COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

and Their Leaders Yearbook



Countries of the World

and Their Leaders Yearbook 2010

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Countries of the World

and Their Leaders Yearbook 2010

A Compilation of U.S. Department of State Reports on Contemporary Political and Economic Conditions, Government Personnel and Policies, Political Parties, Religions, History, Education, Press, Radio and TV, Climate, and Other Characteristics of Selected Countries of the World; Together with Travel Alerts, Passport and Visa Information, World Health Information for Travelers, and Customs and Duty Tips for Returning Residents

Volume 1

Status of the World's Nations
Background Notes: Afghanistan — Mozambique

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INTRODUCTION AND ABBREVIATIONS

The majority of the information in these volumes was provided by the U.S. Department of State and is the most recent release of that information as of January 2009. However, changes in countries and governments occur rapidly. Therefore, the reader is advised to check directly with the consulate of the country he or she intends to visit before making final plans. The reader is also advised to visit www.state.gov for more detailed and current information on travel to the countries of the world.

Events in all parts of the world—Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa—demonstrate the dynamic changes that quickly change the world's political and economic structures. This 2010 edition continues the tradition of *Countries of the World* in meeting the need for current information by monitoring and presenting pertinent U.S. government publications. The U.S. Department of State (State Department) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) publications present current basic information available on the countries of the world, their leaders, and U.S. embassies worldwide. Key government reports from these and other federal agencies have been gathered together in these volumes.

Beginning with the 2004 edition, *Countries of the World* has been re-structured to make the information more accessible to the reader. In past editions, separate sections were devoted to:

- Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts
- Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments
- Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets from U.S. State Department

The information in these sections was presented country by country. In this edition, the individual country information in these sections has been moved to each country's "Background Note."

Beginning in the 2006 edition, general sections on "Intercountry Adoption" and "International Parental Child Abduction" were added and country specific information concerning intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction was included in the appropriate country "Background Notes."

For this 2010 edition, all 202 "Background Notes" from the previous publication of Countries of the World 2009 have been updated. In addition, the sections on International Treaty Organizations and Foreign Travel have been updated, revised, and reformatted as new information has been made available through the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Customs, the Office of U.S. Trade Representative, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Since the 2009 edition, the sections on "Visa Requirements of Foreign Governments" and "Tips for Travelers" are no longer published by the Department of State. However, readers may find country specific information on entry requirements and special circumstances (as applicable) within the "Background Notes." Country specific information on intercountry adoption procedures and international parental child abduction has been updated as well and can again be found within the "Background Notes" of those countries to which this information is pertinent.

ORGANIZATION

The two volumes in this set contain four sections:

- Status of the World's Nations
- Background Notes
- International Treaty Organizations
- Foreign Travel

A comprehensive index is included at the end of volume two.

Status of the World's Nations

This section begins the set by providing tables listing the independent nations of the world and the dependencies and areas of special sovereignty. Also included are alphabetical and chronological checklists of new nations since 1943.

Background Notes

This section contains the "Background Notes" on the countries of the world compiled by the State Department. These concise guides provide information on a country's leaders, politics, economy, and relations with the United States. "Background Notes" appear on the State Department's web site at http://www.state.gov. The maps appearing in the "Background Notes" were created by Maryland Cartographics, Inc. and were added by the editors to supplement the government information. They were not part of the original government publication. In this edition, the "Background Notes" have also been supplemented by the editors with the following additional State Department and CIA information: Principal U.S. Embassy Officials; Principal Government Officials; and Travel Warnings and Consular Information Sheets.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

This section contains information from the State Department's report *Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts*. The address and telephone number of each embassy, consulate, or foreign service post are listed. Names and assignments are shown for principal U.S. embassy officials to aid in making direct inquiry. A key to abbreviations related to foreign service assignments follows:

ACM	Assistant Chief of Mission
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADV	Adviser
AGR	Agricultural Section (USDA/FAS)
AID	Agency for International Development
AIT	American Institute in Taiwan
ALT	Alternate
AMB	Ambassador
AMB OMS	Ambassador's Office Management Specialist
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
APO	Army Post Office
ARSO	Assistant Regional Security Officer
ATF	Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
ATO	Agricultural Trade Office (USDA/FAS)
B.P.	Boite Postale
BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
BCAO	Branch Cultural Affairs Officer
BO	Branch Office (of Embassy)
BUD	Budget
BUREC	Bureau of Reclamation
C.P.	Caixa Postal
CA	Consular Agent
CAO	Cultural Affairs Officer
CDC	Centers for Disease Control
Cdr	Commander
CEO	Cultural Exchange Officer
CG	Consul General, Consulate General
CHG	Charge d'Affaires
CINCAFSOUTH	Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe
CINCEUR	Commander-in-Chief U.S. European Command
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Command
CINCUSAFE	Commander-in-Chief U.S. Air Forces Europe
CINCUSAREUR	Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army Europe
CM	Chief of Mission
COM	Commercial Section (FCS)
CON	Consul, Consular Section
COUNS	Counselor
CUS	Customs Service (Treasury)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAO	Office of the Defense Attache
DATT	Defense Attache
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration
DEF ADV	Defense Adviser
DEL	Delegation
DEP	Deputy
DEP DIR	Deputy Director
DEVEL	Development
DIR	Director
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
DOJ	Department of Justice
DPAO	Deputy Public Affairs Officer
DPO	Deputy Principal Officer
DSA	Defense Supply Adviser
E	Embassy
EBRD	Economic Board for Reconstruction and Development
ECO	Economic Section
ECO/COM	Economic/Commercial Section
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EDO	Export Development Officer
ENV	Environment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERDA	Energy Research and Development Administration
EST	Environment, Science, and Technology
EX-IM	Export-Import
EXEC	Executive
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAA/CASLO	Federal Aviation Administration Civil Aviation Security Liaison Officer
FAA/FSIDO	Federal Aviation Administration Flight Standards International District Office
FAO	Foreign Agricultural Office
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBO	Foreign Buildings Office
FCS	Foreign Commercial Service
FIC/JSC	Finance Committee and Joint Support Committee
FIN	Financial Attache (Treasury)
FM	Facilities Maintenance
FODAG	Food and Agriculture Organizations
FPO	Fleet Post Office
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
GAO	General Accounting Office
GSA	General Services Administration
GSO	General Services Officer
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAGS	Inter-American Geodetic Survey
IBB	International Broadcasting Bureau
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IMO	Information Management Officer
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IO	Information Officer (USIS)
IPO	Information Program Officer
IRM	Information Resources Management
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
ISM	Information Systems Manager
ISO	Information Systems Officer
ISSO	Information Systems Security Officer
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JUS/CIV	Department of Justice, Civil Division
JUSMAG	Joint US Military Advisory Group
JUST	Justice Department
LAB	Labor Officer
LEGATT	Legal Attache
LO	Liaison Officer
M	Mission
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
Mg	Major General
MGT	Management Officer
MGT & RFM	Management and Reform
MIG AFF	Migration Affairs
MIL	Military
MILGP	Military Group
MIN	Minister
MLO	Military Liaison Office
MNL	Minerals Officer
MSC	Military Staff Committee
MSG	Marine Security Guard
NARC	Narcotics Officer
NAS	Narcotics Affairs Section
NASA	National Air and Space Administration

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCIS	Naval Criminal, U.S.
NIV	Nonimmigrant Visas
NLO	Naval Liaison Officer
OAS	Organization of American States
ODC	Office of Defense Cooperation
OIC	Officer in Charge
OMC	Office of Military Cooperation
OMS	Office Management Specialist
ORA	Office of Regional Affairs
PAA	Public Affairs Adviser
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PC	Peace Corps
PER	Personnel
PERM REP	Permanent Representative
PO	Principal Officer
POL	Political Section
POL/ECO	Political/Economic Section
POL/LAB	Political and Labor Section
POLAD	Political Adviser
RCON	Regional Consular Affairs Officer
REDSO	Regional Economic Development Services Office
REF	Refugee Coordinator
RELO	Regional English Language Officer
REP	Representative
RES	Resources
RHUDO	Regional Housing and Urban Development Office
RMO	Regional Medical Officer
ROCAP	Regional Officer for Central American Programs
RPSO	Regional Procurement and Support Office
RSO	Regional Security Officer
SAO	Security Assistance Office
SCI	Scientific Attache
SCO	Senior Commercial Office
SEC	Secretary
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SLG	State and Local Government
SPA	Special Assistant
SPSH	Special Self Help
SR	Senior
STC	Security Trade Control
TAT	Tactical Analysis Team
TREAS	Treasury Department
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNVIE	US Mission to International Organizations in Vienna
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USDA/APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
USDOC	US Department of Commerce
USEO	United States Embassy Office
USEU	US Mission to the European Union
USGS	US Geological Survey
USINT	United States Interests Section
USLO	United States Liaison Office
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USMTM	US Military Training Mission
USN	United States Navy
USNATO	US Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
USOAS US	Mission to the Organization of American States
USOECD	US Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
USOP U.S.	Office Pristina
USTTA US	Travel and Tourism Agency
USUN US	Mission to the United Nations
VC	Vice Consul
VOA	Voice of America

Principal Government Officials

The information in this part of the "Background Note" is taken from the Central Intelligence Agency directory, *Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments*, which is updated monthly. The directory is intended to be used primarily as a reference aid and includes as many governments of the world as is considered practicable, some of them not officially recognized by the United States. In the directory, regimes with which the United States has no diplomatic exchanges are indicated by the initials NDE (no diplomatic exchange). The spelling of personal names follows transliteration systems generally agreed upon by government agencies, except in the case in which officials have stated a preference for alternate spellings of their names.

Although the head of the central bank is listed for each country, in most cases he or she is not a Cabinet member. Ambassadors to the United States and Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York have also been included. A key to the abbreviations related to members of foreign governments follows:

Adm.	Admiral
Admin.	Administrative/Administration
Asst.	Assistant
Brig.	Brigadier
Capt.	Captain
Cdr.	Commander
Cdte.	Comandante
Chmn.	Chairman
Col.	Colonel
Comdr.	Commodore
Ctte.	Committee
Del.	Delegate
Dep.	Deputy
Dept.	Department
Dir.	Director
Div.	Division
Dr.	Doctor
Eng.	Engineer
Fd. Mar.	Field Marshal
Fed.	Federal
Gen.	General
Govt.	Government
Intl.	International
Lt.	Lieutenant
Maj.	Major
Mar.	Marshal
Mbr.	Member
Min.	Minister, Ministry
NDE	No Diplomatic Exchange
Org.	Organization
Pres.	President
Prof.	Professor
RAdm.	Rear Admiral

Ret.	Retired
Sec.	Secretary
VAdm.	Vice Admiral
VMar.	Vice Marshal

Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts

Consular Information Sheets (also referred to as Country Specific Information) are available for every country of the world. These pages include such information as location of the U.S. embassy or consulate in the subject country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties. Consular Information Sheets generally do not include advice, but present information in a factual manner so the traveler can make his or her own decisions concerning travel to a particular country.

Where applicable, country entries will also include information concerning international parental child abduction laws and/or intercountry adoption requirements and procedures. This country specific information provides only a general look at what are often very complex policies and procedures of a particular country. Readers should consult the website of the State Department at http://www.state.gov for more details and updated information.

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff. Travel Alerts (formerly known as Public Announcements) are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions, generally within a particular country, that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert.

International Treaty Organizations

This section provides information in "Background Note" format on important international organizations of which many of the world's nations are members.

Foreign Travel

This section provides useful information on travel to the countries of the world. Information is provided on customs, passports and visas, health concerns, vaccination requirements, international parental child abduction laws, intercountry adoption regulations, and numerous other travel related topics. A new section has been added containing an abridged version of the State Department's *Foreign Embassies and Consulates in the United States.* Travelers may wish to contact the offices of the country to which they wish to travel for specific information on entry requirements, customs, laws, and safety issues. Also included in this section is important U.S. government advice on global terrorism and its prevalence in countries and regions of the world.

Government Advice:
How and Where to Seek the State Department's Assistance When Doing Business Abroad

This section, primarily in question and answer format, provides explanations of the U.S. government services available to those engaged in business activities in other countries. Information on who to contact and how to make contacts by mail and telephone is outlined. In addition, contact information for the state and regional offices of the U.S. Department of Commerce devoted to international trade is provided.

Country Reports on Terrorism: 2007

This section, previously called *Patterns of Global Terrorism* (in the 2006 edition), presents a summary of the status of the U.S. government's efforts to combat international terrorism and summarizes the acts of terrorism recorded during 2006–07. It also provides descriptions of terrorist activities in the regions of the world and profiles active terrorist organizations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Government data presented in these volumes represents the most current release of such data as of March 2008. However, some articles have been condensed and edited to be suitable for book format. Also, it must again be emphasized that because events and conditions in the world can change dramatically and quickly, readers should consult the web site of the State Department at http://www.state.gov for the latest information releases.

The State Department has also established a toll-free number to assist individuals who need additional information or do not have access to the website. This toll-free number, 1-888-407-4747, is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-317-472-2328.

Persons seeking information or assistance outside of these hours, including on weekends or holidays, should call 1-202-647-5225.

Status of the World's Nations

STATUS OF THE WORLD'S NATIONS

Listing of Nations, Dependencies, and Areas of Special Sovereignty

Editor's note: This section was adapted from *Geographic Notes*, issued by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. State Department in April 1992 and updated by the editors of this volume in March 2008.

OVERVIEW

In this survey, the term "nation" refers to a people politically organized into a sovereign state with a definite, internationally recognized territory. The number of such nations has almost tripled since the end of World War II. On the eve of the war there were 70 nations; as of March 2008, there were 194.

In 1990 and 1991 several important changes took place in the status of the world's nations. Two nations, Yemen and Germany, were formed in 1990, each by unification of two formerly separate nations. In the case of Germany, the former German Democratic Republic was subsumed by the Federal Republic of Germany. The Republic of Yemen was formed by union of the former Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Also in 1990, Namibia finally realized its Independence; the UN had terminated its status as a South African mandate in 1966.

The year 1990 also began a period of turmoil in the former Soviet Union. The independence of the three Baltic States—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—was recognized by the central Soviet government in August 1991. The United States established diplomatic relations with the democratically elected governments of the Baltic States in September 1991. In December 1991 the 12 former Soviet republics became separate sovereign nations.

With the breakup of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence along with its neighbor Serbia and Montenegro in 1992. In 1993 Czechoslovakia dissolved into Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Also in 1993, Eritrea declared its independence from Ethiopia. In 2002, East Timor declared itself a nation after separating from Indonesia. Montenegro separated from Serbia to become an independent nation on June 3, 2006. On February 17, 2008, Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia.

The magnitude of these changes, though noteworthy, is not unprecedented in recent history. The unsettled international situations following each of the World Wars fostered the creation of new nations without an equal dissolution of existing ones. As a result of World War I, three nations in Europe ceased to exist—Austria, Hungary, Montenegro, and Serbia—but they were replaced by four new nations: Austria-Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Poland reappeared on the map of Europe after an interval of almost a century and a quarter during which it had been partitioned among Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia.

In the early part of World War II, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were forcibly incorporated into the USSR. Other nations disappeared temporarily from the world community during the period that led up to World War II. These include Ethiopia in 1936, Austria in 1938, and Czechoslovakia in 1939. In the aftermath of World War II, however, two new nations emerged through the partition of Germany and Israel was created within the United Kingdom's Palestine League of Nations Mandate.

Proliferation of Nations

The dramatic increase in the number of nations since World War II has occurred primarily through the breakup of larger territorial entities, particularly in Africa, along the southern periphery of Asia, in the Caribbean, and in the Pacific Ocean. The dissolution of the Soviet Union follows this proliferation pattern.

Several periods since 1945 were marked particularly by the emergence of new nations from colonial powers. In 1960 alone, 14 new nations appeared from French-controlled parts of Africa. Of the 69 nations formed worldwide between 1961 and 1992, 42 had been wholly or partly under British sovereignty at some time in their history, including seven of the 11 new Pacific island nations. Between September 1974 and November 1975, all five of Portugal's overseas provinces in Africa became nations.

Several exceptional situations since World War II have caused irregularities in the sovereignty structure. Syria in 1958 joined Egypt to form the United Arab Republic, a union that endured three years. In 1962 the West Indies Federation, just a few months before its scheduled independence, was dissolved in favor of sovereignty for Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. In another instance in which nations unsuccessfully attempted to merge, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Zanzibar considered the creation of an East African federation with a single national government. These plans failed to materialize, but in April 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to become one nation, Tanzania.

Geographical Attributes

The largest nation by size of territory is Russia, followed, in order by Canada, China, the United States, Brazil, and Australia, all with more than 5 million square kilometers of total area. The largest nation by population is China, followed, in order by India, the United States, and Indonesia, all with more than 190 million people. The Holy See (Vatican City) is the world's smallest nation, in both land area and population.

Of the 194 nations, 39 are islands that border no other country, 44 are landlocked, and the remaining 111 face one or more oceans or their embayments. As nations delimit their 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zones (EEZs) under the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including negotiating maritime boundaries with neighboring nations, some may face the possibility of being "zonelocked."

Dependent Areas

Government control over land areas varies widely, from full sovereignty to none. The term "dependent areas" encompasses a broad category of political entities that fall in some way within the jurisdiction of a nation. In this survey, dependent areas are "overseas" territories associated with a nation; they do not include offshore islands that belong to or make up civil divisions of a nation. Australia, Denmark, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States maintain dependent areas. The level of political dependence ranges from self-governing in domestic affairs to administered directly from the national capital. The latter case often includes minor scattered islands with little or no permanent population.

Except for a sector of Antarctica, there are no significant land areas that are not either under the control of a nation or claimed by one. Antarctic claims have been made by seven of the 28 consultative nations to the 1959 Antarctic Treaty,* although the legal status of those claims remains in suspension under the provisions of the treaty. The unclaimed sector of Antarctica is between 90 and 150 degrees west longitude.

The United States has asserted no claim of sovereignty in Antarctica, although it reserves the right to make one; it recognizes none of the claims within the Antarctic Treaty area (south of 60 degrees south latitude) made by other nations.

*Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom are the seven signatories of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty which have claims in Antarctica. The remaining consultative nations are Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, United States, and Uruguay.

NATIONS, DEPENDENCIES, AREAS OF SPECIAL SOVEREIGNTY

The following information is provided as reference material only. The data do not necessarily correspond to official statistics published by the various states. Status of the World's Nations should not be considered legally definitive.

Diplomatic Relations

The United States has established diplomatic relations with 189 of the listed nations. These are designated by an asterisk (*).

Name of Nation

The short-form name of the nation is commonly used; the long form is used for official documents and formal occasions. In a few instances no short form exists; the long form must serve for all usages. Conversely, a long form may not exist or may seldom be used.

Sovereignty

The sovereignty of dependencies and areas of special sovereignty is identified; where required, a note clarifies an entity's political status.

Capitals

For each state the conventionally accepted capital city name, recommended for use on maps, is listed. In the several instances where states have more than one capital, information on each is given. Some dependencies have no capital city and may be administered from another dependency of the same nation. In the case of small multi-island insular states or dependencies, the island on which the capital is located is given, unless it has the same name.

UN Membership

UN membership is indicated by a (+).

Independent States[1] in the World as of August 19, 2008

	Short-form name	Long-form name	FIPS[2]	Capital
1.	Afghanistan *+	**Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**	AF	*Kabul*
2.	Albania *+	**Republic of Albania**	AL	*Tirana*
3.	Algeria *+	**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**	AG	*Algiers*
4.	Andorra *+	**Principality of Andorra**	AN	*Andorra la Vella*
5.	Angola *+	**Republic of Angola**	AO	*Luanda*
6.	Antigua and Barbuda *+	(no long-form name)	AC	*Saint John's*
7.	Argentina *+	**Argentine Republic**	AR	*Buenos Aires*
8.	Armenia *+	**Republic of Armenia**	AM	*Yerevan*
9.	Australia *+	**Commonwealth of Australia**	AS	*Canberra*
10.	Austria *+	**Republic of Austria**	AU	*Vienna*
11.	Azerbaijan *+	**Republic of Azerbaijan**	AJ	*Baku*
12.	Bahamas, The *+	**Commonwealth of The Bahamas**	BF	*Nassau*
13.	Bahrain *+	**Kingdom of Bahrain**	BA	*Manama*
14.	Bangladesh *+	**People's Republic of Bangladesh**	BG	*Dhaka*
15.	Barbados *+	(no long-form name)	BB	*Bridgetown*
16.	Belarus *+	**Republic of Belarus**	BO	*Minsk*
17.	Belgium *+	**Kingdom of Belgium**	BE	*Brussels*
18.	Belize *+	(no long-form name)	BH	*Belmopan*
19.	Benin *+	**Republic of Benin**	BN	*Porto-Novo*
20.	Bhutan +	**Kingdom of Bhutan**	BT	*Thimphu*
21.	Bolivia *+	**Republic of Bolivia**	BL	*La Paz (administrative)* *Sucre (legislative/judiciary)*
22.	Bosnia and Herzegovina *+	(no long-form name)	BK	*Sarajevo*
23.	Botswana *+	**Republic of Botswana**	BC	*Gaborone*
24.	Brazil *+	**Federative Republic of Brazil**	BR	*Brasília*
25.	Brunei *+	**Brunei Darussalam**	BX	*Bandar Seri Begawan*
26.	Bulgaria *+	**Republic of Bulgaria**	BU	*Sofia*
27.	Burkina Faso *+	**Burkina Faso**	UV	*Ouagadougou*
28.	Burma *+	**Union of Burma**	BM	*Rangoon* *Nay Pyi Taw (administrative)*
29.	Burundi *+	**Republic of Burundi**	BY	*Bujumbura*
30.	Cambodia *+	**Kingdom of Cambodia**	CB	*Phnom Penh*
31.	Cameroon *+	**Republic of Cameroon**	CM	*Yaoundé*
32.	Canada *+	(no long-form name)	CA	*Ottawa*
33.	Cape Verde *+	**Republic of Cape Verde**	CV	*Praia*
34.	Central African Republic *+	**Central African Republic**	CT	*Bangui*
35.	Chad *+	**Republic of Chad**	CD	*N'Djamena*
36.	Chile *+	**Republic of Chile**	CI	*Santiago*
37.	China *+ (see note 3)	**People's Republic of China**	CH	*Beijing*
38.	Colombia *+	**Republic of Colombia**	CO	*Bogotá*
39.	Comoros *+	**Union of Comoros**	CN	*Moroni*
40.	Congo (Brazzaville) *+ (4)	**Republic of the Congo**	CF	*Brazzaville*
41.	Congo (Kinshasa) *+ (4)	**Democratic Republic of the Congo**	CG	*Kinshasa*
42.	Costa Rica *+	**Republic of Costa Rica**	CS	*San José*
43.	Côte d'Ivoire *+	**Republic of Côte d'Ivoire**	IV	*Yamoussoukro*
44.	Croatia *+	**Republic of Croatia**	HR	*Zagreb*
45.	Cuba +	**Republic of Cuba**	CU	*Havana*
46.	Cyprus *+	**Republic of Cyprus**	CY	*Nicosia*
47.	Czech Republic *+	**Czech Republic**	EZ	*Prague*
48.	Denmark *+	**Kingdom of Denmark**	DA	*Copenhagen*
49.	Djibouti *+	**Republic of Djibouti**	DJ	*Djibouti*
50.	Dominica *+	**Commonwealth of Dominica**	DO	*Roseau*
51.	Dominican Republic *+	**Dominican Republic**	DR	*Santo Domingo*
52.	Ecuador *+	**Republic of Ecuador**	EC	*Quito*
53.	Egypt *+	**Arab Republic of Egypt**	EG	*Cairo*

* Diplomatic relations with the United States; + Member of United Nations

Short-form name	Long-form name	FIPS[2]	Capital
54. El Salvador *+	**Republic of El Salvador**	ES	*San Salvador*
55. Equatorial Guinea *+	**Republic of Equatorial Guinea**	EK	*Malabo*
56. Eritrea *+	**State of Eritrea**	ER	*Asmara*
57. Estonia *+	**Republic of Estonia**	EN	*Tallinn*
58. Ethiopia *+	**Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**	ET	*Addis Ababa*
59. Fiji *+	**Republic of the Fiji Islands**	FJ	*Suva*
60. Finland *+	**Republic of Finland**	FI	*Helsinki*
61. France *+	**French Republic**	FR	*Paris*
62. Gabon *+	**Gabonese Republic**	GB	*Libreville*
63. Gambia, The *+	**Republic of The Gambia**	GA	*Banjul*
64. Georgia *+	**Georgia**	GG	*T'bilisi*
65. Germany *+	**Federal Republic of Germany**	GM	*Berlin*
66. Ghana *+	**Republic of Ghana**	GH	*Accra*
67. Greece *+	**Hellenic Republic**	GR	*Athens*
68. Grenada *+	**(no long-form name)**	GJ	*Saint George's*
69. Guatemala *+	**Republic of Guatemala**	GT	*Guatemala*
70. Guinea *+	**Republic of Guinea**	GV	*Conakry*
71. Guinea-Bissau *+	**Republic of Guinea-Bissau**	PU	*Bissau*
72. Guyana *+	**Co-operative Republic of Guyana**	GY	*Georgetown*
73. Haiti *+	**Republic of Haiti**	HA	*Port-au-Prince*
74. Holy See *	**Holy See**	VT	*Vatican City*
75. Honduras *+	**Republic of Honduras**	HO	*Tegucigalpa*
76. Hungary *+	**Republic of Hungary**	HU	*Budapest*
77. Iceland *+	**Republic of Iceland**	IC	*Reykjavík*
78. India *+	**Republic of India**	IN	*New Delhi*
79. Indonesia *+	**Republic of Indonesia**	ID	*Jakarta*
80. Iran +	**Islamic Republic of Iran**	IR	*Tehran*
81. Iraq *+	**Republic of Iraq**	IZ	*Baghdad*
82. Ireland *+	(no long-form name)	EI	*Dublin*
83. Israel *+	**State of Israel**	IS	*Jerusalem (see note 5)*
84. Italy *+	**Italian Republic**	IT	*Rome*
85. Jamaica *+	(no long-form name)	JM	*Kingston*
86. Japan *+	(no long-form name)	JA	*Tokyo*
87. Jordan *+	**Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**	JO	*Amman*
88. Kazakhstan *+	**Republic of Kazakhstan**	KZ	*Astana*
89. Kenya *+	**Republic of Kenya**	KE	*Nairobi*
90. Kiribati *+	**Republic of Kiribati**	KR	*Tarawa*
91. Korea, North +	**Democratic People's Republic of Korea**	KN	*P'yongyang*
92. Korea, South *+	**Republic of Korea**	KS	*Seoul*
93. Kosovo*	**Republic of Kosovo**	KV	*Pristina*
94. Kuwait *+	**State of Kuwait**	KU	*Kuwait*
95. Kyrgyzstan *+	**Kyrgyz Republic**	KG	*Bishkek*
96. Laos *+	**Lao People's Democratic Republic**	LA	*Vientiane*
97. Latvia *+	**Republic of Latvia**	LG	*Riga*
98. Lebanon *+	**Lebanese Republic**	LE	*Beirut*
99. Lesotho *+	**Kingdom of Lesotho**	LT	*Maseru*
100. Liberia *+	**Republic of Liberia**	LI	*Monrovia*
101. Libya *+	**Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**	LY	*Tripoli*
102. Liechtenstein *+	**Principality of Liechtenstein**	LS	*Vaduz*
103. Lithuania *+	**Republic of Lithuania**	LH	*Vilnius*
104. Luxembourg *+	**Grand Duchy of Luxembourg**	LU	*Luxembourg*
105. Macedonia*+	**Republic of Macedonia**	MK	*Skopje*
106. Madagascar *+	**Republic of Madagascar**	MA	*Antananarivo*
107. Malawi *+	**Republic of Malawi**	MI	*Lilongwe*
108. Malaysia *+	(no long-form name)	MY	*Kuala Lumpur*
109. Maldives *+	**Republic of Maldives**	MV	*Male*

* Diplomatic relations with the United States; + Member of United Nations

Short-form name	Long-form name	FIPS[2]	Capital
110. Mali *+	**Republic of Mali**	ML	*Bamako*
111. Malta *+	**Republic of Malta**	MT	*Valletta*
112. Marshall Islands *+	**Republic of the Marshall Islands**	RM	*Majuro*
113. Mauritania *+	**Islamic Republic of Mauritania**	MR	*Nouakchott*
114. Mauritius *+	**Republic of Mauritius**	MP	*Port Louis*
115. Mexico *+	**United Mexican States**	MX	*Mexico*
116. Micronesia, Federated States of *+	**Federated States of Micronesia**	FM	*Palikir*
117. Moldova *+	**Republic of Moldova**	MD	*Chisinau*
118. Monaco *+	**Principality of Monaco**	MN	*Monaco*
119. Mongolia *+	(no long-form name)	MG	*Ulaanbaatar*
120. Montenegro +	**Montenegro**	MJ	*Podgorica*
121. Morocco *+	**Kingdom of Morocco**	MO	*Rabat*
122. Mozambique *+	**Republic of Mozambique**	MZ	*Maputo*
123. Namibia *+	**Republic of Namibia**	WA	*Windhoek*
124. Nauru *+	**Republic of Nauru**	NR	*Yaren District (no capital city)*
125. Nepal *+	**Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal**	NP	*Kathmandu*
126. Netherlands *+	**Kingdom of the Netherlands**	NL	*Amsterdam* *The Hague (seat of gov't)*
127. New Zealand *+	(no long-form name)	NZ	*Wellington*
128. Nicaragua *+	**Republic of Nicaragua**	NU	*Managua*
129. Niger *+	**Republic of Niger**	NG	*Niamey*
130. Nigeria *+	**Federal Republic of Nigeria**	NI	*Abuja*
131. Norway *+	**Kingdom of Norway**	NO	*Oslo*
132. Oman *+	**Sultanate of Oman**	MU	*Muscat*
133. Pakistan *+	**Islamic Republic of Pakistan**	PK	*Islamabad*
134. Palau *+	**Republic of Palau**	PS	*Koror*
135. Panama *+	**Republic of Panama**	PM	*Panama*
136. Papua New Guinea *+	**Independent State of Papua New Guinea**	PP	*Port Moresby*
137. Paraguay *+	**Republic of Paraguay**	PA	*Asunción*
138. Peru *+	**Republic of Peru**	PE	*Lima*
139. Philippines *+	**Republic of the Philippines**	RP	*Manila*
140. Poland *+	**Republic of Poland**	PL	*Warsaw*
141. Portugal *+	**Portuguese Republic**	PO	*Lisbon*
142. Qatar *+	**State of Qatar**	QA	*Doha*
143. Romania *+	(no long-form name)	RO	*Bucharest*
144. Russia *+	**Russian Federation**	RS	*Moscow*
145. Rwanda *+	**Republic of Rwanda**	RW	*Kigali*
146. Saint Kitts and Nevis *+	**Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis**	SC	*Basseterre*
147. Saint Lucia *+	(no long-form name)	ST	*Castries*
148. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines *+	(no long-form name)	VC	*Kingstown*
149. Samoa *+	**Independent State of Samoa**	WS	*Apia*
150. San Marino *+	**Republic of San Marino**	SM	*San Marino*
151. São Tomé and Príncipe *+	**Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe**	TP	*São Tomé*
152. Saudi Arabia *+	**Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**	SA	*Riyadh*
153. Senegal *+	**Republic of Senegal**	SG	*Dakar*
154. Serbia *+	**Republic of Serbia**	RB	*Belgrade*
155. Seychelles *+	**Republic of Seychelles**	SE	*Victoria*
156. Sierra Leone *+	**Republic of Sierra Leone**	SL	*Freetown*
157. Singapore *+	**Republic of Singapore**	SN	*Singapore*
158. Slovakia *+	**Slovak Republic**	LO	*Bratislava*
159. Slovenia *+	**Republic of Slovenia**	SI	*Ljubljana*
160. Solomon Islands *+	(no long-form name)	BP	*Honiara*
161. Somalia *+	(no long-form name)	SO	*Mogadishu*

* Diplomatic relations with the United States; + Member of United Nations

Short-form name	Long-form name	FIPS[2]	Capital
162. South Africa *+	**Republic of South Africa**	SF	*Pretoria (administrative)* *Cape Town (legislative)* *Bloemfontein (judiciary)*
163. Spain *+	**Kingdom of Spain**	SP	*Madrid*
164. Sri Lanka *+	**Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**	CE	*Colombo* *Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte (legislative)*
165. Sudan *+	**Republic of the Sudan**	SU	*Khartoum*
166. Suriname *+	**Republic of Suriname**	NS	*Paramaribo*
167. Swaziland *+	**Kingdom of Swaziland**	WZ	*Mbabane (administrative)* *Lobamba (legislative)*
168. Sweden *+	**Kingdom of Sweden**	SW	*Stockholm*
169. Switzerland *	**Swiss Confederation**	SZ	*Bern*
170. Syria *+	**Syrian Arab Republic**	SY	*Damascus*
171. Tajikistan *+	**Republic of Tajikistan**	TI	*Dushanbe*
172. Tanzania *+	**United Republic of Tanzania**	TZ	*Dar es Salaam* *Dodoma (legislative)*
173. Thailand *+	**Kingdom of Thailand**	TH	*Bangkok*
174. Timor-Leste*+	**Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste**	TT	*Dili*
175. Togo *+	**Togolese Republic**	TO	*Lomé*
176. Tonga *+	**Kingdom of Tonga**	TN	*Nuku'alofa*
177. Trinidad and Tobago *+	**Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**	TD	*Port-of-Spain*
178. Tunisia *+	**Tunisian Republic**	TS	*Tunis*
179. Turkey *+	**Republic of Turkey**	TU	*Ankara*
180. Turkmenistan *+	(no long-form name)	TX	*Ashgabat*
181. Tuvalu *+	(no long-form name)	TV	*Funafuti*
182. Uganda *+	**Republic of Uganda**	UG	*Kampala*
183. Ukraine *+	(no long-form name)	UP	*Kiev*
184. United Arab Emirates *+	**United Arab Emirates**	AE	*Abu Dhabi*
185. United Kingdom *+	**United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**	UK	*London*
186. United States +	**United States of America**	US	*Washington, DC*
187. Uruguay *+	**Oriental Republic of Uruguay**	UY	*Montevideo*
188. Uzbekistan *+	**Republic of Uzbekistan**	UZ	*Tashkent*
189. Vanuatu *+	**Republic of Vanuatu**	NH	*Port-Vila*
190. Venezuela *+	**Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**	VE	*Caracas*
191. Vietnam *+	**Socialist Republic of Vietnam**	VM	*Hanoi*
192. Yemen *+	**Republic of Yemen**	YM	*Sanaa*
193. Zambia *+	**Republic of Zambia**	ZA	*Lusaka*
194. Zimbabwe *+	**Republic of Zimbabwe**	ZI	*Harare*

* Diplomatic relations with the United States; + Member of United Nations

Other

Taiwan[6]	(no long-form name)	TW	*T'ai-pei*

Notes

Note 1: In this listing, the term "independent state" refers to a people politically organized into a sovereign state with a definite territory recognized as independent by the US.

Note 2: Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 10-4 codes.

Note 3: With the establishment of diplomatic relations with China on January 1, 1979, the US Government recognized the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China and acknowledged the Chinese position that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China.

Note 4: "Congo" is the official short-form name for both the Republic of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To distinguish one from the other, the U.S. Department of State adds the capital in parentheses. This practice is unofficial and provisional.

Note 5: Israel proclaimed Jerusalem as its capital in 1950. The U.S., like nearly all other countries maintains its embassy in Tel Aviv.

Note 6: Claimed by both the Government of the People's Republic of China and the authorities on Taiwan. Administered by the authorities on Taiwan (see note 3)

Source: Office of The Geographer and Global Issues, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

Dependencies and Areas of Special Sovereignty as of December 18, 2007

Short-form name	Long-form name	Sovereignty	Code[1]	Capital
Akrotiri [15]	**Akrotiri**	United Kingdom	AX	*Episkopi*[16]
American Samoa	**Territory of American Samoa**	United States	AQ	*Pago Pago*
Anguilla	**Anguilla**	United Kingdom	AV	*The Valley*
Antarctica	(no long-form name)	None (see note 2)	AY	*None*
Aruba	(no long-form name)	Netherlands	AA	*Oranjestad*
Ashmore and Cartier Islands	**Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands**	Australia	AT	*Administered from Canberra*
Baker Island	(no long-form name)	United States	FQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Bermuda	**Bermuda**	United Kingdom	BD	*Hamilton*
Bouvet Island	(no long-form name)	Norway	BV	*Admin. from Oslo*
British Indian Ocean Territory[3]	**British Indian Ocean Territory**	United Kingdom	IO	*None*
Cayman Islands	**Cayman Islands**	United Kingdom	CJ	*George Town*
Christmas Island	**Territory of Christmas Island**	Australia	KT	*The Settlement (Flying Fish Cove)*
Clipperton Island	(no long-form name)	France	IP	*Administered from French Polynesia*
Cocos (Keeling) Islands	**Territory of Cocos (Keeling) Islands**	Australia	CK	*West Island*
Cook Islands	(no long-form name)	New Zealand	CW	*Avarua*
Coral Sea Islands	**Coral Sea Islands Territory**	Australia	CR	*Administered from Canberra*
Dhekelia[15]	**Dhekelia**	United Kingdom	DX	*Episkopi*[16]
Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)	**Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas)**	United Kingdom[4]	FK	*Stanley*
Faroe Islands	(no long-form name)	Denmark	FO	*Tórshavn*
French Guiana[5]				
French Polynesia	(no long-form name)	France	FP	*Papeete*
French Southern & Antarctic Lands[6]	(no long-form name)	France	FS	*Administered from Paris*
Gibraltar	**Gibraltar**	United Kingdom	GI	*Gibraltar*
Greenland	(no long-form name)	Denmark	GL	*Nuuk (Godthåb)*
Guadeloupe[5]				
Guam	**Territory of Guam**	United States	GQ	*Hagatna*
Guernsey[7]	**Bailiwick of Guernsey**	British Crown Dependency	GK	*Saint Peter Port*
Heard Island & McDonald Islands	**Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands**	Australia	HM	*Administered from Canberra*
Hong Kong	**Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**	China[8]	HK	*None*
Howland Island	(no long-form name)	United States	HQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Isle of Man	(no long-form name)	British Crown Dependency	IM	*Douglas*
Jan Mayen	(no long-form name)	Norway	JN	*Administered from Oslo*[9]
Jarvis Island	(no long-form name)	United States	DQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Jersey	**Bailiwick of Jersey**	British Crown Dependency	JE	*Saint Helier*
Johnston Atoll	(no long-form name)	United States	JQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Kingman Reef	(no long-form name)	United States	KQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*

Short-form name	Long-form name	Sovereignty	Code[1]	Capital
Macau	**Macau Special Administrative Region**	China[10]	MC	*Macau*
Martinique[5]				
Mayotte	**Territorial Collectivity of Mayotte**	France	MF	*Mamoudzou*
Midway Islands	(no long-form name)	United States	MQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Montserrat	**Montserrat**	United Kingdom	MH	*Plymouth*
Navassa Island	(no long-form name)	United States	BQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Netherlands Antilles[11]	(no long-form name)	Netherlands	NT	*Willemstad*
New Caledonia	(no long-form name)	France	NC	*Nouméa*
Niue	(no long-form name)	New Zealand	NE	*Alofi*
Norfolk Island	**Territory of Norfolk Island**	Australia	NF	*Kingston*
Northern Mariana Islands	**Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands**	United States	CQ	*Saipan*
Palmyra Atoll	(no long-form name)	United States	LQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Paracel Islands	(no long-form name)	undetermined[12]	PF	*None*
Pitcairn Islands	**Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie, and Oeno Islands**	United Kingdom	PC	*Adamstown*
Puerto Rico	**Commonwealth of Puerto Rico**	United States	RQ	*San Juan*
Reunion[5]				
Saint Barthelemy	Saint Barthelemy	France	TB	*Gustavia*
Saint Helena[13]	**Saint Helena**	United Kingdom	SH	*Jamestown*
Saint Martin[17]	**Saint Martin**	France	RN	*Marigot*
Saint Pierre & Miquelon	**Territorial Collectivity of Saint Pierre and Miquelon**	France	SB	*Saint-Pierre*
South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands	**South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands**	United Kingdom[4]	SX	*None*
Spratly Islands	(no long-form name)	undetermined[14]	PG	*None*
Svalbard	(no long-form name)	Norway	SV	*Longyearbyen*
Tokelau	(no long-form name)	New Zealand	TL	*None*
Turks & Caicos Islands	**Turks & Caicos Islands**	United Kingdom	TK	*Grand Turk*
Virgin Islands, U.S.	**United States Virgin Islands**	United States	VQ	*Charlotte Amalie*
Virgin Islands, British	**Virgin Islands, British**	United Kingdom	VI	*Road Town*
Wake Island	(no long-form name)	United States	WQ	*Administered from Washington, D.C.*
Wallis and Futuna	**Territory of the Wallis and Futuna Islands**	France	WF	*Matâ'utu*
Western Sahara	(no long-form name)	undetermined	WI	*None*

Notes

Note 1: Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 10-4 codes.

Note 2: Antarctica consists of the territory south of 60 degrees south latitude. This area includes claims by Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway, and the United Kingdom, the legal status of which remains in suspense under the terms of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. The United States recognizes no claims to Antarctica.

Note 3: Chagos Archipelago (including Diego Garcia).

Note 4: U.K.Overseas Territory (also claimed by Argentina).

Note 5: French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Reunion are departments (first-order administrative units) of France, and are therefore not dependencies or areas of special sovereignty. They are included in this list only for the convenience of the user. The Department of Guadeloupe includes the nearby islands of Marie-Galante, La Desirade, and Iles des Saintes, as well as Saint Barthelemy and the northern three-fifths of Saint Martin (the rest of which belongs to Netherlands Antilles). The islands of Bassas da India, Europa Island, Glorioso Islands, Juan de Nova Island, and Tromelin Island are administered from Reunion; all these islands are claimed by Madagascar, and Tromelin Island is claimed by Mauritius.

Note 6: "French Southern and Antarctic Lands" includes Île Amsterdam, Île Saint-Paul, Îles Crozet, and Îles Ker-

guelen in the southern Indian Ocean, along with the French-claimed sector of Antarctica, "Terre Adélie." The United States does not recognize the French claim to "Terre Adélie" (see note 2).

Note 7: The Bailiwick of Guernsey includes the islands of Alderney, Guernsey, Herm, Sark, and nearby smaller islands.

Note 8: Under a Sino-British declaration of September 1984, Hong Kong reverted to Chinese control on July 1, 1997. It is now a semi-autonomous entity that exists pursuant to international agreement and maintains its own government apart from the People's Republic of China.

Note 9: Administered from Oslo, Norway, through a governor resident in Longyearbyen, Svalbard.

Note 10: Under the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on the Question of Macau signed in 1987, Macau reverted to Chinese control on December 20, 1999. It is now a semi-autonomous entity that exists pursuant to international agreement and maintains its own government apart from the People's Republic of China.

Note 11: Netherlands Antilles comprises two groupings of islands: Curaçao and Bonaire are located off the coast of Venezuela; Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Sint Maarten (the Dutch two-fifths of the island of Saint Martin) lie 800 km to the north.

Note 12: South China Sea islands occupied by China but claimed by Vietnam.

Note 13: The territory of Saint Helena includes the Island group of Tristan da Cunha; Saint Helena also administers Ascension Island.

Note 14: South China Sea islands claimed in entirety by China and Vietnam and in part by the Philippines and Malaysia; each of these states occupies some part of the islands.

Note 15: U.K. military bases on the island of Cyprus.

Note 16: The joint force headquarters under the Commander of the British forces, Cyprus administers both sovereign base areas from Episkopi.

Note 17: The island of Saint Martin is divided: the northern three-fifths form the French collectivity of Saint-Martin, while the southern two-fifths (Sint Maarten) are part of the Netherlands Antilles.

Source: Office of the Geographer and Global Issues, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

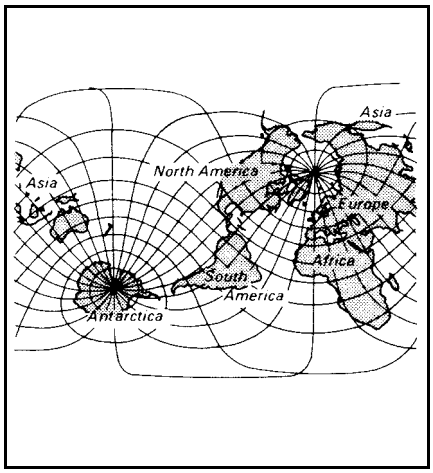
Alphabetical Checklist of 127 New Nations Since 1943

Algeria	July 5, 1962
Angola	Nov. 11, 1976
Antigua and Barbuda	Nov. 1, 1981
Armenia	Sept. 23, 1991
Azerbaijan	Aug. 30, 1991
Bahamas, The	July 10, 1973
Bahrain	Aug. 14, 1971
Bangladesh	Apr. 4, 1972
Barbados	Nov. 30, 1966
Belarus	Aug. 25, 1991
Belize	Sept. 21, 1981
Benin	Aug. 1, 1960
Bosnia and Herzegovina	April 1, 1992
Botswana	Sept. 30, 1966
Brunei	Jan. 1, 1984
Burkina	Aug. 5, 1960
Burma	Jan. 4, 1948
Burundi	July 1, 1962
Cambodia	Nov. 8, 1949
Cameroon	Jan. 1, 1960
Cape Verde	July 5, 1975
Central African Republic	Aug. 13, 1960
Chad	Aug. 11, 1960
Comoros	Dec. 31, 1976
Congo, Dem. Rep. of (Zaire)	June 30, 1960
Congo, Rep. of	Aug. 15, 1960
Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)	Aug. 7, 1960
Croatia	June 25, 1991
Cyprus	Aug. 16, 1960
Czech Republic	Jan. 1, 1993
Djibouti	June 27, 1977
Dominica	Nov. 3, 1978
East Timor	May 20, 2002
Equatorial Guinea	Oct. 12, 1968
Eritrea	April 27, 1993
Estonia	Sept. 6, 1991
Fiji	Oct. 10, 1970
Gabon	Aug. 17, 1960
Gambia, The	Feb. 18, 1965
Georgia	April 9, 1991
Ghana	Mar. 6, 1957
Grenada	Feb. 7, 1974
Guinea	Oct. 2, 1958
Guinea-Bissau	Sept. 10, 1974
Guyana	May 26, 1966
Iceland	June 17, 1944
India	Aug. 15, 1947
Indonesia	Dec. 28, 1949
Israel	May 15, 1948
Jamaica	Aug. 6, 1962
Jordan	Mar. 22, 1946
Kazakhstan	Dec. 6, 1991
Kenya	Dec. 12, 1963
Kiribati	July 12, 1979
Korea, North	Sept. 9, 1948
Korea, South	Aug. 15, 1948
Kosovo	Feb. 17, 2008
Kuwait	June 19, 1961
Kyrgyzstan	Aug. 31, 1991
Laos	July 19, 1949
Latvia	Sept. 6, 1991
Lebanon	Nov. 22, 1943
Lesotho	Oct. 4, 1966
Libya	Dec. 24, 1951
Lithuania	Sept. 6, 1991
Macedonia	Nov. 20, 1991
Madagascar	June 27, 1960
Malawi	July 6, 1964
Malaysia	Aug. 31, 1957
Maldives	July 26, 1966
Mali	Sept. 22, 1960
Malta	Sept. 21, 1964
Marshall Islands	Oct. 21, 1986
Mauritania	Nov. 28, 1960
Mauritius	Mar. 12, 1968
Micronesia, Federated States of	Nov. 3, 1986
Moldova	Aug. 27, 1991
Montenegro	June 3, 2006
Morocco	Mar. 2, 1956
Mozambique	June 25, 1975
Namibia	March 21, 1990
Nauru	Jan. 31, 1968
Niger	Aug. 3, 1960
Nigeria	Oct. 1, 1960
Pakistan	Aug. 14, 1947
Palau	Jan. 1, 1981
Papua New Guinea	Sept. 16, 1976
Philippines	July 4, 1946
Qatar	Sept. 3, 1971
Russia	Aug. 24, 1991
Rwanda	July 1, 1962
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Sept. 19, 1983
Saint Lucia	Feb. 22, 1979
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Oct. 27, 1979
São Tomé and Príncipe	July 12, 1975
Senegal	Aug. 20, 1960
Serbia	April 11, 1992
Seychelles	June 28, 1976
Sierra Leone	Apr. 27, 1961
Singapore	Aug. 9, 1965
Slovakia	Jan. 1, 1993
Slovenia	June 25, 1991
Solomon Islands	July 7, 1978
Somalia	July 1, 1960
Sri Lanka	Feb. 4, 1948
Sudan	Jan. 1, 1956
Suriname	Nov. 25, 1975
Swaziland	Sept. 6, 1968
Syria	Jan. 1, 1944
Tajikistan	Sept. 9, 1991
Tanzania	Dec. 9, 1961
Togo	Apr. 27, 1960
Tonga	June 4, 1970
Trinidad and Tobago	Aug. 31, 1962
Tunisia	Mar. 20, 1956
Turkmenistan	Oct. 27, 1991
Tuvalu	Oct. 1, 1978
Uganda	Oct. 9, 1962
Ukraine	Dec. 1, 1991
Uzbekistan	Aug. 31, 1991
United Arab Emirates	Dec. 2, 1971
Vanuatu	July 30, 1980
Vietnam	Mar. 8, 1949
Western Samoa	Jan. 1, 1962
Yemen	May 22, 1990
Zambia	Oct. 24, 1964
Zimbabwe	Apr. 18, 1980

Chronological Checklist of 127 New Nations Since 1943

1943	Nov. 22	Lebanon
1944	Jan. 1	Syria
	June 17	Iceland
1946	Mar. 22	Jordan
	July 4	Philippines
1947	Aug. 14	Pakistan
	Aug. 15	India
1948	Jan. 4	Burma
	Feb. 4	Sri Lanka
	May 15	Israel
	Aug. 15	Korea, South
	Sept. 9	Korea, North
1949	Mar. 8	Vietnam
	July 19	Laos
	Nov. 8	Cambodia
	Dec. 28	Indonesia
1951	Dec. 24	Libya
1956	Jan. 1	Sudan
	Mar. 2	Morocco
	Mar. 20	Tunisia
1957	Mar. 6	Ghana
	Aug. 31	Malaysia
1958	Oct. 2	Guinea
1960	Jan. 1	Cameroon
	Apr. 27	Togo
	June 27	Madagascar
	June 30	Congo, Dem. Rep. of (Zaire)
	July 1	Somalia
	Aug. 1	Benin
	Aug. 3	Niger
	Aug. 5	Burkina
	Aug. 7	Côte d'Ivoire
	Aug. 11	Chad
	Aug. 13	Central African Republic
	Aug. 15	Congo, Rep of
	Aug. 16	Cyprus
	Aug. 17	Gabon
	Aug. 20	Senegal
	Sept. 22	Mali
	Oct. 1	Nigeria
	Nov. 28	Mauritania
1961	Apr. 27	Sierra Leone
	June 19	Kuwait
	Dec. 9	Tanzania
1962	Jan. 1	Western Samoa
	July 1	Burundi
	July 1	Rwanda
	July 5	Algeria
	Aug. 6	Jamaica
	Aug. 31	Trinidad and Tobago
	Oct. 9	Uganda
1963	Dec. 12	Kenya
1964	July 6	Malawi
	Sept. 21	Malta
	Oct. 24	Zambia
1965	Feb. 18	Gambia, The
	July 26	Maldives
	Aug. 9	Singapore
1966	May 26	Guyana
	Sept. 30	Botswana
	Oct. 4	Lesotho
	Nov. 30	Barbados
1968	Jan. 31	Nauru
1968	Mar. 12	Mauritius
	Sept. 6	Swaziland
	Oct. 12	Equatorial Guinea
1970	June 4	Tonga
	Oct. 10	Fiji
1971	Aug. 14	Bahrain
	Sept. 3	Qatar
	Dec. 2	United Arab Emirates
1972	Apr. 4	Bangladesh
1973	July 10	Bahamas, The
1974	Feb. 7	Grenada
	Sept. 10	Guinea-Bissau
1975	June 25	Mozambique
	July 6	Cape Verde
	July 12	São Tomé and Príncipe
	Sept. 16	Papua New Guinea
	Nov. 11	Angola
	Nov. 25	Suriname
	Dec. 31	Comoros
1976	June 28	Seychelles
1977	June 27	Djibouti
1978	July 7	Solomon Islands
	Oct. 1	Tuvalu
	Nov. 3	Dominica
1979	Feb. 22	Saint Lucia
	July 12	Kiribati
	Oct. 27	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
1980	Apr. 18	Zimbabwe
	July 30	Vanuatu
1981	Jan. 1	Palau
	Sept. 21	Belize
	Nov. 1	Antigua and Barbuda
1983	Sept. 19	Saint Kitts and Nevis
1984	Jan. 1	Brunei
1986	Oct. 21	Marshall Islands
	Nov. 3	Micronesia, Federated States of
1990	Mar. 21	Namibia
	May 22	Yemen
1991	April 9	Georgia
	June 25	Croatia
	June 25	Slovenia
	Aug. 24	Russia
	Aug. 25	Belarus
	Aug. 27	Moldova
	Aug. 30	Azerbaijan
	Aug. 31	Uzbekistan
	Aug. 31	Kyrgyzstan
	Sept. 6	Latvia
	Sept. 6	Lithuania
	Sept. 6	Estonia
	Sept. 9	Tajikistan
	Sept. 23	Armenia
	Oct. 27	Turkmenistan
	Nov. 20	Macedonia
	Dec. 1	Ukraine
	Dec. 6	Kazakhstan
1992	April 1	Bosnia and Herzegovina
	April 11	Serbia
1993	Jan. 1	Czech Republic
	Jan. 1	Slovakia
	April 27	Eritrea
2002	May 20	East Timor
2006	June 3	Montenegro
2008	Feb. 17	Kosovo

Background Notes on Countries of the World



THE WORLD

December 2008

Editor's Note: This entry on The World is an abstract of current, key facts to provide a global context for the various national entries in this Yearbook. This information was provided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency; Background Notes on individual countries are from the U.S. Department of State.

PROFILE

Background

Globally, the 20th century was marked by: (a) two devastating world wars; (b) the Great Depression of the 1930s; (c) the end of vast colonial empires; (d) rapid advances in science and technology, from the first airplane flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina (US) to the landing on the moon; (e) the Cold War between the Western alliance and the Warsaw Pact nations; (f) a sharp rise in living standards in North America, Europe, and Japan; (g) increased concerns about the environment, including loss of forests, shortages of energy and water, the decline in biological diversity, and air pollution; (h) the onset of the AIDS epidemic; and (i) the ultimate emergence of the US as the only world superpower. The planet's population continues to explode: from 1 billion in 1820, to 2 billion in 1930, 3 billion in 1960, 4 billion in 1974, 5 billion in 1988, and 6 billion in 2000. For the 21st century, the continued exponential growth in science and technology raises both hopes (e.g., advances in medicine) and fears (e.g., development of even more lethal weapons of war).

GEOGRAPHY

The surface of the earth is approximately 70.9% water and 29.1% land. The former portion is divided into large water bodies termed oceans. The World Factbook recognizes and describes five oceans, which are in decreasing order of size: the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean, Southern Ocean, and Arctic Ocean.

The land portion is generally divided into several, large, discrete landmasses termed continents. Depending on the convention used, the number of continents can vary from five to seven. The most common classification recognizes seven, which are (from largest to smallest): Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe, and Australia. Asia and Europe are sometimes lumped together into a Eurasian continent resulting in six continents. Alternatively, North and South America are sometimes grouped as simply the Americas, resulting in a continent total of six (or five, if the Eurasia designation is used).

North America is commonly understood to include the island of Greenland, the isles of the Caribbean, and to extend south all the way to the Isthmus of Panama. The easternmost extent of Europe is generally defined as being the Ural Mountains and the Ural River; on the southeast the Caspian Sea; and on the south the Caucasus Mountains, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. Africa's northeast extremity is frequently delimited at the Isthmus of Suez, but for geopolitical purposes, the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula is often included as part Africa. Asia usually incorporates all the islands of the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The islands of the Pacific are often lumped with Australia into a "land mass" termed Oceania or Australasia.

Although the above groupings are the most common, different continental dispositions are recognized or taught in certain parts of the world, with some arrangements more heavily based on cultural spheres rather than physical geographic considerations.

Area: *total:* 510.072 million sq km; *land:* 148.94 million sq k; *water:* 361.132 million sq km; *Note:* 70.9% of the world's surface is water, 29.1% is land

Area—comparative: land area about 16 times the size of the US

Land boundaries: the land boundaries in the world total 251,060 km (not counting shared boundaries twice); two nations, China and Russia, each border 14 other countries. *Note:* 45 nations and other areas are landlocked, these include: Afghanistan, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Burkina Faso,

Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Holy See (Vatican City), Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malawi, Mali, Moldova, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Paraguay, Rwanda, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Swaziland, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, West Bank, Zambia, Zimbabwe; two of these, Liechtenstein and Uzbekistan, are doubly landlocked

Coastline: 356,000 km. *Note:* 94 nations and other entities are islands that border no other countries, they include: American Samoa, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Ashmore and Cartier Islands, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Baker Island, Barbados, Bermuda, Bouvet Island, British Indian Ocean Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cape Verde, Cayman Islands, Christmas Island, Clipperton Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Comoros, Cook Islands, Coral Sea Islands, Cuba, Cyprus, Dominica, Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), Faroe Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, French Southern and Antarctic Lands, Greenland, Grenada, Guam, Guernsey, Heard Island and McDonald Islands, Howland Island, Iceland, Isle of Man, Jamaica, Jan Mayen, Japan, Jarvis Island, Jersey, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Kiribati, Madagascar, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Martinique, Mauritius, Mayotte, Federated States of Micronesia, Midway Islands, Montserrat, Nauru, Navassa Island, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Palmyra Atoll, Paracel Islands, Philippines, Pitcairn Islands, Puerto Rico, Reunion, Saint Barthelemy, Saint Helena, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Spratly Islands, Sri Lanka, Svalbard, Tokelau, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Virgin Islands, Wake Island, Wallis and Futuna, Taiwan

Maritime claims: a variety of situations exist, but in general, most countries make the following claims measured from the mean low-tide baseline as described in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea: territorial sea—12 nm, contiguous zone—24 nm, and exclusive economic zone—200 nm; additional zones provide for exploitation of continental shelf resources and an exclusive fishing zone; boundary situations with neighboring states prevent many countries from extending their fishing or economic zones to a full 200 nm

Climate: a wide equatorial band of hot and humid tropical climates—bordered north and south by subtropical temperate zones—that separate two large areas of cold and dry polar climates

Terrain: the greatest ocean depth is the Mariana Trench at 10,924 m in the Pacific Ocean

Elevation extremes: *lowest point:* Bentley Subglacial Trench -2,540 m. *Note:* in the oceanic realm, Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench is the lowest point, lying -10,924 m below the surface of the Pacific Ocean. *highest point:* Mount Everest 8,850 m

Natural resources: the rapid depletion of nonrenewable mineral resources, the depletion of forest areas and wetlands, the extinction of animal and plant species, and the deterioration in air and water quality (especially in Eastern Europe, the former USSR, and China) pose serious long-term problems that governments and peoples are only beginning to address

Land use: *arable land:* 10.57%; *permanent crops:* 1.04%; *other:* 88.38% (2005); *Irrigated land:* 2,770,980 sq km (2003)

Natural hazards: large areas subject to severe weather (tropical cyclones), natural disasters (earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions)

Environment—current issues: large areas subject to overpopulation, industrial disasters, pollution (air, water, acid rain, toxic substances), loss of vegetation (overgrazing, deforestation, desertification), loss of wildlife, soil degradation, soil depletion, erosion; global warming becoming a greater concern

Geography—Note: the world is now thought to be about 4.55 billion years old, just about one-third of the 13.7-billion-year age estimated for the universe

PEOPLE

Population: 6,706,993,152 (July 2008 est.)

Age structure: *0-14 years:* 27.3% (male 944,665,142/female 887,471,328); *15-64 years:* 65.1% *65 years and over:* 7.6% (male 222,808,372/female 284,647,297) (2008 est.)

Median age: *male:* 27.4 years; *female:* 28.7 years (2008 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.188% (2008 est.)

Birth rate: 20.18 births/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Death rate: 8.23 deaths/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Sex ratio: *at birth:* 1.07 male(s)/female; *under 15 years:* 1.06 male(s)/female; *15-64 years:* 1.02 male(s)/female; *65 years and over:* 0.78 male(s)/female; *total population:* 1.01 male(s)/female (2008 est.)

Infant mortality rate: *total:* 42.09 deaths/1,000 live births; *male:* 44.91 deaths/1,000 live births; *female:* 39.09 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.)

Life expectancy at birth: *total population:* 66.26 years; *male:* 64.3 years; *female:* 68.3 years (2008 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.61 children born/woman (2008 est.)

HIV/AIDS—adult prevalence rate: NA

HIV/AIDS—people living with HIV/AIDS: NA

HIV/AIDS—deaths: NA

Religions: Christians 33.32% (of which Roman Catholics 16.99%, Protestants 5.78%, Orthodox 3.53%, Anglicans 1.25%), Muslims 21.01%, Hindus 13.26%, Buddhists 5.84%, Sikhs 0.35%, Jews 0.23%, Baha'is 0.12%, other religions 11.78%, nonreligious 11.77%, atheists 2.32% (2007 est.)

Languages: Mandarin Chinese 13.22%, Spanish 4.88%, English 4.68%, Arabic 3.12%, Hindi 2.74%,

Portuguese 2.69%, Bengali 2.59%, Russian 2.2%, Japanese 1.85%, Standard German 1.44%, Wu Chinese 1.17% (2005 est.). *Note:* percents are for "first language" speakers only

Literacy: *definition:* age 15 and over can read and write; *total population:* 82%; *male:* 87%; *female:* 77%. *Note:* over two-thirds of the world's 785 million illiterate adults are found in only eight countries (India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and Egypt); of all the illiterate adults in the world, two-thirds are women; extremely low literacy rates are concentrated in three regions, South and West Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Arab states, where around one-third of the men and half of all women are illiterate (2005 est.)

GOVERNMENT

Political subdivisions: 266 nations, dependent areas, and other entities

Legal system: all members of the UN are parties to the statute that established the International Court of Justice (ICJ) or World Court

ECONOMY

Overview

Global output rose by 5.2% in 2007, led by China (11.4%), India (9.2%), and Russia (8.1%). The 14 other successor nations of the USSR and the other old Warsaw Pact nations again experienced widely divergent growth rates; the three Baltic nations continued as strong performers, in the 8%-10% range of growth. From 2006 to 2007 growth rates slowed in all the major industrial countries except for the United Kingdom (3.1%). Analysts attribute the slowdown to uncertainties in the financial markets and lowered consumer confidence. Worldwide, nations varied widely in their growth results. Externally, the nation-state, as a bedrock economic-political institution, is steadily losing control over international flows of people, goods, funds, and technology. Internally, the central government often finds its control over resources slipping as separatist regional movements - typically based on ethnicity - gain momentum, e.g., in many of the successor states of the former Soviet Union, in the former Yugoslavia, in India, in Iraq, in Indonesia, and in Canada. Externally, the central government is losing decisionmaking powers to international bodies, notably the EU. In Western Europe, governments face the difficult political problem of channeling resources away from welfare programs in order to increase investment and strengthen incentives to seek employment. The addition of 80 million people each year to an already overcrowded globe is exacerbating the problems of pollution, desertification, underemployment, epidemics, and famine. Because of their own internal problems and priorities, the industrialized countries devote insufficient resources to deal effectively with the poorer areas of the world, which, at least from an economic point of view, are becoming further marginalized. The introduction of the euro as the common currency of much of Western Europe in January 1999, while paving the way for an integrated economic powerhouse, poses economic risks because of varying levels of income and cultural and political differences among the participating nations. The terrorist attacks on the US on 11 September 2001 accentuated a growing risk to global prosperity, illustrated, for example, by the reallocation of resources away from investment to anti-terrorist programs. The opening of war in March 2003 between a US-led coalition and Iraq added new uncertainties to global economic prospects. After the initial coalition victory, the complex political difficulties and the high economic cost of establishing domestic order in Iraq became major global problems that continued through 2007.

GWP (gross world product): $65.61 trillion (2007 est.)

GDP (official exchange rate): $54.62 trillion (2007 est.)

GDP—real growth rate: 5.2% (2007 est.)

GDP—per capita (PPP): $10,000 (2007 est.)

GDP—composition by sector: *agriculture:* 4%; *industry:* 32%; *services:* 64% (2007 est.)

Labor force: 3.131 billion (2007 est.)

Labor force—by occupation: *agriculture:* 40.2%; *industry:* 20.5%; *services:* 39.4% (2007 est.)

Unemployment rate: 30% combined unemployment and underemployment in many non-industrialized countries; developed countries typically 4%-12% unemployment (2007 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share: lowest 10%: 2.5%; highest 10%: 29.8% (2002 est.)

Investment (gross fixed): 22.7% of GDP (2007 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): developed countries 1% to 4% typically; developing countries 5% to 20% typically; national inflation rates vary widely in individual cases, from declining prices in Japan to hyperinflation in one Third World countries (Zimbabwe); inflation rates have declined for most countries for the last several years, held in check by increasing international competition from several low wage countries (2005 est.)

Industries: dominated by the onrush of technology, especially in computers, robotics, telecommunications, and medicines and medical equipment; most of these advances take place in OECD nations; only a small portion of non-OECD countries have succeeded in rapidly adjusting to these technological forces; the accelerated development of new industrial (and agricultural) technology is complicating already grim environmental problems

Industrial production growth rate: 5% (2007 est.)

Electricity—production: 18.96 trillion kWh (2007 est.)

Electricity—consumption: 16.88 trillion kWh (2007 est.)

Electricity—exports: 655.6 billion kWh (2007 est)

Electricity—imports: 627.9 billion kWh (2007 est.)

Electricity—production by source: fossil fuel: NA; hydro: NA; nuclear: NA; other: NA

Oil—production: 84.79 million bbl/day (2007 est.)

Oil—consumption: 85.37 million bbl/day (2007 est.)
Oil—exports: 66.19 million bbl/day (2005)
Oil—imports: 65.41 million bbl/day (2005)
Oil—proved reserves: 1.332 trillion bbl (1 January 2008 est.)
Natural gas—production: 3.021 trillion cu m (2007 est.)
Natural gas—consumption: 3.198 trillion cu m (2007 est.)
Natural gas—exports: 929.9 billion cu m (2007 est.)
Natural gas—imports: 957.6 billion cu m (2007)
Natural gas—proved reserves: 175.4 trillion cu m (1 January 2008 est.)
Exports: $13.89 trillion f.o.b. (2006 est.)
Exports—commodities: the whole range of industrial and agricultural goods and services.
Top ten—share of world trade: electrical machinery, including computers 14.8%; mineral fuels, including oil, coal, gas, and refined products 14.4%; nuclear reactors, boilers, and parts 14.2%; cars, trucks, and buses 8.9%; scientific and precision instruments 3.5%; plastics 3.4%; iron and steel 2.7%; organic chemicals 2.6%; pharmaceutical products 2.6%; diamonds, pearls, and precious stones 1.9% (2006 est.)
Exports—partners: US 13.7%, Germany 7.3%, China 6.2%, France 4.6%, UK 4.5%, Japan 4.1% (2007)
Imports: $13.74 trillion f.o.b. (2006 est.)
Imports—commodities: the whole range of industrial and agricultural goods and services
Top ten—share of world trade: see listing for exports
Imports—partners: China 10.7%, Germany 9.23%, US 8.28%, Japan 5.14%, France 3.99% (2007)
Economic aid—recipient: ODA, $106.4 billion (2005)
Debt—external: $51.78 trillion
Note: this figure is the sum total of all countries' external debt, both public and private (2004 est.)
Stock of direct foreign investment—at home: World total DFI $14 trillion
Top ten recipients of DFI: US $1.966 trillion; UK $1.324 trillion; France $872.4 billion; Germany $811.0 billion; HK $780.4 billion; China $758.9 billion; Belgium $703.9 billion; Netherlands $535.1 billion; Canada $527.4 billion; Spain $487.8 billion (year-end 2007 est.)
Top ten sources of DFI: US $2.627 trillion; UK $1.741 trillion; France $1.211 trillion; Germany $1.123 trillion; Netherlands $811.4 billion; HK $716.2 billion; Spain $613.9 billion; Switzerland $591.5 billion; Belgium $537.6 billion; Japan $527.8 billion (year-end 2007 est.)
Market value of publicly traded shares: $53.51 trillion (2006)

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephones—main lines in use: 1,263,367,600 (2005)
Telephones—mobile cellular: 2,168,433,600 (2005)
Telephone system: general assessment: NA; domestic: NA; international: NA
Radio broadcast stations: AM NA, FM NA, shortwave NA
Television broadcast stations: NA
Internet users: 1,018,057,389 (2005)

TRANSPORTATION

Airports: total airports—49,024
Top ten by passengers: Atlanta—84,846,639; Chicago—77,028,134; London—67,530,197; Tokyo—65,810,672; Los Angeles—61,041,066; Dallas/Fort Worth—60,226,138; Paris—56,849,567; Frankfurt—52,810,683; Beijing—48,654,770; Denver—47,325,016
Top ten by cargo (metric tons): Memphis—3,692,081; Hong Kong—3,609,780; Anchorage—2,691,395; Seoul—2,336,572; Tokyo—2,280,830; Shanghai—2,168,122; Paris—2,130,724; Frankfurt—2,127,646; Louisville (US)—1,983,032; Singapore—1,931,881 (2006)
Heliports: 1,359 (2007)
Railways: total: 1,370,782 km (2006)
Roadways: *total:* 68,937,575 km (2008)
Waterways: 671,886 km (2004)
Ports and terminals: Top ten container ports (TEUs): Singapore—24,792,400; Hong Kong—23,539,000; Shanghai—21,710,000; Shenzhen (China)—18,468,890; Busan (South Korea)—12,030,000; Kaohsiung (Taiwan)—9,774,670;—Rotterdam—9,603,000; Dubai (UAE)—8,923,465; Hamburg—8,861,545; Los Angeles—8,469,853 (2006)

MILITARY

Military expenditures—percent of GDP: roughly 2% of gross world product (2005 est.)

TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES

Disputes—international: stretching over 250,000 km, the world's 322 international land boundaries separate 194 independent states and 70 dependencies, areas of special sovereignty, and other miscellaneous entities; ethnicity, culture, race, religion, and language have divided states into separate political entities as much as history, physical terrain, political fiat, or conquest, resulting in sometimes arbitrary and imposed boundaries; most maritime states have claimed limits that include territorial seas and exclusive economic zones; overlapping limits due to adjacent or opposite coasts create the potential for 430 bilateral maritime boundaries of which 209 have agreements that include contiguous and non-contiguous segments; boundary, borderland/resource, and territorial disputes vary in intensity from managed or dormant to violent or militarized; undemarcated, indefinite, porous, and unmanaged boundaries tend to encourage illegal cross-border activities, uncontrolled migration, and confrontation; territorial disputes may evolve from historical and/or cultural claims, or they may be brought on by resource competition; ethnic and cultural clashes continue to be responsible for much of the territorial fragmentation and internal displacement of the estimated 6.6 million people and cross-border displacements of 8.6 million refugees around the world as of early 2006;

just over one million refugees were repatriated in the same period; other sources of contention include access to water and mineral (especially hydrocarbon) resources, fisheries, and arable land; armed conflict prevails not so much between the uniformed armed forces of independent states as between stateless armed entities that detract from the sustenance and welfare of local populations, leaving the community of nations to cope with resultant refugees, hunger, disease, impoverishment, and environmental degradation

Refugees and internally displaced persons: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that in December 2006 there was a global population of 8.8 million registered refugees and as many as 24.5 million IDPs in more than 50 countries; the actual global population of refugees is probably closer to 10 million given the estimated 1.5 million Iraqi refugees displaced throughout the Middle East (2007)

Trafficking in persons: current situation: approximately 800,000 people, mostly women and children, are trafficked annually across national borders, not including millions trafficked within their own countries; at least 80% of the victims are female and up to 50% are minors; 75% of all victims are trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation; almost two-thirds of the global victims are trafficked intra-regionally within East Asia and the Pacific (260,000 to 280,000 people) and Europe and Eurasia (170,000 to 210,000 people)

Tier 2 Watch List: Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, The Gambia, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Jordan, Libya, Malaysia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Niger, Panama, Republic of the Congo, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Tier 3: Algeria, Burma, Cuba, Fiji, Iran, Kuwait, Moldova, North Korea, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria (2008)

Illicit drugs: *cocaine:* worldwide coca leaf cultivation in 2007 amounted to 232,500 hectares; Colombia produced slightly more than two-thirds of the worldwide crop, followed by Peru and Bolivia; potential pure cocaine production decreased 7% to 865 metric tons in 2007; Colombia conducts aggressive coca eradication campaign, but both Peruvian and Bolivian Governments are hesitant to eradicate coca in key growing areas; 551 metric tons of export-quality cocaine (85% pure) is documented to have been seized or destroyed in 2005; US consumption of export quality cocaine is estimated to have been in excess of 380 metric tons

opiates: worldwide illicit opium poppy cultivation continued to increase in 2007, with a potential opium production of 8,400 metric tons, reaching the highest levels recorded since estimates began in mid-1980s; Afghanistan is world's primary opium producer, accounting for 95% of the global supply; Southeast Asia - responsible for 9% of global opium - saw marginal increases in production; Latin America produced 1% of global opium, but most was refined into heroin destined for the US market; if all potential opium was processed into pure heroin, the potential global production would be 1,000 metric tons of heroin in 2007



AFGHANISTAN

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 647,500 sq. km. (249,935 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Texas.

Cities: Capital—Kabul (1,780,000; 1999/2000 UN est.). Other cities (1988 UN est.; current figures are probably significantly higher)—Kandahar (226,000); Herat (177,000); Mazar-e-Sharif (131,000); Jalalabad (58,000); Konduz (57,000).

Terrain: Landlocked; mostly mountains and desert.

Climate: Dry, with cold winters and hot summers.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Afghan(s).

Population: 31,056,997 (June 2006 est.). More than 3.5 million Afghans live outside the country, mainly in Pakistan and Iran, although over 5 million have returned since the removal of the Taliban.

Annual population growth rate: (2006 est.) 2.67%. Main ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Aimaq, Baluch, Nuristani, Kizilbash.

Religions: Sunni Muslim 80%, Shi'a Muslim 19%, other 1%.

Languages: Dari (Afghan Persian), Pashto.

Education: Education: Approximately 6 million children, of whom some 35% are girls.

Literacy: (2008 est.) 28.1% (male 43%, female 12%), but real figures may be lower given breakdown of education system and flight of educated Afghans during three decades of war and instability.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2008 est.)—154.67 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2008 est.)—44.04 yrs. (male); 44.39 yrs. (female).

Government

Type: Islamic Republic.

Independence: August 19, 1919.

Constitution: January 4, 2004.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state). Legislative—bicameral National Assembly (House of the People—249 seats, House of the Elders—102 seats). Judicial—Supreme Court, High Courts, and Appeals Courts.

Political subdivisions: 34 provinces.

Suffrage: Universal at 18 years.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $8.4 billion.

GDP growth: (2008 est.) 11.5%.

GDP per capita: (2007 est.) $300.

Natural resources: Natural gas, oil, coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron, salt, precious and semiprecious stones.

Agriculture: (estimated 38% of GDP): Products—wheat, opium, sheepskins, lambskins, corn, barley, rice, cotton, fruit, nuts, karakul pelts, wool, and mutton.

Industry: (estimated 24% of GDP): Types—small-scale production of textiles, soap, furniture, shoes, fertilizer, cement; hand-woven carpets; natural gas, coal, and copper.

Services: (estimated 38% of GDP): Transport, retail, and telecommunications.

Trade: (2006-2007 est.): Exports—$274 million (does not include opium): fruits and nuts, hand-woven carpets, wool, cotton, hides and pelts, precious and semiprecious gems. Major markets—Central Asian republics, United States, Russia, Pakistan, India. Imports—$3.8 billion: food, petroleum products, textiles, machinery, and consumer goods. Major suppliers—Central Asian republics, Pakistan, United States, India, Germany.

Currency: The currency is the afghani, which was reintroduced as Afghanistan's new currency in January 2003. At present, $1 U.S. equals approximately 49 afghanis.

PEOPLE

Afghanistan's ethnically and linguistically mixed population reflects its location astride historic trade and

invasion routes leading from Central Asia into South and Southwest Asia. While population data is somewhat unreliable for Afghanistan, Pashtuns make up the largest ethnic group at 38-44% of the population, followed by Tajiks (25%), Hazaras (10%), Uzbek (6-8%), Aimaq, Turkmen, Baluch, and other small groups. Dari (Afghan Farsi) and Pashto are official languages. Dari is spoken by more than one-third of the population as a first language and serves as a lingua franca for most Afghans, though Pashto is spoken throughout the Pashtun areas of eastern and southern Afghanistan. Tajik and Turkic languages are spoken widely in the north. Smaller groups throughout the country also speak more than 70 other languages and numerous dialects.

Afghanistan is an Islamic country. An estimated 80% of the population is Sunni, following the Hanafi school of jurisprudence; the remainder of the population—and primarily the Hazara ethnic group— predominantly Shi'a. Despite attempts during the years of communist rule to secularize Afghan society, Islamic practices pervade all aspects of life. In fact, Islam served as a principal basis for expressing opposition to communism and the Soviet invasion. Islamic religious tradition and codes, together with traditional tribal and ethnic practices, have an important role in personal conduct and dispute settlement. Afghan society is largely based on kinship groups, which follow traditional customs and religious practices, though somewhat less so in urban areas.

HISTORY

Afghanistan, often called the crossroads of Central Asia, has had a turbulent history. In 328 BC, Alexander the Great entered the territory of present-day Afghanistan, then part of the Persian Empire, and established a Hellenistic state in Bactria (present-day Balkh). Invasions by the Scythians, White Huns, and Turks followed in succeeding centuries. In AD 642, Arabs invaded the entire region and introduced Islam. Arab rule gave way to the Persians, who controlled the area until conquered by the Turkic Ghaznavids in 998. Mahmud of Ghazni (998-1030) consolidated the conquests of his predecessors and turned Ghazni into a great cultural center as well as a base for frequent forays into India. Following Mahmud's short-lived dynasty, various princes attempted to rule sections of the country until the destructive Mongol invasion of 1219 led by Genghis Khan.

Following Genghis Khan's death in 1227, a succession of petty chiefs and princes struggled for supremacy until late in the 14th century, when one of his descendants, Tamerlane, incorporated Afghanistan into his own vast Asian empire.

In 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani, the founder of what is known today as Afghanistan, established his rule. A Pashtun, Durrani was elected king by a tribal council after the assassination of the Persian ruler Nadir Shah at Khabushan in the same year. Throughout his reign, Durrani consolidated chieftainships, petty principalities, and fragmented provinces into one country. His rule extended from Mashad in the west to Kashmir and Delhi in the east, and from the Amu Darya (Oxus) River in the north to the Arabian Sea in the south.

European Influence

During the 19th century, collision between the expanding British Empire in the subcontinent and czarist Russia significantly influenced Afghanistan in what was termed "The Great Game." British concern over Russian advances in Central Asia and growing influence in Persia precipitated two Anglo-Afghan wars. The first (1839-42) resulted not only in the destruction of a British army, but is remembered today as an example of the ferocity of Afghan resistance to foreign rule. The second Anglo-Afghan war (1878-80) was sparked by Amir Sher Ali's refusal to accept a British mission in Kabul. This conflict brought Amir Abdur Rahman to the Afghan throne. During his reign (1880-1901), the British and Russians officially established the boundaries of what would become modern Afghanistan through the demarcation of the Durand Line. The British retained effective control over Kabul's foreign affairs.

Habibullah, Abdur Rahman's son and successor, was assassinated in 1919, possibly by family members opposed to British influence. His third son, Amanullah, regained control of Afghanistan's foreign policy after launching the third Anglo-Afghan war with an attack on India in the same year. During the ensuing conflict, the war-weary British relinquished their control over Afghan foreign affairs by signing the Treaty of Rawalpindi in August 1919. In commemoration of this event, Afghans celebrate August 19 as their Independence Day.

Reform and Reaction

King Amanullah (1919-29) moved to end his country's traditional isolation in the years following the third Anglo-Afghan war. He established diplomatic relations with most major countries and—following a 1927 tour of Europe and Turkey during which he noted the modernization and secularization advanced by Ataturk—introduced several reforms intended to modernize Afghanistan. Some of these, such as the abolition of the traditional Muslim veil for women and the opening of a number of co-educational schools, quickly alienated many tribal and religious leaders. Faced with overwhelming armed opposition, Amanullah was forced to abdicate in January 1929 after Kabul fell to forces led by Bacha-i-Saqao, a Tajik brigand. Prince Nadir Khan, a cousin of Amanullah's, in turn defeated Bacha-i-Saqao in October of the same year and, with considerable Pashtun tribal support, was declared King Nadir Shah. Four years later, however, he was assassinated in a revenge killing by a Kabul student.

Mohammad Zahir Shah, Nadir Khan's 19-year-old son, succeeded to the throne and reigned from 1933 to 1973. In 1964, King Zahir Shah promulgated a liberal constitution providing for a two-chamber legislature



to which the king appointed one-third of the deputies. The people elected another third, and the remainder were selected indirectly by provincial assemblies. Although Zahir's "experiment in democracy" produced few lasting reforms, it permitted the growth of unofficial extremist parties on both the left and the right. These included the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which had close ideological ties to the Soviet Union. In 1967, the PDPA split into two major rival factions: the Khalq (Masses) faction headed by Nur Muhammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin and supported by elements within the military, and the Parcham (Banner) faction led by Babrak Karmal. The split reflected ethnic, class, and ideological divisions within Afghan society. Zahir's cousin, Sardar Mohammad Daoud, served as his Prime Minister from 1953 to 1963. During his tenure as Prime Minister, Daoud solicited military and economic assistance from both Washington and Moscow and introduced controversial social policies of a reformist nature. Daoud's alleged support for the creation of a Pashtun state in the Pakistan-Afghan border area heightened tensions with Pakistan and eventually resulted in Daoud's dismissal in March 1963.

Daoud's Republic (1973-78) and the April 1978 Coup

Amid charges of corruption and malfeasance against the royal family and poor economic conditions created by the severe 1971-72 drought, former Prime Minister Daoud seized power in a military coup on July 17, 1973. Zahir Shah fled the country, eventually finding refuge in Italy. Daoud abolished the monarchy, abrogated the 1964 constitution, and declared Afghanistan a republic with himself as its first President and Prime Minister. His attempts to carry out badly needed economic and social reforms

met with little success, and the new constitution promulgated in February 1977 failed to quell chronic political instability. Seeking to exploit more effectively mounting popular disaffection, the PDPA reunified with Moscow's support. On April 27, 1978, the PDPA initiated a bloody coup, which resulted in the overthrow and murder of Daoud and most of his family. Nur Muhammad Taraki, Secretary General of the PDPA, became President of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister of the newly established Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Opposition to the Marxist government emerged almost immediately. During its first 18 months of rule, the PDPA brutally imposed a Marxist-style "reform" program, which ran counter to deeply rooted Afghan traditions. Decrees forcing changes in marriage customs and pushing through an ill-conceived land reform were resisted by virtually all Afghans. In addition, thousands of members of the traditional elite, the religious establishment, and the intelligentsia were imprisoned, tortured, or murdered. Conflicts within the PDPA also surfaced early and resulted in exiles, purges, imprisonments, and executions.

By the summer of 1978, a revolt began in the Nuristan region of eastern Afghanistan and quickly spread into a countrywide insurgency. In September 1979, Hafizullah Amin, who had earlier been Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, seized power from Taraki after a palace shootout. Over the next 2 months, instability plagued Amin's regime as he moved against perceived enemies in the PDPA. By December, party morale was crumbling, and the insurgency was growing.

The Soviet Invasion

The Soviet Union moved quickly to take advantage of the April 1978 coup. In December 1978, Moscow signed a new bilateral treaty of friendship and cooperation with Afghanistan, and the Soviet military assistance program increased significantly. The regime's survival increasingly was dependent upon Soviet military equipment and advisers as the insurgency spread and the Afghan army began to collapse.

By October 1979, however, relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union were tense as Hafizullah Amin refused to take Soviet advice on how to stabilize and consolidate his government. Faced with a deteriorating security situation, on December 24, 1979, large numbers of Soviet airborne forces, joining thousands of Soviet troops already on the ground, began to land in Kabul under the pretext of a field exercise. On December 26, these invasion forces killed Hafizullah Amin and installed Babrak Karmal, exiled leader of the Parcham faction, bringing him back from Czechoslovakia and making him Prime Minister. Massive Soviet ground forces invaded from the north on December 27.

Following the invasion, the Karmal regime, although backed by an expeditionary force that grew as large as 120,000 Soviet troops, was unable to establish authority outside Kabul. As much as 80% of the countryside, including parts of Herat and Kandahar, eluded effective government control. An overwhelming majority of Afghans opposed the communist regime, either actively or passively. Afghan freedom fighters (mujahidin) made it almost impossible for the regime to maintain a system of local government outside major urban centers. Poorly armed at first, in 1984 the mujahidin began receiving substantial assistance in the form of weapons and training from the U.S. and other outside powers.

In May 1985, the seven principal Peshawar-based guerrilla organizations formed an alliance to coordinate their political and military operations against the Soviet occupation. Late in 1985, the mujahidin were active in and around Kabul, launching rocket attacks and conducting operations against the communist government. The failure of the Soviet Union to win over a significant number of Afghan collaborators or to rebuild a viable Afghan army forced it to bear an increasing responsibility for fighting the resistance and for civilian administration. Soviet and popular displeasure with the Karmal regime led to its demise in May 1986. Karmal was replaced by Muhammad Najibullah, former chief of the Afghan secret police (KHAD). Najibullah had established a reputation for brutal efficiency during his tenure as KHAD chief. As Prime Minister, Najibullah was ineffective and highly dependent on Soviet support. Undercut by deep-seated divisions within the PDPA, regime efforts to broaden its base of support proved futile.

The Geneva Accords and Their Aftermath

By the mid-1980s, the tenacious Afghan resistance movement—aided by the United States, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and others—was exacting a high price from the Soviets, both militarily within Afghanistan and by souring the U.S.S.R.'s relations with much of the Western and Islamic world. Informal negotiations for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan had been underway since 1982. In 1988, the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, with the United States and Soviet Union serving as guarantors, signed an agreement settling the major differences between them. The agreement, known as the Geneva accords, included five major documents, which, among other things, called for U.S. and Soviet noninterference in the internal affairs of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the right of refugees to return to Afghanistan without fear of persecution or harassment, and, most importantly, a timetable that ensured full Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan by February 15, 1989. About 14,500 Soviet and an estimated one million Afghan lives were lost between 1979 and the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Significantly, the mujahidin were party neither to the negotiations nor to the 1988 agreement and, consequently, refused to accept the terms of the accords. As a result, the civil war continued after the Soviet withdrawal, which was completed in February 1989.

Najibullah's regime, though failing to win popular support, territory, or

international recognition, was able to remain in power until 1992 but collapsed after the defection of Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostam and his Uzbek militia in March. However, when the victorious mujahidin entered Kabul to assume control over the city and the central government, a new round of internecine fighting began between the various militias, which had coexisted only uneasily during the Soviet occupation. With the demise of their common enemy, the militias' ethnic, clan, religious, and personality differences surfaced, and the civil war continued.

Seeking to resolve these differences, the leaders of the Peshawar-based mujahidin groups established an interim Islamic Jihad Council in mid-April 1992 to assume power in Kabul. Moderate leader Prof. Sibghatullah Mojaddedi was to chair the council for 2 months, after which a 10-member leadership council composed of mujahidin leaders and presided over by the head of the Jamiat-i-Islami, Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, was to be set up for 4 months. During this 6-month period, a Loya Jirga, or grand council of Afghan elders and notables, would convene and designate an interim administration which would hold power up to a year, pending elections.

But in May 1992, Rabbani prematurely formed the leadership council, undermining Mojaddedi's fragile authority. In June, Mojaddedi surrendered power to the Leadership Council, which then elected Rabbani as President. Nonetheless, heavy fighting broke out in August 1992 in Kabul between forces loyal to President Rabbani and rival factions, particularly those who supported Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami. After Rabbani extended his tenure in December 1992, fighting in the capital flared up in January and February 1993. The Islamabad Accord, signed in March 1993, which appointed Hekmatyar as Prime Minister, failed to have a lasting effect. A follow-up agreement, the Jalalabad Accord, called for the militias to be disarmed but was never fully implemented. Through 1993, Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami forces, allied with the Shi'a Hezb-i-Wahdat militia, clashed intermittently with Rabbani and Masood's Jamiat forces. Cooperating with Jamiat were militants of Sayyaf's Ittehad-i-Islami and, periodically, troops loyal to ethnic Uzbek strongman Abdul Rashid Dostam. On January 1, 1994, Dostam switched sides, precipitating large-scale fighting in Kabul and in northern provinces, which caused thousands of civilian casualties in Kabul and elsewhere and created a new wave of displaced persons and refugees. The country sank even further into anarchy, forces loyal to Rabbani and Masood, both ethnic Tajiks, controlled Kabul and much of the northeast, while local warlords exerted power over the rest of the country.

Rise and Fall of the Taliban

The Taliban had risen to power in the mid 90's in reaction to the anarchy and warlordism that arose after the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Many Taliban had been educated in madrassas in Pakistan and were largely from rural southern Pashtun backgrounds. In 1994, the Taliban developed enough strength to capture the city of Kandahar from a local warlord and proceeded to expand its control throughout Afghanistan, occupying Kabul in September 1996. By the end of 1998, the Taliban occupied about 90% of the country, limiting the opposition largely to a small mostly Tajik corner in the northeast and the Panjshir valley.

The Taliban sought to impose an extreme interpretation of Islam—based upon the rural Pashtun tribal code—on the entire country and committed massive human rights violations, particularly directed against women and girls. The Taliban also committed serious atrocities against minority populations, particularly the Shi'a Hazara ethnic group, and killed noncombatants in several well-documented instances. In 2001, as part of a drive against relics of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past, the Taliban destroyed two huge Buddha statues carved into a cliff face outside of the city of Bamiyan.

From the mid-1990s the Taliban provided sanctuary to Osama bin Laden, a Saudi national who had fought with the mujahideen resistance against the Soviets, and provided a base for his and other terrorist organizations. Bin Laden provided both financial and political support to the Taliban. Bin Laden and his Al-Qaida group were charged with the bombing of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam in 1998, and in August 1998 the United States launched a cruise missile attack against bin Laden's terrorist camp in southeastern Afghanistan. Bin Laden and Al-Qaida have acknowledged their responsibility for the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States.

Following the Taliban's repeated refusal to expel bin Laden and his group and end its support for international terrorism, the U.S. and its partners in the anti-terrorist coalition began a military campaign on October 7, 2001, targeting terrorist facilities and various Taliban military and political assets within Afghanistan. Under pressure from U.S. military and anti-Taliban forces, the Taliban disintegrated rapidly, and Kabul fell on November 13, 2001.

Afghan factions opposed to the Taliban met at a United Nations-sponsored conference in Bonn, Germany in December 2001 and agreed to restore stability and governance to Afghanistan—creating an interim government and establishing a process to move toward a permanent government. Under the "Bonn Agreement," an Afghan Interim Authority was formed and took office in Kabul on December 22, 2001 with Hamid Karzai as Chairman. The Interim Authority held power for approximately 6 months while preparing for a nationwide "Loya Jirga" (Grand Council) in mid-June 2002 that decided on the structure of a Transitional Authority. The Transitional Authority, headed by President Hamid Karzai, renamed the government as the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA). One of the TISA's primary achievements was the drafting of a constitution that was ratified by a Constitutional Loya

Jirga on January 4, 2004. On December 7, 2004, the country was renamed the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

On October 9, 2004, Afghanistan held its first national democratic presidential election. More than 8 million Afghans voted, 41% of whom were women. Hamid Karzai was announced as the official winner on November 3 and inaugurated on December 7 for a five-year term as Afghanistan's first democratically elected president.

An election was held on September 18, 2005 for the "Wolesi Jirga" (lower house) of Afghanistan's new bicameral National Assembly and for the country's 34 provincial councils. Turnout for the election was about 53% of the 12.5 million registered voters. The Afghan constitution provides for indirect election of the National Assembly's "Meshrano Jirga" (upper house) by the provincial councils and by reserved presidential appointments.

The first democratically elected National Assembly since 1969 was inaugurated on December 19, 2005. Younus Qanooni and Sigbatullah Mojadeddi were elected Speakers of the Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga, respectively.

Afghanistan will hold a series of elections in 2009-2010. Presidential and provincial council elections are scheduled for fall 2009. National Assembly elections are scheduled for summer 2010.

Elections for district and village councils may be held in 2010 as well. Unlike previous election cycles, the elections will be coordinated by the Afghanistan Independent Election Commission (IEC), with assistance from the UN.

The government's authority is growing, although its ability to deliver necessary social services remains largely dependent on funds from the international donor community. U.S. assistance for Afghanistan's reconstruction from fiscal year 2001 to the present totals over $32 billion.

Donors pledged continued assistance for the rebuilding of the country at the June 2008 international Afghanistan support conference in Paris. Overall, the international community has made multi-year reconstruction and security assistance pledges to Afghanistan totaling over $42 billion.

With international community support, including more than 40 countries participating in Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the government's capacity to secure Afghanistan's borders to maintain internal order is increasing. Responsibility for security for all of Afghanistan was transferred to ISAF in October 2006. As of November 2008, approximately 70,000 Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers and nearly 76,000 police, including border and civil order police, had received training.

In September 2008, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, made up of key donors and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), approved the Afghan Government's request to increase the size of the ANA from 86,000 to 134,000 soldiers. Reform of the army and police, to include training, is an extensive and ongoing process, and the U.S. is working with NATO and international partners to further develop Afghanistan's National Security Forces.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) has also helped to further establish the authority of the Afghan central government. The DDR program, after receiving 63,000 military personnel, stopped accepting additional candidates in June 2005. Disarmament and demobilization of all of these candidates were completed at the end of June 2006.

A follow-on program targeting illegal militias, the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG), was begun in 2005, under the joint auspices of Japan and the United Nations. The DIAG program is still ongoing.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Hamid KARZAI**
Vice Pres.: **Ahmad Zia MASOOD**
Vice Pres.: **Abdul Karim KHALILI**
Min. of Agriculture: **Obaidullah RAMIN**
Min. of Border & Tribal Affairs: **Mohammad Karim BRAHAWI**
Min. of Commerce & Industry: **Mohammad Amin FARHANG**
Min. of Communications: **Amirzai SANGIN**
Min. of Counternarcotics: **KHODAIDAD, Gen.**
Min. of Defense: **Abdul Rahim WARDAK**
Min. of Economy: **Mohammad Jalil SHAMS**
Min. of Education: **Mohammad Hanif ATMAR**
Min. of Energy & Water: **Ismail KHAN**
Min. of Finance: **Anwar Ul-Haq AHADY**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Rangin Dadfar SPANTA**
Min. of Hajj & Islamic Affairs: **Niamatullah SHAHRANI**
Min. of Health: **Sayed Mohammad Amin FATEMI**
Min. of Higher Education: **Mohammad Azam DADFAR**
Min. of Interior: **Ahmad Moqbel ZARAR**
Min. of Justice: **Mohammad Sarwar DANESH**
Min. of Martyrs, Disabled, & Social Affairs: **Nur Mohammad QARQIN**
Min. of Mines & Industries: **Ibrahim ADEL**
Min. of Public Works: **Surab Ali SAFARI**
Min. of Refugees & Repatriation: **Sher Mohammad ETEBARI**
Min. of Rural Rehabilitation & Development: **Ehsan ZIA**
Min. of Transportation: **Hamidullah QADERI**
Min. of Urban Development: **Yousef PASHTUN**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **Hasan Bano GHAZANFAR**
Min. of Youth & Culture: **Abdul Karim KHURAM**
National Security Adviser: **Zalmay RASSOUL, Dr.**
Governor, Central Bank: **Abdul Qadir FITRAT**
Ambassador to the US: **Said Tayeb JAWAD**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Zahir TANIN**

Afghanistan maintains an embassy in the United States at 2341 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-483-6410; email: info@embassyofafghanistan.org).

ECONOMY

In the 1930s, Afghanistan embarked on a modest economic development program. The government founded banks; introduced paper money; established a university; expanded primary, secondary, and technical schools; and sent students abroad for education.

Historically, there has been a dearth of information and reliable statistics about Afghanistan's economy. The 1979 Soviet invasion and ensuing civil war destroyed much of the country's limited infrastructure and disrupted normal patterns of economic activity. Gross domestic product fell substantially because of loss of labor and capital and disruption of trade and transport. Continuing internal strife hampered both domestic efforts at reconstruction as well as international aid efforts. However, Afghanistan's economy has grown at a fast pace since the 2001 fall of the Taliban, albeit from a low base. In 2007, GDP growth exceeded 7%. In 2008, 11.5% GDP growth is expected.

In June 2006, Afghanistan and the International Monetary Fund agreed on a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility program for 2006-2009 that focuses on maintaining macroeconomic stability, boosting growth, and reducing poverty. Afghanistan is also rebuilding its banking infrastructure through the Da Afghanistan National Central Bank. The central bank manages $2.8 billion in reserves. Sixteen banks have been established and more than 171 branches in over twenty provinces with $1.5 billion of total assets, a fourfold increase in three years.

Agriculture

The main source of income in the country is agriculture, and in the past, Afghanistan produced enough food and food products to provide for the people, as well as to create a surplus for export. The major food crops produced are: corn, rice, barley, wheat, vegetables, fruits, and nuts. In Afghanistan, industry is also based on agriculture, and pastoral raw materials. The major industrial crops are: cotton, tobacco, madder, castor beans, and sugar beets. The Afghan economy continues to be overwhelmingly agricultural, despite the fact that only 12% of its total land area is arable and less than 6% currently is cultivated. Agricultural production is constrained by an almost total dependence on erratic winter snows and spring rains for water; irrigation is primitive. Relatively little use is made of machines, chemical fertilizer, or pesticides. Overall agricultural production dramatically declined following severe drought as well as sustained fighting, instability in rural areas, and deteriorated infrastructure. The easing of the drought and the end of civil war produced the largest wheat harvest in 25 years during 2003. Wheat production was an estimated 58% higher than in 2002. However, the country still needs to import an estimated one million tons of wheat to meet its requirements. Millions of Afghans, particularly in rural areas, remain dependent on food aid.

Opium has become a ready source of cash for many Afghans, especially following the breakdown in central authority after the Soviet withdrawal, and opium-derived revenues probably constituted a major source of income for the two main factions during the civil war in the 1990s. Opium is easy to cultivate and transport. Afghanistan produced a record opium poppy crop in 2007, supplying 93% of the world's opium. Much of Afghanistan's opium production is refined into heroin and is either consumed by a growing regional addict population or exported, primarily to Western Europe.

Afghanistan has begun counter-narcotics programs, including the promotion of alternative development, public information campaigns, targeted eradication policies, interdiction of drug shipments, as well as law enforcement and justice reform programs. These programs were first implemented in late 2005. In August 2008, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimated that 157,000 hectares of opium poppy were cultivated, representing a 19% decrease from 2007 and 2% of Afghanistan's agricultural land.

Trade and Industry

Afghanistan is endowed with natural resources, including extensive deposits of natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, chromite, talc, barites, sulfur, lead, zinc, iron ore, salt, and precious and semiprecious stones. Unfortunately, ongoing instability in certain areas of the country, remote and rugged terrain, and an inadequate infrastructure and transportation network have made mining these resources difficult, and there have been few serious attempts to further explore or exploit them. The first significant investment in the mining sector is expected to commence in 2008, for the development of the Aynak cooper deposit in east-central Afghanistan. This project tender, awarded to a Chinese firm and valued at over $2.5 billion, is the largest international investment in Afghanistan to date. The Ministry of Mines also plans to move forward with oil, gas, and possibly iron ore tenders in 2008.

The most important resource has been natural gas, first tapped in 1967. At their peak during the 1980s, natural gas sales accounted for $300 million a year in export revenues (56% of the total). Ninety percent of these exports went to the Soviet Union to pay for imports and debts. However, during the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, Afghanistan's natural gas fields were capped to prevent sabotage by the mujahidin.

Restoration of gas production has been hampered by internal strife and the disruption of traditional trading relationships following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The government expects to pass a hydrocarbons law, developed with donor assistance, to regulate future exploration and development of Afghanistan's oil and gas fields.

With the law in place, Afghanistan hopes to begin using natural gas to produce electricity. Trade in smuggled goods into Pakistan once constituted a major source of revenue for Afghan regimes, including the Taliban, and still figures as an important element in the Afghan economy, although efforts are underway to formalize this trade and remove non-tariff barriers limiting its expansion.

Transportation

In the 1960s, the United States helped build a highway connecting Afghanistan's two largest cities. It began in Kabul and wound its way through five of the country's core provinces—skirting scores of isolated and otherwise inaccessible villages; passing through the ancient market city of Ghazni; descending through Qalat; and eventually reaching Kandahar, founded by Alexander the Great. More than 35% of the country's population lives within 50 kilometers of this highway, called, appropriately, modern Afghanistan's lifeline.

In 1978, the Soviet Union invaded and, after more than two decades of war, the Kabul-Kandahar highway was devastated, like much of the country's infrastructure. Little could move along the lifeline that had provided so many Afghans with their means of livelihood and their access to healthcare, education, markets, and places of worship.

Restoration of the highway has been an overriding priority of President Hamid Karzai. It is crucial to extending the influence of the new government. Without the highway link, Afghanistan's civil society and economy would remain moribund and prey to divisive forces. The economic development that the highway makes possible will help guarantee the unity and long-term security of the Afghan people. The restored highway is a visually impressive achievement whose symbolic importance should not be underestimated. It marks a palpable transition from the recent past and represents an important building block for the future. An official in Herat likened the ring road to veins and arteries that nourish and bring life to the "heart" of Kabul and the body of the country. The highway will not end in Kandahar: there are plans to complete the circuit, extending it to Herat and then arcing it back through Mazar-e-Sharif to Kabul. The route is sometimes referred to as the Ring Road. As of December 2006, 100% of the Ring Road had been funded, with plans for completion in 2009.

Landlocked Afghanistan has no functioning railways, but the Amu Darya (Oxus) River, which forms part of Afghanistan's border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, has barge traffic. During their occupation of the country, the Soviets completed a bridge across the Amu Darya. The bridge, reconstructed with U.S. assistance, reopened in 2007 and has opened vital trade routes between Afghanistan and its neighbors.

Afghanistan's national airline, Ariana, operates domestic and international routes, including flights to New Delhi, Islamabad, Dubai, Moscow, Istanbul, and Tehran. Civil aviation has been expanding rapidly and several private airlines now offer an alternative to Ariana and operate a domestic and international route network. The first, Kam Air, commenced domestic operations in November 2003. Many sections of Afghanistan's highway and regional road system are undergoing significant reconstruction, many with substantial U.S. assistance. The Asian Development Bank is also active in road development projects, mainly in the border areas with Pakistan.

Power

In 2001, Afghanistan produced 430 megawatts of electricity. Today the country produces 754 megawatts. International statistics maintained by the World Bank indicate the ratio of gross domestic product (GDP) growth to electrical production is approximately $1,000 to 300 kwh. The Afghan Government's current power plan sets a goal to deliver sufficient electricity to meet the needs of an economic growth rate of 9% per year. Additionally, the Afghan Government anticipates approximately 90% of urban businesses will have access to electrical power by the end of 2010. Finally, the plan's objective is to provide access to electricity to 65% of urban and 25% of rural households by the end of 2010.

Electricity distribution, rehabilitation, and infrastructure projects in all major urban centers are underway. Access of rural households to electricity has been increased by 7% and a renewable energy master plan has been approved. However, the lack of electrical power significantly affects the pace of development in Afghanistan. There is some potential for private funding of power-generation initiatives and business ventures. An example is the Aynak Copper Mine, where the Chinese developers are expected to build a power plant to provide energy for mining and processing needs.

Afghanistan is envisioned as the corridor for the Central Asian-South Asian (CASA) Regional Energy Market, intended to bring electric power from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan. Under CASA-1000, the first phase of the project, 1,000 megawatts will reach Peshawar in Pakistan and 300 megawatts will reach Kabul. The North East Power System (NEPS) is used to import power to Kabul from three Central Asian neighbors. Other energy projects include: efforts to rehabilitate hydropower plants at Kajaki, Naghlu, and Darunta; the transmission line from Pul-e Khumri to Kabul to be built by India; the transmission lines from Naghlu to Jalalabad/Methar Lam; and the transmission lines from Kabul to Gardez (including a substation for Gardez) to be funded by the Asian Development Bank. The required 33% increase per year in electrical connections to meet 2010 goals will likely not be realized due to a $1.2 billion gap in funding the national energy sector plan.

De-mining

Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world; an estimated 200,000 Afghans have

been disabled by the explosive remnants of war (ERW). Between March 2006 and March 2007 an average 62 civilians were injured each month. As of March 2007 the United Nations Mine Action Program for Afghanistan (MAPA), responsible for demining in Afghanistan, employed approximately 8,500 Afghan personnel through funding and oversight of several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) deployed throughout the country.

With Afghanistan Government support, and in line with its Ottawa Convention commitments, MAPA has destroyed Afghanistan's known stockpile of landmines and strives to make Afghanistan mine-free by 2013. Since 1989, MAPA has cleared about 1.2 billion square meters of land and destroyed millions of ERW, including over 300,000 anti-personnel landmines.

Training programs are also provided to educate the public about the threat and dangers of ERW. These combined efforts have reduced ERW victims by over 50% in the past six years. The United States remains the leading single donor for Afghanistan's humanitarian demining efforts.

Refugees and Internally Displaced People

Afghanistan has had the largest refugee repatriation in the world in the last 30 years. Over 5 million Afghan refugees have returned to the country since 2002. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR) leads the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in assisting its citizens in returning from exile. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) leads the international community's response, in coordination with the International Organization of Migration (IOM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Program (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and a number of other national and international NGOs and donors. As of November 2008, approximately 3 million Afghans remained in neighboring countries. The U.S. provided more than $500 million in support to Afghan refugees, returnees, and other conflict victims between September 2001 and November 2008.

Health

In response to a strategy outlined by the Ministry of Health, the international community is supporting the government in rebuilding the primary health-care system. Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the health sector has seen significant progress in development, with reductions in morbidity (disease) and mortality (death). In 2001, 8% of the Afghan population had access to basic health care; today, 79% have access to basic health services. In 2001, Afghanistan was ranked the world's worst in infant mortality; in 2007 Afghanistan's infant mortality rates were falling due to the efforts of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and its international partners. Since 2006, Afghanistan has reduced child mortality (five years and under) by 25%, saving 89,000 children in 2007. In 2006, 23,000 Afghans died from tuberculosis. In 2007, due to improved access to basic health care, only 12,000 Afghans died from this disease.

Immunization coverage has reached 83% of children under one year of age and additional progress has been made in updating routine immunizations for older children, adolescents, and adults. Finally, recent data showed that 70% of health facilities have at least one female provider on staff, compared to 45% during the Taliban era.

The MoPH developed the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS), a program which includes maternal and newborn health, child health and immunization, public nutrition, communicable diseases, mental health, disability, and supply of essential drugs. The program has recently increased its coverage of the population from 77% to 82%.

There has been a marked increase in health infrastructure; the number of health facilities providing the BPHS has increased to 897 (from 746), the number of health facilities providing comprehensive emergency obstetric care has also increased to 89 (from 79), and the number of health facilities within the government's program of Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses stands at 309 facilities located in eight provinces and 39 districts. Thirteen therapeutic feeding units have been established, and two additional midwifery schools were opened. Twelve mobile health facilities were established to provide basic health services to the nomadic Kuchi population. The number of health facilities providing direct observed treatment short courses (in the treatment of tuberculosis) increased to 55% (from 45%).

Approximately 40,000 insecticide bed nets were distributed to control the spread of malaria. Provincial teams in eight provinces were established to track the prevalence of avian flu. In total, 670 health facilities have been renovated or constructed.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Before the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan pursued a policy of neutrality and nonalignment in its foreign relations. After the December 1979 invasion, Afghanistan's foreign policy mirrored that of the Soviet Union. Most Western countries, including the United States, maintained small diplomatic missions in Kabul during the Soviet occupation. Repeated Taliban efforts to occupy Afghanistan's seat at the UN and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) were unsuccessful.

The fall of the Taliban in October 2001 opened a new chapter in Afghanistan's foreign relations. Afghanistan is now an active member of the international community, and has diplomatic relations with countries from around the world. In December 2002, the six nations that border Afghanistan signed a 'Good Neighbor' Declaration, in which they pledged to respect Afghanistan's independence and territorial integrity. In 2005 Afghanistan and its South Asia neighbors held the first

annual Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECC) promoting intra-regional relations and economic cooperation.

Pakistan

The 1978 Marxist coup strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan took the lead diplomatically in the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference in opposing the Soviet occupation. During the war against the Soviet occupation, Pakistan served as the primary logistical conduit for the Afghan resistance. Pakistan initially developed close ties to the Taliban regime, and extended recognition in 1997.

Pakistan dramatically altered its policy in support of coalition efforts to remove the Taliban after September 11, 2001. Afghanistan and Pakistan are engaged in dialogue to resolve bilateral friction. Pakistan is also seeking to repatriate its Afghan refugee population, which is concentrated mostly in the Northwestern Frontier Province.

Iran

Afghanistan's relations with Iran have fluctuated over the years, with periodic disputes over the water rights of the Helmand River as the main issue of contention. Following the Soviet invasion, which Iran opposed, relations deteriorated. Iran supported the cause of the Afghan resistance and provided financial and military assistance to rebel leaders who pledged loyalty to the Iranian vision of Islamic revolution. Following the emergence of the Taliban and their harsh treatment of Afghanistan's Shi'a minority, Iran stepped up assistance to the Northern Alliance. Relations with the Taliban deteriorated further in 1998 after Taliban forces seized the Iranian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif and executed Iranian diplomats. Since the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan's relations with Iran have improved, but they suffered a setback in spring 2007 with the deportation of 200,000 undocumented Afghans from Iran. Iran has been active in Afghan reconstruction efforts, particularly in the western portion of the country.

Russia

During the reign of the Taliban, Russia became increasingly disenchanted over the Taliban's support for Chechen rebels and its provision of sanctuary to terrorist groups active in Central Asia and in Russia itself. Moscow provided military assistance to the Northern Alliance. Since the fall of the Taliban, the Karzai government has improved relations with Russia.

Tajikistan

Afghanistan's relations with Tajikistan have been complicated by political upheaval and civil war in Tajikistan, which spurred some 100,000 Tajiks to seek refuge in Afghanistan in late 1992 and early 1993. Also disenchanted by the Taliban's harsh treatment of Afghanistan's Tajik minority, Tajikistan facilitated assistance to the Northern Alliance. The Karzai government has sought to establish closer ties with its northern neighbor in order to capitalize on the potential economic benefits of increased trade. The 2007 opening of a U.S.-funded bridge across the Amu Darya river has facilitated bilateral trade flows between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

UN Efforts

The UN has played an important role in Afghanistan for more than 20 years, assisting in the repatriation of Afghan refugees and providing humanitarian aid. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), launched in October 2001, was instrumental in helping restore peace and stability in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, organizing the Afghan presidential elections held in October 2004 and National Assembly elections held in 2005.

The UN Security Council has now given UNAMA a leading role in international efforts to stabilize and help develop Afghanistan. UN Security Council Resolution 1806 adopted in March 2008 added a number of crucial tasks to the UN mission's overall function to promote peace and stability. A new Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Mr. Kai Eide of Norway, was appointed. Since the June 2008 Paris International Conference in Support of Afghanistan, the UN mission is leading international efforts to help the Government of Afghanistan implement the Afghan National Development Strategy. UNAMA website: http://www.unama-afg.org.

U.S.-AFGHAN RELATIONS

The first extensive American contact with Afghanistan was made by Josiah Harlan, an adventurer from Pennsylvania who was an adviser in Afghan politics in the 1830s and reputedly inspired Rudyard Kipling's story "The Man Who Would be King." After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1934, the U.S. policy of helping developing nations raise their standard of living was an important factor in maintaining and improving U.S.-Afghan ties. From 1950 to 1979, U.S. foreign assistance provided Afghanistan with more than $500 million in loans, grants, and surplus agricultural commodities to develop transportation facilities, increase agricultural production, expand the educational system, stimulate industry, and improve government administration.

In the 1950s, the U.S. declined Afghanistan's request for defense cooperation but extended an economic assistance program focused on the development of Afghanistan's physical infrastructure—roads, dams, and power plants. Later, U.S. aid shifted from infrastructure projects to technical assistance programs to help develop the skills needed to build a modern economy. The Peace Corps was active in Afghanistan between 1962 and 1979.

After the April 1978 coup, relations deteriorated. In February 1979, U.S. Ambassador Adolph "Spike" Dubs

was murdered in Kabul after Afghan security forces burst in on his kidnapers. The U.S. then reduced bilateral assistance and terminated a small military training program. All remaining assistance agreements were ended after the December 1979 Soviet invasion. Following the Soviet invasion, the United States supported diplomatic efforts to achieve a Soviet withdrawal. U.S. contributions to the refugee program in Pakistan played a major part in efforts to assist Afghans in need. This cross-border humanitarian assistance program aimed to increase Afghan self-sufficiency and help Afghans resist Soviet attempts to drive civilians out of the rebel-dominated countryside. During the period of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the U.S. provided about $3 billion in military and economic assistance to Afghans and the resistance movement.

After the fall of the Taliban, the U.S. supported the emergence of a broad-based government, representative of all Afghans, and actively encouraged a UN role in the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan. The U.S. has made a long-term commitment to help Afghanistan rebuild itself after years of war. The U.S. and others in the international community currently provide resources and expertise to Afghanistan in a variety of areas, including humanitarian relief and assistance, capacity-building, security needs, counter-narcotic programs, and infrastructure projects. The U.S. also supports the Afghan Government in its efforts to establish a framework for a vibrant civil society, one that emphasizes democratic principles through a rule of law and creates accountable and transparent forms of government. The United States and its international partners remain committed to helping Afghans realize their vision for a country that is stable, democratic, and economically successful, and to an Afghan Government committed to the protection of women's rights, human rights, and religious tolerance.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 16, 2008

Country Description: Afghanistan has made significant progress since the Taliban were deposed in 2001, but it still faces daunting challenges, including defeating terrorists and insurgents, dealing with years of severe drought, recovering from over two decades of civil strife, and rebuilding a shattered physical, economic and political infrastructure. Coalition and NATO forces under ISAF work in partnership with Afghan security forces to combat Taliban and al-Qaida elements who continue to seek to terrorize the population and challenge the government. The ISAF Coalition-Afghan partnership contained the spring offensive planned by insurgent forces, who have turned instead to isolated terrorist attacks, including suicide bombings and kidnappings. President Hamid Karzai was sworn in as President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on December 7, 2004. He and his ministers work with the parliament, which first convened in late 2005, to establish policies and procedures to deal with the array of issues any government must address, as well as Afghanistan's unique challenges. The government is in the process of developing a more effective police force, a more robust legal system, and sub-national institutions that work in partnership with traditional and local leaders to meet the needs of the population. The U.S. works closely with the international community to provide coordinated support for these efforts. The recent Afghanistan-hosted Peace Jirga with Pakistan resulted in a commitment to cooperate in combating terrorism, facilitate the return of Afghan refugees, and support regional economic activity.

Entry Requirements: A passport and valid visa are required to enter and exit Afghanistan. Afghan entry visas are not available at Kabul International Airport. American citizens who arrive without a visa are subject to confiscation of their passport and face heavy fines and difficulties in retrieving their passport and obtaining a visa, as well as possible deportation from the country. Americans arriving in the country via military air usually have considerable difficulties if they choose to depart Afghanistan on commercial air, because their passports are not stamped to show that they entered the country legally. Those coming on military air should move quickly after arrival to legalize their status if there is any chance they will depart the country on anything other than military air. Visit the Embassy of Afghanistan web site at http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org for the most current visa information. The Consular office of the Embassy of Afghanistan is located at 2233 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Suite 216, Washington, DC 20007, phone number 202-298-9125.

Safety and Security: The latest Travel Warning for Afghanistan states clearly that the security situa-

tion remains critical for American citizens. There are remnants of the former Taliban regime and the terrorist al-Qaida network in various parts of Afghanistan, as well as narcotraffickers and other groups that oppose the strengthening of a democratic government. Those groups aim to weaken or bring down the new Government of Afghanistan, and often, to drive Westerners out of the country. They do not hesitate to use violence to achieve their aims. Terrorist actions may include, but are not limited to, suicide operations, bombings—including vehicle-borne explosives and improvised explosive devices—assassinations, carjackings, rocket attacks, assaults or kidnappings. There is an ongoing threat to kidnap U.S. citizens and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) workers throughout the country. Since the beginning of 2007, more than three dozen foreigners have been kidnapped and held for extended periods of time, and six foreigners have been kidnapped and murdered; foreigners and Afghan nationals have been killed or injured in improvised explosive device attacks. Kabul continues to experience suicide bombers attacking Afghan government personnel as well as international civilians and military personnel. Riots—sometimes violent—have occurred in response to various political or other issues. Crime, including violent crime, remains a significant problem. Official Americans' use of the Kabul-Jalalabad road and other roads throughout the country is often restricted or completely curtailed because of security concerns. The country faces a difficult period in the near term, and American citizens could be targeted or placed at risk by unpredictable local events. There is also a real danger from the presence of millions of unexploded land mines and other ordnance. Terrorists continue to use roadside or vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. Private Americans should not come to Afghanistan unless they have made arrangements in advance to address security concerns.

The absence of records for ownership of property, differing laws from various regimes and the chaos that comes from decades of civil strife have left property issues in great disorder. Afghan-Americans returning to Afghanistan to recover property, or Americans coming to the country to engage in business, have become involved in complicated real estate disputes and have faced threats of retaliatory action, including kidnapping for ransom and death. Large parts of Afghanistan are extremely isolated, with few roads, mostly in poor condition, irregular cell phone signals, and none of the basic physical infrastructure found in Kabul or the larger cities. Americans traveling in these areas who find themselves in trouble may not even have a way to communicate their difficulties to the outside world.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Travel Warning for Afghanistan, and the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: A large portion of the Afghan population is unemployed, and many among the unemployed have moved to urban areas. Basic services are rudimentary or non-existent. These factors may directly contribute to crime and lawlessness. Diplomats and international relief workers have reported incidents of robberies and household burglaries as well as kidnappings and assault. Any American citizen who enters Afghanistan should remain vigilant for possible banditry, including violent attacks.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Well-equipped medical facilities are few and far between throughout Afghanistan. European and American medicines are available in limited quantities and may be expensive or difficult to locate. There is a shortage of basic medical supplies. Basic medicines manufactured in Iran, Pakistan, and India are available, but their reliability can be questionable. Several western-style private clinics have opened in Kabul: the DK-German Medical Diagnostic Center (www.medical-kabul.com), Acomet Family Hospital (www.afghancomet.com), and CURE International Hospital (ph. 079-883-830) offer a variety of basic and routine-type care; Americans seeking treatment should request American or Western health practitioners.

Afghan public hospitals should be avoided. Individuals without government licenses or even medical degrees often operate private clinics; there is no public agency that monitors their operations. Travelers will not be able to find Western-trained medical personnel in most parts of the country outside of Kabul, although there are some international aid groups temporarily providing basic medical assistance in various cities and villages. For any medical treatment, payment is required in advance. Commercial medical evacuation capability from Afghanistan is limited and could take days to arrange. Even medevac companies that claim to service the world may not agree to come to Afghanistan. Those with medevac insurance should confirm with the insurance provider that it will be able to provide

medevac assistance to this country. There have been outbreaks of Avian Influenza in poultry in Afghanistan, to include the areas of Nangahar, Laghman, and Wardak provinces, and in the city of Kabul, however, there have been no reported cases of the H5N1 virus in humans. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Afghanistan. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB. http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Afghanistan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

All drivers face the potential danger of encountering land mines that may have been planted on or near roadways. An estimated 5-7 million landmines and large quantities of unexploded ordnance exist throughout the countryside and alongside roads, posing a danger to travelers. Robbery and crime are also prevalent on highways outside of Kabul. The transportation system in Afghanistan is marginal, although the international community is constructing modern highways and provincial roads. Vehicles are poorly maintained, often overloaded, and traffic laws are not enforced. Vehicular traffic is chaotic and must contend with numerous pedestrians, bicyclists and animals. Many urban streets have large potholes and are not well lit. Rural roads are not paved.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Afghanistan, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Afghanistan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

U.S. Government personnel are not authorized to travel on Ariana Afghan Airlines or any other airline falling under the oversight of the Government of Afghanistan's Civil Aviation Authority, owing to safety concerns; however, U.S. Government personnel are permitted to travel on international flights operated by airlines from countries whose civil aviation authorities meet international aviation safety standards for the oversight of their air carrier operations under the FAA's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program.

Special Circumstances: Because of the poor infrastructure in Afghanistan, access to banking facilities is limited and unreliable. Afghanistan's economy operates on a "cash-only" basis for most transactions. Credit card transactions are not available. International bank transfers are limited. Some ATM machines exist at Standard Charter Bank and Afghan International Bank (AIB) in the Wazir Akbar Khan neighborhood of Kabul, but some travelers have complained of difficulties using them.

International communications are difficult. Local telephone networks do not operate reliably. Most people rely on satellite or cellular telephone communications even to make local calls. Cellular phone service is available locally in Kabul and some other cities. Injured or distressed foreigners could face long delays before being able to communicate their needs to family or colleagues outside of Afghanistan. Internet access through local service providers is limited.

In addition to being subject to all Afghan laws, U.S. citizens who are also citizens of Afghanistan may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Afghan citizens. U.S. citizens who are also Afghan nationals do not require visas for entry into Afghanistan. The Embassy of Afghanistan issues a letter confirming your nationality for entry into Afghanistan. However, you may wish to obtain a visa as some Afghan-Americans have experienced difficulties at land border crossings because they do not have a visa in their passport. For additional information on dual nationality in general, see the Consular Affairs home page for our dual nationality flyer. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passport with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. As stated in the Travel Warning, consular assistance for American citizens in Afghanistan is limited.

Islam provides the foundation of Afghanistan's customs, laws and practices. Foreign visitors—men and women—are expected to remain sensitive to the Islamic culture and not dress in a revealing or provocative manner, including the wearing of sleeveless shirts and blouses, halter-tops and shorts. Women in particular, especially when traveling outside of Kabul, may want to ensure that their tops have long sleeves and cover their collarbone and waistband, and that their pants/skirts cover their ankles. Almost all women in Afghanistan cover their hair in public; American women visitors should carry scarves for this purpose. Afghan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importa-

tion into or export from Afghanistan of items such as firearms, alcoholic beverages, religious materials, antiquities, medications, and printed materials. American travelers have faced fines and/or confiscation of items considered antiquities upon exiting Afghanistan.

It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Afghanistan in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements. Travelers en route to Afghanistan may transit countries that have restrictions on firearms, including antique or display models. If you plan to take firearms or ammunition to another country, you should contact officials at that country's embassy and those that you will be transiting to learn about their regulations and fully comply with those regulations before traveling. Please consult http://www.customs.gov for information on importing firearms into the United States.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law.

Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Afghanistan's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. During the last several years, there have been incidents involving the arrest and/or detention of U.S. citizens. Arrested Americans have faced periods of detention—sometimes in difficult conditions—while awaiting trial. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Afghanistan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Another potentially-sensitive activity is proselytizing. Although the Afghan Constitution allows the free exercise of religion, proselytizing may be viewed as contrary to the beliefs of Islam and considered harmful to society. Proselytizing may lead to arrest and/or deportation. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Afghanistan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Afghanistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Kabul on Great Massoud Road, local phone number 0700-108-001 or 0700-108-002, and for emergencies after hours 0700-201-908. The web site is http://kabul.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2007

The Department of State has occasionally received inquiries from American citizens concerned about the plight of the children of Afghanistan and wondering about the possibility of adopting them. In general, intercountry adoptions are private civil legal matters governed by the laws of the children's home country, which has the primary responsibility and jurisdiction for deciding what would be in the children's best interests. The U.S. Embassy in Kabul has confirmed that Afghan law, which is based on Islamic Shari'a law, does not currently permit full adoptions as they are generally understood in the United States.

Afghanistan does grant a more limited arrangement akin to guardianship; however, even if an Afghan court or other Afghan authority were to grant a U.S. citizen guardianship rights for an Afghan child, the child would likely be unable to immigrate to the United States, unless the citizen could establish both that the child qualifies as an "orphan" as defined in section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Immigration and Nationality Act and, under Afghan law, the "guardianship" order gave the citizen authority not only to care for the child but to bring the United States for the specific purpose of the child's adoption in the United States. Since Afghan law does not permit adoption, it is not clear that an Afghan guardianship order could give this authority.

The U.S. and international media have occasionally reported on the difficult situation faced by Afghanistan's children, and it is completely understandable that some American citizens want to respond to such stories by offering to open their homes and adopt these children in need. However, it is a generally agreed international principle that uprooting children during a war, natural disaster or other crisis may in fact exacerbate the children's situation. It can be extremely difficult in such circumstances to determine whether children who appear to be orphans truly are. It is also not uncommon in a hostile situation for parents to send their children out of the area, or for families to become separated during an evacuation. Even when it can be demonstrated that children are indeed orphaned or abandoned, they are often taken in by other relatives. Staying with relatives in extended family units is generally a better solution than uprooting a child completely. There are still ways in which U.S. citizens can help the children of Afghanistan. Many American non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Afghanistan say that what is needed most at this time are financial contributions. Individuals who wish to assist can do the most good by making a financial contribution to an established NGO that will be well placed to respond to Afghanistan's most urgent needs, including those related to the country's's children.

The Department of State continues to strongly warn U.S. citizens against travel to Afghanistan, which remains very dangerous.

Travel Warning

September 10, 2008

This Travel Warning provides updated information on the security situation in Afghanistan. The security threat to all American citizens in Afghanistan remains critical. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Afghanistan issued February 6, 2008.

The Department of State continues to strongly warn U.S. citizens against travel to Afghanistan. No part of Afghanistan should be considered immune from violence, and the potential exists throughout the country for hostile acts, either targeted or random, against American and other Western nationals at any time. Remnants of the former Taliban regime and the terrorist al-Qa'ida network, and other groups hostile to NATO-led military operations remain active. There is an on-going threat to kidnap and assassinate U.S. citizens and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) workers throughout the country. Afghan authorities have a limited ability to maintain order and ensure the security of citizens and visitors. Travel in all areas of Afghanistan is unsafe due to military operations, landmines, banditry, armed rivalry among political and tribal groups, and the possibility of terrorist attacks, including attacks using vehicular or other improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The security environment remains volatile and unpredictable. Kabul, in particular has seen a rise in militant attacks, including rocket attacks, vehicle borne IEDs, and suicide bombings. The number of attacks in the south and southwestern areas of the country continues to be high as a result of insurgent and drug-related activity, but no part of the country is immune from attacks. Over 100 attacks were reported in Kabul over the past year, although many additional attacks were thwarted by Afghan and coalition forces. An additional 4,400 attacks occurred nationwide during the same timeframe. Incidents have occurred with some frequency on the Kabul-Jalalabad Road (commonly called Jalalabad Road). The road's use is highly restricted for Embassy employees and, if the security situation warrants, sometimes is curtailed completely. Foreigners throughout the country continue to be targeted for violent attacks and kidnappings, whether motivated by terrorism or criminal activity. In January, gunmen attacked the Serena Hotel and killed eight people, including an American contractor and a Norwegian journalist. In April, an assassination attempt against Afghan President Karzai showed the continued desire of the insurgency to destabilize the Afghan government. The July 2008 bombing of the Indian Embassy in downtown Kabul, near many western embassies and Afghan Government institutions, demonstrated the ability of the insurgents to undertake assaults within Kabul itself. Rocket fire and rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attacks have occurred with increasing frequency. In August, three female western non-governmental organization (NGO) employees, along with their male Afghan driver, were gunned down as they traveled south of Kabul. An American NGO worker and her driver were kidnapped in Kandahar in January. Other Americans were kidnapped in Afghanistan in February and August 2008.

Riots and incidents of civil disturbance can and do occur, often without warning. American citizens should avoid rallies and demonstrations; even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. Carjackings, robberies, and violent crime remain a problem. American citizens involved in property disputes—a common legal problem—have reported that their adversaries in the disputes have threatened their lives. Americans who find themselves in such situations cannot assume that either local law enforcement or the U.S. Embassy will be able to assist them.

From time to time depending on current security conditions, the U.S. Embassy places areas frequented by foreigners off limits to its personnel. Potential target areas include key national or international government establishments, international organizations and other locations with expatriate personnel, and public areas popular with the expatriate community. Private U.S. citizens are strongly urged to heed these restrictions as well and may obtain the latest information by consulting the embassy website below.

The United States Embassy's ability to provide emergency consular services to U.S. citizens in Afghanistan is limited, particularly for those persons outside the capital. U.S. citizens who choose to visit or remain in Afghanistan despite this Travel Warning are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Afghanistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. Registering makes it easier for the Embassy to contact Americans in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Great Masood Road between Radio Afghanistan and the Ministry of Public Health (the road is also known as Bebe Mahro (Airport Road), Kabul. The phone number is +93-70-108-001 or +93-70-108-002; the Consular Section can be reached for after-hours emergencies at +93-70-201-908. The Embassy website is http://afghanistan.usembassy.gov. Updated information on travel and security in Afghanistan may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For further information, please consult the Country Specific Information for Afghanistan and the current Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at http://travel.state.gov.



ALBANIA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Albania

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 28,748 sq. km. (slightly larger than Maryland).

Cities: Capital—Tirana (600,000, 2005 est.). Others—Durres (200,000, 2005 est.), Shkoder (81,000, 2005 est.), Vlore (72,000, 2005 est.).

Terrain: Situated in the southwestern region of the Balkan Peninsula, Albania is predominantly mountainous but flat along its coastline with the Adriatic Sea.

Climate: Mild, temperate; cool, wet winters; dry, hot summers.

People

Population: (2007 est.) 3,600,523.

Growth rate: (2007 est.) 0.529%.

Ethnic groups: (2004 est., Government of Albania) Albanian 98.6%, Greeks 1.17%, others 0.23% (Vlachs, Roma, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Balkan Egyptians, and Bulgarians).

Religions: Muslim (Sunni and Bektashi) 70%, Albanian Orthodox 20%, and Roman Catholic 10%.

Languages: Albanian.

Health: (2007 est.) Life expectancy—males 74.95 years; females 80.53 years. Infant mortality rate—20.02 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: Adopted by popular referendum November 28, 1998.

Independence: November 28, 1912 (from the Ottoman Empire).

Government branches: Executive—President (chief of state), Prime Minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—Unicameral People's Assembly or Kuvendi Populloor—140 seats (100 members elected by direct popular vote; 40 by proportional vote; all serve 4-year terms). Judicial—Constitutional Court, High Court, multiple district and appeals courts.

Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Political parties: Democratic Party of Albania (PD); Albanian Socialist Party (PS); Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI); Albanian Republican Party (PR); Demo-Christian Party (PDK); Union for Human Rights Party (PBDNJ); New Democracy Party (PDR); Social Democratic Party (PSD); Social Democracy Party (PDS).

Economy

Real GDP growth: (2007): 6%; 6% (2008 forecast).

Inflation rate: (2007): 3% (average year-on-year annual).

Unemployment rate: (Q2 2007): 13.5%.

Natural resources: Oil, gas, coal, iron, copper and chrome ores.

GEOGRAPHY

Albania shares a border with Greece to the south/southeast, Macedonia to the east, Serbia (including Kosovo) to the northeast, and Montenegro to the northwest. Western Albania lies along the Adriatic and Ionian Sea coastlines. Albania's primary seaport is Durres, which handles 90% of its maritime cargo.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Over 90% of Albania's people are ethnic Albanian, and Albanian is the official language. Religions include Muslim (Sunni and Bektashi), Albanian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic.

Scholars believe the Albanian people are descended from a non-Slavic, non-Turkic group of tribes known as Illyrians, who arrived in the Balkans around 2000 BC. After falling under Roman authority in 165 BC, Albania was controlled nearly continuously by a succession of foreign powers until the mid-20th century, with only brief periods of self-rule.

Following the split of the Roman Empire in 395, the Byzantine Empire established control over present-day Albania. In the 11th century, Byzan-



tine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus made the first recorded reference to a distinct area of land known as Albania and to its people.

The Ottoman Empire ruled Albania from 1385-1912. During this time, much of the population converted to the Islamic faith, and Albanians also emigrated to Italy, Greece, Egypt and Turkey. Although its control was briefly disrupted during the 1443-78 revolt, led by Albania's national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu, the Ottomans eventually reasserted their dominance. The League of Prizren (1878) promoted the idea of an Albanian nation-state and established the modern Albanian alphabet, updating a language that survived the hundreds of years of Ottoman rule despite being outlawed. By the early 20th century, the weakened Ottoman Empire was no longer able to suppress Albanian nationalism. Following the conclusion of the First Balkan War, Albanians issued the Vlore Proclamation of November 28, 1912, declaring independence and the Great Powers established Albania's borders in 1913. Albania's territorial integrity was confirmed at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, after U.S. President Woodrow Wilson dismissed a plan by the European powers to divide Albania among its neighbors.

During the Second World War, Albania was occupied first by Italy (1939-43) and then by Germany (1943-44). After the war, Communist Party leader Enver Hoxha, through a combination of ruthlessness and strategic alliances, managed to preserve Albania's territorial integrity during the next 40 years, but exacted a terrible price from the population, which was subjected to purges, shortages, repression of civil and political rights, a total ban on religious observance, and increased isolation. Albania adhered to a strict Stalinist philosophy, eventually withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact in 1968 and alienating its final remaining ally, China, in 1978.

Following Hoxha's death in 1985 and the subsequent fall of Communism in 1991, Albanian society struggled to overcome its historical isolation and underdevelopment. During the initial transition period, the Albanian Government sought closer ties with the West in order to improve economic conditions and introduced basic democratic reforms, including a multiparty system.

In 1992, after the sweeping electoral victory of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha became the first democratically elected President of Albania. Berisha began a more deliberate program of economic and democratic reform but progress on these issues stalled in the mid-1990s, due to political gridlock. At the same time, unscrupulous investment companies

defrauded investors all over Albania using pyramid schemes. In early 1997, several of these pyramid schemes collapsed, leaving thousands of people bankrupt, disillusioned, and angry. Armed revolts broke out across the country, leading to the near-total collapse of government authority. During this time, Albania's already inadequate and antiquated infrastructure suffered tremendous damage, as people looted public works for building materials. Weapons depots all over the country were raided. The anarchy of early 1997 alarmed the world and prompted intensive international mediation.

A UN Multinational Protection Force restored order, and an interim national reconciliation government oversaw the general elections of June 1997, which returned the Socialists and their allies to power at the national level. President Berisha resigned, and the Socialists elected Rexhep Meidani as President of the Republic.

During the transitional period of 1997-2002, a series of short-lived Socialist-led governments succeeded one another as Albania's fragile democratic structures were strengthened. Additional political parties formed, media outlets expanded, non-governmental organizations and business associations developed. In 1998, Albanians ratified a new constitution via popular referendum, guaranteeing the rule of law and the protection of fundamental human rights and religious freedom. Fatos Nano, Chairman of the Socialist Party, emerged as Prime Minister in July 2002.

On July 24, 2002, Alfred Moisiu was sworn in as President of the Republic. A nonpartisan figure, he was elected as a consensus candidate of the ruling and opposition parties. The peaceful transfer of power from President Meidani to President Moisiu was the result of an agreement between the parties to engage each other within established parliamentary structures. This "truce" ushered in a new period of political stability in Albania, making possible significant progress in democratic and economic reforms, rule of law initiatives, and the development of Albania's relations with its neighbors and the U.S. The "truce" between party leaders began to fray in summer 2003 and progress on economic and political reforms suffered noticeably due to political infighting. The municipal elections of 2003 and national elections of 2005 were an improvement over past years, adding to the consolidation of democracy despite the continued presence of administrative errors and inaccuracies in voter lists.

In 2005, the Democratic Party and its allies returned to power, pledging to fight crime and corruption, decrease the size and scope of government, and promote economic growth. Their leader, Sali Berisha, was sworn in as Prime Minister on September 11, 2005.

Since the election, Prime Minister Berisha's government has made the fight against corruption and organized crime a priority, although the former has met with limited success. The opposition has criticized the government's approach to fighting corruption and crime as unconstitutional and an attempt to undermine independent institutions. While previously relations between the government and opposition SP party were characterized as antagonistic, both sides have at times shown willingness to work together to achieve major policy objectives, such as the constitutional reforms of early 2008.

Another politically contentious process was the pre-electoral period prior to the 2007 local elections. Although the February 18, 2007 local elections were generally peaceful and democratic, over-politicized debate during the preceding months resulted in procedural and administrative problems during the conduct of the elections. A major positive step forward was the performance of the police force.

The fragility of the Albanian electoral system was tested again during the parliamentary by-election in zone 26 (Shijak) on March 11, 2007. The left-wing opposition parties withdrew their commissioners from the polling stations and the counting center, in spite of prior concessions from the Central Elections Commission (CEC) to the opposition's demands. Opposition commissioners left and took with them one of the seals that mark the ballots. By midday, the opposition candidate also announced his withdrawal from the parliamentary race. However, the right of citizens to vote prevailed and the process continued thanks to the technical arrangements of the CEC. The only visible sign of violence was the wounding of a Democratic Party commissioner, who was fired upon by a militant.

Both elections were an indication of lack of political will to cooperate and of the imminent need for a comprehensive electoral reform of the present Albanian electoral system.

On July 20, 2007 President Bamir Topi was elected within Parliament after six members of the opposition coalition broke ranks to vote for his candidacy. Out of 90 deputies present at the session, 85 voted for Topi, while Neritan Ceka, head of the opposition Democratic Alliance party, won five votes. Topi, 50, a former agriculture minister, now succeeds President Alfred Moisiu for a five-year mandate.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The unicameral People's Assembly (Kuvendi Popullor) consists of 140 seats, 100 of which are determined by direct popular vote. The remaining seats are distributed by proportional representation. All members serve 4-year terms. The Speaker of Parliament (Jozefina Topalli) has two deputies, who along with eight permanent parliamentary commissions assist in the process of legislating Albanian affairs.

The President is the head of state and elected by a three-fifths majority vote of all Assembly members. The President serves a term of 5 years with the right to one re-election. Although the position is largely ceremonial, the

Constitution gives the President authority to appoint and dismiss some high-ranking civil servants in the executive and judicial branches, and this authority can have political implications. The President is also commander in chief of the armed forces, and chairs the National Security Commission. The current President's term expires on July 23, 2012.

The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and approved by a simple majority of all members of the Assembly. The Prime Minister serves as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (cabinet), which consists of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and other ministers. Members of the Council of Ministers are nominated by the Prime Minister, decreed by the President, and approved by a parliamentary vote.

Albania's civil law system is similar to that of other European countries. The court structure consists of a Constitutional Court, a Supreme Court, and multiple appeal and district courts. The Constitutional Court is comprised of nine members appointed by the Assembly for one 9-year term. The Constitutional Court interprets the Constitution, determines the constitutionality of laws, and resolves disagreements between local and federal authorities. The Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal and consists of 11 members appointed by the President with the consent of the Assembly for 9-year terms. The President chairs the High Council of Justice, which is responsible for appointing and dismissing other judges. The High Court of Justice is comprised of 15 members—the President of the Republic, the Chairman of the High Court, the Minister of Justice, three members elected by the Assembly, and nine judges of all levels elected by the National Judicial Conference.

The remaining courts are divided into three jurisdictions: criminal, civil, and military. There are no jury trials under the Albanian system of justice. A college of three judges, who are sometimes referred to as a "jury" by the Albanian press, render court verdicts.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Bamir TOPI**
Prime Min.: **Sali BERISHA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Gazmend OKETA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Jemin GJANA**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Ylli PANGO**
Min. of Defense: **Gazmend OKETA**
Min. of Economy & Energy: **Genc RULI**
Min. of Education & Science: **Genc POLLO**
Min. of Environment, Forests, & Waters: **Lufter XHUVELI**
Min. of Finance: **Ridvan BODE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Lulzim BASHA**
Min. of Health: **Nard NDOKA**
Min. of Integration: **Majlinda BREGU**
Min. of Interior: **Bujar NISHANI**
Min. of Justice: **Enkelejd ALIBEAJ**
Min. of Labor, Social Issues, & Equal Opportunity: **Koco BARKA**
Min. of Transportation: **Sokol OLLDASHI**
Governor, Bank of Albania: **Ardian FULLANI**
Ambassador to the US: **Aleksander SALLABANDA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Adrian NERITANI**

ECONOMY

Albania remains one of the poorest countries in Europe. According to the Bank of Albania, per capita income was U.S. $3,500 in 2008. The official unemployment rate is 13.5%, and 18.5% of the population lives below the poverty line according to the World Bank's 2005 Poverty Assessment. Almost 60% of all workers are employed in the agricultural sector, although the construction and service industries have been expanding recently, the latter boosted significantly by ethnic Albanian tourists from throughout the Balkans. The GDP is comprised of agriculture (approximately 24%), industry (approximately 13%), service sector (approximately 39%), transport and communication (12%), construction (11%), and remittances from Albanian workers abroad—mostly in Greece and Italy (approximately 12.8%).

Albania was the last of the central and eastern European countries to embark upon democratic and free market reforms. Further, Albania started from a comparatively disadvantaged position, due to Hoxha's catastrophic economic policies. Transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-orientated system has been almost as difficult for Albania as the country's communist period.

The democratically elected government that assumed office in April 1992 launched an ambitious economic reform program meant to halt economic deterioration and put the country on the path toward a market economy. Key elements included price and exchange system liberalization, fiscal consolidation, monetary restraint, and a firm income policy. These were complemented by a comprehensive package of structural reforms, including privatization, enterprise and financial sector reform, and creation of the legal framework for a market economy and private sector activity.

Results of Albania's efforts were initially encouraging. Led by the agricultural sector, real GDP grew, and Albania's currency, the lek, stabilized. The speed and vigor of private entrepreneurial response to Albania's opening and liberalizing was better than expected. Beginning in 1995, however, progress stalled. The collapse of the infamous pyramid schemes of the 1990s and the instability that followed were a tremendous setback, from which Albania's economy continues to recover.

In recent years the Albanian economy has improved, although infrastructure development and major reforms in areas such as tax collection, property laws, and for improving the business climate in general are proceeding slowly. Between 2003-2007, Albania experienced an average 5.5% annual growth in GDP. Fiscal and monetary discipline has kept inflation relatively low, averaging roughly 2.5% per year between 2004-2006. In 2007, inflation increased to 3%, still within the target range set by the Bank of Albania. Albania's public debt reached 54.1% of GDP in 2007, and the growing trade deficit

was estimated at 22% of GDP in 2007. Economic reform has also been hampered by Albania's very large informal economy, which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates equals 50% of GDP.

Albania's trade imbalance is severe. In 2007, Albanian trade had U.S. $4.15 billion in imports, and U.S. $1 billion in exports. Albania has concluded Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Macedonia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia, and Moldova. Albania also previously established an FTA with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which is expected to transfer to the Republic of Kosovo sometime in 2009. In April 2006, these bilateral agreements were replaced by a multiregional agreement that entered into force in May 2007 and that is based on the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) model. However, combined trade with all these countries constitutes a small percentage of Albania's trade, while trade with EU member states (mainly Greece and Italy) accounts for nearly 68%. U.S. two-way trade with Albania is very low. In 2006, U.S. exports to Albania totaled $46.6 million. U.S. imports, during the same time period, totaled $3.44 million, making the U.S. the 17th overall trade partner of Albania. However, there are some discrepancies between U.S. and Albanian trade figures. Major U.S. investment to date has been limited to large-scale infrastructure contracts with the government; Lockheed Martin and Bechtel are principal U.S. participants. The Albanian Government signed a FTA with the EU as part of its Stabilization and Association Agreement negotiations. The interim agreement entered into force in December 2006, and it foresees a duty-free regime for almost 90% of agricultural and industrial products. On the fiscal side it will also significantly reduce revenue collection.

Albania is trying to attract foreign investment and promote domestic investment, but significant impediments exist. The Albanian Government faces the daunting task of rationalizing and uniformly applying business laws, improving transparency in business procedures, restructuring the tax systems (including tax collection), reducing corruption in the bureaucracy, and resolving property ownership disputes.

Business growth is further hampered by Albania's inadequate energy and transportation infrastructure. The capital, Tirana, and the main port of Durres, generally receive electricity most of the day, but frequent power outages plague every other major city, small town, and rural village. Although recent steps have been taken to improve the transportation infrastructure, Albania has a limited railway system and just one international airport. Because of the mountainous terrain and poor road condition, overland goods transport is arduous and costly.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Since the fall of communism in Albania in 1991, the country has played a constructive role in resolving several of the inter-ethnic conflicts in south central Europe, promoting peaceful dispute resolution and discouraging ethnic Albanian extremists. Albania sheltered many thousands of Kosovar refugees during the 1999 conflict, and now provides logistical assistance for Kosovo Force (KFOR) troops. Albania is part of the international Stabilization Force (SFOR) serving in Bosnia, and Albanian peacekeepers are part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the international stabilization force in Iraq. Albania has been a steadfast supporter of U.S. policy in Iraq, and was one of only four nations to contribute troops to the combat phase of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Albania continues to work with the international community to restructure its armed forces and strengthen democratic structures pursuant to its NATO Membership Action Plan. NATO members continue to encourage Albania to address military reforms that will bring it closer to membership. Since 1999, Albania has spent approximately $108 million annually on military expenditures, roughly 1.35% of its GDP. According to Government of Albania projections, military expenditure will reach 2% of GDP in 2008. With bilateral and multilateral assistance, the Ministry of Defense is transitioning to a smaller, voluntary, professional military, and reducing the vast amounts of excess weaponry and ammunition that litter the country and pose a significant public hazard and proliferation risk. The Albanian Government and the international community are working together on a project that will make Albania a mine-free country by 2010. Most high- and medium-priority mine clearance has been completed in the mined areas of northeast Albania, a legacy of the 1999 Kosovo crisis.

Albania and the U.S. enjoy a military partnership and are signatories to treaties including the 2003 Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Promotion of Defense and Military Relations and the 2004 Supplementary Agreement to the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement, which defines the status of American military troops in Albania and further enables military cooperation. In May 2003, Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, and the U.S. created the Adriatic Charter, modeled on the Baltic Charter, as a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation to advance each country's NATO candidacy. In spite of strong EU objections, Albania also signed in May 2003 a bilateral agreement with the United States on non-surrender of persons, based on Article 98 of the statute of International Criminal Court.

In 2004 President Bush authorized the use of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program funds for projects in Albania, marking the first time such funds are used outside the former Soviet Union. With this funding the United States is assisting the Government of Albania with the destruction of a stockpile of chemical agents left over from the communist regime. Under this program, Albania became the first nation in the world to complete destruction of declared chemical weapons holdings under the

Chemical Weapons Convention in July 2007. Albania received an invitation to become a NATO member at the April 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. The U.S. Senate unanimously ratified Albania's Protocols of Accession to NATO September 25, and President Bush signed the Accession Protocols October 24, 2008.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Albania is currently pursuing a path of greater Euro-Atlantic integration. Its primary long-term goals are to gain NATO and EU membership and to promote closer bilateral ties with its neighbors and with the U.S. Albania is a member of a number of international organizations, as well as multiple regional organizations and initiatives, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN, the Stability Pact, the Adriatic Charter, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In June 2006, Albania and the EU signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement, the first step to EU membership, which will focus on implementing essential rule of law reforms and curbing corruption and organized crime.

Albania maintains generally good relations with its neighbors. It re-established diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia following the ousting of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, and maintains excellent relations with the Republic of Montenegro, which gained its independence after the dissolution of the Serbia and Montenegro union in 2006. Albanian, Macedonian, and Italian law enforcement agencies are cooperating with increasing efficiency to crack down on the trafficking of arms, drugs, contraband, and human beings across their borders. Albania has also arrested and prosecuted several ethnic-Albanian extremists on charges of inciting interethnic hatred in Macedonia and Kosovo. Tensions occasionally arise with Greece over the treatment of the Greek minority in Albania or the Albanian community in Greece, but overall relations are good.

U.S.-ALBANIAN RELATIONS

Albania enjoys friendly and cooperative bilateral relations with the U.S. Pro-U.S. sentiment is widespread among the population. Even while the U.S., which had closed its mission to Albania in 1946, was being vilified by communist propaganda during the Hoxha regime, ordinary Albanians remembered that Woodrow Wilson had protected Albanian independence in 1919. Albanians credit the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 with saving thousands of Kosovo Albanians, and they greatly appreciate the U.S. Government's continued support for a stable, free, and democratic Kosovo.

In 2003, Albania and the U.S. signed and ratified a number of agreements, including a treaty on the Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Promotion of Defense and Military Relations; the Adriatic Charter; and an Agreement regarding the non-surrender of persons to the International Criminal Court. The U.S. strongly supports Albania's EU and NATO membership goals. Working towards NATO membership, the U.S. and Albania signed a Supplementary Agreement to the Partnership for Peace. NATO Protocols. Status of Forces Agreement, an important step in strengthening bilateral cooperation and enhancing security, peace, and stability in the region. The US Senate unanimously ratified Albania's Protocols of Accession to NATO September 25, and President Bush signed the Accession Protocols October 24, 2008.

Since FY 1991, the U.S. has provided Albania with more than $616 million in assistance, not counting U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food aid. The aid has served to facilitate Albania's transition from the most isolated and repressive communist state in Europe to a modern democracy with a market-oriented economy, and to support long-term development. In 2007, the U.S. gave over $21.1 million to Albania under the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act program. Albania was among the first countries selected to participate in the Threshold Program under the Millennium Challenge Account, winning a grant of $13.8 million and a Second Threshold grant of $16 million in 2008. The program targets two critical stumbling blocks to development—corruption and rule of law.

Despite daunting problems at home, Albania has wholeheartedly supported the U.S. in the global war on terrorism by freezing terrorist assets, shutting down non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with possible links to terrorist financing, expelling extremists, and providing hundreds of military troops for the U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Albania has played a moderating role in the region and has fully supported UN mediation efforts in Kosovo.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

TIRANA (E) 103 Rruga Elbasanit, APO/FPO 9510 Tirana Place, Dulles Va 20189, 355-4-2247285, Fax (355) (4) 2232-222, Workweek: Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm, Website: http://tirana.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Brenda James
AMB OMS:	Bridget Kissinger
DCM/CHG:	Stephen Cristina
ECO:	Robert Newsome
FM:	Allan Mitchell
MGT:	Nancy Brannaman
POL/ECO:	Robert Newsome
AMB:	John Withers II
CON:	Abigail Aronson
PAO:	Leigh Rieder
GSO:	Lisa Ficek
RSO:	Leonard Patrick
AID:	Edward Landau
CLO:	Keith Kadlec
DAO:	Brian Moore
FMO:	Robert Gresbrink
IMO:	Randal Meyers
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISSO:	Gary Harral

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 4, 2008

Country Description: Albania is a parliamentary democracy that is transforming its economy into a market-oriented system. Albania's per capita income is among the lowest in Europe, but economic conditions in the country are steadily improving. Tourist facilities are not highly developed in much of the country, and though Albania's economic integration into European Union markets is slowly underway, many of the goods and services taken for granted in other European countries are not yet available. Hotel accommodations are limited outside of major cities.

Entry and Exit Requirements: A passport is required. All travelers entering or exiting Albania must have six months or more validity on their passport. Customs officers strictly enforce this law. U.S. citizens do not require a visa prior to entering Albania, but those traveling without a visa will be charged a fee for an entry stamp at the point of entry, which is valid for a stay of up to 90 days. This fee is currently 10 Euros, or the equivalent in any easily convertible currency, including U.S. dollars. Travelers without a visa who intend to stay in Albania for more than 90 days should be aware that Albanian law allows a traveler without a visa to remain in Albania for 90 days only within a specific 180-day period. That 180-day period is defined from the first day of entry. For example, a traveler entering without a visa on January 1 may remain in Albania for 90 days total during the period of time between January 1 and June 28. Departing Albania during this time period does not "restart the clock." Travelers attempting to reenter Albania without a visa and within 180 days of a previous entry and after an aggregate stay of 90 days may be denied entry. For stays exceeding 90 days within a 180-day period, those interested must apply for a Residency Permit at the police station with jurisdiction over the city of residence. Information on how to apply for a residency permit is available on the Embassy of Albania web site at http://www.embassyofalbania.org. There is also a departure fee of ten Euros, or the equivalent in any easily convertible currency, including U.S. dollars. Visit the Embassy web site at http://www.embassyofalbania.org/consular.html#visa for the most current visa information.

Dual Nationality: The Albanian government considers any person in Albania of Albanian parents to be an Albanian citizen. In addition to being subject to all Albanian laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may be subject to Albanian laws that impose special obligations. Male Albanian citizens are subject to compulsory military service regulations. If such persons are found guilty of draft evasion in Albania, they are subject to prosecution by the Albanian court. Those who might be affected should inquire at an Albanian Embassy or Consulate outside Albania regarding their status before traveling. In some instances, dual nationality may hamper U.S. Government efforts to provide protection abroad.

Safety and Security: Although the overall security situation in Albania has improved in recent years, organized criminal activity continues to operate in all regions, and corruption is pervasive. The U.S. Government maintains security procedures regarding the travel of U.S. Government employees to the northern administrative districts of Shkoder, Malesi E Madhe and Tropoje (with the exception of the route along the national road to Montenegro and the city of Shkoder) and to the southern town of Lazarat, with such travel restricted to secure vehicles with escort. Recently, travel restrictions for U.S. Government employees have been lifted for overnight stays in the city of Shkoder. In most cases, police assistance and protection is limited. A high level of security awareness should be maintained at all times. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. All gatherings of large crowds should be avoided, particularly those involving political causes or striking workers.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: In the latest State Department assessment, Albania's crime rating is "medium." Crime against foreigners is rare in Albania, as targeting foreigners is often viewed as too risky. Visitors should maintain the same personal security awareness that they would in any metropolitan U.S. city. Caution should be exercised in bars in Tirana where violent incidents, some involving the use of firearms, have occurred in the past, particularly in the early morning hours. Within the last years there have been fewer cases of carjacking compared with previous years. Anyone who is carjacked should surrender the vehicle without resistance. Armed crime continues to be more common in northern and northwestern Albania than in the rest of the country. Street crime is fairly common in Albania, particularly at night. Criminals do not seem to deliberately target U.S. citizens or other foreigners, but do seek targets of opportunity, and select those who appear to have anything of value. Vehicle theft is still one of the biggest problems in Albania. Pick-pocketing is widespread; U.S. citizens have reported the theft of their passports by pickpockets.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while over-

seas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities and capabilities in Albania are limited beyond rudimentary first aid treatment. Emergency and major medical care requiring surgery and hospital care is inadequate due to lack of specialists, diagnostic aids, medical supplies, and prescription drugs. Travelers with previously diagnosed medical conditions may wish to consult their physicians before travel. As prescription drugs may be unavailable locally, travelers may also wish to bring extra supplies of required medications.

Recent electricity shortages have resulted in sporadic blackouts throughout the country, which can affect food storage capabilities of restaurants and shops. While some restaurants and food stores have generators to properly store food, travelers should take care that food is cooked thoroughly to reduce the risk of food-borne illness. Water in Albania is not potable. Visitors should plan to purchase bottled water or drinks while in country.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Albania.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Albania is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Major roads in Albania are often in very poor condition. Traveling by road throughout Albania is the most dangerous activity for locals and tourists. Vehicle accidents are the major cause of death, according to police statistics. Electricity shortages have resulted in sporadic blackouts throughout the country that can happen any hour of the day or night. Such outages affect traffic signals and street lights, making driving increasingly treacherous at any time of day. Travel at night outside the main urban areas is dangerous and should be avoided due to deplorable road conditions. During the winter months, travelers may encounter dangerous snow and icy conditions on the roads throughout mountainous regions in northern Albania. Buses travel between most major cities almost exclusively during the day, but they are often unreliable and uncomfortable. Many travelers looking for public transport prefer to use privately owned vans, which function as an alternate system of bus routes and operate almost entirely without schedules or set fares. Please note that many of these privately owned vans may not have official permission to operate a bus service and may not adhere to accepted safety and maintenance standards. Persons wishing to use privately owned vans should exercise caution. There are no commercial domestic flights and few rail connections.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by Albanian carriers, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Albania's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For further information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Albania's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Albania of some items. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Albania in Washington, D.C. or one of Albania's Consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. As noted previously, the Albanian government considers any person in Albania of Albanian parents to be an Albanian citizen. In addition to being subject to all Albanian laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may be subject to Albanian laws that impose special obligations. Male Albanian citizens are subject to compulsory military service regulations. Albania is a cash economy. Credit cards and travelers checks are not generally accepted, except at the major new hotels in Tirana and some international airline offices. Travelers' checks can be changed at banks in larger towns.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Albania's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for

possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Albania are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Under Albanian law, police can detain any individual for up to 10 hours without filing formal charges. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times to show proof of identity and U.S. citizenship if questioned by local officials.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Albania are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Albania. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Rruga Elbasanit 103, tel. (355) (4) 247285; fax (355) (4) 232222. The U.S. Embassy web site is http://tirana.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Albania is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Albania is the Albanian Adoption Committee, located within the Ministry of Justice.

Eligibility to Adopt: Under Albanian law, prospective adoptive parents must be a minimum of 18 years older than the adopted child. Both married and single prospective adoptive parents are permitted. Under U.S. immigration law, at least one parent must be 25 years old or older (at least 24 years old at the time he or she files the advanced processing application and at least 25 years old at the time he or she files the orphan petition).

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for U.S. citizens wishing to adopt a child in Albania.

Time Frame: Prospective adoptive parents should expect a time frame up to six months after a child has been identified.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: All adoptions must be processed by an adoption agency accredited by the Albanian Adoption Committee. Currently, two U.S. adoption agencies have been accredited. Both agencies are listed on the U.S. Embassy website: http://tirana.usembassy.gov. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The U.S. Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: Adoptive parents can expect to pay three different fees. The agency fee, which may differ depending up on the adoption service provider selected, is between $10,000 and $11,000. In addition a fee of $1,000 must be paid to the Albanian Adoption Committee. A fee of $500.00 must also be paid to the orphanage where the child lived prior to adoption.

The U.S. Embassy in Albania discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Albania at risk.

Adoption Procedures: Individuals may not deal directly with the Albanian Adoption Committee or with individual orphanages or biological parents. The Albanian child must have a certificate from the Albanian Adoption Committee stating that s/he is adoptable.

This means that the child has been in an orphanage for at least six months with no contact from his/her biological parent(s), and that the orphanage has been unsuccessful in placing the child with an Albanian family. The prospective adoptive parent(s) may not go to an orphanage to select a child without authorization from the Albanian Adoption Committee. (Authorized local adoption agencies, i.e., International Children's Alliance, or Bethany Christian Services, may contact the Albanian Adoption Committee to obtain authorization for the prospective adoptive parents to visit an orphanage). In general the Committee will propose a child whom

the prospective adoptive parent(s) may accept if they wish. In addition, the final court decision and the child's travel documentation cannot be issued until 14 days after the court date. The child must remain in Albania during these 14 days, although s/he may reside with the adoptive parent(s) during that time.

Please remember: when traveling back to the U.S., your newly adopted child may need to obtain a transit visa. If the country of transit requires a visa for Albanian nationals, this process can take up to one week. (this procedure is separate from the U.S. immigrant visa process.) Therefore, prospective adoptive parent(s) should be prepared to arrive in Albania a day or two before the court date and to remain afterwards for approximately three weeks.

Required Documents:

- A written request clearly stating the reasons why he/she/they want(s) to adopt a child.
- Adoption application; the form is called Preliminary Application for International Adoption. The agency facilitating the case will provide the form to the PAP.
- Birth certificate, marriage certificate of the adopting parent(s). Divorce decree and former spouse's death certificate, if applicable.
- Police records of the adopting parent(s) (PAPs) must have a clean police record.
- Personal, family, and social information on the adopting parents (usually included in the Home Study).
- Medical information on the adopting parent(s). Medical information is addressed by a physician that is contracted by the adoption service provider in the U.S.
- Home Study completed by an authorized home study preparer.
- Financial statement from adopting parents.
- Warranty deed (the Albanian Adoption Committee requires evidence that PAPs own their own home).
- Reference letter from adopting parent's employer.
- Family and home pictures.

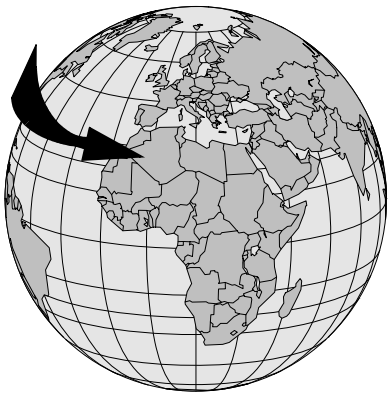
All the above-mentioned documents are submitted to one of the adoption agencies accredited by the Albanian Adoption Committee.

Embassy of the Republic of Albania
2100 S. Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 223-4942 or (202) 393-2396
Fax: (202) 628-7324

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

U.S. Embassy
Rruga e Elbasanit, No. 103
Tirana, Albania
Tel: +355-4-247-285
Fax number: +355-4-374-957
E-mail address:
ACSTirana@state.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



ALGERIA

Compiled from the October 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

PROFILE

Geography

Location: Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Morocco and Tunisia.

Area: Total—2,381,740 sq. km. Land—2,381,740 sq. km.; water—0 sq. km. More than three times the size of Texas.

Cities: Capital—Algiers; Oran, Constantine, Annaba.

Terrain: Mostly high plateau and desert; some mountains; narrow, discontinuous coastal plain. Mountainous areas subject to severe earthquakes, mud slides.

Climate: Arid to semiarid; mild, wet winters with hot, dry summers along coast; drier with cold winters and hot summers on high plateau; a hot, dust/sand-laden wind called sirocco is especially common in summer.

Land use: Arable land—3%; permanent crops—0%, permanent pastures—13%; forests and woodland—2%.

People

Nationality: Noun—Algerian(s); adjective—Algerian.

Population: (2007 est.) 33,333,216.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.22%. Birth rate (2007 est.)—17.11 births/1,000 population; death rate (2007 est.)—4.62 deaths/1,000 population.

Ethnic groups: Arab-Berber 99%, European less than 1%.

Religions: Sunni Muslim (state religion) 99%, Christian and Jewish 1%.

Languages: Arabic (official), Berber (national language), French.

Education: Literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)—total population 70% (2004 est.); female 60% (2004 est.).

Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—28.78 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy at birth—total population, 73.52 years; male 71.91 years, female 75.21 years.

Work force: (2006) 9.31 million.

Unemployment rate: (2006 est.) 23%; Algerian Government estimates 13%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 5, 1962 (from France).

Constitution: September 8, 1963; revised November 19, 1976, November 3, 1988, February 23, 1989, and November 28, 1996.

Government branches: Legal system based on French and Islamic law; judicial review of legislative acts in ad hoc Constitutional Council composed of various public officials, including several Supreme Court justices; Algeria has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction.

Political subdivisions: 48 provinces (wilayates; singular, wilaya).

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal.

National holidays: Independence Day, July 5, 1962; Revolution Day, November 1, 1954.

Political parties: National Liberation Front (FLN), National Democratic Rally (RND), Movement for National Reform (MRN), Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), Workers' Party (PT), Algerian National Front (FNA), Islamic Renaissance Movement (MNI), Party of Algerian Renewal (PRA), Movement of National Understanding (MEN).

Economy

GDP: (2006) $92.22 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2006) 5.6%.

Per capita GDP: (PPP, 2006) $7,777.

Agriculture: Products—wheat, barley, oats, grapes, olives, citrus, fruits; sheep, cattle.

Industry: Types—petroleum, natural gas, light industries, mining, electrical, petrochemical, food processing, pharmaceuticals, cement, seawater desalination. Sector Information as% GDP: (2006) Agriculture 9.4%, services 32.5%, industry 58.1%.

Currency: Algerian dinar.

Inflation: GDP deflator (2004) 10.2%.

Trade: Exports (f.o.b., 2006 est.)—$55.6 billion: petroleum, natural gas, and petroleum products 97.52%. Partners (2005 est.)—U.S. 23.5%, Italy 16.7%, France 11.4%, Spain 11.25%. Imports (f.o.b., 2006 est.)—$27.6 billion: capital goods, food and beverages, consumer goods. Partners (2005)—France 28%, Italy 7.8%, Germany 6.3%, U.S. 5.4%, China 6.6%, Spain 7.2%.

Budget: (2006 est.) Revenues—$59.26 billion; expenditures—$49.14 billion, including capital expenditures of $5.8 billion.

Debt: (external, 2006 est.) $5 billion.

U.S. economic assistance: (2005 est.) $4.40 million (MEPI, IMET).

GEOGRAPHY

Algeria, the second-largest state in Africa, has a Mediterranean coastline of about 998 kilometers (620 mi.). The Tellian and Saharan Atlas mountain ranges cross the country from east to west, dividing it into three zones. Between the northern zone, Tellian Atlas, and the Mediterranean is a narrow, fertile coastal plain—the Tell (Arabic for hill)—with a moderate climate year round and rainfall adequate for agriculture. A high plateau region, averaging 914 meters (3,000 ft.) above sea level, with limited rainfall, great rocky plains, and desert, lies between the two mountain ranges. It is generally barren except for scattered clumps of trees and intermittent bush and pastureland. The third and largest zone, south of the Saharan Atlas mountain range, is mostly desert. About 80% of the country is desert, steppes, wasteland, and mountains. Algeria's weather varies considerably from season to season and from one geographical location to another. In the north, the summers are usually hot with little rainfall. Winter rains begin in the north in October. Frost and snow are rare, except on the highest slopes of the Tellian Atlas Mountains. Dust and sandstorms occur most frequently between February and May.

Soil erosion—from overgrazing, other poor farming practices, and desertification—and the dumping of raw sewage, petroleum refining wastes, and other industrial effluents are leading to the pollution of rivers and coastal waters. The Mediterranean Sea, in particular, is becoming polluted from oil wastes, soil erosion, and fertilizer runoff. There are inadequate supplies of potable water.

PEOPLE

Ninety-one percent of the Algerian population lives along the Mediterranean coast on 12% of the country's total land mass. Forty-five percent of the population is urban, and urbanization continues, despite government efforts to discourage migration to the cities. About 1.5 million nomads and semi-settled Bedouin still live in the Saharan area.

Nearly all Algerians are Muslim, of Arab, Berber, or mixed Arab-Berber stock. Official data on the number of non-Muslim residents is not available; however, practitioners report it to be less than 5,000. Most of the non-Muslim community is comprised of Methodist, Roman Catholic and Evangelical faiths; the Jewish community is virtually non-existent. There are about 1,100 American citizens in the country, the majority of whom live and work in the oil/gas fields in the south.

Algeria's educational system has grown dramatically since the country gained its independence. In the last 12 years, attendance has doubled to more than 5 million students. Education is free and compulsory to age 16. Despite government allocation of substantial educational resources, population pressures and a serious shortage of teachers have severely strained the system. Modest numbers of Algerian students study abroad, primarily in Europe and Canada. In 2000, the government launched a major review of the country's educational system and in 2004 efforts to reform the educational system began.

Housing and medicine continue to be pressing problems in Algeria. Failing infrastructure and the continued influx of people from rural to urban areas have overtaxed both systems. According to the United Nations Development Program, Algeria has one of the world's highest per housing unit occupancy rates, and government officials have publicly stated that the country has an immediate shortfall of 1.5 million housing units.

HISTORY

Since the 5th century B.C., the native peoples of northern Africa (first identified by the Greeks as "Berbers") were pushed back from the coast by successive waves of Phoenician, Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, Arab, Turkish, and, finally, French invaders. The greatest cultural impact came from the Arab invasions of the 8th and 11th centuries A.D., which brought Islam and the Arabic language. The effects of the most recent (French) occupation—French language and European-inspired socialism—are still pervasive.

North African boundaries have shifted during various stages of the conquests. Algeria's modern borders were created by the French, whose colonization began in 1830. To benefit French colonists, most of whom were farmers and businessmen, northern Algeria was eventually organized into overseas departments of France, with representatives in the French National Assembly. France controlled the entire country, but the traditional Muslim population in the rural areas remained separated from the modern economic infrastructure of the European community.

Algerians began their uprising on November 1, 1954, to gain rights denied them under French rule. The revolution, launched by a small group of nationalists who called themselves the National Liberation Front (FLN), was a guerrilla war in which both sides targeted civilians and otherwise used brutal tactics. Eventually, protracted negotiations led to a cease-fire signed by France and the FLN on March 18, 1962, at Evian, France. The Evian Accords also provided for continuing economic, financial, technical, and cultural relations, along



with interim administrative arrangements until a referendum on self-determination could be held. Over 1 million French citizens living in Algeria at the time, called the pieds-noirs (black feet), left Algeria for France.

The referendum was held in Algeria on July 1, 1962, and France declared Algeria independent on July 3. In September 1962 Ahmed Ben Bella was formally elected president. On September 8, 1963, a Constitution was adopted by referendum. On June 19, 1965, President Ben Bella was replaced in a non-violent coup by the Council of the Revolution headed by Minister of Defense Col. Houari Boumediene. Ben Bella was first imprisoned and then exiled. Boumediene, as President of the Council of the Revolution, led the country as Head of State until he was formally elected on December 10, 1976. Boumediene is credited with building "modern Algeria." He died on December 27, 1978.

Following nomination by an FLN Party Congress, Col. Chadli Bendjedid was elected president in 1979 and re-elected in 1984 and 1988. A new constitution was adopted in 1989 that allowed the formation of political parties other than the FLN. It also removed the armed forces, which had run the government since the days of Boumediene, from a designated role in the operation of the government. Among the scores of parties that sprang up under the new

constitution, the militant Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was the most successful, winning more than 50% of all votes cast in municipal elections in June 1990 as well as in the first stage of national legislative elections held in December 1991.

Faced with the real possibility of a sweeping FIS victory, the National People's Assembly was dissolved by presidential decree on January 4, 1992. On January 11, under pressure from the military leadership, President Chadli Bendjedid resigned. On January 14, a five-member High Council of State was appointed by the High Council of Security to act as a collegiate presidency and immediately canceled the second round of elections. This action, coupled with political uncertainty and economic turmoil, led to a violent reaction by Islamists. On January 16, Mohamed Boudiaf, a hero of the Liberation War, returned after 28 years of exile to serve as Algeria's fourth president. Facing sporadic outbreaks of violence and terrorism, the security forces took control of the FIS offices in early February, and the High Council of State declared a state of emergency. In March, following a court decision, the FIS Party was formally dissolved, and a series of arrests and trials of FIS members occurred resulting in more than 50,000 members being jailed. Algeria became caught in a cycle of violence, which became increasingly random and indiscriminate. On June 29, 1992, President Boudiaf was assassinated in Annaba in front of TV cameras by Army Lt. Lembarek Boumarafi, who allegedly confessed to carrying out the killing on behalf of the Islamists.

Despite efforts to restore the political process, violence and terrorism dominated the Algerian landscape during the 1990s. In 1994, Liamine Zeroual, former Minister of Defense, was appointed Head of State by the High Council of State for a three-year term. During this period, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) launched terrorist campaigns against government figures and institutions to protest the banning of the Islamist parties. A breakaway GIA group—the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)—also undertook terrorist activity in the country. Government officials estimate that more than 100,000 Algerians died during this period.

Zeroual called for presidential elections in 1995, though some parties objected to holding elections that excluded the FIS. Zeroual was elected president with 75% of the vote. By 1997, in an attempt to bring political stability to the nation, the National Democratic Rally (RND) party was formed by a progressive group of FLN members. In September 1998, President Liamine Zeroual announced that he would step down in February 1999, 21 months before the end of his term, and that presidential elections would be held.

Algerians went to the polls in April 1999, following a campaign in which seven candidates qualified for election. On the eve of the election, all candidates except Abdelaziz Bouteflika pulled out amid charges of widespread electoral fraud. Bouteflika, the candidate who appeared to enjoy the backing of the military, as well as the FLN and the RND party regulars, won with an official vote count of 70% of all votes cast. He was inaugurated on April 27, 1999 for a 5-year term.

President Bouteflika's agenda focused initially on restoring security and stability to the country. Following his inauguration, he proposed an official amnesty for those who fought against the government during the 1990s with the exception of those who had engaged in "blood crimes," such as rape or murder. This "Civil Concord" policy was widely approved in a nationwide referendum in September 2000.

Government officials estimate that 80% of those fighting the regime during the 1990s have accepted the civil concord offer and have attempted to reintegrate into Algerian society. Bouteflika also launched national commissions to study education and judicial reform, as well as restructuring of the state bureaucracy.

In 2001, Berber activists in the Kabylie region of the country, reacting to the death of a youth in gendarme custody, unleashed a resistance campaign against what they saw as government repression. Strikes and demonstrations in the Kabylie region were commonplace as a result, and some spread to the capital. Chief among Berber demands was recognition of Tamazight (a general term for Berber languages) as an official language, official recognition and financial compensation for the deaths of Kabyles killed in demonstrations, an economic development plan for the area and greater control over their own regional affairs. In October 2001, the Tamazight language was recognized as a national language, but the issue remains contentious as Tamazight has not been elevated to an official language.

Algeria's most recent presidential election took place on April 8, 2004. For the first time since independence, the presidential race was democratically contested through to the end. Besides incumbent President Bouteflika, five other candidates, including one woman, competed in the election. Opposition candidates complained of some discrepancies in the voting list; irregularities on polling day, particularly in Kabylie; and of unfair media coverage during the campaign as Bouteflika, by virtue of his office, appeared on state-owned television daily. Bouteflika was re-elected in the first round of the election with 84.99% of the vote. Just over 58% of those Algerians eligible to vote participated in the election.

In the years since Bouteflika was first elected, the security situation in Algeria has improved markedly. Terrorism, however, has not been totally eliminated, and terrorist incidents still occur, particularly in the provinces of Boumerdes, Tizi-Ouzou, and in the remote southern areas of the country. In April 2007, a series of bombings in Algiers targeted a government facility and police stations, killing 33 people. In addition, on July 11 a suicide bomber targeted military barracks in the Kabylie region, killing eight soldiers. The alleged mastermind behind the 2007 attacks was killed later in July during a raid led by Algerian security forces. In Sep-

tember 2005, Algeria passed a referendum in favor of President Bouteflika's Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation, paving the way for implementing legislation that will pardon certain individuals convicted of armed terrorist violence.

The new Charter builds upon the Civil Concord, and the Rahma (clemency) Law shields from prosecution anyone who laid down arms in response to those previous amnesty offers. The Charter specifically excludes from amnesty those involved in mass murders, rapes, or the use of explosives in public places. The Charter was implemented in March 2006, and the window for combatants to receive amnesty expired in September 2006. Approximately 2,500 Islamists were released under the Charter, many of whom are now suspected of having returned to militant groups in Algeria.

GOVERNMENT

Under the 1976 Constitution (as modified 1979, and amended in 1988, 1989, and 1996) Algeria is a multiparty state. The Ministry of the Interior must approve all political parties. According to the Constitution, no political association may be formed "based on differences in religion, language, race gender or region." Algeria has universal suffrage at the age of 18.

The head of state is the president of the republic. The president, elected to a five-year term, and constitutionally limited to two terms, is the head of the Council of Ministers and of the High Security Council. He appoints the prime minister as well as one-third of the upper house (the Council of the Nation). The prime minister presides over the Council of Ministers and serves as head of the government. The Algerian Parliament is bicameral, consisting of a lower chamber, the National People's Assembly (APN), with 380 members and an upper chamber, the Council of the Nation, with 144 members. The APN is elected every five years. Legislative elections were held in May 2007. Two-thirds of the Council of the Nation is elected by regional and municipal authorities; the rest are appointed by the president. The Council of the Nation serves a six-year term with one-half of the seats up for election or reappointment every three years. Either the president or one of the parliamentary chambers may initiate legislation. Legislation must be brought before both chambers before it becomes law. Sessions of the APN are televised.

Algeria is divided into 48 wilayates (states or provinces) headed by walis (governors) who report to the Minister of Interior. Each wilaya is further divided into communes. The wilayates and communes are each governed by an elected assembly.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA**
Prime Min.: **Ahmed OUYAHIA**
Min. of State & Personal Representative of the Head of State: **Abdelaziz BELKHADEM**
Min. of State for Interior & Local Govts.: **Noureddine Yazid ZERHOUNI**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Bouguerra SOLTANI**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Rachid BENAISSA**
Min. of Commerce: **El Hachemi DJAABOUB**
Min. of Communication: **Abderrachid BOUKERZAZA**
Min. of Culture: **Khalida TOUMI**
Min. of Energy & Mining: **Chakib KHELIL**
Min. of Finance: **Karim DJOUDI**
Min. of Fisheries & Fishing Resources: **Smail MIMOUNE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Mourad MEDELCI**
Min. of Health, Population, & Hospital Reform: **Said BARKAT**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Rachid HARRAOUBIA**
Min. of Housing & Urban Development: **Noureddine MOUSSA**
Min. of Industry & Promotion of Investments: **Abdelhamid TEMMAR**
Min. of Justice & Keeper of the Seals: **Tayeb BELAIZ**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Tayeb LOUH**
Min. of National Defense: **Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA**
Min. of National Education: **Boubekeur BENBOUZID**
Min. of National Solidarity & Family & Algerian Communities Abroad: **Djamal Ould ABBAS**
Min. of Postal Services, Information, & Communication Technologies: **Hamid BESSALAH**
Min. of Public Works: **Amar GHOUL**
Min. of Relations With the Parliament: **Mahmoud KHEDRI**
Min. of Religious Affairs: **Bouabdellah GHLAMALLAH**
Min. of Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises & Handicrafts: **Mustapha BENBADA**
Min. of Transport: **Amar TOU**
Min. of Urban Planning, the Environment, & Tourism: **Cherif RAHMANI**
Min. of Vocational & Educational Training: **El Hadi KHALDI**
Min. of War Veterans (Moudjahidine): **Mohamed Cherif ABBAS**
Min. of Water Resources: **Abdelmalek SELLAL**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Hachemi DJIAR**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of National Solidarity & Family & Algerian Communities Abroad in Charge of Family Affairs & Women's Issues: **Nouara Saadia DJAAFAR**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research in Charge of Scientific Research: **Souad BENDJABALLAH**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of National Defense: **Abdelmalek GUENAIZIA**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of State for Foreign Affairs in Charge of Maghreb & African Affairs: **Abdelkader MESSAHEL**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of State for Interior & Local Govts. in Charge of Local Govts.: **Daho OULD KABLIA**
Sec. Gen. of the Govt.: **Ahmed NOUI**
Governor, Central Bank: **Mohamed LEKASASSI**
Ambassador to the US: **Amine KHERBI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Terrorist violence in Algeria resulted in more than 100,000 deaths during the 1990s. Although the security situation in the country has improved, addressing the underlying issues that brought about the political turmoil of the 1990s remains the government's major task. President Bouteflika implemented the Charter on Peace and National Reconciliation on March 1, 2006, as one way to bring

closure. Thus far, it has successfully gained the surrender of a number of moderate Islamists, but paradoxically, has emboldened the more hardcore elements, in particular the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which changed its name in January 2007 to Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

In keeping with its amended Constitution, the Algerian Government espouses participatory democracy and free-market competition. The government has stated that it will continue to open the political process and encourage the creation of political institutions. Presidential elections took place in April 2004 and returned President Bouteflika to office with 84.99% of the vote. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 2009.

Algeria has more than 45 daily newspapers published in French and Arabic, with a total circulation of more than 1.5 million copies. There are 20 domestically printed weekly publications with total circulation of 622,000 and 11 monthly publications with total circulation of 600,000. In 2001, the government amended the Penal Code provisions relating to defamation and slander, a step widely viewed as an effort to rein in the press. While the Algerian press is relatively free to write as they choose, use of the defamation laws significantly increased the level of press harassment following President Bouteflika's April 2004 re-election victory, and as a result, the press began to self-censor. In July 2006, President Bouteflika pardoned all journalists convicted of defaming or insulting state institutions. The pardon effectively dismissed the charges against 67 people. Critics point out that according to the criminal code, insulting the president is punishable by prison sentence. Nevertheless, the pardon was widely seen as a significant step toward democracy. The government holds a monopoly over broadcast media; Algerian newspapers are widely seen to be the freest in the region.

Population growth and associated problems—unemployment and underemployment, inability of social services to keep pace with rapid urban migration, inadequate industrial management and productivity, a decaying infrastructure—continue to affect Algerian society. Increases in the production and prices of oil and gas over the past decade have led to exchange reserves reaching $80 billion. The government began an economic reform program in 1994, focusing on macroeconomic stability and structural reform. These reforms aimed at liberalizing the economy, making Algeria competitive in the global market, and meeting the needs of the Algerian people. In 2004, the government announced a $55 billion spending program to improve national infrastructure and social services; subsequent announcements have increased the proposed program to $120 billion.

ECONOMY

The hydrocarbons sector is the backbone of the Algerian economy, accounting for roughly 60% of budget revenues, nearly 30% of GDP, and over 97% of export earnings. Algeria has the ninth-largest reserves of natural gas in the world (2.7% of proven world total) and is the fourth-largest gas exporter; it ranks 14th for oil reserves (2006). Its key oil and gas customers are Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. U.S. companies have played a major role in developing Algeria's oil and gas sector; of the $5.3 billion (on a historical-cost basis, according to statistics gathered by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis) of U.S. investment in Algeria, the vast bulk is in the petroleum sector.

Faced with declining oil revenues and high-debt interest payments at the beginning of the 1990s, Algeria implemented a stringent macroeconomic stabilization program and rescheduled its $7.9 billion Paris Club debt in the mid-1990s. The macroeconomic program has been particularly successful at narrowing the budget deficit and at reducing inflation from of near-30% averages in the mid 1990s to almost single digits in 2000. Inflation was at 3.6% in 2004. Algeria's economy has grown by more than 5% in each of the past five years, posting 5.6% growth in 2006. The country's foreign debt fell from a high of $28 billion in 1999 to $5 billion in 2006; in that year Algeria paid off the last of its Paris Club debt. The spike in oil prices in 1999-2000 and 2004, the government's tight fiscal policy and conservative budgeting of oil prices from 2000 to present, a large increase in the trade surplus, and the near tripling of foreign exchange reserves have helped the country's finances.

The government pledges to continue its efforts to diversify the economy by attracting foreign and domestic investment outside the energy sector. The Algerian Government has had little success at reducing high unemployment, officially estimated at 13% in 2006, though international estimates put the figure higher, and at improving living standards.

Priority areas are banking and judicial reform, improving the investment environment, partial or complete privatization of state enterprises, and reducing government bureaucracy. The government has privatized certain sectors of the economy and embraced joint venture investment opportunities with traditionally state owned and operated entities.

In 2001, Algeria concluded an Association Agreement with the European Union, which was ratified in 2005 by both Algeria and the EU and took effect in September of that same year. The government is working toward accession to the World Trade Organization.

DEFENSE

Algeria's armed forces, known collectively as the Popular National Army (ANP), total 138,000 active members, with some 100,000 reservists. The president serves as Minister of National Defense. Military forces are supplemented by a 60,000-member

national gendarmerie, a rural police force, under the control of the president and a 30,000-member Sureté Nationale or Metropolitan Police force under the Ministry of the Interior. Eighteen months of national military service is compulsory for men.

Algeria is a leading military power in the region and has demonstrated remarkable success in its struggle against terrorism. The Algerian military, having fought a decade-long insurgency, has increased expenditures in an effort to modernize and return to a more traditional defense role.

Due to historical difficulties in acquiring U.S. military equipment, Algeria's primary military supplier has traditionally been Russia, and to a lesser extent China; Algeria recently made large purchases of advanced weaponry from the former. Algeria has, however, in recent years, begun to diversify its supplies of military equipment to include U.S.-made airborne surveillance aircraft and ground radars.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Algeria has traditionally practiced an activist foreign policy and in the 1960s and 1970s was noted for its support of Third World policies and independence movements. Algerian diplomacy was instrumental in obtaining the release of U.S. hostages from Iran in 1980. Since his first election in 1999, President Bouteflika worked to restore Algeria's international reputation, traveling extensively throughout the world. In July 2001, he became the first Algerian President to visit the White House in 16 years. He has made official visits to France, South Africa, Italy, Spain, Germany, China, Japan, Portugal, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Latin American countries, among others, since his inauguration.

Algeria has taken the lead in working on issues related to the African continent. Host of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Conference in 2000, Algeria also was key in bringing Ethiopia and Eritrea to the peace table in 2000. In 2001, the 37th summit of the OAU formally adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to address the challenges facing the continent. Algeria has taken a lead in reviving the Union of the Arab Maghreb with its neighbors.

Since 1976, Algeria has supported the Polisario Front, which claims to represent the population of Western Sahara. Contending that the Sahrawis have a right to self-determination under the UN Charter, Algeria has provided the Polisario with support and sanctuary in refugee camps in the southwestern Algerian province of Tindouf. UN involvement in the Western Sahara includes MINURSO, a peacekeeping force, UNHCR, which handles refugee assistance and resettlement, and the World Food Program (WFP). Active diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary General are ongoing.

Algeria's support of self-determination for the Polisario is in opposition to Morocco's claim of sovereignty. The dispute remains a major obstacle to bilateral and regional cooperation. Although the land border between Morocco and Algeria was closed in the wake of a terrorist attack in 1994, the two have worked at improving relations, and in July 2004, Morocco lifted visa requirements for Algerians. Algeria reciprocated with the lifting of visa requirements for Moroccans on April 2, 2005.

Algeria has friendly relations with its other neighbors in the Mahgreb, Tunisia and Libya, and with its sub-Saharan neighbors, Mali and Niger. It closely monitors developments in the Middle East and has been a strong proponent of the rights of the Palestinian people, as well as a supporter of Iraq's democratic transition. Algeria has diplomatic relations with more than 100 foreign countries, and over 90 countries maintain diplomatic representation in Algiers. Algeria held a nonpermanent, rotating seat on the UN Security Council from January 2004 to December 2005. Algeria hosted 13 Arab leaders at the Arab League Summit, March 22-23, 2005.

U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS

In July 2001, President Bouteflika became the first Algerian President to visit the White House since 1985. This visit, followed by a second meeting in November 2001, a meeting in New York in September 2003, and President Bouteflika's participation at the June 2004 G8 Sea Island Summit, is indicative of the growing relationship between the United States and Algeria. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, contacts in key areas of mutual concern, including law enforcement and counter-terrorism cooperation, have intensified. Algeria publicly condemned the terrorist attacks on the United States and has been strongly supportive of the international war against terrorism. The United States and Algeria consult closely on key international and regional issues. The pace and scope of senior-level visits has accelerated. In April 2006, then-Foreign Minister Bedjaoui met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

In 2006, U.S. direct investment in Algeria totaled $5.3 billion, mostly in the petroleum sector, which U.S. companies dominate. American companies also are active in the banking and finance, services, pharmaceuticals, medical facilities, telecommunications, aviation, seawater desalination, energy production, and information technology sectors. Algeria is the United States' 3rd-largest market in the Middle East/North African region. U.S. exports to Algeria totaled $1.2 billion in 2005, an increase of more than 50% since 2003. U.S. imports from Algeria grew from $4.7 billion in 2002 to $10.8 billion in 2005, primarily in oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG). In March 2004, President Bush designated Algeria a beneficiary country for duty-free treatment under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

In July 2001, the United States and Algeria signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, which established common principles on which the economic relationship is founded and forms a platform for negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT) and a free-trade agreement (FTA). The two governments meet on an ongoing basis to discuss trade and investment policies and opportunities to enhance the economic relationship. Within the framework of the U.S.-North African Economic Partnership (USNAEP), the United States provided about $1.0 million in technical assistance to Algeria in 2003. This program supported and encouraged Algeria's economic reform program and included support for World Trade Organization accession negotiations, debt management, and improving the investment climate. In 2003, USNAEP programs were rolled over into Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) activities, which provide funding for political and economic development programs in Algeria.

Cooperation between the Algerian and U.S. militaries continues to grow. Exchanges between both sides are frequent, and Algeria has hosted senior U.S. military officials. In May 2005, the United States and Algeria conducted their first formal joint military dialogue in Washington, DC; the second joint military dialogue took place in Algiers in November 2006.

The NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Commander, U.S. European Command, General James L. Jones visited Algeria in June and August 2005, and then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited Algeria in February 2006. The United States and Algeria have also conducted bilateral naval and Special Forces exercises, and Algeria has hosted U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ship visits. In addition, the United States has a modest International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program ($824,000 in FY 2006) for training Algerian military personnel in the United States, and Algeria participates in the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP).

The United States has implemented modest university linkages programs and has placed two English Language Fellows, the first since 1993, with the Ministry of Education to assist in the development of English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at the Ben Aknoune Training Center. In 2006, Algeria was again the recipient of a grant under the Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation. That fund provided a grant of $106,110 to restore the El Pacha Mosque in Oran. Algeria also received an $80,000 grant to fund microscholarships to design and implement an American English-language program for Algerian high school students in four major cities.

Initial funding through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has been allocated to support the work of Algeria's developing civil society through programming that provides training to journalists, businesspersons, legislators, Internet regulators, and the heads of leading nongovernmental organizations. Additional funding through the State Department's Human Rights and Democracy Fund will assist civil society groups focusing on the issues of the disappeared, and Islam and democracy.

In August 2005, then-Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Richard G. Lugar, led a Presidential Mission to Algeria and Morocco to oversee the release of the remaining 404 Moroccan POWs held by the Polisario Front in Algeria. Their release removed a longstanding bilateral obstacle between Algeria and Morocco.

The official U.S. presence in Algeria is expanding following over a decade of limited staffing, reflecting the general improvement in the security environment. During the past three years, the U.S. Embassy has moved toward more normal operations and now provides most embassy services to the American and Algerian communities.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Lina Mendez
AMB OMS:	Lina Mendez
ECO/COM:	Jeffrey W. Mazur
FCS:	Rick Ortiz
FM:	Winston I. Noel
MGT:	Kristi Hogan-Lahmar
POL/ECO:	Mark A. Schapiro
AMB:	Robert S Ford
CON:	Joshua Fischel
DCM:	Thomas F. Daughton
PAO:	Rafik K. Mansour
GSO:	Ann F. Granatino
RSO:	Julie S. Cabus
AFSA:	Jennifer McAlpine
AGR:	Michael Fay
CLO:	Mikiko Fischel
DAO:	Col. Steven R. Drago
EEO:	Rafik Mansour
ICASS Chair:	Mark A. Schapiro
IMO:	Linda L Safta
ISSO:	Duane M. Sargus
LEGATT:	Dave Archey

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 10, 2008

Country Description: Algeria is the second-largest country in Africa, with over four-fifths of its territory covered by the Sahara desert. The country has a population of 35 million people mainly located near the northern coast. Algeria is a multi-party, constitutional republic. Facilities for travelers are available in populated areas, but sometimes limited in quality and quantity.

Entry Requirements: Passports and visas are required for U.S. citizens traveling to Algeria. The Algerian visa application must be typed. The Algerian Embassy no longer accepts handwritten visa applications. For further information on entry/exit requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

at 2137 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 265-2800. Visit the Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria web site at http://www.algeria-us.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Terrorism continues to pose a threat to the safety and security of American citizens traveling to Algeria. Terrorist activities, including bombings, false roadblocks, kidnappings, ambushes, and assassinations, occur regularly. Since early 2007, vehicle-borne suicide bomb attacks have emerged as a terrorist tactic in Algeria, including in the capital. Suicide car bomb attacks in December 2007 targeted the UN Headquarters and the Algerian Constitutional Council in Algiers. The attacks occurred in areas where many diplomatic missions and residences are located. The group that claimed credit for the December attacks has pledged more attacks against foreign targets, and specifically American targets.

The Department of State warns American citizens against travel to the Kabylie region of Algeria. Since June 2008, the Kabylie region has seen a series of bombing and other terrorist attacks of increasing size and frequency, including a suicide car bomb attack at a gendarmerie school in Issers on August 19 that killed at least 43 people. While many of the attacks have targeted Algerian security forces, other targets have included a bus transporting the employees of a foreign company, and many of the victims of the attacks have been civilians.

The Travel Warning for Algeria contains the most current information concerning the threat from terrorism.

Embassy staffing is currently at full capacity, but may not be able to provide full emergency consular services in certain areas of the country due to security restrictions. U.S. Government employees traveling between cities must be accompanied by a security escort. The Department of State recommends that U.S. citizens avoid overland travel in Algeria. U.S. citizens should also carefully consider the security risks involved when using public transportation such as buses and taxis.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The crime rate in Algeria is moderately high and increasing. Serious crimes have been reported in which armed men posing as police officers have entered homes and robbed the occupants at gunpoint. False roadblocks/checkpoints have been employed to rob motorists (see Traffic Safety and Road Conditions section below). Some of these incidents resulted in the murder of the vehicles' occupants; there has been an increase in the kidnapping of vehicle occupants who appear to be wealthy. Petty theft and home burglary occur frequently, and muggings are on the rise, especially after dark in the cities. Theft of contents and parts from parked cars, pick-pocketing, theft on trains and buses, theft of items left in hotel rooms and purse snatching are common. Alarms, grills, and/or guards help to protect most foreigners' residences.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Algeria is: 17 for the police and 14 in case of fire. These numbers may only be dialed from landline phones. From a mobile phone, dial 021-71-14-14 in case of fire; 021-23-63-81 for an ambulance; 021-73-53-50 for the police. Reliability and response time of emergency services vary, but are not to U.S. standards. Emergency operators may or may not speak French, and normally do not speak English.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Hospitals and clinics in Algeria are available and improving in the large urban centers, but are still not up to Western standards. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for services. Most medical practitioners speak French; English is not widely used.

Prescription medicines are not always readily available. Some pharmacies may at times be out-of-stock. In addition, the medicine may be sold under a different brand name and may contain a different dosage than in the U.S. Please be aware that some newer medications may not yet be available in Algeria. It is usually easy to obtain over-the-counter products.

Emergency services are satisfactory, but response time is often unpredictable. In all cases, response time is not as fast as in the U.S.

Cases of tuberculosis are regularly reported, but do not reach endemic levels. Every summer, public health authorities report limited occurrences of water-borne diseases, such

as typhoid. In addition, HIV/AIDS is a concern in the remote southern part of the country, especially in border towns.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en.

Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Algeria is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Algerian roads are overcrowded and traffic-related accidents kill a large number of people every year. Drivers will encounter police and military checkpoints on major roads within and on the periphery of Algiers and other major cities. Security personnel at these checkpoints expect full cooperation. Motorists should be aware that terrorists employ false roadblocks as a tactic for ambushes and kidnappings, primarily in the central regions of Boumerdes and Tizi Ouzou and some parts of eastern Algeria.

Travel overland, particularly in the southern regions, may require a permit issued by the Algerian government. For specific information concerning Algerian driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, contact the Algerian Embassy.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Algeria, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Algeria's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Algeria maintains restrictions on the import and export of local currency. Foreign currency must be exchanged only at banks or authorized currency exchange locations, such as major hotels. Photography of military and government installations is prohibited. It is also illegal to import weapons, body armor, handcuffs or binoculars.

Proselytizing: Islam is the state religion of Algeria. The Algerian government allows non-Muslim religious worship only in structures exclusively intended and approved for that purpose. Activities such as proselytizing, engaging in activities which the Algerian authorities could view as encouraging conversion to another faith, and convening religious ceremonies in private residences are prohibited under a March 2006 law.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Algerian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Algeria are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Algeria are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Algeria. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 5 Chemin Cheikh Bachir El-Ibrahimi, B.P. 408 (Alger-gare) 16000, in the capital city of Algiers. The telephone numbers is [213] 21 98 20 00 which can also be reached after hours. The fax number is 213 21 60 73 35. The U.S. Embassy work week is Saturday through Wednesday.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: Algeria is not a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention). Therefore the entering into force of the Convention for the United States on April 1, 2008, did not change intercountry adoption processing for Algeria.

Algerian family law is based on an interpretation of Islamic Sharia law. Algerian law No 84/11, article 46 forbids "adoption." However, like most Muslim countries, Algeria deals with Sharia law's ban on adoption by replacing it with kafala. Under Algerian law (Family Code Chapter VII, article 116-125), Muslim couples may take into their family an abandoned child and give him their name. Algerian law defines kafala or recueil légal as a court authorization for couples to voluntarily commit to take a child into their family on the same basis as a father would do for his own biological child.

Algeria is the only Muslim country to authorize name changes for children taken in through the kafala process (Decree 92-24 of January 13, 1992). If the child has a known parent, the guardian can only be a blood relative. When the child is from unknown parents, it is not necessary for the legal guardian (kafil) to be a blood relative. When the child is an orphan, a completed kafala process gives full and irrevocable custody to the adoptive parents and is the legal equivalent of a full and final adoption in the United States. Thus, orphans—i.e. children with no parents—acquired via the kafala process in Algeria are in fact "adopted" in the legal sense of the word.

The prospective adoptive parent should start the application for kafala (recueil légal) at the Algerian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

A foreign country's determination that the child is an orphan does not guarantee that the child will be considered an orphan under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act. For more specific information on adoption in Algeria, please contact an attorney familiar with Algerian laws or the Embassy of Algeria in Washington, D.C. www.algeria-us.org.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Ministry of the Social Action and National Solidarity
Route Nationale N1 les vergers BP N31 Bir khadem–Alger—Algérie
Phone: +213 021 44 99 46;
+213 021 44 99 47
Fax: +213 021 44 97 26
Phone-Fax: +213 021 44 99 59

Eligibility to Adopt:

- The father must be of Muslim faith
- The father must be no more than 60 years old. The mother can be no more than 55 years old
- Prospective adoptive parents must be able to prove they have sufficient revenue to support the child

Time Frame: The time frame varies significantly.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies operating in Algeria.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy cannot predict the approximate fee for the process of acquiring custody (kafala). The orphanages (pouponnieres) do not require any payment

Adoption Procedures: A completed adoption file containing the documents listed below may be mailed or hand-delivered to the Algerian Embassy in Washington D.C.

Required Documents:

- A handwritten request signed by the prospective adoptive parent
- A copy of a consular registration card
- Marriage certificate
- Birth certificates of both prospective adoptive parents
- Employment status and proof that you will be able to support the child financially
- Proof of revenue
- Proof you own/rent a house/apartment
- Police certificates for both prospective adoptive parents
- Medical certificates for both prospective adoptive parents

Once these documents are submitted, the Algerian Embassy conducts an investigation. The Embassy will send the file to Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Algeria which will forward it to the Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity from which it will be finally transferred to the Orphanage (pouponiere).

Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
2118 Kalorama Rd, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 265-2800
Fax: (202) 667-2174
Email: ambassadoroffice@yahoo.com

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy: The U.S. Embassy is located at 5 Chemin Cheikh Bachir El-Ibrahimi, 16000, in the capital city of Algiers. The telephone numbers is [213] 70 08 20 00 which can also be reached after hours. The fax number is 213 21 60 73 35. The U.S. Embassy workweek is Saturday through Wednesday.

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and

international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

Travel Warning

August 22, 2008

This Travel Warning updates information on the current security situation in Algeria and warns American citizens against travel to the Kabylie region of the country. The threat from terrorism continues to pose a significant security risk. This supersedes the Travel Warning issued on March 26, 2008.

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens who travel to Algeria to evaluate carefully the risks posed to their personal safety. Terrorist attacks including bombings, false roadblocks, kidnappings, ambushes, and assassinations occur regularly. Since early 2007, the use of suicide bomb attacks, particularly vehicle-borne attacks, has emerged as a terrorist tactic in Algeria, including in the capital. The group that claimed credit for the December 11, 2007, suicide car-bomb attacks in Algiers has pledged more attacks against foreign targets, and specifically against American targets.

The Department of State warns American citizens against travel to the Kabylie region of Algeria. Since June 2008, the Kabylie region has seen a series of bombing and other terrorist attacks of increasing size and frequency, including a suicide car-bomb attack at a gendarmerie school in Issers on August 19 that killed at least 44 people. While many of the attacks have targeted Algerian security forces, other targets have included a bus transporting the employees of a foreign company, and many of the victims of the attacks have been civilians.

The Department of State recommends that U.S. citizens avoid overland travel in Algeria. Americans who reside or travel in Algeria should take prudent security measures while in the country, including making provisions for reliable and experienced logistical support. Visitors to Algeria are advised to stay only in hotels where adequate security is provided. All visitors to Algeria should remain alert and adhere to prudent security practices such as avoiding predictable travel patterns and maintaining a low profile.

The U.S. Government considers the potential threat to U.S. Embassy personnel assigned to Algiers sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under significant security restrictions. These practices limit, and may occasionally prevent, the movement of U.S. Embassy officials and the provision of consular services in certain areas of the country. The Government of Algeria requires U.S. Embassy personnel to seek permission to travel to the Casbah within Algiers or outside the province of Algiers and to have a security escort. Travel to the military zone established around the Hassi Messaoud oil center requires Government of Algeria authorization. Daily movement of Embassy personnel in Algiers is limited, and prudent security practices are required at all times. Travel by personnel within the city requires prior coordination with the Embassy's Regional Security Office. American visitors are encouraged to contact the Embassy's Consular Section for the most recent safety and security information concerning travel in the city of Algiers.

Americans living or traveling in Algeria are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Algiers through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Algeria. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 5 Chemin Cheikh Bachir El-Ibrahimi in the El Biar district of Algiers. The telephone number is [213] 770 08 20 00, which can also be reached after hours. The fax number is [213] 21 98 22 99.

Updated information on travel and security in Algeria may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For further information, please consult the Country Specific Information for Algeria and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at http://travel.state.gov.



ANDORRA

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Principality of Andorra

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 468 sq. km. (180 sq. mi.); about half the size of New York City.
Cities: Capital-Andorra la Vella.
Terrain: Mountainous.
Climate: Temperate, cool, dry.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective-Andorran(s).
Population: (2007) 83,137.
Annual growth rate: 2.4%.
Ethnic groups: Catalan, Spanish, French, Portuguese.
Religions: Roman Catholic.
Languages: Catalan (official), Spanish, French.
Education: Years compulsory—to age 16. Attendance—100%. Literacy—100%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—3/1,000. Life expectancy(2002)—76 yrs. male, 81 yrs. female.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy that retains as its heads of state two co-princes.
Constitution: Ratified in March 1993.
Independence: 1278.
Government branches: Heads of State—Two co-princes (President of France, Bishop of Seu d'Urgell in Spain). Executive—Head of Government (Cap de Govern) and eleven ministers (Executive Council). Legislative—Parliament (General Council), founded 1419, consisting of 28 members. Judicial—Civil cases heard in first instance by four judges (batlles) and in appeals by the one-judge Court of Appeals. The highest body is the five-member Superior Council of Justice. Criminal cases are heard by the Tribunal of Courts in Andorra la Vella.
Political subdivisions: Seven parishes (parroquies)—Andorra la Vella, Canillo, Encamp, La Massana, Ordino, Sant Julia de Lòria, and Escaldes make up the districts represented in the General Council.
Political parties: Andorran Liberal Party (PLA), CDA (Democratic Center of Andorra), and the Social Democratic Party (PS).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $3.66 billion.
Natural resources: Hydroelectric power, mineral water, timber, iron ore, lead.
Agriculture: Products—tobacco, sheep.
Industry: Types—tourism, (mainstay of the economy), tobacco products, furniture.
Trade: Major activities are commerce and banking; no official figures are available. Duty-free status.
Currency: Euro.

PEOPLE

Andorrans live in seven valleys that form Andorra's political districts. Andorrans are a minority in their own country; they make up only approximately 36% of the population or about 28,000 native Andorrans. Spanish, French, and Portuguese residents make up the other 64% of the population.

The national language is Catalan, a romance language related to the Provençal groups. French and Spanish are also spoken.

Education law requires school attendance for children up to age 16. A system of French, Spanish, and Andorran public schools provides education up to the secondary level. Schools are built and maintained by Andorran authorities, who pay also for Andorran teachers. French and Spanish schools pay for their own teachers. About 35% of Andorran children attend the French primary schools, 35% attend Spanish, and 29% attend Andorran schools. Andorran schools follow the Spanish curriculum, and their diplomas are



recognized by the Spanish education system. In July 1997, the University of Andorra was established. The number of students makes it impossible for the University of Andorra to develop a full academic program, and it serves principally as a center for virtual studies, connected to Spanish and French universities. The only two graduate schools in Andorra are the Nursing School and the School of Computer Science.

HISTORY

Andorra is the last independent survivor of the March states, a number of buffer states created by Charlemagne to keep the Muslim Moors from advancing into Christian France. Tradition holds that Charlemagne granted a charter to the Andorran people in return for their fighting the Moors. In the 800s, Charlemagne's grandson, Charles the Bald, made Count of Urgell overlord of Andorra. A descendant of the count later gave the lands to the diocese of Urgell, headed by Bishop of Seu d'Urgell.

In the 11th century, fearing military action by neighboring lords, the bishop placed himself under the protection of the Lord of Caboet, a Spanish nobleman. Later, the Count of Foix, a French noble, became heir to Lord Caboet through marriage, and a dispute arose between the French Count and the Spanish bishop over Andorra.

In 1278, the conflict was resolved by the signing of a pareage, which provided that Andorra's sovereignty be shared between the Count of Foix and the Bishop of Seu d'Urgell of Spain. The pareage, a feudal institution recognizing the principle of equality of rights shared by two rulers, gave the small state its territory and political form.

Over the years, the title was passed between French and Spanish rule until, in the reign of the French King Henry IV, an edict in 1607 established the head of the French state and the Bishop of Urgell as co-princes of Andorra.

Given its relative isolation, Andorra has existed outside the mainstream of European history, with few ties to countries other than France and Spain. In recent times, however, its thriving tourist industry along with developments in transportation and communications have removed the country from its isolation.

GOVERNMENT

Until recently, Andorra's political system had no clear division of powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches. A constitution was ratified and approved in 1993. The constitution establishes Andorra as a sovereign parliamentary democracy that retains as its heads of state two co-princes.

The fundamental impetus for this political transformation was a recommendation by the Council of Europe in 1990 that, if Andorra wished to attain full integration into the European Union (EU), it should adopt a modern constitution, which guarantees the rights of those living and working there. A Tripartite Commission—made up of representatives of the co-princes, the General Council, and the Executive Council—was formed in 1990 and finalized the draft constitution in April 1991.

Under the 1993 constitution, the co-princes continue as heads of state, but the head of government retains executive power. The two co-princes serve co-equally with limited powers that do not include veto over govern-

ment acts. They are represented in Andorra by a delegate. As co-princes of Andorra, the President of France and the Bishop of Seu d'Urgell maintain supreme authority in approval of all international treaties with France and Spain, as well as all those, which deal with internal security, defense, Andorran territory, diplomatic representation, and judicial or penal cooperation. Although the institution of the co-princes is viewed by some as an anachronism, the majority sees them as both a link with Andorra's traditions and a way to balance the power of Andorra's two much larger neighbors.

Andorra's main legislative body is the 28-member General Council (Parliament). The sindic (president), the subsindic, and the members of the Council are elected in the general elections held every four years. The Council meets throughout the year on certain dates set by tradition or as required. The most recent general elections took place on April 24, 2005. The forthcoming Andorran elections will be held in March/April 2009.

At least one representative from each parish must be present for the General Council to meet. Historically, within the General Council, four deputies from each of the seven individual parishes provided representation. This system allowed the smaller parishes, which have as few as 562 voters, the same number of representatives as larger parishes, which have up to 4,014 voters. To correct this imbalance, a provision in the 1993 constitution introduced a modification of the structure and format for electing the members of the Council; under this format, half of the representatives are chosen by the traditional system, while the other half are selected from nationwide lists. A sindic and a subsindic are chosen by the General Council to implement its decisions. They serve four-year terms and may be reappointed once. They receive an annual salary. Sindics have virtually no discretionary powers, and all policy decisions must be approved by the Council as a whole.

Every four years, after the general elections, the General Council elects the head of government, who, in turn, chooses the other members of the Executive Council. The current council has eleven ministers.

The judicial system is independent. Courts apply the customary laws of Andorra, supplemented with Roman law and customary Catalan law. Civil cases are first heard by the batlles court -a group of four judges, two chosen by each co-prince. Appeals are heard in the Court of Appeals. The highest body is the five-member Superior Council of Justice. Andorra has no defense forces and only a small internal police force. All able-bodied men who own firearms must serve, without remuneration, in the small army, which is unique in that all of its men are treated as officers. The army has not fought for more than 700 years, and its main responsibility is to present the Andorran flag at official ceremonies.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Andorra held national elections on April 24, 2005. The ruling Andorran Liberal Party (PLA) won the elections but lost the absolute majority it had attained in the 2001 elections. After 10 years in power, Cap de Govern and PLA leader Marc Forné stepped down as Cap de Govern. His replacement is Former Foreign Minister Albert Pintat, who comes from the same party. The center-right PLA went from 15 to 14 seats in the 28-seat Parliament, while the center-left Social Democratic Party (PS) doubled its representation from 6 to 12 seats. The remaining 2 seats are held by CDA-Segle-21, a union of two center-right parties which are likely to join in a coalition with PLA. Since the ratification of the constitution in 1993, four coalition governments have been formed. The Pintat government's principal goals are to address housing scarcity, modernize the country's taxation system, and press forward with reforms required to remove Andorra from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) list of tax haven countries. There has been a redefinition of the qualifications for Andorran citizenship, a major issue in a country where only about 36% are legal citizens. In 1995, a law to broaden citizenship was passed but citizenship remains hard to acquire, with only Andorran nationals being able to transmit citizenship automatically to their children. Lawful residents in Andorra may obtain citizenship after 25 years of residence. Children of residents may opt for Andorran citizenship after 18 if they have resided virtually all of their lives in Andorra. Mere birth on Andorran soil does not confer citizenship. Dual nationality is not permitted. Non-citizens are allowed to own only a 33% share of a company. Only after they have resided in the country for 20 years, will they be entitled to own 100% of a company. A proposed law to reduce the necessary years from 20 to 10 is pending approval in Parliament.

By creating a modern legal framework for the country, the 1993 constitution has allowed Andorra to begin a shift from an economy based largely on tax-free shopping to one based on tourism and international banking and finance. Despite promising new changes, it is likely that Andorra will, at least for the short term, continue to confront a number of difficult issues arising from the large influx of foreign residents and the need to develop modern social and political institutions. In addition to questions of Andorran nationality and immigration policy, other priority issues will include dealing with housing scarcities and speculation in real estate, developing the tourist industry, defining its relationship with the European Union, and reforming the investment law to allow up to 100% foreign ownership in activities and sectors considered strategic.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Head of Govt.: **Albert PINTAT**
Head of State (Co-Prince): **Joan Enric VIVES i SICILIA, Bishop**

Head of State (Co-Prince): **Nicolas SARKOZY**
Min. of Economic Development, Tourism, Culture, & Higher Education & Spokesman: **Juli MINOVES**
Min. of Economy & Agriculture: **Joel FONT**
Min. of Education, Professional Training, Youth, & Sports: **Roser BASTIDA**
Min. of Finance & of the Presidency: **Ferran MIRAPEIX**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Meritxell MATEU**
Min. of Health, Welfare, Family, & Housing: **Montserrat GIL**
Min. of Justice & Interior: **Antoni RIBERAYGUA**
Min. of Territorial & Town Planning & Environment: **Xavier JORDANA**
Ambassador to the US: **Carles FONT**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Carles FONT**

ECONOMY

Andorra's national income in 2007 was approximately $3.66 billion, with tourism as its principal component. Attractive for shoppers from France and Spain because of low taxes, the country also has developed active summer and winter tourist resorts. With some 270 hotels and 400 restaurants, as well as many shops, the tourist trade employs a growing portion of the domestic labor force.

There is a fairly active trade in consumer goods, including imported manufactured items, which, because they are taxed at lower rates, are less expensive in Andorra than in neighboring countries. Andorra's tax-free status has also had a significant effect on its relationship with the European Union. Its negotiations with the Union began in 1987. An agreement that went into effect in July 1991 sets duty-free quotas and places limits on certain items—mainly milk products, tobacco, and alcoholic beverages. Andorra is permitted to maintain price differences from other EU countries, and visitors enjoy limited duty-free allowances.

In June 2004 Andorra signed a series of accords with the EU in the fields of economic, social, and cultural cooperation. Tax legislation was also approved that taxes interest from monetary products and fixed-interest investments belonging to non-residents while maintaining bank secrecy. The results of Andorra's elections thus far indicate that many support the government's reform initiatives and believe Andorra must, to some degree, integrate into the European Union in order to continue to enjoy its prosperity. Although less than 2% of the land is arable, agriculture was the mainstay of the Andorran economy until the upsurge in tourism. Sheep rising has been the principal agricultural activity, but tobacco growing is lucrative. Most of Andorra's food is imported.

In addition to handicrafts, manufacturing includes cigars, cigarettes, and furniture for domestic and export markets. A hydroelectric plant at Les Escaldes, with a capacity of 26.5 megawatts, provides 40% of Andorra's electricity; Spain provides the rest.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since the establishment of sovereignty with the ratification of the constitution in 1993, Andorra has moved to become an active member of the international community. In July 1993, Andorra established its first diplomatic mission in the world, to the United Nations. In early 1995, the United States and Andorra established formal diplomatic relations. Andorra has also expanded relations with other nations.

Andorra is a full member of the United Nations (UN), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Conference for Commerce and Development (UNCCD), International Center of Studies for Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage (ICCROM), Telecommunications International Union (UIT), International Red Cross, Universal Copyright Convention, European Council, EUTELSAT, World Tourism Organization, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Customs Cooperation Council (CCC), Interpol, and International Monetary Fund among others. Since 1991, Andorra has had a special agreement with the European Union. In 2008, Andorra announced its endorsement of the Proliferation Security Initiative, designed to combat illegal trafficking in weapons of mass destruction.

U.S.-ANDORRAN RELATIONS

As noted, the United States established diplomatic relations with Andorra in February 21, 1995. The two countries are on excellent terms. The U.S. Ambassador to Spain is also accredited as Ambassador to Andorra. United States Consulate General officials based in Barcelona are responsible for the day-to-day conduct of relations with Andorra. The Andorran Permanent Representative to the United Nations was accredited as Andorra's Ambassador to the United States in early 2008.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MADRID (E) C/Serrano 75, APO/FPO PSC 61 Box, APO AE 09642, (34) 91-587-2200, Fax (34) 91-587-2303, INMARSAT Tel 8816-763-10973, Workweek: 09:00 to 18:00, Website: madrid.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Sharron Amis
AMB OMS:	Irene Buentello
DHS/CIS:	Vacant
DHS/ICE:	Luis Alvarez
ECO:	James Dudley
FCS:	Jim Wilson
FM:	James M. Wilt
HRO:	A.W. (Bill) Michael
MGT:	Gary Bagley
AMB:	Eduardo Aguirre, Jr.
CG:	Daniel Keller
DCM:	Hugo Llorens
PAO:	Josie Shumake
GSO:	Omar Bsaies
RSO:	John Young
AFSA:	Carl Schonander
AGR:	Stephen Hammond
CLO:	Katerina Marrano/Mimi Rhodes
DAO:	Capt. Kevin Little
DEA:	Joe Bond
EST:	C. Darren Perdue
FAA/CASLO:	Vacant
FMO:	R. Chance Sullivan

IMO:	Lorraine Morris
IPO:	Robert Hong
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISO:	William Jamerson
ISSO:	Robert Hong/William Jamerson
LEGATT:	Marc L. Varri
POL:	William Duncan

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet—Spain and Andorra

July 15, 2008

Country Description: Spain and Andorra are both highly developed and stable democracies with modern economies. Spain is a member of NATO and the European Union.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required for both countries. U.S. citizens can stay without a visa for a tourist/business stay of up to 90 days. That period begins when you enter any of the Schengen countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. Individuals who enter Spain or Andorra without a visa are not authorized to work. American citizens planning to study in Spain should be aware that Spanish immigration regulations require applications for student visas to be submitted 60 days before anticipated travel to Spain.

Note: Although European Union regulations require that non-EU visitors obtain a stamp in their passport upon initial entry to a Schengen country, many borders are not staffed with officers carrying out this function. If an American citizen wishes to ensure that his or her entry is properly documented, it may be necessary to request a stamp at an official point of entry.

Under local law, travelers without a stamp in their passport may be questioned and asked to document the length of their stay in Schengen countries at the time of departure or at any other point during their visit, and could face possible fines or other repercussions if unable to do so. In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

For further information concerning entry requirements for Spain, travelers should contact the Embassy of Spain at 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone (202) 452-0100, or the nearest Spanish Consulate in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, or San Juan. Spanish government web sites with information about entry requirements (in Spanish) can be found at http://www.mae.es and http://www.mir.es. Additional information may be obtained from the Tourist Office of Spain in New York, telephone (212) 265-8822, or via the Internet at www.spain.info.

For further information on entry requirements to Andorra, travelers should contact the Andorran Mission to the UN, 2 U.N. Plaza, 25th floor, New York, NY 10018, telephone (212) 750-8064 or via the Internet at http://www.andorra.ad. Visit the Embassy of Spain and Andorra web sites for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Spain and Andorra share with the rest of the world an increased threat of international terrorist incidents. Like other countries in the Schengen area, Spain's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering and exiting the country with anonymity. Spain's proximity to North Africa makes it vulnerable to attack from Al Qaeda of the Maghreb terrorists. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

In the deadliest terrorist attack in recent European history, on March 11, 2004, Islamic extremists bombed four commuter trains entering Madrid, causing 191 deaths and over 1,400 injuries. Spanish authorities tried the suspected terrorists and their co-conspirators in February 2007 and convicted 21 in October 2007.

The Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorist organization remains active in Spain. ETA has historically avoided targeting foreigners, directing their attacks against the police, military, local politicians, and Spanish government targets as well as attempts to disrupt transportation and daily life. However, foreigners have been killed or injured collaterally in ETA attacks, as was the case with the Barajas Airport bombing in December 2006, in which two Ecuadorian nationals were killed. In addition, bombs have been used as part of criminal extortion of businesses, particularly in the Basque region. The risk of "being in the wrong place at the wrong time" in event of an ETA action is a concern for foreign visitors and tourists. U.S. tourists traveling to Spain should remain vigilant, exercise caution, monitor local developments, and avoid demonstrations and other potentially violent situations.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While most of Spain has a moderate rate of crime and most of the estimated one million American tourists have trouble free visits to Spain each year, street crimes against tourists occur in the principal tourist areas. Madrid and Barcelona, in particular, report incidents of pickpocketing, mugging and occasional violent attacks, some of which require the victim to seek medical attention.

Although crimes occur at all times of day and night and to people of all ages, older tourists and Asian Americans seem to be particularly at risk. Criminals frequent tourist areas and major attractions such as museums, monuments, restaurants, outdoor cafes, Internet cafes, hotel lobbies, beach resorts, city buses, subways, trains, train stations, airports, and ATMs.

In Madrid, incidents have been reported in all major tourist areas, including the area near the Prado Museum, near Atocha train station, in Retiro Park, in areas of old Madrid including near the Royal Palace and in Plaza Mayor. There has been an increase in the number of passport and bag thefts reported at Madrid's Barajas Airport, local hotels, as well as in El Rastro (Madrid's flea market) and in the Metro.

In Barcelona, the largest number of incidents reported also occurred in major tourist areas, on Las Ramblas, Barcelona's El Prat airport, Sants train station, Metro stations, in the Sagrada Familia Area, in the Gothic Quarter, in Parc Güell, in Plaza Real, and along Barcelona's beaches. There has been a rise in the number of thefts reported at the Port Olimpic Area and nearby beaches.

Travelers should remain alert to their personal security and exercise caution. Travelers are encouraged to carry limited cash, only one credit card, and a copy of their passport; leaving extra cash, extra credit cards, passports and personal documents in a safe location. When carrying documents, credit cards or cash, you are encouraged to secure them in a hard-to-reach place and not to carry all valuables together in a purse or backpack.

Thieves often work in teams of two or more people. In many cases, one person distracts a victim while the accomplices perform the robbery. For example, someone might wave a map in your face and ask for directions, "inadvertently" spill something on you, or help you clean-up bird droppings thrown on by a third unseen accomplice. While your attention is diverted, an accomplice makes off with the valuables. Thieves may drop coins or keys at your feet to distract you and try to take your belongings while you are trying to help. Attacks are sometimes initiated from behind, with the victim being grabbed around the neck and choked by one assailant while others rifle through or grab the belongings. A group of assailants may surround the victim in a crowded popular tourist area or on public transportation, and only after the group has departed does the person discover he/she has been robbed. Purse-snatchers may grab purses or wallets and run away, or immediately pass the stolen item to an accomplice. A passenger on a passing motorcycle sometimes robs pedestrians. There have been increasing reports of thieves posing as plainclothes police officers, beckoning to pedestrians from cars and sometimes confronting them on the street and asking for documents or to inspect their cash for counterfeit bills, which they ultimately "confiscate" as evidence. The U.S. Embassy in Madrid has received several reports of cars on limited access motorways being pulled over by supposed unmarked police cars. The Spanish police do not operate in this fashion. American citizens are encouraged to ask for a uniformed law enforcement officer if approached.

Theft from vehicles is also common. "Good Samaritan" scams are unfortunately common, where a passing car or helpful stranger will attempt to divert the driver's attention by indicating there is a flat tire or mechanical problem. When the driver stops to check the vehicle, the "Good Samaritan" will appear to help the driver and passengers while the accomplice steals from the unlocked car. Drivers should be cautious about accepting help from anyone other than a uniformed Spanish police officer or Civil Guard. Items high in value like luggage, cameras, laptop computers, or briefcases are often stolen from cars. Travelers are advised not to leave valuables in parked cars, and to keep doors locked, windows rolled up, and valuables out of sight when driving.

While the incidence of sexual assault is statistically very low, attacks do occur. Spanish authorities have warned of availability of so-called "date-rape" drugs and other drugs, including "GBH" and liquid ecstasy. Americans should not lower their personal security awareness because they are on vacation.

A number of American citizens have been victims of lottery or advance fee scams in which a person is lured to Spain to finalize a financial transaction. Often the victims are initially contacted via internet or fax and informed they have won the Spanish Lottery (El Gordo), inherited money from a distant relative, or are needed to assist in a major financial transaction from one country to another. For more information, please see the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site on International Financial Scams.

Andorra has a low rate of crime.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

The Embassy's U.S. Commercial Service has seen an upswing in a type of scam targeting U.S. businesses, utilizing the name of a legitimate Spanish concern and legitimate-appearing Spanish bank references. The scam usually involves a temptingly large order or business proposal. The U.S. Commercial Service in Spain at http://www.buyusa.gov/spain/en/ stands ready to counsel any U.S. firm which would like to verify the legitimacy of an unsolicited business proposal purporting to come from a Spanish firm.

Information for Victims of Crime:
The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to

local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, Consular Officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Consular staff are prepared to assist victims of crime in anyway they can.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is available in both Spain and Andorra. Regulations regarding medications may vary from those in the U.S.; Americans with need for specific medications are encouraged to bring a supply sufficient for their anticipated period of stay as the medication may not be available and customs regulations may prohibit certain medications to be mailed from the United States to Spain or Andorra. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance companies prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans may not cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. You should contact your insurance provider before departure so appropriate arrangements can be made. Many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of $50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties, whereas travelers who have purchased overseas medical insurance have found it to be life saving when a medical emergency has occurred. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or if you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn. cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Spain and Andorra is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Madrid and Barcelona is faster-paced than in U.S. cities and can be unnerving due to unfamiliar signs or motorbikes weaving between traffic lanes. Drivers should always obey the closest traffic light, as there are separate pedestrian lights in the city. Drivers should be alert when driving at night in urban areas, due to the possibility of encountering drivers or pedestrians under the influence of alcohol. Night driving in isolated rural areas can be dangerous, because of farm animals and poorly marked roads. Rural traffic is generally heavier in July and August as well as during the Christmas and Easter seasons. Traffic regulations in effect in Spain include the prohibition on the use of a mobile phone without a hands-free device while driving a car. There is a fine of 300 euros for violation of this regulation and loss of driving privileges. In addition, all drivers and passengers are required to carry a reflective vest and put it on if they need to stop on the roadside. A reflective triangle warning sign for a vehicle stopped on the side of the road is also mandatory. Those renting vehicles are encouraged to check with the rental company about traffic regulations and safety equipment. U.S. citizens using U.S. issued drivers licenses must obtain International Driving Permits prior to their arrival if they plan to drive in Spain. Pedestrians should use designated crossing areas when crossing streets and obey traffic lights.

Public transportation in large cities is generally excellent. All major cities have metered taxis, and extra charges must be posted in the vehicle. Travelers are advised to use only clearly identified cabs and to ensure that taxi drivers always switch on the meter. A green light on the roof indicates that the taxi is available. Rail service is comfortable and reliable, but varies in quality and speed. Intercity buses are usually comfortable and inexpensive. For specific information concerning Spanish driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Spanish National Tourist Organization offices in New York via the Internet at http://www.okspain.org. For information about driving in Andorra refer to the Andorran website at http://www.andorra.ad.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Spain's Civil Aviation Authority as

being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Spain's air carrier operations. As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Andorra, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Andorra's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with ICAO aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Spain in Washington, DC or one of Spain's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Spain's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information, please call (212) 354-4480, or send an e-mail to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Spain or Andorra's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Spain and Andorra are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. The cities of Madrid and Barcelona and The Balearics Regional Government have banned the consumption of alcohol in the street, other than in registered street cafes and bars. Visitors to Madrid, Barcelona, Mallorca, Ibiza, and Menorca should be aware that failure to respect this law might result in the imposition of fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Spain or Andorra are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site to obtain updated information on travel and security within Spain or Andorra. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Serrano 75; telephone (34) (91) 587-2200, and fax (34) (91) 587-2303. U.S. citizens who register in the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy, Consulate General, or one of the Consular Agencies listed below can obtain updated information on travel and security within Spain or Andorra. Additional information is available through the U.S. Embassy's home page at http://madrid.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulate in Barcelona is located at Paseo Reina Elisenda 23-25; telephone (34)(93) 280-2227 and fax (34)(93) 205-5206. Visitors to Barcelona can access additional information from the Consulate General's web page at http://madrid.usembassy.gov/barcelonaen.html. There are six consular agencies in Spain, which provide limited services to American citizens, but are not authorized to issue passports. Anyone requesting service at one of the consular agencies should call ahead to verify that the service requested will be available on the day you expect to visit the agency.

Fuengirola (in Malaga Province), at Avenida Juan Gomez Juanito #8, Edificio Lucia 1C, Fuengirola 29640 Spain. Telephone (34)(952) 474-891 and fax (34)(952) 465-189. Hours 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

La Coruna, at Canton Grande 6, La Coruna 15003 Spain. Telephone (34) (981) 213-233 and fax (34)(981 22 28 08). Hours 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

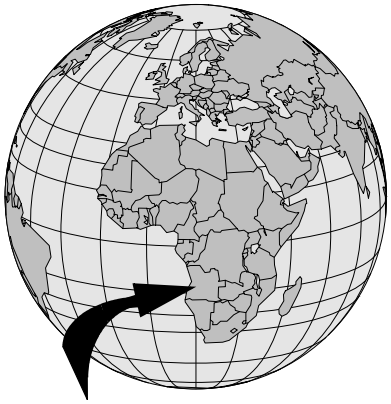
Las Palmas, at Edificio Arca, Calle Los Martinez de Escobar 3, Oficina 7, Las Palmas, Gran Canaria 35007 Spain. Telephone (34)(928) 222-552 and fax (34)(928) 225-863. Hours 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Palma de Mallorca, Edificio Reina Constanza, Porto Pi, 8, 9-D, 07015 Palma de Mallorca 07015 Spain. Telephone (34)(971) 40-3707 or 40-3905 and fax (34)(971) 40-3971. Hours 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Seville, at Plaza Nueva 8-8 duplicado, 2nd Floor, Office E-2 No.4, Sevilla, 41101 Spain. Telephone: (34)(65) 422-8751 and fax (34)(91) 422-0791. Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Valencia, at Doctor Romagosa #1, 2-J, 46002, Valencia 46002 Spain. Telephone (34)(96)-351-6973 and fax (34)(96) 352-9565. Hours 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

For Andorra, please contact the U.S. Consulate in Barcelona.



ANGOLA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name
Republic of Angola (Republica de Angola)

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,246,700 sq. km. (481,400 sq. mi), about twice the size of Texas.
Cities: Capital—Luanda (est. pop. 5.0 million); Huambo (750,000); Benguela (600,000).
Terrain: A narrow, dry coastal strip extending from the far north (Luanda) to Namibia in the south; well-watered agricultural highlands; savanna in the far east and south; and rain forest in the north and the enclave of Cabinda.
Climate: Tropical and tropical highland.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Angolan(s).
Population: (200 est.) 16,500,000.
Annual population growth rate: (2004) 2.8%.
Ethnic groups: Ovimbundu 37%, Kimbundu 25%, Bakongo 13%, mixed racial 2%, European 1%.
Religions: 2001 official est.) Roman Catholic 68%, various Protestant 20%; indigenous beliefs 12%.
Languages: Portuguese (official), Ovimbundu, Kimbundu, Bakongo, and others.
Education: Years compulsory—8. Enrollment (combined gross enrollment for primary, secondary, and tertiary schools, 2004 est.)—26%. Literacy (total population over 15 that can read and write, 2004 est.)—67.4% (female 54.2%, male 82.9%).
Health: Life expectancy (2004 est.)—total population 40.7 years. Infant mortality rate (2004 est.)—154/1,000.
Work force: (2003 est. 5.6 million) Agriculture—85%; industry and commerce—15%; services—6%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: November 11, 1975.
Government branches: Executive—elected president (chief of state), appointed prime minister, and 31 appointed civilian ministers and 55 vice ministers. Legislative—elected National Assembly (223 seats). Judicial—Supreme Court (also functions as Constitutional Court).
Political subdivisions: Province, municipality, commune.
Political parties: 111 with legal status; in 1992, 12 won seats in the National Assembly. Ruling party—Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Opposition—National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Social Renewal Party (PRS), National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), Party for Democratic Progress—Angola National Alliance (PDP-ANA), Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), Party of the Alliance of Youth, Workers, and Peasants (PAJOCA), Liberal Democratic Party (PLD), Democratic Alliance (AD), Angolan Democratic Forum (FDA), Social Democratic Party (PSD), Front for Democracy (FPD), and the Angolan National Democratic Party (PNDA).
Suffrage: Universal age 18 and over.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est. using purchasing power parity) $91.29 billion.
Annual real GDP growth rate: (2007 est.) 21.1%.
Per capita GDP: (2007 est. using purchasing power parity) $5,600.
Avg. inflation rate: (2007) 12.2%.
Natural resources: Petroleum, diamonds, iron ore, phosphates, bauxite, uranium, gold, granite, copper, feldspar.
Agriculture: Products—bananas, sugarcane, coffee, sisal, corn, cotton, manioc, tobacco, vegetables, plantains; livestock; forest products; fisheries products.
Industry: Types—petroleum drilling and refining, mining, cement, basic metal products, fish processing, food processing, brewing, tobacco products, sugar refining, textiles.
Trade: Exports (2007 est)—petroleum $44.32 billion.Consisting of crude oil, diamonds, refined petroleum products, gas, coffee, sisal, fish and fish products, timber, cotton. Major markets (2006)—U.S. (38.1%), China (34.2%), Taiwan (5.8%),

France (4.9%), Chile (4.1%). Imports (2007)—$12.29 billion: machinery and electrical equipment, vehicles and spare parts; medicines, food, textiles, military goods. Major sources (2006)—U.S. (15.3%), Portugal (15%), South Korea (10.1%), China (8.8%), Brazil (8.2%), South Africa (6.7%), France (6.2%).

GEOGRAPHY

Angola is located on the South Atlantic Coast of West Africa between Namibia and the Republic of the Congo. It also is bordered by the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north and east and Zambia to the east. The country is divided into an arid coastal strip stretching from Namibia to Luanda; a wet, interior highland; a dry savanna in the interior south and southeast; and rain forest in the north and in Cabinda. The upper reaches of the Zambezi River pass through Angola, and several tributaries of the Congo River have their sources in Angola. The coastal strip is tempered by the cool Benguela current, resulting in a climate similar to coastal Baja California. There is a short rainy season lasting from February to April. Summers are hot and dry, while winters are mild. The interior highlands have a mild climate with a rainy season from November through April followed by a cool dry season from May to October when overnight temperatures can fall to freezing. Elevations generally range from 3,000 to 6,000 feet. The far north and Cabinda enjoy rain throughout much of the year.

PEOPLE

Estimates of Angola's population vary widely, as there has been no census since 1970, but it is estimated at no less than 16 million. Angola has three main ethnic groups, each speaking a Bantu language: Ovimbundu 37%, Kimbundu 25%, and Bakongo 13%. Other groups include Chokwe, Lunda, Ganguela, Nhaneca-Humbe, Ambo, Herero, and Xindunga. In addition, mixed racial (European and African) people amount to about 2%, with a small (1%) population of whites, mainly ethnically Portuguese. Portuguese make up the largest non-Angolan population, with at least 30,000 (though many native-born Angolans can claim Portuguese nationality under Portuguese law). Portuguese is both the official and predominant language.

HISTORY

In 1482, when the Portuguese first landed in what is now northern Angola, they encountered the Kingdom of the Congo, which stretched from modern Gabon in the north to the Kwanza River in the south. Mbanza Congo, the capital, had a population of 50,000 people. South of this kingdom were various important states, of which the Kingdom of Ndongo, ruled by the ngola (king), was most significant. Modern Angola derives its name from the king of Ndongo. The Portuguese gradually took control of the coastal strip throughout the 16th century by a series of treaties and wars. The Dutch occupied Luanda from 1641-48, providing a boost for anti-Portuguese states. In 1648, Brazilian-based Portuguese forces re-took Luanda and initiated a process of military conquest of the Congo and Ndongo states that ended with Portuguese victory in 1671. Full Portuguese administrative control of the interior did not occur until the beginning of the 20th century.

Portugal's primary interest in Angola quickly turned to slavery. The slaving system began early in the 16th century with the purchase from African chiefs of people to work on sugar plantations in São Tomé, Principe, and Brazil. Many scholars agree that by the 19th century, Angola was the largest source of slaves not only for Brazil, but also for the Americas, including the United States. By the end of the 19th century, a massive forced labor system had replaced formal slavery and would continue until outlawed in 1961. It was this forced labor that provided the basis for development of a plantation economy and, by the mid-20th century, a major mining sector. Forced labor combined with British financing to construct three railroads from the coast to the interior, the most important of which was the transcontinental Benguela railroad that linked the port of Lobito with the copper zones of the Belgian Congo and what is now Zambia, through which it connects to Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

Colonial economic development did not translate into social development for native Angolans. The Portuguese regime encouraged white immigration, especially after 1950, which intensified racial antagonisms. As decolonization progressed elsewhere in Africa, Portugal, under the Salazar and Caetano dictatorships, rejected independence and treated its African colonies as overseas provinces. Consequently, three independence movements emerged: the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by Agostinho Neto, with a base among Kimbundu and the mixed-race intelligentsia of Luanda, and links to communist parties in Portugal and the East Bloc; the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), led by Holden Roberto with an ethnic base in the Bakongo region of the north and links to the United States and the Mobutu regime in Kinshasa; and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), led by Jonas Malheiro Savimbi with an ethnic and regional base in the Ovimbundu heartland in the center of the country and links to the People's Republic of China and apartheid South Africa.

From the early 1960s, elements of these movements fought against the Portuguese. A 1974 coup d'etat in Portugal established a military government that promptly ceased the war and agreed, in the Alvor Accords, to hand over power to a coalition of the three movements. The ideological differences between the three movements eventually led to armed conflict, with FNLA and UNITA forces, encouraged by their respective international supporters, attempting to wrest control of Luanda from the MPLA. The intervention of troops from South Africa on behalf of UNITA and Zaire on behalf of the



FNLA in September and October 1975 and the MPLA's importation of Cuban troops in November effectively internationalized the conflict. Retaining control of Luanda, the coastal strip, and increasingly lucrative oil fields in Cabinda, the MPLA declared independence on November 11, 1975, the day the Portuguese abandoned the capital. UNITA and the FNLA formed a rival coalition government based in the interior city of Huambo. Agostinho Neto became the first president of the MPLA government that was recognized by the United Nations in 1976. Upon Neto's death from cancer in 1979, then-Planning Minister José Eduardo dos Santos ascended to the presidency. The FNLA's military failures led to its increasing marginalization, internal divisions, and abandonment by international supporters. An internationalized conventional civil war between UNITA and the MPLA continued until 1989. For much of this time, UNITA controlled vast swaths of the interior and was

backed by U.S. resources and South African troops. Similarly, tens of thousands of Cuban troops remained in support of the MPLA, often fighting South Africans on the front lines. A U.S.-brokered agreement resulted in withdrawal of foreign troops in 1989 and led to the Bicesse Accord in 1991, which spelled out an electoral process for a democratic Angola under the supervision of the United Nations. When UNITA's Jonas Savimbi failed to win the first round of the presidential election in 1992 (he won 40% to dos Santos's 49%, which required a runoff), he called the election fraudulent and returned to war.

Another peace accord, known as the Lusaka Protocol, was brokered in Lusaka, Zambia, and signed in 1994. This agreement, too, collapsed into renewed conflict. The UN Security Council voted on August 28, 1997 to impose sanctions on UNITA. The Angolan military launched a massive offensive in 1999, which destroyed UNITA's conventional capacity and recaptured all major cities previously held by Savimbi's forces. Savimbi then declared a return to guerrilla tactics, which continued until his death in combat in February 2002.

On April 4, 2002, the Angolan Government and UNITA signed the Luena Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which formalized the de facto cease-fire that prevailed following Savimbi's death. In accordance with the MOU, UNITA recommitted to the peace framework in the 1994 Lusaka Protocol, returned all remaining territory to Angolan Government control, quartered all military personnel in predetermined locations, and relinquished all arms. In August 2002, UNITA demobilized all military personnel. UN Security Council sanctions on UNITA were lifted on December 9, 2002. UNITA and the MPLA held their first post-war party congresses in 2003. The UNITA Congress saw the democratic transfer of power from interim leader General Paulo Lukumba "Gato" to former UNITA representative in Paris Isaias Henriqué Samakuva, while the MPLA Congress reaffirmed President dos Santos' leadership of party structures. Samakuva was reelected to a second 4-year term as UNITA party president at a UNITA party congress in July 2007.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Peace and Reconciliation in Cabinda on August 1, 2006, was intended as a step toward ending conflict in Cabinda and in bringing about greater representation for the people of Cabinda. It followed a successful counterinsurgency campaign by the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), who still maintain a strong troop presence there. The MOU rejected the notion of Cabindan independence, calls for the demobilization and reintegration of former Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) fighters into various governmental positions, and creates a special political and economic status for the province of Cabinda. Many FLEC military combatants were integrated into the Angolan Armed Forces and National Police, including into some command positions. In addition, Cabindans were given designated numbers of vice ministerial and other positions in the Angolan Government. Some FLEC members, who did not sign onto the peace memorandum, continue their independence efforts through public outreach, infrequent low-level attacks against FAA convoys and outposts and occasional attacks on civilians.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Angola changed from a one-party Marxist-Leninist system ruled by the MPLA to a nominal multiparty democracy following the 1992 elections, in which President dos Santos won the first-round election with 49% of the vote to Jonas Savimbi's 40%; a runoff never took place. The Constitutional Law of 1992 establishes the broad outlines of government structure and delineates the rights and duties of citizens. The government is based on ordinances, decrees, and decisions issued by a president and his ministers or through legislation produced by the National Assembly and approved by the president. The parliament is generally subordinate to the executive.

Angola is governed by a president who is assisted by a prime minister and 31 cabinet ministers, all appointed by the president. Political power is concentrated in the presidency. The executive branch of the government is composed of the president (head of state and government), the prime minister, and the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers, composed of all government ministers and vice ministers, meets regularly to discuss policy issues. The president, the Council of Ministers, and individual ministers in their areas of competence have the ability to legislate by decree.

Of the 220 deputies in the National Assembly, 130 are elected at large, and 5 are elected to represent each of the 18 provinces. The Electoral Law also calls for the election of three additional deputies to represent citizens living abroad; however, those positions were not filled in the 1992 elections. Following the 1992 elections, the ruling MPLA controlled 59% of the Assembly's seats.

On June 4, 2008 President dos Santos officially called for legislative elections to be held on September 5, 2008, Angola's first election since 1992. The announcement followed a voter registration process that registered over 8 million Angolans. Due to technical difficulties on election day, voting was extended through September 6. As a result of the elections, which have been widely accepted by the international community as having reflected the will of the Angolan people, the MPLA won 81.6 percent of the electorate giving it 190 out of 220 seats in parliament. The remaining 30 parliamentary seats were won by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola UNITA (16), the Social Renewal Party (PRS) (8), National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) (3), and Nova Democracia (2).

Presidential elections are planned for 2009, with municipal elections to follow. The central government administers the country through 18 provinces. Governors of the provinces are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the president. The government has embarked on a program of decentralization, and in August 2007 the Council of Ministers passed a resolution to grant 50 municipalities control of their own budgets.

The legal system is based on Portuguese and customary law but is weak and fragmented. Courts operate in only a fraction of the 164 municipalities. A Supreme Court serves as the appellate tribunal; a Constitutional Court with powers of judicial review has never been constituted despite statutory authorization. Recently, the Supreme Court has acted as a Constitutional Court.

The 27-year-long civil war ravaged the country's political and social institutions. The government estimates that 4.7 million people were internally displaced by the civil war. In March 2007, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Angola jointly celebrated the end of a 5-year organized voluntary repatriation program that returned home more than 400,000 Angolan refugees. UNHCR and the Angolan Government estimate that over 200,000 refugees remain outside Angola, and the government has assured that all remaining refugees have the right to return. Daily conditions of life throughout the country mirror the inadequate administrative infrastructure as well as weak social institutions. Government support for social institutions is often inadequate. Many hospitals are without medicines or basic equipment, schools are without books, and public employees often lack the basic supplies for their day-to-day work.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Jose Eduardo DOS SANTOS**
Prime Minister: **Fernando "Nando" da Piedade Dias DOS SANTOS**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Gilberto LUTUKUTA**
Min. of Commerce: **Joaquim Ekuma MUAFUMUA**
Min. of Culture: **Boaventura CARDOSO**
Min. of Defense: **Kundi PAIHAMA**
Min. of Education: **Antonio Burity DA SILVA**
Min. of Energy & Water: **Jose Botelho DE VASCONCELOS**
Min. of Environment & Urban Development: **Diakunpuna Sita JOSE**
Min. of External Relations: **Joao Bernardo DE MIRANDA**
Min. of Finance: **Jose Pedro DE MORAIS**
Min. of Fisheries: **Salamao XIRIMBIMBI**
Min. of Geology & Mines: **Manuel Antonio AFRICANO**
Min. of Health: **Sebastiao Sapuile VELSOS**
Min. of Industry: **Joaquim Duarte da Costa DAVID**
Min. of Interior: **Roberto Leal Monteiro NGONGO**
Min. of Justice: **Manuel ARAGAO**
Min. of Petroleum: **Desiderio DA COSTA**
Min. of Planning: **Ana Dias LOURENCO**
Min. of Public Administration & Employment: **Antonio Pitra NETO**
Min. of Public Works: **Francisco Higino CARNEIRO**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Joao Baptista NGANDAGINA**
Min. of Social Communication: **Pedro Henrick Vaal NETO**
Min. of Social Reintegration: **Joao Baptista KUSSUMUA**
Min. of Telecommunications: **Licinio Tavares RIBEIRO**
Min. of Territorial Administration: **Virgilio Fontes PEREIRA**
Min. of Tourism & Hotels: **Eduardo Jonatao CHINGUNJI**
Min. of Transport: **Andre Luis BRANDAO**
Min. of Veterans & Ex-Combatants: **Pedro Jose VAN DUNEM**
Min. of Women & Family Affairs: **Candida Celeste DA SILVA**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Jose Marcos BARRICA**
Min. in the Office of the Presidency, Civil Affairs: **Jose da Costa e Silva LEITAO**
Min. in the Office of the Presidency, General Secretariat: **Jose Mateus de Adelino PEIXOTO**
Min. in the Office of the Presidency, Military Affairs: **Manuel Helder DIAS**
Governor, National Bank of Angola: **Amadeu MAURICIO**
Ambassador to the US: **Josefina Perpetua Pitra DIAKITE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ismael Abraao GASPAR MARTINS**

Angola maintains an embassy in the United States at 2100-2108 16th St., NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-785-1156; fax 202-822-9049; web: www.angola.org). Angola also maintains consulates in New York City (attached to its Permanent Mission to the United Nations) at 866 UN Plaza, 48th St., Suite 552, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-233-3588, ext. 15; fax 212-980-9606; web: http://www2.un.int/public/Angola/) and in Houston at 3040 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 708, Houston, TX 77056 (tel. 713-212-3840; fax 713-212-3841).

ECONOMY

Angola has a fast-growing economy largely due to a major oil boom, but it also ranks in the bottom 10% of most socioeconomic indicators. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that Angola's real GDP increased by 23.4% in 2007. Angola is recovering from 27 years of nearly continuous warfare, and it remains beset by corruption and economic mismanagement. Despite abundant natural resources, and rising per capita GDP, it was ranked 161 out of 177 countries on the 2006 UN Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index. Subsistence agriculture sustains one-third of the population.

The rapidly expanding petroleum industry has reached its Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cap, producing approximately 2 million barrels per day (bpd). Angola's crude oil production is one of the highest in Africa, rivaling Nigeria. Crude oil accounts for 51.7% of GNP, 95% of exports, and 80% of government revenues. Angola also produces 40,000 bpd of locally refined oil. Oil production remains largely offshore and has few linkages with other sectors of the economy, though a local content initiative promulgated by the Angolan Government is pressuring oil companies to source from local businesses.

Block 15, located offshore of Soyo, currently provides 30% of Angola's crude oil production. ExxonMobil,

through its subsidiary Esso, is the operator with a 40% share. In 2005, Block 15's second major sub-field, Kizomba B, came online producing at about 250,000 bpd. BP, ENI-Agip, and Statoil are partners in the concession. Chevron operates Block 0, offshore Cabinda, which provides about 20% of Angola's crude oil production. Its partners in Block 0 are Sonangol (the Angolan state oil company), TotalFinaElf, and ENI-Agip. In 2007, Block 0 had a total production of 370,000 bpd, and drilling activity continues at a high level. Chevron also operates Angola's first deepwater section to go into production, Block 14, which started pumping in January 2000 and produced 105,000 bpd in 2006.

TotalFinaElf brought the first Kwanza Basin deepwater blocks online with production from its Block 17 concession that began in February 2002. Inauguration of the Dalia oilfield in December 2006 combined with the Girassol field already in operation brought Block 17's total production to approximately 500,000 bpd as of July 2007. Total expects to begin drilling in new oilfield Pazflor in 2009, bringing production to a peak 700,000 bpd by 2011. Exploration is ongoing in ultra-deep water concessions and in deepwater and shallow concessions in the Namibe Basin. BP made the first significant ultra-deepwater find in its Block 31 concession in 2002 and had reached nine significant discoveries by the end of 2005. BP expected to ship its first crude from the Plutonio oilfield in Block 18 in September 2007 and expects Plutonio to average 200,000 bpd in full production. Marathon also drilled a successful well in its Block 32 ultra-deep water concession. TotalFinaElf operates Angola's one refinery (in Luanda) for sole owner Sonangol; plans for a second refinery in Lobito with projected production of 200,000 bpd are moving forward. There are plans to increase capacity of the Luanda refinery from 40,000 bpd to 100,000 bpd. Chevron, Sonangol, BP, Total, and Eni are developing a $4-5 billion liquefied natural gas plant at Soyo, to be constructed by Bechtel, expected to start production in 2012.

Exports to Asian countries have grown rapidly in recent years, particularly to China. In late 2004, China's state oil company Sinopec entered the market offering two separate $1 billion signing bonus offers on two offshore blocks. Sinopec has also formed a partnership with Sonangol to operate Block 3/05 (formerly Block 3/80), whose operation was transferred from Total to Sonangol. Sonangol will seek to expand its operation of onshore and shallow water blocks. This includes the northern block of Cabinda's onshore concessions, which since the reduction in hostilities with separatist forces is now open to exploration. Sonangol and Sinopec will also be eyeing future concession rounds, particularly for 23 blocks in the Kwanza Basin onshore area and the relinquished parts of Blocks 15, 17, and 18, currently operated by Exxon, Total, and BP. During 2006, Angola was the leading source country in terms of dollar value for the crude oil China imported, importing U.S. $10.928 billion, up 16.5% year on year.

Diamonds make up most of Angola's remaining exports, with yearly production at 6 million carats. Diamond sales reached approximately $1.1 billion in 2006. Despite increased corporate ownership of diamond fields, much production is currently in the hands of small-scale prospectors, often operating illegally. Only eight large-scale mines are operating out of a total of 145 concessions. In June 2005, De Beers signed a $10 million prospecting contract with the government's diamond parastatal, ending a 4-year investment dispute between De Beers and the government. The government is making an increased effort to register and license prospectors. Legal sales of rough diamonds may occur only through the government's diamond-buying parastatal, although many producers continue to bypass the system to obtain higher prices. The government has established an export certification scheme consistent with the "Kimberley Process" to identify legitimate production and sales. Other mineral resources, including gold, remain largely undeveloped, though granite and marble quarrying have begun.

In the last decade of the colonial period, Angola was a major African agricultural exporter. Because of severe wartime conditions, including extensive laying of landmines throughout the countryside, agricultural activities came to a near standstill, and the country now imports over half of its food. Small-scale agricultural production has increased several-fold over the last 5 years due to demining efforts, infrastructure improvements, and the ability of returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to safely return to agricultural areas, yet production of most crops remains below 1974 levels. Some efforts at commercial agricultural recovery have gone forward, notably in fisheries and tropical fruits, but most of the country's vast potential remains untapped. Recently passed land reform laws will attempt to reconcile overlapping traditional land use rights, colonial-era land claims, and recent land grants to facilitate significant commercial agricultural development.

An economic reform effort launched in 1998 was only marginally successful in addressing persistent fiscal mismanagement and corruption. In April 2000, Angola started an IMF staff-monitored program (SMP). The program lapsed in June 2001 over IMF concerns about lack of progress by Angola. Under the program, the Government of Angola did succeed in unifying exchange rates and moving fuel, electricity, and water prices closer to market rates. In March 2007, the government announced it was not interested in a formally-structured IMF program, but would continue to participate in Article IV consultations and other technical assistance on an ad hoc basis.

In December 2002, President dos Santos named a new economic team to oversee homegrown reform efforts. The new team succeeded in decreasing overall government spending, rationalizing the Kwanza exchange rate, closing regulatory loopholes allowing off-budget expenditures, and capturing all revenues in the state budget. New procedures were implemented to track the flow of funds between the Treasury, Banco

Nacional de Angola (the central bank), and the state-owned Banco de Poupanca e Credito, which operates the budget. The Angolan Government adopted a new investment code. Concerns remain about quasi-fiscal operations by the state oil company Sonangol, continued oil-backed commercial borrowing by the Angolan Government, and inadequate transparency and oversight in the management of public accounts. The Angolan commercial code, financial sector law, and telecommunications law all require substantial revision.

Angola is the third-largest trading partner of the United States in sub-Saharan Africa, largely because of its petroleum exports. U.S. exports to Angola primarily consist of industrial goods and services—such as oilfield equipment, mining equipment, chemicals, aircraft, and food. On December 30, 2003, President Bush approved the designation of Angola as eligible for tariff preferences under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

DEFENSE

The Angolan Armed Forces, known by its Portuguese acronym FAA, are headed by a chief of staff who reports to the civilian minister of defense. There are three services—the army, navy, and air force. Total manpower is about 140,000. The army is by far the largest of the services with about 130,000 personnel. The navy numbers about 3,000 and operates several small patrol craft and barges. Air force personnel total about 7,000; its equipment includes Russian-manufactured fighters and transport planes, Bell helicopters, and Italian trainers. The "Casa Militar," or presidential guard, answers directly to the Office of the President and is separate from FAA command and control structures.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

From 1975 to 1989, Angola was aligned with the Soviet Union and Cuba. Since then, it has focused on improving relationships with Western countries, cultivating links with other Portuguese-speaking countries, and asserting its own national interests in Central Africa through military and diplomatic intervention. It has entered the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in order to improve its ties with its largely anglophone neighbors to the south. In 1997, Zimbabwe and Namibia joined Angola in its military intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Angolan troops fought in support of the Laurent and Joseph Kabila governments. It also has intervened in the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville) in support of President Sassou-Nguesso. Angola has also engaged in a more robust economic relationship with the People's Republic of China. The P.R.C. has extended over U.S. $7 billion in credit to Angola. Angola has also received billion dollar lines of credit from Brazil and Germany.

Multilaterally, Angola has promoted the revival of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) as a forum for cultural exchange and a means of expanding ties with Portugal and Brazil. During the peace process, the government fully cooperated with the UN Mission in Angola (UNMA), which concluded its mandate in mid-February 2003. Angola concluded a 2-year term on the UN Security Council in December 2004. In June 2007, it began a 3-year term on the Human Rights Council.

U.S.-ANGOLAN RELATIONS

The U.S. Mission in Angola includes four agencies—the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Defense, and the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (HHS/CDC). In addition, a variety of federal agencies maintain relationships with the Angolan Government through ongoing projects, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce, the U.S. Trade Development Agency, and the Department of Energy.

The United States and Angola established formal diplomatic relations in 1993. Thereafter, the U.S. played a role in facilitating the Lusaka Protocol that sought an end to Angola's long-running civil war. Since war's end in 2002, United States foreign policy goals in Angola have sought to consolidate peace and security, promote economic prosperity, improve health, and encourage Angola's transition to democracy and respect for human rights. The U.S. has worked in partnership with Angola to remove thousands of landmines and help war refugees and internally displaced people return to their homes.

USAID's development program in Angola in FY 2007 was consistent with the country's status as a developing country at a pivotal juncture in its development and reconstruction. In FY 2006, the program budget was $25.5 million and focused on civil society strengthening, improved governance, and democratization; market-oriented economic analysis and economic reform policy; agricultural sector productivity; maternal and child health; HIV/AIDS prevention, education, and voluntary counseling; and workforce development. Angola also launched a major program to fight malaria through the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). The Governing Justly and Democratically objective strengthens constituencies and institutions required for democratic governance by strengthening civil society organizations and promoting local government decentralization; fostering an independent media, government transparency, accountability, and capability, and improved dialogue between citizens and government; and laying the groundwork for free and fair elections. The Investing in People objective aims to improve maternal and child health and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases by helping communities and institutions to provide necessary health services and to conduct HIV/AIDS prevention programs. The PMI

is the largest health program and expands efforts to scale up proven preventive and treatment interventions toward achievement of 85% coverage among vulnerable groups and 50% reduction in morbidity due to malaria. The Economic Growth objective fosters economic policy and financial sector reform; credit access for micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises; and expanded trade and investment.

To assist with economic reform, in FY 2007 the State Department provided $2.2 million to work on land tenure, economic policy, and the financial sector. An additional $143,000 in grants was provided to community development projects and non-governmental organization (NGO)-sponsored democracy and human rights projects. $152,000 in International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds was provided for English language training to the Angolan Armed Forces. Professional training for law enforcement personnel at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Gaborone, Botswana continued. The Safe Skies for Africa program provided around $800,000 in equipment and training to the Angolan civil aviation authority. As part of its public diplomacy program, the Embassy provided nearly $434,000 in English language training, educational exchanges and fellowships, and information resource services. The State Department provided $6 million for ongoing landmine, small arms, and munitions destruction projects throughout the country. These projects have played a major role in clearing agricultural land and opening critical road networks and increasing access in those areas of the country most impacted by landmines.

At the same time, the energy-based U.S. trading relationship continues to expand and spark other ties. One offshoot has been the development of a Sister City relationship between Lafayette, Louisiana and Cabinda and between Houston, Texas and Luanda. The Catholic University of Luanda has close links with a number of American institutions and has received support from the Angola Educational Assistance Fund, a U.S. non-profit organization organized by Citizens Energy of Boston. Sonangol has a longstanding program of educating its professionals in U.S. universities, complementing Chevron's policy of U.S. training for its own growing pool of Angolan professionals.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LUANDA (E) Rua Houari Boumedienne #32, 011-244-222-641-000, Fax 011-244-222-641-232, INMARSAT Tel 011-871-683-133-246, Workweek: Monday thru Thursday, 8:00 am–6:00 pm; Fridays 8:00 am till 12 Noon, Website: Luanda.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Robin Welker
ECO/COM:	Mark Schall
FM:	Larry Ragan
MGT:	Margaret R. Hartley
POL/ECO:	Mitchell Ferguson
AMB:	Dan W. Mozena
CON:	Falashade O. Robinson
DCM:	Francisco Fernandez
PAO:	Abigail Dressel
GSO:	Frieda Martin
RSO:	Keith Larochelle
AID:	Susan Brems
CLO:	Nadege Mathieu
DAO:	Christopher Grieg
ICASS Chair:	Chris Grieg
IMO:	Ruthann Kleinfelt
ISO:	Veronica Johnson
ISSO:	Ruthann Kleinfelt
POL:	Doreen Bailey
State ICASS:	Mitchell Ferguson

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 20, 2008

Country Description: Angola is a large, developing country in southwest central Africa. The capital city is Luanda. Portuguese, the official language, is widely spoken throughout the country. Despite its extensive oil and mineral reserves and arable land suitable for large-scale production of numerous crops, Angola has some of the world's lowest social development indicators. Development was severely restricted by a 27-year long civil war that broke out upon independence in 1975, which destroyed the majority of the country's infrastructure. Since the conflict's conclusion in 2002, the government has initiated extensive infrastructure reconstruction and development projects, and there are growing signs of economic recovery. However, Angola still faces challenges with its infrastructure and with providing government services, especially in basic social services, aviation and travel safety, accommodation availability and quality and communications. Facilities for tourism, particularly outside the capital of Luanda, are often rudimentary.

Entry Requirements: Passport and visa are required and must be obtained in advance. An International Certificate of Vaccination is required. Visitors should allow several weeks for the processing of their visa application. Angola does not issue airport visas. Persons arriving without visas are subject to arrest or exclusion. Travelers may also encounter delays if they do not have at least one completely blank visa page in their passports for entry stamps. As of November 1, 2007, Angola no longer requires travelers to have an exit visa. Travelers whose international immunization cards do not show inoculations against yellow fever within the past ten years may be subject to exclusion, on-the-spot vaccination, and/or heavy fines. Visitors remaining in Angola beyond their authorized visa duration are subject to fines and arrest. It is illegal to attempt to carry local currency out of Angola and persons found attempting to carry local currency out of Angola are subject to having this currency confiscated by customs officers. Current information on entry requirements may be obtained from the Embassy of Angola at 2100-2108 16th Street NW, Washington, DC, tel. (202) 785-1156, fax (202) 785-1258.

Safety and Security: The overall security situation in Angola has improved markedly since the end of the civil war; however, Americans should still exercise caution when traveling in Angola. Although the war has ended, ground travel

throughout Angola can be problematic due to land mines, which were used extensively during the war. Travelers should not touch anything that resembles a mine or unexploded ordinance. Frequent checkpoints and poor infrastructure contribute to unsafe travel on roads outside of the city of Luanda. Police and military officials are sometimes undisciplined, but their authority should not be challenged. Travel in many parts of Luanda is relatively safe by day, but car doors should be locked, windows rolled up, and packages stored out of sight. Visitors should avoid travel after dark, and no travel should be undertaken on roads outside of cities after nightfall.

Americans located in, or planning to visit, the northern province of Cabinda should be aware of threats to their safety outside of Cabinda city. In 2007 and 2008 armed groups specifically targeted and attacked expatriates in Cabinda; these armed attacks resulted in the rape, robbery and murder of a small number of expatriates working in Cabinda. Those responsible have declared their intention to continue attacks against expatriates. Occasional attacks against police and Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) convoys and outposts also continue to be reported. These incidents, while small in overall numbers, have occurred with little or no warning. American citizens are, therefore, urged to exercise extreme caution when traveling outside of Cabinda city and limit travel to essential only.

Americans are advised to undertake only essential travel to Lunda North and South provinces. As the government of Angola is sensitive to the travel of foreigners in the diamond producing areas of the provinces, proper permission and documentation is required to frequent these areas. One can be subject to restriction or detention. There have been reports of crime or banditry in these areas, especially on roads leading into these areas.

Visitors to Angola are advised not to take photographs of sites and installations of military or security interest, including government buildings, as this can result in fines and possibly arrest.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except on U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Crime is a serious problem throughout Angola. While most violent crime occurs between Angolans, foreigners have occasionally been attacked as well. Street crime is a regular occurrence in Luanda. The most common crimes are pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, vehicle theft, and vehicle break-ins. Armed muggings, robberies, and carjacking involving foreigners are not frequent but do occur. Americans are advised to avoid Roque Santeiro and Rocha Pinto, and to only travel the "Serpentine Road" in front of the U.S. Embassy by car. In general, movement around Luanda is safer by day than by night. Touring after dark should be avoided. Police and military officials are sometimes undisciplined, but their authority should not be challenged. Air travelers arriving in Luanda are strongly advised to arrange reliable and secure ground transportation in advance; there is no regular taxi service. American citizens are advised to avoid the use of the public transportation known as "candongueiros" or "taxistas"; these multi-passenger vans are largely unregulated and often dangerous.

Motorists should stop at all police checkpoints if so directed. Police officers may solicit bribes or request immediate payment of "fines" for alleged minor infractions. American citizens asked for bribes by the police should politely ask the traffic police to write them a ticket if the police allege a moving violation. If the police officer writes the ticket, then the motorist would pay the fine at the place indicated on the ticket. If no moving violation is alleged and the officer is asking for a bribe, the motorist should, without actually challenging the officer's authority, politely ask the officer for his/her name and badge number. Officers thus engaged will frequently let motorists go with no bribe paid if motorists follow this advice. Motorists are reminded to have all proper documents in the vehicle at all times (i.e. vehicle registration, proof of insurance, and driver's license), as the lack of documentation is a violation and can also be a reason an officer would solicit a bribe. Local law requires that every driver in Angola have the proper permission to drive. Further information on driving in Angola can be obtained from the Embassy of Angola. Police are not always responsive to reports of crime or requests for assistance. Most police are on foot and are assigned to designated stationary posts. The Rapid Intervention Police (PIR) unit is frequently seen patrolling various areas of the city. This unit, which is well trained and organized, will respond to major criminal incidents.

There have been police operations against illegal aliens and private companies resulting in deportation of illegal resident foreign nationals and loss of personal and company property. Independent entrepreneurs in Angola should carry relevant immigration and business documents at all times.

Travelers should be alert to fraud occasionally perpetrated by Luanda airport personnel. Immigration and customs officials sometimes detain foreigners without cause, demanding gratuities before allowing them to enter or depart Angola. Airport health officials sometimes demand that passengers arriving without proof of current yellow fever vaccination accept and pay for a vaccination at the airport. Travelers are advised to carry their yellow fever vaccination card and ensure their yellow fever vaccine is up-to-date. If travelers forget to bring their yellow fever vacci-

nation card and do not wish to receive the vaccine offered at the airport, they should be prepared to depart the country on the next available flight. Searches of travelers' checked baggage is common; travelers are advised to take precautions against this possibility. Travelers should also be aware that criminals sometimes attempt to insert items into baggage at the airport, particularly for flights from Luanda to South Africa. It is important that travelers maintain control of their carry-on baggage at all times, and if they believe something has been inserted into their baggage, they should report the incident immediately to airport authorities.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of crimes are solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

In addition to reporting crime to local police and the U.S. Embassy in Angola, victims of crime who are residing in Angola are also encouraged to report the crime to the security department of their employer. Short-term visitors are encouraged to report the crime to the management of the hotel where they are staying if the crime occurred in or near the hotel. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Angola for police is 113; for fire fighters: 115, and for ambulance services: 112. Please be advised that the emergency numbers listed may or may not have an English speaking operator available.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities and services are available in Angola, but are limited and often do not meet U.S. standards. Adequate care for medical emergencies is limited to Luanda, where there are some good private clinics that usually have a 24-hour service provided by a general practice physician and with specialists on call. A list of such facilities can be found at http://angola.usembassy.gov. Routine operations such as appendectomies can be performed. Local pharmacies provide a limited supply of prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines/drugs.

Travelers are, therefore, urged to carry with them an adequate supply of properly-labeled medications they routinely require for the duration of their projected stay in Angola. Malaria is endemic in most areas of Angola.

An outbreak of Marburg hemorrhagic fever, a severe and often fatal disease, occurred in Uige province in the spring of 2005; however, on November 7, 2005, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Angola and the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the Marburg outbreak in Angola had ended. This announcement came after 45 consecutive days without a new case of the illness.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Angola is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Since the end of the civil war in 2002, overland access to the interior has increased. However, fighting in most of the country damaged or destroyed many roads and bridges, and services for motorists outside urban areas cannot be counted on.

Road travel can be dangerous, especially during the rainy season (October - March), which can cause large potholes and erosion and due to the presence of landmines. Road conditions vary widely outside the capital from acceptable paved surfaces to virtually impassable dirt roads, particularly secondary routes. Many secondary roads, including secondary roads in urban areas, are impassable during the rainy season. Overloaded, poorly marked, and disabled vehicles, as well as pedestrians and livestock, pose hazards for motorists. Ground travel in rural areas should be undertaken during daylight hours only. Landmines also pose a continuing hazard to travelers. Many areas were heavily mined during the war, including roads, bridges, and railroad tracks. Areas with suspected landmines are generally clearly marked and travelers should heed these warnings. Primary roads are considered to be landmine free in most provinces, but travelers should not venture far from the margins of the road. Extensive government, commercial, and NGO demining projects continue throughout the country.

Traffic in Luanda is heavy and often chaotic, and roads are often in poor condition. Few intersections have traffic lights or police to direct vehicles. Drivers often fail to obey traffic signals and signs, and there are frequent vehicle breakdowns. Itinerant

vendors, scooters and pedestrians often weave in and out of traffic, posing a danger to themselves and to drivers.

Most public transportation, including buses and van taxis, should be avoided as the vehicles are generally crowded and may be unreliable.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Angola, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Angola's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Angolan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Angola of sensitive items including firearms, antiquities, and currency. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Angola in Washington or one of Angola's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Financial Transactions: Angola is generally a cash-only economy; neither traveler's checks nor credit cards are used outside the capital of Luanda. In Luanda, credit cards are accepted in extremely limited circumstances, namely large hotels. Although, in April 2007 a major campaign was launched to expand credit card acceptance this effort has yet to expand beyond the capital city. In general, Automated Teller Machine's (ATMs) are only accessible to those individuals who hold accounts with local banks. Dollars are generally accepted in all provincial capitals; travelers should carry a sufficient supply of U.S. dollars with them. Only the newer series U.S. dollar bills (with large faces) are accepted.

U.S. dollars can be converted to local currency at exchange businesses authorized by the Angolan government. Angolan currency (the Kwanza) may not be taken out of the country and travelers, who attempt to carry currency out of Angola, are subject to having the currency confiscated.

Personal Identification: U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Luanda can prepare copies of American passports at no charge for individuals who register with the Embassy. To avoid the risk of theft of or confiscation of original documentation, the U.S. Embassy recommends that Americans keep their passport in a secure place and carry a copy to avoid the possibility of authorities confiscating identity and travel documents.

Labor Disputes: American performers traveling to Angola to perform in concerts and/or other events should be aware that there have been several serious allegations made against talent agencies making arrangements for foreign performers. These allegations include, among other things, several charges of breach of contract and the forcible retention of passports and persons. Some of these incidents are currently under investigation by the Angolan police. Performers should assure themselves of the reputation of any agency they may contract with before traveling. Many find it useful to contact performers who have previously worked in Angola and are familiar with agencies in that country. Persons experiencing any incidents of this nature in Angola should report these to the local Angolan police and the U.S. Embassy.

Long Delays in Renewal of Visas: U.S. citizens who opt to renew their work or other visa while in Angola should expect delays of 2-10 weeks or more, during which time the Angolan immigration authorities will retain one's passport and one will not be able to travel. U.S. citizens are advised to plan accordingly, and if travel during this time cannot be avoided, one should apply for a second U.S. passport PRIOR to turning over the primary passport to Angolan authorities for visa renewal. To apply for a second U.S. passport, you must write a letter explaining the need for the second passport, as well as meet all the requirements for a normal application for passport renewal, including being able to show a current valid passport. Receiving a second passport will take 7-10 business days. Expatriates who stay beyond their visa expiration date are subject to steep fines.

Hotel Availability: Hotels are limited in Angola, and demand for the limited number of rooms is high. Hotels are often booked months in advance, especially in the capital city of Luanda. Only a few large hotels in Luanda accept credit cards; hotels in the provinces generally do not accept credit cards. Adequate hotels are found in most provincial capitals, but some provide limited amenities.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Angolan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Angola are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sex with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Angola are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Depart-

ment's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Angola. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The Consular Section is located at the American Embassy Complex, Rua Houari Boumedienne #32, in the Miramar area of Luanda, P.O. Box 6468, tel. (244)-222-641-000, (244)-222-447-028, (244)-222-445-481, 244-222-446-224; 24-hour duty officer (244)-923-404-209; fax (244)-222-641-259. The Consular Section may be contacted by e-mail at consular-luanda@state.gov. Further information on travel to Angola is also available at the Embassy web site at http://usembassy.state.gov/angola.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Angola is not a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention). Therefore the entering into force of the Convention for the United States on April 1, 2008, did not change intercountry adoption procedures. While adopting in Angola is not a complex process, it can take years to identify a child for adoption and to complete all of the required paperwork due to the inefficiencies of the Angolan bureaucracy and the fact that it takes an Act of the National Assembly to approve a foreign adoption. Prospective adoptive parents should note that Angolan adoption laws are being revised and they are very strict. To ensure that the adoption process is completed successfully and in a timely manner, the U.S. Embassy in Angola strongly suggests that adoptive parents consult an Angolan attorney.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate only one immigrant visa has been issued to an Angolan orphan in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authorities:
Ministry of Justice
Family Court Room
Sala da Familia
Tribunal Provincial de Luanda
Rua Amilcar Cabral No. 17
5th and 7th Floor
Luanda, Angola
No telephone numbers for the public are available

INAC–National Institute of the Child
Rua N'Gola M'Bambi
Luanda, Angola
Telephone: 244-222 322 611; 222 323 683; 222 322 753

After identifying a child, a document requiring permission to adopt the child should be submitted to the National Assembly (Parliament) for discussion and approval. The identification of the child is done privately. There are orphanages run by the government and others run by NGOs. After the identification of the child the orphanage or NGO contacts INAC (National Institute of the Child) for their opinion. INAC then must issue a document giving permission for the child to be adopted. Once INAC issues permission for the child to be adopted, a request for approval must then be sent to the National Assembly. There is no specific form to be submitted to the National Assembly. This process may take six to twelve months.

Eligibility to Adopt: Prospective adoptive parents may be married, single or common-law spouses. They must be at least 25 years old and at least 16 years older than the adopted child. Prospective adoptive parent(s) must be in full possession of his or her civil rights, in good physical and mental health, and financially capable of supporting and providing an education for the adopted child.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: An intercountry adoption in Angola can take anywhere from two to three years to complete from the time the child is identified.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Angola. Adoptions are handled exclusively by the Ministry of Justice. A list of adoption attorneys in Angola may be found at the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Luanda, Angola (http://luanda.usembassy.gov/wwwhlawyers.html) or may be picked up in person at the U.S. Embassy's consular section.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Angola discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Angola at risk.

Prospective adopting parents can expect to pay as much as $3,000.00 USD for government fees to complete the adoption. Attorney's fees are estimated to be an additional $10,000 USD.

Adoption Procedures: Adoption by proxy is prohibited. Adoption requires the consent of the parents or the legal representative of the prospective adoptive child. Consent will be waived with regard to a child or adolescent whose parents are unknown or who have been stripped of their parental rights. A home study is required and will be evaluated by a Judge of the Family Court Room from the Provincial Court after the approval of the Parliament (National

Assembly). Prospective adoptive parent(s) should contact a local orphanage to identify a child. After the identification of the child, the orphanage contacts the INAC (National Institute of the Child) for their opinion. INAC issues a document giving permission for the child to be adopted. The process of identifying the child for adoption and receiving approval from INAC can take 6-12 months. The adoptive parent(s) then submit a request to the Parliament (National Assembly) requesting the approval to adopt the child. Along with this request the adoptive parent attaches the following:

- A copy of the INAC document giving permission for the child to be adopted;
- Birth certificates of the adoptive parent(s);
- Marriage certificate (if applicable);
- Police clearance;
- Medical exam attesting good physical and mental health; and
- Proof of financial support.

The process of approval from the Parliament might take between twelve and eighteen months. In the meantime the adoptive parent(s) can submit a separate request to the Family Court Room requesting guardianship of the child. The request for guardianship can be submitted at the same time as the request to the National Assembly is submitted. {The request must be accompanied by the same documents listed above. A hearing will be scheduled at which the adoptive parent(s) must be present. If the child is 10 years old or more, he/she will also be heard by the Trustee at the Family Court Room. This process might take three to six months. If the child is not an orphan, the adoptive parent (s) will have to mention that on the adoptive parents request and the Trustee of the Family Court Room will send a notification for the parents to appear in person and consent to the adoption of the child. After the consent, the parental rights are terminated. Once the National Assembly approves the adoption, the adoptive parent(s) receives the determination. The judge orders the issuance of a new birth certificate with the adoptive parent(s) name(s) if they desire. To apply for an Angolan passport the adoptive parents have to contact Serviços de Migração e Estrangeiros (SME) in Luanda.

Required Documents:

- Initial application can be made by a letter and should include the personal data of the prospective adoptive parents and the personal data of the prospective adoptive child. It does not need to be notarized.
- Criminal background check and clearance. The USCIS FBI background check is sufficient.
- Medical Evaluation can be conducted in the U.S. or Angola.
- Proof of income.
- Birth certificate of the prospective adoptive parent(s).
- Birth certificate (if available) for the prospective adoptive child or a statement from the institution where the child has been cared for.
- Marriage certificate and divorce decree(s) of prospective adoptive parent (s), if applicable.
- Consent from any living biological parent(s) of the child to adopt.

All documents must be translated into Portuguese. The translation needs to be done in Angola. Any translator in Angola can do the translation. A list of translators is available from the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy. The court will ask the translator to swear in court that the translation is correct.

Embassy of the Republic of Angola
2100-2108 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: 202-785-1156
Fax: 202-785-1258
http://www.angola.org/

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

American Embassy
Rua Houari Boumedienne #32,
Miramar
Luanda, Angola
C.P. 6468
Consular Tel: (244)(222) 641-000
Fax: (244)(222) 641-259
Email: consularluanda@state.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Antigua and Barbuda

PROFILE

Geography

Area: Antigua—281 sq. km. (108 sq. mi.); Barbuda—161 sq. km. (62 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—St. John's (pop. 30,000).

Terrain: Generally low-lying, with highest elevation 405 m. (1,330 ft.).

Climate: Tropical maritime.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Antiguan(s), Barbudan(s).

Population: (2006) 84,097.

Annual population growth rate: (2005) 1.3%.

Ethnic groups: Almost entirely of African origin; some of British, Portuguese, and Levantine Arab origin.

Religions: Principally Anglican, with evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic minorities.

Languages: English.

Education: (2005) Adult literacy—85.8%.

Health: (2006) Infant mortality rate—10/1,000. Life expectancy—men 70 years; women 74 years.

Work force: (2005) 30,000 (commerce and services, agriculture, other industry).

Unemployment: (2002) 13%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy; independent sovereign state within the Commonwealth.

Constitution: 1981.

Independence: November 1, 1981.

Government branches: Executive—governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Parliament. Judicial—magistrate's courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), Privy Council in London.

Political subdivisions: Six parishes and two dependencies (Barbuda and Redonda).

Political parties: Antigua Labour Party (ALP), United Progressive Party (UPP, majority), Barbuda People's Movement (BPM).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $1.189 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2007) 3.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $10,671.

Inflation: (2005) 0.9%.

Natural resources: Negligible.

Agriculture: Fish, cotton, livestock, vegetables, and pineapples.

Services: Tourism, banking, and other financial services.

Trade: (2005) Exports—$58 million (merchandise) and $454 million (commercial services). Major markets—European Union (23.2%), United States (7.7%), Anguilla (7.0%), St. Kitts and Nevis (10.3%), Netherlands Antilles (23.4%). Imports—$497 million (merchandise) and $197 million (commercial services). Major suppliers—United States (48.9%), Netherlands Antilles (10.2%), European Union (11.6%), Trinidad and Tobago (10.9%), Canada (3.7%).

Exchange rate: EC$2.70 = U.S. $1.

HISTORY

Antigua was first inhabited by the Siboney ("stone people"), whose settlements date at least to 2400 BC. The Arawaks—who originated in Venezuela and gradually migrated up the chain of islands now called the Lesser Antilles—succeeded the Siboney. The warlike Carib people drove the Arawaks from neighboring islands but apparently did not settle on either Antigua or Barbuda.

Christopher Columbus landed on the islands in 1493, naming the larger one "Santa Maria de la Antigua." The English colonized the islands in 1632. Sir Christopher Codrington established the first large sugar estate in Antigua in 1674, and leased Barbuda to raise provisions for his plantations. Barbuda's only town is named after him. Codrington and others brought

slaves from Africa's west coast to work the plantations. Antiguan slaves were emancipated in 1834, but remained economically dependent on the plantation owners. Economic opportunities for the new freedmen were limited by a lack of surplus farming land, no access to credit, and an economy built on agriculture rather than manufacturing. Poor labor conditions persisted until 1939, which saw the birth of the trade union movement in Antigua and Barbuda. The Antigua Trades and Labour Union became the political vehicle for Vere Cornwall Bird, who was elected as the Labour Union's president in 1943. The Antigua Labour Party (ALP), formed by Bird and other trade unionists, first ran candidates in the 1946 elections and became the majority party in 1951, beginning a long history of electoral victories. Voted out of office in the 1971 general elections that swept the progressive labor movement into power, Bird and the ALP returned to office in 1976, winning renewed mandates in every subsequent election under Vere Bird's leadership until 1994 and also under the leadership of his son, Lester Bird, until March 2004. In March 2004 the ALP lost power in national elections that gave the United Progressive Party (UPP) 13 of the 17 seats in Parliament. The ALP lost again to the Baldwin Spencer-led UPP in the March 2007 elections.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

As head of state, Queen Elizabeth II is represented in Antigua and Barbuda by a governor general who acts on the advice of the prime minister and the cabinet. Antigua and Barbuda has a bicameral legislature: a 17-member Senate appointed by the governor general—mainly on the advice of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition—and a 17-member popularly elected House of Representatives. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party in the House and conducts affairs of state with the cabinet. The prime minister and the cabinet are responsible to the Parliament. Elections must be held at least every 5 years but may be called by the prime minister at any time. National elections were last held on March 23, 2007. Constitutional safeguards include freedom of speech, press, worship, movement, and association. Antigua and Barbuda is a member of the eastern Caribbean court system. Jurisprudence is based on English common law.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor General: **James B. CARLISLE**
Prime Min.: **Baldwin SPENCER**
Dep. Prime Min.:
Min. of Agriculture Lands, Marine Resources, & Agro-Industries:
Min. of Barbuda Affairs: **Baldwin SPENCER**
Min. of Defense: **Baldwin SPENCER**
Min. of Education, Sports, & Youth Affairs: **Bertrand JOSEPH**
Min. of Finance & the Economy: **Eroll CORT**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & International Trade: **Baldwin SPENCER**
Min. of Health: **John Herbert MAGINLEY**
Min. of Housing & Social Transformation: **Hilson BAPTISTE**
Min. of Information & Broadcasting: **Baldwin SPENCER**
Min. of Justice & Public Safety: **Colin DERRICK**
Min. of Labor, Public Administration, & Empowerment: **Jacqui QUINN-LEANDRO**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **Justin SIMON**
Min. of National Security: **Baldwin SPENCER**
Min. of Tourism, Culture, & Civil Aviation: **Harold LOVELL**
Min. of Works, Transportation, & the Environment: **Wilmoth DANIEL**
Attorney General: **Justin SIMON**
Ambassador to the US: **Lionel HURST**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **John W. ASHE**

Antigua and Barbuda maintains an embassy in the United States at 3216 New Mexico Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20016 (tel. 202-362-5122).

ECONOMY

Antigua and Barbuda's service-based economy grew by 3.8% in 2007, experiencing its third consecutive year of strong growth. Construction, banking and insurance, communications, and wholesale and retail trade sectors were the main contributors to economic growth, which was driven by a construction boom in hotels and housing, as well as projects related to the 2007 Cricket World Cup. The tourism and hospitality sector has largely recovered after the decrease in tourism following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. It posted a strong performance in 2004, and in 2005 the sector was estimated at 50% of GDP.

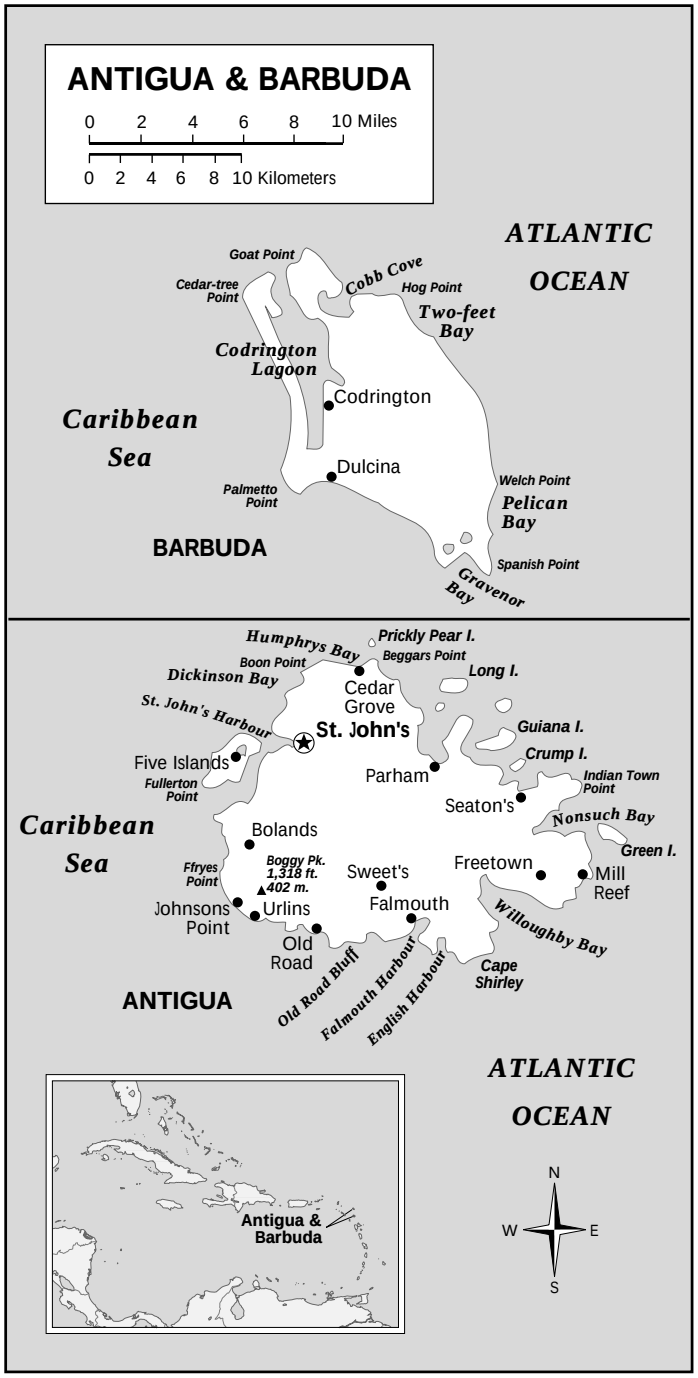
To lessen its vulnerability to natural disasters and economic shocks, Antigua has sought to diversify its economy by encouraging growth in transportation, communications, Internet gambling, and financial services. Antigua and Barbuda's currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (EC$), a regional currency shared among members of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues the EC$, manages monetary policy, and regulates and supervises commercial banking activities in its member countries. The ECCB has kept the EC$ pegged at EC$2.7=U.S. $1.

Antigua and Barbuda is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative that grants duty-free entry into the United States for many goods.

In 2005, 7.7% of its total exports went to the United States, and 48.9% of its total imports came from the United States. Antigua and Barbuda also belongs to the predominantly English-speaking Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Antigua and Barbuda maintains diplomatic relations with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom,



and the People's Republic of China, as well as with many Latin American countries and neighboring Eastern Caribbean states. It is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organization of American States, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and the Eastern Caribbean's Regional Security System (RSS). Unlike some of its neighbors in the Eastern Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda has withheld recognition of Taiwan and has established relations with the People's Republic of China.

U.S.-ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA RELATIONS

The United States has maintained friendly relations with Antigua and Barbuda since its independence. The United States has supported the Government of Antigua and Barbuda's effort to expand its economic base and to improve its citizens' standard of living. However, concerns over the lack of adequate regulation of the financial services sector prompted the U.S. Government to issue a financial advisory for Antigua and Barbuda in 1999. The advisory was lifted in 2001, but the U.S. Government continues to monitor the Government of Antigua and Barbuda's regulation of financial services.

The United States also has been active in supporting post-hurricane disaster assistance and rehabilitation through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Peace Corps. U.S. assistance is primarily channeled through multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), as well as through the USAID office in Bridgetown, Barbados. In addition, Antigua and Barbuda receives counter-narcotics assistance and benefits from U.S. military exercise-related and humanitarian civic assistance construction projects.

Antigua and Barbuda is strategically situated in the Leeward Islands near maritime transport lanes of major importance to the United States. Antigua has long hosted a U.S. military presence. The former U.S. Navy support facility, turned over to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda in 1995, is now being developed as a regional Coast Guard training facility. Antigua and Barbuda's location close to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico makes it an attractive transshipment point for narcotics traffickers. To address these problems, the United States and Antigua and Barbuda have signed a series of counter-narcotic and counter-crime treaties and agreements, including a maritime law enforcement agreement (1995), subsequently amended to include overflight and order-to-land provisions (1996); a bilateral extradition treaty (1996); and a mutual legal assistance treaty (1996).

In 2005, Antigua and Barbuda had 239,804 stay-over visitors, with nearly 28% of Antigua and Barbuda's visitors coming from the United States. It is estimated that 4,500 Americans reside in the country.

The United States maintains no official presence in Antigua. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados and travel to Antigua frequently. However, a U.S. consular agent resident in Antigua assists U.S. citizens in Antigua and Barbuda.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRIDGETOWN (E) Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael BB 14006, APO/FPO APO AA 34055, 246-436-4950, Fax 246-429-5246, Workweek: Mon-Fri: 8.00–4.30, Website: bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Hillaire Campbell
AMB OMS:	Honora L. Myers
ECO:	Bryan R Switzer
FM:	Maurice Pettiford
HRO:	Peggy Laurance (Residence In Ft Lauderdale)
MGT:	Philip A. Dubois
AMB:	Mary M. Ourisman
CG:	Clyde I. Howard
DCM:	D. Brent Hardt
PAO:	John C. Roberts
GSO:	Yoshino Rosenstein
RSO:	Gary Truchot
AFSA:	Arend Zwartjes
AID:	James Goggin
CLO:	Lauren Mchugh/Tamie Harvey
DAO:	Ltc. Cdr. Stephen Leslie (Res. Caracas)
DEA:	Charles Graham
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FAA:	Dawn Flanagan (Res. Washington)
FMO:	Rajiv Malik
IMO:	Frank Sauer
IRS:	Cheryl Kast
ISO:	Norman G B Ellasos
ISSO:	Ricardo Cabrera
LAB:	John C. Aller
LEGATT:	Samuel Bryant, Jr.
MLO:	Ltc. Cdr. Edward Gaynor
NAS:	Ian Campbell
POL:	Ian Campbell

The United States maintains no official presence in Antigua. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados and travel to Antigua frequently. However, a U.S. consular agent resident in Antigua assists U.S. citizens in Antigua and Barbuda.

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
14th & Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-1658, 800-USA-Trade
Fax: 202-482-0464

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW
Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-466-7464
Fax: 202-822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: Antigua and Barbuda is a dual island nation known for its beaches, and is a favorite destination for yachtsmen. Tourist facilities are widely available. English is the primary language. Banking facilities and ATMs are available throughout the island.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. We expect cards will be available and mailed to applicants in spring 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

Immigration officials are strict about getting exact information about where visitors are staying, and will often request to see a return ticket or ticket for onward travel, as well as proof of sufficient funds to cover the cost of the visitor's intended stay.

There is a departure tax payable when departing the country. For further information on entry requirements, travelers can contact the Embassy of Antigua and Barbuda, 3216 New Mexico Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20016, telephone (202) 362-5122, or consulates in Miami. Additional information may be found on the home page of the Antigua and Barbuda Department of Tourism at http://www.antigua-barbuda.org.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the

U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Petty street crime does occur, and valuables left unattended on beaches, in rental cars or in hotel rooms are vulnerable to theft. There has been an increase in crime in Antigua, including violent crimes, in the last six months. However, this increase has not, for the most part, affected visitors to the island. The Government of Antigua and Barbuda has taken steps to improve the effectiveness of the police in responding to crimes. As everywhere, visitors to Antigua and Barbuda are advised to be alert and maintain the same level of personal security used when visiting major U.S. cities.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: There are many qualified doctors in Antigua and Barbuda, but medical facilities are limited to a public hospital and a private clinic and are not up to U.S. standards. The principal medical facility on Antigua is Holberton Hospital, on Hospital Road, St. John's (telephone (268) 462-0251). There is no hyperbaric chamber; divers requiring treatment for decompression illness must be evacuated from the island, to either Saba or Guadeloupe. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services, and U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. U.S.

Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Antigua and Barbuda is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Traffic in Antigua and Barbuda moves on the left. Major roads are generally in good condition, but drivers may encounter wandering animals and slow moving heavy equipment.

There is relatively little police enforcement of traffic regulations. Buses and vans are frequently crowded and may travel at excessive speeds. Automobiles may lack working safety and signaling devices, such as brake lights.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Antigua and Barbuda's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Antigua and Barbuda'sair carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Like all Caribbean countries, Antigua can be affected by hurricanes. The hurricane season normally runs from June to the end of November, but there have been hurricanes in December in recent years. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Antigua and Barbuda's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Antigua and Barbuda are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Areas of detention are very uncomfortable. There are no beds, access to sanitary facilities is limited, and food is substandard.

Persons arrested on a Friday or Saturday are likely to remain in detention until regular working hours resume on Monday. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Antigua and Barbuda are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Antigua and Barbuda. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown is located in the Wildey Business Park in suburban Wildey, south and east of downtown Bridgetown. The main number for the Consular Section is (246) 431-0225; after hours, the Embassy duty officer can be reached by calling (246) 436-4950.

The website for Embassy Bridgetown is http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m.—4:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, except local and U.S. holidays.

The U.S. Consular Agent in Antigua provides passport, citizenship and notarial services, and assists Americans in distress. The Consular Agency is located in Suite #2, Jasmine Court, Friars Hill Rd, St. John's, Antigua. Contact information is as follows: telephone 1-268-463-6531, cellular 1-268-726-6531, or e-mail ANUWndrGyal@aol.com. The mailing address is P.O. Box W-1562, St. John's, Antigua. The Consular Agent is available by appointment only. The office is closed for local and U.S. Holidays.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Antigua and Barbuda are not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Antigua and Barbuda and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction.

American citizens who travel to Antigua and Barbuda place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Antigua and Barbuda with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Antigua and Barbuda parents who are legally married share the custody of their children. If they are not married, by law the custody is granted to the mother unless there are known facts of inappropriate behavior, mental or social problems. Foreign court orders are not automatically recognized.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Antigua and Barbuda if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices.

For example, an order from a U.S. court granting custody to an American mother will not be honored in Antigua and Barbuda if the mother intends to take the child to live outside Antigua and Barbuda.

Nor will Antigua and Barbuda courts enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Antigua and Barbuda to pay child support.

Visitation Rights: In cases where the father has custody of a child, the mother is guaranteed visitation rights. It has been the experience of the U.S. Embassy in Barbados that the father and the paternal grandparents of the child are generally open and accommodating in facilitating the right of the mother to visit and maintain contact with the child.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is recognized under Antiguan law. Children of Antigua and Barbuda parents and grandparents automatically acquire Antigua and Barbuda citizenship at birth, regardless of where the child was born.

They are free to enter and leave the country on Antigua and Barbuda passports even if they are entitled to hold the passport of another country.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Antigua and Barbuda. However, a mother may face serious legal difficulties if she attempts to take her children out of Antigua and Barbuda without the permission of the father.

Immigration officials at the airport or border may ask to see such permission in writing before allowing children to exit.

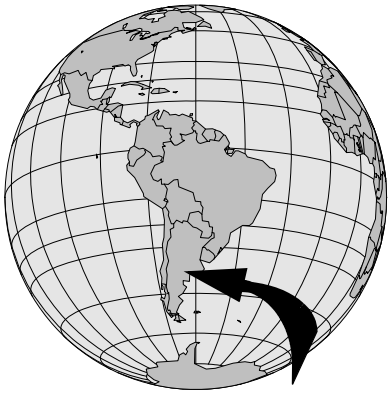
Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in an Antiguan court should retain an attorney in Antigua and Barbuda. The U.S. Embassy in Barbados maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy Bridgetown
Consular Section
ALICO Building, Cheapside
P O Box 302
Bridgetown
Barbados
Telephone: [246] 431-0225
Fax: [246] 431-0179
Web site: www.usembassy.state.gov/bridgetown

Questions involving Antiguan law should be addressed to an Antiguan attorney or to the Embassy of Antigua and Barbuda in the United States at:

Embassy of Antigua and Barbuda
3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Telephone: (202) 362-5122/5166/5211
AmbLHurst@aol.com

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



ARGENTINA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
The Argentine Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 2.8 million sq. km. (1.1 million sq. mi.); about the size of the U.S. east of the Mississippi River; second-largest country in South America.

Climate: Varied; predominantly temperate, with extremes ranging from subtropical in the north to arid/sub-Antarctic in far south.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Argentine(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.): 40.3 million.

Annual population growth rate: (2001) 1.05%.

Ethnic groups: European 97%, mostly of Spanish and Italian descent; Mestizo, Amerindian, or other nonwhite groups 3%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 70%, Protestant 9%, Muslim 1.5%, Jewish 0.8%, other 2.5%.

Languages: Spanish.

Education: Compulsory until age 18. Adult literacy (2001)—97%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—16.16/1,000. Life expectancy (2000 est.)—75.48 yrs.

Work force: Industry and commerce—35.8%; agriculture—9.5%; services—54.7%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: 1853; revised 1994.

Independence: 1816.

Government branches: Executive—president, vice president, cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Congress (72-member Senate, 257-member Chamber of Deputies). Judicial—Supreme Court, federal and provincial trial courts.

Political subdivisions: 23 provinces and one autonomous district (Federal Capital).

Political parties: Justicialist (Peronist), Radical Civic Union (UCR), numerous smaller national and provincial parties.

Suffrage: Universal adult.

Economy (200)

GDP: $261 billion.

Annual real growth rate: +8.7%.

Per capital GDP: $6,630 (estimated).

Natural resources: Fertile plains (pampas); minerals—lead, zinc, tin, copper, iron, manganese, oil, and uranium.

Agriculture: 8% of GDP; including agribusiness, about 55% of exports by value) Products—grains, oilseeds and by-products, livestock products.

Industry: (22.2% of GDP) Types—food processing, oil refining, machinery and equipment, textiles, chemicals and petrochemicals.

Trade: Exports ($55.9 billion)—oilseed by-products, vegetable oils, cars, fuels, grains. Major markets—MERCOSUR 23%; EU 18%; NAFTA 11%. Imports ($44.8 billion)—machinery, vehicles and transport products, chemicals. Major suppliers—MERCOSUR 36%; EU 17%, NAFTA 16%. Imported goods from the United States totaled approx. 12% of Argentine imported goods.

PEOPLE

Argentines are a fusion of diverse national and ethnic groups, with descendants of Italian and Spanish immigrants predominant. Waves of immigrants from many European countries arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Syrian, Lebanese, and other Middle Eastern immigrants number about 500,000 to 600,000, mainly in urban areas. Argentina's population is overwhelmingly Catholic, but it also has the largest Jewish population in Latin America, estimated at between 280,000 and 300,000. In recent years, there has been a substantial influx of immigrants from neighboring countries, particularly Paraguay, Bolivia, and Peru. The indigenous population, estimated at 700,000, is concentrated in the provinces of the north, northwest, and south. The Argentine population has one of Latin America's

lowest growth rates. Eighty percent of the population resides in cities or towns of more than 2,000, and over one-third lives in the greater Buenos Aires area.

HISTORY

Europeans arrived in the region with the 1502 voyage of Amerigo Vespucci. Spanish navigator Juan Diaz de Solias visited what is now Argentina in 1516. Spain established a permanent colony on the site of Buenos Aires in 1580, although initial settlement was primarily overland from Peru. The Spanish further integrated Argentina into their empire by establishing the Vice Royalty of Rio de la Plata in 1776, and Buenos Aires became a flourishing port. Buenos Aires formally declared independence from Spain on July 9, 1816. Argentines revere Gen. Jose de San Martin—who campaigned in Argentina, Chile, and Peru—as the hero of their national independence. Following the defeat of the Spanish, centralist and federalist groups waged a lengthy conflict between themselves to determine the future of the nation. A modern constitution was promulgated in 1853, and a national unity government was established in 1861.

Two forces combined to create the modern Argentine nation in the late 19th century: the introduction of modern agricultural techniques and integration of Argentina into the world economy. Foreign investment and immigration from Europe aided this economic revolution. Investment, primarily from Britain, came in such fields as railroads and ports. As in the United States, the migrants who worked to develop Argentina's resources—especially the western pampas—came from throughout Europe.

From 1880 to 1930, Argentina became one of the world's 10 wealthiest nations based on rapid expansion of agriculture and foreign investment in infrastructure. Conservative forces dominated Argentine politics until 1916, when their traditional rivals, the Radicals, won control of the government. The Radicals, with their emphasis on fair elections and democratic institutions, opened their doors to Argentina's rapidly expanding middle class as well as to groups previously excluded from power. The Argentine military forced aged Radical President Hipolito Yrigoyen from power in 1930 and ushered in another decade of Conservative rule. Using fraud and force when necessary, the governments of the 1930s attempted to contain the currents of economic and political change that eventually led to the ascendancy of Juan Domingo Peron (b. 1897). New social and political forces were seeking political power, including a modern military and labor movements that emerged from the growing urban working class.

The military ousted Argentina's constitutional government in 1943. Peron, then an army colonel, was one of the coup's leaders, and he soon became the government's dominant figure as Minister of Labor. Elections carried him to the presidency in 1946. He created the Partido Unico de la Revolucion, which became more commonly known as the Peronist or Justicialista party (PJ). He aggressively pursued policies aimed at empowering the working class and greatly expanded the number of unionized workers. In 1947, Peron announced the first 5-year plan based on the growth of industries he nationalized. He helped establish the powerful General Confederation of Labor (CGT). Peron's dynamic wife, Eva Duarte de Peron, known as Evita (1919-52), played a key role in developing support for her husband. Peron won reelection in 1952, but the military sent him into exile in 1955. In the 1950s and 1960s, military and civilian administrations traded power, trying, with limited success, to deal with diminished economic growth and continued social and labor demands. When military governments failed to revive the economy and suppress escalating terrorism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the way was open for Peron's return.

On March 11, 1973, Argentina held general elections for the first time in 10 years. Peron was prevented from running, but voters elected his stand-in, Dr. Hector Campora, as President. Peron's followers also commanded strong majorities in both houses of Congress. Campora resigned in July 1973, paving the way for new elections. Peron won a decisive victory and returned as President in October 1973 with his third wife, Maria Estela Isabel Martinez de Peron, as Vice President. During this period, extremists on the left and right carried out violent acts with a frequency that threatened public order. The government resorted to a number of emergency decrees, including the implementation of special executive authority to deal with violence. This allowed the government to imprison persons indefinitely without charge.

Peron died on July 1, 1974. His wife succeeded him in office, but a military coup removed her from office on March 24, 1976, and the armed forces formally exercised power through a junta composed of the three service commanders until December 10, 1983. The armed forces applied harsh measures against those they considered extremists and many suspected of being their sympathizers. While they were able to gradually restore basic order, the human costs of what became known as "El Proceso," or the "Dirty War" were high. Conservative counts list between 10,000 and 30,000 persons as "disappeared" during the 1976-83 period. Serious economic problems, mounting charges of corruption, public revulsion in the face of human rights abuses and, finally, the country's 1982 defeat by the United Kingdom in an unsuccessful attempt to seize the Falklands/Malvinas Islands all combined to discredit the Argentine military regime. The junta lifted bans on political parties and gradually restored basic political liberties.

Democracy returned to Argentina in 1983, with Raul Alfonsin of the country's oldest political party, the Radical Civic Union (UCR), winning the presidency in elections that took place on October 30, 1983. He began a 6-year term of office on December 10, 1983. In 1985 and 1987, large turnouts for mid-term elections demonstrated

continued public support for a strong and vigorous democratic system. The UCR-led government took steps to resolve some of the nation's most pressing problems, including accounting for those who disappeared during military rule, establishing civilian control of the armed forces, and consolidating democratic institutions. However, failure to resolve endemic economic problems, and an inability to maintain public confidence undermined the effectiveness of the Alfonsin government, which left office 6 months early after Justicialista Party (PJ) candidate Carlos Saul Menem won the 1989 presidential elections.

President Menem imposed peso-dollar parity (convertibility) in 1992 to break the back of hyperinflation and adopted far-reaching market-based policies. Menem's accomplishments included dismantling a web of protectionist trade and business regulations, and reversing a half-century of statism by implementing an ambitious privatization program. These reforms contributed to significant increases in investment and growth with stable prices through most of the 1990s. Unfortunately, widespread corruption in the administrations of President Menem and his successor President Fernando De la Rua, who won election in 1999 at the head of a UCR-led coalition of center and center-left parties known as the "Alianza," shook confidence and weakened the recovery. Also, while convertibility defeated inflation, its permanence undermined Argentina's export competitiveness and created chronic deficits in the current account of the balance of payments, which were financed by massive borrowing. The contagion effect of the Asian financial crisis of 1998 precipitated an outflow of capital that gradually mushroomed into a 4-year depression that culminated in a financial panic in November 2001. In December 2001, amidst bloody riots, President De la Rua resigned.

A legislative assembly on December 23, 2001, elected Adolfo Rodriguez Saa (PJ) to serve as President and called for general elections to choose a new president within three months.



Rodriguez Saa announced immediately Argentina's default on $88 billion in debt (the largest sovereign debt default in history), but expressed his commitment to maintain the currency board and the peso's 1-to-1 peg to the dollar. Rodriguez Saa, however, was unable to rally support from within his own party for his temporary administration and this, combined with renewed violence in the Federal Capital, led to his resignation on December 30. Yet another legislative assembly elected Eduardo Duhalde (PJ) President on January 1, 2002 to complete the term

of former President De la Rua. Duhalde assumed office in the midst of a widespread public rejection of the "political class" in Argentina. Duhalde—differentiating himself from his three predecessors—quickly abandoned the peso's ten-year-old link with the dollar, a move that was followed by a sharp currency depreciation and rising inflation. In the face of increasing poverty and continued social unrest, Duhalde moved to bolster the government's social programs and to contain inflation. He was able to stabilize the social situation, but advanced presidential elections by six months in order to pave the way for a president elected with a popular mandate.

In the first round of the presidential election on April 27, 2003, former President Carlos Menem (PJ) won 24.3% of the vote, Santa Cruz Governor Nestor Kirchner (PJ) won 22%, followed by RECREAR candidate Ricardo Lopez Murphy with 16.4% and Affirmation for an Egalitarian Republic (ARI) candidate Elisa Carrio with 14.2%. Menem withdrew from the May 25 runoff election after polls showed overwhelming support for Kirchner in the second round of elections. President Kirchner assumed the presidency on May 25, 2003. He took office following the immense social and economic upheaval stemming from the financial crisis caused by a failed currency convertibility regime. Despite widespread concern, democracy and democratic institutions survived the crisis, and Nestor Kirchner took firm control as President. After taking office, Kirchner focused on consolidating his political strength and alleviating social problems. He pushed for changes in the Supreme Court and military and undertook popular measures, such as raising government salaries, pensions, and the minimum wage. On October 23, 2005, President Kirchner, bolstered by Argentina's rapid economic growth and recovery from its 2001/2002 crisis, won a major victory in the midterm legislative elections, giving him a strengthened mandate and control of a legislative majority in both the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. Many experts considered President Kirchner to be the most powerful Argentine president since democracy was restored in 1983. Although Kirchner enjoyed approval ratings of over 60%, he announced in July 2007 that he would not seek reelection and declared his wife, then-Senator Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, to be a candidate to succeed him. With the Peronist party under a trustee's control, President Kirchner smoothed the way for Fernández de Kirchner to compete under the Victory Front's (Frente para la Victoria, or FpV) banner in general elections in October. She won 45% of the vote and defeated her closest competitor, Elisa Carrió of the Civic Coalition, by 22.25 points. Thus, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner became the first Argentine woman elected to the presidency. "Cristina," as Argentines often refer to her, was sworn into office on December 10, 2007.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Argentina's constitution of 1853, as revised in 1994, mandates a separation of powers into executive, legislative, and judicial branches at the national and provincial level. Each province also has its own constitution, roughly mirroring the structure of the national constitution. The president and vice president are directly elected to 4-year terms. Both are limited to two consecutive terms; they are allowed to stand for a third term or more after an interval of at least one term. The president appoints cabinet ministers, and the constitution grants him considerable power, including authority to enact laws by presidential decree under conditions of "urgency and necessity" and the line-item veto.

Since 2001, senators have been directly elected, with each province and the Federal Capital represented by three senators. Senators serve six-year terms. One-third of the Senate stands for reelection every two years. Members of the Chamber of Deputies are directly elected to four-year terms. Voters elect half the members of the lower house every two years. Both houses are elected via a system of proportional representation. Female representation in Congress—at nearly one-third of total seats—ranks among the world's highest, with representation comparable to European Union (EU) countries such as Austria and Germany.

The constitution establishes the judiciary as an independent government entity. The president appoints members of the Supreme Court with the consent of the Senate. The president on the recommendation of a magistrates' council appoints other federal judges. The Supreme Court has the power to declare legislative acts unconstitutional.

Political Parties

The two largest traditional political parties are the Justicialist Party (PJ—also called Peronist), founded in 1945 by Juan Domingo Peron, and the Union Civica Radical (UCR), or Radical Civic Union, founded in 1891. Traditionally, the UCR has had more urban middle-class support and the PJ more labor support, but both parties have become more broadly based. Although both parties are currently undergoing a process of dramatic change and restructuring, they have maintained their nationwide structures. New emerging political forces, like the Civic Coalition (CC) and the National Proposal (PRO) parties, are concentrated in the urban centers and are working to build national party structures.

The PJ is led by former President Nestor Kirchner. The Victory Front (Frente para la Victoria, or FpV) is a coalition that includes Peronists and non-Peronists aligned with President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Nestor Kirchner.

The UCR's serious fragmentation and poor electoral performance since 2003 has seriously eroded its role as the main opposition party, and many analysts warn that the party is on the verge of extinction. While the national UCR leadership opposes the Fernández de Kirchner government,

its governors, several mayors, and many other representatives have aligned themselves with the Kirchners. In October 2007, several Radical deputies ran under the FpV ballot, and the Vice Presidential candidate with Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, Julio Cobos, was a "Radical-K," as pro-Kirchner Radicals are called. Although the "Radical-K" representatives formed a separate bloc in the Lower House, they are still supportive of the FpV's policies. In the last presidential elections, the UCR did not run its own candidate and aligned itself with a former Peronist Economic Minister, Roberto Lavagna, who came in third with less than 17% of the national vote. Although seriously weakened, the UCR continues to retain some strength in a few provinces and several municipalities. The UCR is the only opposition political party with a nationwide structure.

The Civic Coalition (CC) is a political alliance led by the traditionally left-leaning Affirmation for an Egalitarian Republic (Afirmación por una República Igualitaria, or ARI) party, in conjunction with the Socialist party and the Union for All (Unión Por Todos) party. The CC came in second in the October 2007 presidential elections, positioning itself as the second largest political force. The CC's leader, Elisa Carrió, was a fierce critic of then-President Nestor Kirchner and continues to oppose Fernandez de Kirchner's policies. The Civic Coalition's electoral base is concentrated in large, urban centers, and has governors in the province of Santa Fe and the southern province of Tierra del Fuego.

The center-right Republican Proposal (Propuesta Republicana, or PRO) party represents another emerging political force with a larger representation in the Lower House than in the past. PRO is mostly based in the city of Buenos Aires, where its leader, Mauricio Macri, won the mayoral elections in June 2007 in a run-off with 60% of the vote, defeating then-Education Minister Daniel Filmus, who ran on the FpV ticket supported by then-President Kirchner.

Historically, organized labor—largely tied to the Peronist Party—and the armed forces also have played significant roles in national life. However, the Argentine military's public standing suffered as a result of its perpetration of human rights abuses, economic mismanagement, and defeat by the United Kingdom during the period of military rule (1976-83). The Argentine military today is a downsized, volunteer force fully subordinate to civilian authority.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Cristina FERNANDEZ DE KIRCHNER**
Vice President: **Julio COBOS**
Chief of Cabinet: **Sergio MASSA**
Min. of Defense: **Nilda GARRE**
Min. of Economy & Production: **Carlos FERNANDEZ**
Min. of Education: **Juan Carlos TEDESCO**
Min. of Federal Planning, Public Investment, & Services: **Julio DE VIDO**
Min. of Foreign Relations, Intl. Trade, & Worship: **Jorge TAIANA**
Min. of Health: **Graciela OCANA**
Min. of Interior: **Florencio RANDAZZO**
Min. of Justice, Security, & Human Rights: **Anibal FERNANDEZ**
Min. of Labor, Employment, & Social Security: **Carlos TOMADA**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Lino BARANAO**
Min. of Social Development: **Alicia KIRCHNER**
Pres., Central Bank: **Martin REDRADO**
Ambassador to the US: **Hector TIMERMAN**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Jorge ARGUELLO**

Argentina maintains an embassy in the United States at 1600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington DC 20009; tel (202) 238-6400; fax (202) 332-3171.

ECONOMY

Argentina's economy has sustained a robust recovery following the severe 2001/2002 economic crisis, with five consecutive years of over 8% real growth in gross domestic product (GDP). Argentine GDP reached U.S. $261 billion in 2007, approximately U.S. $6,630 per capita, with investment increasing an estimated 14.4% for the year and representing approximately 23% of GDP. The economic expansion created jobs, with unemployment down from over 21% in 2002 to 8.0% in the second quarter of 2008. Poverty levels also dropped. According to government statistics, 20.6% of the population in the 28 largest urban areas remained below the poverty line in the first quarter of 2008, down from over 50% in the immediate aftermath of the economic crisis.

Argentina benefits from rich natural resources, a highly educated population, a globally competitive agricultural sector, and a diversified industrial base. Argentina's post-crisis move to a more flexible exchange rate regime, along with sustained global and regional growth, a boost in domestic aggregate demand via monetary, fiscal, and income distribution policies, and favorable international commodity prices and interest rate trends were catalytic factors in supporting renewed growth between 2003 and 2007. The economic resurgence also enabled the government to accumulate substantial official reserves (over $45 billion as of early November 2008) to help insulate the economy from external shocks. A higher tax burden, improved tax collection efforts, and the recovery's strong impact on tax revenues supported the government's successful efforts to maintain primary fiscal surpluses since 2003.

Argentina has continued to perform well in 2008, with full year real GDP growth projected at about 7%, according to the Argentine Central Bank's consensus survey. A range of economic experts have identified challenges to sustaining high levels of economic growth in the future, including capacity constraints; the need for substantial new investment in primary infrastructure; potential energy shortages in the face of high growth and energy prices maintained by the government below international market levels. Other challenges include the increasing scarcity

of skilled labor, inflation (8.5% in 2007 according to official statistics, but estimated by independent analysts to be significantly higher), and the heterodox policies employed to contain inflation. These include pressure on the private sector to limit price increases on some consumer goods, delays in the renegotiation of public service tariffs, export trade taxes, and export bans. Recent global financial turmoil and rapid declines in world commodity prices are also threats to Argentina's ability to continue its rapid rate of economic expansion.

Argentina's exchange rate policy is based on a managed float, and the 2009 budget estimates the average exchange rate at 3.19. Market analysts have considered the peso's real exchange rate undervalued in previous years. This, along with historically high global commodity prices, helped lift export volumes and values to record levels, resulting in an $11.2 billion trade surplus in 2007. Foreign trade was approximately 39% of GDP in 2007 (up from only 11% in 1990) and plays an increasingly important role in Argentina's economic development. Exports totaled approximately 21% of GDP in 2007 (up from 14% in 2002), and key export markets included MERCOSUR (23% of exports), the EU (18%), and NAFTA countries (11%). Two-way trade in goods with the U.S. in 2007 totaled about $9.7 billion (according to both U.S. and Argentine government statistics). Total two-way trade in services in 2007 was $4.0 billion (according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce). The production of grains, cattle, and other agricultural goods continues to be the backbone of Argentina's export economy. High technology goods and services are emerging as significant export sectors. A decline in global commodity prices and slower global growth levels in the second half of 2008 is expected to reduce Argentina's trade surplus levels in the medium term.

Nearly 500 U.S. companies are currently operating in Argentina, employing over 155,000 Argentine workers. U.S. investment in Argentina is concentrated in the manufacturing, information, and financial sectors. Other major sources of investment include Spain, Chile, Italy, France, Canada, Japan, and Brazil. Continuing Argentine arrears to international creditors and a large number of arbitration claims filed by foreign companies are legacies of the 2001/2002 economic crisis that remain to be resolved and adversely impact Argentina's investment climate. Outstanding debts include over $20 billion in default claims by international bondholders and between $7 billion and $8 billion owed to official creditors. President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner announced in September 2008 that the government intends to pay debts to Paris Club creditors using Central Bank reserves. She further announced that the government would consider a proposal from private banks on the settlement with international bondholders of untendered Argentine Government debt.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The president and a civilian minister of defense control the Argentine armed forces. The Interior Ministry controls the paramilitary Gendarmeria (border police), the Federal Police, the Prefectura Naval (coast guard), and the Airport Security Police. The Argentine armed forces maintain close defense cooperation and military supply relationships with the United States. Other countries also have military relationships with the Argentine forces, principally Israel, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Brazil, Chile, and Venezuela.

The current Minister of Defense has pursued an aggressive restructuring program based on the Argentine 1988 defense law. Priorities include emphasis on joint operations and peacekeeping. There has been minimal recapitalization due to budget constraints experienced over the past 5 years.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Argentina's foreign policy priorities are focused on increasing regional partnerships, including expanding the MERCOSUR regional trade bloc by integrating Venezuela and Bolivia as new full members. Argentina has played a positive role in promoting human rights and democratic institutions in the hemisphere, particularly in Haiti. Argentina currently has nearly 600 peacekeeping troops in Haiti in support of MINUSTAH, reflecting its traditionally strong support of UN peacekeeping operations. As a member of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Argentina has been a strong voice in support of nuclear non-proliferation issues.

U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS

The U.S. has a positive bilateral relationship with Argentina based on many common strategic interests, including non-proliferation, counternarcotics, counterterrorism, and issues of regional stability, as well as the strength of commercial ties. Argentina is a participant in the Three-Plus-One regional mechanism (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and the U.S.), which focuses on coordination of counter-terrorism policies in the tri-border region. Argentina has endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative, and has implemented the Container Security Initiative, a program of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security which provides for the selective scanning of shipping containers for weapons of mass destruction components. In 2004, Argentina signed a Letter of Agreement with the Department of State opening the way for enhanced cooperation with the U.S. on counternarcotics issues and enabling the U.S. to begin providing financial assistance to the Government of Argentina for its counternarcotics efforts. In recognition of its contributions to international security and peacekeeping, the U.S. Government designated Argentina as a major non-NATO ally in

January 1998. The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Argentine Ministry of Defense hold an annual Bilateral Working Group Meeting, alternating between Argentina and Washington, DC.

U.S.-Argentine cooperation also includes science and technology initiatives in the fields of space, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and the environment. In June 2007, the U.S. and Argentina modernized a bilateral civil aviation agreement to update safety and security safeguards and allow a significant increase in flight frequencies between the two countries, which hold excellent potential for increased tourism and business travel. An active media, together with widespread interest in American culture and society, make Argentina a receptive environment for the information and cultural exchange work of the U.S. Embassy. The Fulbright scholarship program has more than tripled the annual number of U.S. and Argentine academic grantees since 1994, and the U.S. Embassy is actively working to increase other education exchanges.

U.S. Embassy Functions

The U.S. Mission in Buenos Aires carries out the traditional diplomatic function of representing the U.S. Government and people in discussions with the Argentine Government, and more generally, in relations with the people of Argentina. The Embassy is focused on increasing people-to-people contacts, and promoting outreach and exchanges on a wide range of issues.

Political, economic, and science officers deal directly with the Argentine Government in advancing U.S. interests but are also available to brief U.S. citizens on general conditions in the country. Officers from the U.S. Foreign Service, Foreign Commercial Service, and Foreign Agricultural Service work closely with the hundreds of U.S. companies that do business in Argentina, providing information on Argentine trade and industry regulations and assisting U.S. companies starting or maintaining business ventures in Argentina.

The Embassy's Consular Section monitors the welfare and whereabouts of more than 20,000 U.S. citizen residents of Argentina and more than 250,000 U.S. tourists each year. Consular personnel also provide American citizens passport, voting, notary, Social Security, and other services. With the end of Argentine participation in the visa waiver program in February 2002, Argentine tourists, students, and those who seek to work in the United States must have nonimmigrant visas.

The Consular Section processes nonimmigrant visa applications for persons who wish to visit the United States for tourism, studies, temporary work, or other purposes, and immigrant visas for persons who qualify to make the United States a permanent home.

Attaches accredited to Argentina from the Department of Justice—including the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation—the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Aviation Administration, and other federal agencies work closely with Argentine counterparts on international law enforcement cooperation, aviation security, and other issues of concern.

The Department of Defense is represented by the U.S. Military Group and the Defense Attache Office. These organizations ensure close military-to-military contacts, and defense and security cooperation with the armed forces of Argentina.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BUENOS AIRES (E) Avda. Colombia 4300, APO/FPO Unit 4334, APO aa 34034, 54-11-5777-4533, Fax 54-11-5777-4240, Workweek: 0845 AM–0545 PM, Website: http://argentina.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Lindsey, Terri
AMB OMS:	Taylor, Wendy
DHS/ICE:	Kleppe, Stephen
ECO:	Climan, Doug P
FCS:	Rigassio, James
FM:	Thomas Galloway
HRO:	Zabrieskie, Petra J.
MGT:	Sarro, Dorothy
AMB:	Wayne, Earl A.
CG:	Noronha, Jennifer
DCM:	Kelly, Thomas P.
PAO:	Howes, Robert C.
GSO:	Glenn, Richard
RSO:	Campbell, Glenn
AGR:	Mergen, David J
APHIS:	Schissel, Thomas
CLO:	Henry, Mary L.
DAO:	Col. Lengenfelder, Douglas R.
DEA:	Greco, Anthony Jr.
EST:	Perez, James M.
FAA:	Carter, Fred
FMO:	Meredith, Katherine
IMO:	Cabrera, Ricardo
IPO:	Barreto, Monica
ISSO:	Mcdonald, Douglas D
LEGATT:	Godoy, William
MLO:	Col. Passmore, Edwin W.
POL:	Featherstone, Alexander
RAMC:	Charleston Finance Center

The U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is located at 4300 Colombia Avenue in the Palermo district of Buenos Aires. Mission offices can be reached at by phone at (54)(11) 5777-4533/34 or by fax at (54)(11) 5777-4240. Mailing addresses: U.S. Embassy Buenos Aires, APO AA 34034; or 4300 Colombia, 1425 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Other Contact Information

American Chamber of Commerce in Argentina

Viamonte 1133, 8th floor
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel (54)(11) 4371-4500
Fax (54)(11) 4371-8400

U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Latin America and the Caribbean—International Trade Administration

14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel (202) 482-2436
(800) USA-TRADE
Fax (202) 482-4726
Automated fax service for trade-related information: (202) 482-4464

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 2, 2008

Country Description: Last year Argentina's charm, natural beauty and diversity attracted more than 400,000 American citizen visitors, and this year's total is expected to be even higher. Buenos Aires and other large cities have well-developed tourist facilities and services, including many four- and five-star hotels. The quality of tourist facilities in smaller towns outside the capital varies. The country suffered a major financial crisis in 2001-2002. While it has made a dramatic recovery, continued economic hardship has been linked to a rise in street crime.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required for U.S. citizens to enter Argentina. U.S. citizens do not need a visa for visits of up to 90 days for tourism and business. U.S. citizens who arrive in Argentina with expired or damaged passports may be refused entry and returned to the United States at their own expense. The U.S. Embassy cannot provide guarantees on behalf of travelers in such situations, and therefore encourages U.S. citizens to ensure their travel documents are valid and in good condition prior to departure from the United States.

Different rules apply to U.S. citizens who also have Argentine nationality, depending on their dates of U.S. naturalization. For more information, check the Argentine Ministry of the Interior web site at www.mininterior.gov.ar/migraciones. Most dual nationals are permitted 60-day visits. Dual nationals who stay beyond their permitted time are required to depart on an Argentine passport.

The application process for an Argentine passport is lengthy, and the U.S. Embassy is not able to provide assistance in obtaining Argentine passports or other local identity documents. Children under 21 years of age who reside in Argentina, regardless of nationality, are required to present a notarized document that certifies both parents' permission for the child's departure from Argentina when the child is traveling alone, with only one parent, or in someone else's custody. An airport tax is collected upon departure, payable in dollars or Argentine pesos.

American citizens wishing to enter Brazil are required to obtain a visa in advance from the Brazilian Embassy or consulate nearest to the traveler's place of residence. The U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires cannot assist travelers to obtain Brazilian visas.

Visit the Embassy of Argentina's web site at www.embassyofargentina.us for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Traffic accidents are the primary threat to life and limb in Argentina. Pedestrians and drivers should exercise caution. Drivers frequently ignore traffic laws and vehicles often travel at excessive speeds. The rate and toll of traffic accidents has been a topic of much media attention over the past year. The Institute of Road Safety and Education, a private Buenos Aires organization dedicated to transportation safety issues, reports that Argentina has the highest traffic mortality rate in South America per 100,000 inhabitants.

Care should be exercised when traveling in Brazil and Paraguay, near the Argentine border, where criminal entities are known to operate. These organizations are involved in the trafficking of illicit goods, and some individuals in the area have been designated by the U.S. Treasury Department for financially supporting terrorist organizations.

The U.S. government is supportive of coordinated efforts by Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay to combat illegal activity in that region. Americans crossing from Argentina into Paraguay or Brazil may wish to consult the most recent Country Specific Information for those countries.

Demonstrations are common in metropolitan Buenos Aires and occur in other major cities as well. Protesters on occasion block streets, highways, and major intersections, causing traffic jams and delaying travel. While demonstrations are usually nonviolent, hooligans in some of the groups sometimes seek confrontation with the police and vandalize private property. Groups occasionally protest in front of the U.S. Embassy and U.S.-affiliated businesses. U.S. citizens should take common-sense precautions and avoid gatherings or any other event where crowds have congregated to protest. Information about the location of possible demonstrations is available from a variety of sources, including the local media. Additional information and advice may be obtained from the U.S. Embassy at the telephone numbers or email address listed at the end of this document.

Domestic flight schedules can be unreliable. Occasional work stoppages, over-scheduling of flights and other technical problems can result in flight delays, cancellations, or missed connections. Consult local media for information about possible strikes or slow-downs before planning travel within Argentina.

Public transportation is generally reliable and safe. The preferred option for travel within Buenos Aires and other major cities is by radio taxi or "remise" (private car with driver). The best way to obtain safe taxis and remises is to call for one or go to an established stand, rather than hailing one on the street. Hotels, restaurants, and other businesses can order remises or radio taxis, or provide phone numbers for such services, upon request. Passengers on buses, trains, and the subway should be alert for pickpockets and should also be aware that these forms of transport are sometimes interrupted by strikes or work stoppages.

Argentina is a geographically diverse country with mountains, forests, expansive deserts, and glaciers, making it a popular destination for outdoor and adventure sports. Despite the best efforts of local authorities,

assisting visitors lost or injured in such remote areas can be problematic. American citizens have been killed in recent years while mountain climbing, skiing, trekking, and hunting. Travelers visiting isolated and wilderness areas should learn about local hazards and weather conditions and always inform park or police authorities of their itineraries. Reports of missing or injured persons should be made immediately to the police so that a search can be mounted or assistance rendered.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Most American citizens visit Argentina without incident. Nevertheless, street crime in the larger cities, especially greater Buenos Aires and Mendoza, is a problem for residents and visitors alike. As in any big city, visitors to Buenos Aires and popular tourist destinations should be alert to muggers, pickpockets, scam artists, and purse-snatchers on the street, in hotel lobbies, at bus and train stations, and in cruise ship ports. Criminals usually work in groups and travelers should assume they are armed. Criminals employ a variety of ruses to distract and victimize unsuspecting visitors.

A common scam is to spray mustard or a similar substance on the tourist from a distance. A pickpocket will then approach the tourist offering to help clean the stain, and while doing so, he or an accomplice robs the victim. Thieves regularly nab unattended purses, backpacks, laptops, and luggage, and criminals will often distract visitors for a few seconds to steal valuables. While most American victims are not physically injured when robbed, criminals typically do not hesitate to use force when they encounter resistance. Visitors are advised to immediately hand over all cash and valuables if confronted. Thieves will target visitors wearing expensive watches or jewelry.

Your passport is a valuable document and should be guarded. Passports and other valuables should be locked in a hotel safe, and a photocopy of your passport should be carried for identification purposes. The U.S. Embassy has observed a notable rise in reports of stolen passports in the past year. Some travelers have received counterfeit currency in Argentina. Unscrupulous vendors and taxi drivers sometimes pretend to help tourists review their pesos, then trade bad bills for good ones. Characteristics of good currency can be reviewed at the Argentine Central Bank web site at www.bcra.gov.ar.

Along with conventional muggings, so-called express kidnappings continue to occur. Victims are grabbed off the street based on their appearance and vulnerability. They are made to withdraw as much money as possible from ATM machines, and then their family or co-workers are contacted and told to deliver all the cash that they have on hand or can gather in a couple of hours. Once the ransom is paid, the victim is usually quickly released unharmed. There have been some foreign victims. Visitors are particularly advised not to let children and adolescents travel alone.

Travelers worldwide are advised to avoid packing valuables in their checked baggage. In Argentina, officials have publicly acknowledged the systematic theft of valuables and money from checked baggage at Buenos Aires airports. Authorities are working to resolve the problem and have made a number of arrests, but travelers should exercise continued care and caution.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The Argentine Federal Police have established a special Tourist Police Unit to receive complaints and investigate crimes against tourists. The unit, located at Corrientes 436 in Buenos Aires, responds to calls around the clock at 4346-5748 or toll-free 0800-999-5000 from anywhere in the country. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the city of Buenos Aires or in the surrounding Province of Buenos Aires is 911 for police assistance. In the city of Buenos Aires, dial 100 in case of fire and 107 for an ambulance. In the Province of Buenos Aires, fire and ambulance numbers vary by location.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The public health system in Argentina provides emergency and non-emergency services free of charge to all, regardless of nationality or immigration status. However, the quality of non-emergency care in public hospitals is generally below U.S. standards. Medical care in private hospitals in Buenos Aires is generally good, but varies in quality outside the capital. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization in private facilities and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost

thousands of dollars or more. Private physicians, clinics, and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Argentina.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www. who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policies apply overseas and will cover prior conditions and emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation, which could cost tens of thousands of dollars. If not covered, visitors are encouraged to consider purchasing travel insurance. No Medicare benefits are available abroad.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: Driving in Argentina is generally more dangerous than driving in the United States. By comparison, drivers in Argentina tend to be very aggressive, especially in the capital city of Buenos Aires, and frequently ignore traffic regulations. U.S. driver's licenses are valid in the capital and the province of Buenos Aires, but Argentine or international licenses are required to drive in the rest of the country. For further information, please contact the Argentine Automobile Club, Av. Libertador 1850, 1112 Capital Federal, telephone (011) (54)(11) 4802-6061, or contact the Embassy of Argentina as listed in the above section on Entry Requirements.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Argentina's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Argentina's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: In addition to being subject to all Argentine laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Argentine citizens. In some instances, dual nationality may hamper U.S. Government efforts to provide protection abroad. Please see our information on Customs Regulations.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can also be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Argentina's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Argentina are strict, and convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences and fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children and using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country are crimes prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Argentina are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Argentina. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it much easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Avenida Colombia 4300 in the Palermo neighborhood of Buenos Aires (near the Plaza Italia stop on the "D" line subway). The main Embassy switchboard telephone is (54) (11) 5777-4533. Recorded consular information, including instructions on whom to contact in case of an American citizen emergency, is available at tel. (54) (11) 4514-1830. The Consular Section fax is (54) (11) 5777-4293. The Consular Section is open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to noon and 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, except on American and Argentine holidays. Additional information on Embassy services is available on the Internet at http://argentina.usembassy.gov or by e-mail: BuenosAires-ACS@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Presently, intercountry adoption is not permitted in Argentina. Adoption is restricted to Argentine citizens and permanent resident aliens residing in Argentina.

The following information is for U.S. citizens who permanently reside in Argentina who wish to adopt Argentine children.

Patterns of Immigration: Because of the current Argentine government restrictions on intercountry adoption, the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires has issued no immigrant visas to Argentine orphans during the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority:
Secretaria National de la Ninez, Adolescencia y Familia
Av. Peron 524 piso 1 (for adoptions)
Tel: 4338-5800 into. 6012

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The government of Argentina requires that prospective adoptive parents must be at least 30 years of age if single.

There is no minimum age if married, but the couple must have been married for at least 3 years and have no offspring. At least one of the prospective adoptive parents must be at least 18 years older than the adoptee.

If a couple can prove that they are physically unable to have a child the court will consider marriages of less than 3 years.

Married couples must adopt jointly, except in the following cases:

- Legal separation decree
- Spouse declared mentally incompetent by a court or
- Judicial declaration of absence of spouse (presumption of death)

Residency Requirements: Applicants must be Argentine nationals or permanent resident aliens of Argentina for at least the five years immediately preceding the application for guardianship, which is the first step in the adoption process.

Time Frame: Once the guardianship is granted by the court, it takes between six months and one year to obtain the final adoption decree.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are some private agencies that help with adoption processing. However, adoptive parents must apply directly to the Consejo Nacionalde Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia.

Adoption Fees: There are no fixed fees to conclude an adoption in Argentina. The filing of the petition for guardianship to lead to adoption is free of charge. Prospective adoptive parents are responsible for their attorneys' fees, although some courts do provide free legal assistance. The judge may set fees for other services rendered.

Adoption Procedures: Biological parents may relinquish their children for adoption only through the courts. This release is irrevocable and can only be signed at the court by appointment set by a judge at least 60 days after the child's birth. It cannot be done immediately following the birth. The law provides for the 60-day window after the birth of the child to allow the birth mother time to think about her decision. During this 60-day period, the court may review the personal conditions of the biological parents, their age, ability to take care of the child, reasons for the release for adoption and any other considerations and information pertinent to this act. A judge may request the opinion of, technical advice from, and/or the effective participation of a Defensor de Menores e Incapaces from the Ministerio Publico de la Defensa to determine the best interests of the child.

A release by the biological parents will not be necessary in those instances when the child is a ward of the court, already an orphan on the streets, or has been housed in a government institution continuously for more than one year without any indication of interest from the birth parent.

Prospective adoptive parents must file an application with the court having jurisdiction over their domicile. In that application, they may indicate their preference for the child's gender and age, and whether they consider themselves capable to adopt a child with health or other problems. The prospective adoptive parents' names will be placed on a single nationwide list by filing date and be made public. The Consejo de la Niñez, Adolescencia y Familia will inform them when their turn is reached.

The court will then release a child in guardianship to the prospective adoptive parents. The child will remain under the jurisdiction of the court for the full period of guardianship. In no case will the child be permitted to depart Argentina. Application for adoption can only be filed after the guardianship period of not less than six months and not more than twelve months has elapsed. Birth parents will lose all rights and obligations after that time and these rights will be transferred to the prospective adoptive parents.

The application for adoption must be filed with the court having jurisdiction over the prospective parents' domicile or at the court that granted the guardianship. The adopted child will be granted the father's surname or compound father and mother's surname if requested by the parents. The adoptive parents may request the issuance of a new birth certificate identifying the adoptive parents as the child's parents.

After the adoption is finalized, the parents may apply to the Argentine Federal Police for the issuance of a passport. See http://www.policiafederal.gov.ar. To travel outside of Argentina, the child must carry signed written permission from both parents or from the non-traveling parent (if traveling with only one parent).

By Argentine law, the adoptive parents must inform the child of his/her adoption before the age of 18. (According to the laws of Argentina, adopted children have the right to know their true biological identity and will have access to their adoption file once they have reached the age of 18.) This is a commitment that the adopting parents must sign at the court at the time the adoption is granted.

Required Documents:

- Prospective adoptive parent's proof of Argentine citizenship or legal permanent residence in Argentina for the last five years
- A copy of the prospective adoptive parents' marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Evidence of good conduct
- Evidence of financial ability

Note: Additional documentation may be requested.

Embassy of Argentina
1600 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
tel. (202) 939-6400

Argentina also has consulates in Los Angeles, Miami, Atlanta, Chicago, New York, and Houston.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy:
4300 Avenida Colombia
1425 Buenos Aires
Argentina
Main Tel: (011)(54)(11) 5777-4533
Recorded consular information: (54)(11) 4514-1830
Consular Section Immigrant Visa Unit fax is: (54)(11) 5777- 4448
Email: BuenosAires.IV@state.gov
http://argentina.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Argentina may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



ARMENIA

Compiled from the February 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Armenia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 29,800 sq. km. (11,500 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Maryland.

Cities: Capital—Yerevan.

Terrain: High plateau with mountains, little forest land.

Climate: Highland continental, hot summers, cold winters.

People

Nationality: Noun—Armenian(s). Adjective—Armenian.

Population: (official est.) 3,213,011 de jure (3,002,594 de facto). These figures represent the final results of the October 2001 census, as announced in January 2003.

Ethnic groups: Armenian 98%; Yezidi 1.2%; Russian, Greek, and other 0.8%.

Religions: Armenian Apostolic Church (more than 90% nominally affiliated).

Languages: Armenian (96%), Russian, other.

Education: Literacy—99%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—20/1,000. Life expectancy—66.6 years.

Work force: (1.24 million; 10.5% unemployed) Industry and construction—24.5%; agriculture and forestry—24.6%; trade—17.3%; education—13.4%; other—22.2%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Approved in November 2005 referendum.

Independence: 1918 (First Armenian Republic); 1991 (from Soviet Union).

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state) with wider powers relative to other branches, prime minister (head of cabinet), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (parliament). Judicial—Constitutional Court.

Political subdivisions: 10 marzes (provinces) in addition to the city of Yerevan, which has the status of a province.

Political parties: Republican Party of Armenia, Prosperous Armenia, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) Dashnaktsutyun, Country of Law (Orinats Yerkir), and the Heritage Party. Other parties include: People's Party of Armenia, National Accord Party, Republic Party, New Times Party, United Labor Party, Dashink Party, National Democratic Union, and the Armenian National Movement. In addition, there are dozens of other registered parties, many of which become active only during national campaigns, if at all.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy (2007)

GDP: $9.18 billion.

GDP growth rate: 13.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2006) $1,989.

Inflation: 6.6%.

Natural resources: Copper, zinc, gold, and lead; hydroelectric power; small amounts of gas and petroleum.

Agriculture: Products—fruits and vegetables, wines, dairy, some livestock.

Industry: Types—chemicals, electronic products, machinery, processed food, synthetic rubber, and textiles.

Trade: Exports—$1,218.5 million: precious and semi-precious stones and metals, mining products, foodstuffs, brandy. Export partners (2006)—Germany 14.7%, Netherlands 12.6%, Russia 12.1%, Israel 10.6%, Switzerland 7.2%, U.S. 6.5%. Imports—$3,281.8 million: natural gas, petroleum, precious stones and metals, tobacco products, foodstuffs, textiles. Import partners (2006)—Russia 13.9%, Ukraine 7.5%, Turkmenistan 7.7%, Germany 6.6%, Belgium 5.5%, Iran 5.2%.

PEOPLE AND HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Ethnic groups in Armenia include Armenians (95%), Kurds, Russians, Greeks, and others. More than 90% of the population is nominally affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic Church. Languages are Armenian (96%),

Russian, and others. Armenia first emerged into history around 800 BC as part of the Kingdom of Urartu or Van, which flourished in the Caucasus and eastern Asia Minor until 600 BC. After the destruction of the Seleucid Empire, the first Armenian state was founded in 190 BC. At its zenith, from 95 to 65 BC, Armenia extended its rule over the entire Caucasus and the area that is now eastern Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon. For a time, Armenia was the strongest state in the Roman East. It became part of the Roman Empire in 64 BC and adopted a Western political, philosophical, and religious orientation.

In 301 AD, Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, establishing a church that still exists independently of both the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches. During its later political eclipses, Armenia depended on the church to preserve and protect its unique identity. From around 1100 to 1350, the focus of Armenian nationalism moved south, as the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, which had close ties to European Crusader states, flourished in southeastern Asia Minor until conquered by Muslim states. Between the 4th and 19th centuries, Armenia was conquered and ruled by, among others, Persians, Byzantines, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. For a brief period from 1918 to 1920, it was an independent republic. In late 1920, the communists came to power following an invasion of Armenia by the Red Army, and in 1922, Armenia became part of the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1936, it became the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. Armenia declared its independence from the Soviet Union on September 21, 1991.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Armenians voted overwhelmingly for independence in a September 1991 referendum, followed by a presidential election in October 1991 that gave 83% of the vote to Levon Ter-Petrossian. Ter-Petrossian had been elected head of government in 1990, when the Armenian National Movement defeated the Communist Party. Ter-Petrossian was re-elected in 1996. Following public demonstrations against Ter-Petrossian's policies on Nagorno-Karabakh, the President resigned in January 1998 and was replaced by Prime Minister Robert Kocharian, who was elected President in March 1998.

Following the October 27, 1999 assassination in Parliament of Prime Minister Vazgen Sargsian, Parliament Speaker Karen Demirchian, and six other officials, a period of political instability ensued during which an opposition headed by elements of the former Armenian National Movement government attempted unsuccessfully to force Kocharian to resign. Kocharian was successful in riding out the unrest. Kocharian was reelected in March 2003 in a contentious election that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the U.S. Government deemed to fall short of international standards. As a result of the May 2007 parliamentary elections, 103 seats of the 131 in the National Assembly (90 elected on a proportional basis and 41 on a district-by-district majoritarian basis) are members of pro-governmental parties.

The Republican Party and Prosperous Armenia formed a coalition; the ARF Dashnaksutyun Party signed a cooperation agreement with this coalition. The Heritage Party and Orinats Yerkir remain opposition parties. While in the past opposition parties, despite philosophical differences, tended to vote together on key legislative issues, there has been no agreement among the opposition parties to date to do so. Armenia is set to elect a new president on February 19, 2008, who will assume office in April 2008. After serving two consecutive 5-year terms, President Kocharian is constitutionally barred from seeking office a third term, and is stepping down. His hand-picked successor, Prime Minister Serge Sargsyan of the Republican Party, is widely viewed as the frontrunner in the presidential race. Former president Levon Ter-Petrossian is also a candidate. During the presidential election campaign, some opposition parties and presidential candidates have accused the government of harassing their supporters and denying them equal access to TV media. The Government of Armenia's stated aim is to build a Western-style parliamentary democracy as the basis of its form of government. However, international observers have questioned the inherent fairness of parliamentary and presidential elections during each of the previous nationwide elections (1995, 1999, and 2003) as well as during the 2005 constitutional referendum, citing polling deficiencies, lack of cooperation by the electoral commission, poor maintenance of electoral lists, and access to polling places. The 2007 parliamentary elections, however, demonstrated an improvement over previous elections. The new constitution in 2005 increased the power of the legislative branch and allows for more independence of the judiciary; the executive branch nevertheless retains more power than most European countries.

The Government's human rights record remained poor in 2007; while there were some improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained. Security forces beat pretrial detainees. Impunity and corruption remained a problem. There were reports of arbitrary arrest and detention, and incarceration of individuals for political reasons. Lengthy pretrial detention remained a problem. There were limits on press freedom, as well as incidents of violence, intimidation, and self-censorship in the press. The law places some restrictions on religious freedom. Societal violence against women continued to be a problem. Trafficking of persons was a problem, which the government took only limited measures to address.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Serzh SARGSIAN**
Prime Min.: **Tigran SARGSIAN**
President's Chief of Staff:

Min. of Agriculture: **Aramayis GRIGORIAN**
Min. of Culture & Youth: **Hasmik POGHOSIAN**
Min. of Defense: **Seyran OHANIAN**
Min. of Economy: **Nerses YERITSIAN**
Min. of Education & Science: **Spartak SEYRANIAN**
Min. of Emergency Situations: **Mher SHAHGELDIAN**
Min. of Energy & Natural Resources: **Armen MOVSISIAN**
Min. of Environmental Protection: **Aram HARUTIUNIAN**
Min. of Finance: **Tigran DAVTIAN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Eduard NALBANDIAN**
Min. of Health: **Harutyun KUSHKIAN**
Min. of Justice: **Gevorg DANIELIAN**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **Arsen HAMBARTSUMIAN**
Min. of Sport & Youth Affairs: **Armen GRIGORIAN**
Min. of Territorial Admin.: **Armen GEVORGIAN**
Min. of Transport & Communication: **Gurgen SARGSIAN**
Min. of Urban Planning: **Vardan VARDANIAN**
Chmn., National Bank: **Artur JAVADIAN**
Ambassador to the US: **Tatoul MARKARIAN**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Armen MARTIROSIAN**

Armenia's embassy in the U.S. is at 2225 R Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20008; tel: 202-319-1976; fax: 202-319-2984.

ECONOMY

Armenia is the second most densely populated of the former Soviet republics. It is a landlocked country between the Black and the Caspian Seas, bordered on the north by Georgia, to the east by Azerbaijan, on the south by Iran, and to the west by Turkey. Up until independence, Armenia's economy was based largely on industry—chemicals, electronic products, machinery, processed food, synthetic rubber, and textiles—and highly dependent on outside resources. Agriculture accounted for only 20% of net material product and 10% of employment before the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. In recent years, the construction sector has taken off, fueled by an ambitious government-backed construction project in the capital, and remittances to relatives by ethnic Armenians living in Russia and the United States.

Like other New Independent States of the former Soviet Union, Armenia's economy still suffers from the legacy of a centrally planned economy and the breakdown of former Soviet trading networks. While investment from these states in support of Armenian industry has virtually disappeared, and few major enterprises are still able to function, Russian entities have nevertheless increased their exposure in the mining, energy, telecommunications, and transportation sectors. In addition, the effects of the 1988 earthquake, which killed more than 25,000 people and made 500,000 homeless, are still being felt, though international donors and diaspora Armenian groups continue to fund reconstruction efforts in the earthquake zone. Although a cease-fire has held since 1994, the 20-year-old conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh has not been resolved, in spite of intensive efforts by the OSCE Minsk group to reach a settlement.

The consequent closure of both the Azerbaijani and Turkish borders resulting from the war has prevented Armenian from realizing its economic potential, because of Armenia's dependence on outside supplies of energy and most raw materials. Land routes through Azerbaijan and Turkey are closed, though air connections to Turkey exist; land routes through Georgia and Iran are inadequate or unreliable. In 1992-93, GDP fell nearly 60% from its 1989 level. The national currency, the dram, suffered hyperinflation for the first few years after its introduction in 1993. Since 2005, however, the dram has continued to appreciate versus the dollar, going from an annual average of 458 drams in 2005 to 342 in 2007. The currency's appreciation stems largely from growing remittances by diaspora Armenians in Russia and the United States, a weakening dollar, and gradual increase in the productivity of Armenian industry.

In spite of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, where a cease-fire has been in effect since 1994, the Government of Armenia has been able to carry out wide-ranging economic reforms that have paid off in dramatically lower inflation and steady growth. Armenia has registered strong economic growth since 1995, with double-digit growth rates in the past 6 years.

The structure of Armenia's economy has changed substantially since 1991, with sectors such as construction and services replacing agriculture and industry as the main contributors to the economic growth. The diamond processing industry, which was one of the leading export sectors in 2000-2004 and also a major recipient of foreign investment, faced a dramatic decrease in output since 2005 due to raw material supply problems with Russia and overall decline in international diamond markets. Other industrial sectors driving industrial growth include energy, metallurgy, and food processing.

Armenia maintains a floating exchange rate regime with no explicit exchange rate target. The nominal exchange rate of the Armenian dram with major currencies was fairly stable between 1998 and 2003; however, it has strengthened sharply starting in 2004, recording around 46% nominal appreciation against the U.S. dollar compared to January 2004. The main causes of the appreciation of the dram are the global weakening of the U.S. dollar, a large inflow of foreign currency to Armenia from remittances, as well as increases in domestic productivity and incomes. The sharp appreciation of the dram has already affected negatively the external competitiveness of the Armenian products.

Armenia is highly dependent on import of energy fuel, mainly from Russia. The Armenia Nuclear Power Plant (ANPP) provides around 40% of electricity generation for the country, and hydro and thermal plants provide roughly 30% each.

Steady economic progress has earned Armenia increasing support from international institutions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF),



World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), as well as other international financial institutions (IFIs) and foreign countries are extending considerable grants and loans. These loans are targeted at reducing the budget deficit, stabilizing the local currency; developing private businesses; energy; the agriculture, food processing, transportation, and health and education sectors.

In December 2005, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation approved a 5-year $235 million Compact with the Government of Armenia, which focuses on rehabilitation of irrigation networks and upgrading of rural transport infrastructure.

Continued progress will depend on the ability of the government to strengthen its macroeconomic management, including increasing revenue collection, improving the investment climate, and making strides against corruption. A liberal foreign investment law was approved in June 1994, and a Law on Privatization was adopted in 1997, as well as a program on state property privatization. The government joined the World Trade Organization on February 5, 2003.

Environmental Issues

Armenia is trying to address its environmental problems. It has established a Ministry of Nature Protection and has introduced a pollution fee system by which taxes are levied on air and water emissions and solid waste disposal, with the resulting revenues used for environmental protection activities.

Deforestation by mining concerns in certain parts of the country have resulted in periodic protests by environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and stirred controversy over government policies to support investment in the mining sector.

Armenia is interested in cooperating with other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS—a group of 12 former Soviet republics) and with members of the international community on environmental issues. Despite strong pressure from the international community, the Armenian Government has often reiterated its reluctance to decommission the existing nuclear power plant unless there is a reliable alternative source of energy which could become a decent substitute for Metsamor.

Armenia has signed a statement of cooperation with the U.S. to conduct a preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Feasibility Study for a new nuclear power generation unit in Armenia.

DEFENSE AND MILITARY ISSUES

Armenia established a Ministry of Defense in 1992. Border guards subject to the National Security Service patrol Armenia's borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan, while Russian Border Guards continue to monitor its borders with Iran and Turkey.

The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty was ratified by the Armenian parliament in July 1992. The treaty establishes comprehensive limits on key categories of military equipment, such as tanks, artillery, armored combat vehicles, combat aircraft, and combat helicopters, and provides for the destruction

of weaponry in excess of those limits. Armenian officials have consistently expressed determination to comply with its provisions in spite of concerns they have about Azerbaijan exceeding that country's treaty limits. Armenia has provided data on armaments as required under the CFE Treaty and is receptive to CFE inspections. There are indications that Armenia is trying to establish mechanisms to ensure fulfillment of its arms control obligations. Armenia is not a significant exporter of conventional weapons, but it has provided substantial support, including materiel, to ethnic Armenian separatists in the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh located within Azerbaijan's borders.

In March 1993, Armenia signed the multilateral Chemical Weapons Convention, which calls for the eventual elimination of chemical weapons. Armenia acceded to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state in July 1993. The U.S. and other Western governments continue to discuss efforts and initiatives to establish effective nuclear export control systems with Armenia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Armenia is a member of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States, NATO's Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the World Trade Organization.

Nagorno-Karabakh

In 1988, the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly ethnic Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan, voted to secede and join Armenia. This act was the catalyst that led Armenia and Azerbaijan into a full-scale armed conflict that claimed the lives of over 30,000 on both sides. Armenian support for the separatists led to an economic embargo by Azerbaijan, which has had a negative impact on Armenia's foreign trade and made imports of food and fuel more expensive, three-quarters of which previously transited Azerbaijan under Soviet rule.

Peace talks in early 1993 were disrupted by the seizure of Azerbaijan's Kelbajar district by Nagorno-Karabakh Armenian forces and the forced evacuation of thousands of ethnic Azeris. Turkey in protest then followed with an embargo of its own against Armenia. A cease-fire was declared between Azeri and Armenian/Nagorno-Karabakh forces in 1994 and has been maintained by both sides since then in spite of occasional shooting along the line of contact. All Armenian governments have thus far resisted domestic pressure to recognize the self-proclaimed independence of the "Nagorno-Karabakh Republic," while at the same time announcing they would not accept any peace accords that returned the enclave to Azerbaijani rule. Approximately 526,000 of the estimated 800,000 ethnic Azeris who fled during the Karabakhi offensives still live as internally displaced persons in Azerbaijan, while roughly 235,000 of 360,000 ethnic Armenians who fled Azerbaijan since 1988 remain refugees.

Negotiations to peacefully resolve the conflict have been ongoing since 1992 under the aegis of the Minsk Group of the OSCE. The Minsk Group is currently co-chaired by the U.S., France, and Russia. Negotiations have intensified since 2004.

According to Armenia's Office of the Geographer, Karabakhi Armenians, supported by the Republic of Armenia, now hold about 9% of Azerbaijan and have refused to withdraw from Azeri territories they control until an agreement on the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is reached. Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to observe the cease-fire that has been in effect since May 1994, and in late 1995 both also agreed to OSCE field representatives being based in Tbilisi, Georgia, to monitor the cease-fire and facilitate the peace process.

U.S.-ARMENIAN RELATIONS

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought an end to the Cold War and created the opportunity for bilateral relations with the New Independent States (NIS) as they began a political and economic transformation. The U.S. recognized the independence of Armenia on December 25, 1991, and opened an Embassy in Yerevan in February 1992.

The United States has made a concerted effort to help Armenia and other NIS during their difficult transition from totalitarianism and a command economy to democracy and open markets. The cornerstone of this continuing partnership has been the Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act, enacted in October 1992. Under this and other programs, the U.S. to date has provided nearly $2 billion in humanitarian and technical assistance for Armenia. U.S. assistance programs in Armenia are described in depth on the website at: http://www.usaid.am/main/en/129.

On March 27, 2006 Armenia signed a Millennium Challenge Compact with the United States; the agreement entered into force on September 29, 2006. Provided the Armenian Government makes progress on mutually agreed-upon policy performance criteria (corruption, ruling justly, and investing in people), the agreement will provide $235 million to Armenia over five years to reduce rural poverty through the improvement of rural roads and irrigation networks.

U.S.-Armenian Economic Relations

In 1992 Armenia signed three agreements with the U.S. affecting trade between the two countries. The agreements were ratified by the Armenian parliament in September 1995 and entered into force in the beginning of 1996. They include an "Agreement on Trade Relations," an "Investment Incentive Agreement,"

and a treaty on the "Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment" (generally referred to as the Bilateral Investment Treaty, or BIT). Armenia does not have a bilateral taxation treaty with the U.S. The 1994 Law on Foreign Investment governs all direct investments in Armenia, including those from the U.S.

Approximately 70 U.S.-owned firms currently do business in Armenia, including Dell, Microsoft, and IBM. Recent major U.S. investment projects include the Hotel Armenia/ Marriott; the Hotel Ani Plaza; Tufenkian Holdings (carpet and furnishing production, hotels, and construction); several subsidiaries of U.S.-based information technology firms, including Viasphere Technopark, an IT incubator; Synopsys; a Greek-owned Coca-Cola bottling plant; jewelry and textile production facilities; several copper and molybdenum mining companies; and the Hovnanian International Construction Company.

U.S. Support To Build a Stable Market Economy

The U.S. continues to work closely with international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to help Armenia in its transition to a free-market economy. Armenia has embarked upon an ambitious reform program, which has resulted in a double-digit GDP growth for the last 6 years. U.S. economic assistance programs, primarily under the administration of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), have three objectives: to promote sustainable private sector economic growth; to strengthen non-executive governmental systems and civil society to build a more robust democracy; and to ensure a smooth transition towards primary healthcare and the rationalization of social support systems of the government. Other agencies, including the Departments of State, Agriculture, Treasury, Defense, Commerce, Energy, Justice, and the Peace Corps sponsor various assistance projects. The U.S.-Armenia Task Force, established in 2000, is a bilateral commission that meets every 6 months to review the progress and objectives of U.S. assistance to Armenia. The last meeting was held in Washington, DC, in October 2007.

Specific USAID programs focus on private sector competitiveness and workforce development in selected industries, including information technology and tourism; development of the financial sector and fiscal authorities to achieve an enabling environment for businesses; and reforms promoting the efficient and safe use of energy and water; democracy and good governance programs, including the promotion of a well-informed and active civil society, support to decentralization of authority, independent justice sector and the parliament to ensure the separation of power; social sector reform, including benefits and public services administration for vulnerable populations; health sector reform, including improvement of primary healthcare (PHC) services with an emphasis on preventive care; strengthening of reproductive, maternal, and child healthcare countrywide to ensure access to quality PHC services in rural areas; public education programs; and training for PHC providers.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Caucasus Agricultural Development Initiative provides targeted and sustained technical and marketing assistance to small and medium-sized agribusinesses, farmer-marketing associations, and the Government of Armenia. USDA's goal is to sustain the productivity of the agricultural sector by expanding access to markets and credit, increasing efficiency, and modernizing agriculture systems. USDA's priority assistance areas are: Farm Credit, Food Safety and Animal Health, support to the Armenian private sector through the NGO CARD, Agricultural Statistics and Agricultural Education. Also, as a training component of USDA projects in Armenia, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cochran Fellowship Program provides training to Armenian agriculturists in the United States.

U.S. Humanitarian Assistance

Over the past 16 years, the U.S. has provided nearly $2 billion in assistance to Armenia, the highest per capita amount in the NIS. Humanitarian aid originally accounted for up to 85% of this total, reflecting the economic paralysis caused by closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, destruction in northern Armenia left from the devastating 1988 earthquake, and the closure of most of the country's factories.

As conditions in Armenia have improved, with the stabilization of the economy and increased energy production—including the restarting of the Armenian Nuclear Power Plant near the capital—U.S. assistance programs have progressed from humanitarian priorities to longer-term development goals.

U.S. Support To Achieve Democracy

Technical assistance and training programs have been provided in municipal administration, intergovernmental relations, public affairs, foreign policy, diplomatic training, rule of law, and development of a constitution. Specific programs are targeted at promoting elections that meet international standards, strengthening political parties, and promoting the establishment of an independent judiciary and independent media. This includes financing for programs that support civil society organizations, local non-governmental organizations (NGO) capacity building, National Assembly professional development, and local and community-level governance.

State Department and USAID educational exchange programs play an important role in supporting democratic and free-market reforms. Assistance in the translation and publication of printed information also has been provided. Exchange programs in the U.S. for Armenian lawyers, judges, political party members, business people, government officials, NGO activists, journalists,

and other public figures focus on a range of topics, including the American judicial and political system, privatization, specific business sectors, the media, and civil society. The State Department has funded an ongoing project to provide Internet connectivity to schools at various levels throughout the country; these centers provide both educational and community-building opportunities.

USAID has funded international and domestic groups to monitor national elections. USAID also has funded programs to educate voters and to strengthen the role of an array of civic organizations in the democratic process.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

YEREVAN (E) 1 American Ave., (37410) 46-47-00; 49-42-00, Fax (37410) 46-47-42, INMARSAT Tel Emer. Iridium 4179 770 4310; 4179 222 9728, Workweek: Mon-Fri/ 9:00am-6:00pm, Website: http://yerevan.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Sarah Madrid
AMB OMS:	Vacant
DCM/CHG:	Joseph Pennington
DHS/ICE:	Paul Shott
ECO:	Marko Velikonja
FM:	Paul Davis
HRO:	Vacant
MGT:	Robert Frazier (Acting)
POL/ECO:	Stephen Banks
AMB:	Vacant
CON:	Robin Busse
PAO:	Thomas Mittnacht
GSO:	Charles Clegg
RSO:	Gordon Goetz
AGR:	Sean Carmody
AID:	Robin Phillips
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Robert Webster
FMO:	Vacant
IMO:	Gregory Davis
IPO:	Greg Church
IRS:	Susan Stanley
ISO:	Lloyd Barchers
ISSO:	Lloyd Barchers
LEGATT:	Steven Kessler
NAS:	Vacant
POL:	Daniel Renna

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 9, 2008

Country Description: Armenia is a constitutional republic with a developing economy. Tourist facilities, especially outside Yerevan, the capital, are not highly developed, and many of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries may be difficult to obtain.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. U.S. citizens may purchase visas for a stay of up to 21 days online at http://www.armeniaforeignministry.am/ for the fee of USD 60. At this time a visa valid for 120 days may also be obtained upon arrival at the port of entry for the fee of 15,000 Armenian Drams. Visas for up to 120 days may be purchased at the Armenian Embassy in Washington, D.C. or the Consulate General in Los Angeles for the fee of USD 69. For further information on entry requirements, contact the Armenian Embassy at 2225 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 319-1976 and (202) 319-2983; the Armenian Consulate General in Los Angeles at 50 N. La Cienega Blvd., Suite 210, Beverly Hills, CA 90211, tel. (310) 657-7320, or visit the Embassy of Armenia's web site at http://www.armeniaemb.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: A cease-fire has been in effect since 1994 around the self-proclaimed "Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh," an unrecognized ethnic Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan. However, reports of intermittent gunfire along the cease-fire line and along the border with Azerbaijan continue. Because of the existing state of hostilities, consular services are not available to Americans in Nagorno-Karabakh. Travelers should exercise caution near the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and consult the Country Specific Information for Azerbaijan if considering travel to Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenian territory. Armenia's land borders with Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan remain closed and continue to be patrolled by armed troops who stop all people attempting to cross. There are still land mines in numerous areas in and near the conflict zones.

Several political rallies occurred in Yerevan in the spring of 2004 and in the fall of 2005. Though the majority of these demonstrations were peaceful, police forcibly removed protesters from the scene in at least one instance in 2004. Political rallies in the run-up to the May 2007 Parliamentary elections were mostly peaceful. However, some demonstrators were beaten by police during one march in central Yerevan. Americans should be mindful that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful could turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations.

Armenia is an earthquake and landslide-prone country. In addition to these natural disasters, there exists the possibility of chlorine gas spills and radiation poisoning due to industrial accidents; the Soviet-era Armenia Nuclear Power plant is located in Metsamor, approximately 20 kilometers southwest of Yerevan. The plant was closed temporarily in 1988 following a devastating earthquake, but reopened in 1995. Armenia is currently under international pressure to close the plant permanently, due to safety concerns.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime against foreigners is relatively rare in Armenia. Break-ins, particularly of vehicles, and theft are the most common crimes, but there have been instances of violent crime as well. In May 2004, an American citizen was murdered in Yerevan; the crime remains unsolved. While the incidence of violent crime remains lower than in most U.S. cities, American citizens are urged to exercise caution and to avoid traveling alone after dark in Yerevan. Several American investors have also reported being involved in disputes over property ownership, and have had to seek legal recourse through a long, and in the majority of cases, unsuccessful court proceeding.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Though there are many competent physicians in Armenia, medical care facilities are limited, especially outside the major cities. The U.S. Embassy maintains a list of English-speaking physicians in the area. Most prescription medications are available, but the quality varies. Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at risk due to inadequate medical facilities.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Armenia is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel in Armenia requires caution. Public transportation, while very inexpensive, may be unreliable and uncomfortable. Travel at night is not recommended, and winter travel can be extremely hazardous in mountain areas and higher elevations.

Travelers should avoid the old highway between the towns of Ijevan and Noyemberyan in the Tavush region, as well as the main highway between the towns of Kirants and Baghanis/Voskevan. The U.S. Embassy has designated this portion of the road off-limits to all U.S. government personnel because of its proximity to the cease-fire line between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces, a line which has seen numerous cease-fire violations over the years.

On weekends, there are an increased number of intoxicated drivers on Armenian roads. American citizens are urged to exercise particular vigilance while traveling on the main highway from Yerevan to the resort areas of Tsaghadzor and Sevan. Traffic police will attempt to stop individuals driving erratically and dangerously, but police presence outside of Yerevan is limited. Armenia does have emergency police and medical services, but they may take time to reach remote regions.

With the exception of a few major arteries, primary roads are frequently in poor repair, with sporadic stretches of missing pavement and large potholes. Some roads shown as primary roads on maps are unpaved and can narrow to one lane in width, while some newer road connections have not yet been marked on recently produced maps. Secondary roads are normally in poor condition and are often unpaved and washed out in places. Street and road signs are poor to nonexistent. Truck traffic is not heavy except on the main roads linking Yerevan to Iran and Georgia.

Minibuses are considered more dangerous than other forms of public transportation. Travelers who choose to ride minibuses should exercise caution because these vehicles are often overcrowded and poorly maintained, commonly lack safety measures including seatbelts, and are frequently involved in accidents.

Though crime along roadways is rare, the police themselves sometimes seek bribes during traffic stops. Drivers in Armenia frequently ignore traffic laws, making roadways unsafe for unsuspecting travelers. Pedestrians often fail to take safety precautions and those driving in towns at night should be especially cautious. In cities, a pedestrian dressed in black crossing an unlit street in the middle of the block is a common occurrence.

The quality of gasoline in Armenia ranges from good at some of the more reliable stations in cities to very poor. The gasoline and other fuels sold out of jars, barrels, and trucks by independent roadside merchants should be considered very unreliable.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Armenia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Armenia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with Inter-

national Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Travelers on Armavia International Airways may experience prolonged delays, sudden cancellation of flights, and flights departing earlier than scheduled. In addition to frequent delays, flights are sometimes overcrowded with passengers without seats standing in the aisle along with excess unsecured cabin luggage. Even basic safety features such as seat belts are sometimes missing. Air travel to Armenia via European carriers is typically more reliable. Ticketed passengers on flights leaving Yerevan should reconfirm their reservation 24 hours prior to departure.

Special Circumstances: Armenia remains largely a cash-only economy. Credit cards are accepted at some businesses, including major hotels and restaurants in Yerevan, but rarely outside of the capital. Limited facilities exist for cashing traveler's checks and wiring money into the country. There are a number of ATMs in the center of Yerevan. Dollars are readily exchanged at market rates. Travelers may experience problems with local officials seeking bribes to perform basic duties.

Armenian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Armenia of items such as firearms, pornographic materials, medication, and communications equipment. For export of antiquities and other items that could have historical value, such as paintings, carpets, old books, or other artisan goods, a special authorization is required in advance from the Armenian Ministry of Culture. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Armenia in Washington, D.C. or Consulate General in Los Angeles for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Dual Nationality: Recent changes to Armenian legislation now permit Armenian citizens to hold dual citizenship. This means that U.S. citizens who emigrated from Armenia to the U.S. and subsequently acquired U.S. citizenship without explicitly giving up their Armenian citizenship may be able to (re)acquire Armenian citizenship along with all the associated rights and duties, e.g. the right to vote in Armenian elections and/or the duty for certain males to perform military service.

The new law also means that dual citizens need to enter and leave Armenia on their Armenian passport, i.e. they would no longer need an Armenian visa. U.S. citizens interested in obtaining Armenian citizenship must register their dual citizenship with Passport and Visa Department of the Police of the Republic of Armenia (formerly OVIR) by simply presenting proof of their other citizenship (e.g. passport). For more information, please consult with Passport and Visa Department of the Police (tel.: +37410-501439) and/or http://www.armeniaforeignministry.am.

Compulsory Military Service: In addition to being subject to all Armenian laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals are also subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Armenian citizens. Male U.S. citizens over the age of 18 who are also considered to be Armenian citizens may be subject to conscription and compulsory military service upon arrival, and to other aspects of Armenian law while in Armenia. Since the summer of 2005, Armenian authorities have regularly detained U.S. citizens on these grounds upon their arrival in or departure from Armenia. In most cases, ethnic Armenian travelers who are accused of evading Armenian military service obligations are immediately detained and later found guilty of draft evasion. Penalties for those convicted are stiff and, by law, include jail time or a substantial fine. Those who may be affected are strongly advised to consult with Armenian officials and inquire at an Armenian embassy or consulate to their status before traveling.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Armenian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Armenia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Armenia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Armenia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan maintains a computer terminal in the consular waiting room available to U.S. citizens for registration. The U.S. Embassy provides Internet access to the general public through the American Corners program and through the U.S. Embassy's Information Resource Center. American Corners are located in Yerevan (2 Amiryan Street, phone: +374-10 561383), Gyumri (68 Shirakatsi Street, phone: +374-312 22153), Vanadzor (25, Vardanants Street, phone: +374-322-21672, and Kapan (6, Shahumyan Street, phone: +374-0285-22151). By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Yerevan

is located at 1 American Avenue, tel. 011 (37410) 46-47-00 and fax: 011 (37410) 46-47-42. The Consular Section is open from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., with time reserved for American citizen services from 1:30 p.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for official U.S. Embassy holidays. For more information, see the Embassy's web site at http://yerevan.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Armenia is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between Armenia and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Armenia is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Armenia, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Armenia also has the following requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents do not have to fulfill any residency requirements to adopt in Armenia.

Age Requirements: Single prospective adoptive parents must be at least 18 years older than the adopted child.

Marriage Requirements: Both single individuals and married couples are eligible to adopt.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Armenia is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Brazil must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Armenia's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

There are many children living in orphanages, however, ONLY those children whose parents have died, disappeared, or signed a statement of relinquishment of their parental rights, and whose families do not visit them, thus abandoning them, are available for adoption. In addition, consent for child adoption can only be given after the birth of the child.

Relinquishment Requirements: If biological parents are alive, the biological parents must sign a statement of relinquishment in order for a child to be eligible for adoption.

Age Requirements: A child's name must be listed on the national registry list for three months before he or she is declared available for intercountry adoption. For this reason, it is impossible to adopt a very young infant from Armenia.

Waiting Period: The names of children available for adoption are listed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues. A child's name must remain on the list for three months before he/she is declared available for intercountry adoption.

Armenia's Adoption Authority: National Adoption Committee of the Republic of Armenia

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Armenia is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Armenia.

If both the United States and Armenia determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Armenia may provide you with a referral for a child. In Armenia, the adoptive parents identify a child from the children eligible for inter-country adoption listed in the registry kept by the Ministry of Labor and Social Issues. The prospective parents or their representative may go to the Ministry and view the list, or they may visit orphanages directly and identify a child. Once they identify a child, they must verify his/her status by reviewing the list.

Once the child has been identified, the prospective parents or their representative must submit their documents to the municipality in which the child resides. Once those documents are received, a court date is set.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application to a Consular Officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify Armenia's adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Adoptive parents and the child, if over 14, must be present for court proceedings. The court may request the presence of biological parents, orphanage representatives, or the child if the child is over the age of 10. The court proceedings are closed to the public.

Cases may be rejected on the basis of incomplete or fraudulent paperwork, among other issues addressed in

Armenian law. Prospective adoptive parents may be disqualified based on mental disease, drug addiction, alcoholism, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, or other infectious diseases.

The process for finalizing the adoption (or gaining legal custody) in Armenia generally includes the following.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The National Adoption Committee reviews the prospective adoptive parents' registration documents and issues a conclusion on the ability to adopt.

Role of the Court: Once the child has been identified and the remaining documents are submitted, a court date is set. During the hearing, the judge makes decisions on any requests to change the child's name, birth date, etc. After the hearing, the court will issue a preliminary decision and 30 days later the Government registers the final court decision.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Armenian law does not recognize the involvement of professional facilitators, adoption agencies, or attorneys. It does allow prospective adoptive parents to grant power of attorney to an individual to handle most aspects of the adoption process on their behalf. Some United States adoption agencies have contacts with experienced local individuals who can be given power of attorney.

Time Frame: From start to finish, an adoption timeframe of one to two years is common. Once approval to adopt has been granted, it can take up to six months to identify a child and several more months to secure the proper paperwork from the different Government agencies to support an application to adopt that particular child.

Adoption Application: The prospective adoptive parents submit the adoption application to the National Adoption Committee.

Adoption Fee: The official fees necessary to procure the documents needed in support of the adoption are approximately $65 USD. The practice of charging official and unofficial expediting fees varies depending on the particular Government agency or local office. In addition, the attorneys or other individuals assisting the prospective adoptive parents with the adoption may charge fees for services rendered.

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: Please note that fraud is pervasive in Armenia. Fabricated documents or real documents fraudulently obtained are readily available. As a result, the United States Embassy in Yerevan must carefully investigate all visa cases.

The following is a list of documents required to request registration as prospective adoptive parents.

- Copy of the prospective adoptive parents' United States passports
- USCIS approval (either of the Form I-600A in a transition case or the Form I-800A in a new case)
- Copy of certificate of home study, including a description of the family and the home where the adopted child will reside
- Work verification letters indicating position, salary, and three letters of reference
- Tax return for the most recent tax year
- Copy of marriage certificate, if applicable
- Copy of divorce decree, or spouse's death certificate, if applicable
- Spousal consent (if only one spouse is legally adopting the child)
- Medical evaluation report confirming that the prospective adoptive parent(s) do not suffer from any type of psychological condition, alcoholism or drug abuse, HIV AIDS or other STD, active tuberculosis or other infectious diseases
- Local police check for prospective adoptive parents
- Power of Attorney if documents will be submitted through an authorized representative

The following is a list of documents that must be submitted to the regional court presiding over the child's district:

- Full names of the prospective adoptive parent(s) and child
- Notification of prospective adoptive parents' plans to change the child's name, date or place of birth, or to list themselves as parents on new documents
- Prospective adoptive parents' passports or other identification
- Prospective adoptive parents' marriage certificate, if applicable
- Spousal consent (if married and only one spouse is legally adopting the child)
- Child's consent if the child is over 10 years of age
- Child's birth certificate and medical records
- Statement of child's centralized registration from the Ministry of Social Security
- Written consent of adoptive parents, birth parents, and the orphanage. If applicable, death certificates of birth parents and consent of biological grandparents if the biological parents are not legal adults.
- Government approval of prospective adoptive parents

For updates on document requirements and information on how to

authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the Intercountry Adoption section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: According to Armenian law, there are no post-adoption requirements for intercountry adoptions.

Contact Information

United States Embassy in Armenia
1 American Avenue
Yerevan, Republic of Armenia
Tel: (+374 10) 464-700, 494-686
Fax: (+374 10) 464-742, 464-737
Email: consular@usa.am

Armenian Adoption Authority
National Adoption Committee
of the Republic of Armenia
Ministry of Labor and Social Issues
Government Building
#1 Republic Square
Yerevan, Armenia
Tel: (374 10) 56-53-83 or 52-68-31

Embassy of the Republic of Armenia
2225 R Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008, USA
Tel: (202) 319-1976
Fax: (202) 319-2982
Email: armconsul@speakeasy.net
Internet: http://www.armeniaemb.org

Armenian Consulate General
50 North La Cienega Boulevard, Suite 210
Beverly Hills, CA 90211
Tel: (310) 657-7320
Email: armconla@aol.com

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.



ARUBA

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Aruba

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 180 sq. km. (112 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Oranjestad (pop. 60,000, 2003).

Terrain: Flat with a few hills; scant vegetation.

Climate: Subtropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Aruban(s).

Population: (2006) 103,484.

Annual growth rate: 2.2%.

Ethnic groups: Mixed white/Caribbean Amerindian 80%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 81%, Protestant 3%, Hindu, Muslim, Methodist, Anglican, Adventist, Evangelist, Jehovah's Witness, Jewish.

Languages: Dutch (official); Papiamento, Spanish, and English also are spoken.

Education: Literacy—97%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—5.2/1,000. Life expectancy—75 years for men, 81.9 years for women.

Work force: (41,501) Most employment is in wholesale and retail trade and repair, followed by hotels and restaurants and oil refining. Unemployment—about 6.9% (2005).

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: Part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Government branches: Executive—monarch represented by a governor (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Cabinet. Legislative—unicameral parliament. Judicial—Joint High Court of Justice appointed by the monarch.

Political subdivisions: Aruba is divided into eight regions—Noord/Tank Leendert, Oranjestad (west), Oranjestad (east), Paradera, Santa Cruz, Savaneta, Sint Nicolaas (north), and Sint Nicolaas (south).

Political parties: People's Electoral Movement (MEP), Aruba People's Party (AVP), Network (RED), Aruba Patriotic Movement (MPA), Real Democracy (PDR), Aruba Liberal Organization (OLA), Aruba Patriotic Party (PPA), Aruba Democratic Alliance (ALIANSA), Socialist Movement of Aruba (MSA).

Suffrage: Universal at 18 years.

Economy

GDP: (2005) $2.26 billion.

Growth rate: (2005) 2.4%.

Per capita GDP: (2006) $23,426.

Natural resources: Beaches. Tourism/services and oil refining are dominant factors in GDP.

Trade: Exports—$2.61 billion (f.o.b., including oil re-exports & free zone, 2006) oil products, live animals and animal products, art and collectibles, machinery and electrical equipment, transport equipment. Major markets—U.S. (43.61%), Venezuela (5.9%), Netherlands Antilles (16.67%), Netherlands (9.60%). Imports—$2.84 billion: crude petroleum, food, manufactures. Major suppliers—U.S. (57.50%), Netherlands (11.79%), Netherlands Antilles (3.32%).

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Aruba's first inhabitants were the Caquetios Indians from the Arawak tribe. Fragments of the earliest known Indian settlements date back to about 1000 A.D. Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda is regarded as the first European to arrive in about 1499. The Spanish garrison on Aruba dwindled following the Dutch capture of nearby Bonaire and Curacao in 1634. The Dutch occupied Aruba shortly thereafter, and retained control for nearly two centuries. In 1805, during the Napoleonic wars, the English briefly took control over the island, but it was returned to Dutch control in 1816. A 19th-century gold rush was followed by prosperity brought on by the opening in 1924 of an oil refinery. The last decades of the 20th century saw a boom in the tourism industry. In 1986 Aruba seceded

from the Netherlands Antilles and became a separate, autonomous member of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Movement toward full independence was halted at Aruba's prerogative in 1990. Aruba has a mixture of people from South America and Europe, the Far East, and other islands of the Caribbean.

GOVERNMENT

Part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Aruba has full autonomy on all internal affairs with the exception of defense, foreign affairs, and some judicial functions. The constitution was enacted in January 1986. Executive power rests with a governor, while a prime minister heads an eight-member Cabinet. The governor is appointed for a 6-year term by the monarch and the prime minister and deputy prime minister are elected by the legislature, or Staten, for 4-year terms. The Staten is made up of 21 members elected by direct, popular vote to serve 4-year terms. Aruba's judicial system, mainly derived from the Dutch system, operates independently of the legislature and the executive. Jurisdiction, including appeal, lies with the Common Court of Justice of Aruba and the Supreme Court of Justice in the Netherlands.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor: **Fredis REFENJOL**
Prime Minister: **Nelson ODUBER**
Min. of Education: **Fredis REFENJOL**
Min. of Finance & Economic Affairs: **Nilo SWAEN**
Min. of General Affairs & Utilities: **Nelson ODUBER**
Min. of Justice: **Rudy CROES**
Min. of Public Health: **Booshi WEVER**
Min. of Public Works: **Marisol TROMP**
Min. of Sports, Culture, & Labor: **Ramon LEE**
Min. of Tourism & Transportation: **Eddy BRIESEN**
Attorney General: **Ruud ROSINGH**
Pres., Central Bank: **A.R. CARAM**

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In the parliamentary elections of September 23, 2005, the People's Electoral Movement (MEP) gained 11 of the 21 seats available. Voter turnout had been 85%. MEP had also won the previous September 2001 elections with 12 seats, forming Aruba's first one-party government. Despite losing one seat in the 2005 elections, the party retained a slim majority in Parliament. MEP's biggest rival, the Aruba People's Party (AVP) obtained 8 seats and remained the largest opposition party on the island.

ECONOMY

Through the 1990s and into the 21st century Aruba posted growth rates around 5%. However, in 2001, a decrease in demand and the terrorist attack on the United States led to the first economic contraction in 15 years. Deficit spending has been a staple in Aruba's history, and modestly high inflation has been present as well, although recent efforts at tightening monetary policy may correct this. Oil processing is the dominant industry in Aruba, despite the expansion of the tourism sector. Approximately 1.3 million tourists per year visit Aruba, with 75% of those from the United States. The sizes of the agriculture and manufacturing industries remain minimal.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Although Aruba conducts foreign affairs primarily through the Dutch Government, it also has strong relations with other Caribbean governments. Aruba is an observer in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), an associate member of the World Trade Organization through the Netherlands, and is a full member of the Association of Caribbean States.

U.S.-ARUBA RELATIONS

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

CURACAO (CG) J.B. Gorsiraweg #1, 599-9-461-3066, Fax 599-9-461-6489, INMARSAT Tel 00-874-383-133-190, Workweek: M-F 8AM -5 PM AST, Website: curacao.usconsaulate.gov.

CM:	Timothy J. Dunn
CON/POL/ECO:	Vacant
MGT:	Donald J. Feeney
CG:	Timothy J. Dunn
PAO:	Vacant
RSO:	Timothy Dumas
DEA:	Michael Rzepczynski
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FMO:	Leticia Macapinlac
IMO:	Darrell Chapman
ISSO:	Vacant

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: Aruba is an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign

entry requirements. Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.



In addition visitors to Aruba may be asked to show onward/return tickets, proof of sufficient funds and proof of lodging accommodations for their stay. Length of stay for U.S. citizens is granted for thirty days and may be extended to 180 days by the office of immigration.

For further information, travelers may contact the Royal Netherlands Embassy, 4200 Linnean Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 244-5300, or the Dutch Consulate in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Houston or Miami. Visit the web site for the Embassy of the Netherlands at http://www.netherlands-embassy.org and the Aruban Department of Immigration at http://www.aruba.com for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: There are no known extremist groups, areas of instability or organized crime on Aruba, although drug trafficking rings do operate on the island.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The crime threat in Aruba is generally considered low although travelers should always take normal precautions when in unfamiliar surroundings. There have been incidents of theft from hotel rooms and armed robberies have been known to occur. Valuables left unattended on beaches, in cars and in hotel lobbies are easy targets for theft. Car theft, especially that of rental vehicles for joy riding and stripping, can occur. Vehicle leases or rentals may not be fully covered by local insurance when a vehicle is stolen or damaged. Be sure you are sufficiently insured when renting vehicles and jet skis.

Parents of young travelers should be aware that the legal drinking age of 18 is not always rigorously enforced in Aruba, so extra parental supervision may be appropriate. Young female travelers in particular are urged to take the same precautions they would when going out in the United States, e.g. to travel in pairs or in groups if they choose frequenting Aruba's nightclubs and bars, and if they opt to consume alcohol, to do so responsibly.

Anyone who is a victim of a crime should make a report to Aruban police as well as report it immediately to the nearest U.S. consular office. Do not rely on hotel/restaurant/tour company management to make the report for you.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility

of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is good in Aruba. There is one hospital, Dr. H.E. Oduber Hospital, whose medical standards can be compared with an average small hospital in the U.S. The hospital has three classes of services and patients are accommodated according to the level of their insurance (i.e. first class: one patient to a room, TV, better food; second class: two to three patients to a room, shared bathroom, etc; third class: 15 to 20 people in one hall). There is a small medical center in San Nicolas. The many drug stores, or "boticas" provide prescription and over the counter medicine. Emergency services are usually quick to respond. There are no country-specific health concerns.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Aruba is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate for a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Aruba is on the right-hand side of the road. Local laws require drivers and passengers to wear seat belts and motorcyclists to wear helmets. Children under 5 years of age should be in a child safety seat; older children should ride in the back seat. Right turns on red are prohibited in Aruba.

Aruba's main thoroughfare, L.G. Smith Boulevard, is well lit and most hotels and tourist attractions can be easily located. There is a speed limit in Aruba and driving while intoxicated may result in the loss of a driver's license and/or a fine. However, these are not consistently enforced. Drivers should be alert at all times for speeding cars, which have caused fatal accidents. In the interior areas of the island, drivers should be alert for herds of goats or donkeys that may cross the roads unexpectedly.

Buses provide convenient and inexpensive service to and from many hotels and downtown shopping areas. Taxis, while expensive, are safe and well regulated. As there are no meters, passengers should verify the price before entering the taxi. The emergency service telephone number is 911. Police and ambulance tend to respond fast to emergency situations.

Also, travelers may wish to visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety in Aruba for information: http://www.aruba.com/pages/traffictips.htm.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Aruba's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Aruba's air carrier operations.

For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The time-share industry and other real estate investments are two of the fastest-growing tourist industries in Aruba. Time-share buyers are cautioned about contracts that do not have a "non-disturbance or perpetuity protective clause" incorporated in the purchase agreement. Such a clause gives the time-share owner perpetuity of ownership should the facility be sold. Americans have also sometimes complained that the time-share units are not adequately maintained, despite generally high annual maintenance fees.

Potential investors should be aware that failed land development schemes involving time-share investments could result in financial losses. Interested investors may wish to seek professional advice regarding investments involving land development projects. Real estate investment problems that reach local courts are rarely settled in favor of foreign investors.

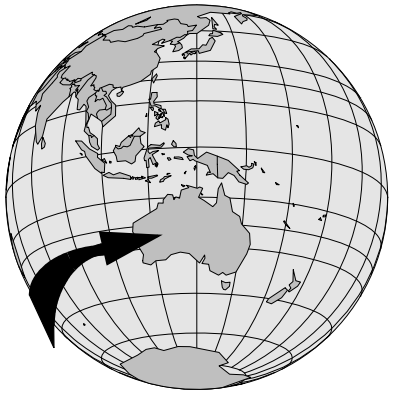
An unusually competitive fee to rent jet skis or other water sports equipment could indicate that the dealer is unlicensed or uninsured. Visitors planning to rent jet skis or other water sports equipment should carefully review all liability and insurance forms presented to them before signing any contracts or agreements. The renter is often fully responsible for replacement costs and fees associated with any damages that occur during the rental period. Visitors may be required to pay these fees in full before being allowed to leave Aruba, and may be subject to civil or criminal penalties if they cannot or will not make payment.

Dutch law in principle does not permit dual nationality. However, there are several exceptions to the rule. For example, American citizens who are married to Dutch citizens are exempt from the requirement to abandon their American nationality when they apply to become a Dutch citizen by naturalization. For detailed information, contact the Embassy of the Netherlands in Washington, DC or one of the Dutch consulates in the U.S.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Aruba's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Aruba are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Aruba are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Aruba. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Consulate General is located at J.B. Gorsiraweg 1, Willemstad, Curaçao, telephone number (599-9) 461-3066; fax (599-9) 461-6489; e-mail address: acscuracao@state.gov.



AUSTRALIA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Commonwealth of Australia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 7.7 million sq. km. (3 million sq. mi.); about the size of the 48 contiguous United States.

Cities: (2007) Capital—Canberra (pop. 340,000). Other cities—Sydney (4.3 million), Melbourne (3.8 million), Brisbane (1.9 million), Perth (1.6 million), Adelaide (1.2 million), Darwin (117,000), Hobart (207,484).

Terrain: Varied, but generally low-lying.

Climate: Relatively dry and subject to drought, ranging from temperate in the south to tropical in the far north.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Australian(s).

Population: (2008 est.) 21 million.

Annual population growth rate: 1.6%.

Ethnic groups: European 92%, Asian 6%, Aboriginal 2%.

Religions: (2006) Catholic 26%, Anglican 19%, other Christian 19%, other non-Christian 5%, no religion 19% and not stated 12%.

Languages: English.

Education: Years compulsory—to age 15 in all states except Tasmania, where it is 16. Literacy—over 99%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—4.7/1,000. Life expectancy—males 78 yrs., females 83 yrs.

Work force: (10.8 million) Agriculture—3.0%; mining—4.9%; manufacturing—10.3%; services—75%; public administration and defense—3.8%.

Government

Type: Democratic, federal-state system recognizing British monarch as sovereign.

Constitution: Passed by the British Parliament on July 9, 1900.

Independence (federation) January 1, 1901.

Government branches: Head of state is the British monarch, who is also the Australian sovereign, represented by an appointed governor general. Legislative—bicameral Parliament (76-member Senate, 150-member House of Representatives). The House of Representatives selects as head of government the Prime Minister, who then appoints his cabinet. Judicial—independent judiciary.

Political subdivisions: Six states and two territories.

Political parties: Australian Labor, Liberal, the Greens, the Nationals, and Family First. The Australian Labor Party currently forms the government.

Suffrage: Universal and compulsory over 18.

Budget: (revenue) FY 2008–2009 $A319.5 billion; FY 2009–2010 $A336.9 billion.

Defense: $A22.7 billion or 1.80% of GDP for FY 2008-2009. (2007 Exchange rate: US$1 = AUS$1.21).

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $908.8 billion.

Inflation rate: (year to June 2008) 4.5% per annum.

Reserve Bank official interest rate: 7.25% (August 2008).

Trade: Exports ($142 billion, 2007 estimate)—coal, iron ore, non-monetary gold, crude petroleum, and bovine meat. Major markets—China, Japan, South Korea, U.S. ($8.6 billion), and New Zealand. Imports ($159 billion, 2007 estimate)—passenger motor vehicles, crude petroleum, computers, medicaments, and telecommunications equipment. Major suppliers—China, United States ($19.2 billion), Japan, Singapore, and Germany.

PEOPLE

Australia's indigenous inhabitants, a hunting-gathering people collectively referred to today as Aboriginals and Torres Straits Islanders, arrived more than 40,000 years ago. Although their technical culture remained static—depending on wood,

bone, and stone tools and weapons—their spiritual and social life was highly complex. Most spoke several languages, and confederacies sometimes linked widely scattered tribal groups. Indigenous population density ranged from one person per square mile along the coasts to one person per 35 square miles in the arid interior. When Captain James Cook claimed Australia for Great Britain in 1770, the native population may have numbered 300,000 in as many as 500 tribes speaking many different languages. In 2006 the indigenous population was approximately 517,200, representing about 2.5% of the population. Since the end of World War II, the government and the public have made efforts to be more responsive to aboriginal rights and needs, most recently with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's historic apology to the indigenous people in February 2008.

Immigration has been vital to Australia's development since the beginning of European settlement in 1788. For generations, most settlers came from the British Isles, and the people of Australia are still predominantly of British or Irish origin, with a culture and outlook similar to those of Americans. Non British/Irish immigration has increased significantly since World War II through an extensive, planned immigration program. Since 1945 around 6.6 million migrants have settled in Australia, including 690,000 refugee and humanitarian entrants. About 80% have remained; 24 percent—almost one in four—of Australians are foreign-born. Britain, Ireland, Italy, Greece, New Zealand, and the former Yugoslavia were the largest sources of post-war immigration, but New Zealand is closing on Britain as the largest source country for permanent migrants to Australia, with India, China, and the Philippines making up the rest of the top five. Since the end of World War II, Australia's population has more than doubled.

Australia's humanitarian and refugee program of about 13,000 per year is in addition to other immigration programs. In recent years, refugees from Africa, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia have comprised the largest element in Australia's refugee program. Although Australia has scarcely more than three people per square kilometer, it is one of the world's most urbanized countries. Less than 2.5% of the population lives in remote or very remote areas.

Cultural Achievements

Much of Australia's culture is derived from European roots, but distinctive Australian features have evolved from the environment, aboriginal culture, and the influence of Australia's neighbors. The vigor and originality of the arts in Australia—film, opera, music, painting, theater, dance, and crafts—have achieved international recognition.

Australian actors and comedians such as Nicole Kidman, Rachel Griffiths, Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush, Paul Hogan, Hugh Jackman, the late Heath Ledger, and Dame Edna Everage (Barry Humphries) have achieved enormous popularity in the United States. Directors such as Peter Weir, Philip Noyes, and Russell Mulcahy, the conductor Sir Charles Mackerras, and singers and musicians such as Olivia Newton-John, The Wiggles, AC/DC, Dame Joan Sutherland, Dame Nellie Melba, and Kylie Minogue are well known.

Australian artists with international reputations include Sidney Nolan, Russell Drysdale, Pro Hart, and Arthur Boyd. Writers who have achieved world recognition include Thomas Keneally, Colleen McCullough, Nevil Shute, Morris West, Jill Ker Conway, Peter Carey, Robert Hughes, Germaine Greer, and Nobel Prize winner Patrick White.

In sports, too, Australian athletes are internationally renowned, particularly in swimming, diving, cricket, tennis, rugby, and golf. Australia's share of Olympic medals and world titles is proportionately larger than its share of the world's population.

HISTORY

Australia was uninhabited until stone-culture peoples arrived, perhaps by boat across the waters separating the island from the Indonesia archipelago more than 40,000 years ago. Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and English explorers observed the island before 1770, when Captain Cook explored the east coast and claimed it for Great Britain (three American colonists were crew members aboard Cook's ship, the Endeavour).

On January 26, 1788 (now celebrated as Australia Day), the First Fleet under Capt. Arthur Phillip landed at Sydney, and formal proclamation of the establishment of the Colony of New South Wales followed on February 7. Many but by no means all of the first settlers were convicts, many condemned for offenses that today would often be thought trivial. The mid-19th century saw the beginning of government policies to emancipate convicts and assist the immigration of free persons. The discovery of gold in 1851 led to increased population, wealth, and trade.

The six colonies that now constitute the states of the Australian Commonwealth were established in the following order: New South Wales, 1788; Tasmania, 1825; Western Australia, 1829; South Australia, 1836; Victoria, 1851; and Queensland, 1859. Settlement preceded these dates in most cases. Discussions between Australian and British representatives led to adoption by the British Government of an act to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia in 1900. In 1911, control of the Northern Territory was transferred from South Australia to the Commonwealth. Also that year, the Australian Capital Territory (where the national capital, Canberra, is located), was established. The Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory were granted self-government in 1978 and 1988, respectively.

The first federal Parliament was opened at Melbourne in May 1901 by the Duke of York (later King George V). In May 1927, the seat of



government was transferred to Canberra, a planned city designed by American Walter Burley Griffin. The first session of Parliament in Canberra was opened by another Duke of York (later King George VI). Australia passed the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act on October 9, 1942, which officially established Australia's complete autonomy in both internal and external affairs and formalized a situation that had existed for years. The Australia Act (1986) eliminated almost all remaining vestiges of British legal authority, including the ability to appeal to the British Privy Council.

GOVERNMENT

The Commonwealth government was created with a Constitution patterned partly on the U.S. Constitution, although it does not include a "bill of rights." Powers of the Commonwealth are specifically defined in the Constitution, and the residual powers remain with the states. Proposed changes to the Constitution must be approved by the Parliament and the people, via referendum.

Australia is an independent nation within the Commonwealth. Queen

Elizabeth II is the head of state and since 1973 has been officially styled "Queen of Australia." The Queen is represented federally by a governor-general and in each state by a governor. By convention, the Governor-General generally acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and other Ministers. However the Governor-General has "reserve powers," including the power to dismiss ministers, last exercised in 1975.

The federal Parliament is bicameral, consisting of a 76-member Senate and a 150-member House of Representatives. Twelve senators from each state are elected for 6-year terms, with half elected every 3 years. Each territory has two senators who are elected for 3-year terms, concurrent with that of the House. Seats in the House of Representatives are allocated among the states and territories roughly in proportion to population. The two chambers have equal powers, except all proposals for appropriating revenue or imposing taxes must be introduced in the House of Representatives. Under the prevailing Westminster parliamentary system, the leader of the political party or coalition of parties that wins a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives is named Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and the cabinet wield actual power and are responsible to the Parliament, of which they must be elected members. General elections are held at least once every 3 years; the last general election was in November 2007.

Each state is headed by a premier, who is the leader of the party with a majority or a working minority in the lower house of the state legislature. (Queensland is an exception, with a unicameral parliament). Australia's two self-governing territories have political systems similar to those of the states, but with unicameral assemblies. Each territory is headed by a chief minister who is the leader of the party with a majority or a working minority in the territory's legislature. More than 670 local councils assist in the delivery of services such as road maintenance, sewage treatment, and the provision of recreational facilities.

At the apex of the court system is the High Court of Australia. It has general appellate jurisdiction over all other federal and state courts and possesses the power of constitutional review.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Quentin BRYCE**
Prime Min.: **Kevin Michael RUDD**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Julia GILLARD**
Min. for Aging: **Justine ELLIOTT**
Min. for Agriculture, Fisheries, & Forestry: **Tony BURKE**
Min. for Broadband, Communications, & the Digital Economy: **Stephen CONROY**
Min. for Climate Change & Water: **Penny WONG**
Min. for Competition Policy & Consumer Affairs: **Chris BOWEN**
Min. for Defense: **Joel FITZGIBBON**
Min. for Defense Science & Personnel: **Warren SNOWDON**
Min. for Education: **Julia GILLARD**
Min. for Employment & Workplace Relations: **Julia GILLARD**
Min. for Employment Participation: **Brendan O'CONNOR**
Min. for the Environment, Heritage, & the Arts: **Peter GARRETT**
Min. for Families, Housing, Community Services, & Indigenous Affairs: **Jenny MACKLIN**
Min. for Finance & Deregulation: **Lindsay TANNER**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Stephen SMITH**
Min. for Health & Aging: **Nicola ROXON**
Min. for Housing: **Tanya PLIBERSEK**
Min. for Human Services: **Joe LUDWIG**
Min. for Immigration & Citizenship: **Chris EVANS**
Min. for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, & Local Govt.: **Anthony ALBANESE**
Min. for Innovation, Industry, Science, & Research: **Kim CARR**
Min. for Resources & Energy: **Martin FERGUSON**
Min. for Small Business, Independent Contractors, & the Service Economy: **Craig EMERSON**
Min. for Social Inclusion: **Julia GILLARD**
Min. for Sport: **Kate ELLIS**
Min. for the Status of Women: **Tanya PLIBERSEK**
Min. for Superannuation & Corporate Law: **Nick SHERRY**
Min. for Tourism: **Martin FERGUSON**
Min. for Trade: **Simon CREAN**
Min. for Veterans' Affairs: **Alan GRIFFIN**
Min. for Youth: **Kate ELLIS**
Treasurer: **Wayne SWAN**
Special Min. of State: **John FAULKNER**
Attorney Gen.: **Robert McCLELLAND**
Governor, Reserve Bank: **Glenn STEVENS**
Ambassador to the US: **Dennis RICHARDSON**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Robert HILL**

Australia maintains an embassy in the United States at 1601 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036 (tel. 202-797-3000), and consulates general in New York (212-351-6500), San Francisco (415-536-1970), Honolulu (808-524-5050), Los Angeles (310-229-4800), Chicago (312-419-1480) and Atlanta (404-760-3400).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Three political parties dominate the center of the Australian political spectrum. The Liberal Party (LP), nominally representing urban business interests, and its smaller Coalition partner, The Nationals, nominally representing rural interests, are the more conservative parties. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) nominally represents workers, trade unions, and left-of-center groups. While the ALP, founded by labor unions, traditionally had been moderately socialist in its policies and approaches to social issues, today it is best described as a social democratic party. All political groups are tied by tradition to welfare programs. Over the last decade, Australia has increased assistance to families while imposing obligations on those receiving unemployment benefits and disability pensions. There is strong bipartisan sentiment on many international issues, including Australia's commitment to its alliance with the United States.

The ALP, under the leadership of Kevin Rudd, defeated the Liberal/National coalition, led by then-Prime Minister John Howard, in the November 24, 2007 election. The ALP

now holds 83 seats in the House of Representatives, against 65 for the Liberal/National coalition, and 2 independents. The composition of the Senate is 37 seats for the Coalition, 32 for the ALP, five seats for the Greens, one for Family First, and one independent.

Rudd and the ALP won the election with a message promising "new leadership" after 11 years of the Howard government. Rudd portrayed himself as an "economic conservative," while criticizing unpopular Howard government policies on workplace relations reform, climate change, and the war on Iraq. The Rudd government has ratified the Kyoto Protocol and is working with the international community on combating climate change. It is undoing some of the labor market reforms instituted by the Howard government, such as statutory individual contracts. The new Australian government's foreign policy is likely to show strong continuity with that of its predecessors, stressing relations with four key countries: the United States, Japan, China, and Indonesia. The Rudd government strongly supports U.S. engagement in the Asia-Pacific region and has pledged to maintain Australian troops in Afghanistan. It withdrew Australia's combat troops from Iraq in 2008, however, leaving air, naval, and training assets in and around Iraq.

ECONOMY

Australia's advanced market economy is dominated by its services sector (72% of GDP), yet it is the agricultural and mining sectors (8% of GDP combined) that account for the bulk of Australia's exports (52%). Australia's comparative advantage in the export of primary products is a reflection of the natural wealth of the Australian continent and its small domestic market; 21 million people occupy a continent the size of the contiguous United States. The relative size of the manufacturing sector has been declining for several decades, but has now steadied at around 10% of GDP. Australia currently enjoys a record high terms-of-trade that is over 30% above its long-run average, reflecting the rise in global commodity prices created by booming demand in China and the drop in prices for imports for manufactured goods, mainly from China.

Since the 1980s, Australia has undertaken significant structural reform of its economy and has transformed itself from an inward-looking, highly protected, and regulated marketplace to an open, internationally competitive, export-oriented economy. Key economic reforms included unilaterally reducing high tariffs and other protective barriers to free trade, floating the Australian dollar, deregulating the financial services sector, including liberalizing access for foreign banks, increasing flexibility in the labor market, reducing duplication and increasing efficiency between the federal and state branches of government, privatizing many government-owned monopolies, and reforming the taxation system, including introducing a broad-based Goods and Services Tax (GST) and large reductions in income tax rates.

Australia is now in its 17th year of uninterrupted economic expansion and enjoys a higher standard of living than any G7 country other than the United States. Australia's economic standing in the world is a result of a commitment to best-practice macroeconomic policy settings, including the delegation of the conduct of monetary policy to the independent Reserve Bank of Australia, and a broad acceptance of prudent fiscal policy where the government aims for fiscal balance over the economic cycle. The Australian Government has zero net debt and, through the "Future Fund," is building a net asset position to deal with future liabilities resulting from an aging population. The Australian economy is expected to grow at around 2.8% in 2008—a figure that could drop as the Australian economy shows signs of slowing down.

Two issues, national infrastructure and climate change, currently dominate thinking about economic policy in Australia. The Australian economy is booming and operating at close to capacity with unemployment near a 32-year low of 4.3%, and participation in the labor market at an all-time high (65.3%). Both the federal and state governments have recognized the need to invest heavily in water, transport, ports, telecommunications, and education infrastructure to expand Australia's supply capacity. While receiving above-average rainfall in many areas during the last half of 2007, a drier than expected winter season in mid-2008 has reinforced the intense economic and political pressure on governments to build dams, water-recycling facilities, and desalination plants in cities such as Brisbane, Canberra, and Perth, which have been significantly affected by the drought conditions of the last five years. The largest river system in Australia, the Murray-Darling, and related coastal lakes and wetlands in South Australia are critically threatened and the government has developed a plan to improve irrigation infrastructure and efficiency and buy back unused water allocations along the river.

A second significant issue is climate change. A report commissioned by then-Prime Minister John Howard recommended a domestic carbon emissions trading scheme and that Australia take an active role in developing a future global carbon emissions trading system. Under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Australia is committed to adopting a domestic carbon trading system by 2010. The government released a "Green Paper" laying out the key elements of the emissions trading scheme in July 2008, and is expected to release a "White Paper" confirming the final design in early December.

The Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) entered into force on January 1, 2005. The AUSFTA was the first FTA the United States concluded with a developed economy since the U.S.-Canada FTA in 1988. Australia also has FTAs with Singapore, Thailand, and Chile, and is pursuing other FTAs, including with China and Japan. A burgeoning trade relationship marked by ongoing, multi-billion dollar resource export

contracts and rising manufactured imports has driven FTA negotiations with China. Parallel efforts are underway with Malaysia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The new Rudd government has restated its commitment to achieving high-quality FTAs with economies in the Asia-Pacific.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Australia has been active participant in international affairs since World War I and Australian forces have fought beside the United States and other Allies in every significant conflict from then to the present day. In 1944, it concluded an agreement with New Zealand dealing with the security, welfare, and advancement of the people of the independent territories of the Pacific (the ANZAC pact). After World War I, Australia played a role in the Far Eastern Commission in Japan and supported Indonesian independence during that country's revolt against the Dutch. Australia was one of the founders of the United Nations and the South Pacific Commission, and in 1950, it proposed the Colombo Plan to assist developing countries in Asia. In addition to contributing to UN forces in Korea—it was the first country to announce it would do so after the United States—Australia sent troops to assist in putting down the 1948-1960 communist revolt in Malaya and later to combat the 1963-1965 Indonesian-supported invasion of Sarawak. The United States, Australia, and New Zealand signed the ANZUS Treaty in 1951, which remains Australia's pre-eminent formal security treaty alliance. Australia sent troops to assist South Vietnamese and U.S. forces in Vietnam, and joined coalition forces in the Persian Gulf conflict in 1991, in Afghanistan in 2001, and in Iraq in 2003.

Australia has been active in the Australia-New Zealand-U.K. agreement and the Five-Power Defense Arrangements—successive arrangements with Britain and New Zealand to ensure the security of Singapore and Malaysia.

One of the drafters of the UN Charter, Australia has given firm support to the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It was a member of the Security Council in 1986-87, a member of the Economic and Social Council for 1986-89, and a member of the UN Human Rights Commission for 1994-96 and 2003-2005. Australia recently declared its intention to seek a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2013-2014. Australia takes a prominent part in many other UN activities, including peacekeeping, nonproliferation and disarmament negotiations, and narcotics control. Australia also is active in meetings of the Commonwealth Regional Heads of Government and the Pacific Islands Forum, and has been a leader in the Cairns Group—countries pressing for agricultural trade reform in World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations—and in founding the APEC forum. In 2002, Australia joined the International Criminal Court.

Australia has devoted particular attention to relations between developed and developing nations, with emphasis on the ten countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the island states of the South Pacific. Australia is an active participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which promotes regional cooperation on security issues, and has been a member of the East Asia Summit since its inauguration in 2005. In September 1999, acting under a UN Security Council mandate, Australia led an international coalition to restore order in East Timor upon Indonesia's withdrawal from that territory. In 2006, Australia participated in an international peacekeeping operation in Timor-Leste (formerly East Timor). Australia led a regional mission to restore law and order in Solomon Islands in 2003 and again in 2006. Australia is part of the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, which also includes the United States.

In 2006, the government committed to doubling Australia's official development assistance to $4 billion a year by 2010. Australia budgeted $A3.16 billion for FY 2007-2008 and has budgeted $A3.7 billion for FY 2008-2009. The Australian aid program is currently concentrated in Southeast Asia (Papua New Guinea and Indonesia are the largest recipients) and the Pacific Islands. Selected aid flows are allocated to Africa, South Asia, and reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq. Contributions to multilateral organizations and other expenses account for about one-third of the foreign assistance budget.

ANZUS AND DEFENSE

The Australia, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) security treaty was concluded at San Francisco on September 1, 1951, and entered into force on April 29, 1952. The treaty bound the signatories to recognize that an armed attack in the Pacific area on any of them would endanger the peace and safety of the others. It committed them to consult in the event of a threat and, in the event of attack, to meet the common danger in accordance with their respective constitutional processes. The three nations also pledged to maintain and develop individual and collective capabilities to resist attack.

In 1984, the nature of the ANZUS alliance changed after the Government of New Zealand refused access to its ports by nuclear-weapons-capable and nuclear-powered ships of the U.S. Navy. The United States suspended defense obligations to New Zealand, and annual bilateral meetings between the U.S. Secretary of State and the Australian Foreign Minister replaced annual meetings of the ANZUS Council of Foreign Ministers. The first bilateral meeting was held in Canberra in 1985. At the second, in San Francisco in 1986, the United States and Australia announced that the United States was suspending its treaty security obligations to New Zealand pending the restoration of port access. Since 1985, U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense and the Australian Foreign and Defense Ministers have held 19 Australia-U.S. Ministerial consultations (AUSMIN), alternating

between Australia and the United States. The next AUSMIN is scheduled to take place in the United States in 2009.

The U.S.-Australia alliance under the ANZUS Treaty remains in full force. AUSMIN meetings are supplemented by consultations between the U.S. Combatant Commander, Pacific and the Australian Chief of Defense Force. There also are regular civilian and military consultations between the two governments at lower levels.

ANZUS has no integrated defense structure or dedicated forces. However, in fulfillment of ANZUS obligations, Australia and the United States conduct a variety of joint activities. These include military exercises ranging from naval and landing exercises at the task-group level to battalion-level special forces training to numerous smaller-scale exercises, assigning officers to each other's armed services, and standardizing, where possible, equipment and operational doctrine. The two countries also operate joint defense facilities in Australia.

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, then-Prime Minister Howard and U.S. President George Bush jointly invoked the ANZUS Treaty for the first time on September 14, 2001. Australia was one of the earliest participants in Operation Enduring Freedom. Australian Defense Forces participated in coalition military action against Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Australian combat forces withdrew from Iraq in mid-2008 but military and civilian specialists continue to participate in the training of Iraqi security forces and the reconstruction of Iraq. Australia has approximately 1,000 troops deployed in Afghanistan and also provides significant development and capacity building assistance to the country. Based on growing defense commitments, Australia decided to increase the Australian Army from 26,000 to 30,000 over the next several years. This will enable the reestablishment of two infantry battalions, as well as enabling troops, such as a new unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) unit.

The Australian Government has stated its intention to maintain its investment in future capability of the Australian Defense Force (ADF). To do so, the government has committed to a 3% annual growth in real defense funding through 2018 to ensure the ADF can continue to meet capability and interoperability goals. The Australian Defense Force numbers about 51,000 active duty personnel, with planned increases to 57,000 within the next decade. The Royal Australian Navy's (RAN) front-line fleet currently includes 12 frigates, including 4 of the Adelaide class and 8 Australian-built ANZAC class. In August 2004, Australia selected the Aegis Combat Control System for its three air warfare destroyers (AWD), which will start coming into service in 2014. A decision on a fourth AWD is expected in 2008. The F/A-18 fighter, built in Australia under license from the U.S. manufacturer, is the principal combat aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force, backed by the U.S.-built F-111 strike aircraft. In October 2002, Australia became a Level III partner in the U.S.-led Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program. Additionally, the Australian Government signed the JSF Production, Sustainment and Follow-on Development MOU in 2006. Australia is projected to buy up to 100 JSF aircraft with deliveries starting in 2013 and running through 2020, with its decision on the JSF expected in 1st quarter 2009. The F-111 strike aircraft are scheduled to exit service by 2010 and will be replaced by 24 Boeing F/A-18F Super Hornet fighters as an interim strike capability with deliveries commencing in 2010. The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) took delivery of the last aircraft in its buy of 4 Lockheed C-17 strategic airlift aircraft in 2008. In addition, Boeing will provide the Commonwealth of Australia's RAAF with an Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system based on the Next-Generation 737-700 aircraft as the airborne platform. Recent U.S. sales to the Australian Army include the M1A1 AIM tank, as well as Hellfire and JAVELIN munitions. Future opportunities include CH-47 helicopter replacements, navy helicopter replacements, light and medium cargo aircraft replacements and artillery systems. The U.S. and Australia signed a Defense Cooperation Treaty in Sydney in September 2007. This treaty, when implemented, will facilitate the trade of defense equipment and technology between the countries. The treaty is currently awaiting ratification by the U.S. Senate.

U.S.-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS

The World War II experience, similarities in culture and historical background, and shared democratic values have made U.S. relations with Australia exceptionally strong and close. Ties linking the two nations cover the entire spectrum of international relations—from commercial, cultural, and environmental contacts to political and defense cooperation. Two-way trade reached almost $26 billion in 2006. More than 459,700 Americans visited Australia in 2007. In September 2007, the United States and Australia signed an agreement launching a twelve-month exchange student work and travel pilot program. While Australia enjoys a similar program with approximately twenty other countries, this was the first program of its kind for the United States. The pilot program will facilitate the hands-on experience of Australian and Americans working in each others' country and will deepen and enhance our bilateral relationship even further.

Traditional friendship is reinforced by the wide range of common interests and similar views on most major international questions. For example, both attach high priority to controlling and eventually eliminating chemical weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, and anti-personnel landmines; and both work closely on global environmental issues such as slowing climate change and preserving coral reefs. The Australian Government and opposition share the view that Australia's security depends on firm ties with the United States, and the ANZUS Treaty enjoys broad bipartisan support. Recent Presidential visits to Australia (in

1991, 1996, 2003, and 2007), a Vice Presidential visit in February 2007, and Australian Prime Ministerial visits to the United States (in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2008) have underscored the strength and closeness of the alliance.

The bilateral Australia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) entered into force on January 1, 2005. This comprehensive agreement, only the second FTA the U.S. had negotiated with a developed nation, substantially liberalized an already vibrant trade and investment relationship. The AUSFTA also creates a range of ongoing working groups and committees designed to explore further trade reform in the bilateral context. Both countries share a commitment to liberalizing global trade. They work together very closely in the World Trade Organization (WTO), and both are active members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

A number of U.S. institutions conduct scientific activities in Australia because of its geographical position, large land mass, advanced technology, and, above all, the ready cooperation of its government and scientists. In 2005, a bilateral science and technology agreement was renewed. Under another agreement dating back to 1960 and since renewed, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) maintains in Australia one of its largest and most important programs outside the United States, including a number of tracking facilities vital to the U.S. space program. Indicative of the broad-ranging U.S.-Australian cooperation on other global issues, a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) was concluded in 1997, enhancing already close bilateral cooperation on legal and counter-narcotics issues. In 2001, the U.S. and Australia signed a new tax treaty and a bilateral social security agreement. The U.S. Studies Centre was launched in 2006 at the University of Sydney with Commonwealth funding of A$25 million.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

CANBERRA (E) American Embassy Canberra, Moonah Place, Yarralumla ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA, APO/FPO PSC 277 APO AP 96549, 61-2-6214-5600, Fax 61-2-6214-5970, Workweek: Mon–Fri /8:00am to 5:00pm, Website: canberra.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Peggy Matsuya
AMB OMS:	Carol Jackson
ECO:	Edgard Kagan
FM:	Frank D. Anthony
MGT:	Christopher Riche
AMB:	Robert McCallum
CON:	Tim Davis
DCM:	Daniel Clune
PAO:	Scott Weinhold
GSO:	Geoffrey Nyhart
RSO:	Julie Cabus
AGR:	Kathleen Wainio
CLO:	Cheryl Brower
DAO:	Col. Andrew Britschgi
DEA:	Emmet Highland
EEO:	Carlos Santamaria
EST:	David Atkinson
FMO:	William Lauritsen
ICASS Chair:	Scott Weinhold
IMO:	Aziz Ahmed
IPO:	Carlos Santamaria-Bernabe
ISO:	Don Clayton
ISSO:	Don Clayton
LAB:	David Sohier
LEGATT:	Scott Cruse
POL:	James Cole
State ICASS:	Christopher Riche

MELBOURNE (CG) 553 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, 3004, APO/FPO PSC 278, APO, AP 96551, + 61 3 9526 5900, Fax +61 3 9510-4646, INMARSAT Tel Iridium 014-716-9057, Workweek: M-F, 8:00–5:00, Web: melbourne.usconsulate. gov.

CG OMS:	Richard Mangus
MGT:	Louise Veenstra (Fsn)
CG:	Earl Irving
CON:	Julie Grant
PAO:	Aric Schwan
COM:	Karen Pilmanis
DAO:	Maj. John Kiernan (Acting)
IMO:	Peter Steitz
POL:	Pete Steitz (Acting)

SYDNEY (CG) 59th Floor, MLC Centre, 19-29 Martin Place, APO/FPO PSC 280, Unit 11026, APO, AP 96554-0002, (61)(2)9373-9200, Fax (61) (2) 9373-9125, Workweek: M-F, 0815–1700, Web: sydney.usconsulate. gov.

CG OMS:	Ginger Richter
ECO:	Casey Mace
FCS:	David Murphy
MGT:	Martin Kelly
POL/ECO:	Casey Mace
CG:	Judith Fergin
PO:	Judith Fergin
CON:	Suzanne Lawrence
PAO:	Mary Scholl
EEO:	Ginger Richter
IPO:	Marqui Neder
LEGATT:	Matt Witt

PERTH (C) Level 13, 16 St Georges Tce, APO/FPO Unit 11021, APO AP96530, 61-8-9202-1224, Fax 61-8-9231-9444, Workweek: M–F; 8:00 am–5:00 pm, Website: http://perth.usconsulate.gov.

CG OMS:	Mariane Primrose
ECO:	Gina Soos
MGT:	Mike Donnelly
PAO/ADV:	Lisa Marino
CG:	Kenneth Chern
CON:	Mark Prokop
GSO:	Anoutchka Payet
ISSO:	Mark Prokop
POL:	Veronica Kerr

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 29, 2008

Country Description: Australia is a highly developed stable democracy with a federal-state system. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: American citizens are required to have a valid U.S. passport to enter Australia. Americans must enter with an Australian visa or, if eligible, through Electronic Travel Authority (ETA). The ETA replaces a visa and allows a stay of up to three months. It may be obtained for a small service fee at http://www.eta.immi.gov.au. Airlines and many travel agents in the United States are also able to issue ETA's. Please note that American citizens, who overstay their ETA or visa, even for short periods, may be subject to exclusion, detention, and removal. More information about the ETA, other visas, and entry requirements may be obtained from the Embassy of Australia at 1601 Massachusetts

Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036, telephone (202) 797-3000, or via the Australian Embassy home page on the Internet at http://www.austemb.org. Visa inquires may be directed to the Australian Visa Information Service at 888-990-8888.Visit the Embassy of Australiaweb site at http://www.austemb.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Australia has instituted an alert system for possible terrorist attacks. The threat levels range from "low" to "high." The Australian Attorney General's Office maintains a website with up-to-date information regarding the current assessment of the terrorism threat at http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au.

American citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. Travelers may also contact the Australian National Security Hotline at 61-1-800-123-400.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Visitors should be aware that street crime, burglaries, and car thefts are a daily occurrence in Australia's larger cities. Weapons are increasingly used in such crimes, which also may be associated with drug trafficking and usage.

Foreign visitors are sometimes targets for pickpockets, purse-snatchers and petty thieves. There have also been reports of drink spiking in some areas.

Appropriate, common sense precautions should be taken, especially at night, to avoid becoming a target of opportunity. To call for fire/police/ambulance services throughout Australia, dial "000" for urgent assistance.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Every state in Australia has a crime victim assistance program that includes crimes against international visitors. Information on these local programs may be found at http://www.vaonline.org.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Australia is: 000 (Triple 0).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Excellent medical care is available. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Most doctors and hospitals expect immediate cash/credit card payment for health services.

Visitors are cautioned that Australian fauna can be dangerous. From jellyfish off the Great Barrier Reef to crocodiles and sharks, poisonous insects and snakes, the continent and its waters host wildlife that merit awe and respect in equal doses. Further information on Australian wildlife may be obtained from the Wet Tropics Management Authority Information on Marine Life at http://www.wettropics.gov.au/vi/vi_marine.html and the Wet Tropics Management Authority information on animals at http://www.wettropics.gov.au/vi/vi_animals.html. Swimmers should use safety precautions, swim between the flags only where a lifeguard is present, and never swim alone. Scuba diving can be a treacherous sport. Over the past few years there have been numerous deaths related to diving incidents. Divers are urged to follow recommended precautions and never dive alone.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Australia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Visitors are reminded that all traffic operates on the left side of the road, and that all vehicles use right-hand drive. Visitors should use caution when crossing streets and when driving. When crossing roads, pedestrians are reminded to look carefully in all directions. Seat belts are mandatory. Speed limits and laws regarding driving while intoxicated are rigorously enforced. Roads and streets are frequently narrower and less graded than U.S. highways. Out-

side the major metropolitan areas, most highways are two-lane roads with significant distances between destinations. Speed limits vary throughout Australia. For a list of State Roads and Traffic Authorities and other sites concerning traffic rules and regulations, travelers may visit http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/relatedwebsites.html.

Drivers are urged to exercise caution while passing or merging with adjacent traffic. When driving in rural areas, particularly in the Northern Territory where there are no speed limits, drivers should be cautious of free-roaming animals and "road-trains" (several semi-truck trailers connected together). It is dangerous to pass road-trains, and it is advisable to pull over and allow on-coming road-trains to pass to avoid being sideswiped. A number of fatalities have occurred in the Northern Territory when vehicles driven at high rates of speed have skidded and overturned after hitting the loose gravel shoulder of the road. U.S. drivers, especially those inexperienced with 4-wheel drive vehicles, should exercise common-sense judgment when driving in outback Australia.

For specific information concerning Australian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, mandatory insurance, and the rental and operation of motor vehicles in Australia, contact the Australian Tourist Commission at http://www.australia.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Australia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Australia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Australian customs authorities enforce very strict regulations concerning the importation from all countries of items such as agricultural and wood products, as well as very strict quarantine standards for other products, animals, and pets. These regulations also apply to items tourists bring with them. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Australia in Washington or one of Australia's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements, or see the Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at http://www.aqis.gov.au.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Australia's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Australia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Australia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security Australia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) or Queanbeyan: For emergency services (i.e. the arrest, death or serious injury of American citizens) please contact the U.S. Embassy in Canberra. The Embassy is located on Moonah Place, Yarralumla, ACT 2600, telephone (61) (2) 6214-5600, fax (61) (2) 6273-3191, web site http://canberra.usembassy.gov.

Note: Passports and other routine citizen services for Canberra and the rest of the ACT are provided by the U.S. Consulate in Sydney.

In New South Wales, Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island and Queensland: For registration, passport, and other consular services for American citizens, please contact the U.S. Consulate General in Sydney located on Level 59, MLC Centre, 19-29 Martin Place, Sydney NSW 2000, telephone (61) (2) 9373-9200, fax (61) (2) 9373-9184, web site http://sydney.usconsulate.gov/sydney/index. html. Hours open to the public: 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Monday to Friday (except American and Australian holidays and the first Wednesday of each month). For emergency services (i.e. the arrest, death or serious injury of American citizens) after 5:00 p.m. weekdays or on holidays and weekends please call (61) (2) 4422-2201.

In Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory: For registration, passport and other consular services for American citizens, please contact the U.S. Consulate General in Melbourne located at 553 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, VIC 3004, telephone (61) (3) 9526-5900, fax (61) (3) 9525-0769, web site http://melbourne.usconsulate.gov/melbourne/index.html. Hours open to the public: 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Monday to Friday (except American and Australian holidays and the last Wednesday of each month). For emergency services (i.e. the arrest, death or serious injury of American citizens) after 4:30 p.m. or on holidays and weekends, please call (61) (3) 9389-3601.

In Western Australia: For registration, passport, and other consular services for American citizens, please contact the U.S. Consulate

General in Perth located at 16 St. Georges Terrace, Perth WA 6000, telephone: (61)(8) 9202-1224, fax (61)(8) 9231-9444; web site http://perth.usconsulate.gov/perth. Hours open to the public for American Citizen Services: 8:30-11:30 a.m. Monday through Thursday. For emergency services (i.e. the arrest, death, or serious injury of an American citizen), outside of business hours please call (61) (8) 9476-0081.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Custody in Australia is referred to as "parental responsibility." Unless there is a court order to the contrary, the parents of a child are assumed to have "joint parental responsibility." A court-issued "residence" order specifies who will be the primary physical custodian of the child. A "contact" order is similar to a U.S. visitation or access order. Australian family courts adjudicate petitions on a case-by-case basis with the judge applying the "best interests of the child" standard. The amount of access allowed a non-custodial parent is also decided on a case-by-case basis, and may be denied under certain egregious circumstances. Legitimacy of the child is not a factor in a judge's determination.

If your child has a claim to Australian citizenship, you may be able to prevent the issuance of an Australian passport to your child. Please contact a consular officer at the Australian Embassy in Washington, D.C. (202-797-3000) for further information. There is also an Australian Consulate in California (310-229-4800).

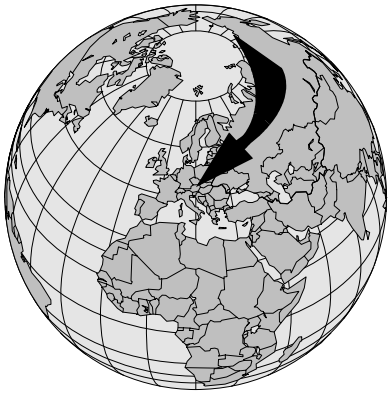
The Hague Convention: The United States is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Its purpose is to discourage international parental child abduction and to ensure that children who are abducted or wrongfully retained, are returned to their country of habitual residence. The Convention does not deal with child custody itself, but determines the jurisdiction where those custody issues should be adjudicated.

The Hague Convention entered into force between the United States and Australia on July 1, 1988. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted to or retained in Australia after July 1, 1988. Under certain circumstances, parents and legal guardians of children taken to Australia prior to July 1, 1988, may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention.

The designated Central Authority for all of Australia is the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department, International Family Law Section, which is part of the Family Law and Legal Assistance Division. Their address is Robert Garran Offices, National Circuit, Barton, ACT 2600, Australia. The international telephone number is 011-61-2-6250-6724 and the international telefax number is 011-61-2-6250-5917. The Section maintains a website, which is located at http://www.law.gov.au/childabduction. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities, or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. You should be aware that filing criminal child abduction charges in the United States against a taking parent may jeopardize an Australian Hague Convention case.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



AUSTRIA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Austria

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 83,857 sq. km. (32,377 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Maine.
Cities: Capital—Vienna (2007 pop. 1.68 million). Other cities—Graz, Linz, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt.
Terrain: Alpine (64%), northern highlands that form part of the Bohemian Massif (10%), lowlands to the east (26%).
Climate: Continental temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Austrian(s).
Population: (2007) 8,332,000.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 0.4%.
Ethnic groups: Germans, Turks, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and Bosnians; other recognized minorities include Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, and Roma.
Religions: Roman Catholic 73.6%, Lutheran 4.7%, Muslim 4.2%, other 5.5, no confession 12.0%.
Languages: German about 90%.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—99%. Literacy—98%.
Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—3.6 deaths/1,000. Life expectancy—men 77.4 years, women 82.9 years.
Work force: (2007, 4.2 million) Services—67%; agriculture and forestry—5%, industry—28%.

Government

Type: Federal Parliamentary democracy.
Constitution: 1920; revised 1929 (reinstated May 1, 1945).
Government branches: Executive—federal president (chief of state), chancellor (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Federal Assembly (Parliament). Judicial—Constitutional Court, Administrative Court, Supreme Court.
Political parties: Social Democratic Party, People's Party, Freedom Party, Greens, Alliance—Future-Austria.
Suffrage: Universal over 18.
Political subdivisions: Nine Bundeslander (federal states).
Defense: (2007) 0.8% of GDP.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $373.6 billion
Real GDP growth rate: (2007) 3.4%.
Per capita income: (2007) $44,890.
Natural resources: Iron ore, crude oil, natural gas, timber, tungsten, magnesite, lignite, cement.
Agriculture: 1.9% of 2007 GDP) Products—livestock, forest products, grains, sugarbeets, potatoes.
Industry: (31.2% of 2007 GDP) Types—iron and steel, chemicals, capital equipment, consumer goods.
Services: 66.9% of 2007 GDP.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$156.4 billion: iron and steel products, timber, paper, textiles, electrotechnical machinery, chemical products, foodstuffs. Imports—$155.9 billion: machinery, vehicles, chemicals, iron and steel, metal goods, fuels, raw materials, foodstuffs. Principal trade partners—European Union, Switzerland, U.S., and China.

PEOPLE

Austrians are a homogeneous people; about 90% speak German as everyday language. However, there has been a significant amount of immigrants, particularly from former Yugoslavia and Turkey, over the last two decades. Only two numerically significant autochthonous minority groups exist—18,000 Slovenes in Carinthia (south central Austria) and about 19,400 Croats in Burgenland (on the Hungarian border). The Slovenes form a closely-knit community. Their rights as well as those of the Croats are protected by law and generally respected in practice. Some

Austrians, particularly near Vienna, still have relatives in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. About 74% of all Austrians are Roman Catholic. The church abstains from political activity. Small Lutheran minorities are located mainly in Vienna, Carinthia, and Burgenland. There are some Islamic communities, concentrated in Vienna and Vorarlberg.

HISTORY

Austrian history as such dates back to 976, when Leopold von Babenberg became the ruler of much of present-day Austria. In 1276 Rudolf I became the first Habsburg to ascend to the throne.

The Habsburg Empire

Although never unchallenged, the Habsburgs ruled Austria for nearly 750 years. Through political marriages, the Habsburgs were able to accumulate vast land wealth encompassing most of Central Europe and stretching even as far as the Iberian Peninsula. After repulsing challenges from the Ottoman Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries, Austrian territory became increasingly consolidated in the central European part of the Danube basin.

In 1848 Franz Josef I ascended to the throne and remained in power until his death in 1916. Franz Josef saw many milestones in Austrian history. The Compromise of 1867 gave greater political rights to Hungary within the Empire, creating what became known as the Dual Monarchy. Political unity deteriorated further in the beginning of the 20th century, culminating, under the stress of World War I, in the collapse of the Empire and proclamation of an Austrian Republic on territory roughly identical to modern day Austria. In 1919, the Treaty of St. Germain officially ended Habsburg rule and established the Republic of Austria.

Political Turmoil During the Inter War Years Leads to Anschluss

From 1918 to 1934, Austria experienced sharpening political strife. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, paramilitary political organizations were engaged in strikes and violent conflicts. Unemployment rose to an estimated 25%. In 1934, a corporatist and authoritarian government came into power in Austria. Austrian National Socialists (NS) launched an unsuccessful coup d'etat in July 1934. Though the government sought to preserve Austrian independence, in February 1938, under renewed threats of military intervention from Germany, Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg was forced to accept Austrian National Socialists (Nazis) in his government. On March 12, Germany sent its military forces into Austria and annexed the country ("Anschluss"), an action that received enthusiastic support among most Austrians.

The Holocaust in Austria

From March 1938 to April 1945, most of the Jewish population of the country was murdered or forced into exile. Other minorities, including the Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, and many political opponents of the Nazis also received similar treatment. Prior to 1938, Austria's Jewish population constituted 200,000 persons, or about 3% to 4% of the total population. Most Jews lived in Vienna, where they comprised about 9% of the population. Following Anschluss, the Germans rapidly applied their anti-Jewish laws in Austria. Jews were forced out of many professions and lost access to their assets. In November 1938, the Nazis launched the Kristallnacht pogrom in Austria as well as in Germany. Jewish businesses were vandalized and ransacked.

Thousands of Jews were arrested and deported to concentration camps. Jewish emigration increased dramatically. Between 1938 and 1940, over half of Austria's Jewish population fled the country. Some 35,000 Jews were deported to the Ghettos in Eastern Europe. Some 67,000 Austrian Jews (or one-third of the total 200,000 Jews residing in Austria) were sent to concentration camps. Those in such camps were murdered or forced into dangerous or severe hard labor that accelerated their death. Only 2,000 of those in the death camps survived until the end of the war.

Austria Post World War II

After liberation in April 1945, the victorious allies divided Austria into zones of occupation similar to those in Germany with a four-power administration of Vienna. Under the 1945 Potsdam agreements, the Soviets took control of German assets in their zone of occupation. These included 7% of Austria's manufacturing plants, 95% of its oil resources, and about 80% of its refinery capacity.

The properties were returned to Austria under the Austrian State Treaty. This treaty, signed in Vienna on May 15, 1955, came into effect on July 27, and, under its provisions, all occupation forces departed by October 25, 1955. Austria became free and independent for the first time since 1938.

Austrian Compensation Programs and Acknowledgement of its Nazi Role

During the immediate postwar period, Austrian authorities introduced certain restitution and compensation measures for Nazi victims, but many of these initial measures were later seen as inadequate and containing flaws and injustices. There is no official estimate of the amount of compensation made under these programs.

More disturbing for many was the continuation of the view that prevailed since 1943 that Austria was the "first free country to fall a victim" to Nazi aggression. This "first victim" view was in fact fostered by the Allied Powers themselves in the Moscow Declaration of 1943, in which the Allies declared as null and void the Anschluss and called for the



restoration of the country's independence. The Allied Powers did not ignore Austria's responsibility for the war, but nothing was said explicitly about Austria's responsibility for Nazi crimes on its territory. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, greater attention was given in many countries to unresolved issues from World War II, including Austria. On November 15, 1994, Austrian President Thomas Klestil addressed the Israeli Knesset, noting that Austrian leaders "... spoke far too rarely of the fact that some of the worst henchmen of the NS dictatorship were in fact Austrians.....In the name of the Republic of Austria, I bow my head before the victims of that time." Since 1994, Austria has committed to providing victims and heirs some $1 billion in total compensation.

GOVERNMENT

The Austrian president convenes and concludes parliamentary sessions and under certain conditions can dissolve Parliament. However, no Austrian president has dissolved Parliament in the Second Republic. The custom is for Parliament to call for new elections if needed. The president requests a party leader, usually the leader of the strongest party, to form a government. Upon the recommendation of the Federal Chancellor, the president also appoints cabinet ministers.

The Federal Assembly (Parliament) consists of two houses—the National Council (Nationalrat), or lower house, and the Federal Council (Bundesrat), or upper house. Legislative authority resides in the National Council. Its 183 members serve for a maximum term of four years in a three-tiered system, on the basis of proportional representation. The National Council may dissolve itself by a simple majority vote or the president may dissolve it on the recommendation of the Chancellor. The nine state legislatures elect the 62 members of the Federal Council for 5- to 6-year terms. The Federal Council only reviews legislation passed by the National Council and can delay but not veto its enactment.

The highest courts of Austria's independent judiciary are the Constitutional Court; the Administrative Court, which handles bureaucratic disputes; and the Supreme Court, for civil and criminal cases. While the Supreme Court is the court of highest instance for the judiciary, the Administrative Court acts as the

supervisory body over government administrative acts of the executive branch, and the Constitutional Court presides over constitutional issues. The Federal President appoints the justices of the three courts for specific terms.

The legislatures of Austria's nine Bundeslander (states) elect the governors. Although most authority, including that of the police, rests with the federal government, the states have considerable responsibility for welfare matters and local administration. Strong state and local loyalties have roots in tradition and history.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Heinz FISCHER**
Chancellor: **Alfred GUSENBAUER**
Vice Chancellor: **Wilhelm MOLTERER**
Min. for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment, & Water Management: **Josef PROELL**
Min. for Economics & Labor: **Martin BARTENSTEIN**
Min. for Education, Arts, & Culture: **Claudia SCHMIED**
Min. for European & International Affairs: **Ursula PLASSNIK**
Min. for Finance: **Wilhelm MOLTERER**
Min. for Health, Family, & Youth: **Andrea KDOLSKY**
Min. for Interior: **Maria FEKTER**
Min. for Justice: **Maria BERGER**
Min. for National Defense: **Norbert DARABOS**
Min. for Science & Research: **Johannes HAHN**
Min. for Social & Consumer Protection: **Erwin BUCHINGER**
Min. for Transportation, Innovation, & Technology: **Werner FAYMANN**
Min. for Women, Media, & Public Service: **Heidrun SILHAVY**
State Sec. in the Chancellery: **Reinhold LOPATKA**
State Sec. in the Chancellery: **Andreas SCHIEDER**
State Sec. in the Min. for Economics & Labor: **Christine MAREK**
State Sec. in the Min. for Finance: **Christoph MATZNETTER**
State Sec. in the Min. for European & International Affairs: **Hans WINKLER**
State Sec. in the Min. for Transportation, Innovation, & Technology: **Christa KRANZL**
Pres., Austrian National Bank: **Herbert SCHIMETSCHEK**
Ambassador to the US: **Eva NOWOTNY**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Gerhard PFANZELTER**

Austria maintains an embassy in the United States at 3524 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-895-6700). Consulates General are in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and honorary consulates are in Anchorage, Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Charlotte, Columbus, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Miami, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, Richmond, St. Paul, St. Louis, St. Thomas, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, San Juan, and Seattle.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since 1955, Austria has enjoyed political stability. A Socialist elder statesman, Dr. Karl Renner, organized an Austrian administration in the aftermath of the war, and the country held general elections in November 1945. All three major parties—the conservative People's Party (OVP), the Socialists (later Social Democratic Party or SPO), and Communists—governed until 1947, when the Communists left the government. The OVP then led a governing coalition with the SPO that governed until 1966.

Between 1970 and 1999, the SPO governed the country either alone or with junior coalition partners. In 1999, the OVP formed a coalition with the right wing, populist Freedom Party (FPO). The SPO, which was the strongest party in the 1999 elections, and the Greens formed the opposition. The FPO had gained support because of populist tactics, and many feared it would represent right wing extremism. As a result, the European Union (EU) imposed a series of sanctions on Austria. The U.S. and Israel, as well as various other countries, also reduced contacts with the Austrian Government. After a period of close observation, the EU lifted sanctions, and the U.S. revised its contacts policy. In the 2002 elections, the OVP became the largest party, and the FPO's strength declined by more than half. Nevertheless, the OVP renewed its coalition with the FPO in February 2003. In national elections in October 2006, the SPO became the largest party, edging the OVP. On January 11, 2007, an SPO-led Grand Coalition took office, with the OVP as junior partner. In July 2008, following months of dispute between the ruling parties, the coalition collapsed when Vice Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer (OVP) called for early elections. New elections are scheduled for September 28, 2008.

The Social Democratic Party traditionally draws its constituency from blue- and white-collar workers. Accordingly, much of its strength lies in urban and industrialized areas. In the 2006 national elections, it garnered 35.3% of the vote. In the past, the SPO advocated state involvement in Austria's key industries, the extension of social security benefits, and a full-employment policy. Beginning in the mid-1980s, it shifted its focus to free market-oriented economic policies, balancing the federal budget, and European Union membership.

The People's Party advocates conservative financial policies and privatization of much of Austria's nationalized industry. It finds support from farmers, large and small business owners, and some lay Catholic groups, mostly in the rural regions of Austria. In 2006, it received 34.3% of the vote. The Greens won 11.1% of the vote in 2006, becoming the third-largest party in parliament. The rightist Freedom Party traditionally had a base in classic European liberalism. However, after losing much of its support in the 2002 elections and suffering a split, the FPO won slightly more of the vote in 2006—11%—than it did in 2002, due to a populist, anti-immigration theme. The Alliance-Future-Austria (BZO) split from the FPO in 2005. All the FPO's Federal Ministers and

most of its parliamentarians joined the BZO, and that party formally became the junior partner in the governing coalition. The BZO was unable to draw significant popular support away from the FPO, but managed to enter parliament in 2006 with 4.1% of the vote.

ECONOMY

Austria has a well-developed social market economy with a high standard of living. Until the late 1980s, the government and its state-owned industries conglomerate played a very important role in the Austrian economy. However, starting in the early 1990s, the group broke apart, state-owned firms started to operate largely as private businesses, and the government wholly or partially privatized many of these firms. Although the government"s privatization work in past years has been very successful, it still operates some firms, state monopolies, utilities, and services. The Schussel government's privatization program further reduced government participation in the economy. The Gusenbauer government did not reverse privatizations, and did not undertake any further privatizations. Austria enjoys well-developed industry, banking, transportation, services, and commercial facilities. Most industrial and commercial enterprises in Austria are relatively small on an international scale.

Austria has a strong labor movement. The Austrian Trade Union Federation (OGB) comprises constituent unions with a total membership of about 1.3 million—about 39% of the country's wage and salary earners. The OGB has always pursued a moderate, consensus-oriented wage policy, cooperating with industry, agriculture, and the government on a broad range of social and economic issues in what is known as Austria's "social partnership." Because of a scandal involving a bank the OGB owned, the OGB lost much of its political influence and is still trying to recover.

Austrian farms, like those of other west European mountainous countries, are small and fragmented, and production is relatively expensive. Since Austria became a member of the EU in 1995, the Austrian agricultural sector has been undergoing substantial reform under the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP). Although Austrian farmers provide about 80% of domestic food requirements, the agricultural contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) has declined since 1950 to less than 2%.

Austria has achieved sustained economic growth and belongs to the richest countries in the EU (4th after Luxembourg, Ireland, and the Netherlands). After a period of low growth of only around 1.0% annually during 2001-2003, Austria's economy recovered again in 2004 and 2005 and grew 2.5% and 2.9%, respectively, driven by booming exports in response to strong world economic growth. Primarily due to higher growth in Europe, particularly Central and Eastern Europe, and continued export growth, Austrian real GDP grew 3.3% in 2006 and 3.4% in 2007. The strong economic growth helped reduce Austria's unemployment rate to 4.4% in 2007. Predictions are for the economy to grow 2.2%-2.3% in 2008 and 1.4%-1.9% in 2009; however, these projections include a high risk of downward revision.

Austria became a member of the EU on January 1, 1995. Membership brought economic benefits and challenges and has drawn an influx of foreign investors. Austria also has made progress in generally increasing its international competitiveness. As a member of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), Austria has integrated its economy with those of other EU member countries, especially with Germany's. On January 1, 1999, Austria introduced the new Euro currency for accounting purposes.

In January 2002, Austria introduced Euro notes and coins in place of the Austrian schilling. Economists agree that the economic effects in Austria of using a common currency with the rest of the members of the Euro-zone have been positive. Trade with other EU-27 countries accounts for about 73% of Austrian imports and exports. Expanding trade and investment in the new EU members of central and eastern Europe that joined the EU in May 2004 and January 2007 represent a major element of Austrian economic activity. Austrian firms have sizable investments in and continue to move labor-intensive, low-tech production to these countries. About one-half of Austria's foreign direct investment is concentrated in the countries of central, eastern, and southeastern Europe. Austria still has the potential to attract EU firms seeking convenient access to developing markets in central and eastern Europe and the Balkan countries.

Total trade with the United States in 2007 reached $13.0 billion. Imports from the United States amounted to $5.1 billion, constituting a U.S. market share in Austria of 3.3%. Austrian exports to the United States in 2007 were $7.9 billion, or 5.1% of total Austrian exports. Approximately 350 U.S. firms have made investments in Austria. Investment flows indicate that U.S. foreign direct investment in Austria reached a new record total of about $12.1 billion, which represents about 10% of the total in Austria and moves the U.S. to the number two position among foreign investors in Austria.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The 1955 Austrian State Treaty ended the four-power occupation and recognized Austria as an independent and sovereign state. In October 1955, the Federal Assembly passed a constitutional law in which "Austria declares of her own free will her perpetual neutrality." The second section of this law stated that "in all future times Austria will not join any military alliances and will not permit the establishment of any foreign military bases on her territory." The date on which this provision passed—October 26—became Austria's National Day. From then, Austria shaped its foreign policy on the basis of neutrality.

In recent years, however, Austria began to reassess its definition of neutrality, granting overflight rights for the UN-sanctioned action against Iraq in 1991, and, since 1995, contemplating participation in the EU's evolving security structure. Also in 1995, it joined the Partnership for Peace with NATO, and subsequently participated in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia.

Austrian leaders emphasize the unique role the country plays both as an East-West hub and as a moderator between industrialized and developing countries. Austria is active in the United Nations and experienced in UN peacekeeping efforts. It attaches great importance to participation in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and other international economic organizations, and it has played an active role in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Austria has participated in the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan since 2002. In August 2005, Austria deployed 93 soldiers to the northern Afghan city of Kunduz to help support the parliamentary and provincial elections. Austria has a contingent of 160 peacekeepers in Chad as part of the EU mission there, aiding victims of civil unrest in Darfur. Austria has also participated in international reconstruction assistance efforts and has provided about 8.5 million Euros since 2002 to combat drugs, to strengthen women's rights, and for mine removal.

Vienna hosts the Secretariat of the OSCE and the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN Industrial Development Organization, and the UN Drug Control Program. Other international organizations in Vienna include the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, and the Wassenaar Arrangement (a technology-transfer control agency).

Austria traditionally has been active in "bridge-building to the east," increasing contacts at all levels with eastern Europe and the states of the former Soviet Union. Austrians maintain a constant exchange of business representatives, political leaders, students, cultural groups, and tourists with the countries of central and eastern Europe. Austrian companies are active in investing and trading with those countries as well. In addition, the Austrian Government and various Austrian organizations provide assistance and training to support the changes underway in the region.

U.S.-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS

Austria's political leaders and people recognize and appreciate the essential role the U.S. played in the country's reconstruction and in the Austrian State Treaty. It is in the interest of the U.S. to maintain and strengthen these strong relations and to maintain Austria's political and economic stability.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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EEO:	Edith Tavakoli
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 29, 2008

Country Description: Austria is a highly developed stable democracy with a modern economy.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. U.S. citizens can stay without a visa for tourist/business for up to 90 days. That period begins when you enter any of the Schengen countries: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. For further information concerning entry requirements for Austria, travelers should visit the Embassy of Austria's web site at http://www.austria.org for the most current visa information. The Embassy of Austria is located at 3524 International Court NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel: (202) 895-6711, and the Austrian Consulates General are located in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

Note: Although European Union regulations require that non-EU visitors obtain a stamp in their passport upon initial entry to a Schengen country, many borders are not staffed with officers carrying out this function. If an American citizen wishes to ensure that his or her entry is properly documented, it may be necessary to request a stamp at an official point of entry. Under local law, travelers without a stamp in their passport may be questioned and asked to document the length of their stay in Schengen countries at the time of departure or at any other point during their visit, and could face possible fines or other repercussions if unable to do so.

Safety and Security: Austria remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Austria's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

Every year, a number of avalanche deaths occur in Austria's alpine regions. Many occur when skiers/snowboarders stray from the designated ski slopes. Leaving the designated slopes to ski off-piste may pose serious risks and may delay rescue attempts in case of emergency. Skiers/snowboarders should monitor weather and terrain conditions, and use the available avalanche rescue equipment. Avalanche beepers (transceivers) are the most common rescue devices and, when properly used, provide the fastest way of locating an avalanche victim, usually enabling authorities to begin rescue operations within minutes.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Austria has a low crime rate, and violent crime is rare. However, crimes involving theft of personal property have increased in recent years. Travelers should be particularly careful not to leave valuables at their table while serving themselves from the breakfast buffet. Travelers are also targets of pickpockets who operate where tourists tend to gather. Some of the spots where such crimes are most frequently reported include Vienna's two largest train stations, the plaza around St. Stephan's Cathedral and the nearby pedestrian shopping areas (in Vienna's First District).

There has been an increase in thefts and pick pocketing on public transportation lines, especially on those lines coming in and out of the city center. U.S. citizens are advised to secure personal belongings and always take precautions while on public transportation and in public places such as cafes and tourist areas. Many citizens have had to disrupt travel plans while awaiting replacements for lost and stolen passports since emergency passports are generally only authorized in rare circumstances such as critical medical emergencies.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Excellent medical care is widely available. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. However, many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe

food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Austria is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road conditions in Austria are generally excellent. During the winter, however, roads in alpine areas may become dangerous due to snowfall, ice, or avalanches. Some mountain roads may be closed for extended periods and tire chains are often required. Drivers should exercise caution during the heavily traveled vacation periods (December-February, Easter, July-August). Extra caution is recommended when driving through autobahn construction zones, particularly on the A-1 East/West Autobahn. Reduced lanes and two-way traffic in these zones have resulted in several deadly accidents in recent years.

Traffic information and road conditions are broadcast on the English language channel fm4, located between 91 and 105 FM depending on the locale.

A U.S. driver's license alone is not sufficient to drive in Austria. The U.S. driver's license must be accompanied by an international driver's permit (obtainable in the U.S. from American Automobile Association and the American Automobile Touring Alliance) or by an official translation of the U.S. driver's license, which can be obtained at one of the Austrian automobile clubs (OEAMTC or ARBOE). This arrangement is only acceptable for the first six months of driving in Austria, after which all drivers must obtain an Austrian license.

Austria requires all vehicles using the autobahn to display a highway tax sticker "Autobahn Vignette" on the inside windshield of the vehicle. The sticker may be purchased at border crossings, gas stations in Austria, as well as small "Tabak" shops located in Austrian towns. Fines for failing to display a valid autobahn vignette on the windshield of your car are usually around $120.00.

Austrian autobahns have a maximum speed limit of 130 km/hr, although drivers often drive much faster and pass aggressively. The use of hand-held cell phones while driving is prohibited. Turning right on red is also prohibited throughout Austria. The legal limit for blood alcohol content in Austria is.05 percent and penalties for driving under the influence tend to be stricter than in many U.S. states.

Tourists driving rented vehicles should pay close attention to the provisions of their rental contract. Many contracts prohibit drivers from taking rented vehicles into eastern European countries. Drivers attempting to enter countries listed as "prohibited" on the car rental contract may be arrested, fined, and/or charged with attempted auto theft.

Austrian police are authorized to hold the rented vehicle for the car rental company Emergency roadside help and information may be reached by dialing 123 or 120 for vehicle assistance and towing services (Austrian automobile clubs), 122 for the fire department, 133 for police, and 144 for ambulance. Visit the website of Austria's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://austria-tourism.at/us.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Austria's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Austria's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Travelers using U.S. issued debit cards in Austrian Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) may encounter problems. If the request for cash is rejected, travelers should check their accounts immediately to see whether the money was in fact debited from their account. If this is the case, they should notify their banking institution immediately. Prompt action may result in a refund of the debited amount.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Austria's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Austria are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Austria are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Austria. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located in the Marriott Hotel Building, on the fourth floor of Parking 12A, in the First District. The Embassy web site is http://vienna.usembassy.gov/en/index.html and includes security updates and other information helpful to American citizens.

Citizens requiring consular assistance may also send an email to ConsulateVienna@state.gov, or may contact the Consular Section through the U.S. Embassy switchboard at (43) (1) 31-339.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Austria is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

There are few Austrian children eligible for intercountry adoption. Prospective adoptive parents must be legal residents of Austria.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authorities: The government offices responsible for adoptions in Austria are the nine provinces, including the City of Vienna. Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov for a list of agencies and addresses.

Eligibility to Adopt: The Austrian government prefers that the prospective adoptive parents be married, although the law does not officially specify this. If married, the couple must apply jointly. If not married, only one of the potential adoptive parents (if applicable) may apply. The adopting father must be at least 30 years old and the adopting mother 28 years old. If the adoptive parents already have children of their own (either biological or adopted), they may have less of a chance to adopt. The adoptive parents must also meet certain personal, social, health, and economic conditions determined by the court. Finally, the adoptive parents must have no criminal record.

Residency Requirements: The adoptive parents need to be legal residents of Austria.

Time Frame: Austrian adoptions take about 12 months to complete. This includes the 6 months during which the child lives with the adoptive parents while under the supervision of provincial adoption authorities and an additional 6 months needed to complete legal requirements.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are adoption agencies and attorneys specialized in adoption cases in Austria. A list of attorneys specializing in family law is available at the U.S. Embassy home page at http://www.usembassy.at.

Because Austria is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The U.S. Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay notary fees and that of any attorney selected. There are court costs (approximately $60) and an adoption contract of a similar amount to be paid in connection with an adoption. The U.S. Embassy in Austria discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents.

Adoption Procedures: If the child is legitimate, the adopting parent(s) must enter into a contract with the child's biological father (if contact can be made). This contract must contain certain legal requirements, including both the birth parent's consent. If the child is an orphan or illegitimate child, his/her legal guardian must sign the adoption contract. In addition, the child's mother (again, if contact is possible) must give her written consent to the adoption, unless she herself signed the adoption contract as legal guardian of the child. All signatures on the adoption contract as well as the biological mother's signature on her consent to the adoption must be notarized either by an Austrian notary public (within Austria) or by a notary public outside of Austria whose signature is authenticated

via the "apostille" procedure. A fact sheet outlining this latter procedure may be accessed on Internet at http://www.HCCH.net (Hague Legalization Convention).

If the court is satisfied that the adoption would be in the best interest of the child, it issues a decree (Beschluss) certifying the adoption contract. This decree makes the adoption final and legally valid, and a new birth certificate for the child giving any new name(s) may be obtained from the appropriate Bureau of Vital Statistics (Standesamt). If the court does not approve the adoption, the contract is void.

Although it is possible for this entire process to be carried out by the prospective parents or parent alone, it may be advisable to engage the assistance of a local Austrian attorney.

Required Documents: The adoption contract and the mother's release are submitted to the appropriate Austrian court with a petition for certification (Bestätigung). The court may require evidence of the adopting parent's financial status. The court may also require a "home study" in the United States or at the place of residence abroad through an appropriate agency.

Austrian Embassy
3524 International Court
Washington D.C. 20008
Phone: 202-895-6711
Fax: 202-895-6773
Web site: http://www.austria.org

Austria also has consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

American Embassy
Consular Section
Parkring 12a, A-1010 Vienna
Tel: [43] (1) 31339-7532
Fax: [43] (1) 512 58 35
Internet: http://www.usembassy.at

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention") came into force between the United States and Austria on October 1, 1988. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after October 1, 1988.

Parents and legal guardians of children taken to or retained in Austria prior to October 1, 1988 may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention in some cases.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

Please note that criminal charges may complicate a Hague Convention case. Contact the country officer in the Office of Children's Issues for specific information. For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Austrian Central Authority

Bundesministerium fur Justiz

Abteilung I 10

Postfach 63

A 1016 Vienna, Austria



AZERBAIJAN

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Azerbaijan

PROFILE

Geography

Location: South Caucasus; bordered by Russia to the north, the Caspian Sea to the east, Iran to the south, and Georgia and Armenia to the west.

Area: 33,774 sq. mi. (includes Nakhchivan and Nagorno-Karabakh); slightly smaller than Maine.

Cities: Capital—Baku.

Terrain: Caucasus Mountains to the north, lowland in the central area through which the Kura River flows.

Climate: Dry, subtropical with hot summers and mild winters; forests, meadows, and alpine tundra in the mountains.

People

Nationality: Noun—Azerbaijani(s), Azeri. Adjective—Azerbaijani, Azeri.

Population: (January 2008) 8,629,900 (Government of Azerbaijan).

Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.1%(Government of Azerbaijan).

Net migration rate: (2006 est.) 4.38 migrant(s)/1,000 population.

Ethnic groups: (1999 census) Azeri 90.6%, Dagestani 2.2%, Russian 1.8%, Armenian 1.5%, other 3.9%. Note: the separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region is populated almost entirely by Armenians.

Religions: Muslim 93.4% (majority Shi'a), Russian Orthodox 2.5%, Armenian Orthodox Church 2.3%, and other 1.8%.

Languages: Azerbaijani 89%, Russian 3%, Armenian 2%, and other 6%.

Education: Literacy—97%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—83.41/1,000 live births (2000 est.). Life expectancy (2007 est.)—65.96 years.

Work force: (3 million) Agriculture and forestry—42.3%; industry—6.9%; construction—4.2%; other—46.6%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Approved in November 1995 referendum.

Independence: August 30, 1991 (from Soviet Union).

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (parliament). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 78 rayons, 11 cities, and 1 autonomous republic.

Political parties: New Azerbaijan Party, Musavat Party, Popular Front Party, Liberal Party, Democratic Party, National Independence Party, Democratic Reforms Party, Civil Solidarity Party, Hope Party, Justice Party, others. There are more than 40 registered political parties in Azerbaijan and many small, unregistered parties.

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $28.94 billion.

GDP real growth rate: (2007) 24.7%; (2008 est.): 16.1% (International Monetary Fund, Government of Azerbaijan).

Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $3,862.

Inflation rate: (2007) 28.96% (Economic Research Center); 16.5% (Government of Azerbaijan).

Unemployment rate: (est.)15%-20%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, nonferrous metals, alumina.

Agriculture: Products—cotton, tobacco, grain, rice, grapes, fruit, vegetables, tea, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats.

Industry: Types—petroleum and natural gas, petroleum products, oilfield equipment, steel, iron ore, cement, chemicals, petrochemicals.

Trade: Exports—$1.557 billion (2008, first quarter), $6.1 billion (2007): oil and gas, chemicals, oilfield equipment, textiles, cotton. Imports—$1.214 billion (2008, first quarter), $5.1 billion (2007): machinery and parts, consumer durables, foodstuffs, textiles. Major trade part-



Due to its location astride the trade routes connecting Europe to Central Asia and the Near East and on the shore of the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan was fought over by Russia, Persia, and the Ottomans for several centuries. Finally, the Russians split Azerbaijan's territory with Persia in 1828 by the Treaty of Turkmenchay, establishing the present frontiers and extinguishing the last native dynasties of local Azerbaijani khans. The beginning of modern exploitation of the oil fields in the 1870s led to a period of unprecedented prosperity and growth in the years before World War I.

At the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, an independent republic was proclaimed in 1918 following an abortive attempt to establish a Transcaucasian Republic with Armenia and Georgia. Azerbaijan received de facto recognition by the Allies as an independent nation in January 1920, an independence terminated by the arrival of the Red Army in April. Incorporated into the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922, Azerbaijan became a union republic of the U.S.S.R. (Soviet Union) in 1936. The late 1980s were characterized by increasing unrest, eventually leading to a violent confrontation when Soviet troops killed 190 nationalist demonstrators in Baku in January 1990. Azerbaijan declared its independence from the U.S.S.R. on August 30, 1991.

ners—Italy, Russia, Turkey, Israel, U.S., Iran, other EU, and other countries formerly part of the Soviet Union.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Azerbaijan combines the heritage of two venerable civilizations—the Seljuk Turks of the 11th century and the ancient Persians. Its name is thought to be derived from the Persian phrase "Land of Fire," referring both to its petroleum deposits, known since ancient times, and to its status as a former center of the Zoroastrian faith. The Azerbaijani Republic borders the Iranian provinces of East and West Azerbaijan, although they have not been united into a single state in modern times.

Little is known about Azerbaijan's history until its conquest and conversion to Islam by the Arabs in 642 AD. Centuries of prosperity as a province of the Muslim caliphate followed. After the decline of the Arab Empire, Azerbaijan was ravaged during the Mongol invasions but regained prosperity in the 13th-15th centuries under the Mongol II-Khans, the native Shirvan Shahs, and under Persia's Safavid Dynasty.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Although the Government of Azerbaijan consists of three branches, Azerbaijan has a strong presidential system in which the legislative and judicial branches have only limited independence. The executive branch is made up of a president, his apparat, a prime minister, and the cabinet of ministers. The legislative branch consists of the 125-member parliament (Milli Majlis). Members, all of whom are elected from territorial districts, serve 5-year terms. The judi-

cial branch, headed by a Constitutional Court, is nominally independent.

Azerbaijan declared its independence from the former Soviet Union on August 30, 1991, with Ayaz Mutalibov, former First Secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party, becoming the country's first President. Following a March 1992 massacre of Azerbaijanis at Khojali in Nagorno-Karabakh (a predominantly ethnic Armenian region within Azerbaijan), Mutalibov resigned and the country experienced a period of political instability.

The old guard returned Mutalibov to power in May 1992, but less than a week later his efforts to suspend scheduled presidential elections and ban all political activity prompted the opposition Popular Front Party (PFP) to organize a resistance movement and take power. Among its reforms, the PFP dissolved the predominantly Communist Supreme Soviet and transferred its functions to the 50-member upper house of the legislature, the National Council.

Elections in June 1992 resulted in the selection of PFP leader Abulfez Elchibey as the country's second President. The PFP-dominated government, however, proved incapable of either credibly prosecuting the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or managing the economy, and many PFP officials came to be perceived as corrupt and incompetent. Growing discontent culminated in June 1993 in an armed insurrection in Ganja, Azerbaijan's second-largest city. As the rebels advanced virtually unopposed on Baku, President Elchibey fled to his native province, the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan.

The National Council conferred presidential powers upon its new Speaker, Heydar Aliyev, former First Secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party (1969-81) and member of the U.S.S.R. Politburo and U.S.S.R. Deputy Prime Minister (until 1987). Elchibey was formally deposed by a national referendum in August 1993, and Aliyev was elected to a 5-year term as President in October with only token opposition. Aliyev won re-election to another 5-year term in 1998, in an election marred by serious irregularities.

Presidential elections that took place on October 15, 2003 resulted in the election of Ilham Aliyev, the son of Heydar Aliyev. The election did not meet international standards. Ilham Aliyev assumed the office of president on October 31, 2003. Heydar Aliyev died December 12, 2003. The next presidential elections will take place on October 15, 2008.

Azerbaijan's first parliament was elected in 1995. The present 125-member unicameral parliament was elected in November 2005 in an election that showed improvements in democratic processes, but still did not meet international standards. A majority of parliamentarians are from the President's "New Azerbaijan Party," although the 2005 elections brought in a much more diverse parliament, with up to 10 opposition members and a sizeable number of independents.

Many of these independents may have close ties to government, while as many as 20 others are business leaders whose political affiliations are not clear.

According to the constitution, the speaker of parliament stands next in line to the president. The parliament, however, is historically a weak body with little real influence. The current Speaker is Oktay Asadov, and the next parliamentary elections will take place in 2010.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Ilham ALIYEV**
Prime Minister: **Artur RASIZADE**
First Dep. Prime Min.: **Yaqub EYYUBOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Elchin EFENDIYEV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ali HASANOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Abid SHARIFOV**
Min. of Agriculture & Food: **Ismat ABBASOV**
Min. of Communications & Information Technology: **Ali ABBASOV**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Abulfaz GARAYEV**
Min. of Defense: **Safar ABIYEV, Col. Gen.**
Min. of Defense Industry: **Yavar JAMALOV**
Min. of Ecology & Natural Resources: **Huseyngulu BAGIROV**
Min. of Economic Development: **Heydar BABAYEV**
Min. of Education: **Misir MARDANOV**
Min. of Emergency Situations: **Kemmalladin HEYDAROV**
Min. of Finance: **Samir SHARIFOV**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Elmar MAMMADYAROV**
Min. of Health: **Oqtay SHIRALIYEV**
Min. of Industry & Energy: **Natiq ALIYEV**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Ramil USUBOV**
Min. of Justice: **Fikret MAMEDOV**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Fizuli ALEKPEROV**
Min. of National Security: **Eldar MAHMUDOV**
Min. of Sports & Youth: **Azad RAHIMOV**
Min. of Taxation: **Fazil MAMEDOV**
Min. of Transport: **Ziya MAMMADOV**
Chmn., National Bank: **Elman RUSTAMOV**
Ambassador to the US: **Yashar ALIYEV**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Agshin MEHDIYEV**

Azerbaijan's embassy in the United States is at 2741 34th Street NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel. (202) 337-3500; fax (202) 337-5911; Consular tel. (202) 337-5912; Consular fax (202) 337-5913; www.azembassy.com.

ECONOMY

Azerbaijan is an economy in transition in which the state continues to play a dominant role. It has important oil reserves and a significant agronomic potential based on a wide variety of climatic zones. During the late 1990s, in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Azerbaijan pursued a successful economic stabilization program, with annual growth exceeding 10% since 2000. In 2007 Azerbaijan's gross domestic product increased by 24.7%, with growth in 2008 estimated at 16.1%. Increases in oil production have largely driven this rapid growth as the oil sector accounted for 52.8% of GDP in 2007. Output expansion

has been largely driven by oil-sector foreign direct investment (FDI) and related spillover effects in the construction and transportation sectors, although there have also been substantial gains in agriculture. Inflation officially reached nearly 17% in 2007, while unofficial consumer price index (CPI) calculations indicate inflation in excess of 28%. In the first quarter of 2008, inflation reached 9.61% and is a major risk that could accelerate in the context of further increases in fiscal spending, high oil prices, and an inflexible exchange rate. Importantly, the higher inflation also reflects customs restrictions that are in place due to supply constraints that limit import competition and monopolies that continue to control many sectors of the economy. The national currency, the manat, is stable and was allowed to appreciate against the dollar by 6.1% in 2005, 5.4% in 2006, and 3.4% in 2007. The IMF has warned that significantly more appreciation (roughly 10%) will be necessary to prevent inflation from increasing.

The 2008 budget increased government expenditures by about 80% over the 2007 budget, with significant increases in military spending, social assistance, wage increases, and capital spending. Part of the increase in expenditures was financed by revenues from the oil fund. The IMF has expressed concern about the impact on inflation and macroeconomic stability as well as governance if the capital budget is not well managed. The State Oil Fund (SOFAZ) was established as an extra-budgetary fund to ensure macroeconomic stability, transparency in the management of oil revenue, and the safeguarding of resources for future generations. All oil revenue profits from the development of new oil fields now flow into SOFAZ, and are held offshore. SOFAZ assets amounted to $3.34 billion by April 2008. Nevertheless, SOFAZ's sterilization effect is limited since it does not cover SOCAR, the State Oil Company. Both the IMF and the World Bank continue to emphasize the need to coordinate the budget planning process to integrate a medium-term spending framework with financing plans and the government's broader oil-revenue management strategy. Progress on economic reform has generally lagged. The government has undertaken regulatory reforms in some areas, including substantial opening of trade policy, but inefficient public administration, in which commercial and regulatory interests are co-mingled, limits the impact of these reforms. The government has largely completed privatization of agricultural lands and small and medium-sized enterprises. Azerbaijan is still plagued by an arbitrary tax and customs administration, a weak court system, monopolistic regulation of the market, and corruption.

For more than a century the backbone of the Azerbaijani economy has been petroleum. Now that Western oil companies are able to tap deepwater oilfields untouched by the Soviets because of poor technology, Azerbaijan is considered one of the most important spots in the world for oil exploration and development. Proven oil reserves in the Caspian Basin, which Azerbaijan shares with Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran are comparable in size to the North Sea, although exploration is still in the early stages.

Azerbaijan has concluded 21 production-sharing agreements with various oil companies. Azerbaijan celebrated first oil for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline in May 2005, and the official completion ceremony was held in Turkey in July 2006. The BTC pipeline is now operational and has a maximum capacity of one million barrels per day. A parallel Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas export pipeline opened in September 2006, but, due to technical issues in the offshore Shah Deniz gas field, has operated only intermittently. Eastern Caspian producers in Kazakhstan also have expressed interest in accessing this pipeline to transport a portion of their production.

Environmental Issues

Azerbaijan faces serious environmental challenges. Soil throughout the region was contaminated by DDT and toxic defoliants used in cotton production during the Soviet era. Caspian petroleum and petrochemicals industries also have contributed to present air and water pollution problems. Several environmental organizations exist in Azerbaijan, yet few funds have been allocated to begin the necessary cleanup and prevention programs. Over-fishing by poachers is threatening the survival of Caspian sturgeon stocks, the source of most of the world's supply of caviar. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has listed as threatened all sturgeon species, including all commercial Caspian varieties. CITES imposed a ban on most Caspian caviar in January 2006, but lifted it in January 2007.

DEFENSE AND MILITARY ISSUES

In July 1992, Azerbaijan ratified the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which establishes comprehensive limits on key categories of conventional military equipment and provides for the destruction of weaponry in excess of those limits. Although Azerbaijan did not provide all data required by the treaty on its conventional forces at that time, it has accepted on-site inspections of forces on its territory. Azerbaijan approved the CFE flank agreement in May 1997. It also has acceded to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state. Azerbaijan participates in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Azerbaijan is a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO's Partnership for Peace, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership, the World Health Organization, GUAM Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Council of Europe, the Community of Democracies, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

Nagorno-Karabakh

The major domestic and international issue affecting Azerbaijan is the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh, a predominantly ethnic Armenian region within Azerbaijan. The current conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh began in 1988 when ethnic Armenian demonstrations against Azerbaijani rule broke out in both Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, and the Nagorno-Karabakh Supreme Soviet voted to secede from Azerbaijan. In 1990, after violent episodes in Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku, and Sumgait, the Soviet Union's Government in Moscow declared a state of emergency in Nagorno-Karabakh, sent troops to the region, and forcibly occupied Baku. In April 1991, Azerbaijani militia and Soviet forces targeted Armenian paramilitaries operating in Nagorno-Karabakh; Moscow also deployed troops to Yerevan. Azerbaijan declared its independence from the U.S.S.R. on August 30, 1991. In September 1991, Moscow declared it would no longer support Azerbaijani military action in Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenian militants then stepped up the violence. In October 1991, a referendum in Nagorno-Karabakh approved independence.

More than 30,000 people were killed in the fighting from 1992 to 1994. In May 1992, Armenian and Karabakhi forces seized Susha (the historical, Azerbaijani-populated capital of Nagorno-Karabakh) and Lachin (thereby linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia). By October 1993, Armenian and Karabakhi forces had succeeded in occupying almost all of Nagorno-Karabakh, Lachin, and large areas in southwestern Azerbaijan. As Armenian and Karabakhi forces advanced, hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijani refugees fled to other parts of Azerbaijan.

In 1993, the UN Security Council adopted resolutions calling for the cessation of hostilities, unimpeded access for international humanitarian relief efforts, and the eventual deployment of a peacekeeping force in the region. The UN also called for immediate withdrawal of all ethnic Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Fighting continued, however, until May 1994 when Russia brokered a cease-fire. Negotiations to resolve the conflict peacefully have been ongoing since 1992 under the aegis of the Minsk Group of the OSCE. The Minsk Group is currently co-chaired by Russia, France, and the U.S. and has representation from Turkey, the U.S., several European nations, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. Despite the 1994 cease-fire, sporadic violations, sniper fire, and landmine incidents continue to claim over 100 lives each year.

Since 1997, the Minsk Group Co-Chairs have presented a number of proposals to serve as a framework for resolving the conflict. One side or the other rejected each of those proposals, but negotiations have continued at an intensified pace since 2004.

U.S.-AZERBAIJAN RELATIONS

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought an end to the Cold War and created the opportunity to build relations with its successor states as they began a political and economic transformation. The United States opened an Embassy in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, in March 1992.

The United States has been actively engaged in international efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The U.S. has played a leading role in the Minsk Group, which was created in 1992 by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe—now the OSCE—to encourage a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. In early 1997, the U.S. heightened its role by becoming a Co-Chair of the Minsk Group, along with Russia and France.

The U.S. supports American investment in Azerbaijan. U.S. companies are involved in three offshore oil development projects with Azerbaijan and have been exploring the emerging investment opportunities in Azerbaijan in other fields, such as telecommunication. The United States is committed to aiding Azerbaijan in its transition to democracy and its formation of an open market economy. The Freedom Support Act, enacted in October 1992, has been the cornerstone of U.S. efforts to help Azerbaijan during this transition. Under the Freedom Support Act, the U.S. was providing approximately $48 million in humanitarian, democracy, and reform assistance to Azerbaijan in FY 2006.

The U.S. and Azerbaijan have signed a bilateral trade agreement, which entered into force in April 1995 and confers to Azerbaijan the status of most favored nation. The United States also has a bilateral investment treaty with Azerbaijan.

U.S. Humanitarian Assistance

U.S. humanitarian programs in Azerbaijan focus on community development, health and economic opportunities, and support services, including training and business management consultations for vulnerable populations. Under a new humanitarian initiative, the Department of State will complete six Small Reconstruction Projects (SRP) in Azerbaijan. These projects raise the standard of beneficiaries by improving conditions in beneficiary institutions such as schools, clinics, orphanages, and homes for the elderly. A new focus on quality health services and practices focuses on better use of health resources and health care practices through health care reform, healthy lifestyles, and the rights and responsibilities of the patient. Technical assistance is being provided to the Ministry of Health to develop policy, legal and regulatory, and finance reforms. In FY 2006, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was funding the final year of a $3.4 million national child vaccination program. The program was financed by a grant that included 10,800 metric tons of wheat to be sold in Azerbaijan. The proceeds will help complete the vaccinations of 450,000 children. The U.S. continues its humanitarian demining efforts in

Azerbaijan. The Peace Corps, which began working in Azerbaijan in 2003, has 55 volunteers. Some teach English at the secondary level and others work with non-governmental organizations engaged in small and micro enterprise development.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BAKU (E) 83 Azadlig Prospect, Azerbaijan, AZ 1007, +994-12-498-03 -35, Fax +994-12-465-66-71, INMARSAT Tel 873-151-5401, Workweek: M-F, 9:00–17:30, Website: http://baku.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Linda Price
HRO:	Steven Rider
MGT:	Karen Davidson
OMS:	Cindi Thompson
POL/ECO:	Joan Polaschik
AMB:	Anne E. Derse
CON:	Vlad Lipschutz
DCM:	Donald Lu
PAO:	Jonathan Henick
GSO:	Christa Dupuis
RSO:	James Hine
AID:	Scott Taylor
ATO:	Sharon Kanai
CLO:	Ingrid Romero
DAO:	Ltc. Stephen Bruce
EEO:	Carolina Hidea
FMO:	Steven Rider
ICASS Chair:	Scott Taylor
IMO:	Daniel Thompson
IPO:	Clark Cunningham
ISO:	Vlad Mazelev
ISSO:	Daniel Thompson
State ICASS:	Jonathan Henick

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 19, 2008

Country Description: Azerbaijan is a constitutional republic with a developing economy. Western-style amenities are found in the capital, Baku, but they are generally not available outside that city.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Travelers may obtain single-entry visas for USD 131 by mail or in person from either the Azerbaijani embassy in Washington, D.C. or any other Azerbaijani embassy offering consular services. Travelers may also obtain single-entry, 30-day visas at the airport upon arrival for USD 131. Visas are not available at the land borders with Georgia or Russia. Double-entry, 90-day visas (cost: USD 131) and one-year multiple-entry visas (cost: USD 250) are only available through an Azerbaijani embassy or through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A letter of invitation from a contact in Azerbaijan is required, and travelers who expect to travel in the region should request a one-year, multiple-entry visa. According to Azerbaijani law, foreign nationals intending to remain in Azerbaijan for more than 30 days must register with local police within three days of their arrival. Foreign citizens should approach the passport section of the local district police office and fill out an application form. The registration fee is AYM 9.90 (approximately USD 12).

American citizens of Armenian ancestry have had visa applications denied by the Government of Azerbaijan on the grounds that their safety cannot be guaranteed.

U.S. citizens who obtain a one-entry visa at the port of entry are permitted to remain in Azerbaijan for up to one month, after which an extension of stay must be requested (cost: USD 131). For persons in Azerbaijan, visa applications, extensions or renewals are made at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Shikhali Gurbanov St., 4, Baku; tel. (9-9412) 492 34 01. For additional information, please contact the Embassy of Azerbaijan, 2741 34th Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-337-3500); e-mail: azerbaijan@azembassy.com.

American citizens should ensure that their visas and/or local identification cards, for stays of longer than 30 days, are current and valid, and that they carry local identification cards, if applicable, at all times. It is advisable to carry a photocopy of your current passport and valid visa if you do not normally carry your passport as well. Visit the Embassy of Azerbaijan web site at http://www.azembassy.us/ for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: As a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, ethnic Armenian forces control Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, and a large portion of additional Azerbaijani territory surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh in the southwest part of the country, along the borders with Iran and Armenia. A cease-fire has been in effect in Nagorno-Karabakh since 1994, although reports of gunfire along the cease-fire line and along the border with Armenia continue. Anti-personnel mines are a danger in areas close to the front lines. It is not possible to enter the self-proclaimed "Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh," which is not recognized by the United States, from other areas of Azerbaijan. Travelers are cautioned to avoid travel to Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding occupied areas. Because of the existing state of hostilities, consular services are not available to Americans in Nagorno-Karabakh.

American citizens of Armenian ancestry considering travel to Azerbaijan should remain particularly vigilant when visiting the country, as the Government of Azerbaijan has claimed that it is unable to guarantee their safety.

The next Presidential election in Azerbaijan will be held in October 2008. In the past, political rallies occurred in Baku in the period before and immediately after the elections. While the majority of these demonstrations were peaceful, some became confrontational and escalated into violence. Americans are reminded that even protests intended to be peaceful may turn violent and travelers are advised to avoid all demonstrations.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can

be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Baku has experienced a trend away from casual stealth street crime, such as pick-pocketing, towards more targeted and aggressive attacks. These attacks tend to be against males, usually involve alcohol, and usually occur late at night. The attacks typically involve multiple attackers on a lone victim using overwhelming numbers and a quick, violent attack to end resistance or flight. Violent crimes tend to be more frequent in the winter, despite the presence of fewer tourists and foreigners in general at this time of year. Many recent attacks have resulted in injuries. There have also been reports of foreigners being held up at knife- or gunpoint at or near ATMs during hours of darkness. Visitors should not walk alone at night.

All incidents of crime should be reported to the local police and U.S. Embassy. The Police Office of Crimes By and Against Foreigners has an English-speaking officer available at all times who may be reached at (994 12) 490-95-32 or, after hours, at 490-94-52).

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime are solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalents of the "911" emergency lines in Azerbaijan are: 101-Fire Brigade, 102-Police, 103-Ambulance, 104-Gas services, and 112-Ministry of Emergency Situations.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: A few Western-type medical clinics, the quality of which is comparable to those in Western countries, are operating in Baku; the quality of these clinics is good. However, medical facilities outside the capital remain inadequate, unsanitary, and unsafe. There is often a shortage of basic medical supplies, including disposable needles and vaccines. Bring adequate amounts of prescription medicines for the duration of your visit, as pharmacies often do not carry all brands or doses.

Tuberculosis (TB) is an increasingly serious health concern in Azerbaijan. For further information, please consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Travel Notice on TB http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowBookCh4-TB.aspx.

Avian Influenza: In 2006, the WHO and Azerbaijani authorities confirmed several human cases of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, commonly known as "bird flu." Travelers to Azerbaijan and other countries affected by the virus are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. In addition, the CDC and WHO recommend eating only fully cooked poultry and eggs. For the most current information and links on avian influenza in Azerbaijan, see the State Department's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet or visit the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Baku at http://azerbaijan.usembassy.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Azerbaijan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving hazards such as open manholes, debris, sinkholes, and potholes are common. Most drivers do not pay attention to traffic regulations, signals, lanes, pedestrians, or other drivers. Drivers often travel at extremely high speed, and accidents are frequent and often serious. Driving in Baku should be considered extremely hazardous. Outside the city, even where roads are present, conditions are similar. Roads are often in poor repair and unlit, and lack lane markings, traffic signs, and warnings. Many rural roads are largely unpaved.

Public transportation throughout the country is overcrowded and poorly maintained. The U.S. Embassy strongly discourages use of the Baku Metro. Train travel in the Caucasus region is not secure.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Azerbaijan, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Azerbaijan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov. Travelers on regional airlines

among the countries of the Caucasus may experience prolonged delays and sudden cancellations of flights. In addition to frequent delays, flights are often overcrowded, with passengers without seats standing in the aisle along with excess unsecured cabin luggage. Even basic safety features such as seat belts are sometimes missing. Air travel to Azerbaijan on international carriers via Europe is typically more reliable.

Special Circumstances: The Republic of Azerbaijan's economy is mostly cash-only. Traveler's checks and credit cards are accepted only in some hotels and a few restaurants and supermarkets. The national currency is the new manat, introduced on January 1, 2006, at the rate of 1 new manat = 5,000 old manat. Old manats were phased out after January 1, 2007. Commercial establishments generally enforce the requirement that purchases be made with new manats. Azerbaijani customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Azerbaijan of items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities including carpets, medications, and caviar, and any amount of currency over USD 1000. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Azerbaijan in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Azerbaijan's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Azerbaijan are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Azerbaijan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Azerbaijan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Azadlig Prospekt 83; tel. (9-9412) 498-03-35, 36, or 37; (9-9412) 490-66-71; email: ConsularBaku@state.gov; web site: http://azerbaijan.usembassy.gov. Travelers are encouraged to notify the Embassy before their permanent departure from the country.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Azerbaijan is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

In late December 2006, the adoption process in Azerbaijan essentially stopped due to the publication of amended laws meant to bring domestic legislation into conformity with The Hague Convention. The U.S. Embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan has engaged the Azerbaijani government on this issue at all levels, and continues to seek clarification about the future of intercountry adoptions given the recent legal changes. The procedure and timetable for completing already pending cases, i.e. those begun under the former legislative framework, is also not yet known.

Although adoptions remain technically open, the future of intercountry adoptions in Azerbaijan remains uncertain. A number of U.S. adoption service providers have decided already that the situation is in too much a state of flux for them to operate comfortably. The latest legislative changes have not improved the situation. There are no guarantees that adoptions will be achieved on a regular basis and in a transparent manner, and no assurances that currently pending adoptions will be processed expeditiously.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: In March 2007, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues was named the new governing authority, replacing the State Adoption Commission. No further information on the Committee's activities with respect to intercountry adoption is available at this time.

Eligibility to Adopt: Married couples may adopt. Azerbaijani law does not officially prohibit singles from adopting, but in practice, single men are not allowed to adopt. Prospective adoptive parents may also face difficulties.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for Azerbaijan.

Time Frame: It is not possible to predict how long it would take to complete a new adoption at this time.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Because Azerbaijan is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The Department maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: Under Azeri law, there is no fee for the adoption itself, but there are fees for issuing and notarizing many of the required documents, and some parents have reported a required donation to the orphanage where the children reside. The U.S. Embassy in Azerbaijan discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Azerbaijan at risk.

Adoption Procedures: The current procedures for processing intercountry adoptions in Azerbaijan remain unclear due to recent changes in the governing legislation and responsible authority.

Embassy of the Republic
of Azerbaijan
2741 34th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-337-3500
Email: consul@azembassy.com
Internet: http://www.azembassy.us

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*.

Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov). While the U.S. Embassy in Baku, Azerbaijan, handles some steps in the immigration process for adopted children from Azerbaijan, most of this process occurs at the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia. For more information, please see the Embassy Tbilisi web site at: http://georgia.usembassy.gov/visasadopt.html.

U.S. Embassy Baku, Azerbaijan
83 Azadliq Prospekt
Baku, Azerbaijan
Tel: (994 12) 98 03 35
Fax: (994 12) 98 37 55
E-mail: consularbaku@state.gov
Internet: www.baku.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



BAHAMAS

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Commonwealth of The Bahamas

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 13,939 sq. km. (5,382 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Connecticut and Rhode Island combined.

Cities: Capital—Nassau, New Providence. Second-largest city—Freeport, Grand Bahama.

Terrain: Low and flat.

Climate: Semitropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bahamian(s).

Population: (2008 est.) 307,451.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 0.57%.

Ethnic groups: African 85%, European 12%, Asian and Hispanic 3%.

Religions: Baptist (32%), Roman Catholic, Anglican, Evangelical Protestants, Methodist, Church of God, Rastafarian, Traditional African.

Languages: English (official); Creole.

Education: (2003) Years compulsory—through age 16. Attendance—92%. Literacy—95.5%.

Health: (2008 est.) Infant mortality rate—23.67/1,000. Life expectancy—65.72 years.

Work force: (2004) 176,330; majority employed in the tourism, government, and financial services sectors.

Government

Type: Constitutional parliamentary democracy.

Independence: July 10, 1973.

Government branches: Executive—British monarch (nominal head of state), governor general (representative of the British monarch), prime minister (head of government), and cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Parliament (40-member elected House of Assembly, 16-member appointed Senate). Judicial—Privy Council in U.K., Court of Appeal, Supreme Court, and magistrates' courts.

Political parties: Free National Movement (FNM), Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), Bahamas Democratic Movement (BDM).

Suffrage: (2007) Universal over 18; 150,689 registered voters.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est., official exchange rate) $6.586 billion.

Growth rate: (2007 est.) 3.1%.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $25,000.

Natural resources: Salt, aragonite, timber.

Tourism: (including tourism-driven construction and manufacturing) 60% of GDP.

Government spending: (2004) 20% of GDP.

Financial services/business services: 36% of GDP.

Construction: (2004; 10% of GDP) Products—largely tourism related.

Manufacturing: (2004; 8% of GDP) Products—plastics, pharmaceuticals, rum.

Agriculture and fisheries: (2004; 3% of GDP) Products—fruits, vegetables, lobster, fish.

Trade: (2006) Exports ($674 million)—mineral products and salt, rum, animal products, chemicals, fruits, and vegetables. Export partners (2006)—U.S. (21%), Singapore (16%), Spain (14.9%), Poland (14.8%), Germany (6.8%), Guatemala (5.9%). Imports ($2.401 billion)—foodstuffs and animals, machinery and transport equipment, manufactures, chemicals, mineral fuels. Import partners (2006)—U.S. (23%), Brazil (16.8%), Japan (11.6%), South Korea (8.3%), Italy (6.4%), Singapore (4.4%).

PEOPLE

Eighty-five percent of the Bahamian population is of African heritage. About two-thirds of the population resides on New Providence Island (the location of Nassau). Many ancestors arrived in the Bahamas when the islands served as a staging area for the slave trade in the early 1800s. Others accompanied thousands of British loyalists who fled the American colonies during the Revolution-

ary War. Haitians form the largest immigrant community in The Bahamas. 30,000–50,000 are estimated to be resident legally or illegally, concentrated on New Providence, Abaco and Eleuthera islands.

School attendance is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 16. The government fully operates 158 of the 210 primary and secondary schools in The Bahamas. The other 52 schools are privately operated. Enrollment for state primary and secondary schools is 50,332, with more than 16,000 students attending private schools. The College of The Bahamas, established in Nassau in 1974, provides programs leading to bachelors and associates degrees. Several non-Bahamian colleges also offer higher education programs in The Bahamas.

HISTORY

In 1492, Christopher Columbus made his first landfall in the Western Hemisphere in The Bahamas. Spanish slave traders later captured native Lucayan Indians to work in gold mines in Hispaniola, and within 25 years, all Lucayans perished. In 1647, a group of English and Bermudan religious refugees, the Eleutheran Adventurers, founded the first permanent European settlement in The Bahamas and gave Eleuthera Island its name. Similar groups of settlers formed governments in The Bahamas until the islands became a British Crown Colony in 1717.

The late 1600s to the early 1700s were the golden age for pirates and privateers. Many famous pirates—including Sir Francis Drake and Blackbeard—used the islands of The Bahamas as a base. The numerous islands and islets with their complex shoals and channels provided excellent hiding places for the plundering ships near well-traveled shipping lanes. The first Royal Governor, a former pirate named Woodes Rogers, brought law and order to The Bahamas in 1718 when he expelled the buccaneers.

During the American Revolution, American colonists loyal to the British flag settled in The Bahamas. These Loyalists and new settlers from Britain brought Colonial building skills and agricultural expertise. Until 1834, when Britain abolished slavery, they also brought slaves, importing the ancestors of many modern Bahamians from Western Africa.

Proximity to the U.S. continued to provide opportunity for illegal shipping activity. In the course of the American Civil War, The Bahamas prospered as a center of Confederate blockade-running. During Prohibition, the islands served as a base for American rumrunners. Today, the Bahamas is a major transshipment point for narcotics on the way to the U.S. Bahamians achieved self-government through a series of constitutional and political steps, attaining internal self-government in 1964 and full independence within the Commonwealth on July 10, 1973. Since independence, The Bahamas has continued to develop into a major tourist and financial services center.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Bahamas is an independent member of the Commonwealth of Nations. It is a parliamentary democracy with regular elections. As a Commonwealth country, its political and legal traditions closely follow those of the United Kingdom. The Bahamas recognizes the British monarch as its formal head of state, while an appointed Governor General serves as the Queen's representative in The Bahamas. A bicameral legislature enacts laws under the 1973 constitution.

The House of Assembly consists of 41 members, elected from individual constituencies for 5-year terms. As under the Westminster system, the government may dissolve the Parliament and call elections at any time. The House of Assembly performs all major legislative functions. The leader of the majority party serves as prime minister and head of government. The Cabinet consists of at least nine members, including the prime minister and ministers of executive departments. They answer politically to the House of Assembly.

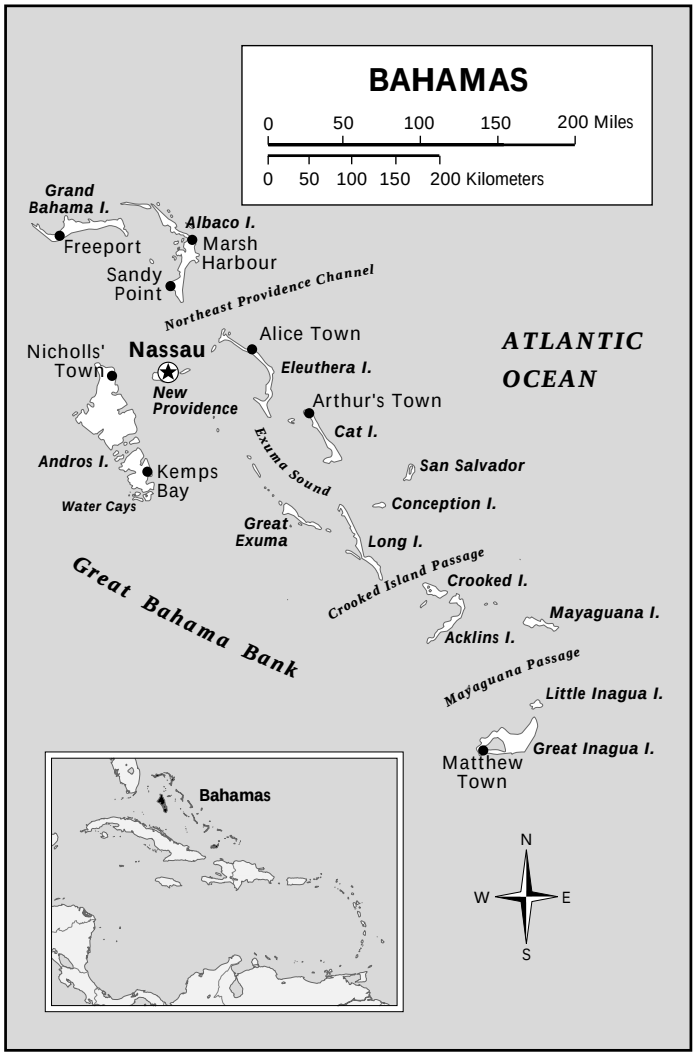
The Senate consists of 16 members appointed by the Governor General, including nine on the advice of the prime minister, four on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, and three on the advice of the prime minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition.

The Governor General appoints the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on the advice of the prime minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The Governor General appoints the other justices with the advice of a judicial commission. The Privy Council of the United Kingdom serves as the highest appellate court.

Local government districts elect councils for town planning, business licenses, traffic issues and maintaining government buildings. In some large districts, lower level town councils also have minor responsibilities.

For decades, the white-dominated United Bahamian Party (UBP) ruled The Bahamas, then a dependency of the United Kingdom, while a group of influential white merchants, known as the "Bay Street Boys," dominated the local economy. In 1953, Bahamians dissatisfied with UBP rule formed the opposition Progressive Liberal Party (PLP). Under the leadership of Lynden Pindling, the PLP won control of the government in 1967 and led The Bahamas to full independence in 1973.

A coalition of PLP dissidents and former UBP members formed the Free National Movement (FNM) in 1971. Former PLP cabinet minister and member of Parliament Hubert Ingraham became leader of the FNM in 1990, upon the death of Sir Cecil Wallace-Whitfield. Under the leadership of Ingraham, the FNM won control of the government from the PLP in the August 1992 general elections.



The PLP regained power in 2002 under the leadership of Perry Christie, but the FNM, again led by Ingraham, returned to government by capturing 23 of the 41 seats in the House of Assembly during the May 2007 election. The next election must be held no later than May 2012.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Arthur Dion HANNA**
Prime Min.: **Hubert INGRAHAM**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Theodore Brent SYMONETTE**
Min. of Agriculture & Marine Resources: **Lawrence CARTWRIGHT**
Min. of Education: **Carl BETHEL**
Min. of the Environment & Maritime Affairs: **Earl DEVEAUX**
Min. of Finance: **Hubert INGRAHAM**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Immigration: **Theodore "Brent" SYMONETTE**
Min. of Health: **Hubert MINNIS, Dr.**
Min. of Housing & National Insurance: **Kenneth RUSSELL**
Min. of Labor & Social Development: **Dion FOULKES**
Min. of Lands & Local Govt.: **Byran WOODSIDE**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **Claire HEPBURN**
Min. of National Security: **Orville "Tommy" TURNQUEST**
Min. of Public Works & Transport: **Neko GRANT**
Min. of Tourism & Aviation: **Vincent VANDERPOOL-WALLACE**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Culture: **Desmond BANNISTER**
Attorney Gen.: **Michael BARNETT**
Governor, Central Bank: **Wendy CRAIGG**
Ambassador to the US: **Cornelius SMITH**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Paulette A. BETHEL**

The Bahamas maintains an embassy in the United States at 2220 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-319-2660) and Consulates General in New York at 231 East 46th Street, New York, NY 10017 (tel: 212-421-6420), and in Miami at Suite 818, Ingraham Building, 25 SE Second Ave., Miami, FL 33131 (tel: 305-373-6295).

ECONOMY

The Bahamas is driven by tourism and financial services. Tourism and tourism-driven construction and manufacturing provide an estimated 60% of the gross domestic product (GDP). Tourism employs about half the Bahamian work force. In 2005, more than 5 million tourists visited The Bahamas, 87% from the United States. However, tourist arrivals declined to 4.7 million in 2006 and 4.6 million in 2007. There are about 110 U.S.-affiliated businesses operating in The Bahamas, and most are associated with tourism and banking. With few domestic resources and little industry, The Bahamas imports nearly all its food and manufactured goods from the United States. American goods and services tend to be favored by Bahamians due to cultural similarities and heavy exposure to American advertising. The Bahamian economy, due to its heavy dependence on U.S. tourism and trade, is deeply affected by U.S. economic performance.

Following economic struggles in 2001-2002 fueled by a drop in tourism after September 11, 2001, The Bahamas has enjoyed a period of economic recovery and an upturn in large-scale private sector investments in tourism, which will boost construction and provide long-term employment. Future goals include continued development of tourism properties, including increased Bahamian ownership, redevelopment of the Grand Bahama

economy following major hurricane losses in 2004, and the expansion of the robust Bahamian financial sector.

Economic challenges facing The Bahamas include meeting continued employment demands, jumpstarting a lagging privatization process, and monitoring increasing levels of government debt. Another major challenge for Bahamians will be to prepare for hemispheric free trade. Currently, Bahamians do not pay income or sales taxes. Most government revenue is derived from high tariffs and import fees. Reduction of trade barriers will probably require some form of taxation to replace revenues when the country becomes a part of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). As evident by domestic opposition to the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME), the advantages of free trade may be hard for the government to sell. The Bahamian Government was expected to sign the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union on August 30, 2008, but the signing was delayed.

A number of planned hotel projects have promised to increase economic growth and create short- and long-term employment. The Atlantis Resort and Casino on Paradise Island remains a major tourist draw and an engine of the economy. The future of the Baha Mar hotel project was called into question after casino operator Harrah's pulled out of the deal in March 2008. The government promises to expand Nassau International Airport and has turned over management to private operators. The Bahamian Government also has adopted a proactive approach to courting foreign investors and has conducted major investment missions to the Far East, Europe, Latin America, India, and Canada. The government continues to pay particular attention to China to encourage tourism and investment. For their part, the Chinese are funding the construction of a new $30 million sports stadium in New Providence. While the new FNM government has expressed a desire to increase Bahamian ownership interests in developments, The Bahamas' dependence on foreign investment is unlikely to change. Financial services constitute the second-most important sector of the Bahamian economy, accounting for up to 15% of GDP, due to the country's status as a tax haven and offshore banking center.

As of 2005, the government had licensed 262 banks and trust companies in The Bahamas. The Bahamas promulgated the International Business Companies (IBC) Act in January 1990 to enhance the country's status as a leading financial center. The act served to simplify and reduce the cost of incorporating offshore companies in The Bahamas. Within 9 years, more than 84,000 IBC-type companies had been established. In February 1991, the government also legalized the establishment of Asset Protection Trusts in The Bahamas. In 2000, in response to multilateral organizations' concerns, the government passed a legislative package of stronger measures to better regulate the financial sector and prevent money laundering in the country's banking sector, including creation of a Financial Intelligence Unit and enforcement of "know-your-customer" rules. Some of these measures have been challenged in Bahamian courts, and the number of offshore banks registered in The Bahamas has declined substantially since 2002.

As many as half of the IBCs have also closed shop. As a result, the government is considering additional legislation to keep the industry competitive while complying with international standards, including possible reform of the regulatory structure.

Agriculture and fisheries together account for 3% of GDP. The Bahamas exports lobster and some fish but does not raise these items commercially. There is no large-scale agriculture, and most agricultural products are consumed domestically. Following an outbreak of citrus canker on Abaco in 2005, The Bahamas lost a main agricultural export, and the Ministry of Agriculture banned the export of plant materials from Abaco.

The Bahamas imports more than $250 million in foodstuffs per year, representing about 80% of its food consumption. The Bahamian Government maintains the value of the Bahamian dollar on a par with the U.S. dollar. The Bahamas is a beneficiary of the U.S.-Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA), Canada's CARIBCAN program, and the European Union's Lome IV Agreement. Although The Bahamas participates in the political aspects of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), it has not entered into joint economic initiatives, like the CSME, with other Caribbean states.

The Bahamas has a few notable industrial firms: the Freeport pharmaceutical firm, PFC Bahamas (formerly Syntex); the BORCO oil facility, also in Freeport, which transships oil in the region; the Commonwealth Brewery in Nassau, which produces Heineken, Guinness, and Kalik beers; and Bacardi Corp., which distills rum in Nassau for shipment to U.S. and European markets. Other industries include sun-dried sea salt in Great Inagua, a wet dock facility in Freeport for repair of cruise ships, and mining of aragonite—a type of limestone with several industrial uses—from the sea floor at Ocean Cay.

The Hawksbill Creek Agreement established a duty-free zone in Freeport, The Bahamas' second-largest city, with a nearby industrial park to encourage foreign industrial investment. The Hong Kong-based firm Hutchison Whampoa operates the container port in Freeport. The Bahamian Parliament approved legislation in 1993 that extended most Freeport tax and duty exemptions through 2054.

Business Environment

The Bahamas offers attractive features to the potential investor: a stable democratic environment, relief from personal and corporate income taxes, timely repatriation of corporate profits, proximity to the United States with extensive air and telecommunications links, and a good pool of skilled professional workers. The Government of The Bahamas welcomes foreign investment in tour-

ism and banking and has declared an interest in agricultural and industrial investments to generate local employment, particularly in white-collar or skilled jobs. Despite its interest in foreign investment to diversify the economy, the Bahamian Government responds to local concerns about foreign competition and tends to protect Bahamian business and labor interests. As a result of domestic resistance to foreign investment and high labor costs, growth can stagnate in sectors which the government wishes to diversify.

The country's infrastructure is best developed in the principal cities of Nassau and Freeport, where there are relatively good paved roads and international airports. Electricity is generally reliable, although many businesses have their own backup generators. In Nassau, there are three daily newspapers, several weeklies, and international newspapers available for sale. There also are six radio stations. Both Nassau and Freeport have a television station. Cable TV and satellite also are available locally and provide most American programs with some Canadian and European channels.

Areas of Opportunity

The best U.S. export opportunities remain in the traditional areas of foodstuffs and manufactured goods: vehicles and automobile parts; hotel, restaurant, and medical supplies; and computers and electronics. Bahamian tastes in consumer products roughly parallel those in the United States. Merchants in southern Florida have found it profitable to advertise in Bahamian publications. Most imports are subject to high but nondiscriminatory tariffs.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Bahamas has strong bilateral relationships with the United States and the United Kingdom, represented by an ambassador in Washington and High Commissioner in London. The Bahamas also associates closely with other nations of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The Bahamas has an ambassador to Haiti and works closely with the United States and CARICOM on political and migration issues related to Haiti. The Bahamas has diplomatic relations with Cuba, including embassies in each other's capitals. A repatriation agreement was signed with Cuba in 1996, and there are commercial and cultural contacts between the two countries.

The Bahamas also enjoys a strengthening relationship with China. The Commonwealth of The Bahamas became a member of the United Nations in 1973 and the Organization of American States in 1982.

The Bahamas holds membership in a number of international organizations: the UN and some specialized and related agencies, including Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the International Labor Organization (ILO); International Monetary Fund (IMF); International Telecommunication Union (ITU); World Bank; World Meteorological Organization (WMO); World Health Organization (WHO); OAS and related agencies, including Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO); the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), excluding its Common Market; the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL); Universal Postal Union (UPU); International Maritime Organization (IMO); World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); and obtained observer status in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001.

U.S.-BAHAMIAN RELATIONS

The United States historically has had close economic and commercial relations with The Bahamas. The countries share ethnic and cultural ties, especially in education, and The Bahamas is home to approximately 30,000 American residents. In addition, there are about 110 U.S.-related businesses in The Bahamas and, in 2005, 87% of the 5 million tourists visiting the country were American.

As a neighbor, The Bahamas and its political stability are especially important to the United States. The U.S. and the Bahamian Government have worked together on reducing crime and addressing migration issues. With the closest island only 45 miles from the coast of Florida, The Bahamas often is used as a gateway for drugs and illegal aliens bound for the United States. The United States and The Bahamas cooperate closely to handle these threats. U.S. assistance and resources have been essential to Bahamian efforts to mitigate the persistent flow of illegal narcotics and migrants through the archipelago. The United States and The Bahamas also actively cooperate on law enforcement, civil aviation, marine research, meteorology, and agricultural issues. The U.S. Navy operates an underwater research facility on Andros Island.

The Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Customs and Border Protection maintains "preclearance" facilities at the airports in Nassau and Freeport. Travelers to the U.S. are interviewed and inspected before departure, allowing faster connection times in the U.S.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

NASSAU (E) Queen Street, 242-322-1181, Fax 242-328-7838, Workweek: Mon-Thurs 8:00am-5:00pm; Fri 8:00am-3:30pm, Website: http://nassau.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Pam Taylor
AMB OMS:	Cynthia J. Loyet
DCM/CHG:	Timothy Zuniga-Brown
DHS/ICE:	Enrique Tamayo
ECO:	Margo Pogorzelski
FM:	Jeffery Davis
HRO:	Kathleen M. Gaseor
MGT:	David S. Elmo
POL/ECO:	Paul Jukic
USCS OIC:	Ltc. Cdr. David Billburg
AMB:	Ned L. Siegel
CON:	Krystina L. Rabassa, Acting

GSO: Francis Shields Jr.
RSO: Albert Dejong
DEA: Kevin Stanfill
EEO: Margo Pogorzelski
IMO: Ronnie J. Fontenot
LEGATT: Richard Etzler
MLO: Lcdr Delong Bonner
NAS: David Foran
POL: Daniel B. O'Connor
State ICASS: David Foran

Other Contact Information

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International Trade Administration
Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-0704; 800-USA-TRADE
Fax: 202-482-0464

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-466-7464
Fax: 202-822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 24, 2008

Country Description: The Bahamas is a developed, English-speaking Caribbean nation composed of hundreds of islands covering a territory approximately the size of California. Tourism and financial services comprise the two largest sectors of the economy. Independent from the United Kingdom since 1973, the Bahamas is a Commonwealth nation with a century-old democratic tradition. The capital, Nassau, is located on New Providence Island.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling to and from the United States by air must have a passport. The passport requirement will be extended to sea travel, except on cruises originating and ending at the same point in the United States, as early as summer 2008. U.S. citizens who are returning from the Cayman Islands by sea, and who are not subject to the passport requirement, may present government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization).

Further information on upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at: http://travel.state.gov. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel.

U.S. citizens do not need to obtain visas to visit the Bahamas. However, U.S. citizens planning on an extended stay of several months may be asked to provide proof or evidence of financial solvency upon entry to Bahamian immigration authorities. Travelers arriving via private watercraft are charged docking fees.

Safety and Security: The water sports and scooter rental industries in the Bahamas are not carefully regulated. Visitors should rent equipment only from reputable operators, and should insist on sufficient training before using the equipment. Every year people are killed or injured due to improper, careless or reckless operation of scooters, jetskis, and personal watercraft. Visitors should insist on seeing proof that operators have sufficient medical and liability insurance.

Travelers should also invest in low-cost traveler's insurance that includes medical evacuations, as most American insurance companies do not cover this (please refer to the section on medical facilities in this document for additional information).

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although The Bahamas has a high crime rate, areas frequented by tourists during the day are not generally prone to violent crime. Visitors should exercise caution and good judgment at all times. Criminals tend to target restaurants and nightclubs frequented by tourists. One common approach is for criminals to entice victims into accepting a ride, either as a "personal favor" or by claiming to offer taxi service, and then robbing and/or assaulting the passenger once they are in the car. Visitors should use only clearly marked taxis with yellow license plates and make a note of the license plate number for their records.

Travelers should avoid walking alone after dark or in isolated areas, and avoid placing themselves in situations where they are alone with strangers. Be cautious on deserted areas of beaches at all hours. Hotel guests should always lock their doors and never open their hotel room door without first verifying the identity of the person knocking. Further, hotel guests should never leave valuables unattended, especially on beaches. Visitors should store passports/identity documents, airline tickets, credit cards, and extra cash in hotel safes. Automated teller machines (ATMs) are available; however, visitors should try not to use them, especially after dark. Avoid wearing expensive jewelry, particularly expensive watches, which criminals have specifically targeted. Visitors should take care to ride only in taxis with seatbelts.

Visitors are advised to report crime to the Royal Bahamas Police Force as quickly as possible. Early reports frequently improve the likelihood of identifying and apprehending suspected perpetrators.

The U.S. Embassy has received numerous reports of sexual assaults, including assaults against teen-age girls. Most assaults have been perpetrated against intoxicated young women, some of whom had reportedly

been drugged. To minimize the potential for sexual assault, the Embassy recommends that young women stay in groups, consume alcohol in moderation or not at all, ride only in licensed taxis, and not accept rides or drinks from strangers.

The legal age in The Bahamas for consumption of alcoholic beverages is 18. Parents should be aware, however, that minimum age requirements are not strongly enforced. It is easy for teenagers to obtain alcoholic beverages and underage drinking is prevalent. Many of the arrests, accidents and violent crimes suffered by U.S. citizens in The Bahamas involve alcohol. Engaging in high-risk behavior such as excessive consumption of alcohol can ultimately be dangerous because it greatly increases the vulnerability of an individual to opportunistic crime.

In many countries around the world, including The Bahamas, counterfeit and pirated goods are available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, attempting to bring such goods back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: High-quality medical care is generally available, but expensive, in Nassau and Freeport. Medical care is limited outside of Nassau and Freeport. Bahamian doctors and hospitals do not usually accept U.S. medical insurance policies and typically expect immediate cash payment for professional services. It is the patient's responsibility to seek reimbursement later from their insurance companies. Serious health problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Persons with serious or life-threatening conditions who wish to return to U.S. medical facilities for treatment normally must be airlifted.

There is a chronic shortage of blood at Princess Margaret Hospital in Nassau, where most emergency surgery is performed. Travelers with rare blood types should know the names and locations of possible blood donors should the need arise. The Lyford Cay Hospital has a hyperbaric chamber for treatment of decompression illness.

Ambulance service is available, but may not be able to respond quickly in the event of a major emergency or disaster.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Bahamas is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in the Bahamas moves on the left side of the roadway. Roads in Nassau and Freeport are generally adequate, but traffic congestion in Nassau is endemic. Rural roads can be narrow, winding, and in poor condition. Flooding frequently occurs on roads in low-lying areas throughout the Bahamas, including Nassau and Freeport. Drivers should be alert for unmarked construction zones throughout the Bahamas.

Travel by moped or bicycle can be quite hazardous, especially in the heavy traffic conditions prevalent in Nassau. Travelers should exercise appropriate caution when renting motorbikes. Those who choose to ride a moped or bicycle should follow the Bahamian helmet law and drive defensively. Accidents involving U.S. tourists on motorbikes have resulted in severe injuries and fatalities.

Pedestrians need to remember that vehicular traffic comes from the right, as many tourists have been struck by cars after failing to check properly for oncoming traffic.

Emergency ambulance service is generally available and can be reached by dialing 911. Roadside assistance is also widely available through private towing services, listed in the phone book.

For specific information concerning driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance in the Bahamas, please contact the Bahamas Tourist Board in New York at http://bahamas.com, (tel.1-800-823-3136).

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Bahamas' Civil Aviation

Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Bahamas' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Customs Regulations: The Bahamas' customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation or exportation of firearms. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas in Washington or one of the Bahamian consulates in the U.S. for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Tourists who arrive by private boat are required to declare firearms to Bahamian Customs and leave firearms on the boat while in the Bahamas.

Boating/Fishing: Boaters should be aware that long-line fishing in Bahamian waters is illegal. All long-line fishing gear is required to be stowed below deck while transiting through Bahamian waters. Fishermen should note that stiff penalties are imposed for catching crawfish (lobster) or other marine life out of season or in protected areas.

Time-Shares: U.S. citizens should exercise caution when considering time-share investments and be aware of the aggressive tactics used by some time-share sales representatives. Bahamian law allows time-share purchasers five days to cancel the contract for full reimbursement. Disputes that arise after that period can be very time-consuming and expensive to resolve through the local legal system.

Hurricanes: The Bahamas, like all countries in the Caribbean basin, is vulnerable to hurricanes. Hurricane season officially runs from June 1 to November 30, although hurricanes have been known to occur outside that time period. Visitors to the Bahamas during hurricane season are advised to monitor weather reports in order to be prepared for any potential threats. General information about disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bahamian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Bahamas are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Bahamas are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Bahamas. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located next to McDonald's restaurant on Queen Street in downtown Nassau; telephone (242) 322-1181, after hours: (242) 328-2206.

The Consular Section's American Citizen Services hours are 9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and 9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. on Fridays. The Embassy is closed on local and U.S. holidays. You may wish to visit the Embassy's web site at http://nassau.usembassy.gov or contact the Consular Section by e-mail at acsn@state.gov.

The U.S. Embassy is also responsible for consular services in the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCIS), a United Kingdom (British) overseas territory. U.S. citizens may obtain updated information on travel and security in TCIS from the U.S. Embassy in Nassau or the Country Specific Information for the Turks and Caicos.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2001

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Bahamian law allows adoption by any person with legal status in The Bahamas (even foreign tourists). However, the number of children is very small and the waiting list for prospective adoptive parents is very long. Therefore, The Bahamas follows an "unofficial regulation" whereby Bahamian citizens or legal residents are given preference in adopting children. Blood relatives of a child are especially given preference.

General: The following is a guideline for U.S. citizens who are interested in adopting a child in The Bahamas and applying for an immigrant visa for the child to return to the United States. This process involves complex Bahamian and U.S. legal require-

ments. U.S. consular officers give each petition careful consideration on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the legal requirements of both countries have been met, for the protection of the prospective adoptive parent(s), the biological parent(s), and the child.

Interested U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to contact U.S. consular officials in The Bahamas before formalizing an adoption agreement to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed which will make it possible for the Embassy to issue a U.S. immigrant visa for the child.

Availability of Children for Adoption: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics show that there were no immigrant visas given within the last five years.

Adoption Authority: The Bahamas Department of Social Services is the government office responsible for adoption.

Adoption Procedures: The entire adoption procedure requires a minimum of three months and frequently takes longer. The Department of Social Services acts as the representative of the child's interests and a lawyer is required to guide the process through the Supreme Court.

It is not a violation of Bahamian law for a parent or legal guardian to remove a child from The Bahamas for adoption elsewhere. A third party may legally remove the child provided the parent(s) or guardian has given consent.

Age and Civil Status: Children may be adopted by foreigners, if they are orphans (both or only known parent deceased), if they have been abandoned (the court must be satisfied that parents cannot be found), or released for adoption by their parents or legal guardian (if the child was born out-of-wedlock, only the mother needs to release the child for adoption). Children are required to be adopted in The Bahamas, unless the guardian (ad litem) grants permission otherwise.

There is no age limit set under the adoption regulations. Single people may adopt, as well as married couples.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The Embassy maintains a separate list of Lawyers who practice in the Turks & Caicos Islands. Please review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/family for a list of agencies.

Doctors: The U.S. Embassy maintains current lists of doctors and sources for medicines should either you or your child experience health problems while in The Bahamas.

Documentary Requirements: The following is a list of the required documents that are provided by the local Bahamian attorney, which will include the following:

- Originating summons
- Statement of support
- Affidavit of support application (court order)
- Summons for appearance
- Undertakings of Court
- Order (issued by court)
- Memo of appearance
- Report from guardian ad litem
- Granting of adoption

The list of documents needed for the prospective adoptive parents to complete the adoption process will be in the hands of the attorneys.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: A Bahamian child adopted by an American citizen must obtain an immigrant visa before he or she can enter the U.S. as a lawful permanent resident.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas
2201 Wisconsin Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-319-2660

U.S. Embassy
Queen Street (P.O. Box N-8197)
Nassau, Bahamas
Tel: 242-322-1181 and 242-328-2206

Fees: The lawyer's fee is usually between $1000—$3000

Additional Information: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoption*s.

Questions: Specific questions regarding adoptions in The Bahamas may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy. You may also contact the Office of Children's Issues, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-2818, telephone 1-888-407-4747 with specific adoption questions.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention") came into force

between the United States and The Bahamas on January 1, 1994. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after January 1, 1994. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to The Bahamas prior to January 1, 1994, may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention in some cases. The Bahamas is currently listed as a country of concern in the State Department's Compliance Report, which is submitted to Congress on a yearly basis, for their implementation of the Hague Convention for the return of children to the United States. Hague applications sent to The Bahamas for return of abducted children have not been acted on for years; Bahamian courts have then refused to order the return of abducted children on the grounds that they have become acclimated to life in The Bahamas.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Please note that criminal charges may complicate a Hague Convention case. Contact the country officer in the Office of Children's Issues for specific information.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



BAHRAIN

Compiled from the October 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Bahrain

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 727 sq. km. (274 sq. mi.); approximately four times the size of Washington, DC. Bahrain is an archipelago of 36 islands located off the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. The four main islands are joined by causeways, and make up about 95% of the total land area.

Cities: Capital—Manama, pop. (2002 est.) 148,000. Other cities—Al Muharraq.

Terrain: Low desert plain (highest elevation point—122 m).

Climate: Hot and humid from May-September, with average highs ranging from 30º-40º C (86º-104º F). Maximum temperatures average 20º-30º C (68º-86º F) the remainder of the year.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bahraini(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 708,535, including about 235,108 non-nationals.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.39%.

Ethnic groups: Bahraini 63%, Asian 19%, other Arab 10%, Iranian 8%.

Religions: 98% Muslim (approximately Shi'a 70%, Sunni 30%), with small Christian, Jewish and Hindu communities.

Languages: Arabic (official), English, Farsi, and Urdu are also widely spoken.

Education: Education is not compulsory, but is provided free to Bahrainis and non-nationals at all levels, including higher education. Estimated net primary school attendance (1991-2001)—84%. Adult literacy, age 15 and over (2003 est.)—89.1% for the overall population (male 91.9%, female 85%).

Health: Infant mortality rate (2007 est.)—16.18 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—72 yrs. males, 77 yrs. females.

Work force: (2006 est.) 352,000 of which 44% are foreigners.

Government

Type: Constitutional hereditary monarchy.

Independence: August 15, 1971 (from the United Kingdom).

Constitution: Approved and promulgated May 26, 1973; suspended on August 26, 1975; the National Action Charter was approved by a national popular referendum on February 14-15, 2001, and a new constitution was issued on February 14, 2002.

Government branches: Executive—King (chief of state); Prime Minister (head of government); Council of Ministers (cabinet) is appointed by the King and headed by the Prime Minister. Legislative—The bicameral parliament (al-Majlis al-Watani) consists of a 40-member elected Council of Representatives (elected in December 2006; next election scheduled for 2010) and a 40-member Shura (Consultative) Council appointed by the King. Members of both chambers serve four-year terms. Judicial—High Civil Appeals Court. The judiciary is independent with right of judicial review.

Political subdivisions: 12 municipalities (manatiq) Al Hidd, Al Manamah, Al Mintaqah al Gharbiyah, Al Mintaqah al Wusta, Al Mintaqah ash Shamaliyah, Al Muharraq, Ar Rifa' wa al Mintaqah al Janubiyah, Jidd Hafs, Madinat Hamad, Madinat 'Isa, Juzur Hawar, Sitrah.

Political parties: al Wifag, al Asala, al Minbar, al Mustaqbil.

Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $12.07 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2006 est.) 7.1%.

Per capita GDP: (2006 est.) $20,600.

Natural resources: Oil, aluminum, textiles, natural gas, fish, pearls.

Agriculture: (less than 1% of GDP) Products—fruit, vegetables, poultry, dairy products, shrimp, fish.

Industry: Types—oil and gas (13.1% of GDP), manufacturing (12.4% of GDP), aluminum.

Services: Finance (24.2% of GDP), transport and communications (8.9% of GDP), real estate (9.2% of GDP); government services (14.8% of GDP).

Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$12.62 billion: oil and other mineral products, aluminum, textiles. Major markets— Saudi Arabia (3.2%), U.S. (3%), Japan (2.3%). Imports—$9.04 billion: crude oil, machinery and appliances, transport equipment, foodstuffs. Major suppliers—Saudi Arabia (37.3%), Japan (6.8%), U.S. (6.2%), U.K. (6.2%), Germany (5%), U.A.E. (4.2%).

PEOPLE

Bahrain is one of the most densely populated countries in the world; about 89% of the population lives in the two principal cities of Manama and Al Muharraq. Approximately 66% of the indigenous population is originally from the Arabian Peninsula and Iran. Bahrain currently has a sizeable foreign labor force (about 34% of the total population). The government's policies on naturalization remain controversial. In June 2002, the King issued a decree allowing citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to take up dual Bahraini nationality. Opposition political groups charge that the government is granting citizenship to foreign nationals who have served in the Bahraini armed forces and security services to alter the demographic balance of the country, which is primarily Shi'a. According to passport officials, about 40,000 individuals have been naturalized over the past 50 years (about 10% of the total population).

The indigenous population is 98% Muslim. Although some two-thirds of the indigenous population is Shi'a Muslim, the ruling family and the majority of government, military, and corporate leaders are Sunni Muslims. The small indigenous Christian and Jewish communities make up the remaining 2% of the population. Roughly half of foreign resident community are non-Muslim, and include Christians, Hindus, Baha'is, Buddhists and Sikhs.

Bahrain has invested its oil revenues in developing an advanced educational system. The first public schools for girls and boys were opened in the 1920s. The government continues to pay for all schooling costs. Although school attendance is not compulsory, primary and secondary attendance rates are high, and literacy rates are currently among the highest in the region.

Higher education is available for secondary school graduates at the Bahrain University, Arabian Gulf University and specialized institutes including the College of Health Sciences—operating under the direction of the Ministry of Health—which trains physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and paramedics. The government has identified providing educational services to the Gulf Cooperation Council as a potential economic growth area, and is actively working to establish Bahrain as a regional center for higher education.

HISTORY

The site of the ancient Bronze Age civilization of Dilmun, Bahrain was an important center linking trade routes between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley as early as 5,000 years ago. The Dilmun civilization began to decline about 2,000 B.C. as trade from India was cut off. From 750 B.C. on, Assyrian kings repeatedly claimed sovereignty over the islands. Shortly after 600 B.C., Dilmun was formally incorporated into the new Babylonian empire. There are no historical references to Bahrain until Alexander the Great's arrival in the Gulf in the 4th century B.C. Although Bahrain was ruled variously by the Arab tribes of Bani Wa'el and Persian governors, Bahrain continued to be known by its Greek name Tylos until the 7th century, when many of its inhabitants converted to Islam. A regional pearling and trade center, Bahrain came under the control of the Ummayad Caliphs of Syria, the Abbasid Caliphs of Baghdad, Persian, Omani and Portuguese forces at various times from the 7th century until the Al Khalifa family, a branch of the Bani Utbah tribe that have ruled Bahrain since the 18th century, succeeded in capturing Bahrain from a Persian garrison controlling the islands in 1783.

In the 1830s the Al Khalifa signed the first of many treaties establishing Bahrain as a British Protectorate. Similar to the binding treaties of protection entered into by other Persian Gulf principalities, the agreements entered into by the Al Khalifa prohibited them from disposing of territory and entering into relationships with any foreign government without British consent in exchange for British protection against the threat of military attack from Ottoman Turkey. The main British naval base in the region was moved to Bahrain in 1935 shortly after the start of large-scale oil production.

In 1968, when the British Government announced its decision (reaffirmed in March 1971) to end the treaty relationships with the Persian Gulf sheikdoms, Bahrain initially joined the other eight states (Qatar and the seven Trucial Sheikhdoms now the United Arab Emirates) under British protection in an effort to form a union of Arab emirates. The nine sheikhdoms still had not agreed on terms of union by 1971, however, prompting Bahrain to declare itself fully independent on August 15, 1971.

Bahrain promulgated a constitution and elected its first parliament in 1973, but just two years later, in August 1975, the Amir disbanded the National Assembly after it attempted to legislate the end of Al-Khalifa rule and the expulsion of the U.S. Navy from Bahrain.

In the 1990s, Bahrain suffered from repeated incidents of political violence stemming from the disaffection of the Shi'a majority. In response, the Amir instituted the first Bahraini cabinet change in 20 years in 1995 and also and increased the membership of the Consultative Council,



which he had created in 1993 to provide advice and opinion on legislation proposed by the cabinet and, in certain cases, suggest new laws on its own, from 30 to 40 the following year. These steps led to an initial decline in violent incidents, but in early 1996 a number of hotels and restaurants were bombed, resulting in several fatalities. Over 1,000 people were arrested and held in detention without trial in connection with these disturbances. The government has since released these individuals.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa succeeded the throne in March 1999, after the death of his father Shaikh Isa bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Bahrain's ruler since 1961. He championed a program of democratic reform shortly after his succession. In November 2000, Shaikh Hamad established a committee to create a blueprint to transform Bahrain from a hereditary emirate to a constitutional monarchy within 2 years.

The resulting "National Action Charter" was presented to the Bahraini public in a referendum in February 2001. In the first comprehensive public vote in Bahrain since the 1970s, 94.8% of voters overwhelmingly endorsed the charter.

That same month, Shaikh Hamad pardoned all political prisoners and detainees, including those who had been imprisoned, exiled or detained on security charges. He also abolished the State Security Law and the State Security Court, which had permitted the government to detain individuals without trial for up to 3 years.

On February 14, 2002, one year after the referendum endorsing his National Action Charter, Shaikh Hamad pronounced Bahrain a constitutional monarchy and changed his status from Amir to King. He simultaneously announced that the first municipal elections since 1957 would be held in May 2002, and that a bicameral parliament, with a representative lower house, would be reconstituted with parliamentary elections in October 2002. As part of these constitutional reforms, the government also created an independent financial watchdog empowered to investigate cases of embezzlement and violations of state expenditure in July 2002.

Turnout for the May 2002 municipal elections was 51%, with female voters making up 52% percent of voters. Turnout for the 2002 parliamentary

elections—the first in almost three decades—was 53% in the first round and 43% in the second round, despite the fact that four political societies, including the largest Shi'a society, organized a boycott to protest constitutional provisions enacted by the King that gave the appointed upper chamber of parliament voting rights equal to the elected lower chamber. The new parliament held its first joint sitting in December 2002. Bahrain held its second set of parliamentary and municipal elections in November and December 2006. All registered political societies participated in the elections and a Shia society, Al Wifaq, now represents the largest single bloc inside the Council of Representatives. Thirty-two of the Council's 40 members represent Sunni and Shia Islamist societies. One woman, Lateefah Al-Qauod, ran uncontested and became the first woman elected to parliament in Bahrain.

Bahrain has a complex system of courts, based on diverse legal sources, including Sunni and Shi'a Sharia (religious law), tribal law, and other civil codes and regulations created with the help of British advisers in the early 20th century. In 2001, Shaikh Hamad created the Supreme Judicial Council to regulate these courts and separate the administrative and judicial branches of government.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **HAMAD bin Isa al-Khalifa**
Prime Min.: **KHALIFA bin Salman al-Khalifa**
Dep. Prime Min.: **ALI bin Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jawad al-ARAIDH**
Dep. Prime Min.: **MUHAMMAD bin Mubarak al-Khalifa**
Min. of King's Court Affairs: **ALI bin Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa**
Min. of Communication: **ALI bin Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa**
Min. of Education: **Majid bin Ali Hasan al-NUAYMI**
Min. of Electricity & Water: **ABDALLAH bin Salman al-Khalifa**
Min. of Finance & Economy: **AHMAD bin Muhammad bin Hamad bin Abdallah al-Khalifa**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **KHALID bin Ahmad al-Khalifa**
Min. of Health: **Faysal al-HAMMER, Dr.**
Min. of Industry & Commerce: **HASAN bin Abdallah al-Fakhru**
Min. of Information: **Jihad BUKAMAL**
Min. of Interior: **RASHID bin Abdallah bin Ahmad al-Khalifa**
Min. of Islamic Affairs: **KHALID bin Ali al-Khalifa**
Min. of Justice: **KHALID bin Ali al-Khalifa**
Min. of Labor: **Majid bin Muhsin al-ALAWI**
Min. of Municipalities & Agricultural Affairs: **Mansur bin RAJAB**
Min. of Oil & Gas: **Abd al-Husayn MIRZA**
Min. of Public Works & Housing: **Fahmi bin Ali al-JAWDAR**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Fatima bint Ahmad al-BALUSHI**
Min. of Transportation: **ALI bin Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa**
Min. of State for Cabinet Affairs: **AHMAD bin Atiyatallah al-Khalifa**
Min. of State for Defense: **MUHAMMAD bin Abdallah al-Khalifa**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Nizar al-BAHARNA**
Min. of State for Shura Council Affairs & Parliament: **Abd al-Aziz bin Muhammad al-FADHIL**
Attorney Gen.: **ABD al-Rahman bin Jabir al-Khalifa**
Dir., Bahrain National Security Agency: **KHALIFA bin Abdallah al-Khalifa**
Governor, Central Bank of Bahrain: **Rashid bin Muhammad al-MARAJ**
Ambassador to the US: **Houda Ezra Ibrahim NUNU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Tawfiq Ahmad Khalil al-MANSUR**

Bahrain maintains an embassy in the United States at 3502 International Drive N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008; tel: [1] (202) 342-1111; fax: [1] (202) 362-2192. The Bahraini Mission to the UN is located at 866 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017; tel: [1] (212)223-6200; fax [1] (212) 319-0687.

ECONOMY

The first Gulf state to discover oil, Bahrain's reserves are expected to run out in 10-15 years. Accordingly, Bahrain has worked to diversify its economy over the past decade and has stabilized its oil production at about 40,000 barrels per day (b/d). Revenues from oil and natural gas currently account for 11.1% of GDP yet currently provide about 76% of government income. The state-owned Bahrain Petroleum Company refinery built in 1935, the first in the Gulf, has a capacity of about 260,000 b/d. Saudi Arabia provides most of the crude for refinery operation via pipeline. Through an agreement with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain also receives half of the net output and revenues from Saudi Arabia's Abu Saafa offshore oilfield.

The Bahrain National Gas Company operates a gas liquefaction plant that utilizes gas piped directly from Bahrain's oilfields. Gas reserves should last about 50 years at present rates of consumption. However, rising domestic demand spurred by a recent development boom has highlighted the need to increase gas supplies. The Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company is a joint venture of the petrochemical industries of Kuwait, the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation, and the Government of Bahrain. The plant, completed in 1985, produces ammonia and methanol for export. Growth in the hydrocarbons sector will be contingent upon new discoveries—Bahrain awarded exploration rights to Malaysia's Petronas and the U.S.'s Chevron Texaco after the resolution of Bahrain's long-standing territorial dispute with Qatar, but no meaningful finds have been announced to date. Bahrain's other industries include the majority state-owned Aluminum Bahrain (Alba)—which operates the largest aluminum smelter in the world outside Eastern Europe with an annual production of about 843,000 metric tons (mt) in 2005 after the completion of an expansion program—and related factories, such as the Aluminum Extrusion Company and the Gulf Aluminum Rolling Mill. Other plants include the Arab Iron and Steel Company's iron ore pelletizing plant (4 million tons annually) and a shipbuilding and repair yard.

Bahrain's development as a major financial center has been the most

widely heralded aspect of its diversification effort. Bahrain is a regional financial and business center; international financial institutions operate in Bahrain, both offshore and onshore, without impediments, and the financial sector is currently the largest contributor to GDP at 27.6%. Some 370 offshore banking units and representative offices are located in Bahrain, as well as 65 American firms. Bahrain has also made a concerted effort to become the leading Islamic finance center in the Arab world, standardizing regulations of the Islamic banking industry. It currently has 32 Islamic commercial, investment and leasing banks as well as Islamic insurance (takaful) companies—the largest concentration of Islamic financial institutions in the Middle East.

Bahrain is working to develop other service industries such as information technology, healthcare and education. The government has used its oil revenues to build an advanced infrastructure in transportation and telecommunications. The state monopoly—Batelco—was broken in April 2003 following the establishment of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). Since that time, the TRA has granted some 63 licenses in the interest of promoting healthy industry competition.

Bahrain plans to expand its airport, one of the busiest in the Gulf. More than 4.8 million passengers transited Bahrain International Airport in 2005. A modern, busy port offers direct and frequent cargo shipping connections to the U.S., Europe, and the Far East. To boost its competitiveness as a regional center, Bahrain is building a new port and has privatized port operations.

The government of Bahrain moved toward privatizing the production of electricity and water by licensing Al Ezzal to construct an independent power plant at a cost of $500 million. The company commenced operations in May 2006. In January 2006, the government announced the sale of the Al Hidd Power Plant for $738 million to Hidd Power Company, a consortium of British, Japanese, and Belgian companies. Regional tourism is also a significant source of income. The government continues to favor large-scale tourism projects. It opened the only Formula One race track in the Middle East in 2004, and has awarded tenders for several tourist complexes. New hotel and spa projects are progressing within the context of broader real estate development, much of which is geared toward attracting increased tourism.

Government revenues continue to be largely dependent on the oil industry. Bahrain has received significant budgetary support and project grants from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Buoyed by rising oil revenues, the 2007-2008 budget approved by the parliament in July 2006 provides for sizable increases in urban development, education, and social spending. Ministry of Defense spending will account for 13% of current spending in 2007 and 2008 based on the new budget. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of the Interior also receive substantial budget allocations. Significant capital outlays have been allocated to improving housing and infrastructure in line with government efforts to raise the standard of living of the Shi'a population and to attract foreign investment.

The government has also started to extend protections to workers. Private sector employees won permission to form unions in late 2002; King Hamad has given his tentative approval for the formation of unions in government departments. In June 2006, Bahrain passed laws legalizing the existence of multiple trade federations and codifying several protections for workers engaged in union activity. As part of the government's labor reform program, it has formed a Labor Market Regulatory Authority and established a fund to support the training of Bahraini workers. In 2006, bilateral trade exceeded $1 billion for the first time, representing almost 50% growth over 2005. The U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement took effect on August 1, 2006 and is generating increased U.S. commercial interest in Bahrain.

DEFENSE

The Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) numbers about 12,000 personnel and consists of army, navy, air force, air defense, and royal guard units. The public security forces and the coast guard are separate from the BDF and report to the Ministry of the Interior. Bahrain also has a national guard that consists of about 1,200 personnel. Bahrain's defense spending since 1999 has been steady. The government spends around $630 million annually on the military, about 20% of current expenditures. The parliamentary process has produced spirited debate over government spending, particularly defense spending, but no actual reductions.

With the help of the U.S. and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Bahrain has made significant efforts to upgrade its defense systems and modernize its armed forces over the last 20 years. In 1982, the GCC gave Bahrain $1.7 billion for this purpose. Since the 1991 Gulf War, the U.S. has provided military and defense technical assistance and training to Bahrain from Foreign Military Sales (FMS), commercial sources, excess defense article sales (EDA) and under the International Military and Education Training (IMET) program. The U.S. Office of Military Cooperation in Bahrain is attached to the U.S. Embassy and manages the security assistance mission.

U.S. military sales to Bahrain since 2000 total $608.9 million. Principal U.S. military systems acquired by the BDF include eight Apache helicopters, 54 M60A3 tanks, 22 F-16C/D aircraft, 20 Cobra helicopters, 20 M109A5 Howitzers, 1 Avenger AD system, and the TPS-59 radar system. Bahrain has received $410 million in U.S. EDA acquisition value delivered since the U.S.-Bahraini program began in 1993.

Military exercises are conducted on a regular basis to increase the BDF's readiness and improve coordination with the U.S. and other GCC forces. The BDF also sends personnel to the United States for military training.

This training includes courses from graduate level professional military education down to entry level technical training.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since achieving independence in 1971, Bahrain has pursued a policy of close consultation with neighboring states. Bahrain became a member of the United Nations and the Arab League in 1971. In 1981 it joined its five neighbors—Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, the U.A.E. and Qatar—to form the strategic Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Bahrain has complied with GCC efforts steps to coordinate economic development and defense and security planning. In December 1994, for example, Bahrain concurred with the GCC decision to drop secondary and tertiary boycotts against Israel. Bahrain also responded positively to Kuwait's request to deploy the GCC collective defense force, "Peninsula Shield," during the build up and execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003.

In addition to maintaining strong relations with its largest financial backers, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the U.A.E., Bahrain has worked to improve its relations with Qatar and has proper, but not warm, relations with Iran. Bahrain-Iran relations have been strained since the discovery in 1981 of an Iran-sponsored coup plot in Bahrain. Bahraini suspicions of the Iranian role in local unrest in the mid-1990s remain. On March 16, 2001, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) announced its judgment on the long-standing maritime delimitation and territorial dispute between Bahrain and Qatar. The binding judgment awarded sovereignty over the Hawar Islands and Qit'at Jaradah to Bahrain and sovereignty over Zubarah (part of the Qatar Peninsula), Janan Island and Fasht ad Dibal to Qatar. The peaceful settlement of this dispute has allowed for renewed co-operation, including plans to construct a causeway between the two countries.

Bahrain's strategic partnership with the U.S. has intensified since 1991. Bahraini pilots flew strikes in Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War, and the country was used as a base for military operations in the Gulf. Bahrain also provided logistical and basing support to international Maritime Interdiction efforts to enforce UN sanctions and prevent illegal smuggling of oil from Iraq in the 1990s. Bahrain also provided extensive basing and overflight clearances for a multitude of U.S. aircraft operating in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Bahrain also deployed forces in support of Coalition operations during both OEF and OIF. Bahrain has delivered humanitarian support and technical training to support the reconstruction of the Iraqi banking sector, and has offered support for each stage of Iraq's political transformation. Bahrain has also cooperated effectively on criminal investigation issues in support of the campaign on terrorism; the Bahrain Monetary Agency (which became the Central Bank of Bahrain in September 2006) moved quickly to restrict terrorists' ability to transfer funds through Bahrain's financial system. In October 2006, Bahrain joined the U.S. and 23 other countries in a Proliferation Security Initiative interdiction exercise in the Persian Gulf.

U.S.-BAHRAINI RELATIONS

The American Mission Hospital, affiliated with the National Evangelical Church, has operated continuously in Bahrain for more than a century. Bahrain has also been a base for U.S. naval activity in the Gulf since 1947. When Bahrain became independent, the U.S.-Bahrain relationship was formalized with the establishment of diplomatic relations. The U.S. embassy at Manama was opened September 21, 1971, and a resident ambassador was sent in 1974. The Bahraini embassy in Washington, DC, opened in 1977. In October 1991, Amir Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa made a state visit to Washington. In 2001, Amir Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa made his first visit to the U.S. after succeeding his father in 1999. He returned to Washington on an official visit in January 2003. King Hamad made an official visit to Washington in November 2004 to meet with President Bush and cabinet-level officials.

Bahrain and the United States signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement in October 1991 granting U.S. forces access to Bahraini facilities and ensuring the right to pre-position material for future crises. Bahrain is the headquarters of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. The U.S. designated Bahrain a Major Non-NATO Ally in October 2001.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MANAMA (E) Building 979, Road 3119, Block 331, Zinj District, APO/FPO Unit 6210 Box 103 FPO. AE 09809-0103, 973-1724-2700/VoIP:202-448-5131, Fax 973-1727-2594, Workweek: Sun to Thurs, 0800-1700, http://manama.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Carolyn Jacobs
AMB OMS:	Jennifer Harrison
ECO:	Benjamin A. Thomson
FM:	Dan Hess
HRO:	Joy Davies
MGT:	George Navadel
POL/ECO:	Steve Butler
AMB:	Adam J. Ereli
CON:	Phillip Richards
DCM:	Christopher Henzel
PAO:	David Edginton
GSO:	Alexandra Aitken
RSO:	Lance Bailey
ATO:	Mike Henney (Res. Dubai)
CLO:	Jeanette Newell
DAO:	Col. Ivar S. Tait
DEA:	Donald Barnes (Res. Cairo)
FAA:	Paul Feldman (Res. Brussels)
FAA/CASLO:	Karl Brown (Res Rome)
FMO:	Huma Desjardins
ICASS Chair:	Ivar S. Tait
IMO:	Bill Bonnett
IPO:	Troy Jackson
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Res. In Paris)
ISO:	Christophe Hickey
ISSO:	Christophe Hickey
LEGATT:	Danny Harrell (Res. Riyadh)
MLO:	Col. Kevin Kyger

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 27, 2008

Country Description: Bahrain is a hereditary kingdom governed by the Al-Khalifa family. In 2002, the country adopted a new constitution that reinstated a parliament, which consists of one elected and one appointed chamber. Islamic ideals and beliefs provide the conservative foundation of the country's customs, laws and practices. Bahrain is a modern, developed country and tourist facilities are widely available. The capital is Manama.

Entry Requirements: A passport and a visa are required. Passports should be valid for at least six months after date of arrival. U.S. passport holders outside of Bahrain may apply and pay for a two-week tourist visa online through the Bahraini government web site at http://www.evisa.gov.bh, or may obtain it upon arrival at the airport. U.S. diplomatic passport holders receive a no-fee two-week visa.

Prior to travel, visitors may obtain five-year multiple-entry visas valid for stays as long as one month from Bahraini embassies overseas. Bahrain assesses heavy fines on visitors who fail to depart Bahrain at the end of their authorized stay. The amount of the fine is determined by a formula related to the visa type, duration, and location of issuance. An exit tax is included in the ticket price for flights out of Bahrain, and no additional exit fees are required upon departure. Residents of Bahrain who intend to return must obtain a re-entry permit before departing. For further information on entry/exit requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 3502 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 342-1111; or the Bahrain Permanent Mission to the U.N., 2 United Nations Plaza, East 44th St., New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 223-6200. Visit the Embassy of Bahrain web site at www.bahrainembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Americans in Bahrain should maintain a high level of security awareness. Spontaneous demonstrations take place in Bahrain from time to time in response to world events or local developments. We remind American citizens that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possible escalate into violence. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. American citizens should stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of their surroundings at all times.

Information regarding demonstrations in Bahrain can be found on the U.S. Embassy Manama's web site at http://bahrain.usembassy.gov/information_for_travelers.html. Visiting U.S. citizens should register with the U.S. Embassy in Manama upon arrival. The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. Americans should maintain a low profile, vary routes and times for all required travel, and treat mail and packages from unfamiliar sources with caution. In addition, U.S. citizens are urged to avoid contact with any suspicious, unfamiliar objects, and to report the presence of the objects to local authorities.

Please report any security concerns to the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Office at telephone (973) 1724-2700 during office hours or (973) 1727–5126 after hours.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The crime rate in Bahrain is low and violent crime is rare. However, burglary, petty theft, and robberies do occur. Visiting Americans are urged to take the same security precautions in Bahrain that one would practice in the United States. Hotel room doors should be locked when visitors are in their rooms, and travelers are encouraged to store valuables in hotel room safes when they are available. Women are encouraged to keep their purses firmly under their arms, and men should avoid keeping their wallets in their hip pockets while in the old market area. The U.S. Embassy in Manama recommends that travelers using local taxis insist on the use of a meter since unexpectedly high fares may otherwise be charged. Bahrain has a professional police force, and visitors are encouraged to contact the police if problems are encountered.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how to transfer funds. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Basic modern medical care and medicines are available in several hospitals and health centers in Bahrain. Two government hospitals, several private hospitals, and numerous private clinics located throughout the country offer a wide range of medical services. Cardiac care, general surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics, orthopedics and dentistry

services are readily available, as are x-rays, CT-scan and MRI testing. The government hospitals house both trauma and ICU units. Pharmacies are common throughout Bahrain and carry a wide range of medications. Prescriptions are normally required.

Payment at all medical facilities is due at the time of service. Some hospitals have limited direct billing capability for certain insurance carriers. Billing and insurance practices vary among the medical facilities.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Bahrain is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel by road in Bahrain is generally safe although unsafe driving practices are common. Highways and major roads in the northern third of Bahrain are four to six lanes wide and well maintained; roads in villages and older parts of Manama and Muharraq are narrow and twisting. As in the United States, traffic in Bahrain moves on the right. Roundabouts (traffic circles) follow the British system, with those automobiles within the traffic circle having right of way over those attempting to enter. Although the Bahraini penal code calls for fines of up to 100 dinars ($270.00) or imprisonment of up to six months for driving above posted speed limits, it is not uncommon for drivers to drive well over the posted speed limits of 50-120 km per hour. The law allows the police to detain drivers for traffic violations until they can appear before a magistrate. It is illegal to use a cell phone while driving.

Under Bahraini law, any sign of having consumed alcohol may be taken as prima facie evidence of driving under the influence, which can lead to imprisonment and/or fines of up to 1,000 Bahraini Dinars (2,700 U.S. dollars). Except for minor accidents, drivers may not move their vehicles after an accident until a report has been filed with the traffic police. This is true even in cases of single-car accidents. Insurance companies may not provide coverage if the cars are moved. However, drivers involved in minor, non-injury accidents no longer need to wait at the scene for the police. Individuals should get their vehicles off the road to avoid further accidents. Drivers can call the accident hotline at 199 (if there are no injuries) or 999 (when someone is injured) where they will be directed to one of five centers to file the accident report. This report must be filed within 24 hours of the accident. Both drivers may be prohibited from leaving the country until the matter is resolved if an accident results in legal proceedings. The main switchboard at the traffic department is 1787-2222.

Emergency numbers are as follows:

Fire/Ambulance/Police: 999

Traffic/Accidents: 199
(no injuries) OR 999 (injuries)

Visit the web site of Bahrain's national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.traffic.gov.bh/main.htm.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Bahrain, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Bahrain's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Individuals subject to Bahraini court orders arising from indebtedness, labor disagreements, or other legal disputes may be prevented from departing Bahrain until their cases are resolved. Instances have occurred in which departure was prohibited for several years, since the legal process can be both lengthy and complex. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Manama maintains a list of local attorneys capable of representing Americans.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Persons violating Bahrain's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Disrespect to officials in word or deed can result in heavy fines. Travelers who are driving should be aware that one drink may be sufficient grounds for a DUI arrest. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bahrain are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Bahrain are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Bahrain. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Bldg. 979, Road no. 3119, Zinj District (next to Al Ahli Sports Club). The mailing address is P.O. Box 26431, Manama, Bahrain. The telephone number is (973) 1724-2700. The after-hours number is (973) 1727-5126. The Consular Section's fax number is (973) 1725-6242. The Embassy's website, which includes consular information and the most recent messages to the American community in Bahrain, is at http://bahrain.usembassy.gov. The workweek in Bahrain is Sunday through Thursday.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2001

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel. The Ministry of Islamic and Justice Affairs has informed the American Embassy in Manama, that adoption is not possible in Bahrain. Muslims from birth may support a child whose father is not known, however, the child cannot inherit or take the name of the family providing support, nor can the child depart Bahrain with this family.

These restrictions extend to third country national children, who are considered citizens of Bahrain when the biological father is not known. Prospective American Guardians may want to review our Shari'a Adoption Flyer on Guardianship in Muslim Countries.

Specific questions regarding adoption issues may be addressed to:

Embassy of the State of Bahrain
3502 International Drive, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Phone: (202) 342-0741
Fax: (202) 362-2192
Bahrain also has a consulate in New York City, New York.

U.S. Embassy Manama
Box 26431
Manama, Bahrain
Zinj, Bahrain

Additional Information: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoption*s for general information on intercountry adoptions.

Questions: Specific questions regarding adoption in Bahrain may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Bahrain. You may also contact the Office of Children's Issues, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-2818, telephone 1-888-407-4747 with specific questions.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Bahrain is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Bahrain and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Bahrain are subject to the jurisdiction of Bahraini courts, as well as to the country's laws and regulations. This holds true for all legal matters including child custody. Parents planning to travel with their children to Bahrain should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: There is no specific law in Bahrain governing child custody, with each dispute examined on a case-by-case basis. When child custody disputes arise between parents, one of whom is a citizen of Bahrain, custody decisions are based on Islamic (Sharia) law. Two separate Islamic courts, representing the jurisprudence of the Sunni and Shia Islamic sects, enforce divergent interpretations of Islamic law. In general, the marriage contract determines which court will exercise jurisdiction. If the contract is silent on this issue, the court representing the husband's sect will have jurisdiction. Non-Bahraini nationals, whether married to a Bahraini or other national, may file custody cases through a lawyer approved to practice in Bahrain in the court in which the marriage was legalized, whether Sunni, Shia or civil. Non-Muslims are permitted to file cases in the Bahrain civil court.

In determining issues of custody, Bahraini courts consider the parents' religion, place of permanent residence, income, and the mother's subsequent marital status. Priority is generally given to a Muslim father,

irrespective of his nationality. Under Sharia law a Muslim mother is usually granted custody of girls under the age of nine and boys under the age of seven, at which time custody is transferred to the father. If the mother is unavailable, an infant may be given to the grandmother on the mother's side until s/he reaches the age of seven or nine.

If the court finds the mother "incompetent," custody of the child, regardless of age, can be given to the father, or to the child's paternal grandmother. A finding of incompetence is left to the discretion of the Sharia judge. Sharia courts have found parents incompetent if they are not Muslim or if they engage in behavior that is considered to be inconsistent with the Islamic faith.

Remarriage to a non-Bahraini may be considered grounds for a finding of incompetence. Under Sharia law, if a mother removes a child from the father thus denying him access, the mother's custody rights can be severed. If both the mother and father are ruled incompetent, custody of the children is given to the women on the father's side of the family.

If a child has attained the "age of discretion," that child may be allowed to choose the parent with whom he or she wishes to live. Since the "age of discretion" has no clear definition, a Bahraini lawyer should be contacted to discuss any specific case. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Bahraini court should retain an attorney in Bahrain.

The U.S. Embassy in Manama maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by contacting the Embassy or the U.S. Department of State. U.S. government officials cannot recommend an attorney and make no claim as to the professional ability or integrity of the attorneys on this list. The U.S. government does not pay legal expenses. A copy of this list may be obtained by contacting the following offices.

American Embassy
Box 26431
Manama, Bahrain
Phone: 973-273-300
After hours: 973-275-126
Fax: 973-272-594
Work Week: Saturday through Wednesday

U.S. Department of State
Office of Children's Issues
SA-29
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520-2818
Phone: (202) 736-9090
Fax: (202) 312-9743

Specific questions regarding child custody in Bahrain should be addressed to a Bahraini attorney or to the Embassy of Bahrain at:

Embassy of the State of Bahrain
3502 International Drive, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: (202) 342-0741
Fax: (202) 362-2192

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Bahrain if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices. For example, an order from a U.S. court granting custody to an American mother may not be honored in Bahrain if the mother intends to take the child to live outside Bahrain. Courts in Bahrain will not enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Bahrain to pay child support.

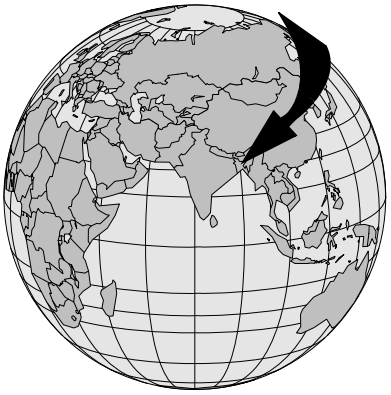
Visitation Rights: Non-custodial parents (both the mother and father) are entitled to visitation by prior arrangement of the competent court. Neither the court nor a custodial parent has the authority to stop a non-Bahraini parent from entering Bahrain to visit the child.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Bahraini law. Children of Bahraini fathers automatically acquire Bahraini citizenship at birth, regardless of where the child was born. Bahraini women can only transmit citizenship in rare instances when there is official intervention from the Bahraini government. Bahrainis must enter and leave the country on Bahraini passports even if they are entitled to hold the passport of another country.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Bahrain. When a custody case is before the local court, children, regardless of their nationality, are generally subject to court-imposed travel restrictions. Either parent can request that a court issue an order restricting the travel of minor children, and immigration authorities will enforce that travel restriction. This travel restriction applies to children who are American citizens.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov/childabduction.



BANGLADESH

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
People's Republic of Bangladesh

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 147, 570 sq. km. (55,813 sq. mi.); about the size of Wisconsin.
Cities: Capital—Dhaka (pop. 10 million). Other cities—Chittagong (2.8 million), Khulna (1.8 million), Rajshahi (1 million).
Terrain: Mainly flat alluvial plain, with hills in the northeast and southeast.
Climate: Semitropical, monsoonal.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bangladeshi(s).
Population: (July 2007 CIA est.) 150 million.
Annual growth rate: (July 2007 CIA est.): 2.06%.
Ethnic groups: Bengali 98%, tribal groups, non-Bengali Muslims.
Religions: Muslim 88.3%; Hindu 10.5%; Christian 0.3%, Buddhist 0.6%, others 0.3%.
Languages: Bangla (official, also known as Bengali), English.
Education: Attendance— 61%. Literacy—(2008 UNDP Report)—47.5%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (below 1)—65/1,000. Life expectancy—61 years (male), 62 years (female).
Work force: (60.3 million) Agriculture—62.3%; manufacturing and mining—7.6%; others—30.1%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.
Independence: 1971 (from Pakistan).
Constitution: 1972; amended 1974, 1979, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1996, 2004.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral Parliament (345 members). Judicial—civil court system based on British model.
Political subdivisions: Divisions, districts, subdistricts, unions, villages.
Political parties: 30-40 active political parties. Largest ones include Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the Awami League (AL), the Jatiya Party, and the Jamaat-e-Islami Party.
Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Economy

Fiscal year: July 1 to June 30.
Annual GDP growth rate: (FY 2006) 6.7%; (FY 2007) 6.51%; (FY 2008 World Bank est.): below 6.0%.
GDP: $63 billion.
Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $520.
Inflation: (December 2007) 11.59% (point to point basis) and 9.11% (monthly average basis).
Exchange rate: FY 2003: U.S $1=Taka 57.90; FY 2006: U.S $1=Taka 69.43; FY 2007 (January) U.S $1=Taka 69.69.
Annual budget: (FY 2008) $12.44 billion.
Natural resources: Natural gas, fertile soil, water.
Agriculture: (21.1% of GDP) Products—rice, jute, tea, sugar, wheat.
Industry: (Manufacturing; 17.8% of GDP) Types—garments and knitwear, jute goods, frozen fish and seafood, textiles, fertilizer, sugar, tea, leather, ship-breaking for scrap, pharmaceuticals, ceramic tableware, newsprint.
Trade: (FY 2007) Total imports (FY 2007)—17.15 billion: capital goods, food grains, petroleum, textiles, chemicals, vegetable oils. Growth rate over previous fiscal year: 16.35%. Total exports (FY 2007)—$12.16 billion: garments and knitwear, frozen fish, jute and jute goods, leather and leather products, tea, urea fertilizer, ceramic tableware. Growth rate over previous fiscal year: 15.59%. Exports to U.S. (Jan.-Dec. 2007)—$3.43 billion. Imports from U.S. (Jan.-Dec. 2007)—$466 million.

GEOGRAPHY

Bangladesh is a low-lying, riparian country located in South Asia with a largely marshy jungle coastline of 710 kilometers (440 mi.) on the northern littoral of the Bay of Bengal. Formed by a deltaic plain at the confluence of the Ganges (Padma), Brahmaputra (Jamuna), and Meghna

Rivers and their tributaries, Bangladesh's alluvial soil is highly fertile but vulnerable to flood and drought. Hills rise above the plain only in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the far southeast and the Sylhet division in the northeast. Straddling the Tropic of Cancer, Bangladesh has a subtropical monsoonal climate characterized by heavy seasonal rainfall, moderately warm temperatures, and high humidity. Natural calamities, such as floods, tropical cyclones, tornadoes, and tidal bores affect the country almost every year. Bangladesh also is affected by major cyclones—on average 16 times a decade.

Urbanization is proceeding rapidly, and it is estimated that only 30% of the population entering the labor force in the future will be absorbed into agriculture, although many will likely find other kinds of work in rural areas. The areas around Dhaka and Comilla are the most densely settled. The Sundarbans, an area of coastal tropical jungle in the southwest and last wild home of the Bengal Tiger, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts on the southeastern border with Burma and India, are the least densely populated.

PEOPLE

The area that is now Bangladesh has a rich historical and cultural past, combining Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Mongol/Mughul, Arab, Persian, Turkic, and west European cultures. Residents of Bangladesh, about 98% of whom are ethnic Bengali and speak Bangla, are called Bangladeshis. Urdu-speaking, non-Bengali Muslims of Indian origin, and various tribal groups, mostly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, comprise the remainder. Most Bangladeshis (about 88.3%) are Muslims, but Hindus constitute a sizable (10.5%) minority. There also are a small number of Buddhists, Christians, and animists. English is spoken in urban areas and among the educated.

Sufi religious teachers succeeded in converting many Bengalis to Islam, even before the arrival of Muslim armies from the west. About 1200 AD, Muslim invaders established political control over the Bengal region. This political control also encouraged conversion to Islam. Since then, Islam has played a crucial role in the region's history and politics, with a Muslim majority emerging, particularly in the eastern region of Bengal.

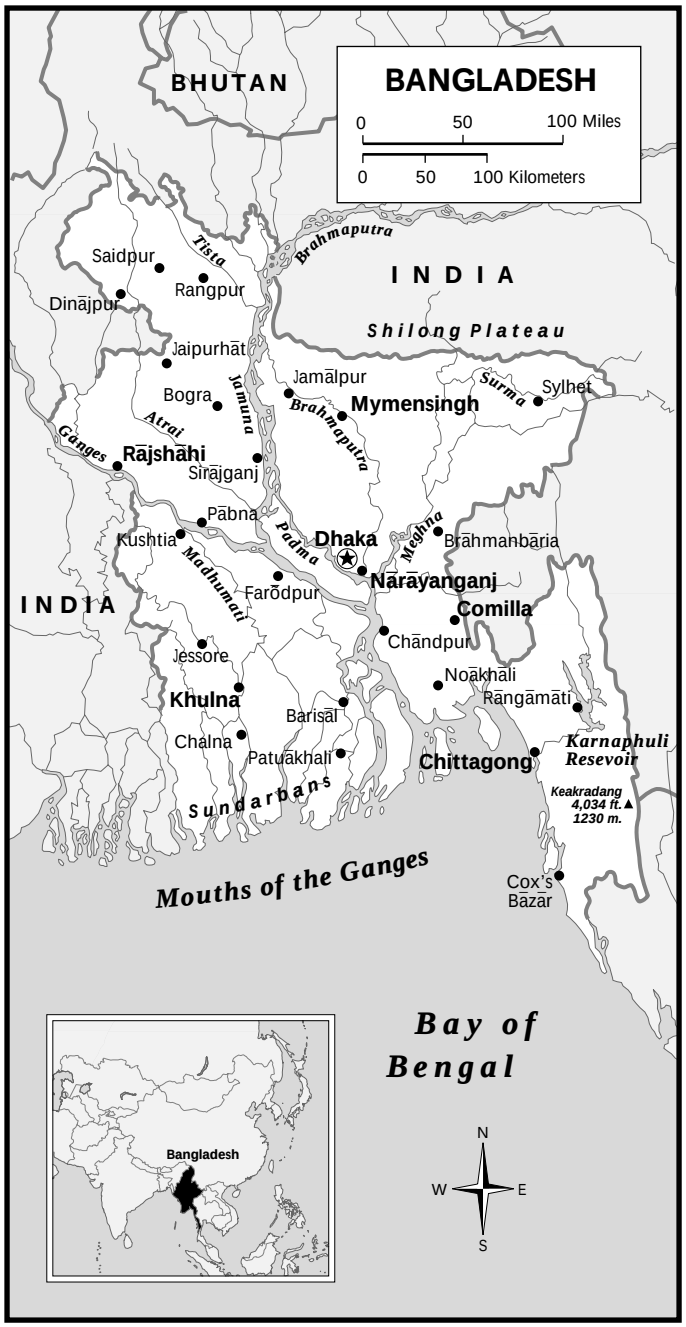
HISTORY

Bengal was absorbed into the Mughul Empire in the 16th century, and Dhaka, the seat of a nawab (the representative of the emperor), gained some importance as a provincial center. But it remained remote and thus a difficult to govern region—especially the section east of the Brahmaputra River—outside the mainstream of Mughul politics. Portuguese traders and missionaries were the first Europeans to reach Bengal in the latter part of the 15th century. They were followed by representatives of the Dutch, the French, and the British East India Companies. By the end of the 17th century, the British presence on the Indian subcontinent was centered in Calcutta. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the British gradually extended their commercial contacts and administrative control beyond Calcutta to Bengal. In 1859, the British Crown replaced the East India Company, extending British dominion from Bengal, which became a region of India, in the east to the Indus River in the west.

The rise of nationalism throughout British-controlled India in the late 19th century resulted in mounting animosity between the Hindu and Muslim communities. In 1885, the All-India National Congress was founded with Indian and British membership. Muslims seeking an organization of their own founded the All-India Muslim League in 1906. Although both the League and the Congress supported the goal of Indian self-government within the British Empire, the two parties were unable to agree on a way to ensure the protection of Muslim political, social, and economic rights. The subsequent history of the nationalist movement was characterized by periods of Hindu-Muslim cooperation, as well as by communal antagonism. The idea of a separate Muslim state gained increasing popularity among Indian Muslims after 1936, when the Muslim League suffered a decisive defeat in the first elections under India's 1935 constitution. In 1940, the Muslim League called for an independent state in regions where Muslims were in the majority. Campaigning on that platform in provincial elections in 1946, the League won the majority of the Muslim seats contested in Bengal. Widespread communal violence followed, especially in Calcutta.

When British India was partitioned and the independent dominions of India and Pakistan were created in 1947, the region of Bengal was divided along religious lines. The predominantly Muslim eastern half was designated East Pakistan—and made part of the newly independent Pakistan—while the predominantly Hindu western part became the Indian state of West Bengal. Pakistan's history from 1947 to 1971 was marked by political instability and economic difficulties. Dominion status was rejected in 1956 in favor of an "Islamic republic within the Commonwealth." Attempts at civilian political rule failed, and the government imposed martial law between 1958 and 1962, and again between 1969 and 1971.

Almost from the advent of independent Pakistan in 1947, frictions developed between East and West Pakistan, which were separated by more than 1,000 miles of Indian territory. East Pakistanis felt exploited by the West Pakistan-dominated central government. Linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences also contributed to the estrangement of East from West Pakistan. Bengalis strongly resisted attempts to impose Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan. Responding to these grievances, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1948 formed a students' organization called the Chhatra League. In 1949, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan



Bhasani and some other Bengali leaders formed the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (AL), a party designed mainly to promote Bengali interests. This party dropped the word Muslim from its name in 1955 and came to be known as Awami League. Mujib became president of the Awami League in 1966 and emerged as leader of the Bengali autonomy movement. In 1966, he was arrested for his political activities. After the Awami League won almost all the East Pakistan seats of the Pakistan national assembly in 1970-71 elections, West Pakistan opened talks with the East on constitutional questions about the division of power between the central government and the provinces, as well as the formation of a national government headed by the Awami League. The talks proved unsuccessful, however, and on March 1, 1971, Pakistani President Yahya Khan indefinitely postponed the pending national assembly session, precipitating massive civil disobedience in East Pakistan. Mujib was arrested again; his party was banned, and most of his aides fled to India and organized a provisional government. On March 26, 1971, following a bloody crackdown by the Pakistan Army, Bengali nationalists declared an independent People's Republic of Bangladesh. As fighting grew between the army and the Bengali mukti bahini ("freedom fighters"), an estimated 10 million Bengalis, mainly Hindus, sought refuge in the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal. On April 17, 1971, a provisional government was formed in Meherpur district in western Bangladesh bordering India with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was in prison in Pakistan, as President, Syed Nazrul Islam as Acting President, and Tajuddin Ahmed as Prime Minister.

The crisis in East Pakistan produced new strains in Pakistan's troubled relations with India. The two nations had fought a war in 1965, mainly in the west, but the refugee pressure in India in the fall of 1971 produced new tensions in the east. Indian sympathies lay with East Pakistan, and in November, India intervened on the side of the Bangladeshis. On December 16, 1971, Pakistani forces surrendered, and Bangladesh— meaning "Bengal country"— was born; the new country became a parliamentary democracy under a 1972 constitution.

The first government of the new nation of Bangladesh was formed in Dhaka with Justice Abu Sayeed Choudhury as President, and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ("Mujib")—who was released from Pakistani prison in early 1972—as Prime Minister.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 1972-75

Mujib came to office with immense personal popularity but had difficulty transforming this popular support into the political strength needed to function as head of government. The

new constitution, which came into force in December 1972, created a strong executive prime minister, a largely ceremonial presidency, an independent judiciary, and a unicameral legislature on a modified Westminster model. The 1972 constitution adopted as state policy the Awami League's (AL) four basic principles of nationalism, secularism, socialism, and democracy.

The first parliamentary elections held under the 1972 constitution were in March 1973, with the Awami League winning a massive majority. No other political party in Bangladesh's early years was able to duplicate or challenge the League's broad-based appeal, membership, or organizational strength. Relying heavily on experienced civil servants and members of the Awami League, the new Bangladesh Government focused on relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of the economy and society. Economic conditions remained precarious, however. In December 1974, Mujib decided that continuing economic deterioration and mounting civil disorder required strong measures. After proclaiming a state of emergency, Mujib used his parliamentary majority to win a constitutional amendment limiting the powers of the legislative and judicial branches, establishing an executive presidency, and instituting a one-party system, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL), which all members of Parliament (and senior civil and military officials) were obliged to join.

Despite some improvement in the economic situation during the first half of 1975, implementation of promised political reforms was slow, and criticism of government policies became increasingly centered on Mujib. In August 1975, Mujib, and most of his family, were assassinated by mid-level army officers. His daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, were out of the country. A new government, headed by former Mujib associate Khandakar Moshtaque, was formed.

Ziaur Rahman, 1975-81

Successive military coups resulted in the emergence of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ziaur Rahman ("Zia") as strongman. He pledged the army's support to the civilian government headed by President Chief Justice Sayem. Acting at Zia's behest, Sayem dissolved Parliament, promising fresh elections in 1977, and instituted martial law.

Acting behind the scenes of the Martial Law Administration (MLA), Zia sought to invigorate government policy and administration. While continuing the ban on political parties, he sought to revitalize the demoralized bureaucracy, to begin new economic development programs, and to emphasize family planning. In November 1976, Zia became Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) and assumed the presidency upon Sayem's retirement 5 months later, promising national elections in 1978.

As President, Zia announced a 19-point program of economic reform and began dismantling the MLA. Keeping his promise to hold elections, Zia won a 5-year term in June 1978 elections, with 76% of the vote. In November 1978, his government removed the remaining restrictions on political party activities in time for parliamentary elections in February 1979. These elections, which were contested by more than 30 parties, marked the culmination of Zia's transformation of Bangladesh's Government from the MLA to a democratically elected, constitutional one. The AL and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), founded by Zia, emerged as the two major parties.

In May 1981, Zia was assassinated in Chittagong by dissident elements of the military. The attempted coup never spread beyond that city, and the major conspirators were either taken into custody or killed. In accordance with the constitution, Vice President Justice Abdus Sattar was sworn in as acting president. He declared a new national emergency and called for election of a new president within 6 months—an election Sattar won as the BNP's candidate. President Sattar sought to follow the policies of his predecessor and retained essentially the same cabinet, but the army stepped in once again.

Hussain Mohammed Ershad, 1982-90

Army Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. H.M. Ershad assumed power in a bloodless coup in March 1982. Like his predecessors, Ershad suspended the constitution and—citing pervasive corruption, ineffectual government, and economic mismanagement—declared martial law. The following year, Ershad assumed the presidency, retaining his positions as army chief and CMLA. During most of 1984, Ershad sought the opposition parties' participation in local elections under martial law. The opposition's refusal to participate, however, forced Ershad to abandon these plans. Ershad sought public support for his regime in a national referendum on his leadership in March 1985. He won overwhelmingly, although turnout was small. Two months later, Ershad held elections for local council chairmen. Pro-government candidates won a majority of the posts, setting in motion the President's ambitious decentralization program. Political life was further liberalized in early 1986, and additional political rights, including the right to hold large public rallies, were restored. At the same time, the Jatiya (National) Party, designed as Ershad's political vehicle for the transition from martial law, was established.

Despite a boycott by the BNP, led by President Zia's widow, Begum Khaleda Zia, parliamentary elections were held on schedule in May 1986. The Jatiya Party won a modest majority of the 300 elected seats in the National Assembly. The participation of the Awami League—led by the late President Mujib's daughter, Sheikh Hasina Wajed—lent the elections some credibility, despite widespread charges of voting irregularities. Ershad resigned as Army Chief of Staff and retired from military service in preparation for the presidential elections, scheduled for October. Protesting that martial law was still in effect, both the BNP and the AL refused to put up opposing

candidates. Ershad easily outdistanced the remaining candidates, taking 84% of the vote. Although Ershad's government claimed a turnout of more than 50%, opposition leaders, and much of the foreign press, estimated a far lower percentage and alleged voting irregularities.

Ershad continued his stated commitment to lift martial law. In November 1986, his government mustered the necessary two-thirds majority in the National Assembly to amend the constitution and confirm the previous actions of the martial law regime. The President then lifted martial law, and the opposition parties took their elected seats in the National Assembly.

In July 1987, however, after the government hastily pushed through a controversial legislative bill to include military representation on local administrative councils, the opposition walked out of Parliament. Passage of the bill helped spark an opposition movement that quickly gathered momentum, uniting Bangladesh's opposition parties for the first time. The government began to arrest scores of opposition activists under the country's Special Powers Act of 1974. Despite these arrests, opposition parties continued to organize protest marches and nationwide strikes. After declaring a state of emergency, Ershad dissolved Parliament and scheduled fresh elections for March 1988.

All major opposition parties refused government overtures to participate in these polls, maintaining that the government was incapable of holding free and fair elections. Despite the opposition boycott, the government proceeded. The ruling Jatiya Party won 251 of the 300 seats. The Parliament, while still regarded by the opposition as an illegitimate body, held its sessions as scheduled, and passed a large number of bills, including, in June 1988, a controversial constitutional amendment making Islam Bangladesh's state religion and provision for setting up High Court benches in major cities outside of Dhaka. While Islam remains the state religion, the provision for decentralizing the High Court division has been struck down by the Supreme Court.

By 1989, the domestic political situation in the country seemed to have quieted. The local council elections were generally considered by international observers to have been less violent and more free and fair than previous elections. However, opposition to Ershad's rule began to regain momentum, escalating by the end of 1990 in frequent general strikes, increased campus protests, public rallies, and a general disintegration of law and order.

On December 6, 1990, Ershad offered his resignation. On February 27, 1991, after 2 months of widespread civil unrest, an interim government headed by Acting President Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed oversaw what most observers believed to be the nation's most free and fair elections to that date.

Khaleda Zia, 1991–96

The center-right BNP won a plurality of seats and formed a government with support from the Islamic fundamentalist party Jamaat-I-Islami, with Khaleda Zia, widow of Ziaur Rahman, obtaining the post of prime minister. Only four parties had more than 10 members elected to the 1991 Parliament: The BNP, led by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia; the AL, led by Sheikh Hasina; the Jamaat-I-Islami (JI), led by Ghulam Azam; and the Jatiya Party (JP), led by acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Choudhury while its founder, former President Ershad, served out a prison sentence on corruption charges.

The electorate approved still more changes to the constitution, formally re-creating a parliamentary system and returning governing power to the office of the prime minister, as in Bangladesh's original 1972 constitution. In October 1991, members of Parliament elected a new head of state, President Abdur Rahman Biswas.

In March 1994, controversy over a parliamentary by-election, which the opposition claimed the government had rigged, led to an indefinite boycott of Parliament by the entire opposition. The opposition also began a program of repeated general strikes to press its demand that Khaleda Zia's government resign and a caretaker government supervise a general election. Efforts to mediate the dispute, under the auspices of the Commonwealth Secretariat, failed. After another attempt at a negotiated settlement failed narrowly in late December 1994, the opposition resigned en masse from Parliament. The opposition then continued a campaign of marches, demonstrations, and strikes in an effort to force the government to resign. The opposition, including the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina, pledged to boycott national elections scheduled for February 15, 1996.

In February, Khaleda Zia was reelected by a landslide in voting boycotted and denounced as unfair by the three main opposition parties. In March 1996, following escalating political turmoil, the sitting Parliament enacted a constitutional amendment to allow a neutral caretaker government to assume power and conduct new parliamentary elections; former Chief Justice Mohammed Habibur Rahman was named Chief Adviser (a position equivalent to prime minister) in the interim government. New parliamentary elections were held in June 1996 and the Awami League won plurality and formed the government with support from the Jatiya Party led by deposed president Ershad; party leader Sheikh Hasina became Prime Minister.

Sheikh Hasina, 1996–2001

Sheikh Hasina formed what she called a "Government of National Consensus" in June 1996, which included one minister from the Jatiya Party and another from the Jatiyo Samajtantric Dal, a very small leftist party. The Jatiya Party never entered into a formal coalition arrangement, and party president H.M. Ershad withdrew his support from the government in September 1997. Only

three parties had more than 10 members elected to the 1996 Parliament: The Awami League, BNP, and Jatiya Party. Jatiya Party president, Ershad, was released from prison on bail in January 1997.

Although international and domestic election observers found the June 1996 election free and fair, the BNP protested alleged vote rigging by the Awami League. Ultimately, however, the BNP party decided to join the new Parliament. The BNP soon charged that police and Awami League activists were engaged in large-scale harassment and jailing of opposition activists. At the end of 1996, the BNP staged a parliamentary walkout over this and other grievances but returned in January 1997 under a four-point agreement with the ruling party. The BNP asserted that this agreement was never implemented and later staged another walkout in August 1997. The BNP returned to Parliament under another agreement in March 1998.

In June 1999, the BNP and other opposition parties again began to abstain from attending Parliament. Opposition parties staged an increasing number of nationwide general strikes, rising from 6 days of general strikes in 1997 to 27 days in 1999. A four-party opposition alliance formed at the beginning of 1999 announced that it would boycott parliamentary by-elections and local government elections unless the government took steps demanded by the opposition to ensure electoral fairness. The government did not take these steps, and the opposition subsequently boycotted all elections, including municipal council elections in February 1999, several parliamentary by-elections, and the Chittagong city corporation elections in January 2000.

In July 2001, the Awami League government stepped down to allow a caretaker government to preside over parliamentary elections. Political violence that had increased during the Awami League government's tenure continued to increase through the summer in the run up to the election. In August, Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina agreed during a visit of former President Jimmy Carter to respect the results of the election, join Parliament win or lose, foreswear the use of hartals (violently enforced strikes) as political tools, and if successful in forming a government allow for a more meaningful role for the opposition in Parliament. The caretaker government was successful in containing the violence, which allowed a parliamentary general election to be successfully held on October 1, 2001.

Khaleda Zia, 2001–2006

The four-party alliance led by the BNP won over a two-thirds majority in Parliament. Begum Khaleda Zia was sworn in on October 10, 2001, as Prime Minister for the third time (first in 1991, second after the February 15, 1996 elections).

Despite her August 2001 pledge and all election monitoring groups declaring the election free and fair, Sheikh Hasina condemned the election, rejected the results, and boycotted Parliament. In 2002, however, she led her party legislators back to Parliament, but the Awami League again walked out in June 2003 to protest derogatory remarks about Hasina by a State Minister and the allegedly partisan role of the Parliamentary Speaker. In June 2004, the AL returned to Parliament without having any of their demands met for an apology to Sheikh Hasina and guarantees of a neutral Speaker. They then attended Parliament irregularly before announcing a boycott of the entire June 2005 budget session.

On August 17, 2005, near-synchronized blasts of improvised explosive devices in 63 out of 64 administrative districts targeted mainly government buildings and killed two persons. An extremist Islamist outfit named Jamiatul Mujahideen, Bangladesh (JMB) claimed responsibility for the blasts aimed to press home their demand for replacement of the secular legal system with Islamic sharia courts. Subsequent attacks on the courts in several districts killed 28 people, including judges, lawyers, and police personnel guarding the courts. A government campaign against the Islamic extremists led to the arrest of hundreds of senior and mid-level JMB leaders. Six top JMB leaders were tried and sentenced to death for their role in the murder of two judges; another leader was tried and sentenced to death in absentia in the same case.

In February 2006, the AL returned to Parliament, raised demands for early elections, and requested significant changes in the electoral and caretaker government systems to stop alleged moves by the ruling coalition to rig the next election. The AL blames the ruling party for several high-profile attacks on opposition leaders, and asserts that the ruling party is bent on eliminating Sheikh Hasina and the Awami League as a viable force.

The BNP and its allies accuse the AL of maligning Bangladesh at home and abroad out of jealousy over the government's performance on development and economic issues. Dialogue between the Secretaries General of the main ruling and opposition parties failed to sort out the electoral reform issues.

Caretaker Government, October 2006–Present

The 13th Amendment to the constitution required the president to offer the position of the Chief Adviser to the immediate past Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice K.M. Hasan, once the previous parliamentary session expired on October 28, 2006. The AL opposed Justice Hasan, alleging that he belonged to ruling BNP in his past life and that the BNP government in 2004 amended the constitution to extend retirement age for the Supreme Court judges to make sure that Justice Hasan became the Chief Adviser during the next elections to help BNP win the election. Justice Hasan declined the position, and after two days of violent protests, President Iajuddin Ahmed also assumed the role of Chief Adviser to the caretaker government.

On January 3, 2007, the Awami League announced that they would boycott the January 22 parliamen-

tary elections. The Awami League planned a series of country-wide general strikes and transportation blockades.

On January 11, 2007, President Iajuddin Ahmed declared a state of emergency, resigned as Chief Adviser, and indefinitely postponed parliamentary elections. On January 12, 2007, former Bangladesh Bank governor Fakhruddin Ahmed was sworn in as the new Chief Adviser, and ten new advisers (ministers) were appointed. Under emergency provisions, the government suspended certain fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution and detained a large number of politicians and others on suspicion of involvement in corruption and other crimes.

In January 2008, a reshuffle of the caretaker government took place, which included the appointment of special assistants to help oversee the functioning of the administration.

On July 16, 2007 the government arrested Awami League president and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on charges of extortion during her tenure as Prime Minister. Hasina was released on parole in June 2008 and allowed to travel to the United States for medical treatment. The cases against her continue. On September 3, 2007, the government arrested BNP chairperson and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on charges of corruption. While legal cases against Zia continue, there are negotiations underway regarding her release from prison.

Municipal elections were held in thirteen city corporations and municipalities on August 4, 2008. These elections were judged free and fair by international and domestic observers. The Election Commission has completed registration of over 80 million voters in preparation for parliamentary elections, which will be held in late December 2008. Amendments to the Representation of the People's Ordinance have been promulgated, and political parties have been instructed to register by October 15 in preparation for national elections. The government has also announced plans to hold upazila (sub-district) elections during the third week of October.

GOVERNMENT

The president, while chief of state, holds a largely ceremonial post; the real power is held by the prime minister, who is head of government. The president is elected by the legislature (Parliament) every 5 years. The president's circumscribed powers are substantially expanded during the tenure of a caretaker government. (Under the 13th Amendment, which Parliament passed in March 1996, a caretaker government assumes power temporarily to oversee general elections after dissolution of the Parliament.) In the caretaker government, the president has control over the Ministry of Defense, the authority to declare a state of emergency, and the power to dismiss the Chief Adviser and other members of the caretaker government. Once elections have been held and a new government and Parliament are in place, the president's powers and position revert to their largely ceremonial role. The Chief Adviser and other advisers to the caretaker government must be appointed within 15 days from the day the current Parliament expires. The prime minister is appointed by the president. The prime minister must be a Member of Parliament (MP) whom the president feels commands the confidence of the majority of other MPs. The cabinet is composed of ministers selected by the prime minister and appointed by the president. At least 90% of the ministers must be MPs. The other 10% may be non-MP experts or "technocrats" who are not otherwise disqualified from being elected MPs. According to the constitution, the president can dissolve Parliament upon the written request of the prime minister.

The legislature is a unicameral, 300-seat body. All of its members are elected by universal suffrage at least every five years. Parliament amended the constitution in May 2004, making a provision for adding 45 seats reserved for women and to be distributed among political parties in proportion to their numerical strength in Parliament. The AL did not take its share of the reserved seats, arguing that they did not support the indirect election or nomination of women to fill these seats. Several women's groups also demanded direct election to fill the reserved seats for women.

Bangladesh's judiciary is a civil court system based on the British model; the highest court of appeal is the appellate court of the Supreme Court. At the local government level, the country is divided into divisions, districts, subdistricts, unions, and villages. Local officials are elected at the union level and selected at the village level. All larger administrative units are run by members of the civil service.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

The country has a caretaker government until a general election is held. Although Iajuddin Ahmed is President and Minister of Defense, all of the other Cabinet portfolios are held by Caretaker Advisers (CAs). The Chief CA is roughly equivalent to a prime minister.

Pres.: **Iajuddin AHMED**
Chief CA: **Fakhruddin AHMED**
CA for Agriculture: **Sajjadul KARIM**
CA for Chittagong Hills Tract Affairs: **Raja ROY**
CA for Civil Aviation & Tourism: **Mahbub JAMIL**
CA for Commerce: **Hossain Zillur RAHMAN**
CA for Communications: **Ghulam QUADER**
CA for Cultural Affairs:
Min. of Defense: **Iajuddin AHMED**
CA for Education: **Hossain Zillur RAHMAN**
CA for Energy & Mineral Resources: **M. TAMIM**
CA for Environment & Forests: **Debashish ROY**
CA for Finance & Planning: **Mirza Azizul ISLAM**
CA for Fisheries & Livestock: **Sajjadul KARIM**
CA for Food & Disaster Management: **A. M. M. Shawkat ALI**

CA for Foreign Affairs: **Iftekhar Ahmed CHOWDHURY**
CA for Health: **A. M. M. Shawkat ALI**
CA for Home Affairs: **M. A. MATIN**
CA for Housing & Public Works: **Ghulam QUADER**
CA for Industries: **Mahbub JAMIL**
CA for Information:
CA for Jute & Textiles: **Anwarul IQBAL**
CA for Labor & Employment: **Anwarul IQBAL**
CA for Land: **A. F. Hassan ARIFF**
CA for Law, Justice, & Parliamentary Affairs: **A. F. Hassan ARIFF**
CA for Liberation War Affairs: **M. A. MATIN**
CA for Local Govt., Rural Development, & Cooperatives: **Anwarul IQBAL**
CA for Overseas Employment & Expatriates' Welfare: **Iftekhar Ahmed CHOWDHURY**
CA for Post & Telecommunications: **M. A. MALEK**
CA for Power: **M. TAMIM**
CA for Primary & Mass Education: **Rasheda K. CHOWDHURY**
CA for Religious Affairs: **A. F. Hassan ARIFF**
CA for Science & Information & Communications Technology: **Manik Lal SAMADDAR**
CA for Shipping: **M. A. MATIN**
CA for Social Welfare: **M. A. MALEK**
CA for Water: **Sajjadul KARIM**
CA for Women's & Children's Affairs: **Rasheda K. CHOWDHURY**
CA for Youth & Sports: **Mahbub JAMIL**
Governor, Bangladesh Bank: **Salehuddin AHMED**
Ambassador to the US: **M. Humayun KABIR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ismat JAHAN**

Bangladesh maintains an embassy in the United States at 3510 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-244-0183; fax: 202-244-5366). Bangladesh has Consulates General in New York and Los Angeles.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Despite serious problems related to a dysfunctional political system, weak governance, and pervasive corruption, Bangladesh remains one of the few democracies in the Muslim world. Bangladeshis regard democracy as an important legacy of their bloody war for independence and vote in large numbers. However, democratic institutions and practices remain weak. Under the state of emergency, political activities remain restricted. The current government has announced that national elections will take place during the third week of December 2008 and has pledged to hand over power to the elected representatives of the people as soon as these polls take place. The Chief of the Army Staff, General Moeen U. Ahmed, has asserted publicly that neither he nor the Bangladesh military have any political ambitions. Bangladesh is generally a force for moderation in international forums, and it is also a long-time leader in international peacekeeping operations. Its activities in international organizations, with other governments, and its regional partners to promote human rights, democracy, and free markets are coordinated and high profile. In May 2005, Bangladesh became a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Bangladesh lies at the strategic crossroads of South and Southeast Asia. Potential terrorist movements and activities in or through Bangladesh pose a potentially serious threat to India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Burma, as well as Bangladesh itself. The Bangladesh Government routinely denies Indian allegations that Indian insurgents in northeast India operate out of Bangladesh and that extremist Islamist forces are overwhelming Bangladesh's traditionally moderate character. It also denies there is any international terrorist presence in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Government, however, banned a number of Islamic extremist groups in recent years. In February 2002, the government banned Shahdat al Hiqma, in February 2005 it banned Jagrata Muslim Janata, Bangladesh (JMJB) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), and in October 2005 it banned Harkatul Jehad Al Islami (HUJI). Following the August 17, 2005 serial bombings in the country, the government launched a crackdown on extremists. In 2006, seven senior JMB leaders were sentenced to death for their role in the 2005 murder of two judges. Six of the seven were executed in March 2007; another leader was tried and sentenced to death in absentia in the same case. In May 2005, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) killed six alleged Indian rebels in a raid on a house near the border with India in north-eastern Maulvibazar district. In June 2006, army and RAB personnel killed 10 gunrunners, who media reports described as suspected Indian insurgents, in a remote forest in southeastern Rangamati Hill district. In March 2008, the U.S. Government listed Harkatul Jihadi Islami (HUJI)-Bangladesh a foreign terrorist organization. Given its size and location, a major crisis in Bangladesh could have important consequences for regional stability, particularly if significant refugee movements ensue.

ECONOMY

Although one of the world's poorest and most densely populated countries, Bangladesh has made major strides to meet the food needs of its increasing population, through increased domestic production augmented by imports. The land is devoted mainly to rice and jute cultivation, although wheat production has increased in recent years; the country is largely self-sufficient in rice production. Nonetheless, an estimated 10% to 15% of the population faces serious nutritional risk. Bangladesh's predominantly agricultural economy depends heavily on an erratic monsoonal cycle, with periodic flooding and drought. Although improving, infrastructure to support transportation, communications, and power supply is poorly developed. Bangladesh is limited in its reserves of coal and oil, and its industrial base is weak. The country's main endowments include its vast human resource base, rich agricultural land, relatively abundant water, and substantial reserves of natural gas.

Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh has received more than $30 billion in grant aid and loan commitments from foreign donors, about $15 billion of which has been disbursed. Major donors include the World

Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the UN Development Program, the United States, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and west European countries. Bangladesh historically has run a large trade deficit, financed largely through aid receipts and remittances from workers overseas. Foreign reserves dropped markedly in 2001 but stabilized in the $3 to $4 billion range (or about 3 months' import cover). In January 2007, reserves stood at $3.74 billion, and they increased to $5.39 billion by January 2008, according to the Bank of Bangladesh, the central bank.

Moves Toward a Market Economy

Following the violent events of 1971 during the fight for independence, Bangladesh—with the help of large infusions of donor relief and development aid—slowly began to turn its attention to developing new industrial capacity and rehabilitating its economy. The static economic model adopted by its early leadership, however—including the nationalization of much of the industrial sector—resulted in inefficiency and economic stagnation. Beginning in late 1975, the government gradually gave greater scope to private sector participation in the economy, a pattern that has continued. A few state-owned enterprises have been privatized, but many, including major portions of the banking and jute sectors, remain under government control. Population growth, inefficiency in the public sector, resistance to developing the country's richest natural resources, and limited capital have all continued to restrict economic growth.

In the mid-1980s, there were encouraging, if halting, signs of progress. Economic policies aimed at encouraging private enterprise and investment, denationalizing public industries, reinstating budgetary discipline, and liberalizing the import regime were accelerated. From 1991 to 1993, the government successfully followed an enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but failed to follow through on reforms in large part because of preoccupation with the government's domestic political troubles. In the late 1990s the government's economic policies became more entrenched, and some of the early gains were lost, which was highlighted by a precipitous drop in foreign direct investment in 2000 and 2001. In June 2003 the IMF approved 3-year, $490-million plan as part of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) for Bangladesh that aimed to support the government's economic reform program up to 2006. Seventy million dollars was made available immediately. In the same vein the World Bank approved $536 million in interest-free loans.

Efforts to achieve Bangladesh's macroeconomic goals have been problematic. The privatization of public sector industries has proceeded at a slow pace—due in part to worker unrest in affected industries—although on June 30, 2002, the government took a bold step as it closed down the Adamjee Jute Mill, the country's largest and most costly state-owned enterprise. The government also has proven unable to resist demands for wage hikes in government-owned industries. Access to capital is impeded. State-owned banks, which control about three-fourths of deposits and loans, carry classified loan burdens of about 50%.

The IMF and World Bank predict GDP growth over the next 5 years will be about 6.0%, well short of the 8%-9% needed to lift Bangladesh out of its severe poverty. The initial impact of the end of quotas under the Multi-Fiber Arrangement has been positive for Bangladesh, with continuing investment in the ready-made garment sector, which has experienced annual export growth of around 20%. Downward price pressure means Bangladesh must continue to cut final delivered costs if it is to remain competitive in the world market. Foreign investors in a broad range of sectors are increasingly frustrated with the politics of confrontation, the level of corruption, and the slow pace of reform. While investors view favorably recent steps by the interim government to address corruption, governance, and infrastructure issues, most believe it is too early to assess the long-term impact of these developments.

Agriculture

Most Bangladeshis earn their living from agriculture. Although rice and jute are the primary crops, maize and vegetables are assuming greater importance. Due to the expansion of irrigation networks, some wheat producers have switched to cultivation of maize which is used mostly as poultry feed. Tea is grown in the northeast. Because of Bangladesh's fertile soil and normally ample water supply, rice can be grown and harvested three times a year in many areas. Due to a number of factors, Bangladesh's labor-intensive agriculture has achieved steady increases in food grain production despite the often unfavorable weather conditions. These include better flood control and irrigation, a generally more efficient use of fertilizers, and the establishment of better distribution and rural credit networks. With 28.8 million metric tons produced in 2005-2006 (July-June), rice is Bangladesh's principal crop. By comparison, wheat output in 2005-2006 was 9 million metric tons. Population pressure continues to place a severe burden on productive capacity, creating a food deficit, especially of wheat. Foreign assistance and commercial imports fill the gap. Underemployment remains a serious problem, and a growing concern for Bangladesh's agricultural sector will be its ability to absorb additional manpower. Finding alternative sources of employment will continue to be a daunting problem for future governments, particularly with the increasing numbers of landless peasants who already account for about half the rural labor force.

Industry and Investment

Fortunately for Bangladesh, many new jobs—1.8 million, mostly for women—have been created by the country's dynamic private ready-made garment industry, which grew at double-digit rates through most of the 1990s. The labor-intensive process of ship-breaking for scrap has

developed to the point where it now meets most of Bangladesh's domestic steel needs. Other industries include sugar, tea, leather goods, newsprint, pharmaceutical, and fertilizer production. The country has done less well, however, in expanding its export base—garments account for more than three-fourths of all exports, dwarfing the country's historic cash crop, jute, along with leather, shrimp, pharmaceuticals, and ceramics.

Despite the country's politically motivated general strikes, poor infrastructure, and weak financial system, Bangladeshi entrepreneurs have shown themselves adept at competing in the global garments marketplace. Bangladesh exports significant amounts of garments and knitwear to the U.S. and the European Union (EU) market.

As noted, the initial impact of the end of quotas on Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry has been positive. Downward price pressures, however, mean Bangladesh must continue to cut final delivered costs if it is to remain competitive in the world market.

The Bangladesh Government continues to court foreign investment, something it did fairly well in the 1990s in private power generation and gas exploration and production, as well as in other sectors such as cellular telephony, textiles, and pharmaceuticals. In 1989, the same year it signed a bilateral investment treaty with the United States, it established a board of investment to simplify approval and start-up procedures for foreign investors, although in practice the board has done little to increase investment. Bangladesh also has established export processing zones in Chittagong (1983), Dhaka (1994), Comilla (2000), Mongla (2001), Iswardi (2005), Uttara (2006), and Karnafully (2007).

The most important reforms Bangladesh should make to be able to compete in a global economy are to privatize state-owned enterprises (SOEs), deregulate and promote foreign investment in high-potential industries like energy and telecommunications, and take decisive steps toward combating corruption and strengthening rule of law.

DEFENSE

The Bangladesh Army, Navy, and Air Force are composed of regular military members. The 110,000-member, seven-division army is modeled and organized along British lines, similar to other armies on the Indian subcontinent. However, it has adopted U.S. Army tactical planning procedures, training management techniques, and noncommissioned officer educational systems. It also is eager to improve its peacekeeping operations capabilities and is working with the U.S. military in that area. The United States gave the Bangladesh Air Force four U.S. C-130 B transport aircraft in 2001 under the excess defense article (EDA) program. These aircraft will improve the military's disaster response and peacekeeping capabilities. The Bangladesh Navy is mostly limited to coastal patrolling, but in 2001 it paid to have an ULSAN-class frigate built in South Korea.

In addition to traditional defense roles, the military has been called on to provide support to civil authorities for disaster relief and internal security. Since the proclamation of the state of emergency on January 11, 2007, the military has played a central role in the formulation and execution of key government strategies, including the anti-corruption campaign. The Bangladesh Air Force and Navy, with about 7,000 personnel each, perform traditional military missions. A Coast Guard has been formed, under the home ministry, to play a stronger role in the area of anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, and protection of offshore resources. Recognition of economic and fiscal constraints has led to the establishment of several paramilitary and auxiliary forces, including the 40,000-member Bangladesh rifles; the Ansars and village defense parties organization, which claim 64 members in every village in the country; and a 5,000-member specialized police unit known as the armed police. In 2004, a new police unit called the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) was constituted with personnel drawn from the military and different law enforcement agencies. RAB is designed to fight hardcore criminal gangs. Bangladesh Rifles, under the authority of the home ministry, are commanded by army officers who are seconded to the organization.

In addition to in-country military training, some advanced and technical training is done abroad, including grant aid training in the United States. China, Pakistan, and Eastern Europe are the major defense suppliers to Bangladesh, but military leaders are trying to find affordable alternatives to Chinese equipment.

A 2,300-member Bangladesh Army contingent served with coalition forces during the 1991 Gulf War. As of September 2007, Bangladesh's 9,728 peacekeepers deployed around the world made it the second-largest troop contributor to international peacekeeping operations. Troops are deployed in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sudan, Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Western Sahara, Georgia, Timor Leste, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Bangladesh pursues a moderate foreign policy that places heavy reliance on multinational diplomacy, especially at the United Nations.

Participation in Multilateral Organizations

Bangladesh was admitted to the United Nations in 1974 and was elected to a Security Council term in 1978 and again for a 2000-01 term. Then Foreign Minister Choudhury served as president of the 41st UN General Assembly in 1986. The government has participated in numerous international conferences, especially those dealing with population, food, development, and women's issues. In 1982-83, Bangladesh

played a constructive role as chairman of the "Group of 77," an informal association encompassing most of the world's developing nations. It has taken a leading role in the "Group of 48" developing countries and the "Developing-8" group of countries. It is also a participant in the activities of the Non-aligned Movement.

Since 1975, Bangladesh has sought close relations with other Islamic states and a role among moderate members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In 1983, Bangladesh hosted the foreign ministers meeting of the OIC. The government also has pursued the expansion of cooperation among the nations of South Asia, bringing the process—an initiative of former President Ziaur Rahman—through its earliest, most tentative stages to the formal inauguration of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at a summit gathering of South Asian leaders in Dhaka in December 1985. Bangladesh hosted the last SAARC summit in November 2005, and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had reassumed its chairmanship. In the latest summit, Bangladesh has participated in a wide range of ongoing SAARC regional activities. The head of the current caretaker government participated in the April 2007 SAARC summit in India.

In recent years, Bangladesh has played a significant role in international peacekeeping activities. Several thousand Bangladeshi military personnel are deployed overseas on peacekeeping operations. Under UN auspices, Bangladeshi troops have served or are serving in Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Kuwait, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Kosovo, East Timor, Georgia, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire and Western Sahara, Bosnia, and Haiti. Bangladesh responded quickly to President Clinton's 1994 request for troops and police for the multinational force for Haiti and provided the largest non-U.S. contingent.

Bilateral Relations With Other Nations

Bangladesh is bordered on the west, north, and east by a 2,400-kilometer land frontier with India, and on the southeast by a land and water frontier (193 kilometers) with Burma.

India. India is Bangladesh's most important neighbor. Geographic, cultural, historic, and commercial ties are strong, and both countries recognize the importance of good relations. During and immediately after Bangladesh's struggle for independence from Pakistan in 1971, India assisted refugees from East Pakistan, intervened militarily to help bring about the independence of Bangladesh, and furnished relief and reconstruction aid.

Indo-Bangladesh relations are often strained, and many Bangladeshis feel India likes to play "big brother" to smaller neighbors, including Bangladesh. Bilateral relations warmed in 1996, due to a softer Indian foreign policy and the new Awami League government. A 30-year water-sharing agreement for the Ganges River was signed in December 1996, after an earlier bilateral water-sharing agreement for the Ganges River lapsed in 1988. Bangladesh remains extremely concerned about a proposed Indian river linking project, which the government says could turn large parts of Bangladesh into a desert The Bangladesh Government and tribal insurgents signed a peace accord in December 1997, which allowed for the return of tribal refugees who had fled into India, beginning in 1986, to escape violence caused by an insurgency in their homeland in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The implementation of most parts of this agreement has stalled, and the army maintains a strong presence in the Hill Tracts. Arms smuggling and reported opium poppy cultivation are concerns in this area. Occasional skirmishes between Bangladeshi and Indian border forces sometimes escalate and seriously disrupt bilateral relations. Much to Bangladesh's displeasure, India has erected a barbed-wire fence on part of its border with Bangladesh to prevent alleged illegal migration of Bangladeshis into India.

The BNP and other political parties view the Indian Government as a major benefactor of the Awami League and blame negative international media coverage of Bangladesh on alleged Indian manipulation. Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, however, visited the Indian capital in March 2006 and reviewed bilateral relations with her Indian counterpart. Two agreements—the Revised Trade Agreement and the Agreement on Mutual Cooperation for Preventing Illicit Drug Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Related Matters—were signed between the two countries during this visit. Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee met with the Chief Adviser in Dhaka on February 26, 2007. Mukherjee invited Ahmed to the April 3-4, 2007, SAARC summit in Delhi, and both sides pledged to put Bangladesh-India relations on "an irreversible higher trajectory." Mukherjee again visited Bangladesh after Cyclone Sidr hit the southwestern coastal districts on November 15, 2007 and offered help to rebuild 10 of the devastated villages. Bangladesh Army Chief General Moeen U. Ahmed paid a six-day visit to India beginning late February 2008 at the invitation of his Indian counterpart. He met with Mukherjee and the Chief Minister of West Bengal province, besides meeting military officials. During this visit, Ahmed announced that passenger trains could start running between Dhaka and Kolkata by April 14.

Pakistan. Bangladesh enjoys warm relations with Pakistan, despite the strained early days of their relationship. Landmarks in their reconciliation are:

- An August 1973 agreement between Bangladesh and Pakistan on the repatriation of numerous individuals, including 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war stranded in Bangladesh as a result of the 1971 conflict;
- A February 1974 accord by Bangladesh and Pakistan on mutual recognition followed more than 2 years later by establishment of formal diplomatic relations;
- The organization by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of an airlift that moved

almost 250,000 Bengalis from Pakistan to Bangladesh, and non-Bengalis from Bangladesh to Pakistan; and

- Exchanges of high-level visits, including a visit by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to Bangladesh in 1989 and visits by Prime Minister Zia to Pakistan in 1992 and in 1995. President Pervez Musharraf visited Bangladesh in 2002. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz visited Bangladesh in 2004.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia visited Pakistan in 2006.

Still to be resolved are the division of assets from the pre-1971 period and the status of more than 250,000 non-Bengali Muslims (known as "Biharis") remaining in Bangladesh but seeking resettlement in Pakistan.

Burma. Bilateral ties with Burma are good, despite occasional border strains and an influx of more than 270,000 Muslim refugees (known as "Rohingya") from predominantly Buddhist Burma. As a result of bilateral discussions, and with the cooperation and assistance of the UNHCR, most of the Rohingya refugees have now returned to Burma. As of 2007, about 20,000 refugees remain in camps in southern Bangladesh. Thousands of other Burmese, not officially registered as refugees, are squatting on the bank of the river Naaf or living in Bangladeshi villages in the southeastern tip. Bangladesh and Burmese officials are negotiating a deal to establish direct road link between the capitals of the two countries.

Russia. The former Soviet Union supported India's actions during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war and was among the first to recognize Bangladesh. The U.S.S.R. initially contributed considerable relief and rehabilitation aid to the new nation. After Sheikh Mujib was assassinated in 1975 and replaced by military regimes, however, Soviet-Bangladesh relations cooled.

In 1989, the U.S.S.R. ranked 14th among aid donors to Bangladesh. The Soviets focused on the development of electrical power, natural gas and oil, and maintained active cultural relations with Bangladesh. They financed the Ghorasal thermal power station—the largest in Bangladesh. Russia conducted an aggressive military sales effort in Dhaka and won a $124-million deal for eight MIG-29 fighters. Bangladesh began to open diplomatic relations with the newly independent Central Asian states in 1992.

China. China traditionally has been more important to Bangladesh than the former U.S.S.R., even though China supported Pakistan in 1971. As Bangladesh's relations with the Soviet Union and India cooled in the mid-1970s, and as Bangladesh and Pakistan became reconciled, China's relations with Bangladesh grew warmer. An exchange of diplomatic missions in February 1976 followed an accord on recognition in late 1975.

Since that time, relations have grown stronger, centering on trade, cultural activities, military and civilian aid, and exchanges of high-level visits, beginning in January 1977 with President Zia's trip to Beijing. The largest and most visible symbol of bilateral amity is the Bangladesh-China "Friendship Bridge," completed in 1989 near Dhaka, as well as extensive military hardware in the Bangladesh inventory and warm military relations between the two countries. In the 1990s, the Chinese also built two 210-megawatt power plants outside of Chittagong; mechanical faults in the plants cause them to shut down frequently for days at a time, heightening the country's power shortage. In April 2005, Bangladesh and China signed nine memoranda of understanding on trade and other issues during the visit to Dhaka of Prime Minister Wen. The opening of a Taiwanese trade center in Dhaka in 2004 displeased China, but the Bangladesh government moved quickly to repair the crack and closed the trade center. In August 2005 former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia visited China.

Other countries in South Asia. Bangladesh maintains friendly relations with Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and strongly opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Bangladesh has cordial relations with the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, and Bangladeshi non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are active in Afghan reconstruction efforts. Bangladesh and Nepal recently agreed to facilitate land transit between the two countries. Bangladesh is considering importing electricity from Nepal and Bhutan through India to meet its energy shortfall.

U.S.-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

Although the U.S. relationship with Bangladesh was initially troubled because of strong U.S. ties with Pakistan, U.S.-Bangladesh friendship and support developed quickly following Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971.

U.S.-Bangladesh relations are excellent. These relations were boosted in March 2000 when President Clinton visited Bangladesh, the first-ever visit by a sitting U.S. President, when Secretary of State Colin Powell visited in June 2003, as well as when Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld visited in June 2004. A centerpiece of the bilateral relationship is a large U.S. aid program, which will total about $110 million in fiscal year 2008. U.S. economic and food aid programs, which began as emergency relief following the 1971 war for independence, now concentrate on long-term development. U.S. assistance objectives include stabilizing population growth, protecting human health, encouraging broad-based economic growth, and building democracy. In total, the United States has provided more than $4.3 billion in food and development assistance to Bangladesh. Food aid under Titles I, II, and III of PL-480 (congressional "food-for-peace" legislation) has been designed to help Bangladesh meet minimum food requirements, promote food production, and moderate fluctuation in consumer prices. Other U.S. development assistance emphasizes family planning and health,

agricultural development, and rural employment. The United States works with other donors and the Bangladesh Government to avoid duplication and ensure that resources are used to maximum benefit.

Since 1986, with the exception of 1988-89, when an aircraft purchase made the trade balance even, the U.S. trade balance with Bangladesh has been negative, due largely to growing imports of ready-made garments. Jute carpet backing is the other major U.S. import from Bangladesh. Total imports from Bangladesh were about $2.6 billion (excluding services) in FY 2005, up from $2.1 billion in 2002. In 2007 total imports reached $3.4 billion. U.S. exports to Bangladesh (some $333 million—excluding services—in 2005, and $456 million in 2007) include wheat, fertilizer, cotton, communications equipment, aircraft, and medical supplies, a portion of which is financed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). A bilateral investment treaty was signed in 1989.

Another trade related issue between the two countries involves the export processing zones (EPZs). The government provides several tax, foreign exchange, customs and labor incentives to investors in the EPZs. One such incentive provided in recent years was an exemption from certain labor laws, which had the practical effect of prohibiting trade unions from the zones. The U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) law requires the beneficiary country to satisfy certain conditions relating to labor rights. On July 13, 2004, the government passed a bill allowing limited trade unionism in the EPZs effective November 1, 2006. Implementation of the law has been slow, however, and a U.S. labor organization has filed a petition with the U.S. Government to suspend Bangladesh's GSP privileges in the absence of progress on labor rights issues.

Relations between Bangladesh and the United States were further strengthened by the participation of Bangladesh troops in the 1991 Gulf war coalition, and alongside U.S. forces in numerous UN peacekeeping operations, including Haiti in 1994, as well as by the assistance of a U.S. naval task force after a disastrous March 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh. The relief efforts of U.S. troops are credited with having saved as many as 200,000 lives. In response to Bangladesh's worst flooding of the century in 1998, the United States donated 700,000 metric tons of food grains, helping to mitigate shortages. In July 2006, the U.S. Navy's hospital ship Mercy visited Bangladesh and U.S. personnel worked with Bangladeshi medical personnel to provide medical treatment to Bangladeshi patients. Between 2005 and 2008, the United States obligated $2.2 million in grant aid funding (Foreign Military Financing) to purchase Defender class small boats for the Coast Guard of Bangladesh, and allocated $934,000 in IMET (International Military Education and Training) for 2007.

In addition to heavy flooding at the end of summer 2007, Cyclone Sidr hit the country on November 15, causing widespread devastation and affecting the lives of millions of people. Following the cyclone, U.S. troops and two U.S. naval vessels assisted in the delivery of relief supplies to cyclone victims, and USAID provided approximately $19.5 million in food and relief items. High levels of assistance continue to be provided to Bangladesh by the United States, through USAID in particular, which will provide an estimated $110 million in aid in fiscal year 2008.

Additionally, Bangladesh has become a valuable United States ally in the Global War on Terror. As part of the war effort, the Government of Bangladesh has begun to address problems of money laundering and weak border controls to ensure that Bangladesh does not become a terrorist safe-haven.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 17, 2008

Country Description: Bangladesh is a democratic republic with a parliamentary form of government. On January 11, 2007, President Iajuddin Ahmed declared a state of emergency. On May 12, 2008, the Chief Adviser announced that national parliamentary elections would be held in the third week of December, 2008. Bangladesh remains a developing country with poor infrastructure. Tourist facilities outside major cities and tourist areas are minimal.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa and onward/return ticket are required. All travelers to Bangladesh, including American citizens, must have a valid visa in their valid passport prior to arrival. Although airport visas (landing permits) are available upon arrival by air, the U.S. Embassy

in Dhaka does not recommend this option for most categories of travelers as working hours may not coincide with flight arrival times and precise formalities can vary. Additionally, if issued, landing permit validity is usually limited to a maximum of fifteen days. A valid visa in an expired or cancelled U.S. passport is not acceptable to the Bangladeshi authorities; if you are issued a new U.S. passport, you will need a new visa.

If you intend to use Dhaka as a hub from which to visit other countries in the region, ensure that you obtain a multiple-entry visa before arrival. If you intend to work for a non-governmental organization (NGO) in Bangladesh, you should ensure that your sponsor has provided you with up-to-date advice on the kind of visa you must obtain before arrival. It is difficult and time-consuming to change your immigration status once you have arrived in Bangladesh.

Visas to Bangladesh which are expiring may be extended at the Directorate of Immigration and Passport, located at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Dhaka. The phone numbers are (880-2) 913-1891 and 913-4011.

New visa rules, introduced in October 2006, require foreign nationals who come to Bangladesh to work or for long-term visits to have the appropriate work permits and clearances on arrival. There are increased financial penalties for overstaying visas. Additionally, those who overstay for more than 90 days face the possibility of being charged with violating the Foreigners Act of 1946. For further information on these rules, please check with the nearest Bangladeshi Embassy or Consulate (U.S. addresses listed below) before traveling, or visit the Bangladeshi Immigration Police web site at www.immi.gov.bd, which provides further details on rules relating to foreigner registrations.

There are two exit requirements:

- When traveling by air, there is a departure tax on all foreigners except children under the age of two. This tax is often included when air tickets are purchased. Otherwise, it is collected at the airport at the time of departure. The amount of the departure tax varies, depending on the destination (e.g., the departure tax for the U.S. is the most expensive, at USD $43). There is no travel tax for transit passengers transiting Bangladesh without a visa and in country for 72 hours or fewer. These requirements may be subject to change, and travelers are advised to check with the Embassy of Bangladesh before traveling.

- Departing foreign nationals are also required to comply with the income tax ordinance of 1984 and submit an income tax clearance certificate/income tax exemption certificate to local airline offices upon departure from Bangladesh. More information can be obtained from the Bangladesh Board of Revenue web site at http://www.nbr-bd.org.

For further information on entry requirements and possible exceptions to the exit requirements, please contact the Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 3510 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone 202-244-0183, fax 202-244-5366, web site http://www.bangladoot.org, or the Bangladeshi Consulates in New York at 211 E. 43rd Street, Suite 502, New York, NY 10017, telephone 212-599-6767 or Los Angeles at 10850 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1250, Los Angeles, CA 90024, telephone 310-441-9399. Visit the Embassy of Bangladesh web site at http://www.bangladoot.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Bangladesh is currently under a state of emergency. As of May, 2008, national parliamentary elections have been scheduled for the third week of December, 2008. The security situation in Bangladesh is fluid, and Americans are urged to check with the U.S. Embassy for the latest information. Spontaneous demonstrations take place in Bangladesh from time to time. American citizens are reminded that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence quickly and unexpectedly. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. American citizens should stay up-to-date with media coverage of local events and be aware of their surroundings at all times. Information regarding demonstrations in Bangladesh can be found on the U.S. Embassy Dhaka's web site at http://dhaka.usembassy.gov.

A terrorist bombing campaign in the second half of 2005, political violence throughout the country at the end of 2006, and threats to U.S. and Western interests led to increased security around U.S. Government facilities. On August 17, 2005, a banned Islamist terrorist group, Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), claimed responsibility for nearly 500 coordinated small bomb blasts in virtually every part of Bangladesh that killed two persons and injured several dozen. The most recent JMB bombing occurred on December 8, 2005, and the Bangladeshi government subsequently apprehended the known senior leadership of JMB. Six JMB leaders convicted of complicity in JMB attacks were executed on March 29, 2007. JMB and other extremist groups are small in number but remain active and may resume violent activities.

Demonstrations, political activity, and hartals (nationwide strikes) were initially banned during the state of emergency, but the rules restricting political activity have been slightly relaxed as part of the process leading up to the planned elections in the third week of December 2008. Prior to the state of emergency, rallies, marches, demonstrations and hartals took place frequently. In August 2007, violent protests involving thousands of demonstrators occurred in several cities in Bangladesh, including Dhaka. Authorities imposed a curfew to restore calm.

Protests involving workers from the large garment-manufacturing industry are not uncommon. Visitors to Bangladesh should check with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka for updated information on the current political situation.

U.S. citizens are advised against traveling to the Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban Hill Tracts districts (collectively known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts) due to kidnappings and other security incidents, including those involving foreign nationals. Foreigners traveling in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are required to register with local authorities. Additionally, the U.S. Embassy has in the past received reports of incidents of kidnapping, arms and narcotics smuggling and clashes between local Bangladeshis and Rohingyan refugees in areas near Rohingyan refugee camps in the Teknaf, Kutupalong, Ukhia, and Ramu areas of the Cox's Bazar district. The U.S. Embassy also recommends against travel to these areas. Individuals who choose to visit these districts are urged to exercise extreme caution.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Americans traveling to or living in Bangladesh who are registered at the U.S. Embassy will receive updated security information about Bangladesh via e-mail. All Demonstration Notices and Warden Messages are posted on the Embassy's web site at http://dhaka.usembassy.gov. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Urban crime can be organized or opportunistic, conducted by individuals or groups, and commonly encompasses fraud, theft (larceny, pick-pocketing, snatch-and-grab), robbery (armed and unarmed), carjacking, rape, assault, and burglary (home and auto). Incidents of crime and levels of violence are higher in low-income residential and congested commercial areas, but are on the rise in wealthier areas as well. Visitors should avoid walking alone after dark, carrying large sums of money, or wearing expensive jewelry. Valuables should be stored in hotel safety deposit boxes and should not be left unattended in hotel rooms. Police are generally responsive to reports of crimes against Americans. Crimes, however, often go unsolved.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime are solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Bangladesh is 999. This connects you to the Dhaka Metro Police Exchange. There is no guarantee that English will be spoken or understood at the Dhaka Metro Police Exchange. The Police Exchange can only transfer calls to the appropriate police station within the Dhaka metropolitan area, and then the caller will have to speak with that police station in order to actually have any police services performed. There is similarly no guarantee that English will be spoken or understood at the local police station.

Outside of Dhaka, the caller will need to add the city code for Dhaka, so dial 02-999. The caller will again be connected to the Dhaka Metro Police Exchange, which should be able to provide the number of the appropriate police station within Bangladesh, but the Dhaka Metro Police Exchange is unlikely to be able to transfer the call to a police station outside Dhaka. The caller would have to hang up and dial the number provided by the Dhaka Metro Police Exchange. The ability to speak and/or understand English is even more unlikely at local police stations outside of Dhaka.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Bangladesh do not approach U.S. standards, even in tourist areas. There is limited functioning ambulance service in Bangladesh. Several hospitals in Dhaka (e.g., Apollo Hospital and Square Hospital) have emergency rooms that are equipped at the level of a community hospital. Hospitals in the provinces are less well equipped and supplied. There have been reports of counterfeit medications within the country, but medication from major pharmacies and hospitals is generally reliable. Medical evacuations to Bangkok or Singapore are often necessary for serious conditions or invasive procedures.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road condi-

tions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Bangladesh is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. The Bangladeshi road network is in poor condition and poorly maintained. The streets of Dhaka are extremely congested; bicycle rickshaws compete with three-wheeled mini-taxis (CNGs), cars, overloaded buses, and trucks on limited road space. Also, driving on the left-hand side of the road may be confusing to American visitors. Inter-city roads are narrow. Driving at night is especially dangerous. Streetlights are rare even in cities. Road accidents are common in Bangladesh. Fatal head-on collisions on inter-city roads are common. When vehicle accidents occur, a crowd quickly gathers and violence can occur when the crowd becomes unruly. Travelers are strongly urged not to use public transportation, including buses, rickshaws, and three-wheeled baby taxis due to their high accident rate and crime issues. An alternative to consider is a rental car and driver.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Bangladesh's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Bangladesh's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Bangladesh is a country crisscrossed with rivers, and thus uses a wide network of water-based public transportation. Ferries and other boats compete with the railroads as a major means of public transport. Typically overloaded and top-heavy, ferries do capsize, particularly during the monsoon season from May to October or during unexpected thunderstorms or windstorms. Every year there are dozens of fatalities resulting from ferry accidents. Bangladeshi customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Bangladesh of items such as currency, household appliances, alcohol, cigarettes and weapons. There is no restriction as to the amount of U.S. currency visitors may bring into Bangladesh; however, they must declare to customs authorities if they are carrying more than USD $5,000 at the time of arrival. It is advisable to contact the Bangladeshi Embassy or Consulates for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Land disputes are extremely common in Bangladesh and are extremely difficult to resolve through legal channels. Court cases can last for months, and sometimes years, without there ever being a final and accurate determination of which party has legitimate claim to the title.

The U.S. Embassy currently has on file nearly twenty cases of American citizens who claim to be victimized in land-grabbing disputes. Rarely are these simple cases of a legitimate property owner and an opportunistic land-grabber. More often, it is a case of disagreement between an owner who believes he has historical ownership of the property and a new owner who has just purchased the same property. One of them has been swindled, both of them have deeds, and it is next to impossible to determine whose deed is valid.

The dangers in becoming involved in a property dispute range from being threatened by bullies to being involved in a lengthy court dispute. Those involved in a court dispute run the risk of having cases filed against them, and may be arrested and jailed, sometimes for months.

American Citizens wishing to purchase property in Bangladesh should be thoroughly aware of the risks they take and should only purchase property from a seller whose ownership is beyond doubt. Additionally, they should recognize the risks associated if they are not physically present to oversee their property. American Citizens should bear in mind that the U.S. Embassy cannot protect personal property in the absence of owners and cannot take sides in a legal dispute. A marriage must be entered into with the full and free consent of both individuals. The parties involved should feel that they have a choice. If an American citizen is being forced into a marriage against his/her will, help and advice are available. For more information, please contact the American Citizens Services unit directly at DhakaACS@state.gov, or 011-88-02-885-5500 from the United States, 02-885-5500 from inside Bangladesh, or 885-5500 from anywhere in the city of Dhaka. All travelers to Bangladesh should retain their passports and their return plane tickets to ensure independence to travel.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bangladeshi laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bangladesh are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Bangladesh are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Bangladesh. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to con-

tact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located approximately four miles south of Zia International Airport, and five miles north of downtown in the Diplomatic Enclave, Madani Avenue, Baridhara, Dhaka, telephone (88-02) 885-5500, fax number (88-02) 882-3744. The workweek is Sunday through Thursday. The Consular Section is open for American Citizens Services Sunday through Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. For emergency services and general information during business hours, please call (88-02) 882-3805. For emergency services after hours, please call (88-02) 885-5500 and ask for the duty officer. The Embassy's Internet home page is http://dhaka.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Bangladeshi law does not allow for full adoptions of Bangladeshi children. Americans considering adoption of Bangladeshi children must obtain guardianship from a Bangladeshi court and subsequently adopt the child in the United States. Prospective American guardians may also want to see our Shari'a Adoption Flyer on Guardianship in Muslim Countries.

In addition, only citizens of Bangladesh may be appointed/declared guardians of a Bangladeshi child. Since Bangladesh allows for dual citizenship, however, American citizens who are also Bangladeshi citizens may be appointed guardians of Bangladeshi children.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Guardianship Authority: The relevant Family Court is the sole authority to award guardianship and issue guardianship certificate. The Ministry of Home Affair issues No Objection Certificate to issue a Bangladesh passport and Immigration and Passport office issues a passport. There is no public contact information for Family Court. Family Court is located in all district of Bangladesh and if it is required by an applicant to contact, he/she may contact the concerned Desk Officer or dealing section of the Family Court in person.

Eligibility Requirements: Prospective guardians must be at least 18 years old being of sound mind and capable of maintaining through provision of food, shelter and education and provide proof of Bangladeshi citizenship. The Court has the duty to look at the character and capacity of the proposed guardian in considering the welfare of the minor. The proposed ward must be a minor (below the age of 18 years).

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements. However, as noted above, prospective guardians must be citizens of Bangladesh.

Time Frame: There are no set time frame and fee for legal guardianship in Bangladesh. The following, however, are rough estimates of the processing times for specific stages of the process. Processing time at orphanage is about 3 days to 1 month. Processing time at Family Court is about 1-3 months. Processing time at Ministry of Home Affairs: 15 days to 2 months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Bangladesh. There are at least 25,000 lawyers in Bangladesh who may initiate guardianship proceedings. Prospective guardians who choose to work with U.S. adoption service providers in the context of obtaining guardianship of Bangladeshi children are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use.

Guardianship Fees: There is a Government court fee of Tk.60. Lawyer's fee: No set fee but ranging from Tk.5000 to Tk.50,000 = roughly $85 to $850. There is no official fee at the orphanage. But many request/accept donations. There is no fee at Ministry of Home Affairs.

Requirements for Obtaining Legal Guardianship:

- Biological parent must sign an irrevocable release of the child before a Notary Public, 1st Class Magistrate or the relevant Family Court in Bangladesh.
- An application for legal guardianship must be made to the Family Court. In Bangladesh, the Family Court has sole jurisdiction over family matters.
- A No Objection Certificate must be obtained from the Home Ministry for issuance of International Passport in the name of the minor.
- The No Objection and Legal Guardianship' certificates should be presented to the Bangladesh Passport Office for the child's passport. Prospective guardians' names should be listed as the legal guardians in the child's passport.

Required Documents:

- Birth Certificate of the minor.
- Guardianship Certificate.
- Irrevocable release/undertaking of the biological parents (if any) of the child before a Notary Public, 1st Class Magistrate or before the relevant Family Court in Bangladesh.
- No Objection certificate from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Bangladeshi procedure for authenticating documents to be used in Bangladesh is as follows:

- Any foreign document should be attested by the Bangladeshi Mission abroad and then re-attested by the Foreign Ministry in Bangladesh. If the document is of a legal nature, then it should revalidated by the relevant treasury in Bangladesh.

- Any Bangladeshi (local) document can be treated as authenticated if it is attested by any First Class Government officer, any Magistrate or any Notary Public in Bangladesh.

Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Washington D.C.
3510, International Drive NW
Washington, DC 20008, USA
Telephone: (202) 244-0183,
Fax:(202) 244-5366
Website: http://www.bangladoot.org

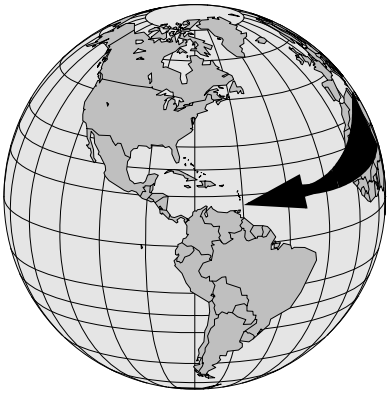
Consulate General of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, New York
211 E. 43rd Street, Suite 502
New York, NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 599-6767,
(212) 599-6850
Fax: (212) 682-9211
E-mail: bdcgny@aol.com

Consulate General of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Los Angeles
10850 Wilshire Boulevard
Suite 1250, Los Angeles CA 90024
Telephone: (310) 441-9399
Fax: (310) 441-4458
E-mail: bcgla@earthlink.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy, Dhaka
Madani Avenue, Baridhara,
Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh
Tel: (880) (2) 885-5500
Fax: (880) (2) 8823744
Internet: http://dhaka.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about guardianship in Bangladesh may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh, via e-mail at: DhakaAdoptions @state.gov. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



BARBADOS

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Barbados

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 431 sq. km. (166 sq. mi.); about three times the size of Washington, DC.
Cities: Capital—Bridgetown.
Terrain: Generally flat, hilly in the interior.
Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Barbadian(s); informally "Bajan(s)."
Population: (2006 estimate) 279,912.
Annual population growth rate: (2005) 0.3%.
Ethnic groups: Predominantly of African descent 90%, White 4%, Asian or mixed 6%.
Religions: Protestant 67% (Anglican 40%, Pentecostal 8%, Methodist 7%, other 12%), Roman Catholic 4%, none 17%, other 12%.
Languages: English.
Education: (2005) Adult literacy—99.7%.
Health: (2005) Infant mortality rate—11.0/1,000. Life expectancy—men 70.8 years; women 74.8 years.
Work force: (2006) 142,000 (tourism, government, manufacturing, construction, mining, agriculture, fishing).
Unemployment: (2006) 7.6%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy; independent sovereign state within the Commonwealth.
Independence: November 30, 1966.
Constitution: 1966.
Government branches: Executive—governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Parliament. Judicial—magistrate's courts, Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), Caribbean Court of Justice in Trinidad and Tobago.
Political subdivisions: Eleven parishes and the city of Bridgetown.
Political parties: Barbados Labour Party (BLP, incumbent), Democratic Labour Party (DLP), People's Empowerment Party (PEP).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $2.976 billion.
GDP growth rate: (2006) 3.8%.
Per capita GDP: (2006 est.) $17,300.
Inflation: (2006) 7.6%.
Natural resources: Petroleum, fish, quarrying, natural gas.
Agriculture: Sugar accounts for less than 1% of GDP and 80% of arable land.
Manufacturing and construction: Food, beverages, infrastructure, electronic components, textiles, paper, chemicals.
Services: Tourism, banking and other financial services, and data processing.
Trade: (2005) Exports—$359 million (merchandise) and $1.41 billion (commercial services). Major markets—United States (13.4%), European Union (12.4%), Trinidad and Tobago (10.8%), St. Lucia (6.1%), and Jamaica (5%). Imports—$1.6 billion (merchandise) and $636 million (commercial services). Major suppliers—United States (35.9%), Trinidad and Tobago (21.2%), European Union (13.3%), Japan (7.6%), and Canada (3.4%).
Exchange rate: BDS$2 = U.S. $1.

PEOPLE

About 90% of Barbados' population is of African descent, 4% European descent, and 6% Asian or mixed. About 40% of Barbadians are Anglican, and the rest mostly Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and Moravian. There also are small Jewish and Muslim communities. Barbados' population growth rate has been very low, less than 1% since the 1960s, largely due to family planning efforts and a high emigration rate.

HISTORY

British sailors who landed on Barbados in the 1620s at the site of present-day Holetown on the Caribbean coast found the island uninhabited. As elsewhere in the eastern Caribbean, Arawak Indians may have been annihilated by invading Caribs, who are believed to have subsequently abandoned the island.

From the arrival of the first British settlers in 1627-28 until independence in 1966, Barbados was a self-funding colony under uninterrupted British rule. Nevertheless, Barbados always enjoyed a large measure of local autonomy. Its House of Assembly, which began meeting in 1639, is the third-oldest legislative body in the Western Hemisphere, preceded only by Bermuda's legislature and the Virginia House of Burgesses.

As the sugar industry developed into the main commercial enterprise, Barbados was divided into large plantation estates, which replaced the small holdings of the early British settlers. Some of the displaced farmers relocated to British colonies in North America. To work the plantations, slaves were brought from Africa; the slave trade ceased a few years before the abolition of slavery throughout the British empire in 1834.

Plantation owners and merchants of British descent dominated local politics. It was not until the 1930s that the descendants of emancipated slaves began a movement for political rights. One of the leaders of this movement, Sir Grantley Adams, founded the Barbados Labour Party in 1938. Progress toward more democratic government for Barbados was made in 1951, when the first general election under universal adult suffrage occurred. This was followed by steps toward increased self-government, and in 1961, Barbados achieved the status of self-governing autonomy.

From 1958 to 1962, Barbados was one of 10 members of the West Indies Federation, and Sir Grantley Adams served as its first and only prime minister. When the federation was terminated, Barbados reverted to its former status as a self-governing colony. Following several attempts to form another federation composed of Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands, Barbados negotiated its own independence at a constitutional conference with the United Kingdom in June 1966. After years of peaceful and democratic progress, Barbados became an independent state within the British Commonwealth on November 30, 1966.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Under its constitution, Barbados is a parliamentary democracy modeled on the British system. The governor general represents the monarch. Control of the government rests with the cabinet, headed by the prime minister and responsible to the Parliament.

The bicameral Parliament consists of the House of Assembly and Senate. The 30 members of the House are elected by universal suffrage to 5-year terms. Elections may be called at any time the government wishes to seek a new mandate or if the government suffers a vote of no-confidence in Parliament. The Senate's 21 members are appointed by the governor general—12 with the advice of the prime minister, two with the advice of the leader of the opposition, and seven at the governor general's discretion to represent segments of the community.

Barbados has an independent judiciary composed of magistrate courts, which are statutorily authorized, and a Supreme Court, which is constitutionally mandated. The Supreme Court consists of the high court and the court of appeals, each with four judges. The Chief Justice serves on both the high court and the court of appeals. The court of last resort is the Caribbean Court of Justice. The island is divided into 11 parishes and the city of Bridgetown for administrative purposes. There is no local government. The two main political parties—the Barbados Labour Party (BLP), the Democratic Labour Party (DLP)—are both moderate and have no major ideological differences; electoral contests and political disputes often have personal overtones. The major political problems facing Barbados today are in promoting economic growth: creating jobs, encouraging agricultural diversification, attracting foreign investment, and promoting tourism.

In January 15, 2008 parliamentary elections, voters gave a majority to the DLP, led by David Thompson. This election ended 14 years of rule by the BLP. New Prime Minister Thompson has pledged to focus on domestic issues, particularly the cost of living, healthcare, and crime.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Clifford HUSBANDS, Sir**
Prime Min.: **David THOMPSON**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Haynesley BENN**
Min. of Community Development & Culture: **Steve BLACKETT**
Min. of Defense & Security:
Min. of Education & Human Resource Development: **Ronald JONES**
Min. of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports, & the Environment: **Esther BYER-SUKOO, Dr.**
Min. of Finance, Economic Affairs & Development, & Energy: **David THOMPSON**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, & International Business: **Christopher SINCKLER**
Min. of Health, National Insurance, & Social Security: **David ESTWICK, Dr.**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Freundel STUART**
Min. of Housing & Lands: **Michael LASHLEY**
Min. of Information:
Min. of Labor & the Civil Service: **David THOMPSON**
Min. of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, & Urban Development: **Denis LOWE, Dr.**
Min. of Tourism: **Richard SEALY**
Min. of Trade, Industry, & Commerce: **George HUTSON**
Min. of Transport, Works, & International Transport: **John BOYCE**



Min. in the Prime Min.'s Office & Leader of Gov't. Business: **Maxine MCCLEAN, Rev.**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, & Intl. Business: **Donville INNISS**
Min. of State in the Min. of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, & Urban Development: **Patrick TODD**
Min. of State in the Prime Min.'s Office (Employment, Labor Relations, & the Social Partnership): **Arni WALTERS**
Min. of State in the Prime Min.'s Office (Finance & Energy): **Darcy BOYCE**
Attorney Gen.: **Freundel STUART**
Governor, Central Bank: **Marion WILLIAMS**
Ambassador to the US: **Michael KING**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Christopher HACKETT**

Barbados maintains an embassy in the United States at 2144 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008 (tel. 202-939-9200), a consulate general in New York City at 800 2nd Avenue, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-867-8435), and a consulate general in Miami at 150 Alhambra Circle, Suite 1270, Coral Gables, FL 33134 (tel. 305-442-1994).

ECONOMY

Since independence, Barbados has transformed itself from a low-income economy dependent upon sugar production into an upper-middle-income economy based on tourism. Barbados is now one of the most prosperous countries in the western hemisphere outside of the United States and Canada. The economy went into a deep recession in 1990 after 3 years of steady decline brought on by fundamental macroeconomic imbalances. After a painful readjustment process, the economy began to grow again in 1993. Growth rates averaged between 3%-5% since then until 2001, when the economy contracted 2.8% in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the global drop-off in tourism. Growth picked up again in 2004 and 2005, and the economy grew by 3.8% in 2006.

Tourism drives the economy in Barbados, but offshore banking and financial services have become an increasingly important source of foreign exchange and economic growth. The sugar industry, once dominant, now makes up less than 1% of GDP and employs only around 500 people. The labor force totaled 142,000 persons at the end of 2006. The average rate of unemployment during the last quarter of 2006 was estimated at 7.6%.

The current account deficit expanded to 12.5% of GDP, and government debt rose above 80% of GDP in 2006. Barbados hosted the final matches of the Cricket World Cup in 2007, and much of the country's investment during 2006 and the beginning of 2007 was directed toward accommodating the expected influx of visitors. As a result of these preparations, growth was registered in all sectors, especially transportation, communications, construction, and utilities. The government and private sector are both working to prepare the country for the Caribbean Community

(CARICOM) Single Market and Economy (CSME)—a European Union-style single market.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

As a small nation, the primary thrust of Barbados' diplomatic activity has been within international organizations. The island is a member of the Commonwealth and participates in its activities. Barbados was admitted to the United Nations in December 1966. Barbados joined the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1967.

On July 4, 1973, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Jamaica signed a treaty in Trinidad to found the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). In May 1974, most of the remaining English-speaking Caribbean states joined CARICOM, which now has 15 members. Barbados also is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), established in 1970, with headquarters in Bridgetown. The Eastern Caribbean's Regional Security System (RSS), which associates Barbados with six other island nations, also is headquartered in Barbados. In July 1994, Barbados joined the newly established Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

Barbados has diplomatic missions headed by resident ambassadors or high commissioners in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela, and at the European Union (Brussels) and the UN. It also has resident consuls general in Toronto, Miami, and New York City. Brazil, Canada, China, Cuba, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela have ambassadors or high commissioners resident in Barbados.

U.S.-BARBADIAN RELATIONS

In 1751, George Washington visited Barbados as a young man, making what is believed to have been his only trip abroad. The U.S. Government has been represented on Barbados since 1823. From 1956 to 1978, the United States operated a naval facility in Barbados.

The United States and Barbados have had friendly bilateral relations since Barbados' independence in 1966. The United States has supported the government's efforts to expand the country's economic base and to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens. Barbados is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative. U.S. assistance is channeled primarily through multilateral agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) office in Bridgetown. In May 1997, Prime Minister Owen Arthur hosted President Clinton and 14 other Caribbean leaders during the first-ever U.S.-regional summit in Bridgetown, Barbados.

The summit strengthened the basis for regional cooperation on justice and counter narcotics issues, finance and development, and trade. Barbados receives counternarcotics assistance and is eligible to benefit from the U.S. military's exercise-related and humanitarian assistance construction program.

Barbados and U.S. authorities cooperate closely in the fight against narcotics trafficking and other forms of transnational crime. In 1996, the United States and Barbados signed a mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) and an updated extradition treaty covering all common offenses, including conspiracy and organized crime.

A maritime law enforcement agreement was signed in 1997. A popular tourist destination, Barbados had around 570,000 tourists in 2006, mainly cruise ship visitors. The majority of tourists are from the U.K., Germany, the Caribbean, and the United States. An estimated 3,000 Americans reside in the country.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRIDGETOWN (E) Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael BB 14006, APO/FPO APO AA 34055, 246-436-4950, Fax 246-429-5246, Workweek: Mon-Fri: 8.00–4.30, Website: bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Hillaire Campbell
AMB OMS:	Honora L. Myers
ECO:	Bryan R Switzer
FM:	Maurice Pettiford
HRO:	Peggy Laurance (Residence In Ft. Lauderdale)
MGT:	Philip A. Dubois
AMB:	Mary M. Ourisman
CG:	Clyde I. Howard
DCM:	D. Brent Hardt
PAO:	John C. Roberts
GSO:	Yoshino Rosenstein
RSO:	Gary Truchot
AFSA:	Arend Zwartjes
AID:	James Goggin
CLO:	Lauren Mchugh/Tamie Harvey
DAO:	Lt. Cdr. Stephen Leslie (Res. Caracas)
DEA:	Charles Graham
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FAA:	Dawn Flanagan (Res. Washington)
FMO:	Rajiv Malik
IMO:	Frank Sauer
IRS:	Cheryl Kast
ISO:	Norman G B Ellasos
ISSO:	Ricardo Cabrera
LAB:	John C. Aller
LEGATT:	Samuel Bryant, Jr.
MLO:	Lt. Cdr. Edward Gaynor
NAS:	Ian Campbell
POL:	Ian Campbell

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
14th & Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-1658, 800-USA-Trade
Fax: 202-482-0464

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW
Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-466-7464
Fax: 202-822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: Barbados is an independent Caribbean island nation with a developed economy. The capital is Bridgetown. Facilities for tourism are widely available. The U.S. Embassy in Barbados has consular responsibility over Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as the British dependent territories of Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Montserrat, and the French islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Barthelemy and St. Martin.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

No visa is needed to enter Barbados for stays up to 28 days. There is a departure tax for travelers over the age of twelve. For further information, travelers may contact the Embassy of Barbados, 2144 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 939-9200, fax (202) 332-7467, e-mail: barbados@oas.org; or the consulates of Barbados in Los Angeles, Miami or New York.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime in Barbados is characterized by petty theft and street crime. Incidents of violent crime, including rape, occur. Visitors should be especially vigilant on the beaches at night. Visitors should try to secure valuables in a hotel safe and take care to always lock and secure hotel room doors and windows.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The main medical facility in Barbados is Queen Elizabeth Hospital, http://www.qeh.gov.bb. Medical care is generally good, but medical transport can take hours to respond and ambulance attendants are prohibited from applying lifesaving techniques during transport. Minor problems requiring a visit to the emergency room can involve a wait of several hours; private clinics and physicians offer speedier service. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services, and U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from

those in the United States. The information below concerning Barbados is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Barbados is on the left-hand side of the road. Taxis and buses are generally safe. Buses and vans and small buses are often crowded and tend to travel at high rates of speed. Night driving should be done with caution because of narrow roads with no shoulders and pedestrian/bicycle traffic. For specific information concerning Barbados driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Barbados Tourism Authority at (212) 986-6516, http://www.barbados.org.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Barbados, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Barbados' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: All Caribbean countries can be affected by hurricanes. The hurricane season normally runs from June to the end of November, but there have been hurricanes in December in recent years. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Barbados' laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Barbados are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Barbados are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Barbados. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown in located in the Wildey Business Park in suburban Wildey, south and east of downtown Bridgetown. The main number for the Consular Section is (246) 431-0225; after hours, the Embassy duty officer can be reached by calling (246) 436-4950. The website for Embassy Bridgetown is http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Please Note: Only citizens of countries with which Barbados has diplomatic or consular relations may adopt Barbadian children. The United States has diplomatic relations with Barbados.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The adoption agency for all of Barbados is the Child Care Board, located at: The Fred Edghill Building, Cheapside, Fontabelle, Barbados. The phone number is 1 (246) 426-2577. There are no private adoption agencies operating in Barbados.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Both married and single people may adopt. Prospective adoptive parents who are already related to the child they plan to adopt must be at least 18 years old. Otherwise, at least one prospective adoptive parent must be 25 years old and at least 18 years older than the child.

Residency Requirements: The adoption of a Barbadian child can take place in Barbados or in the applicants' country of residence. Applicants wishing to adopt a child in Barbados will be required to reside in the island for a period of at least 18 months. If applicants wish the adoption to take place in their country of residence, the applicants are required to come to Barbados for at least a few weeks in order to receive the child into their care and must attend the High Court hearing for the license to take the child out of Barbados for the purpose of adoption.

Time Frame: It will typically take non-Barbadians, including U.S. citizens, between six months and a year to adopt a Barbadian child, but it can

take longer due to sometimes-lengthy Barbadian court procedures.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Private agencies are not allowed to provide adoption services. All adoptions must go through the Child Care Board.

Adoption Fees: Average adoption attorney fees in Barbados are approximately U.S. $3000, which includes court fees. However, fees may vary depending on the attorney. It is necessary for the applicants to use an attorney in Barbados who will apply for the license on their behalf. There are no fees for filing adoption paperwork with the Child Care Board.

Adoption Procedures: The laws that govern adoptions in Barbados are the Child Care Act and the Adoption Act. The Child Care Board administers these laws. Upon being notified of a prospective parent's intent to adopt, the Child Care Board will contract a social welfare agency abroad to do a home study. The home study conducted for U.S. immigration procedures (form I-600A) is acceptable. Upon completion of the home study, the adoptive parents should submit it to the Child Care Board for review. After the Child Care Board approves the home study, the Child Care Board will identify a child based on the adoptive parents' requests. The adoptive parents (using an attorney) will then need to obtain an order from a Barbadian court authorizing the care and custody of the minor. The adoptive parents are required to come to Barbados to attend the High Court hearing for the license and to receive the child into their care.

Required Documents: A completed home study and supporting documents:

- Birth certificate of each prospective adoptive parent;
- Marriage certificate and divorce documents (if applicable);
- Medical report of each prospective adoptive parent, to be conducted in the parent's country of residence;
- Police reference;
- Three (3) personal references known for a period of at least five (5) years and not family members;
- Statement of applicant(s) income.

If the adoption is completed in Barbados, the adoptive parents should apply to the Office of the Registrar for a new birth certificate. If the adoption is to take place in the adoptive parents' country of residence, the child must have a passport issued by Barbados Immigration in order to apply for a an immigrant visa.

Embassy of Barbados
2144 Wyoming Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 939-9200
Fax: (202) 332-7467

There are also consulates of Barbados in Los Angeles, Miami, and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Bridgetown
Consular Section
The ALICO Building
Cheapside
Bridgetown, Barbados
Telephone: (246) 431-0225
Fax: (246) 431-0179
Email: consularbridge2@state.gov
http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Barbados may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Barbados is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Barbados and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Barbados place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Barbados with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Barbados, if parents are legally married they share the custody of their children. If they are not married, by law the custody is granted to the mother unless there are known facts of inappropriate behavior, mental or social problems. Foreign court orders are not automatically recognized.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Barbados.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has been granted custody of a child, the other parent is usually granted visitation rights.

The American Embassy in Bridgetown has reported few problems for non-custodial parents exercising their visitation rights. If a custodial parent fails to allow visitation, the non-custodial parent may appeal to the court.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is recognized under Barbadian law.

Passports for Minors and the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program: For more information on these topics, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Barbados.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Barbadian court should retain an attorney in Barbados. The U.S. Embassy in Barbados maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy Bridgetown
Consular Section
ALICO Building
Cheapside
Barbados

Mailing Address:
P O Box 302
Bridgetown
Barbados
Telephone: [246] 431-0225
Fax: [246] 431-0179
Web site:
http://www.usembassy.state.gov

The workweek for the Embassy is Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm.

Questions involving Barbadian law should be addressed to a Barbadian attorney or to the Embassy of Barbados in the United States at:

Embassy of Barbados
2144 Wyoming Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 939-9200



BELARUS

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Belarus

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 207,600 sq. km. (80,100 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Kansas.
Cities: Capital—Minsk.
Terrain: Landlocked, low-lying with thick forests, flat marshes and fields.
Climate: Cold winters, cool and moist summers, transitional between continental and maritime.

People

Nationality: Noun—Belarusian(s). Adjective—Belarusian.
Population: (July 2008 est.): 9,685,768 (Urban 73%; rural 27%).
Ethnic groups: Belarusian (81.2%), Russian (11.4%), Polish (3.9%), Ukrainian (2.4%), Jewish (0.3%), other (0.8%).
Religions: (2004 est.) Eastern Orthodox 80%, Catholic 14%, Protestant 2%, other (including Autocephalous Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, and Krishna) 4%.
Languages: Belarusian and Russian (official).
Education: Literacy—98%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2008 est.)—6.53/1,000. Life expectancy (2008 est.)—70.34 years (men 64.63 years, women 76.4 years).
Work force: (4.3 million as of December 31, 2005): Industry—34.7%; agriculture and forestry–14%; construction—7.9%; transportation, communications—7.6%; trade, catering–12.2%; education—10.7%; other—24.3%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: March 30, 1994; revision by unrecognized national referendum of November 24, 1996, gave presidency greatly expanded powers and became effective November 27, 1996.
Independence: 1991 (from Soviet Union).
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—bicameral: the House of Representatives (110 deputies) and the Council of the Republic (64 deputies). Judicial—Supreme Court; Constitutional Court.
Political subdivisions: Six oblasts (regions) and one municipality.
Political parties: Belarus has 17 registered political parties, including: Agrarian Party (AP); Belarusian Communist Party (KPB); Green Party; Belarusian Social and Sports Party; Belarusian Patriotic Movement (BPR); Belarusian Popular Front (BNF); Belarusian Social-Democrat Party (BSDP); Social-Democratic Hramada Party; Belarusian Socialist Party; United Civic Party (UCP); Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus (LDBP); Party of Communists Belarusian (PKB); Party of Popular Accord; Republican Party of Labor and Justice (RPPS); Social Democratic Party of Popular Accord (PPA); Women's Party Nadezhda. Several of these parties exist in name only. Other, unregistered parties are also active, such as: Belarusian Party of Labor, Christian Conservative Party, and Party of Freedom and Progress.
Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $44.77 billion.
GDP growth rate: (2007) 8.2%.
Per capita GDP: (2007) $10,600.
Natural resources: Forest land, peat deposits, potash, small amounts of oil and natural gas.
Agriculture: Products—grain, potatoes, vegetables, flax, beef, milk.
Industry: Types—machinery and transport equipment, chemical products, fabrics, and consumer goods.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$24.47 billion (refined petroleum, potash fertilizers, machinery and transport equipment, chemicals, foodstuffs, metals, and textiles). Major markets–Russia, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Great Britain, Ukraine, and Latvia. Imports–$28.32 billion (mineral products, machinery and equipment, metals, crude oil and natural gas, chemicals, foodstuffs). Major

suppliers–Russia, Germany, Ukraine, Poland, Italy, Lithuania.

Exchange rate: (October 2008) 2,113.5 BYR (Belarusian rubles)=U.S. $1.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

While archeological evidence points to settlement in today's Belarus at least 10,000 years ago, recorded history begins with settlement by Baltic and Slavic tribes in the early centuries A.D. With distinctive features by the ninth century, the emerging Belarusian state was then absorbed by Kievan Rus' in the 9th century. Belarus was later an integral part of what was called Litva, which included today's Belarus as well as today's Lithuania. Belarus was the birthplace of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Belarusian was the state language of the Grand Duchy until 1697, in part owing to the strong flowering of Belarusian culture during the Renaissance through the works of leading Belarusian humanists such as Frantzisk Skaryna. Belarus was the site of the Union of Brest in 1597, which created the Greek Catholic Church, for long the majority church in Belarus until suppressed by the Russian empire, and the birthplace of Thaddeus Kosciuszko, who played a key role in the American Revolution. Occupied by the Russian empire from the end of the 18th century until 1918, Belarus declared its short-lived National Republic on March 25, 1918, only to be forcibly absorbed by the Bolsheviks into what became the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.). Suffering devastating population losses under Soviet leader Josif Stalin and the German Nazi occupation, including mass executions of the Jewish population, Belarus was retaken by the Soviets in 1944. It declared its sovereignty on July 27, 1990, and independence from the Soviet Union on August 25, 1991. It has been run by the authoritarian Alexander Lukashenko since 1994.

GOVERNMENT

The constitution provides for a popularly elected president who serves a 5-year term. The bicameral parliament consists of the 64-seat Council of the Republic and the 110-seat Chamber of Representatives. The Council of the Republic is the house of territorial representation. Eight members of the Council are appointed directly by the president of the Republic of Belarus, while local regional councils elect the rest. The deputies to the House of Representatives are elected directly by the voters. The president appoints the prime minister, who is the head of government.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since his election in July 1994 as the country's first President, Alexander Lukashenko has consolidated power steadily in the executive branch through authoritarian means and has dominated all branches of government. He used a non-democratic referendum in November 1996 to amend the 1994 constitution to broaden his powers and illegally extend his term in office. He began to count his 5-year term in 1996, thereby adding 2 years to his first term in office. Based on the unrecognized 1996 constitution, Lukashenko announced that presidential elections were to be held in 2001. In 2004, he engineered a fraudulent referendum that removed term limits on the presidency. Independent exit polling of the referendum showed results far different from those officially announced. In 2006, Lukashenko took advantage of this provision to "win" another term in an undemocratic election. In January 2007, he further consolidated his rule through local elections that failed to meet international standards.

In October 2000, parliamentary elections occurred for the first time since the disputed referendum of 1996. According to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), these elections failed to meet international democratic standards. Based on the unrecognized 1996 constitution, Lukashenko announced presidential elections in 2001. International monitors noted sweeping human rights violations and undemocratic practices throughout the election period, including massive vote-counting fraud. These irregularities led the OSCE/ODIHR to find that these elections also failed to meet Belarus' OSCE commitments for democratic elections. March 2003 local elections and October 2004 parliamentary elections also failed to meet international standards of freedom and fairness. In 2004, Lukashenko called a referendum on removing presidential term limits. According to official results, the referendum passed by a wide margin, and Lukashenko allies won across-the-board victories in simultaneous parliamentary elections. OSCE/ODIHR observers declared that the parliamentary elections fell far short of international standards, citing abuses in the campaign period and the vote counting. The referendum was also conducted with little regard for democratic principles. Independent exit polling showed results far different from those officially announced.

The March 19, 2006 presidential election marked another low point in the government's treatment of its own citizens. OSCE/ODIHR observers noted that the election failed to meet international standards, was characterized by a disregard for the basic rights of freedom of assembly, association, and expression, and included a highly problematic vote count. Authorities detained many opposition and civic activists during the campaign and used force against demonstrators protesting the fraudulent election. Opposition presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin was beaten and arrested during post-election protests. He was sentenced to a five year jail term. The Belarusian authorities released Kozulin on August 16, 2008.



Belarus held parliamentary elections in late September 2008. Despite Belarusian authorities' public assurances that the elections would be "unprecedentedly" democratic and transparent, the OSCE/ODIHR election observation mission determined the elections fell short of OSCE standards. The authorities denied registration for approximately 20 percent of opposition candidates as well as candidates overall. While candidates were allotted their mandatory campaign airtime on various media outlets, restrictions on this access made it difficult for candidates to adequately present their platforms to the public. OSCE/ODIHR observers noted good access to polling stations during early voting and election day. However, the Belarusian authorities fell short on access for OSCE/ODIHR and other observers to the vote count, a crucial aspect for determining the transparency of the elections. OSCE/ODIHR observers assessed transparency of the vote count to have been bad or very bad in 48 percent of observed cases. The OSCE recognized minor improvements in the conduct of the elections, but the lack of a transparent vote count made it impossible to determine the validity of the elections. The Department of State issued a statement following OSCE/ODIHR's preliminary assessment, expressing disappointment with the failure of the Belarusian elections to meet international standards.

Although government restrictions on basic freedoms spiked in connection with elections, they continued even in non-election periods. Efforts to further infringe upon press freedoms included the continued use of libel laws, restrictions on foreign funding, pressure on businesses not to advertise with independent media, limitations on access to newsprint and printing presses, prohibiting access to state distribution networks, censorship, restrictions on the import of media-related materials, temporary and permanent suspension of independent and opposition periodicals, confiscation in quantity of printed publications, and detention of those distributing such material. In December 2004, the government adopted new legislation establishing criminal penalties for "discrediting Belarus" and organizing activities of an unregistered non-governmental organization (NGO). The government has continued to make use of its monopoly on television broadcasting to present biased news coverage and to minimize the presentation of opposing points of view. All Internet service providers in Belarus operate through a state-controlled portal. Despite constitutional provisions, a 1998 government decree limited citizens' rights to express their own opinions. A new media law, signed on August 4 and due to come into force in February 2009. The law prohibits Belarusian media outlets from obtaining technical or monetary support from foreign organizations or individuals unless they are co-founders, requires re-registration of most existing media and accreditation of journalists, and subjects online news media to the same requirements as print and broadcast media. These new restrictions threaten to undermine the last outlets of free speech online in Belarus.

The 1994 and 1996 constitutions both provide for freedom of peaceful assembly; however, the regime severely restricts this right in practice. Demonstrations require an application at least 15 days in advance of the event, and the local government must then respond positively or negatively at least 5 days prior to the event. Applications by opposition groups are usually

rejected. Following many unsanctioned demonstrations, police and other security officials detain, harass, and beat demonstration participants. Police also often film sanctioned events.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion; however, the authorities restrict this right in practice. Although Article 16 of the 1996 amended constitution reaffirms the equality of religions and denominations before the law, it also contains restrictive language stipulating that cooperation between the state and religious organizations "is regulated with regard for their influence on the formation of spiritual, cultural, and country traditions of the Belarusian people."

The government also restricts religious freedom in accordance with the provisions of a 2002 law on religion and a 2003 concordat with the Belarusian Orthodox Church (BOC), a branch of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the only officially recognized Orthodox denomination. Although there is no state religion, the concordat grants the BOC privileged status. Protestants in particular have attracted negative attention. Numerous anti-Semitic acts and attacks on religious monuments, buildings, and cemeteries have occurred with little discernible response from the government. Authorities have kept many religious communities waiting as long as several years for decisions about property registration or restitution. Authorities also harassed and fined members of certain religious groups, especially those that the authorities appear to regard as bearers of foreign cultural influence or as having a political agenda. Foreign missionaries, clergy, and humanitarian workers affiliated with churches have faced many government-imposed obstacles, including deportation and visa refusal or cancellation.

On December 17, 2007, President Lukashenko abolished exit stamps in favor of a computerized system that verifies the validity of passports. At the same time, however, he authorized the Interior Ministry to ban travel by individuals who had access to state secrets, who were facing criminal prosecution or civil suits, and who had outstanding financial commitments.

In late December 2007, authorities included opposition party leader Anatoliy Lebedko on the travel ban list because he faced allegations of libel against government officials. Authorities also banned travel by opposition youth leader Aleksandr Atroshchenkov. Human-rights observers feared that additional opposition activists would likely be included on the government's travel ban list, which is estimated to include the names of 100,000 persons.

The constitution provides for the right of workers, except for state security and military personnel, to voluntarily form and join independent unions and to carry out actions in defense of workers' rights, including the right to strike. In practice, however, these rights are limited. The Belarusian Free Trade Union (FTUB) was established in 1991 and registered in 1992. Following the 1995 Minsk metro workers strike, the President suspended its activities. In 1996, FTUB leaders formed a new umbrella organization, the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BCDTU), which encompasses four leading independent trade unions and is reported to have about 15,000 members. In late 2003, the BCDTU became a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

In May 2001, a complaint was lodged with the International Labor Organization (ILO) by several trade union organizations alleging the government was attempting to destroy the independent unions. A campaign was carried out to raise international awareness about trade unions and to put pressure on the Belarusian authorities. Late in 2001, the regime attempted to further restrict the unions by refusing to turn over dues paid by members. Once it became clear that the unions and the FTUB were adjusting to this change, the government embarked on a takeover of the FTUB and several of its branch unions in June of 2002. The FTUB subsequently became an arm of the government, and the election of Leonid Kozik to the position of Chairman of the FTUB has been challenged by the ILO.

In November 2003, the ILO approved the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate alleged serious violations of workers' rights in the country. That same month the Ministry of the Economy informed the ILO that all activities related to its technical assistance project to labor unions must cease because the registration of the project was denied. In 2004, the ILO presented the government with a list of 12 recommendations to improve its treatment of independent unions. A January 2006 ILO mission found that the government had not implemented any of these recommendations. As a result, in June 2007, the European Union (EU) suspended Belarus' trading preferences under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). The United States had suspended GSP preferences in 2000 due to Belarus' failure to take steps that would allow the right of association and collective bargaining.

In March 2004 the government began forcing state employees (some 80% of Belarusian workers) to sign short-term work contracts. Although contracts may be concluded for a period of five years, most expire after one year, which essentially grants the government the opportunity to annually fire anyone in its employ. Many members of independent unions, political parties, and civil society groups have lost their jobs when their contracts were not renewed.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Aleksandr LUKASHENKO**
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ECONOMY

As part of the former Soviet Union, Belarus had a relatively well-developed industrial base; it retained this industrial base following the breakup of the U.S.S.R. The country also has a broad agricultural base and a high education level. Among the former republics of the Soviet Union, it had one of the highest standards of living. But Belarusians now face the difficult challenge of moving from a state-run economy with a high priority on military production and heavy industry to a civilian, free-market system.

After an initial outburst of capitalist reform from 1991-94, including privatization of state enterprises, creation of institutions of private property, and development of entrepreneurship, Belarus has greatly slowed under Lukashenko, and in many cases, reversed its pace of privatization and other market reforms while emphasizing the need for a "socially oriented market economy." About 80% of all industry remains in state hands, and foreign investment has been hindered by a climate hostile to business. The banks, which had been privatized after independence, were renationalized under Lukashenko. The government has also renationalized companies using the "Golden Share" mechanism, which allows government control in all companies with foreign investment, as well as through other administrative means.

Economic output, which declined for several years, revived in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but the economy has been dependent on heavy discounts in oil and natural gas prices from Russia. Belarus has historically re-exported the oil and oil products at world market prices, using the windfall profits to subsidize state enterprises. In December 2006, Belarus and Russian gas giant Gazprom signed a deal which will eventually end Russia's subsidies of gas for Belarus. Under the deal, Gazprom raised prices for Belarus gas deliveries in 2007 to $100 per 1,000 cubic meters, a significant rise from the subsidized previous price of $46, but still far less than the price paid by EU member states. The price for Russian gas will continue to increase incrementally until 2011, when it will equal the price paid by EU members. Additionally, Gazprom will gradually acquire a 50% stake in Beltransgaz, the Belarusian gas pipeline firm. In January 2007, Russia followed up with a steep duty on oil deliveries, which caused a significant drop in revenue from exports of oil products and Russian-sourced crude oil. The increase in gas prices and simultaneous moves by Moscow to reduce the profitability of refining Russian oil in Belarus for re-export disrupted plans to upgrade industries ranging from oil refining to cement production.

Peat, the country's most valuable mineral resource, is used for fuel, for fertilizer, and in the chemical industry. Belarus also has deposits of clay, sand, chalk, dolomite, phosphorite, and rock and potassium salt. Forests cover about a third of the land, and lumbering is an important occupation. Potatoes, flax, hemp, sugar beets, rye, oats, and wheat are the chief agricultural products. Dairy and beef cattle, pigs, and chickens are raised. Belarus has only small reserves of petroleum and natural gas, and it imports most of its oil and gas from Russia. The main branches of industry produce tractors and trucks, earthmovers for use in construction and mining, metal-cutting machine tools, agricultural equipment, motorcycles, chemicals, fertilizer, textiles, and consumer goods. The chief trading partners are Russia, Germany, Ukraine, and Poland.

The massive April 26, 1986 nuclear accident at the Chernobyl power plant, across the border in Ukraine, had a devastating effect on Belarus. As a result of the radiation released, agriculture in a large part of the country was destroyed and many villages were abandoned. Resettlement and medical costs were substantial and long-term. Many living in Chernobyl afflicted zones have infrequent access to medical treatment due to remoteness, inadequate equipment, and substantial costs. Although the Belarusian authorities claim otherwise, many radiation monitoring stations, especially in rural areas, are either ill-equipped, poorly staffed, and/or no longer in operation. Resettlement of those in affected areas remains incomplete.

Due to the economic and political climate, little new foreign investment

has occurred in recent years. In 2002, two major companies, the Swedish furniture firm Ikea and Russian beer producer Baltika, ended operations in Belarus due to unrealized government commitments or unwelcome interference. Ford Motors did the same in 1999. Economic pressures in 2007 may have led to the unexpected and non-transparent sale of a state telecommunications company to an Austrian firm.

Growth continued to be robust in 2007. Consumer price inflation averaged about 8.3% in 2007, but higher energy import prices are expected to drive up inflation in 2008 and subsequent years. Large wage increases, which were typical in the 1990s and early 2000s, fueled some increased consumption but also made Belarusian firms less competitive. Close to 20% of enterprises and a majority of collective farms currently operate at a loss, a percentage that has remained steady since 2002. The government made progress in reining in its fiscal policies, largely due to constraints imposed by financial difficulties caused by the earlier economic slowdown. Belarus continues to be heavily dependent on Russia, with the potential for greater economic dependency in a long-proposed EU-style union between the two states. Prospects for an eventual union state remain weak, however, largely due to the apparent lack of interest on the part of the leadership of both countries. However, Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan have announced plans to move ahead with the formation of a customs union in 2008 that they expect to be completed by 2010.

The World Bank announced a new 4-year country assistance strategy for Belarus in December 2007, which focuses on global environment and energy challenges, enhances the competitiveness of the Belarusian economy to assure rising incomes, and protects the welfare of the most vulnerable. As part of the strategy, the World Bank is financing improvements to schools, hospitals, and homes for orphans, the elderly, and the disabled throughout Belarus, with particular emphasis on improving the energy efficiency of those facilities. In 2004, Belarus rejected a World Bank loan to help fight AIDS and tuberculosis. International Monetary Fund (IMF) cooperation is currently limited to policy and technical consultations.

Environmental Issues

Belarus has established ministries of energy, forestry, land reclamation, and water resources and state committees to deal with ecology and safety procedures in the nuclear power industry. The most serious environmental issue in Belarus results from the accident in 1986 at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. About 70% of the nuclear fallout from the plant landed on Belarusian territory, and about 20% of the land remains contaminated. But government restrictions on residence and use of contaminated land are not strictly enforced, and the government announced plans in 2004 to increase agricultural production in the contaminated regions. The government receives U.S. assistance in its efforts to deal with the consequences of the radiation. Belarus also faces growing air, land, and water pollution levels from potash mining in the south of the country.

DEFENSE AND MILITARY ISSUES

The United States continues to support Belarus' adherence to arms control agreements and treaties into which it has previously entered, including the Open Skies Treaty, which Belarus ratified in 2001. Cooperation in all such agreements has been exemplary.

Humanitarian aid continues to be the primary engagement between the U.S. military and Belarus. Humanitarian assistance programs have provided a tangible, long-lasting service and have encouraged goodwill toward the U.S. Government and the U.S. military. Renovation of the Gomel Emergency Treatment Hospital was recently concluded. The hospital received more than $600,000 in humanitarian assistance, which included funds for general renovation and the establishment of its blood transfusion center. The humanitarian aid program has two principal elements - the Humanitarian Assistance Program-Excess Property donates non-lethal goods and technical assistance for humanitarian purposes while other assistance focuses on projects such as the refurbishment of medical facilities and the construction of school buildings.

Direct military to military cooperation continues to be minimal. Belarus currently has no International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, and bilateral exercises and cooperation are nonexistent. There is a great desire on the Belarusian side to re-establish such cooperation and contacts, but it has not been possible due to the political situation. The only program that is still functional within this category is the attendance of Belarusian military officers at George C. Marshall Center programs.

Belarus is currently cooperating with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, through the Partnership for Peace Trust Fund, to destroy a total of 700,000 conventional landmines. Belarus also has a stockpile of over 3 million non-conventional anti-personnel mines, which it pledged to destroy by March 2008. However, the bidding process for the project of destroying the mines is still ongoing. In addition, there are numerous World War II-vintage minefields, which are still in place and kill or injure several Belarusians every year.

The Ministry of Defense is experiencing success in the area of military reform. Planned changes include combining the Air and Air Defense Forces, downsizing the force structure about 30% from 83,000 to 60,000, transitioning from a conscript to a contract force, and modernizing the command and control structure by creating a Ground Forces Command between the Ministry of Defense and the units in the field. Implementation of these reforms will take an unspecified amount of time.

There have been numerous reports of Belarusian sales or delivery of weapons or weapons-related technologies to states of concern, including state sponsors of terrorism. In April and September 2004, the United States imposed sanctions on a Belarusian entity, Belvneshpromservice, pursuant to the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000 for the transfer to Iran of items on a multilateral export control list, or items having the potential of making a material contribution to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), or cruise or ballistic missile systems.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Under an arrangement with the former U.S.S.R., Belarus was an original member of the United Nations. It also is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS - a group of 12 former Soviet republics) and its customs union, the Belarusian and Russian Union State, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, the Non-Aligned Movement, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

Following the recognition of Belarus as an independent state in December 1991 by the European Community, EU-Belarus relations initially experienced a steady progression. The signature of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in 1995 signaled a commitment to political, economic, and trade cooperation. Significant assistance was provided to Belarus within the framework of the TACIS technical assistance program and also through various aid programs and loans. However, progress in EU-Belarus relations stalled in 1996 after serious setbacks in the development of democracy. The EU did not recognize the 1996 constitution that replaced the 1994 constitution. Neither the PCA nor its trade-related elements were implemented, and Belarus was not invited to join the EU's Neighborhood Policy. Belarusian membership in the Council of Europe was not supported, bilateral relations at the ministerial level were suspended, and EU technical assistance programs were frozen. In 1998, relations were further worsened when President Lukashenko evicted several western ambassadors from their homes in the Drozdy area of Minsk. In 2004, the Council of Europe adopted a report written by special rapporteur Christos Pourgourides calling on Belarusian authorities to suspend various high-level officials after conducting a thorough investigation of the cases of several prominent Belarusian political figures who have disappeared and remain unaccounted for. In line with the U.S., the EU spoke strongly against the government's conduct of the 2006 election, noting that additional restrictive measures would be imposed against those officials responsible for abuses. After the election, the U.S. and EU imposed travel restrictions and financial sanctions against those responsible for abuses. The EU also launched a two-year, two million Euro project to support Belarusian access to independent information, which complements U.S. assistance programs. In June 2007, the EU announced the withdrawal of GSP trade preferences for Belarus, following an assessment by the International Labor Organization that Belarus had not acted to ensure the protection of labor rights and freedom of association. After the September 2008 parliamentary elections, the EU issued a statement expressing its concern about the conduct of the elections, which despite some progress did not correspond to the OSCE's democratic standards. In October 2008, the EU suspended its visa sanctions for six months on numerous Belarusian officials, including President Lukashenko, in response to Belarus' release of political prisoners in August.

Acknowledging the lack of progress in relation to bilateral relations and the internal situation following the position adopted in 1997, the EU adopted a benchmark approach in 1999, whereby relations would be gradually improved upon fulfillment of the four benchmarks set by the OSCE. In 2000, some moderately positive developments toward the implementation of recommendations made by the OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) were observed, but were not sufficient in the realm of access to fair and free elections. The Belarusian authorities, objecting to the OSCE AMG's activities, forced it to shutdown by failing to renew visas or extend accreditation of its professional staff. The Belarusian authorities agreed to a successor OSCE presence after 14 EU member countries and the U.S. imposed visa restrictions on the travel of high-ranking Belarusian officials. The OSCE Office in Minsk formally came into existence on January 1, 2003 with a mandate to "assist the Belarusian authorities in further promoting institution-building, in further consolidating the Rule of Law and in developing relations with civil society, in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments."

Russia is the largest partner for Belarus in the economic and political fields. In terms of trade, over one-third of Belarusian exports go to Russia. Due to the structure of Belarusian industry, Belarus relies heavily on other CIS countries, and Russia in particular, both for export markets and for the supply of raw materials, subsidized energy, and components. The steep increase in the price of natural gas in 2007, as well as higher tariffs on Russian-sourced oil and oil products, has contributed to a crisis in the Belarusian economy, forcing the regime to cut popular subsidies and to borrow from outside sources to finance the budget. Belarus received a $1.5 billion stabilization loan from Russia in late 2007 and has asked for another loan in 2008.

The framework for the Russia-Belarusian Union was set out in the Treaty on the Formation of a Community of Russia and Belarus (1996), the Treaty on Russia-Belarus Union, the Union Charter (1997), and the Treaty of the Formation of a Union State (1999). The integration treaties contain commitments to monetary

union, equal rights, single citizenship, and a common foreign and defense policy. They also have established a range of institutions modeled after the EU. After protracted disputes and setbacks, the two countries' customs duties were unified as of March 2001. Belarus has made progress in monetary stabilization in the context of ongoing negotiation with the Russian Central Bank on monetary union. However, Belarus has repeatedly pushed back the date for implementing a monetary union. A dispute with Russia in late 2006 and early 2007 over gas prices and oil import duties raised further doubts about the future of the union, and many of the provisions of the union have yet to be implemented. Most recently, talks in October 2008 focused on plans to move forward with unification of customs rates for the Union State, supposedly to be completed by the end of the year, and the use of the Russian ruble for mutual payments. South Ossetia and Abkhazia have both expressed interest in joining the Union State, and in order for them to do so, their application must first be approved by the Union Parliament, and then the presidents of Belarus and Russia must approve the Parliament's resolution to accept Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

U.S.-BELARUSIAN RELATIONS

The United States recognized Belarusian independence on December 25, 1991. After the two countries established diplomatic relations, the U.S. Embassy in Minsk was officially opened on January 31, 1992. Ambassador David H. Swartz, the first Ambassador to Belarus, officially assumed post on August 25, 1992, the first anniversary of Belarusian independence, and departed post on completion of his term in late January 1994. On November 7, 1994, Ambassador Kenneth S. Yalowitz assumed post. He was succeeded by Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard, who served from August 1997 to August 2000, spending one year recalled to Washington because of a dispute between the government and Western embassies over the confiscation of diplomatic residences. Michael G. Kozak served as U.S. Ambassador from October 2000 to August 2003. George A. Krol served as U.S. Ambassador from September 2003 to July 2006. Karen B. Stewart replaced Ambassador Krol as U.S. Ambassador and arrived in Belarus on September 18, 2006. She was recalled on March 12, 2008 following a threat of expulsion by the Belarusian authorities and the recall of Belarus' Ambassador to the U.S. Belarus subsequently voluntarily reduced the staff at its U.S. missions, excluding the mission to the UN, to five persons and demanded the U.S. reciprocate by reducing the U.S. Embassy in Minsk to five diplomats. When the U.S. refused to comply, the Belarusian authorities expelled several U.S. diplomats to reduce U.S. Embassy staffing to five diplomats. The U.S. has imposed no restrictions on Belarus' diplomatic missions to the U.S.

The two countries exchanged top-level official visits in the early years of independence. Stanislav Shushkevich, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Belarus, met with President Clinton in Washington in July 1992, and President Clinton visited Belarus in January 1994. After this high point, bilateral relations cooled following the election of President Alexander Lukashenko in July 1994.

In September 1995 three hot air balloons participating in the Coupe Gordon Bennett race entered Belarusian air space. Race organizers had informed the Belarusian authorities about the race in May, and flight plans had been filed, nevertheless, the Belarusian air force shot down one balloon, killing two American citizens, and forced the other two to land. The crews of the other two balloons were fined for entering Belarus without a visa and released. Belarus to date has not apologized or offered compensation for these killings.

In November 1996, the Lukashenko regime conducted an internationally unrecognized constitutional referendum, which resulted in the dissolution of Belarus' legitimate parliament and the centralization of power in the executive branch. In that same year, the Belarusian authorities provoked a diplomatic crisis by demanding and, in contravention of international law, eventually confiscating diplomatic residences in the Drozdy housing compound, including the U.S. Ambassador's residence. This action led the United States and other countries to withdraw their ambassadors from Belarus until the Belarusian authorities provided compensation and guarantees of respect for international law. In addition, Lukashenko used his newly centralized power to repress human rights throughout the country, including persecuting members of the illegally disbanded Belarusian Parliament (13th Supreme Soviet) and former members of his own government.

As a result of these events and tendencies, the United States announced in 1997 its decision to pursue a "selective engagement" policy with the Belarusian authorities. This policy included downgrading government-to-government contacts to the level of Assistant Secretary and below, as well as restricting U.S. Government assistance to the Belarusian authorities, with some exceptions including humanitarian assistance and exchange programs with state-run educational institutions. At the same time, the U.S. greatly expanded contacts with Belarusian civil society to promote democratization in Belarus.

Since 1997, despite growing U.S. engagement with Belarusian society, official bilateral relations have remained at a low level. In 2003, the United States, in tandem with the European Union, proposed a step-by-step, gradual approach to improve bilateral relations: the United States would respond positively to genuine efforts by Belarusian authorities to improve Belarus' human rights and electoral practices. Belarusian authorities failed to take the steps that warranted a positive response.

In October 2004, the U.S. Congress passed, and the President signed, the Belarus Democracy Act, which was

designed to promote democratization. In signing the act, President Bush noted that the authorities were turning Belarus into "a regime of repression in the heart of Europe," and set out the U.S. policy of working "with our allies and partners to assist those seeking to return Belarus to its rightful place among the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies." After a deeply flawed presidential election in March 2006, the U.S., acting with the EU, imposed travel restrictions and targeted financial sanctions against Belarusian officials implicated in human rights abuses and election fraud. The financial sanctions prohibited U.S. persons from engaging in financial transactions with named persons. On January 12, 2007, President Bush signed the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act, which repeated the call for targeted sanctions against Belarusian officials and continued assistance for democracy building activities. In August 2007, the U.S. widened application of travel restrictions on Belarusians to include directors and deputy directors of state enterprises. In November 2007, the Treasury Department froze the U.S. assets of Belarus' oil and chemical conglomerate, Belneftekhim, because of Alexander Lukashenko's control of the company. After the Belarusian authorities released the last of its political prisoners in August 2008, the U.S. suspended sanctions for six months on two Belneftekhim subsidiaries: Lakokraska and Polotsk Steklovolokno. The U.S. will assess the situation in Belarus at the end of this period and consider whether to extend the suspensions. To underscore U.S. support for the Belarusian people's democratic aspirations, the President and Secretary of State have frequently met with Belarusian pro-democracy activists, most recently during a December 2007 visit to Washington, DC of leaders of Belarusian pro-democracy political parties and NGO leaders.

U.S.-Belarusian Economic Relations

The U.S. Government continues to support the development of the private sector in Belarus and its transition to a free market economy. With the advent of the Lukashenko regime, Belarusian authorities have pursued a generally hostile policy toward the private sector and have refused to initiate the basic economic reforms necessary to create a market-based economy. Most of the Belarusian economy remains in government hands. The government, in particular the presidential administration, exercises control over most enterprises in all sectors of the economy. In addition to driving away major foreign investors, largely through establishment of a "Golden Share" requirement which allows government control in all companies with foreign investment, Belarus' centralization and command approach to the economy has left only a trickle of U.S. Government and international assistance programs in this field.

In February 1993, a bilateral trade treaty guaranteeing reciprocal most-favored-nation status entered into force. In January 1994, the U.S. and Belarus signed a bilateral investment treaty, which has been ratified by Belarus but has not been ratified by the U.S. Senate. In addition, due to continuing repression of labor rights in Belarus, the U.S. removed Belarus from the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) in 2000.

The United States has encouraged Belarus to conclude and adhere to agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on macroeconomic stabilization and related reform measures, as well as to undertake increased privatization and to create a favorable climate for business and investment. Although there has been some American direct private investment in Belarus, its development has been relatively slow. An Overseas Private Investment Corporation agreement was signed in June 1992 but has been suspended since 1995 because Belarus did not fulfill its obligations under the agreement. Belarus is eligible for Export-Import Bank short-term financing insurance for U.S. investments, but because of the adverse business climate, no projects have been initiated. The IMF granted Belarus standby credit in September 1995, but it fell off the program and did not receive the second tranche of funding, which had been scheduled for regular intervals throughout 1996. Since that time, Belarus has had an ongoing discussion to relaunch IMF-backed reforms, including an IMF Staff-Monitored Program (SMP) in 2001, which ended in September of that year with relatively disappointing results. In early 2004, Belarus halted negotiations on a follow-on stand-by arrangement due to disagreements with the IMF on macroeconomic policy and the claim that it did not require IMF funding.

Because of the unpredictable, and at times hostile, environment for investors, the U.S. Government currently does not encourage U.S. companies to invest in Belarus. Belarus' continuing problems with an opaque, arbitrary legal system, a confiscatory tax regime, cumbersome licensing system, price controls, and lack of an independent judiciary create a business environment not conducive to prosperous, profitable investment. In fact, several U.S. investors have left Belarus, including the Ford Motor Company.

U.S. Assistance to Belarus

U.S. Government assistance programs in Belarus support and encourage civil society development, access to independent information, pro-democracy forces, and the emergence of democracy in a very difficult and challenging environment. Most assistance is in the form of training and exchanges, as well as small grants and capacity-building for local non-governmental organizations. The U.S. also supports external radio and television broadcasting into Belarus, and external websites. Because the Belarusian authorities have not embraced market reforms, the U.S. is able to program only modest activities in support of private entrepreneurs. The U.S. provides some health program funding and supports international organizations' efforts in Belarus to combat the growing problem of trafficking in persons. With very limited exceptions, including humanitarian assistance and exchange programs involving state-

run educational institutions, bilateral assistance is not channeled through the Government of Belarus.

For FY 2007, the U.S. provided $11.34 million to Belarus. Assistance is provided to Belarus under the Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act (FSA) enacted in October 1992. U.S. Government assistance to Belarus peaked in 1994 at a level of approximately $76 million (consisting of more than $16 million in FREEDOM Support Act funds and some $60 million in funds from various U.S. Government agencies). However, U.S. assistance levels dropped sharply due to the lack of progress in democratic and economic reforms after Alexander Lukashenko came to power in mid-1994.

Belarus was previously a recipient of assistance under the U.S. Defense Department's Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program, whose objective is to reduce the threat posed to the United States by weapons of mass destruction remaining on the territory of the former Soviet Union by promoting denuclearization and demilitarization and preventing weapons proliferation. However, in February 1997, due to the Belarusian authorities' poor record on human rights, President Clinton de-certified Belarus, thus rendering the country ineligible for further CTR assistance and placing restrictions on other security-related assistance as well. The United States and Belarus signed a government-to-government umbrella agreement on CTR assistance in 1992, seven agency-to-agency CTR implementing agreements, and one memorandum of understanding and cooperation. The umbrella agreement was extended for one year in October 1997 but has now expired.

For more detailed information on U.S. Government assistance to Belarus, please see the annual reports to Congress on U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, which are available in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs section on the State Department's website. A fact sheet on Foreign Operations Appropriated Assistance to Belarus for FY 2007 can be found at http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/107776.htm Information is also available on the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) website at the address: http://www.usaid.gov.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 24, 2008

Country Description: Belarus became an independent republic on August 25, 1991, after the breakup of the Soviet Union. In November 1996, a constitutional referendum, not recognized by the international community, centralized power in the executive branch (president), headed by Aleksandr Lukashenka. Economic and political reform in Belarus has stalled or is being reversed under his authoritarian government. The Belarusian Government's human rights record remains very poor. President Lukashenka gained a third five-year term as president in March 2006, in an election that international observers judged to be seriously flawed. Democratic nations, including the U.S. and EU, condemned the subsequent governmental crackdown on peaceful protests in Minsk, and imposed visa restrictions and other sanctions on senior officials. Both Belarusian and Russian are official languages, and Russian is widely spoken throughout the country, particularly in the cities. Tourist facilities are not highly developed, but food and lodging in the capital and some regional centers are adequate.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Travelers must obtain a visa in advance to visit or transit through Belarus. Travelers who do not have a visa cannot register at hotels. U.S. citizens visiting or residing in Belarus are required to register with the local office of the Citizenship and Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior (formerly OVIR) within three business days after arrival. The registration fee is one National Minimum Tariff Unit (currently about $17). Failure to register can result in fines and difficulties when departing. U.S. citizens staying in hotels are automatically registered at check-in. Visa validity dates are strictly enforced; travelers should request visas of sufficient length to allow for changes in arrival and departure plans, and should carefully review the beginning and ending dates of their visas before traveling.

A valid exit visa is necessary to depart Belarus. Generally, the visa issued by a Belarusian Embassy or Consulate is valid for both entry and exit. Photocopies of visas may be helpful in the event of loss, but note that a copy of a visa will not be sufficient for entry or departure, as Belarusian border officials always require original travel documents.

Travelers who overstay their visa's validity—even for one day—will be prevented from leaving until they have been granted an extension by the Department of Citizenship and Migration. United States citizens without valid visas face delays in leaving Belarus and may have

trouble finding adequate accommodation. By Belarusian law, travelers with an expired visa may not check in at any hotel or other lodging establishment.

U.S. citizens traveling through Belarus to other countries are strongly advised that there is a transit visa requirement for entering and leaving Belarus. Transit visas are required even for travelers transiting on direct overnight trains with no stops or transfers on Belarusian territory. Transit visas should be obtained prior to any journey that requires travel through Belarus. Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Russian visas are no substitute for this transit visa. Most travel agencies, including those in Russia and CIS countries, as well as train ticket sales personnel, are often not aware of this visa requirement and may not seek a transit visa for a traveler unless instructed by the traveler to do so.

U.S. citizens attempting to transit Belarus without a valid Belarusian transit visa have been denied entry into the country and forcibly removed from trains. In some instances, local border and railway authorities have threatened passengers who did not possess a valid transit visa with jail or extorted "fines." American citizens are advised not to pay any border or railway officials for transit visas or "transit visa fines," as these officials are not authorized to issue such visas. Americans finding themselves in Belarus without transit visas, if confronted by border or train personnel, should request to be put in contact with consular officials at the U.S. Embassy in Minsk.

U.S. citizens traveling to Belarus via Russia are reminded that they must possess a Russian transit visa in addition to their Belarusian visa. Russian Embassies outside of the United States, including the Russian Embassy in Belarus, generally do not issue transit or tourist visas to Americans. Russian transit visas are not normally obtainable at Russian airports.

The Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons in the Republic of Belarus states that all foreign citizens may be granted permission for a temporary stay (up to 90 days within a chronological year), temporary residence (up to one year), or permanent residence. Belarusian Embassies and Consulates will issue visas for temporary stays. A temporary stay visa will allow the bearer to be present physically in Belarus for a maximum of 90 days within the 365-day period for which the visa is issued. Once an individual has spent 90 days in Belarus, at one time or through a combination of visits, he or she will not be eligible to receive another visa until the original 365-day period has passed.

Individuals who receive visas for a temporary stay, but wish to remain in Belarus for longer than 90 days, must apply for temporary or permanent residence with the Ministry of Interior. Individuals must make the application in Belarus within the 90 days allotted for a temporary stay. Permission for temporary residence can be granted to students, spouses, or close relatives of Belarusian citizens, or for "work, business, or other activities." Travelers may contact the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Minsk for information about application procedures for temporary or permanent residence. Every foreigner entering Belarus is required to fill out a migration card. This card should be retained for the whole period of stay and should be presented to the border authorities when exiting Belarus.

Foreign citizens without a valid Belarusian visa, migration card, or proper registration with the Department of Citizenship and Migration as a temporary visitor or resident can be subject to sanctions up to and including deportation under the provisions of the Code of Administrative Violations. Depending on the circumstances, deportees also can be banned from returning to Belarus for a period from one to ten years.

Foreign citizens visiting and transiting Belarus also should be prepared to demonstrate sufficient financial means to support their stay. For individuals staying in Belarus for less than one month, this amount is equal to approximately $15/day/person. For those staying for longer than one month, the requirements call for $375/month/person. Belarusian officials may request this proof of funds at the time of visa application, at the border, or during registration. According to the Ministry of Interior, cash, credit cards, paid hotel reservations, or a letter from an inviting party pledging full financial support are sufficient means to demonstrate financial wherewithal.

Belarus requires all foreign nationals (other than accredited diplomats) entering the country to purchase medical insurance at the port-of-entry, regardless of any other insurance they might have. Costs for this insurance will vary according to the length of stay. (Subject to change, current information puts costs at approximately $1 for a one or two day stay, $15 for a stay of up to 31 days, and $85 for a stay of one year.)

Travelers entering Belarus by air with more than 35 kilograms of luggage (77 pounds) will be charged 2 Euros per kilogram in excess of that limit. The fee must be paid in dollars or Euros. In accordance with current customs regulations, foreigners may enter Belarus with up to $10,000 and exit the country with up to $3,000 without submitting a written declaration. For additional information on customs rules for Belarus please see the Belarusian State Customs Committee official web site.

The Belarusian Government enforces a requirement for special permits to travel in "protected border zones." The Government of Belarus has not provided information defining the parameters of those zones. Travelers should be alert for warning signs, road barriers, and/or border guard posts, and are advised not to cross into such areas without permission.

Foreign missionaries may not engage in religious activities outside the institutions that invited them unless they have a religious worker visa.

One-year validity, multiple-entry, "spiritual activities" visas, which are required of foreign missionaries, can be difficult to get, even for faiths that are registered with the government and have a long history in the country. Approval often involves a difficult bureaucratic process.

A law enacted in 2002 required all religious groups and organizations, including recognized "traditional" religions such as Russian Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Judaism, Sunni Islam, and Lutheranism, to re-register; most organizations have done so. Unregistered religious groups may not legally gather for religious purposes. Many unregistered groups continue to meet, however, leaving them vulnerable to selective implementation of the law by authorities. The law also stipulates that only Belarusian citizens can head religious organizations in Belarus. In recent years, authorities have harassed, warned, fined, and briefly detained members of some unregistered and so-called "non-traditional" faiths for engaging in unsanctioned worship or proselytism. The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends that any U.S. citizen who chooses to attend a religious service of an unregistered religious group do so only after consulting with members of the group about the risk of harassment or possible arrest by local law enforcement authorities. U.S. citizens are also urged to contact the U.S. Embassy should they encounter any problems with authorities due to their participation in such services or events.

Naturalized U.S. citizens originally from Belarus do not automatically lose Belarusian citizenship upon naturalization. Such individuals retain Belarusian citizenship unless they take specific steps to renounce it. The Belarusian authorities will allow naturalized U.S. citizens from Belarus to enter the country without a valid Belarusian passport on a "certificate of return" issued by Belarusian Embassies and Consulates, but please note that a valid Belarusian passport will be required to leave the country. It can take two to four weeks to receive a new Belarusian passport. For additional information please consult with the Embassy of Belarus at http://www.belarusembassy.org. Belarusian citizens, including dual nationals, are subject to Belarusian laws requiring service in Belarus' armed forces, as well as other laws pertaining to passports and nationality. American-Belarusian dual nationals of military age who do not wish to serve in the Belarusian armed forces should contact the Embassy of Belarus in Washington, D.C. to learn more about an exemption or deferment from Belarusian military service before going to Belarus. Without this exemption or deferment document, they may not be able to leave Belarus without completing military service, or may be subject to criminal penalties for failure to serve.

Children born to Belarusian parent(s) before August 15, 2002, even if born in the United States and in possession of a U.S. passport, may not be issued a Belarusian visa for travel to Belarus. The Belarusian government considers these children to be Belarusian citizens until age 16, when they may choose to accept or reject that claim to citizenship. Instead of a visa, a "certificate of return" is issued that will allow the child to enter Belarus. It is imperative that parents of such children understand that, in order to leave the country, the child will be required to have a Belarusian passport if he/she does not already have one. It can take anywhere from two to four weeks to complete the application procedures and receive a new Belarusian passport. (Note: if the parent left Belarus on a series PP passport, given to Belarusians who reside abroad and have cancelled their local registration, then Belarus would not require the child to reject his/her claim to citizenship). For children born to one Belarusian parent and one foreign parent after 2002, the parents must by mutual consent agree to Belarusian citizenship for the child, regardless of the place of birth. If the parents cannot reach consensus, Belarus would only force Belarusian citizenship on a child in cases where the child would be left stateless.

Visit the Embassy of Belarus web site at http://www.belarusembassy.org for the most current visa information, or contact the Embassy of Belarus at 1619 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009, tel: 202-986-1606, fax: 202-986-1805, consul @belarusembassy.org.

Safety and Security: Both organized and spontaneous demonstrations occur in Belarus. Localized street disturbances relating to political events occur most frequently in Minsk or larger cities. In some instances, authorities may use force to disperse protesters; bystanders, including foreign nationals, may face the possibility of arrest, beating, or detention. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can sometimes become confrontational and escalate into violence. For this reason, it is recommended that American citizens avoid all demonstrations and protest gatherings.

Security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephones, and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. These sites are not always clearly marked and application of these restrictions is subject to interpretation.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Belarus has a moderate incidence of street crime. Though violent crime against foreigners is rare, criminals have been known to use force if met with resistance from victims.

Common street crimes, such as muggings and pickpocketings, occur most frequently near public transportation venues, near hotels frequented by foreigners, and/or at night in poorly lit areas.

American citizens and other foreigners in Belarus have also been the victims of car theft, car vandalism, and hotel and residential break-ins. Foreigners visiting nightclubs and discos should pay particular attention to their surroundings, as criminal elements may rob unsuspecting patrons after surreptitiously drugging their drinks. Travelers should keep a copy of their passport in a separate location from their original.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Minsk. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Minsk for assistance. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in Belarus are: 111 Fire and Rescue Squad, 102 Police, 103 Ambulance (Medical Emergency).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Belarus is limited. There is a severe shortage of basic medical supplies, including anesthetics, vaccines and antibiotics. Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at risk due to inadequate medical facilities. Travelers are encouraged to ensure that they bring an adequate supply of prescription medications in the event that there are delays in departing Belarus. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Belarus. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to Belarus on a 30 day visit. Long-term residents or students must obtain an HIV/AIDS test in Belarus and submit the results to the Department of Citizenship and Migration.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Belarus is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

American citizens on short-term visits to Belarus (up to 90 days) are permitted to drive with a valid U.S. state license. U.S. citizens should, therefore, always carry their passports with them to prove date of entry into the country in the event that police stop them. If residing in Belarus for more than 90 days, one should apply for a Belarusian driver's license. Drivers will be required to successfully complete a two-part test in Russian; the first part is a computer-based multiple-choice test on local driving rules, and the second part is a driving test. To receive a local driver's license, drivers will also need to complete a medical exam at a special medical clinic, which will include a general physical, a chest x-ray, and an eye exam.

Radar traps and road construction sites, both often unlit at night, are widespread. Except for a stretch of the main east-west highway, where the speed limit is 100 km/h (60 mph), the maximum speed limit on divided highways or main roads outside village, town or city limits is 90 km/h (55 mph). Speed limits in cities are 60 km/h unless marked and will usually range between 40 km/h and 70 km/h, with frequent radar traps. Visible and hidden dangers exist, including potholes, unlit or poorly lit streets, inattentive and dark-clothed pedestrians walking on unlit roads, drivers and pedestrians under the influence of alcohol, and disregard for traffic rules. Driving in winter is especially dangerous because of ice and snow. Driving with caution is urged at all times. Radio-dispatched taxi services are generally reliable, arrive promptly once called and usually offer the lowest fare. Most radio-dispatched taxis are metered, although fares can vary greatly and are considerably higher in the late evening and overnight hours. The use of informal taxis or "gypsy cabs" is not recommended.

Minsk has a clean, safe, and efficient subway system that easily reaches most of the city center. Service is stopped briefly during the early morning hours, but otherwise runs regularly throughout the day. Ticket prices are extremely low by western standards. Though their routes are extensive, buses and trolleys lack heating or cooling capabilities and are usually crowded.

Travelers on all public transportation should be wary of pickpockets and other petty crime. For travelers interested in car rental, only one major

western rental agency currently operates in Minsk. In general, rental car networks in Belarus are not well developed.

Travelers may experience significant delays (of several hours) in crossing the border by road into neighboring countries. Visit the web site of the Republic of Belarus National Tourism Agency at http://belarustourism.by.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Belarus, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Belarus' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Traveler's checks are not widely accepted in Belarus. Most hotels accept either American Express or Visa credit cards. In addition, one hotel in Minsk, "Planeta," provides cash from Visa credit cards during business hours. Travelers face arrest if they attempt to buy items with currency other than Belarusian rubles. Authorized currency exchange centers are widely available throughout major cities.

ATMs are also available for use, and it has become easier to use credit cards and debit cards in Belarus, especially in Minsk; however, this does not mean that it is safer to do so. There have been reports of instances in which U.S. citizens have had their card numbers "skimmed" and the money in their debit accounts stolen or their credit cards fraudulently charged. ("Skimming" is the theft of credit card information by an employee of a legitimate merchant or bank, manually copying down numbers or using a magnetic stripe reader.) In addition to skimming, the risk of physical theft of credit or debit cards also exists. To prevent such theft, the Embassy recommends that travelers keep close track of their personal belongings and only carry what is needed when out. If travelers choose to use credit cards, they should regularly check their account status to ensure its integrity.

Persons seeking to marry in Belarus should consult the information located on the Embassy web site at http://minsk.usembassy.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Belarusian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Belarus are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Access for U.S. consular officers to U.S. citizens in detention is often limited and/or delayed. Although U.S. citizens are able to obtain legal representation, there has been at least one case of delayed notification, hindered consular access, limited medical treatment, and trial behind closed doors.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Belarus are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Belarus. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Minsk at 46 Starovilenskaya Ulitsa; telephone (375) 17-210-12-83 or after hours (375) 17-226-16-01, fax (375) 17-234-78-53 or (375) 17-217-71-60 (consular section). The Consular Section may also be reached by email at ConsularMinsk@state.gov.

Intercountry adoption

February 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The Government of Belarus has not completed any U.S. adoptions of Belarusian children since October 2004. Although the Government of Belarus changed its adoption procedures in 2005, intercountry adoptions involving U.S. families have yet to proceed. Thus, the information in this flyer relates to how the process should work, according to Belarusian law, if and when the Government of Belarus again begins allowing U.S. adoptions.

The very small number of immigrant visas that the U.S. Government was able to issue to Belarusian orphans in Fiscal Year 2005 reflects adoptions approved in Belarus before the Belarusian government stopped processing adoptions. The Department of State encourages U.S. citizens contemplating adopting from Belarus to monitor closely the Important Notices page of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site for the most recent information on Belarusian adoptions.

The government of Belarus stresses that American citizens interested in adopting a child in Belarus should not travel to that country until the stipulated adoption procedures have been completed. Belarus requires post placement reports on Belarusian orphans for the first five years after an adoption.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Belarusian National Adoption Center
Ms. Natalia Pospelova, Director
Platonova Str. 22, 11 th Floor
Minsk, BELARUS
Tel: 375—17-232-6701
Fax: 375—17-231-0617

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: A prospective parent may be married, single, divorced, or widowed. A prospective parent must be at least 16 years older than the adoptive child. Single parents are permitted to adopt a child of either sex.

Residential Requirements: There are no residency requirements for Belarusian adoptions.

Time Frame: The adoption process in Belarus from start to finish generally takes 18 months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Although foreign adoption agencies are permitted to facilitate adoptions in Belarus, the actual adoption procedures are handled exclusively through Belarusian government bodies, while the foreign agency is restricted to a purely liaison role. Please review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/family for a list of agencies.

Adoption Fees: Adoptive parents can expect to pay $18,000 to $25,000 to complete an adoption in Belarus.

Adoption Procedures: Interested American citizens should find and work with a licensed adoption agency or provider that employs representatives or facilitators in Belarus. Because prospective parents are advised that they should not travel to Belarus until a suitable child has been selected for them, a representative in Belarus is absolutely essential in order to work through the adoption process. Applicants must send their completed application, together with Russian language translations of all documents, to the consular section of the Belarusian Embassy in Washington, D.C. After verifying and notarizing the documents, the Embassy transmits them to the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Minsk.

The consular department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Minsk checks to see that the application has been verified and properly notarized and then passes the application to the Ministry of Education in Minsk (Ministerstvo Narodnovo Obrazovaniya, or MNO). The MNO reviews the application and decides whether or not to allow the process of selecting a child for the applicant(s) to go forward. Once it has been established that there is no possibility of a child's adoption by a Belarusian family, the National Adoption Center (NAC) gains the consent of the child's guardian or orphanage director, the district (municipal) department of education, and the regional (oblast) department of education within a respective regional executive council and then initiates putting the child's name on the List of Children for Intercountry Adoption.

Identifying Foreign Prospective Adoptive Parents: Each child's case is then considered individually when the child is matched with foreign adoptive parents and the NAC forwards his/her case to the Council on Intercountry Adoption for its consideration. If the Council approves the adoption of the child to the prospective parents, the case is sent back to the NAC. The NAC will prepare the case for the Minister of Education's decision. If the Minister of Education personally approves it, the adoption case is forwarded to a regional court or the Minsk City Court (for Minsk children).

Foreign prospective adoptive parents are notified of the prospective match after it is approved by the Minister of Education. Belarusian authorities will also inform the prospective adoptive parents when their court hearing date has been set.

At this time point in the process, the prospective parents should contact the U.S. Embassy in Belarus. The U.S. Embassy is responsible for investigating whether the child meets the definition of "orphan" in the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act. This usually consists of an interview with the parents and adopted child as well as a review of the child's medical records and other documents. When the prospective parents arrive in Belarus, they will meet the child in the presence of a representative of the local guardianship and custody authority and then go to the appropriate regional court or to the Minsk City Court. The respective court then considers the case and rules for or against the adoption of the Belarusian child to foreign adoptive parents.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Post-Adoption Reporting Requirements: Belarusian law requires that adoptive parents register their child with the Belarusian consular office that covers the child's new place of residence. Parents should do this as soon as possible after they and the child have entered the United States. Belarusian law also requires that the appropriate social services agency in the child's new country of residence visit the child at least once a year for the first five years following the adoption and provide a report to the Government of Belarus. Parents of Belarusian adopted children may, however, choose to provide to the Belarusian embassy or consular office their own annual reports on the children's well being. Such reports serve to reassure the Government of Belarus that the United States and its citizens adequately care for and protect Belarusian adopted children.

Belarusian Citizenship: Under Belarusian law, children adopted from Belarus remain citizens of

Belarus at least until their 16th birthdays, notwithstanding the children's acquisition of a new citizenship in their new country.

When the child turns 16, the adoptive parents may apply to the Belarusian embassy in Washington to have the child's Belarusian citizenship terminated. Parents with more detailed questions concerning this process should contact the Belarusian embassy.

Embassy of the
Republic of Belarus
1619 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009
Tel: (202) 986-1606
fax: (202) 986-1805
Email: consul@belarusembassy.org
http://www.belarusembassy.org

Belarus also has a Consulate in New York at its UN Mission.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*.

U.S. Embassy Belarus
Consular Section, U.S. Embassy
46 Starovilenskaya St.
220002 Minsk, Belarus
Tel: 375-17-210-1283

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Belarus may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Belarus. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



BELGIUM

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Belgium

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 32,547 square kilometers (12,566 sq. mi.), about the size of Maryland.
Cities: Capital—Brussels (pop. 1,018,804). Other cities—Antwerp (466,203); Ghent (235,143); Charleroi (201,550); Liège (188,907); Bruges (116,982); and Namur (107,653).

People

Population: (2006) 10,511,382.
Annual population growth rate: (2006.) 0.7%.
Population density: 861 per sq. mi. Linguistic regions—(Dutch-speaking) Flanders 57.9%; (French-speaking) Wallonia 31.7%; (legally bilingual) Brussels Capital Region 9.7%; German-speaking 0.7%.
Religions: Predominantly Roman Catholic, with Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Anglican, Greek and Russian Orthodox, as well as secularism, "recognized" religions receiving government subsidies.
Languages: Dutch, French, German.
Education: Literacy—99%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarch.
Independence: 1830.
Constitution: 1994 (revised).
Government branches: Executive—King (head of state), Prime Minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—bicameral parliament (Senate and House of Representatives).
Political parties: Christian Democratic, Liberal, Socialist, Green, Vlaams Belang.
Suffrage: Over 18, compulsory.
Political subdivisions: Ten provinces, three regions, three communities, 589 municipalities.

Economy

GDP: (PPP, 2007) $369.57 billion.
Annual real growth rate: (2007) 2.8%.
Per capita income: (PPP, 2007) $35,200.
Natural resources: Coal.
Agriculture: (1% of GDP) Products—livestock, including dairy cattle, grain, cigarettes, milk, tobacco, potatoes, and other fruits and vegetables.
Industry: (24.3% of GDP) Types—engineering and metal products, motor vehicle assembly, transportation equipment, scientific instruments, processed food and beverages, chemicals, basic metals, textiles, glass, petroleum
Trade: Exports (2007)—$352.1 billion: transportation equipment, diamonds, metals and metal products, foodstuffs, chemicals. Export partners: Germany 19.7%, France 16.9%, Netherlands 12%, U.K. 7.9%, U.S. 6.2%, Italy 5.2%. Imports (2007)—$322.9 billion: Machinery and equipment, chemicals, diamonds, foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, transportation equipment, oil products. Import partners (2007): Netherlands 18.3%, Germany 17.3%, France 11.4%, U.K. 6.6%, Ireland 5.7%, U.S. 5.4%.

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Belgium is located in Western Europe, bordered by the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg, France, and the North Sea. Although generally flat, the terrain becomes increasingly hilly and forested in the southeast (Ardennes) region. Climate is cool, temperate, and rainy; summer temperatures average 77°F, winters average 45°F. Annual extremes (rarely attained) are 10°F and 100°F.

Geographically and culturally, Belgium is at a crossroads of Europe, and during the past 2,000 years has witnessed a constant ebb and flow of different races and cultures. Consequently, Belgium is one of Europe's true melting pots with Celtic, Roman, Germanic, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Austrian cul-

tures having made an imprint. Belgium is divided ethnically into the Dutch-speaking Flemings and French-speaking Walloons, the 70,000 residents of the eastern German cantons, and the bilingual capital of Brussels. The population density is the second highest in Europe, after the Netherlands.

HISTORY

Belgium derives its name from the Belgae, a Celtic tribe. The Belgae were forced to yield to Roman legions during the first century B.C. For some 300 years thereafter, what is now Belgium flourished as a province of Rome. But Rome's power gradually lessened. In about A.D. 300, Attila the Hun invaded what is now Germany and pushed Germanic tribes into northern Belgium. About 100 years later, the Germanic tribe of the Franks invaded and took possession of Belgium.

The northern part of present-day Belgium became an overwhelmingly Germanized and Germanic-Frankish-speaking area, whereas in the southern part people continued to be Roman and spoke derivatives of Latin. After coming under the rule of the Dukes of Burgundy and, through marriage, passing into the possession of the Hapsburgs, Belgium was occupied by the Spanish (1519-1713) and the Austrians (1713-1794).

Under these various rulers, and especially during the 500 years from the 12th to the 17th century, the great cities of Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, and Antwerp took turns at being major European centers for commerce, industry (especially textiles), and art. Flemish painting—from Van Eyck and Breugel to Rubens and Van Dyck—became the most prized in Europe. Flemish tapestries hung on castle walls throughout Europe.

Following the French Revolution, Belgium was invaded and annexed by Napoleonic France in 1795. Following the defeat of Napoleon's army at the Battle of Waterloo, fought just a few miles south of Brussels, Belgium was separated from France and made part of the Netherlands by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

In 1830, Belgium won its independence from the Dutch as a result of an uprising of the Belgian people. A constitutional monarchy was established in 1831, with a monarch invited in from the House of Saxe-Coburg Gotha in Germany.

Belgium was invaded by Germany in 1914 and again in 1940. Those invasions, plus disillusionment over postwar Soviet behavior, made Belgium one of the foremost advocates of collective security within the framework of European integration and the Atlantic partnership.

Since 1944, when British, Canadian, and American armies liberated Belgium, the country has lived in security and at a level of increased well-being.

Language, economic, and political differences between Dutch-speaking Flanders and Francophone Wallonia have led to increased divisions in Belgian society. The Industrial Revolution of the late 18th and the 19th century accentuated the linguistic North-South division. Francophone Wallonia became an early industrial boom area, affluent and politically dominant. Dutch-speaking Flanders remained agricultural and was economically and politically outdistanced by Brussels and Wallonia. The last 50 years have marked the rapid economic development of Flanders, resulting in a corresponding shift of political and economic power to the Flemish, who now constitute an absolute majority (58%) of the population.

Demonstrations in the early 1960s led to the establishment of a formal linguistic border in 1962, and elaborate rules made to protect minorities in linguistically mixed border areas. In 1970, Flemish and Francophone cultural councils were established with authority in matters of language and culture for the two-language groups. Each of the three economic regions—Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels—was granted a significant measure of political autonomy.

Since 1984, the German language community of Belgium (in the eastern part of Liège Province) has had its own legislative assembly and executive, which have authority in cultural, language, and subsequently educational affairs.

In 1988-89, the Constitution was again amended to give additional responsibilities to the regions and communities. The most sweeping change was the devolution of educational responsibilities to the community level. As a result, the regions and communities were provided additional revenue, and Brussels was given its own legislative assembly and executive.

Another important constitutional reform occurred in the summer of 1993, changing Belgium from a unitary to a federal state. It also reformed the bicameral parliamentary system and provided for the direct election of the members of community and regional legislative councils. The bilingual Brabant province, which contained the Brussels region, was split into separate Flemish and Walloon Brabant provinces. The revised Constitution came into force in 1994.

A parliamentary democracy, Belgium has been governed by successive coalitions of two or more political parties. The centrist Christian Democratic Party often provided the Prime Minister. In the 1999 general election, Belgian voters rejected Jean Luc Dehaene's longstanding coalition government of Christian Democrats and Socialists and voted into power a coalition led by Flemish Liberal Leader Guy Verhofstadt.

The first Verhofstadt government (1999-2003) was a six-party coalition between the Flemish and Francophone Liberals, Socialists, and Greens. It was the first Liberal-led coalition in generations and the first six-party coalition in 20 years. It also was the first time the Greens had participated in Belgium's federal government. In the general election of 2003, the Greens suffered significant losses, while the Socialists posted strong gains and the Liberals also



had modest growth in electoral support. Liberal Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt reconstituted the coalition as a four-party government in July 2003, with only the Liberals and Socialists in power.

In the 2007 general elections, the Flemish Christian Democratic CD&V recouped the lost ground, becoming the country's largest party. The two Socialist parties and Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt's Open VLD lost support.

The Francophone Liberal MR became the largest party of Wallonia and Brussels. Following the election, the King tasked CD&V leader Yves Leterme with forming a new government. The ruling coalition is composed of Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V), Francophone Christian Democrats (CDH), Flemish Liberals (Open VLD), Francophone Liberals (MR), and the Francophone Socialists (PS).

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

National Government

Belgium is a hereditary constitutional monarchy. The current monarch is King Albert II, who took the oath of office on August 9, 1993. As titular head of state, the King plays a largely ceremonial and symbolic role in the nation. His primary political function is to designate a political leader to attempt to form a new cabinet following either an election, the resignation of a government, or a parliamentary vote of no confidence. The King is seen as playing a symbolic unifying role, representing a common national Belgian identity.

The Belgian Parliament consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The House of Representatives has 150 directly elected members. The Senate has 71 elected members. The executive branch of the government consists of ministers and secretaries of state (junior ministers) drawn from the political parties that form the government coalition. The number of ministers is limited to 15, and they have no seat in Parliament. The Council of Ministers is chaired by the Prime Minister and consists of the ministerial heads of the executive departments. The allocation of powers between the Parliament and the Council of Ministers is somewhat similar to the United States—the Parliament enacts legislation and appropriates funds—but the Belgian Parliament does not have the same degree of independent power that the U.S. Congress has. Members of political parties represented in the government are expected to support all bills presented by the Cabinet. The House of Representatives is the "political" body that votes on motions of confidence and budgets. The Senate deals with long-term issues and votes on an

equal footing with the Chamber on a limited range of matters, including constitutional reform bills and international treaties.

The parties in the current House are the Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V) and New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), 30 seats; Francophone Liberals (MR), 23 seats; Francophone Socialists (PS), 20 seats; Flemish Liberals (Open VLD), 18 seats; Flemish Far Right (VB), 17 seats; Flemish Socialists (SP.A) and Spirit 14 seats; Francophone Christian Democrats (CDH), 10 seats; Francophone Greens (Ecolo) 8 seats; List Dedecker, 5 seats; Flemish Greens (Groen!) 4 seats; Francophone Far Right (FN), 1 seat.

The Prime Minister and his ministers administer the government and the various public services. Ministers must defend their policies and performance in person before the House.

The Council of Ministers

At the federal level, executive power is wielded by the Council of Ministers. The Prime Minister chairs the Council. Each minister heads a governmental department. No single party or party "family" across linguistic lines holds an absolute majority of seats in Parliament. Consequently, the Council of Ministers reflects the weight of political parties that constitute the governing coalition in the House.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **ALBERT II**
Prime Min.: **Yves LETERME**
Vice Prime Min.: **Patrick DEWAEL**
Vice Prime Min.: **Joelle MILQUET**
Vice Prime Min.: **Laurette ONKELINX**
Vice Prime Min.: **Didier REYNDERS**
Vice Prime Min.: **Jo VANDEURZEN**
Min. of Civil Service & Public Enterprise: **Inge VERVOTTE**
Min. of Climate & Energy: **Paul MAGNETTE**
Min. of Defense: **Pieter DE CREM**
Min. of Development Cooperation: **Charles MICHEL**
Min. of Employment: **Joelle MILQUET**
Min. of Enterprise & Streamlining: **Vincent VAN QUICKENBORNE**
Min. of Finance & Institutional Reform: **Didier REYNDERS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Karel DE GUCHT**
Min. of Interior: **Patrick DEWAEL**
Min. of Justice & Institutional Reform: **Jo VANDEURZEN**
Min. of Migration & Asylum Policy: **Annemie TURTELBOOM**
Min. of Pensions & Social Integration: **Marie ARENA**
Min. of Self-Employed & Agriculture: **Sabine LARUELLE**
Min. of Social Affairs & Public Health: **Laurette ONKELINX**
Governor, National Bank: **Guy QUADEN**
Ambassador to the US: **Dominique STRUYE de Swielande**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Jan GRAULS**

The Belgian embassy is located at 3330 Garfield Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-333-6900; fax 202-333-3079).

The Electoral System

The number of seats in the House of Representatives is constitutionally set at 150, elected from 11 electoral districts. Each district is given a number of seats proportional to its total population (not number of eligible voters) ranging from 4 for the Luxembourg district to 24 for Antwerp. The districts are divided along linguistic lines: 5 Flemish, 5 Walloon, and the bilingual district of Brussels.

The Senate consists of 71 seats. For electoral purposes, Senators are divided into three categories: 40 directly elected; 21 elected by the community parliaments; and 10 "coopted" Senators. For the election of the 25 Flemish and 15 francophone directly elected Senators, the country is divided into three electoral districts—Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels Capital Region. Of the 21 Senators representing the communities, 10 are elected by the Flemish Parliament, 10 by the French Community Parliament, and 1 by the German-language Parliament.

The remaining category, the 10 "coopted" senators, are elected by the first two groups of senators. The princes and princesses of the royal line are also members of the Senate—currently Prince Phillippe, Prince Laurent, and Princess Astrid.

In Belgium, there are no "national" parties operating on both sides of the linguistic border. Consequently, elections are a contest among Flemish parties in Dutch-speaking Flanders and Francophone parties in Wallonia. Only in officially bilingual Brussels can voters choose from either Flemish or Francophone parties. Several months before an election, the parties form a list of candidates for each district. Parties are allowed to place as many candidates on their "list" as there are seats available. The formation of the list is an internal process that varies with each party. The number of seats each party receives and where on a list a candidate is placed, or how many individual votes a candidate receives, determines whether a candidate is elected. Since no single party holds an absolute majority in Parliament, after each election the strongest party or "party family" will create a coalition with other parties to form the government. Voting is compulsory in Belgium; more than 90% of eligible voters participate. Belgium has 25 seats in the European Parliament.

Belgium's Linguistic Divide

In August 1980, the Belgian Parliament passed a devolution bill and amended the Constitution, establishing "Community autonomy." As a result, in Flanders, the Flemish Parliament and government are competent for both regional and community affairs; in Wallonia, the Francophone Community Parliament and government are competent for community affairs, while the Walloon Regional Parliament and government are responsible for regional affairs. Subsequent constitutional reform established a community Parliament and government governments for the German-speaking cantons in 1983, and a regional Parliament and government for the Brussels Capital Region in 1989. The regional and community governments have jurisdiction over transportation, public works, water policy, cultural matters, education,

public health, environment, housing, zoning, economic and industrial policy, agriculture, foreign trade, and oversight of provincial and local governments. They rely on a system of revenue sharing with the federal government for most of their funds. They have the authority to levy taxes (mostly surcharges) and contract loans. Moreover, they have obtained treaty-making power for those issues coming under their respective jurisdictions.

Of total public spending—interest payments not considered—more than 40% is authorized by the regions and communities.

Provincial and Local Government

In addition to three regions and three cultural communities, Belgium also is divided into 10 provinces and 589 municipalities.

The provincial governments are primarily administrative units and are politically weak. A governor appointed by the King presides over each province. Each governor is supported by an elected Provincial Council of 47 to 84 members (depending on the size of the province), which sits only four weeks a year. Municipal governments, on the other hand, are vigorous political entities with significant powers and a history of independence dating from medieval times. Many national politicians originate from municipal political bases; and many often double as mayor or alderman in their hometowns in addition to their federal and regional political positions.

Political Parties

From the creation of the Belgian state in 1830 and throughout most of the 19th century, two political parties dominated Belgian politics: the Catholic Party and the Liberal Party. In the late 19th century the Socialist Party arose, representing the emerging industrial working class. These three groups still dominate Belgian governments, but they have evolved substantially in character and face new electoral challengers.

The Christian Democratic Parties. After World War II, the Catholic (subsequently Christian Democratic) Party severed its formal ties with the Church. It became a mass party of the center (more like a political party in the United States). In 1968, the Christian Democratic Party responded to linguistic tensions in the country by dividing into two independent parties, now known as the Center Democratic and Humanistic (CDH) in Francophone Wallonia and the Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V) in Flanders. The two parties share similar policies, but not on institutional issues. The CD&V is the country's largest party, while the CDH is among the smaller parties.

The Socialist Parties. The modern Belgian Socialist parties are labor- and city-based parties. Despite the post-World War II dominance of the Christian Democrats, the Socialists headed several postwar governments. The Socialists also split along linguistic lines in 1978. The francophone Socialists dominate the cities and towns of Wallonia's industrial basin. The Flemish Socialists' support is less concentrated. The two parties are of almost equal strength.

The Liberal Parties. In modern times, the Liberal Parties in Belgium have chiefly appealed to business people, property owners, shopkeepers, and the self-employed. In American terms, the Liberals' positions could be considered to reflect a more conservative free market oriented economic ideology. This non-interventionist ideology is reflected also in the parties' strong support for gay marriage, homosexual adoption, and euthanasia. The two current Liberal parties were formed in 1971, after the original all-Belgium Liberal Party split along linguistic lines. They are the Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD) (Prime Minister Verhofstadt's party) in Flanders and the Reform Movement (MR) in Wallonia. The latter is the largest party in Wallonia and Brussels.

Greens. The Flemish (Groen!) and Francophone (ECOLO) ecologist parties made their Parliamentary breakthrough in 1981. Following significant gains in the 1999 general elections, the two Green parties joined a federal coalition cabinet for the first time in their history in Prime Minister Verhofstadt's first six-party coalition government. The parties experienced significant losses in the May 2003 election, however; with ECOLO winning only four seats in the Chamber and AGALEV failing to win any seats. They were thus excluded from the new coalition formed by returning Liberal Prime Minister Verhofstadt in 2003. Following the election, AGALEV changed its name to "Groen!." The two parties made a slight recovery in the 2007 general elections.

The Linguistic Parties. A postwar phenomenon in Belgium was the emergence of linguistic-based parties, which were formed to defend the cultural, political, and economic interests of one of the linguistic groups or regions of Belgian society.

The far-right Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest) is the most militant Flemish regional party, with a separatist, anti-immigration, law and order platform. The Vlaams Belang was formerly called the Vlaams Bloc, until a 2004 high court ruling confirmed a lower court verdict that the Bloc was a "racist" party. Faced with further legal problems, the Bloc disbanded and resurrected itself as the Vlaams Belang, with the same party leaders and basically the same radical party policy. The Vlaams Belang was the second most popular party in the 2007 general elections, with 19% of the Flemish vote.

In Brussels and Wallonia, the small far-right Front National (FN) managed to hold on to its only House seat in the 2007 general elections.

The now-defunct Volksunie Party (VU) was the most militant Flemish regional party in Parliament in the 1950s and 1960s, drawing nearly one-quarter of Belgium's Dutch-speaking electorate at the height of its popularity. However, as much of the VU's nationalist agenda was realized through subsequent constitutional reforms that saw the devolution of significant power to the Regions, the

VU suffered severe setbacks. It ultimately splintered into a traditional Flemish nationalist faction, the NVA (currently in alliance with the CD&V), and a more liberal faction, Spirit (in an electoral alliance with the Flemish Socialist Party).

Labor Unions

Belgium is a highly unionized country, and organized labor has been a powerful influence in politics, although less so in recent elections. About 53% of all private sector and public service employees are labor union members. Unlike many American unions, Belgian labor unions take positions on a wide range of political issues, including education, public finance, defense spending, environmental protection, women's rights, abortion, and other issues. They also provide a range of services, including the administration of unemployment benefits and health insurance programs.

Belgium's three principal trade union organizations are the Confederation of Catholic Labor Unions (CSC/ACV), the Belgian Socialist Confederation of Labor (FGTB/ABVV), and the Confederation of Liberal Labor Unions (CGSLB/ACLVB). Until the 1950s, the FGTB/ABVV was the largest confederation; since then, however, the CSC/ACV has become the leading trade union force.

The Confederation of Catholic Labor Unions (CSC/ACV). Organized in 1912, the CSC/ACV rejected the Marxist concept of "class struggle" and seeks to achieve a just social order based on Christian principles. The CSC/ACV is not formally linked to its party political counterparts, the Christian Democratic parties (CD&V and CDH) but exercises influence in their councils. The CSC/ACV is the leading union in all Flemish provinces and in Wallonia's Luxembourg province. It has almost equal strength with the socialist confederation in the Brussels area.

The Belgian Socialist Confederation of Labor (FGTB/ABVV). The FGTB/ABVV derives from the Socialist Trade Union Movement, established in the late 19th century in Walloon industrial areas, Brussels, and urban areas of Flanders. Today, the FGTB/ABVV is the leading union in the Hainaut, Namur, and Liège provinces and matches the CSC/ACV in Brussels.

The Confederation of Liberal Labor Unions (CGSLB/ACLVB). With 240,000 members, this is the smallest of the major union groups. Drawing primarily from management positions, the Brussels-based CGLB/ACVB is Belgium's most probusiness union.

Current Issues

Belgium is a member of the European Economic and Monetary Union. Budgetary issues, the aging population, and the low employment rate remain key concerns of the government.

Belgium's reaction to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks was strong and supportive. For example, Belgium played a key role in helping to obtain EU-wide agreement on a European arrest warrant and in facilitating extradition of terrorist suspects. In support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Belgium contributed a navy frigate in the Mediterranean, AWAC crews for surveillance flights over the United States, as well as aircraft for humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Belgium has contributed ground troops to ISAF since 2002 and provides humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to both Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2006, Belgium sent about 400 peacekeepers to Lebanon in support of the UN mission there.

Current issues before the government include improving the climate for foreign investment, dealing with rising health care costs, and adjusting the federal social security system to a rapidly aging population.

Belgium continues to increase its counter-terrorism capabilities by adding domestic legislative, judicial, intelligence, and law enforcement tools that increase its ability to prevent or respond to terrorism. The government also cooperates closely with other European states and the United States in investigating cases of international terrorism. Belgium operates within UN and EU frameworks concerning the freezing of terrorist assets, and in 2007 enacted a domestic legal framework to act independently.

ECONOMY

Belgium, a highly developed market economy, belongs to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a group of leading industrialized democracies. With a geographic area about equal to that of Maryland, and a population of 10.5 million, Belgian per capita GDP ranks among the world's highest. In 2007, the per capita income (PPP) was $35,200. The federal government has managed to present balanced budgets in recent years, but public debt remains high, at 91% of 2007 GDP. GDP growth in 2007 was 2.8%.

Densely populated Belgium is located at the heart of one of the world's most highly industrialized regions. The first country to undergo an industrial revolution on the continent of Europe in the early 1800s, Belgium developed an excellent transportation infrastructure of ports, canals, railways, and highways to integrate its industry with that of its neighbors. One of the founding members of the European Community (EC), Belgium strongly supports deepening the powers of the present-day European Union to integrate European economies further.

With exports equivalent to over two-thirds of GNP, Belgium depends heavily on world trade. Belgium's trade advantages are derived from its central geographic location and a highly skilled, multilingual, and productive work force.

The Belgian industrial sector can be compared to a complex processing machine: It imports raw materials and semi-finished goods that are further processed and re-exported. Except for its coal, which is no longer economical to exploit, Belgium has

virtually no natural resources. Nonetheless, most traditional industrial sectors are represented in the economy, including steel, textiles, refining, chemicals, food processing, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, electronics, and machinery fabrication. Despite the heavy industrial component, services account for 74.6% of GDP. Agriculture accounts for only 1.4% of the GDP.

Belgian Economy in the 20th Century

For 200 years through World War I, French-speaking Wallonia was a technically advanced, industrial region, while Dutch-speaking Flanders was predominantly agricultural. This disparity began to fade during the interwar period. As Belgium emerged from World War II with its industrial infrastructure relatively undamaged, the stage was set for a period of rapid development, particularly in Flanders. The postwar boom years contributed to the rapid expansion of light industry throughout most of Flanders, particularly along a corridor stretching between Brussels and Antwerp (now the second-largest port in Europe after Rotterdam), where a major concentration of petrochemical industries developed.

The older, traditional industries of Wallonia, particularly steelmaking, began to lose their competitive edge during this period, but the general growth of world prosperity masked this deterioration until the 1973 and 1979 oil price shocks sent the economy into a period of prolonged recession. In the 1980s and 1990s, the economic center of the country continued to shift northward to Flanders.

Foreign Investment

Foreign investment contributed significantly to Belgian economic growth in the 1960s. In particular, U.S. firms played a leading role in the expansion of light industrial and petrochemical industries in the 1960s and 1970s. The Belgian Government encourages new foreign investment as a means to promote employment. With regional devolution, Flanders, Brussels, and Wallonia now have substantial autonomy in courting potential foreign investors, as each deems appropriate.

Foreign direct investment totaled more than $354 billion (cumulative) in 2006. U.S. and other foreign companies in Belgium account for approximately 11% of the total work force, with the U.S. share at about 6%. U.S. companies are heavily represented in the chemical sector, automotive assembly, and petroleum refining. A number of U.S. service industries followed in the wake of these investments—banks, law firms, public relations, accounting, and executive search firms.

The resident American community in Belgium now exceeds 20,000. Attracted by the EU 1992 single-market program, many U.S. law firms and lawyers have settled in Brussels since 1989.

Monetary

On May 1, 1998, Belgium became a first-tier member of the European Monetary Union. Belgium switched from the Belgian franc (BF) to the Euro as its currency after January 1, 2002.

Trade

About 78% of Belgium's trade is with fellow EU member states. Given this high percentage, Belgium seeks to diversify and expand trade opportunities with non-EC countries. Belgium ranks as the 11th-largest market for the export of U.S. goods and services. If goods in transit to other European countries are excluded, Belgium ranks as the 12th-largest market for U.S. goods.

Bilaterally, there are few points of friction with the U.S. in the trade and economic area. The Belgian authorities are, as a rule, anti-protectionist and try to maintain a hospitable and open trade and investment climate. As a result, the U.S. Government focuses its market-opening efforts on the EU Commission and larger member states. Moreover, the Commission negotiates on trade issues for all member states, which, in turn lessens bilateral trade disputes with Belgium.

Employment

The social security system, which expanded rapidly during the prosperous 1950s and 1960s, includes a medical system, unemployment insurance coverage, child allowances, invalid benefits, and other benefits and pensions. With the onset of a recession in the 1970s, this system became an increasing burden on the economy and accounted for much of the government budget deficits. The national unemployment figures mask considerable differences between Flanders and Wallonia. Unemployment in Wallonia is mainly structural, while in Flanders it is cyclical. Flanders' unemployment level equals only half that of Wallonia. The southern region continues a difficult transition out of sunset industries (mainly coal and steel), while sunrise industries (chemicals, high-tech, and services) dominate in Flanders.

Belgium's unemployment rate was 7% in 2007. A total of 4.4 million people make up Belgium's labor force. The majority of these people (73%) work in the service sector. Belgian industry claims 25% of the labor force and agriculture only 2%. As in other industrialized nations, pension and other social entitlement programs have become a major concern as the "baby boom" generation approaches retirement.

Budget

Although Belgium is a wealthy country, public expenditures far exceeded income for many years, and taxes were not diligently pursued. The Belgian Government reacted with poor macroeconomic policies to the 1973 and 1979 oil price hikes by hiring the redundant work force into the public sector and subsidizing industries like coal, steel, textiles, glass, and shipbuilding, which had lost their international competitive edge. As a result, cumulative government debt reached 121% of GDP by the end of the 1980s. However, thanks to Bel-

gium's high personal savings rate, the Belgian Government financed the deficit from mainly domestic savings, minimizing the deleterious effects on the overall economy.

The federal government ran a 7.1% budget deficit in 1992 at the time of the EU's Treaty of Maastricht, which established conditions for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) that led to adoption of the common Euro currency on January 1, 2002. Among other criteria spelled out under the Maastricht treaty, the Belgian Government had to attain a budget deficit of no greater than 3% of GDP by the end of 1997; Belgium achieved this, with a total budget deficit in 2001 (just prior to implementation of the Euro currency) that amounted to 0.2% of GDP. The government has balanced the budget every year since. Belgium's accumulated public debt remains high, but the liberal-socialist coalition government has paid it down to 91% of 2007 GDP.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Concert of Nations sanctioned the creation of Belgium in 1830 on the condition that the country remains strictly neutral. During the two World Wars, Belgium tried but was unable to follow a policy of neutrality due to the German invasions. In 1948, Belgium signed the Treaty of Brussels with Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, and a year later became one of the founding members of NATO.

Belgium remains a strong proponent of both NATO and European defense efforts. Belgium also is a strong advocate of strengthening economic and political integration within the EU. Having federalized their own country, many Belgians view themselves as the ultimate "European federalists."

Both NATO (since 1966) and the EU have their headquarters in Brussels; SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO's military headquarters) is in the south of the country, near Mons.

Belgium supported the expansion of NATO and EU membership to the new democracies of central and eastern Europe and is actively engaged in the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe. Belgium served as the Chair-in-Office of the OSCE in 2006. Belgium sits on the United Nations Security Council during 2007-2008.

U.S.-BELGIAN RELATIONS

The United States and Belgium are good friends and allies, despite occasional disagreements on a limited number of foreign policy issues. Good will and affection for Americans continues as a result of the U.S. role during and after the two World Wars, which was exhibited in 2004 during the 60th anniversary commemorations of the Battle of the Bulge and the liberation of Belgium. Continuing to celebrate cooperative U.S. and Belgian relations, 2007 marks the 175tth anniversary of the nations' relationship.

The U.S. appreciates Belgian activism in international affairs, including its participation in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, its reconstruction and development assistance to Iraq, its peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and Lebanon, its frequent provision of airlift in international crises, and its hosting of 2005 and 2007 transatlantic dialogues between European foreign ministers and the Secretary of State. During the January 17, 2006 visit by Prime Minister Verhofstadt, President Bush thanked him for his "leadership" in helping "the people of the Congo realize their full potential." The U.S. continues to believe that Belgium could be even more active in sharing international security concerns.

As an outward-looking nation, Belgium works closely with the United States bilaterally and in international and regional organizations to encourage economic and political cooperation and assistance to developing countries. Belgium has welcomed hundreds of U.S. firms to its territory, many of which have their European headquarters there.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRUSSELS (E) 27 Blvd. du Regent, 1000 Brussels, APO/FPO APO AE 09710, (32-2) 508-2111, Fax (32-2) 511-2725, Workweek: E: 9-6 JAS 8-5, Website: Brussels.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Elizabeth Hamilton
AMB OMS:	Diane Mooney
ECO/COM:	Richard Eason
FCS:	Paul Kullman
HRO:	Leonardo Osorio
AMB:	Sam Fox
CON:	Colwell Whitney
DCM:	Wayne Bush
PAO:	Kathleen Boyle
GSO:	Robert Hurlbert
RSO:	Kevin Bauer
AGR:	Resident In The Hague
CLO:	Sylvia Shepard And Dianna Watson
DAO:	Daniel Fagundes
DEA:	James C. Kabel
FAA:	Anthony Fazio
FMO:	Gary Herbst
ICASS Chair:	Jonathan Bensky
IMO:	Jan Cote
IPO:	Neeru Lal
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISO:	James Ryan
POL:	Marilynn Gurian

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DCM OMS:	Kathy Stewart
AMB OMS:	James Bryant
ECO:	Peter Chase
FCS:	Jonathan Bensky
HHS:	David Hohman
HRO:	Leonardo Osorio
AMB:	C. Boyden Gray
CON:	Colwell Whitney
DCM:	Christopher Murray
COM:	Jonathan Bensky
GSO:	Robert Hurlbert
RSO:	Kevin Bauer
AGR:	Debra Henke
AID:	Jonathan Addleton
APHIS:	Peter Fernandez
DEA:	Thomas Scarantino
ICASS Chair:	Jonathan Bensky
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USNATO (M) Blvd Leopold III, 1110 Brussels, Belgium, APO/FPO PSC 81 Box 200, APO AE 09724, (32-2) 724-3111, Fax +32 2 724 3440, Workweek: 09:00–18:00, Website: http://nato.usmission.gov.

DCM OMS: Paula Hart
MGT: Robert A. Glacel
DCM: Richard Olson
RSO: Kevin Bauer
ICASS Chair: Please See U.S. Embassy Brussels
IPO: Kenneth Spaulding
IRS: Please See U.S. Embassy Brussels
ISO: Timothy Williams
ISSO: Jay Biddulph

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 3, 2008

Country Description: Belgium is a highly developed and stable democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: Belgium is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Belgium for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. Sufficient funds and a return airline ticket are required. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. For further information concerning entry requirements, contact the Embassy of Belgium at 3330 Garfield Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 333-6900; or one of the Belgian Consulates General in Atlanta, Los Angeles, or New York. Visit the Belgian Embassy web site at http://www.diplobel.org/usa for the most current visa information.

Belgian law requires that everyone carry some form of official identification at all times, which must be displayed upon request to any Belgian police official. A U.S. passport suffices for these purposes. See the section on "Special Circumstances" below for information on new business visitor and employee registration requirements.

Safety and Security: Belgium remains largely free of terrorist incidents. Belgian law enforcement and security officials, in close cooperation with neighboring countries, maintain a solid anti-terrorism effort and a peaceful environment for tourists and business. However, like other countries that are members of the Schengen Agreement of free cross-border movement, Belgium's open borders with its European neighbors allow the possibility for terrorist groups to enter/exit the country with anonymity.

Prior police approval is required for public demonstrations in Belgium, and police oversight is routinely provided to ensure adequate security for participants and passers-by. Nonetheless, situations may develop that could pose a threat to public safety. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid areas where public demonstrations are taking place.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Belgium remains relatively free of violent crime, but low-level street crime is common. Visitors should always be watchful and aware of their surroundings, however, because muggings, purse snatchings, and pick pocketing occur frequently, particularly in the major cities. Transportation hubs like the Metro (subway) and train stations are also frequented by thieves who take advantage of disoriented travelers who are carrying luggage. In Brussels, pick pocketing, purse snatching, and theft of light luggage and laptops are common at the three major train stations—the North Station (Noordstation or Gare du Nord), the Central Station (Centraal Station or Gare Central) and especially at the South Station (Zuidstation or Gare du Midi). The latter is a primary international train hub, and travelers are advised to pay very close attention to their personal belongings when in the station. Common ploys are to distract the victim by spraying shaving cream or another substance on his or her back or asking for directions while an accomplice steals the luggage. It is a good idea to remain in physical contact with hand luggage at all times, and not to place carry-on luggage on overhead racks in trains.

Another growing problem, especially in Brussels, is theft from vehicles, both moving and parked. Do not leave valuables in plain sight where a thief may spot them. Thieves will sometimes position themselves at stop lights to scan for valuables in stopped cars. If they see a purse or other valuable item they break the window and steal the item while the victim is stunned. Expensive car stereos and GSP navigational devices are often stolen from parked cars. Always drive with windows up and doors locked.

Travelers to Brussels should be aware that small groups of young men sometimes prey on unwary tourists, usually at night and often in Metro stations. Items such as expensive mobile phones and MP3 players are often the target. Travelers should carry only a minimum amount of cash, credit cards, and personal identification. Wearing expensive jewelry and watches is discouraged.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or

friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical facilities are widely available in Belgium. The large university hospitals can handle almost every medical problem. Hospitals in Brussels and Flemish-speaking Flanders will probably have English-speaking staff. Hospitals in French-speaking Wallonia may not have staff members who are fluent in English, however. The Embassy Consular Section maintains a list of English-speaking doctors, which can be found on the Embassy web site at http://brussels.usembassy.gov/medical_facilities.html. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Belgium is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Belgian urban highways are generally well built and maintained with extensive lighting systems, but rain and fog often reduce visibility. Rural roads are less likely to be illuminated at night. Belgian rules for right-of-way differ from those in the U.S., and new drivers should thoroughly understand these rules before driving in Belgium. For instance, traffic coming from the right generally has priority at uncontrolled intersections and roundabouts, even if coming from a smaller street. The maximum speed limit on Belgian highways is 120 kilometers (72 miles) per hour, but is not always posted except at Belgium's borders and on roads leaving major airports. The maximum speed in urban areas is normally 50 km (30 miles) per hour. Claims of ignorance may not prevent a significant fine for speeding, which can also lead to the vehicle's being impounded if the driver is unable to pay the fine on the spot. Belgian police also conduct breath analysis checks for alcohol use, particularly at night and during major holidays.

Roadside assistance and information on road conditions are available in English from Touring Mobilis, tel: 0900 10280. Belgian police will also provide information on road conditions, tel: 02-642-6666. Visit the website of Belgium's national tourist office at http://www.visitbelgium.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Belgium's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Belgium's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: While most forms of monetary transactions are available (cash, credit cards), U.S. money orders cannot be negotiated in Belgium. Personal checks may only be cleared through a bank at which a person holds an account and clearance can take from two to four weeks. Banks and exchange facilities may refuse U.S. dollar denominations of $50 and $100 if they are not equipped with devices to identify counterfeit currency. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are widespread in Belgium and accept most U.S. ATM cards to withdraw funds. Travelers seeking to purchase Euros are more likely to find a more favorable exchange rate at banks than at money exchange facilities located at tourist locations, train stations, and airports. Please see our Customs Information.

Non-EU citizens visiting Belgium and staying in a private residence are required by Belgian law to register with local Commune authorities within three days of their arrival. Any change in visa or resident status must also be requested through Commune authorities and must be completed prior to the expiration of the current status. Given the requirements to change status in Belgium, it is nearly impossible to do so within the 90 days permitted to remain in Belgium without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program.

New Business Visitor and Employee Registration Requirement: Since April 1, 2007 non-Belgian employers and self-employed persons or their employees who carry out short term assignments in Belgium must declare these activities in advance.

This mandatory "Limosa" declaration applies to: (1) Employees and apprentices, who come to Belgium to execute certain temporary work and who, because of the nature of their short term assignment, are not subject to the Belgian social security system; (2) Self-employed people and self-employed apprentices who come to work in Belgium temporarily, irrespective of whether they are subject to the Belgian social security system. Some exceptions to this general obligation exist. Certain persons may be exempted, especially for short-term assignments. For more information about the Limosa declaration, visit https://www.socialsecurity.be/foreign/en/employer_limosa/home.html. For more information about working in Belgium, please see http://www.employment.belgium.be/home.aspx.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Belgian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Belgium are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime that is prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Belgium are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Belgium. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Brussels is located at 25 Boulevard du Regent. The telephone number from the U.S. is 011-32-2-508-2111. Within Belgium, the telephone number is 02-508-2111. The Embassy's fax number is 02-511-2725.

The Consular Section's fax number is 02-513-0409. The American Citizen Services Unit of the Consular Section is open from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except for American and Belgian holidays. Further information can be obtained at the Embassy's web site at http://brussels.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Belgium is not a country of origin for intercountry adoption.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate only one immigrant visa was issued to a Belgian orphan in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: Residents of the Flemish-speaking part of Belgium should contact:

Kind en Gezin
Hallepoortlaan 27
1060 Brussels
Tel.: (02) 533 1476

Residents of the French-speaking part of Belgium should contact:

Autorité Communautaire pour l'Adoption Internationale (ACAI)
Boulevard Leopold II, 44,
1080 Brussels
Tel.: (02) 413 2726

Residents of the German-speaking community should contact:

Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft
Zentrale Behörde der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft für Adoptionen
Gospertstrasse 1
B-4700 Eupen
Fax.: +32 (87) 55 64 74
Tel.: + 32 (87) 59 63 46

These organizations will provide you with detailed information on the adoption procedures and with a list of recognized adoption agencies in Belgium.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Minimum age requirement is 25. The civil status depends on the laws of the country of origin of the child to be adopted. Please note there are no Belgian children for adoption, only third country national children.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be resident in Belgium to adopt in third countries.

Time Frame: The time it takes to complete an adoption varies, depending on the child's country of origin.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents should contact the adoption authority for the region of Belgium where they reside for information on Belgian adoption agencies. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Adoption Fees: Most fees will depend on the child's country of origin. Belgian fees forgetting pre-approved (including the home study) vary depending on which community (Flemish-speaking, French speaking) prospective adoptive parents reside in.

Adoption Procedures: An application must be submitted in writing to one of the adoption authorities listed above. Upon receipt of the application, two meetings with a social worker will be scheduled. If the social worker approves, the applicant(s) will begin a one-year period of registration that will include a monthly meet-

ing at the adoption agency. If the agency so recommends, the applicant(s) will be referred to an 'adoption jury,' which will make a decision as to whether the applicant is fit to adopt. That decision, if positive, is followed by a home study, a psychological evaluation and a medical examination. At that point the applicant will be introduced to the child.

This process can take up to three years. After the prospective parents and child have met, the legal adoption procedure, which can take another year, begins. This procedure requires the written consent of both biological parents if they are living, or sole, surviving parent, if applicable. After their consent is obtained, an 'adoption act' is prepared and a request to legalize the adoption is submitted to court with a copy to the General Prosecutor. The Prosecutor investigates and offers his opinion to the judge who makes the final decision on full adoption.

Required Documents: Prospective adoptive parents will have to undergo a home study, a psychological evaluation and medical examination, once they are approved by an adoption jury to adopt.

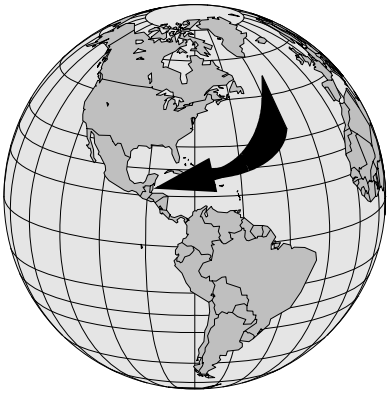
Embassy of Belgium
3330 Garfield Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel.: (202) 333-6900
Fax (202) 333-5457
E-mail: washington@diplobel.org

Belgium also has Consulates in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy in Belgium:
Boulevard du Regent 25
1000 Brussels
Tel.: (02) 508-2537
Fax: (02) 513- 0409
E-mail: uscitizenbrussels@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Belgium may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Brussels. Questions about adoption in third countries should be directed to the U.S. Embassies in those countries. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



BELIZE

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Belize

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 22,966 sq. km. (8,867 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Massachusetts.

Cities: Capital—Belmopan (2005 pop. est. 13,500) Other cities and towns—Belize City (60,800), Corozal (8,800), Orange Walk (15,300), San Ignacio & Santa Elena (16,800), Dangriga (10,800), Punta Gorda (5,000), and San Pedro (8,400).

Terrain: Flat and swampy coastline, low mountains in interior.

Climate: Subtropical (dry and wet seasons). Hot and humid. Rainfall ranges from 60 inches in the north to 200 inches in the south annually.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Belizean(s).

Population: (2007 est.) 314,300

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.)1.8%.

Ethnic groups: Creole, Garifuna, Mestizo, Mayan.

Religions: Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, other Protestant, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist.

Languages: English (official), Creole, Spanish, Garifuna, Mayan.

Education: Years compulsory—9. (2005 est.) Attendance—60%. Literacy—76.5%.

Health: (2006) Infant mortality rate—19.6/1,000. Life expectancy—67.4 years.

Work force: (April 2006, 112,806) Services—60%. Agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing—22%. Industry and commerce—16%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy

Independence: September 21, 1981.

Constitution: September 21, 1981.

Government branches: Executive—British monarch (head of state), represented by a governor general; prime minister (head of government, 5-year term). Legislative—bicameral National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, district magistrates.

Political subdivisions: Six districts.

Political parties: People's United Party (PUP), United Democratic Party (UDP), National Alliance for Belizean Rights (NABR). National Reform Party (NRP), Vision Inspired By the People (VIP), People's National Party (PNP), We the People (WTP).

Suffrage: Universal adult.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $1.22 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.6%; (2006) 5.6%.

Per capita income: (2005) $3,650.

Avg. inflation rate: (2006) 4.3%.

Natural resources: Arable land, timber, seafood, minerals.

Economy: Primary sectors (12.5% of GDP, 2006): Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining. Secondary sectors (17.8% of GDP, 2006): Manufacturing, electricity and water supply, and construction. Tertiary sectors (60.9% of GDP, 2006): Hotels and restaurants, financial intermediation, and transport and communication.

Trade: Exports (2006)—$268.2 million: cane sugar, clothing, citrus concentrate, lobster, fish, banana, and farmed shrimp. Major markets—U.S. (41.8%), U.K., CARICOM. Imports (2006)—$660.4 million: food, consumer goods, machinery, mineral fuels and lubricants. Major suppliers—U.S. (38.7%), Central America and Mexico.

Exchange rate: Since 1976 Belizean banks have bought U.S. dollars at the rate of 2.0175 and sold them at 1.9825, making for an effective fixed rate of Belize $2=U.S. $1.

PEOPLE

Belize is the most sparsely populated nation in Central America. It is larger than El Salvador and compares in size to the State of Massachusetts. Slightly more than half of the population lives in rural areas.

About one-fourth live in Belize City, the principal port, commercial center, and former capital. More than one-third of the population is comprised of persons younger than 14 years of age.

Most Belizeans are of multiracial descent. About 43.7% of the population is of mixed Mayan and European descent (Mestizo); 29.8% are of African and Afro-European (Creole) ancestry; about 11.0% are Mayan; and about 6.6% are Afro-Amerindian (Garifuna). The remainder, about 8.9%, includes European, East Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, and North American groups.

English, the official language, is spoken by virtually all except the refugees who arrived during the past decade. Spanish is the native tongue of about 50% of the people and is spoken as a second language by another 20%. The various Mayan groups still speak their indigenous languages, and an English Creole dialect similar to the Creole dialects of the English-speaking Caribbean Islands is spoken by most. The rate of functional literacy is 76%. About 50% of the population is Roman Catholic; the Anglican Church and other Protestant Christian groups account for most of the remaining 50%. Mennonite settlers number about 8,500.

HISTORY

The Mayan civilization spread into the area of Belize between 1500 BC and AD 300 and flourished until about AD 1200. Several major archeological sites—notably Caracol, Lamanai, Lubaantun, Altun Ha, and Xunantunich—reflect the advanced civilization and much denser population of that period. European contact began in 1502 when Christopher Columbus sailed along the coast. The first recorded European settlement was established by shipwrecked English seamen in 1638. Over the next 150 years, more English settlements were established. This period also was marked by piracy, indiscriminate logging, and sporadic attacks by Indians and neighboring Spanish settlements. Great Britain first sent an official representative to the area in the late 18th century, but Belize was not formally termed the "Colony of British Honduras" until 1840. It became a crown colony in 1862. Subsequently, several constitutional changes were enacted to expand representative government.

Full internal self-government under a ministerial system was granted in January 1964. The official name of the territory was changed from British Honduras to Belize in June 1973, and full independence was granted on September 21, 1981.

GOVERNMENT

Belize is a parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster model and is a member of the Commonwealth. Queen Elizabeth II is head of state and is represented in the country by Governor General Dr. Colville N. Young, Sr., a Belizean and Belize's second governor general. The primary executive organ of government is the cabinet, led by a prime minister (head of government). Cabinet ministers are members of the majority political party in parliament and usually hold elected seats in the National Assembly concurrently with their cabinet positions.

The National Assembly consists of a House of Representatives and a Senate. The 29 members of the House are popularly elected to a maximum 5-year term. The governor general appoints the Senate's 12 members. Six are appointed in accordance with the advice of the prime minister, 3 with the advice of the leader of the opposition. The Belize Council of Churches and the Evangelical Association of Churches, the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Belize Business Bureau, and the National Trade Union Congress and the Civil Society Steering Committee each advise the Governor General on the appointment of one senator each. The Senate is headed by a president, who is a nonvoting member appointed by the governing party.

Members of the independent judiciary are appointed. The judicial system includes local magistrates, the Supreme Court, and the Court of Appeal. Cases may, under certain circumstances, be appealed to the Privy Council in London.

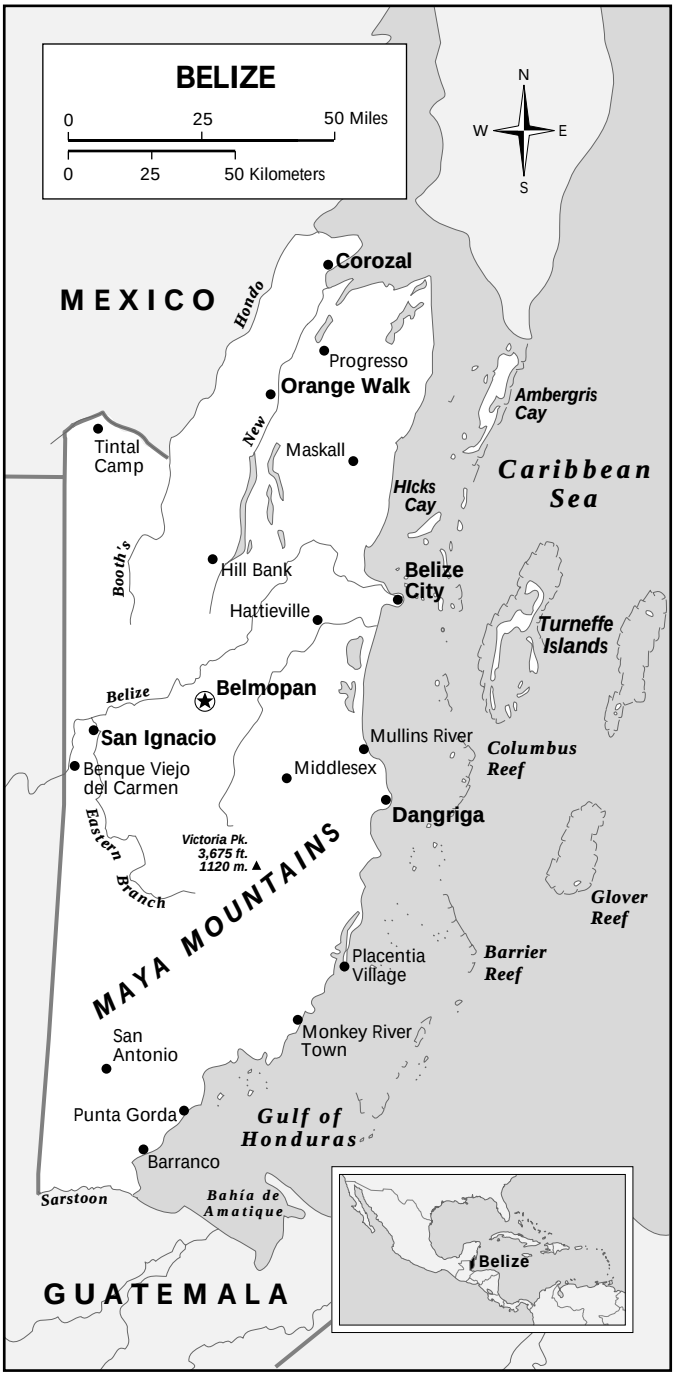
However, in 2001 Belize joined with most members of the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM) to establish a "Caribbean Court of Justice," which was inaugurated on April 16, 2005. The country is divided into six districts: Corozal, Orange Walk, Belize, Cayo, Stann Creek, and Toledo.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In national elections on February 7, 2008, the United Democratic Party (UDP) prevailed over the incumbent People's United Party (PUP). The UDP won 25 of the 31 seats in the House of Representatives, while the PUP won the other six seats. UDP leader Dean Barrow replaced PUP leader Said Musa as Prime Minister.

The PUP governed Belize from 1998-2008; the UDP from 1993-98; the PUP from 1989-1993; and the UDP from 1984-89. Before 1984, the PUP had dominated the electoral scene for more than 30 years and was the party in power when Belize became independent in 1981. Third-party alternatives to the two-party system have arisen in the recent years, but these parties garnered less than 2% of the vote in the February 2008 elections.

The previous government implemented an economic adjustment program, with the aim of (1) increasing revenues, (2) decreasing public sector expenditures, (3) narrowing the fiscal deficit to 1% of GDP, (4) improving the balance of payments, and (5) increasing the country's foreign reserves. Belize's outstanding public debt at the end of June 2007 was U.S. $1.17 billion, an amount that is equivalent to approximately 90.4% of GDP. On January 31, 2007 the Government of Belize officially announced that the holders of Bel-



ize's public external commercial indebtedness agreed to exchange their existing claims against the country for new bonds to be issued by Belize maturing in 2029. Belize traditionally maintains a deep interest in the environment and sustainable development. A lack of government resources seriously hampers these goals. On other fronts, the government is working to improve its law enforcement capabilities. A long-standing territorial dispute with Guatemala continues, although cooperation between the two countries has increased in recent years across a wide spectrum of common interests, including trade and environment.

Seeing itself as a bridge, Belize is actively involved with the Caribbean nations of CARICOM, and also has taken steps to work more closely with its Central American neighbors as a member of SICA (Central American Integration System).

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Colville YOUNG, Sir**
Prime Min.: **Dean BARROW**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Gaspar VEGA**
Min. of Agriculture & Fisheries: **Rene MONTERO**
Min. of Communications: **Melvin HULSE**
Min. of Culture: **Marcel CARDONA**
Min. of Economic Development, Commerce, Industry, & Consumer Protection: **Erwin CONTRERAS**
Min. of Education: **Patrick FABER**
Min. of Finance: **Dean BARROW**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Wilfred ELRINGTON**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **Wilfred ELRINGTON**
Min. of Health: **Pablo MARIN**
Min. of Housing: **Michael FINNEGAN**
Min. of Human Development: **Eden MARTINEZ**
Min. of Labor: **Gabriel MARTINEZ**
Min. of Local Government: **Gabriel MARTINEZ**
Min. of National Security: **Carlos PERDOMO**
Min. of Natural Resources & the Environment: **Gaspar VEGA**
Min. of Public Service: **John SALDIVAR**
Min. of Public Utilities: **Melvin HULSE**
Min. of Rural Development: **Gabriel MARTINEZ**
Min. of Tourism: **Manuel HEREDIA, Jr.**
Min. of Transport: **Melvin HULSE**
Min. of Works: **Anthony MARTINEZ**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Marcel CARDONA**
Attorney Gen.: **Wilfred ELRINGTON**
Governor, Central Bank: **Jorge Meliton AUIL**
Ambassador to the US: **Nestor MENDEZ**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

Belize maintains an embassy in the United States at 2535 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-332-9636; fax: 202-332-6888) and a consulate in Los Angeles. Belize travel information office in New York City: 800-624-0686.

ECONOMY

Forestry was the only economic activity of any consequence in Belize until well into the 20th century, when the supply of accessible timber began to dwindle. Cane sugar then became the

principal export. Exports were augmented by expanded production of citrus, bananas, seafood, and apparel. The agricultural sector suffered from damage resulting from hurricanes that struck Belize in late 2007. The farm shrimp industry, a chief export earner until 2005, continues to decline. The service sector and nascent petroleum sector lead Belize's economic growth.

The country has about 809,000 hectares of arable land, only a small fraction of which is under cultivation. To curb land speculation, the government enacted legislation in 1973 that requires non-Belizeans to complete a development plan on land they purchase before obtaining title to plots of more than 10 acres of rural land or more than one-half acre of urban land.

Domestic industry is limited, constrained by relatively high-cost labor and energy and a small domestic market. Some 185 U.S. companies have operations in Belize, including Archer Daniels Midland, Texaco, and Esso. Tourism attracts the most foreign direct investment, although significant U.S. investment also is found in the telecommunications and agriculture sectors. A combination of natural factors—climate, the longest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere, numerous islands, excellent fishing, safe waters for boating, jungle wildlife, and Mayan ruins—support the thriving tourist industry. Development costs are high, but the Government of Belize has designated tourism as one of its major development priorities. In 2006, tourist arrivals totaled 958,813 (about 70% from the United States). Belize's investment policy is codified in the Belize Investment Guide, which sets out the development priorities for the country. A Country Commercial Guide for Belize is available from the U.S. Embassy's Economic/Commercial section and on the Web at: http://belize.usembassy.gov/investing_in_belize2.html.

Infrastructure

A major constraint on the economic development of Belize continues to be the scarcity of infrastructure investments. As part of its financial austerity measures started in late 2004, the government froze expenditures on several capital projects. Although electricity, telephone, and water utilities are all relatively good, Belize has the most expensive electricity in the region. Large tracts of land, which would be suitable for development, are inaccessible due to lack of roads. Some roads, including sections of major highways, are subject to damage or closure during the rainy season. Ports in Belize City, Dangriga, and Big Creek handle regularly scheduled shipping from the United States and the United Kingdom, although draft is limited to a maximum of 10 feet in Belize City and 15 feet in southern ports. American Airlines, Continental Airlines, U.S. Air, Delta Airlines, and TACA provide international air service to gateways in Dallas, Houston, Miami, Charlotte, Atlanta, and San Salvador.

Trade

Belize's economic performance is highly susceptible to external market changes, a fact that is reflected in its 1.6% real growth rate for 2007. World commodity price fluctuations and continuation of preferential trading agreements, especially with the United States and the European Union (cane sugar) and the United Kingdom (bananas), greatly impact Belize's economic performance.

Belize continues to rely heavily on foreign trade. Imports in 2006 totaled $660.4 million, while total exports were $268.2 million. The United States continues to be Belize's number-one trading partner. Through November 2007, the United States provided 33.5% of all Belizean imports and accounted for 27.2% of Belize's total exports. Other major trading partners include Mexico, the United Kingdom, Western Europe, Guatemala, Canada, and the CARICOM member states. In 2006-2007, Taiwan and Japan emerged as new trading partners with Belize.

Belize aims to stimulate the growth of commercial agriculture through CARICOM. However, Belizean trade with the rest of the Caribbean is small compared to that with the United States and Europe. The country is a beneficiary of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) program, which forms part of the U.S.-Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act—signed into law by President Clinton on May 8, 2000—a comprehensive U.S. Government program designed to stimulate investment in Caribbean nations by providing duty-free access to the U.S. market for most Caribbean products. Significant U.S. private investments in citrus and shrimp farms have been made in Belize under CBI. U.S. trade preferences allowing for duty-free re-import of finished apparel cut from U.S. textiles have significantly expanded the apparel industry. European Union (EU) and U.K. preferences also have been vital for the expansion and prosperity of the sugar and banana industries.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The Belize Defense Force (BDF), established in January 1973, is comprised of a light infantry force of regulars and reservists along with small air and maritime wings. The BDF, currently under the command of Brigadier General Lloyd Gillett, assumed total defense responsibility from British Forces Belize (BFB) on January 1, 1994. The United Kingdom continues to maintain the British Army Training Support Unit Belize (BATSUB) to assist in the administration of the Belize Jungle School. The BDF receives military assistance from the United States and the United Kingdom.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Belize's principal external concern has been the dispute involving the Guatemalan claim to Belizean territory. This dispute originated in Imperial Spain's claim to all "New World" territories west of the line established in the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Nineteenth-century efforts to resolve the problems led to later differences over interpretation and

implementation of an 1859 treaty intended to establish the boundaries between Guatemala and Belize, then named British Honduras. Guatemala contends that the 1859 treaty is void because the British failed to comply with all its economic assistance clauses. Neither Spain nor Guatemala ever exercised effective sovereignty over the area.

Negotiations have been underway for many years, including one period in the 1960s in which the U.S. Government sought unsuccessfully to mediate. A 1981 trilateral (Belize, Guatemala, and the United Kingdom) "Heads of Agreement" was not implemented due to continued contentions. Belize became independent on September 21, 1981, with the territorial dispute unresolved. Significant negotiations between Belize and Guatemala, with the United Kingdom as an observer, resumed in 1988. Guatemala recognized Belize's independence in 1991, and diplomatic relations were established.

Eventually, on November 8, 2000, the two parties agreed to respect an "adjacency zone" extending one kilometer east and west from the border. Around this time, the Government of Guatemala insisted that the territorial claim was a legal one and that the only possibility for a resolution was to submit the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). However, the Government of Belize felt that taking the case to the ICJ or to arbitration represented an unnecessary expense of time and money. So the Belizean Government proposed an alternate process, one under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Since then, despite efforts by the OAS to jumpstart the process, movement has been limited to confidence-building measures between the parties. In November 2007, the Secretary General of the OAS recommended that the dispute be referred to the International Court of Justice.

In order to strengthen its potential for economic and political development, Belize has sought to build closer ties with the Spanish-speaking countries of Central America to complement its historical ties to the English-speaking Caribbean states. In 2005 Belize joined other Central American countries participating in the Cooperating Nations Information Exchange System (CNIES), which assists in locating, identifying, tracking, and intercepting civil aircraft in Belize's airspace. Belize and other Central American countries signed the Conjunta Centroamerica-USA (CONCAUSA) agreement on regional sustainable development. Belize held the presidency of the Central American Integration System (SICA) for a 6-month period in 2007. Belize is a member of CARICOM, which was founded in 1973. It became a member of the OAS in 1990.

U.S.-BELIZEAN RELATIONS

The United States and Belize traditionally have had close and cordial relations. The United States is Belize's principal trading partner and major source of investment funds. It is also home to the largest Belizean community outside Belize, estimated to be 70,000 strong. Because Belize's economic growth and accompanying democratic political stability are important U.S. objectives, Belize benefits from the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative. International crime issues dominate the agenda of bilateral relations between the United States and Belize. The United States is working closely with the Government of Belize to fight illicit narcotics trafficking, and both governments seek to control the flow of illegal migrants to the United States through Belize. Belize and the United States brought into force a Stolen Vehicle Treaty, an Extradition Treaty, and a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty between 2001 and 2003. The United States is one of the largest providers of economic assistance to Belize, contributing $2.5 million in various bilateral economic and military aid programs to Belize in FY 2006. Of this amount, nearly half a million dollars was provided by the U.S. Military Liaison Office. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) closed its Belize office in August 1996 after a 13-year program during which USAID provided $110 million worth of development assistance to Belize. Belize still benefits from USAID regional programs. In addition, during the past 42 years, almost 2,000 Peace Corps volunteers have served in Belize. As of February 2008, the Peace Corps had 63 volunteers working in Belize. The U.S. military has a diverse and growing assistance program in Belize that has included the construction and renovation of several schools and youth hostels, medical assistance programs, and drug reduction programs. Private North American investors continue to play a key role in Belize's economy, particularly in the tourism sector.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BELMOPAN (E) Floral Park Road, APO/FPO Unit 7401, APO AA 34025, 011-501-822-4011, Fax 011-501-822-4012, Workweek: 08:00 -17:00, Mondays–Fridays, Website: http://belize.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Joy Dellinger
AMB OMS:	Virginia Phillips
MGT:	Sharon K. Featherstone
POL/ECO:	Thomas Wise
AMB:	Robert J. Dieter
CON:	Thomas Wallis
DCM:	Leonard A. Hill
PAO:	Thomas Wise
GSO:	Sergey Troitsky
RSO:	Robert F. Kelty
AFSA:	Sue Kuester
APHIS:	Glenn Germain
CLO:	Barry Cuthbertson And Tammie Gandy
DEA:	Floyd Baker
EEO:	Thomas Wise
ICASS Chair:	Donna Cuthbertson
IMO:	Allen Gandy
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Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW
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U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Office of Latin American and the Caribbean
14th & Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 5, 2008

Country Description: Belize is a developing country. Tourism facilities vary in quality, from a limited number of business class hotels in Belize City and resorts on the cayes to a range of ecotourism lodges and very basic accommodations in the countryside. Crime is a growing concern.

Entry Requirements: All U.S. citizens must have a U.S. passport valid for the duration of their visit to Belize. U.S. citizens do not need visas for tourist visits of up to thirty days, but they must have onward or return air tickets and proof of sufficient funds to maintain themselves while in Belize.

Visitors for purposes other than tourism, or who wish to stay longer than 30 days, must obtain visas from the government of Belize. All tourists and non-Belizean nationalities are required to pay an exit fee of U.S.$35 when leaving Belize. Additional information on entry and customs requirements may be obtained from the Embassy of Belize at 2535 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20008, Tel. (202) 332-9636 or at their web site http://www.embassyofbelize.org.

Information is also available at the Belizean Consular offices in Miami, and Los Angeles, or at the Belizean Mission to the UN in New York. Visit the Embassy of Belize web site at http://usembassy.state.gov/belize for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Visitors should exercise caution and good judgment when visiting Belize. Crime can be a serious problem (see Crime), particularly in Belize City and remote areas. Road accidents are common (see Traffic Safety and Road Conditions) and traffic fatalities have included Americans. Public buses and taxis are frequently in poor condition and lack safety equipment. Medical care is limited and emergency response services such as ambulances or paramedics may be either unavailable or limited in capability or equipment.

Boats serving the public, especially water taxis, often do not carry sufficient safety equipment, may carry an excess number of passengers and may sail in inclement weather. Rental diving equipment may not always be properly maintained or inspected, and some local dive masters fail to consider the skill levels of individual tourists when organizing dives to some of Belize's more challenging sites. Deaths and serious mishaps have occurred as a result of negligent diving tour operators and the lack of strict enforcement of tour regulations. The Embassy strongly recommends that anyone interested in scuba diving and snorkeling while in Belize check the references, licenses and equipment of tour operators before agreeing to or paying for a tour. Safety precautions and emergency response capabilities may not be up to U.S. standards.

Following a fatal accident at the Cave Branch Archeological Park in September 2008, the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is implementing new regulations, effective and legally enforced beginning October 15, 2008, to improve safety at cave tubing attractions. Those policies will include an enhanced, mandatory guest-to-guide ratio of eight-to-one for all operating cave tubing tour companies in Belize. Additional signage will be posted in each cave tubing excursion site, informing participants of park rules and current water conditions and/or warnings. Mandatory specialty training for each cave tubing guide will continue and include education on new regulations. Helmets will also be required for each cave tubing participant starting January 1, 2009. Furthermore, the National Institute of Culture and History (NICH), which manages the Cave Branch Archeological Park, will be installing additional monitoring equipment for cave tubing excursions which measure currents and other factors needing to be taken into considerations to ensure participant safety.

Cave tubing participants are urged to exercise due caution and their own best judgment regarding safety and river conditions at the time of their tour, particularly during the rainy/hurricane season from June 1 through November 30. Rainfall upstream from tour sites, sometimes miles away, can cause rapid changes in current strength and water level conditions without notice.

The border between Belize and Guatemala is in dispute, but the dispute thus far has not affected travel between the two countries. There have not been any terrorist activities in Belize.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The incidence of crime, including violent crimes such as armed robbery, shooting, stabbing, murder, and rape, is on the rise. The Embassy has noted an increase in recent years in reports of crimes against tourists at resorts and on the roadways and river ways. The incidence of crimes such as theft, burglary, purse snatching and pickpocketing rises around the winter holidays and spring break. Several victims who resisted when confronted by criminals have received serious personal injuries, including gunshot

wounds. Although the majority of reported incidents are in Belize City, crime occurs in all districts including tourist spots such as San Pedro, Caye Caulker, and Placencia.

Sexual harassment and/or assault of females traveling alone or in small groups have occurred this past year. Several American travelers have been the victims of sexual assaults in recent years. One of these occurred after the victim accepted a lift from an acquaintance, while another occurred during an armed robbery at an isolated resort. One of these assaults has resulted in the death of the victim.

The Embassy recommends that visitors travel in groups and only in daylight hours, stay off the streets after dark, in urban and rural areas, and avoid wearing jewelry, or carrying valuable or expensive items. As a general rule, valuables should not be left unattended, including in hotel rooms and on the beach.

Care should be taken when carrying high value items such as cameras, or when wearing expensive jewelry on the street. Women's handbags should be zipped and held close to the body. Men should carry wallets in their front pants pocket. Large amounts of cash should always be handled discreetly.

If traveling by taxi, use only vehicles with green license plates, do not get in a taxi that is occupied by more than the driver, and do not let the driver pick up additional fares.

Armed robberies of American tourist groups occurred during the summer of 2006 in the Mountain Pine Ridge and Caracol regions of the western district of Belize. Due to increased police patrols, coordinated tours among resort security managers, and the arrest of two of the "highway bandits," there have not been any additional robberies since June, 2006. In the past, criminals have targeted popular Mayan archeological sites in that region. Visitors should travel in groups and should stick to the main plazas and tourist sites. Although there are armed guards posted at some of the archeological sites, armed criminals have been known to prey on persons walking from one site to another. Victims who resist when confronted by these armed assailants frequently suffer personal injury.

Travel on rural roads, especially at night, increases the risk of encountering criminal activities. Widespread narcotics and alien smuggling activities can make remote areas especially dangerous. Though there is no evidence that Americans in particular are targeted, criminals look for every opportunity to attack, so all travelers should be vigilant.

Rather than traveling alone, use a reputable tour organization. It is best to stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads. Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary. Travelers should resist the temptation to stay in budget hotels, which are generally more susceptible to crime, and stay in the main tourist destinations. Do not explore back roads or isolated paths near tourist sites. And remember always to pay close attention to your surroundings.

Americans visiting the Belize-Guatemala border area should consider carefully their security situation and should travel only during daylight hours. Vehicles should be in good operating condition, adequately fueled, and carry communications equipment. Persons traveling into Guatemala from Belize should check the Country Specific Information for Guatemala and the U.S. Embassy web site at http://guatemala.usembassy.gov for the latest information about crime and security in Guatemala. A lack of resources and training impedes the ability of the police to investigate crimes effectively and to apprehend serious offenders. As a result, a number of crimes against Americans in Belize remain unresolved. Nonetheless, victims of crime should report immediately to the police all incidents of assault, robbery, theft or other crimes as well as notifying the U.S. Embassy in Belmopan, telephone 822-4011(after hours and weekends 610-5030). Tourists may contact the Belizean tourist police unit in addition to the main police office for assistance.

In addition to reporting crimes to local police, American citizens should report all criminal incidents to the U.S. Embassy in Belmopan, telephone 822-4011 (after hours and weekends 610-5030).

The embassy staff can assist an American with finding appropriate medical care, contacting family members or friends, and having funds transferred, as well as in determining whether any assistance is available from the victim's home state. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help explain the local criminal justice process and assist in finding an attorney if needed.

Drug use is common in some tourist areas. American citizens should avoid buying, selling, holding, or taking illegal drugs under any circumstances. Penalties for possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia are generally more severe than in the U.S.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of

local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care for minor conditions is generally available in urban areas. Trauma or advanced medical care is limited even in Belize City; it is extremely limited or unavailable in rural areas. Serious injuries or illnesses often necessitate evacuation to another country. The Government of Belize reported an outbreak of dengue fever in April, May and June of 2005. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. Driving in Belize requires one's full attention, and drivers must take extraordinary efforts to drive defensively to avoid dangerous situations. The information below concerning Belize is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Valid U.S. driver's licenses and international driving permits are accepted in Belize for a period of three months after entry. Driving is on the right-hand side of the road. Buses and private vehicles are the main mode of transportation in Belize; no trains operate in the country. Roadside assistance can be difficult to summon, as there are very few public telephones along the road and emergency telephone numbers do not always function properly. The Belizean Department of Transportation is responsible for road safety.

Roads in Belize vary from two-lane paved roads to dirt tracks. The few paved roads are high-crowned roads, which can contribute to cars overturning, and have few markings or reflectors. Even in urban areas, few streets have lane markings, leading many motorists to create as many lanes as possible in any given stretch of street or road. Bridges on the major highways are often only single lanes.

The Manatee Road, leading from the Western Highway to Dangriga, is unpaved, easily flooded after storms and without services. The Southern Highway from Dangriga to Punta Gorda is mostly completed and in good condition, except for a short portion that is under construction. Service stations are plentiful along the major roads, although there are some significant gaps in the rural areas.

Poor road and/or vehicle maintenance causes many fatal accidents on Belizean roads. Speed limits are 55 miles per hour on most highways and 25 miles per hour on most other roads, but they are seldom obeyed or even posted. Many vehicles on the road do not have functioning safety equipment such as turn signals, flashers, or brake lights. Seatbelts for drivers and front-seat passengers are mandatory, but child car seats are not required. Driving while intoxicated is punishable by a fine; if an alcohol-related accident results in a fatality, the driver may face manslaughter charges. Moreover, Americans can and have been imprisoned in Belize for accidents, even where alcohol is not involved.

Unusual local traffic customs include: pulling to the right before making a left turn; passing on the right of someone who is signaling a right-hand turn; stopping in the middle of the road to talk to someone while blocking traffic; carrying passengers, including small children, in the open beds of trucks; and tailgating at high speeds.

Bicycles are numerous and constitute a traffic hazard at all times; bicyclists often ride contrary to traffic and do not obey even basic traffic laws such as red lights or stop signs. Few bicycles have lights at night. It is common to see bicyclists carrying heavy loads or passengers, including balancing small children on their laps or across the handlebars. The driver of a vehicle that strikes a bicyclist or pedestrian is almost always considered to be at fault, regardless of circumstances. Americans who have struck cyclists in Belize have faced significant financial penalty or even prison time.

Driving at night is not recommended, due to poor signage and road markings, a tendency not to dim the lights when approaching other vehicles, and drunk driving. Pedestrians, motorcyclists and bicyclists without lights, reflectors, or reflective clothing also constitute a very serious after-dark hazard. Local wildlife and cattle also are road hazards in rural areas. For safety reasons, travelers should not stop to offer assistance to others whose vehicles apparently have broken down.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Belize's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Belize's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Belize is vulnerable to tropical storms, especially from June 1 until November 30 of each year. General information on weather conditions may be obtained at: http//www.nhc.noaa.gov.

It is not possible to access most U.S. bank accounts through automated teller machines (ATMs) in Belize.

However, travelers can usually obtain cash advances from local banks, Monday through Friday, using major international credit cards.

Dual Nationality: A person who is a citizen of both the U.S. and Belize is able to enter Belize with only a Belizean passport; such a dual national should be aware, however, that he/she must have a U.S. passport in order to board a flight to the U.S. from Belize, and that average processing time for a passport at the U.S. Embassy in Belize is approximately 10 working days.

Belize customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Belize of firearms. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Belize in Washington or one of Belize's Consulates in the U.S. for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Belize laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Belize are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Belize has strict laws making possession of a firearm or ammunition illegal unless a valid permit is obtained. Penalties for firearms violations are severe.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Belize are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Belize. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located in the capital city of Belmopan, approximately 50 miles west of Belize City. The U.S. Embassy is on Floral Park Road, Belmopan and the telephone number is 822-4011. The Embassy is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for the 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. lunch hour, and U.S. and Belizean holidays. The Embassy Internet address is http://usembassy.state.gov/belize/; e-mail embbelize@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption.

Belize is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Belize is the Belize Human Services Department:

Human Services Department
2nd Floor, Commercial Center
P.O. Box 41
Belize City, Belize
Central America
Phone: ++501-227-7451
or 501-227-2057
Fax: ++501-227-1276

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The government of Belize requires that at least one of the prospective adoptive parents must be a minimum of 25 years old and no fewer than 12 years older than the child. Single men cannot adopt female children. These restrictions can be waived if the court finds that special circumstances are warranted.

Residency Requirements: The Belize Supreme Court only processes adoptions for Belizean citizen children. According to Section 137 of the Belize Families and Children's Act, a person who is not a citizen of Belize may adopt a Belizean child if he or she:

- Does not have a criminal record;
- Has a current recommendation concerning his/her suitability to adopt a child from his/her country's probation and welfare office or other competent authority; and
- Has satisfied the court that his/her country of origin will respect and recognize the adoption order.

Belizean law prohibits the issuance of a final adoption order unless the non-Belizean prospective adoptive parent resides in Belize with the Belizean

child for 12 months. A social worker will visit periodically to assess the parent-child relationship. Adoptive parents who are not citizens of Belize may receive an interim adoption decree, which the Government of Belize recognizes as permission for the prospective adoptive parent to take the child out of Belize and pursue a subsequent adoption in accordance with the laws of his/her own country.

Time Frame: The processing time for adoptions can vary, depending on the circumstances of the case. The Belize Department of Human Services reports that "ward adoptions" (children in the custody of the Department of Human Services) can take up one year or more to process because of the need for home study reports, matching, placement and legal proceedings.

For independent adoptions (children not in the custody of the Department of Human Services) the processing time is shorter. Because the adoption is child-specific–that is, the prospective adoptive parents have already selected a child–matching and placement are not necessary. These adoption proceedings take from 3 months to one year.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Because Belize is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider.

It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider.

The U.S. Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Belize discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Belize at risk. Attorney's fees for adoption services in Belize range from $1,500to $5,000 (U.S. dollars). The cost can vary based on the attorney selected, the type of adoption (local vs. international) and the number of children being adopted. Attorneys' fees include all costs related to the adoption process, such as court costs and filing fees. U.S. citizens adopting a child in Belize should report any exorbitant fees to the U.S. Embassy in Belize or to the U.S. Department of State.

Adoption Procedures: Children in Belize may only be adopted through the judicial process. There are no private adoptions nor adoptions through extra-judicial processes. If the prospective adoptive parents legally reside in Belize, the Belize Family Courts may handle the adoption. If the adoptive parents reside outside of Belize and are not citizens of Belize, the adoption must be processed through the Supreme Court of Belize.

International adoptions occur before a Supreme Court Judge and require the services of a local attorney authorized to present cases to the Supreme Court. Those persons desirous of information regarding the forms and procedures to follow for adoptions should contact a Belizean attorney.

A list of attorneys can be found at: http://belize.usembassy.gov/list_of_lawyers.html Belizean law only provides for the adoption of children who are citizens of Belize.

A child who is not a Belizean citizen cannot be the subject of an adoption in a Belizean court, although Belizean courts can issue custody orders for any child residing in Belize.

Adoption of Belizean citizen children must occur within the Belizean court system. Belize does not grant custody of its children for emigration and adoption outside of Belize. However, the Chief Justice of Belize has determined that the "Provisional," "Interim" or "Preliminary" Adoption decrees often issued by the Supreme Court can be considered permission for the prospective adoptive parents to take the child out of Belize and to pursue a concurrent adoption process in accordance with the laws of their own country.

Age And Civil Status Requirements: An adoption order cannot be made unless the applicant—or in the case of joint application, one of the applicants—is at least twenty-five years old and is at least twelve years older than the child.

Civil status is not relevant in regards to adoption orders except in the case of a male adopting a female child; single men cannot adopt female children.

Both of these restrictions can be waived if the court finds that special circumstances warrant an exceptional adoption order.

Required Documents: The following documents are required by the Belize Human Services Department:

- A valid police certificate;
- An approved home study;
- Proof of home government approval to adopt (for U.S. citizens, this is an approved I-800 or I-800A).

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*.

Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

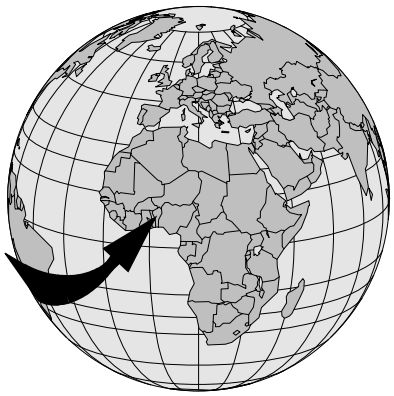
Embassy of Belize–Consular Section
2535 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008
202-332-9636

Permanent Mission of Belize
820 2nd Avenue
Suite 922
New York, NY 10017
212-599-0233

U.S. Embassy
29 Gabourel Lane
Belize City, Belize
Central America
++501-227-7161

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



BENIN

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Benin

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 116,622 sq. km. (43,483 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Porto-Novo (pop. 295,000). Political and economic capital—Cotonou (pop. 2 million).

Terrain: Mostly flat plains of 200 meters average elevation, but the Atacora Mountains extend along the northwest border, with the highest point being Mont Sokbaro 658 meters.

Climate: Tropical, average temperatures between 24º and 31ºC. Humid in south; semiarid in north.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Beninese (singular and plural).

Population: (2007) 7.9 million.

Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 2.73%.

Ethnic groups: African 99% (42 ethnic groups, most important being Fon, Adja, Yoruba, and Bariba), Europeans 5,500.

Religions: Indigenous beliefs (animist) 50%, Christian 30%, Muslim 20%.

Languages: French (official), Fon and Yoruba in the south; Nagot, Bariba and Dendi in the north.

Education: (2007) Literacy—Total population 35%; men 48%, women 23%.

Health: (2005) Infant mortality rate—89/1,000. Life expectancy—55 yrs.

Work force: The labor market is characterized by an increased reliance on informal employment, family helpers, and the use of apprentices. Training and job opportunities are not well matched.

Government

Type: Republic under multiparty democratic rule.

Independence: August 1, 1960.

Constitution: December 10, 1990.

Government branches: Executive—President, elected by popular vote for 5-year term, appoints the Cabinet. Legislative—Unicameral, 83-seat National Assembly directly elected by popular vote for 4-year terms. Judicial—Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, High Court of Justice.

Political subdivisions: Twelve departments: Alibori, Atakora, Atlantique, Borgou, Collines, Couffo, Donga, Littoral, Mono, Oueme, Plateau, and Zou.

Political parties: (partial listing of major parties) La Renaissance du Bénin (RB), Party of Democratic Renewal (PRD), Social-Democrat Party (PSD), African Movement for Development and Progress (MADEP), Party of Democratic Renewal-Rainbow (PRD-Arc-en-ciel), Alliance Etoile, Action Front for Democratic Renewal (FARD-ALAFIA), African Congress for Renewal (CAR-DUNYA), Impulse for Progress and Democracy (IPD), Alliance for Democracy and Progress (ADP), National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), New Generation for the Republic (NGR), Our Common Cause (NCC), Ensemble, National Rally for Democracy (RND), Rally for Progress and Renewal (RPR), Movement for the People Alternative (MAP), National Rally for Unity and Democracy (RUND), Congress of African Democrat (CAD), Movement for Citizens' Commitment and Awakening (MERCI), Democratic Union for Economic and Social Development (UDES), Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), Communist Party of Benin (PCB).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $5.92 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2007) 4.2%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $749.

Inflation rate: (2007) 1.3%.

Natural resources: Small offshore oil deposits, unexploited deposits of high quality marble limestone, and timber.

Agricultural: Products—corn, sorghum, cassava, tapioca, yams, beans, rice, cotton, palm oil, cocoa, peanuts, poultry, and livestock. Arable land—

13%. Permanent crops 4%, permanent pastures 4%, forests and woodland 31%.

Business and industry: Textiles, cigarettes, food and beverages, construction materials, petroleum.

Trade: Exports—$259 million: cotton, crude oil, palm products, cocoa. Imports—$1.2 billion: foodstuffs, tobacco, petroleum products, energy, and capital goods. Major trade partners—Nigeria, France, China, Italy, Brazil, Libya, Indonesia, U.K., Cote d'Ivoire.

GEOGRAPHY

Benin, a narrow, north-south strip of land in West Africa, lies between the Equator and the Tropic of Cancer. Benin's latitude ranges from 6º30N to 12º30N and its longitude from 10E to 3º40E. Benin is bounded by Togo to the west, Burkina Faso and Niger to the north, Nigeria to the east, and the Bight of Benin to the south. With an area of 112,622 square kilometers, roughly the size of Pennsylvania, Benin extends from the Niger River in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the south, a distance of 700 kilometers (about 500 mi.). Although the coastline measures 121 kilometers (about 80 mi.), the country measures about 325 kilometers (about 215 mi.) at its widest point. It is one of the smaller countries in West Africa: eight times smaller than Nigeria, its neighbor to the east. It is, however, twice as large as Togo, its neighbor to the west. A relief map of Benin shows that it has little variation in elevation (average elevation 200 meters).

The country can be divided into four main areas from the south to the north. The low-lying, sandy, coastal plain (highest elevation 10 meters) is, at most, 10 kilometers wide. It is marshy and dotted with lakes and lagoons communicating with the ocean. The plateaus of southern Benin (altitude between 20 meters and 200 meters) are split by valleys running north to south along the Couffo, Zou, and Oueme Rivers. An area of flat lands dotted with rocky hills whose altitude seldom reaches 400 meters extends around Nikki and Save. Finally, a range of mountains extends along the northwest border and into Togo; this is the Atacora, with the highest point, Mont Sokbaro, at 658 meters. Two types of landscape predominate in the south. Benin has fields of lying fallow, mangroves, and remnants of large sacred forests. In the rest of the country, the savanna is covered with thorny scrubs and dotted with huge baobab trees. Some forests line the banks of rivers. In the north and the northwest of Benin the Reserve du W du Niger and Pendjari National Park attract tourists eager to see elephants, lions, antelopes, hippos, and monkeys.

Benin's climate is hot and humid. Annual rainfall in the coastal area averages 36 cm. (14 in.), not particularly high for coastal West Africa. Benin has two rainy and two dry seasons. The principal rainy season is from April to late July, with a shorter less intense rainy period from late September to November. The main dry season is from December to April, with a short cooler dry season from late July to early September. Temperatures and humidity are high along the tropical coast. In Cotonou, the average maximum temperature is 31ºC (89ºF); the minimum is 24ºC (75ºF).

Variations in temperature increase when moving north through a savanna and plateau toward the Sahel. A dry wind from the Sahara called the Harmattan blows from December to March. Grass dries up, the vegetation turns reddish brown, and a veil of fine dust hangs over the country, causing the skies to be overcast. It also is the season when farmers burn brush in the fields.

PEOPLE

The majority of Benin's 7.86 million people live in the south. The population is young, with a life expectancy of 53 years. About 42 African ethnic groups live in this country; these various groups settled in Benin at different times and also migrated within the country. Ethnic groups include the Yoruba in the southeast (migrated from Nigeria in the 12th century); the Dendi in the north-central area (they came from Mali in the 16th century); the Bariba and the Fulbe (Peul) in the northeast; the Betammaribe and the Somba in the Atacora Range; the Fon in the area around Abomey in the South Central and the Mina, Xueda, and Aja (who came from Togo) on the coast.

Recent migrations have brought other African nationals to Benin that include Nigerians, Togolese, and Malians. The foreign community also includes many Lebanese and Indians involved in trade and commerce. The personnel of the many European embassies and foreign aid missions and of nongovernmental organizations and various missionary groups account for a large number of the 5,500 European population.

Several religions are practiced in Benin. Animism is widespread (50%), and its practices vary from one ethnic group to the other. Arab merchants introduced Islam in the north and among the Yoruba. European missionaries brought Christianity to the south and central areas of Benin. Muslims account for 20% of the population and Christians for 30%. Many nominal Muslims and Christians continue to practice animistic traditions. It is believed that voodoo originated in Benin and was introduced to Brazil and the Caribbean Islands by slaves taken from this particular area of the Slave Coast.

HISTORY

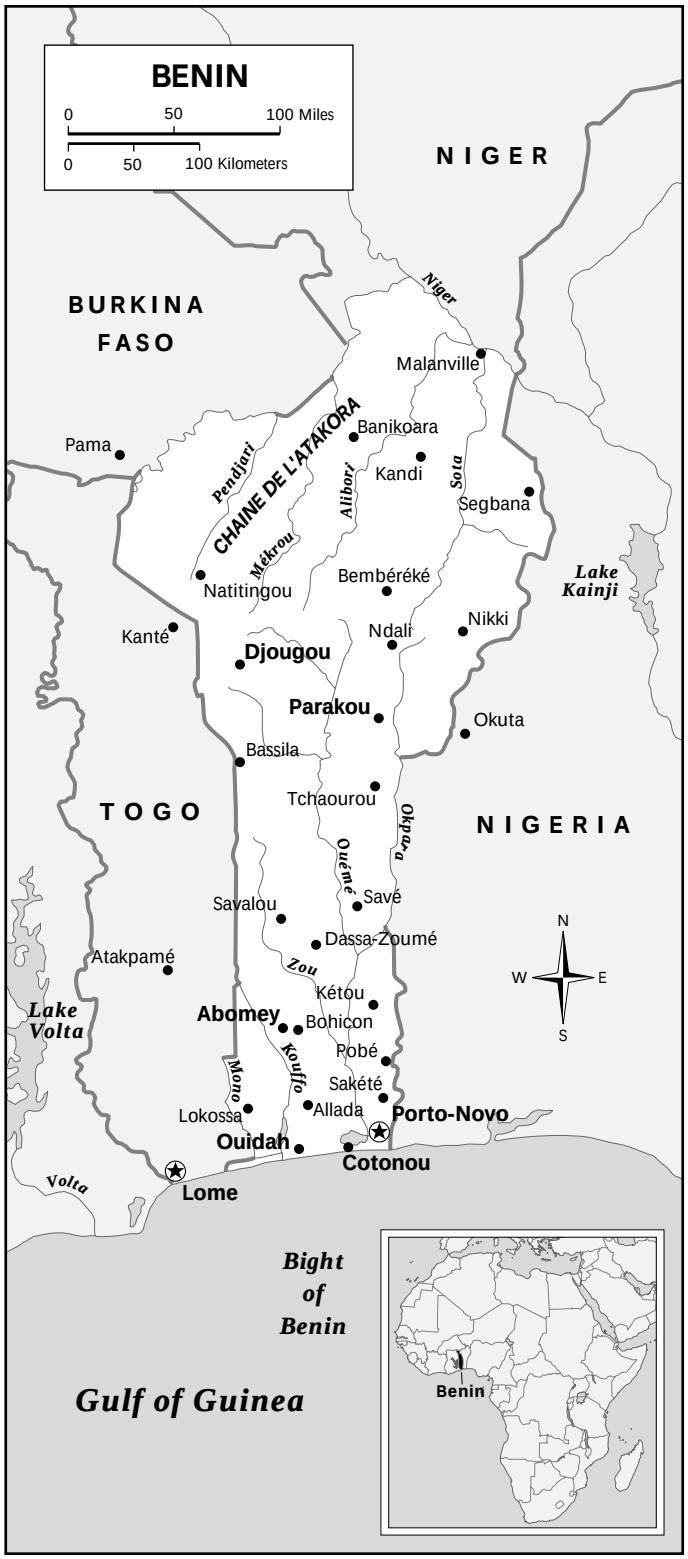
Benin was the seat of one of the great medieval African kingdoms called Dahomey. Europeans began arriving in the area in the 18th century, as the kingdom of Dahomey was expanding its territory. The Portuguese, the French, and the Dutch established trading posts along the coast (Porto-Novo, Ouidah, Cotonou), and traded weapons for slaves. Slave trade ended in 1848. Then, the French signed treaties with Kings of Abomey (Guézo, Toffa, Glèlè) to establish French protectorates in the main cit-

ies and ports. However, King Behanzin fought the French influence, which cost him deportation to Martinique. As of 1900, the territory became a French colony ruled by a French Governor. Expansion continued to the North (kingdoms of Parakou, Nikki, Kandi), up to the border with former Upper Volta. On December 4, 1958, it became the République du Dahomey, self-governing within the French community, and on August 1, 1960, the Republic of Benin gained full independence from France.

Post-Independence Politics

Between 1960 and 1972, a succession of military coups brought about many changes of government. The last of these brought to power Major Mathieu Kérékou as the head of a regime professing strict Marxist-Leninist principles. The Revolutionary Party of the People of Benin (PRPB) remained in complete power until the beginning of the 1990s. Kérékou, encouraged by France and other democratic powers, convened a national conference that introduced a new democratic constitution and held presidential and legislative elections. Kérékou's principal opponent at the presidential poll, and the ultimate victor, was Prime Minister Nicéphore Soglo. Supporters of Soglo also secured a majority in the National Assembly.

Benin was thus the first African country to effect successfully the transition from dictatorship to a pluralistic political system. In the second round of National Assembly elections held in March 1995, Soglo's political vehicle, the Parti de la Renaissance du Benin, was the largest single party but lacked an overall majority. The success of a party formed by supporters of ex-president Kérékou, who had officially retired from active politics, encouraged him to stand successfully at both the 1996 and 2001 presidential elections.



During the 2001 elections, however, alleged irregularities and dubious practices led to a boycott of the runoff poll by the main opposition candidates. The four top-ranking contenders following the first round presidential elections were Mathieu Kérékou (incumbent) 45.4%, Nicephore Soglo (former president) 27.1%, Adrien Houngbedji (National Assembly Speaker) 12.6%, and Bruno Amoussou (Minister of State) 8.6%. The second round balloting, originally scheduled for March 18, 2001, was postponed for days because both Soglo and Houngbedji withdrew,

alleging electoral fraud. This left Kérékou to run against his own Minister of State, Amoussou, in what was termed a "friendly match."

In December 2002, Benin held its first municipal elections since before the institution of Marxism-Leninism. The process was smooth with the significant exception of the 12th district council for Cotonou, the contest that would ultimately determine who would be selected for the mayoralty of the capital city. That vote was marred by irregularities, and the electoral commission was forced to repeat that single election. Nicephore Soglo's Renaisance du Benin (RB) party won the new vote, paving the way for the former president to be elected Mayor of Cotonou by the new city council in February 2002.

National Assembly elections took place in March 2003 and were generally considered to be free and fair. Although there were some irregularities, these were not significant and did not greatly disrupt the proceedings or the results. These elections resulted in a loss of seats by RB—the primary opposition party. The other opposition parties, the Party for Democratic Renewal (PRD) led by the former Prime Minister Adrien Houngbedji and the Alliance Etoile (AE), joined the government coalition. Former West African Development Bank Director Boni Yayi won the March 2006 election for the presidency in a field of 26 candidates. International observers including the United Nations, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and others called the election free, fair, and transparent. President Kérékou was barred from running under the 1990 constitution due to term and age limits. President Yayi was inaugurated on April 6, 2006.

Benin held legislative elections on March 31, 2007 for the 83 seats in the National Assembly. The "Force Cowrie for an Emerging Benin" (FCBE) party, closely linked to President Yayi, won a plurality of the seats in the National Assembly, providing the president with considerable influence over the legislative agenda.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Thomas YAYI Boni**
Min. of State in Charge of the Economy, Economic Forecasting, Development, & Evaluations of Public Action: **Pascal Irene KOUPAKI**
Min. of State in Charge of National Defense: **Issifou Kgui N'DOURO**
Min. of Admin. & Institutional Reform: **Idrissou Sina Bio GOUNOU**
Min. of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, & Fisheries: **Roger DOVONOU**
Min. in Charge of Relations With Institutions & Spokesman for the Govt.: **Alexandre HOUTONDJI**
Min. of Culture, Tourism, & Handicrafts: **Soumanu TOLEBA**
Min. of Decentralization, Local Communities, & Land Management: **Dmolo Issa MOKO**
Min. of Environment & Conservation of Nature: **Juliette Koudenoukpo BIAOU**
Min. of Family & Children: **Gnimbr DANSOU**
Min. of Finance: **Soul Man LAWANI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Francophonie, & Beninese Diaspora: **Moussa OKANLA**
Min. of Health: **Kessile TCHALA**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Vicentia BOCCO**
Min. of Industry, Commerce, & Small & Medium Scale Enterprises: **Gregoire AKOFODJI**
Min. of Interior & Public Security: **Felix HESSOU**
Min. of Justice, Legislation, & Human Rights, & Keeper of the Seals: **Cassa Gustave ANANI**
Min. of Microfinance & Youth & Women's Employment: **Sakinatou Abdou Alfa Orou SIDI**
Min. of Mines, Energy, & Water: **Sacca LAFIA**
Min. of Primary Education, Literacy, & National Languages: **Christine OUINSAVI**
Min. of Secondary Education, Vocational Training, & Technical Training: **Bernadette Sohoudji AGBOSSOU**
Min. of Urban Development, Land Reform, & Erosion Prevention: **Francois Gbendoukpo NOUDEGBESSI**
Min. of Work & Public Service: **Emmanuel TIANDO**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Leisure: **Ganiou SOGLO**
Min.-Del. for Budget in the Office of the Minister of Finance: **Albert Segbegnon HOUNGBO**
Min.-Del. to the Pres. in Charge of Communications & New Technologies: **Dsir ADADJA**
Min.-Del. to the Pres. for Transport & Public Works: **Armand ZINZINDOHOUE**
Governor, Central Bank: **Charles Konan BANNY**
Ambassador to the US: **Cyrille Segbe OGUIN**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Jean-Marie EHOUZOU**

Benin maintains an embassy in the United States at 2124 Kalorama Road, Washington, DC 20008, tel. 202-232-6656. The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Benin to the United Nations is located at 4 East 73rd Street, New York, NY 10021 tel. 212-249-6014, fax 212-734-4735.

ECONOMY

Benin's economy is chiefly based on agriculture. Cotton accounts for 40% of GDP and roughly 80% of official export receipts. There also is production of textiles, palm products, and cocoa. Corn, beans, rice, peanuts, cashews, pineapples, cassava, yams, and other various tubers are grown for local subsistence. Benin began producing a modest quantity of offshore oil in October 1982. Production ceased in recent years but exploration of new sites is ongoing. A modest fishing fleet provides fish and shrimp for local subsistence and export to Europe. A number of formerly government-owned commercial activities are now privatized, and the government, consistent with its commitments to the IMF and World Bank, has plans to continue on this path. Smaller businesses are privately owned by Beninese citizens, but some firms are foreign owned, primarily French and Lebanese. The private commercial and agricultural sectors remain the principal contributors to growth.

Economic Development

Since the transition to a democratic government in 1990, Benin has undergone a remarkable economic recovery. A large injection of external

investment from both private and public sources has alleviated the economic difficulties of the early 1990s caused by global recession and persistently low commodity prices (although the latter continues to affect the economy). The manufacturing sector is confined to some light industry, which is mainly involved in processing primary products and the production of consumer goods.

Benin is dependent on imported electricity, mostly from Ghana, which currently accounts for a significant proportion of the country's imports. Benin has several initiatives to attract foreign capital to build electricity generation facilities in Benin in order to break this dependency. The service sector has grown quickly, stimulated by economic liberalization and fiscal reform. Membership of the CFA Franc Zone offers reasonable currency stability. Benin sells its products mainly to France and, in smaller quantities, to the Netherlands, Korea, Japan, and India. France is Benin's leading source for imports. Benin also is a member of the West African economic community ECOWAS.

In March 2003, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to support a comprehensive debt reduction package for Benin under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Debt relief under HIPC amounts to approximately $460 million. Benin received $27.1 million in 2002 and received $32.9 million in 2003. HIPC will reduce Benin's debt-to-export ratio, freeing up considerable resources for education, health, and other anti-poverty programs.

Despite its growth, the economy of Benin still remains underdeveloped and dependent on subsistence agriculture, cotton production, and regional trade. Inflation has subsided over the past several years. Real economic growth for 2007 was 4.2%. Commercial and transport activities, which make up a large part of GDP, are vulnerable to developments in Nigeria, including fuel shortages.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Abroad, Benin has strengthened ties with France, the former colonial power, as well as the United States and the main international lending institutions. Benin also has adopted a mediating role in the political crises in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Togo and provided a contribution to the UN force in Haiti. In early 2003, Benin provided a peacekeeping contingent to the ECOWAS stabilization force in Cote d'Ivoire. Benin's democratic standing, stability, and positive role in international peacekeeping have helped Benin's international stature continue to grow. Benin enjoys stable relations with Nigeria, the main regional power. Benin held a seat on the UN Security Council; its membership term ended December 31, 2005.

U.S.-BENINESE RELATIONS

The United States and Benin have had an excellent history of relations in the years since Benin embraced democracy. The U.S. Government continues to assist Benin with the improvement of living standards that are key to the ultimate success of Benin's experiment with democratic government and economic liberalization, and are consistent with U.S. values and national interest in reducing poverty and promoting growth. The bulk of the U.S. effort in support of consolidating democracy in Benin is focused on long-term human resource development through U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs.

Efforts to pursue this national interest are spearheaded by USAID, which has effective programs focused on primary education, family health (including family planning), women's and children's health, and combating sexually transmitted diseases, especially the spread of HIV. USAID's Democracy and Governance program also emphasizes encouraging greater civil society involvement in national decision making; strengthening mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability; improving the environment for decentralized private and local initiatives; and enhancing the electoral system and the national legislature. A panoply of military-to-military cooperation programs reinforces democratizing efforts. U.S.-Benin military cooperation is now being expanding, both bilaterally and within a broader regional framework.

In February 2006, the Government of Benin signed a 5-year $308 million Millennium Challenge Compact (MCC) to increase investment and private sector activity in Benin. The program removes key constraints to growth and supports improvements in physical and institutional infrastructures in four critical sectors: land, financial services, justice, and markets. The proposed projects reinforce each other, contributing to an economic rate of return of 17%.

The U.S. advances the ethos of law enforcement by working with Beninese authorities to crack down on crimes, help eradicate corruption, promote good governance, the rule of law, and greater official accountability. The U.S. Public Affairs Office in Cotonou leads the U.S.-Benin cultural, professional, and educational exchanges, with a focus on helping educate the Government of Benin and the public on the trade opportunities and advantages of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. The PA Office also helps in expanding efforts to build a more responsible media. The U.S. Peace Corps program in Benin provides ongoing opportunities for increased understanding between Beninese and Americans. The approximately 110 volunteers promote sustainable development through activities in health, education, the environment, and small enterprise development. The U.S. Peace Corps program in Benin is one of the most successful in Africa, in part because of Beninese receptivity and collaboration. Currently, trade between Benin and the United States is small, but interest in American products is growing. The United States is interested in promoting increased trade with Benin in order

to contribute to U.S. trade with Benin's neighbors, particularly Nigeria, Niger, and Burkina Faso, which receive large amounts of their own imports through the port of Cotonou. Such trade also is facilitated by Benin's membership in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and in the CFA franc monetary zone. The U.S. Government also works to stimulate American investment in key sectors such as energy, telecommunications, and transportation. Benin has been eligible for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) since the program began in 2000. It qualified for AGOA textile and apparel benefits in January 2004.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Penelope Tavernier
HRO:	Lyngrid S. Rawlings
MGT:	Lyngrid Rawlings
POL/ECO:	Jason Hahn
AMB:	Gayleatha B. Brown
CON:	Christopher Derrick
DCM:	Martina Boustani
PAO:	Rhonda Watson
GSO:	Stephanie Arnorld
RSO:	Keith Harris
AID:	Rudolph Thomas
CLO:	Mamane Abdourazakou
FMO:	Fedzer, Misun Pak
ICASS Chair:	Rudolph Thomas
IMO:	Gerald Spears
ISSO:	William Geschwind
State ICASS:	Christopher Derrick

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 28, 2008

Country Description: Benin is a developing country in West Africa. Its political capital is Porto Novo; however, its administrative capital, Cotonou, is Benin's largest city and the site of most government, commercial, and tourist activity.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Visas are not routinely available at the airport. Visitors to Benin should also carry the WHO Yellow Card ("Carte Jaune") indicating that they have been vaccinated for yellow fever. Contact the Embassy of Benin for the most current visa information. The Embassy is located at: 2124 Kalorama Road, NW, Washington, DC 20008; Tel: 202-232-6656.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens should avoid crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

U.S. citizens should not walk on the beach alone at any time of day. It is also highly recommended not to carry a passport or valuables when walking in any part of the city. Travelers should carry a notarized photocopy of the photo page of their passport (see Crime section). They should not walk around the city after dark, and should take particular care to avoid the beach and isolated areas near the beach after dark.

The ocean currents along the coast are extremely strong and treacherous with rough surf and a strong undertow, and several people drown each year.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Street robbery is a significant problem in Cotonou. Robbery and mugging occurs along the Boulevard de France (the beach road by the Marina and Novotel Hotels) and on the beaches near hotels frequented by international visitors. Most of the reported incidents involve the use of force, often by armed persons, with occasional minor injury to the victim. Travelers should avoid isolated and poorly-lit areas and should not walk around the city or the beaches between dusk and dawn. Even in daylight hours, foreigners on the beach near Cotonou are frequent victims of robberies. When visiting the beach, travelers should not bring valuables and should carry only a photocopy of their passport. If you are a victim of crime, you should contact the U.S. Embassy immediately. There has been a continued increase in the number of robberies and carjacking incidents after dark, both within metropolitan Cotonou and on highways and rural roads outside of major metropolitan areas. Motorists are urged to be wary of the risk of carjacking. Keep the windows of your vehicle rolled up and the doors locked, and stay alert for signs of suspicious behavior by other motorists or pedestrians that may lead to carjacking, such as attempts to stop a moving vehicle for no obvious reason. Travelers should avoid driving outside the city of Cotonou after dark and should exercise extreme caution when driving in Cotonou after dark. Overland travel to Nigeria is dangerous near the Benin/Nigeria border due to unofficial checkpoints and highway banditry.

Travelers should avoid the use of credit cards and automated teller machines (ATMs) in Benin due to a high rate of fraud. Perpetrators of business and other kinds of fraud often target foreigners, including Americans. While such fraud schemes in the past have been largely associated with Nigeria, they are now prevalent throughout West Africa, including Benin, and are more frequently perpetrated by Beninese criminals. Business scams are not always easy to recognize, and any unsolicited business proposal should be carefully scrutinized. There are, nevertheless, some indicators that are warnings of a probable scam. Look out for:

- Any offer of a substantial percentage of a very large sum of money to be transferred into your account, in return for your "discretion" or "confidentiality;"
- Any deal that seems too good to be true;
- Requests for signed and stamped, blank letterhead or invoices, or for bank account or credit card information;
- Requests for urgent air shipment, accompanied by an instrument of payment whose genuineness cannot immediately be established;
- Solicitations claiming the soliciting party has personal ties to high government officials;
- Requests for payment, in advance, of transfer taxes or incorporation fees;
- Statements that your name was provided to the soliciting party either by someone you do not know or by "a reliable contact;"
- Promises of advance payment for services to the Beninese government; and
- Any offer of a charitable donation.

These scams, which may appear to be a legitimate business deal requiring advance payments on contracts, pose a danger of both financial loss and physical harm. Recently more American citizens have been targeted. The perpetrators of such scams sometimes pose as attorneys.

One common ploy is to request fees for "registration" with fictitious government offices or regulatory authorities. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of advance-fee fraud is common sense—if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Travelers should carefully check out any unsolicited business proposal originating in Benin before committing any funds, provide any goods or services, or undertake any travel. Scams may also involve persons posing as singles on Internet dating sites or as online acquaintances who then get into trouble and require money to be "rescued." If you are asked to send money by someone you meet online please contact the U.S. Embassy before doing so.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Benin are limited and not all medicines are available. Travelers should bring their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. Not all medicines and prescription drugs available in Benin are USFDA-approved. Malaria is a serious risk to travelers to Benin. For information on malaria, its prevention, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarial drugs, please visit the CDC travelers' health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Benin is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

With the exception of the road linking Cotonou in the south to Malanville on the border with Niger in the north, and from Parakou in central Benin to Natitingou in the northwestern part of the country, roads in Benin are generally in poor condition and are often impassable during the rainy season. Benin's unpaved roads vary widely in quality; deep sand and potholes are common. During the rainy season from mid-June to mid-September, dirt roads often become impassable. Four-wheel drive vehicles with full spare tires and emergency equipment are recommended.

Most of the main streets in Cotonou are paved, but side streets are often dirt with deep potholes. Traffic moves on the right, as in the United States. Cotonou has no public transportation system; many Beninese people rely on bicycles, mopeds, motorbikes, and zemidjans (moped taxis). All official Americans are required to wear safety helmets when on a motorcycle and are strongly discouraged from using zemidjans. Travelers using zemidjans, particularly at night, are much more vulnerable to being mugged, assaulted or robbed. Buses and bush taxis offer service in the interior.

Gasoline smuggled from Nigeria is widely available in glass bottles and jugs at informal roadside stands throughout Cotonou and much of the country. This gasoline is of unreliable quality, often containing water or other contaminants that can damage

or disable your vehicle. Drivers should purchase fuel only from official service stations. There are periodic gas shortages, which can be particularly acute in the north of the country where there are few service stations.

U.S. citizens traveling by road should exercise extreme caution. Poorly maintained and overloaded transport and cargo vehicles frequently break down and cause accidents. Drivers often place branches or leaves in the road to indicate a broken down vehicle is in the roadway. Undisciplined drivers move unpredictably through traffic. Construction work is often poorly indicated. Speed bumps, commonly used on paved roads in and near villages, are seldom indicated. Drivers must be on guard against people and livestock wandering into or across the roads. Nighttime driving is particularly hazardous as vehicles frequently lack headlights and/or taillights, and brake lights are often burned out.

With few exceptions, Cotonou and other cities lack any street lighting, and lighting on roads between population centers is non-existent. The U.S. Embassy in Cotonou prohibits non-essential travel outside of metropolitan areas after dusk by official Americans and strongly urges all U.S. citizens to avoid night driving as well. There have been numerous carjackings and robberies on roads in Benin after dark, several of which resulted in murder when the driver refused to comply with the assailants' demands. The National Police periodically conduct vehicle checks at provisional roadblocks in an effort to improve road safety and reduce the increasing number of carjackings. When stopped at such a roadblock, you must have all of the vehicle's documentation available to present to the authorities.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Benin, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Benin's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: U.S. citizens are advised to keep a notarized photocopy of the photo page of their passport with them at all times when traveling in Benin. The Embassy has had a few reports of officials requesting a "gift" to facilitate official administrative matters (e.g., customs entry). Such requests should be politely but firmly declined. It is prohibited to photograph government buildings and other official sites, such as military installations, without the formal consent of the Government of Benin. In general, it is always best to be courteous and ask permission before taking pictures of people. Beninese citizens may react angrily if photographed without their prior approval. Obtaining customs clearance at the port of Cotonou for donated items shipped to Benin from the United States may be a lengthy process. In addition, to obtain a waiver of customs duties on donated items, the donating organization must secure prior written approval from the Government of Benin. Please contact the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou for more detailed information.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Benin laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Benin are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Benin are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Benin.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Rue Caporal Anani Bernard in Cotonou.

The Embassy's mailing address is B.P. 2012, Cotonou, Benin. The 24-hour telephone numbers are (229) 21-30-06-50, 21-30-05-13, and 21-30-17-92. The Embassy's general fax number is (229) 21-30-06-70; the Consular Section's fax number is (229) 21-30-66-82; http://cotonou.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

September 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent immigration visa statistics show that only one immigrant visa has been issued to a Beninese orphan in the last five years.

Adoption Authority: An adoption request must be filed in the local court of the town/city where the child resides. Adoptions are handled by the courts in Benin.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: A Beninese child can be adopted by a Beninese citizen or by a citizen of another country. Adoptive parents must be either a couple who has been married for five years OR the spouse of a biological parent OR an unmarried individual of at least 35 years of age.

Exceptions to these requirements may be obtained by a court order from the local court where the child resides.

Residency Requirements: There is no residency requirement for adoption in Benin.

Time Frame: Adoptions in Benin can take several months. It is likely to take longer if the child you are adopting does not live in a major city. In addition to the actual petition for adoption, adoptive parents must also provide birth certificates for all parties (including any biological parent still living) and this process can take several months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Adopting a child in Benin can be done independently by the prospective parent(s). It is advisable to retain a lawyer to assist with the court proceedings. An attorneys list may be found on the U.S. Embassy web site at: http://cotonou.usembassy.gov/listoflawyers.html.

Adoption Fees: Adoptive parents must pay court fees and fees to obtain other needed paperwork. The initial fee to submit documents is only 2000 fCFA (approx. $4), but in some cases there may be additional fees. For example, one family paid for the printing of a book of new forms required to obtain local birth certificates because the local government could not afford to pay for it, and there was no other way to get the birth certificate they needed to continue the processing of their adoption petition. Local courts may also have their own fee structures for filing petitions.

Adoption Procedures: An adoption request can be filed by a couple who has been married at least five years, the spouse of one of the biological parents, or an unmarried individual of at least 35 years of age. There is no maximum age defined in the law. All adoptive parents must be childless and the age difference between the parent(s) and the child must be at least 15 years. The local judge hearing the case can make an exception if he/she believes it is warranted and grant an adoption to parent(s) who have biological or adoptive children already.

The granting of consent for the child's adoption by the biological parent(s) or guardian of the child must take place in the presence of a judge, a notary public or (if outside of Benin) a consular officer at a Beninese Embassy. Prospective parent(s) are required to submit a written request to the Tribunal along with a certified agreement to adopt the child, birth certificates (for themselves, the child and any biological parent), a marriage certificate (if applicable), a document of consent by the biological parent(s) and paperwork documenting their ability to support the child financially (e.g. bank statements etc. Although there is a new Family Code in Benin that is supposed to regularize procedures and forms throughout the country, it has not been fully implemented and different localities may have different procedures or may not know/have access to the appropriate forms or procedures for family related issues. The adoption process can be complicated and lengthy and a local lawyer is probably the best resource for the questions of any prospective adoptive parent(s).

Required Documents: Prospective parent(s) are required to submit a written request along with a certified agreement to adopt the child, birth certificates (for themselves, the child and any biological parent), a marriage certificate (if applicable), a document of consent by the biological parent(s) and paperwork documenting their ability to support the child financially (e.g. bank statements etc.).

Embassy of the Republic of Benin

2124 Kalorama Road, N.W.

Washington, DC 20008

Telephone: (202) 232-6656

Fax: (202) 265-1996

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Cotonou

Rue Caporal Bernard Anani

01 BP 2012

Cotonou, Benin

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Benin may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Benin. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



BERMUDA

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Bermuda

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 58.8 sq. km. (22.7 sq. mi.).
Cities: (2000 census) Capital—Hamilton (pop. 3,461). Other city—St. George (pop. 3,306).
Terrain: Hilly islands.
Climate: Semi-tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bermudian(s).
Population: (2007 est.) 64,009.
Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 0.61%.
Ethnic groups: Black 54.8%, white 34%, mixed and other 11.1%.
Religions: (2000) Anglican 23%, Roman Catholic 15%, African Methodist Episcopal 11%, 7th Day Adventist 7%, Methodist 4%, other 40% (none or not stated).
Languages: English.
Education: Years compulsory—to age 16. Bermuda placed third overall of six developed nations (including the U.S.) in the 2005 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey.
Health: (2006 est.) Infant mortality rate—8.3 per thousand. Life expectancy—men 76 yrs., women 80 yrs.
Work force: (2004 est.) Sales—19%; services—19%; clerical—19%; professional and technical—17%; administrative and managerial—15%; agriculture and fishing—3%; laborers—3%.

Government

Type: British Overseas Territory with significant autonomy.
Constitution: June 8, 1968; amended 1989 and 2003.
Government branches: Chief of State—Queen Elizabeth II, British monarch (head of state, represented by a governor). Head of Government—Premier, Ewart Brown. Legislative—Senate (upper house, 11 members appointed by the governor, the premier, and the opposition); House of Assembly (lower house; 36 seats elected by popular vote). Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political subdivisions: Nine parishes.
Political parties: Progressive Labor Party (PLP), United Bermuda Party (UBP), National Liberal Party (NLP).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (nominal, 2005) $4.9 billion. Sectors—21% ($926.5 million) from international companies; 16% ($712 million) from real estate and rental; 12% ($536 million) from financial intermediation; 9% ($379 million) from wholesale, retail trade, and repair services; 6% ($245.8 million) from the hotel and restaurant sector; 6% ($272.4 million) from construction; and 30% ($1.5 billion) from other sectors.
GDP growth rate: (2005 provisional) 4.6%.
Per capita nominal GDP: (2005 prov.) $76,403.
Inflation rate: Annual inflation rate for 2005 was 4.0%.
Natural resource: Limestone, used primarily for building.
Agriculture: Products—semitropical produce, dairy products, flowers, honey.
Industry: Types—re/insurance finance, tourism, structural concrete products, paints, perfumes, furniture.
Trade: Exports (2006, includes re-exports)—$25 million: semitropical produce, light manufactures. Imports (2006)—$1.06 billion: food, clothing, household goods, chemicals, live animals, machinery, transport, and miscellaneous manufactures. Major suppliers—U.S. ($752.6 million), United Kingdom, Canada, Caribbean countries (mostly oil from Netherlands Antilles).

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Bermuda is an archipelago consisting of seven main islands and many smaller islands and islets lying about 1,050 kilometers (650 mi.) east of North Carolina. The main islands—

with hilly terrain and subtropical climate—are clustered together, connected by bridges, and are considered to be a geographic unit, referred to as the Island of Bermuda. Bermuda was discovered in 1503 by a Spanish explorer, Juan de Bermudez, who made no attempt to land because of the treacherous reef surrounding the uninhabited islands.

In 1609, a group of British colonists led by Sir George Somers was shipwrecked and stranded on the islands for 10 months. Their reports aroused great interest about the islands in England, and in 1612 King James extended the Charter of the Virginia Company to include them. Later that year, about 60 British colonists arrived and founded the town of St. George, the oldest continuously inhabited English-speaking settlement in the Western Hemisphere. When representative government was introduced to Bermuda in 1620, it became a self-governing colony.

Due to the islands' isolation, for many years Bermuda remained an outpost of 17th-century British civilization, with an economy based on the use of the islands' endemic cedar trees for shipbuilding and the salt trade. Hamilton, a centrally located port founded in 1790, became the seat of government in 1815.

Slaves from Africa were brought to Bermuda soon after the colony was established. The slave trade was outlawed in Bermuda in 1807, and all slaves were freed in 1834. Today, about 61% of Bermudians are of African descent.

The establishment of a formal constitution in 1968 bolstered internal self-government; debate about independence ensued, although a 1995 independence referendum was defeated. The current government re-opened the independence debate in 2004.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Bermuda is the oldest self-governing overseas territory in the British Commonwealth. Its 1968 constitution provides the island with formal responsibility for internal self-government, while the British Government retains responsibility for external affairs, defense, and security. The Bermudian Government is consulted on any international negotiations affecting the territory. Bermuda participates, through British delegations, in the UN and some of its specialized and related agencies.

Government Structure

Queen Elizabeth II is head of state and is represented in Bermuda by a governor, whom she appoints. Internally, Bermuda has a parliamentary system of government.

The premier is head of government and leader of the majority party in the House of Assembly. The cabinet is composed of ministers selected by the premier from among members of the House of Assembly and the Senate.

The 36-member House is elected from 36 electoral districts (one representative from each district) for a term not to exceed 5 years. The Senate, or reviewing house, serves concurrently with the House and has 11 members—five appointed by the governor in consultation with the premier, three by the opposition leader, and three at the governor's discretion.

The judiciary is composed of a chief justice and associate judges appointed by the governor. For administrative purposes, Bermuda is divided into nine parishes, with Hamilton and St. George considered autonomous corporations.

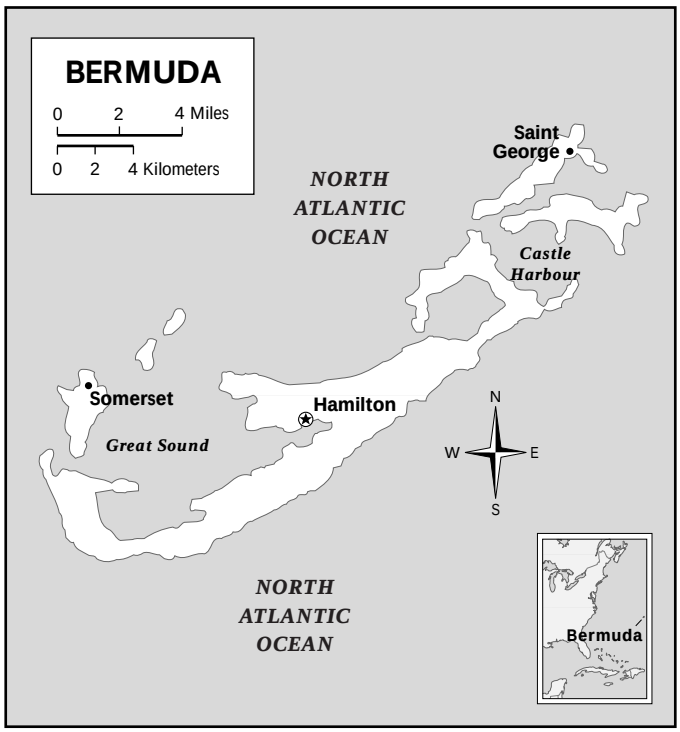
Political Conditions

Bermuda's first political party, the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), was formed in May 1963 with predominantly black adherents. In 1965, the two-party system was launched with the formation of the United Bermuda Party (UBP), which had the support of the majority of white voters and of some black voters. A third party, the Bermuda Democratic Party (BDP), was formed in the summer of 1967 with a splinter group from the PLP as a nucleus; it disbanded in 1970. It was later replaced by the National Liberal Party (NLP), which currently holds no parliamentary seats. Bermuda's first election held on the basis of universal adult suffrage and equal voting took place on May 22, 1968; previously, the franchise had been limited to property owners. In the 1968 election, the UBP won 30 House of Assembly seats, while the PLP won 10 seats and the BDP lost the 3 seats it had previously held. The UBP continued to maintain control of the government, although by decreasing margins in the Assembly, until 1998 when the PLP won the general election for the first time.

Unsatisfied aspirations, particularly among young blacks, led to a brief civil disturbance in December 1977, following the execution of two men found guilty of the 1972-73 assassinations of Governor Sir Richard Sharples and four others. In the 1980s, the increasing prosperity of Bermudians, combined with limited land area, caused a housing shortage. Despite a general strike in 1981 and economic downturn in the early 1980s, Bermuda's social, political, and economic institutions remained stable.

Both political parties have discussed the possibility of complete independence. An independence referendum called by a sharply divided UBP in the summer of 1995 was resoundingly defeated and resulted in the resignation of the premier and UBP leader, Sir John Swan. Just over 58% of the electorate voted in the independence referendum, which had to be postponed one day due to disruptions caused by Hurricane Felix.

Of those voting, over 73% voted against independence, while only 25% voted in favor. Vote results may have been distorted by the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) call to boycott the referendum.



Eventual independence from the United Kingdom (U.K.) has been a goal of the PLP since the party's inception in 1963. In February 2004 then-Premier (and PLP party leader) Alex Scott announced his decision to commence an open and objective debate on the subject of independence.

The government-appointed Bermuda Independence Commission held hearings island-wide where there was considerable focus on the mechanics of deciding independence, whether through an independence referendum, a general election, or some combination of the two. However, several recent polls indicated little support for independence. The international and local business communities continue to take a wait-and-see attitude.

Currently citizens of Britain's overseas territories, including Bermuda, are entitled to British citizenship. The British Overseas Territories Bill, passed in February 2002, provides automatic acquisition of British citizenship, including automatic transmission of citizenship to their children; the right of abode, including the right to live and work in the U.K. and the European Union (EU); the right not to exercise or to formally renounce British citizenship; and the right to use the fast track European Union/European Economic Area (EU/EEA) channel at the airport, free of U.K. immigration controls. The U.K. has said that citizens of an independent Bermuda would no longer be automatically entitled to British citizenship and the EU benefits that accrue to it.

There are no conditions attached to the grant of British citizenship to the overseas territories, a fact of particular importance to Bermuda where the issue of independence is being debated.

A 1999 U.K. government White Paper states: "The new grant of British citizenship will not be a barrier, therefore, to those Overseas Territories choosing to become independent of Britain. Our Overseas Territories are British for as long as they wish to remain British. Britain has willingly granted independence where it has been requested; and we will continue to do so where this is an option."

Following a bitter and divisive general election on December 18, 2007—which many predicted would be very close—the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) under Premier Ewart Brown was returned to power with the same number of seats as it had going into the election.

The opposition United Bermuda Party (UBP) lost its third successive election, and opposition leader Michael Dunkley lost his seat in the House of Assembly. He was appointed opposition leader in the Senate. The UBP elected member of parliament Kim Swan as opposition leader and Cole Simons as deputy. Mr. Swan is a first-time member of parliament whose previous public service was as a UBP senator.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor: **Richard GOZNEY, Sir**
Premier: **Alex SCOTT**
Dep. Premier: **Ewart BROWN**
Min. of Education: **Terry LISTER**
Min. of Environment: **Neletha BUTTERFIELD**
Min. of Finance: **Paula COX**
Min. of Health & Family Services: **Patrice PARRIS**
Min. of Housing, Works, & Engineering: **Ashfield DEVENT**
Min. of Justice: **Larry MUSSENDEN**
Min. of Labor & Home Affairs: **Randy NORTON**
Min. of Legislative Affairs: **Michael SCOTT**
Min. of Sports & Community Affairs: **Dale BULTER**
Min. of Tourism, Telecommunications, and e-Commerce: **Renee WEBB**
Min. of Transport: **Ewart BROWN**
Min. of Works, Engineering, Parks, & Housing: **Alex SCOTT**
Attorney Gen.: **Larry MUSSENDEN**
Cabinet Sec.:
Chmn., Bermuda Monetary Authority:

Bermuda's interests in the U.S. are represented by the United Kingdom, whose embassy is at 3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel: 202-588-6500; fax: 202-588-7870. The Bermudian Government's Department of Tourism has offices in New York and Toronto.

ECONOMY

Bermuda has enjoyed steady economic prosperity since the end of World War II, although the island experienced a mild recession in 2001-02, paralleling the recession in the U.S. Bermuda enjoys one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Its economy is based primarily upon international business and tourism. In 2006, international business, business services, and tourism accounted for 91.7% of the total balance of payments current account receipts of foreign exchange. However, the role of international business in the economy is expanding, whereas that of tourism is generally contracting.

Bermuda is an offshore financial center with a robust financial regulatory system. The government cooperates with the United States and the international community to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing and continues to update its legislation and procedures in conformance with international standards. Bermuda first enacted specific money laundering legislation in 1997, passing the Proceeds of Crime Act (PCA) to apply money laundering controls to financial institutions such as banks, deposit companies, trust companies, and investment businesses, including broker-dealers and investment managers. Insurance companies are covered to the extent that they are judged susceptible to the risk of money laundering abuse. Amendments in 2000, effective June 1, 2001, expanded the scope of the legislation to cover the proceeds of all indictable offenses, including tax evasion, corruption, fraud, counterfeiting, theft, and forgery. The Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment (No. 3) Act 2004 clarified the authority of the BMA to respond to requests from overseas regulators for information about clients.

In December 2002, Parliament passed the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2002, expanding the list of BMA objectives to include action to combat financial crime. It underpins the BMA's existing role in checking systems and controls in financial institutions and paves the way for the BMA to expand its role in administering UN sanctions and other measures on a delegated basis. In order to implement provisions of relevant UN Security Council antiterrorism resolutions, the act—among other provisions—prescribes the manner by which the finance minister may delegate to the BMA the power to block accounts.

Bermuda enacted the Investment Business Act (IBA) in 1998 to regulate the island's financial services industry. In response to international directives, the government passed the Investment Business Act 2003 to further refine its terms. The act creates a balance between government regulation on the one hand and the competitive needs of Bermuda's most important industry—international business—on the other hand. By updating its regulatory framework, Bermuda has enhanced its reputation globally as an international standard-bearer. In return, international businesses registered in Bermuda are recognized as having met or surpassed the most stringent international criteria.

In 2006, Bermuda considered additional legislation to further enhance its compliance with international financial standards. The Collective Investment Scheme Act, a plan to institute a formal licensing regime for investment schemes, was passed by parliament at the end of 2006 under the name of the Investment Funds Act 2006. The act was implemented in early March 2007.

In 2006, 14,267 international companies were registered in Bermuda, many U.S.-owned. They are an important source of foreign exchange for the island, and spent an estimated $1.004 billion in Bermuda in 2006. The growing importance of international business is reflected in its increased share of GDP, up from 13.9% in 2004 to 21.9% in 2005 at $1.062 billion. Additionally, it is now the island's largest employer, with 4,489 jobs in 2006.

Historically important for employment and tax revenue, Bermuda's tourism industry had been experiencing difficulties for many years, but showed a slight improvement in 2006. In 1996, Bermuda welcomed 571,700 visitors to the island. By 2004, that figure had dropped to 477,757 but increased to 641,747 in 2006. Occupancy rates for 2006 averaged 63.8%, and were higher in the smaller hotels than at larger properties. Visitors contributed an estimated $475 million to the economy in 1996, but that figure declined to $392.3 million in 2005. Visitor spending increased in recent years to $464 million in 2006. Bermuda has little in the way of exports or manufacturing; almost all manufactured goods and foodstuffs must be imported. The value of imports rose from $551 million in 1994 to $964 million in 2005. The U.S. is Bermuda's primary trading partner, with $776.7 million in U.S. imports in 2006. The U.K., Canada, and the Caribbean countries (mainly the Netherlands Antilles) also are important trading partners. Exports from Bermuda, including imports into the small free port that are subsequently re-exported, decreased from $35 million in 1993 to $26 million in 2006. Duty on imports is a major source of revenue for the Government of Bermuda. In 2005-2006, the government obtained $224.2 million, or 27.9%, of its revenue base from imports. Heavy importation duties are reflected in retail prices. Even though import duties are high, wages have kept up for the most part with the cost of living, and poverty—by U.S. standards—appears to be practically nonexistent. Although Bermuda imposes no income, sales, or profit taxes, it does levy a real estate tax.

Bermuda is home to immigrants from other countries. According to the 2000 census, 79% of the population is Bermuda-born and 21% is foreign-born. U.K. immigrants comprise 28% of the immigrant population; U.S., 20% (although the U.S. Consulate estimates that the figure is closer to 40%); Canada, 15%; Caribbean, 12%; and Portugal/Azores, 10%. In February 1970, Bermuda converted from its former currency, the pound, to a decimal currency of dollars pegged to the U.S. dollar.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND U.S.-BERMUDIAN RELATIONS

The United Kingdom is formally responsible for Bermuda's foreign and defense policy. U.S. policy toward the U.K. is the basis of U.S.-Bermudian relations. In the early 20th century, as modern transportation and communication systems developed, Bermuda became a popular destination for wealthy U.S., British, and Canadian tourists. While the tariff enacted in 1930 by the U.S. against its trading partners ended Bermuda's once-thriving agricultural export trade—primarily fresh vegetables to the U.S.—it helped spur the overseas territory to develop its tourist industry, which is second only to international business in terms of economic importance to the island.

During World War II, Bermuda became a significant U.S. military site because of its location in the Atlantic Ocean. In 1941, the U.S. signed a lend-lease agreement with the U.K. giving the British surplus U.S. Navy destroyers in exchange for 99-year lease rights to establish naval and air bases in Bermuda. The bases consisted of 5.8 square kilometers (2.25 sq. mi.) of land largely reclaimed from the sea. The U.S. Naval Air Station was on St. David's Island, while the U.S. Naval Air Station Annex was at the western end of the island in the Great Sound.

Both bases were closed in September 1995 (as were British and Canadian bases), and the lands were formally returned to the Government of Bermuda in 2002.

The Government of Bermuda has begun to pursue some international initiatives independent of the U.K. in recent years. Bermuda signed a cultural memorandum of understanding with Cuba in 2003. The island also joined the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as an associate member in 2003. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) provided search and rescue assistance immediately following Hurricane Fabian in September 2003 but Bermuda declined subsequent offers of reconstruction assistance from the U.S. and U.K., preferring to accept assistance from its Caribbean neighbors. The USCG continues to provide search and rescue as needed.

An estimated 8,500 U.S. citizens live in Bermuda, many of them employed in the international business community. There also are a large number of American businesses incorporated in Bermuda, although no actual figures are available. Despite the trend of American businesses moving to Bermuda or other offshore jurisdictions to escape U.S. taxes, Bermuda maintains that the island is not a "tax haven" and that it taxes both local and foreign businesses equally.

While U.S. visitors to Bermuda are critical to the island's tourism industry, the number of U.S. visitors to Bermuda is declining. In 2006 only 76% of air arrivals originated from the U.S. compared to 83.9% in 1990. The number of air and cruise passengers from the U.S. totaled 464,000 in 2000. That number fell to 451,924 American passengers in 2006. Another 3,861 Americans sailed to the island via private yacht in 2006.

In 2005, 74% of Bermuda's imports came from the U.S. Areas of opportunity for U.S. investment are principally in the re-insurance and financial services industries, although the former U.S. base lands also may present long-term investment opportunities.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

HAMILTON (CG) 16 Middle Road, Devonshire DV 03 Bermuda, 1-441-295-1342 x0, Fax 1-441-296-9233, Workweek: 8:00 AM-4:30 PM, M-F.

CG OMS:	Gemma Newton
DHS/CIS:	Stephen Greenberg
DHS/ICE:	Stephen Greenberg
DPO:	Matthew E. Johnson
ECO:	Matthew E. Johnson
MGT:	Matthew E. Johnson
PO:	Gregory W. Slayton
CON:	Margaret Pride
RSO:	Kevin Flanagan (Embassy Ottawa)
AFSA:	Margaret Pride
APHIS:	Stephen Greenberg
CLO:	Christine Gregor
DAO:	Dao London
DEA:	Mcaleer
EEO:	Margaret Pride
FIN:	Matthew E. Johnson
FMO:	Matthew E. Johnson
ICASS Chair:	Stephen Greenberg
IMO:	Joe Smith
ISO:	Margaret Pride
ISSO:	Margaret Pride
LEGATT:	Richard Etzler (Embassy Nassau)
POL:	Matthew E. Johnson

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 27, 2008

Country Description: Bermuda is a highly developed British overseas territory with a stable democracy and modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: Travelers may contact the British Consulate in New York, telephone (212) 745-0273/3206/0281, or the British consulate in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, or San Francisco; Internet: http://www.britain-info.org or the Bermuda Department of Immigration at http://www.immigration.gov.bm.

All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of des-

tination for any foreign entry requirements. Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the passport card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Bermuda has a moderate but growing crime rate. Examples of common crimes include theft of unattended baggage and items from rental motorbikes, purse snatching (often perpetrated against pedestrians by thieves riding motorbikes), mugging, and theft from hotel rooms. Valuables left in hotel rooms (occupied and unoccupied) or left unattended in public areas are vulnerable to theft. The Consulate regularly receives reports of thefts of money, valuables, and passports and advises that travelers keep their hotel windows and doors locked at all times. Criminals often target transportation systems and popular tourist attractions.

Travelers should exercise caution when walking after dark or visiting out-of-the-way places on the island, as they can be vulnerable to theft and sexual assault, and because narrow and dark roadways can contribute to accidents. There have been incidents of sexual assault and acquaintance rape, and the use of "date rape" drugs such as Rohypnol has been reported in the media and confirmed by local authorities; one local advocacy group reports an increase in reporting the use of these drugs and accompanying sexual assault. Travelers should also note an increase in gang presence in Bermuda and should take regular precautions to avoid confrontation. The back streets of Hamilton are often the setting for nighttime assaults, particularly after the bars close.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is available, though extremely expensive. The hospital performs general surgery and has an intensive care unit. Serious or complex medical problems will likely require medical evacuation to the United States.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Bermuda is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Bermuda moves on the left side of the road and the roads are very narrow, often with no defined shoulder. The maximum speed limit in the city of Hamilton is 25 kph (15 mph) and 35 kph (21 mph) on the rest of the island. Under Bermudian law, non-residents are not allowed to own, rent, or drive four-wheeled vehicles. Non-residents must rely on taxis, the excellent local bus system, or motor scooters. Traffic is moderate, but road accidents - particularly involving motorbikes - are common and often result in serious injuries or death.

Rental motor scooters are readily available, and the required helmet is provided. However, visitors should carefully consider whether or not it is worth the risk to ride a scooter. Motor scooters provide the greatest road peril in Bermuda; local operators tend to abuse the speed limit more than other drivers, and they will often pass on the left or right with no warning. Those unfamiliar with driving on the left are likely to find the roundabouts and regulations for yielding at junctions confusing and dangerous. In addition, vehicles often stop on the side of the road, blocking one lane of traffic. Main roads, while generally in good condition, are extremely narrow and tend to be bor-

dered by heavy vegetation or low stone walls. Travelers who rent scooters should be aware that scooter accidents involving visitors are relatively common, and they can be fatal or involve serious injuries.

Taxis are readily available. The local bus system, which is excellent and relatively inexpensive, services the length of the island and stops close to most beaches, hotels, the downtown shopping area, and other points of interest. In addition, water ferry service to a variety of stops around the island is available seven days a week, and is a very safe and enjoyable mode of transportation. For specific information concerning Bermuda driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Bermuda Department of Tourism offices at 310 Madison Avenue, Suite 201, New York, NY, telephone (212) 818-9800, or via the Internet at http://www.bermudatourism.com.

Emergency services may be called at 911, and response time is generally good.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Bermuda's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Bermuda's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: ATMs are widely available in Bermuda. Local banks may not accept checks drawn on U.S. accounts, but some Front Street stores catering to the tourist trade will accept U.S. checks as payment. The local American Express office will cash U.S. checks up to $500.00 for a three-percent fee. Credit cards are widely accepted at all establishments.

U.S. citizens who are taking prescription medication must inform Bermuda customs officials at the point of entry. Medicines must be in labeled containers. Travelers should carry a copy of the written prescription and a letter from the physician or pharmacist confirming the reason the medicine is prescribed.

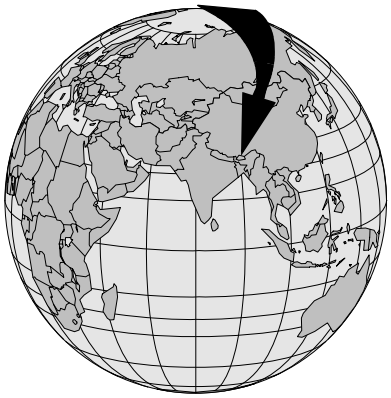
Bermuda customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Bermuda of items such as animals, arms, ammunition and explosives, building sand, crushed rock, gravel, peat and synthetic potting media, foodstuffs (animal origin), fumigating substances, gaming machines, historic articles (relating to Bermuda), lottery advertisements and material, motorcycles, motor vehicles, obscene publications, organotin anti-fouling paint, plants, plant material, fruits and vegetables (living or dead, including seeds), pesticides, prescription drugs, prohibited publications, seditious publications, soil, VHF radios, radar and citizens band (CB) radios. For additional information on temporary admission, export and customs regulations and tariffs, please contact Bermuda Customs at telephone 1-441-295-4816, or email customs@bdagov.bm, or visit the Bermuda Customs web site at http://www.customs.gov.bm.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bermuda's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bermuda are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Bermuda are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Bermuda. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Consulate General is located at Crown Hill, 16 Middle Road, Devonshire DV03, and telephone 1-441-295-1342. Office hours for American Citizens Services are 1:30-3:30 Monday-Wednesday and 8:30-10:30 on Thursdays, except Bermudian and U.S. holidays. American citizens in need of after-hours emergency assistance may call the duty officer at telephone 1-441-335-3828.



BHUTAN

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Bhutan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 46,500 sq. km.

Cities: Capital—Thimphu (pop. approx. 55,000) Other significant cities—Paro, Phoentsholing, Punakha, Bumthong.

Terrain: Mountainous, from the Himalayas to lower-lying foothills and some savannah.

Climate: Alpine to temperate to subtropical with monsoon season from June to September.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bhutanese.

Population: Approximately 672,425 (according to the 2005 census).Domestic and international estimates of the population vary greatly.

Annual growth rate: 2.082% (2007 est.). Density—45 per sq. km.

Ethnic groups: Drukpa 50% (which is also inclusive of Sharchops), as well as ethnic Nepalese (Lhotsampas) 35%, and indigenous or migrant tribes 15%.

Religions: Lamaistic Buddhist 75% (state religion), Indian- and Nepalese-influenced Hinduism 25%.

Languages: Dzongka (official language), English (medium of instruction), Sharchop, Nepali.

Education: Years compulsory—11. Literacy—59.5% (Ministry of Education General Statistics 2007). Primary school net enrollment rate 82.1% (UNDP). Women's literacy—59.5% (2007).

Health: Infant mortality rate (2007 est.)—total: 96.37 deaths/1,000 live births; male: 94.09 deaths/1,000 live births; female: 98.77 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—total population 67 years; male 69.1 years; female 59.5 years (Ministry of Education General Statistics 2007).

Work force: (2005) Agriculture—94%; industry—1%; services—5%. The unemployment rate is 3.1% (2005 est.).

Government

Type: constitutional monarchy. The Royal Government, prompted by the King, initiated a draft constitution in 2003, which was published in 2005. On July 18, 2008, the parliament formally adopted the constitution, marking the final step in Bhutan's historic transition from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy.

National Day: December 17 (1907).

Government branches: Executive—prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—parliament (National Council and National Assembly). The king appoints five members of the National Council and the remaining members are elected. Elections for the National Council (upper house) took place in December 2007. The 47-member National Assembly (lower house) was elected in March 2008. Judicial—High Court (Thrimkhang Gogma), District Courts, and local area arbitration.

Political subdivisions: 20 (dzongkhags).

Political parties: Two. Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) and People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Suffrage: Registered resident with legitimate citizenship, age 18 and above.

Economy

GDP: (purchasing power parity 2007 est.) U.S. $3.359 billion.

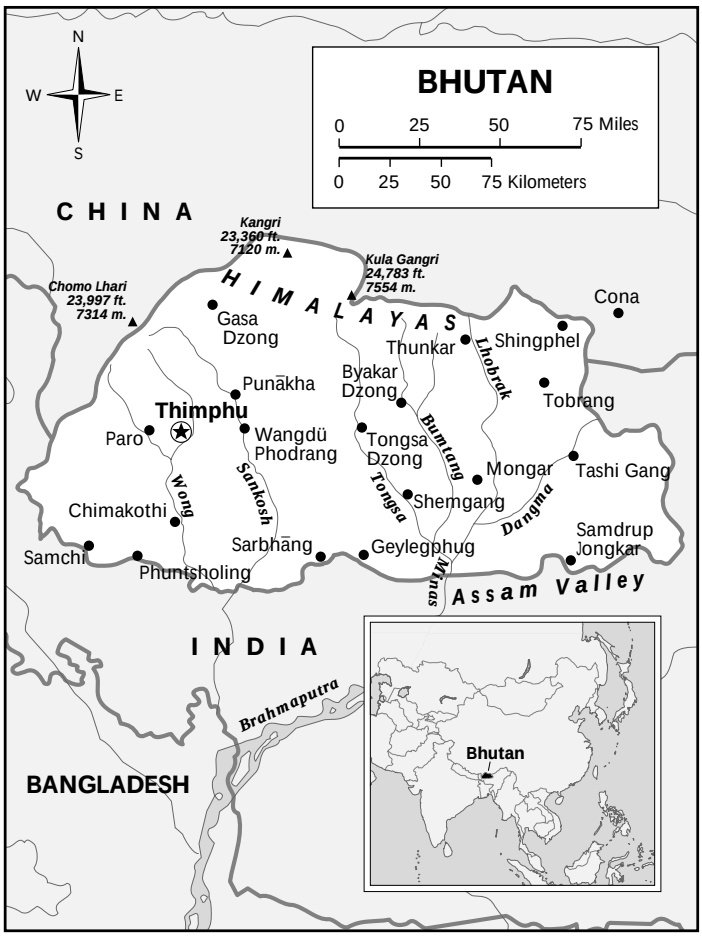
Real growth rate: (2007) 8.5%.

Per capita GDP PPP: (2007 est.) U.S. $5,200.

Natural resources: Hydroelectric power, construction, timber, gypsum, calcium carbide.

Sectors as percent of GDP: (all figures, 2006-2007) Agriculture—22.3%; industry—37.9%; services—39.8%.

Trade: Principal exports (2006-2007)—electricity 26.5%, recorded media 16.8%, palm oil 7.4%, copper wire 6.2%. Principal imports (2006-2007)—diesel fuel 7.9%, copper wires 7.3%, crude palm oil 5.5%, petrol 3.1%. Major trade partners—India, Hong Kong, Japan, Germany, Singapore, and Thailand.



PEOPLE

The people of Bhutan can be divided into three broad ethnic categories—Ngalops, Sharchops, and Lhotsampas. The Ngalops make up the majority of the population, living mostly in the western and central areas. The Ngalops are thought to be of Tibetan origin, arriving in Bhutan during the 8th and 9th centuries A.D. and bringing Buddhism with them.

Most Ngalops follow the Drukpa Kagyupa discipline of Mahayana Buddhism. In a country that is deeply rooted within the Buddhist religion, many people's sect of religion, as opposed to their ethnic group, characterizes them.

The Ngalops predominate in the government, and the civil service and their cultural norms have been declared by the monarchy to be the standard for all citizens.

The Sharchops, who live in the eastern section of Bhutan, are considered to be descendants of the earliest major group to inhabit Bhutan. Most follow the Ningmapa discipline of Mahayana Buddhism. Sharchop is translated as "people of the east."

The Ngalops, Sharchops, and the indigenous tribal people are collectively known as Drukpas and account for about 65% of the population. The national language is Dzongka, but English is the language of instruction in schools and an official working language for the government.

The Lhotsampas are people of Nepali descent, currently making up 35% of the population. They came to Bhutan in the 19th and 20th centuries, mostly settling in the southern foothills to work as farmers. They speak a variety of Nepali dialects and are predominantly Hindu.

HISTORY

Bhutan's early history is steeped in mythology and remains obscure. It may have been inhabited as early as 2000 B.C., but not much was known until the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism in the 9th century A.D. when turmoil in Tibet forced many monks to flee to Bhutan. In the 12th century A.D., the Drukpa Kagyupa school was established and remains the dominant form of Buddhism in Bhutan today. The country's political history is intimately tied to its religious history and the relations among the various monastic schools and monasteries.

The consolidation of Bhutan occurred in 1616 when Ngawana Namgyal, a lama from Tibet, defeated three Tibetan invasions, subjugated rival religious schools, codified an intricate and comprehensive system of law, and established himself as ruler (shabdrung) over a system of ecclesiastical and civil administrators. After his death, infighting and civil war eroded the power of the shabdrung for the next 200 years when in 1885, Ugyen Wangchuck was able to consolidate power and cultivated closer ties with the British in India.

In 1907, Ugyen Wangchuck was elected as the hereditary ruler of Bhutan, crowned on December 17, 1907, and installed as the head of state Druk Gyalpo (Dragon King). In 1910, King Ugyen and the British signed the Treaty of Punakha which provided that British India would not interfere in the internal affairs of Bhutan if the country accepted external advice in its external relations.

When Ugyen Wangchuck died in 1926, his son Jigme Wangchuck became the next ruler, and when India gained independence in 1947, the new Indian Government recognized Bhutan as an independent country. In 1949, India and Bhutan signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which provided that India would not interfere in Bhutan's internal affairs but would be guided by India in its foreign policy. Succeeded in 1952 by his son Jigme Dorji

Wangchuck, Bhutan began to slowly emerge from its isolation and began a program of planned development. Bhutan became a member of the United Nations in 1971, and during his tenure the National Assembly was established and a new code of law, as well as the Royal Bhutanese Army and the High Court.

In 1972, Jigme Singye Wangchuck ascended the throne at age 16. He emphasized modern education, decentralization of governance, the development of hydroelectricity and tourism and improvements in rural developments. He was perhaps best known internationally for his overarching development philosophy of "Gross National Happiness." It recognizes that there are many dimensions to development and that economic goals alone are not sufficient.

Satisfied with Bhutan's transitioning democratization process, he abdicated in December 2006 rather than wait until the promulgation of the new constitution in 2008. His son, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, became King upon his abdication.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Traditionally a decentralized theocracy and, since 1907, a monarchy, Bhutan completed its successful transition to a constitutional monarchy in 2008. Bhutanese officials began preparations for the first-ever elections in 2006, shortly before King Jigme Singye Wangchuck abdicated in December 2006. The National Council of the new bicameral parliament was elected in December 2007, and National Assembly elections followed in March 2008.

The Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) won 44 out of 47 seats in the latter election in which 80% of the 320,000 registered voters cast a ballot. Migration by Nepalis into southern Bhutan began in the early 19th century. Currently these and other ethnic Nepalis, referred to as Lhotsampas, comprise 35% of Bhutan's population. In 1988, the government census led to the branding of many ethnic Nepalis as illegal immigrants. Local Lhotshampa leaders responded with anti-government rallies demanding citizenship and attacks against government institutions. Between 1998-1993, thousands of ethnic Nepalis fled to refugee camps in Nepal alleging ethnic and political repression. Currently, 107,000 refugees reside in seven camps. Bhutan and Nepal have been working for over seven years to resolve the refugee problem and repatriate certain refugees living in Nepal. The resettlement of Bhutanese refugees from the camps in Nepal to the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand is proceeding. The transition to democracy may improve the situation: of its 47 candidates, the DPT fielded nine Nepali-speakers. Officials from both the DPT and PDP have said that resolving the grievances of ethnic Nepalis is a priority.

The spiritual head of Bhutan, the Je Khempo—the only person besides the king who wears the saffron scarf, an honor denoting his authority over all religious institutions—is nominated by monastic leaders and appointed by the king. The Monk Body is involved in advising the government on many levels. Bhutan is divided into 20 districts or dzongkhags, each headed by a district officer (dzongda) who must be elected. Larger dzongkhags are further divided into subdistricts called dungkhags. A group of villages are grouped to form a constituency called gewog, administered by a locally elected leader entitled a gup. There are 201 elected gups. In 2002, the National Assembly created a new structure for local governance at the geog level. Each local area is responsible for creating and implementing its own development plan, in coordination with the district.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **Jigme Khesar Namgyel WANGCHUCK**
Prime Minister: **Jigme THINLEY**
Min. of Agriculture: **Pema GYAMTSHO**
Min. of Economic Affairs: **Khandu WANGCHUK**
Min. of Education: **Thakur Singh POWDYEL**
Min. of Finance: **Wangdi NORBU**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Ugyen TSHERING**
Min. of Health: **Zangley DUKPA**
Min. of Home & Cultural Affairs: **Minjur DORI**
Min. of Information & Communication: **Nandalal RAI**
Min. of Labor & Human Resources: **Dorji WANGDI**
Min. of Trade & Industry:
Min. of Works & Human Settlements: **Yeshey ZIMBA**
Chief Justice: **Sonam TOBGYE**
Chmn., Royal Advisory Council: **Rinzin GYALTSHEN**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Daw PENJO**

The United States and the Kingdom of Bhutan have not established formal diplomatic relations; however, the two governments have informal and cordial relations.

Bhutan maintains a Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. The address is 763 First Avenue, New York, NY 10017; tel: 212-682-2268, fax: 212-661-0551.

ECONOMY

The economy, one of the world's smallest and least developed, is based on hydroelectricity, tourism, agriculture, and forestry. Rugged terrain makes it difficult to develop roads and other infrastructure. Despite this constraint, hydroelectricity and construction continue to be the two major industries of growth for the country.

The Tala hydroelectric project, completed March 2007, has bolstered government revenue and exports, and will continue to do so for the next several years.

Additionally, India has committed to funding three more hydroelectric projects and other industrial development. As these two economic sectors contribute to increased productivity, Bhutan's development prospects are positive.

The Bhutanese Government expects the tourism sector to expand as well; however, restrictions on visitor numbers and minimum per-day spending requirements will impede rapid growth. Bhutan's tenth five-year plan (2008-2013) focuses on ways to manage the country's new-found wealth with special emphasis on three development areas: rural, regional, and private-sector. India has pledged to support the plan and promised to double the amount of aid given to Bhutan in the previous five-year plan. The parliament has not yet finalized the tenth five-year plan; it intends to do so during the next session later in 2008.

Bhutan's economy has been on an upturn due to recent subregional economic cooperation efforts. Already this plan has strengthened the current trade relations with India, as well as opened an avenue of trade with Bangladesh. In May 2003, the Bilateral Free Trade Agreement between Bangladesh and Bhutan was re-signed. Bangladesh is Bhutan's second largest trade partner, after India. In January 2004, as a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bhutan also joined the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). In February 2004 Bhutan joined the Bangladesh, Indian, Myanmar, Singapore, and Thailand Economic Cooperation Forum (BIMSTEC). Bhutan has applied for membership in the World Trade Organization and is in the process of developing clear legal and regulatory systems designed to promote business development.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

India

India is Bhutan's largest trade and development partner, providing significant amounts of foreign aid and investment. Traditionally, the 1949 Treaty of Peace and Friendship governed relations between the countries. In February 2007, India and Bhutan signed a new treaty removing the clause that India will "guide" Bhutan's foreign policy and allowing Bhutan to purchase military equipment from other countries. However, bilateral ties remain close, demonstrated by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's May 2008 visit to Thimpu during which he addressed the newly elected parliament. Prime Minister Jigme Thinley returned the gesture when he made his first official trip abroad as prime minister to New Delhi in July 2008.

In recent years, insurgents on the Indian side of the border from the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the Bodos have used Bhutan as a safe haven. In December 2003, Bhutan military troops expelled Indian insurgents from Assam. Through this joint effort with India, Bhutan strengthened border security and continued cooperation with the Indian military.

China

Bhutan and China do not have diplomatic relations, although they have engaged in 17 rounds of high-level talks regarding a border dispute over three Chinese-built roads which the Bhutanese Government alleges encroach on its territory. Although the current official trade between the countries is minimal, the Chinese Government announced that trade had increased by 3,000% from 2006 to 2007.

Nepal

These two countries established diplomatic relations in 1983. Nepal and Bhutan are currently negotiating to resolve a 16-year-old refugee situation, in which 100,000 refugees are residing in seven UNHCR camps in Nepal.

Most of the refugees claim they are Bhutanese citizens, while Bhutan alleges that most are non-nationals or "voluntary emigrants," who forfeited their citizenship rights. In 2003, a joint Bhutan-Nepal verification team categorized refugees from one camp into four groups, but progress remains stalled.

United Nations

Bhutan became a member of the United Nations in 1971. Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with any of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Bhutan was elected to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 2003 and served until 2006.

Other Countries

Bhutan enjoys diplomatic relations with seven European nations, which form The "Friends of Bhutan" group, together with Japan. These countries are Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, and Austria. Also known as donor nations, they contribute generously to Bhutanese development and social programs. Bhutan also has diplomatic relations with South Korea, Canada, Australia, Kuwait, Thailand, Bahrain, Bangladesh, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

DEFENSE

Bhutan has 8,000 members in five military branches: the Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Bodyguard, National Militia, Royal Bhutan Police, and Forest Guards. In FY 2002, the Bhutanese Government spent 1.9% of its GDP on the military or U.S. $9.3 million. India maintains a permanent military training presence in Bhutan through IMTRAT, the Indian Military Training Team.

U.S.-BHUTAN RELATIONS

The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India, has consular responsibilities for Bhutan, but U.S. citizens also may request assistance from U.S. Embassies in Kathmandu, Nepal, or Dhaka, Bangladesh. The United States and Bhutan do not have diplomatic relations, and the United States does not give foreign assistance to Bhutan. Informal contact is maintained through the U.S. Embassy and the Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi. Bhutan does participate in a regional

program for South Asia sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that helps countries develop their power infrastructure (SARI-E). A few Bhutanese military officers have attended courses at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies. The U.S. Government annually brings several Bhutanese participants to United States through its International Visitors Program.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

NEW DELHI (E) Shanti Path, Chanakya Puri New Delhi–110021, India, 91-11-24198000, Fax 91-11-24190017, Workweek: Monday thru Friday; 0830 hrs to 1730 hrs, Website: http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Roland Elliott
AMB OMS:	Beverly Oliver
CDC:	Jeanine Ambrosio
DHS/CIS:	Vacant
DHS/ICE:	Elliott Harbin
ECO:	John Davison
FCS:	Carmine D'Aloisio
FM:	Mark Moore
HHS:	Altaf Lal
MGT:	Gerri O'Brien
AMB:	David C. Mulford
CON:	Peter Kaestner
DCM:	Steven J. White
PAO:	Larry Schwartz
GSO:	Mary Lou Gonzales
RSO:	George Lambert
AGR:	Holly Higgins
AID:	George Deikun
APHIS:	Marvin Felder
CLO:	Kirstin Lorenzetti
DAO:	Col. Frank Rindone
DEA:	Harold Willis
EEO:	Klaudia Krueger
EST:	Satish Kulkarni
FAA:	Randall S. Fiertz
FMO:	Ken Kowalchek
ICASS Chair:	Mark Ericson
IMO:	Patrick Meagher
IPO:	Frank Landymore
IRS:	Elizabeth Kinney
ISO:	Kimberly Kaestner
ISSO:	Dale Orr
LEGATT:	Kathy Stearman
MLO:	Mark Ericson
POL:	Theodore Osius
State ICASS:	John Fennerty

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 25, 2008

Country Description: Bhutan is a small, land-locked Himalayan country that completed its transition from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy in April 2008; the country is now led by a king and a democratically-elected government. The United States has consular, but not full diplomatic, relations with Bhutan. There is no U.S. diplomatic or consular presence in Bhutan. The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi handles assistance to U.S. citizens.

Entry Requirements: Independent travel is not permitted in Bhutan. Visitors are required to book travel through a registered tour operator in Bhutan. This may be done directly or through a travel agent abroad. Further information, including a list of authorized tour operators in Bhutan, may be obtained through the Bhutanese Department of Tourism, PO Box 126, Thimphu, Bhutan, telephone +975-2-323251, 2-323252; fax +975-2-323695 or at www.tourism.gov.bt. Entry by air is available only via India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Thailand. The border with China is closed. The minimum daily tariff is set by the Bhutanese Department of Tourism and cannot be negotiated. The rate includes all accommodations, all meals, transportation, services of licensed guides and porters, and cultural programs where and when available. The rate is the same for both cultural tours and treks. Travelers should contact the Department of Tourism for the latest daily tariff. At this time, the only carrier servicing Bhutan is Druk Air, the Bhutanese government airline. More information on the airline is available at www.drukair.com.bt. Druk Air will board only travelers with visa clearance from the Tourism Authority of Bhutan. A passport and visa are required for entry into and exit from Bhutan. Visa applications are available from selected travel agencies. Travel agencies will usually arrange for a traveler's entry visa and clearance. Most visitors, including those on official U.S. government business, should obtain visas prior to entering the country. For additional entry/exit information, please contact the Bhutan Mission to the United Nations (Consul General), 763 First Avenue, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 682-2268, fax (212) 661-0551.

Safety and Security: Recent efforts to resettle to the U.S. many of the approximately 100,000 Bhutanese refugees of Nepali ethnic origin currently living in Nepalese refugee camps, coupled with the transition to democracy, have given rise to some civil unrest in usually peaceful Bhutan. Bhutanese Maoists and Communist groups (including the Bhutan Communist Party and the Bhutan Tiger Force operating from the camps in Nepal), who denounce the monarchy and demand that the refugees be repatriated to Bhutan, have been linked to violence in the country. There were about half-a-dozen small bombs set off between October 2006 and August 2007; then on January 20, 2008, four bombs were set off simultaneously. Most of the bombings took place in small cities and towns on the southwestern border, near India, except for one in the capital, Thimphu.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: There is relatively little crime in Bhutan. Petty crime, such as pick-pocketing and purse snatching, is occasionally reported.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S.

Embassy in New Delhi or the U.S. Consulate in Kolkata. If you are the victim of a crime while in Bhutan, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi for assistance. The Embassy's consular staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in the populated areas in Bhutan such as Thimphu or Paro are available, but may be limited or unavailable in rural areas. If Americans need urgent medical care, they should try to get to the General Hospital in the capital city, Thimphu. Medical services may not meet Western standards, and some medicines are in short supply. Certain emergency medical services are provided free of charge to all tourists. Visitors planning to trek in Bhutan should pay special attention to the risk of altitude illness. Treks in Bhutan can take visitors days or weeks away from the nearest medical facility. Helicopter evacuation from remote areas is available in Bhutan through the registered tour operators, or by contacting the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www. who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Bhutan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

General road conditions outside of urban areas are poor, and emergency services generally are not available. Because of the mountainous terrain, roads tend to have steep drop-offs and blind curves. However, because tourists to Bhutan are required to arrange their trips through registered tour operators, tourists do not drive themselves, but travel in groups with experienced drivers.

Visit the web site of Bhutan's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.mti.gov.bt.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Bhutan, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Bhutan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Visitors are advised to carry cash or travelers checks, since credit cards are not widely accepted in Bhutan. When credit cards are accepted, an extra service fee, usually a percentage of the overall purchase, is often charged.

Druk Air, the only carrier servicing Bhutan, has rigid restrictions on the amount and size of luggage passengers may carry into the country. Passengers are advised to book bulky items ahead as unaccompanied baggage, since the aircraft servicing Bhutan have limited space available for large bags, and airline employees may not load large pieces of luggage. Flights into and out of Paro Airport are restricted to daylight hours and are dependent on suitable weather conditions. Flights are sometimes delayed or cancelled, particularly during the monsoon season between June and August.

Passengers are advised to allow at least 24 hours transit time for connecting flights from Paro Airport and to travel on non-restricted air tickets so that they can be rebooked on the first available air carrier if a connecting flight is missed. Bhutanese customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Bhutan of items such as firearms, ammunition, explosives and military stores; narcotics and drugs (except medically-prescribed drugs); tobacco products; wildlife products, especially those of endangered species; and antiques.

It is advisable to contact the Bhutan Mission to the United Nations (Consul General), 763 First Avenue, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 682-2268, fax (212) 661-0551 for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bhutanese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Bhutan recently implemented extremely strict restrictions on the sale or use of cigarettes and other tobacco products. A traveler caught selling tobacco products could be charged with illegal smuggling and fined or imprisoned. Smoking is pro-

hibited in public places. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bhutan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Bhutan. Although no formal diplomatic relations exist between the United States and Bhutan, informal contact is maintained through the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India. Updated information on travel and security in Bhutan may be obtained at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, at any other U.S. Consulate in India, or at the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu, Nepal, as well as the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand. Americans living or traveling in Bhutan are encouraged to register through the State Department's travel registration web site or with the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi to obtain updated information on travel and security within Bhutan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi in person or via mail. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi is located on Shanti Path, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi 110 021, India. Tel. +91-11-2419-8000, fax +91-11-2419-8407, web page http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Consulate in Kolkata is located at 5/1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, Kolkata 700 071, India. Tel. +91-33-3984-2400, fax +91-33-2282-2335, web page http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu is located at Maharajgunj in Kathmandu, Nepal, telephone (977) (1) 400-7200. The Consular Section can be reached through the Embassy switchboard at (977) (1) 4000-7200, directly by fax (977) (1) 400-7281 or email at sonsktm@state.gov. The U.S. Embassy Kathmandu's official web site is http://nepal.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Embassy in Bangkok is located at 120/22 Wireless Road, Bangkok, Thailand, tel. +66-2-205-4000; fax +66-2-205-4103, web page http://bangkok.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2007

Bhutan is a small land-locked Himalayan country with limited tourism and medical facilities. Americans have adopted only one Bhutanese child in the past seven fiscal years, and there are no standardized procedures for doing so. No U.S.-based adoption service providers or adoption agencies operate in Bhutan, and there is no U.S. diplomatic or consular presence in the country. The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India handles all emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Americans considering travel to Bhutan should read the Country Specific Information for Bhutan for additional general information.



BOLIVIA

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Bolivia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1.1 million sq. km. (425,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Texas and California combined.

Cities: Capital—La Paz (administrative—pop. 800,385); Sucre (constitutional—292,080). Other major cities—Santa Cruz (1,486,115), Cochabamba (587,220), El Alto (858,716). (Population estimates 2004).

Terrain: High plateau (altiplano), temperate and semitropical valleys, and the tropical lowlands.

Climate: Varies with altitude—from humid and tropical to semiarid and cold.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bolivian(s).

Population: (July 2008 estimated) 9,247,816.

Annual population growth rate: 1.42%.

Religions: Predominantly Roman Catholic; minority Protestant.

Languages: Spanish (official); Quechua, Aymara, Guarani.

Education: (2001) Years compulsory—ages 7-14. Literacy—86.7%.

Health: (2008) Infant mortality rate—49.1 per 1,000 births.

Work force: (2007, 4.4 million) Nonagricultural employment—2.48 million; services, including government—42%; industry and commerce—58%.

Ethnic groups: (2001) 55% indigenous (primarily Aymara, and Quechua), 30% mestizo or mixed, 15% European.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: August 6, 1825.

Constitution: 1967; revised 1994. New constitution drafted in 2007, a referendum to approve the document is scheduled for January 25, 2009.

Government branches: Executive—president and cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Congress. Judicial—five levels of jurisdiction, headed by Supreme Court with a separate Constitutional Court.

Political subdivisions: Nine departments (similar to states).

Political parties: Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), Social Democratic Power (PODEMOS), Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR), National Unity (UN)

Suffrage: Universal adult, obligatory.

Economy (2007)

GDP: $13.9 billion.

Annual growth rate: 4.6%.

Per capita income: $4,084 (PPP 2007 IMF estimate).

Natural resources: Hydrocarbons (natural gas, petroleum); minerals (zinc, silver, lead, gold, and iron).

Agriculture: 14.5% of GDP) Major products—Soybeans, cotton, potatoes, corn, sugarcane, rice, wheat, coffee, beef, barley, and quinoa. Arable land—27%.

Industry: (30.5% of GDP) Types—Mineral and hydrocarbon extraction, manufacturing, commerce, textiles, food processing, chemicals, plastics, mineral smelting, and petroleum refining.

Services: including government (55%).

Trade: Exports—$4.7 billion (2007). Major export products—natural gas, tin, zinc, coffee, silver, wood, gold, jewelry, soybeans, and byproducts. Major export markets—U.S. (8.6%), Brazil (45.2%), Colombia (6.7%) Argentina (9.2%), Republic of Korea (4.3%), and Japan (6.6%). Imports—$3.25 billion. Major products—machinery and transportation equipment, consumer products, construction and mining equipment. Major suppliers—U.S. (9.7%), Argentina (16.4%), Brazil (30%), Chile (10.4%), Peru (8.1%).

PEOPLE

According to the 2001 Census, Bolivia's ethnic distribution is estimated to be 55% indigenous, 15%

European, and 30% mixed or mestizo (all categories are self-identified). The largest of the approximately three dozen indigenous groups are the Quechua (29% or 2.5 million), Aymara (24% or 2 million), Chiquitano (1% or 180,000), and Guarani (1% or 125,000). No other indigenous groups represent more than 0.5% of the population. There are small German, Croatian, Serbian, Asian, Middle Eastern, and other minorities, many of whose members descend from families that have lived in Bolivia for several generations.

Bolivia is one of the least developed countries in South America. Almost two-thirds of its people, many of whom are subsistence farmers, live in poverty. Population density ranges from less than one person per square kilometer in the southeastern plains to about 10 per square kilometer (25 per sq. mi.) in the central highlands. The annual population growth rate is about 1.39% (2008).

La Paz is the highest of the world's capital cities—3,600 meters (11,800 ft.) above sea level. The adjacent city of El Alto, at 4,200 meters (13,800 ft.) above sea level, is one of the fastest-growing in the hemisphere. Santa Cruz, the nation's commercial and industrial hub, located in the eastern lowlands, is also experiencing rapid population and economic growth.

The great majority of Bolivians are Roman Catholic (the official religion), although Protestant denominations are expanding rapidly. Many indigenous communities interweave pre-Columbian and Christian symbols in their religious practices.

About half of the people speak Spanish as their first language. Approximately 90% of the children attend primary school but often for a year or less. The literacy rate is low in many rural areas. Under President Morales, a number of areas have been declared "illiteracy free" but the resulting level of literacy is often quite basic, restricted to the ability to sign names and recognize numbers.

The socio-political development of Bolivia can be divided into three distinct periods: pre-Columbian, colonial, and republican. Important archaeological ruins, gold and silver ornaments, stone monuments, ceramics, and weavings remain from several important pre-Columbian cultures. Major ruins include Tiwanaku, Samaipata, Incallajta, and Iskanwaya. The country abounds in other sites that are difficult to reach and have seen little archaeological exploration.

The Spanish brought their own tradition of religious art which, in the hands of local indigenous and mestizo builders and artisans, developed into a rich and distinctive style of architecture, painting, and sculpture known as "Mestizo Baroque." The colonial period produced not only the paintings of Perez de Holguin, Flores, Bitti, and others but also the work of skilled but unknown stonecutters, woodcarvers, goldsmiths, and silversmiths. An important body of native baroque religious music from the colonial period was recovered in recent years and has been performed internationally to wide acclaim since 1994.

Bolivian artists of stature in the 20th century include, among others, Guzman de Rojas, Arturo Borda, Maria Luisa Pacheco, and Marina Nunez del Prado. Bolivia has rich folklore. Its regional folk music is distinctive and varied. The "devil dances" at the annual carnival of Oruro are one of the great folkloric events of South America, as is the lesser known carnival at Tarabuco.

HISTORY AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Andean region probably has been inhabited for some 20,000 years. Beginning about the 2nd century B.C., the Tiwanakan culture developed at the southern end of Lake Titicaca. This culture, centered around and named for the great city of Tiwanaku, developed advanced architectural and agricultural techniques before it disappeared around 1200 A.D., probably because of extended drought. Roughly contemporaneous with the Tiwanakan culture, the Moxos in the eastern lowlands and the Mollos north of present-day La Paz also developed advanced agricultural societies that had dissipated by the 13th century. In about 1450, the Quechua-speaking Incas entered the area of modern highland Bolivia and added it to their empire. They controlled the area until the Spanish conquest in 1525.

During most of the Spanish colonial period, this territory was called "Upper Peru" or "Charcas" and was under the authority of the Viceroy of Lima. Local government came from the Audiencia de Charcas located in Chuquisaca (La Plata—modern Sucre). Bolivian silver mines produced much of the Spanish empire's wealth, and Potosi, site of the famed Cerro Rico—"Rich Mountain"—was, for many years, the largest city in the Western Hemisphere. As Spanish royal authority weakened during the Napoleonic wars, sentiment against colonial rule grew. Independence was proclaimed in 1809, but 16 years of struggle followed before the establishment of the republic, named for Simon Bolivar, on August 6, 1825.

Independence did not bring stability. For nearly 60 years, coups and short-lived constitutions dominated Bolivian politics. Bolivia's weakness was demonstrated during the War of the Pacific (1879-83), when it lost its seacoast and the adjoining rich nitrate fields to Chile. An increase in the world price of silver brought Bolivia a measure of relative prosperity and political stability in the late 1800s. During the early part of the 20th century, tin replaced silver as the country's most important source of wealth. A succession of governments controlled by the economic and social elites followed laissez-faire capitalist policies through the first third of the century. Living conditions of the indigenous peoples, who constituted most of the population, remained deplorable. Forced to work under primitive conditions in the mines and in nearly feudal status on large estates, they were denied access to education, economic opportunity, or



political participation. Bolivia's defeat by Paraguay in the Chaco War (1932-35) marked a turning point. Great loss of life and territory discredited the traditional ruling classes, while service in the army produced stirrings of political awareness among the indigenous people. From the end of the Chaco War until the 1952 revolution, the emergence of contending ideologies and the demands of new groups convulsed Bolivian politics.

Revolution and Turmoil

The Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) emerged as a broadly based party. Denied its victory in the 1951 presidential elections, the MNR led the successful 1952 revolution. Under President Victor Paz Estenssoro, the MNR introduced universal adult suffrage, carried out a sweeping land reform, promoted rural education, and nationalized the country's largest tin mines.

Twelve years of tumultuous rule left the MNR divided. In 1964, a military junta overthrew President Paz Estenssoro at the outset of his third term. The 1969 death of President Rene Barrientos, a former member of the junta elected President in 1966, led to a succession of weak governments. Alarmed by public disorder, the military, the MNR, and others installed Col. (later General) Hugo Banzer Suarez as President in 1971. Banzer ruled with MNR support from

1971 to 1974. Then, impatient with schisms in the coalition, he replaced civilians with members of the armed forces and suspended political activities.

The economy grew impressively during most of Banzer's presidency, but human rights violations and eventual fiscal crises undercut his support. He was forced to call elections in 1978, and Bolivia again entered a period of political turmoil. Elections in 1978, 1979, and 1980 were inconclusive and marked by fraud. There were coups, counter-coups, and caretaker governments. In 1980, Gen. Luis Garcia Meza carried out a ruthless and violent coup. His government was notorious for human rights abuses, narcotics trafficking, and economic mismanagement. Later convicted in absentia for crimes, including murder, Garcia Meza was extradited from Brazil and began serving a 30-year sentence in 1995.

After a military rebellion forced out Garcia Meza in 1981, three other military governments in 14 months struggled with Bolivia's growing problems. Unrest forced the military to convoke the Congress elected in 1980 and allow it to choose a new chief executive. In October 1982—22 years after the end of his first term of office (1956-60)—Hernan Siles Zuazo again became President. Severe social tension, exacerbated by economic mismanagement and weak leadership, forced him to call early elections and relinquish power a year before the end of his constitutional term.

Return to Democracy

In the 1985 elections, the Nationalist Democratic Action Party (ADN) of Gen. Banzer won a plurality of the popular vote (33%), followed by former President Paz Estenssoro's MNR (30%) and former Vice President Jaime Paz Zamora's Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR, at 10%). But in the congressional runoff, the MIR sided with MNR, and Paz Estenssoro was chosen for the fourth time as president. When he took office in 1985, he faced a staggering economic crisis. Economic output and exports had been declining for several years. Hyperinflation had reached an annual rate of 24,000%. Social unrest, chronic strikes, and drug trafficking were widespread.

In four years, Paz Estenssoro's administration achieved economic and social stability. The military stayed out of politics and all major political parties publicly and institutionally committed themselves to democracy. Human rights violations, which badly tainted some governments earlier in the decade, were greatly reduced. However, Paz Estenssoro's remarkable accomplishments were not won without sacrifice. The collapse of tin prices in October 1985, coming just as the government was moving to reassert its control of the mismanaged state mining enterprise, forced the government to lay off over 20,000 miners. The highly successful shock treatment that restored Bolivia's financial system also led to some unrest and temporary social dislocation.

MNR candidate Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada finished first in the 1989 elections (23%), though, again, no candidate received a majority of popular votes, so Congress determined who would be president. The Patriotic Accord (AP) between Gen. Banzer's ADN and Jaime Paz Zamora's MIR, the second- and third-place finishers (at 22.7% and 19.6%, respectively), led to Paz Zamora's assuming the presidency.

Paz Zamora was a moderate, center-left president whose political pragmatism in office outweighed his Marxist origins. He continued the economic reforms begun by Paz Estenssoro. Paz Zamora also took a fairly hard line against domestic terrorism, authorizing a 1990 attack on terrorists of the Nestor Paz Zamora Committee and the 1992 crackdown on the Tupac Katari Guerrilla Army (EGTK).

The 1993 elections continued the tradition of open, honest elections and peaceful democratic transitions of power. The MNR defeated the ruling coalition, and Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada was named president by a coalition in Congress. Sanchez de Lozada pursued an aggressive economic and social reform agenda, relying heavily on successful entrepreneurs-turned-politicians like him. The most dramatic program—"capitalization," a form of privatization under which investors acquired 50% ownership and management control of the state oil corporation, telecommunications system, airlines, railroads, and electric utilities, with moneys directed to the pension system instead of the Treasury—was strongly opposed by certain segments of society, with frequent and sometimes violent protests from 1994 through 1996.

In the 1997 elections, Gen. Hugo Banzer, leader of the ADN, defeated the MNR candidate. The Banzer government continued the free market and privatization policies of its predecessor, and the relatively robust economic growth of the mid-1990s continued until regional, global, and domestic factors contributed to a decline in economic growth. Job creation remained limited throughout this period, and public perception of corruption was high. Both factors contributed to increasing social protests during the second half of Banzer's term.

Banzer instructed special police units to physically eradicate the illegal coca of the Chapare region. The policy produced a sudden and dramatic four-year decline in Bolivia's illegal coca crop, to the point that Bolivia became a relatively small supplier of coca for cocaine. In 2001, Banzer resigned from office after being diagnosed with cancer. He died less than a year later. Banzer's U.S.-educated Vice President, Jorge Quiroga, completed the final year of the term.

In the 2002 national elections, former President Sanchez de Lozada (MNR) again placed first with 22.5% of the vote, this time followed by coca-growing syndicate leader Evo Morales (Movement Toward Socialism, MAS) with 20.9%. The MNR platform featured three overarching objectives: economic reactivation (and job creation), anti-corruption, and social inclusion.

A four-year economic recession, tight fiscal situation, and longstanding tensions between the military and police led to the February 12-13, 2003, violence that left more than 30 people dead and nearly toppled Sanchez de Lozada's government. The government stayed in power, but was unpopular.

Trouble began again in September 2003 when a group of tourists became trapped in the town of Sorata. After days of unfruitful negotiations, Bolivian security forces launched a rescue operation, but on the way out, were ambushed by armed peasants and a number of people were killed on both sides. The incident ignited passions throughout the highlands and united a loose coalition of protestors to pressure the government into halting the proposed project to export liquefied natural gas, most likely through Chile. Anti-Chile sentiment and memories of three major cycles of non-renewable commodity exports (silver through the 19th century, guano and rubber later in that century, and tin in the 20th century) touched a nerve with many citizens. Tensions grew and La Paz was subjected to protesters' blockades. Violent confrontations ensued, and most of the approximately 60 deaths occurred when security forces tried to bring supplies into the besieged city.

In the end, large demonstrations forced Sanchez de Lozada to resign on October 17, 2003. Vice President Carlos Mesa Gisbert assumed office and restored order. Mesa appointed a non-political cabinet and promised to revise the constitution through a constituent assembly, revise the hydrocarbons law, and hold a binding referendum on the country's natural gas deposits. The referendum took place on July 18, 2004, and Bolivians voted overwhelmingly in favor of development of the nation's hydrocarbons resources. But the referendum did not end social unrest. Large-scale protests led to Congress approving a confiscatory hydrocarbons law on May 17, 2005. After a brief pause, demonstrations resumed, particularly in La Paz and El Alto. President Mesa offered his resignation on June 6, and Eduardo Rodriguez, the president of the Supreme Court, assumed office in a constitutional transfer of power. Rodriguez announced that he was a transitional president, and called for early elections within six months.

Current Administration

On December 18, 2005, MAS candidate Juan Evo Morales Ayma was elected to the presidency by 54% of the voters. During his campaign, Morales, a coca union leader of indigenous descent, vowed to nationalize hydrocarbons and alleviate poverty and discrimination toward indigenous people. Morales was and remains highly critical of the "neo-liberal" economic policies that have been implemented in Bolivia over the past several decades. On January 22, 2006, Morales and his Vice President Alvaro García Linera were inaugurated into office.

Since then, President Morales has moved to fulfill his campaign promises, including raising the ceiling for licit coca cultivation from 12,000 hectares to 20,000 hectares. On May 1, 2006, the government issued a decree "nationalizing" the hydrocarbons sector and calling for the renegotiation of contracts with hydrocarbons companies. In November 2006, the government and companies signed new contracts that should result in higher revenues for the government; however, vagaries in the contracts are requiring further negotiations and clarification. Morales has continued to promote greater state control of natural resource industries, particularly hydrocarbons and mining. These policies have pleased Morales' supporters, but have complicated Bolivia's relations with some of its neighboring countries, foreign investors, and members of the international community.

President Morales also secured passage of legislation convoking a special election for delegates to a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution. The MAS performed well in those elections, capturing 137 of 255 seats. The assembly convened on August 6, 2006, and planned to complete its work by August 2007; however, the Congress extended its mandate to December 14, 2007. Since the outset, the assembly faced political deadlock over the constituent assembly's voting rules. Although rules were ostensibly clarified in February 2007, the subject reemerged in August, after the legality of a vote to exclude the location of the capital was contested by the opposition. An agreement could not be reached, and the opposition delegates walked out of the assembly. The MAS approved a constitution without the opposition vote in November 2007. On December 14, 2007, Morales presented the constitutional text to the National Congress to legislate a referendum for its approval in 2008.

GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

The 1967 constitution, revised in 1994, provides for balanced executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The traditionally strong executive, however, tends to overshadow the Congress, whose role is generally limited to deliberating legislation initiated by the executive. The judiciary, consisting of a Supreme Court, an independent Constitutional Court, and departmental and lower courts, has long been plagued by corruption and inefficiency. Through revisions to the constitution in 1994, and subsequent laws, the government has initiated potentially far-reaching reforms in the judicial system.

For the first time in history, Bolivians chose their departmental prefects (similar to governors) by popular vote on December 18, 2005. Bolivia's nine departments received greater autonomy under the administrative decentralization law of 1995, although several departments—especially Santa Cruz and Tarija—are seeking increased autonomy. In a July 2006 referendum, Bolivia's four eastern departments voted in favor of increasing regional autonomy, and the other five provinces opposed the measure. The autonomy movement rallied around Sucre's August 2007 demand that the constituent assem-

bly consider moving all branches of government to the traditional capital. Civic committees in six departments (Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, Pando, Cochabamba, and Chuquisaca) supported hunger strikes and protests in Sucre, which led to Bolivian Government-sponsored talks between Sucre and La Paz leaders, which were inconclusive as of March 2008. The Santa Cruz government approved an autonomy statute in December 2007; the governments of the other eastern departments followed Santa Cruz's lead. Santa Cruz held a popular referendum on its autonomy statute on May 4, 2008, in which the majority of voters voted for autonomy. The Bolivian Government considered this referendum to be illegal and does not recognize its results. Some government-aligned parliamentarians have advocated popular elections for the civic committees, which they claim disproportionately represent elite and opposition interests.

Bolivian cities and towns are governed by directly elected mayors and councils. Municipal elections were held in December 2004, with councils elected to 5-year terms. The popular participation law of April 1994, which requires a 20% allocation of national revenues to municipalities for discretionary use, has enabled previously neglected communities to make improvements in their facilities and services.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Juan Evo MORALES Ayma**
Vice Pres.: **Alvaro GARCIA Linera**
Min. of Defense: **Walker SAN MIGUEL Rodriguez**
Min. of Education: **Maria Magdalena CAJIAS de la Vega**
Min. of Finance: **Luis Alberto ARCE Catacora**
Min. of Foreign Relations & Worship: **David CHOQUEHUANCA Cespedes**
Min. of Govt.: **Alfredo Octavio RADA Velez**
Min. of Health & Sports: **Jorge RAMIRO Tapia**
Min. of Hydrocarbons: **Saul AVALOS Cortes**
Min. of Labor: **Walter Juvenal DELGADILLO**
Min. of Legal Defense & State Recovery: **Hector ARCE Zaconeta**
Min. of Mining & Metals: **Luis Alberto ECHAZU Alvarado**
Min. of Planning & Development: **Carlos VILLEGAS Quiroga**
Min. of the Presidency: **Juan Ramon QUINTANA Taborga**
Min. of Production & Microenterprise: **Susana RIVERO Guzman**
Min. of Rural Development & Agriculture: **Carlos ROMERO**
Min. of Services & Public Works: **Oscar COCA Antezana**
Min. Without Portfolio for Justice: **Celima TORRICO Rojas**
Min. Without Portfolio for Water: **Rene GONZALO Orellana**
Presidential Del. for Political Affairs:
Presidential Del. for Public Transparency & Integrity:
Pres., Central Bank:
Ambassador to the US: **Gustavo GUZMAN Saldana**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Efrain Hugo SILES ALVARADO**

Bolivia maintains an embassy in the United States at 3014 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-483-4410); consulates in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami, New Orleans, and New York; and honorary consulates in Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Houston, Mobile, Seattle, St. Louis, and San Juan.

ECONOMY

Bolivia's estimated 2006 gross domestic product (GDP) totaled $10.3 billion. Economic growth was estimated at about 4.5%, and inflation was estimated at about 4.3%.

In 1985, the Government of Bolivia implemented a far-reaching program of macroeconomic stabilization and structural reform aimed at maintaining price stability, creating conditions for sustained growth, and alleviating poverty. The most important change involved the "capitalization" (privatization) of numerous public sector enterprises. Parallel legislative reforms locked in place market-oriented policies that encouraged private investment. Foreign investors were accorded national treatment, and foreign ownership of companies was virtually unrestricted. Many of these reforms are currently under review. Nationalizations have taken place in both the hydrocarbon and mining sectors, and the government announced it would nationalize the country's biggest telephone company. The role of the state in the economy continues to be a primary goal of the Morales administration. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows have dwindled, as has long-term investment across most industrial sectors.

The hydrocarbon sector provides the most prominent example of the current investment climate. Bolivia has the second-largest natural gas reserves in South America. The Bolivian state oil corporation, Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB), has contracts to supply Brazil with natural gas through existing pipelines until 2019. Moreover, in 2006, YPFB signed a "ramp-up" contract with Argentina that steadily increases export levels until 2010, when gas deliveries to Argentina should be more than four times current levels. It does not appear, however, that Bolivia will be able to supply both the domestic market and these contractual obligations. It was estimated that from 2006 to 2007, production would actually decrease slightly as lack of investment led to stagnating production. Companies appeared to be investing only what was necessary to maintain current operations.

In April 2000, violent protests over plans to privatize the water utility in the city of Cochabamba led to nationwide disturbances. The government eventually cancelled the contract without compensation to the investors, returning the utility to public control. International shareholders' outstanding claims were finally resolved in January 2006, when the Government of Bolivia agreed to purchase 80% of the shares in Aguas del Tunari, the joint venture company originally selected to manage the Cochabamba water concession.

Bolivian exports were approximately $3.7 billion for 2006, up from $652 million in 1991. Imports were $2.9

billion in 2006. Bolivia enjoyed a $500 million trade surplus in the first half of 2006. Bolivian tariffs are uniformly low (10%), with capital equipment entering duty-free or incurring 5% tariffs.

Bolivia's trade with neighboring countries is growing, in part because of several regional preferential trade agreements. Bolivia is a member of the Andean Community (CAN) and enjoys nominally free trade with other member countries (Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia). Bolivia is also an associate member of MERCOSUR (Southern Cone Common Market). The Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) allows numerous Bolivian products to enter the United States duty-free, including alpaca and llama products and, subject to a quota, cotton textiles. The Bolivian Government worked to extend ATPDEA benefits beyond their February 2008 expiration date (now extended to December 2008).

In 2006, the United States exported $277 million of merchandise to Bolivia and imported $362 million. Bolivia's major exports to the United States are tin, gold, jewelry, and wood products, with textiles playing an increasingly important role. Its major imports from the United States are electronic equipment, chemicals, vehicles, wheat, and machinery. A bilateral investment treaty (BIT) between the United States and Bolivia came into effect in 2001.

Agriculture accounts for roughly 12.8% of Bolivia's GDP. The amount of land cultivated by modern farming techniques is increasing rapidly in the Santa Cruz area, where weather allows for two crops a year. Soybeans are the major cash crop, sold in the CAN market. The extraction of minerals and hydrocarbons accounts for another 11% of GDP and manufacturing around 17%.

The Government of Bolivia remains heavily dependent on foreign assistance to finance development projects. At the end of 2006, the government owed $3.2 billion to foreign creditors, with 12% of this amount owed to other governments and the balance owed to multilateral development banks. Between 1986 and 1998, Bolivia attended seven rounds of negotiations with Paris Club creditors and received U.S. $1.35 billion of bilateral debt forgiveness. The United States forgave almost all of Bolivia's bilateral debt between 1999 and 2002 and strongly supported efforts to have multilateral institutions do the same. Bolivia received U.S. $1.95 billion in debt relief from HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) I in 1998 and HIPC II in 2001, including almost complete bilateral debt forgiveness.

In June 2005, the G-8 countries decided to provide renewed World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) debt relief for the 18 participant nations of HIPC I and II through the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). Bolivia received U.S. $232.5 million in debt relief from the IMF in January 2006 and approximately U.S. $1.5 billion in debt relief from the World Bank in June 2006. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) forgave $1 billion in debt in March 2007. Bolivia was one of three countries in the Western Hemisphere selected for eligibility for the Millennium Challenge Account in 2004. Bolivia qualified again in 2005 and 2006, and presented a proposal to the Millennium Challenge Corporation in December 2005, which has been superseded by a new proposal submitted September 2007.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Bolivia traditionally has maintained normal diplomatic relations with all hemispheric states except Chile. Relations with Chile, strained since Bolivia's defeat in the War of the Pacific (1879-83) and its loss of the coastal province of Atacama, were severed from 1962 to 1975 in a dispute over the use of the waters of the Lauca River. Relations were resumed in 1975, but broken again in 1978, over the inability of the two countries to reach an agreement that might have granted Bolivia sovereign access to the sea. They are maintained today below the ambassadorial level. In the 1960s, relations with Cuba were broken following Castro's rise to power, but resumed under the Paz Estenssoro administration in 1985. Under President Morales, relations between Bolivia and Cuba have improved considerably, and Cuba has sent doctors and teachers to Bolivia. Relations have also improved with Venezuela, which has provided financial assistance to Bolivian municipalities, armed forces, and police since Morales took office. The Bolivian and Venezuelan Governments are also working closely together in the petrochemical industry, with plans to expand cooperation into the mining sector and advance the Venezuelan-sponsored Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) trading bloc. The Bolivian Government announced it would pursue formal relations with Iran and Libya in September 2007, with plans to cooperate in the petrochemical industry and increase Bolivian exports to both countries.

Bolivia has pursued a foreign policy with a heavy economic component and the Morales government seems to be following in this same tradition. Bolivia has become more active in the Organization of American States (OAS), the Rio Group, and in MERCOSUR, with which it signed an association agreement in 1996. Bolivia promotes its policies on sustainable development and the empowerment of indigenous people.

Bolivia is a member of the UN and some of its specialized agencies and related programs, the Organization of American States (OAS), CAN, Non-Aligned Movement, International Parliamentary Union, Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), World Trade Organization (WTO), Rio Treaty, Rio Group, Amazon Pact, and an associate member of Mercosur. As an outgrowth of the 1994 Summit of the Americas, Bolivia hosted a hemispheric summit conference on sustainable development in December 1996.

U.S.-BOLIVIAN RELATIONS

Although President Morales has been publicly critical of U.S. policies, the United States and Bolivia have a tradition of cordial and cooperative relations. Development assistance from the United States to Bolivia dates from the 1940s, and the U.S. remains a major partner for economic development, improved health, democracy, and the environment. In 1991, the U.S. Government forgave all of the $341 million debt owed by Bolivia to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as well as 80% ($31 million) of the amount owed to the Department of Agriculture for food assistance. The United States has also been a strong supporter of forgiveness of Bolivia's multilateral debt under the HIPC initiatives.

The United States Government channels its development assistance to Bolivia through USAID. USAID is well known in Bolivia, especially in rural areas where thousands of projects have been implemented. USAID has been providing assistance to Bolivia since the 1960s and works with the Government of Bolivia, the private sector, and the Bolivian people to achieve equitable and sustainable development. USAID/Bolivia provides about $85 million annually in development assistance through bilateral agreements with the Bolivian Government and unilateral agreements with other organizations. USAID programs are implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and the Bolivian Government. USAID's programs support Bolivia's National Development Plan and are designed to address key issues, such as poverty and the social exclusion of historically disadvantaged populations, focusing efforts on Bolivia's peri-urban and rural populations. USAID's programs in Bolivia strengthen democratic institutions; provide economic opportunities for disadvantaged populations through business development and trade; improve family health; promote sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity conservation; provide farmers alternatives to illicit coca cultivation; and improve food security.

Public criticisms of the U.S. Government were made on a number of fronts in 2007, including of USAID-supported democracy programs and, in particular, the U.S. Government's non-partisan support across the political spectrum. The Bolivian Government lobbied for an extension of ATPDEA trade preferences and approval of a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). President Morales delivered a $657 million proposal on September 24, 2007 to MCC officials, which focuses on transportation and agriculture development in northern Bolivia. On February 27, 2008, the U.S. Congress approved an ATPDEA extension, which is set to expire on December 31, 2008.

The control of illegal narcotics is a major issue in the bilateral relationship. For centuries, Bolivian coca leaf has been chewed and used in traditional rituals, but in the 1970s and 1980s the emergence of the drug trade led to a rapid expansion of coca cultivation used to make cocaine, particularly in the tropical Chapare region in the Department of Cochabamba (not a traditional coca growing area). In 1988, a new law, Law 1008, recognized only 12,000 hectares in the Yungas as sufficient to meet the licit demand of coca. Law 1008 also explicitly stated that coca grown in the Chapare was not required to meet traditional demand for chewing or for tea, and the law called for the eradication, over time, of all "excess" coca.

To accomplish that goal, successive Bolivian governments instituted programs offering cash compensation to coca farmers who eradicated voluntarily, and the government began developing and promoting suitable alternative crops for peasants to grow. Beginning in 1997, the government launched a more effective policy of physically uprooting the illegal coca plants, and Bolivia's illegal coca production fell over the next 4 years by up to 90%.

This "forced" eradication remains controversial, however, and well-organized coca growers unions have blocked roads, harassed police eradicators, and occasionally used violence to protest the policy. In response, previous government security forces have used force. In some cases confrontations between security forces and coca growers or distributors have resulted in injuries and fatalities, raising human rights concerns. The Morales government has embarked on a policy of voluntary eradication and social control. Although violent confrontations between police and coca growers/distributors have decreased under the new approach, its long-term efficacy remains to be proven.

Bolivia plans to expand, at least for a limited time, legal coca production to 20,000 hectares and stresses development of legal commercial uses for coca leaf. Although the U.S. prefers long-term limits that track more closely with current estimated legal domestic demand of around 4,000 to 6,000 hectares, it will continues to support counter-narcotics efforts in Bolivia as the 20,000 hectare proposal is still significantly below current cultivation, which has oscillated between about 23,000 and 28,000 hectares since 2001.

The United States also heavily supports parallel efforts to interdict the smuggling of coca leaves, cocaine, and precursor chemicals. The U.S. Government has, in large measure, financed alternative development programs and the counter-narcotics police effort. The U.S. recertified Bolivia as not having "failed demonstrably" in 2007 to cooperate on counter-narcotics issues, finding Bolivia's interdiction efforts strongly positive, though against a backdrop of steadily rising production and trafficking of cocaine. Recent Bolivian governments have supported U.S. Government counter-narcotics programs.

In addition to working closely with Bolivian Government officials to strengthen bilateral relations, the U.S. Embassy provides a wide range of services to U.S. citizens and busi-

nesses. Political and economic officers deal directly with the Bolivian Government in advancing U.S. interests, but are also available to provide information to American citizens on local economic and political conditions in the country. Commercial officers work closely with numerous U.S. companies that operate direct subsidiaries or have investments in Bolivia, providing information on Bolivian trade and industry regulations and administering several programs intended to aid U.S. companies starting or maintaining businesses in Bolivia.

The Consular Section of the Embassy, and the two consular agencies in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, provide vital services to the estimated 13,000 American citizens resident in Bolivia. Among other services, the Consular Section and the consular agencies assist Americans who wish to participate in U.S. elections while abroad and also provide notarial services. Some 40,000 U.S. citizens visit annually. The Consular Section also offers passport and emergency services to tourists as needed during their stay in Bolivia.

The Consular Section is currently analyzing a new Bolivian regulation that would require U.S. citizens entering Bolivia for tourism to obtain a visa. The Consular Section will provide information about this new visa requirement on the Embassy's website at http://bolivia.usembassy.gov. In addition to the services provided to U.S. citizens, the Consular Section adjudicates thousands of immigrant and non-immigrant visas at the Embassy in La Paz each year.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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Department of Commerce, Trade Information Center, International Trade Administration
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Tel: 800-USA-TRADE
Internet: Country Commercial Guide for Bolivia—http://www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x_3201945.pdf

U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information should consult with the nearest Export Assistance Center or the U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center at (800) USA-TRADE or go to the following website: http://www.export.gov.

American Chamber of Commerce in Bolivia
Edificio Hilda, Oficina 3
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 12, 2007

Country Description: Bolivia is a constitutional democracy and one of the least-developed countries in South America. Tourist facilities are generally adequate, but vary greatly in quality. The capital is La Paz, accessible by Bolivia's international airport in El Alto.

Entry Requirements: A U.S. passport valid for at least six months from the date of proposed entry into Bolivia is required to enter and depart Bolivia.

Effective December 1, 2007, U.S. citizens seeking to enter Bolivia as tourists must have an entry visa. Bolivian tourist visas can be applied for by mail or in person at Bolivian consulates in the U.S., as well as at Bolivian ports of entry, such as at Bolivia's international airports and at land border crossings. Bolivian tourist visas are valid for five years from the date of issuance and allow the bearer to enter the country three times in a year for a cumulative stay of not more than ninety days.

The cost of the tourist visa is $100 U.S. dollars. The $100 fee can be paid in cash, by deposit to the Bolivian Consulate's bank account or by money order. Tourists applying for their visa upon arrival to Bolivia must pay this fee in cash to immigration authorities. In addition to the $100 fee, the applicant must present a visa application form with a 4x4 color photograph, a passport with a validity of not less than 6 months, evidence of a hotel reservation or a letter of invitation in Spanish, proof of economic solvency (credit card, cash or a current bank statement), and an International Vaccination Certificate for yellow fever.

Please visit the Embassy of Bolivia web site at http://www.bolivia-usa.org for details on how to apply or contact

the nearest Bolivian Embassy or Consulate. Bolivian consulates in the United States are located in Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Oklahoma City, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC.

U.S. citizens whose passports are lost or stolen in Bolivia must obtain a replacement passport and present it, together with a police report of the loss or theft, to a Bolivian government immigration office in order to obtain permission to depart. For more information on replacement passport procedures, please consult the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://bolivia.usembassy.gov. An exit tax is charged when departing Bolivia by air. Travelers with Bolivian citizenship or residency pay an additional fee upon departure. While the Bolivian Government does not currently require travelers to purchase round-trip air tickets in order to enter the country, some airlines have required travelers to purchase round-trip tickets prior to boarding aircraft bound for Bolivia.

Some tourists arriving by land report that immigration officials did not place entry stamps in their passports, causing problems at checkpoints and upon departure.

Additional Requirements for Minors: In an effort to prevent international child abduction, the Bolivian Government has initiated procedures at entry/exit points. Minors (under 18) who are citizens or residents of Bolivia and who are traveling alone, with one parent or with a third party, must present a copy of their birth certificate and written authorization from the absent parent(s) or legal guardian, specifically granting permission to travel alone, with one parent or with a third party. When a parent is deceased, a notarized copy of the death certificate is required in lieu of the written authorization. If documents are prepared in the United States, the documents must be translated into Spanish, notarized, and authenticated by the Bolivian Embassy or a Bolivian consulate within the United States. If documents are prepared in Bolivia, only notarization by a Bolivian notary is required. Using these documents, a travel permit may be obtained from the Juzgado del Menor. This requirement does not apply to children who enter the country with a U.S. passport as tourists, unless they hold dual U.S./Bolivian citizenship or have been in Bolivia for more than 90 consecutive days.

The new visa requirement states that unaccompanied minors to Bolivia must present an official Parental Authorization and Consent Certificate duly provided by the appropriate authorities. Until the government of Bolivia provides further specifics on this document, we recommend that all unaccompanied minors to Bolivia carry a letter of permission from their parents or legal guardians authorizing travel.

Safety and Security: The countrywide emergency number for the police, including highway patrol, is 911. The corresponding number for the fire department is 119. The National Tourism Police has offices in La Paz and Cochabamba, with plans to expand to Santa Cruz, providing free assistance to tourists. These services include English-speaking officials who may assist tourists in filing police reports of lost/stolen documents or other valuables. The La Paz office is located at Plaza del Stadium, Edificio Olympia, planta baja, Miraflores, telephone number 222-0516, open 24 hours per day. The Cochabamba office is located at Plaza 14 de Septiembre, Edificio Prefectura, tel. (4) 451-0023, open 0730 to 2000, seven days a week. Protests, strikes, and other civic actions can occur at any time and disrupt transportation on a local and national level. This is particularly true before, during and after elections or other changes in government. While protest actions generally begin peacefully, they have the potential to become violent. The police have used tear gas to break up protests. In addition to rallies and street demonstrations, protesters sometimes block roads; they have reacted with force when travelers attempt to pass through or go around roadblocks and occasionally have used explosives to press their point.

U.S. citizens should avoid roadblocks and demonstrations. Demonstrations protesting government or private company policies occur frequently, even in otherwise peaceful times. Roadblocks and demonstrations in June 2005 led to the closure of the El Alto airport in La Paz; similar actions in 2006 led to the closure of the Viru Viru International Airport in Santa Cruz. Both incidents resulted in cancellation and/or diversion of flights and other inconveniences to travelers. U.S. citizens planning travel to or from Bolivia should take into consideration the possibility of disruptions to air service in and out of La Paz and other airports. Americans should monitor Bolivian media reports for updates. The Embassy strongly recommends that U.S. citizens avoid areas where roadblocks or public demonstrations are occurring or planned. Political rallies should similarly be avoided in light of press reports of violence at some rallies in various parts of Bolivia.

U.S. citizens who find themselves in a roadblock should not attempt to "run" a roadblock, as this may aggravate the situation and lead to physical harm. Taking alternative, safe routes, or returning to where the travel started may be the safest courses of action under these circumstances. U.S. citizens embarking on road trips should monitor news reports and may contact the American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in La Paz at (591)(2)216-8297 or the U.S. consular agencies in Cochabamba at (591)(4)425-6714 and/or Santa Cruz at (591) (3) 351-3477 for updates. Given that roadblocks may occur without warning and have stranded travelers for several days, travelers should take extra food and water.

The U.S. Embassy also advises its employees to maintain at least two weeks' supply of drinking water and canned food in case roadblocks affect supplies, as occurred in January 2007 around Cochabamba. For more information on emergency preparedness, please consult the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) web site at http://www.fema.gov. That web site includes

a Spanish language version. Americans living or traveling in Bolivia are encouraged to register and update their contact information at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz and/or the U.S. consular agencies in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Registration may be done online and in advance of travel. Information on registering may be found at the Department of State's travel registration web site.

Increased political and social tensions in Bolivia have recently led to violent protests and marches throughout Bolivia. Clashes between opposing social groups and the authorities continue to break out, often at short notice. On November 24-25, 2007, there were serious violent disturbances in Sucre which left hundreds injured and claimed the lives of three individuals.

In January 2007, political and social strife in Cochabamba led to violent confrontations, resulting in three confirmed deaths and over one hundred injured. A U.S. citizen was among those injured.

In February and October 2003, approximately one hundred people died during violent demonstrations and protests in downtown La Paz and the nearby city of El Alto. These demonstrations also affected Cochabamba and other towns and villages in the Altiplano. While the protests and demonstrations subsided, many of the underlying social, political, and economic causes remain, and in January 2007 several intercity roads, including Bolivia's major east-west highway, were closed by blockades for several weeks. Since 2000 the resort town of Sorata, located seventy miles north of La Paz, has been cut off by blockades on three occasions, ranging from one week to one month. Visitors contemplating travel to Sorata should contact the Consular Section in La Paz prior to travel.

In the Chapare region between Santa Cruz and Cochabamba and the Yungas region northeast of La Paz violence and civil unrest, primarily associated with anti-narcotics activities, periodically create a risk for travelers to those regions. Confrontations between area residents and government authorities over coca eradication have resulted in the use of tear gas and stronger force by government authorities to quell disturbances. Pro-coca groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and may attempt to target U.S. Government or private interests. U.S. citizen visitors to the Chapare or Yungas regions are encouraged to check with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy prior to travel. Violence has also erupted between squatters unlawfully invading private land and security forces attempting to remove them. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Travelers interested in the most recent information provided to American citizens registered with the Embassy should visit the U.S. Embassy La Paz web site at http://bolivia.usembassy.gov/travel_warnings__announcements.html. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The U.S. Department of State currently classifies Bolivia as a medium to high crime threat country. Street crime, such as pick pocketing, assaults following ATM withdrawals, and theft from parked vehicles, occurs with some frequency in Bolivia. U.S. citizens have also had backpacks, passports and other property stolen at bus terminals or while traveling on buses as well as at Internet cafes and in other situations where the U.S. citizen is distracted or the property left unattended. Theft of cars and car parts, particularly late-model four-wheel-drive vehicles, is common. Hijacking of vehicles has occurred, and travelers should take appropriate precautions to avoid being victimized. In November 2003, an American citizen was murdered during an attempted carjacking in Santa Cruz.

The Coronilla Hill, a Cochabamba landmark adjacent to the main Bus Terminal and near several markets, hostels, and restaurants, has become an increasingly dangerous place for tourists and local citizens alike. The local police, tourist authorities, and press have declared the area off limits and cautioned people to enter the area at their own peril. American citizens have been assaulted in the area. The police have made several sweeps of the area in an attempt to bring the population of street people, most of whom are reportedly drug addicts and alcohol abusers, under control. Nonetheless, incidents of crime continue. Police reports indicate that the thieves in that area have gone from purse snatching and burglary to increasingly violent assaults on passersby. The Embassy therefore recommends that U.S. citizens avoid this area.

Beginning in June 2007, the U.S. Embassy in La Paz began receiving reports of U.S. citizens traveling by bus from Copacabana to La Paz being kidnapped and robbed of their ATM cards and other valuables. This crime reportedly involves U.S. citizens taking an evening bus from Copacabana. While the bus is scheduled to stop at the La Paz bus terminal, the driver will stop short of that location, typically near the General Cemetery late at night. Disembarking and disoriented passengers then have little option but to hail a waiting taxi. Thieves in collusion with the taxi driver enter the taxi to blindfold and coerce the U.S. citizen(s) into surrendering cash, cameras, ATM cards, and other valuables. U.S. citizen victims to date report that once the thieves withdrew funds using the ATM cards the U.S. citizens were released without further harm. U.S. citizens traveling from Copacabana should try to arrive during daylight hours, verify the final destination, and buy tickets directly at the Copacabana bus terminal rather than from third parties.

Bolivian police state that there are eight organized criminal groups operating in the La Paz area. The techniques employed by these groups vary, but there are a few major pat-

terns that can be identified. There have been reports of "false police"—persons using police uniforms, identification, and even buildings modified to resemble police stations—intercepting and robbing foreign tourists including U.S. citizens. Under Bolivian law, police need a warrant from the "fiscal" or prosecutor to detain a suspect. Any searches or seizures must occur at a bona fide police station in the presence of the fiscal. The warrant requirement also applies to suspected drug trafficking cases, although such searches and seizures may occur without a fiscal present. If detained, U.S. citizens should request to see the warrant and demand immediate contact with the nearest U.S. Consular Office (in La Paz, Cochabamba or Santa Cruz).

According to press reports, criminals using the "false police" method focus on foreigners in areas frequented by tourists including bus terminals and tourist markets such as Sagarnaga Street in La Paz. The perpetrators will identify a potential victim and have an accomplice typically driving a white taxi offer taxi services to the potential victim. They focus on European/American tourists who are not wearing a traditional "trekker" backpack and are traveling without a large number of bags. A few blocks after the potential victim boards the taxi another accomplice, pretending to be a recently arrived tourist, boards the taxi with the potential victim. With all the accomplices then in place, the "false police" stop the taxi, "search" the passengers, and rob the victim. As part of this scam, the false police may take the victim to a "false police" station.

A similar variation also introduces a "tourist" to the victims. This introduction can take place on a bus, taxi, train, or just walking down the street. The "tourist" will befriend the victims and might seek assistance in some manner. After a period of time, the "police" intercept the victims and the "tourist." At this point, the "police" discover some sort of contraband (usually drugs) on the "tourist." The entire group is then taken to the "police station." At this point, the "police" seize the documents, credit cards, and ATM cards of the victims. The perpetrators obtain pin numbers, sometimes by threat of violence, and the scam is complete.

Another technique again introduces a "tourist" to the victims. This "tourist" can be any race or gender and will probably be able to speak the language of the victims. This meeting can happen anywhere and the goal of the "tourist" is to build the trust of the victims. Once a certain level of trust is obtained, the "tourist" suggests a particular mode of transportation to a location (usually a taxi). The "taxi" picks up the victims and the "tourist" and delivers the group to a safe house in the area. At this point the victims are informed that they are now kidnapped and are forced to give up their credit cards and ATM cards with pin numbers.

Bolivian police sources state that two Austrian citizens fell victim to this scam and had their bank accounts emptied through use of their ATM card. The perpetrators then suffocated the victims and buried them in clandestine graves, where police found their bodies on April 3, 2006. During that timeframe, a Spanish citizen also purportedly fell prey to this scam, and his body was found nearby. In most instances, the victims are released, but the murder of the victims is still a possibility. The techniques and the perpetrators are convincing. Authentic uniforms, badges, and props help persuade the victims that the situation is real and valid. All tourists visiting Bolivia should exercise extreme caution. Visitors should be suspicious of all "coincidences" that can happen on a trip. If the tourist has doubts about a situation, the tourist should immediately remove him/herself from the scene.

Thefts of bags, wallets, and backpacks are a problem throughout Bolivia, but especially in the tourist areas of downtown La Paz and the Altiplano. Most thefts involve two or three people who spot a potential victim and wait until the bag or backpack is placed on the ground, often at a restaurant, bus terminal, Internet café, etc. In other cases, the thief places a disagreeable substance on the clothes or backpack of the intended victim, and then offers to assist the victim with the removal of the substance. While the person is distracted, the thief or an accomplice grabs the bag or backpack and flees. In such a situation, the visitor should decline assistance, secure the bag/backpack, and walk briskly from the area. To steal wallets and bags, thieves may spray water on the victim's neck, and while the person is distracted, an accomplice takes the wallet or bag. At times the thief poses as a policeman, and requests that the person accompany him to the police station, using a nearby taxi. The visitor should indicate a desire to contact the U.S. Embassy and not enter the taxi. Under no circumstances should you surrender ATM or credit cards, or release a PIN number. While most thefts do not involve violence, in some instances the victim has been physically harmed and forcibly searched for hidden valuables. This is particularly true in "choke and rob" assaults where the victims, including U.S. citizens, reported being choked from behind until they lost consciousness and later awoke to find all of their possessions gone. These assaults have happened during both day and night. Visitors should avoid being alone on the streets, especially at night and in isolated areas. In 2001, female tourists reported being drugged and raped by a tourist guide in the city of Rurrenabaque in the Beni region. Visitors should be careful when choosing a tour operator and should not accept any type of medication or drugs from unreliable sources. The Embassy also has received reports of sexual assaults against female hikers in the Yungas Valley, near the town of Coroico. Visitors to Coroico are advised to avoid hiking alone or in small groups.

Information for Victims of Crime:
The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropri-

ate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Throughout the country, both personal hygiene and sanitary practices in food handling are far below U.S. standards. As a result, gastrointestinal illness is widespread among both local people and visitors. Medical care in large cities is adequate for most purposes but of varying quality. Ambulance services are limited to non-existent.

Medical facilities are generally not adequate to handle serious medical conditions. Pharmacies are located throughout Bolivia and prescription and over the counter medications are widely available. Western Bolivia, dominated by the Andes and high plains (Altiplano), is largely insect-free. However, altitude sickness is a major problem. Eastern Bolivia is tropical, and visitors to that area are subject to related illnesses. Dengue is endemic throughout eastern Bolivia, including in Santa Cruz city. Since January 2007, however, there have been several thousand cases, representing a significantly increased incidence, and part of a region-wide trend. Although dengue is usually not a fatal disease, there have been a small number of fatalities. News media periodically report outbreaks of rabies, particularly in the larger cities.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

High Altitude Health Risks: Official U.S. Government travelers to La Paz are provided with the following information: The altitude of La Paz ranges from 10,600 feet to over 13,000 feet (3,400 to 4,000 meters) above sea level. Much of Western Bolivia is at the same altitude or higher, including Lake Titicaca, the Salar de Uyuni, and the cities of Oruro and Potosi. The altitude alone poses a serious risk of illness, hospitalization, and even death, even for those in excellent health.

Prior to departing the U.S. for high-altitude locations (over 10,000 feet above sea level), travelers should discuss the trip with their personal physician and request information on specific recommendations concerning medication and lifestyle tips at high altitudes. Coca-leaf tea is a popular beverage and folk remedy for altitude sickness in Bolivia. Possession of this tea, which is sold in bags in most Bolivian grocery stores, is illegal in the United States. The State Department's Office of Medical Services cautions official U.S. Government travelers planning to visit La Paz to consider the following risks and advice.

Sickle cell anemia or sickle cell trait: 30 percent of persons with sickle cell trait are likely to have a crisis at elevations of more than 8,000 feet. U.S. citizens with this condition have required urgent medical evacuation from La Paz to the U.S.

Heart disease: Any person who has heart disease, or known risk factors for heart disease, should consult their doctor about their risks of ascending to altitude, and whether any testing of their heart would be in order. Even U.S. citizens who adjust well initially to the altitude in La Paz have subsequently suffered heart attacks and been hospitalized.

Lung disease: Anyone with emphysema should consult closely with their doctor and seriously reconsider coming to La Paz or surrounding, high altitude areas. Anyone with asthma should consult their doctor; mild asthma may be manageable at high altitude, but it is important to remember that emergency care and intensive respiratory care are very, very limited even in the city of La Paz, and are absent outside the city. U.S. citizens with respiratory ailments have previously been medically evacuated from La Paz to other countries to receive medical treatment.

Given potential complications from altitude sickness, pregnant women should consult their doctor before travel to La Paz and other high-altitude areas of Bolivia.

All people, even healthy and fit persons, will feel symptoms of hypoxia (lack of oxygen) upon arrival at high altitude. Most people will have increased respiration and increased heart rate. Many people will have headaches, difficulty sleeping, lack of appetite, minor gastric and intestinal upsets, and mood changes. Many travelers limit physical activity for the first 36 to 48 hours after arrival and avoid alcohol and smoking for at least one week after arrival.

For additional information, travelers should visit the World Health Organization's web site at http://www.who.int/ith/en/ as well as the CDC's travel warning on high altitude sickness at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Bolivia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. U.S. citizens planning on driving in Bolivia, despite the hazards

described below, should obtain an international driver's license through their local automobile club before coming to Bolivia.

Road conditions in Bolivia are hazardous. Although La Paz, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba are connected by improved highways, the vast majority of roads in Bolivia are unpaved. Few highways have shoulders, fencing or barriers, and highway markings are minimal. Yielding for pedestrians in the cities is not the norm. For trips outside the major cities, especially in mountainous areas, a four-wheel-drive vehicle is highly recommended. Travel during the rainy season (November through March) is difficult, as most routes are potholed, and some roads and bridges are washed out. Added dangers are the absence of formal training for most drivers, poor maintenance and overloaded vehicles, lack of lights on some vehicles at night, and intoxicated or overly tired drivers, including commercial bus and truck drivers.

The majority of intercity travel in Bolivia is by bus, with varying levels of safety and service. Bus accidents, at times attributed to drunk drivers or mechanical failures, have caused scores of deaths and severe injuries. In recent years there have been major bus crashes on the highway between La Paz and Oruro, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, and on the Yungas road. The old Yungas road is considered one of the most dangerous routes in the world. Taxis, vans, and buses dominate intracity transportation. From a crime perspective, public transportation is relatively safe and violent assaults are rare. However, petty theft of unattended backpacks and other personal items does occur. For reasons of safety, visitors are advised to use radio taxis whenever possible. U.S. citizens taking unlicensed taxis have reported being robbed and assaulted.

Drivers of vehicles involved in traffic accidents are expected to remain at the scene until the arrival of local police authorities. Any attempt to leave the scene is in violation of Bolivian law. The Embassy believes any attempt to flee the scene of an accident would place the driver and passengers at greater risk of harm than remaining at the scene until the arrival of local police.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Bolivia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Bolivia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

There are limited flights within Bolivia and to neighboring countries. Flight delays and cancellations are common. In April 2007, Bolivia's transportation superintendent suspended the domestic and international operations of Lloyd Aereo Boliviano (LAB), citing the firm's frequent flight cancellations and shaky finances. This action has resulted in missed connecting flights and disruption to travelers' itineraries. U.S. citizens should keep this information in mind when making travel plans.

Special Circumstances: In the run-up to the July 2006 Constituent Assembly elections, President Morales accused the United States military of infiltrating Bolivia with operatives disguised as "students and tourists." As an apparent result of these comments, some U.S. citizens have reported harassment by Bolivian officials and been subjected to unwanted media attention. In one case, a local Bolivian newspaper wrongly identified an American citizen as an operative for the Central Intelligence Agency. In October 2006, two American citizens apparently seeking to view a government conference in Cochabamba were detained and denounced by the Bolivian Government as "spies" then ordered to leave Bolivia. Americans planning on traveling to Bolivia should be aware of the political atmosphere and the possibility of unwanted attention from pro-governmental groups and other Bolivian officials.

For information on in-country visa procedures and requirements, please consult the Bolivian Immigration Service at fax/telephone (591-2) 211-0960, street address Avenida Camacho entre Loayza y Bueno, La Paz, Bolivia. In emergency cases, the Immigration Service may permit temporary residency applicants to retrieve their passports from those applications. However, under current regulations in such cases the applicant would need to commence the application anew, including paying the corresponding fees. Any U.S. documents, such as birth, marriage, divorce or death certificates, to be presented in Bolivia must first be authenticated in the U.S. at the nearest Bolivian Embassy or consulate. For information on those procedures, please consult the Department of State Office of Authentications web site at http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth, and the nearest Bolivian Embassy or consulate.

Marriage: Please see our information on marriage in Bolivia, available on the Embassy's web site at http://bolivia.usembassy.gov.

Mountain Trekking and Climbing Safety: U.S. citizens are advised to exercise extreme care when trekking or climbing in Bolivia. Since June 2002, four American citizens have died in falls while mountain climbing in Bolivia. Three of the deaths occurred on Illimani, a 6,402-meter peak located southeast of La Paz. Many popular trekking routes in the Bolivian Andes cross passes as high as 16,000 feet. Trekkers must have adequate clothing and equipment, not always available locally, and should be experienced mountain travelers. It is not prudent to trek alone. Solo trekking is the most significant factor contributing to injuries and robberies.

The safest option is to join an organized group and/or use a reputable firm to provide an experienced guide and porter who can communicate in both Spanish and English. If you develop any of the following symptoms while climbing at altitude—severe headache, weakness, vomiting, shortness of breath at rest, cough, chest tightness, unsteadiness—descend to a lower altitude

immediately. Trekkers and climbers are strongly encouraged to purchase adequate insurance to cover expenses in case of injury or death.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bolivian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bolivia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Foreigners who bought dynamite at local markets have been detained by the police; products available on the open market may not be legal for a foreigner to possess. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

It often takes years to reach a decision in Bolivian legal cases, whether involving property disputes, civil, or criminal matters. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the court can order a defendant held in jail for the duration of the case. Prison conditions are primitive, and prisoners are expected to pay for food and lodging. For further information, please see the Annual Human Rights Report for Bolivia at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/shrd/2005/63949.htm. Lists of local Bolivian attorneys and their specialties are available from the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in La Paz and the Consular Agencies in Santa Cruz and Cochabamba at http://bolivia.usembassy.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. Pending U.S. implementation of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions, under Bolivian law U.S. citizens who are not resident in Bolivia are not permitted to adopt Bolivian children.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Bolivia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consular Agency through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Bolivia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consular Agencies in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consular Agency to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 2780 Avenida Arce in La Paz, between calles Cordero and Campos; telephone (591-2) 216-8297 during business hours 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., or (591-2) 216-8000 for after-hours emergencies; fax (591-2) 216-8808; Internet http://bolivia.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Embassy in La Paz is open for American Citizen Services Monday and Thursday from 1:30PM to 5:00PM and Tuesdays and Fridays from 08:30 to12:30 and from 2:00PM to 4:00PM, except U.S. and Bolivian holidays. Questions should be directed to the email address USCit.Services.Bolivia@gmail.com or consularlapaz@state.gov.

There are two consular agencies in Bolivia, which provide limited services to American citizens, but are not authorized to issue passports. Anyone requesting service at one of the consular agencies should call ahead to verify that the service requested would be available on the day you expect to visit the agency.

Santa Cruz: The Consular Agency in Santa Cruz is located at 146 Avenida Roque Aguilera (Tercer Anillo); telephone (591-3) 351-3477, 351-3479, or 351-3480; fax (591-3) 351-3478. The U.S. Consular Agency in Santa Cruz is open to the public Mondays from 09:00 to 12:30 and from 2:00PM to 5:00PM and on Tuesday through Friday from 09:00 to 12:30, except U.S. and Bolivian holidays.

Cochabamba: The Consular Agency in Cochabamba is located at Avenida Oquendo 654, Torres Sofer, room 601; telephone (591-4) 411-6313; fax (591-4) 425 -6714.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Cochabamba is open to the public Monday through Friday from 08:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m. and Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., excluding U.S. and Bolivian holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption.

Bolivia is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The governmental authority responsible for adoption matters in Bolivia is the Vice-Ministry of Gender and Genera-

tional Affairs (Viceministerio de Género y Asuntos Generacionales), which may be reached via the following contact information:

Av. 16 de Julio #1219
La Paz, Bolivia
Telephone: 591–2–212 4725;
591–2–212 4727
Email: vicejunite@alamo.entelnet.bo

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Bolivia allows both married and single people to adopt. Prospective adoptive parents must be between 25 to 50 years of age or 15 years older than the adopted child to adopt a child in Bolivia.

Residency Requirements: U.S. citizens must be legal residents of Bolivia in order to adopt in Bolivia.

Time Frame: Bolivian adoptions can be time-consuming. Recent experience suggests that the total time required will be several months to over one year. When a married couple is adopting, it is sufficient for one spouse to remain in Bolivia for the duration of the adoption process; it is not necessary that both do so. However, both adoptive parents must be present for the preliminary hearing on provisional placement, the evaluation, and the ratification of the adoption by the court. At least one prospective adoptive parent should plan to stay in Bolivia for approximately four to six weeks. Adoptive parents are advised NOT to make travel plans for an adoptive child until they have the child's U.S. visa. The Immigrant Visa Unit at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz will do its best to process adoption visa paperwork quickly; however, unexpected delays in the adoption process are possible. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service and consular officials have no authority to intervene in any Bolivian legal process.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Because Bolivia is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The Department maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Bolivia discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Bolivia at risk.

Adoption Procedures: Bolivia has two types of adoptions: national and intercountry. However, Bolivia does not allow intercountry adoptions to countries that have not ratified The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, including the United States.

The following information is provided for use in cases in which the adoptive parents are resident in Bolivia or hold dual U.S.-Bolivian nationality.

In order to be eligible for adoption, a Bolivian child must be "abandoned." Abandonment is a legal finding made by the Bolivian court, and must occur before the child is assigned to prospective adoptive parents. In effect, this prohibits so-called "direct" adoptions, in which the birth parent gives a child directly (or via an intermediary) to specific prospective adoptive parents for adoption.

In addition, this effectively bars adoptive parents from searching for and locating a child on their own. Prospective adoptive parents must work with the Vice-Ministry of Gender and Generational Affairs to locate a child that is eligible for adoption. Once the prospective adoptive parents are matched with a child, they must then apply to the Bolivian court that has jurisdiction over the child. A Bolivian attorney must submit the request for adoption to the Vice-Ministry of Gender and Generational Affairs along with a copy a social worker's report of the prospective adoptive child. Adoption proceedings can, by law, take from 25 to 45 working days from the date of the first hearing, although it is not uncommon for the procedures to take even longer. The length of the process often depends on which court has jurisdiction over the case.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Required Documents: The following is a general list of documents that are required for adoption in Bolivia. Prospective adoptive parents should be aware that other documents may be required.

Prospective adoptive parents are advised to have several extra copies of each document on hand when traveling to Bolivia. Documents to be submitted by the prospective adoptive parents include (but are not limited to) the following:

- The adoptive parents' birth certificates;
- The adoptive parents' marriage certificate(s), if applicable;
- Home study conducted by an approved adoption service provider;
- Physical and psychological health certificates;
- Financial and employment certifications;
- 2-3 Personal references and police clearances; and
- Evidence that prospective parent(s) has participated in and completed a parenting workshop (this may be undertaken in the United States).

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*.

Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website to download forms and filing instructions.

Embassy of Bolivia
3014 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 483-4410

Bolivia also has Consulates General in Houston, Miami, New York, Oklahoma City and Seattle.

American Embassy
Consular Section
Avenida Arce 2780, between calles Cordero and Campos
La Paz, Bolivia

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747.

This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Bosnia and Herzegovina

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 51,129 sq. km, slightly smaller than West Virginia.

Cities: Capital—Sarajevo (est. pop 387,876); Banja Luka (220,407); Mostar (208,904); Tuzla (118,500); Bihac (49,544).

Terrain: Mountains in the central and southern regions, plains along the Sava River in the north.

Climate: Hot summers and cold winters; areas of high elevation have short, cool summers and long, severe winters; mild, rainy winters in the southeast.

People

Nationality: Bosniak (Muslim), Bosnian Croat, Bosnian Serb.

Population: (July 2004 est.) 4,007,608 (note: all data dealing with population are subject to considerable error because of the dislocations caused by military action and ethnic cleansing).

Population growth rate: (2004 est.) 0.45%.

Ethnic groups: Bosniak 48.3%, Serb 34.0%, Croat 15.4%, others 2.3%. (Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2002—Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Religions: Muslim (40%); Orthodox (31%); Catholic (15%); Protestant (4%); other (10%).

Languages: Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian (formerly "Serbo-Croatian").

Education: Mandatory 8-9 years of primary school (depending on region), 3-4 years in secondary school (vocational/liberal arts), and 3-5 years in universities (depending on major). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there are 1,089 primary schools with 350,000 students and 289 secondary schools with 162,000 students. The main public universities are in larger cities (Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Bihac, Zenica) and there are a number of private institutions of higher education. Adult literacy rate—male 94.1%, female 78.0%.

Health: Infant mortality rate: (2005 est.)—21.05 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2005 est.)—male 70.09, female 75.8.

Work force: (2001 est.) 1.026 million.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: The Dayton Agreement, signed December 14, 1995, included a new constitution now in force.

Independence: April 1992 (from Yugoslavia).

Government branches: Executive—Chairman of the Presidency and two other members of three-member rotating presidency (chief of state), Chairman of the Council of Ministers (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—bicameral parliamentary assembly, consisting of national House of Representatives and House of Peoples (parliament). Judicial—Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, both supervised by the Ministry of Justice.

Political subdivisions: Two Entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (divided into 10 cantons) and Republika Srpska. In accordance with Annex 2, Article V, of the Dayton Peace Agreement that left the unresolved status of Brcko subject to binding international arbitration, an Arbitration Tribunal was formed in mid-1996. On March 5, 1999, the Tribunal issued its Final Award. The Final Award established a special District for the entire pre-war Brcko Opstina, under the exclusive sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The territory of the District belongs simultaneously to both Entities, the Republika Srpska and the Federation, in condominium. Therefore, the territories of the two Entities overlap in the Brcko District. In accordance with the Final Award, the District is self-governing and has a single, unitary, multiethnic, democratic Government; a unified and multiethnic police force operating under a single command structure and an indepen-

dent judiciary. The District Government exercises, throughout the prewar Brcko Opstina, those powers previously exercised by the two Entities and the former three municipal governments. The Brcko district is demilitarized.

Political parties: Party of Democratic Action (SDA); Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ-BiH); Serb Democratic Party (SDS); Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina (SBiH); Croatian Democratic Union-1990 (HDZ-1990); Bosnian Party (BOSS); Social Democratic Union (SDU); Croatian Party of Rights (HSP); Civic Democratic Party (GDS); Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD); Social Democratic Party (SDP); Socialist Party of Republika Srpska (SPRS); Party for Democratic Progress (PDP); National Democratic Union (DNZ); Democratic Peoples' Alliance (DNS); Bosnian Patriotic Party (BPS); Work for Progress (RzB); Serb Radical Party (SRS).

Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Economy

Nominal GDP: (2007 Central Bank and IMF figures): $14.6 billion.

GDP real growth rate: (2007 Central Bank figure): 5.8%.

Nominal GDP per capita: $3,802.

Inflation rate: (2007 est.) 4.9%.

Natural resources: Hydropower, coal, iron ore, bauxite, manganese, forests, copper, chromium, lead, zinc, cobalt, nickel, clay, gypsum, salt, sand, forests.

Agriculture: Products—wheat, corn, fruits, vegetables, livestock.

Industry: Steel, aluminum, minerals, vehicle assembly, textiles, tobacco products, wooden furniture, explosives, munitions, aircraft repair, domestic appliances, oil refining.

Trade: (2007 Central Bank figures): Exports—$4.2 billion. Imports—$9.9 billion.

PEOPLE AND HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

The three main ethnic groups in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina are Bosniak, Serb, and Croat, and languages are Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian (formerly "Serbo-Croatian"). Nationalities are Bosniak (Muslim), Bosnian Serb, and Bosnian Croat. Religions include Islam, Serb Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, some Protestant sects, and some others.

For the first centuries of the Christian era, Bosnia was part of the Roman Empire. After the fall of Rome, Bosnia was contested by Byzantium and Rome's successors in the west. Slavs settled the region in the 7th century, and the kingdoms of Serbia and Croatia split control of Bosnia in the 9th century. The 11th and 12th centuries saw the rule of the region by the kingdom of Hungary. The medieval kingdom of Bosnia gained its independence around 1200 A.D. Bosnia remained independent until 1463, when Ottoman Turks conquered the region.

During Ottoman rule, many Bosnians converted from Christianity to Islam. Bosnia was under Ottoman rule until 1878, when it was given to Austria-Hungary as a colony. While those living in Bosnia came under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, South Slavs in Serbia and elsewhere were calling for a South Slav state. World War I began when Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated the Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Following the Great War, Bosnia became part of the South Slav state of Yugoslavia, only to be given to the Nazi-puppet state, the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in World War II. During this period, many atrocities were committed against Jews, Serbs, and others who resisted the occupation. The Cold War saw the establishment of the Communist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito, and the reestablishment of Bosnia as a republic with its medieval borders within the federation of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia's unraveling was hastened by Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power in 1986. Milosevic's embrace of Serb nationalism led to intrastate ethnic strife. Slovenia and Croatia both declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. On March 1, 1992, the Bosnian Government held a referendum on independence. Bosnia's parliament declared the republic's independence on April 5, 1992. However, this move was opposed by Serb representatives, who favored remaining in Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serbs, supported by neighboring Serbia, responded with armed force in an effort to partition the republic along ethnic lines to create a "greater Serbia." Full recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence by the United States and most European countries occurred on April 7, and Bosnia and Herzegovina was admitted to the United Nations on May 22, 1992.

In March 1994, Muslims and Croats in Bosnia signed an agreement creating the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This narrowed the field of warring parties to two. The conflict continued through most of 1995, and many atrocities were committed, including acts of genocide committed by members of the Army of Republika Srpska in and around Srebrenica from July 12-22, 1995, where approximate 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed. The conflict ended with the November 21, 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, which was formally signed on December 14, 1995 in Paris.

Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, the political and military leaders of the Bosnian Serb separatist movement, were indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (www.un.org/icty) in The Hague in July 1995 on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity stemming from their role in the Srebrenica massacre. Karadzic and Mladic remain at large.

Bosnia and Herzegovina today consists of two Entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is largely Bosniak and Croat, and the Republika Srpska, which is primarily Serb. In July 2000, the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina rendered a decision whereby Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs are recognized as constituent people throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In March 2002, this decision was



formally recognized and agreed by the major political parties in both Entities. The most recent national elections took place in October 2006, electing new state presidency members; Entity governments; and state, Entity, and cantonal parliaments. The traditionally nationalist parties (SDS, HDZ, SDA) lost ground to emerging opposition parties (SNSD, SBiH, HDZ-1990), although the opposition parties relied heavily on ethnically based messages to appeal to voters. A six-party coalition has formed a national government. The next national elections are scheduled for October 2010.

Bosnia and Herzegovina introduced the direct election of mayors at municipal elections held in October 2004. The next municipal elections are scheduled for fall 2008. The international community retains an extraordinary civilian and military presence in BiH stemming from the Dayton Peace Accords. The Dayton Accords created the position of High Representative, an international official charged with overseeing imple-

mentation of the civilian aspects of the agreement. The current High Representative (since July 2007) is Slovakia's Miroslav Lajcak (www.ohr.int).

In December 1995, NATO deployed a 60,000-troop Implementation Force (IFOR) to oversee implementation of the military aspects of the peace agreement. IFOR transitioned into a smaller Stabilization Force (SFOR) in 1996.

With the end of the SFOR mission in December 2004, the European Union (EU) assumed primary responsibility for military stabilization operations.

Approximately 2,200 EU troops remain deployed in Bosnia (www.euforbih.org). NATO maintains a small headquarters operation with responsibility to assist with defense reform and efforts against persons indicted for war crimes and counterterrorism (www.afsouth.nato.int/NHQSA/index.htm).

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

General Government Framework Information and Information Regarding the President and the Cabinet. Under the provisions of the Dayton Peace Accords, the Entities have competencies in areas such as finance, taxation, business development, and general legislation. Entities and cantons control their own budgets, spending on infrastructure, health care, and education.

Ongoing reforms have led to the creation of a single, multi-ethnic military under state-level command and control to replace the previous Entity-based institutions and a state-level Indirect Taxation Authority (ITA) that is responsible for the implementation of a state-wide value-added tax (VAT), revenues from which fund the governments of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the two Entities. Customs, which had been collected by agencies of the two Entities, also is now collected by a new single state customs service.

Presidency. The Presidency in Bosnia and Herzegovina rotates among three members (Bosniak, Serb, Croat), each elected for a 4-year term. The three members of the Presidency are directly elected (the Federation votes for the Bosniak/Croat, and the Republika Srpska for the Serb).

The Presidency is responsible for:

- Conducting the foreign policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Appointing ambassadors and other international representatives, no more than two-thirds of whom may come from the Federation;
- Representing Bosnia and Herzegovina in European and international organizations and institutions and seeking membership in such organizations and institutions of which it is not a member;
- Negotiating, denouncing, and, with the consent of the Parliamentary Assembly, ratifying treaties of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Executing decisions of the Parliamentary Assembly;
- Proposing, upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, an annual budget to the Parliamentary Assembly;
- Reporting as requested, but no less than annually, to the Parliamentary Assembly on expenditures by the Presidency;
- Coordinating as necessary with international and non-governmental organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Exercising command and control over the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in peacetime, crises, and war, and;
- Performing such other functions as may be necessary to carry out its duties, as may be assigned to it by the Parliamentary Assembly, or as may be agreed by the Entities.

The Chair of the Council of Ministers is nominated by the Presidency and approved by the House of Representatives. He is then responsible for appointing a Foreign Minister, Minister of Defense, Minister of Foreign Trade, and others as appropriate. The Council is responsible for carrying out the policies and decisions in the fields of defense, intelligence, foreign policy; foreign trade policy; customs policy; monetary policy; finances of the institutions and for the international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina; immigration, refugee, and asylum policy and regulation; international and inter-Entity criminal law enforcement, including relations with Interpol; establishment and operation of common and international communications facilities; regulation of inter-Entity transportation; air traffic control; facilitation of inter-Entity coordination; and other matters as agreed by the Entities.

Legislature. The Parliamentary Assembly is the lawmaking body in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It consists of two houses: the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives.

The House of Peoples includes 15 delegates, two-thirds of whom come from the Federation (5 Croats and 5 Bosniaks) and one-third from the Republika Srpska (5 Serbs). Nine members of the House of Peoples constitutes a quorum, provided that at least three delegates from each group are present. Federation representatives are selected by the House of Peoples of the Federation, and Republika Srpska representatives are selected by the Republika Srpska National Assembly.

The House of Representatives is comprised of 42 members, two-thirds elected from the Federation and one-third elected from the Republika Srpska.

Federation representatives are elected directly by the voters of the

Federation, and Republika Srpska representatives are directly elected by Republika Srpska voters. The Parliamentary Assembly is responsible for enacting legislation as necessary to implement decisions of the Presidency or to carry out the responsibilities of the Assembly under the constitution; deciding upon the sources and amounts of revenues for the operations of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina and international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina; approving a budget for the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and deciding whether to consent to the ratification of treaties.

Judiciary. The Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the supreme, final arbiter of legal matters. It is composed of nine members: four are selected by the House of Representatives of the Federation, two by the Assembly of the Republika Srpska, and three by the President of the European Court of Human Rights after consultation with the Presidency. The Constitutional Court's original jurisdiction lies in deciding any constitutional dispute that arises between the Entities or between Bosnia and Herzegovina and an Entity or Entities. The Court also has appellate jurisdiction within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both the Federation and the Republika Srpska government have established lower court systems for their territories.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Bosnia's central government is headed by a tripartite presidency, with one representative of each of the three major ethnic constituencies. The chairmanship of the presidency rotates among the three presidency members every eight months.

National Govt.

Presidency Chmn. (Bosniak): **Haris SILAJDZIC**
Presidency Member (Croat): **Zeljko KOMSIC**
Presidency Member (Serb): **Nebojsa RADMANOVIC**
Chmn., Council of Ministers: **Nikola SPIRIC**
Min. of Civil Affairs: **Sredoje NOVIC**
Min. of Defense: **Selmo CIKOTIC**
Min. of Finance: **Dragan VRANKIC**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Sven ALKALAJ**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **Slobodan PUHALAC**
Min. of Human Rights & Refugees: **Safet HALILOVIC**
Min. of Justice: **Barisa COLAK**
Min. of Security: **Tarik SADOVIC**
Min. of Transport & Communication: **Bozo LJUBIC**
Governor, Central Bank: **Kemal KOZARIC**
Ambassador to the US: **Bisera TURKOVIC**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Milos PRICA**

Federation Govt.

Pres.: **Borjana KRSTO**
Vice Pres.: **Mirsad KEBO**
Vice Pres.: **Spomenka MICIC**
Prime Min.: **Nedzad BRANKOVIC**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Vjekoslav BEVANDA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Gavrilo GRAHOVAC**
Min. of Agriculture, Water Industry, & Forestry: **Damir LJUBIC**
Min. of Culture & Sports: **Gavrilo GRAHOVAC**
Min. of Development, Entrepreneurship, & Crafts: **Velimir KUNIC**
Min. of Education & Science: **Meliha ALIC**
Min. of Energy, Mining, & Industry: **Vahid HECO**
Min. of Environment & Tourism: **Nevenko HERCEG**
Min. of Finance: **Vjekoslav BEVANDA**
Min. of Health: **Safet OMEROVIC**
Min. of Interior: **Muhidin ALIC**
Min. of Justice: **Feliks VIDOVIC**
Min. of Labor & Social Welfare: **Perica JELECEVIC**
Min. of the Liberation War Veterans & Disabled Veterans Issues:
Min. of Refugees & Displaced Persons: **Edin MUSIC**
Min. of Soldiers' Matters: **Zahid CRNKIC**
Min. of Spatial Planning: **Salko OBHODJAS**
Min. of Trade: **Desnica RADIVOJEVIC**
Min. of Traffic & Communications: **Nail SECKANOVIC**
Min. of Urban Planning:

Republika Srpska Govt.

Pres.: **Rajko KUSMANOVIC**
Vice Pres.: **Davor CORDAS**
Vice Pres.: **Adil OSMANOVIC**
Prime Min.: **Milorad DODIK**
Min. of Agriculture: **Radivoje BRATIC**
Min. of Economic Relations & Coordination: **Jasna BRKIC**
Min. of Economy & Energy: **Rajko UBIPARIP**
Min. of Education & Culture: **Anton KASIPOVIC**
Min. of Finance: **Alexsandr DZOMBIC**
Min. of Health & Social Protection: **Ranko SKRBIC**
Min. of Interior: **Stanislav CADJO**
Min. of Justice: **Dzerard SELMAN**
Min. of Labor & Veterans Affairs: **Bosko TOMIC**
Min. of Public Admin. & Local Self-Govt.: **Zoran LIPOVAC**
Min. of Refugees & Displaced Persons: **Omer BRANKOVIC**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Bakir AJANOVIC**
Min. of Trade & Tourism: **Predrag GLUKOVIC**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Nedeljko CUBRILOVIC**
Min. of Urban Planning & Ecology: **Fatima FETIBEGOVIC**
Min. of Youth, Families, & Sport: **Proko DRAGOSAVLJEVIC**

Bosnia and Herzegovina maintains an embassy in the United States at 2109 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20037 (tel.: 202-337-1500; fax: 202-337-1502).

ECONOMY

Bosnia and Herzegovina was among the poorer areas of the old Yugoslav Federation. For the most part, agriculture remains in private hands, but farms have been small and inefficient, and net food imports increased dramatically in the aftermath of the 1992-1995 war. Industry still is overstaffed, reflecting the legacy of the centrally-planned economy. Under Tito, military industries were widespread in Bosnia, which hosted a large share of Yugoslavia's defense plants. During the war, three years of interethnic strife damaged or destroyed much of the economy and infrastructure in Bosnia, caused the death of about 100,000 people, and displaced half of the population.

Considerable progress has been made since peace was reestablished following the Dayton Accords. Still regarded as a transition economy, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) sees the long-term goal of EU membership as a driver to further economic

growth and development. Due to Bosnia and Herzegovina's strict currency board regime, which links the Konvertibilna Marka (BAM) to the Euro, inflation has remained relatively low and, as a result, the BAM is one of the most stable currencies in Southeast Europe. The banking sector has been fully reformed, with a significant inflow of foreign banks (foreign ownership currently stands at 85% of the banking sector) providing businesses with easier access to capital and a better range of banking services.

Per capita GDP in 2007 was approximately U.S. $3,802, with a total nominal GDP of approximately U.S. $14.6 billion. The estimated real GDP growth rate for 2007 was 5.8%, and projected growth for 2008 is around 6%. While official unemployment is approximately 40%, "unofficial" estimates of unemployment that include the large gray economy are approximately 18%-22%. Bosnia and Herzegovina's most immediate task remains economic revitalization. The country needs meaningful progress in structural reforms to strengthen the basis for sustained, private sector-led growth. In order to improve the business climate, private sector growth—especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—and foreign direct investment (FDI) acceleration are needed to spur increased economic growth and job creation. Privatization has been slow, and unemployment remains high. The introduction of a value-added tax in 2006 has increased the government's tax revenues and resulted in a budget surplus.

BiH's top economic priorities are: acceleration of EU integration by concluding a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA), which has been initialed but not formally signed; strengthening the fiscal system; public administration reform; World Trade Organization (WTO) membership; and securing economic growth by fostering a dynamic, competitive private sector. To date, work on these priorities has been inconsistent. The country has received a substantial amount of foreign assistance but must prepare for declining assistance flows in the future.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The implementation of the Dayton Accords of 1995 has focused the efforts of policymakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the international community, on regional stabilization in the former Yugoslavia. However, donor resources for Bosnia and Herzegovina have diminished due to competing assistance priorities elsewhere in the region and globally. Bosnia and Herzegovina's relations with its neighbors Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia have been fairly stable since the signing of Dayton in 1995. The U.S. role in the Dayton Accords and their implementation has been key to successes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since the Dayton Accords were signed, over $14 billion in foreign aid has moved into Bosnia and Herzegovina, approximately $940 million of it coming from Support for East European Democracy (SEED) funds.

As stated above, this support has been key to the growth and revitalization of the economy and infrastructure in the republic. In addition to SEED funding, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs have been crucial to the redevelopment of Bosnia and Herzegovina. USAID has programming in the following areas: economic policy reform and restructuring; private sector development (the Business Development Program); infrastructure rebuilding; democratic reforms in the media, political process and elections, and rule of law/legal code formulation; and training programs for women and diplomats.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a member of the United Nations (1992); International Monetary Fund (IMF) (1992), World Bank (1995), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (1992); and the Council of Europe (2002). It also participates in regional cooperation through the Stability Pact, Central-European Initiative (CEI), Southeast Europe Co-operation Initiative (SECI), Southeast Europe Co-operation Process (SEECP), Adriatic-Ionic Initiative (AII) and others.

U.S.-BOSNIAN RELATIONS

The 1992-95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was ended with the crucial participation of the United States in brokering the 1995 Dayton Accords. After leading the diplomatic and military effort to secure the Dayton agreement, the United States has continued to lead the effort to ensure its implementation. The United States maintains command of the NATO headquarters in Sarajevo. The United States has donated hundreds of millions of dollars to help with reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, economic development, and military reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has played a large role in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, including programs in economic development and reform, democratic reform (media, elections), infrastructure development, and training programs for Bosnian professionals, among others. Additionally, there are many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have likewise played significant roles in the reconstruction.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SARAJEVO (E) Alipasina 43, +387 33 445 700, Fax +387 33 659 722, Workweek: Monday–Friday 8:00AM to 5:00PM, Website: http://sarajevo.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Linda Roberts
AMB OMS:	Wanda Kleinsmith
ECO:	Frank Ostrander
FM:	Roy Wurdeman
MGT:	Helen H. Hahn
AMB:	Charles English
CON:	Paul Boyd
DCM:	Judith Cefkin
PAO:	Vacant
GSO:	Stephen Weed
RSO:	Karen Schafer
AGR:	Quintin Gray (Resident In Vienna)
AID:	Jane Nandy
CLO:	Robert Posner
DAO:	Col. Jaime Bonano
EST:	Karyn, Posner (Resident In Budapest)

FAA:	Gregory Joyner (Resident In Rome)
FMO:	Vacant
ICASS Chair:	George Gianaris
IMO:	Marlene Wurdeman
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISO:	Lisa Kurtz
ISSO:	Lisa Kurtz
LEGATT:	Stephen Rees
POL:	Michael Murphy
State ICASS:	Michael Murphy

BANJA LUKA (BO) Jovana Ducica 5, Banja Luka, +387-51-211-500, Fax +387-51-218-291, Workweek: Monday–Friday, Website: http://www.usembassy.ba.

DCM OMS:	Linda Roberts
AMB OMS:	Wanda Kleinsmith
MGT:	Helen Hahan
AMB:	Charles English
CON:	Paul Boyd
DCM:	Judith Cefkin
PAO:	Vacant
RSO:	Karen Schafer
FMO:	Vacant
LEGATT:	Stephen Rees
POL:	Heidi Jovanovic

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 1, 2008

Country Description: Since the December 1995 signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, there has been significant progress in restoring peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Significant progress has been made in reconstructing the physical infrastructure that was devastated by the war. Nonetheless, political tensions among the ethnic groups persist. Hotels and travel amenities are available in the capital, Sarajevo, and other major towns, but they are relatively expensive. In the more remote areas of the country, public facilities vary in quality.

Entry and Exit Requirements: A passport is required for travel to Bosnia and Herzegovina. American citizens do not require a visa for tourist stays up to three months. Travelers who are not staying at a hotel (i.e. a private residence) must register with the local police within 24 hours of arrival. U.S. citizens planning to remain in Bosnia and Herzegovina for more than three months must obtain a visa prior to travel, or apply for a temporary residence permit from the local police station having jurisdiction over their place of residence. Applications for temporary residence permits should be submitted 15 days prior to the expiration of the initial three month tourist visa. A police certificate indicating that the applicant has no criminal record is required for this permit and should be obtained from the applicant's state of residence in the U.S. For additional information please contact the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at 2109 E. Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone 202-337-6473. Visit the Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina web site at http://www.bhembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Beginning in May 2008, the immigration authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina began to strictly enforce a provision of a Bosnian law that requires any unaccompanied minor (under 18) to have written permission from both parents in order to enter and leave the country. If traveling with one parent only, the minor is required to have written permission for the trip from the non-traveling parent.

Safety and Security: Landmines remain a problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As of 2008, there are still an estimated 13,000 minefields and an estimated 222,000 active land mines. The area of suspected landmine contamination is estimated at over 2000 square kilometers more than 4% of the country's territory. These devices have killed more than 400 people since 1996. While most urban areas have been largely cleared, special care should be taken when near the former lines of conflict, including the suburbs of Sarajevo. The de-mining community recommends staying on hard surfaced areas and out of abandoned buildings. Families traveling with children in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be especially aware of the danger posed by mines and unexploded ordnances.

Localized political difficulties continue and random violence may occur with little or no warning.

Bosnian criminals use firearms and explosives to settle personal, business, and political disputes. In October 2008, an explosive device detonated in a public shopping mall in Vitez, killing a store security guard. The foreign community is rarely the target of such violence, but there is always the danger of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. While most Bosnian citizens appreciate the assistance of the international community, occasional anti-foreign sentiment is sometimes encountered.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The overall crime rate throughout the country remains relatively low—the most common being confrontational crimes and residential break-ins. Pick-pocketing and vehicle break-ins are also a problem. Most pickpockets operate in pairs and employ distraction methods to execute their craft. There are also documented cases of pick-pocketing and other scams to get money from foreign passengers aboard public transportation. Travelers should take normal precautions to protect their property from theft and exercise common sense personal security measures, traveling in groups, and staying in well-lighted areas after dark. Confrontations with local citizens resulting from traffic incidents or public disagreements should be avoided.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the near-

est U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Bosnia and Herzegovina is: Police—122; Ambulance—124 and Fire—123.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The lack of adequate medical facilities, especially outside Sarajevo, may cause problems for visitors. Because many medicines are not obtainable, travelers should bring their own supply of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. Private practitioners and dentists are becoming more common; however, quality of care varies and rarely meets U.S. or western European standards. All major surgery is performed in public hospitals.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road travel is possible throughout most of the country. However, some roads are still damaged from the war, and poorly maintained. Roads are sometimes blocked due to landslides, de-mining activity, and traffic accidents. Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the rare countries in Europe that has fewer than ten kilometers of four-lane highway. The existing, two-lane roads between major cities are quite narrow at places, lack guardrails, and are full of curves. Travel by road can be risky due to poorly maintained roads, and morning and evening fog in the mountains. Driving in winter is hazardous due to fog, snow, and ice. Local driving habits are poor, and many vehicles are in bad condition. Many accidents occur when drivers exceed safe speeds along winding mountain roads. Accidents involving drunk driving are an increasing problem. Driving after dark is especially dangerous, and street lighting is not common outside the major towns. Road construction may be poorly marked, and automobiles share the road with heavy vehicles and agricultural equipment. Travelers are encouraged to convoy with other vehicles, if possible, and to plan their trip to ensure they travel only during daylight hours.

Although the number of service stations outside major cities has increased in recent years, many do not offer mechanical or other services. The emergency number for vehicle assistance and towing service is 1282; ambulances can be called at 124, and police at 122.

Speed limit traffic signs are not always obvious or clear. The speed limit on the majority of roads is 60 km/h, and on straight stretches of road it is generally 80 km/h. The use of seat belts is mandatory. Talking on a cell phone while driving is prohibited. The tolerated percentage of alcohol in the blood is .03%.

In order to drive legally in Bosnia and Herzegovina, you must have an international driving permit in addition to your U.S. license. Visit the website of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety http://www.bihamk.ba.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Bosnia and Herzegovina's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

During the winter months, flights into and out of Sarajevo are frequently delayed or cancelled due to heavy fog. Travelers should be prepared for last-minute schedule changes, lengthy delays, and alternate routings, or time-consuming overland transportation.

Special Circumstances: Bosnia and Herzegovina is still predominantly a cash economy. Although the use of credit cards has become more widespread in recent years, travelers still should not expect to use them to cover all expenses. Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are available at international banks in Sarajevo and other major cities and towns, but their number is limited. Traveler's checks can be cashed in banks in major cities, but often with delays of a few weeks or strict monthly limits. Cash transfers from abroad may also involve delays. The convertible mark, the Bosnian currency since June 1998, is pegged to the euro under a

currency-board regime, which guarantees its stability. All official payments must be made in convertible marks, though many private stores and service providers also accept euros. Any bank in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be able to exchange U.S. dollars into the convertible marks with the usual bank commission (being between 1% and 2%).

Photographing military installations, including airports, equipment, bridges, government checkpoints, troops and the U.S. Embassy is forbidden. If in doubt, please ask permission before taking photographs.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bosnia and Herzegovina laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bosnia and Herzegovina are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Bosnia and Herzegovina are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Alipasina 43, telephone (387)(33) 445-700, fax: (387)(33) 221-837; Internet address http://www.usembassy.ba. On weekends, holidays, and after hours, an Embassy duty officer can be reached at telephone (387)(33) 445-700. If after dialing you receive a recorded message, press "0," and then ask for the duty officer.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: While there is nothing in Bosnian law that specifically prohibits foreigners from applying to adopt a Bosnian child, the law stresses that there must be overwhelming justification and exceptionally compelling reasons for a foreigner to be permitted to do so. The definition of "overwhelming justification" is judged on a case-by-case basis. The law says specifically that a foreign citizen may appear as an adoptive parent "if the adoption is in the best interest of the child and if the child cannot be adopted in Bosnia and Herzegovina." The Ministry of Social Policy in the Bosnian entity where the child is living (either the Federation or the Republika Srpska, RS) must approve his/her adoption by foreigners. In practice, it is extremely difficult to obtain this approval. Immigrant visas for Bosnian citizens are issued at the U.S. Embassy in Zagreb, Croatia.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: In both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federation and the Republika Srpska, adoptions are the responsibility of the municipal Centers for Social Work, the Bosnian equivalent of the county or municipal social services department in the United States. The municipal Center for Social Work prepares an adoption case for submission to the Ministry of Social Policy of the entity in question, which makes the final determination in the case. The Ministry of Social Policy will also seek the approval of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Federation or Republika Srpska, depending on where child is located.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Bosnian law requires that at least one adoptive parent be between the ages of 25 and 45, and that there be at least an 18-year age difference between that parent and the child. In exceptional circumstances, persons older than 45 may be permitted to adopt, but the age difference between the parent and child may not exceed 45 years. In practice, children are placed only with married couples.

In addition, persons falling into any of the following groups are prohibited from adopting Bosnian children:

- persons whose parental rights have been taken away;
- persons with a limited or no ability to work;
- persons who provide insufficient guarantees that they will raise the child correctly;
- persons who are mentally ill, retarded, or suffering from any illness that could endanger the health and life of the adopted child.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for Bosnia.

Time Frame: The municipal Center for Social Work publishes its decision regarding its recommendation on an adoption within two months of receiving the adoption application. However, in practice it usually takes longer for the Center to make a decision. Once the Center reaches a decision they then forward the application package to the Ministry of Social Policy with their recommendation. The Ministry is supposed to reach a decision about a request for adoption in two months. Once the Ministry makes a decision, it is sent back to the Center that accepted the application. If the decision is favorable, the prospective adoptive parents must be personally present at the official ceremony (act) of adoption.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no U.S. adoption agencies operating in Bosnia. The U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo maintains lists of attorneys. Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov for a list of agencies.

Adoption Fees: The Bosnian government does not charge a fee for its role in the adoption process.

Adoption Procedures: Persons who wish to apply to adopt a particular child can do so by contacting the Center for Social Work of the municipality/district in which the child is resident and submitting the documents listed below. The Center for Social Work is the Bosnian equivalent of the county or municipal social services department in the United States.] Prospective adoptive parents who do not have a particular child in mind can contact the Center for Social Work for a designated area to inquire if there are any children eligible for adoption. If the Center affirms that a child is eligible for intercountry adoption, the Center will request the documents listed below to determine the eligibility of the prospective adoptive parent(s). It should be noted that it is entirely possible that a Center will not respond at all to an inquiry from a foreign national, since under Bosnian law, intercountry adoption is permitted only in exceptional circumstances (typically when there is a compelling medical need, or one of the adopting parents is of Bosnian origin).

The Center then forwards the application package, along with its recommendation, to the Ministry of Social Policy. The Ministry makes a final decision and sends the package back to the Center. The Center then notifies the prospective adoptive parents. If the decision is favorable, the prospective adoptive parents must be personally present at the official ceremony (act) of adoption.

This is an official act signed by the adoptive parents in person and representatives of the government. It takes place at the Center for Social Work. The court then issues an official decision or decree ratifying the proceedings conducted by the Center for Social Work. The court does not have the authority to overrule the Ministry's decision.

Required Documents: There is no specific application form. The prospective adoptive parent(s) must write a signed letter to the relevant Center for Social Work providing basic information about them. It can be submitted by mail or through an authorized representative. The application must be accompanied by the following documents about each of the adoptive parents:

- Certified Birth certificate.
- Certified Marriage certificates (if applicable).
- Medical certificate of good health, preferably provided by a hospital or general practice clinic, rather than a private physician.
- Proof of citizenship (certified copy of a birth certificate, naturalization certificate or passport).
- Police certificate (i.e., certificate that no criminal record exists) issued by local law enforcement authorities from every place of residence where the applicant has lived for more than a year since the age of 18.
- Court certificate (i.e., certificate proving that the prospective adoptive parent is not under any court investigation at the present time).
- Certificate about capacity for gainful employment. This should take the form of a resume of previous employment records, and an original letter (on official stationery) signed by the current employer, stating the job title, if the position is full- or part-time, how long the person has been employed and the salary.
- Certificate proving that the prospective adoptive parent has never been charged with child neglect or abuse. This may take the form of an official letter from the local department of child welfare.
- Documents testifying to the prospective adoptive parent's income and property.
- Home study (social worker's analysis) about the prospective adoptive family, including its ability to care for a child. For non-Bosnian applicants, including Americans, the social services department of the applicant's country must conduct the study.

All original documents and the application letter must be in English and each must be accompanied by a translation into Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian done by an official court translator. It is easier and less expensive to have the translations done in Bosnia. The U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo can provide a list of court translators. The Embassy itself cannot, however, do the translations.

The Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina
2019 E. Street, N.W.,
Washington, DC 2003
Tel: (202)337-1500.
Bosnia also has consulates in New York and Chicago.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy, Consular Section
Alipasina 43
71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina
tel: +387 33 445-700
fax: +387 33 221-837
e-mail: bhopa@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Bosnia & Herzegovina may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Sarajevo. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, call Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747.



BOTSWANA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Botswana

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 582,000 sq. km. (224,710 sq. mi.), about the size of Texas.

Cities: (2001 census) Capital—Gaborone (pronounced ha-bo-ro-neh), pop. 186,007. Other towns—Francistown (83,023), Selebi-Phikwe (49,849), Molepolole (54,561), Kanye (40,628), Serowe (42,444), Mahalapye (39,719), Lobatse (29,689), Maun (43,776), Mochudi (36,962).

Terrain: Desert and savanna.

Climate: Mostly subtropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Motswana (sing.), Batswana (pl.).

Population: (est) 1.84 million.

Annual population growth rate: (2008) 1.434%.

Ethnic groups: Tswana 79%; Kalanga 11%; Kgalagadi, Herero, Bayeyi, Hambukush, Basarwa ("San"), Khoi, whites 10%.

Religions: Christianity 70%, none 20%, indigenous beliefs 6%, other 4%.

Languages: English (official), Setswana, Ikalanga.

Education: Adult literacy—81%.

Health: (2008) Life expectancy—50.6 years. Infant mortality rate—44.01/1,000.

Work force: (2005/2006 est.) 548,600 employed; total including unemployed, 651,500.

Government

Type: Republic, parliamentary democracy.

Independence: September 30, 1966.

Constitution: March 1965.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government), cabinet. Legislative—popularly elected National Assembly; advisory House of Chiefs. Judicial—High Court, Court of Appeal, local and customary courts, industrial labor court.

Political subdivisions: Five town councils and nine district councils.

Political parties: Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)—48 seats, Botswana National Front (BNF)—12 seats, Botswana Congress Party (BCP)—1 seat, Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM)—0 seats.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

Nominal GDP: (2007) $11.9 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2007 est) 4.8%.

Per capita nominal GDP: (2007) $6,742.

Natural resources: Diamonds, copper, nickel, coal, soda ash, salt, gold, potash.

Agriculture: (1.7% of real GDP, 2006/2007) Products—livestock, sorghum, white maize, millet, cowpeas, beans.

Industry: Types—mining (42% of real GDP, 2006/2007) diamonds, copper, nickel, coal; tourism, textiles, construction, tourism, beef processing, chemical products production, food and beverage production.

Trade: (2007): Exports—$7.2 billion: diamonds, nickel, copper, meat products, textiles, hides, skins, and soda ash. Partners—EU, South Africa. Imports—$4.2 billion: machinery, transport equipment, manufactured goods, food, chemicals, fuels. Major suppliers—South Africa, EU, and U.S.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The Batswana, a term also used to denote all citizens of Botswana, refers to the country's major ethnic group (the "Tswana" in South Africa), which came into the area from South Africa during the Zulu wars of the early 1800s. Prior to European contact, the Batswana lived as herders and farmers under tribal rule.

In the 19th century, hostilities broke out between the Batswana and Boer settlers from the Transvaal. After appeals by the Batswana for assis-

tance, the British Government in 1885 put "Bechuanaland" under its protection. The northern territory remained under direct administration and is today's Botswana, while the southern territory became part of the Cape Colony and is now part of the northwest province of South Africa; the majority of Setswana-speaking people today live in South Africa.

Despite South African pressure, inhabitants of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Basutoland (now Lesotho), and Swaziland in 1909 asked for and received British assurances that they would not be included in the proposed Union of South Africa. An expansion of British central authority and the evolution of tribal government resulted in the 1920 establishment of two advisory councils representing Africans and Europeans. Proclamations in 1934 regularized tribal rule and powers. A European-African advisory council was formed in 1951, and the 1961 constitution established a consultative legislative council.

In June 1964, Britain accepted proposals for democratic self-government in Botswana. The seat of government was moved from Mafikeng, in South Africa, to newly-established Gaborone in 1965. The 1965 constitution led to the first general elections and to independence in September 1966. Seretse Khama, a leader in the independence movement and the legitimate claimant to traditional rule of the Bamangwato, was elected as the first president, re-elected twice, and died in office in 1980. The presidency passed to the sitting vice president, Ketumile Masire, who was elected in his own right in 1984 and re-elected in 1989 and 1994. Masire retired from office in 1998. The presidency passed to the sitting vice president, Festus Mogae, who was elected in his own right in 1999. Mogae won a second term in elections held October 30, 2004 and stepped down in accordance with national term limits on March 31, 2008. On April 1, 2008 former Vice President Ian Khama assumed the presidency. The next general election is expected in October 2009.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Botswana has a flourishing multiparty constitutional democracy. Each of the elections since independence has been freely and fairly contested and has been held on schedule. The country's minority groups participate freely in the political process. There are three main parties and a number of smaller parties. In national elections in 2004, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) won 44 of 57 contested National Assembly seats, the Botswana National Front (BNF) won 12, and the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) won 1 seat. Individuals elected by the National Assembly hold an additional 4 seats; the ruling BDP currently holds all 4. The opposition out-polled the ruling BDP in most urban areas. The openness of the country's political system has been a significant factor in Botswana's stability and economic growth. General elections are held every 5 years. The next general election will be held in October 2009.

The president has executive power and is chosen by the National Assembly following countrywide legislative elections. The cabinet is selected by the president from the National Assembly; it consists of a vice president and a flexible number of ministers and assistant ministers, currently 16 and 8, respectively. The National Assembly has 57 elected and 4 specially elected members; it is expanded following each census (every 10 years; the most recent was conducted in 2001).

The advisory House of Chiefs represents the eight principal subgroups of the Batswana tribes, five members specially elected by the president, and 22 members elected from designated regions. The elected members hold office for a period of only 5 years whereas the eight principal chiefs are members for life. A draft of any National Assembly bill of tribal concern must be referred to the House of Chiefs for advisory opinion. Chiefs and other leaders preside over customary traditional courts, though all persons have the right to request that their case be considered under the formal British-based legal system.

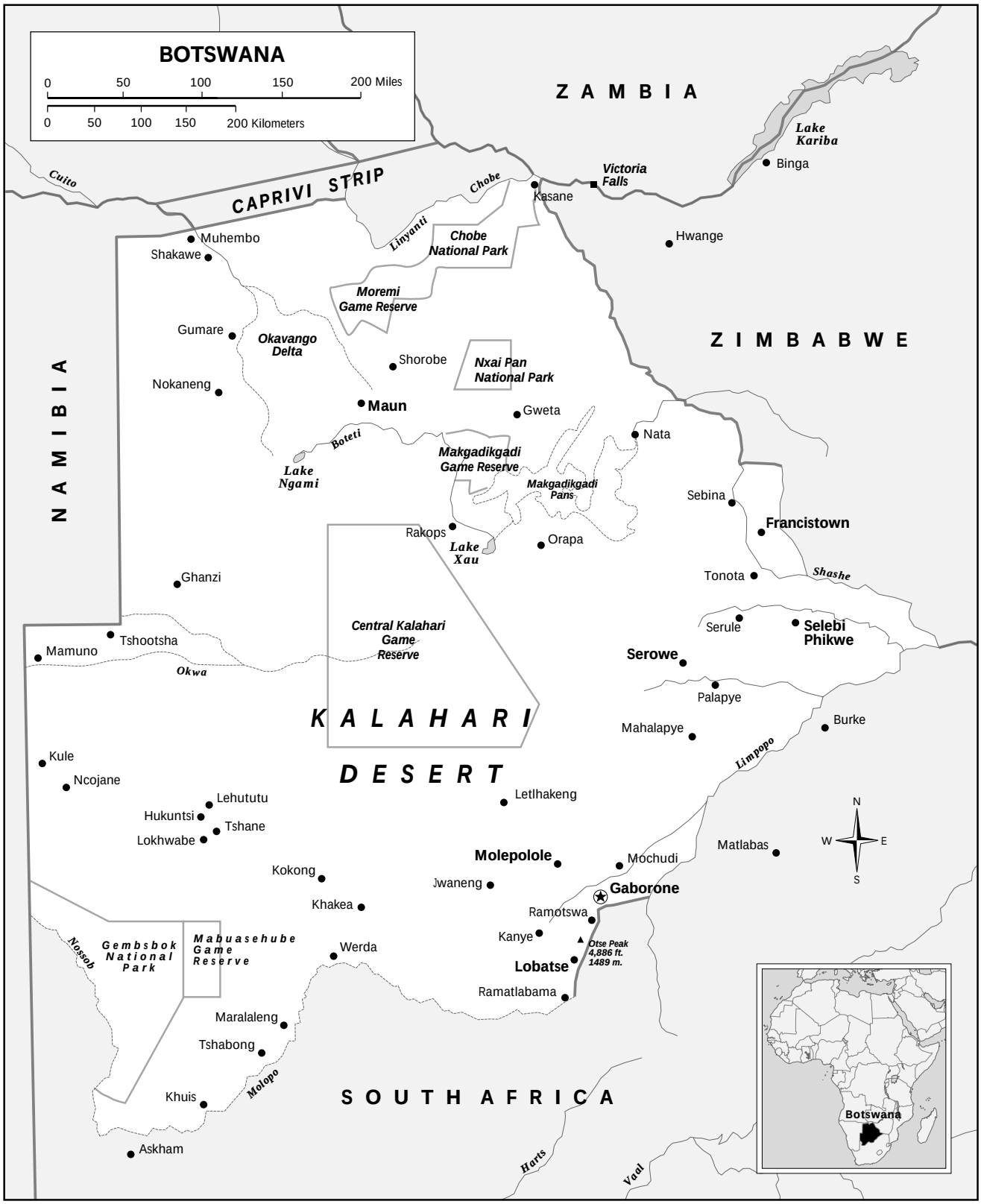
The roots of Botswana's democracy lie in Setswana traditions, exemplified by the Kgotla, or village council, in which the powers of traditional leaders are limited by custom and law. Botswana's High Court has general civil and criminal jurisdiction. Judges are appointed by the president and may be removed only for cause and after a hearing. The constitution has a code of fundamental human rights enforced by the courts, and Botswana has a good human rights record.

Local government is administered by nine district councils and five town councils. District commissioners have executive authority and are appointed by the central government and assisted by elected and nominated district councilors and district development committees. There has been ongoing debate about the political, social, and economic marginalization of the San (indigenous tribal population). The government's policies for the Basarwa (San) and other remote area dwellers continue to spark controversy.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Seretse Khama Ian KHAMA**
Vice Pres.: **Mompati MERAFHE**
Min. of Agriculture: **Christian DE GRAF**
Min. of Communications, Science, & Technology: **Pelonomi VENSON-MOITOI**
Min. of Defense, Justice, & Security: **Dikgakgamatso SERETSE**
Min. of Environment, Wildlife, & Tourism: **Kitso MOKAILA**
Min. of Education: **Jacob NKATE**
Min. of Finance & Development Planning: **Jacob GAOLATHE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Intl. Cooperation: **Phandu Tombola Chaka SKELEMANI**
Min. of Health: **Lesego MOTSUMI**
Min. of Labor & Home Affairs: **Peter SIELE**
Min. of Lands & Housing: **Nonofo MOLEFHI**
Min. of Local Govt.: **Margaret NASHA**


BOTSWANA
0 50 100 150 200 Miles
0 50 100 150 200 Kilometers
ZAMBIA
ZIMBABWE
NAMIBIA
SOUTH AFRICA
KALAHARI DESERT
CAPRIVI STRIP
Cuito
Chobe
Linyanti
Lake Kariba
Binga
Victoria Falls
Kasane
Hwange
Chobe National Park
Moremi Game Reserve
Muhembo
Shakawe
Gumare
Okavango Delta
Shorobe
Nxai Pan National Park
Nokaneng
Maun
Gweta
Nata
Boteti
Lake Ngami
Makgadikgadi Game Reserve
Makgadikgadi Pans
Sebina
Francistown
Rakops
Lake Xau
Orapa
Ghanzi
Tonota
Shashe
Central Kalahari Game Reserve
Serule
Selebi Phikwe
Tshootsha
Mamuno
Okwa
Serowe
Palapye
Mahalapye
Burke
Limpopo
Kule
Ncojane
Letlhakeng
Lehututu
Hukuntsi
Tshane
Lokhwabe
Molepolole
Mochudi
Matlabas
Kokong
Jwaneng
Gaborone
Khakea
Ramotswa
Kanye
Otse Peak 4,886 ft. 1489 m.
Lobatse
Ramatlabama
Gembsbok National Park
Nossob
Mabuasehube Game Reserve
Werda
Maralaleng
Tshabong
Khuis
Molopo
Askham
Harts
Vaal
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Botswana

Min. of Minerals, Energy, & Water Affairs: **Ponatshego KEDIKILWE**
Min. of Presidential Affairs & Public Admin.: **Phandu SKELEMANI**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Daniel Neo MOROKA**
Min. of Works & Transportion: **Johnnie SWARTZ**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Culture: **Gladys KOKORWE**
Attorney Gen.: **Athalia MOLOKOMME**
Governor, Bank of Botswana: **Linah MOHOHLO**
Ambassador to the US: **Lapologang Caesar LEKOA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Charles Thembani NTWAAGAE**

Botswana maintains an embassy at 1531-1533 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington DC 20036 (tel. 202-244-4990; fax 202-244-4164). Its mission to the United Nations is at 103 E. 37th Street, New York NY 10017 (tel. 212-889-2277; fax 212-725-5061).

ECONOMY

Botswana has enjoyed one of the fastest growth rates in per capita income in the world since independence. Economic growth averaged 9% per year from 1967-2006. The government has maintained a sound fiscal policy, despite three consecutive budget deficits in 2002-2004, and a negligible level of foreign debt. Foreign exchange reserves were $10.2 billion at the end of November 2007, equivalent to 28 months' cover of 2007 imports of goods and services. Botswana's impressive economic record has been built on the foundation of wisely using revenue generated from diamond mining to fuel economic development through prudent fiscal policies and a cautious foreign policy. However, economic development spending was cut by 10% in 2004/2005 as a result of recurring budget deficits and rising expenditure on healthcare services. Development spending began to increase again in 2006/2007 and was budgeted to increase by 27% in the 2007/2008 fiscal year. Real GDP remained flat in 2005/2006, but the growth rate recovered to 6.2% in 2006/2007. The government recognizes that HIV/AIDS will continue to affect the economy and is providing leadership and programs to combat the epidemic, including free anti-retroviral treatment and a nationwide Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission program.

Mining

Debswana (formed by the government and South Africa's DeBeers in equal partnership) is the largest mining operation in Botswana. Several other mining operations exist in the country, including the Bamangwato Concessions, Ltd. (BCL, also with substantial government equity participation) and Tati Nickel.

Since the early 1980s, the country has been the world's largest producer of gem-quality diamonds. Four large diamond mines have opened since independence. DeBeers prospectors discovered diamonds in northern Botswana in the late 1960s. The first mine began production at Orapa in 1972, followed by the smaller mines of Lethlakane and Damtshaa. What has become the single-richest diamond mine in the world opened in Jwaneng in 1982. The Orapa 2000 Expansion of the existing Orapa mine was opened in 2000. In December 2004, Debswana negotiated 25-year lease renewals for all four of its mines with the Government of Botswana. For the 12-month period ending June 30, 2007, diamonds accounted for 67% of total exports (down from a high of 84% in 2003/2004) and 28% of GDP. Diamond mining, however, is capital intensive and only accounts for approximately 5% of employment. In 2007, Debswana produced 33.8 million carats, down slightly from 34.3 million carats in 2006, but 2007 revenue was 18 billion pula (approximately U.S. $3 billion), a 3.5% increase from 2006. Exploration for other kimberlite pipes continues. In addition, as part of Botswana's drive to diversify and increase local value added within the mining sector, De Beers opened the Diamond Trading Center in 2008 to shift sorting, cutting, polishing, aggregating, and marketing to Gaborone from London.

BCL, which operates a copper-nickel mine at Selebi-Phikwe, has had a troubled financial history but remains an important employer, although the life of the mine is expected to end in the next 5 to 10 years. Other copper-nickel mines include Tati Nickel near Francistown. Botash, the sole producer of soda ash in the region and supported by substantial government investment, produced 265,000 tons of soda ash in 2005.

Coal-bed methane gas has been discovered in the northeastern part of the country, estimated by the developers at a commercially viable quantity of 12 trillion cubic feet. Development of the gas fields has been slow, however.

Tourism

Tourism is an increasingly important industry in Botswana, accounting for approximately 10% of GDP in 2006. One of the world's unique ecosystems, the Okavango Delta, is located in Botswana. The country offers excellent game viewing and birding both in the Delta and in the Chobe Game Reserve—home to one of the largest herds of free-ranging elephants in the world. Botswana's Central Kalahari Game Reserve also offers good game viewing and some of the most remote and unspoiled wilderness in southern Africa.

Agriculture

More than one-half of the population lives in rural areas and is largely dependent on subsistence crop and livestock farming. Agriculture meets only a small portion of food needs and contributes a very small amount to GDP—primarily through beef exports—but it remains a social and cultural touchstone. Cattle raising in particular dominated Botswana's social and economic life before independence. The national herd is estimated between 2 and 3 million head, but the cattle industry is experiencing a protracted decline.

Private Sector Development and Foreign Investment

Botswana seeks to further diversify its economy away from minerals, which account for over 40% of GDP. Foreign investment and management are welcomed in Botswana. Botswana abolished foreign exchange controls in 1999, has a low corporate tax rate (15%), and no prohibitions on foreign ownership of companies. The country's inflation rate had remained stable and comparatively low over the 10 years preceding 2005. However, rising fuel and utility prices along with the government's 12.5% devaluation of the Pula in May 2005 resulted in a spike in inflation to 11.4% as of December 2005, which fell well outside the Bank of Botswana's target rate of between 4%-7%. Inflation as of November 2007 was 7.7%. The Government of Botswana was considering additional policies to enhance competitiveness, including a new Foreign Direct Investment Strategy and National Export Development Strategy. Botswana's parliament adopted both a Privatization Master Plan and a new Competition Policy that were aimed at fostering economic diversification.

With its proven record of good economic governance, Botswana was ranked as Africa's least corrupt country by Transparency International in 2008 (36th worldwide, ahead of many European and Asian countries). Botswana is consistently ranked by international organizations as among the freest economies in sub-Saharan Africa. In the 2008 Economic Freedom of the World report, Botswana was ranked 60th overall and third-highest in Africa, while the Heritage Foundation's 2008 Index of Economic Freedom ranked Botswana second in sub-Saharan Africa. In November 2005, Standard & Poor's once again assigned Botswana an "A" grade credit rating. This ranks Botswana as by far the best credit risk in Africa and puts it on par or above many countries in central Europe, East Asia, and Latin America.

U.S. investment in Botswana remains at relatively low levels. Major U.S. corporations, such as H.J. Heinz and AON Corporation, are present through direct investments, while others, such as Kentucky Fried Chicken and Remax, are present via franchise. The sovereign credit ratings by Moody's and Standard & Poor's clearly indicate that, despite continued challenges such as small market size, landlocked location, and cumbersome bureaucratic processes, Botswana remains one of the best investment opportunities in the developing world. Botswana has a 90-member American Business Council that accepts membership from American-affiliated companies.

Because of history and geography, Botswana has long had deep ties to the economy of South Africa. The Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), comprised of Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland, and South Africa, dates from 1910, and is the world's oldest customs union. Under this arrangement, South Africa has collected levies from customs, sales, and excise duties for all five members, sharing out proceeds based on each country's portion of imports. The exact formula for sharing revenues and the decision-making authority over duties—held exclusively by the Government of South Africa—became increasingly controversial, and the members renegotiated the arrangement in 2001. A new structure was formally ratified and a SACU Secretariat was established in Windhoek, Namibia. Following South Africa's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO, of which Botswana also is a member), many of the SACU duties are declining, making American products more competitive in Botswana. Botswana signed an Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union in December 2007, and, as a member of SACU, it signed a preferential trade agreement in 2004 with Mercosur. In July 2008, SACU signed its first Trade, Investment and Development Cooperation Agreement (TIDCA) with the United States. SACU also has plans to negotiate free trade agreements with China, India, Kenya, and Nigeria.

Botswana's currency—the Pula—is fully convertible and is valued against a basket of currencies heavily weighted toward the South African Rand. Profits and direct investment can be repatriated without restriction from Botswana. The Botswana Government eliminated all exchange controls in 1999. The Central Bank devalued the Pula by 12.5% in May 2005 in a bid to maintain export competitiveness against the real appreciation of the Pula and restructured the exchange rate mechanism to a crawling peg system to ensure against future large-scale devaluations.

Botswana is a member of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Gaborone hosts the SADC Secretariat's headquarters. SADC has a broad mandate to encourage growth, development, and economic integration in Southern Africa. SADC's Trade Protocol, which was launched on September 1, 2000, called for the elimination of all tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade by 2008 among the 11 signatory countries. The SADC free trade agreement based on the agreed tariff phasedown was launched at the August 2008 summit in South Africa. Zimbabwe's membership has limited SADC's opportunities for cooperation with the United States.

Transportation and Communications

A sparsely populated, semi-arid country about the size of Texas, Botswana has nonetheless managed to incorporate much of its interior into the national economy. An "inner circle" highway connecting all major towns and district capitals is completely paved, and the all-weather Trans-Kalahari Highway connects the country (and, through it, South Africa's commercially dominant Gauteng Province) to Walvis Bay in Namibia. A fiber-optic telecommunications network has been completed in Botswana connecting all major population centers.

In addition to the government-owned newspaper and national radio network, there is an active, independent press (one daily and seven weekly

newspapers). Two privately owned radio stations began operations in 1999, and a third began operations in 2008. In 2000, the government-owned Botswana Television (BTV) was launched, which was Botswana's first national television station. GBC is a commercially owned television station that broadcast programs to the Gaborone area only. Foreign publications are sold without restriction in Botswana, and there are 22 commercial Internet service providers. Three cellular phone providers cover most of the country.

DEFENSE

The president is commander in chief of the Botswana Defense Force (BDF). A defense council is appointed by the president. The BDF was formed in 1977 and has approximately 13,000 members.

The BDF is a capable and well-disciplined military force. Following positive political changes in South Africa and the region, the BDF's missions have increasingly focused on border control and anti-poaching activities. The BDF is considered an apolitical and professional institution.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Botswana puts a premium on economic and political integration in Southern Africa. It seeks to make SADC a working vehicle for economic development, and promotes efforts to make the region self-policing in terms of preventative diplomacy, conflict resolution, and good governance. Botswana joins the African consensus on most major international matters and is a member of international organizations such as the United Nations and the African Union (AU). In 2008, Botswana has taken a leadership role within SADC advocating for a resolution of the crisis in Zimbabwe that fully reflects the will of the Zimbabwean people.

U.S.-BOTSWANA RELATIONS

The United States considers Botswana an advocate of and a model for stability in Africa and has been a major partner in Botswana's development since its independence. The U.S. Peace Corps returned to Botswana in August 2002 with a focus on HIV/AIDS-related programs after concluding 30 years of more broadly targeted assistance in 1997. Similarly, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) phased out a longstanding bilateral partnership with Botswana in 1996, after successful programs emphasizing education, training, entrepreneurship, environmental management, and reproductive health. Botswana, however, continues to benefit along with its neighbors in the region from USAID's Initiative for Southern Africa, now based in Pretoria, and USAID's Southern Africa Global Competitiveness Hub, headquartered in Gaborone. The United States International Board of Broadcasters (IBB) operates a major Voice of America (VOA) relay station in Botswana serving most of the African continent.

In 1995, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) started the BOTUSA Project in collaboration with the Botswana Ministry of Health in order to generate information to improve tuberculosis (TB) control efforts in Botswana and elsewhere in the face of the TB and HIV/AIDS co-epidemics. Under the 1999 U.S. Government's Leadership and Investment in Fighting an Epidemic (LIFE) Initiative, CDC through the BOTUSA Project has undertaken many projects and has assisted many organizations in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Botswana. Botswana is one of the 15 focus countries for PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief, and received more than $230 million since the program began in January 2004 through September 2007. PEPFAR assistance to Botswana, which totaled $76.2 million in FY 2007, is contributing to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and care interventions. The International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), situated just outside of Gaborone, is another example of bilateral cooperation. The academy, jointly financed, managed, and staffed by the Governments of Botswana and the United States, provides training to police and government officials from across the Sub-Saharan region. The academy's permanent campus, in Otse outside of Gaborone, opened March 2003. Over 3,000 law enforcement professionals from Sub-Saharan Africa have received training from ILEA since it began offering classes in 2001.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

GABORONE (E) P.O. Box 90, Gaborone, Botswana, (267) 395-3982, Fax (267) 395-6947, Workweek: M-Th 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Fri 7:30 AM to 1:30 PM, Website: http://gaborone.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Anel Zimmerman
AMB OMS:	Barbara Rangel
FM:	Tommy Johnson
HRO:	Carol Gullion
IBB:	George Miller
MGT:	Rebecca Gonzales
CON:	Christopher Machin
DCM:	Philip Drouin
PAO:	Daniel St. Rossy
COM:	Christopher Machin
GSO:	Richard Peterson
RSO:	Robert Hornbeck
AID:	Chris Schaan
CLO:	Taushia Walker
DAO:	Georgia Royster
EST:	Anthony Woods
ICASS Chair:	Mary Kay Larson
IMO:	Guthrie Gullion
IRS:	Kathy Beck
ISSO:	David Ray
MLO:	Ltc. Daniel Jones
POL:	Charles Stonecipher

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 29, 2008

Country Description: Botswana is a country in southern Africa with a

stable democratic government and a growing economy. Facilities for tourism are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A passport with at least six months of validity remaining is required. U.S. citizens are permitted stays up to 90 days without a visa. For additional information on entry requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Republic of Botswana, 1531-1533 New Hampshire Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20036, telephone (202) 244-4990/1, fax (202) 244-4164 or the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Botswana to the United Nations, 103 E. 37th St., New York, NY 10016, telephone (212) 889-2277, fax (212) 725-5061. There are also honorary consuls in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Houston.Visit the Embassy of Botswana's web site at http://www.botswanaembassy.org for the most current visa information. As a general precaution, all travelers are advised to carry a photocopy of the photo/bio information page of their passport and keep it in a location separate from the passport.

Visitors to Botswana who also intend to visit South Africa should be advised that the passports of all travelers to South Africa must contain at least two blank (unstamped) visa pages each time entry to South Africa is sought; these pages are in addition to the endorsement/amendment pages at the back of the passport. Otherwise, the traveler, even when in possession of a valid South African visa, may be refused entry into South Africa, fined, and returned to their point of origin at the traveler's expense.

Safety and Security: Civil unrest and disorder are rare. U.S. citizens should avoid crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Information can also be obtained from the American Citizen Services section of the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://botswana.usembassy.gov. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is a serious concern in Botswana. Visitors must be vigilant and take common-sense security precautions. The criminal threat is very similar to that of any large urban area. Petty street crime and crimes of opportunity, primarily the theft of money and personal property, are not uncommon. Home invasions 'smash and grabs' from vehicles, and cell phone thefts, often at knife point, are routinely reported to the police. Visitors should use care when talking on a cell phone while walking. Urban areas are particularly dangerous at night; pedestrians are advised to avoid walking in Gaborone and other urban areas in Botswana at night. Except for visits to the Gaborone Yacht Club during daylight hours, U.S. Embassy personnel are prohibited from traveling to the area surrounding the Gaborone Dam and to the Kgale Hill area, a popular Gaborone hiking venue, because of multiple incidents of violent crime. American citizens are urged to avoid these areas.

Travelers arriving in Botswana via South Africa should be aware that there is a serious baggage pilferage problem at OR Tambo (Johannesburg) and Cape Town International Airports. Travelers are encouraged to use an airport plastic wrapping service and to avoid placing electronics, jewelry, cameras, designer athletic gear, or other valuables in checked luggage. Also, make an inventory of items in checked baggage to aid in claims processing if theft does occur.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Botswana has three numbers equivalent to the "911" emergency line. For police assistance, dial "999." For an ambulance, dial "997." In the event of a fire, dial "998."

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Gaborone are adequate, but available facilities in other areas are limited. Well-equipped emergency rooms and trained physicians are available in the capital but services are rudimentary elsewhere. Professional private emergency rescue services operate air and ground ambulances throughout the country, but care is rendered only after a patient's ability to pay is established. Response times are often slow in less populated areas. Outside of Gaborone, most airports are either not equipped or have frequently malfunctioning night lighting capability, so airborne medical evacuations can usually only be conducted during daylight hours. Malaria is prevalent only in the north of the country, particularly around the Chobe and Okavango National Parks. Malaria prophylaxis is not required in Gaborone but is suggested for travel to the north. For advanced care Americans often choose to travel to South Africa. Most prescription drugs are available in Gaborone.

Approximately one-quarter of the population of Botswana is infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Travelers are advised to exercise appropriate precautions if engaging in sexual activity, or if exposed to blood products through injuries or rendering assistance to accident victims. Tuberculosis is also endemic to Botswana. Two cases of extensively drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) have been identified in Botswana since January 2008 when Botswana

first obtained the ability to test for this form of TB. Individuals who plan to reside or stay in Botswana for extended periods are advised to obtain a tuberculosis skin test (PPD test) prior to arrival and again upon departure from Botswana.

There are occasional diarrhea outbreaks in areas affected by heavy rains. Travelers are encouraged to take necessary precautions when handling food and drinking water.

The Department of Immigration of Botswana does not impose any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Botswana.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Botswana is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Botswana is challenging and motorists must drive defensively. Traffic circulates on the left in Botswana, as elsewhere in the region. While the roads in major population centers in Botswana are generally good, travel by automobile outside of large towns may be dangerous. The combination of long, tedious stretches of two-lane highways without shoulders, high speed limits, and poor lighting make driving at night on rural highways particularly hazardous. Free-range domestic animals and large numbers of pedestrians and hitchhikers in the roadways make fatal accidents a frequent occurrence.

'Smash and grab' robberies from vehicles are not uncommon in Botswana, particularly in urban areas at traffic lights. Motorists should avoid carrying anything of value (hand bags, briefcases, purses, cell phones, etc.) in the passenger compartment that could attract potential assailants. Visit the web site of Botswana's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.botswana-tourism.gov.bw.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Botswana, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Botswana's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Since February 2008, rolling electric power outages have left many areas without power for several hours each week. This situation is likely to continue. Visitors are urged to carry flashlights. American citizens are also urged to be aware of how power outages might affect home security systems, garage doors and gates, and kitchen equipment, such as stoves and refrigerators. The power fluctuations could cause power surges that might harm computers, televisions, or other electrical appliances.

Botswana strictly enforces its laws controlling the trade in animal products. The hunting of lions is explicitly prohibited and leopards and elephants are covered under a strict quota regime. Botswana's Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act makes it illegal to possess or remove from Botswana without a government permit any living or dead animal or animal trophy. A trophy is any horn, ivory, tooth, tusk, bone, claw, hoof, hide, skin, hair, feather, egg, or other durable portion of an animal, whether the item has been processed or not. Curio shops and vendors throughout the country sell items such as animal skins, plain and decorated ostrich eggs and eggshells, and carved bones or teeth of animals protected by this law. All of the souvenirs, although widely sold, are subject to this act. Travelers departing the country with a trophy must have a receipt from a store licensed to sell such items. Ivory and endangered rhinoceros horn products obtained in Botswana may not be removed from the country under any circumstances; elephant hair jewelry may be removed only with the appropriate license from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. Trophies may not be taken from the wild without a permit. Violators are subject to arrest and may face a penalty of up to five years imprisonment and a substantial fine.

Wild animals may pose a danger to tourists. Tourists should bear in mind that, even in the most serene settings, the animals are wild and can pose a threat to life and safety. Tourists should use common sense when approaching wildlife, observe all local or park regulations, and heed all instructions given by tour guides. In addition, tourists are advised that potentially dangerous areas sometimes lack fences and warning signs. Exercise appropriate caution in all unfamiliar surroundings.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Botswana's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or impris-

oned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Botswana are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Botswana are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Botswana. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Gaborone on Embassy Drive in the Government Enclave. The mailing address is P.O. Box 90, Gaborone, telephone +267 395-3982; fax +267 318-0232; email consulargaboro@state.gov, and the after-hours emergency telephone is +267 395-7111.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Local law and practice requires a lengthy period of residence in Botswana for both adoptive children and parents during the process. Parents must remain resident with the child in Botswana during a period of foster care and the adoptive child must remain resident in Botswana for one year following issuance of an adoption decree.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that only one immigrant visa to an orphan from Botswana has been issued in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority:
Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs
Private Bag 002
Gaborone, Botswana
Tel: +267 3611100
Fax: +267 3613584

Local magistrate's courts are delegated responsibility for overseeing the adoption process. Social workers submit their reports to the court for evaluation and the magistrate is designated the responsibility of executing the adoption order at the end of the process.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must be 25 years old to adopt and if the child is over sixteen (16), the adopting parent(s) must be at least 25 years older than the child. The law permits single individuals to adopt children as well as married couples.

Note: U.S. immigration law requires an orphan be under the age of sixteen to qualify for an immigration visa.

Residency Requirements: While it is not a pre-requisite to be a resident of Botswana, the law requires prospective adoptive parents to reside with the child in Botswana for a period of foster care lasting several months at minimum, but often over a year. The exact period of foster care that must take place in Botswana is at the discretion of local magistrate's courts and is determined on a case-by-case basis. Following a final adoption order, the child must remain resident in Botswana for a period not less than one year. As a result, the parents must also be resident.

Adoptive parents need not be citizens of Botswana; however, they must have lawful resident status in the country during the process.

Time Frame: Adoptions in Botswana are not final until the adoptee has lived with the prospective parents in Botswana. It is common for magistrate's courts to require at least a one-year period of foster care, and thus residency in Botswana.

Prospective adoptive parents must be present in Botswana to petition the court for an adoption order. Accounting for other residency requirements, it would be unlikely for an adoption to be finalized and a United States visa issued to the adopted child in less than two (2) years from the time a child is identified.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The law does not require the services of an adoption agency to locate a child or take part in the adoption process. Though not required, an attorney may be hired for representation before a local magistrates' court. A list of attorneys in Botswana may be found on the US Embassy, Gaborone web page at http://gaborone.usembassy.gov.

No attorneys on this list specialize in adoption. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Adoption Fees: The fees involved in the adoption process vary too greatly to be quantified with accuracy. Most costs would be incurred as a result of court and administrative fees by national and local government and would be determined by the length of time the court requires "foster care" by prospective parents. Local courts have the discretion to evaluate each case uniquely.

Adoption Procedures:

- Adoptive family identifies a child to be adopted. This is most commonly accomplished by surveying orphanages. Botswana does not have a formal agency that is responsible for placing orphans or matching children with prospective parents. An adoptive child's family or guardian must give written consent for the child to be adopted.

- Adopting family applies to the local magistrates' court for the legal adoption proceedings to begin. Private individuals and foreign residents or citizens are all permitted to petition the court. Anyone applying to the court can also do so through legal representation.

- Magistrate's court decrees a period of "foster care" during which time the adoptee lives with the prospective adoptive family in Botswana. While the law does not prescribe a minimum or maximum, this period commonly lasts from a few months to two years and is at the discretion of the magistrate's court. During the "foster period," social workers from the local city council will make home visits to chart the progress of the relationship and standard of care provided to the child.

- At the completion of the foster care period, the social workers must submit their reports to the magistrate's court. The court then makes a final ruling on whether or not the child may be adopted by the prospective family. If the decision is favorable to the prospective parents, the court issues a final adoption decree.

- After the magistrate approves the adoption, the child must live in Botswana in the custody of the adopting family for one year. The child may leave on vacation during that time with the consent of the court and/or the Minister of Local Government. The child may also be issued a passport in his or her birth name unless the adoptive parents have petitioned the court for a change of surname and received a favorable ruling.

- At the end of the one-year residency period in Botswana, the child and adopting family may relocate permanently outside of Botswana.

Required Documents: There is no list of required documents established by the Government of Botswana. However, magistrate's courts may request certain documents at will. Those seeking to adopt in Botswana should be prepared with standard U.S. civil documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, and related court documents, and police records for places of residence. All U.S. documents would need to be certified by local officials in the U.S. or by a U.S. consular officer abroad. Botswana is not a party or signatory to the Hague Legalization Convention on adoptions.

Embassy of the Republic of Botswana

1531 New Hampshire Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20008

Tel: +1 (202) 244-4990

Fax: +1 (202) 244-4164

http://www.botswanaembassy.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy: Embassy Enclave, (off Khama Crescent); Email: consulargaboro@state.gov; Tel: +267 395-3982 x5324/532.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Botswana may be addressed to the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Gabarone. Immigrant visa questions may be addressed to the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg, South Africa. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



BRAZIL

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Federative Republic of Brazil

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 8,511,965 sq. km. (3,290,000 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than the U.S.
Cities: Capital—Brasilia (pop. 2.5 million). Other cities—Sao Paulo (10.9 million), Rio de Janeiro (6.1 million), Belo Horizonte (2.4 million), Salvador (2.9 million), Fortaleza (2.4 million), Recife (1.5 million), Porto Alegre (1.4 million), Curitiba (1.8 million).
Terrain: Dense forests in northern regions including Amazon Basin; semiarid along northeast coast; mountains, hills, and rolling plains in the southwest, including Mato Grosso; and coastal lowland.
Climate: Mostly tropical or semitropical with temperate zone in the south.

People

Nationality: Brazilian.
Population: (2007 est.) 192 million.
Annual growth rate: 1.33%.
Ethnic groups: Portuguese, Italian, German, Spanish, Japanese, Arab, African, and indigenous people.
Religions: Roman Catholic (74%).
Languages: Portuguese.
Education: Literacy—86% of adult population.
Health: Infant mortality rate—26.7/1,000. Life expectancy—72.5 yrs.
Work force: 99.5 million.

Government

Type: Federative republic.
Independence: September 7, 1822.
Constitution: Promulgated October 5, 1988.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government popularly elected to no more than two 4-year terms). Legislative—Senate (81 members popularly elected to 8-year terms), Chamber of Deputies (513 members popularly elected to 4-year terms). Judicial—Supreme Federal Tribunal (11 lifetime positions appointed by the president).
Political parties: Workers' Party (PT), Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB), Liberal Front Party (PFL), Social Democratic Party (PSD), Democratic Workers Party (PDT), Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), Liberal Party (PL), Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B), Brazilian Progressive Party (PP). Popular Socialist Party (PPS), Green Party (PV), the Social Liberal Party (PSL), the National Mobilization Party (PMN), National Workers Party (PTN), Humanistic Solidarity Party (PHS), and the Party of the Reedification of the National Order (PRONA).

Economy (2007)

GDP: $1.269 trillion (official exchange rate).
GDP: $1.838 trillion (purchasing power parity).
Annual real growth: 4.5%.
Per capita GDP: $9,700 (purchasing power parity).
Natural resources: Iron ore, manganese, bauxite, nickel, uranium, gemstones, oil, wood, and aluminum. Brazil has 14% of the world's renewable fresh water.
Agriculture: (5.1% of GDP) Products—coffee, soybeans, sugarcane, cocoa, rice, livestock, corn, oranges, cotton, wheat, and tobacco.
Industry: (30.8% of GDP) Types—steel, commercial aircraft, chemicals, petrochemicals, footwear, machinery, motors, vehicles, auto parts, consumer durables, cement, and lumber.
Services: (64% of GDP) Types—mail, telecommunications, banking, energy, commerce, and computing.
Trade: Trade balance 2007—$43.6 billion surplus. Exports—$159.2 billion. Major markets—United States 15.8%, Argentina 9.0%, and China 6.7%. Imports—$115.6 billion. Major suppliers— United States 15.7%, China 10.5%, and Argentina 8.6%.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

With its estimated 192 million inhabitants, Brazil has the largest population in Latin America and ranks fifth in the world. The majority of people live in the south-central area, which includes the industrial cities of Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte. Urban growth has been rapid; by 2005, 81% of the total population was living in urban areas. This growth has aided economic development but also has created serious social, security, environmental, and political problems for major cities.

Six major groups make up the Brazilian population: the Portuguese, who colonized Brazil in the 16th century; Africans brought to Brazil as slaves; various other European, Middle Eastern, and Asian immigrant groups who have settled in Brazil since the mid-19th century; and indigenous peoples of Tupi and Guarani language stock. Intermarriage between the Portuguese and indigenous people or slaves was common. Although the major European ethnic stock of Brazil was originally Portuguese, subsequent waves of immigration have contributed to a diverse ethnic and cultural heritage.

From 1875 until 1960, about 5 million Europeans immigrated to Brazil, settling mainly in the four southern states of Sao Paulo, Parana, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. Immigrants have come mainly from Italy, Germany, Spain, Japan, Poland, and the Middle East. The largest Japanese community outside Japan is in Sao Paulo. Despite class distinctions, national identity is strong, and racial friction is a relatively new phenomenon. Indigenous full-blooded Indians, located mainly in the northern and western border regions and in the upper Amazon Basin, constitute less than 1% of the population. Their numbers are declining as contact with the outside world and commercial expansion into the interior increase. Brazilian Government programs to establish reservations and to provide other forms of assistance have existed for years but are controversial and often ineffective. Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking nation in the Americas. About three quarters of all Brazilians belong to the Roman Catholic Church; most others are Protestant, members of a growing evangelical movement, or follow practices derived from African religions.

Pedro Alvares Cabral claimed Brazil for Portugal in 1500. The colony was ruled from Lisbon until 1808, when Dom Joao VI and the rest of the Portuguese royal family fled from Napoleon's army, and established its seat of government in Rio de Janeiro. Dom Joao VI returned to Portugal in 1821. His son declared Brazil's independence on September 7, 1822, and became emperor with the title of Dom Pedro I. His son, Dom Pedro II, ruled from 1831 to 1889, when a federal republic was established in a coup led by Deodoro da Fonseca, Marshal of the Army. Slavery had been abolished a year earlier by the Regent Princess Isabel while Dom Pedro II was in Europe.

From 1889 to 1930, the government was a constitutional republic, with the presidency alternating between the dominant states of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais. This period ended with a military coup that placed Getulio Vargas, a civilian, in the presidency; Vargas remained as dictator until 1945. Between 1945 and 1961, Jose Linhares, Gaspar Dutra, Vargas himself, Café Filho, Carlos Luz, Nereu Ramos, Juscelino Kubitschek, and Janio Quadros were elected presidents. When Quadros resigned in 1961, Vice President Joao Goulart succeeded him.

Goulart's years in office were marked by high inflation, economic stagnation, and the increasing influence of radical political elements. The armed forces, alarmed by these developments, staged a coup on March 31, 1964. The coup leaders chose as president Humberto Castello Branco, followed by Arthur da Costa e Silva (1967-69), Emilio Garrastazu Medici (1969-74), and Ernesto Geisel (1974-79), all of whom were senior army officers. Geisel began a democratic opening that was continued by his successor, Gen. Joao Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo (1979-85). Figueiredo not only permitted the return of politicians exiled or banned from political activity during the 1960s and 1970s, but also allowed them to run for state and federal offices in 1982.

At the same time, an electoral college consisting of all members of congress and six delegates chosen from each state continued to choose the president. In January 1985, the electoral college voted Tancredo Neves from the opposition Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB) into office as President. However, Neves became ill in March and died a month later. His Vice President, former Senator Jose Sarney, became President upon Neves' death. Brazil completed its transition to a popularly elected government in 1989, when Fernando Collor de Mello won 53% of the vote in the first direct presidential election in 29 years. In 1992, a major corruption scandal led to his impeachment and ultimate resignation. Vice President Itamar Franco took his place and governed for the remainder of Collor's term culminating in the October 3, 1994 presidential elections, when Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected President with 54% of the vote. Cardoso took office January 1, 1995, and pursued a program of ambitious economic reform. He was re-elected in October 1998 for a second four-year term. Luiz Inacio da Silva, commonly known as Lula, was elected president in 2002, after his fourth campaign for the office. He was re-elected in 2006 for a second four-year term.

President Lula, a former union leader, is Brazil's first working-class president. Since taking office he has taken a prudent fiscal path, warning that social reforms would take years and that Brazil had no alternative but to maintain tight fiscal austerity policies.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Brazil is a federal republic with 26 states and a federal district. The 1988 constitution grants broad powers to the federal government, made up of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The president holds office for four years, with the right to re-election for an additional four-year term, and appoints his own cabinet. There are 81 senators, three for each state and the Federal District, and 513 deputies. Senate terms are eight years, staggered so that two-thirds of the upper house is up for election at one time and one-third four years later. Chamber terms are four years, with elections based on a complex system of proportional representation by states. Each state is eligible for a minimum of eight seats; the largest state delegation (Sao Paulo's) is capped at 70 seats. This system is weighted in favor of geographically large but sparsely populated states.

Fifteen political parties are represented in Congress. Since it is common for politicians to switch parties, the proportion of congressional seats held by particular parties changes regularly. The major political parties are:

- Workers' Party (PT-center-left)
- Democrats (DEM-center-right)
- Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB-center)
- Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB-center-left)
- Progressive Party (PP-right)
- Brazilian Labor Party (PTB-center-right)
- Party of the Republic (PR-center-right)
- Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB-left)
- Popular Socialist Party (PPS-left)
- Democratic Labor Party (PDT-left)
- Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB-left)

President Lula was re-elected October 29, 2006 in a second round victory with over 60% of the vote, over Geraldo Alckmin of the PSDB. Lula's PT party failed to win a majority in either the lower or upper houses in concurrent legislative elections and will be obliged to form a coalition with the centrist PMDB party—which won the most seats in the lower house and may end up with the largest number in the Senate—and a collection of minor parties. However, party loyalty is weak in Brazil, and it is common for politicians to switch parties, changing the balance of power in Congress. The PT won five of twenty-seven governorships, but the opposition PSDB remains in control of the critical states of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais. The PMDB, as in the legislative elections, won the most governorships of any one party, controlling seven states. Because of the mandatory revenue allocation to states and municipalities provided for in the 1988 constitution, Brazilian governors and mayors have exercised considerable power since 1989.

Lula's electoral victory came despite a series of corruption scandals that resulted in the resignation of senior PT officials and the electoral defeat of several congressmen from parties allied to the PT. At least four congressional investigations are ongoing, though Lula has yet to be personally linked to any of the scandals.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Luiz Inacio LULA DA SILVA**
Vice Pres.: **Jose ALENCAR**
Chief of the Civilian Household of the Presidency: **Dilma ROUSSEFF**
Min. of Agrarian Development: **Guilherme CASSEL**
Min. of Agriculture: **Reinhold STEPHANES**
Min. of Cities: **Marcio FORTES de Almeida**
Min. of Communications: **Helio COSTA**
Min. of Culture: **Juca FERREIRA**
Min. of Defense: **Nelson Azevedo JOBIM**
Min. of Development, Industry, & Trade: **Miguel JORGE**
Min. of Education: **Fernando HADDAD**
Min. of Environment: **Carlos MINC**
Min. of Finance: **Guido MANTEGA**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Celso AMORIM**
Min. of Health: **Jose Gomes TEMPORAO**
Min. of Institutional Relations: **Jose MUCIO Monteiro**
Min. of Institutional Security: **Jorge Armando FELIX**
Min. of Justice: **Tarso GENRO**
Min. of Labor & Employment: **Carlos LUPI**
Min. of Mines & Energy: **Edison LOBAO**
Min. of National Integration: **Geddel VIEIRA Lima**
Min. of Planning & Budget: **Paulo BERNARDO**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Sergio Macado REZENDE**
Min. of Social Development & Hunger Alleviation: **Patrus ANANIAS**
Min. of Social Security: **Jose PIMENTEL**
Min. of Sports: **Orlando SILVA**
Min. of Tourism: **Luiz Eduardo Pereira BARRETTO FILHO**
Min. of Transportation: **Alfredo NASCIMENTO**
Pres., Central Bank: **Henrique MEIRELLES**
Ambassador to the US: **Antonio de Aguiar PATRIOTA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Maria Luiza Ribeiro VIOTTI**

Brazil maintains an embassy in the United States at 3006 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-238-2700). Brazil has consulates general in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and consulates in Miami, Houston, Boston, and San Francisco.

ECONOMY

President Lula and his economic team have implemented prudent fiscal and monetary policies and have pursued necessary microeconomic reforms. Brazil's economy, aided by a benign international environment, grew approximately 2.8% in 2006 and 4.5% in 2007. Brazil is now a net creditor nation, and sustained growth, coupled with booming exports, healthy external accounts, moderate inflation, decreasing unemployment, and reductions in the debt-to-GDP ratio led two major rating agencies to give Brazil an investment-grade sovereign debt rating in early 2008.

However, significant vulnerabilities remain. Despite registering year-on-year declines from 2004 to 2007, Brazil's local currency government debt remains high. Total tax burden is high, and income and land distribution remains skewed.

Sustaining high growth rates in the longer term depends on the impact of President Lula's structural reform program and efforts to build a more welcoming climate for investment, both domestic and foreign. In its first year, the Lula administration passed key tax and pension reforms to improve the government fiscal accounts. Judicial reform and an overhaul of the bankruptcy law were passed in late 2004, along with tax measures to create incentives for long-term savings and investments.

Legislation promoting public private partnerships, a key effort to attract private investment to infrastructure, also passed in 2004. Labor reform and proposals to increase autonomy for the Central Bank are pending. Despite this well-considered reform agenda, much remains to be done to improve the regulatory climate for investments, particularly in the energy sector; to simplify tax systems at the state and federal levels; and to further reform the pension system.

Trade Policy

President Lula has made economic growth and poverty alleviation top priorities. Export promotion is a main component in plans to generate growth and reduce what is seen as a vulnerability to international financial market gyrations. To increase exports, the government is seeking access to foreign markets through trade negotiations and increased export promotion as well as government financing for exports.

To increase its international profile (both economically and politically), the Lula administration is seeking expanded trade ties with developing countries, as well as a strengthening of the Mercosul (Mercosur in Spanish) customs union with Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina. In 2004, Mercosul concluded free trade agreements with Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Peru, adding to its existing agreements with Chile and Bolivia to establish a commercial base for the newly-launched South American Community of Nations. Mercosul is pursuing free trade negotiations with Mexico and Canada and has resumed trade negotiations with the EU. The trade bloc also plans to launch trilateral free trade negotiations with India and South Africa, building on partial trade liberalization agreements concluded with these countries in 2004. In July 2006, Venezuela was admitted to the trade bloc as a full member. China has increased its importance as an export market for Brazilian soy, iron ore and steel, becoming Brazil's fourth-largest trading partner and a potential source of investment.

Agriculture

Agriculture is a major sector of the Brazilian economy, and is key for economic growth and foreign exchange. Agriculture accounts for about 5% of GDP (25% when including agribusiness) and 36% of Brazilian exports. Brazil enjoyed a positive agricultural trade balance of $40 billion in 2007. Brazil is the world's largest producer of sugar cane, coffee, tropical fruits, frozen concentrated orange juice (FCOJ), and has the world's largest commercial cattle herd (50% larger than the U.S.) at 170 million head. Brazil is also an important producer of soybeans (second to the United States), corn, cotton, cocoa, tobacco, and forest products. The remainder of agricultural output is in the livestock sector, mainly the production of beef and poultry (second to the United States), pork, milk, and seafood.

Environment

About half of Brazil is covered in forests, and Brazil has the majority of the world's largest rain forest, the Amazon. In the last 30 years, migrations into the Amazon and the conversion of forest land, primarily for agricultural use, has reduced the Brazilian Amazon by almost 20%. In 2006, the government created the Brazilian Forest Service with the aim to manage in a sustainable manner the Amazon forest resources. Due to concerns over possible unauthorized taking and commercialization of genetic resources or traditional knowledge of indigenous communities (often referred to as "biopiracy"), Brazil has imposed substantial restrictions on foreign researchers collecting or studying biological materials.

Other Aspects

Brazil has one of the most advanced industrial sectors in Latin America. Accounting for one-third of GDP, Brazil's diverse industries range from automobiles and parts, other machinery and equipment, steel, textiles, shoes, cement, lumber, iron ore, tin, and petrochemicals, to computers, aircraft, and consumer durables. Most major automobile producers have established production facilities in Brazil. Brazil has a diverse and sophisticated services industry as well. Mail and telecommunications are the largest, followed by banking, energy, commerce, and computing. During the 1990s, Brazil's financial services industry underwent a major overhaul and is relatively sound. The financial sector provides local firms a wide range of financial products. The largest financial firms are Brazilian (and the two largest banks are government-owned), but U.S. and other foreign firms have an important share of the market.

Privatization triggered a flood of investors after 1996. The yearly investment average in the telecom sector the 4 years prior to the start of privatization was R$5.8 billion, and the annual average for the four years following privatization was R$16.3 billion, nearly tripling. Investment in the electrical power sector increased from R$5.3 billion annually in the pre-privatization era to R$7.2 billion. U.S. companies provided a great deal of this influx of cash. After 2000, many of these investors suffered huge losses in the face of adverse regulatory decisions and especially the sharp depreciation of the real. The energy sector was especially hard hit.

The Government of Brazil has undertaken an ambitious program to reduce dependence on imported oil. In the mid-1980s, imports accounted for more than 70% of Brazil's oil and derivatives needs; the net figure is nearing zero. Brazil announced in early 2008 the discovery of the Tupi and Carioca oil fields off the coast of Rio de Janeiro. The oil reserves in these fields could be upwards of 40 billion barrels. Output from the existing Campos Basin and the discovery of the new fields could make Brazil a significant oil exporter by 2015. Brazil is one of the world's leading producers of hydroelectric power. Of its total installed electricity-generation capacity of 90,000 megawatts, hydropower accounts for 66,000 megawatts (74%). Proven mineral resources are extensive. Large iron and manganese reserves are important sources of industrial raw materials and export earnings.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Brazil has traditionally been a leader in the inter-American community and played an important role in collective security efforts, as well as in economic cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. Brazil supported the Allies in both World Wars. During World War II, its expeditionary force in Italy played a key role in the Allied victory at Monte Castello. It is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS) and a party to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty). Recently, Brazil has given high priority to expanding relations with its South American neighbors and is a founding member of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUL) created in June 2004, and Mercosul, a customs union between Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil, with Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador as associate members; Venezuela's full membership is pending.

Brazil is a charter member of the United Nations and participates in its specialized agencies. It has contributed troops to UN peacekeeping efforts in the Middle East, the former Belgian Congo, Cyprus, Mozambique, Angola, East Timor, and most recently Haiti. Brazil is currently leading the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti. Brazil served as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council from 2004-2005. Prior to this, it had been a member of the UN Security Council eight times. Brazil is lobbying for a permanent position on the Council.

As Brazil's domestic economy has grown and diversified, the country has become increasingly involved in international economic and trade policy discussions. For example, Brazil has been a leader of the G-20 group of nations in the WTO Doha Round talks. The U.S., Western Europe, and Japan are primary markets for Brazilian exports and sources of foreign lending and investment. China is a growing market for Brazilian exports. Brazil also has bolstered its commitment to nonproliferation through ratification of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), signing a full-scale nuclear safeguard agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), acceding to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and joining the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

U.S.-BRAZILIAN RELATIONS

The United States was the first country to recognize Brazil's independence in 1822. The two countries have traditionally enjoyed friendly, active relations encompassing a broad political and economic agenda. Deepening U.S.-Brazil engagement and cooperation are reflected in the continuing high-level contacts between the two governments, including reciprocal visits by Presidents Bush and Lula in March 2007.

Ongoing topics of discussion and cooperation include trade and finance; hemispheric economic integration; biofuels; regional security; nonproliferation and arms control; human rights and trafficking in persons; international crime, including financial support to terrorist groups; counter-narcotics; and environmental issues.

Existing bilateral agreements include an Education Partnership Agreement, which enhances and expands cooperative initiatives in such areas as standards-based education reform, use of technology, and professional development of teachers; a Mutual Legal Assistance treaty—ratified in 2001; and agreements on cooperation in energy, the environment, science and technology, and transportation. In March 2007, the United States and Brazil signed three separate memoranda of understanding to increase cooperation on biofuels, education and legislative capacity building in Guinea-Bissau.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Brazil in March 2008 and signed a historic Joint Action Plan for Racial Equality. The plan calls for Brazil and the United States to work jointly in combating racial discrimination and sharing best practices in tackling discrimination in the areas of education, law enforcement, labor, health, and many other areas.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate Functions

The U.S. embassy and consulates in Brazil provide a wide range of services to U.S. citizens and business. Political, economic, and science officers deal directly with the Brazilian Government in advancing U.S. interests but also are available to brief U.S. citizens on general conditions in the country. Attachés from the U.S. Commercial Service and Foreign Agriculture Service work closely with hundreds of U.S. companies that maintain offices in Brazil. These officers provide information on Brazilian trade and industry regulations and administer several programs to aid U.S. companies starting or maintaining business ventures in Brazil. The number of trade events and U.S. companies traveling to Brazil to participate in U.S. Commercial Service and Foreign Agriculture Service programs has tripled over the last three years.

The consular section of the embassy provides vital services to the estimated 60,000 U.S. citizens residing in Brazil. Among other services, the consular section assists Americans who wish to participate in U.S. elections while abroad and provides U.S. tax information. Besides the U.S. residents living in Brazil, some 150,000 U.S. citizens visit annually. The consular section offers passport and emergency services to U.S. tourists as needed during their stay in Brazil.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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Fax 55-61-3312-7676, Workweek: M-F/8:00-5:00, Website: http://brasilia.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Kristin Rohde
AMB OMS:	Melissa McCreery
DHS/ICE:	Charles Allen
ECO:	Tara Erath
FCS:	Rebecca Armand
FM:	Thomas Bauer
MGT:	Frank Manganiello
AMB:	Clifford Sobel
DCM:	Lisa Kubiske
RSO:	Christopher Culver
AFSA:	Craig Bowman
AGR:	Allan Hrapsky
APHIS:	Allan Terrell
DAO:	Chris Cuello
DEA:	Mark Knight
EST:	Richard Driscoll
ICASS Chair:	Mark Knight
IMO:	Fred Armand
LEGATT:	David Brassanini
POL:	Steve Liston

RIO DE JANEIRO (CG) Avenida Presidente Wilson, 147. Rio de Janeiro. RJ 20030-020, APO/FPO Unit 3501 APO AA 34030, 55-21-3823-2000, Fax 55-21-3823-2003, INMARSAT Tel 683-142-238, Workweek: Mon–Fri/08:00–16:45 hrs.

CG OMS:	Marguerite Santos
FCS:	Camille Richardson
MGT:	Timothy Hanway
POL/ECO:	Jenny Malheiro
CG:	Elizabeth Martinez
CON:	William Weissman
GSO:	Kwang H. Kim
RSO:	Michael Olson
CLO:	Julie Anderson
DAO:	Mark Anderson
EEO:	Carla Benini
IPO:	Gerald Lutz
ISSO:	Kevin Bennecoff

SAO PAULO (CG) Rua Henri Dunant, 700, Chacara Santo Antonio, Sao Paulo/SP, 04709-110, APO/FPO Unit 3502, APO AA 34030, (55-11) 5186-7000, Fax (55-11) 5186-7099; (55-11) 5186-7350 (Mgmt), Workweek: Mon-Fri, 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Website: http://saopaulo.usconsulate.gov.

CA:	Debra Tabusa De Godoy
CG OMS:	Kathryn Coster
DHS/CIS:	Hector Noriega
ECO:	James B. Story
FCS:	Daniel Devito
HRO:	Yasmin Kahele
MGT:	Calvin Watlington
POL/ECO:	James B. Story
CG:	Thomas J. White
CON:	Jennifer Noronha
PAO:	Lisa L. Helling
GSO:	Nancy Rios-Brooks
RSO:	Karl J. Kahele
APHIS:	David Midgargten
ATO:	Morgan Perkins
CLO:	Ingrid Perkins
DEA:	Kevin Wilson
FMO:	Calvin Watlington
IPO:	Anup Shah
ISO:	John A. Miller
ISSO:	James Wellence
POL:	Peter Higgins
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RECIFE (C) Rua Goncalves Maia, 163, Boa Vista, Recife,PE, APO/FPO Unit 3503 APO AA 34030, 55-81-3416-3050, Fax 55-81-3231-1906, Workweek: M-F 7:30 am -4:30 pm.

CA:	Patricia Cavin
MGT:	Elizabeth Macdonald
PO:	Diana Page
CON:	Daniel Bazan
PAO:	Kathy Bentley
ISSO:	Elizabeth Macdonald

Other Business Contacts

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Tel: 202-482-0428
1-800-U.S.A-TRADE
Fax: 202-482-4157
Automated fax service for trade-related info: 202-482-4464

American Chamber of Commerce of Sao Paulo
Rua da Paz, No. 1431
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

February 1, 2008

Country Description: Brazil, a nation the size of the lower 48 United States, has an advanced developing economy. Facilities for tourism are excellent in the major cities, but vary in quality in remote areas. The capital is Brasilia.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required for U.S. citizens traveling to Brazil for any purpose. Brazilian visas must be obtained in advance from the Brazilian Embassy or consulate nearest to the traveler's place of residence. There are no "airport visas" and immigration authorities will refuse entry to Brazil to anyone not possessing a valid visa. All Brazilian visas, regardless of the length of validity, must initially be used within 90 days of the issuance date or will no longer be valid. Americans reentering Brazil must be able to show an entry stamp in their passport proving that the visa was issued within 90 days; otherwise they will not be allowed reentry. Immigration authorities will not allow entry into Brazil without a valid visa. The U.S. Government cannot assist travelers who arrive in Brazil without proper documentation.

Travelers are reminded that they are subject to local law. Showing contempt to a Brazilian government official at the port of entry, or elsewhere, is a serious offense. (Fines for such offenses are based on the offender's claimed income.)

Additionally, travelers who have recently visited certain countries, including most other Latin American countries (check Brazilian Embassy website linked below), may be required to present an inoculation card indicating they had a yellow fever inoculation or they may not be allowed to board the plane or enter the country. Minors (under 18) traveling alone, with one parent or with a

third party, must present written authorization by the absent parent(s) or legal guardian specifically granting permission to travel alone, with one parent, or with a third party. The authorization (in Portuguese) must be notarized and then authenticated by the Brazilian Embassy or Consulate.

For current entry and customs requirements for Brazil, travelers may contact the Brazilian Embassy at 3009 Whitehaven Street NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone 1-202-238-2828, e-mail consular@brasilemb.org; web site at http://www.brasilemb.org. Travelers may also contact the Brazilian consulates in Boston, Houston, Miami, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or San Francisco. Addresses, phone numbers, web and e-mail addresses, and jurisdictions of these consulates may be found at the Brazilian Embassy web site.

U.S. citizens also possessing Brazilian nationality cannot be issued Brazilian visas and must obtain a Brazilian passport (from the Brazilian Embassy or Consulate nearest to their place of residence) to enter and depart Brazil. In addition to being subject to all Brazilian laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Brazilian citizens. Note that children adopted from Brazil are still considered Brazilian citizens and must be documented as such should they return to Brazil.

Safety and Security: Political and labor strikes and demonstrations occur sporadically in urban areas and may cause temporary disruption to public transportation. Naturally, protests anywhere in the world have the potential to become violent. In addition, criminal organizations, during 2006, staged several violent campaigns against public institutions in the Sao Paulo State leading to a large number of deaths. While it is unlikely that U.S. citizens would be targeted during such events, U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Brazil are advised to take common-sense precautions and avoid any large gatherings or any other event where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest. Individuals with ties to criminal entities operate along the tri-border area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. These organizations are involved in the trafficking of illicit goods; some individuals in the area are financially supporting designated foreign terrorist organizations. U.S. citizens crossing into Paraguay or Argentina may wish to consult the Country Specific Information for those countries.

Colombian terrorist groups have been known to operate in the border areas of neighboring countries. Although there have been reports of isolated small-scale armed incursions from Colombia into Brazil in the past, we know of no specific threat directed against U.S. citizens across the border in Brazil at this time. Colombian groups have perpetrated kidnappings of residents and tourists in border areas of Colombia's neighbors. Therefore, U.S. citizens traveling or residing in areas of Brazil near the Colombian border are urged to exercise caution. U.S. citizens are urged to take care when visiting remote parts of the Amazon basin and respect local laws and customs. U.S. visitors should ensure that their outfitter/guide is experienced in the Amazon.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime throughout Brazil has reached very high levels. The Brazilian police and the Brazilian press report that the rate of crime continues to rise, especially in the major urban centers—though it is also spreading in rural areas. Brazil's murder rate is more than four times higher than that of the U.S. Rates for other crimes are similarly high. The majority of crimes are not solved. There were several reported rapes against American citizens in 2006. Street crime remains a problem for visitors and local residents alike, especially in the evenings and late at night. Foreign tourists are often targets of crime and Americans are not exempt. This targeting occurs in all tourist areas but is especially problematic in Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Recife.

Caution is advised with regard to nighttime travel through more rural areas and satellite cities due to reported incidents of roadside robberies that randomly target passing vehicles. Robbery and "quicknapping" outside of banks and ATM machines are common. In a "quicknapping," criminals abduct victims for a short time in order to receive a quick payoff from the family, business or the victim's ATM card. Some victims have been beaten and/or raped.

The incidence of crime against tourists is greater in areas surrounding beaches, hotels, discotheques, bars, nightclubs, and other similar establishments that cater to visitors. This type of crime is especially prevalent during Carnaval (Brazilian Mardi Gras), but takes place throughout the year. While the risk is greater at dusk and during the evening hours, street crime can occur both day and night, and even safer areas of cities are not immune. Incidents of theft on city buses are frequent and visitors should avoid such transportation. Several Brazilian cities have established specialized tourist police units to patrol areas frequented by tourists. In Rio de Janeiro, crime continues to plague the major tourist areas.

At airports, hotel lobbies, bus stations and other public places, incidents of pick pocketing, theft of hand carried luggage, and laptop computers are common. Travelers should "dress down" when outside and avoid carrying valuables or wearing jewelry or expensive watches. "Good Samaritan" scams are common. If a tourist looks lost or seems to be having trouble communicating, a seemingly innocent bystander offering help may victimize them. Care should be taken at and around banks and internation-

ally connected automatic teller machines that take U.S. credit or debit cards. Very poor neighborhoods known as "favelas," such as those located on steep hillsides in Rio de Janeiro, are found throughout Brazil. These areas are sites of uncontrolled criminal activity and are often not patrolled by police.

U.S. citizens are advised to avoid these unsafe areas. Carjacking is on the increase in Sao Paulo, Recife and other cities.

Travelers using personal ATMs or credit cards sometimes receive billing statements with non-authorized charges after returning from a visit to Brazil. The Embassy and Consulates have received numerous reports from both official Americans and tourists who have had their cards cloned or duplicated without their knowledge. Those using such payment methods should carefully monitor their banking online for the duration of their visit.

While the ability of Brazilian police to help recover stolen property is limited, it is nevertheless strongly advised to obtain a "boletim de ocorrencia" (police report) at a "delegacia" (police station) whenever any possessions are lost or stolen. This will facilitate the traveler's exit from Brazil and insurance claims.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Brasilia: Once spared the crime rates of other Brazilian cities, Brasilia now has significant crime problems. Following the citywide trend of previous years, reports of residential burglaries continue to occur in the generally affluent residential sections of the city. Public transportation, hotel sectors and tourist areas are still the locations with the highest crime rates, though statistics show that incidents can happen anywhere and at anytime. The majority of kidnappings in Brasilia continue to be the "quicknappings."

Rio De Janeiro: The city continues to experience a high incidence of crime. Tourists are particularly vulnerable to street thefts and robberies on and in areas adjacent to major tourist attractions and the main beaches in the city. Walking on the beaches is very dangerous at night. During the day, travelers are advised not to take possessions of value to the beach. During 2006-07, the Consulate General assisted many Americans who had incapacitating drugs slipped into their drinks at bars or in their hotel rooms and then robbed. Tourists continue to suffer attacks along trails leading to the famous Corcovado Mountain, on the road linking the airport and the South Zone and on the beaches of Copacabana. Over the past year, attacks against motorists increased. In Rio de Janeiro City, motorists are allowed to treat stoplights as stop signs between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. to protect against holdups at intersections. While most police officials are honest, in 2006, there were several cases of corrupt police officials extorting money from American tourists. All incidents should be reported to the tourist police, who can be reached at 3399-7170/71/72/73.

Sao Paulo: While similar incidents may occur elsewhere, all areas of Sao Paulo have a high rate of armed robbery of pedestrians at stoplights. There is a particularly high incidence of robberies and pick pocketing in the Praca da Se section of Sao Paulo and in the eastern part of the city. As is true of "red light districts" in other cities, the areas of Sao Paulo on Rua Augusta north of Avenida Paulista and the Estacao de Luz metro area are especially dangerous. There are regular reports of young women slipping knockout drops in men's drinks and robbing them of all their belongings while they are unconscious. Armed holdups of pedestrians and motorists by young men on motorcycles ("motoboys") are an increasingly common occurrence in Sao Paulo. Victims who resist run the risk of violent retaliation. The number one item of choice by robbers in Sao Paulo, especially with regards to business travelers, is laptop computers. Recent efforts of incarcerated drug lords to exert their power outside of their jail cells have resulted in sporadic disruptions in the city, violence directed at the authorities, bus burnings and vandalism at ATM machines. These occurrences have not resulted in any injuries to U.S. citizens. Visitors and residents should respect police roadblocks and be aware that some municipal services may be disrupted.

Recife: Deceptively tranquil, Recife now has one of the highest murder rates (per capita) in all Brazil. As in Rio de Janeiro, tourists in Recife should take special care while on the beaches, as robberies may occur in broad daylight. In the upscale Boa Viagem neighborhood, car-jackings can occur at any time of the day or night. Some of Brazil's most popular beaches lie in the Recife consular district: Fortaleza, Natal, and Maceio. Beachgoers should heed the signs posted on beaches alerting to the higher-than-average probability of shark attacks. Shark attacks are recorded in Recife every year.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is generally good, but it varies in quality, particularly in remote areas, and it may not meet U.S. standards outside the major cities. Expatriates in Brazil

regularly use the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo. The hospital phone is (55-11) 3747-1301.

There have been recent fatalities, possibly from yellow fever, in Goias and Brazil's Federal District (including Brasilia). While test results are pending to determine if these deaths were actually caused by yellow fever, the Government of Brazil has begun a yellow fever vaccine campaign in the affected regions. CDC has long recommended yellow fever vaccinations for parts of Brazil: yellow fever vaccine is recommended for persons over 9 months of age for travel to all rural areas of all states, including Iguassu Falls tourist resorts, and for travel to Brasilia and Belo Horizonte. Cities in jungle areas are considered rural, not urban, in nature. yellow fever is not a risk for travel to major coastal cities from Fortaleza to the Uruguay border, including the major tourist/business destinations of Sao Paulo, Salvador, Rio, Recife, and Fortaleza.

Plastic and other elective/cosmetic surgery is a major medical industry in Brazil. While Brazil has many plastic surgery facilities that are on par with those found in the United States, two U.S. citizens died and one was left in vegetative state from complications following plastic surgery in 2005. U.S. citizens should make sure when arranging such surgery that emergency medical facilities are available, as some "boutique" plastic surgery operations offer luxurious facilities, but are not hospitals and are therefore unable to deal with unforeseen emergencies. Several U.S. citizens have also died while visiting non-traditional healers outside of urban areas. While this is not surprising given that this type of treatment often attracts the terminally ill, U.S. citizens are advised to ensure they have access to proper medical care when visiting the site. In the unfortunate event of a death, relatives or friends of any deceased U.S. citizen are advised to immediately contact the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia and not to contract with local mortuary services before seeking embassy assistance.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Brazil is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travelers may consider obtaining an Inter-American Driving Permit, to carry along with their valid U.S. license if they plan to drive while in Brazil. Such permits can be obtained through AAA or other sources.

Road conditions in Brazil vary widely throughout the country. State roads (especially in the south) are often excellent, while federal, interstate roads (designated by 'BR') are often very poor due to lack of maintenance. There are occasional stretches of modern divided highway (especially in Sao Paulo State) that rival European or U.S. roads. In municipal areas, however, signs, shoulders, exits, and merge lanes tend to be haphazard. There are many potholes and surfaces are frequently uneven and bumpy. Some stretches of federal roads and rural state roads are so potholed that high-clearance vehicles are needed to traverse them.

Many cities and towns have erected speed bumps, which are sometimes severe and may be unpainted and unmarked. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and horse-drawn vehicles all pose hazards and can be encountered even on major routes. Travel after dark outside city centers is not recommended because of animals and disabled vehicles. Dirt roads are the rule in remote areas. These vary widely in quality and may quickly become more dangerous, even impassable, in rainy weather. Passenger car travel can be reasonably safe in most areas if one takes into account the prevailing conditions described above and exercises due prudence and caution. Passenger-bus hijacking, usually non-violent, occurs at random in some areas of the country.

Brazil's inter-city roads are widely recognized as among the most dangerous in the world. As is the case elsewhere in the region, poor driving skills, bad roads and a high density of trucks combine to make travel considerably more hazardous than in the United States. There are no laws requiring truckers to take mandatory rest stops and they often drive for excessive periods of time. All major inter-city routes are saturated with heavy truck traffic and for the most part have only two lanes. Road maintenance is inadequate and some long-distance roads through the Amazon forest are impassable much of the year.

There are few railroads and passenger train travel is almost nonexistent. Private cars and public buses are the main modes of inter-city road travel. Buses can range (depending on the route and the price) from luxurious and well maintained to basic and mechanically unsound.

The Brazilian Federal Government maintains a (Portuguese language) website with up-to-date information on road conditions throughout the country (http://www.dnit.gov.br); the site also has downloadable state roadmaps. A private Brazilian company, Quatro Rodas, publishes road maps that contain local phone numbers to ascertain the current conditions of roads on the map. They are

available at www.guia4rodas.com.br. Apart from toll roads, which generally have their own services, roadside assistance is available only very sporadically and informally through local private mechanics. There is a group called the "Angels of the Pavement" that provides roadside assistance on the main highway between Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

The fastest way to summon assistance in an emergency anywhere in the country is to dial 193, a universal number staffed by local fire departments. This service is in Portuguese only. Many motorists in major urban areas and more developed parts of the country carry cellular phones, and can be asked to assist in calling for help. Brazilian traffic laws impose severe penalties for a number of traffic offenses. Enforcement ranges from sporadic to non-existent, so motorists should not assume that others will necessarily follow even the most fundamental and widely accepted rules of the road. Some important local rules and customs include the following:

Seat Belts: All states have seat belt laws, but enforcement varies from state to state.

Child Car Seats: Some states require child car seats, but they are not universally available or affordable, and enforcement is also lax. As a result, most children are not secured in car seats.

Speed Limits: The maximum speed limit on major, divided highways is 120kmph (74 mph). Lower limits (usually 60kmph (40 mph)) are often posted in urban areas, depending on the road and the nature of the neighborhood. Speed limits are widely ignored and rarely enforced. Many towns and cities have marked electronic/photographic devices ("Fiscalisacao Electronica"), which verify speed and snap photos of violators' cars and license plates as a basis for issuing speeding tickets. Brazilian drivers tend to brake suddenly when encountering these devices.

Yielding the Right of Way: Drivers must yield the right of way to cars on their right. Compliance with stop signs is rarely enforced; so many motorists treat them as yield signs.

Driving Under the Influence: Drivers are in violation of the law if blood/alcohol level reaches 0.06 percent.

Turns on Red Lights: Not permitted, except for right turns where there is a sign with an arrow pointing right and the words "Livre a Direita."

Penalties for Drivers Involved in an Accident Resulting in Injury or Death: In addition to possible criminal charges and penalties, compensatory and punitive damages may also apply.

Local Driving Customs Regulations: Drivers often use flashes or wave a hand out of the window to signal other drivers to slow down. Drivers will often break suddenly to slow down for the electronic speed traps mentioned above. In addition, pedestrian "zebra" crossings are strictly observed in some places (especially in Brasilia) and ignored most everywhere else.

For specific information concerning Brazilian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please contact the Brazilian National Tourist Organization offices in New York via the Internet at http://www.embratur.gov.br.

For additional information from other sources in Brazil about road safety and specific information about accident statistics, Brazilian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please see the following web sites: http://www.dprf.gov.br (Brazilian Federal Highway Police, in Portuguese only), and http://www.transportes.gov.br (Ministry of Transportation, in Portuguese only).

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Brazil's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Brazil's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at www.faa.gov.

Foreigners are required to carry their passports for internal flights. Brazil's air transportation system has been in disarray since accidents with fatalities occurred in September 2006 and July 2007. Causes of the accidents are still under investigation. Air traffic work stoppages and issues with equipment have caused widespread delays in air travel nationwide.

Both international and domestic flights are frequently delayed for several hours or cancelled. In some cases, travelers have been rerouted, causing disruptions to travel plans. American citizens living in or traveling to Brazil are advised to prepare for long delays at Brazilian airports and for the possibility of missing flight connections. Foreigners are required to carry their passports for internal flights.

Special Circumstances: Brazilian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Brazil of items such as firearms, antiquities, tropical plants, medications, and business equipment. In the Amazon region, there is a special concern for the export of biological material, which could have genetic value. People propagating or exporting biological material without proper permits run the risk of being accused of "biopiracy," a serious offence in Brazil. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Brazil in Washington or one of Brazil's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Brazilian laws, even unknowingly, may be

expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Brazil are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Brazil are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Brazil. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Brasilia at Avenida das Nacoes, Lote 3, telephone 011-55-61-3312-7000, after-hours telephone 011-55-61-3312-7400; web site at http://brasilia.usembassy.gov. Consular Section public hours are 2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday except Brazilian and U.S. holidays. Non-emergency services are provided by appointment, available at 61-3312-7471 or 7063.

There are consulates in the following cities:

Recife: Rua Goncalves Maia 163, telephone 011-55-81-3416-3050, after-hours telephone 011-55-3416-3060; web site www.embaixada-americana.org.br. Consular Section public hours are 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday except Brazilian and U.S. holidays.

Rio de Janeiro: Avenida Presidente Wilson 147, telephone 011-55-21-3823-2022, after-hours 011-55-21-3823-2029; web site at http://www.embaixada-americana.org.br. Consular Section public hours are 8:30 a.m.–11:00 a.m. (passports and reports of birth by appointment) and 1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m. (notary services), Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, except Brazilian and U.S. holidays. Non-emergency passports and reports of appointments should be done by appointment; please request at acsrio@state.gov.

Sao Paulo: Rua Henri Dunant, 500 Barrio Chacara Santo Antonio, telephone 011-55-11-5186-7000, after hours telephone 011-55-11-5181-8730; web site at http://saopaulo.usconsulate.gov. Consular Section public hours are 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday and 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday except Brazilian and U.S. holidays. Non-emergency services are done by appointments, please request at ACSAPPTSPL@state.gov, by phone: 11-5186-7315 or by fax: 11-5186-7159.

There are Consular Agencies in:

Belem: Edificio Sintese 21, Av. Conselheiro Furtado 2865, Rooms 1104/1106; telephone 011-55-91-3259-4566.

Manaus: Rua Franco de Sa, 230 Sao Francisco, Edificio Atrium, Rm. 306; telephone 011-55-92-3611-3333.

Salvador da Bahia: Av. Tancredo Neves, 1632, Rm. 1401–Salvador Trade Center–Torre Sul, Caminho da Arvores; telephone 011-55-71-3113-2090/2091/2092.

Fortaleza: Av. Santos Dumont 2828 s.708–Aldeota; telephone 011-55-85-3486-1306.

Porto Alegre: The Instituto Cultural Brasil-Norteamericano, Rua Riachuelo, 1257, Centro; telephone 011-55-51-3226-3344.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Brazil is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between Brazil and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Brazilian law does not allow for a Brazilian child to travel to the United States to be adopted. Therefore, prospective adoptive parents must obtain a full and final adoption under Brazilian law before the child can immigrate to the United States.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Brazil is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Brazil, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government.

Adoption in Brazil can be a complicated process, sometimes involving long waits. Brazilian adoption law gives preference to Brazilian citizens and citizens of countries that have implemented The Hague Adoption Convention. Please be aware that without Brazilian citizenship, it is unlikely that a United States citizen will be able to adopt a healthy, single child under the age of 5 years. The following types of children are most commonly available to United States citizens without Brazilian citizenship:

- Single, healthy children, age 5+
- Sibling groups of any number and of all ages
- Special needs children of all ages

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Brazil also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Brazilian law requires prospective parents to live in Brazil with the child for a cohabitation period of at least 15 days for children under two years of age and at least 30 days for children two and over.

Age Requirements: Persons over the age of 21 may adopt, regardless of marital status. The adopting party must be at least 16 years older than the potential adoptee.

Marriage Requirements: There are no marriage requirements for adoption in Brazil.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Brazil is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Brazil must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Brazil's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Brazil's Central Authority: The State Judiciary Commission of Adoption (CEJA)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Brazil is to select an accredited or approved adoption service provider in the United States. Each Brazilian state maintains a CEJA (State Judiciary Commission of Adoption) that acts as the Central Authority and is the sole organization authorized to approve foreign adopting parents. Some CEJAs are less apt to work with American petitioners; however, the CEJAs of Alagoas, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, Santa Catarina, and São Paulo are known to work with American citizens.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the Central Authority in Brazil. The CEJA will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Brazilian law. A lawyer is not required for this service. If prospective adoptive parents are approved by CEJA, it will provide the parent(s) with a "Habilitation Approval Certificate." If both the United States and Brazil determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the CEJA may provide you with a referral for a child. Eventually identify the child(ren) eligible for adoption from a database of prospective adoptees and notify the prospective adoptive parent(s) of the match. After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he or she will notify the CEJA (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Central Authority: The State Judiciary Commission of Adoption (CEJA) is the division of government responsible for intercountry adoption in Brazil. Each Brazilian state maintains a CEJA that acts as the Central Authority and is the sole organization authorized to approve foreign adoption parents.

Role of the Court: In October 1990, Brazil promulgated a new Federal Statute for the protection of children and adolescents. In accordance with this law, priority in adoptions is given to Brazilian citizens. Other major terms of the law include:

- Adoption by proxy is prohibited
- A child will only be allowed to depart Brazilian territory when the adoption has been finalized

Role of Adoption Agencies: Prospective adoptive parents are required to use the services of an accredited or approved adoption service provider in the United States, and are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services in Brazil. Because Brazil is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an approved service provider.

Time Frame: The average time to complete an intercountry adoption in Brazil varies from three months to one year.

Adoption Application: To begin the adoption process, prospective adoptive parents must apply for permission to adopt from the CEJA. CEJA will process the application; a lawyer is not required for this service. CEJA provides the prospective adoptive parents with a "Habilitation Approval Certificate" and eventually identifies the child(ren) eligible for adoption from a database of prospective children.

The United States Consulate in Rio de Janeiro provides a letter addressed to the CEJA stating that the United States will comply with The Hague Adoption Convention (i.e. that the adopted child will be a United States citizen and have all rights as any United States citizen). This letter is provided only after the USCIS has approved the I-800A application and a copy of the approval is received by the United States Consulate in Rio de Janeiro.

Once the adoptive parents satisfy Brazilian adoption requirements, a judge may grant a final adoption. The Brazilian government will then allow the child to leave Brazil.

Adoption Fees: There are no government fees to open a dossier with the CEJA. Unfortunately it is difficult to determine an average cost for attorneys in Brazil since prices vary from state to state, and on the qualifications of the attorney.

Documents Required: According to CEJA statutes, petitioners must provide at a minimum the following:

- A home study including a psychological evaluation and medical report(s) of prospective adoptive parent(s) stating they are in good health and capable to adopt;
- Certificate of Residence—proof of home ownership or an affidavit from landlord regarding the apartment lease;
- Photos of the prospective adoptive parents') residence (inside and outside);
- Pictures of prospective adoptive family and grandparents, if possible;
- Notice of Approval of I-800A petition;
- Copy of Petitioner's United States passport(s), photo and signature page;
- Police records, requested within one year;
- Last filed Federal Income Tax return;
- Marriage certificate (if applicable);
- Birth certificate(s) of prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Divorce Decree (if applicable);
- Copy of applicant's current state of residence law on adoptions, including statement that the law is still in effect (generally obtained at a state Court House, from a Senator's office, or lawyer);
- Handwritten signed statement from prospective adoptive parent(s) saying they are aware that adoption in Brazil is free and irrevocable; and
- Statement that prospective adoptive parent(s) is (are) aware that they must not establish any contact in Brazil with prospective child's birth parent(s) or guardian (if applicable) before the authorization from CEJA is issued.

All documents must be translated into Portuguese and authenticated by the Brazilian Embassy and/or Consulate in the United States. For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: According to Brazilian law, there are no post-adoption requirements of adoptive parents.

Contact Information
U.S. Embassy in Brazil
Avenida Presidente Wilson,
147, Castelo
Rio de Janeiro RJ 20030-020
Tel: (55) (21) 3823-2000
Fax: (55) (21) 3823-2083
Email: IVadoptionRDJ@state.gov.

Brazilian Embassy
3006 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: (202) 238-2700
Fax: (202) 238-2827
Website: www.brasilemb.org

Brazilian Consulates are located in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Francisco.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
Email: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

Brazil's Central Authority: The State Judiciary Commission of Adoption (CEJA) is the division of government responsible for intercountry adoption in Brazil. Each Brazilian state maintains a CEJA that acts as the Central Authority and is the sole organization authorized to approve foreign adopting parents. Visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov for a list of known offices and addresses.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this circular relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is

provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Brazil is organized as a federal republic with a civil law system. The Federal Union and the states have their own court systems, which follow the same civil procedure. There is no civil jury system in Brazil. Local family courts handle divorce and custody cases in Brazil. Hague petitions submitted to the Central Authority are filed with a federal court.

In conflicts between a local court and a federal court, the federal court has precedence. Brazilian courts can uphold a U.S. custody order, however, the order must first be registered in Brazil, which is a lengthy process called homologation.

Child Custody Law: Under the Brazilian Civil Code, married parents have equal rights of custody to their minor children. Legal guardianship goes automatically to a mother when the child is born out of wedlock, unless the father files for custody with a family court. While parents share a presumption of equal rights of custody, the U.S. Embassy in Brasilia notes that bias based on gender or nationality does occur. Mothers are often given preference in custody cases involving small children or girls and a Brazilian parent is favored over a foreign parent.

Divorce and custody disputes are not uncommon in Brazil. The U.S. Embassy in Brasilia, however, feels that compared to other court processes, family court cases are resolved in a relatively short period of time. Parents seeking the recognition of U.S. custody orders can initiate a process called homologation, which consists of registering the U.S. decision in Brazil. The process is very lengthy and ultimately must be upheld by a Brazilian court.

Right of Visitation: Brazilian courts grant visitation rights to parents residing outside of the country. The specifics of visitation are determined by a divorce decree or custody order. Parents seeking to enforce visitation rights already granted by a foreign or Brazilian court order may do so directly with a Brazilian court or through the Hague Convention. Additionally, parents may initially seek visitation or access rights through the Hague Convention.

Criminal Aspects: Under Brazilian law, parental abduction is a crime when committed within Brazil and both parents are Brazilian. An international parental abduction, involving a Brazilian parent taking a child to Brazil in interference with a foreign parent's custodial rights, is not considered a crime. Additionally, the Brazilian Constitution prohibits the extradition of its own nationals, preventing a taking parent of Brazilian nationality from being extradited for parental kidnapping.

Citizenship/Passports: If one of the parents of a child is a Brazilian citizen, then the child is a Brazilian citizen, regardless of place of birth or any other citizenship that may be possessed by the child. Children born in the U.S. may travel to Brazil on a U.S. passport and be documented as Brazilian citizens upon arriving in Brazil. It is also possible for children born in the U.S. to be registered and documented as Brazilian citizens by a Brazilian Consulate in the U.S., allowing the child to travel out of the U.S. on a Brazilian passport. All children born in Brazil, except those born to people on the diplomatic blue list, are Brazilian citizens.

Under Brazilian law, neither parent can travel alone with a child without the written consent of the absent parent or a court order granting either sole custody to the traveling parent or permission to travel with the child. This applies to both domestic and international travel and includes married parents. Additionally, both parents' consent is necessary for the issuance of a Brazilian passport.

In order for a parent to request that a Brazilian passport not be issued to their child, he/she must petition a family court in Brazil and provide an explanation as to why the passport should not be issued to the child. If a passport has already been issued, the parent may request that a judge take possession of the passport and not release the passport to either parent. When a judge receives a petition for the return of a minor under the Hague Convention, the court seizes the travel documents of the child and the abducting parent and retains the documents until a final decision is issued.

Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Parental Abduction: The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Parental Abduction (the "Hague Convention") came into force between the United States and Brazil on December 1, 2003.

Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return or access would apply to children abducted or retained after December 1, 2003. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Brazil prior to December 1, 2003, may still submit applications for return or access to the Brazilian Central Authority in some cases.

The Central Authority is located at Secretaria de Estado dos Direitos Humanos, Esplanada dos Ministerios, Edificio Sede, sala 212 70064-900 Brasilia. The international telephone number is 55-61-3-429-3481 and the fax number is 55-61-3-226-7980. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov. For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



BRUNEI

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Negara Brunei Darussalam

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 5,765 sq. km. (2,226 sq. mi.), slightly larger than Delaware.
Cities: Capital—Bandar Seri Begawan.
Terrain: East—flat coastal plain rises to mountains; west—hilly lowland with a few mountain ridges.
Climate: Equatorial; high temperatures, humidity, and rainfall.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bruneian(s).
Population: (2007 est.) 390,000.
Annual growth rate: (2007 est., Government of Brunei): 1.8%.
Ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese, other indigenous groups.
Religions: Islam.
Languages: Malay, English, Chinese; Iban and other indigenous dialects.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy (2006)—94.7%.
Health: Life expectancy (years)—75.2 (men), 77.8 (women) yrs. Infant mortality rate (2007 est. Government of Brunei)—7.6/1,000.

Government

Type: Malay Islamic Monarchy.
Independence: January 1, 1984.
Constitution: 1959.
Government branches: Executive—Sultan is both head of state and Prime Minister, presiding over a fourteen-member cabinet. Legislative—a Legislative Council has been reactivated after a 20-year suspension to play an advisory role for the Sultan. Judicial (based on Indian penal code and English common law)—magistrate's courts, High Court, Court of Appeals, Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (sits in London).
Political subdivisions: Four districts—Brunei-Muara, Belait, Tutong, and Temburong.

Economy

GDP: (2007, Government of Brunei) U.S. $12.341 billion.
Growth rate: (2007, Government of Brunei) 0.6%.
Natural resources: Oil and natural gas.
Trade: Exports—oil, liquefied natural gas, petroleum products, garments. Major markets—Japan, Korea, ASEAN, U.S. Imports—machinery and transport equipment, manufactured goods. Major suppliers—ASEAN, Japan, U.S., EU.

PEOPLE

Many cultural and linguistic differences make Brunei Malays distinct from the larger Malay populations in nearby Malaysia and Indonesia, even though they are ethnically related and share the Muslim religion.

Brunei has hereditary nobility, carrying the title Pengiran. The Sultan can award to commoners the title Pehin, the equivalent of a life peerage awarded in the United Kingdom. The Sultan also can award his subjects the Dato, the equivalent of a knighthood in the United Kingdom, and Datin, the equivalent of damehood. Bruneians adhere to the practice of using complete full names with all titles, including the title Haji (for men) or Hajah (for women) for those who have made the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca. Many Brunei Malay women wear the tudong, a traditional head covering. Men wear the songkok, a traditional Malay cap. Men who have completed the Haj can wear a white songkok.

The requirements to attain Brunei citizenship include passing tests in Malay culture, customs, and language. Stateless permanent residents of Brunei are given International Certificates of Identity, which allow them to travel overseas. The majority of Brunei's Chinese are permanent

residents, and many are stateless. An amendment to the National Registration and Immigration Act of 2002 allowed female Bruneian citizens for the first time to transfer their nationality to their children.

Oil wealth allows the Brunei Government to provide the population with one of Asia's finest health care systems. Malaria has been eradicated, and cholera is virtually nonexistent. There are five general hospitals—in Bandar Seri Begawan, Tutong, Kuala Belait, Bangar, and Seria—and there are numerous health clinics throughout the country.

Education starts with preschool, followed by 6 years of primary education and up to 7 years of secondary education. Nine years of education are mandatory. Most of Brunei's college students attend universities and other institutions abroad, but approximately 3,674 (2005) study at the University of Brunei Darussalam. Opened in 1985, the university has a faculty of more than 300 instructors and is located on a sprawling campus overlooking the South China Sea.

The official language is Malay, but English is widely understood and used in business. Other languages spoken are several Chinese dialects, Iban, and a number of native dialects. Islam is the official religion, but religious freedom is guaranteed under the constitution.

HISTORY

Historians believe there was a forerunner to the present Brunei Sultanate, which the Chinese called Po-ni. Chinese and Arabic records indicate that this ancient trading kingdom existed at the mouth of the Brunei River as early as the seventh or eighth century A.D. This early kingdom was apparently conquered by the Sumatran Hindu Empire of Srivijaya in the early ninth century, which later controlled northern Borneo and the Philippines. It was subjugated briefly by the Java-based Majapahit Empire but soon regained its independence and once again rose to prominence. The Brunei Empire had its golden age from the 15th to the 17th centuries, when its control extended over the entire island of Borneo and north into the Philippines. Brunei was particularly powerful under the fifth sultan, Bolkiah (1473-1521), who was famed for his sea exploits and even briefly captured Manila; and under the ninth sultan, Hassan (1605-19), who fully developed an elaborate Royal Court structure, elements of which remain today.

After Sultan Hassan, Brunei entered a period of decline due to internal battles over royal succession as well as the rising influences of European colonial powers in the region that, among other things, disrupted traditional trading patterns, destroying the economic base of Brunei and many other Southeast Asian sultanates. In 1839, the English adventurer James Brooke arrived in Borneo and helped the Sultan put down a rebellion. As a reward, he became governor and later "Rajah" of Sarawak in northwest Borneo and gradually expanded the territory under his control.

Meanwhile, the British North Borneo Company was expanding its control over territory in northeast Borneo. In 1888, Brunei became a protectorate of the British Government, retaining internal independence but with British control over external affairs. In 1906, Brunei accepted a further measure of British control when executive power was transferred to a British resident, who advised the ruler on all matters except those concerning local custom and religion.

In 1959, a new constitution was written declaring Brunei a self-governing state, while its foreign affairs, security, and defense remained the responsibility of the United Kingdom. An attempt in 1962 to introduce a partially elected legislative body with limited powers was abandoned after the opposition political party, Parti Rakyat Brunei, launched an armed uprising, which the government put down with the help of British forces. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the government also resisted pressures to join neighboring Sabah and Sarawak in the newly formed Malaysia. The Sultan eventually decided that Brunei would remain an independent state. In 1967, Sultan Omar abdicated in favor of his eldest son, Hassanal Bolkiah, who became the 29th ruler. The former Sultan remained as Defense Minister and assumed the royal title Seri Begawan. In 1970, the national capital, Brunei Town, was renamed Bandar Seri Begawan in his honor. The Seri Begawan died in 1986.

On January 4, 1979, Brunei and the United Kingdom signed a new treaty of friendship and cooperation. On January 1, 1984, Brunei Darussalam became a fully independent state.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

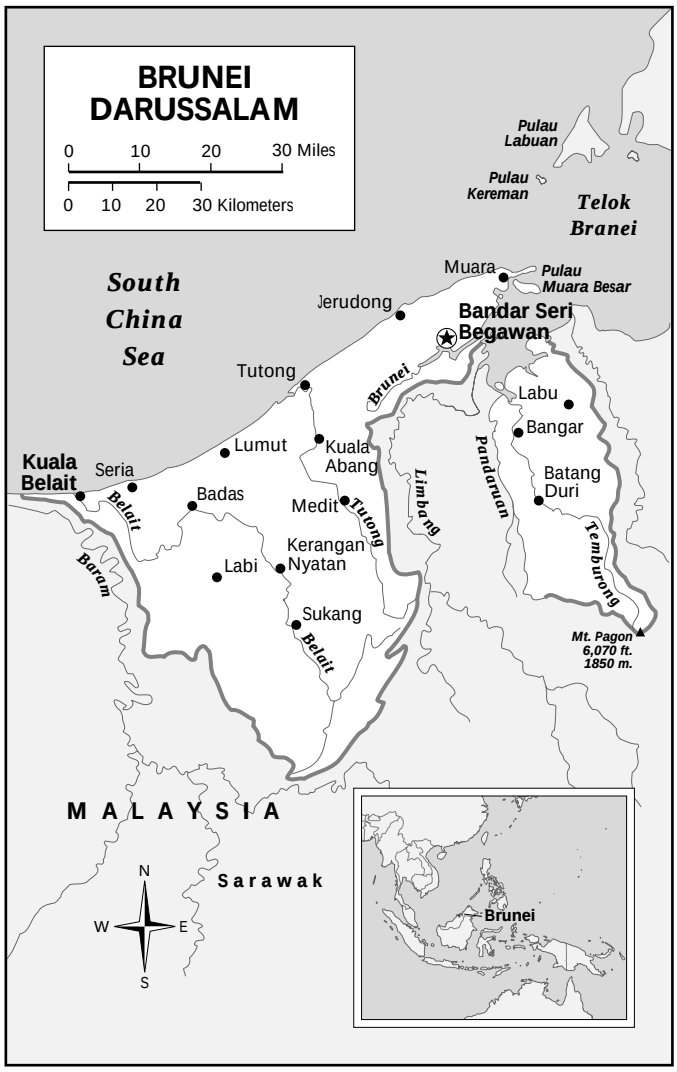
Under Brunei's 1959 constitution, the Sultan is the head of state with full executive authority, including emergency powers since 1962. The Sultan is assisted and advised by five councils, which he appoints. A Council of Ministers, or cabinet, which currently consists of 14 members (including the Sultan himself), assists in the administration of the government. The Sultan presides over the cabinet as Prime Minister and also holds the positions of Minister of Defense and Minister of Finance. His son, the Crown Prince, serves as Senior Minister. One of the Sultan's brothers, Prince Mohamed, serves as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Brunei's legal system is based on English common law, with an independent judiciary, a body of written common law judgments and statutes, and legislation enacted by the Sultan. The local magistrates' courts try most cases. More serious cases go before the High Court, which sits for about 2 weeks every few months. Brunei has an arrangement with the United Kingdom whereby United Kingdom judges are appointed as the judges for Brunei's High Court and Court of Appeal. Final appeal can be made to the Judicial Committee of the Privy

Council in London in civil but not criminal cases. Brunei also has a separate system of Islamic courts that apply Sharia law in family and other matters involving Muslims.

The Government of Brunei assures continuing public support for the current form of government by providing economic benefits such as subsidized food, fuel, and housing; free education and medical care; and low-interest loans for government employees. The Sultan said in a 1989 interview that he intended to proceed, with prudence, to establish more liberal institutions in the country and that he would reintroduce elections and a legislature when he "[could] see evidence of a genuine interest in politics on the part of a responsible majority of Bruneians." In 2004 the Sultan issued amendments to the constitution and re-introduced an appointed Legislative Council with minimal powers. Currently, five of the 31 seats on the Council are indirectly elected by village leaders. Brunei's economy is almost totally supported by exports of crude oil and natural gas. The government uses its earnings in part to build up its foreign reserves.

The Brunei Investment Agency manages the bulk of the nation's foreign investments, which are reported to have reached more than $30 billion. The country's wealth, coupled with its membership in the United Nations, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference give it an influence in the world disproportionate to its size.



Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Sultan: **HASSANAL Bolkiah, Sir**
Prime Min.: **HASSANAL Bolkiah, Sir**
Min. of Communications: **Awang ABU BAKAR bin Apong**
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Sports: **MOHAMMAD bin Daud, Gen. (Ret.)**
Min. of Defense: **HASSANAL Bolkiah, Sir**
Min. of Development: **ABDULLAH bin Begawan**
Min. of Education: **Abdul RAHMAN bin Mohamed Taib**
Min. of Energy: **YAHYA bin Begawan**
Min. of Finance: **HASSANAL Bolkiah, Sir**
Min. of Finance II: **ABDUL RAHMAN bin Ibrahim**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Trade: **MOHAMED Bolkiah, Prince**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Trade II: **LIM Jock Seng**
Min. of Health: **SUYOI bin Osman**
Min. of Home Affairs: **ADANAN bin Begawan**
Min. of Industry & Primary Resources: **AHMAD bin Jumat, Dr.**
Min. of Religious Affairs: **MOHD ZAIN bin Serudin, Dr.**
Senior Min. in the Prime Min.'s Office: **Al Muhtadee BILLAH, Crown Prince**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **EMRAN bin Bahar**

Brunei Darussalam maintains an embassy in the United States at 3520 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel. 202-237-1838.

ECONOMY

Brunei's economy enjoyed moderate growth in the mid-2000s, primarily due to high world oil and gas prices. Recently, Brunei's growth has fallen sharply. In 2007, the government reported a growth rate of 0.6%. Brunei continues to have one of the lowest GDP growth rates of any ASEAN nation.

Brunei is the third-largest oil producer in Southeast Asia, averaging

about 193,832 barrels a day in 2007. It also is the ninth-largest exporter of liquefied natural gas in the world. Like many oil producing countries, Brunei's economy has followed the swings of the world oil market. Economic growth has averaged around 2.8% in the 2000s, heavily dependent on oil and gas production. Oil production has averaged around 200,000 barrels a day during the 2000s, while liquefied natural gas output has been slightly under or over 1,000 trillion btu/day over the same period. Oil production has dropped slightly in recent years, and growth rates have fallen more significantly. Brunei is estimated to have oil reserves expected to last 25 years, and enough natural gas reserves to last 40 years.

Brunei Shell Petroleum (BSP), a joint venture owned in equal shares by the Brunei Government and the Royal Dutch/Shell group of companies, is the chief oil and gas production company in Brunei. It also operates the country's only refinery. BSP and four sister companies—including the liquefied natural gas producing firm BLNG—constitute the largest employer in Brunei after the government. BSP's small refinery has a distillation capacity of 10,000 barrels per day. This satisfies domestic demand for most petroleum products.

The French oil company Total (then known as ELF Aquitaine) became active in petroleum exploration in Brunei in the 1980s. The joint venture Total E&P Borneo BV currently produces approximately 35,000 barrels per day and 13% of Brunei's natural gas.

In 2003, Malaysia disputed Brunei-awarded oil exploration concessions for offshore blocks J and K (Total and Shell respectively), which led to the Brunei licensees ceasing exploration activities. Negotiations between the two countries are continuing in order to resolve the conflict. Two on-shore blocks are being explored following awards to two consortia—one Canadian-led and the other an Australian-led operating consortium. Australia, Indonesia, and Korea were the largest customers for Brunei's oil exports, taking over 67% of Brunei's total crude exports. Traditional customers Japan, the U.S., and China each took around 5% of total crude exports.

Almost all of Brunei's natural gas is liquefied at Brunei Shell's Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plant, which opened in 1972 and is one of the largest LNG plants in the world. Some 90% of Brunei's LNG produced is sold to Japan under a long-term agreement renewed in 1993. The agreement calls for Brunei to provide over 5 million tons of LNG per year to three Japanese utilities, namely to TEPCo, Tokyo Electric Power Co. (J.TER or 5001), Tokyo Gas Co. (J.TYG or 9531) and Osaka Gas Co. (J.OSG or 9532). The Japanese company, Mitsubishi, is a joint venture partner with Shell and the Brunei Government in Brunei LNG, Brunei Coldgas, and Brunei Shell Tankers, which together produce the LNG and supply it to Japan. Since 1995, Brunei has supplied more than 700,000 tons of LNG to the Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS) as well. In 2007, total natural gas production reached 1.021 billion cubic feet per day. A small amount of natural gas is used for domestic power generation. Since 2001, Japan remains the dominant export market for natural gas. Brunei is the fourth-largest exporter of LNG in the world (according to the Brunei Economic Development Board) behind Indonesia, Malaysia, and Australia.

The government sought in the past decade to diversify the economy with limited success. Oil and gas and government spending still account for most of Brunei's economic activity. Brunei's non-petroleum industries include agriculture, forestry, fishing, aquaculture, and banking. The garment-for-export industry has been shrinking since the U.S. eliminated its garment quota system at the end of 2004. The Brunei Economic Development Board (BEDB) announced plans in 2003 to use proven gas reserves to establish downstream industrial projects. In 2006, the Brunei Methanol Company, a joint venture between Petroleum Brunei, Mitsubishi, and Itochu, was established. Initial construction on a $400 million methanol plant, fed by natural gas, was started in 2007 and the plant is expected to come on line in 2010. The government has plans to build a power plant in the Sungai Liang region to power a proposed aluminum smelting plant that will depend on foreign investors. A second major project depending on foreign investment is in the planning stage: a giant container hub at the Muara Port facilities. BEDB appointed a port operator, International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) from the Philippines.

The government regulates the immigration of foreign labor out of concern it might disrupt Brunei's society. Work permits for foreigners are issued only for short periods and must be continually renewed. Despite these restrictions, the estimated 100,000 foreign temporary residents of Brunei make up a significant portion of the work force. The government reported a total work force of 188,000 in 2007, with a derived unemployment rate of 3.4%.

Oil and natural gas account for almost all exports. Since only a few products other than petroleum are produced locally, a wide variety of items must be imported. Nonetheless, Brunei has had a significant trade surplus in the 2000s. Official statistics show Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, the U.S., and China as the leading importers in 2006. The United States was the third-largest supplier of imports to Brunei in 2007.

Brunei's substantial foreign reserves are managed by the Brunei Investment Agency (BIA), an arm of the Ministry of Finance. BIA's guiding principle is to increase the real value of Brunei's foreign reserves while pursuing a diverse investment strategy, with holdings in the United States, Japan, Western Europe, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries.

The Brunei Government encourages more foreign investment. New enterprises that meet certain criteria can receive pioneer status, exempting profits from income tax for up to 5 years, depending on the amount of capital invested. The normal corpo-

rate income tax rate is 30%. There is no personal income tax or capital gains tax.

One of the government's priorities is to encourage the development of Brunei Malays as leaders of industry and commerce. There are no specific restrictions of foreign equity ownership, but local participation, both shared capital and management, is encouraged. Such participation helps when tendering for contracts with the government or Brunei Shell Petroleum.

Companies in Brunei must either be incorporated locally or registered as a branch of a foreign company and must be registered with the Registrar of Companies. Public companies must have a minimum of seven shareholders. Private companies must have a minimum of two but not more than 50 shareholders. At least half of the directors in a company must be residents of Brunei.

The government owns a cattle farm in Australia through which the country's beef supplies are processed. At 2,262 square miles, this ranch is larger than Brunei itself. Eggs and chickens are largely produced locally, but most of Brunei's other food needs must be imported. Agriculture, aquaculture, and fisheries are among the industrial sectors that the government has selected for highest priority in its efforts to diversify the economy.

Since 2002, the government has worked to develop Brunei as an international offshore financial center as well as a center for Islamic banking. Brunei is keen on the development of small and medium enterprises and has established a technology incubator to encourage the development of an information technology industry. Brunei has also promoted ecotourism to take advantage of the over 70% of Brunei's territory that remains primal tropical rainforest. Brunei is a participant and seeks to take a leadership role in the trilateral Heart of Borneo conservation initiative.

DEFENSE

The Sultan is both Minister of Defense and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (RBAF). All infantry, navy, and air combat units are made up of volunteers. There are three infantry battalions equipped with armored reconnaissance vehicles and armored personnel carriers and supported by Rapier air defense missiles and a flotilla of coastal patrol vessels armed with surface-to-surface missiles. Brunei ordered three offshore patrol vessels from the U.K. but is reportedly seeking to sell these to a third country. Brunei has ordered an unconfirmed number of smaller patrol vessels to replace its aging fleet, but the sale has not been finalized.

Brunei has a defense agreement with the United Kingdom, under which a British Armed Forces Ghurka battalion (1,500 men) is permanently stationed in Seria, near the center of Brunei's oil industry. The RBAF has joint exercises, training programs, and other military cooperation with the United Kingdom and many other countries, including the United States. The U.S. and Brunei signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on defense cooperation in November 1994. The two countries conduct an annual military exercise called CARAT.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Brunei joined ASEAN on January 7, 1984—one week after resuming full independence—and gives its ASEAN membership the highest priority in its foreign relations. Brunei joined the UN in September 1984. It also is a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Brunei hosted the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in November 2000 and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 2002.

U.S.-BRUNEI RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Brunei date from the 1800s. On April 6, 1845, the U.S.S. Constitution visited Brunei. The two countries concluded a Treaty of Peace, Friendship, Commerce and Navigation in 1850, which remains in force today. The United States maintained a consulate in Brunei from 1865 to 1867.

The U.S. welcomed Brunei Darussalam's full independence from the United Kingdom on January 1, 1984, and opened an Embassy in Bandar Seri Begawan on that date. Brunei opened its embassy in Washington in March 1984. Brunei's armed forces engage in joint exercises, training programs, and other military cooperation with the U.S. A memorandum of understanding on defense cooperation was signed on November 29, 1994. The Sultan visited Washington in December 2002 and visited the Pacific Command in Hawaii with Ambassador William E. Todd in November 2008.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN (E) 3rd Flr Teck Guan Plaza, Jalan Sultan, Bandar Seri Begawan, APO/FPO Unit 4280 Box 40; FPO AP 96507-0040, (673) 222-9670, Fax (673) 222-5293, Workweek: 7:45am-4:30pm, Website: bandar.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Allyson Cornish
DHS/CIS:	(Singapore)
FM:	(Singapore)
MGT:	Terry Murphree
POL/ECO:	John McIntyre
CON:	John McIntyre
DCM:	John McIntyre
GSO:	Terry Murphree
RSO:	Nicholas C Porter
DAO:	(Singapore)
EEO:	(Singapore)
FMO:	(Singapore)
IMO:	Misty Knotts
IPO:	Misty Knotts
IRS:	(Singapore)
ISO:	Misty Knotts
ISSO:	Misty Knotts

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 9, 2008

Country Description: Brunei Darussalam is a small Islamic Sultanate on the northwest coast of the Island of Borneo. It is divided into four districts, namely Brunei/Muara, Tutong, Belait and Temburong. The capital, Bandar Seri Begawan, is its only major city. Brunei's official language is Malay but English is widely understood and used in business. Tourist facilities and services are generally available throughout the country. For more information concerning Brunei, please see the Government of Brunei website at http://www.brunei.gov.bn.

Entry Requirements: U.S. passport-holders must have at least six months' validity remaining on their passport before entering Brunei for business or pleasure and are required to obtain a visa prior to arrival in Brunei for visits of 90 days or longer. Diplomatic and official passport-holders are also required to apply for a visa to enter Brunei Darussalam. There is an airport departure tax. For further information about entry or exit requirements, travelers may consult the Consular Section of the Embassy of Brunei, 3520 International Court NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 237-1838, or visit the Embassy of Brunei web site at http://www.bruneiembassy.org for the most current visa information.

As of June 12, 2004, immigration offenses are punishable by caning. Workers who overstay their visas can face jail sentences and three strokes of the cane. Those associated with violators, such as contractors or employers, are subject to the same penalties if the violator is found guilty.

Safety and Security: Following the October 2002, August 2003, September 2004 and October 2005 terrorist bombings in Indonesia, the Department of State continues to be concerned that terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) that have transnational capability to carry out terrorist attacks may do so in various Southeast Asian nations, including Brunei. JI is known to have cells operating in Southeast Asia and to have connections with Al-Qaeda and other regional terrorist groups. JI also has been tied to previous regional terrorist attacks. As security is increased at official U.S. facilities, terrorists will seek softer targets. These may include, but are not limited to, facilities where Americans and other Westerners are known to live, congregate, shop or visit, including, but not limited to, hotels, clubs, restaurants, shopping centers, housing compounds, transportation systems, places of worship, schools or outdoor recreation events. Americans in Brunei should continue to be vigilant with regard to their personal security, maintain a low profile, vary times and routes during their daily routines and report any suspicious activity to the local police or to the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer, who can be reached at the phone number listed at the end of this information sheet.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Though there is some crime, violent crime is rare. Burglaries and theft is on the rise. Americans are reminded to be prudent in their own personal security practices.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

In Brunei, the local equivalents to the "911" emergency line are: 993 for Brunei Police, 955 for Fire & Rescue and 998 for Search & Rescue.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: There is adequate care for basic medical conditions in Brunei; however, due to unpredictable shortages of materials and uncertain support staff, elective surgery or complicated care is best obtained in Singapore or elsewhere.

Brunei has imposed HIV/AIDS travel restrictions as part of a ban on communicable diseases. In October 2003, Ministry of Health (MOH) of Brunei Darussalam required all travelers entering Brunei to fill out a Health Declaration Card and submit it to the Officer-In-Charge (MOH) upon disembarkation. Under Section 7, Infectious Diseases Order 2003 of MOH, travelers may be subjected to a medical examination upon arrival in Brunei Darussalam. Travelers also may be quarantined if infected or suspected to be infected with infectious disease or in if travelers have had contacted with such a person, under Section 15, Infectious Diseases Order 2003 of Ministry of Health Brunei. Please inquire directly with the Embassy of Brunei at http://www.bruneiembassy.org before you travel.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling

abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning road and driving conditions in foreign countries is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Brunei has an extensive network of roads of generally good though varying quality throughout the country that includes highways, link roads, flyovers and roundabouts. Holders of foreign driving license are permitted to drive in Brunei Darussalam for 90 days only. For longer stays a foreign driving license must be endorsed to a Brunei driving license at any Land Transport Department office. Drivers must obey traffic rules at all the times and should take extra caution when approaching traffic signals. In urban areas, some local drivers have run through red lights resulting in several deadly accidents in recent years.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed Brunei's Department of Civil Aviation as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Brunei's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Immigration Violations: Americans in Brunei are subject to the laws of the country and may be arrested for violation of the new immigration regulations, or any other law. In such cases, the Embassy will provide consular services to American citizens arrested in Brunei, in accordance with international law and U.S. regulations. However, the Embassy may not intervene in local judicial matters. Americans should be aware that the new immigration law is more stringent and less flexible than the previous one, with harsher penalties.

The Embassy strongly recommends that U.S. citizens on contract in Brunei be fully aware of their immigration status and of crucial dates regarding contract extensions and renewals, and have their employment documents in order. It would be wise to apply the same approach to any personal and domestic staff they may have hired, to ensure that they, too, do not run afoul of Brunei immigration regulations.

Dual Nationality: Brunei does not recognize or permit dual nationality. Brunei nationals are expected to enter and exit on their Brunei passports. Should Brunei authorities learn that a person is a dual national, they may require renunciation of United States or Brunei citizenship immediately.

Customs Regulations: Brunei customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export of items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities, medications, business equipment, currency restrictions, ivory and alcohol. For non-Muslims, limited amounts of alcohol for personal consumption are permitted. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Brunei in Washington, D.C. for specific information regarding customs requirements. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Brunei laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession or use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Brunei are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Brunei are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Brunei. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the embassy or consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on the 3rd floor, Teck Guan Plaza, at the corner of Jalan Sultan and Jalan McArthur, Bandar Seri Begawan BS 8811, Brunei Darussalam. Mail sent from the United States can be addressed to the Embassy's address: American Embassy, P.O. Box 2991, Bandar Seri Begawan BS8675, Negara Brunei Darussalam. The telephone number is 673-222-0384, fax number (673) (2) 225-293 and e-mail address amEmbassy_BSB@state.gov. The Consular section's e-mail address is: ConsularBrunei@state.gov. The Embassy's after-hours number for emergency calls is (673) (8) 730-691.



BULGARIA

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Bulgaria

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 110,910 sq. km. (slightly larger than Tennessee).
Cities: Capital—Sofia 1.2 million. Others: Plovdiv—368,568, Varna—349,482.
Terrain: Bulgaria is located in South Central Europe. The terrain is varied, containing large mountainous areas, fertile valleys, plains and a coastline along the Black Sea.
Climate: Continental—mild summers and cold, snowy winters.

People

Population: (2007) 7,640,238.
Growth rate: (2007) -0.50%.
Ethnic groups: (2001) Bulgarian 83.94%, Turkish 9.42%, Roma 4.68%, and other 2% (including Macedonian, Armenian, Tatar, Circassian).
Religions: (2001) Bulgarian Orthodox 82.6%, Muslim 12.2%, Roman Catholic 0.6%, Protestant 0.5%, others.
Languages: Bulgarian 84.5%, other 15.5%.
Health: Life expectancy (2006)—male 68.68 years; female 76.13 years. Infant mortality rate (2006)—19.85 deaths/1,000 live births.
Work force: (2007 est.) 4.817 million. Agriculture—11%; industry—32.7%; services—32% (3rd qtr. 2004 est.).

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.
Constitution: Adopted July 12, 1991.
Independence: 1908 (from the Ottoman Empire).
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly or Narodno Subranie—240 seats. Members are elected by popular vote of party/coalition lists of candidates for 4-year terms. As of January 2008, seat allocation is as follows: CfB—82, NMSS—36, MRF—34, UDF—16, DSB—16, BND—16, BPU—13, Ataka—11, and independents—16. Judicial—three-tiered system.
Political subdivisions: 28 provinces plus the capital region of Sofia.
Suffrage: Universal at 18 years of age.
Political parties: Coalition of Bulgaria or CfB (coalition of parties dominated by BSP); Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP); National Movement Simeon II (NMSS); Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF); United Democratic Forces (UDF); Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB); Bulgarian Peoples Union (BPU); Bulgarian New Democracy or BND (a parliamentary group formed by NMSS defectors); Attack Coalition (ATAKA); and Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB). Results from the June 25, 2005 general election are as follows: CfB 31.1%, NMSS 19.9%, MRF 12.7%, ATAKA 8.2%, UDF 7.7%, DSB 6.5%, BPU 5.2%.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $41 billion.
Real GDP growth: 6.2% (2007); 6.3% (2006); 5% (2005); 6% (2004); 5.6& (2003).
Per capita GDP: (PPP, 2007 est.) $11,300.
Inflation rate: 12.5% (2007), 6.5% (2006); 5% (2005); 6% (2004); 5.6% (2003).
Unemployment rate: 7.7% (2007 average), 6.62% (November 2007), 9.61% (2006 average); 11.5% (2005); 12.7% (2004 average); 14.25% (2003 average).
Natural resources: Bauxite, copper, lead, zinc, coal, and timber.
Exchange rate: Lev per $1 U.S.=1.42 (2007 average); 1.56 (2006 average); 1.57 (2005 average); 1.58 (2004 average); 1.73 (2003 average).

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Bulgaria shares a border with Turkey and Greece to the south, Macedonia and Serbia to the west, Romania to the north, and the Black Sea to the east.

The capital, Sofia, lies in the western region of the country. Ethnic groups

include Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma, and others. The official language is Bulgarian.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Ancient Thrace was partially located on the territory of modern Bulgaria, and Thracian culture provides a wealth of archeological sites within Bulgaria. In the second century A.D., the Bulgars came to Europe from their old homeland, the Kingdom of Balhara situated in the Mount Imeon area (present Hindu Kush in northern Afghanistan).

The first Bulgarian state was established in 635 A.D., located along the north coast of the Black Sea. In 681 A.D. the first Bulgarian state on the territory of modern Bulgaria was founded. This state consisted of a mixture of Slav and Bulgar peoples. In 864, Bulgaria adopted Orthodox Christianity. The First Bulgarian Kingdom, considered to be Bulgaria's "Golden Age," emerged under Tsar Simeon I in 893-927. During this time, Bulgarian art and literature flourished. Followers of Saints Cyril and Methodius are believed to have developed the Cyrillic alphabet in Bulgaria in the early 10th century.

In 1018, the Byzantine Empire conquered Bulgaria. In 1185 the Bulgarians broke free of Byzantine rule and established the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. A number of Bulgaria's famous monasteries were founded during this period. Following the 1242 Mongol invasion, this kingdom began losing territory to its neighbors. Ottoman expansion into the Balkan Peninsula eventually reached Bulgaria, and in 1396 Bulgaria became part of the Ottoman Empire. During the five centuries of Ottoman rule, most of Bulgaria's indigenous cultural centers were destroyed. Several Bulgarian uprisings were brutally suppressed and a great many people fled abroad. The April uprising of 1876, the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78), and the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3, 1878, the date of Bulgaria's national holiday), began Bulgaria's liberation from the Ottoman Empire, but complete independence was not recognized until 1908.

During the first half of the 20th century, Bulgaria was marred by social and political unrest. Bulgaria participated in the First and Second Balkan Wars (1912 and 1913) and sided with the Central Powers, and later the Axis Powers, during the two World Wars. Although allied with Germany during World War II, Bulgaria never declared war on the Soviet Union and never sent troops abroad to fight under Nazi command. Near the end of World War II, Bulgaria changed sides to fight the German army all the way to Austria; 30,000 Bulgarian troops were killed.

Bulgaria had a mixed record during World War II, when it was allied with Nazi Germany under a March 1941 agreement. The Law for the Protection of the Nation, enacted in January 1941, divested Jews of property, livelihood, civil rights, and personal security. Despite a February 1943 agreement requiring Bulgaria to transfer Bulgaria's Jews to Nazi extermination camps in Poland, Bulgaria did not actually deport any Bulgarian Jews or Roma to Nazi concentration camps. Under that agreement, however, Bulgarian forces transferred approximately 11,000 Jews from Bulgarian-occupied territory (Thrace and Macedonia) to Nazi concentration camps. In June 1943 the government "re-settled" Sofia's 25,000 Jews to rural areas. Tsar Boris—supported by the parliament (especially its prominent Deputy Speaker, Dimitar Peshev), the Orthodox Church, and the general public—aided the Jewish community and helped its 50,000 members survive the war, despite harsh conditions. The Bulgarian Jews remained safe, and when they were permitted to emigrate to Israel after the war, most of them did.

King Simeon II assumed control of the throne in 1943 at the age of six following the death of his father Boris III. With the entry of Soviet troops into Bulgaria in September 1944 and the defeat of the Axis Powers in World War II, communism emerged as the dominant political force within Bulgaria. Simeon, who later returned and served as Prime Minister, was forced into exile in 1946 and resided primarily in Madrid, Spain. By 1946, Bulgaria had become a satellite of the Soviet Union, remaining so throughout the Cold War period. Todor Zhivkov, the head of the Bulgarian Communist Party, ruled the country for much of this period. During his 27 years as leader of Bulgaria, democratic opposition was crushed; agriculture was collectivized and industry was nationalized; and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church fell under the control of the state.

In 1989, Zhivkov was removed from power, and democratic change began. The first multi-party elections since World War II were held in 1990. The ruling communist party changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party and won the June 1990 elections. Following a period of social unrest and passage of a new constitution, the first fully democratic parliamentary elections were held in 1991 in which the Union of Democratic Forces won. The first direct presidential elections were held the next year.

As Bulgaria emerged from the throes of communism, it experienced a period of social and economic turmoil that culminated in a severe economic and financial crisis in late 1996-early 1997. With the help of the international community, former Prime Minister Ivan Kostov initiated a series of reforms in 1997 that helped stabilize the country's economy and put Bulgaria on the Euro-Atlantic path. Elections in 2001 ushered in a new government and president. In July 2001, Bulgaria's ex-king Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha became the first former monarch in post-communist Eastern Europe to become Prime Minister. His government continued to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration, democratic reform, and development of a market economy. Bulgaria became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on March 29, 2004, and a member of the European Union on January 1, 2007.



Following June 2005 general elections, Sergei Stanishev of the Bulgarian Socialist Party became the new Prime Minister of a coalition government on August 16, 2005. In October 2006, Georgi Parvanov, the former leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, became the first Bulgarian president to win re-election. Despite his limited constitutional powers, President Parvanov has played an important role in helping to ensure a consistent, pro-Western foreign policy. The Stanishev government has continued Bulgaria's integration with the Euro-Atlantic world and its close partnership with the U.S. Bulgaria is attracting large amounts of American and European investment, and is an active partner in coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as in UN-led peacekeeping operations in the Balkans.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Bulgaria is a parliamentary republic. The unicameral National Assembly, or Narodno Subranie, consists of 240 deputies who are elected for 4-year terms through a system of proportional representation in 31 electoral regions. Party or coalition lists, rather than individual candidate names, appear on the ballots. A party or coalition must garner a minimum of 4% of the vote to enter parliament. Parliament selects and dismisses government ministers, including the prime minister, exercises control over the government, and sanctions deployment of troops abroad. It is responsible for enactment of laws, approval of the budget, scheduling of presidential elections, declaration of war, and ratification of international

treaties and agreements. A one-month official campaign period precedes general elections. The voting age is 18. Preliminary results are available within hours of poll closings. Seats in parliament are allocated both by vote and by voter turnout. The votes for parties who did not receive a minimum threshold of votes are redistributed to other parties proportionate to their own share of the vote. The lists of newly elected members of parliament are announced 7 days after the elections. The president must convene the new parliament within one month after the elections, and calls upon parties, coalitions, or political groups to nominate a prime minister and form a government. If the three largest parties, coalitions, or political groups fail to nominate a prime minister, the president can dissolve parliament and schedule new elections. In recent years, it has taken approximately a month for the new government to form.

A general election in Bulgaria was held June 25, 2005. Results are as follows: Coalition for Bulgaria (CfB) 31.1%, National Movement Simeon II (NMSS) 19.9%, Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) 12.7%, Ataka 8.2%, United Democratic Forces (UDF) 7.7%, Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB) 6.5%, Bulgarian People's Union (BPU) 5.2%.

In May 2007, Bulgaria held its first elections for members of the European Parliament. The GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria) party, led by Sofia Mayor Boyko Borisov, won the vote by a narrow margin over the Socialists (BSP) and secured 5 out of 18 seats. The BSP won 5 seats, the MRF won 4 seats, Ataka won 3 seats, and Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha's NMSS won 1 seat. The president of Bulgaria is directly elected for a 5-year term with the right to one re-election. The president serves as the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. The president is the head of the Consultative Council for National Security and while unable to initiate legislation, the president can return a bill for further debate. Parliament can overturn the president's veto with a simple majority vote. Bulgarian Socialist Party candidate Georgi Parvanov won the November 2001 presidential election and was re-elected in October 2006 as an independent candidate in a run-off against Volen Siderov, the leader of extreme nationalist Ataka Party. The prime minister is head of the Council of Ministers, which is the primary component of the executive branch. In addition to the prime minister and deputy prime ministers, the Council is composed of ministers who head the various agencies within the government and usually come from the majority/ruling party or from a member party of the ruling coalition in parliament. The Council is responsible for carrying out state policy, managing the state budget and maintaining law and order. The Council must resign if the National Assembly passes a vote of no confidence in the Council or prime minister.

The Bulgarian judicial system became an independent branch of the government following passage of the 1991 constitution. Reform within this branch has been slow with political influence, widespread corruption, and long delays continuously plaguing the system. In 1994, the National Assembly passed the Judicial Powers Act to further delineate the role of the judiciary. In 2003, Bulgaria adopted amendments to the constitution, which aimed to improve the effectiveness of the judicial system by limiting magistrates' irremovability and immunity against criminal prosecution.

The trial, appellate, and cassation (highest appellate) courts comprise the three tiers of the judicial system. Military courts (at trial and appeal level) handle cases involving military and Ministry of Interior personnel. Administrative courts, effective since March 2007, specialize in reviewing appeals of government acts.

The Supreme Administrative Court and the Supreme Court of Cassation are the highest courts of appeal and determine the application of all laws.

The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) is composed of 25 members serving 5-year terms. Those who serve on the council are experienced legal professionals and are either appointed by the National Assembly, selected by the judicial system, or serve on the SJC as a result of their position in government. The SJC manages the judiciary and is responsible for appointing judges. In 2007 parliament revised the Judicial Powers Act to make it compliant with the latest constitutional amendments, which provided for the establishment of the Inspectorate with the Supreme Judicial Council: a standing body with 11 members who investigate complaints of magistrates' misconduct, with no right to rule on the substance of judicial acts.

The Supreme Court of Administration and Supreme Court of Cassation are the highest courts of appeal and determine the application of all laws.

The Constitutional Court, which is separate from the rest of the judiciary, interprets the constitution and constitutionality of laws and treaties. Its 12 justices serve 9-year terms and are selected by the president, the National Assembly, and the Supreme Courts.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Georgi PARVANOV**
Vice Pres.: **Angel MARIN**
Prime Min.: **Sergei STANISHEV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Emel ETEM**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ivaylo KALFIN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Meglena PLUGCHIEVA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Daniel VULCHEV**
Min. of Agriculture & Forestry: **Valeri TSVETANOV**
Min. of Culture: **Stefan DANAILOV**
Min. of Defense: **Nikolay TSONEV**
Min. of Economy & Energy: **Petar DIMITROV**
Min. of Education & Science: **Daniel VULCHEV**
Min. of Environment & Waters: **Djevdet CHAKUROV**
Min. of European Affairs: **Gergana GRANCHAROVA**
Min. of Finance: **Plamen ORESHARSKI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Ivaylo KALFIN**

Min. of Health: **Evgeniy ZHELEV**
Min. of Interior: **Mihail MIKOV**
Min. of Justice: **Miglena TACHEVA**
Min. of Labor & Social Policy: **Emilia MASLOROVA**
Min. of Natural & Manmade Disasters: **Emel ETEM**
Min. of Public Admin.: **Nikolai VASSILEV**
Min. of Regional Development & Public Works: **Asen GAGAOUZOV**
Min. of Transportation: **Peter MOUTAFCHIEV**
Chmn., Bulgarian National Bank: **Ivan Ganchov ISKROV**
Ambassador to the US: **Elena POPTODOROVA**
Charge d'Affaires, Permanent Mission to the UN, New York: **Ivan PIPERKOV**

Bulgaria maintains an embassy in the United States at 1621 22nd Street, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel. 202-387-0174; fax: 202-234-7973).

ECONOMY

Bulgaria's economy contracted dramatically after 1989 with the collapse of the COMECON system and the loss of the Soviet market, to which the Bulgarian economy had been closely tied. The standard of living fell by about 40%. In addition, UN sanctions against Yugoslavia and Iraq took a heavy toll on the Bulgarian economy. The first signs of recovery emerged when GDP grew in 1994 for the first time since 1988, by 1.4% and then by 2.5% in 1995. Inflation, which surged in 1994 to 122%, fell to 32.9% in 1995. During 1996, however, the economy collapsed due to short-sighted economic reforms and an unstable and de-capitalized banking system.

Under the leadership of former Prime Minister Ivan Kostov (UDF), who came to power in 1997, an ambitious set of reforms were launched, including introduction of a currency board regime, bringing growth and stability to the Bulgarian economy. The currency board contained inflationary pressures and the three-digit inflation in 1997 was cut to only 1% in 1998. Following declines in GDP in both 1996 and 1997, the Bulgarian Government has delivered strong, steady GDP growth in real terms in recent years. Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg's economic team of young, Western-educated financiers continued to implement measures that helped sustain stable economic growth and curb unemployment. Measures introduced by the government were targeted at reducing corporate and individual taxes, curtailing corruption, and attracting foreign investment. The government also restructured the country's foreign debt, revived the local stock market, and moved ahead with long-delayed privatization of some major state monopolies. As a result of this progress, in October 2002 the European Commission declared Bulgaria had a "Functioning Market Economy."

Bulgaria's current government has continued these reforms, and in 2007 the country joined the European Union. According to the World Bank, in 2006 Bulgaria attracted the highest levels of foreign direct investment, as a share of GDP, among Eastern European countries. A growing current-account deficit (21.5% of GDP at the end of 2007) and excessive reliance on foreign capital inflow render the economy vulnerable to external shocks. The international financial crisis led to a new flow of investment which could barely cover the current-account deficit in 2007—at 98.2%. In early 2007, to attract additional foreign investment, the Bulgarian Government lowered corporate tax rates to 10%, reportedly the lowest rate in Europe. A flat-tax rate of 10% for personal income, in place as of January 1, 2008, will further decrease domestic labor costs and help reduce the share of the "gray" economy. In response to local governments' demand for financial independence in 2006, parliament passed fiscal decentralization of municipalities, granting them authority over collection and administration of some taxes, thus further enhancing local economic stability. Despite Bulgaria's many marked successes, organized crime and corruption remain problems.

DEFENSE

Bulgaria became a member of NATO on March 29, 2004 after depositing its instruments of treaty ratification. Bulgaria's military is currently undergoing an ambitious restructuring program aimed to bring the army up to NATO standards and modernize equipment. In 2007, constitutional amendments annulled military conscription, thus allowing the Bulgarian army's transformation to an all-volunteer force.

Bulgaria has been an active participant in military operations outside its borders. It currently has company-sized units working with coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq and has maintained small contingents of troops deployed with international forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. It deployed a frigate to Lebanon with UNIFIL in late 2006 and has several military observers serving in support of United Nations missions in Ethiopia, Liberia, and Kosovo. Bulgaria has also expressed its intent to send military observers to Chad in support of the European Union mission.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Bulgaria became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on March 29, 2004, and a member of the European Union on January 1, 2007. Bulgaria is a member of the United Nations and in 2002-2003 served a 2-year term as a nonpermanent member on the UN Security Council. Bulgaria served as Chair-In-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2004.

Bulgaria joined the World Trade Organization in 1996. In July 1998, Bulgaria became a full member of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which called for the reduction of tariffs by 2002 on most industrial and agricultural goods traded between CEFTA countries. Bulgaria has initialed free trade agreements with Turkey, Macedonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Estonia, Israel,

Albania, and Latvia. Bulgaria's relationship with its neighbors has generally been good. Bulgaria has proven to be a constructive force in the region and has played an important role in promoting regional security. Pursuing its initiative as a partner in the South-East European regional cooperation, Bulgaria has taken over the chairmanship-in-office of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) for the period May 2007-May 2008.

U.S.-BULGARIAN RELATIONS

The year 2003 marked the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and Bulgaria. U.S.-Bulgarian relations were severed in 1950 but were restored a decade later. Bilateral relations between the two nations improved dramatically after the fall of communism. The United States moved quickly to encourage development of multi-party democracy and a market economy. The U.S. signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty in 1994 and gave Bulgaria most-favored-nation trade status in October 1996.

In 1989, the U.S. Congress passed the Support for East European Democracies Act (SEED), authorizing financial support to facilitate development of democratic institutions, political pluralism, and free market economies in the Balkan region. Since 1990, Bulgaria has received over $600 million in SEED assistance. In 2007, after its EU accession, Bulgaria graduated from the SEED program.

In May 2005 the United States and the Republic of Bulgaria signed a defense cooperation agreement, which gives the United States military access to and shared use of several Bulgarian military facilities. The United States military intends to use this access to facilitate joint training with the Bulgarian and Romanian militaries. In February 2007, Bulgaria and the United States signed a treaty on avoidance of double taxation that is expected to further promote U.S. investment in Bulgaria. In June 2008, Bulgaria and the United States signed a weapons of mass destruction agreement and a Second Line of Defense agreement, both of which facilitate greater cooperation in preventing the proliferation of weapons and trafficking of illicit material.

American citizens traveling on a U.S. passport for business or tourism purposes can enter and stay in Bulgaria for up to 90 days in a 6-month period without requiring issuance of a visa.

Bulgaria hosts the only fully American university in the region, the American University of Bulgaria in Blagoevgrad, established in 1991, drawing students from throughout southeast Europe and beyond. As of 2007, the American University of Bulgaria had over 1,000 students.

In June 2007, President Bush visited Sofia following the first visit of a U.S. President, Bill Clinton, in 1999.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SOFIA (E) 16 Kozyak Street, 1407 Sofia, Bulgaria, APO/FPO Unit 5740, APO AE 09750, (359)(2) 937-5100, Fax (359)(2)937-5320; 939-5790/GSO; 937-5231/HR, INMARSAT Tel 683-13-1345;683-13-1346, Workweek: M-F 07:00–19:00, Website: http://bulgaria.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Linda Wood
AMB OMS:	Diane Wampler
DHS/CIS:	Marla Belvedere (Resident Vienna)
DHS/ICE:	Peter Liston (Res. Vienna0
FCS:	Scott Pozil
FM:	Dale Lyle
HRO:	Brian Bishop
MGT:	Adams-Smith, Steven
AMB:	Nancy McEldowney
CON:	Daniel Perrone
DCM:	Alexander Karagiannis
PAO:	David Siefkin
GSO:	Martin Aversa/Justin Brown
RSO:	Gregory Houston
AGR:	Susan Reid
AID:	Eugene Gibson
CLO:	Lolla Perrone
DAO:	Col. Wilmot, David
DEA:	Harry John Giknavorian (Res. Athens)
FMO:	Brian Bishop
IMO:	Harvey Vazquez
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Resident Paris)
ISO:	Douglas Reno
ISSO:	Jason Dennis
LEGATT:	Jeffrey Harp
POL:	James Bigus

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 21, 2008

Country Description: Bulgaria is a quickly developing European nation undergoing significant economic changes. Tourist facilities are widely available, although conditions vary and some facilities may not be up to Western standards. Goods and services taken for granted in other European countries may not be available in many areas of Bulgaria.

Entry Requirements: A United States passport is required for U.S. citizens who are not also Bulgarian nationals. U.S. citizens who enter the country without a Bulgarian visa are authorized to stay for a total of 90 days within a six-month period. This law is strictly enforced. An application to extend one's stay beyond the original 90 days can be filed for urgent or humanitarian reasons, but must be submitted to regional police authorities no later than five days prior to the end of the original 90-day period. Travelers who have been in the country for 90 days, and then leave, will not be able to re-enter Bulgaria before the six-month period expires. Travelers using official or diplomatic passports must secure visas prior to arrival. Upon entering the country, Bulgarian immigration authorities request that all foreigners declare the purpose of their visit and provide their intended address.

For further information concerning entry requirements, travelers should contact the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria at 1621 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20008; http://www.bulgaria-embassy.org; tel. (202) 387-7969 (main switchboard (202)

387-0174), or the Bulgarian Consulate in New York City at 121 East 62nd Street, New York, NY 10021; http://www.consulbulgaria-ny.org; tel. (212) 935-4646.

U.S. citizens intending to live or work in Bulgaria for more than 90 days within six months (or more than six months within a year) must obtain a "D" visa prior to arrival. As of July 2008, U.S. citizens must apply for a "D" visa at a Bulgarian Embassy/ Consulate in the country where they are legally resident. U.S. citizens residing in the United States must therefore apply at the Bulgarian representative office (either the Embassy or a Consulate) nearest their home. If an American citizen residing in the U.S. is already present in Bulgaria—having entered as a tourist, for example—and wishes to obtain a "D" visa to remain for an extended period, he or she will have to return to the U.S. to do so. Additionally, an American citizen married to a Bulgarian national must present his/her marriage license when applying for "D" visa at a Bulgarian Embassy or Consulate.

The Bulgarian authorities do not consider presentation of a copy of the passport sufficient for identification purposes. Visitors should carry their original passports with them at all times. This is not a requirement for U.S. citizens who hold residence permits for Bulgaria.

Traveling with Bulgarian minors: Bulgarian authorities are particularly strict in matters involving the travel of Bulgarian children. Adults, other than a child's parents, departing Bulgaria with a Bulgarian national (including dual or multinational Bulgarian) child, must present to authorities a certified/ legalized declaration signed by the child's parents authorizing custody for travel purposes. This holds true even if the adult is otherwise related to the child. If the declaration is signed in Bulgaria, certification by a Bulgarian notary public is required. If signed in the U.S., the declaration must be certified by a notary public and the court in the jurisdiction where the notary is licensed. The declaration must then be legalized with an apostille issued by the individual state's Department of State or the Governor's office. Please note Bulgarian authorities do not require such documentation for minors who are not Bulgarian.

Safety and Security: While Bulgaria's accession to the European Union has enhanced the overall security environment for tourist and business travelers, violence related to criminal groups occurs sporadically in public locations.

In September 2008 the U.S. Embassy warned of the increasing incidence of violent criminal activity at "gentlemen's clubs" in Sofia and encouraged Americans to avoid such clubs. Recent incidents include two bombings and a shooting in August and September, one of which seriously injured several people. Local authorities reported these incidents likely resulted from turf wars between rival organized crime syndicates.

These syndicates are highly prevalent in Bulgaria's largely cash economy. Suspected organized crime members often travel in convoys of late-model SUVs and luxury sedans, accompanied by armed men, and frequent expensive restaurants, hotels, and nightclubs.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Pick-pocketing and purse snatching are frequent occurrences, especially in crowded markets, shopping streets, and the busiest tram and bus lines. Con artists operate on public transportation and in bus and train stations. Credit cards and ATMs should be used with caution. Be wary of people who approach you at an ATM and offer assistance. Do not give your PIN to anyone under any circumstances (See the Special Circumstances section below). Travelers should be suspicious of "instant friends" and should also require persons claiming to be government officials to show identification. There have been incidents in which tourists have been drugged or assaulted and robbed after accepting offers of coffee or alcoholic beverages from "friendly" individuals met by "chance" at hotels, the airport, or at bus or train stations. Travelers should be wary of unfamiliar individuals who encourage them to drink or eat products, as these may be tainted with strong tranquilizers (such as valium) that can lead rapidly to unconsciousness. Reporting a crime immediately to the police has helped recover money and valuables on more than one occasion and is recommended. To avoid becoming a victim of more serious crimes, one should use the same personal safety precautions that they would use in large urban areas of the United States.

Travelers should pay special attention to the drink prices at high-end bars and nightclubs. There have been instances of travelers being charged exorbitant prices, especially for champagne and hard alcohol. Bills have been as high as several thousand dollars for drinks, and in some establishments the management may use force to secure payment.

On occasion, taxi drivers overcharge unwary travelers, particularly at Sofia Airport and the Central Train Station. We recommend travelers use taxis with meters and clearly marked rates displayed on a sticker on the passenger side of the windshield. Travelers should be aware that there is no official commission that sets taxi cab rates. Taxi drivers are within their full rights to charge passengers any price they want, provided that it corresponds with the price shown on the windshield sticker. At the airport, there is a clearly marked booth within the arrivals terminal, which arranges for metered taxis at a fair rate. Finding reputable taxis at the Central Train Station is more difficult. It is recommended to inquire

about the fare first, to avoid excessive payment if a metered taxi cannot be found. Always ensure that you have and account for all luggage, packages and hand-carried items before you pay and release a taxi. The likelihood of retrieving articles left behind in a taxi is remote. Because pilferage of checked baggage may occur at Sofia Airport, travelers should not include items of value in checked luggage.

Automobile theft is a concern, with four-wheel-drive vehicles and late model European sedans being the most popular targets. Very few vehicles are recovered. Thieves smash vehicle windows to steal valuables left in sight. Break-ins at residential apartments occur as frequently as in major cities everywhere. Persons who plan to reside in Bulgaria on a long-term basis should take measures to protect their dwellings. Long-term residents should consider installation of window grilles, steel doors with well-functioning locks, and an alarm system that alerts an armed response team.

Travelers should also be cautious about making credit card charges over the Internet to unfamiliar web-sites. As recent experience has shown, offers for merchandise and services may be scam artists posing as legitimate businesses. A recent example involves Internet credit card payments to alleged tour operators via Bulgaria-based web sites. In several cases, the corresponding businesses did not actually exist.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Bulgaria is 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: While Bulgarian physicians are trained to a very high standard, most hospitals and clinics, especially in village areas, are generally not equipped and maintained to meet U.S. or Western European standards. Basic medical supplies and over-the-counter and prescription medications are widely available, but highly specialized treatment may not be obtainable. Pediatric facilities are in need of funding and lack equipment. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States may cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Bulgaria.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. All foreign citizens traveling to Bulgaria should be prepared to present valid evidence of health insurance to the Bulgarian border authorities in order to be admitted into the country. The insurance should be valid for the duration of the traveler's stay in Bulgaria.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Bulgaria is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The Bulgarian road system is largely underdeveloped. There are few sections of limited-access divided highway. Some roads are in poor repair and full of potholes. Rockslides and landslides may be encountered on roads in mountainous areas. Livestock and animal-drawn carts present road hazards throughout the country, especially during the agricultural season. Travel conditions deteriorate during the winter as roads become icy and potholes proliferate. The U.S. Embassy in Sofia advises against driving at night because road conditions are more dangerous in the dark. Some roads lack pavement markings and lights, and motorists often drive with dim or missing headlights.

Driving in Bulgaria is extremely dangerous. Aggressive driving habits, the lack of safe infrastructure, and a mixture of late model and old model cars on the country's highways contribute to a high fatality rate for road accidents. Motorists should avoid confrontations with aggressive drivers in Bulgaria. In particular, drivers of late-model sedans are known to speed and drive dangerously. Motorists should exercise caution and avoid altercations with the drivers of such vehicles, which may be driven by armed organized crime figures. In some cities traffic lights late at night blink yellow in all directions, leaving rights-of-way unclear and contributing to frequent accidents.

Heavy truck traffic along the two-lane routes from the Greek border at Kulata to Sofia and from the Turkish border at Kapitan Andre to Plovdiv creates numerous hazards. Motorists should expect long delays at border

crossings. A U.S. state driver's license is valid in Bulgaria only when used in conjunction with an International Driving Permit. For information on how to obtain a permit, please see our Road Safety Overseas information.

If pulled over by a police officer, motorists should be aware that, under a recently changed Bulgarian law, police officers may collect fines on the spot.

The use of seat belts is mandatory in Bulgaria for all passengers, except pregnant women. Children under 12 years of age may ride in the front seat only if seated in a child car seat. In practice, these rules are often not followed. Speed limits are 50 km/h in the cities/towns, 90 km/h out of town, and 130 km/h on the highways. For motorcycles, speed limits are 50 km/h in the cities/towns, 80 km/h out of town, and 100 km/h on the highways. Motorcyclists must drive with helmets and with lights on at all times. At crossings that are not regulated, the driver who is on the right has the right-of-way, but this rule is frequently ignored. Drivers may be charged with driving under the influence of alcohol with a blood level as low as 0.05 percent. Right turns on red lights are not permitted unless specifically authorized. The penalties for drivers involved in an accident resulting in injury or death range from a US $25 fine up to imprisonment for life. A new law requires the use of headlights day and night from November 1st through March 31st.

In case of emergency, drivers should contact the police at telephone number 166 and/or Roadside Assistance at telephone number 146. For an ambulance, please call 150. The fire department can be reached at 160.

For specific information concerning Bulgarian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please visit the Bulgarian Embassy web site at http://www.webhousing.biz/~bulgaria.

Note: the latter web site is available in the Bulgarian language only.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Bulgaria's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Bulgaria's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Bulgaria is still largely a cash economy. Due to the potential for fraud and other criminal activity, credit cards should be used sparingly and with extreme caution. There have been reports of false ATM fronts on bona fide machines that capture cards and PINs for later criminal use, including unauthorized charges or withdrawals. In connection with such scams, travelers should be extremely wary of friendly bystanders near ATMs who offer assistance. Any time a card is not returned the traveler should immediately report the card as lost/stolen to the card-issuing company.

Visitors may exchange cash at banks or Exchange Bureaus, but they should know that Exchange Bureaus sometimes post misleading rate quotations that confuse travelers. People on the street who offer high rates of exchange are usually con artists intent on swindling the unwary traveler. Damaged or very worn U.S dollar bank notes are often not accepted at banks or Exchange Bureaus. Major branches of the following Bulgarian banks will cash travelers' cheques on the spot for Leva, the Bulgarian currency, or another desired currency: Bulbank, Bulgarian Postbank, Biochim, First Investment Bank, and United Bulgarian Bank (UBB). UBB also serves as a Western Union agent and provides direct transfer of money to travelers in need. There are also many Western Union branches in major towns and cities. Most shops, hotels, and restaurants, with the exception of the major hotels, do not accept travelers' cheques or credit cards. Only some local banks can cash U.S. Treasury checks and the payee may need to wait up to a month to receive funds.

Corruption remains an important concern of the Government. The Commission for Coordinating of the Activity for Combating Corruption manages the efforts of each government agency's internal inspectorate in fighting public corruption and engages in public awareness campaigns. Complaints of public corruption can be made to it at the Ministry of Justice, 2A Knyaz Dondukov Blvd., 1055 Sofia, Bulgaria, email: acc@government.bg, 359-2-980-9213, 359-2-923-7595, 359-2-940-3630 or to the Ministry of Finance hotline: 0800180018.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bulgaria's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Bulgaria are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Bulgaria are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Bulgaria. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 16, Kozyak St., Sofia1407; tel.: (+359 2) 937-5100; fax (+359 2) 937-5209; web site:

http://sofia.usembassy.gov. Questions regarding consular services may be directed via email to: niv_sofia @state.gov (for non-immigrant visa matters); iv_sofia@ state.gov (for immigrant visa matters) and acs_sofia@state.gov (for American Citizen Services matters).

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bulgaria is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between Bulgaria and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For more detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Bulgaria is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Bulgaria, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Bulgaria also has the following requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements to complete an intercountry adoption in Bulgaria. However, prospective adoptive parents are expected to spend five days with their adoptive child before the orphanage director will release the child.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 15 years older than their adoptive children, but no more than forty-five years older.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents may be married or single.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Bulgaria is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Bulgaria must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Bulgaria's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Bulgarian Adoption Authority: Ministry of Justice

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Bulgaria is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Prospective adoptive parents also must use a Bulgarian-licensed United States adoption agency or a Bulgarian adoption agency accredited by the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice is currently reviewing license applications for several United States-based adoption agencies. For a complete list of adoption agencies visit the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Sofiaat http://bulgaria.usembassy.gov.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Bulgaria. Bulgaria's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Bulgarian law.

After completing the United States pre-adoption requirements through USCIS, United States citizens specifically interested in pursuing an adoption from Bulgaria must also contact a Bulgarian or United States adoption agency which has been licensed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice. All required documents must be deposited at the Ministry of Justice by the accredited agency. If the prospective parent(s) application is accepted, their names are placed on a registry. Separately, the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice (MOJ) also maintains a registry of Bulgarian children eligible for intercountry adoption. Under Bulgarian law, a child may appear on this registry only if three Bulgarian families have declined to adopt him/her.

If both the United States and Bulgaria determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Bulgaria may provide you with a referral for a child. The Bulgarian Government does not process prospective adoptive parents' applications in chronological order. Priority is given to persons willing to adopt a handicapped child. Furthermore, the Adoption Council abides very strictly by the principle that its goal is to find appropriate parents for a child in need, and not to find a child for prospective parents who want one.

The Adoption Council within the Ministry of Justice reviews the registries of prospective parents and available children, including all relevant documentation, and proposes a match. The MOJ provides the adoptive parents through their accredited agency photographs of the child and information about his/her medical condition. If the family declines to adopt a specific child, the Council should be informed within two months and a match with a different child will be offered. There is no limitation as to the number of times prospective adoptive parents may decline to adopt a Bulgarian orphan. The decision to decline is passed by prospective adoptive parents to the MOJ through the accredited adoption agency. It is important to note that if prospective adoptive parents decline to adopt a specific child, they must notify the MOJ within two months of the referral. Once the prospective adoptive parent(s) select a child and the Council approves the application, the case is forwarded to the Minister of Justice for final approval. When the Minister signs the parents' appli-

cation, the paperwork is transferred directly to Sofia City Court, which sets a date for a court hearing. The judges take into consideration the MOJ's referral and review the documentation related to the adoption process. If they require additional documents, the court sets a date for a new hearing. After all requirements have been met, the court grants custody of the child to the adoptive parents. The process for finalizing the adoption (or gaining legal custody) in Bulgaria generally includes the following.

Time Frame: If there is a child available for intercountry adoption, it normally takes several months to complete the adoption process in Bulgaria; however, there are very few children on the waiting list, which means that the adoptive parents may wait many months and even years until the Ministry of Justice offers them a Bulgarian orphan for adoption.

Adoption Fees: The United States Embassy in Sofia is aware of the following Bulgarian fees for adoption. These fees are subject to change. All fees are given in Euros as the Bulgarian currency is linked to the Euro.

- Application fee at the MOJ: 100.00 EUR
- Court fee: 750 EUR
- Transcript of the Court Decree: 25 EUR
- Passport fee for child under 14: 7.00 EUR
- Passport fee for child over 14: 14.00 EUR
- Birth Certificate fee: 3.00 EUR

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required:

- Application, including personal data, family history, financial information. The application is a letter prepared by the accredited adoption agency.
- Document certifying that the adoptive parent(s) has/have not been deprived of custody rights. An FBI fingerprint clearance shows whether there were prior arrests or criminal convictions which would render them ineligible to adopt a child in Bulgaria.
- Home Study.
- Medical Certificate (signed by a general practitioner).
- Police Certificate.
- Marriage Certificate (if applicable).
- Approval by the USCIS (I-171H).

All documents should be submitted should be originals. They must be translated and apostilled. For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Bulgaria requires adoptive parents to submit post adoption reports. We strongly urge you to comply with the wish of Bulgaria and complete all post-adoption requirements in a timely manner. Your adoption agency may be able to help you with this process. Your cooperation will contribute to Bulgaria's history of positive experiences with American parents.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Bulgaria
16 Kozyak Street
Sofia 1407
Bulgaria
Tel: (359 2) 937-5100
e-mail: iv_sofia@state.gov
Internet:
http://bulgaria.usembassy.gov

Bulgarian Adoption Authority
Ministry of Justice
Slavyanska Street # 1, Sofia 1000
Tel: (359 2) 923-7303 (Bulgarian only)
http://www.mjeli.Government.bg/
(Bulgarian only)

Embassy of Bulgaria
1621 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-387-0174 (main)
Email: office@Bulgaria-Embassy.org,
http://www.bulgaria-embassy.org.

Bulgaria also has consulates in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



BURKINA FASO

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Burkina Faso

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 274,200 sq. km. (106,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Colorado.

Cities: Capital—Ouagadougou (pop. 1 million). Other cities—Bobo-Dioulasso (410,000), Koudougou (83,000).

Terrain: Savanna; brushy plains and scattered hills.

Climate: Sahelian; pronounced wet and dry seasons.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Burkinabe (accent on last e).

Population: (2006) 14.4 million.

Annual growth rate: (2005) 2.53%.

Ethnic groups: 63 ethnic groups among which are Mossi (almost half of the total population), Bobo, Mande, Lobi, Fulani, Gourounsi, and Senufo.

Religions: Traditional beliefs 20%, Muslim 55%, Christian 25%.

Languages: French (official), Moore, Dioula, others.

Education: Literacy (2003)—26.6%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2005)—95.57/1,000. Life expectancy (2003)—48.45 years.

Work force: Agriculture—90%; industry—2.1%; commerce, services, and government—5.5%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: August 5, 1960.

Constitution: June 11, 1991.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state) prime minister (head of government). Legislative—one chamber. Judiciary—independent.

Political subdivisions: 13 regions, 45 provinces, 350 departments.

Political parties: Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), Alliance for Democracy Federation/ African Democratic Assembly (ADF/ RDA), Party for Democracy and Progress/Socialist Party (PDP/PS), National Union for Democracy and Development (UNDD), and numerous other small opposition parties.

Suffrage: Direct universal.

Budget: (2004) $540 million.

Defense: 5.5% of government budget.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $6.2 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2006) 6.4%.

Per capita income: (2006) $440.

Avg. inflation rate: (2006) 2.5%.

Natural resources: (limited quantities) Manganese, gold, limestone, marble, phosphate.

Agriculture: (37% of GDP) Products—cotton, millet, sorghum, rice, livestock, peanuts, shea nuts, maize.

Industry: (19% of GDP) Type—mining, agricultural processing plants, brewing and bottling, light industry.

Trade: (2004) Exports—$439 million: cotton, gold, livestock, peanuts, shea nut products. Major markets—Singapore, China, Thailand, European Union, Asia. Imports—$843 million.

Exchange rate: Fixed to the euro. Communaute Financiere Africaine (CFA) francs 656=1 euro (2003: approx. CFA francs 579=U.S.$1; 2005: CFA francs 534=U.S.$1).

GEOGRAPHY

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country located in the middle of West Africa's "hump." It is geographically in the Sahel—the agricultural region between the Sahara Desert and the coastal rain forests. Most of central Burkina Faso lies on a savanna plateau, 200 meters-300 meters (650 ft.-1,000 ft.) above sea level, with fields, brush, and scattered trees. The largest river is the Mouhoun (Black Volta), which is partially navigable by small craft. Burkina Faso has West Africa's largest elephant population. Game preserves also are home to lions, hippos, monkeys, warthogs, and antelope. Infrastructure and tourism are, however, not well developed. Annual average rainfall varies from about 100 centimeters (40 in.) in the

south to less than 25 centimeters (10 in.) in the north and northeast, where hot desert winds accentuate the dryness of the region. The cooler season, November to February, is pleasantly warm and dry (but dusty), with cool evenings. March-June can be very hot. In July-September, the rains bring a 3-month cooler and greener humid season.

PEOPLE

Burkina Faso's 14.4 million people belong to two major West African cultural groups—the Voltaic and the Mande (whose common language is Dioula). The Voltaic Mossi make up about one-half of the population. The Mossi claim descent from warriors who migrated to present-day Burkina Faso from Ghana and established an empire that lasted more than 800 years. Predominantly farmers, the Mossi kingdom is still led by the Mogho Naba, whose court is in Ouagadougou.

Burkina Faso is an ethnically integrated, secular state. Most of Burkina's people are concentrated in the south and center of the country, sometimes exceeding 48 per square kilometer (125/sq. mi.). This population density, high for Africa, causes migrations of hundreds of thousands of Burkinabe to Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, many for seasonal agricultural work. These flows of workers are obviously affected by external events; the September 2002 coup attempt in Cote d'Ivoire and the ensuing fighting there have meant that hundreds of thousands of Burkinabe returned to Burkina Faso. A plurality of Burkinabe are Muslim, but most also adhere to traditional African religions. The introduction of Islam to Burkina Faso was initially resisted by the Mossi rulers. Christians, both Roman Catholics and Protestants, comprise about 25% of the population, with their largest concentration in urban areas.

Few Burkinabe have had formal education. Schooling is in theory free and compulsory until the age of 16, but only about 54% of Burkina's primary school-age children are enrolled in primary school due to actual costs of school supplies and school fees and to opportunity costs of sending a child who could earn money for the family to school. The University of Ouagadougou, founded in 1974, was the country's first institution of higher education. The Polytechnical University in Bobo-Dioulasso was opened in 1995. The University of Koudougou was founded in 2005 to substitute for the former teachers training school, Ecole Normale Superieure de Koudougou.

HISTORY

Until the end of the 19th century, the history of Burkina Faso was dominated by the empire-building Mossi. The French arrived and claimed the area in 1896, but Mossi resistance ended only with the capture of their capital Ouagadougou in 1901. The colony of Upper Volta was established in 1919, but it was dismembered and reconstituted several times until the present borders were recognized in 1947.

The French administered the area indirectly through Mossi authorities until independence was achieved on August 5, 1960. The first President, Maurice Yameogo, amended the constitution soon after taking office to ban opposition political parties. His government lasted until 1966, when the first of several military coups placed Lt. Col. Sangoule Lamizana at the head of a government of senior army officers. Lamizana remained in power throughout the 1970s, as President of military and then elected governments.

With the support of unions and civil groups, Col. Saye Zerbo overthrew President Lamizana in 1980. Colonel Zerbo also encountered resistance from trade unions and was overthrown 2 years later by Maj. Dr. Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo and the Council of Popular Salvation (CSP). Factional infighting developed between moderates in the CSP and radicals led by Capt. Thomas Sankara, who was appointed Prime Minister in January 1983, but was subsequently arrested. Efforts to bring about his release, directed by Capt. Blaise Compaore, resulted in yet another military coup d'etat, led by Sankara and Compaore on August 4, 1983.

Sankara established the National Revolutionary Committee with himself as President and vowed to "mobilize the masses." But the committee's membership remained secret and was dominated by Marxist-Leninist military officers. In 1984, Upper Volta changed its name to Burkina Faso, meaning "the country of honorable people." But many of the strict security and austerity measures taken by Sankara provoked resistance. Despite his initial popularity and personal charisma, Sankara was assassinated in a coup which brought Capt. Blaise Compaore to power in October 1987.

Compaore pledged to pursue the goals of the revolution but to "rectify" Sankara's "deviations" from the original aims. In fact, Compaore reversed most of Sankara's policies and combined the leftist party he headed with more centrist parties after the 1989 arrest and execution of two colonels who had supported Compaore and governed with him up to that point.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

With Compaore alone at the helm, a democratic constitution was approved by referendum in 1991. In December 1991, Compaore was elected President, running unopposed after the opposition boycotted the election. The opposition did participate in the following year's legislative elections, in which the ruling party won a majority of seats.

The government of the Fourth Republic includes a strong presidency, a prime minister, a Council of Ministers presided over by the president, a unicameral National Assembly, and the judiciary. The legislature and



judiciary are nominally independent but remain susceptible to executive influence.

Burkina held multiparty municipal elections in 1995, 2000, and 2006, as well as legislative elections in 1997, 2002, and 2007. Balloting was considered largely free and fair in all elections despite minor irregularities. However, the ruling party's dominance meant that the playing field was not entirely even.

The Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP), the governing party, won overwhelming majorities in all the elections until the 2002 legislative election, where the CDP won with a small majority of the 111 seats. The opposition made large gains in the 2002 elections. Compaore won the November 1998 presidential election for a second 7-year term against two minor-party candidates. But within weeks of Compaore's victory the domestic opposition took to the streets to protest the December 13, 1998 murder of leading independent journalist Norbert Zongo, whose investigations of the death of the President's brother's chauffeur suggested involvement of the Compaore family.

The opposition Collective Against Impunity—led by human rights activist Halidou Ouedraogo and including opposition political parties of Prof. Joseph Ki-Zerbo and (for a while) Hermann Yameogo, son of the first President—challenged Compaore and his government to bring Zongo's murderers to justice and make political reforms. The Zongo killings still resonate in Burkina politics, though not as strongly as in the past. There has been no significant progress on the investigation of the case. Compaore was re-elected to the presidency for a 5-year term in November 2005. The current cabinet is dominated by Compaore and the CDP. Given the fragile roots of democratic institutions, constitutional checks and balances are seldom effective in practice. The constitution was amended in 2000 to limit the president to a 5-year term, renewable once, beginning with the November 2005 election. The amendment is controversial because it did not make any mention of retroactivity, meaning that President Compaore's eligibility to present himself for the 2005 presidential election is a matter of debate.

The Constitutional Court ruled in October 2005 that the amendment was not retroactive, and Compaore went on to win the November 2005 presidential election with over 80% of

the vote. Most international and national electoral observers believed that the election was fair.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Blaise COMPAORE**
Prime Min.: **Tertius ZONGO**
Min. in Charge of Presidential Missions, Analysis, & Prospective: **Gueda OUEDRAGO**
Min. of Agriculture, Water, & Fisheries: **Laurent SEDOGO**
Min. of Animal Resources: **Sekou BA**
Min. of Basic Education & Literacy: **Marie Odile BONKOUNGOU-BALIMA**
Min. of Civil Service & State Reform: **Soungalo OUATTARA**
Min. of Culture, Tourism, & Communication: **Filippe SAWADOGO**
Min. of Defense: **Yero BOLY**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Lucien Marie Noel BEMBAMBA**
Min. of Employment & Youth: **Justin KOUTABA**
Min. of Environment & Standard of Living: **Salifou SAWADOGO**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Regional Cooperation: **Bedouma Alain YODA**
Min. of Health: **Seydou BOUDA**
Min. of Housing & Urbanization: **Vincent DABILOUGOU**
Min. of Human Rights Promotion: **Salamata SAWADOGO-TAPSOBA**
Min. of Infrastructure & Improvement of Landlocked Situation: **Seydou KABORE**
Min. of Justice & Keeper of the Seal: **Zakalia KOTE**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Jerome BOUGOUMA**
Min. of Mines & Energy: **Abdoulaye Abdoulkader CISSE**
Min. of Parliamentary Relations: **Cecile BELOUM**
Min. of Post & Telecommunications: **Noel KABORE**
Min. of Secondary & Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Joseph PARE**
Min. of Security: **Emile OUEDRAOGO**
Min. of Social Action & National Solidarity: **Pascaline TAMINI-BIHOUN**
Min. of Sports & Leisure: **Jean Pierre A. M. PALM**
Min. of Territorial Admin. & Decentralization: **Clement SAWADOGO**
Min. of Trade, Promotion of Enterprise, & Handicraft: **Mamadou SANOU**
Min. of Transportation: **Gilbert Noel OUEDRAOGO**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **Celine M. YODA-KONKOBO**
Min.-Del. in Charge of Agriculture: **Abdoulaye COMBARY**
Min.-Del. in Charge of Budget: **Marie Therese DRABO-KEITA**
Min.-Del. in Charge of Local Collectives: **Toussaint Abel COULIBALY**
Min.-Del. in Charge of Mass Literacy & Nonformal Education: **Oussemi TAMBOURA**
Min.-Del. in Charge of Regional Cooperation: **Minata SAMATE-CESSOUMA**
Min.-Del. in Charge of Technical Education & Vocational Training: **Maxime SOME**
Ambassador to the US: **Paramanga Ernest YONLI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Michel KAFANDO**

Burkina Faso maintains an embassy in the United States at 2340 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-332-5577).

ECONOMY

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of $440. More than 80% of the population relies on subsistence agriculture, with only a small fraction directly involved in industry and services. Drought, poor soil, lack of adequate communications and other infrastructure, a low literacy rate, and an economy vulnerable to external shocks are all longstanding problems. The export economy also remains subject to fluctuations in world prices.

Burkina remains committed to the structural adjustment program it launched in 1991, and it has been one of the first beneficiaries of the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) debt-relief and poverty reduction programs for highly indebted poor countries. At least 20% of the government budget is financed from international aid, and the majority of infrastructure investments are externally financed. Growth rates had been more than 5% from the late 1990s through 2006, but slowed in 2007 in part due to depressed world prices for cotton, Burkina Faso's largest export. Many Burkinabe migrate to neighboring countries for work, and their remittances provide a contribution to the economy's balance of payments that is second only to cotton as a source of foreign exchange earnings. Political and economic problems in Cote d'Ivoire have had a direct impact on this source of revenue for millions of Burkina households. The military crisis in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire negatively affected trade between the two countries, due to the year-long closure of the border between Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire from September 2002 to September 2003. Goods and services, as well as remittances, continue to flow from Burkinabe living in Cote d'Ivoire, but they have been rerouted through other countries in the region, such as Togo, Ghana, and Benin. Commercial and personal traffic across the border is slowly rebuilding steam.

Burkina is attempting to improve the economy by developing its mineral resources, improving its infrastructure, making its agricultural and livestock sectors more productive and competitive, and stabilizing the supplies and prices of food grains. Staple crops are millet, sorghum, maize, and rice. The cash crops are cotton, groundnuts, karite (shea nuts), and sesame. Livestock, once a major export, has declined.

Manufacturing is limited to cotton and food processing (mainly in Bobo-Dioulasso) and import substitution heavily protected by tariffs. Some factories are privately owned, and others are set to be privatized. Burkina Faso's newly-written investment code has helped to promote foreign investment. U.S. investors, particularly in the mining sector, have taken note of this development, and in 2007, the country's only commercial gold mine was opened. Three others are slated to follow in the next two years. A railway connects Burkina with the port of Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, 1,150 kilometers (712 mi.) away. Due to the closure of the border with Cote d'Ivoire, this railway was not operational between September 2002 and September 2003, but cargo and limited passenger service are now offered.

Primary roads between main towns in Burkina Faso are paved. Domestic air service and flights within Africa are limited. Phones and Internet service providers are relatively reliable, but the cost of utilities is very high.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Burkina has excellent relations with European aid donors, as well as Libya, Taiwan, and other states which have offered financial aid. France and the European Union, in particular, provide significant aid. Other donors with large bilateral aid programs include Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Canada. President Compaore is active in subregional diplomacy in West Africa. He was elected in January 2007 to be Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and has acted as a mediator in the political crises in neighboring Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. In January 2008, Burkina Faso became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council; it will hold this position for two years.

U.S.-BURKINA RELATIONS

U.S. relations with Burkina Faso are excellent. In the past, bilateral relations were subject to strains because of the Compaore government's involvement in arms trading and other sanctions-breaking activity. In addition to regional peace and stability, U.S. interests in Burkina are to promote continued democratization and greater respect for human rights and to encourage sustainable economic development. Although the Agency for International Development (USAID) closed its office in Ouagadougou in 1995, about $18 million annually of USAID funding goes to Burkina's development through non-governmental and regional organizations. The largest is a Food for Peace school lunch program administered by Catholic Relief Services. Burkina has been the site of several development success stories. U.S. leadership in building food security in the Sahel after the 1968-74 drought has been successful in virtually eliminating famine, despite recurrent drought years. River blindness has been eliminated from the region. In both cases, the U.S. was the main donor to inter-African organizations headquartered in Ouagadougou which through sustained efforts have achieved and consolidated these gains. In 2005, Burkina Faso and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) signed a $12 million Threshold Country Program to build schools and increase girls' enrolment rates. In November 2005, the Millennium Challenge Corporation selected Burkina Faso as eligible to submit a proposal for Millennium Challenge Account assistance for fiscal year 2006, making it one of only two countries eligible for threshold as well as compact funding. In July 2008, the Government of Burkina Faso is expected to sign a five-year Compact that will focus on agriculture, land reform, road infrastructure, and education.

The Peace Corps entered Burkina Faso in 1966. The Peace Corps program was phased out in 1987, but was invited to return to Burkina Faso in 1995 as part of a newly established health project. One year later, the Peace Corps established a secondary education project and in 2003, Peace Corps introduced a small enterprise development project to complement the government's poverty reduction and private sector promotional programs. In 2005, the Government of Burkina Faso asked for assistance to increase the level of girls' access to education, which later became the focus of the Millennium Challenge Corporation's Threshold Compact with Burkina Faso. All Peace Corps Volunteers, regardless of sector, are trained in how to promote awareness on HIV/AIDS and gender and development.

U.S. trade with Burkina is still extremely limited—$18.1 million in U.S. exports and $1 million in Burkinabe exports to the U.S. in 2006—but investment possibilities exist, especially in the mining and communications sectors.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

OUAGADOUGOU (E) 602 Avenue Raoul Follereau, 01 B.P. 35, (226) 5030-6723; 5031-2660 (after hours), Fax (226) 5030-3890, Workweek: M-Th 07:30-17:00, F 07:30–12:30, Website: ouagadougou.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Margaret Tagge
AMB OMS:	Anita Beamon-Freeman
ECO/COM:	Pamela Hamblett
FM:	Michael Wilson
HRO:	Tracy R. Madril
MGT:	M. Eugene Aaron
AMB:	Jeanine E. Jackson
CON:	Wossenyelesh Mazengia
DCM:	David Brown
PAO:	Joann Lockard
GSO:	Paul Salarano & Daniel L. McManus
RSO:	Chris Berry
AFSA:	Pamela Hamblett
CLO:	Adrien Houndje
EEO:	Pamela Hamblett
IMO:	Aaron Lockard
IPO:	Michael Tagge
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
POL:	Breanna Green

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 7, 2008

Country Description: Burkina Faso, previously known as Upper Volta, is a landlocked, developing country in the Sahel region of West Africa. Its capital is Ouagadougou. Burkina Faso is a former French colony; the official language is French. It is one of the world's poorest countries, and tourism infrastructure is limited.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, visa, evidence of yellow-fever vaccination are required for entry into the country. Visas valid for seven days are available at land borders and for 21 days at the airport; however, both can be converted into visas of up to five years validity at the Direction du Controle des Migrations, a government office in central Ouagadougou. U.S. travelers should obtain longer-validity visas from the

Embassy of Burkina Faso, 2340 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 332-5577. Overseas inquiries should be made at the nearest Burkinabe embassy or consulate.

Visit the Embassy of Burkina Faso web site www.burkinaembassy-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Ouagadougou occasionally experiences demonstrations and civil unrest. U.S. citizens traveling to and residing in Burkina Faso are urged to exercise caution and maintain a high level of security awareness at all times. Although most demonstrations are generally peaceful, there have been several incidents of violence and destruction within recent years. U.S. citizens should avoid crowds, political gatherings, and street demonstrations, even if they appear to be peaceful. There have been no known terrorist incidents (bombings, hijackings or kidnappings) directed against foreigners in Burkina Faso.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Street crime in Burkina Faso poses high risks for visitors. Most reported incidents involve purse-snatchers and street scam artists, who target wallets, jewelry, cell phones and other valuables. Thieves are especially active during international meetings or events, which draw large crowds to the capital. The areas near and around the U.N. Circle, Avenue Kwame N'Krumah, and the former Central Market in Ouagadougou experience the highest incidence of purse snatchings and muggings. Travelers should stay alert, remain in groups, and avoid poorly lit areas. Be especially cautious at night, when most reported incidents have taken place.

There continue to be frequent armed robberies and attacks on intercity roads throughout the country. Although these armed individuals and groups operate mostly at night, there have been daytime attacks. They have injured and/or killed individuals who refused their demands or attempted to drive through their roadblocks. Several attacks have been directed at intercity public buses. U.S. travelers should avoid all intercity travel at night. Check with the U.S. Embassy for the latest security information before setting out on your journey.

Perpetrators of business fraud often target foreigners. Recent scams that have victimized U.S. citizens have taken many forms, including fraudulent transactions for gold and antiquities. Typically these scams begin with an unsolicited communication (usually by e-mail) from an unknown person who describes a situation that promises quick financial gain, often involving the transfer of a large sum of money or valuables out of the country. A series of "advance fees" must be paid to conclude the transaction, such as fees to provide legal documents or to pay certain taxes. In fact, the final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scam is simply to collect the advance fees. One common variation involves individuals claiming to be refugees or other victims of western African conflicts who contact U.S. citizens to request help in transferring large sums of money out of Burkina Faso. Another typical ploy involves persons claiming to be related to present or former political leaders who need assistance to transfer large sums of cash.

While such fraud schemes in the past have been associated with Nigeria, they are now prevalent throughout West Africa. The scams pose a danger of both financial loss and physical harm. You should carefully check and research any business proposal originating in Burkina Faso or elsewhere before you commit any funds, provide any goods or services, or undertake any travel. For additional information on scams, see the Department of State's publication, International Financial Scams.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities and emergency hospital care are very limited, particularly in areas outside the capital, Ouagadougou. Some medicines are, however, available through local pharmacies. Travelers requiring medicines should bring an adequate supply for the duration of their stay in Burkina Faso.

Malaria is a serious risk to travelers in Burkina Faso. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what anti-malarial drugs they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC travelers' health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/faq.htm.

Meningitis is endemic in Burkina Faso, and cases are most frequent during the drier, dustier months of January through June. Travelers should confirm that their meningitis A, C, Y, W, 135 inoculations are up to date.

There have been several confirmed cases of avian influenza (H5N1) in Burkina Faso over the last year, although in each case the disease was confined to birds, and was contained. A new outbreak could occur at any time. Travelers should avoid poultry farms and markets, avoid contact with visibly sick or dead birds and

any raw poultry, and ensure poultry products are thoroughly cooked prior to consumption. For further information on avian influenza, consult the U.S. Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site at http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm. World Health Organization (WHO) guidance related to avian influenza is available at http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Burkina Faso is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Public transportation is not safe. While urban road conditions are fair, rural roads are in poor condition and roadside assistance is not available. Travelers should exercise great caution when traveling by land in Burkina Faso. All but a few roads are unpaved, narrow, and full of potholes. Livestock and children often dart onto the road without warning. Road travel at night is especially dangerous and, if at all possible, should be avoided. At night, there is a high volume of truck traffic passing through the country and pedestrians, bicycles, and carts pose a major hazard on unlit, unmarked roads. Vehicles are often dangerously overloaded and poorly maintained. Drivers, including motorcyclists and bicyclists, are often careless. The police rarely enforce traffic laws and are virtually absent on non-urban roads. Emergency services are unreliable and overtaxed.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Burkina Faso, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Burkina Faso's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Burkina Faso's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning export from Burkina Faso of items such as masks, religious materials, and antiquities. The Director of the National Museum has stated that all exportation of objects of art (old or traditional artists' works, and all old material of the national cultural patrimony) is subject to the prior approval of the Ministry of Culture. Contact the Embassy of Burkina Faso in Washington (see contact information in the Entry Requirements section) for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Foreigners should always carry an identity document, such as a passport or U.S. driver's license.

Credit cards are accepted at only a few high-end establishments in Ouagadougou. Travelers' checks may be cashed at local banks, but euro-denominated traveler's checks are much more widely accepted than dollar-denominated ones. There are a few ATMs in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso, but they do not always accept cards from foreign banks. ATMs generally accept Visa credit cards with a personal identification number.

Burkina Faso's laws concerning photography have recently changed. Photo permits from the Tourist Office are no longer required for tourists. Film crews still do require permits. Note that the Tourist Office publishes a list of buildings, installations, and areas that may not be photographed at all. Contact the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou for more details regarding taking photographs in Burkina Faso.

Local telephone service is adequate but expensive. Cell phone networks are available in most urban areas. However, telephone coverage in rural areas is limited. International calls cannot always be made from hotels; it is often necessary to make international calls from a Post and Telecommunications Office, where only local currency is accepted. Collect calls are not possible. Cyber-cafes for Internet access are common in both Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Burkina Faso laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Burkina Faso are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Burkina Faso are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Burkina Faso. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on Avenue Raoul Follereau. The Consular entrance is located on Avenue John F. Kennedy; consular telephone 50-30-67-23; consular fax: 50-30-77-75. The Embassy hours of operation are Monday to Thursday from 07:30 to 12:00 and 12:45 to 17:00; Friday 07:30 to 12:30. The Embassy's website address is: http://burkinafaso.usembassy.gov. The Embassy is closed on both U.S. and Burkinabe holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Burkina Faso is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: Only four Burkinabe orphans have received U.S. immigrant visas in the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The office of Placements and Adoptions at the Ministry of Social Affairs and National Solidarity (La Direction de la Protection de l'Enfant et de L'Adolescent, Ministère de l'Action Sociale et de la Solidarité Nationale) receives and examines all adoption applications and identifies adoptable children.

Ministère de l'Action Sociale et
de la Solidarité Nationale
La Direction des Placements
et des Adoptions
Immeuble Baoghin, Secteur 10
01 BP 515, Ouagadougou 01
Burkina Faso
Telephone: (226) 50 30 68 80
(Switchboard)
Fax: (226) 50 31 67 37

Eligibility to Adopt: Married, cohabiting couples who have been married for at least five years may adopt a child. Single applicants are almost never permitted to adopt children in Burkina Faso. Married prospective adoptive parents without children of their own are given priority.

Each prospective adoptive parent must be at least 15 years older than the prospective adoptee, unless the prospective adoptee is the biological child of one of the spouses, in which case the age difference between the child and the other spouse must be at least 10 years. The authorities must be convinced that an adoption will not generate a material profit for anyone involved in the adoption (except service providers such as lawyers).

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Children: In Burkina Faso, children identified for adoption are mostly from one of the following categories: orphans whose parents are unknown or have died, children with mentally ill mothers, abandoned children, and children who were born of incestuous or adulterous relationships. Under local law, children can be adopted at any time up to age 18. If the adoptive child is aged 15 or above, however, he/she must give his/her personal consent before the adoption can take place.

Residency Requirements: With The Hague Convention now implemented, American citizens residing in the United States can apply to adopt a child from Burkina Faso.

Time Frame: It takes about twelve months from the time the prospective parents submit their initial application until the child is identified and custody is given to the adoptive family. It takes six months or more for the case to be finalized in court. Finalization includes the final adoption decree, the issuance of child's new birth certificate, the issuance of the "Certificat de Conformité" and the authorization for the child to leave the country.

Generally, the child is placed in the adoptive parents' care as soon as s/he is identified, and lives with them until the final court hearing. In the absence of those parents (for Americans who reside in the U.S. and are adopting in Burkina Faso) the child is placed in a host family or in an orphanage. The court hearing is usually just a formality, as the government Social Service Agency has already vetted the parents.

Adoption cases may take longer when not properly followed up with the court. The Placements and Adoptions Office suggests that adoptive parents hire a lawyer, especially when cases fall under the jurisdiction of the civil court in Ouagadougou. The Placements and Adoptions office maintains a list of local lawyers who can be consulted. In small cities, prospective adoptive parents might not need to hire a lawyer.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any

adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. Because Burkina Faso is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The U.S. Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net. The Ministry of Social Affairs, and specifically its Placements and Adoptions office, provides adoption services in Burkina Faso.

As stated above, adoptive parents may find it helpful to hire an attorney suggested by the aforementioned office to assist them with the adoption process. The U.S. Embassy also has a list of attorneys, which is available on our website at http://ouagadougou.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Burkina Faso discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents.

Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Burkina Faso at risk.

The following adoption fees are covered by the adoptive parents:

- Fees for home study conducted on the child: 20 000 F (about 50 USD).
- Medical exam (Tests that are compulsory include hepatitis A and B, HIV, blood and sickle cells detection): 40 000 (about 100 USD).
- Food allowance: 60 000 (about 120 USD) per month. This amount is payable from the time the adoptive family commits themselves to adopting the child.
- In the event of a serious illness, the adoptive parents may be asked to bear the cost of hospitalization and or the transportation of the child.

Adoptive parents must also cover the expenses of lawyers' and notary services.

Adoption Procedures: Burkinabe law does not permit prospective adoptive parents to choose or identify a specific child they would like to adopt. Social Service Agencies throughout Burkina Faso are authorized to conduct social and psychological studies on children to certify that they are eligible for adoption. Lists of these children are forwarded to the Placements and Adoptions Office.

Prospective adoptive parents should understand that there are two kinds of adoption available in Burkina Faso, and for U.S. immigration purposes, the "full" adoption option is the only one that can confer immigrant status to an adopted child. An "open" adoption—one which gives a biological parent the right to revoke the adoption at any time—does not meet the requirements established by U.S. immigration law for issuing visas to adopted orphans.

There are two ways to submit adoption applications in Burkina Faso: Through accredited Adoption Agencies who have a fully accredited representative in Burkina Faso to act on their behalf or Apply directly to the Ministry of Social Affairs, Infant and Adolescent Welfare office. Applications are evaluated with respect to the following factors:

- The family's ability to financially support the child;
- The family's way of life;
- The findings of a social and psychological report on the prospective adoptive parents;
- The family's motivations and their attitude towards adoption;
- The marital status, age and state of health of the adoptive parents;
- The point of view and welfare of children already members of the adoptive family; and
- The size of the family (applications from families with more than two children may not be given priority).

The following criteria are taken into account:

- The age of the prospective parents compared to the child's (making sure that the age difference is not excessive);
- Gender of the child as requested by the prospective parents;
- The order in which files were received (they operate on a first come First served basis); and
- The clauses of their proposal.

As soon as a family is identified, a letter proposing a child is sent to the prospective parents by the Director of the Office of Placements and adoptions. Prospective parents must wait for this official letter, which goes through the accredited Agencies. This is the article 16 Report.

After reading the report on the child's history and health condition, prospective parents must respond to the Ministry of Social Affairs on whether or not they want to proceed with the adoption.

When the prospective parents agree to adopt the child that is proposed to them, the Office of Placements and Adoptions then drafts an agreement to pursue the procedure together with the child's birth certificate and home study. If the child's biological parents are known, there must be a consent act, a family council report or a declaration of abandonment. The agreement to pursue the adoption procedure is given to the local representative of the accredited agency.

This exchange of agreement to pursue the procedure must be completed before the adoption court hearing. Unless this condition is respected, the adoption cannot be recognized by

the authorities of Burkina Faso. After committing themselves to adopt the child, the prospective parents hire a lawyer in Burkina Faso to follow the procedure in court. The Office of Placements and Adoptions forwards the completed adoption file to the tribunal where the child resides or to the main tribunal in Ouagadougou.When the file is received by the tribunal, they contact a notary to establish an act of adoption. This act of adoption is first sent to the institution that is responsible for the welfare of the child to initial and sign the act before it is forwarded to the Office of Placement and adoption for a final signature. There is a three month waiting period after the signature of the act before the court announces the final adoption.

The lawyer then gets a copy of the judgment to request the issuance of a new birth certificate and a new passport for the child. In Burkina Faso, birth certificates are issued by the local mayor's office (the "Mairie"). Passports are issued by the Ministry of Security's "Division du Contrôle des Migrations" upon presentation of the child's birth certificate with name changes and the adoption decree. The passport costs about $65.

Copies of the judgment and the certificate of non appeal are sent to the Office of Placement and Adoptions for the issuance of the certificate of conformity and the authorization to leave the country.

The certificate of non appeal is delivered 1 month after the final court decision. Unless all the conditions are met, the office of placement and adoptions is unable to issue the certificate of conformity and the authorization to leave the country. These documents can only be given to the adoptive parents when they get to Burkina Faso.

At the end of the procedure, the adoptive family must travel to Burkina Faso to get the child. The adoptive parents must remain in the country for at least 10 to 15 business days to finalize the adoption process. When the adoption procedure is completed and the child joins the adoptive family, a periodic follow-up on the integration of the child in the family must be done by the competent social services of the child place of residence. The office of placements and adoptions at the Ministry of Social Affairs and National Solidarity must hear about the child twice a year during the first 2 years of the child's life with the adoptive family and once a year up to the child's 18th birthday.

Required Documents: Only certified copies of these documents are acceptable to Burkinabe authorities.

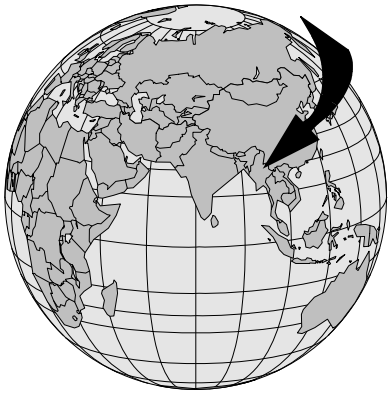
- Two motivation letters stamped with 200 fcfa revenue stamps (available at the local mayor's office), one addressed to the Chief Judge of the court in Ouagadougou and the other to the Ministry of Social Affairs, explaining in detail the motivation for adopting, and specifying the profile of the child they would like to adopt;
- A marriage certificate for the couple showing that they have been married for more than 5 years;
- A copy of the family book (official record of spouse, children) when/if available;
- Proof of residence;
- Proof of income;
- Birth certificate for each prospective parent;
- An authorization to adopt (agreement) issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs;
- Medical documents certifying that both prospective adoptive parents are physically and psychologically health;
- A home study report done by a Social Services agency of the adoptive parents habitual residence;
- A commitment to send a report twice a year during the two first years of adoption and then once a year until the child reaches the age of 18;
- Police certificates for both prospective parents; and
- A copy of the first two pages of both prospective parents' passports.

Embassy of Burkina Faso
2340 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Telephone: (202) 332-5577/6895
Fax: (202) 667-1882
Email: ambawdc@verizon.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

U.S. Embassy
Avenue John F. Kennedy
Secteur 6, Koulouba
01 BP 35, Ouagadougou 01
Telephone: (226) 50-30-67-23
Fax: (226) 50-30-77-75
Email: consularouaga@state.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



BURMA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Union of Burma

Editor's Note: The Burmese Government was dissolved on September 18, 1988 in a military coup and the nation was renamed Myanmar. The US does not presently recognize the current government of Myanmar and therefore continues to refer to the nation as Burma.

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 678,500 sq. km. (slightly smaller than Texas).

Cities: Administrative capital—Nay Pyi Taw, near the township of Pyinmana (pop. 200,000); Other cities—Rangoon (pop. 5.5 million), Mandalay (pop. 1.2 million).

Terrain: Central lowlands ringed by steep, rugged highlands.

Climate: Tropical monsoon; cloudy, rainy, hot, humid summers (southwest monsoon, June to September); less cloudy, scant rainfall, mild temperatures, lower humidity during winter (December to April).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Burmese.

Population: 57.6 million (IMF estimate 2007); no official census has been taken since 1983.

Annual population growth rate: (UNDP 2005 estimate) 0.8%.

Ethnic groups: Burman 68%, Shan 9%, Karen 7%, Rakhine 4%, Chinese 3%, Mon 2%, Indian 2%, other 5%.

Religions: Buddhist 89%, Christian 4% (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%), Muslim 4%, animist 1%, other 2%.

Languages: Burmese, minority ethnic languages.

Education: Literacy—adult, 89.9%; male, 93.9%; female, 86.4% (UNDP 2005 estimate).

Health: Infant mortality rate—75 deaths/1,000 live births (UNDP 2005 estimate). Life expectancy—60.8 yrs.: male, 57.6 yrs.; female 64.2 (UNDP 2005 estimate).

Government

Type: Military junta.

Constitution: January 3, 1974; suspended since September 18, 1988, when the current junta (SPDC) took power. The Burmese regime claimed that a new draft constitution was approved in a May 2008 referendum; it is not clear when the new constitution will go into effect, since parliamentary elections are not scheduled until 2010.

Government branches: Executive—Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Senior General Than Shwe is the head of state. Prime Minister Lt. Gen. Thein Sein is the head of government. Under the new constitution, the president and two vice-presidents will be selected by the parliament. Legislative—The newly approved constitution calls for a bicameral parliament. The lower house will have no more than 440 members and the upper house no more than 224. At least 25% of the legislature will be military, selected by the Chief of Defense Services. Judicial—The legal system is based on a British-era system, but with the constitution suspended, the military regime now rules by decree and there is no guarantee of a fair public trial; the judiciary is not independent. The new constitution provides for a supreme court, a constitutional tribunal, and lower courts.

Political parties: National League for Democracy (NLD) is the primary opposition party; National Unity Party (NUP) is the primary pro-regime party; the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) is a pro-regime socio-political organization; there are also many smaller ethnic parties.

Political subdivisions: The country is divided into seven primarily Burman ethnic divisions (tain) of Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy), Bago (Pegu), Magway, Mandalay, Yangon (Rangoon), Sagaing, and Tanintharyi (Tenassarim) and seven ethnic states (pyi nay) Chin State, Kachin State, Kayin (Karen) State, Kayah (Karenni) State, Mon State, Rakhine (Arakan) State, and Shan State.

Suffrage: Universal suffrage at 18 years of age.

Economy

GDP: $13.7 billion (IMF estimate 2007).

Annual growth rate: 5.5% (IMF estimate 2007); the regime claimed the 2005-2006 rate was 13.2%.
GDP per capita: $239 (IMF estimate 2007)
Inflation rate: 40% (2007 IMF estimate).
Natural resources: natural gas, timber, tin, antimony, zinc, copper, tungsten, lead, coal, limestone, precious stones, hydropower, and petroleum.
Agriculture: Products—rice, pulses, beans, sesame, peanuts, sugarcane, hardwood, fish, and fish products.
Industries: Types—agricultural processing, knit and woven apparel, wood and wood products, copper, tin, tungsten, iron, construction materials, pharmaceuticals, and fertilizer.
Recorded trade: (2007 Business Information Group (BIG) statistics) Exports—$5.9 billion. Types—natural gas 45.5%, agricultural products 17.4%, teak and forest products 9.6%, precious and semi-precious stones 9.5%, and garments 4.8%. Major markets—Thailand 47.2%, India 12.5%, Hong Kong 9.7%, China 8%, and Singapore 5.8%. Imports—$2.8 billion. Types—lubricant oil and diesel 16.9%, textiles and fabrics 10%, palm oil 9%, machinery parts 8.7%, cars 6.9%, and steel, iron, and bars 6.4%. Major suppliers—Singapore 29%, China 20%, Japan 8.5%, and Thailand 8.1%

PEOPLE

A majority of Burma's people are ethnic Burmans. Shans, Karens, Rohingya, Arakanese, Kachins, Chins, Mons, and many other smaller indigenous ethnic groups form about 30% of the population. Indians and Chinese are the largest non-indigenous groups. Although Burmese is the most widely spoken language (approx. 32 million speakers), other ethnic groups have retained their own identities and languages. Some of the most prominent are Shan; various Karen, Karenni and Chin languages; Arakanese; Jingpaw; Mon; Palaung; Parauk; Wa; and Yangbye. English is spoken in many areas frequented by tourists. The Indian and Chinese residents speak various languages and dialects of their homelands: Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Bengali, Mandarin, Fujian, and Cantonese.

An estimated 89% of the population practices Buddhism. Other religions, Christian 4% (Baptist 3%, Roman Catholic 1%), Muslim 4%, and animist 1%, are less prevalent, although Christian and Muslim groups claim the regime significantly underestimates their number of adherents.

According to the UN Development Programme's 2007 Human Development Report, public health expenditure equaled only 0.3% of Burma's GDP. High infant mortality rates and short life expectancies further highlight poor health and living conditions. The HIV/AIDS epidemic poses a serious threat to the Burmese population, as do tuberculosis and malaria. In 2007, the UNDP's Human Development Index, which measures achievements in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment, and adjusted real income, ranked Burma 132 out of 177 countries.

There are numerous documented human rights violations, and internal displacement of ethnic minorities is prevalent. Over a million Burmese, many of them ethnic minorities, have fled for economic and political reasons to Bangladesh, India, China, Malaysia, and Thailand to seek work and asylum. More than 150,000 Burmese live in nine refugee camps in Thailand and roughly 30,000 live in two camps in Bangladesh. Roughly 30,000 Burmese (mostly Chin and Rohingya) have fled to Malaysia.

HISTORY

Burma was unified by Burman dynasties three times during the past millennium. The first such unification came with the rise of the Bagan (Pagan) Dynasty in 1044 AD, which is considered the "Golden Age" in Burmese history. During this period, Theravada Buddhism first made its appearance in Burma, and the Bagan kings built a massive city with thousands of pagodas and monasteries along the Irrawaddy River. The Bagan Dynasty lasted until 1287 when Mongol invaders destroyed the city. Ethnic Shan rulers, who established a political center at Ava (near Mandalay), filled the ensuing political vacuum for a short time.

In the 15th century, the Taungoo Dynasty succeeded again in unifying under Burman rule a large, multiethnic kingdom. This dynasty, which lasted from 1486 until 1752, left little cultural legacy, but expanded the kingdom through conquest of the Shans. Internal power struggles, and the cost of protracted warfare, led to the eventual decline of the Taungoo Dynasty.

The final Burman royal dynasty, the Konbaung, was established in 1752 under the rule of King Alaungpaya. Like the Taungoo Kings, the Konbaung rulers focused on warfare and conquest. Wars were fought with the ethnic Mons and Arakanese, and with the Siamese. The Burmese sacked the Siamese capital of Ayuthaya in 1767. This period also saw four invasions by the Chinese and three devastating wars with the British.

The British began their conquest of Burma in 1824, expanding their holdings after each of the three wars. At the end of the third war in 1885, the British gained complete control of Burma, annexing it to India. Under British control, which lasted until 1948, Burma underwent enormous change. The British established strong administrative institutions and reorganized the economy from subsistence farming to a large-scale export economy. By 1939, Burma had become the world's leading exporter of rice. Burmese nationalists, led by General Aung San and 29 other "Comrades," joined the Japanese forces in driving out the British at the outbreak of World War II. However, the Burmese Army switched sides in mid-1945 and aided U.S. and British forces in their drive to Rangoon. After the war, the Burmese, with General Aung San at the helm, demanded complete political and economic independence from Britain. The British Government acceded to these

demands. A constitution was completed in 1947 and independence granted in January 1948. General Aung San was assassinated with most of his cabinet before the constitution went into effect.

During the constitutional period from 1948 to 1962, Burma suffered widespread conflict and internal struggle. Constitutional disputes and persistent division among political and ethnic groups contributed to the democratic government's weak hold on power. In 1958, Prime Minister U Nu invited the military to rule temporarily to restore political order. The military stepped down after 18 months; however, in 1962 General Ne Win led a military coup, abolishing the constitution and establishing a xenophobic military government with socialist economic policies. These policies had devastating effects on the country's economy and business climate.

In March 1988, student-led disturbances broke out in Rangoon in response to the worsening economic situation and evolved into a call for regime change. Despite repeated violent crackdowns by the military and police, the demonstrations increased in size as many in the general public joined the students. During mass demonstrations on August 8, 1988, military forces killed more than 1,000 demonstrators. At a rally following this massacre Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of General Aung San, made her first political speech and assumed the role of opposition leader.

In September 1988, the military deposed Ne Win's Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP), suspended the constitution, and established a new ruling junta called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). In an effort to "restore order," the SLORC sent the army into the streets to suppress the ongoing public demonstrations. An estimated additional 3,000 were killed, and more than 10,000 students fled into the hills and border areas.

The SLORC ruled by martial law until national parliamentary elections were held in May 1990. The results were an overwhelming victory for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, which won 392 of the 485 seats, even though she was under house arrest. However, the SLORC refused to honor the results and call the Parliament into session, and instead imprisoned many political activists.

The ruling junta changed its name to the State Peace and Development



Council (SPDC) in 1997, but did not change its policy of autocratic control and repression of the democratic opposition. It continued to subject Aung San Suu Kyi to varying forms of detention and other restrictions on her movement, which it periodically lifted only to reinstate later. In 2000, the SPDC began talks with the political opposition led by Aung San Suu Kyi. These talks were followed by the release of political prisoners and some increase in political freedoms for the NLD. In May 2002, Aung San Suu Kyi was allowed to leave her home, and subsequently traveled widely throughout the country. On May 30, 2003, Aung San Suu Kyi and a convoy of her supporters were attacked by a group of government-affiliated thugs. Many members of the convoy were killed or injured, and others disappeared. Aung San Suu Kyi and other members of her party were detained, and the military government forcibly closed the offices of the NLD. Today, only the NLD headquarters in Rangoon is open, all the party's other offices remain closed, and Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo remain under house arrest.

In October 2004, hard-line members of the senior leadership consolidated their power by ousting Prime Minister Khin Nyunt and removing him and his allies from control of the government and military intelligence apparatus. In late November 2004, the junta announced it would release approximately 9,000 prisoners it claimed had been improperly jailed by Khin Nyunt's National Intelligence Bureau. Approximately 86 of those released had been imprisoned for their political beliefs. Those released since November 2004 include Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, both key figures in the 1988 demonstrations. On July 6, 2005, authorities released 323 additional political prisoners and on January 3, 2007, the authorities released over 2,800 prisoners, of whom over 40 were political prisoners. In August 2007 the regime re-arrested Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, and subsequently arrested thousands of political activists and young people after demonstrations in September 2007. Over 2,100 political activists are held in prisons around the country. Following a sharp increase in fuel prices on August 15, 2007, pro-democracy groups began a series of peaceful marches and demonstrations to protest the deteriorating economic situation in Burma. The regime responded by arbitrarily detaining over 150 pro-democracy activists between August 15 and September 11. On August 28, as popular dissatisfaction spread, Buddhist monks began leading peaceful marches. On September 5, security forces violently broke up demonstrations by monks resulting in injuries and triggering calls for a nationwide response and a government apology. Beginning on September 18, monks resumed their peaceful protests in several cities throughout the country. These marches grew quickly to include ordinary citizens, culminating in a gathering of approximately 10,000 protestors in Rangoon on September 24. On September 25, the regime tried to stop the protests by imposing a curfew and banning public gatherings. On September 26 and 27, the regime renewed its violent crackdown, shooting, beating, and arbitrarily detaining thousands of monks, pro-democracy activists, and onlookers. Underestimating the number of deaths during the crackdown, the regime confirmed the deaths of only 10 protestors. Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) estimated the number of casualties to be much higher, and in his December 7, 2007 report to the UN General Assembly, Special Rapporteur Paulo Sergio Pinheiro stated that there were over 30 fatalities in Rangoon associated with the September 2007 protests. In retribution for leading protest marches, monks were beaten and arrested, many monks were disrobed, and several monasteries were raided, ransacked, and closed. In addition to the more than 1,100 political prisoners whose arrests predate the September 2007 crackdown, another thousand or more were detained due to their participation in the recent protests. Additional people continued to be arrested through the end of May 2008.

In February 2008 the government announced that it had completed its draft of a new constitution and it would hold a referendum in May to be followed by multi-party elections in 2010. While the referendum law provided for a secret ballot, free debate was not permitted and activities considered "interfering with the referendum" carried a three-year prison sentence. Despite the major humanitarian disaster precipitated by Cyclone Nargis, which struck Burma May 2-3, the regime insisted on carrying out the referendum, and voting took place on May 10 in most of the country and on May 24 in areas affected by the cyclone. The referendum was rife with irregularities; voters arriving at polling stations were advised that their ballots had already been cast; officials distributed ballots that had previously been completed; vote counts in most areas were conducted in secret; and voters were intimidated by officials to vote in support of the constitution. On May 27, the government announced that 92.5% of voters approved the constitution, with a 98% voter turnout.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Union of Burma is ruled by a military junta that currently calls itself the "State Peace and Development Council" (SPDC). Although the SPDC changed the name of the country to "Myanmar," the democratically elected but never convened parliament of 1990 does not recognize the name change, and the democratic opposition continues to use the name "Burma." Out of support for the democratically elected leaders, the U.S. Government likewise uses "Burma."

Burma consists of 14 states and divisions. Administrative control is exercised from the central government through a system of subordinate executive bodies and regional military commanders. Power is centered on the SPDC, which maintains strict authoritarian rule over the people of Burma. The Prime Minister is appointed directly by the SPDC. Control is maintained through intimida-

tion, the strict censoring of information, repression of individual rights, and suppression of ethnic minority groups.

The military regime has a contentious relationship with Burma's ethnic groups, many of which have fought for greater autonomy or secession for their regions since the country's independence. In 1948, only Rangoon itself was under the control of national government authorities. Subsequent military campaigns brought more and more of the nation under central government control. Since 1989, the regime has signed a series of cease-fire agreements with insurgent groups, leaving only a handful still in active opposition.

The SPDC continues its harsh rule and systematic human rights abuses, and insists that any future political transition be negotiated on its terms. Although the National League for Democracy (NLD) overwhelmingly won the last national elections held in 1990, the ruling junta has never recognized its victory. The junta proclaimed a seven-step road map to democracy and convened a national convention on January 9, 1993 to draft a new constitution. The national convention collapsed in 1996 after the NLD withdrew its participation. The junta reconvened the convention in May 2004 without the participation of the NLD and other pro-democracy ethnic groups. The national convention convened intermittently and in September 2007, the regime concluded the process of "drafting" principles for the new constitution. Delegates to the convention were not allowed to debate or openly discuss the principles. In October 2007, the SPDC appointed 54 persons to sit on the constitution drafting committee, but included no members from the NLD or the pro-democracy opposition. The government declared the completion of the constitution drafting committee's work on February 5, 2008 and announced that it would hold a national referendum on the constitution in May 2008, with multi-party elections planned for 2010. The government carried out the referendum on May 10 and May 24 in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation and in the midst of the humanitarian disaster caused by Cyclone Nargis, claiming a 92.5% approval rate and 98% voter turnout. The referendum process and outcome were not credible. Although the Burmese regime claimed that its draft constitution was approved in the referendum, it is not clear exactly when the new constitution will go into effect as parliamentary elections are not scheduled until 2010. Even under the new constitution, the regime will maintain strict control of the government, giving the military the power to step in and control the government whenever it deems necessary.

In November 2005, the ruling regime unexpectedly relocated the capital city from Rangoon to Nay Pyi Taw, further isolating the government from the public. Nay Pyi Taw is a sparsely populated district located approximately midway between Rangoon and Mandalay. Most government workers and ministries moved to Nay Pyi Taw over the following six months, but construction and development of the new administrative capital remains incomplete. Foreign diplomatic missions are still located in Rangoon.

Cyclone Nargis hit the Irrawaddy delta region and Rangoon on the evening of May 2 and morning of May 3, 2008. The storm devastated a huge swath of the country, wiping out entire villages and leaving an estimated 130,000 Burmese dead or missing. While the international community offered aid in the massive humanitarian relief effort, the regime was slow to permit outside assistance.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Chmn., State Peace & Development Council: **THAN SHWE, Sr. Gen.**
Vice Chmn., State Peace & Development Council: **MAUNG AYE, Vice Sr. Gen.**
Prime Min.: **THEIN SEIN, Lt. Gen.**
Sec. One, State Peace & Development Council: **TIN AUNG MYINT OO, Lt. Gen.**
Sec. Two, State Peace & Development Council: **YE MINT, Lt. Gen.**
Min. for Agriculture & Irrigation: **HTAY OO, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Commerce: **TIN NAING THEIN, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Communications, Post, & Telegraph: **THEIN ZAW, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Construction: **SAW TUN, Maj. Gen.**
Min. for Cooperatives: **TIN HTUT, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Culture: **KHIN AUNG MYINT, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Defense: **THAN SHWE, Sr. Gen.**
Min. of Education: **CHAN NYEIN**
Min. of Electric Power 1: **ZAW MIN, Col.**
Min. of Electric Power 2: **KHIN MYAUNG MYINT, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Energy: **LUN THI, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Finance & Revenue: **HLA TUN, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **NYAN WIN, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Forestry: **THEIN AUNG, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Health: **KYAW MYINT, Dr.**
Min. of Home Affairs: **MAUNG OO, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Hotels & Tourism: **SOE NAING, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Immigration & Population: **SAW LWIN, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Industry 1: **AUNG THAUNG**
Min. of Industry 2: **SOE THEIN**
Min. of Information: **KYAW HSAN, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Labor: **AUNG KYI, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Livestock Breeding & Fisheries: **MAUNG MAUNG THEIN, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Military Affairs: **TIN AUNG MYINT OO, Lt. Gen.**
Min. of Mines: **OHN MYINT, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of National Planning & Economic Development: **SOE THA**
Min. of Progress of Border Areas, National Races, & Development Affairs: **THEIN NYUNT, Col.**
Min. of Rail Transport: **AUNG MIN, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Religious Affairs: **MYINT MAUNG, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Science & Industry: **THAUNG**
Min. of Social Welfare, Relief, & Resettlement: **MAUNG MAUNG SWE, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Sports: **AYE MYINT, Brig. Gen.**
Min. for Transport: **THEIN SWE, Maj. Gen.**
Min. in the Office of the Prime Min.: **PYI SONE, Brig. Gen.**
Min. in the Office of the Prime Min.: **THAN SHWE**
Governor, Central Bank of Burma: **THAN NYEIN**
Charge d'Affaires to the US: **MYINT LWIN**

Burma maintains an embassy to the United States at 2300 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel.: (202) 332—-3344; fax: (202) 332-4351.

ECONOMY

Burma is a resource-rich country with a strong agricultural base. It also has vast timber, natural gas, and fishery reserves and is a leading source of gems and jade. Tourist potential remains undeveloped because of weak infrastructure and Burma's international image, which has been damaged by the junta's human rights abuses and oppression of the democratic opposition. Due to Burma's poor human rights record, the U.S. imposed a range of trade sanctions, including bans on the importation of Burmese products into the U.S. and the export of financial services from the U.S. to Burma. In response to the September 2007 crackdown, President Bush announced on September 25, 2007 that the United States would tighten existing economic sanctions on the regime leaders and their supporters. On October 19, 2007, President Bush expanded sanctions to include individuals responsible for human rights abuses and public corruption, as well as individuals and entities who provided material or financial support to designated individuals or the Burmese military government. Other names were added to the targeted sanctions list in November 2007 and February and March 2008. Australia, Canada, and the EU also have imposed additional economic sanctions on the Burmese regime in response to the crackdown.

Despite Burma's growing GDP due to increasing oil and gas revenues, the regime's mismanagement of the economy has created a downward economic spiral for the people of Burma. The state remains heavily involved in most parts of the economy, infrastructure has deteriorated, and no rule of law exists. The majority of Burmese citizens subsist on an average annual income of less than $200 per capita. Inflation, caused primarily by public sector deficit spending and the eroding value of the local currency (the kyat), has reduced living standards. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that inflation was running at 40% in March 2007, in contrast with official estimates of 10%.

The military's commercial arms play a major role in the economy. The limited moves to a market economy have been accompanied by a significant rise in crony capitalism. A handful of companies loyal to the regime has benefited from policies that promote monopoly and privilege. State-controlled activity predominates in energy, heavy industry, and the rice trade. Agriculture, light industry, trade, and transport dominate the private sector.

Burma remains a primarily agricultural economy with 50% of GDP derived from agriculture, livestock and fisheries, and forestry. Cyclone Nargis, which devastated Rangoon and Irrawaddy Divisions, severely damaged approximately 20% of Burma's rice producing lands. Manufacturing/industry constitutes only 15% of recorded economic activity, and state industries continue to play a large role in that sector. Trade and services constitute 35% of GDP.

Foreign investment has declined precipitously since 1999 due to the increasingly unfriendly business environment and political pressure from Western consumers and shareholders. The government conserves foreign exchange by limiting imports and promoting exports. Published estimates of Burma's foreign trade (particularly on the import side) are greatly understated because of the large volume of off-book, black-market, illicit, and unrecorded border trade.

In the near term, growth will continue to be constrained by government mismanagement and minimal investment. A number of other countries, including member states of the European Union, Canada, and Australia have joined the United States in applying some form of sanctions against the regime.

Government economic statistics are unavailable and unreliable. According to official figures, GDP growth has been over 10% annually since FY 1999-2000. However, the rate is likely much smaller; the IMF estimated that the growth rate in 2007 was 5.5% and predicted 2008 growth to be between 4%-5%. Burma's limited economic growth results largely from its natural gas exports, which account for over half of Burma's export receipts and foreign direct investment. Natural gas exports will increase significantly once production begins from the offshore Shwe and Shwephyu Fields, estimated to hold 5.7-10 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. In 2007-2008, the oil and gas sector accounted for $3.42 billion in foreign direct investment. Corporations based in China, India, South Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia have interests in the exploration and development of several offshore and onshore blocks.

Burma remains the world's second-largest producer of illicit opium—although it amounts to only 12% of the world's total. Annual production of opium is now estimated to be less than 15% of mid-1990 peak levels. Burma is also a primary source of amphetamine-type stimulants in Asia. Although the Burmese Government has expanded its counternarcotics measures in recent years, production and trafficking of narcotics and failure to adequately prosecute those involved remains a major problem in Burma.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

During the Cold War, Burmese foreign policy was based on principles of neutrality, often tending toward xenophobia. Since 1988, however, Burma has expanded its regional ties. It now is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and several other regional organizations and initiatives. Burma's lack of progress on human rights and democracy has frayed some ties, and in July

2005, Burma passed up its scheduled 2006 ASEAN chairmanship. Although Burmese-Thai relations are generally cooperative, they have been tainted by a long history of border conflicts and sporadic hostilities over narcotics trafficking and insurgents operating along the Burmese-Thai border.

Nonetheless, official and unofficial economic ties remain strong. In addition to the sizeable population of Burmese refugees it hosts, the Thai Government issues temporary work permits to another one million Burmese who live outside the refugee camps in Thailand. Despite their often-contentious history, Burma and China have grown much closer in recent years. China quickly is becoming Burma's most important partner, offering debt relief, economic development grants, and soft loans used for the construction of infrastructure and light industry. China also is purportedly Burma's major supplier of arms and munitions. Burma's commercial and military ties with India are also growing steadily as well.

The UN has made several efforts to address international concerns over human rights in Burma. The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Burma, Tan Sri Razali Ismail, resigned his position in December 2005 due to the regime's lack of cooperation. Subsequently, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon named former UN Undersecretary General for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari as his Special Advisor for Burma. Special Advisor Gambari has made three trips to Burma since the September 2007 crackdown. In January 2007, the United States and the U.K. sponsored a UN Security Council resolution calling on Burma to cooperate with the UN Secretary General's good offices mission, open dialogue with the political opposition, stop its military offensive in Karen State, and allow humanitarian organizations greater access to needy populations. The resolution received nine votes in favor, three abstentions, and three "no" votes, but was not approved because of vetoes from Russia and China. The UN Security Council adopted by consensus a Presidential Statement on October 11, 2007 deploring the September 2007 crackdown and calling for the creation of the necessary conditions for a genuine dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and all concerned parties and ethnic groups in order to achieve an inclusive national reconciliation. The UN Security Council issued a press statement on the crackdown on November 14, 2007. In November 2007, UN Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur Paulo Sergio Pinheiro was allowed to visit the country for the first time since 2003. His report detailing the Burmese authorities' September crackdown on demonstrations by monks and democracy activists and the severe reprisals that continued was released on December 11, 2007. Gambari visited Burma in March 2008. On May 2, the Security Council issued a second Presidential Statement calling for the Burmese regime to conduct the referendum on its draft constitution in a free and fair manner. In the wake of Cyclone Nargis, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon visited Burma in May 2008 and called on the regime to grant greater access for international aid to cyclone-affected areas of the country.

Burma is involved in the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Program of Economic Cooperation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. As such, it participates in regional meetings and workshops supported by the ADB. Burma joined ASEAN in 1997, and has participated in that regional forum, even hosting a number of seminars, conferences, and ministerial meetings. As one of ASEAN's least developed members, Burma also has an extra five years (until 2008) to comply with most of ASEAN Free Trade Agreement's liberalization requirements. Burma also is a member of the World Trade Organization.

Most Western foreign aid diminished in the wake of the regime's suppression of the democracy movement in 1988. The UN Development Programme's 2007 Human Development Report indicates that official development assistance totaled $144.7 million in 2006, roughly $2 per capita (compared with $47 per person in Laos and $35 per person in Cambodia). Burma receives grants of technical assistance (mostly from Asia), limited humanitarian aid and debt relief from Japan and China, and concessional loans from China and India.

Burma became a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in 1952, the International Financial Corporation (IFC) in 1956, the International Development Association (IDA) in 1962, and the ADB in 1973. Since July 1987, the World Bank has not made any loans to Burma. Since 1998 Burma has been in non-accrual status with the Bank. The IMF performs its mandated annual Article IV consultations, but there are no IMF assistance programs. The ADB has not extended loans to Burma since 1986. Bilateral technical assistance ended in 1988. Burma has not serviced its ADB loans since January 1998. Burma's total foreign debt now stands at over $7 billion.

U.S.-BURMESE RELATIONS

The political relationship between the United States and Burma worsened after the 1988 military coup and violent suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations. Subsequent repression, including the brutal crackdown on peaceful protestors in September 2007, further strained the relationship.

The United States has imposed broad sanctions against Burma under several different legislative and policy vehicles. The Burma Freedom and Democracy Act (BFDA), passed by Congress and signed by the President in 2003, includes a ban on all imports from Burma, a ban on the export of financial services to Burma, a freeze on the assets of certain Burmese financial institutions, and extended visa restrictions on Burmese officials. Congress has renewed the BFDA annually, most recently in July 2007. Since September 27, 2007, the U.S. Department of Treasury designated 25 senior Burmese Government officials as subject to an asset block

under Executive Order 13310. On October 19, 2007, President Bush announced a new Executive Order (E.O. 13348) which expands the authority to block assets to individuals who are responsible for human rights abuses and public corruption, as well as those who provide material and financial support to the regime. Other names were added to the targeted sanctions list in November 2007 and February and March 2008. On April 30, the President issued Executive Order 13464, blocking all property and interests in property of designated individuals and entities determined to be owned or controlled by the Government of Burma or an official of the Government of Burma. In addition, since May 1997, the U.S. Government has prohibited new investment by U.S. persons or entities. A number of U.S. companies exited the Burma market even prior to the imposition of sanctions due to a worsening business climate and mounting criticism from human rights groups, consumers, and shareholders.

The United States has also imposed countermeasures on Burma due to its inadequate measures to eliminate money laundering. Due to its particularly severe violations of religious freedom, the United States has designated Burma a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act. Burma is also designated a Tier 3 Country in the Trafficking in Persons Report for its use of forced labor, and is subject to additional sanctions as a result.

The United States downgraded its level of representation in Burma from Ambassador to Chargé d'Affaires after the government's crackdown on the democratic opposition in 1988 and its failure to honor the results of the 1990 parliamentary election.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 2/19/2008

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 9, 2008

Country Description: Burma (Myanmar) is an underdeveloped agrarian country ruled by an authoritarian military regime. The country's government suppresses all expression of opposition to its rule.

After a long period of isolation, Burma has started to encourage tourism. Foreigners can expect to pay several times more than locals do for accommodations, domestic airfares, and entry to tourist sites. Tourist facilities in Rangoon, Bagan, Ngapali Beach, Inle Lake, and Mandalay are superior to tourist facilities in other parts of the country, where they are limited. Please note that visitors should travel with sufficient cash to cover their expenses for the duration of their visit. Travelers' checks and credit cards are not accepted anywhere, and ATM machines are nonexistent in Burma.

Entry and Exit Requirements: The government of Burma strictly controls travel to, from, and within Burma. Since October 1, 2006, Burmese authorities have often prohibited entry or exit at most land border crossings, unless the traveler is part of a package tour group that has received prior permission from the Burmese authorities. A passport and visa are required for entry into Burma. Travelers are required to show their passports with a valid visa at all airports, train stations, and hotels. Security checkpoints are common outside of tourist areas.

Burmese authorities rarely issues visas to persons with occupations they deem "sensitive," including journalists. Many journalists and writers traveling to Burma on tourist visas have been denied entry. Journalists and tourists mistaken for journalists have been harassed. Some journalists have had film and notes confiscated upon leaving the country.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the absent parent(s) or legal guardian. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

Information about entry requirements as well as other information may be obtained from the Burmese Embassy (Embassy of the Union of Myanmar) at http://www.embassy.org/embassies/mm.html 2300 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone 202-332-4350 or the Permanent Burma Mission (Mission of Myanmar) to the U.N. 10 East 77th St., New York, NY 10021, (212-535-1311) 212-744-1271, fax 212-744-1290.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens traveling in Burma should exercise caution, register with the U.S. Embassy and check in for an update on the current security situation. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry their U.S. passports or photocopies of pass-

port data and visa pages at all times so that if questioned by Burmese officials, they will have proof of U.S. citizenship readily available. In September 2007, the Burmese Government brutally cracked down on peaceful demonstrators, using gunfire, rubber bullets, batons, and tear gas against them and those observing in the vicinity. The authorities killed at least 30 people during the crackdown and arrested more than 3,000. On September 27, 2007, security forces shot and killed a Japanese journalist in the Sule Pagoda downtown area during a demonstration. The Burmese Government has a standing law, which is sporadically enforced, that bans all gatherings of more than five people.

On May 7, 2005, three large bombs simultaneously exploded in Rangoon at two crowded shopping areas frequented by foreigners and at an international trade center, killing at least 20 people and wounding several hundred. On April 26, 2005, an explosive device detonated at a busy market in Mandalay, killing at least three people. Although other smaller-scale bombings have occurred in Burma in recent years, including in early 2007 and early 2008, the 2005 bombings were more sophisticated and specifically targeted more highly trafficked areas than those used in other bombings. However, there is no indication that these attacks targeted American citizens or U.S. interests. The perpetrators of these bombings have not been identified.

In light of these incidents and the possibility of recurring political unrest, Americans in Burma should exercise caution in public places and be alert to their surroundings. Furthermore, Americans in Burma should avoid crowded public places, such as large public gatherings, demonstrations, and any area cordoned off by security forces. The Embassy also advises U.S. citizens not to photograph or videotape the military or police, because doing so could be interpreted as provocative.

Burma experienced major political unrest in 1988 when the military regime jailed as well as killed thousands of Burmese democracy activists. In 1990, the military government refused to recognize the results of an election that the opposition won overwhelmingly. Major demonstrations by opposition activists occurred in 1996 and 1998. In May 2003, individuals affiliated with the Burmese regime attacked a convoy carrying opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi in Sagaing Division; dozens were killed or injured.

Ethnic rebellions still smolder in regions along Burma's borders with Thailand, China, India, and Bangladesh, and anti-personnel landmines along border areas pose an additional danger. Occasional fighting between government forces and various rebel groups has occurred in Chin State and Sagaing Division near India and along the Thai-Burma border area in Burma's Shan, Mon, Kayah (Karenni), and Karen states. From time to time, the Governments of Burma and Thailand have closed the border between the two nations on short notice. In January 2005, regional governments announced a major regional law enforcement initiative aimed at dismantling the operations of Southeast Asia's largest narcotics trafficking organization, the United Wa State Army. At that time, the Burmese Government stated that it could not guarantee the safety of foreign officials or personnel from non-governmental organizations traveling or working in Wa Special Region 2 (northeastern Shan State).

U.S. citizens have been detained, arrested, tried, and deported for, among other activities, distributing pro-democracy literature and visiting the homes and offices of Burmese pro-democracy leaders. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may also result in problems with authorities. Burmese authorities have warned U.S. Embassy officials that those who engage in similar activities in the future will be jailed rather than deported.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Public Announcements, including the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, can be found. Up–to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00a.m.–8:00p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except for U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Crime rates in Burma, especially toward foreigners, are lower than those of many other countries in the region. Nevertheless, due in part to the poor economic situation in Burma, the crime rate has been increasing. Violent crime against foreigners is rare.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Burma are inadequate for even routine medical care. There are few trained medical personnel. Most foreign drugs on sale have been smuggled into the country, and many are

counterfeit or adulterated and thus unsafe to use. Travelers should bring adequate supplies of their medications for the duration of their stay in Burma. HIV/AIDS is widespread among high-risk populations, such as prostitutes and illegal drug users. Malaria, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and other infectious diseases are endemic in most parts of the country.

In early 2006 and throughout 2007, brief avian influenza outbreaks resulted in the death of domestic poultry and some wild birds. In December 2007, the World Health Organization and Burmese Ministry of Health confirmed Burma's first case of human infection with the H5N1 avian influenza virus. The young girl infected with the virus during a poultry outbreak in eastern Shan State in late November responded well to treatment and fully recovered. Travelers to Burma and other South Asian countries affected by avian influenza are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any other surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals.

Current information about avian influenza A (H5N1) and pandemic influenza can be found via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) web site at http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/ or at AvianFlu.gov. For additional information on avian influenza as it affects American citizens residing abroad, see the U.S. Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Burma. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Burma.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Burma. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad and other health information, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Burma is provided for general reference only, and may not be accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Rangoon's main roads are generally in poor condition. Traffic in the capital is increasing rapidly, but heavy congestion is still uncommon. Some roads are in serious disrepair. Slow-moving vehicles, bicycles, animals, and heavy pedestrian traffic create numerous hazards for drivers on Rangoon's streets. Drivers must remain extremely alert to avoid hitting pedestrians.

Most roads outside of Rangoon consist of one to two lanes and are potholed, often unpaved, and unlit at night. Many of the truck drivers traversing from China to Rangoon are believed to drive under the influence of methamphetamines and other stimulants. Drunken and/or drugged drivers are also common on the roads during the four-day Buddhist water festival in mid-April. Driving at night is particularly dangerous. Few, if any, streets are adequately lit. Most Burmese drivers do not turn on their headlights until the sky is completely dark; many do not use headlights at all. Many bicyclists use no lights or reflectors. Vehicular traffic moves on the right side, as in the United States; however, a majority of vehicles have the steering wheel positioned on the right. The "right of way" concept is generally respected, but military convoys and motorcades always have precedence. Most vehicle accidents are settled between the parties on site, with the party at fault paying the damages. In the event of an accident with a pedestrian, the driver is always considered to be at fault and subject to fines or arrest, regardless of the circumstances. Accidents that require an investigation are concluded quickly and rarely result in criminal prosecution. There is no roadside assistance, and ambulances are not available. Vehicles generally do not have seat belts. Child car seats are also not available.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Burma, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Burma's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

The U.S. Embassy in Rangoon has advised its employees to avoid travel on state-owned Myanmar Airways whenever possible due to serious concerns regarding the airline's ability to maintain its airplanes.

Foreigner Travel within Burma: Burmese authorities require that hotels and guesthouses furnish information about the identities and activities of their foreign guests. Burmese who interact with foreigners may be compelled to report on those interactions to the Burmese authorities. Travelers must assume their actions are being closely monitored, particularly in hotel lobbies and rooms, when meeting Burmese citizens, and when using the telephone.

Travelers are not generally required to obtain advance permission to

travel to the main tourist areas of Mandalay and the surrounding area, Bagan, Inle Lake, Ngapali, and other beach resorts. However, some tourists traveling to places where permission is not expressly required have reported delays due to questioning by local security personnel. Additionally, the military regime restricts access to some areas of the country on an ad hoc basis, and in 2005 stated it could not guarantee the safety of foreigners traveling in eastern Shan State, specifically in Wa territory, also known as Special Region 2. Individuals planning to travel in Burma should check with Burmese tourism authorities to see whether travel to specific destinations is permitted. Even if the Burmese authorities allow travel to specific destinations in Burma, it may not be safe to travel in those areas.

Irrawaddy Delta Region: On May 2, 2008, Cyclone Nargis devastated Burma's Irrawaddy Delta region and surrounding areas, killing over 130,000 people. The Delta region is still without many basic necessities, and the risk of outbreaks of disease remains high. The United Nations, ASEAN, and others in the international community, including the United States, provided international relief assistance to meet both immediate and long-term needs. The Burmese Government has restricted access to this area for people other than relief workers it has authorized. American citizens should defer non-essential travel to the Irrawaddy Delta region.

The environment in Rangoon, Burma's most populous city, and other areas outside of the Irrawaddy Delta has gradually improved. Electrical power and water supply have been restored in most areas and markets are now operating normally.

Customs Regulations: Customs regulations in Burma are restrictive and strictly enforced. Customs authorities closely search travelers' luggage upon arrival and departure from Burma. It is illegal to enter or exit Burma with items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities, medications, business equipment, currency, gems, and ivory. On several occasions in the past two decades, foreigners have been detained, searched, and imprisoned for attempting to take restricted items out of the country.

Customs officials also strictly limit what is brought into the country, including bans on pornography and political material or literature critical of the regime or supportive of the opposition. Travelers have also reported problems bringing in high-tech electronic devices and equipment, ranging from toys to computers. The military regime has never provided a complete listing of prohibited import items. For information on restricted items for import into Burma and specific customs' requirements, it is best to consult the nearest Burmese Embassy (Embassy of the Union of Myanmar) or in Washington DC located at 2300 S Street NW, Washington DC 20008, tel.: 202-332-4350. You may also contact Burma's Mission in New York located at 10 E. 77th Street, New York, NY 10021, tel. 202-535-1310, or 212-535-1311, fax 212-744-1290 In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Computers, Internet, and E-Mail: The military regime carefully controls and monitors all internet use in Burma and restricts internet access through software-based censorship that limits the materials individuals can access on line. The government has allowed several cyber cafes to open, but access to the Internet is very expensive, and access to most "free" international e-mail services such as Hotmail and Yahoo is prohibited. Currently, gmail (Google mail) accounts can be accessed in Burma, and many locals and resident expatriates use it.

It is illegal to own an unregistered modem in Burma. Tourists may bring one laptop computer per person into Burma and must declare it upon arrival. Limited e-mail service is available at some large hotels. All e-mails are read by military intelligence. It is very expensive to send photographs via e-mail. One foreign visitor was presented a bill for $2,000.00 after transmitting one photograph via a major hotel's e-mail system. During September and October 2007, the military government disconnected all Internet access across the country for extended periods of time.

Consular Notification and Access: U.S. consular officers do not always receive timely notification of the detention, arrest, or deportation of U.S. citizens. In addition, Burmese authorities have on occasion refused to give Embassy consular officers access to arrested or detained U.S. citizens. U.S. citizens who are arrested or detained should request immediate contact with the U.S. Embassy. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that if questioned by local officials, they have proof of identity and U.S. citizenship readily available.

Currency: Executive Order 13310, signed by President Bush on July 28, 2003 imposed a ban on the exportation of financial services to Burma. Travelers' checks, credit cards, and ATM cards can rarely, if ever, be used. Although moneychangers sometimes approach travelers with an offer to change dollars into Burmese kyat at the market rate, it is illegal to exchange currency except at authorized locations such as the airport, banks and government stores. It is also illegal for Burmese to have possession of foreign currency without a permit. Foreigners are required to use U.S. dollars, other hard currency, or Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC) for the payment of plane tickets, train tickets and most hotels. Burmese kyats are accepted for nearly all other transactions.

Photography: Photographing military installations or people in uniform is prohibited by Burmese authorities and could lead to arrest or the confiscation of cameras and film. It is advisable to avoid photographing anything that could be perceived by the Burmese authorities as being of

military or security interest—such as bridges, airfields, government buildings or government vehicles.

Telephone Services: Telephone services are poor in Rangoon and other major cities and non-existent in many areas. Calling the United States from Burma is difficult and extremely expensive.

U.S. Treasury Sanctions: As of August 27, 2003, U.S. Treasury sanctions ban the import of almost all goods from Burma into the United States. This ban includes Burmese-origin products such as gifts, souvenirs, and items for personal use, even if carried in personal luggage. These sanctions are part of a much larger U.S. sanctions regime for Burma, which includes a ban on new U.S. investment among other measures. For specific information, contact the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) home page at http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/, via OFAC's Info-by-Fax service at 202-622-0077 or by phone toll-free at 1-800-540-6322.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Burmese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Burma are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Some foreigners have been denied even minimal rights in criminal proceedings in Burma, especially when suspected of engaging in political activity of any type. This includes, but is not limited to, denial of access to an attorney, denial of access to court records, and denial of family and consular visits. The criminal justice system is controlled by the military junta, which orders maximum sentences for most offenses. Engaging in sexual conduct with children, using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Burma are encouraged to register with the Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Burma. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 110 University Ave., Kamayut Township, Rangoon. The Consular Section telephone number is (95-1) 650-006; email consular-rangoo@state.gov. Travelers may visit the U.S. Embassy web site at http://burma.usembassy.gov. The after-hours emergency number is 09-512-4330. The Consular Section is open from 8:00 am to 4:30 p.m., with non-emergency American Citizen Services from 2:00 to 3:30 pm, Monday through Friday except on U.S. and Burmese holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The U.S. Embassy in Rangoon has been informed by Burmese authorities that Burmese law does not allow for the adoption of Burmese children by non-Burmese nationals. Only Burmese citizens are allowed to adopt Burmese children.



BURUNDI

Compiled from the February 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Burundi

PROFILE

Geography

Location: Central Africa. Bordering nations—Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda.

Area: 27,830 sq. km. (10,747 sq. mi.); about the size of Maryland.

Cities: Capital—Bujumbura (pop. 300,000). Other cities—Cibitoke, Muyinga, Ngozi, Bubanza, Gitega, Bururi.

Climate: Equatorial; high plateau with considerable altitude variation (772 m to 2,670 m above sea level); average annual temperature varies with altitude from 23 to 17 degrees centigrade but is generally moderate as the average altitude is about 1,700 m; average annual rainfall is about 150 cm; two wet seasons (February to May and September to November), and two dry seasons (June to August and December to January).

Terrain: Hilly, rising from 780 meters (2,600 ft.) at the Shore of Lake Tanganyika to mountains more than 2,700 meters (9,000 ft.) above sea level.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Burundian(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 8,390,505.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 3.593%.

Ethnic groups: (estimated) Hutu 85%; Tutsi 14%; Twa 1.0%.

Religions: (estimated) Christian 67% (Roman Catholic 62%, Protestant 5%), indigenous beliefs 23%, Muslim 10%.

Languages: Kirundi (official), French (official), Swahili (along Lake Tanganyika and in the Bujumbura area), English.

Education: Years compulsory—6. Attendance—84.05% male, 62.8% female. Literacy—51.6% of total adult population (2003 estimate).

Health: (2007 est.) Life expectancy—total population: 51.29 years; male: 50.48 years; female: 52.12 years. Infant mortality rate—61.93/1,000.

Government

Type: Republic. Democratically elected, post-transition government established August 26, 2005.

Independence: July 1, 1962 (from Belgium).

Constitution: A transitional constitution was adopted October 18, 2001. The parliament adopted a post-transition constitution on September 17, 2004, which was approved in a nation-wide referendum held February 28, 2005.

Government branches: Executive—President, First Vice President in charge of political and administrative affairs, Second Vice President in charge of social and economic affairs, 20-member Council of Ministers. Legislative—A 100-member directly elected National Assembly plus additional deputies appointed as necessary (currently 18 appointed) to ensure an ethnic and gender composition of 60% Hutu, 40% Tutsi, 30% female, and 3 Batwa members. A 54-member Senate (3 seats reserved for former presidents; 3 seats reserved for the ethnic Twa minority; 2 Senators, one Hutu and one Tutsi, from each of the 16 provinces plus the city of Bujumbura appointed by an electoral college comprised of members of locally elected communal and provincial councils; 14 Senators appointed by the president according to the president's own criteria. Women must comprise 30% of the Senate.) Judicial—constitutional and subsidiary courts.

Political subdivisions: 17 provinces including Bujumbura, 117 communes.

Political parties: Multi-party system consisting of 21 registered political parties, of which CNDD (the National Council for the Defense of Democracy, Hutu), FRODEBU (the Front for Democracy in Burundi, predominantly Hutu with some Tutsi membership), and UPRONA (the National Unity and Progress Party, predominantly Tutsi with some Hutu membership) are national, mainstream parties. Other Tutsi and Hutu opposition parties and groups include, among others, PARENA (the Party for National Redress, Tutsi), ABASA (the Burundi African Alliance for the Salvation, Tutsi), PRP

(the People's Reconciliation Party, Tutsi), PALIPEHUTU (the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People, Hutu) and FROLINA/FAP (the Front for the National Liberation of Burundi/Popular Armed Forces, Hutu).

Suffrage: Universal adult.

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $776 million.

Real growth rate: (2007) 6%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $119; ($700 using purchasing power parity, 2006 est.).

Inflation rate: (2006) 11%.

Budget: (2006 est.) Revenues—$239.9 million; expenditures—$297 million, including capital expenditures.

Natural resources: Nickel, uranium, rare earth oxides, peat, cobalt, copper, platinum, vanadium, arable land, hydropower, niobium, tantalum, gold, tin, tungsten, kaolin, limestone.

Agriculture: (2006 est., 44.9% of GDP) Coffee, cotton, tea, corn, sorghum, sweet potatoes, bananas, manioc (tapioca), beef, milk, hides. Arable land—35.57% (2005 est.).

Industry: (2006 est., 20.9% of GDP) Types—beverage production, coffee and tea processing, cigarette production, sugar refining, pharmaceuticals, light food processing, textiles, chemicals (insecticides), public works construction, consumer goods, assembly of imported components, light consumer goods such as blankets, shoes, soap.

Services: (2006 est.) 34.1% of GDP.

Mining: Commercial quantities of alluvial gold, nickel, phosphates, rare earth, vanadium, and other; peat mining.

Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$55.68 million f.o.b.: coffee (50% of export earnings), tea, sugar, cotton fabrics, hides. Major markets—U.K., Germany, Benelux, Switzerland. Imports—$207.3 million f.o.b.: food, beverages, tobacco, chemicals, road vehicles, petroleum products. Major suppliers—Benelux, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Japan.

Total external debt: (2004 est.) $1.4 billion.

PEOPLE

At 206.1 persons per sq. km., Burundi has the second-largest population density in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most people live on farms near areas of fertile volcanic soil. The population is made up of three major ethnic groups—Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. Kirundi is the most widely spoken language; French and Kiswahili also are widely spoken. Intermarriage takes place frequently between the Hutus and Tutsis. Although Hutus encompass the majority of the population, historically Tutsis have been politically and economically dominant.

HISTORY

In the 16th century, Burundi was a kingdom characterized by a hierarchical political authority and tributary economic exchange. A king (mwani) headed a princely aristocracy (ganwa) that owned most of the land and required a tribute, or tax, from local farmers and herders. In the mid-18th century, this Tutsi royalty consolidated authority over land, production, and distribution with the development of the ubugabire—a patron-client relationship in which the populace received royal protection in exchange for tribute and land tenure.

Although European explorers and missionaries made brief visits to the area as early as 1856, it was not until 1899 that Burundi came under German East African administration. In 1916 Belgian troops occupied the area. In 1923, the League of Nations mandated to Belgium the territory of Ruanda-Urundi, encompassing modern-day Rwanda and Burundi. The Belgians administered the territory through indirect rule, building on the Tutsi-dominated aristocratic hierarchy. Following World War II, Ruanda-Urundi became a United Nations Trust Territory under Belgian administrative authority. After 1948, Belgium permitted the emergence of competing political parties. Two political parties emerged: the Union for National Progress (UPRONA), a multi-ethnic party led by Tutsi Prince Louis Rwagasore and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) supported by Belgium. In 1961, Prince Rwagasore was assassinated following an UPRONA victory in legislative elections.

Full independence was achieved on July 1, 1962. In the context of weak democratic institutions at independence, Tutsi King Mwambutsa IV established a constitutional monarchy comprising equal numbers of Hutus and Tutsis. The 1965 assassination of the Hutu prime minister set in motion a series of destabilizing Hutu revolts and subsequent governmental repression. In 1966, King Mwambutsa was deposed by his son, Prince Ntare IV, who himself was deposed the same year by a military coup lead by Capt. Michel Micombero. Micombero abolished the monarchy and declared a republic, although a de facto military regime emerged. In 1972, an aborted Hutu rebellion triggered the flight of hundreds of thousands of Burundians. Civil unrest continued throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In 1976, Col. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza took power in a bloodless coup. Although Bagaza led a Tutsi-dominated military regime, he encouraged land reform, electoral reform, and national reconciliation. In 1981, a new constitution was promulgated. In 1984, Bagaza was elected head of state, as the sole candidate. After his election, Bagaza's human rights record deteriorated as he suppressed religious activities and detained political opposition members.

In 1987, Maj. Pierre Buyoya overthrew Colonel Bagaza. He dissolved opposition parties, suspended the 1981 constitution, and instituted his ruling Military Committee for National Salvation (CSMN). During 1988, increasing tensions between the ruling Tutsis and the majority Hutus resulted in violent confrontations between the army, the Hutu opposition, and Tutsi hardliners. During this period, an estimated 150,000 people were killed, with tens of thousands of refugees flowing to neighboring countries. Buyoya

formed a commission to investigate the causes of the 1988 unrest and to develop a charter for democratic reform.

In 1991, Buyoya approved a constitution that provided for a president, multi-ethnic government, and a parliament. Burundi's first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, of the Hutu-dominated FRODEBU Party, was elected in 1993. He was assassinated by factions of the Tutsi-dominated armed forces in October 1993. The country was then plunged into civil war, which killed tens of thousands of people and displaced hundreds of thousands by the time the FRODEBU government regained control and elected Cyprien Ntaryamira president in January 1994. Nonetheless, the security situation continued to deteriorate. In April 1994, President Ntayamira and Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana died in a plane crash. This act marked the beginning of the Rwandan genocide, while in Burundi, the death of Ntaryamira exacerbated the violence and unrest. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya was installed as president for a 4-year term on April 8, but the security situation further deteriorated. The influx of hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees and the activities of armed Hutu and Tutsi groups further destabilized the regime.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In November 1995, the presidents of Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) announced a regional initiative for a negotiated peace in Burundi facilitated by former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. In July 1996, former Burundian President Buyoya returned to power in a bloodless coup. He declared himself president of a transitional republic, even as he suspended the National Assembly, banned opposition groups, and imposed a nationwide curfew. Widespread condemnation of the coup ensued, and regional countries imposed economic sanctions pending a return to a constitutional government. Buyoya agreed in 1996 to liberalize political parties. Nonetheless, fighting between the army and Hutu militias continued. In June 1998, Buyoya promulgated a transitional constitution and announced a partnership between the government and the opposition-led National Assembly. After Facilitator Julius Nyerere's death in October 1999, the regional leaders appointed Nelson Mandela as Facilitator of the Arusha peace process. Under Mandela the faltering peace process was revived, leading to the signing of the Arusha Accords in August 2000 by representatives of the principal Hutu (G-7) and Tutsi

(G-10) political parties, the government, and the National Assembly. However, the FDD and FNL armed factions of the CNDD and Palipehutu G-7 parties refused to accept the Arusha Accords, and the armed rebellion continued.

In November 2001, a 3-year transitional government was established under the leadership of Pierre Buyoya (representing the G-10) as transitional president and Domitien Ndayizeye (representing the G-7) as transitional vice president for an initial period of 18 months. In May 2003, Mr. Ndayizeye assumed the presidency for 18 months with Alphonse Marie Kadege as vice president. In October and November 2003 the Burundian Government and the former rebel group the CNDD-FDD signed cease-fire and power-sharing agreements, and in March 2004 members of the CNDD-FDD took offices in the government and parliament. The World Bank and other bilateral donors have provided financing for Burundi's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program for former rebel combatants.

National and regional mediation efforts failed to reach a compromise on post-transition power-sharing arrangements between the predominantly Hutu and Tutsi political parties, and in September 2004 over two-thirds of the parliament—despite a boycott by the Tutsi parties—approved a post-transition constitution. The Arusha Peace Agreement called for local and national elections to be held before the conclusion of the transitional period on October 31, 2004.

On October 20, 2004, however, a joint session of the National Assembly and Senate adopted a previously approved draft constitution as an interim constitution that provides for an extension of transitional institutions until elections are held. On February 28, 2005, Burundians overwhelmingly approved a post-transitional constitution in a popular referendum, setting the stage for local and national elections. In April 2005, Burundi's transitional government was again extended and an electoral calendar was established at a regional summit held in Uganda.

In accordance with the new electoral calendar, the Burundian people voted in Commune Council direct elections on June 3, 2005 and National Assembly direct elections on July 4, 2005. An electoral college of commune and provincial councils indirectly elected Senate members on July 29, 2005. A joint session of the parliament elected Pierre Nkurunziza as President of Burundi on August 19, 2005 in a vote of 151 to 9 with one abstention, establishing the post-transition government. Finally, the Burundian people established Colline (hill) councils through direct elections on September 23, 2005.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Pierre NKURUNZIZA**
First Vice Pres.: **Yves SAHINGUVU, Dr.**
Second Vice Pres.: **Gabriel NTISEZERANA**
Min. of Agriculture & Livestock: **Ferdinand NDERAGAKURA**
Min. of Civil Service, Labor, & Social Security: **Clotilde NIRAGIRA**
Min. of Environment, Territorial Development, & Public Works: **Anatole KANYENKIKO**
Min. of External Relations & Cooperation: **Antoinette BATUMUBWIRA**
Min. of Finance, Economy, Cooperation, & Development: **Clotilde NIZIGAMA**
Min. of Health: **Emmanuel GIKORO, Dr.**
Min. of Information, Communication, & Relations With Parliament & Govt. Spokesman: **Hafsa MOSSI**
Min. of Interior & Communal Development: **Venant KAMANA**
Min. of Justice & Keeper of the Seals: **Jean-Bosco NDIKUMANA**
Min. of National Defense & War Veterans: **Germain NIYOYANKANA, Lt. Gen.**
Min. of National Education & Scientific Research: **Saidi KIBEYA**
Min. of National Solidarity, Repatriation, National Reconstruction, Human Rights, & Gender: **Immaculee NAHAYO**
Min. of Public Security: **Alain Guillaumme BUNYONI**
Min. of Regional Integration: **Venerand BAKEVYUMUSAYA**
Min. of Trade, Industry, & Tourism: **Euphrasie BIGIRIMANA**
Min. of Transport, Posts, & Telecommunications: **Philippe NJONI**
Min. of Water, Energy, & Mines: **Samuel NDAYIRAGIJE**
Min. of Youth, Sports & Culture: **Jean-Jacques NYENIMIGABO**
Min. in the Office of the Pres. in Charge of AIDS: **Bonhima BARNABE, Dr.**
Min. in the Office of the Pres. in Charge of Good Governance, Privatization, & General Inspection of the State & Local Admin.: **Martin NIVYABANDI**
Governor, Central Bank: **Gaspard SINDAYIGAYA**
Ambassador to the US: **Celestin NIYONGABO**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Augustin NSANZE**

Burundi maintains an embassy in the United States at Suite 212, 2233 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20007 (tel. 202-342-2574).

ECONOMY

The mainstay of the Burundian economy is agriculture, accounting for 44.9% of GDP in 2006. Agriculture supports more than 90% of the labor force, the majority of whom are subsistence farmers. Although Burundi is potentially self-sufficient in food production, the civil war, overpopulation, and soil erosion have contributed to the contraction of the subsistence economy by 30% in recent years. Large numbers of internally displaced persons have been unable to produce their own food and are dependent on international humanitarian assistance. Burundi is a net food importer, with food accounting for 13% of imports in 2003.

The main cash crop is coffee, which accounted for some 80% of exports in 2004. This dependence on coffee has increased Burundi's vulnerability to fluctuations in seasonal yields and international coffee prices. Coffee processing is the largest state-owned enterprise in terms of income. Although the government has tried to attract private investment to this sector, plans for the privatization of this sector have stalled. Efforts to privatize other publicly held enterprises have likewise stalled. Other principal exports include tea, sugar, and raw

cotton. Coffee production, after a severe drop in 2003, returned to normal levels in 2004. Revenues from coffee production and exports are likewise estimated to return to pre-2003 levels.

Little industry exists except the processing of agricultural exports. Although potential wealth in petroleum, nickel, copper, and other natural resources is being explored, the uncertain security situation has prevented meaningful investor interest. Industrial development also is hampered by Burundi's distance from the sea and high transport costs. Lake Tanganyika remains an important trading point.

Burundi is heavily dependent on bilateral and multilateral aid, with external debt totaling $1.4 billion in 2004. International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment programs in Burundi were suspended following the outbreak of violence in 1993; the IMF re-engaged Burundi in 2002 and 2003 with post-conflict credits, and in 2004 approved a $104 million Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility loan. The World Bank is preparing a Transition Support Strategy, and has identified key areas for potential growth, including the productivity of traditional crops and the introduction of new exports, light manufactures, industrial mining, and services. Both the IMF and the World Bank assisted the Burundians in preparing a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, released in February 2007. More than 81% of Burundians live below the poverty line. Serious economic problems include the state's role in the economy, the question of governmental transparency, and debt reduction.

Based on Burundi's successful transition from war to peace and the establishment of a democratically-elected government in Burundi in September 2005, the United States Government lifted all sanctions on assistance to Burundi on October 18, 2005. Burundi also became eligible for trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act in December 2005.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Burundi's relations with its neighbors have often been affected by security concerns. Hundreds of thousands of Burundian refugees have at various times crossed into Rwanda, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Hundreds of thousands of Burundians fled to neighboring countries during the civil war. Most of them, more than 750,000 since 1993, sought refuge in Tanzania. More than 430,000 remain in camps in Tanzania. Burundi maintains close relations with all neighbors in the Great Lakes region, including Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Burundi is a member of various international and regional organizations, including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the African Union, the African Development Bank, COMESA, the free-tariff zone of eastern and southern Africa, and the East Africa Community (EAC).

U.S.-BURUNDI RELATIONS

U.S. Government goals in Burundi are to help the people of Burundi realize a just and lasting peace based upon democratic principles and sustainable economic development. The United States encourages political stability, ongoing democratic reforms, political openness, respect for human rights, and economic development in Burundi. In the long term, the United States seeks to strengthen the process of internal reconciliation and democratization within all the states of the region to promote a stable, democratic community of nations that will work toward mutual social, economic, and security interests on the continent.

The United States supported the Arusha peace process, providing financial support through our assessed contributions to a UN peacekeeping force established in 2004.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BUJUMBURA (E) Avenue des Etats-Unis, 257-2222-3454, Fax 257-2222-2926, INMARSAT Tel iridium: 8816-3148-8141/7138, Workweek: 5 days–Mon–Thu 7:30-5:30–Fri–7:30–12:30, Web site: http://bujumbura.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Margrethe Kleiber
DCM/CHG:	Joanne Wagner
ECO:	Vacant
HRO:	Anthony Kleiber
MGT:	Anthony Kleiber
PO/CON:	Matthew Garrett
POL/ECO:	Mark Carr
AMB:	Patricia Moller
CON:	Caren Brown
DCM:	Joanne Wagner
PAO:	Poc Caren Brown
GSO:	Chelsea Bakken
RSO:	Chris Bakken
AID:	Jim Anderson (Aid/Ea)
CLO:	None At Post
EEO:	Erik Olerud
FIN:	Anthony Kleiber
FMO:	Anthony Kleiber
ICASS Chair:	Matthew Garrett
IMO:	Simon Guerrero
ISSO:	Erik Olerud
POL:	Caren Brown
State ICASS:	Anthony Kleiber

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 21, 2008

Country Description: One of the poorest countries in the world, Burundi is a small, densely populated central African nation bordering Lake Tanganyika, Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. After more than 12 years of civil and ethnic strife, an electoral process deemed free and fair resulted in the installation of a democratic government in 2005. Years of fighting have devastated a historically fragile economy that depends largely on subsistence agriculture.

Poor public health and education, weather disasters such as drought and floods, crop diseases and lack of infrastructure exacerbate the effects

of conflict and delay recovery. Facilities for tourism, particularly outside the capital, are limited.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa and evidence of immunization against yellow fever are required for entry. Travelers with an expired visa are not permitted to leave the country without acquiring an exit visa prior to departure. The latest information about visas may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Burundi, Suite 212, 2233 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007, telephone (202) 342-2574, or from the Permanent Mission of Burundi to the United Nations in New York at telephone (212) 499-0001 thru 0006.

Safety and Security: The Department of State continues to caution U.S. citizens traveling to Burundi. Burundi was plagued by a civil war from 1993—2006 that often involved non-government, non-combatant targets. In April 2006, the Burundian government lifted the curfew within Bujumbura that had been in effect for decades. In September 2006, the government and the last remaining holdout rebel group from the peace process, the PALIPEHUTU—FNL, signed a cease-fire agreement. While many of the cease-fire provisions have not been implemented and the rebels still retain the capability to conduct indirect fire attacks on the capital, Bujumbura has remained free of attacks since July 2006. Rebels are still present throughout Bujumbura Rural, which surrounds the capital city. Crime, often committed by groups of armed bandits, poses the highest risk for foreign visitors to Bujumbura and Burundi in general. Common crimes include muggings, burglaries, and carjackings. Armed criminals often ambush vehicles, particularly on the roads leading out of Bujumbura. Due to insufficient resources, local authorities in any part of Burundi are often unable to provide timely assistance in case of need.

Crime: Crime poses a high risk for visitors throughout Bujumbura and Burundi in general. Street crimes include mugging, purse-snatching, pick pocketing, burglary, automobile break-ins and carjacking. Many criminal incidents involve armed attackers. U.S. Government personnel are restricted from walking on the streets during the hours of darkness and using local public transportation. Criminals in Bujumbura operate in pairs or in small groups involving six or more individuals. Foreigners, whether in vehicles or at home, are always a potential target of crime. Americans should exercise common sense judgment and take the same precautions as one would in any major city.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and provide a list of local attorneys if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Burundi generally do not meet Western standards of care. Travelers should carry an ample supply of properly-labeled prescription drugs and other medications with them, as certain medications and prescription drugs are unavailable or in short supply. Sterility of equipment is questionable, and treatment is unreliable. Ambulance assistance is non-existent. Hospital care in Burundi should be considered in only the most serious cases and when no reasonable alternatives are available.

Malaria prophylaxis is recommended for travel to all parts of Burundi.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. The embassy does not provide medical evacuation coverage to American citizens.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Burundi is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

While travel on most roads is generally safe during the day, travelers must maintain constant vigilance. There have been regular reports of violent attacks on vehicles traveling the roads throughout the country outside of Bujumbura. U.S. Government personnel are required to travel upcountry via two-vehicle convoys and have their trips pre-approved by the Regional Security Officer. The Embassy recommends that Americans not travel on the national highways from dusk to dawn. Drivers without valid permits, and the ease with which a driver's license can be acquired without training, make Burundian drivers less careful, predictable, or mindful of driving rules than Western drivers may expect.

There are no traffic signals in Bujumbura, and virtually nothing of the kind elsewhere in the country. Roadways are not marked, and the lack of streetlights or shoulders makes driving in the countryside at night especially dangerous. Additionally,

drivers may encounter cyclists, pedestrians, and livestock in the roadway, including in and around the capital. Mini-vans used as buses for 18 persons should be given a wide berth as they start and stop abruptly, often without pulling to the side of the road.

Large holes or damaged portions of roadway may be encountered anywhere in the country, including in Bujumbura; when driving in the countryside, it is recommended that travelers carry multiple spare tires. During the rainy season, many side roads are passable only with four-wheel drive vehicles. Burundi's supply of gasoline and diesel fuel are imported predominantly from Kenya and Tanzania, and are relatively expensive due to high transportation costs. Service stations are rare outside of the major cities.

Third-party insurance is required, and it will cover any damages (property, injury, or death). If you are found to have caused an accident, you automatically will be fined 10,000 Burundian francs (approximately $10 U.S.) and your driver's license will be confiscated until the police investigation is completed. Although the law provides for the arrest of drunk drivers, in practice, the police do not act on this law. In the city of Bujumbura, the number for police assistance is 22-22-37-77; there is no comparable number outside the capital. If you are involved in an accident causing death, it is advised that you leave the scene of the accident and proceed to the nearest police station.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Burundi, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Burundi's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: There are no ATMs located in the country and most Burundian hotels and businesses do not accept credit cards. Many hotels in Bujumbura accept payment in U.S. dollars or Euros only from non-Burundians. Travelers should be aware that Burundian banking practices prohibit acceptance of U. S. currency printed before the year 2003.

The Embassy recommends that visitors do not photograph airports, military installations, or other government buildings, and obtain permission from an individual before taking his/her photograph.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Burundian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Burundi are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans who travel to, or remain in, Burundi are urged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura for information on the Embassy's current security policies, including areas that are off-limits to U.S. Government personnel for security reasons, and to register at the State Department's travel registration web site. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura at Avenue des Etats-Unis, telephone (257) 22-22-34-54, fax (257) 22-22-29-26. Updated information on travel and security in Burundi is available at 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, and for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For further information, consult the Country Specific Information for Burundi and the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov. The Embassy's Internet web site is http://bujumbura.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption.

Burundi is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: All adoption cases are submitted to the Central Authority in the Ministry of Social Action. Once a case has been approved by the Ministry, it must then be approved by the County Court.

Eligibility to Adopt:

- If married, adopting parents must have been married and living together for at least the past five years;
- If married, consent of the spouse is required;
- An adopting parent should be at least thirty years of age. A waiver of this requirement can be requested from the County Court. (There is no age requirement if adopting the child of a spouse);
- An adopting parent must be a minimum of fifteen years older than the child to be adopted. However, a waiver can be obtained from the County Court;
- Adopting parents must have moral qualities and material resources necessary to support the child;
- Adopting parents must be found eligible to adopt through examination of a psycho–medical report and a home study; and
- Adoption by more than one person is not possible except when the couple is legally married.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents of Burundian children.

Time Frame: The local adoption process can take between three and six months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Because Burundi is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The U.S. Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

There are no recognized adoption service organizations in Burundi, only associations who care for children. Adoption cases are prepared and processed by private lawyers. Cases are submitted to the Ministry of Social Action and the County Court for approval.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Burundi discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Burundi at risk. Fees can vary and it is advisable to contact an attorney to obtain accurate fee information.

Adoption Procedures:

- Select and contact a lawyer in Burundi who will process the case;
- Submit all required documentation for prospective parents;
- Submit all required documentation for adoptive child / children; and
- Lawyer will prepare case for adjudication by the Central Authority in the Ministry of Social Action.

The following elements will be reviewed:

- The home study report presented and performed by the adoption authority in the country of the adopting parents. Usually the home study completed when applying for the I-600A;
- The child/children's eligibility to be adopted: identification, status, social background, personal and family development, medical history, education and socio-cultural issued and any other special needs;
- The best interest of the child/children;
- The adoption consent must be given freely, and legally in a notarized attestation by persons authorized to agree to the adoption (e.g. biological parents, association caring for the child, family counsel) and with the understanding of the consequences of intercountry adoption; the biological mother must give consent to relinquish the child/children after birth, if applicable;
- With respect to age and maturity, the adoptive child/children must be fully informed of the consequences of intercountry adoption;
- The child's/children's views must be taken into consideration. If over 13 years of age, the consent of the adoptive child/children must be given freely, and legally in a notarized attestation;
- Evidence of the prospective adoptive parents' eligibility to adopt. See documents required for the prospective parents; and
- Once approval is received from Central Authority, the case will be passed to the County Court for ruling.

Required Documents: The following documents will be required and must be attached to an intercountry adoption request:

For the Child/Children:

- Attestations of the adoptive child/children's family situation and status;

- An attestation of acceptance from the prospective family guaranteeing their material support of the adoptive child/children; and
- Travel document (i.e. Burundian passport) for the adoptive child/children.

For the Prospective Adoptive Parents:

- Marriage, Birth and Judicial/Police Certificates;
- Attestations of good behavior and of family composition;
- Financial/income declaration; and
- Family psychological and medical report.

Civil documents, such as "attestations," can be obtained at the Mayor Office or through the civil offices.

Embassy of Burundi
2233 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Suite 212
Washington, DC 20007
Tel: 202-342-2574
202-749-0885
Fax: 202-342-2578

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

Embassy of the United States of America
B.P. 1720
Avenue Des Etats-Unis
Bujumbura, Burundi
Tel: (257) 22-34-54
Tel (after hours): (257) 21-48-53
Fax: (257) 22-29-26
http://bujumbura.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

Travel Warning
April 22, 2008

This Travel Warning updates American citizens on security conditions in Burundi. American citizens should exercise caution while traveling in the country. The U.S. Embassy restricts the travel of its personnel in Burundi, and certain areas of the capital, Bujumbura, are off-limits. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Burundi dated December 10, 2007.

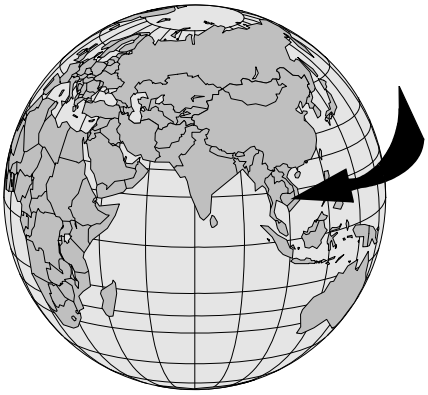
The Department of State continues to caution U.S. citizens traveling to Burundi. Burundi was plagued by a civil war from 1993 to 2006 that often involved non-government, non-combatant targets. In September 2006, the government and the last remaining hold-out rebel group from the peace process, the PALIPEHUTU–FNL, signed a cease-fire agreement. Many of the cease-fire provisions have not been implemented and the rebels still retain the capability to conduct indirect fire attacks on the capital. In April 2008 rebel forces engaged Burundian military units just outside of Bujumbura city limits. Rebels are still present throughout Bujumbura Rural, which surrounds the capital city.

Crime, often committed by groups of armed bandits or street children, poses the highest risk for foreign visitors to Bujumbura and Burundi in general. Common crimes include muggings, burglaries, robberies, and carjackings. Visitors should be careful when stopped in heavy traffic due to the threat of robbery by roving bands of criminals. The U.S. Embassy has received reports of armed criminals ambushing vehicles, particularly on the roads leading out of Bujumbura. U.S. Government personnel are restricted from walking on the streets during hours of darkness, and prohibited from using local public transportation. Due to insufficient resources, local authorities in any part of Burundi are often unable to provide timely assistance in case of need.

The U.S. Embassy restricts the travel of Embassy personnel and certain areas of the capital, Bujumbura, are off-limits to Embassy personnel. In addition, the Embassy's Regional Security Officer must pre-approve all travel outside the capital by U.S. Embassy personnel, and employees must travel in two-vehicle convoys. The Embassy recommends that Americans not travel on national highways from dusk to dawn.

Americans who travel to, or remain in, Burundi despite this Travel Warning are urged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura for information on the latest Embassy security guidelines, and to register at the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura at Avenue des Etats-Unis, telephone (257) 22-22-34-54, fax (257) 22-22-29-26. Security information for American citizens in Burundi is posted at http://burundi.usembassy.gov/warden_information.html.

For further information, consult the Country Specific Information for Burundi and the current Worldwide Caution, available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at http://travel.state.gov. Updated information on travel and security in Burundi is available at 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, and for callers in other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



CAMBODIA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Cambodia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 181,040 sq. km. (69,900 sq. mi.); about the size of Missouri.

Cities: Capital—Phnom Penh (pop. 1.2 million), Battambang, Siem Reap, Kompong Cham, Kompong Speu, Kompong Thom.

Terrain: Central plain drained by the Tonle Sap (Great Lake) and Mekong and Bassac Rivers. Forests away from the rivers and the lake, mountains in the southwest (Cardamom Mountains) and north (Dangrek Mountains) along the border with Thailand.

Climate: Tropical monsoon with rainy season June-Oct. and dry season Nov.-May.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Cambodian(s), Khmer.

Population: (2008 census) 13.4 million.

Avg. annual growth rate: (2008 census) 1.54%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—58/1,000. Life expectancy—59 years male; 63 years female.

Ethnic groups: Cambodian 90%; Vietnamese 5%; Chinese 1%; small numbers of hill tribes, Chams, and Laotian.

Religions: Theravada Buddhism 95%; Islam; animism; Christian.

Languages: Khmer (official) spoken by more than 95% of the population; some French still spoken in urban areas; English increasingly popular as a second language.

Education: Years compulsory—none. Enrollment—primary school, 91.9%; grades 7 to 9, 26.1%; grades 10 to 12, 9.3%; and post-secondary, 1.4%. Completion rates—primary school, 46.8%; lower secondary school, 20.57%; upper secondary school, 8.92%; university, 6%. Literacy (total population over 15 that can read and write, 2007)—74% (male 85%; female 64%).

Government

Type: Multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy.

Independence: November 9, 1953.

Constitution: September 24, 1993; amended March 6, 1999.

Government branches: Executive—King Sihamoni (head of state since October 29, 2004), appointed prime minister (Hun Sen since January 14, 1985), six deputy prime ministers, 14 senior ministers, 28 ministers, 135 secretaries of state, and 146 undersecretaries of state. Legislative—National Assembly, consisting of 123 elected members; Senate, consisting of 61 members. Judicial—Supreme Court and lower courts.

Political subdivisions: 20 provinces and 4 municipalities.

Political parties: Ruling parties—A coalition government of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), led by Samdech Chea Sim; the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), led by Keo Puth Reasmey; and the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP), led by You Hockry. Opposition parties—The Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), led by Sam Rainsy; Human Rights Party, led by Khem Sokha.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $9.6 billion.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $606.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 10.2%.

Inflation: (2007) 10.8%.

Natural resources: Timber, gemstones, some iron ore, manganese and phosphate, hydroelectric potential from the Mekong River.

Agriculture: (29% of GDP, 2007) About 4,848,000 hectares (12 million acres) are unforested land; all are arable with irrigation, but 2.5 million hectares are cultivated. Products—rice, rubber, corn, meat, vegetables, dairy products, sugar, flour.

Industry: (27% of GDP, 2007) Types—garment and shoe manufacturing, rice milling, tobacco, fisheries and fishing, wood and wood products, textiles, cement, some rub-

ber production, paper and food processing.

Services: (39% of GDP, 2007) Tourism, telecommunications, transportation, and construction.

Budget: (2006) Revenues—$814 million; expenditures—$973 million; foreign financing—$213 million.

Trade: Exports ($4.1 billion, 2007 est,)—garments, shoes, cigarettes, natural rubber, rice, pepper, wood, fish. Major partners—United States, Germany, U.K., Singapore, Japan, Vietnam. Imports ($5.4 billion, 2007 est.)—fuels, cigarettes, vehicles, consumer goods, machinery. Major partners—Thailand, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Taiwan, United States.

Economic aid received: Pledges of $698.2 million in grants and concessional loans for calendar year 2007. Major donors—Asian Development Bank (ADB), UN Development Program (UNDP), World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Sweden, Thailand, the U.K., and the U.S., 100 percent of the $601 million pledged by donors for 2006 was actually disbursed, according to the Cambodia Aid Effectiveness Report 2007.

Principal foreign commercial investors: Korea, China, Russia, Thailand, the U.S., and Vietnam.

Exchange rate: (2007) 4,006 riel per U.S. $1.

GEOGRAPHY

Cambodia is located on mainland Southeast Asia between Thailand to the west and north and Vietnam to the east. It shares a land border with Laos in the northeast. Cambodia has a sea coast on the Gulf of Thailand. The Dangrek Mountain range in the north and Cardamom Mountains in the southwest form natural boundaries. Principal physical features include the Tonle Sap lake and the Mekong and Bassac Rivers. Cambodia remains one of the most heavily forested countries in the region, although deforestation continues at an alarming rate.

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Ninety percent of Cambodia's population is ethnically Cambodian. Other ethnic groups include Chinese, Vietnamese, hill tribes, Chams, and Laotian. Theravada Buddhism is the religion of 95% of the population; Islam, animism, and Christianity also are practiced. Khmer is the official language and is spoken by more than 95% of the population. Some French is still spoken in urban areas, and English is increasingly popular as a second language.

Angkor Wat

Over a period of 300 years, between 900 and 1200 AD, the Khmer Kingdom of Angkor produced some of the world's most magnificent architectural masterpieces on the northern shore of the Tonle Sap, near the present town of Siem Reap. The Angkor area stretches 15 miles east to west and 5 miles north to south. Some 72 major temples or other buildings dot the area. Suryavarman II built the principal temple, Angkor Wat, between 1112 and 1150. With walls nearly one-half mile on each side, Angkor Wat portrays the Hindu cosmology with the central towers representing Mount Meru, home of the gods; the outer walls, the mountains enclosing the world; and the moat, the oceans beyond. Angkor Thom, the capital city built after the Cham sack of 1177, is surrounded by a 300-foot wide moat. Construction of Angkor Thom coincided with a change from Hinduism to Buddhism. Temples were altered to display images of the Buddha, and Angkor Wat became a major Buddhist shrine.

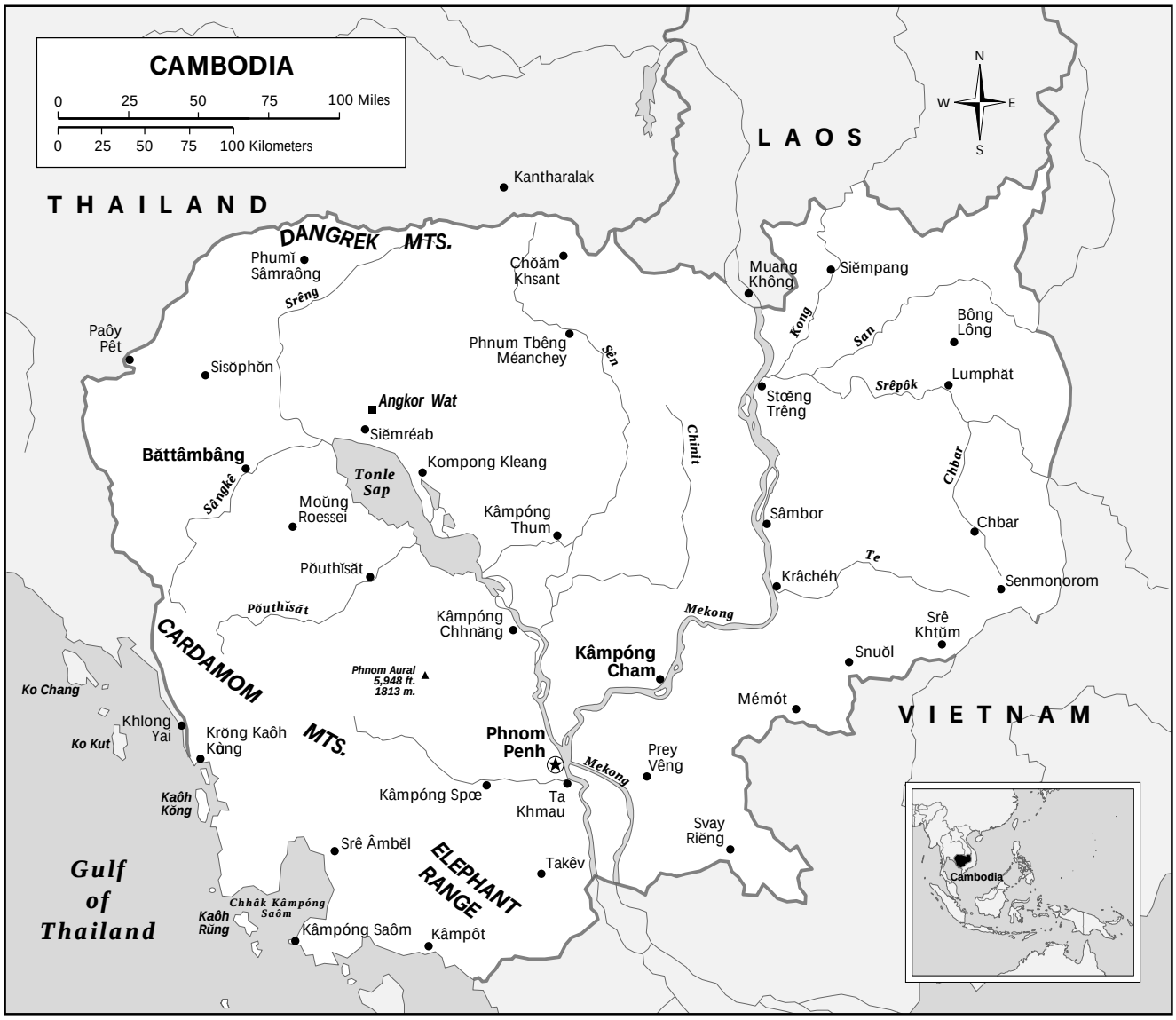
During the 15th century, nearly all of Angkor was abandoned after Siamese attacks. The exception was Angkor Wat, which remained a shrine for Buddhist pilgrims. The great city and temples remained largely cloaked by the forest until the late 19th century when French archaeologists began a long restoration process. Concerned about further destruction and dilapidation of the Angkor complex and cultural heritage, the Cambodian Government in 1995 established the Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA) to protect, maintain, conserve, and improve the value of the archaeological park. In December 1995 the World Heritage Committee confirmed Angkor's permanent inscription on the World Heritage List. Tourism is now the second-largest foreign currency earner in Cambodia's economy.

MODERN HISTORY

Although Cambodia had a rich and powerful past under the Hindu state of Funan and the Kingdom of Angkor, by the mid-19th century the country was on the verge of dissolution. After repeated requests for French assistance, a protectorate was established in 1863. By 1884, Cambodia was a virtual colony; soon after it was made part of the Indochina Union with Annam, Tonkin, Cochin-China, and Laos. France continued to control the country even after the start of World War II through its Vichy government. In 1945, the Japanese dissolved the colonial administration, and King Norodom Sihanouk declared an independent, anti-colonial government under Prime Minister Son Ngoc Thanh in March 1945. The Allies deposed this government in October. In January 1953, Sihanouk named his father as regent and went into self-imposed exile, refusing to return until Cambodia gained genuine independence.

Full Independence

Sihanouk's actions hastened the French Government's July 4, 1953 announcement of its readiness to grant independence, which came on November 9, 1953. The situation remained uncertain until a 1954 conference was held in Geneva to settle the French-Indochina war. All participants, except the United States and the State of Vietnam, associated themselves (by voice) with the final declaration. The Cambodian delegation agreed to the neutrality of the three Indochinese states but insisted



on a provision in the cease-fire agreement that left the Cambodian Government free to call for outside military assistance should the Viet Minh or others threaten its territory.

Neutral Cambodia

Neutrality was the central element of Cambodian foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s. By the mid-1960s, parts of Cambodia's eastern provinces were serving as bases for North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong (NVA/VC) forces operating against South Vietnam, and the port of Sihanoukville was being used to supply them. As NVA/VC activity grew, the United States and South Vietnam became concerned, and in 1969, the United States began a series of air raids against NVA/VC base areas inside Cambodia.Throughout the 1960s, domestic politics polarized. Opposition grew within the middle class and among leftists, including Paris-educated leaders such as Son Sen, Ieng Sary, and Saloth Sar (later known as Pol Pot), who led an insurgency under the clandestine Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK).

The Khmer Republic and the War

In March 1970, Gen. Lon Nol deposed Prince Sihanouk and assumed power. On October 9, the Cambodian monarchy was abolished, and the country was renamed the Khmer Republic. Hanoi rejected the new republic's request for the withdrawal of NVA/VC troops and began to reinfiltrate some of the 2,000-4,000 Cambodians who had gone to North Vietnam in 1954. They became a cadre in the insurgency. The United States moved to provide material assistance to the new government's armed forces, which were engaged against both the Khmer Rouge insurgents and NVA/VC forces. In April 1970, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia in a campaign aimed at destroying NVA/VC base areas. Although a considerable quantity of equipment was seized or destroyed, NVA/VC forces proved elusive and moved deeper into Cambodia. NVA/VC units overran many Cambodian Army positions while the Khmer Rouge expanded their small scale attacks on lines of communication.

The Khmer Republic's leadership was plagued by disunity among its members, the problems of transforming a 30,000-man army into a national combat force of more than 200,000 men, and spreading corruption. The insurgency continued to grow, with supplies and military support provided by North Vietnam. But inside Cambodia, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary asserted their dominance over the Vietnamese-trained communists, many of whom were purged. At the same time, the Khmer Rouge forces became stronger and more independent of their Vietnamese patrons. By 1974, Lon Nol's control was reduced to small enclaves around the cities and main transportation routes. More than 2 million refugees from the war lived in Phnom Penh and other cities.

On New Year's Day 1975, communist troops launched an offensive that, in 117 days of the hardest fighting of the war, destroyed the Khmer Republic. Simultaneous attacks around the perimeter of Phnom Penh pinned down Republican forces, while other Khmer Rouge units overran fire bases controlling the vital lower Mekong resupply route. A U.S.-funded airlift of ammunition and rice ended when Congress refused additional aid for Cambodia. Phnom Penh surrendered on April 17, 1975—5 days after the U.S. mission evacuated Cambodia.

Democratic Kampuchea

Many Cambodians welcomed the arrival of peace, but the Khmer Rouge soon turned Cambodia—which it called Democratic Kampuchea (DK)—into a land of horror. Immediately after its victory, the new regime ordered the evacuation of all cities and towns, sending the entire urban population out into the countryside to till the land. Thousands starved or died of disease during the evacuation. Many of those forced to evacuate the cities were resettled in new villages, which lacked food, agricultural implements, and medical care. Many starved before the first harvest, and hunger and malnutrition—bordering on starvation—were constant during those years. Those who resisted or who questioned orders were immediately executed, as were most military and civilian leaders of the former regime who failed to disguise their pasts.

Within the CPK, the Paris-educated leadership—Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, and Son Sen—was in control, and Pol Pot was made Prime Minister. Prince Sihanouk was put under virtual house arrest. The new government sought to restructure Cambodian society completely. Remnants of the old society were abolished, and Buddhism suppressed.

Agriculture was collectivized, and the surviving part of the industrial base was abandoned or placed under state control. Cambodia had neither a currency nor a banking system. The regime controlled every aspect of life and reduced everyone to the level of abject obedience through terror. Torture centers were established, and detailed records were kept of the thousands murdered there. Public executions of those considered unreliable or with links to the previous government were common. Few succeeded in escaping the military patrols and fleeing the country. Solid estimates of the numbers who died between 1975 and 1979 are not available, but it is likely that hundreds of thousands were brutally executed by the regime. Hundreds of thousands more died of starvation and disease—both under the Khmer Rouge and during the Vietnamese invasion in 1978. Estimates of the dead range from 1.7 million to 3 million, out of a 1975 population estimated at 7.3 million.

Democratic Kampuchea's relations with Vietnam and Thailand worsened rapidly as a result of border clashes and ideological differences. While communist, the CPK was fiercely anti-Vietnamese, and most of its members who had lived in Vietnam were purged. Democratic Kampuchea established close ties with China, and the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict became part of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, with Moscow backing Vietnam. Border clashes worsened when Democratic Kampuchea's military attacked villages in Vietnam.

In mid-1978, Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia, advancing about 30 miles before the arrival of the rainy season. In December 1978, Vietnam announced formation of the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS) under Heng Samrin, a former DK division commander. It was composed of Khmer communists who had remained in Vietnam after 1975 and officials from the eastern sector—like Heng Samrin and Hun Sen—who had fled to Vietnam from Cambodia in 1978. In late December 1978, Vietnamese forces launched a full invasion of Cambodia, capturing Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979 and driving the remnants of Democratic Kampuchea's army westward toward Thailand.

The Vietnamese Occupation

On January 10, 1979, the Vietnamese installed Heng Samrin as head of state in the new People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). The Vietnamese Army continued its pursuit of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces. An estimated 600,000 Cambodians were displaced during the Pol Pot era and the Vietnamese invasion streamed to the Thai border in search of refuge between 1979 and 1981.

The international community responded with a massive relief effort coordinated by the United States through the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Program. More than $400 million was provided between 1979 and 1982, of which the United States contributed nearly $100 million.

Vietnam's occupation army of an estimated 180,000 troops was posted throughout the country from 1979 to September 1989. The Heng Samrin regime's 30,000 troops were plagued by poor morale and widespread desertion. Resistance to Vietnam's occupation was extensive. A remainder of the Khmer Rouge's military forces eluded Vietnamese troops and established themselves in remote regions. A non-communist resistance movement, consisting of groups that had been fighting the Khmer Rouge

after 1975—including Lon Nol-era soldiers—coalesced in 1979-80 to form the Khmer People's National Liberation Armed Forces (KPNLAF), which pledged loyalty to former Prime Minister Son Sann, and Moulinaka (Movement pour la Liberation Nationale de Kampuchea), loyal to Prince Sihanouk. In 1979, Son Sann formed the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) to lead the political struggle for Cambodia's independence. Prince Sihanouk formed his own organization, National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), and its military arm, the Armee Nationale Sihanoukienne (ANS) in 1981.

Within Cambodia, Vietnam had only limited success in establishing its client Heng Samrin regime, which was dependent on Vietnamese advisers at all levels. Security in some rural areas was tenuous, and major transportation routes were subject to interdiction by resistance forces. The presence of Vietnamese throughout the country and their intrusion into nearly all aspects of Cambodian life alienated much of the populace. The settlement of Vietnamese nationals, both former residents and new immigrants, further exacerbated anti-Vietnamese sentiment. Reports of the numbers involved vary widely, with some estimates as high as 1 million. By the end of the decade, Khmer nationalism began to reassert itself against the traditional Vietnamese enemy. In 1986, Hanoi claimed to have begun withdrawing part of its occupation forces. At the same time, Vietnam continued efforts to strengthen its client regime, the PRK, and its military arm, the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (KPRAF). These withdrawals continued over the next 2 years, and the last Vietnamese troops left Cambodia in September 1989.

Peace Efforts

From July 30 to August 30, 1989, representatives of 18 countries, the four Cambodian parties, and the UN Secretary General met in Paris in an effort to negotiate a comprehensive settlement. They hoped to achieve those objectives seen as crucial to the future of post-occupation Cambodia—a verified withdrawal of the remaining Vietnamese occupation troops, the prevention of the return to power of the Khmer Rouge, and genuine self-determination for the Cambodian people. A comprehensive settlement was agreed upon on August 28, 1990.

Cambodia's Renewal

On October 23, 1991, the Paris Conference reconvened to sign a comprehensive settlement giving the UN full authority to supervise a cease-fire, repatriate the displaced Khmer along the border with Thailand, disarm and demobilize the factional armies, and prepare the country for free and fair elections. Prince Sihanouk, President of the Supreme National Council of Cambodia (SNC), and other members of the SNC returned to Phnom Penh in November 1991, to begin the resettlement process in Cambodia. The UN Advance Mission for Cambodia (UNAMIC) was deployed at the same time to maintain liaison among the factions and begin demining operations to expedite the repatriation of approximately 370,000 Cambodians from Thailand.

On March 16, 1992, the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) arrived in Cambodia to begin implementation of the UN Settlement Plan. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees began full scale repatriation in March 1992. UNTAC grew into a 22,000-strong civilian and military peacekeeping force to conduct free and fair elections for a constituent assembly.

Over 4 million Cambodians (about 90% of eligible voters) participated in the May 1993 elections, although the Khmer Rouge or Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK), whose forces were never actually disarmed or demobilized, barred some people from participating. Prince Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC Party was the top vote recipient with a 45.5% vote, followed by Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party and the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party, respectively. FUNCINPEC then entered into a coalition with the other parties that had participated in the election. The parties represented in the 120-member assembly proceeded to draft and approve a new constitution, which was promulgated September 24, 1993. It established a multiparty liberal democracy in the framework of a constitutional monarchy, with the former Prince Sihanouk elevated to King. Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen became First and Second Prime Ministers, respectively, in the Royal Cambodian Government (RGC). The constitution provides for a wide range of internationally recognized human rights.

In 1997, most of the remaining Khmer Rouge fighters accepted a government amnesty and laid down their arms, putting an end to nearly three decades of war. On October 4, 2004, the Cambodian National Assembly ratified an agreement with the United Nations on the establishment of a tribunal to try senior leaders responsible for the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. Donor countries have provided over $40 million to date in support of the tribunal, and in September 2008, the United States pledged $1.8 million. The tribunal has detained five former Khmer Rouge leaders, and the first trial is scheduled to begin in early 2009.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy, and its constitution provides for a multiparty democracy. The Royal Government of Cambodia, formed on the basis of elections internationally recognized as free and fair, was established on September 24, 1993.

The executive branch comprises the king, who is head of state; an appointed prime minister; nine deputy prime ministers, 15 senior ministers, 26 ministers, 198 secretaries of state, and 205 undersecretaries of state. The bicameral legislature consists of a 123-member elected

National Assembly and a 61-member Senate. The judiciary includes a Supreme Court, lower courts, and an internationalized court with jurisdiction over the serious crimes of the Khmer Rouge era. Administrative subdivisions are 20 provinces and 4 municipalities.

Compared to its recent past, the 1993-2003 period was one of relative stability for Cambodia. However, political violence continued to be a problem. In 1997, factional fighting between supporters of Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen broke out, resulting in more than 100 FUNCINPEC deaths and a few Cambodian People's Party (CPP) casualties. Some FUNCINPEC leaders were forced to flee the country, and Hun Sen took over as Prime Minister. FUNCINPEC leaders returned to Cambodia shortly before the 1998 National Assembly elections. In those elections, the CPP received 41% of the vote, FUNCINPEC 32%, and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) 13%. Due to political violence, intimidation, and lack of media access, many international observers judged the elections to have been seriously flawed. The CPP and FUNCINPEC formed another coalition government, with CPP the senior partner.

Cambodia's first commune elections were held in February 2002. These elections to select chiefs and members of 1,621 commune (municipality) councils also were marred by political violence and fell short of being free and fair by international standards. The election results were largely acceptable to the major parties, though procedures for the new local councils have not been fully implemented.

National Assembly elections in July 2003 failed to give any one party the two-thirds majority of seats required under the constitution to form a government. The CPP secured 73 seats, FUNCINPEC 26 seats, and the SRP 24 seats. As a result, the incumbent CPP-led administration continued in power in a caretaker role pending the formation of a coalition with the required number of National Assembly seats to form a government. On July 8, 2004, the National Assembly approved a controversial addendum to the constitution in order to require a vote on a new government and to end the nearly year-long political stalemate. The vote took place on July 15, and the National Assembly approved a new coalition government comprised of the CPP and FUNCINPEC, with Hun Sen as Prime Minister and Prince Norodom Ranariddh as President of the National Assembly. The SRP, with support from various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), asserted the addendum was unconstitutional and boycotted the vote.

On October 7, 2004, King Sihanouk abdicated the throne due to illness. On October 14, the Cambodian Throne Council selected Prince Norodom Sihamoni to succeed Sihanouk as King. King Norodom Sihamoni officially ascended the throne in a coronation ceremony on October 29, 2004.

In February 2005, the National Assembly voted to lift the parliamentary immunity of three opposition parliamentarians, including SRP leader Sam Rainsy, in connection with lawsuits filed against them by members of the ruling parties. One of the MPs, Cheam Channy, was arrested and later tried, while Sam Rainsy went into self-imposed exile. In October 2005, the government arrested critics of Cambodia's border treaties with Vietnam and later detained four human rights activists following International Human Rights Day in December. In January 2006, the political climate improved with the Prime Minister's decision to release all political detainees and permit Sam Rainsy's return to Cambodia.

Following public criticism by Hun Sen, Prince Ranariddh resigned as President of the National Assembly in March 2006. He later broke with FUNCINPEC and founded a new party, the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP). In 2007, Ranariddh was convicted of corruption by a Cambodian court and fled to Malaysia to avoid imprisonment. In October 2008, he received a royal pardon and returned to Cambodia. Shortly afterward, he announced that he was withdrawing from politics.

Cambodia's second commune elections were held in April 2007, followed by National Assembly elections in July 2008. In both cases, there was little of the pre-election violence that preceded the 2002 and 2003 elections. Both polls resulted in victories for the Cambodian People's Party, with the Sam Rainsy Party emerging as the main opposition party and the royalist parties showing weakening support. The new Assembly inaugurated in September 2008 is led by a coalition of the CPP (90 seats) and FUNCINPEC (2 seats). The NRP (2 seats) remains independent but does not identify itself with the opposition. The SRP (26 seats) and the Human Rights Party led by Kem Sokha (3 seats) are in opposition. The CPP-led coalition retained Hun Sen as Prime Minister, as well as most of the key leaders from the previous government, and all ministers are from the CPP. The constitution provides for a wide range of internationally recognized human rights, including freedom of the press. While limitations still exist on mass media, freedom of the press has improved markedly in Cambodia since the adoption of the 1993 constitution, which grants a certain degree of freedom to the media. Much of the written press, while considered largely free, has ties to individual political parties or factions and does not seek to provide objective reporting or analysis. Cambodia has an estimated 25 Khmer-language newspapers that are published regularly. Of these, eight are published daily. There are two major English-language newspapers, one of which is produced daily. Broadcast media, in contrast to print, is more closely controlled. It tends to be politically affiliated, and access for opposition parties is extremely limited.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **Norodom SIHAMONI**
Prime Min.: **HUN SEN**

Permanent Dep. Prime Min.: **MEN SAM AN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **BIN CHHIN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **HOR NAMHONG**
Dep. Prime Min.: **KEAT CHHON**
Dep. Prime Min.: **NHEK BUNCHHAY**
Dep. Prime Min.: **SAR KHENG**
Dep. Prime Min.: **SOK AN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **TEA BANH, Gen.**
Dep. Prime Min.: **YIM CHHAI LY**
Min. of the Office of the Council of Ministers: **SOK AN**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Fisheries: **CHAN SARUN**
Min. of Cults & Religious Affairs: **MIN KHIN**
Min. of Culture & Fine Arts: **HIM CHHEM**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **KEAT CHHON**
Min. of Education, Youth, & Sport: **IM SITTHI**
Min. of Environment: **MOK MARET**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Intl. Cooperation: **HOR NAMHONG**
Min. of Health: **MAM BUN HENG**
Min. of Industry, Mines, & Energy: **SUY SEM**
Min. of Information: **KHIEU KANHARITH**
Min. of Interior: **SAR KHENG**
Min. of Justice: **ANG VONG VATTANA**
Min. of Labor & Vocational Training: **VONG SOTH**
Min. of Land Management, Urbanization, & Construction: **IM CHHUN LIM**
Min. of National Defense: **TEA BANH, Gen.**
Min. of Planning: **CHHAY THAN**
Min. of Posts & Telecommunications: **SO KHUN**
Min. of Public Works & Transportation: **TRAM IV TOEK**
Min. of Relations With the National Assembly, Senate, & Inspection: **SAOM KIM SUO**
Min. of Rural Development: **CHEA SOPHARA**
Min. of Social Affairs, War Veterans, & Youth Rehabilitation: **IT SAM-HENG**
Min. of Tourism: **THONG KHON**
Min. of Trade: **CHAM PRASIT**
Min. of Water Resources & Meteorology: **LIM KEAN-HAO**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **UNG KUNTHA PHAVY**
Governor, State Bank: **CHEA CHANTO**
Ambassador to the US: **EK SEREYWATH**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **SEA KOSAL**

Cambodia's embassy in the United States is located at 4530 16th Street NW, Washington DC 20011; tel: (202) 726-7742; fax: (202) 726-8381.

ECONOMY

From 2004-2007, the Cambodian economy expanded by more than 10% per year, with the garment sector and the tourism industry driving the growth, and inflation remaining relatively low. Growth slowed somewhat in 2008, and rising food and fuel prices pushed inflation into double digits. The economy is heavily dollarized; the dollar and riel can be used interchangeably. Cambodia remains heavily reliant on foreign assistance—about half of the central government budget depends on donor assistance. Foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased 12-fold since 2004 as sound macroeconomic policies, political stability, regional economic growth, and government openness towards investment attract growing numbers of investors.

Manufacturing output is concentrated in the garment sector, which started to expand rapidly in the mid-1990s and now employs 350,000 workers. Garments dominate Cambodia's exports, especially to the U.S. Despite predictions that Cambodia's garment sector would contract following the expiration of the Multifiber Arrangement in 2005, Cambodia's garment sector expanded by nearly 20% to an estimated $2.6 billion in 2007. The other main foreign currency earner is tourism. The number of tourists coming to Cambodia is increasing by 20%-25% per year, with over two million visitors expected to visit Cambodia in 2008. The service sector is heavily concentrated in trading activities and catering-related services. Exploratory drilling for oil and natural gas began in 2005. It is not yet clear if commercial extraction is viable or how large Cambodia's reserves are. If viable, commercial extraction is likely to start early in the next decade.

In spite of recent progress, the Cambodian economy continues to suffer from the legacy of decades of war and internal strife. Per capita income and education levels are lower than in most neighboring countries. Infrastructure remains inadequate, although road networks are improving rapidly. Most rural households depend on agriculture and its related subsectors. Corruption and lack of legal protections for investors continue to hamper economic opportunity and competitiveness. The economy also has a poor track record in creating jobs in the formal sector, and the challenge will only become more daunting in the future since 50% of the population is under 20 years of age and large numbers of job seekers will begin to enter the work force each year over the next 10 years.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Cambodia has established diplomatic relations with most countries, including the United States. The country is a member of most major international organizations, including the UN and its specialized agencies, and became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1998.

Cambodia is a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). On October 13, 2004, Cambodia became the 148th member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

U.S.-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS

In the past three years, bilateral relations between the U.S. and Cambodia have deepened and broadened. With the lifting of a congressional ban to provide direct assistance to the Cambodian Government, more direct technical assistance has become feasible. U.S. assistance to Cambodia administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in 2008 totaled over $57 million for programs in health, education, governance, and economic growth.

The U.S. supports efforts in Cambodia to combat terrorism, reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, build demo-

cratic institutions, promote human rights, foster economic development, eliminate corruption, achieve the fullest possible accounting for Americans missing from the Indochina conflict, and to bring to justice those most responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed under the Khmer Rouge regime.

Between 1955 and 1963, the United States provided $409.6 million in economic grant aid and $83.7 million in military assistance. This aid was used primarily to repair damage caused by Cambodia's war of independence from France, to support internal security forces, and for the construction of an all-weather road to the seaport of Sihanoukville, which gave Cambodia its first direct access to the sea and access to the southwestern hinterlands. Relations deteriorated in the early 1960s. Diplomatic relations were broken by Cambodia in May 1965, but were reestablished on July 2, 1969. U.S. relations continued after the establishment of the Khmer Republic until the U.S. mission was evacuated on April 12, 1975. During the 1970-75 war, the United States provided $1.18 billion in military assistance and $503 million in economic assistance. The United States condemned the brutal character of the Khmer Rouge regime between 1975 and 1979. The United States opposed the subsequent military occupation of Cambodia by Vietnam, and supported ASEAN's efforts in the 1980s to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the problem. This was accomplished on October 23, 1991, when the Paris Conference reconvened to sign a comprehensive settlement.

The U.S. Mission in Phnom Penh opened on November 11, 1991, headed by career diplomat Charles H. Twining, Jr., who was designated U.S. Special Representative to the SNC. On January 3, 1992, the U.S. lifted its embargo against Cambodia, thus normalizing economic relations with the country. The United States also ended blanket opposition to lending to Cambodia by international financial institutions. When the freely elected Royal Government of Cambodia was formed on September 24, 1993, the United States and the Kingdom of Cambodia immediately established full diplomatic relations. The U.S. Mission was upgraded to a U.S. Embassy, and in May 1994 Mr. Twining became the U.S. Ambassador. After the factional fighting in 1997 and Hun Sen's legal machinations to depose First Prime Minister Ranariddh, the United States suspended bilateral assistance to the Cambodian Government. At the same time, many U.S. citizens and other expatriates were evacuated from Cambodia and, in the subsequent weeks and months, more than 40,000 Cambodian refugees fled to Thailand. The 1997 events also left a long list of uninvestigated human rights abuses, including dozens of extra-judicial killings. From 1997 until the lifting of legislative restrictions on bilateral assistance in 2007, U.S. assistance to the Cambodian people was provided mainly through non-governmental organizations, which flourish in Cambodia.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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CON:	Brian Lieke
DCM:	Piper A. Campbell
PAO:	John E. Johnson
GSO:	Judy S. Moore
RSO:	Wade L. Boston
AID:	Erin Soto
CLO:	Tanya Brock
DAO:	Col. Michael A. Norton
FMO:	Wiley J. Williams
ICASS Chair:	David Nelson
IMO:	Bob Blankenship
IPO:	William L. Nguyen
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 5, 2008

Country Description: Cambodia is a poor, developing country with a constitutional monarchy and an elected government. King Norodom Sihamoni is the constitutional monarch and head of state. Elections for Members of the National Assembly were last held in July 2003. Two parties, the CPP and FUNCINPEC, have formed a coalition government, which the CPP dominates. The country has a market economy, with approximately 80 percent of the population of 13.6 million engaged in subsistence farming. The government has good relations with its neighbors despite strains over residual border disputes and other historic antagonisms. The quality of tourist facilities varies widely in Cambodia with the highest standard found in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and a Cambodian visa are required. Cambodia offers on-line visa processing at http://evisa.mfaic.gov.kh. Tourist and business visas are valid for one month beginning with the date of entry into Cambodia. You may also apply in person at the Cambodian Embassy located at 4530 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011 Tel 202-726-7742, Fax 202-726-8381. Tourists and business travelers may also obtain a Cambodian visa at the airports in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and at all major border crossings. Both methods of obtaining a Cambodian visa require a passport-sized photograph and a passport that is valid for a minimum of six months beyond the date of entry into Cambodia.

A departure tax is charged on all domestic and international flights. This tax must be paid in U.S. dollars. Overseas inquiries may be made at the nearest embassy or consulate of Cambodia. Travelers should note that Cambodia regularly imposes

fines of USD 5.00 per day on charges of overstay on an expired visas. Visit the Embassy of the Kingdom of Cambodia web site for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The State Department is concerned that individuals and groups may be planning terrorist actions against United States citizens and interests, as well as sites frequented by Westerners, in Southeast Asia, including in Cambodia. Extremist groups present in Southeast Asia have transnational capabilities to carry out attacks against locations where Westerners congregate. American citizens traveling to Cambodia should therefore exercise caution in clubs, discos, bars, restaurants, hotels, places of worship, schools, outdoor recreation venues, tourist areas, beach resorts, and other places frequented by foreigners. They should remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and avoid crowds and demonstrations. From time to time, the U.S. Embassy places local establishments off limits to Embassy personnel due to safety and security incidents. You can contact the Embassy for notification on the current restrictions in place for Embassy personnel.

Local commune elections in April 2007 were peaceful. National elections are scheduled for July 27, 2008. Political tensions have eased, and the current situation is relatively stable; however, Cambodian political activities have turned violent in the past, and the possibility for politically motivated violence remains.

In November 2006, police arrested six people for allegedly plotting to conduct bomb attacks in Phnom Penh during the November Water Festival. On July 29, 2007, three improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were planted at the Vietnam-Cambodia Friendship Monument in Phnom Penh. One of the IEDs partially exploded, but the others failed to detonate and were recovered by Cambodian authorities. No one was injured, primarily because the explosion occurred during the early morning hours. Police subsequently arrested several individuals suspected of constructing the devices and planning the bombings. While there is no indication this attack was directed at U.S. or other Western interests, the possibility remains that further attacks could be carried out, harming innocent bystanders.

The U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens to avoid large public gatherings and crowded public areas.

Land mines and unexploded ordnance are found in rural areas throughout Cambodia, and especially in Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Pursat, Siem Reap, and Kampong Thom provinces. Travelers should never walk in forested areas or even in dry rice paddies without a local guide. Areas around small bridges on secondary roads are particularly dangerous. Travelers should not touch anything that resembles a mine or unexploded ordnance; they should notify the Cambodia Mine Action Center at 023-368-841/981-083 or 084.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Cambodia has a high crime rate, including street crime. Military weapons and explosives are readily available to criminals despite authorities' efforts to collect and destroy such weapons. Armed robberies occur frequently in Phnom Penh. Foreign residents and visitors are among the victims. Victims of armed robberies are reminded not to resist their attackers and to surrender their valuables, since any perceived resistance may be met with physical violence, including lethal force. Local police rarely investigate reports of crime against tourists, and travelers should not expect to recover stolen items.

The U.S. Embassy advises its personnel who travel to the provinces to exercise extreme caution outside the provincial towns at all times. Many rural parts of the country remain without effective policing. Individuals should avoid walking alone after dusk anywhere in Sihanoukville, especially along the waterfront. Some of the beaches are secluded, and post has received reports that women have been attacked along the Sihanoukville waterfront during the evening hours. Take security precautions when visiting the Siem Reap (Angkor Wat) area. Travelers should be particularly vigilant during annual festivals and at tourist sites in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville, where there have been marked increases in motorcycle "snatch and grab" thefts of bags and purses. A group of young men sexually assaulted a foreigner in Phnom Penh in November 2006 while she was taking a moto-taxi from a nightclub.

Pickpockets, including some who are beggars, are present in the markets and at the tourist sites. Persons visiting Cambodia should practice sound personal security awareness by varying their routes and routines, maintaining a low profile, not carrying or displaying large amounts of cash, not wearing flashy or expensive jewelry, and not walking the streets alone after dark. In addition, we recommend that Americans travel by automobile and not use local moto-taxis or cyclos for transportation. These vehicles are more vulnerable to armed robberies and offer no protection against injury when involved in traffic accidents.

To avoid the risk of theft or confiscation of original documents, the U.S. Embassy advises its personnel to carry photocopies of their U.S. passport, driver's license or other important documents.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities and services in Cambodia do not meet international standards. Both Phnom Penh and Siem Reap have a limited number of international-run clinics and hospitals that can provide basic medical care and stabilization. Medical care outside these two cities is almost non-existent. Local pharmacies provide a limited supply of prescription and over-the-counter medications, but because the quality of locally obtained medications can vary greatly, travelers should bring adequate supplies of their medications for the duration of their stay in Cambodia.

For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747), fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad including avian influenza, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Cambodia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving at night in Cambodia is strongly discouraged. Road maintenance is sporadic in both urban and rural areas. Roads between major areas are adequate; however, roads leading to areas that are more rural are poor. During the rainy season, both urban and rural road conditions deteriorate considerably. Roadside assistance is non-existent. The safety of road travel outside urban areas varies greatly. Cambodian drivers routinely ignore traffic laws, and vehicles are poorly maintained. Intoxicated drivers are commonplace, particularly during the evening hours, and penalties for DWI offenses vary greatly. Banditry occurs even on heavily traveled roads, so all travel should be done in daylight between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m.

Serious flooding occurs in both Phnom Penh and the rest of Cambodia starting at the end of July, early August. Heavy flooding continues into November. The unimproved highways to Prey Veng, Battambang, Pailin, Stung Treng and Poipet become more difficult and dangerous during this time of the year, and travel on unpaved or dirt roads is virtually impossible. The National Route highways are the only roads that can be traveled, with caution, this time of the year.

The U.S. Embassy advises Embassy personnel not to travel by train because of low safety standards and the high risk of banditry. Travel by boat should be avoided because boats are often overcrowded and lack adequate safety equipment. Boat owners accept no liability for accidents. Travelers also should exercise caution when using intercity buses, including those to popular tourist destinations such as Siem Reap and Sihanoukville. Moto-taxis and cyclos are widely available; however, the Embassy does not recommend using them due to safety concerns and because personal belongings can be easily stolen. Organized emergency services for victims of traffic accidents are non-existent outside of major urban areas, and those available in major urban areas are inadequate.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Cambodia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Cambodia's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site, http://www.faa.gov.

The U.S. Embassy strongly discourages its employees from using domestic air carriers due to safety incidents that have occurred in recent years. A PMT Air flight from Siem Reap to Sihanoukville crashed in bad weather in a coastal mountain range on June 25, 2007. There were no survivors. Incidents at the Ratanakiri airport since 2005 have included collapsed landing gear and hard landings. Embassy employees are permitted to use international carriers Siem Reap Airways and Bangkok Airways between Phnom Penh and Siem Reap.

Special Circumstances: Cambodian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Cambodia of items such as drugs, firearms, antiquities, or ivory. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of

Cambodia in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not prohibited under Cambodia's 1996 nationality law. In addition to being subject to all Cambodian laws affecting U.S. citizens, individuals who possess Cambodian nationality may also be subject to laws that impose special obligations on Cambodian citizens.

Business Transactions: Some U.S. citizens have reported threats of personal injury, extortion, detention or kidnapping related to personal business disputes, in particular those involving real estate. The Embassy urges any American citizen planning to engage in real estate deals or other significant financial transactions to proceed with caution. U.S. citizens who do not have confidence in the ability of the local police to protect them may wish to depart the country expeditiously.

Financial Transactions: The U.S. dollar is widely used, especially for larger transactions, and most prices are quoted in dollars. The Cambodian riel can also be used, but is less favored and is mostly given to tourists as change for dollar purchases. Ripped or torn U.S. bills are not accepted. Except in major hotels, credit cards are not widely accepted within Cambodia, although a number of banks in Phnom Penh accept Visa cards for cash advances. Credit cards are often subject to a service charge. Banks and major hotels accept travelers' checks, but usually charge a service fee.

Several international banks operate ATM machines that allow travelers to obtain U.S. dollar currency in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and at the international airports. Personal checks are not generally accepted. Several banks serve as Western Union agents in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville and other provincial cities to which funds can be wired. Information on Western Union can be found at http://www.westernunion.com.

Photography: Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest—including government buildings, military installations, airfields, bridges- -may result in problems with the authorities and confiscation of the camera.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Cambodian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cambodia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children, using, or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. The police actively investigate, arrest and prosecute persons for pedophilia and debauchery. Six Americans were arrested in 2006.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Cambodia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Cambodia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the embassy or consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at No. 1, Street 96 (near Wat Phnom), Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The telephone number is (855-23) 728-000; fax (855-23) 728-600. Additional information about American Services can be found at the U. S. Embassy in Phnom Penh online at http://phnompenh.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Cambodia is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Intercountry adoption is not possible from Cambodia at this time.

On December 21, 2001, United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) announced an immediate suspension of the processing of adoption petitions for Cambodia. This decision was based on numerous concerns related to fraud in Cambodia, as well as the lack of a sufficient local legal framework and other safeguards to protect the children's best interests.

On January 25, 2002, the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs verbally notified the United States State Department that it would suspend the issuance of adoption documentation to American families in acknowledgement of trafficking concerns and other problems in the adoption process.

No further Cambodian orphans, including siblings of previously adopted orphans, can be processed for immigrant visas to the United States until the Department of Homeland Security lifts the suspension of orphan petitions. At this time, it is not known whether or when the moratorium might be lifted.

The functions of the former INS are now carried out by the United States Citizenship and Immigration

Services (USCIS), a division of the Department of Homeland Security. INS ceased to exist in March 2003.

Contact Information

The Embassy of the United States of America, Phnom Penh
Consular Section
#1, Street 96
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel: (855-23) 728-000
Fax: (855-23) 728-600
Email: adoptionscambodia@state.gov
Internet:
http://cambodia.usembassy.gov.

Cambodia's Adoption Authority
No. 788, Preah Monivong Blvd.,
Sangkat Boeung Trabek,
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Tel: 855-23-725-191 or 725-891

The Royal Embassy of Cambodia
4530 16th Street, N.W.,
Washington, D.C., 20011,
Tel. 202-726-77426

Office of Children's issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



CAMEROON

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Cameroon

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 475,000 sq. km. (184,000) sq. mi.), about the size of California.

Cities: (2003 Census Bureau estimates) Capital—Yaounde (pop. 1,111,641). Other major cities—Douala (1.3 million), Garoua (424,312), Maroua (409,546), Bafoussam (319,457), Bamenda (321,490), Nkongsamba (166,262), and Ngaoundere (216,300).

Terrain: Northern plains, central and western highlands, southern and coastal tropical forests. Mt. Cameroon (13,353 ft.) in the southwest is the highest peak in West Africa and the sixth in Africa.

Climate: Northern plains, the Sahel region—semiarid and hot (7-month dry season); central and western highlands where Yaounde is located—cooler, shorter dry season; southern tropical forest—warm, 4-month dry season; coastal tropical forest, where Douala is located—warm, humid year-round.

People

Nationality: English noun and adjective—Cameroonian(s); French noun and adjective—Camerounais(e).

Population: (2008 est.) 18,467,692.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 2.218%.

Ethnic groups: About 250.

Religions: Christian 40%, Muslim 20%, indigenous African 40%.

Languages: French and English (both official) and about 270 African languages and dialects, including pidgin, Fulfulde, and Ewondo.

Education: Compulsory between ages 6 and 14. Attendance—65%. Literacy—75%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2008)—6.46/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2007)—53.3 yrs.

Work force: Agriculture—70%. Industry and commerce—13%.

Government

Type: Republic; strong central government dominated by president.

Independence: January 1, 1960 (for areas formerly ruled by France) and October 1, 1961 (for territory formerly ruled by Britain).

Constitution: June 2, 1972, last amended in January 1996.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), 7-yr. term, renewable once; appointed prime minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (180 members, 5-yr. terms; meets briefly three times a year—March, June, November); a new Senate is called for under constitutional changes made in early 1996. Judicial—falls under the executive's Ministry of Justice.

Political subdivisions: 10 provinces, 58 departments or divisions, 349 subprefectures or subdivisions.

Political parties: Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) or its predecessor parties have ruled since independence. Major opposition parties: the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP), and the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU).

Suffrage: Universal at 20.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $20.646 billion.

Annual real GDP growth rate: (2007) 3.3%.

GDP per capita: (2007 est.) $1,095.

Inflation: (2007 est.): 0.9%.

Natural resources: Oil, timber, hydroelectric power, natural gas, cobalt, nickel.

Agriculture: (2007): 44.3% of GDP. Products—timber, coffee, tea, bananas, cocoa, rubber, palm oil, pineapples, cotton. Arable land (2005 est.)—12.54%.

Industry: (2007) 15.9% of GDP.

Services: (2007) 39.8% of GDP.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$3.7 billion: crude oil, timber and finished wood products, cotton, cocoa, aluminum and aluminum products, coffee, rubber, bananas. Major markets—European Union, CEMAC, China, U.S.,

Nigeria (informal). Imports—$3.6 billion: crude oil, vehicles, pharmaceuticals, aluminum oxide, rubber, foodstuffs and grains, agricultural inputs, lubricants, used clothing. Major suppliers—France, Nigeria, Italy, U.S., Germany, Belgium, Japan.

PEOPLE

Cameroon's estimated 250 ethnic groups form five large regional-cultural groups: western highlanders (or grassfielders), including the Bamileke, Bamoun, and many smaller entities in the northwest (est. 38% of population); coastal tropical forest peoples, including the Bassa, Douala, and many smaller entities in the Southwest (12%); southern tropical forest peoples, including the Ewondo, Bulu, and Fang (all Beti subgroups), Maka and Pygmies (officially called Bakas) (18%); predominantly Islamic peoples of the northern semi-arid regions (the Sahel) and central highlands, including the Fulani, also known as Peuhl in French (14%); and the "Kirdi," non-Islamic or recently Islamic peoples of the northern desert and central highlands (18%).

The people concentrated in the southwest and northwest provinces—around Buea and Bamenda—use standard English and "pidgin," as well as their local languages. In the three northern provinces—Adamaoua, North, and Far North—French and Fulfulde, the language of the Fulani, are widely spoken. Elsewhere, French is the principal language, although pidgin and some local languages such as Ewondo, the dialect of a Beti clan from the Yaounde area, also are widely spoken. Although Yaounde is Cameroon's capital, Douala is the largest city, main seaport, and main industrial and commercial center.

The western highlands are the most fertile in Cameroon and have a relatively healthy environment in higher altitudes. This region is densely populated and has intensive agriculture, commerce, cohesive communities, and historical emigration pressures. From here, Bantu migrations into eastern, southern, and central Africa are believed to have originated about 2,000 years ago. Bamileke people from this area have in recent years migrated to towns elsewhere in Cameroon, such as the coastal provinces, where they form much of the business community. About 20,000 non-Africans, including more than 6,000 French and 2,400 U. S. citizens, reside in Cameroon.

HISTORY

The earliest inhabitants of Cameroon were probably the Bakas (Pygmies). They still inhabit the forests of the south and east provinces. Bantu speakers originating in the Cameroonian highlands were among the first groups to move out before other invaders. During the late 1770s and early 1800s, the Fulani, a pastoral Islamic people of the western Sahel, conquered most of what is now northern Cameroon, subjugating or displacing its largely non-Muslim inhabitants.

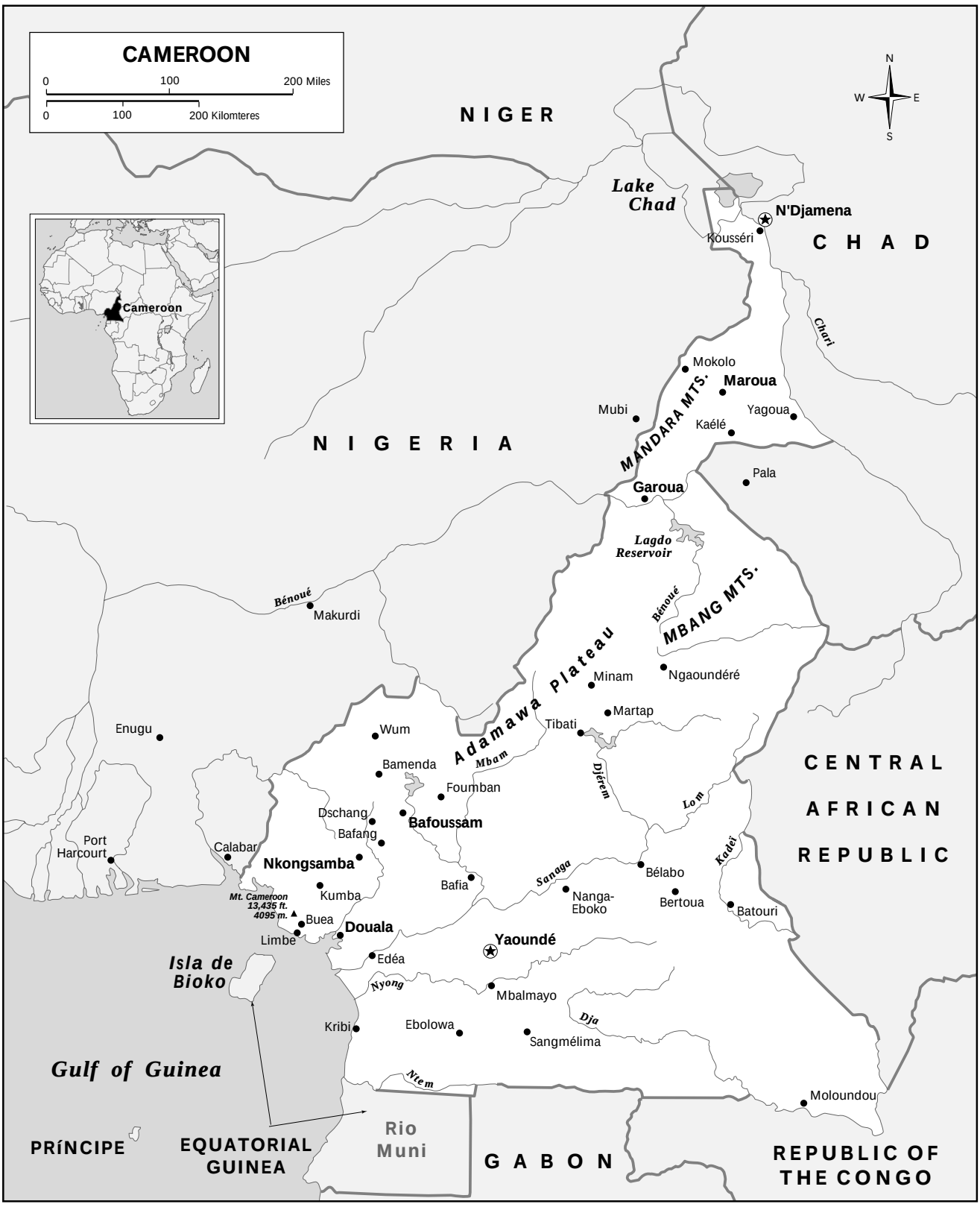
Although the Portuguese arrived on Cameroon's coast in the 1500s, malaria prevented significant European settlement and conquest of the interior until the late 1870s, when large supplies of the malaria suppressant, quinine, became available. The early European presence in Cameroon was primarily devoted to coastal trade and the acquisition of slaves. The northern part of Cameroon was an important part of the Muslim slave trade network. The slave trade was largely suppressed by the mid-19th century. Christian missions established a presence in the late 19th century and continue to play a role in Cameroonian life.

Beginning in 1884, all of present-day Cameroon and parts of several of its neighbors became the German colony of Kamerun, with a capital first at Buea and later at Yaounde. After World War I, this colony was partitioned between Britain and France under a June 28, 1919 League of Nations mandate. France gained the larger geographical share, transferred outlying regions to neighboring French colonies, and ruled the rest from Yaounde. Britain's territory—a strip bordering Nigeria from the sea to Lake Chad, with an equal population—was ruled from Lagos.

In 1955, the outlawed Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC), based largely among the Bamileke and Bassa ethnic groups, began an armed struggle for independence in French Cameroon. This rebellion continued, with diminishing intensity, even after independence. Estimates of death from this conflict vary from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands.

French Cameroon achieved independence in 1960 as the Republic of Cameroon. The following year the largely Muslim northern two-thirds of British Cameroon voted to join Nigeria; the largely Christian southern third voted to join with the Republic of Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The formerly French and British regions each maintained substantial autonomy. Ahmadou Ahidjo, a French-educated Fulani, was chosen President of the federation in 1961. Ahidjo, relying on a pervasive internal security apparatus, outlawed all political parties but his own in 1966. He successfully suppressed the UPC rebellion, capturing the last important rebel leader in 1970. In 1972, a new constitution replaced the federation with a unitary state.

Ahidjo resigned as President in 1982 and was constitutionally succeeded by his Prime Minister, Paul Biya, a career official from the Bulu-Beti ethnic group. Ahidjo later regretted his choice of successors, but his supporters failed to overthrow Biya in a 1984 coup. Biya won single-candidate elections in 1984 and 1988 and flawed multiparty elections in 1992, 1997, and 2004. His Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) party holds a sizeable majority in the legislature following 2007 elections—153 deputies out of a total of 180.


CAMEROON
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Maroua
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Mubi
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Kaélé
NIGERIA
Pala
Garoua
Lagdo Reservoir
Bénoué
Makurdi
MBANG MTS.
Adamawa Plateau
Minam
Ngaoundéré
Martap
Tibati
Enugu
Wum
Bamenda
Mbam
Djérem
Foumban
Lom
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Dschang
Bafoussam
Bafang
Port Harcourt
Calabar
Nkongsamba
Kadéi
Bélabo
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Bafia
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Batouri
Mt. Cameroon 13,435 ft. 4095 m.
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Limbe
Yaoundé
Isla de Bioko
Edéa
Nyong
Mbalmayo
Kribi
Ebolowa
Dja
Sangmélima
Gulf of Guinea
Ntem
Moloundou
PRÍNCIPE
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
Rio Muni
GABON
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The 1972 constitution (amended in 1996 and 2008) provides for a strong central government dominated by the executive. The president is empowered to name and dismiss cabinet members, judges, generals, provincial governors, prefects, sub-prefects, and heads of Cameroon's parastatal (about 100 state-controlled) firms, obligate or disburse expenditures, approve or veto regulations, declare states of emergency, and appropriate and spend profits of parastatal firms. The president is not required to consult the National Assembly.

The judiciary is subordinate to the executive branch's Ministry of Justice. The Supreme Court may review the constitutionality of a law only at the president's request.

The 180-member National Assembly meets in ordinary session three times a year (March-April, June-July, and November-December), and seldom makes major changes in legislation proposed by the executive. Laws are adopted by majority vote of members present or, if the president demands a second reading, of total membership.

Following government pledges to reform the strongly centralized 1972 constitution, the National Assembly adopted a number of amendments in December 1995, which were promulgated in a new constitution in January 1996. The amendments called for the establishment of a 100-member Senate as part of a bicameral legislature, the creation of regional councils, and the fixing of the presidential term to 7 years, renewable once. One-third of senators would be appointed by the president, and the remaining two-thirds would be chosen by indirect elections. As of June 2008, neither the Senate nor the regional council had been created. In April 2008, the National Assembly acceded to constitutional changes proposed by the presidency that, inter alia, removed presidential term limits and provided the President with immunity from prosecution for acts committed while in office. All local government officials are employees of the central government's Ministry of Territorial Administration, from which local governments also get most of their budgets.

While the President, the Minister of Justice, and the president's judicial advisers (the Supreme Court) top the judicial hierarchy, traditional rulers, courts, and councils also exercise functions of government. Traditional courts still play a major role in domestic, property, and probate law. Tribal laws and customs are honored in the formal court system when not in conflict with national law. Traditional rulers receive stipends from the national government.

The government adopted legislation in 1990 to authorize the formation of multiple political parties and ease restrictions on forming civil associations and private newspapers. Cameroon's first multiparty legislative and presidential elections were held in 1992. Because the government refused to consider opposition demands for an independent election commission, the three major opposition parties boycotted the October 1997 presidential election, which Biya easily won. Each of Cameroon's national elections has been marred by severe irregularities. In December 2000, the National Assembly passed legislation creating the National Elections Observatory (NEO), an election watchdog body. NEO played an active role in supervising the conduct of local and legislative elections in June 2002 and July 2007, which demonstrated some progress but were still hampered by irregularities. The NEO also supervised the conduct of the presidential election in October 2004, as did many diplomatic missions, including the U.S. Embassy. NEO reported that it was satisfied with the conduct of the election but noted some irregularities and problems with voter registration. The U.S. Embassy also noted these issues with the election, as well as reports of non-indelible ink, but concluded that the irregularities were not severe enough to impact the final result. The incumbent, Paul Biya, was re-elected with 70.92% of the vote. In December 2006, the President decreed the creation of Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), an independent body responsible for the organization, management and supervision of all election operations and referendums. The decree stipulated its creation by the end of June 2008. The U.S. Embassy provided monitors for the July 2007 parliamentary and municipal elections and concurred with the analysis of other observers and diplomatic missions, who noted some improvements but persistent flaws, especially in the registration of voters and the prevention of voter fraud (indelible ink).

Cameroon has a number of private newspapers, radio stations, and four private television stations. Officially censorship was abolished in 1996, but the government sometimes seizes or suspends newspapers. Mutations, a prominent private French-daily newspaper in Cameroon, was seized on April 14, 2003 after the paper published articles on "Life after Biya."

Since November 2007, the Ministry of Communication has stepped up harassment and arresting of journalists. In February 2008, the government closed Magic FM radio, a Voice of America (VOA) affiliate, and confiscated their equipment, which included VOA transmission equipment, and the same fate awaited Equinoxe Radio and Television after carrying controversial reports and critical commentaries about the regime. Journalists have been fired from their jobs for openly discussing the change of the constitution and the U.S. Ambassador's remarks requesting the government to reopen closed stations and to return U.S. Government equipment. The government also banned a popular song on the radio about constitutional change.

Radio and television continue to be a virtual monopoly of the state-owned broadcaster, the Cameroon Radio-Television Corporation (CRTV). However, there are two independent television stations and many more regional private radio stations, although many are owned by or financed by parliamentarians, may-

ors, or party officials. Since the issuance of the decree authorizing the creation of private radio and television on April 3, 2000, only two stations have received a license from the government. On April 9, 2008 the Minister of Communication gave two television stations and one radio station until July 2008 to pay the remainder of their license fee or be shut down. Most media houses have applied and are currently operating while their applications are pending. The private radio stations broadcasting in Yaounde, Douala, Bafoussam, Bamenda, and Limbe continue to broadcast, and their existence is tolerated by the government. There are a dozen community radio stations supported by the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which are exempted from licenses and have no political content. Radio coverage extends to about 80% of the country, while television covers 60% of the territory.

The Cameroon Government's human rights record has generally improved, although it remains deeply flawed, including significant problems over the past year. There continue to be reported abuses, including beatings of detainees, arbitrary arrests, and illegal searches. Journalists continue to be intimidated, threatened and arrested when discussing subjects considered sensitive by the Cameroonian Government. The judiciary is frequently corrupt, inefficient, and subject to political influence. Corruption is a major problem, although the government has recently arrested several prominent officials for corruption.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Paul BIYA**
Prime Min.: **Ephraim INONI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ahmadu ALI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jean NKUETE**
Sec. Gen. of the Presidency: **Laurent ESSO**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Jean NKUTE**
Min. of Commerce: **Luc Magloire MBARGA ATANGANA**
Min. of Communication: **Jean Pierre Biyiti Bi ESSAM**
Min. of Culture: **Ama Tutu MUNA**
Min. of Defense: **Remy Ze MEKA**
Min. of Economy, Planning, & Regional Development: **Louis Paul MOTAZE**
Min. of Employment & Professional & Technical Training: **Zacharie PEREVET**
Min. of Energy & Water Resources: **Jean-Bernard SINDEU**
Min. of Environment & Nature Protection: **Pierre HELE**
Min. of External Relations: **Henry Eyebe AYISSI**
Min. of Finance: **Lazare Essimi MENYE**
Min. of Forestry & Wildlife: **Elvis NGOLLE NGOLLE**
Min. of Higher Education: **Jacques Fame NDONGO**
Min. of Industry, Mines, & Technological Development: **Badel Ndanga NDINGA**
Min. of Justice: **Amadou ALI**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Robert NKILI**
Min. of Lands & Titles: **Anong Adibime PASCAL**
Min. of Livestock & Fisheries: **Aboubakary SARKI**
Min. of Post & Telecommunications: **Maigari BELLO BOUBA**
Min. of Primary Education: **Haman ADAMA**
Min. of Public Health: **Andre Mama FOUDA**
Min. of Public Service & Admin. Reform: **Emmanuel BONDE**
Min. of Public Works: **Bernard Messengue AVOM**
Min. of Scientific Research & Innovation: **Madeleine TCHUENTE**
Min. of Secondary Education: **Louis BAPES BAPES**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Catherine Bakang MBOCK**
Min. of Sports & Physical Education: **Augustin EDZOA**
Min. of Territorial Admin. & Decentralization: **Hamidou Yaya MARAFA**
Min. of Tourism: **Baba HAMADOU**
Min. of Transport: **Haounaye GOUNOKO**
Min. of Urban Development & Housing: **Colbert TCHATAT**
Min. of Women & Family Protection: **Suzanne BOMBACK**
Min. of Youth: **Adoum GAROUA**
Min. in Charge of Special Duties at the Presidency: **Paul Nji ATANGA**
Min. in Charge of Special Duties at the Presidency: **Victor MENGOT**
Min. in Charge of Special Duties at the Presidency: **Hamadou MUSTAPHA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Philibert ANDZEMBE**
Ambassador to the US: **Jerome MENDOUGA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Martin BELINGA EBOUTOU**

Cameroon maintains an embassy in the United States at 2349 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel.: 202-265-8790).

ECONOMY

Cameroon is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, including in the agriculture, mining, forestry, and oil and gas sectors. Cameroon is the commercial and economic leader in the sub-region, though regional trade, especially with Nigeria, remains under-realized.

Cameroon's economy is highly dependent on commodity exports, and swings in world prices strongly affect its growth. Cameroon's economic development has been retarded by economic mismanagement, pervasive corruption, and a challenging business environment (for local and foreign investors). Cameroon remains one of the lowest-ranked economies on the World Bank's annual Doing Business and similar surveys and regularly ranks among the most corrupt countries in the world. Over the last three years, GDP growth has averaged 3%, which is far below the population's expectations and insufficient to meet the Millennium Challenge goals. Despite boasting a higher GDP per capita than either Senegal or Ghana, Cameroon lags behind these two countries in important socio-economic indicators, including in health and education. The government has professed a determination to foster urgent economic growth and job creation, and there is a decided up-tick in interest in the mining sector, but it is not yet clear how well these promises will translate into improved performance.

For a quarter-century following independence, Cameroon was one of the most prosperous countries in Africa. The drop in commodity prices for its principal exports—oil, cocoa, coffee, and cotton—in the mid-1980s, com-

bined with an overvalued currency and economic mismanagement, led to a decade-long recession. Real per capita gross domestic product (GDP) fell by more than 60% from 1986 to 1994. The current account and fiscal deficits widened, and foreign debt grew.

The government embarked upon a series of economic reform programs supported by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) beginning in the late 1980s. Many of these measures have been painful; the government slashed civil service salaries by 65% in 1993. The CFA franc—the common currency of Cameroon and 13 other African states—was devalued by 50% in January 1994. The government failed to meet the conditions of the first four IMF programs. A three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) approved by the IMF in October 2005 will end by the end of 2008. It is not clear whether the Fund will continue with lending after this date.

Official statistics indicate that inflation is under control (projected by the World Bank at 2.9% in 2008), but anecdotal evidence suggests Cameroonians are frustrated and perceive their spending power is weakening. Public frustration over rising prices was partly to blame for an outbreak of social unrest and violence in many Cameroonian cities in February 2008. In March 2008, the government announced a reduction in food import tariffs and other measures designed to reduce the cost of basic commodities.

The government has made halting progress on its privatization program. The National Water Utility Corporation (SNEC) was split into two entities. CAMWATER—to handle infrastructure—remains in government hands, and a reformed SNEC is now owned by a consortium led by the Moroccan Water Utility. Plans to privatize national air company CAMAIR and national telecom CAMTEL, however, have repeatedly faltered because of political sensitivities and concerns about corruption. CAMAIR was declared officially defunct and ceased to operate in May 2008. CAMTEL remains under the control of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. The European Union remains Cameroon's main trading bloc, accounting for 36.6% of total imports and 66.1% of exports. France is Cameroon's main trading partner, but the United States is the leading investor in Cameroon (largely through the Chad-Cameroon pipeline and energy provider AES Sonel). According to press reports, China recently became the number one importer of Cameroonian exports, especially unprocessed timber.

For further information on Cameroon's economic trends, trade, or investment climate, contact the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230 and/or the Commerce Department district office in any local federal building.

DEFENSE

The Cameroonian military generally has been an apolitical force dominated by civilian control. Traditional dependence on the French defense capability, although reduced, continues. French military advisers remain closely involved at senior levels of all the armed forces and the gendarmes. The armed forces number approximately 28,000 personnel in ground, air, and naval forces, with the majority being in the army and gendarmes.

Cameroon's goal is to develop a military with the capacity to contribute to peacekeeping efforts. While equipment needs pose a significant challenge, Cameroonian officers are already receiving training both in Africa and abroad, and Cameroon has recently become an African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) partner.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Cameroon's noncontentious, low-profile approach to foreign relations puts it squarely in the middle of other African and developing country states on major issues. It supports the principles of noninterference in the affairs of third countries and increased assistance to underdeveloped countries. Cameroon is an active participant in the United Nations, where its voting record demonstrates its commitment to causes that include international peacekeeping, the rule of law, environmental protection, and Third World economic development. In the UN and other human rights fora, Cameroon's nonconfrontational approach has generally led it to avoid criticizing other countries.

Cameroon enjoys good relations with the United States and other developed countries. It has particularly close ties with France, with whom it has numerous military, economic, and cultural agreements. China has a number of health and infrastructure projects underway in Cameroon, and provides some military assistance. Cameroon enjoys generally good relations with its African neighbors. Cameroon has successfully resolved its border dispute with Nigeria in the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula through peaceful legal means after having submitted the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). With the support of the UN, both countries are working closely together to peacefully implement the ICJ ruling, and a genuine, peaceful turnover of the peninsula by Nigeria has begun. Roughly 5,000 Nigerians have moved back into Nigeria thus far. Cameroon is a member of CEMAC (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa) and supports UN peacekeeping activities in Central Africa.

U.S.-CAMEROONIAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Cameroonian relations are close, although from time to time they have been affected by concerns over human rights abuses and the pace of political and economic liberalization. The bilateral U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program in Cameroon closed for budgetary reasons in 1994.

However, approximately 140 Peace Corps volunteers continue to work successfully in agroforestry, community development, education, and health. The Public Affairs section of the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde organizes and funds diverse cultural, educational, and information exchanges. It maintains a library and helps foster the development of Cameroon's independent press by providing information in a number of areas, including U.S. human rights and democratization policies. The Embassy's Self-help and Democracy and Human Rights Funds are some of the largest in Africa.

Through several State Department and USAID regional funds, the Embassy also provides funds for: biodiversity protection, refugees, HIV/AIDS, democratization, and girl's scholarships. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided a commodity grant valued at $6 million in 2003 to fund agricultural development projects in the North and Far North provinces. Similar programs were approved in 2004, 2005, and 2006. The $4 million 2004 program was to fund an agricultural development and nutrition enhancement project in the East and Adamawa provinces. The $4 million 2005 program was to integrate tree crops and agri-business to enhance household livelihood security in vulnerable communities of the Center and South West provinces. The 2006 project was to focus on an agroforestry program to be carried out in the North West and West provinces.

The United States and Cameroon work together in the United Nations and a number of other multilateral organizations. While in the UN Security Council in 2002, Cameroon worked closely with the United States on a number of initiatives. The U.S. Government continues to provide substantial funding for international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, IMF, and African Development Bank, which provide financial and other assistance to Cameroon.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

YAOUNDE (E) 6.050 Avenue Rosa Parks, BP 817, (237) 2220-1500, Fax (237) 2220-1500 Ext. 4531, Workweek: Monday–Thursday: 0730–1700; Friday: 0730–1230, Website: http://yaounde.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Vacant
AMB OMS:	Marcia W. Vajay
CDC:	Dr. Pratima Raghunathan
FM:	Clifford Adams
HRO:	Arthur J. Hermanson
MGT:	Charles F. Werderman
POL/ECO:	Scott Ticknor
AMB:	Janet E. Garvey
CON:	William Swaney
DCM:	Stephen Fox
PAO:	Vacant
GSO:	Jefferson D. Smith
RSO:	Laura Williams
AFSA:	Scott Ticknor
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Maj. Matthew Sousa
EEO:	Lynn Nelson
FMO:	Craig Nagle
IMO:	Fox Bie
ISO:	Lynne D. Hermanson
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: Cameroon is a developing country in central Africa. Although there are many natural and cultural attractions in Cameroon, facilities catering to Western-style tourism are quite limited. The capital is Yaoundé, though Douala, the country's largest city, is its main port and commercial center. Official languages are French and English, though French predominates in most of the country. English may be used in Cameroon's two Anglophone provinces of Southwest and Northwest, and the larger cities. The staff of major hotels in Cameroon's large cities is usually bilingual. In February 2008, social and political unrest led to civil unrest, although the immediate threat of violence has now receded.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, visa, evidence of yellow-fever vaccination, and current immunization records are required, and travelers may be denied entry if they lack the proper documentation. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon, 2349 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington D.C. 20008, tel: (202) 265-8790, fax: (202) 387-3826. Visit the Embassy of Cameroon's web site at http://www.ambacam-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: During the week of February 25, 2008, Cameroon experienced significant civil unrest in half of its ten provinces, most notably in the port city of Douala. Demonstrators clashed violently with police and then military personnel, resulting in the reported deaths of forty persons and arrest of over 1,600 individuals. The unrest was marked by widespread road blockages, attacks on public and private vehicles, looting, burning of government and other buildings, and roaming crowds of malcontents. This disturbance created shortages of fuel, food and other supplies throughout the country, and was ended through the deployment of military units and the use of significant force.

Following the restoration of order, some efforts have been made to address fuel and food prices that were among the key grievances of the demonstrators. However, economic conditions, notably the high unemployment rate, remain difficult without the prospect for rapid improvement. Political tensions also remain, particularly over a possible amendment to the Constitution that would allow President Biya to serve again. Although a rapid resumption of violence is considered unlikely, Americans living in or visiting Cameroon are encouraged to stay abreast of local political and social developments that could signal additional difficulties for the country.

Embassy employees have been instructed to refrain from travel outside of city limits after dusk, and to monitor their movements in centrally

located areas within cities and towns. Private American citizens are urged to follow the same guidelines and are strongly advised against nighttime travel. Armed highway bandits (most notably in border areas); poorly lit roads; hazardous, poorly maintained vehicles; and unskilled, aggressive and/or intoxicated drivers pose a threat to motorists. Attacks and accidents are most common outside major towns, especially in the provinces bordering Chad and the Central African Republic but occur in all areas of the country.

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against travel to neighboring Central African Republic (CAR). On occasion, conflict between insurgents and government security forces in CAR has spilled across the border into Cameroon, affecting outposts in both Adamawa and East Provinces. Humanitarian and religious workers in eastern Cameroon are strongly encouraged to coordinate their efforts with the Embassy and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Yaoundé.

In February 2008, an attack by rebel insurgents on Ndjamena, the capital of Chad, forced the evacuation of the Embassy in Chad and sent up to 50,000 refugees across the border into the town of Kousseri in Cameroon. Although the attack was ultimately repelled, the possibility of further military action by the rebel forces remains.

In late 2006, inter-ethnic clashes were reported in the town of Kye-Ossi near the Cameroonian border with Gabon. These confrontations were a result of a discord between moto-taxi drivers and the security forces, which resulted in demonstrations and roadblocks. According to security authorities, tensions in the area are still high, despite the deployment of a large security force to the region.

Following a ruling from the International Court of Justice defining a section of the Cameroon-Nigeria border, Cameroon assumed administrative control of most of the Bakassi Peninsula, in August 2006, with Nigerian military forces withdrawing across the border. Although the transition has generally gone smoothly, there was an attack on Cameroonian military forces in November 2007, reportedly by criminal elements from the Niger Delta not connected to the Nigerian government. It is very difficult to reach Bakassi, but travelers thinking of going near there should exercise extreme caution as there is the potential for violence if tensions rise.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet website, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including Worldwide Caution Travel Alert can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is a serious and growing problem throughout Cameroon and U.S. citizens should exercise caution when traveling in Cameroon. Internet-based crime is escalating rapidly, and Americans should be extremely skeptical of financial transactions—e.g. adoptions, hiring a service worker, such as a nanny, to come to the U.S., or purchasing a pet—that involve sending money for goods or services not yet delivered (see below). In February 2008, two European nationals were kidnapped by criminals posing as businessmen seeking to establish a palm oil export business. Although several perpetrators were arrested and the individuals were not harmed, the incident highlights a dangerous new confluence of internet-based and violent crime. If you have concerns about the legitimacy of a transaction, such as adoption, in Cameroon contact the U.S. Embassy in Cameroon—see Registration/Embassy Location section below.

All foreigners are potential targets for theft with possible attendant violence. Petty crimes, crimes against persons, thefts from vehicles, and of vehicles are the most common criminal activities. Armed banditry is a growing problem throughout all ten provinces in Cameroon. Specifically, incidents of armed highway-robbery have been reported in the North West, West, South West and East provinces. Armed bandits have erected road barricades on major routes that link rural towns to provincial headquarters, and have taken as many as 100 cars in a single attack. To curb banditry, security personnel may request persons to show their passport, residence card, driver's license, and/or vehicle registration at random checkpoints. Certified copies of these important documents should be kept in a secure location separate from the originals. Security personnel have been known to ask for bribes and may hurt citizens who refuse to pay. The U.S. Government does not condone bribery or corruption of any kind.

Due to the frequency of criminal incidents involving public transportation, American citizens are advised that use of public taxis can be dangerous. In April 2007, two American women were assaulted and robbed in a taxi. Public taxis in Cameroon function more like the U.S. bus system with drivers stopping to pick up additional passengers as long as there is space left in the vehicle. There have been numerous reports of assaults and robberies committed by "passengers" in shared taxis since crimes—rape and robbery being among the most common—are often a collaborative effort between the driver and "passengers." If a traveler must use a taxi, the use of a private taxi—or a taxi hired for exclusive use by the individual for that particular trip—where the driver is known to the passenger is a better alternative to the use of shared taxis. Taxi passengers should be particularly vigilant at night.

The risk of street and residential crime is high, and incidents of violent crime are on the rise throughout the country. During the last year, the number of carjacking and armed burglary incidents in residences and restaurants, particularly in Yaoundé and Douala, continued to increase. Carjacking and robbery has also been

reported on rural highways, especially in the Northern provinces and regions near Cameroon's border with the Central African Republic.

On March 27, 2006, 11 armed men attacked a group of four U.S. citizens in a private residence (adjacent to a hotel frequented by expatriates) in Kribi, located in the Southern province. A group of five armed bandits held up and robbed staff and guests of a hotel in Ngaoundere (Adamawa Province) on December 20, 2006. Similar incidents occurred in the middle of the night at hotels in Bertoua (East Province) on April 22, 2007, and in Yaoundé (Central Province) on May 15, 2007 when assailants broke into hotel rooms and robbed the residents. Americans were among the victims. Crimes against property, such as carjacking and burglaries, have often been accompanied by violent acts and have resulted in fatalities. There were four incidents of armed robberies in the month of April 2007, involving American citizens in or near restaurants in Yaoundé and Bertoua.

In January 2007, a French expatriate was fatally shot in the upscale Bastos neighborhood of Yaoundé. The woman was dropping off a friend to her residence and interrupted an attempted home invasion. Upon realizing what was happening, the friend returned to the vehicle and both women attempted to flee the scene. As they were leaving, an armed bandit shot and fatally wounded the driver of the vehicle.

In September 2007, several expatriates suffered armed attacks. In one incident, an Israeli citizen giving a ride to a friend was attacked in Bastos by two men with knives. In the ensuing scuffle, the Israeli was critically wounded. A Moroccan diplomat was fatally injured while walking near his residence. Found unconscious by security guards, he was taken to a local hospital where he died the following day. A Chinese business woman was also robbed and killed outside her home in a neighborhood near Bastos. All incidents occurred late at night.

In December 2007, a police officer was arrested and jailed in Yaoundé after he and his accomplices surprised a couple returning from Europe and stole a briefcase and jewelry.

In January 2008, three bandits posing as passengers on a bus to Douala—and carrying locally made guns—were intercepted at Bafoussam and apprehended. In Douala, armed bandits robbed a soap company at gun point, surprising the employees. They attempted to loot the company's computers, but were intercepted by a SWAT team and ran off.

Also in January, an Embassy employee using public transportation in the Northwest Province was the victim of highway robbers, who robbed the passengers (including a local mayor) and roughed-up those who did not have enough money.

In February 2008, Cameroon experienced a brief period of civil unrest during a taxi strike that involved road blockages, attacks on public and private vehicles, looting, burning of government and other buildings, and roaming crowds of malcontents. This period was attended by a sharp increase in reported crimes, including the stabbing death of a night watchman at a residence in Yaoundé, an attack at the Brussels Airline travel agency in the Bonapriso district of Douala, an attack by a group of armed bandits on a motorbike rider who suffered a gunshot wound to the head, and numerous reports of rape and armed attacks with firearms and machetes in Douala.

Recently, many American citizens have become victims of Cameroonian advance-fee fraud and other scams offering antiques, exotic and domesticated animals, and even adoption services through the Internet. Americans should be very cautious about sending money or traveling to Cameroon to meet someone contacted via the Internet. Commercial scams targeting foreigners, including many U.S. citizens, continue to be a problem. The scams generally involve phony offers of lucrative sales and repeated requests for additional funds to pay for unforeseen airport and/or customs fees. No one should provide personal financial or account information to unknown parties. The ability of U.S. Embassy officers to extricate U.S. citizens from unlawful business deals and the consequences is limited. For more information on international financial scams, including those involving Internet dating, a promise of an inheritance windfall, a promise of a work contract overseas, overpayment for goods purchased online, or money-laundering, see the Department of State's publication International Financial Scams.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Cameroon are extremely limited. Even in large cities, emergency care and hospitalization for major illnesses and surgery are hampered by the lack of trained specialists, outdated diagnostic equipment, and poor sanitation. Medical services in outlying areas may be completely nonexistent. Doctors and hospitals often require immediate payment for health services in cash. Pharmacies in larger towns are well stocked, but in other areas many medicines are unavailable. Travelers are advised to carry their own supply of needed prescription and anticipated over-the-counter medicines with them.

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. Plasmodium falci-

parum malaria, the type that predominates in Cameroon, is resistant to the antimalarial drug chloroquine. Because travelers to Cameroon are at high risk for contracting malaria, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam–TM), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone -TM). Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. There are periodic outbreaks of cholera in Cameroon. Yellow fever can cause serious medical problems, but the vaccine, required for entry, is very effective in preventing the disease.

In March 2006 avian influenza (H5N1) was confirmed in wild ducks in northern Cameroon. There have been no reports of avian influenza among humans in Cameroon. Avian influenza has been reported in both birds and humans in neighboring Nigeria. For additional information on avian influenza as it affects American citizens residing abroad, please visit the U.S. Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Cameroon is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Cameroon's road networks, both paved and unpaved, are poorly maintained and unsafe at all times of the year. Vehicles are poorly maintained and there is no mechanism or requirement to inspect for roadworthiness. During the rainy season, many roads are barely passable with four-wheel-drive vehicles. Livestock and pedestrians create constant road hazards (especially at night) and road safety rules are frequently ignored. There are few road and traffic signs; speed limits are neither posted nor enforced. Buses and logging trucks travel at excessive speed and are a constant threat to other road traffic.

Travelers on roads near the borders with CAR and Chad should ensure that their vehicles are fully fueled, and that they have adequate cooking fuel, food, and water for several days as well as a reliable means of communication, such as a satellite or cell phone, or radio.

Visitors who are not in possession of a valid passport and a visa may experience difficulties at police roadblocks or other security checkpoints. It is not uncommon for a uniformed member of the security forces to stop motorists on the pretext of a minor or non-existent violation of local motor vehicle regulations in order to extort small bribes. Visitors are advised not to pay bribes and to request that the officer provide a citation to be paid at the local court.

Local law states that vehicles involved in an accident should not be moved until the police arrive and a police report can be made. If an accident results in injury, drivers should be aware of the possibility that a "village justice" mentality may develop. If an angry crowd forms, drive directly to the U.S. Embassy or another location where you can receive assistance. Contact the local police once you are safely away from danger. Cameroon has no real equivalent to 911-type service or roadside emergency telephone numbers, but you can dial 112 in major cities to contact ambulance services. American citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy (237) 220-1500 if emergency assistance is needed.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Cameroon, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Cameroon's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: While visiting game parks and reserves, tourists should bear in mind that they are ultimately responsible for maintaining their own safety. Tourists should use common sense when approaching wildlife, maintain a safe distance from animals, and heed all instructions given by guides or trackers. Even in the most serene settings, the animals in Cameroon's game parks are wild and can pose a threat to life and safety.

Cameroonian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Cameroon of items such as large quantities of medicine or wood products. Customs regulations also restrict the importation of ivory.

Cash in local currency, the Central African franc (CFA), is the only form of payment accepted throughout the country. Larger hotels in Yaoundé

and Douala will change U.S. dollars and cash traveler's checks, though at a disadvantageous rate. Credit card cash advances are not available, and most banks do not cash personal or traveler's checks for non-clients. While credit cards are accepted at some larger hotels and shops in Yaoundé and Douala, caution is urged, as identity theft is endemic in the region. Some larger banks in Yaoundé and Douala have ATM facilities, and several banks in Cameroon have wire transfer services through Western Union. The U.S. Embassy does not provide currency exchange, check cashing or other financial services. Tourists and business travelers should also note that there is an increasing circulation of counterfeit U.S. and Cameroonian currency in the country. In recent years, business travelers have experienced difficulty in obtaining adequate services from Cameroon's banking sector. Business travelers are also advised that using the services of a local agent is strongly recommended in establishing a presence in the Cameroonian market.

While photography is not officially forbidden, security officials are sensitive about photographs taken of government buildings, military installations, and other public facilities, many of which are unmarked. Photography of these subjects may result in seizure of photographic equipment by Cameroonian authorities. Due to the threat of harassment and the lack of signs designating sites prohibited for photography, photography should be limited to private homes and among friends. U.S. citizens are advised to seek proper permission before taking a photograph of a specific subject or location.

Please note that homosexuality is a crime in Cameroon that has recently begun to be enforced. Charges of homosexuality and/or of corruption are also made and enforced indiscriminately in the course of business or personal disputes.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Cameroonian law does not afford many of the protections to which Americans are accustomed, and legal proceedings tend to be complex, lengthy, and subject to inappropriate influence. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Additionally, the condition of detention centers, while improving, is poor. Persons violating Cameroonian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. During the February 2008 civil unrest, there were reports that people were arrested arbitrarily by law enforcement officials quelling the civil disorder that ensued. Although no expatriates were known to have been arrested, the Department of State cautions Americans against venturing out during such periods of unrest.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cameroon are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Cameroon are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Cameroon. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé is located on Avenue Rosa Parks in the Mbankolo Quartier, adjacent to the Mount Febe Golf Club; mailing address P.O. Box 817; embassy tel. (237) 2220-1500, fax: (237) 2220-1572. The Embassy Branch Office in Douala is located on the corner of Rue Ivy and Rue French in the Ecobank Building in Bonanjo, tel: (237) 3342-5331, fax: (237) 3342-7790. Further information, including the U.S. Embassy's business hours, is available at the U.S. Embassy's web site: http://yaounde.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Fraud Warning: Recently, many Americans have become victims of Cameroonian scam artists offering adoption services through the Internet. Americans should be very cautious about sending money or traveling to Cameroon to adopt a child from an orphanage they have only heard about through e-mails. Prospective adoptive parents MUST come to Cameroon for an extended period and participate in person in the elaborate legal procedures that govern Cameroonian adoptions. The competent authorities for intercountry adoption are the Ministry of Social Affairs and the High Court (Tribunal de Grande Instance) that has jurisdiction over the place of residence of the child to be adopted. Cameroon does not have adoption agencies. In general, any orphanage may release an orphan for adoption. However, in order to help protect themselves and the children from the

possibility of fraud or other serious problems, prospective adoptive parents are advised to consider first the list of accredited orphanages available at the Ministry of Social Affairs. Should prospective adoptive parents wish to hire a Cameroonian attorney to assist with the adoption, they can obtain a list of attorneys from the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé. Due to repeated scams involving the impersonation of legitimate lawyers or law offices the Embassy has removed this information from its website. This information can be obtained by e-mailing the American Citizen Services Unit at YaoundeACS@state.gov.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The competent authorities for intercountry adoption are the Ministry of Social Affairs and the High Court (Tribunal de Grande Instance) that has jurisdiction over the place of residence of the child to be adopted.

Eligibility to Adopt: At least one adoptive parent in the couple must be older than 40 years old. If however, both parents are young, at least one has to be at least 35 years old and they had to have been married for 10 years to be eligible. The prospective adoptive parents must be at least 15 years older than the child to be adopted; however, if the adoptive parent married the biological parent of the child, the age difference must only be 10 years. Couples that do not meet these requirements can submit a medical certificate confirming the couple's infertility in order to have the age requirement waived. They may bring a medical certificate from a U.S. or local doctor to do this.

Both parties in a couple must be in agreement over the adoption. One side of a couple cannot adopt without the other's permission. He or she must be medically fit, proven by a medical certificate from either a US or local doctor. Evidence of financial capacity; this is usually proven with a report of a home-study from the US along with bank statements, evidence of assets, pay slips etc. Evidence of the consent of the birth parent(s) (if they are alive). The consent must be witnessed either in court, by a diplomatic consulate or by a public notary. Evidence of the consent of the adoptee if the adoptee is 16 or older. The consent must be witnessed either in court, by a diplomatic consulate or by a public notary.

Eligibility Requirements for Prospective Adoptees: Adopted individuals cannot have children of their own at the time of the adoption, nor have any legal descendants. They may not marry their adoptive parents or siblings.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must have the child in their care and custody for at least three consecutive months before the High Court will consider issuing an adoption decree.

Time Frame: Prospective adoptive parents should expect that a minimum of three months will pass between the date they submit their adoption application to the Ministry of Social Affairs and the date the High Court's Public Prosecutor completes his/her review of the file. Only when the review is completed will a first hearing date be scheduled. In addition, a Cameroonian adoption is likely to be affected by administrative and judicial delays, insufficient or misplaced paperwork, and other factors. Most parents have found that hiring a local attorney to monitor the case and keep pressure on the High Court has been crucial in expediting its processing. Care also needs to be taken in selecting a credible legal representative, as many unscrupulous persons attempt to either impersonate lawyers or deliberately extend or complicate proceedings for personal gain. Once all of the Cameroonian procedures have been completed and an adoption decree has been issued, the U.S. Embassy requires a minimum of two weeks to complete the immigrant visa process and may need longer depending on the specific circumstances. This includes the mandatory I-604 orphan investigation to verify a child qualifies as an orphan.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Cameroon does not have adoption agencies. In general, any orphanage may release an orphan for adoption. However, in order to help protect themselves and the children from the possibility of fraud or other serious problems, prospective adoptive parents are advised to consider first the list of accredited orphanages available at the Ministry of Social Affairs. Prospective adoptive parents wishing to hire a Cameroonian attorney to assist with the adoption can obtain a list of attorneys from the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé. Due to repeated scams involving the impersonation of legitimate lawyers or law offices the Embassy has removed this information from its website. This information can be obtained by e-mailing the American Citizen Services Unit at YaoundeACS@state.gov.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Yaounde discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a child and put all future adoptions in Cameroon at risk.

Adoption Procedures: A social worker will be assigned to follow up the case and assist the prospective adoptive parents with identifying a child for adoption and monitoring the family during the foster care period. The local lawyer, if hired by the prospective adoptive parents, must be also involved in the process. The social worker's final report determines whether prospective adoptive parents can proceed with the case to the High Court.

The adoptive parent(s) may choose either to be present or to be represented by a lawyer during the hearing at the High Court. Under Cameroonian law, the High Court must determine that the following four criteria have been met before it can issue an adoption decree:

- That every person whose consent is necessary has consented to and understands the nature and effect of the adoption. Such consent is

irrevocable and permanently severs all legal ties between the biological parent(s) and the child.

- That the child's welfare will be improved by the adoption. Parents must provide proof of what they can provide for the child in a way that other cannot.
- That no payment or reward has been the reason for the adoption.
- That the prospective adoptive parent is healthy.

Once the High Court has consented to the adoption and issued a final decree, the American parents must obtain a new Cameroonian birth certificate and Cameroonian passport for the child, both reflecting any name change. Post-adoption birth certificates are issued by the Civil Status Registry Center. The Cameroonian passport is issued by the immigration office in the district where the child lives.

Each province has an immigration office that issues passports. The requirements for passports are several passport size photographs, certified copies of the birth certificates, parents' consent, fee, and certified application form. The entire process can cost approximately 100,000 CFA (about USD 200).

Required Documents:

- An application bearing a 1000 FCFA (approximately $2) fiscal stamp is addressed to the President of the High Court;
- A certified copy of the child's Cameroonian birth certificate;
- Biographical information of the biological parents of the child to be adopted;
- Biographical information of the adoptive parent(s);
- If applicable, a notarized deed of agreement from surviving biological parents, or the orphanage director having custody over the child and prospective adoptive parents. This deed expressly states that the child is released irrevocably for adoption;
- Report of the home study (U.S. home studies are acceptable);
- Evidence of finances/income (bank statements, pay slips, etc.);
- Legalized authorization from the biological parents, if applicable;
- Notarized affidavit of support of the child from the adoptive parents;
- A deposit of 3,000 CFA francs (approximately $6. Please note that this amount is subject to change) is made at the court registry;
- A separate non-refundable deposit of 78,000 CFA francs (approximately $160. Please note that this amount is subject to change) is made at the court registry;
- A written application;
- A certified copy of the child's birth certificate;
- A certified copy of the adoptive parents' ID card;
- A prison/court record clearance;
- The adoptive parents' proof of residency; For married adoptive parents who do not meet the age requirements, they must bring a medical certificate attesting their infertility;
- A medical certificate for the adoptive parents attesting that they are medically fit; and
- Report of the social home study.

Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon
2349 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 265-8790
Fax: (202) 387-3826
http://www.ambacam-usa.org/

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Avenue Rosa Parks
P.O. Box 817
Yaoundé, Cameroon
Tel: (237) 2220-15-00
YaoundeACS@state.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



CANADA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Canada

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 9.9 million sq. km. (3.8 million sq. mi.); second-largest country in the world.

Cities: Capital—Ottawa (pop. 1.1 million). Other major cities—Toronto (5.1 million), Montreal (3.6 million), Vancouver (2.1 million), Calgary (1.1 million), Edmonton (1.0 million), Quebec City (0.7 million), Winnipeg (0.7 million), Hamilton (0.7 million).

Terrain: Mostly plains with mountains in the west and lowlands in the southeast.

Climate: Temperate to arctic.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Canadian(s).

Population: (2008 est.) 33.1 million.

Ethnic groups: British/Irish 28%, French 23%, other European 15%, Asian/Arab/African 6%, indigenous Amerindian 2%, mixed background 26%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 43.6%, Protestant 29.2%, other Christian 4.3%, Muslim 2.0%, Jewish 1.1%, Buddhist 1.0%, Hindu 1.0% other 1.3%, none 16.5%.

Languages: English (official) 57.8%, French (official) 22.1%, other 20.1% (including Chinese and aboriginal languages).

Education: Literacy—99% of population aged 15 and over has at least a ninth-grade education.

Health: Infant mortality rate—5.4/1,000. Life expectancy—77.7 yrs. male, 82.5 yrs. female.

Work force: (2008, 18.2 million): Goods-producing sector—25%, of which: manufacturing 15%; construction 6%; agriculture 2%; natural resources 2%; utilities 1%. Service-producing sector—75%, of which: trade 16%; health care and social assistance 11%; educational services 7%, accommodation and food services 7%; professional, scientific, and technical services 7%; finance 6%; public administration 5%; transportation and warehousing 5%; information, culture, and recreation 5%; other services 4%.

Government

Type: Federation, parliamentary democracy, and constitutional monarchy.

Confederation: July 1, 1867.

Constitution: The amended British North America Act of 1867 patriated to Canada on April 17, 1982, Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and unwritten custom.

Government branches: Executive—Queen Elizabeth II (head of state represented by a governor general), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament (308-member House of Commons; 105-seat Senate). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Federal-level political parties: Liberal Party, Conservative Party of Canada, Bloc Quebecois, New Democratic Party.

Political subdivisions: 10 provinces, 3 territories.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $1.266 trillion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2007) 2.7%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $38,435.

Natural resources: Petroleum and natural gas, hydroelectric power, metals and minerals, fish, forests, wildlife, abundant fresh water.

Agriculture: Products—wheat, livestock and meat, feed grains, oil seeds, dairy products, tobacco, fruits, vegetables.

Industry: Types—motor vehicles and parts, machinery and equipment, aircraft and components, other diversified manufacturing, fish and forest products, processed and unprocessed minerals.

Trade: U.S. merchandise exports to Canada (2007)—$248.9 billion: motor vehicles and spare parts, industrial and electrical machinery, plastics, computers, chemicals, petroleum products and natural gas, and agricultural products. In 2007, 65% of Canada's imports came from the

United States. U.S. merchandise imports from Canada (2007)—$313.1 billion: motor vehicles and spare parts, crude petroleum and natural gas, forest products, agricultural products, metals, industrial machinery, and aircraft. In 2007, 76% of Canada's exports went to the U.S.

U.S.-CANADA RELATIONS

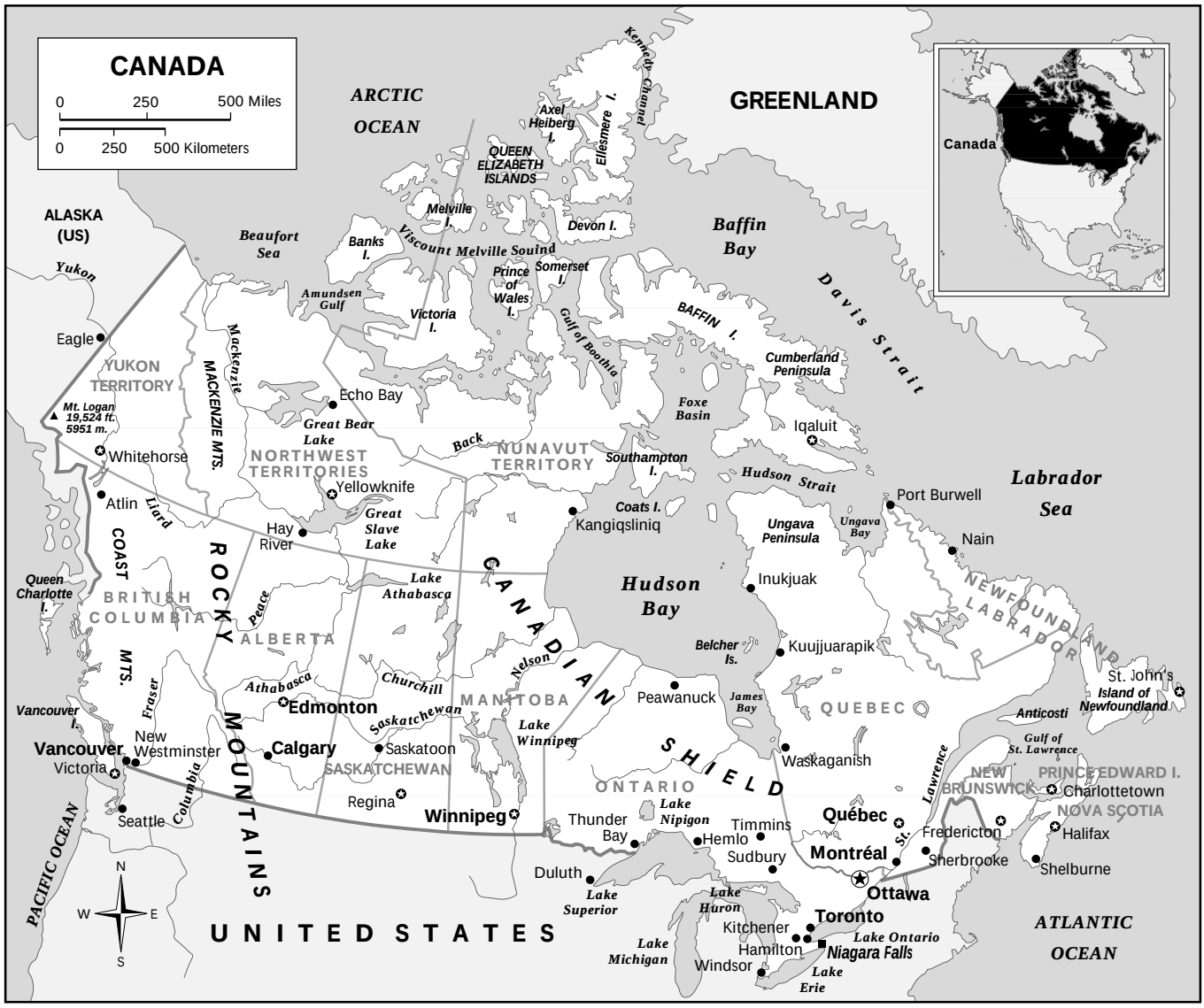
The relationship between the United States and Canada is the closest and most extensive in the world. It is reflected in the staggering volume of bilateral trade—the equivalent of $1.5 billion a day in goods—as well as in people-to-people contact. About 300,000 people cross the shared border every day.

A 2004 law is phasing in new rules for travel between Canada and the United States. Since January 2007 U.S. citizens traveling by air to and from Canada have needed a valid passport to enter or re-enter the United States. Beginning January 31, 2008, U.S. and Canadian citizens aged 19 and older traveling into the U.S. from Canada by land or sea (including ferries) have had to present documents denoting citizenship and identity. This change primarily affects American and Canadian citizens who have previously been permitted entry into the U.S. by oral declaration alone, and marks the transition toward standard and consistent documents for all travelers entering the U.S. Acceptable documentation includes a valid passport or government-issued photo identification such as a driver's license and proof of citizenship such as a birth certificate. Children aged 18 and under need only to present a birth certificate. A list of acceptable documents is found at http://canada.usembassy.gov. Travelers who do not present acceptable documents may be delayed as U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the port of entry attempt to verify identity and citizenship. Beginning in June 2009, all travelers, including U.S. citizens, will have to present a passport or other secure document that denotes identity and citizenship when entering the U.S. from Canada.

In fields ranging from law enforcement to environmental protection to free trade, the two countries work closely on multiple levels from federal to local. In addition to their close bilateral ties, Canada and the U.S. cooperate in multilateral fora. Canada—a charter signatory to the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a member of the G8—takes an active role in the United Nations, including peacekeeping operations, and participates in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Canada joined the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1990 and hosted the OAS General Assembly in Windsor in June 2000, and the third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April 2001. Canada seeks to expand its ties to Pacific Rim economies through membership in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), and will host the Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver-Whistler, British Columbia in 2010.

Canada views good relations with the U.S. as crucial to a wide range of interests, and often looks to the U.S. as a common cause partner promoting democracy, transparency, and good governance around the world. Nonetheless, it sometimes pursues policies at odds with our own. Canada decided in 2003 not to contribute troops to the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq (although it later contributed financially to Iraq's reconstruction and provided electoral advice). Other recent examples are: Canada's leadership in the creation of the UN-created International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes; its decision in early 2005 not to participate directly in the U.S. missile defense program; and its strong support for the Ottawa Convention to ban anti-personnel mines. The U.S., while the world's leading supporter of demining initiatives, declined to sign the treaty due to unmet concerns regarding the protection of its forces and allies, particularly those serving on the Korean Peninsula, as well as the lack of exemptions for mixed munitions. U.S. defense arrangements with Canada are more extensive than with any other country. The Permanent Joint Board on Defense, established in 1940, provides policy-level consultation on bilateral defense matters and the U.S. and Canada share NATO mutual security commitments. In addition, U.S. and Canadian military forces have cooperated since 1958 on continental air defense within the framework of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). The military response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 both tested and strengthened military cooperation between the U.S. and Canada. The new NORAD Agreement that entered into force on May 12, 2006 added a maritime domain awareness component and is of "indefinite duration," albeit subject to periodic review. Since 2002, Canada has participated in diplomatic, foreign assistance, and joint military actions in Afghanistan. Approximately 2,500 Canadian Forces personnel are deployed at any given time in southern Afghanistan under a battle group based at Kandahar and as members of the Canadian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) at Camp Nathan Smith in Kandahar. The Canadian Parliament has approved the extension of this mission in Kandahar until 2011. Canada has also contributed to stabilization efforts in Haiti, initially with troops and later with civilian police and electoral assistance, and humanitarian and developmental aid.

The U.S. and Canada also work closely to resolve trans-boundary environmental issues, an area of increasing importance in the bilateral relationship. A principal instrument of this cooperation is the International Joint Commission (IJC), established as part of the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to resolve differences and promote international cooperation on boundary waters. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978 (as amended in 1987) is another historic example of joint cooperation in controlling trans-boundary water pollution. The two governments also consult regularly on trans-boundary



air pollution. Under the Air Quality Agreement of 1991, both countries have made substantial progress in coordinating and implementing their acid rain control programs and signed an annex on ground level ozone in 2000. In late 2007, Canada and the U.S. began discussions aimed at negotiating a new annex to the Air Quality Agreement which will increase cooperation in combating cross-border air pollution in the form of particulate matter.

Canada ratified the Kyoto Accord in 2002, despite concern among business groups and others that compliance would place Canada's economy at a lasting competitive disadvantage vis-a-vis the U.S. However, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government announced in 2006 that Canada would not be able to meet its original Kyoto Protocol commitments. In April 2007, the Canadian Government announced a new regulatory framework for air emissions that, when implemented, should lead to significant decreases in emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollutants as early as 2010. Canada participates in the U.S.-led International Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum, which researches effective ways to capture and store carbon dioxide. Canada is also a founding member of the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy and the Global Earth Observation System of Systems, both of which are designed to address climate change and are supported by the U.S. In early 2005, Canada joined the U.S.-led Methane to Markets initiative, which focuses on transferring technology to developing countries for the capture and use of methane from pipelines, landfills, and other sources. In October 2007 Canada gained membership in the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, which joins it with the U.S., Japan, Australia, South Korea, China, and India in a broad effort to accelerate the development and deployment of clean energy technologies in major industrial sectors.

While bilateral law enforcement cooperation and coordination were

excellent prior to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, they have since become even closer through such mechanisms as the Cross Border Crime Forum. Canada, like the U.S., has strengthened its laws and realigned resources to fight terrorism. U.S.-Canada security cooperation to create a safe and secure border is exemplary. Canadian and U.S. federal and local law enforcement personnel fight cross-border crime through cooperation on joint Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs). Companies on both sides of the border have joined governments in highly successful partnerships and made massive investments to secure their own facilities and internal supply chains. Over 70% of Canada-U.S. trade is transported by truck. Some commercial drivers crossing the border have volunteered to undergo background security checks under the bilateral Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program and many companies participate in the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT). These initiatives have helped secure trade while speeding border processing.

Canada is a significant source of marijuana and synthetic drugs (methamphetamines, ecstasy) reaching the U.S., as well as precursor chemicals and over-the-counter drugs used to produce illicit synthetic drugs. Implementation and strengthening of regulations in Canada and increased U.S.-Canadian law enforcement cooperation have had a substantial impact in reducing trafficking in precursor chemicals and synthetic drugs, but cannabis cultivation, because of its profitability and relatively low risk of penalty, remains a thriving industry. Canada increased maximum penalties for methamphetamine offenses in August 2005 and implemented new controls over various precursors in November 2005. Canada is active in international efforts to combat terrorist financing and money laundering.

Canada is a large foreign aid donor and targets its annual assistance of C$4.4 billion toward priority sectors such as good governance; health (including HIV/AIDS); basic education; private-sector development; and environmental sustainability. Canada is a major aid donor to Iraq, Haiti, and Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Harper, who entered office stating he intended to bring a new, more positive tone to bilateral relations while still defending Canadian interests, held his first meeting with President Bush at the March 30-31, 2006 Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) meeting in Cancun, Mexico and his most recent at the APEC summit in Lima, Peru on November 22, 2008. Prime Minister Harper and President Bush have held North America leaders' meetings with Mexican President Calderon in Cancun, Mexico in March 2006, Montebello, Quebec, in August 2007, and in New Orleans in April 2008.

Trade and Investment

The U.S. and Canada enjoy an economic partnership unique in the world. The two nations share the world's largest and most comprehensive trading relationship, which supports millions of jobs in each country. In 2007, total trade between the two countries exceeded $560 billion. The two-way trade that crosses the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario equals all U.S. exports to Japan. Canada's importance to the U.S. is not just a border-state phenomenon: Canada is the leading export market for 36 of the 50 U.S. States, and ranked in the top three for another 10 States. In fact, Canada is a larger market for U.S. goods than all 27 countries of the European Community combined, whose population is more than 15 times that of Canada. The comprehensive U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which went into effect in 1989, was superseded by the North American Free Trade Agreement among the United States, Canada and Mexico (NAFTA) in 1994. NAFTA, which embraces more than 450 million people of the three North American countries, expanded upon FTA commitments to move toward reducing trade barriers and establishing agreed upon trade rules. It has also resolved long-standing bilateral irritants and liberalized rules in several areas, including agriculture, services, energy, financial services, investment, and government procurement. Since the implementation of NAFTA in 1994, total two-way merchandise trade between the U.S. and Canada has grown by 265%, creating many new challenges for the bilateral relationship. The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, launched by the three NAFTA countries in March 2005, represents an effort to address these challenges and others on a continental basis.

Canada is an urban services-dependent economy with a large manufacturing base. Since Canada is the largest export market for most states, the U.S.-Canada border is extremely important to the well-being and livelihood of millions of Americans.

The U.S. is Canada's leading agricultural market, taking 55% of its agrofood exports in 2007. However, U.S. imports of Canadian livestock products, particularly ruminants, fell drastically after the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, mad cow disease) in early 2003. Shipments of most Canadian beef to the U.S. were resumed in late 2003, and trade in live cattle under 30 months resumed in July 2005. All remaining U.S. restrictions affecting bilateral beef trade were lifted in November 2007. Canada is the largest U.S. agricultural market, primarily importing fresh fruits and vegetables and livestock products.

The U.S. and Canada enjoy the largest energy trade relationship in the world. Canada is the single largest foreign supplier of energy to the U.S.—providing 17% of U.S. oil imports and 18% of U.S. natural gas demand. Recognition of the commercial viability of Canada's oil sands in Alberta has raised Canada's proven petroleum reserves to 179 billion barrels, making it the world's second-largest holder of reserves after Saudi Arabia. Canada is planning Arctic pipelines and liquefied natural gas terminals to provide more natural gas to the North American market. Canada and the U.S. operate an inte-

grated electricity grid which meets jointly developed reliability standards and provide almost all of each other's electricity imports. Canada is a major supplier of electricity (mostly clean and renewable hydroelectric power) to New England, New York, the Upper Midwest, the Pacific Northwest, and California. Canadian uranium helps fuel U.S. nuclear power plants.

While 98% of U.S.-Canada trade flows smoothly, there are occasional trade disputes affecting the remaining 2%. Usually these issues are managed amicably through bilateral consultative forums or referral to World Trade Organization (WTO) or NAFTA dispute resolution procedures. For example, in response to WTO challenges by the U.S., the two governments negotiated an agreement on magazines providing increased access for the U.S. publishing industry to the Canadian market, and Canada amended its patent laws to extend patent protection to 20 years. Canada has challenged U.S. trade remedy law in NAFTA and WTO dispute settlement mechanisms. Some of these cases involved actions taken by the U.S. Government on softwood lumber imports from Canada. However, the two countries implemented a comprehensive settlement on softwood lumber in late 2006 and these cases were dropped. The U.S. is pressing Canada to strengthen its intellectual property laws and enforcement. The U.S. and Canada resolved a WTO dispute over dairy products in 2003. The U.S. and Canada also have resolved several major issues involving fisheries. By common agreement, the two countries submitted a Gulf of Maine boundary dispute to the International Court of Justice in 1981; both accepted the Court's October 12, 1984 ruling that delineated much of the boundary between the two countries' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).

The U.S. and Canada signed a Pacific Salmon Agreement in June 1999 that settled differences over implementation of the 1985 Pacific Salmon Treaty. In 2001, the two countries reached agreement on Yukon River salmon, implementing a new abundance-based resource management regime and effectively realizing coordinated management over all West Coast salmon fisheries. The U.S. and Canada recently reached agreement on sharing another trans-boundary marine resource, Pacific hake. The two countries also have a treaty on the joint management of albacore tuna in the Pacific, and closely cooperate on a range of bilateral fisheries issues and international high seas governance initiatives. U.S. immigration and customs inspectors provide preclearance services at eight airports in Canada, allowing air travelers direct connections in the U.S. During the 12 months ending in June 2007, nearly 21.9 million passengers flew between the U.S. and Canada on scheduled flights. Toronto's Pearson International Airport is the third-largest international passenger gateway to the U.S. after London (Heathrow) and Tokyo (Narita) airports.

A bilateral Open Skies agreement signed in March 2007 removed all economic restrictions on civil aviation services between Canada and the U.S. The two countries also share in operating the St. Lawrence Seaway, connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.

Canada and the U.S. have one of the world's largest investment relationships. The U.S. is Canada's largest foreign investor. Statistics Canada reports that at the end of 2007, the stock of U.S. foreign direct investment in Canada was $289 billion, or about 59% of total foreign direct investment in Canada. U.S. investment is primarily in Canada's mining and smelting industries, petroleum, chemicals, the manufacture of machinery and transportation equipment, and finance.

Canada is the fifth largest foreign investor in the U.S. At the end of 2006, the U.S. Commerce Department estimates that Canadian investment in the United States was $159 billion at historical cost basis. Canadian investment in the U.S. is concentrated in finance and insurance, manufacturing, banking, information and retail trade and other services.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Joan B. Odean
AMB OMS:	Ashley Martin
DHS/ICE:	Craig Healy
ECO:	Brian J. Mohler
FCS:	Stephen Wasylko
FM:	Gary Hein
HRO:	Patricia Duffy
MGT:	Timothy E. Roddy
AMB:	David Wilkins
CG:	Keith Powell
CON:	Lisa Wishman
DCM:	Terry A. Breese
PAO:	Linda Carol Cheatham
GSO:	Mark R. Brandt
RSO:	Kevin F. Flanagan
APHIS:	Donald R. Wimmer
ATF:	Mark W. Curtin
CLO:	Ronda Buchanan/Karenkay Hall
DAO:	Col. Joe Breen
DEA:	Gerald Kaphing
EST:	Jim Steele
FMO:	Patricia Leiberman
ICASS Chair:	Donald R. Wimmer
IMO:	Robert Hall
IPO:	Margaret Pfister
IRS:	Bruce Traina
ISO:	Amanda Gilke
ISSO:	Robert X Rodriguez
LEGATT:	Gary Klein
POL:	Scott Bellard
State ICASS:	John Carwile

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CG OMS:	Gina M. Peterson
MGT:	Richard W. Roesing
POL/ECO:	Daniel J. Fennell
CG:	Thomas K. Huffaker
CON:	Daniel A. Nowlan

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CON:	Elizabeth Schwefler

MONTREAL (CG) 1155 St. Alexandre, Montreal, Qc, Canada, H3B 3Z1, APO/FPO P.O. Box 847, Champlain, NY, 12919-0847, 514-981-3Z1, APO/FPO P.O. Box 847, Champlain, NY, 12919-0847, 514-981-5059, Fax 514-398-0973, Workweek: 8:15AM to 5:00PM, Mon-Fri, Website: http://montreal.usconsulate.gov.

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MGT:	Vacant
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CG:	Mary B. Marshall
PO:	Mary B. Marshall
CON:	Paul O. Mayer
PAO:	Bell, Susan Tebeau
COM:	Vacant
RSO:	Blodgett, Edward
CLO:	Vacant
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MGT:	Paul D. Yeskoo
POL/ECO:	Vacant
CG:	John Nay
CON:	Mark D. Bysfield
PAO:	Vacant
GSO:	Vacant
RSO:	Mark C. Malhoyt
AFSA:	Vacant
AGR:	Vacant
APHIS:	Vacant
ATF:	Regina Lombardo
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IPO:	Richard S. Johnson
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CG OMS:	Cheryl C. Cruise
DHS/ICE:	Kevin Benson
DPO:	Glenna K. Hill
FCS:	Cheryl M. Schell
MGT:	Kevin B. Crisp
POL/ECO:	Lori E. Balbi
Port DIR:	Richard Roberts
CG:	Lewis A. Lukens
CON:	Alice F Seddon
PAO:	Indran Amirthanayagam
RSO:	Eric M. Miller
ATF:	Terry F. Alverson
DEA:	Barry J. Lucero
EEO:	Jarrod M. Frahm
LEGATT:	Gerard Downes
POL:	Stephen Feldman

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ALT US REP:	Laura Faux-Gable
AMB OMS:	Linda Roberts
US REP:	Donald T. Bliss
AMB:	Donald T. Bliss
DCM:	Laura Faux-Gable
RSO:	Edward Blodgett
FAA:	Stephen Creamer
FMO:	Deborah Kokotailo

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PO:	Mary Speer

GOVERNMENT

Canada is a constitutional monarchy with a federal system, a parliamentary government, and strong democratic traditions. The 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees basic rights in many areas. Queen Elizabeth II, as Queen of Canada, serves as a symbol of the nation's unity. She appoints a governor general, who serves as her representative in Canada, on the advice of the prime minister of Canada, usually for a 5-year term. The prime minister is the leader of the political party in power and is the head of the cabinet. The cabinet remains in office as long as it retains majority support in the House of Commons on major issues.

Canada's parliament consists of an elected House of Commons and an appointed Senate. Legislative power rests with the 308-member Commons. Legislation to provide for federal elections to be held on fixed dates, every four calendar years, was passed in the spring of 2007. The first fixed election date is scheduled for 2009, but the prime minister may ask the governor general to dissolve parliament and call new elections at any time should the governing party lose the confidence of the House of Commons.

Vacancies in the 105-member Senate, whose members serve until the age of 75, are filled by the governor general on the advice of the prime minister. Recent constitutional initiatives have sought unsuccessfully to strengthen the Senate by making it elective and assigning it a greater regional representational role. In an effort to bring about incremental Senate reform without a constitutional amendment, bills to place term limits upon Senators and to create a process of public consultation in the appointment of Senators have been introduced in parliament. However, the bills face substantial opposition, both from within parliament and from certain provinces, which question the constitutionality of the proposed legislation, putting the success of the legislation in doubt.

Criminal law, based largely on British law, is uniform throughout the nation and is under federal jurisdiction. Civil law is also based on the common law of England, except in Quebec, which has retained its own civil code patterned after that of France. Justice is administered by federal, provincial, and municipal courts.

Each province is governed by a premier and a single, elected legislative chamber. A lieutenant-governor

appointed by the governor general represents the Crown in each province.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Michaelle JEAN**
Prime Min.: **Stephen HARPER**
Min. of Agriculture & Agri-Food: **Gerry RITZ**
Min. of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency: **Peter MACKAY**
Min. of Canadian Heritage & Status of Women: **Josee VERNER**
Min. of the Canadian Wheat Board: **Gerry RITZ**
Min. of Citizenship & Immigration: **Diane FINLEY**
Min. of Democratic Reform: **Peter VAN LOAN**
Min. of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec: **Jean-Pierre BLACKBURN**
Min. of the Environment: **John BAIRD**
Min. of the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario: **Tony CLEMENT**
Min. of Finance: **Jim FLAHERTY**
Min. of Fisheries & Oceans: **Loyola HEARN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **David EMERSON**
Min. of Health: **Tony CLEMENT**
Min. of Human Resources & Social Development: **Monte SOLBERG**
Min. of Indian Affairs & Northern Development & Federal Interlocutor for Metis & Nonstatus Canadians: **Chuck STRAHL**
Min. of Industry: **Jim PRENTICE**
Min. of Intergovernmental Affairs: **Rona AMBROSE**
Min. of International Cooperation: **Bev ODA**
Min. of International Trade: **Michael FORTIER**
Min. of Justice & Attorney Gen.: **Rob NICHOLSON**
Min. of La Francophonie & Official Languages: **Josee VERNER**
Min. of Labor: **Jean-Pierre BLACKBURN**
Min. of National Defense: **Peter MACKAY**
Min. of National Revenue: **Gordon O'CONNOR**
Min. of Natural Resources: **Gary LUNN**
Min. of the Pacific Gateway & the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics: **David EMERSON**
Min. of Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness: **Stockwell DAY**
Min. of Public Works & Govt. Services: **Christian PARADIS**
Min. of Transport, Infrastructure, & Communities: **Lawrence CANNON**
Min. of Veterans Affairs: **Greg THOMPSON**
Min. of Western Economic Diversification: **Rona AMBROSE**
Pres., Queen's Privy Council: **Rona AMBROSE**
Pres., Treasury Board: **Vic TOEWS**
Leader of the Govt. in the House: **Peter VAN LOAN**
Leader of the Govt. in the Senate: **Marjory LEBRETON**
Governor, Bank of Canada: **Mark CARNEY**
Ambassador to the US: **Michael WILSON**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **John MCNEE**

Canada maintains an embassy in the United States at 501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001 (tel. 202-682-1740).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

On February 6, 2006, Stephen Harper was sworn in as Canada's twenty-second Prime Minister, succeeding Liberal Party leader Paul Martin. An admitted "policy specialist," Harper rose from the ranks of conservative political party staffers. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, he sat as a Member of Parliament, including as Leader of the Opposition since 2002 when he became head of the western-based Canadian Alliance. He was elected the first leader of the Conservative Party of Canada when it was created in 2003 through the merger of Canadian Alliance and Peter MacKay's Progressive Conservative Party. The January 23, 2006 election victory by the Conservative Party ended 12 years of Liberal Party rule that, in the end, was tainted by corruption and ethics concerns, despite the economic progress Canada achieved while the Liberals were in power. In a subsequent federal election on October 14, 2008, the Conservatives won 38% of the vote and formed a second minority government with 143 seats in the House of Commons. The Liberals won 26% of the vote and 77 seats in the House of Commons. As the party with the second-largest number of seats, the Liberals form the "official opposition."

The Conservatives made unexpected gains in Quebec by winning ten seats in the January 2006 election, but failed to increase their number of seats in the province in the 2008 election. The separatist Bloc Quebecois (BQ) has a majority (49) of Quebec's 75 seats (the BQ offers candidates only in Quebec). The left-leaning New Democratic Party (NDP) now has 37 seats, and two independents also sit in Parliament.

Policy priorities of the Conservatives under Prime Minister Harper have remained fairly consistent since 2006: improving accountability and ethics in government; lower taxes; fighting crime and urban violence; reinvesting in defense; bolstering Canada's Arctic sovereignty; promoting national unity; and raising the profile of Canada's role abroad, through its combat mission in Afghanistan, contributions to stabilization in Haiti, and renewed partnership with the Americas.

In Canada's political system, a key challenge for any federal government is balancing the conflicting interests of Canada's 10 provinces and 3 territories. Recognizing the advantages of a coordinated approach in dealing with the federal government, the provinces and territories created a Council of the Federation in 2003, with their leaders (Canada's first ministers) meeting regularly in that forum to develop common positions. Prime Minister Harper met with the provincial premiers and territorial leaders formally on January 11, 2008 and on November 10, 2008.

Quebec, which represents 23% of the national population (and has a similar proportion of seats in the House of Commons), seeks to preserve its distinctive francophone nature, and is perceived by the less-populous western provinces as wielding undue influence on the Federal Government. At least until January 2006's election of Albertan Stephen Harper as Prime Minister, the western provinces had sometimes expressed con-

cern that Ottawa did not fully attend to their interests. Ontario, believes that it pays out significantly more to the Federal Government than it gets back in revenues, while the Atlantic Provinces seek to assert greater control over fishing and mineral rights off their shores. The Federal Government ceded some power in a few areas of provincial jurisdiction, while seeking to strengthen the federal role in many other areas such as interprovincial trade and the regulation of securities.

National Unity

Popular support for sovereignty appears to be on the wane in Quebec, although pride in that province's unique cultural and linguistic identity remains very strong. Most Quebec voters seem to appreciate the economic benefits of remaining in the Canadian confederation and aim to advance their separate francophone identity within the confederation. In the March 2007 provincial election, the ruling provincial Liberals garnered only 33% of the vote, and Premier Jean Charest heads a minority government. Action Democratique du Quebec (ADQ), led by Mario Dumont, finished second, while the pro-sovereignty Parti Quebecois (PQ) finished a close third.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 11, 2008

Country Description: Canada is a highly developed, stable democracy. Tourist facilities are widely available except in northern and wilderness areas, where they are less developed and can be vast distances apart.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements. Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the U.S. Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

Both the U.S. and Canadian governments urge frequent travelers to join the NEXUS trusted traveler program. NEXUS members receive a special travel card that allows expedited border crossings for both private and commercial travelers through both U.S. and Canadian border controls very quickly. For information about the NEXUS program see http://cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/prog/nexus/menu-eng.html.

Entry into Canada is solely determined by Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) officials in accordance with Canadian law, see http://www.cbsa.gc.ca for details. Canadian law requires that all persons entering Canada must carry both proof of citizenship and identity. A valid U.S. passport or NEXUS card satisfies these requirements for U.S. citizens. If U.S. citizen travelers to Canada do not have a passport or approved alternate document such as a NEXUS card, they must show a government-issued photo ID (e.g. Driver's License) and proof of U.S. citizenship such as a U.S. birth certificate, naturalization certificate, or expired U.S. passport. Children under sixteen need only present proof of U.S. citizenship.

U.S. citizens entering Canada from a third country must have a valid U.S. passport. A visa is not required for U.S. citizens to visit Canada for up to 180 days. Anyone seeking to enter Canada for any purpose besides a visit (e.g. to work, study or immigrate) must qualify for the appropriate entry status, and should contact the Canadian Embassy or nearest consulate and see the Canadian immigration web site at http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/index.asp. Anyone with a criminal record (including even misdemeanors or Driving While Impaired (DWI)) charges may be barred from entering Canada and must qualify for a special waiver well in advance of any planned travel for further processing, which may take some time.

For further information on entry requirements, travelers may contact the Canadian Embassy at 501 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20001, tel. (202) 682-1740, or the Canadian consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, San Juan or Seattle. The Canadian Embassy's web site is http://www.canadianembassy.org.

Importation of Firearms: Firearms are much more strictly controlled in Canada than in the United States. As of January 1, 2001, visitors bringing any firearms into Canada, or planning to borrow and use firearms while in Canada, must declare the firearms in writing using a Non-Resident Firearm Declaration form. Multiple firearms can be declared at the same time. At the border, three copies of the completed, unsigned Non-Resident Firearms Declaration must be presented to a CBSA officer. Upon acceptance, this declaration will serve as a temporary license and

registration certificate for up to 60 days. The Non-Resident Firearm Declaration costs $50 (Canadian). Visitors planning to borrow a firearm in Canada must obtain in advance a Temporary Firearms Borrowing License, which costs $30 (Canadian), payable at the border. These forms must be signed before a CBSA officer at the border and no photocopies are available at the border. Full details and downloadable forms are available at the Canadian Firearms Centre web site, http://www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca under the heading "Visitors to Canada."

Canada has three classes of firearms: non-restricted, restricted, and prohibited. Non-restricted firearms include most ordinary hunting rifles and shotguns. These may be brought temporarily into Canada for sporting or hunting use during hunting season, use in competitions, in-transit movement through Canada, or personal protection against wildlife in remote areas of Canada. Anyone wishing to bring hunting rifles into Canada must be at least 18 years old, and the firearm must be properly stored for transport. Restricted firearms are primarily handguns; however, pepper spray and mace are also included in this category. A restricted firearm may be brought into Canada, but an Authorization to Transport permit must be obtained in advance from a Provincial or Territorial Chief Firearms Officer. Prohibited firearms include fully automatic, converted automatics, and assault-type weapons. Prohibited firearms are not allowed into Canada.

In advance of any travel, please contact a Canadian embassy or consulate, or the Canadian Firearms Centre, http://www.cfc-cafc.gc.ca/, for detailed information and instructions on temporarily importing firearms. In all cases, travelers must declare to Canadian authorities any firearms and weapons in their possession when entering Canada. If a traveler is denied permission to bring in the firearm, there are often facilities near border crossings where firearms may be stored, pending the traveler's return to the United States. Canadian law requires that officials confiscate firearms and weapons from those crossing the border that deny having them in their possession. Confiscated firearms and weapons are never returned. Possession of an undeclared firearm may result in a one-year prison sentence.

Pornography and Controlled Substances: Canada Canada has strict laws concerning child pornography and in recent years there has been an increase of random checks of electronic media of travelers entering Canada. Computers are subject to search without a warrant at the border, and illegal content can result in the seizure of the computer as well as detention, arrest and prosecution of the bearer.

Canadian law prohibits the unlawful importation or trafficking of controlled substances and narcotics. Recently, a number of travelers, including Americans, have been arrested for attempting to smuggle khat, a narcotic from East Africa, into Canada. Smugglers risk substantial fines, a permanent bar from Canada and imprisonment. Please see http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/drugs/drugs_2005_e.htm#khat for details.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although Although criminal activity in Canada is more common in urban areas, violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery and rape can occur throughout the country. Visitors to large cities should be aware that parked cars are regularly targeted for opportunistic smash-and-grab thefts, and they are cautioned to avoid leaving any possessions unattended in a vehicle, even in the trunk. Due to the high incidence of such crimes, motorists in Montreal, Vancouver and some other jurisdictions can be fined for leaving their car doors unlocked or for leaving valuables in view. Auto theft in Montreal and Vancouver, including theft of motor homes and recreational vehicles, may occur in patrolled and overtly secure parking lots and decks. SUVs appear to be the particular targets of organized theft.

While Canadian gun control laws are much more strict than those of the U.S., such laws have not prevented gun-related violence in certain areas of Toronto.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Each of Canada's provinces has a Crime Victim Compensation Board to which American victims of crime in Canada may seek redress.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Canada's medical care is of a high standard but is government controlled and rationed. The level of public health and sanitation in Canada is high. Quick and easy access to ongoing medical care is diffi-

cult for temporary visitors who are not members of each province's government run health care plans. Many physicians will not take new patients. Access to a specialist is by referral from a general practitioner only and even with a referral it may take months to obtain an appointment with a specialist. Emergency room waits are very long. No Canadian health care provider accepts U.S. domestic health insurance. Visitors who seek any medical attention in Canada should be prepared to pay in cash in full at the time the service is rendered. Traveler's medical insurance is highly recommended even for visits to Canada. Some health care professionals in the province of Quebec might only speak French.

For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Canadian health care providers do not accept U.S. domestic health insurance or Medicare. Americans who seek any medical attention in Canada should be prepared to pay in cash in full at the time the service is rendered.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Canada is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Transport Canada is the Canadian federal government agency responsible for road safety, although each province or territory has the authority to establish its own traffic and safety laws and issue driving licenses. For detailed information on road conditions throughout Canada, as well as links to provincial government web sites, please see the Transport Canada web site at http://www.tc.gc.ca or the Canadian Automobile Association web site at http://www.caa.ca. There are typically 3,000 vehicle-related fatalities in Canada each year. The CAA honors American Automobile Association membership. Some automobile warranties of vehicles purchased in the U.S. may be invalid in Canada; please check the warranty of your vehicle.

Driving in Canada is similar to driving in parts of the United States. Distances and speeds, however, are posted in kilometers per hour, and some signs, particularly in Quebec, may only be in French. U.S. driver's licenses are valid in Canada. Proof of auto insurance is required. U.S. auto insurance is accepted as long as an individual is a tourist in Canada. U.S. insurance firms will issue a Canadian insurance card, which should be obtained and carried prior to driving into Canada. Unless otherwise posted, the maximum speed limit in Canada is 50km/hr in cities and 80km/hr on highways. On rural highways, the posted speed limit may be 100km/hr (approximately 60 miles/hr).

Seat belt use is mandatory for all passengers, and child car seats must be used by children under 40 pounds. Some provinces require drivers to keep their headlights on during the day. Motorcycles cannot share a lane, and safety helmets for drivers and passengers are mandatory. Many highways do not have merge lanes for entering traffic. Illegal, rapid lane-changes without signaling and tailgating are common. Emergency vehicles frequently enter the oncoming traffic lane to avoid congestion. At intersections, directional signs will indicate only which turn is allowed; any other turn is prohibited. In Montreal and Quebec City, it is prohibited to turn right on red. As in the United States, all emergency assistance in Canada can be reached by dialing 911.

Driving while impaired (DWI) is a serious offense in Canada. Penalties are heavy, and any prior conviction (no matter how long ago or how minor the infraction) is grounds for exclusion from Canada. Americans with a DWI record must seek a waiver of exclusion from Canadian authorities before traveling to Canada, see http://www.cbsa.gc.ca, which requires several weeks or months to process. It is illegal to take automobile radar detectors into Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, the Yukon or the Northwest Territories, regardless of whether they are used or not. Police there may confiscate radar detectors, operational or not, and impose substantial fines.

Winter travel can be dangerous due to heavy snowfalls and hazardous icy conditions. Some roads and bridges are subject to periodic winter closures. Snow tires are required in some Provinces. The Canadian Automobile Association (http://www.caa.ca) has tips for winter driving in Canada. Drivers should be aware that motorists running red lights is a serious concern throughout Canada, and motorists are advised to pause before proceeding when a light turns green. Travelers should also be cautious of deer, elk and moose while driving at night in rural areas. Holiday periods can be dangerous because of increased traffic.

Highway 401, from Detroit to Montreal, is one of the busiest highways in North America. It has been the scene of recurrent, deadly traffic accidents due to sudden, severe and unpredictable weather changes, high rates of speed, and heavy truck traffic.

There have been numerous incidents involving road racing and dangerous truck driving, which have caused injuries to Americans. Drivers tend to be aggressive, often exceeding speed limits and passing on both sides, and police enforcement is spotty. In addition, approaches to border crossings into the United States may experience unexpected traffic backups. Drivers should be alert, as lane restrictions at border approaches exist for drivers in NEXUS and FAST expedited inspection programs. For specific information concerning Canadian driving permits, mandatory insurance and entry regulations, please contact the Canadian National Tourist Organization at http://www.travelcanada.ca.

Visit the web site of the country's national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.tc.gc.ca.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Canada's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Canada's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Canadian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Canada are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Canada are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Canada. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is in Ottawa, Ontario, at 490 Sussex Drive, K1N 1G8, telephone (613) 238-5335, fax (613) 688-3082. The Embassy web site is http://canada.usembassy.gov.

The Embassy's consular district includes Ottawa, Easter Ontario (Kingston, Lanark, Leeds, Prescott, Refrew, Russell, and Stormont); and those parts of the Quebec Regions of Outaouais and Abitibi-Temiscamingues near Ottawa. U.S. Consulates General are located at:

Calgary, Alberta, at Suite 1050, 615 Macleod Trail SE, telephone (403) 266-8962; emergency-after hours-to report the death or arrest of an American (403) 2 66 -8962 then press '0'; fax (403) 264-6630. The consular district includes Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories, excluding Nunavut.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, at 1969 Upper Water Street, Suite 904, Purdy's Wharf Tower II, telephone (902) 429-2480; emergency-after hours-to report the death or arrest of an American (902) 429-2485; fax (902) 423-6861. The consular district includes New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and the French islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

Montreal, Quebec, at 1155 St. Alexander Street, telephone (514) 398-9695; emergency-after hours-to report the death or arrest of an American (514) 981-5059; fax (514) 398-0702. The consular district includes Greater Montreal and the regions of Southern Quebec Province (Laurentides, Lanaudiere, Laval, Montreal, Montregie, Estrie, and the southern parts of Centre-du-Quebec); including Joliete, Drummondville and Sherbrooke.

Quebec City, Quebec, at 2 rue de la Terrasse Dufferin, telephone (418) 692-2095; emergency-after hours-to report the death or arrest of an American (418) 692-2096; fax (418) 692-4640. The consular district includes Quebec City and those regions of Quebec Province to the North and East of the Montreal and Ottawa Districts (indicated above), plus the Territory of Nunavut.

Toronto, Ontario, at 360 University Avenue, telephone (416) 595-1700; emergency-after hours-to report the death or arrest of an American (416) 201-4100; fax (416) 595-5466, http://toronto.usconsulate.gov. The consular district includes the province of Ontario except the six counties served by the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa.

Vancouver, British Columbia, at 1095 West Pender Street, telephone (604) 685-4311; fax (604) 685-7175. The consular district includes British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

All visa applicants are seen by appointment only. Information on visa appointments is available at www.nvars.com. For information on visa services for foreigners and consular/passport services for Americans who live in Canada please see our contracted web site, www.amcits.com. No visa or consular/passport information is available by calling the embassy or consulate switchboards.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information,

please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Canada is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: The U.S. Embassy in Montreal has issued approximately 13 immigrant visas to Canadian orphans during the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: In Canada, the various provinces are responsible for setting and administering adoption policies and procedures. The following Canadian Government office and website provide contact information for federal and provincial adoption authorities, who can provide specific information on adoption in Canada:

Government of Canada
Human Resources and Social Development Canada
Intercountry Adoption Services
Income Security and
Social Development
Tel: (613) 954-0880
Fax: (613) 948-7537
http: www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/adoption/authorities.asp.

Eligibility And Residency Requirements For Adoptive Parents: Eligibility and residence requirements vary by province. In general, non-residents of Canada cannot adopt children for emigration from Canada. There are some very limited exceptions, usually involving relatives of the children. Most recent cases have been initiated by provincial child welfare agencies.

Time Frame: Varies greatly by case and province.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Because Canada is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The U.S. Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.The Canadian Bar Association, and the Provincial Bars can be contacted at http://www.cba.org.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Canada discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Canada at risk. Adoption procedures, and any associated fees, are determined by the individual Canadian provinces. Prospective adoptive parents should contact the relevant provincial authority for information on local adoption procedures and fees.

Adoption Procedures: Adoption procedures are determined by the individual Canadian provinces. Prospective adoptive parents should contact the relevant provincial authority for information on local adoption procedures.

Required Documents: There is no standard list of required documents. Private intercountry adoptions are rare. Other cases for adoption and emigration to the United States are generally coordinated by provincial child welfare authorities. Prospective adoptive parents should follow the guidelines the provincial child welfare authorities set for each case.

Canadian Embassy
501 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-682-1740; Fax: 202-682-7701

Canada also has consulates in: Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, New York, Raleigh, San Diego, San Francisco, and Seattle.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*.

Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child*

Abduction section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Canada is a federal state comprising ten provinces and three territories. With the exception of Quebec, all provinces or territories are based on a Common Law jurisdiction. Quebec is a civil law province or territory and its laws are codified. Each province or territory administers its own court system. U.S. citizens are not required to have a passport to enter Canada.

The Hague Convention: The United States is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention"). The Convention is an international treaty. Its purpose is to discourage international parental child abduction and to ensure that children who are abducted or wrongfully retained, are returned to their country of habitual residence. The Convention does not address child custody, but determines the jurisdiction in which custody should be adjudicated.

The Hague Convention came into force between the United States and Canada on July 1, 1988. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained on or after July 1, 1988. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Canada prior to July 1, 1988 may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention. For more information on The Hague Convention, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Each province and territory in Canada has its own Central Authority. If the whereabouts of the child is known or there is reason to believe the child is located in a specific province or territory, applications under the Hague Convention are forwarded to the Provincial Central Authority. If the child's whereabouts are not known, the applications are forwarded to the Federal Central Authority in Ottawa, Ontario. For a list of contact names and addresses for Central Authorities, review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

PLEASE NOTE THAT CRIMINAL CHARGES MAY COMPLICATE A HAGUE CONVENTION CASE IN CANADA.

Passports for Minors and the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program: For more information on these topics, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

More Information: For further information and/or assistance in either preventing or responding to an international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



CAPE VERDE

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Cape Verde

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 4,033 sq. km. (1,557 sq. mi.), slightly larger than Rhode Island.
Cities: Capital—Praia (pop. 106,052). Other city—Mindelo (pop. 67,844).
Terrain: Rugged volcanic islands.
Climate: dry, temperate

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Cape Verdean(s).
Population: (2008) 499,796.
Annual growth rate: (2008) 1.41%.
Ethnic groups: Creole (mixed African and Portuguese), African, European.
Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant.
Languages: Portuguese (official); Crioulo (national).
Education: Literacy (2008)—77%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2008)—24.8/1,000. Life expectancy (2008)—72.5 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: July 5, 1975.
Constitution: 1982; revised 1992, 1995, and 1999.
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers. Legislative—National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court, lower courts.
Political subdivisions: 17 administrative districts.
Political parties: African Party for Independence of Cape Verde or PAICV [Jose Maria Pereira NEVES, chairman]; Democratic Alliance for Change or ADM [Eurico MONTEIRO] (a coalition of PCD, PTS, and UCID); Democratic Christian Party or PDC [Manuel RODRIGUES]; Democratic Renovation Party or PRD [Victor FIDALGO]; Democratic and Independent Cape Verdean Union or UCID [Antonio MONTEIRO]; Movement for Democracy or MPD [Agostinho LOPES]; Party for Democratic Convergence or PCD [Eurico MONTEIRO]; Party of Work and Solidarity or PTS [Isaias RODRIGUES]; Social Democratic Party or PSD [Joao ALEM].
Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Economy

GDP: (nominal, 2007) $1.603 billion.
GDP per capita: (2007) $3,200.
Real GDP growth rate: (2008) 6.5%.
Inflation: (2007) 3.29%.
Natural resources: Salt, pozzolana, limestone.
Agriculture: Products—bananas, corn, beans, sugarcane, coffee, fruits, vegetables, livestock products.
Industry: Types—fish and fish products, clothing, shoes, beverages, salt, construction, building materials, ship repair, furniture, metal products, tourism.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$80.36 million: fuel, clothing, shoes and shoe parts, fish and crustaceans. Imports—$768 million: consumer goods, intermediary goods, capital goods, petroleum. Major trading partners, exports—Spain 44.2%, Portugal 21.7%, Netherlands 12.6%, Morocco 4.6%. Major trading partners, imports—Portugal 41.1%, Netherlands 10.6%, Spain 6.5%, Italy 5.4%, Cote d'Ivoire 5.2%, Brazil 4.8%.
Fiscal year: Calendar year.
Currency: Escudo (CVEsc 73 = $1 as of December 2007), which is pegged to the Euro.
Economic aid received: $161 million (2005). Largest donors: Portugal ($43 million); European Community ($22 million); World Bank-IDA ($21 million); Luxembourg ($15 million); Netherlands ($10 million); the United States ($9 million).

GEOGRAPHY

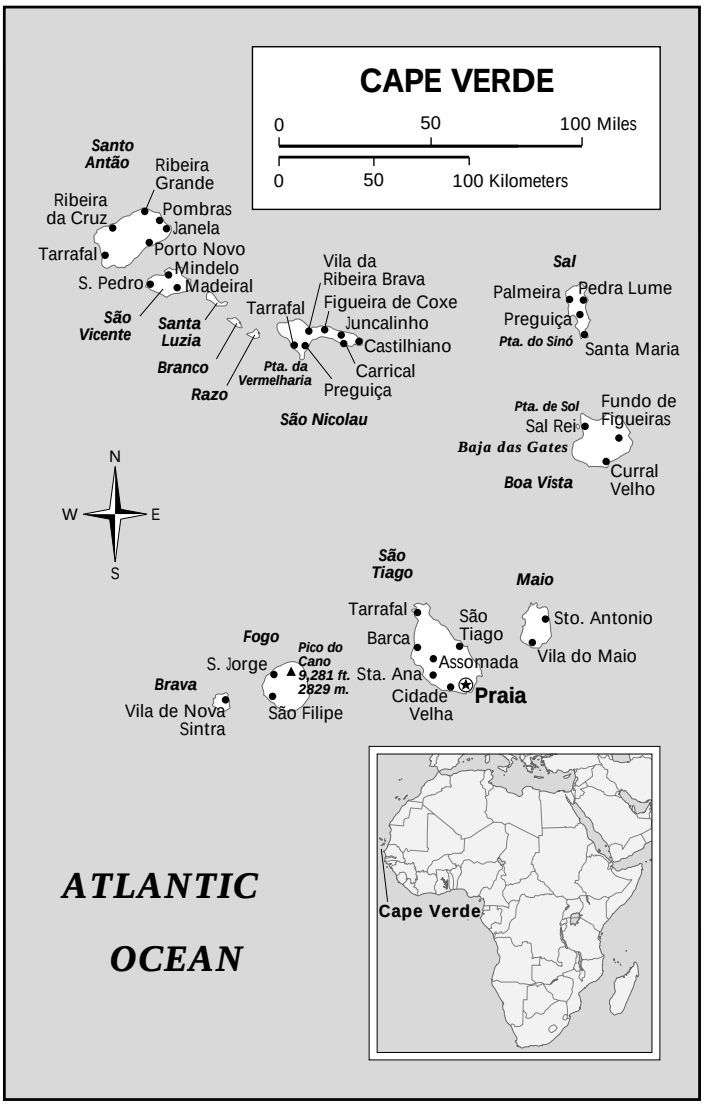
The Cape Verde Islands are located in the mid-Atlantic Ocean some 450 kilometers (about 300 mi.) off the west coast of Africa. The archipelago includes 10 islands and 5 islets, divided into the windward

(Barlavento) and leeward (Sotavento) groups. The main islands in the Barlavento group are Santo Antão, São Vicente, Santa Luzia, São Nicolau, Sal, and Boa Vista; those of the Sotavento group include Maio, Santiago, Fogo, and Brava. All larger islands but Santa Luzia are inhabited.

Three islands—Sal, Boa Vista, and Maio—generally are level and very dry. Mountains higher than 1,280 meters (4,200 ft.) are found on Santiago, Fogo, Santo Antão, and São Nicolau.

Sand carried by high winds has created spectacular rock formations on all islands, especially the windward ones. Sheer, jagged cliffs rise from the sea on several of the mountainous islands. Natural vegetation is sparse in the uplands and coast, but interior valleys support denser growth.

Rainfall is irregular, and the archipelago suffers periodic droughts and consequent food shortages. The average precipitation per year in Praia is 24 centimeters (9.5 in.). During the winter, storms blowing from the Sahara sometimes cloud the sky, but sunny days are the norm year round.



PEOPLE

The Cape Verde archipelago was uninhabited until the Portuguese discovered the islands in 1456. African slaves were brought to the islands to work on Portuguese plantations. As a result, Cape Verdeans are of mixed African and European origin. The influence of African culture is most pronounced on the island of Santiago, where half the population resides. Sparse rain and few natural resources historically have induced Cape Verdeans to emigrate. It is believed that of the more than 1 million individuals of Cape Verdean ancestry, fewer than half actually live on the islands. Some 500,000 people of Cape Verdean ancestry live in the United States, mainly in New England. Portugal, Netherlands, Italy, France, and Senegal also have large communities.

The official language is Portuguese, but most Cape Verdeans also speak a Creole dialect—Crioulo—which is based on archaic Portuguese but influenced by African and European languages. Cape Verde has a rich tradition of Crioulo literature and music.

HISTORY

In 1462, Portuguese settlers arrived at Santiago and founded Ribeira Grande (now Cidade Velha)—the first permanent European settlement city in the tropics. In the 16th century, the archipelago prospered from the transatlantic slave trade. Pirates occasionally attacked the Portuguese settlements. Sir Francis Drake sacked Ribeira Grande in 1585. After a French attack in 1712, the city declined in importance relative to Praia, which became the capital in 1770. With the decline in the slave trade, Cape Verde's early prosperity slowly vanished. However, the islands' position astride mid-Atlantic shipping lanes made Cape Verde an ideal location for re-supplying ships. Because of its excellent harbor, Mindelo (on the island of São Vicente) became an important commercial center during the 19th century.

Portugal changed Cape Verde's status from a colony to an overseas province in 1951 in an attempt to blunt growing nationalism. Nevertheless, in 1956, Amilcar Cabral, a Cape Verdean, and a group of Cape Verdeans

and Guinea-Bissauans organized (in Guinea-Bissau) the clandestine African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC), which demanded improvement in economic, social, and political conditions in Cape Verde and Portuguese Guinea and formed the basis of the two nations' independence movement. Moving its headquarters to Conakry, Guinea in 1960, the PAIGC began an armed rebellion against Portugal in 1961. Acts of sabotage eventually grew into a war in Portuguese Guinea that pitted 10,000 Soviet bloc-supported PAIGC soldiers against 35,000 Portuguese and African troops.

By 1972, the PAIGC controlled much of Portuguese Guinea despite the presence of the Portuguese troops, but the organization did not attempt to disrupt Portuguese control in Cape Verde. Portuguese Guinea declared independence in 1973 and was granted de jure independence in 1974. Following the April 1974 revolution in Portugal, the PAIGC became an active political movement in Cape Verde. In December 1974, the PAIGC and Portugal signed an agreement providing for a transitional government composed of Portuguese and Cape Verdeans. On June 30, 1975, Cape Verdeans elected a National Assembly, which received the instruments of independence from Portugal on July 5, 1975.

Immediately following the November 1980 coup in Guinea-Bissau, relations between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau became strained. Cape Verde abandoned its hope for unity with Guinea-Bissau and formed the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV). Problems have since been resolved, and relations between the countries are good. The PAICV and its predecessor established a one-party system and ruled Cape Verde from independence until 1990.

Responding to growing pressure for pluralistic democracy, the PAICV called an emergency congress in February 1990 to discuss proposed constitutional changes to end one-party rule. Opposition groups came together to form the Movement for Democracy (MpD) in Praia in April 1990. Together, they campaigned for the right to contest the presidential election scheduled for December 1990. The one-party state was abolished September 28, 1990, and the first multi-party elections were held in January 1991. The MpD won a majority of the seats in the National Assembly, and the MpD presidential candidate Mascarenhas Monteiro defeated the PAICV's candidate with 73.5% of the votes. Legislative elections in December 1995 increased the MpD majority in the National Assembly. The party won 50 of the National Assembly's 72 seats. A February 1996 presidential election returned President Mascarenhas Monteiro to office. Legislative elections in January 2001 returned power to the PAICV, with the PAICV holding 40 of the National Assembly seats, MpD 30, and Party for Democratic Convergence (PCD) and Party for Labor and Solidarity (PTS) 1 each. In February 2001, the PAICV-supported presidential candidate Pedro Pires defeated former MpD leader Carlos Veiga by only 13 votes.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Cape Verde constitution—adopted in 1980 and revised in 1992, 1995, and 1999—forms the basis of government. The president is head of state and is elected by popular vote for a 5-year term. The prime minister is head of government and proposes other ministers and secretaries of state. The prime minister is nominated by the National Assembly and appointed by the president. Members of the National Assembly are elected by popular vote for 5-year terms.

Cape Verde enjoys a stable democratic system. The Movement for Democracy (MpD) captured a governing majority in the National Assembly in the country's first multi-party general elections in 1991. The MpD was returned to power with a larger majority in the general elections held in December 1995. In 2001, the PAICV regained power, with four parties holding seats in the National Assembly—PAICV 40, MPD 30, PCD 1, and PTS 1. Nationwide municipal elections were held March 21, 2004.

In January 2006, Cape Verde held a successful round of parliamentary elections, followed by successful presidential elections on February 12, 2006. The National Electoral Commission (NEC) judged both elections free and fair. The leading parliamentary opposition party filed a court case in an attempt to overrule the NEC on the grounds of alleged fraud; this action ultimately failed. Three parties now hold seats in the National Assembly—PAICV 40, MPD 30, and Cape Verdean Independent Democratic Union (UCID) 2. Municipal elections were held in May 2008, with the Movement for Democracy party taking many of the seats within the municipalities.

The judicial system is comprised of a Supreme Court of Justice—whose members are appointed by the president, the National Assembly, and the Board of the Judiciary—and regional courts. Separate courts hear civil, constitutional, and criminal cases. Appeal is to the Supreme Court.

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Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Pedro PIRES**
Prime Min.: **Jose Maria Pereira NEVES**
Min. of Culture: **Manuel Monteiro VEIGA**
Min. of Decentralization, Housing, & Urban Planning: **Sara LOPES**
Min. of Economy, Growth, & Competitiveness: **Fatima FIALHO**
Min. of Education & Human Resources: **Vera DUARTE**
Min. of Environment, Agriculture, & Fisheries: **Sara LOPES**

Min. of Finance, Planning, & Development: **Cristina DUARTE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, & Communities: **Jose BRITO**
Min. of Health: **Basilio Mosso RAMOS**
Min. of Infrastructure, Transport, & Telecommunications: **Manuel Inocencio SOUSA**
Min. of Internal Admin.: **Livio Fernandes LOPES**
Min. of Justice & Local Admin.: **Marisa Helena MORIAS**
Min. of Labor, Professional Training, & Social Solidarity: **Madalena NEVES**
Min. of National Defense & State Reform: **Maria Cristina Fontes LIMA**
Min. of Public Admin.: **Ilidio Alexandre CRUZ**
Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Jorge BORGES**
Sec. of State for Youth & Sports: **Americo NASCIMENTO**
Governor, Central Bank: **Carlos BURGO**
Ambassador to the US: **Fatima Lima VEIGA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Antonio Pedro Lima MONTEIRO**

Cape Verde maintains an embassy in the United States at 3415 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20007 (tel. 202-965-6820) and one consulate at 535 Boylston Street, Boston MA 02116 (tel. 617-353-0014).

ECONOMY

Cape Verde has few natural resources and suffers from poor rainfall and limited fresh water. Only 4 of the 10 main islands (Santiago, Santo Antão, Fogo, and Brava) normally support significant agricultural production, and over 90% of all food consumed in Cape Verde is imported. Mineral resources include salt, pozzolana (a volcanic rock used in cement production), and limestone.

The economy of Cape Verde is service-oriented, with commerce, transport, and public services accounting for more than 70% of GDP. Although nearly 70% of the population lives in rural areas, agriculture and fishing contribute only about 9% of GDP. Light manufacturing accounts for most of the remainder. An amount estimated at about 20% of GDP is contributed to the domestic economy through remittances from expatriate Cape Verdeans. Since 1991, the government has pursued market-oriented economic policies, including an open welcome to foreign investors and a far-reaching privatization program. It established as top development priorities the promotion of market economy and of the private sector; the development of tourism, light manufacturing industries, and fisheries; and the development of transport, communications, and energy facilities. From 1994 to 2000 there was a total of about $407 million in foreign investments made or planned, of which 58% were in tourism, 17% in industry, 4% in infrastructure, and 21% in fisheries and services.

Fish and shellfish are plentiful, and small quantities are exported. Cape Verde has cold storage and freezing facilities and fish processing plants in Mindelo, Praia, and on Sal.

Cape Verde's strategic location at the crossroads of mid-Atlantic air and sea lanes has been enhanced by significant improvements at Mindelo's harbor (Porto Grande) and at Sal's and Praia's international airports. A new international airport was opened in Boa Vista in December 2007. Ship repair facilities at Mindelo were opened in 1983. The major ports are Mindelo and Praia, but all other islands have smaller port facilities. In addition to the international airport on Sal, airports have been built on all of the inhabited islands. All but the airport on Brava enjoy scheduled air service. The archipelago has 3,050 kilometers (1,830 mi.) of roads, of which 1,010 kilometers (606 mi.) are paved, most using cobblestone.

Future prospects depend heavily on the maintenance of aid flows, the encouragement of tourism, remittances, outsourcing labor to neighboring African countries, and the momentum of the government's development program.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Cape Verde pursues a nonaligned foreign policy and seeks cooperative relations with all states. Angola, Brazil, China, Cuba, France, Portugal, Russia, Senegal, Spain, and the United States maintain embassies in Praia. Several others, mostly European countries, maintain honorary consulates. In addition, Cape Verde maintains multilateral relations with other Lusophone nations and holds membership in many international organizations. On July 23, 2008, Cape Verde became the 153rd member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in hopes of opening its markets for imported goods and services.

U.S.-CAPE VERDEAN RELATIONS

The cordial relations between the United States and Cape Verde have strong historical roots. In the early 18th century, U.S. whaling ships appear to have begun recruiting crews from Brava and Fogo to hunt whales that were abundant in the waters surrounding Cape Verde. Ties between the American colonies and Cape Verde are documented as early as the 1740s, when American ships routinely anchored in Cape Verdean ports to trade for salt or buy slaves. The tradition of emigration to the United States began at that time and continues today.

The first U.S. consulate in sub-Saharan Africa was established in Cape Verde in 1818. U.S. consular representation continued throughout the 19th century. The United States recognized Cape Verde on its independence day and supported its admission to the United Nations. Cape Verde assigned one of its first ambassadors to the United States, and a resident U.S. ambassador was posted to Cape Verde in 1983. Prime Minister Jose Neves visited Cape Verdean communities in New England during an official trip to the United States in 2002, and President Pires visited the United States in April 2005. Prime Minister Neves

also visited the U.S. in September 2007. The United States provided emergency humanitarian aid and economic assistance to Cape Verde in the period immediately following Cape Verde's independence, as well as after natural disasters, including a hurricane that struck the island of Brava in 1982, and after a severe volcanic eruption on Fogo in 1995.

Cape Verde also is eligible for trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and has signed an Open Skies agreement to facilitate air travel safety and expansion. On July 4, 2005, Cape Verde became the third country to sign a compact with the U.S. Government-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC); the five-year assistance package is worth over $110 million in addressing rural economic expansion, infrastructure development, and development of tourism and a community college system.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PRAIA (E) Rua Abilio Macedo, No. 6, Plateau, (238) 2 60 89 00, Fax (238) 2 61 13 55, INMARSAT Tel 683-135898/9, Workweek: Mon-Fri 8:00 a.m.-12:30p.m./1:30–5:00 p.m., Website: http://capeverde.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Vacant
HRO:	Patrick M. Dunn
MGT:	Patrick M. Dunn
AMB:	Vacant
CON:	Lesley Hayden
DCM:	Patrick M. Dunn
GSO:	Patrick M.Dunn
RSO:	Patrick M. Dunn
AID:	Mcc–Stahis Panagides
CLO:	Carmen B. Weiss
FMO:	Patrick M. Dunn
ICASS Chair:	Stahis Panagides
IRS:	Kathy Beck
ISSO:	Patrick M. Dunn
LEGATT:	Cavalieros, Richard E
POL:	Ruth Rudzinski
State ICASS:	Ruth Rudzinski

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 5, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Cape Verde consists of nine inhabited and several uninhabited volcanic islands off the western coast of Africa. Most are rugged and mountainous; three (Sal, Maio, and Boa Vista) are flat, desert islands with sand beaches. Praia, the capital, is on the island of Santiago, and Cape Verde's major shipping port is Mindelo on the island of Sao Vicente. Portuguese is the official language. Praia's new international airport opened on October 6, 2005, from which Cape Verdean Airlines (TACV) now offers direct flights between Praia and Boston once or twice a week, depending on the season. Cape Verde has another international airport (Amilcar Cabral Airport) located on Sal Island, more than 100 miles northeast of the capital. While the tourist industry brings ever-growing numbers of visitors, facilities on many islands remain limited. Sal has the most developed tourist industry. See the section "Special Circumstances" below regarding issues that impact inter-island transport.

Cape Verde enjoys a stable, democratic government with an elected president as head of state, a prime minister nominated by the National Assembly (the national legislative body) as head of government, and elected members of the unicameral National Assembly. The judicial system is comprised of numerous courts, culminating in a Supreme Court.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Visa approval can take several days and Cape Verde issues two types of tourist visas: a single-entry visa valid for up to 90 days or a multiple entry visa valid for one year. You may contact the Embassy of the Republic of Cape Verde, 3415 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington DC 20007, tel. (202) 965-6820; or the Consulate General of Cape Verde in Boston (tel. 617-353-0014). Overseas, inquiries should be made to the nearest Cape Verde embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of Cape Verdeweb site at http://virtualcapeverde.net/news2/index.php for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Visitors traveling to Cape Verde who wish to participate in water sports, swimming, boating and fishing should exercise extreme caution since the tides and currents around Cape Verde are very strong. Several small fishing boats were lost at sea in recent years.

Cape Verde, similar to Hawaii, is an archipelago of volcanic islands. Although most islands now appear inactive, the island of Fogo is still active. Fogo erupted several times in the twentieth century, the last time in 1995. U.S. citizens should be aware of the possibility of future eruptions as well as tremors associated with these volcanoes on any of the islands, especially on Fogo, Brava and Santo Antão.

General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Campaign rallies and demonstrations are generally peaceful; however, U.S. citizens should avoid crowds, political gatherings, and street demonstrations.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Petty thievery and burglary are common in Cape Verde, especially in crowds, such as market places, fes-

tivals, and celebrations. Criminals do not necessarily target Americans, but rather affluent foreigners of any nationality. Local police statistics reflect an increase in crime in Cape Verde, particularly in the cities of Praia and Mindelo. Often the perpetrators of these crimes are gangs of street children, so visitors should avoid groups of children who appear to have no adult supervision.

Muggings occur more often than previously, particularly at night and in more isolated areas, and occasionally violence is associated with them. Crime associated with drugs and drug-use is also on the rise. Due to lack of lighting in many public areas and periodic blackouts, people are encouraged to carry small flashlights, travel with others, keep vehicle doors and windows locked, avoid dark and isolated places, and be especially vigilant in the evenings.

Violent crime is also increasing in Cape Verde. There have been several murders and attempted murders in the past year, mostly reported in the urban centers of Praia and Mindelo, although Sal and other islands have not been immune. Murders and violent assaults have not targeted American citizens specifically. As reported in the Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which can be accessed at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100471.htm, domestic abuse against women, is wide-spread. Domestic and child abusers do not specifically target American women or children, however. For information related to crime statistics in Cape Verde, see the Public Order Police's web site at: http://www.pop.cv.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Cape Verde are limited, and some medicines are in short supply or unavailable. There are hospitals in Praia and Mindelo, with smaller medical facilities in other places. The islands of Brava and Santo Antão no longer have functioning airports so air evacuation in the event of a medical emergency is nearly impossible from these two islands. Brava also has limited inter-island ferry service.

Malaria exists in Cape Verde, although not to the extent found in mainland Africa. The risk of contracting malaria is mainly limited to the island of Santiago, with a higher risk from July to December. It is recommended that travelers take preventative measures while visiting Cape Verde.

Further information on prescription drugs is found in the section below on Customs Regulations. A list of medical providers and hospitals is available at the U.S. Embassy in Praia and on their web site.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Cape Verde is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Cape Verde has an extensive road system. Paved roads on most islands are narrow, winding, mostly cobblestone, and are sometimes in poor repair. Asphalt roads are relatively uncommon except for airport connector roads (on the islands of Sao Vicente and Sal), a few roads within Praia and Mindelo, and the north-south road on the island of Santiago. There are projects underway to convert cobblestone roads to asphalt. The newer asphalt roads make driving more comfortable, but can be more dangerous since these roads are smoother and lack speed bumps, which results in a tendency for drivers to speed. During the rainy season, you should be very cautious on slippery cobblestone roads and careful on roads that cut through mountains, as mudslides and large falling rocks are common.

Houses are often located adjacent to the road, so drivers must be careful of people (especially children) and livestock in the road. Roads and streets are often unlit, so driving at night is hazardous. Most accidents result from aggressive driving, excessive speed, and passing in blind curves. Driving while under the influence of alcohol is a problem. The peak time for drunk drivers is on Sundays, but one can encounter them at any time. Recently there was a serious accident on the island of Santiago involving American citizens in a rented vehicle who were hit by an intoxicated taxi driver traveling around a turn in the wrong lane.

Also, you should be extremely cautious after celebrations, festivals and open-air concerts as well as during holiday periods, such as the Christ-

mas, New Year's and Carnival. Service stations are available and quite modern. Taxis and buses offer reasonably dependable service. Bus service in Praia is reliable and inexpensive and buses are fairly new. Intra-island service usually consists of minivans (typically Toyota Hi-Ace) or converted pickup trucks that have benches along the edges of the pickup bed. Intra-island service can be dangerous because some drivers overload their vehicles and exceed the speed limit, and some drivers drink and drive. Before entering any transport, riders should pay close attention to the behavior of the driver. Intoxicated drivers caused some of the accidents, while others were due to dangerously high speeds.

In Cape Verde, traffic moves on the right side of the road. At intersections, the vehicle on the right has the right-of-way, but at roundabouts (traffic circles), cars in the circle have the right-of-way. Under Cape Verdean law, seat belts must be worn at all times by the driver and the person seated in the front passenger seat. Children under 12 must sit in the back seat. Motorcyclists must wear crash helmets and use headlights at all times.

In the event of an accident, for emergency assistance on the island of Santiago, call 130 for medical assistance; 131 for fire; and 132 for police. Each of the other islands has its own emergency numbers. Some form of ambulance service is available on all islands, although there are few ambulances and emergency care is limited. There is no organized system of roadside assistance.

Third-party insurance is required and will cover damages if you are involved in an accident resulting in injuries and you are found not to be at fault. An insurance decal must be displayed on a vehicle's windshield; the police will stop and ticket vehicles that are not insured. A person who causes an accident may be charged a fine, and a driver involved in an accident that results in death may be incarcerated.

For specific information concerning Cape Verdean driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, contact the Cape Verdean Office of Tourism, at Achada Santo Antonio, Caixa Postal 89, Praia, Cape Verde, tel. 238-622-621.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Cape Verde's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Cape Verde's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The U.S. Embassy in Praia urges travelers to apply for a visa prior to traveling to Cape Verde. Although Americans have been allowed to travel to Cape Verde without a visa, they must apply for and purchase an entry visa upon arrival at the airport. Such "airport" visas cost more and have a 7-day validity; to extend one's stay beyond seven days, the visitor needs to purchase a regular single or multi-entry visa at the office of immigration police.

During peak travel season, travelers who connect to other islands via the inter-island plane service may experience delays in receiving their luggage at their final destination because of the limited carrying capacity of inter-island planes. You should have a change of clothing and all vital materials in your carry-on luggage to avoid frustration in the first 24-48 hours in country. Inter-island travel is generally via 45-seat propeller planes or ferries.

Not all flights between islands are direct. With the opening of the new Praia International Airport, TACV (Cape Verdean Airlines) is promising improved inter-island plane service. During the dusty season (late December to late March), inter-island plane service may be cancelled due to poor visibility and related safety concerns. The islands of Brava and Santo Antão are not accessible via plane. The airport on the island of Maio was closed in August of 2007 for repairs, which were estimated to last several months. The airport is not yet open as of April 2008.

There is regular daily inter-island ferry service between Porto Novo, Santo Antão and Mindelo, São Vicente. In September 2005, the island of Brava started benefiting from ferry service. The port of Furna, Brava is now linked (via ferry) to the port of Praia, Santiago and the port of Sao Felipe, Fogo. These ferry links do not offer daily runs, however, and the service schedule frequently changes. The Moura Company launched a new catamaran service in the summer of 2007. The catamaran service operates between the islands of Maio, Santiago, Fogo, Brava and São Vicente with a schedule that changes on a weekly basis.

Cabo Verde Telecom is currently the only provider for fixed-line voice, mobile voice, data service, and Internet service (dial-up, ISDN and ADSL). Only major cities and towns have Internet cafes; mobile phone service is on the GSM standard. International services in Cape Verde are dependent on transatlantic fiber-optic cables, so in 2004 when the main cable servicing Cape Verde was severed, most international voice and data traffic were cut for approximately three weeks and satellite backup could not handle the load. Visitors who need reliable communication to other countries may consider bringing satellite-based voice and/or data equipment. The international country code for Cape Verde is 238. Fixed-line numbers have seven digits and mobile phone numbers begin with nine. Telephone connections are good, but calls outside the archipelago are very expensive.

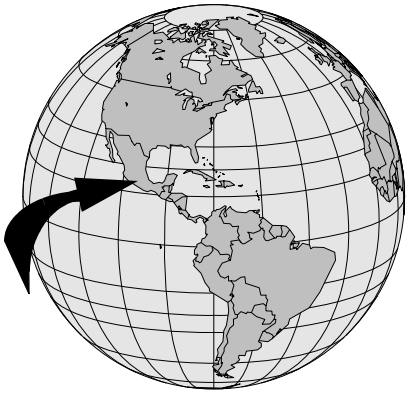
Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar

offenses. Persons violating Cape Verdean laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cape Verde are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Cape Verde are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Cape Verde. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Rua Abilio Macedo 6, Praia, on the island of Santiago. The telephone is (238) 260-8900; the fax number is (238) 261-1355; and the web site http://praia.usembassy.gov.



CAYMAN ISLANDS

Compiled from the February 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Cayman Islands

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 259 sq. km. (100 sq. mi.) on three islands: Grand Cayman (76 sq. mi.), Cayman Brac (14 sq. mi.), and Little Cayman (10 sq. mi.).

Capital: George Town (pop. 20,626. (1999 Census)

Terrain: Low-lying limestone base surrounded by coral reefs.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Caymanian(s).

Population: (2007 est.) 46,600.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.496%.

Ethnic groups: Afro-European 40%, African 20%, European 20%, other 20%.

Religious affiliations: United Church, Anglican, other Protestant, Roman Catholic.

Languages: English.

Education: Years compulsory—to age 16. Literacy (age 15 and over)—98%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—8.7/1,000. Life expectancy—males 75 years; females 79 years.

Work force: 23,450.

Government

Type: British Overseas Territory.
Constitution: 1972; called the Cayman Islands Order.
Government branches: Executive—Governor and Governor-in-Cabinet (representing British monarch), Cabinet. Legislative—unicameral Legislative Assembly (15 elected, three appointed members). Judicial—Summary Court, Grand Court, Cayman Islands Court of Appeal, Her Majesty's Privy Council.
Political subdivisions: Eight districts.
Political parties: People's Progressive Movement, United Democratic Party.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP per capita: (2006 estimate) U.S. $46,500.
GDP: (2004 est., purchasing power parity) $1.939 billion.
Growth rate: 6.5%.
Natural resources: Scenic beaches and underwater attractions, favorable climate.
Agriculture: Products—Minor production of vegetables and livestock, turtle farming, aquaculture.
Industry: Types—tourism, banking, insurance, mutual funds, finance, and construction.
Trade: Exports (2004)—$1.2 million: turtle products, manufactured consumer goods. Major market—United States. Imports (2004)—$722.4 million: machinery, manufactures, food, fuels, chemicals. Major suppliers—U.S., Jamaica, U.K., Netherlands Antilles, Japan.
Exchange rate: (fixed) CI $0.80=U.S. $1.

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Cayman Islands remained largely uninhabited until the 17th century. A variety of people settled on the islands, including pirates, refugees from the Spanish Inquisition, shipwrecked sailors, deserters from Oliver Cromwell's army in Jamaica, and slaves. The majority of Caymanians are of African and British descent, with considerable interracial mixing.

Great Britain took formal control of the Cayman Islands, along with Jamaica, under the Treaty of Madrid in 1670. Following several unsuccessful attempts, permanent settlement of the islands began in the 1730s. The Cayman Islands historically have been popular as a tax-exempt destination. Legend has it that Caymanians in 1788 rescued the crews of a Jamaican merchant ship convoy which had struck a reef at Gun Bay and that the Caymanians were rewarded with King George III's

promise to never again impose any tax. The Cayman Islands, initially administered as a dependency of Jamaica, became an independent colony in 1959; they now are a self-governing British Overseas Territory.

ECONOMY

Although Caymanians enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world, about 90% of the islands' food and consumer goods must be imported.

From the earliest settlement of the Cayman Islands, economic activity was hindered by isolation and a limited natural resource base. The harvesting of sea turtles to resupply passing sailing ships was the first major economic activity on the islands, but local stocks were depleted by the 1790s. Agriculture, while sufficient to support the small early settler population, has always been limited by the scarcity of available land.

The advent of modern transportation and telecommunications in the 1950s led to the emergence of what are now considered the Cayman Islands' "twin pillars" of economic development: international finance and tourism. In 2004, there were more than 70,000 companies registered in the Cayman Islands, including 446 banks and trust companies. Forty of the world's largest banks are present in the Cayman Islands.

It is estimated that financial services represent 40% and tourism between 30-40% of gross domestic product. Unspoiled beaches, duty-free shopping, scuba diving, and deep-sea fishing draw almost a million visitors to the islands each year.

Education is compulsory to the age of 16 and is free to all Caymanian children. Schools follow the British educational system. The Government operates 10 primary, one special education, and two high schools. In addition, there is a university and a law school.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Cayman Islands' physical isolation under early British colonial rule allowed the development of an indigenous set of administrative and legal traditions which were codified into a Constitution in 1959. Although still a British Overseas Territory, the islands today are self-governed in nearly all respects. The Constitution, or Cayman Islands Order, that now governs the islands came into effect in 1972 and was amended in 1994. The Cayman Islands' political system is very stable, bolstered by a tradition of restrained civil governance, sustained economic prosperity, and its relative isolation from foreign policy concerns by virtue of its colonial relationship with the United Kingdom. Public discussion revolves around public sector expenditure and social services, the pace of additional economic development, and the status of the large foreign national community on the islands.

Government Structure

The Cayman Islands form a British Overseas Territory with a large measure of self-government. The present constitution, which came into effect in 1972, provides for a system of government headed by a Governor, a Legislative Assembly, and a Cabinet, which administers the islands. The Governor is recruited from the U.K. Government Service, serves as the British government administrator, and retains responsibility for the civil service, defense, external affairs, and internal security. The Governor also chairs the Cabinet and appoints to the Cabinet the Chief Secretary, the Attorney General, and the Financial Secretary, while the Legislative Assembly elects the Cabinet's other five members. Unlike other Caribbean Overseas Territories there is no Chief Minister but a Leader of Government Business. The Leader of Government Business is also the Minister for District Administration, Planning, Agriculture and Housing. Responsibility for defense and external affairs resides with the United Kingdom; however, the Chief Secretary has responsibility for the Portfolio of Internal and External affairs, and the Cayman Government may negotiate certain bilateral matters directly with foreign governments. The elected members of the Cabinet divide the remaining administrative portfolios. The 18-seat unicameral Legislative Assembly is presided over by an independent speaker. Elections are held at the discretion of the Governor at least every 4 years. Members of the Assembly may introduce bills, which, if passed, are then approved, returned, or disallowed by the Governor. The U.K. Government also reserves the right to disallow bills approved by the Governor. The four-tiered judicial system is based on English common law and colonial and local statutes. The Cayman Islands Court of Appeal is the highest court on the islands, but Her Majesty's Privy Council sitting in London may hear a final appeal.

POLITICAL COALITIONS

Since 2000, there have been two official political parties: The United Democratic Party (UDP) and the People's Progressive Movement (PPM). While there has been a shift to political parties, many contending for an office still run as independents. In May 2005 elections, the People's Progressive Movement won, receiving nine of the 15 seats. The next elections are due in 2009.

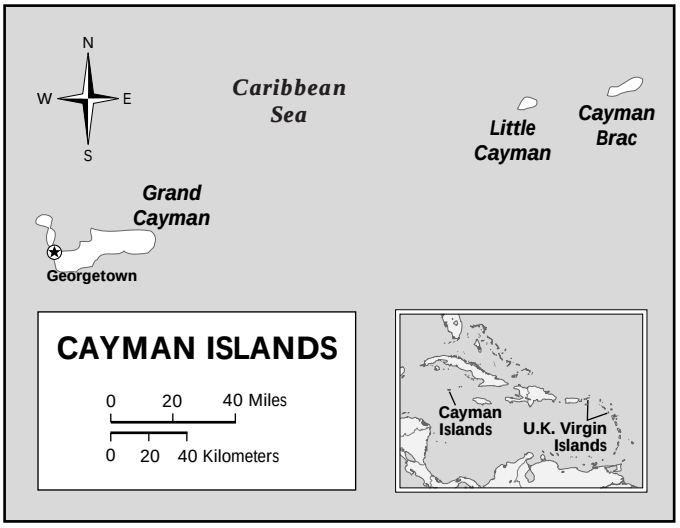
Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 2/1/2008

Head of State: **Queen Elizabeth II**

Governor: **Stuart Jack,** since November 2005

Leader of Government Business: **The Honorable Kurt Tibbetts**, since May 2005



The Cayman Islands are represented in the United States by the United Kingdom Embassy at 3100 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington DC 20008; tel: 202-462-1340; fax: 202-898-4255.

U.S.-CAYMANIAN RELATIONS

Although the United Kingdom is responsible for the Cayman Islands' defense and external affairs, important bilateral issues are often resolved by negotiations between the Cayman Government and foreign governments, including the United States. Despite close historic and political links to the U.K. and Jamaica, geography and the rise of tourism and international finance in the Cayman Islands' economy has made the United States its most important foreign economic partner.

Following a dip in tourists from the United States after September 11, 2001, over 200,000 U.S. citizens traveled by air to the Cayman Islands in 2004; some 4,761 Americans were resident there as of 2005.

For U.S. and other foreign investors and businesses, the Cayman Islands ' main appeal as a financial center is the absence of all major direct taxes, free capital movement, a minimum of government regulations, and a well-developed financial infrastructure. With the rise in international narcotics trafficking, the Cayman Government entered into the Narcotics Agreement of 1984 and the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty of 1986 with the United States in order to reduce the use of its facilities for money laundering operations.

In June 2000, The Cayman Islands was listed by multilateral organizations as a tax haven and a non-cooperative territory in fighting money laundering. The country's swift response in enacting laws limiting banking secrecy, introducing requirements for customer identification and record keeping, and for banks to cooperate with foreign investigators led to its removal from the list of non-cooperative territories in June 2001.

U.S. Representation

The United States does not maintain diplomatic offices in the Cayman Islands. Diplomatic relations are conducted through the U.S. Embassy in London and the British Embassy in Washington, DC. The Cayman Islands are, however, part of the consular district administered by the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica. Inquiries regarding visas to the U.S. or other consular matters should be directed to the consular section of the U.S. Embassy, 142 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6, Jamaica; tel: (876) 702-6000; fax: (876) 702-6001. There also is a U.S. consular agent in the Cayman Islands to assist in providing services for American citizens. Address: Unit 222, Mirco Center, North Sound Road, Georgetown, Grand Cayman; tel: (345) 945-8173; fax: (345) 945-8192. For after-hours emergencies call the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica, tel: (876) 702-6000. The Consular Agency in Georgetown is open to the public: M-W-F 0730 to 1100 and T-Th 1200 to 1530. The office is closed on U.S. and Caymanian public holidays.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

KINGSTON (E) 142 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6, 876-702-6000, Fax 876-702-6001, Workweek: M-F; 07:15 to 16:00; most offices allow flex time; all offices staffed core hours, some staff take Friday afternoons off, working longer on other days., Website: http://kingston.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Shelia Lockett
AMB OMS:	Tiffany Thompson
CG OMS:	Thuy Brault
FCS:	Office Closed
FM:	Ricardo Cruz
HRO:	Maryanne Masterson
MGT:	Eric A. Flohr
POL/ECO:	Lloyd W. Moss
AMB:	Brenda La Grange Johnson
CG:	Edward Wehrli
DCM:	James T. Heg
PAO:	Patricia Attkisson
GSO:	Alfred Braswell
RSO:	Arthur Balek
AGR:	Jamie Rothschild
APHIS:	Alester Simmons
CLO:	Lucy Ramel
DAO:	Cdr. Randall Ramel
DEA:	Gavin Kersellius
EEO:	Tiffany Thompson
FAA:	Allan B. Hurr
FMO:	Sarah Spodek
ICASS Chair:	Erik Valentzas
IMO:	Howard Sparks
ISO:	Francis M. Ruddy
ISSO:	Roger Alt
MLO:	Ltc. Erik Valentzas
NAS:	Andrea Lewis
State ICASS:	Eric A. Flohr

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 2, 2008

Country Description: The Cayman Islands are a British dependent territory consisting of three main islands with a total area of approximately 100 square miles and located about 500 miles west of Jamaica. There is an international airport located in Grand Cayman, and facilities for tourists are widely available. The U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica has consular responsibility for the Cayman Islands.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed-loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted and have been in full production since July 2008.The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on passport cards is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

Visas are not required for U.S. citizens traveling to the Cayman Islands for short-term visits. U.S. citizens traveling to the Cayman Islands for work must obtain a temporary work permit from the Department of Immigration of the Cayman Islands, telephone (345) 949-8344. There is a departure tax for travelers age 12 and older, which is regularly included in airfare.

For further information travelers may contact Cayman Islands Department of Tourism offices in Miami at (305) 599-9033, New York (212) 889-9009, Houston (713) 461-1317 and Chicago (630) 705-0650; or via the Internet at http://www.caymanislands.ky.

Safety and Security: The Cayman Islands are considered politically stable and enjoy a high standard of living. There have been no reported incidences of terrorism or threats made against Americans or American interests in the Cayman Islands.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The The Cayman Islands are considered politically stable and enjoy a high standard of living. There have been no reported incidences of terrorism or threats made against Americans or American interests in the Cayman Islands. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Public Announcements, including the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for other callers, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the Cayman Islands is "911."

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The quality of medical care in the Cayman Islands is generally comparable to that available in the United States; however, some procedures and cases requiring critical care may require medical evacuation to the United States. Several American citizens each year drown or suffer cardiac arrest while snorkeling or scuba diving in the Cayman Islands. These deaths may be attributed in part to tourists attempting to do more than they are trained to do or to poor physical conditioning or pre-existing medical conditions that are exacerbated when snorkeling or diving. A hyperbaric chamber is avail-

able for treatment of decompression illness. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate payment for health services. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Although there are no express HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to the Cayman Islands, persons suffering from HIV/AIDS can be denied permission to land if a Health Officer certifies that their entry to the Islands would be dangerous to the community pursuant to Section 82 (c) of the Cayman Immigration Law (2007 Revision), which states:

"The following persons, not being Caymanian or permanent residents, are prohibited immigrants—a person certified by a Health Officer to be suffering from a communicable disease that makes his entry into the Islands dangerous to the community."

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Cayman Islands is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Due to their size, the Caymans have little highway infrastructure to maintain. Local driving standards, the risk of accidents, the availability of emergency roadside service, quality and frequency of signage, and enforcement of traffic laws, generally meet the standards of the United States. Visitors must obtain a temporary driver's license, easily granted upon presentation of a valid state driver's license and payment of a small fee, at a car rental agency or a police station. Laws against driving while intoxicated are strictly enforced, with a legal maximum blood alcohol level set at 100 milligrams per 100 milliliters of blood. Seatbelt laws are also enforced and require the driver and all passengers to be fastened in while in motion. Drivers and pedestrians should remember that driving in The Cayman Islands is on the left-hand side of the road.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office at www.caymanislands.ky.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Cayman Islands' Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Cayman Islands' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Cayman Islands customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Cayman Islands of items such as firearms of any kind, spear guns (or pole spears or Hawaiian slings), live plants and plant cuttings. Raw fruits and vegetables are also restricted. Visitors from the United States should be aware that products made from farmed green sea turtles at the Cayman Turtle Farm Ltd. are offered for local consumption. The importation of genuine sea turtle products is strictly prohibited by the United States, as well as other countries that have signed the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. In addition, U.S. Customs prohibits the transshipment of turtle products through the United States and any products discovered will be confiscated. It is advisable to contact the Collector of Customs (345) 949-2473 for specific information regarding customs requirements.

The Cayman Islands, like all Caribbean countries, can be affected by hurricanes. Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30 each year. The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) has put measures in place in the event of an emergency or disaster. General information is available on the subject via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the Cayman Islands laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Cayman Islands are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Cayman Islands are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to

obtain updated information on travel and security within the Cayman Islands. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Consular Agency in George Town, Grand Cayman or the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consular Agency to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Consular Agency in the Cayman Islands is located at 222 Mirco Center, North Sound Road, Georgetown, Grand Cayman. Its phone number is (345) 945-8173. Office hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 08:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. American citizens requiring assistance in Cayman may also contact the American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica at (876) 702-6000. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at 142 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6. Office hours are Monday through Friday (except Jamaican and U.S. holidays), 7:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with window services 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Both the Consular Agency and Embassy may provide updated information on travel and security within the Cayman Islands. The Embassy web site is http://kingston.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: The U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica has issued only one immigrant visa to Caymanian orphans during the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority:

Department of Children and Family Services
Ground Floor, Brit Cay Building
George Town
P.O. Box 10653
Grand Cayman KY1-1006
Cayman Islands
Tel. 345-949-0290
Fax. 345-949-4167

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents may be married or single, childless or already parenting other children. The requirements outlined in the Cayman Adoption Law state a person must be 25 years of age but not over 65. If married, the prospective adoptive parents must have been married and living together for no less than three years. If a person is married but separated, he or she will need the written consent of his or her spouse in order to make an application. The Cayman Islands Adoption Law allows non-Caymanians who are domiciled in the Cayman Islands to file applications to adopt.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be resident of the Cayman Islands or be Caymanian nationals.

Time Frame: The Cayman Islands adoption procedures generally take between fourteen months and two years to complete.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

Adoption Fees: There is a fee of CI$75 for processing an application for adoption within the Cayman Islands.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents should contact the Adoption Coordinator, who works within the Department of Children and Family Services, to arrange for an initial interview. The adoption process will be explained and if everything is in order, prospective adoptive parents will be given the application packet to take away and complete. When all of the required documents are completed, prospective adoptive parents should contact the Adoption Coordinator and arrange for a second interview. If everything is in place, the Coordinator files the application with the Adoption Board. The Adoption Board will arrange for a home study (assessment) to be carried out by a qualified social worker in the Cayman Islands. During this process, prospective adoptive parents will work with the social worker to consider all aspects of adoptive parenthood and identify the type of child the prospective adoptive family would like to adopt. When the assessment is completed, the social worker will produce a report for the Adoption Board; this report enables the Board to determine whether or not a person should be approved as a prospective adopter.

As soon as the Board gives its approval, the focus is then placed on identifying a child who best fits the profile for placement with the prospective adoptive family. After the child is placed with the prospective adoptive parents, there is a statutory period of three months during which time the family will be visited by a social worker. The social worker will visit several times to ensure that the child is well cared for and that bonding is taking place. At the end of the supervision period, the social worker will write a report for the Grand Court to support the application for the Adoption Order. When the Grand Court supervision report is completed, the application for an Adoption Order will be prepared and the case filed with the Court. The Clerk of the Court will issue a date for the

hearing and summonses will be served to the prospective adoptive parents and all other interested parties to attend Court on that date. Apart from the prospective adoptive parents and the child to be adopted, the child's birth parents (if known) or previous guardian, are required to attend. The Adoption Coordinator and the Chairman of the Adoption Board also attend the hearing. When the Adoption Order is granted, the adoption is complete. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Required Documents:

- Medical report of the adoptive parent(s)
- Police reports for the adoptive parents
- A letter from employer
- Marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Divorce decree (if applicable)

The Cayman Islands are represented in the United States by the Embassy of the United Kingdom:

United Kingdom Embassy
3100 Massachusetts Avenue
Washington DC 20008
Telephone: 202-462-1340
Fax: 202-898-4255.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publicationM-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy

142 Old Hope Rd.
Kingston 6
Jamaica, West Indies
Phone: 876-702-6000
Fax: 876-702-6018

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in the Cayman Islands may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Central African Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 622,984 sq. km. (242,000 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Texas.

Cities: Capital—Bangui (pop. 690,000). Other cities—Berberati (56,867), Bouar (39,676), Bambari (32,603), Bangassou (24,450), Bossangoa (31,723), Mbaiki (16,901), and Carnot (31,324).

Terrain: Rolling plain 600 meters-700 meters (1,980 ft.-2,310 ft.) above sea level; scattered hills in northeast and southwest.

Climate: Tropical, ranging from humid equatorial in the south to Sahelo-Sudanese in the north; hot, dry winters with mild to hot, wet summers.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Central African(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 4,369,038.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.505%.

Ethnic groups: More than 80; Baya 33%, Banda 27%, Sara 10%, Mandja 13%, Mboum 7%, M'baka 4%, Yakoma 4%, other 2%.

Religions: Protestant 25%, Roman Catholic 25%, Muslim 15%, indigenous beliefs 35%.

Languages: Sangho (official), Sangho (national).

Education: Years compulsory—6. Enrollment—primary school 75%. Literacy—50%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—115 deaths/1,000. Life expectancy—avg. 43 yrs.

Work force: (approx. 53% of pop.) Agriculture—75%; industry—6%; commerce and services—4%; government—15%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: August 13, 1960.

Constitution: Passed by referendum December 29, 1994; adopted January 1995. Suspended by decree in March 2003. New constitution passed by referendum December 5, 2004.

Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister, and Council of Ministers. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly. Judicial—Constitutional Court, inferior courts, criminal courts, Court of Appeals.

Political subdivisions: 16 prefectures, commune of Bangui.

Political parties: Alliance for Democracy and Progress (ADP), Central African Democratic Assembly (RDC), Civic Forum (FC), Democratic Forum (FODEM), Liberal Democratic Party (PLD), Movement for Democracy and Development (MDD), Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC), Patriotic Front for Progress (FPP), People's Union for the Republic (UPR), National Unity Party (PUN), and Social Democratic Party (PSD).

Suffrage: Universal over 21.

Economy

GDP: (2007, nominal) $1.647 billion.

Annual real GDP growth rate: -7.2% (2003); 0.5% (2004 est.); 3% (2006 est.), 3.045% (2007 est.).

Per capita income: (2007, PPP) $700.

Avg. inflation rate: (2007) 0.9%.

Natural resources: Diamonds, uranium, timber, gold, oil.

Agriculture: (2006, 56% of GDP) Products—Timber, cotton, coffee, tobacco, food crops, livestock. Arable land—3.1%.

Industry: (2006, 15% of GDP) Types—Diamond mining, sawmills, breweries, textiles, footwear, assembly of bicycles and motorcycles, and soap.

Services: (2006) 29% of GDP.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$146.7 million f.o.b.; diamonds, coffee, cotton, timber, tobacco. Major markets—Belgium, Italy, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Egypt, Spain, and Cote d'Ivoire. Imports—$237.3 million f.o.b.; food, textiles, petroleum products, machinery, electrical equipment, motor vehicles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, consumer goods,

industrial products. Major suppliers—France, United States, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Germany, Japan.
Budget: (2007) $250 million.
Defense: (2006) 1.1% of GDP.
Fiscal year: Calendar year.

PEOPLE

There are more than 80 ethnic groups in the Central African Republic (C.A.R.), each with its own language. About 75% are Baya-Mandjia and Banda (40% largely located in the northern and central parts of the country), and 4% are M'Baka (southwestern corner of the C.A.R.). Sangho, the language of a small group along the Oubangui River, is the national language spoken by the majority of Central Africans. Only a small part of the population has more than an elementary knowledge of French, the official language.

More than 55% of the population of the C.A.R. lives in rural areas. The chief agricultural areas are around the Bossangoa and Bambari. Bangui, Berberati, Bangassou, and Bossangoa are the most densely populated urban centers.

HISTORY

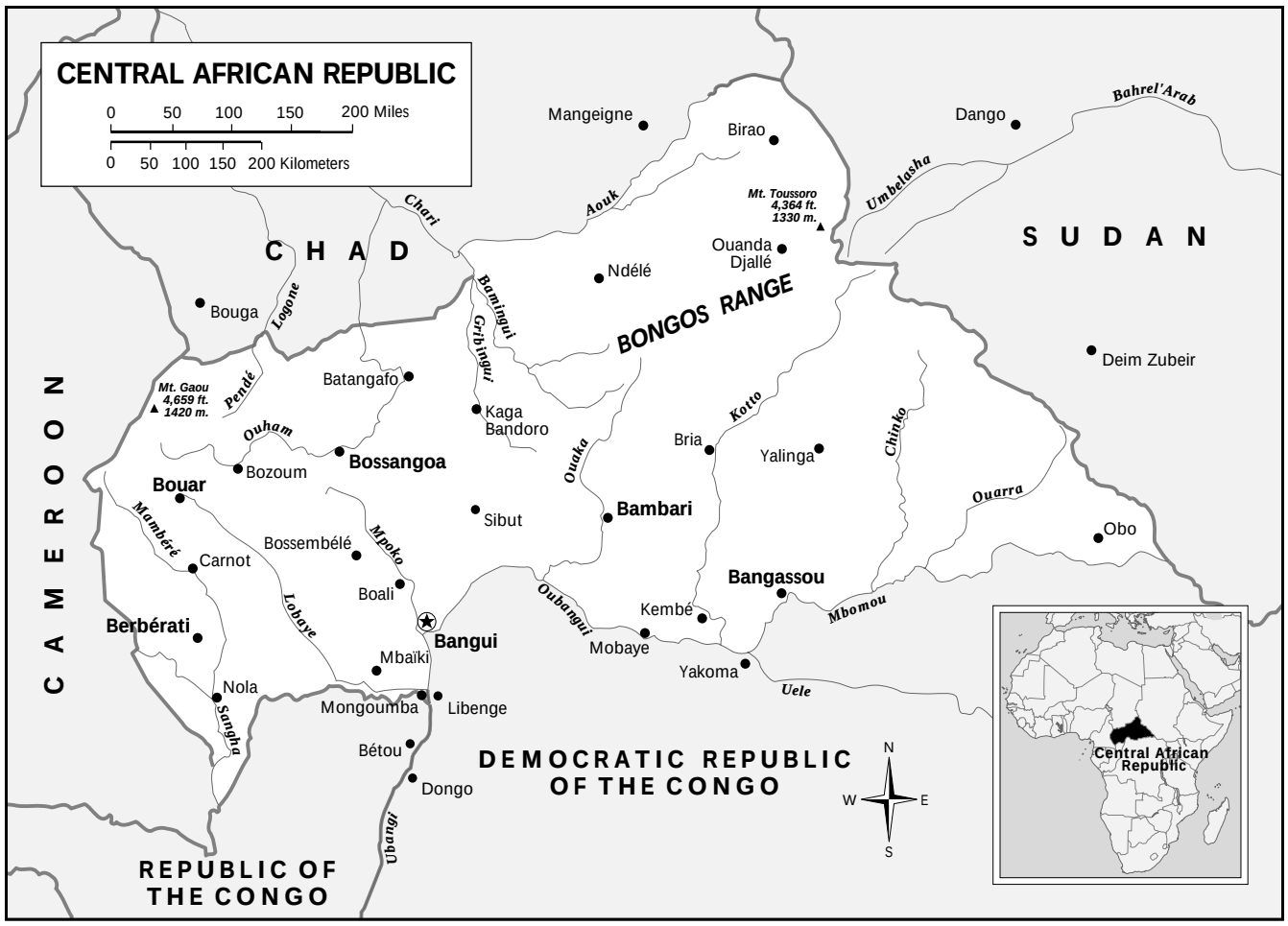
The C.A.R. appears to have been settled from at least the 7th century on by overlapping empires, including the Kanem-Bornou, Ouaddai, Baguirmi, and Dafour groups based in Lake Chad and the Upper Nile. Later, various sultanates claimed present-day C.A.R, using the entire Oubangui region as a slave reservoir, from which slaves were traded north across the Sahara and to West Africa for export by European traders. Population migration in the 18th and 19th centuries brought new migrants into the area, including the Zande, Banda, and Baya-Mandjia.

In 1875 the Egyptian sultan Rabah governed Upper-Oubangui, which included present-day C.A.R. Europeans, primarily the French, German, and Belgians, arrived in the area in 1885. The French consolidated their legal claim to the area through an 1887 convention with Congo Free State, which granted France possession of the right bank of the Oubangui River. Two years later, the French established an outpost at Bangui, and in 1894, Oubangui-Chari became a French territory. However, the French did not consolidate their control over the area until 1903 after having defeated the forces of the Egyptian sultan Rabah and established colonial administration throughout the territory. In 1906, the Oubangui-Chari territory was united with the Chad colony; in 1910, it became one of the four territories of the Federation of French Equatorial Africa (A.E.F.), along with Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), and Gabon. The next 30 years were marked by small-scale revolts against French rule and the development of a plantation-style economy.

In August 1940, the territory responded, with the rest of the A.E.F., to the call from Gen. Charles de Gaulle to fight for Free France. After World War II, the French Constitution of 1946 inaugurated the first of a series of reforms that led eventually to complete independence for all French territories in western and equatorial Africa. In 1946, all A.E.F. inhabitants were granted French citizenship and allowed to establish local assemblies. The assembly in C.A.R. was led by Barthelemy Boganda, a Catholic priest who also was known for his forthright statements in the French Assembly on the need for African emancipation. In 1956 French legislation eliminated certain voting inequalities and provided for the creation of some organs of self-government in each territory. The French constitutional referendum of September 1958 dissolved the A.E.F., and on December 1 of the same year the Assembly declared the birth of the Central African Republic with Boganda as head of government. Boganda ruled until his death in a March 1959 plane crash. His cousin, David Dacko, replaced him, governing the country until 1965 and overseeing the country's declaration of independence on August 13, 1960.

On January 1, 1966, following a swift and almost bloodless coup, Col. Jean-Bedel Bokassa assumed power as President of the Republic. Bokassa abolished the constitution of 1959, dissolved the National Assembly, and issued a decree that placed all legislative and executive powers in the hands of the president. On December 4, 1976, the republic became a monarchy with the promulgation of the imperial constitution and the proclamation of the president as Emperor Bokassa I. His regime was characterized by numerous human rights atrocities.

Following riots in Bangui and the murder of between 50 and 200 schoolchildren, former President Dacko led a successful French-backed coup against Bokassa on September 20, 1979. Dacko's efforts to promote economic and political reforms proved ineffectual, and on September 1, 1981, he in turn was overthrown in a bloodless coup by Gen. Andre Kolingba. For 4 years, Kolingba led the country as head of the Military Committee for National Recovery (CRMN). In 1985 the CRMN was dissolved, and Kolingba named a new cabinet with increased civilian participation, signaling the start of a return to civilian rule. The process of democratization quickened in 1986 with the creation of a new political party, the Rassemblement Democratique Centrafricain (RDC), and the drafting of a new constitution that subsequently was ratified in a national referendum. General Kolingba was sworn in as constitutional President on November 29, 1986. The constitution established a National Assembly made up of 52 elected deputies, elected in July 1987. Due to mounting political pressure, in 1991 President Kolingba announced the creation of a national commission to rewrite the constitution to provide for a multi-party system. Multi-party presidential elections were conducted in 1992 but were later cancelled due to serious logistical and other irregularities. Ange Felix Patasse won a second-round victory in rescheduled elections held in October 1993, and was re-elected for another 6-year term in September 1999.



Salary arrears, labor unrest, and unequal treatment of military officers from different ethnic groups led to three mutinies against the Patasse government in 1996 and 1997. The French succeeded in quelling the disturbances, and an African peacekeeping force (MISAB) occupied Bangui until 1998 when they were relieved by a UN peacekeeping mission (MINURCA). Economic difficulties caused by the looting and destruction during the 1996 and 1997 mutinies, energy crises, and government mismanagement continued to trouble Patasse's government through 2000.

In March 2000 the last of the MINURCA forces departed Bangui. In May 2001 rebel forces within the C.A.R. military, led by former President and Army General Andre Kolingba, attempted a military coup. After several days of heavy fighting, forces loyal to the government, aided by a small number of troops from Libya and the Congolese rebel Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), were able to put down the coup attempt. In November 2001, there were several days of sporadic gunfire between members of the Presidential Security Unit and soldiers defending sacked Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Francois Bozize, who fled to Chad. In mid-2002 there were skirmishes on the C.A.R.-Chad border.

In October 2002, former Army Chief of Staff Francois Bozize launched a coup attempt that culminated in the March 15, 2003 overthrow of President Patasse and the takeover of the capital. General Bozize declared himself President, suspended the constitution, and dissolved the National Assembly. Since seizing power, President Francois Bozize has made significant progress in restoring order to Bangui and parts of the country, and professed a desire to promote national reconciliation, strengthen the economy, and improve the human rights situation. A new constitution was passed by referendum in December 2004. In spring 2005, the country held its first elections since the March 2003 coup.

The first round of presidential and legislative elections were held in March 2005, and in May, President Bozize defeated former Prime Minister Martin Ziguele in a second-round runoff. On June 13, Bozize named Elie Dote, an agricultural engineer who had worked at the African Development Bank, his new Prime Minister. Following a country-wide strike, Elie Dote resigned on January 18, 2008. Humanitarian emergencies continued to plague the north of C.A.R., as unrest and fighting between rebel groups and government troops displaced nearly 300,000 citizens.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The government is a republic comprised of a strong executive branch (president, vice president, prime minister, and council of ministers), and weak legislative and judicial branches. Government and opposition party members, as well as civil society and the military are represented in the three branches, although the president appoints the vice president, prime minister, members of the cabinet (Council of Ministers), top military officials, and managers of national parastatals.

The National Assembly is made up of 109 members elected by popular vote to serve 5-year terms. Legislative elections were held in 1998; in contested results, the government's Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People (MLPC) won just over 50% control of the legislative body. Legislative elections were last held in spring 2005.

For administration purposes, the country is divided into 16 prefectures that are further divided into over 60 subprefectures; the commune of Bangui is administered separately. The president currently appoints heads of these administrative units, called "prefets" and "sous-prefets". There are 174 communes, each headed by a mayor and council appointed by the president. Suffrage is universal over the age of 21.

The judicial sector encompasses the Constitutional Court, Court of Cassation, Court of Appeals, criminal and civil courts, Labor Court, and Juvenile Court, although several of these courts have insufficient resources and trained personnel to operate on a regular basis. The Criminal Court of Bangui sits once or twice a year, usually for 1 or 2 months each session. Judges are appointed by the president; executive influence often impedes transparent handling of judicial affairs. Military courts exist but are currently only used to try military personnel for crimes committed in the course of duty. There are a limited number of formal courts currently functioning outside Bangui; traditional arbitration and negotiation play a major role in administering domestic, property, and probate law.

The Central African Republic has a vibrant civil society, with numerous professional, labor, and local development associations actively carrying out campaigns and gaining greater local and international credibility.

The C.A.R. Government's human rights record remains flawed. There are continued reports of arbitrary detainment, torture and, to a lesser degree, extra judicial killings. Journalists have occasionally been threatened, and prison conditions remain harsh.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Francois BOZIZE**
Prime Minister: **Faustin-Archange TOUADERA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Parfait MBAYE**
Min. of Civil Service: **Jacques BOTI**
Min. of Defense: **Francois BOZIZE**
Min. of Economy: **Sylvain MALIKO**
Min. of Education: **Charles-Armel DOUBANE**
Min. of Equipment, Transport, & Civil Action: **Jean-Prospere WODOBODE**
Min. of Finance & Budget: **Sylvain NDOUTINGAI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, & Francophonie Affairs: **Come ZOUMARA**
Min. of Interior & Security: **Raymond Paul NDOUGOU, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Justice: **Paul OTTO**
Min. of Mining & Energy: **Sylvain NDOUTINGAI**
Min. of Public Health: **Bernard Lala KONAMNA**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Solange Pagonendji N'DACKALA**
Min. of Tourism, Development, & Crafts: **Yvonne MBOISSONA**
Min. of Trade, Industry, & Small & Medium Size Enterprises: **Rosalie KOUDOUNGERE**
Min. of Transport & Equipment: **Charles MASSI**
Min. of Youth, Sports, and Culture: **Desire KOLINGBA**
Min. of State for Communications, National Reconciliation, Democratic Culture, & Human Rights: **Jabdoul Karim MECKASSOUA**
Min. of State for Rural Development: **Charles MASSI**
Min., Office of the Prime Min., & Government Spokesman: **Aurelian Simplice ZINGAS**
Governor, Regional Central Bank: **Alphonse KOYAMBA**
Ambassador to the US: **Emmanuel TOUABOY**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Fernand POUKRE-KONO**

The Central African Republic maintains an embassy in the United States at 1618-22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC (tel: 202-483-7800/01, fax: 202-332-9893).

ECONOMY

The Central African Republic is classified as one of the world's least developed countries, with a 2007 annual per capita income of $700 (purchasing power parity). Sparsely populated and landlocked, the nation is overwhelmingly agrarian, with the vast bulk of the population engaged in subsistence farming; 56% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) came from agriculture in 2006. Principal crops include cotton, food crops (cassava, yams, bananas, maize), coffee, and tobacco. In 2002, timber accounted for about 30% of export earnings. The country also has rich but largely unexploited natural resources in the form of diamonds, gold, uranium, and other minerals. There may be oil deposits along the country's northern border with Chad. Diamonds are the only of these mineral resources currently being developed; in 2002, diamond exports made up close to 50% of the C.A.R.'s export earnings. Industry contributed only about 15% of the country's GDP in 2006, with artesian diamond mining, breweries, and sawmills making up the bulk of the sector. Services accounted for about 29% of GDP in 2006, largely because of the oversized government bureaucracy and high transportation costs arising from the country's landlocked position.

Hydroelectric plants based in Boali provide much of the country's limited electrical supply. Fuel supplies must be barged in via the Ubangui River or trucked overland through Cameroon, resulting in frequent shortages of gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel. The C.A.R.'s transportation and communication network is limited.

The country has only 650 kilometers of paved road, limited international and no domestic air service (except charters), and does not possess a railroad. Commercial traffic on the Ubangui River is impossible from December to May or June, and conflict in the region has sometimes prevented shipments from moving between Kinshasa and Bangui. The telephone system functions, albeit imperfectly. Four radio stations currently operate in the C.A.R., as well as one television station. Numerous newspapers and pamphlets are published on a regular basis, and at least one company has begun providing Internet service.

In the more than 40 years since independence, the C.A.R. has made slow progress toward economic development. Economic mismanagement, poor infrastructure, a limited tax base, scarce private investment, and adverse external conditions have led to deficits in both its budget and external trade. The country saw a 30-year decline in per capita gross national product (GNP), and its debt burden is considerable. Structural adjustment programs with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and interest-free credits to support investments in the agriculture, livestock, and transportation sectors have had limited impact. The World Bank and IMF are now encouraging the government to concentrate exclusively on implementing much-needed economic reforms to jump-start the economy and defining its fundamental priorities with the aim of alleviating poverty. As a result, many of the state-owned business entities have been privatized and limited efforts have been made to standardize and simplify labor and investment codes and to address problems of corruption. The C.A.R. Government has adopted the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) Charter of Investment, and is in the process of adopting a new labor code.

DEFENSE

Under military restructuring plans formulated 1999-2000, the civilian Minister of Defense controlled and directed all armed forces, including the Presidential Security Unit (UPS), which had previously been seen as a militia supporting the president. In April 2001, the C.A.R. armed forces numbered about 3,000, including army, navy, air force, gendarmerie, national police, Presidential Security Unit, and local police personnel. An estimated 1,200 members of the army and gendarmerie fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the failed coup attempt of May 2001.

Following the 2003 coup, Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC-Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale) and C.A.R. armed forces assumed responsibility for securing the capital city. CEMAC forces currently total approximately 400 soldiers, which are supported by an additional 200 French soldiers. The C.A.R. armed forces number approximately 2,000. Working with the French, the C.A.R. military is attempting to provide professional training and decentralize its troops in an effort to combat road bandits, thievery, and poaching throughout the C.A.R. territory.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Central African Republic is an active member in several Central African organizations, including the Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC) Central African Peace and Security Council (COPAX—still under formation), and the Central Bank of Central African States (BEAC). Standardization of tax, customs, and security arrangements between the Central African states is a major foreign policy objective of the C.A.R. Government. The C.A.R. is a participant in the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), and the Organization of African Unity (OAU—now the African Union). Libya and, to a lesser degree, Sudan have shown increased interest in cooperation with the C.A.R. over the last year.

Outside of Africa, the C.A.R. maintains fairly close ties to France, albeit considerably reduced from previous years. In the late 1990s, France withdrew forces stationed in the C.A.R.; drops in its external assistance budget have reduced French military and social development aid to the country. Other multilateral organizations—including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, UN agencies, European Union, and the African Development Bank—and bilateral donors—including Germany, Japan, the European Union, China, and the United States—are significant development partners for the C.A.R.

Seventeen countries have resident diplomatic or consular representatives in Bangui, and the C.A.R. maintains approximately the same number of missions abroad. Since early 1989 the government recognizes both Israel and the Palestinian state. The C.A.R. also maintains diplomatic relations with China. The C.A.R. generally joins other African and developing country states in consensus positions on major policy issues.

U.S.-C.A.R. RELATIONS

The U.S. and C.A.R. enjoy generally good relations, although concerns over the pace of political and economic liberalization and human rights have affected the degree of support provided by the U.S. to the country. The U.S. Embassy in Bangui was briefly closed as a result of the 1996-97 mutinies. It reopened in 1998 with limited staff, but U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Peace Corps mis-

sions previously operating in Bangui did not return. The American Embassy in Bangui again temporarily suspended operations on November 2, 2002 in response to security concerns raised by the October 2002 launch of Francois Bozize's 2003 military coup.

The Embassy reopened in January 2005; however, there currently is limited U.S. diplomatic/consular representation in the C.A.R. As a result, the ability of the Embassy to provide services to American citizens remains extremely limited. The Department of State approved the lifting of Section 508 aid restrictions triggered by the coup; U.S. assistance to the Central African Republic had been prohibited except in the areas of humanitarian aid and support for democratization that have focused on strengthening the media and the parliament, which are largely inexperienced and remain susceptible to pressure from the executive branch.

In international fora, the United States has supported the mandates of the UN Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA) and of the Multinational Force of the Central African Monetary and Economic Community (also known as FOMUC) in order to promote stability in C.A.R. Both BONUCA and FOMUC, while constrained by their small sizes and budgets, have contributed considerably to the pursuit of peace in C.A.R. We also support C.A.R.'s upcoming national dialogue, in hopes that the C.A.R. Government, the political opposition, and the armed opposition will be better able to reach peace and move towards security in the countryside and in Bangui.

The U.S. Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against travel to the Central African Republic. Americans in the C.A.R. are urged to exercise caution and maintain security awareness at all times. U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in the Central African Republic and need emergency assistance should contact the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde, Cameroon at telephone (237) 2220 15 00, fax (237) 2220 16 20, and (237) 2220 16 03 (Consular). Americans may also contact the American Embassy in N'djamena, Chad at telephone (235) 51-70-09, 51-92-33 or 51-90-52 and fax (235) 51-56-54. As noted above, since the United States has a limited diplomatic presence in the Central African Republic, the ability to provide services to U.S. citizens in the C.A.R. is extremely limited.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BANGUI (E) Blvd David Dacko, Bangui, (236) 21-61-02-00, Fax (236) 21-61-44-94, Workweek: Mon-Thurs 7:30-17:00 Fri 7:30-13:30.

CON/POL/ECO:	Cameron D. McGlothlin
MGT:	Wayne Hemmings
AMB:	Frederick B. Cook
DCM:	Charles Neary

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 1, 2008

Country Description: The Central African Republic is a developing African nation that has experienced several periods of political instability since independence from France in 1960. Despite an on-going peace process and the presence of a democratically-elected government in the capital, Bangui, rebels still control large portions of the northern provinces in the country, and highway bandits prey on civilians and travelers in much of western CAR. In the country's Dzanga-Sangha National Park in the southwest, facilities for tourists are being developed but remain limited.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, visa, and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required for entry. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of the Central African Republic, 1618 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone: (202) 483—7800/7801, fax: (202) 332—9893. Overseas, inquiries should be made to the nearest Central African Republic Embassy or Consulate. Note: In any country where there is no Central African Republic diplomatic mission, the French Embassy has authorization to issue a visa for entry into the Central African Republic.

Safety and Security: The Central African Republic is one of the world's least developed nations, and much of the northern part of the country remains outside of central government control.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime remains a significant problem in the capital, Bangui, though it has decreased notably in recent years. Americans should exercise caution while traveling around the city and immediate environs. Petty theft remains a problem in large market areas, particularly in the crowded markets near KM 5 on the outskirts of the city. Armed gangs may operate in outlying residential areas. During previous periods of civil unrest and civil conflict, including most recently in 2002 and 2003, foreign mercenaries and citizens engaged in widespread looting and damaged much of the city's infrastructure. In the northern and western parts of the country, there are consistent reports of armed robbery and kidnapping by highway bandits (called "coupeurs de routes" or "zaraguinas"), especially during the December to May dry season. When a crime does occur in Bangui, the victim may have to pay to send a vehicle to pick up police officers due to the shortage of police vehicles and fuel.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are extremely limited in the CAR, and the quality of acute care is unreliable. Sanitation levels are low. Many medicines are not available; travelers should carry properly labeled prescription drugs and other medications with them.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning CAR is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In Bangui, road conditions vary, and many roads have large holes and degraded points that prevent the normal flow of traffic. Only a small portion of the roads in the country, including in the capital, are paved, and many of the compacted dirt roads have been degraded. Drivers tend to prefer to drive on the smoothest portion of the road and ignore basic traffic laws, thus slowing the flow of traffic and increasing the risk of collision. The city of Bangui does have a public transportation system consisting of green buses and yellow taxis, though these vehicles are often dangerously overcrowded and very badly maintained.

Due to the risk of armed attacks on motorists in the northern and western regions of the country, overland travel in these areas should be avoided. Any driving outside the capital should be only during daylight hours. Most remote areas in the CAR that are frequented by tourists are accessible only by four-wheel drive vehicles, although some roads are not passable at all during the rainy season, from May to October.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and the Central African Republic, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the CAR's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Taking photographs of police or military installations, or any other government buildings, is prohibited. Unauthorized photography may result in the seizure of photographic equipment by CAR authorities. Police or other government authorities can provide information and grant permission for photographing a particular subject or location. Corruption remains a serious problem among CAR security forces, some members of which have harassed travelers for bribes and small amounts of money. At night, the roads in the capital are often manned with impromptu checkpoints, at which police or other military members ask motorists and travelers for money.

Banking infrastructure remains limited in the CAR, and facilities for monetary exchange exist only in the capital. There are no ATMs in the CAR, and exchange bureaus normally accept dollars and euros but not West African Francs (CFA).

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Central Africanlaws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the CARare severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: The U.S. Embassy in Bangui resumed operations in January 2005, following the evacuation of all American staff in 2002 during the civil conflict and looting in Bangui in 2002. The Embassy's American presence increased in 2006, and a new American Ambassador to the CAR presented his credentials to President Bozize in 2007. Nonetheless, the

Embassy continues to operate with limited staffing, and can only provide basic services to American citizens in the CAR.

Americans living or traveling in the CAR are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the CAR. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on Avenue David Dacko, B.P. 924, Bangui, tel: 2161-0200; fax: 2161-4494.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics reflect that there have been only two immigrant visas issued to Central African Republic ("C.A.R.") orphans in the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The "Adoption Committee," which is composed of technical experts from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Family & Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior, serves as the adoption authority in the Central African Republic. The Adoption Committee's recommendations are passed to the Tribunal (Court) of First Instance in Bangui.

Comité d'Adoption
Ministère de la Famille et des Affaires Sociales
B.P. 917

Bangui, République Centrafricaine
Chef de Service des Actions Sociales Jules Gueret
90 07 93

Assistant aux Services des Actions Sociales Bernard Azoumi
03 96 90

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The prospective adoptive parent must be at least 30 years old. A prospective adoptive couple must be married for at least 5 years, and both must consent to the adoption. In the Central African Republic, a single person or a married couple living together are both eligible to adopt.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents need to provide an Acceptance Statement issued and signed by the Mayor where he/she live(s) (Agrément du Maire où l'Adoptant réside). There is no requirement regarding the format of the statement. There is no residency requirement in the Central African Republic for foreign prospective adoptive parents.

Prospective adoptive parents need to provide an Acceptance Statement issued and signed by the Mayor where he/she live(s) (Agrément du Maire où l'Adoptant réside). There is no requirement regarding the format of the statement.

Time Frame: The adoption process can take six months to one year to complete and two weeks to one month for the immigrant visa.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no private adoption agencies in the Central African Republic. All adoption matters are processed through the Ministry of Social Affairs' Adoption Committee and the Courts. Prospective adoptive parents can engage lawyers to carry out adoption proceedings. The U.S. Embassy in Bangui maintains a list of attorneys who can handle intercountry adoptions which is available upon request.

Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Adoption Fees: CFA 500,000 or about US $1,000. This includes all services related to the adoption proceedings, but does not include immigrant visa fees.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective parents interested in adopting a child should send a letter directly to the Ministry of Family & Social Affairs with the appropriate documents. The committee will examine the request and contact an orphanage to identify a child for adoption. A social worker will conduct an investigation of the biological parents or relatives. After the birth parents' agreement and the screening of adoption documents submitted, the committee gives written authorization to the orphanage to release the child to the adoptive parent(s). The file is then forwarded to the court for adjudication. The judge sets up a hearing to verify the circumstances of the adoption as well as to hear the parties: biological and adoptive parents. The judge could also request an investigation on the morality of the adoptive parents.

In the event that a child has already been identified, the committee works with the biological parents. The biological parents play a crucial role in the process, because they must consent to the adoption in writing.

The written consent must be submitted to the court. In the case of an orphan, the judge would request consent from the extended family or from other relatives of the child if the biological parents are not available.

If adopted from an orphanage, authorities might seek consent from the child's home village or community in addition to the orphanage management.

After a satisfactory review of the documents and the written consent of the biological parents, the judge issues an Adoption Decree (Jugement d'adoption). This allows the adoptive parents to apply for a new birth certificate at the city hall's civil registry (Mairie de Bangui or the Mairie in any other province.)

The birth certificate is required for the issuance of a passport through the immigration office. There are two types of adoptions: simple adoption and plenary adoption (adoption plénière).

Plenary adoption severs the familial relationship between the child and the birth parents. This adoption gives the adopted child the same rights as a child born to the adoptive parent.

A simple adoption occurs when the biological parents die, abandon the child, or give the child up for adoption. Under this adoption procedure, the biological parents (if living) retain inheritance rights and other privileges of the child, and must be consulted if the prospective adoptive parents want to change the child's name or make significant changes in the life of the child.

A simple adoption does not meet the requirements of U.S. immigration law and therefore cannot be the basis for granting an immigrant visa to an adopted child.

Required Documents: All documents must be in the French language. Documents issued in a different language are returned to the sender for translation. The documents required for adoption in the Central African Republic are:

- A Motivation Letter explaining why the prospective adoptive parents want to adopt a child. There is no specific format;
- An Acceptance Statement issued and signed by the Mayor where the prospective adoptive child will reside. This document is issued by the Mayor's office of the prospective adoptive parents' residence;
- Certified copy of prospective adoptive parents' birth certificate(s);
- Certified copy of marriage certificate (if applicable);
- Police Clearance;
- Medical Certificate;
- Income documents (such as W-2 statements);
- A Notarized Statement of Net Worth issued by a bank;
- A Certificate of Infertility (if applicable);
- A Notarized Certificate from Next-of Kin or a Friend who is willing to take care of the child in the case of Death;
- An Agreement Letter about the care of the Child. This is a statement indicating the prospective adoptive parents' plans for caring for the child and also for his/her future;
- Photos of the adoptive parents.

In addition, a home-study will be carried out by a social worker or other individual certified to complete home studies in the state in which the prospective adoptive parents' reside in order to determine the prospective adoptive parent's suitability as parents.

Embassy of the Central African Republic
1618 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Telephone: (202) 483-7800, 7801

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Avenue David Dacko
Bangui
Tel: (236) 61-02-00
Fax: (236) 61-44-94.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in the Central African Republic may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Bangui. Questions about immigrant visa processing for Central African children should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé, Cameroon. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

Travel Warning

March 25, 2008

This Travel Warning provides an update on the security situation in the Central African Republic (CAR). American citizens traveling to or residing in the CAR should exercise extreme caution. This supersedes the Travel Warning for the CAR issued August 9, 2007.

American citizens who travel to or reside in the Central African Republic (CAR) should exercise extreme caution, especially outside the capital city of Bangui. Armed rebel groups, bandits, and poachers present real dangers and the Central African government is unable to guarantee the safety of visitors in most parts of the country.

The U.S. Department of State advises American citizens who are not affiliated with humanitarian relief efforts to avoid travel to northwestern and northern CAR, particularly the areas bordering Chad, due to insecurity caused by banditry and clashes between government and rebel forces. In addition, the embassy recommends that Americans traveling outside the capital not travel with any armed escort, as an armed escort may cause problems with local authorities or draw fire from rebel troops. In the northwestern prefecture of Ouham

and Ouham-Pende, roadblocks by rebels and by government forces pose a serious and continuing threat to aid workers and travelers. Fighting between rebels and government forces continues sporadically, and efforts to broker a peace agreement or ceasefire between the parties have not succeeded to date. An expatriate aid worker was killed in an attack on a well-marked vehicle north of Bocaranga in June 2007, and local citizens continue to be kidnapped and held for ransom on a regular basis. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies operating in that area share information on security incidents and the NGOs generally abide by the UN travel restrictions. U.S. Government employees on temporary duty and other contract visitors to the U.S. Embassy are allowed to visit the northwestern or northeastern CAR prefectures only on a case-by-case basis and with specific authorization of the Chief of Mission.

Rebels and armed men are also present in the northeastern Vakaga prefecture, and pose a threat to all travelers in that area. A peace agreement with one group of rebels is in place, but splinter groups and other armed men pose a threat to travelers. The firing on a medical convoy of well-marked NGO vehicles, which led to one patient's death in March 2008, resulted in the temporary suspension of most humanitarian activities in the Vakaga prefecture outside Birao.Highway bandits ("coupeurs de route" in French, "zaraguinas" in Sango) pose a serious threat to travelers throughout the country. Two World Health Organization physicians were murdered by unidentified assailants outside Bossembélé in April 2006. There have been repeated attacks on Central African and expatriate travelers on the Berberati-Carnot-Baoro-Bouar-Bozoum road.

Poachers and armed men also pose a threat to game hunters in the north central CAR, in and around the Parc National de Bamingui-Bangoran. A French hunter was murdered and three others wounded in an attack on a hunting party outside the town of Ndele in April 2007. The poachers in this area are heavily armed, often with automatic weapons, and outside local and national government authority.

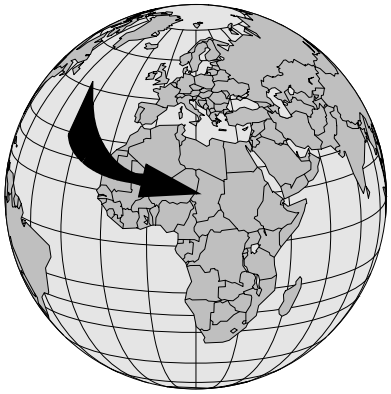
There are approximately 300 peacekeeping troops from neighboring member countries of the Economic and Monetary Union of Central Africa (CEMAC) that move in and out of the capital. CAR military and civilian security forces, sometimes with French military assistance, staff checkpoints throughout the city. Central African security forces (and people posing as such) at those checkpoints frequently harass local and expatriate travelers for bribes or small amounts of money (described as "coffee" in French). American citizens should avoid public demonstrations, as even those intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence.

The U.S. Embassy in Bangui has just four American officers and can provide only limited services to U.S. citizens at this time.

U.S. citizens in the CAR are strongly urged to register on the State Department's web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov. Americans without internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Bangui. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in the CAR is located at Avenue David Dacko, B.P. 924, Bangui; tel. (236) 2161-0200; fax (236) 2161-4494. Americans may also obtain updated information from the American Embassy in N'djamena, Chad, at telephone (235) 51-70-09, 51-92-33 or 51-90-52; fax (235) 51-56-54; web site http://ndjamena.usembassy.gov.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's most recent Consular Specific Information Sheet for Central African Republic and the Worldwide Caution, which are located on the Department's web site at http://travel.state.gov. Up-to-date information on safety and security is also available at 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers from other countries, on a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



CHAD

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Chad

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,284,634 sq. km. (496,000 sq. mi.); about twice the size of Texas.

Cities: Capital—N'Djamena (pop. 1 million est.). Other major cities—Moundou, Abeche, Sarh.

Terrain: Desert, mountainous north, large arid central plain, fertile lowlands in extreme southern regions.

Climate: Northern desert—very dry throughout the year; central plain—hot and dry, with brief rainy season mid-June to mid-September; southern lowlands—warm and more humid with seasonal rains from late May to early October.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Chadian(s).

Population: (July 2008 est.) 10,111,337.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 2.195%.

Population density: 6.6 per sq. km. (17 per sq. mi.).

Ethnic groups: 200 distinct groups. In the north and center, Gorane (Toubou, Daza, Kreda), Zaghawa, Kanembou, Ouaddai, Arabs, Baguirmi, Hadjerai, Fulbe, Kotoko, Hausa, Boulala, and Maba, most of whom are Muslim. In the south, Sara (Ngambaye, Mbaye, Goulaye), Moudang, Moussei, Massa, most of whom are Christian or animist. About 1,000 French citizens live in Chad.

Religions: Muslim 51%, Christian 35%, animist 7%, other indigenous beliefs 7%.

Languages: French and Arabic (official); Sara (in the south), more than 120 indigenous Chadian languages and dialects.

Education: Years compulsory—6. Attendance—primary school 68% (1998); secondary school 5.5% (1995); higher education n/a. Literacy (2003 est.)—48%.

Health: Life expectancy (2007 est.)—47.2 yrs. Infant mortality rate (2008 est.)—100.36 deaths/1,000 live births%.

Work force: (2006 est.)—3.747 million. Agriculture—more than 80%; largely subsistence agriculture.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: August 11, 1960 (from France).

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister, Council of Ministers. Legislative—National Assembly (unicameral). Judicial—Supreme Court; Court of Appeals; criminal courts; magistrate courts president (head of state, president of the council of ministers), council of ministers.

Political parties: About 60, of which Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) is dominant. Other major parties include the Federation Action for the Republic (FAR); Party for Liberty and Development (PLD); Rally for Development and Progress (RNDP); Union for Democracy and the Republic (UDR); National Union for Development and Renewal (UNDR); Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP); Viva Rally for Development and Progress, or Viva RNDP.

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Political subdivisions: 18 regions.

Economy

GDP: current prices (2007 est.) $7.095 billion.

GDP per capita income: (2007 est.) $1,500.

Population living below poverty line: (2001 est.) 80%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natron (sodium carbonate), kaolin, gold, bauxite, tin, tungsten, titanium, iron ore.

Agriculture: (2007 est., 21.5% of GDP): Products—cotton, gum arabic, livestock, fish, peanuts, millet, sorghum, rice, sweet potatoes, cassava, dates, manioc. Arable land—30%.

Industry: (2007 est., 47.8% of GDP): Types—meatpacking, beer brewing, soap, cigarettes, construction materials, natron mining, soft-drink bottling.

Services: (2007 est.): 30.6% of GDP.

Trade: Exports—$4.201 billion (f.o.b., 2007 est.): oil, cotton, livestock, gum arabic. Major markets (1999)—Portugal, Germany, Thailand, Costa Rica, South Africa, France, Nigeria, Cameroon. Imports—$1,157.3 million (f.o.b., 2007 est.): petroleum products, machinery and transportation equipment, foodstuffs, industrial goods, textiles. Major suppliers (2004)—U.S., France, Cameroon, Nigeria.

Budget: (2006 est.) Revenues—$617.3 million. Expenditures—$877.6 million.

Defense: (2002) $31 million.

National holidays: Independence Day, August 11.

Fiscal year: Calendar year.

U.S. aid received: (FY 2007): Total USAID and State humanitarian assistance to Chad—$19,970,000. Economic, food relief—$238 million from all sources (including $30 million committed by African Development Bank).

GEOGRAPHY

Chad is a landlocked country in north central Africa measuring 1,284,000 square kilometers (496,000 sq. mi.), roughly three times the size of California. Most of its ethnically and linguistically diverse population lives in the south, with densities ranging from 54 persons per square kilometers in the Logone River basin to 0.1 persons in the northern B.E.T. desert region, which is larger than France. The capital city of N'Djaména, situated at the confluence of the Chari and Logone Rivers, is cosmopolitan in nature, with a current population nearing one million people.

Chad has four bioclimatic zones. The northernmost Saharan zone averages less than 200 mm (8") of rainfall annually. The sparse human population is largely nomadic, with some livestock, mostly small ruminants and camels. The central Sahelian zone receives between 200 and 600 mm (24") rainfall and has vegetation ranging from grass/shrub steppe to thorny, open savanna. The southern zone, often referred to as the Sudanian zone, receives between 600 and 1,000 mm (39"), with woodland savanna and deciduous forests for vegetation. Rainfall in the Guinea zone, located in Chad's southwestern tip, ranges between 1,000 and 1,200 mm (47").

The country's topography is generally flat, with the elevation gradually rising as one moves north and east away from Lake Chad. The highest point in Chad is Emi Koussi, a mountain that rises 3,100 meters (10,200 ft.) in the northern Tibesti Mountains. The Ennedi Plateau and the Ouaddaï highlands in the east complete the image of a gradually sloping basin, which descends toward Lake Chad. There also are central highlands in the Guera region rising to 1,500 meters (4,900 ft.).

Lake Chad is the second-largest lake in West Africa and is one of the most important wetlands on the continent. Home to 120 species of fish and at least that many species of birds, the lake has shrunk dramatically in the last four decades due to the increased water use and low rainfall. Bordered by Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon, Lake Chad currently covers only 1,350 square kilometers, down from 25,000 square kilometers in 1963. The Chari and Logone Rivers, both of which originate in the Central African Republic and flow northward, provide most of the water entering Lake Chad.

PEOPLE

There are more than 200 ethnic groups in Chad. Those in the north and east are generally Muslim; most southerners are Christians or animists. Through their long religious and commercial relationships with Sudan and Egypt, many of the peoples in Chad's eastern and central regions have become more or less Arabized, speaking Arabic and engaging in many other Arab cultural practices as well. More than three-quarters of the Chadian population is rural. Near the eastern border there are over 250,000 refugees from the Sudanese conflict in Darfur and 56,000 Central African Republic refugees in the south. Due to internal rebel activity, there are also approximately 185,000 internally displaced persons in Chad.

HISTORY

Chad has a long and rich history. A humanoid skull found in Borkou was dated to be more than 3 million years old. Because in ancient times the Saharan area was not totally arid, Chad's population was more evenly distributed than it is today. For example, 7,000 years ago, the north central basin, now in the Sahara, was still filled with water, and people lived and farmed around its shores. Cliff paintings in Borkou and Ennedi depict elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes, cattle, and camels; only camels survive there today. The region has been known to traders and geographers since the late Middle Ages. Since then, Chad has served as a crossroads for the Muslim peoples of the desert and savanna regions, and the animist Bantu tribes of the tropical forests.

Sao people lived along the Chari River for thousands of years, but their relatively weak chiefdoms were overtaken by the powerful chiefs of what were to become the Kanem-Bornu and Baguirmi kingdoms. At their peak, these two kingdoms and the kingdom of Ouaddai controlled a good part of what is now Chad, as well as parts of Nigeria and Sudan. From 1500 to 1900, Arab slave raids were widespread. The French first penetrated Chad in 1891, establishing their authority through military expeditions primarily against the Muslim kingdoms. The first major colonial battle for Chad was fought in 1900 between the French Major Lamy and the African leader Rabah, both of whom were killed in the battle. Although the French won that battle, they did not declare the territory pacified until 1911; armed clashes between colonial troops and local bands continued for many years thereafter.

In 1905, administrative responsibility for Chad was placed under a



governor general stationed at Brazzaville in what is now Congo. Although Chad joined the French colonies of Gabon, Oubangui-Charo, and Moyen Congo to form the Federation of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) in 1910, it did not have colonial status until 1920. The northern region of Chad was occupied by the French in 1914. In 1959, the territory of French Equatorial Africa was dissolved, and four states—Gabon, the Central African Republic, Congo (Brazzaville), and Chad—became autonomous members of the French Community. On August 11, 1960 Chad became an independent nation under its first president, Francois Tombalbaye.

A long civil war began as a tax revolt in 1965 and soon set the Muslim north and east against the southern-led government. Even with the help of French combat forces, the Tombalbaye government was never able to quell the insurgency. Tombalbaye's rule became more irrational and brutal, leading the military to carry out a coup in 1975 and to install Gen. Felix Malloum, a southerner, as head of state. In 1978, Malloum's government was broadened to include more northerners. Internal dissent within

the government led the northern prime minister, Hissein Habre, to send his forces against the national army in the capital city of N'Djamena in February 1979. The resulting civil war amongst the 11 emergent factions was so widespread that it rendered the central government largely irrelevant. At that point, other African governments decided to intervene.

A series of four international conferences held first under Nigerian and then Organization of African Unity (OAU) sponsorship attempted to bring the Chadian factions together. At the fourth conference, held in Lagos, Nigeria, in August 1979, the Lagos accord was signed. This accord established a transitional government pending national elections. In November 1979, the National Union Transition Government (GUNT) was created with a mandate to govern for 18 months. Goukouni Oueddei, a northerner, was named President; Colonel Kamougue, a southerner, Vice President; and Habre, Minister of Defense. This coalition proved fragile; in January 1980, fighting broke out again between Goukouni's and Habre's forces. With assistance from Libya, Goukouni regained control of the capital and other urban centers by year's end. However, Goukouni's January 1981 statement that Chad and Libya had agreed to work for the realization of complete unity between the two countries generated intense international pressure and Goukouni's subsequent call for the complete withdrawal of external forces. Libya's partial withdrawal to the Aozou Strip in northern Chad cleared the way for Habre's forces to enter N'Djamena in June. French troops and an OAU peacekeeping force of 3,500 Nigerian, Senegalese, and Zairian troops (partially funded by the United States) remained neutral during the conflict.

Habre continued to face armed opposition on various fronts, and was brutal in his repression of suspected opponents, massacring and torturing many during his rule. In the summer of 1983, GUNT forces launched an offensive against government positions in northern and eastern Chad with Libyan support. In response to Libya's direct intervention, French and Zairian forces intervened to defend Habre, pushing Libyan and rebel forces north of the 16th parallel. In September 1984, the French and the Libyan governments announced an agreement for the mutual withdrawal of their forces from Chad. By the end of the year, all French and Zairian troops were withdrawn. Libya did not honor the withdrawal accord, and its forces continued to occupy the northern third of Chad.

Southern rebel commando groups (CODO) in southern Chad were broken up by government massacres in 1984. In 1985 Habre briefly reconciled with some of his most powerful opponents, including the Chadian Democratic Front and the Coordinating Action Committee of the Democratic Revolutionary Council. Goukouni also began to rally toward Habre, and with his support Habre successfully expelled Libyan forces from most of Chadian territory. A cease-fire between Chad and Libya held from 1987 to 1988, and negotiations over the next several years led to the 1994 International Court of Justice decision granting Chad sovereignty over the Aouzou strip, effectively ending Libyan occupation.

However, rivalry between Hadjerai, Zaghawa, and Gorane groups within the government grew in the late 1980s. In April 1989, Idriss Deby, one of Habre's leading generals and a Zaghawa, defected and fled to Darfur in Sudan, from which he mounted a Zaghawa-supported series of attacks on Habre (a Gorane). In December 1990, with Libyan assistance and no opposition from French troops stationed in Chad, Deby's forces successfully marched on N'Djamena. After 3 months of provisional government, Deby's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) approved a national charter on February 28, 1991, with Deby as president.

In the following 2 years, Deby faced at least two coup attempts. Government forces clashed violently with rebel forces (including the Movement for Democracy and Development, MDD, National Revival Committee for Peace and Democracy (CSNPD), Chadian national Front (FNT), and the Western Armed Forces, FAO) near Lake Chad and in southern regions of the country. Earlier French demands for the country to hold a national conference resulted in the gathering of 750 delegates representing political parties (legalized in 1992), the government, trade unions, and the army to discuss creation of a pluralist democratic regime.

Unrest continued, however, sparked in part by large-scale killings of civilians in southern Chad. The CSNPD, led by Kette Moise and other southern groups, entered into a peace agreement with government forces in 1994, which later broke down. Two new groups, the Armed Forces for a Federal Republic (FARF) led by former Kette ally Laokein Barde and the Democratic Front for Renewal (FDR), and a reformulated MDD clashed with government forces 1994-95.

Talks with political opponents in early 1996 did not go well, but Deby announced his intent to hold presidential elections in June. Deby won the country's first multi-party presidential elections with support in the second round from opposition leader Kebzabo, defeating General Kamougue (leader of the 1975 coup against Tombalbaye). Deby's MPS party won 63 of 125 seats in the January 1997 legislative elections. International observers noted numerous serious irregularities in presidential and legislative election proceedings.

By mid-1997 the government signed peace deals with FARF and the MDD leadership and succeeded in cutting off the groups from their rear bases in the Central African Republic and Cameroon. Agreements also were struck with rebels from the National Front of Chad (FNT) and Movement for Social Justice and Democracy in October 1997. However, peace was short-lived, as FARF rebels clashed with government soldiers, finally surrendering to government forces in May 1998. Barde was killed in the fighting, as were hundreds of other southerners, most civilians.

From 1998 to 2003, Chadian Movement for Justice and Democracy (MDJT) rebels skirmished periodically with government troops in the Tibesti region, resulting in hundreds of civilian, government, and rebel casualties, but little ground won or lost.

Following an accord with the government in 2003, several hundred rebels rejoined the Chadian Army. Armed remnants of the MDJT linger in the Tibesti region, but no active armed opposition has emerged in other parts of Chad.

In May 2001, Deby won a flawed 63% first-round victory in presidential elections after legislative elections were postponed until spring 2002. Six opposition leaders were arrested (twice), and one opposition party activist was killed following the announcement of election results. However, despite claims of government corruption, favoritism of Zaghawas, and security forces abuses, opposition party and labor union calls for general strikes and more active demonstrations against the government were unsuccessful.

In May 2004, the National Assembly voted in favor of an amendment to the Constitution that would allow President Deby to run again. The amendment was approved in a national referendum June 2005 and abolished presidential term limits. In the last 3 years, Deby faced at least three coup attempts. In April 2006, the capital city of N'djamena was attacked by the United Front for Democratic Change—which was led by the Tama ethnic group—coordinating with another Chadian rebel organization from President Deby's Zaghawa ethnic group. The government put down the attacks. On May 3, 2006 Deby was elected to his third presidential term with a substantial majority, according to Chadian election officials. Provisional figures showed Deby receiving 77.6% of the vote. More than 60% of Chad's 5.8 million registered voters cast ballots. Frequent bouts of fighting between rebel groups characterized 2006. On October 26, 2007 a peace agreement was signed by four Chadian rebel groups and the Government of Chad. Hosted by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, the talks took place in the Libyan city of Sirte.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The constitutional basis for the government is the 1996 Constitution. A strong executive branch headed by the president dominates the Chadian political system. Following his December 1990 military overthrow of Hissein Habre, Idriss Deby in the mid-1990s gradually restored basic functions of government and entered into agreements with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) intended to carry out substantial economic reforms, including the Doba Basin oil extraction project. The president has the power to appoint the prime minister and the Council of State (or cabinet), and exercises considerable influence over appointments of judges, generals, provincial officials and heads of Chad's parastatal firms. In cases of grave and immediate threat, the president, in consultation with the National Assembly President and Council of State, may declare a state of emergency. Most of the Deby's key advisers are members of the Zaghawa clan, although some southern and opposition personalities are represented in his government.

According to the 1996 Constitution, National Assembly deputies are elected by universal suffrage for 4-year terms. Parliamentary elections were last held in April 2002, with President Deby's MPS party winning a large majority. The Assembly holds regular sessions twice a year, starting in March and October, and can hold special sessions as necessary and called by the prime minister. Deputies elect a president of the National Assembly every 2 years. Assembly deputies or members of the executive branch may introduce legislation; once passed by the Assembly, the president must take action to either sign or reject the law within 15 days. The National Assembly must approve the prime minister's plan of government and may force the prime minister to resign through a majority vote of no confidence. However, if the National Assembly rejects the executive branch's program twice in one year, the president may disband the Assembly and call for new legislative elections. In practice, the president exercises considerable influence over the National Assembly through the MPS party structure.

Despite the Constitution's guarantee of judicial independence from the executive branch, the president names most key judicial officials. The Supreme Court is made up of a chief justice, named by the president, and 15 councilors chosen by the president and National Assembly; appointments are for life. The Constitutional Council, with nine judges elected to 9-year terms, has the power to review all legislation, treaties and international agreements prior to their adoption. The Constitution recognizes customary and traditional law in locales where it is recognized and to the extent it does not interfere with public order or constitutional guarantees of equality for all citizens.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Idriss DEBY**
Prime Min.: **Youssof Saleh ABBAS**
Min. of Agriculture: **M'Bailou Naimbaye LOSSIMIAN**
Min. of Civil Service, Labor, & Employment: **Fatime TCHOMBI**
Min. of Commerce & Artisans: **Mahamat Abdoulaye MAHAMAT**
Min. of Communications & Spokesperson for the Govt.: **Mahamat HISSEINE**
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Sports: **Djibert YOUNOUS**
Min. of Defense: **Wadal Abdelkader KAMOUGUE**
Min. of Economy & Urban Planning: **Ousman Matar BREME**
Min. of Environment, Water, & Fisheries: **Khadidja ABDELKHADER**
Min. of Finance & Budget: **Abakar Mallah MOURCHA**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Moussa FAKI Mahamat**

Min. of Higher Learning, Scientific Research, & Professional Training: **Oumar Idriss AL-FAROUK**
Min. of Infrastructure: **Adoum YOUNOUSMI**
Min. of Interior & Public Security: **Ahmat Mahamat BACHIR**
Min. of Justice: **Jean Bawoyeu ALINGUE**
Min. of Livestock & Animal Husbandry: **Mahamat ALI Abdallah Nasseur**
Min. of Mines & Energy: **Emmanuel NADINGAR**
Min. of National Education: **Abderaman KOKO**
Min. of Petroleum: **Mahamat Nasser HASSANE**
Min. of Postal Service, New Technology, & Communications: **Albert Pahimi PADACKE**
Min. of Public Health: **Avocksouma DJONA**
Min. of Social Action, Solidarity, & Family: **Ngarmbatina Carmel SOU IV**
Min. of Territorial Development: **Hamid Mahamat DAHLOB**
Min. of Tourism Development: **Ahmat Barkai ANIMI**
Min. in Charge of Auditing Govt. Departments: **Mahamat Bechir OKORMI**
Min. in Charge of Decentralization: **Abderaman DJASNABAYE**
Min. in Charge of Human Rights: **Fatime Issa RAMADAN**
Min. & Sec. Gen. of the Govt., in Charge of Relations With the National Assembly: **Kalzeube Payimi DEUBET**
Dep. Sec. Gen. of the Govt., in Charge of Relations With the National Assembly: **Yaya DILLO**
Sec. of State for Agriculture: **Haoua Outman DJAME**
Sec. of State for the Economy & Urban Planning, in Charge of Microfinance & Poverty: **Azziza BAROUD**
Sec. of State for Environment, in Charge of Rural Hydraulics & Livestock: **Tahar SOUGOUDI**
Sec. of State for Finance, in Charge of the Budget: **Oumar Boukar GANA**
Sec. of State for Foreign Relations, Intl. Cooperation, & African Integration: **Djidda Moussa OUTMAN**
Sec. of State for Infrastructure, in Charge of Transport: **Hassan TERAP**
Sec. of State for National Defense, in Charge of War Veterans & Victims: **Hassan Saleh Al Gadam AL-DJINNEDI**
Sec. of State for National Education, in Charge of Basic Education: **Hapsita ALBOUKHARI**
Ambassador to the US: **Mahamoud Adam BECHIR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Mahamat Ali ADOUM**

The Republic of Chad maintains an embassy in the United States at 2002 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel: 202-462-4009; fax 202-265-1937).

DEFENSE

Under President Hissein Habre, members of Gourane, Zaghawa, Kanembou, Hadjerai, and Massa ethnic groups dominated the military. Idriss Deby, a member of the minority Zaghawa-related Bidyate clan and a top military commander, revolted and fled to Sudan, taking with him many Zaghawa and Hadjerai soldiers in 1989. The forces that Deby led into N'Djamena on December 1, 1990 to oust President Habre were mainly Zaghawa (including a large number of Sudanese), many of whom were recruited while Deby was in the bush. Deby's coalition also included a small number of Hadjerais and southerners.

Chad's armed forces numbered about 36,000 at the end of the Habre regime but swelled to an estimated 50,000 in the early days of Idriss Deby. With French support, a reorganization of the armed forces was initiated early in 1991 with the goal of reducing the size of the armed forces. An essential element of this effort was to make the ethnic composition of the armed forces reflective of the country as a whole. While the military's size has been reduced to approximately 25,000 soldiers, leadership positions are still dominated by the Zaghawa.

Following Idriss Deby's rise to power, Habre loyalists continued to fight government troops and rob civilians around Lake Chad. In the mid- and late-1990s, a rebellion in the south by the FARF delayed the promised oil development until crushed by government forces. Most recently, the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Tchad (MDJT) launched the most serious threat to Deby's hold on power, but little progress was ever made on either side. In January 2002, the government and the MDJT signed a formal peace accord. Although remnants are still present in the North, active rebellion there has been negligible since late 2003. Long, porous borders continue to render Chad vulnerable to incursions. In March 2004, the Algerian terrorist organization, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), strayed into Chadian territory, where they were engaged by Chadian armed forces. Since the 2003 outbreak of the Darfur crisis in Sudan, armed militias have occasionally crossed into Chad, resulting in small-scale skirmishes. In response to such ongoing threats Chad has joined in the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), a U.S. Government military-to-military assistance program which helps participant countries counter terrorist operations, border incursions, and trafficking of people, illicit materials, and other goods. Initial PSI training was completed in Chad in July 2004.

ECONOMY

In 2007, Chad's GDP was estimated at approximately $7.095 billion. Oil, cotton, cattle, and gum arabic are Chad's major exports.

The effects on foreign investment of years of civil war are still felt today, as investors who left Chad between 1979-82 have only recently begun to regain confidence in the country's future. The most important economic venture to date is the Doba Basin oil extraction project in southern Chad. The project included unique mechanisms for World Bank, private sector, government, and civil society collaboration to guarantee that future oil revenues would benefit local populations and result in poverty alleviation.

Oil exploitation in the southern Doba region began in June 2000, with U.S.-based Exxon Mobil leading a consortium, with assisted funding from the World Bank, in a $3.7 billion project to export oil via a 1,000-km. buried pipeline through Cameroon to the Gulf of Guinea. Beginning in late 2000, development of Chad's petroleum sector stimulated economic growth by attracting major investment and increased levels of U.S.

trade. Oil revenue began trickling into the country in July 2004. It was hoped that this project would serve as a catalyst for the entire economy by helping to reduce energy costs and attracting additional trade and investment in other sectors. Following the government's decision to amend the oil revenue management law in 2006, the World Bank froze the escrow account that received the country's revenues. Later that year, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the World Bank and the Government of Chad that agreed on a new percentage of oil revenue to be used toward poverty reduction. Unfortunately, due to rebel attacks on N'djamena, Deby issued a "state of emergency" placing oil revenue funds into his direct command. The question remains whether Chad will continue to invest its oil revenues wisely or use the funds for other uses. This pipeline project was officially suspended in September 2008 following World Bank accusations that oil profits were not going toward poverty reduction efforts, as outlined in the initial agreement. Political controversy surrounding elections and a rebellion in northern Chad also dampen Chad's economic prospects somewhat by exposing the weaknesses in Chad's political institutions.

The U.S. Government expressed both concern and disappointment after the Government of Chad on August 26, 2006 ordered Chevron Oil Corporation and Petronas, members of the Exxon Mobil-led and operated oil consortium, to cease operations and leave Chad within 24 hours for alleged non-payment of income taxes.

Chevron and Petronas entered into a tax agreement in 2000 with the government, represented by Petroleum Minister Mahamat Hassan Nasser, when they replaced Elf and Shell as minority members of the consortium. The companies assert that the agreement authorizes them to use a special depreciation schedule allowing greater tax deductions than those afforded consortium partner Exxon Mobil. The Government of Chad, however, claimed that the 2000 tax agreement was illegal, because it was negotiated by officials without proper authority and was not vetted by the National Assembly. The Government of Chad also announced plans to press charges against negotiating officials, and on August 28, 2006 replaced Nasser, as well as Economic Minister Mahamat Ali Hassan and Farming Minister Moucktar Moussa. Chevron and Petronas consider the Government of Chad to have violated its contractual obligations and planned to seek recourse through all diplomatic and legal means. While the U.S. takes no position on the merits of the dispute, it has urged all parties involved to respect any binding contractual commitments.

Despite recent development of the petroleum sector, more than 80% of the work force is involved in agriculture (subsistence farming, herding, and fishing). Like many other developing countries, Chad has a small formal sector and a large, thriving informal sector. Statistics indicate the following distribution as percentage of GDP: Agriculture—21.5% (farming, livestock, fishing); industry—47.8%; and services—30.6%. Chad is highly dependent on foreign assistance. Its principal donors include the European Union, France, and the multilateral lending agencies.

Primary markets for Chadian exports include neighboring Cameroon and Nigeria and France, Germany, and Portugal. Aside from oil, cotton remains a primary export, although exact figures are not available. Rehabilitation of CotonTchad, the major cotton company that suffered from a decline in world cotton prices, has been financed by France, the Netherlands, the European Economic Community (EC), and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The parastatal is now being privatized.

The other major export is livestock, herded to neighboring countries. Herdsmen in the Sudanic and Sahelian zones raise cattle, sheep, goats, and, among the non-Muslims, a few pigs. In the Saharan region, only camels and a few hardy goats can survive. Chad also sells smoked and dried fish to its neighbors and exports several million dollars worth of gum arabic to Europe and the United States each year. Other food crops include millet, sorghum, peanuts, rice, sweet potatoes, manioc, cassava, and yams.

After averaging 0.8% in 1999-2000, Chad's real GDP growth was estimated at 8.9% in 2001, and 10% in 2002 and 2003 as the Doba oil project accelerated. Inflation rose from 3.7% in 2000 to 12.4% in 2001, dropped to 5.2% in 2002, and was estimated to level out at 3% in 2004. These fluctuations were due in large part to increasing demand from the Doba project but also to fluctuations in agricultural production. After a disappointing agricultural campaign in 2000, increased production during the 2001-02 timeframe helped reduce inflation in 2002. In 2003, the contraction in investments, the 7% appreciation in the CFA Franc exchange rate, and bumper harvests combined to generate a 1% deflation in place of the projected 4.3% inflation. Chad's economic performance, at least until the onset of oil exports, continued to depend on fluctuations in rainfall and in prices of its principal export commodities, especially cotton.

Since 1995, the Government of Chad has made incremental progress in implementing structural reforms and improving government finances under two successive structural adjustment programs. Most state enterprises have been partially or completely privatized, non-priority public spending has been lessened, and the government has gradually liberalized some key sectors of the economy. Liberalization of the telecommunications, cotton, and energy sectors is expected to proceed over the next several years. Chad reached the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative completion point in May 2001.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Chad is officially nonaligned but has close relations with France, the

former colonial power, and other members of the Western community. It receives economic aid from countries of the European Union, the United States, and various international organizations. Libya supplies aid and has an ambassador resident in N'Djamena.

Other resident diplomatic missions in N'Djamena include the embassies of Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, France, Germany, Nigeria, Russia, Sovereign Military Order of Malta, South Africa, Sudan, Taiwan, the United States, and the European Economic Community. A number of other countries have nonresident ambassadors. In 1988, Chad recognized the State of Palestine, which maintains a mission in N'Djamena. Chad has not recognized the State of Israel.

Although relations with Libya improved with the advent of the Deby government, strains persist. Chad has been an active champion of regional cooperation through the Central African Economic and Customs Union, the Lake Chad and Niger River Basin Commissions, and the Interstate Commission for the Fight Against the Drought in the Sahel. On February 8, 2006 the Tripoli Agreement, an attempt to end border related disputes between Chad and Sudan, was signed by Deby and Sudanese leader Al-Bashir at a summit hosted by Libyan leader Gaddafi. Following several violent confrontations between Chadian Government troops and rebels in the east, Deby broke off diplomatic ties with Al-Bashir, who he accused of backing Chadian rebels. Due to the gravity of the humanitarian crisis caused by these violent conflicts, the UN authorized the deployment of an EU peacekeeping force of 3,700 on September 25, 2007. On February 2, 2008 rebels infiltrated N'Djamena, surrounding the Presidential Palace, forcing the evacuation of U.S. Embassy personnel, and stalling the arrival of the peacekeeping presence. A cease-fire agreement was tentatively reached on February 5, 2008. On March 12, both sides met in Dakar, Senegal and signed a peace accord agreeing that they would stop backing rebels hostile to each other. Following that agreement, Sudan accused Chad of continuing to back Sudanese rebels and then severed ties with Chad. While relations between the neighboring nations continued to deteriorate, Chad experienced further rebel attacks within its borders in June 2008. On July 18, President Al-Bashir expressed his desire to restore diplomatic ties with Chad. In early August, the Libyan Government helped to broker an agreement between the Governments of Chad and Sudan. In October 2008, representatives from Chad and Sudan met in Tripoli to formally restore diplomatic ties between their nations, and an exchange of ambassadors occurred in mid-November.

Chad belongs to the following international organizations: UN and some of its specialized and related agencies; African Union; Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC); African Financial Community (Franc Zone); Agency for the Francophone Community; African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States; African Development Bank; Central African States Development Bank; Economic and Monetary Union of Central African (CEMAC); Economic Community of Central African States (CEEAC); Economic Commission for Africa; G-77; International Civil Aviation Organization; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; International Development Association; Islamic Development Bank; International Fund for Agricultural Development; International Finance Corporation; International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Labor Organization; International Monetary Fund; Interpol; International Olympic Committee; International Telecommunication Union; NAM; Organization of the Islamic Conference; Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; Universal Postal Union; World Confederation of Labor; World Intellectual Property Organization; World Meteorological Organization; World Tourism Organization; World Trade Organization.

U.S.-CHAD RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Chad are good. The American embassy in N'Djamena, established at Chadian independence in 1960, was closed from the onset of the heavy fighting in the city in 1980 until the withdrawal of the Libyan forces at the end of 1981. It was reopened in January 1982. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Information Service (USIS) offices resumed activities in Chad in September 1983.

The United States enjoys cordial relations with the Deby government. Chad has proved a valuable partner in the global war on terror, and in providing shelter to approximately 250,000 refugees of Sudan's Darfur crisis along its eastern border.

Before permanently closing its Chad mission in 1995 because of declining funds and security concerns, USAID's development program in Chad concentrated on the agricultural, health, and infrastructure sectors. It also included projects in road repair and maintenance, maternal and child health, famine early warning systems, and agricultural marketing. A number of American voluntary agencies (notably AFRICARE and VITA) continue to operate in Chad. Peace Corps has traditionally had a large presence in Chad, with volunteers arriving during the postwar period in September 1987, then withdrawing in 1998. Peace Corps operations resumed in September 2003, with a group of 20 new volunteers. The second class of 17 volunteers arrived in September 2004. Both groups focused on teaching English; expansion into other areas was planned for 2005. Currently the Peace Corps presence in Chad is inactive.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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GSO:	Shirley White
RSO:	David Richeson
DAO:	Ltc Nicholas Lovelace
EEO:	Donovan Williams
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 1, 2008

Country Description: Chad is a developing country in north central Africa with one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world. Years of civil and foreign war, drought, and lack of economic growth have severely damaged the country's institutions and its infrastructure. The country continues to experience episodes of political instability, characterized by violent clashes between government and rebel groups primarily in eastern Chad, but also in the capitol, N'Djamena. These clashes pose serious risks to civilians. Facilities for tourism are limited. French and Arabic are the official languages.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and visa are required. Visitors must check in with the National Police and obtain a registration stamp within 72 hours of arrival. Further entry information may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Chad, 2002 R St. N.W., Washington D.C. 20009, telephone (202) 462-4009. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Chadian embassy or consulate. Some travelers originating in countries with no Chadian embassy or consulate can arrange for airport entry visas. This process is generally limited to business or official travelers, and arrangements must be made by the traveler's local contact in Chad several days in advance of arrival. The U.S. Embassy is not in a position to assist private U.S. citizens with their visa application for travel to Chad.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's website where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Americans and Europeans are perceived to be wealthy and certain precautions should be taken. Travelers are advised not to leave cash or valuables unsecured in their hotel room and not to wear expensive jewelry or show large amounts of cash. Travelers are also advised to dress modestly, not to walk outside after dark, and to lock their car doors. Petty crimes such as purse snatching, pick-pocketing and theft from vehicles do occur, particularly in areas frequented by expatriates. Violent crime is somewhat rare, but does occur. Burglary and vehicle thefts increase during times of political instability. Expatriate residences have been targeted for armed robbery, and some foreigners have been assaulted in the process. Travelers to northern Cameroon should contact the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer in N'Djamena prior to crossing the Chad/Cameroon border because of a high incidence of road attacks there.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Chad are extremely limited. Medicines are in short supply or unavailable, including many over-the-counter preparations sold in the United States. Travelers should carry any needed, properly labeled, medicines with them. In the event of major injury or illness, visitors generally will require medical evacuation.

There are two medical clinics in the capital of N'Djamena that offer "international standard" medical care: International SOS and Europ-Assistance. These are not walk in clinics and advance membership is required to access services (www.internationalsos.com and www.europ-assistance.co.uk). Both clinics were destroyed during the civil unrest in February 2008, and are not presently operating.

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. Plasmodium falciparum malaria, the type that predominates in Chad, is resistant to the antimalarial drug chloroquine. Because travelers to Chad are at high risk for contracting malaria, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone).

Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking.

For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, visit the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

Other widespread diseases in Chad include diarrhea and upper respiratory infections. AIDS is becoming an increasingly serious problem as infection rates have risen to alarming levels (up to 25 percent in high-risk groups). Meningitis outbreaks usually occur annually and several other diseases (cholera, diphtheria, chicken pox, typhoid) periodically appear.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Chad is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Roads are in poor condition and dangerous. In the capital city of N'Djamena, only the main roads are paved; the rest of the roads are either hard-packed dirt or looser dirt and sand. During the summer rainy season (mid-June to mid-September) many roads become impassable or are restricted by rain barriers, while during the drier season, clouds of dust rising from the roads reduce visibility.

Visitors should take great care while driving. Both paved and unpaved roads are poorly maintained, and often have large ruts and potholes. All drivers should adjust their speed accordingly. At night, streets are not lit; it is imperative to watch for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and livestock, as they may not become visible until they are in very close proximity.

Driving in Chad tends to be erratic both in cities and in rural areas. In cities, particularly N'Djamena, motorists share the roads with bicycles, motor scooters, pedestrians, and non-motorized wheelchairs. Lanes are not marked, and it is not uncommon for a normally two-lane thoroughfare to become a four-lane road during rush hours (generally 7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. on Friday). Drivers are urged to be particularly observant at these times because motorists often attempt to overtake slower traffic by moving into oncoming lanes, usually at high speeds.There are only a few traffic lights in N'Djamena, and these are often out of service. Drivers yield to traffic on their right, particularly when entering the many traffic circles.

In rural areas, drivers should watch for livestock crossing the roads, and for large hawks that rest on the roads. These birds can be fearless, and cause damage by smashing into drivers' windshields; drivers may avoid this by slowing down when approaching the hawks, and allowing them sufficient time to fly away. Finally, drivers should be alert to older transport trucks traveling between cities, which do not always have functioning headlights.

No emergency services exist, so drivers should exercise extreme caution. Travelers should always wear seat belts. When traveling by car, be sure to carry a spare tire. Roadside service is limited to good Samaritans and children who will help push cars to the side or out of holes. When traveling outside the capital, it is imperative to carry sufficient quantities of drinking water. Drivers should ensure that their gas tanks are at least half-full at all times, as gas stations are not widely available. Gas may be purchased in an emergency in bottles from roadside stands, but it is generally of poor quality. Travelers on roads in all areas of the country are subject to attack by armed bandits.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Chad, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Chad's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: All photography requires a government permit. Taking photos of military sites, official buildings, and airports is strictly prohibited, even with a permit. Such sites are not always clearly marked. Film and cameras may be confiscated, often by undercover police.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Chadian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Chad are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: Embassy N'Djamena does not issue immigrant visas. Therefore, American citizens who adopt children in Chad are required to travel to the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde, Cameroon, or another Embassy for visa processing before return to the United States. For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Chad are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Chad through the State Department's travel registration website, Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Chad is located in N'Djamena on Avenue Felix Eboue; mailing address is B.P. 413; telephone (235) 51-62-11, 51-70-09, 51-77-59, 51-90-52, 51-92-18 and 51-92-33, fax (235) 51-56-54.

Travel Warning

November 14, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Chad and recommends that American citizens not affiliated with humanitarian relief efforts avoid all travel to eastern Chad and the Chad/Central African Republic border area due to insecurity caused by banditry and clashes between Government and rebel forces. American citizens residing in Chad should exercise extreme caution throughout the country. This replaces the Travel Warning for Chad dated June 23, 2008 to note the possibility of increased rebel activity.

Armed rebel groups are active in the region and present real dangers. Rebel activity tends to increase during the dry season, which lasts from late September to July. The security situation in general remains fluid and potentially dangerous. The Chadian government is unable to guarantee the safety of visitors in most parts of the country. If rebels approach the capital, N'djamena, the U.S. Embassy may on short notice decide to evacuate non-emergency personnel and family members of Embassy personnel to Cameroon, as was done in June 2008. Family members of Embassy personnel under the age of 21 are not authorized to reside in Chad. Commercial flights continue to operate from N'Djamena International Airport, but flights are subject to change when rebel activity intensifies.

Limited American citizen services are available at the Embassy, but visa services remain suspended until further notice - see contact information below. The U.S. Embassy is not able to support evacuation from eastern Chad. All Americans affiliated with humanitarian relief efforts in eastern Chad must have an evacuation plan developed with the UN which has aircraft and other logistical support. The Embassy strongly recommends that all U.S. citizens in Chad be prepared to implement their personal evacuation or safe haven plans on short notice should the situation warrant, and exercise extreme caution. Americans in Chad should closely monitor news media and the U.S. Embassy's website at http://ndjamena.usembassy.gov.

U.S. citizens affiliated with humanitarian relief efforts in eastern Chad are strongly urged to coordinate travel plans with UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) security officers in Abeche and N'Djamena, and to follow UNHCR guidance regarding safety and security. The government of Chad requires all individuals traveling to or residing in refugee-affected areas in eastern Chad to obtain permits issued by the Ministry of Territorial Administration in N'Djamena, and to register in Abeche upon arrival in eastern Chad. American citizens who intend to enter Sudan from Chad despite the Department's Travel Warnings for both countries must obtain the appropriate visas and permits in advance of entry into Sudan. Further information is available in the Department's Travel Warning for Sudan at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_934.html.

American citizens traveling to or resident in Chad should register with the U.S. Embassy by completing a registration form online at https://travelregistration.state.gov and provide contact information and specific travel data if traveling outside the capital. Registration enables the Embassy to contact American citizens in case of emergency and provide updates on the security situation. The U.S. Embassy is located in N'Djamena on Avenue Felix Ebou; mailing address B.P. 413, telephone (including after hours): (235) 251-70-09; alternate numbers 251-62-11, 251-90-52, 251-92-33, 251-77-59, 251-92-18; fax (235) 251-56-54; website: http://ndjamena.usembassy.gov.

For additional information, consult the Department of State's latest Country Specific Information for Chad at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1086.html and the Worldwide Caution at http://travel.state.gov, or call 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or 1-202-501-4444 from overseas.



CHILE

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Chile

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 756,945 sq. km. (302,778 sq. mi.); nearly twice the size of California.

Cities: Capital—Santiago (metropolitan area est. 6 million). Other cities—Concepcion-Talcahuano (840,000), Vina del Mar-Valparaiso (800,000), Antofagasta (245,000), Temuco (230,000).

Terrain: Desert in north; fertile central valley; volcanoes and lakes toward the south, giving way to rugged and complex coastline; Andes Mountains on the eastern border.

Climate: Arid in north, Mediterranean in the central portion, cool and damp in south.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Chilean(s).

Population: (2007) 16.5 million.

Annual population growth rate: 1.0%.

Ethnic groups: Spanish-Native-American (mestizo), European, Native-American.

Religions: Roman Catholic 89%; Protestant 11%.

Languages: Spanish.

Education: Years compulsory—12. Attendance—3 million. Adult literacy rate—96%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—8.9/1,000. Life expectancy—76 yrs.

Work force: (6.94 million); employed 6.4 million: Community, social and individual services—26%; industry—14.4%; commerce—17.6%; agriculture, forestry, and fishing—13.9%; construction—7.1%; financial services—7.5%; transportation and communication—8.0%; electricity, gas and water—0.5%; mining—1.2%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: September 18, 1810.

Constitution: Promulgated September 11, 1980; effective March 11, 1981; amended in 1989, 1993, 1997, and 2005.

Government branches: Executive—president. Legislative—bicameral legislature. Judicial—Constitutional Tribunal, Supreme Court, court of appeals, military courts.

Political subdivisions: 12 numbered regions plus two new functioning regions—Arica and Los Rios—that are not numbered, as well as the Santiago metropolitan region, administered by appointed "intendentes." Regions are divided into provinces, administered by appointed governors; provinces are divided into municipalities administered by elected mayors.

Political parties: Major parties are grouped into two large coalitions: 1) the center-left "Concertacion," which includes the Christian Democrat Party, the Socialist Party, the Party for Democracy, and the Radical Social Democratic Party; and 2) the center-right "Alliance for Chile," which includes the National Renewal Party and the Independent Democratic Union. The Communist Party joined the Humanistic Party and a number of smaller parties to form the "Together We Can" coalition in 2004, but none of these leftist parties have recently elected congressional representatives. A new center-left party, "Chile-First," was established in October 2007.

Suffrage: Universal at 18, including foreigners legally resident for more than 5 years.

Economy (2007)

GDP: (official exchange rate) $162.5 billion.

Annual real growth rate: 5.2%.

Per capita GDP: (PPP) $13,900.

Forestry, agriculture, and fisheries: (6% of GDP) Products—wheat, potatoes, corn, sugar beets, onions, beans, fruits, livestock, fish.

Commerce: (8% of GDP) Sales, restaurants, hotels.

Manufacturing: (17% of GDP) Types—mineral refining, metal manufacturing, food processing, fish pro-

cessing, paper and wood products, finished textiles.
Electricity, gas, and water: 3% of GDP.
Transportation and communication: 7% of GDP.
Construction: 8% of GDP.
Financial services: (12% of GDP) Insurance, leasing, consulting.
Mining: (13% of GDP) Copper, iron ore, nitrates, precious metals, and molybdenum.
Trade: Exports—$66.6 billion: copper, fishmeal, fruits, wood products, paper products, fish, wine. Major markets—U.S., Japan, China, Netherlands, South Korea, Brazil, Italy, Mexico. Imports—$46.2 billion: consumer goods, chemicals, motor vehicles, fuels, electrical machinery, heavy industrial machinery, food. Major suppliers—EU, Argentina, U.S., Brazil, China, South Korea.

GEOGRAPHY

The northern Chilean desert contains great mineral wealth, principally copper. The relatively small central area dominates the country in terms of population and agricultural resources. This area also is the cultural and political center from which Chile expanded in the late 19th century, when it incorporated its northern and southern regions. Southern Chile is rich in forests and grazing lands and features a string of volcanoes and lakes. The southern coast is a labyrinth of fjords, inlets, canals, twisting peninsulas, and islands. The Andes Mountains are located on the eastern border.

PEOPLE

About 85% of Chile's population lives in urban areas, with 40% living in greater Santiago. Most have Spanish ancestry. A small, yet influential number of Irish and English immigrants came to Chile during the colonial period. German immigration began in 1848 and lasted for 90 years; the southern provinces of Valdivia, Llanquihue, and Osorno show a strong German influence. Other significant immigrant groups are Italian, Croatian, Basque, and Palestinian. About 800,000 Native Americans, mostly of the Mapuche tribe, reside in the south-central area. The Aymara and Diaguita groups can be found mainly in Chile's northern desert valleys.

HISTORY

About 10,000 years ago, migrating Indians settled in fertile valleys and along the coast of what is now Chile. The Incas briefly extended their empire into what is now northern Chile, but the area's barrenness prevented extensive settlement. The first Europeans to arrive in Chile were Diego de Almagro and his band of Spanish conquistadors, who came from Peru seeking gold in 1535. The Spanish encountered hundreds of thousands of Indians from various cultures in the area that modern Chile now occupies. These cultures supported themselves principally through slash-and-burn agriculture and hunting. The conquest of Chile began in earnest in 1540 and was carried out by Pedro de Valdivia, one of Francisco Pizarro's lieutenants, who founded the city of Santiago on February 12, 1541. Although the Spanish did not find the extensive gold and silver they sought, they recognized the agricultural potential of Chile's central valley, and Chile became part of the Viceroyalty of Peru.

The drive for independence from Spain was precipitated by usurpation of the Spanish throne by Napoleon's brother Joseph in 1808. A national junta in the name of Ferdinand—heir to the deposed king—was formed on September 18, 1810. The junta proclaimed Chile an autonomous republic within the Spanish monarchy. A movement for total independence soon won a wide following. Spanish attempts to reimpose arbitrary rule during what was called the "Reconquista" led to a prolonged struggle.

Intermittent warfare continued until 1817, when an army led by Bernardo O'Higgins, Chile's most renowned patriot, and José San Martín, hero of Argentine independence, crossed the Andes into Chile and defeated the royalists. On February 12, 1818, Chile was proclaimed an independent republic under O'Higgins' leadership. The political revolt brought little social change, however, and 19th century Chilean society preserved the essence of the stratified colonial social structure, which was greatly influenced by family politics and the Roman Catholic Church. A strong presidency eventually emerged, but wealthy landowners remained extremely powerful. Toward the end of the 19th century, the government in Santiago consolidated its position in the south by ruthlessly suppressing the Mapuche Indians. In 1881, it signed a treaty with Argentina confirming Chilean sovereignty over the Strait of Magellan. As a result of the War of the Pacific with Peru and Bolivia (1879-83), Chile expanded its territory northward by almost one-third and acquired valuable nitrate deposits, the exploitation of which led to an era of national affluence. Chile established a parliamentary democracy in the late 19th century, but degenerated into a system protecting the interests of the ruling oligarchy. By the 1920s, the emerging middle and working classes were powerful enough to elect a reformist president, whose program was frustrated by a conservative congress. In the 1920s, Marxist groups with strong popular support arose.

Continuing political and economic instability resulted with the rule of the quasidictatorial Gen. Carlos Ibanez (1924-32). When constitutional rule was restored in 1932, a strong middle-class party, the Radicals, emerged. It became the key force in coalition governments for the next 20 years. During the period of Radical Party dominance (1932-52), the state increased its role in the economy.

The 1964 presidential election of Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei-Montalva by an absolute majority initiated a period of major reform. Under the slogan "Revolution in Liberty," the Frei administration embarked on far-reaching social and economic programs, particularly in education, housing, and agrarian reform, including rural unionization



of agricultural workers. By 1967, however, Frei encountered increasing opposition from leftists, who charged that his reforms were inadequate, and from conservatives, who found them excessive. At the end of his term, Frei had accomplished many noteworthy objectives, but he had not fully achieved his party's ambitious goals. In 1970, Senator Salvador Allende, a Marxist and member of Chile's Socialist Party, who headed the "Popular Unity" (UP) coalition of socialists, communists, radicals, and dissident Christian Democrats, won a plurality of votes in a three-way contest and was named President by the Chilean Congress. His program included the nationalization of private industries and banks, massive land expropriation, and collectivization. Allende's program also included the nationalization of U.S. interests in Chile's major copper mines.

Elected with only 36% of the vote and by a plurality of only 36,000 votes, Allende never enjoyed majority support in the Chilean Congress or broad popular support. Domestic production declined; severe shortages of consumer goods, food, and manufactured products were widespread; and inflation reached 1,000% per annum. Mass demonstrations, recurring strikes, violence by both government supporters and opponents, and widespread rural unrest ensued in response to the general deterioration of the economy. By 1973, Chilean society had split into two hostile camps.

A military coup overthrew Allende on September 11, 1973. As the armed forces bombarded the presidential palace, Allende reportedly committed suicide. A military government, led by General Augusto Pinochet, took over control of the country. The first years of the regime in particular were marked by serious human rights violations. A new Constitution was approved by a plebiscite on September 11, 1980, and General Pinochet became President of the Republic for an 8-year term. In its later years, the regime gradually permitted greater freedom of assembly, speech, and association, to include trade union activity. In contrast to its authoritarian political rule, the military government pursued decidedly laissez-faire economic policies. During its 16 years in power, Chile moved away from economic statism toward a largely free market economy that fostered an increase in domestic and foreign private investment. In a plebiscite on October 5, 1988, General Pinochet was denied a second 8-year term as

president. Chileans voted for elections to choose a new president and the majority of members of a two-chamber congress. On December 14, 1989, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the candidate of a coalition of 17 political parties called the Concertacion, was elected president. Aylwin served from 1990 to 1994 and was succeeded by another Christian Democrat, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle (son of the previous President), leading the same coalition, for a 6-year term. Ricardo Lagos Escobar of the Socialist Party and the Party for Democracy led the Concertacion to a narrower victory in 2000 presidential elections. His term ended on March 11, 2006, when President Michelle Bachelet Jeria, of the Socialist Party, took office.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Chile's Constitution was approved in a September 1980 national plebiscite. It entered into force in March 1981. After Pinochet's defeat in the 1988 plebiscite, the Constitution was amended to ease provisions for future amendments to the Constitution. In September 2005, President Ricardo Lagos signed into law several constitutional amendments passed by Congress. These include eliminating the positions of appointed senators and senators for life, granting the President authority to remove the commanders-in-chief of the armed forces, and reducing the presidential term from six to four years.

Presidential and congressional elections were held December 2005 and January 2006. In the first round of presidential elections, none of the four presidential candidates won more than 50% of the vote. As a result, the top two vote-getters—center-left Concertacion coalition's Michelle Bachelet and center-right Alianza coalition's Sebastian Pinera—competed in a run-off election on January 15, 2006, which Michelle Bachelet won. This was Chile's fourth presidential election since the end of the Pinochet era. All four have been judged free and fair. The President is constitutionally barred from serving consecutive terms. President Bachelet and the new members of Congress took office on March 11, 2006.

Chile has a bicameral Congress, which meets in the port city of Valparaiso, about 140 kilometers (84 mi.) west of the capital, Santiago. Deputies are elected every 4 years, and Senators serve 8-year terms. Chile's congressional elections are governed by a unique binomial system that rewards coalition slates. Each coalition can run two candidates for the two Senate and two Deputy seats apportioned to each electoral district. Historically, the two largest coalitions (Concertacion and Alianza) split most of the seats in a district. Only if the leading coalition ticket out-polls the second-place coalition by a margin of more than 2-to-1 does the winning coalition gain both seats.

In the December 11, 2005 congressional elections, the Concertacion coalition won a majority in both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. In the 38-member Senate, the Concertacion coalition holds 19 seats and the Alianza opposition holds 17. There are two independents. In the 120-member Chamber of Deputies, the Concertacion coalitions holds 62 seats and the Alianza holds 53. There are five independents.

Chile's judiciary is independent and includes a court of appeal, a system of military courts, a constitutional tribunal, and the Supreme Court. In June 2005, Chile completed a nationwide overhaul of its criminal justice system. The reform has replaced inquisitorial proceedings with an adversarial system more similar to that of the United States.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Michelle BACHELET**
Min. of Agriculture: **Marigen HORNKOHL Venegas**
Min. of Culture: **Paulina URRUTIA**
Min. of Defense: **Jose GONI**
Min. of Economy, Development, & Reconstruction: **Hugo LAVADOS Montes**
Min. of Education: **Monica JIMENEZ de la Jara**
Min. of Energy: **Marcelo TOKMAN**
Min. of Environment: **Ana Lya URIARTE**
Min. of Finance: **Andres VELASCO**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Alejandro FOXLEY**
Min. of Health: **Maria BARRIA**
Min. of Housing, Urbanism, & Public Lands: **Patricia POBLETE**
Min. of Interior: **Edmundo PEREZ YOMA**
Min. of Justice: **Carlos MALDONADO**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Osvaldo ANDRADE**
Min. of Mining: **Santiago GONZALEZ Larrain**
Min. of Planning & Cooperation: **Paula QUINTANA**
Min. of Public Works: **Sergio BITAR**
Min. of State & National Property: **Romy SCHMIDT**
Min. of Transportation: **Rene CORTAZAR**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **Laura ALBORNOZ**
Min. Sec. Gen. of the Presidency: **Jose Antonio VIERA-GALLO**
Pres., Central Bank: **Jose DE GREGORIO**
Ambassador to the US: **Mariano FERNANDEZ**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Heraldo Benjamin MUNOZ Valenzuela**

Chile maintains an embassy in the United States at 1732 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; tel: 202-785-1746, fax: 202-659-9624, email: embassy@embassyofchile.org.

DEFENSE

Chile's Armed Forces are subject to civilian control exercised by the President through the Minister of Defense. The President has the authority to remove the commanders-in-chief of the armed forces.

Army

The commander in chief of the Chilean Army is General Oscar Izurieta Ferrer. The Chilean Army is 45,000 strong and is organized with an Army headquarters in Santiago, seven divisions throughout its territory, an Air

Brigade in Rancagua, and a Special Forces Command in Colina. The Chilean Army is one of the most professional and technologically advanced armies in Latin America.

Navy

Admiral Rodolfo Codina directs the 23,000-person Navy, including 2,500 Marines. Of the fleet of 29 surface vessels, only eight are operational major combatants (frigates). Those ships are based in Valparaiso. The Navy operates its own aircraft for transport and patrol; there are no Navy fighter or bomber aircraft. The Navy also operates four submarines based in Talcahuano.

Air Force (FACH)

Gen. Ricardo Ortega Perrier heads a force of 12,500. Air assets are distributed among five air brigades headquartered in Iquique, Antofagasta, Santiago, Puerto Montt, and Punta Arenas. The Air Force also operates an airbase on King George Island, Antarctica. The FACH took delivery of the final 2 of 10 F-16s, all purchased from the U.S., in March 2007. Chile also took delivery in 2007 of a number of reconditioned Block 15 F-16s from the Netherlands, bringing to 18 the total of F-16s purchased from the Dutch.

Carabineros

After the military coup in September 1973, the Chilean national police (Carabineros) were incorporated into the Defense Ministry. With the return of democratic government, the police were placed under the operational control of the Interior Ministry but remained under the nominal control of the Defense Ministry. Gen. Jose Bernales is the head of the national police force of 30,000 men and women who are responsible for law enforcement, traffic management, narcotics suppression, border control, and counter-terrorism throughout Chile.

ECONOMY

After a decade of impressive growth rates, Chile began to experience a moderate economic downturn in 1999, brought on by unfavorable global economic conditions related to the Asian financial crisis, which began in 1997. The economy remained sluggish until 2003, when it began to show clear signs of recovery, achieving 3.3% real GDP growth. The Chilean economy finished 2004 with growth of 6.1%. Real GDP growth reached 6.3% in 2005, decreased to 4.0% in 2006, and rose once again to 5.2% in 2007. Higher energy prices as well as lagging consumer demand were drags on the economy in 2006. Higher Chilean Government spending and favorable external conditions (including record copper prices for much of 2006) were not enough to offset these drags. The year 2007 saw Chile recuperating from sluggish economic growth in 2006.

Chile has pursued generally sound economic policies for nearly three decades. The 1973-90 military government sold many state-owned companies, and the three democratic governments since 1990 have continued privatization, though at a slower pace. The government's role in the economy is mostly limited to regulation, although the state continues to operate copper giant CODELCO and a few other enterprises (there is one state-run bank). Chile is strongly committed to free trade and has welcomed large amounts of foreign investment. Chile has signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with a whole network of countries, including an FTA with the United States, which was signed in 2003 and implemented in January 2004. Over the last several years, Chile has signed FTAs with the European Union, South Korea, New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei, China, and Japan. It reached a partial trade agreement with India in 2005 and began negotiations for a full-fledged FTA with India in 2006. Chile conducted trade negotiations in 2007 with Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand, as well as with China to expand an existing agreement beyond just trade in goods. Chile hopes to conclude FTA negotiations with Australia and the expanded agreement with China in 2008. Negotiations with Malaysia and Thailand are scheduled to continue throughout 2008. The members of the P4 (Chile, Singapore, New Zealand, and Brunei) also plan to conclude a chapter on finance and investment in 2008.

High domestic savings and investment rates helped propel Chile's economy to average growth rates of 8% during the 1990s. The privatized national pension system (AFP) has encouraged domestic investment and contributed to an estimated total domestic savings rate of approximately 21% of GDP. However, the AFP is not without its critics, who cite low participation rates (only 55% of the working population is covered), with groups such as the self-employed outside the system. There has also been criticism of the inefficiency and high costs due to a lack of competition among pension funds. Critics cite loopholes in the use of pension savings through lump sum withdraws for the purchase of a second home or payment of university fees as fundamental weaknesses of the AFP. The Bachelet administration plans substantial reform, but not an overhaul, of the AFP during the next several years.

Unemployment stubbornly hovered in the 8%-10% range after the start of the economic slowdown in 1999, well above the 5%-6% average for the 1990s. Unemployment finally dipped to 7.8% at the end of 2007, due largely to the fact that fewer Chileans were entering the workforce rather than to a substantial and sustained creation of new jobs. The decrease in unemployment can also be attributed to a limited increase in jobs caused by foreign direct investment. Most international observers place some of the blame for Chile's consistently high unemployment rate on complicated and restrictive labor laws. Wages have risen faster than inflation as a result of higher productivity, boosting national living standards. The percentage of Chileans with incomes below the poverty line—defined as twice the cost of satisfying a family of

four's minimal nutritional needs—fell from 46% in 1987 to around 18.2% by 2005.

Chile's independent Central Bank pursues an inflation target of between 2% and 4%. However, within the year 2007, inflation inched towards 8%—the first time inflation has exceeded 5% since 1998. The Chilean peso's rapid appreciation against the U.S. dollar in recent years has helped dampen inflation. Most wage settlements and loans are indexed, reducing inflation's volatility. Under the compulsory private pension system, most formal sector employees pay 10% of their salaries into privately managed funds.

Total foreign direct investment (FDI) was only $3.4 billion in 2006, up 52% from a poor performance in 2005. However, 80% of FDI continues to go to only four sectors: electricity, gas, water and mining. Much of the jump in FDI in 2006 was also the result of acquisitions and mergers and has done little to create new employment in Chile. The Chilean Government has formed a Council on Innovation and Competition, which is tasked with identifying new sectors and industries to promote. It is hoped that this, combined with some tax reforms to encourage domestic and foreign investment in research and development, will bring in additional FDI and to new parts of the economy. As of 2006, Chile invested only 0.6% of its annual GDP in research and development (R&D). Even then, two-thirds of that was government spending. The fact that domestic and foreign companies spend almost nothing on R&D does not bode well for the Government of Chile's efforts to develop innovative, knowledge-based sectors. Additionally, on January 8, 2007, Chile was placed on the U.S. Trade Representative's Priority Watch List due to its poor record on protecting intellectual property rights. Chile is only the second U.S. FTA partner ever to be placed on the Priority Watch List. Chile has a poor and deteriorating record of protecting copyrighted music, films, and software. Combined with this is its institutional structure allowing local companies to produce and market pharmaceutical generics that violate existing patents. Beyond its general economic and political stability, the government also has encouraged the use of Chile as an "investment platform" for multinational corporations planning to operate in the region, but this will have limited value given the developing business climate in Chile itself. Chile's approach to foreign direct investment is codified in the country's Foreign Investment Law, which gives foreign investors the same treatment as Chileans. Registration is simple and transparent, and foreign investors are guaranteed access to the official foreign exchange market to repatriate their profits and capital. While Chile and the EU have signed a double taxation treaty, no such agreement exists between the U.S. and Chile.

Foreign Trade

2006 was a record year for Chilean trade. Total trade registered a 31% increase over 2005. During 2006, exports of goods and services totaled U.S. $58 billion, an increase of 41%. This figure was somewhat distorted by the skyrocketing price of copper. In 2006, copper exports reached a historical high of U.S. $33.3 billion. Imports totaled U.S. $35 billion, an increase of 17% compared to the previous year. Chile thus recorded a positive trade balance of U.S. $23 billion in 2006.

The main destinations for Chilean exports were the Americas (U.S. $39 billion), Asia (U.S. $27.8 billion) and Europe (U.S. $22.2 billion). Seen as shares of Chile's export markets, 42% of exports went to the Americas, 30% to Asia and 24% to Europe. Within Chile's diversified network of trade relationships, its most important partner remained the United States. Total trade with the U.S. was U.S. $15.7 billion in 2007 as compared to U.S. $14.8 billion in 2006. Since the U.S.-Chile Free Trade Agreement went into effect on January 1, 2004, U.S.-Chilean trade has increased by 154%. Internal Government of Chile figures show that even when factoring out inflation and the recent high price of copper, bilateral trade between the U.S. and Chile has grown over 60% since then. Total trade with Europe also grew in 2006, expanding by 42%. The Netherlands and Italy were Chile's main European trading partners. Total trade with Asia also grew significantly at nearly 31%. Trade with Korea and Japan grew significantly, but China remained Chile's most important trading partner in Asia. Chile's total trade with China reached U.S. $8.8 billion in 2006, representing nearly 66% of the value of its trade relationship with Asia.

The growth of exports in 2006 was due mainly to a strong increase in sales to the United States, the Netherlands, and Japan. These three markets alone accounted for an additional U.S. $5.5 billion worth of Chilean exports. In 2007, Chilean exports to the United States totaled U.S. $8.4 billion, representing a 10% decrease compared to 2006 (U.S. $9.3 billion). Within the same year, exports to China were U.S. $9.9 billion. Exports to Japan and South Korea reached U.S. $7.1 billion and U.S. $3.8 billion respectively.

During 2006, Chile imported U.S. $26 billion from the Americas, representing 54% of total imports, followed by Asia at 22%, and Europe at 16%. Mercosur members were the main suppliers of imports to Chile at U.S. $9.1 billion, followed by the United States with U.S. $5.5 billion and the European Union with U.S. $5.2 billion. From Asia, China was the most important exporter to Chile, with goods valued at U.S. $3.6 billion. Year-on-year growth in imports was especially strong from a number of countries—Ecuador (123.9%), Thailand (72.1%), Korea (52.6%), and China (36.9%).

Chile's overall trade profile has traditionally been dependent upon copper exports. The state-owned firm CODELCO is the world's largest copper-producing company, with recorded copper reserves of 200 years. Chile has made an effort to expand nontraditional exports. The most important non-mineral exports are forestry and wood products, fresh fruit and processed food, fishmeal and seafood, and wine.

Successive Chilean governments have actively pursued trade-liberalizing agreements. During the 1990s, Chile signed FTAs with Canada, Mexico, and Central America. Chile also concluded preferential trade agreements with Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. An association agreement with Mercosur—Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay—went into effect in October 1996. Continuing its export-oriented development strategy, Chile completed landmark free trade agreements in 2002 with the European Union and South Korea. Chile, as a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization, is seeking to boost commercial ties to Asian markets. To that end, it has signed trade agreements in recent years with New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei, India, China, and most recently Japan. In 2007, Chile held trade negotiations with Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, and China. In 2008, Chile hopes to conclude an FTA with Australia, and finalize an expanded agreement (covering trade in services and investment) with China. The P4 (Chile, Singapore, New Zealand, and Brunei) also plan to expand ties through adding a finance and investment chapter to the existing P4 agreement. Chile's trade talks with Malaysia and Thailand are also scheduled to continue in 2008.

After two years of negotiations, the United States and Chile signed an agreement in June 2003 that will lead to completely duty-free bilateral trade within 12 years. The U.S.-Chile FTA entered into force January 1, 2004 following approval by the U.S. and Chilean congresses. The bilateral FTA has inaugurated greatly expanded U.S.-Chilean trade ties, with total bilateral trade jumping by 154% during the FTA's first three years.

Chile unilaterally lowered its across-the-board import tariff for all countries with which it does not have a trade agreement to 6% in 2003. Higher effective tariffs are charged only on imports of wheat, wheat flour, and sugar as a result of a system of import price bands. The price bands were ruled inconsistent with Chile's World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations in 2002, and the government has introduced legislation to modify them. Under the terms of the U.S.-Chile FTA, the price bands will be completely phased out for U.S. imports of wheat, wheat flour, and sugar within 12 years.

Chile is a strong proponent of pressing ahead on negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and is active in the WTO's Doha round of negotiations, principally through its membership in the G-20 and Cairns Group.

Finance

Chile's financial sector has grown quickly in recent years, with a banking reform law approved in 1997 that broadened the scope of permissible foreign activity for Chilean banks. The Chilean Government implemented a further liberalization of capital markets in 2001, and there is further pending legislation proposing further liberalization. Over the last ten years, Chileans have enjoyed the introduction of new financial tools such as home equity loans, currency futures and options, factoring, leasing, and debit cards.

The introduction of these new products has also been accompanied by an increased use of traditional instruments such as loans and credit cards. Chile's private pension system, with assets worth roughly $70 billion at the end of 2006, has been an important source of investment capital for the capital market. Chile maintains one of the best credit ratings (S&P A+) in Latin America.

There are three main ways for Chilean firms to raise funds abroad: bank loans, issuance of bonds, and the selling of stocks on U.S. markets through American Depository Receipts (ADRs). Nearly all of the funds raised through these means go to finance domestic Chilean investment. The government is required by law to run a fiscal surplus of at least 1% of GDP. In 2006, the Government of Chile ran a surplus of $11.3 billion, equal to almost 8% of GDP. The Government of Chile continues to pay down its foreign debt, with public debt only 2.25% of GDP at the end of 2007.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since its return to democracy in 1990, Chile has been an active participant in the international political arena. Chile completed a 2-year non-permanent position on the UN Security Council in January 2005. Jose Miguel Insulza, a Chilean national, was elected Secretary General of the Organization of American States in May 2005. Chile is currently serving on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors, and the 2007-2008 chair of the board is Chile's ambassador to the IAEA, Milenko E. Skoknic. The country is an active member of the UN family of agencies and participates in UN peacekeeping activities. It is currently bidding for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council. Chile hosted the Defense Ministerial of the Americas in 2002 and the APEC summit and related meetings in 2004. It also hosted the Community of Democracies ministerial in April 2005 and the Ibero-American Summit in November 2007. An associate member of Mercosur and a full member of APEC, Chile has been an important actor on international economic issues and hemispheric free trade.

The Chilean Government has diplomatic relations with most countries. It settled its territorial disputes with Argentina during the 1990s. Chile and Bolivia severed diplomatic ties in 1978 over Bolivia's desire to reacquire territory it lost to Chile in 1879-83 War of the Pacific. The two countries maintain consular relations and are represented at the Consul General level.

U.S.-CHILEAN RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Chile are better now than at any other time in history. The U.S. Government applauded the rebirth of

democratic practices in Chile in the late 1980s and early 1990s and sees the maintenance of a vibrant democracy and a healthy and sustainable economy as among the most important U.S. interests in Chile. Besides the landmark 2003 U.S.-Chile FTA, the two governments consult frequently on issues of mutual concern, including in the areas of multilateral diplomacy, security, culture, and science.

U.S. Embassy Functions

In addition to working closely with Chilean Government officials to strengthen our bilateral relationship, the U.S. Embassy in Santiago provides a wide range of services to U.S. citizens and businesses in Chile. (Please see the embassy's home page for details of these services.) The Embassy also is the locus for a number of American community activities in the Santiago area.

The Public Affairs Section cooperates with universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on a variety of programs of bilateral interest. Of special note are extensive U.S. Speaker, International Visitor, and Fulbright programs. Themes of particular interest include trade, international security, democratic governance in the region, judicial reform, law enforcement, environmental issues, and the teaching of English. The Public Affairs Section works daily with Chilean media, which has a keen interest in bilateral and regional relations. It also assists visiting foreign media, including U.S. journalists, and is regularly involved in press events for high-level visitors. Attachés at the Embassy from the Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) work closely with the hundreds of U.S. companies who export to or maintain offices in Chile. These officers provide information on Chilean trade and industry regulations and administer several programs intended to support U.S. companies' sales in Chile.

The Consular Section of the Embassy provides vital services to the more than 12,000 U.S. citizens residing in Chile. It assists Americans who wish to vote in U.S. elections while abroad, provides U.S. tax information, and facilitates government benefits/social security payments. Besides those U.S. citizens resident in Chile, about 170,000 U.S. citizens visit Chile annually. The Consular Section offers passport and emergency services to U.S. tourists during their stay in Chile. It also issues about 40,000 visitor visas annually to Chilean citizens who plan to travel to the United States.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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Comite de Inversiones Extranjeras (Foreign Investment Committee)
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Additional information regarding U.S. and U.S.-Chile trade can be found at the following websites: www.export.gov and http://www.buyusa.gov/chile/en.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 20, 2008

Country Description: Chile is a rapidly developing country with a large, educated middle class and a robust free-market economy. Tourist facilities are generally good and are continuously improving.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizens entering Chile must have a valid passport. U.S. visitors will be charged a reciprocity fee at the port of entry, and a small receipt for the fee will be stapled in the last page of the pass-

port. This visa is valid for multiple entries and remains valid until the expiration of the passport. In addition, visitors will be issued a tourist visa consisting of a single sheet of paper placed in the passport. This visa is valid for a stay of up to 90 days. An extension of stay for an additional 90 days is possible, but requires payment of an extension fee. The visa document must be surrendered to immigration authorities upon departure.

Chilean entry and exit control laws require that a minor child under age 18 traveling unaccompanied must have permission from the parents or legal guardians. The document must be notarized and, if issued in the United States, authenticated by a Chilean consul in the United States.

If the child is traveling in the company of only one parent or guardian, the non-traveling parent or guardian will also be required to grant permission for travel. In this case, the document will also need to be notarized and authenticated by a Chilean consul. The permission to travel may also be notarized by a Chilean notary in Chile.

Parents are required to have documentary evidence of their relationship to the child. An original birth certificate or certified copy of an original birth certificate is required. This requirement applies to all foreigners as well as Chileans. This requirement is increasingly being enforced by Chilean immigration officers. When traveling with a minor child in Chile on a tourist visa, having such documentation on hand will facilitate entry and departure.

Visit the Embassy of Chile web site www.chile-usa.org for the most current visa information and entry/exit requirements. Visitors should be aware of the severe Chilean restrictions on the importation of fruit, vegetables & agricultural products. Check the Ministry of Agriculture web site www.sag.gob.cl for current requirements.

Safety and Security: The potential for terrorist activity is low. There has been some politically-motivated violence among indigenous communities in southern Chile, none of which has affected Americans. Potential for civil disturbance is low, although demonstrations, sometimes violent, do occur. Particularly violent days are March 29, the Day of the Young Combatant, and the anniversary of the September 11, 1973, coup against the government of President Salvador Allende.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime rates are low to moderate throughout Chile and are moderate in Santiago, Valparaiso, and other major cities. American citizens visiting Chile should be as careful in cities as they would be in any city in the United States. There have been few violent crimes committed against Americans. However, American tourists are at a heightened risk for pickpocketing, purse or camera snatching, and theft from backpacks and rental cars. Such crimes have been reported in all areas of Chile frequented by tourists. In Santiago, visitors should be especially alert to the possibility of crime at the Plaza de Armas and the Mercado Central; at major hotels and restaurants in the Las Condes, Vitacura, and Providencia areas, and in the Suecia and Bellavista entertainment districts. In Valparaiso, visitors should be especially alert in the port and adjoining tourist areas. Tourists using taxis in Santiago should be alert to possible scams involving currency switching. Tourists should also be especially alert while using public transportation, such as the Santiago Metro Subway and public buses and while in the vicinity of Metro stations and bus terminals. The emergency number for the police (Carabineros) is 133. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Chile is:

131–AMBULANCE (SAMU)
132–FIRE DEPARTMENT (BOMBEROS)
133–POLICE DEPARTMENT (CARABINEROS)

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care, though generally good, may not meet U.S. standards, especially in remote areas. Although emergency rooms in some major hospitals accept credit cards, many doctors and hospitals in Chile expect immediate payment in cash. Prescriptions written by local doctors and over-the-counter medicines are widely available. Air pollution is a major source of health concern in Santiago, resulting in severe bronchial ailments affecting infants, small children and the elderly. The most severe air pollution occurs during the winter (May through August). Additional information on air quality levels is available at the National Air Quality Information Service (SINCA) web site—www.sinca.conama.cl. The

ozone layer is especially thin at the bottom of the world. Travelers should take proper precautions to protect themselves from ultraviolet radiation.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRI. (1-877-394-8747) or from the CDC's web site at http://wwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Chile is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Chile is on the right-hand side of the road. Traffic laws in Chile differ from traffic laws in the United States in some respects. Right-hand turns are generally prohibited at red lights unless otherwise posted. Seat belts are mandatory. Several modern toll highways have recently been opened in and around Santiago, dramatically improving transit into and through the city. Major roads are generally in good condition throughout the country. Some secondary roads, however, may be poorly maintained. At night, occasional heavy fog in rural areas may lead to vehicle accidents with occasional deaths and injuries. Care should be taken while driving in the mountains because the roads tend to have many tight switchbacks and may not have guardrails. Chains are often required and should be used on mountain roads during the winter. Many major highways in Chile are toll roads; drivers should carry a sufficient amount of local currency to cover the tolls. The new major highways in and around Santiago generally collect tolls through use of an electronic transmitter issued by the concessionaire and placed on the vehicle. "Day passes" may be purchased separately. Vehicles rented at Santiago airport generally are equipped with the electronic transmitter and the rental car companies charge a surcharge for its use. Some major arteries remain under construction in Santiago and drivers should be alert for detours and delays. Information on the major highways in the Metropolitan Region requiring an electronic transmitter is found at www.concesiones.cl.

Throughout Chile, care should be exercised when changing lanes or merging because many drivers do not signal lane changes and rarely yield to merging traffic. Many Chilean drivers exceed posted speed limits, do not maintain safe distances, and do not observe posted road signs. Buses are especially aggressive in moving between lanes. Speeding is common, including in urban areas. Traffic jams and detours in Santiago and other areas are common. Taxis are plentiful and relatively inexpensive. Drivers should drive with car doors locked at all times, especially in the southern parts of the city and near the airport, as there have been reports of thieves entering cars stopped at traffic lights or moving in slow traffic. In Santiago, certain major arteries switch directions during morning and evening rush hours. Visitors to Santiago should obtain up-to-date information on these changes from their auto rental company or the Chilean Automobile Association (please see below). Visitors that wish to use the public bus and subway system in Santiago should visit the following websites for information on purchasing a "BIP" card, a prepaid ticket required for public buses, routes and other helpful information regarding the public transportation systems: www.metrosantiago.cl and www.micros.cl. Driving under the influence of alcohol in Chile is severely punished, and can result in incarceration if the driver is involved in an accident. In accidents involving injuries or death, police may detain both drivers for many hours.

Visitors must have an international driver's permit in order to drive legally in Chile. The international driver's license must be obtained in the United States before traveling to Chile. Although car rental firms may rent to customers with only a U.S. driver's license, the police fine foreigners for driving without a valid international permit.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Chile's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Chile's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Visitors should take care to use only the services of government licensed tour operators throughout Chile as the Embassy is aware of at least one accident involving American fatalities with an unauthorized tour operator. Special care should be taken by arriving cruise ship passengers if arranging land tours not authorized by the cruise line.

Chile is an earthquake-prone country. Information on Chilean earthquake preparedness is available from the Oficina Nacional de Emergencia de Chile (ONEMI) at www.onemi.cl. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at www.fema.gov. Information about emergency preparedness is also available on the Embassy web site at http://santiago.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Geological Survey provides earthquake information on Chile at http://earthquake.

usgs.gov. Minefields are found in Chile's northern border with Peru and Bolivia and on the southern border with Argentina in Patagonia. Minefields are generally marked, but markers may have been shifted, become obscured or been vandalized. Travelers should pay attention to markers and follow clearly identified roads and trails when traveling in minefield areas. Border crossings should only be made at authorized locations. Persons visiting wilderness areas in the border regions mentioned above should check with park or other local officials concerning minefields and other potential hazards.

Chile is a popular destination for outdoors and adventure sports. Much of the country is mountain, forest, desert, or glacier. Despite the best efforts of local authorities, assisting persons lost or injured in such areas can be problematic. American citizens have been killed in recent years in mountain climbing and whitewater rafting accidents, and seriously injured while skiing. Persons planning to travel in isolated and wilderness areas should first learn about local hazards and weather conditions. Information about parks and wilderness areas can be obtained from the Chilean Forestry Service at www.conaf.cl. Information about mountain climbing in Chile can be obtained from the Federacion de Andinismo de Chile at www.feach.cl. Current weather forecasts are available from the Chilean Meteorological Service at www.meteochile.cl. Reports of missing or injured persons should be made immediately to the police so that a search can be mounted or assistance rendered. Travelers in isolated areas should always inform park rangers, police, or other local authorities of their itinerary before starting off.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Chilean laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Chile are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Just as in the United States, foreigners in Chile must have proper immigration status and pay taxes on income earned in Chile. Recently, Americans have been deported for working in Chile without authorization. Please see our information on Criminal Penalties and ensure compliance with all Chilean immigration regulations; consult the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Chile for more information at http://santiago.usembassy.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. Chile has demonstrated patterns of noncompliance with the Hague Child Abduction Convention. Chile's patterns of noncompliance fall in its judicial performance. The courts continue to demonstrate a clear bias toward Chilean mothers.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Chile are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Chile. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Avenida Andres Bello 2800, Las Condes, Santiago, Chile. The telephone number is (56) (2) 330-3000. The Embassy web site is http://santiago.usembassy.gov, and the email address for the American Citizen Services Unit is Santiago AMCIT@state.gov. The Consular Section fax number is (56) (2) 330-3005. The American Citizen Services Unit is open to the public from 8:30am-11:30am, Monday through Friday, except U.S. and Chilean holidays and the first Friday of each month.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Chile is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Chilean adoption law gives priority to Chilean families over non-Chilean families. Most Chilean children available for intercountry adoption are at least four years old. Not all children eligible for adoption in Chile meet U.S. immigration requirements to receive an orphan visa, so it is important that adopting families consult with the U.S. Embassy in Santiago before beginning any adoption procedures to ensure that the adoption complies with U.S. law.

Under Chilean law, children to be adopted may not leave the country until the adoption is complete.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: SENAME (Servicio Nacional de Menores) is the clearinghouse for adoptions and approves parents who wish to adopt. Prospective adopting families must contact SENAME first before beginning any adoption proceedings. SENAME can be reached at:

Servicio Nacional de Menores de Chile (SENAME)
Unidad de Adopción
Huerfanos 587
Santiago, Chile
Telephone: (56)(2) 398-4447
www.sename.cl

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Only married couples between the ages of 25 and 60 can adopt in Chile. The adoptive parents must both be at least 20 years older than the child being adopted.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements to adopt in Chile.

Time Frame: Intercountry adoptions from Chile normally take about two (2) years from start to finish. This time is measured from the time the prospective adoptive parents contact SENAME expressing their intention to adopt until the time the adoption is completed. Reasons for this prolonged length of time vary from availability of children to length of time to obtain hearings.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Because Chile is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The Department maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Chile discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Chile at risk.

Fees vary, but prospective adoptive parents should expect to spend no more than $300. Prospective adoptive parents should report exorbitant fees to the U.S. Embassy or SENAME.

Adoption Procedures: Families interested in adopting in Chile must apply and be approved by SENAME, which keeps the national registry of children eligible for adoption. The first stage of the application process is to send SENAME, at the address above, a letter or email that includes both prospective adoptive parents' names, dates of birth, contact information and any preferences, including the reasons for these preferences, for a child or children.

The children on the national registry have been declared eligible for adoption (susceptible de ser adoptado) by a judge and all parental rights have been terminated. SENAME matches available children with prospective adoptive parents. Blood relatives are always given priority, followed by unrelated Chilean families, then non-Chilean families. Prospective adoptive parents do have the right to decline a specific match, which they would do by simply notifying SENAME.

Prospective adoptive parents should consider carefully declining a specific match as they will be required to begin the process again and will have to explain, in detail, the reason for their declination. After a child is successfully matched with a family, there is a wait to obtain a hearing with a judge. The normal wait time is between 6 to 12 months. At the hearing, the judge may determine that the prospective adoptive parents need to provide further documentation, but all of the stated required documents would have already been submitted and in the adoption file (see below "Documents for Adoption in Country"). Either SENAME or one of the approved adoption agencies must be present at the hearing, along with both prospective parents. The child is not normally present for the adoption hearing.

It is extremely hard to obtain a duplicate certified copy of the adoption decree–it is highly recommended that parents ask for an extra certified copy while present at the hearing.

Once the adoption is approved, the judge will inform the civil registry and provide the information for a new birth certificate, with the adoptive parents' names.

This part of the process can take between 15-30 working days. The new birth document is used to obtain a Chilean identification card (also known as a R.U.T. number), which is required to obtain a Chilean passport. This part of the process can take between 15-30 working days as well. Typically adoptive parents will remain in Chile for one to two months to complete the adoption process.

Required Documents: The following documents are required by SENAME after the initial letter or email from the prospective adoptive parents is received. They will not accept these documents with the initial letter or email.

Prospective parents will receive a letter from SENAME acknowledging receipt and asking for the following documents below. Once the package of documents is received, SENAME will begin the process of matching a child.

- Birth certificates and marriage certificate of the prospective adoptive parents;
- Certificate issued by a Chilean Consul in the U.S. that states that the parents have met all U.S. adoption requirements;

- Favorable home study conducted by an accredited agency in the U.S.;
- Physical and psychological exams demonstrating the well-being of the parents;
- Proof of parents' financial situation, i.e., ability to successfully support the child;
- Recent photographs of each of the prospective adoptive parent(s); and
- Three notarized letters of recommendation from U.S. community, religious or other governmental authorities.

Since all Immigrant Visas issued in Chile will be IR-3 visas, the U.S. Embassy will issue a certificate stating that the child is eligible for U.S. citizenship automatically after he/she legally enters the U.S. with an immigrant visa.

In order to obtain this certificate, adopting parents and/or their agent must come to the Embassy Monday, Wednesday or Friday morning between 8:30-11:00am.

Embassy of Chile
1732 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 785-1746
http://www.chile-usa.org

Chile also has consulates in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and San Juan.

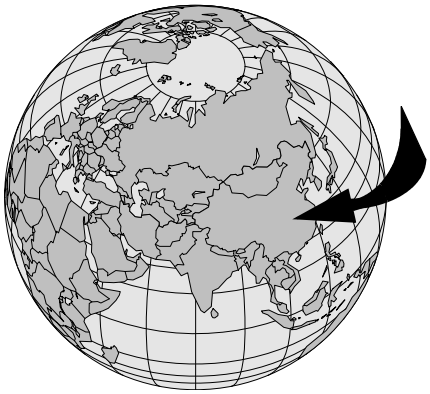
U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*.

Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

U.S. Embassy in Chile
Consular Section–Immigrant Visas
Avenida Andrés Bello 2800
Santiago, Chile
Tel: (56)(2) 335-6550
Fax: (56)(2) 330-3005
Web site: http://www.usembassy.cl
Email: SantiagoVisa@state.gov
Public Service Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
I-600 Petition filing: Monday through Friday, by appointment

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747.

This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



CHINA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
People's Republic of China

PROFILE

Geography

Total area: 9,596,960 sq. km. (about 3.7 million sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Beijing. Other major cities—Shanghai, Tianjin, Shenyang, Wuhan, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Harbin, Chengdu.
Terrain: Plains, deltas, and hills in east; mountains, high plateaus, deserts in west.
Climate: Tropical in south to subarctic in north.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Chinese (singular and plural).
Population: (July 2007 est.) 1,321,851,888.
Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 0.606%.
Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—22.12/1,000. Life expectancy—72.88 years (overall); 71.13 years for males, 74.82 years for females.
Ethnic groups: Han Chinese—91.9%; Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uygur, Yi, Mongolian, Tibetan, Buyi, Korean, and other—8.1%.
Religions: Officially atheist; Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity.
Languages: Mandarin (Putonghua), plus many local dialects.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy—90.9%.
Work force: (2006 est., 798 million) Agriculture and forestry—45%; industry—24%; services—31%.

Government

Type: Communist party-led state.
Constitution: December 4, 1982.
Independence: Unification under the Qin (Ch'in) Dynasty 221 BC; Qing (Ch'ing or Manchu) Dynasty replaced by a republic on February 12, 1912; People's Republic established October 1, 1949.
Government branches: Executive—president, vice president, State Council, premier. Legislative—unicameral National People's Congress. Judicial—Supreme People's Court.
Political subdivisions: 23 provinces (the P.R.C. considers Taiwan to be its 23rd province); 5 autonomous regions, including Tibet; 4 municipalities directly under the State Council.
Political parties: Chinese Communist Party, 70.8 million members; 8 minor parties under communist supervision.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $3.249 trillion (exchange rate-based).
Per capita GDP: (2007)$2,458 (exchange rate-based).
GDP real growth rate: (2007) 11.4%.
Natural resources: Coal, iron ore, crude oil, mercury, tin, tungsten, antimony, manganese, molybdenum, vanadium, magnetite, aluminum, lead, zinc, uranium, hydropower potential (world's largest).
Agriculture: Products—Among the world's largest producers of rice, wheat, potatoes, corn, peanuts, tea, millet, barley; commercial crops include cotton, other fibers, apples, oilseeds, pork and fish; produces variety of livestock products.
Industry: Types—mining and ore processing; iron; steel; aluminum; coal, machinery; textiles and apparel; armaments; petroleum; cement; chemicals; fertilizers; consumer products including footwear, toys, and electronics; automobiles and other transportation equipment including rail cars and locomotives, ships, and aircraft; and telecommunications.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$1.221 trillion: electronics; machinery; apparel; optical, photographic, and medical equipment; and furniture. Main partners—United States, Hong Kong, Japan, EU, South Korea, Singapore. Imports—$917.4 billion: electronics, machinery, mineral fuel and oil, chemicals, plastic. Main partners—Japan, EU, Taiwan, South Korea, United States, Malaysia, Australia.

PEOPLE

Ethnic Groups

The largest ethnic group is the Han Chinese, who constitute about 91.9% of the total population. The remaining 8.1% are Zhuang (16 million), Manchu (10 million), Hui (9 million), Miao (8 million), Uygur (7 million), Yi (7 million), Mongolian (5 million), Tibetan (5 million), Buyi (3 million), Korean (2 million), and other ethnic minorities.

Language

There are seven major Chinese dialects and many subdialects. Mandarin (or Putonghua), the predominant dialect, is spoken by over 70% of the population. It is taught in all schools and is the medium of government. About two-thirds of the Han ethnic group are native speakers of Mandarin; the rest, concentrated in southwest and southeast China, speak one of the six other major Chinese dialects. Non-Chinese languages spoken widely by ethnic minorities include Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur and other Turkic languages (in Xinjiang), and Korean (in the northeast).

The Pinyin System of Romanization

On January 1, 1979, the Chinese Government officially adopted the pinyin system for spelling Chinese names and places in Roman letters. A system of Romanization invented by the Chinese, pinyin has long been widely used in China on street and commercial signs as well as in elementary Chinese textbooks as an aid in learning Chinese characters. Variations of pinyin also are used as the written forms of several minority languages.

Pinyin has now replaced other conventional spellings in China's English-language publications. The U.S. Government also has adopted the pinyin system for all names and places in China. For example, the capital of China is now spelled "Beijing" rather than "Peking."

Religion

Religion plays a significant part in the life of many Chinese. Buddhism is most widely practiced, with an estimated 100 million adherents. Traditional Taoism also is practiced. Official figures indicate there are 20 million Muslims, 5 million Catholics, and 15 million Protestants; unofficial estimates are much higher.

While the Chinese constitution affirms religious toleration, the Chinese Government places restrictions on religious practice outside officially recognized organizations. Only two Christian organizations—a Catholic church without official ties to Rome and the "Three-Self-Patriotic" Protestant church—are sanctioned by the Chinese Government. Unauthorized churches have sprung up in many parts of the country and unofficial religious practice is flourishing. In some regions authorities have tried to control activities of these unregistered churches. In other regions, registered and unregistered groups are treated similarly by authorities and congregations worship in both types of churches. Most Chinese Catholic bishops are recognized by the Pope, and official priests have Vatican approval to administer all the sacraments.

Population Policy

With a population officially just over 1.3 billion and an estimated growth rate of about 0.6%, China is very concerned about its population growth and has attempted with mixed results to implement a strict birth limitation policy. China's 2002 Population and Family Planning Law and policy permit one child per family, with allowance for a second child under certain circumstances, especially in rural areas, and with guidelines looser for ethnic minorities with small populations. Enforcement varies, and relies largely on "social compensation fees" to discourage extra births.

Official government policy opposes forced abortion or sterilization, but in some localities there are instances of forced abortion. The government's goal is to stabilize the population in the first half of the 21st century, and current projections are that the population will peak at around 1.6 billion by 2050.

HISTORY

Dynastic Period

China is the oldest continuous major world civilization, with records dating back about 3,500 years. Successive dynasties developed a system of bureaucratic control that gave the agrarian-based Chinese an advantage over neighboring nomadic and hill cultures. Chinese civilization was further strengthened by the development of a Confucian state ideology and a common written language that bridged the gaps among the country's many local languages and dialects. Whenever China was conquered by nomadic tribes, as it was by the Mongols in the 13th century, the conquerors sooner or later adopted the ways of the "higher" Chinese civilization and staffed the bureaucracy with Chinese.

The last dynasty was established in 1644, when the Manchus overthrew the native Ming dynasty and established the Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty with Beijing as its capital. At great expense in blood and treasure, the Manchus over the next half century gained control of many border areas, including Xinjiang, Yunnan, Tibet, Mongolia, and Taiwan. The success of the early Qing period was based on the combination of Manchu martial prowess and traditional Chinese bureaucratic skills.

During the 19th century, Qing control weakened, and prosperity diminished. China suffered massive social strife, economic stagnation, explosive population growth, and Western penetration and influence. The Taiping and Nian rebellions, along with a Russian-supported Muslim separatist movement in Xinjiang, drained Chinese resources and almost toppled the dynasty. Britain's desire to continue its illegal opium trade with China collided with imperial edicts



prohibiting the addictive drug, and the First Opium War erupted in 1840. China lost the war; subsequently, Britain and other Western powers, including the United States, forcibly occupied "concessions" and gained special commercial privileges. Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking, and in 1898, when the Opium Wars finally ended, Britain executed a 99-year lease of the New Territories, significantly expanding the size of the Hong Kong colony.

As time went on, the Western powers, wielding superior military technology, gained more economic and political privileges. Reformist Chinese officials argued for the adoption of Western technology to strengthen the dynasty and counter Western advances, but the Qing court played down both the Western threat and the benefits of Western technology.

Early 20th Century China

Frustrated by the Qing court's resistance to reform, young officials, military officers, and students—inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Sun Yat-sen—began to advocate the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and creation of a republic. A revolutionary military uprising on October 10, 1911, led to the abdication of the last Qing monarch. As part of a compromise to overthrow the dynasty without a civil war, the revolutionaries and reformers allowed high Qing officials to retain prominent positions in the new republic. One of these figures, Gen. Yuan Shikai, was chosen as the republic's first president. Before his death in 1916, Yuan unsuccessfully attempted to name himself emperor. His death left the republican government all but shattered, ushering in the era of the "warlords" during which China was ruled and ravaged by shifting coalitions of competing provincial military leaders.

In the 1920s, Sun Yat-sen established a revolutionary base in south China and set out to unite the fragmented nation. With Soviet assistance, he organized the Kuomintang (KMT or "Chinese Nationalist People's Party"), and entered into an alliance with the fledgling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After Sun's death in 1925, one of his proteges, Chiang Kai-shek, seized control of the KMT and succeeded in bringing most of south and central China under its rule.

In 1927, Chiang turned on the CCP and executed many of its leaders. The remnants fled into the mountains of eastern China. In 1934, driven out of their mountain bases, the CCP's forces embarked on a "Long March" across some of China's most desolate terrain to the northwestern province of Shaanxi, where they established a guerrilla base at Yan'an.

During the "Long March," the communists reorganized under a new leader, Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung). The bitter struggle between the KMT and the CCP continued openly or clandestinely through the 14-year long Japanese invasion (1931-45), even though the two parties nominally formed a united front to oppose the Japanese invaders in 1937. The war between the two parties resumed after the Japanese defeat in 1945. By 1949, the CCP occupied most of the country.

Chiang Kai-shek fled with the remnants of his KMT government and military forces to Taiwan, where he proclaimed Taipei to be China's "provisional capital" and vowed to re-conquer the Chinese mainland. Taiwan still calls itself the "Republic of China."

The People's Republic of China

In Beijing, on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). The new government assumed control of a people exhausted by two generations of war and social conflict, and an economy ravaged by high inflation and disrupted transportation links. A new political and economic order modeled on the Soviet example was quickly installed.

In the early 1950s, China undertook a massive economic and social reconstruction program. The new leaders gained popular support by curbing inflation, restoring the economy, and rebuilding many war-damaged industrial plants. The CCP's authority reached into almost every aspect of Chinese life. Party control was assured by large, politically loyal security and military forces; a government apparatus responsive to party direction; and the placement of party members into leadership positions in labor, women's, and other mass organizations.

The "Great Leap Forward" and the Sino-Soviet Split

In 1958, Mao broke with the Soviet model and announced a new economic program, the "Great Leap Forward," aimed at rapidly raising industrial and agricultural production. Giant cooperatives (communes) were formed, and "backyard factories" dotted the Chinese landscape. The results were disastrous. Normal market mechanisms were disrupted, agricultural production fell behind, and China's people exhausted themselves producing what turned out to be shoddy, un-salable goods. Within a year, starvation appeared even in fertile agricultural areas. From 1960 to 1961, the combination of poor planning during the Great Leap Forward and bad weather resulted in one of the deadliest famines in human history.

The already strained Sino-Soviet relationship deteriorated sharply in 1959, when the Soviets started to restrict the flow of scientific and technological information to China. The dispute escalated, and the Soviets withdrew all of their personnel from China in August 1960. In 1960, the Soviets and the Chinese began to have disputes openly in international forums.

The Cultural Revolution

In the early 1960s, State President Liu Shaoqi and his protege, Party General Secretary Deng Xiaoping, took over direction of the party and adopted pragmatic economic policies at odds with Mao's revolutionary vision. Dissatisfied with China's new direction and his own reduced authority, Party Chairman Mao launched a massive political attack on Liu, Deng, and other pragmatists in the spring of 1966. The new movement, the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution," was unprecedented in communist history. For the first time, a section of the Chinese communist leadership sought to rally popular opposition against another leadership group. China was set on a course of political and social anarchy that lasted the better part of a decade.

In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, Mao and his "closest comrade in arms," National Defense Minister Lin Biao, charged Liu, Deng, and other top party leaders with dragging China back toward capitalism. Radical youth organizations, called Red Guards, attacked party and state organizations at all levels, seeking out leaders who would not bend to the radical wind. In reaction to this turmoil, some local People's Liberation Army (PLA) commanders and other officials maneuvered to outwardly back Mao and the radicals while actually taking steps to rein in local radical activity.

Gradually, Red Guard and other radical activity subsided, and the Chinese political situation stabilized along complex factional lines. The leadership conflict came to a head in September 1971, when Party Vice Chairman and Defense Minister Lin Biao reportedly tried to stage a coup against Mao; Lin Biao allegedly later died in a plane crash in Mongolia.

In the aftermath of the Lin Biao incident, many officials criticized and dismissed during 1966-69 were reinstated. Chief among these was Deng Xiaoping, who reemerged in 1973 and was confirmed in 1975 in the concurrent posts of Politburo Standing Committee member, PLA Chief of Staff,

and Vice Premier. The ideological struggle between more pragmatic, veteran party officials and the radicals re-emerged with a vengeance in late 1975. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, and three close Cultural Revolution associates (later dubbed the "Gang of Four") launched a media campaign against Deng. In January 1976, Premier Zhou Enlai, a popular political figure, died of cancer. On April 5, Beijing citizens staged a spontaneous demonstration in Tiananmen Square in Zhou's memory, with strong political overtones of support for Deng. The authorities forcibly suppressed the demonstration. Deng was blamed for the disorder and stripped of all official positions, although he retained his party membership.

The Post-Mao Era

Mao's death in September 1976 removed a towering figure from Chinese politics and set off a scramble for succession. Former Minister of Public Security Hua Guofeng was quickly confirmed as Party Chairman and Premier. A month after Mao's death, Hua, backed by the PLA, arrested Jiang Qing and other members of the "Gang of Four." After extensive deliberations, the Chinese Communist Party leadership reinstated Deng Xiaoping to all of his previous posts at the 11th Party Congress in August 1977. Deng then led the effort to place government control in the hands of veteran party officials opposed to the radical excesses of the previous two decades.

The new, pragmatic leadership emphasized economic development and renounced mass political movements. At the pivotal December 1978 Third Plenum (of the 11th Party Congress Central Committee), the leadership adopted economic reform policies aimed at expanding rural income and incentives, encouraging experiments in enterprise autonomy, reducing central planning, and attracting foreign direct investment into China. The plenum also decided to accelerate the pace of legal reform, culminating in the passage of several new legal codes by the National People's Congress in June 1979.

After 1979, the Chinese leadership moved toward more pragmatic positions in almost all fields. The party encouraged artists, writers, and journalists to adopt more critical approaches, although open attacks on party authority were not permitted. In late 1980, Mao's Cultural Revolution was officially proclaimed a catastrophe. Hua Guofeng, a protege of Mao, was replaced as premier in 1980 by reformist Sichuan party chief Zhao Ziyang and as party General Secretary in 1981 by the even more reformist Communist Youth League chairman Hu Yaobang.

Reform policies brought great improvements in the standard of living, especially for urban workers and for farmers who took advantage of opportunities to diversify crops and establish village industries. Literature and the arts blossomed, and Chinese intellectuals established extensive links with scholars in other countries.

At the same time, however, political dissent as well as social problems such as inflation, urban migration, and prostitution emerged. Although students and intellectuals urged greater reforms, some party elders increasingly questioned the pace and the ultimate goals of the reform program. In December 1986, student demonstrators, taking advantage of the loosening political atmosphere, staged protests against the slow pace of reform, confirming party elders' fear that the current reform program was leading to social instability. Hu Yaobang, a protege of Deng and a leading advocate of reform, was blamed for the protests and forced to resign as CCP General Secretary in January 1987. Premier Zhao Ziyang was made General Secretary and Li Peng, former Vice Premier and Minister of Electric Power and Water Conservancy, was made Premier.

1989 Student Movement and Tiananmen Square

After Zhao became the party General Secretary, the economic and political reforms he had championed came under increasing attack. His proposal in May 1988 to accelerate price reform led to widespread popular complaints about rampant inflation and gave opponents of rapid reform the opening to call for greater centralization of economic controls and stricter prohibitions against Western influence. This precipitated a political debate, which grew more heated through the winter of 1988-89.

The death of Hu Yaobang on April 15, 1989, coupled with growing economic hardship caused by high inflation, provided the backdrop for a large-scale protest movement by students, intellectuals, and other parts of a disaffected urban population. University students and other citizens camped out in Beijing's Tiananmen Square to mourn Hu's death and to protest against those who would slow reform. Their protests, which grew despite government efforts to contain them, called for an end to official corruption and for defense of freedoms guaranteed by the Chinese constitution. Protests also spread to many other cities, including Shanghai, Chengdu, and Guangzhou.

Martial law was declared on May 20, 1989. Late on June 3 and early on the morning of June 4, military units were brought into Beijing. They used armed force to clear demonstrators from the streets. There are no official estimates of deaths in Beijing, but most observers believe that casualties numbered in the hundreds.

After June 4, while foreign governments expressed horror at the brutal suppression of the demonstrators, the central government eliminated remaining sources of organized opposition, detained large numbers of protesters, and required political reeducation not only for students but also for large numbers of party cadre and government officials.

Following the resurgence of conservatives in the aftermath of June 4, economic reform slowed until given new impetus by Deng Xiaoping's dramatic visit to southern China in early 1992. Deng's renewed push for a market-oriented economy received official sanction at the 14th Party Congress later in the year as a number of younger, reform-minded leaders

began their rise to top positions. Deng and his supporters argued that managing the economy in a way that increased living standards should be China's primary policy objective, even if "capitalist" measures were adopted. Subsequent to the visit, the Communist Party Politburo publicly issued an endorsement of Deng's policies of economic openness. Though not completely eschewing political reform, China has consistently placed overwhelming priority on the opening of its economy.

Post Deng Leadership

Deng's health deteriorated in the years prior to his death in 1997. During that time, President Jiang Zemin and other members of his generation gradually assumed control of the day-to-day functions of government. This "third generation" leadership governed collectively with President Jiang at the center. In March 1998, Jiang was re-elected President during the 9th National People's Congress. Premier Li Peng was constitutionally required to step down from that post. He was elected to the chairmanship of the National People's Congress. Zhu Rongji was selected to replace Li as Premier.

In November 2002, the 16th Communist Party Congress elected Hu Jintao, who in 1992 was designated by Deng Xiaoping as the "core" of the fourth generation leaders, the new General Secretary. A new Politburo and Politburo Standing Committee was also elected in November. In March 2003, General Secretary Hu Jintao was elected President at the 10th National People's Congress. Jiang Zemin retained the chairmanship of the Central Military Commission. At the Fourth Party Plenum in September 2004, Jiang Zemin retired from the Central Military Commission, passing the Chairmanship and control of the People's Liberation Army to President Hu Jintao.

China is firmly committed to economic reform and opening to the outside world. The Chinese leadership has identified reform of state industries and the establishment of a social safety net as government priorities. Government strategies for achieving these goals include large-scale privatization of unprofitable state-owned enterprises and development of a pension system for workers. The leadership has also downsized the government bureaucracy.

The Chinese Communist Party's 17th Party Congress, held in October 2007, saw the elevation of key "fifth generation" leaders to the Politburo and Standing Committee, including Xi Jinping, Li Keqiang and Wang Yang. At the National People's Congress plenary held in March 2008, Xi was elected Vice President of the government, and Li was elected Vice Premier.

GOVERNMENT

Chinese Communist Party

The 70.8 million member CCP, authoritarian in structure and ideology, continues to dominate government. Nevertheless, China's population, geographical vastness, and social diversity frustrate attempts to rule by fiat from Beijing. Central leaders must increasingly build consensus for new policies among party members, local and regional leaders, influential non-party members, and the population at large. In periods of greater openness, the influence of people and organizations outside the formal party structure has tended to increase, particularly in the economic realm. This phenomenon is most apparent today in the rapidly developing coastal region. Nevertheless, in all important government, economic, and cultural institutions in China, party committees work to see that party and state policy guidance is followed and that non-party members do not create autonomous organizations that could challenge party rule. Party control is tightest in government offices and in urban economic, industrial, and cultural settings; it is considerably looser in the rural areas, where the majority of the people live.

Theoretically, the party's highest body is the Party Congress, which traditionally meets at least once every 5 years. The 17th Party Congress took place in fall 2007. The primary organs of power in the Communist Party include:

- The Politburo Standing Committee, which currently consists of nine members;
- The Politburo, consisting of 25 full members, including the members of the Politburo Standing Committee;
- The Secretariat, the principal administrative mechanism of the CCP, headed by the General Secretary;
- The Central Military Commission;
- The Discipline Inspection Commission, which is charged with rooting out corruption and malfeasance among party cadres.

State Structure

The Chinese Government has always been subordinate to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); its role is to implement party policies. The primary organs of state power are the National People's Congress (NPC), the President (the head of state), and the State Council. Members of the State Council include Premier Wen Jiabao (the head of government), a variable number of vice premiers (now four), five state councilors (protocol equivalents of vice premiers but with narrower portfolios), and 25 ministers, the central bank governor, and the auditor-general.

Under the Chinese constitution, the NPC is the highest organ of state power in China. It meets annually for about two weeks to review and approve major new policy directions, laws, the budget, and major personnel changes. These initiatives are presented to the NPC for consideration by the State Council after previous endorsement by the Communist Party's Central Committee. Although the NPC generally approves State

Council policy and personnel recommendations, various NPC committees hold active debate in closed sessions, and changes may be made to accommodate alternate views.

When the NPC is not in session, its permanent organ, the Standing Committee, exercises state power.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **HU Jintao**
Vice Pres.: **XI Jinping**
Premier, State Council: **WEN Jiabao**
Executive Vice Premier, State Council: **LI Keqiang**
Vice Premier, State Council: **HUI Liangyu**
Vice Premier, State Council: **ZHANG Dejiang**
Vice Premier, State Council: **WANG Qishan**
State Councilor, State Council: **LIU Yandong**
State Councilor, State Council: **LIANG Guanglie**
State Councilor, State Council: **MA Kai**
State Councilor, State Council: **MENG Jianzhu**
State Councilor, State Council: **DAI Bingguo**
Sec. Gen., State Council: **MA Kai**
Chmn., Central Military Commission: **HU Jintao**
Chmn., National Development & Reform Commission: **ZHANG Ping**
Min. in Charge of the State Population & Family Planning Commission: **LI Bin**
Min. in Charge of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission: **YANG Jing**
Min. of Agriculture: **SUN Zhengcai**
Min. of Civil Affairs: **LI Xueju**
Min. of Commerce: **CHEN Deming**
Min. of Culture: **CAI Wu**
Min. of Education: **ZHOU Ji**
Min. of Environmental Protection: **ZHOU Shengxian**
Min. of Finance: **XIE Xuren**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **YANG Jiechi**
Min. of Health: **CHEN Zhu**
Min. of Housing & Urban-Rural Construction: **JIANG Weixin**
Min. of Human Resources & Social Security: **YIN Weimin**
Min. of Industry & Information Technology LI Yizhong:
Min. of Justice: **WU Aiying**
Min. of Land & Resources: **XU Shaoshi**
Min. of National Defense: **LIANG Guanglie**
Min. of Public Security: **MENG Jianzhu**
Min. of Railways: **LIU Zhijun**
Min. of Science & Technology: **WAN Gang**
Min. of State Security: **GENG Huichang**
Min. of Supervision: **MA Wen**
Min. of Transportation: **LI Shenglin**
Min. of Water Resources: **CHEN Lei**
Auditor Gen., National Audit Office: **LIU Jiayi**
Governor, People's Bank of China: **ZHOU Xiaochuan**
Ambassador to the US: **ZHOU Wenzhong**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **WANG Guangya**

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Legal System

The government's efforts to promote rule of law are significant and ongoing. After the Cultural Revolution, China's leaders aimed to develop a legal system to restrain abuses of official authority and revolutionary excesses. In 1982, the National People's Congress adopted a new state constitution that emphasized the rule of law under which even party leaders are theoretically held accountable.

Since 1979, when the drive to establish a functioning legal system began, more than 300 laws and regulations, most of them in the economic area, have been promulgated. The use of mediation committees—informed groups of citizens who resolve about 90% of China's civil disputes and some minor criminal cases at no cost to the parties—is one innovative device. There are more than 800,000 such committees in both rural and urban areas.

Legal reform became a government priority in the 1990s. Legislation designed to modernize and professionalize the nation's lawyers, judges, and prisons was enacted. The 1994 Administrative Procedure Law allows citizens to sue officials for abuse of authority or malfeasance. In addition, the criminal law and the criminal procedures laws were amended to introduce significant reforms. The criminal law amendments abolished the crime of "counter-revolutionary" activity, although many persons are still incarcerated for that crime. Criminal procedures reforms also encouraged establishment of a more transparent, adversarial trial process. The Chinese constitution and laws provide for fundamental human rights, including due process, but these are often ignored in practice.

In addition to other judicial reforms, the Constitution was amended in 2004 to include the protection of individual human rights and legally-obtained private property, but it is unclear how those provisions will be implemented. Although new criminal and civil laws have provided additional safeguards to citizens, previously debated political reforms, including expanding elections to the township level, and other legal reforms, including the reform of the reeducation through labor system, have been put on hold.

Human Rights

The China country reports in the State Department's 2007 Human Rights Practices and International Religious Freedom Reports noted China's well-documented and continuing abuses of human rights in violation of internationally recognized norms, stemming both from the authorities' intolerance of dissent and the inadequacy of legal safeguards for basic freedoms.

Reported abuses have included arbitrary and lengthy incommunicado detention, forced confessions, torture, and mistreatment of prisoners as well as severe restrictions on freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, religion, privacy, worker rights, and coercive birth limitation. In 2006, China continued the monitoring, harassment, intimidation, and arrest of journalists, Internet writers, defense lawyers, religious activists, and political dissidents.

The activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those relating to the rule of law and expansion of judicial review, continue to be restricted. The Chinese Government recognizes five official reli-

gions—Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, Catholicism, and Protestantism—and seeks to regulate religious groups and worship. Religious believers who seek to practice their faith outside of state-controlled religious venues and unregistered religious groups and spiritual movements are subject to intimidation, harassment, and detention. In 2006, the Secretary of State again designated China as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

At the same time, China's economic growth and reform since 1978 has improved dramatically the lives of hundreds of millions of Chinese, increased social mobility, and expanded the scope of personal freedom. This has meant substantially greater freedom of travel, employment opportunity, educational and cultural pursuits, job and housing choices, and access to information. In recent years, China has also passed new criminal and civil laws that provide additional safeguards to citizens. Village elections have been carried out in over 90% of China's one million villages.

We have conducted 12 rounds of human rights dialogue with China since Tiananmen. During 2003 and 2004, no progress was made on the commitments China made at the 2002 dialogue, and we declined to schedule another round at that time.

In February 2008, the United States and China agreed to resume our formal human rights dialogue, with the understanding that the discussions need to be constructive. Outside the formal human rights dialogue, the U.S. Government regularly raises human rights concerns with Chinese officials at all levels of government. In his September 2007 meeting with President Hu and in subsequent discussions, President Bush has emphasized U.S. interest in human rights and religious freedom in China.

ECONOMY

Economic Reforms

Since 1979, China has reformed and opened its economy. The Chinese leadership has adopted a more pragmatic perspective on many political and socioeconomic problems, and has reduced the role of ideology in economic policy. China's ongoing economic transformation has had a profound impact not only on China but on the world.

The market-oriented reforms China has implemented over the past two decades have unleashed individual initiative and entrepreneurship. The result has been the largest reduction of poverty and one of the fastest increases in income levels ever seen. China today is the fourth-largest economy in the world. It has sustained average economic growth of over 9.5% for the past 26 years. In 2006 its $2.68 trillion economy was about one-fifth the size of the U.S. economy.

In the 1980s, China tried to combine central planning with market-oriented reforms to increase productivity, living standards, and technological quality without exacerbating inflation, unemployment, and budget deficits. China pursued agricultural reforms, dismantling the commune system and introducing a household-based system that provided peasants greater decision-making in agricultural activities.

The government also encouraged nonagricultural activities such as village enterprises in rural areas, and promoted more self-management for state-owned enterprises, increased competition in the marketplace, and facilitated direct contact between Chinese and foreign trading enterprises. China also relied more upon foreign financing and imports.

During the 1980s, these reforms led to average annual rates of growth of 10% in agricultural and industrial output. Rural per capita real income doubled. China became self-sufficient in grain production; rural industries accounted for 23% of agricultural output, helping absorb surplus labor in the countryside. The variety of light industrial and consumer goods increased. Reforms began in the fiscal, financial, banking, price-setting, and labor systems.

By the late 1980s, however, the economy had become overheated with increasing rates of inflation. At the end of 1988, in reaction to a surge of inflation caused by accelerated price reforms, the leadership introduced an austerity program.

China's economy regained momentum in the early 1990s. During a visit to southern China in early 1992, China's paramount leader at the time, Deng Xiaoping, made a series of political pronouncements designed to reinvigorate the process of economic reform.

The 14th Party Congress later in the year backed Deng's renewed push for market reforms, stating that China's key task in the 1990s was to create a "socialist market economy." The 10-year development plan for the 1990s stressed continuity in the political system with bolder reform of the economic system.

Following the Chinese Communist Party's Third Plenum, held in October 2003, Chinese legislators unveiled several proposed amendments to the state constitution. One of the most significant was a proposal to provide protection for private property rights. Legislators also indicated there would be a new emphasis on certain aspects of overall government economic policy, including efforts to reduce unemployment (now in the 8-10% range in urban areas), to rebalance income distribution between urban and rural regions, and to maintain economic growth while protecting the environment and improving social equity.

The National People's Congress approved the amendments when it met in March 2004. The Fifth Plenum in October 2005 approved the 11th Five-Year Economic Program aimed at building a "harmonious society"

through more balanced wealth distribution and improved education, medical care, and social security.

Agriculture

China is the world's most populous country and one of the largest producers and consumers of agricultural products. Over 40% of China's labor force is engaged in agriculture, even though only 10% of the land is suitable for cultivation and agriculture contributes only 13% of China's GDP. China's cropland area is only 75% of the U.S. total, but China still produces about 30% more crops and livestock than the United States because of intensive cultivation, China is among the world's largest producers of rice, corn, wheat, soybeans, vegetables, tea, and pork.

Major non-food crops include cotton, other fibers, and oilseeds. China hopes to further increase agricultural production through improved plant stocks, fertilizers, and technology. Incomes for Chinese farmers are stagnating, leading to an increasing wealth gap between the cities and countryside. Government policies that continue to emphasize grain self-sufficiency and the fact that farmers do not own—and cannot buy or sell—the land they work have contributed to this situation. In addition, inadequate port facilities and lack of warehousing and cold storage facilities impede both domestic and international agricultural trade.

Industry

Industry and construction account for about 46% of China's GDP. Major industries are mining and ore processing; iron; steel; aluminum; coal, machinery; textiles and apparel; armaments; petroleum; cement; chemicals; fertilizers; consumer products including footwear, toys, and electronics; automobiles and other transportation equipment including rail cars and locomotives, ships, and aircraft; and telecommunications.

China has become a preferred destination for the relocation of global manufacturing facilities. Its strength as an export platform has contributed to incomes and employment in China. The state-owned sector still accounts for about 40% of GDP. In recent years, authorities have been giving greater attention to the management of state assets—both in the financial market as well as among state-owned-enterprises—and progress has been noteworthy.

Regulatory Environment

Though China's economy has expanded rapidly, its regulatory environment has not kept pace. Since Deng Xiaoping's open market reforms, the growth of new businesses has outpaced the government's ability to regulate them. This has created a situation where businesses, faced with mounting competition and poor oversight, will be willing to take drastic measures to increase profit margins, often at the expense of consumer safety. This issue acquired more prominence in 2007, with the United States placing a number of restrictions on problematic Chinese exports.

The Chinese Government recognizes the severity of the problem, recently concluding that up to 20% of the country's products are substandard or tainted, and undertaking efforts in coordination with the United States and others to better regulate the problem.

Energy

Together with strong economic growth, China's demand for energy is surging rapidly. In 2003, China surpassed Japan to become the second-largest consumer of primary energy, after the United States. China is the world's second-largest consumer of oil, after the United States, and for 2006, China's increase in oil demand represented 38% of the world total increase in oil demand. China is also the third-largest energy producer in the world, after the United States and Russia. China's electricity consumption is expected to grow by over 4% a year through 2030, which will require more than $2 trillion in electricity infrastructure investment to meet the demand. China expects to add approximately 15,000 megawatts of generating capacity a year, with 20% of that coming from foreign suppliers.

Coal makes up the bulk of China's energy consumption (70% in 2005), and China is the largest producer and consumer of coal in the world. As China's economy continues to grow, China's coal demand is projected to rise significantly. Although coal's share of China's overall energy consumption will decrease, coal consumption will continue to rise in absolute terms. China's continued and increasing reliance on coal as a power source has contributed significantly to putting China on the path to becoming the world's largest emitter of acid rain-causing sulfur dioxide and green house gases, including carbon dioxide.

The 11th Five-Year Program, announced in 2005, calls for greater energy conservation measures, including development of renewable energy sources and increased attention to environmental protection. Moving away from coal towards cleaner energy sources including oil, natural gas, renewable energy, and nuclear power is an important component of China's development program. China has abundant hydroelectric resources; the Three Gorges Dam, for example, will have a total capacity of 18 gigawatts when fully on-line (projected for 2009). In addition, the share of electricity generated by nuclear power is projected to grow from 1% in 2000 to 5% in 2030. China's renewable energy law, which went into effect in 2006, calls for 10% of its energy to come from renewable energy sources by 2020.

Since 1993, China has been a net importer of oil, a large portion of which comes from the Middle East. Net imports are expected to rise to 3.5 million barrels per day by 2010. China is interested in diversifying the sources of its oil imports and has invested in oil fields around the world.

Beijing also plans to increase China's natural gas production, which currently accounts for only 3% of China's

total energy consumption. Analysts expect China's consumption of natural gas to more than double by 2010.

In May 2004, then-Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) that launched the U.S.-China Energy Policy Dialogue. The Dialogue has strengthened energy-related interactions between China and the United States, the world's two largest energy consumers.

The U.S.-China Energy Policy Dialogue builds upon the two countries' existing cooperative ventures in high energy nuclear physics, fossil energy, energy efficiency and renewable energy and energy information exchanges. The NDRC and the Department of Energy also exchange views and expertise on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technologies, and we convene an annual Oil and Gas Industry Forum with China.

Environment

One of the serious negative consequences of China's rapid industrial development has been increased pollution and degradation of natural resources. Some analysts estimate that China surpassed the United States as the world's largest emitter of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in 2007; many others project it will do so in 2008. A World Health Organization report on air quality in 272 cities worldwide concluded that seven of the world's 10 most polluted cities were in China. According to China's own evaluation, two-thirds of the 338 cities for which air-quality data are available are considered polluted—two-thirds of them moderately or severely so. Respiratory and heart diseases related to air pollution are the leading cause of death in China.

Almost all of the nation's rivers are considered polluted to some degree, and half of the population lacks access to clean water. By some estimates, every day approximately 300 million residents drink contaminated water. Ninety percent of urban water bodies are severely polluted. Water scarcity also is an issue; for example, severe water scarcity in Northern China is a serious threat to sustained economic growth and the government has begun working on a project for a large-scale diversion of water from the Yangtze River to northern cities, including Beijing and Tianjin. Acid rain falls on 30% of the country. Various studies estimate pollution costs the Chinese economy 7%-10% of GDP each year.

China's leaders are increasingly paying attention to the country's severe environmental problems. In 1998, the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) was officially upgraded to a ministry-level agency, reflecting the growing importance the Chinese Government places on environmental protection. In recent years, China has strengthened its environmental legislation and made some progress in stemming environmental deterioration. In 2005, China joined the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development, which brings industries and governments together to implement strategies that reduce pollution and address climate change. During the 10th Five-Year Plan, China plans to reduce total emissions by 10%. Beijing in particular is investing heavily in pollution control as part of its campaign to host a successful Olympiad in 2008. Some cities have seen improvement in air quality in recent years. Additionally, China has pledged to hold the first-ever carbon-neutral Olympic Games.

China is an active participant in climate change talks and other multilateral environmental negotiations, taking environmental challenges seriously but pushing for the developed world to help developing countries to a greater extent. It is a signatory to the Basel Convention governing the transport and disposal of hazardous waste and the Montreal Protocol for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, as well as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and other major environmental agreements.

The question of environmental impacts associated with the Three Gorges Dam project has generated controversy among environmentalists inside and outside China. Critics claim that erosion and silting of the Yangtze River threaten several endangered species, while Chinese officials say the dam will help prevent devastating floods and generate clean hydroelectric power that will enable the region to lower its dependence on coal, thus lessening air pollution.

The United States and China are members of the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP). The APP is a public-private partnership of six nations—Australia, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States—committed to explore new mechanisms to meet national pollution reduction, energy security and climate change goals in ways that reduce poverty and promote economic development. APP members have undertaken cooperative activities involving deployment of clean technology in partner countries in eight areas: cleaner fossil energy, renewable energy and distributed generation, power generation and transmission, steel, aluminum, cement, coal mining, and buildings and appliances.

The United States and China have been engaged in an active program of bilateral environmental cooperation since the mid-1990s, with an emphasis on clean energy technology and the design of effective environmental policy. While both governments view this cooperation positively, China has often compared the U.S. program, which lacks a foreign assistance component, with those of Japan and several European Union (EU) countries that include generous levels of aid.

Science and Technology

Science and technology have always preoccupied China's leaders; indeed, China's political leadership comes almost exclusively from technical backgrounds and has a high regard for science. Deng called it "the first productive force." Distortions in the economy and society created by party rule have severely hurt Chinese sci-

ence, according to some Chinese science policy experts. The Chinese Academy of Sciences, modeled on the Soviet system, puts much of China's greatest scientific talent in a large, under-funded apparatus that remains largely isolated from industry, although the reforms of the past decade have begun to address this problem.

Chinese science strategists see China's greatest opportunities in newly emerging fields such as biotechnology and computers, where there is still a chance for China to become a significant player. Most Chinese students who went abroad have not returned, but they have built a dense network of trans-Pacific contacts that will greatly facilitate U.S.-China scientific cooperation in coming years. The U.S. space program is often held up as the standard of scientific modernity in China. China's small but growing space program, which successfully completed their second manned orbit in October 2005, is a focus of national pride.

The U.S.-China Science and Technology Agreement remains the framework for bilateral cooperation in this field. A 5-year agreement to extend the Science and Technology Agreement was signed in April 2006. The Agreement is among the longest-standing U.S.-China accords, and includes over eleven U.S. Federal agencies and numerous branches that participate in cooperative exchanges under the S&T Agreement and its nearly 60 protocols, memoranda of understanding, agreements and annexes. The Agreement covers cooperation in areas such as marine conservation, renewable energy, and health. Biennial Joint Commission Meetings on Science and Technology bring together policy makers from both sides to coordinate joint science and technology cooperation. Executive Secretaries meetings are held biennially to implement specific cooperation programs. Japan and the European Union also have high profile science and technology cooperative relationships with China.

Trade

The U.S. trade deficit with China reached $256.3 billion in 2007, as imports grew 12%. China's share of total U.S. imports has grown from 7% to 16% since 1997. At the same time, the share of many other Asian countries' imports to the United States and the U.S. trade deficit with the Asia-Pacific region as a whole have fallen.

U.S. goods exports to China in 2007 accounted for 5.7% of total U.S. goods exports, up from 1.9% in 1997. The top five U.S. exports to China in 2007 were electrical machinery and equipment (up 4.8% over 2006 levels), power generation equipment (up 15%), air and spacecraft (up 18.2%), oil seeds and oleaginous fruits (up 61.7%), and plastics and plastic articles (up 32.6%).

In December 2007, Treasury Secretary Paulson met with P.R.C. Vice Premier Wu Yi in Beijing for the third round of the Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED), which addresses bilateral issues such as trade, currency, and foreign investment. In November 1991, China joined the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group, which promotes free trade and cooperation in the economic, trade, investment, and technology spheres. China served as APEC chair in 2001, and Shanghai hosted the annual APEC leaders meeting in October of that year.

China formally joined the WTO in December 2001. As part of this far-reaching trade liberalization agreement, China agreed to lower tariffs and abolish market impediments. Chinese and foreign businessmen, for example, gained the right to import and export on their own, and to sell their products without going through a government middleman.

By 2005, average tariff rates on key U.S. agricultural exports dropped from 31% to 14% and on industrial products from 25% to 9%. The agreement also opens up new opportunities for U.S. providers of services like banking, insurance, and telecommunications. China has made significant progress implementing its WTO commitments, but serious concerns remain, particularly in the realm of intellectual property rights protection.

China is now one of the most important markets for U.S. exports: in 2007, U.S. exports to China totaled $65.2 billion, more than triple the $19 billion when China joined the WTO in 2001. U.S. agricultural exports have increased dramatically, making China our fourth-largest agricultural export market (after Canada, Japan, and Mexico). Over the same period (2001-2007), U.S. imports from China rose from $102 billion to $321.5 billion.

Export growth continues to be a major driver of China's rapid economic growth. To increase exports, China has pursued policies such as fostering the rapid development of foreign-invested factories, which assemble imported components into consumer goods for export, and liberalizing trading rights. In its eleventh Five-Year Program, adopted in 2005, China placed greater emphasis on developing a consumer demand-driven economy to sustain economic growth and address global imbalances.

The United States is one of China's primary suppliers of power generating equipment, aircraft and parts, computers and industrial machinery, raw materials, and chemical and agricultural products. However, U.S. exporters continue to have concerns about fair market access due to strict testing and standards requirements for some imported products. In addition, a lack of transparency in the regulatory process makes it difficult for businesses to plan for changes in the domestic market structure. The April 11, 2006 U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT) produced agreements on key U.S. trade concerns ranging from market access to U.S. beef, medical devices, and telecommunications; to the enforcement of intellectual property rights, including, significantly, software.

The JCCT also produced an agreement to establish a U.S.-China High

Technology and Strategic Trade Working Group to review export control cooperation and facilitate high technology trade.

Foreign Investment

China's investment climate has changed dramatically in a quarter-century of reform. In the early 1980s, China restricted foreign investments to export-oriented operations and required foreign investors to form joint-venture partnerships with Chinese firms. Foreign direct investment (FDI) grew quickly during the 1980s, but slowed in late 1989 in the aftermath of Tiananmen. In response, the government introduced legislation and regulations designed to encourage foreigners to invest in high-priority sectors and regions. Since the early 1990s, China has allowed foreign investors to manufacture and sell a wide range of goods on the domestic market, and authorized the establishment of wholly foreign-owned enterprises, now the preferred form of FDI. However, the Chinese Government's emphasis on guiding FDI into manufacturing has led to market saturation in some industries, while leaving China's services sectors underdeveloped. China is now one of the leading FDI recipients in the world, receiving over $80 billion in 2007 according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

As part of its WTO accession, China undertook to eliminate certain trade-related investment measures and to open up specified sectors that had previously been closed to foreign investment. New laws, regulations, and administrative measures to implement these commitments are being issued. Major remaining barriers to foreign investment include opaque and inconsistently enforced laws and regulations and the lack of a rules-based legal infrastructure.

Opening to the outside remains central to China's development. Foreign-invested enterprises produce about half of China's exports, and China continues to attract large investment inflows. Foreign exchange and gold reserves were $1.493 trillion at the end of 2007, and have now surpassed those of Japan, making China's foreign exchange reserves the largest in the world.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since its establishment, the People's Republic has worked vigorously to win international support for its position that it is the sole legitimate government of all China, including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. In the early 1970s, Beijing was recognized diplomatically by most world powers. Beijing assumed the China seat in the United Nations in 1971 and has since become increasingly active in multilateral organizations. Japan established diplomatic relations with China in 1972, and the United States did so in 1979. As of March 2008, the number of countries that had diplomatic relations with Beijing had risen to 171, while 23 maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

After the founding of the P.R.C., China's foreign policy initially focused on solidarity with the Soviet Union and other communist countries. In 1950, China sent the People's Liberation Army into North Korea to help North Korea halt the UN offensive that was approaching the Yalu River. After the conclusion of the Korean conflict, China sought to balance its identification as a member of the Soviet bloc by establishing friendly relations with Pakistan and other Third World countries, particularly in Southeast Asia.

In the 1960s, Beijing competed with Moscow for political influence among communist parties and in the developing world generally. Following the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and clashes in 1969 on the Sino-Soviet border, Chinese competition with the Soviet Union increasingly reflected concern over China's own strategic position.

In late 1978, the Chinese also became concerned over Vietnam's efforts to establish open control over Laos and Cambodia. In response to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, China fought a brief border war with Vietnam (February-March 1979) with the stated purpose of "teaching Vietnam a lesson."

Chinese anxiety about Soviet strategic advances was heightened following the Soviet Union's December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. Sharp differences between China and the Soviet Union persisted over Soviet support for Vietnam's continued occupation of Cambodia, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Soviet troops along the Sino-Soviet border and in Mongolia—the so-called "three obstacles" to improved Sino-Soviet relations.

In the 1970s and 1980s China sought to create a secure regional and global environment for itself and to foster good relations with countries that could aid its economic development. To this end, China looked to the West for assistance with its modernization drive and for help in countering Soviet expansionism, which it characterized as the greatest threat to its national security and to world peace. China maintained its consistent opposition to "superpower hegemony," focusing almost exclusively on the expansionist actions of the Soviet Union and Soviet proxies such as Vietnam and Cuba, but it also placed growing emphasis on a foreign policy independent of both the United States and the Soviet Union. While improving ties with the West, China continued to follow closely economic and other positions of the Third World nonaligned movement, although China was not a formal member.

In the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen crackdown in June 1989, many countries reduced their diplomatic contacts with China as well as their economic assistance programs. In response, China worked vigorously to expand its relations with foreign countries, and by late 1990, had reestablished normal relations with almost all nations. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991, China also opened diplomatic relations with the republics of the former Soviet Union.

In recent years, Chinese leaders have been regular travelers to all parts of the globe, and China has sought a higher profile in the UN through its permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and other multilateral organizations. Closer to home, China has made efforts to reduce tensions in Asia, hosting the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program, cultivating a more cooperative relationship with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and participating in the ASEAN Regional Forum. China has also taken steps to improve relations with countries in South Asia, including India. Following Premier Wen's 2005 visit to India, the two sides moved to increase commercial and cultural ties, as well as to resolve longstanding border disputes. The November 2006 visit of President Hu was the first state visit by a Chinese head of state to India in 10 years.

China has likewise improved ties with Russia, with Presidents Putin and Hu exchanging visits to Beijing and Moscow in April 2006 and March 2007. A second round of Russia-China joint military exercises was scheduled for fall 2007. China has played a prominent role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional grouping that includes Russia and the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Beijing has resolved many of its border and maritime disputes, notably including a November 1997 agreement with Russia that resolved almost all outstanding border issues and a 2000 agreement with Vietnam to resolve differences over their maritime border, though disagreements remain over islands in the South China Sea. Relations with Japan improved following Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's October 2006 visit to Beijing, and continued to improve under Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda until his resignation in September 2008., Longstanding and emotionally charged disputes over history and competing claims to portions of the East China Sea remain sources of tension.

While in many ways Sudan's primary diplomatic patron, China has played a constructive role in support of peacekeeping operations in Southern Sudan and pledged 315 engineering troops in support of UN operations in Darfur, all of whom have been deployed China has stated publicly that it shares the international community's concern over Iran's nuclear program and has voted in support of UN sanctions resolutions on Iran. Set against these positive developments has been an effort on the part of China to maintain close ties to countries such as Iran, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, which are sources of oil and other resources and which welcome China's non-conditional assistance and investment.

DEFENSE

Establishment of a professional military force equipped with modern weapons and doctrine was the last of the "Four Modernizations" announced by Zhou Enlai and supported by Deng Xiaoping. In keeping with Deng's mandate to reform, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which includes the strategic nuclear forces, army, navy, and air force, has demobilized millions of men and women since 1978 and introduced modern methods in such areas as recruitment and manpower, strategy, and education and training.

Following the June 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, ideological correctness was temporarily revived as the dominant theme in Chinese military affairs. Reform and modernization appear to have since resumed their position as the PLA's priority objectives, although the armed forces' political loyalty to the CCP remains a leading concern.

The Chinese military is in the process of transforming itself from a land-based power, centered on a vast ground force, to a smaller, mobile, high-tech military eventually capable of mounting limited operations beyond its coastal borders.

China's power-projection capability is limited but has grown over recent years. China has acquired some advanced weapons systems from abroad, including Sovremmeny destroyers, SU-27 and SU-30 aircraft, and Kilo-class diesel submarines from Russia, and continued to develop domestic production capabilities, such as for the domestically-developed J-10 fighter aircraft. However, much of its air and naval forces continues to be based on 1960s-era technology. As the Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review, released February 2006, noted, the United States shares with other countries a concern about the pace, scope, and direction of China's military modernization. We view military exchanges, visits, and other forms of engagement are useful tools in promoting transparency, provided they have substance and are fully reciprocal. Regularized exchanges and contact also have the significant benefit of building confidence, reducing the possibility of accidents, and providing the lines of communication that are essential in ensuring that episodes such as the April 2001 EP-3 aircraft incident do not escalate into major crises. During their April 2006 meeting, President Bush and President Hu agreed to increase officer exchanges and to begin a strategic nuclear dialogue between STRATCOM and the Chinese military's strategic missile command. U.S. and Chinese militaries are also considering ways in which we might cooperate on disaster assistance relief.

Nuclear Weapons. In 1955, Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party decided to proceed with a nuclear weapons program; it was developed with Soviet assistance until 1960. After its first nuclear test in October 1964, Beijing deployed a modest but potent ballistic missile force, including land- and sea-based intermediate-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

China became a major international arms exporter during the 1980s. Beijing joined the Middle East arms control talks, which began in July 1991 to establish global guidelines for conventional arms transfers, but

announced in September 1992 that it would no longer participate because of the U.S. decision to sell F-16A/B aircraft to Taiwan. China was the first state to pledge "no first use" of nuclear weapons. It joined the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1984 and pledged to abstain from further atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons in 1986. China acceded to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1992 and supported its indefinite and unconditional extension in 1995. In 1996, it signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and agreed to seek an international ban on the production of fissile nuclear weapons material. To date, China has not ratified the CTBT.

In 1996, China committed not to provide assistance to un-safeguarded nuclear facilities. China became a full member of the NPT Exporters (Zangger) Committee, a group that determines items subject to IAEA inspections if exported by NPT signatories.

In September 1997, China issued detailed nuclear export control regulations. China began implementing regulations establishing controls over nuclear-related dual-use items in 1998. China also has committed not to engage in new nuclear cooperation with Iran (even under safeguards), and will complete existing cooperation, which is not of proliferation concern, within a relatively short period. In May 2004, with the support of the United States, China became a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Based on significant, tangible progress with China on nuclear nonproliferation, President Clinton in 1998 took steps to bring into force the 1985 U.S.-China Agreement on Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation.

Chemical Weapons. China is not a member of the Australia Group, an informal and voluntary arrangement made in 1985 to monitor developments in the proliferation of dual-use chemicals and to coordinate export controls on key dual-use chemicals and equipment with weapons applications. In April 1997, however, China ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and, in September 1997, promulgated a new chemical weapons export control directive. In October 2002, China promulgated updated regulations on dual-use chemical agents, and now controls all the major items on the Australia Group control list.

Missiles. Although it is not a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the multinational effort to restrict the proliferation of missiles, in March 1992 China undertook to abide by MTCR guidelines and parameters. China reaffirmed this commitment in 1994, and pledged not to transfer MTCR-class ground-to-ground missiles. In November 2000, China committed not to assist in any way the development by other countries of MTCR-class missiles.

However, in August 29, 2003, the U.S. Government imposed missile proliferation sanctions lasting two years on the Chinese company China North Industries Corporation (NORINCO) after determining that it was knowingly involved in the transfer of equipment and technology controlled under Category II of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) Annex that contributed to MTCR-class missiles in a non-MTCR country. In December 2003, the P.R.C. promulgated comprehensive new export control regulations governing exports of all categories of sensitive technologies.

U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

From Revolution to the Shanghai Communique

As the PLA armies moved south to complete the communist conquest of China in 1949, the American Embassy followed the Nationalist government headed by Chiang Kai-shek, finally moving to Taipei later that year. U.S. consular officials remained in mainland China. The new P.R.C. Government was hostile to this official American presence, and all U.S. personnel were withdrawn from the mainland in early 1950. Any remaining hope of normalizing relations ended when U.S. and Chinese communist forces fought on opposing sides in the Korean conflict.

Beginning in 1954 and continuing until 1970, the United States and China held 136 meetings at the ambassadorial level, first at Geneva and later at Warsaw. In the late 1960s, U.S. and Chinese political leaders decided that improved bilateral relations were in their common interest. In 1969, the United States initiated measures to relax trade restrictions and other impediments to bilateral contact. On July 15, 1971, President Nixon announced that his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Dr. Henry Kissinger, had made a secret trip to Beijing to initiate direct contact with the Chinese leadership and that he, the President, had been invited to visit China.

In February 1972, President Nixon traveled to Beijing, Hangzhou, and Shanghai. At the conclusion of his trip, the U.S. and Chinese Governments issued the "Shanghai Communique," a statement of their foreign policy views. (For the complete text of the Shanghai Communique, see the Department of State Bulletin, March 20, 1972.)

In the Communique, both nations pledged to work toward the full normalization of diplomatic relations. The United States acknowledged the Chinese position that all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China. The statement enabled the United States and China to temporarily set aside the "crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations"—Taiwan—and to open trade and other contacts.

Liaison Office, 1973-78

In May 1973, in an effort to build toward the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, the United States and China established the United States Liaison Office (USLO)

in Beijing and a counterpart Chinese office in Washington, DC. In the years between 1973 and 1978, such distinguished Americans as David Bruce, George H.W. Bush, Thomas Gates, and Leonard Woodcock served as chiefs of the USLO with the personal rank of Ambassador.

President Ford visited China in 1975 and reaffirmed the U.S. interest in normalizing relations with Beijing. Shortly after taking office in 1977, President Carter again reaffirmed the interest expressed in the Shanghai Communique. The United States and China announced on December 15, 1978, that the two governments would establish diplomatic relations on January 1, 1979.

Normalization

In the Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations dated January 1, 1979, the United States transferred diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. The United States reiterated the Shanghai Communique's acknowledgment of the Chinese position that there is only one China and that Taiwan is a part of China; Beijing acknowledged that the American people would continue to carry on commercial, cultural, and other unofficial contacts with the people of Taiwan. The Taiwan Relations Act made the necessary changes in U.S. domestic law to permit such unofficial relations with Taiwan to flourish.

U.S.-China Relations Since Normalization

Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping's January 1979 visit to Washington, DC, initiated a series of important, high-level exchanges, which continued until the spring of 1989. This resulted in many bilateral agreements—especially in the fields of scientific, technological, and cultural interchange and trade relations. Since early 1979, the United States and China have initiated hundreds of joint research projects and cooperative programs under the Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology, the largest bilateral program.

On March 1, 1979, the United States and China formally established embassies in Beijing and Washington, DC. During 1979, outstanding private claims were resolved, and a bilateral trade agreement was concluded. Vice President Walter Mondale reciprocated Vice Premier Deng's visit with an August 1979 trip to China. This visit led to agreements in September 1980 on maritime affairs, civil aviation links, and textile matters, as well as a bilateral consular convention.

As a consequence of high-level and working-level contacts initiated in 1980, U.S. dialogue with China broadened to cover a wide range of issues, including global and regional strategic problems, political-military questions, including arms control, UN and other multilateral organization affairs, and international narcotics matters. The expanding relationship that followed normalization was threatened in 1981 by Chinese objections to the level of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Secretary of State Alexander Haig visited China in June 1981 in an effort to resolve Chinese questions about America's unofficial relations with Taiwan.

Eight months of negotiations produced the U.S.-China joint communique of August 17, 1982. In this third communique, the United States stated its intention to reduce gradually the level of arms sales to Taiwan, and the Chinese described as a fundamental policy their effort to strive for a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan question. Meanwhile, Vice President Bush visited China in May 1982.

High-level exchanges continued to be a significant means for developing U.S.-China relations in the 1980s. President Reagan and Premier Zhao Ziyang made reciprocal visits in 1984. In July 1985, President Li Xiannian traveled to the United States, the first such visit by a Chinese head of state. Vice President Bush visited China in October 1985 and opened the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu, the fourth U.S. consular post in China. Further exchanges of cabinet-level officials occurred between 1985-89, capped by President Bush's visit to Beijing in February 1989. In the period before the June 3-4, 1989 crackdown, a large and growing number of cultural exchange activities undertaken at all levels gave the American and Chinese peoples broad exposure to each other's cultural, artistic, and educational achievements. Numerous Chinese professional and official delegations visited the United States each month. Many of these exchanges continued after Tiananmen.

Bilateral Relations After Tiananmen

Following the Chinese authorities' brutal suppression of demonstrators in June 1989, the United States and other governments enacted a number of measures to express their condemnation of China's blatant violation of the basic human rights of its citizens. The United States suspended high-level official exchanges with China and weapons exports from the United States to China. The United States also imposed a number of economic sanctions. In the summer of 1990, at the G-7 Houston summit, Western nations called for renewed political and economic reforms in China, particularly in the field of human rights.

Tiananmen disrupted the U.S.-China trade relationship, and U.S. investors' interest in China dropped dramatically. The U.S. Government also responded to the political repression by suspending certain trade and investment programs on June 5 and 20, 1989. Some sanctions were legislated; others were executive actions. Examples include:

- The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (TDA)—new activities in China were suspended from June 1989 until January 2001, when then-President Clinton lifted this suspension.
- Overseas Private Insurance Corporation (OPIC)—new activities suspended since June 1989.
- Development Bank Lending/IMF Credits—the United States does not support development bank lending and will not support IMF

credits to China except for projects that address basic human needs.

- Munitions List Exports—subject to certain exceptions, no licenses may be issued for the export of any defense article on the U.S. Munitions List. This restriction may be waived upon a presidential national interest determination.

- Arms Imports—import of defense articles from China was banned after the imposition of the ban on arms exports to China. The import ban was subsequently waived by the Administration and re-imposed on May 26, 1994. It covers all items on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives' Munitions Import List.

In 1996, the P.R.C. conducted military exercises in waters close to Taiwan in an apparent effort at intimidation, after Taiwan's former President, Lee Teng-huei made a private visit to the United States. The United States dispatched two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region. Subsequently, tensions in the Taiwan Strait diminished, and relations between the United States and China have improved, with increased high-level exchanges and progress on numerous bilateral issues, including human rights, nonproliferation, and trade. Former Chinese president Jiang Zemin visited the United States in the fall of 1997, the first state visit to the United States by a Chinese president since 1985. In connection with that visit, the two sides reached agreement on implementation of their 1985 agreement on peaceful nuclear cooperation, as well as a number of other issues. Former President Clinton visited China in June 1998. He traveled extensively in China, and direct interaction with the Chinese people included live speeches, press conference and a radio show, allowing the President to convey first-hand to the Chinese people a sense of American ideals and values.

Relations between the United States and China were severely strained by the tragic accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in May 1999. By the end of 1999, relations began to gradually improve. In October 1999, the two sides reached agreement on humanitarian payments for families of those who died and those who were injured as well as payments for damages to respective diplomatic properties in Belgrade and China. Relations further cooled when, in April 2001, a Chinese F-8 fighter collided with a U.S. EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft flying over international waters south of China. The EP-3 was able to make an emergency landing on China's Hainan Island despite extensive damage; the P.R.C. aircraft crashed with the loss of its pilot. Following extensive negotiations, the crew of the EP-3 was allowed to leave China 11 days later, but the U.S. aircraft was not permitted to depart for another 3 months.

Subsequently, the relationship gradually improved. President George W. Bush visited China in February 2002 and met with President Jiang Zemin in Crawford, Texas in October. President Bush hosted Premier Wen Jiabao in Washington in December 2003. President Bush first met Hu Jintao in his new capacity as P.R.C. President on the margins of the G-8 Summit in Evian in June 2003, and at subsequent international fora, such as the September 2004 APEC meeting in Chile, the July 2005 G-8 summit in Scotland, and the September 2005 UN General Assembly meetings in New York. President Bush traveled to China in November 2005, an official visit that was reciprocated in April 2006 when President Hu met with President Bush in Washington.

U.S. China policy has been consistent. For seven consecutive administrations, U.S. policy has been to encourage China's opening and integration into the global system. As a result, China has moved from being a relatively isolated and poor country to one that is a key participant in international institutions and a major trading nation. The United States encourages China to play an active role as a responsible stakeholder in the international community, working with the United States and other countries to support and strengthen the international system that has enabled China's success. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has noted, "America has reason to welcome a confident, peaceful, and prosperous China. We want China as a global partner, able and willing to match its growing capabilities to its international responsibilities." Deputy Secretary John D. Negroponte and other senior State Department officials engage in regular and intensive discussions with their P.R.C. counterparts through the U.S.-China Senior Dialogue. The Senior Dialogue covers the entire range of issues in the bilateral relationship, as well as global issues of shared concern.

China has an important role to play in global, regional, and bilateral counterterrorism efforts, and has supported coalition efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (9-11) in New York City and Washington, DC, China offered strong public support for the war on terrorism and has been an important partner in U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Shortly after 9-11, the United States and China also commenced a counterterrorism dialogue, the most recent round of which was held in Washington in November 2005 and focused on the threat of WMD falling into the hands of terrorists. Inspections under the Container Security Initiative (CSI) are now underway at the major ports of Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. China has also agreed to participate in the Department of Energy's Megaports Initiative, a critical part of our efforts to detect the flow of nuclear materials. China voted in favor of UN Security Council Resolution 1373, publicly supported the coalition campaign in Afghanistan, and contributed $150 million of bilateral assistance to Afghan reconstruction following the defeat of the Taliban. China participated in both the Iraq Neighbors and International Compact with Iraq meetings in 2007 and has voiced strong support for the Government of Iraq following the country's December 2005 parliamentary elections. China has pledged $25

million to Iraqi reconstruction and taken measures to forgive Iraq's sovereign debt to China.

The United States and China have cooperated with growing effectiveness on various aspects of law enforcement, including computer crime, intellectual property rights enforcement, human smuggling, and corruption. The most recent meeting of the U.S.-China Joint Liaison Group on law enforcement cooperation took place in Washington in June 2007.

China and the United States have also been working closely with the international community to address threats to global security, such as those posed by North Korea and Iran's nuclear programs. China has played a constructive role in hosting the Six-Party Talks and in brokering the February 2007 agreement on Initial Actions. The United States looks to Beijing to use its unique influence with Pyongyang to ensure that North Korea implements fully its commitments under the September 2005 Statement of Principles. China has publicly stated that it does not want Iran to acquire nuclear weapons and has voted in support of sanctions resolutions on Iran at UN Security Council. On these and other important issues, such as the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the United States expects China to join with the international community in finding solutions. China's participation is critical to efforts to combat transnational health threats such as avian influenza and HIV/AIDS, and both the United States and China play an important role in new multilateral energy initiatives, such as the Asia-Pacific Partnership.

While the United States looks forward to a constructive and broad-based relationship with China—a message reiterated by President Bush when he met with President Hu in April 2006 in Washington—there remain areas of potential disagreement. The United States does not support Taiwan independence and opposes unilateral steps, by either side, to change the status quo. At the same time, the United States has made it clear that cross-strait differences should be resolved peacefully and in a manner acceptable to people on both sides of the Strait.

At various points in the past several years, China's has expressed concern about the United States making statements on the political evolution of Hong Kong and has stressed that political stability there is paramount for economic growth. The NPC's passage of an Anti-Secession law in March 2005 was viewed as unhelpful to the cause of promoting cross-Strait and regional stability by the United States and precipitated critical high-level statements by both sides.

U.S.-China Economic Relations

U.S. direct investment in China covers a wide range of manufacturing sectors, several large hotel projects, restaurant chains, and petrochemicals. U.S. companies have entered agreements establishing more than 20,000 equity joint ventures, contractual joint ventures, and wholly foreign-owned enterprises in China. More than 100 U.S.-based multinationals have projects in China, some with multiple investments. Cumulative U.S. investment in China is estimated at $57 billion, through the end of 2007, making the United States the sixth-largest foreign investor in China.

Total two-way trade between China and the United States grew from $33 billion in 1992 to over $386 billion in 2007. The United States is China's second-largest trading partner, and China is now the third-largest trading partner for the United States (after Canada and Mexico). U.S. exports to China have been growing more rapidly than to any other market (up 21% in 2005, 32% in 2006, and 18% in 2007). U.S. imports from China grew 12% in 2007, bringing the U.S. trade deficit with China to $256 billion. Some of the factors that influence the U.S. trade deficit with China include:

- A shift of low-end assembly industries to China from the newly industrialized economies (NIEs) in Asia. China has increasingly become the last link in a long chain of value-added production. Because U.S. trade data attributes the full value of a product to the final assembler, Chinese value-added gets overcounted.

- Strong U.S. demand for Chinese goods.

- China's restrictive trade practices, which have included an array of barriers to foreign goods and services, often aimed at protecting state-owned enterprises. Under its WTO accession agreement, China is reducing tariffs and eliminating import licensing requirements, as well as addressing other trade barriers.

The U.S. approach to its economic relations with China has two main elements.

First, the United States seeks to fully integrate China into the global, rules-based economic and trading system. China's participation in the global economy will nurture the process of economic reform, encourage China to take on responsibilities commensurate with its growing influence, and increase China's stake in the stability and prosperity of East Asia.

Second, the United States seeks to expand U.S. exporters' and investors' access to the Chinese market. As China grows and develops, its needs for imported goods and services will grow even more rapidly. The U.S. Government will continue to work with China's leadership to ensure full and timely conformity with China's WTO commitments—including effective protection of intellectual property rights—and to encourage China to move to a flexible, market-based exchange rate in order to further increase U.S. exports of goods, agricultural products, and services to the P.R.C.

In order to achieve these objectives, the United States has engaged with China in the Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED). The SED is a biannual event, focusing on three major themes:

- Maintaining sustainable growth without large trade imbalances;
- Continued opening of markets to trade, competition, and investment;
- Cooperation on energy security, energy efficiency, and the environmental and health impacts.

The SED is based on recognition by both China and the United States of our mutual interest in strengthening the global economy, addressing global imbalances, and promoting energy security and environmentally sustainable growth. Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson led the U.S. delegation during both previous SEDs, while Vice Premier Wu Yi led the Chinese delegation. The third SED is expected to take place in Beijing in December 2007.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 26, 2008

Country Description: The People's Republic of China was established on October 1, 1949, with Beijing as its capital city. With well over 1.3 billion citizens, China is the world's most populous country and the third largest country in the world in terms of territory. China is undergoing rapid, profound economic and social change and development.

Political power remains centralized in the Chinese Communist Party. Modern tourist facilities are available in major cities, but many facilities in

smaller provincial cities and rural areas are frequently below international standards.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and visa are required to enter and exit China and must be obtained from Chinese Embassies and Consulates before traveling to China. Americans arriving without valid passports and the appropriate Chinese visa are not permitted to enter and will be subject to a fine and immediate deportation at the traveler's expense. Travelers should not rely on Chinese host organizations claiming to be able to arrange a visa upon arrival. Chinese authorities have recently tightened their visa issuance policy, in some cases requiring personal interviews of American citizens. Although a bilateral United States-China agreement provides for issuance of multiple-entry visas with validity of up to one year for tourists and business visitors, Chinese consulates often limit visas to only one entry. Visit the Embassy of China web site at http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/ for the most current visa information.

Visas are not required of aliens who hold air tickets to the final destination, have booked seats on international airliners flying directly through China, and will stay in a transit city for less than 24 hours without leaving the airport. Persons transiting China on the way to and from Mongolia or North Korea or who plan to re-enter China from the Hong Kong or Macau Special Administrative Regions should be sure to obtain visas allowing more than one entry. Permits are required to visit Tibet as well as many remote areas not normally open to foreigners. A travel permit for Tibet can be obtained through local travel agents. Permits cost approximately renminbi (RMB) 100, are single-entry and valid for at most three months. Most areas in Tibet are not open for foreigners except Lhasa City and part of Shan Nan. Foreigners can be fined up to RMB 500, taken into custody, and deported for visiting restricted areas. For information about entry requirements and restricted areas, travelers may consult the Visa Office of the Embassy of China (PRC) at Room 110, 2201 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20007, or telephone (202) 338-6688 and (202) 588-9760. For a list of services and frequently asked visa questions and answers, travelers can view the Chinese Embassy's web site at http://www.china-embassy.org/eng. There are Chinese consulates general in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. Since the run-up to the Olympics, some Americans have reported having difficulty getting visas in Seoul, South Korea or Hong Kong.

In July 2007, the Chinese government tightened its regulations for altering or renewing visas for individuals already in China. Visitors can no longer change tourist (L) and exchange (F) -type visas to other types and many applications must now be completed in person. There have also been reports that entry and exit violations are being more strictly enforced, with recent reports of police, school administrators and hotel staff checking to ensure that individuals have not overstayed their visas. Visitors are expected to register with the police within 24 hours of arrival in China. While hotels generally do this automatically with no additional action being required from the guest, Americans planning on staying in private homes with family or friends must go to their local police station to register. The police have been stricter in the enforcement of this rule and have fined apartment companies, hotels and Americans for violations.

Americans who overstay or otherwise violate the terms of their Chinese visas will be subject to a maximum fine of 5,000 RMB, departure delays and may be subject to detention. Travelers should note that international flights departing China are routinely overbooked, making reconfirmation of departure reservations and early airport check-in essential. An airport user fee for both international and domestic flights is now included in the cost of the ticket price. Americans are also required to have an exit visa to leave China. Americans who lose a passport must take into consideration the time needed to get a new passport and a new visa. Visa issuances can take as long as 7 business days.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated new procedures at entry/ exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian if they are not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

Dual national Americans, particularly those with dual Chinese and American nationality, should realize that entering China using their non-U.S. passport could mean that the Chinese Government may not afford them the consular protections to which they are entitled. While the U.S. Government will offer consular services to all U.S. citizens regardless of dual nationality, use of other than a U.S. passport to enter China can make it difficult for U.S. Consuls to assist dual national Americans who have been arrested or who have other concerns with the Chinese Government.

China does not recognize dual citizenship. U.S. Embassy and Consulate officials are often denied access to arrested or detained Americans who do not enter China using their U.S. passport. Lawful Permanent Residents of the United States who do not carry unexpired or otherwise clear evidence that they may re-enter the United States will encounter delays departing from China. Lawful Permanent Residents should renew and update U.S. residence documentation prior to their departure from the United States.

Safety and Security: Americans visiting or residing in China are advised to take routine safety precautions; that is, travelers should remain aware of their surroundings and of events happening around them. Travelers should respect local police requirements to avoid travel in some areas. In light of the greatly increased numbers of older Americans traveling to China, Americans

should verify with U.S. tour operators that local guides being used are familiar with medical facilities and emergency medical evacuation procedures. American citizens who rent apartments with gas appliances should be aware that, in some areas, natural gas is not scented to warn occupants of gas leaks or concentrations. In addition, heaters may not always be well vented, thereby allowing excess carbon monoxide to build up in living spaces. Due to fatal accidents involving American citizens, travelers are advised to ensure all gas appliances are properly vented or to install gas and carbon monoxide detectors in their residences. These devices are not widely available in China and should be purchased prior to arrival.

Security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephones, and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms, including computers, may be searched without the consent or knowledge of the traveler. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. Foreign government officials, journalists, and business people with access to advanced proprietary technology are particularly likely to be under surveillance.

Terrorism is rare in China, although a small number of bombings have occurred in areas throughout China. Recent bombings have generally been criminal in nature, frequently the result of commercial disputes. The vast majority of these local incidents related to disputes over land seizures, social issues or environmental problems. While some incidents have grown to larger scales and involved some violence, these incidents have not been directed against foreigners.

Business disputes in China are not always handled through the courts. Sometimes the foreign partner has been held hostage, threatened with violence, or beaten up. Anyone entering into a contract in China should have it thoroughly examined, both in the United States and in China. Contracts entered into in the United States are not enforced by Chinese courts. Care should also be taken when entering into a lease for an apartment or house. There have been instances of foreigners being ejected from their apartments because of lease disputes, and being prevented from re-entering, even to retrieve their belongings.

Americans doing business in China should be aware that if they become involved in a business and/or civil dispute, the Chinese government may prohibit them from leaving China until the matter is resolved. Civil cases may sometimes be regarded as criminal cases and the defendant may be placed in custody. Civil law disputes may take years to resolve. There are many cases of American citizens being prevented from leaving China for months and even years while their civil cases are resolved. U.S. citizens and business owners should be aware that many intending migrants from China will try to enlist their assistance to secure a U.S. visa. In one common scheme, a PRC national contacts a U.S. business feigning interest in a particular product or service. The PRC national then asks for a formal letter from the U.S. company inviting him or her (alone or with colleagues) to come to the United States to discuss or finalize a purchase, or establish formal cooperation between the two companies. The PRC national will then use the invitation letter when he or she applies for a U.S. visa to show he/ she has a legitimate purpose of travel. While many such requests may be legitimate, some are not. Oftentimes, the PRC national initiating the contact has no relationship to his/her claimed Chinese employer. In fact, it is not unusual for these individuals to be part of elaborate human smuggling syndicates. Visa Sections at the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in China are regularly contacted by U.S. businesses that unwittingly have been used to facilitate illicit migration schemes.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: China has a low crime rate. Pickpockets target tourists at sightseeing destinations, open-air markets, airports, and in stores, often with the complicity of low-paid security guards. Americans are perceived as wealthy and may be specifically targeted by petty criminals. Violence against foreigners, while rare, is on the increase. Over the past year, incidents of violence against foreigners, including sexual assaults, have taken place, usually in urban areas where bars and nightclubs are located. Robberies, sometimes at gunpoint, have occurred in western China and more recently in Beijing. There have been some reports of robberies and assaults along remote mountain highways near China's border with Nepal. Travelers are sometimes asked by locals to exchange money at a preferential rate. It is illegal to exchange dollars for RMB except at banks, hotels, and official exchange offices. Due to the large volume of counterfeit currency in China, unofficial exchanges usually result in travelers losing their money and possibly facing charges of breaking foreign exchange laws. If detained by police under suspicion of committing an economic crime involving currency, travelers may be delayed for weeks or months while police investigate the allegations.

Recently, there have been instances in Beijing and elsewhere of mobs in bar districts attacking foreigners. Nationalism is on the rise, and disputes among Chinese citizens or between Chinese and foreigners can quickly escalate. Caution should be exercised when visiting bar districts late at night, especially on weekends. There have been reports of bar fights in which Americans have been specifically targeted due their nationality.

Simple arguments can turn into mob scenes and many times have resulted in the American being detained for hours for questioning with no right to an attorney or consular officer at that stage. Bar fights are often punished by administrative detention in a local jail for up to two weeks, usually followed by deportation.

Travelers should have small bills (RMB 10, 20 and 50 notes) for travel by taxi. Reports of taxi drivers using counterfeit money to make change for large bills are increasingly common, especially in Guangzhou. Arguments with taxi drivers over fares or over choice of route usually are not easily resolved on the scene. In some cases, Americans who instigate such arguments have been detained for questioning and have not been released until the fare is paid or a settlement is reached and the American offers an apology. There has been an increase in the number of Americans falling victim to scams involving the inflation of prices for tea and other drinks. Normally, the scam involves young people who approach English speaking tourists and ask to have a cup of tea with them to practice their English. When the bill comes for the tea, the charge has been inflated to an exorbitant amount. When the tourist complains, enforcers arrive to collect the money. A similar scam involves buying drinks for young women at local bars.

Throughout China, women outside hotels in tourist districts frequently use the prospect of companionship or sex to lure foreign men to isolated locations where accomplices are waiting for the purpose of robbery. Travelers should not allow themselves to be driven to bars or an individual's home unless they know the person making the offer. Hotel guests should refuse to open their room doors to anyone they do not know personally.

The Embassy has received some reports of fraud committed against U.S. citizens through the Internet with the intent of securing a visa to the United States or money. A common scenario involves a Chinese national who hires a consulting company to communicate with an American citizen on his/her behalf. The intent of the Chinese national is not always clear; however, the business models of many of these companies are reliant on the American citizen ultimately sending money to the Chinese national for expenses, such as English study, not knowing that the money is going to the "consultant" instead. The American citizen may unwittingly carry on telephone conversations with a paid consultant posing as the romantic interest. In some cases, the American citizen may travel to China to meet his/her Internet friend in person, a visa consultant accompanies the Chinese friend and presents the American with a demand for payment of thousands of dollars in fees. At times, when the American citizen has refused to pay, s/he has been threatened with physical violence or unlawful detention. Another common scenario involves a Chinese person who will claim he/she or a close family member has been kidnapped or had a large sum of money stolen and asks the American to wire them money. We want to remind American citizens that no one should provide personal or financial information to unknown parties. For additional information on these types of scams, see the Department of State's publication, International Financial Scams.

Relationship fraud via the Internet is also a growing industry. While many Chinese citizens are sincere in their desire to marry and live with Americans they meet over the Internet, some are not. It is important to remember that immigrant visas to the United States are viewed by many Chinese as having a great deal of value, and it is not uncommon for people to enter into relationships for the sole purpose of obtaining a visa.

Unfortunately, the Embassy is unable to carry out investigations of relationships of this sort, but all Americans are urged to approach such Internet relationships with caution, and to be wary of situations which appear similar to that described above.

Recently, American visitors have encountered scams at the international airports in China whereby individuals appearing to work for the airport offer to take American tourists' bags to the departure area, but instead they carry the bags to another area and insist that the visitor pay an airport tax. Travelers should be advised that the airport tax is now included in the price of the airline ticket. The airport police or security officers should be contacted if this happens.

The U.S. Embassy is aware of reports that airport thefts and robberies of travelers in China are on the rise, specifically in the domestic airports of Beijing, Zhengzhou, Shenyang, Dalian, Qingdao and Taiyuan. Additionally, some Americans report that they have been the victims of robberies while in their hotel rooms in tourist areas and some have been assaulted during these robberies. American visitors to China should carry their passports with them out of reach of pickpockets. Americans with Chinese residence permits (juliuzheng) should carry these documents, and leave their passports in a secure location except when traveling. All Americans are encouraged to make photocopies of their passport bio-data pages and Chinese visas and to keep these in a separate, secure location, and to register with the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate General.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime:
The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropri-

ate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

China has a system similar to "911" in the United States which the Chinese can use to contact police or other emergency services. Americans can call 110 while in China to reach this service; however, there are few to no English speakers working for this hotline.

English Teachers/Secondary School Teachers: Many Americans have enjoyed their teaching experience in China; others have encountered significant problems. Prospective teachers are encouraged to read the Teaching in China Guide on Embassy Beijing's American Citizen Services web site at http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/teach.html. To assist the Embassy in providing up-to-date information to prospective teachers, Americans experiencing problems should inform the Embassy by contacting the American Citizens Services Unit at telephone (86) (10) 8531-4000, or via e-mail at: AmCitBeijing@state.gov.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The standards standards of medical care in China are not equivalent to those in the United States. Medical facilities with international staffs are available in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and a few other large cities. Many other hospitals in major Chinese cities have so-called VIP wards (gaogan bingfang). These feature reasonably up-to-date laboratory and imaging facilities. The physicians in these centers are generally well-trained. Most VIP wards also provide medical services to foreigners and have English-speaking doctors and nurses. Most hospitals in China will not accept medical insurance from the United States, with the exception of the following hospitals, which are on the Blue Cross Blue Shield's worldwide network providers - overseas network hospitals' list (http://www.bcbs.com/bluecardworldwide/index.html): Hong Kong Adventist Hospital, Beijing United Family Hospital, Beijing Friendship Hospital, International Medical Center in Beijing, and Peking Union Medical Center. Cash payment for services is often demanded before a patient is seen and treated, sometimes even in cases of emergency. Travelers will be asked to post a deposit prior to admission to cover the expected cost of treatment. Hospitals in major cities may accept credit cards for payment. Even in the VIP/foreigner wards of major hospitals, however, American patients have frequently encountered difficulty due to cultural, language, and regulatory differences. Physicians and hospitals have sometimes refused to supply American patients with complete copies of their Chinese hospital medical records, including laboratory test results, scans, and x-rays. Travelers should note that commonly used American medication is generally not available in China. Medications that bear the same or similar name to prescription medication from the United States are not always the same. Americans should make sure to carry their prescriptions from their doctors if carrying prescription medication into China for personal use.

Ambulances do not carry sophisticated medical equipment. Injured or seriously ill Americans may be required to take taxis or other immediately available vehicles to the nearest major hospital rather than waiting for ambulances to arrive. Generally, in rural areas, only rudimentary medical facilities are available, often with poorly trained medical personnel who have little medical equipment and medications. Rural clinics are often reluctant to accept responsibility for treating foreigners, even in emergency situations.

International SOS operates modern medical and dental clinics and provides medical evacuation and medical escort services in Beijing, Nanjing, Tianjin, Shekou and Ulaanbaatar, as well as 24hr Alarm Centers in Beijing and Hong Kong. Through its clinics in Beijing (24 hours), Tianjin, Nanjing and Shekou, International SOS offers international standard family practice services, emergency medical services and a range of clinical services. For medical emergencies anywhere in mainland China, Americans can call the International SOS 24-hour "Alarm Center" in Beijing at telephone: (86) (10) 6462-9100 for advice and referrals to local facilities. International SOS "Alarm Centers" can also be contacted in Hong Kong at telephone: (852) 2528-9900 and in the United States at: (215) 942-8226. For a full list of International SOS locations and phone numbers, consult the SOS web site at http://www.internationalsos.com. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates in China maintain lists of local English-speaking doctors and hospitals, all of which are published on their respective ACS web pages at http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn. cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in China. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

Alternative Medical Treatments: There have been increasing numbers of foreigners coming to China to receive alternative medical treatments or procedures prohibited in the United States relating specifically to stem-cell research. Any person contemplating these treatments should be fully aware of the risks of such procedures. The treatments can be dangerous and untested. The results are not guaranteed. In many instances, patients going for treatment develop

secondary infections that cannot be handled by these facilities. They are transferred to hospitals for treatment and are responsible for all additional costs, including repatriation back to the United States. In some cases, these treatments have resulted in death.

Medical Insurance: China has no public healthcare system to provide for people without insurance or money. If you become sick or injured, you will be expected to pay for your bills, sometimes even before treatment is offered. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning China is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The rate of traffic accidents in China, including fatal accidents, is among the highest in the world. Driving etiquette in China is still developing. As a result, traffic is often chaotic, and right-of-way and other courtesies are often ignored. Travelers should note that cars and buses traveling in the wrong lanes frequently hit pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians should always be careful while walking near traffic. Road/traffic conditions are generally safe if occupants of modern passenger vehicles wear seatbelts. Most traffic accident injuries involve pedestrians or cyclists who are involved in collisions or who encounter unexpected road hazards (e.g., unmarked open manholes). Foreigners with resident permits can apply for PRC driver licenses; however, liability issues often make it preferable to employ a local driver. Child safety seats are not widely available in China. Americans who wish to ride bicycles in China are urged to wear safety helmets meeting U.S. standards. The number of American citizens involved in serious and deadly traffic accidents in Beijing is increasing. The Embassy strongly encourages travelers to exercise special caution when crossing streets in China's cities as pedestrians do not have the right-of-way. Please note that many taxi cabs do not have functioning seatbelts for passengers. All drivers should be aware of the Chinese regulations regarding traffic accidents. Although a recent law states that drivers involved in a traffic accident should move their cars to the side of the road as soon as possible, in practice, the police often conduct investigations on the scene of the accident with the cars in their original positions. Americans who cannot express themselves clearly in Chinese should call the police as soon as possible after an accident and wait to move the cars until the police permit it. If called to an accident, the police may take 20 minutes or longer to arrive. Once the police arrive, they will complete a preliminary investigation and arrange a time for you to report to the police station responsible for the accident scene. The police will prepare a written report, in Chinese, describing the circumstances of the accident. They will present the report to you either at the scene, or more likely at the police station, and ask you to sign it verifying the details of the accident. Do not sign the report as is unless your Chinese is good enough to completely understand the report and you find it totally accurate. If you either do not understand it or believe it is partly or wholly inaccurate, you may either:

- Write a disclaimer on the report to the effect that you cannot read and understand the report and cannot attest to the accuracy thereof, but are signing it because of the police requirement that you do so, and then sign, or

- Write your own version of the accident, in English, on the police form and indicate that your signature only attests to the accuracy of the English version.

Most incidents (such as an accident) will draw a crowd. Drivers should remain calm. A crowd will usually move in very close to the accident and participants. In many cases the bystanders consider themselves to be an ad hoc jury. They may call for money, usually from RMB 100 to 1,000, to be paid by the party they consider at fault. The amount is not necessarily relevant to the amount of damage. A certain amount of bargaining is normal, even at accidents involving two Chinese parties. Though a crowd may seem threatening, crowd assaults on foreigners at accidents have not been reported. If a traffic police booth is nearby, you may wish to leave the vehicle and walk there to await the arrival of the police accident team. Alternatively, you may walk to a shop, restaurant, or other location nearby in the immediate vicinity and wait for police.

Your vehicle should not leave the scene of an accident. Your actions may serve to further incite the crowd if they perceive that you are fleeing to evade responsibility for your share of blame or payment of damages. The crowd may attempt to keep your vehicle at the accident scene by standing in the way or blocking the roadway with vehicles, bicycles and other objects.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government ofChina's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of China's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

The Chinese have recently changed their security regulations for international and domestic travel. Please check with the airlines and the airports for the most up-to-date information, or check the Beijing Capital Airport website at http://en.bcia.com.cn.

Special Circumstances: Chinese customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from China of items such as antiquities,

banned publications, religious literature (which may be imported for the visitor's personal use only), or vehicles not conforming to Chinese standards. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of China in Washington or one of China's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Some Americans report that items purchased in China and believed to be antiques or genuine gems are often later determined to be reproductions. Some travelers report that this occurs even at state-owned stores and museum stores.

Travel agencies and tour guides will often escort tour groups to particular shops at which the travel agency or tour guide will share in the profit, and may claim to guarantee the "authenticity" of items sold in those shops. Travelers are warned to be vigilant when purchasing items in China. China's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information call (212) 354-4480, send an e-mail to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit www.uscib.org for details.

Disaster Preparedness: The southeast coast of China is vulnerable to strong typhoons, usually from July to September. Travelers planning a trip to China can obtain general information about natural disaster preparedness on the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. Additional information about currently active typhoons can be obtained on the University of Hawaii tropical storm page at http://www.solar.ifa.hawaii.edu/Tropical/tropical.html.

On May 12, 2008, China's Sichuan province experienced a severe earthquake resulting in the deaths of the tens of thousands of people. The region continues to experience aftershocks, and Americans should continue to avoid the areas of Sichuan province most severely affected by the earthquake and be prepared for travel delays in other parts of the province. Recovery and restoration operations in the area are ongoing; infrastructure has been damaged and road, air and rail transportation disrupted.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which, in China, differ significantly from those in the United States and do not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating China's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in China are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

On March 1, 2006, a new Public Security Law went into effect that gives police new powers relating to the commission of a wide range of offenses, including the authority to detain and deport foreigners. The list of offenses has been expanded to include certain religious activities and prostitution-related crimes.

Americans in China, who are not staying at hotels, including Americans who are staying with friends or relatives, must register with local police as soon as they arrive. Otherwise, they may be fined up to 500 RMB per day.

Americans who are questioned by police should immediately notify the U.S. Embassy or the nearest consulate. Foreigners detained for questioning may not be allowed to contact their national authorities until the questioning is concluded. Foreigners who are detained pending trial have often waited over a year for their trial to begin. Foreigners suspected of committing a crime are rarely granted bail. Criminal punishments, especially prison terms, are much more severe than those in the United States. Several Americans currently incarcerated in China have been implicated in financial fraud schemes involving falsified bank or business documents, tax evasion schemes and assisting alien smuggling, including selling passports to provide aliens with travel documents.

In the past, protesters detained for engaging in pro-Falun Gong activities have been quickly deported from China after being questioned. Several of these protesters alleged they were physically abused during their detention. In addition, they allege that personal property, including clothing, cameras, and computers have not always been returned to them upon their deportation. Chinese authorities report that while they have deported these foreigners quickly after public demonstrations in favor of the Falun Gong, future adherents who intentionally arrive in China to protest against Chinese policy may receive longer terms of detention and possibly face prison sentences. In one instance, an American Falun Gong practitioner who was traveling in China on personal business was detained and asked to provide information on other Falun Gong sympathizers in the United States.

Several Americans have been detained and expelled for passing out non-authorized Christian literature. Sentences for distributing this material may range from three to five years imprisonment, if someone is convicted. Chinese customs authorities have enforced strict regulations concerning importation into China of religious literature, including bibles. Foreigners may import only a "reasonable" amount of religious literature, which is for personal use only. Larger quantities will likely be confiscated and other penalties may apply.

Children's Issues: Americans involved in child custody disputes with Chinese national spouses should be aware that Chinese courts may give preference to the Chinese citizen spouse and that Americans may encounter limited appeal opportunities under the current legal system. For information on international adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov/family.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in China are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within China. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

Beijing: The U.S. Embassy is located at No. 2 Xiu Shui Dong Jie, Chaoyang District, Beijing. The American Citizen Services section can be reached at (86)(10) 6532-3431 (8:30-12:00 a.m. and 2:00-4:00 p.m., Mon-Fri) or after hours at (86)(10) 6532-1910. For detailed information please visit the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn. The Embassy consular district includes the following provinces/regions of China: Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Shaanxi, Qinghai, Xinjiang, Hebei, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, and Jiangxi.

Chengdu: The U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu is located at Number 4, Lingshiguan Road, Section 4, Renmin Nanlu, Chengdu 610041, tel. (86)(28) 8558-3992, 8555-3119, after hours (86)(28) 1370 8001 422, and email at consularchengdu@state.gov. This consular district includes the following provinces/regions of China: Guizhou, Sichuan Xizang (Tibet), and Yunnan, as well as the municipality of Chongqing.

Guangzhou: The main office of the U.S. Consulate General in Guangzhou is located at Number 1 South Shamian Street, Shamian Island 200S1, Guangzhou 510133The Consular Section, including the American Citizens Services Unit, is now located at 5th Floor, Tianyu Garden (II phase), 136-146 Lin He Zhong Lu, Tianhe District, tel. (86) (20) 8518-7605; after hours (86) (20) 8121-6077, and email GuangzhouACS@state.gov. This consular district includes the following provinces/regions of China: Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, and Fujian.

Shanghai: The Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai is located in the Westgate Mall, 8 th Floor, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200031; tel. (86)(21) 3217-4650, ext. 2102, 2013, or 2134, after hours (86)(21) 6433-3936; email shanghaiacs@state.gov This consular district includes the following provinces/regions of China: Shanghai, Anhui, Jiangsu and Zhejiang.

Shenyang: The U.S. Consulate General in Shenyang is located at No. 52, 14 th Wei Road, Heping District, Shenyang 110003; tel. (86)(24) 2322-2374; email ShenyangACS@state.gov. This consular district includes the following provinces/regions of China: Liaoning, Heilongjiang, and Jilin.

International Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *International Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

China is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between China and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *International Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Chinese authorities are extremely sensitive about the operation of foreign entities in China. Moreover, adoption is also a sensitive subject in China. It is therefore advisable for any person interested in adopting a child from China to act with discretion and decorum. High-profile attention to adoption in China could curtail or eliminate altogether adoption of Chinese children by persons from countries, including the United States, that have caused adoption to become the subject of public attention.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and China is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from China, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA) has issued the following new regulations for foreigners who wish to adopt children in China. These regulations become effective for all application received after May 1, 2007.

Residency Requirements: China does not require that prospective adoptive parents reside in China for a specified period prior to completing an adoption. However, in order to finalize an adoption, at least one adopting parent must travel to China to execute the required documents in person before the appropriate Chinese authorities.

If only one member of an adopting married couple travels to China, that person must have in his/her possession a power of attorney from the other spouse, notarized and authenticated by the Chinese Embassy in Washington or one of the Chinese Consulates General elsewhere in the United States.

Age Requirements: Both parents must be between the ages of 30 and

50. Those couples who apply to adopt a special needs child must be between the ages of 30 and 55.

Marriage Requirements: Chinese law permits adoption by married couples, defined as one man and one woman.

They must adopt the child jointly. In addition, they must have been married at least two years. If either person has previously divorced, the couple must have been married at least five years. No more than two divorces are allowed.

Income Requirements: At least one member of the couple must have stable employment. The total value of family assets must be at least $80,000. The family's annual income equals at least $10,000 for each family member in the household (including the child to be adopted). Annual income excludes welfare, pensions, unemployment insurance, Government subsidies, and the like.

Both prospective parents must be high school graduates or have vocational training equivalent to a high school education.

Health Requirements: Both partners must be physically and mentally fit, with none of the following conditions:

- AIDS;
- Mental disability;
- Infectious disease that is actively contagious;
- Blind in either eye;
- Hearing loss in both ears or loss of language function (those adopting children with hearing or language function loss are exempted from this requirement);
- Non-function or dysfunction of limbs or trunk caused by impairment, incomplete limbs, paralysis or deformation;
- Severe facial deformation;
- Severe diseases that require long-term treatment and that may affect life expectancy, including malignant tumors, lupus, nephrosis, epilepsy, etc.;
- Major organ transplant within ten years;
- Schizophrenia;
- Severe mental disorders requiring medication for more than two years, including depression, mania, or anxiety neurosis; and
- Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or more.

Other Requirements: The family must have fewer than five children under the age of 18, and the youngest is at least one year old (those adopting special needs children are exempted from this requirement).

Neither partner may have a significant criminal record, and both must have a history of honorable behavior and good moral character with no evidence of:

- Domestic violence, sexual abuse, abandonment or abuse of children;
- Use of narcotics or any potentially addictive medication prescribed for mental illness; or
- Alcohol abuse, unless the individual can show she/he has been sober for at least ten years.

Applications from persons with past criminal records will be considered on a case-by-case basis if the individual has fewer than three minor criminal convictions (none in the last ten years) and fewer than five minor traffic violations.

The prospective parents must demonstrate the ability to provide a warm family environment capable of meeting the needs of an orphaned child and providing for her/his development, and an understanding of the special risks (including potential diseases, developmental delays, and post-placement maladjustment) that could come with inter-country adoption. The couple must provide an adoption application letter that makes clear the applicants' willingness to allow post-placement follow-ups and provide post-placement reports as required.

In each instance above where a specific age or time span is cited, it will be computed from the time that the CCAA officially logs the adoption application documents.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because China is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from China must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to China's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Age Requirements: Chinese law allows for the adoption of children up to and including age 13; children ages 14 and up may not be adopted.

Requirements for Special Needs or Medical Conditions: Once prospective adoptive parents decide to accept a special needs referral, they have 48 hours to fill out the necessary forms to complete the dossier. Cases of children with special needs who are available for international adoption are posted on the CCAA website. Prospective adoptive parents can view the case, including the medical and growth records and a photo of the child. The reason the child is considered special needs is documented and the prospective parents can decide if this child would fit into their family, if their insurance would cover the medical needs, and whether they themselves are able to provide any educational or rehabilitative needs, etc. After they decide they want this child, they click a button and from that point onward they have 48 hours to fill out the necessary forms to complete the dossier. The reason this short time limit is set is so that the child is not taken off the list unless the family truly wants to adopt it. If the prospective parents have not completed the forms and submitted them within 48 hours, the child's

name goes back on the list and another family could possibly select it.

Waiting Period: It is hard to predict with certainty how much time is required to complete an adoption in China. The time frames provided in this flyer are intended as guidelines only, and the specific circumstances of each case could affect significantly how long it takes.

The most recent reports indicate that waiting periods are approximately 32 months from the time the United States adoption agency submitted the paperwork of the prospective adopter to CCAA to the time the CCAA gave the prospective adoptive parent(s) their initial referral. Cases involving children with special needs are generally shorter.

After the referral is sent and the prospective parent(s) accept the child (see the step-by-step description of the Chinese adoption process, below), four to eight more weeks are likely to elapse before the CCAA gives the prospective adoptive parents final approval to travel to China.

With regard to time required in China, the CCAA has advised local officials to try to complete the process within 15 days after the arrival of the prospective parent(s) in China. The Chinese passport, exit permits, and United States visa process can take another 7-10 days after the adoption is finalized. Some United States families have been able to complete the in-country process, including obtaining the United States immigrant visa for the adoptive child, in approximately two weeks.

Chinese Adoption Authority: The China Centre of Adoption Affairs (CCAA)**.**

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from China is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and China.

Many United States adoption agencies are very familiar with Chinese adoption procedures and may have specific advice for their own clients, such as on how best to submit applications to the CCAA or when to travel to China. In addition to reading the information here for a basic outline of Chinese and United States procedures, check with your particular adoption agency to obtain more information about its own procedures during the Chinese adoption process.

A CCAA-licensed agency may submit adoption applications directly to the CCAA for consideration. A listing of CCAA-licensed agencies can be found on http://www.china-ccaa.org/. Included with the application should be all the required documents along with authentications and translations.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in China. China's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Chinese law.

The CCAA-licensed provider will submit the adoption application to the CCAA, including any preferences the prospective adoptive parents may have about the child's age, sex, physical/medical condition, or region of origin within China.

The CCAA reviews the documents and advises the prospective adoptive parent(s), either directly or through their adoption agency, whether additional documents or authentications are required. Once the CCAA approves the application, it matches the application with a specific child. The CCAA then sends the prospective adoptive parent(s) a letter of introduction about the child, including photographs and the child's health record. This document is commonly called a 'referral.' Prospective adoptive parents who still have questions about the child after reviewing this information may follow up with the CCAA either directly or via their adoption agency.

Prospective adoptive parent(s) then either accept or refuse the referral and send the document to their agency, which forwards it to CCAA. CCAA requires a response on a referral within 45 days of sending a referral to a family. If prospective adoptive parent(s) are considering refusing a referral they should discuss with their agency the possibility of getting a second referral. (Please note that all communications with CCAA must be done via the adoption agency.) CCAA will only accept referral rejections if there is a justified explanation provided.

If the reason for the rejection is considered justifiable, such as a medical problem, the CCAA will refer the second child to the prospective adoptive parents within a month's time. If CCAA regards the rejection as unreasonable, the prospective adoptive parents will have difficulty obtaining a second referral and CCAA is more likely to suggest that the parents withdraw their application for adoption in China.

Prospective adoptive parents who have accepted a specific referred child will receive an approval notice from the CCAA ("Notice of Coming to China for Adoption"). This document will bear the "chops," or red-inked seals of the CCAA. Prospective parents must have this approval notice in hand before departing for China to finalize the adoption.

With the CCAA's sealed approval notice in hand, prospective adoptive parents arriving in China may proceed directly to the city in China where the Civil Affairs Bureau with jurisdiction over the appropriate Children's Welfare Institute is located.

Although the CCAA is headquartered in Beijing, prospective adoptive parents will not be required to travel to Beijing during this process. The CCAA will have already forwarded a copy of the adoption approval notice

to the locality where the child resides. Local Child Welfare Institutes, provincial Civil Affairs officials and Chinese notary offices will not process adoptions unless they have seen this notice allowing the prospective adoptive parents take legal custody of the child.

The process for finalizing the adoption (or gaining legal custody) in China generally includes the following.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The provincial Notarial offices, which are administered by the Ministry of Justice, Department of Notarization Division (No. 10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie, Beijing 100020 China) issue the final adoption certificate.

Time Frame: It is hard to predict with certainty how much time is required to complete an adoption in China. The time frames provided in this flyer are intended as guidelines only, and the specific circumstances of each case could affect significantly how long it takes.

The most recent reports indicate that waiting periods are approximately 32 months from the time the United States adoption agency submitted the paperwork of the prospective adopter to CCAA to the time the CCAA gave the prospective adoptive parent(s) their initial referral. Cases involving children with special needs are generally shorter. After the referral is sent and the prospective parent(s) accept the child (see the step-by-step description of the Chinese adoption process, below), four to eight more weeks are likely to elapse before the CCAA gives the prospective adoptive parents final approval to travel to China.

With regard to time required in China, the CCAA has advised local officials to try to complete the process within 15 days after the arrival of the prospective parent(s) in China. The Chinese passport, exit permits, and United States visa process can take another 7-10 days after the adoption is finalized. Some United States families have been able to complete the in-country process, including obtaining the United States immigrant visa for the adoptive child, in approximately two weeks.

Adoption Fees: Fees charged by Chinese authorities in connection with foreign adoptions may vary depending on the province where the child is adopted. However, for each adoption, there are standard fees that adoptive parents must pay.

The authentication/legalization of documents by the Chinese Embassy or Consulate in the United States costs $10 USD per document, whether the document is one or multiple pages. The fee is for authentication of the seal.

The initial CCAA fee is $365 USD, plus $200 USD for translation of the documents submitted in the dossier. The translations can be done in the United States or China, however, the CCAA advises that the translations must be “correct” and that CCAA will “rectify,” and charge for correcting any errors.

Issuance of the registration of the adoption by the Civil Affairs Bureau, $30 USD Charges for expedited service differs by province. Fees for issuance of the Chinese-notarized certificate approving the adoption, birth certificate and abandonment certificate may vary based on province.

These documents normally come together in a packet notarized by the provincial notary office. The Guangzhou Consulate no longer requests the notarized adoption certificate but still requires the birth certificate and abandonment certificate to be notarized. Many provincial notary offices still issue these three notaries as a package. Additional documents such as death certificates, for the orphan's parents, or additional investigation is not included in this fee.

Chinese passports cost $25 USD for the normal 15-working-day issuance. Charges for expedited service differ by province.

Individual Children's Welfare Institutes (where the child lived prior to adoption) may charge from $3000 USD to $5000 USD as a combined donation to the institution and a fee for caring for the child. It is the experience of the United States Consulate General in Guangzhou that the assessed fees are reasonable based on the local economy and the costs associated with raising a child in China. Some United States families who have adopted in China have reported being required to pay additional charges of up to $500 USD for transportation (if the orphanage staff travels to the capital with the child) or expedited processing of documents.

United States adoptive parent(s) who believe that they were compelled at any point during the adoption process to pay exorbitant fees out of keeping with the general outline provided in this flyer should notify the United States Consulate General in Guangzhou.

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: The following documents should be submitted in the original dossier:

- Adoption application letter;
- Birth certificate(s) of the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Marital status statement–Either a marriage certificate, divorce or death certificate (if applicable) or statement of single status is required;
- Certificates of profession, income and property including; verification of employment and salary notarized and authenticated; a certified and authenticated copy of your property trust deeds, if applicable;
- Bank statements notarized/certified and authenticated;
- Health examination certificate(s) of the prospective adoptive parent(s);

- Certificate(s) of criminal or no-criminal record—A certificate of good conduct for the adoptive parent(s) from a local police department notarized or bearing the police department seal and authenticated. An FBI report is acceptable in lieu of a local police record. This is separate from the FBI check conducted by USCIS as part of the petition process. You can request an FBI record check by sending two sets of fingerprints, an $18 money order, your full name, date and place of birth, social security number and letter of request explaining purpose for clearance to: FBI ID Division, Room 10104, Washington, DC 20537-9700;

- Home study report;

- Certificate of child adoption approval by the competent department of the adopter's country of residence, also known as the Department of Homeland Security Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services I-171H Notice of Approval of an I-600A petition) along with copies of the United States passport(s) of the prospective adoptive parent(s); and

- Each applicant parent should also submit two front-view photos and several other photos reflecting the family's life in the United States.

The prospective adoptive parents should take these additional documents with them to China:

- Power of attorney notarized and authenticated (if only one spouse will travel to China). In case of married couples, if only one adopting parent comes to China, Chinese law requires that the spouse traveling bring a power of attorney from his/her spouse, notarized and properly authenticated by Chinese Embassy or one of the Chinese Consulates General in the United States.

- A copy of the I-171H form (I-600A approval notice from USCIS).

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *International Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *International Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Prospective Adoptive Parents must provide an adoption application letter that makes clear the applicants' willingness to allow post-placement follow-ups and provide post-placement reports as required.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in China
Address: Xiu Shui Bei Jie 3, 100600
Tel: (86-10) 6532-3831
Email: AmCitBeijing@state.gov.

Consulate General of the United States in Guangzhou
Adopted Children
Immigrant Visa Unit
#1 Shamian South Street
Guangzhou, P. R. C. 51033
Tel: 011-86-20-8121 8000;
011-86-20-8518 7653 (Direct Line)
Email: GuangzhouA@state.gov.

The China Centre of Adoption Affairs (CCAA)
103 Beiheyan St.
Dongcheng District
Beijing 100006
Tel: 86-10-6522-3102
Email: mail@ccaa.cn
Internet: www.china-ccaa.org

Department of Civil Affairs
No. 147 Beiheyan St.
Beijing, 100032

Embassy of the People's Republic of China
Consular Section
2300 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-328-2500

China also has Consulates in Los Angeles, CA; San Francisco, CA; Chicago, IL; New York, NY, and Houston, TX.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between China and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction.

American citizens who travel to China place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to China with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In China, parents who are legally married share the custody of their children. If they are not married and the parents cannot reach an agreement, custody is granted by the courts in the best interests of the child.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in China. Such judgments must be presented to a Chinese court for that courts consideration and decision. In China, there is a limited process to appeal a lower court's decision.

Visitation Rights: In cases where legal custody has been granted and the judgment has been rendered, the non-custodial parent's visitation rights are normally incorporated within the court ordered decision.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Chinese law. Some U.S. citizens who are also Chinese nationals (mostly U.S.-born children of Chinese nationals or Legal permanent Permanent Residents) have experienced difficulty entering and departing China on U.S. passports. In some cases, such dual nationals are required to use Chinese travel documents to depart China. Normally this causes inconvenience but no significant problems for affected persons; however, in child custody disputes, the ability of dual national children to depart from China could be affected. Generally, children who are Chinese nationals according to Chinese law are not permitted to depart China if one parent refuses to allow the travel requested by one parent, even if that parent is considered an abducting parent by United States courts. In those cases, children abducted to China are only permitted to return to the United States if both parents agree to their return, or if a Chinese court upholds a United States Court's decision to allow the left-behind parent sole custody.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Travel Restrictions: While no exit visas are required to leave China, persons who replace passports are required to get an exit permit from the entry and exit police. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates will assist a traveler with a new passport in obtaining this document.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov/family. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Travel Alert

July 3, 2008

This Travel Alert updates U.S. citizens on the effects of the earthquake that struck China's Sichuan province on May 12. U.S. citizens should continue to avoid the areas of Sichuan province most severely affected by the earthquake and be prepared for travel delays in other parts of the province. Areas outside of Sichuan province are not experiencing earthquake-related damage or delays. This supersedes the Travel Alert dated May 16, 2008, and expires on January 15, 2009.

Cities and towns to the north and northwest of Sichuan's provincial capital, Chengdu, are the areas most seriously damaged by the earthquake. These include Wenchuan County near the earthquake's epicenter, Beichuan, Dujiangyan, Mianzhu, Mianyang, and Maoxian. Recovery and restoration operations in these areas are ongoing; infrastructure has been damaged, and road, air and rail transportation disrupted. Travelers may experience road blocks as far north as the popular tourist site, Jiuzhaigou, and as far west as Maerkang. Some secondary roads are dangerous or impassible in these areas as well. Aftershocks continue to occur, causing further damage, occasionally blocking roads, and complicating the significant recovery and restoration efforts now under way. The possibility of landslides exists throughout the affected area.

Other areas of Sichuan province, such as the large metropolitan area of Chengdu, suffered less damage, but continue to experience light aftershocks. Areas outside of Sichuan are not experiencing earthquake-related travel delays.

For information on earthquakes and earthquake preparedness, see www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/earthquakes.html, and www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/index.shtm. Family members and friends unable to verify the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens in the affected area should call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or from other

areas via a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. U.S. citizens in the area are urged to monitor the local news. Those residing or traveling in China are reminded to register with the U.S. Embassy or the closest U.S. Consulate, either online at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs or in person at U.S. Embassy Beijing or at one of the following consulates:

U.S. Consulate General Chengdu: Number 4, Lingshiguan Road, Section 4, Renmin Nanlu, Chengdu 610041, tel. 86-28-8558-3992 Email: consularchengdu@state.gov. The U.S. Consulate in Chengdu is open for full consular services and is assisting U.S. citizens in the region.

U.S. Embassy Beijing: No. 2 Xiu Shui Dong Jie, Chaoyang District. tel: 86-10-6532-3431 Email: amcitbeijing@state.gov. Embassy's website: beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn. U.S. Embassy Beijing can be reached 24 hours per day at 86-10-6532-3431.

U.S. Consulate General Guangzhou: 5th Floor, Tianyu Garden (II phase), 136-146 Lin He Zhong Lu, Tianhe District, tel. (86-20) 8518-7605 or 86-20-8121-8000; Email: GuangzhouACS@state.gov. Guangzhou adoptions Email: GuangzhouA@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai: Westgate Mall, 8th Floor, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200041; tel. (86-21) 3217-4650, Email: Shanghaiacs @state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General Shenyang: No. 52, 14th Wei Road, Heping District, Shenyang 110003; tel. (86-24) 2322-1198, Email: Shenyang ACS@state.gov.



COLOMBIA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Colombia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1.14 million sq. km. (440,000 sq. mi.); about three times the size of Montana; fourth-largest country in South America.

Cities: Capital—Bogota (pop. 2005 projected: 7.1 million). Other major cities include Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla and Cartagena.

Terrain: Flat coastal areas, with extensive coastlines on the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, three rugged parallel mountain chains, central highlands and flat eastern grasslands.

Climate: Tropical on coast and eastern plains, cooler in highlands.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Colombian(s).

Population: (July 2007) 44.38 million.

Annual population growth: 1.4%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 90%.

Languages: Spanish.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—80% of children enter school. Only 5 years of primary school are offered in many rural areas. Literacy—93% in urban areas, 67% in rural areas.

Health: Infant mortality rate—25/1,000. Life expectancy—total population 72.27 yrs., men 68.44 yrs., women 76.24 yrs.

Ethnic groups: Mestizo (58%), white (20%), Afro-Colombian (18%) mixed black-Amerindian (3%) and Amerindian (1%).

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 20, 1810.

Constitution: July 1991.

Government branches: Executive—President (chief of state and head of government). egislative—Bicameral Congress.Judicial—Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Council of State, Superior Judicial Council.

Political subdivisions: 32 departments; Bogota, capital district.

Political parties: Conservative Party of Colombia, Liberal, National Unity, Radical Change, Alternative Democratic Pole, and numerous small political movements.

Suffrage: Universal, age 18 and over.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $131 billion; base year 2000: $93.7 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 7.7%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $3,867.

Government expenditures: (2007) 26.1% of GDP.

Natural resources: Coal, petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, nickel, gold, silver, copper, platinum, emeralds.

Manufacturing: (14.58% of GDP): Types—textiles and garments, chemicals, metal products, cement, cardboard containers, plastic resins and manufactures, beverages, wood products, pharmaceuticals, machinery, electrical equipment.

Agriculture: (8.34% of GDP): Products—coffee, bananas, cut flowers, cotton, sugarcane, livestock, rice, corn, tobacco, potatoes, soybeans, sorghum. Cultivated land—8.2% of total area.

Other sectors: (by percentage of GDP): Government, personal and other services—17.3%; financial services—17.5%; commerce—13.82%; transportation and communications services—6.81%; construction and public works—5.3%; mining and quarrying—4.55%; electricity, gas, and water—2.77%.

Trade: Exports (2006)—$29.9 billion: petroleum, coal, coffee, flowers, textiles and garments, ferronickel, bananas, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, gold, sugar, cardboard containers, printed material, cement, plastic resins and manufactures, emeralds. Major markets—U.S., Venezuela, Ecuador, Germany, Netherlands, Japan. Imports (2007)—$32.8 billion: machinery/equipment, grains, chemicals, transportation equipment, mineral products, consumer products, metals/metal products, plastic/rubber, paper products, aircraft, oil and

gas industry equipment, supplies. Major suppliers—U.S., China, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela.

PEOPLE

Colombia is the third-most populous country in Latin America, after Brazil and Mexico. Thirty cities have a population of 100,000 or more. The nine eastern lowlands departments, constituting about 54% of Colombia's area, have less than 3% of the population and a density of less than one person per square kilometer (two persons per sq. mi.). Ethnic diversity in Colombia is a result of the intermingling of indigenous peoples, Europeans and Africans. Today, only about 1% of the people can be identified as fully indigenous on the basis of language and customs.

HISTORY AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

During the pre-Columbian period, the area now known as Colombia was inhabited by indigenous societies situated at different stages of socio-economic development, ranging from hunters and nomadic farmers to the highly structured Chibchas, who are considered to be one of the most developed indigenous groups in South America.

Santa Marta was the first permanent Spanish settlement founded in 1525. Santa Fe de Bogota was founded in 1538 and, in 1717, became the capital of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, which included what are now Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama. Bogota was one of three principal administrative centers of the Spanish possessions in the New World.

On July 20, 1810, the citizens of Bogota created the first representative council to defy Spanish authority. Full independence was proclaimed in 1813, and in 1819 the Republic of Greater Colombia was formed to include all the territory of the former Viceroyalty (Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama). Simon Bolivar was elected its first president with Francisco de Paula Santander as vice president. Conflicts between followers of Bolivar and Santander led to the formation of two political parties that have since dominated Colombian politics. Bolivar's supporters, who later formed the nucleus of the Conservative Party, sought strong centralized government, alliance with the Roman Catholic Church and a limited franchise. Santander's followers, forerunners of the Liberals, wanted a decentralized government, state control over education and other civil matters, and a broader suffrage.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, each party held the presidency for roughly equal periods of time. Colombia maintained a tradition of civilian government and regular, free, elections. Notwithstanding the country's commitment to democratic institutions, Colombia's history also has been characterized by widespread, violent conflict. Two civil wars resulted from bitter rivalry between the Conservative and Liberal parties: The War of a Thousand Days (1899-1903) claimed an estimated 100,000 lives and La Violencia (the Violence) (1946-1957) claimed about 300,000 lives.

La Violencia (The Violence) and the National Front

The assassination of Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitan in 1948 sparked the bloody conflict known as La Violencia. Conservative Party leader Laureano Gomez came to power in 1950, but was ousted by a military coup led by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1953. When Rojas failed to restore democratic rule and became implicated in corrupt schemes, he was overthrown by the military with the support of the Liberal and Conservative Parties.

In July 1957, an alliance between former Conservative President Laureano Gomez (1950-53) and former Liberal President Alberto Lleras Camargo (1945-46) led to the creation of the National Front. It established a power-sharing agreement between the two parties and brought an end to "La Violencia." The presidency would be determined by regular elections every 4 years and the two parties would have parity in all other elective and appointive offices. This system was phased out by 1978.

Post-National Front Years

During the post-National Front years, the Colombian Government made efforts to negotiate a peace with the persistent guerrilla organizations that flourished in Colombia's remote and undeveloped rural areas. In 1984, President Belisario Betancur, a Conservative, negotiated a cease-fire with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Democratic Alliance/M-19 (M-19) that included the release of many imprisoned guerrillas. The National Liberation Army (ELN) rejected the government's cease fire proposal at that time. The M-19 pulled out of the cease-fire when it resumed fighting in 1985. The army suppressed an M-19 attack on the Palace of Justice in Bogota in November 1985, during which 115 people were killed, including 11 Supreme Court justices. The government and the M-19 renewed their truce in March 1989, which led to a peace agreement and the M-19's reintegration into society and political life. The M-19 was one of the parties that participated in the process to enact a new constitution (see below), which took effect in 1991. The FARC ended the truce in 1990 after some 2,000-3,000 of its members who had demobilized had been murdered.

A new constitution in 1991 brought about major reforms to Colombia's political institutions. While the new constitution preserved a presidential, three-branch system of government, it created new institutions such as the Inspector General, a Human Rights Ombudsman, a Constitutional Court and a Superior Judicial Council. The new constitution also reestablished the position of Vice President. Other significant constitutional reforms provide for civil divorce, dual nationality and the establishment of


COLOMBIA
0 50 100 150 200 250 Miles
0 50 100 150 200 250 Kilometers
NETHERLANDS ANTILLES
Caribbean Sea
Uribia
Gulfo de Venezuela
Santa Marta
Cristóbal Colón Pk. 18,947 ft. ▲ 5775 m.
Barranquilla
Cartagena
Valledupar
Lago de Maracaibo
PANAMA
Sincelejo
Montería
VENEZUELA
Gulfo de Panamá
Turbo
La Fria
Cúcuta
Guapá
Atrato
Cauca
Bucaramanga
Juradó
Barrancabermeja
Arauca
Elorza
Medellín
CORDILLERA OCCIDENTAL
LLANOS
Puerto Carreño
PACIFIC OCEAN
Baudó
Magdalena
Tunja
Yopal
San Juan
Ambalema
Bogotá
Meta
CORDILLERA CENTRAL
CORDILLERA ORIENTAL
Ibagué
Villavicencio
Puerto Inírida
Buenaventura
Palmira
Guaviare
Cali
Neiva
Guayabero
Popayán
San José del Guaviare
Tumaco
Patía
Vaupés
Mitú
Pasto
Apaporis
Tres Esquinas
Caas
Uaupés
Monclar
ECUADOR
Caquetá
BRAZIL
Rocafuerte
El Encanto
Napo
Putumayo
PERU
Amazon
Leticia
N
W
E
S
Providencia
NICARAGUA
San Andrés
Caribbean Sea
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
COLOMBIA
PACIFIC OCEAN
Malpelo
Colombia

a legal mechanism ("tutela") that allows individuals to appeal government decisions affecting their constitutional rights. The constitution also authorized the introduction of an accusatory system of criminal justice that is gradually being instituted throughout the country, replacing the previous written inquisitorial system. A constitutional amendment approved in 2005 allows the president to hold office for two consecutive 4-year terms.

Colombian governments have had to contend with the combined terrorist activities of left-wing guerrillas, the rise of paramilitary self-defense forces in the 1990s and the drug cartels. Narco-terrorists assassinated three presidential candidates during the election campaign of 1990. After Colombian security forces killed Medellin cartel leader Pablo Escobar in December 1993, indiscriminate acts of violence associated with his organization abated as the "cartels" were broken into multiple and smaller trafficking organizations that competed against each other in the drug trade. Guerrillas and paramilitary groups also entered into drug trafficking as a way to finance their military operations.

Pastrana Administration

The administration of Andres Pastrana (1998-2002), a Conservative, faced increased countrywide attacks by the FARC and ELN, widespread drug production and the expansion of paramilitary groups. The Pastrana administration unveiled its "Plan Colombia" in 1999 as a strategy to deal with these longstanding problems, and sought support from the international community. Plan Colombia is a comprehensive program to combat narco-terrorism; spur economic recovery; strengthen democratic institutions and respect for human rights; and provide humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons.

In November 1998, Pastrana ceded a sparsely populated area the size of Switzerland in south-central Colombia to the FARC's control to serve as a neutral zone where peace negotiations could take place. The FARC negotiated with the government only fitfully while continuing to mount attacks and expand coca production, seriously undermining the government's efforts to reach an agreement. Negotiations with the rebels in 2000 and 2001 were marred by rebel attacks, kidnappings and fighting between rebels and paramilitaries for control of coca-growing areas in Colombia. In February 2002, after the FARC hijacked a commercial aircraft and kidnapped a senator, Pastrana ordered the military to attack rebel positions and reassert control over the neutral zone. FARC withdrew into the jungle and increased attacks against Colombia's infrastructure, while avoiding large-scale direct conflicts with the military.

Uribe Administration

Alvaro Uribe, an independent, was elected president in May 2002 on a platform to restore security to the country. Among his promises was to continue to pursue the broad goals of Plan Colombia within the framework of a long-term security strategy. In the fall of 2002, Uribe released a national security strategy that employed political, economic and military means to weaken all illegal narco-terrorist groups. The Uribe government offered to negotiate a peace agreement with these groups with the condition that they agree to a unilateral cease fire and to end drug trafficking and kidnapping.

In December 2003, the Colombian Self-Defense Forces (AUC) paramilitary group entered into a peace agreement with the government that has led to the collective demobilization of over 31,000 AUC members. In addition, over 10,000 members of the AUC and other illegal armed groups have individually surrendered their arms. In July 2005, President Uribe signed the Justice and Peace Law, which provides reduced punishments for the demobilized if they renounce violence and return illegal assets, which are to provide reparations to victims.

The ELN and the government began a round of talks with the Colombian Government mediated by the Mexican Government in mid-2004. The ELN withdrew from the talks after the Mexican Government voted to condemn Cuba's human rights record at the United Nations in April 2005. In December 2005, the ELN began a new round of talks with the Colombian Government in Cuba that led to two more meetings, the latest one being held in July 2007. The dialogue is expected to continue.

As a result of the government's military and police operations, the strength of the FARC has been reduced in all urban areas and mostly limited to the most remote areas of the country. Since 2000, the FARC has not carried out large scale multifront attacks, although it has mounted some operations that indicate it has not yet been broken. The FARC has rejected several government proposals and numerous international efforts—including a high-profile effort in late 2007 by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez—aimed at bringing about an exchange of some 45 high-value FARC hostages. On July 2, 2008, an audacious Colombian military operation led to the rescue of three U.S. contractors, the French-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt, and eleven Colombians being held by the FARC. The three Americans were captured by the FARC in February 2003, and were the longest-held U.S. hostages in the world at the time of their rescue. Colombian security forces killed several members of the FARC Secretariat in 2008, severely weakening its leadership. Additionally, a record number of FARC members deserted in 2008, yet another sign of the organization's deteriorating power.

Colombia maintains an excellent extradition relationship with the United States. The Uribe administration has extradited more than 800 fugitives to the United States. Among those extradited were Cali Cartel leaders Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela and his brother Miguel; FARC leaders Juvenal Ovidio Palmera Pineda (aka "Simon Trinidad") and Omaira Rojas Cabrera (aka "Sonia"); and former AUC leaders Salvatore Mancuso and Diego Murillo. In 2008, a

record 170 have been extradited to the U.S., including 15 members of the former AUC and several members of FARC.

In 2004, the Uribe government established, for the first time in recent Colombian history, a government presence in all of the country's 1,099 municipalities (county seats). Attacks conducted by illegally armed groups against rural towns decreased by 91% from 2002 to 2005. Between 2002 and 2007, Colombia saw a decrease in homicides by 40%, kidnappings by 82%, terrorist attacks by 76%, and attacks on the country's infrastructure by 60%.

Although much attention has been focused on the security aspects of Colombia's situation, the Uribe government also is making significant efforts on issues such as expanding international trade, supporting alternate means of development, reforming Colombia's judicial system, and reducing poverty.

President Uribe was reelected with 62% of the vote in May 2006. In congressional elections in March 2006, the three leading pro-Uribe parties (National Unity, Conservative Party, and Radical Change) won clear majorities in both houses of Congress. In late 2006, the Supreme Court began investigations and ordered the arrest of some members of Congress for actions on behalf of paramilitary groups. Those investigations have continued throughout 2008, with several dozen politicians at both the national and local level implicated.

In January 2007, Colombian leaders presented a new strategy to consolidate and build a progressive program under Plan Colombia, called the "Strategy to Strengthen Democracy and Social Development." The new strategy continues successful Plan Colombia programs while increasing state presence by improving access to social services, and supporting economic development through sustainable growth and trade.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Alvaro URIBE Velez**
Vice Pres.: **Francisco SANTOS Calderon**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Andres Felipe ARIAS Leiva**
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Tourism: **Luis Guillermo PLATA**
Min. of Communication: **Maria del Rosario GUERRA de La Espriella**
Min. of Culture: **Paula MORENO Zapata**
Min. of Defense: **Juan Manuel SANTOS Calderon**
Min. of Education: **Cecilia Maria VELEZ White**
Min. of Energy & Mines: **Hernan MARTINEZ Torres**
Min. of Environment, Housing, & Territorial Development: **Juan LOZANO**
Min. of Finance & Public Credit: **Oscar Ivan ZULUAGA Escobar**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Jaime BERMUDEZ Merizalde**
Min. of Interior & Justice: **Fabio VALENCIA Cossio**
Min. of Social Protection: **Diego PALACIO Betancourt**
Min. of Transportation: **Andres Uriel GALLEGO Henao**
Dir., National Planning: **Carolina RENTERIA**
Prosecutor Gen.: **Mario German IGUARAN Arana**
Pres., Bank of the Republic: **Jose Dario URIBE Escobar**
Ambassador to the US: **Carolina BARCO Isakson**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Claudia BLUM de Barberi**

Colombia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2118 Leroy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-387-8338). Consulates are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, San Juan and Washington DC.

DEFENSE

Colombia's Ministry of Defense is charged with the country's internal and external defense and security, and exercises jurisdiction over an army, navy—including marines and coast guard—air force, and national police under the leadership of a civilian Minister of Defense. Real spending on defense has increased every year since 2000, but especially so under President Uribe. Colombian spending on defense more than doubled to U.S. $5.6 billion in 2007 from U.S. $2.6 billion in 2001. The security forces number about 390,000 uniformed personnel: 260,000 military and 130,000 police. President Uribe instituted a wealth tax in 2002, which raised over U.S. $800 million, with 70% used to increase 2002-2003 defense spending. A similar tax imposed from 2007-2011 and levied on the country's wealthiest individuals and enterprises is expected to raise up to U.S. $3.7 billion.

Many Colombian military personnel receive training in the United States or from U.S. instructors in Colombia. The United States provides equipment to the Colombian military and police through the military assistance program, foreign military sales and the international narcotics control program.

NARCOTICS AND TERRORISM

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that more than 80% of the worldwide cocaine supply and as much as 90% of the cocaine smuggled into the United States is produced in Colombia.

The Colombian Government is committed to the eradication of all illicit crops, interdiction of illegal drug shipments and financial controls to prevent money laundering. Between 2004 and 2008, Colombian security forces interdicted almost 900 metric tons of cocaine, coca base, and heroin. Coca cultivation decreased by 10% from 2001 to 2007, while opium poppy cultivation decreased by 67% from 2001 to 2007. Terrorist groups in Colombia are actively engaged in narcotics production and trafficking. The FARC is believed responsible for more than half of the cocaine entering the United States.

ECONOMY

Colombia is a free market economy with major commercial and investment ties to the United States. Transition from a highly regulated economy has been underway for more than 15 years. In 1990, the administration of President Cesar Gaviria (1990-94) initiated economic liberalization or "apertura," with tariff reductions, financial deregulation, privatization of state-owned enterprises and adoption of a more liberal foreign exchange rate. These policies eased import restrictions and opened most sectors to foreign investment, although agricultural products remained protected.

The Uribe administration seeks to maintain prudent fiscal policies and has pursued tough economic reforms including tax, pension and budget reforms. A U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) study shows that Colombian tax rates (both personal and corporate) are among the highest in Latin America. The unemployment rate in August 2008 was 11.42%, down from 15.1% in December 2002.

The sustained growth of the Colombian economy can be attributed to an increase in domestic security; the policy of keeping inflation under control; petroleum price increases; and an increase in exports to Venezuela, Ecuador, and the United States as a result of trade liberalization. The Andean Trade Preference Act, which was extended through December 2009, also plays a pivotal role in Colombia's economic growth. The signing of a trade promotion agreement with the U.S. in November 2006 provides further opportunity for growth once it is approved by the U.S. Congress and implemented.

Industry and Agriculture

The most industrially diverse member of the Andean Community, Colombia has four major industrial centers—Bogota, Medellin, Cali, and Barranquilla—each located in a distinct geographical region. Colombia's industries include textiles and clothing, leather products, processed foods and beverages, paper and paper products, chemicals and petrochemicals, cement, construction, iron and steel products and metalworking.

Colombia's diverse climate and topography permit the cultivation of a wide variety of crops. In addition, all regions yield forest products, ranging from tropical hardwoods in the lowlands, to pine and eucalyptus in the colder areas. Cacao, sugarcane, coconuts, bananas, plantains, rice, cotton, tobacco, cassava and most of the nation's beef cattle are produced in the hot regions from sea level to 1,000 meters elevation. The temperate regions—between 1,000 and 2,000 meters—are better suited for coffee, flowers, corn and other vegetables, pears, pineapples, and tomatoes. The cooler elevations—between 2,000 and 3,000 meters—produce wheat, barley, potatoes, cold-climate vegetables, flowers, dairy cattle and poultry.

Trade

In 2007, Colombia was the United States' fifth-largest export market in the Western Hemisphere behind Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela and the largest agricultural export market in the hemisphere after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) countries. U.S. exports to Colombia in 2007 were U.S. $8.6 billion, up 28% from the previous year. U.S. imports from Colombia were U.S. $9.4 billion, up 2%. Colombia's major exports are petroleum, coffee, coal, nickel, and nontraditional exports (e.g., cut flowers, gold, bananas, semiprecious stones, sugar, and tropical fruits). The United States is Colombia's largest trading partner, representing about 35% of Colombia's exports and 26% of its imports.

Colombia has improved protection of intellectual property rights overall, but the United States remains concerned over deficiencies in licensing and copyright protection.

Mining and Energy

Colombia has considerable mineral and energy resources, especially coal and natural gas reserves. New security measures and increased drilling activity have slowed the drop in petroleum production, allowing Colombia to continue to export through 2015, given current production estimates. In 2007, gas reserves totaled 6,859 billion cubic feet. Gas production totaled 922 million cubic feet per day. The country's current refining capacity is 323,000 barrels per day. Mining and energy related investments have grown because of higher oil prices, increased demand and improved output. Colombia has significantly liberalized its petroleum sector, leading to an increase in exploration and production contracts from both large and small hydrocarbon industries.

Colombia is presently the 5th-largest coal exporting country, accounting for about 1.1% of the world's total annual coal production, and the largest producer in Latin America (71.7 million tons in 2007). Colombia has proven recoverable coal reserves of about 7.4 billion short tons, the majority of which are located in the north of the country. Colombia historically has been the world's leading producer of emeralds, although production has fallen in recent years. Emerald production fell from 5.73 million carats in 2006 to 3.39 million carats in 2007. Colombia is also a significant producer of gold, silver, and platinum.

Foreign Investment

The United States is the largest source of new foreign direct investment (FDI) in Colombia, particularly in the areas of coal and petroleum. In 2007, new FDI totaled U.S. $9 billion, more than triple the amount in 2002. The bulk of the new investment is in the manufacturing, mining, and energy sectors.

The only activities closed to foreign direct investment are defense and national security, and disposal of hazardous wastes. In October 2008, Colombia eliminated controls on foreign investment in fixed income securities to increase access to capital and

investment inflows. The controls were imposed in May 2007 to stem appreciation of the Colombian peso.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In 1969, Colombia, along with Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru, formed what is now the Andean Community. (Venezuela joined in 1973 and announced its departure in 2005; Chile left in 1976 and returned in 2006.) In the 1980s, Colombia broadened its bilateral and multilateral relations, joining the Contadora Group, the Group of Eight (now the Rio Group) and the Non-Aligned Movement, which it chaired from 1994 until September 1998. In addition, it has signed free trade agreements with Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela. The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (U.S.-CTPA) was signed by President Bush in November 2006, and was passed by the Colombian Congress in 2007. It was awaiting U.S. congressional approval as of late October 2008.

Colombia has traditionally played an active role in the United Nations and the Organization of American States and in their subsidiary agencies. Former President Gaviria became Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) in September 1994 and was re-elected in 1999. Colombia hosted the 38th OAS General Assembly in Medellin in early June 2008. Colombia has participated in all five Summits of the Americas, most recently in November 2005, and followed up on initiatives developed at the first two summits by hosting two post-summit, ministerial-level meetings on trade and science and technology. In March 2006, Bogota hosted the Sixth Regular Session of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism.

U.S.-COLOMBIAN RELATIONS

In 1822, the United States became one of the first countries to recognize the new republic and to establish a resident diplomatic mission. The U.S. Government estimates that 30,000 U.S. citizens are visiting or living in Colombia at any given time. Currently, there are approximately 250 American businesses conducting operations in Colombia. During 1995-96, the United States and Colombia signed important agreements on environmental protection and civil aviation. The two countries have also signed agreements on asset sharing and chemical control. In 1997, the United States and Colombia signed an important maritime ship-boarding agreement to allow for search of suspected drug-running vessels. In September 2008, both countries signed a memorandum of understanding on renewable and clean energy. During the Pastrana administration, relations with the United States improved significantly. The United States responded to the Colombian Government's request for international support for Plan Colombia by providing substantial assistance designed to increase Colombia's counter-narcotics capabilities and support human rights, humanitarian assistance, alternative development, and economic and judicial reforms.

The U.S. has continued close cooperation with Colombia under the Uribe administration. Recognizing that terrorism and the illicit narcotics trade in Colombia are inextricably linked, the U.S. Congress granted new expanded statutory authorities in 2002 making U.S. assistance to Colombia more flexible in order to better support President Uribe's unified campaign against narcotics and terrorism. The results thus far have been impressive, but much remains to be done. U.S. policy toward Colombia supports the Colombian Government's efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions, promote respect for human rights and the rule of law, intensify counter-narcotics efforts, foster socioeconomic development, address immediate humanitarian needs, and end the threats to democracy posed by narcotics trafficking and terrorism. Promoting security, stability, and prosperity in Colombia will continue as long-term American interests in the region.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Suzanne Lemandri
AMB OMS:	Virginia Gregory
DHS/ICE:	Juan Dania
ECO:	Lawrence Gumbiner
FCS:	Margaret Hanson-Muse
FM:	William Knight
HRO:	Angie Chin
MGT:	Greg Stanford
OMS:	Jackie Valenzuela
AMB:	William Brownfield
CG:	William Martin
CON:	Eric Cohan
DCM:	Brian A. Nichols
PAO:	Mark Wentworth
GSO:	Lee Hess
RSO:	Stephen Brunette
AGR:	Todd Drennan
AID:	Liliana Ayalde
APHIS:	Darya Chehrezad
ATF:	Orlando Blanco
CLO:	Carmelita Allcott
DAO:	Col. Mark Wilkins
DEA:	Jay Bergman
FMO:	Francisco Lloret
ICASS:	Chair Lizette Yrizarry
IMO:	Doyle Lee
IPO:	Shannon Lankford
IRS:	Olga Acevedo
ISO:	William Velazquez
LEGATT:	Joseph Jeziorski
MLO:	Col. Kevin Saderup
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Other Contact Information

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U.S. Department of Commerce, Trade Information Center, International Trade Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue
Washington, DC 20230
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Colombian-American Chamber of Commerce
Calle 98, @2264, Oficina 1209
Apartado Aereo 8008

Bogota, Colombia
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Internet: www.colombiachamber.com
Chapters in Cali, Cartagena, Medellin.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 13, 2008

Country Description: Colombia is a medium-income nation of some 44 million inhabitants. Its geography is very diverse, ranging from tropical coastal areas and rainforests to rugged mountainous terrain. Tourist facilities in Colombia vary in quality and safety, according to price and location. Security is a significant concern for travelers, as described in the Department of State's Travel Warning for Colombia.

Entry Requirements: All U.S. citizens who are not also Colombian citizens must present a valid U.S. passport to enter and depart Colombia, and to return to the United States. Dual U.S-Colombian citizens must present a Colombian passport to enter and exit Colombia, and a U.S. passport to return to the United States. Be aware that any person born in Colombia may be considered a Colombian citizen, even if never documented as such. U.S. citizens born in Colombia or who otherwise have Colombian citizenship, will need both a Colombian passport and a U.S. passport for the trip.

U.S. citizens traveling to Colombia do not need a Colombian visa for a tourist stay of 60 days or less. Travelers entering Colombia are sometimes asked to present evidence of return or onward travel, usually in the form of a round-trip plane ticket. Americans traveling overland must enter Colombia at an official border crossing. Travelers arriving by bus should ensure, prior to boarding, that their bus will cross the border at an official entry point. Entering Colombia at unauthorized crossings may result in fines or incarceration. Travelers planning to enter Colombia over a land border should carefully read our information on Traffic Safety and Road Conditions below.

The length of stay granted to travelers is determined by the Colombian immigration officer at the point of entry and will be stamped in your passport. Extensions may be requested by visiting an office of the Colombian immigration authority, known as the Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, or DAS, after arrival in Colombia. Fines are levied if a traveler remains in Colombia longer than authorized, and the traveler cannot leave Colombia until the fine is paid. Any traveler possessing a Colombian visa with more than three months' validity must register the visa at a DAS immigration office within 15 days of arrival in Colombia or face fines. The DAS immigration office in Bogota is located at Calle 100 and Carrera 11B.

No arrival tax is collected upon entry into Colombia, but travelers leaving by plane must pay an exit tax at the airport, in cash. The tax varies with the dollar/peso exchange rate, but is usually between $50 and $70. Some airlines include all or a portion of this tax in the cost of your airline ticket; check with your airline to find out how much you will have to pay at the airport.

U.S. citizens whose U.S. passports are lost or stolen in Colombia must obtain a new U.S. passport before departing. They must then present the new passport, along with a police report describing the loss or theft, to a DAS office. Information about obtaining a replacement U.S. passport in Colombia is available on the U.S. Embassy's website at http://bogota.usembassy.gov. Contact information for DAS is available in Spanish at http://www.das.gov.co. The Embassy in Bogotá or the U.S. Consular Agency in Barranquilla can provide guidance on contacting DAS when you apply for your replacement passport. For further, specific guidance on Colombian entry requirements, including information about Colombian visas, travelers should contact the Colombian Embassy at 2118 Leroy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 387-8338; website: http://www.colombiaemb.org; or the nearest Colombian consulate. Consulates are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Additional Requirements for Minors: To prevent international child abduction, Colombia has implemented special exit procedures for Colombian children under 18 who are departing the country without both their mother and their father or a legal guardian. These procedures apply even if the child is also a U.S. citizen. Complying with the procedures can be complex and time-consuming, especially if an absent parent is outside Colombia at the time. Advance planning is essential.

The procedures are as follows. Upon exiting the country, the person traveling with the child (or the child him/herself) must present a certified copy of the child's birth certificate, along with written, signed authorization from the absent parent(s) or legal guardian. The authorization must explicitly grant permission for the child to travel alone, with one parent, or with a third party, by name. When a parent is deceased, a notarized copy of a death certificate is required instead of written authorization. When one parent has sole custody of the child, that parent may present a custody decree instead of the other parent's written authorization.

If the documents to be presented originated in the United States, they must first be translated into Spanish and then signed in front of a Colombian consul at a Colombian consulate. Then, upon arrival in Colombia, the documents must be presented to the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for certification of the consul's signature.

Alternatively, the documents can be translated into Spanish, then notarized by a notary public in the United States, and authenticated by request-

ing an apostille from the competent authority in the state where the documents were prepared. The document, translation, and apostille can then be presented to immigration officers at the airport when the child travels.

If the documents originated in Colombia and are written in Spanish, only notarization by a Colombian notary is required. For documents originating in countries other than the United States or Colombia, please inquire with the Colombian embassy serving that country.

In cases where the absent parent refuses or is unable to provide consent, the other parent can request assistance from the Colombian child protective service, Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF). In appropriate cases, ICBF will investigate and may issue a document that will allow the child to travel without both parents' consent. This process may take a significant amount of time and is not within the control of the U.S. government.

Safety and Security: Violence has decreased markedly in many urban destinations, including the cities of Bogota, Medellin, Barranquilla, and Cartagena. Cali has made less progress combating crime than most other large cities. The level of violence in Buenaventura remains high. Small towns and rural areas of Colombia can be extremely dangerous due to the presence of narco-terrorists. Common crime remains a significant problem in many urban and rural areas, as described in the section on crime below.

The incidence of kidnapping in Colombia has diminished significantly from its peak at the beginning of this decade. Nevertheless, terrorist groups, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and other criminal organizations, continue to kidnap and hold civilians for ransom or as political bargaining chips. No one is immune from kidnapping on the basis of occupation, nationality, or other factors. On July 2, 2008, the GOC effected a successful military rescue of three Americans, Ingrid Betancourt, and eleven members of the Colombia security forces. President Uribe called on the FARC to release the remaining hostages and seek peace. Although the U.S. government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped Americans, it is U.S. policy not to make concessions to kidnappers. Consequently, the U.S. government's ability to assist kidnap victims is limited.

Official and personal travel by U.S. Embassy employees outside most urban areas is subject to strict limitations and reviewed by security officers on a case-by-case basis. U.S. Embassy employees are allowed to travel by air, but inter- and intra-city bus transportation is off limits to them.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the threat of terrorism has decreased in most of Colombia's cities, they nevertheless experience much of the same crime that is seen in comparably sized cities throughout the region. Robbery and other violent crimes, as well as scams against unsuspecting tourists, are common in urban areas. Generally speaking, if you are the victim of a robbery, you should not resist.

Some of the most common methods used by criminals in Colombia are noted below.

Tourists and others have been robbed after using automatic teller machines (ATMs) on the street. In some cases, robbers have used motorcycles to approach their victims and later flee the scene. Americans are urged to use ATMs only inside shopping malls or other protected locations. Driving to and from the location—rather than walking—provides added protection. When using an ATM, you should be on the lookout for anyone watching or following you.

Robbery of taxi passengers is a serious problem in Bogota. Typically, the driver—who is one of the conspirators—will pick up the passenger and then stop to pick up two or more armed cohorts, who enter the cab, overpower the passenger, and take his/her belongings. If the passenger has an ATM card, the perpetrators may force the passenger to withdraw money from various ATM locations. Such ordeals can last for hours.

In almost every case of taxi-related crime, the victims have been riding alone and have hailed taxis off the street. Rather than hailing a taxi, you should use the telephone dispatch service that most taxi companies offer. Many hotels, restaurants, and stores will call a taxi for you, and the taxi usually arrives within minutes. When a taxi is dispatched by telephone, the dispatcher creates a record of the call and the responding taxi.

U.S. citizens arriving at major Colombian airports have occasionally been victimized by armed robbery while en route from the airport to their hotel or home. The perpetrators typically scout out victims at the airport and then follow their vehicles before robbing the occupants at a stoplight. Travelers should remain vigilant at airports and report to local airport police if they suspect they are being observed.

Several U.S. citizens were robbed in 2007 while hiking on nature trails in and around Bogota. Because hiking trips generally take place in isolated settings, participants are especially vulnerable. Hikers in Colombia are more protected if they travel in large groups.

The Embassy continues to receive reports of criminals in Colombia using disabling drugs to temporarily incapacitate tourists and others. At bars, restaurants, and other public areas, perpetrators may offer tainted drinks, cigarettes, or gum. Typically, victims become disoriented or uncon-

scious, and are thus vulnerable to robbery, sexual assault, and other crimes. Avoid leaving food or drinks unattended at a bar or restaurant, and be suspicious if a stranger offers you something to eat or drink.

U.S. citizens in Colombia routinely fall victim to a scam in which purported undercover police officers approach them on the street and request to examine their money, supposedly to determine if it is counterfeit. The "officers," who are in fact criminals, then flee with the money. In a variation of this scam, the thieves may ask to see jewelry. Legitimate Colombian police officers do not make such requests.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Colombia is 112 for police and 119 for fire. There will not be an English speaker answering the phone.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is adequate in major cities but varies greatly in quality elsewhere. Emergency rooms in Colombia, even at top-quality facilities, are frequently overcrowded and ambulance service can be slow. Many private health care providers in Colombia require that patients pay for care before treatment, even in an emergency. Some providers in major cities may accept credit cards, but those that do not may request advance payment in cash. Uninsured travelers without financial resources may be unable to obtain care, or relegated to seeking treatment in public hospitals where care is far below U.S. standards.

The Embassy regularly receives reports of U.S. citizens in Colombia who have died or suffered complications from liposuction and other elective surgeries intended to treat obesity. Before undergoing such a procedure in Colombia, the Department of State recommends that you consult with your personal physician, research the credentials of the provider in Colombia, and carefully consider your ability to access emergency medical care if complications arise. It is important to confirm that your medical insurance provides coverage in Colombia, to include treatment of complications from elective procedures or medical evacuation if necessary. Should you suffer complications as a result of medical malpractice, collecting damages from your surgeon may be difficult.

Colombia has seen a recent increase in the use of unregulated drugs that purport to enhance sexual performance. Several American tourists recently died after using these substances, which come in liquid, powder, or tablet form. You are urged to seek guidance from a physician before ingesting any such substances in Colombia.

Travelers to the capital city of Bogota may need time to adjust to the altitude of 8,600 feet, which can affect blood pressure, digestion, and energy level, and cause mild dyspnea with exercise, headaches, sleeplessness, and other discomfort. Travelers should drink liberal fluids to maintain hydration,, and should avoid strenuous exercise unti they have acclimated to the altitude. Travelers with circulatory or respiratory problems should consult a physician before traveling to Bogota or other high-altitude locations.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Colombia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Due to the security environment in Colombia, U.S. government officials and their families are not permitted to travel by road between most major cities. They also cannot use inter- or intra-city bus transportation, or travel by road outside urban areas at night. All Americans in Colombia are encouraged to follow these same precautions.

Traffic laws in Colombia, including speed limits, are often ignored and rarely enforced, creating dangerous conditions for drivers and pedestrians in major cities. Under Colombian law, seat belts are mandatory for front-seat passengers in a private vehicle. Car seats are not mandatory for children, but a child under ten is not permitted to ride in a front seat. It is against the law to talk on a cellular phone while driving in Colombia, and violators may be fined. While driving outside major cities, it is mandatory to drive with your lights on. If an accident occurs, the involved parties must remain at the scene and not move their vehicles until the

authorities arrive; this rule is strictly enforced, and moving a vehicle or leaving the scene of an accident may constitute an admission of guilt under Colombian law.

Americans seeking to import their own vehicles into Colombia should consult with their

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Colombia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Colombia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Colombia employs strict screening procedures for detecting narcotics smuggling at its international airports. Americans and other travelers are occasionally questioned, searched, fingerprinted, and/or asked to submit to an abdominal x-ray upon arrival or departure. Most airport inspectors do not speak English, and travelers who do not speak Spanish may have difficulty understanding what is asked of them. Please refer to the section on Criminal Penalties for further information on the strict enforcement of Colombia's drug laws.

Customs Regulations: Travelers generally must not enter or exit Colombia while carrying cash or other financial instruments worth more than 10,000 U.S. dollars. Colombian authorities may confiscate any amount over $10,000, and may initiate a criminal investigation into the source of the money and the traveler's reasons for carrying it. Recovery of the confiscated amount requires a lengthy, expensive legal process and may not always be possible. Americans wishing to send large sums of money to or from Colombia should contact their nearest Colombian consulate, or speak with Colombian customs officials, and should also consider seeking advice from an attorney or financial professional.

Colombian law prohibits tourists and business travelers from bringing firearms into Colombia. Illegal importation or possession of firearms may result in incarceration.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Buying or selling them is illegal in Colombia, and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and fines.

Colombian law forbids the export of pre-Columbian objects and other artifacts protected by cultural patrimony statutes. Under an agreement between the United States and Colombia, U.S. customs officials are obligated to seize pre-Columbian objects and certain colonial religious artwork when they are brought into the United States.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Colombia's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Please see our information on Criminal Penalties.

If you are arrested, the U.S. government cannot request your release. Colombia and the United States do not have a prisoner transfer agreement, and so any sentence for a crime committed in Colombia is ordinarily served in a Colombian prison.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking of illegal drugs in Colombia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long prison sentences under harsh conditions, with significant expense and great hardship for themselves and their families. Colombian police make multiple arrests daily for drug trafficking at major airports, and have sophisticated means for detecting illegal drugs in baggage or on your person. Travelers are sometimes requested to undergo an x-ray to ensure that they are not smuggling narcotics within their own bodies. There are more than 30 Americans incarcerated in Colombia for attempting to smuggle drugs out of the country.

The hardships resulting from imprisonment do not end even after release from prison: Colombian law requires that serious offenders remain in the country to serve a lengthy period of parole, during which the offender is given no housing and may lack permission to work. As a result, family members must often support the offender, sometimes for more than a year, until the parole period expires.

State of Emergency: On occasion, the Colombian government has declared a state of emergency in portions of the country. During such times, American citizens may find their movements or civil liberties restricted due to curfews, registration requirements, or other security-related measures. American citizens are advised to stay alert to any announcements declaring emergency status.

Disaster Preparedness: Colombia is an earthquake-prone country. Flooding and mudslides also sometimes occur in parts of the country. U.S. citizens in Colombia can find information on coping with natural disasters on the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://Bogota.usembassy.gov. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans residing or traveling in Colombia are encouraged to

register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Colombia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Calle 24 Bis No. 48-50 Bogotá, D.C. Colombia. Mailing address: Carrera 45 No. 24B-27 Bogotá, D.C. Colombia.

In case of a serious emergency that jeopardizes the health or safety of an American citizen in Colombia, please call the Embassy at (571) 315-0811; Embassy fax: (571) 315-2197; Consular Section phone: (571) 315-1566. The Embassy's American Citizens Services office provides routine information at http://bogota.usembassy.gov. For questions not answered there, inquiries may be sent by email to ACSBogota@state.gov. Email messages are answered by the next business day.

The Embassy's American Citizens Services office is open for passport applications, notary services, and routine in-person inquiries from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon Monday through Thursday, excluding U.S. and Colombian holidays. Inquiries concerning Social Security and other federal benefits can be made in-person from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, except holidays. The American Citizens Services fax number is (571) 3152196/7.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Barranquilla, which accepts passport applications and performs notarial services, is located at Calle 77B, No. 57-141, Piso 5, Centro Empresarial Las Americas, Barranquilla, Atlantico, Colombia; telephone (575) 353-2001; fax (011-57-5) 353-5216. The Consular Agency is not staffed to respond to after-hours emergencies; in case of an emergency in the Barranquilla/north coast area, please contact the Embassy in Bogota at (571) 315-0811.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Colombia is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between Colombia and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law and regulations implementing the Convention.

For detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Colombia's Central Authority for adoptions, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), is the only means of adopting a Colombian child; Colombian law prohibits private adoptions. Please note ICBF does not allow for a Colombian child to travel to the United States to be adopted. Therefore, prospective adoptive parents must obtain a full and final adoption under Colombian law before the child can immigrate to the United States. Adopting parents are required to be physically present before a "family judge" at the time of adoption. No exceptions are made to this requirement.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Colombia is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Colombia, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Colombia also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoptions from Colombia.

Age Requirements: Both parents are required to be 25 years old. In practice, newborns are assigned to younger couples and older children to older couples.

Marriage Requirements: Colombian law allows adoptions by a married man and woman and common law spouses of more than three years. Single men and women are only allowed to adopt children over the age of seven on a case-by-case basis.

Income Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are required to submit documentation confirming their ability to provide for the adopted child. This requirement may be met by only one parent.

Other Requirements: Gay or Lesbian individuals or couples may not adopt children from Colombia. In addition, according to Colombian law, both parents must be found "physically and emotionally capable" to adopt.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Colombia is a member of The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Colombia must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Colombia's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Colombian Central Authority: Bienestar Familiar (ICBF)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Colombia is to select an accredited or approved adoption service provider in the United States. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Colombia.

Once prospective adoptive parents decide that Colombia is the nation from which they wish to adopt, they must first contact the ICBF, or an

accredited adoption service provider in Colombia, in order to obtain a list of adoption service provider in the United States, nearest to the couple's place of residence, that are accredited by both the Colombian and United States Governments. An accredited adoption service provider will conduct the home study and assist the prospective adoptive parents in preparing the paperwork necessary for Homeland Security, Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

After you choose an accredited adoption agency, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Please note that if you reside in Colombia, you should contact the United States Embassy in Bogotá for instructions. Anyone with questions may contact the embassy any working day from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and ask for the person responsible for processing visas for adopted children.

Required Documents: Once USCIS has approved the documentation, parents must compile the following list of documents for submission to the ICBF:

- Application Form for adoption (this can be provided by the ICBF or found on the ICBF Website);
- Birth certificate(s)of the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Marriage certificate or proof of common law relationship of prospective adoptive parents;
- Medical examination(s) by Board-certified physicians clearly stating that prospective adoptive parent(s) is (are) mentally and physically capable of caring for a child (or children);
- National law enforcement clearance issued by a competent police authority. For United States citizens, this consists of a set of fingerprints, and their results, issued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). These cards may be requested from the Department of Homeland Security;
- Birth certificates of any children previously adopted by the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Certificate of financial ability and employment letters explaining time of service and monthly salary received in United States dollars;
- If self-employed, a certified document regarding the parent's(s') financial resources or last income tax return with supporting documents;
- Social and psychological study of the prospective adoptive family that establishes physical, mental, moral and social capacity. The home study required by USCIS can fulfill both the United States and the Colombian requirements;
- If there were previous marriages or partners of the prospective adoptive parent(s), proof of divorce and reasons for such dissolutions should be presented; and
- Notarized statement clarifying any changes in name or indicating, "also known as." Generally, Colombian women do not change their names to that of their husbands. As a result, Colombian courts are accustomed to birth certificates, marriage certificates, and passports with no variation in name. If you have documents in both maiden and marriage names, you must submit a notarized statement indicating the reasons for the discrepancies in your documents.

Once the ICBF approves the package of documents, it will be in a position to inform prospective adoptive parents, through their adoption service providers, about the availability of children in need of a family placement and the amount of time it is likely to take to complete an adoption.

If both the United States and Colombia determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the Central Authority in Colombia may provide you with a referral for a child. ICBF will inform the parents, through the adoption service provider, once a child has officially been assigned to them. Medical, social, psychological, and nutritional assessments are provided to the prospective adoptive parents, as well as photographs of the child. Prospective adoptive parents are given two months to make a decision as to whether to adopt that particular child.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for permission to adopt that child (Form I-800). USCIS will determine whether the child is eligible under United States immigration law to be adopted and enter the United States. After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy in Bogota. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he or she will notify the ICBF (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption until this takes place. At this point, you may travel to Colombia to begin the legal process with Colombian authorities. The ICBF or the Colombian adoption agency will assist with obtaining the documents needed to complete Colombian legal procedures.

Role of the Central Authority: Colombian law does not allow for private adoptions. Children may be adopted only through the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) and approved adoption agencies. The ICBF will match the child with the prospective adoptive parent(s) and help with obtaining paperwork before the case moves to the Colombian courts.

Role of the Court: The Colombian courts require a letter from the United States Embassy in Bogota stating that they will issue an immigrant visa to the child if all adoption and United States immigrant requirements are met. When all documentation is completed, the courts will provide the adoption decree, a

new Colombian birth certificate, and a new Colombian passport. Colombian law requires that both adopting parents be physically present when the adoption is presented to a "family judge." No exceptions are made to this requirement.

Role of Adoption Service Providers: Because Colombia is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Time Frame: There is no set time frame for completing an intercountry adoption from Colombia. There are many factors that determine how long the adoption and visa process takes, including paperwork approval times, desired sex and age of the child, and the age of the prospective adoptive parent(s). Adoptive parents have reported the entire process taking 18 to 30 months.

Adoption Application: Prospective adoptive parents must first contact the ICBF or an accredited adoption agency in Colombia in order to obtain a list of adoption service providers in the United States that are accredited by both the Colombian and United States Governments.

Adoption Fees: It is difficult to predict how much the entire adoption process will cost as each case has unique circumstances. Adoptive parents have reported spending between $12,000 USD and $20,000 USD. The Colombian passport fee is approximately $30 USD. These expenses should have been itemized in the fees and estimated expenses section of your adoption services contract.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Colombian law does not currently have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Colombia
Carrera 45, No. 24B-27
Bogotá, Colombia
Tel: 011-571-383-2795, 2 p.m.–3:30 p.m. (EST)
Email: IVBogota@state.gov,
Attn Adoptions

Colombia's Central Authority
BIENESTAR FAMILIAR (ICBF)
Grupo Nacional de Adopciones
Avenida 68 # 64-01
Bogotá, Colombia
Tel: 011-57-1-437 7630—
Ext. 3158–3157
Website: www.icbf.gov.co (Spanish)

Embassy of Colombia
2118 Leroy Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 387-8338
Fax: (202) 232-8643
Email: embassyofcolombia
@colombiaemb.org
Website:
http://www.colombiaemb.org.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
Email: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information below relating to the legal requirements of Colombia is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Colombia is in the process of transforming its criminal justice system into an accusatorial one, with oral trials, in a way that resembles the U.S. justice system. For non-criminal matters, however, including divorce and custody cases, Colombia remains a civil law country.

Judicial proceedings in a civil law country generally differ from those in the United States, a common law country, in several significant ways.

For example, juries are not used. Legal cases are heard and decided by a judge or panel of judges. Evidence can be presented and arguments can be made in oral hearings, but such hearings tend to play a secondary role, supplementing extensive written submissions to the judge.

The judge normally can play a more active role in proceedings than is common in U.S. courts. A judge in a civil law country is free to seek evidence independently of what either side presents.

In Colombia, family court judges handle divorce and custody cases. In cases involving the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, recent legislation by the Colombian Congress has placed jurisdiction with family courts as well. In more remote areas of the country where there are no family courts, Hague cases are to be heard by civil court circuit judges. While Colombian courts can recognize or enforce U.S. custody orders, they generally refuse to do so. In a Colombian court, Colombian law takes precedence over U.S. law. A Colombian court order granting custody to one parent will prevail over an order issued by a U.S. court.

Custody and Rights of Visitation: In Colombia, married parents share equal rights of custody to their minor children. Under Colombian law, if a father acknowledges on a child's birth certificate that he is the father, then he shares equal custody rights with the mother, even if the child was born out of wedlock. A father who has acknowledged paternity may seek assistance from administrative or judicial authorities for a remedy if the mother interferes with his rights to custody or visitation. Custody cases are first assigned to family protection officers within the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare and then custody and/or visitation are determined before a family court judge. Family courts have heavy caseloads and cases involving a U.S. parent disputing custody with a Colombian parent take a long time to resolve. The U.S. Embassy in Bogota notes that Colombian courts favor parents of Colombian nationality and that it is very rare for a court in Colombia to grant custody to a parent residing in the U.S. when there is a parent residing in Colombia.

Criminal Aspects: The crime of international parental abduction is covered in the Colombian Penal Code as simple kidnapping, with circumstances that can increase or reduce the punishment. Colombia does not consider international parental kidnapping as an extraditable offense.

Colombian Citizenship: The Colombian Constitution provides that a child born abroad to a Colombian mother or father acquires Colombian citizenship once the birth is registered in a consular office or the child later becomes domiciled in Colombia. If a child is born in Colombia, he/she will obtain Colombian citizenship automatically as long as one parent is a Colombian national or one of the child's parents has legal resident status in Colombia.

Colombian Passports: In contrast to U.S. requirements, a Colombian passport for a minor child can be obtained with only one parent's consent. However, Colombian authorities have rules that restrict the departure of Colombian children from the country when they are not in the company of both parents.

Preventing Issuance of a Colombian Passport: If a parent wishes to prevent the issuance of a passport to their minor child, he or she must submit a request to the Ministerio de la Proteccion Social, Instituto Colombiano de Bienstar Familiar (ICBF). If ICBF concurs with the parent's request, it will notify the Colombian passport office to place a hold on issuance of a passport to the minor child. The Colombian passport agency will then notify Colombian Embassies and Consulates of the hold. Parents may only submit a request through ICBF, not through a Colombian Embassy or Consulate. Further information can be found at www.bienestarfamiliar.gov.co.

The Hague Convention: The United States is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The Hague Convention is an international treaty. Its purpose is to discourage international parental abduction and to ensure that children who are abducted or wrongfully retained are returned to their country of habitual residence. The Hague Convention does not govern who should get custody of a child, but only the jurisdiction where custody should be adjudicated.

The Hague Convention took effect between the United States and Colombia on June 1, 1996. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return apply only to children abducted or retained after that date. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Colombia prior to June 1, 1996 may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention. All countries party to the Hague Convention have a Central Authority that is responsible for processing Hague applications.

The Colombian Central Authority performs an administrative role in processing Hague applications. The Central Authority is the Instituto Colombiano de Bienstar Familiar (ICBF), which is located within the Ministry of Social Protection. The address is Sede Nacional Avenida 68 No 64-01, PBX 4377630, Bogota, DC, Colombia. The international telephone number is 011-57-1-437-7630. The Central Authority's email address is churtado1@icbf.gov.co.

More Information: The State Department has general information about hiring a foreign attorney, service of process, and enforcement of child support and the international enforcement of judgments, which supplement the country-specific information provided in this flyer. When situations in a country are sufficiently serious, the State Department issues Travel Alerts or Travel Warnings that may recommend U.S. citizens defer travel to that country. These documents are available on the Internet at: http://travel.state.gov or by the toll-free number, 1-888-407-4747, between 8:00 a.m.—8:00 p.m.

eastern time, Monday thru Friday (except U.S. holidays). Callers who are unable to use the toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-317-472-2328.

Travel Warning

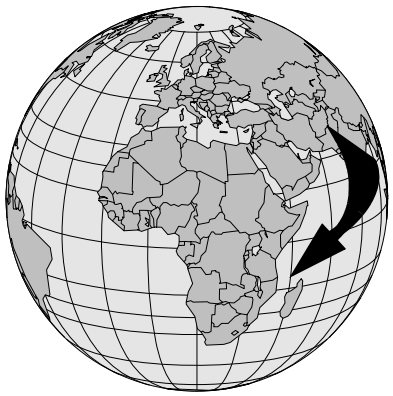
August 7, 2008

This Travel Warning updates and reminds American citizens of ongoing security concerns in Colombia. The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens of the dangers of travel to Colombia. While security in Colombia has improved significantly in recent years, violence by narco-terrorist groups continues to affect some rural areas and cities. The potential for violence by terrorists and other criminal elements exists in all parts of the country. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Colombia issued February 05, 2008.

Violence has decreased markedly in many urban areas; however, the level of violence in Buenaventura remains high. Small towns and rural areas of Colombia can still be extremely dangerous due to the presence of narco-terrorists. Common crime remains a significant problem in many urban and rural areas. For additional details about the general criminal threat, please see the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia.

The incidence of kidnapping in Colombia has diminished significantly from its peak at the beginning of this decade. Nevertheless, terrorist groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and other criminal organizations continue to kidnap and hold civilians for ransom or as political bargaining chips. No one is immune from kidnapping on the basis of occupation, nationality, or other factors. Kidnapping in rural areas is of particular concern. On July 2, 2008, the Government of Colombia rescued 15 hostages, including three Americans, who had been held for more than 5 years. Although the U.S. government places the highest priority on the safe recovery of kidnapped Americans, it is U.S. policy not to make concessions to or strike deals with kidnappers. Consequently, the U.S. government's ability to assist kidnapping victims is limited. U.S. government officials and their families in Colombia are permitted to travel to major cities in the country, but normally only by air. They cannot use inter- or intra-city bus transportation, or travel by road outside urban areas at night. All Americans in Colombia are urged to follow these precautions.

As the Department develops information on potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threats through its Consular Information Program documents, available on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. U.S. citizens should consult warden messages for Colombia at http://bogota.usembassy.gov/acs_wardenmessage.html, as well as the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Colombia and the Worldwide Caution at http://travel.state.gov. U.S. travelers can also get up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or for overseas callers, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.



COMOROS

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Union of the Comoros

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 2,171 sq. km. (838 sq. mi.); slightly less than half the size of Delaware. Major islands—Grande Comore (1,025 sq. km.), Anjouan (424 sq. km.), Mayotte (374 sq. km.), and Moheli (211 sq. km.).

Cities: Capital—Moroni (pop. 30,000); Mutsamudu (pop. 20,000).

Terrain: Rugged.

Climate: Tropical marine.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Comoran(s).

Population: (2006 est.) 690,948. Mayotte (1990 est.)—70,000.

Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 2.87%.

Ethnic groups: Antalote, Cafre, Makoa, Oimatsaha, Sakalava.

Religions: Sunni Muslim 98%, Roman Catholic 2%.

Languages: Shikomoro (a Swahili-Arabic blend), Arabic (official), French (official).

Education: Attendance—60% primary, 34% secondary. Literacy—56.5%.

Health: Life expectancy—62.33yrs. Infant mortality rate—72.85/1,000.

Work force: (1996) 144,500. Agriculture—80%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 6, 1975 (Mayotte remains under French administration).

Constitution: Adopted by referendum on December 23, 2001.

Government branches: Executive—national president; regional island presidents. Legislative—National Assembly. Judicial—traditional Muslim and codified law from French sources.

Political parties: 17 political parties.

Suffrage: Universal adult.

Economy

GDP: (purchasing power parity) $419 million.

Annual growth rate: 0.5%.

Per capita income: $720.

Agriculture: (40% of GDP) Products—vanilla, cloves, perfume essences, copra, banana, cassava, coconuts.

Services: (56% of GDP) Commerce, tourism.

Industry: (4% of GDP) Types—perfume distillation.

Trade: Exports (1999 est.)—$7.9 million: vanilla, cloves, perfume essences, copra. Major markets—France, Germany. Imports (1998 est.)—$35.84 million: rice, petroleum, meat, wheat flour, cotton textiles, cement. Major suppliers—France 38%, Pakistan 13%, Kenya 8%, South Africa 8%.

PEOPLE

The Comorans inhabiting Grande Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli (86% of the population) share African-Arab origins. Islam is the dominant religion, and Koranic schools for children reinforce its influence. Although Arab culture is firmly established throughout the archipelago, a substantial minority of the citizens of Mayotte (the Mahorais) are Catholic and have been strongly influenced by French culture.

The most common language is Shikomoro, a Swahili dialect. French and Arabic also are spoken. About 57% of the population is literate.

HISTORY

Over the centuries, the islands were invaded by a succession of diverse groups from the coast of Africa, the Persian Gulf, Indonesia, and Madagascar. Portuguese explorers visited the archipelago in 1505. “Shirazi” Arab migrants introduced Islam at about the same time. Between 1841 and 1912, France established colonial rule over Grande Comore, Anjouan, Mayotte, and Moheli and placed the islands under the administration of the governor general of Madagascar. Later, French settlers, French-owned companies, and wealthy Arab merchants established a plantation-

based economy that now uses about one-third of the land for export crops. After World War II, the islands became a French overseas territory and were represented in France's National Assembly. Internal political autonomy was granted in 1961. Agreement was reached with France in 1973 for Comoros to become independent in 1978. On July 6, 1975, however, the Comoranparliament passed a resolution declaring unilateral independence. The deputies of Mayotte abstained. As a result, the Comoran Government has effective control over only Grande Comore, Anjouan, and Moheli. Mayotte remains under French administration.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Union of Comoros is ruled by President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi. Comoros has been plagued by political instability and civil strife following numerous coups and secession attempts since independence from France in 1975. Former President Azali seized power in a bloodless coup in April 1999, overthrowing interim President Tadijiddine Ben Said Massounde, who himself had held the office since the death of democratically elected President Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim in November 1998. In May 1999, Azali decreed a constitution that gave him both executive and legislative powers. When Azali took power he had pledged to step down in 2000 and relinquish control to a democratically elected president. Instead, in 2001, Azali resigned from the military and ran as a civilian candidate for the national presidency. He was elected in 2002 in flawed but fair elections.

On May 26, 2006, following a two-stage electoral process that was generally free and fair, Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed Sambi was installed as the new President of the Union of the Comoros. The inauguration of President Sambi in June 2006 marked the first democratic transition of power in Comoran history. In June 2007, individual island elections on Grande Comore and Moheli were held on schedule and judged to have been free and fair.

On the Anjouan, however, island governor Mohamed Bacar refused to step down, held a sham election and declared himself Island Governor for another term. In March of this year, Comoran and African Union (AU) forces restored constitutional rule on Anjouan. A new election for island governor was held on June 15.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Three main islands have been unified into the Union of Comoros, and the presidency of the Union will rotate between the different islands every four years. Presidential elections were held in May 2006, and each island elected its own president.

Pres. of the Union: **Ahmed Abdallah SAMBI**
Vice Pres. for Health, Solidarity, & Promotion: **Ikililou DHOININE**
Vice Pres. for Transportation, Post & Telecommunications,:
Communication, & Tourism: **Idi NADHOIM**
Min. of Agriculture, Fishing, Industrial Development, Artisan Artifacts, & Environment: **Siti KASSIM**
Min. of Defense: **Mohamed Bacar DOSSAR**
Min. of Finance, Budget, Economy, & Plans Responsible for the Promotion of Employment: **Hassan HAMADI**
Min. of Foreign Relations & Cooperation, the Diaspora, & the Francophone & Arab Worlds: **Ahmed Ben Sa'id JAFFAR**
Min. of Justice, Public Office, Prison Admin., & Admin. Reforms & Guard of the Seal: **M'Madi ALI**
Min. of Territorial Management, Urbanization, Housing, & Energy: **Nailane MAHADJI**
Min. for National Education, Research, Arts & Culture, Youth, & Sports & Spokesperson for the Govt.: **Abdouroihim Sa'id BACAR**
Pres. of Anjouan: **Moussa TOYBOU**
Pres. of Grande Comore: **Mohamed ABDOULWAHABI**
Pres. of Moheli: **Mohamed Ali SAID**
Ambassador to the US: **Mohamed TOIHIRI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, NY: **Mohamed TOIHIRI**

Comoros maintains a mission to the United States at 336 E. 45th St., 2d floor, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-750-1637).

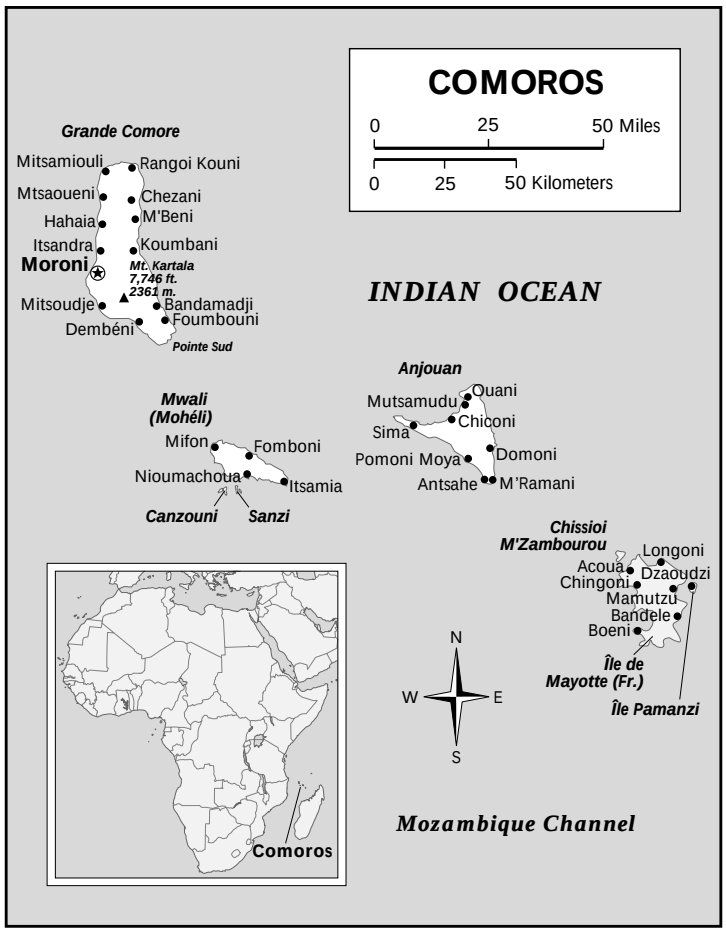
ECONOMY

Comoros, with an estimated gross domestic product (GDP) per capita income of about $700, is among the world's poorest and least developed nations. Although the quality of the land differs from island to island, most of the widespread lava-encrusted soil formations are unsuited to agriculture. As a result, most of the inhabitants make their living from subsistence agriculture and fishing.

Agriculture, involving more than 80% of the population and 40% of the gross domestic product, provides virtually all foreign exchange earnings. Services including tourism, construction, and commercial activities constitute the remainder of the GDP. Plantations engage a large proportion of the population in producing the islands' major cash crops for export: vanilla, cloves, perfume essences, and copra. Comoros is the world's leading producer of essence of ylang-ylang, used in manufacturing perfume. It also is the world's second-largest producer of vanilla. Principal food crops are coconuts, bananas, and cassava. Foodstuffs constitute 32% of total imports.

The country lacks the infrastructure necessary for development. Some villages are not linked to the main road system or at best are connected by tracks usable only by four-wheel-drive vehicles. The islands' ports are rudimentary, although a deepwater facility functions in Anjouan.

Only small vessels can approach the existing quays in Moroni on Grande Comore, despite improvements. Long-distance, ocean-going ships must lie offshore and be unloaded by



smaller boats; during the cyclone season, this procedure is dangerous, and ships are reluctant to call at the island. Most freight is sent first to Mombasa, Kenya or the island of Reunion and transshipped from there. France, Comoros' major trading partner, finances small projects only. The United States receives a growing percentage of Comoros' exports but supplies only a negligible fraction of its imports (less than 1%). Comoros has an international airport at Hahaya on Grande Comore. Comoros has its own currency, the Comorian Franc, which is currently valued at 557 CF = U.S. $1.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The military resources of the Comoros consist of a small standing army and a 500-member police force, as well as a 500-member defense force. A defense treaty with France provides naval resources for protection of territorial waters, training of Comorian military personnel, and air surveillance. France maintains a small maritime base and a Foreign Legion contingent on Mayotte.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In November 1975, Comoros became the 143rd member of the United Nations. The new nation was defined as consisting of the entire archipelago, despite the fact that France maintains control over Mayotte. Comoros also is a member of the African Union, the European Development Fund, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Indian Ocean Commission, and the African Development Bank.

U.S.-COMORIAN RELATIONS

The United States recognized the Comorian Government in 1977. The two countries enjoy friendly relations. The U.S. closed its Embassy in Moroni in 1993 and is now represented by a nonresident Ambassador in neighboring Madagascar.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ANTANANARIVO (E) 14-16 Rue Rainitovo, APO/FPO Antsahavola B.P. 620, (261) (20) 22-21257 or 261-33-442-2000, Fax (261) (20) 22-34539 or 261-33-442-2261, INMARSAT Tel 38-31-32673, Workweek: M-T 7:30AM–5:00PM/ F–7:30 AM–1:30 PM, Website: http://antananarivo.state.gov.

DCM OMS:	Christine McNabb-Visick
AMB OMS:	Julie A. Harrison
ECO:	Brian T. Neubert
ECO/COM:	Brian T. Neubert
FM:	Richard Marrs
HRO:	Stephen Dodson
MGT:	Stephen Dodson
AMB:	R. Niels Marquardt
CON:	Vacant
DCM:	George N. Sibley
PAO:	Rodney D. Ford
GSO:	Otis L. Harrison
RSO:	Christopher J. Gillis
AFSA:	Aaron Brownell
AGR:	Scott Reynolds (Pretoria)
AID:	Gerry Cashion
CLO:	Larina Inglis
DAO:	Cdr. Cecil C. Bridges
DEA:	Jeffrey P. Breeden (Pretoria)
FAA:	Edward Jones (Dakar)
FMO:	Matthew Miller
ICASS Chair:	Cdr. Cecil C. Bridges
IMO:	Kevin Inglis
IPO:	Kevin Inglis
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Paris)
ISO:	John N. Visick
ISSO:	John N. Visick
POL:	Silvana D. Rodriguez
State ICASS:	Brian T. Neubert

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 21, 2008

Country Description: The Union of the Comoros is a developing nation located in the Indian Ocean off the east coast of Africa. Comoros consists of three islands, Ngazidja (also known as Grand Comore), Moheli, and Anjouan, that cover about 900 square miles. A fourth island, Mayotte, is claimed by Comoros but remains a territory of France. Ngazidja is home to the capital city, Moroni, and is the most developed of the three islands. Facilities for tourism are limited and telecommunication links are unreliable. The government of the island of Anjouan currently is in a state of de facto separation from the other islands. French, Arabic, Swahili, and Comorian Creole are spoken.

Entry Requirements: A passport and onward/return ticket are required. Visas are available from the Comoran Mission to the United Nations in New York; American citizens visiting Comoros can obtain a free, 24-hour transit visa upon entry. The following day, visitors are required to go to the immigration office in Moroni to change their visa status. A fee is charged, depending on length of stay. Travelers should obtain the latest details from the Mission of the Union of Comoros, 420 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022; telephone number (212) 972-8010, fax (212) 983-4712.

Safety and Security: Comoros has experienced frequent strikes and civil unrest, resulting in violent clashes between police and demonstrators. The most recent unrest involved the de facto separation of Anjouan from the Union government. In March 2008, Union forces re-took Anjouan and are preparing the island for elections. The former leader of Anjouan, Mohamed Bacar, has applied for asylum with France and is being held on the French Island of Reunion while his asylum claims is adjudicated. As the government completes the transition to constitutional federalism and as Bacar's asylum claim is pending, periodic strikes and protests will likely continue to occur. U.S. citizens should avoid political rallies and street demonstrations as even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. Conditions are subject to rapid change on each of the three islands of the Comoros due to weak political institutions and a lack of economic development. In a rare, apparently religious-based attack, a clinic run by a foreign Christian organization was firebombed on the island of Grande Comore in August 2007. Religious intolerance and religious-based violence remain very unusual in Comoros.

Although foreign residents and visitors have not been targeted, the potential for further outbreaks of civil disorder remains high, and Americans should exercise caution and good judgment, keep a low profile, and remain vigilant with regard to their personal security. U.S. citizens are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo, Madagascar, if visiting or residing in Comoros.

Although foreign residents and visitors have not been targeted, the potential for further outbreaks of civil disorder remains high, and Americans should exercise caution and good judgment, keep a low profile, and remain vigilant with regard to their personal security. U.S. citizens are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo, Madagascar, if visiting or residing in Comoros. Embassy contact information is provided below.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: U.S. travelers are advised to be vigilant against pick-pocketing and other forms of petty crime when visiting crowded market areas, parks, and at the beaches. Violent crime is uncommon. The most commonly reported crime is breaking into homes.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, help you find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Comoros are poorly equipped. Travelers should bring their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. Malaria is prevalent in Comoros. Travelers to Comoros should take malaria prophylaxis. The serious and sometimes fatal strain of malaria, P. falciparum, is resistant to the anti-malarial drug chloroquine. Because travelers to Comoros are at high risk for contracting malaria, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone). The CDC has determined that a traveler who is on an appropriate antimalarial drug has a greatly reduced chance of contracting the disease. In addition, other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, help to reduce

malaria risk. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and anitmalarial drugs, please visit the CDC Travelers' Health web pages. The East African Indian Ocean islands have seen a rise in the cases of Chikungunya, a viral dengue-like ailment, and dengue itself. As with Malaria, Chikungunya and Dengue are transmitted by mosquitoes. Every effort should be made to use repellants, proper clothing and barriers that discourage/prevent mosquito bites. The CDC web site contains further information on Chikungunya and Dengue.

There have been occurrences of measles in Comoros, with outbreaks of greater severity on the islands of Anjouan and Moheli. Travelers are advised to ensure that their measles vaccinations are up to date.

Further, information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Comoros is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. In Comoros, one drives on the right side of the street. Roads are ill-maintained, congested, very narrow and poorly lit at night. Travelers should exercise extreme caution when driving after dark.

Most urban roads are paved, but many rural roads are not. Many roads are full of potholes and dangerous curves. Most roads have no posted speed limits, but road conditions limit speeds to below 30 miles an hour. Drivers and front seat passengers are required to wear seat belts. There are no laws regarding child safety seats.

There are no organizations in Comoros that provide emergency or roadside assistance. Individuals involved in accidents rely on passersby for assistance. Taxis or a rental car with driver are preferable to public transportation.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Comoros, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Comoros' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards.

For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov. Due to the dispute with Anjouan, air traffic to the island of Anjouan is subject to frequent disruption. The Anjouan airport may be closed without prior warning and remain closed for extended periods of time. As a result, American citizens are urged to avoid travel to Anjouan until the crisis is resolved.

Special Circumstances: While religions other than Islam are permitted in Comoros, evangelization is illegal. Violators of this law can be fined or imprisoned. Few establishments accept credit cards in the Comoros and most prefer Comoran Francs or Euros to dollars.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law.

Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the laws of Comoros, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Comoros are strict, with convicted offenders receiving a mandatory minimum five-year jail sentence and heavy fines. Engaging in sex with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: The United States has no Embassy in Comoros. Americans living or traveling in Comoros are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo, Madagascar through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Comoros. Americans without Internet access may register in person at the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 14-16 Rue Rainitovo, Antsahavola, Antananarivo. The mailing address is B.P. 620, Antsahavola, Antananarivo, Madagascar; telephone [261] (20) 22-212-57; fax [261] (20) 22-345-39. The Embassy web site is http://www.usmission.mg.

Intercountry Adoption

September 2006

Adoption is illegal under the laws and Constitution of Comoros. Comoran law recognizes a "Delegation de l'autorite parental," which delegates parental authority to someone other than the child's parent, but this is only available to Comoran citizens. While Comoran citizens can use this process to emigrate a child from Comoros, Comoran law forbids them to adopt the child after leaving Comoros. The Embassy is not aware of any mechanism in Comoran law that would allow non-Comoran citizens to assume guardianship of a child for the purpose of taking him/her to the another country to conclude a full and final adoption. Thus, there appears to be no legal mechanism for a Comoran child to qualify for an immigrant visa as an adopted child or a child to be adopted internationally.



CONGO

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Democratic Republic of the Congo

PROFILE

Geography

Location: Central Africa. Bordering nations—Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.

Area: 2.345 sq. km. (905,063 sq. mi.; about the size of the U.S. east of the Mississippi).

Cities: Capital—Kinshasa (pop. 8 million). Regional capitals—Bandundu, Bukavu, Goma, Kananga, Kindu, Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Matadi, Mbandaka, Mbuji-Mayi.

Terrain: Varies from tropical rainforests to mountainous terraces, plateau, savannas, dense grasslands, and mountains.

Climate: Equatorial; ranges from tropical rainforest in the Congo River basin, hot and humid in much of the north and west, cooler and drier in the south central area and the east.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Congolese.

Population: (2008 est.) 66 million.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 3.24%.

Ethnic groups: More than 200 African ethnic groups; the Luba, Kongo, and Anamongo are some of the larger groupings of tribes.

Religions: Christian 70% (Catholic 50%, Protestant 20%); Kimbanguist 10%; other sects and traditional beliefs 10%; Muslim 10%.

Languages: Official—French. National languages—Lingala, Swahili, Kikongo, Tshiluba.

Education: Literacy (2004 est.)—65.5% in French or local language. Schooling (2000 est.)—none 41.7%, primary 42.2%, secondary 15.4%, university 0.7%.

Health: (2006 est.) Infant mortality rate—129/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—46.1 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic; highly centralized with executive power vested in the president.

Independence: June 30, 1960 (from Belgium).

Constitution: June 24, 1967; amended August 1974; revised February 15, 1978; amended April 1990; transitional constitution promulgated April 1994; Constitutional Act promulgated May 1997; draft constitution proposed but not finalized March 1998; transitional constitution adopted on April 2, 2003. A new constitution was passed by the transitional parliament on May 2005. The D.R.C. held a constitutional referendum on December 18-19, 2005. Official results indicated that 84% of voters approved the constitution. The new constitution was promulgated in a ceremony on February 18, 2006.

Government branches: Executive—President is head of state. Cabinet is appointed by the ruling party in the parliament. Prime minister is elected by the parliament. Legislative—The 500-member lower house of parliament was elected in July 30, 2006 national elections. Provincial Assemblies elected the Senate in October 29, 2006 elections. The Senate elected provincial governors. Judicial—Supreme Court (Cour Supreme).

Political subdivisions: Ten provinces and the capital city, Kinshasa.

Political parties: President Joseph Kabila's party is Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et le Developpement (PPRD). Two main coalitions represent President Kabila and his presidential run-off challenger, former Transitional Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba. Other opposition parties include Union pour la Democratie et le Progres Social (UDPS), Forces du Futur (FDF), Forces Novatrices pour l'Union et la Solidarite (FONUS), Parti Democrate Social Chretien (PDSC), Mouvement Social Democratie et Developpement (MSDD), Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution—Fait Prive (MPR-FP), Union des Nationalistes et des Federalistes Congolais (UNAFEC), and Mouvement National Congolais/ Lumumba (MNC/L). Former rebel movements-

turned-political parties include the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD), Mouvement pour la Liberation du Congo (MLC), and independent splinter groups of the RCD (RCD-ML, RCD-N).
Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $9.85 billion.
Annual GDP growth rate: (2007) 7%.
Per capita GDP: (2007) $300.
Natural resources: Copper, cobalt, diamonds, gold, other minerals; petroleum; wood; hydroelectric potential.
Agriculture: Cash crops—coffee, rubber, palm oil, cotton, cocoa, sugar, tea. Food crops—manioc, corn, legumes, plantains, peanuts.
Land use: Agriculture 3%; pasture 7%; forest/woodland 77%; other 13%.
Industry: Types—processed and unprocessed minerals; consumer products, including textiles, plastics, footwear, cigarettes, metal products; processed foods and beverages, cement, timber.
Currency: Congolese franc (FC).
Trade: Exports (2006)—$1.587 billion. Products—diamonds, cobalt, copper, coffee, petroleum. Partners—EU, Japan, South Africa, U.S., China. Imports (2006)—$2.263 billion. Products—consumer goods (food, textiles), capital equipment, refined petroleum products. Partners—EU, China, South Africa, U.S.
Total external debt: (2006) $11 billion

GEOGRAPHY

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) includes the greater part of the Congo River basin, which covers an area of almost 1 million square kilometers (400,000 sq. mi.). The country's only outlet to the Atlantic Ocean is a narrow strip of land on the north bank of the Congo River.

The vast, low-lying central area is a basin-shaped plateau sloping toward the west and covered by tropical rainforest. This area is surrounded by mountainous terraces in the west, plateaus merging into savannas in the south and southwest, and dense grasslands extending beyond the Congo River in the north. High mountains are found in the extreme eastern region.

D.R.C. lies on the Equator, with one-third of the country to the north and two-thirds to the south. The climate is hot and humid in the river basin and cool and dry in the southern highlands. South of the Equator, the rainy season lasts from October to May and north of the Equator, from April to November. Along the Equator, rainfall is fairly regular throughout the year. During the wet season, thunderstorms often are violent but seldom last more than a few hours. The average rainfall for the entire country is about 107 centimeters (42 in.).

PEOPLE

The population of D.R.C. was estimated at 66 million in 2008. As many as 250 ethnic groups have been distinguished and named. Some of the larger groups are the Kongo, Luba, and Anamongo. Although 700 local languages and dialects are spoken, the linguistic variety is bridged both by the use of French and the intermediary languages Kikongo, Tshiluba, Swahili, and Lingala.

About 70% of the Congolese population is Christian, predominantly Roman Catholic. Most of the non-Christians adhere to either traditional religions or syncretic sects. Traditional religions include concepts such as monotheism, animism, vitalism, spirit and ancestor worship, witchcraft, and sorcery and vary widely among ethnic groups; none is formalized. The syncretic sects often merge Christianity with traditional beliefs and rituals. The most popular of these sects, Kimbanguism, was seen as a threat to the colonial regime and was banned by the Belgians. Kimbanguism, officially "the church of Christ on Earth by the prophet Simon Kimbangu," now claims about 3 million members, primarily among the Bakongo tribe of Bas-Congo and Kinshasa. In 1969, it was the first independent African church admitted to the World Council of Churches.

Before independence in 1960, education was largely in the hands of religious groups. The primary school system was well developed at independence; however, the secondary school system was limited, and higher education was almost nonexistent in most regions of the country. The principal objective of this system was to train low-level administrators and clerks. Since independence, efforts have been made to increase access to education, and secondary and higher education have been made available to many more Congolese. According to estimates made in 2000, 41.7% of the population has no schooling, 42.2% has primary schooling, 15.4% has secondary schooling, and 0.7% has university schooling. At all levels of education, males greatly outnumber females. The largest state-run universities are the University of Kinshasa, the University of Lubumbashi, and the University of Kisangani. The elite continue to send their children abroad to be educated, primarily in Western Europe.

HISTORY

The area known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo was populated as early as 10,000 years ago and settled in the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. by Bantus from present-day Nigeria.

Discovered in 1482 by Portuguese navigator Diego Cao and later explored by English journalist Henry Morton Stanley, the area was officially colonized in 1885 as a personal possession of Belgian King Leopold II as the Congo Free State. In 1907, administration shifted to the Belgian Government, which renamed the country the Belgian Congo.

Following a series of riots and unrest, the Belgian Congo was granted its independence on June 30, 1960. Parliamentary elections in 1960 produced Patrice Lumumba as prime

minister and Joseph Kasavubu as president of the renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Mobutu Era

Within the first year of independence, several events destabilized the country: the army mutinied; the governor of Katanga province attempted secession; a UN peacekeeping force was called in to restore order; Prime Minister Lumumba died under mysterious circumstances; and Col. Joseph Désiré Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko) took over the government and ceded it again to President Kasavubu.

Unrest and rebellion plagued the government until 1965, when Lieutenant General Mobutu, by then commander in chief of the national army, again seized control of the country and declared himself president for 5 years. Mobutu quickly centralized power into his own hands and was elected unopposed as president in 1970.

Embarking on a campaign of cultural awareness, Mobutu renamed the country the Republic of Zaire and required citizens to adopt African names. Relative peace and stability prevailed until 1977 and 1978 when Katangan rebels, staged in Angola, launched a series of invasions into the Katanga region. The rebels were driven out with the aid of Belgian paratroopers.

During the 1980s, Mobutu continued to enforce his one-party system of rule. Although Mobutu successfully maintained control during this period, opposition parties, most notably the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS), were active. Mobutu's attempts to quell these groups drew significant international criticism.

As the Cold War came to a close, internal and external pressures on Mobutu increased. In late 1989 and early 1990, Mobutu was weakened by a series of domestic protests, by heightened international criticism of his regime's human rights practices, and by a faltering economy. In April 1990 Mobutu agreed to the principle of a multi-party system with elections and a constitution. As details of a reform package were delayed, soldiers in September 1991 began looting Kinshasa to protest their unpaid wages. Two thousand French and Belgian troops, some of whom were flown in on U.S. Air Force planes, arrived to evacuate the 20,000 endangered foreign nationals in Kinshasa.

In 1992, after previous similar attempts, the long-promised Sovereign National Conference was staged, encompassing more than 2,000 representatives from various political parties. The conference gave itself a legislative mandate and elected Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo as its chairman, along with Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the UDPS, as prime minister. By the end of the year Mobutu had created a rival government with its own prime minister. The ensuing stalemate produced a compromise merger of the two governments into the High Council of Republic-Parliament of Transition (HCR-PT) in 1994, with Mobutu as head of state and Kengo Wa Dondo as prime minister. Although presidential and legislative elections were scheduled repeatedly over the next 2 years, they never took place.

By 1996, the war and genocide in neighboring Rwanda had spilled over to Zaire. Rwandan Hutu militia forces (Interahamwe), who fled Rwanda following the ascension of a Tutsi-led government, were using Hutu refugee camps in eastern Zaire as bases for incursions against Rwanda.

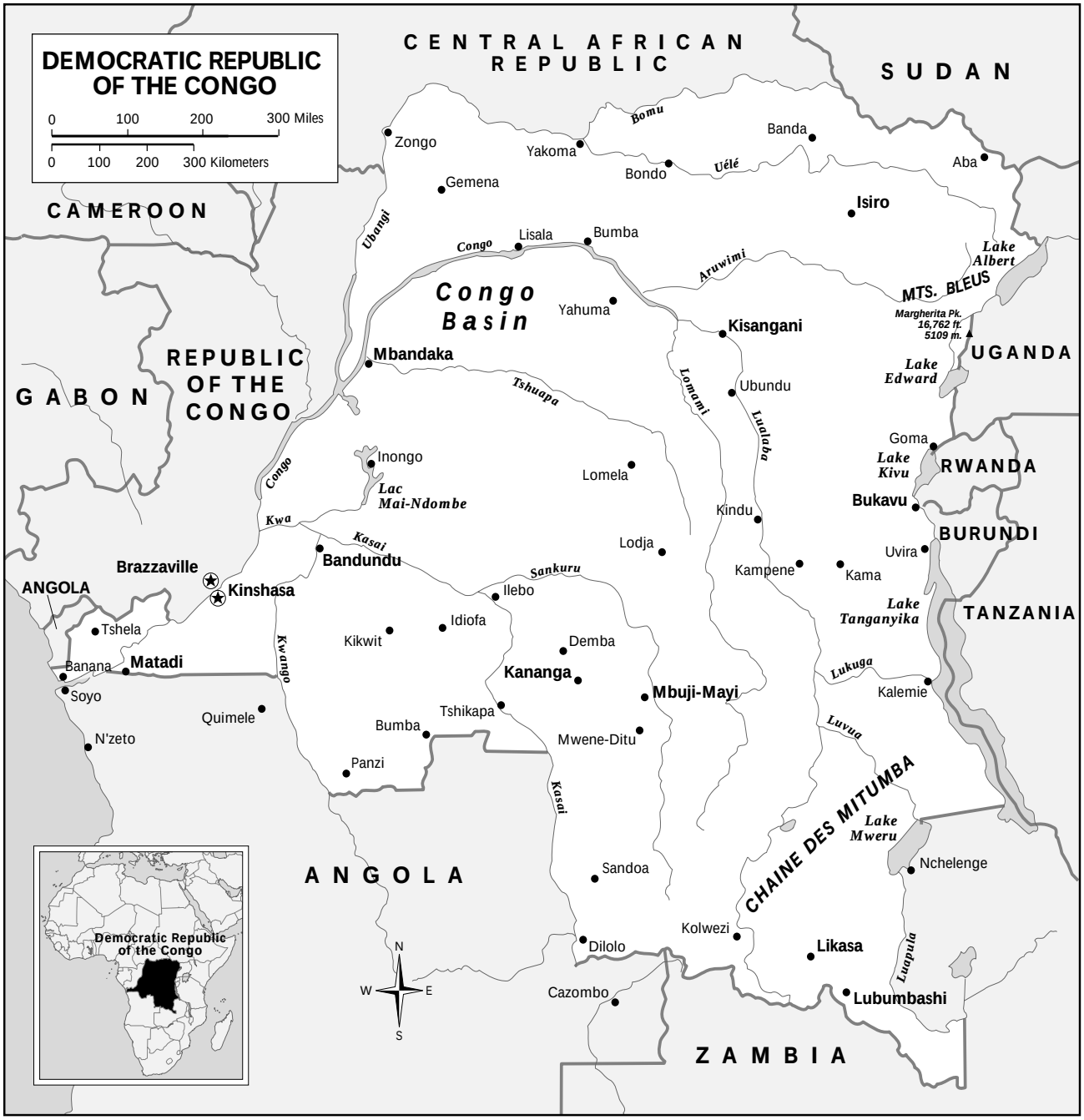
In October 1996, Rwandan troops (RPA) entered Zaire, simultaneously with the formation of an armed coalition led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila known as the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire (AFDL). With the goal of forcibly ousting Mobutu, the AFDL, supported by Rwanda and Uganda, began a military campaign toward Kinshasa. Following failed peace talks between Mobutu and Kabila in May 1997, Mobutu left the country.

From Dictatorship to Disintegration

Laurent-Désiré Kabila marched into Kinshasa on May 17, 1997 and declared himself president. He consolidated power around himself and the AFDL and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.). Kabila's Army Chief and the Secretary General of the AFDL were Rwandan, and RPA units continued to operate tangentially with the D.R.C.'s military, which was renamed the Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC).

Over the next year, relations between Kabila and his foreign backers deteriorated. In July 1998, Kabila ordered all foreign troops to leave the D.R.C. Most refused to leave. On August 2, fighting erupted throughout the D.R.C. as Rwandan troops in the D.R.C. "mutinied," and fresh Rwandan and Ugandan troops entered the D.R.C. Two days later, Rwandan troops flew to Bas-Congo, with the intention of marching on Kinshasa, ousting Laurent Kabila, and replacing him with the newly formed Rwandan-backed rebel group called the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD). The Rwandan campaign was thwarted at the last minute when Angolan, Zimbabwean, and Namibian troops intervened on behalf of the D.R.C. Government. The Rwandans and the RCD withdrew to eastern D.R.C., where they established de facto control over portions of eastern D.R.C. and continued to fight the Congolese Army and its foreign allies.

In February 1999, Uganda backed the formation of a rebel group called the Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC), which drew support from among ex-Mobutuists and ex-FAZ soldiers in Equateur province (Mobutu's home province). Together, Uganda and the MLC established control over the northern third of the



D.R.C. At this stage, the D.R.C. was divided de facto into three segments—one controlled by Laurent Kabila, one controlled by Rwanda, and one controlled by Uganda—and the parties had reached military deadlock. In July 1999, a cease-fire was proposed in Lusaka, Zambia, which all parties signed by the end of August. The Lusaka Accord called for a cease-fire, the deployment of a UN peacekeeping operation, MONUC, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the launching of an "Inter-Congolese Dialogue" to form a transitional government leading to elections.

The parties to the Lusaka Accord failed to fully implement its provisions in 1999 and 2000. Laurent Kabila drew increasing international criticism for blocking full deployment of UN troops, hindering progress toward an Inter-Congolese Dialogue, and suppressing internal political activity.

On January 16, 2001, Laurent Kabila was assassinated. He was succeeded by his son Joseph, who reversed many of his father's negative policies. Over the next year, MONUC deployed throughout the country, and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue proceeded. By the end of 2002, all Angolan, Namibian, and Zimbabwean troops had withdrawn from the D.R.C. Following D.R.C.-Rwanda talks in South Africa that culminated in the Pretoria Accord in July 2002,

Rwandan troops officially withdrew from the D.R.C. in October 2002, although there were continued, unconfirmed reports that Rwandan soldiers and military advisers remained integrated with RCD/G forces in eastern D.R.C. Ugandan troops officially withdrew from the D.R.C. in May 2003.

National Dialogue, Transitional Government, and Nascent Democracy

In October 2001, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue began in Addis Ababa under the auspices of Facilitator Ketumile Masire (former president of Botswana). The initial meetings made little progress and were adjourned. On February 25, 2002, the dialogue was reconvened in South Africa. It included representatives from the government, rebel groups, political opposition, civil society, and Mai-Mai (Congolese local defense militias). The talks ended inconclusively on April 19, 2002, when the government and the MLC brokered an agreement that was signed by the majority of delegates at the dialogue but left out the RCD/G and opposition UDPS party, among others.

This partial agreement was never implemented, and negotiations resumed in South Africa in October 2002. This time, the talks led to an all-inclusive agreement, which was signed by delegates in Pretoria on December 17, 2002, and formally ratified by all parties on April 2, 2003.

Following nominations by each of the various signatory groups, President Kabila on June 30, 2003 issued a decree that formally announced the transitional government lineup. The four vice presidents took the oath of office on July 17, 2003, and most incoming ministers assumed their new functions within days thereafter.

A transitional constitution was adopted on April 2, 2003; a new constitution was promulgated February 2006. Extensive executive, legislative, and military powers are vested in the president. The legislature does not have the power to overturn the government through a vote of no confidence. The judiciary is nominally independent; the president has the power to dismiss and appoint judges. The president is head of a 35-member cabinet of ministers.

President Joseph Kabila has made significant progress in liberalizing domestic political activity, establishing a transitional government, and undertaking economic reforms in cooperation with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, serious human rights problems remain in the security services and justice system. The eastern part of the country is characterized by ongoing violence and armed conflict, which has created a humanitarian disaster and contributed to civilian deaths (more than 3.8 million, according to a prominent international non-governmental organization). MONUC continues to play an important peacekeeping role in the D.R.C., and in October 2004, its authorized force strength increased to 16,700.

On July 30, 2006 the D.R.C. held its first free, democratic, multi-party elections in more than 40 years. The D.R.C.'s 25 million registered voters were charged with electing a president (from a field of 33 candidates) and 500 deputies to the National Assembly (out of a total of 9,709 candidates). Despite technical and logistical difficulties, coupled with isolated incidents of violence and intimidation, the elections were held in a largely calm and orderly fashion. Voter turnout nationwide was high, particularly in the eastern provinces, compared to the December 2005 constitutional referendum.

The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) on August 20, 2006 announced official provisional results from the July 30 presidential elections. According to CEI figures, incumbent Joseph Kabila won 44.81% of the votes cast versus Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba's 20.3%. As no candidate won a majority of votes in the first round and in accordance with the country's electoral law, the top two recipients, Kabila and Bemba, faced off in a second round of balloting. The D.R.C.'s transitional process was threatened by military clashes in Kinshasa just hours after provisional election results were announced. This crisis was exclusively confined to the Gombe area of central Kinshasa and was essentially a clash between Vice President Bemba and President Kabila's militias. The runoff presidential elections were held on October 29, 2006. On November 27, 2006 the Congolese Supreme Court declared President Kabila the winner over Vice President Bemba by a margin of 58% to 42%. Kabila was inaugurated on December 6, 2006.

Voters in July 2006 also chose from among 9,709 legislative candidates to fill 500 seats in the National Assembly, representing 169 electoral districts. Approximately one-third of these districts elected one deputy by a simple majority. The rest were multiple-seat districts, ranging from two representatives to a maximum of 17 (in one of Kinshasa's voting districts). In these areas, deputies were chosen by proportional representation using open party lists. To select the winners in multiple-seat districts, all valid votes cast were first divided according to political party. Next, an "electoral quotient" was determined by dividing the number of votes cast by the number of representatives to be elected. Finally, the number of votes a party received was divided by this "electoral quotient" to determine how many seats the party would win. The candidates ultimately elected were those who received the highest number of votes within their particular party lists. National Assembly deputies serve five-year terms and there is no restriction on the number of times they can be re-elected.

Organizing the D.R.C.'s July 2006 elections presented significant logistical challenges. Supported in large part by the MONUC peacekeeping mission, the Independent Electoral Commission opened more than 50,000 polling stations nationwide and employed some 300,000 poll workers on election day and to oversee the ballot counting process. The presidential and legislative ballots

were printed in South Africa and altogether weighed nearly 1,800 tons, requiring 75 round-trip flights between the D.R.C. and South Africa.

For the July 2006 elections, the CEI reported that there were approximately 25.42 million voters registered and a voter participation rate of 70.54%. Of the 17.9 million ballots cast, 993,704 (approximately 5%) were disqualified due to empty ballots or marking errors. In 2005, approximately 25.7 million Congolese registered as voters (out of an original estimate of 28 million eligible to do so). In the D.R.C.'s December 2005 constitutional referendum, roughly two-thirds of all registered voters participated.

The D.R.C. legislature held its first session on September 22, 2006. On February 26, 2007, Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga and the new Congolese cabinet formally took office. In May 2007, Kengo wa Dongo was elected Senate President.

The Continuing Search for a Lasting Peace

On September 8, 2007, the Governments of the D.R.C. and Uganda reached an agreement in Ngurdoto, Tanzania, in which they mutually agreed to strengthen bilateral efforts to eliminate all "negative forces" (illegal armed groups) operating in and from the two countries.

On November 9, 2007, the Governments of the D.R.C. and Rwanda, with facilitation by the UN and witness of the United States and the European Union, signed the Nairobi Communiqué, which was designed to put an end to the presence in the D.R.C. of all foreign armed groups, particularly the ex-FAR/Interahamwe (later the Forces Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda, FDLR). These groups were to be disarmed, demobilized, and repatriated.

On January 23, 2008, the Government of the D.R.C. and over 20 armed groups signed a peace accord in Goma, D.R.C., under which the parties agreed on the need for immediate cessation of hostilities, the disengagement of troops, improved adherence to human rights standards, and the creation of UN buffer zones between and among the various factions.

As of October 1, 2008, none of these agreements had been fully implemented, and the eastern part of the country in particular continues to suffer from the activities of numerous illegal armed groups that operate largely with impunity.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Joseph KABILA**
Prime Min.: **Antoine GIZENGA**
Min. of State for Agriculture: **Francois Joseph MOBUTU NZANGA Ngbangawe**
Min. of State for Interior, Decentralization, & Security: **Denis KALUME Numbi**
Min. of State at the Presidency: **Nkulu MITUMBA Kilombo**
Min. of Budget: **Adolphe MUZITO**
Min. of Civil Service: **Laurent-Simon IKENGE Lisambola**
Min. of Communications & Media: **Emile BONGELI**
Min. of Culture & Arts: **Esdras KAMBALE**
Min. of Defense & Veterans Affairs: **Guyslain CHIKEZ Diemu**
Min. of Economy & External Trade: **Andre-Phillipe FUTA**
Min. of Energy: **Salomon BANAMUHERE Baliene**
Min. of the Environment & Tourism: **Jose ENDUNDU Bononge**
Min. of Finance: **Athanase MATENDA Kyelu**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Intl. Cooperation: **Antipas MBUSA Nyamwisi**
Min. of Gender, Women, & Children's Affairs: **Philomene Omatuku ATSHAKAWO Akatshi**
Min. of Health: **Victorienne MELENGE**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Leonard MASUGA**
Min. of Hydrocarbons: **Lambert MENDE Omalanga**
Min. of Industry: **Simon MBOSO Kiamputu**
Min. of Infrastructure, Public Works, & Reconstruction: **Pierre LUMBI Okongo**
Min. of Justice: **Mutombo BAKAFWA Nsenda**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Marie-Ange LUKIANA Mufwankolo**
Min. of Lands: **Edouard KABUKABWA Bitangilay**
Min. of Mines: **Martin KABWELULU Labilo**
Min. of National Economy: **Sylvain Joel BIFWILA Tchamwala**
Min. of Plan: **Olivier KAMITATU Etsu**
Min. of Post, Telephones, & Telecommunications: **Louisa MUNGA**
Min. of Primary & Secondary Education: **Maker MWANGU Famba**
Min. at the Prime Min.'s Office: **Godefroid Mayobo MPWENE Ngantien**
Min. of Public Enterprises: **Jeannine MABUNDA Lioko**
Min. of Relations With Parliament: **Adolphe LUMANU**
Min. of Social & Humanitarian Affairs: **Jean-Claude MUYAMBO**
Min. of Transportation: **Charles MWANDO Nsimba**
Min. of Urban Planning & Housing: **Sylvain NGABU Chumbu**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Willy BAKONGA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Jean-Claude MASANGU Mulango**
Ambassador to the US: **Faida Maramuke MITIFU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Atoki Christian ILEKA**

ECONOMY

Sparsely populated in relation to its area, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to a vast potential of natural resources and mineral wealth. Nevertheless, the D.R.C. is one of the poorest countries in the world, with per capita annual income of about $300 in 2007. This is the result of years of mismanagement, corruption, and war.

In 2001, the Government of the D.R.C. under Joseph Kabila undertook a series of economic reforms aimed at stabilizing the macroeconomic situation and promoting economic growth. Reforms were monitored by the IMF and included liberalization of petroleum prices and exchange rates and adoption of disciplined fiscal and monetary policies. The reform program reduced inflation from over 500% per year in 2000 to only about 7% per year in 2003. Inflation rose to 15-20% percent in 2006.

In June 2002, the World Bank and IMF approved new credits for the D.R.C. for the first time in over a decade. Bilateral donors, whose assistance has been almost entirely dedicated to humanitarian interventions in recent years, also are beginning to fund development projects in the D.R.C. In October 2003, the World Bank launched a multi-sector plan for development and reconstruction.

In July 2003, the D.R.C. became eligible for external debt relief ("decision point") under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. However, the D.R.C. lost its eligibility for interim debt relief when it failed to make its sixth IMF review in 2006 due to fiscal slippages and slow implementation of key structural reforms. If the D.R.C. successfully completes its current non-disbursing staff-monitored program with the IMF and qualifies for a new IMF disbursement program, it will be back on track for HIPC debt relief. This debt relief will help alleviate the D.R.C.'s external sovereign debt burden and provide critically needed resources for poverty reduction programs.

In early 2008, the D.R.C. concluded an agreement with a consortium of Chinese companies to create a joint venture to exploit mining resources and develop Congolese infrastructure. The project will be financed by a $9 billion loan arranged by the consortium. To ensure debt sustainability, some of the loan agreement's provisions must be clarified in order to qualify the D.R.C. for a new IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) program.

The D.R.C. Government is working to implement the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approved in mid-2006 by the IMF and World Bank boards. The government's five-year program, approved by the National Assembly in February 2007, is based on the PRSP and focuses heavily on President Kabila's five priority areas: infrastructure, employment, education, water/electricity, and health.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Congolese economy, accounting for 45.7% of GDP in 2006. The main cash crops include coffee, palm oil, rubber, cotton, sugar, tea, and cocoa. Food crops include cassava, plantains, maize, groundnuts, and rice. Industry, especially the mining sector, is underdeveloped relative to its potential in the D.R.C. In 2006, industry accounted for only 27.7% of GDP, with 6.5% attributed to manufacturing. Services reached 26.6% of GDP. The D.R.C. was the world's fourth-largest producer of industrial diamonds during the 1980s, and diamonds continue to dominate exports, accounting for over half of exports ($642 million) in 2003. The D.R.C.'s main copper and cobalt interests are dominated by Gecamines, the state-owned mining giant. Gecamines production has been severely affected by corruption, civil unrest, world market trends, and failure to reinvest.

For decades, corruption and misguided policy have created a dual economy in the D.R.C. Individuals and businesses in the formal sector operated with high costs under arbitrarily enforced laws. As a consequence, the informal sector now dominates the economy. In 2002, with the population of the D.R.C. estimated at 56 million, only 230,000 Congolese working in private enterprise in the formal sector were enrolled in the social security system.

In recent years, the Congolese Government approved a new investment code and a new mining code and designed a new commercial court. The goal of these initiatives was to attract investment by promising fair and transparent treatment to private business. In 2007, shortly after the Joseph Kabila administration took office, the government launched a wholesale review of mining contracts that had been entered into under previous governments. In theory, the purpose of this contract review was to determine which negotiations may have been colored by corruption and revisit/renegotiate their terms as need be. In practice, this process has itself been opaque, with little information provided by the government to foreign (including American) investors. The World Bank also is supporting efforts to restructure the D.R.C.'s large parastatal sector, including Gecamines, and to rehabilitate the D.R.C.'s neglected infrastructure, including the Inga Dam hydroelectric system.

The outbreak of war in the early days of August 1998 caused a major decline in economic activity. As was noted above, the country was divided de facto into different territories, and commerce among these territories had halted. With the installation of the transitional government in July 2003, the country was reunified, and economic and commercial links began to reconnect. Economic growth resumed in 2002 with a 3% growth rate, continuing in 2007 at 7%.

In June 2000, the United Nations established a Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Congolese Resources to examine links between the wars and natural resource exploitation. Reports issued by the panel indicate that countries involved in the war in Congo developed significant economic interests in the D.R.C. that complicated Congolese Government efforts to control its resources and the mining sector. Although the original Panel of Experts was disbanded when its mandate ended in late 2003, a separate UN Group of Experts continues to look into these issues due to the apparent links between the illegal armed groups in the eastern part of the D.R.C. and natural resource exploitation. The Group of Experts is scheduled to issue a final report on these issues by the end of 2008.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The D.R.C.'s location in the center of Africa has made the country a key player in the region since even before independence. Because of its size, mineral wealth, and strategic location, Zaire under Mobutu was able to capitalize on Cold War tensions to garner support from the West. In the early 1990s, however, Cold War-era tolerance of human rights abuses faded, and the mounting evidence of

such abuses led Western support for the Mobutu regime to wane just as internal pressure for reform increased.

D.R.C.'s relations with neighboring countries have often been driven by security concerns, leading to intricate, interlocking, and shifting alliances. Domestic conflicts in the Central African Republic, Sudan, Uganda, Angola, Rwanda, and Burundi have at various times created bilateral and regional tensions. The current situation in eastern D.R.C. arose from foreign insurgents' use of D.R.C. territory as a base for attacking their home countries as well as the Congolese Government's inability to secure its own borders.

U.S.-CONGOLESE RELATIONS

In December 2006, the D.R.C. inaugurated its first democratically elected president in over 40 years, the culmination of both the Congolese people's efforts to choose their leaders through a peaceful, democratic process and international support for numerous domestic and international peace agreements. The United States is proud to have played a role in the peace process in the D.R.C., and continues to encourage Congolese peace, prosperity, democracy, and respect for human rights.

The United States remains a partner with the D.R.C. and other central African nations in their quest for stability and growth on the continent. The United States facilitated the signing of a tripartite agreement on regional security in the Great Lakes region among the D.R.C., Rwanda, and Uganda in October 2004. (Burundi formally joined the Tripartite Commission in September 2005, and the Tripartite Commission is now Tripartite Plus.) The United States also strongly supported UN efforts to create a Joint Verification Mechanism to monitor the border between the D.R.C. and Rwanda. The United States has pursued an active diplomatic strategy in support of these objectives. The United States seeks to strengthen the process of internal reconciliation and democratization in D.R.C., as in all the states of the region, so that the D.R.C. and its neighbors can jointly address mutual security interests and develop mutually beneficial economic relations.

The United States appointed its current ambassador to the D.R.C. in November 2007. The D.R.C. appointed its current ambassador to the United States in 2000. The State Department has consistently issued cautionary travel information about Zaire/D.R.C. since 1977.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

KINSHASA (E) 310 AVENUE DES AVIATEURS, KINSHASAGOMBE, APO/FPO Unit 2220, DPO AE, 09828-0122, 011-243-81-556 -0151, Fax 011-243-81-556-0169, INMARSAT Tel 243-081-884-6681 (POST 1), Workweek: M-Th, 7:30–17:15 and Fri 07:30-12:30, Website: http://kinshasa.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Tammy Tarlton
AMB OMS:	Mccarthy Patrica
CDC:	Vacant
DPO/PAO:	Robert W. Keith
ECO:	Gregory Groth
FM:	Vacant
HRO:	Helga Muller
MGT:	Craig L. Cloud
AMB:	William J. Garvelink
CON:	Vacant
DCM:	Samuel V. Brock
PAO:	Katya Thomas
GSO:	William McClure
RSO:	Bill McCarthy
AID:	Stephen Haykin
CLO:	Susan McCarthy
DAO:	Ltc. Vacant
FMO:	Reginald E. Whatley
ICASS Chair:	Greg Groth
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISSO:	Willie A. Brown
State ICASS:	Greg Groth

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 23, 2008

Country Description: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa) located in central Africa, is the third largest country on the continent. The capital is Kinshasa. French is the official language. Years of civil war and corruption have badly damaged the country's infrastructure.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required for entry. Some travelers arriving in the DRC without proper proof of yellow fever vaccination have been temporarily detained, had their passports confiscated, or been required to pay a fine. Information about yellow fever vaccination clinics in the U.S. may be found at http://www2.ncid.cdc.gov/travel/yellowfever. Visas must be obtained from an embassy of the DRC prior to arrival.

Travelers to the DRC frequently experience difficulties at the airport and other ports of entry, such as temporary detention, passport confiscation and demands by immigration and security personnel for unofficial "special fees." All resident foreigners, including Americans, are required to register at the office of the Direction General de Migration (DGM) in the commune of their place of residence. Visitors who wish to travel in any mining areas must first obtain government approval from various government agencies or ministries, an often cumbersome and time consuming process.

Dual nationals arriving in the DRC should carefully consider which passport they use to enter the DRC. For departure from the DRC, airlines will require a valid visa for all destination countries before they will issue a ticket or allow a passenger to board. Airlines also require that the passenger have the correct entry stamp in the passport they wish to use to exit

the country. Passengers who are unable to leave the country on the passport they used to enter the DRC may not be able to continue on their travel itinerary.

Additional information about visas may be obtained from the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1726 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20036, tel. (202) 234-7690, or the DRC's Permanent Mission to the UN, 866 United Nations Plaza, Room 511, New York, NY 10017, tel. 212-319-8061, fax: 212-319-8232, web site http://www.un.int/drcongo. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Congolese embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: See the Department of State's Travel Warning for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Though the DRC is now significantly more stable than it has been over the past decade, security remains problematic. The first democratic elections in more than forty years were held in 2006, and a new government is now in place. Post-election disturbances occurred as recently as March 2007 in Kinshasa, resulting in deaths of civilians and military personnel. During civil disturbances in 2007 there were incidents of hostility towards U.S. citizens and other expatriates.

Both inside and outside Kinshasa, there can be roadblocks, especially after dark. Vehicles are often searched for weapons and valuables, and travelers are checked for identity papers. Security forces regularly seek bribes. If confronted with such a situation, it is suggested that U.S. citizens remain courteous and calm. If detained, report the incident to the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa as soon as possible.

The United Nations has its largest peacekeeping operation in the world in the DRC. Known by its French acronym of MONUC, it has close to 17,000 peacekeepers deployed in the country—primarily in the east. Violence nevertheless persists in the eastern DRC due to the presence of several militias and foreign armed groups, with sporadic outbreaks occurring in North Kivu, South Kivu, and northern Katanga provinces, as well as in the Ituri District of Orientale province. Members of the Lord's Resistance Army entered into northeastern DRC from Sudan in 2005, and have camps in an isolated region of the DRC, Garamba National Park, where they killed eight MONUC peacekeepers in January 2006.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

The Department of State strongly urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas.

Crime: In the DRC, poor economic conditions continue to foster crime, especially in urban areas. Travel in many sections of Kinshasa, Kisangani, Lubumbashi and most other major cities, is generally safe during daylight hours, but travelers are urged to be vigilant against criminal activity which targets non-Congolese, particularly in highly congested traffic and areas surrounding hotels and stores. Outlying, remote areas are less secure due to high levels of criminal activity and the lack of adequate training, supervision, and salary payments to the security forces present.

Vehicle thefts, burglaries, and armed robbery occur throughout the country; there have been recent reports of after-dark carjackings, resulting in deaths in the North Kivu area. It is recommended to drive with doors locked and windows closed at all times. If confronted by members of the military or security forces, visitors should not permit soldiers or police officers to enter their vehicles nor get into the vehicle of anyone purporting to be a security official. It is recommended that in such instances U.S. citizens remain courteous and calm and, if threatened, not resist. All incidents should be reported to the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa.

Consistency in administering laws and regulations is notably absent. Travelers should note that in cases of theft and robbery, legal recourse is limited. Therefore, valuable items may be safer if kept at home or another secure location. Security officials and/or individuals purporting to be security officials have detained and later robbed American citizens and other foreigners in the city of Kinshasa. This type of crime has increased in recent months, but generally occurs more frequently during the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Travelers using public transportation or visiting high pedestrian traffic areas of any type are advised to be vigilant against robbery and pickpocketing which is a persistent problem in all major cities in the DRC. The presence of "street children," who can be persistent and sometimes aggressive, remains a problem particularly in Kinshasa.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities,

consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: In the DRC, medical facilities are severely limited, and medical materials are in short supply. Travelers should carry properly labeled prescription drugs and other medications with them and should not expect to find an adequate supply of prescription or over-the-counter drugs in local stores or pharmacies. Payment for any medical services required is expected in cash, in advance of treatment.

Malaria is common throughout the DRC and outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, yellow fever, the Ebola virus, and hemorrhagic fever occur. Travelers should take appropriate precautions to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in the DRC. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at: http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of the DRC.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Democratic Republic of Congo. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. For planning purposes, the minimum estimated cost of medical air evacuation to the nearest suitable health care facility (in South Africa) is $35,000.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the DRC is provided for general reference only, and may vary according to location or circumstance.

Inter-city roads are scarce, and throughout the DRC roads are generally in poor condition, and often impassable in the rainy season. When driving in cities, keep windows up and doors locked. At roadblocks or checkpoints, documents should be shown through closed windows. In the event of a traffic incident involving bodily injury to a third party or pedestrian, do not stop to offer assistance under any circumstances. Proceed directly to the nearest police station or gendarmerie to report the incident and request official government intervention. Attempting to provide assistance may further aggravate the incident, resulting in a hostile mob reaction such as stoning or beating.

Presidential and other official motorcades pose serious risks to drivers and pedestrians in Kinshasa. When hearing sirens or seeing security forces announcing the motorcade's approach, drivers should pull off the road as far as possible, stop their vehicles, and extinguish headlights. Vehicles should not attempt to move until the entire motorcade has passed by; the security forces will physically indicate when this has occurred. Failure to comply may result in arrest, and/or vehicle damage with possible personal injury.

Public transportation of all forms is unregulated and is generally unsafe and unreliable. Taxis, mini-buses, and trains are in poor mechanical condition and are invariably filled beyond capacity.

Visitors who wish to travel in any mining areas must first obtain government approval from various government agencies or ministries, an often cumbersome and time consuming process.

Drivers should stop their cars and pedestrians should stand still when passing a government installation during the raising and lowering of the Congolese flag. This ceremony occurs at roughly 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the DRC's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of the DRC's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Civil aviation in the DRC continues to experience air incidents and accidents; more than a dozen crashes and in-flight accidents resulted in more than 300 fatalities between 2000 and August 2008. Incidents included hard landings, engine failures, collapsed landing gear, and planes veering off the runway. In-country air travel schedules are unreliable and planes are frequently overloaded with passengers and/or cargo.

The U.S. Embassy in the DRC has prohibited official travel by U.S. government employees and contractors on all DRC-owned and -operated commercial air transportation services due to concerns regarding safety and maintenance. International flights on foreign-owned and -operated carriers are not affected by this notice.

Photography: Travelers should note that photography in public places in Kinshasa and around any public or government building or monument in the DRC is strictly forbidden. Persons

caught photographing such sites will likely have their photographic equipment confiscated and risk detention and possible arrest.

Travel to and From Congo-Brazzaville (Republic of Congo): Ferry service to and from Kinshasa and Brazzaville stops running in the late afternoon, does not operate on Sundays, and may close completely with minimal notice. If ferry service is functioning, a special exit permit from the DRC's Immigration Service and a visa from the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) are required for U.S. citizens to cross the Congo River from Kinshasa to Brazzaville.

Ferry and riverboat service to the Central African Republic is suspended due to rebel control of the Ubangui River.

Phone Service: In the DRC, cellular phones are the norm, as other telephone service is unreliable. Depending on the type of phone, it may be possible to locally purchase a SIM card to use an American-compatible cell phone in the DRC.

Currency: U.S. currency is widely accepted in the urban areas, but most vendors and banking institutions will accept only Series 1996 bills or newer, with the large, off-center portraits, that provide stronger protection against counterfeiting. In addition, bills must be in near perfect condition; even those with minor stains or small tears will be rejected. One dollar bills are rarely accepted, even if in mint condition. U.S. bills should be examined before they are accepted to ensure that they are legitimate, as counterfeit currency is widely circulated. It is recommended that currency exchange be conducted at reputable banks and not on the street where several schemes exist to either short-change the unwitting customer or to pass counterfeit bills.

Criminal Penalties: While in any foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe in the DRC than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Congolese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the DRC are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Accusations of engaging in crimes against the security of the State, which are loosely defined, often result in detention for prolonged periods without being formally arrested. The DRC's justice system remains plagued by corruption and uneven application of the law. Attorney fees can be expensive and are expected to be paid in advance of services rendered.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. The DRC is not a signatory to the Hague Convention; potential adoptive parents are cautioned to thoroughly understand existing DRC Family Code with respect to adoption before beginning adoption proceedings.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the DRC are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Congo. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs; tel. 243-081-225-5872 (do not dial the zero when calling from abroad). Entrance to the Consular Section of the Embassy is on Avenue Dumi, opposite the Ste. Anne residence. The Consular Section of the Embassy may be reached at tel. 243-081-884-6859 or 243-081-884-4609; fax 243-081-301-0560 (do not dial the first zero when calling from abroad).

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Although the Ministry of Justice has jurisdiction over adoptions, individual cases are handled by the Tribunal de Paix in the region where a prospective adoptive child resides. Mailing addresses do not exist as there is no mail service. Attorneys have current contacts at appropriate courts.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adopting parents may be married, single, widowed or divorced. Persons in these last three groups may not adopt a child of the opposite sex unless the court grants an exemption. Couples should have been married for at least five years and be at least 15 years older than the intended adoptee. This "15-year rule" may be waived if the adoptee is a biological child of one of the

parents. Any person who has a prior history of child abuse is not permitted to adopt. There is no age limit for adopting parents. No couple may adopt more than three children unless a subsequent prospective adoptee is the biological child of one of the parents. Parents may not already have more than two children when they adopt. No adoptive parent may marry the adopted child. There is no medical ineligibility for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents do not need be permanent or long-term residents of the DRC.

Time Frame: It can take from a minimum of three months to a maximum of one year to complete the adoption process from child placement to visa issuance.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in DRC. However, orphanages must be licensed or accredited by the Congolese government. It is customary and accepted practice to engage Congolese lawyers to carry out adoption proceedings. Lawyers are automatically accredited by the government by virtue of their professional training. The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa maintains a list of attorneys known to work with U.S. citizens on its web site. http://kinshasa.usembassy.gov/attorneys_in_congo.html. This list does not imply an endorsement of specific attorneys by the Embassy.

Adoption Fees: Court fees for an adoption case average between $100 and $300. Lawyer fees can range from $1,000 to $2,500. Fees can be kept to a minimum if, prior to the first consultation, adopting parents secure any required documents such as birth, death, marriage and relevant court records on their own.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective parents apply for permission to adopt by sending a letter to the Tribunal de Paix in the region where the child resides. Postal delivery is very limited, so a letter should be sent by messenger or delivered by hand. There is no application form. The Judge from the Tribunal de Paix approves foreign adoptive parents for adoption. If the adoptive parents choose the adoptive child at an orphanage, they do so according to their own criteria (age, gender, etc.). A lawyer may represent the adoptive parents, but adoptive parents' criteria are taken into consideration, rather than a governmental agency or social organization.

The court will require consent to the adoption be settled before granting a judgment. Biological parents, or other family members if one or both parents are deceased, must give their consent. If no family members are identified, the court will step in to determine consent. Any child over the age of 15 and over must give his or her own consent. Please bear in that U.S. immigration law states only adopted orphans under the age of sixteen are eligible for immigrant visas; sixteen and seventeen year olds are eligible only when adopted with a sibling group.

After obtaining the proper consent, the prospective adoptive parents request a hearing in open court at the Tribunal de Paix in the area where the child resides. Along with the request for hearing, the prospective adoptive parents must submit copies of their birth certificates and the birth certificate of the prospective adoptee. The court will require proof that any and all interested family members of the child have been informed of the adoption and have received notice of the court hearing. The adoptive parents and prospective adopted child (if over age 10) must appear personally in court before the judge. Other interested parties may attend or submit documents to the court. After the initial hearing, the court conducts an investigation to determine that all conditions for placement or final adoption have been met and that all documents are legitimate. Adopting parents are not required to remain in DRC after the hearing while waiting for the judgment.

Once the investigation is completed and all requirements have been satisfied, the court will issue a judgment of adoption. The date of the adoption will be retroactive to the date of the first court appearance. The adopted child's name on the judgment will incorporate his/her original name along with the newly adopted family name. At the time of adoption, choices concerning citizenship will be made by the adoptive parent (in the case of minors) or by the adoptee (if 18 years or older). The adoptive parents must register the judgment at the local city hall or magistrate within one month or the adoption is null and void. This is done either where the adoptive parents live (if they live within DRC) or where the child resides (if the adoptive parents do not live in the DRC).

Required Documents: The adopting parents must submit copies of their own birth certificates, the birth certificate of the prospective adoptee, police certificates from the adoptive parents place of birth and attestations of good conduct from their city hall or local embassy or consulate.

Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo
1726 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone: (202) 234-7690

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy: The U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa is located on 310 Avenue des Aviateurs.

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in the Democratic Republic of Congo may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor,

2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

Travel Warning

October 30, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa), and recommends against all travel to North Kivu province. This replaces the Travel Warning dated July 23, 2008 to note the deterioration in the security situation in North Kivu.

Conditions within certain regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly in the east, remain dangerous. Official personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa are restricted from travel to North Kivu unless the travel is for official business and has been specifically authorized by the Embassy. On October 29, 2008, all U.S. Government personnel who had been present in the city of Goma relocated temporarily to the Rwandan town of Gisenyi, directly across the border. American citizens should avoid travel to Goma and surrounding areas, and those who are there are urged to depart. Fighting between armed rebels, Congolese military forces, and U.N. peacekeeping troops has increased in the province of North Kivu and continues in the provinces of South Kivu, Orientale, northern Katanga, and sporadically in Bas Congo. Armed groups as well as active duty and demobilized Congolese troops in parts of the country are known to pillage, carjack, and steal vehicles, kill extra-judicially, rape, kidnap, and carry out military or paramilitary operations. Government soldiers, as well as rebel fighters expected to be demobilized as a result of ongoing peace processes, remain a security concern. Travelers are frequently detained and questioned by poorly disciplined security forces at numerous roadblocks and border crossings throughout the country.

Travelers to the DRC frequently experience difficulties at the airport and other ports of entry, such as temporary detention, passport confiscation, and demands by immigration and security personnel for unofficial "special fees." Visas are not available at ports of entry. All resident foreigners, including Americans, are required to register at the office of the Direction General de Migration (DGM) in the commune of their place of residence. Border closures of 24-48 hour durations can occur without much advance notice.

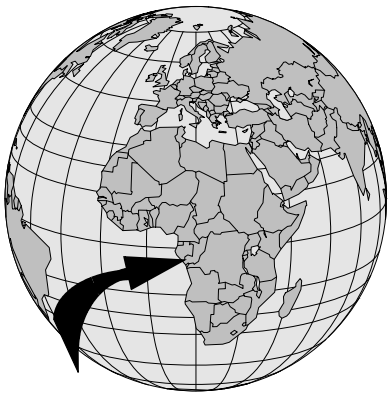
Enforcement of aviation safety standards in the DRC is uneven, with frequent incidents and crashes. The U.S. Embassy has prohibited official travel by U.S. government employees and contractors on all DRC-owned and operated commercial airlines due to safety and maintenance concerns. International flights on foreign-owned and –operated carriers are not affected by this notice.

American citizens should avoid all public demonstrations and areas where crowds have gathered, exercise caution, and closely monitor local and international news from reliable sources. Radio Okapi broadcasts in French on 103.5 FM at 0700, 0800, 1200, and 1800 as well as "flash" updates throughout the day. English-language news can be found on BBC at 92.7 FM. In times of emergency, the Belgian Embassy operates a French-language radio broadcast system at FM 98.8. Changes in security conditions may occasionally restrict the travel of U.S. Mission personnel.

Public Health concerns also pose a hazard to U.S. citizen travelers due to outbreaks of deadly viruses and other diseases, which can occur without warning and often are not rapidly reported by local health authorities. Information on personal protection for international travelers, including children, can be found at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in the DRC despite this Travel Warning are strongly urged to register with the Embassy in Kinshasa or through the State Department's travel registration website at https://travelregistration.state.gov. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs; the Consular Section entrance is located on Avenue Dumi, opposite Saint Anne's Residence. The Embassy's 24-hour phone number is 243-81-225-5872; callers within DRC should dial 081-225-5872. All Embassy telephone numbers are cellular phones as landlines are unreliable. The Embassy website is http://kinshasa.usembassy.gov.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department's Internet website at http://travel.state.gov. Up-to-date information on safety and security is available toll-free at 1-888-407-4747 from within the United States and Canada, or at regular toll rates at 1-202-501-4444 for callers outside the United States and Canada, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



CONGO

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of the Congo

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 342,000 sq. km (132,000 sq. mi.); slightly larger than New Mexico.
Cities: Capital—Brazzaville (pop. 800,000). Other cities—Pointe-Noire (450,000), Dolisie (150,000).
Climate: Tropical. Tropical jungle in the North (country seasonally split—half lies above the Equator; half below the Equator).
Terrain: Coastal plains, fertile valleys, central plateau, forested flood plains.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Congolese (sing. and pl.).
Population: (July 2007 est.) 3,800,610.
Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.639%.
Ethnic groups: 15 principal Bantu groups; more than 70 subgroups. Largest groups are Bacongo, Vili, Bateke, M'Bochi, and Sangha. Also present is a small population (less than 100,000) of Pygmies, ethnically unrelated to the Bantu majority.
Religions: Traditional beliefs 50%, Roman Catholic 35%, other Christian 15%, Muslim 2%.
Languages: French (official), Lingala and Munukutuba (national).
Health: Infant mortality rate (2007 est.)—83.26 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2007 est.)—53.29 yrs.
Work force: About 40% of population, two-thirds of whom work in agriculture.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: August 15, 1960.
Constitution: New constitution adopted in nationwide referendum on January 20, 2002.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—bicameral legislature made up of a Senate and a National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court, Court of Accounts and Budgetary Discipline, Courts of Appeal (Title VIII of the 2002 constitution), and the Constitutional Court (Title IX of the 2002 constitution). Other—Economic Council and Human Rights Commission.
Political subdivisions: 10 departments, divided into districts, plus the capital district.
Political parties: More than 100 new parties formed (but not all function) since multi-party democracy was introduced in 1990. The largest are the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (UPADS), Congolese Labor Party (PCT), Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development (MCDDI), Coalition for Democracy and Social Progress (RDPS), Coalition for Democracy and Development (RDD), Union of Democratic Forces (UFD), Union of Democratic Renewal (URD), Union for Development and Social Progress (UDPS). Following the June-October 1997 war and the 1998-99 civil conflict, many parties, including UPADS and MCDDI, were left in disarray as their leadership fled the country. By 2007, many of the leaders had returned, with the notable exception of former President Pascal Lissouba.
Suffrage: Universal adult.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $7.6 billion.
Real GDP growth rate: (2007 est.) -1.6%.
Per capita income: (2007 est.) $2,159.
Inflation: (2007 est.) 2.6%.
Natural resources: Petroleum, wood, potash, lead, zinc, uranium, phosphates, natural gas, hydropower.
Structure of production: (2001) Government and services—40.3%; petroleum sector—38.9%; agriculture and forestry—10.5%; utilities and industry—6.0%; other—4.3%.
Agriculture: Products—manioc, sugar, rice, corn, peanuts, vegetables, coffee, cocoa, forest products. Land—less than 2% cultivated.
Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$5.996 billion (f.o.b.) petroleum (89% of

export earnings), lumber, plywood, sugar, cocoa, coffee, diamonds. Imports—$1.964 billion (f.o.b.) capital equipment, construction materials, foodstuffs.

PEOPLE

Congo's sparse population is concentrated in the southwestern portion of the country, leaving the vast areas of tropical jungle in the north virtually uninhabited. Thus, Congo is one of the most urbanized countries in Africa, with 70% of its total population living in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, or along the 332-mile railway that connects them. In southern rural areas, industrial and commercial activity suffered as a consequence of the civil wars in the late 1990s. Except in Kouilou province and Pointe Noire, commercial activity other than subsistence activity came nearly to a halt. A slow recovery began in 2000 and continues in 2008.

Before the 1997 war, about 9,000 Europeans and other non-Africans lived in Congo, most of whom were French. Only a fraction of this number remains. The number of American citizens residing in Congo typically hovers around 100.

HISTORY

First inhabited by Pygmies, Congo was later settled by Bantu groups that also occupied parts of present-day Angola, Gabon, and Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), forming the basis for ethnic affinities and rivalries among those states. Several Bantu kingdoms—notably those of the Kongo, the Loango, and the Teke—built trade links leading into the Congo River basin. The first European contacts came in the late 15th century, and commercial relationships were quickly established with the kingdoms—trading for slaves captured in the interior. The coastal area was a major source for the transatlantic slave trade, and when that commerce ended in the early 19th century, the power of the Bantu kingdoms eroded. The area came under French sovereignty in the 1880s. Pierre Savorgnon de Brazza, a French empire builder, competed with agents of Belgian King Leopold's International Congo Association (later Zaire) for control of the Congo River basin. Between 1882 and 1891, treaties were secured with all the main local rulers on the river's right bank, placing their lands under French protection. In 1908, France organized French Equatorial Africa (AEF), comprising its colonies of Middle Congo (modern Congo), Gabon, Chad, and Oubangui-Chari (modern Central African Republic). Brazzaville was selected as the federal capital.

Economic development during the first 50 years of colonial rule in Congo centered on natural resource extraction by private companies. In 1924-34, the Congo-Ocean Railway (CFCO) was built at a considerable human and financial cost, opening the way for growth of the ocean port of Pointe-Noire and towns along its route.

During World War II, the AEF administration sided with Charles DeGaulle, and Brazzaville became the symbolic capital of Free France during 1940-43. The Brazzaville Conference of 1944 heralded a period of major reform in French colonial policy, including the abolition of forced labor, granting of French citizenship to colonial subjects, decentralization of certain powers, and election of local advisory assemblies. Congo benefited from the postwar expansion of colonial administrative and infrastructure spending as a result of its central geographic location within AEF and the federal capital at Brazzaville.

The Loi Cadre (framework law) of 1956 ended dual voting roles and provided for partial self-government for the individual overseas territories. Ethnic rivalries then produced sharp struggles among the emerging Congolese political parties and sparked severe riots in Brazzaville in 1959. After the September 1958 referendum approving the new French Constitution, AEF was dissolved. Its four territories became autonomous members of the French Community, and Middle Congo was renamed the Congo Republic. Formal independence was granted in August 1960. Congo's first President was Fulbert Youlou, a former Catholic priest from the Pool region in the southeast. He rose to political prominence after 1956, and was narrowly elected President by the National Assembly at independence. Youlou's 3 years in power were marked by ethnic tensions and political rivalry. In August 1963, Youlou was overthrown in a 3-day popular uprising (Les Trois Glorieuses) led by labor elements and joined by rival political parties. All members of the Youlou government were arrested or removed from office. The Congolese military took charge of the country briefly and installed a civilian provisional government headed by Alphonse Massamba-Debat.

Under the 1963 constitution, Massamba-Debat was elected President for a 5-year term and named Pascal Lissouba to serve as Prime Minister. However, President Massamba-Debat's term ended abruptly in August 1968, when Capt. Marien Ngouabi and other army officers toppled the government in a coup. After a period of consolidation under the newly formed National Revolutionary Council, Major Ngouabi assumed the presidency on December 31, 1968. One year later, President Ngouabi proclaimed Congo to be Africa's first "people's republic" and announced the decision of the National Revolutionary Movement to change its name to the Congolese Labor Party (PCT).

On March 18, 1977, President Ngouabi was assassinated. Although the persons accused of shooting Ngouabi were tried and some of them executed, the motivation behind the assassination is still not clear. An 11-member Military Committee of the Party (CMP) was named to head an interim government with Colonel (later General) Joachim Yhomby-Opango to serve as President of the Republic. Accused of corruption and deviation from party directives, Yhomby-Opango was removed from office on February 5, 1979, by the Central Committee of the PCT, which then simultaneously designated Vice President and Defense Minister Col.



Denis Sassou-Nguesso as interim President. The Central Committee directed Sassou-Nguesso to take charge of preparations for the Third Extraordinary Congress of the PCT, which proceeded to elect him President of the Central Committee and President of the Republic. Under a congressional resolution, Yhomby-Opango was stripped of all powers, rank, and possessions and placed under arrest to await trial for high treason. He was released from house arrest in late 1984 and ordered back to his native village of Owando.

After two decades of turbulent politics bolstered by Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, and with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Congolese gradually moderated their economic and political views to the point that, in 1992, Congo completed a transition to multi-party democracy. Ending a long history of one-party Marxist rule, a specific agenda for this transition was laid out during Congo's national conference of 1991 and culminated in August 1992 with multi-party presidential elections. Sassou-Nguesso conceded defeat and Congo's new President, Prof. Pascal Lissouba, was inaugurated on August 31, 1992.

Congolese democracy experienced severe trials in 1993 and early 1994.

President Lissouba dissolved the National Assembly in November 1992, calling for new elections in May 1993. The results of those elections were disputed, touching off violent civil unrest in June and again in November. In February 1994, all parties accepted the decisions of an international board of arbiters, and the risk of large-scale insurrection subsided.

However, Congo's democratic progress was derailed in 1997. As presidential elections scheduled for July 1997 approached, tensions between the Lissouba and Sassou-Nguesso camps mounted. When President Lissouba's government forces surrounded Sassou-Nguesso's compound in Brazzaville with armored vehicles on June 5, Sassou-Nguesso ordered his militia to resist. Thus began a 4-month conflict that destroyed or damaged much of Brazzaville. In early October, Angolan troops invaded Congo on the side of Sassou-Nguesso and, in mid-October, the Lissouba government fell. Soon thereafter, Sassou-Nguesso declared himself President and named a 33-member government.

In January 1998, the Sassou-Nguesso regime held a National Forum for Reconciliation to determine the nature and duration of the transition period. The forum, tightly controlled by the government, decided elections should be held in about 3 years, elected a transition advisory legislature, and announced that a constitutional convention would finalize a draft constitution. However, the eruption in late 1998 of fighting between Sassou-Nguesso's government forces and a pro-Lissouba and pro-Kolelas armed opposition disrupted the transition to democracy. This new violence also closed the economically vital Brazzaville-Pointe Noire railroad, caused great destruction and loss of life in southern Brazzaville and in the Pool, Bouenza, and Niari regions, and displaced hundreds of thousands of persons. In November and December 1999, the government signed agreements with representatives of many, though not all, of the rebel groups.

The December accord, mediated by President Omar Bongo of Gabon, called for follow-on, inclusive political negotiations between the government and the opposition. During the years 2000-01, Sassou-Nguesso's government conducted a national dialogue (Dialogue Sans Exclusif), in which the opposition parties and the government agreed to continue on the path to peace. Ex-President Lissouba and ex-Prime Minister Kolelas refused to agree and were exiled. They were tried in absentia and convicted in Brazzaville of charges ranging from treason to misappropriation of government funds. Ex-militiamen were granted amnesty, and many were provided micro-loans to aid their reintegration into civil society. Not all opposition members participated. One group, referred to as "Ninjas," actively opposed the government in a low-level guerrilla war in the Pool region of the country. Other members of opposition parties have returned and have opted to participate to some degree in political life.

A new constitution was drafted in 2001, approved by the provisional legislature (National Transition Council), and approved by the people of Congo in a national referendum in January 2002. Presidential elections were held in March 2002, and Sassou-Nguesso was declared the winner. Legislative elections were held in May and June 2002. In March 2003 the government signed a peace accord with the Ninjas, and the country has remained stable and calm since the signing. Internally displaced persons are returning to the Pool region. President Sassou-Nguesso allowed Kolelas to return to Congo for his wife's funeral in October 2005 and subsequently asked that Parliament grant Kolelas amnesty. Parliament complied with Sassou-Nguesso's request in December 2005.

In 2007, Sassou-Nguesso announced he would allow the return of former president Pascal Lissouba, along with a pardon for the 2001 in absentia conviction for "economic crimes" for which Lissouba had been sentenced to 30 years. By early 2008, however, Lissouba had not returned to the country. Former prime minister Joachim Yhombi-Opango, returned to the country in August 2007 after the Council of Ministers granted him amnesty in May for a 2001 conviction in absentia for allegedly improperly selling the country's oil while in office. Legislative elections were held in June and August 2007 and were widely viewed as disorganized and marred by irregularities, with low voter turnout. Presidential elections are scheduled for 2009.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Before the 1997 war, the Congolese system of government was similar to that of the French. However, after taking power, Sassou-Nguesso suspended the constitution approved in 1992 upon which this system was based. The 2002 constitution provides for a 7-year presidential term. There is a parliament of two houses, whose members serve for 5 years.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Denis SASSOU-Nguesso**
Prime Min.: **Isidore MVOUBA**
Min. of State, Min. of Civil Service & State Reform: **Jean-Martin MBEMBA**
Min. of State, Min. of Hydrocarbons: **Jean-Baptiste TATY LOUTARD**
Min. of State, Min. of Justice & Human Rights & Keeper of the Seals: **Aime Emmanuel YOKA**
Min. of State, Min. of Planning & Territory Improvement: **Pierre MOUSSA**
Min. at the Presidency in Charge of Cooperation, Humanitarian Action, & Solidarity: **Charles Zacharie BOWAO**
Min. at the Presidency in Charge of Land Reform & Conservation of the Public Domain: **Lamyr NGUELET**
Min. at the Presidency in Charge of National Defense, Veterans, & Disabled War Veterans: **Jacques Yvon NDOLOU, Maj. Gen.**
Min. at the Presidency in Charge of Subregional Integration & the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): **Justin Ballay MEGOT**
Min. of Agriculture & Livestock: **Rigobert MABOUNDOU**

Min. of Commerce, Consumption, & Supplies: **Jeanne DAMBENZET**
Min. of Communications in Charge of Relations With Parliament: **Alain AKOUALA-ATIPAULT**
Min. of Construction, Town Planning, Housing, & Land Reform: **Claude Alphonse NSILOU**
Min. of Culture, Arts, & Tourism: **Jean-Claude GAKOSSO**
Min. of Economy, Finance, & Budget: **Pacifique ISSOIKBEKA**
Min. of Energy & Water: **Bruno Jean Richard ITOUA**
Min. of Equipment & Public Works: **Florent NTSIBA, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Intl. Cooperation, & Relations With Francophone Countries: **Basile IKOUEBE**
Min. of Forestry Economy: **Henri DJOMBO**
Min. of Health, Social Affairs, & the Family: **Emilienne RAOUL**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Henri OSSEBI**
Min. of Industrial Development & the Promotion of the Private Sector: **Emile MABONZO**
Min. of Labor, Employment, & Social Security: **Gilbert ODONGO**
Min. of Maritime & Inland Fisheries, in Charge of Aquaculture: **Guy Brice Parfait KOLELAS**
Min. of Maritime Transportation & the Merchant Marine: **Martin Parfait Aime COUSSOUD-MAVOUNGOU**
Min. of Mines, Mineral Industries, & Geology: **Pierre OBA**
Min. of Posts & Technology, in Charge of New Technologies: **Thierry MOUNGALA**
Min. of Primary & Secondary Education, in Charge of Literacy: **Rosalie KAMA**
Min. for the Promotion of Women & the Integration of Women in Development: **Jeanne Francois LECKOMBA LOUMETOPOMBO**
Min. of Scientific Research & Technical Innovation: **Hellot MAMPOUYA MANTSON**
Min. of Security & Public Order: **Paul MBOT, Gen.**
Min. of Small & Medium-Size Enterprises, in Charge of Cottage Industry: **Adelaide MOUNDELE-NGOLLO**
Min. of Sports & Youth: **Serge Michel ODZOKI**
Min. of Technical Education & Professional Training: **Pierre Michel NGUIMBI**
Min. of Territory Admin. & Decentralization: **Raymond MBOULOU**
Min. of Tourism & Environment: **Andri Okombi SALISSA**
Min. of Transportation & Civil Aviation: **Emile OUOSSO**
Min.-Del. for Territorial Development, Attached to the Min. of Planning & Territory Improvement: **Gaston GAPO**
Dir., Central Bank:
Ambassador to the US: **Serge MOMBOULI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

The Congo maintains an embassy in the United States at 4891 Colorado Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20011 (tel: 202-726-5500). The Congolese Mission to the United Nations is at 14 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10021 (tel: 212-744-7840).

ECONOMY

The Congo's economy is based primarily on its petroleum sector, which is by far the country's major revenue earner. The Congolese oil sector is dominated by the French oil company TotalFinaElf. In second position is the Italian oil firm Agip. Chevron Overseas Limited (in partnership with TotalFinaElf) is the primary American oil company active in petroleum exploration or production. Murphy Oil has signed a contract but has not begun exploration or production; that project should begin in 2008. Congo's oil production is expected to decline over the next 15 years with fields yielding less. However, based on an agreement with Angola signed in 2002 to jointly administer certain Congo-Cabinda border areas, Congo's production could rise if exploration is successful. Murphy Oil signed a Production Sharing Agreement (PSA) with Congo in 2003 for two deepwater off-shore permits and expects to begin work in 2008. Congo hopes to offset declining production in other fields with these new PSAs.

The country's abundant northern rain forests are the source of timber. Forestry, which led Congolese exports before the discovery of oil, now generates less than 7% of export earnings. Wood production came to a standstill during the war years but has recommenced, and new concessions were leased in 2001.

Earlier in the decade, Congo's major employer was the state bureaucracy, which had 80,000 employees on its payroll—enormous for a country of Congo's size. The World Bank and other international financial institutions pressured Congo to institute sweeping civil service reforms in order to reduce the size of the state bureaucracy and pare back a civil service payroll that amounted to more than 20% of GDP in 1993. The effort to cut back began in 1994 with a 50% devaluation that cut the payroll in half in dollar terms. By the middle of 1994, there was a reduction of nearly 8,000 in civil service employees.

Between 1994-96, the Congolese economy underwent a difficult transition. The prospects for building the foundation of a healthy economy, however, were better than at any time in the previous 15 years. Congo took a number of measures to liberalize its economy, including reforming the tax, investment, labor, timber, and hydrocarbon codes. In 2002-03 Congo privatized key parastatals, primarily banks, telecommunications, and transportation monopolies, to help improve a dilapidated and unreliable infrastructure. By the end of 1996, Congo had made substantial progress in various areas targeted for reform. It made significant strides toward macroeconomic stabilization through improving public finances and restructuring external debt. This change was accompanied by improvements in the structure of expenditures, with a reduction in personnel expenditures. Further, Congo benefited from debt restructuring from a Paris Club agreement in July 1996.

This reform program came to a halt, however, in early June 1997 when war broke out, and the return of armed conflict in 1998-99 hindered economic reform and recovery. President Sassou-Nguesso has moved forward on improved governance, economic reforms, and privatization, as well as on cooperation with international financial institutions. President Sassou-Nguesso also has made speeches outlining the need for good governance and transparency in the Congo, particularly during his 2003 and 2004 National Day Addresses.

Before June 1997, Congo and the United States ratified a bilateral investment treaty designed to facilitate and protect foreign investment. The country also adopted a new investment code intended to attract foreign capital. The country has made some commendable efforts at political and economic reform, but despite these successes, Congo's investment climate has challenges, offering few meaningful incentives for new investors. High costs for labor, energy, raw materials, and transportation; a restrictive labor code; low productivity and high production costs; and a deteriorating transportation infrastructure have been among the factors discouraging investment. Five years of civil conflict (1997-2003) further damaged infrastructure, though the privatization of some statal and parastatal enterprises has generated some interest from U.S. companies.

In March 2006, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) decision point treatment for Congo, noting that Congo has performed satisfactorily on an IMF-supported program and developed an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy. The IMF and World Bank also noted, however, that Congo needed to address serious concerns about governance and financial transparency in order to qualify for completion point and irrevocable debt relief. Specifically, Congo needs to bring the internal controls and accounting system of the state-owned oil company (SNPC) up to internationally recognized standards; prevent conflicts of interests in the marketing of oil; require SNPC officials to publicly declare and divest any interests in companies having a business relationship with SNPC; and implement an anti-corruption action plan with international support. Any resources that are freed by interim debt relief granted to Congo must be used for poverty reduction under a reform program closely monitored by the international financial institutions. The poverty reduction program has been marked by continued delays, and progress in 2007 was incremental at best.

In November 2007, Congo was readmitted to the Kimberley Process, an international multi-stakeholder initiative designed to stem the trade of conflict diamonds. Congo had been suspended from the Kimberley Process in 2004 after reviews showed its diamond exports vastly outnumbered its production capacity. Congo's government estimates current diamond capacity to be 5,000 carats, with a potential for 50,000 to 70,000 carats.

The London Club and Congolese Government also signed an agreement in November 2007 forgiving 77% of the country's London Club debt. The agreement followed similar measures with the Paris Club, which has now forgiven up to 90% to 100% of the country's debt. The Congo Government continues to face lawsuits from companies who purchase the country's debt on the secondary markets and attempt to reclaim the debt through Western legal systems.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

For the two decades preceding Congo's 1991 national conference, the country was firmly in the socialist camp, allied principally with the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc nations. Educational, economic, and foreign aid links between Congo and its Eastern bloc allies were extensive, with the Congolese military and security forces receiving significant Soviet, East German, and Cuban assistance.

France, the former colonial power, maintained a continuing but somewhat subdued relationship with Congo, offering a variety of cultural, educational, and economic assistance. The principal element in the French-Congolese relationship was the highly successful oil sector investment of the French petroleum parastatal Elf-Aquitaine (now called TotalFinaElf), which entered the Congo in 1968 and has continued to grow.

After the worldwide collapse of communism and Congo's adoption of multi-party democracy in 1991, Congo's bilateral relations with its former socialist allies became relatively less important. France is now by far Congo's principal external partner, contributing significant amounts of economic assistance, while playing a highly influential role. However, there is a growing interest in attracting American investors.

Congo is a member of the United Nations, African Union, African Development Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), International Coffee Organization, Economic Community of Central African States ECCAS/CEEAC), INTERPOL, the Nonaligned Movement, and the Group of 77. Congo holds a seat on the United Nations Security Council during 2006-2007. In January 2006, President Sassou-Nguesso was elected Chairman of the African Union.

U.S.-CONGOLESE RELATIONS

Diplomatic relations between the United States and Congo were broken during the most radical Congolese-Marxist period, 1965-77. The U.S. Embassy reopened in 1977 with the restoration of relations, which remained distant until the end of the socialist era. The late 1980s were marked by a progressive warming of Congolese relations with Western countries, including the United States. Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso made a state visit to Washington in 1990, where he was received by President George H.W. Bush.

With the advent of democracy in 1991, Congo's relations with the United States improved and were cooperative. The United States has enthusiastically supported Congolese democratization efforts, contributing aid to the country's electoral process. The Congolese Government demonstrated an active interest in deepen-

ing and broadening its relations with the United States. Transition Prime Minister Andre Milongo made an official visit to Washington in 1992, where President Bush received him at the White House.

Then-presidential candidate Pascal Lissouba traveled to Washington in 1992, meeting with a variety of officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman J. Cohen. After his election in August 1992, President Lissouba expressed interest in expanding U.S.-Congo links, seeking increased U.S. development aid, university exchanges, and greater U.S. investment in Congo. With the outbreak of the 1997 war, the U.S. Embassy was evacuated. The Embassy was closed, and its personnel became resident in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In 2001 Embassy-suspended operations were lifted, and Embassy personnel were allowed to travel to Brazzaville for periods of extended temporary duty from the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa. As a result, U.S.-Congo bilateral relations were reinvigorated. In 2003 and 2004 this practice continued, and a site for construction of a new Embassy was acquired in July 2004. Construction is well underway on the new Embassy compound, with a scheduled completion in February 2009. Embassy Brazzaville now operates from temporary offices in a commercial bank building in downtown Brazzaville. Relations between the United States and the government of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso are strong, positive, and cooperative.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRAZZAVILLE (E) BDEAC Building, 4th Floor, Brazzaville, ROC, APO/FPO Unit 2090, DPO, AE 09828, 242-281-14-80/281-14-81, Fax 243-81-5324 (Kinshasa), Workweek: M-F /0730-1630, Website: http://brazzaville.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS: Vacant
AMB OMS: Ina Erickson
CDC: Dr. Gianluca Flamigni (Resident In Kinshasa, Drc)
CON/POL/ECO: Kelly Daniel
ECO: Erick Danzer
MGT: Vanessa Brooks
POL/ECO: Vacant
AMB: Vacant
CON: Kelly Daniel
DCM: Cynthia Gregg
PAO: Vacant (See Dcm)
GSO: Vacant (See Mgt)
RSO: Steve Lesniak
CLO: Trudy Wong-You
DAO: Maj. Joshua Reitz
EEO: Ina Erickson
EST: See Eco
FMO: Vacant (See Mgt)
ICASS Chair: Vacant (See Mgt)
IMO: Mark Shepler
IRS: Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris
LAB: See Eco
POL: Vacant (See DCM)
State ICASS: Mark Shepler

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 29, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville) is a developing nation in central Africa. The official language is French. The largest cities are the capital, Brazzaville, on the Congo River, and Pointe Noire on the coast. Civil conflict in 1997 and again in 1998-99 damaged parts of the capital and large areas in the south of the country.

The last rebel group still engaged in armed struggled signed a cease-fire accord with the government in March 2003. Facilities for tourism are very limited.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required for entry. Additional information on entry requirements may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Congo, 4891 Colorado Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20011, telephone (202) 726-5500, or from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Congo to the United Nations, 14 E. 65th St., New York, NY, 10021, telephone (212) 744-7840. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Congolese embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: As a result of past conflicts, there is extensive damage to the infrastructure in Brazzaville and in the southern part of the country, and the government is working to reconstruct roads and buildings. Fighting broke out in March and June of 2002 when rebel groups launched attacks first in the Pool region, and later, at the Brazzaville airport. The fighting in Brazzaville was quickly contained and the rebels were repulsed. In March 2003, the rebels and the government signed a cease-fire accord, which remains in effect, although there was some violence in Brazzaville in December 2003.

Occasionally, political unrest in neighboring Kinshasa can affect Brazzaville on the other side of the Congo River. For example, in 2007, stray small arms fire originating in Kinshasa landed in Brazzaville.

Continued security awareness remains a key consideration for all visitors. Night travel outside of cities should be avoided. U.S. citizens should avoid political rallies and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

In the event of a fire, call the fire brigade at 81-53-87.

The Department of State suspended operations at the U.S. Embassy in Brazzaville in 1997. The Brazzaville U.S. Embassy interim offices are located in the B.D.E.A.C (Central African Development Bank) building in Brazzaville. A new embassy compound is under construction and slated to open in 2009. While Brazzaville is still not fully open for normal operations, Embassy personnel are present in Brazzaville to provide information and guidance to American citizens.

Staff can be contacted through the Embassy's interim offices (see Registration/Embassy Location section below). The reduced staff in Brazzaville has limited ability to provide

emergency services and non-emergency services generally take a few days to coordinate through Embassy Kinshasa.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: In the Congo, petty street crime targeting foreigners is rare. Incidents of mugging and pick pocketing happen frequently near the ports in Pointe Noire and Brazzaville, and sometimes in the Congolese neighborhoods surrounding Brazzaville's city center.

Criminal elements are known to target middle-class and affluent residences without 24-hour guards for burglary. Roadblocks and robberies by armed groups targeting travelers occur in the Pool region south of Brazzaville. Travel to the Pool region is discouraged due to these elements.

Travelers should note that in the case of theft and robbery, legal recourse is limited and therefore, they may wish to leave all valuable items at home.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

While there is no local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Republic of the Congo, the Rapid Response Police Team can be reached at 665-4804. However, police resources are limited and response to emergency calls is often slow (15 minutes or longer).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are extremely limited. Some medicines are in short supply, particularly outside the larger cities. Travelers should carry their own supply of properly labeled medications.

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. Plasmodium falciparum malaria, the type that predominates in the Congo, is resistant to the antimalarial drug chloroquine. Because travelers to the Republic of Congo are at high risk for contracting malaria, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone). Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of the DRC.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Republic of the Congo is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road conditions are generally poor and deteriorate significantly during the rainy season, November-May. Maintenance of the few paved roads is limited. Overland travel off the main roads requires a four-wheel drive vehicle. Poorly marked checkpoints, sometimes manned by undisciplined soldiers, exist in many areas of the countryside.

Taxis are considered an acceptable mode of transport due to availability and low cost. Registered public transportation vehicles are painted green with white roofs and striping. Security is not generally an issue with taxis but buses are often overcrowded and thus less secure. Mechanical reliability of both vehicle types remains in question.

Traffic safety in general is hazardous due to high speeds, aggressive driving, poorly maintained vehicles and general apathy for pedestrians and cyclists.

Roads are narrow, dangerously potholed, frequently wash out during rainy season and are often full of debris, and pedestrians.

Emergency services are limited. Please refer to the medical section above.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and the Republic of the Congo, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Republic of the Congo's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Ferry service between Brazzaville and Kinshasa normally operates from 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. Monday through Saturday and 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. Sunday, but it may close completely with minimal notice. A special exit permit from the Republic of the Congo's Immigration Service and a visa from the Democratic Republic of the Congo's embassy/consulate are required to cross the Congo River from Brazzaville to Kinshasa. Passenger travel on the railroad is discouraged, as there are frequent reports of extortion by undisciplined security forces and robberies by criminal elements along the route.

The Congo is primarily a cash economy and uses the Central African Franc (CFA), a common currency with Gabon, Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea. U.S. dollars may be exchanged for local currency. Traveler's checks can be cashed for a fee at some hotels. Two hotels in Brazzaville, and several in Pointe Noire, accept major credit cards, but prefer payment in cash. Prices are usually quoted in CFA or Euros. Other businesses do not normally accept credit cards. Personal checks drawn on foreign accounts are not accepted. Western Union has offices in Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, and one bank in Brazzaville has an ATM.

Airport police and customs officials routinely inspect incoming and outgoing luggage, even for internal travel. For a complete list of prohibited items, please contact the nearest Congolese embassy or consulate.

Local security forces in areas outside Brazzaville and Pointe Noire may detain foreigners to solicit bribes. Detention of U.S. citizens, particularly in remote areas, may not always be promptly reported to the U.S. Government by Congolese authorities. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their passports with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. If detained or arrested, U.S. citizens should always ask to be allowed to contact the U.S. Embassy.

In general there are no restrictions on photography; however photographs of government buildings or military installations, port facilities or the airport should not be taken. When photographing human beings in remote areas where populations adhere to traditional beliefs, it is best to request permission first. If permission is refused, the photo should not be taken.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Congolese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Republic of the Congo are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Republic of the Congo are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Republic of the Congo. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa or at the interim offices in Brazzaville. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The Embassy in Brazzaville has interim offices located in the B.D.E.A.C Building, 4th Floor, Place du Gouvernement, Plateau de Centre Ville, Brazzaville. The cellular telephone number during regular business hours (7:30 am until 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday) is 242-81-14-81; email is Consular.Brazzaville@state.gov. The Embassy in Kinshasa is located at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs, Gombe; tel. 243-(0)81-225-5872 (do not dial the zero when calling from abroad into the Congo), and the mailing address from the U.S. is Brazzaville Embassy Office, American Embassy Kinshasa, Unite 31550, APO AE, 09828-1550. Entrance to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa is on Avenue Dumi, opposite Ste. Anne residence. The Consular Section of the Embassy in Kinshasa may be reached at cellular tel. 243-(0)81-884-4609, 243-(0)81-884-6859 or 243-(0)81-225-5872; fax 243-(0)81-301-0560. For after-hours emergencies, use 243-81-225-5872. (Cellular phones are the norm, as other telephone service is often unreliable). Web sites are http://brazzaville.usembassy.gov and http://kinshasa.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

American citizens adopting from the Republic of Congo will need to travel to both the Republic of Congo and neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite the similarity of names, these are two different countries, each with a U.S. Embassy. The adoption will take place in Republic of Congo, in keeping with the laws and procedures outlined in this flyer. The U.S. immigrant visa interview for the child will take place at the U.S. Embassy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, since that office processes immigrant visa cases for children from both countries.

It should also be noted that there are currently no physicians or medical clinics in Congo Brazzaville authorized to perform the mandatory medical clearance examination for prospective adoptive children. All medical clearance examinations must be performed in Kinshasa where the current wait time for such appointments is approximately 4-6 weeks. The Embassy in Kinshasa will assist prospective adoptive parents with obtaining an expedited medical exam but cannot guarantee the availability of expedited processing.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent statistics reflect that only two orphans from the Republic of Congo have received U.S. immigrant visas within the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The Civil Magistrate's Court has jurisdiction over adoptions. Mailing addresses do not exist as there is no reliable mail service. Local attorneys have current contacts in the courts.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents (PAPs) may be married, single, widowed or divorced. For the last three categories, the adoptive parent must be at least 35 years old. In the case of couples, they must have been married for at least five years, be living in the same household, and at least one spouse must be over 30 years old. All PAPs must be able to demonstrate to the court that the child will benefit from the adoption and that they have no criminal record or other characteristics that would make them unsuitable as parents. The age difference between the parent(s) and the child must be at least 20 years, except in the case of adoption of a spouse's child, where the age difference need only be 10 years. The court does consider exceptions to the age difference requirement on a case-by-case basis. In the cases of children over 15 years old, the child must agree to the adoption. Where the adoptive child is not an orphan, parental or family agreement is necessary (please note, however, that in order to qualify for immediate immigration to the United States, the adoptive child must meet the definition of orphan as defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, as amended).

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents do not need to be permanent or long-term residents of the Republic of Congo.

Time Frame: The court process normally takes several weeks. Processing a Congolese passport application for the child (needed for international travel as well as the U.S. immigrant visa process) takes an additional one to two weeks. Once the adoptive child's immigrant visa has been approved, it is usually issued within 48 to 72 hours. Prospective adoptive parents therefore should not make reservations to depart the ROC on the same day as the immigrant visa interview.

Prospective adoptive parents should remember that all visa processing is done in Congo Kinshasa and all parties must be physically present in Kinshasa for the visa interview.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

Adoption Fees: 10,000 CFA (about $20) is due with the initial adoption request and a fee of 46,000 CFA (about $92) is due once the court decision is given. Lawyer fees can range from $1,000 to $2,500. Fees can be kept to a minimum if, prior to the first consultation, adopting parents secure any required documents such as birth, death, marriage and relevant court records on their own.

Adoption Procedures: First, the letter of request to adopt and the child's birth certificate is submitted to the office of the President of the Magistrate's Court. The court will conduct an investigation and render a decision regarding the adoption at a public hearing.

Required Documents:

- Letter of request to adopt;
- Proof of adequate financial resources;
- Proof of country of residency;
- Birth certificate of the child; and
- Parental authorization or, in the case of an orphan, court authorization.

Embassy of the Republic of Congo
4891 Colorado Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20011
Telephone: (202) 726-5500

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Congo to the United Nations
14 E. 65th Street
New York, NY 10021
Telephone: (212) 744-7840

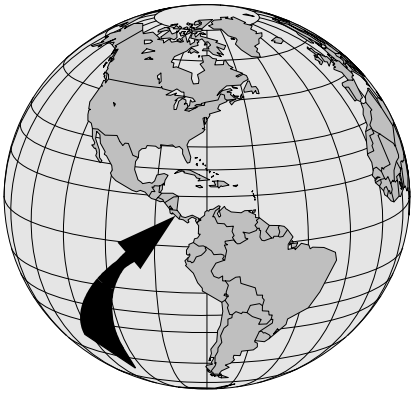
U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult

USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

The U.S. Embassy in Brazzaville has limited operations at this time. Consular staff is available in Brazzaville for questions via email at consular.brazzaville@state.gov.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in the Republic of Congo may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Brazzaville. Questions about orphan immigrant visa processing for children from the Republic of Congo should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



COSTA RICA

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Costa Rica

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 51,100 sq. km (19,730 sq. mi.) about the size of the states of Vermont and New Hampshire combined.

Cities: Capital—San Jose (greater metropolitan area pop. 2.1 million, the greater metropolitan area as defined by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy includes the cities of Alajuela, Cartago, and Heredia). Other major cities outside the San Jose capital area—Puntarenas, Limon, and Liberia.

Terrain: A rugged, central range separates the eastern and western coastal plains.

Climate: Mild in the central highlands, tropical and subtropical in coastal areas.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Costa Rican(s).

Population: (2006) 4.299 million.

Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 1.3%.

Ethnic groups: European and some mestizo 94%, African origin 3%, Chinese 1%, Amerindian 1%, other 1%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 76.3%, Evangelical 13.7%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.3%, other Protestant 0.7%, other 4.8%, none 3.2%.

Languages: Spanish, with a southwestern Caribbean Creole dialect of English spoken around the Limon area.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—99% grades 1-6, 71% grades 7-9. Literacy—96%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—9.45/1,000. Life expectancy—men 74.61 yrs., women 79.94 yrs.

Work force: (2006 est., 1.866 million; this official estimate excludes Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica legally and illegally) Agriculture—13%; industry—22%; services—64%.

Government

Type: Democratic republic.

Independence: September 15, 1821.

Constitution: November 7, 1949.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of government and chief of state) elected for one 4-year term, two vice presidents, Cabinet (15 ministers, two of whom are also vice presidents). Legislative—57-deputy unicameral Legislative Assembly elected at 4-year intervals. Judicial—Supreme Court of Justice (22 magistrates elected by Legislative Assembly for renewable 8-year terms). The offices of the Ombudsman, Comptroller General, and Procurator General assert autonomous oversight of the government.

Political subdivisions: Seven provinces, divided into 81 cantons, subdivided into 421 districts.

Political parties: National Liberation Party (PLN), Citizen's Action Party (PAC), Libertarian Movement Party (PML), Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC), and other smaller parties.

Suffrage: Universal and compulsory at age 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $26.23 billion.

GDP PPP: (2006 est.) $52.22 billion.

Inflation: (2007 est.) 10.81%.

Real growth rate: (2007 est.) 7.3%.

Per capita income: (2006) $5,100. (PPP $11,862, 2006 est.)

Unemployment: (2007 est.) 4.6%.

Currency: Costa Rica Colon (CRC).

Natural resources: Hydroelectric power, forest products, fisheries products.

Agriculture: (8.7% of GDP) Products—bananas, pineapples, coffee, beef, sugar, rice, dairy products, vegetables, fruits and ornamental plants.

Industry: (28.9% of GDP) Types—electronic components, food processing, textiles and apparel, construction materials, fertilizer, medical equipment.

Commerce, tourism, and services: (62.4% of GDP) Hotels, restaurants, tourist services, banks, and insurance.

Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$8.198 billion: integrated circuits, medical equipment, bananas, pineapples, coffee, melons, ornamental plants, sugar, textiles, electronic components, medical equipment. Major markets—U.S. 38.6%, China 6.8%, Hong Kong 6.4%, Netherlands 6.1%, Guatemala 4.0%. Imports—$11.576 billion: raw materials, consumer goods, capital equipment, petroleum. Major suppliers—U.S. 39.3%, Japan 5.1%, Venezuela 5.0%, Mexico 5.2%, China 4.8%, Ireland 4.5%, Brazil 3.4%.

PEOPLE

Unlike many of their Central American neighbors, present-day Costa Ricans are largely of European rather than mestizo descent; Spain was the primary country of origin. However, an estimated 10% to 15% of the population is Nicaraguan, of fairly recent arrival and primarily of mestizo origin. Descendants of 19th-century Jamaican immigrant workers constitute an English-speaking minority and—at 3% of the population—number about 119,000. Few of the native Indians survived European contact; the indigenous population today numbers about 29,000 or less than 1% of the population.

HISTORY

In 1502, on his fourth and last voyage to the New World, Christopher Columbus made the first European landfall in the area. Settlement of Costa Rica began in 1522. For nearly three centuries, Spain administered the region as part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala under a military governor. The Spanish optimistically called the country "Rich Coast." Finding little gold or other valuable minerals in Costa Rica, however, the Spanish turned to agriculture.

The small landowners' relative poverty, the lack of a large indigenous labor force, the population's ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, and Costa Rica's isolation from the Spanish colonial centers in Mexico and the Andes all contributed to the development of an autonomous and individualistic agrarian society. An egalitarian tradition also arose. This tradition survived the widened class distinctions brought on by the 19th-century introduction of banana and coffee cultivation and consequent accumulations of local wealth.

Costa Rica joined other Central American provinces in 1821 in a joint declaration of independence from Spain. Although the newly independent provinces formed a Federation, border disputes broke out among them, adding to the region's turbulent history and conditions. Costa Rica's northern Guanacaste Province was annexed from Nicaragua in one such regional dispute. In 1838, long after the Central American Federation ceased to function in practice, Costa Rica formally withdrew and proclaimed itself sovereign.

An era of peaceful democracy in Costa Rica began in 1899 with elections considered the first truly free and honest ones in the country's history. This began a trend that continued until today with only two lapses: in 1917-19, Federico Tinoco ruled as a dictator, and, in 1948, Jose Figueres led an armed uprising in the wake of a disputed presidential election.

With more than 2,000 dead, the 44-day civil war resulting from this uprising was the bloodiest event in 20th-century Costa Rican history, but the victorious junta drafted a constitution guaranteeing free elections with universal suffrage and the abolition of the military. Figueres became a national hero, winning the first election under the new constitution in 1953. Since then, Costa Rica has held 14 presidential elections, the latest in 2006.

GOVERNMENT

Costa Rica is a democratic republic with a very strong system of constitutional checks and balances. Executive responsibilities are vested in a president, who is the country's center of power. There also are two vice presidents and a 15-member cabinet. The president and 57 Legislative Assembly deputies are elected for 4-year terms. In April 2003, the Costa Rican Constitutional Court annulled a 1969 constitutional reform which had barred presidents from running for reelection. As a result, the law reverted back to the 1949 Constitution, which permits ex-presidents to run for reelection after they have been out of office for two presidential terms, or eight years. Deputies may run for reelection after sitting out one term, or four years. In October 2007, the country ratified the U.S.-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) by a slender margin in its first national referendum.

The electoral process is supervised by an independent Supreme Electoral Tribunal—a commission of three principal magistrates and six alternates selected by the Supreme Court of Justice. Judicial power is exercised by the Supreme Court of Justice, composed of 22 magistrates selected for renewable 8-year terms by the Legislative Assembly, and subsidiary courts. A Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court (Sala IV), established in 1989, reviews the constitutionality of legislation and executive decrees and all habeas corpus warrants. The next national elections will take place in February 2010.

The offices of the Comptroller General of the Republic, the Solicitor General, and the Ombudsman exercise oversight of the government. The Comptroller General's office has a statutory responsibility to scrutinize all but the smallest public sector contracts and strictly enforces procedural requirements. Along with the Sala IV, these institutions are playing an increasingly prominent role in governing Costa Rica.

There are provincial boundaries for administrative purposes, but no elected provincial officials. Costa Rica held its first mayoral elections in December 2002, whereby mayors were elected to 4-year terms by popular vote through general elections. Prior to 2002, the office of mayor did not exist, and the president of each



municipal council was responsible for the administration of his/her municipality. The most recent nationwide mayoral elections took place in December 2006. Autonomous state agencies enjoy considerable operational independence; they include the telecommunications and electrical power monopoly, the state petroleum refinery, the nationalized commercial banks, the state insurance monopoly, and the social security agency.

Costa Rica has no military and maintains only domestic police and security forces. A professional Coast Guard was established in 2000.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Oscar ARIAS Sanchez**
First Vice Pres.: **Laura CHINCHILLA**
Second Vice Pres.:
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Sports: **Maria Elena CARBALLO**
Min. of Education: **Leonardo GARNIER**
Min. of Environment & Energy: **Roberto DOBLES**
Min. of Finance: **Guillermo ZUNIGA**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Bruno STAGNO Ugarte**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **Marco Vinicio RUIZ**
Min. of Health: **Maria Luisa AVILA**
Min. of Housing: **Fernando ZUMBADO**
Min. of Justice: **Laura CHINCHILLA**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Francisco MORALES**
Min. of Planning & Economic Policy: **Roberto GALLARDO**
Min. of the Presidency: **Rodrigo ARIAS**
Min. of Production: **Alfredo VOLIO Perez**
Min. of Public Security, Govt., & Police: **Janina DEL VECCHIO**
Min. of Public Works & Transportation: **Karla GONZALES**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Eugenia FLORES**
Min. of Tourism: **Carlos Ricardo BENAVIDES**
Pres., Central Bank: **Francisco DE PAUL Gutierrez**
Ambassador to the US: **Tomas DUENAS**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Jorge URBINA Ortega**

Costa Rica maintains an embassy in the United States at 2114 S Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-234-2945 and 202-234-2946).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Costa Rica has long emphasized the development of democracy and respect for human rights. The country's political system has steadily developed, maintaining democratic institutions and an orderly, constitutional scheme for government succession. Several factors have contributed to this trend, including enlightened leadership, comparative prosperity, flexible class lines, educational opportunities that have created a stable middle class, and high social indicators. Also, because Costa Rica has no armed forces, it has avoided military involvement in political affairs, unlike other countries in the region. In May 2006, President Oscar Arias of the National Liberation Party

(PLN) assumed office, defeating principal rival Ottón Solis of the Civil Action Party by roughly 2% of the vote. Arias listed passage of the CAFTA-DR, along with fiscal reform, infrastructure improvements, improving education, and improving security as primary goals for his presidency. The 57-member unicameral Legislative Assembly has four principal party factions, with the governing party, PLN, having a 25-seat plurality.

ECONOMY

After experiencing 8.8% growth in 2006, the Costa Rican economy settled down to an estimated 7.3% in 2007. Compared with its Central American neighbors, Costa Rica has achieved a high standard of living, with a per capita income of about U.S. $5,800, and an unemployment rate of 4.6%. Consumer price inflation is high but relatively constant at about a 10% annual rate in the last decade. Both the central government and the overall public sector ran fiscal surpluses in 2007.

Implementing CAFTA-DR, passing fiscal reform, and creating an effective concessions process are the biggest challenges for the country's economic policymakers. Costa Rica ranks 115th out of 175 countries in the World Bank's Doing Business Index. This hampers the flow of investment and resources badly needed to repair and rebuild the country's deteriorated public infrastructure.

Costa Rica's major economic resources are its fertile land and frequent rainfall, its well-educated population, and its location in the Central American isthmus, which provides easy access to North and South American markets and direct ocean access to the European and Asian Continents.

One-fourth of Costa Rica's land is dedicated to national forests, often adjoining picturesque beaches, which has made the country a popular destination for affluent retirees and ecotourists despite increasing crime. Costa Rica used to be known principally as a producer of bananas and coffee, but pineapples have surpassed coffee as the number two agricultural export. In recent years, Costa Rica has successfully attracted important investments by such companies as Intel Corporation, which employs nearly 2,000 people at its $300 million microprocessor plant; Proctor and Gamble, which employs nearly 1,000 people in its administrative center for the Western Hemisphere; and Hospira and Baxter Healthcare from the health care products industry. Manufacturing and industry's contribution to GDP overtook agriculture over the course of the 1990s, led by foreign investment in Costa Rica's free trade zone. Well over half of that investment has come from the United States. Dole and Chiquita have a large presence in the banana and pineapple industries. Two-way trade between the U.S. and Costa Rica exceeded $8 billion in 2007.

Costa Rica has oil deposits off its Atlantic Coast, but the Pacheco administration (2002-2006) decided not to develop the deposits for environmental reasons. The country's mountainous terrain and abundant rainfall have permitted the construction of a dozen hydroelectric power plants, making it largely self-sufficient in electricity, but it is completely reliant on imports for liquid fuels. Costa Rica has the potential to become a major electricity exporter if plans for new generating plants and a regional distribution grid are realized. Its mild climate and trade winds make neither heating nor cooling necessary, particularly in the highland cities and towns where some 90% of the population lives.

Costa Rica's public infrastructure has suffered from a lack of maintenance and new investment. Most parts of the country are accessible through an extensive road system of more than 30,000 kilometers, although much of the system has fallen into disrepair. An antiquated infrastructure system results in treatment of less than 3% of the country's sewage and the possibility of infectious outbreaks near the contaminated lakes, rivers, and beaches where waste is disposed. In 2007, Costa Rica experienced nationwide blackouts resulting from a severe dry season (which limited hydroelectric resources) and the state electricity monopoly's inadequate investment in maintenance and capacity increases.

Costa Rica has sought to widen its economic and trade ties within and outside the region. Costa Rica signed a bilateral trade agreement with Mexico in 1994, which was later amended to cover a wider range of products. Costa Rica joined other Central American countries, and the Dominican Republic, in establishing a Trade and Investment Council with the United States in March 1998. Costa Rica has signed trade agreements with Canada, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, and several Caribbean Community countries. It began negotiating a regional Central American-EU trade agreement in October 2007. Costa Rica was an active participant in the negotiation of the hemispheric Free Trade Area of the Americas and is active in the Cairns Group, which is pursuing global agricultural trade liberalization within the World Trade Organization.

Costa Rica concluded negotiations with the U.S. to participate in CAFTA-DR in January 2004 but is the only CAFTA-DR partner not to have yet entered the agreement into force. In October 2007, a slender majority of Costa Ricans voted to ratify the agreement, which will enter into force after the Legislative Assembly passes corresponding legislation. Once implemented, CAFTA will partially open the state telecommunications monopoly and substantially open the state-run insurance sector.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Costa Rica is an active member of the international community and, in 1993, proclaimed its permanent neutrality. Its record on the environment and human rights and advocacy of peaceful settlement of disputes give it

a weight in world affairs far beyond its size. The country lobbied aggressively for the establishment of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and became the first nation to recognize the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Human Rights Court, based in San Jose. In 2007 Costa Rica was elected for the third time to serve as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (January 2008-December 2009).

During the tumultuous 1980s, then-President Oscar Arias authored a regional peace plan that served as the basis for the Esquipulas Peace Agreement. Arias' efforts earned him the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize. Subsequent agreements, supported by the United States, led to the Nicaraguan election of 1990 and the end of civil war in Nicaragua. Costa Rica also hosted several rounds of negotiations between the Salvadoran Government and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), aiding El Salvador's efforts to emerge from civil war and culminating in that country's 1994 free and fair elections. Costa Rica has been a strong proponent of regional arms limitation agreements. President Arias has publicly supported self-determination in Cuba and expressed concern about eroding democratic institutions in Venezuela. In 2007 Costa Rica established diplomatic ties with China, ending nearly 60 years of diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

U.S.-COSTA RICAN RELATIONS

The United States and Costa Rica have a history of close and friendly relations based on respect for democratic government, human freedoms, free trade, and other shared values. The country generally supports the U.S. in international fora, especially in the areas of democracy and human rights.

The United States is Costa Rica's most important trading partner. The U.S. accounts for almost half of Costa Rica's exports, imports, and tourism, and more than two-thirds of its foreign investment. The two countries share growing concerns for the environment and want to preserve Costa Rica's important tropical resources and prevent environmental degradation. In 2007, the United States reduced Costa Rica's debt in exchange for protection and conservation of Costa Rican forests through a debt for nature swap under the auspices of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act. This is the largest such agreement of its kind to date.

The United States responded to Costa Rica's economic needs in the 1980s with significant economic and development assistance programs. Through provision of more than $1.1 billion in assistance, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supported Costa Rican efforts to stabilize its economy and broaden and accelerate economic growth through policy reforms and trade liberalization. Assistance initiatives in the 1990s concentrated on democratic policies, modernizing the administration of justice, and sustainable development. Once the country had graduated from most forms of U.S. assistance, the USAID Mission in Costa Rica closed in 1996. However, USAID completed a $9 million project in 2000-01 to support refugees of Hurricane Mitch residing in Costa Rica.

For decades, Peace Corps Volunteers have provided technical assistance in the areas of environmental education, natural resources, management, small business development, microfinance, basic business education, urban youth, and community education. Between 30,000-50,000 private American citizens, including many retirees, reside in the country and more than 700,000 American citizens visit Costa Rica annually. A few vexing expropriation and U.S. citizen investment disputes have hurt Costa Rica's investment climate and have occasionally produced bilateral friction. The U.S.-Costa Rica Maritime Cooperation Agreement, the first of its kind in Central America, entered into force in late 1999. The agreement, which facilitates cooperation between the Coast Guard of Costa Rica and the U.S. Coast Guard, has resulted in a growing number of narcotics seizures, illegal migrant rescues, illegal fishing seizures, and search-and-rescue missions. Bilateral Costa Rican law enforcement cooperation, particularly against narcotrafficking, has been exemplary.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SAN JOSE (E) Pavas, San Jose, APO/FPO Unit 2501 APO AA 34020, (506) 2519-2000, Fax (506) 2519-2305, Workweek: Monday-Friday, 8:00a.m.-4:30 p.m., Website: http://sanjose.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Waleska Rios
AMB OMS:	Jean M. Smith
CM OMS:	Jean M. Smith
ECO:	Mark Kissel
FCS:	William B, Smith
FM:	Ron Saunders
HRO:	Maryanne Masterson
MGT:	Brian Wilson
AMB:	Peter Ciachette
CG:	Kimberly Morales
DCM:	Peter M Brennan
PAO:	Magda Siekert
GSO:	Ramon Best
RSO:	Dewitt, Stephen
AGR:	Justina Torry
APHIS:	Vacant
CLO:	Jeanne Henifin
DEA:	Paul Knierim
FMO:	Vacant
ICASS Chair:	Grumley, Terry
IMO:	Peter Butler
ISO:	Peterson, Jon
POL:	David E. Henifin

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
Trade Information Center
International Trade Administration
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20320
Tel: 800-USA-TRADE
www.trade.gov.

Costa Rican American Chamber of Commerce
c/o Aerocasillas
P.O. Box 025216, Dept 1576
Miami, Florida 33102-5216
Tel: 506-22-0-22-00
Fax: 506-22-0-23-00
Email: Amchamcr@sol.racsa.co.cr

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 5, 2008

Country Description: Costa Rica is a middle-income, developing country with a strong democratic tradition. Tourist facilities are extensive and generally adequate. The capital is San Jose. English is a second language for many Costa Ricans.

Entry Requirements: For entry into Costa Rica, U.S. citizens must present valid passports that will not expire for at least thirty days after arrival, and a roundtrip/outbound ticket. Some U.S. airlines may not permit passengers to board flights to Costa Rica without such a ticket. Passports should be in good condition; Costa Rican immigration will deny entry if the passport is damaged in any way. Costa Rican authorities generally permit U.S. citizens to stay up to ninety days; to stay beyond the period granted, travelers must submit an application for an extension to the Office of Temporary Permits in the Costa Rican Department of Immigration. Tourist visas are usually not extended except under special circumstances, and extension requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. There is a departure tax for short-term visitors. Tourists who stay over ninety days may experience a delay at the airport when departing. Persons who overstayed previously may be denied entry to Costa Rica.

Persons traveling to Costa Rica from some countries in South America and Sub-Saharan Africa must provide evidence of a valid yellow fever vaccination prior to entry. The South American countries include Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

The most authoritative and up-to-date information on Costa Rican entry and exit requirements, including visa information, may be obtained from the Consular Section of the Embassy of Costa Rica at 2114 "S" Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 234-2945/46, fax (202) 265-4795, e-mail consulate @costarica-embassy.org, web site http://www.costarica-embassy.org, or from the Costa Rican consulates in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Juan (Puerto Rico), San Francisco, and Tampa. The Costa Rican immigration agency maintains a web site at: http://www.migracion.go.cr. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Costa Rica in Washington or one of Costa Rica's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements before shipping any items.

Safety and Security: There have been no recent acts of terrorism in Costa Rica. Visitors to Costa Rica may experience the effects of civil disturbances such as work stoppages and strikes. Although infrequent, these acts can create inconveniences for visitors. On both the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, currents are swift and dangerous, and there are few lifeguards or signs warning of dangerous beaches. Every year eight to twelve American citizens drown in Costa Rica due to riptides or sudden drop-offs while in shallow water. Extreme caution is advised.

Adventure tourism is popular in Costa Rica, and many companies offer white-water rafting, bungee jumping, jungle canopy tours, deep sea diving, and other outdoor attractions. Americans are urged to use caution in selecting adventure tourism companies. The government of Costa Rica regulates and monitors the safety of adventure tourism companies; enforcement of safety laws is overseen by the Ministry of Health. Registered tourism companies with operating permits must meet safety standards and have insurance coverage. The safety regulations enforced in Costa Rica are not the same as safety regulations enforced in the United States.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Over one and a half million foreign tourists, the majority American, visit Costa Rica annually. All are potential targets for criminals, primarily thieves looking for cash, jewelry, credit cards, electronic items and passports. U.S. citizens are encouraged to exercise the same level of caution they would in major cities or tourist areas throughout the world. Local law enforcement agencies have limited capabilities and do not act according to U.S. standards. Travelers should minimize driving at night, especially outside urban areas.

Americans should avoid areas with high concentrations of bars and nightclubs, especially at night, and steer clear of deserted properties or undeveloped land. For safety reasons, the Embassy does not place its official visitors in hotels in the San Jose city center, but instead puts them at the larger hotels in the outlying suburbs. Americans should walk or exercise with a companion, bearing in mind that crowded tourist attractions and resort areas popular with foreign tourists are common venues for criminal activities. Travelers should ignore any verbal harassment, and avoid carrying passports, large amounts of cash, jewelry or expensive photographic equipment. Tourists are encouraged to carry photocopies of the passport data page and Costa Rican entry stamp on their persons, and leave the original passport in a hotel safe or other secure place.

Travelers should purchase an adequate level of locally valid theft insurance when renting vehicles, park in secured lots whenever possible, and never leave valuables in the vehicle. The U.S. Embassy receives several reports daily of valuables, identity documents, and other items stolen from locked vehicles, primarily rental

vehicles. Thefts from parked cars occur in downtown San Jose, at beaches, in the airport and bus station parking lots, and at national parks and other tourist attractions. Travelers should use licensed taxis, which are red with medallions (yellow triangles containing numbers) painted on the side. Licensed taxis at the airport are painted orange. All licensed taxis should have working door handles, locks, seatbelts and meters (called "marias"); passengers are required to use seatbelts. When traveling by bus, avoid putting bags or other personal belongings in the storage bins. At all times have your belongings in your line of sight or in your possession.

Thieves usually work in groups of two to four. A common scam has one person drop change in a crowded area, such as on a bus, and when the victim tries to assist, a wallet or other item is taken. The most common scam involves the surreptitious puncturing of tires of rental cars, often near restaurants, tourist attractions, airports, or close to the car rental agencies themselves.

When the travelers pull over, "good Samaritans" quickly appear to change the tire and just as quickly remove valuables from the car, sometimes brandishing weapons. Drivers with flat tires are advised to drive, if at all possible, to the nearest service station or other public area, and change the tire themselves, watching valuables at all times.

In late 2006, the government of Costa Rica established a Tourist Police force, and units were established in popular tourist areas throughout the country. The Tourist Police can assist with the reporting of a crime, which can be difficult for victims due to language barriers and the requirement that only investigative police can accept crime reports.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in San Jose is adequate, but is limited in areas outside of San Jose. Most prescription and over-the-counter medications are available throughout Costa Rica. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services, and U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. A list of local doctors and medical facilities can be found at the website of the U.S. Embassy in San Jose, at http://sanjose.usembassy.gov. An ambulance may be summoned by calling 911. The best-equipped ambulances are called "unidad avanzada." Ambulance service in Costa Rica does not meet U.S. standards, and response time is unreliable.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Costa Rica is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Costa Rica has one of the highest vehicle accident rates in the world. The fatality rate for pedestrians and those riding bicycles and motorcycles is disproportionately high. Traffic laws and speed limits are often ignored, turns across one or two lanes of traffic are common, turn signals are rarely used, passing on dangerous stretches of highway is common, and pedestrians are not given the right of way. Roads are often in poor condition, and large potholes with the potential to cause significant damage to vehicles are common. Pedestrians, cyclists, and farm animals may use the main roads.

Traffic signs, even on major highways, are inadequate and few roads are lined. Shoulders are narrow or consist of drainage ditches. All of the above, in addition to poor visibility due to heavy fog or rain, makes driving at night especially treacherous. Landslides are common in the rainy season. All types of motor vehicles are appropriate for the main highways and principal roads in the major cities.

However, some roads to beaches and other rural locations are not paved, and many destinations are accessible only with high clearance, rugged suspension four-wheel drive vehicles. Travelers are advised to call ahead to

their hotels to ask about the current status of access roads. Costa Rica has a 911 system for reporting emergencies. In the event of a traffic accident, vehicles must/must be left where they are. Both the Transito (Traffic Police) and the Insurance Investigator must make accident reports before the vehicles are moved.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Costa Rica's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Costa Rica's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's website at http://www.faa.gov.

Land Ownership and Shoreline Property: U.S. citizens are urged to use caution when making real estate purchases, and consult reputable legal counsel and investigate thoroughly all aspects before entering into a contract. Coastal land within fifty meters of the high tide line is open to the public, and construction on the next one hundred fifty meters inland is possible only with the approval of the local municipality.

Squatters: Organized squatter groups have invaded properties in various parts of the country. These squatter groups, often supported by politically active persons and nongovernmental organizations, take advantage of legal provisions that allow people without land to gain title to unused agricultural property. Local courts may show considerable sympathy for the squatters. Victims of squatters have reported threats, harassment, and violence.

Documentation Requirements: Visitors are required to carry appropriate documentation at all times. However, due to the high incidence of passport theft, tourists are permitted and encouraged to carry photocopies of the datapage and entry stamp from the passport, leaving the passport in a hotel safe or other secure place. However, as noted under CRIME, Costa Rican immigration authorities conduct routine checks for illegal immigrants, especially in bars located in downtown San Jose and in beach communities. An American citizen detained during one of these checks and carrying only the copy of the passport will be required to produce the original passport. Tourists should consider carrying their passports when traveling overnight or a considerable distance from their hotel. Tourists who carry passports are urged to place them securely in an inside pocket.

Exit Procedures for Costa Rican Citizens: Costa Rican children may only depart the country upon presentation of an exit permit issued by immigration authorities. This policy, designed to prevent international child abduction, applies to dual national U.S./Costa Rican citizens. Parents of minors who obtained Costa Rican citizenship through a parent or through birth in Costa Rica are advised to consult with appropriate Costa Rican authorities prior to travel to Costa Rica, especially if one (or both) parent(s) is not accompanying the child.

Disaster Preparedness: Costa Rica is located in an earthquake and volcanic zone. Serious flooding occurs annually on the Caribbean side near the port city of Limon, but flooding occurs in other parts of Costa Rica as well, depending on the time of year and rainfall. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Costa Rican laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Costa Rica are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Costa Rica are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Costa Rica. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Pavas, San Jose, and may be reached at (506) 2519-2000; the extension for the Consular Section is 2453. The Embassy is open Monday through Friday, and is closed on Costa Rican and U.S. holidays. Those seeking information are strongly encouraged to utilize the embassy web site http://sanjose.usembassy.gov, and can email consularsanjose@state.gov with any questions/concerns. For emergencies arising outside normal business hours, U.S. citizens may call (506) 2220-3127 and ask for the duty officer.

Intercountry Adoption- June 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is

based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: Costa Rica is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States. Costa Rica 's adoption procedures are in flux, due to a moratorium on some intercountry adoptions processed through the child welfare office. Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI), the Costa Rican child welfare authority, oversees adoptions of abandoned orphans who are in public institutions, and plays a consultative role in private adoptions, as well. PANI may be contacted as follows:

Patronato Nacional de La Infancia
P.O. Box 5000
San Jose, Costa Rica
phone: (506) 233-0005 or
(506) 222-0443
fax: (506) 233-2414
e-mail: paniadop@racsa.co.cr

PANI contacts a prospective adoptive family when PANI identifies a child for adoption, even calling collect if authorized by the family. Pictures and related information about the child will be sent by airmail. Note that there is a backlog in pending cases.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Costa Rican law permits adoption by married and single persons. A foreign couple must have been married for at least five years. Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 25 and under 60 years of age.

Residency Requirements: Costa Rican law requires that, at the initial stage of the adoption process, both prospective adoptive parents must be in Costa Rica to sign the official consent documents before the Costa Rican court. In the case of adoption by a single prospective adoptive parent, that individual must be present to sign the documents.

At least 15 days should be allowed for this initial trip. At the end of the process, one of the adoptive parents, or the sole parent if it is a single-parent adoption, must be in Costa Rica to finish the paperwork for the adoption, obtain a travel document for the child, and complete immigration procedures at the U.S. Embassy. Since the length of time for the entire adoption process may vary (from four months to a year), many prospective adoptive parents make two trips to Costa Rica; others prefer to remain in Costa Rica for the entire process.

While in Costa Rica, the adopting parents need to take the following steps to satisfy local adoption requirements:

- Meet the child;
- Give formal consent for the adoption at the court;
- Obtain a decree of abandonment;
- Obtain a certified copy of the final adoption decree from the court;
- Register the adoption at the local Civil Registry;
- Obtain a birth certificate from the Civil Registry with the new name of the child;
- Obtain PANI authorization for the child to leave the country; and
- Obtain a passport for the child.

Time Frame: An adoption in Costa Rica generally takes from four to twelve months from the time a decree of abandonment has been issued or an official request for adoption of a specific child is placed before the court.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. Because Costa Rica is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The U.S. Department of State maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Costa Rica.

Official fees for an adoption are set at a minimum of $250, which represents the total court costs when an adoption is processed through PANI. Payments to parents or guardians are illegal under Costa Rican law and prospective adoptive parents who make such payments could be subject to investigation and possible prosecution. The fees generally charged in private adoptions can be very high, running into the thousands of dollars. American adoptive parents may want to notify the Embassy and the Department of State if they feel they are being charged excessive fees.

Adoption Procedures: Costa Rican adoption law provides for two types of adoptions: those arranged through PANI, and private adoptions. In foreign adoptions overseen by PANI, current Costa Rican law prohibits adoption of children less than four years of age, except in cases in which the child is part of a family group, or is difficult to place.

In private adoptions, there is no limit on the age of the children. A child is released to a private attorney, who then arranges the adoption. The court reviews the qualifications of the prospective adoptive parents, with PANI playing a consultative role.

Foreigners, including U.S. citizens, must complete the adoption process in Costa Rica and the adoption must be formally registered in the civil registry before the Costa Rican authorities will grant permission for the child to leave the country. Because of Costa Rican government concerns about child smuggling and the need for follow-up in the adoption process, permission is rarely granted for a child to leave Costa Rica in the custody of a prospective adoptive parent for the purpose of being finally adopted in another country.

Under Costa Rican law, adopted children do not need to be orphans (both birth parents deceased). They must, however, be abandoned or irrevocably surrendered for adoption. Abandoned children may be living in a government facility, in a private orphanage or foster home or in the custody of a relative or friend. Children may also remain in the custody of a biological parent prior to formal relinquishment of custody before a judge.

Important: The preceding relates only to Costa Rican legal requirements. See the section of this flyer on U.S. immigration requirements regarding the definition of an orphan for U.S. visa purposes; a child who does not meet the U.S. legal definition will not be permitted to immigrate to the U.S. even if Costa Rica permits the adoption to take place, and even if the adoptive parents are U.S. citizens.

Required Documents: The following documentation is normally required:

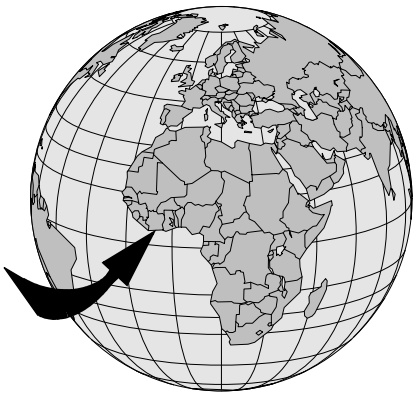
- Certified and authenticated copies of the adoptive parent(s)' birth certificate(s);
- Certified and authenticated copy of the adoptive parent(s)' marriage certificate (if applicable) and proof of termination of any previous marriages (certified copy of spouse's death certificate or divorce decree);
- Medical certificate(s) for adoptive parent(s) notarized by physician and authenticated;
- A certificate of good conduct/no criminal record for each adoptive parent from a local police department, notarized or bearing police department seal and authenticated. An FBI report is acceptable in lieu of local police record. This is separate from the FBI check conducted by USCIS as part of the petition process;
- Verification of employment and salary, notarized and authenticated;
- Two letters of reference notarized and authenticated;
- A certified and authenticated copy of property trusts deeds, if applicable;
- A home study prepared by an authorized and licensed social agency, certified and authenticated, may be required in some cases by the Costa Rican authorities if necessary information was not included on the USCIS (I-600A);
- Bank statements, notarized/certified and authenticated; and
- Family letter of intent to adopt, which states any general preferences requested by the family, i.e. a certain age, sex, etc. notarized and authenticated.

Additional documentation and procedures may be required.

The Costa Rican Embassy in the United States is located at 2112–S Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008 (telephone (202) 234-2945/46, fax (202) 265-4795). Costa Rican consulates are located in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Juan, San Francisco, and Tampa. The Embassy of Costa Rica also maintains a web site at http://www.costarica-embassy.org.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 322,500 sq. km. (124,500 sq. mi.); slightly larger than New Mexico.

Cities: Principal city—Abidjan (economic capital, de facto political capital). Capital—Yamoussoukro (official). Other cities—Bouake, Daloa, Gagnoa, Korhogo, Man, San Pedro.

Terrain: Forested, undulating, hilly in the west.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Ivoirian(s).

Population: (2004 est.) 18,700,000.

Annual growth rate: 3.8%, with immigration.

Ethnic groups: More than 60.

Religions: Indigenous 10%-20%, Muslim 35%-40%, and Christian (Catholic, Protestant, and other denominations) 25%-35%.

Languages: French (official); five principal language groups.

Education: Years compulsory—school is not compulsory at this time. Attendance—57%. Literacy—51%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—111/1,000. Life expectancy—46 years.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: August 7, 1960.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court (3 chambers: judicial, administrative, auditing); Constitutional Council.

Political subdivisions: 19 regions, 58 departments, 196 communes.

Political parties: Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI), Rassemblement des Republicaines (RDR), Union pour la Democratie et pour la Paix en Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI), numerous other smaller political parties operate in Cote d'Ivoire.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (official exchange rate, 2007 est.) $18.66 billion.

GDP: (purchasing power parity, 2007 est.) $32.86 billion.

Annual real growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.7%. Real GDP grew by 1.8% in 2006 and rose by 1.7% in 2007.

Natural resources: Petroleum (offshore) discovered in 1977, production began in 1980; earnings from oil and refined products were $1.3 billion in 2006. Gold mining began in the early 1990s.

Agriculture: (22.7% of GDP, 2006) Products—cocoa, coffee, timber, rubber, corn, rice, tropical foods.

Industry: (26.3% of GDP, 2006) Types—food processing, textiles.

Services: (51% of GDP, 2006).

Trade: (2007) Exports ($8.5 billion f.o.b.)—petroleum, cocoa, coffee, timber, cotton, palm oil, pineapples, bananas, fish. Major markets—France, Netherlands, U.S., Germany. Total imports ($5.2 billion f.o.b.)—fuel, consumer goods, basic foodstuffs (rice, wheat), capital goods. Major suppliers—France, Nigeria, China.

PEOPLE

Cote d'Ivoire has more than 60 ethnic groups, usually classified into five principal divisions: Akan (east and center, including Lagoon peoples of the southeast), Krou (southwest), Southern Mande (west), Northern Mande (northwest), Senoufo/Lobi (north center and northeast). The Baoules, in the Akan division, probably comprise the single largest subgroup with 15%-20% of the population. They are based in the central region around Bouake and Yamoussoukro. The Betes in the Krou division, the Senoufos in the north, and the Malinkes in the northwest and the cities are the next largest groups, with 10%-15% each of the national population. Most of the prin-

cipal divisions have a significant presence in neighboring countries. Of the more than 5 million non-Ivoirian Africans living in Cote d'Ivoire, one-third to one-half are from Burkina Faso; the rest are from Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, Senegal, Liberia, and Mauritania.

The non-African expatriate community includes roughly 10,000 French and possibly 60,000 Lebanese. As of mid-November 2004, thousands of expatriates, African and non-African, had fled from the violence in Cote d'Ivoire. The number of elementary school-aged children attending classes increased from 22% in 1960 to 67% in 1995.

HISTORY

The early history of Cote d'Ivoire is virtually unknown, although it is thought that a Neolithic culture existed. France made its initial contact with Cote d'Ivoire in 1637, when missionaries landed at Assinie near the Gold Coast (now Ghana) border. Early contacts were limited to a few missionaries because of the inhospitable coastline and settlers' fear of the inhabitants.

In the 18th century, the country was invaded from present-day Ghana by two related Akan groups—the Agni, who occupied the southeast, and the Baoule, who settled in the central section. In 1843-44, Admiral Bouet-Williaumez signed treaties with the kings of the Grand Bassam and Assinie regions, placing their territories under a French protectorate. French explorers, missionaries, trading companies, and soldiers gradually extended the area under French control inland from the lagoon region. However, complete pacification was not accomplished until 1915.

French Period

Cote d'Ivoire officially became a French colony in 1893. Captain Binger, who had explored the Gold Coast frontier, was named the first governor. He negotiated boundary treaties with Liberia and the United Kingdom (for the Gold Coast) and later started the campaign against Almany Samory, a Malinke chief, who fought against the French until 1898. From 1904 to 1958, Cote d'Ivoire was a constituent unit of the Federation of French West Africa. It was a colony and an overseas territory under the French Third Republic. Until the period following World War II, governmental affairs in French West Africa were administered from Paris. France's policy in West Africa was reflected mainly in its philosophy of "association," meaning that all Africans in Cote d'Ivoire were officially French "subjects" without rights to citizenship or representation in Africa or France.

During World War II, France's Vichy regime remained in control until 1943, when members of Gen. Charles de Gaulle's provisional government assumed control of all French West Africa. The Brazzaville Conference in 1944, the first Constituent Assembly of the French Fourth Republic in 1946, and France's gratitude for African loyalty during World War II led to far-reaching governmental reforms in 1946. French citizenship was granted to all African "subjects," the right to organize politically was recognized, and various forms of forced labor were abolished.

A turning point in relations with France was reached with the 1956 Overseas Reform Act (Loi Cadre), which transferred a number of powers from Paris to elected territorial governments in French West Africa and also removed remaining voting inequalities.

Independence

In December 1958, Cote d'Ivoire became an autonomous republic within the French community as a result of a referendum that brought community status to all members of the old Federation of French West Africa except Guinea, which had voted against association. Cote d'Ivoire became independent on August 7, 1960, and permitted its community membership to lapse.

Cote d'Ivoire's contemporary political history is closely associated with the career of Felix Houphouet-Boigny, President of the republic and leader of the Parti Democratique de la Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) until his death on December 7, 1993. He was one of the founders of the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), the leading pre-independence inter-territorial political party in French West African territories (except Mauritania).

Houphouet-Boigny first came to political prominence in 1944 as founder of the Syndicat Agricole Africain, an organization that won improved conditions for African farmers and formed a nucleus for the PDCI. After World War II, he was elected by a narrow margin to the first Constituent Assembly. Representing Cote d'Ivoire in the French National Assembly from 1946 to 1959, he devoted much of his effort to inter-territorial political organization and further amelioration of labor conditions. After his 13-year service in the French National Assembly, including almost 3 years as a minister in the French Government, he became Cote d'Ivoire's first Prime Minister in April 1959, and the following year was elected its first President.

In May 1959, Houphouet-Boigny reinforced his position as a dominant figure in West Africa by leading Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Upper Volta (Burkina), and Dahomey (Benin) into the Council of the Entente, a regional organization promoting economic development. He maintained that the road to African solidarity was through step-by-step economic and political cooperation, recognizing the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of other African states.

1999 Coup and Aftermath

In a region where many political systems are unstable, Cote d'Ivoire showed remarkable political stability from its independence from France in 1960 until late 1999. Under Felix Houphouet-Boigny, President from independence until his death in



December 1993, Cote d'Ivoire maintained a close political allegiance to the West while many countries in the region were undergoing repeated military coups, experimenting with Marxism, and developing ties with the Soviet Union and China. His successor, President Henri Konan Bedie, was familiar with the U.S., having served as Cote d'Ivoire's first ambassador to the U.S. Falling world market prices for Cote d'Ivoire's primary export crops of cocoa and coffee put pressure on the economy and the Bedie presidency. Government corruption and mismanagement led to steep reductions in foreign aid in 1998 and 1999, and eventually to the country's first coup on December 24, 1999.

Following the bloodless coup, General Guei formed a government of national unity and promised open elections. A new constitution was drafted and ratified by the population in the summer of 2000. It retained clauses that underscored national divisions between north and south, Christian and Muslim, that had been growing since Houphouet's death.

Elections were scheduled for fall 2000, but when the general's hand-picked Supreme Court disqualified all of the candidates from the two

major parties—the PDCI and Rassemblement des Republicaines (RDR)—Western election support and monitors were withdrawn. The RDR called for a boycott, setting the stage for low election turnout in a race between Guei and Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) candidate Laurent Gbagbo.

When early polling results showed Gbagbo in the lead, Guei stopped the process—claiming polling fraud—disbanded the election commission, and declared himself the winner. Within hours Gbagbo supporters took to the streets of Abidjan. A bloody fight followed as crowds attacked the guards protecting the presidential palace. Many gendarmes and soldiers joined the fight against the junta government, forcing Guei to flee. Having gained the most votes, Gbagbo was declared President. The RDR then took the streets, calling for new elections because the Supreme Court had declared their presidential candidate and all the candidates of the PDCI ineligible. More violence erupted as forces loyal to the new government joined the FPI youth to attack RDR demonstrators. Hundreds were killed in the few days that followed before RDR party leader Alassane Ouattara called for peace and recognized the Gbagbo presidency.

2001 Attempted Coup

On January 7, 2001, another coup attempt shattered the temporary calm. However, some weeks later, in the spring, local municipal elections were conducted without violence and with the full participation of all political parties. The RDR, which had boycotted the presidential and legislative elections, won the most local seats, followed by the PDCI and FPI. Some economic aid from the European Union began to return by the summer of 2001, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) re-engaged the government. Questions surrounding severe human rights abuses by the government during the presidential and legislative elections of 2000 remain unresolved (e.g., the mass grave at Yopougon), but day-to-day life began to return to normal. In August 2002, President Gbagbo formed a de facto government of national unity that included the RDR party.

2002 Country Divides

On September 19, 2002, rebellious exiled military personnel and co-conspirators in Abidjan simultaneously attacked government ministers and government and military/security facilities in Abidjan, Bouake, and Korhogo. In Abidjan, government forces stopped the coup attempt within hours, but the attacks resulted in the deaths of Minister of Interior Emile Boga Doudou and several high-ranking military officers. General Guei was killed under still-unclear circumstances. Almost immediately after the coup attempt, the government launched an aggressive security operation in Abidjan, whereby shantytowns—occupied by thousands of immigrants and Ivoirians—were searched for weapons and rebels. Government security forces burned down or demolished a number of these shantytowns, which displaced over 12,000 people.

The failed coup attempt quickly evolved into a rebellion, splitting the country in two and escalating into the country's worst crisis since independence in 1960. The rebel group, calling itself the "Patriotic Movement of Cote d'Ivoire" (MPCI), retained control in Bouake and Korhogo, and within 2 weeks moved to take the remainder of the northern half of the country. In mid-October 2002, government and MPCI representatives signed a ceasefire and French military forces already present in the country agreed to monitor the ceasefire line.

In late November 2002, the western part of the country became a new military front with the emergence of two new rebel groups—the Ivoirian Popular Movement for the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP). MPIGO and MJP were allied with the MPCI, and the three groups subsequently called themselves the "New Forces." In January 2003, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) placed approximately 1,500 peacekeeping troops from five countries—Senegal (commander), Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Niger—on the ground beside the 4,000 French peacekeepers. The troops maintained the east-west ceasefire line, known as the Zone of Confidence, dividing the country.

Reunification Attempts

In late January 2003, the country's major political parties and the New Forces signed the French-brokered Linas-Marcoussis Accord (LMA), agreeing to a power-sharing national reconciliation government to include rebel New Forces representatives. The parties agreed to work together on modifying national identity, eligibility for citizenship, and land tenure laws which many observers see as among the root causes of the conflict. The LMA also stipulated a UN Monitoring Committee to report on implementation of the accord. Also in January 2003, President Gbagbo appointed Seydou Diarra as the consensus Prime Minister. In March 2003, Prime Minister Diarra formed a government of national reconciliation of 41 ministers. The full government did not meet until mid-April, when UN peacekeepers (UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire, or UNOCI) were in place to provide security for rebel New Forces ministers. On July 4, 2003, the government and New Forces militaries signed an "End of the War" declaration, recognized President Gbagbo's authority, and vowed to work for the implementation of the LMA and a program of Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR). On September 13, 2003, six months after the formation of the reconciliation government, President Gbagbo named politically neutral Defense and Security Ministers, after consulting with the political parties and New Forces.

2004 saw serious challenges to the Linas-Marcoussis Accord. Violent flare-ups and political deadlock in the spring and summer led to the Accra III talks in Ghana. Signed on July 30, 2004, the Accra III Agreement reaffirmed the goals of the LMA with specific deadlines and benchmarks for progress. Unfortunately, those dead-

lines—late September for legislative reform and October 15 for rebel disarmament—were not met by the parties. The ensuing political and military deadlock was not broken until November 4, when government forces initiated a bombing campaign of rebel targets in the north. On November 6, a government aircraft bombed a French military installation in Bouake, killing nine French soldiers and one American civilian. Claiming that the attack was deliberate (the Ivoirian Government claimed it was a mistake), French forces retaliated by destroying most of the small Ivoirian air force. Mayhem ensued for several days as anti-French mobs rioted in Abidjan and violence flared elsewhere. On November 15, 2004 the United Nations Security Council issued an immediate arms embargo on Cote d'Ivoire and gave leaders one month to get the peace process back on track or face a travel ban and a freeze on their assets. In April 2005, South African President Thabo Mbeki invited the leaders to South Africa for an African Union-sponsored mediation effort. The result was the Pretoria Agreement, signed April 6, 2005. The Pretoria Agreement formally ended the country's state of war, and addressed issues such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, the return of New Forces Ministers to government, and the reorganization of the Independent Electoral Commission. A follow-up agreement in June 2005 laid out another framework for disarmament, elections, and the adoption of legislation required under the Linas-Marcoussis Accord.

In September 2005, the government postponed presidential elections scheduled for October 30, 2005. In October 2005, the UN Security Council, via UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1633, endorsed an African Union decision to extend the Linas-Marcouissis peace process for an additional 12 months. As called for under 1633, a new Prime Minister, Charles Konan Banny, was selected by the international community and given broad powers designed to reunify the country. Banny selected a new cabinet in December 2005 in collaboration with the opposition, the President and the New Forces. Violent protests mounted by militias loyal to President Gbagbo in January 2006 against statements by UNOCI regarding the role of the National Assembly during the ongoing transition period threatened the independence of the Banny government and the ability of UNOCI and the International Working Group (created by the UN Security Council to oversee the peace process) to help the country achieve a stable, lasting reconciliation.

Initial steps toward disarmament and elections began in May 2006. The government began a pilot identification program for citizens and foreign residents lacking birth and nationality certificates. Government and rebel New Forces military formations began pre-groupment activities as a prelude to actual disarmament. Neither initiative was completed, and elections did not take place on October 31, 2006, as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1633. In November 2006, the UN Security Council issued a new resolution, 1721, which extended Prime Minister Banny's mandate for an additional 12 months. Prime Minister Banny was effectively blocked, however, from exercising control over the government as envisioned by the international community. President Gbagbo closed out 2006 with a speech to the nation in which he called for direct talks with the New Forces and the elimination of the Zone of Confidence.

Ouagadougou Political Agreement

On March 4, 2007, after weeks of closed-door negotiations led by Burkinabe President Compaore in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, President Gbagbo and New Forces leader Guillaume Soro announced they had agreed to a peace agreement aimed at reunifying the country and holding new elections. The Ouagadougou Accord foresaw a new transitional government and the re-launch of the stalled voter registration and identification process to enable elections to be held within 10 months. It also called for the near-immediate elimination of the Zone of Confidence; the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants; and for ex-rebel and government forces to partially merge before the formation of a new army.

At the end of March, Soro was named Prime Minister, and several days later, a new cabinet—consisting of most of the ministers from the previous cabinet—was named. Since then, UNOCI has withdrawn from the Zone of Confidence and several mixed brigades of New Forces, national army soldiers, and impartial forces carry out joint patrols in its place. Government ministries (particularly Health, Education, Finance, and Interior) and officials are returning to their posts in the northern part of the country, as are important economic actors, such as banks and utilities. In September 2007, the first step in the identification of voters commenced when a series of mobile courts began issuing birth certificates to those who never had them. In April 2008, the government announced elections would be held on November 30, 2008. The disarmament, demobilizaton, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants has begun on a limited, primarily symbolic scale. Both the government's armed forces and New Forces leadership no longer believe DDR will be completed before elections. An integrated command center has been created, but is not fully functioning and suffers from a lack of funding and direction.

GOVERNMENT

Cote d'Ivoire's constitution of the Second Republic (2000) provides for a strong presidency within the framework of a separation of powers. The executive is personified in the president, elected for a 5-year term. The president is the head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces, may negotiate and ratify certain treaties, and may submit a bill to a national referendum or to the National Assembly.

According to the constitution, the president of the National Assembly assumes the presidency for 45-90

days in the event of a vacancy and organizes new elections in which the winner completes the remainder of the deceased president's term. The president selects the prime minister, who is the head of government. The cabinet is selected by and is responsible to the prime minister.

The unicameral National Assembly is composed of 225 members elected by direct universal suffrage for a 5-year term concurrently with the president. It passes on legislation typically introduced by the president, although it also can introduce legislation.

The judicial system culminates in the Supreme Court. The High Court of Justice is competent to try government officials for major offenses. There is also an independent Constitutional Council which has seven members appointed by the president that is responsible for, inter alia, the determination of candidate eligibility in presidential and legislative elections, the announcement of final election results, the conduct of referendums, and the constitutionality of legislation.

For administrative purposes, Cote d'Ivoire is divided into 19 regions and 58 departments. Each region and department is headed by a prefect appointed by the central government. In 2002, the country held its first departmental elections to select departmental councils to oversee local infrastructure development and maintenance as well as economic and social development plans and projects. There are 196 communes, each headed by an elected mayor, plus the city of Abidjan with 10 mayors.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Laurent GBAGBO**
Prime Min.: **Guillaume SORO**
Min. of African Integration & Spokesperson of the Govt.: **Amadou KONE**
Min. of Agriculture: **Amadou Gon COULIBALY**
Min. of Animal Production & Fisheries: **Alphonse DOUATI**
Min. of Communications: **Ibrahim Sy SAVANE**
Min. of Construction, Urban Development, & Housing: **Marcel Benoit Amon TANOH**
Min. of Culture & Francophony: **Komoe Augustin KOUADIO**
Min. of Defense: **Michel AMANI**
Min. of Economic Infrastructure: **Patrick ACHI**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Charles Koffi DIBY**
Min. of Employment & Civil Service: **Hubert OULAYE**
Min. of Environment, Water Resources, & Forests: **Daniel Ayissi AKA**
Min. of Family, Women, & Social Affairs: **Adjoua Jeanne Brou PEUHMOND**
Min. of the Fight Against HIV/AIDS: **Christine ADJOBI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Youssouf BAKAYOKO**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Ibrahima CISSE**
Min. of Industry & Private Sector Promotion: **Amah Marie TEHOUA**
Min. of Interior: **Desire TAGRO**
Min. of Justice & Human Rights & Keeper of the Seal: **Mamadou KONE**
Min. of Mines & Energy: **Leon Emmanuel MONNET**
Min. of National Education: **Gilbert BLEU-LAINE**
Min. of National Reconciliation & Institutional Relations: **Sebastien Dano DJEDJE**
Min. of New Technologies, Information, & Communication: **Hamed BAKAYOKO**
Min. of Planning & Development: **Paul Antoine Bohoun BOUABRE**
Min. of Public Health: **Remi Allah KOUADIO**
Min. of Reconstruction & Reintegration: **Fatoumata BAMBA-HAMZA**
Min. of Solidarity & War Victims: **Louis Andre DAKOURY-TABLEY**
Min. of Technical Education & Vocational Training: **Moussa DOSSO**
Min. of Territorial Admin.: **Daniel Cheik BAMBA**
Min. of Tourism & Handicrafts: **Sidike KONATE**
Min. of Trade & Commerce: **Youssouf SOUMAHORO**
Min. of Transportation: **Albert Mabri TOIKEUSSE**
Min. of Urban Development & Hygiene: **Theodore Mel EG**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Leisure: **Dagobert BANZIO**
Ambassador to the US: **Yao Charles KOFFI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Alcide Ilahiri DJEDJE**

Cote d'Ivoire maintains an embassy at 3421 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20007; tel: 202-797-0300.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Laurent Gbagbo has been President since October 26, 2000. Gbagbo took power following a popular uprising supporting his election victory after junta leader Gen. Robert Guei claimed a dubious victory in the 2000 presidential elections. General Guei had assumed power on December 25, 1999, following a military coup d'etat against the government of former President Henri Konan Bedie. Coup attempts in 2001 and 2002 escalated into a rebellion and crisis which culminated in the January 2003 signing of an accord for a power-sharing national reconciliation government. Implementation of the 2003 accord has made halting progress, and Cote d'Ivoire remains divided, with rebels occupying the northern half of the country. French Licorne and UNOCI peacekeeping troops observe a green line between government and New Forces positions.

Cote d'Ivoire's relations with the U.S. have traditionally been excellent, but have been somewhat strained since Section 508 restrictions curtailed nonhumanitarian aid following the December 1999 military coup. The restrictions were not lifted following the 2000 elections due to questionable governmental interference before and during the election.

Looking toward the country's future, the fundamental issue is whether its political system following the upheavals of recent years will provide for enduring stability, which is critical for investor confidence and further economic development. The political system in Cote d'Ivoire is president-dominated. The prime minister concentrates principally on coordinating and implementing the 2007 Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

However, political dialogue is much freer today than prior to 1990, especially due to the opposition press, which vocalizes its criticism of the regime. Beginning in 1990, Cote d'Ivoire evolved, with relatively little violence or dislocation, from a single-party state. Opposition parties, independent newspapers, and independent trade unions were made legal at that time. Since those major changes occurred, the country's pace of political change had been slow, prior to the period of turmoil ushered in by the December 1999 coup.

Whether further democratic reform will take place, adequate to meet future challenges, is unknown. As is generally true in the region, the business environment is one in which personal contact and connections remain important, where rule of law does not prevail with assurance, and where the legislative and judicial branches of the government remain weak. The political system is becoming less centralized, with the president stepping out of his role as ruling party leader, while attempting to decentralize many legislative functions. President Gbagbo has promised less executive interference in the judicial system, but it still lacks basic strength and independence.

Cote d'Ivoire has a high population growth rate, a high crime rate (particularly in Abidjan), a high incidence of AIDS, a multiplicity of tribes, sporadic student unrest, a differential rate of in-country development according to region, and a dichotomy of religion associated with region and ethnic group. These factors put stress on the political system and could become more of a problem if the government does not succeed in implementing the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and if the economy does not return to consistent growth.

Political Parties

The Ivoirian constitution affords the legislature some independence, but it has not been widely exercised. Until 1990, all legislators were from the PDCI. The December 2000 National Assembly election was marred by violence, irregularities, and a very low participation rate. Largely because of the RDR boycott of the election to protest the invalidation of the candidacy of party president Alassane Ouattara, the participation rate was only 33%. In addition, the election could not take place in 26 electoral districts in the north because RDR activists disrupted polling places, burned ballots, and threatened the security of election officials. Following the legislative by-elections in January 2001, 223 of the 225 seats of the National Assembly were filled. The FPI held 96 seats, the PDCI 94 seats, the PIT 4 seats, very small parties 2 seats, independent candidates 22 seats, and the RDR—in spite of its boycott of the legislative elections—5 seats.

Until it took the reins of government in the 2000 elections, the FPI party was the oldest opposition party. Moderate in outlook, it has a socialist coloration but one which was more concerned with democratic reform than radical economic change. It is strongest in the Bete ethnic areas (southwest) of President Laurent Gbagbo. The PDCI's "core" region may be described as the terrain of the Baoule ethnic group in the country's center and east, home of both Houphouet-Boigny and Bedie; however, the PDCI is represented in all parts of Cote d'Ivoire. Former members of the PDCI's reformist wing formed the originally non-ideological RDR in September 1994. They hoped that former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara would run and prevail in the 1995 presidential election, but Ouattara was subsequently disqualified by Bedie-sponsored legislation requiring 5-year residency. The RDR is now strongest in the mostly Muslim north. The FPI and RDR boycotted the presidential election of October 1995 because of Ouattara's disqualification and the absence of an independent electoral commission, among other grievances. Their "active boycott" produced a certain amount of violence and hundreds of arrests, with a number of those arrested not tried for 2-1/2 years. These grievances remained unresolved, adding to the political instability leading to the 1999 coup and 2002 rebellion.

ECONOMY

The Ivoirian economy is largely market-based and depends heavily on the agricultural sector. Between 60% and 70% of the Ivoirian people are engaged in some form of agricultural activity. The economy performed poorly in the 1980s and early 1990s, and high population growth coupled with economic decline resulted in a steady fall in living standards. A majority of the population remains dependent on smallholder cash crop production. Principal exports are petroleum, cocoa, coffee, cotton, pineapples, tuna, and tropical woods. Principal U.S. exports are rice and wheat, plastic materials and resins, kraft paper, agricultural chemicals, telecommunications, and oil and gas equipment. Principal U.S. imports are cocoa and cocoa products, petroleum, rubber, and coffee.

Foreign Direct Investment Statistics

Direct foreign investment plays a key role in the Ivoirian economy, accounting for between 40% and 45% of total capital in Ivoirian firms. France is overwhelmingly the most important foreign investor. In recent years, French investment has accounted for about one-quarter of the total capital in Ivoirian enterprises, and between 55% and 60% of the total stock of foreign investment capital.

Infrastructure

By developing country standards, Cote d'Ivoire has an outstanding infrastructure. There is an excellent network of more than 8,000 miles of paved roads; good telecommunications services, including a public data communications network, cellular phones, and Internet access. There are two active ports. Abidjan's is the most modern in West Africa and the largest between Casablanca and Cape Town. There is regular air service within the region and to and from Europe and modern real estate developments for commercial, industrial, retail, and residential use. Abidjan remains one of the most modern and livable cities in the region. Its

school system is good by regional standards and includes an international school—whose enrollment dropped sharply due to the November 2004 crisis—based on U.S. curriculum and several excellent French-based schools.

Recent political and economic problems have delayed Cote d'Ivoire's planned public investment program. The government's public investment plan accords priority to investment in human capital, but it also will provide for significant spending on economic infrastructure needed to sustain growth. Continued infrastructure development has been brought into question because of private sector uncertainty. In the new environment of government disengagement from productive activities and in the wake of recent privatization, anticipated investments in the petroleum, electricity, water, and telecommunications sectors, and in part in the transportation sector, will be financed without any direct government intervention. A return to political and economic stability is critical if Cote d'Ivoire is to realize its potential in the region.

Major Trends and Outlooks

Since the colonial period, Cote d'Ivoire's economy has been based on the production and export of tropical products. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries account for a substantial part of GDP and of exports. Cote d'Ivoire produces 40% of the world's cocoa crop and is a major exporter of bananas, coffee, cotton, palm oil, pineapples, rubber, tropical wood products, and tuna. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc and accompanying structural adjustment measures increased the international competitiveness of the agricultural, light industrial, and service sectors. However, reliance on commodity exports exposes the economy to the ups and downs of international price swings. To reduce the economic exposure to price variability, the government encourages export diversification and intermediate processing of cocoa beans. In recent years, petroleum exports have risen significantly, and petroleum is now the country's largest foreign exchange earner.

The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc helped return Cote d'Ivoire to rapid economic growth until the slowdown evident by 1999. Increased aid flows, rigorous macroeconomic policies, and high international commodity prices, along with devaluation, yielded 6%-7% annual GDP growth rates from 1994-98. Cote d'Ivoire also benefited from Paris Club debt rescheduling in 1994, a London Club agreement in 1996, and the 1997 G-7 decision to include Cote d'Ivoire in the IMF-World Bank debt forgiveness initiative for highly indebted poor countries.

In the past several years, economic decline has resulted in declining living standards. Falling commodity prices along with government corruption and fiscal mismanagement brought the economy to its knees by the end of 1999. At that point, the coup d'etat and the subsequent institution of the military junta government caused the loss of foreign assistance. Private foreign investment declined precipitously. Government internal and external debt ballooned. As a result, the Ivoirian economy contracted 2.3% in 2000. The government signed a Staff Monitoring Program with the IMF in July 2001, but plans for a subsequent Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility were disrupted by the onset of the crisis in September 2002. The signs of economic and business recovery were encouraging in the mid-year of 2002, but the political and social crisis that began in September 2002 undermined all the efforts to resume cooperation with international donors. The economy has been in a slow decline since the outbreak of the armed rebellion in late 2002, with a cutoff of most external assistance (except humanitarian aid), mounting domestic and foreign arrearages, and a drastic slowdown in foreign and domestic investment.

The World Bank announced in April 2008 that Cote d'Ivoire had paid fully its arrears, paving the way for new assistance. GDP growth reached 1.7% in 2007, buoyed largely by growing oil and gas revenues, along with steady cocoa exports. Strong economic growth is not expected until peace is firmly reestablished and international financial institutions conclude agreements to reduce the country's large debt profile. However, with the gradual reintegration of the country, the economy in the north may begin to revive after a prolonged slump caused by the four-year-long division of the country.

SECURITY FORCES

Since the outbreak of the rebellion in September 2002 that split the country, the military has reorganized. The former system that broke down the country into four military regions no longer exists. The 21,000-man Ivoirian armed forces (formerly FANCI, now called the Ivorian Defense and Security Forces—FDS) include an army, navy, air force, gendarmerie, and specialized forces. The Joint Staff is assigned to the FDS headquarters in Abidjan.

The gendarmerie has 8,000 men. It is a national police force which is responsible for territorial security, especially in rural areas. In times of national crisis the gendarmerie could be used to reinforce the army. The gendarmerie is commanded by a brigadier-general.

Cote d'Ivoire has a brown-water navy whose mission is coastal surveillance and security for the nation's 340-mile coastline. It has patrol craft that operate in limited fashion along the coast and smaller vessels used to control immigration and contraband within the lagoon system. The operational capability of naval vessels has degraded since the war began.

The Ivoirian Air Force's mission is to defend the nation's airspace and provide transportation support to the other services. As noted above, in response to an FDS attack on a French base in Bouake in November 2004, French Licorne peacekeeping troops destroyed most of the Air Force on the ground. Currently, the Air

Force has one transport/utility aircraft, two utility helicopters, and one attack helicopter.

A mutual defense accord signed with France in 1961 provides for the stationing of French forces in Cote d'Ivoire. The 43rd Marine Infantry Battalion is based in Port Bouet adjacent to the Abidjan Airport. Shortly after the beginning of hostilities in September 2002, France established a stabilization force, currently 3,000 troops, under "Operation Licorne." Previously, France had approximately 500 troops stationed in Cote d'Ivoire. In January 2003, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) placed approximately 1,500 peacekeeping troops from five countries—Senegal (commander), Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Niger—on the ground beside the French peacekeepers. The troops maintained the east-west ceasefire line dividing the country. On April 4, 2004, ECOWAS troops became part of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) which was authorized under UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1528. The authorized strength of the UNOCI operation is 8,115 troops. UNOCI and Operation Licorne coordinate closely to fulfill the terms of UNSCR 1528 and subsequent resolutions. UNSCR 1739 extended the UNOCI and Licorne mandate until June 2007, UNSCR 1765 extended the mandate until January 2008, and UNSCR 1795 extended the mandate until July 2008.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Throughout the Cold War, Cote d'Ivoire's foreign policy was generally favorable toward the West. The country became a member of the United Nations in 1960 and participates in most of its specialized agencies. It maintains a wide variety of diplomatic contacts. It sought change in South Africa through dialogue and was the first country accredited to post-apartheid South Africa. In 1986, Cote d'Ivoire announced the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Israel.

France remains Cote d'Ivoire's single most important foreign partner. President Houphouet-Boigny, who was a minister in the French Government prior to independence, insisted that the connection with France remain strong. Concrete examples of Franco-Ivoirian cooperation are numerous: French is Cote d'Ivoire's official language; Cote d'Ivoire adopted the French legal system; a French marine infantry brigade stationed in Abidjan augmented security; thousands of French expatriates continue to work and live in Cote d'Ivoire; and the CFA franc currency is tied to the euro. However, the September 2002 events injected strain into the relationship, as the Ivoirian Government criticized France for its perceived failure to uphold its commitment under the 1961 mutual defense treaty by helping government forces recapture rebel-held areas. However, the French did send additional forces—reaching a total of around 4,000 troops as of fall 2003—to secure the ceasefire line between regular government and rebel forces. The French contingent was joined by a force provided by various member states of ECOWAS that totaled over 3,000 as of fall 2003. Anti-French riots erupted in Abidjan in late January-early February 2003, but bilateral relations subsequently improved amidst ongoing French military and diplomatic efforts to promote a peaceful resolution of the crisis. As noted above, relations with France deteriorated substantially after the events of November 2004.

The Ivoirian Government has traditionally played a constructive role in Africa. President Houphouet-Boigny was active in the mediation of regional disputes, most notably in Liberia and Angola, and had considerable stature throughout the continent. In 1996-97 Cote d'Ivoire sent a medical unit to participate in regional peacekeeping in Liberia, its first peacekeeping effort. Cote d'Ivoire's hopes to expand its involvement in regional peacekeeping efforts were derailed by the December 1999 coup. Still a regional economic powerhouse, Cote d'Ivoire hopes to retake its place in promoting regional stability when the resolution of its current crisis permits. In May 2004, Cote d'Ivoire joined the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CENSAD).

Cote d'Ivoire belongs to the UN and most of its specialized agencies; the African Union; West African Economic and Monetary Union; ECOWAS; African Mauritian Common Organization; Council of Entente Communaute Financiere Africane; Non-aggression and Defense Agreement; Nonaligned Movement; African Regional Satellite Organization; InterAfrican Coffee Organizations; International Cocoa Organization; Alliance of Cocoa Producers; African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries; and Association of Coffee Producing Countries. Cote d'Ivoire also belongs to the European Investment Bank and the African Development Bank; it is an associate member of the European Union.

U.S.-IVOIRIAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Ivoirian relations have traditionally been friendly and close. Some strain has resulted from the Section 508 restrictions on nonhumanitarian aid imposed on Cote d'Ivoire following the December 1999 coup. Because of Ivoirian governmental interference in the 2000 presidential elections, the Section 508 restrictions were not lifted. The U.S. participates in the international effort to assist Cote d'Ivoire in overcoming its current crisis, providing more than a quarter of the funding for the UN peacekeeping mission that helps to maintain the ceasefire. The U.S. has also provided modest economic support fund (ESF) assistance to promote democracy. The U.S. is sympathetic to Cote d'Ivoire's desire for rapid, orderly economic development as well as its moderate stance on international issues. Bilateral U.S. Agency for International Development funding, with the exception of self-help and democracy and human rights funds, has been phased out, although Cote d'Ivoire continues to benefit to a limited extent from regional West African programs. The country remains a

major beneficiary of U.S. assistance in combating HIV/AIDS, as it is one of 15 focus countries under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). With assistance under PEPFAR likely to total some $85 million in FY 2007, this is by far the largest U.S. assistance program in Cote d'Ivoire. Ivoirian eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has been withdrawn, following the political impasse resulting from the 2002 rebellion.

The U.S. and Cote d'Ivoire maintain an active cultural exchange program, through which prominent Ivoirian Government officials, media representatives, educators, and scholars visit the U.S. to become better acquainted with the American people and to exchange ideas and views with their American colleagues. This cooperative effort is furthered through frequent visits to Cote d'Ivoire by representatives of U.S. business and educational institutions, and by visits of Fulbright-Hays scholars and specialists in various fields. A new U.S. Embassy chancery compound opened in July 2005.

A modest security assistance program that provides professional training for Ivoirian military officers in the U.S. has been suspended by the Section 508 restrictions.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 11, 2008

Country Description: Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) is a developing country on the western coast of Africa. The official capital is Yamoussoukro, but Abidjan is the largest city, the main commercial center, and where the Ivorian government and the U.S. Embassy are located. Cote d'Ivoire is a republic whose constitution provides for separate branches of government under a strong president.

The country has experienced continued, periodic episodes of political unrest and violence, sometimes directed against foreigners, since 2002 when a failed coup attempt evolved into an armed rebellion that split the country in two. Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and New Forces leader Guillaume Soro signed the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) in March 2007 and a new government was formed with Soro as Prime Minister. Implementation of the accord has been slow and although the political situation has improved, it still has not returned to normal. UN and French peacekeepers remain in the country.

Tourist facilities in and near Abidjan, the commercial capital, are good; accommodations in many other locations are limited in quality and availability.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required, but U.S. citizens traveling to Cote d'ivoire for business or tourism do not currently require visas for stays of 90 days or less. The Ivorian government, however, is planning to implement a biometric visa requirement for citizens of all nations, and this information will be published as soon details are known. To stay longer than 90 days, a visitor may still enter without a visa, but then must apply for a "visa de séjour" at the National Police Headquarters within 90 days of arrival. If the intent is to establish a residence in Cote d'Ivoire, the visitor must apply for a "carte de séjour" at the Office d'Identification Nationale (Note: "Cartes de séjour" are not issued to children under the age of 16, who are documented on their parents' visas). An international health certificate showing current yellow fever immunization is required for entry into Cote d'ivoire. Without it, the traveler may be required to submit to vaccination at entry before clearing immigration, at a cost of 5,000 CFA (a little over $10). Travelers may obtain the latest information and details on entry requirements from the Embassy of the Republic of Cote d'ivoire, 2424 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007, tel. (202) 797-0300. There are honorary consulates for Cote d'ivoire in San Francisco, Stamford, Orlando, Houston and Detroit. Overseas, travelers should inquire at the nearest Ivorian embassy or consulate.

Foreign travelers are sometimes approached at ports of entry by individuals with offers to expedite passport control and customs, and are then asked to pay an exorbitant fee, both for the service and for the passport and customs officers. Travelers to Cote d'ivoire are advised that there is no need to pay a police officer or customs officer for any service rendered during an arrival or departure, and that they should not surrender their passports or other important documents to anyone except easily identifiable government officials in uniform.

Safety and Security: Cote d'Ivoire has been unstable since a coup in 1999, and territorially divided since 2002. Although the Zone of Confidence dividing the country was abolished following the signing of the OPA, the New Forces effectively still control the northern and some west-

ern parts of the country. There are many road checkpoints manned by security forces and militia in both the government-controlled and New Forces-controlled portions of the country. Soldiers and militia members check documents and frequently demand cash for permission to pass. Cote d'Ivoire's border with Liberia is open, but border controls are extensive.

Political instability has contributed to economic stagnation and high unemployment, exacerbating social tensions and creating the potential for labor unrest and civil disorder. There have been recurring episodes of violence, some of them severe. In November 2004, there was a brief resumption of hostilities followed by widespread attacks against people and property in Abidjan and elsewhere. Many of these attacks were directed against French and other expatriates, and thousands fled the country. Brief episodes of significant civil unrest in Abidjan and some of the other population centers occurred in late 2005 and again in late 2006. Americans should avoid crowds and demonstrations, be aware of their surroundings, and use common sense to avoid situations and locations that could be dangerous. While the OPA serves as a roadmap to steer the country out of its political crisis, coup attempts or the resumption of hostilities, although unlikely, could occur.

Swimming in coastal waters is dangerous and strongly discouraged, even for excellent swimmers. The ocean currents along the coast are powerful and treacherous, and numerous people drown each year.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime continues to be a major security threat for Americans living in Cote d'ivoire. Grab-and-run street crime and pick-pocketing in crowded areas are widespread. Armed carjacking, robberies of businesses and restaurants, and home invasions occur frequently and have targeted residents, including expatriates, who are perceived as wealthy. American citizens have been stopped after dark, threatened, and robbed at gun point. Travelers should avoid road travel after dark and at night when these incidents are prevalent. Armed criminals use force when faced with resistance. Travelers displaying jewelry and other valuables, such as cameras, are especially at risk. Travelers are advised to carry limited amounts of cash and only photocopies of key documents. While there have been relatively few reported cases of sexual assault against foreigners, given the general climate of criminality, the actual rate of assault may be much higher than that which is reported. There were allegations of sexual assaults during the November 2004 civil strife. Although Americans are highly regarded, given the strong anti-French sentiment, people of non-African appearance may be specifically targeted for violence. Avoid large gatherings and political demonstrations, as they can turn violent quickly.

When traveling outside of Abidjan, moving between towns after dark is discouraged. Travelers are advised to use caution when traveling anywhere after dark. It is particularly dangerous to visit Abidjan's Treichville, Adjame, and Abobo districts after dark. The DeGaulle and Houphouet-Boigny bridges in Abidjan are dangerous areas for pedestrians. Inadequate resources and training limit the ability of the police to combat crime. Many hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, and supermarkets provide security guards to protect clients and vehicles.

Take the same common sense precautions in Abidjan that you would in any metropolitan area in the United States. Stay in well-lit areas and walk confidently at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic close to the curb. Avoid crowds, mass transit, doorways, bushes, alleys and sparsely populated areas. If you go out at night and need transportation, take an Orange metered taxi. Be discreet about your transactions, especially on the street. Normal spending habits of Westerners appear extravagant to local Ivorians.

Credit card use in Cote d'ivoire is limited, particularly outside Abidjan, but credit card fraud is an increasing problem. Business fraud is rampant and the perpetrators often target foreigners, including Americans. Schemes previously associated with Nigeria are now prevalent throughout West Africa, including Cote d'ivoire, and pose a danger of grave financial loss. Typically these scams begin with unsolicited communication (usually e-mails) from strangers who promise quick financial gain, often by transferring large sums of money or valuables out of the country, but then require a series of "advance fees" to be paid, such as fees for legal documents or taxes. Of course, the final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scam is simply to collect the advance fees. A common variation is the scammer's claim to be a refugee or émigré of a prominent West African family, or a relative of a present or former political leader who needs assistance in transferring large sums of cash. Still other variations appear to be legitimate business deals that require advance payments on contracts. Sometimes victims are convinced to provide bank account and credit card information, and authorize financial transactions that drain their accounts, cause them to incur large debts and drain their life savings.

The best way to avoid becoming a victim of advance-fee fraud is common sense—if a proposition looks too good to be true, it is probably a scam, particularly if one has never met the correspondent. You should carefully check and research any unsolicited business proposal before committing funds, providing goods or services, or undertaking travel. A good clue to a scam is the phone number given to the victim; legitimate businesses and

offices provide fixed line numbers, while scams typically use only cellular (cell) phones. In Cote d'ivoire, most cell phone numbers start with zero. It is virtually impossible to recover money lost through these scams.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Cote d'Ivoire is: 111.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Abidjan Abidjan has privately-run medical and dental facilities that are adequate, but do not fully meet U.S. standards. Good physician specialists can be found, though few speak English. While pharmacies are well stocked with medications produced in Europe, newer drugs may not be available. Medical care outside of Abidjan is extremely limited. Malaria is a serious health problem in Cote d'Ivoire. For more information on malaria, including protective measures, see the Centers for Disease Control Travelers' Health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria.

The avian influenza or "Bird Flu" virus (H5N1) has been confirmed in animals in Cote d'Ivoire as of June 2006. For more information regarding Avian Influenza, please visit the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Cote d'Ivoire.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Cote d'Ivoire is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Serious traffic accidents, one of the greatest threats to U.S. citizens in Cote d'Ivoire, occur regularly in Abidjan. Unsafe road conditions, unskilled drivers, and poorly maintained and overloaded vehicles create very poor driving conditions. Speed limits, signals, and yielding for pedestrians and cyclists are not respected. Drive defensively, watch out for public transportation vehicles that stop and start without warning, and be especially cautious at intersections because traffic lights often malfunction.

If you must drive at night, beware of vehicles without headlights and/or taillights, and pedestrians and bicycles along the roadside. In case of an accident, do not move your vehicle until a police officer tells you to do so. However, if there is no other vehicle to take the injured to a hospital, or if you believe your life is in danger from others at the site of the accident, go to the nearest hospital or police station.

Abidjan has a poor public transportation system; if you travel by bus, use only the "Express" line. In Abidjan, taxis are readily available, inexpensive (metered), but poorly maintained and notorious for not respecting the rules of the road. Communal taxis ("woro-woros"), used only within the limits of each commune, are not metered and are dangerous. Local vans ("Gbaka") should not be used because they are frequently involved in accidents.

Criminals usually steal vehicles when the driver is in or near the vehicle, so car doors and windows should be kept locked. While stopped in traffic, allow enough room between your car and the one in front to maneuver out if needed. Before getting into your car, look around to see if there is anyone paying unusual attention, and if someone appears to be watching, don't go to your vehicle, but go get assistance. When getting into or out of your vehicle, do so as quickly as possible as this is when you are most vulnerable to carjacking.

If you are the victim of a carjacking, do not resist. Try to remain calm and give the carjackers what they want, which is usually the vehicle and any valuables that you may possess. Experience shows that criminals usually don't use violence unless they are confronted with resistance. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to take an occupant, usually a woman or child, as hostage to ensure their safe escape; the hostage is usually released unharmed. This is a very difficult situation, so use your best judgment at the time to decide your course of action.

A newer phenomenon is the staged accidental "bumping" accident. If your vehicle is "bumped" from the rear or the side, stay locked inside because this ruse is used to get the

driver out and leave the vehicle free for carjacking. If you have a cell phone, call for assistance. If you feel your safety is in jeopardy, report the accident at the nearest police station as soon as possible. Try to get the license number for any other vehicle involved.

Emergency services such as ambulance service (SAMU) exist in Abidjan and larger towns, but such service is unreliable. Call 185 or 22-44-55-53. In smaller towns there is usually no ambulance service available, but ambulances may be dispatched from larger towns.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Cote d'Ivoire's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Cote d'Ivoire's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Ivorian customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters, at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information, call (212) 354-4480, e-mail atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www. uscib.org.

If traveling to another West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) country, expatriate residents leaving Cote d'Ivoire must declare the amount of currency being taken out of the country; if going to any other country, tourists are prohibited from taking more than 500,000 CFA francs (approximately $1,000), and business operators two million CFA francs (approximately $4,000), without government approval. Even with authorization, there is a cash limit of $4,000 for tourists and $5,500 for business people, with any surplus in travelers or bank checks.

Carry a photocopy of your U.S. passport, visa, and entry stamps. Also, carry your international driver's license with you, especially if you drive. An American driver's license is not valid for driving in Cote d'Ivoire.

Government corruption remains a serious problem in Cote d'Ivoire, and has an impact on judicial proceedings, contract awards, customs, and tax issues. Security forces (police, military, gendarmes) routinely stop vehicles for traffic violations and security checks. If you are stopped, politely present your identification. If you are stopped at one of these check points for any reason and asked to pay a "fine" to these uniformed officials, politely refuse and present your photocopy of your U.S. passport, visa, and entry stamp. Taking pictures is prohibited near sensitive installations, including military sites, government buildings such as the radio and television stations, the Presidency building, the airport, and the DeGaulle and Houphouet-Boigny bridges in Abidjan.

Cote d'Ivoire recognizes dual nationality if acquired at birth. Americans who also are Ivorian nationals may be subject, while in Côte d'Ivoire, to certain aspects of Ivorian law that impose special obligations on citizens of that country.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Cote d'Ivoire's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cote d'Ivoire are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Cote d'Ivoire are urged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Cote d'Ivoire. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in the Riviera Golf neighborhood of the Cocody section of Abidjan, east of the downtown area. The Embassy's postal address is 01 B.P. 1712 Abidjan 01, and the main telephone number is 22-49-40-00. The Consular Section fax number is 22-49-42-02, and more information is on the Consular pages of the Embassy's web site at http://abidjan.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government offices responsible for adoption in Côte d'Ivoire are the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. The Department

of Social Welfare, sub-unit of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs has jurisdiction over the child's identification process, the home study and the issuance of a certificate authorizing the orphanage to release the child to the adoptive parent(s). Any request related to an adoption issue should be directed to:

Mme La Directrice
Direction de la Protection et Promotion Sociales
Ministère de la Famille et Des Affaires Sociales
BP V 124, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire.
Tel: (225) 20 217 626 or 20 213 348

The Ministry of Justice handles the second and final part of the adoption process. Once the child is in the adoptive parent's custody, the adoptive parents must request the legal guardianship and thereafter, either the simple adoption or the plenary adoption. This procedure must be initiated through the Court of First Instance of Abidjan. However please note that only a full adoption is considered a valid adoption for U.S. immigration purposes. Request for information should be directed to:

Monsieur le Président
Tribunal de Première Instance d'Abidjan
BP V 33 Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire
Tel: (225) 20 223 586

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: In Cote d'Ivoire, a single person and a married couple are both eligible to adopt, providing the following requirements are met, the prospective adoptive parent (s) must be thirty (30) years old and must be 15 years older than the adoptive child; a prospective adoptive couple must be married for at least five years, and both individuals must consent to the adoption.

Residency Requirements: The adoption process requires a mandatory home study and an six-month integration period. Therefore, the court expects the prospective adoptive parent(s) to establish residency in Côte d'Ivoire. However, the prospective parent(s) may be from a foreign country. In such cases, they must explain the circumstances preventing them from establishing a temporary residency abroad and should submit proof that they visit the child regularly and provide for his/her care.

Time Frame: The process may be finalized within a year.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no private adoption agencies in Côte d'Ivoire. All adoption matters are processed through the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Justice. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan maintains a list of attorneys who handle inter-country adoptions.

Printed copies of this list are available at the U.S. Embassy, however it is important to note that the Embassy cannot recommend the services of any private attorney.

Adoption Fees: The adoption process involves fees associated with the medical examination as well as for court procedures. As of June, 2006, the average cost of the medical examination ranges from US$ 69.00 in public medical facilities to US$93.00 in private clinics. Court fees consist of US$59.00, which must be paid by the adoptive parent(s) to register the case for a hearing. The total cost for issuance of a new birth certificate and a passport, is approximately US$50.00. This fee includes the purchase of a revenue stamp of US$0.97 for issuance of the birth certificate, and a revenue stamp of USS 49.00 for an Ivorian passport.

Adoption Procedures: Persons interested in adopting a child from Côte d'Ivoire must first identify a child. This can be done with the assistance of the Department of Social Welfare, which is a sub-unit of the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, or by directly contacting the administration of an orphanage. Once the prospective adoptive parent(s) have identified a child for adoption, the orphanage's administrator transmits the case to the Department of Social Welfare, which will conduct a home study. Upon completion of the home study, the Department drafts its recommendation and gives a written authorization (Autorisation de Sortie de la Pouponnière) to the orphanage to release the child to the adoptive parent(s). The file is then forwarded to the court for adjudication. A first hearing is scheduled by the "Judge of Guardianship" to verify the circumstances surrounding the adoption as well as to hear the intent for adoption by both the biological and adoptive parent(s). The biological parent(s) plays a crucial role in the process, because they must consent to the adoption in writing. The written consent is a required document, and must be submitted when the request for adoption is submitted to the Court.

There are two types of adoptions in Cote d'Ivoire: the simple adoption and the full adoption ("Adoption Plénière"). The full adoption awards complete custody to the adoptive parents and breaks any existing familial relationship between the adopted child and the birth parent(s).

Once the birth parents have, in writing, irrevocably released the child for adoption, a permanent parent-child relationship is created and this adoption gives the adopted child the same rights as a child born to the adoptive parent. On the contrary, the simple adoption can be compared to a court decision granting legal custody of the child, to the adoptive parent. It would be, for instance, a case where the biological parent is incapable of providing proper care and partly delegates his/her parental rights to a third party. After a satisfactory review of the six-month integration period, a second hearing is scheduled where the judge issues a preliminary decree called the legal guardianship or "Ordonnance de Garde Juridique en vue d'Adoption." A simple adoption or the final adoption request may be requested by the adoptive parents upon the completion of the compulsory six-month period during which they have lived with the adopted child.

Once the adoption decree is issued, the adoptive parents will apply for a new birth certificate by contacting the civil registry ("Mairie") which has jurisdiction over their place of

residence. The birth certificate is required for the issuance of a passport.

Required Documents: The documentary requirements for foreign adoptions in Côte d'Ivoire are as follows.

- The prospective parent(s) should address a written request either to the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, Department of Social Welfare or directly to the court having jurisdiction if the child has already been identified. In the request, the adoptive parent(s) must give the reasons for their desire to adopt and must indicate the age and the gender of the child.
- Birth certificates of the adoptive parent(s).
- Marriage certificate for married couples.
- Proof of income.
- Consent for adoption in writing with the signature(s) of the biological parent(s), if known, duly attested by a Notary Public.
- Medical certificate confirming sterility if this is the basis for adoption.
- Recommendation of the social welfare service of the local administration (following a home study at the place of residence), with details about the prospective adoptive parents, history of their marriage, living conditions, family and personal motivation for adoption, and income. A U.S. home study may be useful if translated in into French; however, it will not waive the local home study requirement.

Embassy of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire
2424 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20007,
Telephone: (202) 797-0300.

There are honorary consulates for Cote d'Ivoire in San Francisco, Stamford (CT), Orlando, Houston and Detroit.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Abidjan
01 B.P. 1712, Abidjan 01
Côte d'Ivoire
Tel: (225) 22-49-40-00
Fax: (225) 22-49-42-02

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Côte d'Ivoire may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Abidjan. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

Travel Warning

December 15, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Cote d'Ivoire and urges U.S. citizens to exercise extreme caution while traveling in Cote d'Ivoire. This replaces the Travel Warning for Cote d'Ivoire dated June 09, 2008, updates information on the security and political situation, and advises all U.S. citizens to maintain an adequate supply of water, food, and fuel.

Cote d'Ivoire continues to experience periodic episodes of political unrest and violence since a 2002 failed coup attempt evolved into an armed rebellion that split the country in two. Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo and New Forces leader Guillaume Soro signed the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) in March 2007 and a new government was formed with Soro as Prime Minister (PM). Although implementation of the accord is ongoing, the political situation has not fully returned to normal. In December 2007, Bouake, the largest city under the control of the New Forces, experienced rioting by disaffected rebel soldiers and paramilitary forces, as well as fighting between opposing factions within the rebel movement, amid rumors of another coup attempt. Travel for the local population was severely restricted during this period, and two employees of the U.S. Embassy were evacuated by United Nations (UN) forces to a safehaven. Both UN and French peacekeepers remain in the country.

Given the sometimes tense and potentially volatile security situation, the Department of State urges American citizens to exercise extreme caution should they travel to Cote d'Ivoire, and to take special care when traveling outside Abidjan. In February 2008, Embassy personnel and other international organizations were prevented from traveling to and from western Cote d'Ivoire due to rioting by government soldiers. Americans planning travel to Cote d'Ivoire despite this Travel Warning should consult the Embassy or their host organization(s) for the most recent security assessment of the areas where they plan to travel. Increases in food and oil prices could provoke impromptu strikes or demonstrations, as occurred in Abidjan in July 2008. Crimes such as mugging, robbery, burglary, and carjacking pose the highest risk for foreign visitors in Abidjan. Visitors should be careful when stopped in heavy traffic or at impromptu roadblocks due to the threat of violent robbery, and should avoid travel outside of the city after dark. Land routes to neighboring countries are open, although overland travel to Liberia and Guinea is strongly discouraged, and caution is urged when crossing into Mali, Burkina Faso, and Ghana.

Long-delayed presidential elections scheduled for November 30, 2008 have been postponed and a new date has not yet been set. Americans traveling to Cote d'Ivoire should follow political developments carefully, as there is potential for violence in the run-up to, and aftermath of, the elections.

The Department of State continues to prohibit minor dependents under the age of 18 from accompanying U.S. government employees assigned to the Embassy in Abidjan. Embassy employees are asked to be cautious when traveling within Abidjan and to avoid travel outside of the city at night. Private Americans are urged to follow the same guidelines. U.S. Embassy personnel must obtain prior approval before traveling more than 35 kilometers outside Abidjan. Some of those requests may be denied, or multi-vehicle convoys may be required for security reasons. Americans resident in Cote d'Ivoire should maintain several days' supply of cooking fuel, food, and water at home, and ensure that their vehicles are fully fueled at all times. The U.S. Embassy is located in the Riviera Golf neighborhood of the Cocody section of Abidjan. The Embassy may close to the public temporarily from time to time in response to security developments. U.S. citizens who remain in, or travel to, Cote d'Ivoire despite this Travel Warning should consult the Department of State's latest Country Specific Information for Cote d'Ivoire and the Worldwide Caution at http://www.travel.state.gov. Americans should register with the U.S. Embassy by completing a registration form on-line at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/, or by calling (225) 22-49-40-00, or faxing (225) 22-49-42-02. Americans in Cote d'Ivoire who need assistance should contact the Embassy at (225) 22-49-40-00.

Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside of the United States and Canada, by calling a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



CROATIA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name
Republic of Croatia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 56,542 sq. km. land area (slightly smaller than West Virginia), 31,067 sq. km. coastal sea area.

Cities: (2002 est.) Capital—Zagreb (779,145). Others—Split (188,694), Rijeka (144,043), Osijek (114,616).

Terrain: Croatia is situated between central and eastern Europe. Its terrain is diverse, containing rocky coastlines, densely wooded mountains, plains, lakes, and rolling hills.

Climate: Croatia has a mixture of climates. In the north it is continental, Mediterranean along the coast, and a semi-highland and highland climate in the central region.

People

Population: (July 2008 est.) 4,491,543.

Growth rate: (2005 est.) -0.02%.

Ethnic groups: Croat 89.6%, Serb 4.5%, other 5.9% (including Bosniak, Hungarian, Slovene, Czech, and Roma) (2001 census).

Religions: Catholic 87.8%, Orthodox 4.4%, Slavic Muslim 1.28%, others 6.52%.

Languages: Croatian (South Slavic language, using the Roman script).

Health: (2005 est.) Life expectancy—male 70.79 years; female 78.31 years. Infant mortality rate—6.84 deaths/1,000 live births.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: Adopted December 22, 1990.

Independence (from Yugoslavia) June 25, 1991.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet of ministers. Legislative—unicameral Parliament or Sabor. Judicial—three-tiered system.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Political parties: (represented in Parliament) Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP), Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats (HNS), Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS), Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS), Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS), Croatian Party of Pensioners (HSU), Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja (HDSSB), Party of Democratic Action of Croatia (SDAH).

Economy

Real GDP growth: (2007) 5.6%.

Inflation rate: (2007) 2.9%.

Unemployment rate: (International Labor Organization method, 2007) 9.6%.

Natural resources: Oil, bauxite, low-grade iron ore, calcium, natural asphalt, mica, clays, salt, and hydropower.

GEOGRAPHY

Croatia serves as a gateway to eastern Europe. It lies along the east coast of the Adriatic Sea and shares a border with Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, and Slovenia.

The republic swings around like a boomerang from the Pannonian Plains of Slavonia between the Sava, Drava, and Danube Rivers, across hilly, central Croatia to the Istrian Peninsula, then south through Dalmatia along the rugged Adriatic coast. Croatia is made up of 20 counties plus the city of Zagreb and controls 1,185 islands in the Adriatic Sea, 67 of which are inhabited.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The Croats are believed to be a purely Slavic people who migrated from Ukraine and settled in present-day Croatia during the 6th century. After a period of self-rule, Croatians agreed to the Pacta Conventa in 1091, submitting themselves to Hungarian authority. By the mid-1400s, concerns over Ottoman expansion led the Croatian Assembly to invite the Habsburgs, under Archduke Ferdinand, to assume control over Croatia. Habsburg rule proved successful in thwarting the Ottomans, and by the 18th century, much of Croatia was free of Turkish control.

In 1868, Croatia gained domestic autonomy while remaining under Hungarian authority. Following World War I and the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Croatia joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes became Yugoslavia in 1929). Yugoslavia changed its name once again after World War II. The new state became the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and united Croatia and several other states together under the communistic leadership of Marshall Tito (born Josip Broz).

After the death of Tito and with the fall of communism throughout eastern Europe, the Yugoslav federation began to unravel. Croatia held its first multi-party elections since World War II in 1990. Long-time Croatian nationalist Franjo Tudjman was elected President, and one year later, Croatians declared independence from Yugoslavia. Conflict between Serbs and Croats in Croatia escalated, and one month after Croatia declared independence, civil war erupted.

The United Nations mediated a cease-fire in January 1992, but hostilities resumed the next year when Croatia fought to regain one-third of the territory lost the previous year. A second cease-fire was enacted in May 1993, followed by a joint declaration the next January between Croatia and Yugoslavia. However, in September 1993, the Croatian Army led an offensive against the Serb-held Republic of Krajina. A third cease-fire was called in March 1994, but it, too, was broken in May and August 1995 after Croatian forces regained large portions of Krajina, prompting an exodus of Serbs from this area. In November 1995, Croatia agreed to peacefully reintegrate Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Dirmium under terms of the Erdut Agreement. In December 1995, Croatia signed the Dayton peace agreement, committing itself to a permanent cease-fire and the return of all refugees.

The death of President Tudjman in December 1999, followed by the election of a coalition government and President in early 2000, brought significant changes to Croatia. The government, under the leadership of then-Prime Minister Racan, progressed in implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, regional cooperation, refugee returns, national reconciliation, and democratization. On November 23, 2003, national elections were held for Parliament. The current government, headed by Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, took office in December 2003. The Sanader government has made membership for Croatia in the European Union and in NATO its top priorities. Elections for Parliament are not expected again until November 2007. Presidential elections were held in January 2005. President Mesic was re-elected to a second term in office, defeating Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) candidate Jadranka Kosor in two rounds of balloting. President Mesic was inaugurated for a second term on February 18, 2005. Presidential elections will next be held in January 2010.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Croatian Parliament, also known as the Sabor, became a unicameral body after its upper house (Chamber of Counties) was eliminated by constitutional amendment in March 2001. The remaining body, the Chamber of Representatives, consists of 152 members who serve 4-year terms elected by direct vote. The Sabor meets twice a year—from January 15 to July 15 and from September 15 to December 15. The powers of the legislature include enactment and amendment of the constitution, passage of laws, adoption of the state budget, declarations of war and peace, alteration of the boundaries of the republic, and carrying out elections and appointments to office.

Stjepan Mesic was re-elected President in February 2005. The president is the head of state and is elected by direct popular vote for a term of 5 years. The president is limited to serving no more than two terms. In addition to being the commander in chief, the president appoints the prime minister and cabinet members with the consent of Parliament. Following the death of President Tudjman, the powers of the presidency were curtailed and greater responsibility was vested in Parliament.

HDZ President Ivo Sanader assumed the office of Prime Minister in December 2003. The prime minister, who is nominated by the president, assumes office following a parliamentary vote of confidence in the new government. The prime minister and government are responsible for proposing legislation and a budget, executing the laws, and guiding the foreign and internal policies of the republic.

The HDZ-led government that assumed office in January 2008 represents a coalition agreement between the HDZ (66 seats), the HSS (6 seats), the HSLS (2 seats), the SDSS (3 seats), other minority representatives and the lone representative of the HSU. The current government has, in addition to Prime Minister Sanader, 17 ministers, including four deputy prime ministers. Thirteen of the ministers come from the ranks of the HDZ. Coalition partners hold four cabinet seats: agriculture, tourism, and two deputy



prime minister seats, including one responsible for regional development and returns held by a representative of the Croatian Serb SDSS party. This is the highest ranking government position held by a Croatian Serb since Croatia's independence in 1991.

Croatia has a three-tiered judicial system, consisting of the Supreme Court, county courts, and municipal courts. Croatia's Supreme Court is the highest court in the republic. The Supreme Court assures the uniform application of laws. Members of the high court are appointed by the National Judicial Council, a body of 11 members, and justices on the Supreme Court are appointed for life.

The court's hearings are generally open to the public. The Constitutional Court is a body of 13 judges appointed by Parliament for an 8-year term. The Constitutional Court works to assure the conformity of all laws to the constitution.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Stjepan MESIC**
Prime Min.: **Ivo SANADER**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Djurdja ADLESIC**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jadranka KOSOR**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Damir POLANCEC**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Slobodan UZELAC**
Min. of Agriculture: **Bozidar PANKRETIC**
Min. of Culture: **Bozo BISKUPIC**
Min. of Defense: **Branko VUKELIC**

Min. of Economy, Labor, & Entrepreneurship: **Damir POLANCEC**
Min. of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning, & Construction: **Marina Matulovic DROPULIC**
Min. of Family, Veterans, & Intergenerational Affairs: **Jadranka KOSOR**
Min. of Finance: **Ivan SUKER**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & European Integration: **Gordan JANDROKOVIC**
Min. of Health: **Darko MILINOVIC**
Min. of the Interior: **Marijan MLINARIC**
Min. of Justice: **Ana LOVRIN**
Min. of Regional Development, Water Management, & Forestry: **Petar COBANKOVIC**
Min. of Science, Education, & Sport: **Dragan PRIMORAC**
Min. of the Sea, Transport, & Development: **Bozidar KALMETA**
Min. of Tourism: **Damir BAJS**
Governor, Croatian National Bank: **Zeljko ROHATINSKI**
Ambassador to the US: **Kolinda GRABAR-KITAROVIC**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Neven JURICA**

Croatia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2343 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington DC, 20008-2853, tel. (202) 588-5899, fax: (202) 588-8936. Consulates General of the Republic of Croatia are located in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Honorary consulates are located in St. Paul, New Orleans, Seattle, Pittsburgh, and Kansas City.

ECONOMY

Following World War II, rapid industrialization and diversification occurred within Croatia. Decentralization came in 1965, allowing growth of certain sectors, particularly the tourist industry. Profits from Croatian industry were used to develop poorer regions in the former Yugoslavia. This, coupled with austerity programs and hyperinflation in the 1980s, contributed to discontent in Croatia.

Privatization and the drive toward a market economy had barely begun under the new Croatian Government when war broke out in 1991. As a result of the war, the economic infrastructure sustained massive damage, particularly the revenue-rich tourism industry. From 1989 to 1993, GDP fell 40.5%. With the end of the war in 1995, tourism and Croatia's economy recovered moderately. However, corruption, cronyism, and a general lack of transparency stymied meaningful economic reform, as well as much-needed foreign investment.

Croatia's economy turned the corner in 2000 as tourism rebounded. The economy expanded by 5.6% in 2002, stimulated by a credit boom led by newly privatized and foreign-capitalized banks, some capital investment (most importantly road construction), further growth in tourism, and gains by small and medium-sized private enterprises. These trends have continued, with credit growth fueling strong demand in construction and services, resulting in 4.8% GDP growth in 2006. Unemployment, although still high, began a steady decline over this period that has continued to the present day. Croatia has also benefited from macroeconomic stability over the past several years with a stable exchange rate, low inflation, and shrinking government deficits. The start of European Union accession talks in 2005 and the prospect of NATO membership have also helped to attract higher levels of foreign investment.

Despite these gains, however, substantial challenges remain, particularly in reforming the judicial system and reducing corruption. The privatization process, begun in the 1990s, has been unsteady, largely as a result of public mistrust engendered when many state-owned companies were sold to the politically well-connected at below-market prices. The government sold three large metals plants in early 2007, but the Croatian state still controls a significant part of the economy, with government spending accounting for as much as 40% of GDP. Some large, state-owned industries, such as the country's shipyards, continue to rely on government subsidies, crowding out investment in education and technology needed to ensure the economy's long-term competitiveness.

Croatia has so far weathered the global financial crisis reasonably well, but faces significant challenges in 2009. GDP growth is forecast to slow to between 2% and 3%, largely due to an expected downturn in Croatia's top export commodity, tourism. Croatia's external imbalances and high foreign debt present risks as well, as continued access to foreign credit in 2009 may be severely limited.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Croatia is in the midst of pursuing a policy of greater Euro-Atlantic integration. In October 2001, Croatia and the European Union (EU) signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement. In February 2003 Croatia formally presented its EU membership application, and in April 2004 the European Commission agreed to open EU accession negotiations with Croatia. The opening of talks was delayed in March 2005 when the EU decided that Croatia was not fully cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), but talks finally got underway in October 2005, after the ICTY's Chief Prosecutor, Carla del Ponte confirmed that Croatia was fully cooperating.

In December 2005 General Ante Gotovina, indicted by the ICTY for war crimes and a fugitive since 2002, was arrested by Spanish authorities in the Canary Islands, partially as a result of intelligence information provided by the Croatian Government. Since the arrest and transfer of Gotovina to The Hague in late 2005, Croatia continues to cooperate fully with the ICTY.

Croatia was admitted on May 25, 2000 into the Partnership for Peace program—which was designed by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states in 1994 to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security—and, in May 2002, was welcomed into NATO's Membership Action Program, a key step toward NATO membership. On May 2, 2003, the United States joined Croatia, Albania, and

Macedonia to sign the Adriatic Charter, in which the three NATO aspirants pledged their commitment to NATO values and their cooperative efforts to further their collective NATO aspirations. In 2008, the Adriatic Charter expanded to include two new countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Croatia received an invitation to join NATO at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania in April 2008 and hopes to become a full member of the alliance by the next NATO Summit in April 2009.

Croatia has been a member of the United Nations since 1992, and contributes troops to 13 UN operations including those in Haiti, Cyprus, Georgia, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Kashmir. In January 2008, Croatia began a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Since 2003, Croatia has contributed troops to support the International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. Croatia's contribution to ISAF rose to approximately 300 personnel in 2008, and Croatia also approved its participation in ISAF for 2009. Croatia is a member of the World Trade Organization and the Central European Free Trade Organization.

While Croatia has made progress on dealing with a number of post-conflict issues, the status of refugees displaced during the 1991-95 war and resolution of border disputes with Slovenia remain key issues influencing Croatia's relations with its neighbors and the international community.

U.S.-CROATIAN RELATIONS

The United States opened its Embassy in Zagreb in 1992. U.S. engagement in Croatia is aimed at fostering a democratic, secure, and market-oriented society that will be a strong partner in Euro-Atlantic institutions. In an effort to promote regional stability through refugee returns, the United States has given more than $18 million since 1998 in humanitarian demining assistance. Croatia hopes to remove an estimated one million remaining mines by 2010.

The United States also has provided additional financial assistance to Croatia through the Southeastern European Economic Development Program (SEED) to facilitate democratization and restructuring of Croatia's financial sector, largely through programs managed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Most SEED funding and USAID programs in Croatia concluded in 2008.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ZAGREB (E) Thomasa Jeffersona 2, Zagreb 10010, 385-1-661-2200, Fax 385-1-661-2373, Workweek: Mon–Fri 8:00am–16:30pm, Website: http://zagreb.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Nancy J. Walraven
AMB OMS:	Carol Bryan
HRO:	Vacant
MGT:	Thomas R. Favret
AMB:	Robert A. Bradtke
CON:	Ruta D. Elvikis
DCM:	Vivian S. Walker
PAO:	Robert J. Post
GSO:	Elias S. Baumann
RSO:	Robert F. Grech
CLO:	Danuta Bilger/Candace Lawson
DAO:	Col. Brendan B. McAloon
FMO:	Vacant
ICASS Chair:	Ruta D. Elvikis
IMO:	Joel R. Rigby
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
LEGATT:	Neil E. Dietderich
POL:	Richard A. Holtzapple

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 14, 2008

Country Description: Croatia is an increasingly well-developed nation in the process of accession to the EU. Facilities for tourism are available throughout the country, and the Adriatic coast is an increasingly popular tourist destination.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required for travel to Croatia. A visa is not required for U.S. passport holders for tourist or business trips of fewer than 90 days within a six-month period. All foreign citizens must register with the local police within 24 hours of arrival as well as inform them of any change in their address. Registration of foreign visitors staying in hotels or accommodations rented through an accommodation company is done automatically by the hotelier or accommodation company. Failure to register is a misdemeanor offense; some Americans have been fined for failing to register.

U.S. citizens already in Croatia who wish to remain in Croatia for more than 90 days must obtain a temporary residence permit: Note that the first temporary stay permit must be obtained from the Croatian Embassy or Consulate in the United States.

For further information on entry requirements for Croatia, including information regarding requirements for residency and work permits, travelers may also contact the Embassy of Croatia at 2343 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 588-5899, the Croatian Consulates in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles or the Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs' Office for Foreigners, tel. +385 (1) 456-3111 or http://www.mup.hr and http://www.mvpei.hr/MVP.asp?pcpid=1123.

In support of a residency application, applicants will need to provide a copy of their birth and marriage certificates, if applicable, obtained no more than 90 days before application, as well as an FBI Identification Record Request authenticated for use abroad. All documents should be translated into Croatian and have an "apostille" stamp certifying their authenticity. Information on apostilles and authentication of documents is available from the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site.

For information on obtaining FBI Identification Record Requests, please see http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/fprequest.htm.

If an extension of an approved temporary stay is needed, U.S. citizens should submit a request to the local police having jurisdiction over their place of residence in Croatia no later than 30 days in advance of the last day of authorized stay. For the latest information on procedures for obtaining residence or work permits, please see http://zagreb.usembassy.gov/service/other/entry.html.

Safety and Security: Although hostilities in all parts of the country ended in 1995, de-mining of areas along former confrontation lines is not complete. It is estimated that demining operations will continue at least until 2010. Mine-affected areas are well-marked with the Croatian-language warning signs using the international symbol for mines. Travelers in former conflict areas, including Eastern Slavonija, Brodsko-Posavska county, Karlovac county, areas around Zadar, and in more remote areas of the Plitvice Lakes National Park should exercise caution and not stray from known safe roads and areas. Mine clearance work may lead to the closure of roads in former conflict areas. For more information about mine-affected areas and de-mining operations in Croatia, please see the Croatian Mine Action Center's web site at www.hcr.hr/en/minskaSituacija.asp.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Croatia has a relatively low crime rate, and violent crime is rare. Foreigners do not appear to be singled out. However, in tandem with increased numbers of American tourists visiting Croatia, the Embassy is receiving increased reports of thefts. Travelers are advised to safeguard their belongings in public areas, especially in bus or railroad stations, airports and on public transportation. As in many countries, outward displays of wealth may increase a traveler's chances of being targeted by thieves.

While violent crime is rare, there have been isolated attacks targeted at specific persons or property, which may have been racially motivated or prompted by lingering ethnic tensions from Croatia's war for independence.

Additionally, American citizens are cautioned to be mindful that Croatia is predominantly Catholic and, in some regions, quite conservative. Behavior that may be generally acceptable by American standards may offend local sensitivities and be met with hostility and, in a few cases, even violence.

American citizens are urged to be cautious when frequenting so called "gentlemen's clubs." A few such establishments have presented foreign patrons with grossly inflated bar bills, sometimes in the thousands of dollars, and threatened those customers who refuse to pay.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health facilities in Croatia, although generally of western caliber, are under severe budgetary strains. Some medicines are in short supply in public hospitals and clinics. The number of private medical and dental practitioners is substantial, and private pharmacies stock a variety of medicines not readily available through public health facilities. Croatian health care facilities, doctors and hospitals may expect immediate cash payment for health services and generally will not accept credit cards. Tick-borne encephalitis, a disease preventable with a three-shot vaccination series, is found throughout inland Croatia but is not prevalent along the coast. Travelers to Croatia may obtain a list of English-speaking physicians and dentists at the Embassy's web site at www.usembassy.hr/acs/medical.htm or by calling: (385) (1) 661-2376 during working hours, or (385) (1) 661-2400 after working hours. Ambulance services can be reached by dialing 94. Ambulance services are effective; however, response times may be longer to more isolated areas.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn. cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Americans who plan to stay in Croatia for more than 90 days may be required by Croatian authorities to pay into the Croatian health insurance system for the period of their stay in Croatia, regardless of whether they hold private American insurance or not.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Croatia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road conditions and maintenance in Croatia vary widely. Two modern highways linking Zagreb with Rijeka and Split opened in 2004. Construction is complete between Zagreb and Split and Zagreb and Rijeka, but work is still ongoing between Split and Dubrovnik; this work may cause delays and road closures. Additionally, there are stretches of highway with average travel speeds up to 130 km/hour that are only one lane in each direction. Opposing traffic may not be separated by a divider. Highway tolls are higher than in the United States and must be paid by cash or credit card. Primary roads, including roads along the coast, are generally adequate, but most have only one lane in each direction. Coastal roads are narrow and congested, and tend to be slippery when wet. Rock slides are also possible on roads along the coast, as well as through the mountain regions of Lika and Gorski Kotar. There is heavy congestion on major routes on weekends (towards the coast, for example) and in major cities during rush hours. Congestion on coastal routes, at border crossings, and at tunnels is especially heavy in the summer months. Drivers should be prepared for sudden slowdowns when approaching tunnels at any time of year. Drivers tend to be aggressive in Croatia. Passing on curves or in oncoming lanes is common on highways and poses a higher risk of accidents. Accidents, when they do happen, very often involve fatalities. Drivers traveling though former conflict areas should stay on paved roads to reduce the risk of encountering unmarked mines and unexploded ordnance left over from the 1991-1995 war. In Zagreb, motorists and pedestrians alike should also pay special attention to trams (streetcars), which in downtown areas may travel at a high rate of speed through the narrow, congested streets. Right turns on red lights are strictly forbidden in Croatia, unless an additional green light (in the shape of an arrow) allows it. At unmarked intersections, right of way is always given to the vehicle entering from the right. The use of front seat belts is obligatory and passengers in vehicles equipped with rear seat belts are required to use them. Special seats are required for infants, and children under age 12 may not sit in the front seat of an automobile. The use of cellular phones while operating a motor vehicle is prohibited unless the driver is using a hands-free device. By law, headlights of vehicles must be used during the winter, during fog, and/or during inclement weather.

According to Croatian law a driver may drive with a blood alcohol level of up to 0.05 percent, however it is illegal for a professional driver and those younger than 24 years of age to drive with a blood alcohol level greater than 0.00 percent. A driver involved in an accident is also forbidden to have a blood alcohol level greater than 0.00 percent. Police routinely spot-check motorists for drinking and driving administering breath-analyzer tests at even the most minor accident. Drivers who refuse to submit to a breath-analyzer are automatically presumed to have admitted to driving while intoxicated. In case of accidents resulting in death or serious injury, Croatian law requires police to take blood samples to test blood alcohol levels. This new law also introduced significantly tougher fines for traffic violations of up to 2,000 euros and prison sentences.

Within Croatia, emergency road help and information may be reached by dialing 987, a service of the Croatian Automobile Association (HAK), staffed by English speaking operators. The police can be reached by dialing 112 or 92 and the ambulance service by dialing 94. Additional road condition and safety information may be obtained from HAK at tel. + 385 (1) 464-0800 ext. 0 (English speaking operators available 24 hours), or + 385 (1) 455-4433 or +385 (1) 661-1999, or via their web site, www.hak.hr. During the tourist season, traffic information in English is also available at 98.5 FM on Croatian radio thirty minutes past the hour between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.

According to Croatian law, U.S. citizens visiting Croatia for tourism or business may use a U.S. driver's license for up to three months. U.S. citizens with an approved extended tourist visa or a permit for permanent residence may continue to use a U.S. driver's license for up to twelve months. However, a Croatian driver's license is required for stays longer than twelve months.

Foreigners who have been granted temporary residence in the Republic of Croatia and who are in possession of a vehicle registered abroad (with valid registration documents and insurance), may use their car a maximum of three months following the day of entry into Croatia, after which period the vehicle must be re-registered in Croatia. For specific information concerning Croatian driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Croatian National Tourist Office, 350 Fifth Avenue, Suite 4003, New York, NY 10118; phone 1-800-829-4416 or 212-278-8672; fax 212-279-8683.

In cases of traffic accidents involving a foreign-registered vehicle, the investigating police officer on the scene is required to issue a vehicle damage certificate to the owner of the foreign-registered vehicle. This certificate is necessary to cross the border. Upon written request, the police station in the area where the accident occurred will issue a Traffic Accident Investigation Record. For further information, please visit http://www.mup.hr/1266.aspx.

For travelers arriving by private marine craft, please refer to the nautical information and regulations available at www.mmtpr.hr.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Croatia's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization

(ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Croatia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: With numerous automated teller machines and ever-wider acceptance of credit cards in Croatia, traveler's checks are accepted less frequently or exchanged at an unfavorable rate. Western Union money transfer is available. For information on money transfers, call (385)(1) 4839-166 or fax (385)(1) 4839-122.

Recreational Boating: The Government of Croatia adopted a law (effective January 1, 2006) requiring all recreational skippers chartering Croatian flagged vessels to have a certificate of competence. Under the law, the Ministry of Sea, Tourism and Transport will only recognize licenses issued by national authorities of other states. As no such national licensing regime exists in the U.S., Americans wishing to charter and pilot a Croatian-flagged vessel may be required to pass a certification test at the Ministry in Zagreb or a designated harbormaster's office on the coast.

Tourists can be certified in Croatia at harbormasters' offices in Pula, Rijeka, Senj, Zadar, Sibenik, Split, Ploce and Dubrovnik, as well as at the Ministry in Zagreb. Candidates need to contact the harbormaster's office or the Ministry to schedule the test. Please note that the test will be administered only to groups, so individuals may need to wait until a sufficient number of interested applicants apply. The certification costs 850 kuna (roughly $165) and is valid indefinitely. A study guide is available and the test can be taken in Croatian, English, German, and Italian.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Croatian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Croatia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable also in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Croatia are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Croatia.Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Zagreb is located at ul. Thomasa Jeffersona 2, 10010 Zagreb, tel. (385) (1) 661-2200. The Embassy is located in the southern outskirts of Zagreb near the airport. For emergencies on weekends, holidays and after hours, an embassy duty officer can be reached at tel. (385) (1) 661-2400 or (385) (91) 455-2247.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Croatian law gives absolute priority to adoptions by Croatian citizens. While there is nothing in Croatian law that specifically prohibits foreigners from adopting Croatian children, the law stresses that there must be overwhelming justification and exceptionally compelling reasons. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare must approve such adoptions. Foreign adoption and removal of Croatian children from their homeland is a sensitive subject to Croatian authorities and to the Croatian people. In practice, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain this approval, as the government does not consider it beneficial to a child to be uprooted, to lose contact with relatives, or to lose his/her Croatian identity.

The number of prospective parents in Croatia is significantly higher than the number of children available for adoption. There are relatively few adoptable children among the total number of children who are without parental care on a temporary or permanent basis. Traditionally, relatives take in orphan children.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Croatia is the Ministarstvo zdravstva i sociajlne skrbi (Ministry of Health and Social Welfare), the address is Ksaver 200A 14, 10000 Zagreb.

In Croatia, the application for adoption must be submitted to the Centar za socialnu skrb (Center for Social Welfare, equivalent to a U.S. county or municipal social services department). The Center for Social Welfare

prepares an adoption case for submission to the Ministry, the ultimate authority to approve adoptions by foreigners.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adults between the ages of 21 and 35 years old, who are at least eighteen years older than the adopted child, may adopt a child in Croatia. If there are some particularly justified reasons, an adoptive parent may be a person older than 35 years, but the age difference between the adoptive parent and the adopted child may not be greater than 45 years. If the adoptive parents adopt sisters and brothers, half sisters and half brothers, it is enough that one of the adoptive parents meets the age condition for only one of the children.

If the adoptive parents have adopted a child and subsequently wish to adopt the child's sister, brother, half-sister or half-brother, they may adopt such a child without reference to their age. Also, as an exception, an adoptive parent may be a foreigner if this is of particular benefit to the child. If the adoptive parent is a foreigner, the adoption can take place only with the prior approval of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The law makes no distinction between single or married adoptive parents; however, in practice, when a baby is in question, preference is given to married petitioners.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents do not have to reside in Croatia during the adoption process, but the Center for Social Welfare should be aware when they are and are not in the country. A Power of Attorney would be required during adoptive parents' absence so that someone can act legally on their behalf.

Time Frame: According to Croatian law, adoptions should be either approved or disapproved within 60 days of receipt of the submission of the completed application to Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: All adoptions must be approved through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the address is Ksaver 200A, 10000 Zagreb.

The U.S. Embassy Zagreb can provide a list of English-speaking attorneys and court translators in Croatia. Provision of the list is not an endorsement of the attorneys whose contact information is provided. The list can be located at: http://www.usembassy.hr.

Adoption Fees: The Croatian government charges no fee for its role in the adoption process.

Adoption Procedures: Persons who wish to apply to adopt a particular child can do so by directly contacting the Center for Social Welfare of the municipality in which the child resides. If the prospective parents have not identified a particular child, they should contact the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to ask if any municipal Centers for Social Welfare have a child available for adoption. In both cases, when prospective children have been identified, the next step is for parents to submit the documents listed below to the municipal Centers for Social Welfare. After reviewing the case, the Center for Social Welfare forwards the application package to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare with a recommendation as to whether the adoption should proceed. The Ministry then reviews the case and makes a final decision on the adoption within 60 days of receipt.

The Ministry then notifies the Center where the application was filed as of its recommendation and the Center in turn notifies the prospective adoptive parent(s) as to the final decision. The adoption is considered final when the adoptive parents receive the notification from the Center. No court appearance is required for finalization.

Required Documents: There is no specific application form. A request for adoption takes the form of a letter, written by the prospective adoptive parent(s), detailing their circumstances and their desire for adoption, and bearing original signature(s). It can be submitted by mail or through an authorized representative with Power of Attorney. The application must be accompanied by the following documents:

- Certified birth certificate(s) of the prospective parents;
- Certified marriage certificate (if applicable);
- Medical certificate of good health preferably provided by a hospital or general practice clinic rather than a private physician;
- Proof of citizenship (certified copy of a birth certificate, naturalization certificate, or passport);
- Proof of employment in the form of a letter from the parent(s) employer(s) stating their position, length of employment, and salary;
- Criminal Background Check: All prospective parents must submit a U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal Justice information Services (CJIS) identification record;
- Federal Income Tax return(s) from the preceding year;
- Home study (social worker's analysis) about the adoptive family and other circumstances of the application, including his or her ability to care for a child.

All original documents and the application letter must be in English and each must be accompanied by a translation in Croatian by an authorized court translator. It is easier and less expensive to have the translations done in Croatia by an authorized court translator rather than in the United States.

The U.S. Embassy in Zagreb can provide a list of court interpreters, but cannot endorse the services or qualifications of anyone on the list www.usembassy.hr. Any official documents (birth certificates, passports, social service reports, home studies,

etc) should be certified by an apostille from the designated authority in the United States.

Embassy of the Republic of Croatia
2343 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 588-5943
Fax: (202) 588-8937
Internet: http://us.mfa.hr
E-mail: consular@croatiaemb.org

Croatia has consulates in Chicago, Kansas City, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Pittsburgh, Seattle, and St. Paul, Minnesota.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
2 Thomas Jefferson Street
10010 Zagreb, Croatia

Telephone: 385-1-661-2200

Consular Services: 385-1-661-2300

Embassy Hours: 8 AM—4:30 PM

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Croatia may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Zagreb, Croatia (385-1-661-2200 or http://www.usembassy.hr). General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



CUBA

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Cuba

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 110,860 sq. km. (44,200 sq. mi.); about the size of Pennsylvania.

Cities: Capital—Havana (pop. 2 million). Other major cities—Santiago de Cuba, Camaguey, Santa Clara, Holguin, Guantanamo, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Pinar del Rio.

Terrain: Flat or gently rolling plains, hills; mountains up to 2,000 meters (6,000 ft.) in the southeast.

Climate: Tropical, moderated by trade winds; dry season (November-April); rainy season (May-October).

People

Population: 11.2 million; 70% urban, 30% rural.

Ethnic groups: 51% mulatto, 37% white, 11% black, 1% Chinese (according to Cuban census data).

Languages: Spanish. Literacy—97% (according to Cuban government sources).

Work force: (4.87 million) Services—4%; industry—13%; agriculture—20%; science and technology—1%; construction—5%; education—12%; health and social services—12%.

Government

Type: Totalitarian Communist state; current government assumed power by force January 1, 1959.

Independence: May 20, 1902.

Political parties: Cuban Communist Party (PCC); only one party allowed.

Political subdivisions: 14 provinces, including the city of Havana, and one special municipality (Isle of Youth).

Economy

GDP: (2007 est., based on constant 1997 prices) $47.35 billion.

Real annual growth rate: 3.0% (2001); 1.5% (2002); 2.9% (2003); 3.0% (2004 est.); 7.8% (2005 est.); 9.5% (2006 est.); 5.8% (2007 est.).

GDP per capita income: (2007 est., based on constant 1997 prices) $4,200.

Average monthly salary: $17.

Natural resources: Nickel, cobalt, iron ore, copper, manganese, salt, timber, oil, natural gas.

Agriculture: Products—sugar, citrus and tropical fruits, tobacco, coffee, rice, beans, meat, vegetables.

Industry: Types—sugar and food processing, oil refining, cement, electric power, light consumer and industrial products, pharmaceutical and biotech products.

Trade: Exports (2007)—$3.701 billion f.o.b.: nickel/cobalt, pharmaceutical and biotech products, sugar and its byproducts, tobacco, seafood, citrus, tropical fruits, coffee. Major export markets (2006)—Netherlands $774 million (28%); Canada $546 million (20%); Venezuela $296 million (11%); China $246 million (9%); Spain $149 million (5%); Russia $137 million (5%); Singapore $79 million (3%); France $51 million (2%); Bolivia $40 million (1%); Mexico $39 million (1%); others $402 million (15%). Imports (2007)—$10.083 billion f.o.b.: petroleum, food, machinery, chemicals. Major import suppliers (2006)—Venezuela $2.209 billion (24%); China $1.569 billion (17%); Spain $846 million (9%); Germany $616 million (7%);United States $484 (5%); Brazil $429 million (5%); Italy $409 million (4%); Canada $340 million (4%); Mexico $234 million (3%); Algeria $228 million (2%); France $197 million (2%); Vietnam $190 million (2%); Japan $175 million (2%); Russia $152 million (2%); Argentina $115 million (1%); others $1.227 billion (13%).

Exchange rate: Convertible pesos per U.S.$1 = 0.93. Cuba has two currencies in circulation: the Cuban peso (CUP), and the convertible peso (CUC). In April 2005, the official exchange rate changed from $1 per CUC to $1.08 per CUC (0.93 CUC per $1), both for individuals and enterprises. Individuals can buy 24 Cuban pesos (CUP) for each CUC sold, or sell 25 Cuban pesos for each CUC bought; enterprises, however, must

exchange CUP and CUC at a 1:1 ratio. It is also important to note that the Cuban regime taxes and receives approximately 10% of each conversion of U.S. dollars into CUCs.

PEOPLE AND RELIGION

Cuba is a multiracial society with a population of mainly Spanish and African origins. The largest organized religion is the Roman Catholic Church, but evangelical protestant denominations continue to grow rapidly. Afro-Cuban religions, a blend of native African religions and Roman Catholicism, are widely practiced in Cuba. Officially, Cuba has been an atheist state for most of the Castro era. In 1962, the government of Fidel Castro seized and shut down more than 400 Catholic schools, charging that they spread dangerous beliefs among the people. In 1991, however, the Communist Party lifted its prohibition against religious believers seeking membership, and a year later the constitution was amended to characterize the state as secular instead of atheist.

While the Cuban constitution recognizes the right of citizens to freedom of religion, the government de facto restricts that freedom. Twenty-two denominations, including Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists, are members of the Cuban Council of Churches (CCC). Most CCC members are officially recognized by the State, though several, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church, are not registered and are recognized only through their membership in the CCC. Another 31 officially recognized denominations, including Jehovah's Witnesses and the small Jewish community, do not belong to the CCC. The government does not favor any one particular religion or church; however, the government appears to be most tolerant of those churches that maintain close relations to the State through the CCC. Unregistered religious groups experience various degrees of official interference, harassment, and repression. The Ministry of Interior engages in active efforts to control and monitor the country's religious institutions, including through surveillance, infiltration and harassment of religious professionals and practitioners. The most independent religious organizations—including the Catholic Church, the largest independent institution in Cuba today—continue to operate under significant restrictions and pressure imposed on them by the Cuban regime. The Cuban Government continues to refuse to allow the church to have independent printing press capabilities; full access to the media; to train enough priests for its needs or allow adequate numbers of foreign priests to work in the country; or to establish socially useful institutions, including schools and universities, hospitals and clinics, and nursing homes. All registered denominations must report to the Ministry of Interior's Office of Religious Affairs.

The visit of Pope John Paul II in January 1998 was seen as an important, positive event for bringing a message of hope and the need for respect of human rights. Unfortunately, these improvements did not continue once the Pope left the island. While some visas were issued for additional priests to enter Cuba around the time of the visit, the regime has again sharply restricted issuance of visas. Moreover, despite explicit regime guarantees and repeated follow-up requests, the regime has refused to permit the Catholic Church to establish Internet connections or an intranet among dioceses on the Island. In a pastoral letter entitled "There is No Country Without Virtue" ("No Hay Patria Sin Virtud"), the Cuban Conference of Catholic Bishops in February 2003 openly criticized the government's strict control over the activities of the Catholic Church, especially state restrictions on religious education and Church access to mass media, as well as the increasingly amoral and irreligious character of Cuban society under Communist rule. In 2007-2008 the government permitted the Catholic Church to broadcast Christmas and Holy Week messages. The Vatican and the Catholic Church are still pressing for more access to the media. The Cuban Government in 2007, for the first time since the revolution, declared Christmas Day a holiday.

Other Cuban religious groups—including evangelical Christians, whose numbers continue to grow rapidly—also have benefited from the relative relaxation of official restrictions on religious organizations and activities. Although particularly hard hit by emigration, Cuba's small Jewish community continues to hold services in Havana and has members in Santiago, Camaguey, and other parts of the island.

HISTORY

Spanish settlers established the raising of cattle, sugarcane, and tobacco as Cuba's primary economic pursuits. As the native Indian population died out, African slaves were imported to work the ranches and plantations. Slavery was abolished in 1886.

Cuba was the last major Spanish colony to gain independence, following a lengthy struggle begun in 1868. Jose Marti, Cuba's national hero, helped initiate the final push for independence in 1895. In 1898, the United States entered the conflict after the USS Maine sank in Havana Harbor on February 15 due to an explosion of undetermined origin. In December of that year, Spain relinquished control of Cuba to the United States with the Treaty of Paris. On May 20, 1902, the United States granted Cuba its independence but retained the right to intervene to preserve Cuban independence and stability in accordance with the Platt Amendment. In 1934, the Platt Amendment was repealed. The United States and Cuba concluded a Treaty of Relations in 1934 which, among other things, continued the 1903 agreements that leased the Guantanamo Bay naval base to the United States.

Independent Cuba was often ruled by authoritarian political and military figures who either obtained or remained in power by force. Fulgencio Batista, an army sergeant, orga-



nized a non-commissioned officer revolt in September 1933 and wielded significant power behind the scenes until he was elected president in 1940. Batista was voted out of office in 1944 and did not run in 1948. Both those elections were won by civilian political figures with the support of party organizations. Running for president again in 1952, Batista seized power in a bloodless coup 3 months before the election was to take place, suspended the balloting, and began ruling by decree. Many political figures and movements that wanted a return to the government according to the Constitution of 1940 disputed Batista's undemocratic rule.

On July 26, 1953, Fidel Castro, who had been involved in increasingly violent political activity before Batista's coup, led a failed attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba in which more than 100 died. After defending himself in a trial open to national and international media, he was convicted and jailed, and subsequently was freed in an act of clemency, before going into exile in Mexico. There he organized the "26th of July Movement" with the goal of overthrowing Batista, and the group sailed to Cuba on board the yacht Granma, landing in the eastern part of the island in December 1956.

Batista's dictatorial rule fueled increasing popular discontent and the rise of many active urban and rural resistance groups, a fertile political environment for Castro's 26th of July Movement. Faced with a corrupt and ineffective military—itself dispirited by a U.S. Government embargo on weapons sales to Cuba—and public indignation and revulsion at his brutality toward opponents, Batista fled on January 1, 1959. Although he had promised a return to constitutional rule and democratic elections along with social reforms, Castro used his control of the military to consolidate his power by repressing all dissent from his decisions, marginalizing other resistance figures, and imprisoning or executing thousands of opponents. An estimated 3,200 people were executed by the Castro regime between 1959-62 alone. As the revolution became more radical, hundreds of thousands of Cubans fled the island.

Castro declared Cuba a socialist state on April 16, 1961. For the next 30 years, Castro pursued close relations with the Soviet Union and worked in concert with the geopolitical goals of Soviet communism, funding and fomenting violent subversive and insurrectional activities, as well as military adventurism, until the demise of the U.S.S.R. in 1991. Relations between the United States and

Cuba deteriorated rapidly as the Cuban regime expropriated U.S. properties and moved toward adoption of a one-party communist system. In response, the United States imposed an embargo on Cuba in October 1960, and, in response to Castro's provocations, broke diplomatic relations on January 3, 1961. Tensions between the two governments peaked during the October 1962 missile crisis.

GOVERNMENT

Cuba is a totalitarian communist state controlled by General Raul Castro and a cadre of party loyalists. Raul Castro replaced his brother Fidel Castro as chief of state, president of Cuba, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces on February 24, 2008. In March 2003, Fidel Castro had announced his intention to remain in power for life, but he became incapacitated on July 31, 2006. While Fidel Castro is still nominally the First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), Raul Castro, as its Second Secretary, is fully in charge of this political body and has announced that a new party congress will be held toward the end of 2009, the first to be held since 1997. The Ministry of Interior is the principal organ of state security and control. The Castro regime seeks to control most aspects of Cuban life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, the government bureaucracy, and the state security apparatus.

According to the Soviet-style Cuban constitution of 1976, the National Assembly of People's Power, and its Council of State when the body is not in session, has supreme authority in the Cuban system. Since the National Assembly meets only twice a year for a few days each time, the 31-member Council of State wields power. The Council of Ministers, through its 9-member executive committee, handles the administration of the economy, which is state-controlled except for a tiny open-market sector. Raul Castro is President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, and Jose Ramon Machado Ventura serves as First Vice President of both bodies. Although the constitution theoretically provides for independent courts, it explicitly subordinates them to the National Assembly and to the Council of State.

The People's Supreme Court is the highest judicial body. Due process is routinely denied to Cuban citizens, particularly in cases involving political offenses. The constitution states that all legally recognized civil liberties can be denied to anyone who opposes the "decision of the Cuban people to build socialism." Citizens can be and have been jailed for terms of 3 years or more for simply criticizing the communist system or Fidel Castro. Under the law of "dangerousness," citizens can be jailed for up to 4 years if a police official thinks that they show "anti-social behavior."

The Communist Party is constitutionally recognized as Cuba's only legal political party. The party monopolizes all government positions, including judicial offices. Though not a formal requirement, party membership is a de facto prerequisite for high-level official positions and professional advancement in most areas. A small number of non-party members have been permitted by the controlling Communist authorities to serve in the National Assembly. The Communist Party or one of its front organizations approves candidates for all elected offices. Citizens do not have the right to change their government.

In March 2003, the government carried out one of the most brutal crackdowns on peaceful opposition in the history of Cuba when it arrested 75 human rights activists, independent journalists and opposition figures on various charges, ranging from aiding a foreign power to violating national security laws. Authorities subjected the detainees to summary trials and sentenced them to prison terms ranging from 6 to 28 years. Amnesty International identified all 75 as "prisoners of conscience." As of August 2008, 55 of the original 75 prisoners remained incarcerated. See also the Department's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Cuba.

Although the constitution allows legislative proposals backed by at least 10,000 citizens to be submitted directly to the National Assembly, in 2002 the government rejected a petition known as the Varela Project, supporters of which submitted 11,000 signatures calling for a national referendum on political and economic reforms. Many of the 75 activists arrested in March 2003 participated in the Varela Project. In October 2003, Project Varela organizers submitted a second petition to the National Assembly with an additional 14,000 signatures. Since April 2004, some prisoners of conscience have been released, 20 of whom were in the group of 75 and four of whom along with their families were exiled to Spain. All suffered from moderate to severe medical conditions and many of them continue to be harassed by state security even after their release from prison. In April 2008, a government-sponsored mob assaulted a group of Damas de Blanco (Women in White) who were peacefully demanding the release of political prisoners. The following month, the government broke up a dissident-led, symbolic funeral honoring the death Pedro Luis Boitel, a student activist.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres. of the Council of State: **Raul CASTRO Ruz, Gen.**
First Vice Pres. of the Council of State: **Jose Ramon MACHADO Ventura**
Vice Pres. of the Council of State: **Juan ALMEIDA Bosque**
Vice Pres. of the Council of State: **Julio CASAS Reguiero, Corps Gen.**
Vice Pres. of the Council of State: **Abelardo COLOME Ibarra, Corps Gen.**
Vice Pres. of the Council of State: **Carlos LAGE Davila**
Vice Pres. of the Council of State: **Esteban LAZO Hernandez**
Min. Sec. of the Council of State: **Jose M. MIYAR Barruecos**
Pres. of the Council of Ministers: **Raul CASTRO Ruz, Gen.**
First Vice Pres. of the Council of Ministers: **Jose Ramon MACHADO Ventura**
Vice Pres. of the Council of Ministers: **Osmani CIENFUEGOS Gorriaran**

Vice Pres. of the Council of Ministers: **Jose Ramon FERNANDEZ Alvarez**
Vice Pres. of the Council of Ministers: **Pedro MIRET Prieto**
Vice Pres. of the Council of Ministers: **Otto RIVERO Torres**
Vice Pres. of the Council of Ministers: **Jose Luis RODRIGUEZ Garcia**
Sec. of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers: **Carlos LAGE Davila**
Min. of Agriculture:
Min. of Auditing & Control: **Gladys Maria BEJERANO Portela**
Min. of Basic Industries: **Yadira GARCIA Vera**
Min. of Construction: **Fidel FIGUEROA de la Paz**
Min. of Culture: **Abel PRIETO Jimenez**
Min. of Domestic Trade: **Marino MURILLO Jorge**
Min. of Economy & Planning: **Jose Luis RODRIGUEZ Garcia**
Min. of Education: **Ena Elsa VELAZQUEZ Cobiella**
Min. of Finance & Prices: **Georgina BARREIRO Fajardo**
Min. of the Fishing Industry: **Alfredo LOPEZ Valdes**
Min. of the Food Industry: **Alejandro ROCA Iglesias**
Min. of Foreign Investment & Economic Cooperation: **Marta LOMAS Morales**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Felipe PEREZ ROQUE**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **Raul DE LA NUEZ Ramirez**
Min. of Higher Education: **Juan VELA Valdes**
Min. of Information Science & Communication: **Ramiro VALDES Menendez**
Min. of Interior: **Abelardo COLOME Ibarra, Corps Gen.**
Min. of Justice: **Maria Esther REUS Gonzalez**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Alfredo MORALES Cartaya**
Min. of Light Industry: **Jose HERNANDEZ Bernardez**
Min. of Public Health: **Jose Ramon BALAGUER Cabrera**
Min. of the Revolutionary Armed Forces: **Julio CASAS Reguiero, Corps Gen.**
Min. of Science, Technology, & Environment:**.**
Min. of the Steelworking Industry: **Fernando ACOSTA Santana**
Min. of the Sugar Industry: **Ulises ROSALES del Toro**
Min. of Tourism: **Manuel MARRERO Cruz**
Min. of Transportation: **Jorge Luis SIERRA Cruz**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Ricardo CABRISAS Ruiz**
Attorney Gen.: **Juan ESCALONA Reguera**
Pres., Central Bank of Cuba: **Francisco SOBERON Valdes**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Rodrigo MALMIERCA Diaz**

NATIONAL SECURITY

Cuba is a highly militarized society. From 1975 until the late 1980s, massive Soviet military assistance enabled Cuba to upgrade its military capabilities and project power abroad. The tonnage of Soviet military deliveries to Cuba throughout most of the 1980s exceeded deliveries in any year since the military build-up during the 1962 missile crisis.

With the loss of Soviet-era subsidies in the early 1990s, Cuba's armed forces have shrunk considerably, both in terms of numbers and assets. Combined active duty troop strength for all three services is estimated at 50,000 to 55,000 personnel (compared to some 235,000 on active duty 10 years ago) and much of Cuba's weaponry appears to be in storage. Cuba's air force, once considered among the best equipped in Latin America, no longer merits that distinction, though it still possesses advanced aircraft and weapons systems; the navy has become primarily a coastal defense force with no blue water capability. The Cuban army is still one of the region's more formidable, but it also is much reduced and no longer has the considerable resources necessary to project power abroad.

The military plays a dominant role in the economy and manages a number of hotels in the tourist sector. The country's two paramilitary organizations, the Territorial Militia Troops and the Youth Labor Army, have a reduced training capability. Cuba also adopted a "war of the people" strategy that highlights the defensive nature of its capabilities. The government continues to maintain a large state security apparatus under the Ministry of Interior to repress dissent within Cuba, and in the last decade has formed special forces units to confront indications of popular unrest.

ECONOMY

The Cuban Government continues to adhere to socialist principles in organizing its state-controlled economy. Most of the means of production are owned and run by the government and, according to Cuban Government statistics, about 75% of the labor force is employed by the state. The actual figure is closer to 93%, with some 150,000 small farmers and another 150,000 "cuentapropistas," or holders of licenses for self-employment, representing a mere 2.1% of the nearly 4.87 million-person workforce.

The Cuban economy is still recovering from a decline in gross domestic product of at least 35% between 1989 and 1993 as the loss of Soviet subsidies laid bare the economy's fundamental weaknesses. To alleviate the economic crisis, in 1993 and 1994 the government introduced a few market-oriented reforms, including opening to tourism, allowing foreign investment, legalizing the dollar, and authorizing self-employment for some 150 occupations. These measures resulted in modest economic growth; the official statistics, however, are deficient and as a result provide an incomplete measure of Cuba's real economic situation. Living conditions at the end of the decade remained well below the 1989 level. Lower sugar and nickel prices, increases in petroleum costs, a post-September 11, 2001 decline in tourism, devastating hurricanes in November 2001 and August 2004, and a major drought in the eastern half of the island caused severe economic disruptions. Growth rates continued to stagnate in 2002 and 2003, while 2004 and 2005 showed some renewed growth. Moreover, the gap in the standard of living has widened between those with access to dollars and those without. Jobs that can earn dollar salaries or tips from foreign businesses and tourists have become highly desirable. It is not uncommon to see doctors, engineers, scientists, and other professionals working in restaurants or as taxi drivers.

The government of Raul Castro announced several initiatives designed to increase revenues to the Cuban state by formalizing some business activities which were previously conducted in informal and illegal markets. Even in doing so, the Cuban Government is seeking tighter state control over the economy. The Cuban Government is aggressively pursuing a policy of recentralization, making it increasingly difficult for foreigners to conduct business on the island. Likewise, Cuban citizens are adversely affected by reversion to a peso economy and the dual currency regime in which Cubans are paid in pesos, but many goods are sold in "convertible pesos," worth approximately 23 times the regular peso.

In his February 24, 2008, inaugural address, Raul Castro said the Cuban Government would "advance in an articulate, sound and well-thought out manner" a series of measures that would raise the Cuban standard of living and tie individual prosperity to individual initiative and work performance. Castro also referred to excess "prohibitions and regulations," the simplest of which the Cuban Government would start removing "in the next few weeks." More complex "reforms," he said, could only be introduced after changes to certain legal regulations. This followed Castro's July 26, 2007, speech on economic development, in which he asserted that tackling problems in milk production would address some of Cuba's main economic challenges. On July 12, 2008, Raul Castro placed caveats on many of these initiatives by noting that global economic factors may delay implementation, including for wage increases for Cubans. In his speech marking the 55th anniversary of the start of the Cuban revolution on July 26, 2008, Raul Castro further tamped down expectations for change by warning that the global economy could delay his economic adjustments.

Since February 24, Raul Castro's government has announced it would pursue the following initiatives: Expanding access to public land for private farmers; permitting some Cubans to own their homes, increasing wages and retirement pensions; raising the retirement age; upgrading public transportation systems and infrastructure; licensing private taxis to operate; limited deregulation of the construction industry; expanding access to certain previously restricted consumer goods (like cell phones, computers, microwaves, toasters, DVD players, motorcycles, air conditioners, electric ovens, and agricultural supplies and tools), consolidation and modernization of Cuba's family doctor program, and launching a new 24-hour television station to include mostly foreign-produced content. Many of these initiatives, if implemented, would authorize activities that are already underway in Cuba's informal economy.

Prolonged austerity and the state-controlled economy's inefficiency in providing adequate goods and services have created conditions for a flourishing informal economy in Cuba. As the variety and amount of goods available in state-run peso stores has declined, Cubans have turned increasingly to the black market to obtain needed food, clothing, and household items. Pilferage of items from the work place to sell on the black market or illegally offering services on the sidelines of official employment is common, and Cuban companies regularly figure 15% in losses into their production plans to cover this. Recognizing that Cubans must engage in such activity to make ends meet and that attempts to shut the informal economy down would be futile, the government concentrates its control efforts on ideological appeals against theft and shutting down large organized operations. A report by an independent economist and opposition leader speculates that more than 40% of the Cuban economy operates in the informal sector. Since 2005, the government has carried out a large anti-corruption campaign as it continues efforts to recentralize much of the economy under the regime's control.

Sugar, which has been the mainstay of the island's economy for most of its history, has fallen upon troubled times. In 1989, production was more than 8 million tons, but by the mid-1990s, it had fallen to around 3.5 million tons. Inefficient planting and cultivation methods, poor management, shortages of spare parts, and poor transportation infrastructure combined to deter the recovery of the sector. In June 2002, the government announced its intention to implement a "comprehensive transformation" of this declining sector. Almost half the existing sugar mills were closed, and more than 100,000 workers were laid off. The government has promised that these workers will be "retrained" in other fields, though it is unlikely they will find new jobs in Cuba's stagnant economy. Moreover, despite such efforts, the sugar harvest continued to decline, falling to 2.1 million tons in 2003, the smallest since 1933. According to government reports, the harvest was not much better in 2004 (2.3 million tons), and continued to slide in 2005 (1.3 million tons), 2006 (1.2 million tons), and 2007 (approximately 1 million tons). According to government projections, Cuba expects to meet domestic sugar demand in 2009 for the first time after a major restructuring in 2002.

Tourism figures prominently in the Cuban Government's plans for development, and a top official cast it as at the "heart of the economy." Havana devotes significant resources to building new tourist facilities and renovating historic structures for use in the tourism sector. Roughly 1.7 million tourists visited Cuba in 2001, generating about $1.85 billion in gross revenues; in 2003, the number rose to 1.9 million tourists, predominantly from Canada and the European Union (EU), generating revenue of $2.1 billion. In 2004, the number of tourists to Cuba crossed the 2 million mark (2.05 million), including the so-called "medical tourists" from other Latin American countries seeking medical treatment at Cuban facilities. Since 2004, the volume of tourists has remained relatively consistent, at 2.32 million (2005), 2.2 million (2006), and 2.1 million (2007). During the first quarter of 2008 there was a 15% increase in tourists compared to the first quarter of 2007, according to the Caribbean Tourism Organization.

According to the Cuban Ministry of the Basic Industry (MINBAS), nickel became the leading export and the top foreign exchange earner in 2007, valued at approximately $2.7 billion. Nickel extraction in 2007 was 2.2% higher than in 2006. The main market for nickel exports is China. Cuba produced between 75,000 and 76,000 tons of nickel in 2007. The Cuban Government predicted that nickel and cobalt production would reach a record 80,000 tons in 2008. Cuba's pharmaceutical industry generated $350 million in exports in 2007, ranking second in foreign sales behind nickel and ahead of traditional products such as tobacco, rum, and sugar.

Remittances also play a large role in Cuba's economy. Cuba does not publish accurate economic statistics, but academic sources estimate that remittances total from $600 million to $1 billion per year, with most coming from families in the United States. U.S. regulation changes announced in June 2004 allow remittances to be sent only to the remitter's immediate family; they cannot be remitted to certain Cuban Government officials and members of the Cuban Communist Party; and the total amount of family remittances that an authorized traveler may carry to Cuba is now $300, reduced from $3,000. (See also the Commission on Assistance to a Free Cuba report at www.cafc.gov, cited below.) The Cuban Government captures these dollar remittances by allowing Cuban citizens to shop in state-run "dollar stores," which sell food, household, and clothing items at a high mark-up averaging over 240% of face value.

Beginning in November 2004, the government mandated that U.S. dollars be exchanged for "convertible pesos"—a local currency that can be used in special shops on the island but has no value internationally—for a 10% charge. The 10% conversion fee disproportionately affects Cubans who receive remittances from relatives in the U.S.

To help keep the economy afloat, Cuba has actively courted foreign investment, which often takes the form of joint ventures with the Cuban Government holding half of the equity, management contracts for tourism facilities, or financing for the sugar harvest. A new legal framework laid out in 1995 allowed for majority foreign ownership in joint ventures with the Cuban Government. In practice, majority ownership by the foreign partner is nonexistent. Of the 540 joint ventures formed since the Cuban Government issued the first legislation on foreign investment in 1982, 397 remained at the end of 2002, and 287 at the close of 2005. Due in large part to the government's recentralization efforts, it is estimated that one joint venture and two small cooperative production ventures have closed each week since 2000. Responding to this decline in the number of joint ventures, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Investment explained that foreign investment is not a pillar of development in and of itself. Moreover, the hostile investment climate, characterized by inefficient and overpriced labor imposed by the Communist government, dense regulations, and an impenetrable bureaucracy, continue to deter foreign investment. Foreign direct investment flows decreased from $448 million in 2000 to $39 million in 2001 and were at zero in 2002. In July 2002, the European Union, through its embassies in Havana, transmitted to the Cuban Government a document that outlined the problems encountered in operating joint ventures in Cuba. Titled "The Legal and Administrative Framework for Foreign Trade and Investment by European Companies in Cuba," the paper noted the difficulty in obtaining such basic necessities as work and residence permits for foreign employees—even exit visas and drivers licenses. It complained that the Government of Cuba gave EU joint venture partners little or no say in hiring Cuban staff, often forced the joint venture to contract employees who were not professionally suitable, and yet reserved to itself the right to fire any worker at any time without cause. It noted administrative difficulties in securing financing and warned that "the difficulties of state firms in meeting their payment obligations are seriously threatening some firms and increasing the risk premium which all operators have to pay for their operations with Cuba." The Cuban Government offered no response.

Investors are also constrained by the U.S.-Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act that provides sanctions for those who "traffic" in property expropriated from U.S. citizens. More than a dozen companies have pulled out of Cuba or altered their plans to invest there due to the threat of action under the Libertad Act.

In an attempt to provide jobs for workers laid off due to the economic crisis and bring some forms of black market activity into more controllable channels, the Cuban Government in 1993 legalized self-employment for some 150 occupations. This small private sector is tightly controlled and regulated. Set monthly fees must be paid regardless of income earned, and frequent inspections yield stiff fines when any of the many self-employment regulations are violated. Rather than expanding private sector opportunities, in recent years, the government has been attempting to squeeze more of these private sector entrepreneurs out of business and back to the public sector. Many have opted to enter the informal economy or black market, and others have closed. These measures reduced private sector employment from a peak of 209,000 to less than 100,000. Moreover, a large number of those people who nominally are self-employed in reality are well-connected fronts for military officials. No recent figures have been made available, but the Government of Cuba reported at the end of 2001 that tax receipts from the self-employed fell 8.1% due to the decrease in the number of these taxpayers. Since October 1, 2004, the Cuban Government no longer issues new licenses for 40 of the approximately 150 categories of self-employment, including for the most popular ones, such as private restaurants.

In June 2005, 2,000 more licenses were revoked from self-employed workers as a means to reassert government control over the economy

and to stem growing inequalities associated with self-employment. The licenses for self-employed workers were typically for service-oriented work, allowing the Cuban people to eke out a small living in an otherwise impoverished state. Moreover, workers in Cuba's tourist sector—at resorts where native Cubans are prohibited unless they are on the job—have been prohibited by a Ministry of Tourism regulation from accepting gifts, tips, or even food from foreigners, in a further attempt at increasing the tourist apartheid that exists on the island.

A 2004 UN Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) report recommended that Cuba "redesign the parameters of competition in the public, private and cooperative sectors [and] redefine the role of the state in the economy." It recommended more flexibility in self-employment regulations, property diversification, economic decentralization, and a role for the market. The Cuban Government, however, is today reversing the economic liberalization of the 1990s and re-centralizing its economy. Evidence of this is found in the decline in the number of firms participating in the perfeccionamiento empresarial, or entrepreneurial improvement (EI), program, which is based on capitalist management techniques. EI was instituted in the 1980s as a military-led pilot project, and in 1998, the Cuban Government extended it from military to civilian "parastatals," reportedly to foster capitalist competitiveness. At first, the government highlighted participating companies' achievements in cutting costs and boosting profitability and quality and suggested that the increased autonomy of state managers under EI was producing an efficient form of socialism with a strong link between pay and performance. However, many in the Communist Party, even Fidel Castro himself, resisted EI. Many of the original participants have since left the program and participating firms have seen little growth in revenue. The EI program has fallen far short of expectations and the Cuban Government no longer heralds its successes or its future prospects. In 2003 the Cuban Government also tightened foreign exchange controls, requiring that state companies hold money in convertible pesos and obtain special authorization from the central bank before making hard currency transactions. Practically speaking, this restricted companies from using the dollar for internal trade. Following this, in 2004 the government announced that all state entities must stop charging in U.S. dollars and charge only in pesos for any products and services not considered a part of a company's "fundamental social objective." It also recently implemented new requirements to channel imports through monopolistic Soviet-style wholesale distribution companies.

Cuba's precarious economic position is complicated by the high price it must pay for foreign financing. The Cuban Government defaulted on most of its international debt in 1986 and does not have access to credit from international financial institutions like the World Bank, which means Havana must rely heavily on short-term loans to finance imports, chiefly food and fuel. Because of its poor credit rating, an $11 billion hard currency debt, and the risks associated with Cuban investment, interest rates have reportedly been as high as 22%. In 2002, citing chronic delinquencies and mounting short-term debts, Moody's lowered Cuba's credit rating to Caa1—"speculative grade, very poor." Dunn and Bradstreet rate Cuba as one of the riskiest economies in the world.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Cuba's totalitarian regime controls all aspects of life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations, the government bureaucracy, and State Security Department. The latter is tasked with monitoring, infiltrating, and controlling the country's beleaguered human rights community. Despite having signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in February 2008, Cuba ignores the obligations assumed in these treaties, continuing to commit serious abuses and denying its citizens the right to change their government. Cuba is also a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and sits on the UN Human Rights Council, yet routinely arrests citizens who seek to exercise internationally recognized fundamental freedoms.

The government incarcerates people for their peaceful political beliefs or activities. The total number of political prisoners and detainees is unknown, because the government does not disclose such information and keeps its prisons off-limits to human rights organizations and international human rights monitors. There are an estimated 225 prisoners of conscience currently detained in Cuba in addition to as many as 5,000 people sentenced for "dangerousness."

The government places severe limitations on freedom of speech and press, as noted by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Reporters Without Borders. The constitution provides for freedom of speech and press insofar as views "conform to the aims of a socialist society." In March 2008, demonstrators distributing copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were attacked by an orchestrated mob and later detained. Despite the government's decision to permit Cubans to purchase personal computers, access to the Internet is strictly controlled and given only to those deemed ideologically trustworthy; Internet restrictions were tightened further in March and April 2008 to block access by Cuban citizens to certain independent websites.

Freedom of assembly is not constitutionally guaranteed in Cuba. The law punishes unauthorized assembly of more than three persons. The government also restricts freedom of movement and prevents some citizens from emigrating because of their political views. Cubans need explicit "exit permission" from their government to leave their country, and

many people are denied exit permission by the Cuban Government, despite the fact that they have received travel documents issued by other countries.

Although Raul Castro has encouraged controlled forms of "constructive criticism," the Cuban Government continues to show little tolerance for unauthorized dissent. It often utilizes short-term detentions to break up peaceful marches and demonstrations. It sometimes harasses dissidents by directing militants from the Communist Party, the Communist Youth League, Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Women, the Association of Veterans of the Cuban Revolution, and other groups to stage public protests against the dissident, usually in front of his/her residence. These protests, called "acts of repudiation," involve the shouting of insults and the occasional use of violence. The events generate intense fear and are aimed at ostracizing and intimidating those who challenge the government's policies.

Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. Although physical torture is rare, cruel treatment of prisoners—particularly political prisoners and detainees—is common. Prison authorities frequently beat, neglect, isolate, and deny medical treatment to inmates. Authorities often deny family visits, adequate nutrition, exposure to sunshine, and pay for work. Overcrowding is rife.

The Cuban Government routinely violates international core labor standards. The law does not allow Cuban workers to form and join unions of their choice. The government-approved unions do not act as trade unions, promote worker rights or protect the right to strike; rather, they are geared toward ensuring that production goals are met. Some workers lose their jobs because of their political beliefs. Salaries are not high enough to meet food and clothing costs; consequently, many Cubans resort to small-scale embezzlement or pilfering from their employers.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Cuba's once-ambitious foreign policy has been scaled back and redirected as a result of economic hardship and the end of the Cold War. Cuba aims to find new sources of trade, aid, and foreign investment and to promote opposition to U.S. policy, especially the trade embargo and the 1996 Libertad Act. Cuba has relations with over 160 countries and has civilian assistance workers—principally physicians and nurses—in more than 20 nations.

Since the end of Soviet backing, Cuba appears to have largely abandoned monetary support for guerrilla movements that typified its involvement in regional politics in Latin America and Africa, though it maintains relations with several guerrilla and terrorist groups and provides refuge for some of their members in Cuba. Cuba's support for Latin guerrilla movements, its Marxist-Leninist government, and its alignment with the U.S.S.R. led to its isolation in the hemisphere. Cuba is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS), although its present government has been excluded from participation since 1962 for incompatibility with the principles of the inter-American system. Cuba hosted the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in September 2006 and will hold the NAM presidency until 2009. In the context of the NAM and its ordinary diplomacy, Cuba has developed friendly relations with Iran, North Korea and other rogue states.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Cuba expanded its military presence abroad, spending millions of dollars in exporting revolutions; deployments reached 50,000 troops in Angola, 24,000 in Ethiopia, 1,500 in Nicaragua, and hundreds more elsewhere. In Angola, Cuban troops, supported logistically by the U.S.S.R., backed the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in its effort to take power after Portugal granted Angola its independence.

Cuban forces played a key role in Ethiopia's war against Somalia and remained there in substantial numbers as a garrison force for a decade. Cubans served in a non-combat advisory role in Mozambique and the Congo. Cuba also used the Congo as a logistical support center for Cuba's Angola mission. In the late 1980s, Cuba began to pull back militarily. Cuba unilaterally removed its forces from Ethiopia, met the timetable of the 1988 Angola-Namibia accords by completing the withdrawal of its forces from Angola before July 1991, and ended military assistance to Nicaragua following the Sandinistas' 1990 electoral defeat.

EU-Cuban diplomatic relations have suffered as a result of the March 2003 crackdown on dissidents. In June 2004, EU members imposed restrictive measures on Cuba including inviting dissidents to national day celebrations and suspending high-level meetings between EU members and the Cuban Government. In January 2005, though, the restrictions were suspended in an effort to re-engage the regime as a means of advancing the EU's policy of encouraging reform while preparing for the transition. The restrictive measures were formally dropped in June 2008, but the EU established a set of benchmarks to track the Cuban Government's performance on human rights.

Canada maintains a robust trade and investment relationship with Cuba, with a large presence by the Sherritt Corp. in nickel mining. Some Sherritt operations take place on property confiscated from American investors, subjecting officers of Sherritt to Libertad Act sanctions. Canada is also the source of the largest number of foreign tourists who visit Cuba each year.

Spain is among the most important foreign investors in Cuba. The ruling Zapatero government continues Spain's longstanding policy of encouraging further investment and trade with Cuba. Cuba imports more goods from Spain (almost 13% of total imports) than from any other country. Spanish economic involvement with Cuba is exclusively centered on joint venture enterprises that provide financial benefit to the Cuban Gov-

ernment through state-owned firms. Spain's desire to provide support to its business community often impedes its willingness to pressure the Cuban Government on political reform and human rights issues.

Cuba's bilateral relationship with Venezuela has helped keep the Cuban economy afloat. The "Integral Cooperation Accord" signed by Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in October 2000 laid the groundwork for a quasi-barter exchange of Venezuelan oil for Cuban goods and services that has since become a lifeline for Cuba. For Cuba, the benefits of the cooperation accord are subsidized petroleum and increased hard currency flows. The original agreement allowed for the sale, at market prices, of up to 53,000 barrels per day of crude oil and derivatives (diesel, gasoline, jet fuel, etc.) by PDVSA, Venezuela's state-owned petroleum company, to its Cuban counterpart, CUPET. The number of barrels of oil Venezuela began selling to Cuba has risen to over 90,000 barrels daily. Under the accord, PDVSA extended preferential payment terms to CUPET, including 90-day short-term financing instead of the 30 days offered to its other customers and, in lieu of a standard letter of credit backed by an international bank, PDVSA accepted IOUs from Cuba's Banco Nacional, the central banking entity responsible for servicing Havana's foreign debt. In August 2001, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez amended the 2000 accord to allow Venezuela to compensate the Cuban Government in hard currency for any and all Cuban products and services originally intended as in-kind payment for Venezuelan oil. As a result, Cuban exports of goods and services to Venezuela climbed from $34 million in 2001 to more than $150 million in 2003. Venezuelan ministries are contracting with Cuba for everything from generic pharmaceuticals to pre-fabricated housing and dismantled sugar mill equipment. On April 28, 2005, Chavez and Castro signed 49 economic agreements in Havana, covering areas as diverse as oil, nickel, agriculture, furniture, shoes, textiles, toys, lingerie, tires, construction materials, electricity, transportation, health, and education. Venezuela is also committed to sending more than $400 million in various products duty-free to Cuba and plans to open an office of state-owned commercial Venezuelan Industrial Bank (BIV) in Havana to finance imports and exports between the two countries, while Cuba will open an official Banco Exterior de Cuba in Caracas. Increased economic engagement along with the rapid growth in Cuban sales to Caracas has established Venezuela as one of the island's largest export markets.

A series of recent economic agreements between Cuba and China have strengthened trade between the two countries. Sino-Cuban trade totaled more than $525 million in 2004, according to China Customs statistics. This represents an increase of more than 47% over 2003. Most of China's aid involves in-kind supply of goods or technical assistance. During President Hu-Jintao's visit to Cuba in November 2004, China signed investment-related memorandums of understanding (MOUs) estimated at more than $500 million, according to press reports. If these MOUs are fully realized, they would represent a sharp increase in known Chinese investments in Cuba. In addition to these MOUs, a number of commercial accords were signed at the first-ever Cuba-China Investment and Trade Forum. China also plans to invest approximately $500 million in a nickel operation in Moa in the eastern province of Holguin. According to the MOU, Cuba will own 51% of the enterprise and Chinese-owned Minmetals the remaining 49%. Chinese and Venezuelan economic support, including investment and direct aid, have given Cuba the space to eliminate many of the tentative open market reforms Cuba put in place during the depth of its mid-1990s economic crisis.

The Russian prime minister visited Cuba in October 2006, signaling a new effort to expand trade and investment, albeit financed by Russian credit. Russia set aside, for the moment, more than U.S. $20 billion in Soviet-era debt, restructured post-1991 debt, and extended a new credit line to Cuba. The new credit line is for U.S. $355 million repayable over 10 years at an interest rate of 5%. The new credit is conditioned in that it must be used to purchase Russian cars, trucks, and planes, as well as to finance Cuban energy and transport infrastructure projects, including air navigation systems. Russia further agreed to restructure U.S. $166 million in debt accumulated since 1993. Both nations also signed an agreement on military equipment and technical services.

U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS

On May 20, 2002, President Bush announced the Initiative for a New Cuba that called on the Cuban Government to undertake political and economic reforms and conduct free and fair elections for the National Assembly. The initiative challenged the Cuban Government to open its economy, allow independent trade unions, and end discriminatory practices against Cuban workers. President Bush made clear that his response to such concrete reforms would be to work with the U.S. Congress to ease the restrictions on trade and travel between the United States and Cuba. The Cuban Government did not enact any such reforms. Instead, elections for the National Assembly were held in January 2003, with 609 government-approved candidates running for 609 seats. That was followed by the March crackdown on members of civil society.

In October 2003, President Bush created the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba to help the Cuban people achieve the goal of a rapid, peaceful transition to democracy that is strongly supportive of fundamental political and economic freedoms. Its mandate is to identify additional measures to help bring an end to the dictatorship and to lay out a plan for effective and decisive U.S. assistance to a post-dictatorship Cuba, should such be requested by a free Cuba. The commission report outlines how the United States would be prepared to

help a free Cuba improve infrastructure and the environment; consolidate the transition and help build democracy; meet the basic needs of the Cuban people in health, education, housing, and social services; and create the core institutions of a free economy. These recommendations are not a prescription for Cuba's future, but an indication of the kind of assistance the United States and the international community should be prepared to offer a free Cuba.

The commission also sought a more proactive, integrated, and disciplined approach to undermine the survival strategies of the Castro regime and contribute to conditions that will help the Cuban people hasten the dictatorship's end. The recommendations focus on actions available to the United States Government, allowing it to establish a strong foundation on which to build supportive international efforts. This comprehensive framework is composed of six interrelated tasks considered central to hastening change: empowering Cuban civil society; breaking the Cuban Government's information blockade on the Cuban people; denying resources to the regime; illuminating the reality of Castro's Cuba to the rest of the world; encouraging international diplomatic efforts to support Cuban civil society and challenge the Castro regime; and finally, undermining the regime's "succession strategy."

The Commission released its latest report in July 2006 (www.cafc.gov) as well as the "Compact with the Cuban People." The Compact with the Cuban People is a message of hope from the United States to the people of Cuba and a clear statement of principles to reassure Cubans that the U.S. stands with them in their desire for freedom.

The Second Report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba (CAFC II) sets forth specific assistance and programs the United States can offer to advance freedom and democracy in Cuba. The recommendations include $80 million over the following two fiscal years to support these activities. Over the past decade, the regime has built an apparatus designed to exploit humanitarian aspects of U.S. policy, specifically to siphon off hundreds of millions of dollars for itself. To deny resources to the regime, U.S. law enforcement authorities have been directed to conduct "sting" operations against "mule" networks and others who illegally carry money and to offer rewards to those who report on illegal remittances that lead to enforcement actions; family visits to Cuba have been limited to one trip every 3 years under a specific license (individuals are eligible to apply for a specific license 3 years after their last visit to Cuba); and the current authorized per diem amount (the authorized amount allowed for food and lodging expenses for travel in Cuba) has been reduced from $164 per day to $50 per day (i.e., approximately eight times what a Cuban national would expect to earn during a 14-day visit) for all family visits to Cuba, based on the presumption that travelers will stay with family in Cuba.

U.S. policy also pursues a multilateral effort to press for democratic change by urging its friends and allies to actively promote a democratic transition and respect for human rights. The United States opposes consideration of Cuba's return to the OAS or inclusion in the Summit of the Americas process until there is a democratic Cuban Government. The United States has repeatedly made clear, however, that it is prepared to respond reciprocally if the Cuban Government initiates fundamental, systematic, democratic change and respect for human rights. Cuba is on the State Department's worldwide list of state sponsors of terrorism, and as a result is subject to additional sanctions.

All U.S. travel to Cuba must be licensed by the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC), and must fall into one of ten categories. Further information on the licensing process can be obtained from OFAC or at their website. All exports to Cuba must also be licensed by the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS).

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 7, 2008

Country Description: Cuba is a totalitarian police state, which relies on repressive methods to maintain control. These methods, including intense physical and electronic surveillance of Cubans, are also extended to foreign travelers. Americans visiting Cuba should be aware that any encounter with a Cuban could be subject to surreptitious scrutiny by the Castro regime's secret police, the General Directorate for State Security (DGSE). Also, any interactions with average Cubans, regardless how well intentioned the American is, can subject that Cuban to harassment and/or detention, and other forms of repressive actions, by state security elements. The regime is strongly anti-American yet desperate for U.S. dollars to prop itself up. The United States does not have full

diplomatic relations with Cuba, but provides consular and other services through the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. The U.S. Interests Section operates under the legal protection of the Swiss government but is not co-located with the Swiss Embassy.

Entry And Exit Requirements And Travel Transaction Limitations: The Cuban Assets Control Regulations are enforced by the U.S. Treasury Department and affect all U.S. citizens and permanent residents wherever they are located, all people and organizations physically in the United States, and all branches and subsidiaries of U.S. organizations throughout the world.

The Regulations require that persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction be licensed to engage in any travel-related transactions pursuant to travel to, from, and within Cuba. Transactions related to tourist travel are not licensable. This restriction includes tourist travel to Cuba from or through a third country such as Mexico or Canada.

U.S. law enforcement authorities have increased enforcement of these regulations at U.S. airports and preclearance facilities in third countries. Travelers who fail to comply with Department of Treasury regulations could face civil penalties and criminal prosecution upon return to the United States.

General licenses are granted to the following categories of travelers, and they are permitted to spend money for Cuban travel and to engage in other transactions directly incident to the purpose of their travel, without the need to obtain a specific license from the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC):

- Journalists and supporting broadcasting or technical personnel (regularly employed in that capacity by a news reporting organization and traveling for journalistic activities).
- Official government travelers on official business.
- Members of international organizations of which the United States is also a member (traveling on official business).
- Full-time professionals whose travel transactions are directly related to research in their professional areas, provided that their research: 1) is of a noncommercial, academic nature; 2) comprises a full work schedule in Cuba; and 3) has a substantial likelihood of public dissemination.
- Full-time professionals whose travel transactions are directly related to attendance at professional meetings or conferences in Cuba organized by an international professional organization, institution, or association that regularly sponsors such meetings or conferences in other countries. An organization, institution, or association headquartered in the United States may not sponsor such a meeting or conference unless it has been specifically licensed to sponsor it. The purpose of the meeting or conference cannot be the promotion of tourism in Cuba or other commercial activities involving Cuba, or to foster production of any bio-technological products.

Travelers who do not qualify for a general license may be eligible for a specific OFAC license if their travel falls under one of the following categories.

Specific Licenses to Visit Immediate Family Members in Cuba: OFAC will issue specific licenses authorizing travel-related transactions incident to one visit lasting no more than 14 days to immediate family members who are nationals of Cuba per three-year period. For those who emigrated to the United States from Cuba, and have not since that time visited a family member in Cuba, the three-year period will be counted from the date they left Cuba. For all others, the three-year period will be counted from the date they last left Cuba pursuant to the pre-existing family visit general license, or from the date their family visit specific license was issued. Travelers wishing to visit an immediate family member in Cuba who is authorized to be in Cuba, but is not a national of Cuba, may be granted a specific license in exigent circumstances provided that the U.S. Interests Section in Havana concurs in the issuance of such a license.

Specific Licenses for Educational Institutions: Specific licenses may be issued by OFAC to authorize travel transactions related to certain educational activities by students or employees at U.S. undergraduate or graduate institutions. Such licenses must be renewed after a period of one year. Once an academic institution has applied for and received such a specific license, the following categories of travelers affiliated with that academic institution are authorized to engage in travel-related transactions incident to the following activities without seeking further authorization from OFAC:

- Undergraduate or graduate students participating in a structured educational program lasting at least 10 weeks as part of a course offered at a U.S. undergraduate or graduate institution. Students planning to engage in such transactions must carry a letter from the licensed institution stating: 1) the institution's license number; 2) that the student is enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program at the institution; and 3) that the travel is part of an educational program of that institution.
- Persons doing noncommercial Cuba-related academic research in Cuba for the purpose of qualifying academically as a professional (e.g., research toward a graduate degree). Students planning to engage in such transactions must carry a letter from the licensed institution stating: 1) the institution's license number; 2) that the student is enrolled in a graduate degree program at the institution; and 3) that the Cuba research will be accepted for credit toward that degree.

- Undergraduate or graduate students participating in a formal course of study lasting at least 10 weeks at a Cuban academic institution, provided that the Cuban study will be accepted for credit toward a degree at the licensed U.S. institution. A student planning to engage in such transactions must carry a letter from the licensed U.S. institution stating: 1) the institution's license number; 2) that the individual is a student currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate degree program, or a full-time permanent employee at the institution; and 3) that the Cuba-related travel is part of a structured educational program of that institution that will last at least 10 weeks.

- Persons regularly employed in a teaching capacity at a licensed U.S. undergraduate or graduate institution who plan to teach part or all of an academic program at a Cuban academic institution for at least 10 weeks. An individual planning to engage in such transactions must carry a letter from the licensed institution stating: 1) the institution's license number; and 2) that the individual is regularly employed by the licensed institution in a teaching capacity.

- Cuban scholars teaching or engaging in other scholarly activities at a licensed college or university in the United States. Licensed institutions may sponsor such Cuban scholars, including payment of a stipend or salary. The Cuban scholar may remit all such stipends or salary payments back to Cuba.

- Full-time employees of a licensed institution organizing or preparing for the educational activities described above. An individual engaging in such transactions must carry a letter from the licensed institution stating: 1) the institution's license number; and 2) that the individual is regularly employed by the institution.

Specific Licenses for Religious Organizations: Specific licenses may be issued by OFAC to religious organizations to authorize individuals affiliated with the organization to engage in travel transactions under the auspices of the religious organization. Applications by religious organizations for such licenses should include examples of the religious activities to be undertaken in Cuba. All individuals traveling pursuant to a religious organization's license must carry with them a letter from the licensed organization citing the number of the license and confirming that they are affiliated with the organization and that they are traveling to Cuba to engage in religious activities under the auspices of the organization.

Other Specific Licenses: Specific licenses may be issued by OFAC, on a case-by-case basis, authorizing travel transactions by the following categories of persons in connection with the following activities.

Humanitarian Projects and Support for the Cuban People—1) Persons traveling in connection with activities that are intended to provide support for the Cuban people, such as activities of recognized human rights organizations; and 2) Persons whose travel transactions are directly related to certain humanitarian projects in or related to Cuba that are designed to directly benefit the Cuban people. Licenses authorizing transactions for multiple trips over an extended period of time are available.

Free-Lance Journalism—Persons with a suitable record of publication who are traveling to Cuba to do research for a free-lance article. Licenses authorizing transactions for multiple trips over an extended period of time are available for applicants demonstrating a significant record of free-lance journalism.

Professional Research and Professional Meetings—Persons traveling to Cuba to do professional research or to attend a professional meeting that does not meet the requirements of the relevant general license (described above). Licenses authorizing transactions for multiple trips over an extended period of time are available.

Religious Activities—Persons traveling to Cuba to engage in religious activities that are not authorized pursuant to a religious organization's specific license. Licenses authorizing transactions for multiple trips over an extended period of time are available.

Public Performances, Athletic or Other Competitions, and Exhibitions—Persons traveling to participate in a public performance, athletic or other competition (that does not meet the requirements of the general license described above), or exhibition. The event must be open for attendance, and in relevant situations participation, by the Cuban public, and all profits from the event after costs must be donated to an independent nongovernmental organization in Cuba or a U.S.-based charity with the objective, to the extent possible, of benefiting the Cuban people.

Amateur or semi-professional athletes or teams traveling to participate in Cuba in an athletic competition held under the auspices of the relevant international sports federation. The athletes must have been selected for the competition by the relevant U.S. sports federation, and the competition must be one that is open for attendance, and in relevant situations participation, by the Cuban people.

Activities of Private Foundations or Research or Educational Institutions—Persons traveling to Cuba on behalf of private foundations or research or educational institutes that have an established interest in international relations to collect information related to Cuba for non-commercial purposes. Licenses authorizing transactions for multiple trips over an extended period of time are available.

Exportation, Importation, or Transmission of Information or Informational Materials—Persons traveling

to engage in activities directly related to the exportation, importation, or transmission of information or informational materials.

Licensed Exportation—Persons traveling to Cuba to engage in activities directly related to marketing, sales negotiation, accompanied delivery, or servicing of exports of health care products or other exports that may be considered for authorization under existing Department of Commerce regulations and guidelines with respect to Cuba or engaged in by U.S.-owned or controlled foreign firms.

Applying for a Specific License: Persons wishing to travel to Cuba under a specific license should send a letter specifying the details of the proposed travel, including any accompanying documentation, to the Licensing Division, Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of the Treasury, 1500 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20220. Academic institutions wishing to obtain one of the two-year specific licenses described above should send a letter to the same address requesting such a license and establishing that the institution is accredited by an appropriate national or regional accrediting association. Religious organizations wishing to obtain one of the specific licenses described above should send a letter to the same address requesting such a license and setting forth examples of religious activities to be undertaken in Cuba.

The United States maintains a broad embargo against trading with Cuba, and most commercial imports from Cuba are prohibited by law. The sale of certain items, including medicine and medical supplies, and agricultural commodities have been approved for export by specific legislation. The Department of the Treasury may issue licenses on a case-by-case basis authorizing Cuba travel-related transactions directly incident to marketing, sales negotiation, accompanied delivery, and servicing of exports and re-exports that appear consistent with the licensing policy of the Department of Commerce. The sectors in which U.S. citizens may sell and service products to Cuba include agricultural commodities, medicine, and medical devices.

The Treasury Department will also consider requests for specific licenses for humanitarian travel not covered by the general license, educational exchanges (of at least 10 weeks in duration), and religious activities by individuals or groups affiliated with a religious organization. Unless otherwise exempted or authorized, any person subject to U.S. jurisdiction who engages in any travel-related transaction in Cuba violates the regulations. Failure to comply with Department of Treasury regulations may result in civil penalties and criminal prosecution upon return to the United States.

Additional information may be obtained by contacting:

Licensing Division
Office of Foreign Assets Control
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Treasury Annex
Washington, DC 20220
Telephone (202) 622-2480
Fax (202) 622-1657
Internet users can log onto the web site at http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac.

Should a traveler receive a license, a valid passport is required for entry into Cuba. The Cuban government requires that the traveler obtain a visa prior to arrival. Attempts to enter or exit Cuba illegally, or to aid the irregular exit of Cuban nationals or other persons, are contrary to Cuban law and are punishable by stiff jail terms. Entering Cuban territory, territorial waters or airspace (within 12 miles of the Cuban coast) without prior authorization from the Cuban government may result in arrest or other enforcement action by Cuban authorities.

Immigration violators are subject to prison terms ranging from four years for illegal entry or exit to as many as 30 years for aggravated cases of alien smuggling. For current information on Cuban entry and customs requirements, travelers should contact:

Cuban Interests Section (an office of the Cuban government)
2630 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
Telephone (202) 797-8518
Fax (202) 797-8521

Consular Section
(part of Cuban Interests Section)
2639 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
Telephone (202) 797-8609/8610/8615
Fax (202) 986-7283

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

The Cuban Air Force shot down two U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace in 1996. As a result of this action, the President of the United States and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued an "Emergency Cease and Desist Order and Statement of Policy," which allows for vigorous enforcement action against U.S.-registered aircraft that violate Cuban airspace. Additional information is available through the FAA's web site at http://www.intl.faa.gov.

In addition to the appropriate general or specific license, aircraft and vessels seeking to travel to Cuba must obtain a temporary sojourn license from the Department of Commerce. Temporary sojourn licenses are not available for pleasure boaters. Additional information is available at http://www.bis.doc.gov.

Pursuant to an Executive Order issued after the 1996 shoot-down incident, boaters departing south Florida ports with the intention of entering Cuban territorial waters also must obtain permission in advance from the U.S. Coast Guard. The U.S. Coast Guard provides automated information at 1-800-582-5943.

Safety and Security: In May 2007, three Cuban military recruits were arrested after a firefight with Cuban police on the tarmac of Terminal 2 of Jose Martí International Airport. The heavily armed conscripts were attempting to hijack one of the planes at the terminal, which handles special charter flights between Havana and Miami. While this was the first attempted hijacking in several years, in November 2002 and in the first few months of 2003 there were numerous hijack attempts against aircraft and ocean-going vessels, several of which involved the use of weapons. Cuban authorities failed in their efforts to prevent two of these attempts. U.S. citizens, although not necessarily targets, may be caught up in any violence during an attempted hijacking. Accordingly, U.S. citizens should exercise caution when traveling in Cuba.

The United States Government has publicly and repeatedly announced that any person who hijacks (or attempts to hijack) an aircraft or vessel (whether common carrier or other) will face the maximum penalties pursuant to U.S. law, regardless of that person's nationality. In Cuba, hijackers will be sentenced to lengthy prison terms at a minimum, and may be subject to the death penalty; on April 11, 2003, the Government of Cuba executed three suspected hijackers, nine days after taking them into custody.

The waters around Cuba can be dangerous to navigate. Several U.S. boaters run aground in Cuba each year. U.S. boaters who have encountered problems that required repairs in Cuba have found repair and salvage services to be more expensive than comparable services in the U.S. or elsewhere in the Caribbean; for example, docking fees of up to ten dollars an hour have been reported. Cuban authorities typically hold boats as collateral for payment. The quality of repairs in Cuba is frequently not up to U.S. standards. Repairs take significantly longer in Cuba than they would in the U.S. due to lack of materials and bureaucratic impediments. Boaters are often confined to their boats while repairs are made; some boaters have been imprisoned while Cuban authorities investigate the circumstances of their entry to Cuba. The ability of the U.S. Interests Section to assist in such situations is extremely limited.

The transfer of funds from the U.S. to Cuba to pay for boat repair and salvage is subject to restrictions codified in U.S. law relating to commercial transactions with the Government of Cuba. A Treasury license is required for such payments and applicants should be prepared to provide documentary evidence demonstrating the emergency nature of the repairs.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime statistics are significantly under-reported by the Cuban government. Although crime against American and other foreign travelers in Cuba has generally been limited to pick pocketing, purse snatching, or the taking of unattended items, the U.S. Interests Section has received increased reports of violent assaults against individuals in connection with robberies. In cases of violent crime, Americans should not resist if confronted, as perpetrators are usually armed with a knife or machete and often work with partners.

Pick pocketings and purse snatchings usually occur in crowded areas such as markets, beaches, and other gathering points, including Old Town Havana and the Prado neighborhood. Travelers should use caution in all such areas and are advised not to leave belongings unattended, nor to carry purses and bags loosely over one's shoulder. Visitors should avoid wearing flashy jewelry or displaying large amounts of cash. When possible, visitors should carry a copy of their passport with them and leave the original at a secure location. U.S. visitors should also beware of Cuban jineteros, or street "jockeys," who specialize in swindling tourists. While most jineteros speak English and go out of their way to appear friendly, e.g. by offering to serve as tour guides or to facilitate the purchase of cheap cigars, many are in fact professional criminals who will not hesitate to use violence in their efforts to acquire tourists' money and other valuables.

Thefts of property from air travelers' baggage have become increasingly common. All travelers should ensure that valuables remain under their personal control at all times, and are never put into checked baggage.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Interests Section. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the American Citizen Services office of the U.S. Interests Section for assistance.

The staff in this office can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, facilitate contact with family members or friends in the U.S., and explain how funds could be transferred from the U.S. to Cuba.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care does not meet U.S. standards. While medical professionals are generally competent, many health facilities face shortages of medical supplies and bed

space. Many medications are unavailable so travelers to Cuba should bring with them any prescribed medicine in its original container and in amounts commensurate with personal use. Travelers may also consider bringing additional amounts of prescribed medicines and over-the-counter remedies in the event that a return to the U.S. is delayed for unforeseen reasons. A copy of the prescription and a letter from the prescribing physician explaining the need for prescription drugs facilitates their entry into the country.

Travelers to the Havana area should be aware that U.S. and other foreign visitors are generally limited to using only the "tourist" Cira Garcia Hospital located in the Miramar neighborhood of Havana. Treatment at Cira Garcia and any other medical consultation would require that U.S. travelers pay in cash.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: No medical facility in Cuba will accept U.S.-issued insurance cards and medical services must be paid for in cash. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below regarding traffic safety in Cuba is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving is on the right-hand side of the road; speed limits are sometimes posted and generally respected. Passengers in automobiles are generally required to wear seatbelts and a recent law requires all motorcyclists to wear helmets.

Reports suggest that accidents involving motor vehicles are now the leading cause of accidental death in Cuba. Many accidents involve motorists striking pedestrians or bicyclists. Drivers found responsible for accidents resulting in serious injury or death are subject to prison terms of up to 10 years, and Cuban authorities may prohibit drivers of rental cars who are involved in accidents from leaving the country until all claims associated with an accident are settled. Additionally, the U.S. Interests Section notes that mere witnesses to vehicular accidents may not be permitted to leave Cuba until an investigation into the accident has been completed. Taxis are available in busy commercial and tourist areas; radio-dispatched taxis are generally clean and reliable. Travelers should be aware that licensed taxis available near hotel areas are often driven by DGSE agents or the drivers report to the DGSE, as part of the regime's efforts to follow the activities of foreign visitors. Travelers should not accept rides in unlicensed taxis as they may be used by thieves to rob passengers. Buses designated for tourist travel, both between and within cities, generally meet international standards for both cleanliness and safety. Public buses used by Cubans, known as "guaguas" or "camellos," are crowded, unreliable and havens for pickpockets. These public buses will usually not offer rides to foreign visitors.

Although popular with tourists, the three-wheeled, yellow-hooded "Co-Co" taxis are highly unsafe and should be avoided. "Co-Co" taxis are modified motorcycles that reach speeds of up to 40 mph, but have no seat belts or other safety features. Although the main arteries of Havana are generally well-maintained, secondary streets often are not. Many roads and city streets are unlit, making night driving dangerous, especially as some cars and most bicycles lack running lights or reflectors. Street signage tends to be insufficient and confusing. Many Cuban cars are old, in poor condition and lack turn signals and other standard safety equipment. Drivers should exercise extreme care.

The principal Cuban east-west highway is in good condition but lacks lights and extends only two-thirds of the way from Havana to the eastern tip of the island. The extension of that highway on to the east is in poor condition in many areas, with washed out sections and deep potholes. Night driving should be strictly avoided outside urban areas. Secondary rural roads are narrow, and some are in such bad condition as to be impassable by cars. Due to the rarity of cars on rural roads, pedestrians, bicycles, horse-drawn carts, and farm equipment operators wander onto the roads without any regard to possible automobile traffic. Unfenced livestock constitute another serious road hazard.

Rental car agencies provide roadside assistance to their clients as a condition of the rental contract. Cuban authorities may prohibit drivers of rental cars who are involved in accidents from leaving the country, even if they are injured and require medical evacuation, until all claims associated with an accident are settled. Travelers should not permit unauthorized persons to drive the rental vehicle. Automobile renters are provided telephone numbers to call in Havana or in other places where they might be motoring; agencies generally respond as needed with tow trucks and/or mechanics.

A similar service is available to foreigners resident in Cuba who insure cars with the National Insurance Company.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct scheduled commer-

cial air service between the United States and Cuba, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Cuba's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

The U.S. Interests Section has instructed its employees and official visitors to avoid domestic or international travel on Cuban air carriers, including the Cuban flag carrier Cubana de Aviación, whenever possible due to serious concerns regarding Cuba's ability to meet international safety and security oversight standards and its long history of hijackings, including the incidents noted above. Americans considering travel on any Cuban airline may wish to defer their travel or pursue an alternative means of transportation.

Special Circumstances: Photographing military or police installations or personnel, or harbor, rail, and airport facilities is forbidden.

Dual Nationality: The Government of Cuba does not recognize the U.S. nationality of U.S. citizens who are Cuban-born or are the children of Cuban parents. These individuals will be treated solely as Cuban citizens and may be subject to a range of restrictions and obligations, including military service. The Cuban government may require U.S. citizens, whom the Government of Cuba considers to be Cuban, to enter and depart Cuba using a Cuban passport. Using a Cuban passport for this purpose does not jeopardize one's U.S. citizenship; however, such persons must use their U.S. passports to enter and depart the United States. In some instances, dual nationals may be required to obtain exit permission from the Cuban government in order to return to the United States. There have been cases of Cuban-American dual nationals being forced by the Cuban government to surrender their U.S. passports. Despite these restrictions, Cuban-American dual nationals who fall ill may only be treated at hospitals for foreigners (except in emergencies). Cuban-American dual nationals should be especially wary of any attempt by Cuban authorities to compel them to sign "repatriation" documents. The Government of Cuba views a declaration of repatriation as a legal statement on the part of the dual national that she/he intends to resettle permanently in Cuba. In several instances, the Government of Cuba has seized the U.S. passport of dual nationals signing declarations of repatriation and has denied these individuals permission to return to the United States.

Consular Access: U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passport with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. The original should be kept in a secure location, preferably in a safe or locked suitcase.

Cuba does not recognize the right or obligation of the U.S. Government to protect Cuban-born American citizens, whom the Cuban government views as Cuban citizens only. Cuban authorities consistently refuse to notify the U.S. Interests Section of the arrest of Cuban-American dual nationals and deny U.S. consular officers access to them. They also withhold information concerning their welfare and treatment.

Currency: Since November 2004, the U.S. dollar has not been accepted for commercial transactions. U.S. issued debit and credit cards are also not accepted in Cuba. The Cuban government requires the use of convertible Cuban pesos ("chavitos") for all transactions. The current exchange rate for convertible Cuban pesos (CUC) is 1 CUC: 1.20 USD.

Cuba-Related Travel Transactions: Only persons whose travel falls into the categories mentioned above may be authorized to spend money related to travel to, from, or within Cuba. Persons traveling to Cuba to visit immediate family members (a "member of the immediate family" is defined as a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, or sibling of the remitter or that remitter's spouse, as well as any spouse, widow or widower of any of the foregoing) pursuant to a specific-license may spend no more than $50 per day on non-transportation-related expenses in Cuba, and up to an additional $50 per trip to pay for transportation-related expenses in Cuba. Persons licensed to engage in other travel-related transactions in Cuba may spend up to the State Department Travel Per Diem Allowance for Havana, Cuba, for purchases directly related to travel in Cuba, such as hotel accommodations, meals, local transportation, and goods personally used by the traveler in Cuba. Most licensed travelers may also spend additional money for transactions directly related to the activities for which they received their license. For example, journalists traveling in Cuba under the journalism general license (described above) may spend money over and above the current per diem for extensive local transportation, the hiring of cable layers, and other costs that are directly related to covering a story in Cuba. Purchases of services unrelated to travel or a licensed activity, such as non-emergency medical services, are prohibited. The purchase of publications and other information materials is not restricted.

Sending or Carrying Money to Cuba: U.S. persons aged 18 or older may send to members of the remitter's immediate family in Cuba or to a Cuban national in a third country "family" cash remittances of up to $300 per household in any consecutive three-month period, provided that no member of the household is a prohibited official of the Government of Cuba or a prohibited member of the Cuban Communist Party. (The term "prohibited official of the Government of Cuba" means: Ministers and Vice-Ministers, members of the Council of State, and the Council of Ministers; members and employees of the National Assembly of People's Power; members of any provincial assembly; local sector chiefs of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution; Director Generals and sub-Director Generals and higher of all Cuban ministries and state agencies; employees of the Ministry of the Inte-

rior (MININT); employees of the Ministry of Defense (MINFAR); secretaries and first secretaries of the Confederation of Labor of Cuba (CTC) and its component unions; chief editors, editors, and deputy editors of Cuban state-run media organizations and programs, including newspapers, television, and radio; and members and employees of the Supreme Court (Tribuno Supremo Nacional).

The term "prohibited members of the Cuban Communist Party" means: members of the Politburo, the Central Committee, Department Heads of the Central Committee; employees of the Central Committee; and secretaries and first secretaries of the provincial Party central committees.) No more than a combined total of $300 of family remittances may be sent by a remitter to any one household in any consecutive three-month period, regardless of the number of members of the remitter's immediate family residing in that household. A licensed traveler may carry up to $300 of his own family remittances to Cuba.

U.S. persons also may send up to $1,000 per payee on a one-time basis as an "emigration-related" remittance to a Cuban national to enable the payee to emigrate from Cuba to the United States. Specifically, up to $500 may be remitted to a Cuban national prior to the payee's receipt of a valid U.S. visa or other U.S. immigration document, and up to $500 may be remitted to the Cuban national after the payee receives a valid U.S. visa or other U.S. immigration document. A licensed traveler may only carry immigration remittances to Cuba if the visa has already been issued.

Remittances must be transferred through an OFAC-licensed depository institution or remittance forwarder. These OFAC-licensed entities originating transfers on behalf of non-aggregating customers must obtain an affidavit from the remitter certifying that each family remittance does not exceed $300 in any consecutive three-month period and that each emigration-related remittance meets the requirement of the Regulations. Remitters can expect to have their identity, date of birth, address, and telephone number verified.

U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens are prohibited from using credit cards in Cuba. U.S. credit card companies do not accept vouchers from Cuba, and Cuban shops, hotels and other places of business do not accept U.S. credit cards. Neither personal checks nor travelers' checks drawn on U.S. banks are accepted in Cuba.

Exportation of Accompanied Baggage: Authorized travelers to Cuba are limited to 44 pounds of accompanied baggage per traveler unless a specific license from OFAC or the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security authorizes a higher amount.

What Can Be Brought Back: If U.S. travelers return from Cuba with Cuban origin goods, such goods, with the exception of informational materials, may be seized at Customs' discretion. Cuban cigars and rum are routinely confiscated at U.S. ports of entry. The fact that Cuban cigars and rum are purchased in a "duty free" shop at the Havana Airport does not exempt them from seizure by US customs. There are no limits on the import or export of informational materials. Such materials, for example books, films, tapes and CDs, are statutorily exempt from regulation under the embargo and may be transported freely. However, blank tapes and CDs are not considered informational materials and may be seized.

Fair Business Practices: Anyone authorized by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to provide Cuban travel services or services in connection with sending money to Cuba is prohibited from participating in the discriminatory practices of the Cuban government against individuals or particular classes of travelers. The assessment of consular fees by the Cuban government, which are applicable worldwide, is not considered to be a discriminatory practice. However, requiring the purchase of services not desired by the traveler is not permitted. Persons wishing to provide information to the U.S. Treasury Department regarding arbitrary fees, payments for unauthorized purposes, or other possible violations furnished to the U.S. Treasury Department will be handled confidentially.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Cuba's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cuba are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Those accused of drug-related and other crimes face long legal proceedings and delayed due process. In one recent drug arrest, two American citizens were sentenced to terms of 25 and 30 years. In another recent criminal case, the accused was detained for more than 18 months without a trial.

Criminal penalties are also harsh for foreigners or dual nationals suspected of assisting Cuban migrants who attempt to leave Cuba illegally. Average jail sentences for individuals charged with migrant smuggling range from 10 to 20 years. In a recent case, a U.S. citizen was arrested for attempting to facilitate the illegal departure of his Cuban family members via raft. He was charged with migrant smuggling and faces a jail sentence of up to 15 years.

Cuba's Law of Protection of National Independence and the Cuban Economy contains a series of measures aimed at discouraging contact between foreign nationals and Cuban citizens. These measures are aimed particularly at the press and media representatives, but may be used against any foreign national coming into contact with a Cuban. The law provides for jail terms of up to 30 years in aggravated cases. U.S. citizens traveling in Cuba are subject to

this law, and they may unwittingly cause the arrest and imprisonment of any Cuban with whom they come into contact.

For more information, please contact the U.S. Interests Section's American Citizens Services Unit at:

U.S. Interests Section
American Citizen Services Unit
Calzada, entre L y M
Vedado, Havana, Cuba
Phone: 53-7-833-3551 (through 3559)
Fax: 53-7-833-1653

Engaging in sexual conduct with children (persons under the age of 18) or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in both the United States and Cuba.

Children's Issues: Cuba does not allow adoption of children by U.S. citizens. Additionally, children who maintain both Cuban and U.S. citizenship are considered to be Cuban citizens by the Government of Cuba because dual nationality is not recognized. Consequently, it is often difficult for U.S. consular officers to ascertain the welfare and whereabouts of U.S. citizen children living with their Cuban parents or relatives. In the event of a custody dispute, the American parent may need to pursue a legal hearing in Cuba with the assistance of a Cuban attorney. The U.S. Interests Section can provide a list of attorneys practicing in the Havana area to interested parties.

For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Registration: The U.S. Interests Section (USINT) represents American citizens and the U.S. Government in Cuba, and operates under the legal protection of the Swiss government. The Interests Section staff provides the full range of American citizen consular services. U.S. citizens who travel to Cuba are encouraged to contact and register with USINT's American Citizen Services section. U.S. citizens who register at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana may obtain updated information on travel and security within the country. There is no access to the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay from within Cuba.

The U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica handles consular issues for Guantanamo Bay. For further information on Guantanamo Bay, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Kingston at telephone (876) 929-5374.

The U.S. Interests Section is located in Havana at Calzada between L and M Streets, Vedado; telephone (537) 833-3551 through 833-3559. Hours are Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For emergency assistance after hours and on weekends, individuals should call (537) 833-3026 or (535) 280-5791 and request to speak with the duty officer.

USINT staff members provide briefings on U.S.-Cuba policy to American individuals and groups visiting Cuba. These briefings or meetings can be arranged through USINT's Public Diplomacy office.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Cuba is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Cuba and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction.

American citizens who travel to Cuba place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Cuba with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Cuba, if parents are legally married they share the custody of their children. If they are not married and the parents cannot reach an agreement, custody is granted by the courts in the best interests of the child. Foreign court orders are not automatically recognized.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Cuba.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has been granted custody of a child, the other parent is usually granted visitation rights.

If a custodial parent fails to allow visitation, the non-custodial parent may appeal to the court.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Cuban law.

Travel Restrictions: Cuban citizen children (including dual nationals) are required to have exit visas to depart Cuba.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Cuban court should retain an attorney in Cuba.

The U.S. Interests Section at the Embassy of Switzerland in Cuba maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the U.S. Interests Section of the Embassy at:

Embassy of Switzerland
U.S. Interests Section
Calzada between L & M Streets
Vedado
Havana
Cuba
Telephone: 011-53-7-33-3551/59
Fax: 011-53-7-33-3700
Web site: www.usembassy. state.gov

Questions involving Cuban law should be addressed to a Cuban attorney or to the Cuban Interests Section of the Embassy of Switzerland in the United States at:

Embassy of Switzerland
Cuban Interests Section
2630 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Telephone: (202) 797-8518

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2006

The U.S. Interest Section in Havana has been advised that Cuban law does not allow for intercountry adoption. Adoptions of Cuban children are reserved for adoptive parents who are Cuban citizens.

Dual nationality is also not recognized under Cuban law. The U.S. Interest Section in Havana has issued no immigrant visas to Cuban orphans for a at least the past five fiscal years.



CYPRUS

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Cyprus

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 9,251 sq. km. (3,572 sq. mi.); about the size of Connecticut.
Cities: Capital—Nicosia (pop. 197,800, 2000 fig.). Other cities—Limassol, Larnaca, Famagusta, Paphos, Kyrenia, Morphou.
Terrain: Central plain with mountain ranges to the north and south.
Climate: Mediterranean with hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Cypriot(s).
Population: (2007 est.) government-controlled area 788,000; area administered by Turkish Cypriots 260,819.
Annual population growth rate: (2007 est.) government-controlled area: 1.2%; area administered by Turkish Cypriots: 1.3%
Ethnic groups: (1960 census) Greek (77%), Turkish (18%), Armenian and other (4%).
Religions: Greek Orthodox, Muslim, Maronite, Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox.
Languages: Greek, Turkish, English.
Education: Years compulsory—6 in elementary; 3 in high school. Attendance—almost 100%. Literacy—about 99%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—7.04/1,000. Life expectancy—77 yrs.; males 75 yrs.; females 80 years.
Work force: Government-controlled area (2007), 379,900: agriculture and mining—8.5%; industry and construction—20.5%; and services—71.0%. Turkish Cypriot-administered area (2006), 91,815: agriculture—11.0%; industry and construction—38.3%; and services—72.2%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: August 16, 1960.
Constitution: August 16, 1960.
Government branches: Executive—President elected to 5-yr. term. Legislative—unicameral House of Representatives, members elected to 5-yr. terms. Judicial—Supreme Court; six district courts.
Political subdivisions: Six.
Political parties: Greek Cypriots—Progressive Party of Working People or Anorthotikon Komma Ergazomenou Laou—AKEL (communist); Democratic Party or Dimokratikon Komma—DIKO (center-right); Democratic Rally or Dimokratikos Synagermos—DISY (right); Movement for Social Democracy or Eleftheron Dimokratikon—EDEK (socialist); United Democrats or Enomeni Dimokrates—ED (center-left). Turkish Cypriots—National Unity Party or Ulusal Birlik Partisi—UBP (right); Democrat Party or Demokrat Partisi—DP (center-right); Republican Turkish Party or Cumhuriyetci Turk Partisi—CTP (center-left); Freedom and Reform Party or Free Party—Ozgurluk ve Reform Partisi—OP (center-right); Peace and Democracy Movement or Baris ve Demokrasi Hareketi—BDH (center-left); Communal Liberation Party or Toplumcu Kurtulus Partisi—TKP (center-left); New Party or Yeni Parti; Communal Democracy Party or Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi—TDP.
Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Economy

Section refers to the government-controlled area unless otherwise specified.
GDP: (2007) $20.98 billion.
Annual GDP real growth rate: (2007) government-controlled area: 3.8%.
Per capita GDP income: Greek Cypriots (2007)—$26,652; Turkish Cypriots (2007)—$13,133.
Agriculture and natural resources: (2007) 3.1% of GDP. Products—potatoes and other vegetables, citrus fruits, olives, grapes, wheat, carob seeds. Resources—pyrites, copper, asbestos, gypsum, lumber, salt, marble, clay, earth pigment.
Industry and construction: (2006) 19.2% of GDP. Types—mining, cement, construction, utilities, manufacturing, chemicals, non-electric

machinery, textiles, footwear, food, beverages, tobacco.

Services and tourism: (2007) 18.6% of GDP. Types—mining, cement, construction, utilities, manufacturing, chemicals, non-electric machinery, textiles, footwear, food, beverages, tobacco.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$1,494 billion: citrus, grapes, wine, potatoes, pharmaceuticals, clothing, and footwear. Major markets—EU (especially the U.K. and Greece), Middle East, Russia. Imports—$7,274 billion: consumer goods, raw materials for industry, petroleum and lubricants, food and feed grains. Major suppliers—Greece, Italy, Germany, U.K. (U.S. trade surplus—for 2007: $100.5 million.)

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Since 1974, Cyprus has been divided de facto into the government-controlled two-thirds of the island and the remaining one-third of the island, which is administered by Turkish Cypriots. Greek and Turkish Cypriots share many customs but maintain distinct identities based on religion, language, and close ties with their respective "motherlands." Greek is predominantly spoken in the south, Turkish in the north. English is widely used. Cyprus has a well-developed system of primary and secondary education. The majority of Cypriots earn their higher education at Greek, Turkish, British, and other European or American universities. Both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities have developed private colleges and state-supported universities.

Human settlement on Cyprus stretches back nearly eight millennia and by 3700 BC, the island was a crossroads between East and West. The island fell successively under Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Greek, and Roman domination. For 800 years, beginning in 364 AD, Cyprus was ruled by Byzantium. After brief possession by King Richard I (the Lion-Hearted) of England during the Crusades, the island came under Frankish control in the late 12th century. It was ceded to the Venetian Republic in 1489 and conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1571. The Ottomans applied the millet system to Cyprus, which allowed religious authorities to govern their own non-Muslim minorities. This system reinforced the position of the Orthodox Church and the cohesion of the ethnic Greek population. Most of the Turks who settled on the island during the three centuries of Ottoman rule remained when control of Cyprus—although not sovereignty—was ceded to Great Britain in 1878. Many left for Turkey during the 1920s, however. The island was annexed formally by the United Kingdom in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I and became a crown colony in 1925.

Cyprus gained its independence from the United Kingdom and established a constitutional republic in 1960, after an anti-British campaign by the Greek Cypriot EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Fighters), a guerrilla group that desired political union, or enosis, with Greece. Archbishop Makarios, a charismatic religious and political leader, was elected president.

Shortly after the founding of the republic, serious differences arose between the two communities about the implementation and interpretation of the constitution. The Greek Cypriots argued that the complex mechanisms introduced to protect Turkish Cypriot interests were obstacles to efficient government. In November 1963, President Makarios advanced a series of constitutional amendments designed to eliminate some of these special provisions. The Turkish Cypriots opposed such changes. The confrontation prompted widespread intercommunal fighting in December 1963, after which Turkish Cypriots ceased to participate in the government. Following the outbreak of intercommunal violence, many Turkish Cypriots (and some Greek Cypriots) living in mixed villages began to move into enclaved villages or elsewhere. UN peacekeepers were deployed on the island in 1964. Following another outbreak of intercommunal violence in 1967-68, a Turkish Cypriot provisional administration was formed.

In July 1974, the military junta in Athens sponsored a coup led by extremist Greek Cypriots against the government of President Makarios, citing his alleged pro-communist leanings and his perceived abandonment of enosis. Turkey, citing the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, intervened militarily to protect Turkish Cypriots.

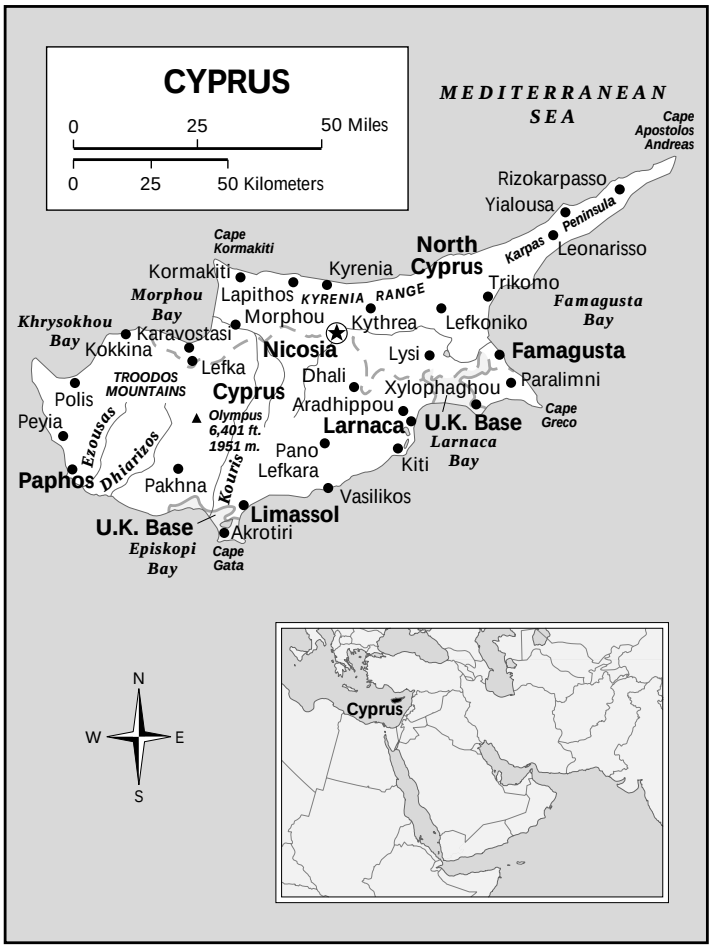
In a two-stage offensive, Turkish troops took control of 38% of the island. Almost all Greek Cypriots fled south while almost all Turkish Cypriots fled north. Since the events of 1974, UN peacekeeping forces have maintained a buffer zone between the two sides. Except for occasional demonstrations or infrequent incidents between soldiers in the buffer zone, the island was free of violent conflict from 1974 until August 1996, when violent clashes led to the death of two demonstrators and escalated tension. The situation has been quiet since 1996.

GOVERNMENT

Since 1974, Cyprus has been divided de facto into the government-controlled two-thirds of the island and the Turkish Cypriot-administered one-third. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has continued to be the only internationally recognized authority; in practice, its authority extends only to the government-controlled area.

The 1960 Cypriot constitution provided for a presidential system of government with independent executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as a complex system of checks and balances, including a weighted power-sharing ratio designed to protect the interests of the Turkish Cypriots.

The executive, for example, was headed by a Greek Cypriot president and a Turkish Cypriot vice president, elected by their respective communi-



ties for 5-year terms, and each possessing a right of veto over certain types of legislation and executive decisions. The Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus retains most elements of the presidential system of government expressed in the constitution, although it has cited the Turkish Cypriots' "withdrawal from government" and the "law of necessity" to enact structural changes that allow "effective governance."

Following the 1974 hostilities, the Turkish Cypriots set up their own institutions in the area they administered with an elected "president" and a "prime minister" responsible to the "National Assembly" exercising joint executive powers. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriots declared an independent "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" ("TRNC"). The United States does not recognize the "TRNC," nor does any country other than Turkey.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Historically, none of the Greek Cypriot parties has been able to elect a president by itself or dominate the 56-seat House of Representatives. The 165,000 Greek Cypriot refugees from the area now administered by Turkish Cypriots are a potent political force, along with the independent Orthodox Church of Cyprus, which has some influence in secular as well as religious matters. In February 2008, Demetris Christofias defeated incumbent Tassos Papadopoulos and challenger Ioannis Kassoulides in two rounds of voting to become the first AKEL president of the Republic of Cyprus. All major parties hold seats in the National Council, the top advisory board to the president on Cyprus settlement issues.

Parliamentary elections last took place in May 2006. AKEL emerged the leading party, garnering 31% of votes cast, with DISY a close second with 30%; each is represented in parliament by 18 MPs. Other parties represented in parliament include DIKO (11 seats), EDEK (5), EUROKO (3) and the Greens (1).

Mehmet Ali Talat was elected in April 2005 as leader of the Turkish Cypriot community (as the so-called "President of the TRNC"), replacing longtime nationalist leader Rauf Denktash. Talat's political rise was due largely to his support of the UN Settlement Plan for Cyprus (the "Annan Plan"), which Rauf Denktash opposed, but which was supported by a majority of Turkish Cypriots in a 2004 referendum. Talat's political allies in the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) currently hold 25 of the 50 seats in the "TRNC National Assembly," and have had to establish a series of coalitions, the latest one formed with the Freedom and Reform Party (Free Party, OP), with CTP leader Soyer as "PM" and OP party leader Turgay Avci as "Deputy Prime Minister" and "Foreign Minister."

Attempts To Achieve a Cyprus Settlement

The first UN-sponsored negotiations to develop institutional arrangements acceptable to both communities began in 1968; several sets of negotiations and other initiatives followed. Turkish Cypriots focus on bizonality, security guarantees, and political equality between the two communities. Greek Cypriots emphasize the rights of movement, property, settlement, and the return of territory. Turkish Cypriots favor a loose grouping of two nearly autonomous societies living side by side with limited contact. Greek Cypriots envision a more integrated structure.

The last major UN-led effort to deliver a Cyprus solution commenced in January 2002 with Secretary General Kofi Annan orchestrating direct talks between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot community leaders. Nine months later Annan released a comprehensive settlement proposal,

informally called "the Annan Plan". Intensive efforts were made to gain both sides' support for the plan prior to the December 2002 European Union (EU) Summit in Copenhagen, where member states would determine the island's future status vis-a-vis the union. Neither side agreed to the Annan Plan before the summit.

UN-sponsored talks continued following Copenhagen. In February 2003, Tassos Papadopoulos was elected president of the Republic of Cyprus. A year later, President Papadopoulos and then-Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash resumed negotiations on the Annan Plan. A comprehensive settlement package was put to both sides in simultaneous referenda on April 24, 2004. Sixty-five percent of Turkish Cypriots endorsed the Annan Plan, but a larger majority of Greek Cypriots (76%) voted "no." The Secretary General later suspended his Good Offices Mission. Nonetheless, the EU invited the Republic of Cyprus (with Cyprus still divided) to join; the Republic of Cyprus became a full member on May 1, 2004, with the EU's acquis communautaire suspended in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. In 2008, the EU started work on harmonization of T/C "laws" and practices with twelve chapters of the aquis in the event of a solution and reunification.

For two years following the Annan Plan referenda, the island saw little progress toward reunification. However, Under Secretary for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari, in his July 2006 visit to Cyprus, succeeded in securing commitment from both sides to commence exploratory talks, and on July 8, community leaders President Papadopoulos and Mr. Talat and met for the first time since 2004. They agreed to a UN-brokered negotiating framework that envisioned the establishment of technical committees to tackle everyday life issues and expert working groups to discuss substantive matters. Following his election in February 2008, President Demetris Christofias pledged to renew settlement efforts through UN auspices. President Christofias met Mr. Talat on March 21 to discuss the formation of 13 working groups and technical committees which were to meet for a fixed period prior to the commencement of full-fledged negotiations. The committees met through July and on July 25 the two leaders announced the decision to commence negotiations beginning in September. The talks began on September 3 with the focus on governance and power sharing. As of October 2008, negotiations are ongoing.

Bi-Communal Contact, Crossing Procedures

In April 2003, then-leader of the Turkish Cypriots Denktash relaxed many restrictions on individuals crossing between the two communities leading to relatively unimpeded bi-communal contact for the first time since 1974. Since the relaxation, there have been nearly 12,000,000 buffer zone crossings in both directions. Under the current regulations, Greek Cypriots must present identity documents to cross to the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, something many are reluctant to do. They are able to drive their personal vehicles in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, provided they first obtain a policy from a Turkish Cypriot insurance provider. Turkish Cypriots are permitted to cross into the government-controlled area upon presentation of a Turkish Cypriot ID card or other identity documentation acceptable to Republic of Cyprus authorities. They must also obtain car insurance from an insurer in the government-controlled area to drive their personal vehicles there.

Until recently, visitors choosing to arrive at non-designated airports and seaports in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots were not allowed to cross the United Nations-patrolled "green line" to the government-controlled area. In June of 2004, however, Cypriot authorities implemented new EU-related crossing regulations that allowed Americans (and citizens of most other countries) to cross freely regardless of their port of entry into Cyprus. Visitors arriving in the government-controlled area are normally able to cross the green line without hindrance, although on occasion difficulties are encountered at both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot checkpoints. The Government of Cyprus considers ports in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots to be illegal. Policy and procedures regarding such travel are subject to change.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Demetris CHRISTOFIAS**
Min. of Agriculture, Natural Resources, & Environment: **Michalis POLYNIKIS**
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Tourism: **Andonis PASCHALIDES**
Min. of Communications & Works: **Nicos NICOLAIDES**
Min. of Defense: **Costas PAPACOSTAS**
Min. of Education & Culture: **Andreas DEMETRIOU**
Min. of Finance: **Charliaos STAVRAKIS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Markos KYPRIANOU**
Min. of Health: **Christos PATSALIDES**
Min. of Interior: **Neoclis SYLIKIOTIS**
Min. of Justice & Public Order: **Kypros CHRYSOSTOMIDES**
Min. of Labor & Social Insurance: **Soteroula CHARALAMBOUS**
Governor, Central Bank: **Athanasios ORPHANIDES**
Ambassador to the US: **Andreas KAKOURIS**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Minas HADJIMICHAEL**

Cyprus maintains an embassy in the United States at 2211 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-462-5772) and a Consulate General in New York City. Cyprus also maintains a trade center at 13 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (tel. 212-686-6016). Turkish Cypriots maintain offices in Washington (tel. 202-887-6198) and at the Republic of Turkey's Mission to the United Nations.

ECONOMY

Cyprus has an open, free-market, services-based economy with some light manufacturing. Cyprus' accession as a full member to the European Union as of May 1, 2004, has been an important milestone in its recent economic development. The Cypriots are among the most prosperous people in

the Mediterranean region. Internationally, Cyprus promotes its geographical location as a "bridge" between three continents, along with its educated English-speaking population, moderate local costs, good airline connections, and telecommunications.

In the past 20 years, the economy has shifted from agriculture to light manufacturing and services. Currently, agriculture makes up only 3.1% of the GDP and employs 8.5% of the labor force. Industry and construction contribute 18.6% and employ 20.5% of the labor force. The services sector, including tourism, contributes 78.3% to the GDP and employs 71.0% of the labor force. In recent years, the services sector, and financial services in particular, have provided the main impetus for growth, while the traditional growth sector, tourism, has leveled off. Manufactured goods account for 58.5% of domestic exports, while potatoes and citrus constitute the principal export crops. The island has few proven natural resources. Trade is vital to the Cypriot economy and most goods are imported. The trade deficit increased in 2007, reaching $5.8 billion. Cyprus must import fuels, food, most raw materials, heavy machinery, and transportation equipment. More than 67% of its imports come from the European Union, particularly Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom, while 1.2% come from the United States.

GNP growth rates have gradually begun to decline as the Cypriot economy has matured over the years. The average rate of growth went from 6.1% in the 1980s, to 4.4% in the 1990s to 3.6% from 2000 to 2007. In the last couple of years (2006 and 2007) growth has remained fairly strong at around 3.8% and 4.2%, respectively and is forecast to remain so for 2008, albeit the financial turmoil of the last months has caused estimates of 2008 growth to be reduced to 3%. Inflation had remained in check up until 2007 (less than 2.5%) but it surged to around 4.8% in 2008. Cyprus has the third-lowest unemployment rate in the EU27 at around 3.9%. Public finances have also improved considerably in recent years. The fiscal deficit, which had peaked at 6.3% of GDP in 2003, was gradually eliminated by 2006. A fiscal surplus of 3.3% of GDP took its place in 2007, likely to be followed by a 1.0% surplus in 2008. Concurrently, the public debt declined from 65.2% in 2006, to around 60% of GDP in 2007, and is forecast to drop further to 49% in 2008.

These developments helped pave the way for the Euro, which replaced the Cyprus Pound as Cyprus' national currency as of January 1, 2008. Joining the Eurozone was a major accomplishment for the Cypriot economy, resulting in such benefits as a higher degree of price stability, lower interest rates, reduction of currency conversion costs and exchange rate risk, and increased competition through greater price transparency. The final conversion exchange rate between the Cypriot pound and the Euro was one Euro per 0.585274 Cyprus pounds. The following website offers additional information on the mechanics of Cyprus's adoption of the Euro: http://www.euro.cy.

Investment Climate

In the run-up to EU accession (May 1, 2004), Cyprus dismantled most investment restrictions, attracting increased flows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), particularly from the EU. Cyprus has good business and financial services, modern telecommunications, an educated labor force, good airline connections, a sound legal system, and a low crime rate. Cyprus' geographic location, tax incentives and modern infrastructure also make it a natural hub for companies looking to do business with the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, the European Union, and North Africa. As a result, Cyprus has developed into an important regional and international business center. According to the latest United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) "World Investment Report 2008," Cyprus ranks among the world's leading countries per capita in terms of attracting FDI. Non-EU investors (both natural and legal persons) may now invest freely in Cyprus in most sectors, either directly or indirectly (including all types of portfolio investment in the Cyprus Stock Exchange). The only exceptions concern primarily the acquisition of property and, to a lesser extent, restrictions on investment in the sectors of tertiary education, banking, and mass media.

In 2007, the inflow of FDI reached $2.17 billion, compared with $1.82 billion in 2006. The geographic origin of new investment in 2007 was primarily the EU, with 61.0% of the total, followed by non-EU countries in Europe with 34.4%. In terms of sectoral allocation, incoming FDI in 2007 went to the following sectors: manufacturing 1%; construction 3.0%; trade and repairs 24.9%; transport and communication 3.7%; financial intermediation 14.8%; real estate and business activities 47.6%; and other services 4.6%.

The flow of U.S. investment in Cyprus reached $37.4 million in 2007 or 1.7% of Cyprus' total inward FDI. The stock of U.S. investment in the island was $338.4 million at the end of 2007. Projects involving U.S. investment in recent years have included a well-known U.S. coffee retailing franchise, a university, an information technology firm, an equestrian center, a hair products manufacturing unit, a firm trading in health and natural foodstuffs, and a financial services company. U.S. investors may benefit from Cyprus's abolition of EU-origin investment restrictions, provided they operate through EU subsidiaries.

European Union (EU)

Along with the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, the Republic of Cyprus entered the EU on May 1, 2004. The EU acquis communautaire is suspended in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots pending a Cyprus settlement.

Export Opportunities

Best prospects for U.S. firms generally lie in services, high technology

sectors, such as computer equipment and data processing services, financial services, environmental protection technology, medical and telecommunications equipment, desalination and water purification equipment and services, and tourism development projects such as casinos, marinas, and golf courses. Moreover, alternative energy sources and the energy sector in general, are attracting an increasing amount of attention, while the possible existence of natural gas and petroleum reserves off the southern and eastern coast of Cyprus opens up new prospects. U.S. food franchises and apparel licensors are also finding fertile ground for expansion in Cyprus.

Trade Between Cyprus and the United States

The U.S. Embassy in Nicosia sponsors a popular pavilion for American products at the annual Cyprus International State Fair and organizes other events to promote U.S. products throughout the year. The U.S. runs a significant trade surplus with Cyprus, on the order of $100.6 million in 2006 (exports of $111.0 million versus imports of $10.5 million—according to Republic of Cyprus statistics).

Principal U.S. goods exports to Cyprus include office machines and data processing equipment; electrical appliances; optical, measuring, and medical equipment; tobacco and cigarettes; passenger cars; and wheat. Principal U.S. imports from Cyprus consist of dairy products, fresh fish, and mineral substances.

Bilateral business ties also encompass a healthy exchange in services. In 2007, the inflow of services (from the United States to Cyprus) was $749.1 million, against an outflow (from Cyprus to the United States) of $275.7 million, according to Republic of Cyprus statistics.

Turkish Cypriot Economy

The economy of the Turkish Cypriot-administered area is dominated by the services sector including the public sector, trade, tourism and education, with smaller agriculture and light manufacturing sectors. The economy operates on a free-market basis, although it continues to be handicapped by the political isolation of Turkish Cypriots, the lack of private and public investment, high freight costs, and shortages of skilled labor. Despite these constraints, the Turkish Cypriot economy turned in an impressive performance from 2003 to 2006, with estimated growth rates of 13.2% in 2006, 13.5% in 2005, 15.4% in 2004, and 11.4% in 2003. This pattern was overturned in 2007, when the economy reportedly shrank by 2.5%. Negative growth is expected again in 2008 as the construction sector continued to contract and tourism from countries other than Turkey declined The economy in recent years has been fuelled by the relative stability of the Turkish Lira, the employment of around 6,000 Turkish Cypriots in the Greek Cypriot economy where wages are significantly higher, and by a boom in the education and construction sectors. In 2007, the services sector accounted for 78.5% of GDP, industry and construction accounted for 14.6% of GDP, and agriculture 7.0%, according to Turkish Cypriot statistics. The partial lifting of travel restrictions between the two parts of the island in April 2003 has allowed movement of persons—over 12 million crossings to date—between the two parts of the island with no significant interethnic incidents.

Turkey remains, by far, the main trading partner of the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, supplying 65% of imports and absorbing around 50% of exports. In a landmark case, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled on July 5, 1994 against the British practice of importing produce from the area based on certificates of origin and phytosanitary certificates granted by "TRNC" authorities. The ECJ decision resulted in a considerable decrease of Turkish Cypriot exports to the EU—from $36.4 million (or 66.7% of total Turkish Cypriot exports) in 1993 to $12.9 million in 2006 (or 19% of total exports). In August 2004, new EU rules allowed goods produced or substantially transformed in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots to be sold duty-free to consumers in the government-controlled area and through that area to the rest of the EU. To qualify, goods must also meet EU sanitary/phytosanitary requirements. Animal products are excluded from this arrangement. In May 2005, Turkish Cypriot authorities adopted a new regulation "mirroring" the EU rules and allowing certain goods produced in the government-controlled areas to be sold in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. (However, suppliers cannot legally transport imported products over the green line in either direction.) Despite these efforts, direct trade between the two communities remains limited.

The EU continues to be the second-largest trading partner of the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, with a 17.9% share of total imports and 18.9% share of total exports. Total imports increased to $1.3 billion in 2006, while total exports remained at $68 million. Imports from the U.S. reached $9.8 million in 2006, while exports to the U.S. were less than $100,000.

Assistance from Turkey is crucial to the Turkish Cypriot economy. Under the latest economic protocol (signed in 2006), Turkey undertakes to provide Turkish Cypriots financial assistance totaling 1.875 billion New Turkish Lira (YTL—roughly $1.34 billion) over a three-year period (600 million YTL in 2007, 625 million YTL in 2008 and 650 million YTL in 2009). Turkey also provides millions of dollars annually in the form of low-interest loans to mostly Turkish entrepreneurs in support of export-oriented industrial production and tourism.

Total stock Turkish assistance to Turkish Cypriots since 1974 is estimated to have exceeded $4 billion.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Republic of Cyprus aligns itself with European positions within the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Cyprus has long identified

with the West in its cultural affinities and trade patterns, and maintains close relations with Greece. Since 1974, the foreign policy of the Republic of Cyprus has sought the withdrawal of Turkish forces and the most favorable constitutional and territorial settlement possible. This campaign has been pursued primarily through international forums such as the United Nations. Turkey does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus.

The Republic of Cyprus enjoys close relations with many countries, including Greece, Russia, China, France, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, and other countries in the region. Cyprus is a member of the United Nations and most of its agencies, as well as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Council of Europe and the British Commonwealth. In addition, the government has signed the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Agreement (MIGA).

U.S.-CYPRUS RELATIONS

The United States regards the status quo on Cyprus as unacceptable. Successive administrations have viewed UN-led inter-communal negotiations as the best means to achieve a fair and permanent settlement.

The United States is working closely with Cyprus in the war on terrorism. A Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, which has been in force since September 18, 2002, facilitates bilateral cooperation. Cyprus also signed a Proliferation Security Initiative Ship Boarding Agreement with the United States on July 25, 2005, which reinforces bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation. The United States has channeled more than $300 million in assistance to the two communities since the mid-1970s. The United States now provides approximately $15 million annually to reduce tensions and promote peace and cooperation between the two communities. In 2004, following the Annan Plan process, the U.S. appropriated an additional $30.5 million to assist economic development in the Turkish Cypriot community, aiming to reduce the economic costs of any future settlement.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

NICOSIA (E) Metochiou & Ploutarchou, P.O. Box 24536, Engomi 2407, Nicosia, Cyprus, APO/FPO US Embassy Nicosia, PSC 815, FPO AE 09836, 357-22-39-3939, Fax 357-22-780-944, INMARSAT Tel 683 -13-2645/6; fax: 683-13-2647, Workweek: M-F, 08:00–17:00, Website: http://nicosia.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Vacant
AMB OMS:	Madeleine B. Ioannou
ECO:	James Carouso
FM:	Vacant
MGT:	Warren D. Hadley
AMB:	Ronald L. Schlicher
CON:	John R. Carlino
DCM:	Vacant
PAO:	Tom Miller
GSO:	Jason S. Evans
RSO:	Shawn H. Sherlock
AFSA:	J T Magellan
AID:	Vacant
CLO:	Maryanne Macris & Sonia Evans
DAO:	Col. William B. Langan
DEA:	James Grace
EEO:	Juliette A. Dickstein
ICASS Chair:	Allen Fulcher
IMO:	John Kelley Razer
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISSO:	John Kelley Razer
POL:	Gregory P. Macris
State ICASS:	Tom Miller

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 27, 2008

Country Description: Since 1974, Cyprus, a developed Mediterranean island nation, has been divided de facto into a government-controlled area comprising the southern two-thirds of the island, and a northern third, (the self-declared "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus"), administered by Turkish Cypriots. The United States does not recognize the " Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" nor does any country other than Turkey. Facilities for tourism in Cyprus are highly developed. Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required for travel to Cyprus. A visa is not required for a stay of up to 90 days. For longer stays, a visa or residence permit is required. U.S. citizens should be mindful that the Government of Cyprus does not recognize the residence permits issued by Turkish Cypriot authorities for the portions of the island under Turkish Cypriot administration. The Government of Cyprus does not issue residency permits to individuals who live in the areas outside government control. On occasion, Americans who resided in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots for more than 90 days without a Republic of Cyprus residence permit have been detained by officials at Larnaca airport and denied entry into the government-controlled area. They also may be subject to prosecution.

For further information on entry requirements for Cyprus, travelers can contact the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus at 2211 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008-4082, tel. (202) 462-5772, or the Cypriot Consulate in New York at 13 East 40th St., 5th Floor, New York, NY 10016, tel. (212) 686-6016/17. Visit the Embassy of Cyprus' web site at http://www.cyprusembassy.net for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Do not, under any circumstances, attempt to enter the U.N. buffer zone at any place other than a designated crossing point. This area is mined and militarized. Never photograph military installations or anything that could be perceived as being of security interest (especially in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots). Pay particular attention to areas marked with "no photography" signs. Police on both sides strictly enforce these restrictions.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should

regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The crime rate in Cyprus is low but rising. Visitors in urban areas should take the normal precautions they would take in a large city. Americans frequenting bars should avoid so -called "cabarets" which sometimes employ women brought to Cyprus for sexual exploitation. These establishments can also present foreign patrons with grossly inflated bar tabs, threatening those customers who refuse to pay.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, contacting family members or friends, and explaining how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of a crime in Cyprus is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Cyprus is 199 or 112. Emergency assistance is available in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots by calling 155.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is available at both government hospitals and private clinics. Emergency rooms offer adequate care to stabilize patients, most of whom are then transferred to private hospitals. Many of the private-sector doctors have been trained in the United Kingdom or the United States. While fees are generally lower than those in the United States, medical supplies are often more expensive. Paramedics do not staff ambulances. The standard of medical care in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots is improving but still falls below that found in the government-controlled area. The World Health Organization considers Cyprus to be one of the healthiest areas of the Mediterranean. Water supplies are potable, and the refuse collection/sewage disposal system is adequate. Communicable diseases such as typhoid are rare. Respiratory ailments and allergies are sometimes exacerbated by the dry and dusty climate.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Cyprus is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In recent years Cyprus has ranked among the top three countries in Europe, on a per capita basis, in traffic fatalities. Speeding, tailgating, overtaking, and the running of caution lights are commonplace and major causes of accidents. Emergency assistance is available in the Republic of Cyprus by calling 112 or 199. There are few public buses and no rail lines. Taxis are widely available. Traffic moves on the left side of the road, British style, and modern motorways link the major cities. Secondary roads, especially in mountainous areas, tend to be narrow and winding, and they are not as well maintained as major highways. Traffic laws, signs and speed limits are consistent with the standards used throughout Europe. Traffic circles (roundabouts) are often utilized at major intersections. The use of seat belts (in front seats) and child car seats is compulsory. Motorcyclists are required to wear helmets and the use of cellular phones while driving is prohibited unless used with some form of hands-free kit. Liability insurance is mandatory.

Road safety conditions in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots are similar to conditions in the south, except that the road network is less developed. Insurance purchased in the government-controlled areais not valid in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, but insurance for that area may be purchased near the U.N. "buffer zone" checkpoints. Emergency assistance is available in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots by calling 155.

For specific information concerning driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance in Cyprus, contact the Cyprus Tourism Organization at 13 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016, tel. (212) 683-5280, email: gocyprus@aol.com, web site: http://www.cyprustourism.org.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Cyprus, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Cyprus' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Since 1974, the Republic of Cyprus has designated Larnaca and Paphos international airports, and the seaports of Limassol, Larnaca, and Paphos, as the only legal points of entry into and exit from Cyprus. These ports are all in the government-controlled southern part of the island. Entry or exit via any other air or seaport is considered an illegal act by the Republic of Cyprus. Formerly, visitors choosing to arrive at non-designated airports and seaports in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots were not allowed to cross the U.N.-patrolled "buffer zone" to the government-controlled area in the south. Since June of 2004, when the Republic of Cyprus implemented new EU-related crossing regulations, Americans (and citizens of other non-EU countries not requiring visas) have been able to cross regardless of their port of entry into Cyprus.

Most American visitors to Cyprus are able to cross the "buffer zone" without hindrance, although on occasion difficulties are encountered at both the government and Turkish Cypriot checkpoints. Cypriot officials at the "buffer zone" checkpoints or at airports and seaports in the government-controlled area may detain and prosecute Americans who have been present for more than 90 days in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots if they do not possess a residency permit issued by the Government of Cyprus.

Policy and procedures regarding travel across the "buffer zone" are subject to change. More information on current procedures may be obtained at the U.N. "buffer zone" Ledra Palace checkpoint in Nicosia.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated strict identification procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian, if not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry and departure. Although Cyprus is party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, the Convention cannot be used effectively to recover a child abducted to the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

Cyprus customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Cyprus of items such as firearms. There are no restrictions on religious materials and medication for personal use. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus in Washington, DC for specific information regarding customs requirements or visit http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/customs/ced.nsf/DMLindex_en/DMLindex_en?OpenDocument. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. Cyprus restricts the export of Byzantine period ecclesiastical material and all archaeological material, including ancient coins. The U.S. Customs Service may impose corresponding import restrictions in accordance with the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act.

In addition to being subject to all Cypriot laws affecting American citizens, individuals who also possess Cypriot nationality may be subject to laws that impose special obligations on citizens of Cyprus. For example, American citizens whom the Republic of Cyprus considers to be Cypriot citizens may be subject to compulsory military service and other aspects of Cypriot law while in Cyprus. American citizen males between the ages of 16 and 26 years who reside in the United States and whose parents or grandfather were Greek Cypriots or have Greek Cypriot names are advised to obtain a written confirmation that they reside permanently outside of Cyprus from the Cypriot Embassy in Washington, D.C. before they travel to Cyprus. After their arrival in Cyprus, the young men should present their foreign residency confirmation statement to the Cypriot National Guard Registration office to obtain an exit permit. Those who believe they may be affected should inquire at the Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus regarding their status. American citizens whom the Turkish Cypriot authorities consider to be "citizens" may also be subject to compulsory military service in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. The U.S. Embassy is unable to exempt dual nationals from such service.

American Citizens who buy or lease property, particularly in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, may find their ownership challenged by people displaced as a result of the 1974 conflict. Prospective property buyers should always seek legal advice before buying. On October 20, 2006, the government of the Republic of Cyprus passed Article 303A of the Criminal Code which makes it a felony to buy, rent or sell property in Cyprus without the consent of the registered owner. Cypriot courts have used the law to prosecute people involved in the sale or purchase of property in the area administered by the Turkish Cypriots. The government of Cyprus has also attempted to enforce Cypriot legal judgments in property matters in other EU countries. Cypriot customs authorities routinely detain anyone arriving in Cyprus or crossing the buffer zone found to be in possession of documents relating to property purchases in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots.

In June 2006 the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" amended the laws governing its "Immovable Property Commission" to enable the Commission to accept claims for compensation or restitution from Greek Cypriots for property in the north. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not recognize the legitimacy of the "Immovable Property Commission." Some Greek Cypriots who have filed claims with the Commission have been subjected to intensive governmental and public pressure to withdraw their claims.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ signifi-

cantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Cyprus' laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Cyprus are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Cyprus are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Cyprus. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Metochiou and Ploutarchou Streets, Engomi, Nicosia, tel. 357-22-393-939. The fax number of the Embassy's American Citizens Services section is 357-22-393344. The e-mail address is consularnicosia@state.gov and the Embassy's web site is http://nicosia.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Government also maintains an office in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots. The office is located at 6 Serif Arzik Street, Kosk-luciftlik, Nicosia, tel. 357-22-669-965, fax: 357-22-679-014. When calling within the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, please dial 2273930.

Intercountry Adoption
April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: There are no children available for adoption in Cyprus. Cypriot couples who wish to adopt usually look to other countries for adoption possibilities. No Cypriot orphans have received U.S. immigrant visas in the past five years. U.S. citizens living in Cyprus who are considering adopting from another country should consult with the appropriate authorities in all three countries (Cyprus, the U.S., and the child's country of origin) before proceeding with an adoption case. Questions concerning the effect of a third-country adoption on U.S. visa qualifications, U.S. citizenship and related issues may be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia.

Adoption Authority: The Department of Welfare at the Ministry of Labor & Social Insurance oversees adoptions in Cyprus.

Ministry of Labor & Social Insurance
Department of Welfare
63 Prodromou Street
1468 Nicosia
Cyprus
Tel: 357-22-406650/406609
Fax: 357-22-667907
E-mail: central.sws@sws.mlsi.gov.cy
or mrossidou@sws.mlsi.gov.cy

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: At least one parent must be 25 years old. If the adopting parents are relatives of the child, one of them must be at least 21 years old. Married couples must adopt jointly unless one spouse is incapable of giving consent or cannot be located. Unmarried couples may not adopt jointly. The court may approve adoptions by single adoptive parents if that person has applied alone and if the court determines that special reasons exist. "Special reasons" are not listed or defined in the Cypriot adoption code, but the prevailing view in Cyprus is that a family with two parents is in children's best interests.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be permanent residents of Cyprus or have resided in Cyprus for at least two years prior to the submission of the application.

Time Frame: Since there are no children available for adoption in Cyprus, all times are related to the requirements of the child's country of birth. American citizens resident in Cyprus and considering adopting from another country should consult the Department of State's flyer for that country, available at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Cyprus. The Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia maintains a list of English-speaking lawyers who are licensed to practice in Cyprus.

The U.S. Embassy cannot recommend the services of any specific attorney. Prospective adopting parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Adoption Fees: Attorneys in Cyprus provide legal services only when Cypriot families adopt children from abroad. Fees vary from case to case.

Adoption Procedures: This information is for those adopting a child from another country who will then immigrate to Cyprus. Prospective adoptive parents must be approved for intercountry adoption by a local Cypriot welfare officer. The actual

adoption of the child is governed by the laws of the child's country of origin. Once the information listed below has been submitted to the Cypriot Central Authority for the Hague Adoption Convention, the Central Authority will guarantee to the government of the child's country of origin that the child will be permitted to enter and reside permanently in Cyprus.

- Information on the child's identity, adoptability, background, social environment, family and medical histories, and any special needs.
- Proof that the necessary consents have been obtained and the reasons for the placement.
- A determination that the placement of the child with the prospective adoptive parents is in the best interests of the child.
- Confirmation from the Central Authority of Cyprus agreeing that the adoption may proceed.

The child will be authorized to enter and reside permanently in Cyprus as soon as a certificate is issued and presented to the Immigration Office of Cyprus stating that the adoption has been done in accordance with the Convention. Please see the Cypriot Department of Welfare web site at http://www.mlsi. gov.cy/sws and search the word adoption for detailed information.

Documents Required for Adoption: Prospective adopting parents need only to submit a written application signed by both spouses to the District Welfare officer of the district of their habitual residence. During the eligibility study they will be requested to undergo full medical tests.

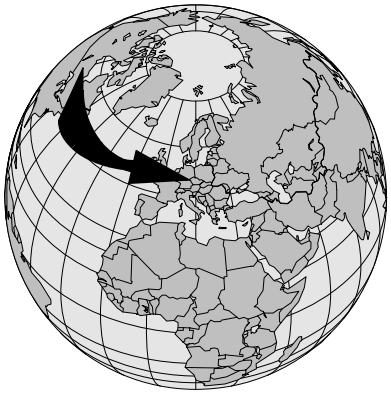
Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus
2211 R St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-4082
Tel: (202) 462-5772
E-mail: info@cyprusembassy.net
Web: http://www.cyprusembassy.net

Cyprus also has a Consulate in New York City, which may be reached at (212) 686-6016.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: U.S. citizens residing in Cyprus who have adopted children from third countries are advised to contact the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia for information on how to apply for an immigrant visa on their child's behalf. Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption. state. gov.

Embassy of the United States of America, Nicosia
Metohiou & Ploutarchou Street –
Engomi 2407 Nicosia Cyprus
or
P.O.Box 24536, 1385 Nicosia Cyprus
Telephone number:357-22-393939
Fax: 357-22-776841
email: consularnicosia@state.gov
http://cyprus.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Cyprus may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



CZECH REPUBLIC

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Czech Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 78,864 sq. kilometers; about the size of Virginia.
Cities: Capital—Prague (pop. 1.16 million). Other cities—Brno (376,172), Ostrava (314,744), Plzen (165,529).
Terrain: Low mountains to the north and south, hills in the west.
Climate: Temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Czech(s).
Population: (est.) 10.3 million.
Annual growth rate: 0.1%.
Ethnic groups: Czech (94% or 9.6 million); Slovak (193,000); Roma (200,000); Silesian (11,000); Polish (52,000); German (39,000); Ukrainian (22,000); and Vietnamese (40,000).
Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant.
Languages: Czech.
Education: Literacy—99.8%.
Health: Life expectancy—males 73.34 yrs., females 79.7 yrs.
Work force: (5.17 million) Industry, construction, and commerce—40%; government and other services—56%; agriculture—4%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary republic.
Independence: The Czech Republic was established January 1, 1993 (former Czechoslovak state established 1918).
Constitution: Signed December 16, 1992.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—Chamber of Deputies, Senate. Judicial—Supreme Court, Constitutional Court.
Political parties: (June 2006 election) Civic Democratic Party (ODS), 81 seats; Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD), 74 seats; Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM), 26 seats; Christian and Democratic Union-Czechoslovak Peoples Party (KDU-CSL), 13 seats; Green Party (SZ), 6 seats.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.
Political subdivisions: Two regions—Bohemia and Moravia; 13 administrative districts and Prague.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $176.5 billion.
Per capita income: $20,229.
Natural resources: Coal, coke, timber, lignite, uranium, magnesite.
Agriculture: Products—wheat, rye, oats, corn, barley, hops, potatoes, sugar beets, hogs, cattle, horses.
Industry: Types—motor vehicles, machinery and equipment, iron, steel, cement, sheet glass, armaments, chemicals, ceramics, wood, paper products, and footwear.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$113 billion (est.): motor vehicles, machinery, iron, steel, chemicals, raw materials, consumer goods. Imports—$109.8 billion (est.). Trading partners—Germany (32%), Slovakia, Poland, France, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, U.K., China, United States

PEOPLE

The majority of the 10.3 million inhabitants of the Czech Republic are ethnically and linguistically Czech (95%). Other ethnic groups include Germans, Roma, and Poles. After the 1993 division of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, some Slovaks remained in the Czech Republic and comprise roughly 3% of the current population. The border between the Czech Republic and Slovakia is open for citizens of the former Czechoslovakia. Laws establishing religious freedom were passed shortly after the revolution of 1989, lifting oppressive regulations enacted by the former communist regime. Major denominations and their estimated percentage populations are Roman Catholic (39%) and Protestant (3%). A large percentage of the Czech population claim to be atheists (40%), and 16% describe themselves as uncertain.

The Jewish community numbers a few thousand today; a synagogue in Prague memorializes the names of more than 80,000 Czechoslovak Jews who perished in World War II.

HISTORY

The Czech Republic was the western part of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. Formed into a common state after World War I (October 28, 1918), the Czechs, Moravians, and Slovaks remained united for almost 75 years. On January 1, 1993, the two republics split to form two separate states.

The Czechs lost their national independence to the Hapsburgs Empire in 1620 at the Battle of White Mountain and for the next 300 years were ruled by the Austrian Monarchy. With the collapse of the monarchy at the end of World War I, the independent country of Czechoslovakia was formed, encouraged by, among others, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson.

Despite cultural differences, the Slovaks shared with the Czechs similar aspirations for independence from the Hapsburg state and voluntarily united with the Czechs. For historical reasons, Slovaks were not at the same level of economic and technological development as the Czechs, but the freedom and opportunity found in Czechoslovakia enabled them to make strides toward overcoming these inequalities. However, the gap never was fully bridged, and the discrepancy played a continuing role throughout the 75 years of the union.

Although Czechoslovakia was the only east European country to remain a parliamentary democracy from 1918 to 1938, it was plagued with minority problems, the most important of which concerned the country's large German population. Constituting more than 22% of the interwar state's population and largely concentrated in the Bohemian and Moravian border regions (the Sudetenland), members of this minority, including some who were sympathetic to Nazi Germany, undermined the new Czechoslovak state. Internal and external pressures culminated in September 1938, when France and the United Kingdom yielded to Nazi pressures at Munich and agreed to force Czechoslovakia to cede the Sudetenland to Germany.

Fulfilling Hitler's aggressive designs on all of Czechoslovakia, Germany invaded what remained of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, establishing a German "protectorate." By this time, Slovakia had already declared independence and had become a puppet state of the Germans. Hitler's occupation of the Czech lands was a clear betrayal of the Munich Pact and still stirs passions in modern-day Czech society, but at the time it was met by muted resistance; the brunt of Nazi aggression was felt by Czech Jews and other minorities who were rounded up and deported to concentration camps in systematic waves. Over 100,000 Jews lived in the Czech lands in 1939. Only several thousand remained or returned after the Holocaust in 1945.

At the close of World War II, Soviet troops overran all of Slovakia, Moravia, and much of Bohemia, including Prague. In May 1945, U.S. forces liberated the city of Plzen and most of western Bohemia. A civilian uprising against the German garrison took place in Prague in May 1945. Following Germany's surrender, some 2.9 million ethnic Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia with Allied approval under the Benes Decrees.

Reunited after the war, the Czechs and Slovaks set national elections for the spring of 1946. The democratic elements, led by President Eduard Benes, hoped the Soviet Union would allow Czechoslovakia the freedom to choose its own form of government and aspired to a Czechoslovakia that would act as a bridge between East and West. The Czechoslovak Communist Party, which won 38% of the vote, held most of the key positions in the government and gradually managed to neutralize or silence the anti-communist forces. Although the communist-led government initially intended to participate in the Marshall Plan, it was forced by Moscow to back out. Under the cover of superficial legality, the Communist Party seized power in February 1948.

After extensive purges modeled on the Stalinist pattern in other east European states, the Communist Party tried 14 of its former leaders in November 1952 and sentenced 11 to death. For more than a decade thereafter, the Czechoslovak communist political structure was characterized by the orthodoxy of the leadership of party chief Antonin Novotny.

The 1968 Soviet Invasion

The communist leadership allowed token reforms in the early 1960s, but discontent arose within the ranks of the Communist Party central committee, stemming from dissatisfaction with the slow pace of the economic reforms, resistance to cultural liberalization, and the desire of the Slovaks within the leadership for greater autonomy for their republic. This discontent expressed itself with the removal of Novotny from party leadership in January 1968 and from the presidency in March. He was replaced as party leader by a Slovak, Alexander Dubcek.

After January 1968, the Dubcek leadership took practical steps toward political, social, and economic reforms. In addition, it called for politico-military changes in the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The leadership affirmed its loyalty to socialism and the Warsaw Pact but also expressed the desire to improve relations with all countries of the world regardless of their social systems.

A program adopted in April 1968 set guidelines for a modern, humanistic socialist democracy that would guarantee, among other things, freedom of religion, press, assembly, speech, and travel; a program that, in Dubcek's words, would give socialism "a human face." After 20 years of little public participation, the population gradually started to take interest in the government, and Dubcek became a truly popular national figure. The



internal reforms and foreign policy statements of the Dubcek leadership created great concern among some other Warsaw Pact governments. On the night of August 20, 1968, Soviet, Hungarian, Bulgarian, East German, and Polish troops invaded and occupied Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak Government immediately declared that the troops had not been invited into the country and that their invasion was a violation of socialist principles, international law, and the UN Charter.

The principal Czechoslovak reformers were forcibly and secretly taken to the Soviet Union. Under obvious Soviet duress, they were compelled to sign a treaty that provided for the "temporary stationing" of an unspecified number of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek was removed as party First Secretary on April 17, 1969, and replaced by another Slovak, Gustav Husak. Later, Dubcek and many of his allies within the party were stripped of their party positions in a purge that lasted until 1971 and reduced party membership by almost one-third.

The 1970s and 1980s became known as the period of "normalization," in which the apologists for the 1968 Soviet invasion prevented, as best they could, any opposition to their conservative regime. Political, social, and economic life stagnated. The population, cowed by the "normalization," was quiet.

The Velvet Revolution

The roots of the 1989 Civic Forum movement that came to power during the "Velvet Revolution" lie in human rights activism. On January 1, 1977, more than 250 human rights activists signed a manifesto called the Charter 77, which criticized the government for failing to implement human rights provisions of documents it had signed, including the state's own constitution; international covenants on political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights; and the Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Although not organized in any real sense, the signatories of Charter 77 constituted a citizens' initiative aimed at inducing the Czechoslovak

Government to observe formal obligations to respect the human rights of its citizens.

On November 17, 1989, the communist police violently broke up a peaceful pro-democracy demonstration and brutally beat many student participants. In the days that followed, Charter 77 and other groups united to become the Civic Forum, an umbrella group championing bureaucratic reform and civil liberties. Its leader was the dissident playwright Vaclav Havel. Intentionally eschewing the label "party," a word given a negative connotation during the previous regime, Civic Forum quickly gained the support of millions of Czechs, as did its Slovak counterpart, Public Against Violence.

Faced with an overwhelming popular repudiation, the Communist Party all but collapsed. Its leaders, Husak and party chief Milos Jakes, resigned in December 1989, and Havel was elected President of Czechoslovakia on December 29. The astonishing quickness of these events was in part due to the unpopularity of the communist regime and changes in the policies of its Soviet guarantor as well as to the rapid, effective organization of these public initiatives into a viable opposition.

A coalition government, in which the Communist Party had a minority of ministerial positions, was formed in December 1989. The first free elections in Czechoslovakia since 1946 took place in June 1990 without incident and with more than 95% of the population voting. As anticipated, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence won landslide victories in their respective republics and gained a comfortable majority in the federal parliament. The parliament undertook substantial steps toward securing the democratic evolution of Czechoslovakia. It successfully moved toward fair local elections in November 1990, ensuring fundamental change at the county and town level.

Civic Forum found, however, that although it had successfully completed its primary objective—the overthrow of the communist regime—it was ineffectual as a governing party. The demise of Civic Forum was viewed by most as necessary and inevitable.

By the end of 1990, unofficial parliamentary "clubs" had evolved with distinct political agendas. Most influential was the Civic Democratic Party, headed by Vaclav Klaus, who later became Prime Minister. Other notable parties that came to the fore after the split were the Czech Social Democratic Party, Civic Movement, and Civic Democratic Alliance.

By 1992, Slovak calls for greater autonomy effectively blocked the daily functioning of the federal government. In the election of June 1992, Klaus's Civic Democratic Party won handily in the Czech lands on a platform of economic reform. Vladimir Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia emerged as the leading party in Slovakia, basing its appeal on fairness to Slovak demands for autonomy.

Federalists, like Havel, were unable to contain the trend toward the split. In July 1992, President Havel resigned. In the latter half of 1992, Klaus and Meciar hammered out an agreement that the two republics would go their separate ways by the end of the year.

Members of the federal parliament, divided along national lines, barely cooperated enough to pass the law officially separating the two nations. The law was passed on December 27, 1992. On January 1, 1993, the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia were simultaneously and peacefully founded.

Relationships between the two states, despite occasional disputes about the division of federal property and governing of the border, have been peaceful. Both states attained immediate recognition from the U.S. and their European neighbors.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The President of the Czech Republic is Vaclav Klaus. He was elected on February 28, 2003 and sworn into office on March 7, 2003. As formal head of state, the president is granted specific powers such as the right to nominate Constitutional Court judges, dissolve parliament under certain conditions, and enact a veto on legislation. Presidents are elected by the parliament for 5-year terms.

The legislature is bicameral, with a Chamber of Deputies (200 seats) and a Senate (81 seats). With the split of the former Czechoslovakia, the powers and responsibilities of the now-defunct federal parliament were transferred to the Czech National Council, which renamed itself the Chamber of Deputies. Chamber delegates are elected from 14 regions—including the capital, Prague—for 4-year terms, on the basis of proportional representation. The Czech Senate is patterned after the U.S. Senate and was first elected in 1996; its members serve for 6-year terms with one-third being elected every 2 years.

The country's highest court of appeal is the Supreme Court. The Constitutional Court, which rules on constitutional issues, is appointed by the president. Its members serve 10-year terms.

The June 2-3, 2006 general election resulted in the Chamber of Deputies' 200 seats being evenly divided 100-100 between three center-right parties and two parties on the left, with neither side able to form a majority government. The impasse led to months of protracted negotiations during which Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek formed a three-party coalition with the Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) and the Greens (SZ).

The coalition lost its first vote of confidence 96-99 on October 4, 2006. But some seven months after the election, on January 19, 2007, the coalition

succeeded in its second attempt when two renegade parliamentarians from the opposition Social Democrats (CSSD) abstained.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Vaclav KLAUS**
Prime Min.: **Mirek TOPOLANEK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Martin BURSIK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jiri CUNEK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Petr NECAS**
Dep. Prime Min. for European Affairs: **Alexandr VONDRA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Petr GANDALOVIC**
Min. of Culture: **Vaclav JEHLICKA**
Min. of Defense: **Vlasta PARKANOVA**
Min. of Education & Youth: **Ondrej LISKA**
Min. of Environment: **Martin BURSIK**
Min. of Finance: **Miroslav KALOUSEK**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Karel SCHWARZENBERG**
Min. of Health: **Tomas JULINEK**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Martin RIMAN**
Min. of Interior: **Ivan LANGER**
Min. of Justice: **Jiri POSPISIL**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **Petr NECAS**
Min. of Regional Development: **Jiri CUNEK**
Min. of Transportation: **Ales REBICEK**
Governor, Czech National Bank: **Zdenek TUMA**
Ambassador to the US: **Petr KOLAR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Martin PALOUS**

ECONOMY

Of the former communist countries in central and eastern Europe, the Czech Republic has one of the most developed and industrialized economies. Its strong industrial tradition dates to the 19th century, when Bohemia and Moravia were the industrial heartland of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Czech Republic has a well-educated population and a well-developed infrastructure. The country's strategic location in Europe, low-cost structure, and skilled work force have attracted strong inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI). This investment is rapidly modernizing its industrial base and increasing productivity.

The principal industries are motor vehicles, machine-building, iron and steel production, metalworking, chemicals, electronics, transportation equipment, textiles, glass, brewing, china, ceramics, and pharmaceuticals. The main agricultural products are sugar beets, fodder roots, potatoes, wheat, and hops. As a small, open economy in the heart of Europe, economic growth is strongly influenced by demand for Czech exports and flows of foreign direct investment.

At the time of the 1948 communist takeover, Czechoslovakia had a balanced economy and one of the higher levels of industrialization on the continent. In 1948, however, the government began to stress heavy industry over agricultural and consumer goods and services. Many basic industries and foreign trade, as well as domestic wholesale trade, had been nationalized before the communists took power. Nationalization of most of the retail trade was completed in 1950-51.

Heavy industry received major economic support during the 1950s, but central planning resulted in waste and inefficient use of industrial resources. Although the labor force was traditionally skilled and efficient, inadequate incentives for labor and management contributed to high labor turnover, low productivity, and poor product quality. Economic failures reached a critical stage in the 1960s, after which various reform measures were sought with no satisfactory results.

Hope for wide-ranging economic reform came with Alexander Dubcek's rise in January 1968. Despite renewed efforts, however, Czechoslovakia could not come to grips with inflationary forces, much less begin the immense task of correcting the economy's basic problems.

The economy saw growth during the 1970s but then stagnated between 1978-82. Attempts at revitalizing it in the 1980s with management and worker incentive programs were largely unsuccessful. The economy grew after 1982, achieving an annual average output growth of more than 3% between 1983-85. Imports from the West were curtailed, exports boosted, and hard currency debt reduced substantially. New investment was made in the electronic, chemical, and pharmaceutical sectors, which were industry leaders in eastern Europe in the mid-1980s.

The "Velvet Revolution" in 1989 offered a chance for profound and sustained economic reform. Signs of economic resurgence began to appear in the wake of the shock therapy that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) labeled the "big bang" of January 1991. Since then, astute economic management has led to the elimination of 95% of all price controls, large inflows of foreign investment, increasing domestic consumption and industrial production, and a stable exchange rate. Exports to former communist economic bloc markets have shifted to western Europe. Thanks to foreign investment, the country enjoys a positive balance-of-payments position. Despite a general trend over the last 10 years toward rising budget deficits, the Czech Government's domestic and foreign indebtedness remains relatively low.

The Czech koruna (crown) became fully convertible for most business purposes in late 1995. Following a currency crisis and recession in 1998-99, the crown exchange rate was allowed to float. Recently, strong capital inflows have resulted in a steady increase in the value of the crown against the euro and the dollar. The strong crown helped to keep inflation low. In 2004, inflation was about 2.8%, mainly due to increases in value added tax rates and higher fuel costs, and dropped to 1.9% in 2005. It hovered around 2.5% in 2006. The Ministry of Finance reported an inflation rate of 2.8% for 2007. The Czech Republic will not adopt the euro earlier than 2012.

The Czech Republic is gradually reducing its dependence on highly polluting low-grade brown coal as a source of energy, in part because of EU environmental requirements. In 2005, according to the Czech Statistical Office, 65.4% of electricity was

produced in steam, combined, and combustion power plants; 30% in nuclear plants; and 4.6% from renewable sources, including hydropower. Russia (via pipelines through Ukraine) and, to a lesser extent, Norway (via pipelines through Germany) supply the Czech Republic with liquid and natural gas.

The government has offered investment incentives in order to enhance the Czech Republic's natural advantages, thereby attracting foreign partners and stimulating the economy. Shifting emphasis from the East to the West has necessitated adjustment of commercial laws and accounting practices to fit Western standards. Formerly state-owned banks have all been privatized into the hands of west European banks and oversight by the central bank has improved. The telecommunications infrastructure has been upgraded and the sector is privatized. The Czech Republic has made significant progress toward creating a stable and attractive climate for investment, although continuing reports of corruption are troubling to investors.

Its success allowed the Czech Republic to become the first post-communist country to receive an investment-grade credit rating by international credit institutions. Successive Czech governments have welcomed U.S. investment in addition to the strong economic influence of Western Europe and increasing investment from Asian auto manufacturers. Inflows of foreign direct investment in 2007 were roughly $9.2 billion. By U.S. Embassy estimates, the United States is among the top six investors in the Czech Republic since the revolution.

The Czech Republic boasts a flourishing consumer production sector. In the early 1990s most state-owned industries were privatized through a voucher privatization system. Every citizen was given the opportunity to buy, for a moderate price, a book of vouchers that he or she could exchange for shares in state-owned companies. State ownership of businesses was estimated to be about 97% under communism. The non-private sector is less than 20% today. Unemployment declined to 5.0% in May 2008. Rates of unemployment are higher in the coal and steel producing regions of Northern Moravia and Northern Bohemia, and among less-skilled and older workers.

The economy grew 5.7% in 2007 and similar growth is expected in 2008. The current right-of-center coalition government has committed itself to reducing the deficit to 3% of GDP by 2008, from 4.7% in 2006. Planned reforms involving reduction of currently mandatory expenditures to meet Maastricht criteria for adoption of the euro will prepare the Czech Republic for accession to the euro zone in 2012 at the earliest.

The Czech Republic became a European Union (EU) member on May 1, 2004. Most barriers to trade in industrial goods with the EU fell in the course of the accession process. The process of accession had a positive impact on reform in the Czech Republic, and new EU directives and regulations continue to shape the business environment. Free trade in services and agricultural goods, as well as stronger regulation and rising labor costs, will mean tougher competition for Czech producers. Future levels of EU structural funding and agricultural supports were key issues in the accession negotiations. Even before accession, policy set in Brussels had a strong influence on Czech domestic and foreign policy, particularly in the area of trade.

The Czech Republic's economic transformation is not yet complete. The government still faces serious challenges in completing industrial restructuring, increasing transparency in capital market transactions, transforming the housing sector, reforming the pension and health care systems, and solving serious environmental problems.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The Czech Republic continues to make significant contributions to international allied coalitions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kosovo. In early 2008, the Czech Republic established a 200-person Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Logar Province, Afghanistan. In addition, an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) was deployed to work alongside the Afghanistan National Air Corps. The deployment of this Czech OMLT complements the ongoing donation of 12 excess fully overhauled Czech military helicopters to Afghanistan, six of which have been delivered. Additionally, in mid-2008, the Czechs will redeploy a Special Forces unit to Afghanistan for a third time as well as a 65-person security detachment to support Dutch forces. These new contributions add to ongoing deployments to Afghanistan, including a large military field hospital in Kabul and a Special Purpose Military Police unit operating in Helmand Province. This increased commitment of support deployments to Afghanistan has not diminished the Czech Republic's continued commitment to support other coalition efforts, including providing a maneuver battalion to Kosovo in support of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) on a continual rotational basis as well as a limited number of personnel to Iraq.

The Czech Republic became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 12, 1999. A major overhaul of the Czechoslovak defense forces began in 1990 and continues in the Czech Republic. Czech forces have been successfully downsized from 200,000 to approximately 30,000, and at the same time reoriented into a more mobile, deployable force. The Czechs have made good progress in reforming the military personnel structure, and a strong commitment to English-language training is paying off. Compulsory military service ended in December 2004. Public support for NATO remains high. The Czech Government currently spends slightly less than 1.5% of GDP on defense.

The Czech Republic has good relations with all of its neighbors, and none of its borders are in question. The Czech Republic is a member of the EU, UN, and Organization for

Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and will lead a European Union Battle Group (EUBG) in the second half of 2009.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

From 1948 until 1989, the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia followed that of the Soviet Union. Since independence, the Czechs have made integration into Western institutions their chief foreign policy objective.

The Czech Republic became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, along with Poland and Hungary, on March 12, 1999. The Czech Republic became a full member of the European Union on May 1, 2004. Both events are milestones in the country's foreign policy and security orientation. The Czech Republic is scheduled to host the rotating EU Presidency during the first half of 2009.

The Czech Republic is a member of the United Nations and participates in its specialized agencies. It is a member of the World Trade Organization. It maintains diplomatic relations with more than 85 countries, of which 80 have permanent representation in Prague.

U.S.-CZECH RELATIONS

Millions of Americans have their roots in Bohemia and Moravia, and a large community in the United States has strong cultural and familial ties with the Czech Republic. President Woodrow Wilson and the United States played a major role in the establishment of the original Czechoslovak state on October 28, 1918. President Wilson's 14 Points, including the right of ethnic groups to form their own states, were the basis for the union of the Czechs and Slovaks. Tomas Masaryk, the father of the state and its first President, visited the United States during World War I and worked with U.S. officials in developing the basis of the new country. Masaryk used the U.S. Constitution as a model for the first Czechoslovak constitution.

After World War II, and the return of the Czechoslovak Government in exile, normal relations continued until 1948, when the communists seized power. Relations cooled rapidly. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 further complicated U.S.-Czechoslovak relations. The United States referred the matter to the UN Security Council as a violation of the UN Charter, but no action was taken against the Soviets.

Since the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989, bilateral relations have improved immensely. Dissidents once sustained by U.S. encouragement and human rights policies reached high levels in the government. President Havel, in his first official visit as head of Czechoslovakia, addressed the U.S. Congress and was interrupted 21 times by standing ovations. In 1990, on the first anniversary of the revolution, President George H.W. Bush, in front of an enthusiastic crowd on Prague's Wenceslas Square, pledged U.S. support in building a democratic Czechoslovakia. Toward this end, the U.S. Government has actively encouraged political and economic transformation.

The U.S. Government was originally opposed to the idea of Czechoslovakia forming two separate states, due to concerns that a split might aggravate existing regional political tensions. However, the U.S. recognized both the Czech Republic and Slovakia on January 1, 1993. Since then, U.S.-Czech relations have remained strong economically, politically, and culturally.

Relations between the U.S. and the Czech Republic are excellent and reflect the common approach both have to the many challenges facing the world at present. The U.S. looks to the Czech Republic as a partner in issues ranging from Afghanistan to the Balkans, and seeks opportunities to continue to deepen this relationship.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PRAGUE (E) Trziste 15, 11801 Praha 1, CR, APO/FPO Unit 5630 Box 1000, DPO AE 09727-1000, (420) 257 022 000, Fax [420] 257 022 806, Workweek: 8:00–4:30 Monday-Friday, Website: prague.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Terri R. Gilbert
AMB OMS:	Margie Doulgas
FCS:	Greg O'Connor
FM:	Thomas Nave
IBB:	Enver Safir
MGT:	Martin Hohe
POL/ECO:	Michael Dodman
AMB:	Richard W. Graber
CG:	Stuart Hatcher
DCM:	Mary Thompson-Jones
PAO:	Michael Hahn
GSO:	Richard Glenn
RSO:	James Pelphrey
AGR:	Quintin Gray (Resident In Vienna)
CLO:	D'Anna Hohe, Cathy Reuter
DAO:	Col. Timothy Lindemann
EST:	Stephen Tagai
FMO:	Kenneth Meyer
ICASS Chair:	Greg O'Connor, Fcs
IMO:	Kevin Rubesh
IRS:	Barbara Franklin
LEGATT:	Vacant

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 21, 2008

Country Description: The Czech Republic is located in the heart of Europe. Tourist facilities in Prague are at the level of those found in most European capitals, while travelers can expect lower standards outside of Prague. Travelers are encouraged to be vigilant as pick-pocketing and petty theft occurs often in crowded tourist areas, restaurants and on public transportation.

Entry Requirements: The Czech Republic is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter the Czech Republic for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay.

Visas are required for U.S. citizens for longer stays and in order to work in the Czech Republic. In such cases, it is recommended that travelers obtain a visa in advance of entering the Czech Republic. The Embassy of the Czech Republic's web site at http://www.mzv.cz/washington provides for the most current visa information. The Czech Government requires travelers to the Czech Republic to have proof of finances to pay for their stay and proof of travel/health insurance. Minimum coverage of the insurance has to be at least $35,000.

According to the Czech Government, a health insurance card or an internationally recognized credit card with health insurance included will generally be accepted as proof of insurance to enter the Republic. The health insurance requirement does not apply to those who have visas permitting them to work.

Safety and Security: Civil disorder is rare in the Czech Republic, although strikes and demonstrations may occur. U.S. citizens should be vigilant in protecting their security, bearing in mind that even demonstrations meant to be peaceful may turn violent. Americans are advised to avoid street demonstrations.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up to date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.

Crime: The Czech Republic generally has a low rate of crime. However, street crime –particularly pick-pocketing and occasional mugging –is a problem, especially in major tourist areas in Prague. Travelers are encouraged to be especially vigilant in Prague's restaurants, train stations, and on public transportation around the city center. Incidents of pick-pocketing were reported in significant numbers during 2007. Incidents of violent crime, while still relatively infrequent, are becoming more common in Prague. Travelers should be aware of the reported use of Rohypnol and other "date rape" drugs in the Czech Republic. Caution should be used when accepting open drinks at bars or clubs. Travelers should be very careful while riding trains, trams or metro, where most crime occurs. Keep a copy of your passport in a safe place separate from the passport itself; this copy can help you to apply for a new passport if yours is lost or stolen. Visitors should be alert to the potential for substantial overcharging by taxis, particularly in areas frequented by tourists. Radio-dispatched taxis are often much more reliable. It is also advisable to set the price in advance.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to both the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please also contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy or Consulate staff can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, contacting family members or friends and explaining how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime overseas is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the Czech Republic is 112. English-speaking assistance is not always available from the local police, but the police headquarters at 9 Jungmannovo Namesti in New Town usually has an English-speaker available.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Prague has good Western style medical clinics with English-speaking doctors and dentists. However, staff members at the majority of Czech medical facilities do not speak English. Doctors and hospitals often expect cash payment for health services, though some facilities do accept credit cards, Hospitalization in the Czech Republic is much more liberal that in the United States; conditions that would be treated on an outpatient basis in the United States are often treated on an inpatient basis in the Czech Republic. Ambulance services are not on a par with U.S. standards. Response time can sometimes be slow, and different ambulances are dispatched depending on the perceived severity of the patient's condition. Many ambulance companies expect payment at the time of delivery. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars or more. Please note that because euthanasia is not permitted under Czech law, U.S. living wills providing for no exceptional interventions to prolong life cannot be honored in the Czech Republic.

People traveling from April-October who plan to participate in camping or hiking in long grass or woodlands run the risk of both tick-borne encephalitis and Lyme disease. All travelers should take precautions to prevent tick bites. There is a vaccine for the former, but not for Lyme disease.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRTP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling

abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Czech Republic is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travelers should note that road fatalities are occurring at an increasing rate in the Czech Republic, placing it amongst the most lethal places to drive in Europe. First-class roads in the Czech Republic generally meet European standards. However, on side roads, drivers should be prepared to encounter uneven surfaces, irregular lane markings, and sign placements that are not clear. Streets in towns are not always in good condition. U.S. drivers should pay special attention to driving on cobblestone and among streetcars in historic city centers. Traffic lights are placed before the intersection and not after as in the United States. Speed limits are 50 km/h in towns, 90 km/h outside of towns and 130 km/h on highways. An International Driving Permit (IDP), available from AAA (in the United States only), must accompany a U.S. driver's license; failure to have the IDP with a valid license may result in denial of an insurance claim after an accident.

Passengers on public transportation should buy a ticket prior to boarding to avoid being fined. The ticket must be validated at the outset of the trip by inserting it into the yellow box found on trams and buses and in the entry halls of subway stations.

Persons driving into the Czech Republic should be aware that a road usage tax sticker is required to drive legally on major highways. Signs stating this requirement are posted near the border, but they are easy to miss. The stickers are available at gasoline stations. The fine for failing to display a motorways toll sticker is assessed on the spot. For specific information concerning Czech requirements for driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Czech Tourist Authority offices in New York by telephone at (212)288-0830 or via email at infor@czechcenter.com.

Visit the web sites of the Czech Republic's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.turistik.cz and http://www.mdcr.cz.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Czech Republic's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Czech Republic's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Czech customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Czech Republic of items such as firearms, antiquities, medications, business equipment, etc. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Washington, D.C, or the Consulates General of the Czech Republic in New York and Los Angeles for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Czech Republic laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Czech Republic are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration And Embassy And Consulate Locations: Americans living in the Czech Republic are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Czech Republic. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Prague is located at Trziste 15, 118 01 Prague, Czech Republic; telephone (420)257 530 663; for after-hours emergencies only, telephone (420 257 532 716; Consular Section's fax (420) 257 534 028; web page: http://prague.usembassy.gov

Intercountry Adoption

June 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. The Czech Republic is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
Central Office for International Legal Protection of Juveniles
Benesova 22,
60200 Brno, Czech Republic
Tel: (420) 54221 5443 through 5.

Eligibility to Adopt: Both married and single persons may adopt Czech children. There can be a maximum of 40 years between the prospective adoptive parents and the child.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be legal residents of the Czech Republic or reside in a country that is also party to The Hague Adoption Convention. In addition, Czech authorities may require prospective adoptive parents to care for the child for up to two years prior to approving an adoption.

Time Frame: It takes about two years from original application to the end of process.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no private adoption agencies in the Czech Republic. Prospective adoptive parents may locate an adoptable child either by contacting a local social service office or by hiring an attorney familiar with the Czech social services system. The U.S. Embassy in Prague maintains a list of Czech attorneys; this list may be obtained in person from the consular section of the U.S. Embassy or via the Embassy's web site at: http://prague.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: There are officially no fees for adoption. There are fees for court papers and new birth certificate in the range of tens of dollars. Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay attorneys fees for services rendered.

The U.S. Embassy in Prague discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in the Czech Republic at risk.

Adoption Procedures: Once a child is located for adoption, the following requirements must be met. A written request from the Central Authority of the prospective adoptive parents must be mailed to the Central Office for International Legal Protection of Juveniles. The request is forwarded to the appropriate guardian authority (usually the Department of Youth of the local town hall). Often a period of 3-24 months of pre-adoption care of the child by the adoptive parents is required. Czech district Court have jurisdiction on decisions in adoption cases of children to be adopted on the Czech territory. The Czech Central Authority for Adoption must approve adoptions to foreign countries. Czech district courts have jurisdiction on decisions in adoption cases.

Required Documents: Adopting parents are also required to present the following supporting documents translated into the Czech language by a court translator and certified by the Czech Embassy in Washington, D.C.:

- Parents' Birth Certificates;
- Marriage Certificate, if applicable;
- Police Certificates/Clearances for all countries where prospective adoptive parents have resided for extended periods of time;
- Parents' Medical Certificates/ Clearances;
- Evidence of Employment and Financial Status; and
- Completed Home Study by competent authority in prospective adoptive parents' country of residence.

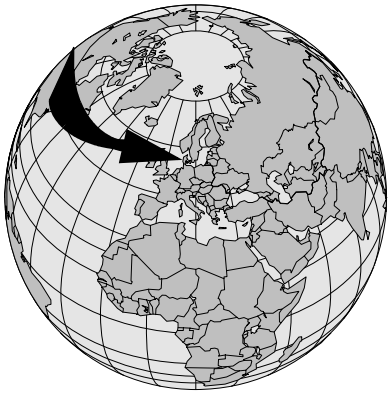
Embassy of the Czech Republic
3900 Spring of Freedom Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
tel. (202) 274-9103
Fax: (202) 363-6308
Web site:
http://www.mzv.cz/washington

The Czech Republic also has consulates in Los Angeles and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website to download forms and filing instructions.

U.S. Embassy
Trziste 15
118 01 Prague 1
Czech Republic
Tel. (420) (25702-2000)
Fax: (420) (25753-4028)
Web site: http://www.usembassy.cz

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



DENMARK

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Denmark

PROFILE

Geography

Excluding Greenland and the Faroe Islands

Area: 43,094 sq. km. (16,639 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Vermont and New Hampshire combined.

Cities: Capital—Copenhagen (pop. 0.5 million in Copenhagen and 1.1 million in the Copenhagen Region). Other cities—Arhus (293,510), Odense (185,206), Aalborg (163,231).

Terrain: Low and flat or slightly rolling; highest elevation is 173 m. (568 ft.).

Climate: Temperate. The terrain, location, and prevailing westerly winds make the weather changeable.

People

Nationality: Noun—Dane(s). Adjective—Danish.

Population: (Dec 2007) 5,475,791.

Annual growth rate: (Dec. 2006–Dec. 2007) 0.53%.

Ethnic groups: Scandinavian, Inuit, Faroese, German, Turkish, Iranian, Somali.

Religions: Evangelical Lutheran 95%; other Protestant denominations and Roman Catholics 3%; Muslim 2%.

Languages: Danish, Faroese, Greenlandic (Inuit dialect), some German. English is the predominant second language.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—100%. Literacy—100%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—4.4/1,000. Life expectancy—men 75.9 years, women 80.5 years.

Work force: (2007) 2.9 million. Employment: Industry, construction, mining and utilities—23%; government—35%; private services—37%; agriculture and fisheries—2%.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Constitution: June 5, 1953.

Government branches: Executive—queen (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral parliament (Folketing). Judicial—appointed Supreme Court.

Political parties: (represented in parliament) Venstre (Liberal), Social Democratic, Konservative, Socialist People's, Social Liberal, Unity List, Danish People's, New Alliance.

Suffrage: Universal adult (18 years of age).

Political subdivisions: 13 counties and 271 municipalities.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $311.5 billion.

Annual growth rate: (real terms, 2007 est.) 1.8%.

Per capita GDP: $56,895.

Agriculture and fisheries: (1.3% of GDP at gross value added) Products—meat, milk, grains, seeds, hides, fur skin, fish and shellfish.

Industry: (20% of GDP at gross value added) Types—industrial and construction equipment, food processing, electronics, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, furniture, textiles, windmills, and ships.

Natural resources: North Sea—oil and gas, fish. Greenland—fish and shrimp, potential for hydrocarbons and minerals, including zinc, lead, molybdenum, uranium, gold, platinum. The Faroe Islands—fish, potential for hydrocarbons.

Trade: (2007, goods): Exports—$101.885 billion: manufactured goods 75% (of which machinery and instruments were 35%); agricultural products 9% (of which pork and pork products cover 48%); fuels, etc. 10%; fish and fish products 1%; other 5%. Imports—$98.861 billion: raw materials and semi-manufactures 44%; consumer goods 30%; capital equipment 12%; transport equipment 7%; fuels 5%; other 1%. Partners (percent of total trade in goods)—Germany 17%, Sweden 15%, U.K. 8%, Norway 6%, U.S. 5%.

Exchange rate: 4.70 kroner=U.S. $1 as of end March 2008.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The Danes, a homogenous Gothic-Germanic people, have inhabited Denmark since prehistoric times. Danish is the principal language. English is a required school subject, and fluency is high. A small German-speaking minority lives in southern Jutland; a mostly Inuit population inhabits Greenland; and the Faroe Islands have a Nordic population with its own language. Education is compulsory from ages seven to 16 and is free through the university level.

Although religious freedom is guaranteed, the state-supported Evangelical Lutheran Church accounts for about 95% of those persons claiming religious affiliation. Several other Christian denominations, as well as other major religions, find adherents in Denmark. Islam is now the second-largest religion in Denmark.

During the Viking period (9th-11th centuries), Denmark was a great power based on the Jutland Peninsula, the Island of Zealand, and the southern part of what is now Sweden. In the early 11th century, King Canute united Denmark and England for almost 30 years.

Viking raids brought Denmark into contact with Christianity, and in the 12th century, crown and church influence increased. By the late 13th century, royal power had waned, and the nobility forced the king to grant a charter, considered Denmark's first constitution. Although the struggle between crown and nobility continued into the 14th century, Queen Margrethe I succeeded in uniting Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and Greenland under the Danish crown. Sweden and Finland left the union in 1520; however, Norway remained until 1814. Iceland, in a "personal union" under the king of Denmark after 1918, became independent in 1944.

The Reformation was introduced in Denmark in 1536. Denmark's provinces in today's southwestern Sweden were lost in 1658, and Norway was transferred from the Danish to the Swedish crown in 1814, following the defeat of Napoleon, with whom Denmark was allied.

The Danish liberal movement gained momentum in the 1830s, and in 1849 Denmark became a constitutional monarchy. After the war with Prussia and Austria in 1864, Denmark was forced to cede Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia and adopt a policy of neutrality. Toward the end of the 19th century, Denmark inaugurated important social and labor market reforms, laying the basis for the present welfare state.

Denmark remained neutral during World War I. Despite its declaration of neutrality at the beginning of World War II, it was invaded by the Germans in 1940 and occupied until liberated by the Allied forces in May 1945. Resistance against the Germans was sporadic until late 1943. By then better organized, the resistance movement and other volunteers undertook a successful rescue mission in which nearly the entire Jewish population of Denmark was shipped to Sweden (whose neutrality was honored by Germany). However, extensive studies are still being undertaken for the purpose of establishing a clearer picture of the degree of Danish cooperation—official and corporate—with the occupying power. Denmark became a charter member of the United Nations and was one of the original signers of the North Atlantic Treaty.

Cultural Achievements

Denmark's rich intellectual heritage has made multifaceted contributions to modern culture the world over. The discoveries of astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), geologist and anatomist Niels Steensen (1639-86), and the brilliant contributions of Nobel laureates Niels Bohr (1885-1962) to atomic physics and Niels Finsen (1860-1904) to medical research indicate the range of Danish scientific achievement. The fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen (1805-75), the philosophical essays of Soeren Kierkegaard (1813-55), and the short stories of Karen Blixen (pseudonym Isak Dinesen; 1885-1962) have earned international recognition, as have the symphonies of Carl Nielsen (1865-1931). Danish applied art and industrial design have won so many awards for excellence that the term "Danish Design" has become synonymous with high quality, craftsmanship, and functionalism. Among the leading lights of architecture and design was Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971), the "father of modern Danish design." The name of Georg Jensen (1866-1935) is known worldwide for outstanding modern design in silver, and "Royal Copenhagen" is among the finest porcelains. No 'short list' of famous Danes would be complete without the entertainer and pianist Victor Borge (1909-2000), who emigrated to the United States under Nazi threat in 1940, and had a worldwide following when he died a naturalized U.S. citizen in Greenwich, Connecticut, at the age of 91.

Visitors to Denmark will discover a wealth of cultural activity. The Royal Danish Ballet specializes in the work of the great Danish choreographer August Bournonville (1805-79). Danish dancers also feature regularly on the U.S. ballet scene, notably Peter Martins as head of New York City Ballet.

The Danish Film Institute, one of the oldest in Scandinavia, offers daily public screenings of Danish and international movies in their original language and plays an active role in the maintenance and restoration of important archival prints. Over the decades, movie directors like Gabriel Axel (Babette's Feast, 1987 Oscar for Best Foreign Film), Bille August (Buster's World, 1984; Pelle the Conqueror, 1988 Oscar for Best Foreign Film; The House of the Spirits, 1993) and Lars von Trier (Breaking the Waves, 1996; Dancer in the Dark, 2000 Cannes Golden Palm) have all won international acclaim. In addition, Denmark has been involved virtually from the start in development of the "Dogma film" genre, where small, hand-held digital cameras have permitted greater rapport



between director and actor and given a documentary film feel to their increasingly realistic works. Besides von Trier's Dogville (2003) starring Nicole Kidman, and The Idiots (1998), The Celebration (1998 Cannes Special Jury prize) by Thomas Vinterberg, Mifune's Last Song (1999 Berlin Silver Bear award) by Soeren Kragh-Jacobsen, and Italian for Beginners (2000 Berlin Silver Bear award) by Lone Scherfig all are prime examples of the Dogma concept. International collections of modern art enjoy unusually attractive settings at the Louisiana Museum north of Copenhagen, "Arken" south of Copenhagen, and the North Jutland Art Museum in Aalborg. The State Museum of Art and the Glyptotek, both in Copenhagen, contain masterpieces of Danish and international art. Denmark's National Museum building in central Copenhagen harbors most of the state's anthropological and archeological treasures with especially fine prehistoric and Viking Age collections; two of its finest satellite collections are the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde west of the metropolis and the Open Air Museum in a near northern suburb where original buildings have

been transported from their original locations around the country and reassembled on plots specially landscaped to evoke the original site. The Museum of Applied Art and Industrial Design in Copenhagen exhibits the best in Danish design. The world-renowned Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Factory exports worldwide. The ceramic tradition is carried on by designers such as Bjoern Wiinblad, whose whimsical creations remain as popular today as when they burst on the scene in the 1950s, and is carried on by younger talents such as Gertrude Vasegaard and Michael Geertsen.

Denmark has more than its share of impressive castles, many of which have been converted to museums. Frederiksborg Castle, on a manmade island in a lake north of Copenhagen, was restored after a catastrophic fire in the 1800s and now houses important collections in awe-inspiring splendor amidst impeccably manicured gardens. In Elsinore, Kronborg (or Hamlet's) Castle that once exacted tribute from passing ships now houses important furniture and art collections of the period, while hosting in its courtyard many touring summer productions of Shakespearean works. In Copenhagen, Rosenborg Castle houses the kingdom's crown jewels and boasts spectacular public gardens in the heart of the city.

Among today's Danish writers, probably the best-known to American readers is Peter Hoeg (Smilla's Sense of Snow; Borderliners), while the most prolific is Klaus Rifbjerg—poet, novelist, playwright, and screenwriter. Benny Andersen writes poems, short stories, and music. Poems by both writers have been translated into English by the Curbstone Press. Suzanne Broegger focuses on the changing roles of women in society. Kirsten Thorup's "Baby" won the 1980 Pegasus Prize and is printed in English by the University of Louisiana Press. The psychological thrillers of Anders Bodelsen and political thrillers by Leif Davidsen also appear in English.

In music, Hans Abrahamsen and Per Noergaard are the two most famous living composers. Abrahamsen's works have been performed by the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC. Other international names are Poul Ruders, Bo Holten, and Karl Aage Rasmussen. Danes such as bass player Niels Henning Oersted Petersen have won broad international recognition, and the Copenhagen Jazz Festival held each year in July has acquired a firm place on the calendar of international jazz enthusiasts.

Cultural Policy

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs was created in 1961. Cultural life and meaningful leisure time were then and remain now subjects of debate by politicians and parliament as well as the general public. The democratization of cultural life promoted by the government's 1960s cultural policy recently has come to terms with the older "genteel culture;" broader concepts of culture now generally accepted include amateur and professional cultural, media, sports, and leisure-time activities.

Denmark's cultural policy is characterized by decentralized funding, program responsibility, and institutions. Danish cultural direction differs from that of other countries with a Ministry of Culture and a stated policy in that special laws govern each cultural field—e.g., the Theater Act of 1990 (as amended) and the Music Law of 1976 (as amended).

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs includes among its responsibilities international cultural relations; training of librarians and architects; copyright legislation; and subsidies to archives, libraries, museums, literature, music, arts and crafts, theater, and film production. During 1970-82, the Ministry also recognized protest movements and street manifestations as cultural events, because social change was viewed as an important goal of Danish cultural policy.

Different governments exercise caution in moderating this policy and practice. Radio and TV broadcasting also fall under the Ministry of Culture. Although government expenditures for culture totaled about 1.0% of the budget in 1996, in 2006 government expenditures for culture totaled 0.66% of gross domestic product (GDP). Viewed against the new government's firm objective to limit public expenditures, contributions are unlikely to increase in the future. Municipal and county governments assume a relatively large share of the costs for cultural activities in their respective districts. Most support goes to libraries and archives, theater, museums, arts and crafts training, and films.

GOVERNMENT

Denmark is a constitutional monarchy. Queen Margrethe II has largely ceremonial functions; probably her most significant formal power lies in her right to appoint the prime minister and cabinet ministers, who are responsible for administration of the government. However, she must consult with parliamentary leaders to determine the public's will, since the cabinet may be dismissed by a vote of no confidence in the Folketing (parliament). Cabinet members are occasionally recruited from outside the Folketing.

The 1953 constitution established a unicameral Folketing of not more than 179 members, of whom two are elected from the Faroe Islands and two from Greenland. Elections are held at least every 4 years, but the prime minister can dissolve the Folketing at any time and call for new elections. Folketing members are elected by a complicated system of proportional representation; any party receiving at least 2% of the total national vote receives representation. The result is a multiplicity of parties (seven represented in the Folketing after the February 2005 general election), none of which holds a majority. Electorate participation normally is around 80-85%.

The judicial branch consists of about 100 local courts, two high courts, several special courts (e.g., arbitration and maritime), and a Supreme

Court of 15 judges appointed by the crown on the government's recommendation.

Since a structural reform of local government was passed by the Folketing in 2004 and 2005, Denmark has been divided into five regions and 98 municipalities. The regions and municipalities are both led by councils elected every four years, but only the municipal councils have the power to levy taxes. Regional councils are responsible for health services and regional development, while the municipal councils are responsible for day care, elementary schools, care for the elderly, culture, environment and roads.

The Faroe Islands and Greenland enjoy home rule, with the Danish Government represented locally by high commissioners. These home rule governments are responsible for most domestic affairs, with foreign relations, monetary affairs, and defense falling to the Danish Government.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Queen: **MARGRETHE II**
Prime Min.: **Anders Fogh RASMUSSEN**
Min. of Climate & Energy: **Connie HEDEGAARD**
Min. of Cultural Affairs: **Carina CHRISTENSEN**
Min. of Defense: **Soren GADE**
Min. of Development Cooperation: **Ulla TORNAES**
Min. of Economic Affairs, Business, & Trade: **Lene ESPERSEN**
Min. of Education & Nordic Cooperation: **Bertel HAARDER**
Min. of Employment: **Claus Hjort FREDERIKSEN**
Min. of Environment: **Troels Lund POULSEN**
Min. of Finance: **Lars Loekke RASMUSSEN**
Min. of Food, Agriculture, & Fisheries: **Eva Kjer HANSEN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Per Stig MOLLER**
Min. of Health & Prevention: **Jakob Axel NIELSEN**
Min. of Justice: **Brian MIKKELSEN**
Min. of Refugees, Immigration, Integration, & Ecclesiastical Affairs: **Birthe Roenn HORNBECH**
Min. of Science, Technology, & Innovation: **Helge SANDER**
Min. of Social Welfare & Gender Equality: **Karen JESPERSEN**
Min. of Taxation: **Kristian JENSEN**
Min. of Transport: **Lars BARFOED**
Chmn., Board of Governors, Danish National Bank: **Soeren BJERRE-NIELSEN**
Ambassador to the US: **Friis Arne PETERSEN**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Carsten STAUR**

Denmark maintains an embassy at 3200 Whitehaven Street NW, Washington, DC 20008-3683 (tel. 202-234-4300). Consulates general are in Chicago and New York.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political life in Denmark is orderly and democratic. Political changes occur gradually through a process of consensus, and political methods and attitudes are generally moderate. Growing numbers of immigrants and refugees throughout the 1990s, and less than successful integration policies, however, have in recent years led to growing support for populist anti-immigrant sentiments in addition to several revisions of already tight immigration laws, with the latest revision taking effect July 1, 2002.

The Social Democratic Party, historically identified with a well-organized labor movement but today appealing more broadly to the middle class, held power either alone or in coalition for most of the postwar period except from 1982 to 1993. From February 1993 to November 2001, Social Democratic Party chairman Poul Nyrup Rasmussen led a series of different minority coalition governments, which all included the centrist Social Liberal Party. However, with immigration high on the November 2001 election campaign agenda, the Danish People's Party doubled its number of parliamentary seats; this was a key factor in bringing into power a new minority right-of-center coalition government led by Liberal Party chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen (no relation to Nyrup Rasmussen). Parliamentary elections held November 13, 2007 returned the coalition to government for another term of up to four years. The coalition consists of the Liberal Party ("Venstre") and the Konservative Party, holding 64 of the 179 seats in the Folketing, and has the parliamentary support of the Danish People's Party, holding another 25 seats. The opposition Social Democrats hold 45 seats, and the Social Liberals hold 9 seats. Addressing the costs and benefits of the Denmark's comprehensive social welfare system, restraining taxes, and immigration are among the key issues on the current domestic political agenda.

Denmark's role in the European Union (EU) remains an important political issue. Denmark emerged from two referenda (June 2, 1992 and May 18, 1993) on the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union with four exemptions (or "opt-outs"): common defense, common currency, EU citizenship, and certain aspects of legal cooperation, including law enforcement. The Amsterdam Treaty was approved in a referendum May 28, 1998, by a 55% majority. Still, the electorate's fear of losing national identity in an integrated Europe and lack of confidence in long-term stability of European economies run deep. These concerns were at the forefront of the September 28, 2000 referendum on Denmark's participation in the third phase of the Economic and Monetary Union, particularly the common currency, the euro; more than 53% voted "no," and Denmark retained its "krone" currency unit. The government and the pro-EU opposition have agreed, and Denmark has received an EU green light to maintain the four opt-outs throughout the process of approving and ratifying a new EU constitutional treaty, with the ambition to eliminate several opt-outs in late 2008.

Denmark's relatively quiet and neutral role in international affairs was abruptly changed on September 30, 2005, when the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten printed 12 caricatures of Mohammed. Islamic law prohibits any visual portrayal of

Mohammed, and Muslims viewed the caricatures as offensive. Muslims worldwide were infuriated with the Danes, beginning a boycott of Danish products and burning several Danish embassies. The Danish Government defended freedom of expression while it chastised the newspaper for inconsideration. The newspaper apologized, and the Danish Government repeatedly reiterated its support for freedom of religion, but the Islamic community still holds much animosity toward the Danes.

ECONOMY

Denmark's industrialized market economy depends on imported raw materials and foreign trade. Within the European Union, Denmark advocates a liberal trade policy. Its standard of living is among the highest in the world, and the Danes devote about 1% of gross national product (GNP) to foreign aid to less developed countries. In addition, Denmark in 2006 devoted 0.81% of GNP for overseas development, including for peace and stability purposes, refugee pre-asylum costs, and for environmental purposes in central and eastern Europe and developing countries.

Denmark is a net exporter of food and energy. Its principal exports are machinery, instruments, and food products. The United States is Denmark's largest non-European trading partner, accounting for about 6% of total Danish merchandise trade. Aircraft, computers, machinery, and instruments are among the major U.S. exports to Denmark. Among major Danish exports to the United States are industrial machinery, chemical products, furniture, pharmaceuticals, canned ham and pork, windmills, and plastic toy blocks (Lego). In addition, Denmark has a significant services trade with the U.S., a major share of it stemming from Danish-controlled ships engaged in container traffic to and from the United States (notably by Maersk-SeaLand). There are some 375 U.S.-owned companies in Denmark.

The Danish economy is fundamentally strong. Since the mid-1990s, economic growth rates have averaged close to 3%, the formerly high official unemployment rate stands at around 2%, and public finances are in surplus. Except for one year—1998—Denmark since 1989 has had comfortable balance-of-payments current account surpluses, in 2007 corresponding to 1.1% of GDP. Denmark has maintained a stable currency policy since the early 1980s, with the krone formerly linked to the Deutschmark and since January 1, 1999, to the euro. Denmark meets, and even exceeds, the economic convergence criteria for participating in the third phase (a common European currency—the euro) of the European Monetary Union (EMU). Although a referendum on EMU participation held on September 28, 2000 resulted in a firm "no" and Denmark, therefore, has not yet adopted the euro, opinion polls show a majority in favor of EMU. It is uncertain when the government will have another referendum on the EMU/euro. Danes are generally proud of their welfare safety net, which ensures that all Danes receive basic health care and need not fear real poverty. However, at present the number of working-age Danes living mostly on government transfer payments amounts to more than 680,000 persons (roughly 20% of the working-age population). Although this number has been reduced in recent years, the heavy load of government transfer payments burdens other parts of the system. Health care, other than for acute problems, and care for the elderly and children have particularly suffered, while taxes remain at a painful level. More than one-fourth of the labor force is employed in the public sector.

Greenland and the Faroe Islands

The Greenland economy has increased by an average of some 3% to 4% annually since 1993, the result of increasing catches and exports of shrimp, Greenland halibut and, more recently, crab. However, it was not until 1999 that the economy had fully recovered from the economic downturn in the early 1990s. During the last decade the Greenland Home Rule Government (GHRG) has pursued a fiscal policy with mostly small budget surpluses and low inflation. The GHRG has taken initiatives to increase the labor force and thus employment by, among other things, raising the retirement age from 60 to 63 years. However, structural reforms are still needed in order to create a broader business base and economic growth through more efficient use of existing resources in both the public and the private sector. Due to the continued critical dependence on exports of fish, the economy remains very vulnerable to foreign developments. The public sector, including publicly owned enterprises and the municipalities, plays the dominant role in Greenland's economy. Close to one-half of the government revenues come from Danish Government grants, an important supplement of GDP. Greenland has registered a foreign trade deficit since the closure of the last remaining lead and zinc mine in 1989. Despite several interesting hydrocarbon and mineral exploration activities, it will take several years before production can materialize. The U.S. aluminum producer Alcoa is in negotiations with Greenland Home Rule to build smelters in Greenland to take advantage of abundant hydropower potential. Besides a continued increase in local content, i.e., using a Greenlandic rather than Danish work force in both the public and private sectors, tourism appears to be the sector that offers the best near-term potential, and even this is limited due to a short season and high costs. Politically, the Greenland Home Rule Government has had increasing autonomy since its creation in 1979. An independent commission from Greenland made recommendations for greater self-rule in 2003. In May 2003, the Danish and Greenland Home Rule governments reached agreement on a set of power-sharing principles on Greenland's involvement in Danish foreign and security policy. The so-called Itilleq Declaration provides that Greenland will have foreign policy involvement with a view toward having equal status on questions of concern to both Denmark and Greenland. A Danish-Greenlandic

Commission will make joint recommendations in 2008 to the Danish parliament on ways to update the Home Rule Act of 1979.

The Faroese economy has performed strongly since the mid-1990s with annual growth rates averaging close to 6%, mostly as a result of increasing fish landings and salmon farming and high and stable export prices. Unemployment is insignificant and there are labor shortages in several sectors. Most of the Faroese who emigrated in the early 1990s (some 10% of the population) due to the economic recession have now returned. The positive economic development also has helped the Faroese Home Rule Government produce increasing budget surpluses that in turn help to reduce the large public debt, most of it to Denmark. However, the total dependence on fishing and salmon farming makes the Faroese economy very vulnerable, and the present fishing efforts appear in excess of what is required to ensure a sustainable level of fishing in the long term. Initial discoveries of oil in the Faroese area give hope for eventual oil production, which may lay the basis for a more diversified economy and thus less dependence on Denmark and Danish economic assistance. Aided by an annual subsidy from Denmark corresponding to about 6% of Faroese GDP, the Faroese have a standard of living comparable to that of the Danes and other Scandinavians.

Politically, the present Faroese Home Rule Government has initiated a process toward greater independence from Denmark, if not complete secession from the realm. In that respect, agreement on how to phase out the Danish subsidy plays a crucial role.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Although Denmark remained neutral during the First World War, its rapid occupation by Nazi Germany in 1940 persuaded most Danes that neutrality was no longer a reliable guarantee of Danish security. Danish security policy is founded on its membership in NATO. Since 1988, Danish budgets and security policy have been set by multi-year agreements supported by a wide parliamentary majority, including government and opposition parties. In 2006, Danish defense expenditures were 1.4% of GDP according to a NATO estimate.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Danish foreign policy is founded upon four cornerstones: the United Nations, NATO, the EU, and Nordic cooperation. Denmark also is a member of, among others, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; the World Trade Organization (WTO); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Council of Europe; the Nordic Council; the Baltic Council; and the Barents Council. Denmark emphasizes its relations with developing nations. Although the government has moved to tighten foreign assistance expenditures, it remains a significant donor and one of the few countries to exceed the UN goal of contributing 0.7% of GNP to development assistance.

In the wake of the Cold War, Denmark has been active in international efforts to integrate the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into the West. It has played a leadership role in coordinating Western assistance to the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). The country is a strong supporter of international peacekeeping. Danish forces were heavily engaged in the former Yugoslavia in the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR), as well as in NATO's Operation Joint Endeavor/Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (IFOR/SFOR), and currently in the Kosovo Force (KFOR).

Denmark has been a member of NATO since its founding in 1949, and membership in NATO remains highly popular. There were several serious confrontations between the U.S. and Denmark on security policy in the so-called "footnote era" (1982-88), when a hostile parliamentary majority forced the government to adopt specific national positions on nuclear and arms control issues. With the end of the Cold War, however, Denmark has been supportive of U.S. policy objectives in the Alliance.

Danes have had a reputation as "reluctant" Europeans. When they rejected ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on June 2, 1992, they put the European Community's (EC) plans for the European Union on hold. In December 1992, the rest of the EC agreed to exempt Denmark from certain aspects of the European Union, including a common defense, a common currency, EU citizenship, and certain aspects of legal cooperation. On this revised basis, a clear majority of Danes approved continued participation in the EU in a second referendum on May 18, 1993, and again in a referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty on May 28, 1998.

Since September 11, 2001, Denmark has been highly proactive in endorsing and implementing United States, UN, and EU-initiated counter-terrorism measures, just as Denmark has contributed substantially to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and the neighboring countries. In 2003, Denmark was among the first countries to join the "Coalition of the Willing" and supplied a submarine, Corvette-class ship, and military personnel to the coalition's effort in Iraq to enforce UN Security Council Resolution 1441. Since that time it has provided 500 troops to assist with stabilization efforts in Iraq. Prime Minister Rasmussen announced in February 2007 that most Danish troops would be withdrawn from Iraq by August 2007, as Iraqi forces had become capable of taking over security responsibilities in the Basra area, where the Danish troops had been concentrated.

U.S.-DANISH RELATIONS

Denmark is a close NATO ally, and overall U.S.-Danish relations are excellent. Denmark is active in

Afghanistan and Kosovo, as well as a leader in the Baltic region. Prime Minister Rasmussen reaffirmed that Denmark would remain engaged in Iraq even as its troop levels there decline. Denmark and the United States consult closely on European political and security matters. Denmark shares U.S. views on the positive ramifications of NATO enlargement.

Denmark is an active coalition partner in the War on Terrorism, and Danish troops are supporting U.S.-led stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. also engages Denmark in a broad cooperative agenda through the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe (EPINE)—the U.S. policy structure to strengthen U.S.-Nordic-Baltic policy and program coordination. President Bush made an official working visit to Copenhagen in July 2005, and Prime Minister Rasmussen met with the President at Camp David in June 2006 and in Crawford, Texas in March 2008.

Denmark's active liberal trade policy in the EU, OECD, and WTO largely coincides with U.S. interests. The U.S. is Denmark's largest non-European trade partner with about 5% of Danish merchandise trade. Denmark's role in European environmental and agricultural issues and its strategic location at the entrance to the Baltic Sea have made Copenhagen a center for U.S. agencies and the private sector dealing with the Nordic/Baltic region.

American culture—and particularly popular culture, from jazz, rock, and rap to television shows and literature— is very popular in Denmark. Some 311,000 U.S. tourists visit the country annually.

The U.S. Air Force (USAF) base and early warning radar at Thule, Greenland—a Danish self-governing territory—serve as a vital link in Western defenses. In August 2004, the Danish and Greenland Home Rule governments gave permission for the early warning radar to be updated in connection with a role in the U.S. ballistic missile defense system. At the same time, agreements were signed to enhance economic, technical, and environmental cooperation between the United States and Greenland.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DHS/ICE:	James McDowell
MGT:	Sarah C. Hall
AMB:	James Cain
CG:	Marilyn Rowdybush
PO:	Marine Security Guard
CON:	Marilyn Rowdybush
DCM:	Sandra Kaiser
PAO:	Thomas Leary
GSO:	Greg Macdonald
RSO:	Jeff Howard
AGR:	Roger Wentzel (Res. The Hague) X 482
CLO:	Renee Napolitano And Barbara Mozdzierz
DAO:	Capt. Roger Coldiron
DEA:	Timothy Moran
EEO:	Mark Draper
EST:	Erik Hall
ICASS Chair:	Tom Leary
IMO:	Jonathan Kirkpatrick
ISSO:	Jonathan Kirkpatrick
LEGATT:	Timothy Flynn
POL:	William Mozdzierz
State ICASS:	Tom Leary

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 26, 2008

Country Description: Denmark is a highly developed stable democracy with a modern economy. Greenland is a self-governing dependency of Denmark. The Faroe Islands are a self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark.

Entry Requirements: Denmark is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Denmark for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. Passport and visa regulations are similar for Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroes. Contact the Royal Danish Embassy at 3200 Whitehaven Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 234-4300 or visit its web site at http://www.denmarkemb.org for the most current visa information. Another source of useful information, available in both English and Danish, is the Danish Immigration Service web site at http://www.nyidanmark.dk/da-dk.

Safety and Security: Denmark remains largely free of terrorist incidents, however the country shares, with the rest of Western Europe, an increased threat of Islamic terrorism. Like other countries in the Schengen area, Denmark's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering and exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

Public demonstrations occasionally occur in Copenhagen and other Danish cities and are generally peaceful events. Prior police approval is required for public demonstrations, and police oversight is routinely provided to ensure adequate security for participants and passers-by. Nonetheless, as with any large crowd comprised of diverse groups, situations may develop which could pose a threat to public safety. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid areas where public demonstrations are taking place.

From time to time Copenhagen may experience protest activities from young people in their attempt to defend their self-proclaimed rights to either property (club activity buildings) or other privileges provided by Danish public means. American citizens should be aware that participation in illegal demonstrations or

street riots may result in immediate imprisonment and long term bans on re-entering Denmark.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet website at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Denmark, Greenland, and the Faroes all have very low violent crime rates, however, non-violent crimes of opportunity have increased over the last few years. Embassy Copenhagen has observed a significant increase in the number of passport thefts during the last few years. Especially in Copenhagen and other major Danish cities, tourists can become targets for pickpockets and sophisticated thieves. Criminals frequent airports, train stations, and cruise ship quays to take advantage of weary, luggage-burdened travelers. Thieves also operate at popular tourist attractions, shopping streets and restaurants. In hotel lobbies and breakfast areas, thieves take advantage of even a brief lapse in attention to snatch jackets, purses, and backpacks. Women's purses placed either on the backs of chairs or on the floor are typical targets for thieves. You should secure your personal possessions at all times. Car and home break-ins are more prevalent than a few years ago.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Denmark has a program to provide financial compensation to victims who suffer serious criminal injuries. According to existing regulations, the victim must report the incident to the police within 24 hours. Danish police routinely inform victims of serious crime of their rights to seek compensation. The relevant forms can be obtained from the police or the Danish Victims' Compensation Board: Civilstyrelsen, Erstatningsnaevnet, Gyldenløvesgade 11, 1600 Copenhagen V, tel.: (45) 33-92- 3334; fax: (45) 39-20-45-05; www.erstatningsnaevnet.dk; email: erstatningsnaevnet@erstatningsnaevnet.dk. Claim processing time is a minimum of 3 months. There is no maximum award limit.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Denmark is 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Excellent medical facilities are widely available in Denmark. In Greenland and the Faroe Islands, medical facilities are limited and evacuation is required for serious illness or injury. Although emergency medical treatment is free of charge, the patient is charged for follow-up care.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Denmark.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int.en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Denmark is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. A valid U.S. driver's license may be used while visiting Denmark, but the driver must be at least 18 years old. Driving in Denmark is on the right side of the road. Road signs use standard international symbols. Many urban streets have traffic lanes reserved for public transport only. Unless otherwise noted on traffic signs, the speed limit is 50 km/h in urban areas, 80 km/h on open roads, and 130 km/h on expressways.

Use of seat belts is mandatory for drivers and all passengers. Children under three years of age must be secured with approved safety equipment appropriate to the child's age, size, and weight. Children from three to six years of age may use approved child or booster seats instead of seat belts.

Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is considered a very serious offense. The rules are stringently enforced, and violations can result in stiff fines and possible jail sentences.

Copenhagen, the capital and largest city in Denmark, has an extensive and efficient public transportation system. Trains and buses connect Copenhagen with other major cities in Denmark and to Norway, Sweden, and Germany. Bicycles are also a common mode of transportation in Denmark. Passengers exiting public or tourist buses, as well as tourists

driving rental cars, should watch for bicycles on their designated paths, which are usually located between the pedestrian sidewalks and the traffic lanes.

Danish expressways, highways, and secondary roads are of high quality and connect all areas of the country. It is possible to drive from the northern tip of Denmark to the German border in the south in just four hours. Greenland has no established road system, and domestic travel is performed by foot, boat, or by air. The majority of the Faroe Islands are connected by bridges or serviced by boat. Although the largest islands have roads, most domestic travel is done on foot, horseback, boat, or by air.

The emergency telephone number for police/fire/ambulance in Denmark and the Faroe Islands is 112. In Greenland contact the local police.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.denmark.org. See also additional information on driving in Denmark at http://www.trafikken.dk.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Denmark's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Denmark's air carrier operations. This rating applies to Greenland and the Faroe Islands as well. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The official unit of currency in Denmark is the Danish krone. ATM machines are widely available throughout Denmark. For information concerning the importation of pets into Denmark, please visit the following website: http://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protection available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Denmark's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Denmark are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Denmark are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Denmark. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Dag Hammarskjolds Alle 24; 2100 Copenhagen, telephone: (45) 33-41-71-00; Embassy fax: (45) 35-43-02-23; Consular Section fax: (45) 35-38-96-16; After-hours emergency telephone: (45) 35-55-92-70. Information is also available via the U.S. Embassy's website at http://www.usembassy.dk. The United States has no consular presence in Greenland or the Faroe Islands.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Denmark is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

There are few children eligible for intercountry adoption from Denmark, with a long waiting list of Danish prospective adoptive parents. While legally possible, intercountry adoption of a Danish orphan by foreigners is unlikely.

Patterns of Immigration: No Danish orphans have received U.S. immigrant visas in the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The Danish Ministry of Family & Consumer Affairs, Department of Family Affairs is the adoption law-making branch of the Danish government and is also the Central Authority for The Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention. The Department certifies adoption agencies and monitors their work to ensure that they comply with the law.

Danish Ministry of Family & Consumer Affairs
Department of Family Affairs
Stormgade 2-6
1470 Copenhagen

Tel: +45-3392 3302
Fax: +45-3927 1889
Email: familiestyrelsen@famstyr.dk
Web site:
http://www.familiestyrelsen.dk

Joint Councils are established at the five Regional State Administrations (Statsforvaltning) in Denmark. The Regional State Administration mainly concentrates on family issues: divorce, child custody, maintenance. The prospective parents file their initial application with the local Joint Council of the Regional State Administration in the jurisdiction where they reside. A Joint Council consists of three members–a social worker, a lawyer, and a medical officer. The Joint Council determines whether the initial application for adoption may be approved for further processing. Decisions reached by the Joint Councils may be appealed to the Danish National Board of Adoption, which is a department of the Ministry of Justice at:

Danish National Board of Adoption
Stormgade 2-6
1470 Copenhagen
Tel: +45-3392 3302
Fax: +45-3927 1889
Email: an@adoptionsnaevnet.dk
Web site:
http://www.adoptionsnaevnet.dk

The Danish National Board of Adoption supervises the Joint Councils, observes national and international developments in adoption matters, collects information concerning adoption, negotiates with authorities and organizations in other countries, and supplies general information.

A complete list of Joint Councils can be found at http://www.statsforvaltning.dk

Eligibility to Adopt: The age difference between the applicant and the prospective child should not be more than 40 years. Married couples must adopt as a couple. Single people can also adopt. Danish law prohibits same-sex couples from adopting in Denmark.

Residency Requirements: Adoptive parents must be legally admitted residents of Denmark to adopt domestically or intercountry. Temporary visitors without an established home in Denmark cannot apply.

Time Frame: From the initial contact with the Joint Council at the Regional State Administration until the adoptive parents can be united with the child, the time frame is a minimum of 18 months, but may be as long as 2½ years.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Because Denmark is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The Department maintains a current list of U.S. accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Domestic adoptions in Denmark are processed via the five Regional State Administrations in the jurisdiction where the prospective parents reside. Private adoption agencies are accredited by the Danish government to provide adoption services. For a list of these adoption agencies, please visit: http://www.familiestyrelsen.dk.

Adoption Fees: Domestic adoptions of Danish children are free of charge. The cost of an intercountry adoption (adopting a child in a third country and then taking him or her to Denmark to reside) is approximately Danish Kroner 74,000 (USD $15,800), depending on the country of the child's origin. Travel expenses must be added to this amount. Once the adoption has been finalized, the adoptive parents are entitled to a Danish Government lump-sum relief benefit of Danish Kroner 42,000 (USD $8,950) to help reduce their overall expenses.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents file an application with their Regional State Administration. The application is processed in three phases. The first phase determines whether the applicants meet the following general conditions for adoptive parents: the age difference between the applicants and the child should not in general be more than 40 years; couples must be married and have lived in the same household for at least 2½ years; the physical and psychological health of the applicants must meet certain criteria, the applicants' home must be suitable to house a child; the applicants must be of proper financial standing; and the applicants cannot have a criminal record that would make them unfit to become adoptive parents. Applicants cannot proceed to phase two without approval by the Joint Council.

The second phase is a pre-adoption counseling training program, mandatory for all applicants who have not previously adopted a child from abroad. The purpose of the training is to supply applicants with information concerning different aspects of adoption, and to provide a basis for the applicants themselves to determine whether or not they possess the necessary resources (financial as well as parenting abilities) to adopt a foreign child. The training course runs over a weekend and a half (one weekend session, followed by one Saturday or Sunday session). Participation in a pre-adoption training program costs Danish Kroner 1,500 (USD $325.

The third phase includes one or more interviews with the secretariat of the Joint Council. At the end of the third phase, a home study report is presented to the Joint Council for final decision and approval. The prospective parents proceed by submitting their approval to one of the Danish government-authorized adoption agencies.

Adoption of a child is governed by the laws of the child's country of origin. The Department of State produces intercountry adoption flyers for every country in the world, and U.S. prospective adoptive parents, even if they are residing outside the United States, should consult the flyer for the country from which they plan to

adopt. The U.S. Embassy in the child's country of origin will also be able to provide additional information.

Required Documents: The initial application form, which can be obtained from the Regional State Administration, must be accompanied by the following documents: birth certificate, marriage certificate, latest tax return showing financial status and documentation whether outstanding arrears exist, and a certificate of health. An application to participate in the pre-adoption counseling program must be filed with the Department of Family Affairs, Office of Training Programs. If the applicants wish to continue the process after they complete the counseling program, a third application must be filed to start phase three. When the child arrives in Denmark from his or her country of origin (after that country's adoption procedures have been completed), the adoptive parents must apply to the Regional State Administration for an Adoption Certificate. With the Adoption Certificate, the adoption is finalized, and pursuant to Danish law, the adopted child has the same rights as a biological child.

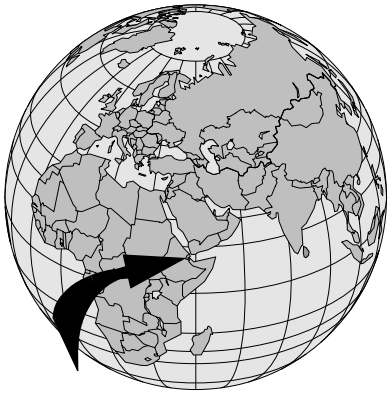
Royal Danish Embassy
3200 Whitehaven Street NW
Washington, DC 20008-3683
Tel: (202) 234-4300
Fax: (202) 328-1470
E-mail: wasamb@.um.dk
Web site:
http://www.denmarkemb.org

Denmark has Consulates General in Chicago and New York City.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov) to download forms and filing instructions.

U.S. Embassy
Dag Hammarskjolds Alle 24
2100 Copenhagen
Tel: +45-3341 7100
Fax: +45-3538 96 16
E-mail: CopenhagenACS@state.gov
Web site:
http://www.denmark.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



DJIBOUTI

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Djibouti

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 21,883 sq. km. (8,450 sq. mi.); about the size of Massachusetts.
Cities: Capital—Djibouti. Other cities—Dikhil, Arta, Ali-Sabieh, Obock, Tadjoura.
Terrain: Coastal desert.
Climate: Torrid and dry.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Djiboutian(s).
Population: (est.) Between 466,900 and 650,000.
Annual growth rate: (2005 est.) 2.6%.
Ethnic groups: Somali, Afar, Ethiopian, Arab, French, and Italian.
Religions: Muslim 94%, Christian 6%.
Languages: French and Arabic (official); Somali and Afar widely used.
Education: Literacy—46.2%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—100 to 150/1,000. Life expectancy (2005 est.)—43.1 years.
Work force: Low employment rate; estimates run well under 50% of the work force. The largest employers are the Government of Djibouti, including telecommunications and electricity; Port of Djibouti; and airport. The U.S. Government, including the military camp and the embassy, is the second largest employer. Able-bodied unemployed population (est. 2006)—60%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: Ratified September 1992 by referendum.
Independence: June 27, 1977.
Government branches: Executive—president. Legislative—65-member parliament, cabinet, prime minister. Judicial—based on French civil law system, traditional practices, and Islamic law.
Political subdivisions: 6 cercles (districts)—Ali-Sabieh, Arta, Dikhil, Djibouti, Obock, and Tadjoura.
Political parties: People's Rally for Progress (RPP) established in 1981; New Democratic Party (PRD) and the National Democratic Party (PND) were both established in 1992; and the Front For The Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) was legally recognized in 1994. Five additional parties were established in 2002: Djibouti Development Party (PDD); Peoples Social Democratic Party (PPSD); Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD); Union for Democracy and Justice (UDJ); Movement for Democratic Renewal (MRD).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.
National holidays: Independence Day, June 27 (1977).

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $768 million.
Adjusted per capita income: $850 per capita for expatriates, $450 for Djiboutians.
Natural resources: Minerals (salt, perlite, gypsum, limestone) and energy resources (geothermal and solar).
Agriculture: (less than 3% of GDP) Products—livestock, fishing, and limited commercial crops, including fruits and vegetables.
Industry: Types—banking and insurance (12.5% of GDP), public administration (22% of GDP), construction and public works, manufacturing, commerce, and agriculture.
Trade: (2004 est.) Imports—$987 million: consists of basic commodities, including food and beverages, pharmaceutical drugs, transport equipment, chemicals, and petroleum products. Exports—$250 million: re-exports, hides and skins, and coffee (in-transit). Major markets (2004)—France, Ethiopia, Somalia, India, China, and Saudi Arabia and other Arabian peninsula countries.

PEOPLE

About two-thirds of the Republic of Djibouti's 650,000 inhabitants live in the capital city. The indigenous population is divided between the majority Somalis (predominantly of the Issa

tribe, with minority Issaq and Gadabursi representation) and the Afars (Danakils). All are Cushitic-speaking peoples, and nearly all are Muslim. Among the 15,000 foreigners residing in Djibouti, the French are the most numerous. Among the French are 3,000 troops.

HISTORY

The Republic of Djibouti gained its independence on June 27, 1977. It is the successor to French Somaliland (later called the French Territory of the Afars and Issas), which was created in the first half of the 19th century as a result of French interest in the Horn of Africa. However, the history of Djibouti, recorded in poetry and songs of its nomadic peoples, goes back thousands of years to a time when Djiboutians traded hides and skins for the perfumes and spices of ancient Egypt, India, and China. Through close contacts with the Arabian Peninsula for more than 1,000 years, the Somali and Afar tribes in this region became the first on the African continent to adopt Islam.

It was Rochet d'Hericourt's exploration into Shoa (1839-42) that marked the beginning of French interest in the African shores of the Red Sea. Further exploration by Henri Lambert, French Consular Agent at Aden, and Captain Fleuriot de Langle led to a treaty of friendship and assistance between France and the sultans of Raheita, Tadjoura, and Gobaad, from whom the French purchased the anchorage of Obock (1862).

Growing French interest in the area took place against a backdrop of British activity in Egypt and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In 1884-85, France expanded its protectorate to include the shores of the Gulf of Tadjoura and the Somaliland. Boundaries of the protectorate, marked out in 1897 by France and Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, were affirmed further by agreements with Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1945 and 1954.

The administrative capital was moved from Obock to Djibouti in 1892. In 1896, Djibouti was named French Somaliland. Djibouti, which has a good natural harbor and ready access to the Ethiopian highlands, attracted trade caravans crossing East Africa as well as Somali settlers from the south. The Franco-Ethiopian railway, linking Djibouti to the heart of Ethiopia, was begun in 1897 and reached Addis Ababa in June 1917, further facilitating the increase of trade.

During the Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia in the 1930s and during World War II, constant border skirmishes occurred between French and Italian forces. The area was ruled by the Vichy (French) government from the fall of France until December 1942, and fell under British blockade during that period. Free French and the Allied forces recaptured Djibouti at the end of 1942. A local battalion from Djibouti participated in the liberation of France in 1944.

On July 22, 1957, the colony was reorganized to give the people considerable self-government. On the same day, a decree applying the Overseas Reform Act (Loi Cadre) of June 23, 1956, established a territorial assembly that elected eight of its members to an executive council. Members of the executive council were responsible for one or more of the territorial services and carried the title of minister. The council advised the French-appointed governor general.

In a September 1958 constitutional referendum, French Somaliland opted to join the French community as an overseas territory. This act entitled the region to representation by one deputy and one senator in the French Parliament, and one counselor in the French Union Assembly.

The first elections to the territorial assembly were held on November 23, 1958, under a system of proportional representation. In the next assembly elections (1963), a new electoral law was enacted. Representation was abolished in exchange for a system of straight plurality vote based on lists submitted by political parties in seven designated districts. Ali Aref Bourhan, allegedly of Turkish origin, was selected to be the president of the executive council. French President Charles de Gaulle's August 1966 visit to Djibouti was marked by 2 days of public demonstrations by Somalis demanding independence. On September 21, 1966, Louis Saget, appointed governor general of the territory after the demonstrations, announced the French Government's decision to hold a referendum to determine whether the people would remain within the French Republic or become independent. In March 1967, 60% chose to continue the territory's association with France.

In July of that year, a directive from Paris formally changed the name of the region to the French Territory of Afars and Issas. The directive also reorganized the governmental structure of the territory, making the senior French representative, formerly the governor general, a high commissioner. In addition, the executive council was redesignated as the council of government, with nine members.

In 1975, the French Government began to accommodate increasingly insistent demands for independence. In June 1976, the territory's citizenship law, which favored the Afar minority, was revised to reflect more closely the weight of the Issa Somali. The electorate voted for independence in a May 1977 referendum. The Republic of Djibouti was established on June 27, 1977, and Hassan Gouled Aptidon became the country's first president. In 1981, he was again elected president of Djibouti. He was re-elected, unopposed, to a second 6-year term in April 1987 and to a third 6-year term in May 1993 multiparty elections.

In early 1992, the constitution permitted the legalization of four political parties for a period of 10 years, after which a complete multiparty system would be installed. By the time of the December 1992 national assembly elections, only three had qualified. They were the Rassemblement Populaire Pour le Progres (Peo-

ple's Rally for Progress—RPP), which was the only legal party from 1981 until 1992; the Parti du Renouveau Democratique (The Party for Democratic Renewal—PRD); and the Parti National Democratique (National Democratic Party—PND). Only the RPP and the PRD contested the national assembly elections, and the PND withdrew, claiming that there were too many unanswered questions on the conduct of the elections and too many opportunities for government fraud. The RPP won all 65 seats in the national assembly, with a turnout of less than 50% of the electorate.

In early November 1991, civil war erupted in Djibouti between the government and a predominantly Afar rebel group, the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD). The FRUD signed a peace accord with the government in December 1994, ending the conflict. Two FRUD members were made cabinet members, and in the presidential elections of 1999 the FRUD campaigned in support of the RPP.

In 1999, Ismail Omar Guelleh—President Hassan Gouled Aptidon's chief of staff, head of security, and key adviser for over 20 years—was elected to the presidency as the RPP candidate. He received 74% of the vote, with the other 26% going to opposition candidate Moussa Ahmed Idriss, of the Unified Djiboutian Opposition (ODU). For the first time since independence, no group boycotted the election. Moussa Ahmed Idriss and the ODU later challenged the results based on election "irregularities" and the assertion that "foreigners" had voted in various districts of the capital; however, international and locally based observers considered the election to be generally fair, and cited only minor technical difficulties. Ismail Omar Guelleh took the oath of office as the second President of the Republic of Djibouti on May 8, 1999, with the support of an alliance between the RPP and the government-recognized section of the Afar-led FRUD. In February 2000, another branch of FRUD signed a peace accord with the government. On May 12, 2001, President Ismail Omar Guelleh presided over the signing of what was termed the final peace accord officially ending the decade-long civil war between the government and the armed faction of the FRUD. The peace accord successfully completed the peace process begun on February 7, 2000 in Paris. Ahmed Dini Ahmed represented the FRUD.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Djibouti is a republic whose electorate approved the current constitution in September 1992. Many laws and decrees from before independence remain in effect. In the presidential election held April 8, 2005 Ismail Omar Guelleh was re-elected to a second 6-year term at the head of a multi-party coalition that included the FRUD and other major parties.

A loose coalition of opposition parties again boycotted the election. Currently, political power is shared by a Somali president and an Afar prime minister, with an Afar career diplomat as Foreign Minister and other cabinet posts roughly divided. However, Issas are predominate in the government, civil service, and the ruling party. That, together with a short-

age of non-government employment, has bred resentment and continued political competition between the Somali Issas and the Afars. In March 2006, Djibouti held its first regional elections and began implementing a decentralization plan. The broad pro-government coalition, including FRUD candidates, again ran unopposed when the government refused to meet opposition preconditions for participation. Parliamentary elections were held in February 2008.

Djibouti has its own armed forces, including a small army, which grew significantly with the start of the civil war in 1991. With the 2001 final peace accord between the government and the Afar-dominated FRUD, the armed forces have been downsized. The country's security is supplemented by a formal security accord with the Government of France, which guarantees Djibouti's territorial integrity against foreign incursions. France maintains one of its largest military bases outside France in Djibouti. There are some 3,000 French troops stationed in Djibouti, including units of the famed French Foreign Legion.

The right to own property is respected in Djibouti. The government has reorganized the labor unions. While there have been open elections of union leaders in the past, some labor leaders allege interference in their internal elections. Others voice opposition to newly-implemented labor laws that apply to new jobs created in free zones and that are less favorable to labor.

In 2002, following a broad national debate, Djibouti enacted a new "Family Law" enhancing the protection of women and children, unifying legal treatment of all women, and replacing Sharia. The government established a minister-designate for women's affairs and is engaged in an ongoing effort to increase public recognition of women's rights and to ensure enforcement. In 2007, it began establishing a network of new counseling offices to assist women seeking to understand and protect their rights. Women in Djibouti enjoy a higher public status than in many other Islamic countries. The government is leading efforts to stop illegal and abusive traditional practices, including female genital mutilation. As the result of a three-year effort, the percentage of girls attending primary school increased significantly and is now more than 50%. However, women's rights and family planning continue to face difficult challenges, many stemming from acute poverty in both rural and urban areas. With female ministers and members of parliament, the presence of women in government has increased. Despite the gains, education of girls still lags behind boys, and employment opportunities are better for male applicants.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Ismail Omar GUELLEH**
Prime Min.: **Mohamed Dileita DILEITA**
Min. of Agriculture, Livestock, & the Sea: **Dini Abdallah BILILIS**
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Artisans: **Rifki Abdoulkader BAMAKHRAMA**
Min. of Communication & Culture: **Rifki Abdoulkader BAMAKHRAMA**
Min. of Defense: **OUGOUREH KIFLEH Ahmed**
Min. of Economy, Finance, & Privatization: **Yacin Elmi BOUH**
Min. of Education: **Abdi Ibrahim ABSIEH**
Min. of Employment & National Solidarity: **Mohamed Barkat ABDILLAHI**
Min. of Energy & Natural Resources: **Mohamed Ali MOHAMED**
Min. of Equipment & Transport: **Elmi Obsieh WAISS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Intl. Cooperation, & Parliamentary Relations: **Mahamoud Ali YOUSSOUF**
Min. of Health: **Banoita Tourab SALEH, Dr.**
Min. of Housing, Town Planning, Environment, & National & Regional Development: **Abdallah Adillahi MIGUIL**
Min. of Interior & Decentralization: **Aboulkader Du'ale WAISS**
Min. of Justice & Penal & Muslim Affairs: **Ismael Ibrahim HEMED**
Min. of Presidential Affairs & Investment Promotion: **Osman Ahmed MOUSSA**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Saleban Omar OUDIN**
Min. of Urban Planning, Housing, Environment, National, & Regional Development: **Souleiman Omar OUDINE**
Min. of Youth, Sports, Leisure, & Tourism: **Akban Goita MOUSSA**
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. for Mosque Properties & Muslim Affairs: **Cheik Mogueh DIRIR**
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. for the Promotion of Women, Family Well-Being, & Social Affairs: **Hawa Ahmed YOUSSOUF**
Governor, Central Bank: **Mahamoud Haid DJAMA**
Ambassador to the US: **Roble OLHAYE Oudine**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Roble OLHAYE Oudine**

Djibouti's mission to the UN is located at 866 UN Plaza, Suite 4011, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-753-3163). Djibouti's embassy in Washington is located at Suite 515, 1156 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 (tel. 202- 331-0270; fax 202-331-0302).

ECONOMY

Djibouti's economy depends largely on its proximity to the large Ethiopian market and a large foreign expatriate community. Its main economic activities are the Port of Djibouti, the banking sector, the airport, and the operation of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railroad. During the "lost decade" following the brunt of its civil war (1991-94), there was a significant diversion of government budgetary resources from developmental and social services to military needs. However, from 2001 on, Djibouti has become a magnet for private sector capital investment, attracting inflows that now average more than $200 million. It has also significantly improved its finances, paying current salaries, maintaining reserves, and generating a growth rate in 2006 of approximately 4.5%. Djibouti has become a significant regional banking hub, with approximately $600 million in dollar deposits. Its currency, the Djiboutian Franc, was linked to the dollar (and to gold) in 1949 and appreciated twice over the interim when the dollar was devalued and then freed to float. Agriculture

and industry are little developed, in part due to the harsh climate, high production costs, unskilled labor, and limited natural resources. Mineral deposits exist in the country, but with the exception of an extraordinary salt deposit at Lac Asal, the lowest point in Africa, they have not been exploited. The arid soil is unproductive—89% is desert wasteland, 10% is pasture, and 1% is forested. Deforestation for charcoal is a significant problem, as it now replaces expensive imported cooking gas in many urban homes. Services and commerce provide most of the gross domestic product.

Djibouti's most important economic asset is its strategic location on the busy shipping route between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Roughly 60% of all commercial ships in the world use its waters from the Red Sea through the Bab-el-Mandeb strait and into the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Its old port is an increasingly important transshipment point for containers as well as a destination port for Ethiopian trade. Last year alone, private investment in the old port totaled approximately $50 million. Djibouti is now in the second of three phases of a multi-year, $800 million, privately-financed project to build a new port with fueling, container, and free zone components. The old port will continue serving as a general shipping, bulk cargo, and break-bulk facility and also as the host of a small French naval facility.

Business soared at the Port of Djibouti when hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia denied Ethiopia access to the Eritrean Port of Assab. Djibouti became the only significant port for landlocked Ethiopia, handling all its imports and exports, including huge shipments of U.S. food aid in 2000 during the drought and famine. In 2000, Dubai Ports World took over management of Djibouti's port and later its customs and airport operations. The result has been a significant increase in investment, efficiency, activity, and port revenues. The Addis Ababa-Djibouti railroad is the only line serving central and southeastern Ethiopia. The single-track railway—a prime source of employment—occupies a prominent place in Ethiopia's internal distribution system for domestic commodities such as cement, cotton textiles, sugar, cereals, and charcoal. A weekly train from Ethiopia brings in most of Djibouti's fresh fruits and vegetables. In March 2006, the Governments of Ethiopia and Djibouti (which co-own the railway) selected the South African firm COMAZAR to manage the line. They are still in negotiations over the management agreement. In addition, the European Union is considering a $100 million project to upgrade a portion of the rail line.

Principal exports from the region transiting Djibouti are coffee, salt, live animals, hides, dried beans, cereals other agricultural products, and wax. Djibouti itself has few exports, and the majority of its imports come from France. Most imports are consumed in Djibouti, and the remainder go to Ethiopia and northwestern Somalia. Djibouti's unfavorable balance of trade is offset partially by invisible earnings such as transit taxes and harbor dues. In 2001, U.S. exports to Djibouti totaled $18.7 million, while U.S. imports from Djibouti were about $1 million.

The city of Djibouti has the only paved airport in the republic. Djibouti has one of the most liberal economic regimes in Africa, with almost unrestricted banking and commerce sectors.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Military and economic agreements with France provide continued security and economic assistance. Links with Arab states and East Asian states, Japan and China in particular, also are welcome. Djibouti is a member of the Arab League, as well as the African Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Djibouti is greatly affected by events in Somalia and Ethiopia, so relations are important and, at times, delicate. The 1991 falls of the Siad Barre and Mengistu governments in Somalia and Ethiopia, respectively, caused Djibouti to face national security threats due to instability in the neighboring states and a massive influx of refugees estimated at 100,000 from Somalia and Ethiopia.

In 2000, after 3 years of insufficient rain, 50,000 drought victims entered Djibouti. In 1996, a revitalized organization of seven East African states, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), established its secretariat in Djibouti. IGAD's mandate is for regional cooperation and economic integration, and it has also sought to play a positive role promoting regional stability, including its efforts in support of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government. Djibouti seeks to play the role of neutral in the frequently tense regional politics of the Horn of Africa.

It became Ethiopia's sole link to the sea when fighting broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1998. Aside from a two-year break in relations from 1998-2000, Djibouti has maintained a cordial relationship with Eritrea. Eritrea's President Isaias and Djibouti's President Guelleh exchanged visits in 2001, and Isaias returned to Djibouti in 2006 for the regional summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), hosted by President Guelleh in his capacity as incoming COMESA President.

Djibouti continues to cultivate cordial relations with Ethiopia, reflecting the fundamental economic ties between the two countries and a long tradition of interchanges. However, rising tensions in Somalia and Ethiopian military involvement in Somalia in 2007 fueled widespread criticism of Ethiopia among Djibouti's majority Somali-speaking population. President Guelleh attended the 2007 Africa Union summit in Ethiopia and supports the African Union peacekeeping operation for Somalia (AMISOM).

U.S.-DJIBOUTIAN RELATIONS

In April 1977, the United States established a Consulate General in Djibouti and upon independence in June 1977 raised the status of its mission to an embassy. The first U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti arrived in October 1980. Over the past decade, the United States has been a principal provider of humanitarian assistance for famine relief, and has sponsored health care, education, good governance, and security assistance programs.

Djibouti has allowed the U.S. military, as well as other nations, access to its port and airport facilities. The Djiboutian Government has been very supportive of U.S. and Western interests, particularly during the Gulf crisis of 1990-91 and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In 2002, Djibouti agreed to host a U.S. military presence at Camp Lemonier, a former French Foreign Legion base outside the capital that now houses approximately 1,800 American personnel. U.S. service members provide humanitarian support and development and security assistance to people and governments of the Horn of Africa and Yemen. They support freedom and oppose terrorism. As a victim of past international terrorist attacks, President Guelleh continues to take a very proactive position against terrorism.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

DJIBOUTI (E) Plateau du Serpent, Blvd Marechal Joffre, P.O. Box 185, (253) 35-39-95, Fax (253) 35-39-40, INMARSAT Tel 68-313-4545/68-313-4546, Workweek: Sunday-Thursday, 08:00-16:30, Website: http://djibouti.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Diana Jackson
AMB OMS:	Melissa Pousette
DCM/CHG:	Kathleen List
ECO/COM:	Rebecca Hunter
MGT:	Richard Denniston
POL/ECO:	Rebecca Hunter
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DCM:	Eric Wong
PAO:	Niles Cole
GSO:	John E. Taylor
RSO:	Ellen Tannor
AID:	Janet Schulman
CLO:	Jessica Eicher And Kimberley Bunnell
EEO:	Niles Cole
IMO:	Michael George
IPO:	Nicholas Eicher
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Resident In Paris)

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 10, 2008

Country Description: Djibouti is a developing African country located at the juncture of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is a multi-party democracy with a legal system based on French civil law (Djibouti was a French colony until 1977), though modified by traditional practices and Islamic (Sharia) law.

Although exact statistics are unavailable, unemployment is estimated at greater than 50% of the working-age population. Over two-thirds of the country's 650,000 residents live in the capital, also called Djibouti. Modern tourist facilities and communications links are found in the city of Djibouti, but limited outside the capital.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa, and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required. Travelers may obtain the latest information on entry requirements from the Embassy of the Republic of Djibouti, 1156 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005, telephone (202) 331-0270, or at the Djibouti Mission to the United Nations, 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 4011, New York, N.Y. 10017, telephone (212) 753-3163. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Djiboutian embassy or consulate. In countries where there is no Djiboutian diplomatic representation, travelers may sometimes obtain visas at the French Embassy. Visit the Embassy of Djibouti web site at www.embassy.org/embassies/dj.html for the most current visa information.

American journalists or any American connected with the media must contact the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs section prior to travel to facilitate entry into Djibouti. If you are unclear whether this applies to you, please contact the U.S. Embassy for more information.

Safety and Security: Djibouti enjoys a stable political climate. However, its international borders are porous and lightly patrolled. In particular, Somalia, Djibouti's neighbor to the south, is a haven for terrorists and insurgent elements. Tensions exist between neighboring Ethiopia and Eritrea due to their long-running border dispute. Since April, 2008, there has been increased tension on Djibouti's border with Eritrea after an incursion by Eritreans in that area. Civil unrest or armed conflict in neighboring countries could disrupt air travel to and from Djibouti or otherwise negatively affect its security.

Terrorism continues to pose a threat in East Africa. U.S. citizens traveling in East Africa should be aware of the potential for indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in public places, including tourist sites and other sites where Westerners are known to congregate. Visit the State Department web site for the most current travel warning on East Africa.

Travelers should exercise caution when traveling to any remote area of Djibouti, especially near the borders with Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The recent Eritrean incursion underscores the importance of increased caution near that border.

Demonstrations have become more frequent due to power outages and the increase in energy prices. Americans are advised to avoid all demonstrations as they may become violent.

Americans considering seaborne travel should exercise extreme caution. There have been several recent incidents of armed attacks and robberies at sea by unknown groups on

ships transiting around the Horn of Africa. See the Country Specific Information (CSI) sheets on Yemen and Somalia for recent information on maritime conditions in Yemeni and Somali waters. It is strongly recommended that vessels convoy in groups and maintain good communications contact at all times. Marine channels 12, 13 and 16 VHF-FM are international call-up and emergency channels and are commonly monitored by ships at sea. 2182 Mhz is the HF international call-up and emergency channel. In the Gulf of Aden, use of transit routes farther offshore appears to reduce, but does not eliminate, the risk of contact with assailants. Wherever possible, travel in trafficked sea-lanes. Avoid loitering in or transiting isolated or remote areas. In the event of an attack, consider activating the Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon. Due to distances involved, there may be a considerable delay before assistance arrives. Vessels may also contact the Yemeni Coast Guard 24-hour Operations Center at 967 1 562-402. Operations Center staff members speak English.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times for ready proof of identity and U.S. citizenship if questioned by local officials. Police occasionally stop travelers on the main roads leading out of the capital to check identity documents.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Accurate crime statistics are not available, but crime appears to be on the rise. Most crimes are petty thefts, but there have also been home invasions and more serious crimes. Major crimes involving third country nationals (TCNs) are rare, but increasing in frequency. The number of murders involving Djiboutians and TCNS has increased.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, help you find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical facilities in the capital of Djibouti are limited and medicines are often unavailable. Medicines that are available are extremely expensive. Medical services in some outlying areas may be completely nonexistent. Motorists especially should be aware that in case of an accident outside the capital, emergency medical treatment would depend almost exclusively on passersby. In addition, cell phone coverage in outlying areas is often unavailable, making it impossible to summon help.

Malaria and dengue fever are prevalent in Djibouti. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what anti-malarial drugs they have been taking.

In 2005, polio was found in all of Djibouti's neighbors (Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Yemen) and health professionals strongly suspect it is present in Djibouti. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that all infants and children in the United States should receive four doses of inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) at 2, 4, and 6–18 months and 4–6 years of age. Adults who are traveling to polio-endemic and epidemic areas and who have received a primary series with either IPV or oral polio vaccine should receive another dose of IPV. For adults, available data does not indicate the need for more than a single lifetime booster dose with IPV.

The prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) in Djibouti is very high, at over 100 cases per 100,000 population, the highest WHO risk category. Travelers planning to stay more than one month should have pre-departure PPD skin test status documented. Travelers should avoid crowded public places and public transportation whenever possible. Domestic help should be screened for TB.

In May 2006, avian influenza was confirmed in three chickens and one human in Djibouti.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Djibouti is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a

particular location or circumstance. The Djiboutian Gendarmerie and the national police force share responsibility for road safety in Djibouti. While Djibouti has been declared a "mine-safe" country, this indicates landmines have been identified and marked, not that they have been removed. Landmines are known to be present in northern Tadjourah and Obock districts. In addition, there may be mines in the Ali Sabieh area of the south. Travelers should stay on paved roads and should check with local authorities before using unpaved roads.

Driving on Djibouti roads can be hazardous. Since most roads do not have shoulders or sidewalks, pedestrians and livestock use the roadways both day and night. Driving at night is extremely dangerous and strongly discouraged on all roads outside of Djibouti City. While some main roads in Djibouti are well maintained, roads are often narrow, poorly lit, or washed-out. Many secondary roads are in poor repair or completely washed-out. Drivers and pedestrians should exercise extreme caution. Minibuses and cars often break down; when breakdowns occur, local drivers usually place branches or rocks behind the vehicle to indicate trouble, but these warning signals are barely visible. Excessive speed, unpredictable local driving habits, pedestrians and livestock in the roadway, and the lack of basic safety equipment on many vehicles are daily hazards. Speed limits are posted occasionally but are not enforced. The leafy narcotic khat is widely used, particularly in the afternoons, creating other traffic hazards. Travelers should be aware that police set up wire coils as roadblocks on some of the major roads, and these may be difficult to see at night.

Drivers who do not have a four-wheel drive vehicle will encounter problems driving on rural roads. There are no emergency services for stranded drivers, and it is always advisable to carry a cell phone or satellite phone when undertaking a trip outside of town; however, many parts of the country do not have cell phone coverage. The two main international routes to the capital city, via Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, and Yoboki, Djibouti, both demand that drivers remain vigilant. The route towards Dire Dawa is in very poor condition. Both have a high volume of Ethiopian trucks transporting large cargo. Railroad crossings are often not clearly marked.

The only means of public inter-city travel is by bus. Buses are poorly maintained and their operators often drive erratically with little regard for passenger safety.

Visit the web site of Djibouti's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.office-tourisme.dj.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Djibouti, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Djibouti's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Although the narcotic khat is legal and widely chewed in Djibouti, it is considered an illegal substance in many countries, including the United States. Djiboutians are generally conservative in dress and manner, especially in rural areas.

Photography of public infrastructure (including, but not limited to, public buildings, seaports, the airport, bridges, military facilities or personnel) is not allowed in Djibouti. Use extreme caution when photographing anyone or anything near prohibited areas. Photographic equipment will be confiscated, and the photographer may be arrested.

Djibouti is a cash-based economy and credit cards are not widely accepted. Automated teller machines (ATMs) are limited. Changing money on the street is legal, but be aware of possible scams as well as personal safety considerations if people observe you carrying large amounts of cash. The exchange rate on the street will be similar to that at a bank or hotel. It is important that the U.S. banknotes that you carry have a date of 2003 or newer because many currency exchanges will not accept U.S. paper money older than 2003.

Djiboutian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Djibouti of firearms. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Djibouti in Washington, DC, for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Djiboutian law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Djibouti are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Djibouti are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Djibouti. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consu-

late to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Plateau du Serpent, Boulevard Marechal Joffre, Djibouti City. The mailing address is Ambassade Americaine, B.P. 185, Djibouti, Republique de Djibouti. The telephone number is (253) 35-39-95. The fax number is (253) 35-39-40. Normal working hours are Sunday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Adoption in Djibouti is a very complicated process, time consuming, and with many legal hurdles. Children with Djiboutian citizenship are not eligible for adoption.

Only children born and abandoned in Djibouti of foreign parentage are available for foreign adoption.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Tribunal de Première Instance de Djibouti, Office of the Secretary (253) 35-333-89.

Tribunal de Première Instance
Ministère de la Justice
B.P. 12
Djibouti
République de Djibouti

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptive parents must be 25 years of age or older and must be at least 15 years older than the child. If the prospective adoptive parent is a relative, he/she need only be 21 years old. The prospective adoptive parent(s) must also be morally and physically sound to be able to care for the child.

Residency Requirements: The adopters must be physically present in Djibouti at the time of the proposed adoption, but need not be residents. The child must be both physically present in and a resident of Djibouti.

Time Frame: It may take a year or more from the time the adoption application is submitted to the Tribunal de Première Instance until the adoptive parents receive the final documents. Factors bearing on this time frame may include court-ordered investigations, parents' citizenship, court calendar, appeals, and individual case anomalies.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no Djiboutian adoption agencies. According to court officials, adoptions do not require the participation of a lawyer, but it is practical to engage someone familiar with the process.

Adoption Fees: The Government of Djibouti processes all adoptions. All procedures undertaken by the court (Adoption Authority) are free of charge. Prospective adoptive parents should expect to pay for any/all required medical examinations for the child, as well as for their own travel expenses.

Adoption Procedures: Once a child has been identified, adoption procedures must be initiated with a written request from the prospective adoptive parent(s) to the President of Tribunal de Première Instance, requesting the court to open an adoption case on their behalf. The court has two responsibilities: first, that of verifying whether the legal conditions necessary for the requested adoption are met; and second, that the adoption is in the best interest of the child. To that effect, it is mandatory that adoptive parent(s) attach the U.S. documents listed in the section below with their application. The court can order an additional social investigation report to complement the one already attached to the initial request, and one or more types of specific medical examinations. The Clerk of the District Court will then forward the request to the police for a background check to be performed (if the prospective adoptive parents are resident in Djibouti).

Procedures for a child with identified biological parent(s): Prior to completing the Djiboutian adoption process, U.S. prospective adoptive parents who wish to adopt a child with identified birth parents should consult with the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti to verify whether the child will be meet the definition of "orphan" as defined by U.S. immigration law.

The birth parents must appear before the court with their I.D. and the child's birth certificate, and sign a consent document. A three-month appeal period is then allowed, during which time the birth parents may reclaim their parental rights or the adoptive parents can decide not to go through with the adoption. At the end of that period, if no appeal is made, the adoptive parents must submit a request to the court to continue the process, after which the court will fix a hearing date. At the hearing, the judge will rule whether to grant a delegation of parental authority, which technically shifts parental authority from birth to adoptive parents. If the adoptive parents are residents of Djibouti, or if they plan to stay for some time, they may be granted temporary custody over the child, to allow the child to physically live with them. The birth parents then have an additional two-month window within which they may reclaim the child. If they do not, the adoptive parents have to submit to the court a request for finalizing the adoption. At the hearing, the court will make a final ruling to grant the adoption. However, for an additional two months the opportunity is given to the Public Ministry (Office of District Attorney) or any other concerned individual (family member), excluding the natu-

ral parents, to appeal for reversal on serious grounds of evidence, if such can show that the adoption will adversely affect the child.

The court can refuse to grant an adoption, and may order the adoptive parents not to break the child's bonds with its biological family. The judgment is always given in a public hearing. Whether the adoption is approved or rejected, the decision can be appealed, and the ensuing appeal may also be subject to a final appeal at the Supreme Court.

Abandoned child with unknown parents: The process is similar to that of a child with identified birth parents, except that the steps pertaining to the birth parents will not be applicable here. Instead, after the adoptive parents have made a written request to the court, the latter will order a police investigation to try to find the birth parents and establish their identity (this may take up to a month). If birth parents cannot be found, or no one claims the child, the police will deliver to the court a certificate of abandonment, after which the court will proceed to consider the case.

Required Documents:

- A police clearance (indicating no arrest record);
- A home study report;
- Proof of adequate financial means and stability (last 3 pay slips, tax return, etc.).

Embassy of the Republic of Djibouti
1156 15th St., NW, Suite 515
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202/331-0270

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy:
Plateau du Serpent
Boulevard Marechal Joffre
Djibouti City
Tel: (253) 35-39-95
Fax: (253) 35-39-40
E-mail: ConsularDjibouti@state.gov
http://djibouti.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Djibouti may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



DOMINICA

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Commonwealth of Dominica

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 754 sq. km. (290 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Roseau (population 14,500).

Terrain: Mountainous volcanic island with rainforest cover.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Dominican (Dom-i-NEE-can).

Population: (2008) 69,000.

Annual growth rate: (2006) 0.55%.

Ethnic groups: Mainly of African descent, mixed Black and European, Syrian and some Carib Amerindians.

Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant (Methodist, Pentecostal, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Baptist), Islam, Baha'I, Rastafarianism, Anglican, Jehovah's Witnesses, Nazarene, Church of Christ, and Brethren Christian Churches.

Languages: English (official); a French patois is widely spoken.

Education: (2005) Adult literacy—94%.

Health: (2006) Infant mortality rate—13/1,000. Life expectancy—men 72 years; women 77.9 years.

Work force: (2005) 24,370.

Unemployment: (2005) 13.1%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy; republic within the Commonwealth.

Independence: November 3, 1978.

Constitution: November 1978.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral House of Assembly. Judicial—magistrate and jury courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), Privy Council.

Political subdivisions: 10 parishes.

Political parties: Dominica Labour Party (incumbent), United Workers Party, and Dominica Freedom Party.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $318.5 million.

GDP growth rate: (2006) 4.0%.

Per capita GDP: (2006) $4,758.

Inflation: (2006) 2.4%.

Natural resources: timber, water (hydropower), copper.

Agriculture: (10% of GDP in 2005) Products—bananas, citrus, coconuts, cocoa, herbal oils and extracts.

Manufacturing: (3% of GDP in 2005) Types—agricultural processing, soap and other coconut-based products, apparel.

Trade: (2005) Exports—$39.0 million (merchandise) and $82.0 million (commercial services). Major markets—European Union (27.8%), Jamaica (12.7%), Antigua and Barbuda (11.3%), Trinidad and Tobago (9.0%), and Saint Lucia (6.8%). Imports—$165 million (merchandise) and $49 million (commercial services). Major suppliers—United States (36.6%), Trinidad and Tobago (20.5%), China (19.4%), European Union (13.4%), and Japan (4.6%).

PEOPLE

Almost all Dominicans are descendants of African slaves brought in by colonial planters in the 18th century. Dominica is the only island in the eastern Caribbean to retain some of its pre-Columbian population—the Carib Indians—about 3,000 of whom live on the island's east coast. The population growth rate is very low, due primarily to emigration to more prosperous Caribbean Islands, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. English is the official language; however, because of historic French domination, the most widely spoken dialect is a French patois. Nearly 80% of the population is Catholic. In recent years, a number of Protestant churches have been established.

HISTORY

The island's indigenous Arawak people were expelled or exterminated by

Caribs in the 14th century. Columbus landed there in November 1493. Spanish ships frequently landed on Dominica during the 16th century, but fierce resistance by the Caribs discouraged Spain's efforts at settlement.

In 1635, France claimed Dominica. Shortly thereafter, French missionaries became the first European inhabitants of the island. Carib incursions continued, though, and in 1660, the French and British agreed that both Dominica and St. Vincent should be abandoned. Dominica was officially neutral for the next century, but the attraction of its resources remained; rival expeditions of British and French foresters were harvesting timber by the start of the 18th century.

Largely due to Dominica's position between Martinique and Guadeloupe, France eventually became predominant, and a French settlement was established and grew. As part of the 1763 Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years' War, the island became a British possession. In 1778, during the American Revolutionary War, the French mounted a successful invasion with the active cooperation of the population. The 1783 Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, returned the island to Britain. French invasions in 1795 and 1805 ended in failure.

In 1763, the British established a legislative assembly, representing only the white population. In 1831, reflecting a liberalization of official British racial attitudes, the Brown Privilege Bill conferred political and social rights on free nonwhites. Three Blacks were elected to the legislative assembly the following year. Following the abolition of slavery, in 1838 Dominica became the first and only British Caribbean colony to have a Black-controlled legislature in the 19th century. Most Black legislators were smallholders or merchants who held economic and social views diametrically opposed to the interests of the small, wealthy English planter class. Reacting to a perceived threat, the planters lobbied for more direct British rule.

In 1865, after much agitation and tension, the colonial office replaced the elective assembly with one comprised of one-half elected members and one-half appointed. Planters allied with colonial administrators outmaneuvered the elected legislators on numerous occasions.

In 1871, Dominica became part of the Leeward Island Federation. The power of the Black population progressively eroded. Crown Colony government was re-established in 1896. All political rights for the vast majority of the population were effectively curtailed. Development aid, offered as compensation for disenfranchisement, proved to have a negligible effect.

Following World War I, an upsurge of political consciousness throughout the Caribbean led to the formation of the Representative Government Association. Marshaling public frustration with the lack of a voice in the governing of Dominica, this group won one-third of the popularly elected seats of the legislative assembly in 1924 and one-half in 1936. Shortly thereafter, Dominica was transferred from the Leeward Island Administration and was governed as part of the Windwards until 1958, when it joined the short-lived West Indies Federation.

After the federation dissolved, Dominica became an associated state of the United Kingdom in 1967 and formally took responsibility for its internal affairs. On November 3, 1978, the Commonwealth of Dominica was granted independence by the United Kingdom.

Independence did little to solve problems stemming from centuries of economic underdevelopment, and in mid-1979, political discontent led to the formation of an interim government. It was replaced after the 1980 elections by a government led by the Dominica Freedom Party under Prime Minister Eugenia Charles, the Caribbean's first female prime minister. Chronic economic problems were compounded by the severe impact of hurricanes in 1979 and in 1980. By the end of the 1980s, the economy recovered, but weakened again in the 1990s due to a decrease in banana prices.

In the January 2000 elections, the Edison James United Workers Party (UWP) was defeated by the Dominican Labour Party (DLP), led by Roosevelt P. "Rosie" Douglas. Douglas died after only a few months in office and was replaced by Pierre Charles, who died in office in January 2004. Roosevelt Skerrit, also of the DLP, replaced Charles as Prime Minister. Under Prime Minister Skerrit's leadership, the DLP won elections in May 2005 that gave the party 12 seats in the 21-member Parliament to the UWP's 8 seats. An independent candidate affiliated with the DLP won a seat as well. Since that time, the independent candidate joined the government and one UWP member crossed the aisle, making the current total 14 seats for the DLP and 7 for the UWP.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

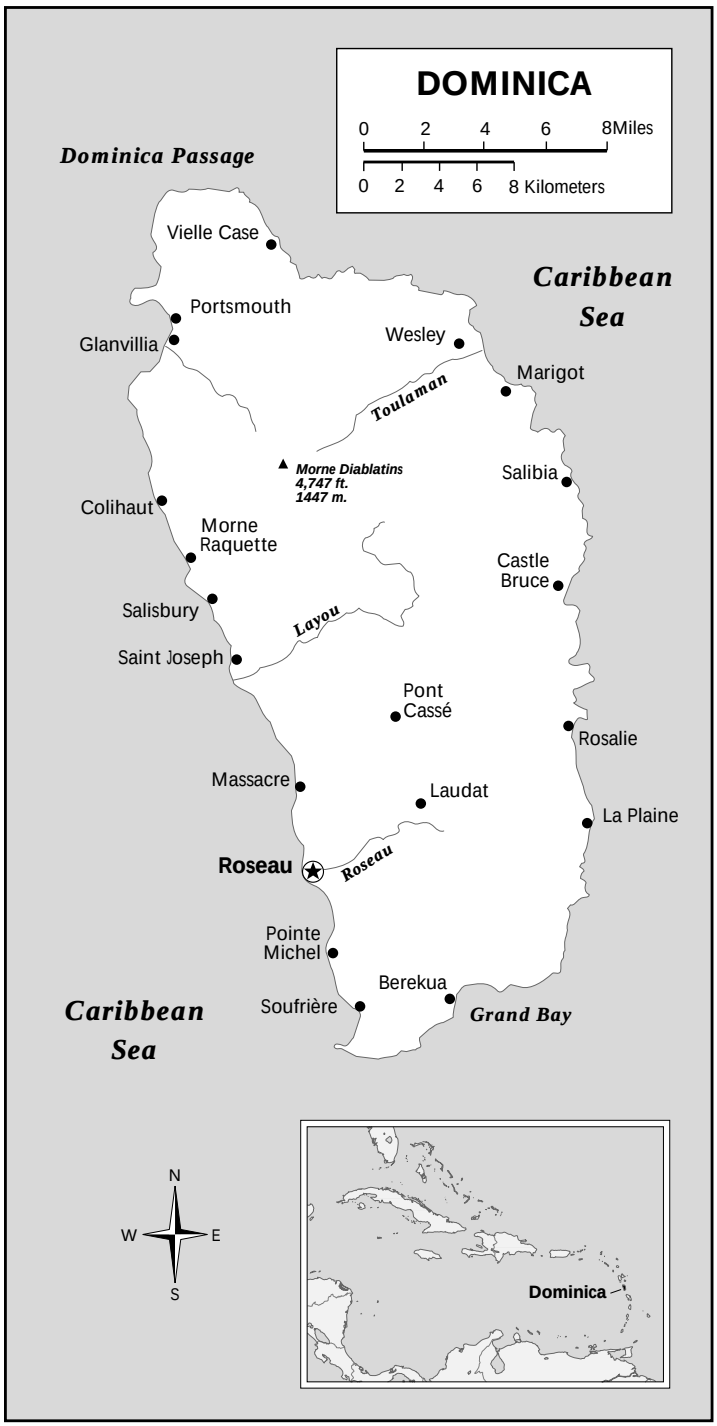
Dominica has a Westminster-style parliamentary government, and there are three political parties—the Dominica Labour Party (the majority party), the Dominica United Workers Party, and the Dominica Freedom Party. A president and prime minister make up the executive branch. Nominated by the prime minister in consultation with the leader of the opposition party, the president is elected for a 5-year term by the parliament. The president appoints as prime minister the leader of the majority party in the parliament and also appoints, on the prime minister's recommendation, members of the parliament from the ruling party as cabinet ministers. The prime minister and cabinet are responsible to the parliament and can be removed on a no-confidence vote.

The unicameral parliament, called the House of Assembly, is composed of 21 regional representatives and nine senators. The regional representa-

tives are elected by universal suffrage and, in turn, decide whether senators are to be elected or appointed. If appointed, five are chosen by the president with the advice of the prime minister and four with the advice of the opposition leader. If elected, it is by vote of the regional representatives. Elections for representatives and senators must be held at least every 5 years, although the prime minister can call elections any time. The last election was held in May 2005.

Dominica's legal system is based on English common law. There are three magistrate's courts, with appeals made to the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal and, ultimately, to the Privy Council in London.

Councils elected by universal suffrage govern most towns. Supported largely by property taxation, the councils are responsible for the regulation of markets and sanitation and the maintenance of secondary roads and other municipal amenities. The island is also divided into 10 parishes, whose governance is unrelated to the town governments.



Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Nicholas J. O. LIVERPOOL**
Prime Min.: **Roosevelt SKERRIT**
Min. of Agriculture, Fisheries, & Forestry: **Matthew WALTER**
Min. for Carib Affairs: **Kelly GRANEAU**
Min. of Community Development, Culture, Gender Affairs, & Information: **Lorraine BANNIS-ROBERTS**
Min. of Economic Development & Urban Renewal: **Julius TIMOTHY**
Min. of Education, Human Resource Development, Sports, & Youth Affairs: **Vince HENDERSON**
Min. of Finance, Social Security, & Foreign Affairs: **Roosevelt SKERRIT**
Min. of Health & Environment: **John FABIEN**
Min. of Housing, Lands, & Telecommunications: **Reginald AUSTRIE**
Min. of National Security, Labor, & Immigration: **Rayburn BLACKMORE**
Min. of Public Utilities, Energy, Ports, & the Public Service: **Charles SAVARIN**
Min. of Public Works & Infrastructural Development: **Ambrose GEORGE**
Min. of Tourism, Legal Affairs, & Civil Aviation: **Ian DOUGLAS**
Min. of Trade, Industry, Consumer Affairs, Private-Sector Relations, CARICOM, OECS, & Diaspora Affairs: **Colin MCINTYRE**
Attorney Gen.: **Francine BARON-ROYER**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Crispin GREGOIRE**

Although the Dominican ambassador to the United States has customarily been resident in Dominica, the country maintains an embassy in the United States at 3216 New Mexico Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20016 (tel. 202-364-6781). Dominica also has a consulate general co-located with its UN mission in New York at Suite 900, 820 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (tel: 212-599-8478).

ECONOMY

Many consider Dominica's economic situation the most challenging of all the Eastern Caribbean states. However, Dominica's economy grew by 3.5% in 2005 and 4.0% in 2006, following a decade of poor performance. The country nearly had a financial crisis in 2003 and 2004. Growth in 2006 was attributed to gains in tourism, construction, offshore and other services, and some sub-sectors of the banana industry. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently praised the Government of Dominica for its successful macroeconomic reforms. The IMF also pointed out remaining challenges, including further reductions in public debt, increased financial sector regulation, and market diversification.

Bananas and other agriculture dominate Dominica's economy, and nearly one-third of the labor force works in agriculture. This sector, however, is highly vulnerable to weather conditions and to external events affecting commodity prices. In 2007, Hurricane Dean caused significant damage to the agricultural sector as well as the country's infrastructure, especially roads. In response to reduced European Union (EU) banana trade preferences, the government has diversified the agricultural sector by introducing coffee, patchouli, aloe vera, cut flowers, and exotic fruits such as mangoes, guavas, and papayas. Dominica has had some success in increasing its manufactured exports, primarily soap.

Dominica is mostly volcanic and has few beaches; therefore, tourism has developed more slowly than on neighboring islands. Nevertheless, Dominica's high, rugged mountains, rainforests, freshwater lakes, hot springs, waterfalls, and diving spots make it an attractive eco-tourism destination. Cruise ship stopovers have increased following the development of modern docking and waterfront facilities in the capital.

Dominica's currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (EC$), a regional currency shared among members of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues the EC$, manages monetary policy, and regulates and supervises commercial banking activities in its member countries. The ECCB has kept the EC$ pegged at EC$2.7=U.S. $1.

Dominica is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative that grants duty-free entry into the United States for many goods. Dominica also belongs to the predominantly English-speaking Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Like its Eastern Caribbean neighbors, the main priority of Dominica's foreign relations is economic development. The country maintains missions in Washington, New York, London, and Brussels and is represented jointly with other Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) members in Canada. Dominica also is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the British Commonwealth. It became a member of the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1978 and of the World Bank and Organization of American States (OAS) in 1979. in 1979. Unlike some of its neighbors in the Eastern Caribbean, Dominica has withheld recognition of Taiwan and has established relations with the People's Republic of China.

U.S.-DOMINICAN RELATIONS

The United States and Dominica have friendly bilateral relations. The United States supports the Dominican Government's efforts to expand its economic base and to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens. U.S. assistance is primarily channeled through multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), as well as through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) office in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Peace Corps also provides technical assistance to Dominica, and has volunteers on the island working primarily in education, youth development, and health.

In addition, the United States and Dominica work together in the battle against illegal drugs. Dominica cooperates with U.S. agencies and participates in counternarcotics programs in an effort to curb narco-trafficking and marijuana cultivation. In 1995, the Dominican Government signed a maritime law enforcement agreement with the United States to strengthen counternarcotics coordination, and in 1996, the government signed mutual legal assistance and extradition treaties to enhance joint efforts in combating international crime.

The United States maintains no official presence in Dominica. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados and frequently travel to Dominica.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRIDGETOWN (E) Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael BB 14006, APO/FPO APO AA 34055, 246-436-4950, Fax 246-429-5246, Workweek: Mon-Fri: 8.00–4.30, Website: bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Hillaire Campbell
AMB OMS:	Honora L. Myers
ECO:	Bryan R Switzer
FM:	Maurice Pettiford
HRO:	Peggy Laurance (Residence In Ft Lauderdale)
MGT:	Philip A. Dubois
AMB:	Mary M. Ourisman
CG:	Clyde I. Howard
DCM:	D. Brent Hardt
PAO:	John C. Roberts
GSO:	Yoshino Rosenstein
RSO:	Gary Truchot
AFSA:	Arend Zwartjes
AID:	James Goggin
CLO:	Lauren Mchugh/Tamie Harvey

DAO:	Ltc. Cdr. Stephen Leslie(Res. Caracas)
DEA:	Charles Graham
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FAA:	Dawn Flanagan (Res. Washington)
FMO:	Rajiv Malik
IMO:	Frank Sauer
IRS:	Cheryl Kast
ISO:	Norman G B Ellasos
ISSO:	Ricardo Cabrera
LAB:	John C. Aller
LEGATT:	Samuel Bryant, Jr.
MLO:	LCDR Cdr. Edward Gaynor
NAS:	Ian Campbell
POL:	Ian Campbell

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE

Caribbean/Latin America Action
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-466-7464
Fax: 202-822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: Dominica is an English-speaking developing Caribbean island nation. The tourism industry in is the early stages of development; first-class tourist facilities are limited, but medium-range facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

In addition to a valid passport, U.S. citizens may be asked to present a return or onward ticket. U.S. citizens should take special care to secure their passports while traveling as it can be time-consuming and difficult to acquire new proof of citizenship to facilitate return travel should the passport be lost or stolen. There is a departure tax assessed when leaving Dominica. Children under twelve years of age are exempt from the departure tax. For further information concerning entry requirements, travelers can contact the Embassy of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 3216 New Mexico Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20016, telephone (202) 364-6781, e-mail embdomdc@aol.com, or the Consulate General of Dominica in New York at (212) 768-2480. Visit the Dominica Division of Tourism offical web site at http://www.dominica.dm/site/index.cfm for more information.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Petty street crime occurs in Dominica. Valuables left unattended, especially on beaches, are vulnerable to theft.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is limited. The major hospital is Princess Margaret Hospital, telephone (767) 448-2231/5720. In addition, there is one other hospital in Dominica and several clinics. There is no operational hyperbaric chamber; divers requiring treatment for decompression illness must be evacuated to Martinique. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and

insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Dominica is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Vehicles are driven on the left in Dominica. Seatbelt laws are not strictly enforced. Roads are narrow with steep inclines throughout the island. There are few guardrails in areas that have precipitous drop-offs from the road. Road signs are limited outside of the major towns. Drivers should be alert for minibus (taxi) drivers, who often make sudden stops or pull out into traffic without warning or signaling.

For specific information concerning Dominica driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Dominica national tourist organization offices in New York via telephone number (212) 949-1711, fax number (212) 949-1714, or e-mail dominicany@msn.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Dominica's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Dominica's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: There is no U.S Embassy or Consulate in Dominica. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados is responsible for American Citizens Services on the island of Dominica. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. Like all Caribbean countries, Dominica can be affected by hurricanes. The hurricane season normally runs from June to the end of November, but there have been hurricanes in December in recent years. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Dominica's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Dominica are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Dominica are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Dominica Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown is located in the Wildey Business Park in suburban Wildey, south and east of downtown Bridgetown. The main number for the Consular Section is (246) 431-0225; after hours, the Embassy duty officer can be reached by calling (246) 436-4950. The website for Embassy Bridgetown is http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday, except Barbados and U.S. holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The Welfare Division is the adoption authority in Dominica. It is part of the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs. The address is:

Welfare Division
Government Head Quarters
Roseau, Dominica.
Telephone: 767-448-2401 extensions 3019, 3020, 3334 or 3254.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptive parents should not be under the age of twenty-five (25) years old. The adopting parent(s) should be employed or have means of supporting the child. There is no specific income requirement. The adopting parent(s) should submit a home study report from the appropriate office of his/her home country.

Residency Requirements: The Dominica government has no specific residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: There is no specified period. A short hearing is required after all requirements are met and all documents are in order.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. Please also see Important Notice Regarding Adoption Agents and Facilitators at the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site travel.state.gov.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Barbados discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Dominica at risk. Adoption fees vary from lawyer to lawyer but an adoptive parent can expect to pay at least US $700 to $1000 for an adoption, including stamp duty.

Adoption Procedures: Parents are not matched to children. An adoption process begins when a child has been identified for adoption. Prospective adoptive parents must submit to the Welfare Division a copy of their home study report and W2 tax form.

Required Documents:

- Petition for Adoption (from country of adoptive parents)
- Affidavit of support (from country of adoptive parents)
- Consent of biological parents
- Birth certificate of child
- Application to appoint Guardian Ad Litem
- Guardian Ad Litem Report
- Home study report from prospective adoptive parents' country if not a citizen of Dominica and W2 tax forms to be submitted to the Welfare Division
- If married a marriage certificate and if one spouse is adopting the consent of the other spouse
- Application for Adoption and Draft Adoption Order

Embassy of Dominica
3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Telephone: (202) 364-6781
Fax: (202) 364-6791

Consulate General of Dominica in New York: E-mail: Embdomdc@aol.com

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Wildey Business Park
Wildey
St. Michael, BB 14006
Barbados, W.I.
Phone: 246-431-0225

The mailing address is:

P.O. Box 302
Bridgetown BB 11000
Bridgetown, Barbados
Phone: 246-431-0225
Fax: 246-431-0179

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Dominica and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. Recommendations to be a signatory to the Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction have been submitted to the Government for consideration. American citizens who travel to

Dominica place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Dominica with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Dominica if parents are legally married they share the custody of their children, in the sense that the children live with them and are taken care of by them in the matrimonial home. However, legal custody lies with the father. When parents are not married the custody of the child usually lies with the mother. Due to the death of the mother, mental problems, or a declaration made by the Court that the mother is unfit based on an application by the father, a father may apply to the court for custody of the child. Foreign court orders are not automatically recognized.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts may be enforced in Dominica once there has been compliance with The Commonwealth Judgments Reciprocal Enforcements Act, which provides for reciprocal enforcement in the state of judgments in Courts of the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth Countries; or The Foreign Judgments Reciprocal Enforcement Act, which provides for judgments given in foreign countries that accord reciprocal treatment to judgments given in Dominica.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has been granted custody of a child, the other parent is usually granted visitation rights. Under the Maintenance Act 15 of 2001, when a parent has been made to maintain a child under a Maintenance Order, a parent can apply to the court for access to the child at the time when the order is made or thereafter once the order is in force. The American Embassy in Bridgetown has reported few problems for non-custodial parents exercising their visitation rights. If a custodial parent fails to allow visitation, the non-custodial parent may appeal to the court.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is recognized under Dominican law.

Passports for Minors and the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program: For more information on these topics, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Dominica.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Dominican court should retain an attorney in Dominica. The U.S. Embassy in Barbados maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy Bridgetown
Consular Section
ALICO Building, Cheapside
P O Box 302
Bridgetown
Barbados
Telephone: [246] 431-0225
Fax: [246] 431-0179

Web site:
http://www.usembassy.state.gov/bridgetown

The Consular Section is open M-F (except U.S. and Barbados holidays) 8:30-11:30 and 1-2 PM

Questions involving Dominican law should be addressed to a Dominican attorney or to the Embassy of Dominica in the United States at:

Embassy of the Commonwealth of Dominica
3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Telephone: (202) 364-6791

More Information: For further information and/or assistance in either preventing or responding to an international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Dominican Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 48,442 sq. km. (18,704 sq. mi.), about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined.
Cities: Capital—Santo Domingo (pop. 2.25 million). Other city—Santiago de los Caballeros (908,230).
Terrain: Mountainous.
Climate: Maritime tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Dominican(s).
Population: (2007) 9.365 million.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.5%.
Ethnic groups: Mixed 73%, European 16%, African origin 11%.
Religions: Roman Catholic 95%.
Languages: Spanish.
Education: Years compulsory—6 Attendance—70%. Literacy—84.7%.
Health: Infant mortality rate: 28.3/1,000. Life expectancy—70.2 years for men, 73.3 years for women.
Work force: 60.2% services (tourism, transportation, communications, finances, others), 15.5% industry (manufacturing), 11.5% construction, 11.3% agriculture, 1.5% mining.

Government

Type: Representative democracy.
Independence: February 27, 1844. Restoration of independence, August 16, 1863.
Constitution: November 28, 1966; amended July 25, 2002.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government), vice president, cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Congress (Senate and House of Representatives). Judicial—Supreme Court of Justice.
Political subdivisions: 31 provinces and the National District of Santo Domingo.
Political parties: Dominican Liberation Party (PLD), Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD), Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC), and several others.
Suffrage: Universal and compulsory, over 18 or married.

Economy (2007)

GDP: $36.4 billion.
Growth rate: 8%
Per capita GDP: $4,147.
Non-fuel minerals: (1.4% of GDP) Nickel, gold, silver.
Agriculture: (6.5% of GDP) Products—sugarcane, coffee, cocoa, bananas, tobacco, rice, plantains, beef.
Industry: (27.4% of GDP) Types—sugar refining, pharmaceuticals, cement, light manufacturing, construction.
Services: (including tourism and transportation) 58.6% of GDP.
Trade: Exports ($6.484 billion (FOB), including processing zones: textiles, sugar, coffee, ferronickel, cacao, tobacco, meats and medical supplies. Markets—U.S. (75%), Canada, Western Europe, South Korea. Imports—$8.797 billion: food stuffs, petroleum, industrial raw materials, capital goods. Suppliers—U.S. (48%), Japan, Germany, Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia.

PEOPLE

About half of Dominicans live in rural areas; many are small landholders. Haitians form the largest foreign minority group. All religions are tolerated; the state religion is Roman Catholicism.

HISTORY

The island of Hispaniola, of which the Dominican Republic forms the eastern two-thirds and Haiti the remainder, was originally occupied by Tainos, an Arawak-speaking people. The Tainos welcomed Columbus in his first voyage in 1492, but subsequent colonizers were brutal, reducing the Taino population from about 1 million to about 500 in 50 years.

To ensure adequate labor for plantations, the Spanish brought African slaves to the island beginning in 1503.

In the next century, French settlers occupied the western end of the

island, which Spain ceded to France in 1697, and which, in 1804, became the Republic of Haiti. The Haitians conquered the whole island in 1822 and held it until 1844, when forces led by Juan Pablo Duarte, the hero of Dominican independence, drove them out and established the Dominican Republic as an independent state. In 1861, the Dominicans voluntarily returned to the Spanish Empire; in 1865, independence was restored. Economic difficulties, the threat of European intervention, and ongoing internal disorders led to a U.S. occupation in 1916 and the establishment of a military government in the Dominican Republic. The occupation ended in 1924, with a democratically elected Dominican Government.

In 1930, Rafael L. Trujillo, a prominent army commander, established absolute political control. Trujillo promoted economic development—from which he and his supporters benefited—and severe repression of domestic human rights. Mismanagement and corruption resulted in major economic problems. In August 1960, the Organization of American States (OAS) imposed diplomatic sanctions against the Dominican Republic as a result of Trujillo's complicity in an attempt to assassinate President Romulo Betancourt of Venezuela. These sanctions remained in force after Trujillo's death by assassination in May 1961. In November 1961, the Trujillo family was forced into exile.

In January 1962, a council of state that included moderate opposition elements with legislative and executive powers was formed. OAS sanctions were lifted January 4, and, after the resignation of President Joaquin Balaguer on January 16, the council under President Rafael E. Bonnelly headed the Dominican Government.

In 1963, Juan Bosch was inaugurated President. Bosch was overthrown in a military coup in September 1963. Another military coup, on April 24, 1965, led to violence between military elements favoring the return to government by Bosch and those who proposed a military junta committed to early general elections. On April 28, U.S. military forces landed to protect U.S. citizens and to evacuate U.S. and other foreign nationals.

Additional U.S. forces subsequently established order. In June 1966, President Balaguer, leader of the Reformist Party (now called the Social Christian Reformist Party—PRSC), was elected and then re-elected to office in May 1970 and May 1974, both times after the major opposition parties withdrew late in the campaign.

In the May 1978 election, Balaguer was defeated in his bid for a fourth successive term by Antonio Guzman of the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). Guzman's inauguration on August 16 marked the country's first peaceful transfer of power from one freely elected president to another.

The PRD's presidential candidate, Salvador Jorge Blanco, won the 1982 elections, and the PRD gained a majority in both houses of Congress. In an attempt to cure the ailing economy, the Jorge administration began to implement economic adjustment and recovery policies, including an austerity program in cooperation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In April 1984, rising prices of basic foodstuffs and uncertainty about austerity measures led to riots.

Balaguer was returned to the presidency with electoral victories in 1986 and 1990. Upon taking office in 1986, Balaguer tried to reactivate the economy through a public works construction program. Nonetheless, by 1988 the country had slid into a 2-year economic depression, characterized by high inflation and currency devaluation. Economic difficulties, coupled with problems in the delivery of basic services—e.g., electricity, water, transportation—generated popular discontent that resulted in frequent protests, occasionally violent, including a paralyzing nationwide strike in June 1989.

In 1990, Balaguer instituted a second set of economic reforms. After concluding an IMF agreement, balancing the budget, and curtailing inflation, the Dominican Republic experienced a period of economic growth marked by moderate inflation, a balance in external accounts, and a steadily increasing GDP that lasted through 2000.

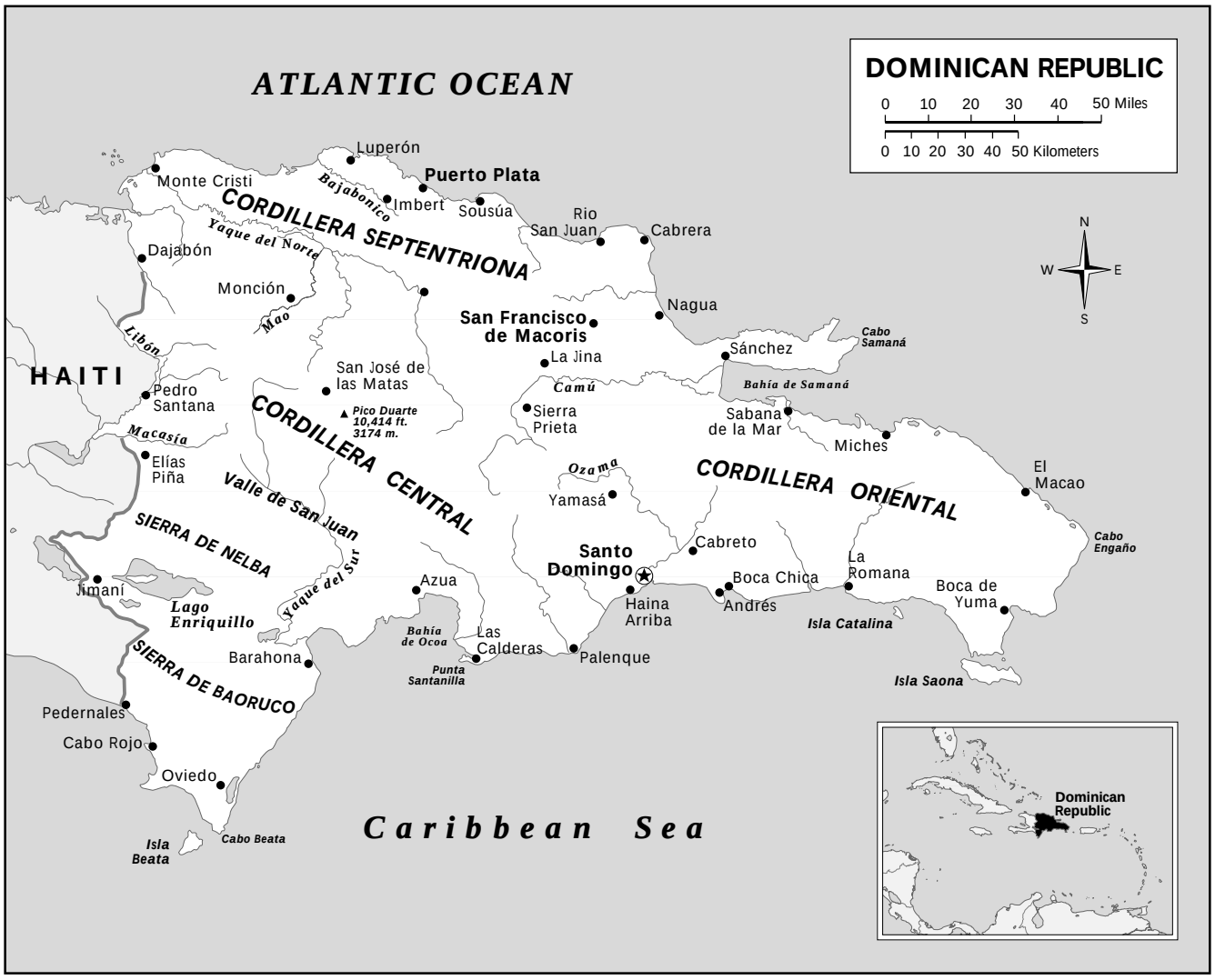
The voting process in 1986 and 1990 was generally seen as fair, but allegations of electoral board fraud tainted both victories. The elections of 1994 were again marred by charges of fraud. Following a compromise calling for constitutional and electoral reform, President Balaguer assumed office for an abbreviated term and Congress amended the Constitution to bar presidential succession.

Since 1996, the Dominican electoral process has been seen as generally free and fair. In June 1996, Leonel Fernández Reyna of the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) was elected to a 4-year term as president. Fernández's political agenda was one of economic and judicial reform. He helped enhance Dominican participation in hemispheric affairs, such as the OAS and the follow up to the Miami Summit. On May 16, 2000, Hipólito Mejía, the PRD candidate, was elected president in another free and fair election, soundly defeating PLD candidate Danilo Medina and former president Balaguer. Mejía championed the cause of free trade and Central American and Caribbean economic integration.

The Dominican Republic signed a free trade agreement (CAFTA-DR) with the United States and five Central American countries in August 2004, in the last weeks of the Mejía administration.

During the Mejía administration, the Constitution was amended to permit an incumbent president to seek a second successive term, and Mejía ran for re-election.

On May 16, 2004, Leonel Fernández was elected president, defeating Mejía 57.11% to 33.65%. Eduardo Estrella of the PRSC received 8.65% of the vote. Fernández took office on August 16, 2004, promising in his inaugural speech to promote fiscal



austerity, to fight corruption and to support social concerns. Fernández said the Dominican Republic would support policies favoring international peace and security through multilateral mechanisms in conformity with the United Nations and the OAS.

The Fernández administration works closely with the United States on law enforcement and immigration and counter-terrorism matters. In 2006 elections, Fernández' PLD won 60% of seats in the House of Representatives and 22 of 32 Senate seats, as well as a plurality of mayoral seats. On May 16, 2008, President Fernández was reelected President with 53.8% of the vote. His new term runs until 2012.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Dominican Republic is a representative democracy with national powers divided among independent executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The president appoints the cabinet, executes laws passed by the legislative branch, and is commander in chief of the armed forces. The president and vice president run for office on the same ticket and are elected by direct vote for 4-year terms. Legislative power is exercised by a bicameral Congress—the Senate (32 members) and the House of Representatives (178 members).

The Dominican Republic has a multiparty political system with national elections every 2 years (alternating between presidential elections and congressional/municipal elections). Presidential elections are held in years evenly divisible by four. Congressional and municipal elections are held in even numbered years not divisible by four. International observers have found that presidential and congressional elections since 1996 have been generally free and fair.

Elections are supervised by a Central Elections Board (JCE) of 9 members chosen for a four-year term by the newly elected Senate. JCE decisions on electoral matters are final. Under the constitutional reforms negotiated after the 1994 elections, the 16-mem-

ber Supreme Court of Justice is appointed by a National Judicial Council, which is comprised of the President, the leaders of both houses of Congress, the President of the Supreme Court, and an opposition or non-governing-party member. One other Supreme Court Justice acts as secretary of the Council, a non-voting position. The Supreme Court has sole authority over managing the court system and in hearing actions against the president, designated members of his cabinet, and members of Congress when the legislature is in session.

The Supreme Court hears appeals from lower courts and chooses members of lower courts. Each of the 31 provinces is headed by a presidentially appointed governor. Mayors and municipal councils to administer the 124 municipal districts and the National District (Santo Domingo) are elected at the same time as congressional representatives.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Leonel FERNANDEZ Reyna**
Vice Pres.: **Rafael ALBURQUERQUE de Castro**
Sec. of State for Agriculture: **Salvador JIMENEZ**
Sec. of State for the Armed Forces: **Pedro Rafael PENA Antonio**
Sec. of State for Culture: **Jose RAFAEL Lantigua**
Sec. of State for Economy, Planning, & Development: **Juan Temistocles MONTAS Dominguez**
Sec. of State for Education: **Melanio PAREDES**
Sec. of State for the Environment & Natural Resources: **Jaime David FERNANDEZ Mirabal**
Sec. of State for Finance: **Vicente BENGOA Albizu**
Sec. of State for Foreign Relations: **Carlos MORALES Troncoso**
Sec. of State for Higher Education, Science, & Technology: **Ligia AMADA MELO Viuda Cardona**
Sec. of State for Industry & Commerce: **Jose Ramon FADUL**
Sec. of State for Interior & Police: **Francisco ALMEYDA Rancier**
Sec. of State for Labor: **Maximiliano PUIG Miller**
Sec. of State for the Presidency: **Cesar PINA TORIBIO**
Sec. of State for Public Health & Social Welfare: **Bautista ROJAS Gomez, Dr.**
Sec. of State for Public Works & Communications: **Victor DIAZ Rua**
Sec. of State for Sports: **Felipe PAYANO**
Sec. of State for Tourism: **Francisco Javier GARCIA Fernandez**
Sec. of State for Women: **Alejandrina GERMAN**
Sec. of State for Youth: **Franklin RODRIGUEZ**
Sec. of State Without Portfolio: **Miguel MEJIA, Dr.**
Sec. of State Without Portfolio: **Eduardo SELMAN**
Admin. Sec. of the Presidency: **Luis Manuel BONETTI Veras**
Technical Sec. of the Presidency:
Special Asst. to the Pres.: **Jose Joaquin BIDO Medina, Dr.**
Presidential Adviser on Antinarcotics: **Vincio CASTILLO**
Attorney Gen.: **Radhames JIMENEZ Pena**
Governor, Central Bank: **Hector VALEZ Albizu**
Ambassador to the US: **Flavio Dario ESPINAL Jacobo**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Erasmo LARA-PENA**

The Dominican Republic maintains an embassy in the United States at 1715 22d Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-332-6280).

DEFENSE

Congress authorizes a combined military force of 44,000 active duty personnel. Actual active duty strength is approximately 32,000. However, approximately 50% of those are used for non-military activities such as security providers for government-owned non-military facilities, highway toll stations, prisons, forestry work, state enterprises, and private businesses. The Commander in Chief of the military is the President. The principal missions are to defend the nation and protect the territorial integrity of the country. The army, larger than the other services combined with approximately 20,000 active duty personnel, consists of six infantry brigades, a combat support brigade, and a combat service support brigade. The air force operates two main bases, one in the southern region near Santo Domingo and one in the northern region near Puerto Plata. The navy operates two major naval bases, one in Santo Domingo and one in Las Calderas on the southwestern coast, and maintains 12 operational vessels. In the Caribbean, only Cuba has a larger military force.

The armed forces have organized a Specialized Airport Security Corps (CESA) and a Specialized Port Security Corps (CESEP) to meet international security needs in these areas. The Secretary of the Armed Forces has also announced plans to form a specialized border corps (CESEF). Additionally, the armed forces provide 75% of personnel to the National Investigations Directorate (DNI) and the Counter-Drug Directorate (DNCD).

The Dominican National Police force contains 32,000 agents. The police are not part of the Dominican armed forces, but share some overlapping security functions. Sixty-three percent of the force serve in areas outside traditional police functions, similar to the situation of their military counterparts.

ECONOMY

After a decade of little to no growth in the 1980s, the Dominican Republic's economy boomed in the 1990s, expanding at an average rate of 7.7% per year from 1996 to 2000. Tourism (the leading foreign exchange earner), telecommunications, and free-trade-zone manufacturing are the most important sectors, although agriculture is still a major part of the economy. The Dominican Republic owed much of its success to the adoption of sound macroeconomic policies in the early 1990s and greater opening to foreign investment. Growth turned negative in 2003 (-0.4%) due to the effects of government handling of major bank frauds and to lower U.S. demand for Dominican manufacturers. The Mejía administration negotiated an IMF standby agreement in August 2003 but was unable to comply with fiscal targets. The

Fernández administration obtained required tax legislation and IMF board approval for the standby in January 2005. The Dominican peso fell to an unprecedented low in exchange markets in 2003-2004 but strengthened dramatically following the election and inauguration of Leonel Fernández. Since late 2004 it has traded at a rate considered to be overvalued on a purchasing power parity basis. Inflation fell sharply in late 2004 and was estimated at 9% for that calendar year. The Fernández administration successfully renegotiated official bilateral debt with Paris Club member governments, commercial bank debt with London Club members, and sovereign debt with a consortium of lenders. It met fiscal and financial targets of the standby agreement but fell short of goals for reforms in the electricity sector and financial markets. Central Bank statistics indicate 10.7% growth for 2006 with 5.0% inflation. The Central Bank estimates that the economy grew at 7.9% in the first six months of 2007 with an inflation rate of 5.9%.

The Dominican Republic's most important trading partner is the United States (75% of export revenues). Other markets include Canada, Western Europe, and Japan. The country exports free-trade-zone manufactured products (garments, medical devices, etc.), nickel, sugar, coffee, cacao, and tobacco. It imports petroleum, industrial raw materials, capital goods, and foodstuffs. On September 5, 2005, the Dominican Congress ratified a free trade agreement with the U.S. and five Central American countries, known as CAFTA-DR. The CAFTA-DR agreement entered into force for the Dominican Republic on March 1, 2007. The total stock of U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in Dominican Republic as of 2006 was U.S. $3.3 billion, much of it directed to the energy and tourism sectors, to free trade zones, and to the telecommunications sector. Remittances were close to $2.7 billion in 2006.

An important aspect of the Dominican economy is the Free Trade Zone industry (FTZ), which made up U.S. $4.55 billion in Dominican exports for 2006 (70% of total exports). Reports show, however, that the FTZs lost approximately 60,000 between 2005 and 2007 and suffered a 4% decrease in total exports in 2006. The textiles sector experienced an approximate 17% drop in exports due in part to the appreciation of the Dominican peso against the dollar, Asian competition following expiration of the quotas of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement, and a government-mandated increase in salaries, which should have occurred in 2005 but was postponed to January 2006. Lost Dominican business was captured by firms in Central America and Asia. The tobacco, jewelry, medical, and pharmaceutical sectors in the FTZs all reported increases for 2006, which somewhat offset textile and garment losses. Industry experts from the FTZs expect that entry into force of the CAFTA-DR agreement will promote substantial growth in the FTZ sector for 2008.

An ongoing concern in the Dominican Republic is the inability of participants in the electricity sector to establish financial viability for the system. Three regional electricity distribution systems were privatized in 1998 via sale of 50% of shares to foreign operators; the Mejía administration repurchased all foreign-owned shares in two of these systems in late 2003. The third, serving the eastern provinces, is operated by U.S. concerns and is 50% U.S.-owned. The World Bank records that electricity distribution losses for 2005 totaled about 38.2%, a rate of losses exceeded in only three other countries. Industry experts estimate distribution losses for 2006 will surpass 40%, primarily due to low collection rates, theft, infrastructure problems and corruption. At the close of 2006, the government had exceeded its budget for electricity subsidies, spending close to U.S. $650 million. The government plans to continue providing subsidies. Congress passed a law in 2007 that criminalizes the act of stealing electricity, but it has not yet been fully implemented. The electricity sector is a highly politicized sector and with 2008 presidential election campaigning already in motion, the prospect of further effective reforms of the electricity sector is poor. Debts in the sector, including government debt, amount to more than U.S. $500 million. Some generating companies are undercapitalized and at times unable to purchase adequate fuel supplies.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Dominican Republic has a close relationship with the United States and with the other states of the inter-American system. It has accredited diplomatic missions in most Western Hemisphere countries and in principal European capitals. Newly elected president of Haiti René Préval made a working visit to Santo Domingo in March 2006, reciprocating Leonel Fernández's call on the Interim Government of Haiti in December 2005. The Dominican Government has regularly appealed for international support for its island neighbor.

There is a sizeable Haitian migrant community in the Dominican Republic, many of whom lack residence permits and citizenship documentation. The Dominican Republic is a founding member of the United Nations and participates in many of its specialized and related agencies, including the World Bank, International Labor Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency, and International Civil Aviation Organization. It is a member of the OAS and of the Inter-American Development Bank.

U.S.-DOMINICAN REPUBLIC RELATIONS

The U.S. has a strong interest in a democratic, stable, and economically healthy Dominican Republic. The country's standing as the largest Caribbean economy, second-largest country in terms of population and land mass, with large bilateral trade with the United States, and its proximity to the United States and other smaller Caribbean nations make the Dominican Republic an important partner in hemispheric affairs. The

Embassy estimates that 100,000 U.S. citizens live in the Dominican Republic; many are dual nationals. An important element of the relationship between the two countries is the fact that more than 1 million individuals of Dominican origin reside in the United States, most of them in the metropolitan Northeast and some in Florida.

U.S. relations with the Dominican Republic are excellent, and the U.S. has been an outspoken supporter of that country's democratic and economic development. The Dominican Government has been supportive of many U.S. initiatives in the United Nations and related agencies. The two governments cooperate in the fight against the traffic in illegal substances. The Dominican Republic has worked closely with U.S. law enforcement officials on issues such as the extradition of fugitives and measures to hinder illegal migration.

The United States supports the Fernández administration's efforts to improve Dominican competitiveness, to attract foreign private investment, to fight corruption, and to modernize the tax system. Bilateral trade is important to both countries. U.S. firms, mostly manufacturers of apparel, footwear, and light electronics, as well as U.S. energy companies, account for much of the foreign private investment in the Dominican Republic.

Exports from the United States, including those from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, to the Dominican Republic in 2007 totaled $6 billion. The Dominican Republic exported $4.2 billion to the United States in 2007. The Dominican Republic is the 31st-largest commercial partner of the U.S. The U.S. Embassy works closely with U.S. business firms and Dominican trade groups, both of which can take advantage of the new opportunities in this growing market. At the same time, the Embassy is working with the Dominican Government to resolve a range of ongoing commercial and investment disputes.

The Embassy counsels U.S. firms through its Country Commercial Guide and informally via meetings with business persons planning to invest or already investing in the Dominican Republic. This is a challenging business environment for U.S. firms, especially for medium to smaller sized businesses.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission is focused on improving access of underserved populations to quality health care and combating HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB);, promoting economic growth through policy reform, support for CAFTA-DR implementation, and technical assistance to small producers and tourism groups; environmental protection and policy reform initiatives; improved access to quality primary, public education and assistance to at-risk youth; a model rural electrification program; and improving participation in democratic processes, while strengthening the judiciary and combating corruption across all sectors.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Dawn Leavitt
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FCS:	Robert Jones
FM:	Curtis L. Hoyle
HRO:	Christine Everhart
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POL/ECO:	Daniel Bellegarde
AMB:	P. Robert Fannin
CG:	Michael Schimmel
DCM:	Rolland W. Bullen
PAO:	Gary Keith
COM:	Robert Jones
GSO:	Michael Barrow
RSO:	Joseph Hooten
AFSA:	Matthew A. Taylor
AGR:	Jamie Rothschild
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Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
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Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 16, 2008

Country Description: The Dominican Republic covers the eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. The capital city is Santo Domingo, located on the south coast of the island. Tourist facilities vary according to price and location. Spanish is the official language.

Though English is widely spoken in major cities and tourist areas, it is much less common outside these areas.

Entry Requirements: All All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card and on upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

For information concerning entry and exit requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Dominican Republic at 1715 22nd Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 332-6280. There are also Dominican consulates in Boston, Chicago (Northfield, IL), Mayaguez, Miami, New Orleans, New York, and San Juan. Visit the Embassy of the Dominican Republic web site at http://www.domrep.org for the most current visa information.

Visas: Visitors who do not obtain a Dominican visa prior to entry must purchase a tourist card upon arrival to enter the country. Tourist cards cost ten U.S. dollars, which must be paid in U.S. currency. Tourist cards may be purchased at the Dominican Embassy in Washington or Dominican Consulates prior to arrival, as well as at Dominican airports at the time of entry. Tourist cards normally permit a legal stay of up to 60 days. Visitors who would like to extend their time in the Dominican Republic should visit the Migration Department in Santo Domingo and request an extension. Failure to request an extension will subject the visitor to a surcharge at the airport upon departure.

Travel Of Children And Exit Requirements: Strict exit requirements apply to minors under 18 years of age (of any nationality) who are residents in the Dominican Republic. Such children traveling alone, without one parent, or with anyone other than the parent(s), must present written authorization from a parent or legal guardian. This authorization must be in Spanish, and it must be notarized at a Dominican consulate in the United States or notarized and then certified at the Dominican Attorney General's office (Procuraduria de la Republica) if done in the Dominican Republic. Though not a requirement for non-resident minors (in the Dominican Republic), the U.S. Embassy recommends that any minor traveling to the Dominican Republic without one or both parents have a notarized document from the parent(s). In addition to clarifying the reason for travel, this will facilitate departure from the Dominican Republic.

The specific guidelines on the Dominican regulations governing the travel of children in the Dominican Republic can be found (in Spanish) at http://www.migracion.gov.do.

Visit the Embassy of the Dominican Republic web site at http://www.domrep.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: American citizens should be aware that foreign tourists are often considered attractive targets for criminal activity, and should maintain a low profile to avoid becoming victims of violence or crime. In dealing with local police, U.S. citizens should be aware that the standard of professionalism might vary. Police attempts to solicit bribes have been reported, as have incidents of police using excessive force.

Protests, demonstrations, and general strikes occur periodically. Previous political demonstrations have sometimes turned violent, with participants rioting and erecting roadblocks, and police sometimes using deadly force in response. Political demonstrations do not generally occur in areas frequented by tourists and are generally not targeted at foreigners. However, it is advisable to exercise caution when traveling throughout the country. Street crowds should be avoided. In urban areas, travel should be conducted on main routes whenever possible. Power outages occur frequently throughout the Dominican Republic, and travelers should remain alert during blackout periods, as crime rates often increase during these outages.

U.S. citizens considering overland travel between the Dominican Republic and Haiti should first consult the Country Specific Information Sheet for Haiti as well as the Internet site of the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince for information about travel conditions in Haiti. Santo Domingo and the majority of tourist destinations within the Dominican Republic are located several hours from the Haitian border, and recent events in Haiti have generally not directly affected these areas.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and

Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Crime continues to be a problem throughout the Dominican Republic. Street crime and petty theft involving U.S. tourists does occur, and precautions should be taken to avoid becoming a target. While pick pocketing and mugging are the most common crimes against tourists, reports of violence against both foreigners and locals are growing. Criminals can be dangerous and visitors walking the streets should always be aware of their surroundings. Valuables left unattended in parked automobiles, on beaches and in other public places are vulnerable to theft, and reports of car theft have increased. Cellular telephones should be carried in a pocket rather than on a belt or in a purse. One common method of street robbery is for at least one person on a moped (often coasting with the engine turned off so as not to draw attention) to approach a pedestrian, grab his or her cell phone, purse or backpack, and then speed away. This type of robbery is particularly dangerous because the motorcyclist reaches the intended victim at 15–20 miles per hour and often knocks the victim to the ground.

Many criminals have weapons and are likely to use them if they meet resistance. Be wary of strangers, especially those who seek you out at celebrations or nightspots. Traveling and moving about in a group is advisable. The dangers present in the Dominican Republic, even in resort areas, are similar to those of many major U.S. cities. Expensive jewelry attracts attention and could prompt a robbery attempt. Limiting the cash and credit cards carried on your person and storing valuables, wallet items, and passports in a safe place is recommended.

Burglaries of private residences continue to be reported as well as crimes of violence. Criminals may also misrepresent themselves in an effort to gain access to your residence or hotel room. In one 2005 homicide, a U.S. citizen was murdered by two men who posed as repairmen to gain access to the apartment. In another, the Dominican police arrested the building's actual maintenance man and an accomplice for the crime.

The U.S. Embassy continues to receive reports from Americans who have been stopped while driving and asked for "donations" by someone who may appear to be a police officer before they would be allowed to continue on their way. Usually, the person(s) stopping the American drivers had approached from behind on a motorcycle; several of these motorcyclists pulled up alongside the driver's window and indicated that they were carrying a firearm. In some cases, the perpetrators were dressed in the light green uniform of "AMET," the Dominican traffic police; however, they often seemed too young to be police officers or wore ill-fitting uniforms that might have been stolen. In another incident, individuals dressed in military fatigues told the victim they were police and requested the victim to follow them to the police station prior to robbing him. Such incidents should be reported to the police and the Consular Section. If Dominican police stop an American driver for a traffic violation, the driver should request a traffic ticket rather than paying an on-the-spot fine. The driver also has the right to ask police for identification. New regulations require police to wear a nametag with their last name. While everyone driving in the Dominican Republic should abide by traffic laws and the instructions of legitimate authorities, Americans finding themselves in the aforementioned scenarios should exercise caution. In general, drivers should keep their doors locked and windows closed at all times and leave themselves an escape route when stopping in traffic in the event of an accident or other threat. Incidents involving police may be reported to the Internal Affairs Department of the National Police at 809 688-1777 or 809 688-0777.

In 2006, the U.S. Embassy received reports of Americans and others who were victims of vehicular-armed robberies in the northern provinces of the Dominican Republic. At least three of the reports indicate the victims were intercepted during the morning hours, when there was little other traffic, while driving on rural highways connecting Santiago and Puerto Plata. Drivers should exercise extreme caution when driving at night and use major highways when possible.

Although kidnappings are not common in the Dominican Republic, in 2007, two American citizens were kidnapped and held for ransom, in separate instances.

Many public transportation vehicles are unsafe, especially the route taxis or "carros publicos" in urban areas. These are privately owned vehicles that run along certain routes, can take up to six or more passengers, and are inexpensive. Passengers in "carros publicos" are frequently the victims of pick pocketing, and passengers have on occasion been robbed by "carro publico" drivers. Urban buses ("guaguas") are only marginally better. The U.S. Embassy is also aware of at least one incident in which the driver of a "motoconcho" (motorcycle taxi) robbed an American passenger. The U.S. Embassy cautions its staff not to use these modes of transportation. As an alternative, some scheduled interurban bus services use modern buses and run on reliable timetables. These are generally the safest means of intercity travel. With respect to taxis, visitors to the Dominican Republic are strongly advised to take only hotel taxis or taxis operated by services whose cabs are arranged in advance by phone and can subsequently be identified and tracked. There are continuing reports of thefts that target Americans as they leave the airport in a taxi that lacks air-conditioning. The driver rolls down the windows and when the taxi stops at a traffic light, a motorcyclist reaches in and steals a purse or anything they can grab. Travelers are advised to utilize the taxi service authorized by the airport if they have made no arrangements before arrival. Credit card fraud is common and recent reports indicate

that its incidence has increased significantly. The U.S. Embassy strongly advises Americans to restrict severely the use of credit/debit cards in the Dominican Republic. The increase in credit card fraud is particularly pronounced in the eastern resort areas of the Dominican Republic. According to reports, store workers, restaurant service staff and hotel employees may conceal devices that can instantly record the credit card information. Often, this device appears to be a normal card reader used by businesses. Credit or debit cards should be carefully protected and never allowed out of the owner's sight. Stolen cards are often used to the maximum amount before the victims are able to contact the bank. Victims of credit card fraud should contact the bank that issued the credit card immediately. It is advisable to pay close attention to credit card bills following time spent in the Dominican Republic. There have been reports of fraudulent charges appearing months after card usage in the Dominican Republic.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are present throughout Santo Domingo and other major cities. However, as with credit cards, the use of ATMs should be minimized as a means of avoiding theft or misuse. One local ATM fraud scheme involves sticking photographic film or pieces of paper in the card feeder of the ATM so that an inserted card becomes jammed. Once the card owner has concluded the card is irretrievable, the thieves extract both the jamming material and the card, which they then use. There are other ATM scams as well. Exercise caution and be aware of your surroundings when using an ATM card.

The overall level of crime tends to rise during the Christmas season, and visitors to the Dominican Republic should take extra precautions when visiting the country between November and January.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Beaches and Resorts: The Embassy regularly receives reports of individuals and families who have become victims of crime while within the boundaries of their resort hotel. A growing number of these crimes involve the burglary of their room and even the removal of the room safe. While in general the criminals do not commit their crime in the presence of the guest it is not unheard of for guests to be victimized in their own room. Vigilance is strongly recommended.

Travelers to the Dominican Republic should strongly consider leaving valuable property at home. The Embassy recommends bringing no item on your trip that cannot be easily replaced and to make contingency plans in case of theft. These precautions include: making photocopies of all credit cards and licenses which include the numbers to call in order to report theft; photocopies of passports and birth certificates; and leaving emergency funds with someone at home in case it is necessary for money to be sent on short notice.

The Embassy occasionally receives reports of instances of sexual assault at the resorts, particularly while at the beach. "All-inclusives" are well known for serving abundant quantities of alcohol. Excessive alcohol consumption may decrease a person's ability to be aware of their surroundings, making them an easy target for crime. As such, the Embassy strongly encourages vigilance at all times.

The Embassy also receives reports of individuals who have suffered accidents or medical crisis at resorts. American citizens are advised to check their own insurance coverage when overseas or consider travelers' insurance. Hospitalization in the Dominican Republic can be extremely expensive and patients are expected to pay for services immediately. For additional information see the below section on medical insurance.

Tourist Police: The Dominican Republic does have police that are specially trained to assist tourists who require assistance. This public institution is called Politur and represents a cooperative effort between the National Police, Secretary of the Armed Forces, and the Secretary of Tourism. Politur typically has personnel in tourist areas to provide first responder type assistance to tourists. If you are the victim of a crime, Politur can help you get to a police station so that you may file a police report and seek further assistance. For more information on Politur and contact information, use the following link: http://www.politur.gov.do. Politur is located at the corner of 30 de Marzo and Mexico, Bloque D, Governmental Building, Santo Domingo. The general phone number is 809-686-8639.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice system and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is limited, especially outside Santo Domingo, and the quality of care varies widely among facilities. There is an emergency 911 service within Santo Domingo, but its reliability is questionable. Outside the capital, emergency services range from extremely limited to nonexistent. Blood supplies at both public and private hospitals are often limited, and not all facilities have blood on hand even for emergencies. Many medical facilities throughout the country do not have staff members who speak or understand English. A private nationwide ambu-

lance service, ProMed, operates in Santo Domingo, Santiago, Puerto Plata and La Romana; Telephone number is 809-548-7200. ProMed expects full payment at the time of transport. The U.S. Embassy maintains a non-comprehensive list of providers of medical care in the Dominican Republic, which can be found at http://www.usemb.gov.do/Consular/ACS/medical_assistance-e.htm.

Tap water is unsafe to drink and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe.

Dengue: Dengue is endemic to the Dominican Republic. To reduce the risk of contracting dengue, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends wearing clothing that exposes as little skin as possible and applying a repellent containing the insecticide DEET (concentration 30 to 35 percent) or Picaridin (concentration 20 percent or greater for tropical travelers). Because of the increased risk of dengue fever and the ongoing risk of malaria in the Dominican Republic, practicing preventative measures is recommended by the CDC. For further information on dengue fever, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/dengue.

Malaria: Since October 2004, there have been several reported cases of malaria in areas frequented by U.S. and European tourists including La Altagracia Province, the easternmost province in which many beach resorts are located. Malaria risk is significantly higher for travelers who go on some of the excursions to the countryside offered by many resorts. Prior to coming to the Dominican Republic, travelers should consult the CDC web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/index.htm for more information and recommendations on malarial prophylaxis.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

The U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo and the CDC are aware of several cases in which U.S. citizens experienced serious complications or died following elective (cosmetic) surgery in the Dominican Republic. The CDC's web site at http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5323a4.htm contains a report on patients who suffered postoperative infections following cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic. Patients considering travel to the Dominican Republic for cosmetic surgery may also wish to contact the Dominican Society of Plastic Surgeons (tel. 809-688-8451) to verify the training, qualifications, and reputation of specific doctors.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Americans traveling in the Dominican Republic should be aware that Dominican hospitals often require payment at the time of service and may take legal measures to prevent patients from departing the country prior to payment. American citizens are reminded that the U.S. Social Security Medicare Program does not provide coverage for hospital or medical costs outside the United States.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Dominican Republic is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in the Dominican Republic moves on the right side of the road. Speed limits vary from 25 mph in the city to 50 mph on rural roads, but they are generally not enforced. Drivers are required to carry liability insurance.

If you do drive in the Dominican Republic, you should be aware that the utmost caution and defensive driving are necessary. Traffic laws are similar to those in the United States, but undisciplined driving is common, due to a lack of adequate traffic controls. Many drivers will not use turn indicators. Rather, it is common for a vehicle operator to stick his hand out the window to signal a turn. Drivers can also be aggressive and erratic, often failing to yield the right-of-way even when road signs or signals indicate that they should. Travel at night on intercity highways and in rural areas should be avoided, due to animals on the road, poor road conditions, and other vehicles being driven at excessive speeds, often with malfunctioning headlights or taillights. Blackouts also increase the danger of night travel. Turning right on red lights is permitted, but should be done with caution.

Traffic accidents often result in serious injury or death. This is often the case when heavy vehicles, such as buses or trucks, are involved. Traditionally, vehicles involved in accidents in the Dominican Republic are not moved (even to clear traffic), until authorized by a police officer. Drivers who violate this norm may be held legally liable for the accident.

Dominican law requires that a driver be taken into custody for driving under the influence or being involved in an accident that causes serious injury or death, even if the driver is insured and appears not to have been at fault. The minimum detention period is 48 hours; however, detentions frequently last until a judicial decision is reached (often weeks or months), or until a waiver is signed by the injured party (usually as the result of a cash settlement). Visitors to the Dominican Republic might want to consider hiring a professional driver during their stay in lieu of

driving themselves. Licensed drivers who are familiar with local roads can be hired through local car rental agencies. In case of accidents, only the driver will be taken into custody.

Pedestrians tend to step out into traffic without regard to corners, crosswalks, or traffic signals. Many pedestrians die every year crossing the street (including major, multilane highways) at seemingly random locations. Pedestrians do not have the right-of-way, and walking along or crossing busy streets—even at intersections with traffic lights or traffic police present—can be very dangerous.

Seat belts are required by law, and those caught not wearing them will be fined. There are no child car seat laws. The law also requires the use of hands-free cellular devices while driving. Police stop drivers using cell phones without the benefit of these devices. Penalties for those driving under the influence and those involved in accidents resulting in injury or death can be severe.

Motorcycles and motor scooters are common in the Dominican Republic, and they are often driven erratically. Dominican law requires that motorcyclists wear helmets, but local authorities rarely enforce this law. As noted previously in this report, public transportation vehicles such as the route taxis ("carros publicos") and urban buses ("guaguas") are unsafe.

Please see the Crime section of this information sheet for more information regarding crimes involving road safety.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Dominican Republic's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Dominican Republic's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Currency: It is legal to exchange currency at commercial banks, exchange booths in hotels and exchange houses. The exchange rate is set by the Central Bank, based on prevailing market conditions. The market determines the exchange rate. No more than USD $10,000 or its equivalent in another currency, including Dominican pesos, may be taken out of the Dominican Republic at the time of departure.

Real Estate: Real estate investments in the Dominican Republic require a high level of caution, as property rights are irregularly enforced and investors often encounter problems in receiving clear title to land. Consultation with an attorney is recommended before signing documents or closing on any real estate transactions. Real estate investments by U.S. citizens have been the subject of both legal and physical takeover attempts. Absentee landlords and absentee owners of undeveloped land are particularly vulnerable. Investors should seek solid property title and not just a "carta de constancia," which is often confused by foreigners with a title. An official land registry measurement (also known as 'deslinde' or 'mensura catastral') is also desirable for the cautious overseas investor. Investors should also consider purchasing title insurance. Squatters, sometimes supported by governmental or non-governmental organizations, have invaded properties belonging to U.S. citizens, threatening violence and blocking the owners from entering their property. In at least one instance, the U.S. citizen landowner was physically assaulted. Several U.S. citizens with long-standing expropriation disputes with the Dominican Government are still without compensation.

Gambling: Many Americans have reported losing large amounts of money at Dominican casinos by playing a game (or variations thereof) known as "Super Keno," "Caribbean Keno," "Progressive Keno," or "Progressive Roulette." Players have complained that the game's rules are unclear and/or misleading. Any complaints arising from a casino should be directed to the Office of Casinos at the Secretary of Finance. To register a complaint with this office, call 809-687-5131, ext. 2120.

Divorce: In recent years, there have been a number of businesses, primarily on the Internet, which advertise "Quickie Dominican Divorces." The services of these businesses should be used with caution, as they may misrepresent the process of obtaining a divorce in the Dominican Republic. While it is relatively simple for foreigners to obtain a divorce in the Dominican Republic, such divorces are only valid if specific steps are taken. Those seeking information regarding divorce should first consult with an attorney in their home state.

Alien Smuggling: Dominican authorities may prosecute anyone arrested for organizing the smuggling of aliens into or out of the Dominican Republic. This is in addition to any charges individuals may face in the other country involved, including the United States.

Hurricanes: The Dominican Republic is situated in an area of the Caribbean prone to hurricanes. In the event of a hurricane alert, a notice will be posted on the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo's web page at http://www.usemb.gov.do. Further information can be obtained by visiting the National Weather Service's web site at http://www.nhc.noaa.gov. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency at http://www.fema.gov.

Water Sports: Visitors to the Dominican Republic, including to local resort areas, should carefully assess the potential risk of recreational activities. Some of the swimming areas at popular beaches around the Dominican Republic are subject to dangerous undertows. Many beaches lack life guards and/or warnings of unsafe conditions. Resort managers usually offer current information on local swimming & surf conditions. Americans are cautioned not to swim alone, particularly at isolated beaches.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Dominican laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Dominican Republic are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. For more information on the Dominican judicial system, procedures, and penalties, please visit the Consular Section's web page at http://www.usemb.gov.do. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Dominican Republic are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Dominican Republic. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at the corner of Calle César Nicolás Penson and Avenida Máximo Gómez. The American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit can be reached by telephone at 809-731-4294, or via the Internet at http://www.usemb.gov.do/Consular/ACS/acs-e-contact.htm. ACS Unit office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, Friday 7:30-12:15, except on U.S. and Dominican holidays. The Chancery of the U.S. Embassy is located a half-mile away from the Consular Section, at the corner of Calle César Nicolás Penson and Calle Leopoldo Navarro. The telephone number is 809-221-2171.

There is a Consular Agency in the north coast city of Puerto Plata at Calle Villanueva esq. Avenida John F. Kennedy, Edificio Abraxa Libraria, 2nd floor, telephone 809-586-4204, 809-586-8017, 809-586-8023; office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. The Consular Agency has a secondary office in Sosua, also on the north coast. That office may be reached at: "Sea Horse Ranch Project" Administrative Office, Carretera Sosua Cabarete, Sosua, D.R., telephone 809-571-3880, fax 809-571-2374.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

The Dominican Republic is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between the Dominican Republic and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law and regulations implementing the Convention.

For detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov. Dominican adoption law is governed by the Dominican Code of Fundamental Protection and Rights for Children and Adolescents, Law 136-03, Articles 111-167. The adoption process is comprised of an administrative and judicial phase. The Dominican authorities will not allow a child to exit the country until the adoption is completed under Dominican law.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and the Dominican Republic is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from the Dominican Republic, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, the Dominican Republic also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: One prospective adoptive parent must meet the specific residency requirements. If the child is under 12 years of age, the parent must reside with the child in the Dominican Republic for 60 days. If the child is 12 years of age or older, the parent must reside with the child for 30 days.

Age Requirements: The prospective adoptive parents must be between 30 and 60 years of age and at least 15 years older than the child they wish to adopt.

Marriage Requirements: Only heterosexual couples who have been married for five years or more are allowed to adopt from the Dominican Republic. Single individuals and unmarried couples are no longer permitted to adopt.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because the Dominican Republic is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from the Dominican Republic must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption.

In addition to the Dominican Republic's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Dominican Republic's Central Authority: Consejo Nacional para la Niñez y la Adolescencia (CONANI)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from the Dominican Republic is to select an accredited or approved adoption service provider in the United States. To begin the administrative phase, prospective adoptive parents should hire a Dominican attorney to initiate contact with CONANI and begin the process of locating a child who meets the definition of "Convention adoptee" under both Dominican and United States law. Learn more about Convention adoption service providers.

After you choose an accredited or approved adoption service provider, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your adoption service provider will forward your information to the Central Authority in the Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic's Central Authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Dominican law. CONANI reviews the prospective adoptive family's file of required documents (see below) and, if satisfied, issues a Certificate of Suitability.

If both the United States and the Dominican Republic determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the Central Authority in the Dominican Republic may provide you with a referral for a child.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he or she will notify the Dominican Republic's Central Authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Central Authority: After the prospective adoptive parents receives and accepts the referral of a child, CONANI reviews the prospective adoptive parents' file of required documents and, if satisfied, issues a Certificate of Suitability.

Role of the Court: Dominican adoption law is governed by the Dominican Code of Fundamental Protection and Rights for Children and Adolescents, Law 136-03, Articles 111-167. The Dominican Court of Minors receives the formal, legal application for adoption. If the application is approved, the Court issues a Final Order of Adoption.

Role of Adoption Service Providers: The adoption service provider forwards the prospective adoptive parents' application to CONANI.

Time Frame: An adoption can be completed within nine to ten months of United States and Dominican requirements being met. It should be noted that many variables can affect the total time it takes to complete the intercountry adoption of a Dominican child.

Adoption Application: The prospective adoptive parents initiate contact with CONANI (via their attorney) and begin the process of locating a child who meets the definition of "Convention adoptee" under both Dominican and United States law.

Adoption Fees: Attorney fees for the adoption of a Dominican child range from $5,000 to $8,000 USD. All adoption-related expenses, including court costs and document fees, are included in this estimate. These expenses should have been itemized in the fees and estimated expenses section of your adoption services contract. Learn more about adoption service provider responsibilities.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents required for adoption in the Dominican Republic:

- Biopsychosocial study of the adoptive parents;
- Legalized adoption consent;
- Adoptive parents' birth certificates;
- Adoptive parents' marriage certificate;
- Declaration of the loss of authority of the biological parents or authorization for adoption;
- Certificate of Suitability, no more than six months old, issued by CONANI;
- Certificate issued by a civic, community, or religious entity/organization attesting to the physical, mental, social, and moral suitability of the adoptive parents;
- Certificate confirming that the adoptive parents have fulfilled the residency requirements, issued by CONANI;
- Certificate of completion of all criteria for the assignment of the child, issued by CONANI;
- Prospective adoptive parents' police certificates issued by a competent authority;
- Prospective adoptive parents' medical certificates;
- Power of attorney from the adoptive parents to their lawyer, legalized by the Dominican "Procuraduría General";
- Copy of the identification documents or passports of the adoptive parents;
- Act of No Opposition in the case of the existence of older children;
- Certification issued by a competent authority that will provide follow-up on the minor's adjustment; and

- Authorization or visa from the country where the child will live.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home.

Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Contact Information
United States Embassy
in the Dominican Republic
IV Unit (Adoptions)
Unit 3470, Box 531
APO AA 34041-0531

The mailing address if you use a private delivery service instead of the U.S. Postal Service is:

Embassy of the United States
of America
César Nicolás Penson 85A esq.
Leopoldo Navarro
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Tel: (809) 221-2171
Fax: (809) 686-7437

Dominican Republic's Central Authority
Consejo Nacional para la Niñez
y la Adolescencia (CONANI)
Av. Máximo Gómez esq.
República de Paraguay # 154
Ensanche La Fe
(Frente a la Bomba Esso)
Santo Domingo,
República Dominicana
Tel: 809-567-2233
(office of Adoptions, ext. 1157)
Website: www.conani.gov.do

Embassy of the Dominican Republic
1715 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 332-6280
Fax: (202) 265-8057

Consulate of the Dominican Republic
1501 New Broadway Ave., Suite 410
New York, NY 10036
Tel: (212) 768-2480
Fax: (212) 768-2677

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



ECUADOR

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Ecuador

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 276,840 sq. km; about the size of Colorado.

Cities: Capital—Quito (pop. 1.6 million). Other major cities—Guayaquil (2.4 million).

Terrain: Jungle east of the Andes, a rich agricultural coastal plain west of the Andes, high-elevation valleys through the mountainous center of the country and an archipelago of volcanic islands in the Pacific Ocean.

Climate: Varied, mild year-round in the mountain valleys; hot and humid in coastal and Amazonian jungle lowlands.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Ecuadorian(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 13,755,680.

Annual population growth rate: (July 2007 est.) 1.55%.

Ethnic groups: Indigenous 25%, mestizo (mixed Indian and Spanish) 65%, Caucasian and others 7%, African 3%.

Religions: Predominantly Roman Catholic (95%), but religious freedom recognized.

Languages: Spanish (official), indigenous languages, especially Quichua, the Ecuadorian dialect of Quechua.

Education: Years compulsory—ages 6-14, but enforcement varies. Attendance (through 6th grade)—76% urban, 33% rural. Literacy—92%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—22.1/1,000. Life expectancy—76.62 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: May 24, 1822 (from Spain).

Constitution: August 10, 1998.

Government branches: Executive—President and 15 cabinet ministers. Legislative—unicameral Congress. Judicial—Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, Supreme Electoral Tribunal, Provincial Courts, and ordinary civil and criminal judges.

Political subdivisions: 22 provinces.

Political parties: Over a dozen political parties; none predominates, although President Correa's Alianza Pais is ascendant.

Suffrage: Obligatory for literate citizens 18-65 yrs. of age; optional for other eligible voters; active duty military personnel and police may not vote.

Economy

GDP: (2008 est.) $48.5 billion;(2007 preliminary) 2.65%; (2006) 3.9%.

Real annual growth rate: 2008 est.) 4.25%; (2007 preliminary) 2.65%; (2006) 3.9%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $3,270; (2006) $3,088.

Natural resources: Petroleum, fish, shrimp, timber, gold.

Agriculture: (including seafood) (6.7% of GDP in 2007): Products—bananas, seafood, flowers, coffee, cacao, sugar, tropical fruits, palm oil, palm hearts, rice, corn, and livestock.

Industry: (9.1% of GDP in 2007; oil and mining 21.9% in 2007): Types—petroleum extraction, food processing, wood products, textiles, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

Other major contributors to GDP: $12.48 billion (Jan.-Nov. 2007); $12.7 billion (2006). Types—petroleum, bananas, shrimp, coffee, cut flowers cacao, hemp, wood, fish. Major markets (2007)—U.S. 42%, Latin America 26%, Andean Community 20%, European Union (EU) 13%, and Asia 3%. Imports—$11.2 billion (Jan.-Nov. 2007); $11.3 billion (2006). Types—industrial materials, fuels and lubricants, nondurable consumer goods. Major suppliers (Jan.-Nov. 2007)—Latin America 40%, Andean Community 24%, U.S. 21%, Asia 20%, and EU 9%.

Trade: Exports—$7.7 billion (2004); $10.1 billion (2005); $12.4 billion (2006). Types—petroleum, bananas, shrimp, coffee, cut flowers cacao, hemp, wood, fish. Major markets

(2006)—U.S. 54%, Latin America 24%, European Union (EU) 12%, and Asia 4%. Imports—$7. 5 billion (2004); $9.5 billion (2005); $11.2 billion (2006). Types—industrial materials, nondurable consumer goods, agricultural products. Major suppliers (2006)—Latin America 39%, U.S. 23%, Asia 19%, and EU 9%.
Currency: U.S. dollar

PEOPLE

Ecuador's population is ethnically mixed. The largest ethnic groups are indigenous and mestizo (mixed Indian-Caucasian). Although Ecuadorians were heavily concentrated in the mountainous central highland region a few decades ago, today's population is divided about equally between that area and the coastal lowlands. Migration toward cities—particularly larger cities—in all regions has increased the urban population to over 60%. The tropical forest region (or Amazon region) to the east of the mountains remains sparsely populated and contains only about 3% of the population. Due to an economic crisis in the late 1990s, more than 600,000 Ecuadorians emigrated to the U.S. and Europe from 2000 to 2001. It is estimated that there are over two million Ecuadorians currently residing in the U.S.

HISTORY

The Inca Empire and Spanish Conquest

Advanced indigenous cultures flourished in Ecuador long before the area was conquered by the Inca Empire in the 15th century. In 1534, the Spanish arrived and defeated the Inca armies, and Spanish colonists became the new elite. The indigenous population was decimated by disease in the first decades of Spanish rule—a time when the natives also were forced into the "encomienda" labor system for Spanish landlords. In 1563, Quito became the seat of a royal "audiencia" (administrative district) of Spain.

Independence

After independence forces defeated the royalist army in 1822, Ecuador joined Simon Bolivar's Republic of Gran Colombia, only to become a separate republic in 1830. The 19th century was marked by instability, with a rapid succession of rulers. The conservative Gabriel Garcia Moreno unified the country in the 1860s with the support of the Catholic Church. In the late 1800s, world demand for cocoa tied the economy to commodity exports and led to migrations from the highlands to the agricultural frontier on the coast.

A coastal-based liberal revolution in 1895 under Eloy Alfaro reduced the power of the clergy and opened the way for capitalist development. The end of the cocoa boom produced renewed political instability and a military coup in 1925. The 1930s and 1940s were marked by populist politicians such as five-time President Jose Velasco Ibarra. In January 1942, Ecuador signed the Rio Protocol to end a brief war with Peru the year before. Ecuador agreed to a border that conceded to Peru much territory Ecuador had previously claimed in the Amazon region. After World War II, a recovery in the market for agricultural commodities and the growth of the banana industry helped restore prosperity and political peace. From 1948-60, three presidents—beginning with Galo Plaza—were freely elected and completed their terms. Political turbulence returned in the 1960's, followed by a period of military dictatorship between 1972 and 1979. The 1980's and beginning of the 90's saw a return to democracy, but instability returned by the middle of the decade.

Political Instability (1997-2007)

Abdul Buckram, from the Guayaquil-based Ecuadorian Roldosista Party (PRE), won the presidency in 1996 on a platform that promised populist economic and social policies, and challenged what Buckram termed as the power of the nation's oligarchy. During his short term of office, Buckram's administration was severely criticized for corruption. Buckram was deposed by the Congress in February 1997 on grounds of alleged mental incompetence. In his place, Congress named Fabian Alarcon interim president. Alarcon's presidency was endorsed by a May 1997 popular referendum.

Quito Mayor Jamil Mahuad of the Popular Democracy party was elected president by a narrow margin In July 1998. Mahuad concluded an historic peace agreement with Peru on October 26, 1998, but increasing economic, fiscal, and financial difficulties drove his popularity steadily lower. On January 21, 2000, during demonstrations in Quito by indigenous groups, the military and police refused to enforce public order. Demonstrators entered the National Assembly building and declared a three-person "junta" in charge of the country. Field-grade military officers declared their support for the concept. During a night of confusion and negotiations, President Mahuad fled the presidential palace. Vice President Gustavo Noboa took charge and Mahuad went on national television to endorse Noboa as his successor. Congress met in emergency session in Guayaquil the same day, January 22, and ratified Noboa as President of the Republic.

Completing Mahuad's term, Noboa restored some stability to Ecuador. He implemented the dollarization of the economy that Mahuad had announced and obtained congressional authorization for the construction of Ecuador's second major oil pipeline, this one financed by a private consortium. Noboa turned over the government on January 15, 2003, to his successor, Lucio Gutierrez, a former army colonel who first came to public attention as a member of the short-lived "junta" of January 21, 2000. Gutierrez' campaign featured an anti-corruption and leftist, populist platform. After taking office, however, Gutierrez adopted relatively conservative fiscal policies and defensive tactics, including replacing the Supreme Court and declaring a state of emergency in the capital to combat mounting opposition. The situation came to a head on April 20, 2005,

when political opponents and popular uprisings in Quito prompted Congress to strip Gutierrez of the presidency for allegedly "abandoning his post." When the military withdrew its support, Gutierrez went into temporary exile. Congress declared Vice President Alfredo Palacio the new president. A semblance of stability returned, but the Palacio administration failed to achieve major reforms.

In presidential elections on October 15, 2006, third-time candidate Alvaro Noboa won the first round. However, Rafael Correa, Palacio's former finance minister, running on an anti-establishment reform platform, bested Noboa in the second round presidential runoff on November 26. Election observers characterized the elections as generally free, fair, and transparent. Noboa's National Institutional Renovation and Action Party won the largest bloc in Congress in 2006 elections, followed by Gutierrez's Patriotic Society Party; Correa's Proud and Sovereign Fatherland Alliance movement did not field any congressional candidates. Traditional parties saw their congressional representation cut in half. The new Congress took office January 5, 2007 and Correa was sworn in as President on January 15, 2007. In March, 2007, 57 members of Congress were dismissed on the grounds that they violated campaign laws. Following that, the Congress was largely deadlocked and later effectively replaced by a constituent assembly that was voted into power on September 30, 2007. The assembly, which was inaugurated on November 29, 2007, approved a text for a new constitution on July 29, 2008. This constitutional text must be approved in a referendum scheduled for September 28, 2008. If approved, elections for a new Congress and president are expected in January 2009.



GOVERNMENT

The 1998 constitution provides for 4-year terms of office for the president, vice president, and members of Congress, although none of the last three democratically-elected presidents finished their terms. Presidents may be re-elected after an intervening term; legislators may be re-elected immediately. The executive branch currently includes 24 ministries (including coordinating ministries with intergovernmental responsibility).

Provincial leaders (called prefects) and councilors, like mayors, city councilors, and rural parish boards, are directly elected. Congress meets throughout the year except for recesses in July and December. Congress is divided into 20 seven-member subject committees.

Justices of the Supreme Court are appointed by the Congress for life; members of the Constitutional Court serve four years.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Rafael CORREA Delgado**
Vice Pres.: **Lenin MORENO Garces**
Min. of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries, & Aquaculture: **Walter POVEDA Ricaurte**
Min. of the Coast: **Carolina PORTALUPI Castro**
Min. of Culture: **Galo MORA Witt**
Min. of Economic & Social Inclusion: **Jeannette SANCHEZ Zurita**
Min. of Education: **Raul VALLEJO Corral**
Min. of Electricity & Renewable Energy: **Alecksey MOSQUERA Rodriguez**
Min. of Environment: **Marcela AGUINAGA Vallejo**
Min. of Finance: **Fausto ORTIZ de la Cadena**

Min. of Foreign Relations, Foreign Trade, & Integration: **Maria Isabel SALVADOR Crespo**
Min. of Govt. & Police: **Fernando BUSTAMANTE Ponce**
Min. of Industry & Competitiveness: **Xavier ABAD Vicuna**
Min. of Justice & Human Rights: **Gustavo JALKH Roben**
Min. of Labor & Employment: **Antonio GAGLIARDO Valarezo**
Min. of Mines & Petroleum: **Galo CHIRIBOGA Zambrano**
Min. of National Defense: **Javier PONCE Cevallos**
Min. of Public Health: **Caroline CHANG Campos**
Min. of Sports: **Raul CARRION Fiallos**
Min. of Tourism: **Veronica SION**
Min. of Transportation & Public Works: **Jorge MARUN Rodriguez**
Min. of Urban Development & Housing: **Maria de los Angeles DUARTE Pesantes**
Min. Coordinator of Economic Policy: **Pedro PAEZ Perez**
Min. Coordinator of Internal & External Security Policy: **Gustavo LARREA Cabrera**
Min. Coordinator of Natural & Cultural Heritage: **Doris SOLIS Carrion**
Min. Coordinator of Policy: **Ricardo PATINO Aroca**
Min. Coordinator of Production: **Susana CABEZA de Vaca**
Min. Coordinator of Social Development: **Nathalie CELY Suarez**
Min. Coordinator of Strategic Sectors: **Derlis PALACIOS Guerrero**
National Sec. of Planning & Development: **Fander FALCONI Benitez**
Sec. Gen. of Public Admin. & Communications: **Vinicio ALVARADO Espinel**
Pres., Central Bank: **Eduardo CABEZAS Molina**
Ambassador to the US: **Luis Benigno GALLEGOS Chiriboga**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Maria Fernanda ESPINOSA Garces**

Ecuador maintains an embassy in the United States at 2535 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-234-7200). Consulates are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Jersey City, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Ecuador's political parties have historically been small, loose organizations that depend more on populist, often charismatic, leaders to retain support than on programs or ideology. Frequent internal splits have produced great factionalism. No party has won the presidency more than once through elections since the return to civilian government in 1979. Although Ecuador's political elite is highly factionalized along regional, ideological, and personal lines, desire for consensus on major issues often leads to compromise. Opposition forces in Congress are loosely organized, but historically they often unite to block the administration's initiatives.

Beginning with the 1996 election, the indigenous population abandoned its traditional policy of shunning the official political system and participated actively. The indigenous population established itself as a force in Ecuadorian politics, and participated in the Gutierrez administration before joining the opposition. In the 2006 elections, the indigenous movement won six seats in Congress (down from 11 in 2002).

Constitutional changes enacted by a specially elected National Constitutional Assembly in 1998 took effect on August 10, 1998. The new constitution strengthened the executive branch by eliminating mid-term congressional elections and by circumscribing Congress' power to remove cabinet ministers. Party discipline varies, and many congressional deputies switch allegiance during each Congress On April 15, 2007, 82% of voters approved a referendum to convene a constituent assembly, a centerpiece of President Correa's political reform agenda. This will be Ecuador's seventh such assembly in the past 90 years, and, if successful, will produce Ecuador's 20th constitution since independence.

ECONOMY

The Ecuadorian economy is based on petroleum production, manufacturing primarily for the domestic market, and agricultural production for domestic consumption and export. Principal exports are petroleum, bananas, shrimp, flowers, and other primary agricultural products. In 2006, oil accounted for 59% of total export earnings. Ecuador is the world's largest exporter of bananas and plantains (about $1.2 billion in 2006) and a major exporter of shrimp ($588 million in 2006). Exports of nontraditional products such as flowers ($436 million in 2006, a three-fold increase in 10 years) and canned fish ($575 million in 2006) have grown in recent years.

Ecuador's economic performance has been solid since it adopted the dollar as its national currency in 2000, following a major banking crisis and recession in 1999. Since 2000, growth has averaged 4.6% per year, supported by the stability brought by dollarization, high oil prices, strong domestic consumer demand, increased non-traditional exports, and growing remittances ($3 billion a year) from Ecuadorians living abroad. In 2007, economic growth slowed to an estimated 2.65%, while inflation was 3.32% and petroleum and non-petroleum exports expanded. Growth was constrained in 2007 by declining petroleum production and reduced private sector investment. Per capita income has increased from $1,296 in 2000 to an estimated $3,270 in 2007, while the poverty rate fell from 51% in 2000 to 38% in 2006.

Ecuador did not improve its overall competitiveness during this period of economic and export growth. In 2006, it slipped three positions in both the World Bank's Doing Business Index (from 120 to 123) and the World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index (from 87 to 90), as other nations have moved more aggressively to adapt to globalization.

Though Ecuador has a relative abundance of oil reserves, it has been

unable to take full advantage of those resources for its own development. Mismanagement, lack of investment, and corruption in the state-owned oil sector have caused declines in state oil production over the last decade. Overall oil production increased during that period because of growing production by private sector companies, but in the first half of 2007 production by the state oil company fell, while that by private sector companies was flat. Commercial disputes as well as judicial and contractual uncertainties have deterred private oil and other companies from investing in the country. The electricity and telecommunications sectors also have similar significant problems. Ecuador was in the final stages of negotiating a free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States, but that progress stalled with an April 2006 hydrocarbons law mandating revisions in contract terms, and the May 2006 seizure of the assets of Occidental Petroleum, at the time the country's largest U.S. investor. Resolution of the Occidental situation is currently pending international arbitration under the terms of the bilateral investment treaty.

President Correa has announced his opposition to resumption of FTA talks with the U.S., citing concerns that Ecuador is not yet sufficiently competitive, especially in sensitive agriculture sectors. Prior to taking office, he said that the Government of Ecuador would only service its external debt obligations after funding domestic social priorities; as of January 2008, the government had met its external debt obligations. In October 2007 the Correa administration decreed that many foreign oil companies operating in Ecuador pay 99% of extraordinary income to the government. The government increased income transfers to the poor and has increased spending on health, education, and basic infrastructure.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Ecuador always has placed great emphasis on multilateral approaches to international problems. Ecuador is a member of the United Nations (and most of its specialized agencies), the Organization of American States (OAS), and many regional groups, including the Rio Group, the Latin American Economic System, the Latin American Energy Organization, the Latin American Integration Association, and the Community of Andean Nations.

In October 1998, Ecuador and Peru reached a peace agreement to settle their border differences, which had festered since the signing of the 1942 Rio Protocol. This long-running border dispute occasionally erupted into armed hostility along the undemarcated sections, with the last conflict occurring in 1995. The U.S. Government, as one of the four guarantor nations (the others are Argentina, Brazil and Chile), played an important role in bringing the conflict to an end. The peace agreement brokered by the four guarantors in February 1995 led to the cessation of hostilities and a Military Observers Mission to Ecuador-Peru (MOMEP), which monitored the zone. In addition to helping broker the peace accord, the U.S. has been active in demining the former area of conflict and supporting welfare and economic projects in the border area.

The ongoing conflict in Colombia and security along the 450-mile-long northern border are important issues in Ecuador's foreign relations with Colombia. The instability of border areas and frequent encroachments of Colombian guerillas into Ecuadorian territory has led the Ecuadorian army to deploy more troops to the region. Although Ecuadorian officials have stated that Colombian guerrilla activity will not be tolerated on the Ecuadorian side of the border, guerrilla bands have been known to intimidate the local population, demanding extortion payments and practicing vigilante justice. The close proximity of the border to northern oil fields also has resulted in kidnappings of foreign oil workers by Colombian-based criminals. The Correa administration is pursuing a policy known as Plan Ecuador to develop the northern border region and protect citizens from the drug threat.

U.S.-ECUADORIAN RELATIONS

The United States and Ecuador have maintained close ties based on mutual interests in maintaining democratic institutions; combating narcotrafficking; building trade, investment, and financial ties; cooperating in fostering Ecuador's economic development; and participating in inter-American organizations. Ties are further strengthened by the presence of an estimated two million Ecuadorians living in the United States, by 150,000 U.S. citizens visiting Ecuador annually, and by approximately 20,000 U.S. citizens residing in Ecuador. More than 100 U.S. companies are doing business in Ecuador.

The United States assists Ecuador's economic development directly through the Agency for International Development (USAID) and through multilateral organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. In addition, the U.S. Peace Corps operates a sizable program in Ecuador. Total U.S. assistance to Ecuador amounted to over $34 million in FY 2007.

The United States is Ecuador's principal trading partner. In 2006, Ecuador exported about $6.8 billion in products to the U.S. For over 10 years Ecuador has benefited from duty-free entry for certain of its exports under the Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) and received additional trade benefits under the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) in 2002. The U.S. Congress approved a ten-month extension of those benefits, now set to expire on December 31, 2008. In May 2004 Ecuador entered into negotiations for an Andean free trade agreement with the U.S., Colombia, and Peru, but negotiations between the U.S. and Ecuador have not resumed since the Government of Ecuador announced controversial reforms to hydrocarbons legislation in April 2006.

Both nations are signatories of the Rio Treaty of 1947, the Western Hemisphere's regional mutual security treaty. Although there are problems with money laundering, border controls, and illegal immigration, Ecuador shares U.S. concerns over narcotrafficking and international terrorism, and has energetically condemned terrorist actions.

The government has maintained Ecuador virtually free of coca production since the mid-1980s, and is working to combat money laundering and the transshipment of drugs and chemicals essential to the processing of cocaine (with U.S. support). It has recently given greater priority to combating child labor and trafficking in persons.

Ecuador and the U.S. agreed in 1999 to a 10-year arrangement whereby U.S. military surveillance aircraft could use the airbase at Manta, Ecuador as a Forward Operating Location to detect drug trafficking flights through the region. President Correa has stated that he will not to renew the lease for the Forward Operating Location.

Ecuador claims a 320-kilometer-wide (200-mi.) territorial sea. The United States, in contrast, claims a 12-mile boundary and jurisdiction for the management of coastal fisheries up to 320 kilometers (200 mi.) from its coast, but excludes highly migratory species. Although successive Ecuadorian governments have declared a willingness to explore possible solutions to this issue, the U.S and Ecuador have yet to resolve fundamental differences concerning the recognition of territorial waters.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Kelly Hopkins-Morell
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MGT:	Michael St. Clair
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CON:	Elizabeth J. Jordan
DCM:	Jefferson T. Brown
PAO:	Michael N. Greenwald
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RSO:	Martin J. Rath
AGR:	Eugene Philhower
AID:	Alexandria Panehal
APHIS:	Darya Chehrezad
CLO:	Lucita Daley
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 5, 2008

Country Description: Ecuador is a Spanish-speaking country about the size of Colorado. It has a developing economy and a democratically elected government. Ecuador is geographically and ethnically diverse. In general, tourist facilities are adequate but vary in quality. Ecuador adopted the U.S. dollar in 2000. Both U.S. coins and Ecuadorian coins, which are equivalent to the value of the U.S. coins, are used.

Entry Requirements: A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and depart Ecuador. Tourists must also provide evidence of return or onward travel. U.S. citizens traveling on regular passports for tourism or business do not need a visa for a stay of 90 days or less. Those planning a longer visit must obtain a visa in advance of arrival. Travelers who stay in Ecuador beyond the allowed entry time are

charged a substantial fee and are barred from re-entering Ecuador for six months from the date of departure. An airport exit tax is required when departing Ecuador.

U.S. citizens whose passports are lost or stolen in Ecuador must obtain a new passport at the U.S. Embassy in Quito or the U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil and present it, together with a police report of the loss or theft, to the main immigration offices in those cities prior to arriving at the airport in order to obtain permission to depart.

Ecuador's exit procedures mandate that minors (under the age of 18) who are citizens or residents of Ecuador and who are traveling alone, with one parent, or with a third party, must present a copy of their birth certificate and written authorization from the absent parent(s) or legal guardian. When a parent is deceased, a notarized copy of the death certificate is required in lieu of the written authorization. If documents are prepared in the United States, the authorization and the birth certificate must be translated into Spanish, notarized and authenticated by the Ecuadorian Embassy or an Ecuadorian consulate within the United States. It is not uncommon for some local authorities to insist these documents be apostilled (authenticated). Documents must be apostilled by the same State that issued the document. For a list of State Authentication Authorities go to http://travel.state.gov/about/info/customer/customer_312.html; if documents are prepared in Ecuador, only notarization by an Ecuadorian notary is required. This paragraph does not apply to children who enter Ecuador with U.S. passports as tourists, unless they hold dual U.S./Ecuadorian citizenship.

For further information regarding entry, exit, and customs requirements, travelers should contact the Ecuadorian Embassy at 2535 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009; telephone (202) 234-7166; web page http://www.ecuador.org/; or the Ecuadorian Consulate in Chicago (312) 338-1002/03; fax (312) 338-1004, Houston (713) 572-8731, Jersey City (201) 985-1700, Los Angeles (323) 658-5146; (323) 658-1068; fax (323) 658-1198, Miami (305) 539-8214, New Orleans (504) 523-3229, New York (212) 808-0211, or San Francisco (415) 982-1819. Visit the Embassy of Ecuador's web site at http://www.ecuador.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The U.S. Embassy in Quito advises caution when traveling to the northern border region of Ecuador, to include areas in the provinces of Sucumbios, Orellana and Carchi, northern Esmeraldas, and southern Esmeraldas, south of Atacames. U.S. government personnel are under limitations with respect to traveling alone and over-nighting in these areas due to the spread of organized crime, drug trafficking, small arms trafficking, and incursions by various Colombian terrorist organizations. Since 1998, at least ten U.S. citizens have been kidnapped near Ecuador's border with Colombia. One U.S. citizen was murdered in January 2001 by kidnappers holding him for ransom. Violent crime has significantly increased in 2007 and 2008 with American citizens being victims of crimes, to include but not limited to, homicides, armed assaults, robberies, sexual assaults, and home invasions. American citizens have also been the victims of violent crime on beaches regardless of whether the beach is a popular tourist destination or remote.

Political demonstrations occur frequently throughout Ecuador for various reasons. Protesters often block city streets and rural highways, including major arteries such as the Pan American Highway. Public transportation is often disrupted during these events. Protesters may burn tires, throw rocks and Molotov cocktails, engage in destruction of property and detonate small improvised explosive devices during demonstrations. Police response may include water cannons and tear gas. U.S. citizens and U.S. affiliated interests are not usually targeted, but U.S. citizens are advised to avoid areas where demonstrations are in progress and to be prepared with backup transportation plans. Although political demonstrations have not been directed at foreigners in the past, visitors are reminded that peaceful demonstrations can turn violent with little or no warning. Additionally, foreigners are prohibited from protesting in Ecuador and may be subject to arrest for participating in demonstrations of any kind. Please see the following links for the local information in Quito and Guayaquil's Consular Districts, respectively at http://ecuador.usembassy.gov/security-and-safety/warden-messages.html and http://guayaquil.usconsulate.gov/warden_messages.html. U.S. citizens may also keep informed of daily happenings by following the local news and police reports.

Ecuadorian authorities may declare states of emergency in provinces and regions affected by civil unrest, natural disaster, or other disruptions. During states of emergency, authorities have expanded powers to restore order, including suspension of some constitutional rights, expanded detention powers, and imposition of curfews.

Radicals in various locations in Ecuador, including Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca, have occasionally placed small explosive devices that release political literature, known locally as pamphlet bombs. Targets have included local and international businesses and various Government of Ecuador buildings. Although no foreign tourists have been injured in these explosions, American citizens visiting or residing in Ecuador are urged to take common-sense precautions and avoid suspicious looking packages.

U.S. citizens should carry identification at all times, including proof of U.S. citizenship. Travelers to Ecuador's beach areas should be aware that strong currents, undertow, and underwater hazards may exist and are not always posted. Most beaches lack staffed lifeguard stations.

Crime: Crime is a serious problem in Ecuador, and visitors should be alert and cautious. Non-violent crime is common: hundreds of Americans are

robbed every year in Ecuador. Violent crime has increased in recent years. Thieves and small gangs armed with guns or knives are now sometimes active even in smaller cities such as Otavalo, Manta, and Cuenca. Tourists have been robbed at gunpoint on beaches and along hiking trails, including on the well-populated trail to the summit of Pichincha Volcano in Quito. Incidents of rape have increased, even in well-traveled tourists areas and when the victims traveled in groups for safety. Shootings, kidnappings, and carjackings are still relatively rare, but American citizens have been victimized by those crimes. The Ecuadorian government has increased police patrols in tourist areas, but travelers should remain alert to their surroundings and maintain constant control of personal belongings.

Travelers should avoid wearing expensive-looking jewelry and watches. Avoid deserted beaches, hiking trails, and infrequently traveled roads, as well as the interior regions of large city parks, particularly at night. Robberies on public buses are a continuing problem. The Embassy recommends that visitors use legitimate taxicabs (yellow, with meters) to travel around the larger cities. Public buses can be dangerous—from both a traffic safety and a personal security point of view.

Pickpockets and other petty thieves are particularly active in public markets, airports, bus terminals, restaurants, and crowded streets. Backpackers are frequently targeted for robbery and "snatch and grabs"; business travelers carrying laptop computer bags are similarly targeted. Many travelers who travel by bus store their luggage below the bus, where it is sometimes stolen. Therefore, we recommend that you do not store your passport in your luggage. Always be aware of your surroundings, and try to not travel alone. Thefts from vehicles are common. Do not leave anything of value in plain view in a car, including sunglasses or sports equipment. Carjackings have occurred in both rural and urban areas. Visitors are advised to drive with doors locked and windows rolled up. In Quito, travelers should be particularly alert on the crowded streets of south Quito, at the Panecillo, in Old Quito, and in the areas of El Tejar, Parroquia San Sebastian, Avenida Cristobal Colon, and Gonzalez Suarez. The U.S. Embassy strongly discourages hiking to the summit of Pichincha as violent crime is sharply rising. Groups as large as eight have been robbed at gunpoint by masked men; female hikers have been sexually assaulted. The Mariscal Sucre District is a popular tourist area in Quito with numerous restaurants, bars, hotels, and shopping sites. Since 1999, U.S. government employees and private U.S. citizens have been victimized there, prompting the U.S. Embassy to put certain bars off-limits and to declare a nighttime curfew in the area for its employees. Increased police presence and better lighting in prime tourist squares of Old Quito have improved safety, but similar measures in the Mariscal district have not been as effective.

In Guayaquil, take extra caution in the downtown area at night, in the street market area of La Bahia, at the Christ Statue (Sagrado Corazon de Jesus) on Cerro del Carmen, in the airport area, and in the southern part of the city. The riverfront park area called the Malecon 2000 and the passage up to the lighthouse in the Las Penas area are generally safe and well patrolled although at night caution should be observed. There have been repeated instances of travelers followed from the airport and intercepted by robbers using two vehicles to cut off the traveler. There is some evidence that those most at risk are people who appear to be returning from family visits laden with gifts and large amounts of cash. There have been armed robberies of restaurants and their patrons, including in the fashionable areas of Guayaquil. Guayaquil has also experienced an increase in kidnappings for ransom, often in connection with hijackings, although tourists have not been targeted.

Criminals sometimes use incapacitating drugs such as scopolamine on unsuspecting tourists in order to rob them. These so-called date rape drugs are put into drinks in order to drug the unsuspecting victim. This drug can render the victim disoriented and can cause prolonged unconsciousness and serious medical problems. Never allow a stranger to "buy" you a drink and never leave your drink unattended. Several American citizens have reported thefts of property following ingestion of such substances.

Every year, 15 to 20 American citizens are arrested for attempting to traffic drugs between Ecuador and the United States, or between mainland Ecuador and the Galapagos. Suitcases with false bottoms and other packages are common methods of transporting illegal substances. Many of these citizens claim to have been unaware that they were transporting drugs. As in any other country, do not accept gifts, packages, or suitcases from other persons; even trusted travel companions have been known to take advantage of their friends and family to traffic drugs through Ecuador's airports. See the Criminal Penalties section below for more details about Ecuador strict laws and sentences regarding illegal drug trafficking.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of

local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Female victims of crime may receive assistance from the Comisaria de la Mujer at Ave. 24 de Mayo y Calle Loja, telephone 593 2 228 4016 or the Oficina de Derechos de la Mujer, Guayanas E-331 y Inglaterra, Quito 593 2 252 9909.

The local equivalent to the emergency line in Ecuador is the same as the U.S., dial "911". The operators typically speak Spanish only. Victims should also call the Embassy or Consulate to report the crime and for assistance.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical and dental care can be readily obtained in the major cities of Ecuador. In smaller communities and in the Galapagos Islands services are limited, and the quality is variable and generally below U.S. standards. Ambulances, with or without trained emergency staff, are in critically short supply. Acute surgical and cardiac services are not available on the Galapagos Islands. Serious cases must be evacuated to the Ecuadorian mainland or the United States for treatment. Pharmacies are readily available in any city. However, the availability of some medications is sporadic, and formulations and brand names will differ from products available in the U.S. Narcotics and tranquilizers are extremely limited in availability. "Pharmacists" sometimes prescribe and dispense medications. These individuals often have little training and prescribe broad-spectrum antibiotics and other inappropriate medications. Travelers should not seek their advice. Folk healers and traditional markets offer herbal and folk remedies which should be avoided as formulations are questionable and some components may interact with other prescription medications.

Travelers to Quito (close to 10,000 feet) and other highland areas may require some time to adjust to the altitude, which can adversely affect blood pressure, digestion, and energy level. Travelers are encouraged to consult with their personal health care providers before undertaking high-altitude travel. In particular, travelers with heart or lung problems and persons with sickle cell trait may develop serious health complications at high altitudes.

Scuba divers in the Galapagos Islands should be aware of limited facilities for decompression. A privately owned decompression chamber is available on Santa Cruz Island in the Galapagos Islands. The Ecuadorian Navy operates a second decompression chamber at the San Eduardo Naval Base in Guayaquil. Due to the high costs for these services and associated emergency transportation, divers are advised to obtain adequate medical evacuation and divers insurance.

Travelers should be aware of the presence of malaria, dengue fever, and yellow fever in areas of Ecuador below 4,500' elevation. Historically there has not been dengue or malaria in the Galapagos archipelago, and yellow fever has only occurred in the Amazon Basin. Travelers who are on an appropriate anti-malarial drug have a greatly reduced chance of contracting malaria, while vaccine can provide protection against yellow fever. Avoiding mosquito bites is the only effective prevention for dengue and personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, help to reduce the risk of contracting all of these illnesses. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a high-risk area, and for up to one year thereafter, should seek prompt medical attention. For additional information on malaria or dengue, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarials, consult the Center for Disease Control and World Health Organization web sites listed below.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Ecuador.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Ecuador is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road travel throughout Ecuador can be dangerous, especially at night. Many roads are poorly maintained or unmarked. Heavy rains and mudslides often close or wash out roads. Heavy fog is common in mountainous areas. Driving practices differ from U.S. standards. Inter-urban and inter-provincial bus passengers are often targets of crime, including robbery and sexual assault.

Highways are often unmarked and do not have signs indicating destinations. Road safety features such as crash barriers and guardrails along steep mountainsides are rare. In the countryside livestock are often herded along roads or graze on roadsides. Many roads are used for pedestrian and animal traffic as well as vehicular traffic. Driving habits vary from region to region. In general, drivers in Quito and the mountain areas and the Oriente (eastern jungle) drive more slowly, observe traffic signals, and slow down for speed bumps. Vehicles are reasonably well maintained. On the coast, drivers

have a more liberal approach to vehicle maintenance and traffic regulations. In all areas buses, both intracity and intercity, will stop at any point on their route to pick up or drop off passengers. Speed bumps abound, even on major highways such as the Pan American Highway, to slow traffic. Drivers turn right and left from any lane and do not yield for pedestrians and cyclists.

Intoxicated drivers can be encountered at any time, but they are especially prevalent on weekends and holidays.

Ecuador's frontier regions are largely rural, poor, and lack police presence. Because drug traffickers, criminal organizations, and smugglers of all types use clandestine border crossings to move their goods, the U.S. Embassy advises against driving on all but the most traveled highways.

If you are the driver of a vehicle involved in an automobile accident, you will likely be taken into police custody, especially if injuries are involved. You are almost certain to spend some time in jail until all parties are satisfied that responsibility has been assigned and adequate financial satisfaction received.

Drivers may face criminal charges if injuries or damages are serious. When driving your own vehicle or a rented vehicle, be sure to have proper vehicle registration papers with you.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office at http://www.turismo.gov.ec/ and the Ministerio de Transporte y Obras Publicas, the national authority responsible for road safety, at http://www.mtop.gov.ec.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Ecuador's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Ecuador's air carrier operations.

For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Galapagos Islands: A significant number of Ecuadorian tour vessels operating in the Galapagos Islands are neither inspected nor operated in accordance with U.S. regulations, and do not meet U.S. safety standards. The Government of Ecuador requires that vessels carrying more than sixteen passengers comply with the International Safety Management (ISM) code established by the International Maritime Organization. However, the quality of inspections, oversight, crewmember proficiency evaluation, and other requisites for safe vessel operation may vary substantially. Tour boat accidents are more frequent among small vessels (those carrying fewer than sixteen passengers), but travelers should inquire about safety features of any vessel, regardless of size. When boarding vessels be sure to look for the life boats, floatation devices and if possible take a moment to inspect the life vest you would be using if there were an accident.

There have been at least three cases in 2004-2006 in which small quantities of drugs have been placed by unknown persons in unsecured pockets of tourists' checked bags, including backpacks, en route to the Galapagos. Upon arrival, these drugs have been detected by police canine units, and the owners of the bags have been arrested and detained for months while the cases are resolved. Travelers are advised to secure all parts of their bags thoroughly before checking them on flights to the Galapagos.

Strikes and disturbances by local fisherman in the Galapagos Islands have become violent on occasion. While tourists have not been targeted, the incidents affected their movement and access to some sites. Such disturbances have been minimal since April 2004, but the issue remains unsettled and could resurface at any time.

The islands are over 600 miles from the mainland and help may be slow in arriving in case of emergency. The Government of Ecuador has very limited search and rescue capabilities. Travelers to the Galapagos are encouraged to contact tour operators and visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site for the most recent information when planning their trips to the Galapagos.

Other Legal Issues: Under Ecuadorian law, business disputes that normally would be handled by civil litigation in the United States may be converted into criminal proceedings. This provision of the law has been used to impose travel prohibitions against resident U.S. citizens, and it also has led to the arrest and incarceration of U.S. business people while they were awaiting a hearing on the civil matter.

When considering purchasing property in Ecuador, Americans should be aware that competing claims to property might only surface after an apparently legal sale has been made. Deficiencies in the Ecuadorian system for surveying and registering property and weaknesses in the judicial system mean that these disputes can last years.

The Mission is aware of several cases of American citizen land owners in Ecuador being threatened with physical harm and/or confiscation of their property by individuals claiming rights to the land, and, in at least one case, buildings have been razed. American citizens considering buying property in Ecuador should engage a competent attorney and carefully research land title issues before making a purchase.

Disaster Preparedness: Ecuador has 19 potentially active volcanoes, including nine that have shown recent activity. Earthquakes occur frequently. Three active volcanoes within 50 kilometers of Quito pose a significant threat to the city: Guagua Pichincha, Cotopaxi, and Reventador. The primary threat is from failures of transportation, water, communications, and power systems due to heavy ash fall and damage to infrastructure outside the city. Air transportation is especially vulnerable.

Potentially serious respiratory problems are caused by inhalation of ash. The town of Banos, a popular tourist destination approximately 120 kilometers south of Quito, is at the base of the Tungurahua Volcano. Tungurahua has erupted explosively several times since 1999, most recently in February of 2008, causing deaths and forcing thousands to evacuate their homes. Explosive eruptions can occur with little warning. The resulting flows of mud and lava could pose a significant and immediate threat to Banos and other population centers in the vicinity. Travelers should to be aware of these conditions when choosing to stay overnight in Banos, especially on the western side of the town, and should be ready to evacuate on short notice.

Other volcanoes active in Ecuador include Reventador, 100 kilometers east of Quito, and Cotopaxi, 50 kilometers south of Quito. In 2002, lava and mudflows caused by Reventador volcano closed a major Quito/northern-border highway and volcanic ash blanketed Quito, shutting down the Quito airport for several days.

The Quito City Government and the Ecuadorian Geophysical Institute monitor these volcanoes and issue regular reports on their activity. In the event of eruptions, travelers should pay close attention to the news media for updates on the situation. Other volcanoes in Ecuador may also exhibit increased activity at any time. Further information is available via the Internet from the Ecuadorian Geophysical Institute at http://www.igepn.edu.ec/ and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at http://www.ssd.noaa.gov/VAAC/guag.html.

Customs Regulations: Ecuadorian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Ecuador of items such as forearms, religious materials, antiquities, medications, electronic equipment and currency. Contact the Embassy of Ecuador in Washington, DC or one of Ecuador's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Ecuadorian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Ecuador are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

The Ecuadorian government is required by international law to notify the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. Consulate promptly when an American citizen is arrested and requests such notification. Delays in notification can limit the assistance the U.S. Government can provide an arrested American citizen. Therefore, Americans should promptly identify themselves as such to arresting officers and request that the U.S. Embassy in Quito or the U.S. Consulate in Guayaquil be notified immediately.

Prison conditions in Ecuador are extremely poor. In many facilities food is insufficient in both quantity and quality, and prisoners must pay for adequate nutrition from their own funds. Most Ecuadorian prisons provide poor medical care, and urgent medical conditions may receive only minimal attention. The Guayaquil penitentiary medical clinic does not have medicine but is staffed with medical personnel. Prisoners must personally pay to have someone outside of the prison obtain medicine and prescriptions. Those accused of crimes in Ecuador can expect lengthy delays before trial and sentencing. The accused are usually incarcerated while awaiting trial and sentencing, and in the case of serious crimes, bail is generally not an option.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Ecuador are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Ecuador. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Quito is located at the corner of Avenida 12 de Octubre and Avenida Patria (across from the Casa de la Cultura). The telephone during business hours (8:00a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) is (011) 593 2 256 2890 X4510. For after-hours emergencies use (011) 593 2 256 1749. The fax is (011) 593 2 256 1254. Within the same city use the last seven digits. Add the city code for intercity telephone calls. The Embassy's Internet address is: http://www.usembassy.org.ec.

The U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil is located at the corner of 9 de Octubre and Garcia Moreno (near the Hotel Oro Verde); telephone (011-593-4) 232-3570 during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) or 232-1152 for after-hours emergencies; fax (011-593-4) 232-0904. The Consulate General's Internet address is: http://guayaquil.usconsulate.gov.

Consular services for U.S. citizens in the Galapagos Islands are provided by the Consulate General in Guayaquil with assistance from a U.S. Consular Agent in Puerto Ayora, Galapagos, at 05) 526-330 or (05) 526-296.

The Consular Section in Quito is open for American citizen services, including registration, from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, excluding

U.S. and Ecuadorian holidays. The Consular Section in Guayaquil is open for those services from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Tuesday through Friday, excluding U.S. and Ecuadorian holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Ecuador is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between Ecuador and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Ecuadorian law does not allow for an Ecuadorian child to travel to the United States to be adopted. Therefore, prospective adoptive parents must obtain a full and final adoption under Ecuadorian law before the child can immigrate to the United States.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Ecuador is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Ecuador, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Ecuador also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parent(s) must travel to Ecuador and expect to remain there for three to four weeks to finalize the adoption. Once an adoption decree is issued, only one parent needs to remain in Ecuador with the child, usually for an additional week.

Age Requirements: If married, both parents must be over 25 years of age. There must be an age difference of at least 14 years between the younger parent and the child. If the Unidad Técnica de Adopciones (Technical Adoptions Unit) allows for a non-married individual to adopt a child of the opposite sex, then there must be an age difference of 30 years between the prospective adoptive parent and the child.

Marriage Requirements: Both single and married individuals may adopt a child in Ecuador. An unmarried (single, widowed, divorced) adoptive parent may only adopt a child of the same sex, unless the Technical Adoptions Unit issues a favorable report for adoption of a child of the opposite sex.

Other Requirements: The Childhood and Adolescence Court, Juzgado de la Niñez y Adolescencia, must grant permission for the child to depart the country if only one member of the couple is present in Ecuador to travel with the child. This permission is only valid for one year. Additionally, prospective adoptive parents residing outside Ecuador may not adopt more than two children at a time, except in the case of sibling adoptions.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Ecuador is a member of The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Ecuador must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Ecuador's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Ecuadorian Adoption Authority: The Technical Adoptions Unit (Unidad Técnica de Adopciones) and the Family Assignment Committee (Comité de Asignación Familiar)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Ecuador is to select an accredited or approved adoption service provider in the United States that has signed an Agreement with the Government of Ecuador. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Ecuador. A list of United States accredited and approved adoption service providers may be obtained in person from the Consular Section of the United States Embassy in Quito or Consulate General in Guayaquil, or online from the Department of State.

After you choose an accredited or approved adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to be an adoptive parent, your information will be forwarded to the Central Authority in Ecuador. The Technical Adoptions Unit will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Ecuadorian law.

If both the United States and Ecuador determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the Technical Adoptions Unit may provide you with a referral for a child. You cannot identify a specific child that you would like to adopt prior to the referral. Prospective adoptive parent(s) must express acceptance of the referral in writing, after which, they must travel to Ecuador to complete the judicial part of the process. If married, both spouses are required to travel to Ecuador for an adaptation period. The length of the adaptation period with the child depends on each orphanage's policy and program, but usually takes three or four days.

After this, based on the prospective adoptive parents' relationship with the child, the orphanage will send a report to the Technical Adoption Unit. That office will then give the report along with other adoption documents to the adoption service provider's representative. The documents will be filed at the Minor's Court along with the adoption peti-

tion, which must be signed (jointly by the petitioners if a married couple). The judge will then schedule an appointment (usually one or two days later) with the prospective adoptive parent(s) to acknowledge the signature(s) on the adoption request. The prospective adoptive parent(s) must go personally to that appointment and bring their passport(s). After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that child (Form I-800). If the Form I-800 is provisionally approved, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular officer determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he or she will notify the Technical Adoptions Unit (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Court: The courts in Ecuador issue adoption decrees. The Childhood and Adolescence Court, Juzgado de la Niñez y Adolescencia, must grant permission for the child to depart the country if only one member of the couple is present in Ecuador to travel with the child. This permission is only valid for one year.

Role of Adoption Service Providers: The Government of Ecuador requires that prospective adoptive parents work through an accredited or approved United States adoption service provider that has signed an Agreement with the Government of Ecuador. The agency can give you an estimate of the cost of an adoption in Ecuador. A list of these agencies may be obtained in person from the Consular Section of the United States Embassy in Quito or Consulate General in Guayaquil.

Time Frame: The adoption process in Ecuador generally takes between nine and sixteen months to complete. Adopting families must first contact an Ecuadorian-approved United States adoption service provider that will provide general instructions about intercountry adoption procedures, and will assist prospective adoptive parents with the preparation and filing of preliminary United States immigration documentation. This process generally takes approximately three months (USCIS Form I-800A). An additional six months to one year is needed for further adjudication once these documents are forwarded to an agency or lawyer in Ecuador.

Adoption Fees: The cost of adoptions varies with different adoption service providers. In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: Certifications, notarizations and apostilles must be completed in the United States before the prospective adoptive parents travel to Ecuador or the application for adoption is submitted. Translations can be completed in Ecuador. Documents must be apostilled in the United States.

The prospective adoptive parent(s) must present the following documents to the American adoption service provider which will represent them in Ecuador:

- Certified copies of birth certificates of prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Certified copy of marriage certificate and proof of termination of prior marriages (death certificates/divorce decrees), if applicable;
- Certified copy of the state law that regulates the adoption of minors (especially foreign minors) in the adoptive parent's(s') state of United States residence;
- Home study report on the adoptive parent(s) and institutional criteria on the suitability of the adoptive parent(s) from the entity performing the home study (all these documents are part of the I-800A);
- A sealed certificate of no criminal record for each adoptive parent from a local police department. An FBI report is acceptable in lieu of local police record;
- Verification of employment and salary;
- Notarized adoption authorization letter from the adoption service provider to the family certifying that the family is duly prepared to adopt an Ecuadorian child;
- Certificate of physical and mental health of prospective adoptive parent(s); and
- Photocopies of the passports of the prospective adoptive parent(s).

The adoption hearing will take place three or four days after the judge schedules the meeting to verify signature(s). The judge will review the parent's(s') qualifications, including psychological and financial situations. After the hearing, prospective adoptive parent(s) and the judge sign the minutes. The judge will issue the final adoption decree unless the judge identifies false statements or documents.

The adoption decree becomes final three days after issuance. At this point, the adoptive parent(s) can obtain a new birth certificate for their child from the Civil Registry office. The new birth certificate will include the name(s) of parent(s) and any change of name for the child. With the new birth certificate, the parent(s) (or the adoption service provider on their behalf) can obtain an Ecuadorian identity card and Ecuadorian passport for the child.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home.

Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your

child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Ecuador does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Ecuador
Avenida 12 de Octubre
y Avenida Patria
Quito, Ecuador
Tel: 011-593-2-2562-890
Fax: 011-593-2-2502-052 ext. 4510

United States Consulate in Guayaquil
9 de Octubre y Garcia Moreno
Guayaquil, Ecuador
Tel: 011-593-4-2323-570 ext. 224, 222
Fax: 011-593-4-320-904,
011-593-4-2325-286

Embassy of Ecuador
2535 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: (202) 234-7200
Fax: (202) 667-3482
Email: consuladodc@ecuador.org
Website: http://ecuador.org/main.htm

Ecuador also has consulates in Chicago, Houston, Miami, Jersey City, New York, New Orleans, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
Email: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



EGYPT

Compiled from the March 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Arab Republic of Egypt

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,001,450 sq. km. (386,000 sq. mi.); approximately equal to Texas and New Mexico combined.

Cities: Capital—Cairo (pop. estimated at 16 million). Other cities—Alexandria (6 million), Aswan, Asyut, Port Said, Suez, Ismailia.

Terrain: Desert, except Nile valley and delta.

Climate: Dry, hot summers; moderate winters.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Egyptian(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 80,335,036.

Annual growth rate: (July 2007 est.) 1.72%.

Ethnic groups: Egyptian, Bedouin Arab, Nubian.

Religions: Muslim 90%, Coptic Christian 9%, other Christian 1%.

Languages: Arabic (official), English, French.

Education: Years compulsory—ages 6-15. Literacy—total adult: 58%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006 est.)—31.33 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2006 est.) 71 years.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: 1922.
Constitution: 1971.
Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—People's Assembly (444 elected and 10 presidentially appointed members) and Shura (consultative) Council (176 elected members, 88 presidentially appointed). Judicial—Supreme Constitutional Court.
Political subdivisions: 26 governorates.
Political parties: National Democratic Party (ruling). Principal opposition parties—New Wafd Party, Liberal Party, National Progressive Unionist Grouping (Tagammau), and Nasserite Party.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $118–120 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 7.2%.
Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $5,400.
Natural resources: Petroleum and natural gas, iron ore, phosphates, manganese, limestone, gypsum, talc, asbestos, lead, zinc.
Agriculture: Products—cotton, rice, onions, beans, citrus fruits, wheat, corn, barley, sugar.
Industry: Types—food processing, textiles, chemicals, petrochemicals, construction, light manufacturing, iron and steel products, aluminum, cement, military equipment.
Trade: (FY 2005) Exports—$27.4 billion: petroleum, clothing and textiles, cotton, fruits and vegetables, manufactured goods. Major markets—EU, U.S., Middle East, Japan. Imports—$40.48 billion: machinery and transport equipment, petroleum products, livestock, food and beverages, paper and wood products, chemicals. Major suppliers—EU, U.S., China.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world and the second-most populous on the African Continent. Nearly all of the country's 79 million people live in Cairo and Alexandria; elsewhere on the banks of the Nile; in the Nile delta, which fans out north of Cairo; and along the Suez Canal. These regions are among the world's most densely populated, containing an average of over 3,820 persons per square mile (1,540 per sq. km.), as compared to 181 persons per sq. mi. for the country as a whole.

Small communities spread throughout the desert regions of Egypt are clustered around oases and historic trade and transportation routes. The government has tried with mixed suc-

cess to encourage migration to newly irrigated land reclaimed from the desert. However, the proportion of the population living in rural areas has continued to decrease as people move to the cities in search of employment and a higher standard of living.

The Egyptians are a fairly homogeneous people of Hamitic origin. Mediterranean and Arab influences appear in the north, and there is some mixing in the south with the Nubians of northern Sudan. Ethnic minorities include a small number of Bedouin Arab nomads in the eastern and western deserts and in the Sinai, as well as some 50,000-100,000 Nubians clustered along the Nile in Upper (southern) Egypt.

The literacy rate is about 58% of the adult population. Education is free through university and compulsory from ages six through 15. Rates for primary and secondary education have strengthened in recent years. Ninety-three percent of children enter primary school today, compared with 87% in 1994. Major universities include Cairo University (100,000 students), Alexandria University, and the 1,000-year-old Al-Azhar University, one of the world's major centers of Islamic learning.

Egypt's vast and rich literature constitutes an important cultural element in the life of the country and in the Arab world as a whole. Egyptian novelists and poets were among the first to experiment with modern styles of Arabic literature, and the forms they developed have been widely imitated. Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz was the first Arab to win the Nobel prize for literature. Egyptian books and films are available throughout the Middle East.

Egypt has endured as a unified state for more than 5,000 years, and archeological evidence indicates that a developed Egyptian society has existed for much longer. Egyptians take pride in their "pharaonic heritage" and in their descent from what they consider mankind's earliest civilization. The Arabic word for Egypt is Misr, which originally connoted "civilization" or "metropolis."

Archeological findings show that primitive tribes lived along the Nile long before the dynastic history of the pharaohs began. By 6000 B.C., organized agriculture had appeared.

In about 3100 B.C., Egypt was united under a ruler known as Mena, or Menes, who inaugurated the 30 pharaonic dynasties into which Egypt's ancient history is divided—the Old and the Middle Kingdoms and the New Empire. The pyramids at Giza (near Cairo), which were built in the fourth dynasty, testify to the power of the pharaonic religion and state. The Great Pyramid, the tomb of Pharaoh Khufu (also known as Cheops), is the only surviving monument of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Ancient Egypt reached the peak of its power, wealth, and territorial extent in the period called the New Empire (1567-1085 B.C.).

Persian, Greek, Roman, and Arab Conquerors

In 525 BC, Cambyses, the son of Cyrus the Great, led a Persian invasion force that dethroned the last pharaoh of the 26th Dynasty. The country remained a Persian province until conquered by Alexander the Great in 322 BC, ushering in Ptolemeic rule Egypt that lasted for nearly 300 years.

Following a brief Persian reconquest, Egypt was invaded and conquered by Arab forces in 642. A process of Arabization and Islamization ensued. Although a Coptic Christian minority remained—and remains today, constituting about 10% of the population—the Arab language inexorably supplanted the indigenous Coptic tongue. For the next 1,300 years, a succession of Arab, Mameluke, and Ottoman caliphs, beys, and sultans ruled the country.

European Influence

The Ottoman Turks controlled Egypt from 1517 until 1882, except for a brief period of French rule under Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1805, Mohammed Ali, commander of an Albanian contingent of Ottoman troops, was appointed Pasha, founding the dynasty that ruled Egypt until his great-great grandson, Farouk I, was overthrown in 1952. Mohammed Ali the Great ruled Egypt until 1848, writing the first chapter in the modern history of Egypt. The growth of modern urban Cairo began in the reign of Ismail (1863-79). Eager to Westernize the capital, he ordered the construction of a European-style city to the west of the medieval core. The Suez Canal was completed in his reign in 1869, and its completion was celebrated by many events, including the commissioning of Verdi's "Aida" for the new opera house and the building of great palaces such as the Omar Khayyam (originally constructed to entertain the French Empress Eugenie, which is now the central section of the Cairo Marriott Hotel).

In 1882, British expeditionary forces crushed a revolt against the Ottoman rulers, marking the beginning of British occupation and the virtual inclusion of Egypt within the British Empire. In deference to growing nationalism, the U.K. unilaterally declared Egyptian independence in 1922. British influence, however, continued to dominate Egypt's political life and fostered fiscal, administrative, and governmental reforms.

In the pre-1952 revolution period, three political forces competed with one another: the Wafd, a broadly based nationalist political organization strongly opposed to British influence; King Fuad, whom the British had installed during World War II; and the British themselves, who were determined to maintain control over the Canal. Other political forces emerging in this period included the communist party (1925) and the Muslim Brotherhood (1928), which eventually became a potent political and religious force.

During World War II, British troops used Egypt as a base for Allied operations throughout the region. British troops were withdrawn to the Suez Canal area in 1947, but nationalist, anti-British feelings continued to grow after the war. On July 22-23, 1952, a group of disaffected army officers (the "free officers") led by Lt.



Col. Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew King Farouk, whom the military blamed for Egypt's poor performance in the 1948 war with Israel. Following a brief experiment with civilian rule, they abrogated the 1923 constitution and declared Egypt a republic on June 19, 1953. Nasser evolved into a charismatic leader, not only of Egypt, but the Arab world, promoting and implementing "Arab socialism." He nationalized Egypt's economy.

Nasser helped establish the Non-Aligned Movement of developing countries in September 1961, and continued to be a leading force in the movement until his death in 1970. When the United States held up military sales in reaction to Egyptian neutrality vis-à-vis Moscow, Nasser concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia in September 1955.

When the U.S. and the World Bank withdrew their offer to help finance the Aswan High Dam in mid-1956, Nasser nationalized the privately owned Suez Canal Company. The crisis that followed, exacerbated by growing tensions with Israel over guerrilla attacks from Gaza and Israeli reprisals, resulted in the invasion of Egypt that October by France, Britain, and Israel.

Nasser's domestic policies were arbitrary and frequently oppressive, yet generally popular. All opposition was

stamped out, and opponents of the regime frequently were imprisoned without trial. Nasser's foreign and military policies helped provoke the Israeli attack of June 1967 that virtually destroyed Egypt's armed forces along with those of Jordan and Syria. Israel also occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. Nasser, nonetheless, was revered by the masses in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world until his death in 1970.

After Nasser's death, another of the original "free officers," Vice President Anwar el-Sadat, was elected President. In 1971, Sadat concluded a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union, but a year later, ordered Soviet advisers to leave. In 1973, he launched the October war with Israel, in which Egypt's armed forces achieved initial successes but were defeated in Israeli counterattacks.

Camp David and the Peace Process

In a momentous change from the Nasser era, President Sadat shifted Egypt from a policy of confrontation with Israel to one of peaceful accommodation through negotiations. Following the Sinai Disengagement Agreements of 1974 and 1975, Sadat created a fresh opening for progress by his dramatic visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. This led to President Jimmy Carter's invitation to President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin to join him in trilateral negotiations at Camp David.

The historic Camp David accords were signed by Egypt and Israel and witnessed by the U.S. on September 17, 1978. The accords led to the March 26, 1979 signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, by which Egypt regained control of the Sinai in May 1982. Throughout this period, U.S.-Egyptian relations steadily improved, but Sadat's willingness to break ranks by making peace with Israel earned him the enmity of most other Arab states.

Domestic Change

Sadat introduced greater political freedom and a new economic policy, the most important aspect of which was the infitah or "open door." This relaxed government controls over the economy and encouraged private, including foreign, investment. Sadat dismantled much of the existing political machine and brought to trial a number of former government officials accused of criminal excesses during the Nasser era.

Liberalization also included the reinstitution of due process and the legal banning of torture. Sadat tried to expand participation in the political process in the mid-1970s but later abandoned this effort. In the last years of his life, Egypt was racked by violence arising from discontent with Sadat's rule and sectarian tensions, and it experienced a renewed measure of repression.

From Sadat to Mubarak

On October 6, 1981, Islamic extremists assassinated President Sadat. Hosni Mubarak, Vice President since 1975 and air force commander during the October 1973 war, was elected President later that month. He was subsequently confirmed by popular referendum for four more 6-year terms, most recently in September 2005. Mubarak has maintained Egypt's commitment to the Camp David peace process, while at the same time re-establishing Egypt's position as an Arab leader. Egypt was readmitted to the Arab League in 1989. Egypt also has played a moderating role in such international fora as the UN and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since 1991, Mubarak has overseen a domestic economic reform program to reduce the size of the public sector and expand the role of the private sector. There has been less progress in political reform. The November 2000 People's Assembly elections saw 34 members of the opposition win seats in the 454-seat assembly, facing a clear majority of 388 ultimately affiliated with the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Opposition parties continue to face various difficulties in mounting credible electoral challenges to the NDP. The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, remains an illegal organization and is not recognized as a political party (current Egyptian law prohibits the formation of political parties based on religion). Members are known publicly and openly speak their views, although they do not explicitly identify themselves as members of the organization. Members of the Brotherhood have been elected to the People's Assembly and local councils as independents, and most recently scored a major victory in 2005 parliamentary elections, winning 20% of the seats, thus forming the largest opposition group.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Egyptian Constitution provides for a strong executive. Authority is vested in an elected president who can appoint one or more vice presidents, a prime minister, and a cabinet. The president's term runs for 6 years. Egypt's legislative body, the People's Assembly, has 454 members—444 popularly elected and 10 appointed by the president. The constitution reserves 50% of the assembly seats for "workers and peasants." The assembly sits for a 5-year term but can be dissolved earlier by the President. There also is a 264-member Shura (consultative) Council, in which 88 members are appointed and 174 elected for 6-year terms. Below the national level, authority is exercised by and through governors and mayors appointed by the central government and by popularly elected local councils.

Opposition party organizations make their views public and represent their followers at various levels in the political system, but power is concentrated in the hands of the President and the National Democratic Party majority in the People's Assembly and those institutions dominate the political system. In addition to the ruling National Democratic Party,

there are 18 other legally recognized parties, whereas in 2004 there were only 16 other legally recognized parties.

The November 2000 elections were generally considered to have been more transparent and better executed than past elections, because of universal judicial monitoring of polling stations. On the other hand, opposition parties continue to lodge credible complaints about electoral manipulation by the government. There are significant restrictions on the political process and freedom of expression for non-governmental organizations, including professional syndicates and organizations promoting respect for human rights.

Progress was seen in the September 2005 presidential elections when parties were allowed to field candidates against President Mubarak and his National Democratic Party. In early 2005, President Mubarak proposed amending the constitution to allow, for the first time in Egypt's history, competitive, multi-candidate elections. An amendment was drafted by parliament and approved by public referendum in late May 2005. In September 2005, President Mubarak was reelected, according to official results, with 88% of the vote. His two principal challengers, Ayman Nour and No'man Gom'a, took 7% and 3% of the vote respectively.

In March 2007, Mubarak introduced several constitutional amendments that would increase presidential powers and, more significantly, ban any political parties based on religion, race, or ethnicity. The amendments were put to a popular referendum and, despite low voter turnout and boycotts by opposition groups, passed with 75.9% approval.

Egypt's judicial system is based on European (primarily French) legal concepts and methods. Under the Mubarak government, the courts have demonstrated increasing independence, and the principles of due process and judicial review have gained greater respect. The legal code is derived largely from the Napoleonic Code. Marriage and personal status (family law) are primarily based on the religious law of the individual concerned, which for most Egyptians is Islamic Law (Sharia).

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Mohamed Hosni MUBARAK**
Prime Min.: **Ahmed Mohamed NAZIF**
Min. of Agriculture & Land Reclamation: **Amin ABAZA**
Min. of Awqaf (Religious Affairs): **Mahmoud Hamdy ZAQZOUQ**
Min. of Civil Aviation: **Ahmed SHAFIQ**
Min. of Communications & Information Technology: **Tarek KAMEL**
Min. of Culture: **Farouk HOSNI**
Min. of Defense: **Mohamed Hussein TANTAWI, Fd. Mar.**
Min. of Education: **Yousri El-GAMAL**
Min. of Electricity & Energy: **Hassan Ahmed YOUNIS**
Min. of Finance: **Youssef BOUTROS-GHALI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Ahmed Ali ABOUL GHEIT**
Min. of Foreign Trade & Industry: **Rachid Mohamed RACHID**
Min. of Health & Population: **Hatem El-GABALI**
Min. of Higher Education: **Hani HILAL**
Min. of Housing, Utilities, & Urban Communities: **Ahmed El-MAGHRABI**
Min. of Information: **Anas El-FIQQI**
Min. of Interior: **Habib El-ADLY**
Min. of Intl. Cooperation: **Fayza ABOUL NAGA**
Min. of Investment: **Mahmoud MOHIELDIN**
Min. of Irrigation & Water Resources: **Mahmoud ABU ZEID**
Min. of Justice: **Mamdouh MAREI**
Min. of Legal Affairs & Parliamentary Councils: **Moufed Mahmoud SHEHAB**
Min. of Local Development: **Abdel Salam al-MAHGOUB**
Min. of Manpower & Immigration: **Aisha ABDEL HADI**
Min. of Military Production: **Mohamed Hussein TANTAWI, Fd. Mar.**
Min. of Petroleum: **Sameh FAHMY**
Min. of Planning: **Osman Mohammed OSMAN**
Min. of Public Business Sector: **Mokhtar KHATTAB**
Min. of Social Security: **Ali MOSELHI**
Min. of Tourism: **Mohamed Zoheir GARANA**
Min. of Transport: **Mohamed Lotfi MANSOUR**
Min. of State for Admin. Development: **Ahmed DARWISH**
Min. of State for Economic Development: **Osman Mohammed OSMAN**
Min. of State for Environment Affairs: **Maged GEORGE**
Min. of State for Local Development: **Abdel-Rahim SHEHATA**
Min. of State for Military Production: **Sayed MESHAL**
Min. of State for Scientific Research: **Hani HILAL**
Governor, Central Bank: **Farouk Abdel Baky El-OKDA**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Maged ABDEL FATTAH**

Egypt maintains an embassy in the United States at 3521 International Court N.W., Washington, D.C., 20008 (tel. 202-895-5400). The Washington consulate has the same address (tel. 202-966-6342). The Egyptian Mission to the United Nations is located at 304 East 44th Street, New York, N.Y. (tel. 212-305-0300). Egyptian consulates general are located at: 1110 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10022 (tel. 212-759-7120); 1990 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 2180, Houston, TX, 77056 (tel. 713-961-4915); 500 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 1900, Chicago, IL, 60611 (tel. 312-828-9162); and 3001 Pacific Avenue, San Francisco, CA, 94115 (tel. 415-346-9700).

NATIONAL SECURITY

Egypt's armed forces, among the largest in the region, include the army, air defense, air force, and navy. The armed forces inventory includes equipment from the United States, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the former Soviet Union, and China. Equipment from the former Soviet Union is being progressively replaced by more modern American, French, and British equipment, a significant portion of which is built under license in Egypt. To bolster stability and moderation in the region, Egypt has provided military assistance and training to a number of African and Arab states. Egypt remains a strong military and strategic partner of the United States.

ECONOMY

With the installation of the 2004 Egyptian parliament, the Government of Egypt began a new reform movement, following a stalled economic reform program begun in 1991, but moribund since the mid-1990s. In the past year, the cabinet economic team has simplified and reduced tariffs and taxes, improved the transparency of the national budget, revived stalled privatizations of public enterprises and implemented economic legislation designed to foster private sector-driven economic growth and improve Egypt's competitiveness. Despite these achievements, the economy is still hampered by government intervention, substantial subsidies for food, housing, and energy, and bloated public sector payrolls. Moreover, the public sector still controls most heavy industry.

In sectoral terms, agriculture is mainly in private hands, and has been largely deregulated, with the exception of cotton and sugar production. Construction, non-financial services, and domestic marketing are also largely private. The Egyptian economy, however, relies heavily on tourism, oil and gas exports, and Suez Canal revenues, much of which is controlled by the public sector and is also vulnerable to outside factors.

The tourism sector suffered tremendously following a terrorist attack in Luxor in October 1997. The tourism sector feared a repeat of the downturn in tourist numbers when terrorists attacked resorts in the Sinai Peninsula in 2004 and 2005. So far, however, the sector has not suffered as greatly as expected.

The U.S. has a large assistance program in Egypt and provides funding for a variety of programs in addition to some cash transfers. A portion of U.S. assistance to Egypt under the 2003 Iraq war supplemental appropriations was provided in the form of bond guarantees, which were contingent upon Egyptian compliance with a series of economic conditions. Egypt met the conditions and in September 2005 issued $1.25 billion in 10-year bonds that were fully guaranteed by the United States. To support the Middle East peace process through regional economic integration, the United States permits products to be imported from Egypt without tariffs if they have been produced in Qualified Industrial Zones and 11.7% of the inputs of these products originate from Israel.

Agriculture

Approximately one-third of Egyptian labor is engaged directly in farming, and many others work in the processing or trading of agricultural products. Nearly all of Egypt's agricultural production takes place in some 2.5 million hectares (6 million acres) of fertile soil in the Nile Valley and Delta. Some desert lands are being developed for agriculture, including the ambitious Toshka project in Upper Egypt, but some other fertile lands in the Nile Valley and Delta are being lost to urbanization and erosion.

Warm weather and plentiful water permit several crops a year. Further improvement is possible, but land is worked intensively and yields are high. Cotton, rice, wheat, corn, sugarcane, sugar beets, onions, and beans are the principal crops. Increasingly, a few modern operations are producing fruits, vegetables and flowers, in addition to cotton, for export. While the desert hosts some large, modern farms, more common traditional farms occupy one acre each, typically in a canal-irrigated area along the banks of the Nile. Many small farmers also have cows, water buffaloes, and chicken, although larger modern farms are becoming more important.

The United States is a major supplier of wheat, corn, and soybean products to Egypt, almost all through commercial sales. Egypt is, in fact, traditionally the U.S.'s largest market for wheat sales. U.S. agricultural sales to Egypt average $1 billion annually. U.S. food assistance programs to Egypt ended in 1992 as Egypt became more prosperous. Egypt continues to receive modest food assistance through the World Food Program and from France.

"Egypt," wrote the Greek historian Herodotus 25 centuries ago, "is the gift of the Nile." The land's seemingly inexhaustible resources of water and soil carried by this mighty river created in the Nile Valley and Delta the world's most extensive oasis. Without the Nile, Egypt would be little more than a desert wasteland.

The river carves a narrow, cultivated floodplain, never more than 20 kilometers wide, as it travels northward toward Cairo from Lake Nasser on the Sudanese border, behind the Aswan High Dam. Just north of Cairo, the Nile spreads out over what was once a broad estuary that has been filled by riverine deposits to form a fertile delta about 250 kilometers wide (150 mi.) at the seaward base and about 160 kilometers (96 mi.) from south to north.

Before the construction of dams on the Nile, particularly the Aswan High Dam (started in 1952, completed in 1970), the fertility of the Nile Valley was sustained by the water flow and the silt deposited by the annual flood. Sediment is now obstructed by the Aswan High Dam and retained in Lake Nasser. The interruption of yearly, natural fertilization and the increasing salinity of the soil has been a manageable problem resulting from the dam. The benefits remain impressive: more intensive farming on millions of acres of land made possible by improved irrigation, prevention of flood damage, and the generation of billions of low-cost kilowatt hours of electricity.

The Western Desert accounts for about two-thirds of the country's land area. For the most part, it is a massive sandy plateau marked by seven major depressions. One of these, Fayoum, was connected about 3,600 years ago to the Nile by canals. Today, it is an important irrigated agricultural area.

Natural Resources

In addition to the agricultural capacity of the Nile Valley and Delta, Egypt's natural resources include petroleum, natural gas, phosphates, and iron ore. Crude oil is found pri-

marily in the Gulf of Suez and in the Western Desert. Natural gas is found mainly in the Nile Delta, off the Mediterranean seashore, and in the Western Desert. Oil and gas accounts for approximately 12% of GDP. Export of petroleum and related products (including bunker and aviation sales) amounted to $2.7 billion in fiscal year 2003-04.

Crude oil production has been in decline for several years, from a high of more than 920,000 barrels per day (BPD) in 1995 to less than 662,000 BPD as of April 2006. To minimize the growing domestic demand of petroleum products, currently estimated at 25 million metric tons per year, Egypt is encouraging the production of natural gas. Over a 5-year period, production of natural gas increased by approximately 75% to reach about 3.3 billion cubic feet per day (BCFD) by the end of FY 2003/04. Currently, gas accounts for almost 50% of all hydrocarbon usage in Egypt.

Over the last 22 years, more than 230 oil and gas exploration agreements have been signed and multinational oil companies spent more than $27 billion in exploration companions. As of September 2003, crude oil reserves were estimated at 2.8 billion barrels, and proven natural gas reserves were estimated at 62 trillion cubic feet (TCF) with probable additional reserves totaling another 40-60 TCF. Texas-based Apache Oil Company is the largest American investor in Egypt, with a total investment of more than $2.8 billion since 1996.

Egypt's excess of natural gas will more than meet its domestic demand for many years to come. The Ministry of Petroleum has determined that expanding the Egyptian petrochemical industry and increasing exports of natural gas as its most significant strategic objectives. As of September 2005, three liquefied natural gas (LNG) trains had been in operation. The first is in Damietta on the eastern side of the Delta and started exporting in early 2005. It is headed by the Spanish electric utility, Union Fenosa. The second LNG project is located at Idku on the western side of the Delta and started exporting in 2005. The first train started in April 2005, and the second in September. British Gas (BG) Group and the Malaysian state oil company Petronas are the major investors. Another project that will utilize gas for export and domestic consumption is the Mediterranean Gas Complex in Port Said where the Italian company AGIP and BP are the main shareholders. This facility will have a total cost of about $315 million and went on line in late 2004.

Egypt and Jordan established the Eastern Gas Company to export natural gas to Jordan, and then later to Syria and Lebanon. In summer 2003 Egypt began exporting gas to Jordan via a new pipeline from El Arish on Egypt's north Sinai cost to Taba on the Gulf of Aqaba, and then underwater to the Jordanian city of Aqaba. Gas exports to Jordan generated gross revenues of approximately $60 million in 2003/04 and are currently reaching $85-100 million.

Transportation and Communication

Transportation facilities in Egypt are centered in Cairo and largely follow the pattern of settlement along the Nile. The main line of the nation's 4,800-kilometer (2,800-mi.) railway network runs from Alexandria to Aswan. The well-maintained road network has expanded rapidly to over 21,000 miles, covering the Nile Valley and Delta, Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts, the Sinai, and the Western oases.

Egypt Air provides reliable domestic air service to major tourist destinations from its Cairo hub, in addition to overseas routes. The Nile River system (about 1,600 km. or 1,000 mi.) and the principal canals (1,600 km.) are important locally for transportation. The Suez Canal is a major waterway of international commerce and navigation, linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas. Major ports are Alexandria, Port Said, and Damietta on the Mediterranean, and Suez and Safraga on the Red Sea.

Egypt has long been the cultural and informational center of the Arab world, and Cairo is the region's largest publishing and broadcasting center. There are eight daily newspapers with a total circulation of more than 2 million, and a number of monthly newspapers, magazines, and journals. The majority of political parties have their own newspapers, and these papers conduct a lively, often highly partisan, debate on public issues.

Egyptian ground-broadcast television (ETV) is government controlled and depends heavily on commercial revenue. ETV sells its specially produced programs and soap operas to the entire Arab world. In addition to Egyptian programming, the Middle East Broadcast Company, a Saudi television station transmitting from London (MBC), Arab Radio and Television (ART), Al-Jazeera television, and other Gulf stations as well as Western networks such as CNN and BBC, provide access to more international programs to Egyptians who own satellite receivers.

ETV has two main channels, six regional channels, and three satellite channels. Of the two main channels, Channel I uses mainly Arabic, while Channel II is dedicated to foreigners and more cultured viewers, broadcasting news in English and French as well as Arabic.

Egyptian Satellite channels broadcast to the Middle East, Europe, and the U.S. East Coast. In April 1998, Egypt launched its own satellite known as NileSat 101. Seven specialized channels cover news, culture, sports, education, entertainment, health, and drama. A second, digital satellite, Nilesat 102, was launched in August 2000. Many of its channels are rented to other stations.

Three new private satellite-based TV stations were launched in November 2001, marking a great change in Egyptian government policy. Dream TV 1 and 2 produce cultural programming, broadcast contemporary video clips and films featuring Arab and international actors, as well as soap operas; another private station

focuses on business and general news. Both private channels transmit on NileSat.

Radio in Egypt almost all government controlled, using 44 short-wave frequencies, 18 medium-wave stations, and four FM stations. There are seven regional radio stations covering the country. Egyptian Radio transmits 60 hours daily overseas in 33 languages and three hundred hours daily within Egypt. In 2000, Radio Cairo introduced new specialized (thematic) channels on its FM station. So far, they include news, music, and sports. Radio enjoys more freedom than TV in its news programs, talk shows and analysis.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Geography, population, history, military strength, and diplomatic expertise give Egypt extensive political influence in the Middle East and within the Non-Aligned Movement as a whole. Cairo has been a crossroads of Arab commerce and culture for millennia, and its intellectual and Islamic institutions are at the center of the region's social and cultural development.

The Arab League headquarters is in Cairo, and the Secretary General of the League is traditionally an Egyptian. Former Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa is the present Secretary General of the Arab League. President Mubarak has often chaired the African Union (formerly the Organization of African Unity). Former Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister Boutros Boutros-Ghali served as Secretary General of the United Nations from 1991 to 1996.

Egypt is a key partner in the search for peace in the Middle East and resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Sadat's groundbreaking trip to Israel in 1977, the 1978 Camp David Accords, and the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty represented a fundamental shift in the politics of the region—from a strategy of confrontation to one of peace as a strategic choice. Egypt was subsequently ostracized by other Arab states and ejected from the Arab League from 1979 to 1989. Egypt played an important role in the negotiations leading to the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, which, under U.S. and Russian sponsorship, brought together all parties in the region to discuss Middle East peace. This support has continued to the present, with President Mubarak often intervening personally to promote peace negotiations. In 1996, he hosted the Sharm El-Sheikh "Summit of the Peacemakers" attended by President Clinton and other world leaders. In 2000, he hosted two summits at Sharm El-Sheikh and one at Taba in an effort to resume the Camp David negotiations suspended in July of 2000, and in June 2003, Mubarak hosted President Bush for another summit on the Middle East peace process.

Throughout mid-2004, Egypt worked closely with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to facilitate stability following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, which occurred in August and September of 2005. Prior to this Egypt and Israel reached an agreement that allowed Egypt to deploy additional forces along the Philadelphi Corridor in an attempt to control the border and prevent the smuggling of weapons.

Egypt played a key role during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis. President Mubarak helped assemble the international coalition and deployed 35,000 Egyptian troops against Iraq to liberate Kuwait. The Egyptian contingent was the third-largest in the coalition forces, after the U.S. and U.K. In the aftermath of the Gulf war, Egypt signed the Damascus declaration with Syria and the Gulf states to strengthen Gulf security. Egypt continues to contribute regularly to UN peacekeeping missions, most recently in East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. In August 2004, Egypt was actively engaged in seeking a solution to the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan, including the dispatch of military monitors. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Egypt, which has itself been the target of terrorist attacks, has been a key supporter of the U.S. war against terrorists and terrorist organizations such as Osama bin Ladin and al-Qaeda, and actively supported the Iraqi Governing Council, as well as the subsequent government of Prime Minister Allawi. In July 2005, terrorists attacked the Egyptian city of Sharm El Sheikh. In the same month, Egypt's envoy to Iraq was assassinated.

U.S.-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS

The United States and Egypt enjoy a strong and friendly relationship based on shared mutual interest in Middle East peace and stability, revitalizing the Egyptian economy and strengthening trade relations, and promoting regional security. Over the years, Egypt and the United States have worked together assiduously to expand Middle East peace negotiations, hosting talks, negotiations, and the Middle East and North Africa Economic (MENA) Conference. Multinational exercises, U.S. assistance to Egypt's military modernization program, and Egypt's role as a contributor to various UN peacekeeping operations continually reinforce the U.S.-Egyptian military relationship.

An important pillar of the bilateral relationship remains U.S. security and economic assistance to Egypt, which expanded significantly in the wake of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979. U.S. military aid to Egypt totals over $1.3 billion annually. In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided over $25 billion in economic and development assistance to Egypt between 1975 and 2002. A shift in assistance from infrastructure, health, food supply, and agriculture toward market-based economic development, good governance, and training programs is reflected in the motto, "From Aid to Trade." The Commodity Import Program, through which USAID provides hundreds of millions of dollars in financing to enable the Egyptian private sector to import U.S. goods, remains one of the largest and most popular USAID pro-

grams. Since 2003, U.S. assistance is also focusing more on economic reform, education, civil society, and other programs supported by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI).

U.S. military cooperation has helped Egypt modernize its armed forces and strengthen regional security and stability. Under Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs, the U.S. has provided F-4 jet aircraft, F-16 jet fighters, M-60A3 and M1A1 tanks, armored personnel carriers, Apache helicopters, antiaircraft missile batteries, aerial surveillance aircraft, and other equipment. The U.S. and Egypt also participate in combined military exercises, including deployments of U.S. troops to Egypt. Every other year, Egypt hosts Operation Bright Star, a multilateral military exercise with the U.S., and the largest military exercise in the region. Units of the U.S. 6th Fleet are regular visitors to Egyptian ports.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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FCS:	Amer Kayani
FM:	Kenneth Schroeder
HRO:	Beryl Bentley-Anderson
IBB:	Challiss McDonough
MGT:	Dolores M. Brown
POL/ECO:	William Stewart
AMB:	Margaret M. Scobey
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GSO:	Kevin Blackstone
RSO:	Bill Miler
AFSA:	Xxx
AGR:	Peter Kurz
AID:	Hilda Arellano
APHIS:	Linda Logan
CLO:	Linda Consigny
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EEO:	Carlos Figueroa
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 15, 2008

Country Description: Egypt is a republic with a developing economy. It has extensive facilities for tourists.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Tourists can obtain a renewable thirty-day tourist visa on arrival at an Egyptian airport for a $15 fee, payable in U.S. dollars. Visitors arriving overland and/or those who previously experienced difficulty with their visa status in Egypt should obtain a visa prior to arrival. Travelers arriving from Israel at the Taba border crossing are advised to obtain a visa prior to their arrival, otherwise they are granted either a no-fee, fourteen-day visa valid for travel within Sinai only, or they may buy a thirty-day tourist visa for $15 upon submission of a travel agency support letter. The letters are obtainable from travel agents at the border; however, their fees for providing this service vary. Military personnel arriving on commercial flights are not exempt from passport and visa requirements. As of January 2009, Diplomatic and Official passport holders are required to have a visa before arrival in Egypt. The Egyptian Embassy in Washington is currently requiring 7-10 working days to process official visa requests, an expedite letter from the Department of State notwithstanding, so it is incumbent upon all travelers to submit their visa requests and passports to the Egyptian Embassy well in advance of travel. Foreigners can acquire a work permit from the Ministry of Manpower and Immigration offices in the district of the employer, and accordingly are authorized residency in the country. Work permits must be obtained through the employer. Foreigners are generally not allowed to change residency status from non-working to working status while in the country. Foreign workers must obtain a work permit and work visa before arrival in Egypt. Foreigners in Egypt on tourist visas are not permitted to work. Proof of yellow fever immunization is required if arriving from an infected area. Evidence of an AIDS test is required for everyone staying over thirty days, for the purpose of studying or working in Egypt. Visit the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs web site at http://www.mfa.gov.eg/mfa_portal/en-gb/ for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: In September 2008, 11 foreign tourists and eight Egyptians were kidnapped for ransom in the remote south-western desert region, close to the Sudanese border. Tourists should avoid travel to the border region.

The Egyptian-Gaza border has been closed on a permanent basis since June 2007, and the Egyptian Government only re-opens the border temporarily for short periods of time. These re-openings are announced on short notice. Travelers who need to cross this border should contact the U.S. Embassy in Cairo for more information on the current status of the border crossing. Travelers should also refer to the Travel Warning for Israel, West Bank and Gaza, which advises against traveling to Gaza. Official U. S. government travel to the areas of Rafah and Al Arish in the North Sinai is restricted.

Egypt suffered a series of deadly terrorist attacks in or near tourist sites in 2004, 2005, and 2006—often coinciding with major local holidays. Americans should be especially vigilant in crowded tourist areas, practice good personal security measures,

and be alert to their surroundings. A heavy security presence is apparent to travelers throughout the country. U.S. citizens do not appear to have been targeted in any of these incidents.

Three explosions in the town of Dahab in April 2006 killed over 20 people and wounded at least 80 others, including five U.S. citizens. In July 2005, three explosions in Sharm el Sheikh killed over 60 people, including one American. In October 2004, three bombs detonated in Taba and two nearby tourist camps, killing 34 people, including one American. Evidence of instability in the Sinai has also been reflected in random attacks on vehicles transiting the interior and two bomb attacks on Multinational Force Observers near the Rafah border crossing in August 2005 and April 2006. While the Egyptian Government took measures against the perpetrators of the 2004 and 2005 attacks, the April 2006 bombings reflect a persistent, indigenous threat of terror activities in the Sinai.

U.S. citizens who still plan to visit the Sinai in spite of the persistent threat of terrorist attacks should exercise great caution. Travelers are reminded to remain alert to their surroundings and are reminded that crowded tourist areas have been the target of terrorist activities. Travelers should use caution when visiting destination resorts and hotels without significant physical setback and security procedures. Americans are encouraged to visit the U.S. Embassy in Cairo web site at http://cairo.usembassy.gov for the most up-to-date security information.

In addition to the Sinai attacks, there were three terror attacks on crowded tourist destinations in Cairo in April 2005. In one, a lone suicide bomber killed three foreigners, including an American, at Cairo's Khan el-Khalili Market. Three Americans were seriously injured in this incident.

There have been instances of instability and public disorder in some other areas of Egypt, most notably in the Nile Valley governorates of Assiut and Sohag, located between Cairo and Luxor. These governorates, along with the adjacent governorates of Minya and Qena, have been areas of extremist activity in the past. U.S. Embassy personnel traveling to these areas (apart from Luxor and adjacent tourist destinations) require advance approval. Egyptian authorities also restrict the travel of foreigners in these governorates. American citizens planning to travel in these areas should contact the Embassy prior to travel.

Public demonstrations occasionally take place in areas such as Tahrir Square in Cairo and in the vicinity of universities and mosques following the Friday noon prayers, including the Azhar mosque across from the Khan El Khalili Bazaar area. These demonstrations are typically accompanied by a heavy security presence. Roads in the vicinity are often closed. Americans should remain attuned to readily-available English-language media outlets and avoid all public demonstrations.

Travelers to Egypt's frontiers, including the borders with Libya, Sudan, and Israel and parts of the Sinai off the main, paved roads, must obtain permission from the Travel Permits Department of the Ministry of the Interior, located at the corner of Sheikh Rihan and Nubar Streets in downtown Cairo

Those wishing to visit areas near Egypt's frontiers, including oases near the border with Libya and off-road areas in the Sinai, must obtain permission from the Travel Permits Department of the Ministry of the Interior, located at the corner of Sheikh Rihan and Nubar Streets in downtown Cairo. Travelers should be aware of the possible dangers of off-road travel.

In addition, travelers should be aware that landmines have caused many casualties, including deaths of Americans, in Egypt. All travelers should check with local authorities before embarking on off-road travel. Known minefields are not reliably marked by signs, but are sometimes enclosed by barbed wire. After heavy rains, which can cause flooding and the consequent shifting of landmines, travelers should take care driving through build-ups of sand on roadways. Though mines are found in other parts of Egypt, the highest concentrations are in World War II battlefields along the Mediterranean coast west of Alexandria, the Eastern Desert between Cairo and the Suez Canal, and much of the Sinai Peninsula. Travelers are urged to be especially prudent in these areas.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert and the Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, can be found. Consular information is also available via the Internet on the U.S. Embassy Cairo's website. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. A recording of the most recent Embassy message to American citizens in Egypt concerning security can be heard on the U.S. Embassy in Cairo's number, 011-2-02-797-3000.

Crime: The crime rate in Egypt is low. While incidents of violence are rare, purse-snatching, pick-pocketing and petty theft does occur. Travelers are strongly cautioned not to leave valuables such as cash, jewelry, and electronic items unsecured in hotel rooms or unattended in public places. Unescorted women are vulnerable to sexual harassment and verbal abuse. The Embassy has received increasing reports over the last six months of foreigners being sexually groped in taxis and in public places. Travelers are cautioned to be aware of their surroundings and to be cautious going anywhere with a stranger alone.

Many marriages between Egyptians and Americans are successful. However, the Embassy warns against marriage fraud on the part of the American or the Egyptian. Entering

into a marriage contract for the principal purpose of facilitating immigration to the United States for an alien is against U.S. law and can result in serious penalties, including fines and imprisonment for the American citizen and the Egyptian. At the same time, it is not uncommon for Egyptians to enter into marriages with Americans solely for immigration purposes. Relationships developed via correspondence, particularly those begun on the Internet, are particularly susceptible to manipulation. The U.S. government urges Americans who meet Egyptians on the Internet or while touring the country, to take the time necessary to get to know them before considering marriage. Unfortunately, the Embassy sees many cases of abuse against American spouses and often the marriages end in divorce when the Egyptian acquires a green card or citizenship in the United States. These cases invariably occur when the relationship is based mostly on Internet communication and very little face-to-face interaction.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Embassy consular staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Consular officials can assist you to identify appropriate resources. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Egypt is 122. U.S.-citizen tourists can forward their complaints for investigation by the Tourist Police Headquarters.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Egypt falls short of U.S. standards. The U.S. Embassy in Cairo can provide a list of local hospitals and English-speaking physicians. Emergency and intensive care facilities are limited. Most Nile cruise boats do not have a ship's doctor, but some employ a medical practitioner of uncertain qualification. Hospital facilities in Luxor and Aswan are inadequate, and they are nonexistent at most other ports-of-call. The Egyptian ambulance service hotline is 123, but Egyptian ambulance service is not reliable.

Beaches on the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts are generally unpolluted. Persons who swim in the Nile or its canals, walk barefoot in stagnant water, or drink untreated water are at risk of exposure to bacterial and other infections and the parasitic disease schistosomiasis (bilharzia).

It is generally safe to eat properly-prepared, thoroughly-cooked meat and vegetables in tourist hotels, on Nile cruise boats, and in tourist restaurants. Eating uncooked vegetables should be avoided. Tap water is not potable. It is best to drink bottled water or water that has been boiled and filtered. Well-known brands of bottled beverages are generally considered to be safe.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors. Foreign residents and their dependents aged 15 or older who are in Egypt applying for work, study or training permits and staying longer than 30 days require HIV testing. A test performed in the U.S. may be accepted under certain conditions. Please verify this information with the Government of Egypt at http://www.mfa.gov.eg/mfa_portal/en-gb/ before you travel.

Avian Influenza: As of October 15, 2008, the Egyptian Ministry of Health has confirmed fifty human cases of the H5NI strain of avian influenza in Egypt since March 2006. Commonly known as "bird flu," the disease has resulted in twenty-two deaths. Travelers to Egypt and other countries affected by the virus are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. In addition, the CDC and WHO recommend eating only fully-cooked poultry and eggs. For the most current information and links on avian influenza see the State Department's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet and visit the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo at http://cairo.usembassy.gov. For complete U.S. Government information on pandemic preparedness, please visit www.pandemicflu.gov.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Egypt is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Driving in Egypt, a country with one of the world's highest rates of road fatalities per mile driven, is a chal-

lenge. Even seasoned residents of Cairo must use extraordinary care and situational awareness to navigate the hectic streets of the capital. Traffic rules appear to be routinely ignored by impatient drivers.

Any visiting Americans thinking about driving in Cairo should carefully consider their options, take the utmost precautions, and drive defensively. Drivers should be prepared for unlit vehicles at night; few, if any, road markings; vehicles traveling at high rates of speed; vehicles traveling the wrong way on one-way streets; divided highways and connecting ramps; pedestrians constantly dodging in and out of traffic; and a variety of animals on the roads. Most traffic lights in Cairo appear not to function, but rather intersections are staffed by policemen who use subtle finger movements to indicate which cars may move. Pedestrians should also exercise extreme caution when traversing roadways, especially in high-volume/high-velocity streets like Cairo's Corniche, which follows the east bank of the Nile River. Motorists in Egypt should be especially cautious during the rare winter rains, which can cause extremely slippery road surfaces or localized flooding.

Public mini- and microbuses are not safe; the Embassy strongly recommends that its personnel not use them. In 2006, there were two serious accidents involving international tourist buses on highways outside of Cairo in which a number of foreign tourists were killed. Intercity roads are generally in good condition, but unmarked surfaces, stray animals, and disabled vehicles without lights or reflectors are among the many hazards that can be encountered on highways, especially after dark. Embassy personnel in Egypt are prohibited from traveling outside Cairo on official business after sunset.

In addition, some roads, especially in the Sinai and southeastern part of the country, are off-limits to foreigners. Traffic warning signs should be respected. Trains are usually a safe means of transportation in Egypt. In 2006, there were several accidents involving the collision of third-class passenger trains in the Delta area in which a number of Egyptian nationals were killed or injured.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Egypt's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Egypt's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: There are restrictions on photographing military personnel and sites, bridges, and canals, including the Suez Canal. Egyptian authorities may broadly interpret these restrictions to include other potentially-sensitive structures, such as embassies, other public buildings with international associations, and some religious edifices. Visitors should also refrain from taking photographs of any uniformed personnel.

In addition to being subject to all Egyptian laws, U.S. citizens of Egyptian origin may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Egyptian citizens. The Government of Egypt considers all children born to Egyptian fathers to be Egyptian citizens even if they were not issued an Egyptian birth certificate or a passport. American women married to Egyptians do not need their spouse's permission to depart Egypt as long as they have a valid Egyptian visa. Dual nationals residing in Egypt for more than six months from the date of arrival require proof of Egyptian citizenship, such as a family I.D. card. Male dual nationals staying in Egypt for more than six months from the date of arrival and who have not completed military service are not generally required to enlist in the armed forces. However, they must obtain an exemption certificate through the Ministry of Defense Draft Office before they can leave Egypt. Individuals who may be affected can inquire at an Egyptian consulate abroad before traveling to Egypt. Dual Egyptian-American nationals may enter and leave Egypt on their U.S. passports. Persons with dual nationality who travel to Egypt on their Egyptian passports are normally treated as Egyptian citizens by the local government. The ability to provide U.S. consular assistance to those traveling on Egyptian passports is extremely limited. For additional information, please see our dual nationality flyer.

Services for U.S. Companies: The U.S. Department of Commerce's Officers and Commercial Specialists are available for counseling U.S. business representatives on market-entry opportunities and techniques. They actively support U.S. companies who are bidding on projects, advocate on their behalf and assist in removing trade barriers. For specific questions, please contact American.Products@mail.doc.gov or visit http://www.buyusa.gov/egypt/en/ussvcs.html.

Marriage in Egypt: The Egyptian government allows Americans to marry in Egypt. For further information, please refer to the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo at http://cairo.usembassy.gov/consular/acs12.htm.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Egyptian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Egypt are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child

abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Egypt are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Egypt. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the Embassy.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 5 Tawfik Diab Street, Garden City, Cairo, telephone (20) 2 2797-2301. Walk-in working hours are 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Sunday through Thursday. Phone inquiries are between 1:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. The latest Embassy warden message can be heard on (20) 2 2797-3000. For emergencies after-hours, U.S. citizens may reach the Embassy duty officer via (20) 2 2797-3300. The Consular Section American Citizens Services unit fax number is (20) 2 2797-3602.

The mailing address from the United States is: Consular Section, Unit 64900, Box 15, APO AE 09839-4900. Within Egypt or from a third country, it is 8 Kamal el-Din Salah Street, Garden City, Cairo. The Consular Section's e-mail address is consular cairoacs@state.gov. Consular information is available via the Internet on the Embassy website http://cairo.usembassy.gov.

Visa-related inquiries should be directed by e-mail to consular caironiv@state.gov. Once a month, American Citizens Services are available at the American Center, 3 Pharana Street, Azarita, Alexandria, and every five to ten weeks, American Citizens Services are available at the Cairo American College, Maadi. Please check the Embassy web site for dates and times of available services.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Egyptian governmental authority for adoptions and guardianship is divided between the Ministry of Social Affairs (for Muslims) and the court system (for Christians). See below for further details.

Adoption for Muslims: The Egyptian judicial system and Egyptian family law are based on a strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, which restricts the distribution of inheritance to spouses, biological children, and certain blood relatives. It is not possible under Sharia law to create a parent-child relationship that offers the same rights and responsibilities as those between a biological parent and child, which is the definition of adoption as it is generally understood in the United States.

For Christians: Christians are not bound by Sharia law, are not generally under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Affairs, and may adopt through the Egyptian court system. It is important to note that the U.S. Embassy in Cairo has no authority to intervene in Egyptian court proceedings. Therefore, prospective adoptive parents who will be processing their adoptions through the courts are strongly advised to hire an Egyptian attorney to assist in their cases and address questions involving the interpretation of Egyptian family law.

Guardianship can only be done by blood relatives, more specifically, the next of kin. **Fostering**, however, assumes no blood relationship, and can take two forms: the most common form is such that a person will benevolently agree to partially or fully support a child who remains in an orphanage. It is also possible to foster a child in one's home, in which case the foster parent will enter into a contract with the orphanage and agree to fully support the child. To begin this process, the foster family is asked to submit a fostering request to the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) with all documentation with proof that they are capable to provide all types of support to the orphan. If the request is approved, the MOSA will issue permission to allow an orphanage to release a child to be fostered at the home of the foster family. There are no court proceedings involved in this process. There are both Muslim and Christian orphanages in Egypt and prospective guardians may foster a child of the same religion only.

Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Eligibility to Adopt: Obtaining permission to adopt or foster an Egyptian child is a difficult process. Prospective foster parents are required to undergo a pre-qualification process through the Ministry of Social Affairs. This is similar to the U.S. screening process for foster parents and includes, among other things, regular visits by a social worker to determine whether prospective parents are able to care for the child properly. The number of visits is determined by the social worker.

Residency Requirements: There is no residency requirement for adoption, provided the prospective parents had satisfied the requirement of the Egyptian law and are awarded legal custody with the right to remove the child from Egypt for immigration. For guardianship, a lawyer can move

the prospective parent's case through the court system without the guardians. However, at least one of the prospective parents applying for guardianship, adoption or fostering needs to be able to show proof of Egyptian citizenship (e.g. an Egyptian passport or national ID card).

Time Frame: To satisfy the requirements of the Egyptian family law and be awarded legal custody, adoption or permission to foster an orphan at home with an approval to remove the child for immigration is a long and difficult process. Therefore a time frame is impossible to predict. However, once a child has been identified, an I-600A application for advance processing of orphan petition has been approved by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office having jurisdiction over the prospective parents' place of residence, and the prospective parents have satisfied Egyptian law and been awarded legal custody, the immigration process takes between 1-2 weeks.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. The U.S. Embassy in Cairo maintains a list of Egyptian attorneys whom U.S. citizens in Egypt may wish to consider contacting for assistance with legal issues in Egypt. That list is available at http://egypt.usembassy.gov/consular/acslist2.htm.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Egypt discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Egypt at risk. The U.S. Embassy in Cairo cannot predict the approximate fees for the process of being granted an adoption or guardianship, as they differ from case to case. While the orphanages themselves do not require payment in exchange for releasing a child, the prospective parents/guardians will need legal advice and/or facilitators in order to expedite the process and to obtain the required official documentation and approval. Attorneys and facilitators will charge fees.

Adoption Procedures: A social worker from the MOSA will visit the parents to make sure that the foster family will be capable to provide all types of support to an infant. Once all documents are complete, they will be sent to the MOSA Committee for adjudication. If all conditions are met, the MOSA will issue an approval or denial. Foster parents are notified and then are free to visit an orphanage to choose from children whose parents are unknown.

The foster family will sign a contract with the orphanage showing that the orphanage is officially releasing the child to the foster family and that the foster family will allow a social worker from the MOSA to visit the infant on a regular basis to determine whether the foster parents are able to care for the child properly.

Christians wishing to adopt in Egypt should seek legal counsel from an Egyptian attorney in order to receive the most updated information regarding the proper procedures and documentation for adopting or acquiring custody of an Egyptian orphan. All prospective parents are required to apply to the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) to qualify to become foster parents.

Required Documents: To begin the process, foster parents need to submit the following documents:

- A copy of the marriage decree.
- Employment status and proof that they will be able financially to support a child (proof of income).
- Proof that one of the parents is infertile (cannot give birth).
- Proof that one of the foster parents is an Egyptian citizen.

Embassy of the
Arab Republic of Egypt
3521 International Court, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20008
(Phone 202-895-5400)
(FAX 202-244-4319/5131)
Consular Section: 202-966 6342.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

The **Consular Section in Cairo** has a call center that handles general questions, responds to case-specific inquiries, and schedules appointments for certain services (but not visa interviews). The number is 0900-70600. For a small fee, one may call the call center from a land line in Egypt. From a call center mobile in Egypt, call 2100.

E-Mail: ConsularCairo@state.gov

Consular Section, IV Unit
Embassy of the United States
of America
5 Tawfik Diab Street
Garden City, Cairo
Egypt

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular

Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this circular relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign counsel.

The information contained in this flyer is intended as an introduction to the basic elements of children's issues in Egypt. It is not intended as a legal reference. Currently there are no international or bilateral treaties in force between Egypt and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction cannot be invoked if a child is taken from the United States to Egypt, or vice versa, by one parent against the wishes of the other parent or in violation of a U.S. custody order.

Parental Kidnapping: The removal of a child by the non-custodial parent to or within Egypt is not a crime in Egypt unless the child is subject to Egyptian court-ordered travel restrictions. Additionally, parents should be aware that they must work within the Egyptian court system in order to obtain legal custody of the child in Egypt. Once the custody order is obtained, the parent must go to the district family court for its implementation. The president of the court has the authority to request that the police enforce the custody order and/or impose a penalty on the noncustodial parent for noncompliance with the custody order.

Dual Nationality: Egypt recognizes the concept of dual nationality. Under Egyptian law, children born to an Egyptian father are automatically considered citizens of Egypt. Egyptian mothers of children born to a non-Egyptian father, however, should submit requests to the Egyptian Passports, Immigration and Nationality Authority, Egyptian Embassies or Consulates overseas, and/or the Civil Registration Office to register their children as Egyptian citizens.

Enforcement of Foreign Court Orders: A parent can request that a foreign custody order be recognized in Egypt, but enforcement will result only if the order does not contravene Sharia law and "paternal rights." Therefore, as a practical matter, foreign custody orders are not generally automatically recognized in Egypt, and the parent must seek legal representation in Egypt.

Jurisdiction And Right Of Custody: Jurisdiction: Egyptian Family Courts within the jurisdiction of each summary court have legal jurisdiction to hear child custody petitions.

Presumptive Custody: Under Egyptian law, the courts generally favor the mother. Mothers are most commonly considered to be the appropriate custodians of children up to age 15. Normally, if custody disputes arise between parents, Egyptian courts uphold presumptive custody.

Conditions for "Presumptive Custody": Courts in Egypt generally uphold presumptive custody for the mother if she is a "person of the book" (i.e., Muslim, Christian or Jewish) and if she is deemed to be a "fit" mother. If the father is Muslim, the court generally requires that the mother commit herself to raise the child as a Muslim in Egypt.

If a non-Egyptian mother's custody is upheld in court, she generally must still request the permission of the court to take the children out of Egypt. Also, under Egyptian law, if the mother (Muslim or non-Muslim) remarries she may lose her claim to custody of her children, depending on the court's determination based on the best interests of the child. This law, however, does not apply to the father; he would normally retain custody rights if he remarries.

Order of Preference for Non-Parental Custody: The mother may lose presumptive custody due to remarriage or inability to counter court findings that she is an "unfit mother." In such cases, the courts recognize an order of preference of alternate adult custodians with priority given to the mother's family in the following order: maternal grandmother or great-grandmother; paternal grandmother or great-grandmother; maternal aunt; paternal aunt; maternal niece; paternal niece. If these relatives do not exist, the right of custody shifts to a male in the following order of priority: maternal grandfather; maternal brother; maternal nephew; paternal brother.

Right of Visitation: By law, visitation depends on the willingness of the custodial parent. If a father has custody and does not voluntarily agree to visitation, the local authorities will generally not force the issue without a court order. The parent will have to seek a court order to enforce visitation.

Egyptian/American MOU on Parental Access: In October 2003, the U.S. and Egypt signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that confirms both countries' commitment to facilitating parental access to children in the other country. Both the U.S. and Egypt agree that a left-behind parent should have meaningful access to his or her child or children. However, the MOU recognizes that facilitating parental access may occur in tandem with efforts to return children to their custodial parents.

Currently, however, there are no international or bilateral treaties in force between Egypt and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. Egypt is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Thus, this treaty cannot be invoked if a child is taken from the U.S. to Egypt by one parent against the wishes of the other parent or in violation of a U.S. custody order.

Travel: Currently, the father's permission is not required for children to depart Egypt unless there is a custody order that explicitly grants custody to the father. Egyptian fathers no longer have absolute control over their children's right to travel abroad.

They can still prevent their children from traveling, but must do so by means of a court order.

Travel Restrictions (Wife): Due to a Supreme Court decision in March 2000, an Egyptian wife no longer requires the permission of her Egyptian husband to obtain a passport and depart the country. In the case of a child custody dispute, however, either spouse may obtain a court order preventing the other spouse from traveling until the dispute has been resolved.

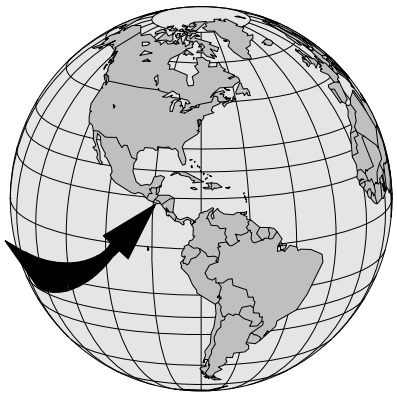
Visas: Should a parent declare a child's passport stolen or lost, the new passport plus a police report of loss or theft is generally sufficient for the re-issuance of a tourist visa. If the Immigration Authority's records indicate the bearer has a prolonged stay in Egypt, however, issuance of the visa may halt pending issuance of an Egyptian birth certificate. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Issuance Of Egyptian Passports: Under Egyptian law, either parent may apply for an Egyptian passport for his/her child, provided there have been no court-ordered restrictions placed on the child's departure. In some recent cases, minors have been able to obtain Egyptian passports on their own behalf.

U.S. Embassy in Cairo
5 Latin America Street
Garden City
Cairo, Egypt
Telephone: 20-2-797-3000
Consular Section Telephone: 20-2-797-2301
Fax: 20-2-797-2472
Mailing Address:
Consular Section—Box 15
Unit 64900
APO AE 09839-4900
Web Site: http://egypt.usembassy.gov

Embassy of the Arab
Republic of Egypt
3521 International Court, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Telephone: (202) 895-5400
Fax: (202) 244-4319/5131
Consular Section: (202) 966-6342

More Information: For further information and/or assistance in either preventing or responding to an international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



EL SALVADOR

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of El Salvador

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 20,742 sq. km. (8,008 sq. mi.); about the size of Massachusetts.

Cities: Capital—San Salvador (pop. 2.2 million). Other cities—Santa Ana, San Miguel, Soyapango, and Apopa.

Terrain: Mountains separate country into three distinct regions—southern coastal belt, central valleys and plateaus, and northern mountains.

Climate: Semitropical, distinct wet and dry seasons.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Salvadoran(s).

Population: (2007 est.) 5.7 million.

Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 1.7%.

Ethnic groups: Mestizo 90%, indigenous 1%, Caucasian 9%.

Religions: About 52% Roman Catholic, with significant and growing numbers of Protestant groups.

Languages: Spanish.

Education: Free through ninth grade. Attendance (grades 1-9)—90.4%. Literacy—85.4% nationally; 77% in rural areas.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2005)—23/1,000 (source: UNICEF). Life expectancy at birth (2007)—70.8 years.

Work force: (about 1.7 million, 2007) Agriculture—17%; services—48.7%; industry—15.7%; construction—7.6%; government—4.5% (2006).

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: December 20, 1983.

Independence: September 15, 1821.

Government branches: Executive—president and vice president. Legislative—84-member Legislative Assembly. Judicial—independent (Supreme Court).

Political subdivisions: 14 departments.

Political parties: (represented in the legislature) Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), National Conciliation Party (PCN), Christian Democratic Party (PDC), and Democratic Change (CD).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007)$20.4 billion; PPP GDP $41.56 billion (2007 IMF estimate).

GDP annual real growth rate: (2007) 4.7%.

Per capita income: (2007) $3,547.21; PPP per capita income $5,842 (2007 IMF estimate).

Agriculture: (11.2% of GDP, 2007) Products—coffee, sugar, livestock, corn, poultry, and sorghum. Arable, cultivated, or pasture land—68% (2005).

Industry: (20.6% of GDP, 2007) Types—textiles and apparel, medicines, food and beverage processing, clothing, chemical products, petroleum products, electronics, call centers.

Trade: (2006) Exports—$4 billion: textiles and apparel, ethyl alcohol, coffee, sugar, medicines, iron and steel products, tuna, light manufacturing, and paper products. Major markets—U.S. 50.8%, Central American Common Market (CACM) 33.7%. Imports—$8.7 billion: petroleum, iron products, machines and mechanical devices, cars, medicines, consumer goods, foodstuffs, capital goods, and raw industrial materials. Major suppliers—U.S. 35.6%, CACM 16.8%, Mexico 9.8%.

PEOPLE

El Salvador's population numbers about 5.7 million. Almost 90% is of mixed Indian and Spanish extraction. About 1% is indigenous; very few Indians have retained their customs and traditions. The country's people

are largely Roman Catholic and Protestant. Spanish is the language spoken by virtually all inhabitants. The capital city of San Salvador has about 1.6 million people; an estimated 37.3% of El Salvador's population lives in rural areas.

HISTORY

The Pipil Indians, descendants of the Aztecs, and the Pocomames and Lencas were the original inhabitants of El Salvador.

The first Salvadoran territory visited by Spaniards was on Meanguera Island, located in the Gulf of Fonseca, where Spanish Admiral Andrés Niño led an expedition to Central America and disembarked on May 31, 1522. In June 1524, the Spanish Captain Pedro de Alvarado started a war to conquer Cuscatlán. His cousin Diego de Alvarado established the village of San Salvador in April 1525. In 1546, Charles I of Spain granted San Salvador the title of city.

During the subsequent years, the country evolved under Spanish rule; however, toward the end of 1810 many people began to express discontent. On November 5, 1811, when the Priest José Matias Delgado rang the bells of La Merced Church in San Salvador calling for insurrection, the people began to band together for freedom.

In 1821, El Salvador and the other Central American provinces declared their independence from Spain. When these provinces were joined with Mexico in early 1822, El Salvador resisted, insisting on autonomy for the Central American countries. In 1823, the United Provinces of Central America was formed of the five Central American states under Gen. Manuel Jose Arce. When this federation was dissolved in 1838, El Salvador became an independent republic. El Salvador's early history as an independent state—as with others in Central America—was marked by frequent revolutions; not until the period 1900-30 was relative stability achieved. Following a deterioration in the country's democratic institutions in the 1970s a period of civil war followed from 1980-1992. More than 75,000 people are estimated to have died in the conflict. In January 1992, after prolonged negotiations, the opposing sides signed peace accords which ended the war, brought the military under civilian control, and allowed the former guerillas to form a legitimate political party and participate in elections.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

El Salvador is a democratic republic governed by a president and an 84-member unicameral Legislative Assembly. The president is elected by universal suffrage by absolute majority vote and serves for a 5-year term. A second round runoff is required in the event that no candidate receives more than 50% of the first round vote. Members of the assembly are elected based on the number of votes that their parties obtain in each department (circumscriptive suffrage) and serve for 3-year terms. The country has an independent judiciary and Supreme Court. Legislative and municipal elections will be held in January 2009. Presidential elections will be held in March 2009.

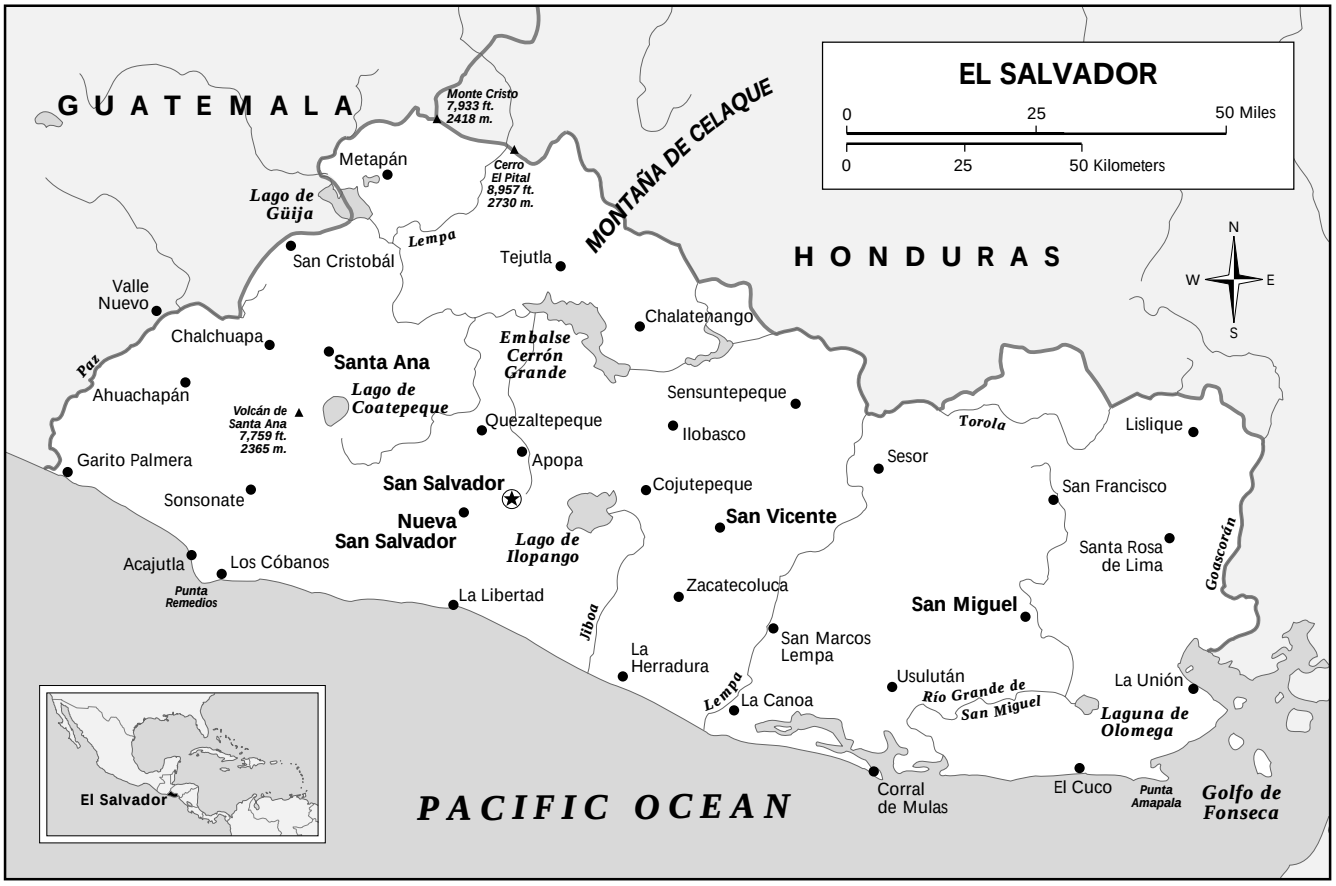
Political Landscape

Hard-line conservatives, including some members of the military, created the Nationalist Republican Alliance party (ARENA) in 1981. ARENA almost won the election in 1984 with solid private sector and rural farmer support. By 1989, ARENA had attracted the support of business groups. Multiple factors contributed to ARENA victories in the 1988 legislative and 1989 presidential elections, including allegations of corruption in the ruling Christian Democratic party, poor relations with the private sector, and historically low prices for the nation's main agricultural exports.

The successes of Alfredo Cristiani's 1989-94 administration in achieving a peace agreement to end the civil war and in improving the nation's economy helped ARENA—led by former San Salvador mayor Armando Calderon Sol—keep both the presidency and a working majority in the Legislative Assembly in the 1994 elections. ARENA's legislative position was weakened in the 1997 elections, but it recovered its strength, helped by divisions in the opposition, in time for another victory in the 1999 presidential race, bringing President Francisco Guillermo Flores Perez to office. Flores concentrated on modernizing the economy and strengthening bilateral relations with the United States by becoming a committed partner in anti-terror efforts, sending troops to aid in the reconstruction of Iraq, and by playing a key role in negotiations for the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR).

Taking advantage of both public apprehension of Flores' policies and ARENA infighting, the chief opposition party, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), was able to score a significant victory against ARENA in the March 2003 legislative and municipal elections. ARENA, left with only 29 seats in the 84-seat Legislative Assembly, was forced to court the right-wing National Conciliation Party (PCN) in order to form a majority voting bloc. However, in 2003 the PCN entered into a loose partnership with the FMLN, further limiting ARENA's ability to maneuver in the legislature.

Despite these constraints, ARENA made a strong showing in the March 2004 presidential election, which was marked by an unprecedented 67% voter turnout. ARENA candidate Elias Antonio "Tony" Saca handily defeated the FMLN candidate and party head Shafik Handal, garnering 57.71% of the votes cast. The defeat of the FMLN's presidential candidate rekindled an internal FMLN struggle between party hardliners and more moderate party members who saw the party's 2004 defeat as a call for reform. In addition, the PCN and the



two parties that comprise the center/center-left coalition, the United Democratic Center (CDU) and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), faced dissolution for failing to each capture at least 3% of the votes.

In March 2006 Legislative Assembly and municipal elections, the ruling ARENA party garnered 34 Assembly deputies and 147 mayoralties, while the opposition FMLN won 32 legislative seats and 51 city halls (plus 8 additional mayoralties in which they participated as part of a coalition). The PCN, PDC, and CD carried 10, 6, and 2 Legislative Assembly seats, respectively.

As with the 2003-2006 Assembly, the combined 44 seats of ARENA and their center-right PCN allies are sufficient for all legislation requiring a 43-vote simple majority, while the FMLN can still block legislation requiring a two-thirds (56 vote) supermajority. El Salvador's political parties are preparing and planning for 2009, when presidential, legislative, and municipal elections will be held in the same year for the first time since 1994.

Human Rights and Post-War Reforms

During the 12-year civil war, human rights violations by both the government security forces and left-wing guerillas were rampant. The accords established a Truth Commission under UN auspices to investigate the most serious cases. The commission recommended that those identified as human rights violators be removed from all government and military posts. Thereafter, the Legislative Assembly granted amnesty for political crimes committed during the war. Among those freed as a result were the Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) officers convicted in the November 1989 Jesuit murders and the FMLN ex-combatants held for the 1991 murders of two U.S. servicemen. The peace accords also established the Ad Hoc Commission to evaluate the human rights record of the ESAF officer corps.

In accordance with the peace agreements, the constitution was amended to prohibit the military from playing an internal security role except under extraordinary circumstances. Demobilization of Salvadoran military forces generally proceeded on schedule throughout the process. The Treasury Police, National Guard, and National Police were abolished, and military intelligence functions were transferred to civilian control. By 1993—9 months ahead of schedule—the military had cut personnel from a war-time high of 63,000 to the level of 32,000 required by the peace accords. By 1999, ESAF strength stood at less than 15,000, including uniformed and non-uniformed personnel, consisting of personnel in the army, navy, and air force. A purge of military officers accused of human rights abuses and corruption was completed in 1993 in compliance with the Ad Hoc

Commission's recommendations. The military's new doctrine, professionalism, and complete withdrawal from political and economic affairs leave it the most respected institution in El Salvador. More than 35,000 eligible beneficiaries from among the former guerrillas and soldiers who fought the war received land under the peace accord-mandated land transfer program, which ended in January 1997. The majority of them have received agricultural credits.

National Civilian Police

The civilian police force, created to replace the discredited public security forces, deployed its first officers in March 1993 and was present throughout the country by the end of 1994. The National Civilian Police (PNC) has about 16,000 officers. The United States, through the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP), led international support for the PNC and the National Public Security Academy (ANSP), providing about $32 million in non-lethal equipment and training since 1992.

Judiciary

Following the peace accords, both the Truth Commission and the Joint Group identified weaknesses in the judiciary and recommended solutions, the most dramatic being the replacement of all the magistrates on the Supreme Court. This recommendation was fulfilled in 1994 when an entirely new court was elected, but weaknesses remain. The process of replacing incompetent judges in the lower courts, and of strengthening the attorney generals' and public defender's offices, has moved more slowly. The government continues to work in all of these areas with the help of international donors, including the United States. Action on peace accord-driven constitutional reforms designed to improve the administration of justice was largely completed in 1996 with legislative approval of several amendments and the revision of the Criminal Procedure Code—with broad political consensus.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Elias Antonio SACA Gonzalez**
Vice Pres.: **Ana Vilma Albanez de ESCOBAR**
Min. of Agriculture & Livestock: **Mario SALAVERIA**
Min. of Defense: **Jorge Alberto MOLINA Contreras**
Min. of Economy: **Ricardo ESMAHAN D'Aubuisson**
Min. of Education: **Darlyn MEZA**
Min. of Environment: **Carlos GUERRERO**
Min. of Finance: **William HANDAL**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Marisol ARGUETA de Barillas**
Min. of Government: **Juan Miguel BOLANOS**
Min. of Health: **Jose Guillermo MAZA Brizuela**
Min. of Labor & Social Welfare: **Jose Roberto ESPINAL**
Min. of Public Security & Justice: **Rene FIGUEROA**
Min. of Public Works: **Jorge Isidro NIETO Menendez**
Min. of Tourism: **Ruben ROCHI Parker**
Attorney Gen.: **Felix Garrid SAFIE**
Pres., Central Reserve Bank: **Luz Maria SERPAS de Portillo**
Ambassador to the US: **Rene Antonio LEON Rodriguez**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Carmen Maria GALLARDO de Hernandez**

El Salvador maintains an Embassy in the United States at 1400 16th Street NW, Washington, DC, 20036 (tel: 202-265-9671). There are consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Francisco.

ECONOMY

The Salvadoran economy continues to benefit from a commitment to free markets and careful fiscal management. The economy has been growing at a steady and moderate pace since the signing of peace accords in 1992, and poverty has been cut from 66% in 1991 to 30.7% in 2006. Much of the improvement in El Salvador's economy is a result of the privatization of the banking system, telecommunications, public pensions, electrical distribution and some electrical generation; reduction of import duties; elimination of price controls; and improved enforcement of intellectual property rights. Capping those reforms, on January 1, 2001, the U.S. dollar became legal tender in El Salvador. The economy is now fully dollarized.

The Salvadoran Government has maintained fiscal discipline during post-war reconstruction and reconstruction following earthquakes in 2001 and hurricanes in 1998 and 2005. Taxes levied by the government include a value added tax (VAT) of 13%, income tax of 20%, excise taxes on alcohol and cigarettes, and import duties. The VAT is the largest source of revenue, accounting for about 52.2% of total tax revenues in 2007. El Salvador's public external debt in May 2008 was about $5.5 billion, 27.02% of GDP.

Years of civil war, fought largely in the rural areas, had a devastating impact on agricultural production in El Salvador. The agricultural sector experienced significant recovery, buoyed in part by higher world prices for coffee and sugarcane and increased diversification into horticultural crops. Seeking to develop new growth sectors and employment opportunities, El Salvador created new export industries through fiscal incentives for free trade zones. The largest beneficiary has been the textile and apparel (maquila) sector, which directly provides approximately 70,000 jobs. Services, including retail and financial, have also shown strong employment growth, with about 48.7% of the total labor force now employed in the sector.

Remittances from Salvadorans working in the United States are an important source of income for many families in El Salvador. In 2007, the Central Bank estimated that remittances totaled $3.7 billion. UNDP surveys show that an estimated 22.3% of families receive remittances.

Under its export-led growth strategy, El Salvador has pursued economic integration with its Central American neighbors and negotiated trade agreements with the Dominican

Republic, Chile, Mexico, Panama, Taiwan, Colombia, and the United States. Central American countries began negotiating an Association Agreement with the European Union in 2007. Trade agreements with CARICOM and Canada are also under negotiation, while an agreement with Israel is being considered. Exports in 2007 grew 7.4% while imports grew 13.1%. As in previous years, the large trade deficit was offset by family remittances.

The U.S.-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), implemented between El Salvador and the United States on March 1, 2006, provides El Salvador preferential access to U.S. markets. Textiles and apparel, shoes, and processed foods are among the sectors that benefit. In addition to trade benefits, CAFTA-DR also provides trade capacity building, particularly in the environment and labor areas, and a framework for additional reforms on issues such as intellectual property rights, dispute resolution, and customs that will improve El Salvador's investment climate. For sensitive sectors such as agriculture, the agreement includes generous phase-in periods to allow Salvadoran producers an opportunity to become more competitive.

U.S. support for privatization of the electrical and telecommunications markets markedly expanded opportunities for U.S. investment in the country. More than 300 U.S. companies have established either a permanent commercial presence in El Salvador or work through representative offices in the country. The U.S. Department of Commerce maintains a Country Commercial Guide for U.S. businesses seeking detailed information on business opportunities in El Salvador.

On November 29, 2006, the Government of El Salvador and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) signed a five-year, $461 million anti-poverty Compact to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty in the country's northern region. The grant seeks to improve the lives of approximately 850,000 Salvadorans through investments in education, public services, enterprise development, and transportation infrastructure. The Compact entered into force in September 2007 and it is expected that incomes in the region will increase by 20% over the five-year term of the Compact, and by 30% within ten years of the start of the Compact.

Natural Disasters

Located on the Pacific's earthquake-prone Ring of Fire and at latitudes plagued by hurricanes, El Salvador's history is a litany of catastrophe, including the Great Hurricane of 1780 that killed 22,000 in Central America and earthquakes in 1854 and 1917 that devastated El Salvador and destroyed most of the capital city. More recently, an October 1986 earthquake killed 1,400 and seriously damaged the nation's infrastructure; in 1998, Hurricane Mitch killed 10,000 in the region, although El Salvador—lacking a Caribbean coast—suffered less than Honduras and Nicaragua. Major earthquakes in January and February of 2001 took another 1,000 lives and left thousands more homeless and jobless. El Salvador's largest volcano, Santa Ana (also known by its indigenous name Ilamatepec), erupted in October 2005, spewing tons of sulfuric gas, ash, and rock on surrounding communities and coffee plantations, killing two people and permanently displacing 5,000. Also in October 2005, Hurricane Stan unleashed heavy rains that caused flooding throughout El Salvador. In all, the flooding caused 67 deaths, and more than 50,000 people were evacuated at some point during the crisis. Damages from the storm were estimated at $355.6 million.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

El Salvador is a member of the United Nations and several of its specialized agencies, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Central American Common Market (CACM), the Central American Parliament, and the Central American Integration System (SICA). It actively participates in the Central American Security Commission (CASC), which seeks to promote regional arms control. From 2002-03, El Salvador was chair of the OAS anti-terrorism coordinating body, CICTE. El Salvador also is a member of the World Trade Organization and is pursuing regional free trade agreements. An active participant in the Summit of the Americas process, El Salvador chairs a working group on market access under the Free Trade Area of the Americas initiative. El Salvador has joined its six Central American neighbors in signing the Alliance for Sustainable Development, known as the Conjunta Centroamerica-USA or CONCAUSA to promote sustainable economic development in the region.

El Salvador enjoys normal diplomatic and trade relations with all of its neighboring countries including Honduras, with which it has previously had territorial disputes. While the two nations continue to disagree over the status of their maritime borders in the Gulf of Fonseca, they have agreed to settle their land-border disputes with the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In September 1992, the Court awarded most of the territory in question to Honduras. In January 1998, Honduras and El Salvador signed a border demarcation treaty to implement the terms of the ICJ decree although delays continue due to technical difficulties.

U.S.-SALVADORAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Salvadoran relations remain close and strong. U.S. policy toward El Salvador promotes the strengthening of El Salvador's democratic institutions, rule of law, judicial reform, and civilian police; national reconciliation and reconstruction; and economic opportunity and growth. El Salvador has been a committed member of the coalition of nations fighting against terrorism and has sent 10 rotations of troops to Iraq to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

U.S. ties to El Salvador are dynamic and growing. More than 19,000 American citizens live and work full-time in El Salvador. Most are private businesspersons and their families, but a small number of American citizen retirees have been drawn to El Salvador by favorable tax conditions.

The Embassy's consular section provides a full range of citizenship services to this community. The American Chamber of Commerce in El Salvador is located at World Trade Center, Torre 2, local No. 308, 89 Av. Nte. Col. Escalón, phone: 2263-9494.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SAN SALVADOR (E) Blvd. Santa Elena, Antiguo Cuscatlan, APO/FPO APO AA 34023, (503)2501-2999, Fax (503)2501-2150, INMARSAT Tel 683-130-825, Workweek: Mon-Fri, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Website: http://sansalvador.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Cheryl Payne
AMB OMS:	Sharon Propst
DHS/CIS:	Herman Pardo
DHS/ICE:	Galin Hernandez
ECO:	Donn-Allan Titus
FCS:	Michael McGee
HRO:	Ivonne De Galo
MGT:	Richard Morgan
AMB:	Charles L. Glazer
CG:	Carl Cockburn
DCM:	Robert Blau
PAO:	Robert Riley
GSO:	Rafael Rodriguez
RSO:	Daniel Weber
AFSA:	Matt Hurley
AGR:	Robert K. Hoff
AID:	Larry Brady
CLO:	Cristina Selva/Cathy Baxter
DAO:	Col. Gregory Barrack
DEA:	Joseph Roach
FAA:	Ruben Quiñonez
FAA/CASLO:	Victor Guardia (Miami)
FMO:	Margaret Genco
ICASS Chair:	Kirk Dahlgren
IMO:	Ryan C. Rhea
IPO:	Edna Vega
ISSO:	Lee Smith And Gram Parker
LAB:	Jami Thompson
LEGATT:	Leopoldo Navarrete
MLO:	Col. Arie Bogaard
POL:	Philip Laidlaw
State ICASS:	Robert Riley

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-1658;
1-(800) USA-TRADE
Fax: 202-482-0464

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-466-7464
Fax: 202-822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 1, 2008

Country Description: El Salvador is a democratic country with a developing economy. Tourism facilities are not fully developed. The capital is San Salvador, accessible by El Salvador's International Airport at Comalapa. Although the American dollar and Colon are legal tender in El Salvador, in practice the Colon has fallen out of use, and Americans traveling with U.S. dollars should not exchange them for Colones.

Entry Requirements: To enter the country, U.S. citizens must present a current U.S. passport and either a Salvadoran visa or a one-entry tourist card. The tourist card may be obtained from immigration officials for a ten-dollar fee upon arrival in country. U.S. travelers who plan to remain in El Salvador for more than thirty days can apply in advance for a multiple-entry visa, issued free of charge, from the Embassy of El Salvador in Washington, DC or from a Salvadoran consulate in Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Las Vegas, Long Island, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, or San Francisco. Travelers may contact the Embassy of El Salvador at 1400 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036, tel. (202) 265-9671, 265-9672; fax (202) 232-3763; e-mail: correo@elsalvador.org or visit the Embassy's web site at http://www.elsalvador.org. When applying for a visa, travelers may be asked to present evidence of U.S. employment and adequate finances for their visit at the time of visa application or upon arrival in El Salvador. For passengers departing by air, El Salvador has an exit tax of $32.00 which is usually included in the price of the airline ticket.

Travelers should be aware that El Salvador's entry requirements vary in accordance with agreements the country has with foreign governments. Citizens of several countries in addition to the United States may enter El Salvador with a current passport and either a visa or tourist card. Citizens of many other countries, including many Latin American and western European nations, may enter with only a current passport. However, citizens of most nations are required to present both a current passport and a visa to enter El Salvador. Non-U.S. citizen travelers are advised to contact a Salvadoran embassy or consulate to determine the entry requirements applicable to them.

In June 2006, El Salvador entered into the "Central America-4 (CA-4) Border Control Agreement" with Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Under the terms of the agreement, citizens of the four countries may travel freely across land borders from one of the countries to any of the others without completing entry and exit formalities at immigration checkpoints. U.S. citizens and other eligible foreign nationals, who legally enter any of the four countries, may similarly travel among the four without obtaining additional visas or tourist entry permits for the other three countries. Immigration officials at the first port of entry determine the length of stay, up to a maximum period of 90 days. Foreign tourists who wish to remain in the four-country region beyond the period initially granted for their visit must request a

one-time extension of stay from local immigration authorities in the country where the traveler is physically present, or they must leave the CA-4 countries and reapply for admission to the region. Foreigners "expelled" from any of the four countries are excluded from the entire CA-4 region. In isolated cases, the lack of clarity in the implementing details of the CA-4 Border Control Agreement has caused temporary inconvenience to some travelers and has resulted in others being fined more than one hundred dollars or detained in custody for 72 hours or longer.

Airlines operating out of El Salvador International Airport require all U.S. citizen passengers boarding flights for the United States (including U.S.-Salvadoran dual nationals) to have a current U.S. passport. U.S. citizens applying for passports at the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador are reminded that proof of citizenship and identity are required before a passport can be issued. Photographic proof of identity is especially important for young children because of the high incidence of fraud involving children. Since non-emergency passports are printed in the United States, and not at the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador, citizens submitting applications in El Salvador should be prepared to wait approximately one week for receipt of their new passports.

The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador reminds U.S. citizen travelers that their activities in El Salvador are governed by Salvadoran law and the type of visa they are issued. Under Salvadoran law, all foreigners who participate directly or indirectly in the internal political affairs of the country (i.e. political rallies, protests) lose the right to remain in El Salvador, regardless of visa status or residency in El Salvador.

Visit the Embassy of El Salvador's web site at http://www.elsalvador.org for the most current visa information.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian if not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure. Minors traveling on Salvadoran passports and who are traveling alone, with one parent or with a third party must have the written permission of the absent parent(s) or legal guardian to depart El Salvador. A Salvadoran notary must notarize this document. If the absent parent(s) or legal guardian is (are) outside of El Salvador, the document must be notarized by a Salvadoran consul. If a court decree gives custody of the child traveling on a Salvadoran passport to one parent, the decree and a passport will allow the custodial parent to depart El Salvador with the child. Although Salvadoran officials generally do not require written permission for non-Salvadoran minors traveling on U.S. or other non-Salvadoran passports, it would be prudent for the parents of minor children traveling on U.S. passports to provide similar documentation if both parents are not traveling with their children.

Safety and Security: Most travelers to El Salvador experience no safety or security problems, but the criminal threat in El Salvador is critical. Random and organized violent crime is endemic throughout El Salvador. U.S. citizens have not been singled out by reason of their nationality, but are subject to the same threat as all other persons in El Salvador.

Political or economic issues in the country may give rise to demonstrations, sit-ins or protests at any time or place, but these activities are most frequent in the capital or on its main access roads. U.S. citizens are cautioned to avoid areas where demonstrations are being held and to follow local news media reports or call the U.S. Embassy for up-to-date information. Information about demonstrations also is available as "Security Alerts" on the U.S. Embassy home page at http://elsalvador.usembassy.gov.

Many Salvadorans are armed, and shootouts are not uncommon. Foreigners, however, may not carry guns even for their own protection without first procuring a firearms license from Salvadoran officials. Failure to do so will result in detention and confiscation of the firearm, even if it is licensed in the United States.

Armed holdups of vehicles traveling on El Salvador's roads appear to be increasing, and U.S. citizens have been victims in various incidents. In one robbery, an American family was stopped by gunmen while driving on the Pan American highway in Santa Ana Department in daylight. In another incident, an American citizen passenger was robbed after the van in which she was riding was carjacked by armed men. The van was stopped at a traffic light on the busy road between Comalapa International Airport and San Salvador shortly after dark.

Strong undertows and currents can make swimming short distances from El Salvador's Pacific coast beaches extremely dangerous for even strong and experienced swimmers. As an example of this hazard, during a single seven-day holiday period, nine Salvadoran citizens drowned while swimming at Pacific beaches. In one month alone, three U.S. citizens drowned while swimming at Pacific beaches in La Libertad and La Paz Departments.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The U.S. Embassy considers El Salvador a critical crime-threat country. The homicide rate in the country increased 25 percent from 2004 to 2007, and El Salvador has

one of the highest homicide rates in the world. Violent crimes, as well as petty crimes are prevalent throughout El Salvador, and U.S. citizens have been among the victims. The Embassy is also aware that there has been at least one rape of an American minor and one attempted rape of an American adult in the past year. Travelers should avoid displaying or carrying valuables in public places. Passports and other important documents should not be left in private vehicles. Armed assaults and carjacking take place both in San Salvador and in the interior of the country, but are especially frequent on roads outside the capital where police patrols are scarce. Criminals have been known to follow travelers from the international airport to private residences or secluded stretches of road where they carry out assaults and robberies. Armed robbers are known to shoot if the vehicle does not come to a stop. Criminals often become violent quickly, especially when victims fail to cooperate immediately in surrendering valuables. Frequently, victims who argue with assailants or refuse to give up their valuables are shot. Kidnapping for ransom continues to occur, but has decreased in frequency since 2001. U.S. citizens in El Salvador should exercise caution at all times and practice good personal security procedures throughout their stay.

The U.S. Embassy warns its personnel to drive with their doors locked and windows raised, to avoid travel outside of major metropolitan areas after dark, and to avoid travel on unpaved roads at all times because of criminal assaults and lack of police and road service facilities. Travelers with conspicuous amounts of luggage, late-model cars or foreign license plates are particularly vulnerable to crime, even in the capital.

Travel on public transportation, especially buses, both within and outside the capital, is risky and not recommended. The Embassy advises official visitors to use radio-dispatched taxis or those stationed in front of major hotels.

U.S. citizens using banking services should be vigilant while conducting their financial exchanges either inside local banks or at automated teller machines. There have been several reports of armed robberies in which victims appear to have been followed from the bank after completing their transactions.

Visitors to El Salvador should use caution when climbing volcanoes or hiking in other remote locations. Armed robberies of climbers and hikers are common. Mine-removal efforts ceased several years ago, but land mines and unexploded ordnance in backcountry regions still pose a threat to off-road tourists, backpackers, and campers. The Embassy strongly recommends engaging the services of a local guide certified by the national or local tourist authority when hiking in backcountry areas, even when within the national parks.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and find an attorney if needed.

Victims of crime should bear in mind that law enforcement resources are limited and judicial processes are uneven in El Salvador. Many crimes in the country go unsolved and the likelihood for redress through the judicial system is limited.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: There are few private hospitals with an environment that would be acceptable to visiting Americans. The Embassy recommends that these hospitals be used only for emergency care, to stabilize a condition prior to returning to the U.S. for definitive evaluation and treatment. Private hospitals and physicians expect upfront payment (cash or, for hospitals, credit card) for all bills. Priority Ambulance (503-2264-7911) is the only ambulance service in San Salvador that has trained personnel and medical equipment to manage most emergencies. Not all medicines found in the U.S. are available in El Salvador. Medicines often have a different brand name and are frequently more expensive than in the U.S.

No specific vaccinations are required for entry into El Salvador from the United States. Travelers coming from countries where yellow fever is endemic must have had a yellow fever vaccination in order to enter the country. For more information visit El Salvador's Immigration web site at http://www.seguridad.gob.sv/Web-Seguridad/Migracion/migracion.htm.

Information on vaccinations and other health considerations, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. It may be possible to purchase supplemental coverage for travel.

U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. Separate insurance should be obtained for medical evacuation, as it

may cost in excess of $50,000. Many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency medical services and even transportation of remains, in the event of death.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning El Salvador is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road conditions throughout El Salvador are not up to U.S. standards. However, the rebuilding of major roads following the earthquakes in 2001 is nearly completed. Mini-buses, buses, and taxis are often poorly maintained. Drivers are often not trained, and generally do not adhere to traffic rules and regulations. The U.S. Embassy recommends that its personnel avoid using mini-buses and buses, and use only taxis that are radio-dispatched or those stationed in front of major hotels. Robberies and assaults on buses are commonplace.

Because of inconsistent enforcement of traffic laws in El Salvador, safe drivers must make an extraordinary effort to drive defensively. Passing on blind corners is commonplace. Salvadoran law requires that the driver of a vehicle that injures or kills another person must be arrested and detained until a judge can determine responsibility for the accident. This law is uniformly enforced.

Visitors to El Salvador may drive on their U.S. license for up to thirty days. After that time, a visitor is required to obtain a Salvadoran license. Visit the web site of El Salvador's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.elsalvadorturismo.gob.sv. Further information on traffic and road conditions is available in Spanish from Automovil Club de El Salvador, at telephone number 011-503-2221-0557 or via the Internet at http://www.aces.com.sv.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of El Salvador as being in compliance with ICAO international aviation safety standards for oversight of El Salvador's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Travelers intending to carry cell phones from the United States should check with their service provider to determine if the service will be available in El Salvador. Credit cards are acceptable for payment in many-but not all-retail stores and restaurants in major cities. Automatic teller machines with access to major U.S. bank networks are widely available in San Salvador, but less prevalent elsewhere in the country.

Disaster Preparedness: El Salvador is an earthquake-prone country. Flooding and landslides during the rainy season (June to November) also pose a risk. On October 4, 2005, the Government of El Salvador declared a nation-wide state of emergency following major flooding caused by a series of storms. More than 50 deaths were confirmed as attributed to landslides and flooding at that time and over 34,000 residents were evacuated to temporary shelter. The Llamatepec Volcano, located approximately 50 kilometers west of San Salvador, erupted briefly on October 1, 2005, casting rocks and volcanic ash onto neighboring regions and producing two confirmed deaths. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

An earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale devastated much of El Salvador on January 13, 2001. A second earthquake on February 13, 2001, measured 6.6 on the Richter scale, and caused significant additional damage and loss of life. Reconstruction efforts are largely complete and the country has returned to normal. Additional information in Spanish about earthquakes (sismos) in El Salvador can be found on the Government of El Salvador's web page at http://www.snet.gob.sv.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating El Salvador laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in El Salvador are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Guns: El Salvador has strict laws requiring a locally obtained license to possess or carry a firearm in the country. The Embassy strongly advises persons without a Salvadoran firearms license not to bring guns into the country or use a firearm while in El Salvador. During a three-month period in 2006, three U.S. citizens were arrested in separate incidents for firearms violations. In each instance, the individuals complied with airline procedures, declared the firearm on a Customs form upon arrival at El Salvador's Comalapa International Airport, and were allowed to depart the airport without hindrance. However, when the individuals returned to the airport and declared the weapons to airline employees, they were arrested by Salvadoran police, not for violating aviation regulations but for having carried an unlicensed firearm while in El Salvador. The Embassy cannot intervene in the judicial process when a U.S. citizen is charged with a firearms violation. Conviction for possessing an unlicensed firearm can carry a prison sentence of three-to-five years.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children

and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in El Salvador are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within El Salvador. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador is located at Final Boulevard Santa Elena Sur, Urbanizacion Santa Elena, Antiguo Cuscatlan, La Libertad, telephone 011-503-2501-2999, fax 011-503-2278-5522, e-mail: CongenSansal@state.gov. The Embassy's web site can be accessed at http://sansalvador.usembassy.gov. The Consular Section is open for U.S. citizens' services from 8:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. weekdays, excluding U.S. and Salvadoran holidays. After business hours, the Embassy can be contacted by telephone at 011-503-2501-2316 or 011-503-2501-2253.

For any questions concerning U.S. visas for either temporary travel to or permanent residence in the U.S., please contact our regional U.S. Visa Information Center. From El Salvador, the Visa Information Center may be reached by calling 900-6011 from any landline operated by Telecomm, or by purchasing a VISAS-USA calling card from any location that sells Telefonica phone cards. Calling instructions are on the back of the card. Calls using the 900 number cost approximately $2.15 per minute and will be charged to the caller's telephone bill. The Telefonica phone card costs $15.00 and permits a seven-minute call. From the U.S., the Visa Information Center can be contacted by dialing 866-730-2089 and charging the call to a Visa or MasterCard credit card.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. El Salvador is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authorities: Several Salvadoran governmental bodies are involved in the adoption process. These include the Family Courts, the Procuraduría General de la República (PGR or Public Defender's Office) and The Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA).

The PGR is responsible for family welfare law in El Salvador. ISNA is also responsible for the care of orphans and other children in government custody. Representatives from ISNA and the PGR oversee intercountry adoptions in El Salvador's adoption central authority, called the Oficina Para Adopciones (Office for Adoptions or OPA). Information regarding Salvadoran laws and procedures for the purposes of adoption may be obtained by contacting:

Oficina Para Adopciones
Coordinador OPA
Procuraduría General
de la República
9ª. Calle Poniente y 13 Ave.
Norte, Torre PGR,
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador
Phone (503) 2231-9418–2231-9424 or 2231-9412

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Foreign, married couples wishing to adopt in El Salvador must both be over 25 years of age and be married for at least 5 years and the elder spouse must be at least 25 years of age.

There must be a minimum of 15 years difference in age between the adopting parents and the child. Parents adopting a child under one year of age cannot be older than 45. Single individual may adopt in El Salvador if they are at least 25 years old and at least 15 years older than the child to be adopted. Prospective parents must demonstrate that they are financially, morally, mentally, and physically able to provide for the adopted child. Each applicant for adoption in El Salvador must also provide documentation that includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- birth certificate;
- marriage certificate;
- criminal background check;
- evidence of the adopting parents' financial situation;
- health certificates for the adopting parents, and the child to be adopted;
- home and psychological studies by an authorized state agency addressing family relations, moral attitudes, social behavior, finances, and the physical and psychological health conditions of the adopting parents (the family

must also provide photos of the exterior and interior of their home);

- certification from the adoptive parents' state of residence stating that they meet the legal requirements to adopt and that the state will monitor the welfare of the child after adoption;
- proof of legal residence in the country of intended residence, as well as certified copies of the adopting parents' passports;
- a statement identifying who will be responsible for the adopted child in the absence of the adoptive parents due to illness, disability or death; and
- certified copies of the birth and health certificates of any biological or adopted children of the adopting parents.

Residency Requirements: Under Article 176 of the Salvadoran Family Code, adoptive parents who wish to adopt a particular child who is not related to them must be prepared to reside with the child in El Salvador for at least one year prior to finalization of the adoption. To satisfy this requirement, the adoptive parent(s) must be appointed the foster parent(s) of the child by ISNA prior to the beginning of the one year co-residency.

Although personnel at the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador are familiar with some cases in which this requirement was not applied, the Government of El Salvador is now enforcing the co-residency requirement in most cases involving the adoption of a particular child. U.S. citizen missionaries, Peace Corps Volunteers, contract employees and other relatively long-term residents in El Salvador are not exempted from the one year co-residency requirement as a formally decreed foster parent.

Time Frame: Salvadoran adoption procedures can take 18 to 36 months to complete. This does not include the time necessary for the U.S. Embassy to complete its own investigation, as required by immigration regulations. Because adoption fraud in El Salvador has taken a variety of forms, an investigation of each adoption is necessary to ensure that the child is an orphan, as defined by U.S. immigration law, and that the birth mother is aware that the child is being adopted irrevocably and will be taken from the country. Investigation times vary depending upon the complexity of each case.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. Because El Salvador is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, "donations," or "expediting" fees, that may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of " "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in El Salvador at risk.

The costs of adopting a Salvadoran child and taking him or her to the United States can vary considerably, depending primarily on the length of time required to complete the adoption process and the fees charged by Salvadoran attorneys.

The costs listed below are neither comprehensive nor unchanging but are provided to give prospective adopting parents a general idea of the financial outlays required.

- Salvadoran Attorney's Fee: typically $3,000–$10,000
- Medical Examination for the Child: $250–$600 (includes vaccinations for all children and x-rays for children between 14 and 16 years of age)
- U.S. Immigrant Visa Fee: $400
- Salvadoran passport fee: $10
- Photos for U.S. Immigrant Visa: $5
- Room for two adults for one night at the Hilton Princess or Sheraton Presidente Hotel: approximately $170

(While the Salvadoran government charges no fees for the services it provides in the adoption process, municipal and other authorities do charge for the documents and services they provide. These fees typically are included in the Salvadoran lawyer's fee. The prospective adopting parents should confirm with their Salvadoran attorney whether the attorney's fees will cover these additional costs.)

Adoption Procedures: Salvadoran law states that a child under 18 years of age may be eligible for intercountry adoption if the child is abandoned or orphaned and a family court determines that the adoption is in the best interest of the child. Salvadoran law also permits the adoption of a child over 18 who is under the care of a parent or relatives if a court determines the adoption is in the child's best interest. However, prospective adopting parents should bear in mind that foreign adoptions of children over 16 years of age are not valid for immigration purpose for the U.S. Foreign adoptive parents must formally adopt Salvadoran children in El Salvador, in accordance with Salvadoran laws and procedures, before taking the children out of the country to live. The Supreme Court of El Salvador advises that the granting of guardianships to prospective foreign adoptive parents for the purpose of allowing children to leave El Salvador for subsequent adoption abroad is prohibited. OPA investigates the circumstances of an orphaned or neglected child's family and seeks to find a close relative who may be will-

ing to care for the child. Once satisfied that adoption is in the child's best interest, OPA determines which prospective adoptive parents are suitable matches for the child.

A committee composed of representatives of the Public Defender's Office, and ISNA then determines whether a specific child may be adopted by a particular set of parents. Once the committee makes an affirmative decision, the Public Defender signs the approved adoption petition. The case then goes to a Salvadoran judge, who rules on whether or not the court will issue a final adoption decree. In order for the adopted child to be eligible for a U.S. immigrant visa, the adoptive parents must obtain this decree.

Once the court issues a final adoption decree, municipal authorities in the town where the child's birth was registered cancel the original birth certificate and issue a new birth certificate naming the adoptive parents as the child's parents. The new birth certificate becomes part of a bound record book kept at the Alcaldia (city hall).

Required Documents: Each of the US Documents listed below must be either authenticated at a Salvadoran Embassy or a Salvadoran Consulate or apostilled by the competent authority of the adopting parents' country.

U.S. documents listed below must also be translated into Spanish by an individual appointed for that purpose by a Salvadoran notary public (as stipulated in Article 24 of the "Ley del Ejercicio Notarial de la Jurisdicción Voluntaria y de Otras Diligencias").

- Certified birth certificate for the adopting parents;
- Certified marriage certificate for the adopting parents;
- Police clearance from the adopting parents' municipality;
- Documentation of the adopting parents' financial situation (salary statements, bank accounts, etc.);
- Home study completed by an agency authorized to conduct such a study in the domicile of the parents. The home study completed for the I-600A/I-600 or I-800A/I-800 will fulfill this requirement;
- Health certificate for the adopting parents;
- Certification issued by the adoptive parents' state Department of Health and Human Services, or institution for the protection of children, or an equivalent public entity stating that the adopting parents meet the legal requirements of that state to adopt and that the state will monitor the welfare of the child after adoption;
- The adoptive parents must submit a statement identifying who will be responsible for the adopted child in the absence of the adoptive parents due to illness, disability or death;
- Certified copies of the adopting parents' passports;
- If the adopting parents have biological or adopted children, they must include certified copies of their birth and health certificates for each of them; and
- Photographs of the exterior and interior of the house of the adopting parents.

Salvadoran Documents:

- Photocopy of the identity card and certified birth certificate of the Salvadoran attorney;
- Health certificate for the child to be adopted;
- Photographs of the adopting parents, adopted child, attorney; and
- Power of attorney for a specified Salvadoran lawyer to represent the adopting parents. This power of attorney must be executed before a Salvadoran notary public or by a Salvadoran Consul at a Salvadoran Embassy or Consulate. The power of attorney must specifically authorize the attorney to perform all necessary steps in the adoption process from beginning to end before the Public Defender's Office (PGR) and the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA). Including, but not limited to: the power to initiate judicial proceedings before a family court and having jurisdiction over the habitual residence of the adoptee. The power of attorney must also authorize the attorney to perform the registration of the corresponding adoption certificate and migration and visa paperwork of the minor once the adoption is approved.

The designated Salvadoran lawyer must present two files of all the documentation, (one with the originals and the other with copies certified by the above mentioned appropriate Salvadoran notary public. If the files exceed two hundred pages, both files must be divided in halves with a closing and opening statement from the notary attached to the divided files. The Salvadoran attorney must comply with the requirements stipulated in Article 42 of the Salvadoran Family Code of Proceedings.

Embassy of El Salvador
Consular Section
1400 16th Street, Suite 100, N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20036
Tel: (202) 595-7500
Fax: (202) 232 3763
Email: correo@elsalvador.org
http://www.rree.gob.sv/sitio/sitiowebrree.nsf/pages/sembajadasconsulados_norteamerica

Salvadoran Consulates are established in the following metropolitan areas: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Elizabeth (NJ), Houston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Santa Ana-California, Woodbridge-Virginia, Duluth-Georgia, Miami, New York, Long Island-New York, Nogales (AZ), San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Contact information for these consulates can be found at the web site listed above.

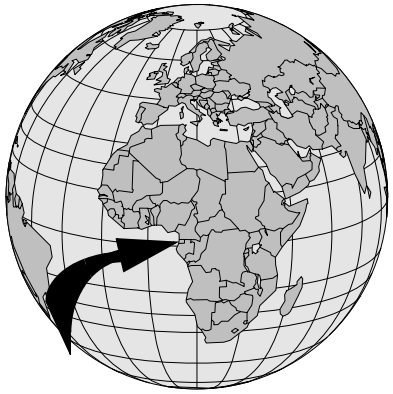
U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*. Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov).

The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador is located at:

Final Boulevard y Urb. Santa Elena
Antiguo Cuscatlán, La Libertad
Tel. (outside the El Salvador): 011+503-2501-2999 within El Salvador: 2501-2999
Fax: (503) 2278-6020
E-mail: AdoptSanSal@state.gov

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Equatorial Guinea

PROFILE

Geography

Location: Western Africa, bordering the Bay of Biafra. Bordering nations—Cameroon, Gabon.

Area: 28,050 sq. km; slightly smaller than Maryland.

Cities: Capital—Malabo. Other cities—Bata (also capital of Littoral province on the mainland).

Terrain: Varies. Bioko Island is volcanic, with three major peaks of 9,876 feet, 7,416 feet and 6,885 feet. Behind the coastal plain, the mainland provinces are hilly at a level of approximately 2,000 feet, with some 4,000-foot peaks. Annobon Island is volcanic.

Climate: Tropical; always hot, humid. Bata on the mainland is somewhat drier and cooler.

People

Nationality: Noun—Equatorial Guinean(s), Equatoguinean(s) Adjective—Equatorial Guinean, Equatoguinean.

Population: (July 2008 est.) 616,459.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 2.732%; (1975-2002) 2.8%.

Ethnic groups: The Fang ethnic group of the mainland constitutes the great majority of the population and dominates political life and business. The Bubi group comprises about 50,000 people living mainly in Bioko Island. The Annobonese on the island of Annobon are estimated at about 3,000 in number. The other three ethnic groups are found on the coast of Rio Muni and include the Ndowe and Kombe (about 3,000 each) and the Bujebas (about 2,000). The pygmy populations have long been integrated into the dominant Bantu-speaking cultures. Europeans number around 2,000, primarily Spanish and French. There is a thriving Lebanese community, other Arabs (primarily Egyptians), a large number of Filipinos, and a rapidly expanding Chinese presence.

Languages: Official—Spanish, French; other—pidgin English, Fang, Bubi, Ibo.

Religions: Nominally Christian and predominantly Roman Catholic; pagan practices.

Education: Primary school compulsory for ages 6-14. Attendance (2007 est.)—90%. Adult literacy (2005 est.)—87%.

Health: (2008 est.) Life expectancy—61.23 years. Infant mortality rate—83.75/1,000.

Government

Type: Nominally multi-party Republic with strong domination by the executive branch.

Independence: October 12, 1968 (from Spain).

Constitution: Approved by national referendum November 17, 1991; amended January 1995.

Government branches: Executive—President (Chief of State) and a Council of Ministers appointed by the president. Legislative—100-member Chamber of People's Representatives (members directly elected by universal suffrage to serve five-year terms). Judicial—Supreme Tribunal.

Political subdivisions: Seven provinces—Annobon, Bioko Norte, Bioko Sur, Centro Sur, Kie-Ntem, Littoral, Wele-Nzas.

Political parties: The ruling party is the Partido Democratico de Guinea Ecuatorial (PDGE), formed July 30, 1987. Numerous other parties were allowed to form in the early 1990s.

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal adult.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $10.4 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2007 est.) 9.1%.

Inflation rate: (2008 est. average) 5.5%.

Unemployment rate: (2007 est.) 8%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, timber, small, unexploited deposits of gold, manganese, and uranium.

Agriculture: (2006 est.) 2.8% of GDP. Products—coffee, cocoa, rice, yams, cassava (tapioca), bananas,

palm oil nuts, manioc, livestock, and timber.

Industry: (2006 est.) 92.6% of GDP. Types—petroleum, fishing, saw milling, natural gas.

Services: (2006) 4.5% of GDP.

Trade: (2007 est.) Exports—$10.03 billion: hydrocarbons (97%), timber (2%), others (1%). Imports—$3.219 billion. Major trading partners—United States, Spain, China, Canada, France, United Kingdom, Cameroon, and Norway.

Currency: Communaute Financiere Africaine (CFA) Franc.

GEOGRAPHY

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is located in west central Africa. Bioko Island lies about 40 kilometers (25 mi.) from Cameroon. Annobon Island lies about 595 kilometers (370 mi.) southwest of Bioko Island. The larger continental region of Rio Muni lies between Cameroon and Gabon on the mainland; it includes the islands of Corisco, Elobey Grande, Elobey Chico, and adjacent islets.

Bioko Island, called Fernando Po until the 1970s, is the largest island in the Gulf of Guinea—2,017 square kilometers (780 sq. mi.). It is shaped like a boot, with two large volcanic formations separated by a valley that bisects the island at its narrowest point. The 195-kilometer (120-mi.) coastline is steep and rugged in the south but lower and more accessible in the north, with excellent harbors at Malabo and Luba, and several scenic beaches between those towns.

On the continent, Rio Muni covers 26,003 square kilometers (10,040 sq. mi.). The coastal plain gives way to a succession of valleys separated by low hills and spurs of the Crystal Mountains. The Rio Benito (Mbini), which divides Rio Muni in half, is unnavigable except for a 20-kilometer stretch at its estuary. Temperatures and humidity in Rio Muni are generally lower than on Bioko Island.

Annobon Island, named for its discovery on New Year's Day 1472, is a small volcanic island covering 18 square kilometers (7 sq. mi.). The coastline is abrupt except in the north; the principal volcanic cone contains a small lake. Most of the estimated 1,900 inhabitants are fisherman specializing in traditional, small-scale tuna fishing and whaling. The climate is tropical—heavy rainfall, high humidity, and frequent seasonal changes with violent windstorms.

PEOPLE

The majority of the Equatoguinean people are of Bantu origin. The largest tribe, the Fang, is indigenous to the mainland, but substantial migration to Bioko Island has resulted in Fang dominance over the earlier Bantu inhabitants. The Fang constitute 80% of the population and are themselves divided into 67 clans. Those in the northern part of Rio Muni speak Fang-Ntumu, while those in the south speak Fang-Okah; the two dialects are mutually unintelligible. The Bubi, who constitute 15% of the population, are indigenous to Bioko Island. In addition, there are coastal tribes, sometimes referred to as "Playeros," consisting of Ndowes, Bujebas, Balengues, and Bengas on the mainland and small islands, and "Fernandinos," a Creole community, on Bioko. Together, these groups comprise 5% of the population. There are also foreigners from neighboring Cameroon, Nigeria, and Gabon.

Spanish and French are both official languages, though use of Spanish predominates. The Roman Catholic Church has greatly influenced both religion and education.

Equatoguineans tend to have both a Spanish first name and an African first and last name. When written, the Spanish and African first names are followed by the father's first name (which becomes the principal surname) and the mother's first name. Thus people may have up to four names, with a different surname for each generation.

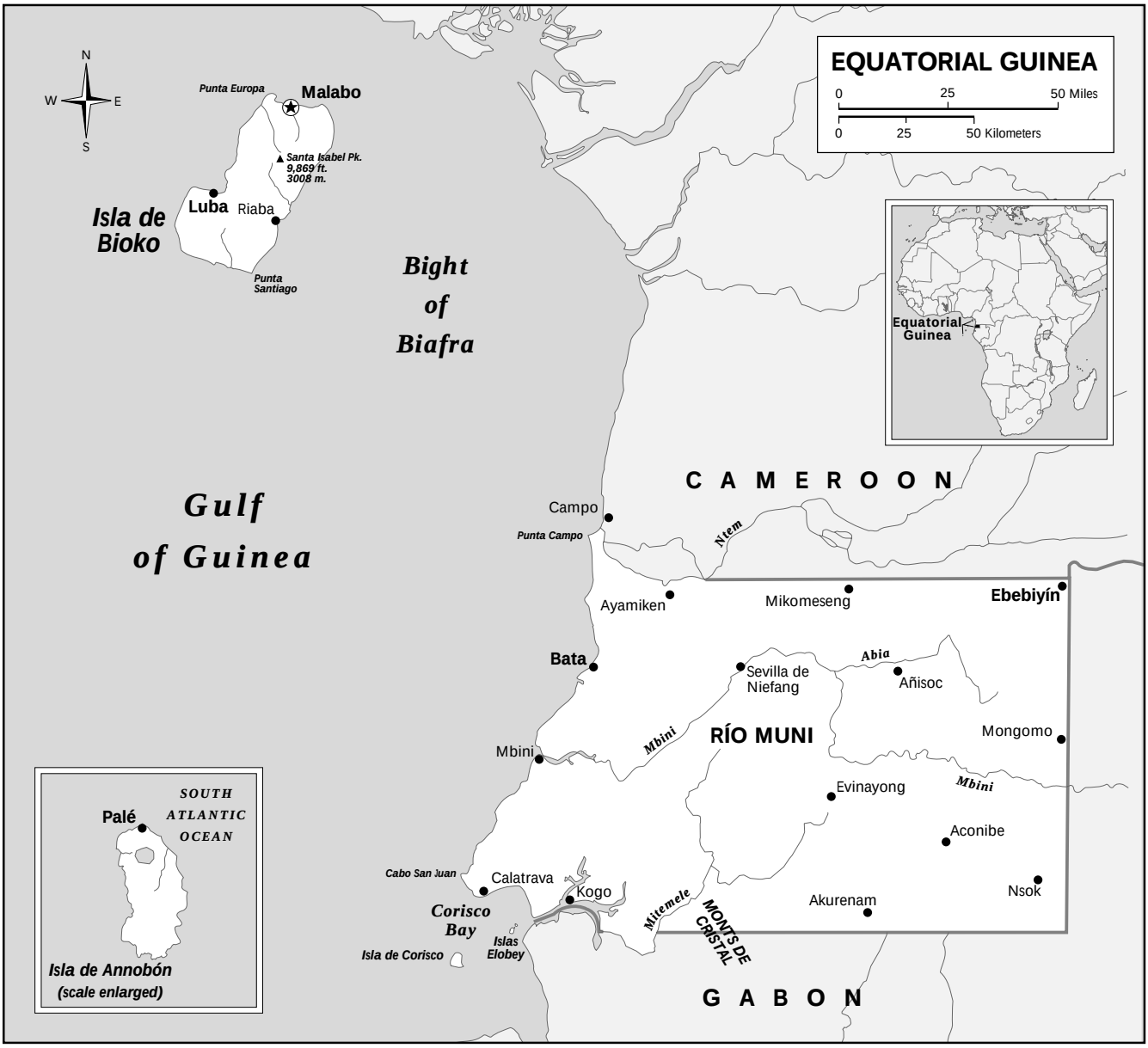
HISTORY

The first inhabitants of the region that is now Equatorial Guinea are believed to have been Pygmies, of whom only isolated pockets remain in northern Rio Muni. Bantu migrations between the 17th and 19th centuries brought the coastal tribes and later the Fang. Elements of the latter may have generated the Bubi, who immigrated to Bioko from Cameroon and Rio Muni in several waves and succeeded former Neolithic populations. The Annobon population, native to Angola, was introduced by the Portuguese via São Tomé.

The Portuguese explorer, Fernando Po (Fernao do Poo), seeking a route to India, is credited with having discovered the island of Bioko in 1471. He called it Formosa ("pretty flower"), but it quickly took on the name of its European discoverer. The Portuguese retained control until 1778, when the island, adjacent islets, and commercial rights to the mainland between the Niger and Ogoue Rivers were ceded to Spain in exchange for territory in South America (Treaty of Pardo). From 1827 to 1843, Britain established a base on the island to combat the slave trade. The Treaty of Paris settled conflicting claims to the mainland in 1900, and periodically, the mainland territories were united administratively under Spanish rule.

Spain lacked the wealth and the interest to develop an extensive economic infrastructure in what was commonly known as Spanish Guinea during the first half of this century. However, through a paternalistic system, particularly on Bioko Island, Spain developed large cacao plantations for which thousands of Nigerian workers were imported as laborers. At independence in 1968, largely as a result of this system, Equatorial Guinea had one of the highest per capita incomes in Africa. The Spanish also helped Equatorial Guinea achieve one of the continent's highest literacy rates and developed a good network of health care facilities.

In 1959, the Spanish territory of the Gulf of Guinea was established with



status similar to the provinces of metropolitan Spain. As the Spanish Equatorial Region, a governor general ruled it exercising military and civilian powers. The first local elections were held in 1959, and the first Equatoguinean representatives were seated in the Spanish parliament. Under the Basic Law of December 1963, limited autonomy was authorized under a joint legislative body for the territory's two provinces. The name of the country was changed to Equatorial Guinea. Although Spain's commissioner general had extensive powers, the Equatorial Guinean General Assembly had considerable initiative in formulating laws and regulations.

In March 1968, under pressure from Equatoguinean nationalists and the United Nations, Spain announced that it would grant independence to Equatorial Guinea. A constitutional convention produced an electoral law and draft constitution. In the presence of a UN observer team, a referendum was held on August 11, 1968, and 63% of the electorate voted in favor of the constitution, which provided for a government with a General Assembly and a Supreme Court with judges appointed by the president.

In September 1968, Francisco Macias Nguema was elected first president of Equatorial Guinea, and independence was granted in October. In July 1970, Macias created a single-party state and by May 1971, key portions of the constitution were abrogated. In 1972 Macias took complete control of the government and assumed the title of President-for-Life. The Macias regime was characterized by abandonment of all government functions

except internal security, which was accomplished by terror; this led to the death or exile of up to one-third of the country's population. Due to pilferage, ignorance, and neglect, the country's infrastructure—electrical, water, road, transportation, and health—fell into ruin. Religion was repressed, and education ceased. The private and public sectors of the economy were devastated. Nigerian contract laborers on Bioko, estimated to have been 60,000, left en masse in early 1976. The economy collapsed, and skilled citizens and foreigners left.

On August 3, 1979 the former director of the infamous Black Beach prison, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, led a successful coup d'etat; Macias was arrested, tried, and executed. Obiang assumed the Presidency in October 1979. Obiang initially ruled Equatorial Guinea with the assistance of a Supreme Military Council. A new constitution, drafted in 1982 with the help of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, came into effect after a popular vote on August 15, 1982; the Council was abolished, and Obiang remained in the presidency for a 7-year term. He was reelected in 1989. In February 1996, he again won reelection with 98% of the vote; several opponents withdrew from the race, however, and international observers criticized the election. Subsequently, Obiang named a new cabinet, which included some opposition figures in minor portfolios.

Despite the formal ending of one-party rule in 1991, President Obiang and a circle of advisors (drawn largely from his own family and ethnic group) maintain real authority. The President names and dismisses cabinet members and judges, ratifies treaties, leads the armed forces, and has considerable authority in other areas. He appoints the governors of Equatorial Guinea's seven provinces. The opposition had few electoral successes in the 1990s. By early 2000, President Obiang's PDGE party fully dominated government at all levels. In December 2002, President Obiang won a new seven-year mandate with 97% of the vote. Reportedly, 95% of eligible voters voted in this election, although many observers noted numerous irregularities.

GOVERNMENT

The 1982 constitution gives the President extensive powers, including naming and dismissing members of the cabinet, making laws by decree, dissolving the Chamber of Representatives, negotiating and ratifying treaties and calling legislative elections. The President retains his role as commander in chief of the armed forces and maintains close supervision of military activity. In June 2004, the President reorganized the cabinet and created two new positions: Minister of National Security and Director of National Forces. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and operates under powers designated by the President. The Prime Minister coordinates government activities.

The Chamber of Representatives is comprised of 100 members elected by direct suffrage for 5-year terms. In practice, the Chamber has not demonstrated independence, and it rarely acts without presidential approval or direction. National assembly elections were held in May 2008; 99 of the 100 seats went to the PDGE.

The President appoints the governors of the seven provinces. Each province is divided administratively into districts and municipalities. The internal administrative system falls under the Ministry of Interior and Territorial Administration; several other ministries are represented at the provincial and district levels.

The judicial system follows similar administrative levels. At the top are the President and his judicial advisors (the Supreme Court). In descending rank are the appeals courts, chief judges for the divisions, and local magistrates. Tribal laws and customs are honored in the formal court system when not in conflict with national law. The current court system, which often uses customary law, is a combination of traditional, civil, and military justice, and it operates in an ad hoc manner for lack of established procedures and experienced judicial personnel.

The other official branch of the government is the State Council. The State Council's main function is to serve as caretaker in case of death or physical incapacity of the President. It comprises the following ex officio members: the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, the President of the national assembly and the Chairman of the Social and Economic Council.

Although the abuses and atrocities that characterized the Macias years have been eliminated, the government continues to be dominated by the presidency. Religious freedom is tolerated.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Teodoro OBIANG Nguema Mbasogo, Brig. Gen. (ret.)**
Prime Min.: **Ricardo MANGUE Obama Nfube**
First Vice Prime Min. in Charge of Human Rights: **Aniceto EBIAKA Mohote**
Second Vice Prime Min. in Charge of the Interior: **Demetrio ELO Ndong Nsefumu**
Sec. Gen. of the Govt. in Charge of Admin. Coordination: **Fortunado OFA Mbo**
Min. of Agriculture & Forests: **Teodoro Nguema OBIANG Mangu**
Min. of Civil Service & Admin. Planning: **Vincente Eate TOMI**
Min. of Economy, Commerce, & Promotion: **Jaime Ela NDONG**
Min. of Education, Science, & Sports: **Cristobal Menana ELA**
Min. of Finance & Budget: **Mercelino Owono EDU**
Min. of Fishing & the Environment: **Vincente Rodriguez SIOSA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Intl. Cooperation, & Francophone Affairs: **Pastor Micha ONDO BILE**
Min. of Health: **Antonio Martin NDONG Ntutumu**
Min. of Information, Culture, Tourism, & Govt. Spokesman: **Santiago NSOBEYA Efuman Nchama**
Min. of Infrastructure & Urban Planning: **Fidel NSUE Micha**
Min. of Integration: **Baltasar Engonga EDJO**

Min. of Interior & Local Corporations: **Clemente ENGONGA Nguema Onguene**
Min. of Justice, Culture, & Penitentiary Institutions: **Mauricio BOKUNG Asumu**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Evangelina OYO Ebule**
Min. of Mines, Industry, & Energy: **Antanasio ELA Ntugu Nsa**
Min. of National Defense: **Antonio MBA Nguema, Gen.**
Min. of National Security: **Manuel Nguema MBA Ma Mba, Col.**
Min. of Mines, Industry, & Energy: **Antanasio Ela NTUGU Nsa**
Min. of Planning, Economic Development, & Public Investment: **Jose ELA Oyana**
Min. of Social Affairs & the Promotion of Women: **Eulalia ENVO Bela**
Min. of Transportation, Technology, & Posts & Telecommunications: **Demetrio Elo Ndong NSEFUMU**
Min. at the Presidency in Charge of Missions: **Alejandro EVUNA Owono Asangono**
Min. at the Presidency in Charge of Political Affairs & Admin.: **Carmelo MODU Acuse Bindang**
Min. at the Presidency in Charge of Information, Culture, & Tourism: **Alfonso NSUE Mokuy**
Min. in Charge of Relations With Parliament: **Angel MASIE Mibuy**
Ambassador to the US: **Purificacion Angue ONDO**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Lino Sima Ekua AVOMO**

Equatorial Guinea maintains an embassy at 2020 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009 (Tel. (202) 518-5700, Fax. (202) 518-5252). Its mission to the United Nations is at 801 Second Avenue, Suite 1403, New York, N.W. 10017 (Tel. 212-599-1523).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In the period following Spain's grant of local autonomy to Equatorial Guinea in 1963, there was a great deal of political party activity. Bubi and Fernandino parties on the island preferred separation from Rio Muni or a loose federation. Ethnically based parties in Rio Muni favored independence for a united country comprising Bioko and Rio Muni, an approach that ultimately won out. (The Movimiento para la Auto-determinacion de la Isla de Bioko (MAIB) which advocates independence for the island under Bubi control, is one of the offshoots of the era immediately preceding independence). After the accession of Macias to power, political activity largely ceased in Equatorial Guinea. Opposition figures who lived among the exile communities in Spain and elsewhere agitated for reforms; some of them had been employed in the Macias and Obiang governments. After political activities in Equatorial Guinea were legalized in the early 1990s, some opposition leaders returned, but repressive actions have continued sporadically.

The country's first freely contested municipal elections were held in September 1995. Most observers agree that the elections themselves were relatively free and transparent and that the opposition parties garnered between two-thirds and three-quarters of the total vote. The government, however, delayed announcement of the results and then claimed a highly dubious 52% victory overall and the capture of 19 of 27 municipal councils. In early January 1996 Obiang called for presidential elections. International observers agreed that the campaign was marred by fraud, and most of the opposition candidates withdrew in the final week. Obiang claimed re-election with 98% of the vote. In an attempt to mollify his critics, Obiang gave minor portfolios in his cabinet to people identified as opposition figures. In the legislative election in March 1999, the party increased its majority in the 80-seat parliament from 68 to 75. The main opposition parties refused the seats they had allegedly won. In May 2000, the ruling PDGE overwhelmed its rivals in local elections. Opposition parties rejected the next election, the December 2002 Presidential election, as invalid. During this election, President Obiang was re-elected with 97% of the vote. Following his re-election Obiang formed a government based on national unity encompassing all opposition parties, except for the CPDS, which declined to join after Obiang refused to release one of their jailed leaders.

In April 2004, parliamentary and municipal elections took place. President Obiang's Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) and allied parties won 98 of 100 seats in parliament and all but seven of 244 municipal posts. International observers criticized both the election and its results.

While President Obiang's rule, in which schools reopened, primary education expanded, and public utilities and roads restored, compares favorably with Macias' tyranny and terror, it has been criticized for not implementing genuine democratic reforms. Corruption and a dysfunctional judicial system disrupt the development of Equatorial Guinea's economy and society. In 2004, the President appointed a new Prime Minister, Miguel Abia Biteo, and replaced several ministers; however, the government budget still did not include all revenues and expenditures. The United Nations Development Program proposed a broad governance reform program, but the Equatoguinean Government was not moving rapidly to implement it. In August 2006 a new Prime Minister, Ricardo Mangue, was named and the pace of reform accelerated.

On May 4, 2008, legislative elections resulted in an overwhelming victory for the PDGE. Ninety-nine of the 100 seats in the assembly went to the PDGE while the opposition party, the Convergence for Social Democracy (CPDS), only received one. (This is one less seat than the 2004 elections that granted the CPDS two seats.) Results were similar in the municipal elections held the same day, granting PDGE 319 councillor seats while CPDS only gained 13. International elections observers reported that the elections were generally conducted in a free and fair manner. Nevertheless, irregularities were reported, which included the barring of certain members of the international press.

In March 2004, Zimbabwean police in Harare impounded a plane from South Africa with 64 alleged mercenaries on board. The group said they were providing security for a mine in Democratic Republic of the Congo,

but a couple of days later an Equatorial Guinean minister said they had detained 15 more men who he claimed were the advance party for the group captured in Zimbabwe. Nick du Toit, the leader of the group of South Africans, Armenians and one German, in Equatorial Guinea, said at his trial in Equatorial Guinea that he was playing a limited role in a coup bid organized by Simon Mann, the alleged leader of the group held in Zimbabwe, to remove Obiang from power and install an exiled opposition politician, Severo Moto.

In September 2004, Mann was sentenced to seven years in jail in Zimbabwe after being convicted of illegally trying to buy weapons. In subsequent legal proceedings, three Equatoguineans and three South Africans were acquitted. In June 2005, President Obiang granted amnesty to the six Armenian pilots. In Harare, Mann obtained a reduced sentence based on good behavior in late 2007. Zimbabwe consented to Equatorial Guinea's extradition request and flew Mann to Malabo in early 2008. His trial began in June 2008. During the trail he reportedly confessed to the attempted coup, implicating Severo Moto, Sir Mark Thatcher, and Ely Calil, a nationalized British citizen of Lebanese ancestry with connections to Nigeria. Mann has been allowed visits by western media and family members.

Although Equatorial Guinea lacks a well-established democratic tradition, it has broken with the anarchic, chaotic, brutal, and repressive pattern of the Macias years and is improving its human rights and political performance. On June 5, 2008 President Obiang granted amnesty to 37 political prisoners, and the government has indicated a willingness to grant amnesty to other political prisoners. In addition, the country is undertaking an ambitious, multi-billion dollar development program that is improving the quality of life and providing opportunities for employment for its citizens. Equatorial Guinea also is a candidate for membership in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which aims to strengthen governance by improving transparency and accountability in the oil, gas, and minerals sector. The country is engaging with the EITI Secretariat to meet the requirements of EITI membership.

ECONOMY

Oil and gas exports have increased substantially and will drive the economy for years to come. Real GDP growth was 9.1% in 2007 (est.). Per capita income rose from about $590 in 1998 to $2,000 in 2000, $5,300 in 2004, and approximately $10,000 in 2007. The energy export sector is responsible for this rapid growth, and recorded even bigger gains in 2007 with a new, state-of-the-art liquefied natural gas (LNG) production and shipping facility coming on line in 2007. Oil production increased from 81,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) in 1998 to approximately 500,000 bbl/d equivalent by the end of 2007. Exploration efforts continue in search of further potential offshore concessions, and promising discoveries were announced in late 2007.

Equatorial Guinea has other resources, including its tropical climate, fertile soils, rich expanses of water, deepwater ports, and reserves of unskilled labor. However, its hydrocarbon riches dwarf all other economic activity. The government is actively seeking to diversify the economy by encouraging agriculture, tourism, and fishing. The ongoing construction boom is also enhancing related skills. The once-significant economic mainstays of the colonial era—cocoa, coffee, and timber—are also receiving attention, though they remain miniscule in comparison to the energy sector.

Equatorial Guinea's economic policies comprise an open investment regime. Qualitative restrictions on imports, non-tariff protection, and many import licensing requirements were lifted in 1992 when the government adopted a public investment program endorsed by the World Bank. The Government of Equatorial Guinea has sold some state enterprises. It is attempting to create a more favorable investment climate, and its investment code contains numerous incentives for job creation, training, promotion of nontraditional exports, support of development projects and indigenous capital participation, freedom for repatriation of profits, exemption from certain taxes and capital, and other benefits. Trade regulations have been further liberalized since Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC) reform codes in 1994. This included elimination of quota restrictions and reductions in the range and amounts of tariffs. The CEMAC countries agreed to the introduction of a value added tax (VAT) in 1999.

While business laws promote a liberalized economy, the business climate remains difficult. Application of the laws remains selective. Corruption among officials is widespread, and many business deals are concluded under nontransparent circumstances. A wage law now regulates separate wage levels for the petroleum, private, and government sector.

There is little industry in the country, and the local market for industrial products is small. The government seeks to expand the role of free enterprise and to promote foreign investment but has had little success in creating an atmosphere conducive to investor interest.

The Equatoguinean budget has grown enormously in the past 5 years as royalties and taxes on foreign company oil and gas production have provided new resources to a once poor government. The 2007 government revenue was about $7 billion. Oil revenues account for more than 81% of government revenue. Value Added Tax and trade taxes are other large revenue sources for the government.

The Equatoguinean Government has undertaken a number of reforms since 1991 to reduce its predominant role in the economy and promote private sector development. Its role is a diminishing one, although many government interactions with the private sector are at times capricious. Beginning in early 1997, the govern-

ment initiated efforts to attract significant private sector involvement through cooperative efforts with the Corporate Council on Africa visit and numerous ministerial efforts. In 1998, the government privatized distribution of petroleum products. There are now Total and Mobil stations in the country. The maritime border with Nigeria was settled in 2000, allowing Equatorial Guinea to continue exploitation of its oil fields. In October 2002, the government launched a national oil company, GEPetrol, under the Ministry of Mines and Hydrocarbons. The government is anxious for greater U.S. investment, and the aforementioned new Marathon LNG production refinery was the biggest new step in that direction for 2007. Much more is on the way, as U.S. hydrocarbon producers have announced $7 billion in new investments, starting in 2008. In addition, China has recently won exploration and drilling rights in a new offshore block, and will begin operations soon.

The government has expressed interest in privatizing the outmoded electricity utility. Several ports and a new terminal were built to accommodate the needs of the oil industry. A French company operates cellular telephone service in cooperation with a state enterprise, though the sector was opened to competition in 2007.

Equatorial Guinea's balance-of-payments situation has improved substantially since the mid-1990s because of new oil and gas production and favorable world energy prices. Exports totaled $8.1 billion in 2006. Crude oil exports now annually accounts for more than 94% of export earnings. Timber exports, by contrast, now represent only about 2% of export revenues. Imports into Equatorial Guinea also are growing very quickly. Imports totaled $4.3 billion in 2006.

Equatorial Guinea in the 1980s and 1990s received foreign assistance from numerous bilateral and multilateral donors, including European countries, the United States, and the World Bank. Many of these aid programs have ceased altogether or have diminished. Spain, France, and the European Union continue to provide some project assistance, as do China and Cuba. The government also has discussed working with World Bank assistance to develop government administrative capacity.

Equatorial Guinea operated under an International Monetary Fund-negotiated Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) until 1996. Since then, there have been no formal agreements or arrangements. However, since 1996, the IMF has held regular held Article IV consultations (periodic country evaluations). After the 2003 consultations, IMF directors stressed the need for further improvements in governance and transparency, the attainment of a sustainable fiscal position, implementation of structural reforms to bolster the non-oil sector, the development of a transparent framework for saving and managing part of the country's oil wealth, and a comprehensive effort to reduce poverty. In 2007, the government undertook a multi-million dollar Social Development Fund project, which engaged U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) expertise and regulation, to improve the quality of life and raise standards in education and health care.

Trade and Investment

With investments estimated at over $12 billion, the United States is the largest cumulative bilateral foreign investor in Equatorial Guinea. In 2003, 74% of U.S. exports to Equatorial Guinea consisted of energy sector-related transportation and machinery equipment. The United States' main import from Equatorial Guinea is petroleum (99% of imports in 2003). In 1999, the European Union (EU) imported $281.7 million in goods from Equatorial Guinea, 89% of which was petroleum and 7% timber. The European Union exported $104 million to Equatorial Guinea. Approximately 20% of these exports were oil and gas-related, and the remaining 80% ranged from agricultural products to clothing to used cars.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure has improved dramatically in the last few years. Numerous, large-scale infrastructure investments have recently been completed or are underway. Surface transport options are increasing as the government has invested heavily in road pavement projects. In 2002, the African Development Bank and the European Union co-financed two projects to improve the paved roads from Malabo to Luba and Riaba; and to build an interstate road network to link Equatorial Guinea to Cameroon and Gabon. A Chinese construction company is completing a project to link Mongomo to Bata, both cities on the mainland. In November 2003, the government announced an ambitious ten-project program to upgrade the country's road network and improve the airport facilities at Bata, the country's second city (on the mainland). These projects have since been completed and additional airport expansion and new-city corridors are now under construction.

Equatorial Guinea's electricity sector is owned and operated by the state-run monopoly, SEGESA. Equatorial Guinea's electricity generating capacity is now more than adequate to meet demand on both the continent and the island of Bioko, although the power supply is unreliable. The country's distribution network remains incapable of delivering reliable electricity to end users, due to aging equipment and poor management, as demonstrated by regular blackouts in Malabo. As a result, small diesel generators are widely used as a back-up power source. A project to modernize the grid is underway, with scheduled completion by 2010. Equatorial Guinea is estimated to have 2,600 megawatts (MW) of hydropower potential.

Potable water is available in the major towns but is not always reliable because of poor maintenance and aging infrastructure; consequently, supply interruptions are frequent and prolonged in some neighborhoods. A major project upgrading the public water system is also underway, with the cities of Malabo and Bata expecting completion in 2009. Some

villages and rural areas are equipped with generators and water pumps, usually owned by private individuals.

Telecommunications have improved dramatically in recent years. Parastatal Getesa, a joint venture with a 40% ownership stake held by France Telecom, provides telephone service in the major cities through an efficient, digital fixed network and good mobile coverage. Getesa's fixed-line service has 20,000 subscribers and the mobile service is used by over 200,000. Internet is widely available and access is increasing, providing improved access to information.

Equatorial Guinea has two of the deepest Atlantic seaports of the region, including the main business and commercial port city of Bata. The ports of both Malabo and Bata have been severely overextended. A half-billion dollar renovation project for the Port of Malabo is nearing completion, and a renovation of the Bata port scheduled to begin in 2008. In partnership with the U.S. petroleum company Amerada Hess, the British company Incat made significant progress in a project to renovate and expand Luba, the country's third-largest port, located on Bioko Island. Luba has become a major transportation hub for offshore oil and gas companies operating in the Gulf of Guinea. Luba is located some 50 kilometers from Malabo and was previously virtually inactive except for minor fishing activities and occasional use to ease congestion in Malabo.

The influx of oil workers has increased international air activity. Major international carriers now connect Malabo to the European cities of Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid, and Zurich. A weekly business-class charter flight was providing service to Houston, Texas. The runway at Malabo's international airport (3,200 meters) is equipped with lights and can service Boeing 747s. The runway at Bata (2,400 meters) does not currently operate at night but can accommodate aircraft as large as B737s. Bata is undergoing an upgrade with runway extension and expansion. Two minor airstrips (800 meters) are located at Mongomo and on the island of Annobon. Air service between the island and continental territories is restricted to 5 small airlines. In March 2006 the European Union blacklisted airlines based in Equatorial Guinea from flying into the EU. A project to gain International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) accreditation for various parts of the airline industry is underway.

Energy Developments

Equatorial Guinea is now the third-largest producer of crude oil in sub-Saharan Africa, after Nigeria and Angola. Equatorial Guinea's oil reserves are located mainly in the hydrocarbon-rich Gulf of Guinea, containing estimated probable reserves as high as 10% of the world total. As a result, large amounts of foreign investment primarily by U.S. companies have poured into the country's oil sector in recent years. Equatorial Guinea's total proven oil reserves are estimated at 1.1 billion barrels.

Oil production from Equatorial Guinea is expanding rapidly, averaging approximately 400,000 bbl/d by the end of 2007. In October 2004, the government capped production levels at 350,000 bbl/d to extend the life of the country's petroleum reserves, but lifted the cap the next year to allow expansion. With the addition of LNG production that came on line in 2007, total hydrocarbon production is now near 500,000 bbl/d equivalent. Three fields—Zafiro, Ceiba, and Alba—currently account for the majority of the country's oil output.

In 2001, GEPetrol became Equatorial Guinea's national oil company. It was established as the primary state-run institution responsible for the country's downstream oil sector activities. However, since 2001 its primary focus has become managing the government's interest stakes in various Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) with foreign oil companies. GEPetrol also partners with foreign firms to undertake exploration projects and has a say in the country's environmental policy implementation. In its recent block-licensing negotiations, Equatorial Guinea has pursued increases in the government's stake in new PSCs. In early 2008 it announced a $2.2 billion purchase of U.S.-based Devon Energy's stake in the country's oil fields, increasing its participation to 20% in the Zafiro field operation.

The Zafiro field is Equatorial Guinea's largest oil producer, with output rising from an initial level of 7,000 bbl/d in August 1996 to approximately 280,000 bbl/d by 2004. Ceiba, Equatorial Guinea's second major producing oil field, is located just offshore of Rio Muni and is estimated to contain 300 million barrels of oil. Production at Ceiba has risen dramatically during the past 2-3 years, following improvements and upgrades to the facility. Alba, Equatorial Guinea's third significant field was discovered in 1991. Original estimates of reserves at Alba were around 68 million barrels of oil equivalent (BOE), but recent exploration has increased estimates significantly to almost 1 billion BOE. Unlike the Zafiro or Ceiba fields, exploration and production at Alba has focused on natural gas, including condensates.

Ceiba's discovery has significantly increased interest in petroleum exploration of surrounding areas, with many new companies acquiring licenses in exploration blocks further offshore in the Rio Muni basin. International companies with interests in one or more exploration blocks include Chevron (U.S.), Vanco Energy (U.S.), Atlas Petroleum International (U.S.), Devon Energy (U.S.), Roc Oil (Australia), Petronas (Malaysia), Sasol Petroleum (South Africa), and Glencore (Switzerland). In October 2004, Noble Energy Equatorial Guinea, an Equatoguinean subsidiary of American Noble Energy, Inc. signed a contract to exploit a new oil field off the island of Bioko. Recently, Equatorial Guineau gave the Chinese National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) the rights to its newest oil field. While China's capacity for deep-water drilling remains thus far unproven, CNOOC expects to complete two new oil rigs by 2009.

Equatorial Guinea's natural gas reserves are located offshore Bioko

Island, primarily in the Alba and Zafiro oil and gas fields. Natural gas and condensate production in Equatorial Guinea has expanded rapidly in the last five years in response to new investments by major stakeholders in the Alba natural gas field. Alba, the country's largest natural gas field, contains 1.3 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of proven reserves, with probable reserves estimated at 4.4 Tcf or more.

Marathon Oil, other investors, and the state-owned gas company, SONOGAS, joined together in a $1.5 billion deal to construct a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility on Bioko Island. The world-class facility shipped its first product in May 2007. In early 2008 Marathon and the government announced plans to construct and operate LNG trains 2 and 3, pending confirmation of feedstock gas from national and neighboring gas fields.

DEFENSE

The Equatoguinean military consists of approximately 2,500 service members. The largest contingent is the Army with 1,400 soldiers; the police have 400 para-military policemen, the Navy has 200 members and the Air Force has approximately 120. The Gendarmerie numbers approximately 300. In 2003, the government disbursed $75 million in military expenditures, about 9% of the 2002 budget. It continues to acquire equipment and has one of the strongest navies in the region. In 2005, the American consulting firm MPRI, Inc. was licensed to contract with the government to begin extensive training of the military and police forces. The primary purpose has been to professionalize security personnel, and a strong human rights and anti-trafficking provision was included in the curriculum. The program has been effective and continues to expand.

Between 1984 and 1992, service members went regularly to the United States on the International Military Education Training program, after which funding for this program for Equatorial Guinea ceased. U.S. military-to-military engagement has been dormant since 1997 (the year of the last Joint Combined Exchange Training Exercise), although their representatives did attend a military-hosted conference on Gulf of Guinea Security Cooperation in November 2006, and are slated to be involved in the follow-up conference later in 2008. The USS Fort McHenry made a highly successful ship visit to Malabo in January 2008, with additional similar visits being planned.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Equatoguinean Government favorably views the U.S. Government and American companies. The United States is the largest single foreign investor in Equatorial Guinea. U.S. companies have the largest and most visible foreign presence in the country, though the Chinese presence is growing rapidly. In an effort to attract increased U.S. investment, American passport-holders are entitled to visa-free entry for short visits. The United States is the only country with this privilege. With the increased U.S. investment presence, relations between the U.S. and the Government of Equatorial Guinea have been characterized by a positive, constructive relationship.

Equatorial Guinea maintains an embassy in Washington, DC, and has recently opened a new consulate in Houston, Texas. President Obiang has worked to cultivate the Equatorial Guinea-U.S. relationship with regular visits to the U.S. for meetings with senior government and business leaders, as well as to the opening sessions of the United Nations.

Despite improvements in its record, the 2007 U.S. State Department Human Rights report on Equatorial Guinea cited shortcomings in basic human rights, political freedom, and labor rights. U.S. Government policy involves constructive engagement with Equatorial Guinea to encourage an improvement in the human rights situation and positive use of petroleum funds directed toward the development of a working civil society. Equatoguineans visit the U.S. under programs sponsored by the U.S. Government, American oil companies, and educational institutions. The Ambassador's Self-Help Fund annually finances a number of small grassroots projects.

In view of growing ties between U.S. companies and Equatorial Guinea, the U.S. Government's overseas investment promotion agency, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), has concluded the largest agreement in Sub-Saharan Africa for a major U.S. project in Equatorial Guinea. The U.S. Agency for International Development has no U.S.-funded projects ongoing, but USAID does administer the Social Needs Fund of the Equatorial Guinean Government. This program is unique, and is projected to expand to a total value of $60 million over the next several years. The Peace Corps has had no presence in the country since the mid-1990s. American-based non-governmental organizations and other donor groups have very little involvement in the country.

U.S.-EQUATORIAL GUINEA RELATIONS

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Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MALABO (E) Carretera de Aeropuerto KM-3 (El Paraiso), Apt. 95, Malabo Equatorial Guinea, (240) 09.88.95, Fax (240) 09.88.94, Workweek: 8:30-5, M-F, Website: http://malabo.usembassy.gov.

MGT:	Maureen McGovern
AMB:	Donald C. Johnson
CON:	Maureen McGovern
DCM:	Anton K. Smith
RSO:	Miguel Eversley
DAO:	Maj. Matthew Sousa
IMO:	George B. Green
ISO:	Lynne Hermanson
ISSO:	Lynne Hermanson

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 15, 2007

Country Description: Equatorial Guinea is a developing country in central Africa. Its capital, Malabo, is located on the island of Bioko, off the coast of Cameroon. A secondary port, Luba, is also on Bioko. The mainland territory of Equatorial Guinea is located between Cameroon and Gabon.

The principal city on the mainland is Bata. Facilities for tourism are limited. Official languages are Spanish, which is widely spoken, and French, which is not widely understood, but sometimes used in business dealings.

Entry Requirements: A passport and evidence of a yellow fever vaccination is required to enter Equatorial Guinea. U.S. citizens are not required to have visas to enter Equatorial Guinea for short visits. For long visits and other types of visas, travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, 2020 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009, telephone (202) 518-5700, fax (202) 518-5252. Overseas, inquiries may also be made at the nearest Equato-Guinean embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: It is not uncommon for a uniformed member of the security forces to stop motorists on the pretext of minor or nonexistent violations of the local motor vehicle regulations in order to extort small bribes. Visitors are advised not to pay bribes, and to request that the officer provide a citation to be paid at the local court.

Although large public demonstrations are uncommon, U.S. citizens should avoid large crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Violent crime is rare and the overall level of criminal activity is low in comparison to other countries in the region. However, there has been a rise in non-violent street crime and residential burglaries.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are extremely limited. Pharmacies in Malabo and Bata stock basic medicines including antibiotics, but cannot be counted on to supply advanced medications. Outside of these cities,

many medicines are unavailable. Travelers are advised to carry any special medication that they require. The sanitation levels in even the best hospitals are very low. Doctors and hospitals often require immediate payment for health services, and patients are often expected to supply their own bandages, linen and toiletries. Nevertheless, improvements in the health sector are underway. An Israeli-built and staffed private hospital in Bata is reported by Red Cross officials to be the best in the region. The Malabo hospital is likewise undergoing a complete update, with expected completion in 2008.

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. Plasmodium falciparum malaria, the type that predominates in Equatorial Guinea, is resistant to the antimalarial drug chloroquine. Because travelers to the country are at high risk for contracting malaria, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam TM), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone TM).

Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

There are periodic outbreaks of cholera in Equatorial Guinea. Yellow fever can cause serious medical problems, but the vaccine, required for entry, is very effective in preventing the disease.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Equatorial Guinea is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Equatorial Guinea's road networks are underdeveloped. There are few road and traffic signs. Livestock and pedestrians create constant road hazards. During the rainy season, many roads are passable only with four-wheel-drive vehicles. However, new road construction and repair is taking place all over the country and road conditions have improved markedly over the course of the past year.

Travelers outside the limits of Malabo and Bata may expect to encounter occasional military roadblocks. Travelers should be prepared to show proper identification (for example, a U.S. passport) and to explain their reason for being at that particular location. The personnel staffing these checkpoints normally do not speak or understand English or French; travelers who do not speak Spanish would do well to have their reason for being in the country and their itinerary written down in Spanish before venturing into the countryside.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Equatorial Guinea, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Equatorial Guinea's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Commercial air travel to and from Equatorial Guinea can be difficult. Malabo is served by European airlines a few times per week. The island of Bioko and the African mainland are connected by several small local airlines offering daily service. Schedules are subject to change or cancellation without notice; flights are often overbooked and reservations may not guarantee seats.

Malabo Airport has navigational aids and can accommodate night landings. There are no navigational aids at Bata Airport. Special clearances are required to land in or overfly Equato-Guinean territory.

Special Circumstances: Equatorial Guinea has a strictly cash economy. Credit cards and checks are not accepted; credit card cash advances are not available and there are no ATMs. In addition, most local businesses do not accept travelers' checks, dollars or euros. However, dollars can be changed at local banks for CFA. Cash in CFA is usually the only form of payment accepted throughout the country.

Special permits from the Ministry of Information and Tourism (or from the local delegation if outside Malabo) are required for virtually all types of photography. Police or security officials may charge a fine, attempt to take a violator into custody, or seize the camera and film of persons photographing the Presidential Palace and its environs, military installations, airports, harbors, government buildings, and other areas.

Travelers are advised that the possession of camouflage-patterned clothing, large knives, binoculars, firearms, or a variety of other items may be deemed suspicious by the

security forces and grounds for confiscation of the item and detention of the carrier.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Equato-Guinean laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Equatorial Guinea are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Equatorial Guinea are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Equatorial Guinea. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The United States reopened its Embassy in Malabo in October 2003. However, due to limited staffing, it can offer only emergency services to U.S. citizens in distress. The U.S. Embassy in Malabo can be contacted at (240) 098-895. Embassy web site: http://malabo.usembassy.gov. Routine services are provided through the U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé, Cameroon, located on Avenue Rosa Parks in the Mbankolo Quartier, adjacent to the Mount Febe Golf Club; mailing address P.O. Box 817; embassy tel. (237) 2220-1500, fax: (237) 2220-1572; web site: http://yaounde.usembassy.gov. The Embassy Branch Office in Douala, Cameroon is located on Rue Flatters, in the Citibank building, tel.: (237) 3342-53-31, fax: (237) 3342-77-90.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding.

Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Intercountry adoption from Equatorial Guinea is rare. The U.S. Embassy in Yaoundé, Cameroon, which issues immigrant visas for citizens of Equatorial Guinea, has not issued any immigrant visas to orphans from Equatorial Guinea in the past five fiscal years. The U.S. Embassy in Malabo continues to seek clarification from the government of Equatorial Guinea on the legal procedures for intercountry adoption. This flyer will be updated as new information becomes available.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States of America

Carretera Aeropuerto KM-3,
El Paraiso

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
http://usembassy.state.gov/malabo
Tel: 09.88.95
Fax: 09.88.94
malaboconsular@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Equatorial Guinea may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Equatorial Guinea. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



ERITREA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
State of Eritrea

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 125,000 sq. km. (48,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Pennsylvania.
Cities: Capital—Asmara (est. pop. 435,000). Other cities—Keren (57,000); Assab (28,000); Massawa (25,000); Afabet (25,000); Tessenie (25,000); Mendefera (25,000); Dekemhare (20,000); Adekeieh (15,000); Barentu (15,000); Ghinda (15,000).
Terrain: Central highlands straddle escarpment associated with Rift Valley, dry coastal plains, and western lowlands.
Climate: Temperate in the highlands; hot in the lowlands.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Eritrean(s).
Population: (2004 est.) 3.6 million.
Annual growth rate: 2.5%.
Ethnic groups: Tigrinya 50%, Tigre 31.4%, Saho 5%, Afar 5%, Beja 2.5%, Bilen 2.1%, Kunama 2%, Nara 1.5%, and Rashaida 0.5%.
Religions: Christian 50%, mostly Orthodox, Muslim 48%, indigenous beliefs 2%.
Education: Years compulsory—none. Attendance—elementary (net 2002) 45.2%; secondary (net 2002) 21.2%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2003)—45/1,000. Life expectancy—52 yrs.
Work force: Agriculture—80%. Industry and commerce—20%.

Government

Type: Transitional government.
Independence: Eritrea officially celebrated its independence on May 24, 1993.
Constitution: Ratified May 24, 1997, but not yet implemented.
Government branches: Executive—president, cabinet. Legislative—Transitional National Assembly (does not meet). Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political subdivisions: Six administrative regions.
Political parties: People's Front for Democracy and Justice (name adopted by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front when it established itself as a political party).
Suffrage: Universal, age 18 and above (although no national elections have been held).
Budget: (2005 est.) $485 million.
Defense: (2004 est.) $185 million.

Economy

Real GDP: (2004 est.) $700 million.
Annual growth rate: (2005 est.) 4.8%.
Per capita income: $900 (on a purchasing power parity basis); per capita GNI (World Bank Atlas method), 2004 est. $180.
Avg. inflation rate: (2004 est.) 25%.
Mineral resources: Gold, copper, iron ore, potash, oil.
Agriculture: (12% of GDP in 2004) Products—millet, sorghum, teff, wheat, barley, flax, cotton, papayas, citrus fruits, bananas, beans and lentils, potatoes, vegetables, fish, dairy products, meat, and skins. Cultivated land—10% of arable land.
Industry: (25% of GDP in 2004) Types—processed food and dairy products, alcoholic beverages, leather goods, textiles, chemicals, cement and other construction materials, salt, paper, and matches.
Trade: Exports (2005 est.)—$12 million: skins, meat, live sheep and cattle, gum arabic. Major markets—Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Yemen), Europe (Italy), Djibouti, and Sudan. Imports (2005 est.)—$474 million: food, military materiel, and fuel, manufactured goods, machinery and transportation equipment. Major suppliers—U.A.E., Saudi Arabia, Italy, Germany, Belgium.

GEOGRAPHY

Eritrea is located in the Horn of Africa and is bordered on the northeast and east by the Red Sea, on the west and northwest by Sudan, on the south by Ethiopia, and on the south-

east by Djibouti. The country has a high central plateau that varies from 1,800 to 3,000 meters (6,000-10,000 ft.) above sea level. A coastal plain, western lowlands, and some 300 islands comprise the remainder of Eritrea's landmass. Eritrea has no year-round rivers.

The climate is temperate in the mountains and hot in the lowlands. Asmara, the capital, is about 2,300 meters (7,500 ft.) above sea level. Maximum temperature is 26o C (80o F). The weather is usually sunny and dry, with the short or belg rains occurring February-April and the big or meher rains beginning in late June and ending in mid-September.

PEOPLE

Eritrea's population comprises nine ethnic groups, most of which speak Semitic or Cushitic languages. The Tigrinya and Tigre make up four-fifths of the population and speak different, but related and somewhat mutually intelligible, Semitic languages. In general, most of the Christians live in the highlands, while Muslims and adherents of traditional beliefs live in lowland regions. Tigrinya and Arabic are the most frequently used languages for commercial and official transactions. In urban areas, English is widely spoken and is the language used for secondary and university education.

HISTORY

Prior to Italian colonization in 1885, what is now Eritrea had been ruled by the various local or international powers that successively dominated the Red Sea region. In 1896, the Italians used Eritrea as a springboard for their disastrous attempt to conquer Ethiopia. Eritrea was placed under British military administration after the Italian surrender in World War II. In 1952, a UN resolution federating Eritrea with Ethiopia went into effect. The resolution ignored Eritrean pleas for independence but guaranteed Eritreans some democratic rights and a measure of autonomy. Almost immediately after the federation went into effect, however, these rights began to be abridged or violated.

In 1962, Emperor Haile Sellassie unilaterally dissolved the Eritrean parliament and annexed the country, sparking the Eritrean fight for independence from Ethiopia that continued after Haile Sellassie was ousted in a coup in 1974. The new Ethiopian Government, called the Derg, was a Marxist military junta led by Ethiopian strongman Mengistu Haile Miriam.

During the 1960s, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) led the Eritrean independence struggle. In 1970, some members of the group broke away to form the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). By the late 1970s, the EPLF had become the dominant armed Eritrean group fighting against the Ethiopian Government, with Isaias Afwerki as its leader. The EPLF used material captured from the Ethiopian Army to fight against the government.

By 1977, the EPLF was poised to drive the Ethiopians out of Eritrea. That same year, however, a massive airlift of Soviet arms to Ethiopia enabled the Ethiopian Army to regain the initiative and forced the EPLF to retreat to the bush. Between 1978 and 1986, the Derg launched eight major offensives against the independence movement—all of which failed. In 1988, the EPLF captured Afabet, headquarters of the Ethiopian Army in northeastern Eritrea, prompting the Ethiopian Army to withdraw from its garrisons in Eritrea's western lowlands. EPLF fighters then moved into position around Keren, Eritrea's second-largest city. Meanwhile, other dissident movements were making headway throughout Ethiopia.

At the end of the 1980s, the Soviet Union informed Mengistu that it would not be renewing its defense and cooperation agreement. With the withdrawal of Soviet support and supplies, the Ethiopian Army's morale plummeted, and the EPLF—along with other Ethiopian rebel forces—advanced on Ethiopian positions. The United States played a facilitative role in the peace talks in Washington during the months leading up to the May 1991 fall of the Mengistu regime. In mid-May, Mengistu resigned as head of the Ethiopian Government and went into exile in Zimbabwe, leaving a caretaker government in Addis Ababa. Later that month, the United States chaired talks in London to formalize the end of the war. The four major combatant groups, including the EPLF, attended these talks.

Having defeated the Ethiopian forces in Eritrea, EPLF troops took control of their homeland. In May 1991, the EPLF established the Provisional Government of Eritrea (PGE) to administer Eritrean affairs until a referendum could be held on independence and a permanent government established. EPLF leader Isaias became the head of the PGE, and the EPLF Central Committee served as its legislative body.

A high-level U.S. delegation was present in Addis Ababa for the July 1-5, 1991 conference that established a transitional government in Ethiopia. The EPLF attended the July conference as an observer and held talks with the new transitional government regarding Eritrea's relationship to Ethiopia. The outcome of those talks was an agreement in which the Ethiopians recognized the right of the Eritreans to hold a referendum on independence. Although some EPLF cadres at one time espoused a Marxist ideology, Soviet assistance for Mengistu limited the level of Eritrean interest in seeking Soviet support. The fall of communist regimes in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc convinced them it was a failed system. The EPLF (and later its successor, the PFDJ) expressed its commitment to establishing a democratic form of government and a free-market economy in Eritrea. The United States agreed to provide assistance to both Ethiopia and Eritrea, conditional on continued progress toward democracy and human rights. On April 23-25, 1993, Eritreans voted overwhelmingly for independence from Ethiopia in a UN-



monitored free and fair referendum. The Eritrean authorities declared Eritrea an independent state on April 27, and Eritrea officially celebrated its independence on May 24, 1993.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Eritrea's Government faced formidable challenges following independence. With no constitution, no judicial system, and an education system in shambles, the Eritrean Government was required to build institutions of government from scratch. Currently, the Government of Eritrea exercises strict control of political, social, and economic systems, with nearly no civil liberties allowed.

On May 19, 1993, the PGE issued a proclamation regarding the reorganization of the government. The government was reorganized, and after a national, freely contested election, the Transitional National Assembly, which chose Isaias as President of the PGE, was expanded to include both EPLF and non-EPLF members. The EPLF established itself as a political party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). The PGE declared that during a 4-year transition period it would draft and ratify a constitution, draft a law on political parties, draft a press law, and carry out elections for a constitutional government.

In March 1994, the PGE created a constitutional commission charged with drafting a constitution flexible enough to meet the current needs of a population suffering from 30 years of civil war as well as those of the future, when prospective stability and prosperity would change the political landscape. Commission members traveled throughout the country and to Eritrean communities abroad holding meetings to explain

constitutional options to the people and to solicit their input. A new constitution was ratified in 1997 but has not been implemented, and general elections have not been held. The government had announced that Transitional National Assembly elections would take place in December 2001, but those were postponed and new elections have not been rescheduled.

The present government structure includes legislative, executive, and judicial bodies. The legislature, the Transitional National Assembly, comprises 75 members of the PFDJ and 75 additional popularly elected members. The Transitional National Assembly is the highest legal power in the government until the establishment of a democratic, constitutional government. The legislature sets the internal and external policies of the government, regulates implementation of those policies, approves the budget, and elects the president of the country.

The president nominates individuals to head the various ministries, authorities, commissions, and offices, and the Transitional National Assembly ratifies those nominations. The cabinet is the country's executive branch. It is composed of 17 ministers and chaired by the president. It implements policies, regulations, and laws and is accountable to the Transitional National Assembly. The ministries are agriculture; defense; education; energy and mines; finance; fisheries; foreign affairs; health; information; labor and human welfare; land, water, and environment; local governments; justice; public works; trade and industry; transportation and communication; and tourism.

Nominally, the judiciary operates independently of both the legislative and executive bodies, with a court system that extends from the village through to the district, provincial, and national levels. However, in practice, the independence of the judiciary is limited. In 2001, the president of the High Court was detained after criticizing the government for judicial interference.

In September 2001, after several months in which a number of prominent PFDJ party members had gone public with a series of grievances against the government and in which they called for implementation of the constitution and the holding of elections, the government instituted a crackdown. Eleven prominent dissidents, members of what had come to be known as the Group of 15, were arrested and held without charge in an unknown location. At the same time, the government shut down the independent press and arrested its reporters and editors, holding them incommunicado and without charge. In subsequent weeks, the government arrested other individuals, including two Eritrean employees of the U.S. Embassy. All of these individuals remain held without charge and none are allowed visitors.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **ISAIAS Afworki**
Vice Pres.:
Min. of Agriculture: **AREFAINE Berhe**
Min. of Defense: **SEBHAT Ephrem**
Min. of Education: **SEMERE Russom**
Min. of Energy & Mines: **TESFAI Gebreselassie**
Min. of Finance: **BERHANE Abrehe**
Min. of Fisheries: **AHMED Haj Ali**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **OSMAN Saleh Mohammed**
Min. of Health: **SALEH Meki**
Min. of Information: **ALI Abdu**
Min. of Justice: **FOZIA Hashim**
Min. of Labor & Human Welfare: **ASKALU Menkerios**
Min. of Land, Water, & Environment: **WOLDEMICHAEL Gebremariam**
Min. of Maritime Resources: **AHMED Haj Ali**
Min. of National Development: **WOLDAI Futur**
Min. of Public Works: **ABRAHA Asfaha**
Min. of Tourism: **AMNA Nurhusein**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **GERGIS Teklemichael, Dr.**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **WOLDENKIEL Abraha**
Governor, Bank of Eritrea: **BEYENE Tekie**
Ambassador to the US: **GHIRMAI Ghebremariam**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **ARAYA Desta**

Eritrea maintains an embassy in the United States at 1708 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-319-1991).

ECONOMY

The Eritrean economy is largely based on agriculture, which employs 80% of the population but currently may contribute as little as 12% to GDP. Agricultural exports include cotton, fruits and vegetables, hides, and meat, but farmers are largely dependent on rain-fed agriculture, and growth in this and other sectors is hampered by lack of a dependable water supply. Worker remittances and other private transfers from abroad currently contribute about 32% of GDP.

While in the past the Government of Eritrea stated that it was committed to a market economy and privatization, the government and the ruling PFDJ party maintain complete control of the economy. The government has imposed an arbitrary and complex set of regulatory requirements that discourage investment from both foreign and domestic sources, and it often reclaims successful private enterprises and property.

After independence, Eritrea had established a growing and healthy economy. But the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia had a major negative impact on the economy and discouraged investment. Eritrea lost many valuable economic assets in particular during the last round of fighting in May-June 2000, when a significant portion of its territory in the agriculturally important west and south was occupied by Ethiopia. As a result of this last round of fighting, more than one million Eritreans were displaced, though by 2007 nearly all have been resettled. According to World Bank estimates, Eritreans also lost livestock worth some $225 million, and 55,000 homes worth $41 million were destroyed during the war. Damage to public buildings, including hospitals, is estimated at $24 million. Much of the transportation and communication infrastructure is outmoded and

deteriorating, although a large volume of intercity road-building activity is currently underway. The government sought international assistance for various development projects and mobilized young Eritreans serving in the national service to repair crumbling roads and dams. However, in 2005, the government asked the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to cease operations in Eritrea.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), post-border war recovery was impaired by four consecutive years of recurrent drought that have reduced the already low domestic food production capacity. The government reports that harvests have improved, but it provides no data to support these claims. Eritrea currently suffers from large structural fiscal deficits caused by high levels of spending on defense, which have resulted in the stock of debt rising to unsustainable levels. Exports have collapsed due to strict controls on foreign currencies and trade, as well as a closed border with Ethiopia, which was the major trading partner for Eritrea prior to the war. In 2006, Eritrea normalized relations with Sudan and is beginning to open the border to trade between the two countries. Large and persistent transfers from Eritreans living abroad offer significant support to the economy.

The port in Massawa has been rehabilitated and is being developed. In addition, the government has begun on a limited basis to export fish and sea cucumbers from the Red Sea to markets in Europe and Asia. A newly constructed airport in Massawa capable of handling jets could facilitate the export of high-value perishable seafood.

DEFENSE

During the war for independence, the EPLF fighting force grew to almost 110,000 fighters, about 3% of the total population of Eritrea. In 1993, Eritrea embarked on a phased program to demobilize 50%-60% of the army, which had by then shrunk to about 95,000. During the first phase of demobilization in 1993, some 26,000 soldiers—most of who enlisted after 1990—were demobilized. The second phase of demobilization, which occurred the following year, demobilized more than 17,000 soldiers who had joined the EPLF before 1990 and in many cases had seen considerable combat experience. Many of these fighters had spent their entire adult lives in the EPLF and lacked the social, personal, and vocational skills to become competitive in the work place. As a result, they received higher compensation, more intensive training, and more psychological counseling than the first group. Special attention was given to women fighters, who made up some 30% of the EPLF's combat troops. By 1998, the army had shrunk to 47,000.

The moves to demobilize were abruptly reversed after the outbreak of war with Ethiopia over the contested border. During the 1998-2000 war, which is estimated to have resulted in well over 100,000 casualties on the two sides, Eritrea's armed forces expanded to close to 300,000 members, almost 10% of the population. This imposed a huge economic burden on the country. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the economy shrank by more than 8% in 2000, although it rebounded somewhat in 2001. The war ended with a cessation of hostilities agreement in June 2000, followed by a peace agreement signed in December of the same year. A UN peacekeeping mission, the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), was established and monitors a 25-kilometer-wide Temporary Security Zone separating the two sides. Per the terms of the cessation of hostilities agreement, two commissions were established: one to delimit and demarcate the border and the other to weigh compensation claims by both sides. The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission announced its decision in April 2002. Demarcation was expected to begin in 2003, but despite attempts to progress, it has been delayed by a stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The government has been slow to demobilize its military after the most recent conflict, although it formulated an ambitious demobilization plan with the participation of the World Bank. A pilot demobilization program involving 5,000 soldiers began in November 2001 and was to be followed immediately thereafter by a first phase in which some 65,000 soldiers would be demobilized. This was delayed repeatedly. In 2003, the government began to demobilize some of those slated for the first phase; however, the government maintains a "national service" program, which includes most of the male population between 18-40 and the female population between 18-27. The program essentially serves as a reserve force and can be mobilized quickly. There are estimates that one in twenty Eritreans actively serve in the military.

Presently, the U.S. has no military-to-military cooperation with Eritrea.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Eritrea is a member of the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the African Union (AU) but does participate actively in the AU. Eritrea maintains diplomatic relations with the United States, Italy, and several other European nations, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands. Relations with these countries became strained as a result of the 2001 government crackdown against political dissidents and others, the closure of the independent press, and limits on civil liberties.

Eritrea's relations with its neighbors other than Djibouti also are somewhat strained. Although a territorial dispute with Yemen over the Haynish Islands was settled by international arbitration, tensions over traditional fishing rights with Yemen resurfaced in 2002. The relationship to date remains cordial. Relations with Sudan also were colored by occasional incidents involving the extremist group, Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ)—which the Eritrean Government believes is supported by the National Islamic Front government in Khartoum—and by continued Eritrean

support for the Sudanese opposition coalition, the National Democratic Alliance; however, Eritrea normalized relations with Sudan in 2006.

U.S.-ERITREAN RELATIONS

The U.S. consulate in Asmara was first established in 1942. In 1953, the United States signed a mutual defense treaty with Ethiopia. The treaty granted the United States control and expansion of the important British military communications base at Kagnew near Asmara. In the 1960s, as many as 4,000 U.S. military personnel were stationed at Kagnew. In the 1970s, technological advances in the satellite and communications fields were making the communications station at Kagnew increasingly obsolete. In 1974, Kagnew Station drastically reduced its personnel complement. In early 1977, the United States informed the Ethiopian Government that it intended to close Kagnew Station permanently by September 30, 1977. In the meantime, U.S. relations with the Mengistu regime were worsening. In April 1977, Mengistu abrogated the 1953 mutual defense treaty and ordered a reduction of U.S. personnel in Ethiopia, including the closure of Kagnew Communications Center and the consulate in Asmara. In August 1992, the United States reopened its consulate in Asmara, staffed with one officer. On April 27, 1993, the United States recognized Eritrea as an independent state, and on June 11, diplomatic relations were established, with a chargé d'affaires. The first U.S. Ambassador arrived later that year. In the past, the United States has provided substantial assistance to Eritrea, including food and development. In FY 2004, the United States provided over $65 million in humanitarian aid to Eritrea, including $58.1 million in food assistance and $3.47 million in refugee support. In 2005, the Government of Eritrea told USAID to cease operations. At the Eritrean Government's request, the United States no longer provides bilateral development assistance to Eritrea. U.S. interests in Eritrea include consolidating the peace with Ethiopia, encouraging progress toward establishing a democratic political culture, supporting Eritrean efforts to become constructively involved in solving regional problems, assisting Eritrea in dealing with its humanitarian and development needs, and promoting economic reform.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ASMARA (E) 179 Alaa Street. P.O.Box 211, Asmara, 291-1-120004, Fax 291-1-127584, INMARSAT Tel 00-871-683-142-188, Workweek: Mon-Thu 0800-1800; Fri 0800-1200, Website: asmara.usembassy.gov.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 26, 2008

Country Description: Eritrea is a poor but developing East African country, the capital of which is Asmara. Formerly a province of Ethiopia, Eritrea became an independent country on May 24, 1993, following a 30-year struggle that culminated in an overwhelming referendum vote for independence. Tourism facilities are very limited.

Entry Requirements: All travelers should have a passport and valid visa prior to arrival; visas are not available at the airport unless specifically pre-authorized by the Eritrean government. Travelers visiting Eritrea using a foreign passport do not need an exit visa, provided they leave before their entrance visa expiration date. Persons staying beyond their entrance visa expiration date may be subject to fines or imprisonment, or be required to remain in Eritrea for an extended period while their case is reviewed in court. All long-term residents, regardless of citizenship, must obtain an exit visa 30 days prior to departure, unless they hold a difficult-to-obtain multiple entry visa. Upon entry and exit, visitors must declare all foreign currency, and may be asked to declare electronic equipment such as cameras, computers and video equipment. Visitors must save all receipts for foreign exchange and present these upon departure to account for all foreign currency spent in Eritrea. Failure to report foreign currency or meet customs requirements usually results in both a fine and imprisonment. There is also a $20 airport departure tax. Information about the airport tax and entry/exit requirements is available from the Embassy of Eritrea, 1708 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009; telephone (202) 319-1991; fax (202) 319-1304. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Eritrean embassy or consulate.

U.S. citizens born in Eritrea, to Eritrean parents, or who in any other way appear to have Eritrean origins, are required to register with the Immigration and Nationality office in Asmara within seven business days of their entry into the country. The Eritrean government sometimes subjects U.S. citizens of Eritrean heritage to the same entry/exit requirements as Eritrean citizens. See the "Special Circumstances" section below for more information about dual nationality.

Safety and Security: Eritrea and Ethiopia fought a border war from 1998-2000. United Nations peacekeepers patrolled the border until March 2008, when Government of

Eritrea diesel fuel restrictions resulted in the peacekeepers' withdrawal. Both Eritrea and Ethiopia maintain large military presences along the border and currently all border crossings into Ethiopia from Eritrea remain closed. U.S. citizens are strongly advised to avoid travel near the Eritrean-Ethiopian border and to register their presence in Eritrea with the U.S. Embassy in Asmara.

Since April 2008, large numbers of Eritrean troops have been deployed along the northeastern border of Djibouti. U.S. citizens are strongly advised to avoid non-essential travel to the Southern Red Sea region of Eritrea, including the port of Assab.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance remain a serious problem throughout the country. There are reports of accidents and numerous incidents where vehicles and people occasionally detonate mines. Many detonations occurred on relatively well-traveled roads in and near the Gash Barka region of western Eritrea; subsequent investigations indicated that several mines had been recently laid. Vast areas of the country still have not been certified free of mines and unexploded ordnance left over from both the 30-year war for independence and the subsequent 1998-2000 conflict with Ethiopia. Americans should avoid walking alone and hiking in riverbeds or areas that local government officials have not certified as safe.

Although Eritrea and Sudan have diplomatic relations, the procedures for crossing their common border are not clear and subject to change. Overland travel between the two countries is dangerous and ill advised. Travelers crossing from Eritrea to Sudan north and west of the Keren-Barentu road risk becoming victims of banditry or Islamic extremist insurgent activity. Several incidents were reported in 2007, apparently involving insurgents or criminals in this area. The U.S. Embassy also received reports of sporadic bombings of vehicles and government facilities in the Gash Barka region near Sudan in 2007 and 2008. If travel near the Eritrean-Sudanese border is essential, travelers should consult both the Eritrean authorities and the U.S. Embassy in advance. Foreign travelers who wish to visit any area outside of Asmara must apply at least ten days in advance for a travel permit from the Eritrean government.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although still a safe city by many measures, Asmara reported significant increases of street crime, such as theft, robbery, and assault in 2008. Travelers should exercise vigilance in their personal security and safety precautions regarding what valuables they carry and which areas they visit.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities And Other Health Information: Medical facilities in Eritrea are extremely limited. Travelers must carry their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventative medicines because pharmaceuticals are in short supply. Food and water-borne illnesses are very common among travelers, so drink only bottled or purified water and eat foods that are cooked or peeled. Malaria is a serious risk to travelers in the lowlands of Eritrea, but Asmara is generally considered free of the disease.

There is no HIV testing requirement for temporary or permanent entry into Eritrea. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Eritrea before you travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Eritrea is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The roads between major cities (Asmara, Massawa, Mendefera, Dekemhare, Barentu, and Keren) are paved and in relatively good condition. However, secondary roads and those in remote areas are usually unpaved and in poor condition. U.S. citizens should avoid traveling on these roads, especially at night. Bad weather can also make the condition

of poor roads worse. If you must take unpaved roads, check first with local government and village officials as new minefields continue to be discovered.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance litter the countryside in many areas, occasionally causing injuries and deaths. Although the UN conducted de-mining efforts until late 2007, evidence of new mines has been reported, particularly in areas near the Ethiopian border. All areas that are not well traveled are potentially dangerous due to live mines, especially north and west of Keren.

There are also minefields near Massawa, Ghinda, Agordat, Barentu, south of Tessenae, Nakfa, Adi Keih, Arezza, Dekemhare, and in a roughly 40-kilometer wide region just west of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border between the Setit and Mereb Rivers.

Many Eritreans use inexpensive public transportation, especially bus service. Travelers should avoid taking buses due to extreme over-crowding. Taxis are plentiful and inexpensive in Asmara, but usually carry multiple passengers along pre-defined routes. If an empty taxi is available, a customer may request a "contract" taxi, which accepts no additional passengers, for a significantly higher fixed price. Drivers should be aware of heavy and erratic pedestrian and bicycle traffic obstructing vehicle flow. Occasionally horse-drawn carts, cattle, or goats add to the obstacles. Other hazards are children and the elderly, who sometimes wander into the path of moving traffic, as well as small, slow, motorized carts. Elderly or disabled people usually drive these carts and do not always yield to faster moving traffic. When parallel parking on city streets, watch for pedestrians as you back into the space.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Eritrea, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Eritrea's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Due to Eritrean government restrictions impacting Embassy operations, the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Asmara does not provide routine services to American citizens in Eritrea, including reports of birth, passports, and notaries. Americans traveling or residing in Eritrea who require such services must travel to a U.S. Embassy or Consulate outside Eritrea, and should plan accordingly.

American citizens should also be aware that U.S. diplomatic personnel are subject to travel restrictions. The Government of Eritrea requires resident diplomats to apply 10 days in advance for travel outside of Asmara city limits; often travel permission is not given. This restriction can delay or prevent U.S. Embassy emergency assistance to American citizens outside of Asmara.

The consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Asmara has been closed for visa services since January 2007.

Eritrea has complicated citizenship laws and does not recognize renunciation of Eritrean citizenship. Dual nationals who enter the country on Eritrean documents are treated as Eritrean citizens, regardless of their other citizenship. U.S. citizens born in Eritrea, or who otherwise are considered to have acquired Eritrean citizenship, may be subject to certain obligations, including being drafted into national service, regardless of the documents they present at entry. (National service is approximately six months of military training, followed by an often unspecified number of years in military or other government service.)

U.S.-Eritrean dual nationals who enter the country on an Eritrean passport or national ID card must obtain an exit visa prior to departure. Exit visa applications can significantly delay travel plans or be denied, even for persons who entered Eritrea legally. Eritrean dual nationals are also required to pay a 2% income tax on overseas earnings to the Eritrean Government prior to being granted an exit visa. Additionally, Eritrean authorities sometimes to not allow Eritreans who left the country after 1993 to depart Eritrea after visiting the country, even if they have a U.S. passport and a valid Eritrean visa.

The government of Eritrea does not inform the U.S. Embassy of the detention of American citizens, and does not allow Embassy officials to visit incarcerated Americans.

Visitors are advised to exercise caution when taking photographs in Eritrea. Foreigners in Asmara have been harassed and detained by local police and plain clothes security officials for taking photographs of street scenes in the city. No law has been cited, but the arresting officials' justifications have been that (unmarked) government buildings are in the background and/or that the pictures are being taken (illegally) for commercial reasons.

All foreign nationals in Eritrea are required to apply for permits to travel outside of Asmara. Travel permits must be presented at all checkpoints. Checkpoints are found on major roads through Eritrea, but locations may change without notice. Applications for travel permits are available at the Ministry of Tourism located on Harnet Avenue.

There is a high risk of earthquakes in Eritrea. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available on the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. Please see our information on Customs Regulations.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Eritrean

laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Eritrea are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sex with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues web pages.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Eritrea are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Eritrea. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 179 Alaa Street, PO Box 211, Asmara; telephone (291-1) 12-00-04; fax (291-1) 124-255 and (291-1) 127-584; the Embassy's web site is located at http://eritrea.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: In order to adopt Eritrean children, prospective adoptive parents who are not Eritrean citizens must reside in Eritrea for at least six continuous months immediately prior to the adoption. In the U.S. Embassy's experience, most adoptions by U.S. citizens have been of younger relatives.

However, there have been difficulties in verifying the children's ages and that they meet the U.S. immigration requirements for "orphan." Eritrea requires post-adoption reports for adopted children at three months, six months and one year after the adoption and annually thereafter until the child reaches 18.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The adoption authority responsible for adoptions in Eritrea is the Ministry of Labor & Human Welfare. They can be reached by phone at: (291) 1-151846. Contact Mr. Tekle Tesfay at that office for more information.

Ministry of Labor and
Human Welfare
P. O. Box 5252
Asmara, Eritrea
Telephone: (291) 1-151846

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must be between the ages of 25 and 50 and be at least 21 years older than the child at the time of adoption. Prospective adoptive parents do not need to be married.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must have resided in Eritrea for at least six consecutive months prior to the date of the application unless they are Eritrean citizens.

Time Frame: The adoption process takes approximately six months, but can take longer. This time period is separate from the 6-month residency requirement.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no official adoption agencies in Eritrea; however, the Ministry of Labor & Human Welfare facilitates and oversees both local and intercountry adoptions. There are no specialized adoption attorneys. If there is a request regarding an intercountry adoption, the Ministry of Labor & Human Welfare will be asked to assist. with the processing and obtaining documentation regarding the adoption.

In the event prospective adoptive parents wish to consult an attorney, a list of attorneys can be obtained from the U.S. Embassy website at: http://usembassy.state.gov. Neither the U.S. Embassy nor the Department of State can vouch for the efficacy or professionalism of attorneys on this list.

All adoptions must be finalized through the office of the Ministry of Labor & Human Welfare and/or by the High Court.

Adoption Fees: Please note that prospective adoptive parents are required under Eritrean law to retain an attorney for adoption proceedings. Adoption fees paid to the attorney vary depending.

Adoption Procedures: Most children in orphanages are abandoned children, i.e. they have no living parents or relatives to care for them. The Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare has custody of abandoned children and the authority to place these children with prospective adoptive parents.

However, some children residing in orphanages also have surviving parent(s) and/or distant relatives. Prospective adoptive parents need to work with birth parent(s) or the distant relative of the child regarding the release of the child for adoption.

Please be advised that directed adoptions involving two birth parents to U.S. citizen prospective adoptive par-

ents may disqualify a child from receiving a U.S. immigrant visa. All adoptions are reviewed by the High Court. Prospective adoptive parents must first work with local clerks of the municipal government of the area where the child resides to obtain a statement that transfers authority from the biological parents or relative (if available) or the Ministry of Labor and Human Welfare to the prospective adoptive parents. Prospective adoptive parents submit the request for transfer of authority and the application to adopt to the High Court.

The High Court issues a decision based on their statement and the court's satisfaction of the decision done in the best interests of the child. The adoption goes into effect as of the date the High Court's judge signs the petition.

Required Documents: Prospective adoptive parents must provide the following documents to Ministry of Labor & Human Welfare:

- A written statement from the prospective adoptive parents explaining why an Eritrean child is preferred;
- Original birth certificate(s) of the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Original marriage license/certificate, if applicable. Note: If originals are not available, certified copies must be authenticated by the Department of State or U.S. Embassy Asmara;
- An original Eritrean police clearance for each of the prospective adoptive parent(s) including those residing in Eritrea;
- A medical certificate/clearance for each of the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- The original home study prepared by a qualified social worker, which specifies the following: personal and family status; character and personal qualities; educational background; duration and stability of marriage; financial and medical situations; present address and U.S. address; condition of home in country of residence; address and names of family of origin (i.e., parents) and the agency's recommendation regarding your suitability as an adoptive parent with an original translation into Tigrigna;
- Evidence of economic status, which must include proof of life insurance and health insurance, other proof of income or assets may also be submitted;
- Three letters of reference from friends, relatives, church or other sources qualified to assess prospective adoptive parents' character, the stability of marriage, and ability to parent;
- Two passport-size photographs of the prospective adopting parent(s);
- If the prospective adoptive parent(s) do not come to Eritrea together to oversee this entire process, then they must execute a power of attorney for their adoption agency, or if only one parent will travel to Eritrea, the other parent must execute a power of attorney for him/her. That power of attorney must be authenticated by the Eritrean Embassy in Washington, D.C. This applies to all prospective adopting parents coming from the U.S.Eritrean nationals living in the United States as well as non-Eritreans who plan to adopt. Documents that are notarized by a U.S. notary public in the United States must be authenticated by the Eritrean Embassy in Washington, D.C. in order to be recognized by the Eritrean government;
- Obligation of Adoption or Social Welfare Agency signed by the adoption agency handling the adoption, or for private adopters, from the organization that provided the home study, or by the parents' employer, in which the parent(s) agree to allow follow-up visits by a U.S. social worker, and to submit regular progress report to the Ministry of Labor and Human on the child's (or children's) adjustment to/development in the adoptive home;
- Verification by the adoption agency or home study organization on the child's qualification for naturalization under the laws of the parents' country of residence with an original translation into Tigrigna.

Embassy of the State of Eritrea
1708 New Hampshire Ave, NW
Washington, DC20009
Tel: (202) 588-7594
Fax: (202) 319-1304
E-mail: girma@embassyeritrea.org

Consulate General of the State of Eritrea
Tribune Tower, 409 13th Street
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel: (510) 986-1991
Fax: (510) 986-1904
E-mail: badmena@sbcglobal.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

American Embassy Asmara
Ala Street, P. O. Box 211
Asmara, Eritrea

The Consular Section's telephone number is (291)-1-120-004. The fax number is (291)-1-124255. The e-mail address is consularasmara@state.gov. American citizens can walk in from 2:00 p.m.—4:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Eritrea may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Asmara. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of

Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

Travel Warning

November 15, 2008

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Eritrea and recommends that U.S. citizens defer travel at this time. This replaces the Travel Warning dated June 11, 2008, and informs U.S. citizens that the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Asmara is currently closed for all public non-emergency services. The Consular Section will continue to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens.

Since September 13, the Government of Eritrea has repeatedly, and in violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, interfered with the unfettered delivery of the U.S. Embassy's diplomatic pouches. As a result, the Embassy is unable to receive critical supplies and materials necessary, including U.S. passports and other citizenship-related documents, for the conduct of normal operations. Until this matter is resolved, the consular section of the U.S. Embassy has no choice but to suspend all non-emergency services. This closure affects all routine services to American citizens, such as Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, passport services, and notary services. American citizens who need routine consular services should consider traveling to the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti or the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Department of State recommends U.S. citizens defer travel to Eritrea due to restrictions on travel outside the capital city of Asmara and heightened tensions along Eritrea's borders with Ethiopia and Djibouti.

American citizens considering travel within Eritrea should be aware of the presence of large numbers of Eritrean and Ethiopian troops along the Eritrean-Ethiopian border, and acute political tensions between the two countries. In March 2008, the Eritrean restrictions on diesel fuel supplies caused United Nations' Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea's detachments to withdraw from the Temporary Security Zone, leaving no international observers monitoring the border.

Since April 2008, Djiboutian and Eritrean troops have been deployed along the northeastern border of Djibouti. The Djiboutian government claims Eritrean troops have crossed into its territory and on June 10, 2008, Djiboutian and Eritrean troops exchanged fire along their shared border.

U.S. citizens are strongly advised to avoid travel near the Eritrean-Ethiopian border and to the Southern Red Sea region, including the port of Assab.

The Eritrean government continues to restrict the travel of all foreign nationals, including resident diplomats. These restrictions require all visitors and residents to apply ten days in advance for permission to travel outside Asmara city limits. As a result, the U.S. Embassy cannot provide emergency consular assistance outside of Asmara. The government of Eritrea does not inform the U.S. Embassy when American citizens have been arrested or detained.

Americans currently living or traveling in Eritrea are strongly encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Asmara in person or through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Eritrea. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of an emergency and provide updates on the security situations. The U.S. Embassy is located at 179 Alaa Street, P.O. Box 211, Asmara; telephone (291-1) 12-00-04; fax (291-1) 124-255 and (291-1) 127-584; web site http://asmara.usembassy.gov.

For additional information, consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information sheet for Eritrea and the Worldwide Caution at http://travel.state.gov. American citizens may also obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or 1-202-501-4444 from overseas.



ESTONIA

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Estonia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 45,226 sq. km. (17,462 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than New Hampshire and Vermont combined.

Cities: Capital—Tallinn (pop. 396,000), situated in the north of the country, on the Gulf of Finland. Other cities—university town of Tartu (101,500); the primarily Russian-speaking industrial towns of Narva (67,100) and Kohtla-Järve (46,000) in the north-east of Estonia; Pärnu on the western coast (44,400) and Viljandi in the rural south (20,509). The last population census was held in 2000.

Terrain: Mostly flat, with some undulating terrain in the east and southeast, average elevation 50 m. Steep limestone banks and 1,520 islands mark the coastline. Land use—12.05% arable land, 47.4% forest and woodland, 22% swamps and bogs, 18.55% other. Coastal waters are somewhat polluted.

Climate: Temperate, with four seasons. Annual precipitation averages 50-75 cm.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Estonian(s).

Population: (2007) 1.342 million.

Annual growth rate: (2006) -1.82%. Birth rate (2006)—11.07/1,000. Death rate (2006)—12.89/1,000. Net migration (2006)—3.2 migrant(s)/1,000 population. Density—31/sq. km. Urban dwellers—70%.

Ethnic groups: Estonians 68.6%, Russians 25.6%, Ukrainians 2.1%, Belarusians 1.2%, Finns 0.8%, other 1.7%.

Religions: Evangelical Lutheran; the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox, subordinated to Constantinople; the Estonian Orthodox, subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate; Baptist.

Languages: (2000 census) Estonian (official) 67.3%, Russian 29.7%, other 2.3%, unknown 0.7%.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—218,600 students at 550 schools, plus 50,800 university students. Literacy—99.8%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—4.4 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—67.3 yrs. men, 78 yrs. women.

Work force: 659,600.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: On June 28, 1992 Estonia ratified its constitution based on its 1938 model, offering legal continuity to the Republic of Estonia prior to Soviet occupation.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), elected indirectly every 5 years; prime minister (head of government). Legislative—Riigikogu (Parliament—101 members, 4-year term). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 15 counties, 33 towns, and 194 municipalities (local elections data, 2005).

Political parties: Six parties are presently represented in the parliament: the Estonian Center Party; Estonian Reform Party; Pro Patria-Res Publica Union; Estonian People's Union; Estonian Social Democratic Party; and the Estonian Greens. Other parties include: the Russian Party of Estonia; Estonian Independence Party; Estonian Christian Democratic Party; Constitution Party; Estonian Left Party.

Suffrage: Universal at 18 years of age; noncitizen residents may vote in municipal elections.

Government Budget: $2.3 billion.

Defense: 1.8% of GDP.

National holidays: Jan. 1 (New Year's Day), Feb. 24 (Independence Day), Good Friday, Easter Sunday, May 1 (May Day), Whitsunday, June 23 (Victory Day—anniversary of Battle of Vonnu in 1919), June 24 (Midsummer Day), Aug. 20 (Day of Restoration of Independence), Dec. 25 (Christmas Day), Dec. 26 (Boxing Day).

Government of Estonia web site: http://www.riik.ee/en/

Economy

GDP: (2007) $21.3 billion.
Real GDP growth rate: (2007) 7.1%.
Per capita GDP: (2007) $15,868.
Inflation: (2007) 6.6%.
Unemployment: (2007) 4.7%.
Natural resources: Oil shale, phosphorus, limestone, blue clay.
Agriculture: (3% of 2007 GDP): Products—livestock production (milk, meat, eggs) and crop production (cereals and legumes, potatoes, forage crops). Arable land—433,100 hectares.
Industry: (21% of 2007 GDP): Types—engineering, electronics, wood and wood products, and textiles.
Services: (60% of 2007 GDP): Transit, information technology (IT), telecommunications, business services, retail, construction, real estate.
Trade: Exports (2007)—$11 billion. Partners—Finland 18%, Sweden 13%, Latvia 11%, Russia 8.8%, Germany 5.2%, Lithuania 5.7%, U.S. 4%. Imports (2007)—$15.5 billion. Partners—Finland 16%, Germany 12.8%, Russia 10%, Sweden 10%, Latvia 7.6%, Lithuania 6.8%.
Exchange rate: (2007) 11.4 kroon (EEK)=U.S.$1.
Foreign direct investment: (2007) Sweden 39.7%, Finland 24.6%, Netherlands 5.7%, Denmark 4.4%, Russia 2.6%, Norway 2.5%, Germany 2.4%, Cyprus 2.3%, Luxembourg 2%, U.K. 2%, U.S. 1.6%.

GEOGRAPHY

Between 57.3 and 59.5 degrees latitude and 21.5 and 28.1 degrees longitude, Estonia lies on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea on the level, northwestern part of the rising East European platform. Average elevation reaches only 50 meters (160 ft.).

The climate resembles New England's. Oil shale and limestone deposits, along with forests that cover 47% of the land, play key economic roles in this generally resource-poor country. Estonia boasts more than 1,500 lakes, numerous bogs, and 3,794 kilometers of coastline marked by numerous bays, straits, and inlets. Tallinn's Muuga port offers one of Europe's finest warm water harbor facilities. Estonia's strategic location has precipitated many wars fought on its territory between other rival powers at its expense. In 1944, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) granted Russia the trans-Narva and Petseri regions on Estonia's eastern frontier. Russia and Estonia signed a border treaty in 2005 recognizing the current border. Estonia ratified the treaty in June 2005, but Russia subsequently revoked its signature to the treaty, due to a reference the Estonian Parliament inserted regarding the Peace Treaty of Tartu.

PEOPLE

Estonians belong to the Balto-Finnic group of the Finno-Ugric peoples, as do the Finns and the Hungarians. Archaeological research confirms the existence of human activity in the region as early as 8,000 BC, but by 3,500 BC the principal ancestors of the Estonians had arrived from the east.

Estonians have strong ties to the Nordic countries today stemming from deep cultural and religious influences gained over centuries during Scandinavian colonization and settlement. This highly literate society places great emphasis upon education, which is free and compulsory until age 16. About 20% of the population belongs to the following churches registered in Estonia: Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, Estonian Orthodox Church subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate, Baptist Church, Roman Catholic Church, and others.

As of March 2, 2008, 83.8% of Estonia's population held Estonian citizenship, 8% were citizens of other countries (primarily Russia), and 8.2% were of undetermined citizenship.

Written with the Latin alphabet, Estonian is the language of the Estonian people and the official language of the country. Estonian is one of the world's most difficult languages to learn for English-speakers: it has fourteen cases, which can be a challenge even for skilled linguists. During the Soviet era, the Russian language was imposed for official use.

HISTORY

Ancient

Estonians are one of the longest-settled European peoples and have lived along the Baltic Sea for over 5,000 years. The Estonians were an independent nation until the 13th century A.D. The country was then subsequently conquered by Denmark, Germany, Poland, Sweden, and finally Russia, whose defeat of Sweden in 1721 resulted in the Uusikaupunki Peace Treaty, granting Russia rule over what became modern Estonia.

First Period of Independence

Independence remained out of reach for Estonia until the collapse of the Russian empire during World War I.

Estonia declared itself an independent democratic republic in November 1918. In 1920, by the Peace Treaty of Tartu, Soviet Russia recognized Estonia's independence and renounced in perpetuity all rights to its territory.

The first constitution of the Republic of Estonia was adopted in 1920 and established a parliamentary form of government. Estonia's independence would last for 22 years, during which time Estonia guaranteed cultural autonomy to all minorities, including its small Jewish population, an act that was unique in Western Europe at the time.

Soviet Period

Leading up to World War II (WWII), Estonia pursued a policy of neutrality. However, the Soviet Union forcibly incorporated Estonia as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of

1939, in which Nazi Germany gave control of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the Soviet Union in return for control of much of Poland. In August 1940, the U.S.S.R proclaimed Estonia a part of the Soviet Union as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (E.S.S.R.). The United States never recognized Soviet sovereignty over Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania.

During World War II, between 1939 and 1945, through both the Nazi and Soviet occupations, Estonia's direct human losses reached 180,000 residents, which amounted to 17% of its total population. During the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1944, 7,800 citizens of the Republic of Estonia (70% ethnic Estonians, 15% ethnic Russians, 12.8% Estonian Jews, and 2.2% representing other nationalities) were executed in Nazi prison camps. Of the total number executed during the period of Nazi occupation, an estimated 1,000 were Estonian Jews—or roughly 25% of the pre-war Jewish population of Estonia. Additionally, an estimated 10,000 Jews were transported to Estonia from elsewhere in eastern Europe and killed there.



Re-establishing Independence

In the late 1980s, looser controls on freedom of expression under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev reignited the Estonians' call for self-determination. By 1988, hundreds of thousands of people were gathering across Estonia to sing previously banned national songs in what became known as the "Singing Revolution."

In November 1988, Estonia's Supreme Soviet passed a declaration of sovereignty; in 1990, the name of the Republic of Estonia was restored, and during the August 1991 coup in the U.S.S.R, Estonia declared full independence. The U.S.S.R Supreme Soviet recognized independent Estonia on September 6, 1991. Unlike the experiences of Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia's revolution ended without blood spilled.

Estonia became a member of the United Nations on September 17, 1991 and is a signatory to a number of UN organizations and other international agreements, including IAEA, ICAO, UNCTAD, WHO, WIPO, UNESCO, ILO, IMF, and WB/EBRD. It is also a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

After more than 3 years of negotiations, on August 31, 1994, the armed forces of the Russian Federation withdrew from Estonia.

Modern Period: 1990s—Today

In 1992, a constitutional assembly introduced amendments to the 1938 constitution. After the draft constitution was approved by popular referendum, it came into effect July 3, 1992. Presidential elections were held on September 20, 1992, with Lennart Meri as victor. Lennart Meri served two terms as president, implementing many reforms during his tenure. Meri was constitutionally barred from a third term. Arnold Rüütel became president in 2001, Toomas Hendrick Ilves in 2006. Since fully regaining independence, Estonia has had 13 governments with 7 different prime ministers elected: Mart Laar, Andres Tarand, Tiit Vähi, Mart Siimann, Siim Kallas, Juhan Parts, and Andrus Ansip.

Estonia began to adopt free-market policies even before it declared independence in mid-1991 and has continued to pursue reform aggressively ever since. For example, the government set privatization as an early priority and has now completed the process of putting most major industries in private hands. After independence the Government of Estonia took steps to simplify the tax system. Tax evasion is now relatively low by regional standards. Income tax is levied at a flat rate, a principle supported by all the major parties except the Center Party, for which a progressive tax system remains a keystone policy. Budget performance is excep-

tionally strong; the IMF projected a surplus of 3.4% of GDP in 2006. An integral part of Estonia's transition to a market economy during the early 1990s involved reorienting foreign trade to the West and attracting foreign investment to upgrade the country's industry and commerce. In 1990, only 5% of Estonia's foreign trade was with the developed West; only 21% of this trade represented exports. About 87% of Estonia's trade was with the Soviet Union, and of that, 61% was with Russia. Estonia's main foreign trading partners today are Sweden, Finland, Germany and others in the West. Russia's share of Estonia's trade is less than 10%.

The introduction of the Estonian kroon in June 1992, with only U.S.$120 million in gold reserves and no internationally backed stabilization fund, proved decisive in stabilizing foreign trade. For stability, the kroon was pegged by special agreement to the deutsche mark (DM) at EKR8 = DM1 and later to the Euro. The new Estonian currency became the foundation for rational development of the economy. Money began to have clear value; the currency supply could be controlled from Tallinn, not Moscow; and long-term investment decisions could be made with greater confidence by both the state and private enterprise. The central bank is independent of the government but subordinate to the parliament. In addition to its president, the bank is managed by a board of directors, whose chair is also appointed by parliament.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the rapid contraction of Estonia's market to the East during the early 1990s caused Estonia's economy to shrink 36% from 1990 to 1994. But economic reforms in Estonia and the ability of its economy to reorient toward the West allowed Estonia's economy to pick up in 1995 with 4.6% growth and 4.0% growth in 1996. Russia's financial crisis in 1999 led to the only year of decline in Estonia's GDP since 1994—but the 0.7% decline was relatively small.

The 1994-2004 period was mainly dominated by the Estonian EU and NATO accession processes. Estonia was the first Baltic country to start direct accession talks with the EU. Estonia applied to join the EU in November 1995 and, while participating in accession negotiations, continued its program of major economic and social reforms. This gave Estonia a good opportunity to take into account EU objectives and to exploit the experience of existing EU member states when carrying out reforms. Examples of reform in the social area included the launch of unemployment insurance in 2002 and the 1999 implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, which regulates safety and health requirements in the work place as well as the organizational aspects of the occupational health system.

In 1999, Estonia joined the World Trade Organization, adding to its previous membership of the IMF, World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

In November 2002, Estonia was one of seven Central and East European countries to be invited to join NATO; it officially became a member of NATO on March 29, 2004. In just fifteen years since re-establishing independence, Estonia has proven itself to be an excellent Ally, having built a military capable of participating in ever more complex and distant military operations.

EU accession negotiations proceeded rapidly, and Estonia joined the EU in May 2004, along with nine other countries, including its Baltic neighbors. The final decision was conditional on the outcome of a national referendum which was held in September 2003 and returned a large majority in favor of membership.

Estonia has developed into a strong international actor, through its membership in the EU and NATO; it is a capable advocate and promoter of stability and democracy in the former Soviet Union and beyond. Estonian troops have been in Afghanistan since 2002 and Iraq since 2003. It participates in the NATO training mission in Iraq. Estonia also provides peacekeepers for international missions in both Bosnia and Kosovo and contributes to EU battlegroups and NATO Response Force rotations. It supports democratic developments in key countries of the former Soviet Union and beyond by providing training to government and law enforcement officials as well as non-governmental organizations. It has valuable experience to offer new democracies from its own recent history, and it works hard to promote democracy, freedom, and stability worldwide.

GOVERNMENT

Estonia is a parliamentary democracy, with a 101-member parliament (the Riigikogu) and a president who is elected indirectly by parliament or, if no candidate wins a two-thirds majority in parliament, by an electoral college composed of members of parliament and of local government representatives. Estonia holds presidential elections every five years. The last presidential election was in 2006. The President serves a maximum of two terms. The President is also the Supreme Commander of the National Defense of Estonia.

Parliamentary elections take place every four years; members are elected by proportional representation. The most recent elections took place on March 4, 2007. A party must gather at least 5% of the votes to take a seat in Parliament. EU citizens who are 18 years of age or older and registered in the Population Register may vote in European Parliament elections. In addition, non-citizen long-term residents may vote in local elections, although they may not run for office.

After parliamentary elections, the President traditionally asks the party with the most votes to form a new government. The President chooses the Prime Minister—usually the leader of the largest party or coalition in the Parliament—with the consent of the parliament to supervise the work of the government. The Estonian government has a total of 14 ministers.

At the local level, Estonians elect government councils by proportional representation. The individual councils vary in size, but election laws stipulate minimum size requirements depending on the population of the municipality.

Estonia's Supreme Court, the Riigikohus, has 19 justices, all of whom receive lifetime tenure appointments. The parliament appoints the Chief Justice on nomination by the President.

Estonians may vote via the Internet in local and parliamentary elections.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Currently, half a dozen parties represent Estonia's 1.3 million citizens. The Reform Party, Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, and the Social Democratic parties form the current government with 31, 19, and 10 seats in parliament, respectively. Other major parties include the Center Party, the Greens, and the People's Union.

Reform Party Chairman Andrus Ansip is the current Prime Minister of the coalition government.

Toomas Hendrik llves is the President of Estonia. He was a member of the Social Democrat Party, a former Ambassador to the United States, two-time Minister of Foreign Affairs, Estonian member of parliament, and a former member of the European Parliament. President Ilves narrowly defeated incumbent Arnold Rüütel in an electoral-college vote in September 2006, and he took office on October 9, 2006.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Toomas Hendrik ILVES**
Prime Min.: **Andrus ANSIP**
Min. of Agriculture: **Helir-Valdor SEEDER**
Min. of Culture: **Laine JANES**
Min. of Defense: **Jaak AAVIKSOO**
Min. of Economic Affairs & Communications: **Juhan PARTS**
Min. of Education & Research: **Tonis LUKAS**
Min. of Environment: **Jaanus TAMKIVI**
Min. of Finance: **Ivari PADAR**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Urmas PAET**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Juri PIHL**
Min. of Justice: **Rein LANG**
Min. of Regional Affairs: **Siim-Valmar KIISLER**
Min. of Population Affairs: **Urve PALO**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Maret MARIPUU**
Pres., Bank of Estonia: **Andres LIPSTOK**
Ambassador to the US: **Vaino REINART**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Tiina INTELMANN**

Estonia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2131 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: [1] (202) 588-0101; fax: [1] (202) 588-0108). It operates a consulate at 600 Third Avenue, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10016-2001 (tel: [1] (212) 883-0636; fax: [1] (212) 883-0648).

ECONOMY

Estonia is considered one of the most liberal economies in the world, ranking 12th in the Heritage Foundation's 2007 Economic Freedom Index. Hallmarks of Estonia's free, market-based economy include a balanced budget, a flat-rate income tax system (the first in the world), a fully convertible currency pegged to the Euro, a competitive commercial banking sector, and a hospitable environment for foreign investment, including no tax on reinvested corporate profits (tax is not levied unless a distribution is made).

Estonia's liberal economic policies and macroeconomic stability have fostered exceptionally strong growth and better living standards than those of most new EU member states. The economy benefits from strong electronics and telecommunications sectors; the country is so wired that it is nicknamed E-stonia. Many bars and cafes across the country are equipped with wireless connections. Skype, designed by Estonian developers, offers free calls over the Internet to millions of people worldwide. Tourism has also driven Estonia's economic growth, with beautifully restored Tallinn already a Baltic tourist landmark. By the late 1990s, Estonia's trade regime was so liberal that adoption of EU and World Trade Organization (WTO) norms actually forced Estonia to impose tariffs in certain sectors, such as agriculture, which had previously been tariff-free. Openness to trade, rapid growth in investment, and an appreciating real exchange rate have resulted in large trade deficits in recent years. In 2006, exports and imports both grew rapidly, with growth reaching 24% and 29% year-on-year, respectively.

Estonia supplies more than 90% of its electricity needs with locally mined oil shale; however, it imports all of its natural gas and petroleum (roughly 30% of total energy consumption) from Russia. Alternative energy sources such as wood, peat, and biomass make up about 9% of primary energy production. An undersea electricity cable inaugurated in December 2006 allows Estonia to export electricity to Finland.

Notwithstanding these many achievements, the economy of Estonia still faces challenges. The income differential between Tallinn and the rest of the country has widened in recent years as the cost of living differential has narrowed. The formerly industrial northeast section of Estonia suffered from economic depression as a result of plant closings in the early 1990s, although even this region has experienced strong growth in the last two years.

The labor force is shrinking due to low birth rates and emigration. This tight labor market and the government's restrictive labor and immigration policies have led to wage pressure and challenges to future competitiveness. Inflation above 3% has forced the government to push back adoption of the Euro from its original target of 2007.

After enjoying double digit growth in recent years, 2007 GDP growth slowed to 7.1% and is expected to be around 2% for 2008 (Bank of Estonia estimate from April 2008). Prices are decreasing in the real estate sector, and there are signs of a slowdown in

private consumption growth. Rising prices of non-domestic goods, especially food, both from the EU and imported from third countries, have pushed inflation to 6.6%.

Foreign Trade

Estonia is part of the European Union, and its trade policy is conducted in Brussels.

Estonia's business attitude toward the United States is positive, and business relations between the two countries are increasing. The primary competition for American companies in the Estonian marketplace is European suppliers, especially Finnish and Swedish companies.

Total U.S. exports to Estonia in 2007 were $242 million, forming 1.2% of total Estonian imports. In 2007 the principal imports from the United States were boilers, machinery, vehicles, chemicals, mineral fuels, oils and electronics. Estonian exports to the United States were around $296 million in 2007, making the U.S. Estonia's fourth-largest export market outside of the EU. U.S. imports from Estonia are primarily mineral fuels and oils, electronic machinery, games and sports equipment, and fertilizers.

Estonia's economy benefits from its location at the crossroads of East and West. Estonia lies just south of Finland and across the Baltic Sea from Sweden, both EU members. To the east are the huge potential markets of northwest Russia. Estonia's modern transportation and communication links provide a safe and reliable bridge for trade with former Soviet Union and Nordic countries. Many observers also see a potential role for Estonia as a future link in the supply chain from the Far East into the EU.

Country Commercial Guides are available for U.S. exporters from the National Trade Data Bank's CD-ROM or via the Internet. Please contact STAT-USA at 1-800-STAT-USA for more information. Country Commercial Guides can be accessed via the World Wide Web at the U.S. Department of Commerce's site and at the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn's website at http://estonia.usembassy.gov/commguide.php. They also can be ordered in hard copy or on diskette from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) at 1-800-553-NTIS. U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance and country-specific commercial information should contact the U.S. Department of Commerce, Trade Information Center by phone at 1-800-USA-TRAD(E) or by fax at 1-202-482-4473.

DEFENSE

Estonia's regular armed forces—the Estonian Defense Forces—in peacetime number about 3,800 (Army 3,300, Navy 300, Air Force 200) persons, of whom about 1,500 are conscripts. The President of Estonia is the Commander in Chief of the Estonian Defense Forces. The National Defense Council—composed of the Chairman of the Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Chief of the Defense Forces, the Defense Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Chairman of the Parliamentary National Defense Committee—advises the President on national defense matters.

Estonia officially became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on March 29, 2004 after depositing its instruments of treaty ratification in Washington, DC. The United States and Estonia cooperate intensively in the defense and security field.

Estonian defense spending has increased 13% annually since 2001. The Government of Estonia has expressed a firm commitment to meet the NATO goal of spending 2% of GDP by 2010; its current defense budget is 1.8% of GDP. In 2007, Estonia had approximately 300 military personnel deployed to support UN, NATO, and coalition military operations around the world. That number represents almost 10% of Estonia's military, a good indication of Estonia's willingness and ability to contribute to global security. Estonia currently has troops in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Bosnia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Estonia is party to most major international organizations. It is a UN, EU, and NATO member and a strong ally and partner of the United States on all fronts. It is deeply committed to good transatlantic relations and to promoting democracy and free-market economic policy globally.

In the EU, Estonia's priorities include supporting continued EU enlargement; raising EU competitiveness through innovation; joining the Eurozone; developing a unified European energy policy; enhancing and fostering the European Neighborhood Policy; and improving the EU relationship with Russia.

Estonia has active development assistance programs in many of the former Soviet countries (with a focus on Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova), as well as in Afghanistan.

U.S.-ESTONIA RELATIONS

The relationship between Estonia and the United States of America has been constant and strong since Estonia first became independent. The United States and Estonia are important allies and partners.

The United States recognized the Republic of Estonia on July 28, 1922. The first Estonian diplomatic mission in the United States was opened in the same year. It continued its activities throughout the period of occupation by the Soviet Union from 1940 to 1991. The U.S. Government recognized Estonia's diplomatic mission as a legal representative of the Republic of Estonia. Indeed, the recognition of the legal continuity of the Republic of Estonia has been the cornerstone of Estonian-U.S. relations.

The U.S. reopened its Embassy in Tallinn on September 4, 1991, soon after the restoration of Estonia's independence on August 20, 1991. Relations between the two countries have since developed at a rapid pace. In November 2006, President George W. Bush became the first sitting U.S. president to visit Estonia. During the visit, he announced the administration's intention to work with the U.S. Congress to make changes to the U.S. Visa Waiver Program, increasing security while facilitating entry for legitimate visitors and businesspeople from countries like Estonia.

President Bush nominated Stanley Davis Phillips at the end of 2006 to be Ambassador to Estonia. Vaino Reinart has been Estonia's Ambassador to the United States since September 2007. Estonia also is represented in the United States by a Consulate General in New York and four Honorary Consuls: Jaak Treiman in Los Angeles, Eric Harkna in Chicago, Irja Cilluffo in New Hampshire, and Paul Raidna in Seattle.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

TALLINN (E) Kentmanni 20, Tallinn 15099, Estonia, APO/FPO PSC 78, Box T, APO AE 09723, (372) 668-8100, Fax (372) 668-8266, Workweek: 8:30–17:30, Website: http://estonia.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Bates, Agnes L.
AMB OMS:	Elliot Stacy
ECO/COM:	Hollister, Robert M.
MGT:	Graves, Andrew
POL/ECO:	Adkins, Jessica L.
AMB:	Phillips, Dave
CON:	Matt Golden
DCM:	Decker, Karen B.
PAO:	Helene Tuling
GSO:	Adkins, William
RSO:	Call Mgt/Pso
AFSA:	Andrew Graves
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Cdr. Enkema, Philip
EEO:	Alamanda Gribbin
ICASS Chair:	Skaggs, Britt A.
IMO:	Haydter, David
IRS:	Franklin, Barbara
ISO:	Vacant
LEGATT:	Sylvester, John T.
State ICASS:	Adkins, Jessica

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 28, 2008

Country Description: Estonia a stable democracy with an economy that has developed rapidly in recent years. Tourist facilities in Tallinn are comparable to other western European cities, but some amenities may be lacking in rural areas. Some goods and services may not be available outside of major cities.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. Estonia is a party to the "Schengen" Agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Estonia for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa.

The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our Schengen Fact Sheet. For further information concerning entry requirements and residency permits, contact the Estonian Embassy, located at 2131 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202)588-0101, or the Consulate General of Estonia in New York City, telephone (212) 883-0636. Visit the Embassy of Estonia web site at http://www.estemb.org for the most current visa information. American citizens who wish to reside in Estonia (e.g. for work, studies, retirement, etc.) can also consult with the Estonian Citizenship and Migration Board at http://www.mig.ee.

Safety and Security: Civil unrest generally is not a problem in Estonia, and there have been no incidents of terrorism directed toward American interests. Large public gatherings and demonstrations may occur on occasion in response to political issues, but these have been, with few exceptions, without incident in the past.

During periods of darkness, (roughly October through April), reflectors must be worn by pedestrians. Violators of this law may be subject to a fine of up to 600 EEK (Estonian Kroon), or up to 6,000 EEK if the pedestrian is under the influence of alcohol. Reflectors are inexpensive and are available at most supermarkets and many smaller shops. To meet legal requirements, the reflector's packaging must include a reference to European safety standard EN13356.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Estonia is a relatively safe country, although crime in Tallinn's "Old Town" is an ongoing concern, particularly during the summer tourist season. Travelers should exercise the same precautions with regard to their personal safety and belongings they would take in major U.S. cities. The most common crimes encountered by foreign tourists are purse snatching, pick-pocketing, and mugging. Tourists are often targeted by individuals and small groups of thieves working together.

In public places such as the "Old Town," in particular the Town Hall Square ("Raekoja Plats"), as well as the airport, train stations, bus stations and the Central Market, one must exercise special care in safeguarding valuables against purse-snatchers and pickpockets. Valuables should never be left unattended in vehicles and car doors should be kept locked at all times. Some violent crime does occur, mainly at night and often in proximity to nightlife areas. Public drunkenness, car theft and break-ins also continue to be a problem in Tallinn.

The Estonian Police agencies are modern, well-equipped law enforcement entities on a standard comparable to most Western European police, with only isolated instances of corruption. However, large-scale reductions in the police force are scheduled for this year, which may decrease some of their capabilities. Many police officers speak only very limited English.

Credit card fraud is an ongoing concern, as is internet-based financial fraud and "internet dating" fraud. Travelers should take precautions to safeguard their credit cards and report any suspected unauthorized transaction to the credit card company immediately. Racially motivated verbal harassment and, on occasion, physical assault of Americans and other nationals of non-Caucasian ethnicity has occurred. If an incident occurs, it should be reported to the police and to the Embassy.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft of a U.S. passport abroad should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Estonia is: 112. The level of English spoken by the operator answering may be minimal.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The quality of medical care in Estonia continues to improve but still falls short of Western standards. Estonia has many highly trained medical professionals, but hospitals and clinics still suffer from a lack of equipment and resources. Elderly travelers and those with health problems may be at increased risk. Visitors to forest areas in warm weather should also guard against tick-borne encephalitis. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Estonia.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. In recent years, a number of American citizens have been disembarked from cruise ships and hospitalized due to serious medical problems. Holding a policy providing for medical evacuation coverage can be critical to ensure access to timely emergency medical care.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Estonia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Estonia can be more dangerous than in much of the United States. Many roads, especially in rural areas, are poorly lit and are not up to Western standards. Some drivers can be aggressive, recklessly overtaking vehicles and traveling at high speed, even in crowded urban areas. Despite strict Estonian laws against driving under the influence of alcohol, accidents involving intoxicated drivers are very frequent.

It is not uncommon for the police to set up checkpoints on major streets and highways; drivers should pull over when asked. Drivers should always remain alert to the possibility of drunk drivers and drunken pedestrians.

Estonian traffic laws require drivers to stop for all pedestrians in marked crosswalks. Nevertheless, Estonian motorists do not always comply with this regulation, and pedestrians should always be careful when crossing the streets. In rural areas, wild animals, such as deer and moose, and icy road conditions can create unexpected hazards. Dark-clothed or drunken pedestrians walking along unlit roads or darting across dimly-lit streets or highways pose a risk to unsuspecting drivers.

Winter roads are usually treated and cleared of snow, but drivers should remain vigilant for icy patches and large potholes.

Estonian laws against driving under the influence are strict and follow a policy of zero tolerance. Penalties are severe for motorists caught driving after consumption of even a small amount of alcohol. Local law requires that headlights be illuminated at all times while driving. Use of a seatbelts by all passengers is required, and children too small to be secure in seatbelts must use child car seats. The speed limit is 50 km/h in town and 90 km/h out of town unless otherwise indicated. A right turn on a red light is prohibited unless otherwise indicated by a green arrow.

According to Estonian law vehicles involved in accidents should not be moved to the side of the road until the police reach the scene. Americans planning to drive in Estonia must obtain an international driving permit prior to arrival.

For information about international driving permits, contact AAA or the American Automobile Touring Alliance. The Eesti Autoklubi (Estonian Auto Club—www.autoclub.ee), which is affiliated with AAA, provides emergency roadside assistance. Drivers do not need to be a member to receive assistance; however, the fees charged are higher for non-members.

The number to call for roadside vehicle assistance and towing service is 1888. For ambulance, fire or police assistance the number is 112. Please note that for both numbers, the level of English spoken by the operator answering may be minimal.

You may also visit the website of Estonia's national tourist office at http://www.visitestonia.com. For specific information concerning Estonian driving permits, vehicles inspections and road tax mandatory insurance, contact the Estonian Motor Vehicle Registration Center at http://www.ark.ee/atp. Additional information may be obtained from the website of the Estonian Road Administration at http://www.mnt.ee/atp, or from Baltic Roads at http://www.balticroads.net.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Estonia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the EstonianCivil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Commercial and financial transactions in Estonia are increasingly automated and on-line. Cash is almost always acceptable. The national currency is the Estonian Kroon (EEK), the value of which is pegged to the Euro (15.65 EEK= 1 Euro). Most credit cards are widely recognized throughout the country. ATM machines are common and many U.S.-issued bankcards are compatible with them. Bank checks are virtually unknown, and checks drawn on a U.S. bank are of little use in the country. Estonia's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes.

ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information call (212) 354-4480, send and email to acarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Estonian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Estonia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable both in Estonia as well as in the United States.

Dual Nationality: Estonian law requires that individual with dual nationality must choose between Estonian citizenship and his of her other citizenship at age 18. After that time, Estonian law does not permit the individual to carry passports of two (or more) different countries. However, the Estonian government reportedly has not regularly enforced this law in the past with respect to persons of Estonian background, and thus a number of individuals have continued to carry both Estonian and American passports. Any American citizen who also carries an Estonian passport should be aware that the Estonian government may not recognize the person as an American citizen in certain circumstances, thus limiting the consular services that can be provided by the U.S. Embassy (e.g. in case of arrest, etc.).

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Estonia are encouraged to register with the U.S Embassy in Tallinn through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Estonia.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn by visiting in person. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The latest security information is available from the Embassy, including on its web site, http://estonia.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Embassy is available 24 hours a day for emergency assistance for American citizens visiting or residing in Estonia. The Embassy is located approximately 1 km outside of Tallinn's "Old Town." The address is: Kentmanni 20, 15099 Tallinn, Estonia. The Embassy's main switchboard number is telephone (372) 668-8100.

The Consular Section can be reached directly at (372 668-8128, 8111, 8197 or 8129. The Consular Section's fax number is (372) 668-8267. The Consular Sections' email address for American Citizen Services is ACSTallin@state.gov. For after-hours emergencies, an Embassy Duty Officer may be contacted by mobile phone at (372) 509-2129, if dialing from the U.S., and 509-2129 if dialed from within Estonia. The Embassy's web site is http://estonia.usembassy.gov. The American Citizen Services Unit email address is ACSTallinn@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov. Estonia is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Therefore all adoptions between Estonia and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Estonia is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Estonia, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. According to the Estonian Family Law only those children whose parents are deceased or whose parents have had their parental rights taken away may be adopted. There are few such children and long waiting lists of Estonian families who by law take precedence. Consequently, identifying a child for adoption can be lengthy (several years or more) as the number of children that can be adopted by foreigners is quite limited (only about 20 children a year). Since foreign parents with Estonian background are given preference over foreigners with no Estonian heritage, prospective adoptive parents should explain their ties to Estonia.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents in Estonia.

Age Requirements: A prospective adoptive parent must be at least 25 years old. In exceptional cases, the Court may give permission to a younger person.

Marriage Requirements: Both single individuals and legally married couples can adopt. Married couples must have the written consent of the spouse. Per the Estonian Family Law Act, an adoption can occur without the consent of the spouse if the conjugal relations of the spouses have terminated and they live apart.

Income Requirements: Estonia does not have any income requirements for intercountry adoptions.

Other Requirements: Same-sex couples cannot adopt in Estonia.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Estonia is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Estonia must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Estonia's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Abandonment Requirements: According to the Estonian Family Law only those children whose parents are deceased or whose parents have had their parental rights taken away may be adopted.

Estonia's Adoption Authority: Ministry of Social Affairs (Sotsiaal Ministeerium)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Estonia is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Estonia. Adoption Hope International is currently the only registered United States adoption agency working in Estonia.

The address and website for Adoption Hope International is:

Adoption Hope International, Inc.
284 Shoreward Drive
Myrtle Beach, SC 29579
http://www.adopts.com/estonia.html

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Estonia. Estonia's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Estonia's law.

Once prospective adoptive parents have been approved to adopt, the Ministry places them on a list and begins the process of locating a suitable match Once a match is found, the Ministry notifies the prospective adoptive parents (through the adoption agency).

According to the Estonian Family Law only those children whose parents are deceased or whose parents have had their parental rights taken away may be adopted. There are few such children and long waiting lists of Estonian families who by law take precedence. Consequently, identifying a child for adoption can be lengthy (several years or more) as the number of children that can be adopted by foreigners is quite limited (only about 20 children a year). Since foreign parents with Estonian background are given preference over foreigners with no Estonian heritage, prospective adoptive parents should explain their ties to Estonia.

The Ministry of Social Affairs cautions that prospective adoptive parents should not visit orphanages to locate a child since it is unlikely that the child they choose will be permitted to be adopted by foreigners. According to the new adoption law, intercountry adoptions may be processed through an adoption agency in the parents' home country which has signed an agreement with the Ministry. After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that

particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application to a Consular Officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify Estonia's adoption authority (Article 5 letter).

For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Social Affairs prepares the entire package of adoption documents for approval first by the Minister of Social Affairs and then for the county or city court to make the adoption decision.

Once prospective adoptive parents have been approved to adopt, the Ministry places them on a list and begins the process of locating a suitable match Once a match is found, the Ministry notifies the prospective adoptive parents (through the adoption agency).

Role of the Court: Estonian adoption law requires court approval of intercountry adoptions and the adoptive parents' presence at the court hearing when the adoption is finalized. The Domiciliary County Government's Children Protection officer represents the child's rights and will release the child into the adoptive parents' custody.

Role of Adoption Agencies: The adoption agency sends a letter of interest, on behalf of the prospective adoptive parents, to the Ministry of Social Affairs indicating the sex and age of the child(ren) they would be interested in adopting as well as information regarding the prospective adoptive parents' age and profession. Once a child is identified, the adoption agency notifies the prospective adoptive parents.

The adoption agency then notifies the Ministry of Social Affairs of the prospective adoptive parents' decision to accept or decline a proposed child. (It should be noted that no more than three successive children will be offered to the prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: Once a child has been identified, the adoption process takes approximately one year. This estimate includes matching the child and prospective parents, documentation, and the court hearing.

Adoption Application: The adoption agency forwards the letter of interest and the adoption application to the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Adoption Fees: While there is no official adoption fee in Estonia, some fees prospective adoptive parents should anticipate include court fees ($10 USD) and new Estonian passports ($25 USD).

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents needed for adoptions in Estonia:

- Home study;
- Medical examination indicating the prospective adoptive parents' state of health;
- Documents pertaining to the financial condition of the prospective adoptive parents;
- Copy of marriage certificate;
- Copies of the prospective adoptive parents' passports;
- Any other information the parents feel would be useful for the MSW to know, including family heritage, ties to Estonia, letters of reference, etc.; and
- Documents determining that there is no open criminal record of the prospective adoption parents.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States:

The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Estonia does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Estonia
Kentmanni 20
Tallinn, Estonia
Tel: 011-372-668-8100
Fax: 011-372-668-8267
Email: ACSTallinn@state.gov.

Estonia's Adoption Authority
Ministry of Social Affairs

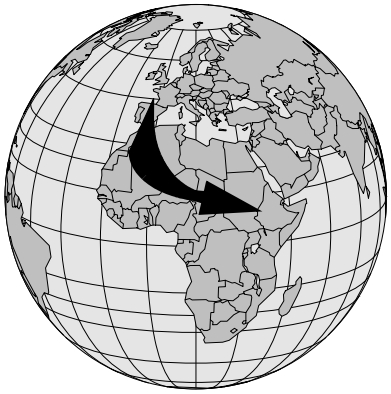
(Sotsiaal Ministeerium)
Gonsiori 29, 15027 Tallinn, Estonia
Internet: http://www.sm.ee/eng/pages/index.html

Embassy of Estonia
2131 Massachusetts Ave, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 588-0101
Fax: (202) 588-0108

Consulate General of Estonia
600 Third Avenue, 26th Floor
New York, N.Y. 10016-2001
Tel: (212) 883-0636
Fax:(212) 883-0648
Email: nyconsulate@nyc.estemb.org
Internet: http://www.nyc.estemb.org

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



ETHIOPIA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1.1 million sq. km (472,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico combined.
Cities: Capital—Addis Ababa (pop. 5 million). Other cities—Dire Dawa (237,000), Nazret (189,000), Gondar (163,000), Dessie (142,000), Mekelle (141,000), Bahir Dar (140,000), Jimma (132,000), Awassa (104,000).
Terrain: High plateau, mountains, dry lowland plains.
Climate: Temperate in the highlands; hot in the lowlands.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Ethiopian(s).
Population: (2005) 77 million.
Annual growth rate: 2.7%.
Ethnic groups: (est.) Oromo 40%, Amhara 25%, Tigre 7%, Somali 6%, Sidama 9%, Gurage 2%, Wolaita 4%, Afar 4%, other nationalities 3%.
Religions: (est.) Ethiopian Orthodox Christian 40%, Sunni Muslim 45-50%, Protestant 5%, remainder indigenous beliefs.
Languages: Amharic (official), Tigrinya, Arabic, Guaragigna, Oromigna, English, Somali.
Education: Years compulsory—none. Attendance (elementary) 57%. Literacy—43%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—93/1,000 live births.
Work force: Agriculture—80%. Industry and commerce—20%.

Government

Type: Federal Republic.
Constitution: Ratified 1994.
Government branches: Executive—president, Council of State, Council of Ministers. Executive power resides with the prime minister. Legislative—bicameral parliament. Judicial—divided into Federal and Regional Courts.
Political subdivisions: 9 regions and 2 special city administrations: Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa.
Political parties: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP), the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM), and other small parties.
Suffrage: Universal starting at age 18.
Budget: (2006 est.) $3.4 billion.
Defense: $348 million (5.6% of GDP FY 2003).
National holidays: May 28.

Economy

Real GDP: (2006 est.) $13.3 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 9.6%.
Per capita income: (2006 est.) $130.
Average inflation rate: (2006 est.) 13%.
Natural resources: Potash, salt, gold, copper, platinum, natural gas (unexploited).
Agriculture: (47% of GDP) Products—coffee, cereals, pulses, oilseeds, khat, meat, hides and skins. Cultivated land—17%.
Industry: (12% of GDP) Types—textiles, processed foods, construction, cement, and hydroelectric power.
Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$1.1 billion. Imports—$4.1 billion; plus remittances—official est. $400 million; unofficial est. $400 million.
Fiscal year: July 8-July 7.

GEOGRAPHY

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa and is bordered on the north and northeast by Eritrea, on the east by Djibouti and Somalia, on the south by Kenya, and on the west and southwest by Sudan. The country has a high central plateau that varies from 1,800 to 3,000 meters (6,000 ft.-10,000 ft.) above sea level, with some mountains reaching 4,620 meters (15,158 ft.). Elevation is generally highest just before the point of descent to the Great Rift Valley, which splits the plateau diagonally. A number of rivers cross the plateau—

notably the Blue Nile flowing from Lake Tana. The plateau gradually slopes to the lowlands of the Sudan on the west and the Somali-inhabited plains to the southeast.

The climate is temperate on the plateau and hot in the lowlands. At Addis Ababa, which ranges from 2,200 to 2,600 meters (7,000 ft.-8,500 ft.), maximum temperature is 26o C (80o F) and minimum 4o C (40o F). The weather is usually sunny and dry with the short (belg) rains occurring February-April and the big (meher) rains beginning in mid-June and ending in mid-September.

PEOPLE

Ethiopia's population is highly diverse. Most of its people speak a Semitic or Cushitic language. The Oromo, Amhara, and Tigreans make up more than three-fourths of the population, but there are more than 77 different ethnic groups with their own distinct languages within Ethiopia. Some of these have as few as 10,000 members. In general, most of the Christians live in the highlands, while Muslims and adherents of traditional African religions tend to inhabit lowland regions. English is the most widely spoken foreign language and is taught in all secondary schools. Amharic is the official language and was the language of primary school instruction but has been replaced in many areas by local languages such as Oromifa and Tigrinya.

HISTORY

Ethiopia is credited with being the origin of mankind. Bones discovered in eastern Ethiopia date back 3.2 million years. Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and one of the oldest in the world. Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century B.C. describes ancient Ethiopia in his writings. The Old Testament of the Bible records the Queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem. According to legend, Menelik I, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, founded the Ethiopian Empire. Missionaries from Egypt and Syria introduced Christianity in the fourth century A.D. Following the rise of Islam in the seventh century, Ethiopia was gradually cut off from European Christendom. The Portuguese established contact with Ethiopia in 1493, primarily to strengthen their influence over the Indian Ocean and to convert Ethiopia to Roman Catholicism. There followed a century of conflict between pro- and anti-Catholic factions, resulting in the expulsion of all foreign missionaries in the 1630s. This period of bitter religious conflict contributed to hostility toward foreign Christians and Europeans, which persisted into the 20th century and was a factor in Ethiopia's isolation until the mid-19th century.

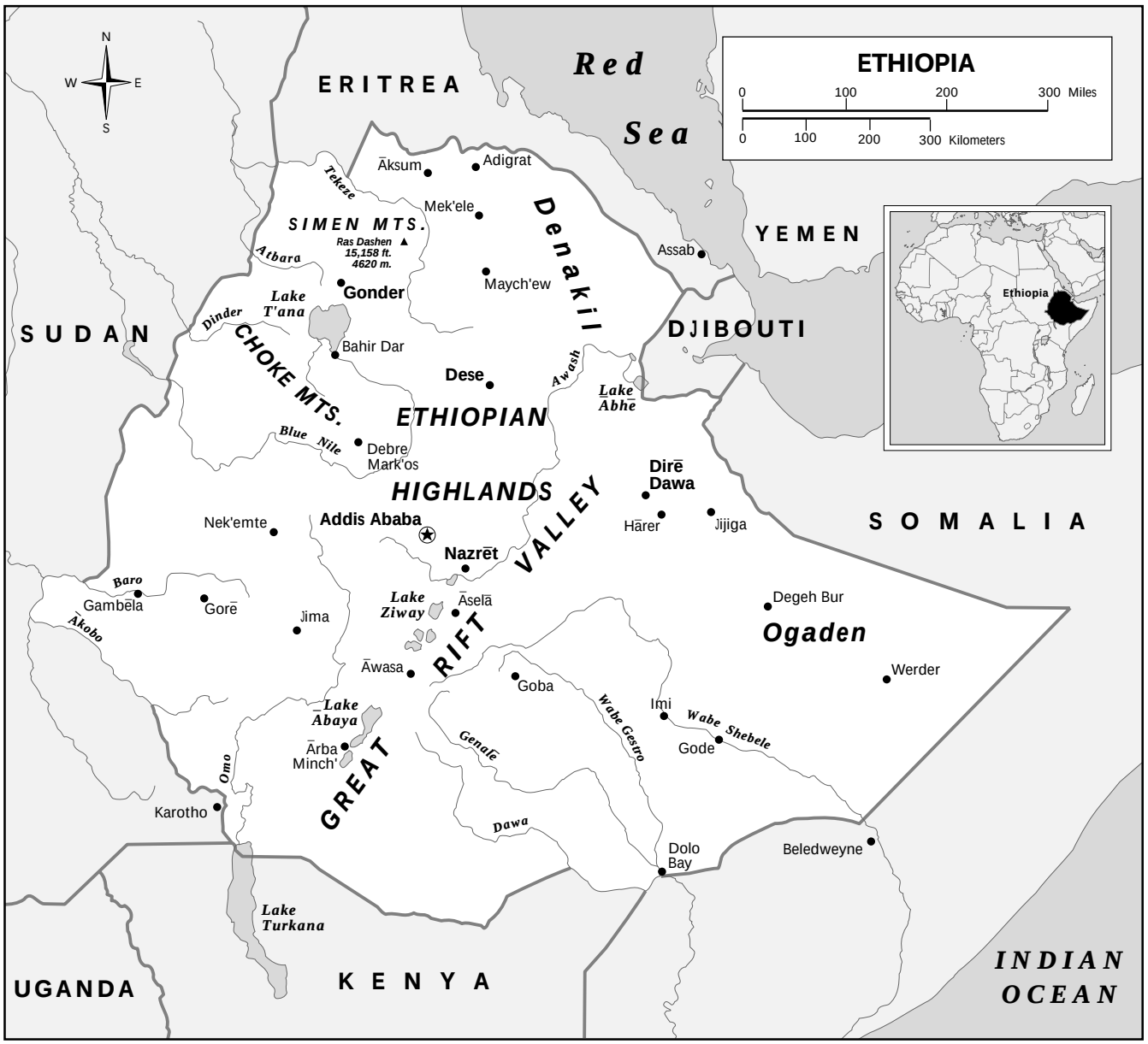
Under the Emperors Theodore II (1855-68), Johannes IV (1872-89), and Menelik II (1889-1913), the kingdom was consolidated and began to emerge from its medieval isolation. When Menelik II died, his grandson, Lij Iyassu, succeeded to the throne but soon lost support because of his Muslim ties. The Christian nobility deposed him in 1916, and Menelik's daughter, Zewditu, was made empress. Her cousin, Ras Tafari Makonnen (1892-1975), was made regent and successor to the throne. In 1930, after the empress died, the regent, adopting the throne name Haile Selassie, was crowned emperor. His reign was interrupted in 1936 when Italian Fascist forces invaded and occupied Ethiopia. The emperor was forced into exile in England despite his plea to the League of Nations for intervention. Five years later, British and Ethiopian forces defeated the Italians, and the emperor returned to the throne.

After a period of civil unrest, which began in February 1974, the aging Haile Selassie I was deposed on September 12, 1974, and a provisional administrative council of soldiers, known as the Derg ("committee") seized power from the emperor and installed a government, which was socialist in name and military in style. The Derg summarily executed 59 members of the royal family and ministers and generals of the emperor's government; Emperor Haile Selassie was strangled in the basement of his palace on August 22, 1975.

Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam assumed power as head of state and Derg chairman, after having his two predecessors killed. Mengistu's years in office were marked by a totalitarian-style government and the country's massive militarization, financed by the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, and assisted by Cuba. From 1977 through early 1978 thousands of suspected enemies of the Derg were tortured and/or killed in a purge called the "red terror." Communism was officially adopted during the late 1970s and early 1980s with the promulgation of a Soviet-style constitution, Politburo, and the creation of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE).

In December 1976, an Ethiopian delegation in Moscow signed a military assistance agreement with the Soviet Union. The following April, Ethiopia abrogated its military assistance agreement with the United States and expelled the American military missions. In July 1977, sensing the disarray in Ethiopia, Somalia attacked across the Ogaden Desert in pursuit of its irredentist claims to the ethnic Somali areas of Ethiopia. Ethiopian forces were driven back deep inside their own frontier but, with the assistance of a massive Soviet airlift of arms and Cuban combat forces, they stemmed the attack. The major Somali regular units were forced out of the Ogaden in March 1978. Twenty years later, development in the Somali region of Ethiopia lagged.

The Derg's collapse was hastened by droughts and famine, as well as by insurrections, particularly in the northern regions of Tigray and Eritrea. In 1989, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) merged with other ethnically based opposition movements to form the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). In May 1991, EPRDF forces advanced on Addis Ababa. Mengistu fled the country for asylum in Zimbabwe, where he still resides. In July 1991, the EPRDF, the



Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and others established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) which was comprised of an 87-member Council of Representatives and guided by a national charter that functioned as a transitional constitution. In June 1992 the OLF withdrew from the government; in March 1993, members of the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition left the government. In May 1991, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), led by Isaias Afwerki, assumed control of Eritrea and established a provisional government. This provisional government independently administered Eritrea until April 23-25, 1993, when Eritreans voted overwhelmingly for independence in a UN-monitored free and fair referendum. Eritrea was with Ethiopia's consent declared independent on April 27, and the United States recognized its independence on April 28, 1993.

In Ethiopia, President Meles Zenawi and members of the TGE pledged to oversee the formation of a multiparty democracy. The election for a 547-member constituent assembly was held in June 1994, and this assembly adopted the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in December 1994. The elections for Ethiopia's first popularly chosen national parliament and regional legislatures were held in May and June 1995. Most opposition parties chose to boycott these elections, ensuring a landslide victory for the EPRDF. International and nongovernmental observers concluded that opposition parties would have been able to participate had they chosen to do so. The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was installed in August 1995.

In May 1998, Eritrean forces attacked part of the Ethiopia-Eritrea border region, seizing some Ethiopian-controlled territory. The strike spurred a two-year war between the neighboring states that cost over 100,000 lives. Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders signed an Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities on June 18, 2000 and a peace agreement, known as the Algiers Agreement, on December 12, 2000.

The agreements called for an end to the hostilities, a 25-kilometer-wide Temporary Security Zone along the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping force to monitor compliance, and the establishment of the Ethiopia Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC) to act as a neutral body to assess colonial treaties and applicable international law in order to render final and binding border delimitation and demarcation determinations. The United Nations Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE) was established in September 2000. The EEBC presented its border delimitation decision on April 13, 2002. To date, neither Ethiopia nor Eritrea has taken the steps necessary to enable the EEBC to demarcate the border.

Opposition candidates won 12 seats in national parliamentary elections in 2001. Ethiopia held the most free and fair national campaign period in the country's history prior to May 15, 2005 elections. Unfortunately, electoral irregularities and tense campaign rhetoric resulted in a protracted election complaints review process. Public protests turned violent in June 2005. The National Electoral Board released final results in September 2005, with the opposition taking over 170 of the 547 parliamentary seats and 137 of the 138 seats for the Addis Ababa municipal council. Opposition parties called for a boycott of parliament and civil disobedience to protest the election results. In early November 2005, Ethiopian security forces responded to public protests by arresting scores of opposition leaders, as well as journalists and human rights advocates, and detaining tens of thousands of civilians in rural detention camps for up to three months. In December 2005, the government charged 131 opposition, media, and civil society leaders with capital offenses including "outrages against the constitution." Key opposition leaders and almost all of the 131 were pardoned and released from prison in the summer of 2007. Approximately 150 of the elected opposition members of parliament have taken their seats. Ruling and opposition parties have engaged in little dialogue since the opposition leaders were freed. Government harassment and intimidation prompted the major opposition parties to withdraw from the April 2008 elections for local officials and 39 seats in parliament. As a result, the ruling party won over 95% of all the positions, including all but one of the 138 seats of the Addis Ababa city council (a complete reversal of the 2005 results).

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Ethiopia is a federal republic under the 1994 constitution. The executive branch includes a president, Council of State, and Council of Ministers. Executive power resides with the prime minister. There is a bicameral parliament; national legislative elections were held in 2005. The judicial branch comprises federal and regional courts.

Political parties include the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), and other small parties. Suffrage is universal at age 18.

The EPRDF-led government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has promoted a policy of ethnic federalism, devolving significant powers to regional, ethnically based authorities. Ethiopia today has 9 semi-autonomous administrative regions and two special city administrations (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa), which have the power to raise their own revenues. Under the present government, Ethiopians enjoy wider, albeit circumscribed, political freedom than ever before in Ethiopia's history.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **GIRMA Woldegiorgis**
Prime Minister: **MELES Zenawi**
Dep. Prime Min.: **ADDISU Legesse**
Dep. Prime Min.: **KASSU Ilala**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **ADDISU Legesse**
Vice Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **BELAY Ejigu**
Vice Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **GETACHEW Teklemedhin**
Vice Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **TEKALIGN Mamo**
Min. of Cabinet Affairs: **BERHANU Adelo**
Min. of Capacity Building: **TEFERA Walwa**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **MOHAMOUD Dirir**
Min. of Defense: **KUMA Demeksa**
Min. of Education: **SNTAYEHU Weldemikael**
Min. of Energy & Mines: **ALEMAYEHU Tegenu**
Min. of Federal Affairs: **SIRAJ Fegisa**
Min. of Finance & Economic Development: **SUFIAN Ahmed**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **SEYOUM Mesfin**
Min. of Health: **TEWODROS Adhanom**
Min. of Information: **BERHAN Hailu**
Min. of Justice: **ASEFA Kesito**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **HASSAN Abdella**
Min. of Revenue Collection: **MELAKU Fenta**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **GIRMA Birru**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **JUNEDIN Sado**
Min. of Water Resources: **ASFAW Dingamo**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **HIRUT Dilebo**
Min. of Works & Urban Development: **KASSU Ilala**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **ASTER Mamo**
Governor, National Bank: **TEKLEWOLD Atnafu**
Ambassador to the US: **Samuel ASSEFA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **DAWIT Yohannes**

Ethiopia maintains an embassy in the U.S. at 3506 International Drive, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-364-1200) headed by Ambassador

Samuel Assefa. It also maintains a UN mission in New York and consulates in Los Angeles, Seattle (honorary), and Houston (honorary).

ECONOMY

The current government has embarked on a cautious program of economic reform, including privatization of state enterprises and rationalization of government regulation. While the process is still ongoing, so far the reforms have attracted only meager foreign investment, and the government remains heavily involved in the economy.

The Ethiopian economy is based on agriculture, which contributes 47% to GNP and more than 80% of exports, and employs 85% of the population. The major agricultural export crop is coffee, providing 35% of Ethiopia's foreign exchange earnings, down from 65% a decade ago because of the slump in coffee prices since the mid-1990s. Other traditional major agricultural exports are hides and skins, pulses, oilseeds, and the traditional "khat," a leafy shrub that has psychotropic qualities when chewed. Sugar and gold production has also become important in recent years. Ethiopia's agriculture is plagued by periodic drought, soil degradation caused by inappropriate agricultural practices and overgrazing, deforestation, high population density, undeveloped water resources, and poor transport infrastructure, making it difficult and expensive to get goods to market. Yet agriculture is the country's most promising resource. Potential exists for self-sufficiency in grains and for export development in livestock, flowers, grains, oilseeds, sugar, vegetables, and fruits.

Gold, marble, limestone, and small amounts of tantalum are mined in Ethiopia. Other resources with potential for commercial development include large potash deposits, natural gas, iron ore, and possibly oil and geothermal energy. Although Ethiopia has good hydroelectric resources, which power most of its manufacturing sector, it is totally dependent on imports for its oil. A landlocked country, Ethiopia has relied on the port of Djibouti since the 1998-2000 border war with Eritrea. Ethiopia is connected with the port of Djibouti by road and rail for international trade. Of the 23,812 kilometers of all-weather roads in Ethiopia, 15% are asphalt. Mountainous terrain and the lack of good roads and sufficient vehicles make land transportation difficult and expensive. However, the government-owned airline's reputation is excellent. Ethiopian Airlines serves 38 domestic airfields and has 42 international destinations.

Dependent on a few vulnerable crops for its foreign exchange earnings and reliant on imported oil, Ethiopia lacks sufficient foreign exchange earnings. The financially conservative government has taken measures to solve this problem, including stringent import controls and sharply reduced subsidies on retail gasoline prices. Nevertheless, the largely subsistence economy is incapable of meeting the budget requirements for drought relief, an ambitious development plan, and indispensable imports such as oil. The gap has largely been covered through foreign assistance inflows.

DEFENSE

The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) numbers about 200,000 personnel, which makes it one of the largest militaries in Africa. During the 1998-2000 border war with Eritrea, the ENDF mobilized strength reached approximately 350,000. Since the end of the war, some 150,000 soldiers have been demobilized. The ENDF continues a transition from its roots as a guerrilla army to an all-volunteer professional military organization with the aid of the U.S. and other countries. Training in peacekeeping operations, professional military education, military training management, counter-terrorism operations, and military medicine are among the major programs sponsored by the United States. Ethiopia now has one peacekeeping contingent in Liberia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Ethiopia was relatively isolated from major movements of world politics until Italian invasions in 1895 and 1935. Since World War II, it has played an active role in world and African affairs. Ethiopia was a charter member of the United Nations and took part in UN operations in Korea in 1951 and the Congo in 1960. Former Emperor Haile Selassie was a founder of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now known as the African Union (AU). Addis Ababa also hosts the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Ethiopia is also a member of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a Horn of Africa regional grouping.

Although nominally a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, after the 1974 revolution, Ethiopia moved into a close relationship with the Soviet Union and its allies and supported their international policies and positions until the change of government in 1991. Today, Ethiopia has very good relations with the United States and the West, especially in responding to regional instability and supporting war on terrorism and, increasingly, through economic involvement.

Ethiopia's relations with Eritrea remained tense and unresolved. Following a brutal 1998-2000 border war in which tens of thousands died on both sides, the two countries signed a peace agreement in December 2000. A five-member independent international commission—the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC)—issued a decision in April 2002 delimiting the border. In November 2007 the EEBC issued a decision that the border was demarcated based on map coordinates (usual demarcation based on pillars on the ground had not yet occurred due to disagreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea) and disbanded. Ethiopia does not consider the border to be demarcated, though Eritrea does. In March 2008 the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) peacekeeping mission began withdrawing from Eritrea

because Eritrea refused to allow UNMEE to secure fuel supplies for its operations. Both countries have stationed approximately 100,000 troops along the border, which has become more dangerous due to the pending departure of UNMEE. Both countries insist they will not instigate fighting, but both also remain prepared for any eventuality. Regarding its neighbor Somalia, the weakness of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and factional fighting in Somalia contributes to tensions along the boundaries of the two countries. Ethiopia has recently entered into a loose tripartite (nonmilitary) cooperation with Sudan and Yemen.

The irredentist claims of the extremist-controlled Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) in Somalia in 2006 posed a legitimate security threat to Ethiopia and to the TFG of Somalia. In December 2006, the TFG requested the assistance of the Ethiopian military to respond to the CIC's aggression. Within a few weeks, the joint Ethiopian-TFG forces routed the CIC from Somalia. Since then Ethiopia has stationed troops in Somalia (largely around Mogadishu), awaiting full deployment of the African Union's Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Uganda and Burundi together have sent some 2,400 peacekeepers to Somalia—roughly one-third of AMISOM's planned deployment of 8,000 soldiers.

U.S.-ETHIOPIA RELATIONS

U.S.-Ethiopian relations were established in 1903 and were good throughout the period prior to the Italian occupation in 1935. After World War II, these ties strengthened on the basis of a September 1951 treaty of amity and economic relations. In 1953, two agreements were signed: a mutual defense assistance agreement, under which the United States agreed to furnish military equipment and training, and an accord regularizing the operations of a U.S. communication facility at Asmara.

Through fiscal year 1978, the United States provided Ethiopia with $282 million in military assistance and $366 million in economic assistance in agriculture, education, public health, and transportation. A Peace Corps program emphasized education, and U.S. Information Service educational and cultural exchanges were numerous.

After Ethiopia's revolution, the bilateral relationship began to cool due to the Derg's linking with international communism and U.S. revulsion at the Derg's human rights abuses. The United States rebuffed Ethiopia's request for increased military assistance to intensify its fight against the Eritrean secessionist movement and to repel the Somali invasion. The International Security and Development Act of 1985 prohibited all U.S. economic assistance to Ethiopia with the exception of humanitarian disaster and emergency relief. In July 1980, the U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia was recalled at the request of the Ethiopian Government, and the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Embassy in the United States were headed by Charges d'Affaires.

With the downfall of the Mengistu regime, U.S.-Ethiopian relations improved dramatically. Legislative restrictions on assistance to Ethiopia other than humanitarian assistance were lifted. Diplomatic relations were upgraded to the ambassadorial level in 1992. Total U.S. Government assistance, including food aid, between 1991 and 2003 was $2.3 billion. The U.S. Government provided $474 million in assistance in FY 2007, $264 million of it for combating HIV/AIDS.

Today, Ethiopia is a strategic partner of the United States in the Global War on Terrorism. U.S. development assistance to Ethiopia is focused on reducing famine vulnerability, hunger, and poverty and emphasizes economic, governance, and social sector policy reforms. Some military training funds, including training in such issues as the laws of war and observance of human rights, also are provided.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ADDIS ABABA (E) 14 Entoto Rd, Addis Ababa, (251-11) 517-4000, Fax (251-11) 517-4888, INMARSAT Tel 00871761258488, Workweek: Mon-Th 0745-1730, Fri 0745-1145, Website: http://ethiopia.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Gayle Lowell
CDC:	Vacant
CM OMS:	Patricia Reber
FM:	Daniel Ferguson
HRO:	Ken Williams
MGT:	Kay Crawford
POL/ECO:	Michael Gonzales
AMB:	Donald Yamamoto
CON:	Paul Cantrell
DCM:	Deborah Malac
PAO:	Michael McClellan
GSO:	Jon E. Eklund
RSO:	Mike Bishop
AFSA:	Celia Thompson
AID:	Glen Anders
CLO:	Juliana Hightower
DAO:	Col. Bradley Anderson
EST:	Lisa Brodey
FMO:	Paul R. Kenul
ICASS Chair:	Kevin Rushing
IMO:	Robert King
State ICASS:	Michael McClellan

US MISSION TO AFRICAN UNION (M) 14 Entoto Rd, Addis Ababa, (251-11) 517-4000, Workweek: Mo-Th 0745 -1730, Fr 0745-1145.

AMB OMS:	Vacamt
DPO/PAO:	Olive Sampson
POL/ECO:	Alfreda Meyers
AMB:	Vacant

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 26, 2008

Country Description: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a developing country in East Africa. It is comprised of nine states and two city administrations (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa). The capital is Addis Ababa. Tourism facilities can be found in the most populous regions of Ethiopia, but infrastructure is basic. The ruling EPRDF party and Prime

Minister Meles Zenawi maintain strong control of the government and economy. Despite several years of high economic growth, the country remains vulnerable to external economic shocks and recurring drought.

Entry Requirements: To avoid possible confusion or delays, travelers are advised to obtain a valid Ethiopian visa at the nearest Ethiopian Embassy prior to arrival, and must do so if entering across any land port-of-entry. For example: travelers wishing to enter Ethiopia from Kenya at the land border at Moyale, must obtain an Ethiopian visa first. Ethiopian visas ARE NOT available at the border crossing point at Moyale. Travelers should apply for Ethiopian visas at the Ethiopian Embassy in Nairobi or at other Ethiopian embassies in other countries. Ethiopian visas are available to U.S. citizens upon arrival at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa. U.S. citizens may obtain one-month or three month, single-entry tourist visas or 10-day single-entry business visas upon arrival at Bole International Airport. This service is available only at Bole International Airport and is not available at any other ports of entry in Ethiopia. The visa fee at Bole International Airport is payable in U.S. dollars. Such visas can be extended by applying at the Main Immigration Office in Addis Ababa. Business visas of up to three-months validity can also be obtained at Bole International Airport upon arrival if the traveler has a sponsoring organization in Ethiopia that has made prior arrangements for issuance through the Main Immigration Office in Addis Ababa. Travelers whose entry visa expires before they depart Ethiopia, must obtain a visa extension and pay a monthly penalty fee of $20 USD per month. Such travelers may also be required to pay a court fine of up to 4000 ETB (USD $435) before being permitted to depart from Ethiopia. Travelers are required to pay the penalty fee before they will be able to obtain an exit visa (USD $20) permitting them to leave Ethiopia.

Individuals intending to stay in Ethiopia for a prolonged period of time are advised to contact the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington prior to traveling. The Ethiopian Embassy is located at 3506 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 364-1200; fax (202) 587-0195. For the most current visa information, visit the Embassy's web site at www.ethiopianembassy.org. Inquiries by Americans located overseas may be made at the nearest Ethiopian embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: While Ethiopia is generally stable, domestic insurgent groups, extremists from Somalia, and the heavy military buildup along the northern border pose risks to safety and security, particularly along Ethiopia's border areas and in the Somali region. In the past year, there has been an increase in targeted bombings in Addis Ababa and in other parts of Ethiopia. In November 2008, the Government of Ethiopia issued a warning to its citizens alerting them of the potential for terrorist attacks and subsequently increased security measures to unprecedented levels.

Throughout Ethiopia: Americans are strongly advised to review their personal safety and security posture, to remain vigilant and to be cautious when frequenting prominent public places and landmarks. Targeted bombings in Addis Ababa and south eastern Ethiopia in 2008 resulted in numerous injuries and deaths. Americans are advised to avoid public gatherings and public places, including hotels, if possible, and using public transportation and transportation hubs. They are advised to beware of unattended baggage or packages left in any location, including in minibuses and taxis.

Ethiopia/Eritrea Border Area: Ethiopia and Eritrea signed a peace agreement in December 2000 that ended their border war. However, the border remains an issue of contention between the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The border area is a militarized zone where there exists the possibility of armed conflict between Ethiopian and Eritrean forces. American citizens are advised to avoid travel in the areas along the Eritrean/Ethiopian border (within 50 km/30 miles of the Ethiopian/Eritrean border) because of the dangers posed by land mines and because of the possibility of conflict between Ethiopian and Eritrean defense forces. Due to abductions and banditry, Americans are advised to avoid travel within 30 miles of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border west of Adigrat to the Sudanese border, with the exception of the town of Axum, and within 60 miles east of Adigrat to the Djiboutian border. Embassy personnel are permitted to travel in these areas only on a case-by-case basis. Travel to the northern Afar Region towards the Eritrean border is also discouraged. Embassy personnel are permitted to travel there only on a case-by-case basis.

Somali Region: Since the mid-1990's the members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have clashed with Ethiopian government forces near the city of Harar and in the Somali regional state, particularly in the Ogaden zones. In April 2007, the ONLF claimed responsibility for attacking a Chinese oil exploration installation south of Jijiga, in Ethiopia's Somali region. The attack resulted in deaths, kidnappings and the wounding of dozens of Chinese and Ethiopian citizens. In 2008, a hotel in the town of Jijiga was bombed and two hotels in the town of Negele Borena were bombed.

American citizens are reminded that the U.S. Embassy strongly discourages travel to Ethiopia's Somali region and that a Travel Warning for Somalia has been issued that advises against all travel to that country. Armed insurgent groups operate within the Somali, Oromiya and Afar regions of Ethiopia. In December 2006, the Ethiopian Government, at the invitation of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, began military operations against extremists in Somalia. As of November 2007, military operations continue in Mogadishu, where an African Union peacekeeping force, AMISOM, is deployed. In 2008, two staff members of a non-governmental organization (NGO) were abducted in the Somali region.

Gambella Region: Sporadic inter-ethnic clashes remain a concern throughout the Gambella region of western Ethiopia following outbursts of violence there in 2003 - 2004. There is a heavy military and police presence in the town of Gambella. While the security situation in the town of Gambella is calm, it remains unpredictable throughout the rest of the region, and violence could recur without warning. Travel to this region is discouraged.

Travel in Ethiopia via rail is discouraged due to past episodes of derailment, sabotage, and bombings. In southern Ethiopia along the Kenyan border, banditry and incidents involving ethnic conflicts are also common. Travelers should exercise caution when traveling to any remote area of the country, including the borders with Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan. Ethiopian security forces do not have a widespread presence in those regions.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Pick-pocketing, "snatch and run" thefts, and other petty crimes are common in Addis Ababa. These are generally crimes of opportunity rather than planned attacks. Travelers should exercise caution in crowded areas and should avoid visiting the Mercato in Addis Ababa, a large open-air market. Violence in the Mercato has been on the rise. In 2008 an explosion in the Mercato killed several and wounded more than a dozen individuals. Also in 2008, there was a shooting in the Mercato. Travelers should limit the amount of cash they carry and leave valuables, such as passports, jewelry, and airline tickets in a hotel safe or other secure place. Travelers should keep wallets and other valuables where they will be less susceptible to pick-pockets.

Travelers should be cautious at all times when traveling on roads in Ethiopia. There have been reports of highway robbery, including carjacking, by armed bandits outside urban areas. Some incidents have been accompanied by violence. Travelers are cautioned to limit road travel outside major towns or cities to daylight hours and travel in convoys, if possible.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

There is no local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Ethiopia. Distress calls should be made to the local police station, the telephone number of which can be obtained by calling directory assistance at 997. This is the number for directory assistance throughout Ethiopia. In Addis Ababa, the number for police is 991, for the fire brigade 939, and for an ambulance 907.

Medical Facilities and Other Health Information: Health facilities in Addis Ababa are very limited and are generally inadequate outside the capital. Even the best hospitals in Addis Ababa suffer from inadequate facilities, antiquated equipment, and shortages of supplies (particularly medicines). There is a shortage of physicians. Emergency assistance is limited. Psychiatric services and medications are practically nonexistent. Serious illnesses and injuries often require travelers to be medically evacuated from Ethiopia to a location where adequate medical attention is available. Such "medevac" services are very expensive and are generally available only to travelers who either have travel insurance that covers medevac services or who are able to pay in advance the considerable cost of such services (often in excess of USD 40,000). See Medical Insurance below. Travelers must carry their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines, as well as a doctor's note describing the medication. If the quantity of drugs exceeds that which would be expected for personal use, a permit from the Ministry of Health is required.

Malaria is prevalent in Ethiopia outside of the highland areas. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and explain to the health care provider their travel history and which anti-malarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarial drugs, please visit the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/index.htm.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Ethiopia. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

Ethiopia is a mountainous country and the high altitude may cause health problems, even for healthy travelers. Addis Ababa is located at an altitude of 8,300 feet. Travelers may experience shortness of breath, fatigue, nausea, headaches, and inability to sleep. Individuals with respiratory (including asthma) or heart conditions should consult with a health care professional before traveling to Ethiopia. Travelers to Ethiopia should also avoid swimming in any lakes, rivers, or still bodies of water. Most bodies of water have been found to contain parasites. Travelers should be aware that Ethiopia has a

high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Ethiopia has had outbreaks of acute watery diarrhea, possible cholera, typhoid, or other bacterial diarrhea in the recent past, and the conditions for reoccurrences continue to exist. Further information on prevention and treatment of cholera and other diarrheal diseases can be found at the CDC web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentDiseases.aspx.

Ethiopian authorities are monitoring the possibility of avian influenza following the deaths of poultry and birds; preliminary results are negative. For additional information on avian flu please visit the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Ethiopia. Please verify with the embassy of Ethiopia before you travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Specific medevac insurance, which generally covers evacuation of a patient from Ethiopia to a location where adequate medical attention is available, is often inexpensive and available through a variety of companies that can be accessed online. Medicare and Medicaid recipients are not covered overseas and are advised to purchase supplemental health and medical evacuation insurances.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Ethiopia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Ethiopia has the highest rate of traffic fatalities per vehicle in the world. Roads in Ethiopia are poorly maintained, inadequately marked, and poorly lighted. Road travel after dark outside Addis Ababa and other cities is dangerous and discouraged due to hazards posed by broken-down vehicles left in the road, pedestrians walking in the road, stray animals, and the possibility of armed robbery. Road lighting in cities is inadequate at best and nonexistent outside of cities. Excessive speed, unpredictable local driving habits, pedestrians and livestock in the roadway, and the lack of basic safety equipment on many vehicles are daily hazards on Ethiopian roads.

While travel during daylight hours on both paved and unpaved roads is generally considered safe, land mines and other anti-personnel devices can be encountered on isolated dirt roads that were targeted during various conflicts. Before undertaking any off-road travel, it is advisable to inquire of local authorities to ensure that the area has been cleared of mines.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Ethiopia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Ethiopia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

The Ethiopian government has closed air routes near the border with Eritrea and has referred to the airspace as a "no-fly zone." The FAA currently prohibits U.S. aircraft and U.S. pilots from flying in Ethiopian airspace north of 12 degrees north latitude, the area along the country's northern border with Eritrea. For complete information on this flight prohibition, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Ethiopia Ethiopia does not recognize dual nationality. The government of Ethiopia considers Ethiopians who have become naturalized U.S. citizens to be Americans. Such individuals are not subject to Ethiopian military service. The Ethiopian government has stated that Ethiopian-Americans in almost all cases are given the same opportunity to invest in Ethiopia as Ethiopians. Several years ago the government of Ethiopia arrested people of Eritrean origin who initially failed to disclose their U.S. citizenship. However, this has not occurred in recent years. Ethiopian officials have recently stated that Eritrean-Americans are treated as U.S. citizens and are not subject to arrest simply because of their ties to Eritrea.

Permits are required before exporting either antiques or animal skins from Ethiopia. Antique religious artifacts, including "Ethiopian" crosses, require documentation from the National Museum in Addis Ababa for export.

Foreign currency should be exchanged in authorized banks, hotels and other legally authorized outlets and proper receipts should be obtained for the transactions. Exchange receipts are required to convert unused Ethiopian currency back to the original foreign currency. Penalties for exchanging money on the black market range from fines to imprisonment. Credit cards are not accepted at most hotels, restaurants, shops, or other local facilities, although they are accepted at the Hilton and Sheraton Hotels in Addis Ababa. Some hotels and car rental companies, particularly in Addis Ababa, may require foreigners to pay in foreign currency or show a receipt for the source of foreign exchange if

paying in local currency. However, many hotels or establishments are not permitted to accept foreign currency or may be reluctant to do so. Ethiopian institutions have on occasion refused to accept 1996 series U.S. currency, although official policy is that such currency should be treated as legal tender.

Ethiopian law strictly prohibits the photographing of military installations, police/military personnel, industrial facilities, government buildings, and infrastructure (roads, bridges, dams, airfields, etc.). Such sites are rarely marked clearly. Travel guides, police, and Ethiopian officials can advise if a particular site may be photographed. Photographing prohibited sites may result in the confiscation of film and camera.

There is a risk of earthquakes in Ethiopia. Buildings may collapse due to strong tremors. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Ethiopian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Ethiopia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Ethiopia are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Ethiopia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Entoto Avenue, P.O. Box 1014, in Addis Ababa, telephone: 251-11-124-2424; emergency after-hours telephone: 251-11-124-2400; consular fax: 251-11-124-2435; website: http://addisababa.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Ethiopia is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Ethiopia, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Ethiopia also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents:

Age Requirements: If single, the prospective adoptive parent must be at least 25 years old. If married, there is no minimum age. There is no maximum age limit; however, the practice is to limit the age difference between the prospective adoptive parent and the adopted child to no more than 40 years.

Marriage Requirements: The Ethiopian Government prefers to place children with married couples who have been married for at least five years.

Income Requirements: Prospective parent(s) must prove financial ability as determined by the Ethiopian courts, though there is no minimum income required.

Other Requirements: Gay and lesbian adoption, and/or adoption by same-sex couples is not allowed in Ethiopia, although the Ethiopian Government has occasionally approved such cases.

Who Can Be Adopted? Ethiopia has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. You cannot adopt a child in Ethiopia unless he or she meets the requirements outlined below. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) identifies orphans in need of permanent family placement through intercountry adoption. In general, orphans identified for intercountry adoption have been abandoned by their parents or have lost their parents to disease or other misfortune.

Relinquishment Requirements: The Contract of Adoption is signed between the child's legal guardian and the prospective adoptive parents or the agency representative. This contract is the basis for the issuance of the adoption decree which shows

that the guardian or the orphanage has relinquished their parental or guardian right to the child.

Abandonment Requirements: When a child is abandoned, by law it comes into the custody of the Government. When a child is found to have two HIV/AIDS-infected parents, or one living HIV/AIDS-infected parent, the Government routinely declares that the child is an orphan and assumes legal guardianship of the child.

Waiting Period: It is common for the Government of Ethiopia to require that a child be resident in an orphanage for three months before they can be adopted.

Ethiopian Adoption Authority: The Adoption Team in the Children and Youth Affairs office (CYAO) operating under the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA)

The Process: Adoptive parents residing in Ethiopia face a few issues NOT faced by those living in the United States. Please see the bottom of this section for more details and considerations for adoptive parents living in Ethiopia. Private adoptions are permitted in Ethiopia, but discouraged by MOWA because they take place under local adoption rules and may bypass the process and protections put in place by the Government of Ethiopia relating to intercountry adoption. Information regarding private adoptions is also found at the end of this section.

The first step in adopting a child from Ethiopia is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

Intercountry adoptions from Ethiopia are handled by the Adoption Team in the Children and Youth Affairs office (CYAO), a part of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA). There are several United States-based adoption agencies authorized by the Ethiopian Government to provide adoption services. All Ethiopian adoptions are full, final, and irrevocable under Ethiopian law. Private adoptions are allowed in Ethiopia; however, they are discouraged by MOWA because they take place under local rules and may bypass the Government of Ethiopia's guidelines for intercountry adoption.

MOWA has a list of adoption agencies authorized to provide adoption services. To bring an adopted child from Ethiopia to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS.

Prospective adoptive parents must take or send all of the required documents (see below), certified and authenticated, to the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, D.C. for additional authentication. Once the Embassy has completed its authenticated, the completed packet is returned to the prospective adoptive parents. The prospective adoptive parents then forward the documents to MOWA, Children and Youth Affairs office, Adoption Team (CYAO). You can find their address in the Contacts section of this information.

The parents' dossier is then taken to the Claims and Authentication Section of the Protocol office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ethiopia to be authenticated. The parents' dossier is returned to CYAO where they then affix a summary sheet of vital information, then forwarded to the Adoption Committee for review and approval to adopt. Given the volume of work before the committee, it can take weeks before the Committee reviews a dossier. The Committee either approves or rejects the prospective adoptive parents, based on Ethiopian guidelines. Further investigation into the parents' qualifications is done if deemed necessary, and a recommendation is made. Only if all members of the committee agree, and sign the recommendation, is the request approved.

Upon approval, a child is selected and referred to the prospective parents to adopt, according to the parents' preferences for age and sex. The child must have its own dossier at MOWA. That dossier describes the child, the child's history, how the child came to be an orphan, and who has legal guardianship of the child.

At this time a notice seeking any other claimants to the child is published in the local press stating the child's name and the name of the adopting parents. Anyone opposed to the adoption must appear at MOWA by a certain date and time.

Upon acceptance of the referral, a Contract of Adoption is signed between the child's legal guardian and the adoptive parents, or the agency representative. The contract must be taken to the Inland Revenue Administration office to be stamped, which charges a nominal fee.

CYAO opens a file at the Federal First Instance Court to apply for an appointment date for the adoption hearing. The court date could be one or two months from the date of filing.

The process for finalizing the adoption (or gaining legal custody) in Ethiopia generally includes the following:

Role of the Adoption Authority: MOWA has all responsibility for all activities regarding children in the country, including intercountry adoption. MOWA approves the eligibility of prospective adoptive parents and oversees the selection of a child eligible for intercountry adoption. It also facilitates services after the adoption process is complete.

After the adoption is complete, MOWA prepares a request to the city of Addis Ababa for a new birth certificate and the office of Security, Immigration and Refugee Affairs for an Ethiopian passport in the child's new name.

Role of the Court: The Federal First Instance Court is where the adoption hearing will be scheduled and held. The court date could be one or two months from the date of the filing of that adoption petition. the Court generally is closed between 3 and 12 weeks between July and October. The dates change every year.

When the appointed court date arrives, the prospective parents or their agency's local representative will be asked to appear in court. Final decision can be handed down quickly, but delays of weeks are not uncommon. Adoptive parents must obtain at least two originals of the court decree. One will be retained by MOWA and one must be submitted to the United States Embassy for the visa application. The original submitted to the Embassy will be returned to the parents.

Role of Adoption Agencies: An adoption agency's United States and Ethiopian-based staff manage the adoption process in Ethiopia. American citizens who are adopting privately must complete all of the adoption steps unaided by adoption professionals.

Time Frame: Recent adoptions have generally taken between 6 to 24 months.

Adoption Fees:

- Authentication and translation of United States documents—$1 USD per page, but check with your adoption agency for up to date information on translation costs
- Document authentication stamps at the Claims and Authentication Section of the Protocol office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is 300 Ethiopian Birr per document
- Document certification by the United States Embassy—$30 per package
- Local birth certificate—$2 USD. Add $5 USD for expedited or same day service
- Birth certificate or document authentication by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—$35 USD
- Ethiopian passport—$35 USD
- Adoption Agencies–The amount charged by the licensed adoption agencies to process Ethiopian adoptions is unknown. Some unscrupulous adoption facilitators have been known to charge additional costs beyond what the prospective adoptive parents expected. These fees are often charged after the parents have arrived in Ethiopia and have the children in their physical custody.

Documents Required: To adopt from Ethiopia, prospective adoptive parents must initially apply directly to the Ethiopian Embassy in the United States. All documents must be accompanied by an original translation into Amharic. Along with your application, you will be required to provide the following documents:

- A written statement of why an Ethiopian child is preferred;
- An original birth certificate(s) of the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- An original marriage license/certificate, if applicable. If originals are not available, certified copies must be authenticated by the Department of State. That authentication must also be accompanied by an original translation into Amharic;
- An original Ethiopian police clearance for each of the prospective adoptive parents;
- A medical certificate/clearance for each of the prospective adoptive parents;
- The original home study prepared by a qualified social worker;
- Evidence of economic status;
- Three letters of reference from friends, relatives, church or other sources describing your character, the stability of your marriage, and your ability to parent;
- Two passport-size photographs of the prospective adoptive parents;
- A Power of Attorney for the adoption agency if the adoptive parents do not come to Ethiopia together to oversee the process, or, if one parent comes to Ethiopia, the other parent must execute a power of attorney for him/her;
- Obligation of Adoption or Social Welfare Agency signed by the adoption agency, or private adopters, in which the parents agree to allow follow-up visits by a social worker and to submit the scheduled progress reports to the CYAO; and
- Verification by the adoption agency or home study organization on the child's qualification for naturalization under the prospective adoptive parents' state laws.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoptive Parents Residing in Ethiopia: Adoptive parents residing in Ethiopia face a few issues not faced by those living in the United States. For detailed and updated information, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters

the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree.

To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: By Ethiopian law, the adoptive parents must submit post adoption reports at three months, six months, and one year. After the first year, the reports must be filed yearly until the child turns 18.

This is a commitment that the adopting parents, home study agency, and adopting agency must sign when submitting documents for the adoption.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Ethiopia
Entoto Road
Addis Ababa
Tel: (251-11) 124-24-24
Fax: (251-11) 124-35-35
Email: consaddis@state.gov.
American citizens can walk in from 8 a.m.–11:30 a.m. M-F, and from 1 p.m.-4 p.m. M-Th.

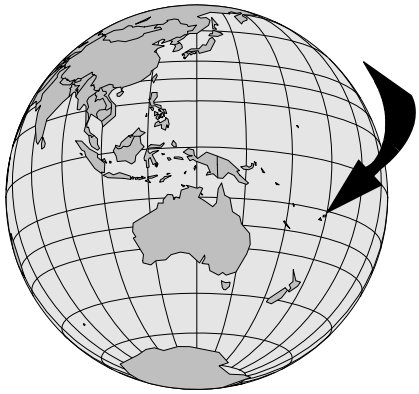
Ethopian Adoption Authority
Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA)
Children and Youth Affairs office,
Adoption Team (CYAO)
P.O. Box 1293
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Embassy of Ethiopia
3506 International Drive, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Phone: 202-364-1200
Fax: 202-587-0195
info@ethiopianembassy.org
http://www.ethiopianembassy.org/contact.shtml

Ethiopia also has a consulate in Los Angeles.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833.)



FIJI

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of the Fiji Islands

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 18,376 sq. km (7,056 sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Suva (pop. 172, 948), Lautoka (pop. 52,742), Nadi (pop. 42,712).
Terrain: Mountainous or varied.
Climate: Tropical maritime.

People

Nationality: Noun—Fiji Islander; adjective—Fiji or Fijian.*
Population: (2007 census): 827,900. Age structure: 35.4% under 14; 3.1% over 65.
Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 0.83%.
Ethnic groups: Indigenous Fijian 57%, Indo-Fijian 37%.
Religions: Christian 52% (Methodist and Roman Catholic), Hindu 33%, Muslim 7%.
Languages: English (official), Fijian, Hindi.
Education: Literacy (2004)—93%.
Health: (2004) Life expectancy—overall, 67.8 years, male 66 years; female 70. Infant mortality rate—16/1,000.
Work force: Agriculture—67%.
*The term "Fijian" has exclusively ethnic connotations and should not be used to describe any thing or person not of indigenous Fijian descent.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy (overthrown by military coup in December 2006).
Independence (from U.K.) October 10, 1970.
Constitution: July 1997 (suspended May 2000, reaffirmed March 2001).
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), Cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament; upper house is appointed, lower house is elected. Judicial—Supreme Court and supporting hierarchy.
Political parties: Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL), Fiji Labor Party (FLP), United People's Party (UPP), National Federation Party (NFP), National Alliance Party (NAP), Nationalist Vanua Tako Lavo Party (NVTLP), Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT), General Voters Party (GVP), Conservative Alliance Matanitu Vanua (CAMV).

Economy

GDP: (2008 forecast) $3.3 billion.
GDP per capita: (2008 forecast nominal) $3,981.93.

GDP composition by sector: Services 59.7%, industry 30.4%, agriculture 9.9%.
Industry: Types—tourism, sugar, garments.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$779.96 million; sugar, garments, gold, fish, mineral water. Major markets—Australia, U.S., U.K., Japan, New Zealand. Imports—$1.86 billion; mineral products, machinery and transport equipment. Major sources—Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, U.S. ($29.9 million).
Government external debt: (2007 provisional) $209 million.

GEOGRAPHY

Fiji is comprised of a group of volcanic islands in the South Pacific lying about 4,450 km. (2,775 mi.) southwest of Honolulu and 1,770 km. (1,100 mi.) north of New Zealand. Its 322 islands vary dramatically in size. The largest islands are Viti Levu, about the size of the "Big Island" of Hawaii, and where the capital and 70% of the population are located, and Vanua Levu. Just over 100 of the smaller islands are inhabited. The larger islands contain mountains as high as 1,200 meters (4,000 ft.) rising abruptly from the shore.

Heavy rains—up to 304 cm. (120 in.) annually—fall on the windward (southeastern) sides of the islands, covering these sections with dense tropical forest. Lowlands on the western portions of each of the main islands are sheltered by the moun-

tains and have a well-marked dry season favorable to crops such as sugarcane.

PEOPLE

Most of Fiji's population lives on Viti Levu's coasts, either in Suva or in smaller urban centers. The interior of Viti Levu is sparsely populated due to its rough terrain.

Indigenous Fijians are a mixture of Polynesian and Melanesian, resulting from the original migrations to the South Pacific many centuries ago. The Indo-Fijian population grew rapidly from the 60,000 indentured laborers brought from India between 1879 and 1916 to work in the sugarcane fields. Thousands more Indians migrated voluntarily in the 1920s and 1930s and formed the core of Fiji's business class. Native Fijians live throughout the country, while Indo-Fijians reside primarily near the urban centers and in the cane-producing areas of the two main islands. Nearly all of indigenous Fijians are Christian; more than three-quarters are Methodist. Approximately 80% of Indo-Fijians are Hindu, 15% are Muslim, and around 6% are Christian.

Some Indo-Fijians have been displaced by the expiration of land leases in cane-producing areas and have moved into urban centers in pursuit of jobs. Similarly, a number of indigenous Fijians have moved into urban areas, especially Suva, in search of a better life. Meanwhile, the Indo-Fijian population has declined due to emigration and a declining birth rate. Indo-Fijians currently constitute 37% of the total population, although they were the largest ethnic group from the 1940s until the late 1980s. Indo-Fijians continue to dominate the professions and commerce, while ethnic Fijians dominate government and the military.

HISTORY

Melanesian and Polynesian peoples settled the Fijian islands some 3,500 years ago. European traders and missionaries arrived in the first half of the 19th century, and the resulting disruption led to increasingly serious wars among the native Fijian confederacies. One Ratu (chief), Cakobau, gained limited control over the western islands by the 1850s, but the continuing unrest led him and a convention of chiefs to cede Fiji unconditionally to the British in 1874.

The pattern of colonialism in Fiji during the following century was similar to that in many other British possessions: the pacification of the countryside, the spread of plantation agriculture, and the introduction of Indian indentured labor. Many traditional institutions, including the system of communal land ownership, were maintained.

Fiji soldiers fought alongside the Allies in the Second World War, gaining a fine reputation in the tough Solomon Islands campaign. The United States and other Allied countries maintained military installations in Fiji during the war, but Fiji itself never came under attack.

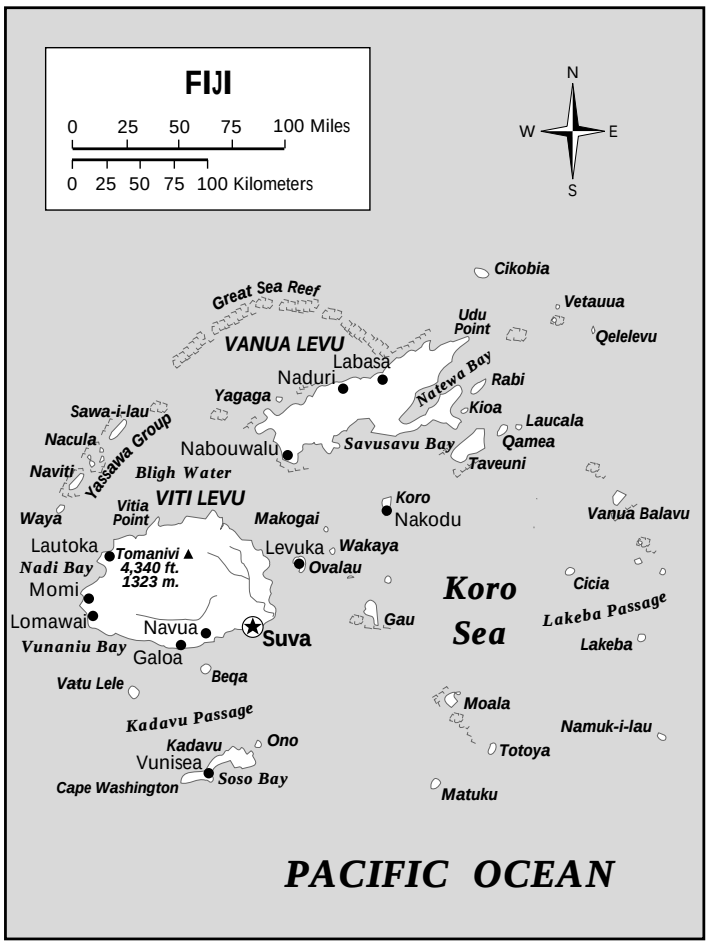
In April 1970, a constitutional conference in London agreed that Fiji should become a fully sovereign and independent nation within the Commonwealth. Fiji became independent on October 10, 1970. Post-independence politics came to be dominated by the Alliance Party of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. The Indian-led opposition won a majority of House seats in 1977, but failed to form a government out of concern that indigenous Fijians would not accept Indo-Fijian leadership. In April 1987, a coalition led by Dr. Timoci Bavadra, an ethnic Fijian supported by the Indo-Fijian community, won the general election and formed Fiji's first majority Indian government, with Dr. Bavadra serving as Prime Minister. Less than a month later, Dr. Bavadra was forcibly removed from power during a military coup led by Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka on May 14, 1987.

After a period of deadlocked negotiations, Rabuka staged a second coup on September 25, 1987. The military government revoked the constitution and declared Fiji a republic on October 10. This action, coupled with protests by the Government of India, led to Fiji's expulsion from the Commonwealth of Nations and official nonrecognition of the Rabuka regime from foreign governments, including Australia and New Zealand. On December 6, 1987, Rabuka resigned as head of state and Governor General Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was appointed the first President of the Fijian Republic. Mara was reappointed Prime Minister, and Rabuka became Minister of Home Affairs.

The new government drafted a new constitution that went into force in July 1990. Under its terms, majorities were reserved for ethnic Fijians in both houses of the legislature. Previously, in 1989, the government had released statistical information showing that for the first time since 1946, ethnic Fijians were a majority of the population. More than 12,000 Indo-Fijians and other minorities had left the country in the 2 years following the 1987 coups. After resigning from the military, Rabuka became prime minister in 1993 after elections under the new constitution.

Tensions simmered in 1995-96 over the renewal of land leases and political maneuvering surrounding the mandated 7-year review of the 1990 constitution. The Constitutional Review Commission produced a draft constitution that expanded the size of the legislature, lowered the proportion of seats reserved by ethnic group, and reserved the presidency for ethnic Fijians, but opened the position of prime minister to all races. Prime Minister Rabuka and President Mara supported the proposal, while the nationalist indigenous Fijian parties opposed it. The reformed constitution was approved in July 1997. Fiji was readmitted to the Commonwealth in October.

The first legislative elections held under the new constitution took place in May 1999. Rabuka's coalition was defeated by the Fiji Labor Party (FLP), which formed a coalition, led by Mahendra Chaudhry, with two small Fijian parties. Chaudhry



became Fiji's first Indo-Fijian prime minister. One year later, in May 2000, Chaudhry and most other members of parliament were taken hostage in the House of Representatives by gunmen led by ethnic Fijian nationalist George Speight. The standoff dragged on for 8 weeks—during which time Chaudhry was removed from office by the then-president due to his incapacitation. The Republic of Fiji military forces convinced President Mara to resign and brokered a negotiated end to the situation. Speight was later arrested when he violated the settlements' terms. In February 2002, Speight was convicted of treason and is currently serving a life sentence.

In July 2000, former banker Laisenia Qarase was named interim prime minister and head of the interim civilian administration by the military and Great Council of Chiefs. Ratu Josefa Iloilo was named President. The Supreme Court reaffirmed the validity of the constitution and ordered the Chaudhry government returned to power in March 2001, after which the President dissolved the Parliament elected in 2000 and appointed Qarase head of a caretaker government until elections could be held in August. Qarase's newly formed Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) party won the elections. In May 2006, the SDL was re-elected to a majority in the Parliament, Qarase continued as Prime Minister and formed a multi-party cabinet, which included nine members of the FLP.

In the lead-up to the May 2006 election and beginning again in September, tensions grew between Commander of the Fiji Military Forces Commodore Frank Bainimarama and the Qarase government. Bainimarama demanded the Qarase government not pursue certain legislation and policies. On December 5, 2006 Bainimarama removed elected Prime Minister Qarase from his position and dissolved Parliament in a military coup d'état. Bainimarama temporarily assumed the powers of the President, stating that the President was unable to discharge his responsibilities. Qarase was exiled to an outer island. On January 4, 2007, Bainimarama reinstated President Iloilo, who stated the military was justified in its behavior and promised them amnesty. The following day Iloilo appointed Bainimarama Prime Minister. Over the following weeks Bainimarama formed an "interim government" that included, among others, former Prime Minister Chaudhry and former Republic of Fiji Military Forces heads Epeli Ganilau and Epeli Nailatikau. On January 15, 2007, President Iloilo decreed amnesty to Bainimarama, the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF), and all those involved in the coup from December 5, 2006 to January 5, 2007, and he claimed to ratify all the actions of Bainimarama and the RFMF.

The coup was widely condemned by regional partners, including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the European Union. In April 2007, the interim government suspended the Great Council of Chiefs after the council declined to appoint the interim government's choice as vice president. In October 2007, the interim government launched a People's Charter initiative, ostensibly to remove communal or ethnic voting and improve governance arrangements. There has been little visible progress towards election. In October 2008, the High Court ruled that President Iloilo's January 2007 appointment of Bainimrama as prime minister, the granting of amnesty to coup perpetrators, and rule by decree, was not unconstitutional.

GOVERNMENT

Under the Fiji constitution, the president (head of state) is appointed for a 5-year term by the Great Council of Chiefs, a traditional ethnic Fijian leadership body. The president in

turn appoints the prime minister (head of government) and Cabinet from among the members of Parliament. Both houses of the legislature have some seats reserved by ethnicity. Other seats can be filled by persons of any ethnic group. The House of Representatives is elected; the Senate is appointed. Since the December 2006 coup, the self-appointed interim government has ruled by decree. Fiji maintains a judiciary consisting of a Supreme Court, a Court of Appeals, a High Court, and magistrate courts. All but one of the five judges on the Supreme Court also is a serving judge in Australia or New Zealand. Since the 2006 coup, a number of High Court and Court of Appeals justices have resigned, claiming interference in judicial affairs.

There are four administrative divisions—central, eastern, northern, and western—each under the charge of a divisional commissioner. Ethnic Fijians have their own administration in which councils preside over a hierarchy of provinces, districts, and villages. The 14 provincial councils deal with all matters affecting ethnic Fijians. There is also a Rotuma Island Council for the island of Rotuma. The Great Council of Chiefs (Bose Levu Vakaturaga) is made up of 55 hereditary chiefs, most of whom are nominated to the Council by their respective provincial councils. It is established under the Fijian Affairs Act and recognized by the constitution. The interim government promulgated regulations in February 2008 concerning membership in the Great Council of Chiefs that are being challenged in Fiji's courts.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

The US has not recognized the interim government formed after the illegal coup of 5 December 2006.

President:

Vice President:

Prime Minister: **Josaia Voreqe BAINIMARAMA, Commodore**

Min. for Agriculture, Fisheries, & Forests: **Jainend KUMAR**

Min. for Commerce, Industry, Investment, & Communications: **Taito WARADI**

Min. for Education: **Netani SUKANAIVALU**

Min. for Fijian Affairs, Heritage, Provincial Development, & Multiethnic Affairs: **Epeli GANILAU**

Min. for Finance, National Planning, Public Enterprise, & Sugar Industry: **Mahendra Pal CHAUDHRY**

Min. for Foreign Affairs & External Trade: **Epeli NAILATIKAU**

Min. for Health: **Jona SENILAGAKALI**

Min. for Home Affairs & Immigration: **Josaia Voreqe BAINIMARAMA, Commodore**

Min. for Information: **Josaia Voreqe BAINIMARAMA, Commodore**

Min. for Justice, Electoral Reform, & Anticorruption: **Aiyaz SAYED-KHAIYUM**

Min. for Labor, Industrial Relations, Productivity, Tourism, & Environment: **Bernadette ROUNDS-GANILAU**

Min. for Lands & Mineral Resources: **Tevita VUIBAU**

Min. for Local Govt., Urban Development, & Public Utilities: **Jone NAVAKAMOCEA**

Min. for Public Service & Public Sector Reform: **Poseci BUNE**

Min. for Transport, Works, & Energy: **Manu KOROVULAVULA**

Min. for Women, Social Welfare, & Housing: **Adi Laufitu MALANI**

Min. for Youth, Sports, & Employment Opportunities: **Lekh Ram VAYESHNOI**

Attorney General: **Aiyaz SAYED-KHAIYUM**

Governor, Reserve Bank: **Savenaca NARUBE**

Charge d'Affaires, Embassy, Washington: **Penijamini Ravulolo Tuikubulau LOMALOMA**

Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

Fiji maintains an embassy at 2000 M Street NW, Suite 710, Washington, DC 20036 (tel: 202-337-8320).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

For 17 years after independence, Fiji was a parliamentary democracy. During that time, political life was dominated by Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and the Alliance Party, which combined the traditional Fijian chiefly system with leading elements of the European, part-European, and Indian communities. The main parliamentary opposition, the National Federation Party, represented mainly rural Indo-Fijians. Intercommunal relations were managed without serious confrontation. However, when a cabinet with substantial ethnic Indian representation was installed after the April 1987 election, extremist elements played on ethnic Fijian fears of domination by the Indo-Fijian community resulting in a military coup d'etat.

This began what many now refer to as the "coup cycle." The most recent coup took place in December 2006, but has its roots in the previous 2000 coup and mutiny. Military commander Commodore Bainimarama helped resolve the 2000 crisis by imposing martial law. Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase led the interim government that followed. Subsequently, Qarase was elected in 2001 and 2006, but pursued some policies favoring the indigenous Fijian community.

One of the main issues of contention is land tenure. Indigenous Fijian communities very closely identify themselves with their land. In 1909 the land ownership pattern was frozen by the British and further sales prohibited. Today, 87% of the land is held by indigenous Fijians, under the collective ownership of the traditional Fijian clans (mataqali). That land cannot be sold and is held in trust by the Native Land Trust Board on behalf of the landowning units. Indo-Fijians produce more than 75% of the sugar crop but, in most cases, must lease the land they work from its ethnic Fijian owners instead of being able to buy it outright.

In 2005 and 2006, tensions rose between Bainimarama and Qarase over legislation proposed by the Qarase government concerning land ownership, traditional non-public ownership of the foreshore, and a reconciliation bill that opened the possibility to grant immunity to some coup participants from 2000. Bainimarama began to make demands and threats, and engaged in shows of military force to intimidate the Qarase

government into backing away from the controversial policies. When the Qarase government did not accede to all military demands, on December 5, 2006, Bainimarama assumed the powers of the presidency, dismissed Parliament, and declared a temporary military government.

Commodore Bainimarama's interim government has pursued what he terms a "clean-up campaign" to root out what he considers to be large-scale corruption in Fiji. A number of civil servants, including the Chief Justice, were summarily suspended or dismissed due to unidentified corruption concerns. Many individuals who spoke out against the coup were taken to military camps where they were questioned and sometimes abused.

ECONOMY

Fiji is one of the more developed of the Pacific island economies, although it remains a developing country with a large subsistence agriculture sector. For many years sugar and textile exports drove Fiji's economy. However, neither industry is competing effectively in globalized markets. Fiji's sugar industry suffers from quality concerns, poor administration, and the phasing out of a preferential price agreement with the European Union beginning in 2006/2007. The European Union has promised a large amount of financial aid to assist the ailing sugar industry, but, post-coup, has clarified that the aid will only be forthcoming if Fiji cleans up its human rights situation and moves quickly to democracy.

In 2005, the textile industry in Fiji markedly declined following the end of the quota system under the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) and the full integration of textiles into WTO General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs. The income from garments plummeted by 43% in 2005 with the end of the ATC quotas. Garments now account for approximately 12% of Fiji's exports and sugar approximately 24%. Other important export crops include coconuts and ginger, although production levels of both are declining. Fiji has extensive mahogany timber reserves, which are only now being exploited. Fishing is an important export and local food source. Gold is also an important, albeit troubled, export industry for Fiji.

The most important manufacturing activities are the processing of sugar and fish. Since 2000 the export of still mineral water, mainly to the United States, has expanded rapidly. By the end of 2006, water exports totaled around U.S. $52 million per year, an increase of 28% over 2005 and an increase of 775% since 2000.

During 2007, GDP growth declined by 6.6%, largely as a result of the December 2006 coup. GDP growth rate in 2006 was 3.6%.

In recent years, growth in Fiji has been largely driven by a strong tourism industry. Tourism expanded rapidly since the early 1980s and is the leading economic activity in the islands. However, the December 2006 coup led to an overall decline in tourist arrivals during 2007. About one-third of Fiji's visitors come from Australia, with large contingents also coming from New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. In 2007, more than 62,000, or around 12%, of the tourists were American, a number that had steadily increased since the start of regularly scheduled nonstop air service from Los Angeles. In 2006, Fiji's gross earnings from tourism were about $445.9 million, an amount double the revenue from its two largest goods exports (sugar and garments). Gross earnings from tourism continue to be Fiji's major source of foreign currency.

Fiji runs a persistently large trade deficit, F$1.6 billion (U.S. $1.03 billion) for 2007, although tourism revenues yield a services surplus. Australia accounts for between 25% and 35% of Fiji's foods trade, with New Zealand, Singapore, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan varying year-by-year between 5% and 20% each. Since the 1960s, Fiji has had a high rate of emigration, particularly of Indo-Fijians in search of better economic opportunities. This has been particularly true of persons with education and skills. The economic and political uncertainties following the coups have added to the outward flow by persons of all ethnic groups. In recent years, indigenous Fijians also have begun to emigrate in large numbers, often to seek employment as home health care workers. Remittances from overseas workers, often undocumented, are second only to tourism as a source of foreign exchange earnings.

Inflation increased dramatically in 2008, reaching an 18-year high of 9.5% in August 2008. This was due to higher oil prices and the rise in global food prices.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Fiji has traditionally had close relations with its major trading partners Australia and New Zealand. Currently, a number of countries including Australia, New Zealand, and the United States have placed targeted sanctions on the illegal interim government. Fiji has pursued closer relations with a number of Asian countries, including the People's Republic of China and India.

Since independence, Fiji has been a leader in the South Pacific region. Fiji hosts the secretariat of the 16-nation Pacific Islands Forum, as well as a number of other prestigious regional organizations. In 2002, Fiji hosted the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Summit with more than 80 countries represented. During the ACP Summit, the Nadi Declaration was adopted regarding economic cooperation with the European Union. In July 2003, Fiji hosted the South Pacific Games, a prestigious event that went far beyond athletics and symbolized the country's return to normalcy. In September 2005, Fiji hosted the 51st Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference. Fiji became the 127th member of the United Nations on October 13, 1970, and participates actively in the organization. Fiji's contributions to UN

peacekeeping are unique for a nation of its size. It maintains about 600 soldiers and police overseas in UN peacekeeping missions, primarily in Iraq, and with MFO Sinai in the Middle East. Fiji also has a number of private citizens working in Iraq and Kuwait, mostly in security services and over 1500 citizens serving in the British Army.

U.S.-FIJI RELATIONS

Relations between the elected government of Fiji and the United States were excellent. The United States has not recognized the interim government established by the illegal December 5, 2006 coup. Fiji maintains an embassy in Washington DC, as well as a Permanent Mission in New York at the United Nations. Although the United States provides relatively little direct bilateral development assistance, it contributes as a major member of a number of multilateral agencies such as the Asian Development Bank and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The U.S. Peace Corps, temporarily withdrawn from Fiji in 1998, resumed its program in Fiji in late 2003.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SUVA (E) 31 Loftus Street, Suva, 679-331-4466, Fax 679-330-5106, Workweek: 0800–1730 (Mon-Thu), 0800–1500 (Fri), Website: http://suva.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Margaret Kennett
DCM/CHG:	Jeffrey Robertson
ECO:	Mark Prokop
HRO:	Ila Jurisson
MGT:	Ila Jurisson
CON:	Debra J. Towry
DCM:	Richard Pruett
PAO:	Jeffrey Robertson
COM:	Quinn N. Plant
GSO:	Scott Gallaway
RSO:	Mathew McCormack
CLO:	Lynne T. Murphy
DAO:	Ltc. Patrick D. Reardon
EEO:	Heather Coble
FMO:	Ila Jurisson
ICASS Chair:	Col. Patrick D. Reardon
IMO:	Steven A. Baldwin
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ISSO:	Steven A. Baldwin
POL:	Mark S. Prokop
State ICASS:	Joseph P. Murphy

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 24, 2008

Country Description: Fiji is a South Pacific island nation consisting of over 350 islands and islets, of which approximately 100 are inhabited. On December 5, 2006, the Commander of Fiji's military force deposed the lawfully elected government of Fiji. There is currently an unelected interim government in place established by the military. The coup has had a negative effect on Fiji's economy. Tourist facilities are available. The capital is Suva. The Fiji Visitors Bureau, which has a wide range of information of interest to travelers, can be contacted via the Internet at http://www.bulafiji.com.

Entry Requirements: A passport valid for at least three months beyond the date of departure from Fiji, proof of sufficient funds and an onward/return ticket are required for entry to Fiji. A visa is not required for tourist stays up to four months. Yachts wishing to call at the Lau group of islands need special permission granted at the first port of entry into Fiji. For further information on entry/exit requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Republic of Fiji, 2233 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, No. 240, Washington, DC 20007; telephone (202) 337-8320, or the Fiji Mission to the United Nations in New York. This is particularly important for travelers planning to enter Fiji by sailing vessel.

Safety and Security: While a state of emergency is no longer in effect, some basic rights remain uncertain. The independence of Fiji's law enforcement and judicial systems appears compromised, putting into question protections ordinarily afforded by the rule of law. The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens to carefully consider the risks of travel to the Republic of Fiji at this time. While Fiji's country situation appears calm on the surface, political, economic, and security uncertainties continue. It is possible that the security situation, especially in Suva, could deteriorate rapidly. American citizens in Fiji should remain vigilant, particularly in public places and near military activities in the greater Suva area, and should avoid demonstrations and large crowds. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful could turn confrontational and escalate into violence unexpectedly.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Urban areas experience a higher incidence of crime than do other areas. Travelers should protect their valuables and be aware that theft from hotel rooms and purse snatching or pick-pocketing are the most common crimes against tourists. Offenses against persons do occur, and visitors should remain attentive to their personal safety. Tourists should be cautious about sharing too much personal information about their country of origin or lodging. Americans not familiar with their environs should ask hotel staff about areas to avoid at night. Visitors are advised not to walk alone after dark and not to walk alone in isolated areas at any time. Due to crime directed against taxi drivers, travelers should not allow taxis to pick up other passengers while en route and should not enter a taxi that already carries other passengers.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji at (679) 331-

4466 (ask for American Citizen Services). If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Fiji is 911.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health-care facilities in Fiji are adequate for routine medical problems. Emergency response is extremely limited, and the few ambulances available are poorly equipped and staffed. Two major hospitals, the Lautoka Hospital in the western city of Lautoka, and the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva, provide limited emergency and outpatient services. A private hospital in Suva provides Western-style medical care, and maintains the Fiji Recompression Chamber for the benefit of scuba divers. Other hospitals and clinics provide only a limited range of health services. Medical emergencies may be referred to Australia, New Zealand, or the United States. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States or elsewhere can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Fiji may impose HIV/AIDS travel restrictions on some visa applicants for work permits. Applicants must obtain a medical clearance, and the work permit committee will make the decision to grant the permit on a case-by-case basis. Before traveling, please inquire directly with the Embassy of the Republic of Fiji, 2233 Wisconsin Avenue NW, No. 240, Washington, DC 20007; telephone (202) 337-8320, or the Fiji Mission to the United Nations in New York. Fiji is currently experiencing an increased number of Dengue fever cases, with almost 1,000 cases confirmed (but no deaths) since September 1, 2008. Dengue fever is a common disease caused by a virus that humans get by being bitten by infected mosquitoes (usually Aedes aegypti). For more information about Dengue fever, see the CDC website below.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Fiji is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left in Fiji. While most roads in urban areas are paved, they are poorly maintained. Roads outside the city are usually not paved. In the city, driving after dark requires heightened attentiveness; outside the city, it is discouraged, except in emergency or exceptional circumstances. Stray animals, unwary pedestrians, and potholes make driving dangerous and particularly hazardous at night. Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.bulafiji.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government of Fiji's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Fiji's air carrier operations. For further information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Water Sports: Many visitors to Fiji participate in water sports, including scuba diving, snorkeling, surfing, and operating jet-skis. The Embassy strongly recommends that anyone interested in scuba diving and snorkeling while in Fiji check the references, licenses, and equipment of tour operators before agreeing to or paying for a tour. Visitors should rent equipment only from reputable operators and should insist on sufficient training before using the equipment. Rental diving equipment may not always be properly maintained or inspected, and some local dive masters may fail to consider the skill levels of individual tourists when organizing dives. Deaths and serious mishaps have occurred in the past as a result of lack of attention to basic safety measures during diving and snorkeling trips. Surfing on Fiji's numerous reef breaks can be highly dangerous. Safety precautions and emergency response capabilities may not be up to U.S. standards. Fiji has only one decompression chamber, which is located in Suva, far from most resorts.

Trekking: Terrain in the Fiji islands can be hazardous. Please consult with local guides and/or your place of lodging before undertaking a trek. Americans are also advised to hike with a companion and not to stray from marked or well-worn paths.

Customs: Fiji's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into, or export from, Fiji of items such as alcohol or tobacco products. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of

Fiji in Washington, DC at (202) 337-8320 for specific information regarding customs requirements. Importation of animals is strictly controlled. Pets may be imported only from designated, rabies-free locales. Those wishing to bring pets to Fiji should contact the Ministry of Agriculture in Suva as much as six months in advance for particulars.

Purchase of Real Estate: U.S. citizens should be aware of the risks inherent in purchasing real estate in Fiji, and should exercise caution before entering into any form of commitment to invest in property there. Investors must recognize the need to obtain authoritative information and to hire competent Fijian legal counsel when contemplating any real estate investment. Fijian law and practices regarding real estate differ substantially from those in the United States.

Notification of Arrest: U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times so, that if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. According to Fijian law, a criminal detainee may be held for a maximum of 48 hours before being charged. Police authorities normally advise the U.S. Embassy of the detention or arrest of a U.S. citizen within 24 hours of the incident. Nevertheless, U.S. citizens who are detained are encouraged to request that a consular officer at the U.S. Embassy in Suva be notified.

Natural Disasters: Fiji is located in an area of high seismic activity. Although the probability of a major earthquake occurring during a particular trip is remote, earthquakes can and do occur. The cyclone season is November through April. The Fiji Meteorological Service maintains a Tropical Cyclone Warning Center (TCWC) in Nadi serving the Southwest Pacific Region. General information regarding disaster preparedness is available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) home page at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Fijian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Fiji are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Fiji are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Suva through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Fiji. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 31 Loftus Street in Fiji's capital city of Suva. The telephone number is (679) 331-4466; the fax number is (679) 330-2267. Information may also be obtained by visiting the U.S. Embassy's home page at http://suva.usembassy.gov/information_for_travelers.html.



FINLAND

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Finland

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 338,144 sq. km. (130,558 sq. miles); about the size of New England, New Jersey, and New York combined.

Cities: Capital—Helsinki (pop. 564,521). Other cities—Espoo (235,000), Tampere (204,000), Vantaa (189,711), Turku (175,286).

Terrain: Low but hilly, more than 70% forested; 188,000 lakes and 179,584 islands, 98,050 of which are in the lakes.

Climate: Northern temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun—Finn(s). Adjective—Finnish.

Population: (April 2008) 5.3 million.

Population growth rate: (2006) 0.4%.

Ethnic groups: Finns, Swedes, Lapps, Sami, Roma, Tatars.

Religions: Lutheran 82.5%, Orthodox 1.1%.

Languages: Finnish 91.5%, Swedish 5.5% (both official); small Lapp- (0.03%) and Russian-speaking (0.8%) minorities.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—almost 100%. Literacy—almost 100%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—2.8/1,000 (2006). Life expectancy—males 75.6 yrs., females 82.8 yrs.

Work force: (2.65 million; of which 2.44 million are employed) Public services—32.8%; industry—19%; commerce—15.6%; finance, insurance, and business services—13.8%; agriculture and forestry—4.7%; transport and communications—7.4%; construction—6.7%.

Government

Type: Constitutional republic.

Constitution: July 17, 1919; March 2000.

Independence: December 6, 1917.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of State (cabinet). Legislative—unicameral parliament. Judicial—Supreme Court, regional appellate courts, local courts.

Political subdivisions: Six provinces, provincial self-rule for the Aland Islands.

Political parties: Social Democratic Party, Center Party, National Coalition (Conservative) Party, Leftist Alliance, Swedish People's Party, Green League, Christian Democrats, True Finns.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy (2007)

GDP: $245.3 billion (EUR 179 billion).

GDP growth rate: 4.4%.

Per capita income: $46,327 (EUR 33,803).

Inflation rate: 2.5% (2007 average); 3.9% (March 2008).

Natural resources: Forests, minerals (copper, zinc, iron), farmland.

Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting: (2.9% of GDP) Products—meat (pork and beef), grain (wheat, rye, barley, oats), dairy products, potatoes, rapeseed.

Industry: (30.1% of GDP) Types—metal (including electronics and electrical equipment) and engineering, forest products, chemicals, shipbuilding, foodstuffs, textiles.

Trade: Exports—$89.7 billion. Major markets—EU 57%, Russia 10.2%, U.S. 6.4%, China 3.3%. Imports—$81.5 billion. Major suppliers—EU 56%, Russia 14.1%, China 7.5%, U.S. 3.4%

HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

The origins of the Finnish people are still a matter of conjecture, although many scholars argue that their original home was in what is now west-central Siberia. The Finns arrived in their present territory thousands of

years ago, pushing the indigenous Lapps into the more remote northern regions. Finnish and Lappish—the language of Finland's small Lapp minority—both are Finno-Ugric languages and are in the Uralic rather than the Indo-European family.

Finland's nearly 700-year association with the Kingdom of Sweden began in 1154 with the introduction of Christianity by Sweden's King Eric. During the ensuing centuries, Finland played an important role in the political life of the Swedish-Finnish realm, and Finnish soldiers often predominated in Swedish armies. Finns also formed a significant proportion of the first "Swedish" settlers in 17th-century America.

Following Finland's incorporation into Sweden in the 12th century, Swedish became the dominant language, although Finnish recovered its predominance after a 19th-century resurgence of Finnish nationalism. Publication in 1835 of the Finnish national epic, The Kalevala—a collection of traditional myths and legends—first stirred the nationalism that later led to Finland's independence from Russia.

In 1809, Finland was conquered by the armies of Czar Alexander I and thereafter remained an autonomous grand duchy connected with the Russian Empire until the end of 1917. On December 6, 1917, shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Finland declared its independence. In 1918, the country experienced a brief but bitter civil war that colored domestic politics for many years. During World War II, Finland fought the Soviet Union twice—in the Winter War of 1939-40 and again in the Continuation War of 1941-44. This was followed by the Lapland War of 1944-45, when Finland fought against the Germans as they withdrew their forces from northern Finland.

During the Continuation War (1941-1944) Finland was a co-belligerent with Germany. However, Finnish Jews were not persecuted. Of the approximately 500 Jewish refugees who arrived in Finland, eight were handed over to the Germans, for which Finland submitted an official apology in 2000. Also during the war, approximately 2,600 Soviet prisoners of war were exchanged for 2,100 Finnish prisoners of war from Germany. In 2003, the Simon Wiesenthal Center submitted an official request for a full-scale investigation by the Finnish authorities of the prisoner exchange. It was established there were about 70 Jews among the extradited prisoners but none was extradited as a result of ethnic background or religious belief.

Treaties signed in 1947 and 1948 with the Soviet Union included obligations and restraints on Finland vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R. as well as territorial concessions by Finland; both have been abrogated by Finland since the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Finland has a mixed presidential/parliamentary system with executive powers divided between the president, who has primary responsibility for national security and foreign affairs, and the prime minister, who has primary responsibility for all other areas, including EU issues. Under the constitution that took effect in March 2000, the established practice for managing foreign policy is that the president keeps in close touch with the prime minister, the minister for foreign affairs, and other ministers responsible for foreign relations. Constitutional changes strengthened the prime minister—who must enjoy the confidence of the parliament (Eduskunta)—at the expense of the president. Finns enjoy individual and political freedoms, and suffrage is universal at 18. The country's population is relatively ethnically homogeneous. Immigration to Finland has significantly increased over the past decade, although the foreign-born population, estimated at only 2.2% of the total population, is still much lower than in any other EU country. Few tensions exist between the Finnish-speaking majority and the Swedish-speaking minority.

President and cabinet. Elected for a 6-year term, the president:

- Handles foreign policy, except for certain international agreements and decisions of peace or war, which must be submitted to parliament, and EU relations, which are handled by the prime minister;
- Is commander in chief of the armed forces and has wide decree and appointive powers;
- May initiate legislation, block legislation by pocket veto, and call extraordinary parliamentary sessions; and
- Appoints the prime minister and the rest of the cabinet (Council of State). The Council of State is made up of the prime minister and ministers for the various departments of the central government as well as an ex officio member, the Chancellor of Justice. Ministers are not obliged to be members of the Eduskunta and need not be formally identified with any political party.

The president may, upon proposal of the prime minister and after having heard the parliamentary groups, order parliament to be dissolved, and a new election held.

Parliament. Constitutionally, the 200-member, unicameral Eduskunta is the supreme authority in Finland. It may alter the constitution, bring about the resignation of the Council of State, and override presidential vetoes; its acts are not subject to judicial review. Legislation may be initiated by the president, the Council of State, or one of the Eduskunta members.

The Eduskunta is elected on the basis of proportional representation. All persons 18 or older, except military personnel on active duty and a few high judicial officials, are eligible for election. The regular parliamentary



term is 4 years; however, the president may dissolve the Eduskunta and order new elections at the request of the prime minister and after consulting the speaker of parliament.

Judicial system. The judicial system is divided between courts with regular civil and criminal jurisdiction and special courts with responsibility for litigation between the public and the administrative organs of the state. Finnish law is codified. Although there is no writ of habeas corpus or bail, the maximum period of pretrial detention has been reduced to 4 days. The Finnish court system consists of local courts, regional appellate courts, a Supreme Court, and a Supreme Administrative Court.

Administrative divisions. Finland consists of five provinces and the self-ruled province of the Aland Islands. Below the provincial level, the country is divided into cities, townships, and communes administered by municipal and communal councils elected by proportional representation once every 4 years. At the provincial level, the five mainland provinces are administered by provincial boards composed of civil servants, each headed by a governor. The boards are responsible to the Ministry of the Interior and play a supervisory and coordinating role within the provinces.

The island province of Aland is located near the 60th parallel between Sweden and Finland. It enjoys local autonomy and demilitarized status by virtue of an international convention of 1921, implemented most recently by the Act on Aland Self-Government of 1951. The islands are further distinguished by the fact that they are entirely Swedish-speaking. Government is vested in the provincial council, which consists of 30 delegates elected directly by Aland's citizens.

Military. Finland's defense forces consist of 35,000 persons in uniform (26,000 army; 5,000 navy; and 4,000 air force). The country's defense budget equals about 1.3% of GDP. There is universal male conscription under which all men serve from six to 12 months. As of 1995, women were permitted to serve as volunteers. A reserve force ensures that Finland can field 490,000 trained military personnel in case of need.

Political parties. Finland's proportional representation system encourages a multitude of political parties and has resulted in many coalition governments. Political activity by communists was legalized in 1944, and although four major parties have dominated the postwar political arena, none now has a majority position. In elections held in 2007, the Center Party (Keskusta), tradition-

ally representing rural interests, kept its position as the biggest party. The then-opposition Conservative Party, however, came away as the biggest winner, gaining 10 seats and becoming the second-largest political party in the country. The Center then formed a four-party governing coalition with the Conservatives and the Swedish People's Party and the Greens. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) suffered a defeat in these elections and fell to the third position among the big parties. Of the other parties, the True Finns, the Green League, and the Swedish People's Party were able to gain seats in parliament. The Conservative Party received the portfolios of foreign minister, finance minister, and defense minister, among others, and became an important player after a long interval.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Tarja HALONEN**
Prime Min.: **Matti Taneli VANHANEN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jyrki KATAINEN**
Min. of Agriculture & Forestry: **Sirkka-Liisa ANTTILA**
Min. of Communications: **Suvi LINDEN**
Min. of Culture & Sport :**Stefan WALLIN**
Min. of Defense: **Jyri HAKAMIES**
Min. of Economic Affairs: **Mauri PEKKARINEN**
Min. of Education: **Sari SARKOMAA**
Min. of Employment: **Tarja CRONBERG**
Min. of the Environment (Acting): **Kimmo TILLIKAINEN**
Min. of Finance: **Jyrki KATAINEN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Nordic Cooperation: **Cai-Goran Alexander STUBB**
Min. of Foreign Trade & Development: **Paavo VAYRYNEN**
Min. of Health & Social Services: **Paula RISIKKO**
Min. of Housing: **Jan VAPAAVUORI**
Min. of Immigration & European Affairs: **Astrid THORS**
Min. of Interior: **Anne HOLMLUND**
Min. of Justice: **Tuija BRAX**
Min. of Public Admin. & Local Govt.: **Mari KIVINIEMI**
Min. of Social Affairs & Health: **Liisa HYSSALA**
Min. of Transport: **Anu VEHVILAINEN**
Governor, Bank of Finland: **Erkki LIIKANEN**
Ambassador to the US: **Pekka LINTU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Kirsti Eeva Helena LINTONEN**

Finland's embassy in the United States is located at 3301 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel: 202-298-5800; fax: 202-298-6030.

ECONOMY

Finland has a highly industrialized, free-market economy with a per capita output equal to that of other western economies such as France, Germany, Sweden, or the U.K. The largest sector of the economy is services (64.6%), followed by manufacturing and refining (32.3%). Primary production is at 3.2%.

The Finnish economy has made enormous strides since the severe recession of the early 1990s. Finland successfully joined the euro zone and has outperformed euro-area partners in terms of economic growth and public finance. In the last few years, the Finnish economy has performed reasonably well, and Finland is now into its third year of upswing. The upswing is, however, set to level off in 2008 and GDP growth is estimated to slow from 4.4% in 2007 to 2.8% in 2008. Unemployment decreased significantly from 1994 to 6.9% in 2007 and is expected to drop to 6.2% in 2008. A relatively inflexible labor market and high employer-paid social security taxes hamper growth in employment. Labor bottlenecks are becoming more common in certain sectors, and this will increasingly restrict growth in output in the future. The main constraint to medium-term economic growth will be the drop in the population of working age once the post-war baby boomers reach retirement age.

Exports of goods and services contribute 32% of Finland's GDP. Metals and engineering (including electronics) and timber (including pulp and paper) are Finland's main industries. The United States is Finland's third most important trading partner outside of Europe. With a 3.4% share of imports in 2007, the United States was Finland's ninth-largest supplier. The total value of U.S. exports to Finland in 2007 was $2.7 billion. Major exports from the United States to Finland continue to be machinery, telecommunications equipment and parts, metalliferous ores, road vehicles and transport equipment, computers, peripherals and software, electronic components, chemicals, medical equipment, and some agricultural products. The primary competition for American companies comes from Russia, Germany, Sweden, and China. The main export items from Finland to the United States are electronics, machinery, ships and boats, paper and paperboard, refined petroleum products, telecommunications equipment and parts. In 2007, the United States was Finland's fourth-largest customer after Germany (10.9%), Sweden (10.7%), and Russia (10.2%), with an export share of 6.4%, or $5.7 billion. However, trade is only part of the totality: the 10 biggest Finnish companies in the United States have a combined turnover that is three times the value of Finland's total exports to the United States. About 2.3% of the Finnish GDP comes from exports to the United States.

Except for timber and several minerals, Finland depends on imported raw materials, energy, and some components for its manufactured products. Farms tend to be small, but farmers own sizable timber stands that are harvested for supplementary income in winter. The country's main agricultural products are dairy, meat, and grains. Finland's EU accession has accelerated the process of restructuring and downsizing of this sector.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Finland's basic foreign policy goal from the end of the Continuation War with the U.S.S.R. in 1944 until 1991 was to avoid great-power conflicts and to build mutual confidence with the Soviet Union. Although the country was culturally, socially, and politically Western, Finns realized they must live in peace with the U.S.S.R.

and take no action that might be interpreted as a security threat. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 opened up dramatic new possibilities for Finland and has resulted in the Finns actively seeking greater participation in Western political and economic structures. Finland joined the European Union in 1995.

Relations With the Soviet Union and With Russia

The principal architect of the post-1944 foreign policy of neutrality was J.K. Paasikivi, who was President from 1946 to 1956. Urho Kekkonen, President from 1956 until 1981, further developed this policy, stressing that Finland should be an active rather than a passive neutral. This policy is now popularly known as the "Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line."

Finland and the U.S.S.R. signed a peace treaty at Paris in February 1947 limiting the size of Finland's defense forces and providing for the cession to the Soviet Union of the Petsamo area on the Arctic coast, the Karelian Isthmus in southeastern Finland, and other territory along the former eastern border. Another provision, terminated in 1956, leased the Porkkala area near Helsinki to the U.S.S.R. for use as a naval base and gave free access to this area across Finnish territory.

The 1947 treaty also called for Finland to pay to the Soviet Union reparations of 300 million gold dollars (amounting to an estimated $570 million in 1952, the year the payments ended). Although an ally of the Soviet Union in World War II, the United States was not a signatory to this treaty because it had not been at war with Finland.

In April 1948, Finland signed an Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union. Under this mutual assistance pact, Finland was obligated—with the aid of the Soviet Union, if necessary—to resist armed attacks by Germany or its allies against Finland or against the U.S.S.R. through Finland. At the same time, the agreement recognized Finland's desire to remain outside great-power conflicts. This agreement was renewed for 20 years in 1955, in 1970, and again in 1983 to the year 2003, although the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the agreement's abrogation.

The Finns responded cautiously in 1990-91 to the decline of Soviet power and the U.S.S.R.'s subsequent dissolution. They unilaterally abrogated restrictions imposed by the 1947 and 1948 treaties, joined in voicing Nordic concern over the coup against Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, and gave increasing unofficial encouragement to Baltic independence.

At the same time, by replacing the Soviet-Finnish mutual assistance pact with treaties on general cooperation and trade, Finns put themselves on an equal footing while retaining a friendly bilateral relationship. Finland now is boosting cross-border commercial ties and touting its potential as a commercial gateway to Russia. It has reassured Russia that it will not raise claims for Finnish territory seized by the U.S.S.R. and continues to reaffirm the importance of good bilateral relations.

Multilateral Relations

Finnish foreign policy emphasizes its participation in multilateral organizations. Finland joined the United Nations in 1955 and the EU in 1995. As noted, the country also is a member of the North —Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace as well as a member in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. As a NATO partner, Finland had 100 troops in Afghanistan as of May 2008.

Finland is well represented in the UN civil service in proportion to its population and belongs to several of its specialized and related agencies. Finnish troops have participated in UN peacekeeping activities since 1956, and the Finns continue to be one of the largest per capita contributors of peacekeepers in the world. Finland is an active participant in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and in early 1995 assumed the co-chairmanship of the OSCE's Minsk Group on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Finland chairs the OSCE in 2008 and is part of the Chairmanship Troika in 2007 and 2009.

Cooperation with the other Scandinavian countries also is important to Finland, and it has been a member of the Nordic Council since 1955. Under the council's auspices, the Nordic countries have created a common labor market and have abolished immigration controls among themselves. The council also serves to coordinate social and cultural policies of the participating countries and has promoted increased cooperation in many fields.

In addition to the organizations already mentioned, Finland became a member of the following organizations: Bank for International Settlements, 1930; International Monetary Fund, 1948; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1948; General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade: (GATT), 1950; International Finance Corporation, 1956; International Development Association, 1960; European Free Trade Association, 1961; Asian Development Bank, 1966; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1969; Inter-American Development Bank, 1977; African Development Bank, 1982; Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, 1988; the Council of Europe, 1989; European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in Central and Eastern Europe, 1991; World Trade Organization, 1995; and INTELSAT, 1999. Finland entered Stage Three of EMU (the European Monetary Union) in 1999. All the Nordic countries, including Finland, joined the Schengen area in March 2001.

U.S.-FINLAND RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Finland are warm. Some 200,000 U.S. citizens visit Finland annually, and about 5,000 U.S. citizens are res-

ident there. The United States has an educational exchange program in Finland which is comparatively large for a west European country of Finland's size. It is financed in part from a trust fund established in 1976 from Finland's final repayment of a U.S. loan made in the aftermath of World War I. Finland is bordered on the east by Russia and, as one of the former Soviet Union's neighbors, has been of particular interest and importance to the United States both during the Cold War and in its aftermath. Before the U.S.S.R. dissolved in 1991, longstanding U.S. policy was to support Finnish neutrality while maintaining and reinforcing Finland's historic, cultural, and economic ties with the West. The United States has welcomed Finland's increased participation since 1991 in Western economic and political structures. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Finland has moved steadily toward integration into Western institutions and abandoned its formal policy of neutrality, which has been recast as a policy of military nonalliance coupled with the maintenance of a credible, independent defense. Finland's 1994 decision to buy 64 F-18 fighter planes from the United States signaled the abandonment of the country's policy of balanced arms purchases from East and West. The final aircraft rolled off the assembly line in August 2000.

In 1994, Finland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace; the country also is an observer in the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Finland became a full member of the EU in January 1995, at the same time acquiring observer status in the Western European Union. Finland welcomes foreign investment. Areas of particular interest for U.S. investors are specialized high-tech companies and investments that take advantage of Finland's position as a gateway to Russia and the Baltic countries.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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LAB:	Lisa Conesa
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 23, 2008

Country Description: Finland is a highly developed democracy with a modern economy. It is a member of the European Union. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: Finland is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter FInland for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. Travelers can contact the Embassy of Finland at 3301 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel.: (202) 298-5800, or the Finnish Consulates General in Los Angeles or New York. Additional information is available via the Internet at http://www.finland.org. The U.S. Embassy in Helsinki is not able to assist private U.S. citizens in obtaining any necessary visas for neighboring countries, including Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

Safety and Security: Finland remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Finland's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Elements of organized crime groups operating in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are present in Finland, but these do not represent a specific danger to U.S. citizen residents or tourists. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found.

Up to date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the crime rate in Finland is low compared to the U.S. and most European countries, it has increased in recent years. However, Finland remains a relatively safe environment. Americans visiting Finland are seldom victims of crime, but visitors should not be complacent regarding personal safety or the protection of valuables. The same precautions employed in the U.S. should be followed in Finland. Finnish police services are excellent, however, some police officers speak little English. Due to the low crime rate, Finland has one of the lowest numbers of police of any European nation. Outside of key sites in major urban cen-

ters, they rarely project a visible presence; consequently, response times to crisis situations may be unpredictable. The telephone number for police and other emergency services throughout Finland is 112. All forms of public transportation are considered safe. Street crimes, such as muggings and pick-pocketing, remain relatively uncommon, but do occur.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Finland has a program to provide financial compensation to victims who suffer serious criminal injuries. According to existing regulations, the victim must report the incident to the police and file an application for compensation within 10 years of the date of the crime. Finnish police routinely inform victims of serious crime of their right to seek compensation.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: In Finland, medical facilities and their staff are as a rule excellent and are widely available for emergency services. English is commonly spoken by Finnish medical personnel. Helsinki is a frequent medical evacuation point for emergency cases from the countries of the former Soviet Union. The public hospital system and many private hospitals honor foreign credit cards. Most pharmacies ("apteekki" in Finnish) are open during normal shopping hours and major cities have at least one 24-hour service pharmacy.

If you are a tourist or temporary visitor to Finland and you require immediate emergency medical assistance, you may visit a local medical center or clinic, called "ensiapuasema" (first-aid station) in Finnish. Usually these stations are located at hospitals and provide a full range of services.

The emergency telephone number, 112, can be used throughout Finland to contact emergency medical services. For more detailed information on medicines and medical issues, please visit the website of the Finnish Embassy in Washington, DC at www.finland.org.

Travelers with special medical needs should consult with their personal physicians and take appropriate precautions, including bringing adequate supplies of necessary medication. Medicines may be brought into the country as long as they are intended for the traveler's personal use. Medications categorized as narcotics may only be brought into the country to cover the traveler's personal use for a maximum of 14 days and must be accompanied by a medical certificate stating why the traveler needs them. There are special requirements concerning the quantity of doses that can be brought into the country. For more detailed information, please contact the Finnish Embassy in Washington, DC at http://www.finland.org.

In addition, stringent Finnish customs regulations prohibit travelers from receiving drugs from abroad after having arrived in the country. Travelers may also find local physicians reluctant to prescribe equivalent quantities of dosages.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Finland is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Finnish roads are comparable to those in the U.S., though secondary roads may be less heavily traveled due to Finland's sparse population outside the major urban areas. These secondary routes often narrow to two lanes with a wider shoulder. Slower vehicles are expected to move onto the shoulder to allow faster moving vehicles to pass.

Finland has an extensive network of highways throughout the country, as well as excellent public transportation services. A valid U.S. driver's license may be used while visiting Finland, but drivers must be at least 18 years of age. Driving in Finland is on the right. Traffic approaching from the right usually has priority, even if entering a primary roadway from a secondary one.

Road signs use standard international symbols and Finnish text. Many urban streets have traffic lanes reserved for public transportation only. Unless otherwise noted on traffic signs, the speed limit is 50 km/h in urban areas, 80 km/h on open roads, and 120 km/h on expressways during summer (reduced to 100 km/h during winter). Vehicles must use headlights at all times. Use of seatbelts is mandatory for drivers and all passengers. Minor children must be seated in approved child or booster seats. The emergency telephone number for

police/fire/ambulance in Finland is 112. Public transport in Finland is of good quality and is the recommended method of travel. Passenger trains, intercity buses, and air flights provide regular service over longer distances. Public transportation in urban centers includes buses, subways, trams, suburban trains, and taxis. Taxis are more expensive than in major U.S. cities. Most local residents use public transport in Helsinki as parking can be hard to find and expensive. The bus, train, and subway systems are relatively safe.

Travelers should be aware that drunk-driving laws are strict, and acceptable blood alcohol levels are much lower in Finland than in the U.S. Police strictly enforce all traffic laws and institute random roadside Breathalyzer tests. Those drivers who register a.05 or above alcohol content are subject to immediate arrest. Drivers should be aware that regulations and traffic signs differ significantly from those in the U.S. Visitors should be familiar with both prior to operating a vehicle in Finland. Driving in Finland during the winter months can be hazardous. Daylight hours are very short and one should be comfortable with driving in darkness. Icy road conditions are common. If driving in Finland, the vehicle must be winterized with studded snow tires, and engine heaters are strongly recommended. When driving at night, drivers must be alert to moose wandering onto major roadways. There have been incidents of moose being struck by vehicles, causing severe damage to the vehicle and injury, sometimes fatal, to the occupants. For real-time updates on road conditions throughout Finland, see the Finnish Road Administration's travel and traffic information web site at http://www.finnra.fi. Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.mek.fi.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Finland's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Finland's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Commercial and financial transactions in Finland are increasingly automated and on-line. Cash is almost always acceptable (the currency is the euro) but most major credit cards are widely recognized. ATM machines are very common and many U.S.-issued bankcards are compatible with them. Checks drawn on a U.S. bank are of little use in Finland.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Finland's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Finland are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Finland are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Finland. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Itainen Puistotie 14B. The telephone number for the American Citizen Services unit is 358-9-616-25-701, 0830 to 1700 Monday to Friday (after hours, 358-9-616-25-0); the fax number is 358-9-616-25-800; e-mail: HelsinkiACS@state.gov. The address of the Embassy's Internet home page is http://helsinki.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Important Note: Finnish law prohibits foreigners from adopting Finnish children. Thus, the information in this flyer relates more generally to the Finnish adoption process and is unlikely to be applicable to U.S. citizen prospective adoptive parents.

Patterns of Immigration: Because of the restrictions mentioned above, the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki has issued no immigrant visas to Finnish orphans in recent years.

Adoption Authority: Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA). This agency may be reached via the Internet at www.stm.fi.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: A prospective adoptive parent must be at least 25 years old and a permanent resident of Finland in order to adopt a Finnish

child. The prospective adoptive parent is not permitted to take the child out of the country to live. The prospective parent(s) can be married, single, divorced or widowed, but couples in common-law marriages are not eligible to adopt.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be permanent residents of Finland.

Time Frame: The general time frame for an adoption in Finland may vary depending on the circumstances of the case. Persons considering an adoption in Finland should check with the Ministry of Social Affairs at www.stm.fi for an assessment of how long the case is likely to take.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Because of the strict prohibitions against intercountry adoptions, there are no adoption agencies or attorneys in Finland handling intercountry adoptions.

Adoption Fees, Procedures and Documentary Requirements: The best source of this information is the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs, which may be reached most easily via the Internet at www.stm.fi.

Embassy of Finland
3301 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: 202-298-5800.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy:

Itainen Puistotie 14 B

00140 Helsinki, Finland

Phone: 358-9-6162 5730.

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Finland may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki at HelsinkiIV@state.gov. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



FRANCE

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
French Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 551,670 sq. km. (220,668 sq. mi.); largest west European country, about four-fifths the size of Texas.
Cities: Capital—Paris. Major cities—Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Strasbourg, Nice, Rennes, Lille, Bordeaux.
Terrain: Varied.
Climate: Temperate.

People

Nationality: Adjective—French.
Population: (July 2008 est.) 64,057,790 (including overseas territories); 60,876,136 (metropolitan).
Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.1%.
Ethnic groups: Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Sub-Saharan African, Indochinese, and Basque minorities.
Religions: Roman Catholic 85% (est.), Muslim 10% (est.), Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%.
Languages: French.
Education: Years compulsory—10. Literacy—99%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2008)—3.36/1,000.
Work force: (2007, third quarter) 27.929 million: Services—74.7%; industry and commerce—22.0%; agriculture—3.2%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: September 28, 1958.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state); prime minister (head of government). Legislative—bicameral Parliament (577-member National Assembly, 319-member Senate). Judicial—Court of Cassation (civil and criminal law), Council of State (administrative court), Constitutional Council (constitutional law).
Political subdivisions: 22 administrative regions containing 96 departments (metropolitan France). Thirteen territories outside metropolitan France: four overseas departments which are also regions (French abbreviation is DOM-ROM)—Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana, and Reunion; six overseas collectivities ("Collectivités d'Outre-mer" or COM)—French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna Islands, Mayotte, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthelemy Islands; one overseas country of France ("Pays d'Outre-mer" or POM)—New Caledonia; and the French Southern and Antarctic Territories and the atoll of Clipperton.
Political parties: Union for a Popular Movement (UMP—a synthesis of center-right Gaullist/nationalist and free-market parties); Socialist Party; New Center (former UDF centrists now affiliated with the UMP); Democratic Movement (former UDF centrists loyal to MoDem President Francois Bayrou); Communist Party; extreme right National Front; Greens; various minor parties.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $2.593 trillion.
Avg. annual growth rate: (2007) 2.1%, compared with 2.4% in 2006.
Per capita GDP at PPP: (2007) $33,200.
Agriculture: Products—grains (wheat, barley, corn); wines and spirits; dairy products; sugar beets; oilseeds; meat and poultry; fruits and vegetables.
Industry: Types—aircraft, electronics, transportation, textiles, clothing, food processing, chemicals, machinery, steel.
Trade: (est.) Exports (2007)—$550 billion (f.o.b.): automobiles, aircraft and aircraft components, pharmaceuticals, automobile equipment, pharmaceuticals, automobile equipment, iron and steel products, refined petroleum products, cosmetics, organic chemicals, electronic components, wine and champagne. Imports (2007)—$604 billion (f.o.b.): oil and natural gas, automobiles, aircraft and aircraft components, refined petroleum products, automobile equipment, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel products, and computers/

computer-related products. Major trading partners—EU and U.S.
Exchange rate: U.S. $1=euro 0.7297 in 2007.

PEOPLE

Since prehistoric times, France has been a crossroads of trade, travel, and invasion. Three basic European ethnic stocks—Celtic, Latin, and Teutonic (Frankish)—have blended over the centuries to make up its present population. France's birth rate was among the highest in Europe from 1945 until the late 1960s. Since then, its birth rate has fallen but remains higher than that of most other west European countries.

Traditionally, France has had a high level of immigration. More than 1 million Muslims immigrated in the 1960s and early 1970s from North Africa, especially Algeria. About 85% of the population is Roman Catholic, 10% Muslim, less than 2% Protestant, and about 1% Jewish. In 2004, there were over 6 million Muslims, largely of North African descent, living in France. France is home to both the largest Muslim and Jewish populations in Europe.

Education is free, beginning at age 2, and mandatory between ages 6 and 16. The public education system is highly centralized. Private education is primarily Roman Catholic. Higher education in France began with the founding of the University of Paris in 1150. It now consists of 91 public universities and 175 professional schools, including the post-graduate Grandes Ecoles. Private, college-level institutions focusing on business and management with curriculums structured on the American system of credits and semesters have been growing in recent years.

The French language derives from the vernacular Latin spoken by the Romans in Gaul, although it includes many Celtic and Germanic words. Historically, French has been used as the international language of diplomacy and commerce. Today it remains one of six official languages at the United Nations and has been a unifying factor in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean.

HISTORY

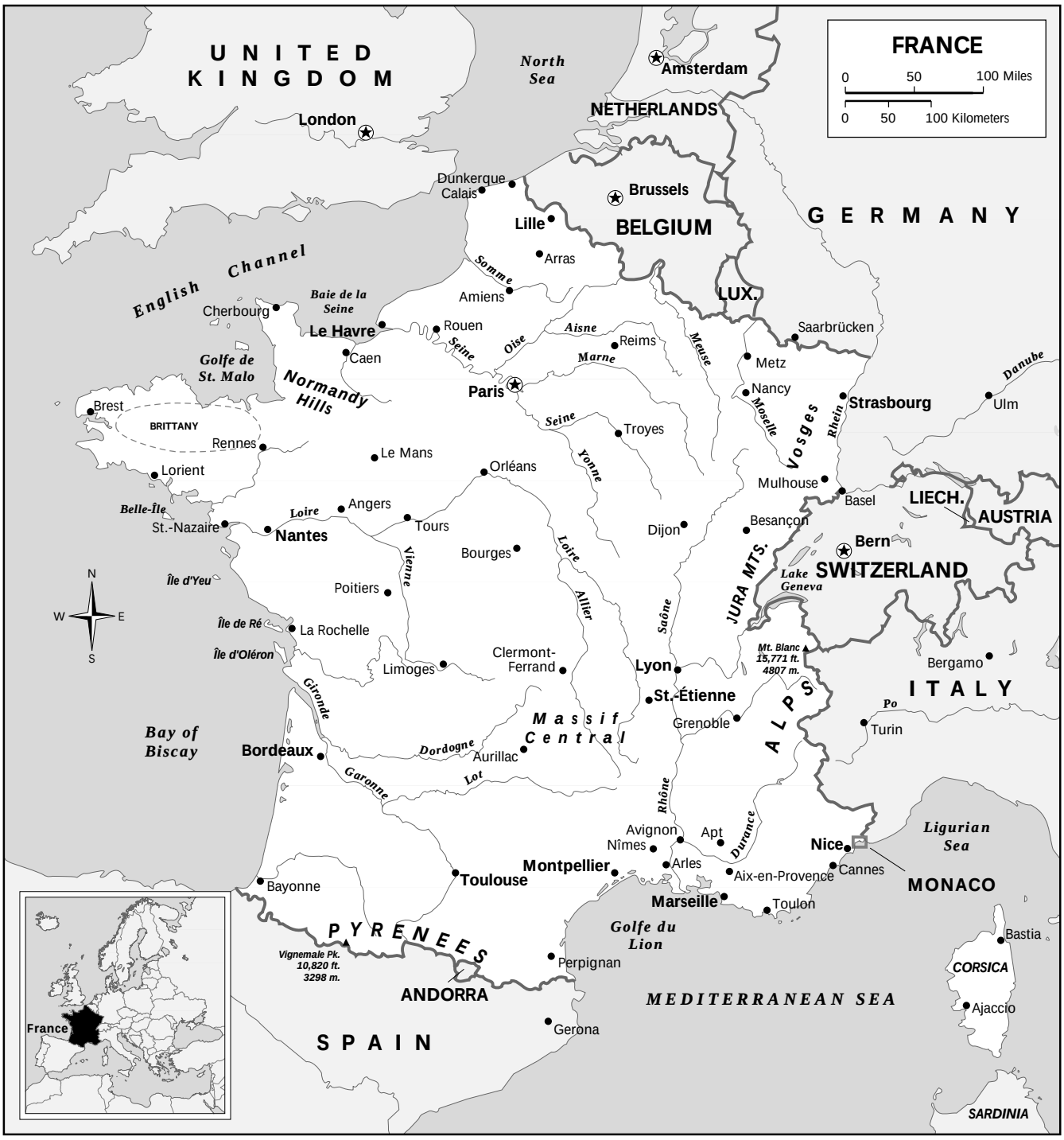
France was one of the earliest countries to progress from feudalism to the nation-state. Its monarchs surrounded themselves with capable ministers, and French armies were among the most innovative, disciplined, and professional of their day. During the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), France was the dominant power in Europe. But overly ambitious projects and military campaigns of Louis and his successors led to chronic financial problems in the 18th Century. Deteriorating economic conditions and popular resentment against the complicated system of privileges granted the nobility and clerics were among the principal causes of the French Revolution (1789-94). Although the revolutionaries advocated republican and egalitarian principles of government, France reverted to forms of absolute rule or constitutional monarchy four times—the Empire of Napoleon, the Restoration of Louis XVIII, the reign of Louis-Philippe, and the Second Empire of Napoleon III. After the Franco-Prussian War (1870), the Third Republic was established and lasted until the military defeat of 1940.

World War I (1914-18) brought great losses of troops and materiel. In the 1920s, France established an elaborate system of border defenses (the Maginot Line) and alliances to offset resurgent German strength. France was defeated early in World War II, however, and was occupied in June 1940. In July, the country was divided into two: one section being ruled directly by the Germans, and a second controlled by the French ("Vichy" France) and which the Germans did not occupy. German and Italian forces occupied all of France, including the "Vichy" zone, following the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942. The "Vichy" government largely acquiesced to German plans, namely in the plunder of French resources and the forceful deportations of tens of thousands of French Jews living in France to concentration camps across Europe, and was even more completely under German control following the German military occupation of November 1942. Economically, a full one-half of France's public sector revenue was appropriated by Germany. After 4 years of occupation and strife, Allied forces liberated France in 1944.

France emerged from World War II to face a series of new problems. After a short period of provisional government initially led by Gen. Charles de Gaulle, the Fourth Republic was set up by a new constitution and established as a parliamentary form of government controlled by a series of coalitions. French military involvement in both Vietnam and Algeria combined with the mixed nature of the coalitions and a consequent lack of agreement caused successive cabinet crises and changes of government.

Finally, on May 13, 1958, the government structure collapsed as a result of the tremendous opposing pressures generated by four years of war with Algeria. A threatened coup led the Parliament to call on General de Gaulle to head the government and prevent civil war. Marking the beginning of the Fifth Republic, he became prime minister in June 1958 and was elected president in December of that year. Also resulting from the Algerian conflict, were decades of increased immigration from the Maghreb states, which functioned to change the composition of French society.

Seven years later, for the first time in the 20th Century, the people of France went to the polls to elect a president by direct ballot. De Gaulle won re-election with a 55% share of the vote, defeating François Mitterrand. In April 1969, President de Gaulle's government conducted a national referendum on the creation of 21 regions with limited political powers. The government's proposals were defeated, and de Gaulle subsequently resigned. Succeeding him as president of France have been Gaullist Georges Pompidou (1969-



74), Independent Republican Valery Giscard d'Estaing (1974-81), Socialist François Mitterrand (1981-95), neo-Gaullist Jacques Chirac (1995-2007), and Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-present).

While France continues to revere its rich history and independence, French leaders are increasingly tying the future of France to the continued development of the European Union. France was integral in establishing the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and was among the EU's six founding states. During his tenure, President Mitterrand stressed the importance of European integration and advocated the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European economic and political union, which France's electorate narrowly approved in September 1992. The center of domestic attention soon shifted, however, to the economic reform and belt-tightening measures required for France to meet the criteria for Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) laid out by the Maastricht Treaty. France continues to play a leading role in the EU, particularly in

the development of European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). Although a 2005 French referendum was actually responsible for the defeat of the treaty establishing a constitution for Europe, France has since then backed the Lisbon Treaty—a main priority of Nicolas Sarkozy during France's EU presidency in the latter half of 2008. In July 2008, France was instrumental in launching the Union for the Mediterranean (UM), a continuation of the EU Barcelona Process. France and Egypt hold the first rotating co-presidency, which serves as a forum for political and economic cooperation between the EU and its Mediterranean neighbors.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S., France has played a central role in the war on terrorism. French forces participate in Operation Enduring Freedom and in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Afghanistan. France did not, however, join the coalition that liberated Iraq in 2003. In October and November 2005, three weeks of violent unrest in the largely immigrant suburbs focused French attention further on their minority communities. Also in 2005 French voters disapproved the EU constitution in a national referendum. In the spring of 2006, students protested widely over restrictive employment legislation.

In May 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy was elected as France's sixth president under the Fifth Republic, signaling French approval of widespread economic and social reforms, as well as closer cooperation with the United States. President Sarkozy indicated France will fully reintegrate into the NATO command structure, a positive step in transatlantic relations and NATO-ESDP cooperation.

GOVERNMENT

The constitution of the Fifth Republic was approved by public referendum on September 28, 1958. It greatly strengthened the powers of the executive in relation to those of Parliament. Under this constitution, presidents were elected directly for a 7-year term since 1958. Beginning in 2002, the presidential term of office was reduced to 5 years and a constitutional reform passed on July 21, 2008 limits presidents to two consecutive terms in office. The president names the prime minister, presides over the cabinet, commands the armed forces, and concludes treaties. Traditionally, presidents under the Fifth Republic have tended to leave day-to-day policy-making to the prime minister and government; the five-year term of office is expected to make presidents more accountable for the results of domestic policies. Sarkozy, however, has been a hands-on manager and policymaker.

The president can submit questions to a national referendum and can dissolve the National Assembly. In certain emergency situations, with the approval of parliament, the president may assume dictatorial powers and rule by decree. The main components of France's executive branch are the president, the prime minister and government, and the permanent bureaucracies of the many ministries. Led by a prime minister, who is the head of government, the cabinet is composed of a varying number of ministers, ministers-delegate, and secretaries of state. Parliament meets for one 9-month session each year. Under special circumstances the president can call an additional session.

Under the constitution, the legislative branch has few checks on executive power; nevertheless, the National Assembly can still cause a government to fall if an absolute majority of the total Assembly membership votes to censure. The Parliament is bicameral with a National Assembly and a Senate. The National Assembly is the principal legislative body. Its deputies are directly elected to 5-year terms, and all seats are voted on in each election. Senators are chosen by an electoral college and, under new rules passed in 2003 to shorten the term, serve for six years, with one-half of the Senate being renewed every three years. (As a transitional measure in 2004, 62 Senators were elected to 9-year terms, while 61 were elected to 6-year terms; subsequently, all terms will be six years.) The Senate's legislative powers are limited; the National Assembly has the last word in the event of a disagreement between the two houses. The government has a strong influence in shaping the agenda of Parliament, although the constitutional reform passed on July 21, 2008 grants new authority to the Parliament to set its own agenda. The government also can declare a bill to be a question of confidence, thereby linking its continued existence to the passage of the legislative text; unless a motion of censure is introduced and voted, the text is considered adopted without a vote. The constitutional reform passed on July 21, 2008 has limited the process to the vote of the national budget, the financing of the social security, and to one bill per session of the Parliament.

A distinctive feature of the French judicial system is that the Constitutional Council protects basic rights when they might be potentially violated by new laws and the Council of State protects basic rights when they might be violated by actions of the state. The Constitutional Council examines legislation and decides whether it conforms to the constitution. Unlike the U.S. Supreme Court, it considers only legislation that is referred to it by Parliament, the prime minister, or the president. Moreover, it considers legislation before it is promulgated. The Council of State has a separate function from the Constitutional Council and provides recourse to individual citizens who have claims against the administration. The Ordinary Courts—including specialized bodies such as the police court, the criminal court, the correctional tribunal, the commercial court, and the industrial court—settle disputes that arise between citizens, as well as disputes that arise between citizens and corporations. The Court of Appeals reviews cases judged by the Ordinary Courts.

Traditionally, decision-making in France has been highly centralized, with each of France's departments headed by a prefect appointed by the

central government. In 1982, the national government passed legislation to decentralize authority by giving a wide range of administrative and fiscal powers to local elected officials. In March 1986, regional councils were directly elected for the first time, and the process of decentralization continues, albeit at a slow pace.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Nicolas SARKOZY**
Prime Min.: **Francois FILLON**
Min. of State: **Jean-Louis BORLOO**
Min. of Agriculture & Fisheries: **Michel BARNIER**
Min. of Budget, Public Accounts, & the Civil Service: **Eric WOERTH**
Min. of Culture & Communication: **Christine ALBANEL**
Min. of Defense: **Herve MORIN**
Min. of Economy, Industry, & Employment: **Christine LAGARDE**
Min. of Environment, Energy, Sustainable Development, & Regional Development: **Jean-Louis BORLOO**
Min. of Foreign & European Affairs: **Bernard KOUCHNER**
Min. of Health, Youth, Sports, & Associations: **Roselyne BACHELOT-NARQUIN**
Min. of Higher Education & Research: **Valerie PECRESSE**
Min. of Housing & Urban Affairs: **Christine BOUTIN**
Min. of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, & Co-Development: **Brice HORTEFEUX**
Min. of the Interior, Overseas France, & Local Authorities: **Michele ALLIOT-MARIE**
Min. of Justice & Keeper of the Seals: **Rachida DATI**
Min. of Labor, Labor Relations, Family, & Solidarity: **Xavier BERTRAND**
Min. of National Education: **Xavier DARCOS**
Sec. of State for the Civil Service: **Andre SANTINI**
Sec. of State for Defense & Veterans Affairs: **Jean-Marie BOCKEL**
Sec. of State for Development of the Capital Region: **Christian BLANC**
Sec. of State for Employment: **Laurent WAUQUIEZ**
Sec. of State for the Environment: **Nathalie KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET**
Sec. of State for European Affairs: **Jean-Pierre JOUYET**
Sec. of State for Family Affairs: **Nadine MORANO**
Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs & Human Rights: **Rama YADE**
Sec. of State for Foreign Cooperation & Francophone Affairs: **Alain JOYANDET**
Sec. of State for Industry & Consumer Affairs: **Luc CHATEL**
Sec. of State for the Interior & Local Authorities: **Alain MARLEIX**
Sec. of State for Overseas Territories: **Yves JEGO**
Sec. of State for Planning, Public Policy Evaluation, & Digital Economy Development: **Eric BESSON**
Sec. of State for Regional Development: **Hubert FALCO**
Sec. of State for Relations With Parliament: **Roger KAROUTCHI**
Sec. of State for Solidarity: **Valerie LETARD**
Sec. of State for Trade: **Anne-Marie IDRAC**
Sec. of State for Trade, Artisan Trades, Small & Medium-Sized Businesses, Tourism, & Services: **Herve NOVELLI**
Sec. of State for Transport: **Dominique BUSSEREAU**
Sec. of State for Urban Affairs: **Fadela AMARA**
Sec. of State for Youth, Sports, & Associations: **Bernard LAPORTE**
High Commissioner Responsible for Fighting Poverty: **Martin HIRSCH**
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POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since his inauguration in May 2007 as France's sixth president under the Fifth Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy focused his first months in office on improving the performance of France's economy through liberalization of labor markets, higher education, and taxes. In the April 22, 2007 first round of presidential elections, Sarkozy, the leader of the center-right Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) party, placed first; Socialist candidate Segolene Royal placed second; centrist Francois Bayrou placed third; and extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen placed fourth out of a field of 12 candidates. Sarkozy prevailed in the May 6, 2007 second round, defeating Royal by a 53.06% to 46.94% margin. Royal's loss marked the third straight defeat for the Socialist candidate in presidential elections.

President Sarkozy assumed office on May 16, 2007, the last day of Jacques Chirac's official term. Sarkozy named Francois Fillon Prime Minister. Jean-Louis Borloo became the second-highest ranking figure in the government, presiding over an expanded Ministry of Environment, renamed the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Planning. Legislative elections held on June 10 and 17, 2007 gave the UMP a large parliamentary majority. Other key ministers include: Michele Alliot-Marie, Interior; Bernard Kouchner, Foreign Affairs; Christine Lagarde, Economy; Brice Hortefeux, Immigration; Rachida Dati, Justice; and Herve Morin, Defense.

In electing Nicolas Sarkozy, French voters endorsed the wide-ranging program of reforms—including market-oriented social and economic reforms—that were the focal point of Sarkozy's campaign, implicitly giving him the green light to try and implement these reforms quickly, and allowing a way forward for overcoming France's 2005 rejection of the EU constitutional treaty. By embracing a figure long tagged as "pro-American," French voters also expressed their desire to renew trust in the U.S.-France relationship. During the campaign Sarkozy often ended his stump speeches—evoking Martin Luther King—by calling for a "French dream" of social equality, social mobility, and equal opportunity; and his first speech as President-elect assured his "American friends" that they could rely on France's friendship.

During his first year and a half in office, Sarkozy eliminated income taxes on overtime hours, lengthened the contribution period for retirees to receive full pensions, and established a "minimum service" requirement on strike days, among other reforms. He

also completed a major revision of the French constitution, which made the president more accountable to Parliament and strengthened the power of the legislature. French and EU analysts stress that longer-term reform measures must focus on reducing the future burden of ballooning public pension and health care budgets, as well as reducing labor-related taxes.

ECONOMY

With a GDP of $2.5 trillion, France is the sixth-largest economy. It has substantial agricultural resources, a large industrial base, and a highly skilled work force. A dynamic services sector accounts for an increasingly large share of economic activity and is responsible for nearly all job creation in recent years. Real GDP increased 2.1% in 2007. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) projections, 2008 GDP growth will hit 1.8%.

Government economic policy aims to promote investment and domestic growth in a stable fiscal and monetary environment. Creating jobs and reducing the high unemployment rate has been a top priority. The unemployment rate in metropolitan France slipped to 7.5% in the first quarter of 2008 from 8.1% in the second quarter of 2007 when the government took office. France joined 10 other European Union countries in adopting the euro as its currency in January 1999. Since then, monetary policy has been set by the European Central Bank in Frankfurt. On January 1, 2002, France, along with the other countries of the euro zone, dropped its national currency in favor of euro bills and coins.

Despite significant reform and privatization over the past 15 years, the government continues to control a large share of economic activity: Government spending, at 52.4% of GDP in 2007, is among the highest in the G-7. The government continues to own shares in corporations in a range of sectors, including banking, energy production and distribution, automobiles, transportation, and telecommunications. In 2008, in a move to advance France's competitiveness, the National Assembly passed four bills introduced by the French government to modernize the economy and improve the labor market. In October 2007, under President Nicolas Sarkozy's impetus, overtime work beyond the 35-hour work week was exempted from income taxes and payroll taxes, a move to encourage work and to increase work time. Membership in France's labor unions accounts for approximately 5% of the private sector work force and is concentrated in the manufacturing, transportation, and heavy industry sectors. Most unions are affiliated with one of the competing national federations, the largest and most powerful of which are the communist-dominated General Labor Confederation (CGT), the Workers' Force (FO), and the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT).

France has been very successful in developing dynamic telecommunications, aerospace, and weapons sectors. With virtually no domestic oil production, France has relied heavily on the development of nuclear power, which now accounts for about 80% of the country's electricity production.

Trade

France is the second-largest trading nation in Western Europe (after Germany). France ran a record-setting $90 billion deficit for the 12 months ending in May 2008. Total trade in goods for 2007 amounted to $1.162 trillion, over 45% of GDP, 63% of which was with EU-26 countries. In 2007, U.S.-France trade in goods and services totaled $99 billion. U.S. industrial chemicals, aircraft and engines, electronic components, telecommunications, computer software, computers and peripherals, analytical and scientific instrumentation, medical instruments and supplies, broadcasting equipment, and programming and franchising are particularly attractive to French importers. Total French trade of goods and services was $1.421 trillion in 2007.

Principal French exports to the United States are aircraft and engines, beverages, electrical equipment, chemicals, cosmetics, and luxury products. France is the eighth-largest trading partner of the United States.

Agriculture

France is the European Union's leading agricultural exporter, accounting for about 17% of all agricultural land within the EU-27. Agriculture and related food industries accounted for 2.0% of France's GDP in 2006. French agricultural production grossed $86 billion, or about 23% of the agricultural production of the European Union in 2006. Northern France is characterized by large grain farms. Dairy, pork, poultry, and apple production is concentrated in the western region. Beef production is located in central France, while the production of corn, fruits, vegetables, and wine ranges from central to southern France. France is expanding its forestry and fishery industries. France remains extremely cautious about the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) plants at the domestic and EU levels. France is a proponent of the European preference principle and is attentive to protecting its interests in further agricultural trade liberalization at the EU and World Trade Organization (WTO) levels.

France is the world's second-largest agricultural producer, after the United States. The destination of 70% of its exports is other EU member states. Wine and beverages, wheat, meat, and dairy products are the principal exports. The United States, the third-largest exporter to France, faces stiff competition from domestic production, other EU member states, and third countries. U.S. agricultural exports to France, totaling $1.1 billion in 2007, consisted primarily of tree nuts, seafood, live animals, soybeans, planting seeds, grapefruit, forest products, and many value-added products, especially snack foods. French agricultural exports to the United States amounted to $2.3 billion in 2007 and consisted mainly of wine and spirits, snack food, and dairy products.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

France plays an influential global role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, NATO, the G-8, the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the WTO, la Francophonie, and other multilateral institutions. Among NATO members, France is second only to the United States in terms of troops deployed abroad. The French took over the rotating EU presidency for July-December 2008, with a focus on immigration, energy, the environment, and European defense during their term. However, the 2008 French Presidency was complicated by the June 2008 Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty, which meant to serve as an institutional solution to the functioning of an enlarged EU at 27 members. The other EU member states are continuing to ratify the Lisbon Treaty while searching for an acceptable solution for Ireland. A charter member of the United Nations, France holds one of the permanent seats in the Security Council and is a member of most of its specialized and related agencies. France is also America's oldest ally; French military intervention was instrumental in helping Britain's American colonies establish independence. Because many battles in which the United States was involved during World War I and World War II took place in France, more American soldiers have been killed on French soil than on that of any other foreign country.

France is a leader in Western Europe because of its size, location, and large economy, membership in European organizations, strong military posture, and energetic diplomacy. France generally has worked to strengthen the global economic and political influence of the EU and its role in common European defense. It views Franco-German cooperation and the development of a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) with other EU members, as the foundation of efforts to enhance European security.

France supports Quartet (U.S.-EU-Russia-UN) efforts to implement the Middle East roadmap, which envisions establishment of a Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. Recognizing the need for a comprehensive peace agreement, France supports the involvement of all Arab parties and Israel in a multilateral peace process.

Since 2003, France has supported four UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on Iraq, including UNSCR 1546, which laid out a timetable for Iraq's political transition and reaffirmed UNSC authorization for a Multinational Force in Iraq, at the invitation of the Iraqi government, to stabilize the country. France contributed to the $315 million EU contribution to Iraq reconstruction in 2003. After the Iraqi Interim Government took power, France agreed to substantial debt relief and offered police training to Iraqi security forces. Since 2006, France has actively and repeatedly publicly stressed the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran and worked with the U.S. and other members of the P5+1 group (China, Russia, the U.K., the U.S., and Germany) to demand that Iran end its enrichment-related and pre-processing activities.

France continues to play an important role in Africa, especially in its former colonies, through aid programs, commercial activities, military agreements, and cultural impact. The Sarkozy government announced a change in its sub-Saharan African policy shortly after it came to power, intending to modernize and rationalize relations in a future-oriented manner. The French military presence is likely to diminish, with an emphasis on cooperating with Africa's sub-regional organizations such as Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). France's military bases in Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, and Senegal, and its long-term military presence in Chad may therefore be reduced in size, consolidated, or eliminated in the years ahead. Nonetheless, France is likely to continue to play an important role in promoting stability in the region. For example, French support to the Government of Chad was crucial in 2008 to fending off a rebel attack, and in 2007, France played a leading role in the EU's formation of a peacekeeping mission in Chad and the Central African Republic designed to complement international efforts in Sudan and Darfur.

France has extensive political and commercial relations with Asian countries, including China, Japan, and Southeast Asia as well as an increasing presence in regional fora. France is seeking to broaden its commercial presence in China and will pose a competitive challenge to U.S. business, particularly in aerospace, high-tech, and luxury markets. In Southeast Asia, France was an architect of the 1991 Paris Accords, which ended the conflict in Cambodia.

SECURITY ISSUES

French military doctrine is based on the concepts of national independence, nuclear deterrence, and military sufficiency. France is a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and has worked actively with Allies to adapt NATO, internally and externally, to the post-Cold War environment. In 1966, the French withdrew from NATO's military bodies while remaining full participants in the alliance's political councils. In December 1995, France increased its participation in NATO's military wing, including the Military Committee. France will co-host with Germany the 2009 NATO Summit and may announce further rapprochement with NATO's military structures, consistent with President Sarkozy's stated goals.

France released a white paper on defense in June 2008 that assessed foreign and domestic defense and security issues. The white paper was intended to provide a comprehensive security strategy for the next 25 years, reflecting a changed 21st century security environment, and to

outline restructuring proposals to make the French military more flexible, technologically advanced, and better able to coordinate with allies such as the U.S. and multilateral organizations such as the EU, NATO, and the UN. Consistent with the white paper, France has undertaken a major restructuring to develop a professional military that will be smaller, more rapidly deployable, and better tailored for operations outside of mainland France. Key elements of the restructuring include reducing personnel, bases, and headquarters and rationalizing equipment and the armament industry. French active-duty military number about 350,000 (including Gendarmes), of which over 35,000 were deployed outside of French territory as of July 2008. France completed the move to all-professional armed forces when conscription ended on December 31, 2002.

France has actively and heavily participated in a variety of peacekeeping/coalition efforts in Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans, often taking the lead in these operations. France also remains a firm supporter of the OSCE and other efforts at cooperation.

France places a high priority on arms control and non-proliferation. After conducting a final series of six nuclear tests, the French signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996. France has implemented a moratorium on the production, export, and use of anti-personnel landmines and supports negotiations leading toward a universal ban. France is an active participant in the major supplier regimes designed to restrict transfer of technologies that could lead to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group (for chemical and biological weapons), the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the Missile Technology Control Regime. France participates actively in the Proliferation Security Initiative, and is engaged with the U.S., both bilaterally and at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to curb nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) proliferation. France has joined with the U.S., Germany, and the other three permanent members of the UN Security Council to offer a package of incentives and disincentives to Iran to halt its uranium enrichment activities. France, along with other EU member states, was instrumental in pressing for Europe's adoption of UNSCR 1803, calling for extra vigilance over Iranian banks. France has also signed and ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. France maintains a color-coded security system, similar to that of the U.S., consisting of yellow, orange, red, and scarlet threat levels.

U.S.-FRENCH RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and France are active and friendly. Mutual visits by high-level officials are conducted frequently. Bilateral contact at the cabinet level has traditionally been active. France and the United States share common values and have parallel policies on most political, economic, and security issues. Differences are discussed frankly and have not generally been allowed to impair the pattern of close cooperation that characterizes relations between the two countries.

France is one of NATO's top five troop contributors. The French support NATO modernization efforts and are leading contributors to the NATO Response Force (NRF). France is keen to build European defense capabilities, including through the development of EU battle-group sized force packages and joint European military production initiatives. President Sarkozy supports development of a European defense that complements and reinforces NATO, which remains at the core of transatlantic security. During his December 2007 visit to Kabul, the President underscored French commitment to complete NATO's mission in Afghanistan, where some 2,200 French troops serve. In June 2008 Paris hosted the successful Afghanistan Support Conference, where international donors pledged a total of $21 billion to help develop Afghan infrastructure and to combat drugs, violence, and poverty.

France is a close partner with the U.S. in the war on terror. It cooperates with the U.S. to monitor and disrupt terrorist groups and has processed numerous U.S. requests for information under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. French intelligence and security officials continue to actively investigate and prosecute cases of extremism. The French judiciary in December 2007 tried and convicted five French former Guantanamo detainees on terrorism charges. France is a strong partner in multiple non-proliferation fora and is a key participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative. As one of the P5+1 powers and as a leader of the EU, France is working to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

France opposed the use of force in Iraq in March 2003 and did not join the U.S.-led coalition that liberated the country from the dictatorial rule of Saddam Hussein. Despite differences over Iraq, the U.S. and France continue to cooperate closely on many issues, most notably the global war on terrorism, efforts to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and on regional problems, including in Africa, Lebanon, and Kosovo. On Iraq, the French agreed to generous debt relief for Iraq in Paris Club negotiations and have accepted the establishment of a NATO training mission there.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, France fully supports U.S. engagement in the peace process. France is working to contain the Hamas-led challenge to the Palestinian Authority. President Sarkozy has repeatedly emphasized his admiration of Israel and support for its security balanced with calls for Israel's full respect of commitments under the Middle East roadmap with respect to settlements and restrictions on Palestinian movement within the occupied territories. France hosted a donors conference for Palestinians in December 2007.

The U.S. and France have worked closely to support a sovereign and independent Lebanon, free of Syrian domination. The U.S. and France co-sponsored in September 2004 UNSCR 1559, which called for full withdrawal of Syrian forces, a free and fair electoral process, and disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. In the wake of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005, the U.S. and France reiterated calls for a full, immediate withdrawal of all Syrian troops and security services from Lebanon.

France also co-sponsored UNSCR 1701 and was one of the leading countries in Europe working to end hostilities between Israel and Hizballah in 2006 by committing 2,000 troops to UNIFIL-plus. Strong French backing led to adoption of UNSCR 1757 establishing a Special Tribunal for Lebanon to prosecute the perpetrators of the Hariri assassination and other killings of critics of Syria's interference in Lebanon. French efforts in Lebanon are focused on maintaining stability and promoting national reconciliation consistent with relevant UNSCRs. President Sarkozy's decision to pursue a rapprochement with Syria following the Doha accord to end fighting in Lebanon in 2008 is also reportedly contingent upon good faith Syrian efforts to normalize relations with Lebanon. France also participates in the U.S. Broader Middle East and North Africa initiative.

Trade and investment between the U.S. and France are strong. On average, over $1 billion in commercial transactions take place between France and the U.S. every day, with the U.S. being France's sixth-ranked supplier and its sixth-largest customer. France ranks as the United States' eighth trading partner for total goods (imports and exports). There are approximately 2,300 French subsidiaries in the U.S. that provide more than 485,200 jobs and that generate an estimated $196 billion in turnover. The U.S. is the top destination for French investments worldwide. Concurrently, the U.S. is the largest foreign investor in France, employing over 619,000 French citizens with aggregate investment estimated at $65.9 billion in 2006.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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BORDEAUX (C) 10, place de la Bourse, APO/FPO PSC 116, APP Bordeaux, APO AE 09777-5000, 33-(0)5-56-48-63-80, Fax 33-(0)5-56-51-61-97, Workweek: M-F 9-6, Website: http://www.ambusa.fr/bordeaux/default.htm.

PO: Ken Forder

LILLE (C) 107, rue Royale, APO/FPO PSC 116, APP Lille, APO AE 09777-5000, 33-(0)3-28-04-25-00, Fax 33-(0)3-20-74-88-23, Workweek: M-F 9-5, Website: http://paris.usembassy.gov/lille.

PO: Jeffrey Hawkins

LYON (C) 1, quai Jules Courmont, 69289 Lyon cedex 02, APO/FPO PSC 116 Box L, APO AE 09777, 33-(0)4-78-38-36-88, Fax 33-(0)4-72-41-71-81, Workweek: M-F 09h00—12h00 and 14h00—18h00, Website: http://paris.usembassy.gov/lyon.

PO: Harry Sullivan

RENNES (C) 30 quai Duguay-Trouin, 35000 Rennes, France, APO/FPO PSC 116, Rennes, APO AE 09777, 33(0)2-23-44-09-60, Fax +33.2.99.35.00.92, Workweek: Mon-Fri, 9 am-6pm, Website: http://paris.usembassy.gov/rennes.

PO: Virginia Murray

STRASBOURG (C) 14, avenue d'Alsace, 67082 Strasbourg, France, APO/FPO PSC 116, CG Strasbourg, APO AE 09777-5000, 33-(0)3-88-35-31-04, Fax 33(0)3-88-24-06-95, Workweek: M-F 9:00 to 13:00, 14:00 to 17:00, Website: france.usembassy.gov/strasbourg

CG: Frankie Reed

TOULOUSE (C) 25 allees Jean Jaures, 3100 Toulouse, APO/FPO PSC 116—APP Toulouse, APO AE 09777-5000, 33-(0)5-34-41-36-50, Fax 33-(0)5-34-41-16-19, Workweek: Mon—Fri 9a.m–5 p.m, Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/toulouse

PO: Jennifer Bachus Carleton

US UNESCO (PARIS) (M) 12 Avenue Raphael, Paris 75116, APO/FPO

PSC 116, USUNESCO, APO AE 09777, 9-011-33-1-45 24 74 56, Fax 9-011-33-1-45 24 74 58, Workweek: 0900-1800, Website: http://unesco.usmission.gov.

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AMB OMS:	Holly Hubler
HHS:	John Hoff
MGT:	Elise Battaglia
AMB:	Louise V. Oliver
DCM:	Steve Engelken
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GSO:	Charles Hamblett
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FMO:	Barry L. Haney
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LAB:	Sally Lovejoy
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USOECD (M) 12, ave Raphael Paris 75016 France, APO/FPO PSC 116 (USOECD), APO AE 09777, 33 1-45-24-74-77, Fax 33(0)1-45-24-74-80, Workweek: M-F; 9-6, Website: http://www.usoecd.org.

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RSO:	David Renauldi
AFSA:	Kenan Hunter
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EST:	Curtis Stone
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ISSO:	Walter Yates
LAB:	James McCracken
POL:	Charles Randolph Edu. & Environment Advisor
State ICASS:	Dorothy Imwold–Tmm Mgmt Off.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 22, 2008

Country Description: France is a developed and stable democracy with a modern economy. Monaco is a developed constitutional monarchy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: France is party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter France for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. A passport is required and should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. Anyone intending to stay more than 90 days must obtain the appropriate visa issued by one of the French Consulates in the U.S., prior to departure for France. This also applies to anyone considering marriage in France. For further information about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet.

A passport is required to enter Monaco. A visa is not required for tourist/business stays up to 90 days in Monaco.

For further information concerning entry requirements for France, travelers may contact the Embassy of France at 4101 Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007, tel. (202) 944-6000, email: info@ambafrance-us.org, or the French Consulates General in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, or San Francisco.

For further information on entry requirements to Monaco, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Principality of Monaco. 2314 Wyoming Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20008, Tel: 202-234-1530, email: embassy@monaco-usa.org, or the Consulate General of Monaco, 565 Fifth Avenue –23rd floor, New York, NY 10017, tel.: 212-286-0500, email: info@monaco-consulate.com. For more information, visit the Embassy of France web site at www.consulfrance-washington.org or the Embassy of the Principality of Monaco web site at http://www.monaco-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The Government of France maintains a threat rating system, known locally as "Vigipirate," similar to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Advisory System. Under this plan, in times of heightened security concerns, the government augments police with armed forces and increases visibility at airports, train and metro stations, and other high-profile locations such as schools, major tourist attractions, and government installations. Over the last few years, there have been numerous arrests of suspected Islamic militants involved in various terrorist plots. As with other countries in the Schengen area, France maintains open borders with its European neighbors, allowing the possibility of terrorist operatives entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

Political assassinations and bombings have occurred in France. The National Front for the Liberation of Corsica (FLNC), as part of its decades-long bombing campaign on the island of Corsica, continues to conduct limited operations in the south of France and on Corsica. In the 1990s there was a wave of bombings and attacks in Paris carried out by Algerian terrorists. Today, numerous radical Islamic groups claim sympathizers within France's large immigrant community, as evidenced by arrests over the last few years.

Although Americans have not been specifically targeted in terrorist attacks in France within the past few years, travelers should maintain vigilance. Immediately report unattended packages observed in public places or any other suspicious activities. French law enforcement authorities are proactive and will respond immediately. If there is a security incident or suspicious package, do not linger in the area to observe.

Although violent civil disorder is rare in France, in the past, student demonstrations, labor protests, and other types of demonstrations have developed into violent confrontations between demonstrators and police. This was the case in March/April 2006, when a series of large demonstrations took place in central Paris. Several weeks of unrest occurred in the suburbs of Paris, as well as in other French cities and towns, in November 2005. Neither of these

periods of disorder exhibited any anti-U.S. sentiment, but it is important to remember that even a passerby can be harmed should demonstrations devolve into violence. Americans are advised to avoid street demonstrations, particularly if riot police are on the scene.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While both France and Monaco have relatively low rates of violent crime, a limited number of neighborhoods in the larger French cities merit extra caution. Additionally, although the overall crime rate has fallen slightly in recent years, the violent crime rate has increased. Thieves commonly target vehicles with non-local license plates, and work in or near tourist attractions such as museums, monuments, restaurants, hotels, beaches, trains, train stations, airports, and subways. Americans in France and Monaco should be particularly alert to pickpockets in train stations and subways. Travelers should keep photocopies of travel documents and credit cards separate from the originals, along with key telephone numbers to contact banks for credit card replacement.

Although thieves may operate anywhere, the U.S. Embassy in Paris receives frequent reports of theft from several areas in particular.

Paris: The Paris Police Prefecture published a pamphlet entitled "Paris in Complete Safety," which provides practical advice and useful telephone numbers for visitors and can be accessed at http://www.prefecture-police-paris.interieur.gouv.fr. Thieves operate on the rail link (RER) from Charles de Gaulle Airport to downtown Paris, where they prey on jet-lagged, luggage-burdened tourists. In one common ruse, a thief distracts a tourist with a question about directions while an accomplice steals a momentarily unguarded backpack, briefcase, or purse. Thieves also time their thefts to coincide with train stops so they may quickly exit the car just before the automatic doors close. Travelers should consider taking an airport shuttle bus or taxi from the airport into the city.

Reports of stolen purses, briefcases, and carry-on bags at Charles de Gaulle Airport are not uncommon. Travelers should monitor their bags at all times and never leave them unattended. As thieves commonly target laptop bags, travelers should avoid carrying passports and other valuables in computer bags. Another common method involves picking up a traveler's shoulder bag that has been placed on the floor while the traveler is busy at the ticket counter. Also be aware that unattended bags are subject to destruction by airport security.

There are reports of robberies in which thieves on motorcycles reach into a moving car by opening the car door or accessing an open window or even breaking the window to steal purses and other bags visible inside. The same technique is used against pedestrians walking with purses/bags/cameras slung over their street-side shoulder. Those traveling by car should remember to keep the windows up and the doors locked and items that may be attractive to thieves out of sight. Pedestrians are encouraged to remain aware of their surroundings at all times, and to keep bags slung across the body, with the bag hanging away from the street.

Many thefts occur on the Number One Subway Line, which runs through the center of Paris by many major tourist attractions (including the Grand Arch at La Défense, the Arc de Triomphe, the Champs Elysées, Place de la Concorde, the Louvre, and the Bastille). Pickpockets are especially active on this metro line during the summer months and use a number of techniques. The most common, and unfortunately the most successful, is the simple "bump and snatch," where an individual bumps into the tourist while at the same time reaching into the pockets/purse/bag. Visitors should be particularly careful when metro doors are closing, as this is a favored moment for the less-sophisticated pickpockets to simply grab valuables and jump through the closing doors, leaving the victim helplessly watching as the thief flees. Visitors are encouraged NOT to confront thieves aggressively; they often operate in groups and may become violent if cornered. Simply drawing attention to an attempted theft will most likely stop the operation, and result in a tactical withdrawal by the thief.

Gare du Nord train station, where the express trains from the airport arrive in Paris, is also a high-risk area for pocket-picking and theft. Travelers should also beware of thefts that occur on both overnight and day trains, especially on trains originating in Spain, Italy, and Belgium. These involve the theft of valuables while passengers are sleeping, or when the bags are left unattended.

In hotels, thieves target lobbies and breakfast rooms, and take advantage of a minute of inattention to snatch jackets, purses, and backpacks. While many hotels do have safety latches that allow guests to secure their rooms from inside, this feature is not as universal as it is in the United States. If no chain or latch is present, a chair placed up against the door and wedged under the handle is usually an effective obstacle to surreptitious entry during the night. There are, however, reports of thieves breaking into hotel rooms on lower floors through open windows while the occupants are sleeping. To guard against this, hotel room windows should be kept locked at all times. Whenever possible, valuables should be kept in the hotel safe.

Many Americans report thefts occurring in restaurants and nightclubs/bars, where purses are stolen from the back of a chair or from under the

table. Again, keep valuables on your person and do not leave them unattended or out of sight. Thefts also occur at the major department stores such as Galeries Lafayette and Printemps where tourists often place wallets, passports, and credit cards on cashier counters during transactions.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are very common in France and provide ready access to cash, allowing travelers to carry as much money as they need for each day. The rates are competitive with local exchange bureaus, and an ATM transaction is easier than cashing a traveler's check. However, crime involving ATMs is increasing. Travelers should not use ATMs in isolated, unlit areas or where loiterers are present. Travelers should be especially aware of persons standing close enough to see the Personal Identification Number (PIN) being entered into the machine. Thieves often conduct successful scams by simply observing the PIN as it is entered and then stealing the card from the user in some other location. If the card becomes stuck, travelers should immediately report it to the bank where the machine is located.

Large criminal operations in Paris involving the use of ATMs that "eat" the user's ATM card have been reported. This most often happens during a weekend or at night when the bank is closed. The frustrated traveler often walks away after unsuccessfully trying to retrieve the card, with plans to return the first day the bank is open. In such cases, a criminal gang has modified the machine using an add-on device equipped with a microchip that records the user's PIN when it is typed in, and also prevents the card from being ejected. The criminal retrieves the card from the device once the visitor departs, downloads the recorded PIN and then goes to other ATMs and withdraws as much cash as possible. ATM users are strongly encouraged to carry a 24-hour emergency number for their ATM card and bank account that will enable the immediate prevention of withdrawals from the account if difficulties occur.

Pigalle is the "adult entertainment district" of Paris. Many entertainment establishments in this area engage in aggressive marketing and charge well beyond the normal rate for drinks. Reports of threats of violence to coerce patrons into paying exorbitant beverage tabs are not uncommon. There have also been several violent confrontations between rival gangs in the district, including one in August 2007 one block from the famous Moulin Rouge cabaret. Visitors are encouraged to avoid this area unless touring with a well-organized and reputable tour company.

Normandy: There has been an increase in break-ins and thefts from vehicles in the parking lots at the Normandy beaches and American cemeteries common. Valuables should not be left unattended in a car, and locking valuables in the trunk should not be considered a safeguard. Thieves often pry open car trunks to steal bags inside.

Southern France: Thefts from cars with unlocked doors or open windows stopped at red lights or caught in slow traffic are very common, particularly along the Riviera of the Nice-Antibes-Cannes area, and in Marseille. Car doors should be kept locked and windows raised at all times to prevent incidents of "snatch-and-grab" thefts. In this type of scenario, the thief is usually a passenger on a motorcycle. Break-ins of parked cars are also fairly common. Valuables should not be left in the car, not even in the trunk, when the vehicle is unattended.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Under French law, compensation is available to victims of crime committed on French soil under certain circumstances.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in France are as follows: 17 (police emergency), 18 (fire department) and 15 (emergency medical/paramedic team/ambulance). In Monaco, the numbers are 17 (police emergency), 18 (fire department) and 9375-2525 (medical/paramedic team/ambulance).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care comparable to that found in the United States is widely available. In France, the phone number for emergency medical services is 15. In Monaco, the phone number for emergency medical services is 9375-2525.

The U.S. State Department is unaware of any HIV/AIDS related entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of France.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who. int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S.

citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning France and Monaco is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Roads in France are generally comparable to those in the United States, but traffic engineering and driving habits pose special dangers. Usually, lane markings and sign placements are not as clear as in the United States. Drivers should be prepared to make last-minute maneuvers, as most French drivers do. The French typically drive more aggressively and faster than Americans, and tend to exceed posted speed limits. Right-of-way rules in France may differ from those in the United States. Drivers entering intersections from the right have priority over those on the left (unless specifically indicated otherwise), even when entering relatively large boulevards from small side streets. Many intersections in France are being replaced by traffic circles, where the right-of-way belongs to drivers in the circle.

On major highways, service stations are situated at least every 25 miles. Service stations are not as plentiful on secondary roads in France as they are in the United States. Paris, the capital and largest city in France, has an extensive and efficient public transportation system. The interconnecting system of buses, subways, and commuter rails serves more than 4 million people a day with a safety record comparable to or better than the systems of major American cities. Similar transportation systems are found in all major French cities. Between cities, France is served by an equally extensive rail service, which is reliable. High-speed rail links connect the major cities in France. Many cities are also served by frequent air service.

Visit the web site of the French and Monegasque National Tourist Office at http://franceguide.com. The website contains specific information concerning French and Monegasque driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of France's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of France's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: French and Monegasque customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from France of items such as firearms, antiquities, medications, business equipment, sales samples, and other items. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of France in Washington, DC, one of France's consulates in the United States, or the Consulate General of Monaco in New York for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating French or Monegasque laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in France or Monaco are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in France or Monaco are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within France and Monaco. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in cases of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Paris is located at 4 avenue Gabriel, 75008 Paris (Place de La Concorde, Metro Stop Concorde), tel. 011-33-1-43-12-22-22 or (in France) 01-43-12-22-22; fax: 011-33-1-42-96-28-39 for Passport Services, or fax 011-33-1-42-61-61-40 for Special Consular Services (emergencies). Further information can be obtained at the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://france.usembassy.gov.

The Consulate General in Marseille is located at Place Varian Fry, 13006 Marseille, tel. 011-33-4-91-54-92-00, or (in France) 04-91-54-92-00; fax 011-33-4-91-55-55-56-95 or 011-33-4-91-55-09-47. Web site: http://france.usembassy.gov/marseille/default.htm

The Consulate General in Strasbourg is located at 15 Avenue d'Alsace, 67082 Strasbourg, tel. 011-33-3-88-35-31-04 or (in France) 03-88-35-31-04; fax 011-33-3-88-24-06-95.

The Consulate General in Strasbourg does not produce passports on the premises. American citizens in this area whose passports are lost or stolen and have urgent travel needs should contact the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Web site: www.amb-usa.fr/strasbourg.

The Consular Agency in Nice is located at 7, Avenue Gustave V, 3rd floor, 06000 Nice, tel. 011-33-4-93-88-89-55 or (in France) 04-93-88-89-55; fax 011-33-4-93-87-07-38. Web site: http://france.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Government also has consular representation in Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Rennes, and Toulouse that provide some services to Americans, by appointment only. The post in Bor-

deaux is located at 10 place de la Bourse, 33076 Bordeaux (entry on rue Fernand Philippart); tel. 011-33-5-56-48-63-85 or 05-56-48-63-85 in France; fax: 011-33-5-56-51-61-97. Web site: http://france.usembassy.gov/bordeaux/default.htm.

The post in Lille is located at 107, rue Royale, 59000 Lille; tel. 011-33-3-28-04-25-00 or 03-28-04-25-00 in France; fax: 011-33-3-20-74-88-23. Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/lille/default.htm.

The post in Lyon is located at 1, quai Jules Courmont, 69002 Lyon; tel. 011-33-4-78-38- 33-03 or 04-78-38-33-03 in France; fax: 011-33-4-72-41-71-81. Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/lyon/default.htm.

The post in Rennes is located at 30, quai Duguay Trouin, 35000 Rennes; tel. 011-33-2-23-44-09-60 or 02-23-44-09-60 in France; fax: 011-33-2-99-35-00-92. Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/rennes/default.htm.

The post in Toulouse is located at 25, Allée Jean Jaures, 31000 Toulouse; tel. 011-33-5-34-41-36-50 or 05-34-41-36-50 in France; fax: 011-33-5-34-41-16-19. Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/toulouse/default.htm.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The number of children available for adoption in France is small, and French couples who wish to adopt them are given priority over persons of other nationalities. Most go overseas to adopt.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate no immigrant visas have been issued to French orphans in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions is the "Direction de l'Action Sociale, de l'Enfance et de la Santé," and each French department (local jurisdiction roughly equivalent to a U.S. state) has its own office and specific address. Residents of Paris must write, preferably in French, for information to the:

Direction de l'Action Sociale, de l'Enfance et de la Santé
Sous-Direction des Actions Familiales et Educatives,
Bureau des Adoptions,
94-96 Quai de la Rapée,
75570 Paris Cedex 12,
tel.: 01-43-47-75-42.

Americans residing elsewhere in France should consult the following French government internet site: http://www.france.diplomatie.fr/MAI, under the heading "Adresses utiles" for the address of the "Aide Sociale à l'enfance" office for the department in which they live. The web site is in French. French nationals and foreigners residing in France wishing to adopt a child from another country must apply to the Mission de l'Adoption Internationale at French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Americans residing in France who travel to pick up a child adopted from third countries will need to obtain a French visa for the child in order to take the child back to France. Once in France, a U.S. visa may be required, if the parents choose to immigrate their child to the U.S. at a later time.

Adopted children of a number of Americans have been denied entry into France because they did not have the appropriate French visas.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: For domestic and intercountry adoptions, a couple must be married for a minimum of two years or if married less than two years, both spouses are at least 28 years old. A single person can adopt provided he/she is at least 28 years old; however, in practice, it is very difficult to get approval). There is no age limit if one of the spouses wishes to adopt the other spouse's child. There is no age maximum. Adopting parents must be at least 15 years older than the child they want to adopt (10 years in the case of the other spouse's child).

Residency Requirements: A foreigner who resides outside of France, and wishes to complete an intercountry adoption of a child residing in France, does not need to establish residency in France. A foreigner who wishes to adopt a child, whether in France or elsewhere, for the purpose of residing in France with the child, must be a permanent resident of France.

Time Frame: Intercountry adoption in France is a lengthy process. The process takes at least a year, sometimes several years.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Addresses of adoption facilitators can also be obtained from the government agencies also listed on the site www.france.diplomatie.fr/MAI. The U.S. Embassy in France also maintains a list of numerous attorneys practicing in France. http://france.usembassy.gov/consul/acs/guide/Attorneys.pdf

Adoption Fees: There are no "adoption fees" in France but adopting parents often hire an attorney to assist them with the administrative and legal proceedings.

Adoption Procedures: American citizens interested in or considering adopting a child in France should consult the French government internet site provided above. Americans who are legally resident in France but are considering adopting a child from a different country should first consult the adoption flyer for that

country. It is critical to remember, however, that in addition to meeting U.S. legal requirements, such children will also have to have a French visa to enter and reside in France.

Required Documents: American citizens interested in or considering adopting a child in France or bringing a child to be adopted elsewhere to reside with them in France should consult the French government internet site provide above under Adoption Authority in France for information concerning documentary requirements.

French Embassy
4101 Reservoir Road, NW
Washington, DC 20007
Telephone: (202) 944-6000
Fax: (202) 944-6166
http://www.info-france-usa.org

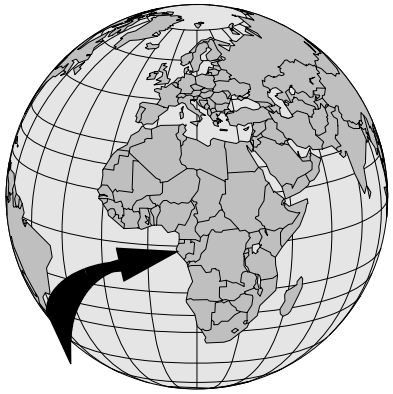
France also has Consulates General in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
2 Rue St. Florentin, 75001
Paris
Tel: 011-33-1-43-12-22-22 or
(in France) 01-43-12-22-22
http://france.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in France may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Questions about adopting in other countries should be directed to the U.S. Embassies in those countries. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



GABON

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Gabonese Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 267,667 sq. km. (103,347 sq. mi.); about the size of Colorado.

Cities: Capital—Libreville (pop. 673,995). Other cities—Port-Gentil (118,940), Franceville.

Terrain: Narrow coastal plain; hilly, heavily forested interior (about 80% forested); some savanna regions in east and south.

Climate: Hot and humid all year with two rainy and two dry seasons.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Gabonese (sing. and pl.).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 1,454,867.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.036%.

Ethnic groups: Fang (largest), Myene, Bapounou, Eshira, Bandjabi, Bakota, Nzebi, Bateke/Obamba.

Religions: Christian (55%-75%), Muslim, animist.

Languages: French (official), Fang, Myene, Bateke, Bapounou/Eschira, Bandjabi.

Education: Years compulsory—to age 16. Attendance—60%. Literacy—63%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—91/1,000. Life expectancy—56.2 yrs.

Work force: (500,000 est.) Agriculture—52%; industry and commerce—16%; services and government—33%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: August 17, 1960.

Constitution: February 21, 1961 (revised April 15, 1975; rewritten March 26, 1991; revised July 29, 2003).

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state); prime minister (head of government) and appointed Council of Ministers. Legislative—bicameral legislature (National Assembly and Senate). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 9 provinces, 36 prefectures, and 8 subprefectures.

Political parties: Parti Democratique Gabonais (PDG) holds the largest number of seats in the National Assembly; there are several others.

Suffrage: Universal, direct.

Budget: (2001 est.) Receipts—$1.6 billion; expenses—$1.2 billion; defense (1999)—3.0% of government budget.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $5.915 billion.

Annual real growth rate: (2007 est.) 5.6%.

Per capita income: (2006 est.) $7,200.

Avg. inflation rate: 1.2%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, timber, manganese, uranium.

Agriculture and forestry: (6% of GDP) Products—cocoa, coffee, rubber, sugar, and pineapples. Cultivated land—1%.

Industry: (59% of GDP): Types—petroleum related, wood processing, food and beverage processing.

Trade: (2007) $8.499 billion. Exports—61% of GDP (f.o.b.): petroleum, wood, manganese. Major markets—U.S. 53%, China 8.5%, France 7.4%, EU, Asia. Imports—30% of GDP (f.o.b.): construction equipment, machinery, food, automobiles, manufactured goods. Major suppliers—France 43%, U.S. 6.3%, U.K. 5.8%, Netherlands 4%. Current account balance with U.S. (2007 est.)—$1.689 billion.

PEOPLE

Almost all Gabonese are of Bantu origin. Gabon has at least 40 ethnic groups, with separate languages and cultures. The largest is the Fang (about 30%). Other ethnic groups include the Myene, Bandjabi, Eshira, Bapounou, Bateke/Obamba, Nzebi, and Bakota. Ethnic group boundaries are less sharply drawn in Gabon than elsewhere in Africa. French, the official language, is a unifying force. More than 12,000 French people live in Gabon, including an estimated

2,000 dual nationals, and France dominates foreign cultural and commercial influences. Historical and environmental factors caused Gabon's population to decline between 1900 and 1940. It is one of the least densely inhabited countries in Africa, and a labor shortage is a major obstacle to development and a draw for foreign workers. The population is generally accepted to be just over 1 million but remains in dispute.

HISTORY

During the last seven centuries, Bantu ethnic groups arrived in the area from several directions to escape enemies or find new land. Little is known of tribal life before European contact, but tribal art suggests rich cultural heritages. Gabon's first European visitors were Portuguese traders who arrived in the 15th century and named the country after the Portuguese word "gabao," a coat with sleeve and hood resembling the shape of the Komo River estuary. The coast became a center of the slave trade. Dutch, British, and French traders came in the 16th century. France assumed the status of protector by signing treaties with Gabonese coastal chiefs in 1839 and 1841. American missionaries from New England established a mission at Baraka (now Libreville) in 1842. In 1849, the French captured a slave ship and released the passengers at the mouth of the Komo River. The slaves named their settlement Libreville—"free town." An American, Paul du Chaillu, was among the first foreigners to explore the interior of the country in the 1850s. French explorers penetrated Gabon's dense jungles between 1862 and 1887. The most famous, Savorgnan de Brazza, used Gabonese bearers and guides in his search for the headwaters of the Congo River. France occupied Gabon in 1885 but did not administer it until 1903. In 1910, Gabon became one of the four territories of French Equatorial Africa, a federation that survived until 1959. The territories became independent in 1960 as the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), and Gabon.

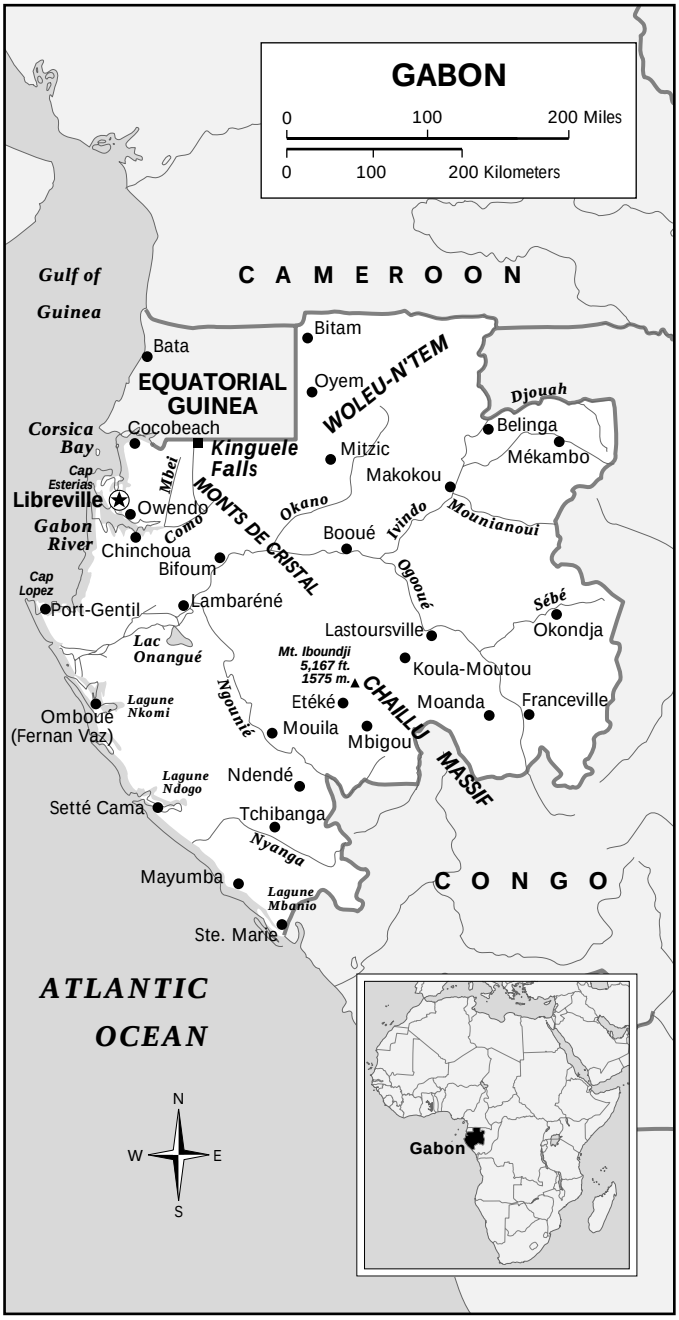
At the time of Gabon's independence in 1960, two principal political parties existed: the Bloc Democratique Gabonais (BDG), led by Leon M'Ba, and the Union Democratique et Sociale Gabonaise (UDSG), led by J.H. Aubame. In the first post-independence election, held under a parliamentary system, neither party was able to win a majority. The BDG obtained support from three of the four independent legislative deputies, and M'Ba was named Prime Minister. Soon after concluding that Gabon had an insufficient number of people for a two-party system, the two party leaders agreed on a single list of candidates. In the February 1961 election, held under the new presidential system, M'Ba became President and Aubame became Foreign Minister.

This one-party system appeared to work until February 1963, when the larger BDG element forced the UDSG members to choose between a merger of the parties or resignation. The UDSG cabinet ministers resigned, and M'Ba called an election for February 1964 and a reduced number of National Assembly deputies (from 67 to 47). The UDSG failed to muster a list of candidates able to meet the requirements of the electoral decrees. When the BDG appeared likely to win the election by default, the Gabonese military toppled M'Ba in a bloodless coup on February 18, 1964. French troops re-established his government the next day. Elections were held in April 1964 with many opposition participants. BDG-supported candidates won 31 seats and the opposition 16. Late in 1966, the constitution was revised to provide for automatic succession of the vice president should the president die in office. In March 1967, Leon M'Ba and Omar Bongo (then Albert Bongo) were elected President and Vice President. M'Ba died later that year, and Omar Bongo became President.

In March 1968, Bongo declared Gabon a one-party state by dissolving the BDG and establishing a new party—the Parti Democratique Gabonais (PDG). He invited all Gabonese, regardless of previous political affiliation, to participate. Bongo was elected President in February 1975; in April 1975, the office of vice president was abolished and replaced by the office of prime minister, who had no right to automatic succession. Bongo was re-elected President in December 1979 and November 1986 to 7-year terms. Using the PDG as a tool to submerge the regional and tribal rivalries that divided Gabonese politics in the past, Bongo sought to forge a single national movement in support of the government's development policies.

Economic discontent and a desire for political liberalization provoked violent demonstrations and strikes by students and workers in early 1990. In response to grievances by workers, Bongo negotiated with them on a sector-by-sector basis, making significant wage concessions. In addition, he promised to open up the PDG and to organize a national political conference in March-April 1990 to discuss Gabon's future political system. The PDG and 74 political organizations attended the conference. Participants essentially divided into two loose coalitions, the ruling PDG and its allies, and the United Front of Opposition Associations and Parties, consisting of the breakaway Morena Fundamental and the Gabonese Progress Party.

The April 1990 conference approved sweeping political reforms, including creation of a national Senate, decentralization of the budgetary process, freedom of assembly and press, and cancellation of the exit visa requirement. In an attempt to guide the political system's transformation to multiparty democracy, Bongo resigned as PDG chairman and created a transitional government headed by a new Prime Minister, Casimir Oye-Mba. The Gabonese Social Democratic Grouping (RSDG), as the resulting government was called, was smaller than the previous government and included representatives from several opposition parties in its cabinet. The RSDG drafted a provisional constitution in May 1990 that provided a basic bill of rights and an independent judiciary but retained strong executive powers for the president. After further review by a constitutional committee and the National Assembly, this document



came into force in March 1991. Under the 1991 constitution, in the event of the president's death, the prime minister, the National Assembly president, and the defense minister were to share power until a new election could be held.

Opposition to the PDG continued, however, and in September 1990, two coup d'etat attempts were uncovered and aborted. Despite anti-government demonstrations after the untimely death of an opposition leader, the first multiparty National Assembly elections in almost 30 years took place in September-October 1990, with the PDG garnering a large majority.

Following President Bongo's re-election in December 1993 with 51% of the vote, opposition candidates refused to validate the election results. Serious civil disturbances led to an agreement between the government and opposition factions to work toward a political settlement. These talks led to the Paris Accords in November 1994, under which several opposition figures were included in a government of national unity. This arrangement soon broke down, however, and the 1996 and 1997 legislative and municipal elections provided the background for renewed partisan politics. The PDG won a landslide victory in the legislative election, but several major cities, including Libreville, elected opposition mayors during the 1997 local election.

Facing a divided opposition, President Bongo coasted to easy re-election in December 1998, with large majorities of the vote. While Bongo's major opponents rejected the outcome as fraudulent, some international observers characterized the results as representative despite any perceived irregularities, and there were none of the civil disturbances that followed the 1993 election. Peaceful though flawed legislative elections held in 2001-02, which were boycotted by a number of smaller opposition parties and were widely criticized for their administrative weaknesses, produced a National Assembly almost completely dominated by the PDG and allied independents. In November 2005, President Bongo was elected for his sixth term. He won re-election easily, but opponents claim that the balloting process was marred by irregularities. There were some instances of violence following the announcement of Bongo's win, but Gabon generally remained peaceful.

National Assembly elections were held again in December 2006. Several seats contested because of voting irregularities were overturned by the Constitutional Court, but the subsequent run-off elections in early 2007 again yielded a PDG-controlled National Assembly.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Under the 1961 constitution (revised in 1975, rewritten in 1991, and

revised in 2003), Gabon is a republic with a presidential form of government. The National Assembly has 120 deputies elected for a 5-year term. The president is elected by universal suffrage for a 7-year term. The president can appoint and dismiss the prime minister, the cabinet, and judges of the independent Supreme Court. The president also has other strong powers, such as authority to dissolve the National Assembly, declare a state of siege, delay legislation, and conduct referenda. A 2003 constitutional amendment removed presidential term limits and facilitated a presidency for life. In 1990 the government made major changes to Gabon's political system. A transitional constitution was drafted in May 1990 as an outgrowth of the national political conference in March-April and later revised by a constitutional committee. Among its provisions were a Western-style bill of rights; creation of a National Council of Democracy to oversee the guarantee of those rights; a governmental advisory board on economic and social issues; and an independent judiciary. After approval by the National Assembly, the PDG Central Committee, and the President, the Assembly unanimously adopted the constitution in March 1991. Multiparty legislative elections were held in 1990-91, despite the fact that opposition parties had not been declared formally legal.

The elections produced the first representative, multiparty National Assembly. In January 1991, the Assembly passed by unanimous vote a law governing the legalization of opposition parties. After President Bongo was re-elected in a disputed election in 1993 with 51% of votes cast, social and political disturbances led to the 1994 Paris Conference and Accords, which provided a framework for the next elections. Local and legislative elections were delayed until 1996-97. In 1997, constitutional amendments were adopted to create an appointed Senate and the position of vice president, and to extend the president's term to 7 years.

For administrative purposes, Gabon is divided into 9 provinces, which are further divided into 36 prefectures and 8 separate subprefectures. The president appoints the provincial governors, the prefects, and the subprefects.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Omar BONGO**
Vice Pres.: **Didjob Divungi DI NDINGE**
Prime Min.: **Jean Eyeghe NDONG**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Honorine DOSSOU NAKI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Laure Olga GONDJOUT**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Georgette KOKO**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Paul MBA ABESSOLE**
Min. of State for Agriculture & Rural Development: **Faustin BOUKOUBI**
Min. of State for Communication, Post, & Telecommunications & New Information Technologies: **Jean-Boniface ASSELE, Gen.**
Min. of State for Culture, the Arts, Educating the Population, Reform, & Human Rights: **Paul MBA ABESSOLE**
Min. of State for Economy, Finance, Budget, & Privatization: **Paul TOUNGUI**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, & Francophonie & Regional Integration: **Laure Olga GONDJOUT**
Min. of State for Housing & Town Planning: **Patrice TONDA**
Min. of State for Planning & Programming Development, in Charge of Evaluating Public Policies: **Richard Auguste ONOUVIET**
Min. of State for Trade & Industrial Development: **Paul BIYOGHE MBA**
Min. of Defense: **Ali BONGO ONDIMBA**
Min. for the Environment, Sustainable Development, & the Protection of Nature: **Georgette KOKO**
Min. of Forests, Water, & Fishing Economy: **Emile DOUMBA**
Min. for Higher Education: **Dieudonne PAMBO**
Min. of Interior, Regional Development, Decentralization, Security, & Immigration : **Andre MBA OBAME**
Min. of Justice: **Martin MABALA**
Min. of Labor, Employment, & Social Welfare: **Jean-Francois NDONGOU**
Min. of the Merchant Navy & Port Infrastructures: **Jacques ADIAHENOT**
Min. of Mines, Petroleum, Hydrocarbons, Energy, Hydraulic Resources, & the Promotion of New Energies: **Casimir OYE MBA**
Min. of National Education & Civic Instruction: **Michel MENGA M'ESSONO**
Min. for Public Health & Sanitation, in Charge of the Family & the Promotion of Women: **Angelique NGOMA**
Min. of Public Services & the Modernization of the State: **Alain Mensah ZOGUELET**
Min. of Public Works, Infrastructures, & Construction: **Flavien NZENGUI NZOUNDOU, Gen.**
Min. of Scientific Research & Technological Development: **Albert ONDO OSSA**
Min. of Small & Medium-Size Enterprises, Social Economy, & the Fight Against Poverty: **Vincent ESSONE MENGUE**
Min. of Social Affairs, National Solidarity, & the Protection of Widows & Orphans, in Charge of the Fights Against AIDS: **Maitre Denise MEKAM'NE**
Min. of State Control, Inspections, the Fight Against Corruption, & Illegal Accumulation of Wealth: **Honorine DOSSOU NAKI**
Min. of Technical Training, Vocational Training, & Professional Integration of Young People: **Pierre-Andre KOMBILA**
Min. of Territorial Development & Urban Policy: **Pierre Claver MAGANGA MOUSSAVOU**
Min. of Tourism & National Parks: **Idriss NGARI, Gen.**
Min. of Transport & Civil Aviation: **Dieudonne MOUIRI BOUSSOUGOU**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Leisure, in Charge of Voluntary Organizations, & Govt. Spokesperson: **Rene NDEMEZO OBIANG**
Min. in Charge of Relations With Parliament & Constitutional Institutions: **Josue MBADINGA**
Ambassador to the US: **Carlos BOUNGOU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Denis DANGUE-REWAKA**

Gabon maintains an embassy in the United States at 2034 20th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-797-1000).

ECONOMY

Gabon's economy is dominated by oil. Oil revenues comprise 65% of the Government of Gabon budget, 43% of gross domestic product (GDP), and 81% of exports. Oil production is now declining rapidly from its high point

of 370,000 barrels per day in 1997. In spite of the decreasing oil revenues, little planning has been done for an after-oil scenario. Gabon public expenditures from the years of significant oil revenues were not spent efficiently.

Overspending on the Transgabonais railroad, the oil price shock of 1986, the CFA franc devaluation of 1994, and low oil prices in the late 1990s caused serious debt problems. Gabon has earned a poor reputation with the Paris Club and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the management of its debt and revenues. Successive IMF missions have criticized the government for overspending on off-budget items (in good years and bad), over-borrowing from the Central Bank, and slipping on the schedule for privatization and administrative reform. In September 2005, Gabon successfully concluded a 15-month Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF. Following this, Gabon sought a multi-year successor arrangement that was formally proposed to the IMF in 2007.

Gabon's oil revenues have given it a strong per capita GDP of $7,800, extremely high for the region. On the other hand, a skewed income distribution and poor social indicators are evident. The richest 20% of the population receives over 90% of the income, and about a third of Gabonese live in poverty. The economy is highly dependent on extraction of abundant primary materials. After oil, logging and manganese mining are the other major sectors. Foreign and Gabonese observers have consistently lamented the lack of transformation of primary materials in the Gabonese economy. Various factors have so far stymied more diversification—small market of 1 million people, dependence on French imports, inability to capitalize on regional markets, lack of entrepreneurial zeal among the Gabonese, and the fairly regular stream of oil "rent". The small processing and service sectors are largely dominated by just a few prominent local investors. At World Bank and IMF insistence, the government embarked on a program of privatization of its state-owned companies and administrative reform, including reducing public sector employment and salary growth, but progress has been slow.

DEFENSE

Gabon has a small, professional military of about 10,000 personnel, divided into army, navy, air force, gendarmerie, and national police. Gabonese forces are oriented to the defense of the country and have not been trained for an offensive role. A well-trained, well-equipped 1,500-member guard provides security for the president.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Gabon has followed a nonaligned policy, advocating dialogue in international affairs and recognizing both parts of divided countries. Since 1973, the number of countries establishing diplomatic relations with Gabon has doubled. In inter-African affairs, Gabon espouses development by evolution rather than revolution and favors regulated free enterprise as the system most likely to promote rapid economic growth. Concerned about stability in Central Africa and the potential for intervention, Gabon has been directly involved with mediation efforts in Chad, the Central African Republic, Angola, Congo/Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Burundi. In December 1999, through the mediation efforts of President Bongo, a peace accord was signed in Congo/Brazzaville between the government and most leaders of an armed rebellion. President Bongo has remained involved in the continuing Congolese peace process, and has also played a role in mediating the crisis in Cote d'Ivoire. Gabon has been a strong proponent of regional stability, and Gabonese armed forces played an important role in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) mission to the Central African Republic.

Gabon is a member of the UN and some of its specialized and related agencies, as well as of the World Bank; the African Union (AU); the Central African Customs Union/Central African Economic and Monetary Community (UDEAC/CEMAC); EU/ACP association under the Lome Convention; the Communaute Financiere Africaine (CFA); the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC); the Nonaligned Movement; and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS/CEEAC). Gabon withdrew from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1995.

U.S.-GABONESE RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Gabon are excellent. In 1987, President Bongo made an official visit to Washington, DC. In September 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell made a brief but historic visit to Gabon to highlight environmental protection and conservation in the Central Africa region. This was followed by a visit to the White House by President Bongo in May 2004. The United States imports a considerable percentage of Gabonese crude oil and manganese and exports heavy construction equipment, aircraft, and machinery to Gabon. Through a modest International Military Education and Training program, the United States provides military training to members of the Gabonese armed forces each year. Other bilateral assistance includes the funding of small grants for qualified democracy and human rights, self-help, and cultural preservation projects. U.S. private capital has been attracted to Gabon since before its independence.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LIBREVILLE (E) Boulevard du Bord de Mer, BP 4000, Libreville, [241] 76-20-03/04, Fax [241] 74-55-07, Workweek: MON-THU 08:00-17:15 and FRI 08:00-14:00.

AMB OMS:	Debra Debose
ECO:	John Corrao
MGT:	Charles Morrill
AMB:	Eunice Reddick
CON:	Vacant
DCM:	Nathan Holt
PAO:	John Carrao
GSO:	Heather Cole
RSO:	Bart Sandlin
CLO:	Sylvia Matthews
DAO:	Ltc. Rene Dechaine
ICASS Chair:	Jim Matthews
IMO:	Jim Matthews
ISO:	Mike Moffatt
POL:	Leslie Doumbia

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 15, 2008

Country Description: Gabon is a developing nation in west central Africa. French is the official language; few Gabonese speak English. Facilities for tourism outside the capital city, Libreville, are available, but they are often limited and can be expensive.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Proof of yellow fever vaccination is required for entry. Visas must be obtained in advance, as airport visas are no longer available. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of Gabon, 2034 20th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009, telephone: (202) 797-1000, fax: (202) 332-0668. Travelers may also contact the Gabonese Consulate at 18 East 41st St., Ninth Floor, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 683-7371. Overseas, inquiries should be made to the nearest Gabonese embassy or consulate. All non-Gabonese citizens, with the exception of those bearing diplomatic or official passports, are required to obtain exit visas from the Direction Générale à la Documentation et l'Immigration (DGDI, formerly known as CEDOC) before departing Gabon.

Safety and Security: Americans should maintain security awareness at all times. There have been isolated incidents of civil unrest within the past year, both in the capital city and in the interior. Large gatherings such as sporting events or any other event where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest should be avoided.

Americans may contact the U.S. Embassy in Gabon for the most up-to-date information on safety and security. The Embassy informs the registered resident American community of security matters through a warden system (please see the Registration/ Embassy Location section below for more information).

In the event of a fire, dial 18.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

For further information on safety and security in Gabon, please visit the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) web site at www.osac.gov, and use the "Jump to Country" pull-down menu to reach the Gabon Country Profile.

Crime: In Gabon, petty thievery is common. Violent crime is more common in urban areas, and there have been cases of armed robberies in homes and in restaurants frequented by foreigners. Occasionally Americans or Europeans have been victims of crime.

The U.S. Embassy encourages Americans to take extra precautions when traveling in Libreville. To prevent carjacking, citizens are encouraged to travel with their automobile windows up and doors locked. Marginal neighborhoods, poorly lit streets, and unfamiliar areas of the city should be avoided, especially at night. Walking or running on the beach alone at night should be avoided. When dining in restaurants or visiting markets, it is recommended that one carry only minimal amounts of cash and avoid wearing excessive amounts of jewelry. If involved in an attempted robbery or carjacking, Americans are encouraged to comply with the attacker to avoid injury and to report all incidents to the police and the U.S. Embassy. Police response time to reports of crime can be slow.

Scams or confidence schemes do occur in Gabon. For general information on scams, see our Financial Scams webpage.

Credit cards are not widely accepted except at hotels, and because of the high rates of credit card fraud, their use outside major chain hotels is not recommended.

There have been incidents of sexual assault against foreigners.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Gabon to reach the police is 177.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Gabon's major cities are limited, but they are generally adequate for routine or basic needs. Medical services in rural areas are generally unavailable. Additionally, some medicines are not available; travelers should carry necessary, properly labeled medications with them.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Gabon.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Gabon is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel by road in Gabon can be hazardous. It is recommended that you drive with your car windows up and the doors locked. Travelers are routinely stopped at police checkpoints within cities and on roads to the interior. Americans should comply politely if stopped, but avoid encouraging bribery if possible. Travelers should use extreme caution when driving after dark. Two-lane roads are the norm throughout Gabon. Roads to outlying cities have visible and hidden dangers that are profuse, including large potholes, absence of road signs, poor to non-existent streetlights, and the presence of pedestrians and animals. Construction work is often poorly indicated. Four-wheel drive vehicles are recommended for travel beyond the paved road to Lambarene, especially during the rainy season.

Roadside assistance and emergency medical services are available in Libreville, but they may not be dependable. Such services are nonexistent outside of the city. Service stations are available along main roads, but vehicle repair facilities are not always available. Drivers must have a valid international driver's license (available from AAA and the American Automobile Routing Alliance) when driving in Gabon.

Use of taxis is generally safe but does pose added risks. It is recommended that one use a hotel taxi when possible. Before riding in a taxi, check that the taxi has seatbelts and agree on a fare. Riding in a taxi alone or during late hours of the evening is not recommended and creates additional risk of becoming a victim of crime. Rail services are available, but infrequent, and travelers should be prepared for delays.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Gabon, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Gabon's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Gabon is a francophone country; travelers who do not speak French will face difficulties associated with the language barrier. Americans should always carry identification with them in the event they are stopped at a police checkpoint. Taking photographs of the Presidential Palace, military or other government buildings is strictly forbidden.

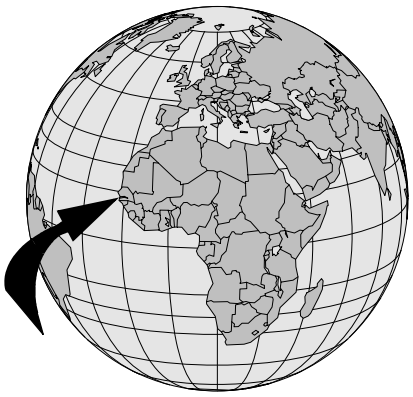
Official corruption is common, but offering bribes is not recommended. Gabon is largely a cash economy. Credit cards are accepted at only a few major hotels. Travelers' checks can be cashed or dollars exchanged for Central African Francs (CFA) at hotels and banks. ATMs are available in major urban centers, and dispense CFA.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Gabonese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Gabon are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Gabon are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Gabon.Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located downtown on the Boulevard du Bord de Mer. The mailing address is Centre Ville, B.P. 4000, Libreville, Gabon. The telephone numbers are (241) 76-20-03 or (241) 76-20-04. The fax numbers are (241) 74-55-07 or (241) 76-88-49 and the web ite is http://libreville.usembassy.gov.



THE GAMBIA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of The Gambia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 11,300 sq. km. (4,361 sq. mi.); less than half the size of Maryland.
Cities: Capital—Banjul (pop. 34,828 excluding suburbs; 2003 census provisional).
Terrain: Flood plain of the Gambia River flanked by low hills.
Climate: Tropical; hot rainy season (June to November); cooler, dry season (November to May).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Gambian(s).
Population: (2008) 1.7 million.
Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 2.724%.
Ethnic groups: (2003 census) Mandinka 42%, Fula 18%, Wolof 16%, Jola 10%, Sarahule 9%, Serere 7.8%, Krio/Aku Marabout 1.8%, Manjago 0.8%, Bambara 0.7%, other Gambians 1.2%, no declaration 0.3%. Non-Gambians 12.9% of the population.
Religions: Muslim 90%, Christian 9%, other 1%.
Languages: English (official), Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, Jola, Sarahule, other indigenous languages.
Education: Years compulsory—up to age eight. Attendance—69% primary, 35% secondary. Adult literacy—37.8%.
Health: Life expectancy—57 yrs (2005 est.). Infant mortality rate (2005)—97/1,000. Access to safe drinking water (2004)—urban 95%, rural 77%.
Work force: (400,000) Agriculture—70%; industry, commerce, services—24%; government—6%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: February 18, 1965.
Constitution: January 16, 1997.
Government branches: Executive, legislative, and judicial.
Political subdivisions: Capital and six divisions.
Political parties: Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), United Democratic Party (UDP), National Reconciliation Party (NRP), National Convention Party (NCP), Peoples Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS), National Democratic Action Movement (NDAM), and the Gambia Party for Democracy and Progress (GPDP).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $709 million.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 6.5%.
Per capita income: (2007) $454.
Natural resources: Seismic studies indicate the possible presence of oil and gas offshore.
Services: 58.5% of GDP, 2007.
Agriculture: (32.80% of GDP, 2007) Products—peanuts, rice, millet, sorghum, fish, palm kernels, vegetables, livestock, forestry.
Industry: (8.70% of GDP, 2007): Types—peanut products, construction, telecommunications, brewing, soft drinks, agricultural machinery assembly, woodworking, metal working, clothing and textile manufacturing, food processing.
Trade: (2007 est.) Principal exports—$14.5 million: 43.33% groundnut products, 25.18% fish and fish preparations, 2.43% cotton, 11.18% fruits and vegetables, 0.17% hides and skin, 6.191% re-exports, and others 11.52%. Major markets—France 48.85%, Senegal 22.62%, Netherlands 10.21%, United States 7.02%, Germany 3.46%, and Japan 3.05%. Principal imports—$345.7 million including food and beverages, manufactures, machinery and transport equipment, and minerals and fuel. Major suppliers—Denmark, United States, China, Germany, U.K., Cote d'Ivoire, and Netherlands.
Official Development Assistance: (ODA) received from all sources (2001) $50.9 million.
U.S. economic aid received: (FY 2007) $88,000 in grassroots projects and assistance to democracy and human rights programs.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

A wide variety of ethnic groups live in The Gambia with a minimum of intertribal friction, each preserving its own language and traditions. The Mandinka tribe is the largest, followed by the Fula, Wolof, Jola, and Sarahule. Approximately 3,500 non-Africans live in The Gambia, including Europeans and families of Lebanese origin.

Muslims constitute more than 90% of the population. Christians of different denominations account for most of the remainder. Gambians officially observe the holidays of both religions and practice religious tolerance.

More than 63% of Gambians live in rural villages (1993 census), although more and more young people come to the capital in search of work and education. Provisional figures from the 2003 census show that the gap between the urban and rural populations is narrowing as more areas are declared urban. While urban migration, development projects, and modernization are bringing more Gambians into contact with Western habits and values, the traditional emphasis on the extended family, as well as indigenous forms of dress and celebration, remain integral parts of everyday life.

The Gambia was once part of the Ghana Empire and the Songhai Empire. The first written accounts of the region come from records of Arab traders in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. Arab traders established the trans-Saharan trade route for slaves, gold, and ivory. In the 15th century, the Portuguese took over this trade using maritime routes. At that time, The Gambia was part of the Kingdom of Mali.

In 1588, the claimant to the Portuguese throne, Antonio, Prior of Crato, sold exclusive trade rights on The Gambia River to English merchants; this grant was confirmed by letters patent from Queen Elizabeth I. In 1618, King James I granted a charter to a British company for trade with The Gambia and the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

During the late 17th century and throughout the 18th, England and France struggled continuously for political and commercial supremacy in the regions of the Senegal and Gambia Rivers. The 1783 Treaty of Versailles gave Great Britain possession of The Gambia, but the French retained a tiny enclave at Albreda on the north bank of the river, which was ceded to the United Kingdom in 1857.

As many as 3 million slaves may have been taken from the region during the three centuries that the transatlantic slave trade operated. It is not known how many slaves were taken by Arab traders prior to and simultaneous with the transatlantic slave trade. Most of those taken were sold to Europeans by other Africans; some were prisoners of intertribal wars; some were sold because of unpaid debts, while others were kidnapped. Slaves were initially sent to Europe to work as servants until the market for labor expanded in the West Indies and North America in the 18th century. In 1807, slave trading was abolished throughout the British Empire, and the British tried unsuccessfully to end the slave traffic in The Gambia. They established the military post of Bathurst (now Banjul) in 1816. In the ensuing years, Banjul was at times under the jurisdiction of the British governor general in Sierra Leone. In 1888, The Gambia became a separate colonial entity.

An 1889 agreement with France established the present boundaries, and The Gambia became a British Crown Colony, divided for administrative purposes into the colony (city of Banjul and the surrounding area) and the protectorate (remainder of the territory). The Gambia received its own executive and legislative councils in 1901 and gradually progressed toward self-government. A 1906 ordinance abolished slavery.

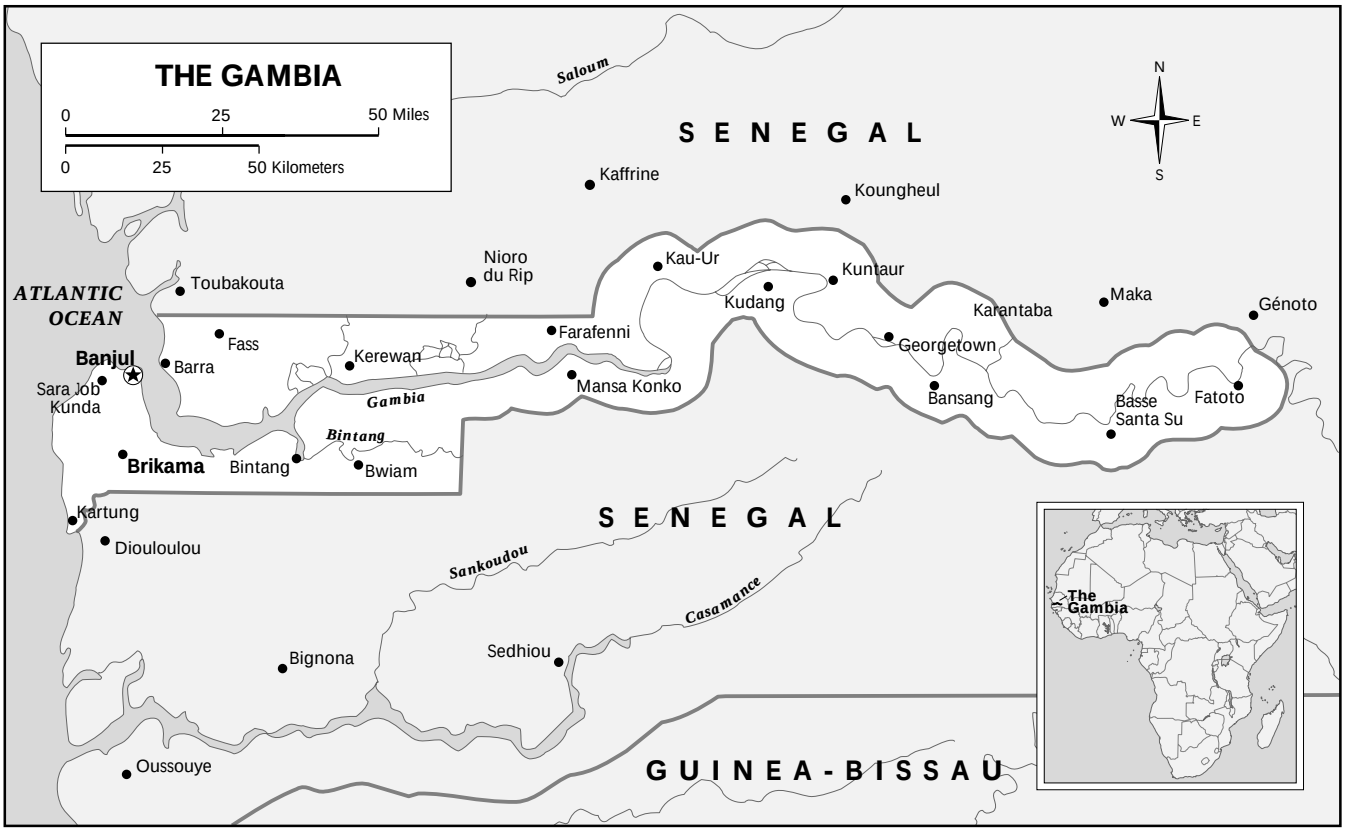
During World War II, Gambian troops fought with the Allies in Burma. Banjul served as an air stop for the U.S. Army Air Corps and a port of call for Allied naval convoys. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt stopped overnight in Banjul en route to and from the Casablanca Conference in 1943, marking the first visit to the African Continent by an American president while in office.

After World War II, the pace of constitutional reform quickened. Following general elections in 1962, full internal self-government was granted in 1963. The Gambia achieved independence on February 18, 1965, as a constitutional monarchy within the British Commonwealth. Shortly thereafter, the government proposed conversion from a monarchy to a republic with an elected president replacing the British monarch as chief of state. The proposal failed to receive the two-thirds majority required to amend the constitution, but the results won widespread attention abroad as testimony to The Gambia's observance of secret balloting, honest elections, and civil rights and liberties. On April 24, 1970, The Gambia became a republic following a referendum.

Until a military coup in July 1994, The Gambia was led by President Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, who was reelected five times. The relative stability of the Jawara era was first broken by a violent, unsuccessful coup attempt in 1981. The coup was led by Kukoi Samba Sanyang, who, on two occasions, had unsuccessfully sought election to parliament. After a week of violence which left several hundred dead, President Jawara, in London when the attack began, appealed to Senegal for help. Senegalese troops defeated the rebel force.

In the aftermath of the attempted coup, Senegal and The Gambia signed the 1982 Treaty of Confederation. The result, the Senegambia Confederation, aimed eventually to combine the armed forces of the two nations and to unify economies and currencies. The Gambia withdrew from the confederation in 1989.

In July 1994, the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC) seized power in a military coup d'etat, deposing the government of Sir



Dawda Jawara. Lieutenant Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, chairman of the AFPRC, became head of state.

The AFPRC announced a transition plan for return to democratic civilian government. The Provisional Independent Electoral Commission (PIEC) was established in 1996 to conduct national elections. The transition process included the compilation of a new electoral register, adoption of a new constitution by referendum in August 1996, and presidential and legislative elections in September 1996 and January 1997, respectively.

Foreign observers did not deem these elections free and fair. Retired Col. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh was sworn into office as President of the Republic of The Gambia in November 1996. The PIEC was transformed to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in 1997 and became responsible for registration of voters and conduct of elections and referenda. In late 2001 and early 2002, The Gambia completed a full cycle of presidential, legislative, and local elections, which foreign observers deemed free, fair, and transparent, albeit with some shortcomings. President Yahya Jammeh, who was re-elected, took the oath of office again on December 21, 2001. The APRC maintained its strong majority in the National Assembly, particularly after the main opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) boycotted the legislative elections. President Jammeh was re-elected for a third five-year term on September 22, 2006 with 67% of the vote. The UDP received 27% of the vote, and instead of boycotting future elections, vowed to take part in the 2007 National Assembly elections. In the January 2007 parliamentary elections the ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) won 42 of the available 48 elected seats.

GOVERNMENT

The 1970 constitution, which divided the government into independent executive, legislative, and judicial branches, was suspended after the 1994 military coup. As part of the transition process, the AFPRC established the Constitution Review Commission (CRC) through decree in March 1995. In accordance with the timetable for the transition to a democratically elected government, the commission drafted a new constitution for The Gambia, which approved by referendum in August 1996. The constitution provides for a strong presidential government, a unicameral legislature, an independent judiciary, and the protection of human rights.

Local government in The Gambia varies. The capital city, Banjul and the much larger Kanifing Municipality have elected town and municipal councils. Five rural divisions exist, each with a council containing a majority of elected members. Each council has its own treasury and is responsible for local government services. Tribal chiefs retain traditional powers authorized by customary law in some instances.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Yahya JAMMEH**

Vice Pres.: **Isatou NJIE-SAIDY**

Sec. of State for Communications, Information, & Technology: **Fatim BADJI**

Sec. of State for Basic & Secondary Education: **Fatou Lamin FAYE**

Sec. of State for Defense: **Yahya JAMMEH**

Sec. of State for Finance & Economic Affairs: **Mousa BALA-GAYE**

Sec. of State for Fisheries, Water Resources, & National Assembly Matters: **Yankouba TOURAY**

Sec. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Omar TOURAY**

Sec. of State for Forestry & Environment: **Momodou Kotu CHAM**

Sec. of State for Health & Social Welfare: **Malick NJIE**

Sec. of State for Higher Education & Research, Science, & Technology: **Crispin GREY-JOHNSON**

Sec. of State for Interior: **Ousman SONKO**

Sec. of State for Local Govt. & Lands & Religious Affairs: **Ismaila SAMBOU**

Sec. of State for Petroleum, Energy, & Mineral Resources: **Ousman JAMMEH**

Sec. of State for Tourism & Culture: **Nancy NJIE**

Sec. of State for Trade, Industry, & Employment: **Abdou KOLLEY**

Sec. of State for Women's Affairs: **Isatou NJIE-SAIDY**

Sec. of State for Works, Construction, & Infrastructure: **Lamin BOJANG**

Sec. of State for Youth & Sports: **Mass Axy GYE**

Attorney Gen. & Sec. of State for Justice: **Marie SAINE-FIRDAUS**

Chief of Defense Staff: **Lang Tombong TAMBA, Maj. Gen.**

Ambassador to the US: **Dodou Bammy JAGNE**

Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Tamsir JALLOW**

The Gambia maintains an embassy at 1156 15th Street, NW, Suite 905, Washington, DC 20005. Tel. (202) 785-1399. Its UN mission is located at 820 2nd Avenue, Suite 900-C, New York, NY 10017. Tel. (212) 949-6640.

DEFENSE

The Gambian national army numbers about 1,900. The army consists of infantry battalions, the national guard, and the navy, all under the authority of the Department of State for Defense (a ministerial portfolio held by President Jammeh). Prior to the 1994 coup, the Gambian army received technical assistance and training from the United States, United Kingdom, People's Republic of China, Nigeria, and Turkey. With the withdrawal of most of this aid, the army has received renewed assistance from Turkey and new assistance from Libya and others. The Gambia allowed its military training arrangement with Libya to expire in 2002.

Members of the Gambian military participated in ECOMOG, the West African force deployed during the Liberian civil war beginning in 1990. Gambian forces have subsequently participated in several other peacekeeping operations, including, inter alia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, and East Timor. The Gambia contributed 150 troops to Liberia in 2003 as part of the ECOMIL contingent. In 2004, The Gambia contributed a 196-man contingent to the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur, Sudan. Responsibilities for internal security and law enforcement rest with the Gambian police under the Inspector General of Police and the Secretary of State for the Interior.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Before the coup d'état in July 1994, The Gambia was one of the oldest existing multi-party democracies in Africa. It had conducted freely contested elections every 5 years since independence. After the military coup, politicians from deposed President Jawara's People's Progressive Party (PPP) and other senior government officials were banned from participating in politics until July 2001.

The People's Progressive Party (PPP), headed by former president Jawara, had dominated Gambian politics for nearly 30 years. After spearheading the movement toward complete independence from Britain, the PPP was voted into power and was never seriously challenged by any opposition party. The last elections under the PPP regime were held in April 1992.

Following the coup in July 1994, a presidential election took place in September 1996, in which retired Col. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh won 56% of the vote. The legislative elections held in January 1997 were dominated by the APRC, which captured 33 out of 45 seats. In July 2001, the ban on Jawara-era political parties and politicians was lifted. Four registered opposition parties participated in the October 18, 2001, presidential election, which the incumbent, President Yahya Jammeh, won with almost 53% of the votes. The APRC maintained its strong majority in the National Assembly in legislative elections held in January 2002, particularly after the main opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) boycotted the legislative elections.

President Jammeh won the September 2006 elections with 67% of the vote while the opposition alliance won a total of 27%. In the January 2007 parliamentary elections, Jammeh's APRC won 42 of the available 48 seats. While both the September and January elections were declared credible, several sources have reported increased oversight of journalists in the preceding months. A failed coup in March 2006 had a major effect on The Gambia's political climate. Since then President Jammeh has taken far-reaching steps to maintain power.

ECONOMY

The Gambia has a liberal, market-based economy characterized by traditional subsistence agriculture, a historic reliance on groundnuts (peanuts) for export earnings, a re-export trade built up around its ocean port, low import duties, minimal adminis-

trative procedures, a fluctuating exchange rate with no exchange controls, and a significant tourism industry.

Agriculture accounts for roughly 30% of gross domestic product (GDP) and employs about 70% of the labor force. Within agriculture, peanut production accounts for 6.9% of GDP, other crops 8.3%, livestock 5.3%, fishing 1.8%, and forestry 0.5%. Industry accounts for approximately 8% of GDP and services approximately 58%. The limited amount of manufacturing is primarily agricultural-based (e.g., peanut processing, bakeries, a brewery, and a tannery). Other manufacturing activities include soap, soft drinks, and clothing.

Previously, the U.K. and other EU countries constituted The Gambia's major domestic export markets. However, in recent years Senegal, the United States, and Japan have gained fair proportions of Gambian exports. In Africa, Senegal represented the biggest trade partner of The Gambia in 2007, which is a defining contrast to previous years that saw Guinea-Bissau and Ghana as equally important trade partners. Globally, Denmark, the United States, and China have become important source countries for Gambian imports. The U.K., Germany, Cote d'Ivoire, and Netherlands also provide a fair share of Gambian imports. Gambia's trade deficit for 2007 was $331 million.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Gambia followed a formal policy of nonalignment throughout most of former President Jawara's tenure. It maintained close relations with the United Kingdom, Senegal, and other African countries. The July 1994 coup strained The Gambia's relationship with Western powers, particularly the United States, which until 2002 suspended most non-humanitarian assistance in accordance with Section 508 of the Foreign Assistance Act. Since 1995, President Jammeh has established diplomatic relations with several additional countries, including Libya, Taiwan and Cuba. The Gambia plays an active role in international affairs, especially West African and Islamic affairs, although its representation abroad is limited. As a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), The Gambia has played an active role in that organization's efforts to resolve the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and contributed troops to the community's ceasefire monitoring group (ECOMOG) in 1990 and (ECOMIL) in 2003. It also has sought to mediate disputes in nearby Guinea-Bissau and the neighboring Casamance region of Senegal. The Government of The Gambia believes Senegal was complicit in the March 2006 failed coup attempt. This has put increasing strains on relations between The Gambia and its neighbor. The subsequent worsening of the human rights situation has placed increasing strains of U.S.-Gambia relations.

U.S.-GAMBIAN RELATIONS

U.S. policy seeks to build improved relations with The Gambia on the basis of historical ties, mutual respect, democratic rule, human rights, and adherence to UN resolutions on counter-terrorism, conflict diamonds, and other forms of trafficking. Following The Gambia's successful presidential and legislative elections in October 2001 and January 2002, respectively, the U.S. Government determined that a democratically elected government had assumed office and thus lifted the sanctions it had imposed against The Gambia in accordance with Section 508 of the Foreign Assistance Act as a result of the 1994 coup. U.S. assistance supports democracy, human rights, girls' education, and the fight against HIV/AIDS. In addition, the Peace Corps maintains a large program with about 100 volunteers engaged in the environment, public health, and education sectors, mainly at the village level.

Relations with the U.S. have not been improved significantly due to the human rights and freedom of press shortcomings, which resulted in the suspension of The Gambia's compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in June 2006. The Gambia became eligible for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) on January 1, 2003.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BANJUL (E) Kairaba Avenue, Fajara PMB 19, APO/FPO 2070 Banjul Pl, Dulles VA 20189-2070, [220] 439-2856, Fax [220] 439-2475, Workweek: Monday-Thursday 0800-1730, Friday 0800-1200, Website: http://www.usembassybanjul.gm.

DCM/CHG:	Brian D. Bachman
POL/ECO:	Menaka M. Nayyar
AMB:	Barry L. Wells
CON:	Wendy Kennedy
GSO:	Sharon E. Gordon
RSO:	Eleanor Holloway
ICASS Chair:	Brian D. Bachman
IMO:	Maureen A. Monetta
IPO:	Ross L. Klinger
State ICASS:	Brian D. Bachman

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 23, 2008

Country Description: The Gambia is a developing country in western Africa, and the capital is Banjul. The official language is English. Facilities for tourism in the Banjul area are good; however, outside the capital region, tourist facilities are limited in availability and quality.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa, and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required. The current fee for a two-year visa for Americans is $100.00 (U.S. Dollars).

The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends obtaining a Gambian visa in advance of arrival.

Travelers who do not obtain the necessary visa before arrival in The Gambia will have their passports stamped at the port of entry with a 24, 48 or 72 hour pass and are required to report to Banjul Immigration Department to document their stay. Banjul Immigration grants permission to remain for one month for about $16. Extensions require additional visits to the Gambian Immigration Department and additional fees.

A $10.00 (U.S. dollars) tourist levy is charged upon arrival at the airport. Payment is only accepted in U.S. dollars, British pounds, or Euros. NOTE: Charter flights should have this fee included in the price of the ticket.

Travelers are urged to obtain the latest information on customs and entry requirements from the Embassy of The Gambia, 1156 15th Street, NW, Suite 905, Washington, DC 20005; telephone (202) 785-1399, fax (202) 785-1430; or from the Permanent Mission of The Gambia to the U.N. at 820 Second Avenue, Suite 900-C, New York, NY, 10071; Telephone (212) 949-6640. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Gambian embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of The Gambia web site at www.gambiaembassy.us for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The Gambia has not experienced any acts of terrorism or other major issues of safety and security, but The Gambia borders the Casamance region of Senegal, which is home to a long-running low-intensity conflict. Like most countries in the region, conditions are always subject to change and travelers should check with the US Embassy if they have specific concerns. Demonstrations are rare in The Gambia.

Travelers driving a vehicle in The Gambia are obligated to stop at all roadblocks or road checkpoints in the country. Drivers should not reverse direction to avoid a road checkpoint or make any movements that security personnel may view as suspicious or provocative. For travel to the nearby Casamance region of Senegal, please see the Country Specific Information for Senegal.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Petty street crime is a problem in The Gambia. Travelers should be careful of pickpockets in crowded markets areas and on ferries. Packages or luggage should never be left unattended, especially in taxis. U.S. citizens in The Gambia should be careful not to leave valuables or identity documents unsecured in hotel rooms or cars. Travelers should also be cautious of individuals who persistently offer unsolicited help.

Visitors and resident U.S. citizens should drive with their windows up and doors locked while driving due to several reported residential and automobile burglaries, including theft from occupied cars stopped in traffic with the windows open or doors unlocked. Long-term residents should consider hiring a security guard for their home to prevent burglary and theft.

Women should avoid walking alone especially after dark including beach and tourist areas. In addition, female visitors to The Gambia should be particularly cautious of men locally known as "bumsters" who approach them wishing "just to get to know you" or offering to be a tour guide. Bumsters often use romance in hopes of gaining money and/or assistance of various types, or in hopes of departing The Gambia through marriage to a Westerner. Travelers are advised to be polite but decisive in turning down unwanted help or attempts at conversation.

Business fraud, long associated with other parts of West Africa, has also been reported in The Gambia. The U.S. embassy has received reports of several scams recently in which U.S. businesses send, but do not receive payment for shipments. U.S. citizens should be very suspicious of any unsolicited offers to participate in lucrative business opportunities, especially if they require financial disclosures, money transfers, large up-front investments, or promises of confidentiality. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of fraud is common sense–if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. You should be suspicious of any unsolicited business proposal originating in The Gambia. Carefully scrutinize all proposals before you commit any funds, provide any goods or services, or undertake any travel. For additional information, please see the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, International Financial Scams.

The U.S. embassy has also been contacted by several victims of internet scams perpetrated in The Gambia. Generally, an American citizen befriends someone or gets engaged to someone over the internet. This person, who can claim to be an American or a Gambian citizen, generally requests financial assistance from the American due to urgent medical treatment required, claims of improper imprisonment, harassment by local authorities, or a variety of other reasons. In most of these cases, the person with whom the American has been corresponding is using a fake identity and is in no need of assistance. In general, Americans are advised not to send money to anyone they have not met in person. For more information on this type of scam, please refer to the State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, International Financial Scams, specifically the section entitled, "Gorgeous People in Trouble—The Damsel in Distress."

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while over-

seas, in addition to reporting the crime to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Please contact the U.S. Embassy in Banjul for a list of lawyers practicing in The Gambia, or visit the Embassy's web site at http://banjul.usembassy.gov/public_services/legal-services.html.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in The Gambia is: 116 for Ambulatory services, 117 for police assistance, and 118 for fire. The Gambian Police Force operates another 24 hour emergency line at (220)422-4914. Please be advised that the emergency numbers listed may or may not have an English-speaking operator available.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in The Gambia are very limited, some treatments are unavailable, and emergency services can be unpredictable and unreliable. Travelers should carry their own supplies of prescription as well as over-the-counter medicines or treatments. See the "Special Circumstances" section below for further information on prescription drugs.

Malaria is a serious risk to travelers in The Gambia. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in amalaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what anti-malarial medications they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarial drugs, visit the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/faq.htm.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

There are no HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of The Gambia at this time.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning The Gambia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel in The Gambia is difficult due to poor road conditions, particularly during the rainy season, which generally lasts from June through October. Although there are paved main roads in the greater Banjul area, many are poorly maintained and poorly lit. With the installation of street lights on some roads in the Banjul area, some drivers no longer use their vehicle lights at night. Most roads outside the Banjul Area are still unlit and unpaved. Livestock and pedestrians pose road hazards throughout the country, including in the greater Banjul area. Drivers and pedestrians should exercise extreme caution to prevent accidents.

Numerous accidents are caused by intoxicated drivers. Tests are rarely done to determine levels of intoxication. If you are suspected of causing an accident while intoxicated, and the case is taken to trial, you may be subject to a substantial fine or imprisonment.

The police do not consistently apply traffic laws and regulations, and sometimes compel drivers to pay fines on the spot for violations, real or contrived. Written citations/tickets are rarely given. Police periodically set up impromptu traffic stops on major streets to check for drivers' licenses and proper insurance. Drivers should not attempt to drive around these traffic stops.

Caution should be exercised when using taxis, particularly at night. Most taxis lack safety belts and some are not road-worthy.

Government convoys frequently travel at high speeds and often in either or both lanes of traffic, including in the oncoming traffic lane, requiring cars to move off the road. Whenever there are police lights or sirens, drivers should move off the road immediately and completely to avoid collisions.

There are no trauma centers in The Gambia and severe accidents often require evacuation to Senegal or Europe.

Water transportation in the region can be unpredictable and risky. Ferries rarely keep to their posted schedules. The ferries, which are often overcrowded, usually lack sufficient numbers of life preservers for all passengers. In particular, the wooden dugout "pirogues" that cross the Gambia River often leave shore overloaded and occasionally sink in the middle of the river. U.S. citizens are advised to exit their cars during the crossing. U.S. citizens who must cross the Gambia River are advised to use the Gambia Port Authority's Banjul-Barra or Yelitenda-Farafenni ferries, which are slower but safer than the privately operated pirogues.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.visitthegambia.gm.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of The Gambia's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of The Gambia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Gambian airlines do not offer service to the United States. Services provided by the West African regional air carriers that serve Banjul are sometimes unreliable. The airlines are known to alter scheduled stops, cancel or postpone flights on short notice, and regularly overbook flights. Travelers may experience unexpected delays even after checking in, and should be prepared to handle alternate ticketing and/or increased food and lodging expenses.

Special Circumstances: In addition to being subject to all of The Gambia's laws affecting foreign citizens, Americans who are also legal Gambian citizens may be subject, while in The Gambia to certain additional provisions of Gambian law. Dual nationals should inquire at a Gambian embassy or consulate regarding their status.

In May 2008 Gambian government leaders, including the country's president, strongly condemned homosexuality and advocated for greatly increased penalties for anyone harboring homosexuals. However, no legislative action has resulted. The Gambia's existing laws already criminalize homosexual sex acts, but current laws do not include the death penalty. Violations of the laws against homosexual sex acts are occasionally pursued and Gambian citizens have been prosecuted under these laws. In June 2008, two Western tourists were detained but not charged under this section of the criminal code. The Gambia has strict laws on the import and export of skin-bleaching creams and some medications. Visitors who arrive with substances containing hydroquinone, hydrocortisone, betamethasone, flucinonide, clobestatol, or clobestatone are subject to fines up to $2,000 and/or three years imprisonment. Airport police and customs officials routinely inspect incoming and outgoing luggage. Airline passengers are required to put their luggage through an x-ray machine before departing the airport. Travelers in possession of prescription drugs should carry proof of their prescriptions, such as labeled containers. Police have, on occasion, arrested foreigners carrying unlabeled pills. For a list of prohibited items, travelers should contact the nearest Gambian embassy or consulate.

It is against the law for tourists to photograph or film government buildings, including airports, military installations or embassies due to security concerns.

Gambian currency, the dalasi, is freely convertible but is not widely available outside the country. The Gambia has a cash economy and travelers should carry sufficient currency to cover all expenses for their visit. Visitors can exchange currency at banks or exchange bureaus. Changing money unofficially is prohibited and individuals who do so may face prosecution. Travelers should be aware that The Gambia has many last-minute holidays requiring banks and other businesses to close. Travelers should always have enough cash to carry them through unexpected bank closures.

Credit cards are accepted only at major hotels, some grocery stores, and a few restaurants. Local personal checks from U.S. citizens are accepted only at exchange bureaus and only from Americans who are resident in The Gambia. There are a few ATMs in the Banjul area, but they often malfunction or fail to issue receipts. ATMs only accept VISA cards for international transactions and only dispense a maximum of about $80.00 in local currency per transaction with three transactions allowed per day. Money transfers are widely available at Western Union branch offices in The Gambia.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law.

Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating The Gambia's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in The Gambia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in The Gambia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within The Gambia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 92 Kairaba Avenue in Fajara, a suburb of the capital city of Banjul. The mailing address is P.M.B.19, Banjul, The Gambia. Twenty-four hour telephone numbers are (220) 439-2856, 439-2858 and 439-1971; the fax is (220) 439-2475; and the web site is http://

www.usembassybanjul.gm. Normal business hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Mondays-Thursdays and till noon on Fridays.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The Government of Gambia passed into law a Children's Act in 2005 that includes laws governing adoptions in the country. Under this Act, the Children's Court has jurisdiction over matters of adoption; therefore, this court must approve all adoption applications. As of March 31, 2006, the Children's Court has only heard one case, and it was not related to adoptions.

Foreigners are allowed to adopt Gambian children only in exceptional circumstances. Prospective adoptive parents must be resident in The Gambia at least six month prior applying to adopt. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal issues immigrant visas for Gambian citizens, including adopted orphans.

Please review carefully the information found later in this flyer regarding the immigrant visa procedures at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar. Failure to comply with the Embassy's requirements could result in a denial of the child's visa case. U.S. Embassy Dakar's website is at: http://usembassy.state.gov/dakar.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate only one immigrant visa has been issued to a Gambian orphan in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The Children's Court, which has jurisdiction over adoption, coordinates with the Social Welfare Department in Gambia to process adoption applications.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptions by non-Gambian prospective adoptive parents are allowed only in exceptional circumstances. Adoptive parent(s) can be single or a married couple. The adoptive parent(s) must be at least 21 years old and at least 15 years older than the child, but not over age 60. The spouse of an applicant must also consent to the adoption. Single men may not adopt a female child, nor may single women adopt a male child.

The adoptive parent(s) must have fostered the child for a period of at least thirty-six months under the supervision of a Social Welfare Officer. Non-Gambian nationals must have residency in Gambia for at least six months, have no criminal record, and prove economic resources to support the child.

Residency Requirements: Non-Gambians are required to be resident for at least six months in Gambia. Prospective adoptive parents must foster the child for a minimum of thirty-six months under the supervision of a Social Welfare Officer. According to the Department of Social Welfare, the 36 months does not have to take place in Gambia, but must occur under the supervision of a qualified social welfare agency in the place of residence.

Time Frame: Currently no information is available on the timeframe for the adoption process in Gambia. Once the adoption process of the Children's Court is established, this information will be updated.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The Children's Court handles all adoption cases. There are neither specific adoption lawyers nor adoption agencies in Gambia. At this time no private attorneys have brought adoption cases before the Children's Court.

Adoption Fees: The cost of an adoption decree has not yet been determined. According to the Department of Social Welfare in Gambia, no fees are charged for processing an adoption.

The S.O.S. Village, the only orphanage in Gambia, also reported that it does not charge adoption fees. They refer all inquiries to the Department of Social Welfare. The fee for a Gambian passport is 500 dalasi (USD 18).

Adoption Procedures: The process begins with an application submitted to the Children's Court. The Children's Act of 2005 does not give further details of this process and the Court has not yet heard an adoption case to set precedent or issue procedures.

The U.S. Embassy in Banjul and the Department of State's Office of Children's Issues are tracking closely the development of this area of law and any precedents the Children's Court may set, and this flyer will be updated as such information becomes available.

Required Documents: The Children's Act does not list specific documents that are required for adoption, and the Children's Court has not yet announced specific requirements.

Embassy of Gambia

1156 15th Street, N.W., Suite 905

Washington, D.C. 20005

TEL: (202) 785-1399
fax (202) 785-1430

www.gambiaembassy.us

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
92 Kairaba Avenue
Fajara, Gambia
(P.M.B. 19, Banjul)
TEL: +(220) 439-2856
FAX: +(220) 439-2475
EMAIL: ConsularBanjul@state.gov
Website: http://usembassybanjul.gm

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in The Gambia may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Banjul. Questions about the U.S. immigrant visa process for Gambian children should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



GEORGIA

Compiled from the February 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Georgia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 69,700 square kilometers; slightly smaller than South Carolina; 20% of total territory is not under government control.
Cities: Capital Tbilisi (population 1.1 million, 2002).
Terrain: Mostly rugged and mountainous.
Climate: Generally moderate; mild on the Black Sea coast with cold winters in the mountains.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective Georgian(s).
Population: (July 2007 est.) 4.65 million.
Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 0.33%.
Ethnic groups: (2002 census) Georgian 83.8%, Azeri 6.5%, Armenian 5.7%, Russian 1.5%, other 2.5%.
Religions: (2002 census) Orthodox Christian 83.9%, Muslim 9.9%, Armenian Apostolic 3.9%, Catholic 0.8%; other 0.8%; none 0.7%.
Languages: Georgian (official), Abkhaz also "official language" in Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia.
Education: Years compulsory 11. Literacy (2004 est.) 100%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2007 est.) 17.36 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2007 est.) 76.3 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: August 24, 1995; amended February, April, and June 2004; December 2005; and January 2007.
Government branches: Executive: president with State Chancellery. Legislative: unicameral parliament, 235 members. Judicial: Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and local courts.
Political subdivisions: 67 electoral districts, including those within the two autonomous republics (Abkhazia and Adjara) and five independent cities.
Political parties: United National Movement-Democrats [Mikheil Saakashvili]; Industry Will Save Georgia (Industrialists) [Georgi Topadze]; Labor Party [Shalva Natelashvili]; National Democratic Party [Bachuki Kardava]; New Rights [David Gamkrelidze]; Republican Party [David Usupashvili]; Traditionalists [Akaki Asatiani]; Union of National Forces-Conservatives [Koba Davitashvili and Zviad Dzidziguri], Georgia's Way [Salome Zourabichvili].
Suffrage: Universal over 18 years of age.

Economy

GDP: $6.46 billion (2006).
GDP per capita: $3,800, purchasing power parity (2006).
GDP growth: 9.4% in 2006 and 11.4% in the 1st quarter of 2007.
Inflation rate: 7.3% (end of June 2007).
Natural resources: Forests, hydropower, nonferrous metals, manganese, iron ore, copper, citrus fruits, tea, wine.
Industry: Types—steel, aircraft, machine tools, foundry equipment (automobiles, trucks, and tractors), tower cranes, electric welding equipment, fuel re-exports, machinery for food packing, electric motors, textiles, shoes, chemicals, wood products, bottled water, and wine.
Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$1.76 billion. Partners: United Kingdom, Turkey, United States, Spain, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan. Imports—$3.32 billion. Partner: Turkey, United States, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Germany, Italy.
Work force: (2.02 million in 2005) Agriculture 40%, industry: 20%, services: 40%.
Unemployment: (2005 est.) 13.8%.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Georgia's recorded history dates back more than 2,500 years. Georgian, a South Caucasian (or "Kartvelian") language unrelated to any other outside the immediate region, is one of the oldest living languages in the

world, and has its own distinctive alphabet. Tbilisi, located in the picturesque Mtkvari River valley, is more than 1,500 years old. In the early 4th century Georgia adopted Christianity, the second nation in the world to do so officially. Georgia has historically found itself on the margins of great empires, and Georgians have lived together in a unified state for only a small fraction of their existence as a people. Much of Georgia's territory was fought over by Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Mongol, and Turkish armies from at least the 1st century B.C. through the 18th century. The zenith of Georgia's power as an independent kingdom came in the 11th and 12th centuries, during the reigns of King David the Builder and Queen Tamara, who still rank among the most celebrated of all Georgian rulers. In 1783 the king of Kartli (in eastern Georgia) signed the Treaty of Georgievsk with the Russians, by which Russia agreed to take the kingdom as its protectorate. In 1801, the Russian empire began the piecemeal process of unifying and annexing Georgian territory, and for most of the next two centuries (1801-1991) Georgia found itself ruled from St. Petersburg and Moscow. Exposed to modern European ideas of nationalism under Russian tutelage, Georgians like the writer Ilya Chavchavadze began calling for greater Georgian independence. In the wake of the collapse of tsarist rule and war with the Turks, the first Republic of Georgia was established on May 26, 1918, and the country enjoyed a brief period of independence under the Menshevik president, Noe Zhordania. However, in March 1921, the Russian Red Army re-occupied the country, and Georgia became a republic of the Soviet Union. Several of the Soviet Union's most notorious leaders in the 1920s and 1930s were Georgian, such as Joseph Stalin, Sergo Orjonikidze, and Lavrenti Beria. In the postwar period, Georgia was perceived as one of the wealthiest and most privileged of Soviet republics, and many Russians treated the country's Black Sea coast as a kind of Soviet Riviera. On April 9, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia declared independence from the U.S.S.R.

Beset by ethnic and civil strife from independence in 1991, Georgia began to stabilize in 1995. The separatist conflicts in Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain unresolved, although cease-fires are in effect. In Abkhazia, the Commonwealth of Independent States (in fact, only Russian forces) maintains a peacekeeping force, and the United Nations maintains an Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), both of which monitor compliance with the 1994 cease-fire agreement. In South Ossetia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has the prime role in monitoring the 1992 cease-fire and facilitating negotiations. A Joint Peacekeeping Force composed of Georgian, Russian, and Ossetian troops patrols the region.

The Georgian Government stakes much of its future on the revival of the ancient Silk Road as a Eurasian transportation corridor, using Georgia's geography as a bridge for the transit of goods, including oil and gas, between Europe and Asia. Georgians are renowned for their hospitality and artistry in dance, theater, music, and design.

GOVERNMENT

Georgia has been a democratic republic since the presidential elections and constitutional referendum of October 1995. The President is elected for a term of 5 years, limited to 2 terms; his constitutional successor is the Speaker of Parliament.

Parliamentary elections on November 2, 2003 were marred by irregularities and fraud according to local and international observers. Popular demonstrations ensued in the streets of Tbilisi; protestors carried roses in their hands and these peaceful protests became known as the Rose Revolution. Former President Eduard Shevardnadze resigned on November 23, 2003, and the Speaker of Parliament Nino Burjanadze assumed the role of Interim President. President Mikheil Saakashvili was elected to a 5-year term in January 2004. Parliamentary elections were re-held in March 2004 and President Saakashvili's party, National Movement, combined with Speaker Burjanadze's party, the Burjanadze-Democrats, won the majority of seats. On May 24, 2005, the Parliament passed legislation to decentralize power from the central government in Tbilisi to local government authorities in the regions. Elections were held on October 5, 2006 to elect 1,732 members of 69 local councils and seven city governments.

In September 2007, following the arrest of former Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili, nine opposition parties formed the United National Council (UNC) and issued four demands to the government, including moving up parliamentary elections from the fall to the spring of 2008. The Council organized protests throughout Georgia in October and staged a large rally in front of the Parliament on November 2. Opposition leaders began to demand the president's resignation, and violence ensued when the police dispersed protesters in front of the Parliament on November 7. As a result, President Saakashvili officially resigned on November 25 and called snap presidential elections for January 5, 2008.

On January 5, President Saakashvili was reelected to a second 5-year term with 53.45% of the vote. Levan Gachechiladze, the UNC candidate, earned 25.68%. Voters also overwhelmingly voted in two plebiscites in favor of NATO integration and spring parliamentary elections.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Mikheil SAAKASHVILI**
Speaker of Parliament: **Davit BAKRADZE**
Prime Minister: **Vladimir "Lado" GURGENIDZE**
Vice Premier: **Giorgi BARAMIDZE**
Min. of Agriculture: **Bakur KVEZERELI**
Min. of Culture: **Nika VACHEISHVILI**
Min. of Defense: **Davit KEZERASHVILI**
Min. of Economic Development: **Eka SHARASHIDZE**
Min. of Education & Science: **Gia NODIA**



Min. of Energy: **Alexander KHETAGURI**
Min. of Environment: **Irakli GVALADZE**
Min. of Finance: **Nikoloz GILAURI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Eka TKESHELASHVILI**
Min. of Health & Social Welfare: **Sandro KVITASHVILI**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Vano MERABISHVILI**
Min. of Justice: **Nika GVARAMIA**
State Min. for Diaspora Affairs: **Iulon GAGOSHADZE**
State Min. for Euro-Atlantic Integration: **Giorgi BARAMIDZE**
State Min. for Refugees & Accommodation:
State Min. for Regional Policies: **Davit TKESHELASHVILI**
State Min. for Reintegration: **Temur IAKOBASHVILI**
Prosecutor General:
Sec., National Security Council: **Kakha LOMAIA**
Chmn., National Bank (Acting): **David AMAGLOBELI**

Ambassador to the US: **Vasil "David" SIKHARULIDZE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Irakli ALASANIA**

Georgia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2209 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 387-2390, fax (202) 393-4537.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since 2004, the Government of Georgia has turned a nearly failed state into a rapidly maturing market democracy. Parliamentary and municipal elections have been judged to be largely free and fair, although problems remain with voter lists. The new government took action against endemic corruption. It completely reorganized the traffic police, which was infamous for its corruption prior to the Rose Revolution. Corrupt judges were dismissed, and a fair examination system for entering the universities was implemented. Georgia has received high marks from the World Bank and others on the government's aggressive anti-corruption campaign. Democratic institutions were strengthened as public service reform gained momentum and judicial reform was acknowledged as a priority. Constitutional amendments signed into law in 2006 increased the independence of the judiciary; further reforms have aimed at increasing respect for and strengthening the rule of law. In July 2007, legislation banning ex parte communication was passed, prohibiting parties to a case from communicating with judges during the pre-trial investigation period

as well as during the trial. Legislation requiring the Ministry of Justice to establish a legal aid office was also passed, making available assistance and representation in court proceedings to those who request it. The Georgian legislature has instituted political reforms supportive of higher human rights standards, including religious freedoms that are enshrined in the constitution. The government has launched an aggressive campaign to combat trafficking in persons.

Georgia is seeking membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions, particularly the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and eventually the European Union (EU), and much progress has been made reforming Georgia's military. In September 2006, NATO granted Georgia Intensified Dialogue on requirements for membership in the organization.

The separatist conflict in Abkhazia continues to simmer, with frequent accusations from the Georgian Government that ethnic Georgians in Abkhazia face discrimination from the Abkhaz de facto authorities. The Abkhaz de facto authorities seek full independence from Georgia, and are currently refusing talks following the reassertion of Georgian Government control over the upper Kodori Valley area of Abkhazia in the summer of 2006. Since December 1993, the United Nations has chaired negotiations toward a settlement in Abkhazia. The UN mediator is the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), currently Ambassador Jean Arnault. The Group of Friends of the UN Secretary General on Georgia (consisting of the United States, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom) supports the UN-led peace process. UNOMIG and the Friends continue to encourage the adoption of confidence-building measures in the region. The Georgian Government has repeatedly expressed its desire to internationalize the CIS peacekeeping contingent but has made no official demand for the peacekeepers in Abkhazia to leave. For more information on the separatist conflict in Georgia's Abkhazia region, see the Department of State's fact sheet on Abkhazia http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/53745.htm. The United States supports the strengthening of Georgia's territorial integrity through peaceful means. Unilaterally and as a member of the Group of Friends, the U.S. seeks to advance negotiations toward a comprehensive settlement of the conflict, including on Abkhazia's future status within Georgia and the safe and dignified return of refugees and internally-displaced persons.

The 1992 Sochi Agreement established a cease-fire between the Georgian and South Ossetian forces, and defined both a zone of conflict around the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali and a security corridor along the border of South Ossetian territories. The South Ossetia region is comprised of a patchwork of Georgian villages interspersed with ethnic Ossetian villages. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitors the cease-fire and facilitates negotiations between the Georgians and the South Ossetians toward a comprehensive settlement consistent with Georgian independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The Agreement also created the Joint Control Commission (JCC) and a peacekeeping body, the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF). The JPKF is under Russian command and is comprised of peacekeepers from Georgia, Russia, and Russia's North Ossetian autonomous republic. South Ossetian peacekeepers serve in the North Ossetian contingent. Talks on South Ossetia are held under the auspices of the JCC, with Georgian, Russian, North Ossetian, and South Ossetian delegations participating. The Georgian Government has frequently complained that the current format for talks puts Georgia at a disadvantage, and would like greater participation by the international community.

In January of 2005, Georgian President Saakashvili put forth a proposal to give autonomous status to South Ossetia within Georgia. The United States welcomed President Saakashvili's initiative to resolve the conflict through peaceful means and continues to look for ways to encourage a lasting resolution of the conflict. An alternative leader in South Ossetia emerged in November 2006, when ethnic Ossetian Dmitry Sanakoyev was elected in a de facto presidential election, largely by the ethnic Georgian population. Sanakoyev heads a Temporary Administrative Unit in Kurta, South Ossetia.

The United States supports the territorial integrity of Georgia and supports a peaceful resolution of the conflict within Georgia's internationally recognized borders, while affording South Ossetia significant autonomy within a unified Georgia. The United States views Georgia's autonomy proposal as an important step in a peace process that should be marked by direct and frequent negotiations between the two sides. International donors, including the United States, launched an economic rehabilitation project in 2006 to help establish a peaceful and prosperous future for South Ossetia within Georgia. For more information on the separatist conflict in Georgia's South Ossetia region, see the Department of State's fact sheet on South Ossetia http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/53721.htm.

ECONOMY

The Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia was one of the most prosperous and envied locations in the former Soviet Union. The political turmoil after independence had a catastrophic effect on Georgia's economy. The cumulative decline in real GDP is estimated to have been more than 70% between 1990 and 1994, and by the end of 1996, Georgia's economy had shrunk to around one-third of its size in 1989. Today, the largest share of Georgia's GDP is produced by agriculture, followed by trade, manufacturing, and transport. Georgia's main exports are metals and ores, wine, nuts, and aircraft.Although Georgia experienced some years of growth in the mid-1990s, it was hit hard by the Russian economic crisis of 1998-99. The later years of former President Shevardnadze's administration were marked by rampant cronyism, cor-

ruption, and mismanagement. Public disaffection with the situation resulted in the Rose Revolution of 2003. The new government, led by Mikheil Saakashvili, promised to reorient the government and the economy toward privatization, free markets, and reduced regulation, to combat corruption, to stabilize the economy, and to bring order to the budget.

The government reduced the number of taxes from 21 to 7 and introduced a flat income tax of 12%. It significantly reduced the number of licenses a business requires, and introduced a "one-window" system that allows an entrepreneur to open a business relatively quickly. Strict deadlines for agency action on permits were introduced, and consent is assumed if the agency fails to act within the time limit. The government intends to completely eliminate import duties by 2008, which should reduce costs and stimulate business.

The World Bank recognized Georgia as the world's fastest-reforming economy in its 2008 "Doing Business" report, ranking it as the world's 18th easiest place to do business, in the same league as countries such as Germany, Sweden, and Estonia. The World Bank's "Anti-Corruption in Transition 3" report places Georgia among the countries showing the most dramatic improvement in the struggle against corruption, due to implementation of key economic and institutional reforms, and reported reduction in the bribes paid by firms in the course of doing business.

Economic growth has remained strong, reaching 8% in 2006; inflation reached 10% in the same year but decreased to 7.3% in the first six months of 2007. Efforts to improve the efficiency of government operations since the Rose Revolution have required the government to release workers, pushing official unemployment to 13.8% in 2005. A strongly negative balance of trade is offset by inflows of investment and assistance from international donors. The fiscal deficit was 2.9% of GDP in 2006 according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Improved collection and administration of taxes have greatly increased revenues for the government. In two years, from 2003 to 2005, tax collections went up from 13.8% of GDP to 20.8%. The government has been able to pay off wage and pension arrears and increase spending on desperately needed infrastructure such as roads and electric energy supply systems. The government privatized nine times the value of state-owned assets in 2005 as it did in all of 2000-2003. It expects to have privatized all of the largest state-owned industries by the end of 2008, increasing revenues and removing a major temptation toward corruption from the control of state bureaucrats.

Before 2004, electricity blackouts were common throughout the country, but since late 2005, distribution has been much more reliable, approaching consistent 24-hour-a-day service. Improvements have resulted from increased metering, better billing and collection practices, reduced theft, and management reforms. Investments in infrastructure have been made as well. Hydroelectricity output increased by almost 27%, and thermal by 28%, from 2005 to 2006. Natural gas has traditionally been supplied to Georgia by Russia. Through conservation, new hydroelectricity sources, and the availability of new sources of natural gas in Azerbaijan, Georgia's dependence on Russia for energy supplies should decrease in the near future.

The banking sector is becoming more open to competition from foreign-owned banks. The sector is relatively stable, and is supplying more credit to domestic businesses. Credit from Georgian banks to the economy was 15% of GDP in 2005, compared to 10% in 2004—still low, compared to the average in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland for 2005, which was 36%. Foreign direct investment (FDI) is the most important source of capital for Georgia and other post-Soviet states. Such investment not only supports new plants and equipment, but usually entails bringing in modern management methods as well. The Georgian Government is eager to welcome foreign investors. From 2002 to 2006, FDI averaged 9% of GDP, with much of it dedicated to the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the South Caucasus gas pipeline. In 2006, which saw diminishing pipeline investment as a function of total FDI, more than half of FDI went to the banking, manufacturing, and tourism sectors.

Georgia faces many challenges in attracting foreign investment and growing its economy. In 2006, more than 50% of the population lived below the official poverty line. With only 4.7 million people, most of whom have little disposable income, it is a small market in itself. The major market to which Georgia has traditionally been linked is Russia. (For example, at one time nearly 100% of the Soviet Union's citrus fruits were grown in Georgia.) In 2006, trade relations were plagued by politically motivated interruptions when Russia imposed bans on all Georgian exports of wine, fruits and vegetables, and mineral water. In October 2006, Russia severed all direct transportation links, as well as postal service and visa issuance. In addition, Russia undertook a campaign of deportations of Georgian nationals residing in Russia and closed the only legal land border crossing between Georgia and Russia, diverting traffic into the separatist regions outside of Georgia's control. In light of these restrictions, Georgian businesses are actively seeking new markets for their products in the EU, Eastern Europe, North America, and elsewhere. Reports confirm that the sanctions have not had an adverse effect on the economy; in fact, exports have increased since the beginning of 2006 because Georgia was forced to find alternate markets for its goods.

The government faces a major challenge in controlling corruption, which is a persistent problem. Shortly after President Saakashvili took office, his administration dismissed nearly the entire police force and replaced it with better-paid and -trained officers. Several high officials have been prosecuted for corruption-related offenses. On the other hand, widespread lack of confidence in the Geor-

gian courts and system of justice is a major obstacle to both foreign and domestic investment. The new government has promised to tackle this difficult task, which requires balancing the objective of judicial independence with honest, fair, and competent decision making.

The United States and other international donors have targeted foreign assistance to promote democratic reform, resolve regional conflicts, foster energy independence, assist economic development, and reduce poverty. The U.S. seeks to help Georgia consolidate democratic gains since the Rose Revolution. The USG lends significant diplomatic and funding support to Georgia's efforts to resolve the separatist conflicts of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. With USG assistance, Georgia is working to free itself from near total energy dependence on Russian sources of energy. Georgia is one of the first countries to receive a compact, in the amount of $295 million over five years, from the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). MCC offers grant assistance to countries that meet certain requirements for good governance and commitment to reform. In 2004, Georgia's debt to the Paris Club was restructured. Since 2004, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has monitored a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility that will terminate in 2007. The World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, EU, OSCE, and the UN are all active in Georgia. Their goals are complementary, and include assisting in conflict resolution in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, energy and transportation development, legal and administrative reform, health, and many other areas.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Georgia's location between the Black Sea, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey gives it importance as a transport corridor far beyond its size. It is developing as the gateway from the Black Sea to the Caucasus and the Caspian basin. Following Russian bans on imports of Georgian wine, water, and agricultural products, and the severing of transportation links in 2006, Georgia has reached out to other neighbors and to the West to diversify its export markets. It signed a partnership and cooperation agreement with the European Union, and in 2006 signed an action plan under the European Union's European Neighborhood Policy for reforms aimed at building a closer relationship with the EU. Georgia participates in NATO's Partnership for Peace program. In September 2006, Georgia was granted Intensified Dialogue with NATO to formalize discussions on Georgia's membership aspirations. In addition, Georgia has reached out to a number of countries that have expressed interest in investing in the country. China, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, and Ukraine, as well as a number of European Union countries (including Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) maintain embassies in Tbilisi. Georgia is a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Trade Organization, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM.

U.S.-GEORGIA RELATIONS

U.S.-Georgia relations continue to be close. Extensive U.S. assistance is targeted to support Georgia's democratic, economic, and security reform programs, with an emphasis on institution-building and implementing lasting reforms. The United States has provided Georgia approximately $1.7 billion in assistance since 1991. On September 12, 2005, Georgia signed a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation for a five-year $295.3 million assistance package. Information about U.S. assistance to Georgia can be found at http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/66198.htm.

The United States works closely with Georgia to promote mutual security and counterterrorism interests. The United States provides Georgia with bilateral security assistance, including English-language and military professionalism training, through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. The multi-year Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) ended in 2004, achieving its intended goals of enhancing Georgia's military capability and stimulating military reform. Launched in January 2005, the Georgia Sustainment and Stability Operations Program has advanced GTEP's goals and trained the Georgian contingent participating in coalition operations in Iraq. Partnership with the Georgia (U.S.) National Guard, visits by the Sixth Fleet and the Coast Guard to Georgia, and the Bilateral Working Group on Defense and Military Cooperation are also important components of our security relationship with Georgia. Promoting democracy and reform is another strategic pillar of our bilateral relationship with Georgia. In April 2006 the government passed a strong anti-trafficking-in-persons law. Since then, the government has taken further constructive steps to combat trafficking in persons. In 2007, Georgia moved up to the Tier 1 list, meaning that it fully complies with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

TBILISI (E) 11 George Balanchine Street, Tbilisi, Georgia, 0131, APO/FPO Unit 7060, APO AE 09742-7060, 995 32 277000, Fax 995 32 532310, INMARSAT Tel 2 INMARSATS 683130425/BGAN 870772242768; 2 Thurayas +8821652073174 & +8821651072639, Workweek: M-F; 0900-1800, Website: http://georgia.usembassy.gov.

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AMB:	John Tefft
CON:	Lindsay Henderson
DCM:	Mark Perry
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GSO:	Brian Anselman
RSO:	John Galido
AGR:	Sean Carmody
AID:	Robert Wilson
CLO:	Georgetta Caroll
DAO:	Col. Matthew Brand
FIN:	Timothy Grewe
FMO:	Kristen Heslink-Purcell
ICASS Chair:	Bridget Brink
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 18, 2008

Country Description: Georgia is a constitutional republic with a developing economy. Tourist facilities outside of Tbilisi are not highly developed, and many of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries are not yet available.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. U.S. citizens visiting for 90 days or less do not need a visa to enter Georgia. Armenian and Azerbaijani visas are no longer valid for transit through Georgia. For further information, please contact the Embassy of Georgia at 2209 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington DC, 20008 tel. (202) 387-2390, fax: (202) 393-4537. Visit the Embassy of Georgia web site at http://embassy.mfa.gov.ge for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: As a result of civil wars in the 1980s and early 1990s, there are two separatist regions in Georgia that are not under the control of the Government of Georgia: South Ossetia, in north-central Georgia; and Abkhazia, in northwest Georgia. Tensions are high between the separatist regions and the central government, and fighting broke out in August 2008 between separatist, Georgian, and Russian forces. The situation remains tense, with Russian troops stationed in both separatist regions and in adjacent territory within Georgia proper. Due to the volatility of the political situation, high levels of crime, and inability of Embassy personnel to travel to Abkhazia or South Ossetia, the U.S. Embassy advises American citizens not to travel to these separatist-controlled areas. The restricted access of U.S. officials to Abkhazia and South Ossetia significantly limits the ability of the U.S. Government to assist American citizens in these regions, even in emergencies. All travelers to these regions, should register with the U.S. Embassy. The U.S. Embassy recommends that Americans regularly monitor warden messages on the Embassy web site for the latest information on the security situation throughout Georgia.

Serious fighting occurred between Georgian and combined separatist and Russian forces in August 2008 in some areas adjacent to the conflict zones of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, resulting in civilian casualties and the displacement of over 100,000 people. Russian forces occupied the area near the city of Gori in central Georgia for several days; Russian troops remain in areas near the western cities of Poti and Zugdidi. The risk of unexploded ordnance in areas where fighting occurred remains high, and Americans should avoid travel to those areas until they are cleared.

In addition to the recent violence, a number of attacks, criminal incidents, and kidnappings have occurred in the separatist regions over the past several years. On August 6, 2007, a missile was fired from an aircraft near a village between the city of Gori and the separatist region of South Ossetia. This incident serves as another reminder that the situation near the separatist areas is unpredictable. While Abkhaz "border officials" may demand that travelers entering the region purchase "visas" from the so-called "Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia," the U.S. Government recognizes the territorial integrity of Georgia.

Georgia's armed forces periodically conduct operations against suspected international terrorists, Chechen fighters, and criminals who have taken refuge in the Pankisi Gorge. American citizens should avoid all travel to the Pankisi Gorge. American citizens are also advised to exercise caution when traveling in the northern mountainous areas of Georgia bordering the Russian Federation, especially the Chechnya and Dagestan sectors. American citizens cannot legally cross by land, air, rail or sea between Russia and Georgia, even if in possession of valid Russian or Georgian visas.

Political demonstrations take place from time to time in Tbilisi, and normally take place in front of the Parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue. While these demonstrations are normally peaceful, confrontational demonstrations have occurred, and we wish to remind all Americans that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence.

Regardless of the region in Georgia one is planning to visit, American citizens are urged to review their personal security precautions, increase their levels of awareness, register with the consular section and as appropriate, take increased security measures. American citizens in Georgia are also advised to be aware of their surroundings at all times and to avoid straying off main roads or traveling after dark.

Religious minorities in Georgia have been targets of violent attacks. The victims were primarily Jehovah's Witnesses, but also include Pentecostals, Baptists, and members of the Assembly of God. Incidents included the burning of literature, the destruc-

tion of private property and the beating (sometimes severe) of believers, including American citizens. Although Georgian authorities arrested, convicted, and imprisoned the ringleader of the group responsible for these attacks in 2005, American citizens should remain cautious when engaging in missionary activity in Georgia.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is a very serious problem in Georgia. There is a great disparity in affluence between foreigners and most Georgians. Americans in particular are perceived as being wealthy, and are therefore targeted for economic- and property-based crimes. Most of the crimes involving Americans, as reported to the Embassy, are residential break-ins, carjackings, car theft, petty theft, and armed robbery. Petty street crime, such as pick pocketing, purse snatching, and cell phone theft, is also common throughout the country. Furthermore, violent attacks have become more commonplace. Illegal firearms are readily available in Georgia, so assailants are likely to be armed with firearms and other weapons.

Crime remains a particularly serious issue in Tbilisi, where criminal activity against foreigners remains at levels disproportionate to other metropolitan areas in Europe and the United States. Many robberies and assaults have occurred in areas frequented by American citizens and foreigners, such as on side streets near Tbilisi's city center; trouble spots include areas off the main avenues in the Vake and Vera districts, and Chavchavadze and Rustaveli avenues, as well as the Saburtalo region of Tbilisi. These crimes often occur when the victim is alone, after dark, and in unfamiliar surroundings.

Petty theft is also a problem on the Tbilisi metro system and in minivans, or "marshrutkas" used for public transport. American citizens are advised to use personal vehicles or use taxis from established companies that carry passengers door-to-door. While the security of overland travel in Georgia has improved, vehicular and rail traffic remains vulnerable to robbery.

The threat of kidnapping exists both within and outside of Tbilisi. In the past, foreign businessmen have been abducted for ransom, and Americans in the Tbilisi area have received kidnapping threats. The possibility of similar risk to Americans elsewhere in the country cannot be discounted.

Outside of Tbilisi, criminal activity is also a problem, especially in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, due to the reduced capacity of law enforcement in those areas. Other regions of concern include: upper Svanetia, Samtskhe-Javakheti, the administrative border with Abkhazia (including Zugdidi city), and areas along the border with Russia. When visiting or traveling through these regions, American citizens are urged to increase their vigilance, review their personal security precautions, and take appropriate security measures, e.g. traveling with a native Georgian escort familiar with the local area.

Despite much progress in the Georgian Government's efforts to reform police and fight internal corruption, serious concerns remain as to the police's ability to deter criminal activity or conduct effective post-incident investigations. Although police emergency response is good (see below for contact information), criminals continue to have freedom of movement throughout Tbilisi day or night.

In light of the serious crime situation, all American citizens visiting Georgia are again strongly advised to exercise basic security precautions. American travelers should vary times and routes, especially from places of residence to work locations. Americans should maintain a low profile by not carrying large amounts of cash, not wearing excessive amounts of jewelry, and not behaving in a manner that draws unnecessary attention. Additionally, Americans should be aware of their surroundings, travel in pairs or groups, and stay on main streets and routes. The Embassy recommends that those traveling throughout the country do so during daylight hours only and provide a travel itinerary and contact telephone numbers to a friend or business colleague. Americans should not hesitate to report any unusual incidents or suspicious vehicles or individuals to the Georgian authorities as soon as possible. Finally, those that do become a victim of crime should not resist their assailant and should cooperate with the assailant as best they can. Assailants are most interested in money and/or property; cooperation reduces the chance of being more seriously injured.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) has established a police emergency hotline. This service is currently limited to larger cities, but the MOIA is planning to expand this service countrywide. The local "911" equivalent to contact police in an emergency is: "022." Please note that the police dispatcher speaks only Georgian or Russian.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Georgia is limited. There is a severe shortage of basic medical supplies, including disposable needles, anesthetics, and antibiotics. Elderly travelers and those with pre-existing health problems may be at risk due to inadequate medical facilities. It is recommended that travelers who intend to visit Georgia for at least two weeks get the hepatitis A vaccine and a pre-exposure rabies vaccine. Travelers are also encouraged to bring medicine to treat diarrhea, which regularly afflicts newcomers. Georgian doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment before rendering medical services.

Tuberculosis (TB) is an increasingly serious health concern in Georgia. For further information, please consult the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Travel Notice on TB http://wwwn.cdc.gov.

For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet.

There are no restrictions on travel for HIV/AIDS positive tourist visitors to Georgia who plan to stay for 90 days or less. A recently enacted law, the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Foreigners, states that permanent residency can be denied for those carrying infectious diseases. It is unknown at this time if HIV/AIDS positive individuals would be denied permanent residency due to their HIV/AIDS infection alone, although Georgian Government officials have stated that it does not apply to HIV/AIDS carriers.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company before traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Georgia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

As in the United States, vehicular traffic in Georgia moves along the right side of roadways. Speed limits range from 80 to 100 km/hr on highways, and from 30 to 60 km/hr on urban thoroughfares. Motorists are not permitted to make right turns on red traffic lights. While legislation mandating seat belt use has yet to be enacted, drivers and passengers are strongly advised to buckle up on Georgian roads. Georgian law requires that children under seven (7) years of age be restrained in child-safety seats. A driver with any blood alcohol concentration exceeding 0.00% is considered to be driving under the influence of alcohol.

Motorists should exercise extreme caution when driving in Georgia, as many local drivers do not operate their vehicles in accordance with established traffic laws. Traffic signals and rules of the road are often completely ignored. Motorists drive erratically, often recklessly, and at excessive speeds. Motorists frequently encounter oncoming high-speed traffic attempting to pass other vehicles at blind turns or over hilltops. Pedestrians enjoy no right-of-way and need to be extremely careful when crossing streets. The Georgian Patrol Police, who come under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, are responsible for maintaining traffic safety in Georgia, but enforcement of traffic regulations is haphazard. Undivided two-lane roads connect most major cities in Georgia. Roads are generally in poor condition and often lack shoulder markings and centerlines. In addition, traffic signals may not work because of power outages or poor maintenance. Driving at night can be especially dangerous. Travel on mountain roads is treacherous in both rain and snow, and during winter, heavy snowfalls may make some roads impassable.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Georgia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Georgia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Travelers on regional airlines among the countries of the South Caucasus may experience prolonged delays and sudden cancellations of flights. In addition to frequent delays, flights are often overcrowded or overbooked. Basic safety features such as seat belts are sometimes missing. Air travel to Georgia on international carriers via Europe is typically more reliable. Ticketed passengers on flights departing from Georgia should reconfirm reservations with the airline 24 hours prior to departure.

Special Circumstances: Georgia has been subject to regular energy crises. During the winter months, frequent and prolonged power outages are common, especially outside of Tbilisi. The lack of lighting in public places, even when electricity is available, heightens vulnerability to crime (please see the Crime section above for details).

Georgia's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the temporary import into or export from Georgia of items such as alcohol, tobacco, jewelry, religious materials, art or artifacts, antiquities, and business equipment. Only personal medicines with a doctor's statement can be

imported without the permission of the Georgian Drug Agency section of the Ministry of Health.

American citizens may not import firearms into Georgia; however, hunting weapons may be brought into the country for a two-week period, based on valid Georgian hunting licenses. While there is no limit to the amount of currency that can be imported, if more money is exported than was declared at the time of entry, the traveler is obligated to prove it was legally obtained. There are limits on the amount of Georgian currency that may be exported. For additional customs information, American citizens should contact the Embassy of Georgia in Washington, DC.

American citizens should exercise extreme caution in purchasing property in Abkhazia. Land for sale in that region may rightfully belong to internally displaced persons forced to leave Abkhazia in the early 1990s and may have improperly been placed on the market by the de facto authorities in Abkhazia. In such cases, the government of Georgia considers the sale of property in Abkhazia illegal under Georgian law and the property could be reclaimed by original owners at a future date.

The Ministry of Culture's Department of Expertise and Evaluation must license any valuables such as artwork, antiques, jewelry, paintings, etc. This license describes the object, assesses its value, and provides permission to export it from Georgia. The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi can provide more specific information on quantities of items that can be imported duty-free, as well as duties excised for specific items.

It is also advisable to contact the Embassy of Georgia in Washington, DC. for specific information regarding customs requirements.

While the Georgian lari is the only legal tender, dollars can be freely exchanged for laris at market rates. ATMs are more widespread within the city of Tbilisi. Credit cards are rarely accepted outside of upscale hotels and restaurants, and travelers' checks are difficult to cash. American citizens in Georgia have reported incidents of credit card fraud and identity theft.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law.

Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Georgian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Georgia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Georgia are strongly encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Georgia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi is located at 11 George Balanchine Street. Office hours from American Citizens Services are from 2 to 5 pm on weekdays; no appointment is necessary.

The telephone number is (995) (32) 27-70-00, which can also be reached after hours, and the fax number is: (995) (32) 53-23-10. The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi's web site is http://georgia.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption: The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States became a party on April 1, 2008, establishes legal and regulatory requirements for intercountry adoption. Georgia is a party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and with which the Convention is in force for the United States. A very limited number of Georgian children are eligible for intercountry adoption.

On May 1, 2008, a new adoption law took effect in Georgia that established a mandatory waiting period of 18 months before children available for adoption in Georgia can be considered for intercountry adoption.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Georgia is the Ministry of Educa-

tion and Science. The main contact is Ms. Tamta Golubiani, the head of the Child Care Department. Ms.Golubiani speaks English.

52 Uznadze Street
Tbilisi, Georgia 0102
Tel: 995-32-95-71-32 and
995-32-95-08-79

Eligibility to Adopt: Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 16 years older than the child they wish to adopt. Spouses must adopt the child jointly. Unmarried individuals may also adopt. Persons who have been denied parental rights in a court of law or who have had other adoptions annulled due to failure to perform parental duties may not adopt. Persons unable to perform parental duties due to physical or mental illness, moral, criminal or other reasons may not adopt.

Residential Requirements: There are no residency requirements in Georgia for prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: Georgian adoptions should take from three months to nine months. However, the U.S. Department of State is aware of individual cases that took much longer than nine months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Georgia does not require adoption agencies to be licensed or accredited. The Ministry of Education requires that the prospective adoptive parent(s) submit the required documentation, legalized by the Georgian Embassy in the U.S., directly to the Ministry of Education. While the Ministry will accept applications submitted through adoption agencies or facilitators, the use of such intermediaries has sometimes lengthened the process. Because Georgia is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider. It is essential that prospective adoptive parent(s) seeking to adopt from a Convention country use an accredited adoption service provider. The Department maintains a current list of accredited adoption service providers. The list of accredited adoption service providers is also provided on the website of The Hague Permanent Bureau at www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: The average total fees in Georgia are around $4,000 to $5,000. This fee includes the cost of an attorney, translation and notarization services as well as other costs charged by the Georgian government including the child's passport. Please note that the Ministry of Education does not charge any fees for the referral of a child for adoption. If a prospective adoptive parent uses an adoption agency the total fee to adopt a child could be from $20,000-$30,000.

Adoption Procedures: Children available for adoption are registered in the Central Registry Database maintained by the Ministry of Education. The children can be adopted locally only for eighteen months after being put in the database. According to the Georgian adoption law that took effect on May 1, 2008, a child is only eligible for intercountry adoption after eighteen months in the database. Only the Ministry of Education is authorized to make matches of adoptive parents with available children, and only after the adoptive parents' application for adoption is approved.

U.S. citizens wishing to adopt a child from Georgia must submit the documents listed below to the Ministry of Education for approval. It usually takes two to three months of review and investigation by the Ministry before the application is accepted.

The Ministry will then provide the adopting parent(s) with basic information about children in the Central Registry Database (date of birth, sex, and medical diagnosis if relevant). After the adopting parent(s) confirms in writing a willingness to adopt, the adopting parent(s) is provided with the location of the child, allowed to visit, and have any desired medical consultations done.

A final written confirmation from the adoptive parent(s) in regards to a specific child is then required before the Ministry of Education will submit a statement of adoption consent to the City Court Civil Cases Collegium. The length of this process fluctuates; there have been informal reports by adoptive parents(s) that the Ministry of Education review takes longer than the three to nine months stated above. The prospective adoptive parents must submit the documents to the Ministry of Education and see the child before the Ministry will issue the statement of adoption consent.

Prospective adoptive parents must be present at the court session. After the court has approved the adoption, copies of all documentation are taken by the prospective adoptive parents or facilitators to the regional registration department, where the new birth certificate and the adoption certificate are issued. The adopting parents must be present for this procedure. A new Georgian passport, based on the new birth certificate, will be issued.

Required Documents: Prospective adoptive parents need to submit the following documents directly to the Ministry of Education:

- Statement from the adoptive parent(s) indicating their full name, address, age, and sex and the category of child desired for adoption;
- Copy of passport(s);
- Copy of marriage certificate if applicable. If single or divorced, a sworn statement notarized by the consular section of the U.S. Embassy;
- Documents from a U.S. doctor certifying health of adoptive parents, including a psychiatric certificate;
- Certificate from adoptive parent's workplace indicating position and salary;
- Copy of adoptive parent's personal financial account;
- Clean record of no criminal activity of the adoptive parents;

- References from friends, family, clergy, this is often covered by the home study;
- Completed home study; and
- I-800 approval.

All the above documents MUST be translated into Georgian, notarized by a notary public, and then authenticated and legalized by the Consular Office of the Georgian Embassy in the U.S. For more detailed information, please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of Georgia
1101 15th St., NW, Suite 602
Washington, D.C. 20009
Tel: 202-387-2390
Consular Section: 202-393-6060
Fax: 202-393-4537
Email: embassy@georgiaemb.org or consulate@georgiaemb.org
Internet: http://www.georgiaemb.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: As of April 1, 2008, U.S. citizens wishing to adopt in a Convention country must begin the process by filing with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) a form I-800A *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*.

Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security, USCIS website (www.uscis.gov).

U.S. Embassy
11 George Balanchine St., Tbilisi, Georgia 0131
Tel: (995) (32) 277-000,
Email: consulate-tbilisi@state.gov
Website: http://www.usembassy.ge.

Additional Information: For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, and security information for U.S. citizens traveling abroad, call Toll Free 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST/EDT, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

Travel Warning
December 12, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Georgia. This travel warning replaces the one dated September 10, 2008 to note travel restrictions for official Americans in Georgia and the risk that unexploded ordnance poses in the areas where fighting took place in August 2008, including around the city of Gori in the direction of the administrative boundary with South Ossetia.

American citizens are urged not to travel to the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia and to be aware that the potential exists for gunfire, increased risk of crime, and ongoing potential for violence in these and areas adjacent to these regions.

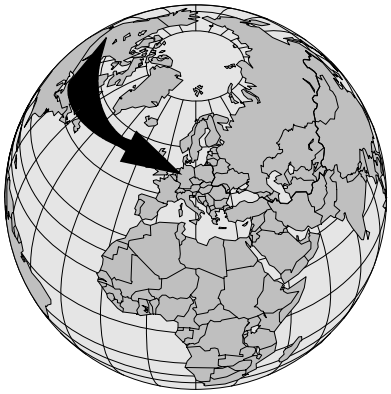
The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi has limited travel for its employees in areas adjacent to the region of South Ossetia, to include all roads north of the M-1 (East/West Highway) that lead to the region of South Ossetia; areas adjacent to the region of Abkhazia, including the Tsalenjikha District of the Samegrelo Region; and the region of the Pankisi Gorge, north of the city Akhmeta, up to the border with Russia.

American citizens currently in Georgia are urged to continue to review their personal security situations to take appropriate action to ensure their safety. Given the recent upheaval in Georgia, American citizens should take precautions in case of an increase in violent crime. Private American citizens are encouraged to remain in close communication with the American Embassy in Tbilisi for more detailed information. American citizens in Georgia are advised to register with the Department of State on-line at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/ or in person at U.S. Embassy Tbilisi so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security. Travel in some parts of western Georgia remains unpredictable. American citizens should monitor the U.S. Embassy web site, http://georgia.usembassy.gov/, and stay in contact with family and friends in the United States. American citizens in Tbilisi may also tune in to Radio Syndicati at FM 104.3 or throughout Georgia at Radio Green Wave at FM 107.4 for updated U.S. Embassy warden message information.

Family members and friends unable to verify the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens in the affected area should call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or from other areas via a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. U.S. citizens in the area are urged to monitor the local news. Those residing or traveling in Georgia are reminded to register with the U.S. Embassy either online at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/ or in person at U.S. Embassy Tbilisi so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

For the latest security information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, Country Specific Information, and health information resources can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi is located at 11 George Balanchine Street (in Didi Dighomi), Tbilisi 0131, Georgia, tel: 995-32-27-70-00. The after-hours emergency number is 995-99-57-39-69, or, if dialing locally on a mobile telephone, 899-57-39-69.



GERMANY

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Federal Republic of Germany

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 357,000 sq. km. (137,821 sq. mi.); about the size of Montana.
Cities: Capital—Berlin (population about 3.4 million). Other cities—Hamburg (1.7 million), Munich (1.2 million), Cologne (964,000), Frankfurt (644,000), Essen (603,000), Dortmund (592,000), Stuttgart (582,000), Dusseldorf (568,000), Bremen (543,000), Hanover (516,000).
Terrain: Low plain in the north; high plains, hills, and basins in the center and east; mountainous alpine region in the south.
Climate: Temperate; cooler and rainier than much of the United States.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—German(s).
Population: (2007 est.) 82 million.
Ethnic groups: Primarily German; 2.6 million citizens and residents of Turkish descent; Danish minority in the north, Sorbian (Slavic) minority in the east; 7.3 million foreign residents.
Religions: Protestants (26 million); Roman Catholics (26 million); approximately 3.5 million Muslims. approximately 3.2 million Muslims.
Languages: German.
Education: Years compulsory—10; attendance—100%; literacy—99%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2006 est.)—4.12/1,000; life expectancy (2006 est.)—women 81.96 years, men 77.81 years.
Employment: (2006 avg.) 39.08 million; unemployed (2006 avg.) 9.8% of labor force.

Government

Type: Federal republic.
Founded: 1949 (Basic Law, i.e., Constitution, promulgated on May 23, 1949). On October 3, 1990, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic unified in accordance with Article 23 of the F.R.G. Basic Law.
Government branches: Executive—president (titular chief of state), chancellor (executive head of government); legislative—bicameral parliament; judicial—independent, Federal Constitutional Court.
Political subdivisions: 16 Laender (states).
Political parties: Social Democratic Party (SPD); Christian Democratic Union (CDU); Christian Social Union (CSU); Alliance 90/Greens; Free Democratic Party (FDP); Left Party (LP).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007 nominal) $3.22 trillion.
Annual growth rate: (2006) 2.7%; (2007) 2.5%; (2008 est.) 1.7%.
Per capita GDP: (2007 nom.): $40,415.
Inflation rate: (consumer prices, 2007) 2.2%; (2008 est.) 3%.
Natural resources: Iron, hard coal, lignite, potash, natural gas.
Agriculture: (0.9% of GDP) Products—corn, wheat, potatoes, sugar, beets, barley, hops, viticulture, forestry, fisheries.
Industry: (29.1% of GDP) Types—car-making; mechanical, electrical, and precision engineering; chemicals; environmental technology; optics; medical technology; biotech and genetic engineering; nanotechnology; aerospace; logistics.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$1.35 trillion: chemicals, motor vehicles, iron and steel products, manufactured goods, electrical products. Major markets—France, U.S., and U.K. Imports—$1.075 trillion: food, petroleum products, manufactured goods, electrical products, motor vehicles, apparel. Major suppliers—France, Netherlands, U.S.

PEOPLE

Most inhabitants of Germany are ethnic German. There are, however, more than 7 million foreign residents, most of whom are the families and descendents of so-called “guest work-

ers" (foreign workers, mostly from Turkey, invited to Germany in the 1950's and 1960's to fill labor shortages) who remained in Germany, and Germany has a sizable ethnic Turkish population. Germany is also a prime destination for political and economic refugees from many developing countries. An ethnic Danish minority lives in the north, and a small Slavic minority known as the Sorbs lives in eastern Germany. Due to restrictive German citizenship laws, most "foreigners" do not hold German citizenship even when born and raised in Germany. However, since the German government undertook citizenship and immigration law reforms in 2002, more foreign residents have had the ability to naturalize.

Germany has one of the world's highest levels of education, technological development, and economic productivity. Since the end of World War II, the number of youths entering universities has more than tripled, and the trade and technical schools of the Federal Republic of Germany (F.R.G.) are among the world's best. With a per capita income level of more than $28,700, Germany is a broadly middle class society. A generous social welfare system provides for universal medical care, unemployment compensation, and other social needs. Millions of Germans travel abroad each year.

With unification on October 3, 1990, Germany began the major task of bringing the standard of living of Germans in the former German Democratic Republic (G.D.R.) up to that of western Germany. This has been a lengthy and difficult process due to the relative inefficiency of industrial enterprises in the former G.D.R., difficulties in resolving property ownership in eastern Germany, and the inadequate infrastructure and environmental damage that resulted from years of mismanagement under communist rule.

Economic uncertainty in eastern Germany is often cited as one factor contributing to extremist violence, primarily from the political right. Confusion about the causes of the current hardships and a need to place blame has found expression in harassment and violence by some Germans directed toward foreigners, particularly non-Europeans. The vast majority of Germans condemn such violence.

HISTORY

Two of Germany's most famous writers, Goethe and Schiller, identified the central aspect of most of Germany's history with their poetic lament, "Germany? But where is it? I cannot find that country." Until 1871, there was no "Germany." Instead, Europe's German-speaking territories were divided into several hundred kingdoms, principalities, duchies, bishoprics, fiefdoms and independent cities and towns.

Finding the answer to "the German question"—what form of statehood for the German speaking lands would arise, and which form could provide central Europe with peace and stability—has defined most of German history. This history of many independent polities has found continuity in the F.R.G.'s federal structure. It is also the basis for the decentralized nature of German political, economic, and cultural life that lasts to this day.

The Holy Roman Empire

Between 962 and the beginning of the 19th Century, the German territories were loosely organized into the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The initially non-hereditary Emperor, elected by the many princes, dukes, and bishops of the constituent lands and confirmed by the Pope, nominally governed over a vast territory, but had very limited ability to intervene in the affairs of the hundreds of entities that made up the Empire, many of which would often wage war against each other. The Empire was never able to develop into a centralized state.

Beginning in 1517 with Martin Luther's posting of his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Castle church, the German-speaking territories bore the brunt of the pan-European struggles unleashed by the Reformation. The leaders of the German kingdoms and principalities chose sides, leading to a split of the Empire into Protestant and Catholic regions, with the Protestant strongholds mostly in the North and East, the Catholic in the South and West. The split along confessional lines also laid the groundwork for the later development of the most powerful German states—Prussia and Austria—as the Prussian Hohenzollern line adopted Protestantism and the Hapsburgs remained Catholic.

The tension culminated in the 30 Years War (1618-1648), a combination of wars within the Empire and between outside European states that were fought on German land. These wars, which ended in a rough stalemate, devastated the German people and economy, definitively strengthened the rule of the various German rulers at the cost of the (Habsburg) Emperor (though Habsburg Austria remained the dominant single German entity within the Empire), and established the continued presence of both Catholics and Protestants in German territories.

The Rise of Prussia

The 18th and 19th Centuries were marked by the rise of Prussia as the second powerful, dominant state in the German-speaking territories alongside Austria, and Austrian-Prussian rivalry became the dominant political factor in German affairs. Successive Prussian kings succeeded in modernizing, centralizing, and expanding the Prussian state, creating a modern bureaucracy and the Continent's strongest military. Despite Prussia's emphasis on militarism and authority, Prussia also became a center of the German Enlightenment and was known for its religious tolerance, with its western regions being predominantly Catholic and Jews being granted complete legal equality by 1812. After humiliating losses to Napoleon's armies, Prussia embarked on a series of administrative, military, economic, and education reforms that eventu-



ally succeeded in turning Prussia into the Continent's strongest state. Following Napoleon's defeat, the 1814-1815 Congress of Vienna replaced the Holy Roman Empire with the German Confederation, made up of 38 independent states. A loose confederation, this construct had no common citizenship, legal system, or administrative or executive organs. It did, however, provide for a Federal Diet that met in Frankfurt—a Congress of deputies of the constituent states who would meet to discuss issues affecting the Confederation as a whole.

The Path to Unification: The Customs Union and the 1848 Revolutions

Prussia led a group of 18 German states that formed the German Customs Union in 1834, and the Prussian Thaler eventually became the common currency used in this region. The Customs Union greatly enhanced economic efficiency, and paved the way for Germany to become a single economic unit during the 19th Century's period of rapid industrialization. Austria chose to remain outside the German Customs Union, preferring instead to form its own customs

union with the Hapsburg territories—a further step down the path of a unified Germany that did not include Austria.

France's 1848 February Revolution that overthrew King Louis Phillipe sparked a series of popular uprisings throughout the German states. Panicking local leaders provided several political, social, and economic concessions to the demonstrators, including agreeing to a national assembly that would discuss the constitutional form of a united Germany, individual rights, and economic order. The assembly rapidly devolved into competing factions; meanwhile, the conservative leaders of the German states reconstituted their power. When the assembly finally determined that there should be a united, federal Germany (excluding Austria) with universal male suffrage, organized as a constitutional monarchy under an Emperor—and offered that emperor title to the King of Prussia—there was no longer any interest or political reason (least of all in absolutist, powerful Prussia) for the leaders to listen. The Prussian monarch rejected the assembly's offer, and the assembly was forcefully disbanded without achieving any of the stated goals of the 1848 revolutionaries.

Nevertheless, the 1848 Revolutions did leave a lasting legacy. The factions of the ill-fated national assembly went on to develop into political parties. Certain economic and social reforms, such as the final abolition of feudal property structures, remained. The idea of German unity was firmly established. And the revolutionaries' colors—black, red, and gold—became firmly ensconced as the colors of German democratic and liberal aspirations.

Unification and Imperial Germany

German nationalism developed into an important unifying and sometimes liberalizing force during this time, though it became increasingly marked by an exclusionary, racially-based definition of nationhood that included anti-Semitic tendencies. However, eventual unification of Germany was essentially the result of Prussian expansionism rather than the victory of nationalist sentiment. Prussia's economic growth outstripped Austria's during the latter half of the 19th Century and Prussia-controlled Germany became one of Europe's industrial powerhouses. Under Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, Prussia defeated Austria (1866) and France (1870) in wars that paved the way for the formation of the German Empire under Emperor Wilhelm I in 1871. Germany became a federal state, with foreign and military policy determined at the national level, but most other policies remained the purview of the states.

Internally, Bismarck waged a struggle against Catholicism, which he viewed as an agent of Austria (ironically, this anti-Catholic move—which eventually failed—actually ended up consolidating a lasting political role for Germany's Catholics), and tried to both co-opt and repress the emerging socialist movement by passing the age's most progressive social insurance and worker protection legislation while clamping down on Socialist activities. Externally, Bismarck then moved to consolidate the stability of the new Empire, launching a string of diplomatic initiatives to form a complex web of alliances with other European powers to ensure that Germany did not become surrounded by hostile powers and avoid Germany's involvement in further wars.

However, Emperor William II disagreed vehemently with Bismarck, sacking him in 1890. Wilhelm II had ambitious aspirations for Germany, including acquisition of overseas colonies. His dynamic expansion of military power and confrontational foreign policies contributed to tensions on the continent. The fragile European balance of power, which Bismarck had helped to create, broke down in 1914. World War I and its aftermath, including the Treaty of Versailles, ended the German Empire.

The Weimar Republic and Fascism's Rise and Defeat

The postwar Weimar Republic (1919-33) was established as a broadly democratic state, but the government was severely handicapped and eventually doomed by economic problems and the rise of the political extremes. The dozens of political parties represented in the federal parliament never allowed stable government formation, creating political chaos. (This lesson led to the decision by the creators of the F.R.G. to limit parliamentary representation to parties that garner at least 5% of the vote.) The hyperinflation of 1923, the world depression that began in 1929, and the social unrest stemming from resentment toward the conditions of the Versailles Treaty worked to destroy the Weimar government.

The National Socialist (Nazi) Party, led by Adolf Hitler, stressed nationalist and racist themes while promising to put the unemployed back to work. The party blamed many of Germany's ills on the alleged influence of Jewish and non-German ethnic groups. The party also gained support in response to fears of growing communist strength. In the 1932 elections, the Nazis won a third of the vote. In a fragmented party structure, this gave the Nazis a powerful parliamentary caucus, and Hitler was asked to form a government. He quickly declined. The Republic eroded and Hitler had himself nominated as Reich Chancellor in January 1933. After President Paul von Hindenburg died in 1934, Hitler assumed that office as well.

Once in power, Hitler and his party first undermined and then abolished democratic institutions and opposition parties. The Nazi leadership immediately jailed many Jewish citizens and opposition figures and withdrew their political rights. Hitler's Nuremburg Laws subsequently deprived all of Germany's Jews of their political rights and also of their economic assets and professional licenses, foreshadowing the systematic plundering of Jewish assets throughout Nazi-occupied territory. The Nazis implemented a program of

genocide, at first through incarceration and forced labor and then by establishing death camps. In a catastrophe generally known as the Holocaust or Shoah, roughly six million European Jews from Germany and Nazi-occupied countries were murdered in these death camps and in the killing fields set up behind military lines on the Eastern Front. Hitler's henchmen also carried out a campaign of ethnic extermination against Europe's Roma/Sinti and murdered thousands of homosexuals, mentally disabled people, and opposition figures.

Nazi revanchism and expansionism led to World War II, which resulted in the destruction of Germany's political and economic infrastructures and led to its division.

After Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945, the United States, the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R. and, later, France occupied the country and assumed responsibility for its administration. The commanders in chief exercised supreme authority in their respective zones and acted in concert on questions affecting the whole country.

The United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union agreed at Potsdam in August 1945 to treat Germany as a single economic unit with some central administrative departments in a decentralized framework. However, Soviet policy turned increasingly toward dominating the part of Europe where Soviet armies were present, including eastern Germany. In 1948, the Soviets, in an attempt to abrogate agreements for Four-Power control of the city, blockaded Berlin. Until May 1949, the Allied-occupied part of Berlin was kept supplied only by an Allied airlift. The "Berlin airlift" succeeded in forcing the Soviets to accept, for the time being, the Allied role and the continuation of freedom in a portion of the city, West Berlin.

Political Developments in West Germany

The United States and the United Kingdom moved to establish a nucleus for a future German government by creating a central Economic Council for their two zones. The program later provided for a constituent assembly, an occupation statute governing relations between the Allies and the German authorities, and the political and economic merger of the French with the British and American zones. The western portion of the country became the Federal Republic of Germany.

On May 23, 1949, the Basic Law, which came to be known as the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, was promulgated. Konrad Adenauer became the first federal Chancellor on September 20, 1949. The next day, the occupation statute came into force, granting powers of self-government with certain exceptions.

As part of an ongoing commitment to deal with its historic responsibility, the Federal Republic of Germany took upon itself a leading role in the field of Holocaust education and support for research into this dark period of history. It has also paid out nearly 63 billion Euros as a measure of compensation to Jewish survivors and heirs of the Holocaust and other victims of Nazism, such as forced laborers from many European countries.

The F.R.G. quickly progressed toward fuller sovereignty and association with its European neighbors and the Atlantic community. The London and Paris agreements of 1954 restored full sovereignty (with some exceptions) to the F.R.G. in May 1955 and opened the way for German membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Western European Union (WEU).

The three Western Allies retained occupation powers in Berlin and certain responsibilities for Germany as a whole, including responsibility for the determination of Germany's eastern borders. Under the new arrangements, the Allies stationed troops within the F.R.G. for NATO defense, pursuant to stationing and status-of-forces agreements. With the exception of 45,000 French troops, Allied forces were under NATO's joint defense command. (France withdrew from NATO's military command structure in 1966.)

Political life in the F.R.G. was remarkably stable and orderly. After Adenauer's chancellorship (1949-63), Ludwig Erhard (1963-66) and Kurt Georg Kiesinger (1966-69) served as Chancellor. Between 1949 and 1966 the united caucus of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU), either alone or with the smaller Free Democratic Party (FDP), formed the government. Kiesinger's 1966-69 "Grand Coalition" included the F.R.G.'s two largest parties, CDU/CSU and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). After the 1969 election, the SPD, headed by Willy Brandt, formed a coalition government with the FDP. Brandt resigned in May 1974, after a senior member of his staff was uncovered as an East German spy.

Helmut Schmidt (SPD) succeeded Brandt, serving as Chancellor from 1974 to 1982. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, a leading FDP official, became Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister, a position he would hold until 1992.

In October 1982, the FDP joined forces with the CDU/CSU to make CDU Chairman Helmut Kohl the Chancellor. Following national elections in March 1983, Kohl emerged in firm control of both the government and the CDU. He served until the CDU's election defeat in 1997. In 1983, a new political party, the Greens, entered the Bundestag for the first time.

Political Developments in East Germany

In the Soviet zone, the Communist Party forced the Social Democratic Party to merge in 1946 to form the Socialist Unity Party (SED). Under Soviet direction, a constitution was drafted on May 30, 1949, and adopted on October 7 when the German Democratic Republic was proclaimed. On October 11, 1949, a SED government under Wilhelm Pieck was established. The Soviet Union and its East European allies immediately recog-

nized the G.D.R. The United States and most other countries did not recognize the G.D.R. until a series of agreements in 1972-73.

The G.D.R. established the structures of a single-party, centralized, communist state. On July 23, 1952, the G.D.R. abolished the traditional Laender and established 14 Bezirke (districts). Formally, there existed a "National Front"—an umbrella organization nominally consisting of the SED, four other political parties controlled and directed by the SED, and the four principal mass organizations (youth, trade unions, women, and culture). However, control was clearly and solely in the hands of the SED. Balloting in G.D.R. elections was not secret. On July 17, 1953, East Germans revolted against totalitarian rule. The F.R.G. marked the bloody revolt by making the date the West German National Day, which remained until reunification.

Inter-German Relations

During the 1950s, East Germans fled to the West by the millions. The Soviets made the inner German border increasingly tight, but Berlin's Four-Power status countered such restrictions. Berlin thus became an escape point for even greater numbers of East Germans. On August 13, 1961, the G.D.R. began building a wall through the center of Berlin, slowing down the flood of refugees and dividing the city. The Berlin Wall became the symbol of the East's political debility and the division of Europe.

In 1969, Chancellor Brandt announced that the F.R.G. would remain firmly rooted in the Atlantic Alliance but would intensify efforts to improve relations with Eastern Europe and the G.D.R. The F.R.G. commenced this "Ostpolitik" by negotiating nonaggression treaties with the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary. Based upon Brandt's policies, in 1971 the Four Powers concluded a Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin to address practical questions the division posed, without prejudice to each party's view of the city's Four Power status.

The F.R.G.'s relations with the G.D.R. posed particularly difficult questions. Though anxious to relieve serious hardships for divided families and to reduce friction, the F.R.G. under Brandt was intent on holding to its concept of "two German states in one German nation." Relations improved, however, and in September 1973, the F.R.G. and the G.D.R. were admitted to the United Nations. The two Germanys exchanged permanent representatives in 1974, and, in 1987, G.D.R. head of state Erich Honecker paid an official visit to the F.R.G.

Berlin

Shortly after World War II, Berlin became the seat of the Allied Control Council, which was to have governed Germany as a whole until the conclusion of a peace settlement. In 1948, however, the Soviets refused to participate any longer in the quadripartite administration of Germany. They also refused to continue the joint administration of Berlin and drove the government elected by the people of Berlin out of its seat in the Soviet sector and installed a communist regime in its place. From then until unification, the Western Allies continued to exercise supreme authority—effective only in their sectors—through the Allied Kommandatura. To the degree compatible with the city's special status, however, they turned over control and management of city affairs to the Berlin Senat (executive) and House of Representatives, governing bodies established by constitutional process and chosen by free elections. The Allies and German authorities in the F.R.G. and West Berlin never recognized the communist city regime in East Berlin or G.D.R. authority there.

During the years of Berlin's isolation—176 kilometers (110 mi.) inside the former G.D.R.—the Western Allies encouraged a close relationship between the Government of West Berlin and that of the F.R.G. Representatives of the city participated as non-voting members in the F.R.G. parliament; appropriate West German agencies, such as the supreme administrative court, had their permanent seats in the city; and the governing mayor of Berlin took his turn as President of the Bundesrat. In addition, the Allies carefully consulted with the F.R.G. and Berlin Governments on foreign policy questions involving unification and the status of Berlin.

Between 1948 and 1990, major events such as fairs and festivals took place in West Berlin, and the F.R.G. encouraged investment in commerce by special concessionary tax legislation. The results of such efforts, combined with effective city administration and the Berliners' energy and spirit, were encouraging. Berlin's morale remained high, and its industrial production considerably surpassed its prewar level.

German Unification

During the summer of 1989, rapid changes took place in the G.D.R. Pressures for political opening throughout Eastern Europe had not seemed to affect the G.D.R. regime. However, Hungary ended its border restrictions with Austria, and a growing flood of East Germans began to take advantage of this route to West Germany. Thousands of East Germans also tried to reach the West by staging sit-ins at F.R.G. diplomatic facilities in other East European capitals. The exodus generated demands within the G.D.R. for political change, and mass demonstrations in several cities—particularly in Leipzig—continued to grow. On October 7, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev visited Berlin to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the G.D.R. and urged the East German leadership to pursue reform.

On October 18, Erich Honecker resigned and was replaced by Egon Krenz. The exodus continued unabated, and pressure for political reform mounted. Finally, on November 9, the G.D.R. allowed East Germans to travel freely. Thousands poured through the Berlin Wall into the western sectors of Berlin. The Wall was opened.

On November 28, F.R.G.Chancellor Kohl outlined a 10-point plan for the peaceful unification of the two Ger-

manys. In December, the G.D.R. Volkskammer eliminated the SED's monopoly on power. The SED changed its name to the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), and numerous political groups and parties formed. The communist system had been eliminated. A new Prime Minister, Hans Modrow, headed a caretaker government that shared power with the new, democratically oriented parties.

In early February 1990, Chancellor Kohl rejected the Modrow government's proposal for a unified, neutral Germany. Kohl affirmed that a unified Germany must be a member of NATO. Finally, on March 18, the first free elections were held in the G.D.R., and Lothar de Maiziere (CDU) formed a government under a policy of expeditious unification with the F.R.G. The freely elected representatives of the Volkskammer held their first session on April 5, and the G.D.R. peacefully evolved from a communist to a democratically elected government.

Four Power Control Ends

In 1990, as a necessary step for German unification and in parallel with internal German developments, the two German states and the Four Powers—the United States, U.K., France, and the Soviet Union—negotiated to end Four Power reserved rights for Berlin and Germany as a whole. These "Two-plus-Four" negotiations were mandated at the Ottawa Open Skies conference on February 13, 1990. The six foreign ministers met four times in the ensuing months in Bonn (May 5), Berlin (June 22), Paris (July 17), and Moscow (September 12). The Polish Foreign Minister participated in the part of the Paris meeting that dealt with the Polish-German borders.

Of key importance was overcoming Soviet objections to a united Germany's membership in NATO. The Alliance was already responding to the changing circumstances, and, in NATO, issued the London Declaration on a transformed NATO. On July 16, after a bilateral meeting, Gorbachev and Kohl announced an agreement in principle to permit a united Germany in NATO. This cleared the way for the signing of the "Treaty on the Final Settlement With Respect to Germany" in Moscow on September 12. In addition to terminating Four Power rights, the treaty mandated the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Germany by the end of 1994. This made it clear that the current borders were final and definitive, and specified the right of a united Germany to belong to NATO. It also provided for the continued presence of British, French, and American troops in Berlin during the interim period of the Soviet withdrawal. In the treaty, the Germans renounced nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and stated their intention to reduce German armed forces to 370,000 within 3 to 4 years after the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, signed in Paris on November 19, 1990, entered into force.

German unification could then proceed. In accordance with Article 23 of the F.R.G.'s Basic Law, the five Laender (which had been reestablished in the G.D.R.) acceded to the F.R.G. on October 3, 1990. The F.R.G. proclaimed October 3 as its new national day. On December 2, 1990, all-German elections were held for the first time since 1933.

The Final Settlement Treaty ended Berlin's special status as a separate area under Four Power control. Under the terms of the treaty between the F.R.G. and the G.D.R., Berlin became the capital of a unified Germany. The Bundestag voted in June 1991 to make Berlin the seat of government.

The Government of Germany asked the Allies to maintain a military presence in Berlin until the complete withdrawal of the Western Group of Forces (ex-Soviet) from the territory of the former G.D.R. The Russian withdrawal was completed August 31, 1994. On September 8, 1994, ceremonies marked the final departure of Western Allied troops from Berlin.

In 1999, the formal seat of the federal government moved from Bonn to Berlin. Berlin also is one of the Federal Republic's 16 Laender.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The government is parliamentary, and a democratic constitution emphasizes the protection of individual liberty and division of powers in a federal structure. The chancellor (prime minister) heads the executive branch of the federal government. The duties of the president (chief of state) are largely ceremonial; the chancellor exercises executive power. The Bundestag (lower, principal chamber of the parliament) elects the chancellor. The president is elected every 5 years on May 23 by the Federal Assembly, a body convoked only for this purpose, comprising the entire Bundestag and an equal number of state delegates. President Horst Köhler (Christian Democratic Union - CDU) will stand for re-election on May 23, 2009. The CDU's coalition partner and rival, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Left Party will also run candidates.

The Bundestag, which serves a 4-year term, consists of at least twice the number of electoral districts in the country (299). When parties' directly elected seats exceed their proportional representation, they may receive more seats. The number of seats in the Bundestag was reduced to 598 for the 2002 elections. The Bundesrat (upper chamber or Federal Council) consists of 69 members who are delegates of the 16 Laender (states). The legislature has powers of exclusive jurisdiction and concurrent jurisdiction with the Laender in areas specified in the Basic Law. The Bundestag has primary legislative authority. The Bundesrat must concur on legislation concerning revenue shared by federal and state governments and those imposing responsibilities on the states.

Germany has an independent federal judiciary consisting of a constitutional court, a high court of justice, and courts with jurisdiction in administrative, financial, labor, and social matters.

The highest court is the Bundesverfassungsgericht (Federal Constitutional Court), which ensures a uniform interpretation of constitutional provisions and protects the fundamental rights of the individual citizen as defined in the Basic Law.

Political Parties

Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union (CDU/ CSU). An important aspect of postwar German politics was the emergence of a moderate, ecumenical Christian party—the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)—operating in alliance with a related Bavarian party, the Christian Social Union (CSU). Although each party maintains its own structure, the two form a common caucus in the Bundestag and do not run opposing campaigns. The CDU/CSU has adherents among Catholics, Protestants, rural interests, and members of all economic classes. It is generally conservative on economic and social policy and more identified with the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

Social Democratic Party (SPD). The SPD is one of the oldest organized political parties in the world. It originally advocated Marxist principles, but in the 1959 Godesberg Program abandoned the concept of a " "class party" while continuing to stress social welfare programs. Under the leadership of Gerhard Schroeder, the SPD-Greens government implemented in 2003 the centrist Agenda 2010 reforms, designed to modernize the country's social system and labor market.

The SPD elected Franz Muentefering as chairperson on October 18, 2008 replacing Kurt Beck, who had resigned in September 2008. The SPD also chose Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier to lead the party against incumbent Chancellor Angela Merkel's CDU in the September 27, 2009 national parliamentary elections. The SPD has a powerful base in the bigger cities and industrialized states.

Free Democratic Party (FDP). The FDP has traditionally been composed mainly of middle and upper class Protestants who consider themselves heirs to the European liberal tradition. It supports reducing the role of the state in economic policy, free trade, and is libertarian on social issues. The party has participated in all but three postwar federal governments but has not been in federal government since 1998.

The Left. The PDS (comprised largely of former East German communists) and the WASG (comprised of western leftists) merged in June 2007 to form a party simply known as "The Left." The party's foreign policy is largely shaped by its rigid opposition to foreign military deployments. On domestic policy, the party opposes economic reforms, such as Hartz IV, which aim to increase free markets and reduce unemployment benefits. The Left proposes to replace the free market system with a return to socialist principles.

Alliance 90/Greens. In the late 1970s, environmentalists organized politically as the Greens. Opposition to nuclear power, military power, and certain aspects of highly industrialized society were principal campaign issues. In the December 1990 all-German elections, the Greens merged with the Eastern German Alliance 90, a loose grouping of civil rights activists with diverse political views. The Greens joined a federal government for the first time in 1998, forming a coalition with the SPD.

Other parties. Because of the instability caused by the need for multiparty coalitions in the Weimar Republic, Germany's Basic Law today requires parties reach 5% of the vote to win seats in the Bundestag. In addition to those parties that won representation in the Bundestag in 2005, a variety of minor parties won a cumulative 2.7% of the vote, down from 3.0% in 2002.

Several other parties were on the ballot in one or more states but did not qualify for representation in the federal Bundestag.

2005 Federal Elections

The 2005 federal elections were held after Chancellor Schroeder asked for a Bundestag "vote of confidence" in the SPD-Greens coalition. The July 1, 2005 confidence motion failed, and President Koehler called for elections to be held on September 18, 2005, a year earlier than planned. The results of the 2005 Bundestag elections are as follows:

CDU/CSU—35.2%, 226 seats; SPD—34.2%, 222 seats; FDP—9.8%, 61 seats; LP/PDS—8.7%, 54 seats; Greens—8.1%, 51 seats; Other parties—4.0%, no representation.

After several weeks of negotiations, the CDU/CSU and SPD agreed to form a "grand coalition" under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel. Angela Merkel and the new cabinet were sworn in on November 22, 2005. The next Bundestag elections are scheduled to be held on September 27, 2009.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Horst KOEHLER**
Chancellor: **Angela MERKEL**
Vice Chancellor: **Frank-Walter STEINMEIER**
Min. for Consumer Protection & Agriculture: **Horst SEEHOFER**
Min. of Defense: **Franz Josef JUNG**
Min. for Economic Cooperation & Development: **Heide Marie WIECZOREK-ZEUL**
Min. for Economics & Technology: **Michael GLOS**
Min. for Education & Research: **Annette SCHAVAN**
Min. for Environment & Nuclear Safety: **Sigmar GABRIEL**
Min. for Family, Seniors, Women, & Youth: **Ursula VON DER LEYEN**
Min. of Finance: **Peer STEINBRUECK**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Frank-Walter STEINMEIER**
Min. for Health: **Ulla SCHMIDT**
Min. of Interior: **Wolfgang SCHAEUBLE**
Min. of Justice: **Brigitte ZYPRIES**

Min. for Labor & Social Security: **Olaf SCHOLZ**
Min. for Transportation, Construction, & Housing: **Wolfgang TIEFENSEE**
Min. Without Portfolio & Chancellery Chief: **Thomas DE MAIZIERE**
Pres., Bundesbank: **Axel A. WEBER**
Ambassador to the US: **Klaus SCHARIOTH**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Thomas MATUSSEK**

Germany maintains an Embassy in the United States at 4645 Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007 (tel. 202-298-4000). Consulates general are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle. Germany has honorary consuls in more than 30 U.S. cities.

ECONOMY

Germany is the world's third-largest economy and the largest in Europe. In 2006, Germany had its best year since 2000 with 2.7% growth; in 2007, growth was at 2.5% despite a 3 percentage point value added tax (VAT) hike at the beginning of the year. In the context of the global financial crisis, economic growth has slowed during 2008. The German economy is expected to grow by 1.7% for the year as a whole, followed by 0.2% growth in 2009. Nevertheless, consumer expectations have risen as a result of wage increases earlier in the year and lower energy costs. Another bright spot is unemployment, which stood at 7.4% nationwide in September 2008, a decrease of 1.1% from a year earlier.

From the 1948 currency reform until the early 1970s, West Germany experienced almost continuous economic expansion. Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth slowed down, and even declined, from the mid-1970s through the recession of the early 1980s. The economy then experienced 8 consecutive years of growth that ended with a downturn beginning in late 1992. During most of the post-reunification period, Germany has seen relatively low average real growth and stubbornly high unemployment.

Germans often describe their economic system as a "social market economy." The German Government provides an extensive array of social services. The state intervenes in the economy by providing subsidies to selected sectors and by owning some segments of the economy, while promoting competition and free enterprise. The government has restructured the railroad system on a corporate basis, privatized the national airline, and is privatizing telecommunications and postal services.

The German economy is heavily export-oriented, with exports accounting for more than one-third of national output. As a result, exports traditionally have been a key element in German macroeconomic expansion, accounting for over half of the economic growth in recent years. Germany is a strong advocate of closer European economic integration, and its economic and commercial policies are increasingly determined within the European Union (EU). Germany uses the common European currency, the euro, and the European Central Bank sets monetary policy.

In the early-mid 2000s, Germany adopted a complex set of labor/social welfare reforms to overcome structural weaknesses of the German welfare state and to create policies more conductive to employment. Defying a skeptical German public, the coalition government of Chancellor Angela Merkel initiated additional reform measures, such as the gradual increase in the mandatory retirement age from 65 to 67—a move intended to add 2.5 million to the workforce by 2030. Subsequently, however, there has been active political debate and some rollback of these labor reforms; most notably the government decided to extend the payment period of unemployment benefits to older workers in early 2008.

Nearly 20 years after reunification (October 3, 1990), Germany has made great progress in raising the standard of living in eastern Germany, introducing a market economy and improving its infrastructure. At the same time, the process of convergence between east and west is taking longer than originally expected and, on some measures, has stagnated since the mid-1990s. Growth rates in the east have been lower than in the west in recent years. Unemployment is twice as high, prompting many skilled easterners to seek work in the west, and productivity continues to lag. Eastern consumption levels are dependent on large public net financial transfers from west to east. In addition to social assistance payments, the government will extend funds to promote eastern economic development through 2019.

The United States is Germany's second-largest trading partner, and U.S.-German trade has continued to be strong. Two-way trade in goods totaled $144 billion in 2007. U.S. exports to Germany were $49.6 billion, while U.S. imports from Germany were more than $94.4 billion. At nearly $45 billion, the U.S.'s fifth-largest trade deficit is with Germany. Major U.S. export categories include aircraft, electrical equipment, telecommunications equipment, data processing equipment, and motor vehicles and parts. German export sales are concentrated in motor vehicles, machinery, chemicals, and heavy electrical equipment. Much bilateral trade is intra-industry or intra-firm.

Germany has a liberal foreign investment policy. For 2007, German investment in the U.S. amounted to $202.6 billion, while U.S. investment in Germany was $107 billion.

U.S. firms employ about 800,000 people in Germany; German firms likewise employ about 670,000 people in the United States.

Despite persistence of some structural rigidities in the labor market and extensive government regulation, the economy remains strong and internationally competitive. Although production costs are very high, Germany is still an export powerhouse, and unit labor costs have decreased in the last decade. Additionally, Germany is strategically placed to take advantage of the rapidly growing central European countries. The current government has

addressed some of the country's structural problems, with important tax, social security, and financial sector reforms.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Germany continues to emphasize close ties with the United States, membership in NATO, and the "deepening" of integration among current members of the EU. The Federal Republic of Germany took part in all of the joint postwar efforts aimed at closer political, economic, and defense cooperation among the countries of western Europe. Germany has been a large net contributor to the EU budget. Germany also is a strong supporter of the United Nations and of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

During the postwar era, the Federal Republic of Germany also sought to improve its relationship with the countries of eastern Europe, first establishing trade agreements and, subsequently, diplomatic relations. With unification, German relations with the new democracies in central and eastern Europe intensified. On November 14, 1990, Germany and Poland signed a treaty confirming the Oder-Neisse border. They also concluded a cooperation treaty on June 17, 1991. Germany concluded four treaties with the Soviet Union covering the overall bilateral relationship, economic relations, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the territory of the former G.D.R., and German support for those troops. Russia accepted obligations under these treaties as successor to the Soviet Union. Germany continues to be active economically in the states of central and eastern Europe and to actively support the development of democratic institutions, bilaterally and through the EU.

U.S.-GERMAN RELATIONS

U.S.-German relations have been a focal point of American involvement in Europe since the end of World War II. Germany stands at the center of European affairs and is a key partner in U.S. relations with Europeans in NATO and the European Union.

German-American ties extend back to the colonial era. More than 7 million Germans have immigrated over the last three centuries, and today nearly a quarter of U.S. citizens claim German ancestry. In recognition of this heritage and the importance of modern-day U.S.-German ties, the U.S. President annually has proclaimed October 6, the date the first German immigrants arrived in 1623, to be "German-American Day."

U.S. policy toward Germany remains the preservation and consolidation of a close and vital relationship with Germany, not only as friends and trading partners, but also as allies sharing common institutions. During the 45 years in which Germany was divided, the U.S. role in Berlin and the large American military presence in West Germany served as symbols of the U.S. commitment to preserving peace and security in Europe. Since German unification, the U.S. commitment to these goals has not changed. The U.S. made significant reductions in its troop levels in Germany after the Cold War ended, and, on July 12, 1994, President Clinton "cased the colors" at the Berlin Brigade's deactivation ceremony. The U.S., however, continues to recognize that the security and prosperity of the United States and Germany significantly depend on each other.

As allies in NATO, the United States and Germany work side by side to maintain peace and freedom. This unity and resolve made possible the successful conclusion of the 1987 U.S.-U.S.S.R. Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), the Two-plus-Four process—which led to the Final Settlement Treaty—and the November 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.

More recently, the two allies have cooperated closely in peacekeeping efforts in the Balkans and have worked together to encourage the evolution of open and democratic states throughout central and eastern Europe. Germany is also a strong contributor to our common effort to secure peace and stability in Afghanistan, providing some 3,500 military personnel to the NATO ISAF mission, making it the third-largest troop contributor after the U.S. and the U.K. Germany currently commands ISAF's northern region (RC-North) where it leads two of the five provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) as well as the forward support base. Under a new parliamentary mandate approved in October 2008, the troop ceiling for German forces in Afghanistan was increased from 3,500 to 4,500.

The Bundeswehr is in the process of transforming itself from a purely territorial defense force, as it was during the Cold War, into an expeditionary force capable of deploying up to 14,000 soldiers at a time. Currently, Germany has some 7,000 soldiers on deployments outside NATO territory. In addition to the troops in ISAF, Germany has more than 2,000 military personnel in the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) and contributes troops to the European Union Force in Bosnia, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, and the UN missions in Sudan, Georgia, and Ethiopia.

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, Germany has been a reliable U.S. ally in the campaign against terrorism. As two of the world's leading trading nations, the United States and Germany share a common, deep-seated commitment to an open and expanding world economy. Personal ties between the United States and Germany extend beyond immigration to include intensive foreign exchange programs, booming tourism in both directions, and the presence in Germany of large numbers of American military personnel and their dependents.

The United States and Germany have built a solid foundation of bilateral cooperation in a relationship that has changed significantly over six decades. The historic unification of Germany and the role the United

States played in that process have served to strengthen ties between the two countries.

German-American political, economic, and security relationships continue to be based on close consultation and coordination at the most senior levels. High-level visits take place frequently, and the United States and Germany cooperate actively in international forums.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BERLIN (E) Pariser Platz 2, 10117 Berlin, Germany, APO/FPO PSC 120, Box 1000, APO AE 09265, [49] (30) 238-5174, Fax [49] (30) 238-6290, Workweek: Monday-Friday, 0830-1730, Website: http://germany.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Lily Eastham (Acting)
AMB OMS:	Augustine Peterson-Becker
ECO:	Robert Pollard
FM:	William L. Hedges
HRO:	Joseph E. Zadrozny
MGT:	Jay N. Anania
AMB:	William R. Timken, Jr.
CON:	David C. Stewart
DCM:	John M. Koenig
PAO:	Helena Finn
COM:	George Ruffner
GSO:	Sarah Drew
RSO:	Douglas Quiram
AGR:	Bobby Richey
CLO:	Madeleine Beard
DAO:	Col. David Allwine
EEO:	Michael Sullivan
FMO:	Francis (Frank) Conte
ICASS Chair:	(Acting) Bobby Richey
IMO:	Roger Cohen
IPO:	Sheridan Howard
IRS:	Barbara Franklin (Frankfurt)
ISO:	Mark S. Copeland
ISSO:	Mark S. Copeland
LEGATT:	Greg Ruppert
POL:	Jeff Rathke
State ICASS:	Peter Claussen

DUSSELDORF (CG) Willi Becker Allee 10, APO/FPO Unit 2215, APO AE 09103, +49-211-4706-127, Fax +49-211-788-8936, Workweek: Monday–Friday 08:00–17:00, Website: http://duesseldorf.usconsulate.gov.

CG OMS:	Nicole Leick
FCS:	Edward C. Fantasia
MGT:	Matthew Boyse
POL/ECO:	Richard Volk
CG:	Matthew Boyse
RSO:	Dan Powers (Frankfurt), Bruce Kraft Pso
IMO:	John Benton
IRS:	Barbara Franklin

FRANKFURT (CG) Giessener Strasse 30, 60435 Frankfurt, APO/FPO PSC 115, APO AE 09213-0115, 49-69-7535-0, Fax 49-69-7535-5410 (Mgmt), Workweek: 8:00 a.m. -4:30 p.m. M-F, Website: http://frankfurt.usconsulate.gov.

CG OMS:	Ann Rehme
DHS/CIS:	Jeffrey Sapko Dhs/Cis
DHS/ICE:	Ronald Grimes
DPO:	Richard Aker
FM:	Steven Montgomery
HRO:	Anna Kosinska
MGT:	Mark Young
POL/ECO:	James Morris
CG:	Jo Ellen Powell
CON:	Andrew C. Parker
PAO:	James Seward
COM:	Michael Richardson
GSO:	Joseph Seman
RSO:	Daniel J. Power
CLO:	Heather O'Hara
DEA:	Gene Corley
EEO:	Andrew Parker
FAA/CASLO:	Anthony Monreal Dhs/Tsa
FMO:	Michael Browning
IMO:	John Benton
IRS:	Barbara Franklin
ISO:	Samual Miller
LEGATT:	Christine Awender

HAMBURG (CG) Alsterufer 27/28, 20354 Hamburg, APO/FPO PSC 120 Box 3000, APO, AE 09265, 049-40-411-71300, Fax 049-40-411-71222; 049-40-417-665, Workweek: M–F; 0800–1700 local, Website: http://hamburg.usconsulate.gov.

MGT:	Robin E. Blunt
POL/ECO:	Genevieve Libonati
CG:	Karen E. Johnson
CON:	Vacant
RSO:	Tj Lunardi
AFSA:	Vacant
CLO:	Paige Speer
ICASS Chair:	Am Emb Berlin
ISSO:	Genevieve Libonati

LEIPZIG (CG) Wilhelm-Seyfferth-Str. 4, APO/FPO AmConsul Leipzig, PSC 120. Box 1000, APO AE 09265, (49) (341) 213-8418, Fax (49) (341) 213-8461, Workweek: 8:30 am to 5:30 pm, Mo thru Fri, Website: http://leipzig.usconsulate.gov.

POL/ECO:	Edie J. Backman
PO:	Mark D. Scheland
PAO:	Mark L. Wenig

MUNICH (CG) Koeniginstrasse 5, APO/FPO Unit 24520, APO AE 09053-4520, 49-89-2888-745 (Mgmt), Fax 49-89-283-047, INMARSAT Tel Iridium: 8816-7631-0884, Workweek: Monday -Friday, 0830-1730, Website: http://munich.usconsulate.gov.

FCS:	Isabella Cascarano
MGT:	Marlene M. Menard
POL/ECO:	Thomas A. Kelsey
CG:	Eric G. Nelson
CON:	Lisa L. Washburn
PAO:	Patricia Guy
GSO:	Dieter Hackl
RSO:	Paul R. Houston
IPO:	Joel Wisner
MLO:	Gerhard Rueckert
State ICASS:	Marlene M. Menard

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 8, 2008

Country Description: Germany is a modern and stable democracy. Tourist facilities are highly developed. In larger towns, many people can communicate in English.

Entry Requirements: Germany is a party to the Schengen Agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Germany for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. Further information on entry, visa and passport requirements may be obtained from the German Embassy at 4645 Reservoir Road N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, telephone (202) 298-4000, web site: http://www.germany.info/Vertretung/usa/en/Startseite.html, or the German Consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, or San Francisco.

Passengers transiting Germany en route to other countries should ensure that they are aware of and in compliance with the entry requirements for their final destinations as

individuals not presenting appropriate documentation for their destination may be denied boarding on connecting flights.

Safety and Security: German authorities remain vigilant in combating the threat posed by foreign and resident extremists. Specific threats have been uncovered and persecutions undertaken, though Germany itself has been largely free of terror incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Germany's open borders with its European neighbors allow the possibility of dangerous individuals entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Germany regularly experiences demonstrations on a variety of political and economic themes. Prior police approval is required for public demonstrations, and police oversight is routinely provided for participants and passersby. Nonetheless, these demonstrations can attract counter-demonstrators and have the potential to turn violent. In addition, hooligans, most often young intoxicated "skinheads" have been known to harass or even attack people whom they believe to be foreigners or members of rival groups. On occasion, American have reported that they were assaulted for racial reasons or because they appeared "foreign." All Americans are cautioned to avoid the area around protests and demonstrations and to check local media for updates on the situation.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Violent crime is rare in Germany, but can occur, especially in larger cities or high-risk areas such as train stations. Most incidents of street crime consist of theft of unattended items and pickpocketing. There have been a few reports of aggravated assault against U.S. citizens in higher-risk areas. American travelers are advised to take the same precautions against becoming crime victims as they would in any American city.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy or Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the 911 emergency line in Germany is 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is widely available. Doctors and hospitals may expect immediate payment in cash for health services from tourists and persons with no permanent address in Germany. Most doctors, hospitals and pharmacies do not accept credit cards.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. military facilities in Germany will not provide treatment to private American citizens who are not affiliated with the Department of Defense.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Germany is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road conditions in general are excellent, although caution should be exercised while traveling on older roads in eastern Germany. The high speed permitted on the German autobahn, weather, and unfamiliar road markings can pose significant hazards, and driver error is a leading cause of accidents involving American motorists in Germany. Rules on right-of-way differ significantly from the U.S. Notice should be taken that it is generally illegal in Germany to pass vehicles from the right and that the threshold for determining whether a person has been driving under the influence of alcohol is lower than in some U.S. states.

Many German streets and sidewalks have dedicated bike lanes for use by bicyclists. Pedestrians should be aware that bicycles have priority use of these lanes and should be careful to observe whether any bicyclist is approaching before crossing or stepping into the bike lane. Bicyclists also have priority over cars turning onto side streets, and motorists should always confirm whether a bicyclist is approaching from either direction before attempting to enter side streets, even when the light is in their favor. Motorists turning into a side street who hit a bicyclist who is using a marked bike lane will be held responsible for any injury or damage caused.

The use of cell phones while driving is prohibited in Germany. For specific information on travel within Germany contact the German National Tourist Board Office in New York at

(212) 661-7200, fax (212) 661-7174 or via the Internet at http://www.germany-tourism.de. Travelers should also note that railroad crossings are marked differently in Germany than in the U.S. There have been several accidents involving Americans in recent years at railroad crossings. In addition to the standard crossbuck (X-shaped) sign, railroad crossings are often marked by signal lights. Signal lights at a railroad crossing means that a train is approaching and that all vehicles should stop.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.germany-tourism.de.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Germany's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Germany's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Germany's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Germany of certain items such as firearms, military artifacts (particularly those pertaining to the Second World War), antiques, medications/pharmaceuticals and business equipment. Under German law it is also illegal to bring into or take out of Germany literature, music CDs, or other paraphernalia that glorifies fascism, the Nazi past of the former "Third Reich." It is advisable to contact the German Embassy in Washington or one of the German consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are widely available throughout Germany. They utilize many of the same account networks that are found in the U.S., so it is possible in most cases to get euros directly from your U.S. bank while you are in Germany without paying any inordinate fees for currency exchange. Credit cards are not accepted as widely as in the United States.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating German laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Germany are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: American citizen parents have at times encountered difficulties having visitation orders enforced in Germany. For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Germany are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy of Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Germany.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

U.S. Consular Sections are located at:

Berlin: Clayallee 170; Tel: (49)(30)832-9233; Fax: (49)(30) 8305-1215.

Frankfurt: Giessner Str. 30, Tel. (49)(69) 75350; Fax: (49)(69) 7535-2304.

Leipzig: Wilhelm-Seyfferth-Strasse 4, Tel. (49)(341) 213-8418; Fax: (49)(341) 2138417 (emergency service only). Munich: Koenigstrasse 5, Tel. (49)(89) 2888-0; Fax: (49)(89) 280-9998.

There is also a U.S. consular agency in Bremen located at Bremen World Trade Center, Birkenstrasse 15, Tel: (49)(421) 301-5860; Fax: (49)(421) 301-5861.

When calling another city from within Germany, dial a zero before the city code (for example, when calling Berlin from Munich, the city code for Berlin is 030).

Intercountry Adoption

December 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt is the designated immigrant visa issuing post for Germany.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The address of the Central Authority for intercountry adoption in Germany is:

Generalbundesanwalt beim
Bundesgerichtshof
(Public Prosecutor General of the Federal Court of Justice)
Zentrale Behörde
Adenauerallee 99-103
53113 Bonn
Tel. + 49-228-40
Fax +49-228-410-5050
www.bundeszentralregister.de

Persons wishing to adopt a child in Germany should contact the Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt) of each district/major city or the Youth Welfare Office (Landesjugendamt) of each German state (Bundesland). These organizations will be able to assist in arranging an adoption and in facilitating legal proceedings.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The minimum age for an adopting parent is 25 years old. Married couples can only adopt together as husband and wife, with the minimum age for one parent being 25 years old and the minimum age of the second parent being at least 21 years old. Same-sex couples cannot adopt as a couple. However, one of the members of a couple may adopt alone. There is no restriction on the nationality of the adopting parent. Singles, not in a relationship, as well as one member of an unmarried heterosexual couple, can also adopt a child in Germany. Germany also allows non-Germans to adopt a German child.

There is no legal upper age limit of an adopting parent; although German youth welfare offices prefer that the adopting parent(s) be under 40, particularly if they are adopting a baby.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements to adopt in Germany.

Time Frame: There is no specific time frame for the adoption process. It varies from case to case and primarily depends upon the duration of the qualifying process and/or the difficulty of identifying a child for adoption. However, the processing period may last from one to seven years and possibly longer.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents should visit the web site for the Hague Permanent Bureau for Private International Law for a list of accredited adoption agencies in Germany: http://www.hcch.net. The U.S. Embassy in Germany also maintains a list of attorneys who have expressed a willingness to work with U.S. citizens. Please see the Embassy's web site on living in Germany at http://berlin.usembassy.gov/germany/services/lists.html.

Adoption Fees: There will be a surcharge of approximately U.S.$300 for the handling and review of the foreign documents; the court fees for the final adoption decree will be approximately US$100-130. Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay additional costs such as legal fees (attorneys), notarizations, flights, accommodations, etc, totaling several thousand dollars or more.

Adoption Procedures: For both domestic and intercountry adoption, the prospective adoptive parent(s) must first approach either one of the youth offices listed above, the German Central Authority for intercountry adoption, the Central Authority in the country of the child's habitual abode or an intercountry adoption agency for an initial consultation. After a favorable evaluation, the parents will be subject to a home study by their local youth welfare office. Their translated home study will be sent to the adoption authority office. When a child has been identified, the adopting parent(s) and the child's legal guardian sign an agreement before a German court or notary public. Before the family court decides if the adoption may take place and issues the final decree, the adopting parent(s) have to prove that the child will be lawfully admitted into their home country.

Required Documents: There is no standardized checklist of required documents, as each youth office/or court has discretion to allow an adoption to take place or to issue the adoption decree. However, the following is at least a partial list of the civil documents may be required:

- the adopting parents' certified birth certificate;
- identification (passport, photo i.d., etc.);
- marriage certificate (if applicable);
- termination of previous marriage(s) (death certificate, divorce decree, etc.);
- proof of parents' income.

All of the above documents may require a German translation.

German Embassy
4645 Reservoir Road NW
Washington, DC, 20007-1998
(202) 298-4000
http://www.germany.info/relaunch/index.html.

Germany also has consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General
Immigrant Visa Unit
Giessener Strasse 30
60435 Frankfurt Am Main

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Germany may be addressed to the U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Germany is a federal country that consists of 16 states. Nevertheless, substantive and procedural law on domestic relations is federal law. Germany became party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention") on December 1, 1990.

The Hague Convention: The Hague Convention is an international treaty. Its purpose is to discourage international parental child abduction and to ensure that children who are abducted or wrongfully retained in a party country are returned to their country of habitual residence. The Convention does not address child custody, but determines the jurisdiction in which custody should be adjudicated.

The Hague Convention came into force between the United States and Germany on December 1, 1990. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return of a child to the U.S. would apply only to children abducted to or retained in Germany after December 1, 1990. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Germany prior to December 1, 1990, may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention in some cases. For more information on The Hague Convention, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction. For a list of contact names and addresses for German Central Authorities, review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

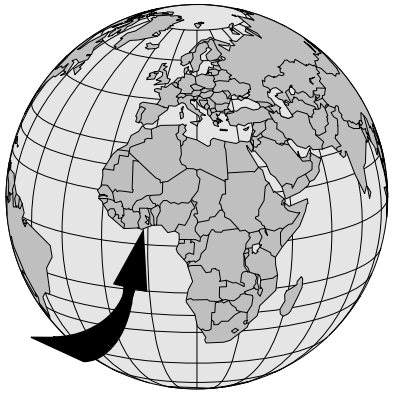
Other Information: Although German courts do issue return/access orders based upon Hague applications, the actual enforcement of those orders can be difficult if the parent with the child refuses to comply with the court's decision.

For further details about the Hague Convention proceedings in Germany, please contact the Office of Children Issues: Telephone (202) 736-9090 or Fax (202) 736-9133.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities, or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. You should be aware that filing criminal child abduction charges in the United States against a taking parent might jeopardize a German Hague Convention case.

Passports for Minors and the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program: For more information on these topics, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

More Information: For further information and/or assistance in either preventing or responding to an international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



GHANA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Ghana

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 238,538 sq. km. (92,100 sq. mi.); about the size of Illinois and Indiana combined.
Cities: Capital—Accra (metropolitan area pop. 3 million est.). Other cities—Kumasi (1 million est.), Tema (500,000 est.), Sekondi-Takoradi (370,000 est.).
Terrain: Plains and scrubland, rainforest, savanna.
Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Ghanaian(s).
Population: (2007 est.) 23 million.
Population density: 88/sq. km. (247/sq. mi.).
Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.7%.
Ethnic groups: Akan, Ewe, Ga, Moshi-Dagomba.
Religions: Christian 69%, Muslim 15.6%, traditional and indigenous beliefs 8.5%.
Languages: English (official), Akan (which includes Asante Twi, Akwapim Twi, Akyem, and Fanti) 49%, Mole-Dagbani 16%, Ewe 13%, Ga-Adangbe 8%, Guan 4%, others 10%.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy—53.7%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2003 est.)—64/1,000. Life expectancy—59.2 yrs. for women, 55.5 yrs. for men
Work force: (11.1 million) Agriculture and fishing—47.9%; industry and transport—16.2%; sales and clerical—19.3%; services—5.9%; professional—8.9%; other—1.8%.

Government

Type: Democracy.
Independence: March 6, 1957.
Constitution: Entered into force January 7, 1993.
Government branches: Executive—president popularly elected for a maximum of two 4-year terms; Council of State, a presidential appointed consultative body of 25 members required by the constitution. Legislative—unicameral Parliament popularly elected for 4-year terms. Judicial—independent Supreme Court justices nominated by president with approval of Parliament.
Political subdivisions: Ten regions.
Political parties: New Patriotic Party, National Democratic Congress, Convention People's Party, People's National Convention, others.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $12.5 billion.
Real GDP growth rate: (2006) 6.2%.
Per capita GDP: (2006) $540.
Inflation rate: (consumer prices) (2006) 11%.
Natural resources: Gold, timber, diamonds, bauxite, manganese, fish.
Agriculture: Products—cocoa, coconuts, coffee, pineapples, cashews, pepper, other food crops, rubber. Land—70% arable and forested.
Business and industry: Types—mining, lumber, light manufacturing, fishing, aluminum, tourism.
Trade: (2006) Exports—$3.9 billion: cocoa ($1.26 billion), gold, timber, diamonds, manganese. Imports—$6.8 billion: petroleum ($1.3 billion), food, industrial raw materials, machinery, equipment. Major trade partners—Nigeria, China, U.S., U.K., Germany, Togo, France, Netherlands, Spain.
Fiscal year: Calendar year.

GEOGRAPHY

Ghana is located on West Africa's Gulf of Guinea only a few degrees north of the Equator. Half of the country lies less than 152 meters (500 ft.) above sea level, and the highest point is 883 meters (2,900 ft.). The 537-kilometer (334-mi.) coastline is mostly a low, sandy shore backed by plains and scrub and intersected by several rivers and streams, most of

which are navigable only by canoe. A tropical rain forest belt, broken by heavily forested hills and many streams and rivers, extends northward from the shore, near the Cote d'Ivoire frontier. This area produces most of the country's cocoa, minerals, and timber. North of this belt, the country varies from 91 to 396 meters (300 ft.-1,300 ft.) above sea level and is covered by low bush, park-like savanna, and grassy plains. The climate is tropical. The eastern coastal belt is warm and comparatively dry; the southwest corner, hot and humid; and the north, hot and dry. There are two distinct rainy seasons in the south—May-June and August-September; in the north, the rainy seasons tend to merge. A dry, northeasterly wind, the Harmattan, blows in January and February. Annual rainfall in the coastal zone averages 83 centimeters (33 in.).

Volta Lake, the largest manmade lake in the world, extends from the Akosombo Dam in southeastern Ghana to the town of Yapei, 520 kilometers (325 mi.) to the north. The lake generates electricity, provides inland transportation, and is a potentially valuable resource for irrigation and fish farming.

PEOPLE

Ghana's population is concentrated along the coast and in the principal cities of Accra and Kumasi. Most Ghanaians descended from migrating tribes that probably came down the Volta River valley at the beginning of the 13th century. Ethnically, Ghana is divided into small groups speaking more than 50 languages and dialects. Among the more important linguistic groups are the Akans, which include the Fantis along the coast and the Ashantis in the forest region north of the coast; the Guans, on the plains of the Volta River; the Ga- and Ewe-speaking peoples of the south and southeast; and the Moshi-Dagomba-speaking tribes of the northern and upper regions. English, the official and commercial language, is taught in all the schools.

Education

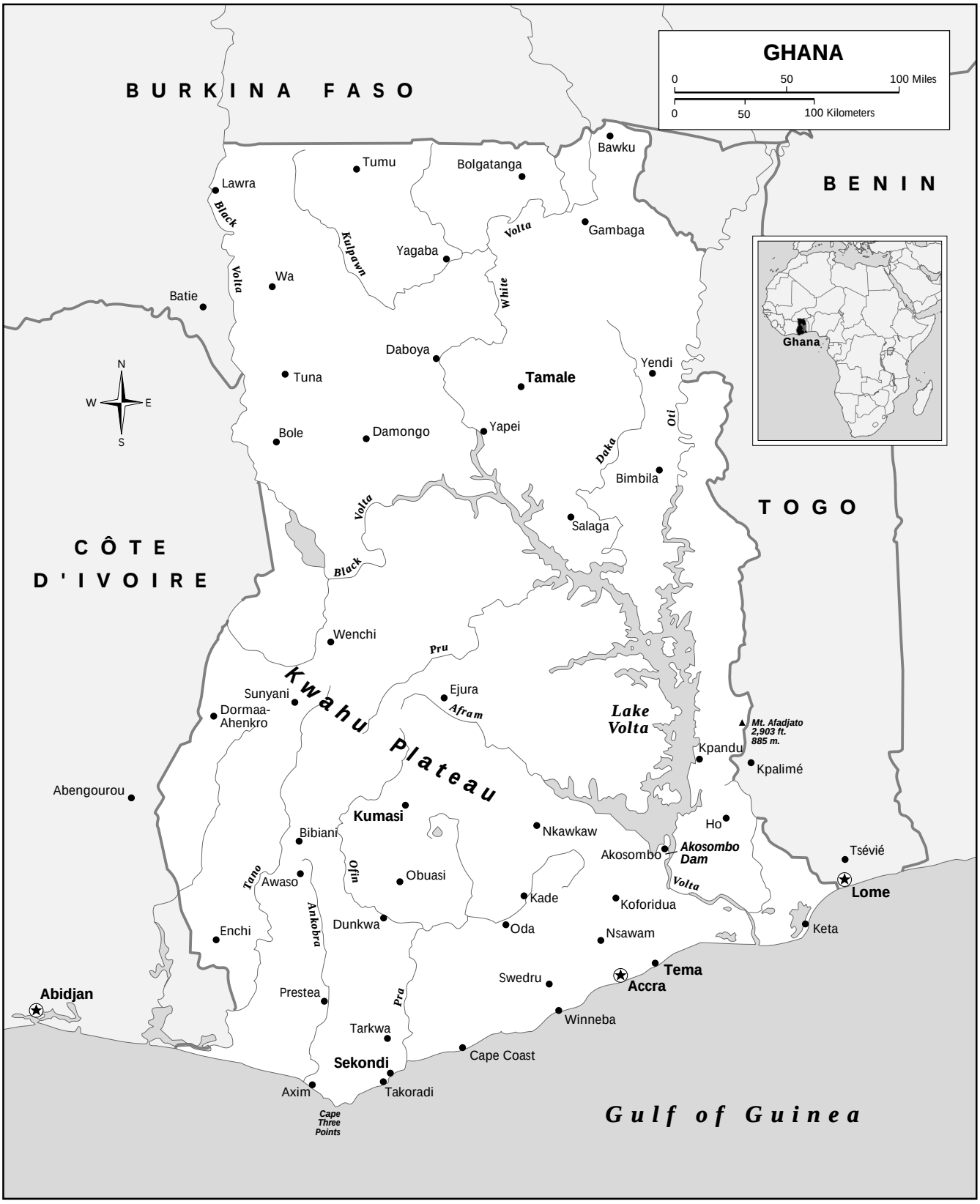
Primary and junior secondary school education is tuition-free and mandatory. The Government of Ghana's support for basic education is unequivocal. Article 39 of the constitution mandates the major tenets of the free, compulsory, universal basic education (FCUBE) initiative. Launched in 1996, it is one of the most ambitious pre-tertiary education programs in West Africa. Since the early 1980s, Government of Ghana expenditures on education have risen from 1.5% to nearly 3.5% of GDP. Since 1987, the share of basic education in total education spending has averaged around 67%. The units of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MOESS) responsible for education are: the Ghana Education Service (GES), which administers pre-university education; the National Council on Tertiary Education; the National Accreditation Board; and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX). The West African Examinations Council (WAEC), a consortium of five Anglophone West African Countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Liberia) is responsible for developing, administering, and grading school-leaving examinations at the secondary level.

Since 1986, pre-tertiary education in Ghana includes six years of primary education, three years at the junior secondary school level and three years at the senior secondary school level. A new educational reform, beginning September 1, 2007, has introduced two years of kindergarten education beginning at age four and increased the three years senior secondary to four years. Successful completion of senior secondary school leads to admission eligibility at training colleges, polytechnics, and universities. In 2006 there were approximately 5.1 million students attending schools at these three levels: 68% at the primary level, 23% at the junior secondary level and 10% at the senior secondary level. There are over six hundred public senior secondary schools in Ghana that graduated a total of 90,000 students in 2004, representing a huge expansion over the old system (which was transformed in 1987), which consisted of three hundred institutions graduating 27,000 students a year. However, access to each successive level of education remains severely limited by lack of facilities. About 99.1% of junior secondary school graduates are able to gain admission to senior secondary schools, and only about 34.4% of senior secondary school graduates are able to gain admission to universities and polytechnics, plus another 10-20% to diploma-level postsecondary education. Private secondary schools play a very small role in Ghana, with only a handful of institutions offering international curricula such as the British-based A-levels, International Baccalaureate, and U.S. high school. Combined, they graduate fewer than 200 students a year.

Entrance to one of the five Ghanaian public universities is by examination following completion of senior secondary school. There are now five public and twelve private degree-granting universities in Ghana, along with ten public polytechnics offering the British Higher National Diploma (HND), a three-year tertiary system in applied fields of study. Ghana's first private Catholic university opened in 2003 in Sunyani. The polytechnics also offer vocational, non-tertiary diploma programs. In addition, there are approximately forty teacher-training colleges and fifteen nurses' training colleges. Private tertiary education is a recent but rapid development in Ghana, meticulously regulated by the National Accreditation Board. Over 84,078 undergraduates are now enrolled in secular degree-granting programs in seventeen public and private universities, 29,047 students enrolled in polytechnics, and 26,025 trainees enrolled in teacher training colleges.

HISTORY

The history of the Gold Coast before the last quarter of the 15th century is derived primarily from oral tradition that refers to migrations from the ancient kingdoms of the western Soudan (the area of Mauritania and


GHANA
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0 50 100 Kilometers
BURKINA FASO
BENIN
TOGO
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Gulf of Guinea
Ghana
N
W
E
S
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Tumu
Bolgatanga
Lawra
Gambaga
Yagaba
Wa
Batie
Daboya
Tamale
Yendi
Tuna
Bole
Damongo
Yapei
Bimbila
Salaga
Wenchi
Sunyani
Dormaa-Ahenkro
Ejura
Kwahu Plateau
Lake Volta
Mt. Afadjato 2,903 ft. 885 m.
Kpandu
Kpalimé
Abengourou
Kumasi
Bibiani
Nkawkaw
Ho
Akosombo
Akosombo Dam
Tsévié
Awaso
Obuasi
Kade
Koforidua
Lome
Enchi
Dunkwa
Oda
Nsawam
Keta
Swedru
Tema
Accra
Abidjan
Prestea
Winneba
Tarkwa
Cape Coast
Sekondi
Axim
Takoradi
Cape Three Points
Black Volta
Kulpawn
White Volta
Oti
Daka
Pru
Afram
Tano
Ofin
Ankobra
Pra
Volta

Mali). The Gold Coast was renamed Ghana upon independence in 1957 because of indications that present-day inhabitants descended from migrants who moved south from the ancient kingdom of Ghana. The first contact between Europe and the Gold Coast dates from 1470, when a party of Portuguese landed. In 1482, the Portuguese built Elmina Castle as a permanent trading base. Thomas Windham made the first recorded English trading voyage to the coast in 1553. During the next three centuries, the English, Danes, Dutch, Germans, and Portuguese controlled various parts of the coastal areas.

In 1821, the British Government took control of the British trading forts on the Gold Coast. In 1844, Fanti chiefs in the area signed an agreement with the British that became the legal steppingstone to colonial status for the coastal area. From 1826 to 1900, the British fought a series of campaigns against the Ashantis, whose kingdom was located inland. In 1902, they succeeded in establishing firm control over the Ashanti region and making the northern territories a protectorate. British Togoland, the fourth territorial element eventually to form the nation, was part of a former German colony administered by the United Kingdom from Accra as a League of Nations mandate after 1922. In December 1946, British Togoland became a UN Trust Territory, and in 1957, following a 1956 plebiscite, the United Nations agreed that the territory would become part of Ghana when the Gold Coast achieved independence.

The four territorial divisions were administered separately until 1946, when the British Government ruled them as a single unit. In 1951, a constitution was promulgated that called for a greatly enlarged legislature composed principally of members elected by popular vote directly or indirectly. An executive council was responsible for formulating policy, with most African members drawn from the legislature and including three ex officio members appointed by the governor. A new constitution, approved on April 29, 1954, established a cabinet comprising African ministers drawn from an all-African legislature chosen by direct election. In the elections that followed, the Convention People's Party (CPP), led by Kwame Nkrumah, won the majority of seats in the new Legislative Assembly. In May 1956, Prime Minister Nkrumah's Gold Coast government issued a white paper containing proposals for Gold Coast independence. The British Government stated it would agree to a firm date for independence if a reasonable majority for such a step were obtained in the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly after a general election. This election, held in 1956, returned the CPP to power with 71 of the 104 seats in the Legislative Assembly. Ghana became an independent state on March 6, 1957, when the United Kingdom relinquished its control over the Colony of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, the Northern Territories Protectorate, and British Togoland.

In subsequent reorganizations, the country was divided into 10 regions, which currently are subdivided into 138 districts. The original Gold Coast Colony now comprises the Western, Central, Eastern, and Greater Accra Regions, with a small portion at the mouth of the Volta River assigned to the Volta Region; the Ashanti area was divided into the Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo Regions; the Northern Territories into the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions; and British Togoland essentially is the same area as the Volta Region.

Post-Independence Politics

After independence, the CPP government under Nkrumah sought to develop Ghana as a modern, semi-industrialized, unitary socialist state. The government emphasized political and economic organization, endeavoring to increase stability and productivity through labor, youth, farmers, cooperatives, and other organizations integrated with the CPP. The government, according to Nkrumah, acted only as "the agent of the CPP" in seeking to accomplish these goals.

The CPP's control was challenged and criticized, and Prime Minister Nkrumah used the Preventive Detention Act (1958), which provided for detention without trial for up to 5 years (later extended to 10 years). On July 1, 1960, a new constitution was adopted, changing Ghana from a parliamentary system with a prime minister to a republican form of government headed by a powerful president. In August 1960, Nkrumah was given authority to scrutinize newspapers and other publications before publication. This political evolution continued into early 1964, when a constitutional referendum changed the country to a one-party state. On February 24, 1966, the Ghanaian Army and police overthrew Nkrumah's regime. Nkrumah and all his ministers were dismissed, the CPP and National Assembly were dissolved, and the constitution was suspended. The new regime cited Nkrumah's flagrant abuse of individual rights and liberties, his regime's corrupt, oppressive, and dictatorial practices, and the rapidly deteriorating economy as the principal reasons for its action.

Post-Nkrumah Politics

The leaders of the February 24, 1966 coup established the new government around the National Liberation Council (NLC) and pledged an early return to a duly constituted civilian government. Members of the judiciary and civil service remained at their posts and committees of civil servants were established to handle the administration of the country. Ghana's government returned to civilian authority under the Second Republic in October 1969 after a parliamentary election in which the Progress Party, led by Kofi A. Busia, won 105 of the 140 seats. Until mid-1970, a presidential commission led by Brigadier A.A. Afrifa held the powers of the chief of state. In a special election on August 31, 1970, former Chief Justice Edward Akufo-Addo was chosen President, and Dr. Busia became Prime Minister.

Faced with mounting economic problems, Prime Minister Busia's government undertook a drastic devaluation

of the currency in December 1971. The government's inability to control the subsequent inflationary pressures stimulated further discontent, and military officers seized power in a bloodless coup on January 13, 1972.

The coup leaders, led by Col. I.K. Acheampong, formed the National Redemption Council (NRC) to which they admitted other officers, the head of the police, and one civilian. The NRC promised improvements in the quality of life for all Ghanaians and based its programs on nationalism, economic development, and self-reliance. In 1975, government reorganization resulted in the NRC's replacement by the Supreme Military Council (SMC), also headed by now-General Acheampong.

Unable to deliver on its promises, the NRC/SMC became increasingly marked by mismanagement and rampant corruption. In 1977, General Acheampong brought forward the concept of union government (UNIGOV), which would make Ghana a non-party state. Perceiving this as a ploy by Acheampong to retain power, professional groups and students launched strikes and demonstrations against the government in 1977 and 1978. The steady erosion in Acheampong's power led to his arrest in July 1978 by his chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Frederick Akuffo, who replaced him as head of state and leader of what became known as the SMC-2.

Akuffo abandoned UNIGOV and established a plan to return to constitutional and democratic government. A Constitutional Assembly was established, and political party activity was revived. Akuffo was unable to solve Ghana's economic problems, however, or to reduce the rampant corruption in which senior military officers played a major role. On June 4, 1979, his government was deposed in a violent coup by a group of junior and noncommissioned officers—Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)—with Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings as its chairman.

The AFRC executed eight senior military officers, including former chiefs of state Acheampong and Akuffo; established Special Tribunals that, secretly and without due process, tried dozens of military officers, other government officials, and private individuals for corruption, sentencing them to long prison terms and confiscating their property; and, through a combination of force and exhortation, attempted to rid Ghanaian society of corruption and profiteering. At the same time, the AFRC accepted, with a few amendments, the draft constitution that had been submitted; permitted the scheduled presidential and parliamentary elections to take place in June and July; promulgated the constitution; and handed over power to the newly elected President and Parliament of the Third Republic on September 24, 1979.

The 1979 constitution was modeled on those of Western democracies. It provided for the separation of powers between an elected president and a unicameral Parliament, an independent judiciary headed by a Supreme Court, which protected individual rights, and other autonomous institutions, such as the Electoral Commissioner and the Ombudsman. The new President, Dr. Hilla Limann, was a career diplomat from the north and the candidate of the People's National Party (PNP), the political heir of Nkrumah's CPP. Of the 140 members of Parliament, 71 were PNP. The PNP government established the constitutional institutions and generally respected democracy and individual human rights. It failed, however, to halt the continuing decline in the economy; corruption flourished, and the gap between rich and poor widened. On December 31, 1981, Flight Lt. Rawlings and a small group of enlisted and former soldiers launched a coup that succeeded against little opposition in toppling President Limann.

The PNDC Era

Rawlings and his colleagues suspended the 1979 constitution, dismissed the President and his cabinet, dissolved the Parliament, and proscribed existing political parties. They established the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), initially composed of seven members with Rawlings as chairman, to exercise executive and legislative powers. The existing judicial system was preserved, but alongside it the PNDC created the National Investigation Committee to root out corruption and other economic offenses; the anonymous Citizens' Vetting Committee to punish tax evasion; and the Public Tribunals to try various crimes. The PNDC proclaimed its intent to allow the people to exercise political power through defense committees to be established in communities, workplaces, and in units of the armed forces and police. Under the PNDC, Ghana remained a unitary government.

In December 1982, the PNDC announced a plan to decentralize government from Accra to the regions, the districts, and local communities, but it maintained overall control by appointing regional and district secretaries who exercised executive powers and also chaired regional and district councils. Local councils, however, were expected progressively to take over the payment of salaries, with regions and districts assuming more powers from the national government. In 1984, the PNDC created a National Appeals Tribunal to hear appeals from the public tribunals; changed the Citizens' Vetting Committee into the Office of Revenue Collection; and replaced the system of defense committees with Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.

In 1984, the PNDC also created a National Commission on Democracy to study ways to establish participatory democracy in Ghana. The commission issued a "Blue Book" in July 1987 outlining modalities for district-level elections, which were held in late 1988 and early 1989, for newly created district assemblies. The government appointed one-third of the assembly members.

The Fourth Republic

Under international and domestic pressure for a return to democracy, the PNDC allowed the establishment of a 258-member Consultative Assembly made up of members repre-

senting geographic districts as well as established civic or business organizations. The assembly was charged to draw up a draft constitution to establish a Fourth Republic, using PNDC proposals. The PNDC accepted the final product without revision, and it was put to a national referendum on April 28, 1992, in which it received 92% approval. On May 18, 1992, the ban on party politics was lifted in preparation for multi-party elections. The PNDC and its supporters formed a new party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), to contest the elections. Presidential elections were held on November 3 and parliamentary elections on December 29, 1992. Members of the opposition boycotted the parliamentary elections, however, which resulted in a 200-seat Parliament with only 17 opposition party members and two independents.

The constitution entered into force on January 7, 1993, to found the Fourth Republic. On that day, Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings was inaugurated as President and members of Parliament swore their oaths of office. In 1996, the opposition fully contested the presidential and parliamentary elections, which were described as peaceful, free, and transparent by domestic and international observers. In that election, President Rawlings was re-elected with 57% of the popular vote. In addition, Rawlings' NDC party won 133 of the Parliament's 200 seats, just one seat short of the two-thirds majority needed to amend the constitution, although the election returns of two parliamentary seats faced legal challenges.

The December 2000 elections ushered in the first democratic presidential change of power in Ghana's history when John A. Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) defeated the NDC's John Atta Mills—who was Rawling's Vice President and handpicked successor. Kufuor defeated Mills by winning 56.73% of the vote, while the NPP picked up 100 of 200 seats in Parliament. The elections were declared free and fair by a large contingent of domestic and international monitors. After several by-elections were held to fill vacated seats, the NPP majority stood at 103 of the 200 seats in Parliament, while the NDC held 89 and independent and small party members held eight.

In December 2004, eight political parties contested parliamentary elections and four parties, including the NPP and NDC, contested presidential elections. This election was reported to have a remarkable turnout of 85.12% according to the Election Commission. Despite a few incidents of intimidation and minor irregularities, domestic and international observers judged the elections generally free and fair. There were several isolated incidents of election-related violence, but the election was generally peaceful in most of Ghana. John Agyekum Kufuor was re-elected president with 52.45% of the vote against three other presidential candidates, including former Vice-President John Atta Mills of the NDC. Thirty constituencies were created in the period between the 2000 and 2004 elections, resulting in a 230-member Parliament. Ghana's next presidential election will be held in 2008, and the race to succeed President Kufuor is well underway, with more than 15 candidates seeking the office.

On March 6, 2007, Ghana celebrated its 50th anniversary since becoming independent. As the first African nation to win its struggle for independence, Ghana hosted delegations from around the world during its year-long Jubilee event.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The 1993 constitution that established the Fourth Republic provided a basic charter for the republican democratic government. It declares Ghana to be a unitary republic with sovereignty residing in the Ghanaian people. Intended to prevent future coups, dictatorial government, and one-party states, it is designed to establish the concept of power sharing. The document reflects lessons learned from the abrogated constitutions of 1957, 1960, 1969, and 1979, and incorporates provisions and institutions drawn from British and American constitutional models. One controversial provision of the constitution indemnifies members and appointees of the PNDC from liability for any official act or omission during the years of PNDC rule. The constitution calls for a system of checks and balances, with power shared between a president, a unicameral parliament, an advisory Council of State, and an independent judiciary.

Executive authority is established in the Office of the Presidency, together with his Council of State. The president is head of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the armed forces. He also appoints the vice president. According to the constitution, more than half of the presidential-appointed ministers of state must be appointed from among members of Parliament.

Legislative functions are vested in Parliament, which consists of a unicameral 230-member body plus the Speaker. To become law, legislation must have the assent of the president, who has a qualified veto over all bills except those to which a vote of urgency is attached. Members of Parliament are popularly elected by universal adult suffrage for terms of 4 years, except in wartime, when terms may be extended for not more than 12 months at a time beyond the 4 years.

The structure and the power of the judiciary are independent of the two other branches of government. The Supreme Court has broad powers of judicial review. It is authorized by the constitution to rule on the constitutionality of any legislation or executive action at the request of any aggrieved citizen. The hierarchy of courts derives largely from British juridical forms. The hierarchy, called the Superior Court of Judicature, is composed of the Supreme Court of Ghana, the Court of Appeal, the High Court of Justice, regional tribunals, and such lower courts or tribunals as Parliament may establish. The courts have jurisdiction over all civil and criminal matters.

The government of John A. Kufuor appears to enjoy broad support among the Ghanaian population as it pursues a domestic political agenda based upon public commitment to the rule of law, basic human rights, and free market initiatives. So far, the government has taken steps to strengthen freedoms of expression by repealing colonial-era criminal libel laws, dropping a number of libel suits against journalists, abolishing sometimes abusive community tribunals, and introducing legislation to establish a juvenile justice system. As part of its anti-corruption efforts the Kufuor government has pursued some high-profile cases, including the prosecution of its Minister of Youth and Sports and several former high-level government officials. On September 3, 2002, Ghana inaugurated its National Reconciliation Commission, a South Africa-style commission established to investigate human rights abuses under Ghana's former military regimes. The National Reconciliation Commission completed its hearings in July 2004 and submitted its final report with recommendations in October 2004. The government responded with a White Paper in April 2005, accepting the recommendation to establish a Reparation and Rehabilitation Fund for victims of abuse, as well as directing security forces to study carefully the various recommendations on recruitment, training and deployment. Narcotics trafficked through Ghana to Western Europe and North America also pose a significant challenge for Ghana.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **John Agyekum KUFUOR**
Vice Pres.: **Aliu MAHAMA**
Min. of Aviation: **Gloria AKUFFO**
Min. of Communications: **Benjamin AGGREY-NTIM**
Min. of Defense: **Albert KAN-DAPAAH**
Min. of Education, Science, & Sports: **Dominic FOBIH**
Min. of Energy: **Joseph Kofi ADDA**
Min. of Finance & Economic Planning: **Kwadwo BAAH-WIREDU**
Min. of Fisheries: **Gladys ASMAH**
Min. of Food & Agriculture: **Ernest DEBRAH**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration, & the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): **Akwasi OSEI-ADJEI**
Min. of Health: **Courage QUASHIGAH, Maj. (Ret.)**
Min. of Information & National Orientation: **Stephen ASAMOAH-BOATENG**
Min. of Interior: **Kwamena BARTELS**
Min. of Justice: **Joe GHARTEY**
Min. of Lands, Forestry, & Mines: **Esther Obeng DAPAAH**
Min. of Local Govt., Rural Development, & Environment: **Kwado ADJEI-DARKO**
Min. of Manpower, Youth, & Employment: **Nana OKOMEA**
Min. of National Security:
Min. of Parliamentary Affairs: **Abraham OSEI-AIDOOH**
Min. of Ports, Harbors, & Railways: **Christopher Ameyaw AKUMFI**
Min. for Public Sector Reform: **Paa Kwesi NDUOM**
Min. of Roads & Highways: **Richard ANANE**
Min. of Tourism & Diaspora Relations: **Oboshie Sai KOFIE**
Min. of Trade, Industry, & Private Sector Development: **Joseph BAIDOE-ANSAH**
Min. of Transportation: **Richard ANANE**
Min. of Water Resources, Works, & Housing: **Abubakar Saddique BONIFACE**
Min. of Women's & Children's Affairs: **Alima MAHAMA**
Min. of State in the Presidency: **Yaw BARIMAH**
Min. of State in the Presidency: **Charles BINTIN**
Min. of State in the Min. of Education: **Elizabeth OHENE**
Min. of State for Aviation: **Gloria AKUFFO**
Min. of State for Culture & Chieftancy: **Sampson Kwaku BOAFO**
Min. of State for Finance & Economic Planning: **Anthony Akoto OSEI**
Min. of State for Interior: **Nana OBIRI BOAHEN**
Min. of State for Justice: **Ambrose DERY**
Min. of State for Public Sector Reform: **Samuel OWUSU-ADJEI**
Min. of State for Transportation: **Godfred BONYON**
Min. of State for Water Resources, Works, & Housing: **Cecelia Abena DAPAAH**
Attorney Gen.: **Joe GHARTEY**
Governor, Bank of Ghana: **Paul ACQUAH**
Ambassador to the US: **Kwame BAWUAH-EDUSEI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Leslie CHRISTIAN**

Ghana maintains an embassy in the United States at 3512 International Drive, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-686-4500). Its permanent mission to the United Nations is located at 19 E. 47th Street, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-832-1300).

ECONOMY

By West African standards, Ghana has a relatively diverse and rich natural resource base. Minerals—principally gold, diamonds, manganese ore, and bauxite—are produced and exported. Exploration for oil and gas resources is ongoing. Timber and marine resources are important but declining resources.

Agriculture remains a mainstay of the economy, accounting for more than one-third of GDP and about 55% of formal employment. Cash crops consist primarily of cocoa and cocoa products, which typically provide about one-third of export revenue, timber products, coconuts and other palm products, shea nuts (which produce an edible fat), and coffee. Ghana also has established a successful program of nontraditional agricultural products for export including pineapples, cashews, and peppers. Cassava, yams, plantains, corn, rice, peanuts, millet, and sorghum are the basic foodstuffs. Fish, poultry, and meat also are important dietary staples.

Ghana's industrial base is relatively advanced compared to many other African countries. Industries include textiles, apparel, steel (using scrap), tires, oil refining, flour milling, beverages, tobacco, simple consumer goods, and car, truck, and bus assembly. Industry, including mining, manufacturing, construction and electricity, accounts for about 25% of GDP.

Gold shares the top export revenue spot with cocoa, each bringing in about $1 billion in 2006. Tourism has become one of Ghana's largest foreign income earners (ranking third in 2005 at $836 million), and the Ghanaian Government has placed strong emphasis on further development of the sector. The country's largest

source of foreign exchange is remittances from abroad, which totaled about $4 billion in 2006.

Ghana's post-independence economic story has been a difficult one, but over the last 20 years, stability and growth have increasingly taken hold. Real GDP growth has averaged 4% since the mid-80s and was about 6% 2004-2006. Inflation and interest rates have declined steadily, particularly over the last decade. Ghana's poverty rate has also come down markedly, from 51.7% in 1991 to 28.5% in 2005/2006. Ghana is on track to meet the Millennium Development goal of halving extreme poverty by 2008, well ahead of the 2015 target.

Economic Development

At independence, Ghana had a substantial physical and social infrastructure and $481 million in foreign reserves. The Nkrumah government further developed the infrastructure and made important public investments in the industrial sector. With assistance from the United States, the World Bank, and the United Kingdom, construction of the Akosombo Dam was completed on the Volta River in 1966. Two U.S. companies built Valco, Africa's largest aluminum smelter, to use power generated at the dam. Aluminum exports from Valco used to be a major source of foreign exchange for Ghana, but an investment dispute beginning in 2001, followed by sale back to the government, has led to sporadic operation in recent years, and it was closed again in March 2007 due to the country's energy crisis.

Many Nkrumah-era investments were monumental public works projects and poorly conceived, badly managed agricultural and industrial schemes. With cocoa prices falling and the country's foreign exchange reserves fast disappearing, the government resorted to supplier credits to finance many projects. By the mid-1960s, Ghana's reserves were gone, and the country could not meet repayment schedules. The National Liberation Council responded by abandoning unprofitable projects and selling some inefficient state-owned enterprises to private investors. On three occasions, Ghana's creditors agreed to reschedule repayments due on Nkrumah-era supplier credits. Led by the United States, foreign donors provided import loans to enable the foreign exchange-strapped government to import essential commodities.

Prime Minister Busia's government (1969-72) liberalized controls to attract foreign investment and to encourage domestic entrepreneurship. Investors were cautious, however, and cocoa prices declined again while imports surged, precipitating a serious trade deficit. Despite considerable foreign assistance and some debt relief, the Busia regime also was unable to overcome the inherited restraints on growth posed by the debt burden, balance-of-payments imbalances, foreign exchange shortages, and mismanagement.

Although foreign aid helped prevent economic collapse and was responsible for subsequent improvements in many sectors, the economy stagnated in the 10-year period preceding the NRC takeover in 1972. Population growth offset the modest increase in gross domestic product, and real earnings declined for many Ghanaians.

To restructure the economy, the NRC, under General Acheampong (1972-78), undertook an austerity program that emphasized self-reliance, particularly in food production. These plans were not realized, however, primarily because of post-1973 oil price increases and a drought in 1975-77 that particularly affected northern Ghana. The NRC, which had inherited foreign debts of almost $1 billion, abrogated existing rescheduling arrangements for some debts and rejected other repayments. After creditors objected to this unilateral action, a 1974 agreement rescheduled the medium-term debt on liberal terms. The NRC also imposed the Investment Policy Decree of 1975—effective on January 1977—that required 51% Ghanaian equity participation in most foreign firms, but the government took 40% in specified industries. Many shares were sold directly to the public. Continued mismanagement of the economy, record inflation (more than 100% in 1977), and increasing corruption, notably at the highest political levels, led to growing dissatisfaction. The post-July 1978 military regime led by General Akuffo attempted to deal with Ghana's economic problems by making small changes in the overvalued cedi and by restraining government spending and monetary growth. Under a one-year standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in January 1979, the government promised to undertake economic reforms, including a reduction of the budget deficit, in return for a $68 million IMF support program and $27 million in IMF Trust Fund loans. The agreement became inoperative, however, after the June 4 coup that brought Flight Lieutenant Rawlings and the AFRC to power for 4 months.

In September 1979, the civilian government of Hilla Limann inherited declining per capita income, stagnant industrial and agricultural production due to inadequate imported supplies, shortages of imported and locally produced goods, a sizable budget deficit (almost 40% of expenditures in 1979), high inflation, "moderating" to 54% in 1979, an increasingly overvalued cedi, flourishing smuggling and other black-market activities, high unemployment, particularly among urban youth, deterioration in the transport network, and continued foreign exchange constraints.

Limann's PNP government announced yet another (2-year) reconstruction program, emphasizing increased food production, exports, and transport improvements. Import austerity was imposed and external payments arrears cut. However, cocoa production and prices fell, while oil prices soared. No effective measures were taken to reduce rampant corruption and black marketing.

When Rawlings again seized power at the end of 1981, cocoa output had fallen to half the 1970-71 level and its world price to one-third the 1975

level. By 1982, oil would constitute half of Ghana's imports, while overall trade contracted greatly. Internal transport had slowed to a crawl, and inflation remained high. During Rawlings' first year, the economy was stagnant. Industry ran at about 10% of capacity due to the chronic shortage of foreign exchange to cover the importation of required raw materials and replacement parts. Economic conditions deteriorated further in early 1983 when Nigeria expelled an estimated 1 million Ghanaians who had to be absorbed by Ghana.

In April 1983, in coordination with the IMF, the PNDC launched an economic recovery program, perhaps the most stringent and consistent of its day in Africa, aimed at reopening infrastructure bottlenecks and reviving moribund productive sectors—agriculture, mining, and timber. The largely distorted exchange rate and prices were realigned to encourage production and exports. The government imposed fiscal and monetary discipline to curb inflation. Through November 1987, the cedi was devalued by more than 6,300%, and widespread direct price controls were substantially reduced.

The economy's response to these reforms was initially hampered by the absorption of 1 million returnees from Nigeria, compounded by the decline of foreign aid and the onset of the worst drought since independence, which brought on widespread bushfires and forced closure of the aluminum smelter and severe power cuts for industry. In 1985, the country absorbed an additional 100,000 expellees from Nigeria.

In 1987, cocoa prices declined again; however, infrastructure repairs, improved weather, and producer incentives and support revived output. During 1984-88 the economy experienced solid growth for the first time since 1978. Renewed exports, aid inflows, and a foreign exchange auction eased hard currency constraints.

While the reforms caused substantial shocks in some sectors, particularly agriculture and textiles, the overall effects were positive and helped bring about a measure of economic stabilization and recovery. However, a big drop in world cocoa and gold prices hurt growth and, in the face of pending elections, spurred government spending, leading to an increased deficit, falling currency and high inflation at the time a new government led by John Agyekum Kufuor took office in 2000.

The economy has performed well under the Kufuor administration, but Ghana's fundamental vulnerabilities remain. The new administration continued the economic stabilization begun under the previous administration, and has taken some difficult but necessary steps such as ending subsidies of petroleum prices. Solid macroeconomic management coupled with major debt relief, large inflows of donor resources, and relatively high cocoa and gold prices have been the keys to the steady improvements in real GDP growth, which in 2004 topped 5% for the first time in a decade and reached an estimated 6.2% in 2006. Further debt relief, continued large aid inflows, favorable commodity prices, and $4 billion in gross annual remittances—this figure includes remittances from individuals as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and embassies; individual remittances were estimated at about $1.8 billion in 2006—put Ghana in a stronger balance of payments position.

Ghana was recognized for its economic and democratic achievements in 2006, when it signed a five-year, $547 million anti-poverty compact with the United States' Millennium Challenge Corporation. The compact focuses on accelerating growth and poverty reduction through agricultural and rural development. The compact has three main components: enhancing the profitability of commercial agriculture among small farmers; reducing the transportation costs affecting agricultural commerce through improvements in transportation infrastructure, and expanding basic community services and strengthening rural institutions that support agriculture and agri-business. The compact is expected to contribute to improving the lives of one million Ghanaians. Ghana's stated goals are to accelerate economic growth, improve the quality of life for all Ghanaians, and reduce poverty through macroeconomic stability, higher private investment, broad-based social and rural development, as well as direct poverty-alleviation efforts. These plans are fully supported by the international donor community.

Key economic challenges include: overcoming infrastructure bottlenecks, especially in energy and water; poor management of natural resources; improving human resource capacity and development; establishing a business and investment climate that encourages and allows private sector-led growth, and privatizing remaining state-owned enterprises, several of which are significant budget liabilities.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Ghana is active in the United Nations and many of its specialized agencies, as well as the World Trade Organization, the Nonaligned Movement, the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Generally, Ghana follows the consensus of the Nonaligned Movement and the AU on economic and political issues that do not directly affect its own interests. Ghana plays an increasingly active role in subregional affairs. In February 2002, Ghana's former Deputy Foreign Minister, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, assumed the office of ECOWAS Executive Secretary. In February 2003, President Kufuor became the Chairperson of ECOWAS heads of state, taking on a strong role in the Cote d'Ivoire and Liberian peace and reconciliation processes. Kufuor was reelected to a second year in December 2003. His tenure expired in January 2005. Ghana took a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council in January 2006. In January 2007, President Kufuor was elected Chairman of the African Union, and Ghana hosted the June 2007 AU Summit, which focused on increasing

African unity. Ghana has been extremely active in international peacekeeping activities under UN auspices in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Rwanda, the Balkans, and Pakistan, in addition to an 8-year subregional initiative with its ECOWAS partners to develop and then enforce a ceasefire in Liberia. In January 2003, Ghana sent a company of troops to Cote d'Ivoire as part of the ECOWAS stabilization force and sent another contingent to Liberia in July of 2003; the United States provided logistical assistance to Ghana in these efforts. Ghana has current deployments to Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Lebanon, and Congo with numerous small troop deployments in the role of UN observers in many other crisis locations around the world. Additionally, Ghana sent some troops to a French-sponsored RECAMP Exercise in Benin, clearly highlighting the key role that peacekeeping operations have in the Ghana Armed Forces. Ghana maintains friendly relations with all states, regardless of ideology. Ghana has also committed to send a peacekeeping contingent to Somalia.

U.S.-GHANAIAN RELATIONS

The United States has enjoyed good relations with Ghana at a nonofficial, personal level since Ghana's independence. Thousands of Ghanaians have been educated in the United States. Close relations are maintained between educational and scientific institutions, and cultural links, particularly between Ghanaians and African-Americans, are strong.

Through the U.S. International Visitor Program, Ghanaian parliamentarians and other government officials have become acquainted with U.S. congressional and state legislative practices and have participated in programs designed to address other issues of interest. The U.S. and Ghanaian militaries have cooperated in numerous joint training exercises, culminating with Ghanaian participation in the African Crisis Response Initiative, an international activity in which the U.S. facilitates the development of an interoperable peacekeeping capacity among African nations. U.S.-Ghanaian military cooperation continues under the new African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program; Ghana was one of the first militaries to receive ACOTA training in early 2003. In addition, there is an active bilateral International Military Education and Training program. Additionally, Ghana is the site of a U.S.-European Command-funded Exercise Reception Facility that was established to facilitate troop deployments for exercises or crisis response within the region. The facility is a direct result of Ghana's partnership with the United States on a Fuel Hub Initiative. Ghana is one of few African nations selected for the State Partnership Program, which will promote greater economic ties with U.S. institutions, including the National Guard.

The United States is among Ghana's principal trading partners. The Office of the President of Ghana worked closely with the U.S. Embassy in Accra to establish an American Chamber of Commerce to continue to develop closer economic ties in the private sector. Major U.S. companies operating in the country include ACS, CMS Energy, Coca Cola, S.C. Johnson, Ralston Purina, Star-Kist, A.H. Robins, Sterling, Pfizer, IBM, 3M, Motorola, Stewart & Stevenson, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and National Cash Register (NCR). Several U.S. firms recently made or are considering investments in Ghana, primarily in gold mining, wood products, and petroleum. U.S. mining giant Newmont entered Ghana's mining sector in 2004 and intends to invest up to $1 billion. In late 1997, Nuevo Petroleum concluded an oil exploration agreement accounting for the last of Ghana's offshore mineral rights zones. Several other U.S. oil companies also are engaged in offshore exploration, but so far with little success.

U.S. development assistance to Ghana in fiscal year 2007 was implemented by USAID, the African Development Foundation, Millennium Challenge Corporation, and others. U.S. development assistance to Ghana in fiscal year 2007 totaled more than $55.1 million, with programs in small farmer competitiveness, health, including HIV/AIDS and maternal child health, education, and democracy/governance. Ghana was the first country in the world to accept Peace Corps volunteers, and the program remains one of the largest. Currently, there are more than 150 volunteers in Ghana. Almost half work in education, and the others in agro-forestry, small business development, health education, water sanitation, and youth development. Ghana's $547 million compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation is the most recent achievement in the U.S.-Ghanaian development partnership.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ACCRA (E) No. 24 4th Circular Rd Cantonments Accra, Ghana, (233)(21) 775-347/8/9, Fax (233)(21) 741-389, INMARSAT Tel 683-135-735, Workweek: M-Th 0730-1700 Fri 0730-1230 Lunch 1230-1:15, Website: http://ghana.usembassy.gov.

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HRO:	Linda Coulson
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 23, 2008

Country Description: Ghana is a developing country on the West Coast of Africa. The capital is Accra. Facilities for tourism are available in the population centers of the greater Accra region, Kumasi in the Ashanti region, and in the Cape Coast area of the Central region, but they are limited in the more remote areas of the country.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required, as is evidence of a yellow fever vaccination. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of Ghana, 3512 International Drive, NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 686-4520. Consular services are also available at the Ghana Permanent Mission to the UN at 19 East 47th Street, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 832-1300, and the Honorary Consulate of Ghana, 3434 Locke Lane, Houston, TX, telephone (713) 960-8806. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Ghanaian embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of Ghana web site at www.ghanaembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Due to the potential for violence, U.S. citizens should avoid political rallies and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Pick pocketing, purse snatching, and various types of scams are the most common forms of crime confronting visitors. U.S. travelers have reported these types of theft at crowded markets, beaches, parks, and tourist attractions. Incidences of violent crime, such as armed robbery, are on the rise, including reports of armed robberies in expatriate residential areas. Victims who resist attackers run a high risk of serious physical injury. Take security measures, such as traveling in groups and avoiding travel at night. Avoid travel in communal taxis. Travelers who limit their display of jewelry and handle their cash discreetly reduce their vulnerability to crime. Travelers are advised to carry limited amounts of cash and only photocopies of key documents.

Use of credit cards in Ghana should be avoided if possible, as a growing number of travelers have been victims of credit card fraud.

In recent years, U.S. citizens have reported substantial financial losses from questionable transactions involving gold and other precious metals. The Government of Ghana maintains strict regulations on these natural resources. All agents must be licensed and all transactions must be certified. (See Special Circumstances below).

Perpetrators of business fraud often target foreigners, including Americans. Such fraud schemes are now prevalent throughout West Africa, including Ghana. Please refer to the Country Commercial Guide for Ghana at http://www.buyusa.gov.

American citizens frequently consult the Embassy regarding questionable business offers sent by people in Ghana. These are scams and typically begin with an unsolicited communication (usually by e-mail) from an unknown individual who describes a situation that promises quick financial gain, often by assisting in the transfer of a large sum of money or valuables out of the country. A series of "advance fees" must be paid in order to conclude the transaction, such as fees to open a bank account or to pay certain taxes. In fact, the final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scams is simply to collect money from the victim. The Embassy has also received reports of fraudulent charities soliciting contributions through the Internet or direct mail. If you receive such business offers or charity requests, carefully check them out before you commit any funds, provide any goods or services, or undertake any travel. Check with the U.S. Embassy in Ghana at telephone (233-21) 741-100 for an assessment of the offer's credibility.

Another type of fraud is committed by persons claiming to live in Ghana or who claim to be traveling to Ghana on business, and who profess friendship or romantic interest over the Internet. Once a relationship has been established, the correspondent typically asks the American to send money for living expenses, travel expenses, or visa costs. Sometimes a "hospital" or "doctor" telephones to say that the friend has suffered an "accident" and needs immediate financial assistance to cover medical bills. There are other variations of this scam, but the common goal is to fraudulently obtain as much money as possible from the victim. Americans have reported losing thousands of dollars through such scams. The anonymity of the Internet means that the victim cannot be sure of the real name, age, marital status, nationality, or even gender of the correspondent. In most cases reported to the Embassy, the correspondent turned out to be a fictitious persona created to lure Americans into sending money.

Visitors to Ghana should also be wary of overly-friendly locals offering tours, discounted lodging or other services that seem too good to be true. Tourists are often targeted by touts and scam artists. Some Americans have been the victims of false criminal accusations and have found themselves separated from time, money and trust as they seek to resolve these difficult situations.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immedi-

ately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Ghana maintains a specialized Domestic Violence Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) within the Ghana Police Service to assist victims of domestic violence, especially women and children. In addition to its law enforcement responsibilities, the Unit can refer victims to medical providers and counselors, as well as to community support services. Further information is available by following the DOVVSU link at www.ghanapolice.org.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Ghana is: 191.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Ghana are limited, particularly outside Accra, the capital. Travelers should carry adequate supplies of any needed prescription medicines, along with copies of their prescriptions, the generic name of the drugs, and a supply of preferred over-the-counter medications. For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet.

Documentation of Yellow fever vaccination is required upon arrival from all countries. There are no HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Ghana.

Motor vehicle accidents, drownings and water-related accidents due to Ghana's rough surf, muggings and other violent attacks, and the development of sexually transmitted diseases—including HIV—are health and safety concerns that have been reported by U.S. citizens and can be at least partially mitigated by using common-sense safety precautions.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Ghana is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Primary roads are generally paved and well maintained. However, some side roads within major cities and roads outside of major cities are in poor condition. The road from Accra to the central region tourist area of Cape Coast continues to be the site of many accidents.

Travel in darkness, particularly outside the major cities, is extremely hazardous, due to poor street lighting and the unpredictable behavior of pedestrians, bicyclists and farm animals, particularly goats and sheep. Aggressive drivers, poorly maintained vehicles and overloaded vehicles pose serious threats to road safety.

The safety standards of the small private buses that transit roads and highways are uncertain. Travelers are encouraged to consider this when making travel arrangements.

Travelers are routinely stopped at police checkpoints throughout Ghana, and vehicles and passengers may be searched. Drivers must possess an international driver's license (available from AAA and the American Automobile Touring Alliance). Foreign nationals should carry documentation of their status, such as a passport and visa.

Visit the website of Ghana's national tourist office at http://www.touringghana.com/default.asp and the national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.mrt.gov.gh.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Ghana's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Ghana's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at www.faa.gov.

Service provided by a number of regional air carriers is reported to be unreliable. The airlines may alter scheduled stops, cancel or postpone flights on short notice, and regularly overbook flights. Travelers may experience unexpected delays even after checking in. Passengers should get the required seat reconfirmation stamped on the ticket, have enough emergency funds for food and lodging in case of unexpected delays, and arrive at the airport at least two hours before the scheduled departure time.

Special Circumstances: Effective July 1, 2007, the Government of Ghana redenominated the local currency, the cedi, introducing new banknotes (Ghana cedi) and coins (Ghana pesewa). 10,000 cedis = 1 Ghana cedi = 100 Ghana pesewas. Both currencies will be in circulation through December 31, 2007, after which date the cedi can be converted only at commercial banks or the Bank of Ghana. Travelers should be alert to persons who may try to defraud them with the old and new bills. The Government of Ghana has established a website, www.ghanacedi.gov.gh, to inform the public about the redenomination exercise. The website includes a useful currency converter. Visitors arriving or departing Ghana with more than $5,000 in cash are required to declare the amount at the border. Currency exchange is available at most banks and at licensed foreign exchange bureaus, but currency transactions with private citizens are illegal. The Government of

Ghana also prohibits departing travelers from carrying more than 5,000,000 cedis (500 Ghana cedis) out of the country. Ghanaian currency must either be spent or exchanged before departure, or it will be confiscated.

Strict customs regulations govern temporary importation into or export from Ghana of items such as gold, diamonds and precious natural resources. Only agents licensed by the Precious Metals and Mining Commission, telephone (233-21) 664-635 or 664-579, may handle import-export transactions of these natural resources. Any transaction without the commission's endorsement is illegal and/or fraudulent. All transactions must be completed through the commission at the price set daily by the London exchange. Any transaction that discounts this price, or includes a previously negotiated price, is either illegal or fraudulent. Export of gold dust is rare as it encourages dangerous and environmentally destructive practices, and transactions involving the export of gold dust are probably fraudulent. Attempts to evade regulations are punishable by imprisonment. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Ghana in Washington, D.C., or one of the Ghanaian consulates in the United States, for specific information regarding customs requirements. In rare instances, visitors arriving in Ghana with sophisticated electronic equipment (video cameras and laptop computers) may have to deposit 17.5 per cent of the item's value with the Customs and Excise office at the airport. To get the deposit refunded, visitors must apply to the Customs and Excise Office in central Accra 48 hours before departure. Taking pictures near sensitive installations, including military sites and some government buildings, is prohibited. These sites are not always clearly marked and application of these restrictions is subject to interpretation. Permission may be obtained from Ghanaian security personnel. Permission should also be obtained before photographing anyone in uniform (e.g., police officers and military officers). In some cases, film and cameras have been confiscated. It is strictly prohibited to wear any military apparel such as camouflage jackets or trousers, or any clothing or items that may appear military in nature.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Ghana's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Ghana are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Ghana are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Ghana. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at No. 24 Fourth Circular Road, Cantonments, Accra; telephone (233-21)741-000. The public entrance to the Consular Section is No. 19 Fifth Link Road, Cantonments, Accra; telephone (233-21) 741-100; fax (233-21) 741-362 or 741-426; after-hours (233-21) 741-775.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please note: The Department of Social Welfare may consider an application for intercountry adoption as an alternative means of child care, if a child cannot be placed in a foster or adoptive family in Ghana or cannot in any suitable manner be cared for in Ghana. A court may grant an intercountry adoption order if it is in the best interests of the child.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
The Department of Social Welfare
Client Services Unit
P.O. Box M230
Accra, Ghana
Tel: 233-21-662-857

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents:

- An application for adoption may be made jointly by a husband and wife;
- An application for an adoption order may be made by the mother or father of the child alone or jointly with a spouse;
- An application for an adoption order may be made by a single person, but only if that person is a citizen of Ghana;

- Applicants must be at least 25 years of age and at least 21 years older than the child;
- Applicants must be of sound mind (prospective adoptive parents must undergo a medical exam as part of the pre-approval process).

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be resident in Ghana a minimum of six months prior to adopting a child. The prospective adoptive parents must foster a child for one year in Ghana before the adoption is finalized.

Time Frame: It takes one year to complete an adoption in Ghana. Please note: An additional one to six months may be required for U.S. the immigration petition and visa process.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents will work with a Ghanaian Social Welfare Officer in the region they will adopt from to get pre-approved and matched with a child. Prospective adoptive parents will have to work with an attorney to complete the legal requirements for adoption in Ghana.

Adoption Fees: Cedis 50,000 (approximately $5.00) for initial filing form plus attorney's fees.

Adoption Procedures:

- Applicants purchase the adoption form from the Director of Social Welfare/Representative at any Regional Social Welfare Office for Cedis 50,000;
- Applicants submit the completed form along with the attachments specified in the form (e.g., medical examination, civil documents) to the Director of Social Welfare or his/her representative at the Regional Office for processing;
- The processing of the application begins with visits to the applicants' home by a Social Welfare Officer who interviews applicants and submits the report to the Placement Committee, the head office for adoptions in the Department of Social Welfare for approval (this can take approximately three months);
- Depending upon the availability of children, a suitable child is placed with would-be parents for a trial period of three months, during which time the Social Welfare Officer undertakes monthly visits;
- If the child and would-be parents are determined to be compatible, applicants engage a local attorney to assist with the legal aspects of the adoption;
- The Director of Social Welfare submits the comprehensive report, which covers the social investigation of the applicants, background checks, mental stability, financial stability etc, to the High Court;
- An Adoption Order may then be granted by the High Court upon recommendation from the Director of Social Welfare.

Note: The adoption is incomplete without the granting of an Adoption Order by the Court.

Required Documents: In general, the documents required are the same as for an adoption in the U.S.: birth, marriage and divorce records, medical examination, evidence of finances and employment.

Embassy of Ghana
3512 International Drive, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Telephone (202) 686-4520.

Honorary Consulate of Ghana
3434 Locke Lane
Houston, TX
Telephone (713) 960-8806

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
6th & 10th Lanes
OSU, Accra
Telephone (233) (21) 776-601/02
Fax (233) (21) 701-1813
http://usembassy.state.gov/accra.
E-mail: consulateaccra@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Ghana may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Accra. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



GREECE

Compiled from the May 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Hellenic Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 131,957 sq. km. (51,146 sq. mi.; roughly the size of Alabama).

Cities: Capital—Athens. Greater Athens (pop. 3,566,060), municipality of Athens (772,072), Greater Thessaloniki (pop. 1,057,825), Thessaloniki (824,633), Piraeus (182,671), Greater Piraeus (880,529), Patras (170,452), Iraklion (132,117), Larissa (113,090).

Terrain: Mountainous interior with coastal plains; 1,400-plus islands.

Climate: Mediterranean; mild, wet winter and hot, dry summer.

People

Population: (2005 est.) 11,104,000 million. (Immigrants make up approximately 10% of the population.)

Growth rate: (2007 estimated) 0.163%.

Languages: Greek 99% (official); Turkish, others. Albanian is spoken by approximately 700,000 Albanian immigrants. English is the predominant second language.

Religions: Greek Orthodox (approximately 98% of citizens), with Muslim (1.3%), Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and other religious communities.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy—97.5%. All levels are free.

Health: Infant mortality rate—5.43/1,000. Life expectancy—male 76.72 years, female 81.91 years.

Work force: 4.72 million.

Government

Type: Parliamentary republic.

Independence: 1830.

Constitution: June 11, 1975, amended March 1986, April 2001.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government). Legislative—300-seat unicameral Vouli (parliament). Judicial—Supreme Court. Council of State.

Political parties: New Democracy (ND), Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), Communist Party of Greece (KKE), Coalition of the Left (SYNASPISMOS), and Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS).

Suffrage: universal and mandatory at 18.

Political subdivisions: 13 peripheries (regional districts), 51 nomi (prefectures).

Economy (2007)

GDP: $314.4 billion.*

Per capita GDP: $28,280.

Growth rate: 4.0%.

Inflation rate: 3.0%.

Unemployment rate: (annual average) 8.3%.

Natural resources: Bauxite, lignite, magnesite, oil, marble.

Agriculture: (5.4% of GDP) Products—sugar beets, wheat, maize, tomatoes, olives, olive oil, grapes, raisins, wine, oranges, peaches, tobacco, cotton, livestock, dairy products.

Manufacturing: (21.3% of GDP) Types—processed foods, shoes, textiles, metals, chemicals, electrical equipment, cement, glass, transport equipment, petroleum products, construction, electrical power.

Services: (73.3% of GDP) Transportation, tourism, communications, trade, banking, public administration, defense.

Trade: Exports—$23.5 billion: manufactured goods, food and beverages, petroleum products, cement, chemicals. Major markets—Germany, Italy, France, U.S., U.K. Imports—$75.8 billion: basic manufactures, food and animals, crude oil, chemicals, machinery, transport equipment. Major suppliers—Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Netherlands, U.S.

PEOPLE

Greece was inhabited as early as the Paleolithic period and by 3000 BC had become home, in the Cycladic Islands, to a culture whose art remains among the most evocative in world history. In the second millennium BC, the island of Crete nurtured the maritime empire of the Minoans, whose trade reached from

Egypt to Sicily. The Minoans were supplanted by the Mycenaeans of the Greek mainland, who spoke a dialect of ancient Greek. During the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman Empires (1st-19th centuries), Greece's ethnic composition became more diverse. The roots of Greek language and culture date back at least 3,500 years, and modern Greek preserves many elements of its classical predecessor.

Eastern Orthodox Christianity is the dominant religion in Greece and receives state funding. During the centuries of Ottoman domination, the Greek Orthodox Church preserved the Greek language and cultural identity and was an important rallying point in the struggle for independence. There is a centuries-old Muslim religious minority concentrated in Thrace and an estimated 300,000 Muslim immigrants living elsewhere in the country. Smaller religious communities in Greece include Old Calendar Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons.

Greek education is free and compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 15. Overall responsibility for education rests with the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs. Private colleges and universities (mostly foreign) do have campuses in Greece despite the fact that their degrees are not recognized by the Greek state. Entrance to public universities is determined by state-administered exams.

HISTORY

The Greek War of Independence began in 1821 and concluded in 1830 when England, France, and Russia forced the Ottoman Empire to grant Greece its independence under a European monarch, Prince Otto of Bavaria.

At independence, Greece had an area of 47,515 square kilometers (18,346 square mi.), and its northern boundary extended from the Gulf of Volos to the Gulf of Arta. Under the influence of the "Megali Idea," the expansion of the Greek state to include all areas of Greek population, Greece acquired the Ionian islands in 1864; Thessaly and part of Epirus in 1881; Macedonia, Crete, Epirus, and the Aegean islands in 1913; Western Thrace in 1918; and the Dodecanese islands in 1947.

Greece entered World War I in 1917 on the side of the Allies. After the war, Greece took part in the Allied occupation of Turkey, where many Greeks still lived. In 1921, the Greek army marched toward Ankara, but was defeated by Turkish forces led by Ataturk and forced to withdraw. In a forced exchange of populations, more than 1.3 million refugees from Turkey poured into Greece, creating enormous challenges for the Greek economy and society.

Greek politics, particularly between the two world wars, involved a struggle for power between monarchists and republicans. Greece was proclaimed a republic in 1924, but George II returned to the throne in 1935. A plebiscite in 1946 upheld the monarchy, which was finally abolished by referendum on December 8, 1974.

Greece's entry into World War II was precipitated by the Italian invasion on October 28, 1940. Despite Italian superiority in numbers and equipment, determined Greek defenders drove the invaders back into Albania. Hitler was forced to divert German troops to protect his southern flank and overran Greece in 1941. Following a very severe German occupation in which many Greeks died (including over 90% of Greece's Jewish community) German forces withdrew in October 1944, and the government-in-exile returned to Athens.

After the German withdrawal, the principal Greek resistance movement, which was controlled by the communists, refused to disarm. A banned demonstration by resistance forces in Athens in December 1944 ended in battles with Greek Government and British forces. Continuing tensions led to the outbreak of full-fledged civil war in 1946. First the United Kingdom and later the U.S. gave extensive military and economic aid to the Greek government. In 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall implemented the Marshall Plan under President Truman, which focused on the economic recovery and the rebuilding of Europe. The U.S. contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to rebuilding Greece in terms of buildings, agriculture, and industry.

In August 1949, the Greek national army forced the remaining insurgents to surrender or flee to Greece's communist neighbors. The insurgency resulted in 100,000 killed, 700,000 displaced persons inside the country, and catastrophic economic disruption. This civil war left Greek society deeply divided between leftists and rightists.

Greece became a member of NATO in 1952. From 1952 to late 1963, Greece was governed by conservative parties—the Greek Rally of Marshal Alexandros Papagos and its successor, the National Radical Union (ERE) of the late Constantine Karamanlis. In 1963, the Center Union Party of George Papandreou was elected and governed until July 1965. It was followed by a succession of unstable coalition governments.

On April 21, 1967, just before scheduled elections, a group of colonels led by Col. George Papadopoulos seized power in a coup d'etat. The junta suppressed civil liberties, established special military courts, and dissolved political parties. Several thousand political opponents were imprisoned or exiled to remote Greek islands. In November 1973, following an uprising of students at the Athens Polytechnic University, Gen. Dimitrios Ioannides replaced Papadopoulos and tried to continue the dictatorship.

Gen. Ioannides' attempt in July 1974 to overthrow Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus, brought Greece to the brink of war with Turkey, which invaded Cyprus and occupied part of the island. Senior Greek military officers then withdrew their support from the junta, which toppled. Leading citizens persuaded Karamanlis to return from exile in



France to establish a government of national unity until elections could be held. Karamanlis' newly organized party, New Democracy (ND), won elections held in November 1974, and he became Prime Minister.

Following the 1974 referendum, the Parliament approved a new constitution and elected Constantine Tsatsos as president of the republic. In the parliamentary elections of 1977, New Democracy again won a majority of seats. In May 1980, the late Prime Minister Karamanlis was elected to succeed Tsatsos as president. George Rallis was then chosen party leader and succeeded Karamanlis as Prime Minister.

On January 1, 1981, Greece became the 10th member of the European Community (now the European Union). In parliamentary elections held on October 18, 1981, Greece elected its first socialist government, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), led by Andreas Papandreou. In 1985, Supreme Court Justice Christos Sartzetakis was elected

president by the Greek parliament. PASOK under Papandreou was re-elected in 1985.Greece had two rounds of parliamentary elections in 1989; both produced weak coalition governments with limited mandates. In the April 1990 election, ND won 150 seats and subsequently gained 2 others. After Prime Minister Mitsotakis fired Foreign Minister Andonis Samaras in 1992, the rift led to the collapse of the ND government and a victory in the September 1993 elections for Andreas Papandreou's PASOK.

On January 17, 1996, following a protracted illness, Prime Minister Papandreou resigned and was replaced by former Minister of Industry Constantine Simitis. In elections held in September 1996, Constantine Simitis was elected Prime Minister. In April 2000, Simitis and PASOK won again, gaining 158 seats to ND's 125. Parliamentary elections were held March 8, 2004, and ND won 165 seats to PASOK's 117; Konstantinos Karamanlis, ND leader and the nephew of the former prime minister, became Prime Minister. Karolos Papoulias was elected President by Parliament in February 2005. Most recently, parliamentary elections were held September 16, 2007. ND won 152 seats to PASOK's 102; Karamanlis was re-elected Prime Minister. Greece's exemplary success in hosting a safe and secure 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens has enhanced its international prestige. The 2004 Olympics and Paralympics left an impressive and expensive legacy of new roads, spectacular stadiums, and modern public transportation systems, which the PASOK government began in 1997 and the New Democracy government of Karamanlis completed in 2004.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Greece is a parliamentary republic whose constitution was last amended in May 2008. There are three branches of government. The executive includes the president, who is head of state, and the prime minister, who is head of government. There is a 300-seat unicameral "Vouli" (legislature). The judicial branch includes a Supreme Court. Administrative subdivisions include 13 peripheries (regional districts) and 51 nomi (prefectures). Suffrage is universal at 18.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Karolos PAPOULIAS**
Prime Min.: **Konstandinos KARAMANLIS**
Min. of Culture: **Mikhalis LIAPIS**
Min. of Development: **Christos FOLIAS**
Min. of Employment & Social Protection: **Fani PALLI-PETRALIA**
Min. of Environment, Physical Planning, & Public Works: **Yeoryios SOUFLIAS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Theodora BAKOYIANNI**
Min. of Health & Social Solidarity: **Dimitrios AVRAMOPOULOS**
Min. of Interior: **Prokopis PAVLOPOULOS**
Min. of Justice: **Sotiris KHATZIGAKIS**
Min. of Macedonia & Thrace: **Margaritis TZIMAS**
Min. of Merchant Marine & Island Policy: **Anastasios PAPALIGOURAS**
Min. of National Defense: **Evangelos-Vassilios MEIMARAKIS**
Min. of National Economy & Finance: **Yeoryios ALOGOSKOUFIS**
Min. of National Education & Religions: **Evripidis STYLIANIDIS**
Min. of Rural Development & Foods: **Alekos KONDOS**
Min. of Tourism: **Aris SPILIOTOPOULOS**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Kostis KHATZIDHAKIS**
Min. of State in Charge of Communication: **Theodoros ROUSSOPOULOS**
Governor, Bank of Greece: **Nikos GARGANAS**
Ambassador to the US: **Alexandros MALLIAS**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ioannis MOURIKIS**

Greece's embassy in the United States is located at 2221 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel: (202) 939-1300; fax: (202) 939-1324. Greece also maintains consulates in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Atlanta, Houston and Tampa.

ECONOMY

Greece adopted the euro as its new common currency in January 2002. The adoption of the euro provided Greece (formerly a high inflation risk country under the drachma) with access to competitive loan rates and also to low rates of the Eurobond market. This led to a dramatic increase in consumer spending which gave a significant boost to economic growth. This credit also led to a more relaxed fiscal policy starting in 2002, which, combined with expenditures associated with the preparation of the Athens 2004 Olympics, resulted in excessive deficits and debt in 2003 and 2004. The government deficit in 2004 is now estimated by the Greek Government to have reached 6.6% of GDP. As a result of lower post-Olympic spending and tight public spending, the government deficit dropped to 2.7% of GDP in 2007, with a government debt to GDP ratio of 93.4% (this is government debt, and does not include debt of municipalities and public enterprises). The ND administration has pledged to the European Commission to achieve a balanced budget by the year 2010.

The Greek economy grew by 4.0% in 2007 and is expected to grow by 3.6% in 2008. These growth rates resulted in a drop in unemployment (to 8.3% in 2007, down from 10.4% in 2004), although it is still significantly higher among women and people under 27. Unfortunately, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow has also dropped, and efforts to revive it have been only partially successful. At the same time, Greek investment in Southeast Europe has increased, leading to a net FDI outflow in some years.

Greece recently revised upward its GDP by 9.6%. This revision resulted from the first fundamental revision of economic statistics since 1988.

Services make up the largest and fastest-growing sector of the Greek economy. In 2007, 16.3 million tourists visited Greece, with net revenues of $15.6 billion. Remittances from transport (mainly shipping) are grow-

ing, and actually exceeded tourism receipts in the last 3 years, reaching $23.2 billion in 2007. Receipts from tourism and transport have covered a significant portion of Greece's large trade deficit. Industrial activity has shown a mixed performance, with certain sectors such as the food industry and high-tech/telecommunications showing healthy increases, while textiles have declined. Agriculture employs about 12% of the work force and is still characterized by small farms and low capital investment, despite significant support from the EU in structural funds and subsidies. Traditionally a seafaring nation, the Greek-owned merchant fleet totaled 4,173 ships in February 2008, 8.5% of the world merchant fleet and 16.4% of world tonnage.

European Union (EU) Membership

Greece has realigned its economy as part of its transition to full EU membership that began in 1981. Greece last held the rotating EU presidency in the first half of 2003. Greek businesses continue to adjust to competition from EU firms, and the government has liberalized its economic and commercial regulations and practices.

Greece has been a major net beneficiary of the EU budget; in 2007, EU transfers accounted for 3.8% of GDP. From 1994-99, about $20 billion in EU structural funds and Greek national financing were spent on projects to modernize and develop Greece's transportation network in time for the Olympics in 2004. The centerpiece was the construction of the new international airport near Athens, which opened in March 2001 soon after the launch of the new Athens subway system.

EU transfers to Greece continued with approximately $24 billion in structural funds for the period 2000-2006. The same level of EU funding, $24 billion, has been allocated for Greece for 2007-2013. These funds contribute significantly to Greece's current accounts balance and further reduce the state budget deficit. EU funds will continue to finance major public works and economic development projects, upgrade competitiveness and human resources, improve living conditions, and address disparities between poorer and more developed regions of the country.

U.S.-Greece Trade

In 2007, the U.S. trade surplus with Greece was $769 million. There are no significant non-tariff barriers to American exports. U.S. exports to Greece reached $1.7 billion, accounting for 2.3% of Greece's total imports in 2007. The top U.S. exports remain defense articles, although American business activity is expected to grow in the tourism development, medical, construction, food processing, and packaging and franchising sectors. U.S. companies are involved in Greece's ongoing privatization efforts; further deregulation of Greece's energy sector and the country's central location as a transportation hub for Europe may offer additional opportunities in electricity, gas, refinery, and related sectors.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Greece's foreign policy is aligned with that of its EU partners. Greece gives particular emphasis to its close relations with Cyprus but also has growing political and economic ties with the Balkan countries and the Middle East.

Greece maintains full diplomatic, political, and economic relations with its Southeast European neighbors, except with Macedonia (see below), and regards itself as a leader of the region's Euro-Atlantic integration process. It provides peacekeeping contingents for Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. Greece has good relations with Russia and has embassies in a number of the central Asian republics, which it sees as potentially important trading partners.

Prominent issues in Greek foreign policy include Greek-Turkish differences in the Aegean, Turkish accession to the EU, the name dispute with Macedonia, the reunification of Cyprus, the international community's recognition of Kosovo's independence, and Greek-American relations. For 2005-2006, Greece held a 2-year, rotating seat on the UN Security Council.

Macedonia

The Greek dispute with its northern neighbor over its constitutional name, Republic of Macedonia, has been an important issue in Greek politics since 1992 and has inhibited the establishment of full diplomatic relations. Greece was adamantly opposed to the use of "Macedonia" by the government in Skopje, claiming that the term is intrinsically Greek and should not be used by a foreign country. Mediation efforts by the UN and the United States brokered an interim agreement whereby Greece recognized the country as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in September 1995. At NATO's Bucharest Summit in April 2008, all 26 NATO Allies agreed Macedonia had met the criteria for membership. Consensus on extending a NATO membership invitation could not be reached, due to the unresolved dispute over Macedonia's name. Talks on the name question continue under UN auspices.

Albania

Greece restored diplomatic relations with Albania in 1971, but the Greek Government did not formally lift the state of war, declared during World War II, until 1987. After the fall of the Albanian communist regime in 1991, relations between Athens and Tirana became increasingly strained because of allegations of mistreatment of the Greek ethnic minority by Albanian authorities in southern Albania.

A wave of Albanian illegal economic migrants to Greece exacerbated tensions. In the past several years, however, cooperation between Greece and Albania has improved, with efforts focused on regional issues, such as narcotics trafficking and illegal immigration. However, tensions hover just below the surface. Greece remains host to 600,000-800,000

Albanian immigrants, many of them illegal. Crime in Greece involving Albanians often attracts headlines.

Greece-Turkey-Cyprus Relations

For historical reasons, most Greeks see Turkey as the major potential threat to their security. Greece and Turkey have unresolved disagreements regarding the Aegean maritime boundary, the treatment of the Orthodox Church and Greek minority in Istanbul, and the Muslim (primarily ethnic Turkish) minority in western Thrace. The largest source of tension in their relationship since 1974 has been the Cyprus conflict. Various UN-led efforts over the years to resolve the issue on a bizonal, bicommunal basis have failed. The latest attempt, the Annan Plan, was overwhelmingly rejected by Greek Cypriots in March 2004. Turkish Cypriots voted in favor of the plan and both Greece and Turkey expressed their approval. The Republic of Cyprus entered the EU on May 1, 2004 as a divided island. The UN is currently assessing whether the political will exists among the interested parties to restart negotiations.

At times over the past three decades, tensions between Greece and Turkey have almost reached the point of armed confrontation. In 1996, President Clinton intervened to help avert a possible armed exchange after Greek and Turkish journalists generated a dispute over ownership of a tiny, uninhabited Aegean islet called Imia (Kardak in Turkish.) A significant breakthrough in relations took place when major earthquakes hit Turkey and Greece in 1999. Both countries and peoples responded generously to the other's need, helping turn around official perceptions that rapprochement was too risky politically. Since that time, Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers have increased the quantity and quality of bilateral exchanges, both official and unofficial.

Greece has endorsed and supported Turkey's bid for candidacy to the European Union since the Helsinki EU Summit in 1999. Despite continuing disagreements with Ankara over Cyprus and the Aegean, Greek opinion leaders across the political spectrum are convinced that Greece's long-term interests are best served by Turkey's successfully fulfilling the requirements for membership and joining the European Union. The EU opened accession talks with Turkey on October 3, 2005. In December 2006, amid continuing dispute over Cyprus, the EU froze talks with Turkey on eight chapters regarding accession and stated that no chapters would be closed until a resolution is found.

The Middle East

Greece claims a special interest in the Middle East because of its geographic position and its economic and historic ties to the area. Greece cooperated with allied forces during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. Since 1994, Greece has signed defense cooperation agreements with Israel and Egypt. In recent years, Greek leaders have hosted several meetings of Israeli and Palestinian politicians to contribute to the peace process. Greece has been traditionally supportive of Palestinian claims. However, beginning in the late 1990s, efforts to strike a more balanced relationship with Israel received a boost. Greek-Israeli relations have been complicated by Israel's strategic cooperation with Turkey. Israeli President Moshe Katsav visited Greece in 2006, the first-ever official visit by an Israeli head of state.

U.S.-GREECE RELATIONS

The United States and Greece have longstanding historical, political, and cultural ties based on a common heritage, shared democratic values, and participation as Allies during World War II, the Korean conflict, the Cold War, and now in Afghanistan. The Greek Government responded to the September 11, 2001 attacks with strong political support for the United States, use of Greek airspace, and the offer of Greek military assets in support of the counterterrorism campaign. Its participation in Operation Enduring Freedom included the stationing of a Greek Navy frigate in the Arabian Sea for almost 2 years—the most distant deployment for the Greek Navy since WWII.

In the summer of 2002, Greek authorities captured numerous suspected members of the terrorist group "November 17." In 2003, 15 members of the terrorist organization, which since 1975 had killed many prominent Greeks and five U.S. mission employees, were found guilty and convicted for more than 2,500 crimes, including multiple counts of homicide. In December 2005, a three-judge panel opened an appeals trial for the November 17 convicts, which lasted for 17 months. At its conclusion on May 3, two defendants were acquitted, while at the sentencing for the other 13 terrorists on May 14, 2007, the court largely upheld the results of the initial trial, leaving the leadership of the defunct group serving multiple life sentences and others serving long prison terms. Under the Greek system, however, two of the convicted prisoners were eligible for parole almost immediately (no action taken as mid-November 2007), and another will be eligible 18 months after imposition of the sentence.

In the early morning hours of January 12, 2007, terrorists fired a rocket-propelled grenade through a front window of the U.S. Embassy. A group calling itself Revolutionary Struggle later claimed responsibility for the act. Some see the domestic terrorist organization as a splinter group arising from the remnants of November 17 followers. Revolutionary Struggle also claimed responsibility for attempting to assassinate the Minister of Culture and former Minister of Public Order Georgos Voulgarakis in a bomb blast in May 2006. There is smooth cooperation between U.S. and Greek counter-terrorism officials. Greek and American diplomatic, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies worked closely together in the build-up to and throughout the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens. In January 2006, the United States and Greece signed protocols updating

treaties covering extradition and mutual legal assistance, which further strengthened this cooperation.

An estimated three million Americans resident in the United States claim Greek descent. This large, well-organized community cultivates close political and cultural ties with Greece. There are approximately 90,000 to 100,000 American Citizens resident in Greece. Greece has the seventh-largest population of U.S. Social Security beneficiaries in the world. The United States has provided Greece with more than $11.1 billion in economic and security assistance since 1946. Economic programs were phased out by 1962, but military financial assistance continued until the early 1990s.

In 1953, the first defense cooperation agreement between Greece and the United States was signed, providing for the establishment and operation of American military installations on Greek territory. The United States closed three of its four main bases in the 1990s. The current mutual defense cooperation agreement provides for the operation by the United States of a naval support facility that exploits the strategically located deep-water port and airfield at Souda Bay in Crete.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ATHENS (E) 91 Vasillissis Sophias Ave, APO/FPO PSC 108, APO AE 09842, 30 210 721-2951, Fax 30 210 645 6282, INMARSAT Tel (EATL) 871 683 131 245, Workweek: M-F, 8:30-5:00, Website: http://athens.usembassy.gr.

DCM OMS:	Kevin Wood
AMB OMS:	Jeffrey Bing
DHS/CIS:	Georgia Papas
DHS/ICE:	Andrew Diamond
ECO:	Clark Price
FCS:	Steve Alley
FM:	Norman Lawrence
HRO:	Eshel (Bill) Murad
MGT:	Steven C. Taylor
AMB:	Daniel Speckhard
DCM:	Deborah McCarthy
PAO:	Thomas Miller
GSO:	Andrew Wiener
RSO:	Tim Haley
AFSA:	Kenneth Zurcher
AGR:	Geoffrey Wiggin
CLO:	Jody Manthos & Kathy Boukedes
DAO:	Capt. Michael Morgan
DEA:	George Papadopoulos
EEO:	Janice Green
FAA:	Geoffrey Wiggin
FMO:	Marilyn Mattke
ICASS Chair:	Clark Price
IMO:	Jasper Daniels
IPO:	Ken Spaulding
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
ISO:	Edward Jefferson
ISSO:	Linda Pohl & Peter Manthos
LEGATT:	Jeffrey Rolka
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THESSALONIKI (CG) Tsimiski 43, Thessaloniki 546 23, APO/FPO PSC 108, Box 37, APO A.E. 09842, 0030-2310-242-905, Fax 0030-2310-242 924, Workweek: Mon–Fri 08:30–17:00, Website: http://thessaloniki.usconsulate.gov.

DPO:	Robert D. King
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CG:	Hoyt Brian Yee
CON:	Robert D. King
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ISO:	Edward Jefferson (Athens)
ISSO:	Christina Seremetis
POL:	Robert D. King

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 27, 2008

Country Description: Greece is a developed and stable democracy with a modern economy.

Entry Requirements: Greece is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Greece for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. For other entry requirements, travelers should contact the Embassy of Greece at 2221 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 939-5800, or Greek consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Tampa, New York, and San Francisco, and Greek embassies and consulates around the world.

Holders of official or diplomatic passports visiting Greece as tourists must obtain visas prior to arrival. Visit the Embassy of Greece web site at http://www.greekembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The U.S. Government remains deeply concerned about the heightened threat of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests abroad. Like other countries that are members of the Schengen Agreement for free cross-border movement, Greece's open borders with its European neighbors allow the possibility for terrorist groups entering and exiting the country with anonymity. Greece's long coastline and many islands also heighten the possibility that foreign-based terrorists might try to exploit Greece's borders.

In addition, there are domestic radical organizations that engage in violent acts in Greece. These activities have been against both domestic and foreign targets. On January 12, 2007, at 5:55 AM, the domestic terrorist group Revolutionary Struggle fired a rocket-propelled grenade at the U.S. Embassy. There was minor damage, and no injuries.

Strikes and demonstrations are a regular occurrence. Greece is a stable democracy and these activities usually are orderly and lawful. There have been recent incidents in Athens and Thessaloniki, however, in which unruly protestors engaged in aggressive confrontations with the police, often in areas frequented by tourists. Riot control procedures often include the use of tear gas. Visitors should keep abreast of news about demonstrations from local newspapers and hotel security. When there are demonstrations, visitors should be aware of and avoid places where demonstrators frequently congregate, such as the Polytechnic University area, Exarchion and Syntagma Squares in

Athens, and Aristotle Square in Thessaloniki. Greek police are prohibited generally from entering Greek public university campuses. As a result, the campuses are sometimes exploited as a refuge by people who may engage in petty crime and vandalism. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crimes against tourists (such as purse-snatching and pick-pocketing) have occurred at popular tourist sites and on crowded public transportation. Pick-pocketing is especially common on the Athens metro and in some shopping areas in and around Thessaloniki. Reports of date or acquaintance rape also occasionally occur. The majority of these offenses take place on the islands. The usual safety precautions practiced in any urban or tourist area should be practiced during a visit to Greece.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The Local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Greece is: 100-Police, 166 - Ambulance, and 199 for Fire Brigade

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are adequate, and some, particularly the private clinics and hospitals in Athens and Thessaloniki, are quite good. Some private hospitals have affiliations with U.S. facilities, and generally their staff doctors have been trained in U.S. or other international teaching institutions.

Public medical clinics, especially on the islands, may lack resources; care there can be inadequate by American standards, and often, little English is spoken. Many patients, Greeks and visitors alike, are transferred from the provinces and islands to Athens hospitals for more sophisticated care. Others may choose to transfer from a public to a private hospital within Athens or Thessaloniki. Americans choosing to do so would arrange for an ambulance belonging to the private hospital to transport them from the public hospital to the private one. The cost of the ambulance for this transfer, as well as all expenses in a private hospital, must be borne by the patient.

Nursing care, particularly in public hospitals, may be less than adequate. For special or through-the-night nursing care, it is suggested that a private nurse be hired or a family member or friend be available to assist. One parent or a private nurse should always plan to stay with a hospitalized child on a 24-hour basis, as even the best hospitals generally maintain only a minimal nursing staff from midnight to dawn on non-emergency floors or wards.

For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Greece is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Drivers and pedestrians alike should exercise extreme caution when operating motor vehicles or when walking along roadways or crossing streets. Visitors to Greece must be prepared to drive defensively. Heavy traffic and poor highways pose hazards, especially at night or in inclement weather. Extreme care is warranted in operating a motorbike. Moreover, tourists who rent motorbikes either on the Greek mainland or its islands must wear helmets and take special precautions on local roads that are typically poorly maintained and frequently pothole-ridden. There are a number of nationwide auto-service clubs and plans similar to those in the U.S., that provide towing and roadside service, which a tourist can call and pay for per service. The largest, quite similar to AAA, is ELPA, nation-wide phone number 10400.

Tourists and temporary residents who will stay in Greece less than 185 days must carry a valid U.S. license as well as an international driver's permit (IDP). Failure to have both documents may result in police detention or other problems. The U.S. Department of State has designated two organizations to issue IDPs to those who hold valid U.S. driver's licenses: AAA and the American Automobile Touring Alliance. Issuance of an IDP is quick, easy, and inexpensive, but must generally be done before a traveler leaves the United States. Vehicles may not properly be rented without the IDP, although sometimes they are. A

driver without one, however, will be penalized for failure to have one in the event of an accident, and may be open to civil suit as well. Fines are high. Small motorbike rental firms frequently do not insure their vehicles; customers are responsible for damages and should review their coverage before renting. Individuals who expect to spend more than 185 days in Greece should either obtain a Greek license or convert their valid U.S. license for use in Greece through their local Nomarchy's Office of Transportation and Communications.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Greece's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Greece's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Greek customs authorities have strict regulations concerning the export from Greece of antiquities, including rocks from archaeological sites. Penalties range from large fines to prison terms. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Greece in Washington, or one of Greece's consulates in the United States, for specific information regarding customs requirements.

In addition to being subject to all Greek laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Greek citizens. Greek males between the ages of 20 and 45 are required by Greek law to perform military service. This applies to any individual whom the Greek authorities consider to be Greek, regardless of whether or not the individual considers himself Greek, has a foreign citizenship and passport, or was born or lives outside of Greece. If remaining in Greece for more than the 90-day period permitted for tourism or business, men of Greek descent may be prevented from leaving Greece until they complete their military obligations. Generally, obligatory non-voluntary military service in Greece will not affect US citizenship. Specific questions on this subject should be addressed to the citizenship section of the US Embassy in Athens. For additional information, see our information on Citizenship and Nationality. For additional information regarding military service requirements, contact the nearest Greek embassy or consulate as listed above.

Labor strikes in the transportation sector (national airline, city bus lines, and taxis) occur frequently. Most are announced in advance and are of short duration. Reconfirmation of domestic and international flight reservations is highly recommended.

Users of public transportation in Athens should be sure to buy the appropriate ticket and to validate it correctly, mindful that the metro line to the airport is more expensive than other bus and metro services and that ticket inspectors circulate among passengers assuring compliance with ticketing regulations. ; Fines are heavy for passengers without tickets or with the wrong ticket."

The Greek islands are extremely popular tourist destinations in the summer months. With overall tourist numbers markedly up since the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, and with an increased emphasis on ferryboat safety reducing the total number of vessels in daily inter-island service, airline tickets and ferryboat berths to the Aegean Greek islands can be hard to come by in July and August without prior arrangements. Visitors to Greece are urged to book their island travel in these months as early as possible. There are numerous local travel agencies that can provide such bookings; the agents usually speak English and the costs are no higher than if dealing with the carriers directly.

The Government of Greece does not permit the photographing of military installations. In 2001, several foreigners who photograph military aircraft as a hobby were arrested while taking photographs of aircraft taking off and landing at a military base.

Disaster Preparedness: Greece experienced serious forest fires during the summer of 2007; during the summer months, travelers should be particularly mindful of the risk of fires, taking care not to inadvertently spark one through carelessness. Barbecue and camp fires are restricted in many areas during the dry summer season.

Greece experiences frequent seismic activity; tremors are common and serious earthquakes have occurred. Detailed information on Greece's earthquake fault lines is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at http://www.usgs.gov.

In 2006, the H5N1 Avian Influenza was found in migratory birds in Greece; no human infections or deaths were reported. For more information on avian influenza, please visit http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_2747.html.

Disaster preparedness information and specific suggestions to help mitigate the impact of wildfires, floods, earthquakes, and landslides is available from the U.S. Federal Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. In any natural disaster, follow the instructions of local authorities. The General Secretariat of Civil Protection which responds to emergencies can be reached at 210-3359932/33 or visited at http://www.civilprotection.gr.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Greek laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Greece are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminat-

ing child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Greece are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Greece. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in Athens is located at 91 Vasilissis Sophias Boulevard, tel: (30) (210) 721-2951. The U.S. Consulate General in Thessaloniki is located at Plateia Commercial Center, 43 Tsimiski Street, 7th floor, tel: (30) (2310) 242-905. The Embassy's web site is http://athens.usembassy.gov. The e-mail address for the Consular Section is athensamericancitizenservices@state.gov. The web site for the U.S. Consulate General Thessaloniki is http://thessaloniki.usconsulate.gov. The Consulate's e-mail address is info@usconsulate.gr

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. It does not necessarily reflect the actual state of the laws of a child's country of birth, and is provided for general information only. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Greece is the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, at the following address:

17 Aristotelous Street
104 33 Athens, Greece
Tel. 210-5232820-9
Fax 210-5234768
E-mail: www.mohow.gr

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents may be married or single and must be residents of Greece. Exceptions for prospective adoptive parents who do not reside in Greece will be made only for children with health problems who live in Greek institutions. There is no religious requirement in order to adopt a child in Greece. At least one parent must be older than the adopted child by at least 18 years, and not more than 45 years old. Only minors can be adopted, except in the case of stepparent adoption. Adoptions done privately are also legal in Greece. In case of a private adoption no restriction applies as to the place of residence of the prospective parents. There are no private adoption agencies in Greece, however children may be adopted with the involvement of an attorney who will act as a facilitator. In any case, a court decision must be issued following the field investigation of the relevant social service.

Adoption Fees: The U.S. Embassy in Athens is aware that there is a 300 euro revenue stamp that a prospective adoptive parent will have to obtain from the Greek government before a child is released to him/her by a local institution. It is the embassy's understanding that court and attorney fees generally do not exceed 1,000 Euros (approximately $1,250.00) for adoptions of children living in local institutions. The embassy is not aware of the expenses involved in private adoptions, although certainly there are some, and they can be substantial.

Time Frame: Due to the limited number of children available for adoption, and a large number of prospective adoptive parents, the waiting period to finalize an adoption is approximately five years for a child living in an institution. An attorney is necessary in order to present the case to court and finalize the adoption. Court decisions concerning adoption cases usually take from 1-6 months before a final decision is issued. For children with health problems it usually takes up to three years.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are many governmental institutions and orphanages in Greece which care for orphaned or abandoned infants of Greek or other ethnic descent. Jurisdiction over the premises and the services provided to children living in institutions belongs to the Greek Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity, www.mohaw.gr. The following two Greek institutions care for abandoned children:

Mitera Foster Home, 65 Dimokratias Avenue, 131 22 Athens, tel. 210-2627155, email, mitera@otenet.gr.

Agios Stylianos Municipal Home for Foundlings, 99 28th October Street, 546 42, Thessaloniki, email, agstyl1@otenet.gr.

Whether an individual adopts a child from one of the above institutions or privately, a lawyer is required. The embassy maintains a list of English-speaking lawyers, some of whom specialize in Family law, http://www.usembassy.gr/us_citizen/attorneys.pdf. Although attorneys on the list have been chosen with care and enjoy good reputations, the Embassy cannot guarantee their professional integrity or ability.

Adoption Procedures: All petitions submitted to local institutions by the prospective adoptive parents are followed by an extensive and thorough field investigation performed by the social services of the institution, which is supervised by the Greek Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. When the investigation is over, the case file is forwarded to the local institution's Council, which approves or disapproves the petition of the prospective parents.

The Council of the local institution does the matching of prospective adoptive parents with children, taking into account the specific needs of specific children, and the corresponding ability of prospective parents to meet those needs. Adoptive parents' applications are processed by the local institutions strictly in chronological order, with the exception that priority is given to persons willing to adopt a child with special physical or intellectual needs.If the petition is approved, then the case file is forwarded to the appropriate court for endorsement.

In order for prospective parents who live abroad to initiate an adoption, they must communicate with the respective office of the International Social Services in their country of residence, www.iss-ssi.org (for the Greek branch, issgr@otenet.gr). For private adoptions within Greece, the social service arm of the respective Nomarchy (Prefecture) of the area that the parents reside will conduct the field investigation. The law requires that a home study be conducted by local social services, prior to the court hearing, so that the family and the social status of the adoptive parents can be determined.

There is a 15-20 day fostering period for children living in institutions.

The documents that comprise the legal file submitted to the court in order to issue a final decision for the adoption are:

- Field investigation report by the Institution's social service department;
- Marriage certificate;
- Penal record;
- Family status certificate;
- Written consent of biological parent(s);
- Proof of good financial status of prospective adoptive parents;
- Two reference letters.

Required Documents: an application signed by the adoptive parents is submitted to the institution. In case of an inter-country adoption, the International Social Service in Athens requires the following documents from prospective adoptive parents in order to proceed to the social field investigation:

- An application to show their interest to adopt a child, notarized by the Greek police if they happen to be here in Greece, or sent through their International Social Services office from U.S.A.
- Certified copies of birth certificates, and baptismal certificates if applicable, of the adoptive parents.
- Certified copy of their marriage certificate.
- Medical certificates concerning the general health condition, and separate certificates concerning the mental health of the adoptive parents.
- Evidence of the financial status of the adoptive parents.
- Two letters of recommendation from friends, organizations, or their place of worship.
- Penal records of both adoptive parents. A "penal record" is a document which Greek citizens can obtain from the appropriate area judicial authority regard to their "conviction-free" background. It has been the Embassy's experience that U.S. citizens, whenever required, can submit to the Greek authorities an FBI record, which is considered to serve the same purpose.

The Embassy of Greece
2221 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-939-1300
Fax: 202-234-2803

Greece also has Consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and Florida. For detailed contact information, please visit the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs website at, www.mfa.gr.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
91 Vasilissis Sophias Avenue,
Athens 10160, Greece,
Telephone: 30-210-721-2951
athensconsul@state.gov
Telephone: 30-210-721-2951

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Greece may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Athens. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International*

Parental Child Abduction section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction came into force between the United States and Greece on June 1, 1993. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after June 1, 1993.

Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Greece prior to June 1, 1993 may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention.

The Greek Central Authority
Hellenic Republic Ministry of Justice
General Directorate of International Relations and Legislative Competence
Section 4
96 Messoghion Avenue
11527 Athens
Greece
Telephone: 011 [30] (1) 771-4186
Fax: 011 [30] (1) 770-7025

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



GRENADA

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Grenada

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 344 sq. km. (133 sq. mi.); about twice the size of Washington, DC.

Cities: Capital—St. George's (est. pop. 33,734).

Terrain: Three volcanic islands (Grenada and the smaller islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique) with mountainous rainforest.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Grenadian(s).

Population: (2006) 0.8%

Annual growth rate: (2006) 0.8%.

Ethnic groups: African descent (89%), some South Asians (East Indians) and Europeans, trace Arawak/Carib Indian.

Religions: Roman Catholic, various Protestant denominations, Islam, Rastafarianism.

Languages: English (official).

Education: Years compulsory—10 grades or age 16. Literacy—95% of adult population.

Health: (2005) Infant mortality rate—16/1,000. Life expectancy—men 63.1 years; women 66.7 years.

Work force: (2006) 48,000.

Unemployment: (2005) 18%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy; independent sovereign state within the Commonwealth.

Independence: February 7, 1974.

Constitution: December 19, 1975.

Government branches: Executive—governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament. Judicial—magistrates' courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (high court and court of appeals), final appeal to Privy Council in London.

Political subdivisions: Six parishes and two dependencies (Carriacou and Petit Martinique).

Political parties: New National Party (NNP), majority; National Democratic Congress (NDC); Grenada United Labor Party (GULP).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $408.1 million.

GDP growth rate: (2006) 2.1%.

Per capita GDP: (2006) $3,854.

Inflation: (2006) 3.8%.

Agriculture: Nutmeg, cocoa, bananas, other fruits, vegetables, mace, and fish.

Services: Tourism and education.

Construction: Housing development and tourism renovations.

Trade: (2005) Exports—$39 million (merchandise) and $126 (commercial services). Major markets—European Union (39.4%), United States (23.3%), Saint Lucia (6.3%), Saint Kitts and Nevis (5.2%), and Barbados (4.6%). Imports—$319 million (merchandise) and $93 million (commercial services). Major suppliers—United States (42.6%), Trinidad and Tobago (18.9%), European Union (12.2%), Japan (4.9%), and Barbados (3.3%).

Exchange rate: EC$2.70 = U.S. $1.

Total debt outstanding and disbursed: (2005) $437 million.

PEOPLE

About 89% of Grenada's population is of African descent. An additional 8.2% are of mixed East Indian, African, and/or Caucasian ancestry, reflecting Grenada's history of African slaves, East Indian indentured servants, and European settlers. An additional 2% of the population considers itself East Indian, which includes some descendents of the indentured servants brought to Grenada from 1857 to the 1890s, as well as immigrants arriving from Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Indians since the 1970s. A small community (less than 1% of the population) of the descendants of early European settlers resides in

Grenada. About 50% of Grenada's population is under the age of 30. English is the official language; few people still speak French patois, though there has been a recent resurgence of interest in re-learning the language. A wide range of Christian denominations are present in Grenada, as well as growing number of other religions.

HISTORY

Before the arrival of Europeans, Carib Indians had driven the more peaceful Arawaks from the island. Columbus landed on Grenada in 1498 during his third voyage to the new world. He named the island "Concepcion." The origin of the name "Grenada" is obscure, but it is likely that Spanish sailors renamed the island for the city of Granada. By the beginning of the 18th century, the name "Grenada," or "la Grenade" in French, was in common use.

Partly because of the Caribs, Grenada remained un-colonized for more than 100 years after its discovery; early English efforts to settle the island were unsuccessful. In 1650, a French company founded by Cardinal Richelieu purchased Grenada from the English and established a small settlement. After several skirmishes with the Caribs, the French brought in reinforcements from Martinique and defeated the Caribs.

The island remained under French control until its capture by the British in 1762, during the Seven Years' War. The Treaty of Paris formally ceded Grenada to Great Britain in 1763. Although the French regained control in 1779, the Treaty of Versailles restored the island to Britain in 1783. Britain overcame a pro-French revolt in 1795, and Grenada remained British for the remainder of the colonial period.

During the 18th century, Grenada's economy underwent an important transition. Like much of the rest of the West Indies it was originally settled to cultivate sugar, which was grown on estates using slave labor. But natural disasters paved the way for the introduction of other crops. In 1782, Sir Joseph Banks, the botanical adviser to King George III, introduced nutmeg to Grenada. The island's soil was ideal for growing the spice, and because Grenada was a closer source of spices for Europe than the Dutch East Indies the island assumed a new importance to European traders.

The collapse of the sugar estates and the introduction of nutmeg and cocoa encouraged the development of smaller landholdings, and the island developed a land-owning yeoman farmer class. Slavery was outlawed in 1834. In 1833, Grenada became part of the British Windward Islands Administration.

The governor of the Windward Islands administered the island for the rest of the colonial period. In 1958, the Windward Islands Administration was dissolved, and Grenada joined the Federation of the West Indies. After that federation collapsed in 1962, the British Government tried to form a small federation out of its remaining dependencies in the Eastern Caribbean.

Following the failure of this second effort, the British and the islands developed the concept of associated statehood. Under the Associated Statehood Act of 1967, Grenada was granted full autonomy over its internal affairs in March 1967. Full independence was granted on February 7, 1974.

After obtaining independence, Grenada adopted a modified Westminster parliamentary system based on the British model, with a governor general appointed by and representing the British monarch (head of state) and a prime minister who is both leader of the majority party and the head of government. Sir Eric Gairy was Grenada's first Prime Minister.

On March 13, 1979, the New Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation Movement (New Jewel Movement—NJM), ousted Gairy in a coup and established a People's Revolutionary Government (PRG) headed by Maurice Bishop, who became Prime Minister. His Marxist-Leninist government established close ties with Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other communist bloc countries.

In October 1983, a power struggle within the government resulted in the arrest and execution of Bishop and several members of his cabinet and the killing of dozens of his supporters by elements of the People's Revolutionary Army (PRA).

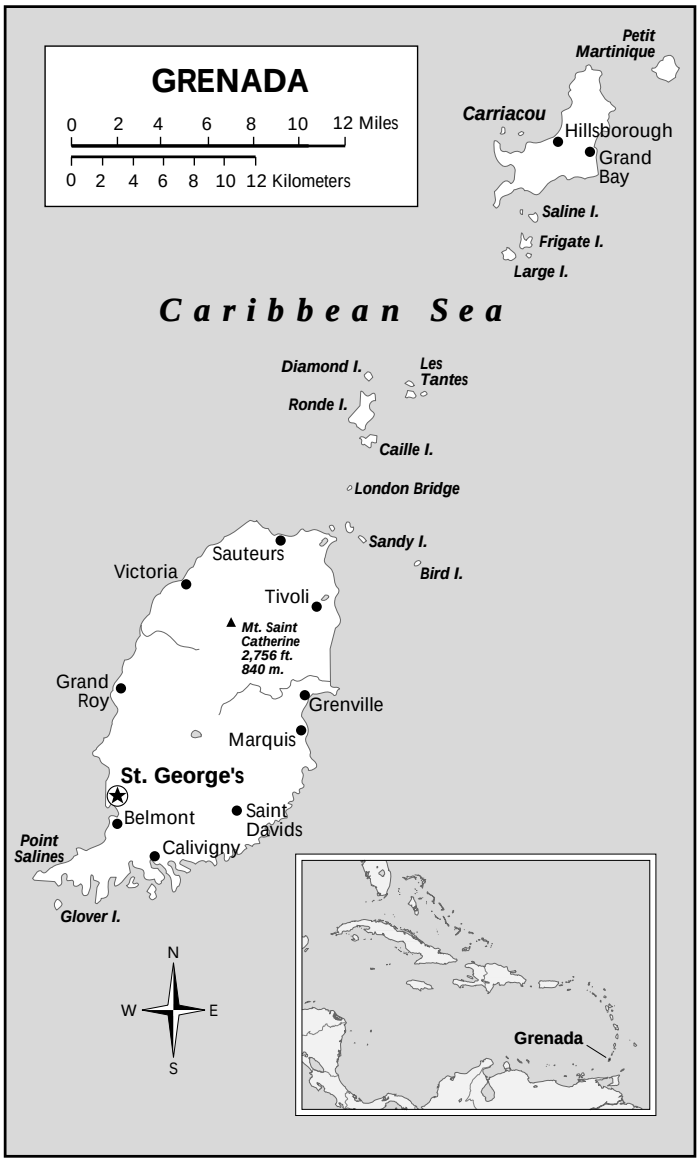
A U.S.-Caribbean force landed on Grenada on October 25, 1983, in response to an appeal from the Governor General and to a request for assistance from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States. U.S. citizens were evacuated, and order was restored.

An advisory council named by the Governor General administered the country until general elections were held in December 1984. The New National Party (NNP) led by Herbert Blaize won 14 out of 15 seats in free and fair elections and formed a democratic government. Grenada's constitution had been suspended in 1979 by the PRG, but it was restored after the 1984 elections.

The NNP continued in power until 1989 but with a reduced majority. Five NNP parliamentary members, including two cabinet ministers, left the party in 1986-87 and formed the National Democratic Congress (NDC), which became the official opposition.

In August 1989, Prime Minister Blaize broke with the NNP to form another new party, The National Party (TNP), from the ranks of the NNP. This split in the NNP resulted in the formation of a minority government until constitutionally scheduled elections in March 1990. Prime Minister Blaize died in December 1989 and was succeeded as Prime Minister by Ben Jones until the elections.

The NDC emerged from the 1990 elections as the strongest party, winning seven of the 15 available seats. Nicholas Brathwaite added two TNP



members and one member of the Grenada United Labor Party (GULP) to create a 10-seat majority coalition. The Governor General appointed him to be Prime Minister.

In parliamentary elections on June 20, 1995, the NNP won eight seats and formed a government headed by Keith Mitchell. The NNP maintained and affirmed its hold on power when it took all 15 parliamentary seats in the January 1999 elections.

General elections were held in November 2003; the NNP won 8 of the 15 seats, holding on to power with a much-reduced majority. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) led by Tillman Thomas won 7 seats and is now the official opposition.

Keith Mitchell lost his bid to win an unprecedented fourth term in the July 2008 election. While he won his own seat by a huge margin, only three other NNP candidates were voted in in a very close election. Tillman Thomas led his NDC cohort to an 11 to 4 victory over their long-time rivals. The winners began to organize their government, and Mitchell became the leader of the official opposition.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Grenada is governed under a parliamentary system based on the British model; it has a governor general, a prime minister and a cabinet, and a bicameral parliament with an elected House of Representatives and an appointed Senate.

Citizens enjoy a wide range of civil and political rights guaranteed by the constitution. Grenada's constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully. Citizens exercise this right through periodic free and fair elections held on the basis of universal suffrage.

The political parties in Grenada are are the New National Party (NNP), which remains moderate; the left of center National Democratic Congress (NDC), which is now made up of some members of the New Jewel Movement (NJM) and the original NDC; the People's Labor Movement (PLM), which is a combination of members of the original NDC and the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (MBPM); and the Grenada United Labor Party (GULP). The National Party (TNP) and MBPM no longer exist. The Good Old Democracy Party (GOD) has only one adherent but contests all elections.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), launched in 2001 to investigate the period between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s, sent its report to the government in May 2006. The long-awaited (and two years overdue) report was only released to the public in mid-September 2006, when the government announced it would implement the TRC's recommendations. However, the government was vague on the details of how or when the recommendations would be implemented and called for additional public input. There has been no further progress.

In February 2007, the Privy Council in London handed down its verdict on the appeal of the group that was con-

victed of murdering Prime Minister Bishop and members of his cabinet in 1983. The "Group of 14" were originally condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to life in prison. The three triggermen, sentenced to 30 years in prison as they were following orders, were released in December 2006 after serving two-thirds of their original sentence, as per local law. The remainder of the group argued that the original trial was unjust and appealed to the Privy Council to overturn the verdict and sentence. The Privy Council decision, however, only vacated the sentence, on the grounds that the original death sentence was inappropriate. It upheld the convictions of multiple homicides, stripping the group of its political prisoner status. The case was returned to the Grenada Supreme Court for resentencing. The resentencing was heard during the 2007 June Assizes, lasting one week. The court overturned the life sentences. Three of the 13 prisoners were released immediately for time served and the remaining ten are expected to be released in three or four years from the time of resentencing. Some family members of those killed in 1983 were unhappy with the new sentencing as it did not address the whereabouts of the bodies of their loved ones. Accusations of bias against the Barbadian judge arose when it was alleged that he had been a supporter of Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement in the 1970s and 1980s. The 800 members of the Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF), which includes an 80-member paramilitary special services unit (SSU) and a 30-member coast guard, maintain security in Grenada. The U.S. Army and the U.S. Coast Guard provide periodic training and material support for the SSU and the coast guard. The Departments of State and Treasury provide support to the Financial Investigative Unit (FIU).

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Daniel WILLIAMS**
Prime Min.: **Tillman THOMAS**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Fisheries: **Michael Denis LETT**
Min. of Carriacou & Petite Martinique Affairs: **George PRIME**
Min. of Education & Human Resources: **Franca BERNADINE**
Min. of Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Energy, & Foreign Trade: **Nazim BURKE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Tourism: **Peter DAVID**
Min. of Health: **Karl HOOD**
Min. of Housing, Lands, & Community Development: **Alleyne WALKER**
Min. of Information: **Tillman THOMAS**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **Tillman THOMAS**
Min. of National Security: **Tillman THOMAS**
Min. of Social Services, Ecclesiastical Affairs, & Labor: **Glynis ROBERTS**
Min. of Works, Physical Development, Public Utilities, & Environment: **Joseph GILBERT**
Min. of Youth Empowerment, Culture, & Sports: **Patrick SIMMONS**
Attorney Gen.: **Jimmy BRISTOL**
Ambassador to the US: **Denis ANTOINE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ruth Elizabeth ROUSE**

Grenada maintains an embassy in the United States at 1701 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel: 202-265-2561).

ECONOMY

The economy of Grenada, based primarily upon services (tourism and education) and agricultural production (nutmeg and cocoa), was brought to a near standstill by Hurricane Ivan on September 7, 2004. Thirty-seven people were killed by the hurricane, and approximately 8,000-10,000 left homeless. Hurricane Ivan damaged or destroyed 90% of the buildings on the island, including some tourist facilities. Overall damage totaled as much as 2.5 times annual GDP. Reconstruction has proceeded quickly, but much work remains. The United States has been the leading donor since the hurricane, with an emergency program of about $45 million aimed at repairing and rebuilding schools, health clinics, community centers, and housing; training several thousand Grenadians in construction and other fields; providing grants to private businesses to speed their recovery; and providing a variety of aid to help Grenada diversify its agriculture and tourism sectors. Despite initial high unemployment in the tourist and other sectors, urban Grenadians have benefited post-hurricane from job opportunities in the surging construction sector. Agricultural workers have not fared as well. Hurricane Ivan destroyed or significantly damaged a large percentage of Grenada's tree crops, and Hurricane Emily further damaged the sector. Complete recovery will take years. However, many hotels, restaurants, and other businesses have reopened. In anticipation of Cricket World Cup matches held on the island in the spring of 2007, many Grenadians renewed their focus on the rebuilding process. Predictions are for an increase in tourism, although Grenada lags behind its neighbors in marketing the island overseas. St. George's University, a large American medical and veterinary school with over 2,000 students, is in full operation.

Grenada is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues a common currency for all members of the ECCU. The ECCB also manages monetary policy, and regulates and supervises commercial banking activities in its member countries.

Grenada is also a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). Most goods can be imported into Grenada under open general license, but some goods require specific licenses. Goods that are produced in the Eastern Caribbean receive additional protection; in May 1991, the CARICOM common external tariff (CET) was implemented. The CET aims to facilitate economic growth through intra-regional trade by offering duty-free trade among CARICOM members and duties on goods imported from outside CARICOM. In the spring of 2008, due to dramatic increases in the costs of food and fuel, the government removed the CET from some essential items, including baby formula, yeast, and baking powder.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The United States, China, Cuba, and Venezuela have embassies in Grenada. Grenada has been recognized by most members of the United Nations and maintains diplomatic missions in the United States, Canada, China, Cuba, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Venezuela. Grenada withdrew recognition of Taiwan in 2004 and subsequently established relations with the People's Republic of China.

Grenada is a member of the Caribbean Development Bank, CARICOM, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Commonwealth of Nations, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). It joined the United Nations in 1974, and then the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Organization of American States (OAS) in 1975. Grenada also is a member of the Eastern Caribbean's Regional Security System (RSS).

U.S.-GRENADIAN RELATIONS

The U.S. Government established an Embassy in Grenada in November 1983. The U.S. Ambassador to Grenada is resident in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Embassy in Grenada is staffed by a Chargé d'Affaires who reports to the Ambassador in Bridgetown.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) played a major role in Grenada's development. In addition to the $45 million emergency aid for reconstruction from Hurricane Ivan, USAID provided more than $120 million in economic assistance from 1984 to 1993. About 25 Peace Corps volunteers in Grenada teach special education, remedial reading, and vocational training and assist with HIV/AIDS work. Grenada receives counter-narcotics assistance from the United States and benefits from U.S. military exercise-related construction and humanitarian civic action projects.

Grenada and the United States cooperate closely in fighting narcotics smuggling and other forms of transnational crime. In 1995, the United States and Grenada signed a maritime law enforcement treaty. In 1996, they signed a mutual legal assistance treaty and an extradition treaty as well as an over-flight/order-to-land amendment to the maritime law enforcement treaty. The United States continues to provide training, equipment, and materiel, including three vehicles in 2006, to Grenadian security and defense forces. Some U.S. military training is provided as well. Grenada continues to be a popular destination for Americans. Of the 98,548 stayover visitors in 2005, 25,181 were U.S. citizens. It is estimated that some 2,600 Americans reside in the country, plus the 2,000 U.S. medical students who study at the St. George's University School of Medicine. (Those students are not counted as residents for statistical purposes.)

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ST. GEORGE's (E) Lance Aux Epines, 1-473-444-1173/7, Fax 1-473 - 444-4820, Workweek: Mon. thru Fri., 8AM-4:30 PM.

DCM OMS:	Hillaire Campbell (Bridgetown)
AMB OMS:	Honora L. Myers (Bridgetown)
HRO:	Peggy Laurance (Residence In Ft Lauderdale)
MGT:	Philip Dubois (Bridgetown)
AMB:	Mary M. Ourisman (Bridgetown, Barbados)
CG:	Clyde Howard (Bridgetown)
PO:	Karen Jo McIsaac
DCM:	O.O. Garza (Tdy)
PAO:	John Roberts (Bridgetown)
GSO:	Paul Kalinowski (Bridgetown)
RSO:	Robert Starnes (Bridgetown)
AID:	James Goggin (Bridgetown)
DEA:	Charles Graham (Bridgetown)
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera (Bridgetown)
FMO:	Karin Sullivan (Bridgetown)
IMO:	Ricardo Cabrera (Bridgetown)
IRS:	Cheryl Kast (Bridgetown)
LAB:	Jake Aller (Bridgetown)
LEGATT:	Samuel Bryant, Jr. (Bridgetown)
MLO:	Cdr. P.Kofi Aboagye (Bridgetown)
NAS:	John Roberts (Bridgetown)
POL:	Ian Campbell (Bridgetown)

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

March 30, 2007

Country Description: Grenada is a developing Caribbean island nation. The capital is St. George's. Tourism facilities vary, according to price and area.

Entry Requirements: For additional information concerning entry/exit requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of Grenada, 1701 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009, telephone: (202) 265-2561, Fax: (202) 265-2468: e-mail: grenada@oas.org, or the Consulate of Grenada in New York.

Sea travelers must have a valid U.S. passport (or other original proof of U.S. citizenship, such as a certified U.S. birth certificate with a government-issued photo ID).

There is no visa requirement for stays up to three months. There is an airport departure fee of US$20 for adults and US$10 for children between the ages of five and twelve.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel

Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Street crime occurs in Grenada. Tourists have been victims of armed robbery especially in isolated areas and thieves frequently steal credit cards, jewelry, U.S. passports and money. Mugging, purse snatching and other robberies may occur in areas near hotels, beaches and restaurants, particularly after dark. Visitors should exercise appropriate caution when walking after dark or when using the local bus system or taxis hired on the road. It is advisable to hire taxis to and from restaurants.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is limited. U.S. citizens requiring medical treatment may contact the U.S Embassy in St. George's for a list of local doctors, dentists, pharmacies and hospitals. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the U.S. can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Pharmacies are usually well stocked, and prescription medicine is available, but travelers are advised to bring with them sufficient prescription medicine for the length of their stay as occasionally there are temporary shortages of medicines; most pharmacies will check with others in the area to see if they can get what is needed.

Grenada chlorinates its water, making it generally safe to drink. However, during especially heavy rains, quality control can slip, particularly in the city of St. George's. It is recommended that visitors to Grenada request bottled water, which is widely available and relatively inexpensive.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Grenada is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left in Grenada; the majority of vehicles are right hand drive. Grenada's roads, paved and unpaved, are mostly narrow and winding, with many blind corners and narrow or no shoulders. Road surfaces often deteriorate; especially in the rainy season (June –November) before maintenance work begins. Driving conditions in Grenada, including road conditions, increasing numbers of vehicles, and sometimes undisciplined minibus drivers all require caution and reduced speed for safety. The Government of Grenada has a seat belt law; drivers and passengers found not wearing seat belts are subject to a fine of EC$1,000 (US$400). Getting a local temporary drivers license, based on valid U.S. drivers license plus EC$30 (US$12), is highly recommended. In the event of an accident, not having a valid local driver's license may result in a fine, regardless of who is at fault. Rental vehicle companies are widely available; most of them will assist in applying for temporary driving licenses. The adequacy of road signage varies, but is generally poor to nonexistent.

For specific information concerning Grenada driver's permits, road safety, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Grenada Board of Tourism in New York at 317 Madison Avenue, Suite 1704, New York, N.Y. 10017, telephone 1-800-927-9554, (212) 599 0301; Fax: 212-573-9731; e-mail: gbt@caribsurf.com or www.grenadagrenadines.com

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office at http://www.grenadagrenadines.com. Additional general information can be found on Grenada's Internet website at: http://www.grenadaconsulate.org.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Grenada's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Grenada's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Recovery efforts have been made from the damage caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004 and Hurricane Emily in July 2005. All utilities have been

restored. Cruise ships have returned and all the main shopping areas are open. While the majority of hotels are up and running, there is still one major resort (Le Source), which remain closed. The resort's management hopes to have the hotel open by the time Cricket World Cup 2007 Super Eight games take place in Grenada (alternate days April 10-21).

The February 1 merger of Liat and Caribbean Star airlines has reduced the number of daily flights between Grenada and the other Eastern Caribbean islands from six to three. Travelers coming into the region from the U.S. and elsewhere should verify in advance directly with Liat that they have a valid reservation. Some travelers making reservations from outside the region have arrived in the Eastern Caribbean and discovered that the reservation they thought they had on Liat, is not recognized by the airline, resulting in delayed travel as well as additional hotel costs.

Grenada experiences tropical storms during the hurricane season, from June through November. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

It is difficult to cash personal U.S. checks in Grenada. If accepted, they will take approximately six weeks to clear by a local bank. Major credit cards are widely accepted, and ATM facilities are available at most banks. Most hotels and restaurants take U.S. currency; however, change will be in local currency.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Grenada laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Grenada are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Grenada are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Grenada. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on the main road to Lance Aux Epines after the Christian Scientist Church, and is approximately 15 minutes from the Point Salines International Airport. Telephone: 1-(473) 444-1173/4/5/6; Fax: 1-(473) 444-4820; Internet e-mail: usemb_gd@caribsurf.com. Embassy hours are 8:00 am to 12:30 pm, Monday to Friday except local and American holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2005

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: If you are not resident or domiciled in Grenada, you may not adopt. Furthermore, no adoption is possible for children who are not resident in Grenada.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Grenada is the Grenada adoption board:

Ministry of Social Services,
Tanteen, St. George's
Grenada.
Tel: (473) 440-6575, (473) 440-8717
Fax: (473) 440-4780

Secretary of the Adoption Board is Ms. Jeanine Sylvester. A free information booklet is supplied on request.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The government of Grenada requires that the adoptive parent(s) must be age twenty-five or at least twenty-one years older than the child.

Residential Requirements: Grenada requires that applicants for adoption be resident and domiciled in Grenada. The child must also be in the continuous physical care of the applicant for at least three consecutive months immediately preceding the adoption order.

Time Frame: This can vary greatly, depending on the number of cases before the courts. Adoptions can take from three months to a year.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adopting parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.- based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adopting parents contact the Better Business Bureau and licensing office of the Depart-

ment of Health and Family Services in the state where the agency is located.

Adoption Fees: The cost for adoptions is approximately US $2,000.00, though this can vary depending on the fees charged by the local attorney.

Adoption Procedures: An initial adoption request is done through a local attorney in Grenada. Subject to the provisions of the Grenada Adoption Act, the court may make an order authorizing the applicant to adopt a child upon an application made in the prescribed manner by a person domiciled in Grenada if the applicant:

- Has attained the age of twenty five and is at least twenty one years older than the infant; or
- Has attained the age of twenty one and is a relative of the infant; or
- Is the biological mother or biological father of the infant.

Required Documents: The prospective parents are required to have valid passports, naturalization certificate, marriage certificate, divorce certificate, birth certificate, bank statements, and medical history.

The child will need a valid passport, original birth certificate and naturalization certificate. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Embassy of Grenada
1701 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: (202) 265-2561
Email: grenada@oas.org

Grenada Consulate
820 2ND Avenue, Suite 900 D,
New York, N.Y. 10017.
Tel: 212-599-0301

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Lance Aux Epines Main Road,
St. George's, Grenada
Mailing address:
P.O. Box 54
St. George's, Grenada,
Tel: (473) 444-1173;
Fax: (473) 444-4820;
E-mail: usemb_gd@caribsurf.com

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Grenada may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Grenada. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4 th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Grenada is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Grenada and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction.

American citizens who travel to Grenada place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Grenada with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Grenada, if parents are legally married they share the custody of their children.

If they are not married, custody is granted to the mother by law unless there are known facts of inappropriate behavior, mental or social problems. Foreign court orders are not automatically recognized.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Grenada.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has been granted custody of a child, the other parent is usually granted visitation rights. If a custodial parent fails to allow visitation, the non-custodial parent may appeal to the court.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Grenadine law.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Grenada.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Grenadian court should retain an attorney in Grenada.

The U.S. Embassy in Grenada maintains a list of attorneys willing to rep-

resent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy St. George's
Consular Section
P O Box 54
St. George's
Grenada
Tel: 473-444-1173
e-mail: usemb_gd@caribsurf.com

Questions involving Grenadian law should be addressed to a Grenadian attorney or to the Embassy of Grenada in the United States at:

Embassy of Grenada
1701 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Telephone: (202) 265-2561

For answers to general questions, please contact the Overseas Citizens Services Hotline at the toll-free number, 1-888-407-4747, which is available from 8:00AM through 8:00PM Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. holidays).

Callers who are unable to use the toll-free number, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during the hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.



GUATEMALA

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Guatemala

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 108,890 sq. km. (42,042 sq. mi.); about the size of Tennessee.
Cities: Capital—Guatemala City (metro area pop. 2.5 million). Other major cities—Quetzaltenango, Escuintla.
Terrain: Mountainous, with fertile coastal plain.
Climate: Temperate in highlands; tropical on coasts.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Guatemalan(s).
Population: (2008 est.) 13.6 million.
Annual population growth rate: (2006 est.) 2.4%.
Ethnic groups: Mestizo (mixed Spanish-Indian), indigenous.
Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant, traditional Mayan.
Languages: Spanish, 24 indigenous languages (principally Kiche, Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi, and Mam).
Education: Years compulsory—6. Attendance—41%. Literacy—70.6%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2005)—32/1,000. Life expectancy (2005)—69 yrs.
Work force: Services—40%; industry and commerce—37%; agriculture—15%; construction, mining, utilities—4%. Fifty percent of the population engages in some form of agriculture, often at the subsistence level outside the monetized economy.

Government

Type: Constitutional democratic republic.
Constitution: May 1985; amended November 1993.
Independence: September 15, 1821.
Government branches: Executive—president (4-year term; 1 term limit). Legislative—unicameral 158-member Congress (4-year term). Judicial—13-member Supreme Court of Justice (5-year term).
Political subdivisions: 22 departments (appointed governors); 331 municipalities with elected mayors and city councils.
Political parties: National Union for Hope (UNE), Grand National Alliance (GANA), Patriot Party (PP), Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG), National Advancement Party (PAN), Unionists (Unionistas), Encounter for Guatemala (EG).
Suffrage: Universal for adults 18 and over who are not serving on active duty with the armed forces or police. A variety of procedural obstacles have historically reduced participation by poor, rural, and indigenous people, but implementation in 2007 of voting reform legislation nearly doubled the number of voting tables, resulting in higher participation in rural areas, including among indigenous people.

Economy

Real GDP: (2007 est.) $24.16 billion.
Real GDP growth: (2007 est.) 5.7%.
Per capita GDP PPP: (2007 est.) $4,571.
Natural resources: Oil, timber, nickel, gold.
Agriculture: (13.3% of GDP) Products—coffee, sugar, bananas, cardamom, vegetables, flowers and plants, timber, rice, rubber.
Manufacturing: (18.5% of GDP) Types—prepared food, clothing and textiles, construction materials, tires, pharmaceuticals.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$6.9 billion: coffee, bananas, sugar, crude oil, chemical products, clothing and textiles, vegetables. Major markets—U.S. 42.3%, Central American Common Market (CACM) 28.3%, Mexico 6.7%. Imports—$13.5 billion: machinery and equipment, fuels, mineral products, chemical products, vehicles and transport materials, plastic materials and products. Major suppliers—U.S. 34.2%, CACM 10.2%, Mexico 8.7%, China 5.7%.

PEOPLE

More than half of Guatemalans are descendants of indigenous Mayan peoples. Westernized Mayans and mestizos (mixed European and indigenous ancestry) are known as Ladinos. Most of Guatemala's population is rural, though urbanization is accelerating. The predominant religion is Roman Catholicism, into which many indigenous Guatemalans have incorporated traditional forms of worship. Protestantism and traditional Mayan religions are practiced by an estimated 40% and 1% of the population, respectively. Though the official language is Spanish, it is not universally understood among the indigenous population. The peace accords signed in December 1996 provide for the translation of some official documents and voting materials into several indigenous languages.

HISTORY

The Mayan civilization flourished throughout much of Guatemala and the surrounding region long before the Spanish arrived, but it was already in decline when the Mayans were defeated by Pedro de Alvarado in 1523-24. The first colonial capital, Ciudad Vieja, was ruined by floods and an earthquake in 1542. Survivors founded Antigua, the second capital, in 1543. Antigua was destroyed by two earthquakes in 1773. The remnants of its Spanish colonial architecture have been preserved as a national monument. The third capital, Guatemala City, was founded in 1776.

Guatemala gained independence from Spain on September 15, 1821; it briefly became part of the Mexican Empire, and then for a period belonged to a federation called the United Provinces of Central America. From the mid-19th century until the mid-1980s, the country passed through a series of dictatorships, insurgencies (particularly beginning in the 1960s), coups, and stretches of military rule with only occasional periods of representative government.

1944 to 1986

In 1944, Gen. Jorge Ubico's dictatorship was overthrown by the "October Revolutionaries," a group of dissident military officers, students, and liberal professionals. A civilian President, Juan Jose Arevalo, was elected in 1945 and held the presidency until 1951. Social reforms initiated by Arevalo were continued by his successor, Col. Jacobo Arbenz. Arbenz permitted the communist Guatemalan Labor Party to gain legal status in 1952. The army refused to defend the Arbenz government when a U.S.-backed group led by Col. Carlos Castillo Armas invaded the country from Honduras in 1954 and quickly took over the government. Gen. Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes took power in 1958 following the murder of Colonel Castillo Armas.

In response to the increasingly autocratic rule of Ydigoras Fuentes, a group of junior military officers revolted in 1960. When they failed, several went into hiding and established close ties with Cuba. This group became the nucleus of the forces that were in armed insurrection against the government for the next 36 years. Four principal left-wing guerrilla groups—the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Revolutionary Organization of Armed People (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), and the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT)—conducted economic sabotage and targeted government installations and members of government security forces in armed attacks. These organizations combined to form the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) in 1982.

Shortly after President Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro took office in 1966, the army launched a major counterinsurgency campaign that largely broke up the guerrilla movement in the countryside. The guerrillas then concentrated their attacks in Guatemala City, where they assassinated many leading figures, including U.S. Ambassador John Gordon Mein in 1968. Between 1966 and 1982, there was a series of military or military-dominated governments.

On March 23, 1982, army troops commanded by junior officers staged a coup to prevent the assumption of power by Gen. Angel Anibal Guevara, the hand-picked candidate of outgoing President and Gen. Romeo Lucas Garcia. They denounced Guevara's electoral victory as fraudulent. The coup leaders asked retired Gen. Efrain Rios Montt to negotiate the departure of Lucas and Guevara.

Rios Montt was at this time a lay pastor in the evangelical protestant "Church of the Word." He formed a three-member military junta that annulled the 1965 constitution, dissolved Congress, suspended political parties, and canceled the electoral law. After a few months, Rios Montt dismissed his junta colleagues and assumed the de facto title of "President of the Republic."

Guerrilla forces and their leftist allies denounced Rios Montt. Rios Montt sought to defeat the guerrillas with military actions and economic reforms; in his words, "rifles and beans." The government began to form local civilian defense patrols (PACs). Participation was in theory voluntary, but in reality, many Guatemalans, especially in the heavily indigenous northwest, had no choice but to join either the PACs or the guerrillas. Rios Montt's conscript army and PACs recaptured essentially all guerrilla territory—guerrilla activity lessened and was largely limited to hit-and-run operations. However, Rios Montt won this partial victory at an enormous cost in civilian deaths, in what was probably the most violent period of the 36-year internal conflict, resulting in about 200,000 deaths of mostly unarmed indigenous civilians.

On August 8, 1983, Rios Montt was deposed by his own Minister of Defense, Gen. Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores, who succeeded him as de facto President of Guatemala. Rios Montt survived to found a political party (the Guatemalan Republic Front) and to be elected President of Congress in 1995 and 2000. Awareness in the United States of the conflict in Guatemala, and its ethnic dimension, increased with the 1983



publication of the book I, Rigoberta Menchu, An Indian Woman in Guatemala.

General Mejia allowed a managed return to democracy in Guatemala, starting with a July 1, 1984 election for a Constituent Assembly to draft a democratic constitution. On May 30, 1985, after 9 months of debate, the Constituent Assembly finished drafting a new constitution, which took effect immediately. Vinicio Cerezo, a civilian politician and the presidential candidate of the Christian Democracy Party, won the first election held under the new constitution with almost 70% of the vote, and took office on January 14, 1986.

1986 to 2007

Upon its inauguration in January 1986, President Cerezo's civilian government announced that its top priorities would be to end the political violence and establish the rule of law. Reforms included new laws of habeas corpus and amparo (court-ordered protection), the creation of a legislative human rights committee, and the establishment in 1987 of the Office of Human Rights Ombudsman. Cerezo survived coup attempts in 1988 and 1989, and the final 2 years of Cerezo's government were also marked by a

failing economy, strikes, protest marches, and allegations of widespread corruption.

Presidential and congressional elections were held on November 11, 1990. After a runoff ballot, Jorge Serrano was inaugurated on January 14, 1991, thus completing the first transition from one democratically elected civilian government to another.

The Serrano administration's record was mixed. It had some success in consolidating civilian control over the army, replacing a number of senior officers and persuading the military to participate in peace talks with the URNG. Serrano took the politically unpopular step of recognizing the sovereignty of Belize. The Serrano government reversed the economic slide it inherited, reducing inflation and boosting real growth.

On May 25, 1993, Serrano illegally dissolved Congress and the Supreme Court and tried to restrict civil freedoms, allegedly to fight corruption. The "autogolpe" (or self-initiated coup) failed due to unified, strong protests by most elements of Guatemalan society, international pressure, and the army's enforcement of the decisions of the Court of Constitutionality, which ruled against the attempted takeover. Serrano fled the country.

On June 5, 1993, the Congress, pursuant to the 1985 constitution, elected the Human Rights Ombudsman, Ramiro De Leon Carpio, to complete Serrano's presidential term. De Leon, not a member of any political party and lacking a political base but with strong popular support, launched an ambitious anticorruption campaign to "purify" Congress and the Supreme Court, demanding the resignations of all members of the two bodies.

Despite considerable congressional resistance, presidential and popular pressure led to a November 1993 agreement brokered by the Catholic Church between the administration and Congress. This package of constitutional reforms was approved by popular referendum on January 30, 1994. In August 1994, a new Congress was elected to complete the unexpired term.

Under De Leon, the peace process, now brokered by the United Nations, took on new life. The government and the URNG signed agreements on human rights (March 1994), resettlement of displaced persons (June 1994), historical clarification (June 1994), and indigenous rights (March 1995). They also made significant progress on a socioeconomic and agrarian agreement.

National elections for president, the Congress, and municipal offices were held in November 1995. With almost 20 parties competing in the first round, the presidential election came down to a January 7, 1996 runoff in which National Advancement Party (PAN) candidate Alvaro Arzu defeated Alfonso Portillo of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) by just over 2% of the vote. Under the Arzu administration, peace negotiations were concluded, and the government signed peace accords ending the 36-year internal conflict in December 1996. The human rights situation also improved during Arzu's tenure, and steps were taken to reduce the influence of the military in national affairs.

In a December 1999 presidential runoff, Alfonso Portillo (FRG) won 68% of the vote to 32% for Oscar Berger (PAN). Portillo's impressive electoral triumph, with two-thirds of the vote in the second round, gave him a claim to a mandate from the people to carry out his reform program. In February 2004, Portillo fled to Mexico to escape corruption charges.

Oscar Berger of the Grand National Alliance (GANA) party won the November 9, 2003 presidential election, receiving 54.1% of the vote. His opponent, Alvarado Colom Caballeros of the National Unity for Hope (UNE) party, received 45.9% of the vote.

Álvaro Colom of the National Unity for Hope (UNE) party won the November 4, 2007 presidential election against retired General Otto Perez Molina with 52.8% of the vote versus 47.2%.

GOVERNMENT

Guatemala's 1985 constitution provides for a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The 1993 constitutional reforms included an increase in the number of Supreme Court justices from 9 to 13. The reforms reduced the terms of office for president, vice president, and congressional representatives from 5 years to 4 years, and for Supreme Court justices from 6 years to 5 years; they increased the terms of mayors and city councils from 2-1/2 years to 4 years.

The president and vice president are directly elected through universal suffrage and limited to one term. A vice president can run for president after 4 years out of office. Supreme Court justices are elected by the Congress from a list submitted by the bar association, law school deans, a university rector, and appellate judges. The Supreme Court and local courts handle civil and criminal cases. There also is a separate Constitutional Court.

Guatemala has 22 administrative subdivisions (departments) administered by governors appointed by the president. Guatemala City and 331 other municipalities are governed by popularly elected mayors or councils.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Alvaro COLOM Caballeros**
Vice Pres.: **Rafael ESPADA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Julio Recinos SALAS**
Min. of Communication & Public Works: **Luis Alfredo ALEJOS Olivero**
Min. of Culture & Sports: **Geronimo LANCERIO**
Min. of Defense: **Marco Tulio GARCIA Franco, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Economy: **Romulo CABALLEROS**

Min. of Education: **Ana Francisca Ordonez DE MOLINA**
Min. of Energy & Mines: **Carlos Ivan MEANY Valerio**
Min. of Environment & Natural Resources: **Luis Alberto FERRATE Feliche**
Min. of External Relations: **Haroldo RODAS Melgar**
Min. of Finance: **Juan Alberto FUENTES Knight**
Min. of Government: **Francisco Jose JIMENEZ Irungaray**
Min. of Labor: **Edgar RODRIGUEZ**
Min. of Public Health & Social Assistance: **Celso David CEREZO Mulet**
Attorney Gen.: **Jose Amilcar VELASQUEZ Zarate**
Solicitor Gen.: **Luis Alfonso ROSALES**
Sec. Gen. of the Presidency: **Jorge Raul ARROYAVE Reyes**
Pres., Bank of Guatemala: **Maria Antonieta del Cid de BONILLA**
Ambassador to the US: **Francisco VILLAGRAN de Leon**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Gert ROSENTHAL Koenigsberger**

The Guatemalan embassy is located at 2220 R Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-745-4952; email: INFO@Guatemala-Embassy.org). Consulates are in Washington, New York, Miami, Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Denver, and Los Angeles, and honorary consuls in Montgomery, San Diego, Ft. Lauderdale, Atlanta, Leavenworth, Lafayette, New Orleans, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Juan, Providence, Memphis, San Antonio, and Seattle.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Congressional, municipal, and first-round presidential elections took place on September 9, 2007. The final round of presidential elections took place on November 4, 2007. Inauguration for the new president and the new Congress took place on January 14, 2008.

Common and violent crime, aggravated by a legacy of violence and vigilante justice, presents a serious challenge. Impunity remained a major problem, primarily because democratic institutions, including those responsible for the administration of justice, have developed only a limited capacity to cope with this legacy. Guatemala's judiciary is independent; however, it suffers from inefficiency, corruption, and intimidation.

In early December 2006, the government and the UN agreed to the creation of the joint International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). On August 1, 2007, the Guatemalan Congress approved the agreement, and on January 11, 2008, Guatemala and the United Nations inaugurated the work of CICIG. An earlier Guatemala-UN agreement was ruled unconstitutional in 2004 before it was acted upon by the Guatemalan Congress. The UN Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) ceased its 10-year project of monitoring peace accord implementation and human rights problems in November 2004 with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan declaring Guatemala had made "enormous progress in managing the country's problems through dialogue and institutions."

ECONOMY

After the signing of the final peace accord in December 1996, Guatemala was well-positioned for rapid economic growth over the next several years, until a financial crisis in 1998 disrupted the course of improvement. The subsequent collapse of coffee prices left what was once the country's leading export sector in depression and had a severe impact on rural incomes. On a more positive note, Guatemala's macroeconomic management is sound and its foreign debt levels are modest. The Berger administration (2004-2007) made promotion of foreign investment and competitiveness a priority and implemented a series of reforms to improve transparency, combat corruption, and spur economic growth. As a result of the reforms and implementation of the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows increased from $591.6 million in 2006 to $723.5 million in 2007.

Guatemala's economy is dominated by the private sector, which generates about 90% of GDP. Agriculture contributes 13.3% of GDP and accounts for 24% of exports. Most manufacturing is light assembly and food processing, geared to the domestic, U.S., and Central American markets. Over the past several years, tourism and exports of textiles, apparel, and non-traditional agricultural products such as winter vegetables, fruit, and cut flowers have boomed, while more traditional exports such as sugar, bananas, and coffee continue to represent a large share of the export market.

The United States is the country's largest trading partner, providing 34.2% of Guatemala's imports and receiving 42.3% of its exports. The government's involvement is small, with its business activities limited to public utilities—some of which have been privatized—ports and airports, and several development-oriented financial institutions.

Guatemala ratified the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement, commonly known as CAFTA, on March 10, 2005, and the agreement entered into force between Guatemala and the U.S. on July 1, 2006. CAFTA eliminates customs tariffs on as many categories of goods as possible; opens services sectors; and creates clear and readily enforceable rules in areas such as investment, government procurement, intellectual property protection, customs procedures, electronic commerce, the use of sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures to protect public health, and resolution of business disputes.

Other priorities include increasing transparency and accountability in Guatemala's public finances, broadening the tax base, and completing implementation of financial sector reforms. These measures attempt to ensure that Guatemala can comply with the standards of the international Financial Action Task Force for detecting and preventing money laundering.

The United States, along with other donor countries—especially France,

Italy, Spain, Germany, and Japan—and the international financial institutions, have increased development project financing since the signing of the peace accords. However, donor support remains contingent upon Guatemalan Government reforms and counterpart financing.

According to the World Bank, Guatemala has one of the most unequal income distributions in the hemisphere. The wealthiest 10% of the population receives almost one-half of all income; the top 20% receives two-thirds of all income. As a result, about 32% of the population lives on less than $2 a day and 13.5% on less than $1 a day. Guatemala's social development indicators, such as infant mortality and illiteracy, are among the worst in the hemisphere. The United States has provided disaster assistance and food aid in response to natural disasters including Hurricane Stan, which caused extensive mudslides in Guatemala in October 2005.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Guatemala is a signatory to the Rio Pact and is a member of the Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC). Guatemala has deployed its troops to UN peacekeeping operations in Haiti and the Congo and has observers in several other locations. The president is commander in chief. The defense minister is responsible for policy. Day-to-day operations are the responsibility of the military chief of staff and the national defense staff.

An agreement signed in September 1996, which is one of the substantive peace accords, mandated that the mission of the armed forces change to focus exclusively on external threats. However, Presidents Berger, Portillo, and Arzu used a constitutional clause to order the army to temporarily support the police in response to a nationwide wave of violent crime.

The accord calls for a one-third reduction in the army's authorized strength and budget—achieved under President Berger—and for a constitutional amendment to permit the appointment of a civilian Minister of Defense. A constitutional amendment to this end was defeated as part of a May 1999 plebiscite, but discussions on how to achieve this objective continue between the executive and legislative branches.

The army has gone beyond its accord-mandated target of reducing its strength to 28,000 troops, and numbered 15,500 troops as of August 2008. Not only was this the most profound transformation of any Central American military in the last 50 years, it also illustrates the effective control the civilian government has over the military. President Berger tasked the Defense Ministry with increasing the professional skills of all soldiers. As part of the army downsizing, the operational structure of 19 military zones and three strategic brigades were recast as several military zones were eliminated and their area of operations absorbed by others. The air force operates three air bases; the navy has two port bases. Additionally, recent steps have been taken to redefine the military's mission—the military doctrine has been rewritten, and there has been an increase in cooperation with civil society to help bring about this reform.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Guatemala's major diplomatic interests are regional security and, increasingly, regional development and economic integration. Guatemala participates in several regional groups, particularly those related to trade and the environment. The Council of Central American Ministers of Trade meets on a regular basis to work on regional approaches to trade issues. The council signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the U.S. in 1998, and was part of the negotiations that led to the creation of CAFTA. Guatemala joined Honduras and El Salvador in signing a free trade agreement with Mexico in 2000, which went into effect the following year. Guatemala also originated the idea for, and is the seat of, the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN). The U.S and Central American countries signed the CONCAUSA (Conjunto Centroamerica-USA) agreement at the Summit of the Americas in December 1994. CONCAUSA is a cooperative plan of action to promote clean, efficient energy use; conserve the region's biodiversity; strengthen legal and institutional frameworks and compliance mechanisms; and improve and harmonize environmental protection standards.

Guatemala has a long-standing claim to a large portion of Belize; the territorial dispute caused problems with the United Kingdom and later with Belize following its 1981 independence from the U.K. In December 1989, Guatemala sponsored Belize for permanent observer status in the Organization of American States (OAS). In September 1991, Guatemala recognized Belize's independence and established diplomatic ties, while acknowledging that the boundaries remained in dispute. In anticipation of an effort to bring the border dispute to an end in early 1996, the Guatemalan Congress ratified two long-pending international agreements governing frontier issues and maritime rights. In 2001, Guatemala and Belize agreed to a facilitation process led by the OAS to determine the land and maritime borders separating the two countries. National elections in Guatemala put a temporary halt to progress, but discussions resumed in November 2005. After being named Foreign Minister in January 2008, Haroldo Rodas made clear his intention to reinvigorate discussions with Belize, and the two countries agreed in principle to seek international arbitration under the auspices of the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

U.S.-GUATEMALAN RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Guatemala traditionally have been close, although at times strained

by human rights and civil/military issues. U.S. policy objectives in Guatemala include:

- Supporting the institutionalization of democracy and implementation of the peace accords;
- Encouraging respect for human rights and the rule of law, and implementation of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG);
- Supporting broad-based economic growth and sustainable development and maintaining mutually beneficial trade and commercial relations, including ensuring that benefits of CAFTA-DR reach all sectors of the Guatemalan populace;
- Cooperating to combat money laundering, corruption, narcotics trafficking, alien-smuggling, and other transnational crime; and
- Supporting Central American integration through support for resolution of border/territorial disputes.

The United States, as a member of "the Friends of Guatemala," along with Colombia, Mexico, Spain, Norway, and Venezuela, played an important role in the UN-moderated peace accords, providing public and behind-the-scenes support.

The U.S. strongly supports the six substantive and three procedural accords, which, along with the signing of the December 29, 1996 final accord, form the blueprint for profound political, economic, and social change. To that end, the U.S. Government has committed over $500 million to support peace implementation since 1997.

Violent criminal activity continues to be a problem in Guatemala, including murder, rape, and armed assaults against persons of all nationalities. In recent years the number of violent crimes reported by U.S. citizens has steadily increased, though the number of Americans traveling to Guatemala has also increased. Most U.S. assistance to Guatemala is provided through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) offices for Guatemala. USAID/Guatemala's current program builds on the gains of the peace process that followed the signing of the peace accords in December 1996, as well as on the achievements of its 1997-2004 peace program.

The current program works to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives by focusing on Guatemala's potential as Central America's largest economy and trading partner of the United States, but also recognizes the country's lagging social indicators and high rate of poverty.

The three areas of focus for USAID/Guatemala's program are modeled after the Millennium Challenge Account areas—ruling justly, economic freedom, and investing in people, and are as follows:

More responsive, transparent governance, through:

- Strengthened justice; and
- Greater transparency and accountability of governments.

Open, diversified and expanding economies, through:

- Laws, policies, and regulations that promote trade and investment;
- More competitive, market-oriented private enterprises; and
- Broader access to financial markets and services.

Healthier, better educated people, through:

- Increased and improved quality of social sector (health and education) investments; and
- Increased use of quality maternal-child and reproductive health services, particularly in rural areas.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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RSO:	John Eustace
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CLO:	Blanca L. Alonso
DAO:	Col. Humberto Rodriguez
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Trade Information Center
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 12, 2007

Country Description: Guatemala has a developing economy, characterized by wide income disparities. Hotels and other tourist facilities in the principal tourist sites most frequented by visitors from the United States are generally good to excellent. A peace accord, signed in 1996, ended a 36-year armed conflict. Violent crime, however, is a serious concern due to endemic poverty, an abundance of weapons, a legacy of societal violence, and dysfunctional law enforcement and judicial systems.

Entry Requirements: A valid U.S. passport is required for all U.S. citizens, regardless of age, to enter Guatemala and to depart Guatemala for return to the U.S. Even if dual nationals are permitted to enter Guatemala on a second nationality passport, U.S. citizens returning to the United States from Guatemala are not allowed to board their flights without a valid U.S. passport. Certificates of Naturalization, birth certificates, driver's licenses, and photocopies are not accepted by Guatemalan authorities as alternative travel documents. While in Guatemala, U.S. citizens should carry their passports, or a photocopy of their passports, with them at all times.

An exit tax must be paid when departing Guatemala by air. The exit tax (currently $30) is generally included in an airline ticket price, but may be charged separately. There is an additional airport security fee (20 Quetzales, approximately $2.50) that all travelers must pay at the airport.

Minors under 18 traveling with a valid U.S. passport need no special permission from their parents to enter or leave Guatemala. U.S. citizens do not need a visa for a stay of 90 days or less (that period can be extended for an additional 180 days upon application to Guatemalan immigration). A U.S. citizen whose passport is lost or stolen in Guatemala must obtain a new passport at the U.S. Embassy as soon as possible and present it, together with a police report of the loss or theft, to the Dirección de Migración (Guatemalan immigration agency), Sub-director de Control Migratorio (Sub-director for Migratory Control), to obtain permission to depart Guatemala. The agency is located in Guatemala City at 6 Avenida 3-11, Zone 4, Guatemala City. Office hours are weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; telephone 2411-2411. No fee is charged by Guatemalan immigration for this service.

In June 2006, Guatemala entered a "Central America-4 (CA-4) Border Control Agreement" with El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Under the terms of the agreement, citizens of the four countries may travel freely across land borders from one of the countries to any of the others without completing entry and exit formalities at Immigration checkpoints. U.S. citizens and other eligible foreign nationals, who legally enter any of the four countries, may similarly travel among the four without obtaining additional visas or tourist entry permits for the other three countries. Immigration officials at the first port of entry determine the length of stay, up to a maximum period of 90 days. Foreign tourists who wish to remain in the region beyond the period initially granted for their visit are required to request a one-time extension of stay from local Immigration authorities in the country where the traveler is physically present, or travel outside the CA-4 countries and reapply for admission to the region. Foreigners "expelled" from any of the four countries are excluded from the entire "CA-4" region. In isolated cases, the lack of clarity in the implementing details of the CA-4 Border Control Agreement has caused temporary inconvenience to travelers.

For further information regarding entry, exit and customs requirements, travelers should contact the Guatemalan Embassy at 2220 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 745-4952, extension 102; fax (202) 745-1908; email at info@guatemala-embassy.org or contact the nearest Guatemalan consulate (Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, or San Francisco).

Safety and Security: Violent criminal activity continues to be a problem in Guatemala, including murder, rape, and armed assaults against foreigners. The police force is inexperienced and under-funded, and the judicial system is weak, overworked, and inefficient. Well-armed criminals know there is little chance they will be caught or punished. Traditionally, Guatemala experiences increases in crime before and during the Christmas and Easter holiday seasons.

Large demonstrations occur throughout Guatemala, often with little or no notice, and can cause serious traffic disruptions. Although most demonstrations are peaceful, they can turn violent, and travelers should avoid areas where demonstrations are taking place. The use of roadblocks and/or blocking of public facilities, including the international airport, has increased and demonstrators may prevent tourists caught behind the blockades from leaving. In 2007 particularly virulent rumors of child stealing and of murder for organ harvesting have been reported in several different areas of Guatemala frequented by American tourists. This year numerous Guatemalan citizens have been lynched for suspicion of child stealing, and three local women who allegedly facilitated foreign adoptions were attacked by a mob that accused them of kidnapping and killing a girl whose mutilated remains were found near Camotan, Chiquimula (near the Honduran border on the main road leading to the Copan Mayan ruins). In reaction to unconfirmed reports of babies being kidnapped in the El Golfete area of the Rio Dulce (near Livingston, Izabal), residents of small villages in the

area remain mobilized and suspicious of all outsiders, including foreigners. Also in 2007, two foreigners (including an American citizen) and a Guatemalan kayaking on a river near Chicaman, Quiche were accused of stealing children and seized by a mob estimated at 500 persons. Although threatened, the individuals were not physically attacked. The incident occurred after the group talked and joked with a local boy on the river bank. In Sayaxche, Petén, child stealing rumors escalated into mob action against a Guatemalan couple believed to be involved in child stealing. The husband was beaten and burned to death, and the wife threatened, but eventually turned over to the police. A local American resident was also seized and threatened with death when he tried to intervene with the mob. A family of American tourists, along with several Guatemalan motorists, was held overnight at a road blockade in the same area for possible use as human shields. Mobs have also targeted police, resulting in delayed or ineffective responses by law enforcement.

Due to uncontrolled drug and alien smuggling, the Guatemalan border with Mexico is a relatively high-risk area, in particular in the northern Peten Department. The most dangerous area in that region is on the northwestern border in the area that includes the Sierra de Lacandon and Laguna del Tigre National Parks. Extra precautions are required when U.S. Government personnel travel to the region.

The following recommendations will help residents and visitors alike to increase their safety:

- Avoid gatherings of agitated people. Frustration over crime and a lack of appropriate judicial remedies has led to violent incidents of vigilantism, including lynchings, especially in more isolated, rural areas. Attempting to intervene may put you at risk of attacks from mobs.

- Avoid close contact with children, including taking photographs, especially in rural areas. Such contact can be viewed with deep alarm and may provoke panic and violence.

- Keep informed of possible demonstrations by following the local news and consulting hotel personnel and tour guides. Avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring.

- Beware of strong currents, riptides, and undertow along Guatemala's Pacific Coast beaches. They pose a serious threat to even the strongest swimmers. Signs warning of treacherous surf are rare and confined mostly to private beaches owned by hotels. Lifeguards are rarely present on beaches.

Tourists planning to climb Pacaya and Agua volcanoes during Guatemala's rainy season (May through October) should plan their climb for the morning hours, when it is less likely that thunderstorms will occur. Climbers should monitor the weather situation and return to the base of the volcano as quickly as safely possible if thunderstorms gather. In 2003, a Canadian tourist was killed by lightning while climbing Pacaya. INGUAT, the Guatemalan Tourist Institute, has organized an active community-based tourism program in San Vicente Pacaya to minimize the risk of armed robbery on Pacaya. Climbing in groups is still highly advisable for any volcano climb to reduce the risk of assault.

Security escorts for tourist groups and security information are available from the Tourist Assistance Office of INGUAT (the Guatemalan Tourist Institute) at 7a Avenida 1-17, Zona 4 Centro Cívico, Ciudad de Guatemala. INGUAT's ASISTUR division has 24 hour/seven days per week direct telephone numbers for tourist assistance and emergencies, which are (502) 2421-2810 and (502) 5578-9836 and the fax is (502) 2421-2891. ASISTUR also maintains regional offices in all major tourist destinations in Guatemala, and the regional delegates provide rapid and appropriate assistance to crime and accident victims. INGUAT may be reached by its toll free number within the United States at 1-888- 464-8281. You may also simply dial 1500 in Guatemala to reach INGUAT Tourist Assistance. The e-mail address is asistur@inguat.gob.gt. Travelers may also wish to visit INGUAT's web site at http://visitguatemala.com. Tourist groups are advised to request security escorts from INGUAT, Attention: Coordinator of the National Tourist Assistance Program. There have been no incidents of armed robbery of groups escorted through the Tourist Protection Program. The request should be submitted by mail, fax or e-mail and should arrive at INGUAT at least three business days in advance of the proposed travel, giving the itinerary, names of travelers, and model and color of vehicle in which they will be traveling. Travelers should be aware that INGUAT might not be able to accommodate all requests.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The number of violent crimes reported by U.S. citizens and other foreigners has remained high in recent years. Incidents include, but are not limited to, assault, theft, armed robbery, carjacking, rape, kidnapping, and murder. Criminals often operate in groups of four or more and are confrontational and violent. Gangs are a growing concern in Guatemala City and rural Guatemala. Gang members are often well armed with sophisticated weaponry and they sometimes use massive amounts of force. Emboldened armed robbers have attacked vehicles on main roads in broad daylight. Travel on rural roads always increases the risk of a criminal roadblock or ambush. Widespread narcotics and alien smuggling activities can make

remote areas especially dangerous. Though there is no evidence that Americans are particularly targeted, criminals look for every opportunity to attack, so all travelers should remain constantly vigilant.

Most tourists and visitors travel throughout Guatemala without mishap. However, violent criminal activity on the highways continues, and tourists, among others, have been targeted. Many of the robbery attempts have occurred in daylight hours on main highways. Carjacking incidents and highway robberies are often violent. Four Americans were killed in highway robbery attempts in 2002 and three killed and one wounded in 2003. In 2004 one American tourist was murdered, and women and children were raped in highway assaults. Several highway assaults of American citizens also took place in 2005, but without serious injury to the victims. In 2006, there were 19 incidents of assault against Americans in motor vehicles reported to the Embassy, none of which involved death or injury. In nine of these incidents, the victims were arriving at Guatemala City's airport.

In 2007 there has been an increasing number of carjacking incidents and armed robberies of travelers who have just arrived on international flights, most frequently between 6:00 a.m and 10:00 am, but also in the evening. In the most common scenario tourists or business travelers who land at the airport around 7:00 am are held up by armed men as their vehicle departs the airport. Private vehicles, taxis and shuttle buses have been attacked. Typically, the assailants steal money, passports, and luggage, and in some but not all cases, the assailants steal the vehicle as well. Recently, many of these attacks have taken place far from the airport, just as travelers arrived at their homes, or in less busy areas of the city. Laptops are frequently targeted, so carry them inconspicuously in a backpack or other carryon luggage. Victims who did not resist the attackers were not physically injured. The Embassy advises its own employees to seek alternative routes for exiting the airport. In some cases, assailants have been wearing full or partial police uniforms and have used vehicles that resemble police vehicles, indicating that some elements of the police might be involved. Armed robberies have occurred within minutes of the tourist's vehicle being stopped by the police. U.S. Embassy personnel continue to observe heightened security precautions in Guatemala City and on the roads outside the capital city. U.S. tourists are urged to be especially aware of safety and security concerns when traveling on the roads in Guatemala. Rather than traveling alone, use a reputable tour organization. Stay in groups; travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles; and, stay on the main roads. Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary. Resist the temptation to stay in hotels that do not have adequate security. Travel after dark anywhere in Guatemala is extremely dangerous. It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations. Do not explore back roads or isolated paths near tourist sites. Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or when driving in Guatemala City. Refrain from displaying expensive-looking jewelry, large amounts of money, laptop computers, or other valuable items. Finally, if confronted by criminals, be aware that resistance may provoke a more violent response.

Avoid low-priced intra- and inter-city buses (recycled U.S. school buses); they are often attacked by armed robbers and are poorly maintained and dangerously driven. More than 100 bus drivers and passengers died in 2006 in robberies staged by holdup gangs that target public transportation, both urban and inter-city. The use of modern inter-city buses somewhat improves security and safety. There have been, however, several attacks on travelers on first-class buses on highway CA-2 near the border areas with both Mexico and El Salvador and on highways CA-1 and CA-9 near the El Salvador border and in the highlands between Quetzaltenango and Sololá. Be cautious with personal items such as backpacks, fanny packs, and passports while riding buses, because tourists' possessions are a favorite target of thieves. Foreign residents of Guatemala have special concerns. Since December 1999, when the Government of Guatemala appointed a Special Prosecutor to investigate all American citizen murders, twenty-four American citizen residents and six American citizen tourists have been murdered, and suspects have been convicted in only two cases. There have been "express" kidnappings in recent years, primarily in Guatemala City, in which a relatively small ransom that can be quickly gathered is demanded. U.S. citizens have been kidnapped in recent years. At least one incident of a random kidnapping, in which the victim was grabbed off the street in an affluent neighborhood of the city, occurred in December 2003 and resulted in a physical and sexual assault.

Pickpockets and purse-snatchers are active in all major cities and tourist sites, especially the central market and other parts of Zone 1 in Guatemala City and the city of Antigua. In a common scenario, an accomplice distracts the victim, while an assailant slashes or simply steals a bag or backpack while the victim's attention is diverted.

As in other countries, criminals also use a number of scams to steal money and possessions from tourists in Guatemala. In one popular scam, robbers place a nail in a parked vehicle's tire. The vehicle is then followed by the robbers who pose as "good Samaritans" when the tire becomes flat and the victims pull to the side of the road. While "help" is being rendered, the contents of the car are stolen, often without the knowledge of the victims. However, in some cases, the robbers have threatened the tourists with weapons. Parking areas in and around the Guatemala City International Airport are particularly prone to this crime. In another scam, victims are approached in a hotel, restaurant or other public place by an individual claiming there is some sort of problem with his or the would-be victim's automobile in the parking lot. On the way to investigate the "problem," usually in a remote or con-

cealed area near the parking lot, the robber pulls a gun on the victim demanding cash, credit cards and other valuables. A third popular scam involves various attempts to acquire a victim's ATM card and PIN number. Some sophisticated criminals have even placed boxes outside ATM kiosks that record PIN numbers when unsuspecting victims believe they must enter their PIN number to gain entry to the ATM foyer. After recording PIN numbers, robbers then steal the owner's ATM card to complete their crime. There are dozens of techniques scammers can use to rob victims of money and possessions. While most people mean no harm, always be cautious when strangers approach you for any reason or make unusual requests.

Parents adopting children in Guatemala have also been victimized in public places and at their hotels by police (or individuals dressed as police) who have threatened to arrest foster mothers and turn adoptive children over to orphanages, but released them in exchange for significant payments, often approaching $1000. Such threats have no basis in Guatemalan law, and should be immediately reported to the Embassy.

For security reasons, the Embassy does not allow U.S. government employees to stay in hotels in Zone 1 in Guatemala City and urges private travelers to avoid staying in this area Do not hail taxis on the street in Guatemala City. Use radio-dispatched taxis or taxis from major hotels instead.

The main road to Lake Atitlan via the Inter-American Highway (CA-1) and Solola is safer than the alternatives, though attacks in recent years have made traveling in a caravan highly recommended, even on the Inter-American Highway. Robbery and assault have been frequently reported on secondary roads near the lake with the highest number of incidents occurring on the RN-11 (Las Trampas road) parallel to the east side of the lake. Robbers have used mountain roads advantageously to stop buses, vans and cars in a variety of ways. Armed attacks have occurred on roads from Guatemala City to the Peten. Visitors to the Mayan ruins at Tikal are urged to fly to nearby Flores and then travel by bus or tour van to the site. Violent attacks have occurred in the Mayan ruins in the Peten, including in the Cerro Cahui Conservation Park, Yaxha, the road to and inside Tikal Park, and in the Tikal ruins. Tourist police (POLITUR) patrols inside the park have significantly reduced the violent crime incidents inside the park, but travelers should nevertheless remain in groups and on the principal trails leading to the Central Plaza and the Temple IV complex, and avoid remote areas of the park.

POLITUR (a joint police/Guatemalan Tourism Institute initiative) is present in all major tourist destinations. They should be contacted in case of any criminal incident in such areas, even if minor.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: A full range of medical care is available in Guatemala City, but medical care outside the city is limited. Guatemala's public hospitals frequently experience serious shortages of basic medicines and equipment. Care in private hospitals is generally adequate for most common illnesses and injuries, and many of the medical specialists working in them are U.S. trained and certified.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Guatemala is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Driving in Guatemala requires one's full attention, and safe drivers must take extraordinary efforts to drive defensively to avoid dangerous situations.

Traffic rules are only casually observed. Many drivers do not use their turn signals to alert other drivers. Instead, a common custom is for a driver or passenger to stick a hand out the window and wave it to indicate that they will be taking an unspecified action. Speed limits, lane markings and stop signs are frequently ignored. Passing blindly on winding and/or steep mountain roads, poorly designed surfaces, and unmarked hazards, including frequent landslides and precarious temporary highway repairs, present additional risks to motorists.

Common public transportation is by local recycled school busses, which

serve every town in the country. Criminal activity and frequent fatal accidents, however, make the low-priced inter-city buses particularly dangerous. Modern inter-city buses offer some security from highway violence, but armed attacks are increasing, showing that all buses are vulnerable.

Although city streets are lit, secondary and rural roads have little to no illumination. Driving outside of urban areas at night is dangerous and not recommended. The Inter-American Highway (CA-1) and the road from Guatemala City to the Caribbean coast (CA-9) are especially dangerous due to heavy traffic, including large trucks and trailers. There are no roadside assistance clubs, however a roadside assistance force (PROVIAL) patrols most of the major highways in the country. PROVIAL can be contacted by calling 2422-7878.

Their vehicles are equipped with basic tools and first aid supplies, and their services are free. Police patrol the major roadways and may assist travelers, but the patrols are sporadic and may be suspended due to budget restraints. For roadside assistance, travelers may call the police by dialing 120 or the fire department by dialing 122 or 123. Cellular telephone service covers most areas frequented by tourists.

Valid U.S. driver's licenses are accepted for the first 30 days of a visit, and international driving permits are accepted in Guatemala for extended stays. Guatemala's road safety authorities are the Department of Transit and the Joint Operations Center of the National Police. Drivers use the right-hand side of the road in Guatemala, and speed limits are posted (in kilometers) depending on the condition of the road. Speed limits are different in rural and urban areas, but are rarely enforced. Drivers often drive at the absolute maximum speed possible for the particular vehicle at the time. These drivers share the road with slow vehicles, some barely able to manage 20 miles per hour, creating a hazardous mix of velocities. Turning right on red is not permitted unless otherwise posted, and drivers must yield when entering a traffic circle. Seat belts must be worn in Guatemala, but there are no laws regarding the use of child safety seats. It is against the law for drivers to operate cellular phones while driving.

People found driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs are arrested and may serve jail time. In an accident resulting in injury or death, every driver involved is taken into custody and the vehicle(s) impounded until a judge determines responsibility in a re-enactment of the accident.

Visit the web site of Guatemala's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.inguat.gob.gt or via e-mail at asistur@inguat.gob.gt or info@inguat.gob.gt.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Guatemala's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Guatemala's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Guatemalan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Guatemala of items such as antiquities and other cultural property. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Guatemala in Washington or one of Guatemala's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available.

Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. Non-Guatemalan citizens who wish to marry in Guatemala are required to provide proof of identity and civil status (indicating whether they are single or divorced). Prior notice of the marriage must be given in the Diario de Centro America (Guatemala's Official Record) and any large circulation daily newspaper for fifteen days. The marriage must take place within six months of the publication of the notice.

Disaster Preparedness: Guatemala is a geologically active country. Visitors should be aware of the possibility of earthquakes at any time and the need for contingency plans.

There are also four active volcanoes. Volcanic activity, such as that of Fuego Volcano near Antigua in January 2003, and again in January 2006, has on occasion forced evacuations of nearby villages; the January-February 2000 activity of Pacaya Volcano near Guatemala City also briefly closed Guatemala City's international airport. Both the Caribbean and Pacific coasts of Guatemala are also vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms from June through November.

Mudslides and flooding during the May to November rainy season often kill dozens of people and close roads. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences.

Persons violating Guatemalan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Guatemala are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Guatemala are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Guatemala. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The latest security information is available from the Embassy, including its web site, http://guatemala.usembassy.gov.

The Consular Section is open for citizen services, including registration, from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursdays and 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Fridays, excluding U.S. and Guatemalan holidays. The second and last Friday of each month are reserved for administrative matters; therefore, routine citizen services are not provided. Emergency services are available at all times.

The U.S. Embassy is located in Guatemala City at Avenida La Reforma 7-01, Zone 10; telephone (502) 2-326-4000 during Embassy business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), or (502) 2-331-2354 for emergencies during non-business hours; fax (502) 2-332-4353; Internet web site: http://guatemala.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

Guatemala is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). The United States Government believes Guatemala has had insufficient time to implement reform legislation that would create a Convention-compliant adoption process, and as a result, Guatemala cannot meet its Convention obligations.

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services is not processing I-800A petitions because the Department of State is unable to verify, as required by Section 301(a) of the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA), that the requirements of The Hague Adoption Convention have been met in cases from Guatemala.

The Guatemalan National Council on Adoption (CNA) announced in September 2008 that CNA will not accept any new adoption cases at this time.

The halt is to enable CNA to work on establishing guidelines to use in accrediting adoption agencies and to focus on completing transition cases. More information about CNA's decision may be found on its website, http://www.cna.gob.gt.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Guatemala
Avenida Reforma 7-01, Zona 10
Guatemala City, Guatemala
Fax: 011-502-2326-4674
Email: adoptguatemala@state.gov
Website:
http://guatemala.usembassy.gov

Guatemalan Central Authority
National Council on Adoption (CNA)
Tel: 011-502-23390825/26
Fax: 011-502-23390835
Email: cna@cna.gob.gt
Website: http://www.cna.gob.gt

Embassy of Guatemala
2220 R Street, N.W.
Washington, DC. 20008
Tel: (202) 745-4952
Fax: (202) 745-1908
Email:
consul@guatemala-embassy.org

Guatemala has consulates in Chicago, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Francisco.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
Email: AskCI@state.gov
Website: http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



GUINEA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Guinea (République de Guinée)

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 245,860 sq. km. (95,000 sq. mi.), about the size of Oregon.

Cities: Capital—Conakry. Other cities—Guéckédou, Boké, Kindia, N'Zérékoré, Macenta, Mamou, Kankan, Faranah, Siguiri, Dalaba, Labe, Pita, Kamsar.

Terrain: Generally flat along the coast and mountainous in the interior. The country's four geographic regions include a narrow coastal belt; pastoral highlands (the source of West Africa's major rivers); the northern savanna; and the southeastern rain forest.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Guinean(s).

Population: (2002 census) 8,444,559, including refugees and foreign residents. Refugee population (2006 est.) 60,000 Liberians and Ivoiriens. Population of Conakry: 2 million. Population of largest prefectures—Guéckédou (487,017), Boké (366,915), Kindia (361,117), N'Zérékoré (328,347), Macenta (365,559).

Annual growth rate: (2002 census) 3.5%.

Ethnic groups: Peuhl 40%, Malinke 30%, Soussou 20%, other ethnic groups 10%.

Religions: Muslim 85%, Christian 8%, traditional beliefs 7%.

Languages: French (official), national languages.

Education: Years compulsory—8. Enrollment—primary school, 64.32% (male 78.71%, female 69.03%); secondary, 15%; and post secondary, 3%. Literacy (total population over age 15 that can read and write)—44.2% (male 58.74%, female 26.38%).

Health: (2002) Life expectancy—total population 54 years. Infant mortality rate (2002)—98/1000.

Work force: (2002, 4.5 million) Agriculture—76%; industry and commerce—18%; services—6%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: 1990; amended 2001.

Independence: October 2, 1958. Anniversary of the Second Republic, April 3, 1984.

Government branches: Executive—elected president (chief of state); prime minister (head of government); cabinet of civilian ministers. Legislative—elected National Assembly (114 seats). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: Region, prefecture, subprefecture, rural district.

Political parties: Pro-government—Party for Unity and Progress (PUP). Opposition—Rally for the Guinean People (RPG), Union for Progress and Renewal (UPR), Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), Union for Progress of Guinea (UPG), Union of Republican Forces (UFR).

Suffrage: Universal over age 18.

Budget: (2006) $642 million.

Economy

GDP: (2005 est.) $3.38 billion.

Annual economic growth rate: (2005 est.) 3.3%.

Per capita GDP: (2005 est.) $363.40.

Avg. inflation rate: (2005) 30.9%.

Natural resources: Bauxite, iron ore, diamonds, gold, water power, uranium, fisheries.

Industry: (30.9% of GDP) Types—mining, light manufacturing, construction.

Agriculture: (19.5% of GDP) Products—rice, cassava, fonio, millet, corn, coffee, cocoa, bananas, palm products, pineapples, livestock, forestry. Arable land—35%. Cultivated land—4.5%.

Trade: (45.1% of GDP) Exports (2005)—$806.6 million: bauxite, alumina, diamonds, gold, coffee, pineapples, bananas, palm products, coffee. Major markets—European Union, U.S., Commonwealth of Independent States, China, Eastern Europe, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco.

Exchange rate: (May 2006) Approximately 4833 Guinean francs=U.S. $1.
Fiscal year: January 1-December 31.

GEOGRAPHY

Guinea is located on the Atlantic Coast of West Africa and is bordered by Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. The country is divided into four geographic regions: A narrow coastal belt (Lower Guinea); the pastoral Fouta Djallon highlands (Middle Guinea); the northern savannah (Upper Guinea); and a southeastern rain-forest region (Forest Guinea). The Niger, Gambia, and Senegal Rivers are among the 22 West African rivers that have their origins in Guinea. The coastal region of Guinea and most of the inland have a tropical climate, with a rainy season lasting from April to November, relatively high and uniform temperatures, and high humidity. Conakry's year-round average high is 29ºC (85ºF), and the low is 23ºC (74ºF); its average annual rainfall is 430 centimeters (169 inches). Sahelian Upper Guinea has a shorter rainy season and greater daily temperature variations.

PEOPLE

Guinea has four main ethnic groups:

- Peuhl (Foula or Foulani), who inhabit the mountainous Fouta Djallon;
- Malinke (or Mandingo), in the savannah and forest regions;
- Soussous in the coastal areas; and
- Several small groups (Gerzé, Toma, etc.) in the forest region.

West Africans make up the largest non-Guinean population. Non-Africans total about 10,000 (mostly Lebanese, French, and other Europeans). Seven national languages are used extensively; major written languages are French, Peuhl, and Arabic.

HISTORY

The area occupied by Guinea today was included in several large West African political groupings, including the Ghana, Mali, and Songhai empires, at various times from the 10th to the 15th century, when the region came into contact with European commerce. Guinea's colonial period began with French military penetration into the area in the mid-19th century. French domination was assured by the defeat in 1898 of the armies of Almamy Samory Touré, warlord and leader of Malinke descent, which gave France control of what today is Guinea and adjacent areas.

France negotiated Guinea's present boundaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the British for Sierra Leone, the Portuguese for their Guinea colony (now Guinea-Bissau), and the Liberia. Under the French, the country formed the Territory of Guinea within French West Africa, administered by a governor general resident in Dakar. Lieutenant governors administered the individual colonies, including Guinea.

Led by Ahmed Sékou Touré, head of the Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG), which won 56 of 60 seats in 1957 territorial elections, the people of Guinea in a September 1958 plebiscite overwhelmingly rejected membership in the proposed French Community. The French withdrew quickly, and on October 2, 1958, Guinea proclaimed itself a sovereign and independent republic, with Sékou Touré as President.

Under Touré, Guinea became a one-party dictatorship, with a closed, socialized economy and no tolerance for human rights, free expression, or political opposition, which was ruthlessly suppressed. Originally credited for his advocacy of cross-ethnic nationalism, Touré gradually came to rely on his own Malinke ethnic group to fill positions in the party and government. Alleging plots and conspiracies against him at home and abroad, Touré's regime targeted real and imagined opponents, imprisoning many thousands in Soviet-style prison gulags, where hundreds perished. The regime's repression drove more than a million Guineans into exile, and Touré's paranoia ruined relations with foreign nations, including neighboring African states, increasing Guinea's isolation and further devastating its economy.

Sékou Touré and the PDG remained in power until his death on April 3, 1984. A military junta—the Military Committee of National Recovery (CMRN)—headed by then-Lt. Col. Lansana Conte, seized power just one week after the death of Sékou Touré. The CMRN immediately abolished the constitution, the sole political party (PDG) and its mass youth and women's organizations, and announced the establishment of the Second Republic. In lieu of a constitution, the government was initially based on ordinances, decrees, and decisions issued by the president and various ministers.

Political parties were proscribed. The new government also released all prisoners and declared the protection of human rights as one of its primary objectives. It reorganized the judicial system and decentralized the administration. The CMRN also announced its intention to liberalize the economy, promote private enterprise, and encourage foreign investment in order to develop the country's rich natural resources.

The CMRN formed a transitional parliament, the "Transitional Council for National Recovery" (CTRN), which created a new constitution (La Loi Fundamental) and Supreme Court in 1990. The country's first multi-party presidential election took place in 1993. These elections were marred by irregularities and lack of transparency on the part of the government. Legislative and municipal elections were held in 1995. Conte's ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP) won 76 of 114 seats in the National Assembly, amid opposition claims of irregularities and government tampering. The new National Assembly held its first session in October 1995.



Several thousand malcontent troops mutinied in Conakry in February 1996, destroying the presidential offices and killing several dozen civilians. Mid-level officers attempted, unsuccessfully, to turn the rebellion into a coup d'etat. The Government of Guinea made hundreds of arrests in connection to the mutiny, and put 98 soldiers and civilians on trial in 1998.

In mid-1996, in response to the coup attempt and a faltering economy, President Conté appointed a new government as part of a flurry of reform activity. He selected Sidya Touré, former chief of staff for the Prime Minster of the Cote d'Ivoire, as Prime Minister, and appointed other technically minded ministers. Touré was charged with coordinating all government action, taking charge of leadership and management, as well as economic planning and finance functions. In early 1997, Conté shifted many of the financial responsibilities to a newly named Minister of Budget and Finance.

In December 1998, Conté was reelected to another 5-year term in a flawed election that was, nevertheless, an improvement over 1993. Following his reelection and the improvement of economic conditions through 1999, Conté reversed direction, making wholesale and regressive changes to his cabinet. He replaced many technocrats and members of the Guinean Diaspora that had previously held important positions with "homegrown" ministers, particularly from his own Soussou ethnic group. These changes led to increased cronyism, corruption, and a retrenchment on economic and political reforms.

Beginning in September 2000, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel army, backed by Liberian Presi-

dent Charles Taylor, commenced large-scale attacks into Guinea from Sierra Leone and Liberia. The RUF, known for their brutal tactics in the near decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone, operated with financial and material support from the Liberian Government and its allies. These attacks destroyed the town of Gueckedou as well as a number of villages, causing large-scale damage and the displacement of tens of thousands of Guineans from their homes. The attacks also forced the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to relocate many of the 200,000 Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees residing in Guinea. As a result of the attacks, legislative elections scheduled for 2000 were postponed.

After the initial attacks in September 2000, President Conté, in a radio address, accused Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees living in the country of fomenting war against the government. Soldiers, police, and civilian militia groups rounded up thousands of refugees, some of whom they beat and raped. Approximately 3,000 refugees were detained, although most were released by year's end.

In November 2001, a nationwide referendum, which some observers believe was flawed, amended the constitution to permit the president to run for an unlimited number of terms, and to extend the presidential term from 5 to 7 years. The country's second legislative election, originally scheduled for 2000, was held in June 2002. President Conté's Party of Unity and Progress (PUP) and associated parties won 91 of the 114 seats. Most major opposition parties boycotted the legislative elections, objecting to inequities in the existing electoral system.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Guinea is a constitutional republic in which effective power is concentrated in a strong presidency. Government administration is carried out at several levels; in descending order, they are: eight regions, 33 prefectures, over 100 subprefectures, and many districts (known as communes in Conakry and other large cities, and villages or "quartiers" in the interior). District-level leaders are elected; the president appoints officials to all other levels of the highly centralized administration. The president governs Guinea with the assistance of an appointed council of civilian ministers typically led by a prime minister.

The failing health of President Conté has been a cause of continuing concern. In late 2003, Conté fell ill during a trip to Japan and had to receive medical treatment in Morocco. However, in December 2003 Conté easily won a third presidential term against a single, relatively unknown candidate after the opposition parties boycotted the elections. On January 19, 2005, President Conte's motorcade was fired upon by unknown assailants. Two bodyguards were wounded but the President was not harmed. President Conté was medically evacuated twice in 2006 to receive emergency treatment in Geneva, Switzerland. However, in a late 2006 interview Conté stated that despite his health he would remain in office until his term ended in 2010.

In December 2005 Guinea held nation-wide elections for local and rural councils. In preparation for the election the government maintained an open dialogue with the opposition parties, 16 of which participated in the elections. Opposition leaders were allowed to campaign freely, and were allowed equal access to government-run media. The ruling PUP won 31 of 38 municipalities and 241 of 303 local councils. Though viewed as flawed, the 2005 elections were much improved over previous elections due to the use of transparent ballot boxes and other reforms. Legislative elections previously scheduled for June 2007 have been repeatedly delayed. Currently elections are expected in late 2008.

In late February and early March 2006, Guinea's labor union alliance launched a historic general strike demanding wage increases and union participation in Guinea's economic and social policy. Though the unions only won a modest salary increases, the strike established them as a credible, unified, and powerful force in Guinea. Due in part to the government's inability to control Guinea's rising inflation, the trade unions launched a second general strike in June 2006. The second general strike was marked by more intense and widespread violence, resulting in the deaths of several protesters at the hands of security forces. The unions called for a third round of national strikes in January 2007, after President Conté personally intervened to save a close associate from charges of corruption.

Whereas the unions' demands during the March and June 2006 strikes were primarily economic, the January 2007 strike began with a political tone. In addition to their economic agenda for improved wages and retirement benefits, the unions called for Conté's retirement and the reinstatement of embezzlement charges against two of Conté's allies. After President Conté dismissed the unions' demands, protesters began barricading roads, throwing rocks, burning tires, and skirmishing with police. Violence throughout Guinea peaked on January 22 when several thousand ordinary Guineans poured into the streets calling for change. Guinean security forces and the military's "red beret" presidential guard reacted by opening fire on the peaceful crowds and killing dozens in Conakry and throughout Guinea.

On January 27, 2007, unions, employers associations, and the government entered a tripartite agreement to suspend the strike. President Conté agreed to name a new "consensus" prime minister, with delegated executive powers. For the first time, the new prime minister of Guinea would carry the title of "head of government" and exercise certain powers previously held by the president of the republic. The government also agreed to new price controls for rice and fuel, as well a one-year ban on the exportation of food and fuel. However, President Conté's February 9

appointment of a longtime associate, Eugène Camara, as Guinea's new prime minister sparked another wave of violence and protests. In an attempt to quell the violence, on February 12 President Conté declared a "state of siege," which conferred broad powers on the military, and implemented a strict curfew. According to media reports, the following days saw military and police forces scour Conakry and towns in the hinterlands where they committed serious human rights abuses.

When Guinea's National Assembly rejected Conté's effort to extend the "state of siege," it became clear that the popular protests had widespread support, even among leaders of Conté's own ruling party. Soon after, an ECOWAS delegation led by former Nigerian President Babangida announced that President Conté had agreed to name a new "consensus" prime minister in consultations with the unions and civil society. Lansana Kouyaté arrived in Conakry on February 27, 2007, just hours after being announced as the new Prime Minister and head of the government. During his premiership, Kouyaté faced constant speculation that the president and his associates opposed his reform efforts. After 15 months in office, President Conté replaced Kouyaté with Ahmed Tidiane Souaré, a former minister of mines from a previous cabinet.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Lansana CONTE, Gen.**
Prime Min.: **Ahmed Tidiane SOUARE**
Min. of Admin. Reform & Public Service: **Makale TRAORE**
Min. of Agriculture: **Mahmoud CAMARA**
Min. of Commerce & Competitiveness: **Yacine BARRY**
Min. of Communication & New Information Technologies: **Tibou CAMARA**
Min. of Culture, Arts, & Leisure: **Aly Gilbert IFONO**
Min. of Decentralization & Local Development: **Ibrahima DIAKITE**
Min. of Defense: **Almamy Kabele CAMARA**
Min. of Development & the Environment: **Papa Koly KOUROUMA**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Ousmane DORE**
Min. of Energy & Water: **Ansoumane CONDE**
Min. of Fishing & Aquaculture: **Youssouf SYLLA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Amadou Lamarana BAH**
Min. of Health & Public Hygiene: **Mariame BEA VOUGI**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Gomou Nianga KOMATA**
Min. of Industrial Development, Small- & Medium-Sized Enterprises, & Handicraft: **Youssouf DIALLO**
Min. of Justice & Keeper of the Seals: **Bachir TOURE**
Min. of Livestock Breeding & the Protection of Animals: **El Hadj Diao KANTE**
Min. of Mines & Geology: **Ahmad KANTE**
Min. of National Reconciliation, Solidarity, & Institutional Relations: **Ahmadou Oury BAH**
Min. in Charge of Overseas Guineans & African Integration: **Harouna BERETE**
Min. of Planning & Cooperation: **Djigui CAMARA**
Min. of Pre-University & Civic Education: **Ousmane SOUARE**
Min. of Public Works: **Amadou Poredaka DIALLO**
Min. of Security & Civil Protection: **Mohamed DAMBA**
Min. of Social, Women's, & Children's Affairs: **Germaine MANGUE**
Min. of State Control & Good Governance: **Souleymane CISSE**
Min. of Technical Education & Vocational Training: **Sanoussi KABA**
Min. of Territorial Admin. & Political Affairs: **Sekouba BANGOURA**
Min. of Tourism & the Promotion of Hotels: **Bah Mairnouna DIALLO**
Min. of Transportation: **Cheick TOURE**
Min. of Urban Planning & Housing: **Saidouba CAMARA**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Issa CONDE**
Min. of Youth Employment: **Ahmadou DIALLO**
Min. Sec. Gen. of the Presidency: **Sam Mamady SOUMAH**
Sec. Gen. of the Govt.: **Oury Bailo BAH**
Sec. Gen. of Religious Affairs: **Mahmoud Cherif NABANIOU**
Governor, Central Bank: **Daouda BANGOURA**
Ambassador to the US: **Mory Karamoko KABA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Alpha Ibrahima SOW**

Guinea maintains an embassy in the United States at 2112 Leroy Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-483-9420) and a mission to the United Nations at 140 E. 39th St., New York, NY 10016 (tel. 212-687-8115/16/17).

ECONOMY

Richly endowed with minerals, Guinea possesses over 25 billion metric tons (MT) of bauxite—and perhaps up to one half of the world's reserves. In addition, Guinea's mineral wealth includes more than 4 billion tons of high-grade iron ore, significant diamond and gold deposits, and undetermined quantities of uranium. Guinea has considerable potential for growth in the agricultural and fishing sectors. Soil, water, and climatic conditions provide opportunities for large-scale irrigated farming and agro industry. Possibilities for investment and commercial activities exist in all these areas, but Guinea's poorly developed infrastructure and rampant corruption continue to present obstacles to large-scale investment projects.

Joint venture bauxite mining and alumina operations in northwest Guinea historically provide about 80% of Guinea's foreign exchange. The Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinea (CBG) is the main player in the bauxite industry. CBG is a joint venture, in which 49% of the shares are owned by the Guinean Government and 51% by an international consortium led by Alcoa and Alcan. CBG exports about 14 million metric tons of high-grade bauxite every year. The Compagnie des Bauxites de Kindia (CBK), a joint venture between the Government of Guinea and Russki Alumina, produces some 2.5 million MT annually, nearly all of which is exported to Russia and Eastern Europe. Dian Dian, a Guinean/Ukrainian joint bauxite venture, has a projected production rate of 1 million MT per year, but is not expected to begin operations for several years. The Alumina Compagnie de Guinée (ACG), which took over the former Friguia Consortium, produced about

2.4 million tons of bauxite in 2004, which is used as raw material for its alumina refinery. The refinery supplies about 750,000 MT of alumina for export to world markets. Both Global Alumina and Alcoa-Alcan have signed conventions with the Government of Guinea to build large alumina refineries with a combined capacity of about 4 million MT per year.

Diamonds and gold also are mined and exported on a large scale. AREDOR, a joint diamond-mining venture between the Guinean Government (50%) and an Australian, British, and Swiss consortium, began production in 1984 and mined diamonds that are 90% gem quality. Production stopped from 1993 until 1996, when First City Mining of Canada purchased the international portion of the consortium. By far, most diamonds are mined artisanally. The largest gold mining operation in Guinea is a joint venture between the government and Ashanti Gold Fields of Ghana. SMD also has a large gold mining facility in Lero near the Malian border. Other concession agreements have been signed for iron ore, but these projects are still awaiting preliminary exploration and financing results.

The Guinean Government adopted policies in the 1990s to return commercial activity to the private sector, promote investment, reduce the role of the state in the economy, and improve the administrative and judicial framework. Guinea has the potential to develop, if the government carries out its announced policy reforms, and if the private sector responds appropriately. So far, corruption and favoritism, lack of long-term political stability, and lack of a transparent budgeting process continue to dampen foreign investor interest in major projects in Guinea.

Reforms since 1985 include eliminating restrictions on agriculture and foreign trade, liquidation of some parastatals, the creation of a realistic exchange rate, increased spending on education, and cutting the government bureaucracy. In July 1996, President Lansana Conté appointed a new government, which promised major economic reforms, including financial and judicial reform, rationalization of public expenditures, and improved government revenue collection. Under 1996 and 1998 International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank agreements, Guinea continued fiscal reforms and privatizations, and shifted governmental expenditures and internal reforms to the education, health, infrastructure, banking, and justice sectors. Cabinet changes in 1999 as well increasing corruption, economic mismanagement, and excessive government spending combined to slow the momentum for economic reform. The informal sector continues to be a major contributor to the economy.

The government revised the private investment code in 1998 to stimulate economic activity in the spirit of free enterprise. The code does not discriminate between foreigners and nationals and provides for repatriation of profits. While the code restricts development of Guinea's hydraulic resources to projects in which Guineans have majority shareholdings and management control, it does contain a clause permitting negotiations of more favorable conditions for investors in specific agreements. Foreign investments outside Conakry are entitled to more favorable benefits. A national investment commission has been formed to review all investment proposals. The United States and Guinea have signed an investment guarantee agreement that offers political risk insurance to American investors through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). In addition, Guinea has inaugurated an arbitration court system, which allows for the quick resolution of commercial disputes.

Until June 2001, private operators managed the production, distribution, and fee-collection operations of water and electricity under performance-based contracts with the Government of Guinea. However, both utilities are plagued by inefficiency and corruption. Foreign private investors in these operations departed the country in frustration.

In 2002, the IMF suspended Guinea's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) because the government failed to meet key performance criteria. In reviews of the PRGF, the World Bank noted that Guinea had met its spending goals in targeted social priority sectors. However, spending in other areas, primarily defense, contributed to a significant fiscal deficit. The loss of IMF funds forced the government to finance its debts through Central Bank advances. The pursuit of unsound economic policies has resulted in imbalances that are proving hard to correct.

Under then-Prime Minister Diallo, the government began a rigorous reform agenda in December 2004 designed to return Guinea to a PRGF with the IMF. Exchange rates have been allowed to float, price controls on gasoline have been loosened, and government spending has been reduced while tax collection has been improved. These reforms have not slowed down inflation, which hit 27% in 2004 and 30% in 2005. Depreciation is also a concern. The Guinea franc was trading at 2550 to the dollar in January 2005. It hit 5554 to the dollar by October 2006. Despite the opening in 2005 of a new road connecting Guinea and Mali, most major roadways connecting the country's trade centers remain in poor repair, slowing the delivery of goods to local markets. Electricity and water shortages are frequent and sustained, and many businesses are forced to use expensive power generators and fuel to stay open. Even though there are many problems plaguing Guinea's economy, not all foreign investors are reluctant to come to Guinea. Global Alumina's proposed alumina refinery has a price tag above $2 billion. Alcoa and Alcan are proposing a slightly smaller refinery worth about $1.5 billion. Taken together, they represent the largest private investment in sub-Saharan Africa since the Chad-Cameroun oil pipeline.

DEFENSE

Guinea's armed forces are divided into four branches—army, navy, air force, and gendarmerie—whose chiefs report to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The 10,000-member army is the largest of the four services. The navy has about 900 personnel and operates several small patrol craft and barges. Air force personnel total about 700; its equipment includes several Russian-supplied fighter planes and transport planes. Several thousand gendarmes are responsible for internal security.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Guinea's relations with other countries, including with her West African neighbors, have improved steadily since 1985. Guinea reestablished relations with France and Germany in 1975, and with neighboring Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal in 1978. Guinea has been active in efforts toward regional integration and cooperation, especially regarding the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) and the Economic Organization of West African States (ECOWAS). Guinea takes its role in a variety of international organizations seriously and participates actively in their deliberations and decisions. Guinea has participated in both diplomatic and military efforts to resolve conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau, and contributed contingents of troops to peacekeeping operations in all three countries as part of ECOMOG, the Military Observer Group of ECOWAS. Guinea has offered asylum to more than 700,000 Liberian, Sierra Leonean, and Bissauan refugees since 1990, despite the economic and environmental costs involved.

The civil wars that engulfed Liberia and then Sierra Leone during the 1990s negatively affected relations between Guinea and these two fellow Mano River Union member countries. Guinea and Liberia accused each other of supporting opposition dissidents, and in late 2000 and early 2001, Guinean dissidents backed by the Liberian government and RUF rebels from Sierra Leone brutally attacked Guinea. These attacks caused over 1,000 Guinean deaths and displaced more than 100,000 Guineans. The attacks led to Guinea's support for the LURD (Liberians United For Reconciliation and Democracy) rebels in their attacks against the Liberian government of Charles Taylor. Taylor's departure for exile in August 2003 and the establishment of a new government in Liberia have led to a much improved relationship between the two countries.

Guinea belongs to the UN and most of its specialized related agencies, the African Union, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), African Development Bank (AFDB), Niger River Basin (NRB), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Mano River Union (MRU), Gambia River Basin Organization (OMVG), and the Nonaligned Movement (NAM).

U.S.-GUINEAN RELATIONS

The United States maintains close relations with Guinea. U.S. policy seeks to encourage Guinea's democratic reforms, its positive contribution to regional stability, and sustainable economic and social development. The U.S. also seeks to promote increased U.S. private investment in Guinea's emerging economy. The U.S. Mission in Guinea is composed of five agencies—Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Peace Corps, the Treasury Department, and the Department of Defense. In addition to providing the full range of diplomatic functions, the U.S. Mission also manages a military assistance program that provided nearly $331,000 for military education, professionalization, and language training programs.

USAID Guinea is now one of only five sustainable development missions in West Africa, with current core program areas in primary education, family health, democracy and governance, and natural resources management. After a temporary suspension due to nationwide political unrest in early 2007, the Peace Corps program in Guinea resumed operations at the end of July. Prior to the suspension, Peace Corps had more than 100 volunteers throughout the country, and the program is gradually increasing its numbers again. Volunteers work in four project areas: secondary education, environment/agro-forestry, public health and HIV/AIDS prevention, and small enterprise development. Guinea has also had a strong Crisis Corps program through the last few years.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Donna L. Smith
AMB OMS:	Timothy W. Markley
ECO:	Kim H. Jordan
FM:	Philip C. Steinhauser
MGT:	Jason A. Brenden
POL/ECO:	Shannon N. Cazeau
AMB:	Phillip Carter III
CON:	John P. Marietti
DCM:	Kent C. Brokenshire
PAO:	Andrew J. Mclean
COM:	Vacant
GSO:	Robin S. Clune
RSO:	Brian K. Wood
AFSA:	Vacant
AID:	Clifford Brown
CLO:	Denee R. Smith
DAO:	Maj. Jason M. Hatch
EEO:	Kim C. Crawford
FMO:	Kevin D. Lewis
ICASS Chair:	Andrew J. Mclean
IMO:	Miller I. Vinson
IRS:	Kathy Beck–Resident In Paris
ISSO:	Mike L. Bostick
State ICASS:	Andrew J. Mclean

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 15, 2008

Country Description: Guinea is a developing country in western Africa, with minimal facilities for tourism. Travelers who plan to stay in Conakry, the capital, should make reservations well in advance. French is the official language; Pular, Malinké and Soussou are also widely spoken.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa, international vaccination record (WHO card), and current yellow fever vaccination are required. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of the Republic of Guinea, 2112 Leroy Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 986-4300, fax (202) 478-3010. The Guinean embassy does not maintain a current website. Overseas, inquiries should be made to the nearest Guinean embassy or consulate. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Guinean embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: Since early 2008, there has been a constant threat of violent strikes and demonstrations in Guinea. The price of gasoline increased by more than 60 percent in April 2008, squeezing already economically hard-pressed Guineans and increasing tension in the country. Parliamentary elections scheduled for late 2008 could result in violence.

While U.S. citizens have not been targeted in past outbreaks of violence, being in the wrong place at the wrong time can be very dangerous. During periods of civil unrest, public services such as transportation and medical care, as well as availability of goods and services, can be affected. During many demonstrations, crowds of people gather and burn tires, create roadblocks, and damage vehicles by throwing rocks and bricks. The military has also been known to demonstrate and incite unrest due to their grievances with the government. Because of the potential for violence, U.S. citizens should avoid large crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations. They should also avoid sensitive government installations, including the Presidential Palace, official government buildings, and military bases.

U.S. citizens should maintain security awareness at all times. There are no known terrorist groups officially operating in the country. Most border crossings are controlled jointly by Guinean armed forces, gendarmes, police and immigration officials. A long land frontier and the military's lack of physical and monetary resources, however, mean that borders are lightly patrolled. U.S. citizens considering travel to the border regions with Liberia, Sierra Leone or Côte d'Ivoire should consult the latest Travel Warnings and Country Specific Information for those countries (available at the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Web site at http://travel.state.gov) and contact the U.S. Embassy in Conakry for the latest travel and security information. Crossing land borders requires visas and complete paperwork, and can be difficult.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: In Conakry, as in many large cities, crime is a fact of daily life. Residential and street crime is very common. Sentiments toward Americans in Guinea are generally positive, but criminals regularly target foreigners, including Americans, because they are perceived as lucrative targets. Nonviolent and violent crimes are a problem. The majority of nonviolent crime involves acts of pick pocketing and purse snatching, while armed robbery, muggings, and assaults are the most common violent crimes. In spite of good intentions, the police have been unable to prevent the rapid escalation of crime. There have also been cases of direct and indirect requests for bribes from the police and military officials.

Criminals particularly target visitors at the airport, in the traditional markets, and near hotels and restaurants frequented by foreigners. Visitors should avoid unsolicited offers of assistance at the airport and hotels because such offers often mask an intention to steal luggage, purses, or wallets. Travelers should arrange for hotel personnel, family members, or business contacts to meet them at the airport to reduce their vulnerability to these crimes of opportunity.

Commercial scams and disputes with local business partners can create legal difficulties for U.S. citizens because corruption is widespread in Guinea. Business routinely turns on bribes rather than the law, and enforcement of the law is irregular and inefficient. The U.S. Embassy has extremely limited recourse in assisting Americans who are victims of illegal business deals.

Business fraud is rampant and the targets are usually foreigners, including Americans. Schemes previously associated exclusively with Nigeria are now prevalent throughout West Africa, including Guinea, and pose a danger of severe financial loss. Typically these scams begin with the receipt of an unsolicited communication (usually e-mails) from strangers who promise quick financial gain, often by transferring large sums of money or valuables out of the country, but then require a series of "advance fees" to be paid—such as fees for legal documents or taxes—to finalize the release of the transferred funds. Of course, the final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scam is simply to collect the advance fees. A common variation is the scammer's claim to be a refugee or émigré of a prominent West African family, or a relative of a present or former political leader who needs assistance in transferring large sums of cash. Still other variations appear to be legiti-

mate business deals that require advance payments on contracts. Sometimes victims are convinced to provide bank account and credit card information and financial authorization that drains their accounts, incurs large debts against their credit, and takes their life savings.

The best way to avoid becoming a victim of advance-fee fraud is common sense—if a proposition looks too good to be true, it probably is. You should carefully check and research any unsolicited business proposal before committing any funds, providing any goods or services, and undertaking any travel. A good clue to a scam is the phone number given to the victim; legitimate businesses and offices provide fixed line numbers, while scams typically use only cell phones. It is virtually impossible to recover money lost through these scams.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are poorly equipped and extremely limited both in the capital city and throughout Guinea. Medicines are in short supply, sterility of equipment should not be assumed, and treatment is frequently unreliable. Some private medical facilities provide a better range of treatment options than public facilities but are still well below global standards. There are no ambulance or emergency rescue services in Guinea and trauma care is extremely limited. Water in Guinea is presumed contaminated, so you should use only bottled or distilled water for drinking. Malaria is a serious risk to travelers in Guinea. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC travelers' health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Guinea. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Guinea is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Drivers in Guinea tend to be poorly trained and routinely ignore road safety rules. Guinea's road network, paved and unpaved, is underdeveloped and unsafe. Roads and vehicles are poorly maintained, road signs are insufficient, and roads and vehicles are frequently unlit. Livestock and pedestrians create constant road hazards and make nighttime travel inadvisable. Guinea has many roadblocks set up by the police or the military, making inter- and intra-city travel difficult from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. During the rainy season (July through September), flash floods make some roads temporarily impassable. There is also a notable increase in banditry along the roadways between towns and upcountry during the rainy season in the hours of darkness. Roadside assistance is not available in Guinea.

Guinea has no public transportation. Taxis, including small cars and larger vans, are often poorly maintained and over-crowded. Taxis frequently stop and start without regard to other vehicles, making driving hazardous. Rental vehicles, with drivers, are available from agencies at major hotels in Conakry.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Guinea, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Guinea's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Guinean customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the temporary import or export of items such as firearms, antiquities, medications, business equipment, and ivory. You should contact the Embassy of Guinea in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements. The local currency is the Guinean franc (FG). Travelers may not have more than 100,000 FG (currently about $23.00 or more than $5,000 when they depart Guinea. Guinea has a cash economy. ATMs are not available, and traveler's checks are accepted only at some banks and hotels. Credit cards are accepted at some larger hotels in Conakry, but should be used only at reputable hotels and banks. Cash advances on Visa credit cards are available at various branches of BICIGUI, a local bank. Inter-bank fund transfers are possible at BICIGUI branches but can be diffi-

cult and expensive. Money transfers from the U.S. have worked successfully in the past. Western Union has several offices in Conakry, and Moneygram has an office downtown. Visitors should restrict photography to private gatherings and should obtain explicit permission from the Guinean government before photographing military and transportation facilities, government buildings, or public works. Photographing without permission in any public area may provoke a response from security personnel or a dangerous confrontation with people who find being photographed offensive.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Guinean laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Guinea are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Guinea are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Guinea. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on the Transversale No. 2, Centre Administratif de Koloma opposite the New Radio Station in Ratoma, Conakry, Guinea; telephone +224-30-42-08-61 through 68 or fax +224-30-42-08-71; web site: http://conakry.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

General: The following is a guide for U.S. citizens who are interested in adopting a child in Guinea and applying for an immigrant visa for the child to come to the United States. This process involves complex Guinean and U.S. legal requirements. U.S. consular officers give each petition careful consideration on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the legal requirements of both countries have been met, for the protection of the prospective adoptive parent(s), the biological parents(s) and the child. Interested U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to contact U.S. consular officials in Dakar, Senegal before formalizing an adoption agreement to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed which will make it possible for the Embassy to issue a U.S. immigrant visa for the child.

Availability of Children for Adoption: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics reflect that four immigrant visas have been issued to Guinean orphans in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: Adoption petitions are submitted to a Tribunal of First Instance or a Justice of the Peace. The Court of Appeals is the second resort. The Ministry of Justice grants their authority.

Adoption Procedures: Those seeking to adopt should retain an attorney who is a member of the Guinean bar association. There are two types of adoptions in Guinea—perfect adoption and simple adoption. Both are open to Guineans and non-Guineans.

A perfect adoption is irrevocable and should be advantageous to the child. In perfect adoptions, the adoptive relationship takes precedence over any biological relationship. In a simple adoption, the child may continue to have ties to his/her biological family and it is revocable. In both kinds of adoption, if the parents are alive, their consent is required. If both parents are dead, consent needs to be granted by the remaining family members (le Conseil famille). The initial request is made to the Tribunal of First Instance or a Justice of the Peace. The judgement is given after inquiry and debate in court chambers.

Age and Civil Status Requirements: Anyone at least 35 years old may adopt another person if the difference in age between the two is at least 15 years. A couple may seek to adopt a minor child if one of the adopters is at least 35 years old and without children. Those seeking to adopt should not have a serious medical condition.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies or groups that specialize in adoption in Guinea. The Embassy maintains a list of numerous attorneys practicing in Guinea.

Doctors: The U.S. Embassy in Conakry maintains current lists of doctors and sources for medicines, should either you or your child experience health problems while in Guinea

Documentary Requirements: The final request for adoption should include a copy of the child's birth certificate, identification for the prospective parents and the child, written justification for the adoption and a "certificate of domicile" verifying the potential prospective parent's place of residence.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: A Guinea child, even if adopted by an American citizen, must obtain an immigrant visa before he or she can enter the U.S. as a lawful permanent resident. Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

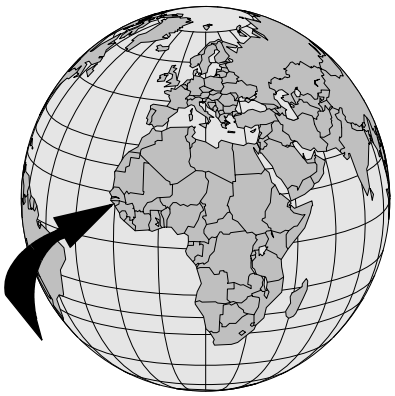
Guinea Embassy
2112 Leroy Place NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: 202-483-9420
Fax: 202-483-8688.

U.S. Embassy
Street address:
2nd Blvd and 9th Ave
Kaloum, Conakry

Mailing Address:
American Embassy—BP 603
Conakry, Guinea
Tel: (224) 41-15-20/1/3

Questions: Specific questions regarding adoption in Guinea may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Conakry.

You may also contact the Office of Children's Issues, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-2818, telephone 1-888-407-4747 with specific questions.



GUINEA-BISSAU

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Guinea-Bissau

PROFILE

Geography

Area: (including Bijagos Archipelago) 36,125 sq. km., about the size of Maryland.

Cities: Capital—Bissau. Other cities—Bafata, Gabu, Canchungo, Farim, Cacheu. Regions: Oio, Tombali, Cacheu, Bolama, Quinara, Biombo, Bafata, Gabu.

Terrain: Coastal plain; savanna in the east.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Bissau-Guinean(s).

Population: (2006) 1,700,000.

Population growth rate: (2005) 3%.

Ethnic groups: Balanta 30%, Fula 20%, Manjaca 14%, Mandinga 13%, Papel 7%, others 16%.

Religions: Indigenous beliefs 50%, Muslim 45%, Christian 5%.

Languages: Portuguese (official), Creole, French, many indigenous languages: Balanta-Kentohe 26%; Pulaar 18%; Mandjak 12%; Mandinka 11%; Pepel 9%; Biafada 3%; Mancanha 3%; Bidyogo 2%; Ejamat 2%; Mansoanka 1%; Bainoukgunyuno 1%; Nalu 1%; Soninke 1%; Badjara 1%; Bayote 0,5%; Kobiana 0,04%; Cassanga 0,04%, Basary 0, 03%.

Education: Years compulsory—4. Literacy (2005)—39.6% of adults.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2005)—200 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2005)—45.8.

Work force: (480,000) Agriculture—85%; industry, services, and commerce—13%; government—2%.

Government

Type: Republic, multi-party since 1991.

Independence: September 24, 1973 (proclaimed unilaterally); September 10, 1974 (de jure from Portugal).

Constitution: Adopted 1984. The National Assembly adopted a new constitution in 2001, but it was neither promulgated nor vetoed by the President.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government) and Council of State, ministers and secretaries of state. Legislature—National Popular Assembly (ANP), 100 members directly elected in 2004. Judicial—Supreme Court and lower courts.

Political subdivisions: Autonomous sector of Bissau and eight regions.

Political parties: In the March 2004 parliamentary elections, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) won 45 seats; the Social Renovation Party (PRS) won 35 seats; and the United Social Democratic Party (PUSD) won 17 seats. In addition to these three major parties, there are numerous other political parties.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $386.8 million (est.).

Annual growth rate: (2007) 3.7%.

GDP per capita PPP: (2005) $600 (est.).

Natural resources: Fish and timber. Bauxite and phosphate deposits are not exploited; offshore petroleum.

Agriculture: Products—cashews, tropical fruits, rice, peanuts, cotton, palm oil. Arable land—11%. Forested—38%.

Industry: Very little industrial capacity remains following the 1998 internal conflict. The cashew processing industry is nascent.

Trade: Exports—$110 million (f.o.b., 2006): cashews ($66 million, 2006), fish and shrimp ($1 million, 2006). Major markets (2006)—India 72.4%, Nigeria 17.2%, Ecuador 4.1%, Italy 1.4%, and South Korea 1.3%. Imports—$28 million (f.o.b., 2006): food ($49 million, 2005), fuel and energy ($20 million, 2006), capital goods ($8 million, 2006). Major suppliers (2006)—Senegal 22.6%, Portugal 17.7%, Italy 12.2%, Pakistan 4.3%, and Cote d'Ivoire 3.2%.

PEOPLE

The population of Guinea-Bissau is ethnically diverse with distinct languages, customs, and social structures. Most people are farmers, with traditional religious beliefs (animism); 45% are Muslim, principally Fula and Mandinka speakers concentrated in the north and northeast. Other important groups are the Balanta and Papel, living in the southern coastal regions, and the Manjaco and Mancanha, occupying the central and northern coastal areas.

HISTORY

The rivers of Guinea and the islands of Cape Verde were among the first areas in Africa explored by the Portuguese in the 15th century. Portugal claimed Portuguese Guinea in 1446, but few trading posts were established before 1600. In 1630, a "captaincy-general" of Portuguese Guinea was established to administer the territory. With the cooperation of some local tribes, the Portuguese entered the slave trade and exported large numbers of Africans to the Western Hemisphere via the Cape Verde Islands. Cacheu became one of the major slave centers, and a small fort still stands in the town. The slave trade declined in the 19th century, and Bissau, originally founded as a military and slave-trading center in 1765, grew to become the major commercial center.

Portuguese conquest and consolidation of the interior did not begin until the latter half of the 19th century. Portugal lost part of Guinea to French West Africa, including the center of earlier Portuguese commercial interest, the Casamance River region. A dispute with Great Britain over the island of Bolama was settled in Portugal's favor with the involvement of U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant.

Before World War I, Portuguese forces, with some assistance from the Muslim population, subdued animist tribes and eventually established the territory's borders. The interior of Portuguese Guinea was brought under control after more than 30 years of fighting; final subjugation of the Bijagos Islands did not occur until 1936. The administrative capital was moved from Bolama to Bissau in 1941, and in 1952, by constitutional amendment, the colony of Portuguese Guinea became an overseas province of Portugal.

In 1956, Amilcar Cabral and Raphael Barbosa organized the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) clandestinely. The PAIGC moved its headquarters to Conakry, Guinea, in 1960 and started an armed rebellion against the Portuguese in 1961. Despite the presence of Portuguese troops, which grew to more than 35,000, the PAIGC steadily expanded its influence until, by 1968, it controlled most of the country.

It established civilian rule in the territory under its control and held elections for a National Assembly. Portuguese forces and civilians increasingly were confined to their garrisons and larger towns. The Portuguese Governor and Commander in Chief from 1968 to 1973, Gen. Antonio de Spinola, returned to Portugal and led the movement that brought democracy to Portugal and independence for its colonies.

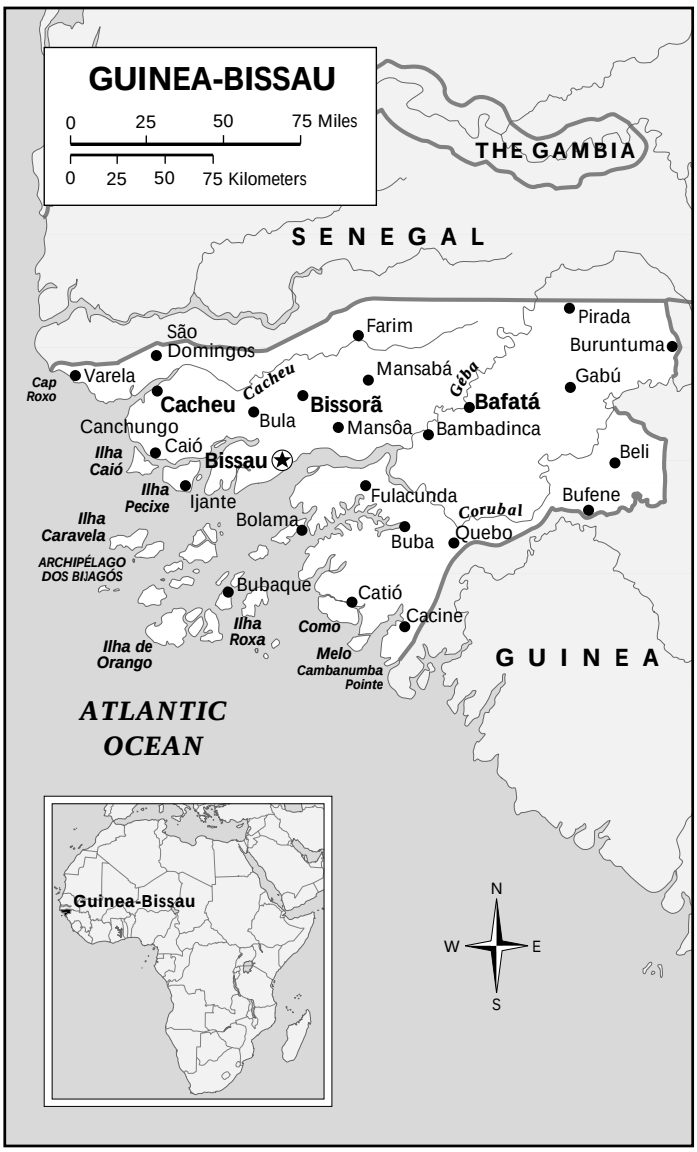
Amilcar Cabral was assassinated in Conakry in 1973, and party leadership fell to Aristides Pereira, who later became the first President of the Republic of Cape Verde. The PAIGC National Assembly met at Boe in the southeastern region and declared the independence of Guinea-Bissau on September 24, 1973. Following Portugal's April 1974 revolution, it granted independence to Guinea-Bissau on September 10, 1974. The United States recognized the new nation that day. Luis Cabral, Amilcar Cabral's half-brother, became President of Guinea-Bissau. In late 1980, the government was overthrown in a relatively bloodless coup led by Prime Minister and former armed forces commander Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira.

From November 1980 to May 1984, power was held by a provisional government responsible to a Revolutionary Council headed by President Joao Bernardo Vieira. In 1984, the council was dissolved, and the National Popular Assembly (ANP) was reconstituted. The single-party assembly approved a new constitution, elected President Vieira to a new 5-year term, and elected a Council of State, which was the executive agent of the ANP. Under this system, the president presided over the Council of State and served as head of state and government. The president also was head of the PAIGC and commander in chief of the armed forces.

There were alleged coup plots against the Vieira government in 1983, 1985, and 1993. In 1986, first Vice President Paulo Correia and five others were executed for treason following a lengthy trial. In 1994, the country's first multi-party legislative and presidential elections were held. An army uprising against the Vieira government in June 1998 triggered a bloody civil war that created hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and resulted in President Vieria having to request assistance from the governments of Senegal and Guinea, who provided troops to quell the uprising. The President was ousted by a military junta in May 1999. An interim government turned over power in February 2000 when opposition leader Kumba Yala, founder of the Social Renovation Party (PRS), took office following two rounds of transparent presidential elections.

Despite the elections, democracy did not take root in the succeeding 3 years. President Yala neither vetoed nor promulgated the new constitution that was approved by the National Assembly in April 2001. The resulting ambiguity undermined the rule of law. Impulsive presidential interventions in ministerial operations hampered effective governance. On November 14, 2002, the President dismissed the government of Prime Minister Alamara Nhasse, dissolved the National Assembly, and called for legislative elections. Two days later, he appointed Prime Minister Mario Pires to lead a caretaker government

controlled by presidential decree. Elections for the National Assembly were scheduled for April 2003, but later postponed until June and then October. On September 12, 2003, the President of the National Elections Commission announced that it would be impossible to hold the elections on October 12, 2003, as scheduled. The army, led by Chief of Defense General Verrisimo Correia Seabra, intervened on September 14, 2003. President Yala announced his "voluntary" resignation and was placed under house arrest. The government was dissolved and a 25-member Committee for Restoration of Democracy and Constitutional Order was established. On September 28, 2003, businessman Henrique Rosa was sworn in as President. He had the support of most political parties and of civil society. Artur Sanha, PRS President, was sworn in as Prime Minister. On March 28 and 30, 2004, Guinea-Bissau held legislative elections which international observers deemed acceptably free and fair. On May 9, 2004, Carlos Gomes Junior became Prime Minister.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

On August 10, 2005 Joao Bernardo Vieria was declared the winner of a July 24 presidential runoff election over Malam Bacai Sanha in an election judged by international observers to be free and fair. President Vieria was inaugurated on October 1, 2005. Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior refused to accept Vieira's victory, and on October 28, Vieira dismissed Gomes and his government. Five days later, he installed former PAIGC official Aristide Gomes as Prime Minister.

Throughout 2006, President Vieira struggled to maintain control over the National Assembly and the general operations of the government. In early March 2007, the three main political parties—the PAIGC, the PRS, and the PUSD—agreed to push for a "government of consensus" in the interests of parliamentary stability. President Vieira refused to accept the decision, and on March 19 the National Popular Assembly passed a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Aristide Gomes. President Vieira was then faced with the decision of dissolving the government and calling for new elections or appointing a new prime minister. Prime Minister Gomes resigned on March 29. In early April 2007, after much resistance, President Vieira accepted the appointment of Martinho N'Dafa Cabi as the new Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Cabi has called for a "relentless" fight against drug trafficking and vowed to instill fiscal discipline in the Government of Guinea-Bissau. This is especially important given the recent increase in news media reports examining Guinea-Bissau's role in the West African regional drug trade.

The government has implemented a number of policies to this end, and has succeeded in gaining the support of many in the donor community. Guinea-Bissau is perceived to be gaining political stability under this government, while still fragile. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for November 16, 2008. This election will be crucial to the ongoing efforts for growth and stability in the country.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Joao Bernardo VIEIRA**
Prime Min.: **Carlos CORREIA**
Min. of Admin. Reform: **Carlos COSTA**
Min. of Defense: **Marciano Silva BARBEIRO**
Min. of Economy & Regional Integration: **Carlos Mussa BALDE**
Min. of Education: **Marcelino VAZ**
Min. of Finance: **Issuf SANHA**
Min. of Fisheries: **Armando Ramos da SILVA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Intl. Cooperation, & Diaspora: **Maria da Conceicao Nobre CABRAL**
Min. of Health: **Camilo Simoes PEREIRA**
Min. of Interior: **Cipriano CASSAMA**
Min. of Justice: **Carmelita Barbosa Rodrigues PIRES**
Min. of Labor & Public Affairs: **Fernando GOMES**
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment: **Snares SAMBU**
Min. of Public Works & Housing: **Dionisio CABI**
Min. of Rural Development: **Sola Nkilin Na BITCHA**
Min. of Social Communication: **Fernando MENDONCA**
Min. of Social Solidarity, Family, & Poverty Eradication: **Fernando GOMES**
Min. of Tourism: **Francisco Conduto de PINA**
Min. of Trade, Industry, & Handicraft: **Luis Oliveira SANCA**
Min. of Transportation & Communications: **Vicente BLUTE**
Min. for Veteran Affairs: **Boata NANBATCHA**
Min. of Youth, Culture, & Sports: **Adiato Diallo NANDIGNA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Alfredo Lopes CABRAL**

Guinea-Bissau does not have official representation in Washington, DC.

ECONOMY

Guinea-Bissau is among the world's least developed nations and depends mainly on agriculture and fishing. Guinea-Bissau exports some fish and seafood, although most fishing in Guinea-Bissau's waters is presently not done by Bissau-Guineans and very little fish and seafood is processed in Guinea-Bissau. The country's other important product is cashews. License fees for fishing provide the government with some revenue. Rice is a major crop and staple food and, if developed, Guinea-Bissau could potentially be self-sufficient in rice. Tropical fruits such as mangos could also provide more income to the country if the sector were developed. Because of high costs, the development of petroleum, phosphate, and other mineral resources is not a near-term prospect. However, unexploited offshore oil reserves may possibly provide much-needed revenue in the long run.

The military conflict that took place in Guinea-Bissau from June 1998 to early 1999 caused severe damage to the country's infrastructure and widely disrupted economic activity. Agricultural production is estimated to have fallen by 17% during the conflict, and the civil war led to a 28% overall drop in gross domestic product (GDP) in 1998. Cashew nut output, the main export crop, declined in 1998 by an estimated 30%. World cashew prices dropped by more than 50% in 2000, compounding the economic devastation caused by the conflict. Before the war, trade reform and price liberalization were the most successful part of the country's structural adjustment program under International Monetary Fund (IMF) sponsorship. Under the government's post-conflict economic and financial program, implemented with IMF and World Bank input, real GDP recovered in 1999 by almost 8%. In December 2000 Guinea-Bissau qualified for almost $800 million in debt-service relief under the first phase of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. However, Guinea-Bissau's Poverty Reduction and Growth Fund program with the IMF was suspended that same month—following disbursement of the first tranche—due to off-program expenditures by the Yala regime. Thus, IMF and Paris Club internal debt relief for Guinea-Bissau was also suspended in 2001.

After a disastrous 2006, Guinea-Bissau's economy bounced back in 2007. Cashews, the country's principal cash crop, rebounded strongly in 2007 after the government's 2006 attempt to artificially set the price of cashews at 70 U.S. cents/kg—more than twice what traders were willing to pay. The economy also benefited from robust growth in the country's tourism industry. Guinea-Bissau appears ready to continue its economic growth in 2008 with new support from international donors and a recovery in cashew exports. Guinea Bissau has announced that Angola will be investing U.S. $500 million in a project to mine 3 million tons of bauxite per year. The IMF and World Bank resumed development support, and in January 2008 the IMF announced its approval for $2.8 million in emergency post-conflict assistance. Oil prospecting continues; however, this has yet to provide results that would encourage significant investment. GDP is projected to increase in 2008, with the deficit projected to decrease.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Guinea-Bissau follows a nonaligned foreign policy and seeks friendly and cooperative relations with a wide variety of states and organizations. The European Union, France, Gambia, Portugal, Brazil, Egypt, Nigeria, People's Republic of China, Libya, Senegal, Guinea, the Palestinian Authority, and Russia have embassies in Bissau. Belgium, Canada, Germany, Mauritania, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. conduct diplomatic relations with Guinea-Bissau through their embassies in neighboring Dakar, Senegal.

Guinea-Bissau is a member of the UN and many of its specialized and related agencies. It is a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); African Development Bank (AFDB), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), African Union, and permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel (CILSS). Guinea-Bissau also is

a member of the Group of 77 (G-77), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and World Health Organization (WHO).

U.S.-GUINEA-BISSAU RELATIONS

The U.S. Embassy suspended operations in Bissau on June 14, 1998, in the midst of violent conflict between forces loyal to then-President Vieira and the military-led junta. Prior to and following the Embassy closure, the United States and Guinea-Bissau have enjoyed excellent bilateral relations.

The U.S. recognized the independence of Guinea-Bissau on September 10, 1974. Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to the United States and the United Nations was one of the first the new nation sent abroad. The U.S. opened an Embassy in Bissau in 1976, and the first U.S. Ambassador presented credentials later that year.

U.S. assistance began in 1975 with a $1 million grant to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for resettlement of refugees returning to Guinea-Bissau and for 25 training grants at African technical schools for Guinean students. Emergency food was a major element in U.S. assistance to Guinea-Bissau in the first years after independence. Since 1975, the U.S. has provided more than $65 million in grant aid and other assistance. Since the 1998 war the U.S. has provided over $800,000 for humanitarian demining to a non-governmental organization (NGO) which has removed over 2,500 mines and 11,000 unexploded ordnance from the city of Bissau; $1.6 million in food aid; and nearly $3 million for assistance for refugees, improving the cashew industry, and promoting democracy. The United States and Guinea-Bissau signed an international military education and training (IMET) agreement in 1986, and prior to 1998, the U.S. provided English-language teaching facilities as well as communications and navigational equipment to support the navy's coastal surveillance program. The U.S. European Command's Humanitarian Assistance Program has assisted with $390,000 for constructing or repairing schools, health centers, and bridges.

The Peace Corps withdrew from Guinea-Bissau in 1998 at the start of the civil war.

In August 2004, sanctions under Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act—which were imposed as a result of the September 2003 military coup—were lifted and Bissau once again became eligible for IMET and other direct aid.In March 2007, the U.S. and Brazil signed a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding with Guinea-Bissau highlighting a parliamentary strengthening project first implemented in 2005.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

Operations were suspended in 1998. They are now covered by Embassy Dakar

BISSAU (BO) P.O. Box 297 Bissau Codex, Bairro de Penha, Rua Ulysses Grant, APO/FPO 2130 Dakar Place, Dulles, VA 20189-2130, 00-245-252-282, Fax 00-245-222-273, Workweek: M-F, 0800-1700, Website: http://dakar.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Debra Clark-Ware
MGT:	Salvatore Piazza
GSO:	Peter Anthes
RSO:	John Beaudry
DAO:	Maj. Mark Deets
POL:	Gregory Holliday

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 8, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Guinea-Bissau, a small country in western Africa, is one of the world's poorest nations. The capital is Bissau and the official language is Portuguese. The country underwent a civil war in 1998-99 that devastated the economy. Tourist facilities and infrastructure in general are very limited and not up to American standards.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, visa, and proof of onward/return ticket are required. As of August 2007, the Bissau-Guinean Embassy in Washington, D.C. remains temporarily closed. The Embassy of Guinea-Bissau does not have a web site. Due to lack of consular representation in the U.S., it is difficult to obtain the required visa for entry into Guinea-Bissau. Since most flights destined for Guinea-Bissau must pass through Dakar, Senegal or Lisbon, Portugal, most travelers are able to apply for visas at the Bissau-Guinean embassies in those countries. Although it is possible to obtain a visa upon arrival in Bissau if arrangements are made in advance, there are no clear instructions for how to make those arrangements.

Safety and Security: There is no permanent U.S. diplomatic or consular presence in Guinea-Bissau. The U.S. Embassy in Bissau suspended operations on June 14, 1998. While officials from the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, make periodic visits to Guinea-Bissau, their ability to provide consular services, including emergency assistance, is very limited. The U.S. maintains a liaison office in Bissau, located at Edifício SITEC, Rua José Carlos Schwarz 245, Bairro d'Ajuda (tel/fax 245-256382, 245-5954647). This office is staffed by locally employed staff and, while not equipped to provide consular services, may be contacted in the event of an emergency. The nearest U.S. Embassies are located in Banjul, the Gambia; Conakry, Guinea; and Dakar, Senegal.

Although the civil war that led to the closure of the U.S. Embassy ended in 1999 and elections were held in June and July 2005, travelers should be aware that political tensions persist. Sporadic politically-motivated violence remains an issue. Due to the

potential for violence, U.S. citizens should avoid political gatherings and street demonstrations, and maintain security awareness at all times. With legislative elections scheduled for late 2008, the potential for future political unrest remains high.

In December 2004, the Government of Senegal and some factions of the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC), a Senegalese separatist movement, instituted an end to hostilities and agreed to negotiate with the goal of achieving a definitive end to the armed conflict in the Casamance. This conflict has not yet been resolved, however, and its effects reach into Guinea-Bissau. In the spring of 2006, Bissau-Guinean military forces conducted offensive operations near the town of Sao Domingos to expel elements of the MFDC. The fighting reportedly resulted in dozens of military and civilian casualties, mostly from landmine explosions. There are currently instances of fighting in the Casamance region (composed of the Ziguinchor and Kolda regions) involving factions of the Casamance separatist MFDC (Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance) in southern Senegal and the Senegalese military. Although the recent escalation in hostilities has not spilled over into Guinea-Bissau, the potential for conflict along the border remains.

Unexploded military ordnance and landmines remain scattered throughout the country. Although the capital city of Bissau was declared "mine-free" in June 2006 by the national demining center (CAAMI), occasional findings or unintentional explosions do occur. There are two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in successfully removing mines.

To minimize the risks posed by both bandits and landmines, U.S. citizens are encouraged to limit driving outside of towns to daylight hours only and to remain on well-traveled roads at all times.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although there is a fairly low incidence of normal daytime street crime, travelers should observe security precautions in the city, particularly with regard to pickpocket activity in marketplaces. Travelers should refrain from walking alone at night. The lack of reliable public electricity means that urban streets are dark at night, even in Bissau. There have been periodic incidents of bandits accosting travelers in rural areas.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: While modern medical facilities are virtually nonexistent in Guinea-Bissau and travelers should not rely on them, emergency medical care may be possible at a new hospital in Bissau operated by the Sant'Egidio Community. Monday to Saturday there are flights from Bissau to Dakar, Senegal, where more acceptable levels of medical care are available. Malaria, a serious and sometimes fatal disease, is a risk for travelers to Guinea-Bissau. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Guinea-Bissau is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The public transportation system, urban and rural road conditions, and the availability of roadside assistance are all poor. There is no consistent public electricity in the capital, and the lack of lighting at night makes careful driving essential. Since there are minefields left over from the civil war and the war of independence, travelers should not leave designated roads and pathways. The landmines are scattered in several areas throughout Guinea-Bissau, including Bafata, Oio, Biombo, Quinara, and Tombali regions. In addition, there are reports of unexploded ordinance located near the Embassies of Russia, France, the European Union and China.

While there has been significant progress in locating and removing landmines, the threat remains substantial. Speak with local authorities

first and use caution if leaving a main road or highway to enter a trail network or to make other types of cross-country movement.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Guinea-Bissau, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Guinea-Bissau's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Guinea-Bissau's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the temporary import or export of items such as firearms, antiquities, medications, and business equipment. (See contact information in the section on Entry Requirements.)

International banking and finance is problematic due to a limited formal banking sector. ATMs are rarely available, credit cards are rarely accepted, currency exchange outside of the black market is almost non-existent, wire transfer possibilities are extremely limited, and repatriation of funds is problematic.

As there is currently no U.S. Embassy in Guinea-Bissau, U.S. consular officials may not be properly notified when an American citizen is arrested or detained in Guinea-Bissau. Because notification would have to be made to consular officers at U.S. Embassies in neighboring countries, there may be a delay in consular access to such citizens. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a notarized copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available.

Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. Guinea-Bissau has a cash-only economy, so travelers should not count on using credit cards and ATMs.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Bissau-Guinean laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Guinea-Bissau are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Guinea-Bissau are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Guinea-Bissau. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Guinea-Bissau remains closed. U.S. citizens who plan to enter Guinea-Bissau are encouraged to register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy at Avenue Jean XXIII, Dakar, Senegal. The mailing address is B.P. 49, Dakar, Senegal. The telephone number is (221) 33 829-2100 and the fax is (221) 33 822-2991. The e-mail address is consulardakar@state.gov. The web site is http://dakar.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal issues immigrant visas for Bissau-Guinean citizens, including adopted orphans. Please review carefully the information found later in this flyer regarding the immigrant visa procedures at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar. Failure to comply with the Embassy's requirements could result in a denial of the child's visa case.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that fewer than five immigrant visas have been issued to Bissau-Guinean orphans in the last five years.

Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Child Protection is responsible for intercountry adoptions in Guinea-Bissau. Adoption laws are outlined in Article 1974 of the civil code. In the adoption process, the Public Ministry will appoint a lawyer to ensure that the child's rights are protected. The Regional Tribunal in Guinea Bissau (Juiz de Direito da Seccao de Familia, Tribunal Regional de Bissau) is the court that approves intercountry adoptions.

Types Of Adoption: There are two types of adoptions in Guinea Bissau: simple adoption (adopcao restrita) and full adoption (adopcao plena). In a simple adoption, the ties of the child

to his birth family cannot be definitively proven and the child may continue to have contact with his or her biological family. Simple adoptions are revocable. In contrast, full adoptions are irrevocable and are granted when one or both parents have died and any living biological parent has severed ties with the child.

In these cases, the child will take the last name of the adopting parents and be considered their legitimate child. Only full adoption is recognized for U.S. immigration purposes. Adoption lawyers and authorities in Guinea-Bissau are aware that full adoption is required. In order to adopt, the prospective adoptive parents must have a local lawyer and meet the eligibility requirements.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: According to the Civil Code, the adoption must meet four basic criteria:

- the adoption should benefit the child;
- the child should be under age 14 and not emancipated;
- the adoption must be with the full consent of the child if he/she is 14 years old or older, unless he/she is mentally disabled, and;
- the adoptive parents must be between the ages of 25 and 60, married more than five years, and not legally or voluntarily separated.

The U.S. Government is aware of cases in which a single parent has successfully adopted an orphan. Adoptive parents must be able to demonstrate that they have adequate financial resources (through employment, tax records, home ownership, or other assets), no criminal record, and the emotional capacity to care for the child (usually described in a home study).

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for adoptive parents.

Time Frame: The adoption process in Guinea-Bissau can take from six months to two years to complete. Once the case has been presented to the Court (Direito da Seccao de Familia), final review and the issuance of the adoption decree typically take one to two weeks.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Guinea-Bissau. Two private nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate centers for orphans and abandoned children: the SOS Village and Casa Emanuel, both in Bissau. Foreign parents have adopted orphans from the Casa Emanuel orphanage in the past. A local lawyer is required to handle all of the requisite legal paperwork. The U.S. Embassy cannot recommend the services of any specific attorney or organization.

Adoption Fees: The fee for issuing an adoption decree is 400,000 West African Francs (CFAF) or approximately $750. This does not include additional fees that may be incurred for the lawyer's time, translation, and other expenses. The total cost to the lawyer is approximately $1,000 to $2,000 and subject to change.

Adoption Procedures: Because relatively few foreigners have adopted Bissau-Guinean orphans, the specific procedures to adopt an orphan are unclear. In general, adopting parents have identified an orphan through the help of a foreign adoption agency and the local orphanage before presenting the supporting documents to a private lawyer, who then presents the case before the Regional Tribunal.

Required Documents:

- Certified true copies of the adopting parent(s)' birth certificates;
- Certified true copies of the adopting parents' marriage certificate, if applicable;
- Police record or certification of the lack thereof;
- Financial documents of the adopting parents (employment records, documentation of assets, retirement and social security);
- Home study describing the social situation of the adopting parent(s);
- Birth certificate of the orphan;
- Death certificate(s) of the biological parents(s), if applicable, and;
- Statement of relinquishment of the biological parent(s), if applicable.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

American Embassy Dakar
BP 49
Avenue Jean XXIII, angle Rue Kleber
Dakar, Senegal
Telephone: (221) 823-4296
Fax: (221) 822-5903
Email: ConsularDakar@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Guinea-Bissau may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Dakar. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



GUYANA

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Co-operative Republic of Guyana

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 214,970 sq. km. (83,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Idaho.

Cities: Capital—Georgetown (pop. 150,000). Other cities—Linden (29,000) and New Amsterdam (18,000).

Terrain: Low coastal plain, hilly sand and clay region, forested highlands, interior savanna.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Guyanese (sing. and pl.).

Population: (2006, Government of Guyana) 760,200.

Ethnic groups: East Indian origin 43%, African origin 30%, mixed 17%, Amerindian 9%.

Religions: Christian 50%, Hindu 35%, Muslim 10%, other 5%.

Languages: English, Guyanese Creole, Amerindian languages (primarily Carib and Arawak).

Education: Years compulsory—ages 5 1/2-14 1/2. Attendance—primary 93.6%, secondary 93%. Literacy—96.5% of adults who have attended school.

Health: Infant mortality rate—49/1,000. Life expectancy—men 59 yrs., women 64 yrs.

Work force: (278,000) Industry and commerce—36.4%; agriculture—30.2%; services—30.2%; other—3.2%.

Government

Type: Republic within the Commonwealth.

Independence: May 26, 1966; Republic, February 23, 1970.

Constitution: 1980

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government), prime minister. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly of 65 deputies. The ten administrative regions of the country elect 25 members, 40 are elected from party lists by proportion of the national vote. Judicial—Judicial Court of Appeal, High Court.

Political subdivisions: 10 regions.

Political parties: (voting seats in the National Assembly) People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) 36; People's National Congress (PNC) 22; Alliance for Change (AFC) 5, Guyana Action Party/Rise Organize and Rebuild (GAP/ROAR) 1; and The United Force (TUF) 1. Total seats: 65. Elections held August 28, 2006.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy (2007)

Real GDP: $847.9 million.

Real annual growth rate: 5.4%.

Per capita GDP: $1,111

Agriculture: Products—sugar, rice, fresh fruits and vegetables.

Natural resources: Gold, bauxite, diamonds, timber, shrimp, fish.

Industry: Types—mining (gold, bauxite, diamonds), agriculture (sugar, rice, livestock, fresh fruits and vegetables), forestry, fisheries, manufacturing (beverage, foodstuff processing, apparel, footwear assembly, pharmaceuticals), construction, and services (distribution, financial, transport and communication).

Trade: (merchandise) Exports—$680.9 million: gold, sugar, bauxite, fish and shrimp, rice, timber, diamonds. Major markets—U.S., Canada, U.K. Imports—$1.06 billion. Major suppliers—Trinidad and Tobago, U.S., China, Cuba, U.K.

PEOPLE

Guyana's population is made up of five main ethnic groups—East Indian, African, Amerindian, Chinese, and Portuguese. Ninety percent of the inhabitants live on the narrow coastal plain, where population density is more than 115 persons per square kilometer (380 per sq. mi.). The population density for Guyana as a whole is low—less than four persons per square kilometer. Although the government has provided free education from nursery school to the university level since 1975, it has not

allocated sufficient funds to maintain the standards of what had been considered the best educational system in the region. Many school buildings are in poor condition, there is a shortage of text and exercise books, the number of teachers has declined, and fees are being charged at the university level for some courses of study for the first time.

HISTORY

Before the arrival of Europeans, the region was inhabited by both Carib and Arawak tribes, who named it Guiana, which means land of many waters. The Dutch settled in Guyana in the late 16th century, but their control ended when the British became the de facto rulers in 1796. In 1815, the colonies of Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice were officially ceded to Great Britain at the Congress of Vienna and, in 1831, were consolidated as British Guiana. Following the abolition of slavery in 1834, thousands of indentured laborers were brought to Guyana to replace the slaves on the sugarcane plantations, primarily from India but also from Portugal and China. The British stopped the practice in 1917. Many of the Afro-Guyanese former slaves moved to the towns and became the majority urban population, whereas the Indo-Guyanese remained predominantly rural. A scheme in 1862 to bring black workers from the United States was unsuccessful. The small Amerindian population lives in the country's interior.

The people drawn from these diverse origins have coexisted peacefully for the most part. Slave revolts, such as the one in 1763 led by Guyana's national hero, Cuffy, demonstrated the desire for basic rights but also a willingness to compromise. Politically inspired racial disturbances between Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese erupted in 1962-64, and again following elections in 1997 and 2001. The conservative and cooperative nature of Guyanese society has contributed to a cooling of racial tensions; however, such tensions do constitute Guyana's most sensitive social stress point. Guyanese political history has been turbulent. The first modern political party in Guyana was the People's Progressive Party (PPP), established on January 1, 1950, with Forbes Burnham, a British-educated Afro-Guyanese, as chairman; Dr. Cheddi Jagan, a U.S.-educated Indo-Guyanese, as second vice chairman; and his American-born wife, Janet Jagan, as secretary general. The PPP won 18 out of 24 seats in the first popular elections permitted by the colonial government in 1953, and Dr. Jagan became leader of the house and minister of agriculture in the colonial government. Five months later, on October 9, 1953, the British suspended the constitution and landed troops because, they said, the Jagans and the PPP were planning to make Guyana a communist state. These events led to a split in the PPP, in which Burnham broke away and founded what eventually became the People's National Congress (PNC).

Elections were permitted again in 1957 and 1961, and Cheddi Jagan's PPP ticket won on both occasions, with 48% of the vote in 1957 and 43% in 1961. Cheddi Jagan became the first premier of British Guiana, a position he held for 7 years. At a constitutional conference in London in 1963, the U.K. Government agreed to grant independence to the colony but only after another election in which proportional representation would be introduced for the first time. It was widely believed that this system would reduce the number of seats won by the PPP and prevent it from obtaining a clear majority in Parliament. The December 1964 elections gave the PPP 46%, the PNC 41%, and the United Force (TUF), a conservative party, 12%. TUF threw its votes in the legislature to Forbes Burnham, who became prime minister.

Guyana achieved independence in May 1966, and became a republic on February 23, 1970—the anniversary of the Cuffy slave rebellion. From December 1964 until his death in August 1985, Forbes Burnham ruled Guyana in an increasingly autocratic manner, first as prime minister and later, after the adoption of a new constitution in 1980, as executive president. During that timeframe, elections were viewed in Guyana and abroad as fraudulent. Human rights and civil liberties were suppressed, and two major political assassinations occurred: the Jesuit Priest and journalist Bernard Darke in July 1979, and the distinguished historian and WPA Party leader Walter Rodney in June 1980. Agents of President Burnham are widely believed to have been responsible for both deaths.

Following Burnham's own death in 1985, Prime Minister Hugh Desmond Hoyte acceded to the presidency and was formally elected in the December 1985 national elections. Hoyte gradually reversed Burnham's policies, moving from state socialism and one-party control to a market economy and unrestricted freedom of the press and assembly. On October 5, 1992, a new National Assembly and regional councils were elected in the first Guyanese election since 1964 to be internationally recognized as free and fair. Cheddi Jagan was elected and sworn in as president on October 9, 1992. When President Jagan died in March 1997, Prime Minister Samuel Hinds replaced him in accordance with constitutional provisions. President Jagan's widow, Janet Jagan, was elected president in December 1997. She resigned in August 1999 due to ill health and was succeeded by Finance Minister Bharrat Jagdeo, who had been named prime minister a day earlier. National elections were held on March 19, 2001. Incumbent President Jagdeo won reelection with a voter turnout of over 90%. President Jagdeo won re-election again in national elections held on August 28, 2006, the first non-violent elections held in more than 20 years.

GOVERNMENT

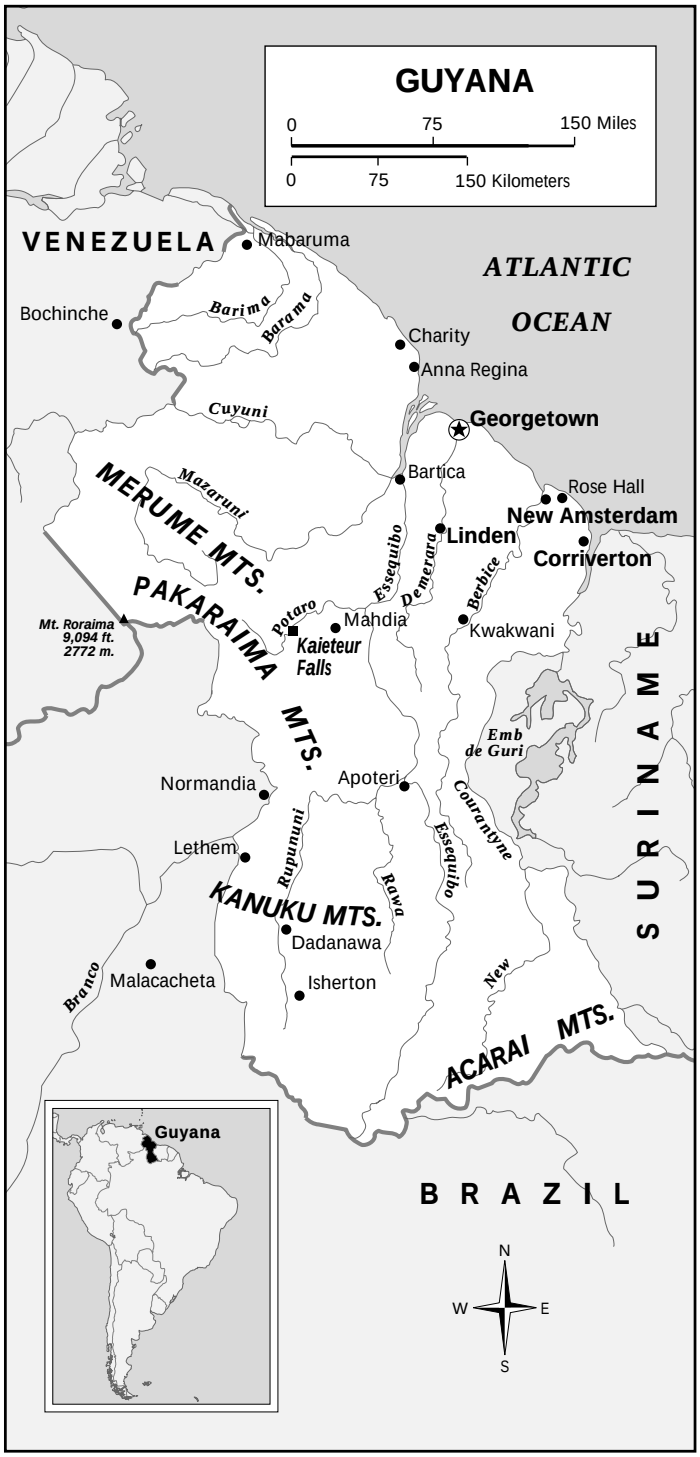
Legislative power rests in a unicameral National Assembly, with 40 members chosen on the basis of proportional representation from national lists named by the political parties. An additional 25 members are elected by regional administrative districts. The legislature is not

directly elected; each party presents slates of candidates for the National Assembly. After the election, each party leader selects from the party lists the individuals who will represent the party in the National Assembly. The president may dissolve the assembly and call new elections at any time, but no later than 5 years from its first sitting.

Executive authority is exercised by the president, who appoints and supervises the prime minister and other ministers. The president is not directly elected; each party presenting a slate of candidates for the assembly must designate in advance a leader who will become president if that party receives the largest number of votes. Any dissolution of the assembly and election of a new assembly can lead to a change in the assembly majority and consequently a change in the presidency. Most cabinet ministers must be members of the National Assembly; the constitution limits non-member "technocrat" ministers to five. Technocrat ministers serve as non-elected members of the National Assembly, which permits them to debate but not to vote.

The highest judicial body is the Court of Appeal, headed by a chancellor of the judiciary. The second level is the High Court, presided over by a chief justice. The chancellor and the chief justice are appointed by the president.

For administrative purposes, Guyana is divided into 10 regions, each headed by a chairman who presides over a regional democratic council. Local communities are administered by village or city councils.



Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Bharrat JAGDEO**
Prime Min.: **Samuel HINDS**
First Vice Pres.:
Second Vice Pres.: **Reepu Daman PERSAUD**
Min. in the Office of the Pres. (Foreign Affairs): **Carolyn RODRIGUES**
Min. in the Office of the Pres. (Public Service): **George FUNG-ON**
Min. of Agriculture: **Robert PERSAUD**
Min. of Amerindian Affairs: **Pauline CAMPBELL-SUKHAI**
Min. of Economic Planning:
Min. of Education: **Shaik BAKSH**
Min. of Finance: **Ashni SINGH, Dr.**
Min. of Fisheries, Crops, & Livestock:
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Carolyn RODRIGUES**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **Henry JEFFREY, Dr.**
Min. of Health: **Leslie RAMSAMMY, Dr.**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Clement ROHEE**
Min. of Housing & Water: **Harry NAWBATT**
Min. of Human Services & Social Security: **Pryia MANICKCHAND**
Min. of Information:

Min. of Labor: **Manzoor NADIR**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **Doodnauth SINGH**
Min. of Local Government: **Kellawan LALL**
Min. of Marine Resources:
Min. of Parliamentary Affairs: **Reepu Daman PERSAUD**
Min. of Public Service Management: **Jennifer WESTFORD, Dr.**
Min. of Public Works: **Samuel HINDS**
Min. of Tourism, Industry, & Commerce: **Manniram PRASHAD**
Min. of Transport, Communication, & Hydraulics: **Robeson BENN**
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Sports: **Frank ANTHONY, Dr.**
Min. Within Local Govt.: **Clinton COLLYMORE**
Head, Presidential Secretariat: **Roger LUNCHEON**
Attorney General: **Doodnauth SINGH**
Governor, Bank of Guyana: **Dolly S. SINGH**
Ambassador to the US: **Bayney KARRAN**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

Guyana maintains an embassy in the United States at 2490 Tracy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-265-6900).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Race and ideology have been the dominant political influences in Guyana. Since the split of the multiracial PPP in 1955, politics has been based more on ethnicity than on ideology. From 1964 to 1992, the PNC dominated Guyana's politics. The PNC draws its support primarily from urban Afro-Guyanese, and for many years declared itself a socialist vanguard party whose purpose was to make Guyana a nonaligned socialist state, in which the party, as in communist countries, was above all other institutions.

A majority of Indo-Guyanese have traditionally backed the People's Progressive Party. Rice farmers and sugar workers in the rural areas form the bulk of PPP's support. Indo-Guyanese who dominate the country's urban business community also have provided important support to both parties, depending on which was in power at the time.

Following independence, and with the help of substantial foreign aid, social benefits were provided to a broader section of the population, specifically in health, education, housing, road and bridge building, agriculture, and rural development. During Forbes Burnham's last years, however, the government's attempts to build a socialist society, including banning importation of basic foodstuffs, caused a massive emigration of skilled workers, and, along with other economic factors, led to a significant decline in the overall quality of life in Guyana.

After Burnham's death in 1985, President Hoyte took steps to stem the economic decline, including strengthening financial controls over the parastatal corporations and supporting the private sector. In August 1987, at a PNC Congress, Hoyte announced that the PNC rejected orthodox communism and the one-party state.

As the elections scheduled for 1990 approached, Hoyte, under increasing pressure from inside and outside Guyana, gradually opened the political system. After a visit to Guyana by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter in 1990, Hoyte made changes in the electoral rules, appointed a new chairman of the Elections Commission, and endorsed putting together new voters' lists, thus delaying the election. The elections, which finally took place in 1992, were witnessed by 100 international observers, including a group headed by Mr. Carter and another from the Commonwealth of Nations. Both groups issued reports saying that the elections had been free and fair, despite violent attacks on the Elections Commission building on election day and other irregularities.

Cheddi Jagan served as Premier (1957-64) and then minority leader in Parliament until his election as President in 1992. One of the Caribbean's most charismatic and famous leaders, Jagan was a founder of the PPP, which led Guyana's struggle for independence. Over the years, he moderated his Marxist-Leninist ideology. After his election as President, Jagan demonstrated a commitment to democracy, followed a pro-Western foreign policy, adopted free market policies, and pursued sustainable development for Guyana's environment. Nonetheless, he continued to press for debt relief and a new global human order in which developed countries would increase assistance to less developed nations. Jagan died on March 6, 1997, and was succeeded by Samuel A. Hinds, whom he had appointed Prime Minister. President Hinds then appointed Janet Jagan, widow of the late President, to serve as Prime Minister.

In national elections on December 15, 1997, Janet Jagan was elected President, and her PPP party won a 55% majority of seats in Parliament. Mrs. Jagan had been a founding member of the PPP and was very active in party politics. In addition to becoming Guyana's first female president, she had also been Guyana's first female prime minister and vice president, two roles she performed concurrently before being elected to the presidency.

The PNC, which won just under 40% of the vote, disputed the results of the 1997 elections, alleging electoral fraud. Public demonstrations and some violence followed, until a CARICOM team came to Georgetown to broker an accord between the two parties, calling for an international audit of the election results, a redrafting of the constitution, and elections under the constitution within 3 years. Elections took place on March 19, 2001. More than 150 international observers representing six international missions witnessed the polling. The observers pronounced the elections fair and open although marred by some administrative problems. As in 1997, public demonstrations and some violence followed the election, with the opposition PNCR disputing the results. The political disturbances following the election partially overlapped and politicized a major crime wave that gripped Guyana from the spring of 2002 through May 2003. By summer 2003 the worst of the crime wave had abated, and agitation over the election had subsided.

A lack of legal clarity over voter registration rules, in particular the legality of Guyanese remaining on the voter rolls after emigrating, fed a political stalemate that delayed the 2006 elections as opposition parties demanded a full house-to-house verification of the voter list. Ultimately, the election was held using the 2001 voting list—which the opposition had earlier deemed valid—plus new registrations. The Organization of American States and the Commonwealth observed the 2006 elections and considered them to be largely free and fair.

In early 2008, national electoral authorities commenced a voter re-registration exercise, scrutinized by the major political parties, in order to produce a fresh and widely accepted voter list. This exercise concludes in July 2008, in anticipation of nationwide municipal elections in early 2009. Municipal elections have not been held since 1994.

A general lack of trust between the predominantly Indo-Guyanese PPP/C and the almost exclusively Afro-Guyanese PNC/R persists. Co-founded prior to the 2006 parliamentary elections by disaffected members of the PPP/C and PNC/R, the Alliance For Change party has attempted to bridge the political and racial divide, but holds only five seats in Parliament and has gained minimal traction.

Due to constitutional term limits, President Jagdeo is not eligible to run for reelection again when his terms concludes in 2011. There is no established frontrunner to succeed him.

ECONOMY

In 2007, the real gross domestic product (GDP) of the Guyanese economy increased by 5.4%, exceeding expectations. Strong growth in the sugar, fishery, livestock, mining, and manufacturing sectors contributed to the economy's performance.

Agriculture

The agricultural sector (including sugar processing and rice milling) recorded a real 0.7% increase during 2007. The growth partly reflected stable weather conditions and large investment in drainage and irrigation facilities. In addition, the government has undertaken initiatives, with U.S. Government support, to increase production in the nontraditional agriculture sector.

Fishing and Livestock

The fishing sector grew 44.3% in real terms in 2007 due to increases of 6.7% and 96.1% in fish and shrimp catches, respectively. The launching of the Fisheries Management Plan, the recertification of Guyanese fish by the U.S., and the construction of an aquaculture hatchery contributed to this increase.

Despite these improvements, the fishing sector continues to be plagued by piracy and increasing machine and fuel costs. In 2007, the livestock sector grew 2% in real terms, largely due to the re-entry of a major livestock producer into the industry, the establishment of additional pastures, and government assistance in controlling pests and diseases.

Forestry

Logging and plywood output decreased in 2007 by 16.1% and 1.2%, respectively. The decrease in logging is largely attributed to the suspension of logging permits as a result of environmental concerns, and increases in freight and insurance costs. In contrast, the production of sawn-wood increased by 10.1%.

Mining

The mining sector grew 22.7% in real terms during 2007. This reflected the substantial investment and restructuring in the bauxite industry in recent years and increased world prices for bauxite and gold.

Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector (excluding sugar processing and rice milling) grew by 1% in 2007. High global prices for inputs adversely affected growth.

Construction

The construction sector grew 5.7% in 2007. Private investment in hotel construction and housing and a 2.2% increase in public sector investment in schools, roads, low-cost housing, and drainage and irrigation contributed to growth.

Services

The service sector increased 7% in 2007. The transport and communications sub-sectors grew by 13%, helped by heightened competition in the telecommunications sector as new cell phone and Internet providers entered the market.

Inflation

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 14% in 2007, a significant increase from the 4.2% inflation experienced in 2006. This was associated with implementation of a value-added tax (VAT) at the beginning of 2007, rising global food and commodity prices, and increased fuel costs.

Exchange Rate

The exchange rate remains stable; the Guyana dollar currently trades at G$200/U.S.$1.

Merchandise Trade

The trade deficit rose 27.3% to U.S. $381.7 million. The U.S $177.6 million increase in imports more than offset the U.S. $95.7 million increase in export earnings.

Exports

Total export receipts in 2007 amounted to U.S. $680.9 million, 16.4% higher than 2006. This increase was a result of higher world prices of sugar, rice, and gold as well as increased volumes exported. Sugar export earnings increased by 9.6% to U.S. $150.1 million, while the volume of sugar exported increased by 3.1% to 246,013 tons. Rice exports earned

U.S. $75.3 million, an increase of 37.8% over 2006 due largely to higher volumes exported. Receipts from gold exports were U.S. $153.1 million, 33.7% higher than the 2006 level due to an increase in export volume and a significant rise in global precious metal prices. The value of timber exports was U.S. $55.4 million, 0.7% below 2006, following new restrictions on log exports. The value of other timber (excluding plywood) exports increased by 2.1% to U.S. $47.6 million, while the value of plywood exports decreased by 6.9%. Total earnings from all other exports were U.S. $145.5 million, 8.2% less than the previous year. Guyana's primary export markets are the U.S. (18.8%), Canada (18.4%), the U.K. (8.7%), Portugal (6.5%), Trinidad and Tobago (4.9%), Netherlands (4.3%), Belgium (4.3%), and Jamaica (4.1%).

Imports

The value of merchandise imports grew by 20.1% to U.S. $1.06 billion in 2007. The increase reflected activities associated with hosting the Cricket World Cup in 2007 and higher fuel costs. Higher imports of furnishings for the hotel and hospitality industry grew to U.S. $62.1 million from U.S. $29.4 million in 2006. Imports of building and transport machinery, largely for public sector capital projects, grew 44.7% and 49.1%, respectively. Guyana's primary import sources are Trinidad and Tobago (23%), the U.S. (21.3%), China (9.7%), Cuba (6.3%), and the U.K. (4.5%).

Total Investment

Total 2007 investment rose by 4.9% to U.S. $434.0 million, due to increased public sector investment and a modestly improved investment climate in Guyana. Public investment accounted for slightly less than half of total investment. This increase reflected the government's aim to maintain infrastructure needed for sustained growth and development, such as roads, bridges, sea defense, drainage and irrigation, and schools. The government also allocated funds for improvement in agriculture, housing and water, and national security. Private investment, spurred by government incentives, increased by 8.5% to U.S. $222.5 million. Major investments include mining, construction, transport and communications, and distribution sectors. Foreign direct investment from the U.S. accounted for approximately U.S. $24.5 million, or 1.1%, of private investment in Guyana.

External Debt

Guyana continued to benefit from debt relief under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) during 2007. Guyana's outstanding public and publicly guaranteed external debt contracted by 31.1% to U.S. $718 million at the end of the year due to the MDRI and other debt write-offs. As a result, debt service payments declined by 18.1% to U.S. $19 million and the Inter-American Development Bank no longer considers Guyana a highly indebted poor country.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

After independence in 1966, Guyana sought an influential role in international affairs, particularly among Third World and nonaligned nations. It served twice on the UN Security Council (1975-76 and 1982-83). Former Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister, and Attorney General Mohamed Shahabuddeen served a 9-year term on the International Court of Justice (1987-96).

Guyana has diplomatic relations with a wide range of nations. The European Union (EU), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the UN Development Program (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Organization of American States (OAS) have offices in Georgetown. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has its Secretariat headquartered in Georgetown.

Guyana strongly supports the concept of regional integration. It played an important role in the founding of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), but its status as one of the organization's poorest members limits its ability to exert leadership in regional activities. Guyana has sought to keep foreign policy in close alignment with the consensus of CARICOM members, especially in voting in the UN, OAS, and other international organizations.

A longstanding maritime boundary dispute with Suriname was resolved largely in Guyana's favor in August 2007. The dispute had flared up in June 2000, when a Canadian company drilling for oil under a Guyanese concession was forced to cease operations by Surinamese military gunboats. After several failed attempts at negotiation, in 2004 Guyana took the dispute to the UN Law of the Sea tribunal, which unanimously determined that the vast majority of the area in contention belonged to Guyana. The resolution of this dispute will likely have significant ramifications for Guyana's economy in the long term, as the seabed is estimated to contain approximately 15 billion barrels of oil.

Another territorial disagreement remains unresolved, however. In 1962 Venezuela challenged a previously accepted 1899 international arbitration award, and claimed all of Guyana west of the Essequibo River—62% of Guyana's territory. At a meeting in Geneva in 1966, the two countries agreed to receive recommendations from a representative of the UN Secretary General on ways to settle the dispute peacefully. Diplomatic contacts between the two countries and the Secretary General's representative continue, with a quiet détente on the issue currently prevailing.

U.S.-GUYANESE RELATIONS

U.S. policy toward Guyana seeks to develop robust, sustainable democratic institutions, laws, and political practices; support economic growth and development; and promote stability and security. During the last

years of his administration, President Hoyte sought to improve relations with the United States as part of a decision to move his country toward genuine political nonalignment. Relations also were improved by Hoyte's efforts to respect human rights, reform the economy, invite international observers for the 1992 elections, and reform electoral laws. Successive democratic elections and Guyana's reaffirmation of sound economic policies and respect for human rights have placed U.S.-Guyanese relations on an excellent footing. Under successive PPP governments, the United States and Guyana have continued to improve relations, and the United States maintains positive relations with the current government of President Jagdeo.

In an effort to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Guyana, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) opened an office at the U.S. Embassy in 2002. In January 2003, Guyana was named as one of only two countries in the Western Hemisphere to be included in President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). CDC, in coordination with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is administering a 5-year multi-million dollar program of education, prevention, and treatment for those infected and affected by the disease. Guyana also benefits from a $6.7 million, two-year threshold country program under the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account developmental program.

U.S. military medical and engineering teams continue to conduct training exercises in Guyana, digging wells, building schools and clinics, and providing medical treatment.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

GEORGETOWN (E) 100 Young & Duke Sts, (592) 225-4900/9, Fax (592) 225-8497/ 747-0303, Workweek: 07:30-16:00, Website: georgetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Janine Geenen
AMB OMS:	BG Wendy Pelaez
CDC:	Lamar Hasbrouck
DCM/CHG:	Karen Williams
ECO/COM:	James Plasman
FM:	Keith Ellis
MGT:	David M Thomas
AMB:	Vacant
CON:	Nyda Budig
GSO:	Gabriel M Hons-Oliver
RSO:	Brandon Lee
AID:	Peter Hubbard
CLO:	Terezinha Deoliveira-Irvin
DEA:	Mo Brooks (Port Of Spain)
EEO:	Edwin McClannan
FMO:	Dave Thomas
ICASS Chair:	Julia Roberts
IMO:	John P Irvin
ISSO:	John P Irvin
LEGATT:	Marvin Freeman (Port Of Spain)
MLO:	Ltc. Steven Stanley
POL:	Rolf A Olson
RAMC:	Charleston
State ICASS:	Julie Roberts

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th & Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 800-USA-TRADE

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 466-7464
Fax: (202) 822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 9, 2008

Country Description: Guyana is a developing nation on the north coast of South America. Tourist facilities are not developed, except for hotels in the capital city of Georgetown and a limited number of eco-resorts. The vast majority of the Guyanese live along the coast, leaving the interior largely unpopulated and undeveloped. Travel in the interior of Guyana can be difficult; many interior regions can only be reached by plane or boat.

Entry Requirements: A valid U.S. passport is required for U.S. citizens to enter and depart Guyana. On arrival, Guyanese Immigration normally grants U.S. visitors a stay of up to 3 months. U.S.-Guyanese dual nationals may be granted an indefinite stay. Extensions of stay may be obtained from the Ministry of Home Affairs at 60 Brickdam Street, Georgetown. The Central Office of Immigration located on Camp Street, Georgetown, must note the extension in the visitor's passport. Travelers for purposes other than tourism should check with the Ministry of Home Affairs for information about requirements for work permits and extended stays.

U.S.-Guyanese dual nationals departing Guyana for the U.S. using a Guyanese passport must present to Guyanese authorities a U.S. Certificate of Naturalization or other document establishing that they may legally enter the United States. For further information about entry, exit and customs requirements, travelers may consult the Embassy of Guyana at 2490 Tracy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 265-6900, the Consulate General in New York, or honorary consuls in California, Florida, Ohio and Texas. Visit the Embassy of Guyana web site at www.guyana.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Driving in Guyana can be particularly dangerous, with a significant number of accidents and road fatalities occurring. See the section below on "Traffic Safety and Road Conditions" for additional information.

In the past, demonstrations and protests occasionally occurred in Georgetown; however, these are increasingly rare. Past demonstrations have not been directed at U.S. citizens and violence against Americans in general is not common. Visitors should nevertheless remain alert and take prudent personal security measures to deal with the unexpected while in Guyana. It is advisable to avoid areas where crowds have congregated and to maintain a low profile when moving about Georgetown and other Guy-

anese cities. Most major eco-tourist resorts and hotels in Guyana do not have written emergency plans in place, and many of them have safety deficiencies, including a lack of easily identifiable lifeguards or no lifeguards at all. Many of these resorts also do not have adequately stocked first aid supplies.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Serious crime, including murder and home invasion, continues to be a major problem; the murder rate in Guyana is three times higher than the murder rate in the United States. In early 2008, an attack in the Georgetown suburb of Lusignan and in the Essequibo River town of Bartica by heavily armed gangs resulted in the deaths of more than 20 persons, mostly innocent Guyanese civilians. An investigation into these attacks is continuing, but most of the perpetrators are still at large. In addition, there have been several instances of random shootings at night at police headquarters or police stations in Georgetown. U.S. citizens are encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance, consider security issues when planning activities throughout Guyana, minimize movement when possible, and avoid traveling at night, when possible.

Armed robberies continue to rise, especially in major business and shopping districts. Hotel room strong-arm break-ins are also increasing, so travelers should use caution when opening their hotel room doors and should safeguard valuables left in hotel rooms. Criminals may act brazenly, and police officers themselves have been the victims of assaults and shootings. Vehicle occupants should keep their doors locked and be aware of their surroundings at all times. Robbery and theft occur with some frequency in Georgetown and New Amsterdam. U.S. citizens should avoid stopping in or traveling through the village of Buxton, which lies along the road between Georgetown and New Amsterdam, and Agricola, which is located on the East Bank highway. The Department of State recommends that Embassy staff using the public golf course at Lusignan, next to Buxton, do so in groups and only during daylight hours.

Pickpocketing, purse snatching by thieves on bicycles, assault, and theft can occur in all areas of Georgetown. The areas adjacent to the sea wall and the National Park in Georgetown, although frequented by joggers, dogwalkers, and families are generally considered safe during daylight hours, have been the scenes of crimes in the past. Travelers should exercise extra care when visiting these areas after dusk. Pickpockets and thieves also frequent Stabroek and Bourda, the two major markets, and great care should be taken to safeguard personal property when shopping in these markets. U.S. passports and permanent residency cards are prized by thieves as they may be used for smuggling and identity theft.

There have been numerous incidents of piracy in recent months in and around the waters of Guyana. Mariners are advised to be vigilant and take appropriate precautions.

Travelers should avoid walking alone around Georgetown, even in the main areas and especially at night. Although bandits have been known to attack taxis, they are generally safe and remain the safest means of getting about town and to and from the airport for visitors. Only taxis from reputable companies should be used. Exercise constant vigilance. Do not dress ostentatiously, as there have also been reports of gold chains or other jewelry being snatched off of pedestrians.

The response of local law-enforcement authorities to the increase in violent crime has been largely ineffectual; the police are cooperative but lack the resources to respond effectively to serious criminal incidents. Nevertheless, Americans who are victims of crime are encouraged to contact the police as well as the American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is available for minor medical conditions. Emergency care and hospitalization for major medical illnesses or surgery is limited, due to a lack of appropriately trained specialists, below standard in-hospital care, and poor sanitation. Ambulance service is limited to transportation without any medical care and is frequently not available for emergencies. An MRI (linked to the US for interpretation) has been installed and is operational, but results may take up to 4 days.

Visitors are advised to bring prescription medicine sufficient for their length of stay and should be aware that Guyana's humid climate may affect some medicines. Some prescription medicines (mainly generic rather than name-brand) are available.

Special attention should be paid to HIV/AIDS in Guyana. In addition to infection rates as high as 45% in high-risk populations such as commercial sex workers, data from a

World Health Organization study in 2006 estimate that 1.6% of the general population is infected with HIV; this is among the highest prevalence rates in Latin America and the Caribbean. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Guyana is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In 2007, road fatalities increased more than 40% from the previous year. The rate of traffic accident fatalities in Guyana is 70% higher than in the United States. The Traffic Division of Guyana's National Police Force is responsible for road safety but is ill-trained and ill-equipped. Driving in Guyana is hazardous because of very poor road surfaces; farm animals sleeping or wandering on the roads; pedestrians walking on the road; and poor driving habits, including speeding, reckless driving, tailgating, cellphone use, quick stops without signaling, failure to dim headlights and weaving in and out of traffic. Traffic lights installed in Georgetown are often ignored or simply flash, posing a risk to drivers and pedestrians. Visitors should exercise caution at all times while driving and avoid driving at night. The Department of State recommends that Embassy staff travel in groups of two or more vehicles when traveling outside of Georgetown at night.

Penalties for drivers involved in an accident resulting in injury or death are severe, including life imprisonment. If involved in an accident, call 911 for police and 913 for an ambulance. Police may be slow to respond and an ambulance may not be available.

Drivers use the left side of the road in Guyana. Seatbelt use is required by law and is enforced; failure to use a seatbelt can result in a fine. There presently are no laws in Guyana concerning use of child car seats. Both drivers and passengers on motorcycles must wear protective helmets that meet certain specifications.

Mini-buses (small twelve- to fifteen-passenger vans) ply various routes both within and between cities on no fixed schedule. Mini-bus drivers have come under severe criticism by the government, press, and private citizens for speeding, aggressive and reckless driving, overloading of vehicles, poor vehicle maintenance and repair, and offensive remarks directed at passengers. Mini-buses have been involved in a number of fatal accidents.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Guyana's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Guyana's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Airlines: Flights on all airlines are routinely delayed, rerouted, or canceled without notice. Air travel within Guyana generally depends on demand. Flights that are not full may be canceled or passengers may be expected to pay for the empty seats. Travelers to the United States from Guyana have found narcotics planted in their luggage, both in bags registered under their names and in items they were carrying for others. Travelers should not carry any items they did not purchase and pack themselves, and should take care that no additional bags are registered in their names. Travelers should hand carry medications, valuables and perishable items.

Geography: The coastal plain, which occupies about 5 percent of the country's area, is home to more than 90 percent of its inhabitants. The plain extends from the Corentyne River in the east to the Venezuelan border in the northwest. This coastal plain was created through the polder system, a technique that dams and then drains a water-covered area. The polder system consists of a front dam (the sea wall along the east coast) and a back dam (the freshwater conservancy) approximately five to six kilometers inland from the sea wall. The system is in a fragile state due to chronic lack of maintenance. In addition, a dozen major drainage canals run from the base of the dam to the Atlantic Ocean across the polder itself. These main canals are, in turn, fed by literally thousands of lateral canals that run along both sides of almost every street and road. Seasonal rains (December-January and May-July), combined with a chronic lack of maintenance and improper new construction, led to significant flooding in Greater Georgetown and along the East Coast in January 2005 and in the Mahaica-Mahaicony Abrary area, Canals 1 and 2, on the West Coast Demerara and the Pomeroon River catchment area in January 2006.

Drinking Water: An inadequate garbage removal system has resulted in illegal residential and commercial dumping on the roadside and into the drainage system. Decaying dead bodies or animal carcasses are periodically discovered in the intake canals for the Georgetown water supply. The water supply system throughout the country should be considered contaminated and water should be treated or boiled before use.

Changing Currency and Credit Card Use: Travelers should have enough cash or travelers checks to meet their expenses. With few exceptions, credit cards and ATM cards cannot be used to withdraw cash from an overseas account. Please contact your bank to see if your card will work in Guyana. Although credit cards are accepted at certain institutions in Georgetown, travelers should be careful when using them and check their receipts and statements to ensure that additional unauthorized purchases have not been made to their card. American citizens are advised to exchange currency only with banks, hotels, and licensed money exchange houses ("cambios"). Many foreigners who opt to exchange money on the streets, lured by promises of higher exchange rates, become victims of fraud or receive counterfeit currency. Foreigners have been mugged after completing bank transactions. There is no legal recourse unless the police are successful in apprehending the perpetrator; even then there is no guarantee that the money will be recovered.

Firearms: Guyanese customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Guyana of items such as firearms. If you plan to take your firearms or ammunition to or through Guyana, you should contact officials at the Embassy of Guyana to learn about its regulations and fully comply with those regulations before traveling. You may consult http://www.customs.gov for information on importing firearms into the United States.

Wildlife: Many plants and animals common in Guyana are globally threatened or endangered species protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES at www.cites.org). The Guyanese Ministry of Agriculture will grant an export permit for taking an exotic bird out of the country only to those persons who have been legally residing in Guyana for more than one year. There have been several U.S. citizens arrested for attempting to leave Guyana carrying birds without having obtained an export permit. Americans who have legally resided in Guyana for more than a year and who would like to take back to the United States any birds or animals, including pets, that are listed in CITES Appendices I, II, and III, must also have an appropriate U.S. import permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This is a U.S. regulation that applies regardless of distinctions among the three CITES Appendices. Individuals can obtain fact sheets and permit applications from the USFWS Office of Management Authority, Branch of Permits, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203, telephone (703) 358-2104, fax (703) 358-2281, http://www.fws.gov/permits.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Guyanese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Guyana are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Guyana are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Guyana. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 100 Young and Duke Streets, telephone 011-592-225-4900 through 225-4909, fax 011-592-225-8497 web site http://georgetown.usembassy.gov. Hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, except local and U.S. holidays. For emergencies after hours, on weekends and on holidays, U.S. citizens are requested to call the U.S. Embassy duty officer at 011-592-623-1992.

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Under Guyanese law only Guyanese nationals, former Guyanese nationals or non-Guyanese domiciled in Guyana may adopt Guyanese children.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:

Adoption Board, Ministry of Labor, Human Services and Social Security
1 Water and Cornhill Streets
Georgetown, Guyana
Phone: 592-225-7450
Fax: 592-227-1308

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoption in Guyana is governed by the Adoption of Children Act, Chapter 46:04. To adopt a child the applicant, or in the case of a joint application one of the applicants, must be 25 years old and be at least 21 years older than the child (18 years older if the child is a relative). Single persons may adopt in Guyana.

Residency Requirements: Guyanese law dictates that Guyanese children can only be adopted by a person domiciled in Guyana; a Guyanese national who is resident outside Guyana; or a former Guyanese national who has acquired, by registration or other voluntary and formal act (including marriage), the citizenship of another country. Non-Guyanese nationals who are not domiciled in Guyana cannot adopt Guyanese children.

Time Frame: Adoptions in Guyana typically take 1 year to complete.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no private adoption agencies in Guyana. A list of attorneys who can provide legal services related to adoption can be obtained from the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown or via the Embassy's web site at: http://georgetown.usembassy.gov. Please review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/family for a list of agencies.

Adoption Fees: Attorneys determine the fees for adoption services rendered and may vary significantly among different attorneys. No government fees are required.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents must apply in person to the Adoption Board ("the Board"). The application form, First Schedule, consists of two parts, Form A and Form B. Form A is completed and signed by the prospective adoptive parents and consists of biographical data for the applicants and prospective child and references for the prospective adoptive parents. Form B is a medical certificate for the child or children to be adopted, which must be completed by a duly qualified medical practitioner. When the prospective adoptive parents file the First Schedule, they will receive an acknowledgement slip with an appointment date for the initial adoption interview. The prospective adoptive parents, child, and biological parents must appear before the Board at the interview.

In the event that the child's biological parents are deceased, proof must be provided to the Board in the form of a death certificate. At the interview the child's birth certificate and most recent school records must be presented. Consent of each birth parent or guardian of the child is required unless the birth parent or guardian has abandoned, neglected or mistreated the child, cannot be found or is incapable of giving consent. In cases where the biological parent(s) cannot be found, advertisement of the pending adoption must be placed for three consecutive Saturdays in a daily newspaper.

A social worker interviews the birth parents, prospective adoptive parents, and children separately at the initial adoption interview. At the conclusion of the interview, the prospective adoptive parents are given an informational letter from the Board. This letter provides instructions for the prospective adoptive parent's attorney to begin preparing the court papers for the adoption process. Two copies of this letter must also be filed in the High Court by the attorney for the applicants, along with an application to appoint the Board guardian ad litem of the child. Obtaining the order may take up to six months depending on the attorney's skill and the court calendar.

After the ad litem (or first order as it is also called) is granted, the Board conducts a more thorough investigation of the case, including a visit by an officer of the Board to the home of the prospective adoptive parents to ensure that the welfare of the child is being met.

In cases where the child does not live with the prospective adoptive parents, a probationary period is allowed for bonding between the two parties. The bonding period must take place in Guyana. A report of the investigation is prepared for the Board. In addition to the investigation by the Board the parents must obtain a home study. The home study may be done locally or overseas by a certified social worker.

After the investigation is complete and the home study received by the Board, the case is placed on the Adoption Board's calendar. Cases are usually scheduled 2-3 months in advance.

The prospective adoptive parents, children, and birth parents are required to be present for the meeting. The prospective adoptive parents must also be physically present in Guyana at least one month prior to the Board meeting.

A decision in favor of the prospective adoptive parents would be followed within a week by a recommendation (Form C) of the case to the High Court for the making of a Final Order. At a later date the parties involved will be given notice to attend court before a judge in chambers for the issuance of the Final Order. Once the Final Order is issued, a copy of the child's Adoption Certificate can be obtained from the office of the Registrar General.

Required Documents: Prospective adoptive parents are required to present certified copies of birth and marriage certificates, bank statements, employment verification, police clearance and a home study, and national identity cards or passports, if non-Guyanese.

Embassy of Guyana
2490 Tracy Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 265-3834
(202) 265-6900
Fax: (202) 232-1297

Consulate General of Guyana
370 7th Avenue, Room 402
New York, N.Y. 10001
Tel: (212) 947-5115
(212) 947-5116
Fax: (212) 947-5163

In addition, Guyana has honorary consuls in Los Angeles, California; Miami, Florida; East Chicago, Indiana; and Waco, Texas.

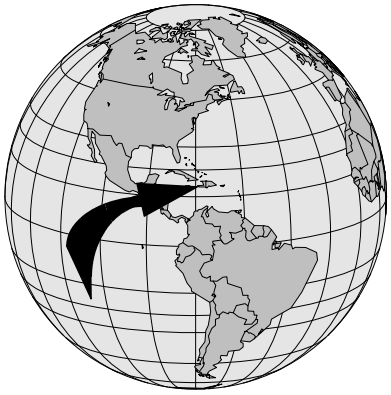
U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
99/100 Young & Duke Streets
Kingston, Georgetown
Phone: 592 225 7965/7966
Fax: 592 227 0221
Email: visageorge@state.gov
Website:
http://georgetown.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Guyana may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Kingston.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



HAITI

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Haiti

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 27,750 sq. km. (10,714 sq. mi.); about the size of Maryland. Ile de la Gonave and Ile de la Tortue comprise Haiti's principal offshore territories.

Cities: Capital—Port-au-Prince (pop. 2 million). Other cities—Cap Haitien (pop. 600,000).

Terrain: Rugged mountains with small coastal plains and river valleys, and a large east-central elevated plateau.

Climate: Warm, semiarid, high humidity in many coastal areas.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Haitian(s).

Population: (2006 census) 8.5 million.

Annual population growth rate: 1975-2001, 1.9%; 2.5% per year.

Ethnic groups: African descent 95%, African and European descent 5%.

Religions: (2003 data) Roman Catholic 55%, Protestant 28%, voudou (voodoo) practices pervasive.

Languages: French (official), Creole (official).

Education: Years compulsory—6. Adult literacy (2006 census)—56%.

Health: Child mortality—1 out of 8 children die before they reach the age of five. Life expectancy—56 years (women), 52 years (men).

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: January 1, 1804.

Constitution: March 1987.

Government branches: Executive—President. Legislative—Senate (30 seats), Chamber of Deputies (99 seats). Judicial—Court of Cassation.

Political subdivisions: Ten departments.

Political parties: Lespwa, Fanmi Lavalas (FL), Struggling People's Organization (OPL), Open the Gate Party (PLB), Christian Movement for a New Haiti (MOCHRENHA), Tet Ansam, Fusion of Socialist Democrats (FUSION), Grand Center Right Front Coalition, Assembly of Progressive National Democrats (RNDP), Union to Save Haiti, Mobilisation for Haiti's progress, Haitian Democratic and Reform Movement, several others.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $6.1 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2007) 3.2%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $713.

GDP by sector: (2006) Agriculture—27%; industry—8%; services—40%; Other—25%.

Inflation: (2007 est.) 8.1%.

Natural resources: Bauxite, copper, calcium carbonate, gold, marble.

Agriculture: (27% of GDP) Products—coffee, mangoes, sugarcane, rice, corn, cacao, sorghum, pulses, other fruits and vegetables.

Industry: (8% of GDP): Types—apparel, handicrafts, electronics assembly, food processing, beverages, tobacco products, furniture, printing, chemicals, steel.

Services: (40% of GDP): Commerce, hotels and restaurants, government, tourism.

Trade: (2006 est.) Total exports f.o.b.—$494.4 million: apparel, mangoes, leather and raw hides, seafood, electrical. Major market—U.S. Total imports f.o.b.—$1,548.3 million: grains, soybean oil, motor vehicles, machinery, meat, vegetables, plastics, petroleum.

Note: There are serious problems with national accounts in Haiti, including incomplete coverage and the questionable accuracy of raw data.

PEOPLE

Although Haiti averages about 302 people per square kilometer, its population is concentrated most heavily in

urban areas, coastal plains, and valleys. About 95% of Haitians are of African descent. The rest of the population is mostly of mixed Caucasian-African ancestry. A few are of European or Levantine heritage. Sixty percent of the population lives in rural areas.

French is one of two official languages, but it is spoken by only about 10% of the people. All Haitians speak Creole, the country's other official language. English is increasingly used as a second language among the young and in the business sector.

The dominant religion is Roman Catholicism. Increasing numbers of Haitians have converted to Protestantism through the work of missionaries active throughout the country. Much of the population also practices voudou (voodoo), recognized by the government as a religion in April 2003. Haitians tend to see no conflict in these African-rooted beliefs coexisting with Christian faith.

Although public education is free, the cost is still quite high for Haitian families who must pay for uniforms, textbooks, supplies, and other inputs. Due to weak state provision of education services, private and parochial schools account for approximately 90% of primary schools, and only 65% of primary school-aged children are actually enrolled. At the secondary level, the figure drops to around 20%. Less than 35% of those who enter will complete primary school. Though Haitians place a high value on education, few can afford to send their children to secondary school and primary school enrollment is dropping due to economic factors. Remittances sent by Haitians living abroad are important in paying educational costs.

Large-scale emigration, principally to the U.S.—but also to Canada, the Dominican Republic, The Bahamas and other Caribbean neighbors, and France—has created what Haitians refer to as the Tenth Department or the Diaspora. About one of every eight Haitians lives abroad.

HISTORY

The Spaniards used the island of Hispaniola (of which Haiti is the western part and the Dominican Republic the eastern) as a launching point from which to explore the rest of the Western Hemisphere. French buccaneers later used the western third of the island as a point from which to harass English and Spanish ships. In 1697, Spain ceded the western third of Hispaniola to France. As piracy was gradually suppressed, some French adventurers became planters, making Saint Domingue, as the French portion of the island was known, the "pearl of the Antilles"—one of the richest colonies in the 18th century French empire.

During this period, African slaves were brought to work on sugarcane and coffee plantations. In 1791, the slave population revolted—led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe—and gained control of the northern part of the French colony, waging a war of attrition against the French.

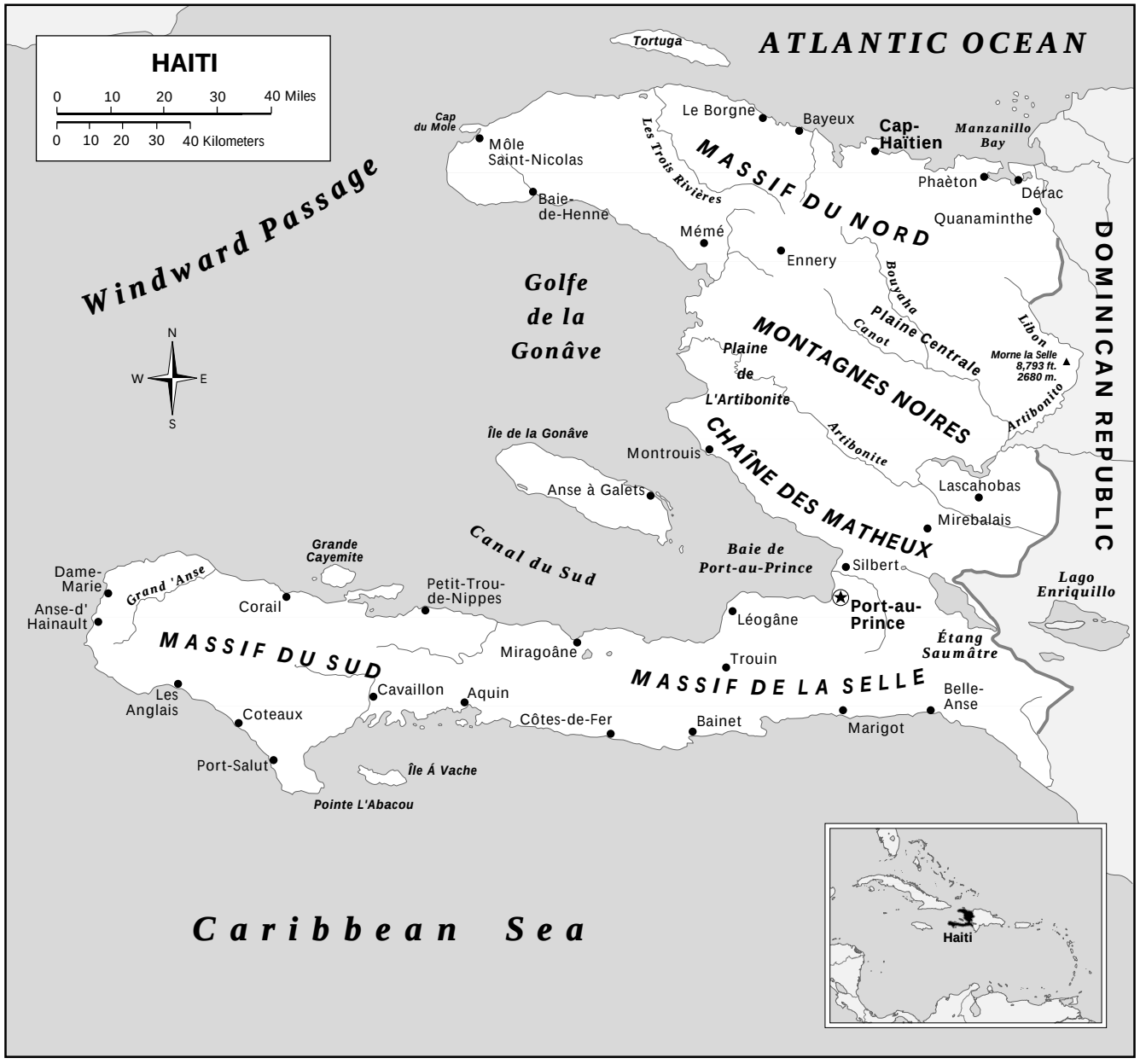
By January 1804, local forces defeated an army sent by Napoleon Bonaparte, established independence from France, and renamed the area Haiti. The impending defeat of the French in Haiti is widely credited with contributing to Napoleon's decision to sell the Louisiana territory to the United States in 1803. Haiti is the world's oldest black republic and the second-oldest republic in the Western Hemisphere, after the United States. Although Haiti actively assisted the independence movements of many Latin American countries, the independent nation of former slaves was excluded from the hemisphere's first regional meeting of independent nations, in Panama in 1826, and did not receive U.S. diplomatic recognition until 1862.

Two separate regimes—north and south—emerged after independence but were unified in 1820. Two years later, Haiti occupied Santo Domingo, the eastern, Spanish-speaking part of Hispaniola. In 1844, however, Santo Domingo broke away from Haiti and became the Dominican Republic. With 22 changes of government from 1843 to 1915, Haiti experienced numerous periods of intense political and economic disorder, prompting the United States military intervention of 1915. Following a 19-year occupation, U.S. military forces were withdrawn in 1934, and Haiti regained sovereign rule.

From February 7, 1986—when the 29-year dictatorship of the Duvalier family ended—until 1991, Haiti was ruled by a series of provisional governments. In March 1987, a constitution was ratified that provides for an elected, bicameral parliament; an elected president that serves as head of state; and a prime minister, cabinet, ministers, and supreme court appointed by the president with parliament's consent. The Haitian Constitution also provides for political decentralization through the election of mayors and administrative bodies responsible for local government.

In December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide won 67% of the vote in a presidential election that international observers deemed largely free and fair. Aristide took office on February 7, 1991, but was overthrown that September in a violent coup led by army elements and supported by many of the country's economic elite. The coup contributed to a large-scale exodus of Haitians by boat. From October 1991 to September 1994 a de facto military regime governed Haiti. Several thousand Haitians may have been killed during the de facto military rule. Various OAS and UN initiatives to end the political crisis through the peaceful restoration of the constitutionally elected government failed. On July 31, 1994, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 940, which authorized member states to use all necessary means to facilitate the departure of Haiti's military leadership and to restore Haiti's constitutionally elected government to power.

The United States took the lead in forming a multinational force (MNF) to carry out the UN's mandate by means of a military intervention. In mid-September, with U.S. troops pre-



pared to enter Haiti by force, Gen. Raoul Cedras and other top leaders agreed to accept the intervention of the MNF. On September 19, 1994, the first contingents of what became a 21,000-member international force touched down in Haiti to oversee the end of military rule and the restoration of the constitutional government. President Aristide and other elected officials in exile returned on October 15.

Nationwide local and parliamentary elections in June 1995 returned a pro-Aristide, multi-party coalition called the Lavalas Political Organization (OPL) to power at all levels. In accordance with the constitutional bar on succeeding himself, President Aristide agreed to step aside and support a presidential election in December 1995. Rene Preval, a prominent Aristide political ally, took 88% of the vote, and was sworn in to a 5-year term on February 7, 1996, during what was Haiti's first-ever transition between two democratically elected presidents.

In late 1996, former President Aristide broke from the OPL and created a new political party, the Lavalas Family (FL). The OPL, holding the majority of the Parliament, renamed itself the Struggling People's Organization. Initial results of elections in April 1997 for the renewal of one-third of the Senate and creation of commune-level assemblies and town delegations showed victories for FL candidates in most races. However, the elections, which drew only about 5% of registered voters, were plagued with allegations of fraud and not certified by most international observers as free and fair.

The government was unable to organize local and parliamentary elections due in late 1998. In early

January 1999, President Preval dismissed legislators whose terms had expired—the entire Chamber of Deputies and all but nine members of the Senate—and converted local elected officials into state employees. The President and Prime Minister then ruled by decree, establishing a cabinet composed almost entirely of FL partisans. First round elections for local councils—ASEC and CASEC, municipal governments, town delegates, the Chamber of Deputies, and two-thirds of the Senate took place on May 21, 2000. The election drew the participation of a multitude of candidates from a wide array of political parties and a voter turnout of more than 60%. Manipulated vote counting by the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) prevented run-off elections for eight Senate seats and gave the FL a virtual sweep in the first round. Although the flawed vote count undercut the credibility of the election, Haiti's new Parliament, including the contested Senators, was convened on August 28, 2000.

After this flawed election, Haiti's main bilateral donors re-channeled their assistance away from the government and announced they would not support or send observers to the November elections. Most opposition parties regrouped in an alliance that became the Democratic Convergence. Elections for President and nine Senators took place on November 26, 2000. All major opposition parties boycotted these elections, in which voter participation was estimated at 5%. Jean-Bertrand Aristide emerged as the easy victor of these controversial elections, and the candidates of his FL party swept all contested Senate seats. On February 7, 2001, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was inaugurated as President.

The political stalemate continued, and violence ensued. On July 28, 2001, unknown gunmen attacked police facilities in Port-au-Prince and the provinces. A subsequent government crackdown on opposition party members and former soldiers further increased tensions between Lavalas and Convergence. On December 17, 2001, unidentified gunmen attacked the National Palace in Port-au-Prince. Following the assault, pro-government groups attacked the offices and homes of several opposition leaders. One opposition member was killed. Negotiations between FL and Democratic Convergence were suspended indefinitely.

In January 2002, the OAS Permanent Council adopted Resolution 806 on Haiti that called for government action to address the political stalemate, growing violence, and deterioration in respect for human rights. It also authorized OAS establishment of a Special Mission in Haiti to support implementation of steps called for in Resolution 806. The OAS Special Mission worked with the government on plans to strengthen Haiti's democratic institutions in security, justice, human rights, and governance.

Security continued to deteriorate. Protest strikes and attacks on opposition demonstrations by government-supported gangs hardened attitudes on both sides. The opposition issued a public call for Aristide's removal and announced plans for a transitional government. In March 2003, a high-level joint delegation of the OAS and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) presented demands to President Aristide to restore public security; select new leadership for the Haitian National Police; arrest a notorious gang leader; and disarm the security forces used by government politicians to intimidate opponents.

Events spiraled downward: government-paid thugs violently disrupted a civil society public ceremony July 12 in Cite Soleil; police attacked civil society marches in Cap Haitien August 30 and September 14 and prevented an opposition march scheduled for October 5. Political instability grew throughout fall 2003. In Gonaives, hitherto pro-Aristide gang members led a violent rebellion against government authorities in the city. Government-sponsored repression of opposition protests reached a nadir when on December 5 pro-government gangs entered Haiti's state university campus and broke the legs of the Rector.

Following a meeting with Aristide at the Summit of the Americas in January 2004, Caribbean Community leaders proposed a plan to resolve the political crisis that President Aristide stated he accepted. A high-level international delegation came to Haiti February 21 to obtain agreement on a specific implementation timetable. President Aristide agreed, but the opposition "Democratic Platform" group of political parties and civil society expressed reservations. Meanwhile, the violence in Gonaives culminated February 5 in the "Artibonite Resistance Front" seizing control of the city. Other armed groups opposed to the Aristide government quickly emerged and succeeded in seizing control of many towns, mostly with little resistance from government authorities. By February 28, 2004, a rebel group led by a former police chief, Guy Philippe, advanced to within 25 miles of the capital. On February 29, 2004 Aristide submitted his resignation as President of Haiti and flew on a chartered plane to Africa.

2004–2007—Interim Government Gives Way to a New Democracy

Following the constitutional line of succession, Supreme Court Chief Justice Boniface Alexandre assumed the presidency and Gerard Latortue was appointed prime minister of the Interim Government of Haiti (IGOH) with the mandate of organizing elections to choose a new government. The interim government managed to organize three rounds of elections with the help of the OAS and UN. The first round of elections for President and Parliament took place peacefully on February 7, 2006, with a turnout estimated at over 60% of registered voters. The elections were considered generally free, fair, transparent, and democratic by national and international observers.

Rene Preval, former President (1996-2001) and former ally to Aristide, won the presidential election with 51.15%. Partial results first showed he fell short of an absolute majority, which triggered demonstrations against alleged fraud. The later decision of

the Electoral Council not to count blank ballots gave the victory to Preval. The Parliament, composed of a 30-seat Senate and a 99-member Chamber of Deputies, was elected in two rounds held on February 7 and April 21, 2006. Lespwa is the main political force in both chambers but fell short of the majority. Fusion, UNION, Alyans, OPL, and Famni Lavalas have many representatives in both chambers. Preval chose his long-time political associate and former Prime Minister Jacques-Edouard Alexis to serve again as his Prime Minister. Municipal elections were held December 3, 2006 and April 29, 2007. Some of these local government positions had not been filled in over a decade.

International Presence 1995–2004

After the transition of the 21,000-strong MNF into a peacekeeping force on March 31, 1995, the presence of international military forces that helped restore constitutional government to power was gradually ended. Initially, the U.S.-led UN peacekeeping force numbered 6,000 troops, but that number was scaled back progressively over the next 4 years as a series of UN technical missions succeeded the peacekeeping force. By January 2000, all U.S. troops stationed in Haiti had departed. In March 2000, the UN peacekeeping mission transitioned into a peacebuilding mission, the International Civilian Support Mission in Haiti (MICAH). MICAH consisted of some 80 non-uniformed UN technical advisers providing advice and material assistance in policing, justice, and human rights to the Haitian Government. MICAH's mandate ended on February 7, 2001, coinciding with the end of the Preval administration. The OAS Special Mission has some 25 international police advisors who arrived in summer 2003; is in addition to observing and reporting Haitian police performance, they provide limited technical assistance.

International Presence 2004–Present

At the request of the interim government and the UN, the U.S.-led Multilateral Interim Force, made up of troops from the U.S., Canada, France, and Chile, arrived in Port-au-Prince to ensure stability until the arrival of a UN peacekeeping force.

In April 2004, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1542, which created the UN Stability Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Since that time, the Security Council has consistently and unanimously approved the renewal of MINUSTAH's mandate at 6-month intervals. On October 14, 2008, the UNSC voted unanimously to extend MINUSTAH's mandate for 12 months through October 14, 2009. The Stability Mission is currently authorized at 7,060 troops and 2,091 civilian police.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Rene Garcia PREVAL**
Prime Min.: **Michele Duvivier PIERRE-LOUIS**
Min. of Agriculture, Natural Resources, & Rural Development: **Joanas GUE**
Min. of Commerce & Industry: **Marie Josee GARNIER**
Min. of Culture & Communication: **Olsen JEAN-JULIE**
Min. of the Economy & Finance: **Daniel DORSAINVIL**
Min. of Environment: **Jean-Marie Claude GERMAIN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Worship: **Alrich NICOLAS**
Min. of Haitians Living Abroad: **Charles MANGAT**
Min. of Interior & Territorial Collectivities: **Paul Antoine BIEN-AIME**
Min. of Justice & Public Security: **Michele Duvivier PIERRE-LOUIS**
Min. of National Education & Professional Training: **Joel Desrosiers JEAN-PIERRE**
Min. of Planning & External Cooperation: **Jean-Max BELLERIVE**
Min. of Public Health & Population: **Alex LARSEN**
Min. of Public Works, Transport, & Communications: **Gerald JEAN-BAPTISTE**
Min. of Social Affairs & Labor: **Gabrielle Previlon BAUDIN**
Min. of Tourism: **Patrick DELATOUR**
Min. of Women's Affairs & Rights: **Marie-Laurence Jocelyn LASSEGUE**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Civic Action: **Evans LESCOUFLAIR**
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. in Charge of Relations With Parliament: **Joseph JASMIN**
Ambassador to the US: **Raymond JOSEPH**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Leo MERORES**

The Embassy of Haiti is located at 2311 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-332-4090).

ECONOMY

Haiti remains the least-developed country in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. Comparative social and economic indicators show Haiti falling behind other low-income developing countries (particularly in the hemisphere) since the 1980s. Haiti now ranks 146th of 177 countries in the UN's Human Development Index. Haiti's economic stagnation is the result of earlier inappropriate economic policies, political instability, a shortage of good arable land, environmental deterioration, continued reliance on traditional technologies, under-capitalization and lack of public investment in human resources, migration of large portions of the skilled population, a weak national savings rate, and the lack of a functioning judicial system.

The 1991 coup and the irresponsible economic and financial policies of the de facto regime resulted in a sharp economic decline from 1991-94. Following the coup, the United States adopted mandatory sanctions, and the OAS instituted voluntary sanctions aimed at restoring constitutional government. International sanctions culminated in the May 1994 UN embargo of all goods entering Haiti except humanitarian supplies, such as food and medicine. The assembly sector, heavily dependent on U.S. markets, employed over 100,000 workers in the mid-1980s. During the embargo, employment fell below 17,000. Private domestic and

foreign investment has returned to Haiti slowly. Since the embargo's end, assembly sector employment has gradually recovered to about 18,500. The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Act (HOPE), enacted by the U.S. Congress in December 2006, provides new trade preferences for textile/apparel products that could boost production in the sector. However, growth has been stalled by investor concerns over security, lack of access to credit, and legal and physical infrastructure constraints.

Under President Preval (1996-2001), the country's economic agenda included trade/tariff liberalization, measures to control government expenditure and increase tax revenues, civil service downsizing, financial sector reform, and the modernization of two out of nine state-owned enterprises through their sale to private investors, the provision of private sector management contracts, or joint public-private investment. Structural adjustment agreements with international financial institutions (IFIs) intended to create conditions for private sector growth proved only partly successful, however. Workers in Haiti are guaranteed the right of association. Unionization is protected by the labor code. A legal minimum wage of 70 gourdes a day (about U.S. $1.70) applies to most workers in the formal sector.

Haiti's real GDP growth turned negative in FY 2001 after six years of growth. Following almost 4 years of recession ending in 2004, the economy grew by 1.5% in 2005, 2.5% in 2006, and 3.2% in 2007. But significant improvement in living standards would require an estimated doubling of the growth rate. Since the departure of President Aristide, the financial situation has stabilized. Inflation fell from 42.7% at end-2003 to 8.1% for calendar year 2007. The interim government conducted a largely sound fiscal policy, which was followed by the Alexis government. But the traditional low revenue collection rate (roughly 9% of the GDP) constrained its ability to provide social services and invest in physical and human capital. External assistance (approximately $965 million from July 2004 through March 2006) as well as diaspora remittances (estimated at approximately $1.65 billion) remain critical to keeping the economy afloat. In November 2006, Haiti was approved for an International Monetary Fund (IMF) Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and reached decision point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Haiti is one of the original members of the United Nations and several of its specialized and related agencies, as well as a member of the Organization of American States (OAS). It maintains diplomatic relations with several dozen countries.

The international community rallied to Haiti's defense during the 1991-94 period of de facto military rule. Thirty-one countries participated in the U.S.-led multinational force (MNF) which, acting under UN auspices, intervened in September 1994 to help restore the legitimate government and create a secure and stable environment in Haiti. At its peak, the MNF included roughly 21,000 troops, mostly Americans, and more than 1,000 international police monitors. Within 6 months, the troop level was gradually reduced as the MNF transitioned to a 6,000-strong peacekeeping force, the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). UNMIH was charged with maintaining the secure environment which the MNF had helped establish as well as nurturing Haiti's new police force through the presence of 900 police advisers. A total of 38 countries participated in UNMIH.

To spur Haiti's social and economic recovery from decades of misrule before that, international donors pledged in 1994 to provide more than $2 billion over five years in total assistance. Most bilateral assistance is now channeled through non-governmental organizations. Major bilateral donors are led by the United States, with the largest program, and include Canada, the EU, France, Germany, Japan, and Taiwan. Cuba provides highly visible, low-cost medical and technical experts. Multilateral aid is provided by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and the UN and its agencies. All aid is coordinated informally by the World Bank.

In July 2004, $1.085 billion was pledged through 2006 at the World Bank Donors' Conference. Donors include the U.S., Canada, the EU, France, Sweden, Spain, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Greece, Norway, Mexico, and Ireland. The IDB and the World Bank pledged multilateral aid. As of March 2006, $965 million had been disbursed, mainly to address humanitarian needs.

U.S.-HAITI RELATIONS

U.S. policy toward Haiti is designed to foster and strengthen democracy; help alleviate poverty, illiteracy, and malnutrition; promote respect for human rights; and counter illegal migration and drug trafficking. The U.S. also supports and facilitates bilateral trade and investment along with legal migration and travel. U.S. policy goals are met through direct bilateral action and by working with the international community. The United States has taken a leading role in organizing international involvement with Haiti. The United States works closely with the Organization of American States (OAS; see "Key OAS Issues"), particularly through the Secretary General's "Friends of Haiti" group (originally a UN group that included the U.S., Canada, France, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina which was enlarged in 2001 to add Germany, Spain, Norway, Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and The Bahamas), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and individual countries to achieve policy goals.

Maintaining good relations with and fostering democracy in Haiti are important for many reasons, not least

of which is the country's geographical proximity to the continental United States. In addition to the many Haitians who receive visas to immigrate into the U.S. (averaging over 13,000 annually in FY 1999-2003), there is a flow of illegal migrants. Over 100,000 undocumented Haitian migrants were intercepted at sea by the U.S. Coast Guard in the past two decades, particularly during the 1991-94 period of illegal military rule when more than 67,000 migrants were interdicted. Since the return of the legitimate government in 1994, the interdiction of illegal migrants by U.S. Coast Guard vessels has decreased dramatically, averaging fewer than 1,500 annually. Neighboring Caribbean countries, particularly The Bahamas, continue to interdict Haitian migrants as well. The prospect remains, however, for the renewal of higher flows of illegal migrants, particularly under conditions of political unrest or further economic downturn.

U.S. Economic and Development Assistance

Political insecurity and the failure of Haiti's governments to invest in developing the country's natural and human resources has contributed significantly to the country's current state of underdevelopment. U.S. efforts to strengthen democracy and help build the foundation for economic growth aim to rectify this condition. The U.S. has been Haiti's largest donor since 1973. Between FY 1995 and FY 2003, the U.S. contributed more than $850 million in assistance to Haiti. Since 2004, the U.S. has provided over $600 million for improving governance, security, the rule of law, economic recovery, and critical human needs. The President's budget request for FY 2007 was $198 million. U.S. Government funds have been used to support programs that have addressed a variety of problems. Additional information on U.S. assistance to Haiti can be found at http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2006/77358.htm.

Haiti has been plagued for decades by extremely high unemployment and underemployment. The precipitous decline in urban assembly sector jobs, from a high of over 100,000 in 1986 to fewer than 20,000 in 2006, exacerbated the scarcity of jobs. To revitalize the economy, U.S. assistance attempts to create opportunities for stable sustainable employment for the growing population, particularly in rural areas. More recently, programs that help to increase commercial bank lending to micro-enterprises, especially in the agricultural sector, have helped to create a significant number of jobs. U.S. assistance is channeled primarily through private voluntary agencies and contractors to ensure efficient implementation of U.S. assistance programs.

Combating Drug Trafficking

Haiti is a major transshipment point for South American narcotics, primarily cocaine, being sent to the United States. To counter this threat, the U.S. has taken a number of steps, including vetting and training the counternarcotics division of the Haitian National Police, providing material assistance and training to the Haitian Coast Guard for drug and migrant interdiction, and obtaining the expulsion of several traffickers under indictment in the United States.

U.S. Business Opportunities

The U.S. remains Haiti's largest trading partner. Port-au-Prince is less than 2 hours by air from Miami, with several daily direct flights. A daily flight also connects Port-au-Prince with New York, and a new Port-au-Prince-Fort Lauderdale flight started in 2007. Both Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien on the north coast have deep-water port facilities. Many Haitian entrepreneurs conduct business in English, and U.S. currency circulates freely in Haiti. A number of U.S. firms, including commercial banks, telecommunications, airlines, oil and agribusiness companies, and U.S.-owned assembly plants are present in Haiti.

Further opportunities for U.S. businesses include the development and trade of raw and processed agricultural products; medical supplies and equipment; rebuilding and modernizing Haiti's depleted infrastructure; developing tourism and allied sectors—including arts and crafts; and improving capacity in waste disposal, transportation, energy, telecommunications, and export assembly operations. Haiti's primary assembly sector inputs include textiles, electronics components, and packaging materials. Other U.S. export prospects include electronic machinery, including power-generation, sound and television equipment, plastics and paper, construction materials, plumbing fixtures, hardware, and lumber. Benefits for both Haitian and American importers and exporters are available under the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA)—which provides for duty-free export of many Haitian products assembled from U.S. components or materials—the successor program to the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and the HOPE Act, which provides additional duty-free preferences for qualifying apparel/textiles products and automotive wire harnesses.

U.S. export opportunities also exist for four-wheel-drive vehicles, consumer electronics, rice, wheat, flour, animal and vegetable fats, meat, chicken, vegetables, and processed foodstuffs. The Government of Haiti seeks to reactivate and develop agricultural industries where Haiti enjoys comparative advantages, among which are essential oils, spices, fruits and vegetables, and sisal. The government encourages the inflow of new capital and technological innovations. Additional information on business opportunities in Haiti can be found at the Country Commercial Guide for Haiti.

Establishing a Business

Individuals wishing to practice a trade in Haiti must obtain an immigrant visa from a Haitian Consulate and, in most cases, a government work permit. Transient and resident traders must also have a professional ID card.

Property restrictions still exist for foreign individuals. Property rights of foreigners are limited to 1.29 hectares in urban areas and 6.45 hectares in rural areas. No foreigner may own more than one residence in the same district, or own property or buildings near the border.

To own real estate, authorization from the Ministry of Justice is necessary. Hurdles for businesses in Haiti include poor infrastructure, a high-cost port, an irregular supply of electricity, and Customs delays. There is little direct investment.

In November 2002, the Haitian Parliament passed an investment law prohibiting fiscal and legal discrimination against foreign investors. The 2002 law explicitly recognizes the crucial role of foreign direct investment in spurring economic growth and aims to facilitate, liberalize, and stimulate private investment in Haiti.

Foreign investment protection is also provided by the Haitian Constitution of 1987, which permits expropriation of private property for public use or land reform with payment in advance. American firms enjoy free transfer of interest, dividends, profits, and other revenues stemming from their investments, and are guaranteed just compensation paid in advance of expropriation, as well as compensation in case of damages or losses caused by war, revolution, or insurrection.

The U.S. and Haiti have a bilateral agreement on investment guarantees that permits the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation to offer programs in Haiti. The two governments also signed a bilateral investment treaty in December 1983, but it was not ratified.

Additional information on establishing a business in Haiti can be found at www.export.gov, then to market research, then Country Commercial Guides.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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MGT:	Thomas Doherty
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CG:	Donald Moore
DCM:	Thomas C. Tighe
PAO:	Ellickson-Brown, James
GSO:	Steve Goertz
RSO:	Edwin Guard
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Tel: (509) 222-0281 or (509) 222-2475

Haitian-American Chamber of Commerce and Industry: (AMCHAM)
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Republic of Haiti
Tel: (509) 511-3024, fax not available

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 2, 2008

Country Description: Haiti is one of the least developed and least stable countries in the Western Hemisphere. The availability of consumer goods and services is barely adequate in the capital, Port-au-Prince, but other parts of the country experience chronic shortages. Most consumer products are imported and expensive. Some tourism facilities in the large cities and resort areas are satisfactory, but many are rudimentary at best, and are difficult to find in most rural areas and small towns.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. Haitian law requires U.S. citizens to have a passport to enter and exit Haiti. Once in Haiti, an undocumented U.S. citizen can experience delays of several weeks for the issuance of a passport, as it is often more difficult to establish identity and citizenship overseas than in the United States. The Haitian government

requires foreigners to pay a departure fee. U.S. citizens are encouraged to contact the Embassy of the Republic of Haiti for more details regarding current entry, departure and customs requirements for Haiti. The Embassy of the Republic of Haiti is located at 2311 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; the telephone number is (202) 332-4090, and the Internet address is http://www.haiti.org. There are Haitian consulates in Miami and Orlando, Florida; Boston, Massachusetts; New York, NY; Chicago, Illinois and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens should exercise extreme caution and are strongly encouraged to register online at https://travelregistration.state.gov prior to travel.

Travel in Haiti can be dangerous and all visitors are urged to exercise vigilance and caution. In some cities and towns ordinary services such as water, electricity, police protection and government services are either very limited or unavailable. While U.N. personnel from several countries have been in Haiti since 2004, their presence does not guarantee absolute security for residents or visitors.

During 2007 and early April 2008, the Embassy issued several security related messages warning U.S. citizens in Haiti of violent or unstable conditions. On occasion, the U.S. mission in Haiti was forced to suspend service to the public or close because of security concerns. These concerns have also prevented Embassy personnel from traveling to or through some areas. Since October 2004 Embassy personnel have been prohibited from entering central Port-au-Prince after dark due to security concerns. The Embassy has also imposed a curfew on its officers from time to time. If situations occur where the Embassy must suspend operations or when officers are unable to travel freely, the Embassy will continue to be available by telephone to offer emergency services to U.S. citizens.

In early April 2008, there were violent demonstrations, looting, transportation disruptions, and up to seven reported deaths in Les Cayes and Port-au-Prince. Some American citizens were temporarily stranded in isolated locations and could not safely travel until calm was restored. Because political and economic conditions precipitating the civil unrest have not been entirely resolved, American citizens should defer non-essential travel to Haiti.

U.S. citizens in Haiti should avoid all large gatherings, as crowd behavior can be unpredictable. Visitors encountering roadblocks, demonstrations, or large crowds should remain calm and depart the area quickly and without confrontation. Assistance from Haitian officials, such as the police, is often unavailable. Overseas visitors must be particularly cautious on the days of planned political activities. U.S. citizens are urged to take common-sense precautions and avoid any event where crowds may congregate.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: There are no "safe areas" in Haiti. Crime, a chronic problem over the years, has increased in recent years and can be subject to periodic surges sometimes not obviously explained by other events or conditions. The U.S. estimates that up to 8% of the cocaine entering the United States passes through Haiti. The state of law and order has steadily deteriorated as a result. Reports of kidnapping, death threats, murders, drug-related shootouts, armed robberies, break-ins or carjackings are common. These crimes are primarily Haitian against Haitian, though several foreigners and U.S. citizens have been victimized. In 2007, there were 29 reported kidnappings of American citizens, including two victims who were killed. Many American citizens reported that they were beaten and or raped by their hostage takers. Kidnapping remains the most critical security concern; kidnappers frequently target children.

U.S. citizens who travel to Haiti should exercise extreme caution throughout the country. Travelers should keep valuables well hidden, ensure possessions are not left in parked vehicles, use private transportation, alternate travel routes, and keep doors and windows in homes and vehicles closed and locked. U.S. citizens should avoid all nighttime travel due to poor road conditions and increased criminal activity after dark. They should be alert for suspicious onlookers when entering and exiting banks, as criminals often watch and subsequently attack bank customers. Withdrawals of large amounts of cash should be avoided.

Criminal perpetrators often operate in groups of two to four individuals, and are disposed occasionally to be confrontational and gratuitously violent. Criminals sometimes will seriously injure or kill those who resist their attempts to commit crime. In robberies or home invasions, it is not uncommon for the assailants to beat or shoot the victim in order to limit the victim's ability to resist. If an armed individual demands the surrender of a vehicle or other valuables, the U.S. Embassy recommends compliance without resistance. This recommendation also applies in the event of a kidnapping. Visitors to Haiti should exercise caution at all times and review basic personal security procedures frequently.

U.S. citizens in Haiti must be particularly alert when arriving from overseas at the Port-au-Prince airport, as criminals have often targeted arriving passengers for later assaults and robberies. Some recent incidents have resulted in death. The use of public transportation, including "tap-taps" (private transportation used for commercial purposes), is not recommended. Visitors to Haiti should arrange for someone known to them to meet them at the airport.

U.S. citizens should decline all requests to carry items for others to or from Haiti. Traffickers of illegal drugs have duped unsuspecting travelers into helping transport narcotics aboard commercial airlines.

Certain high-crime zones in the Port-au-Prince area should be avoided, including Croix-des-Bouquets, Carrefour, Martissant, the port road (Boulevard La Saline), urban route Nationale #1, the airport road (Boulevard Toussaint L'Ouverture) and its adjoining connectors to the New ("American") Road via Route Nationale #1 (which should also be avoided). This latter area in particular has been the scene of numerous robberies, carjackings, and murders. Embassy employees are prohibited from remaining in the downtown area after dark or entering Cite Soleil and La Saline and their surrounding environs due to significant criminal activity. Neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince once considered relatively safe, such as the Delmas road area and Petionville, have been the scenes of an increasing number of violent crimes.

Cameras and video cameras should only be used with the permission of the subjects; violent incidents have followed unwelcome photography. Their use should be avoided altogether in high-crime areas.

Holiday periods, especially Christmas and Carnival, often bring a significant increase in criminal activity. Haiti's Carnival season is marked by street celebrations in the days leading up to Ash Wednesday. In recent years, Carnival has been accompanied by civil disturbances, altercations and severe traffic disruptions. People attending Carnival events or simply caught in the resulting celebrations have been injured and killed. Random stabbings during Carnival season are frequent. Roving musical bands called "rah-rahs" operate during the period from New Year's Day through Carnival. Being caught in a rah-rah event may begin as an enjoyable experience, but the potential for injury and the destruction of property is high. A mob mentality can develop unexpectedly leaving people and cars engulfed and at risk. During Carnival, rah-rahs continuously form without warning; some rah-rahs have identified themselves with political entities, lending further potential for violence.

The Haitian police are understaffed, poorly equipped and unable to respond to most calls for assistance. There are continued allegations of police complicity in criminal activity. The unsatisfactory response and enforcement capabilities of the Haitian national police and the weakness of the judiciary frustrate many victims of crime in Haiti. In the past, U.S. citizens involved in business and property disputes in Haiti have been arrested and detained without charge, and have been released only after intervention at high levels of the Haitian Government.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Haiti are scarce and for the most part sub-standard; outside the capital standards are even lower. Medical care in Port-au-Prince is limited, and the level of community sanitation is extremely low. Life-threatening emergencies often require evacuation by air ambulance at the patient's expense. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Haiti is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Cars are supposed to be driven on the right side of the road in Haiti, but few roads have lane indicators and drivers use whatever part of the road is open to them, even if it is not the correct side of the road. Traffic is extremely congested in urban areas, and hours-long traffic jams develop throughout the country.

Driving in Haiti must be undertaken with extreme caution. The situation on the roads can be described as chaotic at best, and it is advisable for those with no knowledge of Haitian roads and traffic customs to hire a driver through a local hotel. Roads are generally unmarked, and detailed and accurate maps are not widely available. Lanes are not marked and signs indicating the direction of traffic flow seldom exist. This lack of organization, along with huge potholes that occur without warning, may cause drivers to execute unpredictable and dangerous maneuvers in heavy traffic. The Haitian govern-

ment lacks adequate resources to assist drivers in distress or to clear the road of accidents or broken-down vehicles blocking the flow of traffic. Drinking and driving is illegal in Haiti, but people frequently drive after drinking, especially at night.

Public transportation as it is usually defined does not exist in Haiti. While Haitians use buses, "taptaps" and taxis, which may observe regular routes, much like public transportation, none of these should be considered reliable. The Embassy strongly discourages their use.

Those who drive in Haiti should do so defensively and conservatively, avoid confrontations such as jockeying for position, and remain aware of the vehicles around them. Drivers should carry the phone numbers of people to call for assistance in an emergency, as Haitian authorities are unlikely to respond to requests for assistance. When traveling outside of Port-au-Prince, drivers should caravan with other vehicles to avoid being stranded in the event of an accident or breakdown.

As neither written nor driving tests are required to qualify for driver's licenses, road laws are not generally known or applied. Signaling imminent actions is not widely practiced, and not all drivers use turn indicators or international hand signals properly. For instance, many drivers use their left blinker for all actions, including turning right and stopping in the road, and others flap their left arm out the window to indicate that they will be taking an unspecified action. Drivers do not always verify that the road is clear before switching lanes, turning, or merging.

Speed limits are seldom posted and are generally ignored. Speeding is the cause of many of the fatal traffic accidents in Haiti, as are overloaded vehicles on winding, mountainous roads and vehicles without brakes. Poor maintenance and mechanical failures often cause accidents as well. Drivers should be particularly cautious at night, as unlighted vehicles can appear without warning. Right of way is not widely observed in Haiti, and there are few operational traffic lights or traffic signs. It is advisable at most intersections to stop and verify that there is no oncoming traffic even if it appears that you have the right of way. Drivers can be quite aggressive and will seldom yield. Walls built to the edge of roads frequently make it impossible to see around corners, forcing drivers to edge their cars into the road at intersections to check for oncoming traffic.

In addition to vehicles, a variety of other objects may appear on the road in Haiti, such as wooden carts dragged by people, small ice cream carts, animals, mechanics working on vehicles parked on the street, and even vendors and their wares. Vehicles are often abandoned in the road or by the side of the road. There are few marked crosswalks and sidewalks, and pedestrians often wend their way through traffic in urban areas.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Haiti's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Haiti's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The official currency of Haiti is the gourde, which has a variable exchange rate. Visitors will notice that most establishments in Haiti price items in an unofficial currency known as the "Haitian dollar." (One Haitian dollar is equivalent to five gourdes.) Others give prices in gourdes or even in U.S. dollars. It is always a good idea to clarify with vendors which currency—the gourde, Haitian dollar, or U.S. dollar—is being used in a given transaction, as price tags often bear a number without indicating currency. The currency itself shows a value in gourdes. U.S. dollars are the currency of choice at the Labadee Beach cruise ship port-of-call.

Travelers' checks are often difficult to change in Haiti, but credit cards are widely accepted and some establishments accept or cash personal checks. At least one local bank chain has ATMs around Port-au-Prince that are compatible with some U.S. ATM cards. These ATMs are frequently out-of-order, and there have been reports of over-charging accounts.

Haiti, like most Caribbean countries, can be affected by hurricanes and other storms. Hurricane season runs from approximately June 1—November 30 each year. Extensive flooding as a result of heavy rainfall has occurred in the past. Daily weather information in Haiti is available from national and international media. The Haitian meteorological service provides hurricane warnings via national radio. Both media and government information is only in Kreyol and/or French. Warnings are also available on the internet from many sources among which is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) at hurricanes.noaa.gov. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Haiti's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Haiti are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. The judicial process in Haiti can be extremely long; progress is often dependent on considerations not related to the specific case. Detainees may wait months or years for their cases to be heard before a judge or to have legal decisions acted upon by the authorities. Bond is not usually available to those arrested for serious crimes with the result that often suspects remain in custody for

many months before formal indictment. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Haiti are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Departments travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Haiti. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at Boulevard du 15 October, Tabarre 41, Tabarre, Haiti. The main Embassy switchboard number is: (509) (2) 229-8000. The America Citizens Services (ACS) Unit fax number is (509) (2) 229-8027, the email address is acspap@hotmail.com. Web site: http://haiti.usembassy.gov. ACS Unit office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Consular Section is closed on U.S. and local holidays.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Haiti is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Haiti and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Haiti place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Haiti with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: Normally, in Haiti, parents who are legally married share the custody of their children. If they are not married, custody is decided by a court. The rights of the designated parent will be set within the scope of the court order. Culture, ethnicity, and gender do not have an impact in custody disputes. However, morality, financial resources, dependability, and availability are essential elements that are taken into account in custody disputes. Parental kidnapping is considered a crime and the length of imprisonment depends on the age of the child abducted.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforced in Haiti.

Visitation Rights: In cases where legal custody has been granted and the judgment has been rendered, the non-custodial parent can petition the court for visitation rights within the court ordered decision or come to a verbal agreement with the custodial parent.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Haitian law.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Haiti. However, travel restrictions can be imposed on married women or children. This authorization requires certification from the Haiti immigration office before they may exit the country.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Haitian court should retain an attorney in Haiti. The U.S. Embassy in Haiti maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy Port-Au-Prince
Consular Section
5 Harry Truman Blvd
P O Box 1761
Port-au-Prince
Haiti
Telephone: (509) 223-7011
Fax: [509] 223-9665
Web site: http://usembassy.state.gov

Questions involving Haitian law should be addressed to a Haitian attorney or to the Embassy of Haiti in the United States at:

Embassy of Haiti
2311 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 332-4090
Internet: http://www.haiti.org

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the

Intercountry Adoption section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Haiti is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Haitian law does not allow for a Haitian child to travel to the United States to be adopted. Therefore, prospective adoptive parents must obtain a full and final adoption under Haitian law before the child can immigrate to the United States. Prospective adoptive parents can expect a lengthy process to adopt a child in Haiti.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Haiti, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Haiti also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Haitian law does not require prospective adoptive parents to reside in Haiti, although Haitian courts and/or the Institut du Bien Etre Social et de Recherches (IBESR, the Haitian adoption authority) may require American prospective adoptive parents to travel to Haiti before the adoption is finalized. The United States Government does not require adoptive parents to travel to Haiti at any time during the adoption and immigrant visa process.

Age Requirements: Under Haitian law, at least one prospective adoptive parent must be 35 or older. For married couples, one prospective adoptive parent may be under age 35, provided the couple has been married for ten years and has no biological children.

Marriage Requirements: Adoptions by married couples require the consent of both spouses. This restriction can be waived with permission from the President of Haiti. While Presidential waivers of ineligibility are sometimes issued, they are difficult to obtain and require a lengthy period of time to process. United States immigration procedures still require the signature of both spouses on the USCIS Form I-600 (Petition to Classify Orphan as Immediate Relative).

Other Requirements: Haitian law permits adoptions by single parents, provided they meet the residency and age requirements.

Who Can Be Adopted? Haiti has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. You cannot adopt a child in Haiti unless he or she meets the requirements outlined below.

In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States immigration law for you to bring him or her back to the United States. Learn more about United States requirements.

Relinquishment Requirements: Prospective adoptive parent(s) must obtain release from the child's surviving parent(s) or legal guardian. Known as the Extrait des Minutes des Greffes, this can only be obtained from the Tribunal de Paix (Justice of the Peace) with jurisdiction over the residence of the child.

Abandonment Requirements: If the biological parents of the child are deceased, their Extrait de Decès (extract of death) must be obtained from the Haitian National Archives.

Haitian Adoption Authority: Institut du Bien Etre Social et de Recherches (IBESR)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Haiti is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption agencies must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Haiti to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS.

Prospective adoptive parents must submit the Extrait des Minutes des Greffes (or Extrait de Decès, if applicable) to IBESR, which will investigate, among other things, the medical and psychological well-being of the prospective adoptive parents and child. If you are found to be eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, IBESR will provide you with a referral to the child.

The child must be eligible to be adopted according to Haiti's requirements. The child must also meet the definition of an orphan under United States immigration law.

Role of the Adoption Authority: If IBESR approves the adoption, it issues an Autorisation d'Adoption, Authorization of Adoption.

Only the IBESR office in Port-au-Prince can authorize an adoption. IBESR regional offices do not have this authority. This second step is often the most time-consuming in the overall adoption process. Each case has different mitigating factors, some more complicated than others, all of which can have a direct impact on the length of time it takes IBESR to process an individual case. The Immigrant Visa Unit of the United States Embassy has no authority over or ability to influence how quickly IBESR processes its caseload or which cases it takes in which order.

Role of the Court: Prospective adoptive parents must present the IBESR Authorization of Adoption to the Tribunal Civil (Civil Court) that has jurisdiction over the child's residence in order to obtain an Acte d'Adoption (Adoption Act), which finalizes the adoption.

Adoption Application: Prospective adoptive parents should file their application with IBESR.

Time Frame: The adoption process in Haiti frequently requires as long as eighteen months, primarily because the legal process is complex. Often adoption applications can take more than two years. Once an adoption case has been approved by

IBESR and USCIS, the adoptive parent(s) must apply for a Haitian passport for the child; this process can take an additional two or three months after the receipt of the Acte d'Adoption. Only after a Haitian passport has been obtained can the two-week process of obtaining an immigrant visa appointment at the Immigrant Visa Unit (Adoptions Unit) of the United States Embassy Consular Section begin. If at the time of the visa interview the adoption case is complete and the immigrant visa is issuable, the visa itself is typically available within two business days.

Adoption Fees: IBESR charges approximately $140 USD. Haiti's courts charge for judicial services, but their fees are not fixed. Prospective adoptive parents should expect to pay varying court fees and expenses. The approximate total cost to adopt a child in Haiti is $3,000 USD, excluding airfare; however, some adoptive parents report paying larger sums.

The adoptive parents must also pay the cost of the child's medical examination. The fee is $40 USD for children under age 10. For children over the age of 10, the fee is $40 USD, plus an additional $110 USD for vaccinations. Note that the vaccinations may be waived for completion in the United States if the child is under the age of 10.

Haitian and United States law prohibit any payments to the child's birth parent(s) or guardian(s) by the prospective adoptive parent(s) or their agents.

Documents Required: All documents are required to be translated into French and authenticated by a Haitian consul in the United States. The following is a list of documents for the child that are required by IBESR to process an adoption application:

- Three identity photos;
- A Haitian legal document called the "Certificate of Abandonment" from the birth mother and father (if known);
- Relinquishment of parental rights from each birth parent (if the birth parents are deceased, the surviving relatives or legal guardian must issue this document);
- The child's "extrait de naissance" and the "extrait de naissance," if available;
- Death certificate of the birth parents ("extrait de decès"), if applicable;
- The child's social history, which is a statement prepared by a social worker appointed by IBESR, stating how the child became an abandoned child;
- A psychological evaluation of the child; and
- A complete medical report that includes tests for tuberculosis, HIV, and sickle cell anemia.
- A statement from the prospective adoptive parents that they plan to adopt a child in Haiti;
- Three identity photos of each of the prospective adoptive parents;
- Birth certificate of each prospective adoptive parent (or Extrait de Naissance if born in Haiti);
- Marriage certificate of the prospective adoptive parents (Extrait de Mariage if married in Haiti; not required of single adoptive parent);
- An original notarized power of attorney designating whoever may act on the parents' behalf in Haiti (if applicable; a fax copy is not sufficient);
- A report from the adoptive parent's United States state of residence indicating that they are authorized to adopt a child;
- Financial documents, including tax returns, job letters, notarized bank account documents and copies of deeds and mortgages (prospective adoptive parents should forward the Form I-864 Affidavit of Support with the requisite attachments);
- An evaluation of the household environment in which the adoptive child will live (the home study conducted for the I-600A can be used to fulfill this requirement);
- A statement from a competent police authority in the prospective adoptive parent's town of residence indicating the absence of a criminal record (this is included in the home study and the I-171H is sufficient for this requirement);
- Medical examination reports for the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- A psychological evaluation report of the prospective adoptive parent(s); and
- Two letters of reference.

After IBESR approves the adoption, the Haitian courts require that prospective adoptive parents submit the following documents:

- The adoptive parents' birth certificates (if born in Haiti, these must be the official Extrait de Naissance (Extract of Birth) available from the Haitian National Archives);
- The child's Extrait de Naissance; this should not be confused with the Acte de Naissance, the document upon which the Extrait is based;
- The adoptive parents' marriage certificate, if applicable; and
- If the biological parents of the child are deceased, their Extrait de Decès (Extract of Death) from the Haitian National Archives.

Archives National d'Haiti is the National Archives in Port-au-Prince and is the only Haitian agency with the authority to issue extracts related to acts of birth, death, marriage, and divorce. Each of these documents is

based on an "acte" of birth, death, marriage, and divorce; this "acte" is rarely sufficient for IBESR or United States immigration purposes. The Immigrant Visa Unit of the United States Embassy has no authority over the National Archives or ability to influence how quickly it can provide required extracts.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Haiti does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Haiti
Consular Section (Adoptions Unit)
Boulevard du 15 Octobre
Tabarre 41
Tabarre, Haiti
Tel: 509-2229-8000 (from Haiti);
1-866-829-2842
(from the United States)
Email: papadoptions@state.gov.

Mailing address in the United States

United States Embassy
Port-au-Prince
Consular Section
3400 Port-au-Prince Pl.
Washington, DC 20521-3400

Haitian Adoption Authority
Institut du Bien Etre Social et de Recherches" (IBESR)
18 rue des marguerites
PORT-AU-PRINCE

Embassy of Haiti
2311 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 332-4090
Fax: (202) 745-7215
Email: embassy@haiti.org

Haiti also has consulates in New York, Miami, Chicago, and Boston. In addition, Haiti has honorary consuls located in the following cities who may perform authentication services: Atlanta, Denver, Detroit, Evansville, New Orleans, St. Louis, San Francisco and Trenton.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

Travel Warning
April 30, 2008

This Travel Warning is being issued to advise American citizens to defer non-essential travel to Haiti until further notice. The civil unrest of early April has subsided, but the political and economic conditions that precipitated these events have not been entirely resolved. Conditions may occasionally limit Embassy operations to emergency services. Americans are also reminded of ongoing security concerns in Haiti, including frequent kidnappings of Americans for ransom. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Haiti issued on April 11, 2008.

In early April 2008, there were violent demonstrations, looting, transportation disruptions, and up to seven reported deaths in Les Cayes and Port-au-Prince. Some American citizens were temporarily stranded in isolated locations and could not safely travel until calm was restored. Because political and economic conditions precipitating the civil unrest have not been resolved, American citizens should defer non-essential travel to Haiti.

The absence of an effective police force in many areas of Haiti means that, should protests reignite, there is potential for looting, the erection of intermittent roadblocks set by armed protestors or by the police, and an increased possibility of random crime, including kidnapping, carjacking, home invasion, armed robbery and assault. Americans in Haiti should practice good personal security, take commonsense precautions, and avoid any event where crowds may congregate. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn violent. Americans should closely monitor news media and the U.S. Embassy's website at: http://haiti.usembassy.gov.

U.S. citizens traveling to and residing in Haiti despite this warning are reminded that there is also a chronic danger of violent crime, especially kidnappings. Most kidnappings are criminal in nature, and the kidnappers make no distinctions of nationality, race, gender or age; all are vulnerable. There were 29 reported kidnappings of Americans in 2007. As of the date of this Travel Warning, fourteen Americans were reported kidnapped in 2008. Most of the Americans were abducted in Port-au-Prince. These kidnappings have been marked by deaths, brutal physical

and sexual assault, and shooting of Americans. The lack of civil protections in Haiti, as well as the limited capability of local law enforcement to resolve kidnapping cases, further compounds the element of danger surrounding this trend.

Travel is always hazardous within Port-au-Prince. U.S. Embassy personnel are under an embassy-imposed curfew and must remain in their homes or in U.S. government facilities during the curfew. Some areas are off-limits to embassy staff after dark, including downtown Port-au-Prince. The embassy limits (restricts) travel by its staff to some areas outside of Port-au-Prince due to prevailing road and security conditions. This may constrain our ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens outside of Port-au-Prince. Demonstrations and violence occasionally limit Embassy operations to emergency services, even within Port-au-Prince. The UN stabilization force (MINUSTAH) remains fully deployed and is assisting the government of Haiti in providing security.

The Department of State strongly advises U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Haiti to register either online at https://travelregistration.state.gov or with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince. The Consular Section can be reached at (509) (2)229-8000 or e-mail address acspap@state.gov. Travelers should also consult the Department of State's latest Country Specific Information for Haiti and the Worldwide Caution at http://travel.state.gov. American citizens may also obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States or Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from overseas. In Haiti, citizens can call 509/222-0200, ext. 2000.



THE HOLY SEE

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
The Holy See

PROFILE

Geography and People

Area: Total of 0.44 sq. km. (109 acres).
Population: (July 2006 est.) 932.
Ethnic groups: Italian, Swiss, other.
Religions: Roman Catholic.
Languages: Italian, Latin, French, various others.
Literacy: 100%.
Work force: 3,000 lay workers (reside outside the Vatican).

Government

Type: Papacy; ecclesiastical governmental and administrative capital of the Roman Catholic Church.
Independence: Sovereign entity since medieval times (Lateran Pacts confirming independence and sovereignty of The Holy See signed with Italy on February 11, 1929).
Suffrage: Limited to Cardinals less than 80 years old.

Economy

Budget: Revenues (2007) $372 million; expenditures (2007) $386 million.
Industries: Worldwide banking and financial activities; printing; production of coins, medals, postage stamps, a small amount of mosaics, and staff uniforms. This unique, noncommercial economy is also supported financially by contributions (known as Peter's Pence) from Roman Catholics throughout the world, the sale of postage stamps and tourist mementos, fees from admissions to museums, and the sale of publications. The incomes and living standards of lay workers are comparable to, or somewhat better than, those of counterparts who work in the city of Rome

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Almost all of Vatican City's citizens live inside the Vatican's walls. The Vatican includes high-ranking dignitaries, priests, nuns, and guards as well as about 3,000 lay workers who comprise the majority of the work force.

The Holy See's diplomatic history began in the fourth century, but the boundaries of the papacy's temporal power have shifted over the centuries. From the 8th century through the middle of the 19th century, the Popes held sway over the Papal States, which included a broad band of territory across central Italy. In 1860, after prolonged civil and regional unrest, Victor Emmanuel's army seized the Papal States, leaving only Rome and surrounding coastal regions under papal control. In 1870, Victor Emmanuel captured Rome itself and declared it the new capital of Italy, ending papal claims to temporal power. Pope Pius IX and his successors disputed the legitimacy of these acts and proclaimed themselves to be "prisoners" in the Vatican. Finally, in 1929, the Italian Government and the Holy See signed three agreements resolving the dispute:

- A treaty recognizing the independence and sovereignty of the Holy See and creating the State of the Vatican City;
- A concordat defining the relations between the government and the church within Italy; and
- A financial convention providing the Holy See with compensation for its losses in 1870.

A revised concordat, altering the terms of church-state relations, was signed in 1984.

GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONS

The Pope exercises supreme legislative, executive, and judicial power over the Holy See and the State of the Vatican City. Pope Benedict XVI, former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of

Germany, was elected and invested on April 19 and formally inaugurated on April 24, 2005.

The term "Holy See" refers to the composite of the authority, jurisdiction, and sovereignty vested in the Pope and his advisers to direct the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. As the "central government" of the Roman Catholic Church, the Holy See has a legal personality that allows it to enter into treaties as the juridical equal of a state and to send and receive diplomatic representatives. The Holy See has formal diplomatic relations with 175 nations, including the United States and many predominantly Muslim countries. The Holy See also maintains relations of a special nature with the Russian Federation and the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine.

Created in 1929 to provide a territorial identity for the Holy See in Rome, the State of Vatican City is a recognized national territory under international law. The Holy See enters into international agreements and receives and sends diplomatic representatives.

Administration of Vatican City State

The Pope delegates the internal administration of the Vatican City to the Pontifical Commission for the State of Vatican City. Vatican City maintains the Swiss Guards, a voluntary military force, as well as a modern security corps. It has its own post office, commissary, bank, railway station, electrical generating plant, television center, and publishing house. The Vatican also issues its own coins, stamps and Internet domain (.va). Vatican Radio, the official radio station, is one of the most influential in Europe. L'Osservatore Romano is the semi-official newspaper, published daily in Italian, and weekly in English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and French (plus a monthly edition in Polish). There is also a weekly version published in Italian, as well as a weekly version in Malayalam (a language of India), started on April 3, 2007.

Administration of the Holy See

The Pope exercises his authority through the Roman Curia and the Papal Civil Service. The Roman Curia consists of the Secretariat of State, nine Congregations, three Tribunals, 11 Pontifical Councils, and a complex of offices that administer church affairs at the highest level. The Secretariat of State, under the Cardinal Secretary of State, directs and coordinates the Curia. On September 15, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone as Secretary of State (a role equivalent to that of prime minister) and appointed Archbishop Dominique Mamberti as Secretary for Relations with States (equivalent to foreign minister).

Among the most active of the major Curial institutions are the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which oversees church doctrine; the Congregation for Bishops, which coordinates the appointment of bishops worldwide; the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which oversees all missionary activities; and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, which deals with international peace and social issues.

Three tribunals are responsible for judicial power. The Apostolic Penitentiary deals with matters of conscience; the Roman Rota is responsible for appeals, including annulments of marriage; and the Apostolic Signatura is the final court of appeal.

The Prefecture for Economic Affairs coordinates the finances of the Holy See departments and supervises the administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, an investment fund dating back to the Lateran Pacts. A committee of 15 cardinals, chaired by the Secretary of State, has final oversight authority over all financial matters of the Holy See, including those of the Institute for Works of Religion, the Vatican bank.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Supreme Pontiff, Roman Catholic Church: **BENEDICT XVI, Pope**
Sec. of State: **Tarcisio BERTONE, Cardinal**
Sec. for Relations With States: **Dominique MAMBERTI, Archbishop**
Apostolic Nuncio to the US: **Pietro SAMBI, Archbishop**
Permanent Observer to the UN, New York: **Celestino MIGLIORE, Archbishop**

The Holy See maintains an Apostolic Nunciature, the equivalent of an embassy, in the U.S. at 3339 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008, (202) 333-7121.

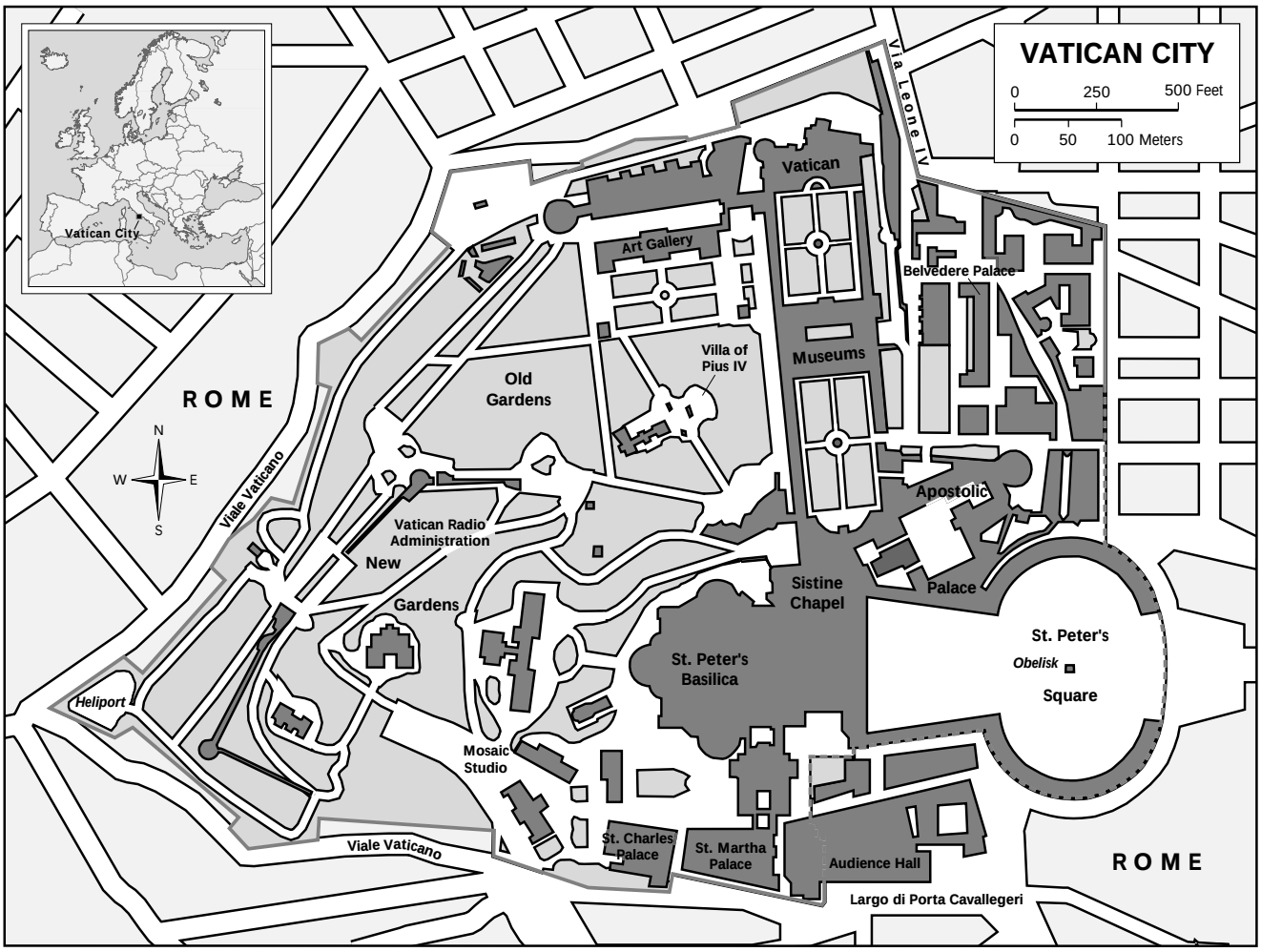
Papal Audiences

The North American College in Rome, owned and operated by the U.S. Catholic hierarchy for training American priests, handles requests for papal audiences. The address is Casa Santa Maria dell'Umilta, Via dell'Umilta 30, 00187, Rome, Italy (tel. 39-06-690-0189).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Holy See conducts an active diplomacy. As noted, it maintains formal diplomatic relations with 175 nations; 78 of these maintain permanent resident diplomatic missions accredited to the Holy See in Rome. The rest have missions located outside Italy with dual accreditation. The Holy See maintains 106 permanent diplomatic missions to nation-states. Furthermore, the Holy See has two separate permanent diplomatic missions: one to the European Union, another to the Russian Federation.

The Holy See is especially active in international organizations. The Holy See has diplomatic relations with the European Union (EU) in Brussels, it is a permanent observer of the United Nations Organization (UN), Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, African Union (AU), World Tourist Organization (WToO), World Trade Organiza-



tion (WTO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP), United Nations Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS), Latin Union (LU), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labor Organization (ILO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The Holy See is also an observer on an informal basis of the World Meteorological Organization in Geneva (WMO), United Nations Committee of Peaceful Use of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS), International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), International Maritime Organization (IMO), African Asian Legal Consultative Committee (AALCC) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The Holy See is a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), International Telecommunication Satellite Organization (ITSO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Grains Council (IGC), International Committee for Military Medicine (ICMM), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

In 1971, the Holy See announced the decision to adhere to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in order to "give its moral support to the principles that form the base of the treaty itself."

The Holy See is also a participating state in the OSCE and a guest of honor to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

Furthermore, the Holy See has a delegate to the Arab League (AL) in Cairo.

U.S.-HOLY SEE RELATIONS

The United States maintained consular relations with the Papal States from 1797 to 1870 and diplomatic relations with the Pope, in his capacity as head of the Papal States, from 1848 to 1868, though not at the ambassadorial level. These relations lapsed with the loss of all papal territories in 1870.

From 1870 to 1984, the United States did not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See. Several presidents, however, designated personal envoys to visit the Holy See periodically for discussions of international humanitarian and political issues. Myron C. Taylor was the first of these representatives, serving from 1939 to 1950. Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan also appointed personal envoys to the Pope.

The United States and the Holy See announced the establishment of diplomatic relations on January 10, 1984. On March 7, 1984, the Senate confirmed William A. Wilson as the first U.S. ambassador to the Holy See. Ambassador Wilson had been President Reagan's personal envoy to the Pope since 1981. The Holy See named Archbishop Pio Laghi as the first Apostolic Nuncio (equivalent to ambassador) of the Holy See to the U.S.

The U.S.-Holy See relationship is best characterized as an active global partnership for human dignity. Establishment of diplomatic relations has bolstered the frequent contact and consultation between the United States and the Holy See on many important international issues of mutual interest. The commitment to human dignity at the core of both the U.S. and Holy See approach to the world gives rise to a common agenda for action to promote religious freedom, justice, religious and ethnic tolerance, liberty, respect for women and children and for the rule of law.

Holy See priorities for 2008 include freedom of religion, inter-religious dialogue (particularly with the Muslim world), ecumenism, protection for the traditional family, and peace (particularly for the Middle East). Pope Benedict XVI has also publicly expressed concern over the issue of climate change, describing the protection of the environment as a moral responsibility to safeguard God's creation.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

VATICAN CITY (E) Via delle Terme Deciane, 26, APO/FPO PSC 59, Box 66, APO AE 09624, (+39) 06-4674-3425, Fax (0039) 06-575-8346, Workweek: Mon–Fri/8:30am–5:30pm, Website: http://vatican.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Jelena Lazovic
AMB OMS:	Carolyn Wachter
MGT:	Brenda Soya
AMB:	Mary Ann Glendon
PAO:	Adam Packer
POL:	Rafael Foley

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet—Italy

June 10, 2008

Country Description: Italy is a developed democracy with a modern economy. The Holy See is a sovereign entity that serves as the ecclesiastical, governmental and administrative capital of the Roman Catholic Church, physically located within the State of the Vatican City inside Rome, with a unique, non-traditional economy. San Marino is a developed, constitutional democratic republic, also independent of Italy, with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. Italian authorities may deny entry to travelers who attempt to enter without a valid passport. A visa is not required for tourist stays up to three months. However, for all other purposes, such as work, study, etc., a visa is required and must be obtained from the Italian Embassy or Consulates before entering Italy.

For further information concerning visas and entry requirements for Italy, travelers may contact the Embassy of Italy at 3000 Whitehaven St NW, Washington, DC 20008, via telephone at (202) 612-4400 or via the Internet: http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it or Italian Consulates General in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, or San Francisco, accessible through the above Internet site.

Americans staying or traveling within Italy for less than three (3) months are considered non-residents. This includes persons on vacation, those taking professional trips, students registered at an authorized school, or persons performing research or independent study.

As of May 28, 2007, under Italian law (http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/07068l.htm), all non-residents are required to complete a dichiarazione di presenza (declaration of presence). Tourists arriving from a non-Schengen-country (e.g. the United States) should obtain a stamp in their passport at the airport on the day of arrival. This stamp is considered the equivalent of the declaration of presence. Tourists arriving from a Schengen-country (e.g. France) must request the declaration of presence form from a local police office (commissariato di zona), police headquarters (questura) or their place of stay (e.g hotel, hostel, campgrounds) and submit the form to the police or to their place of stay within eight business days of arrival. It is important that applicants keep a copy of the receipt issued by the Italian authorities. Failure to complete a declaration of presence is punishable by expulsion from Italy.

Americans staying in Italy for more than three (3) months are considered residents and must obtain a permesso di soggiorno (permit of stay). This includes Americans who will

work or transact business and persons who want to simply live in Italy. An application "kit" for the permesso di soggiorno may be requested from one of 14,000 national post offices (Poste Italiane). The kit must then be returned to one of 5,332 designated Post Office acceptance locations. It is important that applicants keep a copy of the receipt issued by the Post Office. Additional information may be obtained from an Italian immigration website via Internet at: http://www.portaleimmigrazione.it. Within 20 days of receiving the permit to stay in Italy, Americans must go to the local Vital Statistics Bureau (Anagrafe of the Comune) to apply for residency. It generally takes one to two months to receive the certificate of residence (Certificato di Residenza).

Safety and Security: There have been occasional episodes of politically motivated violence in Italy, most often connected to Italian internal developments or social issues. At various times, Italian authorities have found bombs outside public buildings, have received bomb threats and were subjects of letter bombs. Firebombs or Molotov cocktails have been thrown at buildings or offices in the middle of the night. These incidents have all been attributed to organized crime or anarchist movements. Americans were not targeted or injured in these instances.

Demonstrations may have an anti-American character. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful have the potential to turn into confrontational situations and possibly escalate into violence. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Italy should take common sense precautions and follow news reports carefully in order to avoid demonstrations and to be aware of heightened security and potential delays when they occur.

Italy remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Italy's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State Burea of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Italy has a moderate rate of violent crime, some of which is directed towards tourists, principally for motives of theft. Some travelers have been victims of rape and beatings. There have also been incidents of drinks laced with drugs being used by criminals to rob, and in some cases, assault tourists. Many of these incidents have occurred in the vicinity of Rome's Termini train station and at major tourist centers such as Campo de Fiori and Piazza Navona, as well as in Florence and Naples. Criminals using this tactic "befriend" a traveler at a train station, bus stop, restaurant, café or bar in tourist areas, then eventually offer a drink laced with a sleeping drug. When the tourist falls asleep, criminals steal the traveler's valuables. There have also been instances where the victim was assaulted, either physically or sexually.

Americans are urged to exercise caution at train stations and airports, and when frequenting nightclubs, bars and outdoor cafes, particularly at night, because criminals may make initial contact with potential victims in such settings. Individuals under the effect of alcohol may become victims of crime, including robbery, physical and sexual assault, due to their impaired ability to judge situations and make decisions. This is particularly a problem for younger Americans visiting Italy, where the age limit on the sale of alcoholic beverages is lower than in most U.S. states. If you are a victim of such a crime, please file a police report and contact the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate. There are also in-country organizations, which provide counseling, medical, and legal assistance to certain crime victims. Petty crimes such as pick pocketing, theft from parked cars, and purse snatching are serious problems, especially in large cities. Pickpockets sometimes dress like businessmen so tourists should not be lulled into a false sense of security by believing that well-dressed individuals are not potential pickpockets or thieves. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites, on public buses or trains, or at the major railway stations: Rome's Termini; Milan's Centrale; Florence's Santa Maria Novella; and Naples' Centrale and Piazza Garibaldi. Travelers should also be alert to theft in Milan's Malpensa Airport, particularly at car rental agencies. Clients of Internet cafes in major cities have been targeted. Tourists who have tried to resist petty thieves on motor scooters have suffered broken arms and collarbones.

Thieves in Italy often work in groups or pairs. Pairs of accomplices or groups of street urchins are known to divert tourists' attention so that another can pickpocket them. In one particular routine, one thief throws trash, waste or ketchup at the victim; a second thief assists the victim in cleaning up the mess; and the third discreetly takes the victim's belongings. Criminals on crowded public transportation slit the bottoms of purses or bags with a razor blade or sharp knife, then remove the contents. Theft of small items such as radios, luggage, cameras, briefcases, and even cigarettes from parked cars is a major problem.

Carjackings and thefts have also been reported from occupied vehicles waiting in traffic or stopped at traffic lights. Vehicles parked near beaches during the summer have been broken into and items stolen. Robbers take items from cars at gas stations often by smashing car windows.

In a scam practiced on the highways, one thief signals a flat tire to the driver of another car and encourages the driver to pull over. Often, the tire has been punctured by an accomplice, while in other instances, there may, in fact, be nothing wrong with the

vehicle. When the driver stops, one thief helps change the tire, while the other takes the driver's belongings. Use particular caution driving at night on highways, when there may be a greater incidence of robbery attempts. There have been occasional reports of break-ins of rental cars driven by Americans when the precautions mentioned above were not followed during stops at highway service areas.

On trains, a commonly reported trick involves one or more persons who pretend to befriend a traveler and offer drugged food or drink. Also, thieves have been known to impersonate police officers to gain the confidence of tourists. The thief shows the prospective victim a circular plastic sign with the words "police" or "international police." If this happens, the tourist should insist on seeing the officer's identification card (documento), as impersonators tend not to carry forged documents. Tourists should immediately report thefts or other crimes to the local police. The U.S. Secret Service in Rome has been advised of, and is assisting Italian Law Enforcement authorities in investigating, an increase in the appearance of ATM skimming devices. These devices are attached to legitimate bank ATMs, usually located in tourist areas, and capture the account information stored electronically on the card's magnetic strip. The devices consist of a card reader installed over the legitimate reader and a pin-hole video camera mounted above the keypad that records the customer's PIN. ATMs with skimming devices installed may also allow normal transactions to occur. The victim's information is sold, traded on-line or encoded on another card such as a hotel key card to access the compromised account. Here are some helpful hints to protect yourself and to identify skimming devices:

- Use ATMs located in well-lit public areas, or secured inside the bank/business
- Cover the keypad with one hand as you enter your PIN
- Avoid card readers that are not flush with the face of the ATM
- Look for gaps, tampered appearance, or other irregularities between the metal faceplate of the ATM and the card reader
- Monitor your account statements for unauthorized transactions

Organized criminal groups operate throughout Italy, but are more prevalent in the south. They have occasionally resorted to violence to intimidate or to settle disputes. Though the activities of such groups are not generally targeted at tourists, visitors should be aware that innocent bystanders could be injured.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

According to Italian Law (Law 80 of May 14, 2005), anyone caught buying counterfeit goods (for example, DVDs, CDs, watches, purses, bags, belts, sunglasses, etc.) is subject to a fine of no less than EUR 1,000. Police in major Italian cities enforce this law to varying degrees. Travelers are advised to purchase products only from stores and other licensed retailers to avoid unknowingly buying counterfeit and illegal merchandise.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Lost or stolen credit cards present risk of identity theft and should be cancelled immediately. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are available, but may be limited outside urban areas. Public hospitals, though generally free of charge for emergency services, sometimes do not maintain the same standards as hospitals in the United States, so travelers are encouraged to obtain insurance that would cover a stay in a private Italian hospital or clinic. It is almost impossible to obtain an itemized hospital bill from public hospitals, as required by many U.S. insurance companies, because the Italian National Health Service charges one inclusive rate (care services, bed and board). For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

In Naples and the region of Campania, a perennial problem exists due to periodic garbage collection strikes and inadequate dump facilities. Residents often resort to burning the garbage which can give off toxic substances that can aggravate respiratory problems. Warm summer temperatures further aggravate this problem.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Ameri-

cans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Italy is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Streets in historic city centers are often narrow, winding and congested. Motor scooters are very popular and drivers often see themselves as exempt from conventions that apply to automobiles. Travelers who rent scooters should be particularly cautious. Pedestrians and drivers should be constantly alert to the possibility of scooters' sudden presence. Throughout Italy, the number of pedestrian deaths and injuries are increasing. Most deaths and injuries involve pedestrians or cyclists who are involved in collisions with scooters or other vehicles. U.S. citizens should remain vigilant and alert while walking or cycling near traffic. Pedestrians should be careful, as sidewalks, especially in major cities, can be extremely congested and uneven, and drivers of bicycles, motorcycles and other vehicles routinely ignore traffic signals and traffic flows, routinely park and even drive on sidewalks. For safety, pedestrians should look carefully in both directions before crossing streets, even when using a marked crosswalk with a green "avanti" ("walk") light illuminated.

Traffic lights are limited, often disobeyed, and a different convention of right-of-way is observed. Italy has over 5,600 kilometers (3,480 mi.) of "Autostrada," or superhighways. Commercial and individual vehicles travel and pass on these well-maintained roads at very high speeds. Accidents occur in which contributing factors include excessive speed, alcohol/drug use and/or sleepiness of long-distance drivers. Italy has one of the highest rates of car accident deaths in the European Union. In rural areas, a wide range of speed on highways makes for hazardous driving. Roads are generally narrow and often have no guardrails. Travelers in northern Italy, especially in winter, should be aware of fog and poor visibility, responsible for multiple-car accidents each year. Most Italian automobiles are equipped with special fog lights. Roadside assistance in Italy is excellent on the well-maintained toll roads, but limited on secondary roads. Use of safety belts and child restraining devices is mandatory and headlights should be on at all times outside of urban areas.

U.S. citizens driving in Italy are reminded that they must adhere to the local driving laws and regulations. Vehicle traffic in some historic downtown areas of cities and towns throughout Italy is limited by a system of permits (called "ZTL" and functioning the same way as an "EasyPass" system in the U.S. might on the freeway). Cameras record the license plates of cars driving in parts of the city that require a permit. Although most of the automated verification stations are clearly marked, if a driver passes one it is impossible to know at the time that a violation occurred or has been recorded. Violators are not pulled over or stopped, and there is no personal contact with a police officer. Whenever possible, the fines imposed for these violations are forwarded to the driver's home in the U.S. to request payment. The fines are cumulative for each time a driver passes a control point. A similar system of automated traffic control cameras is in place in many parts of the highway system and is used to ticket speeding violations.

U.S. citizens driving in Italy should also note that, according to Italian regulation, if a resident of a non-European Union country (e.g. the United States) violates a traffic law (e.g. for speeding), the violator must pay the fine at the time the violation occurs to the police officer issuing the ticket. If the citizen does not or cannot pay the fine at the time, Italian regulation allows the police officer to confiscate the offender's vehicle (even if the vehicle is a rental vehicle.) For specific information concerning Italian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) offices via the Internet at: http://www.enit.it, tel: 212-245-4822 or the A.C.I. (Automobile Club Italiano) at Via Magenta 5, 00185 Rome, tel: 39-06-4477. For information on obtaining international drivers licenses, contact AAA or the American Automobile Touring Alliance.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office at http://www.italiantourism.com and national authority responsible for road safety online at http://www.infrastrutturetrasporti.it.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Italy's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Italy's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Strikes and other work stoppages occur frequently in the transportation sector (national airlines, airports, trains, and bus lines). Most are announced in advance and are of short duration. Information on strikes may be found at http://www.infrastrutture.gov.it/page/NuovoSito/site.php. Reconfirmation of domestic and international flight reservations is highly recommended.

U. S citizens using public transportation while in Italy are reminded that they must adhere to local transportation laws and regulations. Travelers must purchase train tickets and validate them by punching them in validating machines usually located near the entrance of train tracks prior to boarding. Failure to follow this procedure may result in an on-the-spot fine by an inspector on the train. Travelers must purchase bus tickets prior to boarding and validate them immediately after boarding. Tickets may be

purchased at tobacco stores or kiosks. Failure to follow this procedure may result in an immediate fine imposed by an inspector on the bus. If the violator does not pay the fine on the spot, it will automatically double and will be forwarded to the violator's home address.

Disaster Preparedness: Several major earthquake fault lines cross Italy. Principal Italian cities, with the exception of Naples, do not lie near these faults, but smaller tourist towns, like Assisi, do and have suffered earthquakes.

General information about disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. Detailed information on Italy's earthquake fault lines is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at http://www.usgs.gov.

Italy also has several active volcanoes generating geothermal events. Mt. Etna, on the eastern tip of the island of Sicily, has been erupting intermittently since 2000. Mt. Vesuvius, located near Naples, is currently capped and not active. Activity at Mt. Vesuvius is monitored by an active seismic network and sensor system, and no recent seismic activity has been recorded. Two of Italy's smaller islands, Stromboli and Vulcano in the Aeolian Island chain north of Sicily, also have active volcanoes with lava flows. Detailed information on volcano activity in Italy is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at http://www.usgs.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations. They may differ significantly from those of the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Italian law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Italy are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Italy are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Italy. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Via V. Veneto 119/A, tel: 39-06-46741 and fax: 39-06-4674-2217; Internet address: http://italy.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulates are located in:

Florence: Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci 38, tel: 39-055-266-951, consular fax: 399-055-215-550;

Milan: Via Principe Amedeo 2/10, tel: 39-02-290-351, and fax: 39-02-290-35-273;

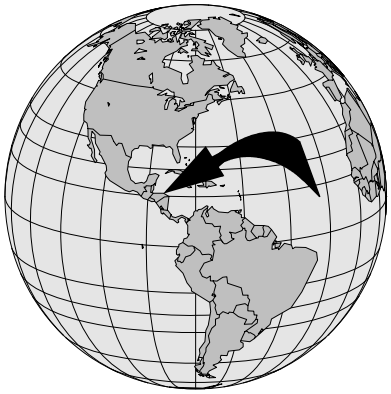
Naples: Piazza della Repubblica, tel: 39-081-583-8111, and consular fax: 39-081-583-8275.

There are U.S. Consular Agents located in:

Genoa: Via Dante 2, tel: 39-010-584-492, and fax: 39-010-553-3033;

Palermo: Via Vaccarini 1, tel: 39-091-305-857, and fax: 39-091-625-6026;

Venice: Viale Galileo Galilei, 30, tel: 39-041-541-5944, and fax: 39-041-541-6654.



HONDURAS

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Honduras

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 112,090 sq. km. (43,278 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Virginia.
Cities: Capital—Tegucigalpa (1,150,000); San Pedro Sula (800,000-900,000).
Terrain: Mountainous.
Climate: Tropical to subtropical, depending on elevation.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Honduran(s).
Population: (2006 est.) 7.3 million.
Growth rate: (2006 est.) 2.16%.
Ethnic groups: 90% mestizo (mixed Indian and European); others of European, Arab, African, or Asian ancestry; and indigenous Indians.
Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant minority.
Languages: Spanish.
Education: (2003) Years compulsory—6. Attendance—88% overall, 31% at junior high level. Literacy—76.2%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—29.64/1,000. Life expectancy—66.2 yrs.
Work force: Services—42.2%; natural resources/agriculture—35.9%; manufacturing—16.3%; construction/housing—5.6%.

Government

Type: Democratic constitutional republic.
Independence: September 15, 1821.
Constitution: 1982; amended 1999.
Government branches: Executive—president, directly elected to 4-year term. Legislative—unicameral National Congress, elected for 4-year term. Judicial—Supreme Court of Justice (appointed for a 7-year term by Congress and confirmed by the president); several lower courts.
Political parties: National Party, Liberal Party, Innovation and National Unity Party, Christian Democratic Party, and the Democratic Unification Party.
Suffrage: Universal and compulsory at age 18.
Political subdivisions: 18 departments.

Economy (2007 est.)

GDP: $12.3 billion
Growth rate: 6.7%.
Per capita GDP: $1,600 (official exchange rate), $3,130 (PPP, IMF).
Natural resources: Arable land, forests, minerals, and fisheries.
Agriculture: (13.8% of GDP) Products—coffee, bananas, shrimp and lobster, sugar, fruits, basic grains, and livestock.
Manufacturing: (19.7% of GDP) Types—textiles and apparel, cement, wood products, cigars, and foodstuffs.
Services: (54.2% of GDP).
Trade: Exports (goods)—$5.59 billion: apparel, coffee, shrimp, bananas, palm oil, gold, zinc/lead concentrates, soap/detergents, melons, lobster, pineapple, lumber, sugar, and tobacco. Major market—U.S. (69.9%). Imports (goods)—$8.56 billion: fabrics, yarn, machinery, chemicals, petroleum, vehicles, processed foods, metals, agricultural products, plastic articles, and paper articles. Major source—U.S. (52.2%).

PEOPLE

About 90% of the population is mestizo. There also are small minorities of European, African, Asian, Arab, and indigenous Indian descent. Most Hondurans are Roman Catholic, but Protestant churches are growing in number. While Spanish is the predominant language, some English is spoken along the northern coast and is prevalent on the Caribbean Bay Islands. Several indigenous Indian languages and Garífuna (a mixture of Afro-indigenous languages) are also spoken. The restored Mayan ruins near the Guatemalan border in Copan reflect the great Mayan culture that flourished there for hundreds of years until the early 9th century. Columbus landed at mainland Honduras (Trujillo) in 1502, and named the area “Honduras” (mean-

ing “depths”) for the deep water off the coast. Spaniard Hernan Cortes arrived in 1524.

HISTORY

Honduras was originally inhabited by indigenous tribes, the most powerful of which were the Mayans. The western-central part of Honduras was inhabited by the Lencas. These autonomous groups had their conflicts but maintained their commercial relationships with each other and with other populations as distant as Panama and Mexico.

On July 30, 1502, Christopher Columbus first saw Honduran soil and he claimed the territory in the name of his sovereigns, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. He named the area “Honduras” (meaning “depths") for the deep water off the coast.

In 1523 the first expeditionary forces arrived under the command of Gil Gonzáles de Avila, who hoped to rule the new territory. In 1524, Cristóbal de Olid arrived with the same intent on behalf of Hernán Cortés. Olid founded the colony Triunfo de la Cruz and tried to establish an independent government. When Cortés learned of this, he decided to reestablish his own authority by sending a new expedition, headed by Francisco de las Casas. Olid, who managed to capture his rivals, was betrayed by his men and assassinated. Cortés then traveled to Honduras to firmly establish his government in the city of Trujillo before returning to Mexico in 1526. Honduras formed part of the colonial era Captaincy General of Guatemala. The cities of Comayagua and Tegucigalpa developed as early mining centers.

By October 1537, the Lenca chief, Lempira, a warrior of great renown, had managed to unify more than two hundred native tribes in order to offer an organized resistance against penetration by the Spanish conquerors. After a long battle, Governor Montejo gained the Valley of Comayagua, established Comayagua city in another location, and vanquished the indigenous peoples in Tenampúa, Guaxeregui, and Ojuera.

Independence

Honduras gained independence from Spain in 1821. The country was then briefly annexed to the Mexican Empire. In 1823, Honduras joined the newly formed United Provinces of Central America federation, which collapsed in 1838. Gen. Francisco Morazan—a Honduran national hero—led unsuccessful efforts to maintain the federation. Honduras' agriculture-based economy was dominated in the 1900s by U.S. companies that established vast banana plantations along the north coast. Foreign capital, plantation life, and conservative politics held sway in Honduras from the late 19th century until the mid-20th century.

Military Rule

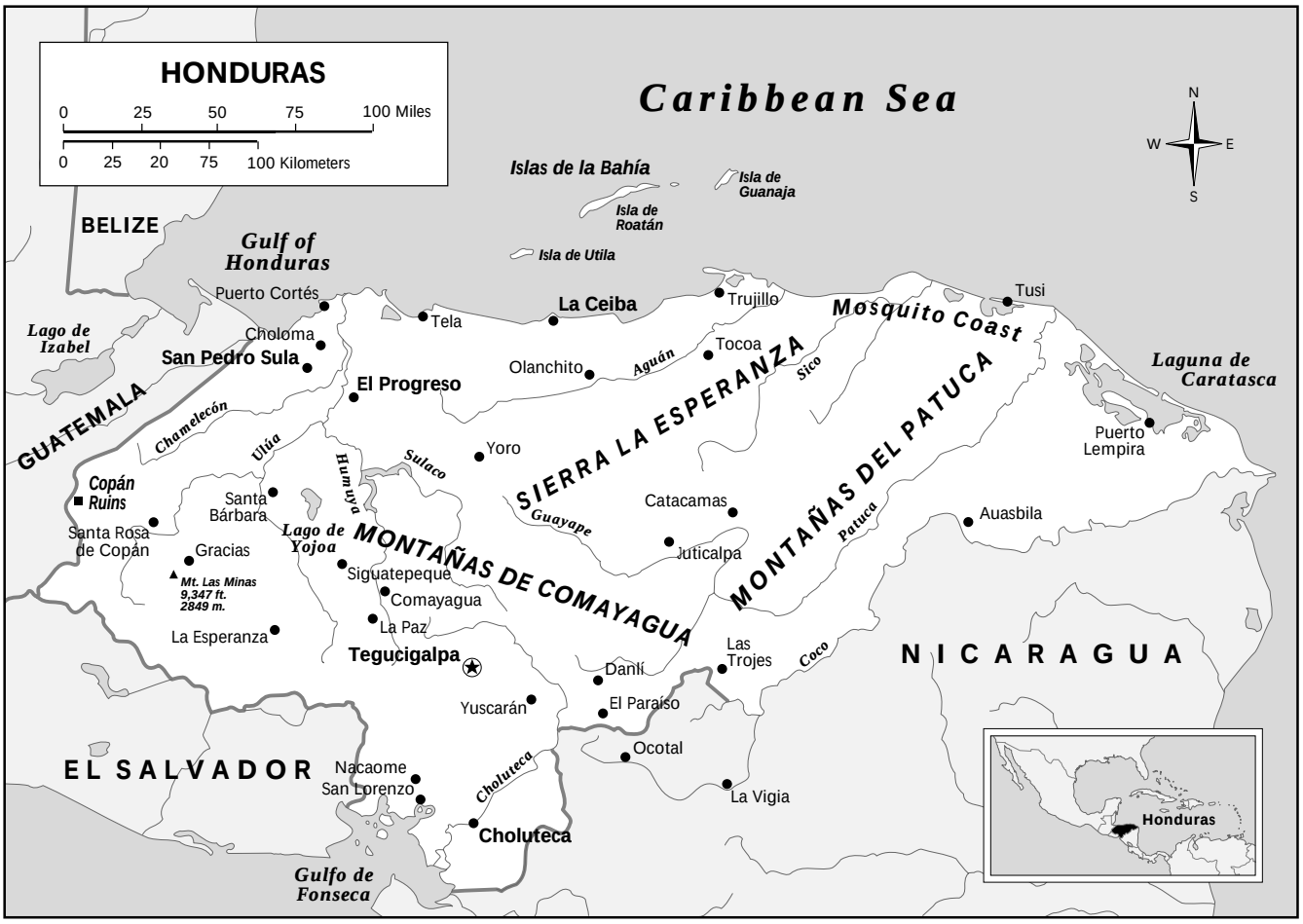
Authoritarian Gen. Tiburcio Carias Andino controlled Honduras during the Great Depression, until 1948. In 1955—after two authoritarian administrations and a strike by banana workers—young military reformists staged a coup that installed a provisional junta and paved the way for constituent assembly elections in 1957. This assembly appointed Ramon Villeda Morales as President and transformed itself into a national legislature with a 6-year term. The Liberal Party ruled during 1957-63. In 1963, conservative military officers preempted constitutional elections and deposed Villeda in a bloody coup. These officers exiled Liberal Party members and took control of the national police. The armed forces, led by Gen. Lopez Arellano, governed until 1970. Popular discontent continued to rise after a 1969 border war with El Salvador, known as “the Soccer War.” A civilian President—Ramon Cruz of the National Party—took power briefly in 1970 but proved unable to manage the government. In 1972, Gen. Lopez staged another coup. Lopez adopted more progressive policies, including land reform, but his regime was brought down in the mid-1970s by corruption scandals. The regimes of Gen. Melgar Castro (1975-78) and Gen. Paz Garcia (1978-82) largely built the current physical infrastructure and telecommunications system of Honduras. The country also enjoyed its most rapid economic growth during this period, due to greater international demand for its products and the availability of foreign commercial lending.

Seven Consecutive Democratic Elections

Following the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua in 1979 and general instability in El Salvador at the time, Hondurans elected a constituent assembly in 1980 and voted in general elections in 1981. A new constitution was approved in 1982, and the Liberal Party government of President Roberto Suazo Cordoba took office. Suazo relied on U.S. support during a severe economic recession, including ambitious social and economic development projects sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Honduras became host to the largest Peace Corps mission in the world, and nongovernmental and international voluntary agencies proliferated.

As the 1985 election approached, the Liberal Party interpreted election law as permitting multiple presidential candidates from one party. The Liberal Party claimed victory when its presidential candidates, who received 42% of the vote, collectively outpolled the National Party candidate, Rafael Leonardo Callejas. Jose Azcona Hoyo, the candidate receiving the most votes among the Liberals, assumed the presidency in 1986. With the endorsement of the Honduran military, the Azcona administration ushered in the first peaceful transfer of power between civilian presidents in more than 30 years.

Nationalist Rafael Callejas won the presidential election, taking office in 1990. The nation's fiscal deficit ballooned during Callejas' last year in office. Growing public dissatisfaction with the rising cost of living and with widespread government corruption led voters in 1993 to elect Liberal



Party candidate Carlos Roberto Reina with 56% of the vote. President Reina, elected on a platform calling for a "moral revolution," actively prosecuted corruption and pursued those responsible for human rights abuses in the 1980s. He created a modern attorney general's office and an investigative police force, increased civilian control over the armed forces, transferred the police from military to civilian authority, and restored national fiscal health.

Liberal Carlos Roberto Flores Facusse took office in 1998. Flores inaugurated programs of reform and modernization of the Honduran government and economy, with emphasis on helping Honduras' poorest citizens while maintaining the country's fiscal health and improving international competitiveness. In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras, leaving more than 5,000 people dead and 1.5 million displaced. Damages totaled nearly $3 billion. Ricardo Maduro Joest of the National Party won the 2001 presidential elections, and was inaugurated in 2002. During his campaign, President Maduro promised to reduce crime, reinvigorate the economy, and fight corruption. Maduro's first act as President was to deploy a joint police-military force to the streets to permit wider neighborhood patrols in the ongoing fight against the country's massive crime and gang problem. Maduro was a strong supporter of the global war on terrorism and joined the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq with an 11-month contribution of 370 troops. Under President Maduro's guidance, Honduras also negotiated and ratified the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), received debt relief, became the first Latin American country to sign a Millennium Challenge Account compact with the U.S., and actively promoted greater Central American integration.

Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya Rosales of the Liberal Party won the November 27, 2005 presidential elections with less than a 4% margin of victory, the smallest margin ever in Honduran electoral history. Zelaya's campaign theme was "citizen power," and he vowed to increase transparency and combat narcotrafficking, while maintaining macroeconomic stability. The Liberal Party won 62 of the 128 congressional seats, just short of an absolute majority.

GOVERNMENT

The 1982 constitution provides for a strong executive, a unicameral National Congress, and a judiciary appointed by the National Congress. The president is directly elected to a 4-year term by popular vote. The Congress also serves a 4-year term; congressional seats are assigned the

parties' candidates in proportion to the number of votes each party receives in the various departments. The judiciary includes a Supreme Court of Justice (one president and 14 magistrates chosen by Congress for a seven-year term), courts of appeal, and several courts of original jurisdiction—such as labor, tax, and criminal courts. For administrative purposes, Honduras is divided into 18 departments, with municipal officials selected for 4-year terms.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Reinforced by the media and several political watchdog organizations, concerted efforts to protect human rights and civil liberties continue. Organized labor represents approximately 8% of the work force and its economic and political influence continues to decline.

Honduras held its seventh consecutive democratic elections in 2005 to elect a new president, unicameral Congress, and mayors. For the first time, as a result of the newly reformed Electoral Law, voters were able to vote for individual members of Congress, with photos of each candidate on the ballot, rather than party lists. For the electoral period 2006-2010, 31 women were elected to Congress. Additionally, 27 of these 31 congresswomen chose women as their alternates.

Political Parties

The two major parties are the slightly left-of-center Liberal Party and the slightly right of center National Party. The three much smaller registered parties—the Christian Democratic Party, the Innovation and National Unity Party, and the Democratic Unification Party—hold a few seats each in the Congress, but have never come close to winning the presidency.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 2/1/2008

Pres.: **Manuel ZELAYA Rosales**
Vice Pres.: **Elvin Ernesto SANTOS Ordonez**
Min. of Agriculture & Livestock: **Hector HERNANDEZ**
Min. of Culture, Arts, & Sports: **Rodolfo PASTOR**
Min. of Defense: **Aristides MEJIA**
Min. of Education: **Rafael PINEDA PONCE**
Min. of Finance: **Rebeca SANTOS Rivera**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Milton JIMENEZ Puerto**
Min. of Industry & Commerce: **Elizabeth AZCONA Bobock**
Min. of Govt. & Justice: **Jorge Arturo REINA**
Min. of Labor: **Rixi MONCADA Godoy**
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment: **Mayra MEJIA del Cid**
Min. of the Presidency: **Yani ROSENTHAL**
Min. of Public Employees' Retirement & Pension (INJUPEMP): **Lucio IZAGUIRRE**
Min. of Public Health: **Orison VELASQUEZ**
Min. of Public Works, Transportation, & Housing: **Jose Rosario BONANO**
Min. of Public Security: **Alvaro Antonio ROMERO Salgado**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Miriam MEJIA**
Min. of Tourism: **Ricardo MARTINEZ**
Min. Without Portfolio (Housing Sector): **Hector BRICENO**
Pres., Central Bank: **Gabriella NUNEZ de Reyes**
Ambassador to the US: **Roberto FLORES BERMUDEZ**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ivan ROMERO-MARTINEZ**

Honduras maintains an embassy in the United States at 3007 Tilden Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-966-7702).

ECONOMY

Honduras, with a per capita gross national income of $1,600, is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. The economy grew 6% in 2006 or by about 3.2% on a per capita basis, and by an estimated 6.7% in 2007. Historically dependent on exports of agricultural goods, the Honduran economy has diversified in recent decades and now has a strong export-processing (maquila) industry, primarily focused on assembling textile and apparel goods for re-export to the United States, as well as automobile wiring harnesses and similar products. These industries employ about 130,000 Hondurans, out of an economically active population of 2.8 million. Despite the recent economic diversification, there continues to be a large subsistence farmer population with few economic opportunities. Honduras also has extensive forest, marine, and mineral resources, although widespread slash-and-burn agricultural methods and illegal logging continue to destroy Honduran forests.

Remittances from Hondurans living abroad, particularly the U.S., totaled $2.56 billion in 2007—more than a quarter of GDP—but the annual rate of growth of remittances slowed to 10%, compared with 31% in 2006. Meanwhile, Honduras's fuel import bill rose sharply with the surge in world oil prices (Honduras produces no petroleum), and foreign reserves of the Central Bank fell by nearly $98 million—about 4%. The rise in global grain prices also put upward pressure on Honduran consumer prices in 2007, and the inflation rate accelerated to 8.9% from 6.2% in 2006. By the end of the year, inflation was running at about a 10% annual rate, giving rise to political demands for price controls on basic items. Remittances may decline in 2008 with the slowdown in the U.S. economy, particularly the construction sector, where many Hondurans are employed, putting additional pressure on reserves.

The official exchange rate has been fixed at 18.89 Honduran Lempiras to the dollar since 2005. About 40% of the Honduran workforce was considered either unemployed or underemployed in 2006. This does not include the roughly 1 million Hondurans who have migrated to the United States.

Since 2005, Honduras has received nearly $ 4 billion in debt relief from

bilateral and multilateral donors. The donor community estimated this would reduce annual debt service payments by about $200 million in 2007. The Government of Honduras has committed to apply these funds to poverty alleviation, as laid out in the existing Poverty Reduction Strategy. However, much of the ensuing rise in government spending has gone to public sector salaries and fuel subsidies. The state electric utility, ENEE, is losing an estimated $300 million a year, primarily because the rates it charges its customers do not cover costs.

NATIONAL SECURITY

With the cessation of the 1980s civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the Honduran armed forces refocused their orientation toward combating transnational threats such as narcoterrorism and organized crime. Honduras supports efforts at regional integration and deployed troops to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 1999, the constitution was amended to abolish the position of military commander in chief of the armed forces, thus codifying civilian authority over the military.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Honduras is a member of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC), and the Central American Security Commission (CASC). During 1995-96, Honduras—a founding member of the United Nations—served as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council for the first time. Honduras is currently a member of the UN Human Rights Commission. Honduras is a party to all UN and OAS counterterrorism conventions and protocols.

Honduras is a strong proponent of Central American cooperation and integration, and continues to work towards the implementation of a regional customs union and Central American passport, which would ease border controls and tariffs among Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

In 1969, El Salvador and Honduras fought the brief "Soccer War" over disputed border areas. The two countries formally signed a peace treaty in 1980, which put the border dispute before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In 1992, the Court awarded most of the disputed territory to Honduras, and in January 1998, Honduras and El Salvador signed a border demarcation treaty to implement the terms of the ICJ decree although delays continue due to technical difficulties. However, Honduras and El Salvador maintain normal diplomatic and trade relations. Honduras also has unresolved maritime border disputes with El Salvador, Nicaragua, Jamaica, and Cuba.

U.S.-HONDURAN RELATIONS

Overview

The United States and Honduras have close and friendly relations. Honduras is supportive of U.S. policy in the United Nations and other fora, as well of the war on terrorism. Honduras was among the first countries to sign an International Criminal Court (ICC) Article 98 Agreement with the U.S., and the Honduran port of Puerto Cortes is part of the U.S. Container Security Initiative (CSI).

The United States favors stable, peaceful relations between Honduras and its Central American neighbors. During the 1980s, Honduras supported U.S. policy opposing a revolutionary Marxist government in Nicaragua and an active leftist insurgency in El Salvador. The Honduran Government also played a key role in negotiations that culminated in the 1990 Nicaraguan elections. Honduras continues to participate in the UN observer mission in the Western Sahara, contributed 370 troops for stabilization in Iraq, and remains interested in participating in other UN peacekeeping missions.

The United States is Honduras' chief trading partner, with two-way trade in goods increasing to over $7 billion in 2006. U.S.-Honduran trade is dominated by the Honduran maquila industry, which imports yarn and textiles from the United States and exports finished articles of clothing. Other leading Honduran exports to the United States include coffee, bananas, seafood (particularly shrimp), minerals (including zinc, lead, gold, and silver), and other fruits and vegetables. Two-way trade with Honduras in 2006 was $7.4 billion, up from $7.0 billion in 2005. For 2007 through October, Honduran exports to the United States increased 6%, and U.S. exports to Honduras increased 18% when compared to the same period in 2006.

U.S. investors account for nearly two-thirds of the foreign direct investment (FDI) in Honduras. The stock of U.S. direct investment in Honduras in 2005 was $402 million, up from $339 million in 2004. The overall flow of FDI into Honduras in 2005 totaled $568 million, $196 million of which was spent in the maquila sector. The United States continued as the largest contributor of FDI. The most substantial U.S. investments in Honduras are in the maquila sector, fruit production (particularly bananas, melons, and pineapple), tourism, energy generation, shrimp aquaculture, animal feed production, telecommunications, fuel distribution, cigar manufacturing, insurance, brewing, leasing, food processing, and furniture manufacturing. Many U.S. franchises, particularly in the restaurant sector, operate in Honduras.

In 2004, the United States signed the U.S.-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. The legislatures of all signatories except Costa Rica ratified CAFTA in 2005, and the agreement entered into force in the first half of

2006. CAFTA eliminates tariffs and other barriers to trade in goods, services, agricultural products, and investments. Additionally, CAFTA is expected to solidify democracy, encourage greater regional integration, and provide safeguards for environmental protection and labor rights.

In June 2005, Honduras became the first country in the hemisphere to sign a Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) compact with the US Government. Under the compact, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation will invest $215 million over five years to help Honduras improve its road infrastructure, diversify its agriculture, and get its products to market. Honduras failed the corruption indicator required for continued funding into 2008. MCC will closely follow Honduras's progress on reducing corruption under an approved "remediation plan."

The United States maintains a small presence at a Honduran military base; the two countries conduct joint peacekeeping, counternarcotics, humanitarian, disaster relief, and civic action exercises. U.S. troops conduct and provide logistics support for a variety of bilateral and multilateral exercises—medical, engineering, peacekeeping, counternarcotics, and disaster relief—for the benefit of the Honduran people and their Central American neighbors. U.S. forces—regular, reserve, and National Guard—benefit greatly from these exercises.

U.S. Policy Toward Honduras

U.S. policy toward Honduras is aimed at consolidating democracy, protecting human rights, and promoting the rule of law. U.S. Government programs are aimed at promoting a healthy and more open economy capable of sustainable growth, improving the climate for business and investment while protecting U.S. citizen and corporate rights, and promoting the well-being of the Honduran people. The United States also works with Honduras to meet transnational challenges—including the fight against terrorism, narcotics trafficking, money laundering, illegal migration, and trafficking in persons—and encourages and supports Honduran efforts to protect the environment. The goals of strengthening democracy and promoting viable economic growth are especially important given the geographical proximity of Honduras to the United States. An estimated 1 million Hondurans reside in the United States, 600,000 of whom are believed to be undocumented; consequently, immigration issues are an important item on our bilateral agenda.

U.S.-Honduran ties are further strengthened by numerous private sector contacts, with an average of between 80,000 and 110,000 U.S. citizens visiting Honduras annually and about 15,000 Americans residing there. More than 150 American companies operate in Honduras.

Economic and Development Assistance

In order to help strengthen Honduras' democratic institutions and improve living conditions, the United States has provided substantial economic assistance. The United States has historically been the largest bilateral donor to Honduras. The USAID budget for Honduras is $37 million for fiscal year 2007. Over the years, U.S. foreign assistance has helped advance such objectives as fostering democratic institutions, increasing private sector employment and income, helping Honduras manage its arrears with international financial institutions, providing humanitarian aid, increasing agricultural production, and providing loans to microbusinesses.

1998's Hurricane Mitch left hundreds of thousands homeless, devastated the road network and other public infrastructure, and crippled certain key sectors of the economy. Estimates show that Hurricane Mitch caused $8.5 billion in damages to homes, hospitals, schools, roads, farms, and businesses throughout Central America, including more than $3 billion in Honduras alone. In response, the United States provided more than $461 million in immediate disaster relief and humanitarian aid spread over the years 1998-2001. This supplemental assistance was designed to help repair water and sanitation systems; replace housing, schools, and roads; provide agricultural inputs; provide local government crisis management training; grant debt relief; and encourage environmental management expertise. Additional resources were utilized to maintain anti-crime and drug assistance programs.

The Peace Corps has been active in Honduras since 1962, and currently the program is one of the largest in the world. In 2005, there were 220 Peace Corps Volunteers working in the poorest parts of Honduras.

The U.S. Government strongly supports the professionalization of the civilian police force as an important element in strengthening the rule of law in Honduras. The American Embassy in Tegucigalpa provides specialized training to police officers.

Security Assistance

The role of the Honduran armed forces has changed significantly in recent years as many institutions formerly controlled by the military are now under civilian authority. The annual defense and police budgets have hovered at around $35 million during the past few years. Honduras receives modest U.S. security assistance funds and training.

In the absence of a large security assistance program, defense cooperation has taken the form of increased participation by the Honduran armed forces in military-to-military contact programs and bilateral and multilateral combined exercises oriented toward peacekeeping, disaster relief, humanitarian/civic assistance, and counternarcotics. The U.S. Joint Task Force Bravo (JTF-B), stationed at the Honduran Soto Cano Air Base, plays a vital role in supporting combined exercises in Honduras and in neighboring Central American countries. JTF-Bravo plays a critical role in helping the United States respond to natural disasters in Central America

by serving as a platform for rescue missions, repairing critical infrastructure, and in meeting high priority health and sanitation needs. JTF-Bravo forces have helped deliver millions of dollars worth of privately donated goods to those in need.

U.S. Business Opportunities

Bilateral trade between the two nations totaled $7.4 billion in 2006, up from $7 billion in 2005. Exports of goods and services from the U.S. increased from $3.24 billion in 2005 to $3.69 billion in 2006, while Honduran exports to the U.S. fell slightly from $3.75 billion in 2005 to $3.72 billion in 2006. More than 150 American companies operate in Honduras; U.S. franchises are present in increasing numbers.

Opportunities for U.S. business sales include textile machinery, construction equipment, automotive parts and accessories, telecommunications equipment, pollution control/water resources equipment, agricultural machinery, hotel and restaurant equipment, computers and software, franchising, and household consumer goods. The best prospects for agricultural products are corn, milled rice, wheat, soybean meal, and consumer-ready products.

U.S. citizens contemplating investment in real estate in Honduras should proceed with extreme caution, especially in the Bay Islands or coastal areas, because of frequently conflicting legislation, problems with land titles, and a weak judicial system. Investors or their attorneys should check property titles not only with the property registry office having jurisdiction in the area in which the property is located (being especially observant of marginal annotations on the deed and that the property is located within the area covered by the original title), but also with the National Agrarian Institute (INA) and the National Forestry Administration (COHDEFOR). Investors in land should be aware that even clear title is not a guarantee that a future dispute over land would be resolved equitably.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

TEGUCIGALPA (E) Avenida La Paz, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, APO/FPO Unit 3480, Box 220, APO AA 34022-0220, [504] 236-9320 or [504] 238-5114, Fax [504] 236-9037, Workweek: M-Th, 8–5:30; F 8–3 local time, Website: http://honduras.usembassy.gov/english/index_e1.htm.

DCM OMS:	Catherine Lawton
AMB OMS:	Barbara A. Matchey
DHS/CIS:	Joel Miramontes
DHS/ICE:	Luis Carmona
ECO:	Robert A. Armstrong
FM:	Jefferey Burns
HRO:	Judy E. Picardi
MGT:	Randall C. Budden
AMB:	Charles A. Ford
CG:	Douglass R. Benning
DCM:	James G. Williard
PAO:	Chantal Dalton
COM:	Michael L. McGee (Resident In San Salvador)
GSO:	Raphael Semmes
RSO:	Bruce Lizzi
AFSA:	Beatriz Beroud
AGR:	Robert K. Hoff (Resident In Guatemala)
AID:	Randall Peterson (Acting)
CLO:	Liza Bright
DAO:	Col. Andrew W. Papp, Usaf
DEA:	John Mark Discenza
EEO:	Chantal S. Dalton
FMO:	James Wickersham
ICASS Chair:	Chantal Dalton
IMO:	Marc A. Beroud
IPO:	Jack Swope
ISO:	W. Kay Angell
LEGATT:	Leo J. Navarrete (Resident In San Salvador)
MLO:	Ltc. Jose (Tony) Espinosa (Acting)
NAS:	Jill M. Foster
POL:	Andrea R. Brouillette-Rodriguez
State ICASS:	Chantal Dalton

Other Contact Information

American Chamber of Commerce
Hotel Honduras Maya
Apartado Postal 1838
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Tel: (504) 232-7043/232-6035
Fax: (504) 232-9959

Branch office in San Pedro Sula
Tel: (504) 557-6402/559-6412
Fax: (504) 557-6402

U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration
Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-0057
800-USA-TRADE
Fax: 202-482-0464
Internet: http://trade.gov

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523-0001
Tel: 202-712-4810
Fax: 202-216-3524
Internet: www.usaid.gov

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 19, 2008

Country Description: Honduras is a democracy with a developing economy. The national language is Spanish, although English is often spoken in the Bay Islands. The climate is generally pleasant and temperate, with dry and wet seasons. During the dry season from February into May, widespread forest fires and agricultural burning can lead to severely degraded air quality throughout the country leading to respiratory problems and airport closures. The terrain includes mountainous areas, coastal beaches and jungle lowlands. Facilities that would normally be used by tourists, including hotels and restaurants are generally adequate in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, Tela, La Ceiba, the Bay Islands and near the Copan ruins. Large sections of the country, however, lack basic public services or even a governmental presence. Currency exchange is readily available at banks and hotels in the major cities.

Entry Requirements: A U.S. passport valid for at least three months from the date of entry is required to enter Honduras. Though not required by law, some travelers have reported difficulty departing Honduras using a passport with less than three months

of validity beyond the date of departure. A visa is not required, but tourists must provide evidence of return or onward travel. Parents should not rely on birth certificates for their children's travel; rather, prior to travel they should obtain U.S. passports for infants and minors born in the United States. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a photocopy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that if questioned by local officials proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available.

In June 2006, Honduras entered a "Central America-4 (CA-4) Border Control Agreement" with Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Under the terms of the agreement, citizens of the four countries may travel freely across land borders from one of the countries to any of the others without completing entry and exit formalities at Immigration checkpoints. U.S. citizens and other eligible foreign nationals who legally enter any of the four countries may similarly travel among the four without obtaining additional visas or tourist entry permits for the other three countries. Immigration officials at the first port of entry determine the length of stay, up to a maximum period of 90 days. Foreign tourists who wish to remain in the four country region beyond the period initially granted for their visit are required to request a one-time extension of stay from local immigration authorities in the country where the traveler is physically present, or travel outside the CA-4 countries and reapply for admission to the region. Foreigners "expelled" from any of the four countries are excluded from the entire "CA-4" region. In isolated cases, the lack of clarity in the implementing details of the CA-4 Border Control Agreement has caused temporary inconvenience to some travelers and has resulted in others being fined more than one hundred dollars or detained in custody for 72 hours or longer.

Dual Nationality: Honduran law permits dual nationality only for minors under the age of 21 and those Honduran-born citizens who have become naturalized citizens of other countries. U.S. citizens who become Honduran citizens by naturalization are not considered to have dual nationality under Honduran law. However, becoming a Honduran citizen will not cause U.S. Citizens to lose their U.S. citizenship and all the accompanying rights and privileges. Dual nationals, in addition to being subject to all Honduran laws affecting U.S. citizens, may be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Honduran citizens. For more information, please contact Honduran Immigration in Tegucigalpa (telephone 504-238-5613), San Pedro Sula (telephone 504-550-3728), Roatan (telephone 504-445-1226), La Ceiba (telephone 504-442-0638), or Puerto Cortes (telephone 504-665-0582).

Safety and Security: Political demonstrations sometimes disrupt traffic, but they are generally announced in advance and are usually peaceful. Travelers should avoid areas where demonstrations are taking place, and they should stay informed by following the local news and consulting hotel personnel and tour guides. Demonstrators frequently block public roads to press for concessions from the Government of Honduras. These demonstrations may last several hours and the Government rarely seeks to disperse the demonstrators. U.S. citizens should never try to pass such roadblocks. While the Honduran side of the Honduras-Nicaragua border has been largely cleared of land mines, travelers should exercise caution there. For more information, we strongly encourage travelers to visit the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://honduras.usembassy.gov. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is endemic in Honduras and requires a high degree of caution by U.S. visitors and residents alike. U.S. citizens have been the victims of a wide range of crimes, including murder, kidnapping, rape, assault, and property crimes. Sixty-two U.S. citizens have been murdered in Honduras since 1995; only twenty cases have been resolved. Four U.S citizens were murdered in Honduras in 2007, six in 2006, and ten in 2005. Kidnappings of U.S. citizens have occurred in Honduras, including two incidents in 2007. Poverty, gangs, and low apprehension and conviction rates of criminals contribute to a critical crime rate, including horrific acts of mass murder. With a total of 3,855 murders in 2007, and a population of approximately 7.3 million people, Honduras has one of the world's highest per capita murder rates.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to follow local news reports and seek additional information in the resources listed above. Criminals and pickpockets also target visitors as they enter and depart airports and hotels, so visitors should consider carrying their passports and valuables in a concealed pouch. Two-man teams on medium-size motorcycles often target pedestrians for robbery. There have also been reports of armed robbers traveling in private cars targeting pedestrians on isolated streets. The Honduran government conducts occasional joint police /military patrols in major cities in an effort to reduce crime. Problems with the judicial process include corruption and an acute shortage of trained personnel, equipment, staff, and financial resources. The Honduran law enforcement authorities' ability to prevent, respond to, and investigate criminal incidents and prosecute criminals remains limited. Honduran police generally do not speak English. The government has established a special tourist police in the resort town of Tela and other popular tourist destinations, including Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, La Ceiba, and Roatan, but the number deployed is small and coverage is limited. The San Pedro Sula area has seen occasional armed robberies against tourist vans, minibuses, and cars traveling from the airport to area hotels, even sometimes targeting the road to Copan. Armed men have forced vehicles transporting tourists off the road and

robbed the victims, occasionally assaulting the driver or passengers. In past years, several U.S. citizens have been murdered in San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba shortly after arriving in the country. Assaults in these areas may be based on tips from sources at airport arrival areas, so visitors are strongly urged to exercise caution in discussing travel plans in public.

Copan, Roatan/Bay Islands, and other tourist destinations have a lower crime rate than other parts of the country, but thefts, break-ins, assaults, and murders do occur. Exercise particular caution walking on isolated beaches, especially at night. Coxen Hole on the island of Roatan should be avoided after dark.

The Government of Honduras has a very limited presence in Northern Olancho, Colon and Gracias a Dios Departments, which are well known for lumber and narcotics smuggling and violence. Travelers in those areas should use extra caution. See the description of highways/areas to be avoided in the Traffic Safety and Road Conditions section below for details.

Incidents of crime along roads in Honduras are common, including carjacking and kidnapping. There have been frequent incidents of highway robbery on a number of roads including Limones to La Union, Olancho (route 41) via Salama and northward to Esquipulas Del Norte. For more information, please see the section below on Traffic Safety and Road Conditions.

Travelers should always drive with their doors locked and windows rolled up to avoid potential robberies at traffic lights and other places, such as congested downtown streets. Avoid driving at night. All bus travel should be during daylight hours and on first-class conveyances, not on economy buses. Please choose taxis carefully, and note the driver's name and license number. Instruct the driver not to pick up other passengers, agree on the fare before you depart, and have small bills available for payment, as taxi drivers often do not make change. Do not resist a robbery attempt. Most criminals have weapons, and most injuries and deaths have resulted when victims have resisted. In 2004, an American citizen was murdered while attempting to flee an armed robbery in progress and another American was shot while resisting a carjacking. Two American citizens were murdered while resisting armed robberies in 2005.

Do not hitchhike or go home with strangers, particularly from nightspots. Whenever possible, travel in groups of two or more persons. Use the same common sense while traveling in Honduras that you would in any high crime area in the United States: do not wear excessive jewelry; do not carry large sums of money, or display cash, ATM/credit cards, or other valuables you do not need.

Avoid walking at night in most areas of Honduras. Do not hike alone in backcountry areas, or walk alone on beaches, historic ruins, or trails.

Individuals and groups should register their travel plans with the State Department via the Internet at the Department's secure travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov. Travelers may also register by sending passport, date of birth, and emergency contact information to the American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa via fax at 011-504-238-4357, or e-mail at usahonduras@state.gov prior to travel. Individuals as well as groups should always keep in their possession a photocopy of their U.S. passport data page, carry an additional copy in their suitcase, and leave a copy at home with a friend or family member.

Information for Victims of Crime: If you are the victim of a crime while in Honduras, contact local authorities immediately, either directly or through thenational police emergency number: *199. In addition to reporting to the local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa or the Consular Agency in San Pedro Sula for assistance. The theft of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately.The Embassy and Consular Agency staff can provide you with information about medical care, contacting family members or friends and explaining how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of most crimes is solely the responsibility of local authorities, Consular staff can provide you with a list of attorneys if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Honduras varies greatly in quality and availability. Outside Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, medical care is inadequate to address complex situations. Support staff facilities and necessary equipment and supplies are not up to U.S. standards anywhere in Honduras. Facilities for advanced surgical procedures are not available. Wide areas of the country, including the popular tourist areas of the Bay Islands, do not have a general surgery hospital. Ambulance services are limited in major cities and almost non-existent elsewhere. Emergency services may be contacted directly through their local numbers.

Scuba diving is popular in the Bay Islands, but the limited medical facilities there pose a special risk in the event of an emergency. There is a decompression chamber on Roatan and Utila for divers, but no advanced medical care on either island for diving related accidents.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the U.S. unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the U.S. However, many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas including emergency services such as medical evacuations. It is important to ensure that you have adequate medical evac-

uation coverage prior to your trip to Honduras. When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the U.S. may cost tens of thousands of dollars. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad, available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page.

Other Health Information: Mosquito-borne illnesses are an ongoing problem in Honduras. All persons traveling in Honduras, even for a brief visit, are at risk of contracting malaria. Take a prophylactic regimen best suited to your health profile. The country regularly suffers from outbreaks of dengue fever. Unlike traditional mosquito-borne illnesses, there is no medicinal prophylactic or curative regimen for dengue fever. Travelers should take precautions against being bitten by mosquitoes to reduce the chance of contracting such illnesses, such as avoiding standing water even in the home, wearing long sleeves and pants in both day and night, and applying insect repellent regularly.

Severe air pollution, which can aggravate or lead to respiratory problems, is common throughout the country during the dry season due in large part to widespread forest fires and agricultural burning. Travelers with respiratory or cardiac conditions and those who are elderly or extremely young are at greatest risk for complications from air pollution, which may include coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or chest pain. Acute respiratory infections are also widespread; more than 100,000 cases are reported annually.

Individuals traveling to Honduras should ensure that all their routine vaccinations are up to date. Vaccination against Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, and Typhoid is strongly recommended for those traveling to Honduras from the United States. Honduras requires vaccination against Yellow Fever for those traveling to Honduras from countries where there is the risk of transmission. Travelers taking prescription medications should bring an adequate supply with them when coming to Honduras and ensure that they are properly labeled.

Honduras also has the highest adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the region. Over 63,000 people in Honduras have HIV/AIDS.

Honduras lacks a substantial infrastructure for maintaining water purity. Travelers are strongly encouraged to avoid drinking tap water or a beverage that contains ice from an unknown source (even alcoholic drinks). Bottles and bags of purified water are widely available. It is also recommended that individuals traveling to Honduras avoid eating untreated raw vegetables, fruits that can't be peeled on the spot, raw fish like ceviche and undercooked shellfish and products containing mayonnaise, pastry icing, and unpasteurized dairy products. Hot cooked food, fresh bread, dry foods such as crackers, bottled carbonated beverages, coffee, tea, and beer are usually safe, provided such food items are not purchased from street vendors. All fruits and vegetables should be washed thoroughly with detergent and running water. Those that will be cooked or peeled can then be stored in a sealed container until used. Those that will be eaten raw and will not be peeled should be soaked for 15 minutes in a solution of chlorine bleach (or 5% household bleach) in water (one tablespoon of Clorox per gallon of water), rinsed with potable water, and allowed to air dry.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Honduras is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Because of crime and poor road conditions, driving can be very dangerous, and travelers should carry a cellular phone in case of an emergency. Travelers should exercise extreme caution while driving on isolated stretches of road and passing on mountainous curves. Rockslides are common, especially in the rainy season (May through December). Traffic signs, even on major highways, are often inadequate, and streets in the major cities are often unmarked. Travelers should always drive with their doors locked and windows rolled up to avoid potential robberies at traffic lights and other places such as congested downtown streets. Please refer to our Road Safety page for more information.

Honduran roads are poorly lit and marked. Vehicles are often driven at night without adequate illumination, and animals and people wander onto the roads at all hours. For these reasons, and because of the high incidence of crime, the U.S. Embassy strongly discourages car and bus travel after dark.

Major cities are connected by an inconsistently maintained, two-lane system of paved roads. Many secondary roads in Honduras are unpaved. During the rainy season, even major highways are often closed due to rockslides and flooding from heavy rains. In the event of an accident, contact the Honduran Transit Authority ("Transito") immediately. They may be contacted either directly through their local numbers, or through their national emergency number, *189. Honduran law requires that no vehicles involved in an accident be moved until Transit Agents arrive, not even to clear a traffic obstruction, unless you are in serious physical danger.

Some of the most dangerous stretches for road travel include: Tegucigalpa to Choluteca, because of dangerous mountain curves; El Progreso to La Ceiba, because of animal crossings and the poor condition of bridges from flooding; Route 39 through northern Olancho Department between Gualaco and San Esteban; and Limones to La Union, Olancho (route 41) via Salama and northward to Saba. Locals also refer to this latter stretch of road as the "Corridor of Death" because of frequent incidents of highway robbery. In March of 2008, 27 persons died when a bus overturned and rolled down a ravine in La Esperanza, Intibuca, on another infamous stretch of road called "Flight of the Angel."

The Embassy has received reports of robberies on the road from Tegucigalpa to Danlí. The only recommended route to the north coast from the south is CA-5 to route 21 to CA-13 via Tela to La Ceiba and Trujillo. Hijackings of private and commercial vehicles from the United States to Honduras have occurred. While Honduras and the United States have signed and ratified a Stolen Vehicle Treaty, existing Honduran laws protect good faith buyers (even of stolen vehicles) so the recovery and return of these vehicles to their original owners is not guaranteed. Vehicle insurance may mitigate loss; please check with the National Insurance Crime Bureau at https://www.nicb.org, private insurance carriers, and our Embassy web site information on Commercial Vehicle Hijackings at http://honduras.usembassy.gov for more information. For specific information concerning Honduran driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please contact the Honduran National Tourist Organization offices in New York via the Internet at http://www.hondurastips.honduras.com.

Marine Safety and Oversight: The areas off both coasts of Honduras are the subject of maritime border disputes between Honduras and its neighbors. The Honduran Navy patrols these areas, and all private vessels transiting Honduran territorial waters should be prepared to be hailed and possibly boarded by Honduran military personnel to verify documentation. While the Honduran Navy previously used private vessels as patrol vessels, this is no longer the case. In the event that any vessel is hailed in Honduran waters in the Caribbean by a non-military vessel or any suspicious vessel and directed to prepare for boarding, the vessel should immediately contact the U.S. Coast Guard Operations Center by radio or INMARSAT at 305-415-6800. Anyone needing more information can also contact the U.S. Embassy during working hours and request to speak with the U.S. Military Group (USMILGP) office. There have been incidents of armed assaults against private sailing vessels by criminals posing as fishermen off the northeast coast of Honduras, particularly in the numerous small islands northeast of the Department of Gracias a Dios. Sailors should contact the Coast Guard and yacht facility managers in their areas of travel for current information.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Honduras' Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Honduras' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov. Severe air pollution often leads to the closing of some or all of Honduras's four international airports during the dry season. Some travelers have been compelled to travel by bus to neighboring countries in order to catch onward flights.

For further information, travelers may contact the Department of Transportation within the United States at tel. 1-800-322-7873, or visit the FAA's Internet web site at: www.faa.gov/avr/iasa.

Real Estate Investment: U.S. citizens should exercise extreme caution before entering into any form of commitment to invest in real property, particularly in coastal areas and the Bay Islands. Honduran laws and practices regarding real estate differ substantially from those in the United States, and fraudulent deeds and titles are common; U.S. citizens considering investing or buying real estate in Honduras should be aware that rights to such property do not enjoy the same level of protection as in the United States. There is no title insurance in Honduras, and approximately 80 percent of privately held land is untitled. In addition, there are complaints that the Honduran judicial system often prolongs disputed cases for many years before resolution. Americans have spent thousands of dollars in legal fees and years of frustration trying to resolve property disputes, even in cases in which local attorneys and Honduran and U.S. real estate agents had given assurances to the investor. Violence has been used against Americans involved in disputed property cases. Potential investors should engage competent local legal representation before making any commitments. Investors should thoroughly check references of attorneys and real estate agents.

Honduran law places certain restrictions on land ownership by foreigners in coastal and border areas. Squatters claim a number of properties owned by U.S. citizens. U.S. Government officials may not act as agents, attorneys, or in a fiduciary capacity. U.S. citizens who own property abroad and who thereby have assumed responsibilities concurrent

with ownership of property in a foreign country should take steps on their own initiative to safeguard their interests and to employ private legal counsel when the need arises. For further information on investing in property in Honduras, please review the State Department's Investment Climate Statement, part of the Country Commercial Guide at http://www.buyusa.gov/honduras/en/14.html. For information on contracting Honduran legal representation, please check with other investors. You may also refer to the list of attorneys available on the Embassy's home page at http://honduras.usembassy.gov/attorneylistjul07.pdf.

Financial Market Investment: Due to poor regulation and lack of guarantees, investment in the Honduran "Bolsa de Valores," or securities market, as well as banking institution bonds, "fideicomisos" (trusts), and certificates of deposit from uninsured financial institutions pose high risk to investors. Extreme caution should be exercised before and while undertaking such activities, as American citizens have lost large sums of money through investments in such precarious markets. For further information on investing in Honduras, please review the State Department's Investment Climate Statement, part of the Country Commercial Guide at http://www.buyusa.gov/honduras/en/14.html.

Corruption: Many U.S. firms and citizens operating in Honduras have found corruption to be a serious problem and a constraint to successful investment. While some U.S. firms have satisfactorily resolved cases through the courts, the majority have difficulty navigating the legal system. There are complaints that the Honduran judicial system caters to favoritism, external pressure and bribes. Corruption appears to be most pervasive in government procurement, government permits, and in the buying and selling of real estate (land titling).

Customs Regulations: U.S. citizens who intend to stay in Honduras for an extended period of time and who bring vehicles or household goods into the country should consult Honduran customs officials prior to shipment. With the exception of "antique" cars, all vehicles imported into Honduras by foreigners must be less than ten (10) years old. For specific information regarding customs requirements, please contact the Embassy of Honduras in Washington, DC at: http://www.hondurasemb.org for more information.

Honduran customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary import and export of items such as antiquities, medications, and business equipment. For example, Honduran law prohibits the export of antiques and artifacts from pre-colonial civilizations. To protect the country's biodiversity, it is illegal to export certain birds, feathers, and other flora and fauna. For specific information regarding exportation requirements, please contact the Embassy of Honduras in Washington, DC at http://www.hondurasemb.org.

The Government of Honduras is strictly enforcing the law that requires a Honduran permit for the importation of firearms into Honduras. Travelers must obtain a firearm importation permit from a Honduran Embassy, Consulate General or Consulate located in the U.S. prior to bringing firearms into the country.

Please note that a U.S. government-issued or airline-issued permit is not valid for importation of firearms into Honduras. Firearms that arrive without the requisite Honduran permit will be confiscated and the bearer will be prosecuted to the full extent of Honduran law.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the U.S. and may not afford the protections available under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the U.S. for similar offenses. Persons violating Honduran laws, even unknowingly, may be fined, expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Honduras are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Assisting or participating in the distribution of illegal drugs is also a crime prosecutable in the U.S., and may lead to fines, property seizure, or imprisonment.

Anyone offering you illegal drugs should be considered extremely dangerous—there is no "safe" source of illegal drugs. "Sexual tourists" travel alone or in groups to Honduras for the purpose of purchasing sexual favors from minors. This activity violates Honduran law, and American citizens are imprisoned in Honduras for sexual offenses involving minors. In addition, U.S. citizens and residents charged with these crimes are subject to prosecution upon their return to the U.S., regardless of the outcome of the judicial proceedings overseas.

Moreover, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in sex workers in Honduras is estimated to be in excess of 10%.Using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is also a crime prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: International adoptions from Honduras are very complex. Current information on Honduran adoption procedures and the immigrant visa application process is available from the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy.

Prospective adoptive parents are urged to check with the Consular Section to ensure that all required documentation has been approved by the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security and to confirm that their child's adoption is complete before traveling to Honduras to apply for their child's immigrant visa. Adoptive parents are also urged to carry with them complete adoption paperwork when traveling with their adopted child to, from, and within Honduras. Honduras is a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, but the U.S. Department of State has determined that Honduras has failed to comply with its obli-

gations under the Convention. No child has ever been returned to the United States from Honduras under the provisions of the Convention.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Honduras are encouraged to register their presence through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Honduras. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa. By registering, whether via the Internet or in person at the Embassy, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate location:
Avenida La Paz in Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Internet site:
http://honduras.usembassy.gov
Telephone: 011-504-236-9320 or 011-504-238-5114

For information on services for U.S. citizens, please ask for ext. 4400.
American Citizens Services Unit Fax: 011-504-238-4357

Consular Agency in San Pedro Sula location:
Banco Atlantida Building—11th Floor
San Pedro Sula, Honduras
Telephone: 011-504-558-1580

For more details about all U.S. Embassy and consular services in Honduras, please see the Embassy web site at http://honduras.usembassy.gov or visit the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel. state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The adoption process in Honduras is currently in flux. Policies regarding eligibility requirements for adoptive parents, residency requirements, and time frame are under review by the Honduran Family Court (IHNFA).

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Instituto Hondureño de la Niñez y la Familia (IHNFA) for children under 14 years old. Honduran Family Court for children 14 and older.

Instituto Hondureño de la Niñez y la Familia (IHNFA)
Honduras, Centro America
Tegucigalpa, Col. Humuya,
Calle la salud,
Apartado Postal 3234
Phone: (504) 23.57.754
Website: http://www.ihnfa.hn/

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: All adoption agencies must be accredited. IHNFA has the information about registration and accreditation to operate. The U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa maintains a listing of attorneys in Honduras on their website at: http://honduras.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: Between U.S. $3,000 and U.S. $10,000 for attorney fees.

Adoption Procedures: If a child is under 14 years old, a petition (available at the IHNFA) must be submitted with the IHNFA. If a child is 14—18 years old, a petition may be submitted to the Honduran Family Court by an attorney.

Required Documents: These are currently under review by IHNFA. Please contact IHNFA for more specific information.

Embassy of Honduras
3007 Tilden Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Telephone: (202) 966-7702.
E-mail: embassy@hondurasemb.org
Website:
http://www.hondurasemb.org

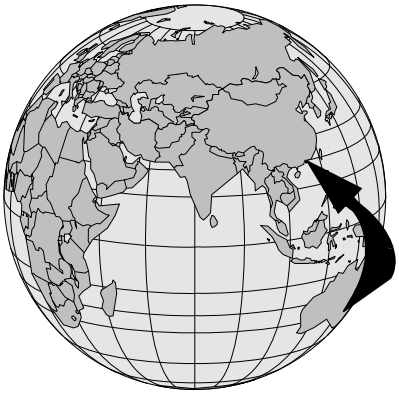
Honduran Consulates are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Phoenix, San Francisco, San Juan, and Tampa.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Avenida La Paz
Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Americans may contact the American Citizen Services Unit of the Consular Section at: Telephone: (504) 238-5114 ext. 4400; Website: http://honduras.usembassy.gov.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Honduras may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



HONG KONG

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,104 sq. km.; Hong Kong comprises Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories, and numerous small islands.

Terrain: Hilly to mountainous, with steep slopes and natural harbor.

Climate: Tropical monsoon. Cool and humid in winter, hot and rainy from spring through summer, warm and sunny in fall.

People

Population: (end-2007) 6.96 million.

Population growth rate: (2007) 0.8%.

Ethnic groups: Chinese 95%; other 5%.

Religions: About 43% participate in some form of religious practice. Christian, about 9.6%.

Languages: Cantonese (a dialect of Chinese) and English are official.

Education: Literacy—97.1% (98.7% male, 95.4% female).

Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—1.7/1,000. Life expectancy—82.4 yrs. (overall); 79.3 yrs. males, 85.4 yrs. females.

Work force: (2008) 3.66 million. Wholesale, retail, and import/export trades and restaurants and hotels—29.0%; finance, insurance, real estate, and business services—14.3%; manufacturing—4.2%

Government

Type: Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, with its own constitution (the Basic Law).

Government branches: Executive—Administration: Chief Executive selected in March 2007; Executive Council, serving in an advisory role for the Chief Executive. Legislative—Legislative Council elected in September 2004. Judicial—Court of Final Appeal is highest court, other lower courts.

Political subdivisions: Hong Kong, Kowloon, New Territories.

Suffrage: Permanent residents, at 18 years or over, living in Hong Kong for the past 7 years are eligible to vote.

Economy (2007)

GDP: (2007) $207.2 billion.

GDP real growth rate: (2007) 6.4%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $29,900.

Natural resources: Outstanding deepwater harbor.

Industry: Types—textiles, clothing, electronics, plastics, toys, watches, clocks.

Trade: Exports—$344.6 billion: clothing, electronics, textiles, watches and clocks, office machinery. Imports—$367.7 billion: consumer goods, raw materials and semi-manufactures, capital goods, foodstuffs, fuels.

PEOPLE

Hong Kong's population has increased steadily over the past decade, reaching 6.96 million in 2007. Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with an overall density of some 6,303 people per square kilometer. Cantonese, the official Chinese language in Hong Kong, is spoken by most of the population. English, also an official language, is widely understood, being spoken by more than one-third of the population. Every major religion is practiced freely in Hong Kong. All children are required by law to be in full-time education between the ages of 6 and 15. Preschool education for most children begins at age 3. Primary school begins normally at the age of 6 and lasts for 6 years. At about age 12, children progress to a 3-year course of junior secondary education. Most stay on for a 2-year senior secondary course, while others join full-time vocational training. More than 90% of children complete upper secondary education or equivalent vocational education.

HISTORY

According to archaeological studies initiated in the 1920s, human activity on Hong Kong dates back over five millennia. Excavated neolithic artifacts suggest an influence from northern Chinese stone-age cultures. The territory was settled by Han Chinese during the seventh century, A.D., evidenced by the discovery of an ancient tomb at Lei Cheung Uk in Kowloon. The first major migration from northern China to Hong Kong occurred during the Sung Dynasty (960-1279). The British East India Company made the first successful sea venture to China in 1699, and Hong Kong's trade with British merchants developed rapidly soon after. After the Chinese defeat in the First Opium War (1839-42), Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking. Britain was granted a perpetual lease on the Kowloon Peninsula under the 1860 Convention of Beijing, which formally ended hostilities in the Second Opium War (1856-58). The United Kingdom, concerned that Hong Kong could not be defended unless surrounding areas also were under British control, executed a 99-year lease of the New Territories in 1898, significantly expanding the size of the Hong Kong colony.

In the late 19th century and early 20th centuries, Hong Kong developed as a warehousing and distribution center for U.K. trade with southern China. After the end of World War II and the communist takeover of Mainland China in 1949, hundreds of thousands of people fled from China to Hong Kong. Hong Kong became an economic success and a manufacturing, commercial, finance, and tourism center. High life expectancy, literacy, per capita income, and other socioeconomic measures attest to Hong Kong's achievements over the last five decades.

On July 1, 1997, China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, ending more than 150 years of British colonial rule. Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China with a degree of autonomy in all matters except foreign and defense affairs. According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984) and the Basic Law, Hong Kong will retain its political, economic, and judicial systems and unique way of life for 50 years after reversion and will continue to participate in international agreements and organizations under the name, "Hong Kong, China."

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is headed by Chief Executive Donald Tsang, who first took office in 2005 and whose current term ends in 2012. The Election Committee that votes on the Chief Executive is made up of approximately 800 Hong Kong residents from four constituency groups: commercial, industrial, and financial interests; professionals; labor, social services, and religious interests; and the legislature, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and the P.R.C. National People's Congress.

In December 2006, supporters of pro-democracy Civic Party legislator Alan Leong won 134 seats in the Election Committee, enabling Leong to challenge incumbent Chief Executive Tsang's bid for a new five-year term in 2007. Tsang, with solid support from the pro-government and pro-business sectors, won the March 25, 2007 Election Committee vote with 649 of the 795 votes. Leong garnered 123 votes.

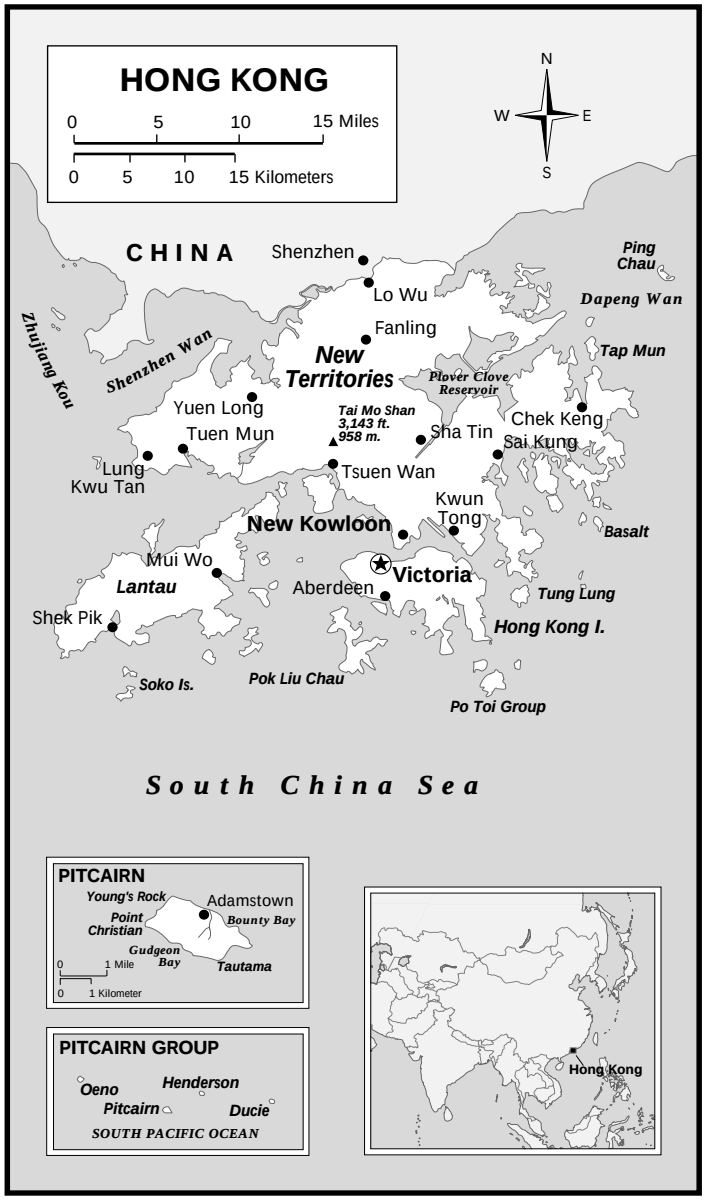
In July 2002, the Hong Kong Government implemented the Principal Officials Accountability System, which was designed to make the government more responsive to public concerns. Eleven political appointees, directly responsible to the Chief Executive, were added to run the 11 policy bureaus. Three other senior civil service positions—the Chief Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Justice Secretary—also were converted to political appointments. This system was expanded in 2008 to include one Under Secretary and one Political Assistant position being filled by appointment in each bureau.

While Hong Kong remains a free and open society where human rights are respected, courts are independent, and there is well-established respect for the rule of law, residents are limited in their ability to change their government, and the legislature is limited in its power to affect government policies. The September 12, 2004 Legislative Council elections were seen as generally free, open, and widely contested, although Hong Kong groups have alleged voter intimidation, manipulation, or pressure in connection with them.

In December 2005 the Legco rejected a Hong Kong Government-proposed package of incremental reforms to the mechanisms for choosing the CE in 2007 and forming the Legco in 2008. In July 2007, the Hong Kong Government's Commission on Strategic Development issued a Green Paper on Constitutional Development, which set out a myriad of options to reform the CE and Legco electoral mechanisms, with the "ultimate aim" of universal suffrage as prescribed by the Basic Law.

On December 12, 2007, Chief Executive Donald Tsang submitted a report on the Green Paper to the central government. The report said more than half of local people wanted universal suffrage by 2012, but 2017 might be a more realistic date.

In December 2007, the P.R.C. National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) issued a decision on Hong Kong's constitutional development which, while ruling out universal suffrage in 2012, appears to open the way for Hong Kong to achieve full universal suffrage for the CE in 2017, and full universal suffrage for Legco sometime thereafter. Any amendments to the Basic Law will require approval by the CE, at least two-thirds of Legco, and then the NPCSC.



Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/2008

Chief Executive: **Donald TSANG Yam-kuen**
Chief Secretary for Admin.: **Henry TANG Ying-yen**
Sec. for Civil Service: **Denise YUE Chong-yee**
Sec. for Commerce & Economic Development: **Rita LAU Ng Wai-lan**
Sec. for Constitutional Affairs: **Stephen LAM Sui-lung**
Sec. for Development: **Carrie LAM Cheng Yuet-ngor**
Sec. for Education: **Michael SUEN Ming-yueng**
Sec. for Environment: **Edward YAU Tang-wah**
Sec. for Finance: **John TSANG Chun-wah**
Sec. for Financial Services & Treasury: **K. C. CHAN Ka-keung**
Sec. for Food & Health: **York CHOW, Dr.**
Sec. for Home Affairs: **TSANG Tak-sing**
Sec. for Justice: **WONG Yan Lung**
Sec. for Labor & Welfare: **Matthew CHEUNG Kin-chung**
Sec. for Security: **Ambrose LEE Siu-kwong**
Sec. for Transport & Housing: **Eva CHENG**
Chief Executive, Hong Kong Monetary Authority: **Joseph YAM**
Chief Justice: **Andrew LI Kwok-nang**
Pres., Legislative Council: **Rita FAN Hsu Lai-tai**
Commissioner of Police: **TANG King-shing**
Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption: **Timothy TONG Hin-ming**
Director of Audit: **Benjamin TANG Macau**
(Special Admin. Region of the People's Republic of China)
Chief Executive: **Edmund HO Hau-wah**
Sec. for Admin. & Justice: **Florinda Da Rosa Silva CHAN**
Sec. for Economics & Finance: **Francis TAM Pak-yuen**
Sec. for Security: **CHEONG Kuoc Va**
Sec. for Social Affairs & Culture: **Fernando CHUI Sai-on**
Sec. for Transportation & Public Works: **AO Man Long**
Procurator Gen.: **HO Chio Meng**
Pres., Court of Final Appeal: **SAM Hou Fai**
Pres., Legislative Council: **Susana CHOU**
Commissioner, Audit: **Fatima Mei-lei CHOI**
Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption: **CHEONG U**

ECONOMY

Hong Kong is one of the world's most open and dynamic economies. Hong Kong per capita GDP is comparable to other developed countries. Real GDP expanded by 6.4% in 2007 year-on-year, driven by thriving exports, vibrant inbound tourism and strong consumer spending. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) caused the Hong Kong economy to shrink during the first half of 2003, and property prices had fallen 66% from their late 1997 peak, but have since more than doubled from that lower base. The unemployment rate declined to 3.3% in April-June 2008, the lowest level since mid-1998. The surplus for fiscal year 2007-08 was $15.9 billion or 7.6% of GDP, attributed to the robust economy, increased corporate profits and salaries, the buoyant stock market, and a stable property market.

Hong Kong enjoys a number of economic strengths, including a sound banking system, virtually no public debt, a strong legal system, ample foreign exchange reserves and an able and rigorously enforced anti-corruption regime. Hong Kong's liberal

economic system enables it to respond quickly to changing circumstances. It continues to take measures designed to improve its attractiveness as a commercial and trading center, especially after China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), and is continually refining its financial architecture. The government is deepening its economic interaction with the Pearl River Delta in an effort to maintain Hong Kong's position as a gateway to China. These efforts include the conclusion of a free trade agreement with China, known as "the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement" (CEPA), which applies zero tariffs to all Hong Kong-origin goods and preferential treatment in 40 service sectors. Hong Kong, along with the Macau SAR, is also participating in a new pan-Pearl River Delta trade block with nine Chinese provinces, which aims to lower trade barriers among members, standardize regulations, and improve infrastructure. U.S. companies have a generally favorable view of Hong Kong's business environment, including its legal system and the free flow of information, low taxation, and infrastructure.

The American Chamber of Commerce's annual business confidence survey, released in December 2007, showed 99% of respondents had a "good" or "satisfactory" outlook for 2008. Survey results indicated a positive economic outlook through 2010.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Hong Kong's foreign relations and defense are the responsibility of China. Hong Kong is an independent customs territory and economic entity separate from the rest of China and is able to enter into international agreements on its own behalf in commercial and economic matters. Hong Kong, independently of China, participates as a full member of numerous international economic organizations including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). It is an articulate and effective champion of free markets and the reduction of trade barriers.

U.S.-HONG KONG RELATIONS

U.S. policy toward Hong Kong, grounded in a determination to promote Hong Kong's prosperity, autonomy, and way of life, is stated in the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992. The United States maintains substantial economic and political interests in Hong Kong. The United States supports Hong Kong's autonomy by concluding and implementing bilateral agreements; promoting trade and investment; arranging high-level visits; broadening law enforcement cooperation; bolstering educational, academic, and cultural links; and supporting the large community of U.S. citizens and visitors. Hong Kong is an active member of the global coalition against terrorism. Hong Kong has joined the Container Security Initiative and remains an important partner with regard to eliminating funding for terrorist networks and combating money laundering. Hong Kong agreed to participate in the Secure Freight Initiative in a limited capacity on a pilot basis in November 2007 and is scheduled to continue it participation through April 2009. Hong Kong has passed legislation designed to bring Hong Kong into compliance with applicable UN anti-terror resolutions and Financial Action Task Force recommendations.

The United States has substantial economic and social ties with Hong Kong. There are some 1,100 U.S. firms, including 891 regional operations (298 regional headquarters and 593 regional offices), and about 54,000 American residents in Hong Kong. According to U.S. Government statistics, U.S. exports to Hong Kong totaled $20.1 billion in 2007. U.S. direct investment in Hong Kong at the end of 2007 totaled about $47.4 billion, making the United States one of Hong Kong's largest investors, along with China, Japan, and the Netherlands. The United States and Hong Kong signed a civil aviation agreement in October 2002, which significantly liberalized the aviation market. Hong Kong enjoys a high degree of autonomy as a separate customs territory, with no changes to borders, staffing, or technology export controls since the 1997 handover. Intellectual property rights (IPR) protection is relatively strong and Hong Kong continues to take steps to improve both its legislation and its enforcement regime.

The Hong Kong Government maintains three Economic and Trade Offices in the United States. Addresses, telephone numbers, and web sites for these offices are listed below:

1520-18th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 331-8947
Fax: (202) 331-8958
Web Site: www.hketowashington.gov.hk/dc/index.htm

115 East 54th Street
New York, NY 10022
Tel: (212) 752-3320
Fax: (212) 752-3395
Web Site: http://www.hketony.gov.hk/ny/index.htm

130 Montgomery Street
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: (415) 835-9300
Fax: (415) 421-0646
Web Site: http://www.hketosf.gov.hk/sf/index.htm

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

HONG KONG (CG) 26 Garden Road, Central, APO/FPO AmConGen Hong Kong, PSC 461, Box 1, FPO AP 96521, (852) 2523-9011, Fax (852) 2845-1598, Workweek: 0830-1730, Website: hongkong.usconsulate.gov.

DCM OMS:	Virginia S. Burns
DHS/ICE:	Tatum King
FCS:	James W. Mayfield (Acting)
HRO:	Anush Dawidjan
MGT:	Michelle A. Burton (Acting)
POL/ECO:	Laurent D. Charbonnet
AMB:	Christopher J. Marut (Acting)

CON:	Steven S. Maloney
DCM:	Steven S. Maloney (Acting)
PAO:	Anthony A. Hutchinson
RSO:	Vincent D. Graham
ATO:	Philip A. Shull
DAO:	Capt. Theodore P. Algire
DEA:	Gene T. Goon
FMO:	Michelle A. Burton
IMO:	Gary Cook
IPO:	Roger J. Bjorkdahl
ISO:	Joan E. Hutfles
LEGATT:	Nelson Low

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 26, 2008

Country Description: Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) since July 1, 1997, has a high degree of autonomy, except in the areas of defense and foreign policy, and retains its own currency, laws, and border controls. It is composed of three geographic areas: the New Territories, Kowloon Peninsula, and Hong Kong Island. Hong Kong SAR is cosmopolitan and highly developed. Tourist facilities and services are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A passport with a minimum of one-month validity after the period of intended stay, adequate funds to cover stay without working and evidence of onward/return transportation are required. Because many neighboring areas require six months validity remaining on the passport, U.S. citizens planning travel beyond Hong Kong should ensure that their passports are valid for at least six months from the date of their proposed entry into such areas. A visa is not required for tourist visits of up to 90 days by U.S. citizens. An extension of stay may be granted upon application to the Hong Kong SAR Immigration Department. Visas are required to work or study in Hong Kong. Visit the Hong Kong SAR Immigration Department at http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/home.htm or the Embassy of the People's Republic of China web site at http://www.china-embassy.org/eng for the most current visa information. U.S. citizens should obtain all required visas prior to departing the U.S. Specifically, U.S. citizens wishing to travel to the PRC from Hong Kong require a PRC visa and should apply at the PRC Embassy or consulates in the U.S. Parents whose children hold U.S. passports should be aware that the PRC Visa Office may require certified birth certificates or other U.S. documents for these children. Persons applying in Hong Kong for PRC visas for U.S.-born children have been unable to obtain PRC visas without the certified U.S. birth certificate. Parents should consider bringing their children's certified birth certificates if applying for a PRC visa in Hong Kong.

Safety and Security: Although there have been no terrorist incidents in Hong Kong, the Department of State reminds Americans everywhere that U.S. citizens and interests are at a heightened risk of attack by terrorists. These individuals and groups have proven that they do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Because security awareness has been elevated within the United States, terrorists may target U.S. interests overseas. Private Americans should be aware of the potential risks when making travel plans and should remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and exercise caution. The State Department will continue to develop information about potential threats.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Hong Kong SAR has a low crime rate. Even so, travelers should exercise caution when in congested areas and pay particular attention to personal belongings while in crowded markets and while traveling on public transportation. Violent crime, though rare, does occur. There have been cases where both local and foreign hikers have been robbed or beaten in country parks and on Victoria Peak. Although no U.S. citizens have been reported among these victims, U.S. citizens should be extremely vigilant when walking in these areas and should travel in groups.

There have been reports of robberies involving the drug rohypnol, commonly known as the "date rape drug." Most reports have involved bar staff and/or prostitutes from bars and clubs in the popular Wanchai and Tsim Sha Tsui districts. The drug is administered to unwitting victims via food or drink, who have later awoken to find all of their valuables missing. The drug causes the victim to lose consciousness, sometimes for over 24 hours, and often induces short term amnesia. Travelers are advised to avoid leaving drinks or food unattended, and should not accept food or drink from strangers or new acquaintances.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Hong Kong has a crime victim compensation program available to U.S. citizens who are legal residents or tourists in Hong Kong. For more detailed information on the program and its requirements, please see the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department web page at http://www.

swd.gov.hk. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Hong Kong is 999.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical facilities are available, and there are many Western-trained physicians in Hong Kong. Prescription drugs are widely available although may have different names than those in the U.S. Emergency services response time is good. Doctors and hospitals require immediate cash payment for health services and generally do not accept credit cards.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Hong Kong. The H5N1 virus ("avian flu") has been found in poultry and wild birds in Hong Kong. While rare, human infection and death from H5N1 infection have been reported. Most reported cases of human infection with H5N1 viruses have occurred after contact with H5N1-infected poultry or birds, but a small number of cases may have occurred following close and prolonged contact with another person who is visibly ill from H5N1 infection. Further information about Avian Flu is available from the Centers for Disease Control's Avian Flu Traveler Information web page at http://wwwn.cdc.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Hong Kong is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

About 90 percent of the population in Hong Kong depends on public transport. Taxis, buses, and the mass transit railway (MTR) are readily available, inexpensive, and generally safe. The MTR is an underground railway network and is the most popular mode of public transport, carrying an average of 2.3 million passengers a day.

In Hong Kong, traffic moves on the left. During the daytime, traffic congests Hong Kong's urban areas. Each year, more than 19,000 drivers, passengers, and pedestrians are injured or killed in traffic accidents in Hong Kong. Speed limits are 50 kilometers per hour in urban areas, 80 kilometers per hour on highways and 110 kilometers per hour on expressways unless otherwise marked. The use of seat belts in vehicles, if so equipped, is mandatory both in the front and back seats. The maximum penalty for dangerous driving causing death can be a fine of $50,000 HK ($6,500 US), imprisonment for five years and disqualification from driving for not less than two years on first conviction. At the scene of a traffic accident, drivers are required to undergo alcohol level testing. Any driver found exceeding the prescribed limit of blood alcohol level may face prosecution under Hong Kong law. The use of hand-held cellular phones while driving in Hong Kong is strictly prohibited. A breach of this law can lead to a maximum fine of $2,000 HK ($260 US). However, motorists can use "hands-free devices," such as headphones and speakerphones. Hong Kong law requires that all registered vehicles carry valid third-party liability insurance. A Hong Kong driver's license may be issued without a test to individuals who hold a valid U.S. driver's license, provided they have resided in the United States for not less than six months. U.S. citizen visitors who do not plan to stay in Hong Kong for more than twelve months can drive in Hong Kong on their valid U.S. driver's license. Visit the website of the Hong Kong Transport Department at www.td.gov.hk/home/index.htm for further details.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Hong Kong's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Hong Kong's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Customs Regulations: Hong Kong SAR customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning controlled items carried while transiting Hong Kong (temporary importation or exportation) such as firearms and ammunition, counterfeit goods or illegally produced copies of copyright items, ivory, narcotics, medications, television decoders requiring a subscription, animals and plants, meat and poultry, textiles, and sensitive high technology or military products. Travelers bringing such goods into Hong Kong without a license may be prosecuted and the goods may be seized. The penalty for trafficking in dangerous drugs can be life imprisonment and a heavy fine. Among the other items that travelers must declare to customs officials are liquors, tobacco, cigarettes and cigars, methyl alcohol, and merchandise imported for commercial purposes. There are no currency restrictions for travelers.

Travelers are liable to prosecution and possible detention if they bring into/out of Hong Kong any firearm or ammunition. Unless otherwise exempted by laws, possession of an "imitation firearm" is also an offense. "Arms" means any firearm, air rifle/air gun/air pistol from which any shot, bullet or missile can be discharged with a muzzle energy greater than two joules, electric stunning device, gun/pistol or other propelling/releasing instrument from or by which a projectile containing any gas or chemical could be discharged, weapon for the discharge of any noxious liquid/gas/powder, and harpoon or spear gun. Paintball guns are included in this category.

Travelers are also liable to prosecution if they bring into/out of Hong Kong any "weapon," which includes Chinese-style throwing dart, gravity knife, gravity-operated steel baton, knuckleduster, Chinese-style fighting iron, spring-loaded steel baton, any

knife the blade of which is exposed by a spring or other mechanical/electric device, and any bladed/pointed weapon. Please note that the fact that such items may be openly for sale in mainland China does not necessarily mean that they may be brought into Hong Kong.

Please visit the website of the Hong Kong Department of Customs and Excise at http://www.customs.gov.hk/eng/content_e.html for specific information regarding Hong Kong customs requirements.

Visitors to Hong Kong should be aware that the importation into the United States of counterfeit, brand-name items, such as watches, compact discs, computer software, and clothing, is prohibited by U.S. law. U.S. Customs officials encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes.

Dogs and cats may be brought into Hong Kong only with a special permit issued in advance. Dogs and cats imported from the United States may be exempted from quarantine when they have valid health and vaccination certificates and the pets have been in the United States for at least six months. Additional information on importing pets is available on the Hong Kong Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department web site at http://www.afcd.gov.hk.

Dual Nationality: Under PRC nationality law, persons who are of Chinese descent and who were born in the mainland of China or Hong Kong are PRC citizens. However, under an agreement between the United States and the PRC, all U.S. citizens entering Hong Kong on their U.S. passports, including such persons as may be considered PRC nationals by the PRC authorities, are considered U.S. citizens by the Hong Kong SAR authorities for purposes of ensuring consular access and protection.

Dual nationals, who are or previously were Hong Kong residents, and who wish to ensure U.S. consular access and protection after the initial 90-day period of admission into Hong Kong, must declare their U.S. nationality by presenting their U.S. passports to the Hong Kong Immigration Department and completing an application for declaration of change of nationality. This declaration of change of nationality will ensure U.S. consular protection and may also result in loss of one's Chinese nationality (but not necessarily one's right of abode). Although such individuals' failure to declare U.S. nationality may jeopardize U.S. consular protection, such failure will not jeopardize their U.S. citizenship. Dual national residents of Hong Kong who enter Hong Kong on their Hong Kong identity cards rather than their U.S. passports and who desire to guarantee U.S. consular protection should declare their U.S. nationality to the Hong Kong Immigration Department as soon as possible after entry. Dual nationals contemplating onward travel to PRC should be especially attentive to use of their U.S. passports, as the PRC authorities may require them to use the same document for entry into the PRC as they used to enter Hong Kong. The Nationality Law of the PRC does not recognize dual nationality. U.S. citizens, including such persons as may be considered Chinese nationals by the PRC authorities, who enter and depart the PRC using a U.S. passport and a valid PRC visa retain the right of U.S. consular access and protection under the U.S.-PRC Consular Convention. The ability of the U.S. Embassy or Consulates General in the PRC to provide normal consular services would be extremely limited should a dual national enter the PRC on a non-U.S. passport. Therefore, travelers should carefully consider whether or not to use a passport or travel document other than their U.S. passport.

Further information on consular protection and dual nationality is available on the Department of State Consular Affairs home page or the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong SAR at (852) 2841-2211. Information on the right of abode in Hong Kong may be obtained from the Hong Kong Immigration Department at telephone number: (852) 2824-4055, fax: (852) 2598-8388, via the Internet at: http://www.immd.gov.hk.

Typhoons: During the storm season (July through September), the Hong Kong Observatory issues typhoon warnings on an average of six times a year and heavy rainstorm alerts more frequently. The Hong Kong Observatory has a good notification and monitoring system in place. Please consult the Hong Kong Observatory web site for further information at http://www.hko.gov.hk/contente.htm. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available at the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) web site at http://www.fema.gov. Please be advised that if Typhoon Signal 8 or above or Black Rainstorm Warning is announced by the Hong Kong Government, the Consulate General will be closed.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Hong Kong laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Hong Kong are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Hong Kong are encouraged to reg-

ister with the U.S. Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Hong Kong. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Consulate is located at 26 Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong, 24-hour telephone number (852) 2523-9011. Direct lines to American Citizen Services are (852) 2841-2211, 2841-2323, 2841-2225, fax (852) 2845-4845, email: acshk@state.gov. The U.S. mailing address is PSC 461, Box 5, FPO, AP 96521-0006. Please check the U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong web site for current office hours at http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

China is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Since Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is a territory of China, all adoptions between Hong Kong and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. The Government of Hong Kong tends to prefer that prospective adoptive parents are ethnic Chinese. However, non-ethnic Chinese may also adopt if willing to consider an older child or a child with special needs.

Adoption between the United States and Hong Kong is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Hong Kong, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, Hong Kong also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents currently living in Hong Kong must be residents of Hong Kong or should offer assurance to the Adoption Unit that they will be living in Hong Kong for a minimum of 12 months. There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents residing in the United States.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 25 years of age. Prospective adoptive parents over the age of 45 will be considered if they are willing to accept older children or children with special needs.

Marriage Requirements: Both single individuals and married couples are eligible to adopt from Hong Kong. For single prospective adoptive parents, preference is given to single parents with special parental skills, such as nursing or social work skills. Some single parents have found their chances of being approved for adoption in Hong Kong increase if they agree to adopt a child with special needs. Single parents who already have a special needs child have a better chance of being matched with a special needs adoptee.

Income Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents will have to prove their income exceeds the Medium Monthly Domestic Household Income set by the Social Welfare Department. The Medium Monthly Domestic Household Income requires that after a family has paid all the necessary monthly expenditures (e.g., mortgage, loans, insurance, helper wages, tuition, etc.), a minimum level of funds are left over for incidental expenses. For instance, a family of three must show monthly funds of $16,000 HK and a family of four must show monthly funds of $19,800 HK.

The Medium Monthly Domestic Household Income is not available publicly. The Social Welfare Department must be contacted directly for specifics. Couples residing outside of Hong Kong must submit their tax returns and complete a questionnaire detailing their financial assets.

Other Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents should be in good physical and mental health.

Who Can Be Adopted? Hong Kong also has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. You cannot adopt a child in Hong Kong unless he or she meets the requirements outlined below.

Age Requirements: Children between the ages of six months and 18 years of age can be adopted. (reflect that most children available for adoption are five years old or younger and some have health problems or are disabled.)

Hong Kong's Adoption Authority: Adoption Unit of the Social Welfare Department

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Hong Kong is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Hong Kong.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Chinese law.

The Hong Kong-licensed provider will submit the adoption application to the Hong Kong central authority, including any preferences the prospective adoptive parents may have about the child's age, sex, physical/medical condition, or region of origin within Hong Kong. The application package should also include a cover letter, written along the lines found

at the following web site: http://www.gwca.org. The Hong Kong central authority reviews the documents and advises the prospective adoptive parent(s), either directly or through their adoption agency, whether additional documents or authentications are required.

If both the United States and Hong Kong determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Hong King may provide you with a referral for a child. Once the Hong Kong central authority approves the application, it matches the application with a specific child. The central authority then sends the prospective adoptive parent(s) a letter of introduction about the child, including photographs and the child's health record. This document is commonly called a 'referral.' Prospective adoptive parents who still have questions about the child after reviewing this information may follow up with the Hong Kong central authority either directly or via their adoption agency.

Prospective adoptive parent(s) then either accept or refuse the referral and send the document to their agency, which forwards it to the Hong Kong central authority. If prospective adoptive parent(s) are considering refusing a referral they should discuss with their agency the possibility of getting a second referral.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify the Chinese adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Director of the Social Welfare Department reviews the documentation to determine if the adoption is in the best interests of the child. Upon approval, the Social Welfare Department will file a court order to pass the care and control of the child to the Director of the United States adoption agency. (If the prospective adoptive parents are residents of Hong Kong, the child is released into their home for at least six months.) During the six months of living with the family, an adoption social worker makes periodic visits to determine if adoption by the prospective adoptive parents is in the best interest of the child.

Role of the Court: The District Court grants the adoption order and issues the final adoption certificate. For non-residents of Hong Kong, the finalization of the adoption passes the care and control of the child from the United States adoption agency to the adoptive parents.

Role of Adoption Agencies: The adoption agency arranges the prospective adoptive parents' home study. The adoption agency works with one of the agencies in Hong Kong that have been accredited to facilitate intercountry adoptions. The United States adoption agency forwards the home study report and supporting documents to the Hong Kong accredited body. The Hong Kong agency submits the documentation to the Social Welfare Department. Some adoption agencies accredited to facilitate intercountry adoptions are the International Social Service (ISS) and Mother's Choice Overseas Adoption Service. The ISS works closely with Hong Kong's Social Welfare Department in placing children overseas. Mother's Choice specializes in placing children with special needs–ranging from vision and hearing impairment to cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, and development delay.

International Social Service
Hong Kong Branch
6/F., Southorn Center
130 Hennessy Road
Wanchai, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2834-6863
Fax: (852) 2834-7627
Email: isshkbr@netvigator.com
Website: http://www.isshk.org

(United States office)
700 Light Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
Tel: (410) 230-2734
Fax: (410) 230-2741

Overseas Adoption Service
Tel: (852) 2537-4122
Fax: (852) 2537-7681
Email: adoption@motherschoice.com
Website:
http://www.motherschoice.com/pages/index.asp?pg=home

Adoption Application: The adoption application is filed with the Adoption Unit of the Social Welfare Department.

Time Frame: The average amount of time required to complete an intercountry adoption ranges from six to twelve months. The timeframe may be increased if the prospective adoptive parents have specific requests regarding the child's age and/or medical conditions.

Adoption Fees: The Social Welfare Department's Adoption Unit provides an assessment of the prospective adoptive parents' suitability to adopt at no charge. Adoptive parents based in Hong Kong are required to pay $2,840 HK for acting as guardian ad litem while the adoption proceedings are finalized. Prospective adoptive parents residing outside of Hong Kong are not required to pay this fee.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents required to adopt a child from Hong Kong:

- Copy of United States passport;
- Copy of marriage certificate (if applicable);
- Evidence of termination of previous marriage (if applicable);
- Proof of income;
- Copies of school credentials;
- Evidence of prior adoptions (if any); and

- Satisfactory home study report and medical examination reports of the adopting parents.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Hong Kong does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information
United States Embassy
in Hong Kong
26 Garden Road
Central, Hong Kong
Mailing Address:
PSC 461, Box 5
FPO AP 96521-0006
Tel: (852) 2841-2211
Fax: (852) 2845-4845
Email:
http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/visa_inquiries.html

Hong Kong's Adoption Authority
Adoption Unit, Social Welfare Department
38 Pier Road
Harbor Building 4/F

Central, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2852-3107
Fax: (852) 2851-9189
Email: grau@swd.gov.hk
Internet: http://www.info.gov.hk/swd

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China
2300 Connecticut Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 328-2500
Fax: (202) 588-0032
Email:
webmaster@china-embassy.org

The People's Republic of China also has consulates in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, New York City, and Chicago.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

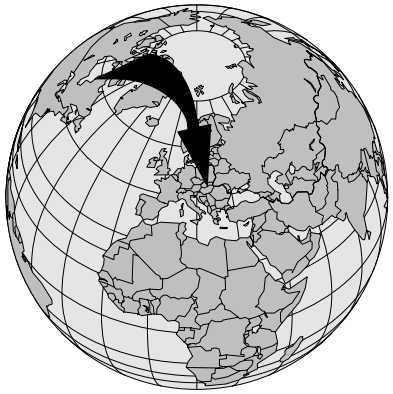
The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention") came into force between the United States and Hong Kong on September 1, 1997. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after September 1, 1997. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Hong Kong prior to September 1, 1997, may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention in some cases.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies in the United States, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Please note that criminal charges may complicate a Hague Convention case.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



HUNGARY

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Hungary

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 93,030 sq. km. (35,910 sq. mi.); about the size of Indiana.
Cities: Capital—Budapest (est. pop. 2 million). Other cities—Debrecen (220,000); Miskolc (208,000); Szeged (189,000); Pecs (183,000).
Terrain: Mostly flat, with low mountains in the north and northeast and north of Lake Balaton.
Climate: Temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Hungarian(s).
Population: (July 2007 est.) 9,956,108.
Ethnic groups: Magyar 89.9%, Romany 4% (est.), German 2.6%, Serb 2%, Slovak 0.8%, Romanian 0.7%.
Religions: (2001 census) Roman Catholic 51.9%, Calvinist 15.9%, Lutheran 3%, Greek Catholic 2.6%, Jewish 1%, others, including Baptist Adventist, Pentecostal, Unitarian 3%.
Languages: Magyar 98.2%, other 1.8%.
Education: Compulsory to age 16. Attendance—96%. Literacy—99%.
Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—8.21/1,000. Life expectancy—men 68.73 yrs., women 77.38 yrs.
Work force: (2006 est. 4.21 million) Agriculture—5.5%; industry and commerce—33.3%; services—61.2%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: August 20, 1949. Substantially rewritten in 1989, amended in 1990.
Government branches: Executive—president of the Republic (head of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers. Legislative—National Assembly (386 members, 4-year term). Judicial—Supreme Court and Constitutional Court.
Political subdivisions: 19 counties plus capital region of Budapest.
Political parties: Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party—center-right; Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)—center-left; Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ)—center-left; Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF)—center-right; Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP)—center-right.

Economy

GDP: HUF 27,220 billion (approx. $163.9 billion) ($1=HUF 166.1 - average exchange rate Jan—Oct 2008).
Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 1.8%
Per capita GDP: (2008 est.) $16,400.
Natural resources: bauxite, coal, natural gas, fertile soils, arable land.
Agriculture/forestry: (2006 est., 3.4% of GDP) Products—meat, corn, wheat, sunflower seeds, potatoes, sugar beets, vegetables, fruits.
Industry and construction: (2007 est., 44,3% of GDP) Types—machinery, vehicles, chemicals, precision and measuring equipment, computer products, medical instruments, pharmaceuticals, textiles.
Trade: (2007 est.) Exports $94,6 billion)—machinery, vehicles, food, beverages, tobacco, crude materials, manufactured goods, fuels and electric energy. Imports ($94,7 billion)—machinery, vehicles, manufactured goods, fuels and electric energy, food, beverages, and tobacco. Major markets—EU (Germany, Austria, Italy, France, UK, Romania, Poland). Major suppliers—EU (Germany, Austria, Italy, France, Netherlands, Poland), Russia, China.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Ethnic groups in Hungary include Magyar (nearly 90%), Romany, German, Serb, Slovak, and others. The majority of Hungary's people are Roman Catholic; other religions represented are Calvinist, Lutheran, Jewish, Baptist, Adventist, Pentecostal, and Unitarian. Magyar is the pre-

dominant language. Hungary has long been an integral part of Europe. It converted to Western Christianity before AD 1000. Although Hungary was a monarchy for nearly 1,000 years, its constitutional system preceded by several centuries the establishment of Western-style governments in other European countries.

Following the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy (1867-1918) at the end of World War I, Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory and nearly as much of its population. It experienced a brief but bloody communist dictatorship and counterrevolution in 1919, followed by a 25-year regency under Adm. Miklos Horthy. Although Hungary fought in most of World War II as a German ally, it fell under German military occupation following an unsuccessful attempt to switch sides on October 15, 1944. Under occupation, the Hungarian Government deported or executed and seized the property of hundreds of thousands of its minority citizens, mostly members of the Jewish community. On January 20, 1945, a provisional government concluded an armistice with the Soviet Union and established the Allied Control Commission, under which Soviet, American, and British representatives held complete sovereignty over the country. The Commission's chairman was a member of Stalin's inner circle and exercised absolute control.

Communist Takeover

The provisional government, dominated by the Hungarian communist party (MKP), was replaced in November 1945 after elections which gave majority control of a coalition government to the Independent Smallholders' Party. The government instituted a radical land reform and gradually nationalized mines, electric plants, heavy industries, and some large banks. The communists ultimately undermined the coalition regime by discrediting leaders of rival parties and through terror, blackmail, and framed trials. In elections tainted by fraud in 1947, the leftist bloc gained control of the government.

By February 1949, all opposition parties had been forced to merge with the MKP to form the Hungarian Workers' Party. In 1949, the communists held a single-list election and adopted a Soviet-style constitution, which created the Hungarian People's Republic. Between 1948 and 1953, the Hungarian economy was reorganized according to the Soviet model. In 1949 and the country joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, or Comecon.) All private industrial firms with more than 10 employees were nationalized. Freedom of the press, religion, and assembly were strictly curtailed. The head of the Roman Catholic Church, Cardinal Jozsef Mindszenty, was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Forced industrialization and land collectivization soon led to serious economic difficulties, which reached crisis proportions by mid-1953. Imre Nagy replaced Rakosi as prime minister in 1953 and repudiated much of Rakosi's economic program of forced collectivization and heavy industry. He also ended political purges and freed thousands of political prisoners. However, the economic situation continued to deteriorate, and Rakosi succeeded in disrupting the reforms and in forcing Nagy from power in 1955 for "right-wing revisionism." Hungary joined the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact Treaty Organization the same year.

1956 Revolution

Pressure for change reached a climax on October 23, 1956, when security forces fired on Budapest students marching in support of Poland's confrontation with the Soviet Union. The ensuing battle quickly grew into a massive popular uprising. Gero called on Soviet troops to restore order on October 24. Fighting did not abate until the Central Committee named Imre Nagy as prime minister on October 25, and the next day Janos Kadar replaced Gero as party first secretary. Nagy dissolved the state security police, abolished the one-party system, promised free elections, and negotiated with the U.S.S.R. to withdraw its troops.

Faced with reports of new Soviet troops pouring into Hungary despite Soviet Ambassador Andropov's assurances to the contrary, on November 1 Nagy announced Hungary's neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. He appealed to the United Nations and the Western powers for protection of its neutrality. Preoccupied with the Suez Crisis, the UN and the West failed to respond, and the Soviet Union launched a massive military attack on Hungary on November 3. Some 200,000 Hungarians fled to the West. Nagy and his colleagues took refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy. Kadar, after delivering an impassioned radio address on November 1 in support of "our glorious revolution" and vowing to fight the Russians with his bare hands if they attacked Hungary, defected from the Nagy cabinet; he fled to the Soviet Union and on November 4 announced the formation of a new government. He returned to Budapest and, with Soviet support, carried out severe reprisals; thousands of people were executed or imprisoned. Despite a guarantee of safe conduct, Nagy was arrested and deported to Romania. In June 1958, the government announced that Nagy and other former officials had been executed.

Reform Under Kadar

In the early 1960s, Kadar announced a new policy under the motto of "He who is not against us is with us." He declared a general amnesty, gradually curbed some of the excesses of the secret police, and introduced a relatively liberal cultural and economic course aimed at overcoming the post-1956 hostility toward him and his regime. In 1966, the Central Committee approved the "New Economic Mechanism," through which it sought to overcome the inefficiencies of central planning, increase productivity, make Hungary more competitive in world markets, and create prosperity to ensure political stability. However, the reform was not as comprehensive as planned, and basic flaws of central planning produced economic stagnation. Over the next two decades of relative domestic quiet, Kadar's government responded to pressure for political and economic



reform and to counterpressures from reform opponents. By the early 1980s, it had achieved some lasting economic reforms and limited political liberalization and pursued a foreign policy which encouraged more trade with the West. Nevertheless, the New Economic Mechanism led to mounting foreign debt incurred to shore up unprofitable industries.

Transition to Democracy

Hungary's transition to a Western-style parliamentary democracy was the first and the smoothest among the former Soviet bloc, inspired by nationalism that long had encouraged Hungarians to control their own destiny. By 1987, activists within the party and bureaucracy and Budapest-based intellectuals were increasing pressure for change. Some of these became reform socialists, while others began movements which were to develop into parties. Young liberals formed the Federation of Young Democrats (Fidesz); a core from the so-called Democratic Opposition formed the Association of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), and the neopopulist national opposition established the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF). Civic activism intensified to a level not seen since the 1956 revolution.

In 1988, Kadar was replaced as General Secretary of the MKP, and that same year, the Parliament adopted a "democracy package," which included trade union pluralism; freedom of association, assembly, and the press; a new electoral law; and a radical revision of the constitution, among others. The Soviet Union reduced its involvement by signing an agreement in April 1989 to withdraw Soviet forces by June 1991.

National unity culminated in June 1989 as the country reburied Imre Nagy, his associates, and, symbolically, all other victims of the 1956 revolution. A national roundtable, comprising representatives of the new parties and some recreated old parties—such as the Smallholders and Social Democrats—the communist party, and different social groups, met in the late summer of 1989 to discuss major changes to the Hungarian constitution in preparation for free elections and the transition to a fully free and democratic political system.

Free Elections and a Democratic Hungary

The first free parliamentary election, held in May 1990, was a plebiscite of sorts on the communist past. The revitalized and reformed communists performed poorly despite having more than the usual advantages of an "incumbent" party. Populist, center-right, and liberal parties fared best, with the Democratic Forum (MDF) winning 43% of the vote and the Free Democrats (SZDSZ) capturing 24%. Under Prime Minister Jozsef Antall, the MDF formed a center-right coalition government with the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP) and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) to command a 60% majority in the parliament. Parliamentary opposition parties included SZDSZ, the Socialists (MSZP), and the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz). Peter Boross succeeded as Prime Minister after Antall died in December 1993. The Antall/Boross coalition governments achieved a reasonably well-functioning parliamentary democracy and laid the foundation for a free market economy.

In May 1994, the socialists came back to win a plurality of votes and 54% of the seats after an election campaign focused largely on economic issues and the substantial decline in living standards since 1990. A heavy turnout of voters swept away the right-of-center coalition but soundly rejected extremists on both right and left. Despite its neocommunist pedigree, the MSZP continued economic reforms and privatization, adopting a painful but necessary policy of fiscal austerity (the "Bokros plan") in 1995. The government pursued a foreign policy of integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions and reconciliation with neighboring countries. But neither an invitation to join NATO nor improving economic indicators guaranteed the MSZP's re-election; dissatisfaction with the pace of economic recovery, rising crime, and cases of government corruption convinced voters to propel center-right parties into power following national elections in May 1998. The Federation of Young Democrats (renamed Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party (MPP) in 1995) captured a plurality of parliamentary seats and forged a coalition with the Smallholders and the Democratic Forum. The new government, headed by 35-year-old Prime Minister Viktor Orban promised to stimulate faster growth, curb inflation, and lower taxes. Although the Orban administration also pledged continuity in foreign policy, and continued to pursue Euro-Atlantic integration as its first priority, it was a more vocal advocate of minority rights for ethnic Hungarians abroad than the previous government.

In April 2002, the country voted to return the MSZP-Free Democrat coalition to power. The new government, led by Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy, had a very slim majority in Parliament following the closest elections of the post-communist era. The Medgyessy government placed special emphasis on solidifying Hungary's Euro-Atlantic course, which culminated in Hungary's accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004. Prime Minister Medgyessy resigned in August 2004 after losing coalition support following an attempted cabinet reshuffle. Ferenc Gyurcsany was selected by the governing coalition to succeed Medgyessy, and he was confirmed by the Parliament on September 29, 2004.

In the April 2006 election, Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany and his Socialist-liberal coalition were re-elected, the first time since communism that a sitting government has renewed its mandate. Currently, the MSZP is ruling as a minority government as the SZDSZ pulled out of the coalition in April 2008. The present configuration of Parliament includes MSzP with 190 seats, SZDSZ with 19 seats; Fidesz and KDNP with 161 seats, MDF with 10 seats, and five independent Members of Parliament. One seat is currently vacant, awaiting a by-election in January 2009. Following the dissolution of the coalition with SZDSZ the Prime Minister reduced the number of ministries in the cabinet from 17 to 13.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The President of the Republic, elected by the National Assembly every 5 years, has a largely ceremonial role, but powers also include appointing the prime minister. The prime minister selects cabinet ministers and has the exclusive right to dismiss them. Each cabinet nominee appears before one or more parliamentary committees in consultative open hearings and must be formally approved by the president. The unicameral, 386-member National Assembly is the highest organ of state authority and initiates and approves legislation sponsored by the prime minister. A party must win at least 5% of the national vote to form a parliamentary faction. National parliamentary elections are held every 4 years (the last in April 2006). A 15-member Constitutional Court has power to challenge legislation on grounds of unconstitutionality.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Laszlo SOLYOM**
Prime Min.: **Ferenc GYURCSANY**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Jozsef GRAF**
Min. of Defense: **Imre SZEKERES**
Min. of Economics & Development: **Gordon BAJNAI**
Min. of Education & Culture: **Istvan HILLER**
Min. of Environmental Protection & Water Management: **Imre SZABO**
Min. of Finance: **Janos VERES**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Kinga GONCZ**
Min. of Health: **Tamas SZEKELY**
Min. of Justice & Law Enforcement: **Tibor DRASKOVICS**
Min. for Local Govt. & Regional Development: **Istvan GYENESEI**
Min. of Social Affairs & Labor: **Erika SZUCS**
Min. of Transportation & Telecommunications: **Pal SZABO**
Min. in Charge of the Prime Min.'s Office: **Peter KISS**
Min. Without Portfolio for the Secret Services: **Gyorgy SZILVASY**

Min. Without Portfolio for Public Admin. Reform: **Tibor DRASKOVICS**
Min. Without Portfolio for Research & Development: **Karoly MOLNAR**
Governor, National Bank of Hungary: **Andras SIMOR**
Ambassador to the US: **Ferenc SOMOGYI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Gabor BRODI**

The Hungarian embassy is located at 3910 Shoemaker St. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-362-6730). Hungary has consulates in New York City and Los Angeles.

ECONOMY

The Hungarian economy prior to WWII was primarily oriented toward agriculture and small scale manufacturing. Hungary's strategic position in Europe and its relative lack of natural resources also have dictated a traditional reliance on foreign trade. In the early 1950s, the communist government forced rapid industrialization after the standard Stalinist pattern in an effort to encourage a more self-sufficient economy. Most economic activity was conducted by state-owned enterprises or cooperatives and state farms. In 1968, Stalinist self-sufficiency was replaced by the "New Economic Mechanism," which reopened Hungary to foreign trade, gave limited freedom to the workings of the market, and allowed a limited number of small businesses to operate in the services sector.

Although Hungary enjoyed one of the most liberal and economically advanced economies of the former Eastern bloc, both agriculture and industry began to suffer from a lack of investment in the 1970s, and Hungary's net foreign debt rose significantly—from $1 billion in 1973 to $15 billion in 1993—due largely to consumer subsidies and unprofitable state enterprises. In the face of economic stagnation, Hungary opted to try further liberalization by passing a joint venture law, adopting an income tax, and joining the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. By 1988, Hungary had developed a two-tier banking system and had enacted significant corporate legislation which paved the way for the ambitious market-oriented reforms of the post-communist years.

The Antall government of 1990-94 began market reforms with price and trade liberation measures, a revamped tax system, and a nascent market-based banking system. By 1994, however, the costs of government overspending and hesitant privatization had become clearly visible. Since that time, the government sector has been prone to high deficit spending, often preceding national elections. A series of reforms has helped bring this under control, and Hungary's early openness to foreign direct investment (FDI) led to a sustained period of high growth and made Hungary a magnet for FDI in the late 1990's and early parts of this century.

In 1995 Hungary's currency, the forint (HUF), became convertible for all current account transactions, and subsequent to OECD membership in 1996, for almost all capital account transactions as well. In 2001, the Orban government lifted remaining currency controls and broadened the band around the exchange rate, allowing the forint to appreciate by more than 12% in a year. Conflicting fiscal and monetary policy in the summer of 2002 caused confusion briefly in the market, with the forint surging against the Euro for several months. Prior to the change of regime in 1989, 65% of Hungary's trade was with Comecon countries. By the end of 1997, Hungary had shifted much of its trade to the West. Trade with EU countries and the OECD now comprises over 75% and 85% of the total, respectively. Germany is Hungary's single-most important trading partner. The United States has become Hungary's sixth-largest export market, while Hungary is ranked as the 72nd largest export market for the United States. Bilateral trade between the two countries has increased to more than $1 billion per year. The United States has normal trade relations with Hungary and has extended to it Overseas Private Investment Corporation insurance, and access to the Export/Import Bank. In the 1990's, Hungary rapidly integrated into the European economy, with the value of exports and imports both growing to well over 70% of GDP. This close relationship with the economies of the European Union (EU) helped pave the way for Hungary's accession to the EU in 2004. In recent years, Hungary has been a leader in per capita FDI in the region, and the private sector is the dominant engine of growth in an economy saddled down with heavy government debt and a substantial fiscal deficit.

Many analysts and international organizations note the success of export-oriented manufacturing companies, but see room for substantial structural reform to reduce government spending and increase efficiencies in areas such as taxation, health care, education, and social benefits. As a result, despite high levels of FDI, Hungary's growth rate over much of the last decade has trailed that of its central European neighbors.

As part of its EU membership agreement, Hungary agreed to meet the economic criteria necessary to adopt the Euro. In 2005 and 2006, it became clear that not only was a high budget deficit hurting the economy (at one point in danger of surpassing 10% of GDP in 2006), but that Hungary would have to endure EU scrutiny and possible sanctions associated. Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Gyurcsany proposed and launched a sweeping austerity program to attack Hungary's budget deficit, by raising taxes, decreasing subsidies, and streamlining the public sector. Businesses have complained that the increased taxes and greater enforcement costs have decreased Hungary's competitiveness, but the positive affects of the deficit are clear. With a goal of cutting the deficit from over 9% if GDP in 2006 to 6.8% of GDP in 2007, the government exceeded its target and attained a deficit of 5,0% of GDP for the year. GOH decreased the 2008 deficit target to 3.4% of GDP (from 4%) and the 2009 target to 2.9% of GDP. The rate of inflation has been declining since May 2008. The

Finance Ministry projects 6.4% annual average inflation for 2008. With more than $60 billion in FDI since 1989, Hungary has been a leading destination for FDI in central and eastern Europe, although this level is beginning to decline. The largest U.S. investors include GE, Alcoa, General Motors, Coca-Cola, Ford, IBM, and PepsiCo. Foreign companies modernized Hungary's industrial sector and created thousands of new, high-skilled, high-paying jobs. As a result of extensive and continuing liberalization, the private sector produces about 80% of Hungary's output. Currently, foreign firms control two-thirds of manufacturing, 90% of telecommunications, and 60% of the energy sector. Inflation declined from 14% in 1998 to 3.7% in 2005, and is expected to return to low levels by 2008. Policy challenges include cutting the public sector deficit, reducing the country's high redistribution rate, and taking concrete measures on transparency and tax reform to retain its competitive position in attracting investment.

In October 2008, the effects of the global financial crisis spilled over into Hungary. Years of high budget deficits and Hungary's high external debt levels fueled investor risk aversion, and negatively affected the foreign exchange, government securities, and equity markets in Hungary. Even though macroeconomic and financial policies had been strengthened since 2006, Hungary was hit hard by global de-leveraging. In order to increase investor confidence and ensure liquidity in domestic financial markets, Hungary concluded a $25 billion financial stabilization package with the IMF, EU and the World Bank.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Hungary's key national security focus since joining NATO in 1999 has been contributing to the stability of the region while integrating its armed forces into NATO's force structure. As a "NATO island" in an area of instability, Hungary takes a keen interest in NATO expansion and in the transatlantic link. It shares a more acute sense of the threat than many other European countries and is watching the transition in the Balkans, Ukraine, and Russia with great interest. Hungarians believe that Hungary's own security and that of its ethnic minorities in neighboring countries will be best served by a peaceful, unified region, which will be achieved when EU and NATO membership is extended to the entire region.

Hungary has been slowly modernizing and downsizing its armed forces since it left the Warsaw Pact in 1990. Transitioning from a heavy, slow-moving Warsaw Pact force to a lighter, versatile NATO force, the Hungarian military has gone from 130,000 in 1989 to approximately 24,000 combat and combat support forces in 2008. Implementing a new training, logistics, and leadership systems and a new Joint Forces Command structure, the Hungarian military has gained considerable practical experience working with NATO and other forces serving in international military missions (about 1,000 at any given time). Hungary was especially helpful during the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords in the Balkans from 1995-2004, when its airbase at Taszar was used by coalition forces transiting the region. Hungary currently leads a Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan and provides security at the Kabul airport. Hungary has committed to providing two Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT) as well as Special Forces personnel, without caveat, in Afghanistan in 2009. The Hungarian military took over command of a joint battalion in the Balkans in 2008. Hungary's Papa Airbase will be the home base of the Strategic Airlift Consortium's C-17 operations, expanding its contribution to NATO and other European partners. Hungary's military still faces numerous challenges to its modernization program, as reflected in the 2008 Hungarian defense budget, set at 1.17% of GDP, well below the NATO target of two percent.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Except for the short-lived neutrality declared by Imre Nagy in November 1956, Hungary's foreign policy generally followed the Soviet lead from 1947 to 1989. During the communist period, Hungary maintained treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance with the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Romania, and Bulgaria. It was one of the founding members of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact and Comecon, and it was the first central European country to withdraw from those now defunct organizations.

As with any country, Hungarian security attitudes are shaped largely by history and geography. For Hungary, this is a history of more than 400 years of domination by great powers—the Ottomans, the Habsburgs, the Germans during World War II, and the Soviets during the Cold War—and a geography of regional instability and separation from Hungarian minorities living in neighboring countries. Hungary's foreign policy priorities, largely consistent since 1990, represent a direct response to these factors. Since 1990, Hungary's top foreign policy goal has been achieving integration into Western economic and security organizations. To this end, Hungary joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in May of 2004. Hungary also has improved its often-chilled neighborly relations by signing basic treaties with Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

These renounce all outstanding territorial claims and lay the foundation for constructive relations. However, the issue of ethnic Hungarian minority rights in Slovakia and Romania periodically causes bilateral tensions to flare. Hungary was a signatory to the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, has signed all of the CSCE/OSCE follow-on documents since 1989, and served as the OSCE's Chairman-in-Office in 1997. Hungary's record of implementing CSCE Helsinki Final Act provisions, including those on reunification of divided families,

remains among the best in eastern Europe. Hungary has been a member of the United Nations since December 1955.

U.S.-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Hungary following World War II were affected by the Soviet armed forces' occupation of Hungary. Full diplomatic relations were established at the legation level on October 12, 1945, before the signing of the Hungarian peace treaty on February 10, 1947. After the communist takeover in 1947-48, relations with Hungary became increasingly strained by the nationalization of U.S.-owned property, unacceptable treatment of U.S. citizens and personnel, and restrictions on the operations of the American legation. Though relations deteriorated further after the suppression of the Hungarian national uprising in 1956, an exchange of ambassadors in 1966 inaugurated an era of improving relations. In 1972, a consular convention was concluded to provide consular protection to U.S. citizens in Hungary.

In 1973, a bilateral agreement was reached under which Hungary settled the nationalization claims of American citizens. In January 1978, the United States returned to the people of Hungary the historic Crown of Saint Stephen, which had been safeguarded by the United States since the end of World War II. Symbolically and actually, this event marked the beginning of excellent relations between the two countries. A 1978 bilateral trade agreement included extension of most-favored-nation status to Hungary. Cultural and scientific exchanges were expanded. As Hungary began to pull away from the Soviet orbit, the United States offered assistance and expertise to help establish a constitution, a democratic political system, and a plan for a free market economy.

Between 1989 and 1993, the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act provided more than $136 million for economic restructuring and private sector development. The Hungarian-American Enterprise Fund has offered loans, equity capital, and technical assistance to promote private-sector development. The U.S. Government has provided expert and financial assistance for the development of modern and Western institutions in many policy areas, including national security, law enforcement, free media, environmental regulations, education, and health care. American direct investment has had a direct, positive impact on the Hungarian economy and on continued good bilateral relations. When Hungary acceded to NATO in April 1999, it became a formal ally of the United States. This move has been consistently supported by the 1.5 million-strong Hungarian-American community. The U.S. government supported Hungarian European Union accession in 2004, and continues to work with Hungary as a valued partner in the Transatlantic relationship. Hungary joined the Visa Waiver Program on November 17, 2008.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BUDAPEST (E) 1054 Budapest Szabadsag Ter 12 Hungary, APO/FPO UNIT 5270 Box 40, DPO AE 09731-0040, 36-1-475-4400, Fax 36-1-475-4520 (ADMIN), Workweek: Mon–Fri; 8:00AM–5:00PM, Website: http://www.usembassy.hu.

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AMB OMS:	Teresa Chupp
DHS/CIS:	William Gilligan (Vienna)
DHS/ICE:	Kenneth J. McDonald (Vienna)
FCS:	Patricia Gonzalez
FM:	John B. Drexler
HRO:	Ellen M. Flanagan
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RSO:	David R. Whitehead
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DAO:	Col. Kevin McGrath
DEA:	Kurt. D. Coront
EEO:	David R. Whitehead
EST:	Camille Hill
FMO:	Michael J. Rentz
ICASS Chair:	Kevin J. Rust
IMO:	Tim I. McCann
IPO:	Alex Miller
IRS:	Susan Stanley
ISO:	Tim I. McCann
ISSO:	Tom Pitts
LEGATT:	Kevin Rust

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 29, 2008

Country Description: Hungary is a stable democracy with a market economy. Tourist facilities outside Budapest are widely available, if not as developed as those found in Western Europe. Visitors considering a trip are encouraged to read the Embassy's consular web site at http://budapest.usembassy.gov.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. Hungary is a party to the "Schengen" Agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Hungary for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our Schengen Fact Sheet.

For further information concerning entry requirements and residency permits, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Hungary at 3910 Shoemaker Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 362-6730. More information can be found on the Hungarian Embassy's web site at http://www.huembwas.org, or, from the Hungarian Consulates in Los Angeles or New York.

Safety and Security: Prior police approval is required for public demonstrations in Hungary and police oversight is routinely provided to ensure adequate security for partici-

pants and passersby. The October 23rd anniversary of the 1956 revolution is a very important and emotional national holiday in Hungary. Since 2006, groups have used this holiday to stage demonstrations against the Hungarian Government, and some of these demonstrations have turned violent. Police forces have used tear gas and water cannons to control the civil unrest. Other situations may develop which could pose a threat to public safety, as large demonstrations continue to occur in protest of various domestic political issues. While demonstrations have occurred throughout the country, the most vocal demonstrations occurred at Budapest's Kossuth Lajos tér, outside the Hungarian Parliament Building and very close to the U.S. Embassy. On several occasions the demonstrations turned violent, resulting in local law enforcement response that included the use of water cannons and tear gas. While Americans and U.S. interests are not specifically targeted by these incidents, many take place in areas popular with tourists. As a result, U.S. citizens are advised to avoid areas in which public demonstrations are taking place.

While Hungary does not appear to be experiencing the wave of race or ethnic-based violence associated with outer countries in East and Central Europe, a small but vocal group calling itself the Magyar Gaarda (Hungarian Guard) gained prominence in 2007 due to its radical nationalist message of intolerance towards Jews, Roma and homosexuals, its advocacy of violence and it's imagery reminiscent of Hungary's fascist regime of the 1940's. Although the group is not avowedly anti-American, it's targeting of people based on their ethnicity, race or sexual orientation should be noted by Americans traveling in Hungary, and steps should be taken to avoid confrontations with the group and its members.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov/, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up to date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.

Crime: Hungary has a low rate of violent crime. However, street crime occasionally involving violence has been reported, especially near major hotels and restaurants and on public transportation. Theft of passports, currency and credit cards is a frequent problem, especially in train stations, on public transportation and, occasionally, in restaurants and public baths.

The U.S. Embassy's Consular Section offers an informational brochure for tourists in Hungary, including a section on crimes and scams that have been encountered by other tourists. To read the advisory, please visit http://budapest.usembassy.gov/tourist_advisory.html.

Drivers should be cautious when stopping at gas stations and highway parking lots, or fixing flat tires or other mechanical problems, especially at night. There have been reports of scams perpetrated on unwitting victims while traveling the highways. One reported scam involves someone who attracts the driver's attention by saying that there is something wrong with his/her car (e.g. a smoking hood or flat tire) in order to encourage the driver to pull over to the side of the road. Once pulled over, the people participating in the scam will remove purses, passports, etc., from the car and drive away. Luggage and valuables should not be left unattended inside any vehicle.

A common scam involves young women asking foreign men to buy them drinks. When the bill arrives the drinks cost hundreds of dollars each. Americans should avoid bars and restaurants promoted by cab drivers or people on the street. Every bar and restaurant should provide a menu with prices before ordering. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy or Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Tourists who become victims of a crime in Hungary are strongly encouraged to call a 24-hour multilingual crime-reporting telephone number. The number from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. is 01-438-8080; from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., the number is 06-8066-0044. There is also a 24-hour police Tourist Information office that provides service in English and German and is located in one of downtown Budapest's busiest tourist areas: 1051 Budapest Süto utca 2.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical treatment in Hungary is adequate, but hospital facilities and nursing support are not comparable to those in the United States. Physicians are generally well trained, but there is a lack of adequate emergency services. Some doctors, particularly in Budapest, speak English. Doctors and hospitals usually expect immediate cash payment for health services.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Hungary.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Hungary is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. In Hungary, fatal traffic accidents number approximately 1,200 per year, with about 7,000 traffic accidents per year resulting in serious injuries. While this may seem low compared to the Untied States, Hungary has a much higher rate of accidents per miles driven. Americans should drive with caution and always be alert for other vehicles that may be violating traffic laws. Road travel is more dangerous during the Christmas season, summer months, and at night.

Roadside assistance, including medical and other services, is generally available. English is usually spoken at the emergency numbers listed below. In case English is not spoken, dial 112.

Ambulance: 104 or 350-0388
Police: 107
Fire: 105
24-hour English speaker: 112

Bus, train and taxi services are readily available for inter-city travel.

Hungarian motorways and highways are generally in good condition. Urban roads and road maintenance are also good although areas under construction are not always adequately marked or blockaded. In Budapest, many roads are often under construction. In rural areas, however, roads are often narrow, badly lit, and can be in a state of poor repair in some areas. Pedestrians, agricultural machinery, and farm animals often use these small rural roads. This requires increased caution on the part of drivers. Additional information on road conditions is available from "Utinform" at phone number (38)(1)336-2400.

Hungary has a policy of zero tolerance for driving under the influence of alcohol. Police often conduct routine roadside checks where breathanalyzer tests are administered. Persons found to be driving while intoxicated face jail and/or fines. Possible penalties for a car accident involving injury or death are one to five years in prison. Police have instituted a widespread practice of stopping vehicles, particularly in Budapest, to check driver identity documents in a search for illegal aliens and residents in Hungary, and to check vehicle registration and fitness documentation. It is against the law to use a handheld cell phone while driving anywhere in Hungary. Hungary recognizes international driver's permits (IDP) issued by the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the American Automobile Touring Alliance when presented in conjunction with a state driver's license. American driver's licenses will be accepted in Hungary for one year after arrival provided that a certified Hungarian translation has been attached to the license. Those with IDPs do not need to have the license translated, but must present both IDP and state driver's license together. After one year in Hungary, U.S. citizens must obtain a Hungarian driver's license. For further information on this procedure visit our website at http://budapest.usembassy.gov. The speed limit for cars and motorcycles on the motorway is 130 km per hour (approximately 80 mph); on highways, the limit is 110 km per hour (approximately 65 mph); and in town and village areas, the speed limit is 50 km per hour (approximately 30 mph). Many drivers, however, do not observe the speed limits, and extra care should be taken on two-way roads. Special seats are required for infants. Children under age 12 may not sit in the front seat of an automobile. Seats belts are mandatory for everyone in the car. Unless another instruction sign is displayed, yielding the right of way to cars approaching from the right is the general rule. Turning right on a red light is prohibited. The police write up tickets for traffic violations thus documenting the infraction and any applicable fine(s). The police will give the offender a postal check (money order) on which the amount of the fine to be paid is written, and this postal check may be presented and paid for at any Hungarian post office. Sometimes in disputes about fines or the offense, the police will confiscate the person's passport and issue a receipt for the passport with an "invitation letter" to appear at the police station the ext day or day after to resolve the dispute. The passport is returned after the resolution and/or the payment of the fine. For specific information about Hungarian driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road taxes and mandatory insurance, contact the Hungarian National Tourist Organization Office in New York via the internet at http://www.gotohungary.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Hungary's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Hungary's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The acceptance of traveler's checks is not universal in Hungary. The presence of ATMs is increasing in Budapest and other major cities. Hungary's custom authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Hungary of items such as firearms, antiquities, and prescription medications. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Hungary in Washington or one of Hungary's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Hungarian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Hungary are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living in Hungary are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy of Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Hungary. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Budapest is located at 1054 Budapest, Szabadsag Ter 12; telephone (36)(1) 475-4703 or (36)(1) 475-4929. The Consular Section's fax is (36)(1) 475-4188 or (36)(1) 475-4113, and the Consular Section's web site is located at http://hungary.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Ministry for Youth, Family and Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity; Department of Family and Guardianship Matters (Ifjusági, Családügyi, Szociális és Esélyegyenlõségi Minisztérium, Családjogi és Gyámügyi Osztály); Address: 1054 Budapest, Akademia u. 3.; Phone: (36-1) 475-5788 or (36-1) 475-7983.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Hungarian law does not specify an age limit for adoptive parents, but Hungarian authorities require that one of the adoptive parents be under age 45. Hungarian law permits single people to adopt; however, Hungarian authorities may deny an adoption based on the strongly held opinion that a child be raised in by a married couple in a traditional family. According to the Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs, adoptions are approved based on the submitted documents and a detailed study of the case. An adoption may be denied because of the age, marital status or other circumstances of the adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents. However, once a child has been identified, the prospective parents will have to travel to Hungary to meet the child and, if they decide to proceed with the adoption, remain in Hungary for up to six weeks.

Time Frame: After receiving the prospective adoptive parents' application, the adoption authorities have 15 days to notify adoptive parents whether they have been approved to adopt in Hungary. Parents have 60 days to submit required documents. After prospective adoptive parents arrive to meet their child, it takes four to six weeks to complete the adoption.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no officially accredited intercountry adoption agencies in Hungary. However, there are U.S. adoption agencies registered with the Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs. Local authorities prefer to work with the registered and known agencies. Prospective adoptive parents must work directly with the Child and Youth Protection Institute (GYIVI) in the Hungarian county where the child is residing. The Embassy usually advises adoptive parents to seek the assistance of a U.S. adoption agency or a lawyer with experience in intercountry adoptions from Hungary if no friends or relatives are available to help in Hungary in the complex adoption process. Please contact the Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs for information on which U.S. adoption agencies are authorized to work in Hungary.

Adoption Fees: Although there are no fees for the adoption itself, other expenses of obtaining documents and translations, and lawyers' fees, if any, can be high. For a translation of one

page a translator may collect from $40 to $140. The U.S. Embassy in Budapest is not familiar with what Hungarian attorneys charges for adoption related services.

Adoption Procedures: People who are interested in adopting children in Hungary should send their requests (a letter expressing the intention to adopt a Hungarian child) to:

Ministry for Youth, Family and Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunity
(Ifjusági, Családügyi, Szociális és Esélyegyenlõségi Minisztérium)
Akademia u. 3
Budapest 5th District
(36-1) 475-5788 or (36-1) 475-7983

Adoption requests can also be submitted through a Hungarian Consulate abroad. Please note, however, that the Consulate is required to forward the request to Budapest. Once a request for adoption is received, the adoption center has fifteen days to send the parents are sent an information packet about the necessary documents they must submit and adoption procedures. If the prospective parents fail to present the required documents within sixty days, the adoption center considers the request to adopt abandoned. Once the necessary documents are submitted, the adoption center will forward notification of registration to the adoptive parents. The documents are forwarded to the appropriate county Child and Youth Protection Institute (GYIVI). The county GYIVI will schedule an appointment for the prospective parents to travel to Hungary to meet the child. If, after meeting the child with whom they have been matched, the prospective adoptive parents agree to adopt this child, the GYIVI forwards all the documents with a recommendation to the Guardianship Office in the county where the child resides. This office has legal authority to adjudicate (approve or deny) all adoption requests. Once the final adoption decree is issued, the child must be re-registered at the birth registry of his/her place of birth. When the new birth certificate is issued, the adoptive parents submit a Hungarian passport application on behalf of the child.

The adoptive parents must be prepared to stay in Hungary during the adoption process, which may take 3-6 weeks, including the passport application. If, after meeting the child with whom they have been initially matched, the prospective adoptive parents do not wish to adopt that child, the GYIVI returns their documents to the adoption center in Budapest for further consideration.

The prospective adoptive parents' application remains valid for two years, after which time the entire registration process must be repeated.

Required Documents: In order to be placed on the national register of adoptive parents, the following documents must be submitted upon receipt of the information packet.

- Home study performed by a U.S. licensed agency or a social worker;
- Proof of income;
- Psychological evaluation of adoptive parents by a psychologist;
- Notification of I-600A approval from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services;
- Evidence of citizenship;
- Statement of prospective adoptive parents regarding motivation for adoption and expectations about the child (separate from the original letter of intent);
- Prospective adoptive parents' statements consenting to their registration on the national register;
- Certified copy of license of adoption agency, if applicable.

All of the documents must be original or certified copies issued within the last year, and must be accompanied by Hungarian translations authenticated by Hungarian consular officials abroad or certified translators in Hungary.

Embassy of Hungary
3910 Shoemaker Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Telephone (202) 362-6730
E-mail: info@huembwas.org
http://www.hungaryemb.org

Hungary also has consulates in Los Angeles and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy of Budapest
1054 Budapest, Szabadsag ter 12
Budapest V, Hungary
Tel: 011-36-1-475-4400
Fax: 011-36-1-475-4188/4113
Email:
usconsular.budapest@state.gov
http://budapest.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Hungary may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Budapest. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



ICELAND

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Iceland

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 103,000 sq. km. (39,600 sq. mi.); about the size of Virginia or slightly larger than Ireland.
Cities: Capital—Reykjavík (pop. 117,898). Other towns—Kópavogur (28,665), Hafnarfjörður (24,895), Akureyri (17,278).
Terrain: Rugged.
Climate: Maritime temperate.
Highest elevation: Hvannadalshnjúkur at Vatnajökull Glacier, at 2,111 meters (6,925 ft.).

People

Nationality: Noun—Icelander(s). Adjective—Icelandic.
Population: (January 1, 2008): 313,376.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.8%.
Ethnic groups: Relatively homogenous mixture of descendants of Norwegians and Celts.
Religions: Evangelical Lutheran, 86%.
Languages: Icelandic.
Education: Compulsory up to age 16. Attendance—99%. Literacy—99.9%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2001-2006 average)—2.4/1,000. Life expectancy (2006)—men 79.4 years, women 83 years.
Work force: (2007, 181,500): Commerce—32.4%; manufacturing—10.2%; fishing/fish processing—4.2%; construction—8.9%; transport and communications—6.3%; agriculture—3.4%; government, education, and health—27.3%; other services—7.1%.
Unemployment: (2007) 2.3%.

Government

Type: Semi-presidential, parliamentary.
Independence: 1918 (became "sovereign state" under Danish Crown); 1944 (establishment of republic).
Constitution: 1874.
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet (12 ministers). Legislative—63-member unicameral parliament (Althingi). Judicial—Supreme Court, district courts, special courts.
Political subdivisions: 26 administrative districts and 79 municipalities.
Political parties: Independence (IP), Progressive (PP), Social Democratic Alliance (SDA), Left-Green Party (LGP), Liberal Party (LP).
Suffrage: Universal 18 years and above.
National holidays: June 17, anniversary of the establishment of the republic.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $19.9 billion.
GDP growth rate: (2005) 5.8%; (2006) 2.6%; (2007) 3.8%.
Per capita GDP: (2007) $64,033.
Inflation rate: (2007) 5.1%; (June 2008, 12-month change) 12.7%.
Budget: (2007) $6.3 billion; (projected 2008) $6.7 billion.
Annual budget surplus: (2006) 1.4% of GDP.
Net central government debt: (2007) 4.9% of GDP.
Natural resources: Marine products, hydroelectric and geothermal power.
Agriculture: Products—potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, turnips, livestock.
Industry: Types—aluminum smelting, fishing and fish processing technology, ferro-silicon alloy production, hydro and geothermal power, tourism, information technology.
Trade: Exports of goods (2007)—$4.8 billion: marine products 41.8% industrial products 38.9%, agriculture 1.1%, and miscellaneous 18.2%. Partners—EEA 78.4% (Netherlands 21.3%, Germany 13.4%, U.K. 13.2%, Ireland 7.6%, Spain 4.6%, Norway 3.8%, Denmark 3.3%); U.S. 5.3% ($250 million); Japan 4.2%. Imports (2007)—$6.7 billion: industrial supplies 26.7%; capital goods, parts, accessories 21.5%; consumer goods 15.7%; transport equipment 20.5%; food and beverages 6.8%; fuels and lubricants 8%. Partners—EEA 64.6% (Germany 12.1%, Sweden 10%, Denmark 7.4%, Netherlands 5.6%, U.K.

5.4%, Norway 4.6%, Italy 3.4%); U.S. 13.5% ($208 million); China 5.1%; Japan 4.7%.

GEOGRAPHY

Iceland is a volcanic island in the North Atlantic Ocean east of Greenland and immediately south of the Arctic Circle. It lies about 4,200 kilometers (2,600 mi.) from New York and 830 kilometers (520 mi.) from Scotland. About 79% of Iceland's land area, which is of recent volcanic origin, consists of glaciers, lakes, a mountainous lava desert (highest elevation 2,000 meters—6,590 ft.—above sea level), and other wasteland. About 28% of the land is used for grazing, and 1% is cultivated. The inhabited areas are on the coast, particularly in the southwest where about 60% of the population lives. Because of the Gulf Stream's moderating influence, the climate is characterized by damp, cool summers and relatively mild but windy winters. In Reykjavík, the average temperature is 11°C (52°F) in July and -1°C (30°F) in January.

PEOPLE

Most Icelanders are descendants of Norwegian settlers and Celts from the British Isles, and the population is remarkably homogeneous. According to Icelandic Government statistics, 93% of the nation's inhabitants live in urban areas (localities with populations greater than 200) and about 60% live in the Reykjavík metropolitan area. Of the Nordic languages, the Icelandic language is closest to the Old Norse language and has remained relatively unchanged since the 12th century. About 91% of the population belongs to the state church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, or other Lutheran Churches. However, Iceland has complete religious liberty, and about 20 other religious congregations are present.

Most Icelandic surnames are based on patronymy, or the adoption of the father's first given name. For example, Magnus and Anna, children of a man named Pétur, would hold the surname Pétursson and Pétursdóttir, respectively. Magnus' children, in turn, would inherit the surname Magnusson, while Anna's children would claim their father's first given name as their surname. Women normally maintain their original surnames after marriage. This system of surnames is required by law, except for the descendants of those who had acquired family names before 1913.

Most Icelanders, while reserved by nature, rarely call each other by their surnames, and even phone directories are based on first names. Because of its small size and relative homogeneity, Iceland holds all the characteristics of a very close-knit society.

Cultural Achievements

The Sagas, almost all written between 1180 and 1300 A.D., remain Iceland's best-known literary accomplishment, and they have no surviving counterpart anywhere in the Nordic world. Based on Norwegian and Icelandic histories and genealogies, the Sagas present views of Nordic life and times up to 1100 A.D. The Saga writers sought to record their heroes' great achievements and to glorify the virtues of courage, pride, and honor, focusing in the later Sagas on early Icelandic settlers. The best-known Icelandic writer of the 20th century is the 1955 Nobel Prize winner Halldór Kiljan Laxness. The literacy rate is 99.9%, and literature and poetry are a legendary passion with the population. Per capita publication of books and magazines is the highest in the world.

Unlike its literature, Iceland's fine arts did not flourish until the 19th century because the population was small and scattered. Iceland's most famous painters are Ásgrímur Jónsson, Jón Stefánsson, and Jóhannes Kjarval, all of whom worked during the first half of the 20th century. The best-known modern sculptor, Ásmundur Sveinsson (1893-1982), drew his inspiration from Icelandic folklore and the Sagas for many of his works. Today, Kristján Jóhannsson is Iceland's most famous opera singer, while pop singer Björk and progressive rock band Sigur Rós are well known internationally.

HISTORY

Iceland was settled in the late 9th and early 10th centuries, principally by people of Norse origin. In 930 A.D., the ruling chiefs established a republican constitution and an assembly called the Althingi (Alþingi) the oldest parliament in the world. Iceland remained independent until 1262, when it entered into a treaty establishing a union with the Norwegian monarchy. Iceland passed to Denmark in the late 14th century when Norway and Denmark were united under the Danish crown.

In the early 19th century, national consciousness revived in Iceland. The Althingi had been abolished in 1800 but was reestablished in 1843 as a consultative assembly. In 1874, Denmark granted Iceland limited home rule, which was expanded in scope in 1904.

The constitution, written in 1874, was revised in 1903, and a minister for Icelandic affairs, residing in Reykjavík, was made responsible to the Althingi. The Act of Union, a 1918 agreement with Denmark, recognized Iceland as a fully sovereign state united with Denmark under a common king. Iceland established its own flag, but Denmark continued to represent Icelandic foreign affairs and defense interests.

German occupation of Denmark in 1940 severed communications between Iceland and Denmark. Consequently, Iceland moved immediately to assume control over its own territorial waters and foreign affairs. In May 1940, British military forces occupied Iceland. In July 1941, responsibility for Iceland's defense passed to the United States. Following a plebiscite, Iceland formally became an independent republic on June 17, 1944. In October 1946, the Icelandic and U.S. Governments agreed to terminate U.S. responsibility for the defense of Iceland, but the



United States retained certain rights at Keflavík. Iceland became a charter member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. After the outbreak of hostilities in Korea in 1950, and pursuant to the request of NATO military authorities, the United States and Iceland agreed that the United States should again make arrangements for Iceland's defense.

A bilateral defense agreement signed on May 5, 1951, remains in force, even though the U.S. military forces are no longer permanently stationed in Iceland. Iceland is the only NATO country with no standing military of its own.

GOVERNMENT

The president, elected to a 4-year term, has limited powers. When Iceland became a republic in 1944, the post of president was created to fill the void left by the Danish king. Although the president is popularly elected and has limited veto powers (he can force a public referendum on a proposed law by refusing to sign it—a power that has only once been exercised), the expectation is that the president should play the same limited role as a monarch in a traditional parliamentary system.

The prime minister and cabinet exercise most executive functions. The parliament is composed of 63 members, elected every 4 years unless it is dissolved sooner. Suffrage for presidential and parliamentary elections is universal for those 18 and older, and members of the parliament are elected on the basis of parties' proportional representation in six constituencies. The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, district courts, and various special courts. The constitution protects the judiciary from infringement by the other two branches.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Olafur GRIMSSON**
Prime Minister: **Geir H. HAARDE**
Min. of Commerce: **Bjorgvin SIGURDSSON**

Min. of Communication & Transport: **Kristjan MOLLER**
Min. of Education, Culture, Research & Development: **Thorgedur Katrin GUNNARSDOTTIR**
Min. of Environment: **Thorunn SVEINBJARNADOTTIR**
Min. of Finance: **Arni M. MATHIESEN**
Min. of Fisheries & Agriculture: **Einar K. GUDFINNSSON**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & External Trade: **Ingibjorg Solrun GISLADOTTIR**
Min. of Health & Social Security: **Gudlaugur Thor THORDARSON**
Min. of Industry: **Ossur SKARPHEDINSSON**
Min. of Justice & Church Affairs: **Bjorn BJARNASON**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Johanna SIGURDARDOTTIR**
Dir., Central Bank of Iceland: **David ODDSSON**
Ambassador to the US: **Albert JONSSON**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Hjalmar HANNESSON**

Iceland maintains an embassy in the United States at 1156 - 15th Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20005 [tel. (202) 265-6653], and a consulate general at 800 Third Ave, 36th floor, New York, NY 10022 [tel. (212) 593-2700]. Iceland also has 25 honorary consulates in major U.S. cities.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Iceland's current government coalition was formed after the May 2007 parliamentary elections by the conservative Independence Party (IP) and the center-left Social Democratic Alliance. The two parties hold a large majority in parliament, with 43 out of 63 seats.

The current government replaced a coalition of the Independence Party and the Progressive Party (PP) that had been in power since 1995. Longtime IP leader Davíð Oddsson was Prime Minister 1991-2004, making him the longest-serving prime minister in Europe (from 1991 to 1995, the IP was in coalition with the Social Democratic Party). PP chairman and former Foreign Minister Halldór Ásgrímsson took over as Prime Minister on September 15, 2004, as part of a post-election deal with the Independence Party, and Oddsson became Foreign Minister. Oddsson retired from his ministerial position September 27, 2005, with former Finance Minister Geir Haarde becoming Foreign Minister. Oddsson also announced his intention shortly to step down as IP chairman, with Haarde elected to the post at a party national conference in October. In early June 2006 Ásgrímsson announced his withdrawal from politics as Prime Minister, parliamentarian, and chairman of the Progressive Party. Haarde became the third Prime Minister during the current electoral term on June 15, 2006, and Valgerður Sverrisdóttir (Progressive Party) took over as Foreign Minister. In May 2007 the Independence Party and the Social Democratic Alliance formed a new government after an abysmal showing by the Progressive Party. Geir Haarde continued as Prime Minister, and the chairman of the Social Democratic Alliance, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, took over the reins at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The centrist agrarian Progressive Party has been a party to government for over 30 years in the past 4 decades. Its support dropped from 23% in the 1995 parliamentary election to 12% in 2007. The party has dealt with internal instability in the past few years, and power struggles have lead to frequent change in the party's leadership. Chairman Jón Sigurðsson stepped down after the 2007 elections and was replaced by the deputy chairman, Guðni Águstsson.

Three left-wing parties—the Social Democratic Party, the People's Alliance, and the Women's List—formed an electoral coalition prior to the 1999 parliamentary election in the hope of mounting a credible challenge to the long-dominant Independence Party. But the dream of creating a united left coalition failed when disaffected leftists formed a new splinter party called the Left Green Movement, led by former deputy People's Alliance leader Steingrímur Sigfusson. With this defection, the left coalition won a disappointing 27% of the vote (17 seats) in the 1999 election, four percentage points below what the three parties had won running separately in 1995. Their 31% (20 seats) showing in 2003 recaptured this ground but did not suffice to topple the government. The Left Greens won a respectable 9% of the vote (5 seats) in 2003, but in the 2007 election they improved significantly, with 14% of the total vote (9 seats). Another new faction, the Liberal Party, won just over 7% (4 seats) in 2003 based on its strong opposition to the current fishing management system, and clung to roughly 6% in 2007.

Despite the poor electoral showing in 1999, the three left-wing parties decided to merge formally in 2000, creating a new party, the Social Democratic Alliance, led by Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. The party has found it difficult to reconcile the widely varying foreign policy views of its members, which range from strong support for NATO membership to pacifism and a desire for neutrality.

Iceland's current President is Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, a former political science professor who led the far-left People's Alliance in 1987-95 and served as Finance Minister in 1988-91. Although Grímsson won office with only a 41% plurality in 1996, he was not challenged for re-election in 2000. This follows a well-established tradition of giving deference to sitting presidents. He was re-elected again on June 26, 2004. Once in office, a president can generally count on serving as many terms as he or she likes, assuming good behavior. Reflecting the belief that the president is "above politics," presidential candidates run for election as individuals—since 1952, political parties have played no role in nominating or endorsing candidates. President Grímsson has occasionally drawn criticism that he breaches the bounds of presidential etiquette by being too outspoken on sensitive political issues.

ECONOMY

Traditionally marine products have accounted for the majority of Iceland's exports of goods, but for the first time ever, in 2008 aluminum exports will exceed marine product exports. Other important exports include ferro-silicon alloys, equipment and electronic machinery for fishing and fish processing, and pharmaceuticals. The vast majority of Iceland's exports go to the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, followed by the United States and Japan. The U.S. is by far the largest foreign investor in Iceland. Iceland's relatively liberal trading policy was strengthened by accession to the European Economic Area in 1994 and by the Uruguay Round agreement, which also brought significantly improved market access for Iceland's exports, particularly seafood products. The agricultural sector, however, remains heavily subsidized and protected. Iceland became a full member of the European Free Trade Association in 1970 and entered into a free trade agreement with the European Community in 1973. Under the European Economic Area agreement, which took effect January 1, 1994, there is basically free cross-border movement of capital, labor, goods, and services between Iceland, EU, and EEA countries.

Iceland's economy was historically prone to inflation due to periods of rapid growth and its dependence on a few key export sectors, such as fish, which could fluctuate significantly in quantity and price from one year to the next. For example, inflation exceeded 43% in 1974 and 59% in 1980, before falling to 15% in 1987, and then rising to 30% in 1988, which resulted in devaluations of the krona. In the 1990s and continuing until 2006, Iceland experienced several years of strong economic growth, thanks to economic reforms, deregulation, and low inflation, averaging around 4%. The economy suffered a setback in spring 2006 when credit rating agencies and other international financial firms released a number of reports raising questions about the activities and stability of Iceland's major banks and the state of the Icelandic economy. These reports were widely covered in the international financial press, causing a marked drop in the value of shares listed on the Icelandic stock exchange and of the Icelandic krona. The market recovered as reforms were made in the banking sector. The financial sector was hit hard by the global credit crisis beginning in 2007. Although Icelandic banks had limited sub-prime mortgage market exposure, they were affected by the general lack of available capital. In the first six months of 2008, the Icelandic krona was devalued by 30% and inflation rose to nearly 12%. Because of Iceland's high current account deficit, high inflation, and high private sector debt levels, the global financial community and the foreign media closely monitored the situation. In turn, the Icelandic Government has carefully followed foreign confidence in the Icelandic economy because access to foreign capital, which Icelandic business people have used aggressively in overseas investments, is extremely important. Wealthy Icelanders have heavily invested in the retail and real estate markets in Denmark and the U.K. and telecom, pharmaceutical, banking, and financial sectors in Eastern Europe. Their success, beginning in the late 1990s, created for the first time a "super-rich" elite in Icelandic society.

Iceland has few proven mineral resources, but has abundant hydroelectric and geothermal energy resources. These clean energy sources provide for nearly 100% of electricity generation and home heating. Iceland's energy resources support power-intensive export industries, such as aluminum smelting. The Kárahnjúkar hydroelectric project is the largest single electrical station in the country, with capacity of 690 megawatts (mw). Other major hydroelectric stations include Búrfell (270 mw), Hrauneyjarfoss (210 mw), Sigalda (150 mw), and Blanda (150 mw). Iceland-based Nordural Aluminum is a wholly owned investment of Century Aluminum of Monterey, California. The plant employs more than 450 people and recently expanded its production capacity to 220,000 tons per year. A new smelter owned by Alcoa, another U.S.-owned aluminum company, began operations in June 2007 and will have a production capacity of 346,000 tons per year when fully operational. The Kárahnjúkar hydroelectric power plant, completed in early 2007, was built to provide power to the Alcoa smelter. Over $2 billion was invested to build the power plant and smelter, making the combined project the largest in Icelandic history.

Iceland has no railroads. Organized road building began about 1900 and has greatly expanded in the past decade. The current national road system connects most of the population centers along the coastal areas and consists of about 13,000 kilometers (8,125 mi.) of roads, of which about 4,800 kilometers (2,982 mi.) are paved. Regular air and sea service connects Reykjavík with the other main population centers.

DEFENSE

The U.S. and Iceland signed a bilateral agreement in 1951 stipulating that the U.S. would make arrangements for Iceland's defense on behalf of NATO and providing for basing rights for U.S. forces in Iceland. In March 2006 the U.S. announced it would continue to provide for Iceland's defense but without permanently basing forces in the country; Naval Air Station Keflavik closed in September 2006 after 55 years. The Government of Iceland expressed disappointment, and even opposition politicians opposed to the U.S. military presence criticized the manner of the closing, but bilateral discussions ensued to explore new ways of ensuring the country's security, with an emphasis on a "visible defense." Negotiations concluded with a Technical Agreement on base closure issues (e.g., facilities return, environmental cleanup, residual value) signed on September 29, 2006, and a "Joint Understanding" on future bilateral security cooperation (focusing on defending Iceland and the North Atlantic region against emerg-

ing threats such as terrorism and trafficking) signed by the Secretary of State, Prime Minister Haarde and Foreign Minister Sverrisdóttir in Washington on October 11, 2006. The U.S. also cooperated with local officials to mitigate the impact of job losses at the Air Station, notably by encouraging U.S. investment in industry and tourism development in the Keflavík area. The Government of Iceland announced in spring 2007 that a large portion of the former base site would be converted into the university-level "Atlantic Center of Excellence" with operations scheduled to begin in fall 2007.

Cooperative activities in the context of the new agreements began almost immediately, with the arrival of the amphibious ship USS Wasp in Reykjavík on October 12, 2006 (the first U.S. Navy port visit since 2002) to demonstrate the Navy's rapid reaction capability and to support counterterrorism training by units of Iceland's Coast Guard and police. In November 2006 a U.S. Navy P-3 patrol aircraft arrived at Keflavík for joint search and rescue, disaster surveillance, and maritime interdiction training. Northern Viking 2007, a U.S.-led air defense exercise, took place in August 2007, and planning for subsequent joint endeavors is underway.

The 2008 budget for the Government of Iceland is the first in the country's history to include funding for defense ($8.2 million); the money is earmarked for support of cooperative defense activities, military exercises in Iceland, and maintenance of defense-related facilities. This funding is in addition to roughly $12 million in new expenditures for the operation of the Iceland Air Defense System radar sites, which the United States handed over to Iceland on August 15, 2007.

The Government of Iceland contributes financially to NATO's international overhead costs and recently has taken a more active role in NATO deliberations, planning, and peacekeeping. Iceland hosted the NATO Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Reykjavík in June 1987 and again in May 2002. Iceland hosted the NATO Military Committee in April 2007 and hosted the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in October 2007.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Iceland maintains diplomatic and commercial relations with practically all nations, but its ties with other Nordic states, with the U.S., and with the other NATO member states are particularly close. Icelanders remain especially proud of the role Iceland played in hosting the historic 1986 summit in Reykjavík between President Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev, which set the stage for the end of the Cold War.

Iceland has greatly increased its international profile since the early 1990s. Since the mid-1990s, Iceland has opened a number of missions overseas for a total of 22, including an embassy in Beijing, giving Iceland a diplomatic presence in all five permanent member countries of the UN Security Council. Not coincidentally, it has announced its candidacy to serve on the UN Security Council in 2009-2010. In the past few years, Iceland has also established missions to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Vienna. In 1998, it bolstered its delegation to NATO, assigning a permanent representative to the military committee for the first time ever.

Notwithstanding its status as an unarmed nation, Iceland has been eager to do its part to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. One of the niches it is helping to fill is in civilian peacekeeping and crisis management. It took a significant step forward in this area in 2001 by launching its Icelandic Crisis Response Unit (ICRU). In setting up the ICRU, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs established a roster of over 100 experts in various occupations (police officers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, engineers, journalists, etc.) who will be specially trained and prepared to deploy to trouble spots abroad on short notice.

Peacekeeping has been a permanent item in the Icelandic state budget since 1994, and Iceland has been an active member of the UN Peacekeeping Committee since 1997. With the formal establishment of the ICRU, the government decided to increase the number of deployed peacekeepers to 50 by 2006. The key emerging niche capability of the ICRU is airport administration following the successful management of the airport in Pristina, Kosovo, in 2003 and of the airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2004-2005.

Icelanders have a strong emotional bond with the Baltic states, and Iceland prides itself on being the first country to have recognized these countries' claim for independence in 1991.

Membership in International Organizations

Iceland is a member of the following organizations: Arctic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Council; Council of Baltic Sea States; Council of Europe; European Economic Area; European Free Trade Organization; EFTA Court; EFTA Surveillance Authority; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; International Criminal Police Organization; International Council for the Exploration of the Sea; International Hydrographic Organization; International Maritime Satellite Organization; International Union for the Publication of Custom Tariffs; Nordic Council; North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission; North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization; the International Whaling Commission; and the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission. It also is a member of the United Nations and most of its related organizations, specialized agencies, and commissions, including the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, World Tourism Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Fund for Agri-

cultural Development; Industrial Development Organization; International Labor Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Telecommunications Union, UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Universal Postal Union, World Health Organization, and World Meteorological Organization; World Intellectual Property Organization; International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; International Development Association; International Finance Corporation Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency and International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes; UN Conference on Disarmament; Economic Commission for Europe; UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Commission of Human Rights; UN Conference on Trade and Development.

U.S.-ICELANDIC RELATIONS

U.S. policy aims to maintain close, cooperative relations with Iceland, both as a NATO ally and as a friend interested in the shared objectives of enhancing world peace; respect for human rights; economic development; arms control; and law enforcement cooperation, including the fight against terrorism, narcotics, and human trafficking. Moreover, the United States endeavors to strengthen bilateral economic and trade relations.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 2/19/2008

REYKJAVIK (E) Laufasvegur 21, IS-101 Reykjavik, Iceland, APO/FPO 5640 Reykjavik Place, Washington DC 20521-5640, (354) 562-9100, Fax (354) 562-9118, Workweek: Monday to Friday/0800- 1700, Website: http://iceland.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Sarah Cline
AMB OMS:	Linda Lopez
ECO/COM:	Fiona Evans
MGT:	Richard R. Johnson
AMB:	Carol Van Voorst
CON:	Ronald E. Hawkins, Jr.
DCM:	Neil R. Klopfenstein
PAO:	Sally Hodgson
GSO:	Richard R. Johnson
RSO:	Peter A. Dinoia
DAO:	Capt. James G. Stevens, USN
FMO:	Richard R. Johnson
ICASS:	Chair Peter A. Dinoia
IMO:	Steve Ackerman
IPO:	Steve Ackerman
ISSO:	Ryan Boera
POL:	Bradley Evans
State ICASS:	Steve Ackerman

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 17, 2008

Country Description: Iceland is a highly developed, stable democracy with a modern economy. The national language is Icelandic, but English is widely spoken, especially in the capital city of Reykjavik.

Entry Requirements: Iceland is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Iceland for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. For further information in English concerning entry requirements for Iceland, please contact the Icelandic Directorate of Immigration via their web site at www.utl.is.

Safety and Security: There have been no terrorist attacks and very few criminal attacks affecting Americans in Iceland. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Iceland's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorists or other criminals entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Iceland has a relatively low crime rate, but minor assaults, automobile break-ins and other street crimes do occur, especially in the capital city of Reykjavik. Tourists should be aware that downtown Reykjavik can become especially disorderly in the early morning hours on weekends. Violent crime is rare, but it does occasionally occur.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft of a U.S. passport abroad should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Iceland maintains a limited crime victim's assistance program through the Ministry of Justice. Please contact the U.S. Embassy in Reykjavik for further details. Those suffering psychological trauma or victims of rape may receive psychological assistance by contacting the University of Iceland's Hospital Psychological Trauma Center at 354-543-2000.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Iceland is: 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Excellent medical facilities are available in Iceland. To obtain emergency medical assistance anywhere in the country, dial 112. To obtain non-emergency medical assistance in the Reykjavik metropolitan area dial 544-4114 during business hours and outside of normal business hours, dial 1770. The nurse who answers will offer advice on how to handle the problem, suggest that the patient come to an after-hours clinic, or send a physician to make a house call. For information on after-hours dental care, call 575-0505.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Iceland.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: Most medical services in Iceland, including emergency care, require full payment at the time of service. Payment to the medical facility must be paid in full before an individual will be able to leave the country. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Additional travel insurance to cover the price of medical evacuations is also strongly recommended.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Iceland is provided for general reference only, and may not be completely accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Less than a third of Iceland's total road network is paved (2,262 miles of paved road vs. 5,774 miles of gravel or dirt road). Most of the 900-mile ring road (Highway 1) that encircles the country is paved, but many other roads outside the capital, especially those that run through the center of the country, are dirt or gravel tracks. Even those roads that are paved tend to be narrow and lack a shoulder or margin. Most bridges are only one lane wide, requiring drivers to be cognizant of oncoming traffic.

Extreme care should be taken when driving in rural areas during the winter (October through March), when daylight hours are limited and the weather and road conditions can change rapidly. Many routes in the interior of the country are impassable until July, due to muddy conditions caused by snowmelt. When driving in the interior, consider traveling with a second vehicle and always inform someone of your travel plans. For information on current road conditions throughout the country, please call the Public Roads Administration (Vegagerdin) at 1777 or consult its web site at http://www.vegagerdin.is/english.

For recorded weather information in English, call the Icelandic Weather Office (Vedurstofa Islands) at 902-0600, press 1 for English.

Icelandic law requires drivers to keep headlights on at all times. Talking on cell phones while driving is prohibited except when using a hands-free system, and is subject to a 5000 Icelandic Kronur fine. Unless otherwise posted, the speed limit is 50 km/h in urban areas and 30 km/h in residential areas. In rural areas, the speed limit depends on the type of road. On dirt and gravel roads, the speed limit is 80 km/h. On paved highways, the speed limit is 90 km/h. It is illegal to turn right on a red light. At four-way intersections, the right of way goes to the driver on the right; in traffic circles, to drivers in the inside lane. Many intersections in the capital have automatic cameras to catch traffic violators.

The use of seatbelts is mandatory in both the front and rear seats, and children under the age of six must be secured in a special car seat designed for their size and weight. Drivers are held responsible for any passenger under the age of 15 who is not wearing a seatbelt. No one who is less than 140 centimeters tall, weighs less than 40 kilograms, or is under the age of 12 is allowed to ride in a front seat equipped with an airbag.

Driving under the influence of alcohol is considered a serious offense in Iceland. The threshold blood alcohol test (BAT) level is very low. Drivers can be charged with DWI with a BAT as low as.05%. Drivers stopped under suspicion for DWI are usually given a "balloon" or Breathalyzer test. If the test is positive, a blood test is routinely administered. Under Icelandic law, a blood test cannot be refused and will be administered by force if necessary. The minimum punishment for a first offense is a fine of 50,000 Icelandic Kronur and the loss of driving privileges for two months.

U.S. citizens spending less than 90 days in Iceland may drive using their U.S. licenses.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Iceland's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Iceland's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Extreme care should be exercised when touring Iceland's numerous nature attractions, which include glaciers, volcanic craters, lava fields, ice caves, hot springs, boiling mud pots, geysers, waterfalls, and glacial rivers. There are few warning signs or barriers to alert travelers to potential haz-

ards. Several tourists are scalded each year because they get too close to an erupting geyser, or because they fall or step into a hot spring or boiling mud pot. High winds and icy conditions can exacerbate the dangers of visiting these nature areas. Hikers and backpackers are well advised to stay on marked trails, travel with someone, notify a third party about their travel plans and check weather reports, as there are often no means of communication from remote locations. This is especially important as weather conditions in Iceland are subject to frequent and unexpected changes. Those planning visits to dangerous or remote locations in Iceland are strongly encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy before beginning their journey and to leave a travel itinerary with local guides/officials if planning to trek through remote parts of the country.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Icelandic laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Iceland are strict, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Disaster Preparedness: Iceland is subject to natural disasters in the form of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, avalanches and violent storms. Travelers should learn how to prepare for and react to such events by consulting the web site of Iceland's National Civil Defense Agency at http://www.almannavarnir.is. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living in or visiting Iceland are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Iceland.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Laufasvegur 21, tel. +354-562-9100; fax +354-562-9110. Information about consular services can be found in the Consular section of the Embassy home page at http://iceland.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding.

Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Prospective adoptive parents must be resident in Iceland to adopt. This flyer describes how to get pre-approved in Iceland to adopt in a third country.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that only one immigrant visa was issued to an Icelandic orphan in the last five years.

Adoption Authority:

The Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs
Arnarhvall on Lindargata
150 Reykjavik, Iceland
Tel: 011-354-560-9010
Fax: 011-354-552-7340
E-mail: postur@dkm.stjr.is
Homepage: www.stjr.is

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents:

- Applicants must be at least 25 years old, but not more than 45 years old;
- Good mental and physical state;
- Do not have a criminal record;
- Can financially support a family;
- Married couples or a male and a female that have lived together in a proxy marriage (cohabitation registered with the National Registry) for at least 5 years can adopt together;
- One of the married individuals or a male/female in a proxy marriage can adopt the partner's child or foster child with the partner's permission;
- One of the married individuals or a male/female in a proxy marriage can adopt a child without the partner's permission if the partner has vanished or his/her mental state would impede the adoption process;
- Individuals can adopt children in special circumstances and if the adoption benefits the welfare of the child.

Residency Requirements: Under the 1999 Adoption Act (Law no. 130), only foreigners who are resident in Iceland or "have a special connection to the country" are allowed to adopt children in Iceland.

Time Frame: The pre-approval processs, described below, will take three to six months. The length of time to adopt in a third country will depend on the child's country of origin.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Íslensk Ættleiðing (Icelandic Adoption Society) is the only adoption agency in Iceland. Please see their website (only in Icelandic): http://www.isadopt.is.

Adoption Fees: The pre-approval certificate that is issued to prospective adoptive parents costs IKR. 2.250.00. Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay for services pertaining to adoption in a third country.

Adoption Procedures: The first step to adopt a child is to apply for a pre-approval from the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs. Applicants can get the application forms on their website. Then they return the forms to Íslensk Ættleiðing (Icelandic Adoption Society -IAS) and the agency will send the forms to the Ministry and attach necessary documents.

The application with attached documents is sent to the Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs which then asks the social services and the child protection agency in the applicants' home town to give a report about the applicant's home and family environment. An employee from social services will contact the applicant and do a home study. This report is sent to the ministry which will take the decision based on this report. If the pre-approval is granted, then it is sent in English to IAS and the applicant gets a copy. The approval notice, which is valid for two years, will state that the applicant is permitted to adopt a child from a specific third country.

Required Documents:

- Application for pre-approval, Ministry of Judicial and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Skuggasundi, 150 Reykjavík. Telephone: 354-545-9000. Opening hours: Mon-Fri. 8:30—16.00;
- Birth certificate from applicant;
- Information about applicant on this form. (Re Application For Permission to Adopt. Re Application for Pre-Approval);
- Marriage certificate or certificate that proves proxy marriage of applicant;
- Certificate from the National Registry to show how long applicants have been living together. Marriage must have lasted at least one year and Proxy Marriage at least five years. The certificate can be sought at the National Registry in Iceland, Borgartúni 21a, 104 Reykjavík. Telephone: 354-569-2900;
- Police certificates from countries prospective adoptive parents resided for 3 months after the age of 16;
- Information about the applicant's health on the Information on Health Re application for Pre-Approval to Adopt a Child form;
- Doctors certificate for the adopting parent. Here you can get the Medical Certificate for Prospective Adoption Parent form, needs to be filled out by a doctor and the applicant;
- Certified copy of tax returns for the last two years;

The documents referenced above can be sought in Icelandic at:

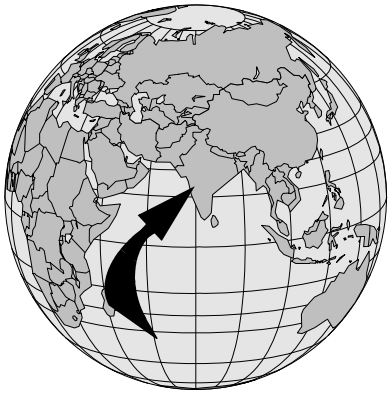
Embassy of Iceland
1156 15th Street N.W., Suite 1200
Washington, D.C. 20005-1704
Tel.: (202) 265 6653
E-mail: icemb.wash@mfa.is
http://www.iceland.org/us

Iceland also has a Consulate General in New York and honorary consulates around the United States.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Laufasvegur 21,
101 Reykjavik, Iceland
Tel: (354) 562-9100
E-mail: reykjavikconsular@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Iceland may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Reykjavik. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



INDIA

Compiled from the January 2009 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of India

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 3.29 million sq. km. (1.27 million sq. mi.); about one-third the size of the U.S.

Cities: Capital—New Delhi (pop. 12.8 million, 2001 census). Other major cities—Mumbai, formerly Bombay (16.4 million); Kolkata, formerly Calcutta (13.2 million); Chennai, formerly Madras (6.4 million); Bangalore (5.7 million); Hyderabad (5.5 million); Ahmedabad (5 million); Pune (4 million).

Terrain: Varies from Himalayas to flat river valleys and deserts in the west.

Climate: Alpine to temperate to subtropical monsoon.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Indian(s).

Population: (2007) 1.14 billion; urban 27.8%.

Annual growth rate: 1.3%

Population density: 324/sq. km.

Ethnic groups: Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, others 3%. While the national census does not recognize racial or ethnic groups, it is estimated that there are more than 2,000 ethnic groups in India.

Religions: Hindu 81.4%, Muslim 12.4%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other groups including Buddhist, Jain, Parsi within 1%.

Languages: Hindi, English, and 16 other official languages.

Education: Years compulsory—none. Literacy—64.84%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—34.61/1,000. Life expectancy—68.59 years (2007 est.).

Work force: (est.) 450 million. Agriculture—60%; industry and commerce—18%; services and government—22%

Government

Type: Federal republic.

Independence: August 15, 1947.

Constitution: January 26, 1950.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—bicameral parliament (Rajya Sabha or Council of States, and Lok Sabha or House of the People). Judicial —Supreme Court.

Political parties: Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Communist Party of India-Marxist, and numerous regional and small national parties.

Political subdivisions: 28 states (including Jammu and Kashmir), 7 union territories.

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Economy

GDP: (FY 2007) $1 trillion ($1,000 billion).

Real growth rate: (2006-2007 est.) 9.4%.

Per capita GDP: (FY 2006-2007) $909.

Natural resources: Coal, iron ore, manganese, mica, bauxite, chromite, thorium, limestone, barite, titanium ore, diamonds, crude oil.

Agriculture: (18% of GDP) Products—wheat, rice, coarse grains, oilseeds, sugar, cotton, jute, tea.

Industry: 27% of GDP. Products—textiles, jute, processed food, steel, machinery, transport equipment, cement, aluminum, fertilizers, mining, petroleum, chemicals, and computer software.

Services and transportation: 55% of GDP.

Trade: Exports (FY 2006-2007)—$127 billion; engineering goods, petroleum products, precious stones, cotton apparel and fabrics, gems and jewelry, handicrafts, tea. Software exports—$22 billion. Imports (FY 2006-2007)—$192 billion; petroleum, machinery and transport equipment, electronic goods, edible oils, fertilizers, chemicals, gold, textiles, iron and steel. Major trade partners—U.S., China, EU, Russia, Japan.

PEOPLE

Although India occupies only 2.4% of the world's land area, it supports over 15% of the world's population. Only China has a larger population. India's median age is 25, one of the youngest among large economies. About 70% live in more than 550,000 villages, and the remainder in more than 200 towns and cities. Over the thousands of years of its history, India has been invaded from the Iranian plateau, Central Asia, Arabia, Afghanistan, and the West; Indian people and culture have absorbed and modified these influences to produce a remarkable racial and cultural synthesis.

Religion, caste, and language are major determinants of social and political organization in India today. However, with more job opportunities in the private sector and better chances of upward social mobility, India has begun a quiet social transformation in this area. The government has recognized 18 official languages; Hindi, the national language, is the most widely spoken, although English is a national lingua franca. Although 81% of its people are Hindu, India also is the home of more than 138 million Muslims—one of the world's largest Muslim populations. The population also includes Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis.

The Hindu caste system reflects Indian occupational and socially defined hierarchies. Ancient Sanskrit sources divide society into four major categories, priests (Brahmin), warriors (Kshatriya), traders (Vaishya) and farmers/laborers (Shudra). Although these categories are understood throughout India, they describe reality only in the most general terms. They omit, for example, the tribes and those once known as "untouchables." In reality, Indian society is divided into thousands of jatis—local, endogamous groups based on occupation—and organized hierarchically according to complex ideas of purity and pollution. Discrimination based on caste is officially illegal, but remains prevalent, especially in rural areas. Nevertheless, the government has made strong efforts to minimize the importance of caste through active affirmative action and social policies. Moreover, caste has been diluted if not subsumed in the economically prosperous and heterogeneous cities, where an increasing percentage of India's population lives. In the countryside, expanding education, land reform and economic opportunity through access to information, communication, transport, and credit have lessened the harshest elements of the caste system.

HISTORY

The people of India have had a continuous civilization since 2500 B.C., when the inhabitants of the Indus River valley developed an urban culture based on commerce and sustained by agricultural trade. This civilization declined around 1500 B.C., probably due to ecological changes.

During the second millennium B.C., pastoral, Aryan-speaking tribes migrated from the northwest into the subcontinent, settled in the middle Ganges River valley, and adapted to antecedent cultures.

The political map of ancient and medieval India was made up of myriad kingdoms with fluctuating boundaries. In the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., northern India was unified under the Gupta Dynasty. During this period, known as India's Golden Age, Hindu culture and political administration reached new heights.

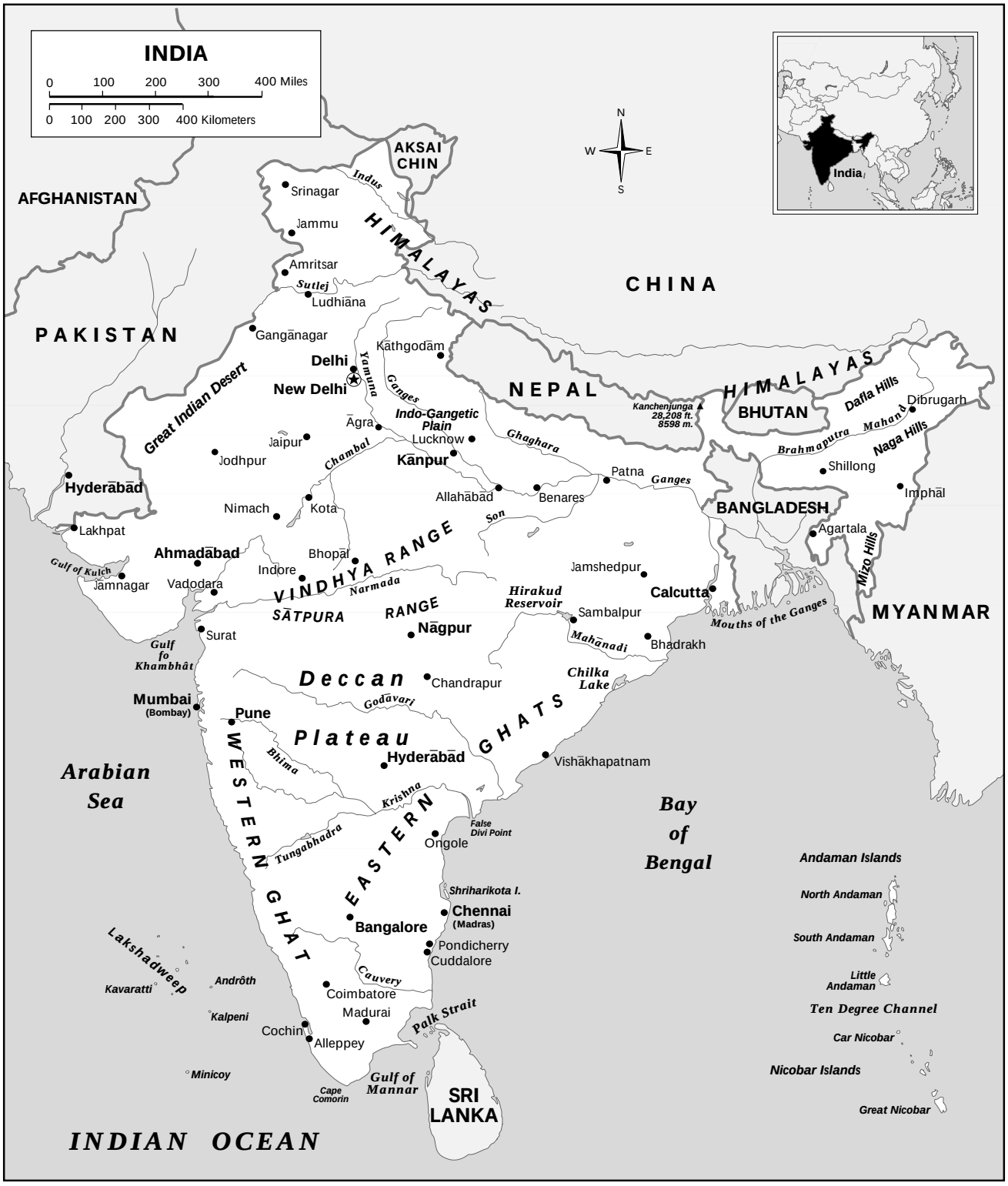
Islam spread across the subcontinent over a period of 700 years. In the 10th and 11th centuries, Turks and Afghans invaded India and established sultanates in Delhi. In the early 16th century, Babur, a Turkish adventurer and distant relative of Timurlane, established the Mughal Dynasty, which lasted for 200 years. South India followed an independent path, but by the 17th century large areas of South India came under the direct rule or influence of the expanding Mughal Empire. While most of Indian society in its thousands of villages remained untouched by the political struggles going on around them, Indian courtly culture evolved into a unique blend of Hindu and Muslim traditions.

The first British outpost in South Asia was established by the English East India Company in 1619 at Surat on the northwestern coast. Later in the century, the Company opened permanent trading stations at Madras (now Chennai), Bombay (now Mumbai), and Calcutta (now Kolkata), each under the protection of native rulers.

The British expanded their influence from these footholds until, by the 1850s, they controlled most of present-day India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. In 1857, an unsuccessful rebellion in north India led by Indian soldiers seeking the restoration of the Mughal Emperor caused the British Parliament to transfer political power from the East India Company to the Crown. Great Britain began administering most of India directly, while controlling the rest through treaties with local rulers.

In the late 1800s, the first steps were taken toward self-government in British India with the appointment of Indian councilors to advise the British Viceroy and the establishment of Provincial Councils with Indian members; the British subsequently widened participation in Legislative Councils. Beginning in 1920, Indian leader Mohandas K. Gandhi transformed the Indian National Congress political party into a mass movement to campaign against British colonial rule. The party used both parliamentary and nonviolent resistance and non-cooperation to agitate for independence. During this period, however, millions of Indians served with honor and distinction in the British armed forces, including service in both World Wars and countless other overseas actions in service of the Empire.

With Indians increasingly united in their quest for independence, a war-weary Britain led by Labor Prime



Minister Clement Attlee began in earnest to plan for the end of its suzerainty in India. On August 15, 1947, India became a dominion within the Commonwealth, with Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister. Strategic colonial considerations, as well as political tensions between Hindus and Muslims, led the British to partition British India into two separate states: India, with a Hindu majority; and Pakistan, which consisted of two "wings," East and West Pakistan—currently Bangladesh and Pakistan—with Muslim majorities. India became a republic within the Commonwealth after promulgating its Constitution on January 26, 1950.

After independence, the Indian National Congress, the party of Mohandas K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, ruled India under the leadership first of Nehru and then his daughter (Indira Gandhi) and grandson (Rajiv Gandhi), with the exception of brief periods in the 1970s and 1980s, during a short period in 1996, and the period from 1998-2004, when a coalition led by the Bharatiya Janata Party governed.

Prime Minister Nehru governed the nation until his death in 1964. Nehru was succeeded by Lal Bahadur Shastri, who also died in office. In 1966, power passed to Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister from 1966 to 1977. In 1975, beset with deepening political and economic problems, Mrs. Gandhi declared a state of emergency and suspended many civil liberties. Seeking a mandate at the polls for her policies, she called for elections in 1977, only to be defeated by Morarji Desai, who headed the Janata Party, an amalgam of five opposition parties.

In 1979, Desai's Government crumbled. Charan Singh formed an interim government, which was followed by Mrs. Gandhi's return to power in January 1980. On October 31, 1984, Mrs. Gandhi was assassinated, and her son, Rajiv, was chosen by the Congress (I)—for "Indira"—Party to take her place. His Congress government was plagued with allegations of corruption resulting in an early call for national elections in 1989.

Although Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party won more seats than any other single party in the 1989 elections, he was unable to form a government with a clear majority. The Janata Dal, a union of opposition parties, then joined with the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the right and the Communists on the left to form the government. This loose coalition collapsed in November 1990, and the Janata Dal, supported by the Congress (I), came to power for a short period, with Chandra Shekhar as Prime Minister. That alliance also collapsed, resulting in national elections in June 1991.

While campaigning in Tamil Nadu on behalf of Congress (I), Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on May 27, 1991, apparently by Tamil extremists from Sri Lanka, unhappy with India's armed intervention to try to stop the civil war there. In the elections, Congress (I) won 213 parliamentary seats and returned to power at the head of a coalition, under the leadership of P.V. Narasimha Rao. This Congress-led government, which served a full 5-year term, initiated a gradual process of economic liberalization and reform, which opened the Indian economy to global trade and investment. India's domestic politics also took new shape, as the nationalist appeal of the Congress Party gave way to traditional caste, creed, regional, and ethnic alignments, leading to the founding of a plethora of small, regionally based political parties.

The final months of the Rao-led government in the spring of 1996 were marred by several major corruption scandals, which contributed to the worst electoral performance by the Congress Party in its history. The Hindu-nationalist BJP emerged from the May 1996 national elections as the single-largest party in the Lok Sabha but without a parliamentary majority. Under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the subsequent BJP coalition lasted only 13 days. With all political parties wishing to avoid another round of elections, a 14-party coalition led by the Janata Dal formed a government known as the United Front, under the former Chief Minister of Karnataka, H.D. Deve Gowda. His government collapsed after less than a year, when the Congress Party withdrew its support in March 1997. Inder Kumar Gujral replaced Deve Gowda as the consensus choice for Prime Minister at the head of a 16-party United Front coalition.

In November 1997, the Congress Party again withdrew support from the United Front. In new elections in February 1998, the BJP won the largest number of seats in Parliament—182—but fell far short of a majority. On March 20, 1998, the President approved a BJP-led coalition government with Vajpayee again serving as Prime Minister. On May 11 and 13, 1998, this government conducted a series of underground nuclear tests, spurring U.S. President Clinton to impose economic sanctions on India pursuant to the 1994 Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act.

In April 1999, the BJP-led coalition government fell apart, leading to fresh elections in September. The National Democratic Alliance—a new coalition led by the BJP—won a majority to form the government with Vajpayee as Prime Minister in October 1999. The NDA government was the first in many years to serve a full five year term, providing much-needed political stability.

The Kargil conflict in 1999 and an attack by terrorists on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 led to increased tensions with Pakistan.

Hindu nationalists supportive of the BJP agitated to build a temple on a disputed site in Ayodhya, destroying a 17th century mosque there in December 1992, and sparking widespread religious riots in which thousands, mostly Muslims, were killed. In February 2002, 57 Hindu volunteers returning from Ayodhya were burnt alive when their train caught fire. Alleging that the fire was caused by Muslim attackers, anti-Muslim rioters throughout the state of Gujarat killed over 900 people and left 100,000 homeless. This led to accusations that the BJP-led Gujarat state government had not done enough to contain the riots, or arrest and prosecute the rioters.

The ruling BJP-led coalition was defeated in a five-stage election held in April and May of 2004, and a Congress-led coalition, known as the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), took power on May 22 with Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister. The UPA's victory was attributed to dissatisfaction among poorer rural voters that the prosperity of the cities had not filtered down to them, and rejection of the BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda.

The Congress-led UPA government has continued many of the BJP's foreign policies, particularly improving relations with the U.S. Prime Minister Singh and President Bush concluded a landmark U.S.-India strategic partnership framework agreement on July 18, 2005. In March 2006, President Bush visited India to further the many initiatives that underlie the new agreement. The strategic partnership is anchored by a historic civil nuclear cooperation initiative and includes cooperation in the fields of space, high-technology commerce, health issues, democracy promotion, agriculture, and trade and investment.

In July 2008, the UPA won a confidence motion with 275 votes in its favor and 256 against.

In late November 2008, terrorists killed at least 164 people in a series of coordinated attacks around Mumbai. Prime Minister Singh promised a thorough investigation and Home Minister Chidambaram pledged significant reforms to improve India's counterterrorism agencies.

GOVERNMENT

According to its Constitution, India is a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic." Like the United States, India has a federal form of government. However, the central government in India has greater power in relation to its states, and has adopted a British-style parliamentary system.

The government exercises its broad administrative powers in the name of the president, whose duties are largely ceremonial. A special electoral college elects the president and vice president indirectly for 5-year terms. Their terms are staggered, and the vice president does not automatically become president following the death or removal from office of the president.

Real national executive power is centered in the Council of Ministers (Cabinet), led by the prime minister. The president appoints the prime minister, who is designated by legislators of the political party or coalition commanding a parliamentary majority in the Lok Sabha (lower house). The president then appoints subordinate ministers on the advice of the prime minister. India's bicameral Parliament consists of the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the Lok Sabha (House of the People). The Council of Ministers is responsible to the Lok Sabha. The legislatures of the states and union territories elect 233 members to the Rajya Sabha, and the president appoints another 12. The members of the Rajya Sabha serve 6-year terms, with one-third up for election every 2 years. The Lok Sabha consists of 545 members, who serve 5-year terms; 543 are directly elected, and two are appointed.

India's independent judicial system began under the British, and its concepts and procedures resemble those of Anglo-Saxon countries. The Supreme Court consists of a chief justice and 25 other justices, all appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister.

India has 28 states* and 7 union territories. At the state level, some legislatures are bicameral, patterned after the two houses of the national parliament. The states' chief ministers are responsible to the legislatures in the same way the prime minister is responsible to Parliament.

Each state also has a presidentially appointed governor, who may assume certain broad powers when directed by the central government. The central government exerts greater control over the union territories than over the states, although some territories have gained more power to administer their own affairs. Local governments in India have less autonomy than their counterparts in the United States. Some states are trying to revitalize the traditional village councils, or panchayats, to promote popular democratic participation at the village level, where much of the population still lives. Over half a million panchayats exist throughout India.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Pratibha PATIL**
Vice Pres.: **Hamid ANSARI**
Prime Min.: **Manmohan SINGH**
Principal Sec. to the Prime Min.'s Office: **T. K. A. NAIR**
National Security Adviser: **Mayankote Kelath NARAYANAN**
Dep. Chmn., Planning Commission: **Montek Singh AHLUWALIA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Sharad PAWAR**
Min. of Agro & Rural Industries: **Mahavir PRASAD**
Min. of Chemicals & Fertilizers: **Ram Vilas PASWAN**
Min. of Coal: **Manmohan SINGH**
Min. of Commerce & Industry: **Kamal NATH**
Min. of Communications & Information Technology: **A. RAJA**
Min. of Company Affairs: **Prem Chand GUPTA**
Min. of Consumer Affairs, Food, & Public Admin.: **Sharad PAWAR**
Min. of Culture: **Jaipal REDDY**
Min. of Defense: **A. K. ANTONY**
Min. of Development of Northeastern Region: **Paty Ripple KYNDIAH**
Min. of Earth Sciences: **Kapil SIBAL**
Min. of Environment & Forests: **Manmohan SINGH**
Min. of External Affairs: **Pranab MUKHERJEE**
Min. of Finance: **Palaniappan CHIDAMBARAM**
Min. of Health & Family Welfare: **Anbumani RAMADOSS**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Shivraj PATIL**
Min. of Human Resource Development: **Arjun SINGH**
Min. of Information & Broadcasting: **Priyaranjan DASMUNSI**
Min. of Law & Justice: **Hans Raj BHARDWAJ**
Min. of Local Govt.: **Mani Shankar AIYAR**
Min. of Mines: **Sis Ram OLA**
Min. of Minority Affairs: **A. R. ANTULAY**
Min. of Overseas Indian Affairs: **Vayalar RAVI**
Min. of Panchayati Raj: **Mani Shankar AIYAR**
Min. of Parliamentary Affairs: **Priyaranjan DASMUNSI**
Min. of Petroleum & Natural Gas: **Murli DEORA**
Min. of Power: **Sushil Kumar SHINDE**
Min. of Railways: **Laloo Prasad YADAV**
Min. of Rural Development: **Raghuvansh Prasad SINGH**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Kapil SIBAL**

Min. of Shipping, Road Transport, & Highways: **T. R. BAALU**
Min. of Small-Scale Industries: **Mahavir PRASAD**
Min. of Social Justice & Empowerment: **Meira KUMAR**
Min. of Steel: **Ram Vilas PASWAN**
Min. of Textiles: **Shankersinh VAGHELA**
Min. of Tourism & Culture: **Ambika SONI**
Min. of Tribal Affairs: **Paty Ripple KYNDIAH**
Min. of Urban Development: **Jaipal REDDY**
Min. of Water Resources: **Saif-u-Din SOZ**
Min. of Youth Affairs & Sports: **Mani Shankar AIYAR**
Min. of State (Independent Charge) for Civil Aviation: **Praful PATEL**
Min. of State (Independent Charge) for Food Processing Industries: **Subodh Kant SAHAY**
Min. of State (Independent Charge) for Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises: **Santosh Mohan DEV**
Min. of State (Independent Charge) for Labor & Employment: **Oscar FERNANDES**
Min. of State (Independent Charge) for Nonconventional Energy Sources: **Vilas MUTTEMWAR**
Min. of State (Independent Charge) for Statistics & Program Implementation: **G. K. VASAN**
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Min. of State (Independent Charge) for Women & Child Development: **Renuka CHOWDHURY**
Governor, Reserve Bank of India: **Duvvuri SUBBARAO**
Ambassador to the US: **Ranendra SEN**
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POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Emerging as the nation's single largest party in the April/May 2004 Lok Sabha election, Congress currently leads a coalition government under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Party President Sonia Gandhi was reelected by the Party National Executive in May 2005. Also a Member of Parliament, she heads the Congress Lok Sabha delegation. Congress prides itself as a secular, left of center party, with a long history of political dominance. Although its performance in national elections had steadily declined during the last 12 years, its surprise victory in 2004 was a result of recruiting strong allies into the UPA, the anti-incumbency factor among voters, and its courtship of India's many poor, rural and Muslim voters. Congress political fortunes suffered badly in the 1990s, as many traditional supporters were lost to emerging regional and caste-based parties, such as the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party, but have rebounded since its May 2004 ascension to power. It currently rules either directly or in coalition with its allies in 9 states. In November 2005, the Congress regained the Chief Ministership of Jammu and Kashmir state, under a power-sharing agreement.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Rajnath Singh, holds the second-largest number of seats in the Lok Sabha. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee serves as Chairman of the BJP Parliamentary Party, and former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani is Leader of the Opposition. The Hindu-nationalist BJP draws its political strength mainly from the "Hindi Belt" in the northern and western regions of India.

The party holds power in the states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa—in coalition with the Biju Janata Dal. Popularly viewed as the party of the northern upper caste and trading communities, the BJP made strong inroads into lower castes in recent national and state assembly elections. The party must balance the competing interests of Hindu nationalists, (who advocate construction of a temple on a disputed site in Ayodhya, and other primarily religious issues), and center-right modernizers who see the BJP as a party of economic and political reform. Four Communist and Marxist parties are united in a bloc called the "Left Front," which controls 57 parliamentary seats. The Left Front rules the states of West Bengal and Kerala. Although it has not joined the government, Left Front support provides the crucial seats necessary for the UPA to retain power in New Delhi; without its support, the UPA government would fall. It advocates a secular and Communist ideology and opposes many aspects of economic liberalization and globalization, resulting in dissonance with Prime Minister Singh's liberal economic approach.

The next general election is scheduled for April-May 2009.

ECONOMY

India's population is estimated at more than 1.1 billion and is growing at 1.3% a year. It has the world's 12th largest economy—and the third largest in Asia behind Japan and China—with total GDP in 2007 of around $1.1 trillion ($1,100 billion), based on a 2007 year-end exchange rate of 39.5 rupees to the U.S. dollar. Services, industry, and agriculture account for 55%, 27%, and 18% of GDP respectively. Nearly two-thirds of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood. 700 million Indians live on $2 per day or less, but there is a large and growing middle class of more than 50 million Indians with disposable income ranging from 200,000 to 1,000,000 rupees per year ($4166-$20,833). Estimates are that the middle class will grow ten-fold by 2025.

India continues to move forward, albeit haltingly, with market-oriented economic reforms that began in 1991. Reforms include increasingly liberal foreign investment and exchange regimes, industrial decontrol, reductions in tariffs and other trade barriers, opening and modernization of the financial sector, significant adjustments in government monetary and fiscal policies, and more safeguards for intellectual property rights.

Real GDP growth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007 was 9.4%, up from 9.0% growth in the previous year. Growth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009 was initially expected to be between 8.5-9.0%, but has been revised downward by a number of economists to 7.0% or less because of the financial crisis and resulting global economic slowdown. Foreign portfolio and direct investment inflows have risen significantly in recent years. They contributed to $255 billion in foreign exchange reserves by June 2007. Government receipts from privatization were about $3 billion in fiscal year 2003-2004, but the privatization program has stalled since then.

Economic growth is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, a cumbersome bureaucracy, corruption, labor market rigidities, regulatory and foreign investment controls, the "reservation" of key products for small-scale industries, and high fiscal deficits. The outlook for further trade liberalization is mixed and a key WTO Doha Ministerial in July 2008 was unsuccessful due to differences between the U.S. and India (as well as China) over market access. India eliminated quotas on 1,420 consumer imports in 2002 and has incrementally lowered non-agricultural customs duties in recent successive budgets. However, the tax structure is complex, with compounding effects of various taxes.

The United States is India's largest trading partner. Bilateral merchandise trade in 2007 was $41.6 billion. Principal U.S. exports are diagnostic or lab reagents, aircraft and parts, advanced machinery, cotton, fertilizers, ferrous waste/scrap metal, and computer hardware. Major U.S. imports from India include textiles and ready-made garments, Internet-enabled services, agricultural and related products, gems and jewelry, leather products, and chemicals.

The rapidly growing software sector is boosting service exports and modernizing India's economy. Software exports crossed $28 billion in FY 2006-2007, while business process outsourcing (BPO) revenues hit $8.3 billion in 2006-2007. Personal computer penetration is 14 per 1,000 persons. The cellular/mobile market surged to 140 million subscribers by November 2006. The country has 54 million cable TV customers.

The United States is India's largest investment partner, with a 13% share. India's total inflow of U.S. direct investment was estimated at more than $9 billion through 2006. Proposals for direct foreign investment are considered by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board and generally receive government approval. Automatic approvals are available for investments involving up to 100% foreign equity, depending on the kind of industry. Foreign investment is particularly sought after in power generation, telecommunications, ports, roads, petroleum exploration/processing, and mining.

India's external debt was $155 billion in 2006-2007, up from $126 billion in 2005-2006. Foreign assistance was approximately $3 billion in 2006-2007, with the United States providing about $126 million in development assistance. The World Bank plans to double aid to India to almost $3 billion a year, with focus on infrastructure, education, health, and rural livelihoods.

DEFENSE

The supreme command of the Indian armed forces is vested in the President of India. Policies concerning India's defense, and the armed forces as a whole, are formulated and confirmed by the Cabinet.

The Indian Army numbers over 1.1 million strong and fields 34 divisions. Its primary task is to safeguard the territorial integrity of the country against external threats. The Army has been heavily committed in the recent past to counterterrorism operations in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as the in the Northeast. Its current modernization program focuses on obtaining equipment to be used in combating terror. The Army often provides aid to civil authorities and assists the government in organizing relief operations. The Indian Navy is by far the most capable navy in the region. The Navy's primary missions are the defense of India and of India's vital sea lines of communication. India relies on the sea for 90% of its oil and natural gas and over 90% of its foreign trade. The Navy currently operates one aircraft carrier with two on order, 14 submarines, and 15 major surface combatants. It is capable of projecting power within the Indian Ocean basin and occasionally operates in the South China Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Gulf. Fleet introduction of the Brahmos cruise missile and the possible lease of nuclear submarines from Russia will add significantly to the Indian Navy's flexibility and striking power.

Although small, the Indian Coast Guard has been expanding rapidly in recent years. Indian Navy officers typically fill top Coast Guard positions to ensure coordination between the two services. India's Coast Guard is responsible for control of India's huge exclusive economic zone.

The Indian Air Force is becoming a 21st century force through modernization, new tactics and the acquisition of modern aircraft, such as the SU-30MKI, a new advanced jet trainer (BAE Hawk) and the indigenously produced advanced light helicopter (Dhruv). In April 2008 six firms submitted proposals to the Indian Government to manufacture 126 multi-role combat aircraft for the Indian Air Force.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

India's size, population, and strategic location give it a prominent voice in international affairs, and its growing economic strength, military prowess, and scientific and technical capacity give it added weight. The end of the Cold War dramatically affected Indian foreign policy. India remains a leader of the developing world and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India is now strengthening its political and commercial ties with the

United States, Japan, the European Union, Iran, China, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. India is an active member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Always an active member of the United Nations, India now seeks a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. India has a long tradition of participating in UN peacekeeping operations.

Bilateral and Regional Relations

Pakistan. India and Pakistan have been locked in a tense rivalry since the partition of the subcontinent upon achieving independence from Great Britain in 1947. The principal source of contention has been Kashmir, whose Hindu Maharaja at that time chose to join India, although a majority of his subjects were Muslim. India maintains that his decision and subsequent elections in Kashmir have made it an integral part of India. This dispute triggered wars between the two countries in 1947 and 1965 and provoked the Kargil conflict in 1999.

Pakistan and India fought a war in December 1971 following a political crisis in what was then East Pakistan and the flight of millions of Bengali refugees to India. The brief conflict left the situation largely unchanged in the west, where the two armies reached an impasse, but a decisive Indian victory in the east resulted in the creation of Bangladesh.

Since the 1971 war, Pakistan and India have made slow progress toward normalization of relations. In July 1972, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto met in the Indian hill station of Simla. They signed an agreement by which India would return all personnel and captured territory in the west and the two countries would "settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations." Diplomatic and trade relations were re-established in 1976.

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan caused new strains between India and Pakistan. Pakistan supported the Afghan resistance, while India implicitly supported the Soviet occupation. In the following eight years, India voiced increasing concern over Pakistani arms purchases, U.S. military aid to Pakistan, and Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. In an effort to curtail tensions, the two countries formed a joint commission. In December 1988, Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto concluded a pact not to attack each other's nuclear facilities and initiated agreements on cultural exchanges and civil aviation.

In 1997, high-level Indo-Pakistani talks resumed after a three-year pause. The Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan met twice, and the foreign secretaries conducted three rounds of talks. In June 1997 at Lahore, the foreign secretaries identified eight "outstanding issues" around which continuing talks would be focused. The dispute over the status of Jammu and Kashmir, an issue since partition, remains the major stumbling block in their dialogue. India maintains that the entire former princely state is an integral part of the Indian union, while Pakistan insists upon the implementation of UN resolutions calling for self-determination for the people of the state.

In September 1997, the talks broke down over the structure of how to deal with the issues of Kashmir and peace and security. Pakistan advocated that separate working groups treat each issue. India responded that the two issues be taken up along with six others on a simultaneous basis. In May 1998 India, and then Pakistan, conducted nuclear tests. Attempts to restart dialogue between the two nations were given a major boost by the February 1999 meeting of both Prime Ministers in Lahore and their signing of three agreements. These efforts were stalled by the intrusion of Pakistani-backed forces into Indian-held territory near Kargil in May 1999 (that nearly turned into full scale war), and by the military coup in Pakistan that overturned the Nawaz Sharif government in October the same year. In July 2001, Mr. Vajpayee and General Pervez Musharraf, leader of Pakistan after the coup, met in Agra, but talks ended after two days without result. After an attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, India-Pakistan relations cooled further as India accused Pakistan of involvement. Tensions increased, fueled by killings in Jammu and Kashmir, peaking in a troop buildup by both sides in early 2002.

Prime Minister Vajpayee's April 18, 2003 speech in Srinagar (Kashmir) revived bilateral efforts to normalize relations. In November 2003, Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf agreed to a ceasefire, which still holds, along the Line-of-Control in Jammu and Kashmir. After a series of confidence building measures, Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf met on the sidelines of the January 2004 SAARC summit in Islamabad and agreed to commence a Composite Dialogue addressing outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, including Kashmir.

In February 2004, India and Pakistan agreed to restart the "2+6" Composite Dialogue formula, which provides for talks on Peace and Security and Jammu and Kashmir, followed by technical and Secretary-level discussions on six other bilateral disputes: Siachen Glacier, Wuller Barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project, Sir Creek estuary, Terrorism and Drug Trafficking, Economic and Commercial cooperation, and the Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields. The restart of the Composite Dialogue process was especially significant given the almost six years that had transpired since the two sides agreed to this formula in 1997-1998. The UPA government continued the Composite Dialogue with Pakistan. Following the October 2005 earthquake in Kashmir, the two governments coordinated relief efforts and opened access points along the Line-of-Control to allow relief supplies to flow from India to Pakistan and to allow Kashmiris from both sides to visit one another.

The Foreign Secretary talks resumed in November 2006, after a three-month delay following the July 11, 2006 terrorist bombings in Mumbai. The meeting generated modest progress, with the two sides agreeing to establish a joint mechanism on counter-terrorism. Since 2006, India and Pakistan have continued to take part in the Composite Dialogue process in an effort to maintain the peace process and strengthen bilateral relations. Most recently, the Indian Minister of External Affairs and the Indian Foreign Secretary met in May 2008 with their new counterparts in Islamabad to close the fourth round of talks, reaffirming a commitment to maintain the ceasefire along the Line-of-Control as well as increasing people-to-people connections through improving cross-border bus services. The Mumbai terrorist attacks in November 2008, however, have increased tensions between India and Pakistan.

SAARC. Certain aspects of India's relations within the subcontinent are conducted through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Its members are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, with the People's Republic of China, Iran, Japan, European Union, Republic of Korea, and the U.S. as observers. Established in 1985, SAARC encourages cooperation in agriculture, rural development, science and technology, culture, health, population control, narcotics, and terrorism.

SAARC has intentionally stressed these "core issues" and avoided those which could prove divisive, although political dialogue is often conducted on the margins of SAARC meetings. In 1993, India and its SAARC partners signed an agreement gradually to lower tariffs within the region. Forward movement in SAARC had slowed because of tension between India and Pakistan, and the SAARC summit scheduled for 1999 was not held until January 2002. In addition, to boost the process of normalizing India's relationship with Pakistan, the January 2004 SAARC summit in Islamabad produced an agreement to establish a South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA). All the member governments have ratified SAFTA, which was slated to come into force on January 1, 2006, with a series of graduated tariff cuts through 2015. As of December 2006, however, the FTA partners were still negotiating sensitive product lists, rules of origin, and technical assistance. India hosted the 2007 SAARC summit, which called for greater regional cooperation on trade, environmental, social, and counterterrorism issues. At the 2008 SAARC summit in Sri Lanka, the SAFTA member countries signed a protocol for Afghanistan's accession and several countries (Including India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) agreed to drop some items from their sensitive product lists.

China. Despite suspicions remaining from a 1962 border conflict between India and China and continuing territorial/boundary disputes, Sino-Indian relations have improved gradually since 1988. Both countries have sought to reduce tensions along the frontier, expand trade and cultural ties, and normalize relations. Their bilateral trade reached $24 billion in 2006. China is India's second-largest trading partner behind the U.S.

A series of high-level visits between the two nations has improved relations. In December 1996, Chinese President Jiang Zemin visited India on a tour of South Asia. While in New Delhi, he and the Indian Prime Minister signed a series of confidence-building measures along the disputed border, including troop reductions and weapons limitations.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao invited Prime Minister Vajpayee to visit China in June 2003. They recognized the common goals of both countries and made the commitment to build a "long-term constructive and cooperative partnership" to peacefully promote their mutual political and economic goals without encroaching upon their good relations with other countries. In Beijing, Prime Minister Vajpayee proposed the designation of special representatives to discuss the border dispute at the political level, a process that is still under way.

In November 2006, President Hu Jintao made an official state visit to India, further cementing Sino-Indian relations. India and China are building on growing economic ties to improve other aspects of their relationship such as counter-terrorism, energy, and trade. In another symbol of improved ties, the two countries opened the Nathu La Pass to bilateral trade in July 2006 for the first time in 40 years. Though it is the first direct land trade route in decades, trade is expected to be local and small since the pass is open only four months a year.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met Chinese President Hu Jintao in January 2008 in Beijing in an effort to reinforce their confidence to further develop ties, vowing to promote their relations to a higher level. The meetings cemented a shared vision for the 21st century, agreeing to raise the annual volume of bilateral trade to $60 billion by 2010.

Former Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) had major repercussions for Indian foreign policy. India's substantial trade with the region plummeted after the Soviet collapse and has yet to recover. Long-standing military supply relationships were similarly disrupted due to questions over financing. Russia nonetheless remains India's largest supplier of military systems and spare parts.

Russia and India have not renewed the 1971 Indo-Soviet Peace and Friendship Treaty and follow what both describe as a more pragmatic, less ideological relationship. The visit of Russian President Boris Yeltsin to India in January 1993 helped cement this new relationship. The pace of high-level visits has since increased, as has discussion of major defense purchases. UPA leader Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Singh visited Russia in July 2005. President Vladimir Putin traveled to India in January 2007 to attend an Indo-Russia Summit and was the guest of honor at India's Republic Day celebrations.

U.S.-INDIA RELATIONS

Recognizing India as a key to strategic U.S. interests, the United States has sought to strengthen its relationship with India. The two countries are the world's largest democracies, both committed to political freedom protected by representative government. India is also moving gradually toward greater economic freedom. The U.S. and India have a common interest in the free flow of commerce and resources, including through the vital sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. They also share an interest in fighting terrorism and in creating a strategically stable Asia.

There were some differences, however, including over India's nuclear weapons programs and the pace of India's economic reforms. In the past, these concerns may have dominated U.S. thinking about India, but today the U.S. views India as a growing world power with which it shares common strategic interests. A strong partnership between the two countries will continue to address differences and shape a dynamic and collaborative future.

In late September 2001, President Bush lifted sanctions imposed under the terms of the 1994 Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act following India's nuclear tests in May 1998. The nonproliferation dialogue initiated after the 1998 nuclear tests has bridged many of the gaps in understanding between the countries. In a meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee in November 2001, the two leaders expressed a strong interest in transforming the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. High-level meetings and concrete cooperation between the two countries increased during 2002 and 2003. In January 2004, the U.S. and India launched the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP), which was both a milestone in the transformation of the bilateral relationship and a blueprint for its further progress.

In July 2005, President Bush hosted Prime Minister Singh in Washington, DC. The two leaders announced the successful completion of the NSSP, as well as other agreements which further enhance cooperation in the areas of civil nuclear, civil space, and high-technology commerce. Other initiatives announced at this meeting include: an U.S.-India Economic Dialogue, Fight Against HIV/AIDS, Disaster Relief, Technology Cooperation, Democracy Initiative, an Agriculture Knowledge Initiative, a Trade Policy Forum, Energy Dialogue and CEO Forum. President Bush made a reciprocal visit to India in March 2006, during which the progress of these initiatives were reviewed, and new initiatives were launched.

In December 2006, Congress passed the historic Henry J. Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Cooperation Act, which allows direct civilian nuclear commerce with India for the first time in 30 years. U.S. policy had opposed nuclear cooperation with India because the country had developed nuclear weapons in contravention of international conventions and never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The legislation clears the way for India to buy U.S. nuclear reactors and fuel for civilian use.

In July 2007, the United States and India reached a historic milestone in their strategic partnership by completing negotiations on the bilateral agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation, also known as the "123 agreement." This agreement, signed by Secretary of State Rice and External Affairs Minister Mukherjee on October 10, 2008, governs civil nuclear trade between the two countries and opens the door for American and Indian firms to participate in each other's civil nuclear energy sector.

The U.S. and India seek to elevate the strategic partnership further to include cooperation in counter-terrorism, defense cooperation, education, and joint democracy promotion.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 27, 2008

Country Description: India, the world's largest democratic republic, has a very diverse population, geography and climate. India is the world's second most populous country, and the world's seventh largest country in area. Tourist facilities have varying degrees of comfort and amenities are widely available in the major population centers and main tourist areas.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizens require a valid passport and valid Indian visa to enter and exit India for any purpose. Visitors, including those on official U.S. Government business, must obtain visas at an Indian Embassy or Consulate abroad prior to entering the country, as there are no provisions for visas upon arrival. Those arriving without a valid passport and valid visa are subject to immediate deportation. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates in India are unable to assist when U.S. citizens arrive without proper documentation. Each visitor should carry photocopies of the bio-data page of the traveler's U.S. passport and the page containing the Indian visa in order to facilitate obtaining an exit visa from the Indian government in the event of theft or loss of the passport. Replacing a lost visa in order to exit the country takes up to three business days. Americans wishing to visit India are responsible for requesting the correct type of visa from the Indian Embassy or Consulate, as there generally are no provisions for changing one's immigration category (e.g., from tourist to work visa) once admitted. As of October 1, 2007, the Indian Embassy and Consulates in the U.S. outsourced the visa application process to Travisa Visa Outsourcing: http://indiavisa.travisaoutsourcing.com. Diplomatic and Official visa applications, however, are still accepted directly at the Indian Embassy and Consulates. Foreign citizens whose primary purpose of travel is to participate in religious activities should obtain a missionary visa rather than a tourist visa. Indian immigration authorities have deported American citizens who entered India with a tourist visa and conducted religious activities.

American travelers to India who work in "designated institutes and technology areas" will be subject to a two week waiting period in the visa application process and will be required to submit supplemental information with their visa application. Scholars planning to conduct research in India often need research clearances in addition to their visas. Specific information is available at the Indian Embassy and Consulates.

Foreign citizens who visit India to study, do research, work or act as missionaries, as well as all travelers planning to stay more than 180 days are required to register, generally within 14 days of arrival, with the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) closest to where they will be staying. The FRRO maintains offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai (known as the "Chennai Immigration Office"), Kolkata and Amritsar. In smaller cities and towns, the local police headquarters will normally perform this function. General information regarding Indian visa and immigration rules, including the addresses and telephone numbers for the FRRO offices, can be found at the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs web site for its Bureau of Immigration at http://www.immigrationindia.nic.in.

If a foreign citizen (e.g., an American) overstays his or her Indian visa, or otherwise violates Indian visa regulations, the traveler may require a clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs in order to leave the country. Such travelers generally must pay a fine, and in some cases, may be jailed until their deportation can be arranged. Visa violators seeking an exit clearance can visit the following office any weekday from 10 a.m. - 12 noon: Ministry of Home Affairs, Foreigners Division, Jaisalmer House, 26 Man Singh Road, New Delhi 110 011 (tel. +91-11-2338-5748).

For the most current information on entry and exit requirements, please contact the Embassy of India at 2536 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 939-9806 (http://www.indianembassy.org) or the Indian Consulates in Chicago (http://chicago.indianconsulate.com), New York (http://www.indiacgny.org), San Francisco (http://www.cgisf.org) or Houston (http://www.cgihouston.org). Outside the United States, inquiries should be made at the nearest Indian embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: Multiple, simultaneous bombings in crowded public places in India over the past three years represent an increasing threat to American citizens traveling in India. Coordinated terror attacks in Mumbai on November 27, 2008 targeting areas frequented by foreigners cause specific concern for the risk of Americans becoming intended or unintended victims of terrorism in India.

Because the targets have included hotels, trains, train stations, markets, cinemas, mosques, and restaurants in large urban areas, it is becoming more difficult to modify one's behavior to lessen the growing risk.

Examples of terror attacks in major cities include the following that have killed over 600 people:

- November 2008: Terrorist attacks on luxury hotels, Jewish community center, restaurant, train station, hospital and other facilities frequented by foreigners in Mumbai,
- September 2008: Five deadly explosions in New Delhi markets,
- July 2008: Thirty bombs detonated in Bangalore, Karnataka and Ahmedabad, Gujarat as well as multiple un-detonated bombs found in Surat, Gujarat,
- May 2008: A coordinated series of bombings in market and temple areas of the tourist city of Jaipur, Rajasthan,
- December 2007: An attack on a government paramilitary facility in Uttar Pradesh,
- November 2007: Coordinated blasts at court facilities in three cities in Uttar Pradesh,
- November 2007: A blast in a cinema hall in Punjab,
- August 2007: Two explosions at a popular park and restaurant in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh,
- May 2007: An explosion at the main mosque in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh,
- February 2007: The detonation of explosive devices on a train northwest of Delhi,
- September 2006: A series of explosions at a mosque and cemetery in Malegaon,
- July 2006: Seven simultaneous attacks on Mumbai commuter trains,
- March 2006: Simultaneous attacks on a train station and places of worship in Varanasi,
- October 2005: Simultaneous attacks on several markets in New Delhi.

Terrorist incidents, including those in which American citizens were injured, also occur frequently in more remote parts of India. Generally, the attacks have taken place during the busy evening hours in markets and other crowded places but could occur at any time. Americans in India should be vigilant about security at all times. Americans are advised to monitor local news reports, vary their routes and times in carrying out daily activities, and consider the level of security present when visiting public places, including religious sites, or choosing hotels, restaurants, entertainment and recreation venues. Specific areas of concern are addressed below under "Areas of Instability."

A number of anti-Western terrorist groups (some of which are on the U.S. Government's list of foreign terrorist organizations) are active in India including, but not limited to, Islamic extremist groups such as Harakat ul-Mujahidin, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e Tayyiba, and Harkat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami.

Beyond the threat from terrorism, demonstrations often cause inconvenience. Local demonstrations can begin spontaneously and escalate with little warning, disrupting transportation systems and city services and posing risks to travelers' personal safety. In response to such events, Indian authorities occasionally impose curfews and/or restrict travel. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid demonstrations and rallies as they have the potential for violence, especially immediately preceding and following elections and religious festivals (particularly when Hindu and Muslim festivals coincide). In addition, religious and inter-caste violence is unpredictable and occurs occasionally. In some cases, demonstrators specifically block roads near popular tourist sites in order to gain the attention of Indian authorities; occasionally vehicles transporting tourists are attacked in these incidents. U.S. citizens should monitor local television and print media and contact the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. Consulate for further information about the current situation in areas where they wish to travel.

In 2008, violence against Christians (including foreigners accused of proselytizing) has increased. Mobs have attacked Indian and American missionaries and social workers as such activity provokes strong reactions in some areas. Anti-Christian violence has seen an increase recently in several areas of India, such as in Orissa, Gujarat, Kerala, and Karnataka. Conversion of Hindus is illegal in some states of India and acts of conversion often become flash points for violent Hindu nationalist feelings.

Finally, visitors should exercise caution when swimming in open waters along the Indian coastline, particularly during the monsoon season. Every year, several people in Goa, Mumbai, Puri (Orissa), and other

areas drown due to the strong undertow. It is important for visitors to heed warnings posted or advised at beaches and avoid swimming in the ocean during the monsoon season.

Jammu & Kashmir: The Department of State strongly recommends that U.S. citizens avoid travel to the state of Jammu & Kashmir, with the exception of visits to the eastern Ladakh region and its capital, Leh. A number of terrorist groups operate in the state, targeting security forces that are present throughout the region, particularly along the Line of Control (LOC) separating Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, and those stationed in the primary tourist destinations in the Kashmir Valley: Srinagar, Gulmarg, and Pahalgam.

Since 1989, as many as 60,000 people (terrorists, security forces, and civilians) have been killed in the Kashmir conflict. Many terrorist incidents take place in the state's summer capital of Srinagar, but the majority of attacks occur in rural areas. Foreigners are particularly visible, vulnerable, and definitely at risk. In the summer of 2008, serious communal violence left the state mostly paralyzed, due to massive strikes and business shut downs. In addition, there have been attacks specifically targeted at civilians. For example: in October 2007 five soldiers and two civilians were killed in an IED blast carried out by militants in the Baramulla district of Kashmir; in August 2007 terrorists lobbed a grenade at the venue of an Independence Day function in the Bandipora district; in July 2007 a blast on an out-of-state tourist bus killed six and injured 20 civilians in the capital, Srinagar. The Indian government prohibits foreign tourists from visiting certain areas along the LOC (see the section on Restricted Areas, below). U.S. Government employees are prohibited from traveling to the state of Jammu & Kashmir (except for Ladakh) without permission, which is only granted in exceptional circumstances, from the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi. When traveling to Kashmir, U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profiles, limit their lengths of stay, and exercise extreme caution.

India-Pakistan Border: The State Department recommends that U.S. citizens avoid travel to areas within five to ten kilometers of the border between India and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan maintain a strong military presence on both sides of the border. The only official India-Pakistan border crossing point for persons who are not citizens of India or Pakistan is in the state of Punjab between Atari, India, and Wagah, Pakistan. The border crossing is usually open, but travelers are advised to confirm the current status of the border crossing prior to commencing travel. A Pakistani visa is required to enter Pakistan. An American citizen seeking a Pakistani visa while in India must first come to the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi to sign an affidavit of intent to apply for the Pakistani visa. This is a requirement of the Pakistani government.

Both India and Pakistan claim an area of the Karakoram mountain range that includes the Siachen glacier. U.S. citizens traveling to or climbing peaks in the disputed areas face significant risks. The disputed area includes the following peaks: Rimo Peak; Apsarasas I, II, and III; Tegam Kangri I, II and III; Suingri Kangri; Ghiant I and II; Indira Col; and Sia Kangri.

Travelers may check with the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi for information on current conditions. (Please see the section on "Registration/ Embassy and Consulate Locations" below.)

Northeast States: Incidents of violence by ethnic insurgent groups, including the bombing of buses and trains, occur with a degree of frequency in parts of Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland. While U.S. citizens have not been specifically targeted, they may be affected as bystanders. Visitors to India's Northeast states are cautioned not to travel outside major cities at night.

Security laws are in force, and the central government has deployed security personnel. Certain Northeastern states can be visited by foreigners only with a permit (see the section on Restricted Areas, below.) Travelers may check with the U.S. Consulate in Kolkata for information on current conditions. (Please see the section on Registration/Embassy and Consulate Locations, below.) U.S. Government employees are prohibited from traveling to the state of Manipur and to portions of the Karbi Anglong districts and Tinsukia in Assam without permission from the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi and U.S. Consulate in Kolkata. When traveling to these areas, U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profiles, limit their lengths of stay, and exercise extreme caution.

East Central and Southern India: A disparate number of Maoist extremist groups called "Naxalites" are active in the region, primarily in rural areas. The Naxalites have a long history of conflict with state and national authorities, including frequent attacks on local police, paramilitary forces, and government officials. The Naxalites have not specifically targeted U.S. citizens, but have attacked symbolic targets that have included Western companies. The primary Naxalite group is represented by the Communist Party of India (Maoist).

The party's regional affiliates are active in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkand, and West Bengal. There was significant Naxalite activity in some rural areas of these states in recent years.

Restricted Areas: Certain parts of India are designated as "restricted areas" by the Indian Government, and require special advance permission to visit. These areas include:

- The state of Mizoram,
- The state of Manipur,
- The state of Arunachal Pradesh,
- The state of Nagaland,
- The state of Sikkim,
- Portions of the state of Himachal Pradesh near the Chinese border,

- Portions of the state of Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal) near the Chinese border,
- Portions of the state of Rajasthan near the Pakistani border,
- Portions of the state of Jammu & Kashmir near the Line of Control with Pakistan,
- The Andaman & Nicobar Islands,
- The Union Territory of the Laccadives Islands (Lakshadweep), and
- The Tibetan colony in Mundgod, Karnataka.

"Restricted Area Permits" can be obtained outside of India at Indian embassies and consulates abroad, or within India, from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Foreigners Division) at Jaisalmer House, 26 Man Singh Road, New Delhi. The states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim all maintain official guesthouses in New Delhi, each of which also can issue Restricted Area Permits for their respective states for certain travelers. Tourists also should exercise caution while visiting Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) in Tamil Nadu as the Indira Gandhi Atomic Research Center, Kalpakkam, is located just south of the site and is not clearly marked as a restricted and dangerous area.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor travel information included on the websites of the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi as well as the Consulates General in Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras) and Kolkata (Calcutta). Travelers should also monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Petty crime, especially theft of personal property, is common, particularly on trains or buses. Pickpockets can be very adept, and women have reported having their bags snatched, purse-straps cut or the bottom of their purses slit without their knowledge. Theft of U.S. passports is quite common, particularly in major tourist areas, on overnight trains, and at airports. Train travelers are urged to lock their sleeping compartments and take valuables with them when leaving their berths. Air travelers are advised to carefully watch their bags in the arrival and departure areas outside of airports. Violent crime, especially directed against foreigners, has traditionally been uncommon, although in recent years there has been a modest increase. As U.S. citizens' purchasing power is comparatively large, travelers also should exercise modesty and caution in their financial dealings in India to reduce the chance of being a target for robbery or other crime. Gangs and criminal elements operate in major cities and have sometimes targeted unsuspecting businessmen and their family members for kidnapping.

U.S. citizens, particularly women, are cautioned not to travel alone in India. Western women continue to report incidents of physical harassment by groups of men. Known as "Eve-teasing," these incidents can be quite frightening. While India is generally safe for foreign visitors, according to the latest figures by Indian authorities, rape is the fastest growing crime in India. Among large cities, Delhi experienced the highest number of crimes against women. Although most victims have been local residents, recent sexual attacks against female visitors in tourist areas underline the fact that foreign women are also at risk and should exercise vigilance.

Women should observe stringent security precautions, including avoiding using public transport after dark without the company of known and trustworthy companions; restricting evening entertainment to well known venues; and avoiding walking in isolated areas alone at any time of day. Women should also ensure their hotel room numbers remain confidential and insist the doors of their hotel rooms have chains, deadlocks, and spy-holes. In addition, it is advisable for women to hire reliable cars and drivers and avoid traveling alone in hired taxis, especially during the hours of darkness. It is preferable to obtain taxis from hotels rather than hailing them on the street. If women encounter threatening situations, they can call 100 for police assistance.

Scams: Major airports, train stations and tourist sites are often used by scam artists looking to prey on visitors, often by creating a distraction. Taxi drivers and others, including train porters, may solicit travelers with "come-on" offers of cheap transportation and/or hotels. Travelers accepting such offers have frequently found themselves the victims of scams, including offers to assist with "necessary" transfers to the domestic airport, disproportionately expensive hotel rooms, unwanted "tours," unwelcome "purchases," and even threats to the traveler when the tourists try to decline to pay. There have been several disturbing reports of tourists being held hostage on houseboats in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, and forced to pay thousands of dollars in the face of threats of violence against the traveler and his/her family members.

Travelers should exercise care when hiring transportation and/or guides and use only well-known travel agents to book trips. Some scam artists have lured travelers by displaying their name on a sign when they leave the airport. Another popular scam is to drop money or to squirt something on the clothing of an unsuspecting traveler and during the distraction to rob them of their valuables. Individual tourists have also been given drugged drinks or tainted food to make them more vulnerable to theft, particularly at train stations. Even food or drink purchased in front of the traveler from a canteen or vendor could be tainted. To protect against robbery of personal belongings, it is best not to accept food or drink from strangers.

Some vendors sell rugs or other expensive items that may not be of the quality promised. Travelers should deal only with reputable businesses and should not hand over credit cards or money unless they are certain that goods being shipped to them are the goods they purchased. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it is best avoided. Most Indian states have official tourism bureaus set up to handle travelers' complaints.

Travelers should be aware of a number of other scams that have been perpetrated against foreign travelers, particularly in Goa, Jaipur, and Agra. The scams generally target younger travelers and involve suggestions that money can be made by privately transporting gems or gold (both of which can result in arrest) or by taking delivery abroad of expensive carpets, supposedly while avoiding customs duties. The scam artists describe profits that can be made upon delivery of the goods, and require the traveler to pay a "deposit" as part of the transaction. The items are always fake, and if they were real, the traveler could be subject to arrest.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Victims of a crime in India, including loss or theft of a passport, should obtain a copy of the police report (called an "FIR" or "First Information Report") from local police at the time of reporting the incident. A copy of this report is helpful for insurance purposes in replacing lost valuables. It is required by the Indian Government in order to obtain an exit visa to leave India in the event of a lost or stolen passport. Local authorities generally are unable to take any meaningful action without the filing of a police report.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The quality of medical care in India varies considerably. Medical care is available in the major population centers that approaches and occasionally meets Western standards, but adequate medical care is usually very limited or unavailable in rural areas.

Indian health regulations require all travelers arriving from Sub-Saharan Africa or other yellow-fever areas to have evidence of vaccination against yellow fever. Travelers who do not have such proof are subject to immediate deportation or a six-day detention in the yellow-fever quarantine center. U.S. citizens who transit through any part of sub-Saharan Africa, even for one day, are advised to carry proof of yellow fever immunization.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect-bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. These websites provide useful information, such as suggested vaccinations for visitors to India, safe food and water precautions, appropriate measures to avoid contraction of mosquito-borne diseases (such as malaria), suggestions to avoid altitude sickness, etc. Further, these sites provide information on disease outbreaks that may arise from time to time—outbreaks of mosquito-borne viral diseases such as dengue fever and chikungunya occur in various parts of India each year, so travelers should check the sites shortly before arriving in India. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

In January and February 2008, there were outbreaks of Avian Influenza, H5N1 virus, in poultry in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal including some of the districts surrounding the city of Kolkata. The outbreak affected poultry but there were no reported human cases. There were also Avian Influenza outbreaks in poultry in July 2007 in Manipur and in the spring of 2006,in rural areas of the states of Maharasthra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh. American citizens traveling in India should take all necessary precautions. Updates on the avian influenza situation in India are published on the Embassy's web site at http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/acsinfluenza.html. For further information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in India. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://who.int/ith/en.

Medical tourism is a rapidly growing industry. Companies offering vacation packages bundled with medical consultations and financing options provide direct-to-consumer advertising over the internet. Such medical packages often claim to provide high quality care, but the quality of health care in India is highly variable.

People seeking health care in India should understand that medical systems operate differently from those in the United States and are not subject to the same rules and regulations.

Anyone interested in traveling for medical purposes should consult with their local physician before traveling and refer to the information from

CDC found at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowBookCh2-HealthCare-Abroad.aspx.

The U.S. Embassy and Consulates in India maintain lists of local doctors and hospitals, all of which are published on their respective websites under "U.S. Citizen Services." Please see "Registration/Embassy and Consulate Location" section below.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Many insurers rarely make payment directly to overseas heath care providers. For health care received in India, you will most likely need to pay up front and be reimbursed later for expenses you incur during treatment.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning India is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel by road in India is dangerous. A number of U.S. citizens have suffered fatal traffic accidents in recent years. Travel at night is particularly hazardous. Buses, patronized by hundreds of millions of Indians, are convenient in that they serve almost every city of any size. However, they are usually driven fast, recklessly, and without consideration for the rules of the road. Accidents are quite common. Trains are safer than buses, but train accidents still occur more frequently than in developed countries. In order to drive in India, one must have either a valid Indian driver's license or a valid international driver's license. Because of difficult road and traffic conditions, many Americans who visit India wisely choose to hire a local driver.

On Indian roads, the safest driving policy is to always assume that other drivers will not respond to a traffic situation in the same way you would in the United States. On Indian roads, might makes right, and buses and trucks epitomize this fact. For instance, buses and trucks often run red lights and merge directly into traffic at yield points and traffic circles. Cars, auto-rickshaws, bicycles and pedestrians behave only slightly more cautiously. Frequent use of one's horn or flashing of headlights to announce one's presence is both customary and wise.

Outside major cities, main roads and other roads are poorly maintained and congested. Even main roads often have only two lanes, with poor visibility and inadequate warning markers. On the few divided highways one can expect to meet local transportation traveling in the wrong direction, often without lights. Heavy traffic is the norm and includes (but is not limited to) overloaded trucks and buses, scooters, pedestrians, bullock and camel carts, horse or elephant riders en route to weddings, bicycles, and free-roaming livestock. Traffic in India moves on the left. It is important to be alert while crossing streets and intersections, especially after dark as traffic is coming in the "wrong" direction (i.e., from the left). Travelers should remember to use seatbelts in both rear and front seats where available, and to ask their drivers to maintain a safe speed.

If a driver hits a pedestrian or a cow, the vehicle and its occupants are at risk of being attacked by passersby. Such attacks pose significant risk of injury or death to the vehicle's occupants or at least of incineration of the vehicle. It can thus be unsafe to remain at the scene of an accident of this nature, and drivers may instead wish to seek out the nearest police station. Protestors often use road blockage as a means of publicizing their grievances, causing severe inconvenience to travelers. Visitors should monitor local news reports for any reports of road disturbances.

Emergency Numbers: The following emergency numbers work in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata:

Police: 100
Fire Brigade: 101
Ambulance: 102

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of India's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of India's air carrier operations. Civil aircraft have been detained a number of times for deviating from approved flight plans. U.S. citizens piloting civil aircraft in India must file any changes to previous flight plans with the appropriate Indian authorities and may not overfly restricted airspace.

Dual Nationality: In 2006, India launched the "Overseas Citizens of India" (OCI) program, which has often been mischaracterized as a dual nationality program, as it does not grant Indian citizenship. Thus, an American who obtains an OCI card is not a citizen of India and remains a citizen of the United States. An OCI card in reality is similar to a U.S. "green card" in that a holder can travel to and from India indefinitely, work in India, study in India, and own property in India (except for certain agricultural and plantation properties). An OCI holder, however, does not receive an Indian passport, cannot vote in Indian elections and is not eligible for Indian government employment. The OCI program is similar to the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) card introduced by the Indian government several years ago, except that PIO holders must still register with Indian immigration authorities, and PIO cards are not issued for an indefinite period. American citizens of Indian descent can apply for PIO or OCI cards at the Indian Embassy in Washington, or at the Indian Consulates in Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Houston. Inside India, American citizens can apply at the nearest FRRO office (please see "Entry/Exit Requirements" section above for more information on the FRRO).

Religious Activities: Foreign visitors planning to engage in religious

proselytizing are required by Indian law to have a "missionary" visa. Immigration authorities have determined that certain activities, including speaking at religious meetings to which the general public is invited, may violate immigration law if the traveler does not hold a missionary visa. Foreigners with tourist visas who engage in missionary activity are subject to deportation and possible criminal prosecution. The states of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh have active legislation regulating conversion from one religious faith to another. Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh currently have inactive laws restricting conversion and are awaiting accompanying regulations needed for enforcement. The state legislatures of Rajasthan have passed a similar act, but it was twice refused by the Governor and forwarded to the President for legal review and guidance on its constitutional merit. U.S. citizens intending to engage in missionary activity may wish to seek legal advice to determine whether the activities they intend to pursue are permitted under Indian law. Foreigners suspected of or actually proselytizing Hindus have been attacked in conservative, rural areas in India, including Orissa.

Customs Restrictions: Indian customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from India of items such as firearms, antiquities, electronic equipment, currency, ivory, gold objects, and other prohibited materials. Even transit passengers require permission from the Government of India to bring in such items. Those not complying risk arrest and/or fine and confiscation of these items. If charged with any alleged legal violations by Indian law enforcement, it is recommended that an attorney review any document prior to signing. The Government of India requires the registration of antique items with the local police along with a photograph of the item. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of India in Washington or one of India's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. More information is available from the Indian Central Board of Excise and Customs at http://www.cbec.gov.in/cae1-english.htm. Another useful site is https://igiacustoms.gov.in/about.htm. In many countries around the world, including India, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under Indian law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Indian customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information call (212) 354-4480, e-mail atacarnet@uscib.org or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Indian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. For example, certain comments or gestures towards women, Indian national symbols, or religion that are legal in the United States may be considered a criminal violation in India, subjecting the accused to possible fines or imprisonment. Furthermore, since the police may arrest anyone who is accused of committing a crime (even if the allegation is frivolous in nature), the Indian criminal justice system is often used to escalate personal disagreements into criminal charges. This practice has been increasingly exploited by dissatisfied business partners, contractors, estranged spouses, or other persons with whom the U.S. citizen has a disagreement, occasionally resulting in the jailing of U.S. citizens pending resolution of their disputes. At the very least, such circumstances can delay the U.S. citizen's timely departure from India, and may result in an unintended long-term stay in the country.

Corruption in India, especially at local levels, is a concern, as evidenced by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index of 3.5, ranking India in 72nd place of the world's countries. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in India are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in India is a crime, and is prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: India is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (although the Government of India has expressed its intention to sign the convention at some point in the future), nor is international child abduction considered to be a crime under Indian law.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in India are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security in India. Americans without Internet access may register in person with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi is located at Shanti Path, Chanakya Puri 110021; telephone +91-11-2419-8000; fax +91-11-2419-8407. The Embassy's Internet home page address is http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov. (Note that the "+" sign indicates your international access code, which in the United States is 011-, but which is 00- in most other countries.)

The U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai (Bombay) is located at Lincoln House, 78 Bhulabhai Desai Road, 400026, telephone +91-22-2363-3611; fax +91-22-2363-0350. The Internet home page address is http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Kolkata (Calcutta) is at 5/1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, 700071; telephone +91-33-3984-2400; fax +91-33-2282-2335. The Internet home page address is http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Chennai (Madras) is at 220 Anna Salai, Gemini Circle, 600006; telephone +91-44-2857-4000; fax +91-44-2857-4443. The Internet home page address is http://chennai.usconsulate.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

India is a member of The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between India and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and the United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov. Indian law does not permit foreigners to adopt Indian children, but rather to receive guardianship (or legal custody) of a child. This allows prospective adoptive parents to depart India and to adopt the child in the United States.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and India is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from India, you must first be found eligible to be an adoptive parent by the United States Government.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, India also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residence Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoptions from India.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents can't be less than 30 or more than 55 years of age. Married couples must have a combined age of 90 or less. Single parents up to the age of 45 can adopt. Prospective adoptive parents should be at least 21 years older than the child.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents can be married or single.

Income Requirements: There are no income requirements for intercountry adoptions from India.

Other Requirements: Indian law only allows Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists to complete full adoptions of Indian children. However, Under the Guardian and Wards Act of 1890, foreigners may petition an Indian District Court (or Family Court in larger urban areas) for legal custody (guardianship) of a child for the purpose of taking the child abroad to conclude a full and final adoption.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because India is a member of The Hague Adoption Convention, children from India must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. India makes an effort to place all abandoned or relinquished children with an Indian family in India first. If that is not possible, then they prefer that an Indian family abroad be found. Finally, if no Indian family can be found, then the child can be placed with a non-Indian resident family. Typically prospective adoptive parents resident in Indian will find the process goes much more quickly and smoothly than for non-resident prospective adoptive parents.

India's Adoption Authority: Central Adoption Resource Agency

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from India is to select an agency in the United States that has been accredited. Only accredited agencies (and approved attorneys) can provide adoption services between the United States and India.

Under Indian law, foreign prospective adoptive parents considering adoption of a child from India are required to use an adoption agency that is "enlisted" with the Indian Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA).

Further details on enlisted agencies may be found on the CARA web site at http://www.adoptionindia.nic.in/carahome.html. These agencies then work with a local placement agency to complete the custody process in India on behalf of the prospective parents.

After you choose an accredited adoption agency, you apply to be found eligible to adopt by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines you "eligible" and "suitable" to be an adoptive parent, your information will be forwarded to the adoption authority in India. India's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under India's law.

If both the United States and India determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority will provide you with a referral for a child. You cannot identify a specific child that you would like to adopt prior to the adoption authority providing this referral.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application to a Consular Officer at the United States

Embassy. If the Consular Office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify India's adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Central Adoption Resource Agency is the official national agency that oversees intercountry adoptions in India.

Role of the Court: The court will normally require, at a minimum the "No Objection Certificate" (NOC), a birth certificate or affidavit of birth, and evidence of abandonment to grant the custody order.

Role of Adoption Agencies: In addition, all recognized adoption agencies (or, as they are referred to in India, placement agencies) in India are local and must be registered with their Indian state Voluntary Coordinating Agency (VCA). Placement agencies do not provide national coverage, so prospective adoptive parents must determine the Indian state from which they propose to adopt. The Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA), established in 1990, licenses all the VCAs and all Indian placement agencies. The Indian placement agency usually files the paperwork with the court, minimizing the need for a private attorney. However, links to attorneys lists maintained by the United States Embassy and three consulates in India are provided below.

New Delhi—
http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/judicial_assistance.html

Chennai—
http://chennai.usconsulate.gov/uploads/images/ia8t6wtgvUD1ip1tJSW4jg/wwwflawyer.pdf

Mumbai—
http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov/judicial_assistance.html

Calcutta—
http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov/list_of_attorneys.html

Time Frame: Once prospective adoptive parents have received approval to adopt abroad (approval of I-600A petition) and arrived in India, they can expect approximately two to three months to complete all formalities in India.

Adoption Fees: Adoption fees to adopt an Indian child are approximately $3,500 USD. This amount does not include any United States-based expenses (such as the home study, application or petition filing costs, etc.). Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay a total of between $12,000 and $15,000 USD for adoption services.

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: All prospective adoptive parents must provide the following documents to the Indian District Court when applying for guardianship of an Indian child:

- Approved I-600A;
- Birth certificate for the child;
- Abandonment certificate for the child from an approved adoption agency;
- No Objection Certificate from CARA; and
- Child's Indian Passport.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents.

For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: There are no post-adoption requirements for intercountry adoptions from India.

Contact Information
United States Embassy, New Delhi
Shantipath, Chanakyapuri
New Delhi—110021
Tel: 011-2419-8000
Fax: +91-11-2419-0017
Email: IVND@state.gov
Internet:
http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov

United States Consulate General, Kolkata
5/1, Ho Chi Minh Sarani
Calcutta—700071
Tel: 033-3984-2400
Fax: +91-33-2282-2335
Email: pascal@state.gov
Internet:
http://calcutta.usconsulate.gov

United States Consulate General, Chennai
No. 220, Anna Salai

Chennai—600006
Tel: 044-2811-2000
Email: chennaic@state.gov
Internet:
http://chennai.usconsulate.gov

United States Consulate General, Mumbai
Lincoln House
78, Bhulabhai Desai Road
Mumbai—400026
Tel: 022-2363-3611
Email: webmastermumbai@state.gov
Internet:
http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov

India's Adoption Authority
Central Adoption Resource Agency
Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
West Block VIII, Wing II
2nd Floor, R.K. Puram
New Delhi—110 066
Tel: 91-011 618-0194
Fax: 91-011 618-0198
Email: CARA@bol.net.in
Internet: www.adoptionindia.nic.in

Embassy of India
2107 Massachusetts Ave, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 939-7000
Fax: (202) 265-4351
Internet:
http://www.indianembassy.org/newsite/embassy.asp

India also has consulates in Chicago, Houston, New York and San Francisco.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

Travel Alert
December 24, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens that there is a high threat of terrorism throughout India, and advises U.S. citizens traveling to or already in India to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness, especially during the end-of-year holidays until India's Republic Day, January 26. This Travel Alert expires on January 31, 2009 and replaces that issued on December 19 to provide updated information regarding the security situation.

The November 26 terrorist attack in Mumbai was carried out at venues frequented by Americans. That attack killed 170 persons (including six Americans and 16 other non-Indians) and injured 300. Future attacks may also target public places frequented by Westerners, including in large cities and tourist areas. In response to perceived threats of terror attacks there, the Government of Goa has restricted beach parties and other large outdoor gatherings from December 23 to January 5.

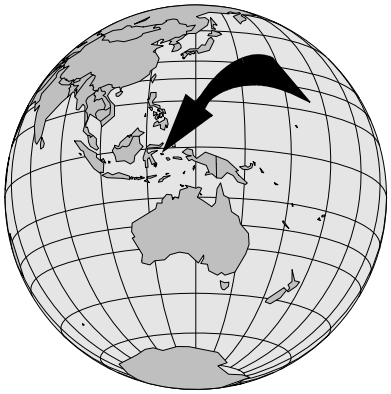
The U.S. Mission is concerned that increased political tension between Pakistan and India may further complicate travel in areas near their already-sensitive border. In addition, the Department of Defense has increased its security requirements for all its employees visiting India.

Because of the number and diversity of terror attacks in India during the past two years, Americans in India should be vigilant about security at all times. They should monitor local news, vary their routes and times, and consider the level of security when visiting public places, such as religious sites, hotels, restaurants, or entertainment and recreation venues. U.S. citizens should keep a low profile, avoid crowds and demonstrations, and maintain valid travel documents. Finally, travelers should plan on added time to account for increased security, especially at hotels and airports. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Americans are also encouraged to read the Country Specific Information for India, available on the Embassy's website at http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov, and also at http://travel.state.gov.

U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

U.S. citizens may contact the American Citizens Services Unit of the Embassy or the Consulates General for further information. The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi is located at Shanti Path, Chanakya Puri 110021; telephone +91-11-2419-8000; fax +91-11-2419-8407. The Embassy's Internet home page address is http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Consulate General in Mumbai (Bombay) is located at Lincoln House, 78 Bhulabhai Desai Road, 400026, telephone +91-22-2363-3611; fax +91-22-2363-0350. The Internet home page address is http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov. The U.S. Consulate General in Chennai (Madras) is at 220 Anna Salai, Gemini Circle, 600006, telephone +91-44-2857-4000; fax +91-44-2811-2027. The Internet home page address is http://chennai.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Kolkata (Calcutta) is at 5/1 Ho Chi Minh Sarani, 700071; telephone +91-33-3984-2400; fax +91-33-2282-2335. The Internet home page address is http://kolkata.usconsulate.gov.



INDONESIA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Indonesia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 2 million sq. km. (736,000 sq. mi.), about three times the size of Texas; maritime area: 7,900,000 sq. km.

Cities: Capital—Jakarta (est. 8.8 million). Other cities—Surabaya 3.0 million, Medan 2.5 million, Bandung 2.5 million.

Terrain: More than 17,500 islands; 6,000 are inhabited; 1,000 of which are permanently settled. Large islands consist of coastal plains with mountainous interiors.

Climate: Equatorial but cooler in the highlands.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Indonesian(s).

Population: (July 2008 est.) 237.5 million.

Annual population growth rate: (2008 est.) 1.175%.

Ethnic groups: (2000 census) Javanese 40.6%, Sundanese 15%, Madurese 3.3%, Minangkabau 2.7%, others 38.4%.

Religions: (2000 census) Muslim 86.1%, Protestant 5.7%, Catholic 3%, Hindu 1.8%, others 3.4%.

Languages: Indonesian (official), local languages, the most prevalent of which is Javanese.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Enrollment—94% of eligible primary school-age children. Literacy—90.4% (2007).

Health: Infant mortality rate—31.04/1,000 (2008 est.). Life expectancy at birth—70.46 years (2008 est.).

Work force: 111.5 million (2008). Agriculture—42%, industry—12%, services—44%.

Government

Type: Independent republic.

Independence: August 17, 1945 proclaimed.

Constitution: 1945. Embodies five principles of the state philosophy, called Pancasila, namely monotheism, humanitarianism, national unity, representative democracy by consensus, and social justice.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of government and chief of state) elected by direct popular vote. Legislative—The People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), which includes the 550-member House of Representatives (DPR) and the 128-member Council of Regional Representatives (DPD), both elected to five-year terms. Judicial—Supreme Court.

Suffrage: 17 years of age universal and married persons regardless of age.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $433 billion; (2008 est.): $500 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 6.3%; (2008 est.): 6.1%.

Inflation: (2007) 6.6%; (2008 est.): 11.5-12.5% (end-period).

Per capita income: (2007) $3,700 (est., PPP).

Natural resources: (11.1% of GDP): Oil and gas, bauxite, silver, tin, copper, gold, coal.

Agriculture: (13.8% of GDP) Products—timber, rubber, rice, palm oil, coffee. Land—17% cultivated.

Manufacturing: (27% of GDP) Garments, footwear, electronic goods, furniture, paper products.

Trade: Exports (2007)—$118.1 billion including oil, natural gas, appliances, textiles. Major exporters—Japan, U.S., Singapore, Republic of Korea, China. Imports (2007)—$84 billion including food, chemicals, capital goods, consumer goods. Major importers—Singapore, Japan, China.

PEOPLE

Indonesia's approximately 237.5 million people make it the world's fourth-most populous nation. The island of Java, roughly the size of New York State, is the most populous island in the world (124 million, 2005 est.) and one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Indonesia

includes numerous related but distinct cultural and linguistic groups, many of which are ethnically Malay. Since independence, Bahasa Indonesia (the national language, a form of Malay) has spread throughout the archipelago and has become the language of most written communication, education, government, business, and media. Local languages are still important in many areas, however. English is the most widely spoken foreign language. Education is compulsory for children through grade 9. In primary school, 94% of eligible children are enrolled whereas 57% of eligible children are enrolled in secondary school.

Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom apply to the six religions recognized by the state, namely Islam (86.1%), Protestantism (5.7%), Catholicism (3%), Hinduism (1.8%), Buddhism (about 1%), and Confucianism (less than 1%). On the resort island of Bali, over 90% of the population practices Hinduism. In some remote areas, animism is still practiced.

HISTORY

By the time of the Renaissance, the islands of Java and Sumatra had already enjoyed a 1,000-year heritage of advanced civilization spanning two major empires. During the 7th-14th centuries, the Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya flourished on Sumatra. At its peak, the Srivijaya Empire reached as far as West Java and the Malay Peninsula. Also by the 14th century, the Hindu Kingdom of Majapahit had risen in eastern Java. Gadjah Mada, the empire's chief minister from 1331 to 1364, succeeded in gaining allegiance from most of what is now modern Indonesia and much of the Malay archipelago as well. Legacies from Gadjah Mada's time include a codification of law and an epic poem. Islam arrived in Indonesia sometime during the 12th century and, through assimilation, supplanted Hinduism by the end of the 16th century in Java and Sumatra. Bali, however, remains overwhelmingly Hindu. In the eastern archipelago, both Christian and Islamic proselytizing took place in the 16th and 17th centuries, and, currently, there are large communities of both religions on these islands.

Beginning in 1602, the Dutch slowly established themselves as rulers of present-day Indonesia, exploiting the weakness of the small kingdoms that had replaced that of Majapahit. The only exception was East Timor, which remained under Portugal's control until 1975. During 300 years of rule, the Dutch developed the Netherlands East Indies into one of the world's richest colonial possessions.

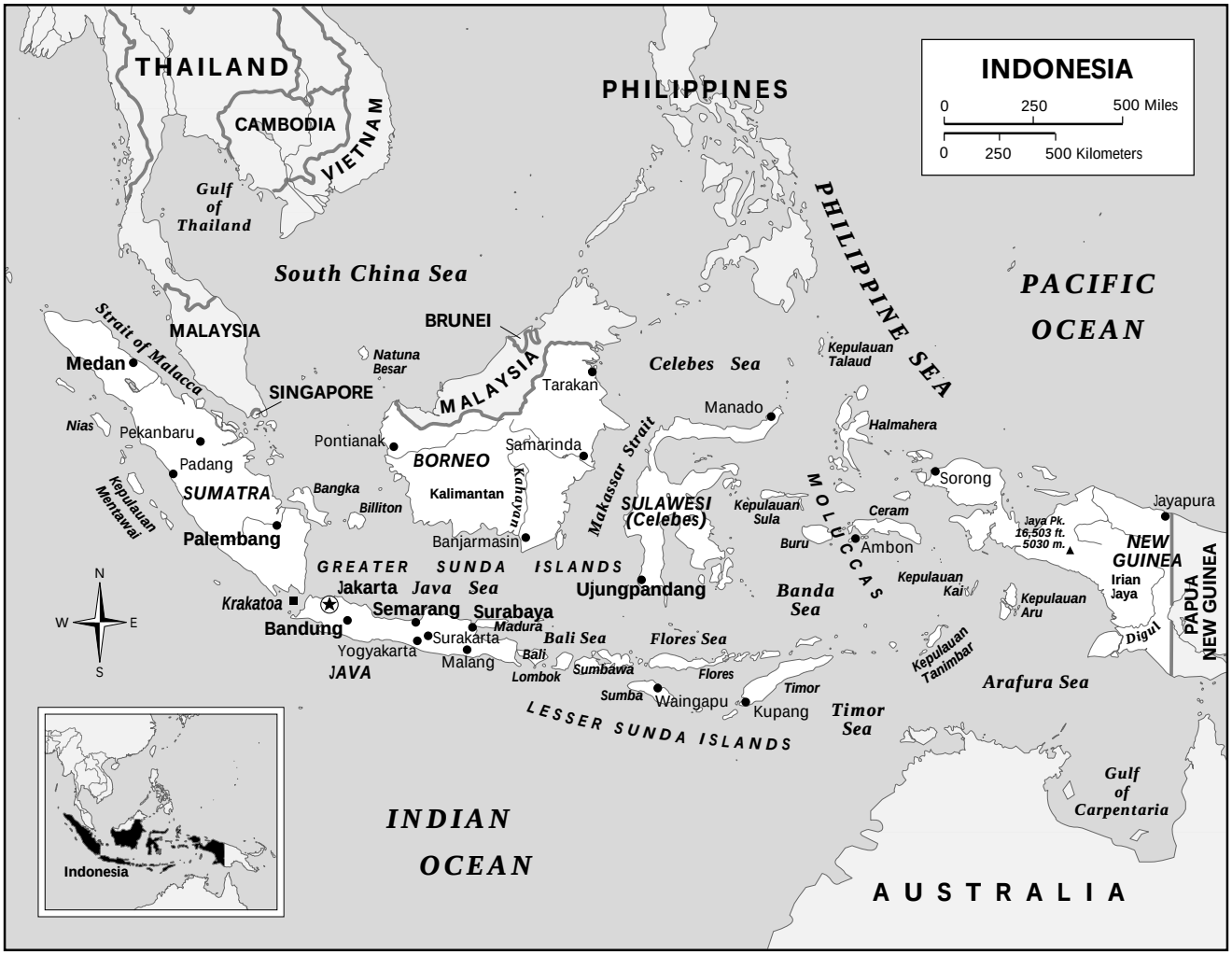
During the first decade of the 20th century, an Indonesian independence movement began and expanded rapidly, particularly between the two World Wars. Its leaders came from a small group of young professionals and students, some of whom had been educated in the Netherlands. Many, including Indonesia's first president, Soekarno (1945-67), were imprisoned for political activities.

The Japanese occupied Indonesia for three years during World War II (1942-1945). On August 17, 1945, three days after the Japanese surrender to the Allies, a small group of Indonesians, led by Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta, proclaimed independence and established the Republic of Indonesia. They set up a provisional government and adopted a constitution to govern the republic until elections could be held and a new constitution written. Dutch efforts to reestablish complete control met strong resistance. After four years of warfare and negotiations, the Dutch transferred sovereignty to a federal Indonesian Government. In 1950, Indonesia became the 60th member of the United Nations.

Shortly after hostilities with the Dutch ended in 1949, Indonesia adopted a new constitution, providing for a parliamentary system of government in which the executive was chosen by and accountable to parliament. Parliament was divided among many political parties before and after the country's first nationwide election in 1955, and stable governmental coalitions were difficult to achieve. The role of Islam in Indonesia became a divisive issue. Soekarno defended a secular state based on Pancasila, five principles of the state philosophy—monotheism, humanitarianism, national unity, representative democracy by consensus, and social justice—codified in the 1945 constitution, while some Muslim groups preferred either an Islamic state or a constitution which included a preambular provision requiring adherents of Islam to be subject to Islamic law. At the time of independence, the Dutch retained control over the western half of New Guinea (known as Irian Jaya in the Soekarno and Soeharto eras and as Papua since 2000) and permitted steps toward self-government and independence.

Negotiations with the Dutch on the incorporation of Irian Jaya into Indonesia failed and armed clashes broke out between Indonesian and Dutch troops in 1961. In August 1962, the two sides reached an agreement and Indonesia assumed administrative responsibility for Irian Jaya on May 1, 1963. The Indonesian Government conducted an "Act of Free Choice" in Irian Jaya under UN supervision in 1969 in which 1,025 Papuan representatives of local councils agreed by consensus to remain a part of Indonesia. A subsequent UN General Assembly resolution confirmed the transfer of sovereignty to Indonesia. Opposition to Indonesian administration of Papua gave rise to small-scale guerrilla activity in the years following Jakarta's assumption of control. In the more open atmosphere since 1998, there have been more explicit expressions within Papua calling for independence from Indonesia.

Unsuccessful rebellions on Sumatra, Sulawesi, West Java, and other islands beginning in 1958, plus a failure by the constituent assembly to develop a new constitution, weakened the parliamentary system. Consequently, in 1959, when President Soekarno unilaterally revived the provisional 1945 constitution that gave broad presidential powers, he met little resistance. From 1959 to 1965, President Soekarno imposed an authoritarian regime under the label



of "Guided Democracy." He also moved Indonesia's foreign policy toward nonalignment, a foreign policy stance supported by other prominent leaders of former colonies who rejected formal alliances with either the West or Soviet bloc. Under Soekarno's auspices, these leaders gathered in Bandung, West Java in 1955 to lay the groundwork for what became known as the Non-Aligned Movement. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, President Soekarno moved closer to Asian communist states and toward the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in domestic affairs. Though the PKI represented the largest communist party outside the Soviet Union and China, its mass support base never demonstrated an ideological adherence typical of communist parties in other countries.

By 1965, the PKI controlled many of the mass civic and cultural organizations that Soekarno had established to mobilize support for his regime and, with Soekarno's acquiescence, embarked on a campaign to establish a "Fifth Column" by arming its supporters. Army leaders resisted this campaign. Under circumstances that have never been fully explained, on October 1, 1965, PKI sympathizers within the military, including elements from Soekarno's palace guard, occupied key locations in Jakarta and kidnapped and murdered six senior generals. Major General Soeharto, the commander of the Army Strategic Reserve, rallied army troops opposed to the PKI to reestablish control over the city. Violence swept throughout Indonesia in the aftermath of the October 1 events and unsettled conditions persisted through 1966. Right-wing gangs killed tens of thousands of alleged communists in rural areas. Estimates of the number of deaths range between 160,000 and 500,000. The violence was especially brutal in Java and Bali. During this period, PKI members by the tens of thousands turned in their membership cards. The emotions and fears of instability created by this crisis persisted for many years as the communist party remains banned from Indonesia.

Throughout the 1965-66 period, President Soekarno vainly attempted to restore his political stature and shift the country back to its pre-October 1965 position. Although he remained President, in March 1966, Soekarno transferred key political and military powers to General Soeharto, who by that time had become head of the armed forces. In March 1967, the Provisional People's Consultative Assem-

bly (MPRS) named General Soeharto acting President. Soekarno ceased to be a political force and lived under virtual house arrest until his death in 1970.

President Soeharto proclaimed a "New Order" in Indonesian politics and dramatically shifted foreign and domestic policies away from the course set in Soekarno's final years. The New Order established economic rehabilitation and development as its primary goals and pursued its policies through an administrative structure dominated by the military but with advice from Western-educated economic experts. In 1968, the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) formally selected Soeharto to a full five-year term as President and he was re-elected to successive 5-year terms in 1973, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, and 1998. In mid-1997, Indonesia suffered from the Asian financial and economic crisis, accompanied by the worst drought in 50 years and falling prices for oil, gas, and other commodity exports. As the exchange rate changed from a fixed to a managed float to fully floating, the rupiah depreciated in value, inflation increased significantly, and capital flight accelerated. Demonstrators, initially led by students, called for Soeharto's resignation. Amid widespread civil unrest, Soeharto resigned on May 21, 1998, three months after the MPR had selected him for a seventh term. Soeharto's hand-picked Vice President, B.J. Habibie, became Indonesia's third President. President Habibie reestablished International Monetary Fund (IMF) and donor community support for an economic stabilization program. He released several prominent political and labor prisoners, initiated investigations into the unrest, and lifted controls on the press, political parties, and labor unions.

In January 1999, Habibie and the Indonesian Government agreed to a process, with UN involvement, under which the people of East Timor would be allowed to choose between autonomy and independence through a direct ballot held on August 30, 1999. Some 98% of registered voters cast their ballots, and 78.5% of the voters chose independence over continued integration with Indonesia. Many people were killed by Indonesian military forces and military-backed militias in a wave of violence and destruction after the announcement of the pro-independence vote.

Indonesia's first elections in the post-Soeharto period were held for the national, provincial, and sub-provincial parliaments on June 7, 1999. Forty-eight political parties participated in the elections. For the national parliament, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle led by Megawati Soekarnoputri) won 34% of the vote; Golkar ("Functional Groups" party) 22%; Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB, National Awakening Party linked to the conservative Islamic organization Nadhlatul Ulama headed by former President Abdurrahman Wahid) 13%; and Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP, United Development Party led by Hamzah Haz) 11%. The MPR selected Abdurrahman Wahid as Indonesia's fourth President in November 1999 and replaced him with Megawati Soekarnoputri in July 2001.

The constitution, as amended in the post-Soeharto era, provides for the direct election by popular vote of the president and vice president. Under the 2004 amendment, only parties or coalitions of parties that gained at least 3% of the House of Representatives (DPR) seats or 5% of the vote in national legislative elections were eligible to nominate a presidential and vice presidential ticket. The 2004 legislative elections took place on April 5 and were considered to be generally free and fair. PDI-P lost its plurality in the House of Representatives, dropping to under 19% of the total vote, while Golkar remained near 1999 levels with 21% of the vote. Five other parties won between 6 and 11% of the national vote. Of the 18 other parties that participated, nine won small numbers of seats in the DPR. The first direct presidential election was held on July 5, 2004, contested by five tickets. As no candidate won at least 50% of the vote, a runoff election was held between the top two candidates, President Megawati Sukarnoputri and retired General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, on September 20, 2004. In this final round, Yudhoyono won 60.6% of the vote. Approximately 76.6% of the eligible voters participated, a total of roughly 117 million people, making Indonesia's presidential election the largest single-day election in the world. The Carter Center, which sent a delegation of election observers, issued a statement congratulating "the people and leaders of Indonesia for the successful conduct of the presidential election and the peaceful atmosphere that has prevailed throughout the ongoing democratic transition."

Natural disasters have devastated many parts of Indonesia over the past few years. On December 26, 2004 a 9.1 to 9.3 magnitude earthquake took place in the Indian Ocean, and the resulting tsunami killed over 130,000 people in Aceh and left more than 500,000 homeless. On March 26, 2005, an 8.7 magnitude earthquake struck between Aceh and northern Sumatra, killing 905 people and displacing tens of thousands. After much media attention of the seismic activity on Mt. Merapi in April and May 2006, a 6.2 magnitude earthquake occurred 30 miles to the southwest. It killed over 5,000 people and left an estimated 200,000 people homeless in the Yogyakarta region.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Indonesia is a republic based on the 1945 constitution providing for a separation of executive, legislative, and judicial power. Substantial restructuring has occurred since President Soeharto's resignation in 1998 and the short, transitional Habibie administration in 1998 and 1999. The Habibie government established political reform legislation that formally set up new rules for the electoral system, the House of Representatives (DPR), the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), and political parties without changing the

1945 Indonesian constitution. After these reforms, the constitution now limits the president to two terms in office.

The president, elected for a five-year term, is the top government and political figure. The president and the vice president were elected by popular vote for the first time on September 20, 2004. Previously, the MPR selected Indonesia's president. In 1999, the MPR selected Abdurrahman Wahid, also known as Gus Dur, as the fourth President.

The MPR removed Gus Dur in July 2001, immediately appointing then-Vice President Megawati Soekarnoputri as the fifth President. Megawati brought a certain amount of stability to Indonesia, yet there were concerns over progress on combating corruption and encouraging economic growth. In 2004, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected to succeed Megawati. National legislative and presidential elections will be held in 2009. The president, assisted by an appointed cabinet, has the authority to conduct the administration of the government. President Yudhoyono's Democratic Party (PD) holds 55 of the 550 seats in the House of Representatives (DPR), making it the fourth-largest political party represented in the legislature as of 2008. Yudhoyono, however, also had the support of other political parties that combined to hold a majority of the seats in the DPR.

The People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) has 678 members, consisting of the 550 members of the DPR and the 128 representatives of the Council of Regional Representatives (DPD), which includes four members from 32 of Indonesia's 33 provinces. Since 2004, all seats in the DPR and DPD have been held by legislators elected by the citizenry. Previously, some seats had been reserved for representatives of the armed forces. The military has been a significant political force throughout Indonesian history, though it had ceded its formal political role by 2004.

The armed forces shaped the political environment and provided leadership for Soeharto's New Order from the time it came to power in the wake of the abortive 1965 uprising. Military officers, especially from the army, were key advisers to Soeharto and Habibie and had considerable influence on policy. Under the dual function concept ("dwifungsi"), the military asserted a continuing role in socio-political affairs.

This concept was used to justify placement of officers to serve in the civilian bureaucracy at all government levels. Although the military retains influence and is one of the only truly national institutions, the wide-ranging democratic reforms instituted since 1999 abolished "dwifungsi" and ended the armed forces' formal involvement in government administration. The police have been separated from the military, further reducing the military's direct role in governmental matters. Control of the military by the democratically elected government has been strengthened. As a reaction to Soeharto's centralization of power and reflecting historically independent sentiment, Hasan di Tiro established the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) in December 1976 to seek independence for Aceh. Some 15,000 died in military conflict in Aceh over the following three decades. Through peace talks led by former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari, a peace agreement between GAM and the Indonesian Government that provided wide-ranging autonomy for Aceh was signed on August 15, 2005.

By December 2005, GAM declared that they had disbanded the military wing of their organization, and the Indonesian Government had withdrawn the bulk of its security forces down to agreed levels. On December 11, 2006, Aceh held gubernatorial and district administrative elections, the first democratic elections in over half a century in Aceh.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Susilo Bambang YUDHOYONO**
Vice Pres.: **Muhammad Yusuf KALLA**
Coordinating Min. for Economic Affairs: **SRI MULYANI Indrawati**
Coordinating Min. for the People's Welfare: **Aburizal BAKRIE**
Coordinating Min. for Political, Legal, & Security Affairs: **WIDODO Adi Sutjipto**
Min. of Agriculture: **Anton APRIYANTONO**
Min. for Communication & Information: **Mohammad NUH**
Min. for Cooperatives & Small & Medium Enterprises: **Suryadharma ALI**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Jero WACIK**
Min. of Defense: **Juwono SUDARSONO**
Min. for the Development of Disadvantaged Regions: **Mohammad Lukman EDY**
Min. of Education: **Bambang SUDIBYO**
Min. for Energy & Mineral Resources: **Purnomo YUSGIANTORO**
Min. for the Environment: **Rachmat Nadi WITOELAR Kartaadipoetra**
Min. of Finance: **SRI MULYANI Indrawati**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Noer Hassan WIRAJUDA**
Min. of Forestry: **Malam Sambat KABAN**
Min. of Health: **Siti Fadilah SUPARI**
Min. of Home Affairs: **MARDIYANTO**
Min. of Industry: **Fahmi IDRIS**
Min. of Justice & Human Rights: **Andi MATTALATA**
Min. of Manpower & Transmigration: **Erman SUPARNO**
Min. of Maritime Affairs & Fisheries: **Freddy NUMBERI**
Min. for National Development Planning: **Paskah SUZETTA**
Min. for Public Housing: **Mohammad Yusuf ASYARI**
Min. of Public Works: **Joko KIRMANTO**
Min. of Religion: **Muhammad Maftuh BASYUNI**
Min. of Research & Technology: **KUSMAYANTO Kadiman**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Bachtiar CHAMSYAH**
Min. for State Apparatus Reform: **Taufiq EFFENDI**
Min. for State-Owned Enterprises: **Sofyan DJALIL**
Min. of Trade: **Mari Elka PANGESTU**
Min. of Transportation: **Jusman Syafii DJAMAL**
Min. for Women's Empowerment: **Meutia Farida HATTA Swasono**
Min. for Youth & Sports: **Adhyaksa DAULT**
Attorney Gen.: **Hendarman SUPANDJI**
Cabinet Sec.: **Sudi SILALAHI**
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Dir., State Intelligence Agency (BIN): **Syamsir SIREGAR**
Governor, Bank Indonesia: **BOEDIONO**
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ECONOMY

Indonesia has a market-based economy in which the government plays a significant role. There are 158 state-owned enterprises and the government administers prices on several basic goods, including fuel, rice, and electricity.

In the mid-1980s, the government began eliminating regulatory obstacles to economic activity. The steps were aimed primarily at the external and financial sectors and were designed to stimulate employment and growth in the non-oil export sector. Annual real gross domestic product (GDP) growth averaged nearly 7% from 1987-97 and most analysts recognized Indonesia as a newly industrializing economy and emerging major market. The Asian financial crisis of 1997 altered the region's economic landscape. With the depreciation of the Thai currency, the foreign investment community quickly reevaluated its investments in Asia. Foreign investors dumped assets and investments in Asia, leaving Indonesia the most affected in the region. In 1998, Indonesia experienced a negative GDP growth of 13.1% and unemployment rose to 15-20%. In the aftermath of the 1997-98 financial crisis, the government took custody of a significant portion of private sector assets via debt restructuring, but subsequently sold most of these assets, averaging a 29% return. Indonesia has since recovered, albeit slower than some of its neighbors, by recapitalizing its banking sector, improving oversight of capital markets, and taking steps to stimulate growth and investment, particularly in infrastructure. GDP growth has steadily risen this decade, achieving real growth of 6.3% in 2007 and projected to exceed 6.0% growth in 2008.

Economic Policy

After he took office on October 20, 2004, President Yudhoyono moved quickly to implement a "pro-growth, pro-poor, pro-employment" economic program. He appointed a respected group of economic ministers who announced a "100-Day Agenda" of short-term policy actions designed to energize the bureaucracy. President Yudhoyono also announced an ambitious anti-corruption plan in December 2004. The State Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) released in early 2005 a Medium Term Plan focusing on four broad objectives: creating a safe and peaceful Indonesia; creating a just and democratic Indonesia; creating a prosperous Indonesia; and establishing a stable macroeconomic framework for development. President Yudhoyono reshuffled his cabinet in December 2005, appointing former Finance Minister Boediono as Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and moving Sri Mulyani Indrawati from the National Development Planning Agency to the Finance Ministry. In May 2008, President Yudhoyono appointed Boediono as Governor of Bank Indonesia, the central bank. In June 2008, President Yudhoyono appointed Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati to also serve as Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs. The Yudhoyono administration targeted average growth of 6.6% from 2004-2009 to reduce unemployment and poverty significantly. Indonesia's overall macroeconomic picture is stable and improving. By 2004, real GDP per capita returned to pre-financial crisis levels. In 2007, domestic consumption continued to account for the largest portion of GDP, at 63%, followed by investment at 24.8%, government consumption at 8.3%, and net exports at 4%. By all measures, investment realization has climbed in each of the past several years.

Following a significant run-up in global energy prices in 2007/2008, the Indonesian Government raised fuel prices by an average of 29% on May 24, 2008 in an effort to reduce its fuel subsidy burden. Fuel subsidies had been projected to reach Rp 265 trillion ($29.4 billion) in 2008, or 5.9% of GDP. The fuel price hikes, along with rising food prices, led to consumer price inflation of 11.9% in July 2008. To help its citizens cope with higher fuel and food prices, the Indonesian Government implemented a direct cash compensation package for low-income families and an extra range of benefits including an expanded subsidized rice program and additional subsidies aimed at increasing food production.

Banking Sector

Indonesia currently has 128 commercial banks, of which 11 are majority foreign-owned and 17 are foreign joint venture banks. The top 15 banks control about 70% of assets in the sector. Four state-owned banks (Bank Mandiri, BNI, BRI, BTN) control about 37.4% of assets. The Indonesian central bank, Bank Indonesia (BI), announced plans in January 2005 to strengthen the banking sector by encouraging consolidation and improving prudential banking and supervision. BI hopes to encourage small banks with less than Rp 100 billion (about U.S. $11 million) in capital to either raise more capital or merge with healthier "anchor banks" before end-2010, announcing the criteria for anchor banks in July 2005. In October 2006, BI announced a single presence policy to further prompt consolidation. The policy stipulates that a single party can own a controlling interest in only one banking organization. Controlling interest is defined as 25% or more of total out-

standing shares or having direct or indirect control of the institution. BI plans to adopt Basel II standards beginning in 2009 and to improve operations of its credit bureau to centralize data on borrowers. Another important banking sector reform was the decision to eliminate the blanket guarantee on bank third-party liabilities. BI and the Indonesian Government completed the process of replacing the blanket guarantee with a deposit insurance scheme run by the independent Indonesian Deposit Insurance Agency (also known by its Indonesian acronym, LPS) in March 2007. The removal of the blanket guarantee did not produce significant deposit outflows from or among Indonesian banks. Sharia banking has grown considerably in Indonesia in recent years, representing 2.15% of the banking sector, about $4.78 billion in assets as of July 2008.

Exports and Trade

Indonesia's exports grew to a record $118 billion in 2007, an increase of 14% from 2006. The largest export commodities for 2007 were oil and gas (19.4%), minerals (18.8%), electrical appliances (13.27%), rubber products (6.8%), and textiles (3.6%). The top four destinations for exports for 2007 were Japan (14.2%), the U.S. (12.3%), Singapore (9.7%), and China (7.3%). Meanwhile, total imports rose 15% to $84 billion in 2007. The U.S. trade deficit with Indonesia increased 1.9% in 2007 to $10.1 billion ($4.2 billion in exports versus $14.3 billion in imports).

Oil and Minerals Sector

Indonesia announced that it would leave the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 2008, as it had been a net petroleum importer since 2004. Crude and condensate output averaged 954,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 2007. In 2006, the oil and gas sector contributed $11.9 billion of government revenues, or 15.5% of the total. U.S. companies have invested heavily in the petroleum sector. Indonesia ranked tenth in world gas production. In early 2007, Qatar passed Indonesia as the world's number one exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Despite the declining trends, Indonesia's oil and gas trade balance remained positive at $2.3 billion for 2006 and $156 million in 2007, according to unofficial statistics.

Although minerals production traditionally centered on bauxite, silver, and tin, Indonesia is expanding its copper, nickel, gold, and coal output for export markets. In mid-1993, the Energy Ministry reopened the coal sector to foreign investment. Total coal production reached 179 million metric tons in 2007, including exports of 139.9 million tons. Two U.S. firms operate two copper/gold mines in Indonesia, with a Canadian and U.K. firm holding significant investments in nickel and gold, respectively. In 2007 Indonesia ranked fifth among the world's top gold concentrate producers. Indonesian gold production in 2006 was 171 tons. Indonesia achieved its peak output in 2001 with 180 tons. Production mainly came from Freeport's Grasberg mine, the world's biggest gold-producing mine. Indonesia's share of global hard rock mining exploration spending has dropped from 3% to 1%. Since 1998, only three new gold mines have opened. This decline does not reflect Indonesia's mineral prospects, which are high; rather, the decline reflects uncertainty over mining laws and regulations, low competitiveness in the tax and royalty system, and investor concerns over divestment policies and the sanctity of contracts.

Investment

Since the late 1980s, Indonesia has made significant changes to its regulatory framework to encourage investment and economic growth. This growth was financed largely from private investment, both foreign and domestic. U.S. investors provided a majority of the investment in the oil and gas sector and undertook some of Indonesia's largest mining projects. In addition, the presence of U.S. banks, manufacturers, and service providers expanded, especially after the industrial and financial sector reforms of the 1980s. While many petroleum and mining investors remained after the 1997 financial crisis, the number of U.S. investors in other sectors declined. Other major foreign investors include Japan, the United Kingdom, Singapore, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea. Infrastructure investment declined steadily after the financial crisis and has not yet recovered. In November 2006, however, the Indonesian Government announced that it was opening up 110 infrastructure projects valued at $16.5 billion and was working on 120 regulations to encourage infrastructure investment.

President Yudhoyono and his economic ministers have stated repeatedly their intention to improve the climate for private sector investment to raise the level of GDP growth and reduce unemployment. In addition to general corruption and legal uncertainty, businesses have cited a number of specific factors that have reduced the competitiveness of Indonesia's investment climate, including: corrupt and inefficient customs services; non-transparent and arbitrary tax administration; inflexible labor markets that have reduced Indonesia's advantage in labor-intensive manufacturing; increasing infrastructure bottlenecks; and uncompetitive investment laws and regulations. In each of the past three years, the Government of Indonesia has announced a series of economic policy packages aimed at stimulating investment and infrastructure improvements and implementing regulatory reform. A new investment law was enacted in 2007, which contains provisions to restrict the share of foreign ownership in a range of industries. The government is considering a review of Indonesia's negative list, but no changes or revisions had been announced as of September 2008.

On September 2, 2008, the DPR passed long-awaited tax reform legislation. The legislation, which awaits presidential signature, will reduce corporate and personal income tax rates as of January 1, 2009. Corporate income tax rates will fall from 30% to 28% in 2009 and 25% in 2010, with additional reductions for small and medium enterprises and publicly

listed companies. The legislation raises the taxable income threshold for individuals, cuts the maximum personal income tax from 35% to 30%, and provides lower marginal personal income tax rates across four income categories. Taxes on dividends will also fall from a maximum of 20% to a maximum of 10%. Long-planned labor reforms have been delayed.

The passage of a new copyright law in July 2002 and accompanying optical disc regulations in 2004 greatly strengthened Indonesia's intellectual property rights (IPR) regime. Despite the government's significantly expanded efforts to improve enforcement, IPR piracy remains a major concern to U.S. intellectual property holders and foreign investors, particularly in the high-technology sector. In March 2006, President Yudhoyono issued a decree establishing a National Task Force for IPR Violation Prevention. The IPR Task Force was intended to formulate national policy to prevent IPR violations and determine additional resources needed for prevention, as well as to help educate the public through various activities and improve bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation to prevent IPR violations. It has yet to fully realize these aims. In 2007, Indonesia was removed from the U.S. Trade Representative's "Priority Watch" list and placed on the "Watch" list.

Environment

President Yudhoyono's administration has significantly increased Indonesia's global profile on environmental issues, and U.S.-Indonesia cooperation on the environment has grown substantially. Indonesia is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which include rising sea levels and erosion of coastal areas, increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, species extinction, and the spread of vector-borne diseases. At the same time, Indonesia faces challenges in addressing the causes of climate change. Indonesia has the world's second-largest tropical forest and the fastest deforestation rate, making it the third-largest contributor of greenhouse gas emissions, behind the U.S. and China. In December 2007, Indonesia hosted the 13th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and led efforts to highlight the importance of forests and deforestation in the climate debate.

In 2004, President Yudhoyono initiated a multi-agency drive against illegal logging that has significantly decreased illegal logging through stronger enforcement activities. The State Department and the U.S. Trade Representative have negotiated with the Indonesian Ministries of Trade and Forestry the U.S. Government's first Memorandum of Understanding on Combating Illegal Logging and Associated Trade. Presidents George W. Bush and Yudhoyono announced the MOU during President Bush's November 2006 visit to Indonesia. Implementation of the MOU includes collaboration on sustainable forest management, improved law enforcement, and improved markets for legally harvested timber products. This effort will strengthen the enabling conditions for avoiding deforestation, specifically addressing the trade issues that are involved.

The U.S. Government contributed to the start of the Heart of Borneo conservation initiative to conserve a high-biodiversity, transboundary area that includes parts of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. The three countries launched the Heart of Borneo initiative in February 2007. The Governments of Indonesia and the U.S. are currently negotiating a Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCA) program. Under the program, a portion of the Government of Indonesia's debt to the U.S. Government may be reduced and redirected toward tropical forest conservation in Indonesia.

Indonesia is also home to the greatest marine biodiversity on the planet. President Yudhoyono called for a Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) in August 2007. The Coral Triangle Initiative is a regional plan of action to enhance coral conservation, promote sustainable fisheries, and ensure food security in the face of climate change. In December 2007, the U.S. Government announced its support for the six CTI nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands). Since then, the United States has provided $8.4 million to this initiative. With projected funding of $32 million over five years, the U.S. is the largest bilateral donor to CTI, and President Bush endorsed the CTI proposal formally at the 2007 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit.

Indonesia will host the first-ever World Oceans Conference in Manado, North Sulawesi, May 11-15, 2009. The World Oceans Conference is also the launch venue for the Coral Triangle Initiative. Top government officials and other leaders will discuss the scientific interplay between ocean degradation, climate and weather patterns, and fishing stocks.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Indonesia's armed forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, or TNI) total approximately 350,000 members, including the army, navy, marines, and air force. The army is the largest branch with about 280,000 active-duty personnel. Defense spending in the national budget accounts for 1.8% of GDP, but is supplemented by revenue from many military businesses and foundations.

The Indonesian National Police were a branch of the armed forces for many years. The police were formally separated from the military in April 1999, a process that was formally completed in July 2000. With 250,000 personnel, the police represent a much smaller portion of the population than in most nations.

Indonesia has peaceful relations with its neighbors. Without a credible external threat in the region, the military historically viewed its prime mission as assuring internal security. Military leaders have said that they wish to transform the military to a professional, external security force, providing domestic support to civilian

security forces as necessary. Throughout Indonesian history, the military maintained a prominent role in the nation's political and social affairs. A significant number of cabinet members have had military backgrounds, while active duty and retired military personnel occupied a large number of seats in the parliament. Commanders of the various territorial commands played influential roles in the affairs of their respective regions. With the inauguration of the newly-elected national parliament in October 2004, the military no longer has a formal political role, although it retains important political influence.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since independence in 1945, Indonesia has espoused a "free and active" foreign policy, seeking to play a role in regional affairs commensurate with its size and location but avoiding involvement in conflicts among major powers. Indonesian foreign policy under the "New Order" government of President Soeharto moved away from the stridently anti-Western, anti-American posturing that characterized the latter part of the Soekarno era.

Following Soeharto's ouster in 1998, Indonesia's Presidents have preserved the broad outlines of Soeharto's independent, moderate foreign policy. The traumatic separation of East Timor from Indonesia after an August 1999 East Timor referendum, and subsequent events in East and West Timor, strained Indonesia's relations with the international community.

A cornerstone of Indonesia's contemporary foreign policy is its participation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which it was a founding member in 1967 with Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Since then, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Burma, and Cambodia also have joined ASEAN. While organized to promote common economic, social, and cultural goals, ASEAN acquired a security dimension after Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1979. The security policy aspect of ASEAN expanded with the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1994, in which 22 countries participate, including the United States.

At ASEAN's Singapore Summit in November 2007, the organization's members signed a new charter, a small step toward the agreed goal of creating an ASEAN Community to propel greater integration in the areas of political and security affairs, economics, and socio-cultural affairs. Indonesia was a strong proponent of further integration. Indonesia also was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and has taken moderate positions in its councils. As NAM Chairman in 1992-95, Indonesia led NAM positions away from the rhetoric of North-South confrontation, advocating instead the broadening of North-South cooperation in the area of development. Indonesia continues to be a prominent leader of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Indonesia often supports NAM and Group of 77 (G-77) foreign policy views, taking positions regarding human rights contrary to the United States. In May 2005, the Yudhoyono administration, in a major effort to reinvigorate its leadership of the NAM and reset the movement's future course, hosted an Asia-Africa Summit to commemorate the founding of the NAM in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955.

A secular state, Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population and is a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). It carefully considers the interests of Islamic solidarity in its foreign policy decisions while providing a moderating influence in the OIC. President Wahid, for example, pursued better relations with Israel; Foreign Minister Wirajuda participated in the November 2007 Middle East peace conference in Annapolis.

After 1966, Indonesia welcomed and maintained close relations with the donor community, particularly the United States, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan, through the Intergovernmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI) and its successor, the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI), which have provided substantial foreign economic assistance. Donors in recent years have expanded assistance to Indonesia, due to its rapid democratic consolidation.

Indonesia has been a strong supporter of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Largely through the efforts of President Soeharto at the 1994 meeting in Bogor, Indonesia, APEC members agreed to implement free trade in the region by 2010 for industrialized economies and 2020 for developing economies.

In 2008, Indonesia finalized its Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with Japan, a significant trade partner and Indonesia's biggest foreign investor. The agreement is Indonesia's first bilateral free trade deal and exempts Indonesia from 90% of Japanese import duties.

President Yudhoyono has sought a higher international profile for Indonesia. In March 2006, Yudhoyono traveled to Burma to discuss democratic reform and visited several Middle Eastern countries in April and May 2006. Yudhoyono delivered a major speech in Saudi Arabia, encouraging the Muslim world to embrace globalization and technology for greater social and economic progress.

In November 2006, Indonesia sent about 1,000 peacekeeping troops to southern Lebanon to be part of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and replaced those troops with a second contingent a year later. In 2007 and 2008, Indonesia holds a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

U.S.-INDONESIAN RELATIONS

The United States has important economic, commercial, and security interests in Indonesia. It remains a

linchpin of regional security due to its strategic location astride a number of key international maritime straits, particularly the Malacca Strait. Relations between Indonesia and the U.S. are positive and have advanced since the election of President Yudhoyono in October 2004. The U.S. played a role in Indonesian independence in the late 1940s and appreciated Indonesia's role as an anti-communist bulwark during the Cold War. Cooperative relations are maintained today, although no formal security treaties bind the two countries. The United States and Indonesia share the common goal of maintaining peace, security, and stability in the region and engaging in a dialogue on threats to regional security. Cooperation between the U.S. and Indonesia on counter-terrorism has increased steadily since 2002, as terrorist attacks in Bali (October 2002 and October 2005), Jakarta (August 2003 and September 2004) and other regional locations demonstrated the presence of terrorist organizations, principally Jemaah Islamiyah, in Indonesia. The United States has welcomed Indonesia's contributions to regional security, especially its leading role in helping restore democracy in Cambodia and in mediating territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

The U.S. is committed to consolidating Indonesia's democratic transition and supports the territorial integrity of the country. Nonetheless, there are friction points in the bilateral political relationship. These conflicts have centered primarily on human rights, as well as on differences in foreign policy. The U.S. Congress cut off grant military training assistance through International Military Education and Training (IMET) to Indonesia in 1992 in response to a November 12, 1991, incident in East Timor when Indonesian security forces shot and killed East Timorese demonstrators. This restriction was partially lifted in 1995. Military assistance programs were again suspended, however, in the aftermath of the violence and destruction in East Timor following the August 30, 1999 referendum favoring independence.

Separately, the U.S. had urged the Indonesian Government to identify and bring to justice the perpetrators of the August 2002 ambush murders of two U.S. teachers near Timika in Papua province. In 2005, the Secretary of State certified that Indonesian cooperation in the murder investigation had met the conditions set by Congress, enabling the resumption of full IMET. Eight suspects were arrested in January 2006, and in November 2006 seven were convicted.

In November 2005, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, under authority delegated by the Secretary of State, exercised a National Security Waiver provision provided in the FY 2005 Foreign Operations Appropriations Act to remove congressional restrictions on Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and lethal defense articles. These actions represented a reestablishment of normalized military relations, allowing the U.S. to provide greater support for Indonesian efforts to reform the military, increase its ability to respond to national and regional disasters, and promote regional stability.

Under the terms of the FY 2008 FOAA, signed into law in December 2007, Congress did not reimpose restrictions. However, it prevented a portion of U.S. security assistance from being released before the Secretary of State reported on the status of certain measures of military reform, of accountability for past human rights abuses, of public access to Papua, and of the investigation into the 2004 murder of a prominent human rights activist.

Regarding worker rights, Indonesia was the target of several petitions filed under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) legislation arguing that Indonesia did not meet internationally recognized labor standards. A formal GSP review was suspended in February 1994 without terminating GSP benefits for Indonesia. Since 1998, Indonesia has ratified all eight International Labor Organization core conventions on protecting internationally recognized worker rights and allowed trade unions to organize. However, enforcement of labor laws and protection of workers rights remains inconsistent and weak in some areas. Indonesia's slow economic recovery has pushed more workers into the informal sector, which reduces legal protection and could create conditions for increases in child labor.

Development Assistance from the United States to Indonesia

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its predecessors have provided development assistance to Indonesia since 1950. Initial assistance focused on the most urgent needs, including food aid, infrastructure rehabilitation, health care, and training. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a time of great economic growth in Indonesia, USAID played a major role in helping the country achieve self-sufficiency in rice production and in reducing the birthrate.

Today, USAID assistance programs focus on basic education, democratic and decentralized governance, economic growth, education, health, water, sanitation, and the environment. The United States was one of the lead donors in the reconstruction efforts in the tsunami-hit area of Aceh. Most of the U.S. tsunami relief program is complete, although our efforts toward the construction of the Aceh west coast highway continues, and the U.S. remains actively engaged in conflict prevention and resolution efforts in Aceh.

Education: In October 2003, President Bush announced a $157 million Indonesian Education Initiative for 2004-2009 to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. This initiative is a cornerstone of the U.S. Government assistance program in Indonesia, directly responding to Indonesia's priorities and reflecting a joint Indonesia-U.S. commitment to revitalize education for the next generation of Indonesia's leaders. Since the initiative began, more than 1,476 primary and junior secondary schools—secular and religious, public and private—in eight provinces, have

participated. About 23,612 educators have been trained to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and more than 345,983 students are reaping the benefits.

The program serves as a model for introducing useful pedagogical and capacity-building techniques that facilitate the smooth transition of the sector-based management of basic education in a decentralized environment. By 2010, the program will promote ownership of a robust and replicable model and ensure the sustainability of a very promising innovation to Indonesia's education system.

Decentralized Basic Education (DBE): The Indonesia Education Initiative will increase the quality of basic education in primary and junior secondary schools, both public and private, and focus on three results: (DBE1) Local governments and communities more effectively manage education services; (DBE2) Enhance the quality of teaching and learning to improve student performance in key subjects such as math, science, and reading; and (DBE3) Youth gain more relevant life and work skills to better compete for jobs in the future.

Opportunities for Vulnerable Children: This program promotes inclusive education in Indonesia. Children with special needs such as visual impairment are provided the opportunity to be educated in public schools. Replicable models are being developed to expand the reach of the program.

Sesame Street Indonesia: An Indonesian co-production of the award-winning television show targeting young children was developed and produced by the Sesame Workshop in New York with local Indonesian partners and USAID funding. The program went on the air in 2007 and more than 1.8 million Indonesian children have viewed the program.

Effective Democracy and Decentralized Governance: This objective aims to support democratic reforms by supporting effective and accountable local governance, addressing conflict and encouraging pluralism, and consolidating national-level democratic reforms.

Mitigation of Conflict and Support for Peace: USAID remains a key donor working to mitigate conflict and support peace in conflict areas, such as Aceh, Papua, Sulawesi, and Ambon. Assistance activities focus on: conflict resolution/mitigation; civilian-military affairs; livelihoods development in conflict areas; drafting and monitoring of relevant legislation; and emergency and post-conflict transitional assistance to conflict affected persons.

Anti-Trafficking In Persons: USAID's anti-trafficking programs work closely with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and civil society groups in policy making, program development, victim support, and dissemination of information which will contribute to reducing the trafficking of women and children in Indonesia.

Justice Sector Reforms: Through the Democratic Reform Support Program and Justice Sector Reform Program, USAID's current Justice Sector programs provide technical assistance and training to judges, prosecutors and staff members at the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, and the Attorney General's Office.

Legislative Strengthening: Technical assistance and training are provided to strengthen the legislative and legal drafting skills of parliamentarians as well as provide institutional support to the National House of Representatives, National Regional Representative Council, and over 60 district-level legislative councils.

Activities include promoting constituency and media outreach; developing the capacity to draft and analyze legislation and operational budgets; creating inter-party coalitions; and encouraging legislative commissions to carry out their functions and perform strategic planning.

The Local Governance Support Program: Currently assisting 60 local governments, this program works to increase governmental accountability and transparency, strengthen the local legislative process, promote citizen engagement and civil service reform, and improve the delivery of basic services.

Promoting Democratic Culture: USAID works with civil society organizations and government institutions to strengthen democratic civic culture, focusing on respect for pluralism, religious diversity, and the rights of women and minority groups. Activities under this program include civic education, advocacy, engaging traditional leaders, building networks to support tolerance and pluralism, and assisting the government in reviewing policies that conflict with the constitution and human rights standards.

Tsunami Reconstruction: The U.S. Government was one of the first donors to respond to the disaster. Through numerous grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, and UN agencies, USAID has helped stabilize the humanitarian situation in Aceh, avert a public health crisis, and provide relief services to survivors.

Rebuilding Shelter and Key Infrastructure: USAID is assisting communities by providing much needed shelter, working with the Indonesian Government to rebuild key infrastructure and ensuring proper mapping and planning is considered through local cooperation.

Restoring Livelihoods: USAID enables communities to direct capacity building to benefit people at the local level. USAID's Community Based Recovery Initiative is working with 59 villages to organize local capacity-building initiatives.

Strengthening Capacity and Governance: USAID is providing assistance to restore local government services in Aceh, working to increase governmental accountability and transparency, strengthen the local legislative process, promote citizen

engagement and civil service reform, and improve the delivery of basic services.

Economic Growth Strengthened and Employment Created: Assistance to the Indonesian Government and private sector focuses on creating jobs by improving the business and investment climate, combating corruption, increasing competitiveness in key sectors, and improving the safety of the financial system. USAID is working with Indonesians to ensure that future generations enjoy an increasingly prosperous, democratic and stable country.

Trade and Investment Climate: Efforts to promote a transparent and predictable legal and regulatory business climate aim to reduce the hidden costs of doing business, increase certainty, promote good governance, enhance trade and investment, and create jobs.

Agribusiness and Industry Competitiveness: Assistance to leading agribusiness and industry sub-sectors fuels growth, exports, jobs, and prosperity. These efforts also drive increased productivity and national competitiveness by forging stronger public and private sector partnerships.

Financial Sector Safety and Soundness: Assistance to key financial and non-bank financial institutions helps build a sound financial infrastructure through improved oversight, transparency, and governance.

Improving the Quality of Basic Human Services: The USAID Basic Human Services Office provides assistance to Indonesia through an integrated strategy that aims to improve the health of local communities through support for maternal and child health, disease surveillance and control, food and nutrition, and access to safe drinking water through better watershed management and water treatment.

Environmental Services: This program supports better health through improved water resources management and expanded access to clean water and sanitation services. With a ridge to reef approach, partners improve water resource management from watershed sources, along rivers, through cities, and to coastal reefs. In the upper watershed, the program promotes forest management, biodiversity conservation, and land use planning to protect a steady, year-round source of clean water. Further downstream, the program strengthens municipal water utilities to improve and expand piped water and sanitation services to communities. Stakeholder forums link upstream and downstream communities to build consensus on water and waste management issues. Marginalized urban communities also benefit from the introduction of safe drinking water through Air Rahmat, a home chlorination product being introduced to the market through a public-private partnership.

Health Services: Women, newborns, and children are the principal beneficiaries of this integrated public health program. Working with the government, NGOs, and other partners, USAID focuses on maternal, neonatal, and child health; reproductive health; nutrition; HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria; and decentralization of the health sector. Improved health-seeking behaviors within communities link key hygiene promotion interventions, such as hand-washing with soap to reduce diarrheal disease, a major cause of childhood death. USAID's avian influenza (AI) program includes integrated public and private sector AI surveillance and response for both animal and human outbreaks and behavior change communications to minimize behaviors that facilitate the transmission of AI to both poultry and people.

Food and Nutrition: Improving the nutritional status of Indonesians, USAID food assistance targets poor communities. These activities directly impact women and children through targeted supplemental feeding and nutritional education activities. The food assistance program works with villages to construct public latrines, washing facilities, protected water stations, and to organize solid waste disposal efforts to better protect community health. Over one million people will be direct recipients of USAID food assistance under this program.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 15, 2008

Country Description: Indonesia is an independent republic consisting of more than 17,500 islands spread over 3,400 miles along the Equator. The main islands are Java, Sumatra, Bali, Kalimantan (Borneo), Sulawesi (Celebes), Papua, Halmahera, and Seram. The capital city of Jakarta lies in the lowlands of West Java, the most populated island. The country has approximately 245,500,000 people and more than 300 ethnic groups.

Indonesia's geographic location and topography make the country prone to natural disasters, especially seismic upheaval due to its location on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin. Indonesia is a developing country with a growing economy and some infrastructure shortcomings. However, it has many tourist destinations associated with the country's cultural diversity and natural resources. Annually, approximately 150,000 U.S. tourists visit Indonesia.

The U.S. diplomatic mission in Indonesia consists of approximately 220 American staff and 500 family members in addition to an average of 150 temporary duty officials who visit the Embassy each month.

Entry Requirements: Indonesian government requires a passport valid for at least six months from the date of arrival in Indonesia to enter the country. Indonesian authorities regularly deny entry to all foreign nationals who arrive with less than six months validity on their passports. The U.S. Embassy cannot obtain entry permission for Americans in this situation. Travelers will be required to depart for Singapore or a nearby country to obtain a new U.S. passport. American citizens are required to have a visa to enter Indonesia. U.S. citizens may apply for a visa on arrival at the airports in Jakarta, Bali, Surabaya, Medan, Padang, Pekanbaru, Manado, Biak, Ambon, Balikpapan, Pontianak, Kupang, Batam, and South Sumatra. An onward/return ticket is required to apply for an entry visa at these Indonesian ports of entry. Visas are not available at the Banda Aceh airport. Visas on arrival are available at a limited number of seaports, including the Batam and Bintan ferry terminals, but are not available at any land border crossing. Travelers without a visa should check carefully when planning travel between Indonesia and other countries in the region to be sure their return to Indonesia is through a designated visa-on-arrival port or airport. Travelers will not be allowed to enter or return to Indonesia at a port of entry that does not have visa-on-arrival facilities.

Indonesian visas require an entire passport page. Travelers without a blank visa page in their passport may be denied entry. Additional visa pages may be added in the United States through a Passport Agency or at most U.S. embassies and consulates. Visitors may be granted a 3-day visa on arrival for a fee of $10, or a 30-day visa on arrival for a fee of $25. Recent experience has shown that some visitors are granted a 7-day visa on arrival for $10. All visas on arrival are non-extendable. Travelers must exit the country to be able to purchase another visa on arrival. Travelers are strongly advised to purchase the 30-day visa on arrival to avoid problems if travel plans change unexpectedly. As of March 2008, travelers who overstay visas on arrival are subject to a fine of U.S. $20 per day.

U.S. citizens may also apply for a visa at the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, DC, or at an Indonesian Consulate in the U.S. In some cases, U.S. citizens may also apply at Indonesian embassies and consulates in other countries. U.S. citizens traveling overseas who wish to apply for an Indonesian visa should inquire with the local embassy in the country where they are currently traveling. A visitor's visa for business purposes and social/cultural stays of longer duration require a letter of intent/sponsorship from the Indonesian employer and/or sponsor. For up-to-date information, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia: 2020 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, phone: (202) 775-5200 or at http://www.embassyofindonesia.org. Indonesian Consulates are located in Los Angeles (213) 383-5126, San Francisco (415) 474-9571, Chicago (312) 920-1880, New York (212) 879-0600, and Houston (713) 785-1691. Visit the Embassy of Indonesia web site at http://www.embassyofindonesia.org for the most current visa information.

Indonesia strictly enforces its immigration/visa requirements. Several Westerners, including Americans, have been jailed for visa violations and/or overstays. Violators may also be subject to substantial fines and/or deportation from Indonesia for immigration and visa violations. Immigration officials have also detained people for conducting business, academic, or other non-tourist activities while on tourist visa status. Volunteer work with local or international NGOs is not permitted on tourist visa status. Penalties for such immigration/visa violations may include a prison sentence of up to 5 years and a fine of Rupiah 25 million. Travelers are encouraged to contact an Indonesian consular office to determine the appropriate visa category before traveling to Indonesia. All airline passengers, including children, are subject to a departure tax, which must be paid in cash (Rupiah). The international departure tax as of November 2008 is 100,000 Rupiah in Jakarta but may vary depending on what international airport is being used; domestic departure tax in Jakarta is 30,000 Rupiah but this tax also varies by airport.

Safety and Security: Since 2005, the Indonesian police and security forces have disrupted a number of terrorist cells and arrested approximately 400 suspects linked with Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a U.S. Department of State-designated terrorist organization, including the three terrorists convicted of killing 202 people in an October 2002 nightclub bombing in Bali. While Indone-

sia's counterterrorism efforts have had significant results, the threat remains. For example, in July 2008, Indonesian authorities arrested nine suspects in Sumatra who had been building bombs reportedly in preparation for anti-Western attacks, and in September 2008, a bomb was found in a shopping center in Palu before the start of the Muslim fasting month.

In spite of the success of the Indonesian counter-terrorism units, JI networks and cells may remain intact and have the capacity to go operational with little or no warning.

Extremists may target both official and private interests. Examples of such targets include high-profile sporting events, residential areas, business offices, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, public areas, and locales where Americans or foreigners gather in large numbers. The Department of State urges Americans in Indonesia to avoid crowds, maintain a low profile, and be vigilant about security at all times. Americans are advised to monitor local news broadcasts, vary their routes and times in carrying out daily activities, and consider the level of preventive security when visiting public places in Indonesia. Americans vacationing in Indonesia are advised to consider the level of preventive security when choosing hotels, restaurants, beaches, entertainment venues, and recreation sites.

Americans should always use common sense when traveling in unfamiliar areas and should be aware that local groups here as elsewhere may respond violently to real and perceived offenses. For example, in June 2008, two Americans in western Sumatra were beaten after the Americans reportedly accused a local man of theft. In the same month, another American in Sumatra was threatened by members of a local mosque when the American visited the mosque to complain about being awakened from his sleep by the morning call to prayer. The U.S. Mission in Indonesia must approve U.S. government employees' travel to the province of Papua, and travelers to that region must also obtain the approval of the Indonesian government. Even though other areas of Indonesia are not under official U.S. government travel restrictions, the U.S. Mission requests that official U.S. government employees inform the Regional Security Officer of their intent to travel to the provinces of Banda Aceh, Central Sulawesi and Maluku.

American travelers and American residents are urged to update their passports and important personal papers in case it becomes necessary to depart Indonesia quickly. Travel distances, poor communications, and an inadequate health care infrastructure make it extremely difficult for the Embassy to respond to U.S. citizen emergencies. Many parts of Indonesia (including many tourist destinations) are isolated and difficult to reach or contact.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime can be a problem in some major metropolitan areas in Indonesia. Crimes of opportunity such as pick-pocketing and theft occur throughout the country. Americans in Jakarta and Surabaya are advised to hire a taxi either from a major hotel queue or by calling a reputable taxi company, such as Silver Bird or Blue Bird, rather than hailing one on the street. Americans arriving at Soekarno-Hatta Airport in Jakarta should only use Silver Bird or Blue Bird taxis obtained at a designated taxi queue. Airport touts should not be used. Criminals in Jakarta regularly rob customers in taxis painted to look like taxis from reputable companies; booking taxis by telephone directly from the company is the best way to avoid falling victim to this crime. Claiming to act in the name of religious or moral standards, certain extremist groups have, on occasion, attacked nightspots and places of entertainment. Most of these attacks have sought to destroy property rather than to injure individuals. International news events can sometimes trigger anti-American or anti-Western demonstrations.

Credit card fraud and theft is a serious and growing problem in Indonesia, particularly for Westerners. Travelers should minimize use of credit cards or use cash. If used, credit card numbers should be closely safeguarded at all times. There have been many reports of shop, restaurant, and hotel staff writing down the credit card numbers of customers and then making purchases using the credit card number after the card owner has departed the retail location. Travelers should avoid using credit cards for online transactions at Internet cafes and similar venues. Travelers who decide to use credit cards should monitor their credit card activity carefully and immediately report any unauthorized use to their financial institution.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and proof of U.S. citizenship are readily available. When U.S. citizens are arrested or detained, formal notification of the arrest is normally provided to the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta in writing, a process that can take several weeks. If detained, U.S. citizens should telephone the Embassy Jakarta, or the nearest U.S. consular office immediately.

"Drink-spiking" incidents have been of increasing concern as there have been many reports of males being targeted for this ruse in clubs and nightspots. The effects of this drug, believed to be an animal tranquilizer, are extremely powerful. Besides putting the victim in an unconscious state for a long period of time, the side effects include memory loss, nausea, headaches and vomiting. Although most of these incidents involve male victims it is important

to remember that females have been victimized in the past with "Date-Rape" drugs. Maritime piracy in Indonesian waters continues, but incident reports have decreased steadily in past years. Most recent reports are of thefts of valuables or cargo from boats that are in a port and not at sea. Regardless, before traveling by sea, especially in the Straits of Malacca between the Riau Province and Singapore and in the waters north of Sulawesi and Kalimantan, passengers are advised to review the current security situation with a local port agent.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The Indonesia emergency telephone numbers similar to "911" in the United States are: 110 for police, 113 for fire, and 118 for ambulance.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The general level of sanitation and health care in Indonesia is far below U.S. standards. Some routine medical care is available in all major cities, although most expatriates leave the country for serious medical procedures. Psychological and psychiatric medical and counseling services are limited throughout Indonesia. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to locations with acceptable medical care, such as Singapore, Australia, or the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payments or sizable deposits for health services. A list of English-speaking doctors and hospitals is available via the U.S. Embassy Jakarta web site at http://jakarta.usembassy.gov.

Indonesian ambulance attendants often lack training equivalent to U.S. standards. Americans staying in Indonesia for extended periods, especially those who have known health problems, are advised to investigate private ambulance services in their area and to provide family and close contacts with the direct telephone number(s) of the service they prefer.

Malaria, dengue and other tropical and contagious diseases occur frequently in Indonesia. In 2005, polio re-emerged in Western Java. Avian Influenza (H5N1) is endemic among poultry in Indonesia and poultry outbreaks have been reported in the majority of Indonesia's provinces. As of September 10, 2008, the World Health Organization has reported a total of 137 confirmed human H5N1 cases and 112 deaths. Of the total, 20 cases and 13 deaths occurred in 2005, 55 cases and 45 deaths occurred in 2006, 42 cases and 37 deaths occurred in 2007, and 20 cases and 17 deaths have been reported this year. Travelers are urged to consult with their personal physicians and to obtain updated information on Avian Influenza before traveling to Indonesia.

Updated information and links to the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are posted on the U.S. Embassy web site at http://jakarta.usembassy.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the CDC's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Indonesia. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB http://wwwn.cdc.gov. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the WHO's web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm if their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Information regarding short-term health and emergency assistance policies is located on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Indonesia is provided for general reference only, and may not be accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In general, traffic in Indonesia is congested and undisciplined. The number and variety of vehicles on the road far exceed the capacity of existing roadways to handle the traffic. Road conditions vary from good (in the case of toll roads and major city roads) to dangerously poor. Generally, road safety awareness is very low in Indonesia, although it is increasing. Buses and trucks are often dangerously overloaded and tend to travel at high speeds. Most roads outside major urban areas have a single lane of traffic in each direction, making passing dangerous. Most Indonesian drivers do not maintain a safe following distance in a manner familiar to U.S. drivers and tend to pass or maneuver with considerably less

margin for error than in the United States. Although traffic in Indonesia moves on the left side of the road, drivers tend to pass on both sides and may use the shoulder for this purpose. It is common for drivers to create extra lanes regardless of the lane markings painted on the roads.

Throughout Indonesia, there is an overabundance of motorcycles claiming to have the right of way. Many motorcycle drivers recklessly weave in and out of traffic and typically fail to observe traffic regulations. Throughout the country, motor vehicles also share the roads with other forms of transportation such as bicycle pedicabs, horse and ox carts, and pushcarts.

Although Indonesia requires the use of seat belts in front seats, most Indonesian automobiles do not have seat belts in the rear passenger seats. The use of infant and child car seats is not common, and it can be very difficult to rent a car seat for temporary use. Helmets are required for all passengers on motorcycles, but this law is inconsistently enforced. Passengers often do not wear helmets. Accidents on rented motorcycles constitute the largest cause of death and serious injury among foreign visitors to Indonesia. American citizens are discouraged from riding motorcycles.

Accidents between a car and a motorcycle are invariably viewed as the fault of the driver of the car. Groups of motorcycle riders will sometimes threaten the driver of a car who is involved in an accident regardless of who is at fault. Expatriates and affluent Indonesians often use professional drivers. All car rental firms provide drivers for a nominal additional fee. Travelers unfamiliar with Indonesian driving conditions are strongly encouraged to hire drivers.

Driving at night can be extremely dangerous outside of major urban areas. Drivers often refuse to use their lights until it is completely dark, and most rural roads are unlit. Sometimes residents in rural areas use road surfaces as public gathering areas, congregating on them after dark.

When an accident involving personal injury occurs, Indonesian law requires both drivers to await the arrival of a police officer to report the accident. Although Indonesian law requires third party insurance, most Indonesian drivers are uninsured, and even when a vehicle is insured, it is common for insurance companies to refuse to pay damages. Nevertheless, foreigners who plan to drive while in Indonesia should ensure they have appropriate insurance coverage and drivers licenses. Drivers should be aware that ambulance service in Indonesia is unreliable, and that taxis or private cars are often used to transport the injured to a medical facility. In cases of serious injury to a pedestrian, the driver of the vehicle could be required to help transport the injured person to the hospital. When an accident occurs outside a major city, it may be advisable, before stopping, to drive to the nearest police station to seek assistance.

Visit the website of Indonesia's national tourist office online at http://my-indonesia.info/indexpromo.php.

Aviation Safety Oversight: B Based on publicly available information, including the results of a study commissioned by the Indonesian Government, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has determined that the Indonesian Directorate General of Civil Aviation is not in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Indonesia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

Indonesian civil aviation continues to experience air incidents and accidents, including four crashes with fatalities between September 5, 2005, and March 7, 2007. Incidents included hard landings, collapsed landing gear, and planes veering off the runway. Whenever possible, Americans traveling to and from Indonesia should fly directly to their destinations on international carriers from countries whose civil aviation authorities meet international aviation safety standards for the oversight of their air carrier operations under the FAA's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program.

Natural Disasters: Many areas of Indonesia are at high risk for natural disasters due to its geographic location and topography. The Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami on December 26, 2004 killed more than 130,000 people and left over 37,000 missing in Aceh and North Sumatra. On September 12, 2007 a 8.4-magnitude quake off shore of Sumatra along the edge of the Menawai island patch damaged hundreds of homes and killed at least 13 people. Dozens of strong aftershocks were felt and magnitude 7.8 and 7.1 tremors were recorded during the following two days. Major earthquakes on Nias Island off Sumatra in March 2005 and in Yogyakarta in May 2006 killed thousands of people. An earthquake and tsunami on the southern Java coast in July 2006 killed more than 600 people and left thousands homeless. Mt. Merapi Volcano near Yogyakarta experienced significant pyroclastic flows from April to early July 2006, and authorities evacuated residents within a 15-mile radius. Americans planning hiking or other outdoor activities in Indonesia are encouraged to obtain up-to-date information on local conditions, to travel with a local guide, and to carry a local mobile phone. Travelers should obey instructions from civil defense and emergency personnel and should not enter restricted areas.

Air Quality: Air quality in Indonesia is acceptable most of the time. However, within Indonesia's major cities, air quality can range from "unhealthy for sensitive groups" to "unhealthy." The air quality in Jakarta is particularly polluted. Individuals susceptible to chronic respiratory illnesses should consult with their doctor before spending significant amounts of time in Jakarta.

Scuba Diving, Snorkeling and Surfing: U.S. citizens should exercise prudence when scuba diving, snorkeling and surfing, and when vis-

iting remote tourist locations. Strong seasonal undercurrents in coastal waters pose a sometimes-fatal threat to surfers and swimmers, and every year several Americans drown in unstable water. Surfers and divers should also be aware that local fishermen in coastal waters may use explosives to catch fish although this practice is illegal in Indonesia.

Hiking: U.S. citizens interested in hiking on Puncak Jaya or other mountains in Papua should ensure that they organize their trip through a reputable tour operator and ensure they have firm, realistic plans and backup plans for climbing down the mountain. In the past, some local tour operators have abandoned climbers after they reached the summit. Climbers should be aware that transiting via private properties on the way down the mountain is considered trespassing and not a safe or legal alternative.

Teaching English in Indonesia: U.S. citizens who would like to teach English in Indonesia are urged to carefully review employment contracts before they travel to Indonesia. Most contracts include a monetary penalty for early termination. Individuals should be aware that English schools may require holding passports to insure that the employee complies with the terms of the contract or pays the appropriate penalty. In the past several months, there has been an increase in the number of Americans who terminated their employment contracts early, and could not depart Indonesia because their employer would not release their passports.

Commercial Disputes: U.S. citizens involved in commercial or property matters should be aware that the business environment is complex and dispute settlement mechanisms are not highly developed. Local and foreign businesses often cite corruption and ineffective courts as serious problems. Business and regulatory disputes, which would be generally considered administrative or civil matters in the U.S., may in some cases be treated as criminal cases in Indonesia. It can be challenging to resolve trade disputes. For more information, please refer to the U.S. Department of Commerce's Country Commercial Guide for Indonesia at http://www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x_6987010.pdf.

Internet Purchases: U.S. citizens frequently experience difficulties when purchasing goods by Internet from Indonesian suppliers with whom the buyer has not met personally. An increase in fraud has been noted with American citizens attempting to purchase goods via the internet from Indonesian stores and suppliers.

Currency: Counterfeit currency is a problem in Indonesia. Banks, exchange facilities and most commercial establishments do not accept U.S. currency that is worn, defaced, torn or issued before 1996.

Dual Nationality: Indonesian law does not recognize dual nationality for adults over 18 years. Because of this, U.S. citizens who are also documented as Indonesian nationals may experience difficulties with immigration formalities in Indonesia. Holding dual citizenship may also hamper the U.S. Embassy or Consulate's ability to provide consular protection to Americans. In addition to being subject to all Indonesian laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Indonesian citizens. In July 2006 the Indonesian Parliament passed new legislation allowing children under age 18 to maintain a foreign nationality as well as Indonesian citizenship. Parents whose children hold both Indonesian and U.S. citizenship may experience difficulties with entry and exit immigration procedures until the new law is fully implemented.

Transportation: There has been a rapid rise in all manners of public and private transportation within Indonesia. Various private airlines have begun operation in Indonesia over the past several years, as have new bus and ferry lines. Several recent air accidents have resulted in fatalities, injuries and significant damage to aircraft. In the past year, several ferries sank and another was badly damaged by fire, resulting in a significant number of deaths and injuries. While all forms of transportation are regulated in Indonesia, equipment tends to be less well maintained than similar equipment operated in the United States, and the quality of amenities found on various modes of transportation do not typically meet Western standards.

Customs Regulations: Indonesian customs authorities have strict regulations concerning import and export of items such as prescription medicines and foreign language materials or videotapes/discs. Americans are encouraged to contact the Embassy of Indonesia in Washington or one of Indonesia's consulates in the United States for specific information about customs requirements. Transactions involving such products are illegal, and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeiture and/or fines.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Indonesia's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Indonesia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. The death sentence can be given in cases of drug trafficking; several foreigners have been sentenced to death in recent years. One U.S. citizen was given a life sentence for drug trafficking.

Indonesian prisons are harsh and do not meet Western standards. Many prisoners are required to supplement their prison diets and clothing with funds from relatives. Medical care within Indonesian prisons, while available, is below Western standards, and access to medical testing to diagnose illness, as well as medica-

tions to treat conditions, is often difficult to obtain. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: There have been several recent cases of parental child abduction in Indonesia. While each case is different, Indonesian courts and police typically have not recognized valid U.S. sole custody decrees. Indonesia is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Indonesia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Indonesia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located in Jakarta at Medan Merdeka Selatan 5; telephone: (62)(21) 3435-9000; fax (62)(21) 385-7189. The Embassy's web site is http://www.usembassy-jakarta.org. The consular section can be reached by e-mail at jakconsul@state.gov. To subscribe to the U.S. Embassy Emergency Notification System, please register at http://jakarta.usembassy.gov/consular/ACSREGISTER.html. The U.S. Consulate General in Surabaya is at Jalan Raya Dr. Sutomo 33; telephone: (62)(31)295-6400; fax (62)(31) 567-4492; e-mail: consurabaya@state.gov.; after-hours duty officer (62)(811)334-183. The consulate should be the first point of contact for Americans needing assistance who are present or residing in the Indonesian provinces of: East Java, Nusa Tenggara Timor, Nusa Tenggara Barat, all of Sulawesi and North and South Maluku.

There is a Consular Agency in Bali at Jalan Hayam Wuruk 188, Denpasar, Bali; telephone: (62)(361) 233-605; fax (62)(361) 222-426; e-mail: amcobali@indo.net.id. The U.S. Consulate in Surabaya is an alternate contact for American citizens in Bali.

The U.S. Consulate in Medan, North Sumatra, only provides emergency assistance to U.S. citizens and does not yet have public consular hours. Americans citizens needing consular assistance in Sumatra should contact the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Indonesia is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Indonesia and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. Therefore, there is no treaty remedy by which the left-behind parent would be able to pursue recovery of the child or children should they be abducted or wrongfully retained in Indonesia. Once in Indonesia, the child or children would be completely subject to Indonesian law for all matters including custody. The United States is not a party to any treaty or convention on the enforcement of court orders. A custody decree issued by a court in the U.S. has no binding legal force abroad, although it may have a persuasive force in some countries. Furthermore, a U.S. custody decree may be considered by foreign courts and authorities as evidence and, in some cases, foreign courts may voluntarily recognize and enforce it on the basis of comity (the voluntary recognition by courts of one jurisdiction of the laws and judicial decisions of another).

Custody Disputes: Parental child abduction is not a crime under Indonesian law. Custody disputes are considered civil legal matters that must be resolved between the concerned parties or through the courts in Indonesia. The district/religious courts will hear and process child custody cases only as part of a divorce petition. Family issues and custody disputes are adjudicated based on Indonesian's Civil Code ("Kitab Undang-undang Hukum Perdata").

In order to bring a case/petition before the local court, the left-behind parent will require the assistance of an attorney licensed to practice in Indonesia. The court will also consider a child's relationship with each of the disputing parties and will evaluate each parent's ability to provide education and general living conditions and welfare for the child or children. Domestic law does not provide visitation rights to the non-custodian parent unless the parent(s) ask the court to incorporate visitation orders before the final divorce decree is issued.

The district and religious courts have jurisdiction on civil law cases, including child custody disputes. For Muslims, Islamic (Sharia) law can apply in family and religious matters. Questions on specific Islamic laws as they pertain to custody rights should be addressed to a lawyer licensed to practice in Indonesia. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel. state.gov/child-abduction.

Deportation: There is no extradition treaty between the United States and Indonesia. However, if the taking parent is a U.S. citizen whose U.S. passport has been revoked due to an outstanding federal Unlawful Flight to avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrant or indictment on charges of International Parental Kidnapping (IPKCA) in violation of 18 USC Section 1204, Indonesian authorities may consider deportation based on lack of a valid travel document. Exit permits are required for foreigners who stay in Indonesia for more than six months. Exit/re-entry permits are given to foreigners who are holding "KITAS" (temporary stay permit).

Dual Nationality: A child with a parent who was born outside of the U.S. or who has acquired a second nationality through naturalization in another country may have a claim to citizenship in that country. There is no requirement that a U.S. citizen parent consent to the acquisition by his/her child of another nationality and in many cases a parent is unaware that his/her child may have dual citizenship. The Embassy of Indonesia in Washington D.C. will be able to provide more detailed information on whether your child has a claim.

Initiating Foreign Enforcement Proceedings Under Local Law: If a country is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, it may be necessary for you to initiate a child custody action in the courts in the foreign country. This usually will require retaining the services of an attorney abroad. The Department of State, Office of Children's Issues is not a repository for foreign laws. However, selected information may be available concerning general procedures on child custody in particular countries. Contact the Office of Children's Issues to see if such information is available.

Retaining A Foreign Attorney: A list of English-speaking attorneys is available from the U.S. State Department, Office of American Citizens Services. See also the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory available in law libraries. It may be helpful to provide your foreign attorney with copies of any state laws concerning child custody orders and their enforcement in the U.S.

Criminal Remedies: The Department of State is not a law enforcement agency. The Department of Justice, Office of International Affairs works with U.S. prosecuting attorneys, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and with Interpol (an international police agency) in a joint cooperative effort to return persons charged with U.S. crimes from foreign countries. Extradition of the abducting adult may not result in the return of the child. Foreign countries may refuse to extradite a person to the United States if that person is also a citizen of the foreign country. Foreign countries may not recognize parental abduction as a crime. Please note that the extradition process applies only to the abducting adult/fugitive and not the child. The proper channel for the return of the child is through civil mechanisms or voluntary return arrangements. Additional information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Important Notes: Indonesian Government stipulates that an adoptive child must be of the same religion as the adoptive parents. Where the religion of the child's birth parents is not known, the child will be deemed to be Muslim.

There have been a number of instances in which Americans have been poorly advised (by legal practitioners) and have entered into fostering/adoption arrangements which, even though endorsed by local Indonesian courts, do not meet the requirements of Indonesian adoption law. Adoptions that do not meet these requirements will not meet the requirements for the issuance of U.S. immigrant visas for the children. Americans intending to adopt a child in Indonesia should not attempt to circumvent the proper processes.

U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to contact U.S. consular officials in Jakarta, Indonesia, before formalizing an adoption agreement to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed which will make it possible for the Embassy to issue a U.S. immigrant visa for the child.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Directorate of Child Social Service Development is the agency designated by the Indonesian government to manage the administration of Indonesian adoption law and regulations. This office may be reached in writing or by phone at:

Jalan Salemba Raya No. 28
Jakarta Pusat, Indonesia
Telephone: 62-21-310-0375

In addition, American prospective adoptive parents considering adopting an Indonesian child should contact Yayasan Sayap Ibu (the Sayap Ibu Foundation).

This organization has been designated by the Ministry of Social Affairs to handle adoptions by foreigners. In areas of Indonesia where Yayasan Sayap Ibu is not represented, the first point of contact should be the Ministry itself. The Yayasan Sayap Ibu office in Jakarta is located at:

Yayasan Sayap Ibu
Jalan Barito II # 55
Telephone: 62-21-722-1763

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The Indonesian government has imposed the following criteria on prospective adoptive parents:

- Couples must be between 30 and 45 years of age;
- Married for a minimum of 5 years;
- Resident in Indonesia for at least 2 years with a permit issued by the local authorities (Rukun Tetangga, Rukun Warga, Kelurahan, Kecamatan), and a letter from the Embassy in Jakarta (a statement of Domicile);
- Couples can be either childless, have one of their own children or have previously adopted an Indonesian child. If the prospective adoptive mother has had birth children in the past, she must no longer be capable of bearing children;
- Believe in God;
- Both parents must appear at the Court hearing;
- The adoptive child must be less than 5 years old;
- The adoptive child must be in the care of a registered and authorized social welfare organization.

Recent legislation also stipulates that an adoptive child must be of the same religion as the adoptive parents. Where the religion of the child's birth parents is not known, the child will be deemed to be Muslim.

Residency Requirements: Foreign national prospective adoptive parents must be resident in Indonesia and must have been working and living in Indonesia for at least two years prior to the application to adopt. Past experience has shown that if one foreign national parent is resident in Indonesia before the other, he or she may initiate the process as long as s/he has already been resident in Indonesia for at least two years.

In cases where one prospective adoptive parent is a foreign national and the other is an Indonesian citizen, the residency requirement has not applied as long as the Indonesian national has resided in Indonesia to see the adoption process through completion. Such cases, however, are necessarily more complicated, and different courts may interpret the law differently.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Time Frame: Adoption procedures can take from 12 to 18 months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta is not aware of any legally recognized Indonesian agencies who can assist adoptive parents. Foreigners may seek private legal assistance to facilitate the process of adoption and seek advice and information from certain orphanages.

Adoption Fees: The legal fees paid to the Indonesian authorities for adoption are approximately US$ 400. However, some adoptive parents have indicated that the cost can run up to $600 or more total.

Adoption Procedures: This is a guide to local procedures for adoption of Indonesian children by American citizens. For further information, Americans wishing to adopt a child in Indonesia should contact Yayasan Sayap Ibu. There are several required documents that must be completed by the adoptive parents. When all the required paperwork is completed, applications for adoption are directed through Yayasan Sayap Ibu or another designated social organization to the Department of Social Affairs, which usually grants permission for the child to be released into the prospective adoptive parents' foster care.

The adoptive parent must complete a minimum period of six months of foster parenting the child before commencing the court process to finalize the adoption. Monitoring by an Indonesian social worker appointed by the Department of Social Affairs (DEPSOS) is a part of this fostering process.

After the adoptive parents have completed the requisite six months of foster parenting, fulfilled the two- year residency requirement, and have delivered all the necessary paperwork to the Sayap Ibu Orphanage, a court date will be set. The court hearing will officially establish the foster parents as the child's adoptive parents.

Americans intending to adopt a child in Indonesia should not attempt to circumvent the proper processes. In order to obtain a valid court order, all adoptions must be vetted by an Inter-Departmental Committee (Tim Pertimbangan Perizinan Pangangkatan Anak Antara Warganegara Indonesia dan Warganegara Asing) that authorizes foreign adoptions.

The final court decision must refer to the approval decision made by this committee.

Approximately two weeks after the court hearing approving the adoption, the adoptive parents will receive the official court adoption document. With the court document in hand, the parents can apply for the child's Indonesian passport.

The child will not be able to depart Indonesia or be issued a U.S. visa until he/she has a passport.

Required Documents:

- Letter of no objection to the adoption from the American Embassy (issued by the Consular Section);
- Marriage Certificate (authenticated by the Indonesian Embassy/ Consulate in the country of issuance);
- Birth Certificates of both parents (authenticated by the Indonesian Embassy/Consulate in the country of issuance);
- Birth Certificates of previous children (authenticated by the Indonesian Embassy/Consulate in the country of issuance);
- Reference letters from the parents or close relatives of both prospective adoptive parents stating that they approve of the prospective parents' desire to adopt an Indonesian child;
- Health statement for the husband and wife by a medical practitioner at an Indonesian government hospital. Statement from an Indonesian government hospital gynecologist regarding involuntary childlessness;
- Income statement;
- Good conduct certificates from the Indonesian police for both husband and wife;
- Family photos and photos of the home and surroundings;
- Three photos each (3cm x 4cm) of husband and wife;
- Statement from the adoptive parents that they will report the condition of the adopted child to the Indonesian Embassy or Consulate in future areas of residence;
- Statement of motivation for adopting an Indonesian child (with U.S. Embassy seal);
- Separate statements of domicile issued by the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta and from the local authorities (Rukun Tangga/ Rukun Warga / Kelurahan / Kecamatan);
- Photocopy of Work or Residence Permits;
- Photocopy of passports;
- A letter from the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta stating that the child will be allowed to enter the United States after the adoption is granted, and that under U.S. adoption legislation an adopted child becomes a child of the adopters as if he/she had been born to them in marriage.

Note: All documents must be translated into Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) by a translator that has registered their signature with the Embassy so that translations may be certified with greater ease. Prospective adoptive parents may obtain the list of sworn translators from the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta.

Embassy of Indonesia
2020 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: 202-775-5200

Indonesia also has consulates in Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Jakarta
Jalan Medan Merdeka Selatan #4-5
Jakarta—10110
Phone: 62-21-3435-9000
Fax: 62-21-385-7189

U.S. Consulate Surabaya
Jalan Dr. Sutomo No. 33
Surabaya
Phone: 62-31-295-6400
Fax: 62-31-567-4492

Consulate Agency Bali
Jl. Hayam Wuruk 188
Denpasar
Phone: 62-361-233-605
Fax: 62-361-222-426

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Indonesia may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-404-4747.



IRAN

Compiled from the March 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Islamic Republic of Iran

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1.6 million sq. km. (636,295 sq. mi., slightly larger than Alaska).

Arable land: 9.78% of the country.

Cities: Capital—Tehran. Other cities—Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashhad, Shiraz, Yazd, Qom.

Terrain: Desert and mountains.

Climate: Semiarid; subtropical along the Caspian coast.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Iranian(s).

Population: (2007 est.) 70.5 million.

Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.6%.

Ethnic groups: Persians 51%, Azeri 24%, Gilaki and Mazandarani 8%, Kurd 7%, Arab 3%, Lur 2%, Baloch 2%, Turkmen 2%, other 1%.

Religions: Shi'a Muslim 89%; Sunni Muslim 9%; Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Baha'i 2%.

Languages: Persian and Persian dialects 58%, Turkic languages (besides Turkish) 26%, Kurdish 9%, Luri 2%, Balochi 1%, Arabic 1%, Turkish 1%, other 2%.

Education: Literacy (total population age 15 and over who can read and write, 2003)—79% (male: 86%, female: 73%).

Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—38.12 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy at birth (2007)—total population: 70.56 yrs.

Government

Type: Islamic republic.

Constitution: Ratified in December 1979, revised 1989.

Government branches: Executive—Supreme Leader (head of state), president (head of government), Council of Ministers, Assembly of Experts, Expediency Council, Council of Guardians. Legislative—290-member Majles (National Assembly, or Islamic Consultative Assembly). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political parties: Several reformist groups, such as the Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIFP, also known as Mosharekat) and the Mojahideen of the Islamic Revolution (MIRO) have come together as a reformist coalition in advance of the 2008 Majles elections. Another influential reformist group is the National Trust Party. Similarly, several conservative groups have come together under two separate coalitions, the United Front of Principle-ists and the Broad and Popular Coalition of Principle-ists. Some conservative groups remain outside either coalition.

Political subdivisions: 30 provinces.

Suffrage: Universal suffrage. The government is debating raising the voting age from 15 to 18.

Economy

GDP: (purchasing power parity, 2007 est.) $852.6 billion.

GDP: (official exchange rate, 2007 est.) $222.4 billion.

GDP real growth rate: (2007 est.) 6.2%.

GDP composition by sector: (2007 est.) Agriculture 10.4%, industry 33%, services 48.8%.

Per capita income: (PPP 2007 est.) $12,300.

Work force: by occupation (June 2007) Agriculture 25%, industry 31%, services 45%.

Unemployment rate: (according to the Iranian Government) 12.1%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, iron ore, lead manganese, zinc, sulfur.

Agriculture: Principal products—wheat, rice, other grains, sugar beets, fruits, nuts, cotton, dairy products, wool, caviar. Note: Iran is not self-sufficient in terms of food.

Industry: Types—petroleum, petrochemicals, textiles, cement and building materials, food processing (particularly sugar refining and vegetable oil production), metal fabricating (particularly steel and copper), armaments.

Trade: (2007 est.) Exports—$76.5 billion: petroleum 80%, chemical and

petrochemical products, carpets, fruits, nuts. Major export partners (2007)–U.A.E. (17.1%), Germany (13.6%), Italy (6.7%), Turkey (5.3%), India (4.8%), Azerbaijan (4%), Turkmenistan (2.4%), China (3%), Singapore (2.5%). Imports–$61.3 billion: industrial raw materials and intermediate goods, capital goods, foodstuffs and other consumer goods, technical services, military supplies. Major import partners–Germany (12%), China (10.5%), U.A.E. (9.4%), France (5.6%), Italy (5.4%), South Korea (5.4%), Russia (4.5%).

PEOPLE

Iran is a pluralistic society. Persians are the largest predominant ethnic and cultural group in this country, though many are actually of mixed ancestry. The population of the country has important Turkic elements (e.g., Azeris) and Arabs predominate in the southwest. In addition, Iranian citizens include Kurds, Balochi, Bakhtyari, Lurs, and other smaller minorities, such as Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and Brahuis (or Brohi).

The 1979 Islamic revolution and the 1980-88 war with Iraq transformed Iran's class structure politically, socially, and economically. During this period, Shia clerics took a more dominant position in politics and nearly all aspects of Iranian life, both urban and rural. After the fall of the Pahlavi regime in 1979, much of the urban upper class of prominent merchants, industrialists, and professionals, favored by the former monarch, the shah, lost standing and influence to the senior clergy and their supporters. Bazaar merchants, who were allied with the clergy against the Pahlavi shahs, also have gained political and economic power since the revolution.

The urban working class has enjoyed somewhat enhanced status and economic mobility, spurred in part by opportunities provided by revolutionary organizations and the government bureaucracy. Though the number of clergy holding senior positions in the parliament and elsewhere in government has declined since the 1979 revolution, Iran has nevertheless witnessed the rise of a post-revolutionary elite among lay people who are strongly committed to the preservation of the Islamic Republic.

Most Iranians are Muslims; 89% belong to the Shi'a branch of Islam, the official state religion, and about 9% belong to the Sunni branch, which predominates in neighboring Muslim countries. Non-Muslim minorities include Zoroastrians, Jews, Baha'is, and Christians.

HISTORY

The ancient nation of Iran, historically known to the West as Persia and once a major empire in its own right, has been overrun frequently and has had its territory altered throughout the centuries. Invaded by Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols, and others—and often caught up in the affairs of larger powers—Iran has always reasserted its national identity and has developed as a distinct political and cultural entity.

Archeological findings indicate human activity in Iran during the middle Paleolithic era, about 100,000 years ago. The sixth millennium B.C. saw a fairly sophisticated agricultural society and proto-urban population centers. Many dynasties have ruled Iran, starting with the Achaemenid (559-330 B.C.) founded by Cyrus the Great. After the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic period (300-250 B.C.) came the Parthian (250 B.C.-226 A.D.) and the Sassanian (226-651) dynasties.

The seventh century Arab-Muslim conquest of Iran was followed with invasions by the Seljuk Turks and the Mongols. Iran underwent something of a revival under the Safavid dynasty (1502-1736), the most prominent figure of which was Shah Abbas, who expelled the Uzbeks and Ottomans from Persia. The conqueror Nadir Shah and his successors were followed by the Zand dynasty, founded by Karim Khan, and later the Qajar (1795-1925) and the Pahlavi dynasties (1925-1979).

Modern Iranian history began with a nationalist uprising against the Shah in 1905 and the establishment of a limited constitutional monarchy in 1906. The discovery of oil in 1908 would later become a key factor in Iranian history and development.

In 1921, Reza Khan, an Iranian officer of the Persian Cossack Brigade, seized control of the government. In 1925, having ousted the Qajar dynasty, he made himself Shah and established the Pahlavi dynasty, ruling as Reza Shah for almost 16 years.

Under Reza Shah's reign, Iran began to modernize and to secularize, and the central government reasserted its authority over the tribes and provinces. During World War Two the Allies feared the monarch close relations with Nazi Germany. In September 1941, following the occupation of western Iran by the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate. His son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, became Shah and would rule until 1979.

During World War Two, Iran had been a vital link in the Allied supply line for lend-lease supplies to the Soviet Union. After the war, Soviet troops stationed in northwestern Iran not only refused to withdraw but backed revolts that established short-lived, pro-Soviet separatist regimes in the northern regions of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. These ended in 1946. The Azerbaijani revolt crumbled after U.S. and United Nations (UN) pressure forced a Soviet withdrawal. Iranian forces also suppressed the Kurdish uprising.

In 1951, the government of nationalist Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq (sometimes spelled Mossadegh) nationalized the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). The Shah fled to Rome from Iran before the U.S.-backed coup against Mossadeq in August 1953, during which pro-Shah army forces



arrested the Prime Minister. The Shah returned soon thereafter. In 1961, Iran initiated a series of economic, social, and administrative reforms that became known as the Shah's White Revolution. The core of this program was land reform. Modernization and economic growth proceeded at an unprecedented rate, fueled by Iran's vast petroleum reserves, the third-largest in the world. However, his autocratic method of rule and pro-western policies alienated large sectors of the population, including the Shia clergy.

In 1978, domestic turmoil swept the country as a result of religious and political opposition to the Shah's rule, including abuses committed by SAVAK, the hated internal security and intelligence service. In January 1979, the Shah left Iran; he died abroad several years after.

On February 1, 1979, exiled religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned from France to assume control of the revolution and established himself as Supreme Leader of a new, theocratic republic guided by Islamic principles. Following Khomeini's death on June 3, 1989, the Assembly of Experts chose the outgoing president of the republic, Ali Khamenei, to be his successor as Supreme Leader in what proved to be a smooth transition externally. There was debate amongst senior clerics regarding Khamenei's relative lack of religious credentials.

In August 1989, Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the speaker of the Majles, was elected President by an overwhelming majority. He was re-elected June 1993, with a more modest majority. Some Western observers attributed the reduced voter turnout to disenchantment with the deteriorating economy. An overwhelming majority of Iranians elected Mohammad Khatami-Ardakani as President in August 1997, hoping he would

usher in a new era of freedom and reform. Khatami had modest successes in broadening the participation of Iranians in government and politics through initiating popular elections for local government councils and encouraging the development of civil society. Many liberal-minded Iranians were disappointed that Khatami did not support student protesters in 1999, but he was nevertheless re-elected in June 2001.

In February 2004 flawed elections were held for the Seventh Majles in which many reformists were prohibited from running, meaning that a much more conservative group of parliamentarians easily retook control of the Majles in May 2004. The first round of elections for the Eighth Majles took place on March 14, 2008, but final results will not be available until after April 25.

None of the seven candidates in the presidential vote on June 17, 2005 received a majority, resulting in a two-candidate runoff between Tehran mayor Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad and former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on June 24. Following the first round, some Iranian politicians alleged voter fraud and electoral interference by the Basij militia forces. Ahmadi-Nejad, winning in the second round with almost 62% of the vote according to Iranian Government figures, took office in August 2005. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 2009.

GOVERNMENT

The December 1979 Iranian constitution defines the political, economic, and social order of the Islamic republic. The document establishes Shi'a Islam of the Twelver (Jaafari) sect as Iran's official religion. Sunni Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity are the only other recognized, legal minority religions. The country is governed by secular and religious leaders through governing bodies, whose duties often overlap.

The Supreme Leader holds power for life unless removed by the Assembly of Experts. He has final say on all domestic, foreign, and security policies for Iran, though he establishes and supervises those policies in consultation with the Expediency Council. The Leader is the final arbiter on all differences or disputes among the various branches of government. He appoints officials to key positions including the head of judiciary and the 12 members of the Guardian Council (six directly, six indirectly). He has power to remove the president and is commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

The constitution stipulates that the Assembly of Experts, which currently consists of the 86 popularly-elected clerics elected to 8-year terms, chooses the Supreme Leader based on jurisprudent qualifications and commitment to the principles of the revolution. The Assembly of Experts reviews his performance periodically and has the power to depose and replace him. Pragmatic conservative candidates generally polled better than their hardline conservative opponents during the December 15, 2006 elections to the Assembly of Experts. (Turnout for this vote, which coincided with municipal council elections, was quite high, topping 60%.) Citizens will not vote for representatives to the Assembly again until 2014.

The Council of Guardians consists of 12 persons. The Supreme Leader appoints the six religious members of the Council of Guardians while the Iranian parliament, the Majles, selects the six lay members from candidates recommended by the judiciary, which is in turn selected by the Supreme Leader. The non-clerics play a role only in determining whether legislation before the Majles conforms to Iran's constitution. The religious members, on the other hand, take part in all deliberations, considering all bills for conformity to Islamic principles. The Council of Guardians can veto any law. This body also certifies the competence of candidates for the presidency, the Assembly of Experts, and the Majles, and it has the power of approbatory supervision over elections.

The president of the Islamic Republic of Iran is elected by universal suffrage to a 4-year term. The president supervises the affairs of the executive branch, appointing and supervising the Council of Ministers (members of the cabinet), coordinating government decisions, and selecting government policies to be placed before the National Assembly.

The Majles, or National Assembly, consists of 290 members elected to 4-year terms. The members of the legislature are elected by direct and secret ballot from among the candidates approved by the Council of Guardians.

In 1988, Ayatollah Khomeini created the Council for Expediency, which resolves legislative issues on which the Majles and the Council of Guardians fail to reach an agreement. Since 1989, it has been used to advise the national religious leader on matters of national policy as well. It is composed of the president, the speaker of the Majles, the judiciary chief, the clerical members of the Council of Guardians, and other members appointed by the Supreme Leader for 3-year terms. Cabinet members and Majles committee chairs also serve as temporary members when issues under their jurisdictions are considered. In 2005, it was announced that the Expediency Council, which now has over 40 members, would have responsibility for general supervision of the system, though that has not resulted in any noticeable change in this institution's day-to-day authority or operations.

Judicial authority is constitutionally vested in the Supreme Court and the four-member High Council of the Judiciary; these are two separate groups with overlapping responsibilities and have one head. Together, they are responsible for supervising the enforcement of all laws and for establishing judicial and legal policies.

Iran has two military forces. The national military is charged with defending Iran's borders, while the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is charged with protecting the

revolution and its achievements. The Qods Force is the IRGC's special operations branch and is responsible for activity outside Iran.

Iran has 30 provinces managed by an appointed governor general. The provinces are further divided into counties, districts, and villages. Sixty percent of eligible voters took part in the first ever municipal and local council elections in 1999, though a lower percentage went to the polls in the second round in 2003. Turnout during the December 15, 2006 elections, during which citizens also elected Assembly of Expert representatives, was over 60%. The local councils select mayors.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Supreme Leader: **Ali Hoseini-KHAMENEI, Ayatollah**
Pres.: **Mahmud AHMADI-NEJAD**
Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majles): **Ali Ardeshir-LARIJANI**
Sec. of the Cabinet: **Masud ZARIBAFAN**
First Vice Pres.: **Parviz DAVUDI**
Vice Pres. for Atomic Energy: **Qolam Reza AQAZADEH-Khoi**
Vice Pres. for Cultural Heritage & Tourism: **Esfandiar Rahim MASHAIE**
Vice Pres. for Environmental Protection: **Fatemeh JAVADI**
Vice Pres. for Executive Affairs: **Ali SAIDLU**
Vice Pres. for Legal & Parliamentary Affairs: **Mohammad Reza RAHIMI**
Vice Pres. for Management & Planning: **Mansur BORQEI**
Vice Pres. for Martyrs & War Veterans Affairs: **Hosein DEHQAN**
Vice Pres. for National Youth Organizations: **Ali AKBARI, Hojjat ol-Eslam**
Vice Pres. for Physical Education: **Mohammad ALI-ABADI**
Min. of Agricultural Jihad: **Mohammad Reza ESKANDARI**
Min. of Commerce: **Masud MIR-KAZEMI**
Min. of Communication & Information Technology: **Mohammad SOLEIMANI**
Min. of Cooperatives: **Mohammad ABBASI**
Min. of Defense & Armed Forces Logistics: **Mostafa Mohammad NAJAR, Brig. Gen. (Ret.)**
Min. of Economic Affairs & Finance: **Shams-ed-Din HOSEINI**
Min. of Education: **Mahmud FARSHIDI**
Min. of Energy: **Parviz FATAH**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Manuchehr MOTAKI**
Min. of Health: **Kamran BAQERI-LANKARANI**
Min. of Housing & Development: **Mohammad SAIDI-KIA**
Min. of Industries & Mining: **Ali Akbar MEHRABIAN**
Min. of Intelligence & Security: **Qolam Hosein MOHSENI-EJEI**
Min. of Interior: **Ali KORDAN**
Min. of Islamic Culture & Guidance: **Mohammad Hosein SAFAR-HARANDI**
Min. of Justice: **Qolam Hosein ELHAM**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **Mohammad JAHROMI**
Min. of Petroleum: **Qolam Hosein NOZARI**
Min. of Roads & Transportation: **Hamed BEHBAHANI**
Min. of Science, Research, & Technology: **Mohammad Mehdi ZAHEDI**
Min. of Welfare & Social Security: **Abdol Reza MESRI**
Govt. Spokesman: **Qolam Hosein ELHAM**
Governor, Central Bank of Iran: **Tahmaseb MAZAHERI-Khorasani**
Head of Interest Section in the US: **Mostafa RAHMANI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Mohammad KHAZAI-Torshizi**

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Iran's post-revolution difficulties have included an 8-year war with Iraq, internal political struggles and unrest, and economic disorder. The early days of the regime were characterized by severe human rights violations and political turmoil, including the seizure of the U.S. Embassy compound and its occupants on 4 November 1979, by Iranian student militants. Iranian authorities released the 52 hostages only after 444 days of captivity.

By mid-1982, the clergy had won a succession of post-Revolution power struggles that eliminated first the center of the political spectrum and then the leftists, including the communist Tudeh party and the cult-like Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MEK or MKO). Assassinations, throwing acid in the faces of women who refused to wear the veil, and other acts of violence punctuated this period. There has been some moderation of excesses since the early days of the revolution, and the country experienced a partial "thaw" in terms of political and social freedoms during the tenure of former president Khatami, but serious problems remained. The administration of President Ahmadi-Nejad has witnessed a crackdown on Iranian civil society, continued human rights violations, and worsening constraints on press freedom and civil liberties.

The Islamic Republican Party (IRP) was Iran's sole political party until its dissolution in 1987. Iran now has a variety of groups engaged in political activity; some are oriented along ideological lines or based on an identity group, others are more akin to professional political parties seeking members and recommending candidates for office. Some have been active participants in the Revolution's political life while others reject the state. Conservatives consistently thwarted the efforts of reformists during the Khatami era and have consolidated their control on power since the flawed elections for the seventh Majles in 2004 and president Ahmadi-Nejad's victory in 2005.

The Iranian Government has faced armed opposition from a number of groups, including the MEK (which the U.S. Government added to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations in 1999), the People's Fedayeen, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), and the Baluchi opposition group Jundallah.

ECONOMY

Pre-revolutionary Iran's economic development was rapid. Traditionally an agricultural society, by the 1970s Iran had achieved significant industrialization and economic moderniza-

tion, helped in large part by the growing worldwide demand for oil. However, the pace of growth had slowed dramatically by 1978, just before the Islamic revolution. Since the fall of the shah, economic recovery has proven elusive thanks to a combination of factors, including state interference in the economy and fluctuations in the global energy market. Economic activity was severely disrupted additionally by years of upheaval and uncertainty surrounding the revolution and the introduction of statist economic policies. These conditions were worsened by the war with Iraq and the decline in world oil prices beginning in late 1985. After the war with Iraq ended, the situation began to improve: Iran's GDP grew for two years running, partly from an oil windfall in 1990, and there was a substantial increase in imports. Iran's social policies during the Iran-Iraq war resulted in a baby boom. Nonetheless, Iran continues to suffer from "brain drain" as its educated youth leave the country to pursue better economic opportunities.

A decrease in oil revenues in 1991 and growing external debt dampened optimism for recovery. In March 1989, the government instituted a new 5-year plan for economic development, which loosened state control and allowed Iran to seek greater latitude in accessing foreign capital. Mismanagement and inefficient bureaucracy, as well as political and ideological infighting, hampered the formulation and execution of a consolidated economic policy, and Iran fell short of the plan's goals while economic inequality was aggravated. Former President Khatami followed the market reform plans of his predecessor, President Rafsanjani, and indicated that he would pursue diversification of Iran's oil-reliant economy, although he made little progress toward that goal. High inflation and expansive public transfer programs, as well as powerful economic-political vested interests, created obstacles for rapid reform.

Unemployment, a major problem even before the revolution, has many causes, including population growth and restrictive labor policies. Farmers and peasants enjoyed a psychological boost from the attention given them by the Islamic regime but hardly appear to be better off in economic terms. The government has made progress on rural development, including electrification and road building, but Iran still faces inefficiencies related to agricultural land usage which are politically difficult to reconcile. Agriculture also has suffered from shortages of capital, raw materials, and equipment, problems dating back to the 1980-1988 war with Iraq. (See Foreign Relations below.)

Although Islam guarantees the right to private ownership, banks and some industries–including the petroleum, transportation, utilities, and mining sectors–were nationalized after the revolution under Marxist-influenced economic policies. Starting under President Rafsanjani, Iran has pursued some privatization through its nascent equities markets. However, the industrial sector remains plagued by low labor productivity and shortages of raw materials and spare parts, and is uncompetitive against foreign imports.

Today, Iran's economy is marked by a bloated and inefficient state sector, a reliance on the oil sector (which provides over 85% of government revenues), and statist policies that create major distortions throughout. Most economic activity is controlled by the state. Although the Supreme Leader issued a decree in July 2006 to privatize 80% of the shares of most government-owned companies, private sector activity is typically limited to small-scale workshops, farming, and services. President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad has failed to make any notable progress in fulfilling the goals of the nation's latest five-year plan. A combination of price controls and subsidies (on food and energy in particular) continue to weigh down the economy, and administrative controls, widespread corruption, and other rigidities undermine the potential for private-sector-led growth. As a result of these inefficiencies, significant informal market activity flourishes and shortages are common. High oil prices in recent years have doubled export earnings since 2004 and have enabled Iran to amass nearly $65 billion in foreign exchange reserves. Yet this increased revenue has not eased economic hardships, which include high unemployment (11% according to government estimates) and double-digit inflation, and the economy has only seen moderate growth. Iran has an educated population, and economic inefficiency and insufficient investment (both foreign and domestic) have prompted an increasing number of Iranians to seek employment overseas, resulting in significant "brain drain."

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Khomeini's revolutionary regime initiated sharp changes from the foreign policy pursued by the Shah, particularly in reversing the country's orientation toward the West. In the Middle East, Iran's only significant ally has been Syria, but Iran has made strides in improving relations with its Gulf neighbors, particularly Saudi Arabia.

Iran's foreign relations are based on sometimes competing objectives. Iran's pragmatic foreign policy goals include, not surprisingly, protecting itself from external threats and building trade ties. Iran also exports its fundamentalist revolution to other countries and supports terrorist organizations, and its vehement anti-U.S. and anti-Israel stances are well-known. Senior Iranian officials directed Hezbollah to carry out the bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA, the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) building in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, killing 85 people and wounding scores of others. The Interpol Executive Committee in November 2007 issued Red Notices (international arrest warrants) for six individuals–five former or current Iranian officials and one Lebanese Hezbollah leader–out of the eight indicted by the Government of Argentina in October 2006.

In September 1980, during the U.S. hostage crisis, Iraq invaded Iran to

take control of the waterway between the two countries, the Shatt al-Arab, although the conflict's underlying causes included each nation's overt desire for the overthrow of the other's government. Iran defended itself and demanded the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Iranian territory and the return to the status quo ante for the Shatt al-Arab as established under the 1975 Algiers Agreement signed by Iraq and Iran. Khomeini's government turned down an Iraqi cease-fire proposal in 1982, making a new demand for Saddam Hussein's removal as well. After eight punishing years of war, in July 1988, Iran at last agreed to UN Security Council Resolution 598 and the cease-fire was implemented on August 20, 1988. Neither nation had made any real gains in the war.

Iran's relations with many of its Arab neighbors have been strained by Iranian attempts to spread its Islamic revolution, a strictly ideological goal. In 1981, Iran supported a plot to overthrow the Bahrain Government. In 1983, Iran expressed support for Shi'ites who bombed Western embassies in Kuwait, and in 1987, Iranian pilgrims rioted during the hajj (pilgrimage) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Egypt mistrusts Iran because of support of Egyptian Sunni fundamentalists. Iran backs Hezbollah (in Lebanon), Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, all of which are violently opposed to the Arab-Israeli peace process. In contrast, while relations with west European nations have been uneven, they have been driven primarily by pragmatic goals of trade and security. Iran has largely declined to deliver on key European political concerns such as human rights and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) acquisition efforts, particularly in the nuclear field, where the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been strongly critical of Iran.

An IAEA report in November 2003 provided evidence that Iran, a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), had concealed secret nuclear activities for 18 years. Under international pressure, Iran signed the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement on December 18, 2003, agreeing to suspend all uranium-enrichment and reprocessing activities voluntarily, as well as cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in resolving questions regarding Iran's nuclear program. In June 2004, the IAEA rebuked Iran for failing to fully cooperate with an inquiry into its nuclear activities, and in November 2004, Iran agreed to suspend most of its uranium enrichment under a deal with the EU. That promise did not last, however, and since then concerns over Iran's nuclear activities have increased.

On June 6, 2006, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United States, and United Kingdom offered Iran a substantial package of economic cooperation and assistance. Tehran, however, was first required to come into compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) guidelines on its nuclear program, suspending its uranium enrichment program. On July 31, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1696 on the Iranian nuclear question, requiring Iran to suspend all activities related to enrichment and reprocessing, including research and development, as demanded by the IAEA, or else face possible sanctions. Tehran defied the UN Security Council (UNSC) deadline of August 31, leading to the passage of UNSC Resolution 1737 in December 2006 and, as Iran continued to balk, Resolution 1747 in March 2007.

Both Iran and Russia believe they have important national interests at stake in developments in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus, particularly regarding energy resources from the Caspian Sea. Russian and other sales of military equipment and technology to Iran concern Iran's neighbors and the United States. Washington is also concerned about Russian assistance in building a nuclear facility at Bushehr.

Iran spends about 3.3% of its GDP on its military. Iran's military consists of both a national military held over from the shah's government and the IRGC, each with its own ground, naval and air braches. The Iran-Iraq war took a heavy toll on these military forces. Iran has since worked to modernize its military, including development of ballistic missile programs. Iran also continues to seek nuclear capabilities.

U.S.-IRANIAN RELATIONS

On November 4, 1979, militant Iranian students occupied the American Embassy in Tehran with the support of Ayatollah Khomeini. Fifty-two Americans were held hostage for 444 days. On April 7, 1980, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Iran, and on April 24, 1981, the Swiss Government assumed representation of U.S. interests in Tehran. Iranian interests in the United States are represented by the Government of Pakistan. The Islamic Republic of Iran does not have its own embassy in Washington, though it does have a permanent mission to the United Nations in New York City.

In accordance with the Algiers declaration of January 20, 1981, the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal (located in The Hague, Netherlands) was established for the purpose of handling claims of U.S. nationals against Iran and of Iranian nationals against the United States. U.S. contact with Iran through The Hague covers only legal matters.

The U.S. Government, by Executive Orders issued by the President as well as by Congressional legislation, prohibits most trade with Iran. Some sanctions were imposed on Iran because Tehran is a state sponsor of terrorism, others because of the nuclear proliferation issues, and still more for human rights violations, including infringement of religious freedom. The commercial relations that do exist between the two countries consist mainly of Iranian purchases of food and medical products and U.S. imports of carpets and food. Some sanctions were temporarily

waived in the wake of the devastating Bam earthquake of December 2003. U.S. officials and relief workers actively assisted in relief and reconstruction efforts.

There are serious obstacles to improved relations between the two countries. As a state sponsor of terrorism, Iran remains an impediment to international efforts to locate and prosecute terrorists. Recent attempts by Iran to form loose alliances with anti-U.S. governments in the Western Hemisphere, such as the Venezuelan Government, has further heightened concern about Iran's support for terrorism and nuclear ambitions. Operation Iraqi Freedom removed the Iranian Government's greatest security threat, but officially Iran remained neutral about U.S. policy, sometimes strongly condemning American policies and actions in Iraq. Iran has cultural ties to elements of the populations of both Iraq and Afghanistan. It has made some positive contributions to stability in both countries, but other actions have had the opposite effect. It remains to be seen whether Tehran will ultimately be a constructive force in the reconstruction of its two neighbors or not.

The U.S. Government defines its areas of objectionable Iranian behavior as the following:

- Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;
- Its support for and involvement in international terrorism;
- Its support for violent opposition to the Middle East peace process, as well as its harmful activities particularly in Lebanon, as well as in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the region; and
- Its dismal human rights record and lack of respect for its own people.

The United States has held discussions with Iranian representatives on particular issues of concern over the years. U.S. and Iranian envoys cooperated during operations to overthrow the Taliban in 2001 and during the Bonn Conference in 2002 that established a broad-based government for the Afghan people under President Karzai. The Secretary of State, her Iranian counterpart, and others met at talks on Iraq in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on May 3, 2007. The American and Iranian ambassadors to Iraq took part in face-to-face discussions in Baghdad, with Iraqi officials in attendance, on May 28, 2007. The United States believes, however, that normal relations are impossible until Iran's policies change.

The Secretary of State has stated that Iranian agreement to abide by UNSC Resolutions 1696 and 1747, calling for Tehran to suspend uranium enrichment and comply with its international nuclear obligations, could lead to the direct negotiations between American and Iranian government officials, not only on Iran's nuclear case but on a wide range of issues. Nevertheless, the U.S. State Department is supporting efforts to further the cause of democracy in Iran. In fiscal year (FY) 2006, the U.S. Congress allocated approximately $66 million to promote free media, personal freedom, and a better understanding of western values and culture. As part of these efforts, the Department supports efforts to develop civil society in Iran and exchange programs that bring Iranian students, athletes, professionals and others to the United States.

In 2007, the Iranian Government charged and in some cases imprisoned four innocent Iranian-American scholars, civil society actors, and journalists, accused by the regime of jeopardizing the security of the state. The international community, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private citizens joined the U.S. Government in calling for the release of the detained dual nationals. They were later freed. We continue to press Iran to cooperate more fully in the investigation into the case of private investigator and retired FBI agent Robert Levinson, missing since visiting Kish Island, Iran, March 8-9, 2007.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 1, 2008

Country Description: Iran is a constitutional Islamic republic with a theocratic system of government where ultimate political authority is vested in a learned religious scholar, the Supreme Leader. Shia Islam is the official religion of Iran, and Islamic law is the basis of the authority of the state. The Iranian Constitution guarantees freedom of worship to Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians, though they are sometimes the subject of discrimination and repression. The workweek in Iran is Saturday through Thursday; however, many government offices and private companies are closed on Thursdays. Friday is the day of rest when all establishments are closed. Offices in Iran are generally open to the public during the morning hours only.

Entry Requirements: Should you decide to travel to Iran despite the current Travel Warning, a passport and visa are required, except for travel to Kish Island. To obtain a visa, contact the Iranian Interests Section of the Embassy of Pakistan located at 2209 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007; tel. 202-965-4990, 91, 92, 93, 94, 99, fax 202-965-1073, 202-965-4990 (Automated Fax-On-Demand after office hours).

U.S. citizens traveling to Iran are being fingerprinted upon entry. The Iranian press has reported that foreign tourists may obtain seven-day tourist visas at the airport in Tehran. However, U.S. citizens are not eligible to receive these visas and have to obtain valid visas from the Iranian Interests Section in Washington. Note: possession of a valid Iranian visa will not guarantee entry into the country. Some American travelers with valid visas have been refused entry at the border without explanation. U.S. citizens do not have to obtain a visa for travel from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to Kish

Island. U.S. passports are valid for travel to Iran. However, the Iranian government does not recognize dual nationality and will treat U.S.-Iranian dual nationals solely as Iranian citizens. Thus, U.S. citizens who were born in Iran, who became naturalized citizens of Iran (e.g. through marriage to an Iranian citizen), and children of such persons—even those without Iranian passports who do not consider themselves Iranian—are considered Iranian nationals by Iranian authorities.

Therefore, despite the fact that these individuals hold U.S. citizenship, under Iranian law, they must enter and exit Iran on an Iranian passport, unless the Iranian government has recognized a formal renunciation or loss of Iranian citizenship. Dual nationals may be subject to harsher legal treatment than a visitor with only American citizenship. (See section on Special Circumstances below.)

In the past, U.S.-Iranian dual nationals have been denied permission to enter/depart Iran using their U.S. passport; they have also had their U.S. passports confiscated upon arrival or departure. (Depending on the circumstances, the individuals were sometimes able to retrieve their U.S. passports after renouncing their Iranian citizenship.)

Recently, Iranian authorities have prevented a number of Iranian-American citizen academics, journalists, and others who traveled to Iran for personal reasons from leaving, and in some cases have detained and imprisoned them on various charges, including espionage and being a threat to the regime. Americans of Iranian origin should consider the risk of being targeted by authorities before planning travel to Iran. Iranian authorities may deny dual nationals' access to the United States Interests Section in Tehran, because they are considered to be solely Iranian citizens.

As a precaution, however, it is advisable for U.S.-Iranian dual nationals to obtain in their Iranian passports the necessary visas for the country which they will transit upon their return to the U.S. so that, if their U.S. passports are confiscated in Iran, they may depart Iran with their Iranian passport. These individuals can then apply for a new U.S. passport in that third country.

Dual nationals whose U.S. passports are confiscated may also obtain a "Confirmation of Nationality" from the U.S. Interests Section of the Embassy of Switzerland, which is the U.S. protecting power. This statement, addressed to the relevant foreign embassies in Tehran, enables the travelers to apply for third-country visas in Tehran. Dual nationals finding themselves in this situation should note in advance that the Swiss Embassy would issue this statement only after the traveler's U.S. nationality is confirmed and after some processing delay. Dual nationals must enter and depart the United States on U.S. passports.

Visa extensions are time-consuming and must be filed at least one week in advance of the expiration date. As of March 21, 2006, a foreign national and anyone accompanying him/her will pay a fine of 300,000 rials or 30,000 ottomans per day for each day of unauthorized stay in Iran.

All Iranian nationals, including U.S.-Iranian dual nationals, must have an exit permit stamped in their Iranian passports in order to depart Iran. The stamp is affixed to the Iranian passport when it is issued and remains valid until the expiration date of the passport. All Iranian nationals residing abroad and in Iran, including U.S.-Iranian dual nationals, are now required to pay an exit tax regardless of the duration of their stay in Iran. More specific information on Iranian passport and exit visa requirements may be obtained from the Iranian Interests Section of the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, D.C.

Non-Iranian-national women who marry Iranian citizens gain Iranian nationality upon marriage. If the marriage takes place in Iran, the woman's American passport will be confiscated by Iranian authorities. They must have the consent of their husbands to leave Iran or, in his absence, must gain the permission of the local prosecutor. Iranian law combined with the lack of diplomatic relations between the United States and Iran means that the U.S. Interests Section in Tehran can provide only very limited assistance if an American woman married to an Iranian man has marital difficulties and/or encounters difficulty in leaving Iran.

After divorce or death of the husband, a foreign-born woman has the choice to renounce her Iranian citizenship but any of the couple's children will automatically be Iranian citizens and their citizenship is irrevocable. They will be required to enter and depart Iran on Iranian passports. For a divorce to be recognized it should be carried out in Iran or, if outside Iran, in accordance with Sharia law. Upon divorce, custody of the children normally goes to the mother until the child reaches age 7, at which point custody is automatically transferred to the father. However, if the courts determine that the father is unsuitable to raise the children, they may grant custody to the paternal grandfather or to the mother, if the mother has not renounced her Iranian citizenship and is normally resident in Iran. If the courts grant custody to the mother, she will need permission from the paternal grandfather or the courts to obtain exit visas for the minor children (under age 18) to leave the country. Iran is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Please see the Department of State's International Parental Child Abduction flyer on Iran for further information.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens who travel to Iran despite the Travel Warning should exercise caution throughout the country, but especially in the southeastern region where westerners have been victims of criminal gangs often involved in the smuggling of drugs and other contraband. American citizens should avoid travel to areas within 100 kilometers of the border with Afghanistan, within 10 kilometers of the border with Iraq, and generally anywhere east of the line from Bam and Bandar Abbas toward the Pakistan border.

Terrorist explosions have killed a number of people since 2005. Be aware that the Iranian government has blamed the U.S. and/or UK governments for involvement in the February 2007 bombing that killed Iranian military forces in Zahedan in the southeast and the 2005/2006 bombings in Ahvaz/Khuzestan in the southwest. A number of British firms were damaged in attacks in August and November 2005.

U.S. citizens are advised to avoid demonstrations and large public gatherings. Increased tension between Iran and the West over the past several years is a cause of concern for American travelers.

Iranian security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephones and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched. Photography near military and other government installations is strictly prohibited and could result in serious criminal charges, including espionage, which carries the death penalty.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Travel Warning for Uzbekistan and the Worldwide Caution can be found.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Travel Warning for Iran, the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert and the Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security, including safety and security in Iran, can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Major crime is generally not a problem for travelers in Iran, although foreigners occasionally have been victims of petty street crime. Young men in unmarked cars have robbed foreigners and young men on motor bikes have snatched bags.

There have been reports of robberies by police impersonators, usually in civilian clothing. Insist on seeing the officer's identity card and request the presence of a uniformed officer/marked patrol car. Travelers should not surrender any documents or cash.

Travelers should not carry large amounts of hard currency. In view of the possibility of theft, passports, disembarkation cards, other important documents and valuables should be kept in hotel safes or other secure locations. Pre-booked taxis are safer than those hailed from the street. Americans should check with their hotel or tour guide for information on local scams.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy in Tehran or the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Because of the lack of a U.S. Embassy in Iran, the processing time for a replacement passport takes longer at the U.S. Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy than elsewhere.

If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Interests Section for assistance. The staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, Swiss Embassy officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent of the "911" emergency line in Iran is as follows: 115 for ambulance service, 125 for fire and 110 for police. English speakers, however, are generally unavailable.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Basic medical care and medicines are available in the principal cities, but may not be available in rural areas. Medical facilities do not meet U.S. standards and sometimes lack medicines and supplies.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

In 2006, there were reports of Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever, mostly in the southeastern Sistan va Baluchistan province. See www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs208/en for more information. Iranian authorities have confirmed outbreaks of avian influenza (bird flu) in January 2008 in northern Iran, as well as earlier reports among wild swans in the Anzali Wetlands and in domestic poultry in the northern provinces of Azerbaijan and Gilan. There have been a number of fatalities from avian flu reported in eastern Turkey, 45 kilometers from the Iranian border. For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their pol-

icy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Iran is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travelers in possession of International Driver's Permits may drive in Iran, though the U.S. Interests Section in Iran does not recommend that tourists drive in Iran. Iran has a very high rate of traffic accidents, the second highest cause of mortality in the country. Drivers throughout Iran tend to ignore traffic lights, traffic signs and lane markers. Urban streets are not well lit. It is therefore particularly dangerous to drive at night. Sidewalks in urban areas only exist on main roads and are usually obstructed by parked cars. In the residential areas, few sidewalks exist. Drivers almost never yield to pedestrians at crosswalks. If you are involved in an accident, no matter how minor, do not leave the scene. Wait until the police arrive to file a report.

Iranian authorities sometimes set up informal roadblocks, both in cities and on highways, often manned by young, inexperienced officers. They are often suspicious of foreigners. Ensure you carry a form of identification with you and avoid getting into disputes.

Pollution levels from cars are very high, particularly in Tehran, which can trigger respiratory problems.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the U.S. and Iran by local carriers, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Government of Iran's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov. Civil aviation in Iran continues to experience air incidents and accidents, including five crashes with fatalities between April 20, 2005, and November 27, 2006. Incidents included engine failure and planes veering off the runway.

Special Circumstances: The Iranian Government has seized the passports and blocked the departure of foreigners who work in Iran on tax/commercial disputes.

In addition to being subject to all Iranian laws, U.S. citizens who also possess Iranian citizenship may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on citizens of Iran, such as military service or taxes. Iranian-citizen males aged 18-34 are required to perform military service, unless exempt. Iranian-Americans, even those born in the U.S., are included.

Dual nationals sometimes have their U.S. passports confiscated and may be denied permission to leave Iran, or encounter other problems with Iranian authorities. Likewise, Iranian authorities may deny dual nationals' access to the U.S. Interests Section in Tehran, because they are considered to be solely Iranian citizens. Refer to the above section entitled "Entry/Exit Requirements" for additional information concerning dual nationality.

U.S. citizens who are not dual U.S.-Iran nationals are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passport (biodata page and page with Iranian visa) with them at all times, so that if questioned by local officials, proof of U.S. citizenship is readily available. Carry some other form of identification with you, such as a drivers license or other photo identification at all times as well.

Credit cards and bank cards are not widely accepted in Iran. It is difficult to change dollars to rials in Iranian banks and you may not be able to access your U.S. bank accounts via the Internet from Iran. You will not be able to access your U.S. bank accounts using ATMs in Iran. Travelers checks can be difficult to exchange. Bring enough hard currency to cover your stay, but make sure you declare this currency upon entry. There is no Western Union or similar institution and bank transfers may not be possible. Exchange money only at banks or an authorized currency exchange facility, not on the street, and keep your exchange receipts.

Pre-paid overseas calling cards are available at most newsagents. The Internet is widely used in Iran. There are Internet cafes in most hotels. Usage may be monitored.

Do not work illegally. You will be deported, fined and/or imprisoned. You may also be prevented from entering the country again.

Islamic law is strictly enforced in Iran. Alcohol is forbidden. Importation of pork products is banned. Consult a guide book on Iran to determine how to dress and behave properly and respectfully. Women should expect to wear a headscarf and jacket that covers the arms and upper body while in public. There may be additional dress requirements at certain religious sites, e.g., women might need to put on a chador (which covers the whole body except the face) at some shrines. During the holy month of Ramadan, you should in general observe the Muslim tradition of not eating, drinking or smoking in public from sunrise to sunset each day, though there are exemptions for foreign travelers who eat in hotel restaurants. (See the Criminal Penalties section below for more information.)

In general, it is best to ask before taking photographs of people. Hobbies like photography and those involving the use of binoculars (e.g., bird-watching) can be misunderstood and get you in trouble with security officials. (See the Safety and Security section above for warnings on photography.)

For specific information regarding Iranian customs regulations, contact the Iranian Interests Section of the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC.

Most laptops are controlled items. It is unlawful to bring controlled items into Iran, even on a temporary basis, unless specifically authorized by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) in a manner consistent with the Iran-Iraq Arms Nonproliferation Act of 1992 and other relevant law.

U.S. Government economic sanctions still govern imports of Iranian-origin goods and services and exports to Iran. Except for carpets and foodstuffs, and information or informational materials and gifts valued at $100 or less, the importation of Iranian-origin goods or services into the United States is prohibited. The exportation or re-exportation of goods, technology or services directly or indirectly from the United States or by a U.S. person to Iran also is prohibited, except in the following cases: articles donated to relieve human suffering (such as food, clothing and medicine), gifts valued at $100 or less, licensed exports of agricultural commodities, medicine and medical devices, and trade in informational materials.

The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), Department of Treasury, provides guidance to the public on the interpretation of the current economic sanctions. For further information, consult OFAC's Compliance Programs Division, at 202-622-2490, visit the OFAC web site at http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/, or obtain information via fax at 202-622-0077. For information concerning licensing of exports, contact OFAC's Licensing Division at:

Licensing Division
Office of Foreign Assets Control
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Treasury Annex
Washington, DC 20220
Telephone (202) 622-2480
Fax (202) 622-1657

Iran is prone to earthquakes. Many people have died in recent years, most notably in the city of Bam in 2003, killing 30,000. In February 2005, an earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale struck Zarand in southeast Iran. In March 2006, several earthquakes occurred in Restan province, western Iran, killing around 100 and injuring 1200.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Iranian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Fines, public floggings, and long prison terms are common. Former Muslims who have converted to other religions, as well as persons who encourage Muslims to convert, are subject to arrest and possible execution. Drinking, possession of alcoholic beverages and drugs, un-Islamic dress, as well as public displays of affection with a member of the opposite sex are considered to be crimes. Relations between non-Muslim men and Muslim women are illegal. Adultery, sex outside of marriage and gay sex are all illegal under Iranian law and carry the death penalty. DVDs depicting sexual relations and magazines showing unveiled women are forbidden.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Iran are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Iran executes many people each year on drug-related charges. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Please see our information on Criminal Penalties.

U.S. citizens in Iran who violate Iranian laws, including laws that are unfamiliar to Westerners (such as those regarding the proper wearing of apparel,) may face severe penalties.

The Iranian Government reportedly has the names of all individuals who filed claims against Iran at the Iran-U.S. Claims Tribunal at The Hague pursuant to the 1981 Algerian Accords. In addition, the Iranian Government reportedly has compiled a list of the claimants who were awarded compensation in the Iran Claims Program administered by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. The Iranian government is allegedly targeting award-holders who travel to Iran. It is reported that upon some claimants' entry into Iran, Iranian authorities question them as to the status of payment of their respective awards with a view to recouping the award money. It is also reported that the Iranian Government has threatened to prevent U.S. claimants who visit Iran from departing the country until they make arrangements to repay part or all of their award.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and U.S. Interests Section Location: There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Iran. The Embassy of Switzerland serves as the protecting power for U.S. interests in Iran. The U.S. Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy is currently located at Afrika Avenue, West Farzan Street, no. 32, Tehran, 19588-45111, Iran, P.O. Box 19395-4683. The telephone numbers for the U.S. Interests Section are (98) 21-8878-2964 and 98-21-8879-2364, fax 98-21-8877-3265, email: tie.vertretung@eda.admin.ch. The workweek is Sunday through Thursday. Public service hours are 8:00 a.m.—12:00 noon. The Interests Section does not issue U.S. visas or accept visa applications. The limited consular services provided to U.S. citizens in Tehran include:

- registering U.S. citizens;
- answering inquiries concerning the welfare and whereabouts of U.S. citizens in Iran;
- rendering assistance in times of distress or physical danger;|
- providing U.S. citizens with pass-

port and Social Security card applications and other citizenship forms for approval at the U.S. Embassy in Bern, Switzerland;

- performing notarial services on the basis of accommodation; and,

- taking provisional custody of the personal effects of deceased U.S. citizens.

Americans living or traveling in Iran are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Iran. They may also register on the web site of the U.S. Interests Section at www.eda.admin.ch/tehran. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate before flying to Iran. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the U.S. Interests Section to contact them in case of emergency.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The Department of State has received inquiries from American citizens concerned about the plight of the children affected by the earthquake in Bam, Iran and wondering about the possibility of adoption. The Department of State shares this humanitarian concern for the children of Bam, Iran and applauds American citizens' desire to assist them in their time of need. However, at this time, it is not possible for U.S. citizens to adopt Iranian children, for several reasons. The international standard in a crisis is to keep children as close to their family members as possible. It can be extremely difficult to determine whether children whose parents are missing are truly orphans. It is not uncommon in a catastrophic situation for parents to send their children out of the affected area, or to become separated during an evacuation. Even when children are indeed orphaned or abandoned by their parents, they are often taken in by other relatives. Staying with relatives in extended family units is generally a better solution than uprooting the child completely.

The United States Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy at Tehran has provided the following information regarding adoptions in Iran. The information is based on informal discussions with an adviser at the Nationality and Refugees Department of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In accordance with current Iranian practice, adoptions by parents residing outside of Iran are possible provided the adoptive parents are Iranian citizens and fulfill all the other required conditions for adoption. Applications from close family members have the greatest chance of being approved. Before an adoption can take place, strict rules are applied in order to protect the children and to establish the suitability of prospective adoptive parents. The process is complicated and time-consuming. Moreover, only the Iranian Welfare Organization and the appropriate court can decide each case on its own merits in the best interest of the child. Muslim children will be given exclusively to Muslim parents. Christian parents may adopt children of Christian denominations.

Iranians living abroad can file adoption applications through relatives living in Iran. Applications must be submitted to the Iranian Welfare Organization. After a child has been placed with a family, surveillance by Iranian authorities continues and periodic checks are made to ensure the child's physical and mental well-being.

There are still ways in which U.S. citizens can help the children of Bam. Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) say that what is needed most at this time are financial contributions. Individuals who wish to assist can do the most good by making a financial contribution to an established NGO that will be well placed to respond to Iran's most urgent needs.

The Red Cross is working through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide humanitarian assistance in Iran. The Red Cross and ICRC do assessments to determine needs and use monetary donations where the need is the greatest. To contact them, call 1-800-HELP-NOW. There is no mechanism to direct money to a specific child or person. The website http://www.redcross.org has more information on directed contributions. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Web site, http://www.usaid.gov/iran, provides information on how individuals can assist.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

Since the mid-1970's, when we first began compiling statistics on this

subject, the Department of State has taken action in more than 4,200 cases where children have either been abducted from the United States or wrongfully detained in a foreign country. We have provided information in response to thousands of additional inquiries regarding child custody, visitation rights and effective abduction prevention techniques such as supervised visitation.

The Office of Overseas Citizens Services has taken an active role in almost 80 cases of children taken to or wrongfully retained in Iran. To our knowledge, the majority of these cases have not been resolved. However, in a number of cases, the left-behind parent has kept open the lines of communication, negotiated with the abducting parent, and eventually persuaded the other parent to travel out of Iran with the children.

The United States severed diplomatic and consular relations with the Government of Iran on April 7, 1980 as a result of the events surrounding the seizure of our Embassy in Tehran, Iran on November 4, 1979. In April of 1980, the United States Government formally asked the Swiss Government if it would assume diplomatic and consular representation of the United States in Iran. The Swiss agreed to perform specific consular and administrative functions on behalf of the U.S. Government.

One of their responsibilities is to provide consular services to children who have been taken by one parent to Iran without the other parent's knowledge or consent. In this regard, Swiss officials are permitted to ascertain the child's welfare, process applications for U.S. passports and to inform appropriate officials if there are allegations of child abuse. However, the Iranian government has placed strict limits on the ability of Swiss diplomats to intervene in such cases because they do not recognize the concept of dual nationality and therefore, when one parent is an Iranian citizen, consider the children involved to be Iranian citizens only.

Swiss diplomats in Iran do not have the authority to take custody of and return a child to the United States, just as foreign diplomats in the U.S. cannot remove children from this country. Such an action would be considered kidnapping under local law.

If you are concerned about a potential abduction, one of the first steps you should take is to notify the Department's Office of Legal Assistance and Citizenship Appeals. That office, which can be reached on (202) 326-6178, can block the issuance of a U.S. passport in your child's name upon submission of a court order giving you sole custody or prohibiting the child's departure from the U.S. without permission of the court. That office can also tell you whether your spouse has already applied for and obtained a passport for your child. However, if a passport has already been issued for the child, that office cannot revoke the passport or prevent its use.

If the child's father is an Iranian citizen, the child is considered an Iranian citizen under Iranian law and could travel abroad on an Iranian passport. There is nothing the Department of State can do to prevent the issuance of an Iranian passport by the Iranian Interests Section of the Embassy of Algeria.

You may wish to notify the Iranian Interests Section that you would object to your child receiving a passport without your consent. At that time, you could ask whether they have already issued a passport for the child. The address and the telephone number of the Iranian Interests Section of the Embassy of Algeria are: 2209 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington D.C. 20007; (202) 965-4999.

Unfortunately, it has been our experience that a parent encounters little or no difficulty obtaining travel documentation from the Interests Section for a dual U.S.-Iranian citizen child, despite the existence of a U.S. court order barring departure without the court's consent.

As you may already know, a custody decree issued by a court in the United States has no force or effect in a foreign country. When a child is abducted by a parent, the deprived parent must usually initiate legal proceedings in the foreign country to regain custody of the child or to enforce visitation rights. However, the difficulties in recovering a child from an Islamic country without the full support and consent of the father can be insurmountable.

It is the Department's understanding that in Iran, all matters concerning family law are governed by the religious courts. While you would be free to seek legal custody through the Iranian religious courts, you should be aware that Islamic courts rarely, if ever, grant custody of children to a parent who will not raise them as Muslims, does not plan to remain in Iran or has remarried. Islamic courts attach great importance to having children reside near their father so that he can visit frequently and oversee their upbringing. Even if the mother is granted custody, (The children would still need his permission to leave the country).

Currently, the only treaties which have any application to abductions of children from the United States are the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the extradition treaties which the United States has with individual countries. Iran is not a party to the Hague Convention, and since the U.S. and Iran do not maintain diplomatic relations, there is no bilateral treaty in effect which would cover parental child abduction.

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Travel Warning

September 15, 2008

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens to carefully consider the risks of travel to Iran. Dual

national Iranian-American citizens may encounter difficulty in departing Iran. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for Iran issued January 3, 2008.

Some elements of the Iranian regime and the population remain hostile to the United States. As a result, American citizens may be subject to harassment or arrest while traveling or residing in Iran. In 2007, Iranian authorities prevented a number of Iranian-American citizen academics, journalists, and others who traveled to Iran for personal reasons from leaving for several months, and in some cases detained and imprisoned them on various charges, including espionage and posing a threat to national security. Americans of Iranian origin should consider the risk of being targeted by authorities before planning travel to Iran. Iranian authorities may deny dual nationals access to the United States Interests Section in Tehran, because they are considered to be solely Iranian citizens.

The Iranian regime continues to repress its minority religious and ethnic groups, including Bahai, Arabs, Kurds, Azeris, and others. Consequently, some areas within the country where these minorities reside, including the Baluchistan border area near Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Kurdish northwest of the country, and areas near the Iraqi border, remain unsafe. Armed attacks on the road between Bam and Kerman in May 2007 also render this area unsafe.

Large-scale demonstrations have taken place in various regions throughout Iran over the past several years as a result of a sometimes volatile political climate. U.S. citizens who travel to Iran despite this Travel Warning should exercise caution.

The U.S. government does not have diplomatic or consular relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and therefore cannot provide protection or routine consular services to American citizens in Iran. The Swiss government, acting through its Embassy in Tehran, serves as protecting power for U.S. interests in Iran. Neither U.S. passports nor visas to the United States are issued in Tehran. The Iranian Government does not recognize dual citizenship and generally does not permit the Swiss to provide protective services for U.S. citizens who are also Iranian nationals. U.S. citizens of Iranian origin who are considered by Iran to be Iranian citizens have been detained and harassed by Iranian authorities. Former Muslims who have converted to other religions, as well as persons who encourage Muslims to convert, are subject to arrest and prosecution.

Americans who travel or reside in Iran despite this Travel Warning are strongly encouraged to register through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov. If they are in Tehran, American citizens may also register in person at the U.S. Interests Section of the Swiss Embassy at Africa Avenue, West Farzan Street, no. 59, Tehran. The local telephone numbers are 021-8878-2964 and 021-8879-2364, fax 021-8877-3265, e-mail: tie.vertretung@eda.admin.ch.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Iran, and the current Worldwide Caution, which are located on the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov. American citizens may also obtain updated information on travel and security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, from outside the United States and Canada, 1-202-501-4444.



IRAQ

Compiled from the February 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Iraq

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 437,072 sq. km.; about the size of California.

Cities: Capital—Baghdad (5.7 million, 2004 estimate). Other cities—Basrah, Mosul, Kirkuk, Sulaymaniyah, Irbil.

Terrain: Alluvial plains, mountains, and desert.

Climate: Mostly hot and dry.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Iraqi(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 27,499,638.

Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.618%.

Ethnic groups: Arab 75%-80%, Kurd 15%-20%, Turcoman, Chaldean, Assyrian, or others less than 5%.

Religions: Muslim 97%, Christian 3%, others less than 1%.

Languages: Arabic (official), Kurdish (official), Assyrian, Armenian.

Education: Years compulsory—primary school (age 6 through grade 6). Literacy (2006 UNESCO est.)—74.1%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—47.04 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—69.3 yrs. (2007 est.)

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: October 15, 2005.

Independence: On October 3, 1932, Iraq gained independence from the League of Nations Mandate under British Administration. On June 28, 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) transferred sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government. A new four-year, constitutionally based government took office in March 2006, and a new cabinet was installed in May 2006.

Government branches: Executive—Presidency Council (one president and two vice presidents); Council of Ministers (one prime minister, two deputy prime ministers, and 34 cabinet ministers). Judicial—Supreme Court appointed by the Prime Minister and confirmed by the Council of Representatives. Legislative—Council of Representatives (CoR) consisting of 275 members.

Political subdivisions: 18 governorates (muhafazat, singular—muhafazah)—Al Anbar, Al Basrah, Al Muthanna, Al Qadisiyah, An Najaf, Arbil, As Sulaymaniyah, At Ta'mim, Babil, Baghdad, Dahuk, Dhi Qar, Diyala, Karbala', Maysan, Ninawa, Salah ad Din, Wasit. One region—the Kurdistan Regional Government.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $55.44 billion (official exchange rate).

GDP per capita: (2007 est.) $3,600.

GDP real growth rate: (2007 proj.) 5.0%.

Inflation: (2007) 4.7%

Unemployment rate: (2006 estimate) 18% to 30%.

Budget: (FY 2008) Revenues—$42.3 billion (est.); expenditures—$48.4 billion (est.)

Public debt: (December 2007 est.) $56.3 billion.

Natural resources: Oil, natural gas, phosphates, sulfur.

Agriculture: Products—wheat, barley, rice, vegetables, cotton, dates, cattle, sheep.

Industry: Types—petroleum, chemicals, textiles, construction materials, food processing.

Trade: Exports (2007 est.)—$34.04 billion f.o.b. Export commodities (2007 est.)—crude oil (84%), crude materials excluding fuels (8%), food and live animals (5%). Export partners (2006)—U.S. 46.8%, Italy 10.7%, Canada 6.2%, Spain 6.1%. Imports (2007 est.)—$23.09 billion f.o.b. Import commodities—food, medicine, manufactured goods, refined petroleum products. Import partners (2006)—Syria 26.5%, Turkey 20.5%, U.S. 11.8%, Jordan 7.2%.

GEOGRAPHY

Iraq is bordered by Kuwait, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. The country slopes from mountains over 3,000 meters (10,000 ft.) above sea level along the border with Iran and Turkey to the remnants of sea-level marshes in the southeast. Much of the land is desert or wasteland. The mountains in the northeast are an extension of the alpine system that runs eastward from the Balkans into southern Turkey, northern Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan, terminating in the Himalayas.

Average temperatures range from higher than 48°C (120°F) in July and August to below freezing in January. Most of the rainfall occurs from December through April and averages between 10 and 18 centimeters (4-7 in.) annually. The mountainous region of northern Iraq receives appreciably more precipitation than the central or southern desert region.

PEOPLE

Almost 75% of Iraq's population live in the flat, alluvial plain stretching southeast from Baghdad and Basrah to the Persian Gulf. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers carry about 70 million cubic meters of silt annually to the delta. Known in ancient times as Mesopotamia, the region is the legendary locale of the Garden of Eden. The ruins of Ur, Babylon, and other ancient cities are in Iraq. Iraq's two largest ethnic groups are Arabs and Kurds. Other distinct groups are Turcoman, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Persians, and Armenians. Arabic is the most commonly spoken language. Kurdish is spoken in the north, and English is the most commonly spoken Western language. The majority (60-65%) of Iraqi Muslims are members of the Shi'a sect, but there is a large (32-37%) Sunni population as well, made up of both Arabs and Kurds. Small communities of Christians, Jews, Bahais, Mandaeans, and Yezidis also exist. Most Kurds are Sunni Muslim but differ from their Arab neighbors in language, dress, and customs.

HISTORY

Once known as Mesopotamia, Iraq was the site of flourishing ancient civilizations, including the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Parthian cultures. Muslims conquered Iraq in the seventh century A.D. In the eighth century, the Abassid caliphate established its capital at Baghdad.

At the end of World War I, Iraq became a British-mandated territory. When it was declared independent in 1932, the Hashemite family, which also ruled Jordan, ruled as a constitutional monarchy. In 1945, Iraq joined the United Nations and became a founding member of the Arab League. In 1956, the Baghdad Pact allied Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom, and established its headquarters in Baghdad.

Gen. Abdul Karim Qasim took power in July 1958 coup, during which King Faysal II and Prime Minister Nuri as-Said were killed. Qasim ended Iraq's membership in the Baghdad Pact in 1959. Qasim was assassinated in February 1963, when the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party (Ba'ath Party) took power under the leadership of Gen. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as prime minister and Col. Abdul Salam Arif as president.

Nine months later, Arif led a coup ousting the Ba'ath government. In April 1966, Arif was killed in a plane crash and was succeeded by his brother, Gen. Abdul Rahman Mohammad Arif. On July 17, 1968, a group of Ba'athists and military elements overthrew the Arif regime. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr reemerged as the President of Iraq and Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC).

In July 1979, Bakr resigned, and Saddam Hussein assumed both offices. The Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) devastated the economy of Iraq. Iraq declared victory in 1988 but actually achieved a weary return to the status quo antebellum. The war left Iraq with the largest military establishment in the Gulf region but with huge debts and an ongoing rebellion by Kurdish elements in the northern mountains. The government suppressed the rebellion by using weapons of mass destruction on civilian targets, including a mass chemical weapons attack on the city of Halabja that killed several thousand civilians.

Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, but a U.S.-led coalition acting under United Nations (UN) resolutions expelled Iraq from Kuwait in February 1991. After the war, Kurds in the north and Shi'a Muslims in the south rebelled against the government of Saddam Hussein. The government responded quickly and with crushing force, killing thousands. It also pursued damaging environmental and agricultural policy meant to drain the marshes of the south. As a result, the United States, United Kingdom, and France established protective no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq. In addition, the UN Security Council required the regime to surrender its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and submit to UN inspections. When the Ba'ath regime refused to fully cooperate with the UN inspections, the Security Council employed sanctions to prevent further WMD development and compel Iraqi adherence to international obligations. Coalition forces enforced no-fly zones in southern and northern Iraq to protect Iraqi citizens from attack by the regime and a no-drive zone in southern Iraq to prevent the regime from massing forces to threaten or again invade Kuwait.

A U.S.-led coalition removed the Ba'th regime in March-April 2003, bringing an end to more than 12 years of Iraqi defiance of UN Security Council resolutions. The coalition formed the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to provide for the administration of Iraq during the period of transitional administration, to restore conditions of security and stability, and to create conditions in which the Iraqi people could freely determine their own political future. The UN Security Council acknowledged the authorities of the coalition and provided for a role for the UN and other parties to assist in fulfilling these objectives.



The CPA disbanded on June 28, 2004, transferring sovereign authority for governing Iraq to the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG). Based on the timetable laid out in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), the IIG governed Iraq until elections were held on January 30, 2005; thereafter the Iraqi Transitional Government assumed authority.

In May 2005, the Iraqi Transitional Government appointed a multi-ethnic committee to draft a new Iraqi Constitution. The new constitution was finalized in September 2005, and was ratified in a nationwide referendum on October 15, 2005. On December 15, 2005, Iraqis again went to the polls to participate in the first legislative elections as laid out by the new constitution. The new four-year, constitutionally based government took office in March 2006, and the new cabinet was approved and installed in May 2006.

GOVERNMENT

Iraq is a constitutional democracy with a federal system of government.

The 2005 Iraqi Constitution guarantees all Iraqis basic rights in many areas. The executive branch is made up of the Presidency Council (one president, two deputy presidents) and a Council of Ministers (one prime minister, two deputy prime ministers, and 34 cabinet ministers). The President is the Head of State, protecting the Constitution and representing the sovereignty and unity of the state, while the Prime Minister is the direct executive authority and commander in chief. Beginning in 2006, the military and police began transitioning from being under the operational control of the Multi-National Forces-Iraq command to Iraqi command and control. The President and Vice Presidents are elected by the Council of Representatives (CoR). The Prime Minister is nominated by the largest bloc in the Council of Representatives. Upon designation, the Prime Minister names the members of his cabinet, the Council of Ministers, which is then approved by the Council of Representatives. The Council of Representatives may withdraw confidence from the Prime Minister, in which case the Prime Minister and Cabinet are considered resigned. Under normal circumstances, the executive branch serves a four-year term concurrent with that of the Council of Representatives.

Iraq's legislative branch consists of an elected Council of Representatives and an as-yet unformed Federation Council. The Council of Representatives consists of 275 members, each of whom is elected to four-year terms of service. At least one-quarter of the members of the Council of Representatives must be female. The responsibilities of the Council of Representatives include enacting federal laws, monitoring the executive branch, and electing the President of the Republic. The Federal Council will be established, by law, as a representative for governorates and territories that are not organized in a region.

Iraq's judicial branch is independent, and is under no authority but that of the law. The federal judicial authority is comprised of the Higher Judicial Council, Federal Supreme Court, Court of Cassation, Public Prosecution Department, Judiciary Oversight Commission, and other federal courts. The Higher Judicial Council supervises the affairs of the federal judiciary. The Federal Supreme Court is the highest court in the country, and the final authority on legal decisions. The establishment of the federal courts, their types, and methods for judicial appointments will be set forth by laws enacted by the Council of Representatives.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Jalal TALABANI**
Vice Pres.: **Adil ABD AL-MAHDI**
Vice Pres.: **Tariq al-HASHIMI**
Prime Min.: **Nuri al-MALIKI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Rafi al-ISSAWI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Barham SALIH**
Min. of Agriculture: **Ali Husayn al-BAHADILI**
Min. of Communications: **Faruq ABD AL-QADIR Abd al-Rahman**
Min. of Culture: **Mahar Dilli al-HADITHI**
Min. of Defense: **Abd al-Qadir al-MUFRIJI**
Min. of Displacement & Migration: **Abd al-Samad SULTAN**
Min. of Education: **Khudayr al-KHUZAI**
Min. of Electricity: **Karim Wahid al-HASAN**
Min. of Environment: **Nermin OTHMAN**
Min. of Finance: **Bayan JABR**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Hoshyar Mahmud ZEBARI**
Min. of Health: **Salih Mahdi Mutlab al-HASNAWI**
Min. of Higher Education: **Abid Dhiyab al-UJAYLI**
Min. of Housing & Construction: **Bayan DIZAYEE**
Min. of Human Rights: **Wijdan Mikhail SALIM**
Min. of Industry & Minerals: **Fawzi al-HARIRI**
Min. of Interior: **Jawad al-BULANI**
Min. of Justice: **Hashim al-SHIBLI**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **Mahmud Muhammad Jawad al-RADI**
Min. of Municipalities & Public Works: **Riyadh GHARIB**
Min. of Oil: **Husayn al-SHAHRISTANI**
Min. of Planning: **Ali BABAN**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Raid Fahmi JAHID**
Min. of Trade: **Abd al-Falah al-SUDANI**
Min. of Transportation: **Amir Abd al-Jabar ISMAIL**
Min. of Water Resources: **Latif RASHID**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Jasim Muhammad JAFAR**
Min. of State for Civil Society Affairs: **Thamir Jafar al-ZUBAYDI**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Muhammad Munajid al-DULAYMI**
Min. of State for National Assembly: **Safa al-Din al-SAFI**
Min. of State for National Dialogue: **Akram al-HAKIM**
Min. of State for National Security: **Shirwan al-WAILI**
Min. of State for Provinces: **Khulud Sami al-MAJUN**
Min. of State for Tourism & Antiquities: **Qahtan Abbas al-JABBURI**
Min. of State for Women's Affairs: **Nawal Majid al-SAMARRAI**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Ali Muhammad AHMAD**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Hasan Radhi Kazim al-SARI**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Muhammad Abbas al-URAYBI**
Governor, Central Bank of Iraq: **Sinan al-SHABIBI**
Ambassador to the US: **Samir Shakir al-SUMAYDI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Hamid al-BAYATI**

Political Parties and Leaders

Assyrian Democratic Movement [Yonadam Kanna]; Da'wa al-Islamiya Party [Ibrahim al-Ja'afari]; Badr Organization [Hadi al-Amiri]; Constitutional Monarchy Movement [Sharif Ali Bin al-Hussein]; General Conference of Iraqi People [Adnan al-Dulaymi]; Hewar National Iraqi Front [Saleh al-Mutlaq]; Independent Iraqi Alliance [Falah al-Naqib]; Iraqi Communist Party [Hamid Majeed Musa]; Iraqi Hizballah [Karim Mahud al-Muhammadawi]; Iraqi Independent Democrats [Adnan Pachachi]; Iraqi Islamic Party [Tariq al-Hashimi]; Iraqi National Accord (INA) [Ayad Allawi]; Iraqi National Congress (INC) [Ahmad Chalabi]; Iraqi National Council for Dialogue [Khalaf Ulayan al-Khalifawi al-Dulaymi]; Iraqi National Unity Movement [Ahmad al-Kubaysi]; Iraqi Turkmen Front ; Islamic Action Organization [Ayatollah Muhammad al-Mudarrisi]; Jama'at al-Fadilah [Ayatollah Muhammad 'Ali al-Yacoubi]; Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) [Massoud Barzani]; Kur-

distan Islamic Union [Salaheddine Muhammad Bahaaeddin]; Mithal al-Alusi List [Mithal al-Alusi]; Muslim Ulama Council [Harith Sulayman al-Dari]; National Democratic Movement; National Reconciliation and Liberation Party [Mishan al-Jabburi]; Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) [Jalal Talabani]; Al-Risalyun [Muqtada al-Sadr]; Al-Sadr Movement [Muqtada al-Sadr] (not an organized political party, but it fields independent candidates affiliated with Muqtada al-Sadr); Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI, formerly the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, SCIRI) [Abdul Aziz al-Hakim]; Yezidi Movement for Reform and Progress.

Note: The Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan, the Iraqi National List, Tawafuq Coalition, Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, and the United Iraqi Alliance were electoral blocs consisting of the representatives from the various Iraqi political parties. Alliances and Electoral blocs are subject to change.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since March 2006, the Government of Iraq has been a broad coalition led by a Shi'ite legislative bloc known as the United Iraqi Coalition (UIC) or the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). The UIC currently holds 128 of 275 seats in the Council of Representatives. The UIC is currently composed of ISCI, the al-Sadr movement, al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya, Da'wa Tanzim al-Iraq, Jama'at al-Fadilah, and various independents. Politicians with Sunni religious affiliations, including the Tawaffuq and Hewar groups, presently hold 59 seats in the Council of Representatives. The Kurdish bloc known as the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (which includes the KDP & PUK) holds 53 legislative seats. Ayad Allawi's Iraqiyya or Iraqi National List (INL) holds 25 seats. The remaining seats are composed of various independents.

The Council of Representatives is currently working toward reviewing certain controversial articles of the Constitution. The process is likely to be a long one, as consideration needs to be given to the interests of each of the major political groups.

ECONOMY

Historically, Iraq's economy was characterized by a heavy dependence on oil exports and an emphasis on development through central planning. Prior to the outbreak of the war with Iran in September 1980, Iraq's economic prospects were bright. Oil production had reached a level of 3.5 million barrels per day, and oil revenues were $21 billion in 1979 and $27 billion in 1980. At the outbreak of the war, Iraq had amassed an estimated $35 billion in foreign exchange reserves.

The Iran-Iraq war depleted Iraq's foreign exchange reserves, devastated its economy, and left the country saddled with a foreign debt of more than $40 billion. After hostilities ceased, oil exports gradually increased with the construction of new pipelines and the restoration of damaged facilities. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, subsequent international sanctions, damage from military action by an international coalition beginning in January 1991, and neglect of infrastructure drastically reduced economic activity. Government policies of diverting income to key supporters of the regime while sustaining a large military and internal security force further impaired finances, leaving the average Iraqi citizen facing desperate hardships. Implementation of a UN Oil-For-Food (OFF) program in December 1996 improved conditions for the average Iraqi citizen. In December 1999, Iraq was authorized to export unlimited quantities of oil through OFF to finance essential civilian needs including, among other things, food, medicine, and infrastructure repair parts.

The drop in GDP in 2001-02 was largely the result of the global economic slowdown and lower oil prices. Per capita food imports increased significantly, while medical supplies and health care services steadily improved. The occupation of the U.S.-led coalition in March-April 2003 resulted in the shutdown of much of the central economic administrative structure. The rebuilding of oil infrastructure, utilities infrastructure, and other production capacities has proceeded steadily since 2004 despite attacks on key economic facilities and continuing internal security incidents. Despite uncertainty, Iraq is making progress toward establishing the laws and institutions needed to make and implement economic policy.

Iraq's economy is dominated by the oil sector, which has traditionally provided about 95% of foreign exchange earnings. Current estimates show that oil production averages 2.1 million bbl/day.

The Iraqi Government is seeking to pass and implement laws to strengthen the economy, including a hydrocarbon law to encourage development of this sector, a revenue sharing law to equitably divide oil revenues within the nation in line with the Iraqi constitution, and writing regulations to implement a new foreign investment law. Controlling inflation, reducing corruption, and implementing structural reforms such as bank restructuring and private sector development will be key to Iraq's economic growth.

Foreign assistance has been an integral component of Iraq's reconstruction efforts over the past three years. At a Donors Conference in Madrid in October 2003, more than $33 billion was pledged to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq. Out of that conference, the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank launched the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) to administer and disburse about $1.7 billion of those funds. The rest of the assistance is being disbursed bilaterally. To date $15.3 billion has been pledged in foreign aid for 2004-2008 from outside of the U.S.

In December 2007, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to

renew a Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) for Iraq, which provides a credit line to the Iraqi government of up to $744 million if needed. The SBA also requires Iraq to undertake some economic policy reforms. If Iraq fulfills the terms of the SBA, the country will receive the final stage of Paris Club debt reduction. At that point, a total of 80 percent of Iraq's international debt will have been forgiven. The new SBA lasts for 15 months, through March 2009; the previous SBA began December 2005 and ended December 2007.

In July 2006, the Government of Iraq and the UN began work to formulate the International Compact with Iraq (ICI), a five-year framework for Iraq to achieve economic self-sufficiency within its region and the world. On May 3, 2007 in Sharm el-Sheikh the ICI was formally launched by more than 70 countries and international organizations, many represented at the ministerial level.

The Compact aims to create a mutually reinforcing dynamic of national consensus and international support. Domestically the aim is to build a national Compact around the government's political and economic program and to restore the Iraqi people's trust in the state and its ability to protect them and meet their basic needs. Internationally, the Compact establishes a framework of mutual commitments to provide financial and technical assistance and debt relief needed to support Iraq and strengthen its resolve to address critical reforms and policies.

Agriculture

Despite its abundant land and water resources, Iraq is a net food importer. Under the UN Oil-For-Food program, Iraq imported large quantities of grains, meat, poultry, and dairy products. Obstacles to agricultural development during the previous regime included labor shortages, inadequate management and maintenance, salinization, urban migration, and dislocations resulting from previous land reform and collectivization programs. A Ba'ath regime policy to destroy the "Marsh Arab" culture by draining the southern marshes and introducing irrigated farming to this region destroyed a natural food-producing area, while concentration of salts and minerals in the soil due to the draining left the land unsuitable for agriculture. Through assistance from USAID and USDA, targeted efforts have begun to overcome the damage done by the Ba'ath regime in ways that will rehabilitate the agricultural sector and confront environmental degradation. These efforts include infrastructure development, private sector development, veterinary clinic restoration, increased wheat production, and training and technical assistance in developing policies on sustainable water resources management and building Iraqi natural resources management.

Trade

The United Nations imposed economic sanctions on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990. Under the Oil-For-Food program Iraq was allowed to export oil and use the proceeds to purchase goods to address essential civilian needs, including food, medicine, and infrastructure spare parts. With the lifting of UN sanctions after the Ba'ath regime was removed in 2003, Iraq is gradually resuming trade relations with the international community, including with the U.S. The U.S. designated Iraq as a beneficiary developing country under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program in September 2004. Iraq was granted observer status at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in February 2004, and began its WTO accession process in December 2004. On May 25, 2007, Iraq participated in its first Working Party meeting in Geneva. The meeting, in which Trade Minister al-Sudani participated, was characterized as a successful start to the WTO accession process, one that is crucial to Iraq's integration into the international economy. Dependent upon Iraqi progress on relevant issues, the next Working Party meeting could take place as early as spring 2008.

DEFENSE

The Iran-Iraq War ended with Iraq sustaining the largest military structure in the Middle East, with more than 70 divisions in its army and an air force of over 700 modern aircraft. Losses during the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and subsequent expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991 by a UN coalition resulted in the reduction of Iraq's ground forces to 23 divisions and air force to less than 300 aircraft.

When major combat operations ended in April 2003, the Iraqi Army disintegrated, and its installations were destroyed by pilfering and looting. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) officially dissolved the Iraqi military and Ministry of Defense on May 23, 2003. On August 7, 2003, the CPA established the New Iraqi Army as the first step toward the creation of the national self-defense force of post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. Support for the manning, training, and equipping of Iraq's security forces is led by the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I). In addition to defense forces, the Ministry of Interior, with the help of the MNSTC-I, is training and equipping civilian police forces to establish security and stability, primarily through combating the nation-wide insurgency. Initially under the command and control of the Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I) command, in 2006 police and Iraqi Army units began to transition to Iraqi control. By November 2007, all of the original ten Iraq Army divisions had completed the transfer to Iraq Ground Forces Command. The process of transferring provinces to Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) began in July 2007, when Muthanna became the first province where Iraq Security Forces took the leading role of security in a province. In December 2007, Basrah became the ninth of Iraq's eighteen provinces to transfer to PIC.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

With the fall of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath regime, Iraq has taken

steps toward re-engagement on the international stage. Iraq currently has diplomatic representation in 54 countries around the world, including 3 permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva and the Arab League in Cairo. 43 countries have diplomatic representation in Iraq,

U.S.-IRAQI RELATIONS

The focus of United States policy in Iraq remains on helping the Iraqi people build a constitutional, representative government that respects the rights of all Iraqis and has security forces capable of maintaining order and preventing the country from becoming a safe haven for terrorists and foreign fighters. The ultimate goal is an Iraq that is peaceful, united, stable, democratic, and secure, with institutions capable of providing just governance and security for all Iraqis and is an ally in the war against terrorism. U.S. forces remain in Iraq as part of the Multi-National Force-Iraq to assist the Government of Iraq in training its security forces, as well as to work in partnership with the Government of Iraq to combat forces that seek to derail Iraq's progression toward full democracy. The U.S. Government is carrying out a multibillion-dollar program to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq.

The Republic of Iraq belongs to the following international organizations: United Nations (UN); Arab League (AL); World Bank (WB); International Monetary Fund (IMF); International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); Nonaligned Movement (NAM); Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC); Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); Interpol; World Health Organization (WHO); G-19; G-77; Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (ABEDA); Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD); Arab Monetary Fund (AMF); Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD); International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO); International Community for Radionuclide Metrology (ICRM); International Development Association (IDA); International Development Bank (IDB); International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); International Finance Corporation (IFC); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCS); International Labor Organization (ILO); International Maritime Organization (IMO); International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO) Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC); International Organization for Standardization (ISO); International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (ITSO); International Telecommunication Union (ITU); Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC); Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)Universal Postal Union (UPU); World Customs Organization (WCO); World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU); World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); World Meteorological Organization (WMO); World Trade Organization (WTO) observer.

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Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 2, 2008

Country Description: In 2005, Iraqi citizens adopted a new constitution and participated in legislative elections to create a permanent, democratic government, and in May 2006, a new Government of Iraq (GOI), led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, was sworn in. Although the GOI has made political, economic and security progress, Iraq still faces many challenges, including overcoming three decades of war and government mismanagement that stunted Iraq's economy, sectarian and ethnic tensions that have slowed progress toward national reconciliation, and ongoing (even if abating) insurgent, sectarian, criminal, and terrorist violence. Conditions in Iraq are extremely dangerous. While Iraqi Security Forces now take the lead in providing security in most provinces, Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) continues to assist the Iraqi government in providing security in many areas of the country. The workweek in Iraq is Sunday through Thursday.

Entry Requirements: Passports valid for at least six months and visas are required for most private American citizens. An Iraqi visa may be obtained through the Iraqi Embassy in Washington, D.C. Travelers should not rely on obtaining a visa upon arrival at an airport or port of entry in Iraq. Visitors to Iraq who plan to stay for more than 10 days must obtain a no-fee residency stamp. In Baghdad, the stamps are available for all visitors at the main Residency Office near the National Theater. Contractors in the International Zone may also obtain exit stamps at the Karadah Mariam Police Station (available Sunday and Wednesday, 10:00-14:00.). There is a 10,000 Iraqi dinar (USD 8) penalty for visitors who do not obtain the required residency stamp. In order to obtain a residency stamp, applicants must produce valid credentials or proof of employment, two passport-sized photos, and HIV test results. An American citizen who plans to stay longer than two months must apply at the Residency Office for an extension. Americans traveling to Iraq for the purpose of employment should check with their employers and with the Iraqi Embassy in Washington, D.C. for any special entry or exit requirements related to employment. American citizens whose passports reflect travel to Israel may be refused entry into Iraq or may be refused an Iraqi visa, although to date there are no reported cases of this occurring.

U.S. citizens who remain longer than 10 days must obtain an exit stamp at the main Residency Office before departing the country. In Baghdad, they are available for all visitors at the main Residency Office near the National Theater. Contractors in the International Zone may also obtain exit stamps at the Karadah Mariam Police Station (available Sunday and Wednesday, 10:00-14:00). Exit stamp fees vary from USD 20 to USD 200, depending on the length of stay, entry visa and other factors. Those staying fewer than 10 days do not need to get an exit stamp before passing through Iraqi immigration at the airport. Visitors who arrive via military aircraft but depart on commercial airlines must pay a USD 80 departure fee at the airport.

Note: For information on entry requirements for other countries, please go to the Entry/Exit Requirements section in the Country Specific Information Sheet for the country you are interested in at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html. You may also contact the U.S. embassy or consulate of that country for further information.

Visit the Iraqi Embassy web site at http://www.iraqiembassy.us for the most current visa information. The Embassy is located at 1801 P Street NW, Washington, DC 20036; phone number is 202-742-1600; the fax is 202-333-1129.

Exit Requirements: U.S. Citizens who remains longer than 10 days must obtain an exit stamp at the main Residency Office before departing the country. In Baghdad, they are available for all visitors at the main Residency Office near the National Theater. Contractors in the International Zone may also obtain exit stamps at the Karadah Mariam Police Station (available Sunday and Wednesday, 10:00-14:00). Exit stamp fees vary from USD 20 to USD 200, depending on the length of stay, entry visa and other factors. Those staying fewer that 10 days do not need to get an exit stamp before passing through Iraqi Immigration at the airport. Visitors who arrive via military aircraft but depart on commercial airlines must pay a USD 80 departure fee at the airport

Visit the Iraqi Embassy web site at http://www.iraqiembassy.org for the most current visa information. The Embassy is located at 1801 P Street NW, Washington, DC 20036; phone number is 202-483-7500; fax is 202-462-5066.

Safety and Security: The risk of terrorism directed against U.S. citizens in Iraq remains extremely high. The Department of State continues to strongly warn U.S. citizens against travel to Iraq, which remains very dangerous.

Remnants of the former Baath regime, transnational terrorists, criminal elements and numerous insurgent groups remain active throughout Iraq. Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)-led military operations continue, and attacks persist against MNF-I and the ISF throughout the country. Turkish government forces have carried out operations against elements of the Kongra-Gel (KGK, formerly Kurdistan Worker's Party, or Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK)) terrorist group that are located along Iraq's northern border. Despite recent improvements in the security environment, Iraq remains dangerous, volatile and unpredictable. Attacks against military and civilian targets throughout Iraq continue, including in the International (or "Green") Zone. Targets include hotels, restaurants, police stations, checkpoints, foreign diplomatic mis-

sions, and international organizations and other locations with expatriate personnel. Such attacks can occur at any time. Kidnappings still occur; the most recent kidnapping of an American citizen occurred in July 2008. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Explosively Formed Penetrators (EFPs), and mines often are placed on roads, concealed in plastic bags, boxes, soda cans, dead animals, and in other ways to blend with the road. Grenades and explosives have been thrown into vehicles from overpasses and placed on vehicles at intersections, particularly in crowded areas. Rockets and mortars have been fired at hotels, and vehicle-borne IEDs have been used against targets throughout the country. Occasionally, U.S. Government personnel are prohibited from traveling to certain areas depending on prevailing security conditions. In addition to terrorist and criminal attacks, sectarian violence occurs often. Detailed security information is available on the Embassy's web site at http://iraq.usembassy.gov and at http://www.centcom.mil.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Travelers are also referred to the U.S. Embassy Baghdad's Warden Notices which are available on the Embassy web site at http://iraq.usembassy.gov.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The U.S. Embassy and MNF-I are working with Iraqi authorities to establish law enforcement and civil structures throughout the country. U.S. and British military personnel are providing police protection as well, as the security situation permits. Petty theft is common in Iraq, including thefts of money, jewelry, or valuable items left in hotel rooms and pick-pocketing in busy places such as markets. Carjacking by armed thieves is very common, even during daylight hours, and particularly on the highways from Jordan and Kuwait to Baghdad. Foreigners, primarily dual American-Iraqi citizens, and Iraqi citizens are targets of kidnapping. The kidnappers often demand money but have also carried out kidnappings for political/religious reasons.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. While U.S. Consular Services in Iraq are limited due to security conditions, the Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

There is no 911-equivalent emergency telephone number in Iraq.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Basic modern medical care and medicines are not widely available in Iraq. The recent conflict in Iraq has left some medical facilities non-operational and medical stocks and supplies severely depleted. The facilities in operation do not meet U.S. standards, and the majority lack medicines, equipment and supplies. Because the Baghdad International Airport has limited operations for security reasons, it is unlikely that a private medical evacuation can be arranged.

Iraq does not allow visitors with HIV/AIDS to enter the country. At this time there is no waiver available for this ineligibility. However, please inquire directly with the Embassy of Iraq at http://www.iraqiembassy.org before you travel for any changes.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Avian Influenza: The WHO and Iraqi authorities have confirmed human cases of the H5NI strain of avian influenza, commonly known as the "bird flu." Travelers to Iraq and other countries affected by the virus are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. In addition, the CDC and WHO recommend eating only fully cooked poultry and eggs.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation as well as whether medical evacuation would be possible from Iraq.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Iraq is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

All vehicular travel in Iraq is extremely dangerous. There have been numerous attacks on civilian vehicles, as well as military convoys. Attacks occur throughout the day, but travel at night is exceptionally dangerous and should be avoided. There have been attacks on civilian vehicles

as well as military convoys on Highways 1, 5, 10 and 15, even during daylight hours. Travelers are strongly urged to travel in convoys with at least four vehicles in daylight hours only. Travel in or through Ramadi and Fallujah, in and between al-Hillah, al-Basrah, Kirkuk, and Baghdad and between the International Zone and Baghdad International Airport, and from Baghdad to Mosul is particularly dangerous. Occasionally, U.S. Government personnel are prohibited from traveling to select areas depending on prevailing security conditions. There continues to be heavy use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and/or mines on roads, particularly in plastic bags, soda cans, and dead animals. Grenades and explosives have been thrown into vehicles from overpasses, particularly in crowded areas. Travel should be undertaken only when absolutely necessary and with the appropriate security.

Buses run irregularly and frequently change routes. Poorly maintained city transit vehicles are often involved in accidents. Long distance buses are available, but are often in poor condition and drive at unsafe speeds. Jaywalking is common. Drivers usually do not yield to pedestrians at crosswalks and ignore traffic lights (if available), traffic rules and regulations. Roads are congested. Driving at night is extremely dangerous. Some cars do not use lights at night and urban street lights may not be functioning. Some motorists drive at excessive speeds, tailgate and force other drivers to yield the right of way.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by air carriers registered in Iraq, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Iraq's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA web site at http://www.faa.gov.

There is credible information that terrorists are targeting civil aviation. Military aircraft arriving and departing from Baghdad International Airport (ORBI) have been subjected to small arms and missile fire. Travelers choosing to utilize civilian aircraft to enter or depart Iraq should be aware that, although there have been no recent attacks on civilian aircraft, the potential threat still exists. Official U.S. Government (USG) personnel are strongly encouraged to use U.S. military or other USG aircraft when entering or departing Iraq. All personnel serving in Iraq under Chief of Mission (COM) authority are prohibited from entering or departing ORBI on commercial airlines unless they receive COM approval, which is granted on a case-by-case basis for emergency purposes only. Other personnel not under COM authority must be guided by their own agencies. Personnel under COM authority assigned to the Erbil and Sulaymaniyah areas are permitted to use commercial flights in and out of Erbil on a case-by-case basis.

Special Circumstances: As of September 21, 2006, Iraqi law prohibits adult Iraqis and foreigners from holding and transporting more than U.S. $10,000 in cash out of Iraq. In addition, it permits adult Iraqi and resident foreigners to hold and transport no more than 200,000 Iraqi dinars to cover travel expenses. Iraqi law also prohibits taking more than 100 grams of gold out of the country. Iraqi customs personnel are taking action to enforce these laws and may pose related questions to travelers during immigration and customs exit procedures. (Civil customs personnel also will verify passport annotations related to any items such as foreign currency, gold jewelry, or merchandise that were declared by passengers upon entry into Iraq on Form-8.)

All U.S. citizens are reminded that it is their duty to respect Iraqi laws, including legal restrictions on the transfer of currency outside of Iraq. If you are detained at the airport or at any other point of exit regarding your attempt to transfer currency out of Iraq, you should contact—or ask that Iraqi authorities immediately contact—the American Embassy.

Transporting large amounts of currency is not advisable. Almost all of the international companies working in Iraq have the capability to make payments to their employees and at least four Iraqi banks are also able to convert cash into an international wire transfer directed to a bank account outside Iraq. Branches of the Credit Bank of Iraq on Al-Sa'adoon St., Baghdad (creditbkiq@yahoo.com), Dar Es Salaam Bank (info@desiraq.com), Iraqi Middle East Investment Bank (coinvst@iraqimdlestbank.com) and Al-Warqaa Investment Bank (warkabank@hotmail.com) all have this capability. Please be aware that large wire transfers may require Central Bank of Iraq approval because of measures in place to combat money laundering. Such approvals can be obtained by the sending bank, if information on the origin of the funds and the reason for its transfer are provided. Additional information on banking in Iraq is available at the Central Bank of Iraq web site http://www.cbiraq.org.

Customs and MNF-I officers have the broad authority to search persons or vehicles at Iraq ports of entry. Officers may confiscate any goods that may pose a threat to the peace, security, health, environment, or good order of Iraq or any antiquities or cultural items suspected of being illegally exported. Goods that are not declared may be confiscated by an officer. Persons may also be ordered to return such goods, at their expense, to the jurisdiction from which they came.

The banking and financial infrastructure has been disrupted and is in the process of rebuilding. Hotels usually require payment in foreign currency. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are extremely limited but the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) provides ATM services in dinars and U.S. dollars at the TBI head office in central Baghdad and two other locations.

Telecommunications are very poor. There is very limited international phone service in Iraq at this time. Local calls are often limited to a neighborhood network. There are no public telephones in the cities; however, calls may be made from hotels, restaurants or shops. Limited cellu-

lar telephone service and Internet service are available in Iraq. Due to security conditions, the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is able to provide only limited emergency services to U.S. citizens. Because police and civil structures are in the process of being rebuilt, emergency service and support will be limited.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Iraqi laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Iraq are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: The U.S. and international media have occasionally reported on the difficult situation faced by Iraq's children, and it is completely understandable that some American citizens want to respond to such stories by offering to open their homes and adopt these children in need. However Iraqi law does not permit full adoptions as they are generally understood in the United States. It is not possible to adopt Iraqi children at this time. Iraq is not party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Iraq and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction.

The security situation in Iraq limits consular access to children. For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: The Travel Warning on Iraq urges U.S. citizens to defer travel to Iraq. However, Americans living or traveling in Iraq despite that Warning are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Iraq. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. U.S. citizens may also contact the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq located in the International Zone via e-mail at baghdadacs@state.gov, via landline at 1-240-553-0581, extension 2413 (this number rings in Baghdad) or the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://iraq.usembassy.gov. The after-hours number in case of extreme emergency is 011-964-770-443-2594 (from the US) or 964-0770-443-2594 (within Iraq.)

Intercountry Adoption

August 2007

The Department of State has received many inquiries from American citizens concerned about the plight of the children of Iraq and wondering about the possibility of adopting them. At this time, it is not possible to adopt Iraqi children, for several reasons.

In general, intercountry adoptions are private civil legal matters governed by the laws of the children's home country, which has the primary responsibility and jurisdiction for deciding what would be in the children's best interests. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad has confirmed that Iraqi law does not currently permit full adoptions as they are generally understood in the United States.

Iraq does grant a more limited arrangement akin to guardianship; however, the U.S. Government is unaware of any non-Iraqis' being granted guardianship of Iraqi children. In addition, even if an Iraqi court were to grant a U.S. citizen guardianship rights for an Iraqi child, the child would likely be unable to immigrate to the United States, unless the citizen could establish both that the child qualifies as an "orphan" as defined in section 101(b)(1)(F) of the Immigration and Nationality Act and, under Iraqi law, the "guardianship" order gave the citizen authority not only to care for the child but to bring the United States for the specific purpose of the child's adoption in the United States. Since Iraqi law does not permit adoption, it is not clear that an Iraqi guardianship order could give this authority. The U.S. and international media have occasionally reported on the difficult situation faced by many Iraqi children, and it is completely understandable that some American citizens want to respond to such stories by offering to open their homes and adopt these children in need. However, it is a generally agreed international principle that uprooting children during a war, natural disaster or other crisis may in fact exacerbate the children's situation. It can be extremely difficult in such circumstances to determine whether children who appear to be orphans truly are. It is not uncommon in a hostile situation for parents to send their children out of the area, or for families to become separated during an evacuation. Even when it can be demonstrated that children are indeed orphaned or abandoned, they are often taken in by other relatives. Staying with relatives in extended family units is generally a better solution than uprooting a child completely. There are still ways in which U.S. citizens can help the children of Iraq. Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) say that what is needed most at this time are financial contributions. Individuals who wish to assist can do the most good by making a financial contribution to an established NGO that will be well placed to respond to Iraq's most urgent needs. The American Red Cross is working through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide humanitarian assistance in Iraq. The Red Cross and ICRC do assessments to determine

needs and use monetary donations where the need is the greatest. To contact them, call 1-800-HELP-NOW. There is no mechanism to direct money to a specific child or person. The website http://www.redcross.org has more information on directed contributions. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Web site, http://www.usaid.gov/iraq, provides information on how individuals can assist. "Interaction" is a Washington-based coalition of NGOs. Those interested in children's issues/orphans may go on the website http://www.interaction.org and look at the "Guide to Appropriate Giving" and to "Emergency Relief in Iraq" both on the home page. Interested donors can read synopses on various organizations and in some cases make contributions. Interaction can also be reached at 202-667-8227. The Department of State continues to strongly warn U.S. citizens against travel to Iraq, which remains very dangerous.

Travel Warning

June 13, 2008

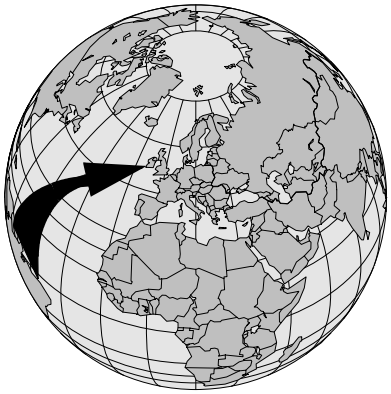
This Travel Warning updates the current security situation and reiterates the dangers of the use of civilian aircraft and of road travel within Iraq. This supersedes the Travel Warning of July 23, 2007.

The Department of State continues to strongly warn U.S. citizens against travel to Iraq, which remains very dangerous. Remnants of the former Baath regime, transnational terrorists, criminal elements and numerous insurgent groups remain active throughout Iraq. Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)-led military operations continue, and attacks persist against MNF-I and the ISF throughout the country. Turkish government forces have carried out operations against elements of the Kongra-Gel (KGK, formerly Kurdistan Worker's Party, or Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK)) terrorist group that are located along Iraq's northern border.

Despite recent improvements in the security environment, Iraq remains dangerous, volatile and unpredictable. Attacks against military and civilian targets throughout Iraq continue, including in the International (or "Green") Zone. Targets include hotels, restaurants, police stations, checkpoints, foreign diplomatic missions, and international organizations and other locations with expatriate personnel. Such attacks can occur at any time. Kidnappings still occur; the most recent kidnapping of an American citizen occurred in August 2007. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Explosively Formed Penetrators (EFPs), and mines often are placed on roads, concealed in plastic bags, boxes, soda cans, dead animals, and in other ways to blend with the road.

Grenades and explosives have been thrown into vehicles from overpasses, particularly in crowded areas. Rockets and mortars have been fired at hotels, and vehicle-borne IEDs have been used against targets throughout the country. Occasionally, U.S. Government personnel are prohibited from traveling to certain areas depending on prevailing security conditions. In addition to terrorist and criminal attacks, sectarian violence occurs often. Detailed security information is available on the Embassy's web site at http://iraq.usembassy.gov and at http://www.centcom.mil. Military aircraft arriving and departing from Baghdad International Airport (ORBI) have been subjected to small arms and missile fire. Travelers choosing to utilize civilian aircraft to enter or depart Iraq should be aware that, although there have been no recent attacks on civilian aircraft, the potential threat still exists, as well as does the high risk to road transportation described above. Official U.S. Government (USG) personnel are strongly encouraged to use U.S. military or other USG aircraft when entering or departing Iraq. All personnel serving in Iraq under Chief of Mission (COM) authority are prohibited from entering or departing ORBI on commercial airlines unless approved by the Regional Security Office (RSO) on a case-by-case basis. Other personnel not under COM authority must be guided by their own agency. The Embassy is located in the International Zone. The Embassy can provide only limited emergency services to U.S. citizens in Iraq. The U.S. Government considers the potential threat to U.S. Government personnel assigned to Iraq sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under strict security restrictions. At present, travel to and from the International Zone is extremely limited. Unofficial travel to Iraq by U.S. Government employees and their family members requires prior approval by the Department of State. The U.S. Embassy does not provide visa services to the general public. American citizens who choose to visit or reside in Iraq despite this Travel Warning are urged to take responsibility for their personal security, avoid crowds, especially rallies or demonstrations, and to inform the U.S. Embassy of their presence in Iraq.

All Americans in Baghdad are strongly encouraged to register with the Embassy at the following website: https://travelregistration.state.gov.American citizens may obtain the latest security information or other information about Iraq by contacting the U.S. Embassy, located in the International Zone, via landline at: 1-240-553-0589, via Iraqna cellular phones at 07901-191-0058/57/56/54/53/52/49/48, via e-mail to baghdadacs@state.gov, or by accessing the U.S. Embassy's website at http://iraq.usembassy.gov. The after-hours numbers in cases of extreme emergency is 011-964-770-443-2594 (from the US) or 964 0770-443-2594 (within Iraq.). Updated information on travel and security in Iraq may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. For further information, please consult the Country Specific Information for Iraq, as well as the Worldwide Caution, all of which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at http://travel.state.gov.



IRELAND

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Ireland

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 70,282 sq. km. (27,136 sq. mi.); slightly larger than West Virginia.
Terrain: Arable 10%, meadows and pastures 77%, rough grazing in use 11%, inland water 2%.
Climate: Temperate maritime.

People

Nationality: Noun—Irishman, Irishwoman. Adjective—Irish.
Population: (April 2007): 4,339,000.
Cities: Capital—Dublin (pop. 506,211). Other cities—Cork (119,418), Galway (72,414), Limerick (52,539), Waterford (45,748).
Population breakdown: 0-14 years (21%), 15-24 years (15%), 25-34 years (17%), 35-44 years (14%), 45-54 years (12%), 55-64 years (10%), 65 years and over (11%).
Population growth rate: (2008 est.): 1.133%.
Ethnic groups: Irish, with English minority.
Religions: Roman Catholic 86.8%; Church of Ireland 3 %; Presbyterian 0.5%; Methodist 0.25%; Muslim 1 %; Jewish 0.1%; other 8.35%.
Languages: English, Irish (Gaelic).
Education: Compulsory up to age 16. Enrollment rates: first (primary) level 471,519; second (high school and vocational) level 333,718; third (university and college) level 138,362. Literacy—99%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—5.14/1,000. Life expectancy at birth—male 75.44 yrs., female 80.88 yrs.
Work force: Services—67%; industry—27%; agriculture—6%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary republic.
Independence: December 6, 1921.
Constitution: December 29, 1937.
Government branches: Executive—president, chief of state; Prime Minister (Taoiseach—pronounced "TEE-shuck"), head of government. Legislative—bicameral national Parliament (Oireachtas—pronounced "o-ROCK-tas") House of Representatives (Dail—pronounced "DOIL") and Senate (Seanad—pronounced "SHAN-ad"). Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political subdivisions: 26 counties, 34 local authorities.
Political parties: Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour, Progressive Democrats, Green Party, Sinn Fein.
Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Economy

Nominal GDP: (2007) $186.2 billion.
Real GDP growth: (2007) 5.3%.
Nominal GDP per capita: (2007) $43,100.
Natural resources: Zinc, lead, natural gas, barite, copper, gypsum, limestone, dolomite, peat.
Agriculture: (5% of GDP) Products—cattle, meat, and dairy products; potatoes; barley; hay; silage; wheat.
Industry: (46% of GDP) Types—food processing, beverages, engineering, computer equipment, textiles and clothing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, construction.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$115.6 billion (excluding services): machinery, transport equipment, chemicals, food, live animals, manufactured materials, beverages. Imports—$84.2 billion (excluding services): grains, petroleum products, machinery, transport equipment, chemicals, textile yarns. Major suppliers—Great Britain and Northern Ireland 31%, U.S. 11%, Germany 8%, China 7%, Japan 4%, France 3%, rest of the world (including other EU member states) 36%.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The Irish people are mainly of Celtic origin, with the country's only significant sized minority having descended from the Anglo-Normans. English is the common language, but Irish (Gaelic) is also an official language and is taught in schools. Anglo-Irish writers such as Swift, Sheridan,

Goldsmith, Burke, Wilde, Joyce, Yeats, Shaw, and Beckett have made a major contribution to world literature over the past 300 years.

The earliest inhabitants—people of a mid-Stone Age culture—arrived about 6000 BC. About 4,000 years later, tribes from southern Europe arrived and established a high Neolithic culture, leaving behind gold ornaments and huge stone monuments. The Bronze Age people, who arrived during the next 1,000 years, produced elaborate gold and bronze ornaments and weapons.

The Iron Age arrived abruptly in the fourth century BC with the invasion of the Celts, a tall, energetic people who had spread across Europe and Great Britain in the preceding centuries. The Celts, or Gaels, and their more numerous predecessors divided into five kingdoms in which, despite constant strife, a rich culture flourished.

The coming of Christianity from across the Irish Sea brought major changes and civilizing influences. Tradition maintains that St. Patrick arrived on the island in AD 432 and, in the years that followed, worked to convert the Irish to Christianity.

The pagan druid tradition collapsed before the spread of the new faith, and Irish scholars excelled in the study of Latin learning and Christian theology in the monasteries that flourished. Missionaries went forth from Ireland to England and the continent, spreading news of the flowering of learning, and scholars from other nations came to Irish monasteries. The excellence and isolation of these monasteries helped preserve Latin and Greek learning during the Dark Ages. The arts of manuscript illumination, metalworking, and sculpture flourished and produced such treasures as the Book of Kells, ornate jewelry, and the many carved stone crosses that dot the island.

Two hundred years of Viking invasion and settlement was later followed by a Norman conquest in the 12th century. The Norman conquest resulted in the assimilation of the Norman settlers into Irish society. The early 17th century saw the arrival of Scottish and English Protestants, sent as colonists to the north of Ireland and the Pale around Dublin.

In 1800 the Irish Parliament passed the Act of Union with Great Britain, and Ireland was an official part of the United Kingdom until 1921. Religious freedom, outlawed in the 18th century, was restored in 1829, but this victory for the Irish Catholic majority was overshadowed by a severe economic depression and the great famine from 1846-48 when the potato crop failed. Millions died, and the millions that emigrated spawned the first mass wave of Irish emigration to the United States. A decade later, in 1858, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB—also known as the Fenians) was founded as a secret society dedicated to armed rebellion against the British. An aboveground political counterpart, the Home Rule Movement, was created in 1874, advocating constitutional change for independence.

Galvanized by the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, the party was able to force British governments after 1885 to introduce several home rule bills. The turn of the century witnessed a surge of interest in Irish nationalism, including the founding of Sinn Fein ("Ourselves Alone") as an open political movement.

Nationalism was and is a potent populist force in Irish politics. A home rule bill passed in 1914, but its implementation was suspended until war in Europe ended. Believing the mantra: "England's problem is Ireland's opportunity," and tapping into a mood of Gaelic revivalism, Padraic Pearse and James Connolly led the unsuccessful Easter Rising of 1916. Pearse and the other 1916 leaders declared an independent Irish republic, but a lack of popular support doomed the rebellion, which lasted a week and destroyed large portions of Dublin. The decision by the British military government to execute the leaders of the rebellion, coupled with the British Government's threat of conscripting the Irish to fight in the Great War, alienated public opinion and produced massive support for Sinn Fein in the 1918 general election. Under the leadership of Eamon de Valera, the elected Sinn Fein deputies constituted themselves as the first Dail. Tensions only increased: British attempts to smash Sinn Fein ignited the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921.

The end of the war brought the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, which established the Irish Free State of 26 counties within the British Commonwealth and recognized the partition of the island into Ireland and Northern Ireland, though supposedly as a temporary measure. The six predominantly Protestant counties of northeast Ulster—Northern Ireland—remained a part of the United Kingdom with limited self-government. A significant Irish minority repudiated the treaty settlement because of the continuance of subordinate ties to the British monarch and the partition of the island. This opposition led to further hostilities—a civil war (1922-23), which was won by the pro-treaty forces.

In 1932, Eamon de Valera, the political leader of the forces initially opposed to the treaty, became Prime Minister, and a new Irish constitution was enacted in 1937. The last British military bases were soon withdrawn, and the ports were returned to Irish control. Ireland was neutral in World War II. The government formally declared Ireland a republic in 1948; however, it does not normally use the term "Republic of Ireland," which tacitly acknowledges the partition, but refers to the country simply as "Ireland."

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Ireland is a sovereign, independent, democratic state with a parliamentary system of government. The president, who serves as head of state in a largely ceremonial role, is elected for a 7-year term and can be re-elected only once. The current president is

Mary McAleese, who is serving her second term after having succeeded President Mary Robinson—the first instance worldwide where one woman has followed another as an elected head of state. In carrying out certain constitutional powers and functions, the president is aided by the Council of State, an advisory body. On the Taoiseach's (prime minister's) advice, the president also dissolves the Oireachtas (Parliament). The prime minister (Taoiseach, pronounced "TEE-shuck") is elected by the Dail (lower house of Parliament) as the leader of the political party, or coalition of parties, which wins the most seats in the national elections, held approximately every 5 years (unless called earlier). Executive power is vested in a cabinet whose ministers are nominated by the Taoiseach and approved by the Dail.

The bicameral Oireachtas (Parliament) consists of the Seanad Eireann (Senate) and the Dail Eireann (House of Representatives).

The Seanad is composed of 60 members—11 nominated by the prime minister, 6 elected by the national universities, and 43 elected from panels of candidates established on a vocational basis. The Seanad has the power to delay legislative proposals and is allowed 90 days to consider and amend bills sent to it by the Dail, which wields greater power in Parliament. The Dail has 166 members popularly elected to a maximum term of 5 years under a complex system of proportional representation. A member of the Dail is known as a Teachta Dala, or TD.

Judges are appointed by the president on nomination by the government and can be removed from office only for misbehavior or incapacity and then only by resolution of both houses of Parliament. The ultimate court of appeal is the Supreme Court, consisting of the chief justice and five other justices. The Supreme Court also can decide upon the constitutionality of legislative acts if the president asks for an opinion.

Local government is by elected county councils and—in the cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Waterford—by county borough corporations. County councils/corporations in turn select city mayors. In practice, however, authority remains with the central government. Irish politics remain dominated by the two political parties that grew out of Ireland's bitter 1922-23 civil war. Fianna Fail was formed by those who opposed the 1921 treaty that partitioned the island. Although treaty opponents lost the civil war, Fianna Fail soon became Ireland's largest political party. Fine Gael, representative of the pro-treaty forces, remains the country's second-largest party. The Progressive Democrats, Labour, Sinn Fein, and the Greens are the other significant parties.



The May 2007 national elections brought the Fianna Fail party and its leader Bertie Ahern back to power in a coalition government for an unprecedented third five-year term. Coalition members joining Fianna Fail were the Green Party and the Progressive Democrats. Ahern appointed Finance Minister Brian Cowen Deputy Prime Minister (Tanaiste, pronounced "TAW-nish-tuh").

On April 3, 2008 Ahern announced his intention to resign as leader of Fianna Fail and Taoiseach on May 6. Cowen was elected leader of Fianna Fail on April 5, and assumed office on May 6. He was elected Taoiseach on May 7. Cowen appointed Mary Coughlan, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment as Tanaiste. The Foreign Minister is Micheal Martin.

Local and European elections took place in June 2004 and saw gains for opposition parties. The election also featured a referendum on citizenship. Until that time, Ireland had granted citizenship on the basis of birth on Irish soil. Concerns about security and social welfare abuse prompted the government to seek to bring citizenship laws in line with the more restrictive policies prevalent in the rest of Europe, and the 2004 referendum measure passed by a wide majority. Now, persons with non-Irish parents can acquire Irish citizenship at birth only if at least one parent has been resident in Ireland for three years preceding the birth.

In a referendum held on June 12, 2008 Irish voters rejected the European Union (EU) Lisbon Treaty by 53.7% to 46.3%. The margin of the "no" vote was surprisingly high given that most of the political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, and farmers' associations endorsed it. However, no single factor emerged as decisive in the referendum's defeat. The government began a "comprehensive analysis" of the Irish vote, which they intend to present to their EU partners at the EU Council meeting in October.

Northern Ireland

Consolidating the peace process in Northern Ireland and encouraging the full implementation of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA) and the 2006 St. Andrews Agreement remain U.S. priorities in Ireland.

The conflict in Northern Ireland stems from a history of British rule, historical animosity between Catholics and Protestants, and the various armed and political attempts to unite Northern Ireland with the rest of the island. "Nationalist" and "Republican" groups seek a united Ireland, while "Unionists" and "Loyalists" want Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. After decades of violence by both Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries, most notably the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the British and Irish governments negotiated an IRA ceasefire in 1994, which was followed by the landmark U.S.-brokered Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998.

The GFA established a power-sharing legislative assembly to serve as the autonomous local government of Northern Ireland. The 108-member Northern Ireland Assembly is led by a first minister and deputy first minister, one from each of the two communities, and a 10-minister executive. The GFA also provided for changes in both the British and Irish constitutions. Ireland ceded territorial claim to Northern Ireland, and the U.K. agreed that Northern Ireland could become part of Ireland if a majority (North and South) so voted in the future. Finally, the GFA provided the blueprint for "normalization," to include the eventual removal of British forces, devolution of police and justice functions, and guarantees of human rights and equal opportunity for all individuals. The agreement was approved in a 1998 referendum by 71% of Northern Ireland voters and 95% of Irish voters.

The major political parties in Northern Ireland are the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Sinn Fein, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), and the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP). The UUP and SDLP are centrist Unionist and Nationalist parties, respectively, while Sinn Fein is strongly Republican and the DUP is strongly Unionist. From the time the Assembly was created in 1998 until 2003, the UUP and SDLP were the governing parties.

In October 2002, the British Government suspended (for the fourth time) the Assembly, following a breakdown in trust between Unionists and Republicans. The British and Irish Governments began discussions with the parties to try to resolve long-standing unresolved differences between the communities, and to secure a commitment from Sinn Fein that Republicans would divest themselves of all paramilitary activities and capabilities. Efforts to restore the political process in time to stage new elections to the Assembly in May 2003 broke down when the two governments concluded they did not have sufficient assurances from the Republicans. However, the governments proceeded to publish a joint declaration, mapping out the timetable to full implementation of the GFA. The governments also created an International Monitoring Commission to serve as a forum to hear complaints of alleged breaches of GFA commitments by the political parties and/or by British authorities. The four-member commission includes a representative from the United States.

Beginning in 2005, there were significant steps to reinvigorate the peace process. In July 2005, the IRA unilaterally announced that it would end its "armed struggle" and rely upon solely peaceful and democratic means to achieve its political objectives. The Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) confirmed in September 2005 that the IRA had effectively put its weapons "beyond use." A series of reports by the International Monitoring Commission also noted significant progress by the IRA in its move away from criminality. Following upon this momentum, the British and Irish Governments in April 2006 launched a new negotiation process that envisioned the restoration of the Assembly and the selection of the First

Minister and Deputy First Minister by year's end. This process led to a summit at St. Andrews, Scotland, in October 2006, brokered by Irish Prime Minister (Taoiseach) Bertie Ahern and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, which achieved agreement between Sinn Fein and the DUP on the process for restoring power to the Northern Ireland Assembly. Elections for the Assembly took place on March 7, 2007, which led to the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly on May 8, 2007. DUP leader Ian Paisley was elected First Minister, while Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness became Deputy First Minister.

Two breakthroughs enabled this historic agreement to proceed: Sinn Fein's decision at an extraordinary Ard Fheis ("AR-desh," party conference) on January 28 to endorse policing and justice; and the DUP's decision to contest the March 7 election, signaling that the party would agree to share power with Sinn Fein in a restored Assembly. In the meantime, both the British and Irish Governments have offered significant new financial packages for the new Assembly.

The Special Envoy for the Northern Ireland Peace Process is Paula Dobriansky, who coordinates with the U.S. Missions in London, Belfast and Dublin to reinforce the views of the British and Irish Governments that the newly restored Northern Ireland Assembly must govern effectively in order to achieve economic growth and community reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

The United States also continues to provide funding ($13.5 million in 2007) for projects administered under the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), created in 1986 to generate economic opportunity and cross-community engagement in the border areas, both North and South. Since the IFI's establishment, the U.S. Government has contributed over $482 million, roughly half of total IFI funding.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Mary MCALEESE**
Prime Min.: **Brian COWEN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Mary COUGHLAN**
Min. for Agriculture, Fisheries, & Food: **Brendan SMITH**
Min. for Arts, Sport, & Tourism: **Martin CULLEN**
Min. for Communications, Energy, & Natural Resources: **Eamon RYAN**
Min. for Community, Rural, & Gaeltacht Affairs: **Eamon O'CUIV**
Min. for Defense: **Willie O'DEA**
Min. for Education & Science: **Batt O'KEEFFE**
Min. for Enterprise, Trade, & Employment: **Mary COUGHLAN**
Min. for Environment, Heritage, & Local Government: **John GORMLEY**
Min. for Finance: **Brian LENIHAN**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Micheal MARTIN**
Min. for Health & Children: **Mary HARNEY**
Min. for Justice, Equality, & Law Reform: **Dermot AHERN**
Min. for Social & Family Affairs: **Mary HANAFIN**
Min. for Transport & Marine: **Noel DEMPSEY**
Attorney Gen.: **Paul GALLAGHER**
Governor, Central Bank of Ireland: **John HURLEY**
Ambassador to the US: **Michael COLLINS**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **John Paul KAVANAGH**

The Irish Embassy in the United States is at 2234 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-462-3939/40/41/42). Irish Consulates are located in New York, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco.

ECONOMY

Ireland boasts a vibrant, globalized economy, with GDP per capita second only to Luxembourg's in the EU. The "Celtic Tiger" period of the mid to late 1990s saw several years of double-digit GDP growth, driven by a progressive industrial policy that boosted large-scale foreign direct investment and exports. GDP growth dipped during the immediate post-September 11, 2001 global economic slowdown, but has averaged roughly 5% yearly since 2004, the best performance for this period among the original EU 15 member states. Between 2004 and 2007, the Irish economy generated roughly 90,000 new jobs annually, attracting over 200,000 foreign workers, mostly from the new EU member states, in an unprecedented immigration influx. The construction sector has accounted for approximately one-quarter of these jobs. However, the Irish economy began to experience a slowdown in 2008, with the government forecasting 0.5% GDP growth in 2008. Some economists believe that the economy will fall into recession this year. The cause of the downturn has been a marked slowdown in Ireland's housing market. The government plans to cut spending over the next two years by just over $2 billion as a result of a fall in tax receipts, again, largely as a result of less construction-related activity.

Economic and trade ties are an important facet of overall U.S.-Irish relations. In 2007, U.S. exports to Ireland were valued at $9 billion, while Irish exports to the U.S. totaled $30.4 billion, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. The range of U.S. exports includes electrical components and equipment, computers and peripherals, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and livestock feed. Irish exports to the United States represent approximately 20% of all Irish exports, and have roughly the same value as Irish exports to the U.K. (inclusive of Northern Ireland). Exports to the United States include alcoholic beverages, chemicals and related products, electronic data processing equipment, electrical machinery, textiles and clothing, and glassware. According to Ireland's Central Statistical Office, Irish exports to the United States from January to September 2006 rose by 7% compared to the same period in 2005, while Irish imports from the United States from January to September 2006 fell by 14% compared to the same period in 2005.

U.S. investment has been particularly important to the growth and modernization of Irish industry over the past 25 years, providing new

technology, export capabilities, and employment opportunities. As of year-end 2007, the stock of U.S. foreign direct investment in Ireland stood at $85 billion, more than the U.S. total for China, India, Russia, and Brazil—the so-called BRIC countries—combined. Currently, there are approximately 620 U.S. subsidiaries in Ireland, employing roughly 100,000 people and spanning activities from manufacturing of high-tech electronics, computer products, medical supplies, and pharmaceuticals to retailing, banking, finance, and other services. In more recent years, Ireland has also become an important research and development (R&D) center for U.S. firms in Europe.

Many U.S. businesses find Ireland an attractive location to manufacture for the EU market, since it is inside the EU customs area and uses the euro. In 2005, U.S. firms accounted for 61% of Ireland's total exports. Other reasons for Ireland's attractiveness include: a 12.5% corporate tax rate for domestic and foreign firms; the quality and flexibility of the English-speaking work force; cooperative labor relations; political stability; pro-business government policies; a transparent judicial system; strong intellectual property protection; and the pulling power of existing companies operating successfully (a "clustering" effect). Factors that negatively affect Ireland's ability to attract investment include: increasing labor and energy costs (especially when compared to low-cost countries in Eastern Europe and Asia), skilled labor shortages, inadequate infrastructure (such as in the transportation and Internet/broadband sectors), and price levels that are ranked among the highest in Europe.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Ireland is a member of numerous international organizations, including the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the European Union. Ireland has been an important contributor to numerous international peacekeeping missions, such as in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Liberia (UNIMIL), and the Balkans (KFOR and EUFOR). Ireland's overseas development assistance focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa and stands at 5% of GDP.

U.S.-IRISH RELATIONS

U.S. relations with Ireland have long been based on common ancestral ties and shared values. These relations have broadened and matured, given the significant U.S. role in Ireland's economic success and cooperation on global challenges. Besides regular dialogue on political and economic issues, the U.S. and Irish Governments have official exchanges in areas such as medical research and education.

With Ireland's membership in the European Union, the discussion of EU trade and economic policies, as well as other aspects of EU policy, is also a key element in the U.S.-Irish relationship. In recent years, Ireland has attempted to act as a diplomatic bridge between the United States and European Union. During its 2004 EU presidency, Ireland worked to strengthen U.S.-EU ties that had been strained by the Iraq war, and the current EU Ambassador to the United States is former Irish Prime Minister John Bruton.

Emigration, long a vital element in the U.S.-Irish relationship, declined significantly with Ireland's economic boom in the 1990s. For the first time in its modern history, Ireland is experiencing high levels of inward migration, a phenomenon with political, economic, and social consequences. However, Irish citizens do continue the common practice of taking temporary residence overseas for work or study, mainly in the U.S., U.K., and elsewhere in Europe, before returning to establish careers in Ireland.

The U.S. J-1 visa program, for example, remains a popular means for Irish youths to work temporarily in the United States.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

DUBLIN (E) 42 Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, APO/FPO 5290 Dublin Pl, Dulles, VA 20189-5290, 353 1 668-7122, Fax 353 1 668-9946, INMARSAT Tel 881631438814 (Iridium), Workweek: 8:30 am -5:00 pm, Website: http://dublin.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Jacqueline Perry
AMB OMS:	Renee M Cummings
CG OMS:	Brenda Daly
DHS/CIS:	Juan Soltaro
DHS/ICE:	Scottt Davis/London
FCS:	Vacant
FM:	Robert Warner
HRO:	Mgtoff
MGT:	Sandra J Cecchini
POL/ECO:	Dwight Nystrom
AMB:	Thomas C. Foley
CG:	Daniel Toma
CON:	Gillen, Matthew
DCM:	Robert J Faucher
PAO:	Sheila Paskman
GSO:	Col. Christopher O'Connor
RSO:	Terry Cobble
AGR:	Besa Kotati/London
CLO:	Noelle Rush
DAO:	Col Paul Flynn
DEA:	Bruce Travers/London
FAA:	Christopher Barks/London
FMO:	Mgtoff
IMO:	Arthur T Day
IPO:	Chad A O'Brien
IRS:	Linda M. Garrard/London
ISSO:	Janet R Meyer
LEGATT:	Mark Bullock/London
POL:	Theodore Pierce

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 2, 2008

Country Description: Ireland is a highly developed democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A passport is necessary, but a visa is not required for tourist or business stays of up to three months.

Visit the Embassy of Ireland web site for the most current visa information, or contact the embassy at 2234 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington,

DC 20008, tel: (202) 462-3939, or the nearest Irish consulate in Boston, Chicago, New York or San Francisco.

Safety and Security: Ireland remains largely free of terrorist incidents. While the 1998 ceasefire in Northern Ireland is holding, there have been spates of violence in Northern Ireland associated with paramilitary organizations. These incidents have the potential for some spillover into Ireland. Travelers to Northern Ireland should consult the Country Specific Information for the United Kingdom and Gibraltar. Several Americans have reported incidents of verbal abuse and one reported a physical assault apparently in reaction to U.S. policy on the war on terrorism. As elsewhere in Europe, there have been public protests, which for the most part are small, peaceful and well policed. Americans are advised, nonetheless, to avoid public demonstrations in general and to monitor local media when protests occur.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Ireland has a low rate of violent crime. There have been a limited number of incidents in which foreigners and tourists have been victims of assault, including instances of violence toward those who appear to be members of racial minority groups. In addition, there have been several reported assaults in Dublin by small, unorganized gangs roaming the streets in the early morning hours after the pubs close. There is a high incidence of petty crime—mostly theft, burglary and purse snatching—in major tourist areas. Thieves target rental cars and tourists, particularly in the vicinity of tourist attractions, and some purse and bag snatching incidents in these areas have turned violent, especially in Dublin. Travelers should take extra caution to safeguard passports and wallets from pickpockets and bag snatchers.

Crimes involving credit and debit cards and automated teller machines (ATMs) are also a concern. Travelers should protect their PIN numbers at all times and avoid using ATM machines that appear to have been tampered with. There has been an increase in Ireland of the use of "skimmers" on ATM machines, especially in tourist areas. Skimmers are usually small electronic devices that are attached to the outside of an ATM machine in order to "skim" the ATM or credit card data for later criminal use. Most ATMs in Ireland now have electronic warnings about their use and advise customers to look closely at the ATM before using it.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime in Ireland, in addition to reporting to local police (Gardai), please contact the U.S. Embassy in Dublin for assistance. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, contacting family members or friends, and learning how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime are solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The Irish Tourist Assistance Service (ITAS) is a free nationwide service offering support and assistance to tourists who are victimized while visiting Ireland. If you are a tourist victim of crime, report the incident to the nearest Garda Station (police station), which will contact ITAS. All tourist victims of crime are referred to ITAS by the Gardai.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Ireland is 999 or 122.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Modern medical facilities and highly skilled medical practitioners are available in Ireland. Because of high demand, however, access to medical specialists can be difficult and admissions to hospitals for certain non-life-threatening medical conditions may require spending significant periods of time on waiting lists. Those traveling to or intending to reside in Ireland who may require medical treatment while in the country should consult with their personal physicians prior to traveling. Over-the-counter medication is widely available. Irish pharmacists may not be able to dispense medication prescribed by your U.S. physician and may direct you to obtain a prescription from an Irish doctor before providing you with your required medication. A list of Irish general practitioners in each area of Ireland may be obtained from the web site of the Irish College of General Practitioners at http://www.icgp.ie/go/find_a_gp. Emergency services usually respond quickly.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Ireland.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/countries/irl/en. Further health information for travelers is available online at http://www.who.int/ith.

Foot and Mouth Disease: The Irish Department of Agriculture and Food wishes to advise all incoming passengers to Ireland that the current Foot and Mouth situation in Great Britain represents a high risk of the spread of disease to Ireland. If you are travel-

ing from Great Britain to Ireland, and have visited a farm with cattle, sheep, goats, or pigs on your travels, you must report to the Irish Department of Agriculture and Food office at the port of entry. Fresh meat or unpasteurized milk products bought in Great Britain may not be brought into Ireland. If you are carrying any of these products they must be disposed of in the bins provided at the port of entry. For further information, please visit www.agriculture.gov.ie.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Ireland is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in every particular location or circumstance.

As driving is on the left side of the road in Ireland, motorists without experience in left-drive countries should be especially cautious. Tourists driving on the wrong side of the road are the cause of several serious accidents each year. Turning on red is not legal in Ireland. The vast majority of the rental cars are stick shift; it can be difficult to find automatic transmission rental cars. Road conditions are generally good, but once off main highways, country roads quickly become narrow, uneven and winding. Roads are more dangerous during the summer and on holiday weekends due to an increase in traffic. More information on driving in Ireland can be found on the U.S. Embassy in Dublin web site.

For specific information concerning Irish driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please visit the official tourism guide for Ireland at Tourism Ireland web site at at http://www.tourismireland.com. Taxis are reasonably priced but availability varies with time of day and where you are in the country. Bus service in the cities is generally adequate, though many buses are overcrowded and frequently late. Inter-city bus and train services are reasonably good.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Ireland's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Ireland's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site.

Special Circumstances: Most Irish banks will not accept U.S. $100 bills. ATMs are widely available, but some, particularly in rural areas, may not accept cards from U.S. banks. Credit cards are widely accepted throughout Ireland. A number of travelers have been told by their airline that their passport must remain valid for six months after their entry into Ireland.

The Government of Ireland has advised that this is a recommendation of the airline industry and is not an Irish legal requirement. Travelers must be in possession of a valid passport to travel.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Irish laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Ireland are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in Ireland and the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Ireland are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Dublin through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Ireland. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Dublin. By registering, Americans make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 42 Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, telephone (353) (1) 668-8777, after hours number: (353) (1) 668-9612, fax: (353) (1) 668-8056, and on the Internet at http://dublin.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The following is intended as a very general guide to assist U.S. citizens who plan to adopt a child from Ireland and apply for an immigrant visa for the child to come to the United States. The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of Ireland is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate only one immigrant visa has been issued to an Irish orphan in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority in Ireland: The government office responsible for adoptions in Ireland is:

Adoption Board (An Bord Uchtala),
Shelbourne House
Shelbourne Road
Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
Tel: 353-1-667-1392
Fax: 353-1-667-1438
Website: www.adoptionboard.ie

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Other than widows or widowers, unmarried individuals may not adopt Irish children. A couple adopting a child to whom they are not related must both be at least 21 years of age.

Where the child is being adopted by a married couple and one of them is the biological mother or father or a relative of the child, only one of them must have attained the age of 21 years. Both the biological parent and the step-parent adopt the child, thus changing the biological parent's legal relationship to the child.

Irish law does not lay down upper age limits for adopting parents. However, age is considered a significant factor by the societies and health boards when assessing a couple's suitability to adopt and most Irish adoption agencies apply their own upper age limits.

The following persons are eligible to adopt:

- A married couple living together. This is the only circumstance in which the law permits the adoption of a child by more than one person.
- A maried person alone. In this circumstance, the spouse's consent to adopt must be obtained, unless they are living apart and are separated because: (i). there is a court decree or deed of separation; or (ii). the absent spouse has deserted the prospective adoptive parent; or (iii). the prospective adoptive parent has left the other spouse based on that other spouse's conduct.
- The mother, father or a relative of a specific child (relative meaning a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt of the child to be adopted and/or the spouse of any such relative). In this case, the term "relative" is taken to mean a biological relative of either the biological mother or father.
- A widow or widower.

Persons not falling into one of the categories and above may only adopt where the Board is satisfied that, in the particular circumstances of the case, it is desirable to grant an order.

A sole applicant who does not come within the classes of persons defined under c) and d) may only adopt where the Board is satisfied that, in the particular circumstances of the case, it is desirable to grant an order. It is not possible for two unmarried persons to adopt jointly.

If the adopting parents, child and birth parent(s) are not all of the same religion, the birth parent(s) must know the religion (if any) of each of the adopting parents when giving consent to the child's adoption. The identity of the adoptive parents need not be disclosed to the biological parents, merely their religious preference.

The Adoption Board cannot make an adoption order unless it is satisfied that each of the adopting parents is a suitable person to have parental rights and duties in respect

Residency Requirements: Adopting parents must be ordinarily resident in Ireland and have been so resident for at least one year before the date of the making of the adoption order.

Time Frame: From start of process until the child is matched with prospective adopters is approximately 12 to15 months. Adoptive parents who plan to file an I-600 must finalize the adoption within 18 months of filing their I-600A in the United States.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The registered adoption societies and the health boards are the only agencies legally entitled to place children for adoption. A number of the societies are operated by, or in association with, the local Irish health authority. There is no Irish government-approved attorney or firm of attorneys. A list of approved adoption agencies can be found at: http://www.adoptionboard.ie/domestic/supportgroups.php.

Adoption Fees: Attorney fees: Vary depending on the firm and the complexity of the case:

- Adoption Agency fees: No Fees
- Health Board fees: No Fees
- Adoption Board fees: No Fees
- Estimated average cost to parents of adoption in Ireland: No maximum

Domestic Adoption Within Ireland: All applications for adoption orders are made to the Adoption Board, an independent statutory body. The primary function of the Board is to approve or refuse applications for Adoption orders in relation to Irish adoptions.

A couple wishing to have a child placed with them for adoption should apply to a registered adoption agency or their local health board to initiate the process. They will undergo an assessment process to determine whether they are considered eligible to adopt. Those who are considered ineligible to adopt for any reason can appeal the decision of the assessors if they wish. Those considered eligible can then seek a child to adopt.

A couple seeking permission to adopt will have to undergo a detailed assessment by either the Registered Adoption Society or the Health Board (not the Adoption Board) through which they have chosen to apply The purpose of this assessment is to

establish the couple's suitability as prospective adoptive parents. The assessment will be carried out by one of the agency's social workers. It will include a number of joint and individual interviews and visits to the couple's home. The couple will also need to undergo a medical examination.

The Adoption Board cannot make an adoption order unless it is satisfied as to the suitability of the adoption parents. The Board has a team of social workers who visit the homes of applicants for adoption orders and report to the Board on their suitability. This second set of home visits is completely separate from those initially conducted by either the Adoption Society or Health board.

The Adoption Board does not usually finalize an adoption until the adopting parents have had the child in their care for at least six months. The Board may require the applicants to have the child in their care for a longer period in certain circumstances.

When the Adoption Board is satisfied that an adoption is ready to be finalized, it will invite the adoptive parents and child to attend the hearing of their application. At the oral hearing, the applicants are asked certain questions under oath in order to establish their identity and eligibility to adopt. If these questions are answered to the satisfaction of the Board, the Board then makes an adoption order of the child.

Intercountry Adoption in Third Countries: The pre-approval procedures for intercountry adoption are similar to domestic adoption above. The adoption of the child will by governed by the child's country of origin. For more information on Irish government requirements for such cases, prospective adoptive parents should visit www.adoptionboard.ie/intercountry/index.php.

Documents Required: If a couple is accepted by an adoption agency and have a child placed with them, the next step is to apply to the Adoption Board for an adoption order. Certain documents specified by the Adoption Board must be sent to the Board in support of the application, typically marriage certificates, birth certificates, etc.

Embassy of Ireland
2234 Massachusetts Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C. 20008
Tel: 202 462-3939
Fax: (202) 232 5993
http://www.irelandemb.org
Ireland also has Consulates General in Boston, Chicago, New York, and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publicationM-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
42 Elgin Road
Ballsbridge Dublin 4
Tel: (353)-(1)-668-8777,
After hours number:
(353) (1) 668-9612
Fax: (353) (1) 668-8056
Email: ACS_Dublin@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Ireland may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Dublin or the Irish Adoption Board. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Absent a court order, married parents in Ireland are assumed to share joint custody of any minor children. In divorce and custodial proceedings, it is rare, but not unheard of, for the father to be awarded custody. The mother of a child born out-of-wedlock in Ireland is assumed to have sole and full custody of the child. If the father's name does not appear on the birth certificate, he may have a difficult time even obtaining access to the child even though he can still be brought to court and ordered to pay child support.

A U.S. court order regarding custody is not enforceable in Ireland, but will be taken into account as a courtesy, if presented to the Irish court during a custody hearing in Ireland.

The child of an Irish citizen automatically acquires Irish citizenship regardless of where the birth occurred (with a few exceptions). The signatures of both parents are required on an application for an Irish passport for a minor child. If your child has a claim to Irish citizenship, you may be able to prevent the issuance of an Irish passport to your child upon presentation of a court order certified by the clerk of the court. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

The Hague Convention: The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Hague Convention) came into force between the United States and the Republic of Ireland on October 1, 1991. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would

apply to children abducted or retained after October 1, 1991. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to the Republic of Ireland prior to October 1, 1991 may still submit applications for access/visitation to the child under the Hague Convention. All countries party to the Hague Convention have a Central Authority that is responsible for processing Hague applications. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

The designated Central Authority for the Republic of Ireland is the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. They are located at 43/49 Mespil Road, Dublin 4, Ireland. The international telephone number is 011-353-1-667-0344 and the international telefax number is 011-353-1-667-0367. The Central Authority e-mail address is child_abduction@justice.ie.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities, or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. You should be aware that filing criminal child abduction charges in the United States against a taking parent could jeopardize an Irish Hague Convention case.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



ISRAEL

Compiled from the October 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
State of Israel

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 20,330 sq. km. (7,850 sq. mi.) including Jerusalem; about the size of New Jersey.

Cities: Capital—Jerusalem. Israel proclaimed Jerusalem as its capital in 1950. The United States, like nearly all other countries, maintains its embassy in Tel Aviv. Other cities—Tel Aviv, Haifa.

Terrain: Plains, mountains, desert, and coast.

Climate: Temperate, except in desert areas.

People

Population: (2007 est.) 6.43 million.

Annual population growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.2%.

Ethnic groups: Jews 76.2%; Arabs 19.5%; other 4.3%.

Religions: Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Druze.

Languages: Hebrew (official), Arabic (official), English, Russian.

Education: Years compulsory—11. Literacy—96.9% (female 95.6%; male 98.3%).

Health: Infant mortality rate (2005 est.)—7.03/1,000 births. Life expectancy at birth—79.32 years; female 81.55 years, male 77.21 years.

Work force: (2.68 million; Central Bureau for Statistics, 2004) Agriculture—2.1%; manufacturing—16.2%; electricity and water supply—0.8%; construction—5.4%; trade and repair of motor vehicles—3.6%; accommodation services and restaurants—4.3%; transport, storage, and communication—6.5%; banking, insurance, and finance—3.3%; business activities—13.4%; public administration—4.7%; education—12.7%; health, welfare, and social services—10.7%; community, social, and personal services—4.6%; services for households by domestic personnel—1.6%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: May 14, 1948.

Constitution: None; however, the Declaration of Establishment (1948), the Basic Laws of the parliament (the Knesset), and the Israeli citizenship law fill many of the functions of a constitution.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state); prime minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral Knesset. Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political parties: Labor, Likud, Kadima, and various other secular and religious parties, including some wholly or predominantly supported by Israel's Arab citizens. A total of 12 parties are represented in the 17th Knesset, elected March 2006.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $170.3 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2006) 4.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2006) $26,800.

Currency: Shekel (4.13 shekels = 1 U.S. dollar; 2007 est.).

Natural resources: Copper, phosphate, bromide, potash, clay, sand, sulfur, bitumen, manganese.

Agriculture: Products—citrus and other fruits, vegetables, beef, dairy, and poultry products.

Industry: Types—high-technology projects (including aviation, communications, computer-aided design and manufactures, medical electronics, fiber optics), wood and paper products, potash and phosphates, food, beverages, tobacco, caustic soda, cement, construction, plastics, chemical products, diamond cutting and polishing, metal products, textiles, and footwear.

Trade: Exports (2006 est.)—$42.86 billion. Exports include polished diamonds, electronic communication, medical and scientific equipment, chemicals and chemical products, electronic components and computers, machinery and equipment, transport equipment, rubber, plastics, and textiles. Imports (excluding defense imports, 2006 est.)—$47.8 billion: raw materials, diamonds, energy ships and airplanes, machinery, equipment, land transportation equipment for investment, and consumer goods. Major partners—U.S., U.K., Germany; exports—U.S., Bel-

gium, Hong Kong; imports—U.S., Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, U.K.

PEOPLE

Of the approximately 6.43 million Israelis in 2007, about 76% were counted as Jewish, though some of those are not considered Jewish under Orthodox Jewish law. Since 1989, nearly a million immigrants from the former Soviet Union have arrived in Israel, making this the largest wave of immigration since independence. In addition, an estimated 105,000 members of the Ethiopian Jewish community have immigrated to Israel, 14,000 of them during the dramatic May 1991 Operation Solomon airlift. 32.9% of Israelis were born outside of Israel.

The three broad Jewish groupings are the Ashkenazim, or Jews who trace their ancestry to western, central, and eastern Europe; the Sephardim, who trace their origin to Spain, Portugal, southern Europe, and North Africa; and Eastern or Oriental Jews, who descend from ancient communities in Islamic lands. Of the non-Jewish population, about 68% are Muslims, about 9% are Christian, and about 7% are Druze.

Education is compulsory from age 6 to 16 and is free up to age 18. The school system is organized into kindergartens, 6-year primary schools, 3-year junior secondary schools, and 3-year senior secondary schools, after which a comprehensive examination is offered for university admissions. There are seven university-level institutions in Israel, a number of regional colleges, and an Open University program.

With a population drawn from more than 100 countries on 5 continents, Israeli society is rich in cultural diversity and artistic creativity. The arts are actively encouraged and supported by the government. The Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra performs throughout the country and frequently tours abroad. The Jerusalem Symphony and the New Israel Opera also tour frequently, as do other musical ensembles. Almost every municipality has a chamber orchestra or ensemble, many boasting the talents of gifted performers from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Israel has several professional ballet and modern dance companies, and folk dancing, which draws upon the cultural heritage of many immigrant groups, continues to be very popular. There is great public interest in the theater; the repertoire covers the entire range of classical and contemporary drama in translation as well as plays by Israeli authors. Of the three major repertory companies, the most famous, Habimah, was founded in 1917.

Active artist colonies thrive in Safed, Jaffa, and Ein Hod, and Israeli painters and sculptors exhibit works worldwide. Israel boasts more than 120 museums, including the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls along with an extensive collection of regional archaeological artifacts, art, and Jewish religious and folk exhibits. Israelis are avid newspaper readers, with more than 90% of Israeli adults reading a newspaper at least once a week. Major daily papers are in Hebrew; others are in Arabic, English, French, Polish, Yiddish, Russian, Hungarian, and German.

HISTORY

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 was preceded by more than 50 years of efforts to establish a sovereign nation as a homeland for Jews. These efforts were initiated by Theodore Herzl, founder of the Zionist movement, and were given added impetus by the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which asserted the British Government's support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

In the years following World War I, Palestine became a British Mandate and Jewish immigration steadily increased, as did violence between Palestine's Jewish and Arab communities. Mounting British efforts to restrict this immigration were countered by international support for Jewish national aspirations following the near-extermination of European Jewry by the Nazis during World War II. This support led to the 1947 UN partition plan, which would have divided Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under UN administration.

On May 14, 1948, soon after the British quit Palestine, the State of Israel was proclaimed and was immediately invaded by armies from neighboring Arab states, which rejected the UN partition plan. This conflict, Israel's War of Independence, was concluded by armistice agreements between Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria in 1949 and resulted in a 50% increase in Israeli territory.

In 1956, French, British, and Israeli forces engaged Egypt in response to its nationalization of the Suez Canal and blockade of the Straits of Tiran. Israeli forces withdrew in March 1957, after the United Nations established the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Gaza Strip and Sinai. This war resulted in no territorial shifts and was followed by several years of terrorist incidents and retaliatory acts across Israel's borders.

In June 1967, Israeli forces struck targets in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in response to Egyptian President Nasser's ordered withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from the Sinai Peninsula and the buildup of Arab armies along Israel's borders. After 6 days, all parties agreed to a cease-fire, under which Israel retained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, the formerly Jordanian-controlled West Bank of the Jordan River, and East Jerusalem. On November 22, 1967, the Security Council adopted Resolution 242, the "land for peace" formula, which called for the establishment of a just and lasting peace based on Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 in return for the end of all states of belligerency, respect for the sovereignty of all states in the area, and the right to live in peace within secure, recognized boundaries.



The following years were marked by continuing violence across the Suez Canal, punctuated by the 1969-70 war of attrition. On October 6, 1973—Yom Kippur (the Jewish Day of Atonement), the armies of Syria and Egypt launched an attack against Israel. Although the Egyptians and Syrians initially made significant advances, Israel was able to push the invading armies back beyond the 1967 cease-fire lines by the time the United States and the Soviet Union helped bring an end to the fighting. In the UN Security Council, the United States supported Resolution 338, which reaffirmed Resolution 242 as the framework for peace and called for peace negotiations between the parties.

In the years that followed, sporadic clashes continued along the cease-fire lines but guided by the U.S., Egypt, and Israel continued negotiations. In November 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made a historic visit to Jerusalem, which opened the door for the 1978 Israeli-Egyptian peace summit convened at Camp David by President Carter. These negotiations led to a 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, pursuant to which Israel withdrew from the Sinai in 1982, signed by President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menahem Begin of Israel.

In the years following the 1948 war, Israel's border with Lebanon was quiet relative to its borders with other neighbors. After the expulsion of Palestinian fighters from Jordan in 1970 and their influx into southern Lebanon, however, hostilities along Israel's northern border increased and Israeli forces crossed into Lebanon. After passage of Security Council Resolution 425, calling for Israeli withdrawal and the creation of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon peacekeeping force (UNIFIL), Israel withdrew its troops.

In June 1982, following a series of cross-border terrorist attacks and the attempted assassination of the Israeli Ambassador to the U.K., Israel invaded Lebanon to fight the forces of Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO with-

drew its forces from Lebanon in August 1982. Israel, having failed to finalize an agreement with Lebanon, withdrew most of its troops in June 1985 save for a residual force which remained in southern Lebanon to act as a buffer against attacks on northern Israel. These remaining forces were completely withdrawn in May 2000 behind a UN-brokered delineation of the Israel-Lebanon border (the Blue Line). Hezbollah forces in Southern Lebanon continued to attack Israeli positions south of the Blue Line in the Sheba Farms/Har Dov area of the Golan Heights.

The victory of the U.S.-led coalition in the Persian Gulf War of 1991 opened new possibilities for regional peace. In October 1991, the United States and the Soviet Union convened the Madrid Conference, in which Israeli, Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, and Palestinian leaders laid the foundations for ongoing negotiations designed to bring peace and economic development to the region. Within this framework, Israel and the PLO signed a Declaration of Principles on September 13, 1993, which established an ambitious set of objectives relating to a transfer of authority from Israel to an interim Palestinian authority. Israel and the PLO subsequently signed the Gaza-Jericho Agreement on May 4, 1994, and the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities on August 29, 1994, which began the process of transferring authority from Israel to the Palestinians.

On October 26, 1994, Israel and Jordan signed a historic peace treaty, witnessed by President Clinton. This was followed by Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and PLO Chairman Arafat's signing of the historic Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on September 28, 1995. This accord, which incorporated and superseded previous agreements, broadened Palestinian self-government and provided for cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians in several areas.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated on November 4, 1995, by a right-wing Jewish radical, bringing the increasingly bitter national debate over the peace process to a climax. Subsequent Israeli governments continued to negotiate with the PLO resulting in additional agreements, including the Wye River and the Sharm el-Sheikh memoranda. However, a summit hosted by President Clinton at Camp David in July 2000 to address permanent status issues—including the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, final security arrangements, borders, and relations and cooperation with neighboring states—failed to produce an agreement.

Following the failed talks, widespread violence broke out in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza in September 2000. In April 2001 the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact Finding Committee, commissioned by the October 2000 Middle East Peace Summit and chaired by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, submitted its report, which recommended an immediate end to the violence followed by confidence-building measures and a resumption of security cooperation and peace negotiations. Building on the Mitchell report, In April 2003, the Quartet (the U.S., UN, European Union (EU), and the Russian Federation) announced the "roadmap," a performance-based plan to bring about two states, Israel and a democratic, viable Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Despite the promising developments of spring 2003, violence continued and in September 2003 the first Palestinian Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), resigned after failing to win true authority to restore law and order, fight terror, and reform Palestinian institutions. In response to the deadlock, in the winter of 2003-2004 Prime Minister Sharon put forward his Gaza disengagement initiative, proposing the withdrawal of Israeli settlements from Gaza as well as parts of the northern West Bank. President Bush endorsed this initiative in an exchange of letters with Prime Minister Sharon on April 14, 2004, viewing Gaza disengagement as an opportunity to move towards implementation of the two-state vision and begin the development of Palestinian institutions. In a meeting in May 2004 the Quartet endorsed the initiative, which was approved by the Knesset in October 2004.

The run-up to disengagement saw a flurry of diplomatic activity, including the February 2005 announcement of Lieutenant General William Ward as U.S. Security Coordinator; the March 2005 Sharon-Abbas summit in Sharm el-Sheikh; the return of Egyptian and Jordanian ambassadors to Israel; and the May 2005 appointment of former World Bank president James D. Wolfensohn as Special Envoy for Gaza Disengagement to work for a revitalization of the Palestinian economy after disengagement. Wolfensohn's direct involvement spurred Israeli-Palestinian agreement on the Gaza 'crossings" at Karni and Erez, on the demolition of settler homes, water, electricity, and communications infrastructure issues, as well as other issues related to the Palestinian economy.

On August 15, 2005, Israel began implementing its disengagement from the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli Defense Forces completed their withdrawal, including the dismantling of 17 settlements, on September 12. After broad recognition for Prime Minister Sharon's accomplishment at that fall's UN General Assembly, international attention quickly turned to efforts to strengthen Palestinian governance and the economy in Gaza. The United States brokered a landmark Agreement on Movement and Access between the parties in November 2005 to facilitate further progress on Palestinian economic issues. However, the terrorist organization Hamas—building on popular support for its "resistance" to Israeli occupation and a commitment to clean up the notorious corruption of the Palestinian Authority (PA)—took a majority in the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, with Hamas leader Ismail Haniya as Prime Minister. The Israeli leadership pledged not to work with a Palestinian government in which Hamas had a role.

Shortly following Hamas' PLC victory, the Quartet—comprised of the United States, European Union, United Nations. and Russia—outlined three basic principles the Hamas-led PA must meet in order for the U.S. and the international community to reengage with the PA: renounce violence and terror, recognize Israel, and respect previous agreements, including the roadmap. The Hamas-led PA government rejected these principles, resulting in a Quartet statement of "grave concern" on March 30, 2006 and the suspension of U.S. assistance to the PA, complete prohibition on U.S. Government contacts with the PA, and prohibition of unlicensed transactions with the PA government. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) under the leadership of PLO Chairman and PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen), by contrast, remained consistently committed to the Quartet principles.

Despite several negotiated cease-fires between Hamas and Fatah, violent clashes in the Gaza Strip—and to a lesser extent in the West Bank—were commonplace between December 2006 and February 2007 and resulted in dozens of deaths and injuries. In an attempt to end the intra-Palestinian violence, the King of Saudi Arabia invited Palestinian rivals to Mecca, and on February 9, 2007, Abbas and Hamas leader Haniya agreed to the formation of a Palestinian national unity government and a cessation of violence. Hamas' rejectionist policies and violent behavior continued despite the formation of the national unity government.

In June 2007, Hamas effectively orchestrated a violent coup in Gaza. Hamas also launched scores of Qassam rockets into southern Israel in an attempt to involve Israel in the Hamas-Fatah conflict. On June 14, Palestinian Authority President Mahoud Abbas exercised his lawful authority by declaring a state of emergency, dissolving the national unity government, and replacing it with a new government with Salam Fayyad as Prime Minister.

The new Palestinian Authority government under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad has no elements controlled by Hamas or any other terrorist group. The new government is dedicated to peace and the Quartet principles and has been embraced politically and financially by the international community, including Israel.

GOVERNMENT

Israel is a parliamentary democracy. Its governmental system is based on several basic laws enacted by its unicameral parliament, the Knesset. The president (chief of state) is elected by the Knesset for a 5-year term.

The prime minister (head of government) exercises executive power and has in the past been selected by the president as the party leader most able to form a government. Between May 1996 and March 2001, Israelis voted for the prime minister directly. (The legislation, which required the direct election of the prime minister, was rescinded by the Knesset in March 2001.) The members of the cabinet must be collectively approved by the Knesset.

The Knesset's 120 members are elected by secret ballot to 4-year terms, although the prime minister may decide to call for new elections before the end of the 4-year term. Voting is for party lists rather than for individual candidates, and the total number of seats assigned each party reflects that party's percentage of the vote. Successful Knesset candidates are drawn from the lists in order of party-assigned rank. Under the present electoral system, all members of the Knesset are elected at large. The independent judicial system includes secular and religious courts. The courts' right of judicial review of the Knesset's legislation is limited. Judicial interpretation is restricted to problems of execution of laws and validity of subsidiary legislation. The highest court in Israel is the Supreme Court, whose judges are approved by the President.

Israel is divided into six districts, administration of which is coordinated by the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Defense is responsible for the administration of the occupied territories.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

The country has a caretaker government until the selection of a new prime minister. The prime minister automatically assumes any ministerial position vacated until the official appointment of another minister.

Pres.: **Shimon PERES**
Prime Min.: **Ehud OLMERT**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Tzipora "Tzipi" LIVNI**
Vice Prime Min.: **Haim RAMON**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Shalom SIMHON**
Min. of Communications: **Ariel ATIAS**
Min. of Defense: **Ehud BARAK**
Min. for Development of the Negev & Galilee: **Yaacov EDRI**
Min. of Education: **Yael "Yuli" TAMIR**
Min. of Environment: **Gideon EZRA**
Min. of Finance: **Roni BAR-ON**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Tzipora "Tzipi" LIVNI**
Min. of Health: **Yaacov BEN YIZRI**
Min. of Housing & Construction: **Zeev BOIM**
Min. of Immigrant Absorption: **Yaacov EDRI**
Min. of Industry, Trade, & Labor: **Eliyahu "Eli" YISHAI**
Min. of Interior: **Meir SHEETRIT**
Min. of Internal (Public) Security: **Avraham DICHTER**
Min. of Justice: **Daniel FRIEDMANN**
Min. of National Infrastructures: **Binyamin BEN ELIEZER**
Min. for Pensioner Affairs: **Rafael "Rafi" EITAN**
Min. of Religious Affairs: **Yitzhak COHEN**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Yitzhak HERZOG**
Min. of Science, Culture, & Sport: **Ghalib MAJADILAH**
Min. of Tourism: **Gideon EZRA**
Min. of Transportation & Road Safety: **Shaul MOFAZ**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Ruhama AVRAHAM**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Amichai "Ami" AYALON**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Yitzhak COHEN**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Meshulam NAHARI**
Attorney Gen.: **Menachem MAZUZ**

Governor, Bank of Israel: **Stanley FISCHER**
Ambassador to the US: **Salai MERIDOR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Gabriela SHALEV**

Israel maintains an embassy in the United States at 3514 International Drive NW, Washington DC, 20008 (tel. 202-364-5500). There also are consulates general in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

From the founding of Israel in 1948 until the election of May 1977, Israel was ruled by successive coalition governments led by the Labor alignment or its constituent parties. From 1967-70, the coalition government included all of Israel's parties except the communist party. After the 1977 election, the Likud bloc, then composed of Herut, the Liberals, and the smaller La'am Party, came to power forming a coalition with the National Religious Party, Agudat Israel, and others. As head of Likud, Menachem Begin became Prime Minister. The Likud retained power in the succeeding election in June 1981, and Begin remained Prime Minister. In the summer of 1983, Begin resigned and was succeeded by his Foreign Minister, Yitzhak Shamir.

After Prime Minister Shamir lost a Knesset vote of confidence early in 1984, new elections in July provided no clear winner, with both Labor and Likud considerably short of a Knesset majority and unable to form even narrow coalitions. After several weeks of difficult negotiations, they agreed on a government of national unity, including the rotation of the office of Prime Minister and the combined office of Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister midway through the government's 50-month term. During the first 25 months of unity government rule, Labor's Shimon Peres served as Prime Minister, while Likud's Shamir held the posts of Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, until they switched positions in October 1986. In November 1988 elections, Likud edged Labor out by one seat but was unable to form a coalition, producing another national unity government in January 1989. Yitzhak Shamir became Prime Minister, and Shimon Peres became Vice Prime Minister and Finance Minister. This government fell in March 1990, however, in a vote of no confidence precipitated by disagreement over the government's response to U.S. Secretary of State Baker's initiative in the peace process. Labor Party leader Peres was unable to attract sufficient support among the religious parties to form a government. Yitzhak Shamir then formed a Likud-led coalition government, including members from religious and right-wing parties.

Shamir's government took office in June 1990, and held power for 2 years. In the June 1992 national elections, the Labor Party reversed its electoral fortunes, taking 44 seats. Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin formed a coalition with Meretz (a group of three leftist parties) and Shas (an ultra-Orthodox religious party). The coalition included the support of two Arab-majority parties. Rabin became Prime Minister in July 1992, presiding over the signing of the Oslo accords with the Palestine Liberation Organization. However, Rabin was assassinated by a right-wing Jewish radical on November 4, 1995. Peres, then Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, once again became Prime Minister and immediately proceeded to carry forward the peace policies of the Rabin government and to implement Israel's Oslo commitments, including military redeployment in the West Bank and the holding of historic Palestinian elections on January 20, 1996.

Enjoying broad public support and anxious to secure his own mandate, Peres called for early elections after just 3 months in office. (They would have otherwise been held by the end of October 1996.) In late February and early March, a series of suicide bombing attacks by Palestinian terrorists took some 60 Israeli lives, seriously eroding public support for Peres and raising concerns about the peace process. Increased fighting in southern Lebanon, which also brought Katyusha rocket attacks against northern Israel, also raised tensions and weakened the government politically a month before the May 29 elections.

In those elections—the first direct election of a Prime Minister in Israeli history—Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu won by a narrow margin, having sharply criticized the government's peace policies for failing to protect Israeli security. Netanyahu subsequently formed a right-wing coalition government publicly committed to pursuing the peace process, but with an emphasis on security and reciprocity.

In 1999, with a shrunken coalition and facing increasing difficulty passing legislation and defeating no-confidence motions, Netanyahu dissolved parliament and called for new elections. This time, the Labor candidate—Ehud Barak—was victorious. Barak formed a mixed coalition government of secular and religious parties, with Likud in the opposition. In May 2000, Barak fulfilled one of his major campaign promises by withdrawing Israeli forces from Southern Lebanon. However, by mid-autumn, with the breakdown of the Camp David talks and the worsening security situation caused by the new intifada, Barak's coalition was in jeopardy. In December, he resigned as Prime Minister, precipitating a new prime ministerial election.

In a special election on February 6, 2001, after a campaign stressing security and the maintenance of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem, Likud leader Ariel Sharon defeated Barak by over 20 percentage points. As he had promised in his campaign, Sharon formed a broad unity government that included the Labor and Likud parties, the far-right parties, some smaller secular parties, and several religious parties. The unity government collapsed in late 2002, and new elections were held in January 2003. Sharon again won, and formed a new government consisting

of his own Likud party, the right-wing National Religious Party and National Union party, and centrist Shinui.

The summer of 2004 saw renewed instability in the government, as disagreement over the Gaza disengagement plan resulted in Sharon's firing two ministers of the National Union Party and accepting the resignation of a third from the National Religious Party in order to secure cabinet approval of the plan (it was endorsed on June 6, 2004). Continuing divisions within the Likud on next steps then prompted Ariel Sharon to leave the party in November 2005 to form the Kadima ("Forward") party and call new elections for March 2006. However, Sharon was unexpectedly incapacitated in January 2006 due to a severe stroke and leadership of Kadima shifted to Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who on March 28 led the party to 29 seats in the Knesset. Labor came in second with 19 seats, and Shas and Likud tied with 12. After intensive coalition negotiations, a new, Kadima-led government, with Labor as "senior partner," was sworn in on May 4, 2006.

ECONOMY

Israel has a diversified, technologically advanced economy with substantial but decreasing government ownership and a strong high-tech sector. The major industrial sectors include high-technology electronic and biomedical equipment, metal products, processed foods, chemicals, and transport equipment. Israel possesses a substantial service sector and is one of the world's centers for diamond cutting and polishing. It also is a world leader in software development and, prior to the violence that began in September 2000, was a major tourist destination.

Israel's strong commitment to economic development and its talented work force led to economic growth rates during the nation's first two decades that frequently exceeded 10% annually. The years after the 1973 Yom Kippur War were a lost decade economically, as growth stalled and inflation reached triple-digit levels. The successful economic stabilization plan implemented in 1985 and the subsequent introduction of market-oriented structural reforms reinvigorated the economy and paved the way for rapid growth in the 1990s.

A wave of Jewish immigration beginning in 1989, predominantly from the countries of the former U.S.S.R., brought nearly a million new citizens to Israel. These new immigrants, many of them highly educated, now constitute some 13% of Israel's 6.7 million inhabitants. Their successful absorption into Israeli society and its labor force forms a remarkable chapter in Israeli history. The skills brought by the new immigrants and their added demand as consumers gave the Israeli economy a strong upward push and in the 1990s, they played a key role in the ongoing development of Israel's high-tech sector.

During the 1990s, progress in the Middle East peace process, beginning with the Madrid Conference of 1991, helped to reduce Israel's economic isolation from its neighbors and opened up new markets to Israeli exporters farther afield. The peace process stimulated an unprecedented inflow of foreign investment in Israel, and provided a substantial boost to economic growth in the region over the last decade. The onset of the intifada beginning at the end of September of 2000, the downturn in the high-tech sector and Nasdaq crisis, and the slowdown of the global economy have all significantly affected the Israeli economy. However, despite the recent conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon, the Israeli economy grew during 2006.

Israeli companies, particularly in the high-tech area, have in the past enjoyed considerable success raising money on Wall Street and other world financial markets; Israel ranks second to Canada among foreign countries in the number of its companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges. Israel's tech market is very developed, and in spite of the pause in the industry's growth, the high-tech sector is likely to be the major driver of the Israeli economy. Almost half of Israel's exports are high tech. Most leading players, including Intel, IBM, and Cisco have a presence in Israel.

Growth was an exceptional 6.2% in 2000, due in part to a number of one-time high tech acquisitions and investments. This exceptional year was followed by two years of negative growth of -0.9% and -1%, respectively, in 2001 and 2002. As a result of the security situation and the associated downturn in the economy, there was a significant rise in unemployment and wage erosion. This led to a decline in private consumption in 2002, the first time that there had been negative private consumption since the early 1980s. However, following growth rates of 1.7% in 2003 and 4.4% in 2004, the Israeli economy entered into a period of stabilization and recovery after the deep recession of 2001 and 2002. Since then, the Israeli economy seems to have returned to a trend of consistent growth. The Israeli economy grew by 5.2% in 2005 and GDP per capita (U.S. $17,800) increased by 3.3%. The Israeli economy grew by an estimated 4.8% in 2006.

Exports of goods and services in Israel grew by 7% in 2005. Service and agricultural exports each increased by more than 10% in 2005, whereas exports increased by 5.6% and imports rose to 4.4%. Tourism revenues increased by 22.7% as a result of the dramatic increase following the intifada's subsidence. Israel's private consumption increased by 4% in 2005. The largest growth in private consumption was in the purchase of clothing, footwear, and personal effects, which increased by 10.2%, following an increase of 5.4% in 2004. Consumption of consumer durables grew much more slowly than in 2004, with an increase of only 3.4%, compared with 14.3% the previous year.

In the Israeli business sector, business GDP grew by 6.6% in 2005. According to CBS statistics, the transportation, storage, and communications industries grew by 9.2%, following growth of 6.6% in 2004. The GDP of the wholesale, retail, restau-

rant, and hotel sector increased by 8.1%, up from 6.1% in 2004. The GDP of the finance and business services sector in 2005 increased by 6.4%, up from the previous year's 6.1% growth rate.

The general consensus among economists is that Israel's economy is very strong and that its growth potential is in the 4% to 5% range.

The United States is Israel's largest trading partner. In 2005, two-way trade totaled some $26.6 billion, up 12% from 2004. The U.S. trade deficit with Israel was $7.1 billion in 2005, up 33% from 2004, due largely to rising Israeli exports to the U.S. U.S. exports to Israel rose 6.1% in 2005 to $9.7 billion, making Israel our 19th largest export market for goods. The principal goods exported from the U.S. include civilian aircraft parts, telecommunications equipment, semiconductors, civilian aircraft, electrical apparatus, and computer accessories. Israel's chief exports to the U.S. include diamonds, pharmaceutical preparations, telecommunications equipment, medicinal equipment, electrical apparatus, and cotton apparel. The two countries signed a free trade agreement (FTA) in 1985 that progressively eliminated tariffs on most goods traded between the two countries over the following 10 years. An agricultural trade accord signed in November 1996 addressed the remaining goods not covered in the FTA but has not entirely erased barriers to trade in the agricultural sector. Israel also has trade and cooperation agreements in place with the European Union, Canada, Mexico, and other countries.

Best prospect industry sectors in Israel for U.S. exporters are electricity and gas equipment, defense equipment, medical instruments and disposable products, industrial chemicals, telecommunication equipment, electronic components, building materials/construction industries (DIY and infrastructure), safety and security equipment and services, non-prescription drugs, travel and tourism services, and computer software.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In addition to seeking an end to hostilities with Arab forces, against which it has fought five wars since 1948, Israel has given high priority to gaining wide acceptance as a sovereign state with an important international role.

Before 1967, Israel had established diplomatic relations with a majority of the world's nations, except for the Arab states and most other Muslim countries. UN Security Council resolutions provided the basis for ceasefire and disengagement agreements concerning the Sinai and the Golan Heights between Israel, Egypt, and Syria and for promoting the Camp David accords and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. The Soviet Union and the communist states of Eastern Europe (except Romania) broke diplomatic relations with Israel during the 1967 war, but those relations were restored by 1991.

The landmark October 1991 Madrid conference recognized the importance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 in resolving regional disputes, and brought together for the first time Israel, the Palestinians, and the neighboring Arab countries, launching a series of direct bilateral and multilateral negotiations. These talks were designed to finally resolve outstanding security, border, and other issues between the parties while providing a basis for mutual cooperation on issues of general concern, including the status of refugees, arms control and regional security, water and environmental concerns, and economic development.

Today, Israel has diplomatic relations with 161 states. Following the signing of the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles on September 13, 1993, Israel established or renewed diplomatic relations with 36 countries. Israel has full diplomatic relations with Egypt, Jordan, and Mauritania. In addition, on October 1, 1994, the Gulf States publicly announced their support for a review of the Arab boycott, in effect abolishing the secondary and tertiary boycotts against Israel. Israel has diplomatic relations with nine non-Arab Muslim states and with 32 of the 43 Sub-Saharan states that are not members of the Arab League. Israel established relations with China and India in 1992 and with the Holy See in 1993.

DEFENSE

Israel's ground, air, and naval forces, known as the Israel Defense Force (IDF), fall under the command of a single general staff. Conscription is universal for Jewish men and women over the age of 18, although exemptions may be made on religious grounds. Druze, members of a small Islamic offshoot living in Israel's mountains, also serve in the IDF. Israeli Arabs, with the exception of some Bedouins, do not serve.

During 1950-66, Israel spent an average of 9% of GDP on defense. Real defense expenditures increased dramatically after both the 1967 and 1973 wars. Military spending in 2005 totaled $9.45 billion, which is equivalent to 7.7% of GDP, and represents 16.3% of government expenditures. The United States provides approximately $2.4 billion per year in security assistance.

In 1983, the United States and Israel established the Joint Political Military Group, which meets twice a year. Both the U.S. and Israel participate in joint military planning and combined exercises, and have collaborated on military research and weapons development.

U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS

Commitment to Israel's security and well being has been a cornerstone of U.S. policy in the Middle East since Israel's founding in 1948, in which the United States played a key supporting role. Israel and the United States are bound closely by historic and cultural ties as well as by mutual interests. Continuing U.S. economic and security assistance to Israel

acknowledges these ties and signals U.S. commitment. The broad issues of Arab-Israeli peace have been a major focus in the U.S.-Israeli relationship. U.S. efforts to reach a Middle East peace settlement are based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and have been based on the premise that as Israel takes calculated risks for peace the United States will help minimize those risks.

On a bilateral level, relations between the United States and Israel are continually strengthening in every field. In addition to the Joint Political-Military Group described above, there are: bilateral science and technology efforts (including the Binational Science Foundation and the Binational Agricultural Research and Development Foundation); the U.S.-Israeli Education Foundation, which sponsors educational and cultural programs; the Joint Economic Development Group, which maintains a high-level dialogue on economic issues; the Joint Counterterrorism Group, designed to enhance cooperation in fighting terrorism; and a high-level Strategic Dialogue that meets biannually.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Virginia E. Baldwin
CG OMS:	Tonya Reardon
ECO:	David Burnett
FM:	Gary Rose
HRO:	Elizabeth Moore
MGT:	Brent R. Bohne
CON:	Richard C. Beer
DCM:	Louis Moreno
PAO:	Andrew C. Koss
COM:	John Harris
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CLO:	Matthew K. Moore
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EEO:	Dominick Logalbo
FMO:	Elizabeth Sewall
ICASS Chair:	Mark Herzberg
IMO:	Dominick Logalbo
ISO:	Eric Peterson
POL:	Jessica Lapenn
State ICASS:	Micaela Schweitzer Bluhm

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

February 8, 2008

Country Description: The State of Israel is a parliamentary democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available. Travelers may visit the website of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism for tourist information at http://www.goisrael.com. Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem as a result of the 1967 War. Pursuant to negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, the Palestinian Authority (PA) exercises jurisdiction over the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. Palestinian Authority police are responsible for keeping order in those areas, and the PA exercises a range of civil functions there. The division of responsibilities and jurisdiction in the West Bank between Israel and the PA is complex. Definitive information on entry, customs requirements, arrests, and other matters in the West Bank and Gaza is subject to change without prior notice or may not be available.

Entry Requirements: The general entry and exit requirements for Americans traveling to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza are listed below. American citizens may be subject to special restrictions. American citizens are advised to read all sections of this sheet very carefully for special regulations that may affect their travel.

U.S. citizens who are also citizens of Israel must enter and depart Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza using their current Israeli passport. Israeli authorities require that U.S. citizens who have a Palestinian identification number, or who may have acquired a Palestinian identification number via their parents or grandparents, to enter and exit Israel, the West Bank and Gaza using their Palestinian Authority passport. Without the Palestinian Authority or Israeli passport, these Americans may be denied from entering or exiting Israel, the West Bank or Gaza, or may face serious delays at the ports of entry.

Individuals with a Palestinian Authority identity number, including American citizens, are required by Israeli authorities to enter the West Bank through the Allenby border crossing. They are not permitted by Israeli authorities to enter Israel through Ben Gurion International Airport unless they obtain in advance a transit permit for that purpose.

U.S. citizens are advised that all persons applying for entry to Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza are subject to security and criminal screening by the Government of Israel, and may be denied entry or exit without explanation.

American citizens who feel they have been wrongly denied entry to Israel or the West Bank should fill out the Denial of Entry Sheet which can be retrieved under the U.S. citizen services tab at the Jerusalem Consulate General's web site at http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov.

Israel: A passport valid for six months beyond duration of stay, an onward or return ticket, and proof of sufficient funds are required for entry. A no-charge, three-month visa may be issued upon arrival and may be renewed. Travelers carrying official or diplomatic U.S. passports must obtain visas from an Israeli embassy or consulate prior to arrival. Anyone who has been refused entry, experienced difficulties with his/her status during a previous visit, overstayed the authorized duration of a previous visit, or otherwise violated the terms of their admission to Israel should consult the Israeli Embassy or nearest Israeli Consulate before attempting to return. Anyone seeking returning resident status must obtain permission from Israeli authorities before traveling. The Government of Israel at times has declined to admit American citizens wishing to visit or travel to the West Bank or Gaza. Persons denied entry who seek immigration court hearings to contest such denials may be detained for prolonged periods while awaiting a hearing.

The Gaza Strip: The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to the Gaza Strip, which is under the control of Hamas, a terrorist organization. American citizens in Gaza are advised to depart immediately. Please contact the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem for additional assistance if necessary. See the latest Travel Warning for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza for the latest information concerning travel to the Gaza Strip. Private vehicles may not cross from Israel into Gaza or from Gaza into Israel. The Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt and the Gaza Airport remain closed.

The West Bank: On March 4, 2007, the Government of Israel published a new West Bank visitor visa policy for foreign nationals. The policy states that the following are permitted foreign visitor categories:

- Spouses of resident Palestinians registered in the West Bank population registry;
- Children (up to age 16) of resident Palestinians;
- Business people, investors, and bearers of West Bank work permits;
- Staff of foreign missions in the West Bank;
- Representatives of international organizations in the West Bank;
- Lecturers and consultants;
- Humanitarian cases and others.

According to the written policy, American citizens "may transit to the West Bank via Israel after showing documents at the Ben Gurion airport or Allenby Bridge [crossing between the West Bank and Jordan] that confirm their status/position and the purpose of their visit, subject to inspection and approval by a representative of the Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories."

For extensions of visas of American citizens in the West Bank, the Government of Israel's policy states:

The following categories may request to extend their visa after the initial period for an additional period of up to one year (and no longer than 27 months total):

- Spouses of resident Palestinians registered in the West Bank population registry;
- Children up to the age of 16 of resident Palestinians;
- Businesspersons/investors/bearers of a working permit for the West Bank;
- Humanitarian cases and others.

In order to extend the visa, they must apply to the Palestinian Population Registry in Ramallah. In special cases, they should turn to the Population Registry of the Israeli Ministry of Interior in Beit-El.

The following categories may request an extension of their visa after the initial period for an additional period of up to 6 months (and no longer than a total of 27 months:

- Staff of foreign missions in the West Bank;
- Representatives of international organizations in the West Bank.

In order to extend the visa, they must apply to the Head of the International Organization Department in the Israeli Civil Administrationat Beit El or to the Population Registry of the Israeli Ministry of Interior."

Finally, the Government of Israel policy notes:

Foreign citizens whose passports were stamped recently with the words "Last Permit" in the recent months may nonetheless leave the West Bank and submit a new visa request. The arrangements set out in this document are subject to imperative considerations of policy and security as may be applicable in Entry of individuals into Israel and the West Bank remains subject to security/criminal assessment by the relevant authorities.

U.S. citizens who have a Palestinian Authority ID number or who the Government of Israel considers to have residency status in the West Bank or Gaza are advised to read very carefully the next section, entitled Palestinian-Americans.

Palestinian Americans: It is possible that an American citizen born in the United States whose parents were born or lived in the West Bank or Gaza would be considered a resident of the West Bank or Gaza by Israeli authorities. Israeli authorities may consider American citizens to be residents of the West Bank or Gaza if there were born there, lived there, or

have a Palestinian ID number. The Government of Israel requires residents of the West Bank or Gaza to present valid Palestinian Authority travel documents when entering or leaving Israel. This requirement specifically applies to American citizens considered by the Government of Israel to be resident in the West Bank or Gaza, although in practice it often applies to transient visitors as well. American citizens resident in the West Bank or Gaza who arrive at any Israeli border point without a Palestinian passport will usually be granted permission to travel to the West Bank or Gaza to obtain one.

Individuals with a Palestinian Authority identity number, including American citizens, are required to enter the West Bank through the Allenby border crossing and Gaza through the Rafah border crossing when it is operational. They are not permitted to enter Israel through Ben Gurion International Airport unless they obtain in advance a transit permit for that purpose which is rarely issued and can be expensive and inconvenient. Permit applications must be submitted at least three working days prior to departure, although Israeli authorities may take considerably longer to render a decision. In practice, except in humanitarian or special interest cases Israeli authorities are unlikely to grant this permit. In the event a permit is denied, individuals with a Palestinian Authority identity number, including American citizens, must exit the West Bank via the crossing at Allenby Bridge into Jordan and from Gaza via the Rafah crossing into Egypt when it is operational. Specific questions may be addressed to the nearest Israeli Embassy or Consulate or, within Israel, the nearest office of the Ministry of the Interior. During periods of heightened security restrictions, American citizens with residency status in the West Bank or Gaza might not be allowed to enter or exit Gaza or the West Bank at all, even with an American passport.

Israel-Jordan Crossings: International crossing points between Israel and Jordan are the Arava crossing (Wadi al-'Arabah) in the south, near Eilat, and the Jordan River crossing (Sheikh Hussein Bridge) in the north, near Beit Shean. American citizens using these two crossing points to enter either Israel or Jordan need not obtain prior visas, but will have to pay the following fees:

- Jordan River Crossing: Israeli exit fee of 68 NIS/US $15, Jordanian entry fee 5 Jordanian dinars
- Arava crossing: exit fee of 68 NIS/US $15, entry fee of 5 Jordanian dinars

Visas should be obtained in advance for those wanting to cross the Allenby Bridge between Jordan and the West Bank. The Government of Israel requires that Palestinian Americans with residency status in the West Bank enter Jordan via the Allenby Bridge. Procedures for all three crossings into Jordan are subject to frequent changes. Persons with residency status in the West Bank or Gaza seeking to cross the Allenby Bridge from Jordan should contact the Jordanian authorities for information concerning special clearance procedures for Palestinian ID holders before traveling to the bridge. Visit the Embassy of Israel website at: http://www.israelemb.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Israeli authorities strictly enforce security measures. American citizen visitors have been subjected to prolonged questioning and thorough searches upon entry or departure by Israeli authorities. Travelers (including American citizens) with Arabic surnames, those who ask that Israeli stamps not be entered into their passports, and unaccompanied female travelers have been delayed and subjected to close scrutiny by Israeli border authorities. American citizens have been detained and/or arrested at the airport and at other border crossings on suspicion of security-related crimes and members of religious groups have been monitored, arrested, and deported for suspicion of intent to commit violent or disruptive acts in Israel. In some cases, Israeli authorities have denied American citizen's access to U.S. consular officers, lawyers, and even family members during temporary detention.

Security-related delays are not unusual for travelers carrying cameras or electronic equipment, and some have had their laptop computers and other electronic equipment confiscated at Ben Gurion Airport. While most effects are returned prior to the traveler's departure, some equipment has been retained by the authorities for lengthy periods and has reportedly been damaged, destroyed or lost. Americans who have had personal property damaged due to security procedures at Ben Gurion can contact the Commissioner of Complaints at the airport for redress.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Travel Warning for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, and other Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Terrorism: U.S. citizens, including tourists, students, residents, and U.S. mission personnel, have been injured or killed by terrorists while in Israel, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. Attacks have occurred in highly frequented shopping and pedestrian areas and on public buses. U.S. Embassy and Consulate General American employees and their families are prohibited from using public buses and trains.

American citizens should use good judgment and exercise caution when visiting public areas and using transportation facilities to minimize exposure to possible terrorist attacks. Strategies to minimize risk include: avoiding demonstrations and large crowds, being aware of one's immediate surroundings, especially while visiting contentious religious sites,

military areas, and establishments frequented by off-duty soldiers, and by avoiding suspicious objects.

Kidnapping: In the past, armed gunmen have kidnapped foreigners, including several Americans, in Gaza and the West Bank. Gunmen in negotiations with the Palestinian Authority have sometimes used such foreign hostages as bartering tools. The threat of hostage-taking remains a primary concern for Americans and foreigners within the Gaza Strip. Any Americans traveling to Gaza in spite of the Department of State's Travel Warning urging no travel to Gaza should register with the American Consulate General in Jerusalem prior to entry and maintain a very low profile while moving within Gaza. They should also have the telephone numbers of the U.S. Consulate General at hand for rapid contact in the event of an emergency. However, the ability of the Consulate to provide service to Americans in Gaza is extremely limited; private American citizens should avoid travel to these areas.

Demonstrations and Civil Unrest: In the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, demonstrations or altercations can occur spontaneously and have the potential to become violent without warning. If such disturbances occur, American visitors should leave the area immediately. In Jerusalem's Old City, where exits are limited, American visitors should seek safe haven inside a shop or restaurant until the incident is over. Demonstrations are particularly dangerous in areas such as checkpoints, settlements, military areas, and major thoroughfares where protesters are likely to encounter Israeli security forces.

Areas of Instability: U.S. Government personnel in Israel and Jerusalem, whether stationed there or on temporary duty, are under tight security controls, as noted below. In addition, they occasionally may be prohibited from traveling to sections of Jerusalem and parts of Israel depending on prevailing security conditions.

Jerusalem: In Jerusalem, travelers should exercise caution at religious sites on holy days, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and dress appropriately when visiting the Old City and ultra-orthodox Jewish neighborhoods. Most roads into ultra-orthodox Jewish neighborhoods are blocked off on Friday nights and Saturdays. Assaults on secular visitors, either for being in cars or for being "immodestly dressed," have occurred in these neighborhoods. Isolated street protests and demonstrations can occur in the commercial districts of East Jerusalem (Salah Ed-Din Street and Damascus Gate areas) during periods of unrest. U.S. Government American employees are authorized to travel to the Old City and the Mount of Olives during daylight hours only. Although few security incidents have occurred recently within the Old City, visitors are urged to exercise caution and be aware of their surroundings at all times. This is especially true when entering or exiting the Old City at times when the volume of pedestrian traffic could create difficulties.

There have been reports of harassment of tourists by vendors in many tourist areas of Jerusalem including, in particular, the Mount of Olives.

West Bank and Gaza: For safety and security reason, U.S. Government American personnel and dependents are prohibited from traveling to any cities, towns or settlements in the West Bank, except for mission-essential business or other approved purposes. Jericho, as distinct from other areas in the West Bank, is under the full security responsibility of the Palestinian Authority. Violence in recent years has decreased markedly in Jericho and, since the PA's assumption of security responsibility for Jericho in February 2005, the level of violence there has remained low compared to other parts of the West Bank. For limited, personal travel, U.S. government personnel and family members are permitted to travel through the West Bank, using only Routes 1 and 90, to reach the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge or the Dead Sea coast near Ein Gedi and Masada. Each such transit requires prior notification to the Consulate General's security office and must occur during daylight hours. U.S. Government personnel and family members are permitted personal travel on Route 443 between Modi'in and Jerusalem during daylight hours only.

Travel to the Gaza Strip by U.S. Government personnel is prohibited. Under policy guidance issued by the Secretary of State, exceptions to the prohibition on Gaza travel are only for official, mission-critical travel. Private American citizens also should avoid travel to these areas.

During periods of unrest, the Israeli Government sometimes closes off access to the West Bank and Gaza, and those areas may be placed under curfew. All persons in areas under curfew should remain indoors or risk arrest or injury. Americans have been killed, seriously injured, detained and deported as a result of encounters with Israeli Defense Forces operations in Gaza and the West Bank. Travel restrictions may be imposed with little or no warning. Strict measures have frequently been imposed following terrorist actions, and the movement of Palestinian Americans, both those with residency status in the West Bank or Gaza as well as foreign passport holders, has been severely impeded. Due to current limitations on travel by U.S. Government employees to the West Bank and Gaza made necessary by uncertain security conditions, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to American citizens in need in these areas is considerably reduced at present.

Golan Heights: There are live land mines in many areas and visitors should walk only on established roads or trails. Near the northern border of Israel, rocket attacks from Lebanese territory can occur without warning.

Crime: The crime rate is moderate in Israel, Jerusalem, and the West Bank. Incidents of organized, violent crime, residential break-ins and petty theft have increased in Gaza since Israel's disengagement in September 2005. In addition, break-ins of parked vehicles are common at beach areas,

the Dead Sea, and national parks (especially Caesarea National Park). U.S. citizens should not leave their valuables in unattended cars in these areas. There has also been a significant upsurge in non-violent home invasions. U.S. citizens resident in Israel have had jewelry, cash, vehicles, and their personal documentation and belongings stolen at all hours.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The Government of Israel provides assistance to victims of terrorist acts. Please use this link to the National Insurance Institute for more information: http://www.btl.gov.il.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Modern medical care and medicines are available in Israel. Some hospitals in Israel and most hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza, however, fall below U.S. standards. Travelers can find information in English about emergency medical facilities and after-hours pharmacies in the "Jerusalem Post" and the English language edition of "Ha'aretz" newspapers. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Also, please see the Department of State's Avian Flu Fact Sheet. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Israel, the West Bank and Gaza is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Israeli roads and highways tend to be crowded, especially in urban areas. Aggressive driving is a serious problem and few drivers maintain safe following distances. Drivers should use caution, as Israel has an extremely high rate of fatality from automobile accidents.

U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv and Consulate General Jerusalem American employees and their families have been prohibited from using public buses.

The Government of Israel requires that all passenger car occupants use their seat belts at all times and that headlights be used during all intercity travel, both day and night, during winter. Since January 1, 2006, all drivers are required to carry fluorescent vests in the car with them at all times, and they are required to wear these vests whenever they get out of their cars to make repairs, change tires, etc. If a vehicle is stopped for a traffic violation and it does not contain a fluorescent vest, the driver will be fined. These vests can be purchased for a nominal price in all local gas stations. Cellular phone use is prohibited while driving.

West Bank and Gaza: Crowded roads and aggressive driving are common in the West Bank and Gaza. During periods of heightened tensions, cars with Israeli license plates have been stoned and fired upon. Emergency services may be delayed by the need for Palestinian authorities to coordinate with Israeli officials. Seat belt use is required outside of cities and drivers may not drink alcohol. Individuals involved in accidents resulting in death or injury may be detained by police pending an investigation.

Visit the website of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.goisrael.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Israel's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Israel's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Video cameras and other electronic items must be declared upon entry to Israel and are sometimes seized by Israeli customs and security officials and returned either damaged and/or after a lengthy delay. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Israel in Washington, D.C. or one of Israel's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Definitive information on customs requirements for the Palestinian Authority is not available.

Arrests and Detentions: U.S. citizens arrested by the Israeli National Police (INP) in Israel and charged with crimes are entitled to legal representation provided by the Israeli Government and to consular notification and visitation. In some cases, there are significant delays between the time of arrest and the time when the INP notifies the Embassy or Consulate General and grants consular access. This is particularly true in the arrest of dual American-Israeli and American-Palestinian citizens. This procedure may be expedited if the arrested American shows a U.S. passport to the police and asks the police or prison authority to contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General. When access to a detained American citizen is denied or delayed, the U.S. Government formally protests the lack of consular access to the Israeli Government.

U.S. citizens arrested by the Israeli Security Police for security offenses, and U.S. citizens arrested in the West Bank or Gaza for criminal or security offenses may be prevented from communicating with lawyers, family members, or consular officers for lengthy periods. The U.S. Consulate General and the Embassy are often not notified of such arrests, or are not notified in a timely manner. Consular access to the arrested individual is frequently delayed. Arrestees have been subject to mistreatment during interrogation and pressured to sign statements in Hebrew that have not been translated. Under local law they may be detained for up to six months at a time without charges. Youths over the age of 14 have been detained and tried as adults. The U.S. Government will formally protest any report of mistreatment to the relevant authorities.

U.S. citizens arrested by the Palestinian Authority (PA) Security Forces in the West Bank for crimes are entitled to legal representation and consular notification and access. The PA Security Forces normally notify the Consulate General of non-security related arrests for criminal offenses within two days of arrest, and consular access is normally granted within four days. This procedure may be expedited if the arrested American shows a U.S. passport to the police, or asks the police to contact the U.S. Consulate General.

U.S. citizens arrested by the PA Security Forces in the West Bank for security offenses may be prevented from communicating with lawyers, family members, or consular officers for lengthy periods. In addition, they may be held in custody for protracted periods without formal charges or before being taken in front of a judge for an arrest extension. The PA often does not notify the U.S. Consulate General of arrests in a timely manner, and consular access to arrestees is occasionally delayed. Since Hamas seized control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007, their Executive Forces (EF) have dominated security matters there. The United States Government has no contact with the EF.

Dual Nationality: Israeli citizens naturalized in the United States retain their Israeli citizenship, and children born in the United States to Israeli parents usually acquire both U.S. and Israeli nationality at birth. Israeli citizens, including dual nationals, are subject to Israeli laws requiring service in Israel's armed forces, as well as other laws pertaining to passports and nationality. American-Israeli dual nationals of military age who do not wish to serve in the Israeli armed forces should contact the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. to learn more about an exemption or deferment from Israeli military service before going to Israel. Without this exemption or deferment document, they may not be able to leave Israel without completing military service or may be subject to criminal penalties for failure to serve. Israeli citizens, including dual nationals, must enter and depart Israel on their Israeli passports, and Israeli authorities may require persons whom they consider to have acquired Israeli nationality at birth to obtain an Israeli passport prior to departing Israel.

Bearers of Palestinian passports or identity numbers who have become naturalized United States citizens are considered by the Israeli government to retain their Palestinian nationality, and Israeli authorities will view them as Palestinians first, and as American citizens second. Palestinian Americans whom the Government of Israel considers residents of the West Bank or Gaza may face certain travel restrictions. These individuals are subject to restrictions on movement between Israel, the West Bank and Gaza and within the West Bank and Gaza that are imposed by the Israeli Government on all Palestinians for security reasons. During periods of heightened security concerns these restrictions can be onerous. Palestinian-American residents of Jerusalem are normally required to use laissez-passers (travel documents issued by the Israeli Government) that contain reentry permits approved by the Israeli Ministry of Interior for any out-of-country travel. All U.S. citizens with dual nationality must enter the U.S. on their U.S. passports.

Court Jurisdiction: Civil courts in Israel actively exercise their authority to bar certain individuals, including nonresidents, from leaving the country until monetary and other legal claims against them can be resolved. Israel's rabbinical courts exercise jurisdiction over all Jewish citizens and residents of Israel in cases of marriage, divorce, child custody and child support. In some cases, Jewish-Americans who entered Israel as tourists have become defendants in divorce cases filed by their spouses in Israeli rabbinical courts. These Americans have been detained in Israel for prolonged periods while the Israeli courts consider whether the individuals have sufficient ties to Israel to establish rabbinical court jurisdiction. Jewish-American visitors should be aware that they might be subject to involuntary and prolonged stays in Israel if a case is filed against them in a rabbinical court, even if their marriage took place in the U.S. and regardless of whether their spouse is present in Israel.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United

States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Israel's or the Palestinian Authority's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Israel and Palestinian Authority administered areas are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Israel, the West Bank or Gaza are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the Consulate General in Jerusalem through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Israel, the West Bank or Gaza. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate General to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 71 Hayarkon Street in Tel Aviv. The U.S. mailing address is Unit 7228, Box 0001, APO AE 09830. The telephone number is (972)(3) 519-7575. The number after 4:30 p.m. and before 8:00 a.m. local time is (972)(3) 519-7551. The fax number is (972)(3) 516-4390. The Embassy's e-mail address is amctelaviv@state.gov and its Internet web page is http://telaviv.usembassy.gov.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy should be contacted for information and help in the following areas: Israel, the Golan Heights and ports of entry at Ben Gurion Airport, Haifa Port, the northern (Jordan River) and southern (Arava) border crossings connecting Israel and Jordan, and the border crossings between Israel and Egypt.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem is located at 27 Nablus Road in Jerusalem. The U.S. mailing address is Unit 7228, Box 0039, APO AE 09830. The telephone number is (972)(2) 622-7200. The Consular Section's public telephone number for information and assistance is (972)(2) 628-7137, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Messages may be left at that number at other times. The emergencies only number after 4:30 p.m. and before 8:00 a.m. local time is (972)(2) 622-7250. The Consular Section's fax number is (972)(2) 627-2233. The Consulate's e-mail address is jerusalemacs@state.gov and its Internet web page is http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General should be contacted for information and help in the following areas: West and East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Allenby Bridge border crossing connecting Jordan with the West Bank, and the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

A U.S. Consular Agent who reports to the Embassy in Tel Aviv maintains an office in Haifa at 26 Ben Gurion Boulevard, telephone (972)(4) 853-1470. The Consular Agent can provide both routine and emergency services in the northern part of Israel.

Travel Warning

September 26, 2008

This Travel Warning updates information on the general security environment in Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, and reminds American citizens of threats to themselves and to U.S. interests in those locations. The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to remain mindful of security factors when planning travel to Israel. In addition, the Department of State urges U.S. citizens to defer travel to the West Bank and to avoid all travel to the Gaza Strip. This warning supersedes the Travel Warning issued March 19, 2008.

The Gaza Strip: Conflict and violence can occur and spread rapidly and Unpredictably in the Gaza Strip. The State Department strongly recommends that American citizens refrain from all travel to the Gaza strip and that those already in Gaza depart immediately. This recommendation has been in effect since the deadly roadside bombing of a U.S. Embassy convoy in Gaza in October 2003. It applies to all Americans, including journalists and aid workers. No official travel is permitted inside the Gaza Strip at this time.

Hamas, a State Department-designated foreign terrorist organization, violently assumed control over Gaza in June 2007, making worse the already dangerous security situation there. Although a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas went into effect June 19, 2008, the Gaza Strip continues to be a potential center of violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian terrorist groups. Militants there have abducted Western citizens, and terrorist organizations have threatened attacks against U.S. interests. The American International School in northern Gaza has been the target of repeated attacks. Despite the ceasefire, Hamas and Islamic Jihad (another designated foreign terrorist organization) still occasionally launch rocket attacks against Israeli towns as far north as Ashkelon. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) retains the option of responding to these attacks with military force. In addition, Hamas uses violence against other Palestinian factions in Gaza, and innocent civilians are at times the victims.

The security environment is very fluid in the vicinity of the Gaza Strip, and the ceasefire could collapse with little or no advance warning. Rocket and mortar launches into Israel are unpredictable, resulting in a potentially unsafe situation. Gunfire from Gaza into Israel is a danger. Palestinian snipers have killed individuals

within rifle range of the Gaza border. As a result, travel in the surrounding area is strongly discouraged. Due to the continued high level of tensions and violence in and near the Gaza Strip, all U.S. Embassy and Consulate General employees are required to provide 24 hours advance notice of any official travel to the city of Sderot, crossing points into Gaza, and to any other areas bordering Gaza. American citizens should be aware that as a consequence of the prohibition on travel by U.S. Government employees to the Gaza Strip, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens there is extremely limited.

The West Bank: The security environment in the West Bank remains volatile. Violent demonstrations, kidnappings and shootings are unpredictable and can occur without warning. The Department of State urges Americans to defer travel to the West Bank at this time.

The IDF continues to carry out security operations in the West Bank, including nighttime raids to arrest terrorist suspects that sometimes result in gun battles. Israeli security operations can occur at any time, including frequent raids to arrest terrorist suspects that result in shootings, demonstrations and often violent conflict. This heightens the risk of Americans being caught in the middle of potentially dangerous situations. Some Americans and Europeans involved in demonstrations and other such activities in the West Bank have become involved in confrontations with Israeli settlers and the IDF. The State Department recommends that Americans, for their own safety, avoid demonstrations.

All those who pass through the West Bank should exercise particular care when approaching and transiting Israeli military checkpoints. Travelers should be aware that they might encounter delays and difficulties, and might even be denied passage through a checkpoint.

American citizens should be aware that, as a consequence of the current limitations on official travel to the West Bank, the ability of consular staff to offer timely assistance to U.S. citizens there is limited.

Travel Restrictions for U.S. Government Personnel: All American U.S. Government personnel and their dependents are prohibited from traveling to any cities, towns or settlements in the West Bank, except when they are on mission-essential business or are traveling for other mission-approved purposes. For limited, personal travel, U.S. government personnel and family members are

Permitted to travel through the West Bank only by using Routes 1 and 90 to reach the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge or the Dead Sea coast near Ein Gedi and Masada. They are also permitted to travel north on Route 90 from the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge to the Sea of Galilee. Use of these routes is approved for transit only, with stops permitted only at Qumran National Park off Route 90 by the

Dead Sea. Each such transit requires prior notification to the Consulate General's security office and must occur during daylight hours. U.S. Government personnel and family members are permitted both official and personal travel on Route 443 between Modi'in and Jerusalem without prior notification, during daylight hours only.

General Safety and Security: Israeli authorities remain concerned about the continuing threat of terrorist attacks. In September 2008, a vehicle plowed into a group of Israeli soldiers on a traffic island near a Jerusalem square, injuring more than a dozen. Two fatal bulldozer attacks on civilians in July 2008 and a March 2008 shooting, all in Jerusalem, and a February 2008 bombing in Dimona are reminders of the precarious security environment. The threat of such attacks is on-going. American citizens are cautioned that a greater danger may exist in the vicinity of restaurants, businesses and other places associated with U.S. interests and/or located near U.S. official buildings, such as the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem. Rocket fire from Lebanon into Israel, except for one recent incident, has ceased since the end of military hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah forces in southern Lebanon in the summer of 2006. Although Israel denied any involvement, the killing of a Hizbollah leader in Syria on February 12, 2008, raises the possibility of Hizbollah attacks against Israel.

American citizens are urged to exercise a high degree of caution and common sense when patronizing restaurants, nightclubs, cafes, malls, places of worship, and theaters—especially during peak hours. Large crowds and public gatherings have been targeted by terrorists in the past and should be avoided to the extent practicable. American citizens should take into consideration that public buses, trains, and their respective terminals are "off-limits" to U.S. Government personnel.

The State Department urges American citizens to remain vigilant while traveling throughout Jerusalem, especially within the commercial and downtown areas of West Jerusalem and the city center. Israeli security services report that they continue to receive information of planned terrorist attacks in and around Jerusalem.

Spontaneous or planned protests within the Old City are possible, especially after Friday prayers. Some of these protests have led to violent clashes. The Old City of Jerusalem is off-limits to U.S. Government personnel and their family members after dark during the entire week and between the hours of 11 am and 2 pm on Fridays.

Entry/Exit Difficulties: The Government of Israel considers American citizens who also hold Israeli citizenship or have a claim to such dual nationality to be Israeli citizens for immigration and other legal purposes. For example, an American citizen child of an Israeli parent will be considered an Israeli citizen by Israeli immigration officials and Israeli law will apply to the child's travel to, and departure from, Israel.

American citizens whom Israeli authorities determine to be of Arab origin are likely to face additional, often time-consuming, and probing questioning by immigration and border authorities, or may even be denied entry into Israel. If they are determined by Israeli authorities to have a claim to residency status in the West Bank or Gaza, or to have a claim to a Palestinian identification number, such American citizens may be required by the Government of Israel to use a Palestinian Authority travel document to transit Israel to enter the West Bank or Gaza. Such a determination could be made for American citizens if they or their immediate family members were born in the West Bank or Gaza, currently reside there, or lived there for any appreciable amount of time.

American citizens who hold a Palestinian Authority ID, as well as persons judged by the Israeli authorities to have claim to a Palestinian Authority ID, will be considered subject to Israeli law and to regulations that Israel applies to residents of the West Bank and Gaza, regardless of the fact that they hold U.S. citizenship. A Palestinian ID number might be active or inactive. If active, the Government of Israel may stamp the Palestinian Identification Number in the U.S. passport, and the American citizen may be required to obtain Palestinian Authority travel documents prior to departing Israel. In addition, American citizens having or eligible for a

Palestinian Authority ID who entered Israel via Ben Gurion Airport might be required to depart via the Allenby Bridge to Jordan. Upon arrival, such persons may wish to consider asking Israeli immigration authorities from where they will be required to depart. Additionally, American citizens who have (or who are eligible to receive) a Palestinian Authority Identification Number, may be refused entry to Israel via Ben Gurion Airport and told that they must enter Israel from Jordan via the Allenby Bridge.

The United States Government seeks equal treatment for all American citizens regardless of national origin or ethnicity. American citizens who encounter difficulties are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem at the telephone numbers below.

Americans in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are strongly encouraged to register with the Consular Sections of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv or the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov. U.S. citizens who require emergency services may telephone the Consulate General in Jerusalem at (972) (2) 628-7137, after hours: (972) (2) 622-7250 or the Embassy in Tel Aviv at (972) (3) 519-7575, after hours: (972) (3) 519-7551.

Current information on travel and security in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada, or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. For additional and more in-depth information about specific aspects of travel to these areas, U.S. citizens should consult: the Country Specific Information for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza; and the Worldwide Caution. These along with other Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts and Country Specific Information sheets are available on the Department's Internet website at http://travel.state.gov. Up-to-date information on security conditions can also be accessed at http://usembassy-israel.org.il or http://jerusalem. usconsulate.gov.



ITALY

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Italian Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 301,225 sq. km. (116,303 sq. mi.); about the size of Georgia and Florida combined.

Cities: Capital—Rome (pop. 2.8 million). Other cities—Milan, Naples, Turin.

Terrain: Mostly rugged and mountainous.

Climate: Generally mild Mediterranean; cold northern winters.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Italian(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 58.15 million.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 0.01%.

Ethnic groups: Primarily Italian, but there are small groups of German-, French-, Slovene-, and Albanian-Italians.

Religions: Roman Catholic (majority).

Languages: Italian (official).

Education: Years compulsory—18. Literacy—98%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—5.72/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—77.01 years for men; 83.07 years for women.

Work force: (24.63 million, 2006 est.) Services—63%; industry and commerce—32%; agriculture—5%. Unemployment rate is 7%.

Government

Type: Republic since June 2, 1946.

Constitution: January 1, 1948.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), Council of Ministers (cabinet), headed by the president of the council (prime minister). Legislative—bicameral parliament: 630-member Chamber of Deputies, 315-member Senate (plus a varying number of "life" Senators). Judicial—independent constitutional court and lower magistracy.

Political subdivisions: 94 provinces, 20 regions.

Political parties: People of Liberty, Democratic Party, Northern League, Italy of Values, Union of the Center, Movement for Autonomy.

Suffrage: Vote for House; universal over 18; vote for Senate; universal over 25.

Economy

GDP: (purchasing power parity, 2007 est.) $1.8 trillion.

GDP per capita: (purchasing power parity, 2007 est.) $31,000.

GDP growth: 1.7% (2007); 1.9% (2006); 0.1% (2005); 0.9% (2003 est.); 0.4% (2002); 1.8% (2001).

Natural resources: Fish and natural gas.

Agriculture: Products—wheat, rice, grapes, olives, citrus fruits, potatoes, sugar beets, soybeans beef, dairy products.

Industry: Types—tourism, machinery, iron and steel, chemicals, food processing, textiles, motor vehicles, clothing, footwear, ceramics.

Trade: Exports (2007 est.) $474.8 billion f.o.b.: mechanical products, textiles and apparel, transportation equipment, metal products, chemical products, food and agricultural products. Partners (2006)—Germany 13.2%, France 12.3%, U.S. 7.5%, Spain 7.5%, U.K. 6.6%. Imports (2007 est.)—$483.6 billion f.o.b.: machinery and transport equipment, foodstuffs, ferrous and nonferrous metals, wool, cotton, energy products. Partners (2006)—Germany 17.3%, France 10.0%, Netherlands 5.7%, China 5.2%, Belgium 4.5%, Spain 4.3%.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Italy is largely homogeneous linguistically and religiously but is diverse culturally, economically, and politically. Italy has the fifth-highest population density in Europe—about 200 persons per square kilometer (490 per sq. mi.). Minority groups are small, the largest being the German-speaking people of Bolzano Province

and the Slovenes around Trieste. There are also small communities of Albanian, Greek, Ladino, and French origin. Immigration has increased in recent years, however, while the Italian population is declining overall due to low birth rates. Although Roman Catholicism is the majority religion—85% of native-born citizens are nominally Catholic—all religious faiths are provided equal freedom before the law by the constitution.

Greeks settled in the southern tip of the Italian Peninsula in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.; Etruscans, Romans, and others inhabited the central and northern mainland. The peninsula subsequently was unified under the Roman Republic. The neighboring islands came under Roman control by the third century B.C.; by the first century A.D., the Roman Empire effectively dominated the Mediterranean world. After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West in the fifth century A.D., the peninsula and islands were subjected to a series of invasions, and political unity was lost. Italy became an oft-changing succession of small states, principalities, and kingdoms, which fought among themselves and were subject to ambitions of foreign powers. Popes of Rome ruled central Italy; rivalries between the popes and the Holy Roman Emperors, who claimed Italy as their domain, often made the peninsula a battleground.

The commercial prosperity of northern and central Italian cities, beginning in the 11th century, combined with the influence of the Renaissance, mitigated somewhat the effects of these medieval political rivalries. Although Italy declined after the 16th century, the Renaissance had strengthened the idea of a single Italian nationality. By the early 19th century, a nationalist movement developed and led to the reunification of Italy—except for Rome—in the 1860s. In 1861, Victor Emmanuel II of the House of Savoy was proclaimed King of Italy. Rome was incorporated in 1870. From 1870 until 1922, Italy was a constitutional monarchy with a parliament elected under limited suffrage.

20th Century History

During World War I, Italy renounced its standing alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary and, in 1915, entered the war on the side of the Allies. Under the postwar settlement, Italy received some former Austrian territory along the northeast frontier. In 1922, Benito Mussolini came to power and, over the next few years, eliminated political parties, curtailed personal liberties, and installed a fascist dictatorship termed the Corporate State. The king, with little or no effective power, remained titular head of state.

Italy allied with Germany and declared war on the United Kingdom and France in 1940. In 1941, Italy—with the other Axis powers, Germany and Japan—declared war on the United States and the Soviet Union. Following the Allied invasion of Sicily in 1943, the King dismissed Mussolini and appointed Marshal Pietro Badoglio as Premier. The Badoglio government declared war on Germany, which quickly occupied most of the country and freed Mussolini, who led a brief-lived regime in the north. An anti-fascist popular resistance movement grew during the last two years of the war, harassing German forces before they were driven out in April 1945. A 1946 plebiscite ended the monarchy, and a constituent assembly was elected to draw up plans for the republic.

Under the 1947 peace treaty, minor adjustments were made in Italy's frontier with France, the eastern border area was transferred to Yugoslavia, and the area around the city of Trieste was designated a free territory. In 1954, the free territory, which had remained under the administration of U.S.-U.K. forces (Zone A, including the city of Trieste) and Yugoslav forces (Zone B), was divided between Italy and Yugoslavia, principally along the zonal boundary. This arrangement was made permanent by the Italian-Yugoslav Treaty of Osimo, ratified in 1977 (currently being discussed by Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia). Under the 1947 peace treaty, Italy relinquished its overseas territories and certain Mediterranean islands.

The Roman Catholic Church's status in Italy has been determined, since its temporal powers ended in 1870, by a series of accords with the Italian Government. Under the Lateran Pacts of 1929, which were confirmed by the present constitution, Vatican City is recognized by Italy as an independent, sovereign entity. While preserving that recognition, in 1984, Italy and the Vatican updated several provisions of the 1929 accords. Included was the end of Roman Catholicism as Italy's formal state religion.

Italy's Cultural Contributions

Europe's Renaissance period began in Italy during the 14th and 15th centuries. Literary achievements—such as the poetry of Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto and the prose of Boccaccio, Machiavelli, and Castiglione—exerted a tremendous and lasting influence on the subsequent development of Western civilization, as did the painting, sculpture, and architecture contributed by giants such as da Vinci, Raphael, Botticelli, Fra Angelico, and Michelangelo. The musical influence of Italian composers Monteverdi, Palestrina, and Vivaldi proved epochal; in the 19th century, Italian romantic opera flourished under composers Gioacchino Rossini, Giuseppe Verdi, and Giacomo Puccini. Contemporary Italian artists, writers, filmmakers, architects, composers, and designers contribute significantly to Western culture.

GOVERNMENT

Italy has been a democratic republic since June 2, 1946, when the monarchy was abolished by popular referendum. The constitution was promulgated on January 1, 1948.

The Italian state is centralized. The prefect of each of the provinces is appointed by and answerable to the central government. In addition to the provinces, the constitution provides for 20 regions with limited governing powers. Five regions—



Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia—function with special autonomy statutes. The other 15 regions were established in 1970 and vote for regional "councils." The establishment of regional governments throughout Italy has brought some decentralization to the national governmental machinery, and recent governments have devolved further powers to the regions. Many regional governments, particularly in the north of Italy, are seeking additional powers. The 1948 constitution established a perfectly bicameral parliament (Chamber of Deputies and Senate), a separate judiciary, and an executive branch composed of a Council of Ministers (cabinet), headed by the president of the council (prime minister). The president of the republic is elected for seven years by the parliament sitting jointly with a small number of regional delegates. The president nominates the prime minister, who chooses the other ministers. The Council of Ministers—in practice composed mostly of members of parliament—must retain the confidence of both houses. The houses of parliament are popularly and directly elected by a proportional representation system. Under 2005 legislation, the Chamber of Deputies has 630 members (12 of which are elected by Italians abroad). In addition to 315 elected members (six of which are elected by Italians abroad), the Sen-

ate includes former presidents and several other persons appointed for life according to special constitutional provisions. Both houses are elected for a maximum of five years, but either may be dissolved before the expiration of its normal term. Legislative bills may originate in either house and must be passed by a majority in both.

The Italian judicial system is based on Roman law modified by the Napoleonic code and subsequent statutes. There is only partial judicial review of legislation in the American sense. A constitutional court, which passes on the constitutionality of laws, is a post-World War II innovation. Its powers, volume, and frequency of decisions are not as extensive as those of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Giorgio NAPOLITANO**
Prime Min.: **Silvio BERLUSCONI**
Under Sec. for the Prime Min.: **Gianni LETTA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Luca ZAIA**
Min. of Community Policy: **Andrea RONCHI**
Min. of Cultural Assets: **Sandro BONDI**
Min. of Defense: **Ignazio LA RUSSA**
Min. of Economic Development: **Claudio SCAJOLA**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Giulio TREMONTI**
Min. of Education: **Maria Stella GELMINI**
Min. of Environment: **Stefania PRESTIGIACOMO**
Min. of Equal Opportunity: **Mara CARFAGNA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Franco FRATTINI**
Min. of Infrastructure & Transport: **Altero MATTEOLI**
Min. of Innovation: **Renato BRUNETTA**
Min. of Interior: **Ernesto Roberto MARONI**
Min. of Justice: **Angelino ALFANO**
Min. of Program Implementation: **Gianfranco ROTONDI**
Min. of Reforms & Federalism: **Umberto BOSSI**
Min. of Regional Affairs: **Raffaele FITTO**
Min. of Relations With Parliament: **Elio VITO**
Min. of Simplification: **Roberto CALDEROLI**
Min. of Welfare: **Maurizio SACCONI**
Min. of Youth Policy: **Giorgia MELONI**
Governor, Bank of Italy: **Mario DRAGHI**
Ambassador to the US: **Giovanni CASTELLANETA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Giulio TERZI di Sant'Agata**

Italy maintains an embassy in the United States at 3000 Whitehaven Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-612-4400).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Until recently, there had been frequent government turnovers (more than 60 and counting) since 1945. The dominance of the Christian Democratic (DC) party during much of the postwar period lent continuity and comparative stability to Italy's political situation.

From 1992 to 1997, Italy faced significant challenges as voters—disenchanted with past political paralysis, massive government debt, extensive corruption, and organized crime's considerable influence—demanded political, economic, and ethical reforms. In 1993 referendums, voters approved substantial changes, including moving from a proportional to a largely majoritarian electoral system and the abolishment of some ministries. However in 2005, parliament passed a new electoral law based on full proportional assignment of seats.

Major political parties, beset by scandal and loss of voter confidence, underwent far-reaching changes. New political forces and new alignments of power emerged in March 1994 national elections. The election saw a major turnover in the new parliament, with 452 out of 630 deputies and 213 out of 315 senators elected for the first time. The 1994 elections also swept media magnate Silvio Berlusconi—and his Freedom Pole coalition—into office as Prime Minister. Berlusconi, however, was forced to step down in January 1995 when one member of his coalition withdrew support. The Berlusconi government was succeeded by a technical government headed by Prime Minister Lamberto Dini, which fell in early 1996. New elections in 1996 brought a center-left coalition to government for the first time after World War II.

A series of center-left coalitions dominated Italy's political landscape between 1996 and 2001. In April 1996, national elections led to the victory of a center-left coalition (the Olive Tree) under the leadership of Romano Prodi. Prodi's government became the second-longest to stay in power before he narrowly lost a vote of confidence (by three votes) in October 1998. A new government was formed by Democratic Party of the Left leader and former-communist Massimo D'Alema. In April 2000, following a poor showing by his coalition in regional elections, D'Alema resigned. The succeeding center-left government, including most of the same parties, was headed by Giuliano Amato, who previously served as Prime Minister in 1992-93.

National elections, held on May 13, 2001, returned Berlusconi to power at the head of the five-party center-right Freedom House coalition, comprising the prime minister's own party, Forza Italia, the National Alliance, the Northern League, the Christian Democratic Center, and the United Christian Democrats. This Berlusconi government served its entire term.

In national elections held April 9-10, 2006, Romano Prodi's center-left Union coalition won a narrow victory over Berlusconi's Freedom House coalition. The Union coalition included the Democratic Party (born of the November 2007 fusion of the Democrats of the Left and the Daisy Party), UDEUR (Union of Democrats for Europe), Rose in the Fist (made up by Italian Social Democrats and Italian Radical Party), Communist Renewal, the Italian Communist Party, Italy of Values, and the Greens.

In May 2006, the parliament elected Giorgio Napolitano as the Republic's President. President Napolitano formerly served as a lifetime senator, Minister of the Interior, and a Mem-

ber of the European Parliament as a member of center-left parties. President Napolitano's term ends in May 2013. The Senate, lower house, and regional representatives will vote to elect his successor.

In January 2008, the Prodi government fell when small coalition partner UDEUR withdrew support. In February, the President dissolved parliament and Silvio Berlusconi returned to power after defeating former Rome Mayor Walter Veltroni by a comfortable margin in elections on April 13-14, 2008. Berlusconi's winning coalition was composed of the People of Liberty (a union of Forza Italia and National Alliance), the Northern League, and the Movement for Autonomy. Berlusconi was sworn in as Prime Minister on May 8. Veltroni now heads the opposition.

Political Parties

Italy's dramatic self-renewal transformed the political landscape between 1992 and 1997. Scandal investigations touched thousands of politicians, administrators, and businessmen; the shift from a proportional to majoritarian voting system also altered the political landscape.

Party changes were sweeping. The Christian Democratic Party dissolved; the Italian People's Party and the Christian Democratic Center emerged. Other major parties, such as the Socialists, saw support plummet. A new populist and free-market oriented movement, Forza Italia, gained wide support among moderate voters. The National Alliance broke from the neofascist Italian Social Movement. A trend toward two large coalitions—one on the center-left and the other on the center-right—emerged from the April 1995 regional elections. For the 1996 national elections, the center-left parties created the Olive Tree coalition while the center right united again under the Freedom Pole. The May 2001 elections ushered into power a refashioned center-right coalition dominated by Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia. The April 2006 elections returned the center-left to power under the eight-party Union coalition, a successor to the Olive Tree. In October 2007, the Union coalition parties officially merged to form the Democratic Party. Veltroni was chosen as party leader and was the center-left's candidate in the April 2008 elections. Silvio Berlusconi launched an alliance between his Forza Italia party and Gianfranco Fini's National Alliance. The parties ran together under the People of Liberty symbol in April 2008. The election greatly simplified parliament, dramatically reducing the numbers of parties, and for the first time since World War II, leaving communist parties out of parliament. People of Liberty (37.4%) won the largest share of the vote and took power in coalition with a strengthened Northern League (8.3%) and the tiny Movement for Autonomy (1.1%). The Democratic Party scored 5.6% and ran in alliance with Italy of Values (4.4%), while the Union of the Center (5.6%) ran alone.

ECONOMY

The Italian economy has changed dramatically since the end of World War II. From an agriculturally based economy, it has developed into an industrial state ranked as the world's sixth-largest market economy. Italy belongs to the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialized nations; it is a member of the European Union and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Italy has few natural resources. With much land unsuited for farming, Italy is a net food importer. There are no substantial deposits of iron, coal, or oil. Proven natural gas reserves, mainly in the Po Valley and offshore Adriatic, constitute the country's most important mineral resource. Most raw materials needed for manufacturing and more than 80% of the country's energy sources are imported. Italy's economic strength is in the processing and the manufacturing of goods, primarily in small and medium-sized family-owned firms. Its major industries are precision machinery, motor vehicles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, electric goods, and fashion and clothing.

Italy continues to grapple with budget deficits and high public debt—2.0% and 105.6% of GDP for 2007, respectively. Italy joined the European Monetary Union in 1998 by signing the Stability and Growth Pact, and as a condition of this Euro zone membership, Italy must keep its budget deficit beneath a 3% ceiling. In June 2006, the European Commission warned Italy it had to bring the deficit down to that level by 2007. The Italian Government has found it difficult to bring the budget deficit down to a level that would allow a rapid decrease of that debt.

Italy's economic growth averaged only 0.66% for the five years ending in 2005; 2006 GDP growth reached 1.9%, the highest since 2000, largely due to export growth to the Euro zone area. The economy continues to grow less than the Euro zone average, and growth is expected to decelerate from 1.7% in 2007 to under 1% in 2008 as the Euro zone and world economies slow.

Italy's closest trade ties are with the other countries of the European Union, with whom it conducts about 60.3% of its total trade (2006 data). Italy's largest EU trade partners, in order of market share, are Germany (14.9%), France (11.1%), and the United Kingdom (5.3%). Italy continues to grapple with the effects of globalization, where certain countries (notably China) have eroded the Italian lower-end industrial product sector.

The Italian economy is also affected by a large underground economy—worth some 27% of Italy's GDP. This production is not subject, of course, to taxation and thus remains a source of lost revenue to the local and central government.

U.S.-Italy Economic Relations

The United States and Italy cooperate closely on major economic issues, including within the G-8. With a large population and a high per capita income, Italy was the United States' thirteenth-largest trading partner through November 2007,

with total bilateral trade of $44.9 billion comprised of exports to Italy totaling $12.0 billion and imports from Italy worth $32.1 billion. The U.S.'s $19.2 billion deficit with Italy through November 2007 was slightly below the $20.1 billion deficit registered in 2006. Part of this imbalance has been due to a strong dollar. Significant changes are occurring in the composition of this trade. Value-added products such as office machinery and aircraft are becoming important U.S. exports to Italy. U.S. foreign direct investment in Italy at the end of 2006 exceeded $28.9 billion.

Labor

Unemployment is a regional issue in Italy—low in the north, high in the south. The overall national rate is at its lowest level since 1992. Chronic problems of inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and organized crime act as disincentives to investment and job creation in the south. A significant underground economy absorbs substantial numbers of people, but they work for low wages and without standard social benefits and protections. Women and youth have significantly higher rates of unemployment than do men.

Unions claim to represent 40% of the work force. Most Italian unions are grouped in four major confederations: the General Italian Confederation of Labor (CGIL), the Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions (CISL), the Italian Union of Labor (UIL), and the General Union of Labor (UGL), which together claim 35% of the work force. These confederations formerly were associated with important political parties or currents, but they have evolved into fully autonomous, professional bodies. The CGIL, CISL, and UIL are affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and customarily coordinate their positions before confronting management or lobbying the government. The confederations have had an important consultative role on national social and economic issues.

Agriculture

Italy's agriculture is typical of the division between the agricultures of the northern and southern countries of the European Union. The northern part of Italy produces primarily grains, sugarbeets, soybeans, meat, and dairy products, while the south specializes in fruits, vegetables, olive oil, wine, and durum wheat. Even though much of its mountainous terrain is unsuitable for farming, Italy has a large work force (1.4 million) employed in farming. Most farms are small, with the average size being only seven hectares.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Italy was a founding member of the European Community—now the European Union (EU). Italy was admitted to the United Nations in 1955 and is a member and strong supporter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization (GATT/WTO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe. It chaired the CSCE (the forerunner of the OSCE) in 1994, the EU in 1996, and the G-8 in 2001 and served as EU president from July to December 2003. Italy began serving a two-year term on the UN Security Council in January 2007.

Italy firmly supports the United Nations and its international security activities. Italy actively participated in and deployed troops in support of UN peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Somalia, Mozambique, and Timor-Leste and provides critical support for NATO and UN operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania. Italy, under NATO's ISAF, maintains approximately 2,500 troops and a Provincial Reconstruction Team in the western Afghanistan province of Herat. In December 2006, Italy completed the deployment of some 3,000 troops who supported international efforts to stabilize Iraq and continues to support reconstruction and development assistance of the Iraqi people through humanitarian workers and other officials, particularly in Dhi Qar Province. Currently over 8,000 Italian troops are deployed, including 2,250 in Kosovo, 2, 350 in Lebanon as part of UNIFIL, and over 2,500 in Afghanistan.

The Italian Government seeks to obtain consensus with other European countries on various defense and security issues within the EU as well as NATO. European integration and the development of common defense and security policies will continue to be of primary interest to Italy.

U.S.-ITALY RELATIONS

The United States enjoys warm and friendly relations with Italy. Italy is a leading partner in the war against terrorism. The two are NATO allies and cooperate in the United Nations, in various regional organizations, and bilaterally for peace, prosperity, and security. Italy has worked closely with the United States and others on such issues as NATO and UN operations as well as with assistance to Russia and the New Independent States; Lebanon; the Middle East peace process; multilateral talks; Somalia and Mozambique peacekeeping; and combating drug trafficking, trafficking in women and children, and terrorism. Under longstanding bilateral agreements flowing from NATO membership, Italy hosts important U.S. military forces at Vicenza and Livorno (army); Aviano (air force); and Sigonella, Gaeta, and Naples—home port for the U.S. Navy Sixth Fleet. The United States has about 13,000 military personnel stationed in Italy. Italy hosts the NATO Defense College in Rome. Italy remains a strong and active transatlantic partner which, along with the United States, has sought to foster democratic ideals and international cooperation in areas of strife and civil conflict. Toward this end, the Italian Government has cooperated with the

United States in the formulation of defense, security, and peacekeeping policies.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Christine Fulena
AMB OMS:	Bonnie Angelov
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DHS/ICE:	Joseph W. Burke, Acting
ECO:	Thomas Delare
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FM:	George Hlosek
HRO:	Susan M. Struble
MGT:	Barbara Aycock
AMB:	Ronald P. Spogli
CG:	Barbara Cummings
CON:	Lisa G. Barker
DCM:	Anna Borg
PAO:	Anne Callaghan
GSO:	Richard Morgan
RSO:	Nace Crawford
AGR:	Geoffrey Wiggin
CLO:	Linda Siggins
DAO:	Capt. Michael James
DEA:	Russell F. Benson
EEO:	Karen Rodriguez
EST:	Jean Preston
FAA:	John Halinski
FMO:	James Martin
ICASS Chair:	Jack Bulger
IMO:	Karen Finer
IPO:	Henry Kenealy
ISO:	Stephen Widenhouse
ISSO:	Laura Williams
LAB:	Stephen Anderseon
LEGATT:	Leo Taddeo
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CG OMS:	Kathryn Rakich
CG:	Nora Dempsey
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CON:	Kershaw John

MILAN (CG) Via Principe Amedeo 2/10, 20121 Milano, APO/FPO PSC 833 BOX (60M) FPO AE 09624, +39-02-29035-1, Fax +39-02-29035-440, Workweek: 8:30-12:30 13:30-17:30.

CG OMS:	Vacant
ECO:	Michael R. Kidwell
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CG:	A. Daniel Weygandt
CON:	William Gill R.
PAO:	David A. Bustamante
COM:	Rick De Lambert
GSO:	Gretchen Cureton
RSO:	Nathan Al-Khazraji
CLO:	Karen Bustamante
DEA:	Richard Bendkovic
IPO:	Blanca Neve
IRS:	Susan W. Stanley
ISO:	Blanca Neve
ISSO:	Todd C.E. Cheng
LEGATT:	Karl Soete
POL:	Vacant

NAPLES (CG) Piazza della Repubblica, APO/FPO PSC 813 Box 18 FPO AE 09620, ++39-081-583-8111, Fax ++39-081-761-1869, Workweek: Mon-Fri 08:00–17:00, Website: http://naples.usconsulate.gov.

ECO:	Robert W. Carlson
MGT:	Richard Gray
CG:	J Patrick Truhn
PO:	J Patrick Truhn
CON:	James P Theis
PAO:	Amy M. Bliss
EEO:	William D Howard
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ISSO:	Vansin C Dokken
POL:	Robert W. Carlson
State ICASS:	Richard N. Gray

FODAG (ROME) (M) Piazza del Popolo 18, 4th Floor, 00187 Roma, APO/FPO PSC 59, Box 31, APO, AE 09624, 39-06-4674-3500, Fax 39-06-4674-3535, Workweek: 8:30M to 5:30 PM.

DCM OMS:	Tory Mack
AMB OMS:	Donna Lieberson
MGT:	Les Degraffenried
AMB:	Ambassador Gaddi H. Vasquez
DCM:	Lee A. Brudvig
PAO:	Lillian Devalcourt-Ayala
AGR:	David Hegwood
AID:	Richard Newberg
POL:	Willem Brakel

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 10, 2008

Country Description: Italy is a developed democracy with a modern economy. The Holy See is a sovereign entity that serves as the ecclesiastical, governmental and administrative capital of the Roman Catholic Church, physically located within the State of the Vatican City inside Rome, with a unique, non-traditional economy. San Marino is a developed, constitutional democratic republic, also independent of Italy, with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. Italian authorities may deny entry to travelers who attempt to enter without a valid passport. A visa is not required for tourist stays up to three months. However, for all other purposes, such as work, study, etc., a visa is required and must be obtained from the Italian Embassy or Consulates before entering Italy.

For further information concerning visas and entry requirements for Italy, travelers may contact the Embassy of Italy at 3000 Whitehaven St NW, Washington, DC 20008, via telephone at (202) 612-4400 or via the Internet: http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it or Italian Consulates General in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, or San Francisco, accessible through the above Internet site.

Americans staying or traveling within Italy for less than three (3) months are considered non-residents. This includes persons on vacation, those taking professional trips, students registered at an authorized school, or persons performing research or independent study.

As of May 28, 2007, under Italian law (http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/07068l.htm), all non-residents are required to complete a dichiarazione di presenza (declaration of presence). Tourists arriving from a non-Schengen-country (e.g. the United States) should obtain a stamp in their passport at the airport on the day of arrival. This stamp is considered the equivalent of the declaration of presence. Tourists arriving from a Schengen-country (e.g. France) must request the declaration of presence

form from a local police office (commissariato di zona), police headquarters (questura) or their place of stay (e.g hotel, hostel, campgrounds) and submit the form to the police or to their place of stay within eight business days of arrival. It is important that applicants keep a copy of the receipt issued by the Italian authorities. Failure to complete a declaration of presence is punishable by expulsion from Italy.

Americans staying in Italy for more than three (3) months are considered residents and must obtain a permesso di soggiorno (permit of stay). This includes Americans who will work or transact business and persons who want to simply live in Italy. An application "kit" for the permesso di soggiorno may be requested from one of 14,000 national post offices (Poste Italiane). The kit must then be returned to one of 5,332 designated Post Office acceptance locations. It is important that applicants keep a copy of the receipt issued by the Post Office. Additional information may be obtained from an Italian immigration website via Internet at: http://www.portaleimmigrazione.it. Within 20 days of receiving the permit to stay in Italy, Americans must go to the local Vital Statistics Bureau (Anagrafe of the Comune) to apply for residency. It generally takes one to two months to receive the certificate of residence (Certificato di Residenza).

Safety and Security: There have been occasional episodes of politically motivated violence in Italy, most often connected to Italian internal developments or social issues. At various times, Italian authorities have found bombs outside public buildings, have received bomb threats and were subjects of letter bombs. Firebombs or Molotov cocktails have been thrown at buildings or offices in the middle of the night. These incidents have all been attributed to organized crime or anarchist movements. Americans were not targeted or injured in these instances.

Demonstrations may have an anti-American character. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful have the potential to turn into confrontational situations and possibly escalate into violence. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Italy should take common sense precautions and follow news reports carefully in order to avoid demonstrations and to be aware of heightened security and potential delays when they occur.

Italy remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Italy's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State Burea of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Italy has a moderate rate of violent crime, some of which is directed towards tourists, principally for motives of theft. Some travelers have been victims of rape and beatings. There have also been incidents of drinks laced with drugs being used by criminals to rob, and in some cases, assault tourists. Many of these incidents have occurred in the vicinity of Rome's Termini train station and at major tourist centers such as Campo de Fiori and Piazza Navona, as well as in Florence and Naples. Criminals using this tactic "befriend" a traveler at a train station, bus stop, restaurant, café or bar in tourist areas, then eventually offer a drink laced with a sleeping drug. When the tourist falls asleep, criminals steal the traveler's valuables. There have also been instances where the victim was assaulted, either physically or sexually.

Americans are urged to exercise caution at train stations and airports, and when frequenting nightclubs, bars and outdoor cafes, particularly at night, because criminals may make initial contact with potential victims in such settings. Individuals under the effect of alcohol may become victims of crime, including robbery, physical and sexual assault, due to their impaired ability to judge situations and make decisions. This is particularly a problem for younger Americans visiting Italy, where the age limit on the sale of alcoholic beverages is lower than in most U.S. states. If you are a victim of such a crime, please file a police report and contact the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate. There are also in-country organizations, which provide counseling, medical, and legal assistance to certain crime victims. Petty crimes such as pick pocketing, theft from parked cars, and purse snatching are serious problems, especially in large cities. Pickpockets sometimes dress like businessmen so tourists should not be lulled into a false sense of security by believing that well-dressed individuals are not potential pickpockets or thieves. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites, on public buses or trains, or at the major railway stations: Rome's Termini; Milan's Centrale; Florence's Santa Maria Novella; and Naples' Centrale and Piazza Garibaldi. Travelers should also be alert to theft in Milan's Malpensa Airport, particularly at car rental agencies. Clients of Internet cafes in major cities have been targeted. Tourists who have tried to resist petty thieves on motor scooters have suffered broken arms and collarbones.

Thieves in Italy often work in groups or pairs. Pairs of accomplices or groups of street urchins are known to divert tourists' attention so that another can pickpocket them. In one particular routine, one thief throws trash, waste or ketchup at the victim; a second thief assists the victim in cleaning up the mess; and the third discreetly takes the victim's belongings. Criminals on crowded public transportation slit the bottoms of purses or bags with a razor blade or sharp knife, then remove the contents. Theft of small items such as radios, luggage, cameras, briefcases, and even cigarettes from parked cars

is a major problem. Carjackings and thefts have also been reported from occupied vehicles waiting in traffic or stopped at traffic lights. Vehicles parked near beaches during the summer have been broken into and items stolen. Robbers take items from cars at gas stations often by smashing car windows.

In a scam practiced on the highways, one thief signals a flat tire to the driver of another car and encourages the driver to pull over. Often, the tire has been punctured by an accomplice, while in other instances, there may, in fact, be nothing wrong with the vehicle. When the driver stops, one thief helps change the tire, while the other takes the driver's belongings. Use particular caution driving at night on highways, when there may be a greater incidence of robbery attempts. There have been occasional reports of break-ins of rental cars driven by Americans when the precautions mentioned above were not followed during stops at highway service areas.

On trains, a commonly reported trick involves one or more persons who pretend to befriend a traveler and offer drugged food or drink. Also, thieves have been known to impersonate police officers to gain the confidence of tourists. The thief shows the prospective victim a circular plastic sign with the words "police" or "international police." If this happens, the tourist should insist on seeing the officer's identification card (documento), as impersonators tend not to carry forged documents. Tourists should immediately report thefts or other crimes to the local police. The U.S. Secret Service in Rome has been advised of, and is assisting Italian Law Enforcement authorities in investigating, an increase in the appearance of ATM skimming devices. These devices are attached to legitimate bank ATMs, usually located in tourist areas, and capture the account information stored electronically on the card's magnetic strip. The devices consist of a card reader installed over the legitimate reader and a pin-hole video camera mounted above the keypad that records the customer's PIN. ATMs with skimming devices installed may also allow normal transactions to occur. The victim's information is sold, traded on-line or encoded on another card such as a hotel key card to access the compromised account. Here are some helpful hints to protect yourself and to identify skimming devices:

- Use ATMs located in well-lit public areas, or secured inside the bank/business
- Cover the keypad with one hand as you enter your PIN
- Avoid card readers that are not flush with the face of the ATM
- Look for gaps, tampered appearance, or other irregularities between the metal faceplate of the ATM and the card reader
- Monitor your account statements for unauthorized transactions

Organized criminal groups operate throughout Italy, but are more prevalent in the south. They have occasionally resorted to violence to intimidate or to settle disputes. Though the activities of such groups are not generally targeted at tourists, visitors should be aware that innocent bystanders could be injured.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

According to Italian Law (Law 80 of May 14, 2005), anyone caught buying counterfeit goods (for example, DVDs, CDs, watches, purses, bags, belts, sunglasses, etc.) is subject to a fine of no less than EUR 1,000. Police in major Italian cities enforce this law to varying degrees. Travelers are advised to purchase products only from stores and other licensed retailers to avoid unknowingly buying counterfeit and illegal merchandise.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Lost or stolen credit cards present risk of identity theft and should be cancelled immediately. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are available, but may be limited outside urban areas. Public hospitals, though generally free of charge for emergency services, sometimes do not maintain the same standards as hospitals in the United States, so travelers are encouraged to obtain insurance that would cover a stay in a private Italian hospital or clinic. It is almost impossible to obtain an itemized hospital bill from public hospitals, as required by many U.S. insurance companies, because the Italian National Health Service charges one inclusive rate (care services, bed and board). For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for

travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith. In Naples and the region of Campania, a perennial problem exists due to periodic garbage collection strikes and inadequate dump facilities. Residents often resort to burning the garbage which can give off toxic substances that can aggravate respiratory problems. Warm summer temperatures further aggravate this problem.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Italy is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Streets in historic city centers are often narrow, winding and congested. Motor scooters are very popular and drivers often see themselves as exempt from conventions that apply to automobiles. Travelers who rent scooters should be particularly cautious. Pedestrians and drivers should be constantly alert to the possibility of scooters' sudden presence. Throughout Italy, the number of pedestrian deaths and injuries are increasing. Most deaths and injuries involve pedestrians or cyclists who are involved in collisions with scooters or other vehicles. U.S. citizens should remain vigilant and alert while walking or cycling near traffic. Pedestrians should be careful, as sidewalks, especially in major cities, can be extremely congested and uneven, and drivers of bicycles, motorcycles and other vehicles routinely ignore traffic signals and traffic flows, routinely park and even drive on sidewalks. For safety, pedestrians should look carefully in both directions before crossing streets, even when using a marked crosswalk with a green "avanti" ("walk") light illuminated. Traffic lights are limited, often disobeyed, and a different convention of right-of-way is observed. Italy has over 5,600 kilometers (3,480 mi.) of "Autostrada," or superhighways. Commercial and individual vehicles travel and pass on these well-maintained roads at very high speeds. Accidents occur in which contributing factors include excessive speed, alcohol/drug use and/or sleepiness of long-distance drivers. Italy has one of the highest rates of car accident deaths in the European Union. In rural areas, a wide range of speed on highways makes for hazardous driving. Roads are generally narrow and often have no guardrails. Travelers in northern Italy, especially in winter, should be aware of fog and poor visibility, responsible for multiple-car accidents each year. Most Italian automobiles are equipped with special fog lights. Roadside assistance in Italy is excellent on the well-maintained toll roads, but limited on secondary roads. Use of safety belts and child restraining devices is mandatory and headlights should be on at all times outside of urban areas.

U.S. citizens driving in Italy are reminded that they must adhere to the local driving laws and regulations. Vehicle traffic in some historic downtown areas of cities and towns throughout Italy is limited by a system of permits (called "ZTL" and functioning the same way as an "EasyPass" system in the U.S. might on the freeway). Cameras record the license plates of cars driving in parts of the city that require a permit. Although most of the automated verification stations are clearly marked, if a driver passes one it is impossible to know at the time that a violation occurred or has been recorded. Violators are not pulled over or stopped, and there is no personal contact with a police officer. Whenever possible, the fines imposed for these violations are forwarded to the driver's home in the U.S. to request payment. The fines are cumulative for each time a driver passes a control point. A similar system of automated traffic control cameras is in place in many parts of the highway system and is used to ticket speeding violations.

U.S. citizens driving in Italy should also note that, according to Italian regulation, if a resident of a non-European Union country (e.g. the United States) violates a traffic law (e.g. for speeding), the violator must pay the fine at the time the violation occurs to the police officer issuing the ticket. If the citizen does not or cannot pay the fine at the time, Italian regulation allows the police officer to confiscate the offender's vehicle (even if the vehicle is a rental vehicle.) For specific information concerning Italian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) offices via the Internet at: http://www.enit.it, tel: 212-245-4822 or the A.C.I. (Automobile Club Italiano) at Via Magenta 5, 00185 Rome, tel: 39-06-4477. For information on obtaining international drivers licenses, contact AAA or the American Automobile Touring Alliance.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office at http://www.italiantourism.com and national authority responsible for road safety online at http://www.infrastrutturetrasporti.it.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Italy's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Italy's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Strikes and other work stoppages occur frequently in the transportation sector (national airlines, airports, trains, and bus lines). Most are announced in advance and are of short duration. Information on strikes may be found at http://www.infrastrutture.gov.it/page/NuovoSito/site.php. Reconfirmation of domestic and international flight reservations is highly recommended.

U. S citizens using public transportation while in Italy are reminded that

they must adhere to local transportation laws and regulations. Travelers must purchase train tickets and validate them by punching them in validating machines usually located near the entrance of train tracks prior to boarding. Failure to follow this procedure may result in an on-the-spot fine by an inspector on the train. Travelers must purchase bus tickets prior to boarding and validate them immediately after boarding. Tickets may be purchased at tobacco stores or kiosks. Failure to follow this procedure may result in an immediate fine imposed by an inspector on the bus. If the violator does not pay the fine on the spot, it will automatically double and will be forwarded to the violator's home address.

Disaster Preparedness: Several major earthquake fault lines cross Italy. Principal Italian cities, with the exception of Naples, do not lie near these faults, but smaller tourist towns, like Assisi, do and have suffered earthquakes.

General information about disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. Detailed information on Italy's earthquake fault lines is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at http://www.usgs.gov.

Italy also has several active volcanoes generating geothermal events. Mt. Etna, on the eastern tip of the island of Sicily, has been erupting intermittently since 2000. Mt. Vesuvius, located near Naples, is currently capped and not active. Activity at Mt. Vesuvius is monitored by an active seismic network and sensor system, and no recent seismic activity has been recorded. Two of Italy's smaller islands, Stromboli and Vulcano in the Aeolian Island chain north of Sicily, also have active volcanoes with lava flows. Detailed information on volcano activity in Italy is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at http://www.usgs.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations. They may differ significantly from those of the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Italian law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Italy are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Italy are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Italy.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Via V. Veneto 119/A, tel: 39-06-46741 and fax: 39-06-4674-2217; Internet address: http://italy.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulates are located in:

Florence: Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci 38, tel: 39-055-266-951, consular fax: 399-055-215-550;

Milan: Via Principe Amedeo 2/10, tel: 39-02-290-351, and fax: 39-02-290-35-273;

Naples: Piazza della Repubblica, tel: 39-081-583-8111, and consular fax: 39-081-583-8275.

There are U.S. Consular Agents located in:

Genoa: Via Dante 2, tel: 39-010-584-492, and fax: 39-010-553-3033;

Palermo: Via Vaccarini 1, tel: 39-091-305-857, and fax: 39-091-625-6026;

Venice: Viale Galileo Galilei, 30, tel: 39-041-541-5944, and fax: 39-041-541-6654.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Important Note: Prospective adoptive parents must legally reside in Italy.

Patterns of Immigration: U.S. immigrant visa statistics show that no Italian children have received adoption immigrant visas in the past five years.

Adoption Authority: City juvenile courts oversee the handling of adoption cases.

For a complete listing of these courts, prospective adoptive parents should visit the following web site: http://www.leradicieleali.com.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptive parents must be at least eighteen years old and no more than forty-five years over the age of the adoptee. Only married couples may adopt. The couple must have been married for at least three years and must reside in Italy.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must legally reside in Italy.

Time Frame: An adoption in Italy can take up to three years from the time the application is filed with the juvenile court until the child is in the new family's home and the adoption is finalized.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: A list of Italian adoption agencies is located at: http://www.dirittoefamiglia.it/redazion/problemi/adozioni/associazioniadozione.htm. A list of attorneys is available via the U.S. Embassy web site at http://www.italy.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: Approximately 5,000 euros.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents start the adoption procedure by submitting a request called "Dicharazione alla Disponabilità per l'Adozione" (Declaration of Willingness to Adopt) to the Juvenile Court having jurisdiction over the place of residence of the prospective adoptive parents. Based on the information provided by the prospective adoptive parents, the Juvenile Court selects the child that better matches the prospective adoptive parents. There are no further details on how the child is selected by the Juvenile Court.

There is a fostering period of one year. During that period, the local Juvenile Court monitors and provides support to the prospective adoptive parents. At the end of the fostering year, the Juvenile Court either confirms or revokes the adoption.

The Court will request the intervention of the local social services agency to assist and evaluate the couple, prepare a home study, and report the findings to the Court. The appointed local social services agency will then conduct a study on the prospective adoptive parents in order to evaluate their capacity to bring up the minor, their personal economic situation, their personal health conditions, the family environment and the motivation of their request. The Juvenile Court can also appoint a judge and/or a team of specialists, who will hold meetings with the prospective adoptive parents in order to evaluate them and/or to provide additional information.

Documents Required: The Declaration of Willingness to Adopt should be accompanied by the following documents:

- Birth Certificates of the prospective adoptive parents;
- Registry Office certificate ("Stato di Famiglia");
- Declaration of consent to adopt by the prospective adoptive parents' parents, given in the form of an affidavit or, should they be deceased, death certificate(s) of adopting parents' parents;
- Medical certificate issued by family doctor;
- Evidence of economic means (i.e. tax returns; pay stubs);
- Criminal record of adopting parents;
- Notarial act, or equivalent declaration, attesting that there is neither legal nor de facto separation between the adopting couple.

No documentation about the child or children is required.

Embassy of Italy

3000 Whitehaven Street, NW

Washington, DC 20008

Tel.: (202) 612-4400

Fax: (202) 518-2151

www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it/ambasciata_washington

Italy has Consulates in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy

Via Vittorio Veneto 121—00187 ROMA

website: rome.usembassy.gov

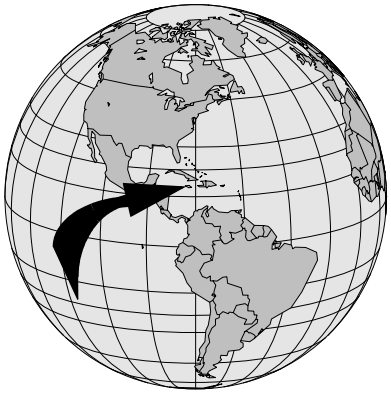
Telephone (switchboard): (+39) 06.46741

fax: (+39) 06.4674.2244

e-mail: uscitizensrome@state.gov

The United States also has Consulates General in Florence, Milan and Naples.

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Italy may be addressed to the U.S. Consulate in Naples. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



JAMAICA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Jamaica

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 10,991 sq. km. (4,244 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Kingston metro area and St. Andrew (pop. 650,000). Other cities—Montego Bay (96,000), Spanish Town (131,515).

Terrain: Mountainous, coastal plains.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Jamaican(s).

Population: (2006 est.) 2,673,800.

Annual growth rate: (2006) 1.5%.

Ethnic groups: African 90.9%, East Indian 1.3%, Chinese 0.2%, White 0.2%, mixed 7.3%, other 0.1%.

Religions: Anglican, Baptist and other Protestant, Roman Catholic, Rastafarian, Jewish.

Languages: English, Patois.

Education: Years compulsory—to age 14. Literacy (age 15 and over)—79.9%.

Health: (2005) Infant mortality rate—19.2/1,000. Life expectancy—female 75 yrs., male 73 yrs.

Work force: (2006, 1.25 million) Industry—17.1%; agriculture—17.9%; services—64.9%.

Government

Type: Constitutional parliamentary democracy.

Independence: August 6, 1962.

Constitution: August 6, 1962.

Government branches: Executive—Governor General (chief of state, representing British monarch), prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Parliament (21 appointed senators, 60 elected representatives). Judicial—Court of Appeal and courts of original jurisdiction.

Political subdivisions: 14 parishes, 60 electoral constituencies.

Political parties: People's National Party (PNP), Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), National Democratic Movement (NDM), United Peoples Party (UPP).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2005) $9.7 billion.

Real growth rate: (2006) 2.5%.

Per capita GDP: (2005) $3,640.

Natural resources: Bauxite, gypsum, limestone, marble, sand, silica.

Agriculture: Products—sugar, bananas, coffee, citrus fruits, condiments and spices.

Industry: Types—tourism, bauxite and alumina, processed foods, sugar, rum, cement, metal, chemical products.

Trade: (2005) Exports—$1.5 billion: alumina, bauxite, sugar, bananas, chemicals, citrus fruits and products, rum, coffee. Major markets (2005)—U.S. 26.3%, U.K. 10.8%, Canada 19.6%, Trinidad and Tobago 0.6%, Japan 1.0%. Imports (2005)—$4.7 billion: machinery, transportation and electrical equipment, food, fuels, fertilizer. Major suppliers (2000)—U.S. 40.1%, Trinidad and Tobago 9.0%, Japan 4.5%, U.K. 2.4%, Canada 2.3%.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Arawaks from South America had settled in Jamaica prior to Christopher Columbus' first arrival at the island in 1494. During Spain's occupation of the island, starting in 1510, the Arawaks were exterminated by disease, slavery, and war. Spain brought the first African slaves to Jamaica in 1517. In 1655, British forces seized the island, and in 1670, Great Britain gained formal possession.

Sugar made Jamaica one of the most valuable possessions in the world for more than 150 years. The British Parliament abolished slavery as of August 1, 1834. After a long period of direct British colonial rule, Jamaica gained a degree of local political control in the late 1930s, and held its first election under full universal

adult suffrage in 1944. Jamaica joined nine other U.K. territories in the West Indies Federation in 1958 but withdrew after Jamaican voters rejected membership in 1961. Jamaica gained independence in 1962, remaining a member of the Commonwealth.

Historically, Jamaican emigration has been heavy. Since the United Kingdom restricted emigration in 1967, the major flow has been to the United States and Canada. About 20,000 Jamaicans emigrate to the United States each year; another 200,000 visit annually. New York, Miami, Chicago, and Hartford are among the U.S. cities with a significant Jamaican population. Remittances from the expatriate communities in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, estimated at up to $1.6 billion per year, make increasingly significant contributions to Jamaica's economy.

GOVERNMENT

The 1962 constitution established a parliamentary system based on the U.K. model. As chief of state, Queen Elizabeth II appoints a governor general, on the advice of the prime minister, as her representative in Jamaica. The governor general's role is largely ceremonial. Executive power is vested in the cabinet, led by the prime minister. Parliament is composed of an appointed Senate and an elected House of Representatives. Thirteen Senators are nominated on the advice of the prime minister and eight on the advice of the leader of the opposition. General elections must be held within 5 years of the forming of a new government. The prime minister may ask the governor general to call elections sooner, however. The Senate may submit bills, and it also reviews legislation submitted by the House.

It may not delay budget bills for more than 1 month or other bills for more than 7 months. The prime minister and the cabinet are selected from the Parliament. No fewer than two or more than four members of the cabinet must be selected from the Senate.

The judiciary also is modeled on the U.K. system. The Court of Appeals is the highest appellate court in Jamaica. Under certain circumstances, cases may be appealed to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom. Jamaica's parishes have elected councils that exercise limited powers of local government.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Kenneth HALL**
Prime Min.: **Bruce GOLDING**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Kenneth BAUGH, Dr.**
Min. of Agriculture: **Christopher TUFTON**
Min. of Defense: **Bruce GOLDING**
Min. of Education: **Andrew HOLNESS**
Min. of Energy: **Clive MULLINGS**
Min. of Finance & the Public Service: **Audley SHAW**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade: **Kenneth BAUGH, Dr.**
Min. of Health & Environment: **Rudyard SPENCER**
Min. of Industry, Commerce, & Investment: **Karl SAMUDA**
Min. of Information, Culture, Youth, & Sports: **Olivia GRANGE**
Min. of Justice: **Dorothy LIGHTBOURNE**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Pearnel CHARLES**
Min. of Mines & Telecommunications: **Derrick SMITH**
Min. of National Security: **Trevor MACMILLAN**
Min. of Planning & Development: **Bruce GOLDING**
Min. of Tourism: **Edmund BARLETT**
Min. of Transport & Works: **Michael HENRY**
Min. of Water & Housing: **Horace CHANG, Dr.**
Attorney Gen.: **Dorothy LIGHTBOURNE**
Governor, Central Bank: **Derick Milton LATIBEAUDIERE**
Ambassador to the US: **Anthony JOHNSON**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Raymond WOLFE**

Jamaica maintains an embassy in the United States at 1520 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036 (tel. 202-452-0660). It also has consulates in New York at 767 3rd Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-935-9000); and in Miami in the Ingraham Building, Suite 842, 25 SE 2nd Avenue, Miami, FL 33131 (tel. 305-374-8431/2).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

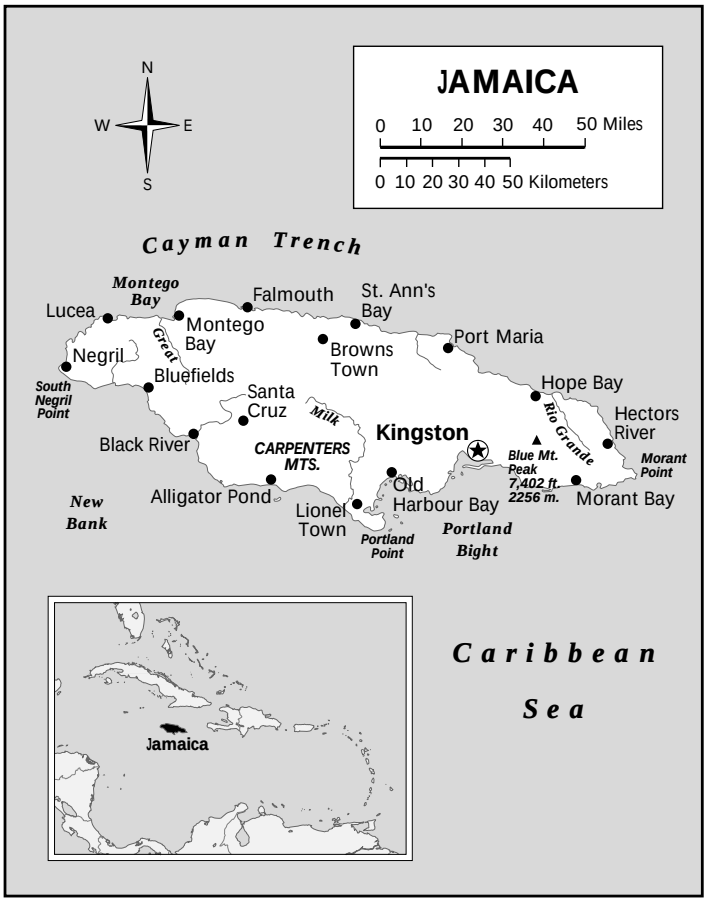
Jamaica's political system is stable. However, the country's serious economic problems have exacerbated social problems and have become the subject of political debate. High unemployment—averaging 12.5%—rampant underemployment, growing debt, and high interest rates are the most serious economic problems. Violent crime is a serious problem, particularly in Kingston.

The two major political parties have historical links with the two largest trade unions—the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) with the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU), and the People's National Party (PNP) with the National Workers Union (NWU). The center-right National Democratic Movement (NDM) was established in 1995, and the populist United Peoples Party (UPP) in 2001; neither has links with any particular trade union, and both are marginal movements.

For health reasons, Michael Manley stepped down as Prime Minister in March 1992 and was replaced by P.J. Patterson. Patterson subsequently led the PNP to victory in general elections in 1993, 1997, and in October of 2002. The 2002 victory marked the first time any Jamaican political party has won four consecutive general elections since the introduction of universal suffrage in 1944. Upon Patterson's retirement on March 30, 2006, Portia Simpson Miller became the first female prime minister in Jamaica's history. She left office after her party (PNP) lost to the JLP in general elections held in September 2007. The current composition of the lower house of Jamaica's Parliament is 32 JLP and 28 PNP.

Since the 1993 elections, the Jamaican Government, political parties, and Electoral Advisory Committee

have worked to enact electoral reform. In the 2002 general elections, grassroots Jamaican efforts from groups like CAFFE (Citizens Action for Free and Fair Elections), supplemented by international observers and organizations such as The Carter Center, helped reduce the violence that has tended to mar Jamaican elections. Former President Carter also observed the 2002 elections and declared them free and fair.



ECONOMY

Jamaica has natural resources, primarily bauxite, adequate water supplies, and climate conducive to agriculture and tourism. The discovery of bauxite in the 1940s and the subsequent establishment of the bauxite-alumina industry shifted Jamaica's economy from sugar and bananas. By the 1970s, Jamaica had emerged as a world leader in export of these minerals as foreign investment increased.

The country faces some serious problems but has the potential for growth and modernization. Currency reserves, remittances, tourism, agriculture, mining, construction, and shipping all remain strong, and Jamaica has attracted over U.S. $4.4 billion in foreign direct investment over the past decade. However, high unemployment, burdensome debt, an alarming crime rate, and anemic growth continue to darken the country's prospects. After 4 years of negative economic growth, Jamaica's GDP grew by 0.8% in 2000, and has grown in the 0.5% to 2.5% range, year-on-year, since then. Inflation fell from 25% in 1995 to 6.1% in 2000 and registered single digits for a few years, until returning to double digits in 2007 and 2008 with the spike in world commodity prices which was soon followed by the global economic downturn.

Through periodic intervention in the market, the central bank prevents any abrupt drop in the exchange rate. Nevertheless, the Jamaican dollar continues to slip despite intervention. The average exchange rate was J$76.20 to the U.S. $1.00 by December 2008. Weakness in the financial sector, speculation, and low levels of government investment erode confidence in the production sector. The government is unable to channel funds into social and physical infrastructure because of an overwhelming debt-to-GDP ratio, which currently stands at approximately 130%.

Almost 55 cents on every dollar earned by the Jamaican Government goes to debt servicing and recurrent expenditure. Tax compliance rates also contribute to the problem, hovering at approximately 45%. On the other hand, net internal reserves were just over $1.7 billion at the end of 2008.

Jamaican Government economic policies encourage foreign investment in areas that earn or save foreign exchange, generate employment, and use local raw materials. The government provides a wide range of incentives to investors, including remittance facilities to assist them in repatriating funds to the country of origin; tax holidays which defer taxes for a period of years; and duty-free access for machinery and raw materials imported for approved enterprises.

Free trade zones have stimulated investment in garment assembly, light manufacturing, and data entry by foreign firms. However, over the last 5 years, the garment industry has suffered from reduced export earnings, continued factory closures, and rising unemployment.

This can be attributed to intense international and regional competition, exacerbated by the high costs of operations in Jamaica, including security costs to deter drug activity, as well as the relatively high cost of labor. The Government of Jamaica hopes to encourage economic activity through a combination of privatization, financial sector restructuring,

falling interest rates, and by boosting tourism and related production activities.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Jamaica has diplomatic relations with most nations and is a member of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. It was an active participant in the April 2001 Quebec Summit of the Americas. Jamaica is an active member of the British Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the G-15, and the G-77. Jamaica is a beneficiary of the Cotonou Conventions, through which the European Union (EU) grants trade preferences to selected states in Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

Historically, Jamaica has had close ties with the U.K., but trade, financial, and cultural relations with the United States are now predominant. Jamaica is linked with the other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean through the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and more broadly through the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). In December 2001, Jamaica completed its 2-year term on the United Nations Security Council.

U.S.-JAMAICAN RELATIONS

The United States maintains close and productive relations with the Government of Jamaica. Former Prime Minister Patterson visited Washington, DC, several times after assuming office in 1992. In April 2001, Prime Minister Patterson and other Caribbean leaders met with President Bush during the Summit of the Americas in Quebec, Canada, at which a "Third Border Initiative" was launched to deepen U.S. cooperation with Caribbean nations and enhance economic development and integration of the Caribbean nations. Then-Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller attended the "Conference on the Caribbean—A 20/20 Vision" in Washington in June 2007. The United States is Jamaica's most important trading partner: bilateral trade in goods in 2005 was over $2 billion. Jamaica is a popular destination for American tourists; more than 1.2 million Americans visited in 2006. In addition, some 10,000 American citizens, including many dual-nationals born on the island, permanently reside in Jamaica.

The Government of Jamaica also seeks to attract U.S. investment and supports efforts to create a Free Trade Area of the Americans (FTAA). More than 80 U.S. firms have operations in Jamaica, and total U.S. investment is estimated at more than $3 billion. An office of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, located in the embassy, actively assists American businesses seeking trade opportunities in Jamaica. The country is a beneficiary of the Caribbean Basin Trade Partner Act (CBTPA). The American Chamber of Commerce, which also is available to assist U.S. business in Jamaica, has offices in Kingston.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assistance to Jamaica since its independence in 1962 has contributed to reducing the population growth rate, the attainment of higher standards in a number of critical health indicators, and the diversification and expansion of Jamaica's export base. USAID's primary objective is promoting sustainable economic growth. Other key objectives are improved environmental quality and natural resource protection, strengthening democratic institutions and respect for the rule of law, as well as family planning. In fiscal year 2006, the USAID mission in Jamaica operated a program totaling more than $21 million in development assistance. The Peace Corps has been in Jamaica continuously since 1962. Since then, more than 3,300 volunteers have served in the country. Today, the Peace Corps works in the following projects: Youth-at-Risk, which includes adolescent reproductive health, HIV/AIDS education, and the needs of marginalized males; water sanitation, which includes rural waste water solutions and municipal waste water treatment; and environmental education, which helps address low levels of awareness and strengthens environmental nongovernmental organizations. The Peace Corps in Jamaica fields about 70 volunteers who work in every parish on the island, including some inner-city communities in Kingston.

Jamaica is a major transit point for cocaine en route to the United States and is also a key source of marijuana and marijuana derivative products for the Americas. During 2006, the Government of Jamaica seized narcotics destined for the United States, arrested key traffickers and criminal gang leaders, and dismantled their organizations. Jamaica remains the Caribbean's largest producer and exporter of marijuana. The efforts of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and Jamaica Defense Force (JDF) enabled cannabis seizures to increase by over 200% in 2006. In 2006, the JCF arrested 5,409 persons on drug related charges, including 269 foreigners. Additionally, more than 20,000 kilograms of marijuana were seized, and 6,300,000 marijuana plants eradicated in 2006.

In August 2006, two priority targets associated with major cocaine trafficking organizations were arrested in Jamaica and await extradition to the United States where they are charged with conspiracy to import illegal drugs. Jeffrey and Gareth Lewis (father and son) allegedly transported cocaine shipments from Colombia to the United States. Operation Kingfish is a multinational task force (Jamaica, U.S., United Kingdom, and Canada) for coordinating investigations leading to the arrest of major criminals.

From its October 2004 inception through December 2006, Operation Kingfish launched 1,378 operations resulting in the seizure of 56 vehicles, 57 boats, one aircraft, 206 firearms, and two containers conveying drugs. Kingfish was also responsible for the seizure of over 13 metric tons of cocaine (mostly outside of Jamaica) and over 27,390 pounds of compressed marijuana.

In 2006 Operation Kingfish mounted 870 operations, compared to 607 in 2005. In 2006, through cargo scanning, the Jamaican Customs Contraband Enforcement Team seized over 3,000 pounds of marijuana, ten kg of cocaine, and approximately $500,000 at Jamaican air and seaports.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

KINGSTON (E) 142 Old Hope Road, Kingston 6, 876-702-6000, Fax 876-702-6001, Workweek: M-F; 07:15 to 16:00; most offices allow flex time; all offices staffed core hours, some staff take Friday afternoons off, working longer on other days., Website: http://kingston.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Shelia Lockett
AMB OMS:	Tiffany Thompson
CG OMS:	Thuy Brault
FCS:	Office Closed
FM:	Ricardo Cruz
HRO:	Maryanne Masterson
MGT:	Eric A. Flohr
POL/ECO:	Lloyd W. Moss
AMB:	Brenda La Grange Johnson
CG:	Edward Wehrli
DCM:	James T. Heg
PAO:	Patricia Attkisson
GSO:	Alfred Braswell
RSO:	Arthur Balek
AGR:	Jamie Rothschild
APHIS:	Alester Simmons
CLO:	Lucy Ramel
DAO:	Cdr. Randall Ramel
DEA:	Gavin Kersellius
EEO:	Tiffany Thompson
FAA:	Allan B. Hurr
FMO:	Sarah Spodek
ICASS Chair:	Erik Valentzas
IMO:	Howard Sparks
ISO:	Francis M. Ruddy
ISSO:	Roger Alt
MLO:	Ltc. Erik Valentzas
NAS:	Andrea Lewis
State ICASS:	Eric A. Flohr

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 800-USA-TRADE or 800-872-8723
Web site: http://trade.gov/

American Chamber of Commerce of Jamaica
The Jamaica Pegasus
81 Knutsford Blvd
Kingston 5, Jamaica
Tel: (876) 929-7866/67
Fax: (876) 929-8597
Web site: http://www.amchamjamaica.org/
E-mail: amcham@cwjamaica.com

Caribbean-Central American Action
1818 N Street, NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 466-7464
Fax: (202) 822-0075
Web site: http://www.c-caa.org

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 25, 2008

Country Description: Jamaica is a developing nation of over 2.6 million people. Facilities for tourists are widely available. International airports are located in Kingston and Montego Bay.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside of the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted and have been in full production since July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

Visitors must have a return ticket and be able to show sufficient funds for their visit. U.S. citizens traveling to Jamaica for work or extended stays are required to have a current U.S. passport and visa issued by the Jamaican Embassy or a Jamaican Consulate. There is a departure tax for travelers, which is regularly included in airfare. For further information, travelers may contact the Embassy of Jamaica at 1520 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, telephone (202) 452-0660; the Jamaican Consulate in Miami or New York; honorary consuls in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Seattle or Los Angeles. Visit the Embassy of Jamaica web site at www.embassyofjamaica.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Gang violence and shootings occur regularly in certain areas of Kingston and Montego Bay. These areas include Mountain View, Trench Town, Tivoli Gardens, and Arnett Gardens in Kingston, and Flankers in Montego Bay. Some neighborhoods are occasionally subject to curfews and police searches. Impromptu demonstrations can occur, during which demonstrators often construct roadblocks or otherwise block the streets. These events usually do not affect tourist areas, but travelers to Kingston should check with local authorities or the U.S. Embassy for current information prior to their trip.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime, including violent crime, is a serious problem in Jamaica, particularly in Kingston. While the vast majority of crimes occur in impoverished areas, the violence is not confined. The primary criminal concern of a tourist is being a victim of theft. In several cases, armed robberies of Americans have turned violent when the victims resisted handing over valuables. Crime is exacerbated by the fact that police are understaffed and ineffective. Therefore, tourists should take their own precautions and always pay extra attention to their surroundings when traveling, exercise care when walking outside after dark, and should always avoid areas known for high crime rates. As a general rule, valuables should not be left unattended, including in hotel rooms and on the beach. Care should be taken when carrying high value items such as cameras, or when wearing expensive jewelry on the street. Women's handbags should be zipped and held close to the body. Men should carry wallets in their front pants pocket. Large amounts of cash should always be handled discreetly.

The U.S. Embassy advises its staff to avoid inner-city areas of Kingston and other urban centers, such as those listed in the section on Safety and Security, whenever possible. Particular caution is advised after dark in downtown Kingston. The U.S. Embassy also cautions its staff not to use public buses, which are often overcrowded and are a frequent venue for crime.

To enhance security in the principal resort areas, the Government of Jamaica has taken a number of steps, including assignment of special police foot and bicycle patrols. Particular care is still called for, however, when staying at isolated villas and smaller establishments that may have fewer security arrangements. Some street vendors and taxi drivers in tourist areas are known to confront and harass tourists to buy their wares or employ their services. If a firm "No, thank you" does not solve the problem, visitors may wish to seek the assistance of a tourist police officer.

Drug use is prevalent in some tourist areas. American citizens should avoid buying, selling, holding, or taking illegal drugs under any circumstances. There is anecdotal evidence that the use of so-called date rape drugs, such as Ruhypnol, has become more common at clubs and private parties. Marijuana, cocaine, heroin and other illegal narcotics are especially potent in Jamaica, and their use may lead to severe or even disastrous health consequences.

In addition to a number of lottery and investment scams, relatives of U.S. citizens visiting Jamaica and U.S. citizens who are prisoners in Jamaica have received telephone calls from people claiming to be Jamaican police officers, other public officials, or medical professionals. The callers usually state that the visitor or prisoner has had trouble and needs financial help. In almost every case these claims are untrue. The caller insists that money should be sent to either themselves or a third party who will assist the visitor or prisoner, but when money is sent, it fails to reach the U.S. citizens in alleged need. U.S. citizens who receive calls such as these should never send money. They should contact the American Citizen Services Unit of the Embassy's Consular Section at telephone (876) 702-6000 for assistance in confirming the validity of the call.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Jamaica is: 119.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is more limited than in the United States. Comprehensive emergency medical services are located only in Kingston and Montego Bay, and smaller public hospitals are located in each parish. Emergency medical and ambulance services, and the availability of prescription drugs, are limited in outlying parishes. Ambulance service is limited both in the quality of emergency care and in the availability of vehicles in remote parts of the country. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars or more. Doctors and hospitals often require cash payment prior to providing services. If a medical evacuation is required, the Embassy recommends you contact the American Citizen Services Unit at (876) 702-6000 for assistance.

Numerous cases of dengue fever, including two afflicting Americans, were reported in Jamaica in 2007, the first in many years. Americans are urged to read the Centers for Disease Control's Fact Sheet on dengue fever and particularly to follow the guidance on deterring mosquitoes at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Jamaica.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be

obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Jamaica is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Drivers and pedestrians should remember that driving in Jamaica is on the left-hand side of the road. Breakdown assistance is quite limited in urban areas and virtually unavailable in rural areas. Nighttime driving is especially dangerous and should be avoided whenever possible. As noted above in the section on Crime, public buses are often overcrowded and they are frequently a venue of crime. Travelers who use taxicabs should take only licensed taxicabs having red-and-white PP license plates.

Drivers and passengers in the front seat are required to wear seat belts, and motorcycle riders are required to wear helmets. Extreme caution should be used in operating motor driven cycles. Several serious and fatal accidents take place each year involving American tourists riding in taxis without seat belts. All passengers are strongly encouraged to utilize vehicles equipped with seat belts. Drivers should make every effort to avoid areas of high crime and civil strife. Roadblocks are sometimes employed by residents as protests intended to draw attention to particular issues and require extreme caution by drivers.

The Embassy also advises its staff to always keep their windows up and doors locked when driving and to leave enough distance between themselves and the preceding car at intersections to allow a roll forward in case of harassment by pedestrian panhandlers. As a rule, drivers should always avoid contact with large groups of pedestrians.

Most roads are paved, but suffer from ill repair, inadequate signage and poor traffic control markings. City roads are often subject to poorly marked construction zones, pedestrians, bicyclists, and, occasionally, livestock. Street corners are frequented by peddlers, window washers, and beggars walking among stopped cars. Smaller roads are often narrow and they are frequently traveled at high speeds. Drivers should be aware of roundabouts, which are often poorly marked and require traffic to move in a clockwise direction. Motorists entering a roundabout must yield to those already in it. Failure to turn into the correct flow of traffic can result in a head on collision.

The A1, A2 and A3 highways are the primary links between the most important cities and tourist destinations on the island. These roads are not comparable to American highways, and road conditions may be hazardous due to poor repair, inadequate signage and poor traffic control markings. The B highways and other rural roads are often very narrow and frequented by large trucks, buses, pedestrians, bicyclists and open range livestock. Highways are traveled at high speeds, but they are not limited-access and are subject to the hazards outlined above.

For specific information concerning Jamaican drivers permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Embassy of Jamaica's website: http://www.congenjamaica-ny.org or the Jamaica Tourist Board at: 1-800-JAMAICA or on line at http://www.jamaicatravel.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Jamaica's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Jamaica's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: In recent years, there has been a growth of Behavior Modification Facilities for the treatment of minors with drug/alcohol and discipline problems. Parents enroll their children in these facilities in the hope of improving their behavior. The Department of State is aware of such facilities in Jamaica and Mexico. There may be facilities in other countries that have not come to the attention of the U.S. government.

Parents considering enrolling their children in overseas Behavior Modification Facilities should visit the facility, if at all possible, and review the host country's rules regarding the facility and its employees. Parents may contact the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in the host country to inquire about the facility or speak to the country officer in the Office of American Citizen Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs at: (202) 647-5226. When such facilities are known to exist, consular officials conduct periodic site visits, sometimes in the company of host country government officials, to monitor the general well being of U.S. citizen enrollees and to check on specific individuals who have been the subject of welfare and whereabouts inquiries. Further information can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Behavior Modification Facilities information flyer.

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against taking any type of firearm or ammunition into Jamaica without authorization from the Ministry of National Security. Entering

Jamaica with a firearm or even a single round of ammunition is a serious crime that can result in a long prison sentence.

Fresh fruits, vegetables and uncooked meats are not permitted to be brought in or out of the country and may be confiscated by customs officials. Pets may not be brought into Jamaica, except for dogs from the United Kingdom that have not been vaccinated for rabies and only after six months quarantine.

It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Jamaica in Washington or one of the Jamaican consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Jamaica, like all Caribbean countries, can be affected by hurricanes. Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30 each year. The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) has put measures in place in the event of an emergency or disaster. General information is available on the subject via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences.

Persons violating Jamaica's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Jamaica are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Airport searches are thorough and people attempting to smuggle narcotics are often apprehended.

Prison conditions in Jamaica differ greatly from prison conditions in the United States. Prisoners are provided only the most basic meals and must rely upon family and friends to supplement their diets, provide clothing, and supply personal care items such as toothpaste and shampoo. Packages shipped from the United States to prisoners are subject to Jamaican import taxes and are undeliverable when the recipient lacks the funds to pay the duties. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Jamaican law contains specific prohibitions on certain sexual activities. These prohibitions have been used to target homosexuals and trans-gendered individuals. Violations can result in lengthy imprisonment.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Jamaica are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Jamaica. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at 142 Old Hope Road in the Liguanea area of Kingston, tel. (876) 702-6000. Office hours are 7:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with window services available Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., except local and U.S. holidays. For emergencies after hours, on weekends, and holidays, U.S. citizens are requested to call the U.S. Embassy duty officer through the main switchboard at (876) 702-6000.

The Consular Agency in Montego Bay is located at St. James Place, 2nd Floor, Gloucester Avenue, tel. (876) 952-0160. Office hours are Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30. The U.S. Embassy also has consular responsibility for the Cayman Islands, a British dependent territory. The U.S. Consular Agency in the Cayman Islands is located at 222 Mirco Centre, Georgetown. Hours are M-W-F from 7:30 to 11:00 and T-Th from 12:00 to 3:30. The telephone number is (345) 945-8173 and the email is consagency@candw.ky. For additional information on travel conditions in the Cayman Islands, please refer to the Cayman Islands Country Specific Information.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Jamaica is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

There are two types of adoption in Jamaica–Adoption Licenses and Adoption Orders. An Adoption License allows a Jamaican citizen child to be taken to a "scheduled country" (in these cases, the United States) and adopted there. An Adoption Order provides for an orphan to be adopted in Jamaica. An Order legally supersedes a birth certificate, as it shows date of birth, (new) parentage, and (new) name. The child's Jamaican passport information may also be superseded by the new parentage and name.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Jamaica, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Jamaica also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents seeking an Adoption License can expect to have to travel to Jamaica at least twice (once to meet with the Child Development Agency (CDA) and again to apply for a visa), but are not required to reside in Jamaica. Prospective adoptive parents seeking an Adoption Order must reside in Jamaica during the pre-adoption placement and until the case appears before a Jamaican court (at least four months). The court may waive the pre-adoption placement requirement if the prospective adoptive parents are Jamaican nationals adopting a relative.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents who aren't related to the potential adopted child must be 25 years of age or older. If the child is a brother, sister, niece, or nephew of the prospective adoptive parent(s), at least one parent must be 18 years of age or older. There are no laws dictating the age difference between the adoptee and the prospective adoptive parent when they are related.

Marriage Requirements: Both single individuals and married couples can adopt.

Income Requirements: While there are no specific income requirements, prospective adoptive parents will have to provide documents relaying their financial status.

Other Requirements: While there are no specific medical ineligibilities, each potential adoption is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Prospective adoptive parents' medical conditions may factor into that evaluation.

Who Can Be Adopted? Jamaica has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. You cannot adopt a child in Jamaica unless he or she meets the requirements. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Jamaica's Adoption Authority: Child Development Agency (CDA)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Jamaica is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate. The CDA is the only agency legally authorized to provide adoption services in Jamaica. There are one or two private agencies operating in Jamaica, but they do so without government sanction.

To bring an adopted child from Jamaica to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS.

The CDA verifies the contents of the home study by writing to the home study agency. This verifies the home study authorship and obtains the home study agency's agreement to supervise the placement in the future.

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the CDA in Jamaica will provide you with a referral to a child.

The child must be eligible to be adopted according to Jamaica's requirements. The child must also meet the definition of an orphan under United States law. The CDA identifies children for adoption. It administers the public children's homes; however, the CDA places children from either public or private children's homes.

The process for finalizing the adoption (or gaining legal custody) in Jamaica generally includes the following.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The CDA approves the adoption and forwards the case to the court.

Role of the Court: In the Kingston, St. Andrew, Westmoreland, and St. James parishes, special Family Courts exercise jurisdiction over adoptions. In the remaining parishes, the local Resident Magistrate's Court supervises adoptions.

Role of Adoption Agencies: The CDA is the only agency legally authorized to provide adoption services in Jamaica. The one or two other agencies operating in Jamaica do so without the governments sanction or authorization.

Adoption Application: The prospective adoptive parents submit the adoption application to the CDA.

Time Frame: Most adoptions using the Adoption License process can be completed in four months. Those using the Adoption Order take longer to complete. The paperwork processing for the Adoption Order can take from two to three months to complete prior to the pre-adoption placement (unless the child is a relative). The pre-adoption placement generally lasts four months.

Adoption Fees: Jamaica does not charge any fees for adoptions. However, each child is required to have an extensive physical. Licensed pediatricians generally charge approximately $100 USD for this service. Adoptive parents may have legal representation at the court proceeding, but most do not hire an attorney. Attorney fees will vary.

Documents Required: The following documents are required to obtain an Adoption License:

- Application form (available from the CDA);
- Home Study—Certified original home study plus two additional copies to be sent directly to the Board by the Department of Health (in most cases, this can be the same home study conducted in the United States for the I-600A or I-600);
- Medical Examination (examination of both the prospective adoptive parents and the child);
- Letter of Undertaking–The agency that conducted the home study submits the letter agreeing to supervise the placement until the adoption is complete, and beyond, as determined on a case-by-case basis by the CDA;

- Bank Statement; and
- Letter(s) from Employer(s)–The letter(s) should indicate the annual income and the nature of employment.

The following documents are required to obtain an Adoption Order:

- Application form (available from the CDA);
- Home Study—certified original home study plus two additional copies to be sent directly to the Board by the Department of Health (can be the same home study conducted in the United States for the I-600A or I-600);
- Medical Examination (examination of both the prospective adoptive parents and the child);
- Income Statement;
- Personal References (two); and
- Letter of Undertaking–provided by the Jamaican agency that conducted the home study to supervise placement.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: The Child Development Agency may, on case-by-case basis, require the agency that conducted the home study to submit reports to the CDA on a regular basis for up to two years after an Adoption License is issued. Post-adoption reporting is not mandated in cases that receive Adoption Orders.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Jamaica
16 Oxford Road
Kingston 5
Jamaica, West Indies
Tel: 876-935-6000
Fax: 876-935-6019

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 541
Kingston
Jamaica

Jamaica's Adoption Authority
Child Development Agency (CDA)
2-4 King Street
Kingston 5, Jamaica
Tel: 876-948-6678
Fax: 876-924-9401
Website: http://www.cda.gov.jm

Embassy of Jamaica
1520 New Hampshire Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-452-0660

Jamaica also has Consulate-Generals in New York and Miami as well as Consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Richmond, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Jamaica is not party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any other international or bilateral treaties in force between Jamaica and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Jamaica place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts.

American citizens planning a trip to Jamaica with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Jamaica, if parents are legally married they share the custody of their children. If they are not married, custody is granted by law to the mother unless there are known facts of inappropriate behavior mental or social problems. Foreign court orders are not automatically recognized.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not automatically enforced in Jamaica, but may be formally recognized by a Jamaican court.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has been granted custody of a child, the other parent is usually granted visitation rights.

The American Embassy in Kingston has reported few problems for non-custodial parents exercising their visitation rights. If a custodial parent fails to allow visitation, the non-custodial parent may appeal to the court.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is recognized under Jamaican law.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Jamaica. However, a child leaving the country with a person other than a parent needs written authorization from one parent. This authorization requires certification from the Jamaican immigration office before minors may exit the country.

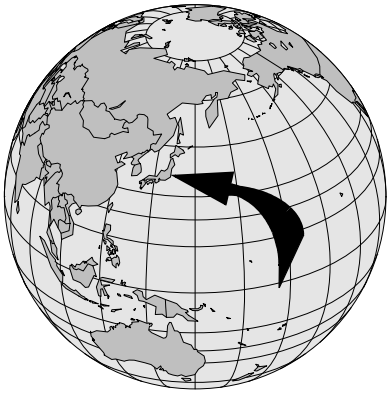
Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Jamaican court should retain an attorney in Jamaica. The U.S. Embassy in Jamaica maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by accessing the internet address below or by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy Kingston
Consular Section
Jamaica Mutual Life Center
2 Oxford Road, 3rd Floor
Kingston
Jamaica
Telephone: (876) 929-4850
Fax: [876] 935-6001
Web site: www.state.gov/kingston

Questions involving Jamaican law should be addressed to a Jamaican attorney or to the Embassy of Jamaica in the United States at:

Embassy of Jamaica
1520 New Hampshire Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 452-0660

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



JAPAN

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Japan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 377,864 sq. km. (145,902 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than California.

Cities: Capital—Tokyo. Other cities—Yokohama, Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo, Kobe, Kyoto, Fukuoka.

Terrain: Rugged, mountainous islands.

Climate: Varies from subtropical to temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Japanese.

Population: (2008 est.) 127.3 million.

Population growth rate: (2007 est.) -0.139%.

Ethnic groups: Japanese; Korean (0.5%), Chinese (0.4%).

Religions: Shinto and Buddhist; Christian.

Languages: Japanese.

Education: Literacy—99%.

Health: (2008 est.) Infant mortality rate—2.8/1,000. Life expectancy—males 79 yrs., females 86 yrs.

Work force: (67 million, 2007 est.) services—67.7%; industry—27.8%; agriculture—4.5%.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government.

Constitution: May 3, 1947.

Government branches: Executive—prime minister (head of government). Legislative—bicameral Diet (House of Representatives and House of Councillors). Judicial—civil law system based on the model of Roman law.

Political subdivisions: 47 prefectures.

Political parties: Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), New Clean Government Party (Komeito), Japan Communist Party (JCP), Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Suffrage: Universal at 20.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $4.384 trillion (official exchange rate); $4.29 trillion (PPP).

Real growth rate: (2007) 2.1%.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est. PPP) $33,600.

Natural resources: Fish and few mineral resources.

Agriculture: Products—rice, vegetables, fruit, milk, meat, silk.

Industry: Types—machinery and equipment, metals and metal products, textiles, autos, chemicals, electrical and electronic equipment.

GEOGRAPHY

Japan, a country of islands, extends along the eastern or Pacific coast of Asia. The four main islands, running from north to south, are Hokkaido, Honshu (or the mainland), Shikoku, and Kyushu. Okinawa Island is about 380 miles southwest of Kyushu. About 3,000 smaller islands are included in the archipelago. In total land area, Japan is slightly smaller than California. About 73% of the country is mountainous, with a chain running through each of the main islands. Japan's highest mountain is the world famous Mt. Fuji (12,385 feet). Since so little flat area exists, many hills and mountainsides are cultivated all the way to the summits. As Japan is situated in a volcanic zone along the Pacific depth, frequent low intensity earth tremors and occasional volcanic activity are felt throughout the islands. Destructive earthquakes occur several times a century. Hot springs are numerous and have been developed as resorts.

Temperature extremes are less pronounced than in the United States, but the climate varies considerably. Sapporo, on the northernmost main island, has warm summers and long, cold winters with heavy snowfall. Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe, in central and western parts of the largest island of Honshu, experi-

ence relatively mild winters with little or no snowfall and hot, humid summers. Fukuoka, on the island of Kyushu, has a climate similar to that of Washington, DC, with mild winters and short summers. Okinawa is subtropical.

PEOPLE

Japan's population, currently some 128 million, has experienced a phenomenal growth rate during the past 100 years as a result of scientific, industrial, and sociological changes, but this has recently slowed because of falling birth rates. In 2005, Japan's population declined for the first time, two years earlier than predicted. High sanitary and health standards produce a life expectancy exceeding that of the United States.

Japan is an urban society with only about 4% of the labor force engaged in agriculture. Many farmers supplement their income with part-time jobs in nearby towns and cities. About 80 million of the urban population is heavily concentrated on the Pacific shore of Honshu and in northern Kyushu. Major population centers include: Metropolitan Tokyo with approximately 14 million; Yokohama with 3.3 million; Osaka with 2.6 million; Nagoya with 2.1 million; Sapporo with 1.6 million; Kyoto with 1.5 million; Kobe with 1.4 million; and Kitakyushu, Kawasaki, and Fukuoka with 1.2 million each. Japan faces the same problems that confront urban industrialized societies throughout the world: overcrowded cities, congested roads, air pollution, and rising juvenile delinquency.

Shintoism and Buddhism are Japan's two principal religions. Shintoism is founded on myths and legends emanating from the early animistic worship of natural phenomena. Since it was unconcerned with problems of afterlife which dominate Buddhist thought, and since Buddhism easily accommodated itself to local faiths, the two religions comfortably coexisted, and Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples often became administratively linked. Today many Japanese are adherents of both faiths. From the 16th to the 19th century Shintoism flourished.

Adopted by the leaders of the Meiji restoration, Shintoism received state support and was cultivated as a spur to patriotic and nationalistic feelings. Following World War II, state support was discontinued, and the emperor disavowed divinity. Today Shintoism plays a more peripheral role in the life of the Japanese people. The numerous shrines are visited regularly by a few believers and, if they are historically famous or known for natural beauty, by many sightseers. Many marriages are held in the shrines, and children are brought there after birth and on certain anniversary dates; special shrine days are celebrated for certain occasions, and numerous festivals are held throughout the year. Many homes have "god shelves" where offerings can be made to Shinto deities.

Buddhism first came to Japan in the 6th century and for the next 10 centuries exerted profound influence on its intellectual, artistic, social, and political life. Most funerals are conducted by Buddhist priests, and many Japanese visit family graves and Buddhist temples to pay respects to ancestors.

Confucianism arrived with the first great wave of Chinese influence into Japan between the 6th and 9th centuries. Overshadowed by Buddhism, it survived as an organized philosophy into the late 19th century and remains today as an important influence on Japanese thought and values.

Christianity, first introduced into Japan in 1549, was virtually stamped out by the government a century later; it was reintroduced in the late 1800s and has spread slowly. Today it has 3 million adherents, including a relatively high percentage of important figures in education and public affairs.

Beyond the three traditional religions, many Japanese today are turning to a great variety of popular religious movements normally lumped together under the name "new religions." These religions draw on the concept of Shinto, Buddhism, and folk superstition and have developed in part to meet the social needs of elements of the population. The officially recognized new religions number in the hundreds, and total membership is reportedly in the tens of millions.

HISTORY

Japanese legend maintains that Japan was founded in 600 BC by the Emperor Jimmu, a direct descendant of the sun goddess and ancestor of the present ruling imperial family. About AD 405, the Japanese court officially adopted the Chinese writing system. Together with the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century, these two events revolutionized Japanese culture and marked the beginning of a long period of Chinese cultural influence. From the establishment of the first fixed capital at Nara in 710 until 1867, the emperors of the Yamato dynasty were the nominal rulers, but actual power was usually held by powerful court nobles, regents, or "shoguns" (military governors).

Contact With the West

The first recorded contact with the West occurred about 1542, when a Portuguese ship, blown off its course to China, landed in Japan. During the next century, traders from Portugal, the Netherlands, England, and Spain arrived, as did Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan missionaries. During the early part of the 17th century, Japan's shogunate suspected that the traders and missionaries were actually forerunners of a military conquest by European powers. This caused the shogunate to place foreigners under progressively tighter restrictions. Ultimately, Japan forced all foreigners to leave and barred all relations with the outside world except for severely restricted commercial contacts with Dutch and Chinese merchants at Nagasaki. This isolation lasted for 200 years, until Commodore Matthew Perry of the U.S. Navy negotiated the opening of Japan to the West with the Convention of Kanagawa in 1854.



Within several years, renewed contact with the West profoundly altered Japanese society. The shogunate resigned, and the emperor was restored to power. The "Meiji restoration" of 1868 initiated many reforms. The feudal system was abolished, and numerous Western institutions were adopted, including a Western legal and educational system and constitutional government along parliamentary lines. In 1898, the last of the "unequal treaties" with Western powers was removed, signaling Japan's new status among the nations of the world. In a few decades, by creating modern social, educational, economic, military, and industrial systems, the Emperor Meiji's "controlled revolution" had transformed a feudal and isolated state into a world power.

Wars With China and Russia

Japanese leaders of the late 19th century regarded the Korean Peninsula

as a potential threat to Japan. It was over Korea that Japan became involved in war with the Chinese Empire in 1894-95 and with Russia in 1904-05. The war with China established Japan's domination of Korea, while also giving it the Pescadores Islands and Formosa (now Taiwan). After Japan defeated Russia in 1905, the resulting Treaty of Portsmouth awarded Japan certain rights in Manchuria and in southern Sakhalin, which Russia had received in 1875 in exchange for the Kurile Islands. Both wars gave Japan a free hand in Korea, which it formally annexed in 1910.

World War I to 1952

World War I permitted Japan, which fought on the side of the victorious Allies, to expand its influence in Asia and its territorial holdings in the Pacific. The postwar era brought Japan unprecedented prosperity. Japan went to the peace conference at Versailles in 1919 as one of the great military and industrial powers of the world and received official recognition as one of the "Big Five" of the new international order. It joined the League of Nations and received a mandate over Pacific islands north of the Equator formerly held by Germany.

During the 1920s, Japan progressed toward a democratic system of government. However, parliamentary government was not rooted deeply enough to withstand the economic and political pressures of the 1930s, during which military leaders became increasingly influential.

Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. In 1933, Japan resigned from the League of Nations. The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 followed Japan's signing of the "anti-Comintern pact" with Nazi Germany the previous year and was part of a chain of developments culminating in the Japanese attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941.

After years of war, resulting in the loss of 3 million Japanese lives and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan signed an instrument of surrender on the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Harbor on September 2, 1945. As a result of World War II, Japan lost all of its overseas possessions and retained only the home islands. Manchukuo was dissolved, and Manchuria was returned to China; Japan renounced all claims to Formosa; Korea was occupied and divided by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.; southern Sakhalin and the Kuriles were occupied by the U.S.S.R.; and the U.S. became the sole administering authority of the Ryukyu, Bonin, and Volcano Islands. The 1972 reversion of Okinawa completed the U.S. return of control of these islands to Japan.

After the war, Japan was placed under international control of the Allies through the Supreme Commander, Gen. Douglas MacArthur. U.S. objectives were to ensure that Japan would become a peaceful nation and to establish democratic self-government supported by the freely expressed will of the people. Political, economic, and social reforms were introduced, such as a freely elected Japanese Diet (legislature) and universal adult suffrage. The country's constitution took effect on May 3, 1947. The United States and 45 other Allied nations signed the Treaty of Peace with Japan in September 1951. The U.S. Senate ratified the treaty in March 1952, and under the terms of the treaty, Japan regained full sovereignty on April 28, 1952.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Japan is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government. There is universal adult suffrage with a secret ballot for all elective offices. Sovereignty, previously embodied in the emperor, is vested in the Japanese people, and the Emperor is defined as the symbol of the state.

Japan's Government is a parliamentary democracy, with a House of Representatives and a House of Councillors. Executive power is vested in a cabinet composed of a prime minister and ministers of state, all of whom must be civilians. The prime minister must be a member of the Diet and is designated by his colleagues. The prime minister has the power to appoint and remove ministers, a majority of whom must be Diet members. The judiciary is independent.

The five major political parties represented in the National Diet are the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the New Clean Government Party (Komeito), the Japan Communist Party (JCP), and the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Japan's judicial system, drawn from customary law, civil law, and Anglo-American common law, consists of several levels of courts, with the Supreme Court as the final judicial authority. The Japanese constitution includes a bill of rights similar to the U.S. Bill of Rights, and the Supreme Court has the right of judicial review. Japanese courts do not use a jury system, and there are no administrative courts or claims courts. Because of the judicial system's basis, court decisions are made in accordance with legal statutes. Only Supreme Court decisions have any direct effect on later interpretation of the law.

Japan does not have a federal system, and its 47 prefectures are not sovereign entities in the sense that U.S. states are. Most depend on the central government for subsidies. Governors of prefectures, mayors of municipalities, and prefectural and municipal assembly members are popularly elected to 4-year terms.

Recent Political Developments

The post-World War II years saw tremendous economic growth in Japan, with the political system dominated by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). That total domination lasted until the Diet lower house elections in

July 1993, in which the LDP failed for the first time to win a majority. The LDP returned to power in 1994, with majorities in both houses of the Diet. In elections in July 2007, the LDP lost its majority in the upper house, with the DPJ now holding the largest number of seats but with no party possessing a clear majority. Currently, the LDP maintains a majority in the lower house.

Shinzo Abe was elected Prime Minister in a Diet vote in September 2006. Abe was the first prime minister to be born after World War II and the youngest prime minister since the war. However, Abe resigned abruptly on September 12, 2007, not long after the LDP lost control of the upper house in the July 2007 elections in which the LDP's handing of domestic issues was a leading issue. Yasuo Fukuda of the LDP was elected Prime Minister by the Diet on September 25, 2007 to replace Abe. Fukuda, who suffered from low approval ratings, resigned suddenly on September 1, 2008. Former Foreign Minister Taro Aso was the victor in the subsequent LDP presidential election held on September 22, 2008, and was designated by the Diet and formally appointed by the Emperor as Japan's Prime Minister on September 24, 2008.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Emperor: **AKIHITO**
Prime Min.: **Taro ASO**
Chief Cabinet Sec.: **Takeo KAWAMURA**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Fisheries: **Shigeru ISHIBA**
Min. of Defense: **Yasukazu HAMADA**
Min. of Economy, Trade, & Industry: **Toshihiro NIKAI**
Min. of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, & Technology: **Ryu SHIONOYA**
Min. of Environment: **Tetsuo SAITO**
Min. of Finance: **Shoichi NAKAGAWA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Hirofumi NAKASONE**
Min. of Health, Labor, & Welfare: **Yoichi MASUZOE**
Min. of Internal Affairs & Communications: **Kunio HATOYAMA**
Min. of Justice: **Eisuke MORI**
Min. of Land, Infrastructure, & Transport: **Kazuyoshi KANEKO**
Min. of Ocean Policy: **Sadakazu TANIGAKI**
State Min. for Abduction Issue: **Takeo KAWAMURA**
State Min. for Consumer Protection, Science & Technology Policy, & Food Safety: **Seiko NODA**
State Min. for Declining Birthrate & Gender Equality: **Yuko OBUCHI**
State Min. for Economic & Fiscal Policy: **Kaoru YOSANO**
State Min. for Financial Services: **Shoichi NAKAGAWA**
State Min. for Okinawa & Northern Territories: **Tsutomu SATO**
State Min. for Regulatory & Civil Service Reform: **Akira AMARI**
Chmn., National Public Safety Commission: **Tsutomu SATO**
Governor, Bank of Japan: **Masaaki SHIRAKAWA**
Ambassador to the US: **Ichiro FUJISAKI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Yukio TAKASU**

Japan maintains an embassy in the United States at 2520 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-238-6700; fax: 202-328-2187).

ECONOMY

Japan's industrialized, free market economy is the second-largest in the world. Its economy is highly efficient and competitive in areas linked to international trade, but productivity is far lower in protected areas such as agriculture, distribution, and services. After achieving one of the highest economic growth rates in the world from the 1960s through the 1980s, the Japanese economy slowed dramatically in the early 1990s, when the "bubble economy" collapsed, marked by plummeting stock and real estate prices.

Japan's reservoir of industrial leadership and technicians, well-educated and industrious work force, high savings and investment rates, and intensive promotion of industrial development and foreign trade produced a mature industrial economy. Japan has few natural resources, and trade helps it earn the foreign exchange needed to purchase raw materials for its economy. Japan's long-term economic prospects are considered good, and it has largely recovered from its worst period of economic stagnation since World War II. Real GDP in Japan grew at an average of roughly 1% yearly in the 1990s, compared to growth in the 1980s of about 4% per year. After sustaining several consecutive years of growth, the Japanese economy began to slow last year in line with global economic conditions. Real growth was 2.1% in 2007.

Agriculture, Energy, and Minerals

Only 15% of Japan's land is arable. The agricultural economy is highly subsidized and protected. With per hectare crop yields among the highest in the world, Japan maintains an overall agricultural self-sufficiency rate of about 40% on fewer than 5.6 million cultivated hectares (14 million acres). Japan normally produces a slight surplus of rice but imports large quantities of wheat, corn, sorghum, and soybeans, primarily from the United States. Japan is the largest market for U.S. agricultural exports.

Given its heavy dependence on imported energy, Japan has aimed to diversify its sources and maintain high levels of energy efficiency. Since the oil shocks of the 1970s, Japan has reduced dependence on petroleum as a source of energy from more than 75% in 1973 to about 52% in 2000. Other important energy sources are coal, liquefied natural gas, nuclear power, and hydropower. Today Japan enjoys one of the most energy-efficient developed economies in the world.

Deposits of gold, magnesium, and silver meet current industrial demands, but Japan is dependent on foreign sources for many of the minerals essential to modern industry. Iron ore, coke, copper, and bauxite must be imported, as must many forest products.

Labor

Japan's labor force consists of some 66.69 million workers, 40% of whom are women. Labor union membership was estimated to be about 10 million in 2006.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Japan is the world's second-largest economy and a major economic power both in Asia and globally. Japan has diplomatic relations with nearly all independent nations and has been an active member of the United Nations since 1956. Japanese foreign policy has aimed to promote peace and prosperity for the Japanese people by working closely with the West and supporting the United Nations.

In recent years, the Japanese public has shown a substantially greater awareness of security issues and increasing support for the Self Defense Forces. This is in part due to the Self Defense Forces' success in disaster relief efforts at home, and its participation in peacekeeping operations such as in Cambodia in the early 1990s and Iraq in 2005-2006. However, there are still significant political and psychological constraints on strengthening Japan's security profile. Although a military role for Japan in international affairs is highly constrained by its constitution and government policy, Japanese cooperation with the United States through the 1960 U.S.-Japan Security Treaty has been important to the peace and stability of East Asia. Currently, there are domestic discussions about possible reinterpretation or revision of Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. Prime Minister Abe made revising or reinterpreting the Japanese constitution a priority of his administration. All postwar Japanese governments have relied on a close relationship with the United States as the foundation of their foreign policy and have depended on the Mutual Security Treaty for strategic protection.

While maintaining its relationship with the United States, Japan has diversified and expanded its ties with other nations. Good relations with its neighbors continue to be of vital interest. After the signing of a peace and friendship treaty with China in 1978, ties between the two countries developed rapidly. Japan extended significant economic assistance to the Chinese in various modernization projects and supported Chinese membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Japan's economic assistance to China is now declining. In recent years, however, Chinese exploitation of gas fields in the East China Sea has raised Japanese concerns given disagreement over the demarcation of their maritime boundary. Prime Minister Abe's October 2006 visits to Beijing and Seoul helped improve relations with China and South Korea that had been strained following Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. At the same time, Japan maintains economic and cultural but not diplomatic relations with Taiwan, with which a strong bilateral trade relationship thrives.

Historical differences, including territorial disputes involving the Liancourt Rocks, resurfaced in 2008, complicating Japan's political relations with South Korea despite growing economic and cultural ties.

A surprise visit by Prime Minister Koizumi to Pyongyang, North Korea on September 17, 2002, resulted in renewed discussions on contentious bilateral issues—especially that of abductions to North Korea of Japanese citizens—and Japan's agreement to resume normalization talks in the near future. In October 2002, five abductees returned to Japan, but soon after negotiations reached a stalemate over the fate of abductees' families in North Korea. Japan's economic and commercial ties with North Korea plummeted following Kim Jong-il's 2002 admission that D.P.R.K. agents abducted Japanese citizens. Japan strongly supported the United States in its efforts to encourage Pyongyang to abide by the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In 2006, Japan responded to North Korea's July missile launches and October nuclear test by imposing sanctions and working with the United Nations Security Council. The U.S., Japan, and South Korea closely coordinate and consult trilaterally on policy toward North Korea, and Japan participates in the Six-Party Talks to end North Korea's nuclear arms ambitions. Tokyo, however, refuses to provide assistance called for under the February 13, 2007 Six-Party Talks agreement until North Korea takes satisfactory steps to resolve the abduction issue. Japan and North Korea reached an agreement in August 2008 in which Pyongyang promised to reinvestigate abduction cases. However, the D.P.R.K. announced later that they would wait until a new Japanese administration was in place before taking concrete action on the cases.

Japan's relations with Russia are hampered by the two sides' inability to resolve their territorial dispute over the islands that make up the Northern Territories (Southern Kuriles) seized by the U.S.S.R. at the end of World War II. The stalemate over territorial issues has prevented conclusion of a peace treaty formally ending the war between Japan and Russia. The United States supports Japan on the Northern Territories issue and recognizes Japanese sovereignty over the islands. Russian Coast Guard boats sometimes seize Japanese fishing vessels operating in waters surrounding the disputed area. In August 2006, a Russian patrol shot at a Japanese fishing vessel, claiming the vessel was in Russian waters, killing one crewmember and taking three seamen into custody. In October 2007, Russia raised objections to U.S.-Japan cooperation on missile defense, and in February 2008, Tokyo protested the incursion into Japanese airspace of a Russian bomber. Despite the lack of progress in resolving the Northern Territories and other disputes, however, Japan and Russia continue to develop other aspects of the overall relationship, including two large, multi-billion dollar oil-natural gas consortium projects on Sakhalin Island. Japan has pursued a more active foreign policy in recent years, recognizing the responsibility that accompanies its

economic strength. It has expanded ties with the Middle East, which provides most of its oil, and has been the second-largest assistance donor (behind the U.S.) to Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2006, Japan's Ground Self Defense Force completed a successful two-year mission in Iraq, and the Diet extended the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law which allowed for Japan's Maritime Self Defense Force refueling activities in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in the Indian Ocean. On July 10, 2007 the Japanese Government decided to extend the Air Self-Defense Force's (ASDF) airlift support mission in Iraq to July 31, 2008. Under the Iraq Special Measures Law a wing of the ASDF's C-130 transport planes, based in Kuwait, will continue to carry personnel and supplies for the U.S.-led multinational forces and the United Nations in Iraq until the end of 2008, when that mission will formally end.

Japan increasingly is active in Africa and Latin America—recently concluding negotiations with Mexico and Chile on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)—and has extended significant support to development projects in both regions. A Japanese-conceived peace plan became the foundation for nationwide elections in Cambodia in 1998. Japan's economic engagement with its neighbors is increasing, as evidenced by the conclusion of an EPA with Singapore and the Philippines, and its ongoing negotiations for EPAs with Thailand and Malaysia.

In May 2007, just prior to the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Prime Minister Abe announced an initiative to address greenhouse gas emissions and seek to mitigate the impact of energy consumption on climate. At the January 2008 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Prime Minister Fukuda reiterated his commitment to this plan. As host of the G8 Summit in July 2008, Japan focused on four themes: environment and climate change, development and Africa, the world economy, and political issues including non-proliferation.

U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONS

The U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of U.S. security interests in Asia and is fundamental to regional stability and prosperity. Despite the changes in the post-Cold War strategic landscape, the U.S.-Japan alliance continues to be based on shared vital interests and values. These include stability in the Asia-Pacific region, the preservation and promotion of political and economic freedoms, support for human rights and democratic institutions, and securing of prosperity for the people of both countries and the international community as a whole.

Japan provides bases and financial and material support to U.S. forward-deployed forces, which are essential for maintaining stability in the region. Under the U.S.-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, Japan hosts a carrier battle group, the III Marine Expeditionary Force, the 5th Air Force, and elements of the Army's I Corps. The United States currently maintains approximately 50,000 troops in Japan, about half of whom are stationed in Okinawa.

Over the past decade the alliance has been strengthened through revised Defense Guidelines, which expand Japan's noncombatant role in a regional contingency, the renewal of our agreement on Host Nation Support of U.S. forces stationed in Japan, and an ongoing process called the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI). The DPRI redefines roles, missions, and capabilities of alliance forces and outlines key realignment and transformation initiatives, including reducing the number of troops stationed in Okinawa, enhancing interoperability and communication between our respective commands, and broadening our cooperation in the area of ballistic missile defense.

Implementation of these agreements will strengthen our capabilities and make our alliance more sustainable. After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Japan has participated significantly with the global war on terrorism by providing major logistical support for U.S. and coalition forces in the Indian Ocean.

Because of the two countries' combined economic and technological impact on the world, the U.S.-Japan relationship has become global in scope.

The United States and Japan cooperate on a broad range of global issues, including development assistance, combating communicable disease such as the spread of HIV/AIDS and avian influenza, and protecting the environment and natural resources. Both countries also collaborate in science and technology in such areas as mapping the human genome, research on aging, and international space exploration.

As one of Asia's most successful democracies and its largest economy, Japan contributes irreplaceable political, financial, and moral support to U.S.-Japan diplomatic efforts.

The United States consults closely with Japan and the Republic of Korea on policy regarding North Korea. In Southeast Asia, U.S.-Japan cooperation is vital for stability and for political and economic reform. Outside Asia, Japanese political and financial support has substantially strengthened the U.S. position on a variety of global geopolitical problems, including the Gulf, Middle East peace efforts, and the Balkans. Japan is an indispensable partner on UN reform and the second largest contributor to the UN budget.

Japan broadly supports the United States on nonproliferation and nuclear issues. The U.S. supports Japan's aspiration to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Economic Relations

U.S. economic policy toward Japan is aimed at increasing access to Japan's markets and two-way investment, stimulating domestic demand-led economic growth, promoting eco-

nomic restructuring, improving the climate for U.S. investors, and raising the standard of living in both the United States and Japan. The U.S.-Japan bilateral economic relationship—based on enormous flows of trade, investment, and finance—is strong, mature, and increasingly interdependent. Further, it is firmly rooted in the shared interest and responsibility of the United States and Japan to promote global growth, open markets, and a vital world trading system. In addition to bilateral economic ties, the U.S. and Japan cooperate closely in multilateral fora such as the WTO, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, and regionally in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC).

Japan is a major market for many U.S. products, including chemicals, pharmaceuticals, films and music, commercial aircraft, nonferrous metals, plastics, and medical and scientific supplies.

Japan also is the largest foreign market for U.S. agricultural products, with total agricultural exports valued at $10.1 billion in 2007, a 20% increase over the $8.39 billion in agricultural exports recorded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2006. Revenues from Japanese tourism to the United States reached nearly $13 billion in 2005.

Trade between the United States and Japan remained strong in 2006. Total trade grew about 0.2% year-on-year. U.S. exports to Japan reached $62.7 billion in 2007, up from $59.6 billion in 2006. U.S. imports from Japan totaled $145.5 billion in 2007 ($148.1 billion in 2006).

U.S. foreign direct investment in Japan reached $91.8 billion in 2006, up from $79.3 billion in 2005, according to data compiled by the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis. New U.S. investment was especially significant in financial services, Internet services, and software, generating new export opportunities for U.S. firms and employment for U.S. workers.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 18, 2008

Country Description: Japan is a stable, highly developed parliamentary democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available. Find information quickly and easily on consular services for all of Japan, including registration, passport renewal, legal matters and safety and security, using convenient, alphabetized links at http://japan.usembassy.gov/acs.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and, for tourist/business "visa free" stays up to 90 days, an onward/return ticket are required. Passports must be valid for the intended period of stay in Japan. A visa is not required for tourist/business stays up to 90 days. Americans cannot work on a 90-day "visa free" entry. As a general rule, "visa free" entry status may not be changed to another visa status without departing and then re-entering Japan with the appropriate visa such as a spouse, work or study visa. All foreign nationals entering Japan, with the exemption of certain categories listed below, are required to provide fingerprint scans and be photographed at the port of entry. This requirement does not replace any existing visa or passport requirements. Foreign nationals exempt from this new requirement include special permanent residents, persons under 16 years of age, holders of diplomatic or official visas, and persons invited by the head of a national administrative organization. U.S. travelers on official business must have a diplomatic or official visa specifying the nature of travel as "As Diplomat," "As Official," or "In Transit" to be exempt from biometric collection. All other visa holders, including those with diplomatic and official visas stating "As Temporary Visitor," are subject to this requirement. SOFA personnel are exempt from the new biometrics entry requirements under SOFA Article 9 (2).

U.S. citizens entering or transiting Japan should ensure that their passports and visas are up to date before leaving the United States. Airlines have mistakenly boarded U.S. citizens coming to Japan, even though their passports had already expired. The U.S. Embassy or our consulates cannot "vouch for" a U.S. citizen without a valid passport, and passport services are not available at the airport. In some instances, travelers have been returned immediately to the U.S., while in other cases, they have been issued 24-hour "shore passes" and were required to return the next day to Japanese Immigration for lengthy processing.

Airlines in Japan will deny boarding to Americans who seek to transit Japan without the required travel documents for their final destinations in Asia. Many Asian countries require that travelers hold passports valid for a minimum of six months. It is not usually possible to obtain a new U.S. passport and foreign visa during a brief stopover while transiting Japan, as tourist passport processing in Japan can take approximately two weeks.

Airlines in Japan will deny boarding to Americans for onward flights to China if the U.S. passport holder does not have a Chinese visa. Transit visas in China are required for any stop (even if the traveler does not exit the plane or train). Without preplanning the entire trip, the traveler is faced with having to obtain a Chinese visa in Japan, which can be a lengthy and complex process. The Chinese Embassy requires at least one full, blank page to be available in the passport. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates cannot assist in obtaining Chinese visas.

Military/SOFA Travelers: While active-duty U.S. military personnel may enter Japan under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with proper Department of Defense (DOD) identification and travel orders, all SOFA family members, civilian employees and contractors must have a valid passport and, in some cases, a SOFA visa to enter Japan. Active-duty military personnel should obtain a tourist passport prior to leaving the United States to accommodate off-duty travel elsewhere in Asia as obtaining one while in Japan can take several weeks. Personnel whose duties will include official travel should also obtain an Official Passport before coming to Japan to avoid delays of up to two months, as these overseas applications must be referred to a special office in Washington, adding to processing times. DOD travelers should consult the DOD Foreign Clearance Guide, DOD 4500.54 before leaving the United States.

New Long Term Residency Requirements: Japan recently modified its Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. The law now requires that certain long-term residents who obtained their status by being of Japanese descent (Nikkei or sansei, etc) provide satisfactory evidence that they do not have a criminal record in their home country when renewing their resident card. However, because Japanese requirements do not appear to be a clear-cut, the Embassy highly recommends that residents consult with their local immigration office before starting the process of obtaining their U.S. criminal record. For more details about the Japanese requirements, check with the nearest immigration office in Japan, http://www.moj.go.jp/ENGLISH/information/ib-09.html. U.S. citizens with long-term resident status in Japan who are required to provide evidence that they do not have criminal records should contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation

(FBI) and provide it with a copy of their fingerprints. To request such service, please follow the guidance listed at http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/fprequest.htm.

Also, it is important to remember that "Long Term Resident" (Teijusha) and "Permanent Resident" (Eijusha) are different and are subject to different requirements.

For more information about the Japanese visa waiver for tourists, Japan's strict rules on work visas, special visas to take depositions, and other visa issues, travelers should consult the Consular Section of the Embassy of Japan at 2520 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 238-6800, or the nearest Japanese consulate. Our posts in Japan cannot assist in obtaining visas for Japan.

Safety and Security: The events of September 11, 2001, serve as a reminder of the continuing threat from terrorists and extremist groups to Americans and American interests worldwide. There have been no major terrorist incidents in Japan since 1995; however, since terrorists can strike at any time and at any place, U.S. citizens should be aware of the potential risks and take these into consideration when making travel plans. The security situation in Japan remains the same with no new credible threat information. The Government of Japan has maintained heightened security measures at key facilities and ports of entry, as counter terrorism precautions linked to the increased tensions in the Middle East.

Our offices in Japan disseminate threat information through our nationwide email warden system and post current threat information on the U.S. Embassy's American Citizens Services (ACS) web site at http://japan.usembassy.gov/acs. The Department of State will continue to develop information about potential threats to U.S. citizens overseas, and to share threat information through its consular information program documents, available from the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page. The government of Japan is vigilant in tracking terrorist threat indicators and remains at a high state of alert. Local police substations (Koban) and police emergency dispatchers (tel. 110) should be contacted to report suspicious activity.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas.

Crime: Crimes against U.S. citizens in Japan usually only involve personal disputes, theft or vandalism. The general crime rate in Japan is at levels well below the U.S. national average. Violent crime is rare, but does exist. Incidents of pick pocketing of foreigners in crowded shopping areas, on trains and at airports have been a sporadic concern. Every year, a number of Americans report their passports lost or stolen at Narita Airport, especially passports being carried in pockets. Some Americans report that Japanese police procedures appear to be less sensitive and responsive to a victim's concerns than would be the case in the United States, particularly in cases involving domestic violence, sexual assault, and when both the victim and the perpetrator are foreigners. Few victim's assistance resources or battered women's shelters exist in major urban areas, and are generally unavailable in rural areas. Investigations of sexual assault crimes are often conducted without women police officers present and typically involve inquiries into the victim's sexual history and previous relationships. Quality of translations can vary significantly, and has proven unsettling to some American victims.

Concerns Regarding Roppongi, Tokyo: The majority of crimes reported by Americans have occurred in Roppongi, an entertainment district that caters to foreign clientele. Incidents involving U.S. Citizens since spring 2004 include murder, assault, overdoses on heroin allegedly purchased in Roppongi, theft of purses and wallets at bars in clubs, exorbitant bar tabs and drugs allegedly slipped into drinks. A number of Americans have also been arrested over the past year in Roppongi for various offenses. You can read about these reported incidents in our monthly newsletter by subscribing to it or by reading it on http://japan.usembassy.gov/acs. Please be aware that Roppongi has also been the scene of recent violence between criminal syndicates. Americans are urged to keep these incidents in mind and exercise caution should they choose to visit Roppongi.

Police can be summoned throughout Japan by dialing 110. Fire and ambulance services can be summoned by dialing 119. These numbers may not work from cell phones, however, and English-speaking dispatchers may not be available. Advice on how to call for an ambulance in Japan is available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-call.html. Persons seeking assistance should be able to describe their address/location in Japanese or enlist a friend who can do so, as few police officers speak English.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

Except for emergencies, a replacement passport takes two to three weeks to process. Travelers will then need to contact Japanese Immigration to have their Japanese visas reissued. "Lost" passports will not disguise an over-stay of one's 90-day entry, as Japanese Immigration records are computerized. Information on replacing a lost passport, included the necessary forms, is available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-7130e.html.

There are two local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in Japan. Please dial 119 to call an ambulance and 110 to call the police. For more information, please see http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-call.html.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: While medical care in Japan is good, English-speaking physicians and medical facilities that cater to Americans' expectations are expensive and not widespread. Japan has a national health insurance system, which is available only to those foreigners with long-term visas for Japan. National health insurance does not pay for medical evacuation or medical care outside of Japan. Medical caregivers in Japan require payment in full at the time of treatment or concrete proof of ability to pay before treating a foreigner who is not a member of the national health insurance plan.

U.S.-style and standard psychiatric care can be difficult to locate in major urban centers in Japan, and generally is not available outside of Japan's major cities. Extended psychiatric care for foreigners in Japan is difficult to obtain at any price; see http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-psychadmissions.html for more information. U.S. prescriptions are not honored in Japan, so travelers with ongoing prescription-medicine needs should arrive with a sufficient supply to see them through their stay in Japan, or enough until they are able to see a local care provider. Certain medications, including some commonly prescribed for depression and Attention Deficient Disorder (ADD), are not widely available. Please see the section below entitled, "Confiscation of Prescription Drugs and Other Medication," regarding the importation of medicine into Japan. More information on importing medicines into Japan is also available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-medimport.html. A list of English-speaking medical facilities throughout Japan is available on our web site.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Japan.

Medical Insurance: U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. It can be both difficult and expensive for foreigners not insured in Japan to receive medical care. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation can cost anywhere from $30,000 to $120,000. Private U.S. citizens are ineligible for treatment at U.S. military hospitals in Japan or U.S. military medical evacuation to the U.S. Access to military facilities is controlled solely by the military; veterans with service-connected disabilities should contact the appropriate U.S. military hospital before traveling to Japan. In the event of death, the cost of preparation and shipment of remains to the U.S is over $15,000. Almost no health care providers accept U.S.-based health insurance "up front"; patients pay in cash and then seek reimbursement from their insurance company once they return home. Most small clinics and some large hospitals do not accept credit/debit cards. No facility accepts checks drawn on U.S. bank accounts.

The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Japan is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Japan is quite complicated and expensive. Those who cannot read the language will have trouble understanding road signs. Highway tolls are assessed at about $1 (U.S.) per mile. City traffic is often very congested. A 20-mile trip in the Tokyo area may take two hours. There is virtually no legal roadside parking. In mountainous areas, roads are often closed during the winter, and cars should be equipped with tire chains.

Roads in Japan are much narrower than those in the United States. Japanese compulsory insurance (JCI) is mandatory for all automobile owners and drivers in Japan. Most short-term visitors choose not to drive in Japan. Vehicular traffic moves on the left. Turns at red lights are forbidden, unless specifically authorized.

Japanese law provides that all persons who drive in Japan are held liable in the event of an accident, and assesses fault in an accident on all parties. Drivers stopped for driving under the influence of intoxicants will have their licenses confiscated. Persons found guilty of "drunken, speeding or blatantly careless driving resulting in injury" are subject to up to 15 years in prison. The National Police Agency (NPA) oversees the administration and enforcement of traffic laws. Further information in

English is available on the NPA's web site at http://www.npa.go.jp/english/index.htm.

Emergency Assistance: Within Japan, please dial 110 for police, and 119 for ambulance. For roadside assistance, please contact JAF (Japan Automobile Federation) at 03-5730-0111 in Tokyo, 072-645-0111 in Osaka, 011-857-8139 in Sapporo, 092-841-5000 in Fukuoka, or 098-877-9163 in Okinawa.

For specific information concerning Japanese driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Japan National Tourist Organization offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York or San Francisco via the Internet at http://www.jnto.go.jp. In addition, information about roadside assistance, rules of the road and obtaining a Japanese driver's license is available in English from the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF) web site at http://www.jaf.or.jp/e/index.htm.

International Driving Permits (IDP): An international driving permit issued in the United States by the American Automobile Association (AAA) or the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA) is required of short-term visitors who drive in Japan. International driving permits are not issued by the U.S. Embassy or by its Consulates and must be obtained prior to arriving in Japan. IDPs issued via the Internet and/or by other organizations are not considered valid in Japan. IDPs issued to Americans in third countries where they are not resident are often considered invalid, or are subject to close scrutiny.

"Residents" are expected to convert to or obtain a Japanese drivers license. Persons using an international driver's license who are resident in Japan can be subject to fines or arrest. The exact boundary between "resident" and "non-resident" is unclear. In practice it seems to involve more than simply visa status or length of stay in Japan and is determined by the police. In short, an international license is not a permanent or expedient substitute for a valid Japanese license. You can learn more at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-drive.html.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Japan's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Japan's air carrier operations. For further information, travelers may visit the FAA web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Customs Regulations: Japan has very strict laws regarding the importation and possession of firearms and other weapons. Persons bringing a firearm or sword into Japan (including target and trophy pistols, air guns, some pocket knives and Japanese-origin swords) may have these items confiscated by Japanese customs authorities, and may be arrested, prosecuted and deported or jailed. Some prescription medications, as well as some over-the-counter medications, cannot be imported into Japan. Please contact the Japanese Embassy or nearest Japanese Consulate in the United States, or visit the Japan Customs web site in English online at http://www.customs.go.jp for specific information regarding import restrictions and customs requirements.

Japanese customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary importation into Japan of professional equipment, commercial samples and/or goods for exhibitions and trade fairs. ATA Carnet Headquarters located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036 issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information, please call (212) 354-4480, or send an email to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www. uscib.org for details.

Confiscation of Prescription Drugs and Other Medication: Decisions on what medications may be imported legally into Japan are made by the Japanese Government, and unfortunately the limited information available at the American Embassy and Consulate does not include comprehensive lists of specific medications or ingredients.

It is illegal to bring into Japan some over-the-counter medicines commonly used in the United States, including inhalers and some allergy and sinus medications. Specifically, products that contain stimulants (medicines that contain pseudoephedrine such as Actifed, Sudafed, and Vicks inhalers) or codeine are prohibited. Up to a two-month supply of allowable over-the-counter medication and up to a four-month supply of allowable vitamins can be brought into Japan duty-free. Some U.S. prescription medications cannot be imported into Japan, even when accompanied by a customs declaration and a copy of the prescription. Generally, up to one month's supply of allowable prescription medicine can be brought into Japan. Travelers must bring a copy of their doctor's prescription as well as a letter stating the purpose of the drug. Travelers should not mail prescription medicine including insulin and injectors without obtaining an import certification called "Yakkan-Syoumei" from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. More information on importing medicines into Japan is also available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-medimport.html.

Japanese physicians can often prescribe similar, but not identical, substitutes to medicines available in the United States. A Japanese doctor, consulted by phone in advance, is also a good source of information on medications available and/or permitted in Japan. A list of English-speaking medical facilities throughout Japan is available on our web site at http://japan.usembassy.gov. Some popular medications legal in the U.S., such as Prozac and Viagra, are sold illegally in Japan on the black market. You are subject to arrest and imprisonment if you purchase such drugs illegally while in Japan. Persons traveling to Japan carrying prescription and non-prescription medications should consult the Japanese Embassy, or a

Japanese Consulate, in the United States before leaving the U.S. to confirm whether they will be allowed to bring the particular medication into Japan. A full listing of phone numbers and email addresses is available at www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jicc/consulat.htm.

Pets: The Japanese Animal Quarantine Service (AQS) http://www.maff-aqs.go.jp/english/index.htm has radically revised its procedures for importing pets. In most instances, the process will take at least seven (7) months from the date of the first rabies vaccination before a pet may enter Japan, so advance planning is critical. More information about importing a pet into Japan is available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-petsi.html. More information about exporting a pet from Japan is available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-petse.html.

Consular Access: U.S. citizens must carry their U.S. passports or Japanese alien registration cards with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, the U.S. citizen can establish proof of identity and citizenship. Under Japanese law, the police may stop any person on the street at any time and demand to see an ID. If a foreigner does not have with him/her either a passport or valid Japanese Alien Registration Card, s/he is subject to arrest. Due to recent crackdowns by the police, such random stops for ID are becoming increasingly more common, especially in areas frequented by foreigners. In accordance with the U.S.-Japan Consular Convention, U.S. consular officers are generally notified within 24 hours of the arrest of a U.S. citizen, if the U.S. citizen requests consular notification.

Conditions at Prisons and Detention Facilities: Japanese prisons and detention facilities maintain internal order through a regime of very strict discipline. American-citizen prisoners often complain of stark, austere living conditions and psychological isolation. A prisoner can become eligible for parole only after serving about 60-70% of his/her sentence. Early parole is not allowed for any reason—humanitarian, medical or otherwise. Access to competent interpreters is not required at all times under Japanese criminal law. More information is available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-7110a.html. Japan acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons on June 1, 2003.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking Japanese law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Japanese law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Persons arrested in Japan, even for a minor offense, may be held in detention without bail for two to three months during the investigation and legal proceedings. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. A list of English-speaking lawyers throughout Japan is available on our web site at http://japan.usembassy.gov.

Illegal Drugs: Penalties for possession or use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs, including marijuana, in Japan are strict, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and fines. In most drug cases, suspects are detained incommunicado, which bars them from receiving visitors or corresponding with anyone other than a lawyer or U.S. consular officer until after indictment, which may take several months. Solitary confinement is common.

People can be convicted of drug use based on positive blood or urine tests alone, and multiple Americans are now serving time in Japanese prisons as the result of sting operations and the use of informants. The Japanese police routinely share information on drug arrests with Interpol, assuring that notice of the arrest will reach U.S. law enforcement agencies. About half of all Americans now in prison in Japan are incarcerated for drug-related crimes.

Japanese authorities aggressively pursue drug smugglers with sophisticated detection equipment, "sniffing" dogs and other methods. Travelers and their luggage entering Japan are screened at ports of entry; incoming and outgoing mail, as well as international packages sent via DHL or FEDEX, is also checked carefully. The Japanese police make arrests for even the smallest amounts of illegal drugs. Several Americans are now in custody after having mailed illegal drugs to themselves from other countries. Other Americans are serving time for having tried to bring drugs into Japan as paid couriers working out of Southeast Asia or Europe.

Immigration Penalties: Japanese work visas are issued outside of Japan for a specific job with a specific employer at a specific place of employment, and are not transferable. It is illegal for U.S. citizens to work in Japan while in tourist or visa-waiver status. Japanese authorities do not allow foreigners to change their immigration status from visa-waiver status to work status while in Japan. Japanese immigration officers may deny entry to travelers who appear to them to have no visible means of support. Please contact the Japanese Embassy or nearest Japanese Consulate in the United States for guidance on what constitutes adequate financial support for a specific period of time. A U.S. citizen who works in Japan without a work visa may be subject to arrest, which can involve several weeks or months of incarceration, followed by conviction and imprisonment or deportation. The deportee must bear the cost of deportation, including legal expenses and airfare.

Due to recent changes in the law, penalties for overstaying one's visa or working illegally have toughened substantially. Fines can run into thousands of dollars, and in some cases re-entry bans can be as long as ten years or indefinite for drug offenders.

Employment Issues: Although the Japanese economy is emerging slowly from a prolonged recession, U.S. citizens are advised against coming to work in Japan without the proper working visa arranged ahead of time, or in the hopes of earning a large salary. Teaching English, even with private students, and serving as a hostess, are both considered "work" in Japan and are illegal without the proper visa.

Some U.S.-based employment agencies and Japanese employers do not fully discuss, or correctly represent, the true nature of employment terms and conditions. U.S. consular officers in Japan receive numerous complaints from U.S. citizens who come to Japan to work as English teachers, carpenters, models, actors, entertainers, exotic dancers and bar hostesses. These complaints include contract violations, non-payment of salary for months at a time, sexual harassment, intimidation and threats of arrest, deportation and physical assault.

A minimum requirement for effectively seeking the protection of Japanese labor law is a written and signed work contract. Without such a contract, Japanese authorities do not intervene on behalf of foreign workers. It is prudent for U.S. citizens coming to work in Japan to carefully review their contracts and the bona fides of their Japanese employer before traveling to Japan. U.S. consular officers generally are unable to confirm the bona fides of prospective Japanese employers, although they may be familiar with organizations about which they have received complaints in the past. If asked to do something they find troubling, U.S. citizens may wish to reassess their reason for being in Japan and consider terminating their employment and returning to the United States. Complaints against U.S.-based employment agencies or recruiters may be directed to the Better Business Bureau at http://welcome.bbb.org or the Office of the Attorney General of the state in question.

Living Expenses: Japan's cost of living is one of the highest in the world. The use of credit/debit cards is not widespread, particularly outside major cities. While there are ATMs in Japan, most are not open 24 hours a day or do not accept a U.S.-based card. ATMs at major airports, foreign bank branches and Japanese Post Offices are more likely to accept foreign cards than other locations.

Taxi fares from airports to downtown Osaka and Tokyo can cost hundreds of dollars; bus fare can run US$25 or more. The airport departure fee is generally included in the ticket prices of flights departing from both Narita (Tokyo) International Airport and Kansai (Osaka) International Airport.

English Help And Information Lines: Tourists and foreign residents in Japan have access to valuable information, including professional counseling, via help and information telephone hotlines. The Tokyo English Lifeline (http://www.telljp.com) provides English-speaking counseling and referrals at 03-5774-0992. The Japan Help Line provides similar assistance nationwide at 0570-000-911 (domestic), 813-3435-8017 (international) (http://www.jhelp.com/).

Disaster Preparedness: Japan is faced with the ever-present danger of deadly earthquakes and typhoons. Japan is one of the most seismically active locations in the world; minor tremors are felt regularly throughout the islands. While responsibility for caring for disaster victims, including foreigners, rests with the Japanese authorities, one of the first things a traveler should do upon arriving in Japan is to learn about earthquake and disaster preparedness from hotel or local government officials.

Additional details on self-preparedness are available via the Internet at http://japan.usembassy.gov/acs and on the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) home page at http://www.fema.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. Japan is not a Hague Convention signatory, and U.S. court custody decisions are not enforceable in Japan. Almost all children born to a Japanese parent since the 1980s are Japanese citizens and may travel on Japanese passports issued in the U.S. even if the left-behind parent in the U.S. does not agree to the issuance of a U.S. passport. The Embassy and our Consulates do not have access to Japanese Immigration records and cannot confirm that a child has entered or departed Japan. The Japanese government will not refuse entry to one of its citizens, even if that citizen is a dual-national child subject to a U.S. court-based custody decision. The Embassy and our Consulates cannot serve process, appear in court on a U.S.-based parent's behalf or carry out U.S.-based arrest warrants. Parents who attempt to re-abduct their children may be subject to kidnapping charges.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living in or visiting Japan are encouraged to register through the State Department's travel registration web site or through the Embassy's web site at http://japan.usembassy.gov/acs where they may also obtain updated information on travel and security within Japan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. U.S. citizens resident in or visiting Japan are encouraged to sign up for an e-mail newsletter at http://japan.usembassy.gov/acs. Alien registration formalities required under Japanese immigration law are separate from U.S. citizen registration. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare or whereabouts may not be released to inquirers without your expressed written authorization. All consular information for Japan is available at http://japan.usembassy.gov.

A full list of our holiday closings is available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-holidays.html. Subscribers to our monthly email newsletter (available from http://

japan.usembassy.gov/e/tacs-main.html#newsletter) receive regular updates on holiday closings.

The U.S. Embassy in Tokyo is located at 1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8420 Japan; telephone 81-3-3224-5000; fax 81-3-3505-1862; American Citizen Services fax81-3-3224-5856. The Visa Information Service, operated by TeleTech Government Solutions, LLC in partnership with Computer Science Corporation (CSC), provides an operator-assisted service between 8:00 and 18:00, Monday through Friday (except on American and Japanese holidays). Please note that this service is a user-pays service. You will need to have a valid credit card ready before you use this service. The fee is $18.35 per call/email. For more details, please read http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/tvisanivcontact.html.

The U.S. Consulate General in Osaka-Kobe is located at 2-11-5 Nishitenma, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-8543; telephone 81-6-6315-5900; fax 81-6-6315-5914. Recorded information for U.S. citizens concerning U.S. passports, notarials and other American citizen services is available 24 hours at 81-6-6315-5900.

The U.S. Consulate General in Naha is located at 2-1-1 Toyama, Urasoe, Okinawa 901-2104; telephone 81-98-876-4211; fax 81-98-876-4243.

The U.S. Consulate General in Sapporo is located at Kita 1-Jo Nishi 28-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo 064-0821; telephone 81-11-641-1115, fax 81-11-643-1283.

The U.S. Consulate in Fukuoka is located at 2-5-26 Ohori, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka 810-0052; telephone 81-92-751-9331; fax 81-92-713-9222.

The U.S. Consulate in Nagoya is located at Nagoya International Center Bldg. 6th floor, 1-47-1 Nagono, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya 450-0001; telephone 81-52-581-4501; fax 81-52-581-3190.

The U.S. Consulate in Nagoya offers limited emergency consular services for U.S. citizens. Consular officers from Osaka also travel to Nagoya on the second Wednesday of each month to provide Americans with notarial services, passport renewals, and report of birth and passport applications for newborn children on an appointment basis.

To schedule an appointment for these American Citizen Services, contact Consulate General Osaka-Kobe at AOK@state.gov, fax 06-6315-5914, or call 06-6315-5912 between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Maps to all our offices in Japan, along with directions on using public transportation to reach us, are available at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-7123.html.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Japan is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? There are two types of adoptions in Japan–regular and special. Regular adoptions do not sever the ties between the child and his/her birth family. As a result, these types of adoptions may not be eligible for a United States immigrant visa. Japan introduced "special" adoptions in an effort to make Japanese adoptions more compatible with intercountry adoptions and to give more protection to adopted children under six years of age. To bring an adopted child to United States from Japan, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, Japan also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: The Japanese courts will not accept an adoption application by prospective adoptive parents who are in Japan on a visitor's visa. At least one parent must provide evidence of long term residence in Japan. When the adoption is finalized at least one parent must be present at court. Proxy adoptions are not permitted.

Age Requirements: In special adoptions, prospective adoptive parents must be over 25 years of age. In regular adoptions, prospective adoptive parents must be at least 20 years of age.

Marriage Requirements: Depending on the United States State law, the Family Court may allow a single parent to adopt (case by case basis).

Income Requirements: While there are no specific income requirements for intercountry adoption from Japan, the prospective adoptive parents will have to provide documentation on their income and finances.

Who Can Be Adopted? Normally a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States. In addition to these requirements, Japan has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption.

Japanese law does not define "orphan." Japanese law defines a "child who requires attention" as:

- Born out of wedlock;
- Abandoned infant;
- Parent(s) deceased or disappeared;
- Parents are incapable of providing support; or
- Abused.

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adoptions may not be eligible for a United States immigrant visa. Japan introduced "special" adoptions in an effort to make Japanese adoptions more compatible with intercountry adoptions and to give more protection to adopted children under six years of age.

Japan's Adoption Authority: Family Court and the Child Guidance Center (CGC)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Japan is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

Neither adoption agencies nor attorneys are required to process an intercountry adoption in Japan. However, Japanese attorneys specializing in adoptions do exist, and the Japanese Government does maintain a list of recommended adoption agencies. All adoption agencies in Japan are privately operated.

American prospective adoptive parents who would like to contact adoption agencies in Japan can obtain a list of adoption agencies on the United States Embassy's website at http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-adopt.html.

To bring an adopted child from Japan to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS. If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Japan will provide you with a referral to a child.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The CGC is the local government authority responsible for determining whether a child requires protection. The CGC will not issue a certificate if the child is to be adopted abroad or if the child will benefit from a privately arranged adoption.

Role of the Court: The Family Court reviews the adoption application. In reviewing the application, the Court examines the law governing intercountry adoptions in the prospective adoptive parents' state of legal domicile. the Court informs the prospective adoptive parents of their court hearing date.

This first hearing date generally occurs at the end of the trial six-month period. Approximately two to three weeks after the final hearing, the judge will decide whether or not to approve the adoption. If the judge approves the petition, the Court issues a certificate allowing "Permission to adopt" (yoshi to suru koto o kyoka-suru). If the biological parents or any interested parties do not object within two weeks of the parents' registering the adoption, it is considered final.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Neither adoption agencies nor attorneys are necessary to complete an intercountry adoption in Japan.

Adoption Application: The prospective adoptive parents submit their adoption application to the Family Court with jurisdiction over the child's residence.

Time Frame: Intercountry adoptions through the Family Court require at least nine months and sometimes longer. The Family Court does not mandate a time limit on when an adoption must be completed.

Adoption Fees: The costs for intercountry adoptions from Japan vary widely; however, the average total cost is approximately $20,000 USD.

This includes fees for the Family Court, adoption agency, immigration processing, airfare, lodging, and document translations and authentications.

It should be noted that adoption agency fees can range from $2,000 to $60,000 USD, so the overall cost of adoption depends on the agency the prospective adoptive parents select. Prospective adoptive parents may incur additional fees when adopting a child(ren) with medical conditions.

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents required for an intercountry adoption from Japan:

- Birth certificate and/or family register of all parties;
- Copy of passport, Japanese visa, and Alien Registration card;
- Copy of United States military ID (where applicable);
- Marriage, divorce, and death certificates (where applicable);
- Medical examination certificates;
- Certificate of foster parent registration (where applicable);
- Certificate of good conduct/no criminal record for each adoptive parent (issued by their home city or state police department);
- Certificate of legal address, employment, and income;
- Copy of any property ownership deeds and/or bank statements;
- Biographic history of all parties;
- Statement of consent to adopt by the child's biological parent(s) or guardian;
- Statement of prospective parent(s)' intent to adopt the identified child;
- Pictures of all parties, preferably of parents with the child;
- Home Study (approved by an authorized and licensed adoption agency); and
- Two character references;

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Japan does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Japan
Box 205
1-10-5 Akasaka Minato-ku
Tokyo 107-8420, Japan
Tel: (81)(3) 3224-5000
Fax: (81)(3) 3224-5929

Japan's Adoption Authority
The Family Court and the CGC is often located in the City or Ward office.

Embassy of Japan
2520 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-2869
Tel: (202) 939-6700

Japan also has Consulates in Anchorage, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Miami, Kansas City (MO), Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Portland (OR), Saipan (Mariana Islands), San Francisco, Seattle, and Tamuning (Guam).

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

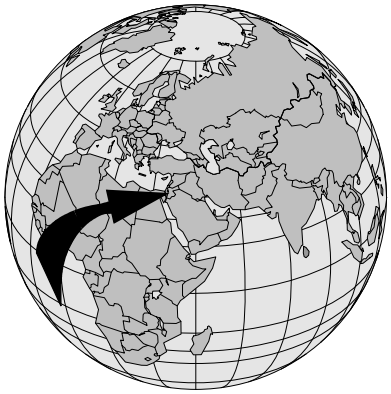
International Parental Child Abduction
November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel. Japan is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

Japanese civil law stresses that in cases where custody cannot be reached by agreement between the parents, the Japanese Family Court will resolve the issue based on the best interests of the child. However, compliance with Family Court rulings is essentially voluntary, which renders any ruling unenforceable unless both parents agree. The Civil Affairs Bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Justice states that, in general, redress in child custody cases is sought through habeas corpus proceedings in the court. There is no preferential treatment based on nationality or gender. Although visitation rights for non-custodial parents are not expressly stipulated in the Japanese Civil Code, court judgments often provide visitation rights for non-custodial parents. In practical terms, however, in cases of international parental child abduction, foreign parents are greatly disadvantaged in Japanese courts, both in terms of obtaining the return of children to the United States, and in achieving any kind of enforceable visitation rights in Japan. The Department of State is not aware of any case in which a child taken from the United States by one parent has been ordered returned to the United States by Japanese courts, even when the left-behind parent has a United States custody decree. In the past, Japanese police have been reluctant to get involved in custody disputes or to enforce custody decrees issued by Japanese courts. In order to bring a custody issue before the Family Court, the left-behind parent will require the assistance of a Japanese attorney. A parent holding a custody decree issued in U.S. courts must retain local Japanese counsel to apply to the Japanese courts for recognition and enforcement of the U.S. decree.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Contact the country officer in the Office of Children's Issues for specific information. For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



JORDAN

Compiled from the March 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 89,342 sq. km. (34,495 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Amman (pop. 1.9 million). Other cities—Irbid (272,681), Az-Zarqa (472,830).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Jordanian(s).

Population: (2007 est.) 6.05 million.

Religions: (2001 est.) Sunni Muslim 92%, Christian 6%, other 2%.

Languages: Arabic (official), English.

Education: (2006, according to Jordan's Department of Statistics) Literacy—90.9%.

Health: (2003) Infant mortality rate—16/1,000. Life expectancy—78 yrs.

Ethnic groups: Mostly Arab but small communities of Circassians, Armenians, and Kurds.

Work force: (1.3 million, of which 260 thousand are registered guest workers) public sector 17%, services 36%, manufacturing 20%, education 12%, health and social services 10%, primary industries 5%.

Unemployment rate: (2007) 13% of economically active Jordanians.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Independence: May 25, 1946.

Constitution: January 8, 1952.

Government branches: Executive—King (chief of state), Prime Minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—bicameral National Assembly (appointed Senate, elected Chamber of Deputies). Judicial—civil, religious, special courts.

Political parties: Wide spectrum of parties legalized in 1992.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Political subdivisions: Twelve governorates—Irbid, Jarash, Ajloun, al-'Aqaba, Madaba, al-Mafraq, al-Zarqa, Amman, al-Balqa, al-Karak, al-Tafilah, and Ma'an.

Economy

Nominal GDP: (2007) $13.55 billion.

Annual real growth rate: (2007) 5.7%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $4,700.

Natural resources: Phosphate, potash.

Agriculture: Products—fruits, vegetables, wheat, olive oil, barley, olives. Land—10% arable; 5% cultivated.

Industry: (26.5% of GDP in 2006) Types—phosphate mining, manufacturing, electricity and water; cement and petroleum production, and construction.

Trade: Exports (2007 est.)—$5.708 billion: garments, pharmaceutical products, fertilizers, vegetables, phosphates, and potash. Major markets—U.S., Iraq, India, Saudi Arabia, U.A.E., Syria, Israel, Kuwait. Imports (2007 est.)—$13.5 billion: crude petroleum and derivatives, fabrics and textiles, machinery and equipment, manufactured goods, iron, and cereals. Major suppliers—Saudi Arabia (mainly crude oil and derivatives), EU, China, U.S., Egypt, South Korea, Japan, Turkey.

Note: From 1949 to 1967, Jordan administered the West Bank. Since the 1967 war, when Israel took control of this territory, the United States has considered the West Bank to be territory occupied by Israel. The United States believes that the final status of the West Bank can be determined only through negotiations among the concerned parties based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

PEOPLE

Jordanians are Arabs, except for a few small communities of Circassians, Armenians, and Kurds who have adapted to Arab culture. The official language is Arabic, but English is used widely in commerce and government. About 70% of Jordan's population is urban; less than

6% of the rural population is nomadic or semi-nomadic. Most of the population lives where rainfall can support agriculture. Approximately 1.7 million registered Palestinian refugees and other displaced persons reside in Jordan, many as citizens.

HISTORY

The land that became Jordan is part of the richly historical Fertile Crescent region. Around 2000 B.C., Semitic Amorites settled around the Jordan River in the area called Canaan. Subsequent invaders and settlers included Hittites, Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arab Muslims, Christian Crusaders, Mameluks, Ottoman Turks, and, finally, the British. At the end of World War I, the League of Nations awarded the territory now comprising Israel, Jordan, the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem to the United Kingdom as the mandate for Palestine and Transjordan. In 1922, the British divided the mandate by establishing the semiautonomous Emirate of Transjordan, ruled by the Hashemite Prince Abdullah, while continuing the administration of Palestine under a British High Commissioner. The mandate over Transjordan ended on May 22, 1946; on May 25, the country became the independent Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. It ended its special defense treaty relationship with the United Kingdom in 1957. Transjordan was one of the Arab states which moved to assist Palestinian nationalists opposed to the creation of Israel in May 1948, and took part in the warfare between the Arab states and the newly founded State of Israel. The armistice agreements of April 3, 1949 left Jordan in control of the West Bank and provided that the armistice demarcation lines were without prejudice to future territorial settlements or boundary lines.

In 1950, the country was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to include those portions of Palestine annexed by King Abdullah I. While recognizing Jordanian administration over the West Bank, the United States maintained the position that ultimate sovereignty was subject to future agreement. Jordan signed a mutual defense pact in May 1967 with Egypt, and it participated in the June 1967 war between Israel and the Arab states of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. During the war, Israel gained control of the West Bank and all of Jerusalem. In 1988, Jordan renounced all claims to the West Bank but retained an administrative role pending a final settlement, and its 1994 treaty with Israel allowed for a continuing Jordanian role in Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. The U.S. Government considers the West Bank to be territory occupied by Israel and believes that its final status should be determined through direct negotiations among the parties concerned on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

The 1967 war led to a dramatic increase in the number of Palestinians living in Jordan. Its Palestinian refugee population—700,000 in 1966—grew by another 300,000 from the West Bank. The period following the 1967 war saw an upsurge in the power and importance of Palestinian resistance elements (fedayeen) in Jordan. The heavily armed fedayeen constituted a growing threat to the sovereignty and security of the Hashemite state, and open fighting erupted in June 1970. No fighting occurred along the 1967 Jordan River cease-fire line during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war, but Jordan sent a brigade to Syria to fight Israeli units on Syrian territory. Jordan did not participate in the Gulf war of 1990-91. In 1991, Jordan agreed, along with Syria, Lebanon, and Palestinian representatives, to participate in direct peace negotiations with Israel sponsored by the U.S. and Russia. It negotiated an end to hostilities with Israel and signed a peace treaty in 1994. Jordan has since sought to remain at peace with all of its neighbors.

GOVERNMENT

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy based on the constitution promulgated on January 8, 1952. Executive authority is vested in the King and his Council of Ministers. The King signs and executes all laws. His veto power may be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both houses of the National Assembly. He appoints and may dismiss all judges by decree, approves amendments to the constitution, declares war, and commands the armed forces. Cabinet decisions, court judgments, and the national currency are issued in his name. The King, who may dismiss other cabinet members at the prime minister's request, appoints the council of ministers, led by a prime minister. The cabinet is responsible to the Chamber of Deputies on matters of general policy and can be forced to resign by a two-thirds vote of "no confidence" by that body.

Legislative power rests in the bicameral National Assembly. The number of deputies in the current Chamber of Deputies is 110, with a number of seats reserved for various religions, ethnicities, and women. The Chamber, elected by universal suffrage to a 4-year term, is subject to dissolution by the King. The King appoints the 55-member Senate for a 4-year term. Elections for municipal councils and mayors were held in July 2007; 20% of the council seats were reserved by quota for women. Parliamentary elections were held in November 2007, with the majority of seats going to independent, pro-government candidates. Eight seats in the parliament are reserved by quota for women, and a ninth woman won a seat outside the quota.

The constitution provides for three categories of courts—civil, religious, and special. Administratively, Jordan is divided into 12 governorates, each headed by a governor appointed by the King. They are the sole authorities for all government departments and development projects in their respective areas.



Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **ABDALLAH II**
Prime Min.: **Nader al-DAHABI**
Min. of Agriculture: **Muzahim al-MUHAISIN**
Min. of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs: **Abdul Fatah SALAH**
Min. of Culture: **Nancy BAKIR**
Min. of Defense: **Nader al-DAHABI**
Min. of Education: **Taysir al-NUEIMI**
Min. of Energy & Mineral Resources: **Khaldoun QUTEISHAT**
Min. of the Environment: **Khalid Al IRANI**
Min. of Finance: **Hamad al-KASASBEH**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Salah Eddin BASHIR**
Min. of Health: **Salah al-MAWAJDEH**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Umar SHUDEIFAT**
Min. of Information & Communication Technology: **Bassem al-ROUSSAN**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Amir al-HADIDI**
Min. of Interior: **Eid Al FAYEZ**
Min. of Justice: **Ayman AWDEH**
Min. of Labor: **Bassem al-SALEM**
Min. of Municipal Affairs: **Shihadeh ABU HUDEIB**
Min. of Planning & Intl. Cooperation: **Suhair Al ALI**
Min. of Political Development & Judicial Affairs: **Kamal NASSER**
Min. of Public Sector Reform: **Maher al-MADADHA**
Min. of Public Works & Housing: **Sahel al-MAJALI**
Min. of Social Development: **Hala LATOUF**
Min. of Tourism & Antiquities: **Maha al-KHATIB**
Min. of Transportation: **Alaa al-BATAYNAH**
Min. of Water & Irrigation: **Raed ABU SAUD**

Min. of State for Media Affairs & Communication: **Nasser JUDEH**
Min. of State for Parliamentary Affairs: **Abdul Rahim al-OKOUR**
Min. of State for Prime-Ministerial Affairs: **Thuqan al-QUDAH**
Governor, Central Bank of Jordan: **Umayya TOUKAN**
Ambassador to the US: **ZEID Ra'ad Zeid al-Hussein, Prince**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Muhammad Al-ALLAF**

Jordan maintains an embassy in the United States at 3504 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-966-2664).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

King Hussein ruled Jordan from 1953 to 1999, surviving a number of challenges to his rule, drawing on the loyalty of his military, and serving as a symbol of unity and stability for both the East Bank and Palestinian communities in Jordan. In 1989 and 1993, Jordan held free and fair parliamentary elections. Controversial changes in the election law led Islamist parties to boycott the 1997 elections. King Hussein ended martial law in 1991 and legalized political parties in 1992.

King Abdullah II succeeded his father Hussein following the latter's death in February 1999. Abdullah moved quickly to reaffirm Jordan's peace treaty with Israel and its relations with the U.S., and has since focused the government's agenda on economic reform, political development, and poverty alleviation.

Jordan's continuing structural economic difficulties, burgeoning population, and more open political environment have led to the emergence of a variety of small political parties. Moving toward greater independence, Jordan's parliament has investigated corruption charges against several regime figures and has become the major forum in which differing political views, including those of political Islamists, are expressed. Parliamentary elections were most recently held in November 2007. The Islamist opposition lost many of the seats it had gained in 2003, with the vast majority of seats being won by independent, pro-government candidates. Following the elections, in December 2007, the King appointed the current cabinet with a clear mandate to push forward economic reform and job creation.

ECONOMY

Jordan is a small country with limited natural resources. It is among the four most water-poor countries in the world. The country is currently exploring ways to expand its limited water supply and use its existing water resources more efficiently, including through regional cooperation. Jordan also depends on external sources for the majority of its energy requirements. During the 1990s, its crude petroleum needs were met through imports from neighboring Iraq, often at concessionary prices. Since early 2003, Jordan has imported oil primarily from Saudi Arabia at concessionary and market prices. In addition, a natural gas pipeline from Egypt to Jordan through the southern port city of Aqaba is now operational. The pipeline has reached northern Jordan and construction to connect it to Syria and beyond is underway. Jordan developed a new energy strategy in 2007 that aims to develop more indigenous and renewable energy sources, including oil shale, nuclear energy, wind, and solar power.

Under King Abdullah, Jordan has undertaken a program of economic reform. The government has taken the initiative for the phased elimination of fuel subsidies, passed legislation targeting corruption, and begun tax reform. It has also worked to liberalize trade, joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2000, signing an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) in 2001, and signing the first bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the U.S. and an Arab country in 2001 (www.jordanusfta.com). The U.S.-Jordan FTA will phase out duties on nearly all goods and services by 2010. The agreement also provides for more open markets in communications, construction, finance, health, transportation, and services, as well as strict application of international standards for the protection of intellectual property. In 1996, the U.S. Congress created Qualifying Industrial Zones (QIZ) to support the peace process. QIZ goods, which must contain a certain percentage of Israeli input and enter the United States tariff- and quota-free, have also driven economic growth, particularly in the export of light manufactured products such as garments. Jordan exported $6.9 million in goods to the U.S. in 1997, when two-way trade was $395 million; according to the U.S. International Trade Commission, it exported $1.33 billion in 2007, with two-way trade at $2.19 billion. In 2007, Jordan's economy continued to grow but was hurt by high oil prices, leading to an unexpectedly high budget deficit. Fuel subsidies were eliminated in 2008, and barley subsidies are scheduled to be replaced by a program that offsets livestock rather than feed costs.

In 1996, Jordan and the United States signed a civil aviation agreement that provides for "open skies" between the two countries, and a U.S.-Jordan Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) for the protection and encouragement of bilateral investment entered into force in 2003. The United States and Jordan also signed in 2007 a Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement to facilitate and strengthen scientific cooperation between the two countries, as well as a memorandum of understanding on nuclear energy cooperation. Such agreements bolster efforts to help diversify Jordan's economy and promote growth, and at the same time lessen reliance on exports of phosphates, potash, and recently textiles; overseas remittances; and foreign aid. The government has emphasized the information technology (IT) and tourism sectors as other promising growth sectors. The low tax and low regulation Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZ) is considered a model of a government-provided framework for private sector-led economic

growth. Jordan is classified by the World Bank as a "lower middle income country." The per capita GDP is $4,700. According to Jordan's Department of Statistics, 13% of the economically active Jordanian population residing in Jordan was unemployed in 2007, although unofficial estimates cite a 30% unemployment rate. Education and literacy rates and measures of social well-being are relatively high compared to other countries with similar incomes. Jordan's population growth rate has declined in recent years and is currently 2.3% as reported by the Jordanian government. One of the most important factors in the government's efforts to improve the well-being of its citizens is the macroeconomic stability that has been achieved since the 1990s. The rate of inflation in 2007 was 5.7%; the currency has been stable with an exchange rate fixed to the U.S. dollar since 1995 at JD 0.708-0.710 to the dollar. In 2007, Jordan negotiated a Paris Club debt buyback agreement to retire at least $2 billion. This buyback will reduce the percentage of external debt to GDP from 46% to 32%.

While pursuing economic reform and increased trade, Jordan's economy will continue to be vulnerable to external shocks and regional unrest. Without calm in the region, economic growth seems destined to stay below its potential.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Jordan has consistently followed a pro-Western foreign policy and traditionally has had close relations with the United States. These relations were damaged by support in Jordan for Iraq during the first Gulf war. Although the Government of Jordan stated its opposition to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, popular support for Iraq was driven by Jordan's Palestinian community, which favored Saddam as a champion against Western supporters of Israel.

Following the first Gulf war, Jordan largely restored its relations with Western countries through its participation in the Middle East peace process and enforcement of UN sanctions against Iraq. Relations between Jordan and the Gulf countries improved substantially after King Hussein's death. Since the 2003 fall of the Iraqi regime, Jordan has played a pivotal role in supporting the restoration of stability and security to Iraq.

The Government of Jordan has facilitated the training of over 50,000 Iraqi police cadets and corrections officers at a Jordanian facility near Amman. Jordan also plays host to several hundred thousand Iraqi refugees and has worked closely with donor agencies and the international community to address their humanitarian needs.

Jordan signed a nonbelligerency agreement with Israel (the Washington Declaration) in Washington, DC, on July 25, 1994. Jordan and Israel signed a historic peace treaty on October 26, 1994, witnessed by President Clinton, accompanied by Secretary Christopher. The U.S. has participated with Jordan and Israel in trilateral development discussions in which key issues have been water-sharing and security; cooperation on Jordan Rift Valley development; infrastructure projects; and trade, finance, and banking issues. Jordan also participates in multilateral peace talks. Jordan belongs to the UN and several of its specialized and related agencies, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Meteorological Organization (IMO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and World Health Organization (WHO). Jordan also is a member of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Nonaligned Movement, and Arab League.

Since the outbreak of the second Intifada in September 2000, Jordan has worked to maintain lines of communication between the Israelis and the Palestinians to counsel moderation and to return the parties to negotiations of outstanding permanent status issues. These efforts bore fruit with the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations at the November 2007 Annapolis conference.

U.S.-JORDANIAN RELATIONS

Relations between the U.S. and Jordan have been close for six decades, with 2009 marking the 60th anniversary of U.S.-Jordan ties. A primary objective of U.S. policy has been the achievement of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East.

U.S. policy seeks to reinforce Jordan's commitment to peace, stability, and moderation. The peace process and Jordan's opposition to terrorism parallel and indirectly assist wider U.S. interests. Accordingly, through economic and military assistance and through close political cooperation, the United States has helped Jordan maintain its stability and prosperity.

Since 1952 the United States has worked closely with Jordan to improve the lives of Jordanian citizens. Total development assistance exceeds $5 billion and has funded a range of projects: health care, education, construction to increase water availability, and support for microeconomic policy shifts toward a more completely free market system. Additionally, the U.S. has provided both grants and loans for the acquisition of U.S. agriculture commodities. These programs have been successful and have contributed to Jordanian stability while strengthening the bilateral relationship. A strong U.S. military assistance program is designed to meet Jordan's legitimate defense needs, including preservation of border integrity and regional stability through the provision of materiel and training. Jordan signed a Threshold Agreement with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in October 2006, and was subsequently deemed by the MCC to be eligible for a Compact Agreement in recognition of the country's progress on economic, social, and political reform indicators.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

AMMAN (E) Al-Omawyeen Street, Abdoun, Amman, Jordan 11118, APO/FPO APO AE 09892, +(962) 6 590-6000, Fax 962-6-592-0163 (Admin), Workweek: Sun-Thurs 0800-1630, Website: http://amman.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Judith Reed
AMB OMS:	Virginia Baldwin
CG OMS:	Sally El-Bader
DIR:	Vincent Raimondi
ECO:	Natalie E. Brown
FCS:	Sheryle Pinckney-Maas
FM:	George Robb
HRO:	Karen McCrea
MGT:	Sandra R. Smith
AMB:	David Hale
CG:	Rena Bitter
CON:	Rena Bitter
DCM:	Daniel Rubinstein
PAO:	Philip Frayne
GSO:	Tom Palmer
RSO:	Michael Mack
AGR:	Mohammad Khraishy
AID:	Jay Knott
APHIS:	Mohammad Khraishy
ATO:	Mohammad Khraishy
CLO:	Dee Dee Zigler
DAO:	Col. Robert Faille
EEO:	Natalie E. Brown
EST:	Manu Bhalla
FAA:	Duffy Winters
FAA/CASLO:	Duffy Winters
FMO:	Arlene Barilec
ICASS Chair:	Col. Robert Faille
IMO:	Michael A. Reed
IPO:	Richard Page
ISO:	Alan Mahood
ISSO:	Richard Page
LEGATT:	Bryan Finnegan
POL:	David Greene
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 14, 2008

Country Description: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with a developing economy and a modern infrastructure. Western culture features prominently in the lives of many Jordanians; however, at the same time, Islamic ideals and beliefs provide the conservative foundation for the country's customs, laws and practices. Tourist facilities are widely available, although quality may vary depending on price and location.

Entry Requirements: A passport and a visa are required. Jordan issues visas for a fee at most international ports of entry upon arrival, and at most international border crossings, except at the crossing known in Jordan as the King Hussein Bridge (this same crossing is known in Israel as the Allenby Bridge). To cross into Jordan at the King Hussein/Allenby Bridge, U.S. citizens must already have either a visa for Jordan in their passports or have an entry permit from the Ministry of Interior.

Foreigners who wish to stay thirty days or more in Jordan must register at a Jordanian police station by their thirtieth day in the country. For stays of six months or more police will require that an AIDS test be performed at a government medical facility. Failure to properly register subjects the traveler to a fine of 1.5 Jordanian dinar (approximately $2.10) per day of overstay. This fine is usually assessed at departure.

HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to Jordan and foreign residents. Jordan does not permit entry or residency for foreign nationals with HIV/AIDS. Travelers known to have HIV are denied entry at ports of entry, including land border crossings. Travelers seeking residency beyond one-year are required to have an AIDS test performed at a government medical facility. Those who fail to submit to the test or who test positive for HIV are deported. Please verify the latest information for travelers with HIV/AIDS at http://www.jordanembassyus.org.

Travelers are urged to check the Country Specific Information and any existing Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts at travel.state.gov for all countries they plan to visit during their travel to the region. Border crossing requirements may change and borders may be closed during periods of heightened security. For further information travelers may contact the Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at 3504 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008, by telephone at (202) 966-2664, or by internet at http://www.jordanembassyus.org. Jordan also maintains Honorary Consulates in Detroit, MI, Chicago, IL, and San Francisco, CA.

Safety and Security: The threat of terrorism remains high in Jordan. Transnational terrorist groups, as well as less sophisticated local elements, have demonstrated the capability to pose threats in Jordan. The Al-Qaida in Iraq network in particular continues terrorist activities against U.S. and Government of Jordan (GOJ) targets in Jordan. The Al-Qaida in Iraq network claimed responsibility for the November 9, 2005 bombings of three international hotels in Amman which killed 60 people and injured over 100. Pedestrian suicide bombers wearing explosive vests carried the bombs into the hotels. Al-Qaida in Iraq also claimed responsibility for the Aqaba rocket attacks on August 19, 2005 targeting a U.S. naval ship, which killed one Jordanian soldier and wounded another. The assassination of American diplomat Larry Foley outside his west Amman residence on October 28, 2002 was also attributed to the Al-Qaida in Iraq network. Numerous other terror plots have been foiled in recent years.

Terrorists often do not distinguish between U.S. government personnel and private citizens. Terrorists may target areas frequented by Westerners, such as tourist sites, hotels, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, liquor stores, shopping malls, transportation hubs, places of worship, expatriate residential areas, and schools. In light of these security concerns, U.S. citizens are urged to maintain a high level of vigilance, to be aware of their surroundings, and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. It is especially important for travelers to be unpredictable in their movements by varying their times and routes and maintaining a low profile. Moreover, U.S. citizens are urged to avoid contact with any suspicious or unfamiliar objects and to immediately report the presence of

such objects to local authorities. U.S. government personnel overseas have been advised to take the same precautions.

Anti-American and anti-Western sentiments exist in Jordan and intensify following important events in the region, particularly those related to Israeli/Palestinian issues, conflicts in Lebanon, and, to a lesser extent, Iraq. This may lead to random acts of violence against Westerners. On July 16, 2008 a gunman fired on foreigners leaving a public concert in downtown Amman, injuring eight foreigners before turning the gun on himself. On September 4, 2006, a gunman fired on foreigners at a popular tourist site in central Amman, killing one and injuring six. Travelers are advised to avoid any demonstrations or large gatherings of people. Many demonstrations occur near mosques after Friday prayers. Consequently, special sensitivity and caution should be exercised when visiting or traveling near mosques and religious sites during holy days and the Friday Muslim Sabbath. Demonstrations may also take place at universities and refugee camps.

U.S. citizens are advised to increase their vigilance as they approach the border area with Iraq. In October 2006, July 2005, and December 2004, Iraq-based terrorists targeted the Jordan/Iraq border crossing with vehicle bombs. The Department of State advises against travel into Iraq. Please see the Travel Warning and Country Specific Information for Iraq for further information.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert and the Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is generally not a serious problem for travelers in Jordan; however, host country and local media sources have reported a slight increase in petty crime. In the narrow streets of the older parts of the city center, crowded conditions invite pickpockets and other petty criminals. Travelers are urged to be more guarded in these areas so that they do not present easy opportunities for criminals. In central and west Amman there have been reports of thieves snatching pedestrians' purses from moving vehicles and then driving off. In some instances victims were injured because they were unable to free themselves from their purses as perpetrators drove off. When carrying a purse it is wise to conceal it, if possible, and to avoid walking near the road within reach of passing vehicles. Walking against the flow of traffic can also reduce your visibility as a target.

Jordanian police have warned the public to exercise vigilance when leaving banks or ATMs, as thieves have reportedly preyed upon persons soon after using these services.

Western women, both visiting and residing in Jordan, report sexual harassment, stalking, and unwelcome advances of a sexual nature. There have also been isolated reports of sexual assault. In particular, the embassy has received increasing reports of harassment and assault involving taxis and taxi drivers. Many of the incidents have involved verbal sexual harassment, staring, or following the victim after exiting the taxi. A few more troubling incidents have included indecent exposure, touching, and abduction. There was one violent sexual assault against a foreigner involving a taxi driver in 2007.

Women are advised to take reasonable precautions including dressing conservatively, not traveling alone, and avoiding travel at night to unfamiliar areas. Women should never sit in the front seat of a taxi and should carry a cell phone. Please see the Embassy's website for a list of radio controlled taxis.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting it to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and to explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Jordan is 191.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Basic modern medical care and medicines are available in the principal cities of Jordan, but not necessarily in outlying areas. Most hospitals in Jordan, especially in Amman, are privately owned. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for services. Because serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States could cost over $150,000 U.S. dollars, we advise travelers to have medical evacuation insurance.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical

insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Avian Influenza: The Government of Jordan confirmed four cases of H5N1 Avian Influenza in poultry on March 24, 2006 on a small farm near Ajloun. An Egyptian who entered Jordan via ferry at Aqaba on March 27, 2006 was confirmed to have H5N1. The World Health Organization declared Jordan to be free of avian flu in May 2006. There have been no confirmed cases of avian flu in people or birds in Jordan since the summer of 2006. Further cases of avian flu in both people and birds in Jordan remain possible. Travelers should patronize restaurants having high standards for food safety and hygiene and ask that poultry and egg products be cooked thoroughly. Travelers to Jordan and other countries affected by the virus are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. For the most current information and links on avian influenza in Jordan, see the State Department's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet or visit the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Jordan.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Jordan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Jordanian Public Safety officials estimate that on a daily basis, an average of two people are killed and fifty people are injured in 145 road accidents throughout the Kingdom. Roads are particularly treacherous during the rainy season—from December to March. Drivers and passengers are required to wear seatbelts and all cars must have a fire extinguisher and warning triangle in the vehicle. Child car seats are not required by law. Violators of speed limits may be assessed fines up to $140. Police routinely pull over reckless drivers as well as those driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Licensed drivers must carry local third party insurance with sufficient coverage for accidents resulting in injury or death.

Poor lighting and road conditions prevail, so extra caution must be exercised at all times, especially when driving at night. Highways are more crowded around the Muslim holidays when many Jordanian expatriates return to Jordan for family visits. City driving in Amman is also more hazardous in the summer months when Jordan experiences an influx of tourists and visitors from other countries in the region. There are no driving restrictions on women and it is not unusual for women to drive alone.

The desert highway outside Aqaba, a popular tourist destination, is particularly dangerous because it is narrow, winding, steep, and crowded with trucks. This area should be avoided at night, if possible. When driving in both urban and rural areas, motorists should beware of livestock, including camels, sheep, and goats. Collisions between livestock and automobiles are common.

Landmines are often located within two miles of military installations and borders, including the popular Dead Sea area. Minefields are usually fenced off and marked with skull-and-crossbones notices, but the fences and signs may be in poor repair or hard to see. Avoiding these areas reduces the risk of accidentally setting off a mine.

Jordan has abundant bus and taxi services. Please see the Crime section of this notice for more information about incidents of sexual harassment and assault involving taxi drivers and important safety tips when using public or private transportation in Jordan. Visitors are encouraged to arrange for their transportation needs via their hotel and should request that drivers not pick up additional passengers en route to their destinations. Other forms of public transportation are not recommended. Jordanian security authorities often establish checkpoints, especially on roads leading to popular tourist destinations, where drivers are expected to stop and present their identity documents. All drivers should stop when directed to do so and comply with the instructions provided to them by the authorities.

Emergencies should be referred to the Civil Defense Department at telephone number 199. Please refer to our Road Safety page for more information. Visit the website of Jordan's national tourist office at http://www.tourism.jo. For information on driving regulations please contact the Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at 3504 International Drive NW, Washington, DC 20008, by telephone at (202) 966-2664, or by internet at http://www.jordanembassyus.org

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Jordan's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Jordan's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Under Jordanian law any man may prevent a female or child relative from leaving Jordan by registering a hold on their travel with the Jordanian authorities. This is possible even if the child or woman's sole nationality is American. Jordanian authorities consider disputes surrounding travel holds as private family matters and the Embassy is limited in its ability to intervene. Please see the section in this notice on Children's Issues.

American citizens are subject to Jordanian laws while in Jordan. American citizens who also possess Jordanian nationality may also be subject to laws that impose special obligations on Jordanians. For example, all Jordanian men under the age of 37 are required to register for service in the Jordanian military. Those subject to registration may be prevented from leaving Jordan until exit

permission is obtained from appropriate Jordanian authorities. This permission is often granted to U.S. citizens, but may take some time to obtain and may be limited to a single exit.

The Government of Jordan considers U.S.-Jordanian dual nationals as Jordanian citizens. Local authorities may not always notify the Embassy of arrests, detentions, or accidents involving dual-nationals. For this reason dual-nationals in particular are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, making evidence of their identity and U.S. citizenship readily available for local authorities. For additional information, see our Dual Nationality Flyer.

Islam is the state religion of Jordan. The Jordanian government does not interfere with public worship by the country's Christian minority. Although the majority of Christians are allowed to practice their faith freely, activities such as proselytizing or encouraging conversion to the Christian faith are prohibited. American citizens have been deported, detained, and arrested for discussing or trying to engage Jordanians in debate about Christianity.

Jordanian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Jordan of items such as drugs, firearms, poisons, chemicals, explosives and pornographic materials, among other items. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Jordan in Washington, D.C., or one of the Jordanian consulates in the United States, for specific information regarding customs requirements.

The United States Government is committed to providing the full range of consular services to all American citizens. Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, to which Jordan is a party, provides that competent authorities in the host country must notify a consular post of the arrest of one of its citizens without delay. However, Jordanian officials often do not notify the U.S. Embassy when an American citizen is arrested or detained. The local workweek for Jordanian government offices and most businesses is Sunday through Thursday.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Jordan's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Jordan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Jordan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in Amman is located on Al-Umayyaween Street, Abdoun, PO Box 354, Amman 11118. The telephone number is [962] (6) 590-6000 and the fax number is [962] (6) 592-4102. The after-hours emergency telephone number is [962] (6) 590-6000. The Internet web site is http://amman.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Embassy is open Sunday through Thursday.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Jordanian law stipulates that all prospective adopting parents MUST be Muslim, married for five or more years and certified as infertile in order to adopt in Jordan.

In addition, Jordanian law does not allow for full adoptions of Jordanian children. Americans considering adoption of Jordanian children must obtain guardianship from a Jordanian court and subsequently adopt the child in the United States. Prospective American guardians may also want to review our Shari'a Adoption Flyer on Guardianship in Islamic Countries.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Adoption in Jordan falls under the purview of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).

Ministry of Social Development
(MSD)
Family and Childhood Section/
Fostering Program
P.O. Box 925379
Jabal Al Hussein

Amman, Jordan
Fax 962-6-569-4953 or
962-6-569-4346

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: By law, all adoptive parents must be Muslim and married for five or more years. The husband must be between 35 and 55 years of age and the wife must be between 30 and 50 years of age. Parents must be medically certified as infertile. They may have up to two children total, including adopted children. If the parents have one child already, then the adopted Jordanian child must be of the same sex. Parents who have previously adopted in Jordan must wait a minimum of two years before adopting another child of the same sex from Jordan. Single people cannot adopt children in Jordan.

Residency Requirements: There are no Jordanian residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: The MSD reports that adoptive parents can expect to wait an average of three months from the time they initiate contact with the MSD to when they are given custody of a child.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed. There are no adoption agencies in Jordan. The Embassy maintains a list of numerous attorneys practicing in Jordan, which can be found at http://amman.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: MSD does not charge any fees. However, adoptive parents can expect to pay fees for the baby's birth certificate, passport, and family book issuance. (A "Family Book" is a document issued by the Jordanian government to families, which contains biographical information about each member of the family.) The fees for obtaining a Jordanian passport for children (under 16) is 10 JD; for the birth certificate is 1 JD; and, for the Jordanian family book is 2 JD. More details about current fees and required documents can be found at the MSD website at www.cspd.gov. jo.

Adoption Procedures: Regardless of nationality, all couples are required to apply to the MSD to qualify to become foster parents. The pre-qualification process is similar to those in most U.S. states. To begin this process, prospective adoptive parents are asked to submit a fostering request to the MSD. This request should include the following information: name, age, profession, and religion of both parents. Contact information, including full mailing address, must be provided. Once the MSD has received and processed the request, it will direct the Jordanian Embassy in Washington (through the Foreign Ministry) to request additional documentation from the prospective foster parents.

Once received, an MSD committee reviews the request to foster a child. If all conditions are met, the Minister of Social Development issues his/her approval or denial. Foster parents are notified by mail that they are approved and invited to travel to Jordan to locate a child. Couples who are approved will then be escorted to a government-run orphanage to choose from children whose parents are unknown.

There are no court proceedings involved with adoption in Jordan. MSD is the only entity that grants adoption According to the precepts of Islam and the laws of Jordan governing the adoption of infants of unknown parentage, the adoptive parents are permitted to choose the first name of the child. The Ministry of Interior, Department of Civil Status chooses fictitious names for the unknown mother and father, which along with the child's first name are placed on the Jordanian birth certificate. These fictitious parents' names, which are chosen at random and do not identify with any common Jordanian family or tribal names, are required for issuance of a Jordanian birth certificate.

The child, per Jordanian law, will carry the names of the fictitious father. Once a birth certificate has been issued, the child is also issued a Jordanian "Family Book" and a Jordanian passport. At this point, the adoptive parents may petition for an immigrant visa for their child at the U.S. Embassy in Amman, Jordan.

After the child has immigrated to the United States, adoptive parents are required to inform the nearest Jordanian embassy or consulate of any change in address. This facilitates the follow up that the MSD performs for all adopted Jordanian children abroad.

Documentary Requirements: The following documents are required:

- Copies of the marriage certificate;
- Copies of each parent's valid passport;
- "Social study" (forms will be provided through the Jordanian Embassy);
- Employment letters;
- Original health reports of both parents, including medical proof of the parents' infertility; and
- If applicable, copy of the conversion certificate to Islam.

All of these documents must be translated into Arabic and certified by the Jordanian Embassy in Washington, which will forward them to the MSD (through the Foreign Ministry).

Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Washington, D.C.
3504 International Drive, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Phone: (202) 966- 2664
Fax: (202) 966-3110
E-mail:
HKJConsular@jordanembassyus.org

Website:
http://www.jordanembassyus.org/new/index.shtml

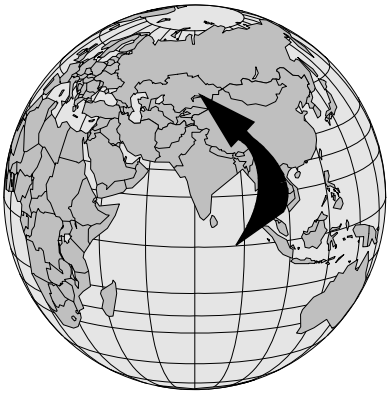
U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States, Amman, Jordan
P.O. Box 354
Amman 11118 Jordan
Phone: 962-6-590-6000
Fax: 962-6-592-4102
E-mail: Amman-IV@state.gov
Internet:
http://amman.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Jordan may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Amman.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



KAZAKHSTAN

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Kazakhstan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 2.7 million sq. km. (1.05 million sq. mi.); ninth-largest nation in the world; the size of Western Europe.

Cities: Astana (capital, June 1998), Almaty (former capital), Karaganda, and Shymkent.

Terrain: Extends east to west from the Caspian Sea to the Altay Mountains and north to south from the plains of Western Siberia to the oasis and desert of Central Asia.

Climate: Continental, cold winters and hot summers; arid and semiarid.

Border lengths: Russia 6,846 km., Uzbekistan 2,203 km., China 1,533 km., Kyrgyzstan 1,051 km., and Turkmenistan 379 km.

People

Nationality: Kazakhstani.

Population: (January 2008 est.) 15.6 million—down from 16.2 million in 1989; second most-populated country in Central Asia. Large-scale emigration of ethnic Russians, Germans, and Ukrainians accounts for most of the population decrease since 1989.

Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.08%.

Population distribution: 52.8 % of population lives in urban areas. The largest cities include Astana (capital) with a population of 602,480, Almaty (former capital) 1.3 million, Karaganda 453,400, Shymkent 545,400, Taraz 340,000, Ust-Kamenogorsk 310,000, Pavlodar 300,000.

Population density: 14.5 people per sq. mi. (U.S. density 2000: 79.6 people per sq. mi.).

Ethnic groups: (2002) Kazakh 55.8%, Russian 28.3%, Ukrainian 3.3%, Uzbek 2.6%, German 1.8%, Uyghur 1.5%, other 5.0%.

Religions: Sunni Muslim 47%, Russian Orthodox 44%, Protestant 2%, other 7%.

Languages: Kazakhstan is a bilingual country. Kazakh language has the status of the "state" language, while Russian is declared the "official" language. Russian is used routinely in business; 64.4% of population speaks the Kazakh language.

Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—27.4/1,000. Life expectancy—67.22 years (male 61.9 yrs.; female 72.84 yrs.). Health care (2005 est.)—30.3 doctors and 68.2 hospital beds per 10,000 persons.

Education: Mandatory universal secondary education. School system consists of kindergarten, primary school (grades 1-4), secondary school (grades 5-9), and high school (grades 10-11). Literacy rate—98.4%.

Work force: (2007 est., 8.16 million) Industry and construction—18.1%; agriculture and fishing—32.9%; services—49%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: December 16, 1991 (from the Soviet Union).

Declaration of sovereignty: October 25, 1990.

Constitution: August 30, 1995 constitution adopted by referendum replaced a 1993 constitution.

Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister, Council of Ministers. Legislative—Senate and Mazhilis. Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 14 oblasts plus 2 cities—Almaty, the former capital, and Astana, the current capital; and the territory of Baykonur, which contains the space launch center that the Russians built and now lease.

Political parties: Ten political parties are registered: Nur Otan ("The Light of Fatherland" in Kazakh), Azat ("Free"; formerly known as True Ak Zhol), the National Social Democratic Party, Ak Zhol (Bright Path), Auyl (Farm), the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, the Communist People's Party, Party of Patriots, Adilet (Justice), and Rukhaniyat (Spirituality).

Suffrage: Universal, 18 years of age.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $102.5 billion. **Exchange rate:** (Period average) 122.55 KZT/1 US$ in 2007.

GDP growth rate: 9.5% (2002); 9.2% (2003); 9.6% (2004 est.); 9.7% (2005 est.); 10.7% (2006); 8.5% (2007).

GDP per capita: (2007) Purchasing power parity—$11,100.

Inflation rate: 6.6% (2002); 6.8% (2003); 6.7% (2004 est.); 7.5% (2005); 8.4% (2006); 18.8% (2007 year-over-year); 10.8% (2007 average).

Trade: Exports (2007 est.)—$44.88 billion. Imports (2007 est.)—$29.91 billion.

Gross external debt: $18.2 billion (2002); $22.9 billion (2003); $32.71 billion (2004); $43.40 billion (2005); $73.46 billion (2006); $96.37 billion (2007).

Central Bank's foreign exchange reserves: $4.96 billion (2003); $7.07 billion (2005 est.); $19.04 billion (Feb. 2008).

National (oil) fund reserves: $3.6 billion (2003); $5.1 billion (2004); $10.1 billion (2006); $22.6 billion (Feb. 2008).

Unemployment rate: (Officially recognized) 8.7% (2003); 8.4% (2004 est.); 8.1% (2005 est.); 7.4% (2006 est.); 7.1% (2007 est.). Population below poverty line: 13.8% (2007).

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Kazakhstan is very ethnically diverse, with only a slight majority of Kazakhstanis being ethnic Kazakh. Other ethnic groups include Russian, Ukrainian, Uzbek, German, and Uyghur. Religions are Sunni Muslim, Russian Orthodox, Protestant, and other. Kazakhstan is a bilingual country. The Kazakh language has the status of the state" language, while Russian is declared the "official" language. Russian is used routinely in business; 64.4% of the population speaks the Kazakh language. Education is universal and mandatory through the secondary level, and the literacy rate is 98.4%.

Nomadic tribes have been living in the region that is now Kazakhstan since the first century BC, although the land has been inhabited at least as far back as the Stone Age. From the fourth century AD through the beginning of the 13th century, the territory of Kazakhstan was ruled by a series of nomadic nations. Following the Mongolian invasion in the early 13th century, administrative districts were established under the Mongol Empire, which eventually became the territories of the Kazakh Khanate. The major medieval cities of Taraz and Turkestan were founded along the northern route of the Great Silk Road during this period.

Traditional nomadic life on the vast steppe and semi-desert lands was characterized by a constant search for new pasture to support the livestock-based economy. The Kazakhs emerged from a mixture of tribes living in the region in about the 15th century and by the middle of the 16th century had developed a common language, culture, and economy. In the early 1600s, the Kazakh Khanate separated into the Great, Middle and Little (or Small) Hordes—confederations based on extended family networks. Political disunion, competition among the hordes, and a lack of an internal market weakened the Kazakh Khanate. The beginning of the 18th century marked the zenith of the Kazakh Khanate. The following 150 years saw the gradual colonization of the Kazakh-controlled territories by tsarist Russia.

The process of colonization was a combination of voluntary integration into the Russian Empire and outright seizure. The Little Horde and part of the Middle Horde signed treaties of protection with Russia in the 1730s and 1740s. Major parts of the northeast and central Kazakh territories were incorporated into the Russian Empire by 1840. With the Russian seizure of territories belonging to the Senior Horde in the 1860s, the tsars effectively ruled over most of the territory belonging to what is now the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Russian Empire introduced a system of administration and built military garrisons in its effort to establish a presence in Central Asia in the so-called "Great Game" between it and Great Britain. Russian efforts to impose its system aroused the resentment of the Kazakh people, and by the 1860s, most Kazakhs resisted Russia's annexation largely because of the disruption it wrought upon the traditional nomadic lifestyle and livestock-based economy. The Kazakh national movement, which began in the late 1800s, sought to preserve the Kazakh language and identity. There were uprisings against colonial rule during the final years of tsarist Russia, with the most serious occurring in 1916. The destruction of the nomadic life, prior to and during the Communist period, created a Kazakh diaspora in neighboring countries, especially western China. Since independence in 1991, the government has encouraged the return of ethnic Kazakhs by offering subsidies for returnees.

Although there was a brief period of autonomy during the tumultuous period following the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Kazakhs eventually succumbed to Soviet rule. In 1920, the area of present-day Kazakhstan became an autonomous republic within Russia and, in 1936, a Soviet republic.

Soviet repression of the traditional elites, along with forced collectivization in late 1920s-1930s, brought about mass hunger and led to unrest. Soviet rule, however, took hold, and a communist apparatus steadily worked to fully integrate Kazakhstan into the Soviet system. Kazakhstan experienced population inflows of thousands exiled from other parts of the Soviet Union during the 1930s and later became home for hundreds of thousands evacuated from the Second World War battlefields. The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) contributed five national divisions to the Soviet Union's World War II effort.

The period of the Second World War marked an increase in industrialization and increased mineral extraction in support of the war effort. At the



time of Soviet leader Josif Stalin's death, however, Kazakhstan still had an overwhelmingly agricultural-based economy. In 1953, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev initiated the ambitious "Virgin Lands" program to turn the traditional pasturelands of Kazakhstan into a major grain-producing region for the Soviet Union. The Virgin Lands policy, along with later modernizations under Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, sped up the development of the agricultural sector, which to this day remains the source of livelihood for a large percentage of Kazakhstan's population.

Growing tensions within Soviet society led to a demand for political and economic reforms, which came to a head in the 1980s. In December 1986, mass demonstrations by young ethnic Kazakhs took place in Almaty to protest Moscow's installment of a non-Kazakhstani First Secretary as leader. Soviet troops suppressed the unrest, and dozens of demonstrators were jailed. In the waning days of Soviet rule, discontent continued to grow and find expression under Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost.

Caught up in the groundswell of Soviet republics seeking greater autonomy, Kazakhstan declared its sovereignty as a republic within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) in October 1990. Following the August 1991 abortive coup attempt in Moscow and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan declared independence on December 16, 1991. The years following independence have been marked by significant reforms to the Soviet command-economy and political monopoly on power. Under Nursultan Nazarbayev, who initially came to power in 1989 as the head of the Kazakh Communist Party and was eventually elected President in 1991, Kazakhstan has made significant progress toward developing a market economy, for which it was recognized by the United States in 2002. The country has enjoyed significant economic growth since 2000, partly due to its large oil, gas, and mineral reserves.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Kazakhstan is a constitutional republic with a strong presidency. It is divided into 14 oblasts and the two municipal districts of Almaty and Astana. Each is headed by an akim (provincial governor) appointed by the president. Municipal akims are appointed by oblast akims. The Government of Kazakhstan transferred its capital from Almaty to Astana on June 10, 1998.

The president is the head of state. The president also is the commander in chief of the armed forces and may veto legislation that has been passed by the Parliament. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been in office since Kazakhstan became independent. In 1995, President Nazarbayev called for a referendum that expanded his presidential powers: only he can initiate constitutional amendments, appoint and dismiss the government, dissolve Parliament, call referenda, and appoint administrative heads of regions and cities.

The prime minister, who serves at the pleasure of the president, chairs the Cabinet of Ministers and serves as Kazakhstan's head of government. There are three deputy prime ministers and 17 ministers in the Cabinet.

In December 2005, President Nazarbayev won a new 7-year term in an election that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said fell short of international standards. Official results gave the president 91% of the vote, although independent exit polls found this figure to be somewhat inflated. Opposition candidates Zharmakhan Tuyakbay (For a Just Kazakhstan) and Alikhan Baymenov (Ak Zhol) were able to compete freely in this election.

Kazakhstan has a bicameral Parliament, comprised of a lower house (the Mazhilis) and upper house (the Senate). Ninety-eight members of the Mazhilis are elected by a party-list vote. Nine members of the Mazhilis are elected by the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan. The Senate has 47 members. Two senators are selected by each of the elected assemblies (Maslikhats) of Kazakhstan's 16 principal administrative divisions (14 regions, or oblasts, plus the cities of Astana and Almaty). The president appoints the remaining fifteen senators. Mazhilis deputies, the government, and the president have the right of legislative initiative, though the government proposes most legislation considered by the Parliament.

President Nazarbayev's Nur Otan party won the August 2007 elections to the Mazhilis. None of the remaining political parties won a seat during the elections, which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said fell short of international standards.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Nursultan NAZARBAYEV**
Prime Min.: **Karim MASIMOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Yerbol ORYNBAYEV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Umirzak SHUKEYEV**
Min. of Agriculture: **Akylbek KURISHBAYEV**
Min. of Culture & Information: **Mukhtar KUL MUKHAMMED**
Min. of Defense: **Daniyal AKHMETOV**
Min. of Economy & Budget Planning: **Bakhyt SULTANOV**
Min. of Education & Science: **Zhanseit TUYMEBAYEV**
Min. of Emergency Situations: **Vladimir BOZHKO**
Min. of Energy & Mineral Resources: **Sauat MYNBAYEV**
Min. of Environmental Protection: **Nurlan ISKAKOV**
Min. of Finance: **Bolat ZHAMISHEV**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Marat TAZHIN**
Min. of Health: **Anatoliy DERNOVOY**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Vladimir SHKOLNIK**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Baurzhan MUKHAMEDZHANOV**
Min. of Justice: **Zagipa BALIYEVA**
Min. of Labor & Social Protection: **Berdybek SAPARBAYEV**
Min. of Tourism & Sport: **Temirkhan DOSMUKHANBETOV**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Serik AKHMETOV**
Chmn., National Bank: **Anvar SAYDENOV**
Chmn., National Security Ctte. (KNB): **Amangeldy SHABDARBAYEV**
Sec., Security Council: **Kairbek SULEYMENOV**
Ambassador to the US: **Yerlan IDRISOV**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Byrganym AITIMOVA**

ECONOMY

Kazakhstan's economy grew by 8.5% in 2007. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 10.7% in 2006, 9.7% in 2005, 9.6% in 2004, 9.2% in 2003, and 9.5% in 2002.

Kazakhstan's monetary policy has been largely well managed. However, in 2007, rapid increases in global commodity prices helped push inflation rates as high as 18.8%. Prior to this, inflation had remained relatively steady at 9.5%, up from 8.4% in 2006. Inflation from 2002-2004 was 6.6%, 6.8%, and 6.7%, respectively. Because of its strong macroeconomic performance and financial health, Kazakhstan became the first former Soviet republic to repay all of its debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2000, 7 years ahead of schedule. In March 2002, the U.S. Department of Commerce graduated Kazakhstan to market economy status under U.S. trade law. The change in status recognized substantive market economy reforms in the areas of currency convertibility, wage rate determination, openness to foreign investment, and government control over the means of production and allocation of resources.

In September 2002, Kazakhstan became the first country in the former Soviet Union to receive an investment-grade credit rating from a major international credit rating agency. Estimated level of external debt in 2006 was $73.46 billion. In 2005, Kazakhstan's gross foreign debt was about $43.40 billion. Kazakhstan has been successful in reducing the ratio of government debt to GDP in recent years. In 2007, total governmental debt was $5.7 billion, which amounts to 5.5% of GDP. In 2000, total government debt equaled

21.7% of GDP. While government debt has continued to decrease, several years of aggressive private-sector borrowing and lending practices contributed to a liquidity and credit crunch in 2007. Total external debt (public and private) increased dramatically from $73.46 billion (2006) to $96.37 billion (2007), now equivalent to 94.4% of GDP. An upturn in economic growth, combined with the results of earlier tax and financial sector reforms, dramatically improved government finances from the 1999 budget deficit level of 3.5% of GDP to a deficit of 0.5% of GDP in 2005. However, the budget deficit level in 2007 was $1.8 billion, or approximately 1.7% of GDP. Government revenues grew from 19.8% of GDP in 1999 to 22.6% of GDP in 2001 to 25.7% of GDP in 2005. Government revenues in 2007, like other sectors of the economy, declined slightly to 22.7% of GDP. In 2000, Kazakhstan adopted a new tax code in an effort to consolidate these gains. On November 29, 2003 the Law on Changes to Tax Code was adopted, which reduced the value added tax (from 16% to 13%), the social tax (from 21% to 13%), and the personal income tax (from 20% to 10%). Kazakhstan furthered its reforms by adopting a new land code on June 20, 2003 and a customs code on April 5, 2003. Further revisions to the customs code are expected to be adopted in 2008.

Oil and gas is the leading economic sector. Production of oil and gas condensate in Kazakhstan amounted to 67.2 million tons in 2007, an increase from 64.5 million tons in 2006. Kazakhstan exported 60.2 million tons of oil and gas condensate in 2007. Natural gas production in Kazakhstan in 2007 amounted to 16.6 billion cubic meters. Kazakhstan holds about 4 billion tons of proven recoverable oil reserves and 3 trillion cubic meters of gas. Industry analysts believe that planned expansion of oil production, coupled with the development of new fields, will enable the country to produce as much as 3 million barrels per day by 2015, lifting Kazakhstan into the ranks of the world's top 10 oil-producing nations. Kazakhstan's 2005 oil exports were valued at $17.4 billion, representing over 70% of overall exports. Major oil and gas fields and their recoverable oil reserves are Tengiz (7 billion barrels); Karachaganak (8 billion barrels and 1,350 billion cubic meters of natural gas); and Kashagan (7-9 billion barrels). Starting in 2004, the Government of Kazakhstan increased its take of oil deals by increasing taxation of new oil projects. In 2007, the government amended the "Law on Subsoil and Subsoil Use."

The amendments give the government the right to annul or amend subsoil contracts if the contracts pose a danger to the country's national economic security interests. The government insisted it would not use the amendments retroactively to annul existing contracts.

Kazakhstan instituted an ambitious pension reform program in 1998. There are 14 saving pension funds, one of which is state controlled. The National Bank oversees and regulates the pension funds. The pension funds' growing demand for quality investment outlets triggered rapid development of the debt securities market. Pension fund capital is being invested almost exclusively in corporate and government bonds, including Government of Kazakhstan Eurobonds. The Kazakhstani banking system is developing rapidly. Its capitalization now exceeds $1 billion. The National Bank has introduced deposit insurance in its campaign to strengthen the banking sector. Several major foreign banks have branches in Kazakhstan, including ABN-AMRO, Citibank, and HSBC.

Agriculture

Agriculture accounted for 5.82% of Kazakhstan's GDP in 2007. Grain (Kazakhstan is the seventh-largest producer of wheat in the world) and livestock are the most important agricultural commodities. Agricultural land occupies more than 220 million hectares, about 68% of which consists of pasture and hay land. Chief livestock products are dairy goods, leather, meat, and wool. The country's major crops include wheat, barley, cotton, and rice. Wheat is the leading agricultural commodity in Kazakhstan's export trade. Kazakhstan harvests 14-15 million tons of wheat per year.

Natural Resources

Oil, gas, and mineral exports are key to Kazakhstan's economic success. Since 1993, Kazakhstan's extractive industries have attracted $30.7 billion in foreign investment, which represents almost 76% of the total foreign direct investment in Kazakhstan for that period. Kazakhstan has significant deposits of coal, iron ore, copper, zinc, uranium, and gold.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Kazakhstan has stable relationships with all of its neighbors. Kazakhstan is a member of the United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and North Atlantic Cooperation Council. It also is an active participant in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace program. Kazakhstan also is a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization along with Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan established the Eurasian Economic Community in 2000 to re-energize earlier efforts at harmonizing trade tariffs and the creation of a free trade zone under a customs union. Kazakhstan is the founding member of the Conference for Interaction and Confidence in Asia. Kazakhstan also engages in regional security dialogue with ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations).

U.S.-KAZAKHSTAN RELATIONS

The United States was the first country to recognize Kazakhstan, on December 25, 1991, and opened its Embassy in Almaty in January 1992. In the years since Kazakhstan's independence, the two countries have developed a wide-ranging bilateral

relationship. The current Ambassador is John Ordway, who assumed his post in September 2004.

U.S.-Kazakhstani cooperation in security and non-proliferation has been a cornerstone of the relationship. Kazakhstan showed leadership when it renounced nuclear weapons in 1993. The United States has assisted Kazakhstan in the removal of nuclear warheads, weapons-grade materials, and their supporting infrastructure. In 1994, Kazakhstan transferred more than a half-ton of weapons-grade uranium to the United States. In 1995 Kazakhstan removed its last nuclear warheads and, with U.S. assistance, completed the sealing of 181 nuclear test tunnels in May 2000. Kazakhstan has signed the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (1992), the START Treaty (1992), the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1993), the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (2001). Under the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, the United States has spent $240 million to assist Kazakhstan in eliminating weapons of mass destruction and weapons of mass destruction-related infrastructure.

Economic Relations

U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) was 24.6% of total FDI in Kazakhstan in the first half of 2007. American companies have invested about $14.3 billion in Kazakhstan since 1993. These companies are concentrated in the oil and gas, business services, telecommunications, and electrical energy sectors. Kazakhstan has made progress in creating a favorable investment climate although serious problems, including arbitrary enforcement of laws, remain. A U.S.-Kazakhstan Bilateral Investment Treaty and a Treaty on the Avoidance of Dual Taxation have been in place since 1994 and 1996, respectively. In 2001, Kazakhstan and the United States established the U.S.-Kazakhstan Energy Partnership.

Sections 402 and 409 of the United States 1974 Trade Act require that the President submit semi-annually a report to Congress on continued compliance with the Act's freedom of emigration provisions by those countries, including Kazakhstan, that fall under the Trade Act's Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Bilateral trade in 2005 was valued at $1.64 billion, a 91% increase from 2004.

U.S. Assistance

Between 1992 and 2005, the United States provided roughly $1.205 billion in technical assistance and investment support in Kazakhstan. The programs were designed to promote market reform, to establish a foundation for an open, prosperous, and democratic society, and to address security issues.

Since 1993, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has administered technical assistance programs to support Kazakhstan's transition to a market economy, fully integrated into the world trade system. These programs include cooperation in privatization, fiscal, and financial policy; commercial law; energy; health care; and environmental protection.

In 2006, Kazakhstan became the first country to share directly in the cost of a U.S. Government's foreign assistance program. Through 2009, the Government of Kazakhstan will contribute over $15 million to a $40 million USAID economic development project aimed at strengthening Kazakhstan's capacity to achieve its development goals.

The U.S. Commercial Service provides U.S. business internships for Kazakhstanis, supports Kazakhstani businesses through a matchmaker program and disseminates information on U.S. goods and services.

Additional information is available on its website: www.buyusa.gov/kazakhstan/en. The Peace Corps has about 120 volunteers working throughout Kazakhstan in business education, English teaching, and the development of environmental nongovernmental organizations. Since 2001 and the advent of the war on terror, the U.S. has assisted Kazakhstan to combat illegal narcotics, improve border security, and, more recently combat money laundering and trafficking in persons.

The United States supports increased citizen participation in the public arena through support for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Dozens of grants have been provided to support NGOs that promote an independent media, legal reform, women's rights, civic education, and legislative oversight. USAID also has provided training courses for leaders and professionals.

Military Cooperation

Kazakhstan's military participates in the U.S.'s International Military Education and Training program, Foreign Military Financing, as well as NATO's Partnership for Peace program. In 2005, U.S. Central Command conducted approximately 45 bilateral, military cooperation events with the Ministry of Defense of Kazakhstan and other agencies, an increase of more than 100% since 2002. Events vary in size and scope, ranging from information exchanges to military exercises.

Environmental Issues

Kazakhstan has identified a number of major ecological problems within its borders—desiccation of the Aral Sea, protection of the fragile Caspian ecosystem, remediation of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing range, cleanup of the Baykonur launching facility, extremely polluted cities, desertification, and development of mechanisms for regional transboundary water management.

To address the water management problem of the Syr Darya River, Kazakhstan and other basin states, with technical assistance from USAID/Central Asia, established the 1998 Framework Agreement on the Use of Water and Energy Resources of the Syr Darya Basin. Kazakhstan became a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in 1999.

The United States and the European Union worked together with the Ministry of Environmental Protection to establish an independent, nonprofit, and nonpolitical Regional Environmental Center (REC) in Almaty in 2001. The mission of the REC is to strengthen civil society and support sustainable development by promoting public awareness and participation in environmental decision-making among the countries of Central Asia. In 2002, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Embassy, and Ministry of Environmental Protection signed a memorandum of understanding to provide the REC with funding for its grants program.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Janet Van Der Zalm
FM:	Ron Hernandez
HHS:	Roxann Giles
HRO:	Alison Hannah
MGT:	Paul Gilmer
AMB:	John M. Ordway
CON:	John Lankenau
DCM:	Kevin Milas
PAO:	Victoria Sloan
GSO:	Sarah Penhune
RSO:	Julia Hill
AID:	Robert Simpson
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Col. Michael A. Hallisey
EEO:	Marilyn Holleran
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HRO:	Alison Hannah
AMB:	John M. Ordway
CON:	Chris Beard
DCM:	Kevin Milas
AID:	William Frej
CLO:	Kristen Bodensteiner
EEO:	Andrea Schindler
IMO:	Daniel Aguayo, Acting
ISO:	Samuel Axelrod, Acting

Business Customs

In terms of business customs, Kazakhstan is more European than Asian. It is customary to shake hands and call people by their first names at business meetings, as well as at informal get-togethers. However, men generally do not shake women's hands in company. Business attire is generally a suit and tie for men and a suit or business dress for women. Small gifts—pens, company logo pins, memo, and books—are frequently given at the end of an initial meeting as a token of appreciation. Business cards are the norm, often in both Russian and English.

Kazakhstani business people are generally less direct than American business people, and what can be accomplished in a few meetings in the United States might take more in Kazakhstan, requiring patience and discipline on the part of the U.S. business people. An experienced and competent interpreter can add invaluable context to your business meetings. It is common in Kazakhstan to have dinner with business contacts, but usually only after establishing business contacts in a more formal setting. Business attire is worn. Usually diners share a bottle of vodka or cognac and offer toasts, stating their desire for a fruitful business relationship and warm personal relations between partners. After-hours informal meetings, dinners and toasts, as well as weekend hunting and barbecues can be very important to forge business relations.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 2, 2008

Country Description: Kazakhstan is a constitutional republic with a strong presidency and a market economy. Kazakhstan's tourist facilities are not highly developed; the availability of goods and services is better than in most neighboring countries, but not up to the standards found in North America and Western Europe. Internal travel and travel to neighboring countries, by air and land, can be subject to delays due to infrastructure shortcomings and winter weather.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and visa are required. The Embassy of Kazakhstan in Washington, D.C. and the Consulate of Kazakhstan in New York issue visas. The Embassy of Kazakhstan is located at 1401 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036, telephone (202) 232-5488 or 550-9617, fax (202) 232-5845 and the Consulate at 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 586 A, New York, N.Y. 10017, telephone (212) 230-1900 or 230-1192, fax (212) 230-1172. An invitation is not required for single-entry business and tourist visas, but multiple-entry visas require an invitation from an individual or organizational sponsor in Kazakhstan. The U.S. Embassy in Astana and the U.S. Embassy Branch Office in Almaty do not issue letters of invitation to citizens interested in private travel to Kazakhstan. All travelers, even those simply transiting Kazakhstan, must obtain a Kazakhstani visa before entering the country. Travelers should be aware that overstaying the validity period of a visa will result in fines and delays upon exit. Travelers may be asked to provide proof at the border of their subsequent travel arrangements. Travelers transiting through Kazakhstan are reminded to check that their visas allow for a sufficient number of entries to cover each transit trip and to check the length of validity of the visa. Crossing the land border to and from the neighboring Kyrgyz Republic can result in delays or demands from border officials to pay fines.

Tourist visas cannot be extended in Kazakhstan. Business visas can be extended for up to 6 months total validity upon submission of a contract with a sponsoring Kazakhstani organization. Work visas can be

extended in Kazakhstan up to the expiration date of the holder's work permit, a separate document issued only in Kazakhstan.

NOTE: Due to changes in the labor law, foreigners who work in Kazakhstan for registered non-profit organizations and NGOs, other than designated Chief Representatives of those organizations, are no longer exempt from work permit regulations.

Travel to certain areas bordering China and cities in close proximity to military installations require prior permission from the Kazakhstani government. In 2001, the government declared the following areas closed to foreigners: Gvardeyskiy village, Rossavel village, and Kulzhabashy railway station in Zhambyl Oblast; Bokeyorda and Zhangaly districts in Western Kazakhstan Oblast; the town of Priozersk and Gulshad village in Karaganda Oblast; and Baykonur, Karmakshy, and Kazakly districts in Kyzylorda Oblast. Americans traveling within Kazakhstan have on occasion reported local officials demanding documentation authorizing travel within their area of jurisdiction, even though they received permission from the Department of Migration Police (formerly OVIR), currently part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Americans should report any trouble with local authorities to the U.S. Embassy in Astana or the U.S. Embassy Branch Office in Almaty.

Registration of American passports is conducted at the same time as the issuance of the visa in one of Kazakhstan's embassies and consulates abroad or at the time of a border crossing. Americans are not required to register in Kazakhstan upon arrival at a local office of the Department of Migration Police. All registrations are valid for three months, regardless of where they are issued. To extend your registration beyond three months, please contact your local office of the Department of Migration Police. However, if you are not sure if you have been properly registered at the time of visa issuance or border crossing, please contact your local office of the Department of Migration Police. Visitors to Kazakhstan engaging in missionary work or other religious activities must register with the Department of Justice office in the region (Akimat) where the activities will take place. This applies even if the religious activities are not the primary purpose of the visit. Attendance at a religious service does not itself require registration, however participation in the delivery of the service may. Americans have been fined and deported from Kazakhstan for addressing a congregation, leading prayers, and performing religious music without proper religious worker registration. In addition, representatives of faith-based non-governmental organizations are often considered subject to the registration requirement even if their activities are not religious in nature. If in doubt whether registration is required, visitors should contact the Department of Justice office responsible for the area of Kazakhstan where they intend to engage in religious activities and request a written decision. Religious worker registration is only valid for the locality where it is granted and visitors must register in each jurisdiction where they wish to engage in religious activities.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian if not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure. All children adopted in Kazakhstan after May 2003 must obtain exit stamps from both the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs before departing the country.

Visit the Embassy of Kazakhstan's web site at http://www.kazakhembus.com for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Supporters of extremist groups such as the Islamic Jihad Union, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, al-Qaeda, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement remain active in Central Asia. These groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and may attempt to target U.S. Government or private interests in the region, including in Kazakhstan.

Attacks against foreign interests in Central Asia have occurred and new tactics, including the use of suicide bombers, have been employed by extremists in neighboring Uzbekistan.

Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Because of increased security at official U.S. facilities, terrorists are also targeting "soft" civilian targets such as residential areas, clubs and restaurants, places of worship, hotels, schools, outdoor recreation events, resorts, beaches, maritime facilities, and aircraft.

Kazakhstani security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephones and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched.

Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Travelers in Kazakhstan should exercise the same precautions concerning personal safety and protection of valuables as they would in any major U.S. city. Using good judgment and avoiding high-risk areas can reduce the crime threat. The

most common crimes foreign tourists encounter are purse snatching, pick pocketing, assaults, and robberies. Pick pocketing or robberies occur most frequently in the vicinity of Western hotels, transportation sites, and at open-air markets, including the central open-air market in Almaty (known locally as the "green market"). Americans are advised to exercise caution in the vicinity of hotels, bus or train stations, and when shopping. The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends that Americans do not carry large sums of money on the street.

Identification checks by the police are common practice. U.S. visitors must produce either a passport or an Embassy-certified copy thereof upon request. Police are not required to demonstrate probable cause or reasonable suspicion to initiate ID checks. Given concerns with crime, the U.S. Embassy has made arrangements with the Kazakhstani Government to allow Americans in the Almaty Oblast to carry a certified copy of their passport and visa rather than the original. These copies can be obtained from either the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section in Astana or the Branch Office in Almaty during business hours Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Be wary of persons representing themselves as police or other local officials. It is not uncommon for Americans to become victims of harassment and extortion by imposters, genuine law enforcement and other officials. A genuine police official should always present his own credentials when approaching someone on the street. If the officer cannot produce identification, he is most likely an imposter. Never voluntarily hand over your wallet to a police officer. If pressured, tell the officer that you will report his behavior to the U.S. Embassy and his supervisors. Authorities are concerned about these incidents and have cooperated in investigating such cases. Try to obtain the officer's name, badge number, and license plate number, and note where the incident happened because this information assists local officials in identifying the perpetrators. Report crimes committed against you by persons presenting themselves as police or other governmental authorities to a police station and the U.S. Embassy.

The "lost wallet" scam continues to be common in Kazakhstan. One version of this swindle involves the discovery of a lost wallet in your presence. A first person will discover the wallet and offer to divide its contents with you. Then, a second person will appear, claim to be the owner of the wallet, and demand compensation for the missing money. A second version involves a person looking for a lost wallet, asking you if have seen it. The person asks you to reveal the contents of your pockets or bag to prove that you do not have the missing wallet. The wallet seeker will then surreptitiously steal your exposed valuables. When initially approached by the "finder" or "seeker" of the lost wallet, simply walk away.

The embassy highly discourages taking private gypsy cabs in lieu of licensed taxicabs while in Kazakhstan. This applies especially to travel from the airport to the city upon arrival, where men posing as "meet and greet" airport facilitators have lured foreigners into cars purportedly to take them to their hotels. However, the driver then takes the passengers to a secluded destination and demands approximately $100 for gas to take the foreigner back to the city. All travelers should make prior arrangements with their contacts in Almaty for concrete identification upon arrival at the airport. Americans should not leave with anyone who does not show pre-arranged identification, even if the person is holding a sign with the traveler's name.

The Embassy has received reports from American residents and visitors being victims of violent, late-night muggings. Americans are advised to travel in groups or pairs. Lone individuals often make easy targets for muggers. At night, try to remain in well-lit, populated areas. Visitors are encouraged to leave restaurants or bars if fights break out.

Corruption by public officials, including law enforcement, has been reported frequently, especially at the airport in Almaty. Some foreigners have been told by customs or border guard officials that they must pay a $50-$500 fine for violating an undisclosed local regulation, despite the fact that the foreign citizen has fully complied with local laws. Some Americans have reportedly been asked to pay a large fine upon exiting Kazakhstan. When encountering such irregularities, U.S. citizens are advised to seek clarification from supervisory airport officials or contact the U.S. Embassy before paying.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Kazakhstan is: 03.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Kazakhstan is limited and well below North American and Western European standards. The U.S. Embassy maintains a list of English-speaking physicians. Basic medical supplies, including disposable needles, anesthetics, and antibiotics can be in short supply. Elderly travelers and those with pre-existing health problems may be at risk due to inadequate medical facilities. Most resident Americans travel to Western Europe for serious medical treatment. Such travel can be extremely

expensive if undertaken under emergency conditions. Travelers requiring prescription medications or specific brand-name medicines should bring sufficient supplies of medications and not rely on local availability.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Kazakhstan. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Some HIV/AIDS restrictions exist for foreign residents of Kazakhstan. Visitors applying for a work or residency permit, required for Americans who wish to spend more than 6 months in Kazakhstan, must submit negative HIV test results with their application to the Migration Police in the city where they intend to work or reside. The results must be less than three months old. The city HIV clinic in the place of registration can conduct the test or may certify test results performed abroad. If the original test results are in a language other than Russian or Kazakh, they must be accompanied by an official translation. If a foreigner tests positive for HIV in Kazakhstan, he or she must depart the country. Please verify this information with the Kazakhstani sponsoring organization that can provide more information on the specific HIV testing procedures in the region of Kazakhstan where you intend to reside.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Kazakhstan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Roads in Kazakhstan are in poor repair, especially in rural areas. Street lighting, especially on side streets, may be turned off at night. Drivers often ignore lane markings. Potholes are common, and are often dangerously deep.

Pedestrians frequently dart out in front of cars. Visitors should drive defensively at all times as many local drivers do not follow traffic laws. Special caution should particularly be taken if driving at night. Road rage can be a problem, especially in and around Almaty, and a non-confrontational response to such behavior is strongly recommended.

Accidents involving severe injury and/or death are common. Traffic police have reportedly stopped cars to extort bribes on main city streets and at periodic checkpoints on major highways.

The road between Almaty and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, is especially treacherous at night or during poor weather. Americans and other travelers have been killed in traffic accidents on that road, and travel at night should be undertaken with great caution or avoided.

Travelers should be particularly careful when using public transportation and taxis. Buses tend to be very crowded and can be unsafe and unreliable. Due to the danger of theft or assault, travelers should be selective regarding which taxi they contract and always avoid entering a cab that already contains persons other than the driver. Americans wishing to drive in Kazakhstan should possess a valid international driver's license. For specific information, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan at 140 1 1 6th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036, telephone (202) 232-5488.

Visit the web site of Kazakhstan's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.kazakhembus.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Kazakhstan, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Kazakhstan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Kazakhstan remains largely a cash economy. Traveler's checks and credit cards are not widely accepted, except at large hotels and restaurants catering to international visitors.

U.S. dollars can easily be exchanged for the local currency (Tenge) at local and authorized currency exchanges, but all denominations of U.S. currency except $1 bills must be new series (large portraits) and all must have been issued after 2000 and be in good condition (not worn or torn and without any writing or marks).

Kazakhstan, especially in the mountainous southeast region, is an earthquake-prone country. The U.S. Department of State has ranked the earthquake threat level within Almaty as a Level 4 (the highest level assigned).

Building practices within Kazakhstan do not generally meet U.S. seismic standards. In addition, local authorities do not have sufficient resources to respond to a large-scale disaster.

American citizens traveling to Kazakhstan are encouraged to register

with either the U.S. Embassy or the U.S. Embassy's Branch Office's Consular Section to facilitate contact in the event of an emergency. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www. fema.gov.

Kazakhstani customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning export from Kazakhstan of items such as antiquities. Foreigners must complete a customs declaration upon entering Kazakhstan and may face fines upon departure if unable to produce certificates verifying legal conversion of foreign currency.

Travelers are strongly encouraged to declare all valuables, including computers, video cameras, and mobile telephones, upon entry in order to avoid paying duty on those items upon departure. Tenge, Kazakhstan's currency, can be exported by residents of Kazakhstan (including foreigners) in amounts up to $3,000 without declaration and without written certification of the origin of funds.

Residents exporting between $3,000 and $10,000 must complete a customs declaration and prove the origin of the funds (e.g. proof of locally-paid salary). Travelers visiting Kazakhstan for short periods of time may not leave the country with more currency than they declared when entering Kazakhstan. For legal requirements on the export of Tenge, travelers should consult with local Customs officials.

In practice, however, travelers should be wary of such officials at the airport, as visitors have been erroneously charged duty on Tenge exports or asked to surrender Tenge in the past. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Washington, D.C. for specific information at 140116th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036, telephone (202) 232-5488.

Foreigners are required to carry a valid passport while in Kazakhstan. American citizens are strongly urged to have a certified copy of their U.S. passport made at the either the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section in Astana or the Branch Office in Almaty. Having a certified copy in their possession satisfies the local requirement to carry a passport and reduces the chances of a passport being lost or stolen.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Kazakhstan's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Kazakhstan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Kazakhstan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Kazakhstan. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in Astana and the U.S. Embassy Branch Office in Almaty are 11 hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Standard Time. The U.S. Embassy in Astana is located at Akbulak-4, St. 22-23, Building 3, 010010, Astana, tel. 7-7172-70-21-00, fax 7-7172-70-22-80, e-mail USAKZ@state.gov, or web site http://kazakhstan.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Embassy Branch Office in Almaty is located at 97 Zholdasbekov St., Samal-2, Almaty 050059, tel. 7-727- 250-49-00, 250-49-01, fax 7-727-250-48-84, e-mail USAKZ@state.gov.

OVIR registration. There are local Kazakhstani registration requirements. All U.S. citizens arriving in Kazakhstan through 12 international airports and the railway point of Dostyk (Druzhba) are registered at the moment of the border crossing and, as proof, receive a migration card with entry and registration marks from the Border Service of Committee of National Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Registration of U.S. citizens is also done at automobile checkpoints in Khorgos, Dostyk, Bakhty, Maikapchagai, Kordai and Kolzhat, and the seaports of Aktau and Bautino. The registration upon arrival is valid for 3 months. For stays longer than 90 days, travelers should register with the Migration Police.

However, if for any reason, a U.S. citizen was not registered in the Kazakhstan Embassy or immediately upon arrival in Kazakhstan, the traveler should register with the Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR) within 5 calendar days. Visitors who do not register may have to pay fines upon departure and their departure may be delayed.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Kazakhstan is not a member of The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague

Adoption Convention). Adoption agencies are not recognized in Kazakhstan. Current Kazakhstani law does not recognize any intermediaries that would represent the parents and act between prospective adoptive parents and children. However, foreign prospective adoptive parents can have assistants, such as interpreters or lawyers, who help them through the adoption process.

In March 2008, the Department of State was informed that the Embassy of Kazakhstan is conducting a review of intercountry adoption procedures. Until completed, this review affects the processing of new adoption dossiers.

Although initial indications were that no new cases would be processed during the review, we have learned that some new cases may have been accepted. We have offered to assist the Embassy with its efforts to ensure that adoptions from Kazakhstan to the United States are conducted in a transparent, serious and honest process. It is not known at this time how long this review will require.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Kazakhstan, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, Kazakhstan also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: The prospective adoptive parents must reside with the child at the child's habitual residence for a minimum of 14 days prior to the adoption. This pre-adoption bonding period cannot be waived.

Age Requirements: There are no age requirements other than an unmarried prospective adoptive parent must be at least 16 years older than the child. Prospective adoptive parents over 60 years of age have found it difficult to adopt.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents can be single or married, however, some unmarried prospective parents have found it difficult to adopt.

Income Requirements: While there are no official income requirements, the prospective adoptive parents are required to show proof of their ability to support the adopted child.

Who Can Be Adopted? Kazakhstan has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Relinquishment Requirements: Kazakhstani law requires that orphans be registered with the Ministry of Education Committee of Guardianship and Care for at last six months before they are eligible for adoption.

Sibling Requirements: It is difficult for foreigners to adopt two or more biologically unrelated children at the same time. Prospective adoptive parents wishing to adopt two or more non-siblings on the same trip are urged to question their adoption agencies carefully prior to visiting the children to ascertain whether this is possible in the city where they plan to adopt.

Kazakhstan's Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Education

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Kazakhstan is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Kazakhstan to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS. Once the prospective adoptive parents have been cleared for adoption from their home state and have completed the initial processing requirements of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, they must register with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to indicate their intention to adopt a Kazakhstani orphan.

The Kazakhstani Embassy or Consulate transfers the dossier to the MFA in Astana for processing. The MFA forwards it to the Ministry of Education for review. The dossier is forwarded to the Guardianship Body in the town where the prospective adoptive parents wish to adopt. The length of time for dossier processing is unpredictable.

After the dossier has been processed, the Guardianship Body issues a letter inviting the parents to travel to Kazakhstan to apply for adoption. This letter is necessary for the parents to obtain a Kazakhstani visa. Also, some cities, such as Almaty and Pavoldar delay issuance of invitation letters for indefinite periods.

After obtaining a visa, the prospective adoptive parents are free to travel to Kazakhstan to select their child and proceed with their petition for adoption.

There is no such thing as a "referral" or "pre-identification" in Kazakhstan. Even though the prospective adoptive parents may wish to adopt a particular child, the Government of Kazakhstan does not match a child to the parents or in any way "assign" them a child until they arrive in Kazakhstan, select a child in person, and apply to the court to adopt the child.

Information about medical histories of the child and other pertinent information will be made available only at the orphanage during selection of the child. Prospective adoptive parents have a minimum of 14 days of personal contact with the orphan before formally submitting an adoption application. This means that prospective adoptive parents must stay in the town where the orphan is living and visit the orphan on a regular basis during this two-week period. Nearly all Kazakhstani jurisdictions require that in the case of married petitioners, BOTH parents be present for the entire 14-day bonding period.Once all legal requirements

are fulfilled, prospective adoptive parents may submit their adoption application to the civil court that will decide whether to grant the adoption.

Role of the Adoption Authority: Adoption agents are encouraged to contact the Ministry of Education to notify the Ministry of their intention to provide adoption services.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Under Kazakhstani law, prospective adoptive parents may work with any agency or individuals they choose. Please note that adoption agencies are not recognized in Kazakhstan.

The current Kazakhstani law does not assume any intermediaries that would be represent the parents and act between prospective adoptive parents and children eligible for adoption. However the regulation admits that adoptive parents as foreigners can have assistants, such as interpreters or lawyers, who would help them to go through the process of adoption.

Adoption Application: The adoption application to the Kazakhstani court should include, but not necessarily limited to, the documents listed in the Documents Required section below.

Time Frame: The prospective adoptive parents can expect to stay in Kazakhstan for a minimum of 60 days to complete the adoption procedures. This period includes the residency requirements listed in the WHO section, as well as the time to complete all post-adoption and United States immigration paperwork.

Adoption Fees: The total cost for adoptions from Kazakhstan (including fees for services charged by United States-based agencies) averages approximately $18,000 USD to $25,000 USD per child. This amount includes the following official fees:

- Application to court—$4 USD
- New birth certificate—$17 USD
- Adoption certification—$17 USD
- Exit stamp from Migration Police of Kazakhstan
- Registration of the child with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan—$84 USD
- Expedited passport issuance is an option available at $80 USD. Normal passport issuance takes 1 month.

Documents Required:

- Letter of Intent to adopt a child.
- Commitment from the Family to uphold Kazakhstan Adoption Law; Prospective adoptive parents must commit to maintain the child's Kazakhstani citizenship, submit post-placement reports annually, and allow Kazakhstani officials to visit the child up to twice a year.
- Home Study–A licensed home study agent/agency in the prospective parents' state of residence must perform the home study.
- Home Study Agency Post-Placement Commitment prepared by a Home Study Agency Worker.
- Home Study Agency Letter of Recommendation–The agency provides a separate notarized Letter of Favorable Recommendation.
- Adoption Agency Certificate of Approval of home study.
- Adoption Agency License.
- Commitment from the Family to Register the Child with the Kazakhstani Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Notarized Copies of each Prospective Adoptive Parent's Passport.
- Notarized copy of marriage certificate, if applicable.
- FBI Background Checks–Each prospective adoptive parent must obtain a background check.
- Medical Forms–Each prospective adoptive parent's physician must copy the medical form (http://kazakhembus.com/Medical_Form.doc) onto their letterhead and complete it.
- Verification of Employment Letters, including salary information. Self-employed prospective adoptive parents must have their business accountant attest to the business's financial stability.
- Financial Statements (Affidavits).
- Bank Letter–Notarized letter from the prospective adoptive parents' bank
- Home Ownership Verification.
- Notification from USCIS of Petition Approval–Either the I-171H or the I-179C form.
- Powers of Attorney–The United States adoption agency will provide a form for the parents to consent to having someone act on their behalf in Kazakhstan.
- Pictures of the prospective adoptive parents.
- Divorce Decree–Notarized copies of all divorce decrees, if applicable. Kazakhstan only allows prospective adoptive parents to have had two divorces.
- Single Parents must submit a notarized copy of their birth certificate, letters naming the person who will be appointed guardian if the adoptive parent can no longer care for the child, and an acceptance letter from the appointed guardian.

Once the court makes a decision on your adoption, there is a 15-day waiting period before the decision is final. In some cases, the judge can waive this "appeal period," but such waivers are rare and prospective adoptive parents should assume the 15-day waiting period will not be waived. In some cases, it may be possible for one or both prospective parents to leave Kazakhstan and return for the child,

or have someone else complete processing and escort the child to the United States. After the court's decision is finalized, the parents may apply for the adoption certificate, the child's new Kazakhstani birth certificate, based on the court decree.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Kazakhstan has a requirement that all adopted children must have a Post Placement Report (PPR) filed for them each year until the adopted child turns 18. This is extremely important, and a failure by adoptive parents to comply with this requirement could have a negative effect on the ability of future families to adopt from Kazakhstan.

The PPR should be done in the United States state where the child and family reside, preferable by a licensed social worker and include up to 5 photos of the child. The PPR should be translated into Russian or Kazakh and sent to the Department of Education of the city or region from where the child was adopted.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Kazakhstan
Consular Section, Adoptions
Embassy of the United States of America
97 Zholdasbekov Street, Samal—2
Almaty, Kazakhstan 050059
Tel: 7-3272-50-48-02
Fax: 7-3272-50-48-84
www.usembassy.kz
Adoption E-Mail: AdoptionsAlmaty@state.gov.
General Consular E-mail: ConsularAlmaty@state.gov.

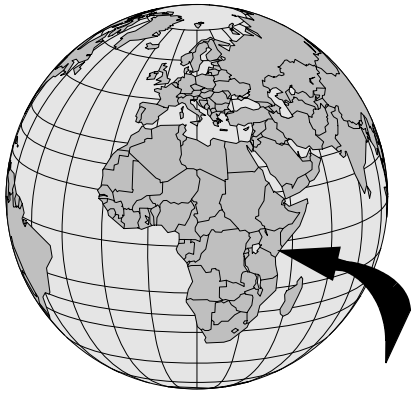
Kazakhstani Adoption Authority
Ministry of Education
Committee on Guardianship and Care
83 Kenesary Street
Astana, Kazakhstan 010000
http://edu.gov.kz.

Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
1401 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-232-5488
Fax: 202-232-5845
http://www.Kazakhembus.com
Kazakh.consul@verizon.net

Consulate of the Republic of Kazakhstan in New York
866 UN Plaza, Suite 586 A
New York, NY 10017
Tel: 212-888-3024
Fax: 212-888-3025
http://www.kazconsulny.org/English/index.htm
kzconsulny@un.int

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833)



KENYA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Kenya

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 582,646 sq. km. (224,960 sq mi.); slightly smaller than Texas.

Cities: Capital—Nairobi (pop. 2.9 million; 2007 est.). Other cities—Mombasa (828,500; 2006 est.), Kisumu (322,000; 1999), Nakuru (219,366; 1999), Eldoret (193,830; 1999).

Terrain: Kenya rises from a low coastal plain on the Indian Ocean in a series of mountain ridges and plateaus which stand above 3,000 meters (9,000 ft.) in the center of the country. The Rift Valley bisects the country above Nairobi, opening up to a broad arid plain in the north. Highlands cover the south before descending to the shores of Lake Victoria in the west.

Climate: Tropical in south, west, and central regions; arid and semi-arid in the north and the northeast.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Kenyan(s).

Population: (June 2007 est.) 37.9 million.

Ethnic groups: Kikuyu 22%, Luyia 14%, Luo 14%, Kalenjin 11%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 5%.

Religions: Christian 80%, Muslim 10%, traditional African religions 9%, Hindu/Sikh/Baha'i/Jewish 1%.

Languages: English (official), Swahili (national), over 40 other languages from the Bantu, Nilotic, and Cushitic linguistic groups.

Education: First 8 years of primary school are provided free by the government. Attendance—92% for primary grades. Adult literacy rate—85.1%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—57.4/1,000. Life expectancy—55.3 yrs (2007 est.).

Work force: (1.95 million wage earners) public sector 30%; private sector 70%. Informal sector workers—6.4 million. Services—45%; industry and commerce—35%; agriculture—20%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: December 12, 1963.

Constitution: 1963.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state, head of government, commander in chief of armed forces). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (parliament). Judicial—Court of Appeal, High Court, various lower and special courts, includes Kadhi (Sharia) courts.

Political subdivisions: 69 districts, joined to form 7 rural provinces. Nairobi area has special provincial status. The government has gazetted 37 more districts, whose ratification was still in process as of October 2007.

Political parties: Over 100 registered political parties. Two coalitions, the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), dominate the political party scene. PNU membership is filled by parties representing Kikuyu and closely related ethnic groups; ODM membership ranks are filled by parties representing nearly everybody else. PNU and ODM agreed in February 2008 to form a grand coalition government in a power-sharing arrangement that ended the political crisis erupting after highly controversial national elections in December 2007.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $29.3 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2006) 6.1%.

Gross national income per capita: (2006) $455.

Natural resources: Wildlife, land.

Agriculture: Products—tea, coffee, sugarcane, horticultural products, corn, wheat, rice, sisal, pineapples, pyrethrum, dairy products, meat and meat products, hides, skins. Arable land—5%.

Industry: Types—petroleum products, grain and sugar milling, cement, beer, soft drinks, textiles, vehicle assembly, paper and light manufacturing.

Trade: (2006) Exports—$3.1 billion: tea, coffee, horticultural products, petroleum products, cement, pyre-

thrum, soda ash, sisal, hides and skins, fluorspar. Major markets—Uganda, Tanzania, United Kingdom, Germany, Netherlands, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Egypt, South Africa, United States. Imports—$7.2 billion: machinery, vehicles, crude petroleum, iron and steel, resins and plastic materials, refined petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, paper and paper products, fertilizers, wheat. Major suppliers—U.K., Japan, South Africa, Germany, United Arab Emirates, Italy, India, France, United States, Saudi Arabia.

PEOPLE

Kenya has a very diverse population that includes three of Africa's major sociolinguistic groups: Bantu (67%), Nilotic (30%), and Cushitic (3%). Kenyans are deeply religious. About 80% of Kenyans are Christian, 10% Muslim, and 10% follow traditional African religions or other faiths. Most city residents retain links with their rural, extended families and leave the city periodically to help work on the family farm. About 75% of the work force is engaged in agriculture, mainly as subsistence farmers. The national motto of Kenya is Harambee, meaning "pull together." In that spirit, volunteers in hundreds of communities build schools, clinics, and other facilities each year and collect funds to send students abroad. The six state universities enroll about 45,000 students, representing some 25% of the Kenyan students who qualify for admission. There are six private universities.

HISTORY

Fossils found in East Africa suggest that protohumans roamed the area more than 20 million years ago. Recent finds near Kenya's Lake Turkana indicate that hominids lived in the area 2.6 million years ago.

Cushitic-speaking people from what is now Sudan and Ethiopia moved into the area that is now Kenya beginning around 2000 BC. Arab traders began frequenting the Kenya coast around the first century AD. Kenya's proximity to the Arabian Peninsula invited colonization, and Arab and Persian settlements sprouted along the coast by the eighth century.

During the first millennium AD, Nilotic and Bantu peoples moved into the region, and the latter now comprise two thirds of Kenya's population. The Swahili language, a Bantu language with significant Arabic vocabulary, developed as a trade language for the region.

Arab dominance on the coast was interrupted for about 150 years following the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. British exploration of East Africa in the mid-1800s eventually led to the establishment of Britain's East African Protectorate in 1895. The Protectorate promoted settlement of the fertile central highlands by Europeans, dispossessing the Kikuyu and others of their land. Some fertile and well watered parts of the Rift Valley inhabited by the Maasai and the western highlands inhabited by the Kalenjin were also handed over to European settlers. For other Kenyan communities, the British presence was slight, especially in the arid northern half of the country. The settlers were allowed a voice in government even before Kenya was officially made a British colony in 1920, but Africans were prohibited from direct political participation until 1944 when a few appointed (but not elected) African representatives were permitted to sit in the legislature.

From 1952 to 1959, Kenya was under a state of emergency arising from the "Mau Mau" insurgency against British colonial rule in general and its land policies in particular. This rebellion took place almost exclusively in the highlands of central Kenya among the Kikuyu people. Tens of thousands of Kikuyu died in the fighting or in the detention camps and restricted villages. British losses were about 650. During this period, African participation in the political process increased rapidly. The first direct elections for Africans to the Legislative Council took place in 1957. Kenya became independent on December 12, 1963, and the next year joined the Commonwealth. Jomo Kenyatta, an ethnic Kikuyu and head of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), became Kenya's first President. The minority party, Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), representing a coalition of small ethnic groups that had feared dominance by larger ones, dissolved itself in 1964 and joined KANU.

A small but significant leftist opposition party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU), was formed in 1966, led by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, a former Vice President and Luo elder. The KPU was banned shortly thereafter, however, and its leader detained. KANU became Kenya's sole political party.

At Kenyatta's death in August 1978, Vice President Daniel arap Moi, a Kalenjin from Rift Valley province, became interim President. By October of that year, Moi became President formally after he was elected head of KANU and designated its sole nominee for the presidential election.

In June 1982, the National Assembly amended the constitution, making Kenya officially a one-party state. Two months later, young military officers in league with some opposition elements attempted to overthrow the government in a violent but ultimately unsuccessful coup. In response to street protests and donor pressure, Parliament repealed the one-party section of the constitution in December 1991. In 1992, independent Kenya's first multiparty elections were held.

Divisions in the opposition contributed to Moi's retention of the presidency in 1992 and again in the 1997 election. Following the 1997 election Kenya experienced its first coalition government as KANU was forced to cobble together a majority by bringing into government a few minor par-



ties. In October 2002, a coalition of opposition parties formed the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). In December 2002, the NARC candidate, Mwai Kibaki, was elected the country's third President. President Kibaki received 62% of the vote, and NARC also won 59% of the parliamentary seats. Kibaki, a Kikuyu from Central province, had served as a member of parliament since Kenya's independence in 1963. He served in senior posts in both the Kenyatta and Moi governments, including Vice President and Finance Minister. In 2003, internal conflicts disrupted the NARC government. These conflicts came into the open when the government put its draft constitution to a public referendum. Key government ministers organized the opposition to the draft constitution, which was defeated soundly. Two principal leaders of the movement to defeat the draft constitution, Raila Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka—both former Kibaki allies—were presidential can-

didates for the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party and the Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K) party, respectively. In September 2007, President Kibaki and his allies formed the coalition Party of National Unity (PNU). KANU joined the PNU coalition, although it served in parliament as the official opposition party.

On December 27, 2007, Kenya held presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections. While the parliamentary and local government elections were largely credible, the presidential election was seriously flawed, with irregularities in the vote tabulation process as well as turnout in excess of 100% in some constituencies. On December 30, the chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya declared incumbent Mwai Kibaki as the winner of the presidential election. Violence erupted in different parts of Kenya as supporters of opposition candidate Raila Odinga and supporters of Kibaki clashed with police and each other. The post-election crisis left more than 1,000 Kenyans dead and about 600,000 people became refugees or were internally displaced. In order to resolve the crisis, negotiation teams representing PNU and ODM began talks under the auspices of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and the Panel of Eminent African Persons (Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania and Graca Machel of Mozambique). On February 28, 2008, President Kibaki and Raila Odinga signed a power-sharing agreement, which provided for the establishment of a prime minister position (to be filled by Odinga) and two deputy prime minister positions, as well as the division of cabinet posts according to the parties' proportional representation in parliament. On March 18, 2008, the Kenyan parliament amended the constitution and adopted legislation to give legal force to the agreement. On April 17, 2008 the new coalition cabinet and Prime Minister Odinga were sworn in. Negotiations are ongoing regarding longer-term reform issues, including constitutional reform, land tenure reform, judicial reform, and the need to address poverty and inequality.

GOVERNMENT

The unicameral National Assembly consists of 210 members elected to a term of 5 years from single-member constituencies, plus 12 members nominated by political parties on a proportional representation basis. The president appoints the vice president and cabinet members from among those elected to the assembly. The attorney general and the speaker are ex-officio members of the National Assembly.

The judiciary is headed by a High Court, consisting of a Chief Justice and High Court judges and judges of Kenya's Court of Appeal, all appointed by the president.

Local administration is divided among 69 rural districts, each headed by a commissioner appointed by the president. The government has proposed 37 more districts, but these are not yet ratified by Parliament. The districts are joined to form seven rural provinces. Nairobi has special provincial status. The Ministry of State in charge of Provincial Administration and Internal Security supervises the administration of districts and provinces.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Mwai KIBAKI**
Vice Pres.: **Stephene Kalonzo MUSYOKA**
Prime Min.: **Raila Amolo ODINGA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Uhuru KENYATTA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Wycliffe Musalia MUDAVADI**
Min. for Agriculture: **William Samoei RUTO**
Min. for Cooperative Development: **Joseph NYAGAH**
Min. for the East African Community: **Amason Kingi JEFFAH**
Min. for Education: **Sam ONGERI**
Min. for Energy: **Kiraitu MURUNGI**
Min. for Environment & Mineral Resources: **John MICHUKI**
Min. for Finance: **Amos KIMUNYA**
Min. for Fisheries Development: **Paul Nyongesa OTUOMA**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Moses WETANGULA**
Min. for Forestry & Wildlife: **Noah WEKESA**
Min. for Gender & Children Affairs: **Esther Murugi MATHENGE**
Min. for Higher Education, Science, & Technology: **Sally Jepngetich KOSGEY**
Min. for Home Affairs: **Stephene Kalonzo MUSYOKA**
Min. for Housing: **Peter Soita SHITANDA**
Min. for Industrialization: **Henry Kiprono KOSGEY**
Min. for Information & Communications: **Samuel Lesuron POGHISIO**
Min. for Justice, National Cohesion, & Constitutional Affairs: **Martha KARUA**
Min. for Labor: **John Kiyonga MUNYES**
Min. for Lands: **Aggrey James ORENGO**
Min. for Livestock Development: **Mohamed Abdi KUTI**
Min. for Local Govt.: **Wycliffe Musalia MUDAVADI**
Min. for Medical Services: **Peter Anyang NYONGO**
Min. for Nairobi Metropolitan Development: **Mutula KILONZO**
Min. for Public Health & Sanitation: **Beth Wambui MUGO**
Min. for Public Works: **Chris OBURE**
Min. for Regional Development Authorities: **Fredrick Omulo GUMO**
Min. for Roads: **Kipkalya KONES**
Min. for Tourism: **Mohamed Najib BALALA**
Min. for Trade: **Uhuru KENYATTA**
Min. for Transport: **Chirau Ali MWAKWERE**
Min. for Water & Irrigation: **Charity Kaluki NGILU**
Min. for Youth & Sports: **Helen Jepkemoi SAMBILI**
Min. of State for Defense: **Yussuf Mohamed HAJI**
Min. of State for Immigration & Registration of Persons: **Gerald Otieno KAJWANG**
Min. of State for National Heritage & Culture: **William Ole NTIMAMA**
Min. of State for Planning, National Development, & Vision 2030: **Wycliffe Ambetsa OPARANYA**
Min. of State for Provincial Admin. & National Security: **George SAITOTI**
Min. of State for Public Service: **Dalmas Anyango OTIENO**
Min. of State for Special Programs: **Naomi Namsi SHABAN**
Attorney Gen.: **Amos WAKO**
Governor, Central Bank of Kenya: **Njuguna S. NDUNGU**
Ambassador to the US: **Peter OGEGO**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Zachary Dominic MUBURI-MUITA**

Kenya maintains an embassy in the United States at 2249 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-387-6101, website: www.kenyaembassy.com) and consulates in Los Angeles and New York.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Until post-election political unrest struck in early 2008, Kenya had, since independence, maintained remarkable stability despite changes in its political system and crises in neighboring countries. This had been particularly true since the re-emergence of multiparty democracy and the accompanying increase in freedom (including freedom of speech, the press, and assembly).

In December 2002, Kenyans held democratic and open elections, which were judged free and fair by international observers. The 2002 elections marked an important turning point in Kenya's democratic evolution as the presidency and the parliamentary majority passed from the party that had ruled Kenya since independence to a coalition of new political parties. The government lost a referendum over its draft constitution in November 2005. This vote too was widely accepted as free, fair, and credible.

Under the first presidency of Mwai Kibaki, the NARC coalition promised to focus its efforts on generating economic growth, improving and expanding education, combating corruption, and rewriting the constitution. The first two goals were largely met, but progress toward the second two goals was limited. President Kibaki's cabinet from 2002-2005 consisted of members of parliament from allied parties and others recruited from opposition parties who joined the cabinet without the approval of their party leaderships.

In early 2006, revelations from investigative reports of two major government-linked corruption scandals rocked Kenya and led to resignations, including three ministers (one of whom was later re-appointed). In March 2006, another major scandal was uncovered involving money laundering and tax evasion in the Kenyan banking system. The government's March 2006 raid on the Standard Group media house conducted by masked Kenyan police was internationally condemned and was met with outrage by Kenya media and civil society. The government did not provide a sufficient explanation. No one has been held accountable.

The December 2007 elections were marred by serious irregularities, and set off a wave of violence throughout Kenya. Following the February 2008 signing of a power-sharing agreement between President Kibaki and the opposition, a new coalition cabinet was sworn in April 2008, headed by Prime Minister Odinga. The 42-member cabinet is the largest in Kenya's history and includes new ministries for cooperative development, Northern Kenya development, and Nairobi metropolitan development. Several ministries were also subdivided, creating a number of new cabinet positions.

With the creation of the coalition government, the Kenyan Government will focus its attention on achieving its ambitious reform agenda, aimed at avoiding a repeat of early 2008's post-election political and tribal violence. The government also plans to draft a new constitution by April 2009, specifically to address land rights issues and to restructure the government by strengthening institutions to create a more effective system of checks and balances.

ECONOMY

After independence, Kenya promoted rapid economic growth through public investment, encouragement of smallholder agricultural production, and incentives for private (often foreign) industrial investment. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an annual average of 6.6% from 1963 to 1973. Agricultural production grew by 4.7% annually during the same period, stimulated by redistributing estates, diffusing new crop strains, and opening new areas to cultivation. After experiencing moderately high growth rates during the 1960s and 1970s, Kenya's economic performance during the last two decades has been far below its potential. The economy grew by an annual average of only 1.5% between 1997 and 2002, which was below the population growth estimated at 2.5% per annum, leading to a decline in per capita incomes. The decline in economic performance in the last two decades was largely due to inappropriate agricultural policies, inadequate credit, and poor international terms of trade contributing to the decline in agriculture. Kenya's inward-looking policy of import substitution and rising oil prices made Kenya's manufacturing sector uncompetitive. The government began a massive intrusion in the private sector. Lack of export incentives, tight import controls, and foreign exchange controls made the domestic environment for investment even less attractive.

From 1991 to 1993, Kenya had its worst economic performance since independence. Growth in GDP stagnated, and agricultural production shrank at an annual rate of 3.9%. Inflation reached a record 100% in August 1993, and the government's budget deficit was over 10% of GDP. As a result of these combined problems, bilateral and multilateral donors suspended program aid to Kenya in 1991. In the 1990s, the government implemented economic reform measures to stabilize the economy and restore sustainable growth. In 1994, nearly all administrative controls on producer and retail prices, imports, foreign exchange and grain marketing were removed. The Government of Kenya privatized a range of publicly owned companies, reduced the number of civil servants, and introduced conservative fiscal and monetary policies. By the mid-1990s, the government lifted price controls on petroleum products. In 1995, foreigners were allowed to invest in the Nairobi Stock Exchange (NSE). In July 1997, the Government of Kenya refused to meet commitments made earlier to

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on governance reforms. As a result, the IMF suspended lending for 3 years, and the World Bank also put a $90-million structural adjustment credit on hold.

The Government of Kenya took some positive steps on reform, including the establishment of the Kenyan Anti-Corruption Authority in 1999, and the adoption of measures to improve the transparency of government procurements and reduce the government payroll. In July 2000, the IMF signed a $150 million Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), and the World Bank followed suit shortly after with a $157 million Economic and Public Sector Reform credit. The Anti-Corruption Authority was declared unconstitutional in December 2000, and other parts of the reform effort faltered in 2001. The IMF and World Bank again suspended their programs.

Net foreign direct investment (FDI) was negative from 2000-2003, but started trickling back in 2004, as demonstrated by an increase in the number of enterprises operating in Export Processing Zones (EPZs) from 66 to 74 between 2003 and 2004. The value of total investments increased from Ksh18.7 billion (U.S. $247.3 million) in 2005 to Ksh20.1 billion (over U.S. $278.3 million) in 2006. Following the end of the Multifiber Arrangement (MFA) textile agreement in January 2005, several textile and apparel factories closed, leaving 68 EPZ enterprises. In 2006, this number increased to 70 EPZ enterprises. According to the World Bank's Migrations and Remittances Factbook 2008, remittances rose from U.S. $338.3 million in 2004 to U.S. $1.3 billion in 2007, equivalent to 5.3% of the GDP.

The economy began to recover after 2002, registering 2.8% growth in 2003, 4.3% in 2004, 5.8% in 2005, 6.1% in 2006, and 7.0% in 2007. However, the violence that broke out after the December 27, 2007 general election paralyzed the economy in January and early February 2008 and closed the Northern Corridor in Rift Valley province, cutting off vital shipments of fuel and other goods to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Tourists fled, and agricultural production in the breadbasket Rift Valley region was crippled. The manufacturing sector had to cut back operations by 70%, as unsafe roads prevented movement of workers, inputs, or products, and congestion at the Port of Mombasa slowed imports and exports. The signing of a reconciliation agreement on February 28 put the economy back on track, but the damage in the first quarter to agriculture, tourism, consumption, investment, and the financial, transport, and construction sectors is expected to shave 2008 economic growth from the 8% forecast to the 4%-6% level. Governments in major source countries for tourists to Kenya have lifted their travel advisories, and the Kenyan Government and tourism industry will make strenuous efforts to bring tourists back, but revenues will be a small fraction of the approximately $1 billion earned in 2007.

During President Kibaki's first term in office (2003-2007), the Government of Kenya began an ambitious economic reform program and resumed its cooperation with the World Bank and the IMF. The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government enacted the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act and Public Officers Ethics Act in May 2003 aimed at fighting graft in public offices. There was some movement to reduce corruption in 2003, but the government did not sustain that momentum. Other reforms, especially in the judiciary, public procurement, etc., led to the unlocking of donor aid and a renewed hope of economic revival.

In November 2003, following the signing into law of key anti-corruption legislation and other reforms by the Kibaki government, donors reengaged as the IMF approved a three-year $250 million Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) and donors committed $4.2 billion in support over 4 years. In December 2004, the IMF approved Kenya's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility arrangement equivalent to U.S. $252.8 million to support the government's economic and governance reforms. However, the government's ability to stimulate economic demand through fiscal and monetary policy remains fairly limited, while the pace at which the government is pursuing reforms in other key areas remains slow. The Privatization Law was enacted in 2005, but only became operational as of January 1, 2008. Parastatals Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen), Kenya Railways, Telkom Kenya, and Kenya Re-Insurance have been privatized, and the government sold 25% of Safaricom (10 billion shares) in 2008, reducing its share to 35%. Accelerating growth to achieve Kenya's potential and reduce the poverty that afflicts about 46% of its population will require continued de-regulation of business, improved delivery of government services, addressing structural reforms, massive investment in new infrastructure (especially roads), reduction of chronic insecurity caused by crime, and improved economic governance generally. The government's Vision 2030 plan calls for these reforms, but implementation will be delayed by the reconstruction effort, coalition politics, and line ministries' limited capacity. In June 2008, the government introduced a revised but still ambitious Vision 2030 plan that seeks to address the economic challenges stemming from the political crisis while still striving to meet growth benchmarks.

Economic expansion is fairly broad-based and is built on a stable macro-environment fostered by government, and the resilience, resourcefulness, and improved confidence of the private sector. Despite the post-election crisis, Nairobi continues to be the primary communication and financial hub of East Africa. It enjoys the region's best transportation linkages, communications infrastructure, and trained personnel, although these advantages are less prominent than in past years. On January 31, 2007, the government signed a $2.7 million contract with Tyco Telecommunications to perform an undersea survey for the construction of a fiber-optic cable to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) called the East

African Marine Systems (TEAMS). Two other fiber-optic cables projects are being pursued to link Kenya to the rest of East Africa and India. Once TEAMS and the domestic fiber-optic cables planned by the government are completed, the economy is expected to benefit significantly from reduced internet access prices and improved capacity. A wide range of foreign firms maintain regional branches or representative offices in the city. In March 1996, the Presidents of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda re-established the East African Community (EAC). The EAC's objectives include harmonizing tariffs and customs regimes, free movement of people, and improving regional infrastructures.

In March 2004, the three East African countries signed a Customs Union Agreement paving the way for a common market. The Customs Union and a Common External Tariff were established on January 1, 2005, but the EAC countries are still working out exceptions to the tariff. Rwanda and Burundi joined the community in July 2007. In May 2007, during a Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Summit, 13 heads of state endorsed a move to adopt a COMESA customs union and set December 8, 2008 as the target date for its adoption.

In 2007, horticulture exports rose 65% to U.S. $1.12 billion, surpassing tourism as the largest foreign exchange earner. Tourism earned Kenya U.S. $972 million in 2007, up from U.S. $803 million in 2006, followed by tea exports of U.S. $638.9 million. Africa is Kenya's largest export market, followed by the European Union (EU). Kenya benefits significantly from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), but the apparel industry is struggling to hold its ground against Asian competition. Ninety-eight percent of AGOA exports are garments, and Kenya's AGOA exports fell from U.S. $265 million in 2006 to U.S. $250 million in 2007.

Kenya faces profound environmental challenges brought on by high population growth, deforestation, shifting climate patterns, and the overgrazing of cattle in marginal areas in the north and west of the country. Significant portions of the population will continue to require emergency food assistance in the coming years.

Media

The key independent print media in Kenya are the Nation Media Group, the Standard Group, People Limited, and the Times Media Group. The Nation Media Group publications, which include the Daily Nation, the Sunday Nation, the Business Daily, the weekly East African, and the only Swahili publications, Taifa Leo and Taifa Jumapili, have the largest circulations. The Standard and the Sunday Standard, published by the Standard Group, are also popular newspapers, although with smaller circulations. Approximately 120 foreign correspondents representing 100 media organizations report from Nairobi. There is no government-owned or controlled newspaper.

Major independent radio and television media are the Kenya Television Network (KTN), the broadcast media arm of the Standard Group; Nation Radio/TV, owned by the Nation Media Group; and Citizen Radio/Television, owned by Royal Media Services. The government owns and controls the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) and its subsidiaries. KBC is the only national radio and television network.

Kenya also has hundreds of FM radio stations, some broadcasting in Swahili or in local languages. Radio has a wide reach in Kenya, especially in rural areas. Some major international broadcasters, including British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA) and Radio France Internationale (RFI), rebroadcast their programming in Kenya.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Despite internal tensions in Sudan and Ethiopia, Kenya has maintained good relations with its northern neighbors. Recent relations with Uganda and Tanzania have improved as the three countries work for mutual economic benefit.

Kenya has hosted and played an active role in the negotiations to resolve the civil war in Sudan and to reinstate a central government authority in Somalia. The Sudan peace negotiations have made major progress, resulting in the signing in Kenya of agreements between the Khartoum Government and the southern Sudan rebels to put an end to the two-decade-long war. On January 9, 2005 a Sudan North-South Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed in Nairobi. Negotiations in the Somali National Reconciliation Conference resulted at the end of 2004 in the establishing of Somali Transitional Federal Institutions (Assembly, President, Prime Minister, and Government). Until early 2005, Kenya served as a major host both for these institutions and for refugees from Somalia as well as Sudan. Between May and June 2005, members of the Somalia Transitional Federal Institutions relocated to Somalia. Kenya maintains a moderate profile in Third World politics. Kenya's relations with Western countries are generally friendly, although current political and economic instabilities are sometimes blamed on Western pressures.

U.S.-KENYAN RELATIONS

The United States and Kenya have enjoyed cordial relations since Kenya's independence. Relations became even closer after Kenya's democratic transition of 2002 and subsequent improvements in human rights.

More than 9,000 U.S. citizens are registered with the U.S. Embassy as residents of Kenya. In 2006 a record 86,528 Americans visited Kenya, up 17.6% from 2005. About two-thirds of resident Americans are missionaries and their families. U.S. business investment is estimated to be more than $285 million, primarily in com-

merce, light manufacturing, and the tourism industry. Al Qaeda terrorists bombed the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi on August 7, 1998, taking hundreds of lives and maiming thousands more. Since that event, the Kenyan and U.S. Governments have intensified cooperation to address all forms of insecurity in Kenya, including terrorism. The United States provides equipment and training to Kenyan security forces, both civilian and military. In its dialog with the Kenyan Government, the United States urges effective action against corruption and insecurity as the two greatest impediments to Kenya achieving sustained, rapid economic growth.

U.S. assistance to Kenya is substantial. It promotes broad-based economic development as the basis for continued progress in political, social, and related areas of national life. The U.S. assistance strategy is built around five broad objectives: Fighting disease and improving healthcare; fighting poverty and promoting private sector-led prosperity; advancing shared democratic values, human rights, and good governance; cooperating to fight insecurity and terrorism; and collaborating to foster peace and stability in East Africa. The Peace Corps, which usually has 150 volunteers in Kenya, is integral to the overall U.S. assistance strategy in Kenya. Peace Corps volunteers were withdrawn from Kenya due to instability and civil unrest in early 2008, but the program resumed Kenya operations within a few months.

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Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

March 12, 2008

Country Description: Kenya is a developing East African country known for its wildlife and national parks. The capital city is Nairobi. The second largest city is Mombasa, located on the southeast coast. Tourist facilities are widely available in Nairobi, the game parks, the reserves, and on the coast.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Visas should be obtained in advance, although airport visas are available. Travelers who opt to obtain an airport visa should expect delays upon arrival. There is a fee for the visa, whether obtained in advance or at the airport. Evidence of yellow fever immunization may be requested. Travelers to Kenya and neighboring African countries should ensure that the validity of their passports is at least six months, and that their passport contains sufficient blank pages for visas and immigration stamps.

Travelers may obtain the latest information on visas as well as any additional details regarding entry requirements from the Embassy of Kenya, 2249 R Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 387-6101, or the Kenyan Consulates General in Los Angeles and New York City. Persons outside the United States should contact the nearest Kenyan embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of Kenya web site at http://www.kenyaembassy.com for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: On August 7, 1998, al-Qaida bombed the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, killing 225 people and injuring over 5,000 around the Embassy. The U.S. Embassy subsequently relocated outside of the city-center. On November 28, 2002, al- Qaida launched a bomb attack on a hotel in Kikambala, Kenya, (near Mombasa) in which 15 people were killed. A near simultaneous attempt to shoot down an Israeli charter plane departing Mombasa was unsuccessful. These incidents have highlighted the continuing threat posed by terrorism in East Africa and the capacity of terrorist groups to carry out attacks. U.S. citizens should be aware of the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in public places, including tourist sites and other sites where Westerners are known to congregate.

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on December 27, 2007. In the wake of the announcement by the Electoral Commission of Kenya on December 30 declaring the incumbent candidate Mwai Kibaki as the presidential winner, violence erupted in strongholds of the opposition party. The violence, which appeared to be ethnically and politically based, was concentrated in Nyanza, Rift Valley, and Western provinces, as well as Nairobi and

parts of Coast province. At least 1,000 people have died as a result of the post-electoral civil unrest and more than 300,000 have been internally displaced. Additionally, disruptions in public transportation services have occurred as a result of political violence, strikes, or work stoppages. There continues to be the potential for spontaneous violence due to simmering political grievances caused by the disputed election.

Political demonstrations can occur sporadically throughout Kenya. Travelers should maintain security awareness at all times and avoid public gatherings and street demonstrations. Violence, including gunfire exchange, has occurred at demonstrations in the past. Demonstrations tend to occur near government buildings, university campuses, or gathering places such as public parks. Police are generally unable to properly manage large demonstrations and they often resort to excessive force to break up large crowds. Most major tourist attractions, particularly outside Nairobi, are not generally affected by protests. However, tribal conflict in rural areas has been known to erupt into violence.

Cross-border violence occurs periodically. The area near Kenya's border with Somalia has been the site of a number of incidents of violent criminal activity, including kidnappings. In September 2007, the U.S. Embassy issued a warning that Islamic extremists in Southern Somalia may be planning kidnapping operations inside of Kenya, targeting Westerners, especially Americans, in the Kiwayu Island tourist area and other beach sites on the northeast coast near Somalia. U.S. citizens who decide to visit the area should be aware that they could encounter criminal activity.

Reports of violence continue in the North Eastern Province near the Somali border and the Northern Rift Valley over disputes involving land, cattle, and water. A number of deaths were reported in the violent clashes. Northern Kenya border areas continue to be plagued by cross-border inter-clan and intra-clan clashes. While foreigners are generally not targets of this type of violence, insecurity in these areas during such times usually increases, placing constraints on travel and threatening safety and security of travelers in the immediate area.

Some sparsely populated rural areas of Kenya, principally in the North, experience recurrent, localized incidents of violent cattle rustling, counter-raids, ethnic conflict, tribal or clan rivalry, and armed banditry. During the past several years, incidents have occurred in the Keiro Valley, Northern Rift Valley sections of Laikipia and Nakuru Districts, and other areas north of Mount Kenya. A number of incidents have also occurred near the game parks or lodges north of Mwingi, Meru, and Isiolo, which are frequented by tourists. The precise areas tend to shift over time. Recent cattle rustling incidents have involved firefights between hundreds of members of rival tribal groups and the theft of thousands of head of cattle at a time. For these reasons, U.S. citizens who plan to visit Kenya are urged to take basic security precautions to maximize their safety. Travel to northern Kenya should be undertaken with at least two vehicles to ensure a backup in the case of a breakdown or other emergency.

Villagers in rural areas are sometimes suspicious of strangers. There have been several incidents of violence against Kenyan and foreign adults in rural areas who are suspected of stealing children. U.S. visitors to rural areas should be aware that close contact with children, including taking their pictures or giving them candy, can be viewed with deep alarm and may provoke panic and violence. Adoptive parents traveling with their adopted child should exercise particular caution and are urged to carry complete copies of their adoption paperwork with them at all times.

Travelers should keep informed of local developments by following local press, radio, and television reports prior to their visits. Visitors should also consult their hosts, including U.S. and Kenyan business contacts, hotels, tour guides, and travel organizers.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: There is a high rate of crime in all regions of Kenya, particularly Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, and at coastal beach resorts. There are regular reports of attacks against tourists by groups of armed assailants. Pickpockets and thieves carry out "snatch and run" crimes on city streets and near crowds. Visitors have found it safer not to carry valuables, but rather to store them in hotel safety deposit boxes or safe rooms. However, there have been reports of safes being stolen from hotel rooms and hotel desk staff being forced to open safes. Walking alone or at night, especially in downtown areas, public parks, along footpaths, on beaches, and in poorly lit areas, is dangerous and discouraged.

Violent criminal attacks, including armed carjacking and home invasions/burglary, can occur at any time and in any location, and are becoming increasingly frequent, brazen, vicious, and often fatal. In early 2007, two American citizens were killed and one critically injured in two separate carjacking incidents. Nairobi averages about ten vehicle hijackings per day and Kenyan authorities have limited capacity to deter and investigate such acts. Matatus (public transportation) tend to be targeted since they carry up to 14 passengers. Although these attacks are often violent, victims are generally not injured if they do not resist. There is also a high incidence of residential breakins and occupants should take additional security measures to protect their property. Thieves and con art-

ists have been known to impersonate police officers, thus Americans are strongly encouraged to ask for identification if approached by individuals identifying themselves as police officials, uniformed or not.

Thieves routinely snatch jewelry and other objects from open vehicle windows while motorists are either stopped at traffic lights or in heavy traffic. Vehicle windows should be up and doors locked regardless of the time of day or weather. Thieves on matatus, buses and trains may steal valuables from inattentive passengers. Americans should guard their backpacks or hand luggage and ensure these items are not left unattended. Purchasing items from street vendors is strongly discouraged—visitors should only use reputable stores or businesses. Many scams, perpetrated against unsuspecting tourists, are prevalent in and around the city of Nairobi. Many of these involve people impersonating police officers and using fake police ID badges and other credentials. Nevertheless, police checkpoints are common in Kenya and all vehicles are required to stop if directed to do so.

Highway banditry is common in much of North Eastern Province, Eastern Province, the northern part of Coast Province, and the northern part of the Rift Valley Province. These areas are remote and sparsely populated. Incidents also occur occasionally on Kenya's main highways, particularly after dark. Due to increased bandit activity, air travel is the recommended means of transportation when visiting any of the coastal resorts north of Malindi. Travelers to North Eastern Kenya and the North Rift Valley Region should travel with the police escorts or convoys organized by the government of Kenya.

There has been an increase in armed banditry in or near many of Kenya's national parks and game reserves, particularly the Samburu, Leshaba, and Masai Mara game reserves. In response, the Kenya Wildlife Service and police have taken some steps to strengthen security in the affected areas, but the problem has not been eliminated. Travelers who do not use the services of reputable travel firms or knowledgeable guides or drivers are especially at risk. Safaris are best undertaken with a minimum of two vehicles so that there is a backup in case of mechanical failure or other emergency. Solo camping is always risky.

The Kenyan mail system can be unreliable and monetary instruments (credit cards, checks, etc.) are frequently stolen. International couriers provide the safest means of shipping envelopes and packages, although anything of value should be insured

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical services are available in Nairobi. Frequent outbreaks of cholera and malaria are endemic in Kenya outside Nairobi. In addition, diseases such as Ebola, Rift Valley Fever, and anthrax from handling sheep skins are concerns, have potential and do occur periodically. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and antimalarial drugs, please visit the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. One of the greatest threats to travelers in Kenya is road safety. The information below concerning Kenya is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In Kenya, one drives on the left side of the road, which can be very disorienting to those not accustomed to it. Excessive speed, unpredictable local driving habits and manners, poor vehicle maintenance, bumpy, potholed and unpaved roads, and the lack of basic safety equipment on many vehicles are daily hazards on Kenyan roads. When there is a heavy traffic jam either due to rush hour or because of an accident, drivers will drive across the median strip and drive directly toward oncoming traffic. There are often fatal accidents involving long-distance, inter-city buses, or local buses called "matatus." Matatus are known to be the greatest danger to other vehicles or pedestrians on the road. They are typically driven too fast and erratically. Since early 2003, several American citizens

have been killed or seriously injured in motor vehicle-related accidents. Also, vehicle travel outside major cities at night should be avoided due to the poor road and street light conditions, and the threat of banditry.

During the rainy season, many unpaved roads are impassable even with four-wheel drive vehicles with high clearance. Severe storms and heavy rains in late 1997 and early 1998 led to extensive flooding and critical damage to roads and bridges, making travel and communications difficult in many parts of the country. Kenya appears to be experiencing similar weather patterns in 2006, which have resulted in large scale flooding and infrastructure damage. Although the government repairs many of the damaged roads and bridges, some remain impassable. Travelers are urged to consult with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi and local officials regarding road conditions.

For specific information concerning Kenyan driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the commercial attaché at the Kenyan Embassy in Washington, D.C. via telephone at (202) 387-6101 or via email at info@kenyaembassy.com. Visitors contemplating adventure tours should contact the Kenya Tourist Board Offices in Minneapolis, Minnesota via the internet at http://www.magicalkenya.com, via telephone at 1-866-44-KENYA, or via email at infousa@magicalkenya.com.

For specific information concerning Kenyan driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Kenyan National Tourist Organization offices in New York at telephone 212-486-1300 or in California at telephone 310-274-6635.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Kenya, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Kenya's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Kenya customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Kenya of items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities, medications, business equipment, currency restrictions, ivory, etc. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Kenya in Washington, D.C. or one of Kenya's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. A current list of those countries with serious problems in this regard can be found at the United States Trade Representative's web site.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passport with them at all times, so that proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available if questioned by local officials.

Kenya is a signatory to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR), and is required by the VCCR to ask any detained American citizen if he/she would like the U.S. Embassy to be notified and to notify the U.S. Embassy if the detained American citizen requests it. Kenya is making strides towards compliance with its VCCR obligation. Any American citizen who is detained should request U.S. Embassy notification if he/she would like consular assistance.

Up to 100,000 Kenyan shillings may be taken out of the country. Destruction of Kenyan currency, even in small amounts, is illegal, and almost always results in arrest and a fine. Visitors to Kenya carrying U.S. Dollars should ensure that the bills are relatively new, as banks in Kenya have been known not to accept older U.S. currency.

Use of firearms is strictly forbidden in wildlife reserves and national parks. Permission to carry firearms must be obtained from local authorities prior to entry.

Local tap water is not potable. Sealed bottled water is safe to drink and can be purchased in hotels, restaurants, and grocery stores. Kenya Telephone and Telegraph has discontinued its "collect call" facility. 1-800 numbers cannot be accessed from Kenya. Use of international long-distance calling cards is very limited in Kenya. International long-distance costs from Kenya are significantly higher than corresponding long-distance rates in the United States. Several local companies offer computer Internet access, including on an hourly rate basis. Many hotels have fax machines but often limit access to guests; some fax services are also available at office supply shops. Travelers are urged to consider their method of maintaining contact with family and friends when making their travel preparations. Kenya does not officially recognize dual nationality. In addition to being subject to all Kenyan laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Kenyan citizens.

Travel via passenger train in Kenya is considered unsafe, particularly during rainy seasons, because of the lack of routine maintenance and safety checks. Over the past several years there have been accidents, including a passenger train derailment between Nairobi and Mombasa, which resulted in the deaths of 32 people, including one foreign tourist. Several trains derailed in 2000. The Kenya Railway service has been reduced from seven days to three days per week. The service from Nairobi to Malaba is now only a cargo service and is no longer a passenger service.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual

under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Kenyan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Kenya are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. There are frequent cases of "mob justice" in Kenya in which suspected criminals are lynched by private citizens before the police arrive to intervene. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Kenya are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Kenya. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S Embassy is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone (254) (20) 363-6000; fax (254)(20) 363-6410. In the event of an after-hours emergency, the Embassy duty officer may be contacted at (254) (20) 363-6170. The Embassy's international mailing address is P.O. Box 606, Village Market 00621, Nairobi, Kenya. Mail using U.S. domestic postage may be addressed to Unit 64100, APO AE 09831. The Embassy home page is http://kenya.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Kenya is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? Kenyan courts are not institutionally biased against foreigners seeking to adopt children in Kenya, although race still remains an issue. The courts are beginning to take a more liberal view of racial differences between prospective adoptive parents and the adoptive child. Kenyan courts view the welfare of the child as paramount in reviewing an adoption case.

To bring an adopted child to United States from Kenya, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Kenya also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must reside with the child in Kenya for at least three months before legal procedures begin. Although some legal adoption steps can be initiated before the three months period has been completed, most of the legal work will only begin after the three month "home stay" with the child is finished.

Age Requirements: At least one of the prospective adoptive parents must be over 25 years of age but less than 65 years of age. Additionally, they must be more than 21 years older than the child.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be married.

Income Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be financially stable and capable.

Other Requirements: The following are not permitted to adopt in Kenya:

- Gay and lesbian individuals or couples;
- individuals (one or both) not of sound mind (as defined by the Kenyan Mental Health Act);
- Joint applicants not married to each other; and
- Applicants charged and convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction for any offense against children under Kenyan law.

Who Can Be Adopted? Kenya has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Relinquishment Requirements: Consent to the adoption must be received from the following:

- Parents or guardian(s) of the mother of the child in a case where the mother is a minor;
- Existing parents, guardians, or anyone else contributing to the maintenance of the child under any agreement or order; and
- Step-father who has acquired parental responsibility

Age Requirements: The child must be at least 6 weeks old and declared free for adoption by a registered adoption society. Children over the age of 14 years must consent to adoption.

Kenya's Adoption Authority: High Courts and the Department of Children's Services

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Kenya is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state

in which they operate. Foreigners interested in adopting a child in Kenya may wish to employ legal representation that is familiar with Kenya's legal system, as the Kenyan Department of Children's Services and the Kenyan Regional High Court's interpretation of adoption laws can vary widely, depending on the case. Families can contact Kenyan Department of Children's Services at Tel: (254) (20) 228-411 for a list of registered Kenyan adoption agencies.

It is illegal to publish an advertisement indicating that a parent or guardian desires to place a child for adoption, that a person wishes to adopt a child, or that a person (who is not an adoption society) is willing to facilitate the adoption of a child.

To bring an adopted child from Kenya to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS. If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Kenya will provide you with a referral to a child.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Department of Children's Services will provide a list of currently registered adoption societies. It also publishes the official adoption regulations. The Department of Children's Services is the initial point of contact for prospective adoptive parents. It reviews the adoption application.

Role of the Court: The court will appoint a guardian ad litem for the child pending the hearing and determination of the adoption application. The guardian ad litem will:

- Safeguard the interests of the child pending the determination of the adoption proceedings;
- Investigate and appraise the court about circumstances pertinent to the adoption of the child in the prescribed manner;
- Make recommendations as to the priority of making any interim orders or an adoption order in respect of the child;
- Intervene on behalf of the child and arrange for the care of the child in the event of the withdrawal of any consent; and
- Undertake such duties as the court may direct.

Role of the Adoption Agencies: Kenyan adoption agencies will assist with identifying a suitable child for adoption and can sometimes assist in some of the legal proceedings.

Adoption Application: The adoption application is submitted to the Kenyan Department of Children's Services.

Time Frame: The average length of time for completing an adoption is six months. This includes the three month residency requirement.

Adoption Fees: Kenyan law prohibits financial transactions between individuals involved in an adoption proceeding.

Some payments are permitted, for example, to an adoption society for maintenance of the child, or to an attorney who acts for any of the parties or in connection with an application for an adoption order.

Any payment or reward made by a prospective adoptive parent or guardian of a child or a third party facilitating the adoption for the purpose of making an adoption order is considered illegal.

Documents Required:

The following documents must be included in the Home Study:

- Social status and family background;
- Description of home including the number of bedrooms and whether it can comfortably accommodate the child;
- Standard of living as it appears in the home;
- Current relationship between husband and wife;
- Current relationship between the parents and children (if any children);
- Development of previously adopted children (if any);
- Current relationship between the couple and the members of each other's family;
- Employment status of the couple;
- Health details such as clinical tests, past illnesses etc., (medical certificates);
- Economic status of the couple;
- Accommodation for the child;
- Schooling facilities;
- Amenities in the home;
- Reasons for wanting to adopt a Kenyan child;
- Attitudes of relatives towards adoption;
- Anticipated plans for the adoptive child; and
- Legal status of the prospective adoptive parents.

The following is a list of documents required for adoption in Kenya:

- Recent photographs of the adoptive family;
- Marriage certificate of adoptive parent;
- Declaration concerning health of adoptive parents;
- Certificate of medical fitness of adoptive parents duly certified by a medical doctor (The approved I-600A or I-600 has been accepted as proof of medical fitness in the past.);
- Declaration regarding financial status of foreign adoptive parents along with supporting documents including employers' certificate, where applicable;

- Employment certificate of adoptive parents, where applicable;
- Income tax records of adoptive parents;
- Bank references;
- Particulars of property owned by the adoptive parents;
- Declaration from adoptive parents stating willingness to adopt the child;
- Undertaking from the social or child welfare enlisted agency sponsoring the foreigner to the effect that the child would be legally recognized as a citizen of the adoptive parent's country without any form of discrimination and that the child would be entitled to the same rights as citizens of that country;
- Undertaking from the adoptive parents that the adopted child would be provided necessary education and upbringing according to the status of the adoptive parents;
- Undertaking from the social and child welfare enlisted agency that a report relating to progress of the child, along with his/her recent photograph, will be sent to Child Welfare Society of Kenya every three months during first two years, and every six months for the next three years, for a total of five years;
- Power of Attorney from the adoptive parents in favor of Child Welfare Society of Kenya which will be required to process the case and such Power of Attorney should authorize the Attorney to handle the cases on behalf of the foreigner in case the foreigner is not in a position to come to Kenya during the initial stages of the adoption; and
- Certificate from the enlisted social or child welfare agency sponsoring the application of the foreigner to the effect that the prospective adoptive parents are permitted to adopt a child according to the laws of their country.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Kenya's post-adoption regulations require adoptive parents to submit post adoption reports on the child's welfare (with pictures) for five years, every three months for the first two years immediately following the adoption and then every six months for the last three years.

Contact Information

United States Embassy in Kenya
Consular Section
United States Embassy
P.O. Box 606
Village Market
00621 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: (254) (20) 375-3704
or (20)-363-6492
Fax: (254) (20) 363-6410
E-mail: NairobiIVDV@state.gov.
Website:
http://Nairobi.usembassy.gov

Kenya's Adoption Authority
Kenyan Department of Children's Services
P.O. Box 46205-00100
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: 254-20-228-411

Embassy of the Republic of Kenya
2249 R Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Telephone: (202) 387-6101
Fax: (202) 462-3829
Email:
information@kenyaembassy.com
Internet:
http://www.kenyaembassy.com.

Kenya also has Consulates General in Los Angeles and New York.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

Travel Warning

November 14, 2008

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Kenya. American citizens in Kenya and those considering travel to Kenya should evaluate their personal security situation in light of continuing threats from terrorism and the high rate of violent crime. This replaces the Travel Warning of August 22, 2008, to note increased security concerns in northeast Kenya near the Somali border.

The U.S. Government continues to receive indications of potential terrorist threats aimed at American,

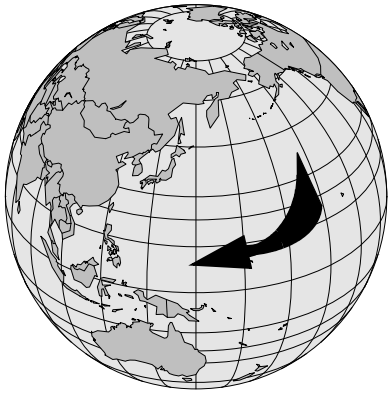
Western, and Kenyan interests in Kenya. Terrorist acts could include suicide operations, bombings, kidnappings, attacks on civil aviation, and attacks on maritime vessels in or near Kenyan ports. Many of those responsible for the attacks on the U.S. Embassy in 1998 and on a hotel in Mombasa in 2002 remain at large and continue to operate in the region. In November 2008, armed groups based in Somalia crossed into Kenya near the town of El Wak and kidnapped two Westerners. Travel by U.S. Embassy personnel to border areas of Kenya northeast of the town of Wajir has been restricted until further notice.

Violent and sometimes fatal criminal attacks, including armed carjackings and home invasions/burglaries, can occur at any time and in any location, particularly in Nairobi. As recently as June 2008, U.S. Embassy personnel were victims of carjackings. In the short-term, the continued displacement of thousands of people by the recent civil unrest combined with endemic poverty and the availability of weapons could result in an increase in crime, both petty and violent. Kenyan authorities have limited capacity to deter or investigate such acts or prosecute perpetrators.

American citizens in Kenya should be extremely vigilant, particularly in public places frequented by foreigners such as clubs, hotels, resorts, upscale shopping centers, restaurants, and places of worship. Americans should also remain alert in residential areas, schools, and at outdoor recreational events, and should avoid demonstrations and large crowds.

Americans who travel to or reside in Kenya are encouraged to register through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi. The U.S. Embassy is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone (254) (20) 363-6000; fax (254) (20) 363-6410. In the event of an after-hours emergency, the Embassy duty officer may be contacted at (254) (20) 363-6170. The Embassy home page is http://kenya.usembassy.gov.

Updated information on travel and security in Kenya may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. For further information, please consult the Country Specific Information for Kenya and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website at http://travel.state.gov.



KIRIBATI

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Kiribati

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 719 sq. km (266 sq. mi.) on 32 atolls and one island.
Cities: Capital—Tarawa (pop. 30,000).
Terrain: Archipelagos of low-lying coral atolls surrounded by extensive reefs.
Climate: Maritime equatorial or tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—I-Kiribati (for both singular and plural, pronounced "ee-keer-ah-bhass").
Population: (2006) 93,706. Age structure (2006 est.)—36.5% under 15; 3.48% over 65.
Population growth rate: (2006-2010 est.) 1.9%
Ethnic groups: Micronesian 99%.
Religions: Roman Catholic 55%, Kiribati Protestant 36%, other 9%.
Languages: English (official), Gilbertese/I-Kiribati (de facto).
Education (2000): Literacy—95%
Health: (2005) Life expectancy—62.82. Infant mortality rate (2005)—48/1,000.
Work force: (2000) Majority engaged in subsistence activities; subsistence workers 30,712, cash workers 9,197.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence (from United Kingdom) July 12, 1979.
Constitution: July 12, 1979.
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state and government), vice president, cabinet. Legislative—unicameral House of Assembly. Judicial—High Court, Court of Appeal, magistrates' courts.
Political parties: Parties are only very loosely organized—Boutokanto Koaava (Pillars of Truth), Maneaban Te Mauri (Protect the Maneaba), Maurin Kiribati Pati.

Economy (all figures in U.S. $)

GDP: (2006, estimate) $61.68 million.
GDP per capita: (2006) $655.12.
GDP composition by sector: (2006) Services 73.8%, agriculture 6.0%, industry 5.5%.
Industry: Types—tourism, copra, fish.
Trade: (2006) Exports—$6.306 million: fish, seaweed, shark fins. Export markets—Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, United States, Australia, Belgium, Denmark. Imports—$63.42 million: food, manufactured goods, machinery and transport equipment. Import sources—Australia, Fiji, Japan, France, New Zealand, United States, Korea, China, Thailand.
Currency: Australian dollar (A$).

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Kiribati (pronounced "keer-ah-bhass") consists of 32 low-lying atolls and one raised island scattered over an expanse of ocean equivalent in size to the continental United States. The islands straddle the Equator and lie roughly halfway between Hawaii and Australia. The three main groupings are the Gilbert Islands, Phoenix Islands, and Line Islands. In 1995 Kiribati unilaterally moved the International Date Line to include its easternmost islands, making it the same day throughout the country.

Kiribati includes Kiritimati (Christmas Island), the largest coral atoll in the world, and Banaba (Ocean Island), one of the three great phosphate islands in the Pacific. Except on Banaba, very little land is more than three meters above sea level.

The original inhabitants of Kiribati are Gilbertese, a Micronesian people. Approximately 90% of the population of Kiribati lives on the atolls of the Gilbert Islands. Although the Line

Islands are about 2,000 miles east of the Gilbert Islands, most inhabitants of the Line Islands are also Gilbertese. Owing to severe overcrowding in the capital on South Tarawa, in the 1990s a program of directed migration moved nearly 5,000 inhabitants to outlying atolls, mainly in the Line Islands. The Phoenix Islands have never had any significant permanent population. A British effort to settle Gilbertese there in the 1930s lasted until the 1960s when it was determined the inhabitants could not be self-sustaining.

HISTORY

The I-Kiribati people settled what would become known as the Gilbert Islands between 1000 and 1300 AD. Subsequent invasions by Fijians and Tongans introduced Melanesian and Polynesian elements to the Micronesian culture, but extensive intermarriage has produced a population reasonably homogeneous in appearance and traditions.

European contact began in the 16th century. Whalers, slave traders, and merchant vessels arrived in great numbers in the 1800s, fomenting local tribal conflicts and introducing often-fatal European diseases. In an effort to restore a measure of order, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands (the Ellice Islands are now the independent country of Tuvalu) consented to becoming British protectorates in 1892. Banaba (Ocean Island) was annexed in 1900 after the discovery of phosphate-rich guano deposits, and the entire group was made a British colony in 1916. The Line and Phoenix Islands were incorporated piecemeal over the next 20 years.

Japan seized some of the islands during World War II. In November 1943, U.S. forces assaulted heavily fortified Japanese positions on Tarawa Atoll in the Gilberts, resulting in some of the bloodiest fighting of the Pacific campaign. The battle was a turning point for the war in the Central Pacific.

Britain began expanding self-government in the islands during the 1960s. In 1975 the Ellice Islands separated from the colony and in 1978 declared their independence. The Gilberts obtained internal self-government in 1977, and became an independent nation on July 12, 1979, under the name of Kiribati.

Post-independence politics were initially dominated by Ieremia Tabai, Kiribati's first President, who served from 1979 to 1991, stepping down due to Kiribati's three-term limit for presidents. The tenure of Teburoro Tito, Kiribati's second-longest serving President, was from 1994 to 2003. His third term lasted only a matter of months before he lost a no confidence motion in Parliament. (See the next section for an explanation of Kiribati's unique presidential system.) In July 2003, Anote Tong defeated his elder brother, Harry Tong, who was backed by former President Tito and his allies. Tong was re-elected for a second term as president in October 2007.

GOVERNMENT

The constitution promulgated at independence establishes Kiribati as a sovereign democratic republic and guarantees the fundamental rights of its citizens.

The unicameral House of Assembly (Maneaba) has 45 members: 43 elected representatives, one appointed member by the Banaban community on Rabi Island in Fiji, and the Attorney General on an ex officio basis. All of the members of the Maneaba serve 4-year terms. The speaker for the legislature is elected by the Maneaba from outside of its membership and is not a voting member of Parliament.

After each general election, the new Maneaba nominates at least three but not more than four of its members to stand as candidates for president. The voting public then elects the president from among these candidates. The president appoints a cabinet of up to 10 members from among the members of the Maneaba. Although popularly elected, the president can be deposed by a majority vote in Parliament. If a no confidence motion passes, a new election for President must be held. An individual can serve as president for only three terms, no matter how short each term is. As a result of this provision, former Presidents Tabai and Tito are constitutionally forbidden from serving as president again.

The judicial system consists of the High Court, a court of appeal, and magistrates' courts. The president makes all judicial appointments.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

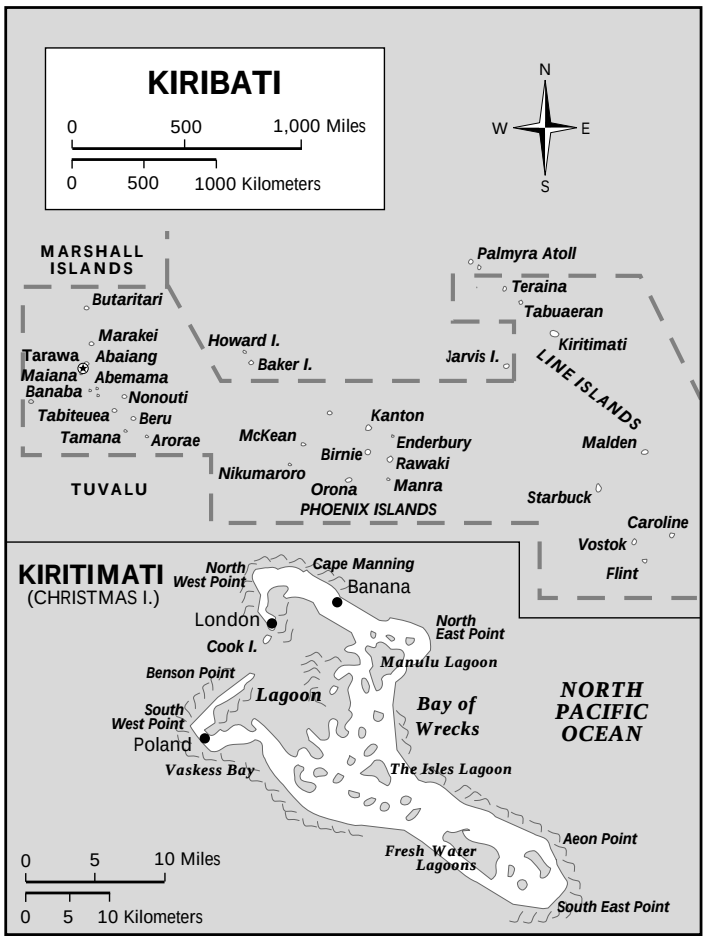
Pres.: **Anote TONG**
Vice Pres.: **Teima ONORIO**
Min. for Commerce, Industry, & Cooperatives: **Ioteba REDFERN**
Min. for Communications, Transport, & Tourism Development: **Naatan TEEWE**
Min. for Education, Youth, & Sport Development: **Teima ONORIO**
Min. for Environment, Lands, & Agricultural Development: **Martin TOFINGA**
Min. for Finance & Economic Development: **Nabuti MWEMWENIKARAWA**
Min. for Foreign Affairs & Immigration: **Anote TONG**
Min. for Health & Medical Services: **Natanera KIRATA**
Min. for Human Resources Development: **Bauro TONGAAI**
Min. for Internal Affairs & Social Development: **Amberoti NIKORA**
Min. for the Line and Phoenix Islands: **Tawita TEMOKU**
Min. for Natural Resources Development: **Tetabo NAKARA**
Min. for Public Works & Utilities: **James TAOM**

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political parties exist but are more similar to informal coalitions in behavior. Parties do not have official platforms or party structures. Most candidates formally present them-

selves as independents. Campaigning is by word of mouth and informal gatherings in traditional meeting-houses.

President Anote Tong won re-election by a comfortable margin in late 2007 and enjoys a comfortable majority in Parliament. The biggest political issue today is employment opportunities for a crowded and growing population.



ECONOMY

Kiribati's per capita GDP of less than U.S. $700 is one of the lowest in the world. Only 20% of the workforce participates in the formal wage economy and over 60% of all formal jobs are in South Tarawa. The monetary economy of Kiribati is dominated by the services sector, representing a GDP share of over 80%, and the public sector which provides 80% of monetary remuneration.

The end of phosphate revenue from Banaba in 1979 had a devastating impact on the economy. Receipts from phosphates had accounted for roughly 80% of export earnings and 50% of government revenue. Per capita GDP was more than cut in half between 1979 and 1981. The Revenue Equalization Reserve Fund, a trust fund financed by phosphate earnings over the years, is still an important part of the government's assets and contained more than U.S. $554 million in 2006. Kiribati has prudently managed the reserve fund, which is vital for the long-term welfare of the country.

In one form or another, Kiribati gets a large portion of its income from abroad. Examples include fishing licenses, development assistance, tourism, and worker remittances. External sources of financing are crucial to Kiribati, given the limited domestic production ability and the need to import nearly all essential foodstuffs and manufactured items. Historically, the I-Kiribati were notable seafarers, and today about 1,400 I-Kiribati are trained, certified, and active as seafarers. Remittances from seafarers are a major source of income for families in the country, and there is a steady annual uptake of young I-Kiribati men to the Kiribati Maritime Training Institute.

Fishing fleets from South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, and the United States pay licensing fees to operate in Kiribati's territorial waters. These licenses produce revenue worth U.S. $20 million to $35 million annually. Kiribati's exclusive economic zone comprises more than 3.55 million square kilometers (1.37 million square miles) and is very difficult to police given Kiribati's small land mass and limited means. Kiribati probably loses millions of dollars per year from illegal, unlicensed, and unreported fishing in its exclusive economic zone.

Official development assistance amounts to between U.S. $30 million and $40 million per year. The largest donors are Japan, the EC, Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan. U.S. assistance is provided through multilateral institutions. Remittances from Kiribati workers living abroad provide more than $11 million annually.

Tourism is a relatively small, but important domestic sector. Attractions include World War II battle sites, game fishing, ecotourism, and the Millennium Islands, situated just inside the International Date Line and the first place on earth to celebrate New Year. The vast majority of American tourists only visit Christmas Island in the Line Islands on fishing and diving vacations.

Most islanders engage in subsistence activities such as fishing and growing of food crops like bananas, breadfruit, and papaya. The leading export is the coconut product, copra, which accounts for about two-thirds of export revenue. Currently, copra is exported to Bangladesh for processing. Other exports include pet fish,

shark fins, and seaweed. Kiribati's principal trading partners are Australia and Japan.

Transportation and communications are a challenge for Kiribati. Air Pacific and Air Marshall Islands provide international air links to the capital of Tarawa. Air Kiribati provides service to most of the populated atolls in the Gilberts using small planes flying from Tarawa. Small ships serve outlying islands, including in the Line Islands, with irregular schedules. A joint venture between Air Pacific and the government of Kiribati operates a flight linking Christmas Island to Fiji and Honolulu. However, Air Pacific suspended this service in September 2008.

Telecommunications are expensive, and service is mediocre.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Kiribati maintains friendly relations with most countries and has particularly close ties to its Pacific neighbors—Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji. Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, and Cuba maintain resident diplomatic missions in Kiribati.

U.S.-KIRIBATI RELATIONS

Relations between Kiribati and the United States are excellent. Kiribati signed a treaty of friendship with the United States after independence in 1979. The United States has no consular or diplomatic facilities in the country. Officers of the American Embassy in Suva, Fiji, are concurrently accredited to Kiribati and make periodic visits. The U.S. Peace Corps maintained a program in Kiribati from 1967 until mid-2008.

Kiribati became a member of the United Nations in 1999, and in September 2003, President Tong requested authority from Parliament to establish a UN mission. Currently, however, Kiribati does not maintain a resident ambassador in New York, and its vote is typically cast by New Zealand in a proxy arrangement. Kiribati also is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, Asian Development Bank, the Commonwealth, International Monetary Fund, the Pacific Community, and the World Bank. Kiribati is particularly active in the Pacific Islands Forum. The only Kiribati diplomatic missions overseas are a high commission in Fiji and an honorary consulate in Honolulu.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SUVA (E) 31 Loftus Street, Suva, 679-331-4466, Fax 679-330-5106, Workweek: 0800–1730 (Mon-Thu), 0800–1500 (Fri), Website: http://suva.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Margaret Kennett
DCM/CHG:	Jeffrey Robertson
ECO:	Mark Prokop
HRO:	Ila Jurisson
MGT:	Ila Jurisson
CON:	Debra J. Towry
DCM:	Richard Pruett
PAO:	Jeffrey Robertson
COM:	Quinn N. Plant
GSO:	Scott Gallaway
RSO:	Mathew McCormack
CLO:	Lynne T. Murphy
DAO:	Ltc. Patrick D. Reardon
EEO:	Heather Coble
FMO:	Ila Jurisson
ICASS Chair:	Col. Patrick D. Reardon
IMO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISSO:	Steven A. Baldwin
POL:	Mark S. Prokop
State ICASS:	Joseph P. Murphy

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 9, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Kiribati (pronounced kir-ree-bas) is an island group in the Western Pacific Ocean. It consists of an archipelago of some 33 low-lying coral atolls surrounded by extensive reefs, with a total land area of 800 square kilometers. Kiribati gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1979. Kiribati has an elected President and a legislative assembly. The capital city of Kiribati is Tarawa. Kiribati has few natural resources, and its economy is very small. Tourist facilities are not widely available.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport with a minimum of six months validity until expiration date and a visa are required. Kiribati strictly enforces its immigration/visa requirements. Westerners, including American citizens, have been detained for visa violations. For information on entry requirements, please contact the Consulate of the Republic of Kiribati, 95 Nakolo Place, Rm. 265, Honolulu, Hawaii 96819, tel. (808) 834-6775, fax (808) 834-7604, or via e-mail kiribaticonsul@aol.com.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the crime rate in Kiribati is low, visitors should not be complacent regarding personal safety or the protection of valuables.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to

understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

Medical Facilities And Health Information: Health care facilities in Kiribati are adequate for routine medical care, but extremely limited in availability and quality. Serious medical conditions requiring hospitalization or evacuation to the United States or elsewhere may cost thousands of dollars. All water should be regarded as a potential health risk. Visitors should therefore refrain from drinking any water that is not bottled, boiled or otherwise sterilized. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit should be peeled before it is eaten.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Kiribati is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left side of the road in Kiribati. Roads in urban Tarawa and Christmas Island, while satisfactory in some areas, are generally in need of repair. After heavy rains, some road sections experience temporary flooding. Vehicle traffic proceeds at a relatively slow rate. Drinking and driving is a common practice, especially on the weekends. Since visibility is poor with no streetlights, drivers should be careful when driving at night. For specific information concerning Kiribati drivers' permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Consulate of the Republic of Kiribati in Honolulu, HI.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed Kiribati's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Kiribati's air carrier operations. For further information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Kiribati's customs authorities strictly prohibit the importation of firearms, ammunition, explosives and indecent publications. Strict quarantine laws govern the import of any part of plants, fruits or vegetables, as well as soil, animals and animal products. Visitors are not allowed to export human remains, artifacts that are 30 or more years old, traditional fighting swords, traditional tools, dancing ornaments or suits of armor. For more information, please contact the Consulate of the Republic of Kiribati in Honolulu, HI.

The Australian dollar is the legal currency in Kiribati. Traveler's checks and all major currencies are accepted by banks and may also be exchanged for local currency at some local hotels. Visa and MasterCard are accepted at most hotels.

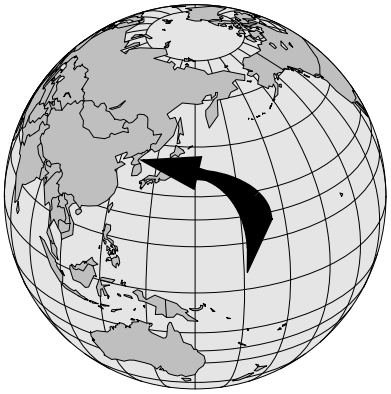
Kiribati is located in an area of high seismic and tropical cyclone activity. Strong winds are common, especially during the rainy season from November to April. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under the U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Kiribati's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Kiribati are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy in Kiribati. Americans living or traveling to Kiribati are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji, or through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain up-to-date information on travel and security within Kiribati. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Fiji is located at 31 Loftus Street in the capital city of Suva; telephone (679) 331-4-466; fax (679) 330-2?267. Information may also be obtained by visiting the Embassy's home page at http://www.amembassy-fiji.gov.



KOREA (NORTH)

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Democratic People's Republic of Korea

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1122,762 sq. km. (47,918 sq. mi.), about the size of Mississippi.

Cities: Capital—Pyongyang. Other cities—Hamhung, Chongjin, Wonsan, Nampo, and Kaesong.

Terrain: About 80% of land area is moderately high mountains separated by deep, narrow valleys and small, cultivated plains. The remainder is lowland plains covering small, scattered areas.

Climate: Long, cold, dry winters; short, hot, humid, summers.

People*

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Korean(s).

Population: (2008) 23.5 million.

Annual growth rate: About +0.98%.

Ethnic groups: Korean; small ethnic Chinese and Japanese populations.

Religions: Buddhism, Confucianism, Shamanism, Chongdogyo, Christian; autonomous religious activities have been virtually nonexistent since 1945.

Languages: Korean.

Education: Years compulsory—11. Attendance—3 million (primary, 1.5 million; secondary, 1.2 million; tertiary, 0.3 million). Literacy—99%.

Health: (1998) Medical treatment is free; one doctor for every 700 inhabitants; one hospital bed for every 350; there are severe shortages of medicines and medical equipment. Infant mortality rate—21.86 /1,000 (2008 est.). Life expectancy—males 69 yrs., females 75 yrs. (2008 est.).

Government

Type: Highly centralized communist state.

Independence: August 15, 1945—Korean liberation from Japan; September 9, 1948—establishment of the Republic of Korea (R.O.K., or South Korea), marking its separation from North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or D.P.R.K.).

Constitution: 1948; 1972, revised in 1992 and 1998.

Government branches: Executive—President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (chief of state); Chairman of the National Defense Commission (head of government). Legislative—Supreme People's Assembly. Judicial—Central Court; provincial, city, county, and military courts.

Political subdivisions: Nine provinces; four province-level municipalities (Pyongyang, Kaesong, Chongjin, Nampo); one free trade zone (Najin-Sonbong FTZ).

Political parties: Korean Workers' Party (communist).

Suffrage: Universal at 17.

Economy*

GNI: (2006 estimate) $25.6 billion; 23.3% in agriculture and fishery, 10.2% in mining, 19.5% in manufacturing, 4.5% in electricity, gas and tap water output, 9.0% in construction, and 33.6% in services (2006).

Per capita GNI (2006): $1,108.

Agriculture: Products—rice, potatoes, soybeans, cattle, pigs, pork and eggs.

Mining and manufacturing: Types—military products; machine building; chemicals; mining (gold, coal, iron ore, limestone, magnesite, etc.); metallurgy; textiles; food processing; tourism.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$1.684 billion: minerals, non-ferrous metals, garments, chemicals/plastics, machinery/electric and electronic products, animal products, wood products, vegetable products, and precious metals. The D.P.R.K. is also thought to earn hundreds of millions of dollars from the unreported sale of missiles, narcotics, and counterfeit cigarettes, and other illicit activities. Imports—$3.055 billion: minerals, petroleum, machinery/electronics, vegetable products, textiles, chemicals, non-ferrous metals, plastics, vehicles, and animal products. Major trading partners (2007): (1) China,

(2) R.O.K., (3) Thailand, (4) Russia, and (5) India.

*In most cases, the figures used above are estimates based upon incomplete data and projections.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Korean Peninsula was first populated by peoples of a Tungusic branch of the Ural-Altaic language family, who migrated from the northwestern regions of Asia. Some of these peoples also populated parts of northeast China (Manchuria); Koreans and Manchurians still show physical similarities. Koreans are racially and linguistically homogeneous. Although there are no indigenous minorities in North Korea, there is a small Chinese community (about 50,000) and some 1,800 Japanese wives who accompanied the roughly 93,000 Koreans returning to the North from Japan between 1959 and 1962. Although dialects exist, the Korean spoken throughout the peninsula is mutually comprehensible. In North Korea, the Korean alphabet (hangul) is used exclusively.

Korea's traditional religions are Buddhism and Shamanism. Christian missionaries arrived as early as the 16th century, but it was not until the 19th century that major missionary activity began. Pyongyang was a center of missionary activity, and there was a relatively large Christian population in the north before 1945. Although religious groups exist in North Korea today, the government severely restricts religious activity.

By the first century AD, the Korean Peninsula was divided into the kingdoms of Shilla, Koguryo, and Paekche. In 668 AD, the Shilla kingdom unified the peninsula. The Koryo dynasty—from which Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century derived the Western name "Korea"—succeeded the Shilla kingdom in 935. The Choson dynasty, ruled by members of the Yi clan, supplanted Koryo in 1392 and lasted until Japan annexed Korea in 1910. Throughout its history, Korea has been invaded, influenced, and fought over by its larger neighbors. Korea was under Mongolian occupation from 1231 until the early 14th century. The unifier of Japan, Hideyoshi Toyotomi, launched major invasions of Korea in 1592 and 1597. When Western powers focused "gunboat" diplomacy on Korea in the mid-19th century, Korea's rulers adopted a closed-door policy, earning Korea the title of "Hermit Kingdom." Though the Choson dynasty recognized China's hegemony in East Asia, Korea was independent until the late 19th century. At that time, China sought to block growing Japanese influence on the Korean Peninsula and Russian pressure for commercial gains there. The competition produced the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Japan emerged victorious from both wars and in 1910 annexed Korea as part of the growing Japanese empire.

Japanese colonial administration was characterized by tight control from Tokyo and ruthless efforts to supplant Korean language and culture. Organized Korean resistance during the colonial era was generally unsuccessful, and Japan remained firmly in control of the Peninsula until the end of World War II in 1945. The surrender of Japan in August 1945 led to the immediate division of Korea into two occupation zones, with the United States administering the southern half of the peninsula and the U.S.S.R. taking over the area to the north of the 38th parallel. This division was meant to be temporary until the United States, U.K., Soviet Union, and China could arrange a trusteeship administration.

In December 1945, a conference was convened in Moscow to discuss the future of Korea. A five-year trusteeship was discussed, and a joint Soviet-American commission was established.

The commission met intermittently in Seoul but deadlocked over the issue of establishing a national government. In September 1947, with no solution in sight, the United States submitted the Korean question to the UN General Assembly. Initial hopes for a unified, independent Korea quickly evaporated as the politics of the Cold War and domestic opposition to the trusteeship plan resulted in the 1948 establishment of two separate nations with diametrically opposed political, economic, and social systems.

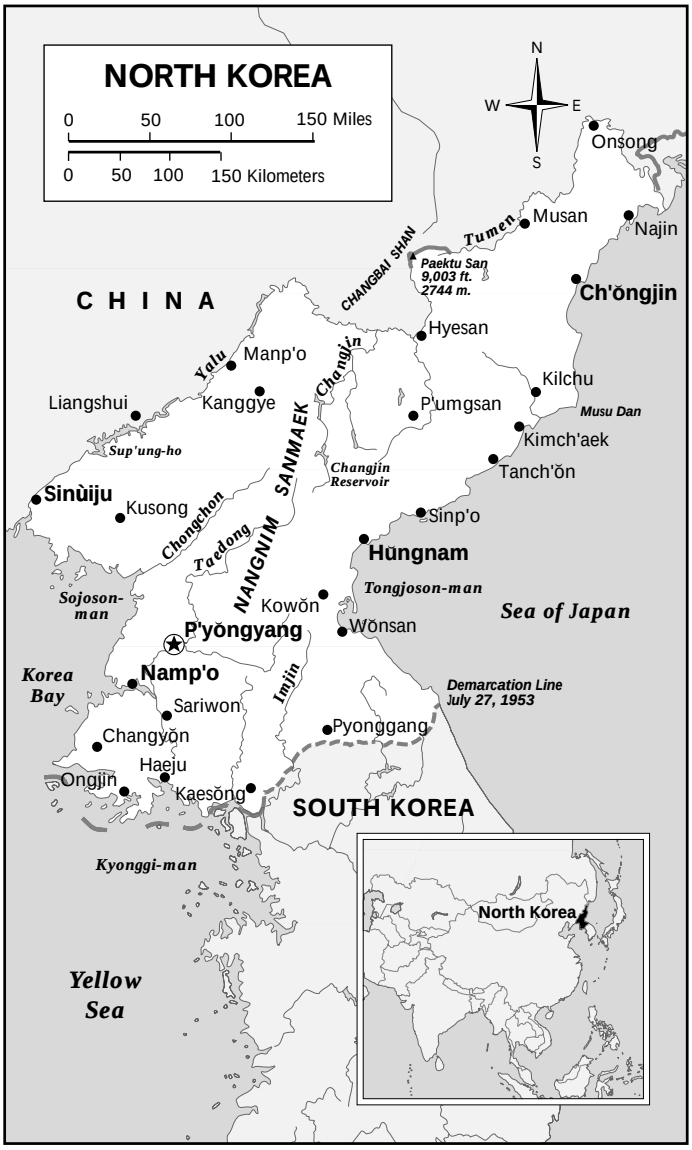
Elections were held in the South under UN observation, and on August 15, 1948, the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.) was established in the South. Syngman Rhee, a nationalist leader, became the Republic's first president. On September 9, 1948, the North established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.) headed by then-Premier Kim Il-sung, who had been cultivated and supported by the U.S.S.R.

Korean War of 1950-53

Almost immediately after establishment of the D.P.R.K., guerrilla warfare, border clashes, and naval battles erupted between the two Koreas. North Korean forces launched a massive surprise attack and invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950.

The United Nations, in accordance with the terms of its Charter, engaged in its first collective action and established the UN Command (UNC), to which 16 member nations sent troops and assistance. Next to South Korea, the United States contributed the largest contingent of forces to this international effort. The battle line fluctuated north and south, and after large numbers of Chinese "People's Volunteers" intervened to assist the North, the battle line stabilized north of Seoul near the 38th parallel.

Armistice negotiations began in July 1951, but hostilities continued until July 27, 1953. On that date, at Panmunjom, the military commanders of the North Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and the UNC signed an armistice agreement. Neither the United States nor South Korea is a signatory to the armistice



per se, although both adhere to it through the UNC. No comprehensive peace agreement has replaced the 1953 armistice pact.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

North Korea has a centralized government under the rigid control of the communist Korean Workers' Party (KWP), to which all government officials belong. A few minor political parties are allowed to exist in name only. Kim Il-sung ruled North Korea from 1948 until his death in July 1994. Kim served both as Secretary General of the KWP and as President of North Korea.

Little is known about the actual lines of power and authority in the North Korean Government despite the formal structure set forth in the constitution. Following the death of Kim Il-sung, his son—Kim Jong-il—inherited supreme power. Kim Jong-il was named General Secretary of the KWP in October 1997, and in September 1998, the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) reconfirmed Kim Jong-il as Chairman of the National Defense Commission and declared that position as the "highest office of state." However, the President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, Kim Yong-nam, serves as the nominal head of state. North Korea's 1972 constitution was amended in late 1992 and in September 1998. The constitution designates the Central People's Committee (CPC) as the government's top policymaking body. The CPC makes policy decisions and supervises the cabinet, or State Administration Council (SAC). The SAC is headed by a premier and is the dominant administrative and executive agency.

Officially, the legislature, the SPA, is the highest organ of state power. Its members are elected every four years. Usually only two meetings are held annually, each lasting a few days. A standing committee elected by the SPA performs legislative functions when the Assembly is not in session. In reality, the Assembly serves only to ratify decisions made by the ruling KWP.

North Korea's judiciary is "accountable" to the SPA and the president. The SPA's standing committee also appoints judges to the highest court for four-year terms that are concurrent with those of the Assembly.

Administratively, North Korea is divided into nine provinces and two provincial-level municipalities—Pyongyang and Nasun, or Najin-Sonbong. It also appears to be divided into nine military districts.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Gen. Sec., Korean Workers' Party: **KIM Jong Il**
Supreme Cdr., Korean People's Army: **KIM Jong Il, Mar.**
Chmn., National Defense Commission (NDC): **KIM Jong Il, Mar.**
First Vice Chmn., NDC: **JO Myong Rok, VMar.**
Vice Chmn., NDC: **KIM Yong Chun, VMar.**
Vice Chmn., NDC: **RI Yong Mu, VMar.**
Member, NDC: **JON Pyong Ho**
Member, NDC: **KIM Il Chol, VMar.**

Supreme People's Assembly (SPA)

Pres., SPA Presidium: **KIM Yong Nam**
Vice Pres., SPA Presidium: **KIM Yong Dae**
Vice Pres., SPA Presidium: **YANG Hyong Sop**
Honorary Vice Pres., SPA Presidium: **KIM Yong Ju**
Honorary Vice Pres., SPA Presidium: **PAK Song Chol**
Sec. Gen., SPA Presidium: **CHOE Yong Rim**
Member, SPA Presidium: **HONG Sok Hyong**
Member, SPA Presidium: **KANG Chang Uk**
Member, SPA Presidium: **KANG Yong Sop**
Member, SPA Presidium: **KIM Kyong Ho**
Member, SPA Presidium: **PAK Sun Hui**
Member, SPA Presidium: **PYON Yong Rip**
Member, SPA Presidium: **RI Kwang Ho**
Member, SPA Presidium: **RYOM Sun Gil**
Member, SPA Presidium: **RYU Mi Yong**
Member, SPA Presidium: **THAE Hyong Chol**
Chmn., SPA: **CHOE Thae Bok**
Vice Chmn., SPA: **RYO Won Gu**
Vice Chmn., SPA:

Cabinet

Premier: **KIM Yong Il**
Vice Premier: **JON Sung Hun**
Vice Premier: **KWAK Pom Gi**
Vice Premier: **RO Tu Chol**
Vice Premier: **THAE Jong Su**
Min. of Agriculture: **RI Kyong Sik**
Min. of Chemical Industry: **RI Mu Yong**
Min. of City Management: **CHOE Jong Gon**
Min. of Coal Industries: **KIM Hyong Sik**
Min. of Commerce: **RI Yong Son**
Min. of Construction & Building-Materials Industries: **TONG Jong Ho**
Min. of Crude Oil Industry:
Min. of Culture: **KANG Nung Su**
Min. of Education: **KIM Yong Jin**
Min. of Electronic Industry: **O Su Yong**
Min. of Extractive Industries: **KANG Min Chol**
Min. of Finance: **MUN Il Bong**
Min. of Fisheries: **SIM Ki Yop**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **PAK Ui Chun**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **RI Ryong Nam**
Min. of Forestry: **SOK Kun Su**
Min. of Labor: **JONG Yong Su**
Min. of Land & Environment Preservation: **PAK Song Nam**
Min. of Land & Marine Transport: **RA Tong Hui**
Min. of Light Industry: **RI Ju O**
Min. of Machine-Building Industry: **JO Pyong Ju**
Min. of Metal Industry: **KIM Sung Hyon**
Min. of People's Security: **JU Sang Song**
Min. of Post & Telecommunications: **RYU Yong Sop**
Min. of Power Industries: **PAK Nam Chil**
Min. of Procurement & Food Admin.: **CHOE Nam Gyun**
Min. of Public Health: **CHOE Chang Sik**
Min. of Railways: **CHON Kil Su**
Min. of State Construction Control: **PAE Tal Jun**
Min. of State Inspection: **KIM Ui Sun**
Chmn., State Planning Commission: **KIM Kwang Rin**
Chmn., Physical Culture & Sports Guidance Commission: **PAK Hak Son**
Pres., National Academy of Sciences: **PYON Yong Rip**
Dir., Central Statistics Bureau: **KIM Chang Su**
Chief Sec.: **KIM Yong Ho**
Min. of People's Armed Forces (not subordinate to the cabinet): **KIM Il Chol, VMar.**
Pres., Central Bank: **KIM Wan Su**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **SIN Son Ho**

DEFENSE AND MILITARY ISSUES

North Korea now has the fourth-largest army in the world. It has an estimated 1.21 million armed personnel, compared to about 680,000 in the South. Military spending is estimated at as much as a quarter of GNP, with about 20% of men ages 17-54 in the regular armed forces. North Korean forces have a substantial numerical advantage over the South (between 2 and 3 to 1) in several key categories of offensive weapons—tanks, long-range artillery, and armored personnel carriers. The North has perhaps the world's second-largest special operations force, designed for insertion behind the lines in wartime. While the North has a relatively impressive fleet of submarines, its surface fleet has a very limited capability. Its air force has twice the number of aircraft as the South, but, except for a few advanced fighters, the North's air force is obsolete. The North deploys the bulk of its forces well forward, along the demilitarized zone (DMZ). Several North Korean military tunnels under the DMZ were discovered in the 1970s. Over the course of several years, North Korea realigned its forces and moved some rear-echelon troops to hardened bunkers closer to the DMZ. Given the proximity of Seoul to the DMZ (some 25 miles), South Korean and U.S. forces are likely to have little warning of any attack. The United States and South Korea continue to believe that the U.S. troop presence in South Korea remains an effective deterrent. North Korea's nuclear weapons program has also been a source of international tension (see below, Reunification Efforts Since 1971; Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula).

In 1953, the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) was created to oversee and enforce the terms of the armistice. Over the past decade, North Korea has sought to dismantle the MAC in a push for a new "peace mechanism" on the peninsula. In April 1994, it declared the MAC void and withdrew its representatives.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

North Korea's relationship with the South has determined much of its post-World War II history and still undergirds much of its foreign policy. North and South Korea have had a difficult and acrimonious relationship from the Korean War. In recent years, North Korea has pursued a mixed policy—seeking to develop economic relations with South Korea and to win the support of the South Korean public for greater North-South engagement while at the same time continuing to denounce the R.O.K.'s security relationship with the United States and maintaining a threatening conventional force posture on the DMZ and in adjacent waters.

The military demarcation line (MDL) of separation between the belligerent sides at the close of the Korean War divides North Korea from South Korea. A demilitarized zone (DMZ) extends for 2,000 meters (just over 1 mile) on either side of the MDL. Both the North and South Korean governments hold that the MDL is only a temporary administrative line, not a permanent border. During the post-

war period, both Korean governments have repeatedly affirmed their desire to reunify the Korean Peninsula, but until 1971 the two governments had no direct, official communications or other contact.

Reunification Efforts Since 1971

In August 1971, North and South Korea held talks through their respective Red Cross societies with the aim of reuniting the many Korean families separated following the division of Korea and the Korean War. In July 1972, the two sides agreed to work toward peaceful reunification and an end to the hostile atmosphere prevailing on the peninsula. Officials exchanged visits, and regular communications were established through a North-South coordinating committee and the Red Cross. These initial contacts broke down in 1973 following South Korean President Park Chung-hee's announcement that the South would seek separate entry into the United Nations, and after the kidnapping of South Korean opposition leader Kim Dae-jung—perceived as friendly to unified entry into the UN—by South Korean intelligence services. There was no other significant contact between North and South Korea until 1984.

Dialogue was renewed in September 1984, when South Korea accepted the North's offer to provide relief goods to victims of severe flooding in South Korea. Red Cross talks to address the plight of separated families resumed, as did talks on economic and trade issues and parliamentary-level discussions. However, the North then unilaterally suspended all talks in January 1986, arguing that the annual U.S.-ROK "Team Spirit" military exercise was inconsistent with dialogue. There was a brief flurry of negotiations that year on co-hosting the upcoming 1988 Seoul Olympics, which ended in failure and was followed by the 1987 bombing of a South Korean commercial aircraft (KAL 858) by North Korean agents. In July 1988, South Korean President Roh Tae-woo called for new efforts to promote North-South exchanges, family reunification, inter-Korean trade, and contact in international forums. Roh followed up this initiative in a UN General Assembly speech in which South Korea offered for the first time to discuss security matters with the North. Initial meetings that grew out of Roh's proposals started in September 1989. In September 1990, the first of eight prime minister-level meetings between North Korean and South Korean officials took place in Seoul. The prime ministerial talks resulted in two major agreements: the Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Exchanges, and Cooperation (the "Basic Agreement") and the Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula (the "Joint Declaration").

The Basic Agreement, signed on December 13, 1991, called for reconciliation and nonaggression and established four joint commissions. These commissions—on South-North reconciliation, South-North military affairs, South-North economic exchanges and cooperation, and South-North social and cultural exchange—were to work out the specifics for implementing the basic agreement. Subcommittees to examine specific issues were created, and liaison offices were established in Panmunjom, but in the fall of 1992 the process came to a halt because of rising tension over North Korea's nuclear program.

The Joint Declaration on denuclearization was initialed on December 31, 1991. It forbade both sides from testing, manufacturing, producing, receiving, possessing, storing, deploying, or using nuclear weapons and forbade the possession of nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities. A procedure for inter-Korean inspection was to be organized and a North-South Joint Nuclear Control Commission (JNCC) was mandated to verify the denuclearization of the peninsula.

On January 30, 1992, the D.P.R.K. finally signed a nuclear safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as it had pledged to do in 1985 when it acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This safeguards agreement allowed IAEA inspections to begin in June 1992. In March 1992, the JNCC was established in accordance with the Joint Declaration, but subsequent meetings failed to reach agreement on the main issue of establishing a bilateral inspection regime.

As the 1990s progressed, concern over the North's nuclear program became a major issue in North-South relations and between North Korea and the United States. The lack of progress on implementation of the Joint Declaration's provision for an inter-Korean nuclear inspection regime led to reinstatement of the U.S.-R.O.K. Team Spirit military exercise for 1993. The situation worsened rapidly when North Korea, in January 1993, refused IAEA access to two suspected nuclear waste sites and then announced in March 1993 its intent to withdraw from the NPT. During the next two years, the United States held direct talks with the D.P.R.K. that resulted in a series of agreements on nuclear matters, including the 1994 Agreed Framework (which broke down in 2002 when North Korea was discovered to be pursuing a uranium enrichment program for nuclear weapons—see below, Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula).

At his inauguration in February 1998, R.O.K. President Kim Dae-jung enunciated a new policy of engagement with the D.P.R.K., dubbed "the Sunshine Policy." The policy had three fundamental principles: no tolerance of provocations from the North, no intention to absorb the North, and the separation of political cooperation from economic cooperation. Private sector overtures would be based on commercial and humanitarian considerations. The use of government resources would entail reciprocity. This policy set the stage for the first inter-Korean summit, held in Pyongyang June 13-15, 2000.

R.O.K. President Roh Moo-hyun, following his inauguration in February 2003, continued his predecessor's policy of engagement with the North, though he abandoned the name "Sunshine Policy." The R.O.K. and

D.P.R.K. held a second inter-Korean summit October 2-4, 2007 in Pyongyang. Inter-Korean relations have declined since the inauguration of R.O.K. President Lee Myung-bak in February 2008, as the D.P.R.K. has criticized Lee's policy of seeking greater reciprocity in inter-Korean relations.

The United States supports engagement and North-South dialogue and cooperation. Major economic reunification projects have included a tourism development in Mt. Geumgang, the re-establishment of road and rail links across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) and a joint North-South industrial park near the North Korean city of Kaesong.

Relations Outside the Peninsula

Throughout the Cold War, North Korea balanced its relations with China and the Soviet Union to extract the maximum benefit from the relationships at minimum political cost. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, the Soviet-backed Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan created strains between China and the Soviet Union and, in turn, in North Korea's relations with its two major communist allies. North Korea tried to avoid becoming embroiled in the Sino-Soviet split, obtaining aid from both the Soviet Union and China and trying to avoid dependence on either. Following Kim Il-sung's 1984 visit to Moscow, there was an improvement in Soviet-D.P.R.K. relations, resulting in renewed deliveries of Soviet weaponry to North Korea and increases in economic aid.

The establishment of diplomatic relations by South Korea with the Soviet Union in 1990 and with China in 1992 seriously strained relations between North Korea and its traditional allies. Moreover, the fall of communism in eastern Europe in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in a significant drop in communist aid to North Korea. Despite these changes and its past reliance on this military and economic assistance, North Korea continued to proclaim a militantly independent stance in its foreign policy in accordance with its official ideology of "juche," or self-reliance.

Both North and South Korea became parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in 1987. (North Korea is not a member of the Chemical Weapons Convention, nor is it a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime, or MTCR.)

North Korea has maintained membership in some multilateral organizations. It became a member of the UN in September 1991. North Korea also belongs to the Food and Agriculture Organization; the International Civil Aviation Organization; the International Postal Union; the UN Conference on Trade and Development; the International Telecommunications Union; the UN Development Program; the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; the World Health Organization; the World Intellectual Property Organization; the World Meteorological Organization; the International Maritime Organization; the International Committee of the Red Cross; and the Nonaligned Movement.

In the mid-1990s, when the economic situation worsened dramatically and following the death of D.P.R.K. founder Kim Il-sung, the North abandoned some of the more extreme manifestations of its "self reliance" ideology to accept foreign humanitarian relief and create the possibility, as noted below, for foreign investment in the North. In subsequent years, the D.P.R.K. has continued to pursue a tightly restricted policy of opening to the world in search of economic aid and development assistance. However, this has been matched by an increased determination to counter perceived external and internal threats by a self-proclaimed "military first" ("Songun") policy.

During the present period of limited, extremely cautious opening, North Korea has sought to broaden its formal diplomatic relationships. In July 2000, North Korea began participating in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), with Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun attending the ARF ministerial meeting in Bangkok. The D.P.R.K. also expanded its bilateral diplomatic ties in that year, establishing diplomatic relations with Italy, Australia, the Philippines, Australia, Canada, the U.K., Germany, and many other European countries.

In the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement issued at the end of the fourth round of Six-Party Talks, the United States and the D.P.R.K. committed to undertake steps to normalize relations. The D.P.R.K. and Japan also agreed to take steps to normalize relations and to discuss outstanding issues of concern, such as abductions. The February 13, 2007 Initial Actions agreement established U.S.-D.P.R.K. and Japan-D.P.R.K. bilateral working groups on normalization of relations, which have both met several times since their creation (see below, Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula).

Terrorism

The D.P.R.K. is not known to have sponsored terrorist acts since the 1987 bombing of KAL flight 858. Pyongyang continues to provide sanctuary to members of the Japanese Communist League-Red Army Faction (JRA) who participated in the hijacking of a Japan Airlines flight to North Korea in 1970.

The D.P.R.K. has made several statements condemning terrorism. In October 2000, the United States and the D.P.R.K. issued a joint statement on terrorism in which "the two sides agreed that international terrorism poses an unacceptable threat to global security and peace, and that terrorism should be opposed in all its forms." The United States and the D.P.R.K. agreed to support the international legal regime combating international terrorism and to cooperate with each other to fight terrorism. The D.P.R.K. became a signatory to the Convention for the Suppression of Financing of Terrorism and a party to the Convention Against the

Taking of Hostages in November 2001. In June 2008, the D.P.R.K. Foreign Ministry issued an authoritative statement providing assurances that the D.P.R.K. supports international efforts to combat terrorism and opposes all forms of terrorism.

In the February 13, 2007 Initial Actions agreement, the United States agreed to begin the process of removing the designation of the D.P.R.K. as a state sponsor of terrorism. In the October 3, 2007 Second-Phase Actions, the United States agreed to fulfill its commitments to the D.P.R.K. in parallel with the D.P.R.K.'s actions on disablement and declaration. On June 26, 2008, following the D.P.R.K.'s submission of its nuclear declaration and progress on disablement, President Bush announced his intention to rescind North Korea's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism (see U.S. POLICY TOWARD NORTH KOREA: Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula).

Abductions

In the past, the D.P.R.K. has also been involved in the abduction of foreign citizens. In 2002, Kim Jong-il acknowledged to Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi the involvement of D.P.R.K. "special institutions" in the kidnapping of Japanese citizens between 1977 and 1983 and said that those responsible had been punished. While five surviving victims and their families were allowed to leave the D.P.R.K. and resettle in Japan in October 2002, 12 other cases remain unresolved and continue to be a major issue in D.P.R.K.-Japanese relations. In October 2005, the D.P.R.K. acknowledged for the first time having kidnapped R.O.K. citizens in previous decades, claiming that several abductees, as well as several POWs from the Korean War, were still alive. In June 2006, North Korea allowed Kim Young-nam, a South Korean abducted by the North in 1978, to participate in a family reunion. In June 2008, the D.P.R.K. agreed to reopen the investigation into the abduction issue. In August 2008, the D.P.R.K. and Japan agreed to a plan for proceeding with the abduction investigation. The United States has continued to press the D.P.R.K. to address Japan's concerns about the abduction issue.

U.S. POLICY TOWARD NORTH KOREA

U.S. Support for North-South Dialogue and Reunification

The United States supports the peaceful reunification of Korea on terms acceptable to the Korean people and recognizes that the future of the Korean Peninsula is primarily a matter for them to decide. The United States believes that a constructive and serious dialogue between the authorities of North and South Korea is necessary to resolve outstanding problems, including the North's nuclear program and human rights abuses, and to encourage the North's integration with the rest of the international community.

Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula

North Korea joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapons state in 1985. North and South Korean talks begun in 1990 resulted in the 1992 Joint Declaration for a Non-Nuclear Korean Peninsula (see, under Foreign Relations, Reunification Efforts Since 1971). However, the international standoff over the North's failure to implement an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency for the inspection of the North's nuclear facilities led Pyongyang to announce in March 1993 its intention to withdraw from the NPT. A UN Security Council Resolution in May 1993 urged the D.P.R.K. to cooperate with the IAEA and to implement the 1992 North-South Denuclearization Statement. It also urged all UN Member States to encourage the D.P.R.K. to respond positively to this resolution and to facilitate a solution to the nuclear issue. The United States opened talks with the D.P.R.K. in June 1993 and eventually reached agreement in October 1994 on a diplomatic roadmap, known as the Agreed Framework, for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Agreed Framework called for the following steps:

- North Korea agreed to freeze its existing nuclear program and allow monitoring by the IAEA.
- Both sides agreed to cooperate to replace the D.P.R.K.'s graphite-moderated reactors with light-water reactor (LWR) power plants, by a target date of 2003, to be financed and supplied by an international consortium (later identified as the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization or KEDO).
- As an interim measure, the United States agreed to provide North Korea with 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil annually until the first reactor was built.
- The United States and D.P.R.K. agreed to work together to store safely the spent fuel from the five-megawatt reactor and dispose of it in a safe manner that did not involve reprocessing in the D.P.R.K.
- The two sides agreed to move toward full normalization of political and economic relations.
- The two sides agreed to work together for peace and security on a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.
- The two sides agreed to work together to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In accordance with the terms of the Agreed Framework, in January 1995 the U.S. Government eased economic sanctions against North Korea in response to North Korea's freezing its graphite-moderated nuclear program under United States and IAEA verification. North Korea agreed to accept the decisions of KEDO, the financier and supplier of the LWRs, with respect to provision of the reactors.

KEDO subsequently identified Sinpo as the LWR project site and held a groundbreaking ceremony in August 1997. In December 1999, KEDO and the (South) Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO) signed the Turnkey Contract (TKC), permitting full-scale construction of the LWRs.

In January 1995, as called for in the 1994 Agreed Framework, the United States and D.P.R.K. negotiated a method to store safely the spent fuel from the D.P.R.K.'s five-megawatt nuclear reactor. Under this method, United States and D.P.R.K. operators worked together to can the spent fuel and store the canisters in a spent fuel pond; canning began in 1995. In April 2000, canning of all accessible spent fuel rods and rod fragments was completed.

In 1998, the United States identified an underground site in Kumchang-ni, North Korea, which it suspected of being nuclear-related. In March 1999, after several rounds of negotiations, the United States and D.P.R.K. agreed that the United States would be granted "satisfactory access" to the underground site at Kumchang-ni. In October 2000, during D.P.R.K. Special Envoy Marshal Jo Myong-rok's visit to Washington, and after two visits to the site by teams of U.S. experts, the United States announced in a Joint Communiqué with the D.P.R.K. that U.S. concerns about the site had been resolved.

As called for in former Defense Secretary William Perry's official review of U.S. policy toward North Korea, the United States and the D.P.R.K. launched Agreed Framework Implementation Talks in May 2000 The United States and the D.P.R.K. also began negotiations for a comprehensive missile agreement, pursuant to the Perry recommendations.

In January 2001, the Bush Administration discontinued nuclear and missile talks, specifying that it intended to review the United States' North Korea policy. The Administration announced on June 6, 2001, that it was prepared to resume dialogue with North Korea on a broader agenda of issues—including North Korea's conventional force posture, missile development and export programs, human rights practices, and humanitarian issues.

In October 2002, a U.S. delegation confronted North Korea with the assessment that the D.P.R.K. was pursuing a uranium enrichment program, in violation of North Korea's obligations under the NPT and its commitments in the 1992 North-South Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the Agreed Framework. North Korean officials asserted to the U.S. delegation, headed by then-Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly, the D.P.R.K.'s "right" to a uranium enrichment program and indicated that that it had such a program. The U.S. side stated that North Korea would have to terminate the program before any further progress could be made in U.S.-D.P.R.K. relations. The United States also made clear that if this program were verifiably eliminated, it would be prepared to work with North Korea on the development of a fundamentally new relationship. Subsequently, the D.P.R.K. has denied the existence of a uranium enrichment program. In November 2002, the member countries of KEDO's Executive Board agreed to suspend heavy fuel oil shipments to North Korea pending a resolution of the nuclear dispute.

In late 2002 and early 2003, North Korea terminated the freeze on its existing plutonium-based nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, expelled IAEA inspectors, removed seals and monitoring equipment at Yongbyon, announced its withdrawal from the NPT, and resumed reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel to extract plutonium for weapons purposes. North Korea announced that it was taking these steps to provide itself with a deterrent force in the face of U.S. threats and U.S. "hostile policy." Beginning in mid-2003, the North repeatedly claimed to have completed reprocessing of the spent fuel rods previously frozen at Yongbyon and publicly said that the resulting fissile material would be used to bolster its "nuclear deterrent force." There is no independent confirmation of North Korea's claims. The KEDO Executive Board suspended work on the LWR Project beginning December 1, 2003.

President Bush has made clear that the United States has no intention to invade or attack North Korea. The President has also stressed that the United States seeks a peaceful end to North Korea's nuclear program in cooperation with North Korea's neighbors, who are directly affected by the threat the nuclear program poses to regional stability and security.

In early 2003, the United States proposed multilateral talks on the North Korean nuclear issue. North Korea initially opposed such a process, maintaining that the nuclear dispute was purely a bilateral matter between the United States and the D.P.R.K. However, under pressure from its neighbors and with the active involvement of China, North Korea agreed to three-party talks with China and the United States in Beijing in April 2003 and to Six-Party Talks with the United States, China, R.O.K., Japan and Russia in August 2003, also in Beijing. During the August 2003 round of Six-Party Talks, North Korea agreed to the eventual elimination of its nuclear programs if the United States were first willing to sign a bilateral "non-aggression treaty" and meet various other conditions, including the provision of substantial amounts of aid and normalization of relations. The North Korean proposal was unacceptable to the United States, which insisted on a multilateral resolution to the issue and opposed provision of benefits before the D.P.R.K.'s complete denuclearization. In October 2003, President Bush said he would consider a multilateral written security guarantee in the context of North Korea's complete, verifiable, and irreversible elimination of its nuclear weapons program.

China hosted a second round of Six-Party Talks in Beijing in February 2004. The United States saw the results as positive, including the announced intention of all parties to hold a third round by the end of June

and to form a working group to maintain momentum between plenary sessions.

At the third round of Six-Party Talks in Beijing, in June 2004, the United States tabled a comprehensive and substantive proposal aimed at resolving the nuclear issue. All parties agreed to hold a fourth round of talks by the end of September 2004. Despite its commitment, the D.P.R.K. refused to return to the table, and in the months that followed issued a series of provocative statements. In a February 10, 2005, Foreign Ministry statement, the D.P.R.K. declared that it had "manufactured nuclear weapons" and was "indefinitely suspending" its participation in the Six-Party Talks. In Foreign Ministry statements in March, the D.P.R.K. said it would no longer be bound by its voluntary moratorium on ballistic missile launches, and declared itself a nuclear weapons state.

Following intense diplomatic efforts by the United States and other parties, the fourth round of Six-Party Talks were held in Beijing over a period of 20 days from July-September 2005, with a recess period in August. Discussions resulted in all parties agreeing to a Joint Statement of Principles. In the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement, the six parties unanimously reaffirmed the goal of verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. The D.P.R.K. for the first time committed to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and to return, at an early date, to the NPT and to IAEA safeguards. The other parties agreed to provide economic cooperation and energy assistance. The United States and the D.P.R.K. agreed to take steps to normalize relations subject to bilateral policies, which for the United States includes our concerns over North Korea's ballistic missile programs and deplorable human rights conditions. While the Joint Statement provides a vision of the endpoint of the Six-Party process, much work lies ahead to implement the elements of the agreement. A fifth round of talks began in November 2005, but ended inconclusively as the D.P.R.K. began a boycott of the Six-Party Talks, citing the "U.S.' hostile policy" and specifically U.S. law enforcement action that had led in September to a freeze of North Korean accounts in Macau's Banco Delta Asia (BDA). The United States held discussions in Kuala Lumpur (July 2006) and New York in (September 2006) with other Six-Party partners, except North Korea, along with representatives from other regional powers in the Asia-Pacific region, to discuss Northeast Asian security issues, including North Korea. On July 4-5, 2006 (local Korea time), the D.P.R.K. launched seven ballistic missiles, including six short- and medium-range missiles and one of possible intercontinental range. In response, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1695 on July 15, which demands that the D.P.R.K. suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile program and reestablish existing commitments to a moratorium on missile launching. The resolution also requires all UN Member States, in accordance with their national legal authorities and consistent with international law, to exercise vigilance and prevent missile and missile-related items, materials, goods and technology from being transferred to the D.P.R.K.'s missile or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs, prevent the procurement of missiles or related items, materials, goods and services from the D.P.R.K., and the transfer of any financial resources in relation to the D.P.R.K.'s missile or WMD programs. The D.P.R.K. immediately rejected the resolution.

On October 9, 2006, North Korea announced the successful test of a nuclear explosive device, verified by the United States on October 11. In response, the United Nations Security Council, citing Chapter VII of the UN Charter, unanimously passed Resolution 1718, condemning North Korea and imposing sanctions on certain luxury goods and trade of military units, WMD and missile-related parts, and technology transfers.

The Six-Party Talks resumed in December 2006 after a 13-month hiatus. Following a bilateral meeting between the United States and D.P.R.K. in Berlin in January 2007, another round of Six-Party Talks was held in February 2007. On February 13, 2007, the parties reached an agreement on "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement" in which North Korea agreed to shut down and seal its Yongbyon nuclear facility, including the reprocessing facility and to invite back IAEA personnel to conduct all necessary monitoring and verification of these actions as agreed between the IAEA and the D.P.R.K. The other five parties agreed to provide emergency energy assistance to North Korea in the amount of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil (HFO) in the initial phase and the equivalent of 950,000 tons of HFO in the next phase of North Korea's denuclearization. The six parties also established five working groups to form specific plans for implementing the Joint Statement in the following areas: denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, normalization of D.P.R.K.-U.S. relations, normalization of D.P.R.K.-Japan relations, economic and energy cooperation, and a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism. All parties agreed that the working groups would meet within 30 days of the agreement, which they did. The agreement also envisions the directly-related parties negotiating a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum.

The sixth round of Six-Party Talks took place on March 19-23, 2007. The parties reported on the first meetings of the five working groups. At the invitation of the D.P.R.K., Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill visited Pyongyang in June 2007 as part of ongoing consultations with the six parties on implementation of the Initial Actions agreement. In July 2007, the D.P.R.K. shut down the Yongbyon nuclear facility, as well as an uncompleted reactor at Taechon, and IAEA personnel returned to the D.P.R.K. to monitor and verify the shut-down and to seal the facility. Concurrently, the R.O.K. delivered 50,000 metric tons of HFO in August 2007. All five working groups met in August and September to discuss detailed plans for implementation of

the next phase of the Initial Actions agreement, and the D.P.R.K. invited a team of experts from the United States, China, and Russia to visit the Yongbyon nuclear facility in September 2007 to discuss specific steps that could be taken to disable the facility.

The subsequent September 27-30 Six-Party plenary meeting resulted in the October 3, 2007 agreement on "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement." Under the terms of the October 3 agreement, the D.P.R.K. agreed to disable all existing nuclear facilities subject to abandonment under the September 2005 Joint Statement and the February 13 agreement. The Parties agreed to complete by December 31, 2007 a set of disablement actions for the three core facilities at Yongbyon—the 5-MW(e) Experimental Reactor, the Radiochemical Laboratory (Reprocessing Plant), and the Fresh Fuel Fabrication Plant—with oversight from a team of U.S. experts, The D.P.R.K. also agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs in accordance with the February 13 agreement by December 31, 2007 and reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how. The U.S., R.O.K., China, and Russia have continued to provide HFO and HFO-equivalent energy assistance to the D.P.R.K., to fulfill the commitment of one million tons in the initial and second phases, in parallel with the D.P.R.K.'s actions on disablement and declaration.

In November 2007, the D.P.R.K. began to disable the three core facilities at Yongbyon, and U.S. experts have been present at the site to oversee the disablement actions. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill visited Pyongyang again in December 2007 as part of ongoing consultations on the implementation of Second-Phase Actions and carried with him a letter from the President of the United States to Kim Jong-il. While the D.P.R.K. missed the December 31 deadline to provide a complete and correct declaration, it provided its declaration to the Chinese, chair of the Six-Party Talks, on June 26, 2008. The D.P.R.K. also imploded the cooling tower at the Yongbyon facility in late June 2008 before international media. Following the D.P.R.K's progress on disablement and provision of a declaration, President Bush announced the lifting of the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA) with respect to the D.P.R.K. and notified Congress of his intent to rescind North Korea's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. President Bush made clear that the United States needs to have a strong regime in place to verify the D.P.R.K.'s declaration before it removes the D.P.R.K. from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. As of August 2008, the United States continued to work with its Six-Party partners to establish such a verification regime, and remained prepared to move forward with taking the D.P.R.K. off of the state sponsors of terrorism list once a verification regime was in place.

ECONOMY

North Korea's economy declined sharply in the 1990s with the end of communism in Eastern Europe, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of bloc-trading with the countries of the former socialist bloc. Gross national income per capita is estimated to have fallen by about one-third between 1990 and 2002. The economy has since stabilized and shown some modest growth in recent years, which may be reflective of increased inter-Korean economic cooperation. Output and living standards, however, remain far below 1990 levels. Other centrally-planned economies in similar situations opted for domestic economic reform and liberalization of trade and investment. North Korea formalized some modest wage and price reforms in 2002, and has increasingly tolerated markets and a small private sector as the state-run distribution system has deteriorated. The regime, however, seems determined to maintain control. In October 2005, emboldened by an improved harvest and increased food donations from South Korea, the North Korean Government banned private grain sales and announced a return to centralized food rationing. Reports indicate this effort to reassert state control and to control inflation has been largely ineffective. Another factor contributing to the economy's poor performance is the disproportionately large share of GDP (thought to be about one-fourth) that North Korea devotes to its military.

North Korean industry is operating at only a small fraction of capacity due to lack of fuel, spare parts, and other inputs. Agriculture is now 23% of GDP, even though agricultural output has not recovered to early 1990 levels. The infrastructure is generally poor and outdated, and the energy sector has collapsed. About 80% of North Korea's terrain consists of moderately high mountain ranges and partially forested mountains and hills separated by deep, narrow valleys and small, cultivated plains. The most rugged areas are the north and east coasts. Good harbors are found on the eastern coast. Pyongyang, the capital, near the country's west coast, is located on the Taedong River.

North Korea experienced a severe famine following record floods in the summer of 1995 and continues to suffer from chronic food shortages and malnutrition. The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) provided substantial emergency food assistance beginning in 1995 (2 million tons of which came from the United States), but the North Korean Government suspended the WFP emergency program at the end of 2005 and permitted only a greatly reduced WFP program through a protracted relief and recovery operation. While China and the R.O.K. had provided most of the D.P.R.K.'s food aid in the past, the D.P.R.K. has refused to accept food aid from the R.O.K. since Lee Myung-bak's inauguration. The United States began providing food assistance to the D.P.R.K. in June 2008 after establishing a strong framework to ensure that the food will reach those most in need. The United States intends to provide up to 400,000 tons of food through WFP and 100,000 tons through U.S. nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The United States also assisted U.S.

NGOs in providing aid to fight the outbreak of infectious diseases following August 2007 floods, and is working with U.S. NGOs to improve the supply of electricity at provincial hospitals in North Korea.

Development Policy

In 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and termination of subsidized trade arrangements with Russia, other former Communist states, and China, North Korea announced the creation of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in the northeast regions of Najin (sometime rendered "Rajin"), Chongjin, and Sonbong. Problems with infrastructure, bureaucracy, and uncertainties about investment security and viability have hindered growth and development of this SEZ. The government announced in 2002 plans to establish a Special Administrative Region (SAR) in Sinuiju, at the western end of the North Korea-China border. However, the government has taken few concrete steps to establish the Sinuiju SAR, and its future is uncertain. In addition, North Korea and South Korea have established a special economic zone near the city of Kaesong, where about 20 South Korean companies operate manufacturing facilities employing North Korean workers (see further information under North-South Economic Ties).

North Korea implemented limited micro- and macroeconomic reforms in 2002, including increases in prices and wages, changes in foreign investment laws, a steep currency devaluation, and reforms in industry and management. Though the changes have failed to stimulate recovery of the industrial sector, there are reports of changed economic behavior at the enterprise and individual level. One unintended consequence of the 2002 changes has been severe inflation. An increasing number of North Koreans now try to work in the informal sector to cope with growing hardship and reduced government support.

North-South Economic Ties

Two-way trade between North and South Korea, legalized in 1988, had risen to more than $1.8 billion in 2007, much of it related to out-processing or assembly work undertaken by South Korean firms in the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC). A significant portion of the total also includes donated goods provided to the North as humanitarian assistance or as part of inter-Korean cooperation projects. Although business-based and processing-on-commission transactions continued to grow, the bulk of South Korean exports to North Korea in 2007 was still non-commercial.

Since the June 2000 North-South summit, North and South Korea have reconnected their east and west coast railroads and roads where they cross the DMZ and are working to improve these transportation routes. North and South Korea conducted tests of the east and west coast railroads on May 17, 2007 and began cross-border freight service between Kaesong in the D.P.R.K. and Munsan in the R.O.K. in December 2007. Much of the work done in North Korea has been funded by South Korea. The west coast rail and road are complete as far north as the KIC (six miles north of the DMZ), but little work is being done north of Kaesong. On the east coast, the road is complete but the rail line is far from operational. Since 2003, tour groups have been using the east coast road to travel from South Korea to Mt. Geumgang in North Korea, where cruise ship-based tours had been permitted since 1998.

As of August 2008, 72 South Korean firms were manufacturing goods in the KIC, employing more than 30,000 North Korean workers. Most of the goods are sold in South Korea; a small quantity, about 20% of the KIC products, is being exported to foreign markets. Ground was broken on the complex in June 2003, and the first products were shipped from the KIC in December 2004. Plans envision 250 firms employing 350,000 workers by 2012.

R.O.K.-organized tours to Mt. Kumgang in North Korea began in 1998. Since then, more than a million visitors have traveled to Mt. Kumgang. The R.O.K. suspended tours to Mt. Kumgang in July 2008, however, following the shooting death of a South Korean tourist at the resort by a D.P.R.K. soldier.

Economic Interaction with the United States

The United States imposed a near total economic embargo on North Korea in June 1950 when North Korea attacked the South. Sanctions were eased in stages beginning in 1989 and following the Agreed Framework on North Korea's nuclear programs in 1994. In June 2000, a new series of regulations authorized most transactions between U.S. and North Korean persons. Among other things, these regulations allowed most products, other than those specifically controlled for military, nonproliferation, or anti-terrorism purposes, to be exported to North Korea without an export license (although the export licensing requirement was subsequently reimposed in order to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 1718). Restrictions on U.S. investments in North Korea and travel of U.S. citizens to North Korea were also eased, and U.S. ships and aircraft were allowed to call at North Korean ports. On June 26, 2008, the President announced the termination of the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to the D.P.R.K. To date, however, U.S. economic interaction with North Korea remains minimal, and North Korean assets frozen since 1950 remained frozen. In January 2007, pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1718, the U.S. Department of Commerce issued new regulations prohibiting the export of luxury goods to North Korea. Many statutory sanctions on North Korea, including those affecting trade in military, dual-use, and missile-related items and those based on multilateral arrangements, remain in place. Most forms of U.S. economic assistance, other than purely humanitarian assistance, are prohibited. North Korea does not enjoy "Normal Trade Relations" with

the United States, so any goods manufactured in North Korea are subject to a higher tariff upon entry to the United States.

Points of Contact for U.S. regulations concerning economic activity with North Korea:

- Treasury—Office of Foreign Assets Control, Tel. (202) 622-2490, http://www.treas.gov/ofac;
- Commerce—Foreign Policy Controls Division, Bureau of Industry and Security, Tel. (202) 482-0171;
- Transportation—Office of the Assistant General Counsel for International Law, Tel. (202) 366-9183.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 29, 2008

Prior to departing the United States, U.S. citizens planning to transit China on their visit to North Korea are encouraged to register on line with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing; U. S. citizens transiting South Korea to take the Mount Kumgang or Kaesong City tours should register with the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. U. S. citizens visiting North Korea should also register with the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang (U.S. Protective Power).

Country Description: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea or the DPRK) is a highly militaristic Communist state located on the Korean Peninsula between northeast China and the Republic of Korea (South Korea or ROK), with land borders with China, Russia and South Korea. The DPRK is one of the world's most isolated countries. The continuing dispute over North Korea's development of nuclear programs and nuclear weapons has resulted in tensions in the region and between the United States and the DPRK. North Korea limits trade and transportation links with other countries and tightly restricts the circumstances under which foreigners may enter the country and interact with local citizens. Telephone and fax communications are unavailable in many areas of the country and foreigners can expect their communications to be monitored by DPRK officials. In the past few years, North Korea has experienced famine, flooding, fuel and electricity shortages, and outbreaks of disease. Many countries, including the United States, have contributed to international relief efforts to assist the people of North Korea.

Foreign tourists are a means for North Korea to earn much needed foreign currency, but an underdeveloped service sector, inadequate infrastructure, and political tensions with surrounding countries have stymied any significant tourist flow. North Korean efforts to expand tourism have focused primarily on group tours from China, as well as from South Korea primarily to the Mount Kumgang tourist area and the city of Kaesong.

The United States does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with the DPRK. The Swedish Embassy located in Pyongyang acts as the United States' interim consular protective power and provides basic consular services to U.S. citizens traveling in North Korea. Please refer to Special Circumstances for additional information.

Entry Requirements: North Korean visas are required for entry. The U.S. Government does not issue letters to private Americans seeking North Korean visas, even though in the past such letters have sometimes been requested by DPRK embassies. Prospective travelers entering and departing North Korea through China must also obtain a two-entry visa for China as a valid Chinese visa is essential for departing North Korea at the conclusion of a visit or in an emergency. While the ROK government is attempting to open direct travel routes to the DPRK, routine travel from the ROK to the DPRK is currently prohibited. Travel across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) is allowed only infrequently for official and government-authorized cultural and economic exchanges, or aid shipments. There are no regularly operating direct commercial flights from South Korea to North Korea at this time. U.S. citizens who arrive in North Korea without a valid U.S. passport and North Korean visa may be detained, arrested, fined or denied entry. Individuals traveling to North Korea report that fees for local travel costs (taxi, tolls, permits and the cost for security personnel assigned to escort foreigner visitors) can be high and arbitrary.

Where to obtain a North Korean visa: There is no DPRK embassy in the United States. U.S. citizens and residents planning travel to North Korea must obtain DPRK visas in third countries, for example in Beijing, China. For information about entry requirements and restricted areas, contact the DPRK Mission to the United Nations in New York. Address inquiries to:

The Permanent Representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations
820 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 972-3105
Fax: (212) 972-3154

Americans living abroad can contact the DPRK Embassy, if any, in their country of residence. U.S. citizens traveling to North Korea may obtain their visas at the DPRK Embassy in Beijing, China, which will issue visas only after receiving authorization from the DPRK Foreign Ministry in Pyongyang. Prior to traveling to the region, travelers may wish to confirm that authorization to issue their visa has been received from Pyongyang. Americans can call the North Korean Embassy in Beijing prior to their travel by telephone at (86-10) 6532-1186 or (86-10) 6532-1189 (fax: (86-10) 6532-6056).

Safety and Security: DPRK government security personnel closely monitor the activities and conversations of foreigners in North Korea. Hotel rooms, telephones and fax machines

may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched. Photographing roads, bridges, airports, rail stations, or anything other than designated public tourist sites can be perceived as espionage and may result in confiscation of cameras and film or even detention. DPRK border officials routinely confiscate visitors' cell phones upon arrival, returning the phone only upon departure. Foreign visitors to North Korea may be arrested, detained or expelled for activities that would not be considered criminal outside the DPRK, including involvement in unsanctioned religious and political activities, engaging in unauthorized travel, or interaction with the local population.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on worldwide security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The North Korean government does not release statistics on crime. Violent crime is very rare and street crime is uncommon in Pyongyang. Petty thefts have been reported, especially at the airport in Pyongyang.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and to the Swedish Embassy. If you are a victim of any crime while in North Korea, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the Swedish Embassy for assistance (address and phone number below).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Persons with medical problems should not travel to North Korea. For decades, medical facilities in the DPRK have suffered from a lack of resources and electricity, as well as inadequate and often outdated skills among the medical staff. Hospitals in Pyongyang can perform basic examinations and lifesaving measures but functioning x-ray facilities are not generally available. Surgery should be avoided. For accidents outside Pyongyang, transport back to the capital can be a lengthy trip without medical assistance. Persons requiring regular medication are encouraged to bring sufficient stocks of drugs for personal use since most drugs are impossible to obtain locally. Hospitals will expect immediate U.S. dollar cash payment for medical treatment. Credit cards and checks have not been honored in the past, according to diplomatic personnel stationed in the DPRK. Local DPRK hosts are often not aware of available evacuation options and might claim that no such options exist. In case of serious medical problems, it is important to insist on immediate contact with the Swedish Embassy. The Swedish Embassy can arrange a medical evacuation to Beijing within approximately 5-10 hours.

All necessary vaccinations should be received prior to traveling to North Korea. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en. Travelers with special dietary requirements are advised to bring food with them to North Korea, as the restaurants available to foreigners may have limited menus that lack variety and nutritional adequacy.

In the case of a critical illness or accident, the Swedish Embassy will attempt to arrange flight clearances for air ambulances performing emergency medical evacuations. Medical air evacuation costs vary, but average approximately $40,000 to $50,000 for medical, personnel, aircraft and clearance costs. Clearances can usually be arranged within one week. Medical evacuation by regularly scheduled airlines can be arranged, but is limited to the very few flights that operate from Pyongyang to Beijing, Dalian, Shenyang and Macau. Chinese visas for injured foreigners and any escorts must be obtained prior to the evacuation from North Korea in order to transit China. Even in the case of a medical emergency, transit visas may take several days to arrange. Evacuation across the DMZ to South Korea is not allowed.

If an American citizen falls ill or is injured while traveling in the DPRK, accompanying travelers or family members should immediately contact the Swedish Embassy using the phone numbers listed below.

The Embassy of Sweden,
Munsu-Dong District,
Pyongyang, DPRK

Telephone and fax numbers for the Swedish Embassy (U.S. Protective Power) are:

Tel: (850-2) 3817 485 (Reception)
(850-2) 3817 904, 907 (First Secretary)
(850-2) 3817 908, 905 (Ambassador)
Fax: (850-2) 3817 663
Email:
ambassaden.pyongyang@foreign.ministry.se

Notification also should be made to the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit in Beijing, China, using the phone numbers listed below:

U.S. Embassy, Beijing
American Citizen Services
Number 2 Xiushui Dong Jie
Beijing, China 100600
Telephone: (86-10) 6532-3431
Fax: (86-10) 6532-4153

After hours, please call (86-10) 6532-1910 and ask for the Embassy duty officer. Americans who wish to contact U.S. consular officials in China can e-mail questions to: amcitbeijing

@state.gov. Companies that may be able to arrange evacuation services include, but are not limited to those listed below. Travelers may wish to contact these or other emergency medical assistance providers for information about their ability to provide medical evacuation insurance and/or assistance for travelers to North Korea.

SOS International (www.intsos.com)
U.S. telephone: (1-800) 468-5232
China telephone:
(86-10) 6462-9111/9118

Medex Assistance Corporation
(www.medexassist.com)
U.S. telephone: (410) 453-6300 / 6301
Toll free: 108888-800-527-0218
(call from China)
China telephone: (86-10) 6595-8510)

Global Doctor
(www.globaldoctor.com)
China telephone: (86-10) 83151914)
(86-24) 24330678 in Shenyang, Liaoning Province

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning North Korea is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or situation. Foreigners not holding a valid DPRK driver's license are not allowed to drive in North Korea. Foreigners generally are not allowed to use public buses or the subway. North Korea has a functioning rail transport system; however delays occur often, sometimes for days. On occasion, service may be totally interrupted before reaching the final destination. Bicycles are unavailable for rental or purchase.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and North Korea, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed North Korea's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Interim Consular Protecting Power: The United States does not maintain diplomatic or consular relations with the DPRK. The U.S. Government therefore cannot provide normal consular protective services to U.S. citizens in North Korea. On September 20, 1995, a consular protecting power arrangement was implemented, allowing the Swedish Embassy in the DPRK capital of Pyongyang to provide basic consular protective services to U.S. citizens traveling in North Korea who are ill, injured, arrested or who have died while there.

Consular Access: There is no United States diplomatic or consular presence in the DPRK. Americans traveling in the DPRK may receive limited consular services from the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang. Please see section above on "Medical Insurance" for address and contact information for the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry photocopies of their passport data and photo pages with them at all times so that, if questioned by DPRK officials, evidence of their U.S. citizenship is readily available. The U.S.- DPRK Interim Consular Agreement provides that North Korea will notify the Swedish Embassy within four days of an arrest or detention of an American citizen and will allow consular visits within two days after a request is made by the Swedish Embassy. However, consular access has not been readily granted in cases where American citizens have been reported as being detained or held against their will by DPRK officials. Moreover, delegations with ethnic Korean individuals, or delegations representing Korean-affiliated organizations in the U.S., are handled by DPRK structures that are well beyond the reach of diplomatic missions in Pyongyang. Hence, in case of a situation requiring consular assistance, the Embassy's access is even more limited.

Customs Regulations: DPRK authorities may seize documents, literature, audio and videotapes, compact discs and letters deemed by North Korean officials to be pornographic, political or intended for religious proselytizing. Persons seeking to enter North Korea with religious materials in a quantity deemed to be greater than that needed for personal use can be detained, fined and expelled. It is advisable to contact the DPRK Mission to the United Nations or a DPRK embassy or a DPRK consulate in a third country for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Dual Nationality: The DPRK does not recognize dual nationality. U.S. citizens of Korean heritage may be subject to military obligations and taxes on foreign source income. Additional questions on dual nationality may be directed to Overseas Citizens Services, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20520 or by telephone at 1-888-407-4747.

U.S. Government Economic Sanctions Against North Korea: At this time, goods of North Korean origin may not be imported into the United States either directly or indirectly without prior notification to and approval of the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). Exports to North Korea may be subject to licensing requirements. Check with the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security. Most financial transactions between U.S. and North Korean citizens are authorized, provided they meet the criteria outlined in the June 19, 2000, and subsequent amendments to OFAC regulations. All transactions ordinarily incident to travel to, from and within North Korea and to maintenance within North Korea are authorized, and U.S. travel service providers are allowed to organize group travel to North Korea. Commercial U.S. ships and

aircraft carrying U.S. goods are allowed to call at North Korean ports with prior clearance. In May 2006, OFAC began prohibiting U.S. persons from "owning, leasing, operating or insuring any vessel flagged by North Korea." Full text of the regulation can be found in the Federal Register at http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/fr/2000/061900-a.txt.

The U.S. maintains various export controls and other sanctions on North Korea for counter- terrorism, nonproliferation and other reasons. Exports of military and sensitive dual-use items are prohibited, as are most types of U.S. economic assistance. The U.S. also abides by multilateral restrictions and sanctions with respect to North Korea, including those contained in recent United Nations Security Council Resolutions in response to the North Korean missile launches and nuclear test in July and October 2006.

For additional information, consult the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) home page on the Internet at http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States. Local laws also may not afford the protections available to U.S. citizens under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking local laws can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating the law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict, and convicted offenders often face long jail sentences and heavy fines. North Korean security personnel may view unescorted travel by Americans inside North Korea without explicit official authorization as espionage, especially in cases where the U.S. citizens are originally from South Korea or are thought to understand the Korean language. Security personnel may also view any attempt to engage in unauthorized conversations with a North Korean citizen as espionage.

Foreigners are subject to fines or arrest for unauthorized currency transactions or for shopping at stores not designated for foreigners. It is a criminal act in North Korea to show disrespect to the country's current and former leaders, Kim Jong-Il and Kim Il-Sung, respectively. Foreign journalists have been threatened when questioning the policies or public statements of the DPRK or the actions of the current leadership.

Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Please see additional information on Criminal Penalties.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Embassy Locations And Registration: There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in North Korea. U.S. citizens planning to visit North Korea are encouraged to register prior to departing the United States with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing if entering North Korea from China. U.S. citizens planning to visit the Mount Kumgang tourism area or Kaesong from South Korea should register with the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. Registration can be done on line through the State Department's travel registration web site or in person, by telephone or fax, at the U.S. Embassy. Americans who have a medical or consular emergency and who wish to contact the Swedish Embassy are reminded first to communicate this need to their North Korean escorts or guides. Do not attempt to travel to the Swedish Embassy unescorted. The Swedish Embassy (U.S. Protective Power) is located at Munsu-Dong District, Pyongyang. The telephone and fax numbers for the Swedish Embassy (U.S. Protective Power) are:

Tel: (850-2) 3817 485 (reception)

Tel: (850-2) 3817 904, (850-2) 3817 907 (First Secretary)

Tel: (850-2) 3817 908, (850-2) 3817 905 (Ambassador)

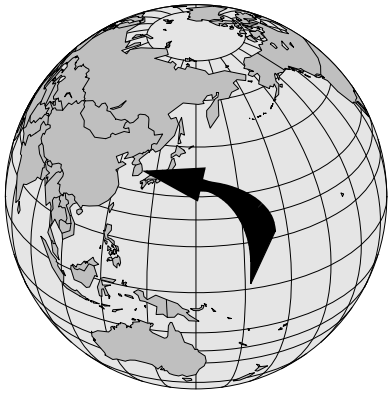
Fax: (850-2) 3817 663

The American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China, is located at: 2 Xiushui Dong Jie, Beijing. The Embassy is located near Ritan Park. Telephone: (86-10) 6532-3431. Fax: (86-10) 6532-4153. Email: amcitbeijing@state.gov. The Embassy Beijing web site is http://beijing. usembassy-china.org.cn.

For after-hours emergencies please call (86-10)6532-3431 and ask for the Embassy duty officer.

The American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea, is located at: 32 Sejong-no, Jongno-gu, Seoul. The Embassy is located across the street from Sejong Cultural Center and next to the Ministry of Information and Communication/KT Building. Telephone: (82-2) 397-4114. Fax: (82-2) 2-397-4101. E-mail: seoul_acs@state.gov. The Embassy Seoul web site is http://seoul.usembassy.gov.

For after-hours emergencies please call (82-2) 721-4114 and ask for the Embassy duty officer.



KOREA (SOUTH)

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Korea

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 98,480 sq. km. (38,023 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Indiana.
Cities: (2005) Capital—Seoul (10.3 million). Other major cities—Busan (3.7 million), Daegu (2.5 million), Inchon (2.6 million), Gwangju (1.4 million), Daejeon (1.5 million), Ulsan (1.0 million).
Terrain: Partially forested mountain ranges separated by deep, narrow valleys; cultivated plains along the coasts, particularly in the west and south.
Climate: Temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Korean(s).
Population: (2008) 48,379,392.
Population annual growth rate: (2008) 0.269%.
Ethnic groups: Korean; small Chinese minority (about 20,000).
Religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Shamanism, Confucianism, Chondogyo.
Languages: Korean.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Enrollment—11.5 million. Attendance—middle school 99%, high school 95%. Literacy—98%.
Health: (2008) Infant mortality rate—4.29/1,000. Life expectancy—78.64 yrs (men 75.34 yrs.; women 82.17 yrs).
Work force: (2007) 24.22 million. Services—75.2%; industry—17.3%; agriculture—7.5%

Government

Type: Republic with powers shared between the president, the legislature, and the courts.
Liberation: August 15, 1945.
Constitution: July 17, 1948; last revised 1987.
Government branches: Executive—President (chief of state); Prime Minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court and appellate courts; Constitutional Court.
Political subdivisions: Nine provinces, seven administratively separate cities (Seoul, Busan, Incheon, Daegu, Gwangju, Daejeon, Ulsan).
Political parties: Grand National Party (GNP); Democratic Party (DP), formerly known as United Democratic Party (UDP); Liberal Forward Party (LFP); Democratic Labor Party (DLP); Creative Korea Party (CKP)
Suffrage: Universal at 19.
Budget: (2007) Expenditures—$256.6 billion.
Defense: (2007) 2.7% of GDP.

Economy

GDP: (purchasing power parity in 2007) $1.201 trillion.
GDP growth rate: 2004, 4.7%; 2005, 4.2%; 2006, 5.1%; 2007, 5.0%.
Per capita GNI: (2007) $20,045.
Consumer price index: 2004, 3.6%; 2005, 2.8%; 2006, 2.2%; 2007, 2.5%.
Natural resources: Limited coal, tungsten, iron ore, limestone, kaolinite, and graphite.
Agriculture: (including forestry and fisheries) Products—rice, vegetables, fruit, root crops, barley; cattle, pigs, chickens, milk, eggs, fish. Arable land—17% of land area.
Industry: Types—Electronics and electrical products, telecommunications, motor vehicles, shipbuilding, mining and manufacturing, petrochemicals, industrial machinery, steel.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$379 billion f.o.b.: electronic products (semiconductors, cellular phones and equipment, computers), automobiles, machinery and equipment, steel, ships, petrochemicals. Imports—$349.6 billion f.o.b.: crude oil, food, machinery and transportation equipment, chemicals and chemical products, base metals and articles. Major markets (2007)—China (25.7%), U.S. (12.3%), Japan (6.8%), Hong Kong (4.5%). Major suppliers (2007)—China (16.7%), Japan (16.4%), U.S. (10.5%), Saudi Arabia (6.3%), U.A.E. (4.2%).

PEOPLE

Population

Korea's population is one of the most ethnically and linguistically homogenous in the world. Except for a small Chinese community (about 20,000), virtually all Koreans share a common cultural and linguistic heritage. With 48.85 million people, South Korea has one of the world's highest population densities. Major population centers are located in the northwest, southeast, and in the plains south of the Seoul-Incheon area. Korea has experienced one of the largest rates of emigration, with ethnic Koreans residing primarily in China (2.4 million), the United States (2.1 million), Japan (600,000), and the countries of the former Soviet Union (532,000).

Language

The Korean language is related to Japanese and Mongolian. Although it differs grammatically from Chinese and does not use tones, a large number of Chinese cognates exist in Korean. Chinese ideograms are believed to have been brought into Korea sometime before the second century BC. The learned class spoke Korean, but read and wrote Chinese. A phonetic writing system ("hangul") was invented in the 15th century by King Sejong to provide a writing system for commoners who could not read classical Chinese. Modern Korean uses hangul almost exclusively with Chinese characters in limited use for word clarification. Approximately 1,300 Chinese characters are used in modern Korean. English is taught as a second language in most primary and secondary schools. Chinese and Japanese are widely taught at secondary schools.

Religion

Half of the population actively practices religion. Among this group, Christianity (49%) and Buddhism (47%) comprise Korea's two dominant religions. Though only 3% identified themselves as Confucianists, Korean society remains highly imbued with Confucian values and beliefs. The remaining 1% of the population practice Shamanism (traditional spirit worship) and Chondogyo ("Heavenly Way"), a traditional religion.

HISTORY

The myth of Korea's foundation by the god-king Tangun in BC 2333 embodies the homogeneity and self-sufficiency valued by the Korean people. Korea experienced many invasions by its larger neighbors in its 2,000 years of recorded history. The country repelled numerous foreign invasions despite domestic strife, in part due to its protected status in the Sino-centric regional political model during Korea's Chosun dynasty (1392-1910). Historical antipathies to foreign influence earned Korea the title of "Hermit Kingdom" in the 19th century.

With declining Chinese power and a weakened domestic posture at the end of the 19th century, Korea was open to Western and Japanese encroachment. In 1910, Japan began a 35-year period of colonial rule over Korea. As a result of Japan's efforts to supplant the Korean language and aspects of Korean culture, memories of Japanese annexation still recall fierce animosity and resentment, especially among older Koreans. Nevertheless, import restrictions on Japanese movies, popular music, fashion, and the like have been lifted, and many Koreans, especially the younger generations, eagerly follow Japanese pop culture. Aspects of Korean culture, including television shows and movies, have also become popular in Japan.

Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers in 1945, signaling the end of World War II, only further embroiled Korea in foreign rivalries. Division at the 38th parallel marked the beginning of Soviet and U.S. trusteeship over the North and South, respectively. On August 15, 1948 the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.) was established, with Syngman Rhee as the first President. On September 9, 1948 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.) was established under Kim Il Sung. On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces invaded South Korea. Led by the U.S., a 16-member coalition undertook the first collective action under United Nations Command (UNC). Following China's entry on behalf of North Korea later that year, a stalemate ensued for the final two years of the conflict. Armistice negotiations, initiated in July 1951, were ultimately concluded on July 27, 1953 at Panmunjom, in what is now the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The Armistice Agreement was signed by representatives of the Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and the U.S.-led United Nations Command (UNC). Though the R.O.K. supported the UNC, it refused to sign the Armistice Agreement. A peace treaty has never been signed. The war left almost three million Koreans dead or wounded and millions of others homeless and separated from their families.

In the following decades, South Korea experienced political turmoil under autocratic leadership. President Syngman Rhee was forced to resign in April 1960 following a student-led uprising. The Second Republic under the leadership of Chang Myon ended after only one year, when Major General Park Chung-hee led a military coup. Park's rule, which resulted in tremendous economic growth and development but increasingly restricted political freedoms, ended with his assassination in 1979. Subsequently, a powerful group of military officers, led by Lieutenant General Chun Doo Hwan, declared martial law and took power.

Throughout the Park and Chun eras, South Korea developed a vocal civil society that led to strong protests against authoritarian rule. Composed primarily of students and labor union activists, protest movements reached a climax after Chun's 1979 coup and declaration of martial law. A confrontation in Gwangju in 1980 left at least 200 civilians dead. Thereafter, pro-democracy activities intensified even more, ultimately forcing political concessions by the government in 1987, including the restoration of direct presidential elections.

In 1987, Roh Tae-woo, a former general, was elected president, but additional democratic advances during his tenure resulted in the 1992 election of a long-time pro-democracy activist, Kim Young-sam. Kim became Korea's first civilian elected president in 32 years. The 1997 presidential election and peaceful transition of power marked another step forward in Korea's democratization when Kim Dae-jung, a life-long democracy and human rights activist, was elected from a major opposition party. The transition to an open, democratic system was further consolidated in 2002, when self-educated human rights lawyer, Roh Moo-hyun, won the presidential election on a "participatory government" platform. South Koreans voted for a new president in December 2007. Former business executive and Mayor of Seoul Lee Myung-bak's 5-year term began with his inauguration on February 25, 2008.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Republic of Korea (commonly known as "South Korea") is a republic with powers nominally shared among the presidency, the legislature, and the judiciary, but traditionally dominated by the president. The president is chief of state and is elected for a single term of 5 years. The 299 members of the unicameral National Assembly are elected to 4-year terms; elections for the assembly were held on April 9, 2008. South Korea's judicial system comprises a Supreme Court, appellate courts, and a Constitutional Court. The judiciary is independent under the constitution. The country has nine provinces and seven administratively separate cities—the capital of Seoul, along with Busan, Daegu, Daejeon, Gwangju, Incheon and Ulsan. Political parties include the Grand National Party (GNP), Democratic Party (DP), Liberal Forward Party (LFP), Creative Korea Party (CKP), and Democratic Labor Party (DLP). Suffrage is universal at age 19 (lowered from 20 in 2005).



Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

The spellings of names of South Korean officials have been changed to reflect widely recognized spellings.

Pres.: **LEE Myung-bak**
Prime Min.: **HAN Seung-soo**
Chief Sec.: **CHO Jung-pyo**
Min. of Culture, Sports, & Tourism: **YU In-chon**
Min. of Education, Science, & Technology: **AHN Byong-man**
Min. of Environment: **LEE Maan-ee**
Min. for Food, Agriculture, Forestry, & Fisheries: **JANG Tae-pyung**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Trade: **YU Myung-hwan**
Min. of Gender Equality: **BYUN Do-yoon**
Min. for Health, Welfare, & Family Affairs: **JEON Jae-hee**
Min. of Justice: **KIM Kyung-han**
Min. of Knowledge Economy: **LEE Youn-ho**
Min. of Labor: **LEE Young-hui**
Min. of Land, Transport, & Maritime Affairs: **CHUNG Jong-hwan**
Min. of National Defense: **LEE Sang-hee**

Min. of Public Admin. & Security: **WON Sei-hoon**
Min. of Strategy & Finance: **KANG Man-soo**
Min. of Unification: **KIM Ha-joong**
Chmn., Board of Audit & Inspection:
Chmn., Civil Rights Commission: **YANG Gun**
Chmn., Civil Service Commission: **KWON Oh-ryong**
Chmn., Fair Trade Commission: **BAEK Yong-ho**
Chmn., Financial Services Commission: **JUN Kwang-woo**
Chmn., Korean Broadcasting & Communications Commission: **CHOI See-jung**
Chmn., National Competitive Council: **SA-KONG Il**
Pres., National Human Rights Commission: **AHN Kyong-whan**
Chief of Staff, Office of the Pres.: **CHUNG Chung-kil**
Senior Presidential Sec. for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Office of the Pres.: **KIM Sung-hwan**
Dir., National Intelligence Service: **KIM Sung-ho**
Governor, Bank of Korea: **LEE Seong-tae**
Ambassador to the US: **LEE Tae-sik**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **PARK In-kook**

Korea maintains an embassy in the United States at 2450 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-939-5600). Consulates General are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Hagatna (Agana) in Guam.

ECONOMY

The Republic of Korea's economic growth over the past several decades has been spectacular. Per capita GNP, only $100 in 1963, is over $20,000. South Korea is now the United States' seventh-largest trading partner and is the 13th-largest economy in the world.

In the early 1960s, the government of Park Chung Hee instituted sweeping economic policy changes emphasizing exports and labor-intensive light industries, leading to rapid debt-financed industrial expansion. The government carried out a currency reform, strengthened financial institutions, and introduced flexible economic planning. In the 1970s Korea began directing fiscal and financial policies toward promoting heavy and chemical industries, consumer electronics, and automobiles. Manufacturing continued to grow rapidly in the 1980s and early 1990s.

In recent years, Korea's economy moved away from the centrally planned, government-directed investment model toward a more market-oriented one. Korea bounced back from the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis with some International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistance, but based largely on extensive financial reforms that restored stability to markets. These economic reforms, pushed by President Kim Dae-jung, helped Korea return to growth, with growth rates of 10% in 1999 and 9% in 2000. The slowing global economy and falling exports slowed growth to 3.3% in 2001, prompting consumer stimulus measures that led to 7.0% growth in 2002. Consumer over-shopping and rising household debt, along with external factors, slowed growth to near 3% again in 2003. Economic performance in 2004 improved to 4.6% due to an increase in exports, and remained at or above 4% in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Economists are concerned that South Korea's economic growth potential has fallen because of a rapidly aging population and structural problems that are becoming increasingly apparent. Foremost among these structural concerns are the rigidity of South Korea's labor regulations, the need for more constructive relations between management and workers, the country's underdeveloped financial markets, and a general lack of regulatory transparency. Korean policy makers are increasingly worried about diversion of corporate investment to China and other lower wage countries, and by Korea's falling foreign direct investment (FDI). President Lee Myung-bak was elected in December 2007 on a platform that promised to boost Korea's economic growth rate through deregulation, tax reform, increased FDI, labor reform, and free trade agreements (FTAs) with major markets.

North-South Economic Ties

Two-way trade between North and South Korea, legalized in 1988, hit almost $1.8 billion in 2007, much of it related to out-processing or assembly work undertaken by South Korean firms in the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC). A significant portion of the total also includes donated goods provided to the North as humanitarian assistance or as part of inter-Korean cooperation projects. According to R.O.K. figures, about 60% of the total trade consisted of commercial transactions, much of that based on processing-on-commission arrangements. The R.O.K. is North Korea's second-largest trading partner.

Since the June 2000 North-South summit, North and South Korea have reconnected their east and west coast railroads and roads where they cross the DMZ and are working to improve these transportation routes. North and South Korea conducted tests of the east and west coast railroads on May 17, 2007 and began cross-border freight service between Kaesong in the D.P.R.K. and Munsan in the R.O.K. in December 2007. Much of the work done in North Korea has been funded by South Korea. The west coast rail and road are complete as far north as the KIC (six miles north of the DMZ), but little work is being done north of Kaesong. On the east coast, the road is complete but the rail line is far from operational. Since 2003, tour groups have been using the east coast road to travel from South Korea to Mt. Geumgang in North Korea, where cruise ship-based tours had been permitted since 1998.

As of September 2008, 79 South Korean firms including apartment-type factories were manufacturing goods in the KIC, employing more than 33,000 North Korean workers. Most of the goods are sold in South Korea; a small quantity is being exported to foreign markets. Ground was broken on the complex in June 2003, and the first products were shipped from the KIC in December 2004. Plans envision 1,500 firms

employing 350,000 workers by 2012. R.O.K.-organized tours to Mt. Geumgang in North Korea began in 1998. Since then, more than a million visitors have traveled to Mt. Geumgang. The R.O.K. suspended tours to Mt. Geumgang in July 2008, however, following the shooting death of a South Korean tourist at the resort by a D.P.R.K. soldier.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In August 1991, South Korea joined the United Nations along with North Korea and is active in most UN specialized agencies and many international forums. The Republic of Korea also hosted major international events such as the 1988 Summer Olympics, the 2002 World Cup Soccer Tournament (co-hosted with Japan), and the 2002 Second Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies.

Economic considerations have a high priority in Korean foreign policy. The R.O.K. seeks to build on its economic accomplishments to increase its regional and global role. It is a founding member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and chaired the organization in 2005.

The Republic of Korea maintains diplomatic relations with more than 170 countries and a broad network of trading relationships. The United States and Korea are allied by the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty. Korea and Japan coordinate closely on numerous issues. This includes consultations with the United States on North Korea policy.

Korean Peninsula: Reunification and Recent Developments

For almost 20 years after the 1950-53 Korean War, relations between North and South Korea were minimal and very strained. Official contact did not occur until 1971, beginning with Red Cross contacts and family reunification projects in 1985. In the early 1990s, relations between the two countries improved with the 1991 South-North Basic Agreement, which acknowledged that reunification was the goal of both governments, and the 1992 Joint Declaration of Denuclearization. However, divergent positions on the process of reunification and North Korean weapons programs, compounded by South Korea's tumultuous domestic politics and the 1994 death of North Korean leader Kim Il-sung, contributed to a cycle of warming and cooling of relations.

Relations improved again following the 1997 election of Kim Dae-jung. His "Sunshine Policy" of engagement with the D.P.R.K. set the stage for the historic June 2000 inter-Korean summit between President Kim and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il. President Kim was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000 for the policy, but the prize was somewhat tarnished by revelations of a $500 million dollar "payoff" to North Korea that immediately preceded the summit.

Relations again became tense following the October 2002 North Korean acknowledgement of a covert program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. Following this acknowledgement, the United States, along with the People's Republic of China, proposed multilateral talks among the concerned parties to deal with this issue. At the urging of China and its neighbors, the D.P.R.K. agreed to meet with China and the United States in April 2003. In August of that year, the D.P.R.K. agreed to attend Six-Party Talks aimed at ending the North's pursuit of nuclear weapons that added the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Russia to the table. Two more rounds of Six-Party Talks between the United States, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, and the D.P.R.K. were held in February and June of 2004. At the third round, the United States put forward a comprehensive proposal aimed at completely, verifiably, and irreversibly eliminating North Korea's nuclear weapons programs.

A fourth round of talks was held in two sessions spanning a period of 20 days between July and September 2005. All parties agreed to a Joint Statement of Principles on September 19, 2005, in which, among other things, the D.P.R.K. committed to "abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards." The Joint Statement also committed the United States and other parties to certain actions as the D.P.R.K. denuclearized. The United States offered a security assurance, specifying that it had no nuclear weapons on R.O.K. territory and no intention to attack or invade the D.P.R.K. with nuclear or other weapons. Finally, the United States and the D.P.R.K., as well as the D.P.R.K. and Japan, agreed to undertake steps to normalize relations, subject to their respective bilateral policies. On October 9, 2006, North Korea announced a successful nuclear test, verified by the United States on October 11. In response, the United Nations Security Council, citing Chapter VII of the UN Charter, unanimously adopted Resolution 1718, condemning North Korea's action and imposing sanctions on certain luxury goods and trade of military units, weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related parts, and technology transfers. The Six-Party Talks resumed in December 2006 after a 13-month hiatus. Following a bilateral meeting between the United States and D.P.R.K. in Berlin in January 2007, another round of Six-Party Talks was held in February 2007. On February 13, 2007, the parties reached an agreement on "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement" in which North Korea agreed to shut down and seal its Yongbyon nuclear facility, including the reprocessing facility, and to invite back International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) personnel to conduct all necessary monitoring and verification of these actions. The other five parties agreed to provide emergency energy assistance to North Korea in the amount of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil (HFO) in the initial phase (within 60 days) and the equivalent of up to 950,000 tons of HFO in the next phase of North Korea's denuclearization. The six parties also established five working groups to form specific

plans for implementing the Joint Statement in the following areas: denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, normalization of D.P.R.K.-U.S. relations, normalization of D.P.R.K.-Japan relations, economic and energy cooperation, and a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism. All parties agreed that the working groups would meet within 30 days of the agreement, which they did. The agreement also envisions the directly-related parties negotiating a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum. As part of the initial actions, North Korea invited IAEA Director General ElBaradei to Pyongyang in early March for preliminary discussions on the return of the IAEA to the D.P.R.K. The sixth round of Six-Party Talks took place on March 19-23, 2007. The parties reported on the first meetings of the five working groups. At the invitation of the D.P.R.K., Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill visited Pyongyang in June 2007 as part of ongoing consultations with the six parties on implementation of the Initial Actions agreement. In July 2007, the D.P.R.K. shut down the Yongbyon nuclear facility, as well as an uncompleted reactor at Taechon, and IAEA personnel returned to the D.P.R.K. to monitor and verify the shut-down and to seal the facility. Concurrently, the R.O.K., China, United States, and Russia initiated deliveries of approximately 50,000 metric tons of HFO per month, with the R.O.K. completing delivery of the first tranche of 50,000 metric tons in August, China the second in September, the United States the third in November, and Russia the fourth in January. These four parties are expected to continue to provide monthly shipments of HFO as the D.P.R.K. continues to implement denuclearization steps. All five working groups met in August and September to discuss detailed plans for implementation of the next phase of the Initial Actions agreement, and the D.P.R.K. invited a team of experts from the United States, China, and Russia to visit the Yongbyon nuclear facility in September 2007 to discuss specific steps that could be taken to disable the facility. The subsequent September 27-30 Six-Party plenary meeting resulted in the October 3, 2007 agreement on "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement."

Under the terms of the October 3 agreement, the D.P.R.K. agreed to disable all existing nuclear facilities subject to abandonment under the September 2005 Joint Statement and the February 13 agreement. The parties agreed to complete by December 31, 2007 a set of disablement actions for the three core facilities at Yongbyon—the 5-MW(e) Experimental Reactor, the Radiochemical Laboratory (Reprocessing Plant), and the Fresh Fuel Fabrication Plant—with oversight from a team of U.S. experts, The D.P.R.K. also agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs in accordance with the February 13 agreement by December 31, 2007 and reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how.

In November 2007, the D.P.R.K. began to disable the three core facilities at Yongbyon and complete most of the agreed disablement actions by the end of the year. Due to health and safety concerns, disablement activities at the 5-MW(e) reactor continued beyond December 31, 2007. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill visited Pyongyang again in December 2007 as part of ongoing consultations on the implementation of Second-Phase actions and carried with him a letter from the President of the United States to Kim Jong-il. The D.P.R.K. missed the December 31 deadline to provide a complete and correct declaration, but efforts to secure a declaration continued into January 2008. While the D.P.R.K. missed the December 31 deadline to provide a complete and correct declaration, it provided its declaration to the Chinese, chair of the Six-Party Talks, on June 26, 2008. The D.P.R.K. also imploded the cooling tower at the Yongbyon facility in late June 2008 before international media. Following the D.P.R.K's progress on disablement and provision of a declaration, President Bush announced the lifting of the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA) with respect to the D.P.R.K. and notified Congress of his intent to rescind North Korea's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. President Bush made clear that the United States needs to have a strong regime in place to verify the D.P.R.K.'s declaration before it removes the D.P.R.K. from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. As of August 2008, the United States continued to work with its Six-Party partners to establish such a verification regime, and remained prepared to move forward with taking the D.P.R.K. off of the state sponsors of terrorism list once a verification regime was in place.

U.S.-KOREAN RELATIONS

The United States believes that the question of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula is, first and foremost, a matter for the Korean people to decide.

Under the 1953 U.S.-R.O.K. Mutual Defense Treaty, the United States agreed to help the Republic of Korea defend itself against external aggression. Since that time in support of this commitment, the United States has maintained military personnel in Korea, including the Army's Second Infantry Division and several Air Force tactical squadrons.

To coordinate operations between these units and the over 680,000-strong Korean armed forces, a Combined Forces Command (CFC) was established in 1978. The head of the CFC also serves as Commander of the United Nations Command (UNC) and U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). The current commander is General Burwell Baxter "B.B." Bell.

Several aspects of the security relationship are changing as the U.S. moves from a leading to a supporting role. In 2004, agreement was reached on the return of the Yongsan base in Seoul—as well as a number of other U.S. bases—to the R.O.K. and the eventual relocation of all U.S. forces to south of the Han River. In addition,

the U.S. and R.O.K. agreed to move 12,500 of the 37,500 U.S. troops out of Korea by 2008. At the same time U.S. troops are being redeployed from Korea, the U.S. will bolster combined U.S./R.O.K. deterrent and defense capabilities by providing $11 billion in force enhancements in Korea and at regional facilities over the next four years. As Korea's economy has developed, trade and investment ties have become an increasingly important aspect of the U.S.-R.O.K. relationship. Korea is the United States' seventh-largest trading partner (ranking ahead of larger economies such as France, Italy, and India), and there are significant flows of manufactured goods, agricultural products, services and technology between the two countries. Major American firms have long been major investors in Korea, while Korea's leading firms have begun to make significant investments in the United States.

The implementation of structural reforms contained in the IMF's 1998 program for Korea improved access to the Korean market and improved trade relations between the United States and Korea. Building on that improvement, the United States and Korea launched negotiations on the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) on February 2, 2006. The KORUS FTA was signed by U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab and South Korean Trade Minister Kim Hyun-chong on June 30, 2007 and is currently awaiting ratification in the U.S. Congress and the Korean National Assembly. The KORUS FTA is a comprehensive FTA that eliminates virtually all barriers to trade and investment between the two countries. Tariffs on 95% of trade between the two countries will be eliminated within three years of implementation, with virtually all the remaining tariffs being removed within ten years of implementation; the FTA also contains chapters that address non-tariff measures in investment, intellectual property, services, competition policy, and other areas. The KORUS FTA is the largest free trade agreement Korea has ever signed, and the largest free trade agreement for the United States since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992. Economists have projected the FTA will generate billions of dollars in increased trade and investment between the United States and the Republic of Korea, and boost economic growth and job creation in both countries.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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FCS:	John Fogarasi
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HRO:	Jill E. Perry
MGT:	Robert E. Davis
AMB:	Alexander R. Vershbow
CG:	Julia R. Stanley
DCM:	William A. Stanton
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AGR:	Lloyd S. Harbert
APHIS:	George A. Ball
ATO:	Stanley S. Phillips
CLO:	Ruginna Son
DAO:	Kip A. McCormick
DEA:	Troy A. Derby
EEO:	Daniel Y Chu
EST:	Milton L. Charlton
FAA:	Joseph Tymczyszyn
FMO:	Sau Ching Yip
ICASS Chair:	Troy A. Derby
IMO:	Miyuki V. Wade
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CG:	Chang Min, Acting

Additional Resources

The following general country guides are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402:

- Library of Congress. *North Korea: A Country Study*. 1994.
- Library of Congress. *South Korea: A Country Study*. 1992.
- Department of State. *The Record on Korean Unification 1943-1960*. 1961.
- Department of the Army. *Communist North Korea: A Bibliographic Survey*. 1971.

Internet Resources on North and South Korea

The following sites are provided to give an indication of Internet sites on Korea. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications, including Internet sites.

- R.O.K. Embassy— http://www.koreaembassyusa.org/
- Korea Society— http://www.koreasociety.org/; links to academic and other sites.
- Nautilus Institute— http://www.nautilus.org/; produced by the Nautilus Institute in Berkeley, California, and includes press roundup Monday through Friday.
- Korea Web Weekly— http://www.kimsoft.com/korea.htm; links to North Korean sites.
- Korea Herald— http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/; South Korean English-language newspaper.
- Korea Times— http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/; South Korean English-language newspaper.
- (North) Korean Central News Agency— http://www.kcna.co.jp/index-e.htm

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

January 2, 2009

Country Description: The Republic of Korea (South Korea or ROK) is a highly developed, stable, democratic republic with powers shared between the president and the legislature. It has a modern economy, and tourist facilities are widely available. English is often not spoken outside the main tourist and business centers.

The Korea National Tourism Organization (KNTO) can be reached from American and Canada by calling 1-800-868-7567 and has a useful website in English at http://www.tour2korea.com. The KNTO also operates a telephone information service in the Republic of Korea, which traveling or resident Americans in Korea can reach by calling 1330 (02-1330 from cell phones) anywhere in the country. The telephone service has English speakers and is available 24 hours every day throughout the year. The Seoul Help Center (SHC) assists foreigners with an English-speaking help line at (02) 731-6800 or 731-6802. The SHC is located in the Seoul City Hall and is open from 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. and 2:30 -5:30 p.m.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. U.S. passport holders may enter the Republic of Korea without a visa for a stay of up to 90 days for tourism or business. When staying for more than 90 days or for any purpose other than tourism or business, the U.S. passport holder must obtain a visa prior to entry. Americans visiting Korea for employment or profit-making purposes, teaching English, or planning to stay more than 90 days must obtain a visa at a Korean embassy or consulate abroad. Generally, individuals staying in Korea for longer than 90 days must also apply for an Alien Registration Card, once in Korea. Individuals who desire to stay longer than their authorized period of stay must apply to Korean Immigration for an extension in advance of the expiration of their authorized period of stay. Individuals who stay in Korea longer than the period authorized by Korean Immigration without applying for an extension are subject to fines and may be required to pay the fines before departing the country. Changes of status from one type of visa to another (from tourism to teaching, for example) are normally not granted in the Republic of Korea and must be obtained at a Korean embassy or consulate in another country after departing Korea.

Active-duty U.S. military personnel may enter the Republic of Korea under the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with proper Department of Defense (DOD) identification and travel orders. Every civilian accompanying the force (including DOD civilian employees, invited contractors, and family members) must have a valid passport to enter Korea and should obtain an A-3 SOFA visa prior to arrival in Korea.

Active duty military personnel should obtain a tourist passport prior to leaving the U.S. to accommodate off-duty travel elsewhere in Asia. DOD travelers should consult the DOD Foreign Clearance Guide before leaving the United States.

Exit permits are not required to leave Korea. However, if a parent requests through the Korea Immigration Service that a travel restriction be placed on a child, the child is likely to be prevented from departing Korea.

For the most current visa information, contact the Consular Section of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea at 2320 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, telephone (202) 939-5660, or see the Korean Embassy website at http://www.koreaembassyusa.org. Republic of Korea consulates are also located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Guam, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, San Francisco, and Seattle. The Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a website directory of all Korean diplomatic missions worldwide in Korean and in English at http://www.mofat.go.kr/index.jsp.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens in the Republic of Korea should review their own personal security practices, be alert to any unusual activity around their homes or businesses, and report any significant incidents to local police (tel: 112; from a cell phone: 02-112).

Demonstrations, protests, and vigils occur frequently, with participants often protesting major Korean social issues such as the following: the presence of U.S. military forces in Korea; U.S. military base relocations in Korea; labor accords; discussions regarding a Free Trade Agreement between Korea and the United States; U.S. involvement in the war in Iraq; and the Republic of Korea's decision to maintain troops in Iraq; and, more recently, the opening of the Korean market to U.S. beef. While the majority of the political, labor, and student demonstrations and marches are non-violent, some have on occasion become confrontational. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can escalate into violence. U.S. citizens are therefore urged to avoid areas near demonstrations and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any protests.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the State Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll-line at 202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the crime rate in the Republic of Korea is low, there is a higher incidence of pick-pocketing, purse snatching, assault, hotel room and residential burglary, and residential crime in major metropolitan areas, such as Seoul and Busan, than elsewhere in Korea. U.S. citizens are

more likely to be targeted in known tourist areas, such as Itaewon (near the U.S. Army Garrison in the Yongsan area) and large market areas downtown. Incidents of rape have been reported in popular nightlife districts in Seoul, as well as in the victims' residences.

Bar and street fights as well as occasional harassment of Westerners have also been reported in nightlife districts in Seoul. Travelers should exercise caution when traveling alone at night and should use only legitimate taxis or public transportation. Travelers may reduce the likelihood of becoming a crime victim by exercising the same type of security precautions they would take when visiting any large city in the United States.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm and at http://www.ustr.gov.

Information for Victims of Crime: The emergency number to reach the police anywhere in the Republic of Korea, the local equivalent to the U.S. "911" emergency line, is 112 (02-112 from a cell phone). Foreigners who do not speak Korean can be connected to an English-speaking interpreter on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis.

If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Embassy staff can assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and to get funds transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime are solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and provide a list of attorneys, if needed.

The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Hospitals in Korea are generally well-equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic equipment. High quality general and specialty dental care is available in Seoul. Western-style medical facilities are available in major urban areas of Seoul, Busan, Daegu, and a few other large cities. However, not all doctors and staff in these major urban areas are proficient in English. Most clinics in rural areas do not have an English-speaking doctor. A list of hospitals and medical specialists who speak English is available at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul or on the Embassy's web site at http://korea.usembassy.gov/health.html.

Pharmacies are first-rate and most prescribed medications, except psychotropic medications, can be obtained with a prescription. Travelers taking any psychotropic or controlled medications should bring a sufficient supply as well as a copy of the prescription for Korean customs clearance at the airport.

Korean ambulances do not carry sophisticated medical equipment and the ambulance personnel do not have the same level of emergency medical training as in the United States. However, ambulances operated by the fire department (dial 119) will respond very quickly and take patients to the nearest hospital. For medical evacuation to points outside Korea, SOS International is located in Seoul (tel: 02- 3140-1902, web site: www.internationalsos.com.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Korea does not have a written policy regarding entry to Korea for foreigners with HIV/AIDS. However, Section 11 of the Korean Immigration law stipulates that an immigration officer has the right to deny entry to those who may have communicable diseases.

Also, E-6 visa applicants such as singers, dancers, or other entertainment workers have to submit HIV/AIDS test results in order to be eligible for that visa category.

Medical Insurance: Korean hospitals generally do not accept foreign medical insurance and expect advance payment for services in the form of cash or credit cards from foreigners. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: The Republic of Korea's roads are well paved, traffic lights are functional, and most drivers comply with basic traffic laws. However, Korea has a significantly higher traffic fatality rate than does the United States. Causes of accidents include excessive speed, frequent lane changes, running of red lights, aggressive bus drivers, and weaving motorcyclists. Pedestrians should be aware that motorcyclists sometimes drive on the sidewalks and drivers of all types of vehicles do not always yield to pedestrians in marked crosswalks. It is safer to use pedestrian underpasses and overpasses where available.

Traffic laws in the Republic of Korea differ from traffic laws in the United States in some respects. Left-hand turns are generally prohibited except where a green arrow indicates otherwise. Drivers may turn right on a red light after coming to a complete stop.

Seat belts are mandatory. Children riding in the front seat of vehicles must wear a seat belt or use an appropriate child car seat. Passengers on motorcycles must wear protective helmets. An international driving permit issued in the U.S. by the American Automobile Association (AAA) or the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA) is required of short-term visitors who drive in Korea. Otherwise, drivers must have a Korean driver's license.

In all accidents involving an automobile and a pedestrian or motorcycle, the driver of the automobile, regardless of citizenship, is presumed to be at fault. Police investigations of traffic accidents usually involve long waits at police stations. Police may request to hold the passport of a foreigner involved in a traffic accident if there is any personal injury or a dispute about the cause of the accident. Criminal charges and heavy penalties are common in accidents involving injury, even if negligence is not proven.

Persons arrested in accidents involving serious injury or death may be detained until the conclusion of the police investigation and legal process. Driving under the influence of alcohol is a serious offense. Drivers in the Republic of Korea may wish to carry a disposable camera to document any traffic accidents, even minor ones.

For specific information concerning Korean driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please contact the Korea National Tourism Organization office in Fort Lee, N.J., (telephone 1-800-868-7567) or check http://www.tour2korea.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Republic of Korea's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Republic of Korea's air carrier operations. For more information, visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Dual Nationality: The Government of the Republic of Korea does not recognize dual citizenship. An individual is a citizen of the Republic of Korea if his or her name appears on the Korean Family Census Register. The Korean Government requires persons with a claim to dual citizenship to choose or reject Korean nationality by December 31 of the year the individual turns 21 years old.A person's name is not automatically removed from the Korean Family Census Register simply because he or she is an American citizen.

It is the obligation of an American citizen to inform the Korean government of his or her American citizenship for the purposes of removing his or her name from the Korean Family Census Register. Any male whose name appears on the Korean Family Census Register must fulfill his two-year military obligation unless he has surrendered his Korean nationality before March 30 of the year he turns 18 years old.

An American male in this situation must notify Korean authorities of his parents' immigration status, renounce his Korean citizenship, and remove his name from the Korean Family Census Register. If an American male fails to remove his name from the Korean Family Census Register, Korean authorities may require that he serve in the Korean military if he lives in Korea or visits Korea during conscription age (18 to 35 years of age).

Under a law that went into effect on May 26, 2005, men who have dual citizenship may be required to serve in the military before they can give up their Korean citizenship. Women are not required to serve in the military.

The 2005 law affects male U.S. citizens of Korean descent in different ways.

- A Korean male born in Korea who emigrates to the U.S. and becomes a naturalized American citizen loses his Korean citizenship and therefore has no military obligations in Korea.
- A male who was born in the U.S. whose Korean parents were U.S. citizens at the time of his birth does not have Korean military obligations.
- A male who was born in the U.S. whose name is on the Korean Family Census Register and whose parents were not American citizens at the time of his birth but immigrated to and live in the U.S. is not obligated to serve in the Korean military if he renounces his Korean citizenship prior to March 30 of the year he turns 18 years of age.
- A male who was born in the U.S. and is on the Korean Family Census Register, whose Korean citizen parents lived only temporarily outside Korea, may not renounce his Korean citizenship until he completes his service in the Korean military.
- A U.S. citizen male who was born in and lives in Korea and is on the Korean Family Census Register may not renounce his Korean citizenship until he serves in the Korean military.

After fulfilling his military service, a dual national has two years to choose his nationality before he loses his Korean citizenship.

There have been several instances in which young American men of Korean descent—who were born in and lived all of their lives in the United States—arrived in Korea as tourists only to be drafted into the Republic of Korea army. At least two of these cases involved individuals whose names had been recorded on the Korean Family Census Register without their knowledge.

U.S. military members should contact the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Legal Office prior to making plans to travel to Korea, whether for official or personal purposes. Direct contact is Mr. Hyun S. Kim, DSN (315) 738-7175, commercial (82-2) 7918-7175, e-mail hyun.s.kim1@korea.army.mil.

Customs Regulations: Persons traveling to/from Korea or transiting Korea to/from other countries should be aware that the Republic of Korea's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the temporary importation into or export from Korea of items such as firearms, ammunition, explosives, narcotics and prescription drugs, non-prescription health supplements, radio equipment, and gold, as well as books, other printed material, and videos or audio recordings that might be considered subversive to national security, obscene, or in any way harmful to the public interest and cultural property.

Furthermore, the Republic of Korea has customs laws and regulations to prevent the spread of livestock diseases, such as hoof-and-mouth disease, avian influenza, etc. The following products must be declared to Korean customs officials upon arrival: live animals, such as dogs, cats, pet birds, etc.; animal products, such as antlers, bone, blood meal, etc.; beef, pork, mutton, chicken meat and processed meat products, such as sausages, ham, meat jerky, boiled meat, canned products, boiled eggs, etc.; processed dairy products, such as milk, cheese, butter, etc.; processed egg products, such as egg, egg white, egg powder, etc. For further inquires, please send an email to nvrqs@nvrqs.go.kr.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection lists items whose entry into the Unites States is prohibited or restricted at http://www.cbp.gov. For additional information please see the section above on Crime.

Passport Seizures, Exit Bans, And Commercial Disputes: The Government of the Republic of Korea sometimes seizes the passports and blocks departure from Korea of foreigners involved in commercial disputes. While the U.S. Government may reissue a passport to a U.S. citizen who applies for one in such circumstances, the Korean exit ban remains in effect, thereby preventing departure.

Working In The Republic Of Korea: Americans going to the Republic of Korea to teach, model, or work for a company (part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid) must enter Korea using the appropriate work visa. Changes of status from any other visa status to a work visa are not granted within the country. Any foreigner who begins work without the appropriate visa is subject to arrest, costly fines, and deportation. Persons working without a valid work permit and who have a contractual dispute with their employers have little or no entitlement to legal recourse under Korean law.

Teaching English: The government of the Republic of Korea changed its immigration policies effective December 15, 2007, to require that criminal records checks and a health certificate be submitted with E-2 English teaching visa applications or extensions. The U.S. Embassy in South Korea does not provide a records check or fingerprinting service, nor can the Embassy authenticate records checks or health certificates. If you have further questions, please contact the Korea Immigration Service, Border Control Division, at (within Korea) 500-9116, 500-9117, or 500-9118, or consult their website: http://seoul.immigration.go.kr/HP/IMM80/index.do. More detailed information on the procedure is also available on the U.S. Embassy Seoul consular website, at www.asktheconsul.org.

The U.S. Embassy in Seoul receives many complaints from U.S. citizens who enter the Republic of Korea to teach English at private language schools ("hagwons"). The most frequent complaints are that the schools and/or employment agencies misrepresent salaries, working conditions, living arrangements, and other benefits, including health insurance, even in the written contracts. There have also been some complaints of physical assault, threats of arrest/deportation, and sexual harassment. Some U.S.-based employment agencies have been known to misrepresent contract terms, employment conditions, or the need for an appropriate work visa. Since 2005, Korean police have investigated a number of foreign teachers for document fraud. Several Americans have been arrested and charged with possession of fraudulent university diplomas that were used to obtain employment in Korea. Please see our comprehensive website section on Teaching English in Korea at http://seoul.usembassy.gov.

Disaster Preparedness: Legally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea—the DPRK) and the Republic of Korea remain in a state of war. Peace has been maintained on the Korean peninsula under an armistice for more than 50 years. In the last few years, political, economic, and social contacts between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea have increased significantly. However, the possibility of military hostilities that could necessitate the evacuation of U.S. citizens from the Republic of Korea cannot be excluded.

The U.S. Government has developed a Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) plan for the evacuation of U.S. citizens from Korea in an emergency. A guide for U.S. citizens about the NEO plan is available online at http://korea.usembassy.gov/emergency_evacuation.html, or at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul.

The U.S. Government does not provide protective equipment to private American citizens in the Republic of Korea. As always, U.S. citizens should review their own personal security practices and make their own decisions with regard to those precautions that they might take to avoid danger. Those who may wish to acquire protective equipment for personal use should contact commercial vendors who may be able to provide such equipment.

If the Department of State becomes aware of any specific and credible threat to the safety and security of U.S. citizens, that information will be provided to the American public at large. During the monsoon season (June-August) and the typhoon (hurricane) season (May-November), there may be heavy rains and flood-

ing in Korea. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Persons violating Korean laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Republic of Korea are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. American citizens in Korea have been arrested for past use of illegal drugs based on urine tests, hair samples, or other tests. Korean authorities frequently arrest Americans on drug charges by scanning suspicious packages sent through the mail system and by using information provided by other persons charged with drug possession or use.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living in or visiting the Republic of Korea are encouraged to register through the State Department's travel registration web site and obtain updated information on travel and security within the Republic of Korea. American citizens may also sign up for warden messages and monthly newsletters by providing their email address at http://seoul.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Embassy street address is 32 Sejong-no, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 110-710. The APO address is Unit 15550, APO AP 96205-5550. Telephone (82-2) 397-4114 (from a cell phone in Korea: 02-397-4114); fax (82-2) 397-4101. Please visit the U.S. Embassy Seoul's consular web site at http://seoul.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: South Korea's special adoption law No. 2977, Section 9 (A), requires the use of an adoption agency for overseas adoption of Korean orphans, and Section 10 (A) provides that such agencies must be authorized by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in South Korea is the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The address is as follows:

Population & Children's Policy
Anyang Construction Tower 3rd Fl.
1112-1 Dalan Dong,
Tongan Gu, Anyang
Tel: +82-31-440-9654

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: South Korean authorities have advised the U.S. Embassy in Seoul of the following criteria for selecting adoptive parents. These criteria have been established by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. They are administrative policy guidelines and not legal requirements, but local adoption agencies can be expected to follow them:

- The adoptive parents must be eligible to adopt under the laws of their country or state of residence.
- Single parents are not eligible.
- The couple should be married for at least three years and be between the ages of 25 and 44. Korean authorities usually require that both adoptive parents in overseas adoptions be younger than 45 years old; however, they may make exceptions in some cases. The following three factors, while unofficial and applied differently from case to case, may be considered when making exceptions to the age limit: 1. At least one parent is under 45; 2. The adoptive parents have previously adopted a Korean orphan; 3. The parents are willing to adopt an orphan with serious medical problems.
- The adoptive couple should have no more than five children. This number includes the child or children to be adopted.
- The couple should not have an age difference of more than 15 years.
- The income of the adoptive couple should be higher than the national average of their country and sufficient to raise the child.

Residency Requirements: Parents living in US don't need residency in Korea to adopt a child from Korea. They only need to contact one of US adoption agencies affiliated with Korean adoption agencies authorized by Korean government.

Time Frame: The period of time between when a couple begins pre-adoption processing and when the child arrives in the United States is anywhere between one and four years. This time frame includes the total timing for processing in the U.S. and in Korea. In the U.S., the adoptive parents should have an Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petiton (I-600A) filed and approved by the Department of Homeland Security. Following approval of the I-600A, processing time in Korea will be about 5 to 6 months.

Effective January 1, 2007, Korean law will require a five-month waiting period before an infant orphan can be considered for intercountry adoption. This new requirement, however, is not expected to lengthen adoptive parents' overall waiting time.

Adoption Fees: According to the Korean Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and Korean adoption agencies, the total cost is between $9,500 and $10,000. This includes:

- Child care fees (including payment for foster mother)
- Medical expenses
- Legal processing fees
- Administrative fees
- Social worker payment and counseling fees
- Post adoption service fee

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The Korean government requires prospective adoptive families to work with agencies that have been approved by the Korean government. Please review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/family for a list of agencies.

Adoption Procedures: Korean adoption is always conducted through one of the aforementioned authorized adoption agencies. Accordingly, the first step for couples who wish to adopt a Korean child would be to contact the adoption agency.

The procedure with the adoption agency is generally the following:

- Pre-adoption counseling
- Submission of application for adoption
- A home study
- Child assignment
- Application for child's overseas adoption to the Korean government
- Applications for child's passport and visa
- Fly to the adoptive parents

Documentary Requirements: Most of the documents required by the Korean government will be prepared by the adoption agencies. Adoption agencies will require from the would-be parents the following documents:

- Home study report
- Affidavit of support (Form I-864)
- Adoptive parents' birth certificates
- Notice of petition approval (Form I-797)

Embassy of Korea
Consular Section
2450 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: 202-939-5600
Web address:
http://www.koreaemb.org

Korea also has Consulates in Agana (Guam), Anchorage, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Evanston (Illinois), Ft. Lauderdale, Honolulu, Houston, Kansas City (Kansas), Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Mobile, New Orleans, New York, Oklahoma City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland (Oregon), San Francisco, San Juan, Seattle and St. Louis.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
32 Sejong-Ro, Jongno-gu
Seoul, Korea
Tel: 011-82-2-397-4114
Fax: 011-82-2-738-8845
Web:
http://usembassy.state.gov/seoul
Mailing Address
U.S. Embassy
Unit 15550
APO AP 96205-5550

Doctors: In addition to the designated panel physicians who must be consulted as part of the U.S. immigrant visa process, the U.S. Embassy in Seoul maintains current lists of doctors and sources for medicines, should either a prospective parent or prospective adoptive child experience health problems while in Korea.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in South Korea may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: South Korea is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between South Korea and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to South Korea place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to South Korea with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In South Korea, parents who are legally married share the custody of their children. If they are not married, custody is normally granted to the mother unless there are known facts of inappropriate behavior, or mental or social problems.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable directly under Korean law. However, under Article 203 of the Criminal Code, an applicant can request recognition of foreign court orders.

Visitation Rights: In cases where legal custody has been granted and the judgment has been rendered, the non-custodial parent can petition the court for visitation rights within the court ordered decision or come to an oral agreement with the custodial parent.

Dual Nationality: Dual U.S.-Korean nationality is recognized under Korean law until the age of 22, when the dual national must choose either Korean or U.S. citizenship. Dual-national males are subject to mandatory military service in South Korea if they do not make a decision on their nationality before the age 18.

Passports for Minors and the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program: For more information on these topics, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Korea. However, if a parent requests through the Korean Immigration Office that a travel restriction be placed on a child, the child may be prevented from departing Korea.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Korean court should retain an attorney in Korea. The American Embassy in Korea maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy in Seoul
Consular Section
82 Sejong-ro, Chongro-ku
Seoul 110-710
Republic of Korea
Telephone: 011-82-2-397-4114
Fax: 011-82-2-397-4101
Web site:
http://www.asktheconsul.org

The workweek for the Embassy is Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9:30AM to 11:30AM and 1:30PM to 3:30PM. The Embassy is closed on Wednesdays.

Questions involving Korean law should be addressed to a Korean attorney or to the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United States at:

Embassy of the Republic of Korea
2320 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 939-5663/60

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov.



KOSOVO

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Kosovo

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 10,887 square kilometers (4,203 square miles), slightly smaller than Connecticut.

Capital: Pristina.

Terrain: Varied.

Climate: Temperate.

People

Nationality: Adjective—Kosovo national.

Population (2000 est.): 2.1 million.

Ethnic groups: 90% ethnic Albanians, 6% ethnic Serbs, 2% Bosniaks, Gorani, 1.5% Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, 1% Turks.

Religion: The majority ethnic Albanian population, as well as the Bosniak, Gorani, and Turkish communities, and some of the Roma/Ashkalia/Egyptian communities are adherents of Islam. The ethnic Serb population is largely Serb Orthodox. Approximately 3% of ethnic Albanians are Roman Catholic.

Languages: Albanian (official), Serbian (official), Roma, Turkish (official only in municipality of Prizren), Bosniak, English.

Education: Adult literacy rates (2004 est.): 94.12% (men 97.30%, women 91.30%). Enrollment (2003 est.)—96% of children ages 7-15 enrolled in primary school.

Health: Infant mortality rate—23.7/1000. Total fertility rate, births per woman (2000 est.)—2.7. Life expectancy (2003 est.)—75 years.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: The Kosovo Assembly approved a new constitution on April 9, 2008. It came into force on June 15, 2008.

Branches: Executive—president (head of state); prime minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral Assembly (120 seats, 4-year terms; 100 seats generally elected, 10 seats reserved for ethnic Serbs, 10 seats reserved for other ethnic minorities). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Subdivisions: 30 municipalities (names given in Albanian, then Serbian)—Leposaviq (Leposavic), Novo Brdo (Novobërdë), Podujevo (Podujevë), Istog (Istok), Kamenice (Kamenicë), Deçan (Decani), Gllogovc (Glogovac), Ferizaj (Uroševac), Fushë Kosovë (Kosovo Polje), Gjakovë (Đakovica), Gjilan (Gnjilane), Kaçanik (Kacanik), Obiliq (Obilic), Klinë (Klina), Lipjan (Lipljan), Malishevë (Mališevo), Mitrovicë (Mitrovica), Pejë (Pec), Prishtinë (Priština), Prizren (Prizren), Rahovec (Orahovac), Skenderaj (Srbica), Dragash (Dragaš), Shtërpcë (Štrpce), Shtime (Štimlje), Suharekë (Suva Reka), Viti (Vitina), Vushtrri (Vucitrn), Zubin Potok (Zubin Potok), Zvecan (Zveçan).

Political parties: Albanian Christian Democratic Party of Kosovo (PShDK) [Mark KRASNIQI]; Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) [Ramush HARADINAJ]; Alliance of Independent Social Democrats of Kososvo and Metohija (SDSKIM) [Ljubisa Zivic]; Autonomous Liberal Party (SLS) [Slobodan PETROVIC]; Bosniak Vakat Coalition (DSV) [Sadik Idrizi]; Citizens' Initiative of Gora (GIG) [Murselj HALJILJI]; Democratic League of Dardania (LDD) [Nexhat DACI]; Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) [Fatmir SEJDIU]; Democratic Party of Ashkali of Kosovo (PDAK) [Sabit RAHMANI]; Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) [Hashim THACI]; Kosovo Democratic Turkish Party (KDTP) [Mahir YAGCILAR]; New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (IRDK) [Xhevdet NEZIRAJ]; New Democratic Party (ND) [Branislav GRBIC]; New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) [Behxhet PACOLLI]; Popular Movement of Kosovo (LPK) [Emrush XHEMAJLI]; Reform Party Ora [Teuta SAHATQIJA]; Serb National Party (SNS) [Mihailo SCEPANOVIC]; Serbian Kosovo and Metohija Party (SKMS) [Dragisa MIRIC]; United Roma Party of Kosovo (PREBK) [Haxhi Zylfi MERXHA]; Democratic Action Party (SDA) [Numan BALIC]; Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija [Oliver IVANOVIC]; Serbian National Council of Northern Kosovo and Metohija (SNV) [Milan IVANOVIC]; Democratic Party of Bosniaks [Dzezair MURATI]; Ser-

bian Democratic Party of Kosovo and Metohija (SDS KiM) [Slavisa PETKOVIC].
Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Economy

GDP (2007 est.): $4 billion.
Per capita GDP at PPP (2007 est.): $1,755.
GDP composition by sector: Agriculture 25%, industry 20%, services 55%.
Agriculture: Products—Fruits and vegetables (potatoes, berries), wheat, corn, wine, beef.
Industry: Mineral mining, energy, telecommunications, forestry, agriculture, metal processing, construction materials, base metals, leather, machinery, appliances.
Income and employment (2001 est.): 53% of the Kosovo labor force is unemployed; 50.3% of Kosovo's citizens live below the poverty line, and 12% live in extreme poverty.

HISTORY

Kosovo has been inhabited since the Neolithic Era. During the medieval period, Kosovo became home to many important Serb religious sites, including many architecturally significant Serbian Orthodox monasteries. It was the site of a 14th-century battle in which invading Ottoman Turks defeated an army led by a Serbian Prince named Lazar.

The Ottomans ruled Kosovo for more than four centuries, until Serbia acquired the territory during the First Balkan War in 1912-13. First partitioned in 1913 between Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo was then incorporated into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later named Yugoslavia) after World War I. During World War II, parts of Kosovo were absorbed into Italian-occupied Albania. After the Italian capitulation, Nazi Germany assumed control over Kosovo until Tito's Yugoslav Partisans entered at the end of the war.

After World War II, Kosovo became an autonomous province of Serbia in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (S.F.R.Y.). The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution gave Kosovo (along with Vojvodina) the status of a Socialist Autonomous Province within Serbia. As such, it possessed nearly equal rights as the six constituent Socialist Republics of the S.F.R.Y. In 1981, riots broke out and were violently suppressed after Kosovo Albanians demonstrated to demand that Kosovo be granted full Republic status.

The Kosovo Conflict and NATO Intervention

In the late 1980s, Slobodan Milosevic propelled himself to power in Belgrade by exploiting the fears of the Serbian minority in Kosovo. In 1989, he eliminated Kosovo's autonomy and imposed direct rule from Belgrade. Belgrade ordered the firing of most ethnic Albanian state employees, whose jobs were then assumed by Serbs.

In response, Kosovo Albanian leaders began a peaceful resistance movement in the early 1990s, led by Ibrahim Rugova. They established a parallel government funded mainly by the Albanian diaspora. When this movement failed to yield results, an armed resistance emerged in 1997 in the form of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA's main goal was to secure the independence of Kosovo.

In late 1998, Milosevic unleashed a brutal police and military campaign against the KLA, which included widespread atrocities against civilians. As Milosevic's ethnic cleansing campaign progressed, over 800,000 ethnic Albanians were forced from their homes in Kosovo. Intense international mediation efforts led to the Rambouillet Accords, which called for Kosovo autonomy and the insertion of NATO troops to preserve the peace. Milosevic's failure to agree to the Rambouillet Accords triggered a NATO military campaign to halt the violence in Kosovo. This campaign consisted primarily of aerial bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (F.R.Y.), including Belgrade, and continued from March through June 1999. After 78 days of bombing, Milosevic capitulated. Shortly thereafter, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244 (1999), which suspended Belgrade's governance over Kosovo, and under which Kosovo was placed under the administration of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and which authorized a NATO peacekeeping force. Resolution 1244 also envisioned a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status.

As ethnic Albanians returned to their homes, elements of the KLA conducted reprisal killings and abductions of ethnic Serbs and Roma in Kosovo. Thousands of ethnic Serbs, Roma, and other minorities fled from their homes during the latter half of 1999, and many remain displaced.

Kosovo Under UN Administration

The UN established the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), under the control of a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). In 2001, UNMIK promulgated a Constitutional Framework that provided for the establishment of Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG).

Under UNMIK's guidance, Kosovo established new institutions (both at the municipal and central levels), held free elections, and established a multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service (KPS). The KLA was demobilized, with many of its members incorporated into the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), a civilian emergency services organization. UNMIK gradually turned over more governing competences to local authorities.

In March 2004, Kosovo experienced its worst inter-ethnic violence since the Kosovo war. The unrest in 2004 was sparked by a series of minor events that soon cascaded into large-scale riots. Kosovo Serb communities and Serbian Orthodox churches were targeted in the violence.

After many years of international administration, Kosovo Albanian authorities continued to press the



international community to begin a process to define Kosovo's future status. In October 2004, Kosovo held elections for the second 3-year term of the Kosovo Assembly. For the first time, Kosovo's own Central Election Commission administered these elections, under Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) guidance. The main ethnic Albanian political parties were the same as in the 2001 elections, but with the addition of the new party ORA, led by Veton Surroi, and two new Kosovo Serb parties: the Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM) led by Oliver Ivanovic, and the Citizens Initiative of Serbia led by Slav-

isa Petkovic. In contrast to the previous Kosovo Government, this election produced a "narrow" coalition of two parties, the LDK and AAK. The December 3, 2004 inaugural session of the Kosovo Assembly re-elected Ibrahim Rugova as President and Ramush Haradinaj as Prime Minister.

In March 2005, Haradinaj resigned as Prime Minister after he was indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY); Haradinaj voluntarily surrendered to authorities and traveled to The Hague to face charges. (Haradinaj was acquitted of all charges on April 3, 2008.) The Kosovo Assembly subsequently elected Bajram Kosumi (AAK) as Prime Minister; Kosumi's resignation in March 2006 led to his replacement with Agim Ceku. After President Rugova's death in January 2006, he was replaced by Fatmir Sejdiu.

Kosovo's Status Process

In 2005, a UN envoy, Norwegian diplomat Kai Eide, was appointed to review progress in Kosovo. Eide reported uneven progress on many key issues, especially with respect to promoting multi-ethnicity in Kosovo, but said that there was no advantage to be gained by further delaying a future status process.

In November 2005, the Contact Group (France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) produced a set of "Guiding Principles" for the resolution of Kosovo's future status. Some key principles included: no return to the situation prior to 1999, no changes in Kosovo's borders, and no partition or union of Kosovo with a neighboring state. The Contact Group later said that Kosovo's future status had to be acceptable to the people of Kosovo.

The Ahtisaari Process

In November 2005, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed Martti Ahtisaari, former president of Finland, to lead a future status process. Special Envoy Ahtisaari's diplomatic efforts addressed a broad range of issues important to Kosovo's future, including decentralization of local government, protecting Kosovo's cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo, economic issues, and safeguarding the rights of minorities. Over the course of 2006 and early 2007, Ahtisaari brought together officials from Belgrade and Pristina to discuss these practical issues and the question of status itself.

Ahtisaari subsequently developed a comprehensive proposal for Kosovo's future status, which set forth a series of recommendations on Kosovo's democratic governance and substantial protections for minorities. Ahtisaari also recommended that Kosovo become independent, subject to a period of international supervision. He proposed that a new International Civilian Office (ICO) be established to supervise Kosovo's implementation of its obligations under the Ahtisaari Plan. A European Union (EU)-led rule of law mission (subsequently named EULEX) would also be deployed to focus on the police and justice sector, while a NATO-led stabilization force would continue to provide for a safe and secure environment. Pristina accepted the Ahtisaari recommendations, but Belgrade rejected them.

On April 3, 2007, Ahtisaari presented his plan to the UN Security Council. Due to Russian opposition, the Security Council could not reach agreement on a new Security Council resolution that would pave the way for the implementation of the Ahtisaari recommendations.

After several months of inconclusive discussions in the Security Council, the Contact Group agreed to support a new period of intensive engagement to try to find an agreement between Belgrade and Pristina on Kosovo's status. A "Troika" of representatives from the European Union, the Russian Federation, and the United States, began this effort in August 2007. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon asked them to report on their efforts no later than December 10, 2007. The German ambassador to the United Kingdom, Wolfgang Ischinger, represented the EU; Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko represented the Russian Federation; and Ambassador Frank Wisner represented the United States.

After an intense series of Troika-led negotiations, including a high-level conference in Baden, Austria, the Troika's mandate ended in December without an agreement between the parties. In its final report, the Troika explained that it explored with the parties every realistic option for an agreement, but it was not possible to find a mutually acceptable outcome.

Independence

Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008. In its declaration of independence, Kosovo committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Ahtisaari Plan, to embrace multi-ethnicity as a fundamental principle of good governance, and to welcome a period of international supervision.

The United States formally recognized Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state on February 18. To date, Kosovo has been recognized by a robust majority of European states, the United States, Japan, and Canada, and by other states from the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Shortly after independence, a number of states established an International Steering Group (ISG) for Kosovo that appointed Dutch diplomat Pieter Feith as Kosovo's first International Civilian Representative (ICR).

As part of its commitment to the Ahtisaari Plan, the Kosovo Government rapidly enacted after independence laws on minority protection, decentralization, special protection zones for Serb cultural and religious sites, local self-government, and municipal boundaries.

The Kosovo Assembly approved a constitution in April, and it entered into force on June 15, 2008. ICR Feith certified that the constitution was in accordance with the Ahtisaari Plan. At the time of certification, ICR Feith also congratulated Kosovo on a modern constitution that "provides com-

prehensive rights for members of communities as well as effective guarantees for the protection of the national, linguistic and religious identity of all communities." More information on the role of the ICO in post-status Kosovo can be found at: http://www.ico-kos.org/en.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In 2001, UNMIK promulgated a Constitutional Framework that established Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) for Kosovo. Under the Constitutional Framework, the President of Kosovo is the head of state and serves a term of 5 years with the right to one re-election. The Prime Minister is the head of government and is elected by the Kosovo Assembly.

The unicameral Kosovo Assembly consists of 120 seats, 10 seats of which are reserved for ethnic Serbs, and 10 seats for other minorities (4 seats for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities (RAE), 3 seats for the Bosniak community, 2 seats for the Turkish community, and 1 seat for the Gorani community). Three of the remaining 100 seats are also held by minority members (for a total of 13). All members serve 4-year terms. Jakup Krasniqi (PDK party) is President of the Assembly.

These arrangements were superseded by Kosovo's new constitution, which entered into force on June 15, 2008. Under the new constitution, which enshrines the relevant provisions of the Ahtisaari Plan, Kosovo will undergo a comprehensive shift in governance from the Constitutional Framework of 2001 to a legal charter based upon its new status as an independent state.

The main political parties in Kosovo include the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), formerly led by Ibrahim Rugova and now led by Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu; Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), led by former KLA political chief Hashim Thaci; and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), led by former KLA commander Ramush Haradinaj. Kosovo held its first parliamentary elections in November 2001. After significant political wrangling, politicians agreed to establish a coalition government in March 2002, with Bajram Rexhepi (PDK) as Prime Minister and Ibrahim Rugova (LDK) as President. In the same year, the Kosovo Assembly began to function and pass its first laws. Beginning in 2003, UNMIK began transferring governing competencies to these ministries.

On November 17, 2007, Kosovo held parliamentary and municipal elections. These elections were deemed free and fair by international observers. The PDK gained 34.3% of the vote, the LDK gained 22.6%, the New Kosovo Alliance (AKR) won 12.3%, the Democratic League of Dardania (LDD) won 10%, and the AAK won 9.6%. Smaller minority parties also made some small gains. These elections led to a coalition between the LDK and the PDK and to the elevation of Hashim Thaci as Prime Minister of Kosovo. At the behest of Serbian leaders in Belgrade, virtually all Kosovo Serbs again boycotted the vote.

In June 2008, UN Secretary General Ban decided to "reconfigure" UNMIK and reduce the size of the UN presence in Kosovo, effectively ending the UN's role as administrator of Kosovo and welcoming EU deployment of its Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). As Ban stated in his report to the Security Council, "UNMIK will no longer be able to perform effectively the vast majority of its tasks as an international administration." The EU will gradually assume increasing responsibility in the areas of policing, justice, and customs throughout Kosovo.

The Kosovo judicial system started adapting to the new legal charter on June 15, 2008. Supreme Court judges and prosecutors, district court judges, and municipal courts judges already appointed by the SRSG will continue to serve in their posts until the expiry of their appointment. After the transfer of rule of law functions to the Government of Kosovo, the Kosovo Judicial Council (KJC) will propose to the President of Kosovo candidates for appointment or reappointment as judges and prosecutors.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Fatmir SEJDIU**
Prime Min.: **Hashim THACI**
Min. of Agriculture: **Idriz VEHAPI**
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Sports: **Valton BEQIRI**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Ahmet SHALA**
Min. of Education, Science, & Technology: **Enver HOXHAJ**
Min. of Energy & Mining: **Justina PULA-SHIROKA**
Min. of Environment & Spatial Planning: **Mahir YAGCILAR**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Skender HYSENI**
Min. of Health: **Alush GASHI**
Min. of Interior: **Zenun PAJAZITI**
Min. of Justice: **Nekibe KELMENDI**
Min. of Labor & Social Work: **Nenad RASIC**
Min. of Local Govt.: **Sadri FERATI**
Min. of Public Services: **Arsim BAJRAMI**
Min. of Returns & Communities: **Boban STANKOVIC**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Lutfi ZHARKU**
Min. of Transport & Telecommunication: **Fatmir LIMAJ**
Managing Dir., Central Banking Authority of Kosovo: **Michel SVETCHINE**

ECONOMY

Kosovo's economy has shown significant progress since the conflict of the 1990s; it is, however, still significantly dependent on the international community and the diaspora for financial and technical assistance. Remittances from the diaspora, located mainly in Germany and Switzerland, account for about 30% of GDP.

Kosovo's citizens are the poorest in Europe, with an average annual per capita income of approximately $1,800, about one-third the level of neighboring Albania. Most of Kosovo's population lives in rural towns

outside of the capital, Pristina. Inefficient, near-subsistence farming is common, the result of small plots, limited mechanization, and lack of technical expertise.

As a result of international assistance, Kosovo has been able to privatize 50% of its state-owned enterprises (SOE) by number, and over 90% of SOEs by value. Privatized companies have been able to increase sales sevenfold and attract more than 450,000 Euros (approximately $688,500) in new investment. Technical assistance to the Kosovo Electricity Corporation (KEK) has helped improve procedures for billings and collections, increased revenues, strengthened internal accounting procedures and controls, and rationalized budgeting and investment planning. The installation of bulk meters at the sub-station level is facilitating greater accountability for collection performance at the district level. The U.S. Government has cooperated with the World Bank to prepare a commercial tender for the development of new generation and mining capacity. The capacity of KEK's workforce was bolstered by continuing on-the-job training provided to 325 employees.

Economic growth is largely driven by the private sector, mostly small-scale retail businesses. The official currency of Kosovo is the Euro, but the Serbian dinar is also used in Northern Kosovo and other areas where ethnic Serbs predominate. Kosovo's use of the Euro has helped keep inflation low. Kosovo has maintained a budget surplus as a result of efficient tax collection and inefficient budget execution. In order to help integrate Kosovo into regional economic structures, UNMIK signed (on behalf of Kosovo) its accession to the Central Europe Free Trade Area (CEFTA) in 2006. In February 2008, UNMIK also represented Kosovo at the newly established Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).

Some of the commodities that Kosovo exports are: mineral products, base metals, leather products, machinery, and appliances. Its main export partners are countries that are members of CEFTA. Some of the products that it imports include: live animals and animal products, fruit and vegetable products, minerals, food products, base materials, machinery, appliances and electrical equipment, textiles and related products, wood and wood products, stone, ceramic and glass products, and chemical products. Its main import partners are the EU, Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, and Albania.

Trade and Industry

Kosovo has been laying the foundations of a market-oriented economy for the past eight years but is still struggling to develop viable and productive domestic industries. Kosovo has one of the lowest export/import rates in the region. In 2007, Kosovo imported $2.3 billion in goods and services and exported only $151 million, resulting in a trade deficit close to 65% of Kosovo's GDP. This deficit is largely financed through foreign assistance and remittances from Kosovo's diaspora. Kosovo's leading industries are mining, energy, and telecommunications.

Agriculture

Agricultural land comprises 53% of Kosovo's total land area and forests 41%. According to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization, 741,316 acres of land are under cultivation and 444,789 acres are upland pasture. The majority of agricultural land is privately owned (80%), providing subsistence farming for individual households. Although Kosovo's agricultural sector is generally characterized by small farms, low productivity, and the absence of advisory services, agriculture contributes around 25% of Kosovo's overall GDP.

Agriculture is the largest employment sector in Kosovo, providing jobs for 25% to 35% of the population, primarily on an informal basis. The agricultural sector also accounts for 16% of total export value and remains an important creator of national wealth, although Kosovo is still an importer of many agricultural products, which accounted for 24% of overall imports ($448.7 million) in 2005. Forestry in Kosovo is minimal; wood-processing and wood products (flooring and furniture) are industry contributors, although not yet in significant numbers.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In March 2008, Kosovo passed legislation to establish a foreign ministry. This legislation went into effect on June 15, 2008. The Government of Kosovo appointed Skender Hyseni as its first foreign minister. The Government of Kosovo has not yet established diplomatic missions overseas but is expected to do so soon.

U.S.-KOSOVO RELATIONS

The United States and Kosovo established diplomatic relations on February 18, 2008. The strong bilateral ties the United States shares with Kosovo are maintained through the U.S. Embassy in Pristina, which was opened on April 8, 2008 by then-Charge d'Affaires ad interim Tina Kaidanow. Prior to independence, the United States maintained U.S. Office Pristina (USOP), with a chief of mission.

The U.S. also continues to contribute troops to the Kosovo Force (KFOR), and will be providing staff to the ICO and EULEX missions.

During a European Commission-hosted international Donors' Conference on July 11, 2008 the United States pledged $400 million for 2008-2009 to support, among many other things, helping relieve debt Kosovo may inherit. U.S. assistance in Kosovo continues to support good governance through strengthening civil society and political processes, especially targeting minority communities, and will strengthen economic institutions and help private enterprise grow.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PRISTINA (E) Nazim Hikmet St. No. 30, APO/FPO UNIT 9520 BOX 1000, APO, AE 09741-9520, 381-38-59593000, Fax 381-38-549890, INMARSAT Tel 873-762-029-495, Workweek: M-F, 8:00-17:00, Website: http://pristina.state.gov.

CM:	Tina Kaidanow
CM OMS:	Frances C. Parish
ECO/COM:	Valerie Bilgri- Holm
MGT:	Robert C Ruehle
POL/ECO:	Collen Hyland
CON:	Kimberly A McDonald
DCM:	Thomas K. Yazdgerdi
PAO:	Karyn A. Posner
GSO:	Robert Burnett
RSO:	Richard Fuller
AFSA:	Jeremy R. Wisemiller
AID:	Michael Farbman
DAO:	Col. Johnny Mcqueen
ICASS Chair:	Keith Clark
IMO:	Lillian E. Quiles
ISO:	Jimmie D. Rabourn
ISSO:	Lillian E. Quiles
State ICASS:	Thomas K. Yazdgerdi

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

March 12, 2008

Description: Kosovo declared independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008, and the United States recognized Kosovo as an independent state on February 18, 2008. The UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), pursuant to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244, continues to provide support during the transition period, as the International Civilian Office, European Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), and NATO (KFOR) prepare to supervise Kosovo's independence. At this time, some civilian institutions, including the criminal justice system, are not functioning at a level consistent with Western standards. Kosovo is a cash economy. The currency used throughout Kosovo is the euro.

Entry and Exit Requirements: U.S. citizens citizens need a passport to enter Kosovo. No visa is required, but visitors may be required to produce documentation to demonstrate the purpose of their visit. Generally, visitors allowed to enter Kosovo will be permitted to stay for up to 90 days. Persons who wish to prolong their stay beyond 90 days will need to register at the Office for Registration of Foreigners, located in the Main Police Headquarters in Pristina.

Entry to Serbia from Kosovo should not be attempted without a valid Serbian visa and entry stamp from a Serbia border crossing post. Serbia does not recognize entry stamps by Kosovo border authorities at Kosovar ports of entry, including Pristina Airport, as valid. For more information on current regulations on the movement of people, see http://www.unmikonline.org.

Safety and Security: The NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) along with international and local police, are responsible for security and stability in Kosovo. Although the overall security situation has improved, inter-ethnic tensions and sporadic incidents of violence continue to occur. Following the February declaration of independence, violent incidents occurred at border crossings between the Republic of Kosovo and Serbia. Per standing security instructions, U.S. Government officials may only travel to parts of northern Kosovo for official business and these restrictions remain in place.

Americans should avoid demonstrations and other sites, such as roadblocks, where large crowds are gathered, particularly those involving political/ethnic causes. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful have the potential to turn into confrontational situations and possibly escalate into violence.

While de-mining programs have proven effective, unexploded ordnance and mines remain in some areas. The reliability of telecommunications, electric and water systems remains unpredictable.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: High unemployment and other economic factors have encouraged criminal activity. Street crimes, in particular theft and purse snatchings, are serious problems in Kosovo, especially Pristina. It is not unusual for criminals to commit crimes while armed, especially with handguns. Foreigners can be targets for crime, as they are assumed to carry cash. Likewise, foreigners' homes, vehicles and international non-governmental organization (NGO) offices have been subject to burglaries. The loss or theft of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the nearest police station and to U.S. Embassy Pristina. While U.S. Embassy Pristina does not have the ability to issue new passports at this time, it will assist with arrangements for applying for a new passport at the U.S. Embassy in Skopje, Macedonia. Emergency numbers in Pristina are Police: 92; Fire Department: 93; and Ambulance: 94. For information on other areas contact U.S. Embassy Pristina.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the

crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The civilian police force is a contingent of international officers who are working alongside local officers to carry out most normal police functions. The judicial system is still developing under the oversight of the civilian mission, UNMIK.

Medical Facilities: Health facilities are limited, and medications are in short supply. KFOR cannot provide basic health care to non-military personnel, nor can they provide medical evacuation out of Kosovo.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Kosovo is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road conditions can be extremely hazardous because roads are narrow, crowded, and used by a variety of vehicles, from KFOR armored personnel carriers to horse-drawn carts. Many vehicles are old and lack standard front or rear lights. Mountain roads can be narrow, poorly marked, and lack guardrails. They quickly become dangerous in inclement weather.

The use of seat belts is mandatory. A driver with a blood alcohol level higher than 0.05 is considered intoxicated. Travelers entering Kosovo by road should be aware that the purchase of local third-party insurance is required.

Aviation Safety Oversight: Since Kosovo's recent independence, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not separately assessed the Government of Kosovo's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. However, the FAA earlier assessed the Governments of Serbia and Montenegro's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with ICAO standards for oversight of Serbia and Montenegro's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

Special Circumstances: Banking services are available in Pristina and other major towns, although they are not fully developed. There are now a number of banks with international ties that offer limited banking services, including Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), in Pristina and other major towns. If it becomes necessary to receive emergency funds from abroad, Western Union has offices throughout Kosovo.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Kosovo laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Kosovo are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living in or traveling in Kosovo are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Kosovo. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy, Consulate, or Office. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy, Consulate, or Office to contact them in case of emergency. U.S. citizens are encouraged to register with U.S. Embassy Pristina and obtain updated information on travel and security in Kosovo. At this time U.S. Embassy Pristina provides only emergency services to American citizens. U.S. Embassy Skopje, Macedonia, provides all routine consular services such as passport and visa processing.

The Embassy is located at 30 Nazim Hikmet St. in the Dragodan area of Pristina. The telephone number is (381) 38-5959-3000, e-mail: consular-pristina@state.gov. The web site is http://pristina.usmission.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry*

Adoption section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Kosovo remains part of Serbia and Montenegro but is governed by the UN Mission in Kosovo. (Kosovo also has local provisional institutions of government that fall under the ultimate authority of the UN.) The United States has an office in Pristina that provides limited services to U.S. citizens in Kosovo. Immigrant visa applications for Kosovars are processed at the U.S. Embassy in Skopje, Macedonia.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
Adoption Coordinator
Social Services Division
Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
011-038-504-604-4680 (Monday—Thursday; callers must speak Albanian)

Adoptive parents may also contact the Centers for Social Work in the municipality from where they are adopting after first establishing contact with the adoption coordinator in Pristina.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must first be approved to adopt by their home countries. For U.S. citizens, this means obtaining an approved I-600A from the local office of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) covering their U.S. residence.

At this time, Kosovo has not established any age or civil status requirements although it is preferred that at least one of the prospective adoptive parents be not older than 55 years. Kosovo authorities have not identified any medical ineligibilities that would disqualify prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoption.

Time Frame: As the U.S. Government is unaware of any completed intercountry adoptions from Kosovo, it is not possible to estimate how long such an adoption would take.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no known U.S. adoption agencies that are allowed to operate in Kosovo. Adoptive parents must work directly with the Adoption Coordinator.

Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and state adoption licensing/accrediting office in the state where the agency is located.

Adoption Fees: Authorities in Kosovo have not established any fees related to adoption services.

Adoption Procedures: The Center for Social Welfare (CSW) in each municipality actively searches for a Kosovar family permanently residing in Kosovo to adopt a child in need of a family. The CSW tries to find a family with the same ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background as the child. After efforts to locate a family in each of the 31 municipalities are exhausted, the child is then referred to the Intercountry Adoption Board for approval for the child to be adopted internationally.

Prospective adoptive parents must submit all documentation to the Social Services Division at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, where they will be entered into a database.

Parents and children are matched based on the needs of the child. After an initial match is made, the prospective adoptive parents can communicate with their prospective adoptive child. If the match is successful, it will be reviewed and approved by the Adoption Board. After receiving Adoption Board approval, the CSW will complete adoption requirements and issue an adoption decree.

Adoptive parents are required to travel to Kosovo to complete adoption requirements such as signing documents and applying for birth certificates, etc.

Required Documents:

- Written request for adoption—signed by both spouses;
- Marriage certificate;
- Birth certificate for each spouse;
- Identification document (true copy of ID and passport, issued by State or Federal government agency) for both spouses;
- Proof of Nationality;
- Medical certificate regarding health condition and adoption capability—for both spouses, i.e. general health, illnesses that might impact on ones ability to care for a child;
- Evidence of economic condition (i.e. property ownership, bank statements);
- Letter of employment and with salary or income information (for both spouses, if applicable);
- Statement from local police authorities that applicants have no criminal record;
- Certificate from a competent authority certifying that parental rights have never been taken away from either spouse;
- Home Study by competent adoption authority in the parents' place of residence.

Note: All documents must be translated into Albanian or Serbian depending on the child's nationality.

Embassy in Washington, D.C.
2134 Kalorama Road
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 332-0333
Fax: (202) 332-3933.
http://www.mfa.gov.yu.

Consulate General in Chicago
201 East Ohio St., Suite 200
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Tel: (312) 670-6707
Fax (312) 670-6787
Email at yuconsulate@aol.com.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http:// adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Office in Kosovo:
Dragodan-Arbëria, Nazim Hikmet 30, Pristina
Tel: + 381 38 549 516
Fax: + 381 38 548 614
e-mail: consularpristina@state.gov
http://pristina.usmission.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Kosovo may be addressed to the U.S. Office in Kosovo. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



KUWAIT

Compiled from the June 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
State of Kuwait

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 17,820 sq. km. (6,880 sq. mi.); approximately the size of the State of New Jersey.

Cities: Capital—Kuwait City.

Terrain: Almost entirely flat desert plain (highest elevation point—306 m).

Climate: Summers are intensely hot and dry with average highs ranging from 42º-49ºC (108º-120ºF); winters are short (Dec.-Feb.) and cool, averaging 10º-30ºC (50º-80ºF), with limited rain.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Kuwaiti(s).

Population: (Dec. 2006 est.) 3,182,960, including approximately 1 million Kuwaiti citizens and 2 million non-Kuwaiti citizens.

Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 3.52%.

Ethnic groups: Kuwaiti 35%, other Arab 22%, non-Arab (primarily Asian) 39%, stateless Arabs (bidoon) 4%.

Religions: Muslim estimated 80% (Sunni 70%, Shi'a 30% among Kuwaitis), with sizable Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, and Sikh communities.

Languages: Arabic (official), English is widely spoken.

Education: Compulsory from ages 6-14; free at all levels for Kuwaitis, including higher education. Adult literacy (age 15 and over)—83.5% for the overall population (male 85.1%, female 81.7%), 91.2% for Kuwaitis (male 91.4%, female 90.8%).

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006 est.)—9.71 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2006 est.)—76.13 yrs. male, 78.31 yrs. female.

Work force: (official figures as of December 31, 2006) 1.963 million (76% male; 24% female; 17% Kuwaiti citizens).

Government

Type: Constitutional hereditary emirate.

Independence: June 19, 1961 (from U.K.).

Constitution: Approved and promulgated November 11, 1962.

Government branches: Executive—Amir (head of state); prime minister (head of government); Council of Ministers (cabinet) is appointed by prime minister and approved by the Amir. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (Majlis al-'Umma) of 50 elected members who serve 4-year terms plus all ministers, who serve as ex officio members. Judicial—High Court of Appeal.

Political subdivisions: Six governorates (muhafazat) Al 'Asimah, Hawalli, Al Ahmadi, Al Jahra', Mubarak Al-Kebir, and Al Farwaniyah.

Political parties: None; formal political parties have no legal status, although de facto political blocs exist.

Elections: There are no executive branch elections; the Amir is hereditary; prime minister and crown prince are appointed by the Amir. Legislative branch elections were last held June 29, 2006. Municipal Council elections were held on April 4, 2006.

Suffrage: Adult males and since May 16, 2005, adult females who are 21, have been citizens for 20 years, and are not in the security forces. In June 2006, women participated as voters and candidates in parliamentary elections for the first time.

Economy

GDP: (2005 est.) $74.6 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2005) 8.5%.

Natural resources: Oil, natural gas, fish.

Agriculture: (about 0.5% of GDP) With the exception of fish, most food is imported. Cultivated land—1%.

Industry: (about 48% of GDP) Types—petroleum extraction and refining, fertilizer, chemicals, desalination, construction materials.

Services: (about 52% of GDP) public administration, finance, real estate, trade, hotels and restaurants.

Trade: (2005 est.) Exports —$46.87 billion: oil (93%). Major markets—Japan 17%, South Korea 13%, U.S. 11%, Singapore 10%, Pakistan 3%. Imports—$15.67 billion: food, construction materials, vehicles and parts, clothing. Major suppliers—U.S. 13%, Germany 13%, Japan 8%, China 6%, United Kingdom 6%.

PEOPLE

Over 90% of the population lives within a 500-square kilometer area surrounding Kuwait City and its harbor. Although the majority of people residing in the State of Kuwait are of Arab origin, fewer than half are originally from the Arabian Peninsula. The discovery of oil in 1938 drew many Arabs from nearby states. Following the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation in 1991, the Kuwaiti Government undertook a serious effort to reduce the expatriate population by specifically limiting the entry of workers from nations whose leaders had supported Iraq during the Gulf War. Kuwait later abandoned this policy, and it currently has a sizable foreign labor force (approximately 68% of the total population is non-Kuwaiti).

Of the country's total population of 3.1 million, approximately 80% are Muslims, including nearly all of its1.023 million citizens. While the national census does not distinguish between Sunni and Shi'a adherents, approximately 70-75 % of citizens, including the ruling family, belong to the Sunni branch of Islam. The remaining Kuwaiti citizens, with the exception of about 100-200 Christians and a few Baha'is, are Shi'a. The expatriate Christian population is estimated to be more than 400,000 residents. There also are communities of Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs.

Kuwait's 83.5% literacy rate, one of the Arab world's highest, is the result of extensive government support for the education system. Public school education, including Kuwait University, is free, but access is restricted for foreign residents. The government sponsors the foreign study of qualified students abroad for degrees not offered at Kuwait University. In 2004, approximately 1,720 Kuwaitis were enrolled in U.S. universities, down 6.8% from the previous year.

HISTORY

Archaeological finds on Failaka, the largest of Kuwait's nine islands, suggest that Failaka was a trading post at the time of the ancient Sumerians. Failaka appears to have continued to serve as a market for approximately 2,000 years, and was known to the ancient Greeks. Despite its long history as a market and sanctuary for traders, Failaka appears to have been abandoned as a permanent settlement in the 1st century A.D. Kuwait's modern history began in the 18th century with the founding of the city of Kuwait by the Uteiba, a subsection of the Anaiza tribe, who are believed to have traveled north from Qatar.

Threatened in the 19th century by the Ottoman Turks and various powerful Arabian Peninsula groups, Kuwait sought the same treaty relationship Britain had already signed with the Trucial States (UAE) and Bahrain. In January 1899, the ruler Sheikh Mubarak Al Sabah—"the Great"—signed an agreement with the British Government that pledged himself and his successors neither to cede any territory, nor to receive agents or representatives of any foreign power without the British Government's consent, in exchange for protection and an annual subsidy. When Mubarak died in 1915, the population of Kuwait of about 35,000 was heavily dependent on shipbuilding (using wood imported from India) and pearl diving.

Mubarak was succeeded as ruler by his sons Jabir (1915-17) and Salim (1917-21). Kuwait's subsequent rulers have descended from these two brothers. Sheikh Ahmed al-Jabir Al Sabah ruled Kuwait from 1921 until his death in 1950, a period in which oil was discovered and in which the government attempted to establish the first internationally recognized boundaries; the 1922 Treaty of Uqair set Kuwait's border with Saudi Arabia and also established the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone, an area of about 5,180 sq. km. (2,000 sq. mi.) adjoining Kuwait's southern border.

Kuwait achieved independence from the British under Sheikh Ahmed's successor, Sheikh Abdullah al-Salim Al Sabah. By early 1961, the British had already withdrawn their special court system, which handled the cases of foreigners resident in Kuwait, and the Kuwaiti Government began to exercise legal jurisdiction under new laws drawn up by an Egyptian jurist. On June 19, 1961, Kuwait became fully independent following an exchange of notes with the United Kingdom.

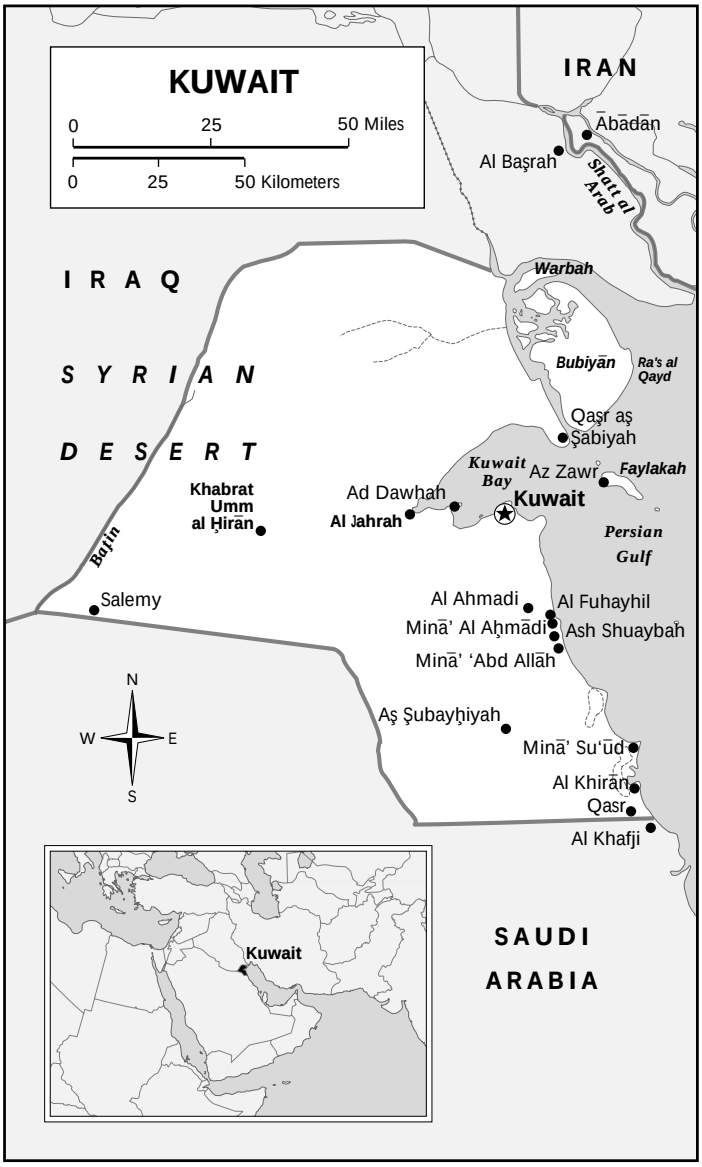
Kuwait enjoyed an unprecedented period of prosperity under Amir Sabah al-Salim Al Sabah, who died in 1977 after ruling for 12 years. Under his rule, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia signed an agreement dividing the Neutral Zone (now called the Divided Zone) and demarcating a new international boundary. Both countries share equally the Divided Zone's petroleum, onshore and offshore. The country was transformed into a highly developed welfare state with a free market economy.

In August 1990, Iraq attacked and invaded Kuwait. Kuwait's northern border with Iraq dates from an agreement reached with Turkey in 1913. Iraq accepted this claim in 1932 upon its independence from Turkey. However, following Kuwait's independence in 1961, Iraq claimed Kuwait, arguing that Kuwait had been part of the Ottoman Empire subject to Iraqi suzerainty. In 1963, Iraq reaffirmed its acceptance of Kuwaiti sovereignty and the boundary it agreed to in 1913 and 1932, in the "Agreed Minutes between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq Regarding the Restoration of Friendly Relations, Recognition, and Related Matters."

Following several weeks of aerial bombardment, a UN-mandated coalition led by the United States began a ground assault in February 1991 that liberated Kuwait. During the 7-month occupation by Iraq, the Amir,

the Government of Kuwait, and many Kuwaitis took refuge in Saudi Arabia and other nations. The Amir and the government successfully managed Kuwaiti affairs from Saudi Arabia, London, and elsewhere during the period, relying on substantial Kuwaiti investments available outside Kuwait for funding and war-related expenses.

Following liberation, the UN, under Security Council Resolution 687, demarcated the Iraq-Kuwait boundary on the basis of the 1932 and the 1963 agreements between the two states. In November 1994, Iraq formally accepted the UN-demarcated border with Kuwait, which had been further spelled out in UN Security Council Resolutions 773 and 883.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate ruled by princes (Amirs) who have been drawn from the Al Sabah family since the middle of the 18th century. The 1962 constitution provides for an elected National Assembly and details the powers of the branches of government and the rights of citizens. Under the Constitution, the National Assembly has a limited role in approving the Amir's choice of the Crown Prince, who succeeds the Amir upon his death. If the National Assembly rejects his nominee, the Amir then submits three names of qualified candidates from among the direct descendants of Mubarak the Great, the founder of modern Kuwait, from which the Assembly must choose the new Crown Prince. Successions have been orderly since independence. In January 2006, the National Assembly played a symbolically important role in the succession process, which was seen as an assertion of parliament's constitutional powers.

For almost 40 years, the Amir appointed the Crown Prince as Kuwait's Prime Minister. However, in July 2003, the Amir formally separated the two positions and appointed a different ruling family member as Prime Minister.

Kuwait's first National Assembly was elected in 1963, with follow-on elections held in 1967, 1971, and 1975. From 1976 to 1981, the National Assembly was suspended. Following elections in 1981 and 1985, the National Assembly was again dissolved. Fulfilling a promise made during the period of Iraqi occupation, the Amir held new elections for the National Assembly in 1992. In May 1999 and once again in May 2006, the Amir dissolved the National Assembly, but complied with the constitution by holding new elections within 60 days. The most recent general election, held in June 2006, was considered free and fair and was marked by the participation of women for the first time as voters and candidates who introduced social and educational issues to the political debate. In July 2006 the newly elected legislature passed a law to reduce the number of electoral districts from 25 to 5 in a move that reformers hoped would increase the transparency of the democratic process by increasing the number of votes necessary to win a seat in parliament.

The government does not officially recognize political parties; however, de facto political blocs, typically organized along ideological lines, exist and are active in the National Assembly. Although the Amir maintains the final word on most government policies, the National Assembly plays a real role in decision-making, with powers to initiate legislation, question ("grill") cabinet ministers, and express lack of confidence in individual ministers. For example, in May 1999, the Amir issued several landmark decrees dealing with women's suffrage, economic liberalization, and nationality. The National Assembly later rejected all of these decrees as a matter of principle and then reintroduced most of them as parliamentary legislation. In May 2005, the National Assembly approved legislation granting women full political rights. Subsequently the Prime Minister appointed Kuwait's first female minister, Dr. Masouma Al-Mubarak, as Planning Minister and Minister of State for Administrative Development Affairs, and the government appointed two women to Kuwait's Municipal Council. Following the March 2007 resignation of the cabinet, Dr. Masouma was joined by a second woman, Nouriya Subih, in the cabinet.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Amir: **SABAH al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah**
Prime Min.: **NASIR al-MUHAMMAD al-Ahmad al-Sabah**
First Dep. Prime Min.: **JABIR al-MUBARAK al-Hamad al-Sabah**
Dep. Prime Min.: **MUHAMMAD al-Sabah al-Salim al-Sabah**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Faysal al-HAJJI**
Min. of Commerce & Industry: **Ahmad Abdallah al-BAQR**
Min. of Communications: **Abd al-Rahman al-GHUNAYM**
Min. of Defense: **JABIR al-MUBARAK al-Hamad al-Sabah**
Min. of Education & Higher Education: **Nuriya al-SUBAYH**
Min. of Electricity & Water: **Muhammad al-ULAYM**
Min. of Finance: **Mustafa al-Jassim al-SHIMMALI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **MUHAMMAD al-Sabah al-Salim al-Sabah**
Min. of Health: **Ali Muhammad al-BARRAK**
Min. of Information: **SABAH al-KHALID al-Hamad al-Sabah**
Min. of Interior: **JABIR al-KHALID al-Jabir al-Sabah**
Min. of Justice: **Husayn al-HURAYTI**
Min. of Oil: **Muhammad al-ULAYM**
Min. of Public Works: **Fadhil Safar Ali SAFAR**
Min. of Religious Endowment & Islamic Affairs: **Husayn al-HURAYTI**
Min. of Social Affairs & Labor: **Badr al-DUWAYLAH**
Min. of State for Amiri Diwan Affairs: **NASIR al-SABAH al-Ahmad al-Sabah**
Min. of State for Cabinet Affairs: **Faysal al-HAJJI**
Min. of State for Housing Affairs: **Mudhi al-HAMUD**
Min. of State for Municipality Affairs: **Fadhil Safar Ali SAFAR**
Min. of State for National Assembly Affairs: **Ahmad Abdallah al-BAQR**
Pres., National Security Bureau: **AHMAD al-FAHD al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah**
Governor, Central Bank: **SALIM al-Abd al-Aziz al-Saud al-Sabah**
Ambassador to the US: **SALIM al-Abdallah al-Jabir al-Sabah**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Abdallah Ahmad Muhammad al-MURAD**

Kuwait maintains an embassy in the United States at 2940 Tilden Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. [1] (202)-966-0702).

ECONOMY

Kuwait has a small, relatively open economy dominated by the oil industry and government sector. Approximately 90% of the Kuwaiti citizen labor force works in the public sector, and 90% of private sector workers are non-Kuwaitis. Kuwait's proven crude oil reserves of about 101.5 billion barrels—9% of world reserves—account for nearly 60% of GDP, 95% of export revenues, and 80-90% of government income. During the 1970s, Kuwait benefited from the dramatic rise in oil prices, which Kuwait actively promoted through its membership in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The economy suffered from the triple shock of a 1982 securities market crash, the mid-1980s drop in oil prices, and the 1990 Iraqi invasion and occupation. The Kuwaiti Government-in-exile depended upon its $100 billion in overseas investments during the Iraqi occupation to help pay for the reconstruction. Thus, by 1993, this balance was cut to less than half of its pre-invasion level. The wealth of Kuwait is based primarily on oil and capital reserves, and the Iraqi occupation severely damaged both, although both have been restored as reconstruction has proceeded and world oil prices have risen. Kuwait enjoyed an economic boom following Operation Iraqi Freedom as many companies working in Iraq established offices in Kuwait and procured goods through Kuwaiti companies. The banking, financial services, logistics, telecommunications, and construction sectors, in particular, have grown in the last two years. The sustained high oil prices also provided the Kuwaiti Government with windfall revenues in 2005 and 2006.

In the closing hours of the Gulf War in February 1991, the Iraqi occupation forces set ablaze or damaged 749 of Kuwait's oil wells. Kuwait spent more than $5 billion to repair oil infrastructure damage. Oil production was 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) by the end of 1992, and pre-war capacity was restored in 1993. Kuwait's current production capacity is estimated to be 2.5 million bpd. Kuwait plans to increase its capacity to 3.5 million bpd by 2015 and 4.0 million bpd by 2020.

Oil

In 1934, the ruler of Kuwait granted an oil concession to the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), jointly owned by the British Petroleum Company and Gulf Oil Corporation. In 1976, the Kuwaiti Government nationalized KOC. The following year, Kuwait took over part of onshore production in the Divided Zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) produces jointly there with Saudi Arabian Chevron, which, by its 1984 purchase of Getty Oil Company, acquired the Saudi Arabian onshore concession in the Divided Zone. Saudi

Arabian Chevron's concession is due to expire in February 2009. Offshore in the Divided Zone, the Arabian Oil Company (AOC)—80% owned by Japanese interests and 10% each by the Kuwaiti and Saudi Governments—produced on behalf of both countries from 1961 until 2000, when its concession in the Saudi zone expired. AOC gave up its drilling rights in the Kuwaiti sector 3 years later. KGOC has assumed AOC's offshore operations. Aramco Gulf Oil Company (AGOC) manages the Saudi portion of the offshore Divided Zone.

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), an integrated, state-owned oil company, is the parent company of the government's operating companies in the petroleum sector, and includes Kuwait Oil Company, which produces oil and gas; Kuwait National Petroleum Company, which manages refining and domestic sales; Petrochemical Industries Company, which produces ammonia, urea, ethylene, propylene, and styrene and participates in a number of successful joint ventures with Dow Chemical within Kuwait and abroad; Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company, which is responsible for exploration and upstream production outside Kuwait (in several developing countries and Australia); Kuwait Oil Tanker Company.; Kuwait Gulf Oil Company, responsible for exploration and production in the Kuwait portions of the offshore and onshore Divided Zone; and Kuwait Petroleum International, which manages refining and retail operations outside Kuwait (in Europe and East Asia).

KPC purchased from Gulf Oil Co. refineries in the Netherlands and Italy and service stations in the Benelux nations, Italy, and Scandinavia. In 1987, KPC bought a 19% share in British Petroleum, which was later reduced to 10%. KPC markets its products in Europe under the brand name Q8. In 2006, KPC announced plans to participate in a joint venture to build and operate a refinery and associated petrochemical plant in China. The Government of Kuwait also signed a memorandum of agreement with the State of Louisiana in 2006 to explore the feasibility of building a refinery in the United States. According to official OPEC figures, Kuwait has about 101.5 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, including the Kuwaiti share of proven reserves in the Divided Zone. This gives Kuwait the fifth-largest oil reserves in the world after Saudi Arabia, Canada, Iran, and Iraq. Estimated capacity before the occupation was about 2.4 million bpd. During the Iraqi occupation, Kuwait's oil-producing capacity was severely reduced. However, tremendous recovery and improvements have been made. Oil production was 1.5 million bpd by the end of 1992, and pre-war capacity was restored in 1993. Kuwait's production capacity is estimated to be 2.5 million bpd. Kuwait plans to increase its capacity to 3.5 million bpd by 2015 and 4.0 million bpd by 2020. Oil revenues comprise about 95% of exports and 90% of total government revenues. Kuwaiti export crude averaged about $58/barrel in 2006.

Social Benefits

The government has sponsored many social welfare, public works, and development plans financed with oil and investment revenues. Among the benefits for Kuwaiti citizens are retirement income, marriage bonuses, housing loans, virtually guaranteed employment, free medical services, and education at all levels. By Amiri decree, the government occasionally disburses a portion of its budget surplus as a grant to all Kuwaiti citizens. In September 2006, an Amiri grant of 200 Kuwaiti dinars (approximately $700) was paid to every citizen who applied. Foreign nationals residing in Kuwait do not have access to these welfare services. The right to own stock in publicly traded companies, real estate, and banks or a majority interest in a business is limited to Kuwaiti citizens, and citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states under limited circumstances.

Industry and Development

Industry in Kuwait consists of several large export-oriented petrochemical units, oil refineries, and a range of small manufacturers. It also includes large water desalinization, ammonia, desulphurization, fertilizer, brick, block, and cement plants. During the invasion, the Iraqis looted nearly all movable equipment of value, especially high-technology items and small machinery. Much of this has been replaced with newer equipment. The Kuwaiti Government has promoted the Trade and Investment Framework (TIFA) agreement, signed with the U.S. in 2004, as a means to attract additional foreign investment into Kuwaiti industries and enhance the country's diversification from a purely oil-based economy.

Agriculture

Agriculture is limited by the lack of water and arable land. The government has experimented in growing food through hydroponics and carefully managed farms. However, most of the soil which was suitable for farming in south central Kuwait was destroyed when Iraqi troops set fire to oil wells in the area and created vast "oil lakes." Fish and shrimp are plentiful in territorial waters, and large-scale commercial fishing has been undertaken locally and in the Indian Ocean.

Shipping

The Kuwait Oil Tanker Company has 24 crude oil, liquefied petroleum gas, and refined product carriers and is the largest tanker company in an OPEC country. Kuwait also is a member of the United Arab Shipping Company.

Trade, Finance, and Aid

The Kuwaiti dinar is a strong currency which was pegged from 2003 until May 2007 to the U.S. dollar. The dinar is now pegged to a basket of currencies, of which the dollar is a majority. Kuwait ordinarily runs a current account surplus, estimated at $40 billion for 2006 (about 45% of GDP). Government revenues are dependent on oil revenues. In 2006, Kuwait's fiscal surplus was estimated to be about 20% of GDP, despite a

16% rise in government expenditure. The government's two reserve funds—the Fund for Future Generations and the General Reserve Fund—which totaled nearly $100 billion prior to the invasion in 1990, were the primary source of capital for the Kuwaiti Government during the war. While these funds were depleted to $40-$50 billion after the war, total external assets, including the two reserve funds and the Public Fund for Social Security, are currently estimated to be around $160 billion. The bulk of this is invested in the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, and Southeast Asia. In order of importance, foreign assets are believed to be invested in stocks and bonds, fixed yield instruments (mostly short term), and real estate. Kuwait follows a generally conservative investment policy.

Kuwait has been a major source of foreign economic assistance to other states through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), an autonomous state institution created in 1961 on the pattern of Western and international development agencies and chaired by the Foreign Minister.

In 1974, the fund's lending mandate was expanded to include all non-Arab, developing countries. According to the most recent statistics available, the Fund's paid-up capital amounts to $7 billion. Total loan disbursement extended is $37 billion. The Fund has granted 595 loans since its inception and extended technical assistance on 196 occasions to different countries and organizations in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. KFAED is responsible for administering the disbursal of at least $500 million in concessionary loans to Iraq in support of reconstruction efforts.

Over the years Kuwait has provided aid to Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, as well as the Palestinian Authority. During the Iran-Iraq war, Kuwait also gave significant aid to the Iraqis. The Kuwait fund issued loans and technical assistance grants totaling over $419 million during its fiscal year ending March 31, 2003. Kuwaiti provided unparalleled assistance during Operation Iraqi Freedom by establishing and operating the Humanitarian Operations Center for Iraq. Following the Israel-Lebanon conflict in 2006, Kuwait pledged $300 million for humanitarian aid and deposited $500 million in the Lebanese Central Bank.

At the 2003 Madrid Conference, the Government of Kuwait pledged $1.5 billion in assistance to Iraq. KFAED is responsible for disbursing and overseeing as much as $560 million of that assistance through grants. In 2005, KFAED contributed $50 million to Pakistan earthquake relief, contributed $50 million for Hurricane Katrina relief, and made significant contributions to tsunami relief efforts. Kuwaiti has also supported the establishment of the International Compact for Iraq.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Following independence in June 1961, Kuwait faced its first major foreign policy problem arising from Iraqi claims to Kuwait's territory. The Iraqis threatened invasion but were dissuaded by the U.K.'s ready response to the Amir's request for assistance. Kuwait presented its case before the United Nations and preserved its sovereignty. U.K. forces were later withdrawn and replaced by troops from Arab League nations, which were withdrawn in 1963 at Kuwait's request.

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait. Through U.S. efforts, a multinational coalition was assembled, and, under UN auspices, initiated military action against Iraq to liberate Kuwait. Arab states, especially the other five members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates), Egypt, and Syria, supported Kuwait by sending troops to fight with the coalition. Many European and East Asian states sent troops, equipment, and/or financial support.

After liberation, Kuwait concentrated its foreign policy efforts on development of ties to states which had participated in the multinational coalition. Notably, these states were given the lead role in Kuwait's reconstruction. Kuwait's relations with those nations that supported Iraq, among them Jordan, Sudan, Yemen, and Cuba, were slow to recover. Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasir Arafat's support for Saddam Hussein during the war also affected Kuwait's attitudes toward the PLO though Kuwait supports the Arab-Israeli peace process.

The Government of Kuwait has abandoned its previous policy of limiting the entry of workers from nations whose leaders had supported Iraq during the Gulf War. In August 2001, the Interior Minister announced that there were no longer any special restrictions or permits required for Palestinian workers wishing to return to the country. At the end of 2002, there were approximately 30,000 to 40,000 Palestinians, 30,000 to 40,000 Jordanians, and 5,000 Yemenis resident in Kuwait.

Since liberation from Iraq, Kuwait has made efforts to secure allies throughout the world, particularly UN Security Council members. In addition to the United States, defense arrangements have been concluded with the United Kingdom, Russia, and France. Ties to other key Arab members of the Gulf War coalition—Egypt and Syria—also have been sustained.

During the 2002-03 buildup to and execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Kuwait was a vital coalition partner, reserving a full 60% of its total land mass for use by coalition forces and donating significant assistance in kind to the effort. Kuwait continues to provide generous assistance in kind to ongoing coalition operations in Iraq. Kuwait has been consistently involved in reconstruction efforts in Iraq, pledging $1.5 billion at the October 2003 international donors' conference in Madrid, and consulting closely with Iraqi officials, including former Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaffari, who visited Kuwait

in late October 2005, and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who visited in July 2006 and again in April 2007. Kuwait has been an active and vocal public supporter of the political process in Iraq, welcoming the January 2005 elections and praising Iraq's October 2005 successful constitutional referendum. Iraqi President Talibani visited Kuwait in September 2006.

Kuwait is a member of the UN and some of its specialized and related agencies, including the World Bank (IBRD), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT); African Development Bank (AFDB), Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), Arab League, Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Group of 77 (G-77), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), INMARSAT, International Development Association (IDA), International Finance Corporation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labor Organization (ILO), International Maritime Organization, Interpol, IOC, Islamic Development Bank (IDB), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Non-Aligned Movement, Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

DEFENSE

Before the Gulf War, Kuwait maintained a small military force consisting of army, navy, and air force units. The majority of equipment for the military was supplied by the United Kingdom. Aside from the few units that were able to escape to Saudi Arabia, including a majority of the air force, all of this equipment was either destroyed or taken by the Iraqis. Much of the property returned by Iraq after the Gulf War was damaged beyond repair. Iraq retained a substantial amount of captured Kuwaiti military equipment in violation of UN resolutions.

Since liberation, Kuwait, with the help of the United States and other allies, has made significant efforts to increase the size and modernity of its armed forces. These efforts are succeeding. The government also continues to improve defense arrangements with other Arab states, as well as UN Security Council members. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, in 2003, Kuwaiti military elements successfully operated missile defense systems.

A separately organized National Guard maintains internal security. The police constitute a single national force under the purview of civilian authorities of the Ministry of Interior.

U.S.-KUWAITI RELATIONS

The United States opened a consulate in Kuwait in October 1951, which was elevated to embassy status at the time of Kuwait's independence 10 years later. The United States supports Kuwait's sovereignty, security, and independence, as well as its multilateral diplomatic efforts to build greater cooperation among the GCC countries.

Strategic cooperation between the United States and Kuwait increased in 1987 with the implementation of a maritime protection regime that ensured the freedom of navigation through the Gulf for 11 Kuwaiti tankers that were reflagged with U.S. markings.

The U.S.-Kuwaiti strategic partnership intensified dramatically again after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The United States spearheaded UN Security Council demands that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait and its authorization of the use of force, if necessary, to remove Iraqi forces from the occupied country. The United States also played a dominant role in the development of the multinational military operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm that liberated Kuwait. The U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship has remained strong in the post-Gulf War period. Kuwait and the United States worked on a daily basis to monitor and to enforce Iraq's compliance with UN Security Council resolutions, and Kuwait has also provided the main platform for Operation Iraqi Freedom since 2003.

Since Kuwait's liberation, the United States has provided military and defense technical assistance to Kuwait from both foreign military sales (FMS) and commercial sources. The U.S. Office of Military Cooperation in Kuwait is attached to the American embassy and manages the FMS program.

There are currently over 100 open FMS contracts between the U.S. military and the Kuwait Ministry of Defense totaling $8.1 billion. Principal U.S. military systems currently purchased by the Kuwait Defense Forces are Patriot Missile systems, F-18 Hornet fighters, the M1A2 main battle tank, AH-64D Apache helicopter, and a major recapitalization of Kuwait's Navy with U.S. boats.

Kuwaiti attitudes toward American products have been favorable since the Gulf War. In 1993, Kuwait publicly announced abandonment of the secondary and tertiary aspects of the Arab boycott of Israel (those aspects affecting U.S. firms).

The United States is currently Kuwait's largest supplier of goods and services, and Kuwait is the fifth-largest market in the Middle East. U.S. exports to Kuwait totaled $2.14 billion million in 2006. Provided their prices are reasonable, U.S. firms have a competitive advantage in many areas requiring advanced technology, such as oil field equipment and services, electric power generation and distribution equipment, telecommunications gear, consumer goods, and military equipment. Kuwait also is an important partner in the ongoing U.S.-led campaign against international terrorism, providing assistance

in the military, diplomatic, and intelligence arenas and also supporting efforts to block financing of terrorist groups.

In January 2005, Kuwait Security Services forces engaged in gun battles with local extremists, resulting in fatalities on both sides in the first such incident in Kuwait's history.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

KUWAIT (E) Al-Masjed Al-Aqsa Street, Bayan, Plot 14, APO/FPO PSC 1280, Box #, APO AE 09880, (965) 259-1001, Fax 965-538-0282, Workweek: Sun-Thur/0800-1600, Website: Kuwait.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Vacant
AMB OMS:	Donna Millet
DHS/ICE:	Robert Hessler
ECO:	Nita Crespo (Acting)
FCS:	Nancy K. Charles-Parker
FM:	Rachna Korhonen
HRO:	Karen McCarthy
IBB:	Gaines Johnson
MGT:	Brian R. Moran
AMB:	Deborah K. Jones
CON:	Santiago Busa, Jr.
DCM:	Alan G. Misenheimer
PAO:	John F. Berry
RSO:	Michael E. Wilkins
AFSA:	Vacant
CLO:	(Act) Jessica Olson
DAO:	Ltc. Ltc Charles Pfaff
DEA:	Amembassy Cairo
EEO:	Emily L. Weston
FAA/CASLO:	Faa-Amemb Manama
FMO:	Karen McCarthy
ICASS Chair:	Lubin Quinones
IMO:	Michael McCowan
IPO:	Dwayne E. Singleton
IRS:	Kathy Beck
ISO:	Michael McCowan
ISSO:	Michael McCowan
MLO:	BG Brig Gen Charles L. Hudson
POL:	(Act) Thomas Rosenberger
State ICASS:	Santiago Busa, Jr.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 2, 2008

Country Description: Kuwait is a small, oil-rich constitutional monarchy with 10% of proven world oil reserves. Foreign workers constitute approximately 90% of the labor force. Kuwaiti citizens constitute only 34% of the country's population of three million, and enjoy the benefits of a generous social welfare system that guarantees employment, housing, education and medical care. Facilities for travelers are widely available.

Entry Requirements: Passports and visas are required for U.S. citizens traveling to Kuwait. U.S. citizens can obtain visitor visas for a fee at the port of entry in Kuwait. Travelers who overstay their visas may be required to pay large fines before leaving Kuwait. Travelers who leave Kuwait without completing Kuwaiti exit procedures may also be required to pay large fines if they return to and attempt to depart from Kuwait. This includes travelers proceeding via Kuwait to and from Iraq. Effective May 15, 2007, the Government of Kuwait no longer admits travelers with a contractor identification card. All contractors entering or transiting the State of Kuwait should have a valid passport. Visas can be obtained upon arrival in Kuwait for a fee of 3 Kuwaiti Dinar (KD). For further information on entry and exit requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of Kuwait at 2940 Tilden Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 966-0702, or the Kuwaiti Consulate in New York City, telephone (212) 973-4318.

Kuwaiti officials are extremely sensitive about travel to Iraq. There have been instances in which Americans, especially those of Iraqi descent, have been detained for questioning at ports of entry/exit. Americans seeking to travel to Iraq through Kuwait have also on occasion been turned around and/or detained. On a number of occasions the border between Iraq and Kuwait has been closed without notice, stranding Americans on either side of the border.

Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, including Americans, charged with criminal offenses, placed under investigation, or involved in unresolved financial disputes with local business partners, are subject to travel bans. These bans, which are rigidly enforced, prevent the individual from leaving Kuwait for any reason until the matter is resolved. Travel bans can be initiated by any person for almost any reason and may remain in place for a substantial period of time while the case is being investigated. Expatriates have been detained in Kuwait for cases with seemingly little or no evidence or legal merit. A person with influence with the Kuwaiti government can ensure that a travel ban remains in place even if a judge or government official states the ban should be lifted. In the case of purely financial disputes, it may be possible to depart the country if a local sponsor pledges funds equal to the amount in dispute. Once such legal orders are in place, the U.S. Embassy can assist American citizens in obtaining legal representation, but cannot overcome the ban on exit from the country until the matter is resolved.

Safety and Security: Americans in Kuwait should exercise a high level of security awareness. The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of further terrorist actions against U.S. citizens and interests abroad, specifically in the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. Americans considering travel to Kuwait should review the Worldwide Caution.

All U.S. citizens in Kuwait should exercise caution, maintain a low profile, and avoid areas where Westerners are known to congregate. Heightened security awareness should be exercised at all hotels and residential complexes, as terrorists in the past have specifically targeted hotel chains perceived as Western and a variety of Western housing facilities. Military members, as well as civilians and contractors related to military interests, are also potential targets.

Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Terrorist actions may include bombings, hijackings, hostage taking, kidnappings and assassinations. Increased security at official U.S. facilities may lead terrorists and their sympathiz-

ers to seek softer targets such as public transportation, residential areas and apartment complexes, schools and places of worship, oil-related facilities and personnel, and public areas where people congregate including restaurants, hotels, clubs, and shopping areas. U.S. citizens are advised to immediately report any unusual or suspicious activity in Kuwait to the Kuwaiti police or to the U.S. Embassy.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

The U.S. Embassy in Kuwait has an active warden program and records warden notices in both English and Arabic for audio playback. The English-language notices can be heard by calling +965-259-1048 and the Arabic-language notices are available at +965-259-1049.

Crime: The crime threat in Kuwait is assessed as low. Violent crimes against expatriates are rare, but do occur. The U.S. Embassy advises all U.S. citizens to take the same security precautions in Kuwait that one would practice in the United States or any other large city abroad. Physical and verbal harassment of women are continuing problems. The Kuwaiti police accept crime reports at the police station with jurisdiction where the crime occurred. If filing a crime report, it is advisable that an American citizen be accompanied by a person who speaks Arabic or a local attorney. The Embassy's List of Attorneys is available on the Embassy web site at http://kuwait.usembassy.gov/attorneys.html. Filing a crime report can take several hours as a police investigator will take the victim's statement orally while composing his investigative report. In all cases of abuse, the victim must obtain a medical report from a Kuwaiti hospital in order to file a police report.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent of the "911" emergency line in Kuwait is "777" and can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The quality and range of services provided by the emergency line are not equivalent to those provided in the U.S. and response times may vary greatly depending on the time of day and the location of the emergency.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The health care system continues to develop, with many government and private medical facilities available in Kuwait. Medical care at government-run clinics and hospitals is provided at low cost to residents of Kuwait. Private physicians and hospitals charge fees for services, and some do not accept local health insurance. Many hospital and clinic services do not compare to U.S. standards, and staff often have no U.S. experience or training. For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

The government of Kuwait has strict regulations regarding certain diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis. Medical examinations are required for all residency applications and any applicants who are found positive for these restricted diseases will be asked to leave the country immediately and will be permanently barred from re-entry. Please inquire directly with the Embassy of Kuwait at http://www.embassy.org/embassies/kw.html before you travel.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Kuwait is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Kuwait is hazardous. Although Kuwait has an extensive and modern system of well-lit roads, excessive speeding on both primary and secondary roads, coupled with

lax enforcement of traffic regulations and a high density of vehicles (one vehicle for every 2.8 residents), leads to frequent and often fatal accidents. In 2006, reported vehicular accidents were 40,000 with 460 deaths, an increase over the previous year. The average age of death was between 21 and 30 years. There are now over one million motor vehicles registered in Kuwait. Incidents of road rage, inattention and distraction on the part of drivers, poor driving skills, and highway brinksmanship are common in Kuwait, and can be unsettling to Western drivers in Kuwait who are accustomed to more rigid adherence to traffic laws.

The government-owned Kuwait Public Transportation Company operates bus services throughout the Kuwait City metropolitan area on 50 different routes, which are widely used by the low-income expatriate labor force. Call taxis are available at major hotels and pick up passengers at other locations upon telephonic request. Unaccompanied women should not use taxis after dark. It is now possible to hail taxis on streets. Taxis have meters, but fares are more commonly negotiated.

Visitors can use international driving permits issued by their respective countries within the time limit of their visas; however, the visitor must also have liability insurance. It is illegal to drive in Kuwait without a license and car registration documents. If you are stopped and cannot produce them, you may be taken to a police station and held until they are presented on your behalf. The Government of Kuwait may provide American citizens with a Kuwaiti driver's license if their valid American driver's license is first certified by the American Embassy. This service costs 9 KD and is available from the American Citizens Services Unit of the Consular Section. The Embassy's certification must be authenticated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the American permit must be translated by an approved translation service.

If you are in an accident, Kuwaiti law mandates that you must remain at the scene until the police arrive. The use of front seat belts is mandatory in Kuwait. Driving is on the right side of the road. Speed limits are posted. Making a right turn on a red light is not permitted unless there is a special lane to do so with a yield sign. Parking is not allowed where the curb is painted black and yellow. Digital cameras for registering traffic violations, including speeding, are in use on Kuwaiti roads.

Driving while under the influence of alcohol (possession and consumption of alcohol is illegal in Kuwait) is a serious offense, which may result in fines, imprisonment, and/or deportation. Repeat traffic violations or violations of a serious nature may also result in the deportation of an expatriate offender. When a driver flashes his/her high beams in Kuwait, it is meant as a request to move your car into a slower lane to allow the driver with the flashing beams to proceed ahead.

Kuwait has one of the highest per capita rates of cellular telephone ownership in the world and using a cellular telephone while driving remains legal. Local emergency service organizations may be contacted by dialing 777. Ambulance crews do not respond as quickly as in the United States and do not often include trained paramedics.

Visit the website of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior at www.moi.gov.kw for information and statistics in Arabic about traffic safety and road conditions in Kuwait.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Kuwait's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Kuwait's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The workweek in Kuwait is Sunday through Thursday for most businesses, government offices and commercial banks. Kuwaiti customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Kuwait of items such as firearms, religious material, pornography, and alcohol. Alcohol, pork products, and pornography are illegal in Kuwait. Travelers with prescription medications should carry them in their original packaging or bottle, as dispensed, and carry a copy of their prescription in case customs authorities question their importation into Kuwait.

Kuwaiti customs authorities screen the baggage of all travelers entering Kuwait. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Kuwait in Washington, D.C. or Kuwait's Consulate in New York for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Photographing government and public buildings, military installations, and economic infrastructure, particularly that related to the oil industry, is against the law and can result in arrest, investigation, and prosecution. Also, some traditionally-dressed women find being photographed to be offensive and may complain to the local police. If photographing public scenes or persons, visitors should take care to ask permission beforehand and not to inadvertently cause offense that could lead to an official complaint to the authorities.

Humiliating a person, including a police officer or a public official, is a crime in Kuwait similar to disorderly conduct or harassment in the United States. A person charged with humiliating another is subject to police investigation and possible prosecution. Persons under investigation can be prevented from departing Kuwait. Proselytizing is prohibited for all religions except Islam.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar

offenses. Persons violating Kuwaiti laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Kuwait are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Kuwait are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through theState Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Kuwait. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Kuwait is located at Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa Street, Block 6, Plot 14, Bayan, Kuwait. The mailing address is PO Box 77, Safat 13001, Kuwait. The primary telephone numbers are 965-259-1001 or 259-1002. The fax number is 965-259-1438 or 538-0282. The after-hours number is 965-538-2097. Additional information may also be obtained through the Embassy's web site at http://kuwait.usembassy.gov.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Kuwait is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Kuwait and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Kuwait are subject to the jurisdiction of Kuwait courts, as well as to the country's laws and regulations. American citizens planning a trip to Kuwait with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: Cases involving divorce and the custody of minor children are adjudicated in religious courts. If the marriage partners are Muslim, disputes will be resolved before an Islamic Sharia court which will apply principles of the Islamic sect (Shia or Sunni or mixed) of the parties involved. A Sharia court would also hear a dispute between a Muslim husband and non-Muslim wife. Marriage between a Muslim woman and non-Muslim man is prohibited in Kuwait. In the case of Christians, the court will be an Ecclesiastical Court composed of clergymen from the appropriate religious community, who will refer to the principles governing family status in the Greek Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church or other Christian denomination.

In both theory and practice, Muslim and Christian courts in Kuwait differ very little in how they resolve disputes over the custody of children of divorced or separated parents. The relevant laws all give priority for custodianship to the mother as long as certain restrictive conditions are met. However, once the children reach adolescence, the father can appeal for custody, except in the Sunni sect where the daughter stays with her mother until marriage. If a court finds the mother not fit to have custody, a maternal grandmother living in Kuwait or a paternal grandmother (if the maternal grandmother is not living in Kuwait) will be given custody until the children reach the age at which the father may appeal for custody.

In actual practice, the conditions placed on the mother's primary right to custody often enable the father to maintain a great deal of influence over the rearing of the children, even though he may not have legal custody. For example, the mother must seek his approval to depart Kuwait with the children. Frequently, the father is actually able to assume legal custody against the wishes of the mother when she is unable or unwilling to meet the conditions set by law for her to maintain her custodial rights. A mother can lose her primary right to custody of a child in a number of ways. The court can determine that she is incapable of safeguarding the child or of bringing the child up in accordance with the appropriate religious standards. The mother can void her right to custody by re-marrying a party considered "unmarriageable," or by residing in a home with people who might be "strangers" to the child. The mother may not deny visitation rights to the father or the paternal grandfather and may not travel outside Kuwait with the child without the father's approval and the approval of the court. In general, a Kuwaiti man divorcing his non-Kuwaiti wife may be awarded legal custody of their children if the court determines that any of the above conditions have not been met.

Under Sharia law, if a mother removes a child from the father thus denying him access, the mother's custody rights can be severed. An attempt to remove children from Kuwait without permission from the father is considered a criminal act in Kuwait. The U.S. Embassy cannot prevent the Kuwaiti government from arresting and either deporting or prosecuting an American citizen who violates Kuwaiti law.

A Kuwaiti father can remove his children from Kuwait without approval from the mother. A mother can seek a

travel ban to prevent the father from taking the children out of Kuwait. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Kuwaiti court should retain an attorney in Kuwait. The U.S. State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait maintain a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by contacting either office.

U.S. Embassy Kuwait
P.O. Box 77 Safat
13001 Safat
Kuwait
Phone: [965] 539-5307/5308
After hours emergency phone number: [965] 538-2097/2098
Fax: [965] 539-2484
Workweek: Saturday through Wednesday

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Kuwait if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices. For example, an order from a U.S. court granting custody to a parent will not be honored in Kuwait if the parent intends to take the child to live outside Kuwait. Nor will Kuwaiti courts enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Kuwait to pay child support. However, a court hearing a custody case in Kuwait may take into consideration the law of the country of the father's nationality. An American father with a U.S. court order granting him custody might find that order helpful (though not binding) in a custody proceeding in Kuwait.

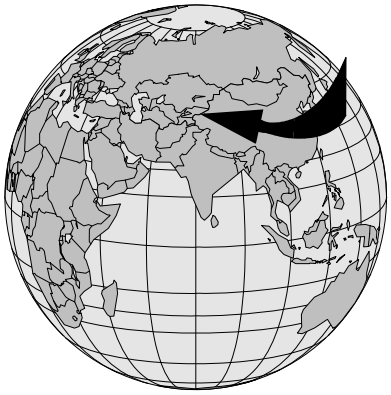
Visitation Rights: In cases where the father has custody of a child, the mother is guaranteed visitation rights. It has been the experience of the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait that the father and the paternal grandparents of the child are generally very open and accommodating in facilitating the right of the mother to visit and maintain contact with the child.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Kuwaiti law. Children of Kuwaiti fathers automatically acquire Kuwaiti citizenship at birth, regardless of where the child was born. Women cannot transmit citizenship. Kuwaiti citizens must enter and exit the country on Kuwaiti passports.

Travel Restrictions: Exit visas are not required to leave Kuwait. However, a mother may face serious legal difficulties if she attempts to take her children out of Kuwait without the permission of the father. Immigration officials at the airport or border often ask to see permission from the father in writing before allowing children to exit, and have even been known to confirm a written request by contacting the father. If a woman has not placed a travel ban preventing a father from removing children from Kuwait, a father will usually be permitted to exit Kuwait with his children without difficulty.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



KYRGYZSTAN

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kyrgyz Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 77,181 sq. mi.

Cities: Bishkek (capital), Osh, Cholpon Ata, Karakol.

Terrain: 90% mountainous, with some desert regions. Elevation extremes—lowest point: Kulundy village in the Batken province 401 m; highest point: Jengish Chokusu (Pik Pobedy) 7,439 m.

People

Nationality: Kyrgyzstani.

Population: (July 2008) 5,356,869.

Annual growth rate: (2008) 1.38%.

Ethnic groups: (2007) Kyrgyz 68.9%; Russian 9.1%; Uzbek 14.4%; Dungan (ethnic Chinese Muslims) 1%; Uighurs 1%; Tajik 0.9%, Kazakh 0.8%, Tatars 0.7%; Korean 0.4%, German 0.3%.

Religions: Islam; Russian Orthodox.

Languages: State—Kyrgyz; official (2001)—Russian.

Education: Nine years compulsory. Literacy—98.7%.

Health: (2006) Infant mortality rate—29.2 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—67.7 years.

Population distribution: (2006) Urban 64.7%; rural 35.3%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: August 31, 1991 (from the Soviet Union).

Constitution: May 5, 1993; amended in 1996, 1998, 2003, 2006, and 2007.

Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister. Legislative—parliament. Judicial—Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, local courts, Procurator-General.

Political subdivisions: Seven oblasts and the municipality of Bishkek.

Political parties: Ak Jol People's Party, no formal leader, but this is the party of President Bakiyev; Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, Deputy Almazbek Atambayev; Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan, Deputy Iskhak Masaliev; Ar Namys (Dignity) Party, Feliks Kulov; Ata-Meken (Fatherland) Party, Omurbek Tekebaev; Jany Kyrgyzstan Party, Presidential Advisor Usen Sydykov; Erkindik (Freedom) Party, Shamshibek Utebaev; Zamandash Party, Muktarbek Omurakunov; Ak Shumkar Party, Temir Sariyev.

Economy

GDP: 2007, $3.75 billion; 2006, $2.8 billion; 2003, $1.9 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2007) 8.2%.

Inflation rate: (2007) 10.2%.

GDP per capita: (2006 est.) $536.

Unemployment rate: (as of the end of 2006) 17.7%.

Natural resources: Abundant hydropower; significant deposits of gold and rare earth metals; locally exploitable coal, oil, and natural gas; other deposits of iron, bauxite, copper, tin, molybdenum, mercury, and antimony.

Agriculture: Products—tobacco, cotton, wheat, vegetables (potatoes, sugar beets, beans), fruits (apples, apricots, peaches, grapes), berries; sheep, goats, cattle; wool.

Industry: Types—small machinery (electric motors, transformers), light industry (cotton and wool processing, textiles, food processing), construction materials (cement, glass, slate), shoes, furniture, mining, energy.

Trade: Exports (2007)—$1.34 billion: cotton, wool, meat, tobacco, gold, mercury, uranium, hydropower, machinery, shoes. Partners—Russia 20.7%, Switzerland 19.9%, Kazakhstan 18.0%, Afghanistan 10.4%. Imports—$2.64 billion: oil and gas, machinery and equipment, foodstuffs. Partners—Russia 40.5%, China 14.7%, Kazakhstan 12.9%, Uzbekistan 5%. Total external debt mid-2008 was $3.16 billion, of which $2.19 billion was public debt.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

According to recent findings of Kyrgyz and Chinese historians, Kyrgyz history dates back to 201 B.C. The earliest descendents of the Kyrgyz people, who are believed to be of Turkic descent, lived in the northeastern part of what is currently Mongolia. Later, some of their tribes migrated to the region that is currently southern Siberia and settled along the Yenisey River, where they lived from the 6th until the 8th centuries. They spread across what is now the Tuva region of the Russian Federation, remaining in that area until the rise of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century, when the Kyrgyz began migrating south. In the 12th century, Islam became the predominant religion in the region. Most Kyrgyz are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school.

During the 15th-16th centuries, the Kyrgyz people settled in the territory currently known as the Kyrgyz Republic. In the early 19th century, the southern territory of the Kyrgyz Republic came under the control of the Khanate of Kokand, and the territory was formally incorporated into the Russian Empire in 1876. The Russian takeover instigated numerous revolts against tsarist authority, and many Kyrgyz opted to move into the Pamir mountains or to Afghanistan. The suppression of the 1916 rebellion in Central Asia caused many Kyrgyz to migrate to China.

Soviet power was initially established in the region in 1918, and in 1924, the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Oblast was created within the Russian Federal Socialist Republic. (The term Kara-Kyrgyz was used until the mid-1920s by the Russians to distinguish them from the Kazakhs, who were also referred to as Kyrgyz.) In 1926, it became the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. On December 5, 1936, the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) was established as a full Union Republic of the U.S.S.R. During the 1920s, the Kyrgyz Republic saw considerable cultural, educational, and social change. Economic and social development also was notable. Literacy increased, and a standard literary language was introduced. The Kyrgyz language belongs to the Southern Turkic group of languages. In 1924, an Arabic-based Kyrgyz alphabet was introduced, which was replaced by Latin script in 1928. In 1941 Cyrillic script was adopted. Many aspects of the Kyrgyz national culture were retained despite suppression of nationalist activity under Joseph Stalin, who controlled the Soviet Union from the late 1920's until 1953.

The early years of glasnost in the late 1980s had little effect on the political climate in the Kyrgyz Republic. However, the republic's press was permitted to adopt a more liberal stance and to establish a new publication, Literaturny Kirghizstan, by the Union of Writers. Unofficial political groups were forbidden, but several groups that emerged in 1989 to deal with an acute housing crisis were permitted to function.

In June 1990, ethnic tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz surfaced in an area of the Osh Oblast, where Uzbeks form a majority of the population. Violent confrontations ensued, and a state of emergency and curfew were introduced. Order was not restored until August 1990.

The early 1990s brought measurable change to the Kyrgyz Republic. The Kyrgyzstan Democratic Movement (KDM) had developed into a significant political force with support in parliament. In an upset victory, Askar Akayev, the president of the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences, was elected to the presidency in October 1990. The following January, Akayev introduced new government structures and appointed a new government comprised mainly of younger, reform-oriented politicians. In December 1990, the Supreme Soviet voted to change the republic's name to the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. (In 1993, it became the Kyrgyz Republic.) In February 1991, the name of the capital, Frunze, was changed back to its pre-revolutionary name—Bishkek.

Despite these moves toward independence, economic realities seemed to work against secession from the U.S.S.R. In a referendum on the preservation of the U.S.S.R. in March 1991, 88.7% of the voters approved a proposal to retain the U.S.S.R. as a "renewed federation."

On August 19, 1991, when the State Committee for the State of Emergency (SCSE) assumed power in Moscow, there was an attempt to depose Akayev in Kyrgyzstan. After the coup collapsed the following week, Akayev and Vice President German Kuznetsov announced their resignations from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and the entire politburo and secretariat resigned. This was followed by the Supreme Soviet vote declaring independence from the U.S.S.R. on August 31, 1991. Kyrgyz was announced as the state language in September 1991. (In December 2001, through a constitutional amendment, the Russian language was given official status.)

In October 1991, Akayev ran unopposed and was elected President of the new independent republic by direct ballot, receiving 95% of the votes cast. Together with the representatives of seven other republics, he signed the Treaty of the New Economic Community that same month. On December 21, 1991, the Kyrgyz Republic formally entered the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In 1993, allegations of corruption against Akayev's closest political associates blossomed into a major scandal. One of those accused of improprieties was Prime Minister Chyngyshev, who was dismissed for ethical reasons in December. Following Chyngyshev's dismissal, Akayev dismissed the government and called upon the last communist premier, Apas Djumagulov, to form a new one. In January 1994, Akayev initiated a referendum asking for a renewed mandate to complete his term of office. He received 96.2% of the vote. A new constitution was passed by the parliament in May 1993. In 1994, however, the parliament failed to produce a quorum for its last scheduled



session prior to the expiration of its term in February 1995. President Akayev was widely accused of having manipulated a boycott by a majority of the parliamentarians. Akayev, in turn, asserted that the communists had caused a political crisis by preventing the legislature from fulfilling its role. Akayev scheduled an October 1994 referendum, overwhelmingly approved by voters, which proposed two amendments to the constitution—one that would allow the constitution to be amended by means of a referendum, and the other creating a new bicameral parliament called the Jogorku Kenesh.

Elections for the two legislative chambers—a 35-seat full-time assembly and a 70-seat part-time assembly—were held in February 1995 after campaigns considered remarkably free and open by most international observers, although the election-day proceedings were marred by widespread irregularities. Independent candidates won most of the seats, suggesting that personalities prevailed over ideologies. The new parliament convened its initial session in March 1995. One of its first orders of business was the approval of the precise constitutional language on the role of the legislature.

On December 24, 1995, President Akayev was reelected for another 5-year term with wide support (75% of vote) over two opposing candidates. President Akayev used government resources and state-owned media to carry out his campaign. Three (out of six) candidates were de-registered shortly before the election.

A February 1996 referendum—in violation of the constitution and the law on referendums—amended the constitution to give President Akayev more power. Although the changes gave the president the power to dissolve parliament, it also more clearly defined the parliament's powers. Since that time, the parliament has demonstrated real independence from the executive branch. An October 1998 referendum approved constitutional changes, including increasing the number of deputies in the lower house, reducing the number of deputies in the upper house, providing for 25% of lower house deputies to be elected by party lists, rolling back parliamentary immunity, introducing private property, prohibiting adoption of laws restricting freedom of speech and mass media, and reforming the state budget.

Two rounds of parliamentary elections were held on February 20, 2000 and March 12, 2000. With the full backing of the United States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reported that the elections failed to comply with commitments to free and fair elections and hence were invalid. Questionable judicial proceedings against opposition candidates and parties limited the choice of candidates available to Kyrgyz voters, while state-controlled media only reported favorably on official candidates. Government officials put pressure on independent media outlets that favored the opposition. The presidential election that followed later in 2000 also was marred by irregulari-

ties and was not declared free and fair by international observers. March 2002 events in the southern district of Aksy, where six people protesting the arbitrary arrest of an opposition politician were shot dead by police, engendered nationwide protests. President Akayev initiated a constitutional reform process, which initially included the participation of a broad range of government, civil, and social representatives in an open dialogue. The reform process resulted in a February 2003 referendum, which was marred by voting irregularities. The amendments to the constitution approved by the referendum resulted in further control by the president and weakened the parliament and the Constitutional Court. Under the new constitution, the previously bicameral parliament became a 75-seat unicameral legislature following the 2005 parliamentary elections.

Parliamentary elections were held February 27 and March 13, 2005. The United States agreed with the findings of the OSCE that while the elections failed to comply with commitments to free and fair elections, there were improvements over the 2000 elections, notably the use of indelible ink, transparent ballot boxes, and generally good access by election observers.

Sporadic protests against widespread fraud during the parliamentary runoff elections in March 2005 erupted into calls for the government to resign. By March 24, 15,000 pro-opposition demonstrators called for the resignation of the president and his regime in Bishkek. Some injuries were reported when opposition demonstrators were attacked by police and pro-government thugs. Protestors seized the presidential administration building, after which President Akayev left the country for Kazakhstan, and then Russia. Looting broke out in parts of Bishkek on the evening of March 24, causing an estimated $100 million in damage. Opposition leaders, caught by surprise by developments, moved to form a broadly inclusive "Committee of National Unity." Opposition leader Kurmanbek Bakiyev was named acting President and Prime Minister. Bakiyev formed an alliance with primary rival Feliks Kulov whereby Kulov agreed to drop out of the presidential race if Bakiyev appointed him Prime Minister upon winning the elections.

Bakiyev easily won the July 10, 2005 presidential elections with over 88% of the vote. An unprecedented number of domestic and international observers monitored the elections and noted significant improvements in the electoral process over the parliamentary elections, although there were some reports of irregularities.

Opposition groups held a series of demonstrations in 2006, including the entire first week of November, to protest the lack of progress on reform, in particular of the constitution, promised by President Bakiyev in 2005. The Kyrgyz parliament adopted amendments to the constitution and President Bakiyev signed the amended constitution on November 9, 2006, which limited the powers of the president and increased the role of parliament. After the government resigned on December 19, the Kyrgyz parliament voted on December 30 to adopt new amendments restoring some of the presidential powers lost in November. President Bakiyev signed the changes into law January 15, 2007.

In March 2007, President Bakiyev appointed opposition leader Almaz Atambayev as Prime Minister. A week-long opposition protest in April 2007 ended when police cleared the main Ala-Too Square in Bishkek.

In September 2007, the Constitutional Court invalidated the November 2006 and December 2006 versions of the constitution. President Bakiyev then called a snap national referendum on a new version of the constitution, which strengthened the powers of the president and provided for a parliament elected by party lists. The new constitution was approved in an October 2007 referendum that was marked by serious irregularities, including massive inflation of turnout figures. President Bakiyev then dissolved the parliament, calling for new elections. The December 2007 elections were deeply flawed, with the new pro-presidential Ak Jol party gaining 71 out of 90 seats. The largest opposition party, Ata Meken, did not gain any seats, despite probably receiving enough votes to meet the regional thresholds required to enter parliament. Following the elections, a new government was formed, headed by the former energy minister, Igor Chudinov, as Prime Minister.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The 1993 constitution defines the form of government as a democratic republic. The executive branch includes a president and prime minister. The judicial branch comprises a Supreme Court, a Constitutional Court, local courts, and a Procurator-General.

President Bakiyev made constitutional reform a key element of his campaign in 2005, and the November 2006 protests stemmed in part from members of parliament's demands for action on that reform. Following parliamentary elections in December 2007, President Bakiyev announced that political reform was complete and that the new government would focus on economic growth and privatization.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Kurmanbek BAKIEV**
Prime Min.: **Igor CHUDINOV**
First Dep. Prime Min.: **Iskenderbek AYDARALIEV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Elmira IBRAGIMOVA**
Min. of Agriculture, Water Management, & Processing Industries: **Arstanbek NOGOEV**
Min. of Culture & Information: **Sultan RAEV**
Min. of Defense: **Bakytbek KALYEV**
Min. of Economic Development & Trade: **Akylbek JAPAROV**

Min. of Education & Science: **Ishenkul BOLDJUROVA**
Min. of Emergency Situations: **Kamchybek TASHIEV**
Min. of Finance: **Tajikan KALIMBETOVA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Ednan KARABAEV**
Min. of Health Care: **Marat MAMBETOV**
Min. of Industry, Energy, & Fuel Resources: **Saparbek BALKIBEKOV**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Moldomusa KONGANTIEV**
Min. of Justice: **Nurlan TURSUNKULOV**
Min. of Labor & Social Development: **Uktomkhan ABDULLAEVA**
Min. of Transportation & Communications: **Nurlan SULAYMANOV**
Chmn., State Committee for National Security: **Murat SUTALINOV**
Sec., National Security Council: **Ismail ISAKOV**
Prosecutor Gen.: **Elmurza SATYBALDIEV**
Ambassador to the US: **Zamira SYDYKOVA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Nurbek JEENBAEV**

The Kyrgyz Republic maintains an embassy in the United States at 2360 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel.: (202) 338-5141; fax: (202) 386-7550).

ECONOMY

Despite the backing of major Western donors, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Kyrgyz Republic has had economic difficulties following independence. Initially, these were a result of the breakup of the Soviet trading bloc and resulting loss of markets, which impeded the republic's transition to a free market economy. The government has reduced expenditures, ended most price subsidies, and introduced a value-added tax. Overall, the government appears committed to the transition to a market economy. Through economic stabilization and reform, the government seeks to establish a pattern of long-term consistent growth. Reforms led to the Kyrgyz Republic's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) on December 20, 1998.

The Kyrgyz Republic's economy was severely affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting loss of its vast market. In 1990, some 98% of Kyrgyz exports went to other parts of the Soviet Union. Thus, the nation's economic performance in the early 1990s was worse than any other former Soviet republic except war-torn Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan. While economic performance has improved in the last few years, difficulties remain in securing adequate fiscal revenues and providing a sufficient social safety net.

Agriculture is an important sector of the economy in the Kyrgyz Republic. By the early 1990s, the private agricultural sector provided between one-third and one-half of some harvests. In 2002 agriculture accounted for 35.6% of GDP and about half of employment. The Kyrgyz Republic's terrain is mountainous, which accommodates livestock raising, the largest agricultural activity. Main crops include wheat, sugar beets, cotton, tobacco, vegetables, and fruit. Wool, meat, and dairy products also are major commodities.

Agricultural processing is a key component of the industrial economy, as well as one of the most attractive sectors for foreign investment. The Kyrgyz Republic is rich in mineral resources but has negligible petroleum and natural gas reserves; it imports petroleum and gas. Among its mineral reserves are substantial deposits of coal, gold, uranium, antimony, and other rare-earth metals. Metallurgy is an important industry, and the government hopes to attract foreign investment in this field. The government has actively encouraged foreign involvement in extracting and processing gold. The Kyrgyz Republic's plentiful water resources and mountainous terrain enable it to produce and export large quantities of hydroelectric energy.

The Kyrgyz Republic's principal exports are nonferrous metals and minerals, woolen goods and other agricultural products, electric energy, and certain engineering goods. Its imports include petroleum and natural gas, ferrous metals, chemicals, most machinery, wood and paper products, some foods, and some construction materials. Its leading trade partners include Germany, Russia, China, and neighboring Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The Kyrgyz Republic exports antimony, mercury, rare-earth metals, and chemical products to the United States. It imports grain, medicine and medical equipment, vegetable oil, paper products, rice, machinery, agricultural equipment, and meat from the United States. In 2007 Kyrgyz exports to the U.S. totaled $1.73 million; 2007 Kyrgyz imports from the U.S. totaled $48.6 million, much of which was equipment, food products, and commodities provided by assistance programs.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Kyrgyz Republic maintains close relations with other former Soviet countries, particularly with Kazakhstan and Russia. Recognizing Russia's concerns about the Russian-speaking minority in the Kyrgyz Republic, President Akayev was sensitive to potential perceptions of discrimination. For example, although the 1993 constitution designates Kyrgyz as the state language, an amendment to the constitution in 2001 granted official status to the Russian language. The amended December 30, 2006 constitution reaffirmed the status of the two languages.

While the Kyrgyz Republic initially remained in the ruble zone, stringent conditions set by the Russian Government prompted the Kyrgyz Republic to introduce its own currency, the som, in May 1993. Withdrawal from the ruble zone was done with little prior notification and initially caused tensions in the region. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan temporarily suspended trade, and Uzbekistan even introduced restrictions tantamount to economic sanctions. Both nations feared an influx of rubles and an increase in inflation. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan's hostility toward the Kyrgyz Republic was short-lived, and the three nations signed an

agreement in January 1994 creating an economic union. Economic cooperation within the region, though, is still hampered by unilateral barriers created by the Kyrgyz Republic's neighbors. The Kyrgyz Republic has been active in furthering regional cooperation, such as joint military exercises with Uzbek and Kazakh troops.

Turkey has sought to capitalize on its cultural and ethnic links to the region and has found the Kyrgyz Republic receptive to cultivating bilateral relations. The Kyrgyz Republic is a member of the OSCE, the CIS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the WTO, and the United Nations.

Since December 2001, the Kyrgyz Republic has hosted Manas Air Base, an important logistical hub for the Coalition effort in Afghanistan.

U.S.-KYRGYZ RELATIONS

The U.S. Government provides humanitarian assistance, non-lethal military assistance, and assistance to support economic and political reforms. It also has supported the Kyrgyz Republic's requests for assistance from international organizations. The United States helped the Kyrgyz Republic accede to the WTO in December 1998. U.S. assistance aids the Kyrgyz Republic in implementing necessary economic, health sector, and educational reforms, and supports economic development and conflict resolution in the Ferghana Valley.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BISHKEK (E) 171 Prospekt Mira, Bishkek Kyrgyz Republic 720016, APO/FPO APO AE 09807, [996] {312} 551-241, Fax [996] {312} 551-264, Workweek: 8:00–1730, Web: http://kyrgyz.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Julia Stanley
DHS/ICE:	Edmund Hubard
FM:	Charles Davis
HRO:	Christopher Hattayer
MGT:	Patrick Fenning
POL/ECO:	Robert Burgess
AMB:	Tatiana Gfoeller-Volkoff
CON:	Valerie Chittenden
DCM:	Earl (Lee) Litzenberger
PAO:	Mark Cameron
GSO:	Andrew Prater
RSO:	Shane Ronish
AFSA:	Valerie Chittenden
AGR:	Ralph Gifford
AID:	Pat Shapiro
CLO:	Georgia Blankenship
DAO:	Col. Jeffrey Zoubek
DEA:	Timothy Jones (Moscow)
EST:	Vacant
FAA:	Brian Staurseth (Moscow)
FMO:	Christopher Hattayer
ICASS Chair:	Bruce Wyse
IMO:	Gregory Lee (Tdy)
IPO:	Kinam Kim
IRS:	Barbara Franklin (Frankfurt)
ISSO:	Kinam Kim
LEGATT:	Howard Leadbetter (Astana
NAS:	Robert Delcore
State ICASS:	Robert Burgess

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 29, 2008

Country Description: The Kyrgyz Republic, a mountainous country of five million people, is undergoing political and economic change. Tourist facilities are not highly developed, and many of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries are not yet widely available.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. American citizens can obtain a one-month single-entry, non-extendable tourist visa upon arrival at the "Manas" International Airport outside Bishkek for a $36 fee without invitation or sponsorship. Newly enacted legislation requires that all foreigners present in the Kyrgyz Republic for more than sixty days register with the Kyrgyz Department of Visa and Passport Control. Failure to do so may cause difficulties when exiting the country. Individuals traveling to Kyrgyzstan to perform religious work or work in affiliation with any religious organization in any capacity are required by Kyrgyz law to declare so on their visa applications. Failure to do so may lead to difficulties with local law enforcement as it is considered a violation of Kyrgyz law to engage in activities not matching the purpose of travel indicated on an individual's visa. In general, travelers should apply for the correct category of visa for their purpose of travel. Travelers cannot obtain a tourist visa at land borders or other airports. American citizens visiting the Kyrgyz Republic are not required to register with the Office of Visas and Registration. The Embassy recommends that Americans traveling in the Kyrgyz Republic also obtain Kazakh visas, as commercial air travel out of the Kyrgyz Republic is limited and Americans may need to travel through Kazakhstan to return to the United States. For further information regarding entry/exit requirements, contact the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic at 2630 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone: (202) 338-5141, fax: (202) 742 6501. Visit the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic web site at http://www.kgembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to rural areas along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek and Kyrgyz-Tajik borders, and all areas to the south and west of the provincial capital of Osh. Security conditions in these parts of the southern Kyrgyz Republic differ from security conditions in the north, and the threat of violence against foreigners in the southern Kyrgyz Republic continues. Hostage-taking incidents involving foreigners occurred during the summers of 1999 and 2000, including one incident in the summer of 2000 involving American citizens. In 2007, there were reports of attempted "bride-kidnappings" in rural areas. While foreigners are not believed to be intentional targets, an American female was held against her will for several days in one reported incident. In 2006, suspected Islamic militants attacked a border post on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, and ensuing skirmishes took place between the militants and Kyr-

gyz military forces throughout the southern Batken region. Land mines in Batken Oblast and near the Kyrgyz-Tajik border continue to be a concern. There are currently restrictions for U.S. Government employees traveling to areas of the Kyrgyz Republic south and west of Osh and in rural areas along the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border because of the volatile security situation in these areas.

Supporters of extremist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), al-Qaeda, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement remain active in Central Asia. These groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and may attempt to target U.S. Government or private interests in the region, including in the Kyrgyz Republic. Terrorist attacks involving the use of suicide bombers have previously taken place in neighboring Uzbekistan. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Because of increased security at official U.S. facilities, terrorists are seeking softer civilian targets such as residential areas, clubs and restaurants, places of worship, hotels, schools, outdoor recreation events, resorts, beaches, maritime facilities, airports and aircraft.

In the past year, demonstrations and protests have occurred frequently throughout the Kyrgyz Republic. Many demonstrations in Bishkek occur in front of the Presidential Administration building (White House) and on Alatoo Square in the city center. These demonstrations often happen without warning, and the Embassy does not always have advance information about them. Therefore, all Americans are urged to avoid the vicinity of all protests, because even protests that are intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens to exercise caution in urban areas of the Kyrgyz Republic due to the high rate of violent crime against foreigners. Travelers arriving at Manas International Airport should arrange their transportation from the airport in advance. Foreign travelers have been the victims of extortion by airport taxi drivers, who appeared in some cases to be colluding with airport personnel to identify their victims. Travelers should not take public transportation or walk after dark, and should be extremely cautious in or near hotels, bars, parks and all places that attract an expatriate clientele.

The Kyrgyz Republic has a high rate of violent crime due to unemployment and a large number of organized gangs. Muggings often occur after dark and can be quite violent, leaving the victim severely injured. Other common crimes include auto theft, mugging, and pick pocketing in crowded places such as markets, Internet cafes and on public transportation. U.S. citizens have been the victims of such crimes as rape, assault, kidnapping and robbery while in urban and rural parts of Kyrgyzstan, and there have been reports of U.S. citizens who were robbed by groups of young men who had followed them back to their residences from hotels and bars.

Police officers rarely speak English and no victims' assistance programs are available. Medical and psychiatric care for victims is limited.

Harassment and extortion by people who purport to be Kyrgyz police officers are common. According to Kyrgyz law, any person claiming to be a police officer must show identifying documents on demand. U.S. citizens should not act upon requests by people, whether in civilian dress or in police uniform, if they have no official identification. Also U.S. citizens should not get into cars with someone they do not know, even if the person claims to be a police officer.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency lines in Kyrgyzstan are: 101 for fire; 102 for police; 103 for first aid ambulance (state-funded); 151 (from landline), 0 312 684466 (from landline or cellphone); and 161 for rescue service (under the Ministry of emergency situations).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical services in the Kyrgyz Republic are extremely limited. Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at risk due to inadequate medical facilities. The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends that travelers to the Kyrgyz Republic carry medical evacuation insurance in case of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Bishkek maintains a list of foreign-trained and local physicians who have agreed to give medical assistance to Americans. This list is available on the Embassy web site at http://bishkek.usembassy.gov.

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of Kyrgyzstan. There is no legal requirement for HIV/AIDS testing during the visa application or registration process. Kyrgyz law does state that if a foreign citizen refuses to submit to HIV/AIDS testing when

requested while in Kyrgyzstan, that person could be deported. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Kyrgyzstan at http://www.kgembassy.org before you travel.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Kyrgyzstan. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB available at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Kyrgyz Republic is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Most of the Kyrgyz Republic's road infrastructure consists of two-lane roads, which are all in various states of disrepair, and are poorly marked and lit. Many local drivers tend to disobey fundamental traffic laws—such as stopping at red lights. As a result, driving can be very dangerous. Accidents involving severe injury and/or death are not uncommon.

Drivers must exercise particular caution to avoid uneven pavement, potholes, open drains and manholes. Night driving should be avoided, as roads are inadequately lit. In winter, roads are seldom plowed and ice and snow make the poor driving conditions even more hazardous. Pedestrians routinely walk in the road, often wearing dark clothes at night, necessitating even greater caution for drivers. Mountain roads in the Kyrgyz Republic are often narrow and treacherous, and may close without notice due to snow, ice or rockslides. Guardrails and barriers preventing falling rocks are often missing. The Kyrgyz Republic does not have a roadside assistance infrastructure. Towing companies do not exist. Although mechanics are available in cities there is little organized oversight or certification of their practices or abilities. Rest areas are infrequent and very primitive. Service stations are generally available in and near cities, but the fuel they provide may be adulterated or of poor quality.

The road between Almaty, Kazakhstan and Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, is especially treacherous at night or during poor weather. Americans and other travelers have been killed in traffic accidents on that road, and travel at night is not recommended.

Generally, speed limits are 60 km per hour in the cities and 90 km per hour in rural areas. Kyrgyz law mandates that all automobile passengers wear seat belts and that motorcycle riders wear helmets. International driving permits are recognized in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Drivers may face harassment by traffic police, who have been known to demand payment for arbitrary "fines" for purported infractions. The Kyrgyz Republic has a "zero tolerance" policy for driving under the influence of alcohol.

Public transportation in the Kyrgyz Republic is limited to buses, taxis, and very few intercity trains. Travelers should be particularly careful when using public transportation. Buses tend to be very crowded and can be unsafe and unreliable. Taxis too can be dangerous. Due to the danger of theft or assault, travelers should avoid entering a cab that already contains passengers. Taxis are seldom metered, and travelers should negotiate a fare prior to entering a cab and be aware that cab drivers often try to charge foreigners a high fare. Drivers of vehicles that are not taxis are often willing to drive people for fares. However, U.S. citizens should avoid using any of these "private taxis" and unmarked taxis.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Kyrgyz Republic's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Kyrgyz customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Kyrgyz Republic of items such as antiquities or hunting trophies. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Washington at 2360 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone: (202) 338-5141, fax: (202) 386-7550, or on the Internet at http://www.kgembassy.org for specific information regarding customs requirements.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a cash-only economy. The banking system is not well developed. ATMs are available, but the security of these machines remains untested. A hotel or bank may, on occasion, accept traveler's checks or credit cards, but the fees can be as high as 20 percent for traveler's checks.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passport with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and citizenship are readily available.

In accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and

certain bilateral treaties, a consular officer from the U.S. Embassy must be given access to any U.S. citizen arrested in the Kyrgyz Republic. U.S. citizens who are arrested or detained should ask that the U.S. Embassy be contacted immediately. This is generally recognized, though there can be a sizeable delay in notification times depending on the local authorities' interpretation of the case's legal status.

The Kyrgyz Republic is an earthquake-prone country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Hunting and trekking are popular sports for locals and tourists in the Kyrgyz Republic; however, American citizens traveling to the Kyrgyz Republic should know that hunting in the Kyrgyz Republic without proper licenses is illegal. It is illegal to import or own firearms in the Kyrgyz Republic without a permit issued by the Kyrgyz government. Foreign hunters who do not have official permission to hunt or take trophies out of the country may face criminal and civil charges. Both hunting and trekking infrastructures are underdeveloped with limited services, especially in the high mountainous regions popular with trekkers and hunters. Avalanches and landslides are common in these mountainous regions, often cutting off villages for weeks at a time. These villages and hunting areas are in isolated, rugged, mountainous areas inaccessible by the limited rescue services available in the Kyrgyz Republic. Americans traveling to the Kyrgyz Republic to hunt or trek need to be aware of the risks involved. The Embassy recommends that all Americans register with the Embassy in Bishkek for the duration of their stay in the country.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the Kyrgyz Republic's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in The Kyrgyz Republic are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Kyrgyz Republic are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Kyrgyz Republic. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Bishkek is located at 171 Prospect Mira, 720016 Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. The phone number is 996-312-551-241, fax: 996-517-777-202, and website: http://bishkek.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Kyrgyzstan is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Kyrgyzstan, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, Kyrgyzstan also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prior to the adoption, prospective adoptive parents must reside with the child for a minimum of one week at the child's habitual place of residence in the Kyrgyzstan. During this pre-adoption bonding period, a psychologist from the Ministry of Education monitors the interaction between the prospective adoptive parent(s) and the child, and reports to the Ministry of Education. This prior visit requirement may be waived by the Ministry of Education if the adopting parents submit a statement of hardship in accommodating the two-trip requirement. This cannot be waived, however, in cases where the child suffers from serious mental or physical disorders.

Age Requirements: Under Kyrgyz law, prospective adoptive parents must be at least 18 years old.

Marriage Requirements: Both married and single people may adopt Kyrgyz children; however, two people who are not married to each other cannot adopt a child together.

Other Requirements: Kyrgyz law prevents homosexual individuals or couples from adoption. Single parents may be required to present a sworn statement that they are not homosexual.

Who Can Be Adopted? Kyrgyzstan has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Kyrgyz Adoption Authority: Ministry of Education, Department for Extracurricular Education and Protection of Children's Rights (DEEPCR)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

Under Kyrgyz law, adoption agencies are not recognized in Kyrgyzstan. Adoption service providers have to work either as independent facilitators or with legal firms or non-profit organizations. The current Kyrgyz law is ambiguous about the use of intermediaries between prospective adoptive parents and children eligible for adoption. Since 2005, due to the expressed wish of the Kyrgyz authorities to have control over the future welfare of the adopted children, the Ministry of Education started working with United States-based adoption agencies. These accredited agencies are responsible for reporting about the welfare of the adopted children to the Kyrgyz Government on a regular basis. Currently the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyzstan has agreements with five United States-based adoption agencies to facilitate adoptions from Kyrgyzstan. Please contact the adoption specialist at the Ministry of Education or the United States Embassy in Bishkek for contact information for these agencies (the list is not available on-line at this time). United States citizens who have lived in the Kyrgyzstan for several years and plan to remain in the Kyrgyzstan for an extended period of time following the adoption do not have to use an agency.

To bring an adopted child from Kyrgyzstan to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS.

Once prospective adoptive parents obtain a home study from their state of residence and an I-600A from USCIS, the adoption agency representing the prospective parents then forwards the "intent to adopt" statement and completed home study to the Ministry of Education in Kyrgyzstan.

In addition to meeting the United States requirements for adoptive parents, you need to meet the requirements of Kyrgyzstan.

The Ministry of Education's Department for Extracurricular Education and Protection of Children's Rights (DEEPCR), reviews the dossier. Please note that the length of time required for dossier processing is unpredictable. If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Kyrgyzstan will provide you with a referral to a child.

Based on the expressed preferences of the prospective adoptive parents, DEEPCR selects three children from its database of children eligible for intercountry adoption. DEEPCR, the Custody and Guardianship Committee of the local administration in the region where the orphanage is located, and the local adoption agency coordinator select one appropriate candidate for adoption. The adoption agency will notify the parents of the decision. The parents then decide if they will accept the child they have been offered. Once the parents agree to adopt the child and the parents' complete dossier is submitted to DEEPCR, the prospective parents are free to travel to the Kyrgyzstan and proceed with their petition for adoption.

Role of the Adoption Authority: Kyrgyzstan, prospective parents are required to have a minimum of seven days of personal contact with the orphan they chose. This means that prospective adoptive parents must stay in the town where the orphan is living and visit the orphan on a regular basis during a one-week period. A Ministry of Education psychologist will monitor this interaction and report to DEEPCR whether the prospective parents and child appear to be a good match.

Role of the Court: Based on the psychologist's recommendation, as well as its own review of the family's file, the Custody and Guardianship Committee of the local administration in the region where the orphanage is located makes its own assessment and then refers the case to the district civil court having jurisdiction over the child's place of residence in the Kyrgyzstan.

Documents Required: The adoption application for the DEEPCR of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education should include all of the documents listed below. It is important to note, however, that this is not necessarily an exhaustive list and that Kyrgyz authorities involved in various stages of the adoption process may request additional documentation.

- A written statement of the prospective adoptive parents' intent to adopt a child or children. The statement should include the prospective parents' full names and address, as well as any preferences they may have with regard to the child's gender, age, health/medical condition, etc. The statement should include the prospective parent's pledge to provide adequate living conditions for the child and to register the child with the Kyrgyz Embassy in the Washington, D.C. within one month after arriving in the United States; translated and notarized;

- Copies of the parents' passports, translated and notarized;

- A home study report, drafted by a licensed social worker, attesting to the prospective parents' living conditions and ability to provide for the child (must be legalized);

- Copy of the parents' marriage certificate (must be legalized);

- Prospective parents' mental and physical examination report from a doctor in the United States (can be included in the home study). The report should state that no adverse information impacting on their suitability to raise a child has been found, translated and notarized;

- Reference letter from parents' place of employment and parents' current bank statement (must be legalized);
- A statement certifying that the prospective parents have not previously had their parental rights terminated or limited by the courts for any reason. (This is normally included as part of the home study report.) (legalized within the home study);
- A statement of no criminal record by the police authorities where the parents' live (must be legalized);
- Written statement from the Kyrgyz district administration's guardianship body where the child resides stating that it has no objection to the adoption of the child by the prospective adoptive family;
- A letter of guarantee stating that the child will go to school and will be covered by health insurance;
- A letter from parents' family doctor, stating that the child will be treated by him/her when child enters the United States (must be legalized);
- A statement of guarantee from the adoption agency stating its commitment to submit information about the child's living conditions, family situation and health during the post-adoption period (until the child turns 14). This information must be submitted to the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education twice a year; and
- Proof that the United States Government will allow the child to enter and reside permanently in the United States. (The Kyrgyz Government will accept the approved I-600A form for this purpose.).

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: The Kyrgyzstan requires post placement reports twice a year until the child is fourteen years old. Adoptive families must submit their reports through their adoption agencies to be forwarded to the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Kyrgyzstan

171 Prospect Mira
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan 720016
Tel.: +996 312 551-241
Fax: +996 312 551-264
e-mail: ConsularBishkek@state.gov.
website:
http://bishkek.usembassy.gov

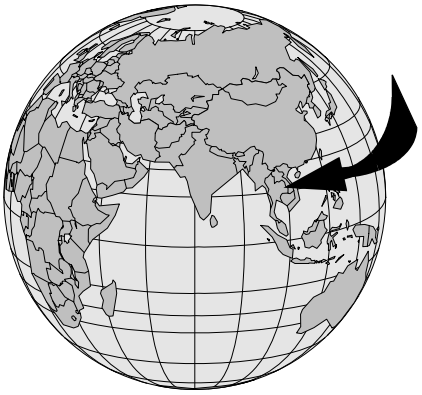
United States Embassy in Almaty, Kazakhstan
Consular Section, Adoption Unit
Branch office of the United States of America
97 Zholdasbekova, Samal—2
Almaty, Kazakhstan 480099
Tel: 7-3272-50-48-02
Fax: 7-3272-50-48-84
http://www.usembassy.kz
Adoption E-Mail:
AdoptionsAlmaty@state.gov.
General Consular E-mail:
USAKZ@state.gov.

Kyrgyzstan's Adoption Authority
Ministry of Education
Department for Extracurricular Education and Protection of Children's Rights (DEEPCR)
257 Tynystanova Street
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Embassy of Kyrgyzstan
1001 Pennsylvania Avenue,
Suite #600, NW
Washington, DC 20004
Tel: 202-338-5141
Fax: 202-742-6501
http://www.kyrgyzembassy.org
consul@kyrgyzembassy.org

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



LAOS

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Lao People's Democratic Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 236,800 sq. km. (91,430 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Utah.
Cities: Capital—Vientiane (2006 pop. est. 711,919). Other principal towns—Savannakhet, Luang Prabang, Pakse, Thakhek.
Terrain: Rugged mountains, plateaus, alluvial plains.
Climate: Tropical monsoon; rainy season (May to November); dry season (November to April).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Lao (sing. and pl.).
Population: (2008 est.) 6.7 million.
Annual growth rate: (2008) 2.3%.
Ethnic groups: Tai-Kadai language family (6 ethnic groups)—66.2%; Austro-Asiatic (Mon-Khmer and Viet-Muong) language family (30 ethnic groups)—22.8%; Hmong-Yao (2 ethnic groups)—7.4%; Tibeto-Burman (8 ethnic groups)—2.7%; other ethnic groups (including Vietnamese and Chinese)—0.9%.
Religions: Buddhism—65%; Christianity—1.3%; others (including animism, Ba'hai, and Islam)-33.7%.
Languages: Lao (official), French, English, and various ethnic languages.
Education: Literacy—69%.
Health: (2008) Infant mortality rate-79.6/1,000. Life expectancy—56 years.
Work force: (2.1 million, 2006) Agriculture—78.5%; industry and services—21.5% (2006).

Government

Type: Communist state.
Government branches: Executive—President (head of state); Chairman, Council of Ministers (prime minister and head of government); 11-member Politburo; 55-member Central Committee. Legislative—115-seat National Assembly. Judicial—district, provincial, and a national Supreme Court.
Political parties: Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP)—only legal party.
Political subdivisions: 16 provinces, and Vientiane prefecture.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $4.2 billion.
Per capita income: (2007 est.) $710.
GDP growth rate: (2007 est.) 7%.
Natural resources: Hydroelectric power, timber, and minerals.
Agriculture: (41.3% of GDP, 2007 est.): Primary products—glutinous rice, coffee, corn, sugarcane, vegetables, tobacco, ginger, water buffalo, pigs, cattle, poultry, sweet potatoes, cotton, tea, and peanuts.
Industry: (32.2% of GDP, 2007 est.): Primary types—garment manufacturing, electricity production, copper, gold, gypsum, and tin mining, wood and wood processing, cement manufacturing, agricultural processing, and tourism.
Industrial growth rate: (2007 est.) 12%.
Services: (2007 est.) 26.5% of GDP.
Trade: Exports (2007 est.)—$970 million: garments, gold and copper, electricity, wood and wood products, coffee and other agricultural products, rattan, and tin. Major markets—Thailand, Vietnam, France, and Germany. Imports (2007 est.)—$1.376 billion. Major imports—fuel, food, consumer, goods, machinery and equipment, vehicles and spare parts. Major suppliers—Thailand, China, Vietnam, Singapore.

PEOPLE

Laos' population was estimated at 6.7 million in mid-2008, dispersed unevenly across the country. Most people live in valleys of the Mekong River and its tributaries. Vientiane prefecture, the capital and largest city, had about 711,919 residents in 2006. The country's population density was 27/sq. km.

About half the country's people are ethnic Lao, the principal lowland

inhabitants as well as the politically and culturally dominant group. The Lao are descended from the Tai people who began migrating southward from China in the first millennium A.D. Mountain tribes of Hmong-Yao, and Tibeto-Burman (Kor and Phounoy) as well as Tai ethno-linguistic heritage are found in northern Laos. Until recently, they were known as Lao Sung or highland Lao. In the central and southern mountains, Austro Asiatic (Mon-Khmer and Viet-Muong) tribes, formerly known as Lao Theung or mid-slope Lao, predominate. Some Vietnamese and Chinese minorities remain, particularly in the towns, but many left in two waves-after partial independence in the late 1940s and again after 1975.

The predominant religion is Theravada Buddhism. Animism is common among the mountain tribes. Buddhism and spirit worship coexist easily. There also are small numbers of Christians and Muslims.

The official and dominant language is Lao, a tonal language of the Tai linguistic group. Minorities speak an assortment of Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Yao, and Tibeto-Burman languages. French, once common in government and commerce, has declined in usage, while knowledge of English—the language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—has increased in recent years. The government is encouraging officials and students to learn English. High school students are required to take either French or English; the majority today choose English. The government plans to introduce English at the primary school level by 2010.

HISTORY

Laos traces its first recorded history and its origins as a unified state to the emergence of the Kingdom of Lan Xang (literally, "million elephants") in 1353. Under the rule of King Fa Ngum, this powerful and wealthy kingdom covered much of what today is Thailand and Laos. His successors, especially King Setthathirat in the 16th century, helped establish Buddhism as the predominant religion of the country. By the 17th century, the kingdom of Lan Xang entered a period of decline marked by dynastic struggle and conflicts with its neighbors. In the late 18th century, the Siamese (Thai) established suzerainty over much of what is now Laos. The region was divided into principalities centered on Luang Prabang in the north, Vientiane in the center, and Champassak in the south. Following their colonization of Vietnam, the French supplanted the Siamese and began to integrate all of Laos into the French empire. The Franco-Siamese treaty of 1907 defined the present Lao boundary with Thailand.

During World War II, the Japanese occupied French Indochina, including Laos. King Sisavang Vong of Luang Prabang was induced to declare independence from France in 1945, just prior to Japan's surrender. During this period, nationalist sentiment grew. In September 1945, Vientiane and Champassak united with Luang Prabang to form an independent government under the Free Laos (Lao Issara) banner. The movement, however, was short-lived. By early 1946, French troops reoccupied the country and conferred limited autonomy on Laos following elections for a constituent assembly.

During the first Indochina war between France and the communist movement in Vietnam, Prince Souphanouvong formed the Pathet Lao (Land of Laos) resistance organization committed to the communist struggle against colonialism. Laos was not granted full sovereignty until the French defeat by the Vietnamese and the subsequent Geneva peace conference in 1954. Elections were held in 1955, and the first coalition government, led by Prince Souvanna Phouma, was formed in 1957. The coalition government collapsed in 1958, amidst increased polarization of the political process. Rightist forces took over the government.

In 1960, Kong Le, a paratroop captain, seized Vientiane in a coup and demanded the formation of a neutralist government to end the fighting. The neutralist government, once again led by Souvanna Phouma, was not successful in holding power. Rightist forces under Gen. Phoumi Nosavan supplanted it later that same year. Subsequently, the neutralists allied themselves with the communist insurgents and began to receive support from the Soviet Union. Phoumi Nosavan's rightist regime received support from the United States.

A second Geneva conference, held in 1961-62, provided for the independence and neutrality of Laos. Soon after accord was reached, the signatories accused each other of violating the terms of the agreement, and with superpower support on both sides, the civil war soon resumed. Although Laos was to be neutral, a growing American and North Vietnamese military presence in the country increasingly drew Laos into the second Indochina war (1954-75). For nearly a decade, Laos was subjected to extremely heavy bombing as the U.S. sought to interdict the portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail that passed through eastern Laos. Unexploded ordnance, particularly cluster munitions, remains a major problem.

In 1972, the communist People's Party renamed itself the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP). It joined a new coalition government in Laos soon after the Vientiane cease-fire agreement in 1973. Nonetheless, the political struggle among communists, neutralists, and rightists continued. The fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh to communist forces in April 1975 hastened the decline of the coalition in Laos. Several months after these communist victories, the Pathet Lao entered Vientiane. On December 2, 1975, the king abdicated his throne and the communist Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) was established.

The new communist government imposed centralized economic decision-making and broad security measures, including control of the media and the arrest and incarceration of many members of the previous government and military in "re-education camps." These draconian policies and deteriorating economic condi-



tions, along with government efforts to enforce political control, prompted an exodus of lowland Lao and ethnic Hmong from Laos. About 10% of the Lao population sought refugee status after 1975, many of whom resettled in third countries, including the United States. From 1975 to 1996, the U.S. resettled some 250,000 Lao refugees from Thailand, including 130,000 Hmong. The last major resettlement to the United States of about 15,000 Hmong from the Wat Tham Krabok camp was in 2004.

Over time, the Lao Government closed the re-education camps and released most political prisoners. By the end of 1999, more than 28,900 Hmong and lowland Lao had voluntarily repatriated to Laos—3,500 from China and the rest from Thailand. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) monitored returnees for a number of years and reported no evidence of systemic persecution or discrimination against returnees per se. UNHCR closed its Laos office at the end of 2001.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The only legal political party is the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP). The head of state is President Choummaly Sayasone. The head of government is Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh. Government policies are determined by the party through the all-powerful eleven-member Politburo and the 55-member Central Committee. Important government decisions are vetted by the Politburo. Laos adopted its Constitution in 1991, amending it most recently in 2003. The National Assembly, which has added seats at every election, approves all new laws, although the executive branch retains the authority to issue binding decrees. The most recent elections took place in June 2006, when the National Assembly was expanded to 115 members. Laos has enacted a number of new laws in recent years, but the country is still governed largely through the issuance of decrees.

Since the end of the Indochina conflict, a low-level insurgency against the regime has continued. Incidents have included a series of bombings in Vientiane during the summer of 2000 and renewed spikes of violence in 2003 and 2004 against various types of land transportation and public markets. There were reports of continued fighting in 2005 and 2007. In late 2006 and 2007, several hundred former fighters and family members surrendered to Lao authorities. The United States does not endorse or support violent activities carried out against the Lao Government.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Lao officials are addressed by the first element in their names.

Pres.: **CHOUMMALI Saignason, Lt. Gen.**
Vice Pres.: **BOUN-GNANG Volachit**
Prime Min.: **BOUASONE Bouphavanh**
Dep. Prime Min.: **ASANG Laoli, Maj. Gen.**
Dep. Prime Min.: **DOUANGCHAI Phichit**
Dep. Prime Min.: **SOMSAVAT Lengsavat**
Dep. Prime Min.: **THONGLOUN Sisoulit**
Min. of Agriculture & Forestry: **SITAHENG Latsaphone**
Min. of Commerce: **SOULIVONG Daravong**
Min. of Communications, Transport, Posts, & Construction: **SOMMATH Pholsena**
Min. of Education: **SOMKOT Mangnormek**

Min. of Energy & Mining:
Min. of Finance: **SOMDY Douangdy**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **THONGLOUN Sisoulit**
Min. of Industry & Commerce: **NAM Vignaket**
Min. of Information & Culture: **MOUNKEO Olaboun**
Min. of Justice: **CHALEUAN Yapaoher**
Min. of Labor & Social Welfare: **ONECHANH Thammavong**
Min. of National Defense: **DOUANGCHAI Phichit, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Public Health: **PONMEK Dalaloi, Dr.**
Min. of Public Security: **THONGBANH Sengaphone**
Min. to the Prime Min.'s Office & Head of Public Admin. & Civil Authority: **BOUNPHENG Mounphosay**
Min. to the Prime Min.'s Office: **BOUASY Lovansay**
Min. to the Prime Min.'s Office: **KHAMOUANE Bouppha**
Min. to the Prime Min.'s Office: **ONNEUA Phommachanh**
Min. to the Prime Min.'s Office: **SAISENGLI Tengbliachu**
Min. & Chmn. of National Mekong Ctte.: **KHAMLOUAD Sitlakone**
Min. & Chmn. of National Tourism Authority: **SOMPHONG Mongkhonvilay**
Min. & Head of Cabinet, Pres.'s Office: **SOUBANH Sritthirath**
Min. & Head of Govt. Secretariats: **CHEUANG Sombounkhanh**
Min. & Head of Science, Technology, & Environment Agency: **BOUNTIEM Phitsamay**
Chmn. Planning & Investment Ctte.: **SOULIVONG Dalavong**
Chmn. State Control Commission: **ASANG Laoli, Maj. Gen.**
Governor, Bank of Lao PDR: **PHOUPHET Khamphounvong**
Ambassador to the US: **PHIANE Philakone**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **KANIKA Phommachanh**

Laos maintains an embassy in the United States at 2222 S Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20009 (tel: 202-332-6416).

ECONOMY

Laos is a poor, landlocked country with an inadequate infrastructure and a largely unskilled work force. The country's per capita income in 2007 was estimated to be $710. Agriculture, mostly subsistence rice farming, dominates the economy, employing an estimated 78% of the population and producing 41.3% of GDP. Domestic savings are low, forcing Laos to rely heavily on foreign assistance and concessional loans as investment sources for economic development. In 2006, donor-funded programs accounted for 13% of GDP and 70% of the capital budget. In 2007, the country's foreign debt was estimated at $4.47 billion.

Following its accession to power in 1975, the communist government imposed a harsh, Soviet-style command economy system, replacing the private sector with state enterprises and cooperatives; centralizing investment, production, trade, and pricing; and creating barriers to internal and foreign trade. Within a few years, the Lao Government realized its economic policies were preventing, rather than stimulating, growth and development. No substantive reform was introduced, however, until 1986 when the government announced its "new economic mechanism" (NEM). Initially small in scale, the NEM was expanded to include a range of reforms designed to create conditions conducive to private sector activity.

Prices set by market forces replaced government-determined prices. Farmers were permitted to own land and sell crops on the open market. State firms were granted increased decision-making authority and lost most of their subsidies and pricing advantages. The government set the exchange rate close to real market levels, lifted trade barriers, replaced import barriers with tariffs, and gave private sector firms direct access to imports and credit.

In 1989, the Lao Government reached agreement with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on additional reforms. The government agreed to expand fiscal and monetary reform, promote private enterprise and foreign investment, privatize or close state firms, and strengthen banking. In addition, it agreed to maintain a market exchange rate, reduce tariffs, and eliminate unneeded trade regulations. A liberal foreign investment code was enacted and appears to be slowly making a positive impact in the market. The process of economic reform continues. These reforms led to increased availability of goods and economic growth that has continued since the early 1990's, despite short-term economic setbacks resulting from the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The economy continues to be dominated by an unproductive agricultural sector operating largely outside the money economy, and the public sector continues to play an important role. Tourism is a growing industry and important source of foreign exchange. The Government of Laos is promoting infrastructure development, especially in the hydropower and mining sectors. Several large hydropower projects currently under construction are expected to increase national revenue significantly once completed.

International indices rate Laos poorly on transparency and ease of doing business. Corruption continues to hamper economic development. Laos has begun the World Trade Organization accession process, with the intention of joining that organization by 2010.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The government that assumed power in December 1975 aligned itself with the Soviet bloc and adopted a hostile posture toward the West. In ensuing decades, Laos maintained close ties with the former Soviet Union and its eastern bloc allies, and depended heavily on the Soviet Union for most of its foreign assistance. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Laos has sought to improve relations with its regional neighbors. Laos was admitted into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July 1997 and applied to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1998. The government hopes to accede to the WTO by 2010. Currently, Laos' foreign policy concentrates on its immediate neighbors. Laos generally maintains a low profile in the larger international arena, although it has been playing an increasing role in activities of the Non-Aligned Move-

ment. Laos maintains a "special relationship" with Vietnam and formalized a 1977 treaty of friendship and cooperation that created tensions with China. Although the two were allies during the Vietnam War, the China-Vietnam conflict in 1979 led to a sharp deterioration in Sino-Lao relations. These relations began to improve in the late 1980s. In 1989 Sino-Lao relations were normalized. Today China is becoming a major player in Laos; Chinese investment in Laos is increasing at a rapid rate, bringing with it a growing number of Chinese workers. Thailand remains the largest single foreign investor in Laos. In 2003, Laos and Thailand signed agreements to cooperate on cross-border, labor, and counternarcotics issues. Laos and Thailand signed a joint communique in March 2007, the first in 20 years, covering infrastructure development, avian influenza, border control, and Hmong migration issues.

Laos is a member of the following international organizations: Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACCT), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), ASEAN Regional Forum, Asian Development Bank, Colombo Plan, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), G-77, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Development Association (IDA), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Labor Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Interpol, International Olympic Commission (IOC), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Mekong River Commission (MRC), Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), UN, United Nations Convention on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Federation of Trade Unions, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), World Tourism Organization, and World Trade Organization (observer).

U.S.-LAO RELATIONS

The United States opened a legation in Laos in 1950. Although diplomatic relations were never severed, U.S.-Lao relations deteriorated during in the post-Indochina War period after 1975. The relationship remained cool until 1982 when efforts at improvement began. Full diplomatic relations were restored in 1992 with a return to ambassadorial-level representation. Accounting for Americans missing in Laos from the Vietnam War has been a special focus of our bilateral relationship. Since the late 1980s, joint U.S. and Lao teams have conducted a series of excavations and investigations of sites related to cases of Americans missing in Laos.

Counternarcotics activities are also an important part of the bilateral relationship. The United States and Laos cooperate closely on opium crop control projects that have helped to bring about a 96% decline in poppy cultivation, from 42,000 hectares in 1989 to 1700 hectares in 2006. Laos, however, remains on the U.S. list of major opium producers. U.S.-sponsored demand reduction programs have increased Laos' capacity to treat both narcotic and amphetamine addiction. The U.S. also provides law enforcement assistance to help contend with the rapid growth in meth-amphetamine abuse and crime that has occurred in Laos since 2003. The U.S. Government provided more than $11 million in foreign assistance to Laos in FY 2007, in areas including unexploded ordnance clearance and removal, counternarcotics, health and avian influenza, education, economic development, and governance.

In December 2004, the President signed into law a bill extending normal trade relations to Laos; in February 2005, a Bilateral Trade Agreement between the United States and Laos entered into force. There has been a consequent rise in Lao exports to the U.S., although the volume of trade remains small in absolute terms. Bilateral trade reached $25.4 million in 2007, compared with $15.7 million in 2006. The Lao Government is working to implement the provisions of the Bilateral Trade Agreement while simultaneously seeking to join the World Trade Organization.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

VIENTIANE (E) Rue Bartolonie, B.P. 114, APO/FPO Unit 8165, Box V, APO AP 96546-0001, (856) (21) 26-7000, Fax (856) (21) 26-7190, INMARSAT Tel 683-132825/826/827, Workweek: Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm, Website: http://vientiane.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Jill Hinson
CDC:	Andrew L. Corwin
DCM/CHG:	Mary Grace McGeehan
ECO:	Joshua C. Archibald
MGT:	Stephen A. Druzak
POL/ECO:	Harvey A. Somers
AMB:	Ravic R. Huso
CON:	Michael D. Sweeney
DCM:	Mary Grace McGeehan
PAO:	Amy E. Archibald
GSO:	Daniel R. Bischof
RSO:	Thomas Vandenbrink
AFSA:	Michael D. Sweeney
APHIS:	Bounheuang Kounnavong
CLO:	Janya Somers
DEA:	Brian Kutz
EEO:	Thomas R. Vandenbrink
ICASS Chair:	Clifford D. Heinzer
IMO:	Robert S. Lynn
ISSO:	Robert S. Lynn
NAS:	Clifford D. Heinzer
State ICASS:	Clifford D. Heinzer

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 17, 2008

Country Description: The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos) is a poor, developing country ruled by an

authoritarian, Communist, one-party government. Political power is centralized in the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. Services and facilities for tourists are adequate in the capital, Vientiane, and the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, but are extremely limited in other parts of the country.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. The Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that visas can be issued upon arrival in Laos to U.S. citizen tourists with two passport-size photographs and $35 at the following ports of entry: Wattay Airport, Vientiane; Pakse and Luang Prabang Airports; Friendship Bridge, Vientiane and Savannakhet; and land-border crossings at Boten-Bohan and Vangtao-Chong Mek. Persons who have obtained an entry visa prior to their arrival in Laos may also enter at the following international entry points: Chiang Saen-Huaixay, Khammouane-Nakhonphanom, Savannakhet-Mukdahan, Daensayanh-Laobao, Namphao-Kaopae, and Namkan. Foreign tourists are generally admitted to Laos for 30 days. U.S. citizens born in Laos may be admitted for 60 days or longer. The Department of Immigration in Vientiane will extend 30-day tourist visas up to an additional 60 days for a fee of $2 per day. Foreigners who overstay their visas in Laos risk arrest and upon departure will be fined $10 for each day of overstay. The Lao government requires payment of visa fees and fines in U.S. dollars. Thai baht and Lao kip may sometimes be accepted for the fees, but at unfavorable exchange rates. Foreign tourists who wish to obtain a visa in advance may contact a Lao embassy or consulate. In the United States, visas and further information about Lao entry requirements can be obtained directly from the Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2222 S St. NW, Washington DC 20008, tel: 202-332-6416, fax: 202-332-4923, http://www.laoembassy.com.

Business visas can only be arranged in advance; a company or individual "sponsor" must contact the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Vientiane and request a visa for the traveler by offering a "guarantee." Once this request is approved by the MFA, the approval will be communicated to the Lao Embassy in Washington, DC, and the U.S. traveler may then apply for the business visa. This process normally takes 1-3 months. After the traveler's arrival, these visas can usually be extended for one month.

U.S. citizens should not attempt to enter Laos without valid travel documents or outside of official ports of entry. Travelers should not cross the border between Laos and Thailand along the Mekong River except at official immigration check crossings. Persons attempting to enter Laos outside of official ports of entry risk arrest or other serious consequences.

Immigration offices at some of the less-used land border crossing points are not well marked. Travelers should make sure that they complete immigration and customs formalities when they enter or depart Laos. Travelers who enter Laos without completing these formalities may be subject to fine, detention, imprisonment, and/or deportation.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship, such as the child's birth certificate, and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

At Wattay Airport (Vientiane), Pakse Airport and the Luang Prabang Airport, there is an international airport departure tax of US$10. This tax may be included in the price of the airline ticket, depending on the carrier. At the Friendship Bridge (Vientiane, Laos-Nong Khai, Thailand border crossing) there is an overtime fee after 4:00 pm weekdays and during weekends. Visit http://www.laoembassy.com for the more visa information.

Safety and Security: There have been reports in the past of violent incidents carried out by anti-government forces, including reports in 2007 of isolated clashes between Lao Government forces and unidentified opponents in the area of Vang Vieng in northern Vientiane Province, and in Bokeo Province. The Department of State recommends that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Laos exercise caution and be alert to their surroundings at all times.

The Lao Government security forces often stop and check all transport on main roads. Travelers should comply with requests to stop at checkpoints and roadblocks. U.S. citizens, especially those considering travel outside urban centers, are advised to contact relevant Lao government offices, such as Lao Immigration Police Headquarters in Vientiane, the Lao Tourist Police, local police and customs offices, or contact the U.S. Embassy for the most current security information. To avoid trouble with the authorities, U.S. citizens traveling outside of normal tourist areas or contemplating any unusual activity (including, but not limited to, engaging in business, extensive photography, or scientific research of any kind) should consider seeking advance permission from the Village Chief, District Head, Provincial Governor, or National Tourism Authority, as appropriate.

More than 100 casualties per year are caused by the large amount of unexploded ordnance (UXO) in Laos left over from the Indochina War. Some parts of Savannakhet, Xieng Khouang, Saravane, Khammouane, Sekong, Champassak, Houaphan, Attapeu, Luang Prabang and Vientiane Provinces are contaminated by UXO. In addition, numerous mine fields are left over from the war, including mine fields along Route 7 (from Route 13 to the Vietnam border), Route 9 (Savannakhet to the Vietnam border), and Route 20 (Pakse to Saravane). Travelers in Laos should never pick up unknown metal objects and should avoid traveling off of well-used roads, tracks and paths.

U.S. citizens are advised to exercise caution in remote areas along the Lao border with Burma. Bandits, drug traffickers, and other people pursuing illegal activities operate in these border areas, as do armed insurgent groups opposed to the government of Burma.

From 2004 to 2006, seven Lao-American and Hmong-American citizens were murdered in northern and northeastern Thailand near the border with Laos. During the same period, a number of non-Americans with ties to Laos were also murdered in this region of Thailand. In addition, in March 2006 a Hmong-American disappeared from his residence in Chiang Mai along with seven other individuals. In most of these cases, no arrests have been made. If U.S. citizens, particularly Lao-Americans or Hmong-Americans, travel to these areas, they should exercise caution and remain vigilant with regard to their personal security. It is also recommended that persons wishing to travel to border areas check first with the Thai Police and the U.S. Consulate General in Chiang Mai or the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok or the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Laos generally has a low rate of violent crime, but travelers should remain aware of their surroundings and exercise appropriate security precautions. With the introduction of methamphetamines and other illicit drugs, thefts and assaults in Vientiane have increased and some have turned violent. Bag-snatching has increased and sexual assaults have also occurred. Residential burglary is commonplace. Expatriates attempting to report burglaries in progress to the police often find that police telephones are not answered or they are informed that the police are not authorized to respond to criminal activity at night or that they have no transportation. U.S. citizens who move to Vientiane are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy for security advice.

Travelers in Vientiane should exercise caution, particularly after dark, at roadside restaurants and stalls near the banks of the Mekong River. Foreigners are often the victims of purse snatchings while sitting down to eat or while riding bicycles or motorcycles in this area. To help ensure the security of valuables and documents carried on their person, travelers should carry them in bags that cannot be easily stolen. U.S. citizens traveling to Vang Vieng should be aware that some tourists have been robbed and assaulted while walking alone to the caves on the far side of the Nam Song River. Camping at night anywhere except in authorized campgrounds in national parks is dangerous. Many restaurants in popular tourist locations in the Vang Vieng area offer menu items, particularly "pizzas," "shakes" or "teas" which may contain unknown substances or opiates. These products are often advertised as "happy" or "special" items. These unknown foods and drinks can be dangerous, causing illness and death.

Over the last year, several foreigners, including U.S. citizens, died in Laos after using illegal drugs, such as methamphetamines, opium, or heroin. The potency of some of these drugs can be several times that of similar substances found in the U.S.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities and services in Laos are limited and do not meet Western standards. In Vientiane, U.S. citizens may wish to contact the Primary Care Center, also known as the Centre medical de L'Ambassade de France (CMAF), which is supported by the French Embassy. The CMAF is located on Khou Vieng Road across the street from the Green Park Hotel, Tel. +856-21-214-150, or +856-20-558-4617, email: cmafloa@gmail.com. U.S. citizens in Laos often seek medical care in Thailand. The Friendship Bridge linking Vientiane, Laos, to Nong Khai, Thailand, is open daily 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Officials generally will allow travelers to cross after hours in cases of medical emergency. AEK International Hospital (tel: 66-42-342-555) and North Eastern Wattana General Hospital, both in Udorn, Thailand (tel: 66-1-833-4262) have English-speaking staff accustomed to dealing with foreign patients. Nong Khai Wattana Hospital in Nong Khai, Thailand (tel: 66-1-833-4262) can handle most simple medical procedures. Ambulances for both AEK International Hospital and Nong Khai Wattana Hospital have permission to cross the Friendship Bridge to collect patients from Vientiane. In Vientiane, the Setthatirat Hospital ambulance (tel: 021-413-720) can take patients to Thailand. The Department of State assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or reputation of these hospitals.

Avian Influenza: The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and Lao authorities have confirmed the presence in Laos of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, commonly known as "bird flu." In 2007, two Lao nationals died after contracting the H4N1 virus. Travelers to Laos and other countries affected by the virus are

cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. In addition, the CDC and WHO recommend eating only fully cooked poultry and eggs. The Lao government's avian influenza hotline may be reached by calling 166 from anywhere in Laos. This hotline may be used to report suspected cases of avian influenza in animals or humans, or to obtain information on areas in Laos where avian influenza may have been recently detected. Operators speak Lao and English. For the most current information and links on avian influenza in Laos, see the State Department's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet or visit the website of the U.S. Embassy in Laos.

There is a problem with counterfeit pharmaceuticals throughout Southeast Asia. American citizens should be aware of this problem and purchase pharmaceuticals only through the most reputable pharmacies with a physician's prescription.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Laos.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Laos is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The number of road accidents and fatalities in Laos has risen sharply in the last decade as the number of motor vehicles has increased. U.S. citizens involved in traffic accidents have been barred from leaving Laos before paying compensation for property damage or injuries, regardless of who was at fault. A driver involved in a traffic accident should remain at the scene and attempt to contact the police or wait for them to arrive to prepare an accident report. If renting a car or motorcycle, contact the rental company and its insurance agent. If there is major damage, injury or death, contact the Consular Section or the Duty Officer at the U.S. Embassy.

Traffic in Laos is chaotic and road conditions are very rough. Few roads have lane markings. Where lane markings, road signs, and stoplights do exist, they are widely ignored. Many drivers are unlicensed, inexperienced and uninsured. Driving under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is not uncommon, and penalties for such offenses may not be enforced. Theoretically, traffic moves on the right, but vehicles use all parts of the road. Motorcyclists pay little or no heed to cars. Motorcycles carry as many as five people, greatly impeding the drivers' ability to react to traffic. The evening hours are particularly dangerous. Road construction sites are poorly marked, appear with no advance warning, and can be difficult to see at night. Roads are poorly lit, many vehicles have no operating lights, few bicycles have reflectors, and trucks without reflectors commonly park on unlit roads.

Travelers are also advised to be cautious when traveling the roads of Laos and to check with local authorities, transport companies, other travelers, and/or the Embassy regarding any recent developments prior to travel. Road obstacles such as changes in surface conditions due to the weather occur frequently.

Public transportation is unreliable and is limited after sunset. The most common form of public transport is three-wheeled, open-sided taxis called "tuk-tuks." Automobile taxis or cars for hire are available at the airport, the Friendship Bridge, and most major hotels, and near the Morning Market in Vientiane. Tuk-tuks and taxis are frequently in poor repair, and drivers generally speak little or no English. Inter-city transport is provided by buses, vans, pickups, and trucks, which are also often in poor repair.

Emergency services in Laos are either unreliable or non-existent. Lao road traffic regulations require any driver coming upon a road accident to assist in transporting injured persons to a hospital. Emergency telephone numbers in Vientiane are Fire: 190, Ambulance: 195 or 021-413-720, Traffic Police: 191, Tourist Police: 021-251-128 (only for incidents involving tourists).

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Laos, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Lao Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Travel Of Foreigners Within Laos: The Lao tourist police have informed foreign tourists that a licensed Lao tour guide must accompany any group of more than 5 foreign tourists; however, this regulation does not appear to be strictly enforced. The authorities may restrict travel in rural areas outside of popular tourist destinations. Restricted areas may not be marked or even widely known by local citizens. If traveling without a reputable tour guide who is aware of local conditions, travelers should consult with

local authorities before entering remote areas away from obvious tourist destinations. Lao citizens who wish to have a foreign citizen—including a family member—stay in their home must obtain prior approval from the village chief. The foreigner may be held responsible if the Lao host has not secured prior permission for the visit. American citizens are strongly advised to ensure that such permission has been granted before accepting offers to stay in Lao homes. Security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephones and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with the local authorities.

Relationships With Lao Citizens: The Lao Government prohibits sexual contact between foreign citizens and Lao nationals except when the two parties have been married in accordance with Lao Family Law. Any foreigner who enters into a sexual relationship with a Lao national may be interrogated, detained, arrested, or jailed. Lao police have confiscated passports and imposed fines of up to $5000 on foreigners who enter into disapproved sexual relationships. The Lao party to the relationship may also be jailed without trial. Foreigners are not permitted to invite Lao nationals of the opposite sex to their hotel rooms; police may raid hotel rooms without notice or consent.

Foreign citizens intending to marry Lao nationals are required by Lao law to obtain prior permission from the Lao Government. The formal application process can take as long as a year. American citizens may obtain information about these requirements from the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane. The Lao Government will not issue a marriage certificate unless the correct procedures are followed. Any attempt to circumvent Lao regulations may result in arrest, imprisonment, a fine of $500-$5000, and deportation. Foreigners who cohabit with or enter into a close relationship with Lao nationals may be accused by Lao authorities of entering into an illegal marriage and be subject to these same penalties. Foreign citizens who wish to become engaged to a Lao national are required to obtain prior permission from the chief of the village where the Lao national resides. Failure to obtain prior permission can result in a fine of $500-$5000. Lao police frequently impose large fines on foreign citizens a few days after they hold an engagement ceremony with a Lao citizen based on the suspicion that the couple subsequently had sexual relations out of wedlock.

Marriage: A Lao Prime Ministerial decree requires that marriages of Lao citizens abroad be registered with Lao embassies in order to be legal in Laos. If an American citizen marries a Lao citizen in the U.S. and then the couple comes to Laos, the American could be subject to penalties under the Lao law governing sexual relationships (above) if the marriage has not been registered beforehand with a Lao Embassy.

Religious Workers: Religious proselytizing or distributing religious material is strictly prohibited. Foreigners caught distributing religious material may be arrested or deported. The Government of Laos restricts the importation of religious texts and artifacts. While Lao law allows freedom of religion, the Government registers and controls all associations, including religious groups. Meetings, even in private homes, must be registered and those held outside of established locations may be broken up and the participants arrested.

Travel: U.S. citizens considering travel by air, road or river within Laos are advised to carefully evaluate the relative risks of the three modes of transport (see sections on Aviation Safety Oversight, Traffic Safety, and River Travel below). Travelers should also exercise caution if contemplating swimming in rivers in Laos. Currents can be deceptie and strong.

River travel is common in Laos, but safety conditions do not conform to U.S. standards. In particular, travel by speedboat (local term “fast boat”) is dangerous and should be avoided, particularly during the dry season. Travel on or across the Mekong River along the Thai border should be avoided at night. Lao militia forces have shot at boats on the Mekong after dark.

Photography and Other Restrictions: Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest—including bridges, airfields, military installations, government buildings, or government vehicles—may result in problems with authorities, including detention or arrest and confiscation of the camera. Tourists should be cautious when traveling near military bases and strictly observe signs delineating the military base areas. Military personnel have detained and questioned foreigners who have unknowingly passed by unmarked military facilities. Because of the prohibition on religious proselytizing, travelers should use caution when taking photographs or videotaping non-Buddhist religious services. If attending public services or religious gatherings, foreigners should ask permission from the local police and civil authorities to photograph or videotape. See section above on Religious Workers. Local police may suspect persons using any kind of sophisticated still or video camera equipment of being professional photographers or possibly photojournalists, which may lead to questioning, detention, arrest or deportation by the police.

Financial Transactions: There are network-connected ATMs in Vientiane, including those operated by the Foreign Commercial Bank of Laos, also know as the Banque Pour le Commerce Exterieur de Laos (BCEL). BCEL also has network-connected ATMS in Vang Vieng, and the Provincial capital cities, or “Muang,” of Luangnamtha, Oudomxay, Luangprabang, Khammouan, Savannakhet, and Champasak Provinces. These machines are generally limited to withdrawals of the equivalent of about $100.00 in Lao kip only. Credit cards are accepted at major hotels

and tourist-oriented businesses. Credit card cash advances and/or Western Union money transfers are available at banks in most provincial capitals and other tourist centers. While the government requires that prices be quoted in Lao kip, prices are often given in U.S. dollars or Thai baht, especially in tourist areas or at markets. The Lao Government requires payment in U.S. dollars for some taxes and fees, including visa fees and the airport departure tax.

Customs and Currency Regulations: Lao customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Laos of items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities, foreign currency, cameras and other items. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements. (Please also see section on "Religious Workers" above). There are prohibitions against importing or exporting more than $2500 (U.S. dollar equivalent) of currency without authorization. Contact the Lao Embassy or Lao customs authorities for more details.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Lao laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Laos are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Laos are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Laos. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the embassy or consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on Rue Bartholonie (near Tat Dam), in Vientiane; from the U.S., mail may be addressed to U.S. Embassy Vientiane, Unit 8165, Box V, APO AP 96546; Telephone (856-21) 267-000, recorded emergency information for American citizens (856-21) 267-111; duty officer emergency cellular telephone (856-20) 550-2016; Embassy-wide fax number (856-21) 267-190; Consular Section e-mail: CONSLAO@state.gov, Embassy web site: http://laos.usembassy.gov.

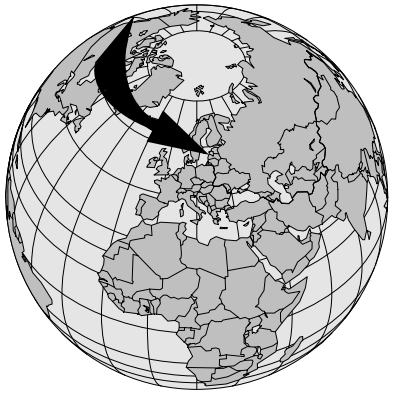
Intercountry Adoption

February 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Suspension of Foreign Adoptions: Prospective adopting American citizen parents should be aware that the Lao government has currently suspended all adoptions of Lao children by foreigners. Some exceptions have been granted by the Office of the Prime Minister, which is the only Lao government authority which can grant exceptions to the ban. Prospective adopting American citizen parents must obtain written authorization from the Office of the Prime Minister prior to having the United States Citizen and Immigration Service (USCIS) approve a petition for an orphan. For further information on intercountry adoption, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://adoption.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



LATVIA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Latvia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 64,589 sq. km. (24,938 sq. mi.); slightly larger than West Virginia.

Cities: (2008) Capital—Riga (717,371). Other cities—Daugavpils (105,958); Liepaja (85,050); Jelgava (65,635); Jurmala (55,580); Ventspils (43,299); Rezekne (35,883).

Terrain: Fertile low-lying plains predominate in central Latvia, highlands in Vidzeme and Latgale to the east, and hilly moraine in the western Kurzeme region. Forests cover one-third of the country, with over 3,000 small lakes and numerous bogs. Although there are more than 12,000 rivers in the country, the only major waterways are the Daugava (Dvina) River, which flows through the center of the country and empties into the Gulf of Rîga, and the Gauja River, which rises in the Vidzeme Upland.

Land use: 20% arable land, 8% meadows and pastures, 45% forest and woodland, 27% other.

Climate: Temperate, maritime, with four seasons of almost equal length. Average temperatures in January range from -2.8°C (26.6°F) in the western, coastal town of Liepaja, to -6.6°C (20.1°F) in the inland town of Daugavpils. Mean temperatures for July range from 16.7°C (62.1°F) in Liepaja to 17.6°C (63.7°F) in Daugavpils. Annual precipitation averages 57 centimeters (23 in.).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Latvian(s).

Population: (2008) 2,270,894.

Annual growth rate: (2007) -0.5%. Birth rate—10,2/1,000. Death rate—14,5/1,000. Migration rate—3541 immigrants, 4183 emigrants (2007). Net migration rate (2007): -642 migrants.

Population density: (2008) 35.2/1 sq. km (this figure is far lower in the rural parts of Latvia). Urban dwellers—67,9%.

Ethnic groups: (2008) Latvians 59,2%, Russians 28.0%, Belarusians 3.7%, Ukrainians 2.5%, Poles 2.4%.

Religions: (2003) Lutheran (23.8%), Roman Catholic (18.4%), Russian Orthodox (15.0%).

Languages: Latvian (Lettish). Russian also is spoken by most people.

Education: Years compulsory—9. By 1989, 60% of the adult populace had finished high school, and 12% had completed college. Enrollment (2007/2008)—382,073 students in 1,648 schools (including pre-school establishments and vocational education institutions) and 127,760 university students. Literacy—99.8%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—8.7/1,000 (2007). Life expectancy (2007)—65.8 yrs. male, 76.5 yrs. female.

Work force: (2007) (1,075 Mil. people): Industry—17.2%; trade—16,5%; construction—11.2%; agriculture/forestry—9.6%;; transport/communications—9.3%; public administration/defense—7.5%; education—7.3%; real estate industry—6,6%; health care/social welfare—4.5%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: The law "On the Republic of Latvia Status as a State," passed by Parliament on August 21, 1991, provided for the reinstatement of the 1922 constitution.

Government branches: Executive—President (head of state), elected by Parliament every 4 years; Prime Minister (head of government). Legislative—Saeima (100-member parliament). Judicial—Supreme Court; Constitutional Court; civil law system.

Political subdivisions: 26 "rural" districts and 6 districts in Riga.

Political parties: People's Party—21 seats, Alliance of Political Organizations (Harmony Center)—18 seats, Greens and Farmers—17 seats, New Era—14 Seats,, Latvia's First Party and Latvia's Way Union—10 seats, Civic Union—6 seats, Fatherland and Freedom—5 seats, For Human Rights in United Latvia—5 seats, independent—4 seats.

Suffrage: universal adult (18 years of age).
National holidays: (2008) 1 January (New Year's Day); 23-24 March (Easter); 1 May (Labor Day); 23-24 June (Midsummer Festival); 18 November (National Day, proclamation of the Republic); 25-26 December (Christmas); 31 December (New Year's Eve).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $17.09 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 10.3%.
Annual inflation rate: (2007) 14.1%.
Unemployment rate: (2007) 6%.
Per capita income: (Nominal GDP per capita) (2007) $12,000.
Natural resources: Peat, limestone, dolomite, gypsum, timber.
Agriculture/forestry: (3.2% of 2007 GDP): Products—cattle, dairy foods, cereals, potatoes, timber. Land—2.36 million hectares, of which 73.3% is arable, 25.7% meadow and pasture, and 1.0% orchards.
Industry: (13.6% of 2007 GDP): Metalworking, machinery and tools, light electrical equipment and fittings, textiles and footwear, technological instruments, construction materials, processed foods.
Major sectors of the economy: (2007) retail and wholesale trade, repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods 20.3%; real estate, renting and business activities 15.8%; manufacturing 10.8%; transport and communications 10.8%; construction 8.4%; financial intermediation 7.7%; public administration and defense, compulsory social security 6.7%
Trade: (2007) Exports—$7.92 billion: wood, wood products 22.5%; basic metals, fabricated metal products 14.6%, machinery, equipment 11%; food products, beverages (incl. alcoholic), tobacco 7.8%; chemicals, chemical products 7.4%; textiles and textile products 6.7%. Major markets—Lithuania 15.8%, Estonia 14.4%, Russia 9.6%, Germany 8.7%, Sweden 7.7%, U.K. 6.9%. Imports—$15.26 billion: machinery and equipment 20.8%; motor vehicles 14.6%; mineral products 11.5%; basic metals and fabricated metal products 9.6%; chemicals and chemical products 8.1%; food products, beverages (incl. alcoholic), tobacco 6.1%; rubber and plastic products 4.8%; textiles and textile products 4.3% Partners—Germany 15.2%, Lithuania 13.9%, Russia 8.4%, Estonia 8.1%, Poland 7%, Finland 5.1%, Sweden 4.9%.

PEOPLE

The behavior of most Latvians reflects the strong cultural and religious influences of centuries-long Germanic and Scandinavian colonization and settlement. They are viewed as self-reliant, independent, persistent, and reserved. Eastern Latvia (Latgale), however, retains a strong Polish and Russian cultural and linguistic influence. This highly literate society places strong emphasis upon education, which is free and compulsory until age 16. The majority of Latvians belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church; a sizable minority is Russian Orthodox, and Eastern Latvia is predominantly Roman Catholic.

Historically, Latvia has always had fairly large Russian, Jewish, German, and Polish minorities, but traumatic wartime events, postwar emigration, deportations, and Soviet Russification policies from 1939 to 1989 reduced the percentage of ethnic Latvians in Latvia from 73% to 52%. In an attempt to preserve the Latvian language and prevent ethnic Latvians from becoming a minority in their own country, Latvia enacted language, education, and citizenship laws which require a working proficiency in the Latvian language in order to become a citizen. Such legislation has caused concern among many non-citizen resident Russians, despite Latvian legal guarantees of universal human and civil rights regardless of citizenship.

Written with the Latin alphabet, Latvian is the language of the Latvian people and the official language of the country. It is an inflective language with several analytical forms, three dialects, and German syntactical influence. The oldest known examples of written Latvian are from a 1585 catechism. Latvians and Lithuanians are the only surviving direct descendents of the Baltic peoples who speak languages of the Indo-European family. While Latvia was a member of the U.S.S.R, Russian was the official language, so many Latvians also speak Russian, and the resident Slavic populace generally speaks Russian as a first language.

HISTORY

By the 10th century, the area that is today Latvia was inhabited by several Baltic tribes who had formed their own local governments. In 1054, German sailors who shipwrecked on the Daugava River inhabited the area, which initiated a period of increasing Germanic influence. The Germans named the territory Livonia. In 1201, Riga, the current capital of Latvia, was founded by the Germanic Bishop Alberth of Livonia; the city joined the Hanseatic League in 1285 and began to form important cultural and economic relationships with the rest of Europe. However, the new German nobility enserfed the indigenous people and accorded them only limited trading and property rights.

Subsequent wars and treaties led to Livonia's partition and colonization for centuries. In 1721 Russia took control over the Latvian territories as a result of its victory over Sweden in the Great Northern War. During this time there was little sense of a Latvian national identity, as both serfdom and institutional controls to migration and social mobility limited the boundaries of the indigenous people's intellectual and social geography. However, in the 1860's, the Young Latvian Movement was formed in order to promote the indigenous language against Russification policies and to publicize and counteract the socioeconomic oppression of Latvians, 60% of whom belonged to the landless, urban class. This growing proletariat became fertile ground for the ideas of western European socialism and supported the creation in 1903 of the Latvian Social Demo-



cratic Union (LSDU), which continued to champion national interests and Latvia's national self-determination, especially during the failed 1905 Revolution in Russia.

The onset of World War I brought German occupation of the western coastal province of Kurzeme, which Latvians heroically countered with several regiments of riflemen commanded by Czarist generals. The military campaign generally increased Latvian and LSDU support for the Bolsheviks' successful October Revolution in 1917, in the hopes of a "free Latvia within free Russia." These circumstances led to the formation of the Soviet "Iskolat Republic" in the unoccupied section of Latvia. In opposition to this government and to the landed barons' German sympathies stood the Latvian Provisional National Council and the Riga Democratic Bloc. These and other political parties formed the Latvian People's Council, which on November 18, 1918 declared Latvia's independence and formed an army. The new Latvian Army won a decisive battle over the combined German-Red Army forces and consolidated that success on the eastern Latgale front. These developments led to the dissolution of the Soviet Latvian government on January 13, 1920 and to a peace treaty between Latvia and Soviet Russia on August 11 later that year. On September 22, 1921, an independent Latvia was admitted to the League of Nations.

The government, headed by Prime Minister Ulmanis, declared a democratic, parliamentary republic. It recognized Latvian as the official language, granted cultural autonomy to the country's sizeable minorities, and introduced an electoral system into the Latvian constitution, which was adopted in 1922. The ensuing decade witnessed sweeping economic reform, as the war had devastated Latvian agriculture, and most Russian factories had been evacuated to Russia. However, economic depression heightened political turmoil, and, on May 15, 1934, the Prime Minister dismissed the Parliament, banned outspoken and left-wing political parties, and tightened authoritarian state control over Latvian social life and the economy.

The German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 1939 steadily forced Latvia under Soviet influence, culminating in Latvia's annexation by the Soviet Union on August 5, 1940. On June 14

of the following year, 15,000 Latvian citizens were forcibly deported and a large number of army officers shot. The subsequent German occupation witnessed the mobilization of many Latvians into Waffen SS legions, while some Latvians joined the Red Army and formed resistance groups, and others fled to the West and East.

An estimated 70,000, or 89.5%, of Latvian Jews were killed in Latvia under Nazi occupation. Up to one-third of Latvia's pre-war population (approximately 630,000 residents) was lost between 1940 and 1954 due to the Holocaust and the Soviet and Nazi occupations.

After World War II, the U.S.S.R. subjected the Latvian republic to a social and economic reorganization which rapidly changed the rural economy to one based on heavy industry, transformed the predominantly Latvian population into a more multiethnic populace, and converted the peasant class into a fully urbanized industrial worker class. As part of the goal to more fully integrate Latvia into the Soviet Union, Stalin deported another 42,000 Latvians and continued to promote the policy of encouraging Soviet immigration to Latvia.

In July 1989, following the dramatic events in East Germany, the Latvian Supreme Soviet adopted a "Declaration of Sovereignty" and amended the Constitution to assert the supremacy of its laws over those of the U.S.S.R. Candidates from the pro-independence party Latvian Popular Front gained a two-thirds majority in the Supreme Council in the March 1990 democratic elections. On May 4, the Council declared its intention to restore full Latvian independence after a "transitional" period; three days later, a Latvian was chosen Prime Minister. Soviet political and military forces tried unsuccessfully to overthrow the Latvian Government. On August 21, 1991, Latvia claimed de facto independence. International recognition, including that of the U.S.S.R., followed. The United States, which had never recognized Latvia's forcible annexation by the U.S.S.R. and continued to accredit a Latvian Ambassador in Washington, recognized Latvia's renewed independence on September 2. In 2007, the United States and Latvia celebrated 85 years of continuous diplomatic relations. Since regaining its independence, Latvia has rapidly moved away from the political-economic structures and socio-cultural patterns which underlay the Soviet Union. Through a U.S. initiative, on April 30, 1994, Latvia and Russia signed a troop withdrawal agreement; Russia withdrew the bulk of its troops by August 31 of that year. Except for some large state-owned utilities, Latvia has privatized most sectors of its economy, which enjoyed years of rapid development before slowing down in 2007. By the end of 2008, Latvian economy was facing the risk of recession. Latvia has also maintained and strengthened the democratic, parliamentary republic that it revived in 1990.

Internationally, Latvia has accomplished a great deal. It became a member of the United Nations (UN) on September 18, 1991, and is a signatory to a number of UN organizations and other international agreements, including the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. It is also a member of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and officially became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on March 29, 2004. On May 1, 2004 Latvia joined the European Union (EU).

Since 2004, Latvia has emerged as a significant player in foreign affairs, standing out as a successful post-Soviet transition society. Strong memories of occupation and oppression motivate Latvia to reach out to countries struggling to move beyond authoritarian politics and state-controlled economies. It has worked closely with the U.S. and the EU to promote democracy in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia. Latvia also supports pro-market, pro-free-trade policies in European and international organizations. It was the European Union's fastest-growing economy in 2004 through 2006.

Latvia has developed a policy of international security cooperation through participation in crisis management and peacekeeping operations. In 2006, Latvia deployed over 10% of its active duty military to support UN, NATO, and coalition military operations. That percentage is well above the European average in terms of per capita contributions. In 2008, Latvia increased its participation in the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan to 155 soldiers and plans to maintain the number in 2009. Closer to home, Latvia has been active in the Balkans: it supports the NATO mission in Kosovo with peacekeepers, and the European Union Force (EUFOR) mission in Bosnia with liaison officers. Latvia also contributes to the OSCE mission to Georgia. In November 2006, Latvia hosted a NATO Summit in its capital, Riga.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The highest organ of state authority in Latvia is the Saeima, a unicameral legislative body of 100 members who are elected by direct popular vote to serve four-year terms. The Saeima initiates and approves legislation sponsored by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the head of government and has full responsibility and control over the Cabinet. The President, who is elected by the Saeima every four years, holds a primarily ceremonial role as head of state, though the President must sign each law into force and has the power to return laws to the Saeima twice for review and revision. The President also has the power to call for a referendum on legislation that the Saeima refuses to change after twice being sent back. In the autumn of 1991 Latvia re-implemented significant portions of its 1922 constitution, and in the spring of 1993 the government took a census to determine eligibility for citizenship. Latvia finalized a citizenship and naturalization law in the summer of 1994, which was further liberalized in 1998. By law, those who

were Latvian citizens in 1940 and their descendants (regardless of ethnicity) could claim citizenship. Forty-one percent of Latvia's population is ethnically non-Latvian, yet almost three-fourths of all residents are citizens of Latvia. Requirements for naturalization include a conversational knowledge of Latvian, a loyalty oath, renunciation of former citizenship, 5 years of residency in Latvia, and a basic knowledge of Latvian history. Dual citizenship is allowed for those who were forced to leave Latvia during the Soviet occupation and adopted another citizenship. Convicted criminals, agents of Soviet intelligence services, and certain other groups are excluded from becoming citizens.

On March 19, 1991 the Supreme Council passed a law explicitly guaranteeing "equal rights to all nationalities and ethnic groups" and "to all permanent residents in the Republic regardless of their nationality, equal rights to work and wages." In addition, the law prohibits "any activity directed toward nationality discrimination or the promotion of national superiority or hatred."

In the June 5-6, 1993 elections, in which more than 90% of the electorate participated, eight of Latvia's 23 registered political parties passed the 5% threshold to enter parliament. The centrist party Latvia's Way received a 33% plurality of votes and joined the Farmer's Union to head a center-right-wing coalition government.

The September 30-October 1,1995 elections resulted in a deeply fragmented parliament with nine parties represented and the largest party commanding only 18 of 100 seats. Attempts to form right-of-center and leftist governments failed; seven weeks after the election, a broad but fractious coalition government of six of the nine parties was voted into office under Prime Minister Andris Skele, a popular, nonpartisan businessman.

In the 1998 elections, the Latvian party structure began to consolidate, with only six parties obtaining seats in the Saeima. Andris Skele's newly formed People's Party garnered a plurality with 24 seats. Though the election represented a victory for the center-right, personality conflicts and scandals within the two largest right-of-center parties—Latvia's Way and the People's Party—prevented stable coalitions from forming. Two shaky governments quickly collapsed in less than a year. In May 2000, a compromise candidate was found in the Latvia's Way mayor of Riga, Andris Berzins. His four-party coalition lasted until parliamentary elections in October 2002. Those elections left Latvia's Way, for the first time since 1993, with no seats in parliament. The New Era Party, which ran on an anti-corruption platform, gained the most seats and formed a four-party coalition government until the abrupt resignation of the Prime Minister in February 2004 over issues relating to personalities and management of the ruling coalition.

In 1999, the Saeima elected Vaira Vike-Freiberga, a compromise candidate with no party affiliation, to the presidency. Though born in Riga in 1937, she settled in Canada during the years of the Soviet occupation, becoming a well-respected academic on the subject of Latvian culture and psychology. Following her election, she became one of the most popular political figures in Latvia. She was overwhelmingly re-elected by parliament for another four-year term in June 2003. She was also credited with bringing Latvia to the world's stage and serving as an important check on the ruling coalitions.

With the tacit support of leftist parties, a minority government led by Greens and Farmers Union leader Indulis Emsis took office on March 9, 2004. The new government focused on smoothing Latvia's entry into NATO and the European Union, which took place in the first half of 2004. The government collapsed on October 28, 2004 after parliament voted against the 2005 budget. A new coalition government, led by Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis, took office on December 2, 2004 and was re-elected on October 7, 2006. These last election results marked the first time that an incumbent administration has won re-election in the history of independent Latvia.

In July 2007, the Saeima elected Valdis Zatlers, another candidate with no political affiliation, to the presidency. An orthopedic surgeon by trade, Zatlers was the director of the Latvian Traumatology and Orthopedics Center until his election and has no prior political experience. His start was clouded by charges that he had accepted supplemental payments for medical services on which he did not pay taxes.Zatlers complied with investigations which in the end concluded he had committed no breaches of law.

In December 2007, Prime Minister Kalvitis resigned after his government came under intense criticism for attempting to dismiss the head of the anti-corruption bureau. President Zatlers nominated veteran politician Ivars Godmanis to form a new government. Godmanis' governing coalition consists of the same four center-right parties that made up the previous government.

Latvia's flag consists of two horizontal, maroon bands of equal width, divided by a white stripe one-half the width. The national holiday is November 18, Independence Day, which marks Latvia's 1918 independence.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Valdis ZATLERS**
Prime Min.: **Ivars GODMANIS**
Min. of Agriculture: **Martins ROZE**
Min. for Children & Families: **Ainars BASTIKS**
Min. of Culture: **Helena DEMAKOVA**
Min. of Defense: **Vinets VELDRE**
Min. of Economics: **Kaspars GERHARDS**
Min. of Education & Science: **Tatjana KOKE**
Min. of Environment: **Raimonds VEJONIS**
Min. of Finance: **Atis SLAKTERIS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Maris RIEKSTINS**
Min. of Health: **Ivars EGLITIS**

Min. of Interior: **Mareks SEGLINS**
Min. of Justice: **Gaidis BERZINS**
Min. of Regional Development & Local Govts.: **Edgars ZALANS**
Min. for Special Assignments for Admin. of European Union Funds: **Normunds BROKS**
Min. for Special Assignments for E-Govt. Affairs: **Signe BALINA**
Min. for Special Assignments for Society Integration Affairs: **Oskars KASTENS**
Min. of Transport: **Ainars SLESERS**
Min. of Welfare: **Iveta PURNE**
Governor, Bank of Latvia: **Ilmars RIMSEVICS**
Ambassador to the US: **Andrejs PILDEGOVICS**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Solveiga SILKALNA**

Latvia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2306 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008 [tel: (202) 328-2840].

ECONOMY

For centuries under Hanseatic and German influence and then during its inter-war independence, Latvia used its geographic location as an important East-West commercial and trading center. Industry served local markets, while timber, paper, and agricultural products supplied Latvia's main exports. The years of Soviet occupation tended to integrate Latvia's economy into the U.S.S.R. in order to serve that empire's large internal industrial needs. Since reestablishing its independence, Latvia has proceeded with market-oriented reforms. Its freely traded currency, the Lat, was introduced in 1993 and has held steady or appreciated against major world currencies. Before late 2007, Latvia's economic performance was among the best of the EU accession countries. Real per capita GDP had roughly doubled compared to its 1995 level, the economy was growing rapidly with GDP growth hitting 12.2% in 2006. Recently, however, internal economic instability combined with adverse external factors has decelerated economic growth considerably. Latvia's annualized second quarter real GDP growth rate dropped to 0.1% from 11% just a year ago. Increasing inflation is also causing concern. Latvia has registered the highest inflation rate in the EU, which reached 17.9%t at its highest level. The increase in inflation has delayed prospects of introducing the Euro currency in Latvia. At the same time, Latvia's current account deficit (ranging from 12% to 14% of GDP over the past 3 years) remains one of the key vulnerabilities of the Latvian economy.

Independence forced Latvia into a precarious position regarding its energy supply. With the exception of peat and timber, Latvia had no significant domestic energy resources and received 93% of its imported energy from Soviet republics. Latvia has sought ways to diversify its energy sources and to increase energy conservation. In August 2001, the Kegums hydroelectric power plant was reopened, contributing to Latvia's ability to supply 25% of its energy that year. Furthermore, in June 2002 the European Investment Bank loaned Latvenergo, a state-owned energy supply group, 80 million Euros to modernize its generation and distribution of electricity and thermal energy. Latvia is also looking to regional cooperation arrangements to diversify its energy supplies. With the other Baltic states, it plans to create an electricity network able to operate independently of its Russian counterpart. It is planning major infrastructure projects to provide energy supplies via Scandinavia, and it is working with Estonia, Lithuania and Poland to build a new nuclear power station in Ignalina, Lithuania.

Privatization in Latvia is effectively complete. All of the previously state-owned small and medium enterprises have been privatized, leaving in state hands the electric utility, the Latvian railway company, and the Latvian postal system, as well as state shares in several politically sensitive concerns. Despite the lack of transparency of the early stages of the privatization process and certain difficulties in privatization of some of the largest companies, Latvian privatization efforts have led to the development of a dynamic and prosperous private sector, which accounts for approximately 70% of the country's GDP.

In the last few years, Latvia has implemented many positive reforms in the business sphere (ranking 29th worldwide on the ease of doing business there, according to the World Bank Doing Business 2009 report). Most reforms deal with licensing, taxes, and business closures. In the 2005/2006 period, Latvia made it easier for businesses to comply with building requirements and reduced the number of licenses and permits required. In addition, Latvia launched an electronic tax filing system and improved the regulation of bankruptcy administrators in order to reduce corruption.

Foreign investment in Latvia remains high, as both Western and Eastern investors are trying to establish a foothold in the new EU member state as well as to take advantage of central location in the region and relatively cheap labor. Representing 5.8% of Latvia's total foreign direct investment (FDI), the U.S. FDI stock in Latvia stood at nearly $480 million at the end of 2008, according to the Bank of Latvia's most recent available figures. In 2007, U.S. goods and services accounted for 1.4% of Latvia's total imports, while exports to the United States accounted for 1.1% of Latvia's total exports. Latvia has been a member of the World Trade Organization since 1999. Latvia and the United States have signed treaties on investment, trade, intellectual property protection, and avoidance of double taxation.

In the long term, continued high economic growth in Latvia will depend on further improvements to the business environment, particularly the drive to reduce corruption and strengthen the rule of law, and on Latvia's ability to use the opportunities presented by EU membership.

DEFENSE

Latvia's defense concept is based upon four basic pillars: collective defense as a member of NATO, professionalization of the armed forces, support and coordination with civil society, and international military

cooperation. The armed forces consist of the regular forces, a home guard called "Zemessardze," and the Reserve. The regular forces are composed of the land forces, an air force focused on air surveillance and search and rescue, and naval forces focused on coastal surveillance, assertion of sovereignty, mine countermeasures, search and rescue, and environmental protection. Additionally, there are some other minor units adding to the total armed forces personnel of 5,000.Zemessardze is an autonomous 10,600-man-strong volunteer reserve organization which performs traditional national-guard duties such as crisis response and support for military operations. The Latvian National Armed Forces became fully professional in November 2006. Defense spending has risen in recent years, and the government has committed 2% of its GDP to defense spending through 2013.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

After regaining its independence, Latvia began to work at reintegrating into the West. In 1991, Latvia joined the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and became a member of the United Nations (UN). It is party to a number of UN organizations as well as other international agreements including the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. Since 2004, Latvia has been an active member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU).

Latvia has emerged as a significant international player, courageously supporting peace and democracy world-wide. Per capita, it is one of the largest contributors to international military operations. It has deployed troops to Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans. It also works closely with the U.S. and the EU to support and promote democracy in the former Soviet Union states of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and Georgia. A testament to the close relationship between the U.S, and Latvia is the fact that President Bush has visited the country twice, the second time to attend the NATO Summit held in Riga on November 28-29, 2006.

Russia has expressed concern over how Latvia's language and naturalization laws affect Latvia's Russian-speaking population. Russians comprised 28% of the population in 2008. In turn, Latvia is interested in the welfare of ethnic Latvians still residing in Russia. Latvia and Russia signed a border treaty agreement in March 2007. It was ratified by both sides and went into effect at the end of 2007.

Latvia maintains embassies in the United States, Austria, Azerbaijan,Belarus, Belgium, Canada, the People's Republic of China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan. It also operates missions to the United Nations in New York City and Geneva, the European Council, the European Union, the Chemical Weapons Nonproliferation Organization, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Trade Organization, UNESCO,and the UN Council on Food and Agriculture.

Latvia has Consulates General in Russia and Germany; Consulates in Belarus and Russia; Honorary Consulates General in Brazil, Denmark, Italy,, Cyprus, Lebanon, Norway, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Venezuela; and Honorary Consulates in USA, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria,, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong Iceland, India, Indonesia Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,, Luxembourg, Malta, Morocco, Macedonia, Mexico, Moldova, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Syria, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

U.S.-LATVIAN RELATIONS

The United States established diplomatic relations with Latvia on July 28, 1922. The U.S. Legation in Riga was officially established on November 13, 1922 and served as the headquarters for U.S. representation in the Baltics during the interwar era. The Soviet invasion forced the closure of the legation on September 5, 1940, but Latvian representation in the United States has continued uninterrupted for 85 years. The United States never recognized the forcible incorporation of Latvia into the U.S.S.R. and views the present Government of Latvia as a legal continuation of the interwar republic. Latvia and the United States have signed treaties on investment, trade, intellectual property protection, extradition, mutual legal assistance, and avoidance of double taxation. Latvia has enjoyed most-favored-nation treatment with the United States since December 1991. In 2008, Latvia joined the visa waiver program.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

RIGA (E) 7 Raina Blvd., Riga LV-1510 Latvia, APO/FPO PSC 78 Box R, APO AE 09723, +371-6703-6200, Fax +371-6782-0047, Workweek: M-F/0830-1700, Website: http://riga.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	James J. Zellinger
AMB OMS:	Sheila Jefferson
MGT:	Eric R. Kettner
POL/ECO:	Tamir G. Waser
AMB:	Charles W. Larson, Jr.
CON:	Stephen Frahm
DCM:	Stuart Seldowitz
PAO:	William Bellis
COM:	Thomas L. Johnston
GSO:	Leon Clyde Lowder
RSO:	Jeffrey Lefler
AFSA:	Joseph Babb
CLO:	Juli Briskman
DAO:	Ltc. David Holahan, USMC

EEO:	Stephen Frahm
IMO:	Tad Pollard
IRS:	Barbara B. Franklin
ISO:	Tad Pollard
ISSO:	Tad Pollard
MLO:	Ltc. Eric Phillipson

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 2, 2008

Country Description: Latvia is a stable democracy experiencing rapid economic growth. Most tourist facilities found in a western European city are available in the capital city of Riga. However, some of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries are not yet available in other parts of the country.

Entry Requirements: Latvia is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Latvia for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. Travelers remaining in Latvia for more than 90 days, including 180 day periods that cross over two half-calendar years, must apply for temporary residence. All travelers must have a valid insurance policy, covering medical expenses while in Latvia. Repatriation costs, including funeral and disposition of remains costs also have to be covered by the policy. In addition, upon entering or exiting the country, travelers must declare cash in excess of 10,000 euros to Latvian customs. For more information, travelers may contact the Latvian Embassy, at 2306 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202)328-2840, fax (202) 328-2860. For further information, visit http://www.latvia-usa.org. Within Latvia, contact the Ministry of Interiors Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs at Ciekurkalna 1, linija 1,k,3,Riga, LV 1026. Tel. (371)67219645, (371)67219679, (371)80007657, fax (371)67219654, e-mail: pmlp@pmlp.gov.lv, web site http://www.ocma.gov. Any traveler to Russia, even in transit, is advised to obtain a visa prior to entry into Latvia. The process of obtaining a visa at the Russian Embassy in Riga can be lengthy, and involve surrender of the passport for an undetermined period of time. Visit the Embassy of Latvia web site at http://www.latvia-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Civil unrest is not a problem in Riga. Nonetheless, in the past, Riga has seen large, peaceful demonstrations related to internal political issues. While demonstrations have been peaceful, American citizens are nevertheless cautioned to avoid any large public demonstrations. There have been no incidents of terrorism directed toward American interests. Incidents of anti-Americanism are rare. However, instances of racially motivated verbal harassment, and on occasion, physical assaults on non-Caucasian foreigners, have occurred in Riga. There have also been reports of non-Caucasian foreigners being subjected to extra scrutiny by security guards in shops and malls in Riga. Additionally, individuals displaying alternative lifestyles have experienced harassment.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime in Riga is generally non-violent. The majority of non-violent crime tends toward acts of pickpocketing, identity theft, and personal scams. However, there have been instances of serious violent assaults and robberies. Street crime is a serious problem, particularly for tourists. In addition to pickpockets in all public areas, there are numerous scam artists targeting foreigners in the tourist pubs and restaurants. There have been a number of reports recently of foreign tourists being charged xorbitant prices for drinks in bars. Some have then been assaulted or forced to withdraw money from an ATM to pay the bill. You can avoid situations like this by ensuring that you check the price of drinks before ordering, pay for one round at a time and seek recommendations for bars from trustworthy sources. There have also been a few cases of tourists and residents being drugged in bars and restaurants and then taken outside or to their residences and robbed. In any public area, one should always be alert, particularly to being surrounded by two or more people at once. It is not uncommon for groups of pickpockets to attempt to overwhelm their victim. Gangs of professional pickpockets are specifically targeting foreigners, particularly those carrying backpacks. In addition, Riga has one of the highest rates of car theft in the world.

Internet crime is a growing concern in Latvia. Common fraudulent schemes involve both Internet auction sites and Internet job search sites. In the first scam, criminals offer valuable items for sale at low prices on Internet auctions and request that payments be sent by wire transfer to a bank in Latvia or through a fraudulent escrow site that they have created themselves. In this scheme, the money passes through a bank in Latvia and is quickly withdrawn by ATM or transferred to a bank in another country. It is very difficult in these cases to discover the identities of the account holders or recover the funds. The second common scam involves identity theft through false job offers. In this scheme, a company claiming to be located in Latvia, but which has a non-existent address, offers the victim employment as a U.S.—based agent or freight forwarder. When the victim responds to the job offer, commonly posted on one of several popular Internet job sites, a Social Security Number and other identifying information needed for the identity theft is required under the guise of conducting a background check.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy or Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Latvia is steadily improving, but remains limited in several important respects. There are a few private clinics with medical supplies and services, including disposable needles and basic modern diagnostics, which are nearly equal to Western Europe or U.S. standards. However, because of the lack of equipment and resources, most major invasive procedures or surgeries in Latvia are not recommended. Hospital services have shown good progress but are still not equal to Western standards. Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at risk due to inadequate medical facilities. Most, but not all, antibiotics and prescription medications are available but as they are generally produced in Europe or Latvia, they often have different names and instructions are usually not printed in English. Diphtheria, hepatitis and tick-borne encephalitis are present. According to the World Health Organization, tuberculosis is a significant problem in Latvia, with 9% of all cases being multi-drug resistant. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowBookCh4-TB.aspx. State ambulance service for emergencies is available by dialing 112 anywhere in Latvia. However, response time is poor in rural areas. Air ambulance service is available for medical evacuations. In general, private air ambulance services are very expensive and require advance payment before the patient is transported.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Further health information for travelers is available at www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Latvia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Foreign visitors to Latvia planning to operate a motor vehicle are required to obtain an International Driving Permit. These may be obtained through the American Automobile Association (AAA) or the American Automobile Touring Alliance for a small fee. A U.S. state driver's license is not sufficient. These requirements apply to those operating rental cars as well, whether or not the rental company chooses to enforce the requirement as a condition of rental. Individuals driving without an International Driving Permit may have their vehicle confiscated by the police. Americans resident in Latvia for more than six months are required to apply for a Latvian driver's license.

Upon receipt of a Latvian driver's license, American citizens are required to surrender their US driver's license to the Latvian authorities. The licenses are then returned to their respective states of issuance. For more information, visit the Latvian Road and Traffic Safety Department at http://www.csdd.lv.

Latvia has one of the highest rates of automobile accidents and fatalities in Europe. While recent reports show a decrease in the number of traffic accident fatalities, there are still a number of hazards to watch out for. Drivers should be alert for pedestrians and slow moving vehicles in traffic. Additionally, violation of traffic rules is common, and it is not unusual to be overtaken by other automobiles traveling at high speeds, even in crowed urban areas. Drivers do not always yield to pedestrians, even at marked intersections. During winter, most major roads are cleared of snow. However, drivers should be alert for fog, snow, and ice while driving. Driving while intoxicated is a very serous offense and carries heavy penalties. Local authorities use roadblocks and Breathalyzer tests as enforcement tools. Drivers and pedestrians should be alert to the possibility of drunk drivers and drunken pedestrians wandering on the road. Drivers must use their headlights at all times. Speed limits are usually 50 km/hr in the city and 90 km/hr on the highways. Public transportation is generally considered safe, but travelers are encouraged to select well-marked taxis. Emergency services are fair but improving; response time may be especially slow in traffic or in rural settings. Dial 112 for ambulance service.

Visit the web site of Latvia's national tourist office online at http://latviatourism.lv/info.php and the national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.csdd.lv.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Latvia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Latvia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Banks and currency exchange counters may refuse to accept U.S. currency that is crumpled, torn, discolored or defaced (even small pen stokes, hand written numbers and letters are considered defacing). If such notes are accepted for exchange, an additional processing fee, based on the size of the transaction, may be charged. ATMs are widely available in Riga and in major towns. For security purposes, it is recommended that visitors use ATMs located inside major hotels or shopping malls, versus those located on the street, in high-volume tourist areas. Telephone connections with the United States are reliable. However, 1-800 numbers cannot be accessed from Latvia. Please check with your long distance carrier before departure to see if they offer service in Latvia. Local Internet cafés offer computer access, and fax machines are widely available.

Latvian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Latvia of items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities, medications, business equipment, drugs, etc. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Latvia in Washington or one of the Latvian consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements at http://www.latvia-usa.org.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Latvian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Latvia are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Latvia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy of Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, http://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Latvia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 7 Raina Blvd. Riga, LV-1510, and may be reached by dialing +371-703-6200. The fax number for the Consular American Citizen Services section is+371-781-4088. The U.S. Embassy web site is http://riga.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Latvia is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between Latvia and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Public opposition in Latvia to the adoption of Latvian children by foreigners has contributed to reluctance to reform intercountry adoption procedures, which currently require several extended trips by adoptive parents to Latvia to complete all the requirements. In addition, the Latvian Government recently announced that, as of March 1, 2008, it will approve applications for intercountry adoption only if the adoptive parents file to adopt a) a sibling group of three or more children, b) a child over age 9, c) a child with severe health problems, or d) a child released for intercountry adoption who has not been adopted by Latvians.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Latvia is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Latvia, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Latvia also has the following requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Parent-child relationship requirement: Latvian adoption law requires that a parent-child relationship be established before the final court decision can be made at the town or city court having jurisdiction over the child. It leaves to each orphan court to decide on a case-by-case basis the period of time required to establish the parent-child relationship. The interpretation of the child-parent relationship among courts may differ. Adoptive parents are advised that orphan courts may require them to take care of the adoptive children and share a household in Latvia for some time period, not exceeding six months.

Age Requirements: Latvia does not have any age requirements for intercountry adoptions.

Marriage Requirements: Both single individuals and married couples are eligible to adopt.

Income Requirements: Latvia does not have any income requirements for intercountry adoptions.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Latvia is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Latvia must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Latvia's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Latvia's Adoption Authority: Ministry for Children and Family Affairs

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Latvia is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Latvia.

You must also select a United States adoption service provider that has been accredited by the Ministry for Family and Children Affairs of the Republic of Latvia. After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS.

Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Latvia. Latvia's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Latvia's law. The Ministry for Children and Family Affairs reviews all applications and determines whether the applicant meets the requirements of the law to adopt. If the judgment is favorable, the Ministry provides the prospective parents with information on children who are available for adoption.

If both the United States and Latvia determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Latvia may provide you with a referral for a child. After the prospective parents choose a child, the Ministry issues them permission to meet the child. The Ministry is informed after the adoptive family has cared for the child for the required time period and the orphan court has established that the adoption would (or would not) be in the child's interests.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify Latvia's adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Ministry for Children and Family Affairs is responsible for administering intercountry adoptions. Orphan courts in Latvia carry out functions similar to those of social workers in the United States. The Ministry prepares an adoption approval (or rejection) statement for sub mission to the town or city court responsible for the final adoption decree. The Minister's adoption permission is valid for three months.

Role of the Court: Orphan courts decide: (a) whether the birth parents' rights can be terminated, (b) whether an orphan should be placed in an orphanage or whether someone else must be granted custody, (c) issues related to inheritance rights when a child's parents die. The main purpose of the orphan court session in the context of intercountry adoption is to establish that such an adoption will be in the child's interest and that the required parent-child relationship has been established. Current law provides for a twenty-day period for the final court decree to become effective.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Adoption agents are allowed to represent parents. They may do the required translations, and file adoption applications at the Ministry. However, under current law the adoptive parents are required to personally file applications at orphan courts and participate in the orphan court and final court sessions.

Time Frame: The time needed to complete an adoption in Latvia from beginning to end varies, but can take from under a year to four years.

Adoption Application: Prospective adoptive parents are required to file adoption applications with the Ministry for Children and Family Affairs.

Adoption Fees: There are no Latvian Government fees for adoption services in Latvia. However, prospective adoptive parents should be prepared to cover fees related to the translation and certification of documents and the processing of new civil and travel documents for the adopted child.

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents needed:

- Application including information about the reasons for adoption as well as information about the sex, age range, and religion of the child (children) they are interested in adopting;
- A copy of the parents' marriage certificate, if applicable, under apostille (Please see further information below about authentication of documents);
- A copy of any divorce decree (if applicable), under apostille;
- A statement about the housing for the family (i.e., size, location, type of residence);
- An autobiography (curriculum vitae);

- Medical statements regarding the health of the family (hereditary illnesses, if any, and any specific illnesses);

- A home study, under apostille, conducted by a United States state adoption agency or a private organization licensed to perform such studies. Home studies must be current in order to for the adoption application to considered. Continuations of home study approval should be forwarded to the Ministry for applications to remain valid; and

- A police clearance statement under apostille.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: If the adoptive parents and the child continue to reside in Latvia, the orphan court having jurisdiction over the child's place of residence will monitor the adopted child's well being for the first two years after the adoption's finalization.

If the adoptive parents and the child reside overseas, the Ministry requires post adoption reports on the adopted child for two years after the adoption (one a year). The reports should be conducted by appropriate child welfare officials in the state where the child resides.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Latvia
7 Raina Boulevard
Riga, LV-1510, Latvia
Tel: 371-6703-6200
Fax: 371-6781-4088
E-mail: AskConsular@USRiga.lv
Internet: http://www.usembassy.lv

Latvia's Adoption Authority
14 Zigfrida Annas Meierovica Blvd.
Riga, LV 1050
Latvia
Tel. 371-6735-6497
Fax. 371-6735-6464
E-mail: pasts@bm.gov.lv
Internet:
http://www.bm.gov.lv/eng/adoption

Embassy of Latvia
2306 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-328-2840
Fax: 202-328-2860
E-mail: embassy.usa@mfa.gov.lv

Latvia also has honorary consulates in Los Angeles, Houston, Cincinnati, Connecticut, Buffalo, and Florida.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



LEBANON

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Lebanese Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 10,400 sq. km. (4,015 sq. km.) about 0.7 times the size of Connecticut.

Cities: Capital—Beirut (pop. 1.5 million). Other cities—Tripoli/Trablus (210,000), Zahle (60,000), Sidon/Sayda (50,000), Tyre/Sur (20,000), Byblos/Jbail (10,000).

Terrain: Narrow coastal plain; El Beqaa (Bekaa Valley) separates Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains.

Climate: Mediterranean; mild to cool, wet winters with hot, dry summers; Lebanon mountains experience heavy winter snows.

People

Nationality: noun and adjective—Lebanese (singular and plural).

Population: (2006 est.) 3,874,050.

Growth rate: (2006 est.) 1.23%.

Ethnic groups: Arab 95%, Armenian 4%, other 1% (note: many Christian Lebanese do not identify themselves as Arab but rather as descendents of the ancient Canaanites and prefer to be called Phoenicians).

Religions: Muslim 60% (Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Isma'ili, Alawite or Nusayri), Christian 39% (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt, Protestant), other 1%.

Languages: Arabic (official), English, French, Armenian.

Education: Years compulsory—8. Attendance—99%. Literacy (2005 est.)—87.4%; 93.1% male, 82.2% female.

Health: (2006 est.) Infant mortality rate—23.7/1,000. Life expectancy—70.41 male, 75.48 female.

Work force: (2001 est.) 2.6 million.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: November 22, 1943.

Constitution: May 23, 1926.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), deputy prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—unicameral national assembly. Judicial—four Courts of Cassation, Constitutional Council, Supreme Council.

Political subdivisions: 8 governorates.

Political parties: Amal Movement, Ba'ath Party, Democratic Left, Democratic Renewal Movement, Free Patriotic Movement, Future Movement, Hezbollah, Kataeb Party, Kataeb Reform Movement, Lebanese Forces, National Bloc, Marada Movement, Nasserite Popular Movement, National Liberal Party, Popular Bloc, Progressive Socialist Party, Qornet Shehwan Gathering, Syrian Social National Party, Tachnaq Party. A principal divide in current Lebanese politics is between pro-and anti-Syrian forces, often referred to, respectively, as March 8 and March 14, after major demonstrations they organized in 2005. "March 8" consists principally of the Shi'ite Amal and Hezbollah, now allied with the Free Patriotic Movement (Christian), while March 14 includes the Future Movement (Sunni), Progressive Socialist Party (Druze), and Lebanese Forces and Qornet Shehwan Gathering (both Christian).

Suffrage: 21; compulsory for all males; authorized for women at 21 with elementary education.

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $21.5 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2006 est.) (-5%).

Per capita GDP: (2006 est.) $5,500.

Natural resources: limestone, iron ore, salt.

Agriculture: Products—citrus, grapes, tomatoes, apples, vegetables, potatoes, olives, tobacco; sheep, goats. Arable land—18%.

Industry: Types—banking, tourism, food processing, jewelry, cement, textiles, mineral and chemical products, wood and furniture products, oil refining, metal fabricating.

Trade: Exports—$1.88 billion (2005 est., f.o.b.) authentic jewelry, inor-

ganic chemicals, miscellaneous consumer goods, fruit, tobacco, construction minerals, electric power machinery and switchgear, textile fibers, paper. Major markets—Syria, U.A.E., Switzerland, Turkey, Saudi Arabia. Imports—$9.34 billion (2005 est., f.o.b.) petroleum products, cars, medicinal products, clothing, meat and live animals, consumer goods, paper, textile fabrics, tobacco. Major suppliers—Italy, Syria, France, Germany, China, U.S., U.K., Saudi Arabia.

PEOPLE

The population of Lebanon comprises various Christian and Muslim sects as well as Druze. No official census has been taken since 1932, reflecting the political sensitivity in Lebanon over confessional (religious) balance. While there is no consensus over the confessional breakdown of the population for this reason, it is safe to say that the Muslim sects as a whole make up a majority, and that Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Maronites are the three largest groups.

About 400,000 Palestinian refugees, some in Lebanon since 1948, are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). They are not accorded the legal rights enjoyed by the rest of the population.

With no official figures available, it is estimated that 600,000-900,000 persons fled the country during the initial years of civil war (1975-76). Although some returned, continuing conflict through 1990 as well as after the 2006 war sparked further waves of emigration, casting even more doubt on population figures. As much as 7% of the population was killed during the civil war between 1975 and 1990. Approximately 17,000-20,000 people are still "missing" or unaccounted for from the civil war period.

Many Lebanese still derive their living from agriculture. The urban population, concentrated mainly in Beirut and Mount Lebanon, is noted for its commercial enterprise. A century and a half of migration and return have produced Lebanese commercial networks around the globe—from North and South America to Europe, the Gulf, and Africa. Lebanon has a high proportion of skilled labor compared with many other Arab countries.

HISTORY

Lebanon is the historic home of the Phoenicians, Semitic traders whose maritime culture flourished there for more than 2,000 years (c.2700-450 B.C.). In later centuries, Lebanon's mountains were a refuge for Christians, and Crusaders established several strongholds there. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the League of Nations mandated the five provinces that comprise present-day Lebanon to France. Modern Lebanon's constitution, drawn up in 1926, specified a balance of political power among the various religious groups. The country gained independence in 1943, and French troops withdrew in 1946. Lebanon participated in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and signed an armistice with Israel on March 23, 1949.

Lebanon's history since independence has been marked by periods of political turmoil interspersed with prosperity built on Beirut's position as a regional center for finance and trade. In 1958, during the last months of President Camille Chamoun's term, an insurrection broke out, and U.S. forces were briefly dispatched to Lebanon in response to an appeal by the government. During the 1960s, Lebanon enjoyed a period of relative calm and Beirut-focused tourism and banking sector-driven prosperity. Other areas of the country, however, notably the South, North, and Bekaa Valley, remained poor in comparison.

In the early 1970's, difficulties arose over the presence of Palestinian refugees, many of whom arrived after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the secret 1969 Cairo Agreement permitting the establishment of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, and 1970 "Black September" hostilities in Jordan. Among the 1970 arrivals were Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Coupled with the Palestinian problem, Muslim and Christian differences grew more intense.

Beginning of the Civil War—1975-81

Full-scale civil war broke out in April 1975. After shots were fired at a church, gunmen in Christian East Beirut ambushed a busload of Palestinians. Palestinian forces joined predominantly leftist-Muslim factions as the fighting persisted, eventually spreading to most parts of the country and precipitating the Lebanese President's call for support from Syrian troops in June 1976. In fall of 1976, Arab summits in Riyadh and Cairo set out a plan to end the war. The resulting Arab Deterrent Force, which included Syrian troops already present, moved in to help separate the combatants. As an uneasy quiet settled over Beirut, security conditions in the south began to deteriorate.

After a PLO attack on a bus in northern Israel and Israeli retaliation that caused heavy casualties, Israel invaded Lebanon in March 1978, occupying most of the area south of the Litani River. In response, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 425 calling for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces and creating the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), charged with maintaining peace. Israeli forces withdrew later in 1978, turning over positions inside Lebanon along the border to their Lebanese ally, the South Lebanon Army (SLA) under the leadership of Maj. Sa'ad Haddad, thus informally setting up a 12-mile wide "security zone" to protect Israeli territory from cross border attack.

U.S. Intervention—1982-84

An interim cease-fire brokered by the U.S. in 1981 among Syria, the PLO, and Israel was respected for almost a year. Several incidents, including PLO rocket attacks on northern Israel, as well as an assassination



attempt on the Israeli Ambassador to the United Kingdom, led to the June 6, 1982 Israeli ground attack into Lebanon to remove PLO forces. Operation "Peace for Galilee" aimed at establishing a deeper security zone and pushing Syrian troops out of Lebanon, with a view toward paving the way for an Israeli-Lebanese peace agreement. With these aims in mind, Israeli forces drove 25 miles into Lebanon, moving into East Beirut with the support of Maronite Christian leaders and militia.

In August 1982, U.S. mediation resulted in the evacuation of Syrian troops and PLO fighters from Beirut. The agreement also provided for the deployment of a multinational force composed of U.S. Marines along with French and Italian units. A new President, Bashir Gemayel, was elected with acknowledged Israeli backing. On September 14, however, he was assassinated. The next day, Israeli troops crossed into West Beirut to secure Muslim militia strongholds and stood aside as Lebanese Christian militias massacred almost 800 Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Israel's then-Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon was held indirectly responsible for the massacre by the Kahane Commission and later resigned. With U.S. backing, Amin Gemayel, chosen by the Lebanese parliament to succeed his brother as President, focused anew on securing the withdrawal of Israeli and Syrian forces. The multinational force returned.

On May 17, 1983, Lebanon, Israel, and the United States signed an agreement on Israeli withdrawal that was conditioned on the departure of Syrian troops. Syria opposed the agreement and declined to discuss the withdrawal of its troops, effectively stalemating further progress. In August 1983, Israel withdrew from the Shuf (southeast of Beirut), thus removing the buffer between the Druze and the Christian militias and triggering another round of brutal fighting. By September, the Druze had gained control over most of the Shuf, and Israeli forces had pulled out from all but the southern security zone, where they remained until May 2000. The virtual collapse of the Lebanese Army in February 1984, following the defection of many Muslim and Druze units to militias, was a major blow to the government. With the U.S. Marines looking ready to withdraw, Syria and Muslim groups stepped up pressure on Gemayal. On March 5, 1984 the Lebanese Government canceled the May 17 agreement; the Marines departed a few weeks later.

This period of chaos witnessed the beginning of terrorist attacks launched against U.S. and Western interests. These included the April 18, 1983 suicide attack at the U.S. Embassy in West Beirut (63 dead), the bombing of the headquarters of U.S. and French forces on October 23, 1983 (298 dead), the assassination of American University of Beirut President Malcolm Kerr on January 18, 1984, and the bombing of the U.S. Embassy annex in East Beirut on September 20, 1984 (9 dead).

It also saw the rise of radicalism among a small number of Lebanese Muslim factions who believed that the successive Israeli and U.S. interventions in Lebanon were serving primarily Christian interests. It was

from these factions that Hezbollah emerged from a loose coalition of Shi'a groups. Hezbollah employed terrorist tactics and was supported by Syria and Iran.

Worsening Conflict and Political Crisis—1985-89

Between 1985 and 1989, factional conflict worsened as various efforts at national reconciliation failed. Heavy fighting took place in the "War of the Camps" in 1985 and 1986 as the Shi'a Muslim Amal militia sought to rout the Palestinians from Lebanese strongholds. The Amal movement had been organized in mid-1975, at the beginning of the civil war, to confront what were seen as Israeli plans to displace the Lebanese population with Palestinians. (Its charismatic founder Imam Musa Sadr disappeared in Libya three years later. Its current leader, Nabih Berri, is the Speaker of the National Assembly.) The combat returned to Beirut in 1987, with Palestinians, leftists, and Druze fighters allied against Amal, eventually drawing further Syrian intervention. Violent confrontation flared up again in Beirut in 1988 between Amal and Hezbollah.

Meanwhile, on the political front, Prime Minister Rashid Karami, head of a government of national unity set up after the failed peace efforts of 1984, was assassinated on June 1, 1987. President Gemayel's term of office expired in September 1988. Before stepping down, he appointed another Maronite Christian, Lebanese Armed Forces Commanding General Michel Aoun, as acting Prime Minister, contravening Lebanon's unwritten "National Pact," which required the prime minister to be Sunni Muslim. Muslim groups rejected the move and pledged support to Salim al-Hoss, a Sunni who had succeeded Karami. Lebanon was thus divided between a Christian government in East Beirut and a Muslim government in West Beirut, with no president.

In February 1989 Aoun attacked the rival Lebanese Forces militia. By March he turned his attention to other militias, launching what he termed a "War of Liberation" against the Syrians and their Lebanese militia allies. In the months that followed, Aoun rejected both the agreement that ultimately ended the civil war and the election of another Christian leader as president. A Lebanese-Syrian military operation in October 1990 forced him to take refuge in the French Embassy in Beirut and later to go into a 15-year exile in Paris. After Syrian troop withdrawal, Aoun returned to Lebanon on May 7, 2005 and won a seat in the 2005 parliamentary elections. His Free Patriotic Movement became a principal element of the pro-Syrian opposition bloc.

End of the Civil War—1989-91

The Ta'if Agreement of 1989 marked the beginning of the end of the war. In January of that year, a committee appointed by the Arab League, chaired by Kuwait and including Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco, had begun to formulate solutions to the conflict, leading to a meeting of Lebanese parliamentarians in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, where they agreed to the national reconciliation accord in October. Returning to Lebanon, they ratified the agreement on November 4 and elected Rene Moawad as President the following day. Moawad was assassinated in a car bombing in Beirut on November 22 as his motorcade returned from Lebanese Independence Day ceremonies. Elias Hrawi, who remained in office until 1998, succeeded him.

In August 1990, parliament and the new President agreed on constitutional amendments embodying some of the political reforms envisioned at Ta'if. The National Assembly expanded to 128 seats and was divided equally between Christians and Muslims (with Druze counted as Muslims). In March 1991, parliament passed an amnesty law that pardoned all political crimes prior to its enactment. The amnesty was not extended to crimes perpetrated against foreign diplomats or certain crimes referred by the cabinet to the Higher Judicial Council. In May 1991, the militias (with the important exception of Hezbollah and Palestinian militias) were dissolved, and the Lebanese Armed Forces began to slowly rebuild itself as Lebanon's only major nonsectarian institution.

In all, it is estimated that more than 100,000 were killed, and another 100,000 left handicapped, during Lebanon's 16-year civil war. Up to one-fifth of the pre-war resident population, or about 900,000 people, were displaced from their homes, of which perhaps a quarter of a million emigrated permanently. The last of the Western hostages taken during the mid-1980s were released in May 1992.

Postwar Reconstruction—1992 to 2005

Postwar social and political instability, fueled by economic uncertainty and the collapse of the Lebanese currency, led to the resignation of Prime Minister Omar Karami in May 1992, after less than 2 years in office. Former Prime Minister Rashid al Sulh, who was widely viewed as a caretaker to oversee Lebanon's first parliamentary elections in 20 years, replaced him.

By early November 1992, a new parliament had been elected, and Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri had formed a cabinet, retaining for himself the finance portfolio. The formation of a government headed by a successful billionaire businessman was widely seen as a sign that Lebanon would make a priority of rebuilding the country and reviving the economy. Solidere, a private real estate company set up to rebuild downtown Beirut, was a symbol of Hariri's strategy to link economic recovery to private sector investment. After the election of then-commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces Emile Lahoud in 1998, following Hrawi's extended term as President, Salim al-Hoss again served as Prime Minister. Hariri returned to office as Prime Minister in November 2000. Although problems with basic infrastructure and government services persist, and Lebanon is now highly

indebted, much of the civil war damage was repaired throughout the country, and many foreign investors and tourists returned.

In early April 1996, Israel conducted a military operation dubbed "Grapes of Wrath" in response to Hezbollah's continued launching of rockets at villages in northern Israel. The 16-day operation caused hundreds of thousands of civilians in south Lebanon to flee their homes. On April 18, Hezbollah fired mortars at an Israeli military unit from a position near the UN compound at Qana, and the Israeli Army responded with artillery fire. Several Israeli shells struck the compound, killing 102 civilians sheltered there. In the "April Understanding" concluded on April 26, Israel and Hezbollah committed themselves to avoid targeting civilians and using populated areas to launch attacks. The Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group (ILMG), co-chaired by France and the United States, with Syria, Lebanon, and Israel all represented, was set up to implement the Understanding and assess reports of violations. ILMG ceased operations following the May 2000 Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon.

On May 23, 2000, the Israeli military carried out a total withdrawal of Israeli troops from the south and the Bekaa Valley, effectively ending 22 years of occupation. The SLA collapsed and about 6,000 SLA members and their families fled the country, although more than 3,000 had returned by November 2003. The military court tried all of the SLA operatives who remained in the country and the average sentence handed down was 1-year imprisonment.

On June 16, 2000, the UN Security Council adopted the report of the Secretary General verifying Israeli compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 425 (1978) and the withdrawal of Israeli troops to their side of the demarcated Lebanese-Israeli line of separation (the "Blue Line") mapped out by UN cartographers. (The international border between Lebanon and Israel is still to be determined in the framework of a peace agreement.) In August 2000, the Government of Lebanon deployed over 1,000 police and soldiers to the former security zone, but Hezbollah also maintained observation posts and conducted patrols along the Blue Line. While Lebanon and Syria initially agreed to respect the Blue Line, both since have registered objections and continue to argue that Israel has not fully withdrawn from Lebanese soil. As regional tension escalated with the Palestinian intifada in September 2000, Hezbollah cited Blue Line discrepancies when it reengaged Israel on October 7, taking three Israeli soldiers captive in an area known as Sheba'a Farms. (In 2001, the Israeli Government declared the three soldiers were believed to be dead.) Sheba'a Farms, a largely unpopulated area just south of the Blue Line opposite the Lebanese town of Sheba'a, was captured by Israel when it occupied Syria's Golan Heights in 1967. The Lebanese Government has repeatedly laid claim to the area since shortly before Israel's general withdrawal. Meanwhile, the Syrian Government has verbally stated that the Sheba'a Farms tract is Lebanese, but, as with the rest of the Lebanon-Syria border, has been unwilling to commit to a formal border demarcation in the area. As a result of secret mediation by the German Government, Israel released a number of Lebanese prisoners held by Israel in early 2004 in exchange for Elhanan Tannenbaum, an Israeli reservist abducted by Hezbollah in late 2000.

In January 2000 the government took action against Sunni Muslim extremists in the north who had attacked its soldiers, and it continues to act against groups such as Asbat al-Ansar, which has been linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, and other extremists. On January 24, 2002, Elie Hobeika, a former Lebanese Forces figure associated with the Sabra and Shatila massacres and who later served in three cabinets and the parliament, was assassinated in a car bombing in Beirut.

A September 2004 vote by the Chamber of Deputies to amend the constitution to extend President Lahoud's term in office by 3 years amplified the question of Lebanese sovereignty and the continuing Syrian presence. The vote was clearly taken under Syrian pressure, exercised in part through Syria's military intelligence service, whose chief in Lebanon had acted as a virtual proconsul for many years. Syria, which views Lebanon as part of its own territory, has not signed a boundary agreement with Lebanon and does not have normal diplomatic relations with Lebanon. The UN Security Council expressed its concern over the situation by passing Resolution 1559, also in September 2004, which called for withdrawal of all remaining foreign forces from Lebanon, disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces throughout the country, and a free and fair electoral process in the presidential election.

Syrian Withdrawal—2005

Former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, who had resisted Syria's effort to secure Lahoud's extension, and 19 others were assassinated in Beirut by a car bomb on February 14, 2005. The assassination spurred massive protests in Beirut and international pressure that led to the withdrawal of the remaining Syrian military troops from Lebanon on April 26. In the months that followed Hariri's assassination, journalist Samir Qassir, Lebanese politician George Hawi, and journalist Gebran Tueni were murdered by car bombs, and Defense Minister Elias Murr and journalist May Chidiac narrowly avoided a similar fate when they were targeted with car bombs. The UN International Independent Investigative Commission (UNIIIC) headed by Detlev Mehlis began an investigation of Hariri's assassination and related crimes, beginning with the October 2004 attempt to assassinate Communications Minister Marwan Hamadeh. Serge Brammertz took over the investigation at the beginning of 2006. In December 2006, the Lebanese Cabinet approved an agreement with the UN Security Council to create a Special Tribunal of international character which will be responsible for trying those who may

be indicted as a result of the investigation. President Lahoud, Parliament Speaker Berri, and the Shia ministers who resigned from Lebanon's cabinet in November 2006 do not recognize the cabinet's decision on this matter, however.

Parliamentary elections were held May 29-June 19, 2005 and the anti-Syrian opposition led by Sa'ad Hariri, Rafiq Hariri's son, won a majority of 72 seats (out of 128). Hariri ally and former Finance Minister Fouad Siniora was named Prime Minister and Nabih Berri was reelected as Speaker of Parliament. Parliament approved the first "made-in-Lebanon" cabinet in almost 30 years on July 30. The ministerial statement of the new cabinet (which included two Hezbollah ministers), a summary of the new government's agenda and priorities, focused on political and economic reform, but also endorsed Hezbollah's right to possess military weapons to carry out a "national resistance" against the perceived Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory.

Hezbollah forces continued to launch sporadic military strikes on Israeli forces, drawing responses that produced casualties on both sides and, on two occasions in 2001, Israeli air strikes on Syrian radar sites in Lebanon. Israel continues to violate Lebanese sovereignty by conducting overflights of Lebanese territory north of the Blue Line. UNIFIL has recorded numerous violations of the Blue Line by both sides since the Israeli withdrawal. In general, however, the level of violence along the Israeli-Lebanon front decreased dramatically from May 2000 until mid-2006.

War with Israel—2006

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah guerillas crossed into Israel, killed three Israeli soldiers, and kidnapped two others, precipitating a war with Israel. Israeli air strikes hit Hezbollah positions in the south and strategic targets throughout Lebanon, and Israeli ground forces ground forces moved against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah resisted the ground attack and fired thousands of rockets at civilian targets in Israel. By the time the war ended, on Aug. 14, an estimated 1200 Lebanese civilians and hundreds of Hezbollah fighters had died, along with 119 Israeli military and 43 Israeli civilians. UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the war, provided for a ceasefire, Israeli withdrawal and lifting of blockades, disarming of Hezbollah and other militias, and a ban on unauthorized weapons transfers into Lebanon. UNSCR 1701 also significantly strengthened UNIFIL's mandate and authorized its enlargement from about 2,000 initially up to a maximum of 15,000. Bolstered by UNIFIL, which by the beginning of 2007 had more than 11,000 personnel, the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed to southern Lebanon and the border with Israel for the first time in almost four decades. The war temporarily or permanently displaced roughly one-fourth of Lebanon's population, and caused enormous damage to homes, businesses, and infrastructure. The country, which was already seriously indebted, suffered roughly $5 billion in damages and financial losses. The international community provided massive humanitarian relief, plus substantial aid for economic reconstruction and reform, with $940 million in aid pledged at an August 31, 2006 donors conference in Stockholm and $7.6 billion in pledges announced at a Paris conference January 25, 2007. Aid pledged in Paris was to be coordinated with the Lebanese Government's program for fiscal and economic reform.

Although Syria withdrew its military forces from Lebanon, intelligence assets remained, and Syria continues to have a strong influence in Lebanese politics. In November 2006, as Siniora's cabinet neared approval of the Hariri tribunal, pro-Syrian ministers, including all the Shi'ite ministers, withdrew from the cabinet. Led by Hezbollah, pro-Syrian forces began months of massive demonstrations, sit-ins, and occasional violence with the aim of either paralyzing or bringing down the cabinet. Minister of Industry Pierre Gemayel, son of ex-president Amin Gemayel, was assassinated November 21.

GOVERNMENT

Lebanon is a parliamentary democracy in which the people constitutionally have the right to change their government. However, from the mid-1970s until the parliamentary elections in 1992, civil war precluded the effective exercise of political rights. According to the constitution, direct elections must be held for the parliament every 4 years. Parliament, in turn, is tasked to elect a new president every 6 years. A presidential election scheduled for the autumn of 2004 was pre-empted by a parliamentary vote to extend the sitting President's term in office by 3 years. The president and parliament choose the prime minister. Political parties may be formed. However, the political parties that do exist are weak and mostly based on sectarian interests.

Since the emergence of the post-1943 state, national policy has been determined largely by a relatively restricted group of traditional regional and sectarian leaders. The 1943 national pact, an unwritten agreement that established the political foundations of modern Lebanon, allocated political power on an essentially confessional system based on the 1932 census. Until 1990, seats in parliament were divided on a 6-to-5 ratio of Christians to Muslims (with Druze counted as Muslims). With the Ta'if Agreement, the ratio changed to half and half. Positions in the government bureaucracy are allocated on a similar basis. Indeed, gaining political office is virtually impossible without the firm backing of a particular religious or confessional group. The pact also allocated public offices along religious lines, with the top three positions in the ruling "troika" distributed as follows:

- The presidency is reserved for a Maronite Christian;
- The prime minister, a Sunni Muslim; and
- The speaker of parliament, a Shi'a Muslim.

Efforts to alter or abolish the confessional system of allocating power have been at the center of Lebanese politics for decades. Those religious groups most favored by the 1943 formula sought to preserve it, while those who saw themselves at a disadvantage sought either to revise it after updating key demographic data or to abolish it entirely. Nonetheless, many of the provisions of the national pact were codified in the 1989 Ta'if Agreement, perpetuating sectarianism as a key element of Lebanese political life.

Although moderated somewhat under Ta'if, constitutionally, the president has a strong and influential position. The president has the authority to promulgate laws passed by the Chamber of Deputies, to issue supplementary regulations to ensure the execution of laws, and to negotiate and ratify treaties. The Chamber of Deputies is elected by adult suffrage (majority age is 21) based on a system of proportional representation for the various confessional groups. Political blocs are usually based on confessional and local interests or on personal/family allegiance rather than on left/right policy orientations. The parliament traditionally has played a significant role in financial affairs, since it has the responsibility for levying taxes and passing the budget. It also exercises political control over the cabinet through formal questioning of ministers on policy issues and by requesting a confidence debate. Lebanon's judicial system is based on the Napoleonic Code. Juries are not used in trials. The Lebanese court system has three levels—courts of first instance, courts of appeal, and the court of cassation. There also is a system of religious courts having jurisdiction over personal status matters within particular religious communities, e.g., rules on such matters as marriage, divorce, and inheritance.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Michel SULAYMAN**
Prime Min.: **Fuad SINIORA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Issam ABU JAMRA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Elie SKAFF**
Min. of Culture: **Tammam SALAM**
Min. of Defense: **Elias MURR**
Min. of Displaced People: **Raymond AUDI**
Min. of Economy & Trade: **Muhammad SAFADI**
Min. of Education: **Bahia HARIRI**
Min. of Energy & Water: **Alain TABOURIAN**
Min. of Environment: **Antoine KARAM**
Min. of Finance: **Mohammed CHATTAH**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Emigrants: **Fawzi SALLOUKH**
Min. of Health: **Muhammad Jawad KHALIFA**
Min. of Industry: **Ghazi ZOAYTER**
Min. of Information: **Tarek MITRI**
Min. of Interior: **Ziad BAROUD**
Min. of Justice: **Ibrahim NAJJAR**
Min. of Labor: **Muhammed FNEISH**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Mario AWN**
Min. of Telecommunications: **Gibran BASSIL**
Min. of Tourism: **Elie MAROUNI**
Min. of Transport & Public Works: **Ghazi ARIDI**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Talal ARSLAN**
Min. of State for Administrative Reform: **Ibrahim SHAMSEDDINE**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Wael ABU FAOUR**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Nassib LAHOUD**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Jean OGASSAPIAN**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Khalid QABBANI**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Ali QANSO**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Youssef TAQLA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Riad SALAMEH**
Ambassador to the US: **Antoine CHEDID**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Nawaf SALAM**

Lebanon maintains an embassy in the United States at 2560 28th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008, tel. (202) 939-6300. There also are three consulates general in the United States: 1959 East Jefferson, Suite 4A, Detroit, MI 48207, tel. (313) 567-0233/0234; 7060 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 510, Los Angeles, CA 90028, tel. (213) 467-1253/1254; and 9 East 76th Street, New York, N.Y. l0021, tel. (212) 744-7905/7906 and 744-7985.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Lebanese political institutions often play a secondary role to highly confessionalized personality-based politics. Powerful families also still play an independent role in mobilizing votes for both local and parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, a lively panoply of domestic political parties, some even predating independence, still exists. The largest are all confessional based. The Kataeb (Phalange), National Bloc, National Liberal Party, Lebanese Forces and Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) are overwhelmingly Christian parties. Amal and Hizballah are the main rivals for the organized Shi'a vote, and the PSP (Progressive Socialist Party) is the leading Druze party. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, an anti-Syrian opposition coalition ("March 14") emerged, led by Sa'ad Hariri's predominantly Sunni Future Movement and allied with Druze leader Jumblatt, the Qornet Shehwan coalition of center-right Christian politicians, Samir Geagea's mostly Maronite Lebanese Forces, and Elias Attallah's Democratic Left secular movement. In addition to domestic parties, there are branches of pan-Arab secular parties (Ba'ath, socialist and communist parties) that were active in the 1960s and throughout the period of civil war.

There are differences both between and among Muslim and Christian parties regarding the role of religion in state affairs. There is a very high degree of political activism among religious leaders across the sectarian spectrum. The interplay for position and power among the religious, political, and party leaders and groups produces a political tapestry of extraordinary complexity.

In the past, the system worked to produce a viable democracy. The civil war resulted in greater segregation across the confessional spectrum. Whether in political parties, places of residence, schools, media outlets, even workplaces, there is a lack of regular interaction across sectarian

lines to facilitate the exchange of views and promote understanding. Some Christians favor political and administrative decentralization of the government, with separate Muslim and Christian sectors operating within the framework of a confederation. Muslims, for the most part, prefer a unified, central government with an enhanced share of power commensurate with their larger share of the population. The trajectory of the Ta'if Agreement points towards a non-confessional system, but there has been no real movement in this direction in the decade and a half since Ta'if.

Palestinian refugees, predominantly Sunni Muslims, who numbered 405,525 in 2006 according to UNWRA, are not active on the domestic political scene. Nonetheless, they constitute an important minority whose naturalization/settlement in Lebanon is vigorously opposed by most Lebanese, who see them as a threat to Lebanon's delicate confessional balance. During 2002, parliament enacted legislation banning Palestinians from owning property in Lebanon. The Labor Ministry opened up professions previously closed to Palestinians in June 2005. The number of Iraqi refugees is approximately 50,000 and is believed to have stabilized as of 2008.

ECONOMY

Lebanon has a free-market economy and a strong laissez-faire commercial tradition. The Lebanese economy is service-oriented; main growth sectors include banking and tourism. According to the Lebanese Ministry of Economy and Trade, Lebanon posted 5% real growth in 2004, with inflation running at 3%. There are no restrictions on foreign exchange or capital movement, and bank secrecy is strictly enforced. Lebanon has adopted a law to combat money laundering. There are practically no restrictions on foreign investment; however, the investment climate suffers from red tape, corruption, arbitrary licensing decisions, high taxes, tariffs, and fees, archaic legislation, and a lack of adequate protection of intellectual property. There are no country-specific U.S. trade sanctions against Lebanon. Lebanon embarked on a massive reconstruction program in 1992 to rebuild the country's physical and social infrastructure devastated by both the long civil war (1975-90) and the Israeli occupation of the south (1978-2000). In addition, the delicate social balance and the near-dissolution of central government institutions during the civil war handicapped the state as it sought to capture revenues to fund the recovery effort. Monetary stabilization coupled with high interest rate policies aggravated the debt service burden, leading to a substantial rise in budget deficits. Thus, the government accumulated significant debt, which by 2005 had reached $36 billion, or 185% of GDP. Unemployment is estimated at 18% officially, but in the absence of reliable statistics, some estimate it could be as high as 20-25%.

The government also has maintained a firm commitment to the Lebanese pound, which has been pegged to the dollar since September 1999. The government passed an Investment Development Law as well as laws for the privatization of the telecom and the electricity sector, signed the Euro-Med Partnership Agreement with the European Union (EU) in March 2003, and is working toward accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). In order to increase revenues, the government introduced a 10% value added tax (VAT) that became applicable in February 2002 and a 5% tax that became applicable in February 2003.

Plagued by mounting indebtedness, Lebanon submitted a comprehensive program on its financing needs at the Paris II donors conference in November 2002 and succeeded in attracting pledges totaling $4.4 billion, including $3.1 billion to support fiscal adjustment and $1.2 billion to support economic development projects. Despite the substantial aid it had received, the government made little progress on its reform program, and by 2006, even before the war, the debt problem had grown worse. After the war, $940 million in relief and early reconstruction aid was pledged to Lebanon August 31, 2006 at a donors conference in Stockholm, and an additional $7.6 billion in assistance for reconstruction and economic stabilization was pledged January 25, 2007 at the International Conference for Support to Lebanon, "Paris III". Unlike the Paris II aid, much of the Paris III aid was to be contingent on Lebanon's meeting agreed benchmarks in implementing its proposed five-year economic and social reform program. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to initiate a Post-Conflict Program and to assign a team to Lebanon to provide technical assistance, to monitor the progress of reforms, and to advise donors on the timing of aid delivery.

The U.S. enjoys a strong exporter position with Lebanon, generally ranking as Lebanon's fifth-largest source of imported goods. More than 160 offices representing U.S. businesses currently operate in Lebanon. Since the lifting of the passport restriction in 1997 (see below), a number of large U.S. companies have opened branch or regional offices, including Microsoft, American Airlines, Coca-Cola, FedEx, UPS, General Electric, Parsons Brinkerhoff, Cisco, Eli Lilly, and Pepsi Cola.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The foreign policy of Lebanon reflects its geographic location, the composition of its population, and its reliance on commerce and trade. Lebanon's foreign policy has been heavily influenced by neighboring Syria, which has also long influenced Lebanon's internal policies as well. Reflecting lingering feelings in Syria that Lebanon was unjustly separated from Syria by European powers, Syria and Lebanon have never formally agreed on their mutual boundaries, and, rather than having normal diplomatic relations, the two countries are linked by a Higher Council for Bilateral Relations. Syria has no embassy or equivalent office in Beirut, while Lebanon has an "Interest Office" in Damascus. The framework for relations was first codified in May 1991,

when Lebanon and Syria signed a treaty of mutual cooperation. This treaty came out of the Ta'if Agreement, which stipulated "Lebanon is linked to Syria by distinctive ties deriving strength from kinship, history, and common interests." The Lebanese-Syria treaty calls for "coordination and cooperation between the two countries" that would serve the "interests of the two countries within the framework of sovereignty and independence of each." Numerous agreements on political, economic, security, and judicial affairs have followed over the years. Syria maintained troops in Lebanon from 1976 until 2005; however, even after the withdrawal of Syria's military troops, it is believed to have maintained intelligence assets in Lebanon. In any case, Syrian influence in Lebanese politics remains strong.

Lebanon, like most Arab states, does not recognize Israel, with which it has been technically at war since Israel's establishment. Lebanon participated in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and despite the 1948 Lebanon-Israel armistice, Lebanon's lack of control over the border region resulted in repeated border hostilities, initiated mainly by Palestinian exile groups from 1968 to 1982 and later by Hizballah. These attacks led to Israeli counterattacks, including a 1978 invasion, a 1982 invasion and occupation which ended in 2000, and the 2006 war. Lebanon did not participate in the 1967 or 1973 Arab-Israeli wars, nor in the 1991 Gulf War. The success of the latter created new opportunities for Middle East peacemaking. In October 1991, under the sponsorship of the United States and the then-Soviet Union, Middle East peace talks were held in Madrid, Spain, where Israel and a majority of its Arab neighbors conducted direct bilateral negotiations to seek a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 (and 425 on Lebanon) and the concept of "land for peace." Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and representatives of the Palestinians continued negotiating until the Oslo interim peace accords were concluded between Israel and the Palestinians in September 1993 and Jordan and Israel signed an agreement in October 1994. In March 1996, Syria and Israel held another round of Madrid talks; the Lebanon track did not convene. Lebanon has repeatedly called for a solution of the Israeli-Palestinian problem as a prerequisite to peace with Israel.

Lebanon concluded negotiations on an association agreement with the European Union in late 2001, and both sides initialed the accord in January 2002. Lebanon also has bilateral trade agreements with several Arab states and is working toward accession to the World Trade Organization. Aside from Syria, Lebanon enjoys good relations with virtually all of the other Arab countries (despite historic tensions with Libya, the Palestinians, and Iraq), and hosted an Arab League Summit in March 2002 for the first time in more than 35 years. Lebanon also is a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference and maintains a close relationship with Iran, largely centered on Shi'a Muslim links. Lebanon is a member of the Francophone countries and hosted the Francophone Summit in October 2002.

U.S.-LEBANESE RELATIONS

The United States seeks to maintain its traditionally close ties with Lebanon, and to help preserve its independence, sovereignty, national unity, and territorial integrity. The United States, along with the international community, supports full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559, including the disarming of all militias and the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces throughout Lebanon. The United States believes that a peaceful, prosperous, and stable Lebanon can make an important contribution to comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

One measure of U.S. concern and involvement has been a program of relief, rehabilitation, and recovery that from 1975 through 2005 totaled more than $400 million in aid to Lebanon. For relief, recovery, rebuilding, and security in the wake of the 2006 war, the U.S. Government substantially stepped up this program, pledging well over $1 billion in additional assistance for the 2006 and 2007 fiscal years. This support reflects not only humanitarian concerns and historical ties but also the importance the United States attaches to sustainable development and the restoration of an independent, sovereign, unified Lebanon. Some of current funding is used to support the activities of U.S. and Lebanese private voluntary organizations engaged in rural and municipal development programs nationwide, improve the economic climate for global trade and investment, and enhance security and resettlement in south Lebanon. The U.S. also supports humanitarian demining and victims' assistance programs.

Over the years, the United States also has assisted the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese American University (LAU) with budget support and student scholarships. Assistance also has been provided to the Lebanese-American Community School (ACS) and the International College (IC).

1993, the U.S. resumed the International Military Education and Training program in Lebanon to help bolster the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)—the country's only nonsectarian national institution—and reinforce the importance of civilian control of the military. Sales of excess defense articles (EDA) resumed in 1991 and have allowed the LAF to enhance both its transportation and communications capabilities, which were severely degraded during the civil war. Security assistance to both the LAF and the Internal Security Forces (ISF) increased significantly after the 2006 war, in order to support the democratically elected Government of Lebanon as it carries out the requirements of UNSCR 1701 and asserts its sovereignty over the whole of Lebanese territory.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BEIRUT (E) P.O.Box70-840 Antelias-Beirut, 961-4-542600/543600, Fax 961-4-544604, INMARSAT Tel Primary:873-683-825 unsecure: 873-683-131-826 secure/alternate 761-258-233, Workweek: Monday-Friday/0800-1630, Website: http://lebanon.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Mary Metzger
AMB OMS:	Kam T. Wong
DPO/PAO:	Cherie Lenzen
FM:	Julian Glynn Brown
MGT:	Michelle M. Esperdy
PO/CON:	Kirk Smith
POL/ECO:	Penelope Wilkinson
AMB:	Michele J. Sison
CON:	Kirk Smith
DCM:	William Grant
PAO:	Cherie Lenzen
COM:	Penelope Wilkinson
GSO:	Calvin E. Dubose
RSO:	Thomas Depenbrock
AID:	Raouf Youssef
CLO:	Mary Knight
DAO:	Ltc. David Alley
DEA:	Tom Varvitsiotis
ICASS Chair:	Raouf Youssef
IMO:	Joseph Rinella
ISO:	Michael Pitts
ISSO:	Teri Pitts
LEGATT:	Khalil Nammour
MLO:	Ltc. Andrew Leinberger
POL:	Susanne Rose

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 27, 2007

Country Description: The Republic of Lebanon is a parliamentary republic. Political power is concentrated in the office of the President, Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament, each representing one of Lebanon's three largest religious sects (Maronite Christians, Sunni and Shi'a Muslims). Since 1973, Lebanon has been in a state of war with Israel.

Entry Requirements: Passports and visas are required. American citizens coming to Lebanon for tourism can purchase a short-term visa at the border. Travelers holding passports that contain visas or entry/exit stamps for Israel will likely be refused entry into Lebanon. Travelers whose passports contain Israeli stamps or visas and who also hold an "Arab nationality" may be subject to arrest and imprisonment. Travelers who have overstayed their entry visa validity in Lebanon have to adjust their status with the Central Department of Surete General (Department of Passport and Immigration) prior to their departure.

Further information on entry/exit requirements can be obtained from the Embassy of Lebanon, 2560 28th Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 939-6300. Travelers may also contact one of the following Lebanese Consulates General:

1959 E. Jefferson, Suite 4A
Detroit, MI 48207
(313) 567-0233

2400 Augusta, Suite 308
Houston, TX 77057
(713) 268-1640

7060 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 510
Los Angeles, CA 90028
(323) 467-1253

6600 S.W. 57th Avenue, Suite 200
Miami, FL 33143
(305) 665-3004

(Honorary Consul, for Florida residents only)
9 E. 76th Street
New York, NY 10021
(212) 744-7905

Safety and Security: A Department of State Travel Warning advises U.S. citizens against travel to Lebanon. Recent events underscore the need for caution and sound personal security precautions. U.S. citizens who are in Lebanon despite this Travel Warning should exercise particular caution when traveling in parts of the southern suburbs of Beirut, portions of the Bekaa Valley and areas south of the Litani River in South Lebanon. Hizballah maintains a strong presence in many of these areas, and there is the potential for action by other extremist groups. The situation remains tense and a resumption of sporadic violence remains a possibility. On May 7, 2008, Hizballah militants blocked the road to Rafiq Hariri International Airport. The action rendered the airport inaccessible and travelers were unable to enter or leave the country via commercial air carriers. Armed Hizballah and other opposition members proceeded to enter areas of Lebanon not traditionally under their control resulting in heavy fighting and a number of casualties. While there is now full access to the airport, widespread hostilities have subsided, and the government of Lebanon has successfully elected a president and formed a cabinet, the United States remains concerned about Hizballah's willingness to use violence to achieve political ends with little or no warning. Since the May hostilities there have been violent outbreaks in Tripoli that left over ten dead and dozens wounded.

Americans have been the targets of numerous terrorist attacks in Lebanon in the past. The perpetrators of many of these attacks are still present and retain the ability to act. On January 15, 2008, a U.S. Embassy vehicle was involved in a bomb attack that killed three Lebanese bystanders. American citizens should thus keep a low profile, varying times and routes for all required travel. Americans should also pay close attention to their personal security at locations where Westerners are generally known to congregate, and should avoid demonstrations and large gatherings. Unofficial travel to Lebanon by U.S. Government employees and their family members requires prior approval by the Department of State.

Palestinian groups hostile to both the Lebanese government and the U.S. operate largely autonomously inside refugee camps in different areas of the country. Intra-communal violence within the camps has resulted in violent incidents such as shootings and explosions.

Travel by U.S. citizens to Palestinian camps should be avoided. Asbat al-Ansar, a terrorist group with apparent links to Al-Qaida, has targeted Lebanese, U.S. and other foreign government interests. It has been out-

lawed by the Lebanese government but continues to maintain a presence in Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp.

Americans traveling to Lebanon should also be aware that personnel from the U.S. Embassy are not able to travel in all areas of Lebanon. In the case of an emergency involving a U.S. citizen in areas where it is unsafe for Embassy personnel to travel, the Embassy may not be able to render assistance.

In addition, dangers posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance throughout south Lebanon are significant and also exist in other areas where civil war fighting was intense.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The crime rate in Lebanon is moderate, but both car theft and home break-ins occur. Violent crime and sexual assault are rare, although petty theft—such as pick pocketing and purse snatching—is common in crowded public areas. Police are responsive but often unable to effect a positive outcome.

There are no special concerns with regard to targeted victimization of Americans or to scams or confidence schemes. There have, however, been recent kidnappings of Lebanese-American women by their Lebanese relatives in an effort to force these women into marriage.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Lebanon is 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: In Beirut and the surrounding areas, modern medical care and medicines are widely available. Such facilities are not always available in outlying areas, although no location in the country is more than three hours from the capital. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for services and without such payment, may deny service even in emergency cases. A list of doctors who speak English and a list of hospitals are available from the U.S. Embassy and at the Embassy's web site: http://lebanon.usembassy.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Lebanon.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Lebanon is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Drivers in Lebanon often maneuver aggressively and pay little regard to traffic lights and stop signs. Lanes are generally unmarked and roads outside of the capital may be poorly lit. Pedestrians, especially, should exercise great caution. Inter-city directional signs are improving throughout the country, but side roads are often not signposted at all. Public transportation is generally safe.

Emergency services in Lebanon are adequate. In case of a road accident, emergency numbers are "140" for the Red Cross and "125" for the emergency civil police.

Visit the web site of Lebanon's national tourist office at http://www.Lebanon-tourism.gov.lb.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Lebanon, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Lebanon's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

Special Circumstances: In addition to being subject to general Lebanese law, U.S. citizens who also possess Lebanese nationality may be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on them as Lebanese citizens. Lebanese citizens who are discovered to have associated with or traveled through Israel, for example, are subject to arrest and detention.

Military Service: Mandatory military service in Lebanon was abolished on February 4, 2007. However, travelers with questions about prior military service, desertion, or failure to register in the past should contact the Military Office of the Embassy of Lebanon, 2560 28th Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, call (202) 265-2335 or fax (202) 667-0063 for details prior to traveling to Lebanon. Information about military service can also be found at the Lebanese government web site: www.lebarmy.gov.lb. Lebanese Customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning import and export of such items as firearms or antiquities. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Lebanon in Washington, D.C., or one of Lebanon's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Lebanese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Lebanon are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Lebanon are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Lebanon. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Beirut. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Awkar, near Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon. Public access hours for American citizens are Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 am for regular consular services. Consular Report of Birth Abroad are handled Wednesdays only from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The telephone numbers are (961-4) 542-600, 543-600, and fax 544-209, and American citizens who require emergency services outside of these hours may contact the Embassy by telephone at any time. American citizens registering at the embassy can receive updated information and warden messages via e-mail by subscribing to join-wardenmessagebeirut@mh.databack.com. Information on consular services and registration can be found at http://lebanon.usembassy.gov or by phone at the above telephone numbers between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday local time.

Travel Warning

September 10, 2008

This Travel Warning updates information on security threats and ongoing political violence in Lebanon and informs U.S. citizens of current safety and security concerns. The Department of State continues to urge that Americans avoid all travel to Lebanon. Americans who live and work in Lebanon presently should understand that they are accepting risks in remaining and should carefully consider those risks, especially those in Tripoli. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Lebanon issued on May 30, 2008. Recent clashes in the northern city of Tripoli have resulted in more than twenty deaths and numerous injuries. Additionally, a bomb exploded next to a city bus in Tripoli on August 13, 2008 and killed fourteen people. The U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens against all travel to Lebanon, and recommends that U.S. citizens presently in Lebanon consider the risks of remaining, particularly in Tripoli in light of recent incidents there.

On May 7, 2008, Hizballah militants blocked the road to Rafiq Hariri International Airport. The action rendered the airport inaccessible and travelers were unable to enter or leave the country via commercial air carriers. Armed Hizballah and other opposition members proceeded to enter areas of Lebanon not traditionally under their control resulting in heavy fighting and a number of casualties. While there is now full access to the airport and widespread hostilities have subsided, the United States is concerned about Hizballah's willingness to use violence to achieve political ends with little or no warning.

The threat of anti-Western terrorist activity exists in Lebanon; groups such as Al-Qaeda and Jund al-Sham are present in the country and have issued statements calling for attacks against Western interests in the past.

U.S. citizens traveling to Lebanon or resident in Lebanon should be aware that the U.S. Embassy has limited ability to reach all areas of Lebanon. The Embassy cannot guarantee that Embassy employees can render assistance to U.S. citizens in all areas of the country. Furthermore, in the event that the security climate in the country worsens, American citizens should be aware that they will bear the responsibility of arranging their own travel out of Lebanon. American citizens with special medical or other needs should be aware of the risks of remaining given their condition and be prepared to be treated in Lebanon if they cannot arrange for travel out of the country.

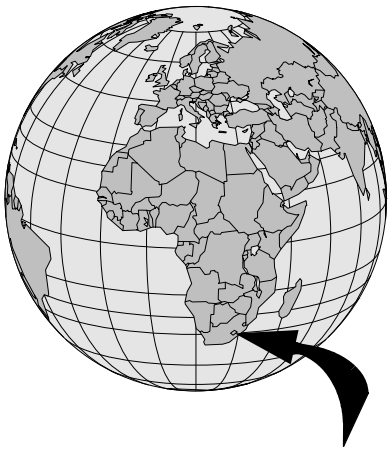
U.S. Government-facilitated evacuations such as took place in 2006 occur only when no safe commercial alternatives exist. Evacuation would be provided on a cost-recovery basis, which means the traveler must reimburse the U.S. government for the cost of the travel. The lack of valid travel documents (U.S. passport or U.S. visa, as appropriate) will slow the U.S. Embassy's ability to provide assistance. Further information on the department's role during emergencies is provided at http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance continually pose significant dangers throughout southern Lebanon, particularly south of the Litani River, as well as in areas of the country where civil war fighting was intense. More than a dozen civilians have been killed and over 100 injured by unexploded ordnance following the armed conflict in July-August 2006. Travelers should watch for posted landmine warnings and strictly avoid all areas where landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present.

The Department of State considers the threat to U.S. government personnel in Beirut sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under strict security restrictions. These practices limit, and may occasionally prevent, access by U.S. Embassy officials to certain areas of the country. Unofficial travel to Lebanon by U.S. government employees and their family members requires prior approval by the Department of State.

The Embassy is located in Awkar, near Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon. Public access hours for American citizens are Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; however, American citizens who require emergency services outside of these hours may contact the embassy by telephone at any time. The telephone numbers are (961-4) 542-600, 543-600, and fax 544-209. American citizens may register with the embassy online by visiting https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs. Americans are strongly encouraged to update their registration information if it is no longer current. Information on consular services and registration can also be found at http://lebanon.usembassy.gov or by phone at the above telephone numbers between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday local time.

Updated information on travel and security in Lebanon may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. Additional details can be found in the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Lebanon, and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Department's Internet website at http://travel.state.gov.



LESOTHO

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Lesotho

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 30,355 sq. km. (11,718 sq. mi.), about the size of Maryland.

Cities: Capital—Maseru (173,700). Other cities—Teyateyaneng (22,800), Leribe (35,000), Mafeteng (32,900), Mohale's Hoek (18,400).

Terrain: High veld, plateau and mountains.

Climate: Temperate; summers hot, winters cool to cold; humidity generally low and evenings cool year round. Rainy season in summer, winters dry. Southern hemisphere seasons are reversed.

People

Nationality: Noun—Mosotho (sing.); Basotho (pl.). Adjective—Basotho.

Population: (2007 est.) 1.88 million.

Annual growth rate: (2004 est.) 1.4%. (Note: the population growth rate is depressed by an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate estimated to be at approximately 23.2%.)

Ethnic groups: Basotho 99.7%; Europeans, Asians, and other 0.3%.

Religions: 80% Christian, including Roman Catholic (majority), Lesotho Evangelical, Anglican, other denominations; other religions include Islam, Hindu, indigenous.

Languages: Official—Sesotho and English. Others—Zulu, Xhosa.

Education: Years compulsory—None. Literacy (2003 est.)—84.8%. Lesotho has free primary education (grades 1-7).

Health: Infant mortality rate (2004 est.)—85.22/1,000. Life expectancy (2004 est.)—36.81 years.

Work force: (2001 est.) 704,000.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Constitution: April 2, 1993.

Independence: October 4, 1966.

Government branches: Executive—monarch is head of state; prime minister is head of government and cabinet. Legislative—Bicameral parliament consists of elected Assembly and non-elected Senate. Judicial—High Court, Court of Appeals, Magistrate's Court, traditional and customary courts.

Political subdivisions: 10 districts.

Political parties: Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), All Basotho Congress (ABC), Basotho National Party (BNP), Lesotho Peoples Congress (LPC), National Independent Party (NIP), Basutoland African Congress (BAC), Basutoland Congress Party (BCP), Lesotho Workers Party (LWP), Popular Front for Democracy (PFD), Marematlou Freedom Party (MFP), Christian Democratic Party (CDP), Kopanang Basotho Party (KBP), National Progressive Party (NPP), New Lesotho's Freedom Party (NLFP), Sefate Democratic Union (SDU), Social Democratic Party (SDP), United Party (UP).

Suffrage: 18 years of age.

Budget: (FY 2003-2004 est.) Revenues—$560 million. Expenditures—$599 million.

Economy

GDP: (2003) $1.43 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 7.2%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $850.

Average inflation rate: (2008) 12%.

Natural resources: Water, agricultural and grazing land, some diamonds and other minerals. Lesotho is an exporter of excess labor.

Agriculture: (2007 est.) 17% of GDP. Products—corn, wheat, sorghum, barley, peas, beans, asparagus, wool, mohair, livestock. Arable land—11%.

Industry: (2007 est.) 47% of GDP. Types—apparel, food, beverages, handicrafts, construction, tourism.

Trade: (2007) Exports—Exports—$437 million; clothing, furniture, footwear and wool. Partners—South Africa, United States, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, EU. Imports—$661 million; corn, clothing, building materials, vehicles, machinery, medicines, petroleum products. Partners—South Africa, Asia, EU.

Fiscal year: 1 April–31 March.

Economic aid received: (2007) $350 million. Primary donors—U.S., World Bank, IMF, EU, UN, U.K., and Ireland.

PEOPLE

More than 99% of Lesotho's population is ethnically Basotho; other ethnic groups include Europeans and Asians. The country's population is 80% Christian, the majority of whom are Roman Catholic. Other religions are Islam, Hindu, and indigenous beliefs. Sesotho and English are official languages, and other languages spoken include Zulu and Xhosa.

HISTORY

Lesotho gained independence from Britain on October 4, 1966. In January 1970 the ruling Basotho National Party (BNP) appeared set to lose the first post-independence general elections when Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan annulled the election. He refused to cede power to the Basotho Congress Party (BCP) and imprisoned its leadership.

The BNP ruled by decree until January 1986 when a military coup forced them out of office. The Military Council that came into power granted executive powers to King Moshoeshoe II, who was until then a ceremonial monarch. In 1990, however, the King was forced into exile after a falling out with the army. His son was installed as King Letsie III.

The chairman of the military junta, Major General Metsing Lekhanya, was ousted in 1991 and then replaced by Major General Phisoane Ramaema, who handed over power to a democratically elected government of the BCP in 1993. Moshoeshoe II returned from exile in 1992 as an ordinary citizen. After the return to democratic government, King Letsie III tried unsuccessfully to persuade the BCP government to reinstate his father (Moshoeshoe II) as head of state. In August 1994, Letsie III staged a coup which was backed by the military and deposed the BCP government. The new government did not receive full international recognition. Member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) engaged in negotiations aimed at the reinstatement of the BCP government. One of the conditions put forward by the King for the return of the BCP government was that his father should be re-installed as head of state. After protracted negotiations, the BCP government was reinstated and the King abdicated in favor of his father in 1995, but Moshoeshoe II died in a car accident in 1996 and was again succeeded by his son, Letsie III. The ruling BCP split over leadership disputes in 1997.

Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle formed a new party, the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD), and was followed by a majority of Members of Parliament, which enabled him to form a new government. The LCD won the general elections in 1998 under the leadership of Pakalitha Mosisili, who had succeeded Mokhehle as party leader. Despite the elections being pronounced free and fair by local and international observers and a subsequent special commission appointed by SADC, the opposition political parties rejected the results.

Opposition protests in the country intensified, culminating in a violent demonstration outside the royal palace in August 1998. When junior members of the armed services mutinied in September, the government requested a SADC task force to intervene to prevent a coup and restore stability. A military group of South African and Botswana troops entered the country in September, put down the mutiny, and withdrew in May 1999. Looting, casualties, and widespread destruction of property followed.

An Interim Political Authority (IPA), charged with reviewing the electoral structure in the country, was created in December 1998. The IPA devised a proportional electoral system to ensure that there would be opposition in the National Assembly. The new system retained the existing 80 elected Assembly seats, but added 40 seats to be filled on a proportional basis. Elections were held under this new system in May 2002, and the LCD won again. For the first time, due to the inclusion of proportional seats, opposition political parties won significant numbers of seats. Elections were held again in February 2007. Nine opposition parties hold all 40 of the proportional seats, with the National Independent Party (NIP) having the largest share (21). The LCD has 61 of the 80 constituency-based seats, and All Basotho Congress (ABC) holds 17.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Lesotho Government is a constitutional monarchy. The Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, is head of government and has executive authority. The King serves a largely ceremonial function; he no longer possesses any executive authority and is proscribed from actively participating in political initiatives.

The Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) controls a majority in the National Assembly (the lower house of parliament), with All Basotho Congress (ABC), the National Independent Party, and the Lesotho Workers Party among the 9 opposition parties represented. The upper house of parliament, called the Senate, is composed of 22 principal chiefs whose membership is hereditary, and 11 appointees of the King, acting on the advice of the prime minister.

The constitution provides for an independent judicial system. The judiciary is made up of the Court of Appeal, the High Court, Magistrate's Courts, and traditional courts that exist predominately in rural areas. All but one of the Justices on the Court of Appeal are South African jurists. There is no trial by jury; rather, judges make rulings alone, or, in the case of criminal trials, with two other judges as observers. The constitution also protects basic civil liberties, including freedom of speech,

association, and the press; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of religion. For administrative purposes, Lesotho is divided into 10 districts, each headed by a district administrator. Lesotho held its first post-independence local government elections on April 30, 2005 using a quota system that reserved one-third of electoral divisions for women candidates. In these elections, 53% of the victorious candidates were women. Locally elected officials attended post-election training while regulations for local governance were drawn up by the National Assembly and infrastructure was created.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **LETSIE III**
Prime Min.: **Pakalitha Bethuel MOSISILI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Archibald Lesao LEHOHLA**
Min. of Agriculture & Food Security: **Lesole MOKOMA**
Min. of Communications, Science, & Technology: **Mothetjoa METSING**
Min. of Defense & National Security: **Pakalitha Bethuel MOSISILI**
Min. of Education & Training: **Mamphono KHAKETLA**
Min. of Employment & Labor: **Refiloe MASEMENE**
Min. of Finance & Development Planning: **Timothy THAHANE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Mohlabi Kenneth TSEKOA**
Min. of Forestry & Land Reclamation: **Lincoln Ralechate MOKOSE**
Min. of Gender, Youth, Sports, & Recreation: **Mathabiso LEPONO**
Min. of Health & Social Welfare: **Mphu RAMATLAPENG**
Min. of Home Affairs, Public Safety, & Parliamentary Affairs: **Archibald Lesao LEHOHLA**
Min. of Justice, Human Rights, Correctional Services, Law, & Constitutional Affairs: **Mpeo Mahase MOILOA**
Min. of Local Government & Chieftainship: **Pontso Matumelo SEKATLE**
Min. of Natural Resources: **Monyane MOLELKI**
Min. in the Prime Minister's Office: **Motloheloa PHOOKO**
Min. of Public Service: **Semano SEKATLE**



Min. of Public Works & Transport: **Tsele CHAKELA**
Min. of Tourism, Environment, & Culture: **Lebohang NTSINYI**
Min. of Trade & Industry, Cooperatives & Marketing: **Popane LEBESA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Moeketsi SENAOANA**
Ambassador to the US: **David Mohlomi RANTEKO**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Lebohang Fine MAEMA**

Lesotho maintains an embassy in the United States at 2511 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-797-5533). Lesotho's mission to the United Nations is located at 204 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016 (tel: 212-661-1690).

ECONOMY

Lesotho's economy is based on water and electricity sold to South Africa, manufacturing, earnings from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), agriculture, livestock, and to some extent earnings of laborers employed in South Africa. Lesotho also exports diamonds, wool, and mohair. Lesotho is geographically surrounded by South Africa and economically integrated with it as well. The majority of households subsist on farming or migrant labor, primarily miners in South Africa for 3 to 9 months. The western lowlands form the main agricultural zone. Almost

50% of the population earns some income through crop cultivation or animal husbandry, with over half the country's income coming from the agricultural sector.

Water is Lesotho's only significant natural resource. It is being exploited through the 30-year, multi-billion-dollar Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP), which was initiated in 1986. The LHWP is designed to capture, store, and transfer water from the Orange River system and send it to South Africa's Free State and greater Johannesburg area, which features a large concentration of South African industry, population, and agriculture. Completion of the first phase of the project has made Lesotho almost completely self-sufficient in the production of electricity and generated approximately $24 million annually from the sale of electricity and water to South Africa. The World Bank, African Development Bank, European Investment Bank, and many other bilateral donors financed the project. Lesotho has taken advantage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to become the largest exporter of garments to the U.S. from sub-Saharan Africa. Exports totaled $437 million in 2007. Employment reached 40,000. Asian investors own most factories.

Lesotho has received economic aid from a variety of sources, including the United States, the World Bank, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Germany, and the People's Republic of China.

Lesotho has nearly 6,000 kilometers of unpaved and modern all-weather roads. There is a short rail line (freight) linking the capital city of Maseru with Bloemfontein, South Africa that is owned and operated by South Africa (the half-mile trunk inside Lesotho is operated by Lesotho Flour Mills, Ltd.). Lesotho is a member of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) in which tariffs have been eliminated on the trade of goods with other member countries, which include Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland. With the exception of Botswana, these countries also form a common currency and exchange control area known as the Common Monetary Area (CMA). The South African rand can be used interchangeably with the loti, the Lesotho currency (plural: maloti). One hundred lisente equal one loti. The loti is at par with the rand.

HIV/AIDS

According to recent estimates, the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Lesotho is about 23.2%, one of the highest rates in the world. The United Nations estimates that this rate will rise to 36% within the next 15 years, resulting in a further drop in life expectancy. According to the Lesotho Bureau of Statistics, in 2001 life expectancy was estimated at 48 for men and 56 for women. Recent statistics estimate that life expectancy has fallen to an average of 36 years.

In 1999, the government finalized its Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS, a diagram for addressing the education, prevention, counseling, and treatment needs of the populace. In 2000, Lesotho declared a national emergency as a result of the HIV/AIDS crisis. In 2003 the Government of Lesotho hosted a SADC Extraordinary Summit on HIV/AIDS. In 2005 legislation was passed to create the National AIDS Commission to coordinate society-wide anti-AIDS activities, which was following by the launching of a national "Know Your Status" campaign aimed at achieving 100% testing and counseling of all Basotho.

The donor community is collaborating with the Government of Lesotho in a massive effort to address the HIV epidemic. Key international stakeholders include components of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), UN agencies, Irish AID, other international donors, and dozens of non-governmental organizations.

DEFENSE

The security force is composed of the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF—estimated 5,000 personnel) and the Lesotho Mounted Police Service (LMPS—estimated 3,000-4,000 personnel). The LDF consists of an army and an air wing. The LDF reports to the Prime Minister (who is the Minister of Defense and National Security), while the Lesotho Mounted Police Service reports to the Minister of Home Affairs. There also is a National Security Service (NSS) for intelligence, which is directly accountable to the Prime Minister. Relations between the police and the army have occasionally been tense, and in 1997 the army was called upon to put down a serious police mutiny.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Lesotho's geographic location makes it extremely vulnerable to political and economic developments in South Africa. It is a member of many regional economic organizations including the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). Lesotho also is active in the United Nations, the African Union, the Nonaligned Movement, the Commonwealth, and many other international organizations. In addition to the United States, South Africa, China, Libya, Ireland (Consulate General), and the European Union all currently retain resident diplomatic missions in Lesotho. The United Nations is represented by a resident mission as well, including UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, WFP, and UNAIDS.

Lesotho has historically maintained generally close ties with the United States, European Union member states, and other Western countries. Although Lesotho decided in 1990 to break relations with the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) and reestablish relations with Taiwan, in 1993 the nation restored ties with the P.R.C.

Lesotho also recognizes Palestine as a state, was a strong public supporter of the end of apartheid in South Africa, and granted a number of South African refugees political asylum during the apartheid era. Resi-

dent diplomatic missions include the United States, Ireland, the European Union, South Africa, China (P.R.C.), and Libya.

U.S.-LESOTHO RELATIONS

The United States was one of the first four countries to establish an embassy in Maseru after Lesotho gained its independence from Great Britain in 1966. Since this time, Lesotho and the United States have consistently maintained productive bilateral relations. In 1996, the United States closed its resident bilateral aid program in Lesotho. In 2007, however, the Government of Lesotho signed a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation to provide $362.5 million in support over the next five years to develop Lesotho's water, healthcare infrastructure, and private sector. An in-country program to support the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief was established in 2005 and also includes representatives of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Centers for Disease Control. The Peace Corps has operated in Lesotho since 1966. About 90 Peace Corps volunteers concentrate in the sectors of health, agriculture, education, rural community development, and the environment. The Government of Lesotho encourages greater American participation in commercial life and welcomes interest from potential U.S. investors and suppliers.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MASERU (E) 254 Kingsway Avenue, (266) 22-312-666, Fax (266) 22-310-116, Workweek: M-TH 0730-1700, F 0730-1330, Website: http://maseru.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Janelle Larsen
MGT:	Craig Anderson
POL/ECO:	Christopher M. Smith
AMB:	Robert Nolan
CON:	Joyce Brooks
DCM:	W. Patrick Murphy
PAO:	Christopher M. Smith
GSO:	Redmer, Christian W
RSO:	Robert Hornbeck (Gaborone)
AGR:	Scott Sindelar
DAO:	Colonel Michael Garrison (Pretoria)
DEA:	Larry W. Frye (Pretoria)
FAA:	Edward Jones (Dakar)
FMO:	Craig Anderson
IMO:	Dwayne Taylor
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Paris)
ISSO:	Dwayne Taylor
LAB:	Frederick J. Kaplan (Pretoria)
LEGATT:	Donald C Przybyla (Pretoria)

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 29, 2008

Country Description: Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy with a democratically elected lower house of parliament. The upper house, the Senate, is comprised of appointed hereditary chiefs and politicians. A Prime Minister is the head of the government. Geographically, Lesotho is an extremely mountainous developing nation completely surrounded by the country of South Africa. The capital, Maseru, is at 5,000 feet (1,500M) above sea level, and the mountains reach to 11,400 feet (3,500M). Facilities for tourism are limited. A limited number of restaurants are available in Maseru.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required, but no visa for U.S. citizens is needed for visits of 180 days or less. Vaccination for yellow fever is a common requirement and travelers should carry their international vaccination cards with them. For more information concerning entry requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Kingdom of Lesotho, 2511 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 797-5533. Visit the Embassy of Lesotho's web site at http://www.lesothoemb-usa.gov.ls for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens should avoid political gatherings and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: U.S. citizens should remain vigilant about their surroundings at all times. Lesotho has a high level of crime and foreigners are frequently targeted, robbed and sometimes killed. While reporting of incidents by American citizens has increased including both armed and unarmed confrontations, car jackings, and home invasions, there are no indications that U.S. citizens are targeted or that there is an increase in the overall crime rate. Police have reported the presence of a number of armed gangs and unauthorized police stops. Lesotho's high unemployment rate, aggravated by the return of large numbers of unemployed miners from South Africa, and the ongoing effects of social upheaval due to high HIV/AIDS rates of infection, continue to contribute to an increasing number of reported crimes. These types of crimes occur primarily in the capital city of Maseru, but can occur elsewhere in Lesotho. Crime scenes have included popular restaurants, pedestrian overpasses, poorly to unlit roads, and other locations foreigners are known to frequent. Victims have included foreign diplomats, volunteer workers, employees of non-governmental organizations, and nationals of Lesotho. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid large groups and demonstrations, walking and driving at nighttime if possible, and casual walking in the capital city of Maseru even during daylight. Personal crime is more likely to occur at night, but there have been numerous recent incidents in the middle of the day. Traveling alone or at night is particu-

larly dangerous. The Lesotho Mounted Police Service handles policing duties. Police resources are limited and response time can vary widely from none onsite to delayed. U.S. citizens should report crime to the police and to the Embassy consular section.

There is a serious baggage pilferage problem at Johannesburg International Airport, also known as Oliver Tambo International Airport, in South Africa. Persons traveling by air to Lesotho must travel via Johannesburg. The pilferage problem particularly affects travelers changing airlines and those flying on smaller airlines. Passengers flying on major international carriers may not be affected to the same degree. Travelers are encouraged to secure their luggage, use an airport plastic wrapping service, and avoid placing currency, electronics, jewelry, cameras or other valuables in checked luggage. Make an inventory of items in checked baggage to aid in claims processing if theft does occur. The claims processing procedure can be time-consuming.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Lesotho does not have a local equivalent to 911, in the event of an emergency call (266)5888-1010 to speak to the police 24/7.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Lesotho are limited. Good medical service is available in Bloemfontein, South Africa, 90 miles west of Maseru. There is no reliable ambulance service in Lesotho. The Embassy maintains a list of physicians and other health care professionals who may see U.S. citizen patients. The Embassy does not guarantee their services or provide recommendations.

Many medicines are unavailable at facilities in Lesotho; travelers should carry with them an adequate supply of needed medicines and/or prescription drugs, along with copies of prescriptions. Lesotho has a very high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, currently estimated at over thirty percent of the adult population. Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of Lesotho.

Lesotho border guards have the discretion to deny entry to visitors with HIV/AIDS. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Lesotho at http://www.lesothoemb-usa.gov.ls before you travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Lesotho is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left, with right-hand drive vehicles. Never assume right-of-way, as aggressive and undisciplined local driving habits result in frequent collisions. Lesotho has a high number of traffic-related deaths and injuries given its small size. The previous king died in a road accident in 1996. Driving after dark is dangerous due to the absence of street lighting, livestock on the roads, and the prevalence of crime, including occasional incidents of carjacking.

Travel is best done by private car. Rental cars are available, and cars rented in neighboring South Africa may be brought into Lesotho with written permission from the rental company. Although bus and public taxi services exist, chronic overloading combined with inadequate vehicle maintenance and lack of driver training make them unsafe. Some private taxi service exists in the capital, but roving mini-bus taxis should be avoided. There is no passenger train service in the country.

Although the number of paved roads is gradually increasing, the majority of Lesotho's 5,000 miles of roads are unpaved. A few main rural highways are comparable to U.S. two-lane rural roads, but lane markings, signs, shoulders and guardrails are not to U.S. standards, and unfenced livestock pose a particular danger. Lesotho's mountainous terrain makes driving on secondary roads hazardous. Unpaved roads in the interior, often narrow, twisty and steep, are poorly maintained. For travel in the interior, especially in wet or snowy weather, a high ground clearance or four-wheel-drive vehicle is recommended. Four-wheel-drive is required for entering Lesotho through the Sani Pass on the eastern border. The authority for road safety issues rests with the Lesotho Mounted Police. There are no auto clubs or reliable ambulance services. Drivers should contact the police in emergencies.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.lesotho.gov.ls/tourism.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Lesotho, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Lesotho's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

The only scheduled air service is between Maseru and Johannesburg on a South African Airways subsidiary. There is no scheduled service among towns within Lesotho.

Special Circumstances: Tap water is not reliably potable. Visitors to the interior of Lesotho should bring clothing and equipment suitable for cold weather during the winter months (June - October). In the mountains, weather conditions can deteriorate rapidly. In winter, snow often closes mountain passes and temperatures often drop below freezing during the night, even in the lowlands.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Lesotho laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Lesotho are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Lesotho are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Lesotho.Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 254 Kingsway, Maseru West; the mailing address is PO Box 333, Maseru 100, Lesotho. The telephone number is 266-22-312-666. The Embassy's e-mail address is infomaseru@state.gov and the URL is http://maseru.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: In Lesotho, intercountry adoptions are governed under the Child Welfare and Protection Act, no. 60 of 1980 and the Adoption Proclamation of 1952. Under these laws, prospective adoptive parents are required to reside in Lesotho for two years before adoptions. Despite this, intercountry adoptions are processed and approved. A revised Child Welfare and Protection Bill, being debated in the National Assembly, would allow for intercountry adoptions. Adoptions in practice borrow from all three of these documents, the two laws and the new proposed bill. If and when the National Assembly passes the proposed revised bill, this will change how adoptions are processed, and this flyer will be amended accordingly.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Lesotho is the following:

Department of Social Welfare
Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
P/Bag A 222
Maseru, 100
Lesotho
Tel: +266 (22) 326-013
Fax: +266 (22) 317-206

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parent(s) are required to undergo a thorough home study by an approved social service or adoption agency and be found qualified. To locate an approved social service or adoption agency, persons interested in adopting in Lesotho should contact the Lesotho Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The adoptive parent(s) must be at least 25 years old and one prospective adoptive parent should be 21 years older than the child they aim to adopt. Gay/lesbian prospective adoptive parents are not permitted to adopt Lesotho children.

Residency Requirements: Officially, Lesotho adoption laws require that at least one of the prospective adoptive parent(s) be a resident of Lesotho for at least two years prior to the adoption. In practice, however, the courts have granted adoptions to non-residents if it is in the best interests of the child. The Child Welfare and Protection Bill presently under discussion in the National Assembly would explicitly allow for adoptions

by non-residents. The Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare strongly advises prospective parent(s) to spend a minimum of two weeks in Lesotho. The purpose of this stay is so that the prospective parent(s) will learn about Lesotho and be able later to tell their adopted children about their country of origin.

Time Frame: The time frame for adoption procedures differs widely and depends in large measure on how quickly the prospective adoptive parent(s) and their agents collect the necessary paperwork. From start to finish, most adoptions will be completed in six months. Once paperwork has been submitted, Adoption Orders and Removal Orders will take between one week and one month, depending on how quickly cases can be brought to court. A Lesotho Passport, which will be necessary for the U.S. immigrant visa application, can take from 6 to 12 months to procure.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies or attorneys approved by the Lesotho government. Prospective adoptive parents apply directly to the Department of Social Welfare. At this time, there are no formal application forms. Prospective adoptive parents should let the Department of Social Welfare know the details of their request (age of child, boy/girl, health, etc.).

Adoption Fees: The Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare does not charge any fees for processing adoption submissions. The Magistrates courts do not charge fees for hearing adoption cases. The High Court requires revenue stamps to hear removal cases. These revenue stamps are in the amount of 83 maluti (approximately $13 at the exchange rate at the beginning of April 2006). One reputable law firm charges 4,500 maluti (approx. $722) to process an order for adoption and an additional 4,500 maluti for an order for removal (permission to take the child out of the country).

Adoption Procedures: Generally, adoption procedures are initiated when a prospective adoptive parent(s) submits a request to the Department of Social Welfare. The Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will liaise with an approved social service or adoption agency identified by the adoptive parent(s). After a home study has been successfully completed, a child will be identified from one of the orphanages or abandoned children centers.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare will accept home-studies submitted in an I-600A application, which they will forward to the courts. Children have birth certificates confirming their orphan/abandoned status. In some cases, a child may have a letter from extended family, certified by the local authorities (usually the village chief) that the child is eligible for adoption.

The prospective adoptive parents should procure the services of a lawyer to refer the case to the Magistrates Court for an adoption hearing. The same lawyer can be retained to submit a case for removal of child from Lesotho. An order of adoption terminates all the rights and obligations existing between the child and any legally recognized parent or extended family. The adopted child is thereafter deemed by law to be the legitimate child of the adoptive parent(s).

Prospective adoptive parents can apply for a revised Lesotho birth certificate and a Lesotho passport based on the official order of adoption. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare or a lawyer can help with both of these. The revised birth certificate is ordered from the District Administrator and requires proof of ID, a certified copy of the order of adoption and a revenue stamp for 26c(Stamps for 26c are available from the Lesotho Revenue Authority).

The passport with revised names is applied for from the Ministry of Home Affairs. Please provide a certified copy of the order of adoption and a fee of M/R100. An order for removal allows the child to leave Lesotho with the adoptive parent(s).

Useful Information About Lesotho Custody Law And The Rights Of Birth Parents: Laws pertaining to child custody are not applied evenly in Lesotho and are complicated by traditional practice. Children born out of wedlock are considered illegitimate.

A child born to unmarried parents becomes legitimate when the mother marries, if the husband decides to recognize the child and pays an agreed bridal price. Such a child would otherwise be the ward of the maternal grandparent(s).

Unmarried women are considered legal minors and, as mentioned above, their children would be legally in the custody of the mother's parent(s). According to custom, the expanded family has certain custodial rights to children. The Department of Social Welfare will ensure, prior to approving an adoption, that the concerned children are free from custody issues and all family have waived any rights to the child.

Unmarried fathers do not have legal access, custody or guardianship of a biological child unless they have reached an understanding with the maternal grandparent(s).

Customarily, the father will be involved at the invitation of the maternal grandparent(s). The Department of Social Welfare would, prior to accepting a child for adoption proceedings, ensure that any known father will have waived his rights to the child.

Required Documents:

Prospective adoptive parent(s) must submit the following documents:

- Request for adoption to the Department of Social Welfare;
- Home Study;
- Financial statement(s);
- Police record(s);
- Medical Certificate(s);

- Letter(s) from the family of the prospective adoptive parent(s) that these family members accept and acknowledge the adoption.

Lesotho adoption law is based on local cultural practices. By these standards adoption is an extended family issue not just the nuclear family. It is customary that the extended family writes a letter condoning the adoption. In Lesotho, these relations would be expected to care for the child in the case the parents are unable to do so. Centers for orphaned or abandoned children will supply identification for the child and certification the child is eligible for adoption. The Social Worker will submit a report to the prospective adoptive parents' legal counsel, who will prepare the necessary court cases.

Embassy Of The Kingdom Of Lesotho
2511 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel.: 1-202-797-5533
Fax: 1-202-234-6815
Email: Lesothoembassy@Verizon.Net
Internet: http://www.lesothoemb-usa.gov.ls

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publicationM-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
254 Kingsway Road Maseru Lesotho
E-mail: infomaseru@state.gov
URL: http://maseru.usembassy.gov
Tel: +266 22 312 666
Fax: +266 22 310 116

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Lesotho may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Maseru. Questions about the immigrant visa process in Johannesburg should be directed to the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg. Questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



LIBERIA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Liberia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 111,369 sq. km. (43,000 sq. mi.). Slightly larger than Ohio.
Cities: Capital—Monrovia (pop. 1,010,970). Principal towns—Ganta (pop. 41,000), Buchanan (pop. 34,000), Gbarnga (pop. 34,000), Kakata (pop. 33,000), Voinjama (pop. 26,000).
Terrain: Three areas—Mangrove swamps and beaches along the coast, wooded hills and semideciduous shrublands along the immediate interior, and dense tropical forests and plateaus in the interior. Liberia has 40% of West Africa's rain forest.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Liberian(s).
Population: (2008) 3.49 million.
Annual growth rate: (2008) 2.1%.
Ethnic groups: Kpelle 20%, Bassa 16%, Gio 8%, Kru 7%, 49% spread over 12 other ethnic groups.
Religions: Christian 40%, Muslim 20%, animist 40%.
Languages: English is the official language. There are 16 indigenous languages.
Education: Literacy (2003)—20%.
Health: Life expectancy (2005)—42.5 years.
Work force: Agriculture—70%; industry—15%; services—2%. Employment in the formal sector is estimated at 15%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: From American Colonization Society July 26, 1847.
Constitution: January 6, 1986.
Political parties: 30 registered political parties.

Economy

GDP: (IMF 2007 est.) $473.9 million.
Real GDP growth rate: (2008 projected) 9.6%.
Per capita GDP: (2006) $185.50.
Average annual inflation: (2008 projected) 9%.
Natural resources: Iron ore, rubber, timber, diamonds, gold, and tin. The Government of Liberia believes there may be sizable deposits of crude oil along its Atlantic Coast.
Agriculture: Products—coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, rice, cassava, palm oil, bananas, plantains, citrus, pineapple, sweet potatoes, corn, and vegetables.
Industry: Types—agriculture, iron ore, rubber, forestry, diamonds, gold, beverages, construction.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$184.1 million (of which rubber $170.9 million). Major markets—Germany, Poland, U.S., Greece. Imports—$498.7 million (petroleum $125 million; rice $65.3 million).

PEOPLE

There are 16 ethnic groups that make up Liberia's indigenous population. The Kpelle in central and western Liberia is the largest ethnic group. Americo-Liberians who are descendants of freed slaves that arrived in Liberia early in 1821 make up an estimated 5% of the population.

There also are sizable numbers of Lebanese, Indians, and other West African nationals who comprise part of Liberia's business community. The Liberian constitution restricts citizenship to only people of Negro descent, and land ownership is restricted to citizens.

Liberia was traditionally noted for its academic institutions, iron-mining, and rubber. Political upheavals beginning in the 1980s and a 14-year civil war (1989-2003) largely destroyed Liberia's economy and brought a steep decline in living standards.

HISTORY

Portuguese explorers established contacts with Liberia as early as 1461 and named the area Grain Coast because of the abundance of "grains of paradise" (Malegueta pepper seeds). In 1663 the British installed trading posts on the Grain Coast, but the Dutch destroyed these posts a year later. There were no further reports of European settlements along the Grain Coast until the arrival of freed slaves in the early 1800s.

Liberia, "land of the free," was founded by free African-Americans and freed slaves from the United States in 1820. An initial group of 86 immigrants, who came to be called Americo-Liberians, established a settlement in Christopolis (now Monrovia, named after U.S. President James Monroe) on February 6, 1820.

Thousands of freed American slaves and free African-Americans arrived during the following years, leading to the formation of more settlements and culminating in a declaration of independence of the Republic of Liberia on July 26, 1847. The drive to resettle freed slaves in Africa was promoted by the American Colonization Society (ACS), an organization of white clergymen, abolitionists, and slave owners founded in 1816 by Robert Finley, a Presbyterian minister. Between 1821 and 1867 the ACS resettled some 10,000 African-Americans and several thousand Africans from interdicted slave ships; it governed the Commonwealth of Liberia until independence in 1847.

In Liberia's early years, the Americo-Liberian settlers periodically encountered stiff and sometimes violent opposition from indigenous Africans, who were excluded from citizenship in the new Republic until 1904. At the same time, British and French colonial expansionists encroached upon Liberia, taking over much of its territory. Politically, the country was a one-party state ruled by the True Whig Party (TWP). Joseph Jenkins Roberts, who was born and raised in America, was Liberia's first President. The style of government and constitution was fashioned on that of the United States, and the Americo-Liberian elite monopolized political power and restricted the voting rights of the indigenous population. The True Whig Party dominated all sectors of Liberia from independence in 1847 until April 12, 1980, when indigenous Liberian Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe (from the Krahn ethnic group) seized power in a coup d'etat. Doe's forces executed President William R. Tolbert and several officials of his government, mostly of Americo-Liberian descent. One hundred and thirty-three years of Americo-Liberian political domination ended with the formation of the People's Redemption Council (PRC).

Over time, the Doe government began promoting members of Doe's Krahn ethnic group, who soon dominated political and military life in Liberia. This raised ethnic tension and caused frequent hostilities between the politically and militarily dominant Krahns and other ethnic groups in the country.

After the October 1985 elections, characterized by widespread fraud, Doe solidified his control. The period after the elections saw increased human rights abuses, corruption, and ethnic tensions. The standard of living further deteriorated. On November 12, 1985, former Army Commanding Gen. Thomas Quiwonkpa almost succeeded in toppling Doe's government. The Armed Forces of Liberia repelled Quiwonkpa's attack and executed him in Monrovia. Doe's Krahn-dominated forces carried out reprisals against Mano and Gio civilians suspected of supporting Quiwonkpa.

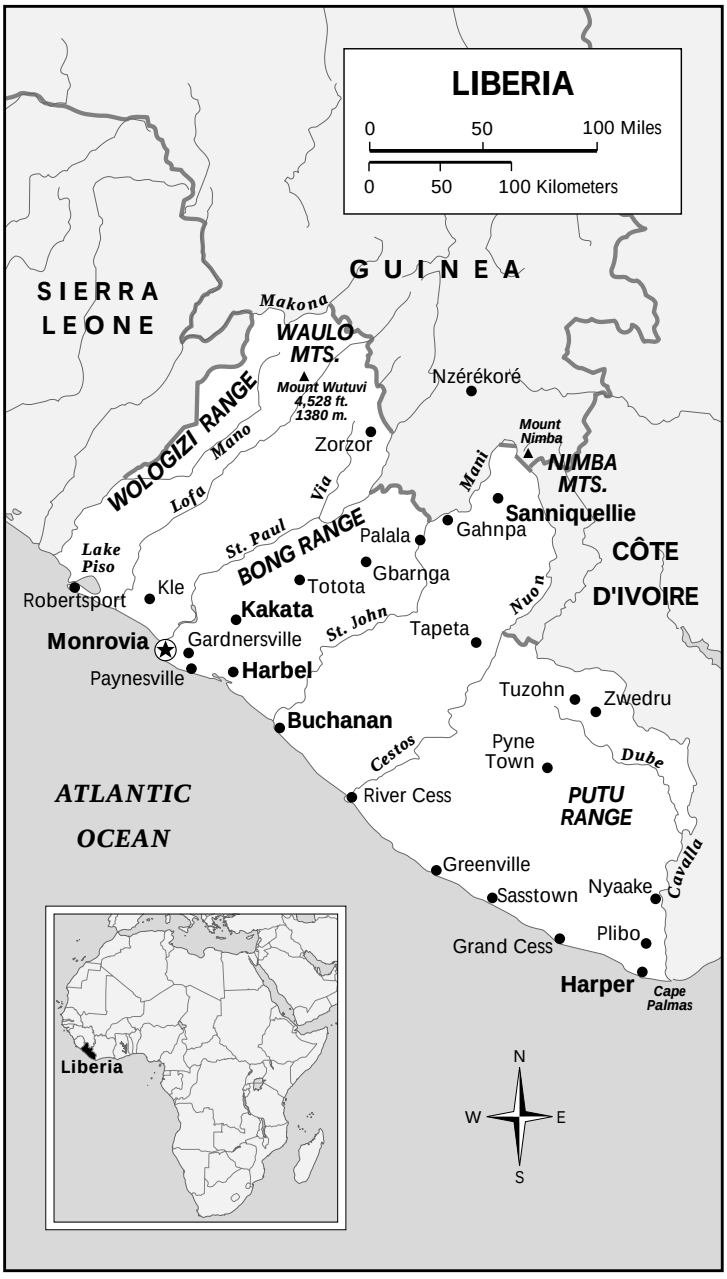
Despite Doe's poor human rights record and questionable democratic credentials, he retained close relations with Washington. A staunch U.S. ally, Doe met twice with President Ronald Reagan and enjoyed considerable U.S. financial support.

On December 24, 1989, a small band of rebels led by Doe's former procurement chief, Charles Taylor, invaded Liberia from Cote d'Ivoire. Taylor and his National Patriotic Front rebels rapidly gained the support of many Liberians and reached the outskirts of Monrovia within six months.

From 1989 to 1996 one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars ensued, claiming the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and displacing a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened in 1990 and succeeded in preventing Charles Taylor from capturing Monrovia. Prince Johnson—formerly a member of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)—formed the break-away Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). Johnson's forces captured and killed Doe on September 9, 1990. Taking refuge in Sierra Leone and other neighboring countries, former AFL soldiers founded the new insurgent United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), fighting back Taylor's NPFL.

An Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was formed in Gambia under the auspices of ECOWAS in October 1990, headed by Dr. Amos C. Sawyer. Taylor (along with other Liberian factions) refused to work with the interim government and continued fighting. After more than a dozen peace accords and declining military power, Taylor finally agreed to the formation of a five-man transitional government. A hasty disarmament and demobilization of warring factions was followed by special elections on July 19, 1997. Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party emerged victorious. Taylor won the election by a large majority, primarily because Liberians feared a return to war had Taylor lost.

For the next six years, the Taylor government did not improve the lives of Liberians. Unemployment and illiteracy stood above 75%, and little investment was made in the country's infrastructure. Liberia is still recovering from the ravages of war; pipe-borne water and electricity are generally unavailable to most of the population, especially outside Monrovia, and schools, hospitals, roads, and



infrastructure remain derelict. Rather than work to improve the lives of Liberians, Taylor supported the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone (see Sierra Leone Country Background Note). Taylor's misrule led to the resumption of armed rebellion from among Taylor's former adversaries. By 2003, armed groups called "Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy" (LURD) and "Movement for Democracy in Liberia" (MODEL), largely representing elements of the former ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J factions that fought Taylor during Liberia's previous civil war (1989-1996), were challenging Taylor and his increasingly fragmented supporters on the outskirts of Monrovia.

On June 4, 2003 in Accra, Ghana, ECOWAS facilitated peace talks among the Government of Liberia, civil society, and the LURD and MODEL rebel groups. On the same day, the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone issued a press statement announcing the opening of a sealed March 7, 2003 indictment of Liberian President Charles Taylor for "bearing the greatest responsibility" for atrocities in Sierra Leone since November 1996. In July 2003 the Government of Liberia, LURD, and MODEL signed a cease-fire that all sides failed to respect; bitter fighting reached downtown Monrovia in July and August 2003, creating a massive humanitarian disaster.

On August 11, 2003, under intense U.S. and international pressure, President Taylor resigned office and departed into exile in Nigeria. This move paved the way for the deployment by ECOWAS of what became a 3,600-strong peacekeeping mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). On August 18, leaders from the Liberian Government, the rebels, political parties, and civil society signed a comprehensive peace agreement that laid the framework for constructing a 2-year National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), headed by businessman Gyude Bryant. The UN took over security in Liberia in October 2003, subsuming ECOMIL into the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), a force that grew to its present size of over 12,000 troops and 1,148 police officers.

The October 11, 2005 presidential and legislative elections and the subsequent November 8, 2005 presidential run-off were the most free, fair, and peaceful elections in Liberia's history. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf defeated international soccer star George Weah 59.4% to 40.6% to become Africa's first democratically elected female president. She was inaugurated in January 2006 and formed a government of technocrats drawn from among Liberia's ethnic groups and including members of the Liberian diaspora who had returned to the country to rebuild government institutions. The president's party, the Unity Party, does not control the legislature, in which 12 of the 30 registered political parties are represented.

The political situation has remained stable since the 2005 elections. The Government of Liberia has made pos-

itive strides aimed at political stability and economic recovery. President Sirleaf has taken a public stance against corruption and has dismissed several government officials. The President is supported by highly experienced and technically competent senior officials, and the public has more confidence in her administration than in any of its recent predecessors. President Sirleaf enjoys good relations with international organizations and donor governments, with whom she is working closely on Liberia's development. The national legislature has enacted several key reforms.

In order to maintain stability through the post-conflict period, Liberia's security sector reform efforts have led to the disarmament of more than 100,000 ex-combatants, the wholesale U.S.-led reconstruction of the Armed Forces of Liberia, and a UN-led effort to overhaul the Liberian National Police. The mandate of UNMIL has been extended to September 2008 and a gradual drawdown will commence in 2008, to last several years. During this period the Government of Liberia and its development partners will focus on creating jobs, attracting investment, and providing education and other essential services to Liberia's communities. The Government of Liberia won substantial donor support for its new Poverty Reduction Strategy at the June 2008 Liberia Poverty Reduction Forum in Berlin, Germany.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Liberia has a bicameral legislature consisting of 64 representatives and 30 senators. The 2005 election placed a spectrum of political personalities in the legislature, most for six-year terms. Senior senators were elected for nine-year terms. Party structures remain weak, and politics continues to be personality-driven. Historically, the executive branch heavily influenced the legislature and judicial system.

The judiciary is divided into four levels, including justices of the peace, courts of record (magistrate courts), courts of first instance (circuit and specialty courts), and the Supreme Court. Traditional courts and lay courts exist in rural areas of the country. Trial by ordeal, though officially outlawed, is practiced in various parts of Liberia. The formal judicial system remains hampered by severe shortages of qualified judges and other judicial officials. Locally, political power emanates from traditional chiefs (town, clan, or paramount chiefs), mayors, and district commissioners. Mayors are elected in principal cities in Liberia. Superintendents appointed by the president govern the counties. There are 15 counties in Liberia.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Ellen JOHNSON SIRLEAF**
Vice President: **Joseph BOAKAI**
Min. of Agriculture: **J. Christopher TOE**
Min. of Commerce & Industry: **Frances JOHNSON MORRIS**
Min. of Education: **Joseph KORTO**
Min. of Finance: **Augustine NGAFUAN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Olubanke KING-AKERELE**
Min. of Gender Development: **Varbah GAYFLOR**
Min. of Health & Social Welfare: **Walter GWENINGALE**
Min. of Information, Culture, & Tourism: **Lawrence BROPLEH**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Ambulai JOHNSON**
Min. of Justice: **Philip A. Z. BANKS III**
Min. of Labor: **Samuel Kofi WOODS**
Min. of Land, Mines, & Energy: **Eugene SHANNON**
Min. of National Defense: **Brownie SAMUKAI**
Min. of Planning & Economic Affairs: **Toga G. MCINTOSH**
Min. of Posts & Telecommunications: **Jackson E. DOE**
Min. of Public Works (Acting): **Luseni DONZO**
Min. of Rural Development: **E. C. B. JONES**
Min. of Transport: **Jeremiah SULUNETH**
Min. of Youth & Sport: **Jamesetta HOWARD-WOLOKOLLIE**
Min. of State for Financial & Economic Affairs: **Morris SAYTUMAH**
Min. of State for Legislative Affairs & Legal Counsel: **David MENYONGAR**
Min. of State for Presidential Affairs (Acting): **Willis KNUCKLES**
Governor, National Bank: **John Mills JONES**
Ambassador to the US: **Charles MINOR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Milton Nathaniel BARNES**

Liberia maintains an embassy in the United States at 5201 16th Street, NW, Washington DC, 202-723-0437.

ECONOMY

The Liberian economy relied heavily on the mining of iron ore and on the export of natural rubber prior to the civil war. Liberia was a major exporter of iron ore on the world market. In the 1970s and 1980s, iron mining accounted for more than half of Liberia's export earnings. Following the coup d'etat of 1980, the country's economic growth rate slowed down because of a decline in the demand for iron ore on the world market and political upheavals in Liberia.

The 1989-2003 civil war had a devastating effect on the country's economy. Most major businesses were destroyed or heavily damaged, and most foreign investors and businesses left the country. Iron ore production stopped completely, and the United Nations banned timber and diamond exports from Liberia. UN sanctions on Liberian timber were removed in 2006; activity in the timber sector is expected to resume on a large scale during the October 2008-May 2009 dry season. Diamond sanctions were terminated by the UN Security Council in April 2007, and Liberian diamond exports have resumed through the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. Gold deposits, some of which are currently nearing production, should soon begin to contribute to government revenues and provide additional employment.

Currently, Liberia's revenues come primarily from rubber exports and revenues from its maritime registry program. Liberia has the second-largest maritime registry in the world;

there are 2,724 vessels totaling 83.3 million gross tons registered under its flag, earning some $16 million in maritime revenue in Liberian FY 2007/2008 (July 1-June 30). There is increasing interest in the possibility of commercially exploitable offshore crude oil deposits along Liberia's Atlantic Coast.

With a democratically elected government in place since January 2006, Liberia seeks to reconstruct its shattered economy. The Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP), which started under the 2003-2006 transitional government, is designed to help the Liberian Government raise and spend revenues in an efficient, transparent way. In addition, the Liberian Government is working to improve the business climate, has formed a commission to deal with land tenure issues, and is reviewing tax and tariff regimes to harmonize them with neighbors in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Liberian National Investment Commission reported $97 million in new investment in 2007 and has set a target of $100 million a year for future years. Investors are finding opportunities in mining, rubber, agro-forestry, light industry, and other sectors. Arcelor Mittal Steel has negotiated an agreement to invest over $1.5 billion in the mining sector, and the Liberian Government is engaged in negotiations with several other large foreign investors.

Years of conflict and mismanagement also left Liberia with a large debt burden of $3.4 billion, owed to multilateral development banks, bilateral creditors, and commercial creditors. On June 12, 2008, the United States became the first bilateral creditor to sign a bilateral agreement implementing the Paris Club's April 2008 debt treatment for Liberia. Several other bilateral creditors have pledged debt relief, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and African Development Bank have approved a formal program to clear Liberia's $1.5 billion in arrears to international financial institutions. With this support, and with technical assistance provided by Liberia's international partners, the Liberian Government seeks to make key economic reforms to attract investment and qualify for eventual debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Liberia has maintained traditionally cordial relations with the West. Liberia currently also maintains diplomatic relations with Libya, Cuba, and China.

Liberia is a founding member of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and is a member of the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Development Bank (ADB), the Mano River Union (MRU), and the Non-Aligned Movement.

During the administration of Charles Taylor, relations between Liberia and its West African neighbors became seriously strained. West African countries backed by the African Union and the United Nations negotiated a peace agreement in Accra, Ghana that subsequently led to the exile of Charles Taylor to Nigeria in August 2003. With the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Liberia has seen significant improvements in relations with its West African neighbors and the wider world. Relations between Liberia and its immediate neighbors in the Mano River region are back on track, and efforts are underway to strengthen relations with other countries. Liberia currently holds the chairmanship of the reinvigorated Mano River Union. Liberia signed a non-aggression pact with Sierra Leone when newly elected President Ernest Bai Koroma visited in September 2007. Liberia is a major proponent of regional integration.

Liberia has taken steps to forge closer ties with Western countries, especially the United States. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has visited several Western countries, including the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway, Spain, France, and Germany. President Sirleaf has also visited China and Libya, with whom Liberia maintains close ties.

U.S.-LIBERIA RELATIONS

Congress appropriated $100,000 in 1819 for the establishment of Liberia (and resettlement of freemen and freed slaves from North America) by the American Colonization Society, led by prominent Americans such as Francis Scott Key, George Washington's nephew Bushrod, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Presidents Monroe, Adams, and Jackson. The first group of settlers arrived in Liberia from the United States in the 1820s. The United States, which officially recognized Liberia in 1862, shared particularly close relations with Liberia during the Cold War.

The outbreak of civil war in Liberia and the long dominance of Charles Taylor soured bilateral relations. However, Liberia now counts the United States as its strongest supporter in its democratization and reconstruction efforts. Since the end of Liberia's civil war in 2003, the United States has contributed over $750 million in bilateral assistance and more than $750 million in assessed contributions to the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). In the current fiscal year, the U.S. will commit another $162 million bilaterally and $179 million through UNMIL. In February 2008, President Bush visited Liberia, where he held his fourth one-on-one meeting with President Sirleaf since Sirleaf's inauguration in January 2006. Peace Corps volunteers will return to Liberia in 2008 for the first time since 1990.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) implements the U.S. Government's development assistance program in Liberia, the second-largest USAID development program in Africa. USAID's post-conflict rebuilding strategy focuses on reintegration and is increasingly moving towards a longer-term devel-

opment focus. Rehabilitation efforts include national and community infrastructure projects, such as expanding access to electricity, building roads, refurbishing government buildings, training Liberians in vocational skills, promoting business development, and improving livelihoods while protecting Liberia's forests. USAID also funds basic education programs, improving education for children, focusing on girls, and training teachers. In the health area, USAID programs include primary health care clinics, HIV/AIDS prevention, and a large malaria program. USAID supports rule of law programs, establishing legal aid clinics and victim abuse centers, training judges and lawyers, community peace building and reconciliation efforts, and anti-corruption projects to promote transparency and accountability in public sector entities. USAID is also providing support to strengthen the legislature and other political processes. USAID is strengthening civil society's role in delivering services and advocating good governance. Total USAID funding in FY 2008 is $105 million.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MONROVIA (E) 111 United Nations Drive, 011-231-77-054-826, Fax 231-77-010-370, Workweek: M-F, 8:00a.m.–5:00p.m., Website: http://monrovia.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Terri L. Tedford
ECO:	Lucy Abbott
ECO/COM:	Doug Carey
FM:	Tim Tucker
HRO:	Maude G. Koutsis
MGT:	Michael L. Bajek
OMS:	Chris Burney
OPDAT:	Tracy Johnson
POL/ECO:	Steven C. Koutsis
AMB:	Donald E. Booth
CON:	Alma Gurski
DCM:	Brooks A. Robinson
PAO:	Meg Riggs
GSO:	Michael A. Classick
RSO:	Peter Velazquez
AFSA:	Chris McDermott
AGR:	Robert D. Simpson
AID:	Lucretia Taylor
CLO:	Pamela F. Scott
DEA:	Sam Gaye (Resident In Lagos)
EEO:	Meg Riggs
FAA:	Ronald L. Montgemery (Res. In Dakar)
FIN:	Vacant
ICASS Chair:	Rick Scott
IMO:	Lloyd E. Cammel
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISSO:	Lloyd E. Cammel
LEGATT:	Alvie Price (Freetown)
POL:	Kristen K. Grauer
State ICASS:	Steven C. Koutsis

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 17, 2008

Country Description: Liberia is a country in West Africa that suffered from years of instability and conflict from 1990-2003, with attendant destruction of buildings, roads, infrastructure and public institutions. A comprehensive peace accord ended the conflict in August 2003 and a United Nations peacekeeping force (UNMIL) was deployed to facilitate disarmament and demobilization, help arrange democratic elections and provide for security of the country. In late 2005, Liberians went to the polls and elected Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as president. The new government was inaugurated in January 2006, and has made tremendous progress towards restoring security and stability to the country.

Despite nearly four years of peace and a renewal of economic growth, Liberia is still one of the poorest countries in the world and many basic services (public power, water and sewage, land line phones) are either limited or unavailable. Facilities for foreign visitors are adequate in the capital, Monrovia, but virtually non-existent in the rest of the country. The official language of Liberia is English.

Entry Requirements: A passport and a visa are required for entry, as is evidence of yellow fever vaccination. Immigration officials do not issue visas at the airport. Persons arriving without a visa may be deported immediately, without leaving the airport. Persons arriving from the United States must obtain a Liberian visa before traveling. There is a U.S. $25 airport tax on departing passengers, although this is usually collected as part of the ticket price. For the latest information on entry requirements, visa fees and airport tax for Liberia, contact the Embassy of the Republic of Liberia, 5201 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011, tel. (202) 723-0437, web site www.embassyofliberia.org. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Liberian embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to plan proposed travel to Liberia carefully and to exercise caution when traveling in Liberia. Neither public transport nor taxis are available at the international airport, which is located 40 miles outside of Monrovia; therefore, before traveling to Liberia, Americans are urged to make arrangements for transportation from the international airport into the city center. Americans traveling to Liberia are also urged to ensure that they have confirmed reservations at a reputable hotel, as rooms can be scarce and difficult to find without advance plans.

Americans who travel to or reside in Liberia should realize that Liberia's police force is in the process of being rebuilt. There is a United Nations (UN) Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), but its mandate is to ensure political stability in Liberia. Americans who travel around Liberia must realize that the role of UN Police (UNPOL) officers is to serve as advisors to the Liberia National Police. Accordingly, they do not have the authority to arrest or detain, and they are unarmed. The Liberia National Police, for its part, has a limited presence in Monrovia, and even less of a presence outside of Monrovia. In addition, police officers can be a source of problems for visitors as well as a source of aid or assistance. Although problems with corruption have improved, travelers may be detained by police officers who solicit bribes. Americans are encouraged to carry a photocopy of their passports with them at all times so that, if ques-

tioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. If detained or arrested, U.S. citizens should always ask to be allowed to contact the U.S. Embassy.

U.S. citizens in Liberia should be aware of their surroundings at all times and use caution when moving around, especially at night. The U.S. Embassy recommends that American citizens observe a suggested curfew of 2:00 a.m.—6:00 a.m. Travel outside of Monrovia after dark is strongly discouraged as roads are in poor condition and thus dangerous to navigate at night. U.S. citizens should avoid crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor at http://travel.state.gov where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime in Liberia is rated high and is exacerbated by the high rate of unemployment. Theft, assault, sexual crimes, and murder are problems, and they occur more frequently after dark. Foreigners, including U.S. citizens, have been targets of street crime, robbery, and sexual assault. Women have been attacked on deserted beaches. Residential armed break-ins occur. The police are ill equipped and largely incapable of providing effective protection or investigation. Criminal activity is reported in both urban and rural areas.

Perpetrators of business fraud often target foreigners, including Americans. Formerly associated with Nigeria, these fraud schemes are now prevalent throughout western Africa, including Liberia, and pose a danger of both financial loss and physical harm. An increasing number of American citizens have been the targets of such scams. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of fraud is common sense–if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Any unsolicited business proposal originating in Liberia should be carefully checked before committing any funds, providing any goods or services, or undertaking any travel, particularly involving the mining or sale of gold and diamonds. There is also an increase in Liberian/American Internet relationships, where there are eventual requests for financial assistance under fraudulent pretenses. For additional information, please see the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure on International Financial Scams.

Petty corruption is rampant; poorly paid government officials are not immune from the temptation to collect fees for doing their job. The result is that travelers may be asked for bribes and inconvenienced for not paying them.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Liberia is: 911. In an emergency, dialing 911 or 355 from a cellular phone within Liberia will put you in contact with a cellular phone at Liberian National Police (LNP) Headquarters. Please note, there is no landline telephone service in Liberia and cellular phone communication is subject to occasional disruptions in service.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Hospitals and medical facilities in Liberia are very poorly equipped and are incapable of providing many services. Emergency services comparable to those in the U.S. or Europe are non-existent, and the blood supply is unreliable and unsafe for transfusion. Americans with serious medical problems travel or are medically evacuated to the United States, Europe or South Africa. Medicines are scarce, often beyond expiration dates, and generally unavailable in most areas. As there is neither an effective garbage removal service nor a functioning sewer system, the level of sanitation throughout urban areas is very poor, which increases the potential for disease. Upper respiratory infections and diarrhea are common, as well as the more serious diseases, typhoid and malaria. All travelers to Liberia must be vaccinated against yellow fever and should carry a supply of all prescription medication, plus anti-malaria medication, adequate for their entire stay. A typhoid vaccination is also recommended.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Liberia at this time.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web-

site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. For travel to Liberia, obtaining separate medical evacuation insurance before arriving in Liberia is strongly recommended.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Liberia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road travel in Liberia can be hazardous. Potholes and poor road surfaces are common, making safe driving extremely challenging. Cars, trucks, and taxis are often overloaded with people and goods and make frequent stops without signaling. Drivers overtake on the right as well as the left. Many vehicles operate with threadbare tires, and blowouts are frequent.

Public taxis are poorly maintained and usually overloaded. Intersections must be approached with caution. The absence of public streetlights makes pedestrians walking in the city streets and those walking on country roads difficult to see at night. Drivers and pedestrians are cautioned that high-speed car convoys carrying government officials require all other vehicles to pull off the road until they have passed.

Travelers should expect delays at UNMIL security checkpoints, as well as time-consuming detours around the many bridges and roads damaged by war, neglect, or the heavy annual rains, which occur from May to November.

Travelers can expect strict enforcement of border controls by Liberian, Ivorian, Sierra Leonean, and Guinean authorities. At times border crossings to neighboring countries are closed.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Liberia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Liberia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Lodging, fuel, transportation, and telephone services are unevenly available in Liberia, and are nonexistent or severely limited in rural areas. Neither water nor electricity is commercially available in Liberia, including the capital of Monrovia. Most hotels have utilities available, but not always on a 24-hour basis.

There is no working landline telephone system in Liberia. Several cell phone companies provide service in Monrovia and some areas outside the capital. US cellular phones do not always work in Liberia and it is advisable to rent or purchase a local cellular phone. The postal system is slow and unreliable. Commercial air courier service is available through UPS, Federal Express (FedEx), and other companies.

The U.S. dollar is readily accepted in Liberia, and there is no limit on the amount of foreign currency that can be transported into and out of the country, provided one follows the specific regulations on how such transfers must be done. Sums in excess of US $10,000 must be reported at the port of entry and no more than US $7,500 in foreign currency banknotes can be moved out of the country at one time. Larger sums must be transferred via bank drafts or other financial instruments; persons without a Liberian bank account are limited to two outgoing US $5,000 over-the-counter cash wire transfers per month. Wire transfers are not widely used and are subject to substantial fees. ATMs are unavailable and Traveler's checks and credit/debit cards are not accepted anywhere in Liberia.

Liberia has many excellent beaches along the Atlantic coastline that tourists and those who live in the country enjoy throughout the year; however, American citizens should be aware of the threat of dangerous rip currents, better known as rip tides. These strong currents can occur anywhere on the coast given the right surf conditions. The Liberia Weather Service does not provide information on where and when these tides form and no lifeguards are posted on beaches. American citizens who plan to swim in the Atlantic should read from various sources about the dangers of rip currents and how to navigate if you find yourself in such a situation; or better still, do not swim if you are unfamiliar with swimming in water where very strong rip currents occur.

Photographing military installations, air and seaports, and important government buildings is prohibited. Visitors should not take photographs of sites or activities that might be considered sensitive, or police are liable to confiscate the camera.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Liberia's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Liberia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children, or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

The U.S. Embassy does not always receive timely notification of the arrest of U.S. citizens by Liberian authorities. If arrested, U.S. citizens

should ask to be allowed to contact the U.S. Embassy (see the Registration/Embassy Location section below). Americans should carry a photocopy of their U.S. passport with them at all times. The consular section of the U.S. Embassy cannot give legal assistance but can provide a list of Liberian attorneys if one is required.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Liberia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Liberia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 111 United Nations Drive, Mamba Point, Monrovia; telephone 231-77-054-826; fax 231-77-010-370; web site http://Monrovia.usembassy.gov. U.S. citizens who wish to write to the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia may address letters to the Consular Section, 8800 Monrovia Place, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20521-8800, or send emails to ConsularMonrovia@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Liberia is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). In July 2008, the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health and Social Welfare began carefully reviewing all adoption cases submitted to them for approval. This change occurred because the Government of Liberia noticed an increasing number of cases in which adoptive parents decided to terminate their parent/child relationship with Liberian adoptive children. The Liberian Parliament is considering a revised adoption law, which was proposed in November 2007. If enacted, the new law would provide additional safeguards to protect adoptive children, birth parents, and prospective adoptive parents.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Liberia, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Liberia also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoptions in Liberia.

Age Requirements: There are no age requirements for intercountry adoptions in Liberia.

Marriage Requirements: There are no marriage requirements for intercountry adoptions in Liberia.

Income Requirements: There are no income requirements for Liberian intercountry adoptions.

Who Can Be Adopted? Liberia has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. The Consular Section of the United States Embassy thoroughly investigates each adoption case to verify that the child's orphan status is legitimate. Since these investigations can take a considerable amount of time, prospective adoptive parents should check with the Embassy to ensure that the investigation has been completed before making travel arrangements for the child to depart Liberia.

Relinquishment Requirements: In addition to a statement of relinquishment from the biological parents, the Liberian Government also requires an approved case summary from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSW). The case summary is issued after a social worker has investigated the case thoroughly and concluded that adoption is in the best interest of the child and the Minister or one of his deputies has reviewed all the legal paperwork necessary to process an adoption in Liberia.

Abandonment Requirements: If the child was born in wedlock, the consent of both parents is required. If the child was born out of wedlock, only the mother must consent. Parental consent is not required if the parents have abandoned the child, if the parental rights have been legally terminated, if the parents are deceased, or if a legal guardian has been appointed by the court.

Age Requirements: If the child is 16 years or older, the child must consent to the adoption. Please note that a child who is 16 years or older is not considered a "child" but the Immigration and Nationality Act and therefore may be ineligible to immigrate to the United States.

Other Requirements: In addition to obtaining a statement of relinquishment from the biological parent or legal guarding of the child being adopted, no adoption decree can be issued without an approved case summary from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSW).

A case summary from the MHSW is issued only after a social worker has investigated the case thoroughly and concluded that adoption is in the best interest of the child, and the Minister has reviewed all the legal paperwork necessary to process an adoption in Liberia.

This requirement has added time to the processing of adoptions, but it is in the best interest of all parties and is strongly endorsed by the Embassy.

Liberia's Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Justice

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Liberia is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Liberia to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS.

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Liberia will provide you with a referral to a child.

Role of the Adoption Authority: No adoption decree can be issued without an approved case summary from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MHSW).

Role of the Court: A petition for adoption must be filed with the Probate Court. The petition must contain the name, age, residence and marital status of the petitioners.

The name, date and place of birth of the child, the date and manner in which the petitioners acquired custody of the child, facts (if any) that render consent of either parent unnecessary, the petitioners' desire to adopt the child and the child's change of name, should also be contained in the petition.

Upon receipt of a petition for adoption, the Court schedules a hearing and serves notice on all interested parties. The petitioners or their legal representative, the parent, parents, or guardian(s) of the child and the child are required to attend the hearing, though the court may waive the appearance of the child for good cause. This waiver must be stated in the order of adoption. All hearings are public, and held in open court. The court must be satisfied that the "moral and temporal interests" of the child will be satisfied by the adoption. Upon this showing, the adoption is ordered. The court must be satisfied that the "moral and temporal interests" of the child will be satisfied by the adoption. Upon this showing, the adoption is ordered.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Most adoptive parents normally work with an adoption agency in the United States, which in turn liaises with an orphanage or organization in Liberia prior to initiating the adoption process. The organization in Liberia must be registered with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

Time Frame: There are no fixed time lines or constraints on the Court's processing of adoptions. The adoption process, including formal relinquishment by the parent(s) if necessary, generally takes 3 to 4 weeks.

Since November 2007, prospective adoptive parents have experienced long delays, sometimes as long as 3 months in processing adoptions due to pending revision of the Liberian adoption law.

Adoption Fees: official Government fees for adoptions in Liberia are minimal and consist mainly of court filing fees. These filing fees are normally less than $12,000 USD. The cost of employing local counsel varies but adoptive parents can expect to pay several hundred dollars at a minimum for an attorney.

Liberia has proposed legislation that will increase fees for processing paper through the Courts and the Ministry of Justice for $5 to $1500 USD. These funds will be used to hire additional social workers and court clerks as well as for the general operation of both Ministries.

Documents Required: The following documents are required for adoption in Liberia:

- Petition for Adoption
- Written consent of the biological parents
- Copy of adoptive parents' passports

Additional documents may be requested. If you are asked to provide proof that a document from the United States is authentic, we can help.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Liberian law has no post-adoption requirements for adoptive parents. Parents should confirm any post-adoption requirements with their legal representatives.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Liberia
111 U.N. Drive
Mamba Point

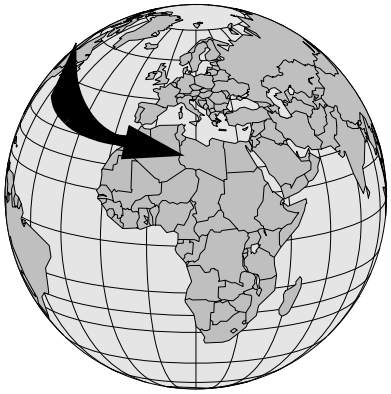
Monrovia, Liberia
Tel: 231-077-207-326
Fax: 231-770-010-370
Email: ConsularMonrovia@state.gov.

Liberian Adoption Authority
Cllr. Philip Banks,
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice Building
Ashmun Street
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Special Assistant: +231 6 520140
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(Massa Johnson)

Embassy of Liberia
5201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20011
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Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

The National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



LIBYA

Compiled from the October 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya

PROFILE

Geography

Location: North Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, southern border with Chad, Niger, and Sudan.
Area: 1,759,540 million sq. km.
Cities: Tripoli (capital), Benghazi.
Terrain: Mostly barren, flat to undulating plains, plateaus, depressions.
Climate: Mediterranean along coast; dry, extreme desert interior.
Land use: Arable land—1.03%; permanent crops—0.19%; other—98.78%.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Libyan(s).
Population: (July 2007 est.) 6,036,914 (includes non-nationals, of which an estimated 500,000 or more are sub-Saharan Africans living in Libya).
Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.262%. Birth rate (2007 est.)—26.09 births/1,000 population. Death rate (2007 est.)—3.47 deaths/1,000 population.
Ethnic groups: Berber and Arab 97%; Greeks, Maltese, Italians, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Turks, Indians, and Tunisians.
Religions: Sunni Muslim 97%.
Languages: Arabic is the primary language. English, French, and Italian are understood in major cities.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—90%. Literacy (age 15 and over who can read and write)—total population 82.6%; female 72% (2003 est.).
Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—22.82 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—total population 76.88 yrs.; male 74.1 yrs.; female 78.58 yrs.
Work force: (2006 est.) 1.787 million, an estimated 500,000 of whom are sub-Saharan African foreign workers.

Government

Type: "Jamahiriya" is a term Col. Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi coined and which he defines as a "state of the masses" governed by the populace through local councils. In practice, Libya is an authoritarian state.
Independence: December 24, 1951. Revolution: September 1, 1969.
Constitution: December 11, 1969, amended March 2, 1977—established popular congresses and people's committees.
Political subdivisions: 31 municipalities (singular—"shabiya," plural—"shabiyat") Butnan, Darnah, Gubba, Al Jabal al-Akhdar, Marj, Green Belt, Benghazi, Ajdabiya, Wahat, Kufra, Surt, Al Jufrah, Misurata, Murgub, Bani-waleed, Tarhuna and Msallata, Tripoli, Jfara, Zawiya, Subrata & Surman, An Nuqat al Khams, Gharyan, Mezda, Nalut, Ghdames, Yefren and Jadu, Wadi Alhaya, Ghat, Sabha, Wadi Shati, Murzuq.
Political parties: Political parties are banned. According to the political theory of Col. Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, multi-layered popular assemblies (people's congresses) with executive institutions (people's committees) are guided by political cadres (revolutionary committees).
Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory.

Economy

Real GDP: (2000$, 2006) $46.451 billion.
GDP per capita: (PPP, 2006) $12,204.
Real GDP growth rate: (2006) 5.6%.
Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, gypsum.
Agriculture: Products—wheat, barley, olives, dates, citrus, vegetables, peanuts, soybeans; cattle; approximately 75% of Libya's food is imported.
Industry: Types—petroleum, food processing, textiles, handicrafts, cement.
Trade: Exports (2006 est.)—$37.02 billion f.o.b.: crude oil, refined petroleum products. Major markets (2005)—Italy (38%), Germany

(15.1%), Spain (9.3%), Turkey (6.2%), France (6.2%), U.S. (5.2%). Imports (2006 est.)—$14.47 billion f.o.b.: machinery, transport equipment, food, manufactured goods. Major suppliers (2003)—Italy (21.2%), Germany (10.2%), Tunisia (5.9%), Turkey (4.8%), U.K. (4.8%), France (4.7%), South Korea (4.6%), China (4.5%).

PEOPLE

Libya has a small population in a large land area. Population density is about 50 persons per sq. km. (80/sq. mi.) in the two northern regions of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, but falls to less than one person per sq. km. (1.6/sq. mi.) elsewhere. Ninety percent of the people live in less than 10% of the area, primarily along the coast. More than half the population is urban, mostly concentrated in the two largest cities, Tripoli and Benghazi. Thirty-three percent of the population is estimated to be under age 15.

Native Libyans are primarily a mixture of Arabs and Berbers. Small Tebou and Touareg tribal groups in southern Libya are nomadic or seminomadic. Among foreign residents, the largest groups are citizens of other African nations, including North Africans (primarily Egyptians and Tunisians), West Africans and Sub-Saharan Africans.

HISTORY

For most of their history, the peoples of Libya have been subjected to varying degrees of foreign control. The Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Vandals, and Byzantines ruled all or parts of Libya. Although the Greeks and Romans left impressive ruins at Cyrene, Leptis Magna, and Sabratha, little else remains today to testify to the presence of these ancient cultures.

The Arabs conquered Libya in the seventh century A.D. In the following centuries, most of the indigenous peoples adopted Islam and the Arabic language and culture. The Ottoman Turks conquered the country in the mid-16th century. Libya remained part of their empire—although at times virtually autonomous—until Italy invaded in 1911 and, in the face of years of resistance, made Libya a colony.

In 1934, Italy adopted the name "Libya" (used by the Greeks for all of North Africa, except Egypt) as the official name of the colony, which consisted of the Provinces of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Fezzan. King Idris I, Emir of Cyrenaica, led Libyan resistance to Italian occupation between the two World Wars. From 1943 to 1951, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica were under British administration, while the French controlled Fezzan. In 1944, Idris returned from exile in Cairo but declined to resume permanent residence in Cyrenaica until the removal in 1947 of some aspects of foreign control. Under the terms of the 1947 peace treaty with the Allies, Italy relinquished all claims to Libya.

On November 21, 1949, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution stating that Libya should become independent before January 1, 1952. King Idris I represented Libya in the subsequent UN negotiations. When Libya declared its independence on December 24, 1951, it was the first country to achieve independence through the United Nations and one of the first former European possessions in Africa to gain independence. Libya was proclaimed a constitutional and a hereditary monarchy under King Idris.

The discovery of significant oil reserves in 1959 and the subsequent income from petroleum sales enabled what had been one of the world's poorest countries to become extremely wealthy, as measured by per capita GDP. Although oil drastically improved Libya's finances, popular resentment grew as wealth was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the elite. This discontent continued to mount with the rise throughout the Arab world of Nasserism and the idea of Arab unity.

On September 1, 1969, a small group of military officers led by then 28-year-old army officer Mu'ammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi staged a coup d'état against King Idris, who was exiled to Egypt. The new regime, headed by the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), abolished the monarchy and proclaimed the new Libyan Arab Republic. Qadhafi emerged as leader of the RCC and eventually as de facto chief of state, a political role he still plays. The Libyan government asserts that Qadhafi currently holds no official position, although he is referred to in government statements and the official press as the "Brother Leader and Guide of the Revolution."

The new RCC's motto became "freedom, socialism, and unity." It pledged itself to remedy "backwardness," take an active role in the Palestinian Arab cause, promote Arab unity, and encourage domestic policies based on social justice, non-exploitation, and an equitable distribution of wealth.

An early objective of the new government was withdrawal of all foreign military installations from Libya. Following negotiations, British military installations at Tobruk and nearby El Adem were closed in March 1970, and U.S. facilities at Wheelus Air Force Base near Tripoli were closed in June 1970. That July, the Libyan Government ordered the expulsion of several thousand Italian residents. By 1971, libraries and cultural centers operated by foreign governments were ordered closed.

In the 1970s, Libya claimed leadership of Arab and African revolutionary forces and sought active roles in international organizations. Late in the 1970s, Libyan embassies were redesignated as "people's bureaus," as Qadhafi sought to portray Libyan foreign policy as an expression of the popular will. The people's bureaus, aided by Libyan religious, political, educational, and business institutions overseas, exported Qadhafi's revolutionary philosophy abroad. Qadhafi's confrontational foreign policies and use of terrorism, as well as Libya's growing friendship with the U.S.S.R., led to increased tensions



with the West in the 1980s. Following a terrorist bombing at a discotheque in West Berlin frequented by American military personnel, in 1986 the U.S. retaliated militarily against targets in Libya, and imposed broad unilateral economic sanctions.

After Libya was implicated in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, UN sanctions were imposed in 1992. UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs) passed in 1992 and 1993 obliged Libya to fulfill requirements related to the Pan Am 103 bombing before sanctions could be lifted. Qadhafi initially refused to comply with these requirements, leading to Libya's political and economic isolation for most of the 1990s. In 1999, Libya fulfilled one of the UNSCR requirements by surrendering two Libyans suspected in connection with the bombing for trial before a Scottish court in the Netherlands. One of these suspects, Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, was found guilty; the other was acquitted. Al-Megrahi's conviction was upheld on appeal in 2002. In

August 2003, Libya fulfilled the remaining UNSCR requirements, including acceptance of responsibility for the actions of its officials and payment of appropriate compensation to the victims' families. UN sanctions were lifted on September 12, 2003. U.S. International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)-based sanctions were lifted September 20, 2004.

On December 19, 2003, Libya publicly announced its intention to rid itself of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)-class missile programs. Since that time, it has cooperated with the U.S., the U.K., the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons toward these objectives. Libya has also signed the IAEA Additional Protocol and has become a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. These were important steps toward full diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Libya.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Libya's political system is in theory based on the political philosophy in Qadhafi's Green Book, which combines socialist and Islamic theories and rejects parliamentary democracy and political parties. In reality, Qadhafi exercises near total control over major government decisions. For the first seven years following the revolution, Colonel Qadhafi and 12 fellow army officers, the Revolutionary Command Council, began a complete overhaul of Libya's political system, society and economy. In 1973, he announced the start of a "cultural revolution" in schools, businesses, industries, and public institutions to oversee administration of those organizations in the public interest. On March 2, 1977, Qadhafi convened a General People's Congress (GPC) to proclaim the establishment of "people's power," change the country's name to the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and to vest, theoretically, primary authority in the GPC.

The GPC is the legislative forum that interacts with the General People's Committee, whose members are secretaries of Libyan ministries. It serves as the intermediary between the masses and the leadership and is composed of the secretariats of some 600 local "basic popular congresses." The GPC secretariat and the cabinet secretaries are appointed by the GPC secretary general and confirmed by the annual GPC congress. These cabinet secretaries are responsible for the routine operation of their ministries, but Qadhafi exercises real authority directly or through manipulation of the peoples and revolutionary committees.

Qadhafi remained the de facto chief of state and secretary general of the GPC until 1980, when he gave up his office. Although he holds no formal office, Qadhafi exercises power with the assistance of a small group of trusted advisers, who include relatives from his home base in the Sirte region, which lies between the traditional commercial and political power centers in Benghazi and Tripoli.

In the 1980s, competition grew between the official Libyan Government and military hierarchies and the revolutionary committees. An abortive coup attempt in May 1984, apparently mounted by Libyan exiles with internal support, led to a short-lived reign of terror in which thousands were imprisoned and interrogated. An unknown number were executed. Qadhafi used the revolutionary committees to search out alleged internal opponents following the coup attempt, thereby accelerating the rise of more radical elements inside the Libyan power hierarchy.

In 1988, faced with rising public dissatisfaction with shortages in consumer goods and setbacks in Libya's war with Chad, Qadhafi began to curb the power of the revolutionary committees and to institute some domestic reforms. The regime released many political prisoners and eased restrictions on foreign travel by Libyans. Private businesses were again permitted to operate. In the late 1980s, Qadhafi began to pursue an anti-Islamic fundamentalist policy domestically, viewing fundamentalism as a potential rallying point for opponents of the regime. Qadhafi's security forces launched a pre-emptive strike at alleged coup plotters in the military and among the Warfallah tribe in October 1993. Widespread arrests and government reshufflings followed, accompanied by public "confessions" from regime opponents and allegations of torture and executions. The military, once Qadhafi's strongest supporters, became a potential threat in the 1990s. In 1993, following a failed coup attempt that implicated senior military officers, Qadhafi began to purge the military periodically, eliminating potential rivals and inserting his own loyal followers in their place.

The Libyan court system consists of three levels: the courts of first instance; the courts of appeals; and the Supreme Court, which is the final appellate level. The GPC appoints justices to the Supreme Court. Special "revolutionary courts" and military courts operate outside the court system to try political offenses and crimes against the state. "People's courts," another example of extrajudicial authority, were abolished in January 2005. Libya's justice system is nominally based on Sharia law.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Col. Muammar al-Qadhafi has no official title, but he runs Libya and is the de facto chief of state. The Secretary of the General People's Congress is chief of state in theory but is not treated as such. The Secretary of the General People's Committee plays the role of prime minister.

Leader: **Muammar Abu Minyar al-QADHAFI, Col.**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Congress: **Miftah Muhammad KUAYBA**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee (Prime Min.): **al-Baghdadi Ali al-MAHMUDI**

Asst. Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee: **Mubarak Abdullah al-SHAMIKH**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Agriculture & Animal Resources: **Abu Bakr Mabruk al-MANSURI**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Culture & Information: **Nuri Dhaw al-HUMAYDI**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Economy, Trade, & Investment: **Ali Abd al-Aziz al-ISSAWI**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Electricity, Water, & Gas: **Umran Ibrahim Abu-KRA'AA**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for General Education: **Abd al-Qadir Muhammad al-BAGHDADI**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Finance: **Muhammad Ali al-HUWAYZ**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Foreign Liaison & Intl. Cooperation: **Abd al-Rahman Muhammad SHALGHAM**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Health & Environment: **Muhammad Abu Ujaylah RASHID**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Higher Education: **Aqil Husayn AQIL**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Industry & Mines: **Ali Yusuf ZIKRI**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Justice: **Mustafa Muhammad Abd-al-JALIL**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Planning: **Abd-al-Hafid Mahmud al-ZULAYTINI**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Public Security: **Abd al-Fatah Yunis al-UBAYDI**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Social Affairs: **Ibrahim al-ZARRUQ al-SHARIF**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for Telecommunications & Transport: **Muhammad Abu-Ujayl al-MABRUK**

Sec. of the Gen. People's Committee for the Workforce, Training, & Employment: **Matuq Muhammad MATUQ**

Governor, Central Bank: **Farhat Omer Ben GDARA**

Charge d'Affaires, People's Bureau, Washington: **Ali Suleiman AUJALI**

Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Giadalla Azzoz Belgasem ETTALHI**

The Libyan Embassy is located at 2600 Virginia Avenue NW, Suite 705, Washington DC 20037 (tel. 202-944-9601, fax 202-944-9060).

ECONOMY

The government dominates Libya's socialist-oriented economy through complete control of the country's oil resources, which account for approximately 97% of export earnings, 75% of government receipts, and 54% of the gross domestic product. Oil revenues constitute the principal source of foreign exchange. Much of the country's income has been lost to waste, corruption, conventional armaments purchases, and attempts to develop weapons of mass destruction, as well as to large donations made to developing countries in attempts to increase Qadhafi's influence in Africa and elsewhere. Although oil revenues and a small population give Libya one of the highest per capita GDPs in Africa, the government's mismanagement of the economy has led to high inflation and increased import prices. These factors resulted in a decline in the standard of living from the late 1990s through 2003.

Despite efforts to diversify the economy and encourage private sector participation, extensive controls of prices, credit, trade, and foreign exchange constrain growth. Import restrictions and inefficient resource allocations have caused periodic shortages of basic goods and foodstuffs.

Although agriculture is the second-largest sector in the economy, Libya imports most foods. Climatic conditions and poor soils severely limit output, while higher incomes and a growing population have caused food consumption to rise. Domestic food production meets about 25% of demand.

On September 20, 2004, President George W. Bush signed an Executive Order ending economic sanctions imposed under the authority of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). U.S. persons are no longer prohibited from working in Libya, and many American companies are actively seeking investment opportunities in Libya. The government has announced ambitious plans to increase foreign investment in the oil and gas sectors to significantly boost production capacity. The government is also pursuing a number of infrastructure projects such as highways, railways, telecommunications backbones, and irrigation.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since 1969, Qadhafi has determined Libya's foreign policy. His principal foreign policy goals have been Arab unity, elimination of Israel, advancement of Islam, support for Palestinians, elimination of outside—particularly Western—influence in the Middle East and Africa, and support for a range of "revolutionary" causes.

After the 1969 coup, Qadhafi closed American and British bases on Libyan territory and partially nationalized all foreign oil and commercial interests in Libya. He also played a key role in promoting the use of oil embargoes as a political weapon for challenging the West, hoping that an oil price rise and embargo in 1973 would persuade the West—especially the United States—to end support for Israel. Qadhafi rejected both Soviet communism and Western capitalism, and claimed he was charting a middle course. Libya's relationship with the former Soviet Union involved massive Libyan arms purchases from the Soviet bloc and the presence of thousands of east bloc advisers. Libya's use—and heavy loss—of Soviet-supplied weaponry in its war with Chad was a notable breach of an apparent Soviet-Libyan understanding not to use the weapons for activities inconsistent with Soviet objectives. As a result, Soviet-Libyan relations reached a nadir in mid-1987.

After the fall of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, Libya concentrated on expanding diplomatic ties with Third World countries and increasing its commercial links with Europe and East Asia. Following the imposition of UN sanctions in 1992, these ties significantly diminished. Following a 1998 Arab League meeting in which fellow Arab states decided not to chal-

lenge UN sanctions, Qadhafi announced that he was turning his back on pan-Arab ideas, which had been one of the fundamental tenets of his philosophy.

Instead, Libya pursued closer bilateral ties, particularly with North African neighbors Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. It has also sought to develop its relations with Sub-Saharan Africa, leading to Libyan involvement in several internal African disputes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, Eritrea and Ethiopia. Libya has also sought to expand its influence in Africa through financial assistance, ranging from aid donations to impoverished neighbors such as Niger to oil subsidies to Zimbabwe, and through participation in the African Union. Qadhafi has proposed a borderless "United States of Africa" to transform the continent into a single nation-state ruled by a single government. This plan has been greeted with skepticism. Libya has played a helpful role in facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance to Darfur refugees in Chad.

One of the longest-standing issues in Libya's relationship with the European Union and the international community was resolved in July 2007 with the release of five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor who had been convicted in 1999 of deliberately infecting over 400 children in a Benghazi hospital with the HIV virus. The six medics were sentenced to death in 2004, a sentence that was upheld by the Libyan Supreme Court but commuted in July 2007 by the Higher Judicial Council to life in prison. Under a previous agreement with the Bulgarian Government on the repatriation of prisoners, the medics were allowed to return to Bulgaria to finish their sentence, where upon arrival the Bulgarian president pardoned all six. The Benghazi International Fund, established by the United States and its European allies, raised $460 million to distribute to the families of the children infected with HIV, each of whom received $1 million.

Terrorism

Libya has taken significant steps to mend its international image and formally renounced terrorism in a letter to the UN Security Council in August 2003. In 1999, the Libyan government surrendered two Libyans suspected of involvement in the Pan Am 103 bombing, leading to the suspension of UN sanctions. On January 31, 2001, a Scottish court seated in the Netherlands found one of the suspects, Abdel Basset al-Megrahi, guilty of murder in connection with the bombing, and acquitted the second suspect, Al-Amin Khalifa Fhima. Megrahi's conviction was upheld on March 14, 2002, but an appeals hearing was granted in June 2007 by the Scottish High Court.

UN sanctions were lifted on September 12, 2003 following Libyan compliance with its remaining UNSCR requirements on Pan Am 103, including acceptance of responsibility for the actions of its officials and payment of appropriate compensation. Libya paid compensation in 1999 for the death of British policewoman Yvonne Fletcher, a move that preceded the reopening of the British Embassy in Tripoli, and paid damages to the families of the victims in the bombing of UTA Flight 772. With the lifting of UN sanctions in September 2003, each of the families of the victims of Pan Am 103 received $4 million of a maximum $10 million in compensation. After the lifting of U.S. IEEPA-based sanctions on September 20, 2004, the families received a further $4 million.

On November 13, 2001, a German court found four persons, including a former employee of the Libyan embassy in East Berlin, guilty in connection with the 1986 La Belle disco bombing, in which two U.S. servicemen were killed. The court also established a connection to the Libyan government. The German Government demanded that Libya accept responsibility for the La Belle bombing and pay appropriate compensation. A compensation deal for non-U.S. victims was agreed to in August 2004. U.S. victims continue to pursue their claims in federal court.

By 2003, Libya appeared to have curtailed its support for international terrorism, although it may have retained residual contacts with some of its former terrorist clients. In August 2004, the Department of Justice entered into a plea agreement with Abdulrahman Alamoudi, in which he stated that he had been part of a 2003 plot to assassinate Saudi Crown Prince Abdallah (now King Abdallah) at the behest of Libyan government officials.

In 2005, the Saudi Government pardoned the individuals accused in the assassination plot. During the 2005 UN General Assembly session, Foreign Minister Shalgam issued a statement that reaffirmed Libya's commitment to the statements made in its letter addressed to the Security Council on August 15, 2003, renouncing terrorism in all its forms and pledging that Libya will not support acts of international terrorism or other acts of violence targeting civilians, whatever their political views or positions. Libya also expressed its commitment to continue cooperating in the international fight against terrorism. On June 30, 2006, the U.S. rescinded Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism.

U.S.-LIBYAN RELATIONS

The United States supported the UN resolution providing for Libyan independence in 1951 and raised the status of its office at Tripoli from a consulate general to a legation. Libya opened a legation in Washington, DC, in 1954. Both countries subsequently raised their missions to embassy level.

After Qadhafi's 1969 coup, U.S.-Libyan relations became increasingly strained because of Libya's foreign policies supporting international terrorism and subversion against moderate Arab and African governments. In 1972, the United States withdrew its ambassador. Export controls on military equipment and civil aircraft were imposed during the 1970s, and

U.S. embassy staff members were withdrawn from Tripoli after a mob attacked and set fire to the embassy in December 1979. The U.S. Government designated Libya a "state sponsor of terrorism" on December 29, 1979.

In May 1981, the U.S. Government closed the Libyan "people's bureau" (embassy) in Washington, DC, and expelled the Libyan staff in response to a general pattern of conduct by the people's bureau contrary to internationally accepted standards of diplomatic behavior.

In August 1981, two Libyan jets fired on U.S. aircraft participating in a routine naval exercise over international waters of the Mediterranean claimed by Libya. The U.S. planes returned fire and shot down the attacking Libyan aircraft. In December 1981, the State Department invalidated U.S. passports for travel to Libya and, for purposes of safety, advised all U.S. citizens in Libya to leave. In March 1982, the U.S. Government prohibited imports of Libyan crude oil into the United States and expanded the controls on U.S.-origin goods intended for export to Libya. Licenses were required for all transactions, except food and medicine. In March 1984, U.S. export controls were expanded to prohibit future exports to the Ras Lanuf petrochemical complex. In April 1985, all Export-Import Bank financing was prohibited.

Due to Libya's continuing support for terrorism, the United States adopted additional economic sanctions against Libya in January 1986, including a total ban on direct import and export trade, commercial contracts, and travel-related activities. In addition, Libyan Government assets in the United States were frozen. When evidence of Libyan complicity was discovered in the Berlin discotheque terrorist bombing that killed two American servicemen, the United States responded by launching an aerial bombing attack against targets near Tripoli and Benghazi in April 1986. Subsequently, the United States maintained its trade and travel embargoes and brought diplomatic and economic pressure to bear against Libya. This pressure helped to bring about the Lockerbie settlement and Libya's renunciation of WMD and MTCR-class missiles.

In 1991, two Libyan intelligence agents were indicted by federal prosecutors in the U.S. and Scotland for their involvement in the December 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103. In January 1992, the UN Security Council approved Resolution 731 demanding that Libya surrender the suspects, cooperate with the Pan Am 103 and UTA 772 investigations, pay compensation to the victims' families, and cease all support for terrorism. Libya's refusal to comply led to the approval of UNSC Resolution 748 on March 31, 1992, imposing sanctions designed to bring about Libyan compliance. Continued Libyan defiance led to passage of UNSC Resolution 883—a limited assets freeze and an embargo on selected oil equipment—in November 1993. UN sanctions were lifted on September 12, 2003, after Libya fulfilled all remaining UNSCR requirements, including renunciation of terrorism, acceptance of responsibility for the actions of its officials, and payment of appropriate compensation to the victims' families.

On December 19, 2003, Libya announced its intention to rid itself of WMD and MTCR-class missile programs. Since that time, it has cooperated with the U.S., the U.K., the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons toward these objectives. Libya has also signed the IAEA Additional Protocol and has become a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In recognition of these actions, the U.S. began the process of normalizing relations with Libya. The U.S. terminated the applicability of the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act to Libya and the President signed an Executive Order on September 20, 2004 terminating the national emergency with respect to Libya and ending IEEPA-based economic sanctions. This action had the effect of unblocking assets blocked under the Executive Order sanctions. Restrictions on cargo aviation and third-party code-sharing have been lifted, as have restrictions on passenger aviation. Certain export controls remain in place. U.S. diplomatic personnel reopened the U.S. Interest Section in Tripoli on February 8, 2004. The mission was upgraded to a U.S. Liaison Office on June 28, 2004, and to a full embassy on May 31, 2006. The establishment in 2005 of an American School in Tripoli demonstrates the increased presence of Americans in Libya, and the continuing normalization of bilateral relations. Libya re-established its diplomatic presence in Washington with the opening of an Interest Section on July 8, 2004, which was subsequently upgraded to a Liaison Office in December 2004 and to a full embassy on May 31, 2006.

On May 15, 2006, the State Department announced its intention to rescind Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism in recognition of the fact that Libya had met the statutory requirements for such a move: it had not provided any support for acts of international terrorism in the preceding six-month period, and had provided assurances that it would not do so in the future. On June 30, 2006, the U.S. rescinded Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. In July 2007, Mr. Gene Cretz was nominated by President Bush as ambassador to Libya.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

TRIPOLI (E) off Jaraba St., behind Libyan Swiss Clinic, Ben Ashour, 218-91-220-3239, Fax 218-21-, Workweek: Sun–Thurs, 08:00–16:45, Website: http://libya.usembassy.gov.

CM OMS:	Cecile M. Sakla
DCM/CHG:	J. Christopher Stevens
HRO:	Ross Taggart
MGT:	Robyn Hooker
POL/ECO:	John Godfrey
CON:	Greg Segas
PAO:	Jennifer Hall-Godfrey
COM:	Mike Miller
GSO:	Daniel White
RSO:	Jim Eisenhut
AFSA:	Cecile Sakla
CLO:	Shannon Eisenhut
DAO:	Col. Kyle Carnahan
EEO:	Greg Segas

FMO: Ross Taggart
IMO: Jacquelynn Beres
IRS: Kathy J Beck
ISSO: Ricardo Perez

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 13, 2008

Country Description: Officially known as the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Libya has a developing economy. Islamic ideals and beliefs provide the conservative foundation of the country's customs, laws, and practices. Tourist facilities are not widely available.

Entry Requirements: Passports and visas are required. The restrictions on the use of U.S. passports for travel to, in, or through Libya were lifted in February 2004. Please see the section below on Special Circumstances.

Without prior notice, the Libyan government on November 11, 2007 "reinstated" a requirement that all foreign travelers must have an Arabic translation of their personal biographic data added to their passport in order to apply for a Libyan visa, or to enter Libya. This requirement includes foreigners who already received visas before the requirement was put into place, including those foreigners currently resident in Libya. Since that date, foreign travelers whose passports do not have Arabic translations have been denied entry into Libya or refused boarding by airlines on flights into Libya.

The U.S. passport is a U.S. travel document that meets all generally recognized international standards. While the Libyan government has the right to impose its own requirements for travelers in connection with obtaining a Libyan visa, it also has the responsibility to give travelers information on where and how to meet these requirements. Travelers should be aware that in some cases, Libyan officials may ask that U.S. citizens obtain translations from U.S. Government-approved translation services. However, U.S. consular officers have no authority to designate or certify private translations; nor do they have authority to place a consular authentication stamp over a privately-obtained translation. American citizens who hold Libyan visas or who intend to apply for a visa are advised to contact the nearest Libyan embassy or consulate for information on how to obtain an acceptable translation. Information from Libyan embassies and consulates may differ from country to country. American citizens may also contact the Consular Section at the U.S. embassy or consulate for additional information.

The Government of Libya does not allow persons with passports bearing an Israeli visa or entry/exit stamps to enter the country. At this time, neither Libya nor the U.S. provides visa services to the general public in each other's countries; U.S. visitors to Libya should therefore plan to obtain a visa via a third country. Libyan visas require an invitation or sponsor, can take up to several months to process, and should be obtained prior to travel. All visas are vetted and approved by immigration departments in Tripoli and only issued by the appropriate Libyan Embassy upon receipt of that approval. There may be another wait for actual visa issuance once approval has been received.

For tourists, the visa application procedure in most cases requires a letter of invitation from an accredited tour company in Libya; for business travelers, a letter of invitation is needed from the Libyan business entity. Americans who apply for Libyan visas are experiencing significant delays, often waiting several weeks or months if their applications are approved at all. Inconsistent Libyan visa practice is subject to change without notice and visa service to American citizens is often blocked without warning. With few exceptions, Libya has stopped issuing tourist visas to Americans. It is recommended that Americans always obtain individual Libyan visas prior to travel, rather than group visas. Americans who expected to enter on group tour visas or individual airport visas arranged by Libyan sponsors have routinely been denied entry at the air and sea ports and have been forced to turn back at the airport or remain onboard ship at the port while other nationals disembark. The U.S. Embassy in Tripoli cannot provide assistance to American citizens seeking Libyan visas.

Inquiries about obtaining a Libyan visa may be made through the Libyan Embassy in Washington, D.C. The Embassy is located at 2600 Virginia Avenue NW—Suite 705, Washington, DC 20037, phone number 202-944-9601, fax number 202-944-9606, website www.libyanbureau-dc.org. Neither the Libyan Mission to the UN in New York nor the Libyan Embassy in Washington, DC accepts visa applications from the general public.

The closest Libyan visa-issuing office to the continental United States is the Libyan People's Bureau in Ottawa, Canada; however, that office frequently declines to accept visa applications from American citizens. The land borders with Egypt and Tunisia are subject to periodic closures even to travelers with valid Libyan visas. Short-term closures of other land borders may occur with little notice. Within three days of arrival, visitors must register at the police station closest to where they are residing or they may encounter problems during their stay or upon departure.

Women and children in Libya are often subject to strict family controls. This can be a particular problem for young single women of marriageable age. Although a woman does not need her father's or husband's explicit consent every time she wishes to leave Libya, a Libyan husband may take legal action to prevent his wife from leaving the country, regardless of her nationality. While not illegal, it is unusual for women and children to travel alone. Children under 18 whose fathers are Libyan must have the father's permission to depart Libya, even if the mother has been granted full custody by a Libyan court.

The Libyan Government requires all its citizens, including dual nationals of Libyan descent, to enter and depart Libya on Libyan documents. In some cases American citizens of Libyan descent have entered Libya on old or expired Libyan identity document and then discovered that they cannot depart Libya without obtaining a valid Libyan passport, which can be a cumbersome process.

Safety and Security: As Libya has taken steps to cooperate in the global war on terrorism, the Libyan Government's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism was rescinded on June 30, 2006. Recent worldwide terrorist alerts have stated that extremist groups continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. interests in the region. Therefore, any American citizen who decides to travel to Libya should maintain a strong security posture by being aware of surroundings, avoiding crowds and demonstrations, keeping a low profile, and varying times and routes for all required travel.

Security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under observation. Hotel rooms, telephones, and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be inspected. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with the authorities.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime against foreigners is a growing problem in Libya. The most common types of crime are property crimes of opportunity, to include vehicle burglaries. Pick-pocketing and residential burglaries are also on the increase. Women routinely face verbal harassment. While physical violence is not common, there have been instances of assault against women. These assaults can range from sexual groping or assault/battery, to attempted rape.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: While some health care providers have been trained in the United States or Europe, basic modern medical care and/or medicines may not be available in Libya. Most Libyan citizens prefer to be treated outside of Libya for ailments such as heart disease and diabetes. A representative list of healthcare providers is available at the U.S. Embassy Tripoli's web site at http://libya.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of Libya. All positive HIV/AIDS tests made in country must be reported to the government.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Libya is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Paved roads in rural areas are satisfactory; however, many rural roads are unpaved (i.e. dirt roads). Also, major highways along the seacoast and leading south merge into single-lane highways once they are outside the cities. These roads are heavily trafficked and precarious to navigate, especially at night and during the winter rainy season. The presence of sand deposits, and domestic and wild animals that frequently cross these highways and rural roads, makes them even more hazardous.

Availability of roadside assistance is extremely limited and offered only in Arabic. In urban areas and near the outskirts of major cities there is a greater possibility of assistance by

police and emergency ambulance services, although they are usually ill equipped to deal with serious injuries or accidents.

Driving in Libya may be hazardous, and there is a high accident rate. Police enforcement of traffic signs and laws is rare. As a result, it is often difficult to anticipate the actions of other drivers on Libyan streets and highways. Wind-blown sand can reduce visibility without warning. Road conditions are poor, and public transportation, which is limited to occasional bus service, is poor. Taxis are available, but many taxi drivers are reckless and untrained, and English-speaking drivers are extremely rare. The sidewalks in urban areas are often in bad condition and cluttered, but pedestrians are able to use them.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Libya, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Libya's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Libya's economy operates on a "cash-only" basis for most transactions, even though U.S. law now permits the use in Libya of credit cards and checks drawn on U.S. banks. Some hotels, restaurants, and major airlines are the only businesses known to accept credit cards (Visa more often than MasterCard). It is recommended that travelers consult their credit card entity prior to travel to ensure that transactions from Libya can be accepted by that entity. A very limited number of ATM machines are being put into service at a few large hotels, major office complexes, the airport, and one or two markets. Service is sporadic and sometimes unreliable.

Foreign visitors should be aware that the penalties for use of unauthorized currency dealers are severe. Foreign visitors should also be aware that their passports might be confiscated in business disputes and/or they may not be permitted to depart Libya until the dispute has been settled. The workweek is Sunday-Thursday. Most U.S. economic sanctions against Libya were terminated effective September 21, 2004. For further information, please contact the Office of Foreign Assets Control at http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac.

On June 30, 2006, the U.S. Department of State officially rescinded Libya's designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. On August 31, 2006, the U.S. Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) published an amendment to the Export Administration Regulations (EAR) in the Federal Register. This amendment updated BIS' license requirements for Libya under the EAR due to its removal from the State Sponsors' List. For further information specific to Libya, contact BIS' Office of Nonproliferation and Treaty Compliance/Foreign Policy Controls Division at (202) 482-4252. Libya-related information is also found on the BIS web site: http://www.bis.doc.gov.

Libyan customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning the introduction into Libya or removal from Libya of firearms, religious materials, antiquities, medications, and currency. Importation of pornographic materials is illegal. The importation and consumption of alcohol and pork products are illegal in Libya. At times, passengers arriving in Libya have been required to bring varying amounts of convertible currency into Libya. This requirement is subject to a border check, and the passenger faces possible deportation if this requirement is not met. It is advisable to contact any Libyan Embassy abroad for specific information regarding customs requirements.

In addition to being subject to all Libyan laws, U.S. citizens of Libyan origin may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Libyan citizens. The Government of Libya considers all children born to Libyan fathers to be Libyan citizens even if they were not issued a Libyan birth certificate or a passport. Dual Libyan-American nationals may not enter and leave Libya on their U.S. passports, and must obtain a Libyan travel document before traveling to Libya.

Persons with dual nationality who travel to Libya on their Libyan passports are normally treated as Libyan citizens by the local government. The ability to provide U.S. consular assistance to those traveling on Libyan passports is extremely limited.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Libyan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Libya are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

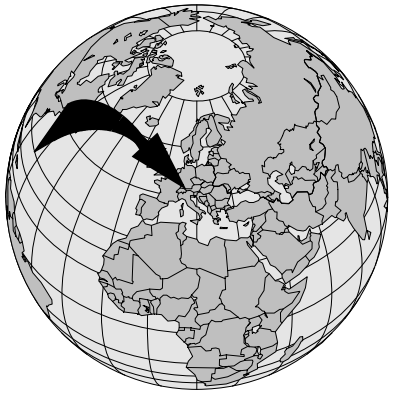
Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Libya are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Libya.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the near-

est U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

Although diplomatic relations were upgraded to embassy status on May 31, 2006, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli is operating with limited staff and in interim facilities. A consular officer is available to provide assistance to U.S. citizens.

Appointments for routine services can be made by telephone from 9am—4 pm Sundays through Thursdays (except U.S. and Libyan holidays) at (218) 21-335-1235 or via e-mail at TripoliConsular@state.gov. In the event of an emergency involving an American citizen, the after-hours telephone number is (218) 91-220-0125. General information, including forms, is available on the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://libya.usembassy.gov.



LIECHTENSTEIN

Compiled from the April 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Principality of Liechtenstein

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 61.7 sq. miles. (160 sq km.); about the size of Washington, DC.
Cities: Capital—Vaduz.
Terrain: 66% mountains, the remainder hills and plateau situated next to the Rhine.
Climate: Continental; cold, cloudy winters with frequent snow or rain; cool to moderately warm, cloudy, humid summers.

People

Nationality: Noun—Liechtensteiner(s), adjective—Liechtenstein.
Population: (2007) 35,168, of which 33.9% foreigners, mainly Swiss, Austrians, Germans, and Italians.
Annual population growth rate: 2.1%.
Ethnic groups: Liechtensteiners, Swiss, Austrians, and Germans.
Religions: Roman Catholic 80.4%, Protestant 7.1%, others 12.5%.
Languages: German (official), Alemannic dialect.

Government

Type: Hereditary constitutional monarchy.
Independence: January 23, 1719 Imperial Principality of Liechtenstein established; July 12, 1806 established independence from the Holy Roman Empire.
Constitution: October 5, 1921.
Government branches: Executive—chief of state: Prince Hans Adam II (assumed executive powers on August 26, 1984, acceded to the throne on November 13, 1989); Heir Apparent Prince Alois, son of the monarch, was born on June 11, 1968. Alois was appointed the permanent representative of the Prince on August 15, 2004. Head of government: Otmar Hasler (since April 5, 2001). Cabinet: Five cabinet members. The cabinet is elected by the Diet, and approved by the Prince. Legislative—Unicameral Diet or Landtag (25 seats; members are elected by direct popular vote under proportional representation to serve four-year terms). Judicial—District Court (low), Superior Court (medium), Supreme Court (high).
Political subdivisions: The country is subdivided into 11 districts.
Political parties: Fatherland Union (VU), Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP), and the Free List (FL).
Currency: Swiss Franc.
National holidays: Assumption Day, August 15.

Economy

GDP: (2004) U.S. $4.28 billion (SFr. 4.28 billion).
Annual growth rate: 2.6%.
Unemployment: (2006): 3.3%, or 584 individuals (based on new definition).
Avg. inflation rate: (2006) 1.1%.
Agriculture: (7% of GDP) Wheat, barley, corn, potatoes, livestock, dairy products.
Industry: (44% of GDP) Electronics, metal manufacturing, textiles, ceramics, pharmaceuticals, food products, precision instruments.
Services: (26% of GDP) Financial, tourism.
Trade: (2006) Exports—$3.6 billion (SFr 3.6 billion, +11.7% over 2005). Main products—small specialty machinery, dental products, stamps, hardware, pottery. Major markets—U.S., Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, Taiwan, Japan, Austria, and United Kingdom. Imports—$2.16 billion (SFr 2.16 billion, +13.3% over 2005). Main products—machinery, metal goods, textiles, foodstuffs, motor vehicles. Major suppliers—EU countries, Switzerland.
Exchange rate: (April 2008) Swiss francs per U.S. dollar = 1.0.

HISTORY

The Liechtenstein Family of Austria acquired the fiefs of Vaduz and Schellenberg in 1699 and 1713 respectively, and gained the status of an independent principality of the Holy Roman Empire in 1719 under the

name Liechtenstein. The French, under Napoleon, occupied the country for a few years, but Liechtenstein regained its independence in 1815 within the new German Confederation. In 1868, after the Confederation dissolved, Liechtenstein disbanded its army of 80 men and declared its permanent neutrality, which was respected during both world wars.

In 1919, Liechtenstein entrusted its external relations to neutral Switzerland. After World War II, Liechtenstein became increasingly important as a financial center, and the country became more prosperous. In 1989, Prince Hans Adam II succeeded his father to the throne and in 1996 settled a long-running dispute with Russia over the Liechtenstein family's archives, which had been confiscated during the Soviet occupation of Vienna in 1945 and later moved to Moscow. In 1978, Liechtenstein became a member of the Council of Europe and then joined the UN in 1990, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1991, and both the European Economic Area (EEA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995.

GOVERNMENT

According to the Constitution, the government is a collegial body and consists of the head of government and four governmental councilors. The head of government and ministers are appointed by the Prince, following the proposals of the Parliament.

Amendments to the constitution and new laws have to be adopted by parliament, signed by both the Prince and the Head of Government, and published in the Principality's Law Gazette.

Prince Hans Adam II is the Head of State. He is entitled to exercise his right to state leadership in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and of other laws. On August 15, 2004 Prince Hans-Adam II entrusted Hereditary Prince Alois as his representative with the exercise of all sovereign rights pertaining to him, in accordance with the Liechtenstein Constitution.

He represents the state vis-à-vis foreign states. He signs international treaties either in person or delegates this function to a plenipotentiary. In accordance with international law, some treaties only become valid when they have been ratified by parliament.

The Prince's involvement in legislation includes the right to take initiatives in the form of government bills and the right to veto parliamentary proposals.

The Prince has the power to enact princely decrees. Emergency princely decrees are possible when the security and welfare of the country is at stake. A countersignature by the Head of Government is required.

The Prince has the right to convene and adjourn parliament and, for serious reasons, to adjourn it for three months or to dissolve it.

The Prince nominates the government, district and high court judges, the judges of the Supreme Court, and the presidents and their deputies of the Constitutional Court and of the Administrative Court of Appeal on the basis of the names put forward by parliament.

The Prince's other authorities include mitigating and commuting punishments that have been imposed with legal force and the abolition—i.e. the dismissal—of investigations that have been initiated. All judgments are issued in the name of the Prince.

Citizens elect the parliament directly under a system of proportional representation. Until 1989, 15 members represented the population of the two constituencies (6 for the lowland area and 9 for the highland area). Since 1989 the lowland constituency has been entitled to have 10 members and the highland area 15 members.

The Parliament's main task is to discuss and adopt resolutions on constitutional proposals and draft government bills. It has the additional duties of giving its assent to important international treaties, of electing members of the government, judges and board members of the Principality's institutions, setting the annual budget and approving taxes and other public charges, and supervising the administration of the state.

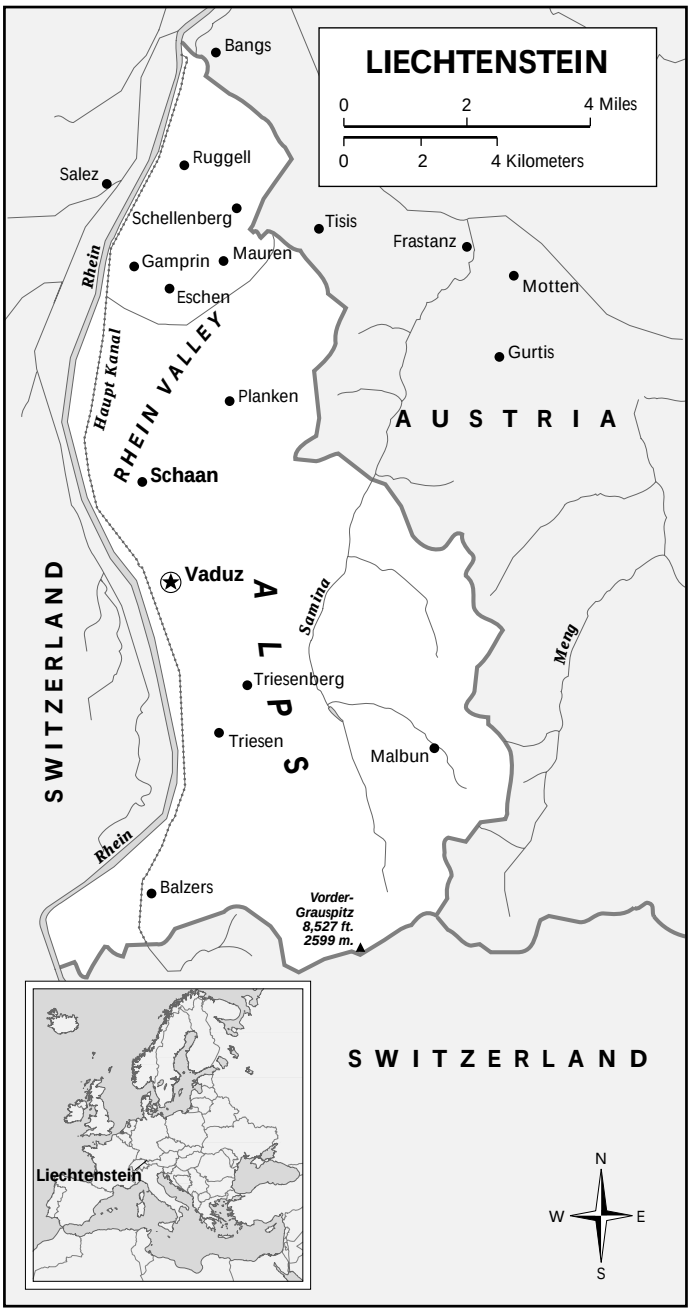
The Parliament observes its rights and duties in the course of sessions of the whole parliament and through the parliamentary commissions that it elects. All members of parliament exercise their mandates in addition to their normal professions or occupations.

The President of parliament and his deputy are both elected at the opening meeting for the current year. The President convenes the individual meetings during the session, leads them and represents parliament externally.

During the parliamentary recess—normally from January to February/March—a "state committee" assumes parliament's duties, and such a committee must also be elected in the case of any adjournment or dissolution of parliament. A "state committee" consists of the President of parliament and four other members.

The duties and working procedures of parliament are laid down in the constitution and in parliament's standing orders.

The government of Liechtenstein is based on the principle of collegiality. The government consists of the Head of Government and four Councilors. The members of the government are proposed by the parliament and are appointed by the Prince. Only men or women born in Liechtenstein, and who are eligible to be elected to parliament, may be elected to the government committee. The two electoral areas of the country, the highlands and the lowlands, are entitled to at least two members of the government, and their respective deputies must come from the same area.



POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The political parties are the moving forces with regard to the composition of the government and in the parliament. For the 2005-2009 legislature period of office one Councilor and three deputies are women. From 1938 to 1997, Liechtenstein had a coalition government and there were only two parties in parliament, the Fatherland Union and the Progressive Citizen's Party. Liechtenstein's distinctive form of coalition government came to an end in April 1997. The Fatherland Union took sole responsibility for the government during the 1997 to 2001 parliament, with its members filling all the positions on the government committee. In 2001, the Progressive Citizen's Party held the majority, and provided all the members of the government. The minority parties, as opposition parties, acted as a check on the government in parliament and on parliamentary commissions.

In the March 2005 parliamentary election a new political party, the Free List, earned enough votes to gain three seats, preventing either of the two larger parties from gaining an absolute majority. A new Parliament was elected and a grand coalition was formed; the two strongest factions, the center-right Progressive Citizens' Party and the center-left Fatherland Union, holding 3 and 2 cabinet seats respectively. There are 25 seats in the Landtag, divided as follows: Progressive Citizen's Party 12, Fatherland Union 10, Free List 3. There are 6 women in the 25-seat Parliament and 1 in the 5-member Cabinet. Women first gained the right to vote in Liechtenstein and a growing number of women are active in politics. Women served on the executive committees of the major parties.

In March 2003, the Liechtenstein electorate endorsed with a decisive margin Prince Hans-Adam II's proposal for a revision of the Liechtenstein Constitution which granted him the power to dissolve Parliament and appoint an interim government, dismiss individual members of Government, and veto any parliamentary legislation by not signing the bill within six months. Without the approval of the reigning prince, no further constitutional amendments can be adopted, except in the case of a referendum abolishing the royal house. The Prince now also has final approval on the appointment of judges, and the State Court loses its key competence to mediate between the Government and the Prince on constitutional matters. In September 2005 an ad-hoc committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe met with a delegation of the Liechtenstein Parliament in Vaduz for a first round of talks on this change to the constitutional order. The talks are part of a dialogue that the Parliamentary Assembly chose as an alternative to a standard monitor-

ing procedure to assess the constitutional order following the adoption in 2003 of a series of amendments to the Liechtenstein Constitution.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Head of State: **HANS ADAM II, Prince**
Head of Govt. (Prime Min.): **Otmar HASLER**
Dep. Head of Govt. (Dep. Prime Min.): **Klaus TSCHUETSCHER**
Min. for Culture: **Rita KIEBER-BECK**
Min. for Economic Affairs: **Klaus TSCHUETSCHER**
Min. for Education: **Hugo QUADERER**
Min. for Environmental Affairs, Land-Use Planning, Agriculture, & Forestry: **Hugo QUADERER**
Min. for Family Affairs & Equal Opportunity: **Rita KEIBER-BECK**
Min. for Finance: **Otmar HASLER**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Rita KIEBER-BECK**
Min. for Health: **Martin MEYER**
Min. for Interior: **Martin MEYER**
Min. for Justice: **Klaus TSCHUETSCHER**
Min. for Public Works: **Otmar HASLER**
Min. for Social Affairs: **Hugo QUADERER**
Min. for Sport: **Klaus TSCHUETSCHER**
Min. for Transportation & Telecommunication: **Martin MEYER**
Chmn., Liechtenstein State Bank: **Josef FEHR**
Ambassador to the US: **Claudia FRITSCHE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Christian WENAWESER**

Liechtenstein maintains an embassy in the United States at 888 17th Street, NW, Suite 1250, Washington, DC 20006. Telephone (202) 331-0590.

ECONOMY

Since the signing of the Customs Treaty in 1924, Liechtenstein and Switzerland have represented one mutual economic area with open borders between the two countries. Liechtenstein also uses the Swiss franc as its national currency, and Swiss customs officers secure the border with Austria.

Liechtenstein is a member of EFTA and joined the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1995 in order to benefit from the EU internal market. The liberal economy and tax-system make Liechtenstein a safe, trustworthy and success-oriented place for private and business purposes, especially with its highly modern, internationally laid-out infrastructure and nearby connections to the whole world. In 2007, Liechtenstein will have an obligation under the EEA treaty to harmonize its laws with EU directives 2005/36 and 1999/42 on the mutual recognition of EU and EEA university and professional diplomas. Liechtenstein is also part of the EU fund on research and technology and is entitled to participate to EU projects and subsidies.

The Principality of Liechtenstein has gone through economic and cultural development in the last 40 years like no other Western country. In this short period of time Liechtenstein developed from mainly an agricultural state to one of the most highly industrialized countries in the world.

Besides its efficient industry, Liechtenstein also has a strong services sector. Four out of ten employees work in the services sector, a relatively high proportion of whom are foreigners, including those who commute across the border from the neighboring states of Switzerland and Austria. Total exports increased from $3 billion (SFr. 3 billion) in 2000 to $3.6 billion (SFr. 3.6 billion) in 2006, while total imports increased from $1.5 billion (SFr. 1.5 billion) to $2.16 billion (SFr. 2.16 billion) during the same period. In 2005, about 14% of Liechtenstein's goods were exported to Switzerland, 44% to the EU, 18% to the U.S., 24% to the Asia/Pacific, and the remaining share to the rest of the world. Liechtenstein imports more than 90% of its energy requirements. The Liechtenstein industrial sector contributes 44% of the country's GDP, followed by services (26%) and agriculture (7%). Despite Liechtenstein's overall good competitive performance, there is a trend among businesses to outsource their production in low cost countries.

In 2005, the U.S. was the third most important trading partner for Liechtenstein, with approximately $521 million (SFr. 521 million) worth of exports and $72 million (SFr. 72 million) of imports. Germany was first with a total trade value of $2.1 billion (SFr. 2.1 billion) and Austria second with $1.4 billion (SFr. 1.4 billion). Although Switzerland is an important trading partner, trade statistics are unavailable because both countries are in a customs union. Approximately 5% of the country's revenue is invested in research and development, one of the driving forces of the success of Liechtenstein's economy. The Principality of Liechtenstein is also known as an important financial center, primarily because it specializes in financial services for foreign entities. The country's low tax rate, loose incorporation and corporate governance rules, and traditions of strict bank secrecy have contributed significantly to the ability of financial intermediaries in Liechtenstein to attract funds from outside the country's borders. The same factors made the country attractive and vulnerable to money launderers, although late 2000 legislation has strengthened regulatory oversight of illicit funds transfers.

Liechtenstein has chartered 17 banks, 3 non-bank financial companies, and 71 public investment companies, as well as insurance and reinsurance companies. Its 270 licensed fiduciary companies and 81 lawyers serve as nominees for, or manage, more than 75,000 entities (primarily corporations, institutions, or trusts), mostly for non-Liechtenstein residents. Approximately one-third of these entities hold the controlling interest in other entities, chartered in countries other than Liechtenstein. The Principality's laws permit the corporations it charters to issue bearer shares. Until recently, the Principality's banking laws permitted banks to issue numbered accounts, but new regulations require strict know-your-customer practices for all accounts.

DEFENSE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

Defense is the responsibility of Switzerland. In 1978, Liechtenstein became a member of the Council of Europe and then joined the UN in 1990, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1991, and both the European Economic Area (EEA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995.

U.S.-LIECHTENSTEIN RELATIONS

The relations between the two countries are good. The two countries in 2002 signed a mutual legal assistance treaty focused largely on jointly combating money laundering and other illegal banking activities.

The U.S. does not have an embassy in Liechtenstein, but the U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland is also accredited to Liechtenstein.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BERN (E) Sulgeneckstrasse 19, CH-3007, Bern, APO/FPO No APO, 41-31-357-7011, Fax 41–31–357-7344, Workweek: Mon.–Fri., 8:30 -5:30, Website: http://bern.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Rebecca Eggert
AMB OMS:	Emily Dirk
DHS/ICE:	Joe Catanzarite
ECO:	Bill Duff
FCS:	Julie Snyder
FM:	Gary David Edwards
MGT:	Jonathan Schools
POL/ECO:	Vacant
AMB:	Peter R. Coneway
CG:	Doria Rosen
DCM:	Leigh Carter
PAO:	Lisbeth Keefe
GSO:	John Schuch
RSO:	Brian Murphy
CLO:	Roman Riedmueller
DAO:	Col. Dorothea Cypher-Erickson
DEA:	Joe Kipp
IMO:	Stephen McCain
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Paris)
ISO:	Novaro Casci
ISSO:	Leo Ruiz
LEGATT:	Daniel Boyd
POL:	Christopher Buck
State ICASS:	Lisbeth Keefe

GENEVA (M) 11 Rte de Pregny, 1292 Chambesy, Geneva, Switzerland, 41-22-749-4111, Fax 41-22-749-4892, INMARSAT Tel 764114496/9, Workweek: M-F 8:30-5:30, Website: http://geneva.usmission.gov.

DCM OMS:	Nancy Doe
AMB OMS:	Abigail Erickson
ECO:	Lisa Carle
HHS:	David E. Hohman
MGT:	Larry Richter
AMB:	Warren W. Tichenor
DCM:	Mark Storella
PAO:	David Gilmour
GSO:	Anne Coughlin
RSO:	Mark G. Bandik
AID:	David Reimer (Rma)
CLO:	Lisa Myers
FMO:	Louis Nelli
ICASS Chair:	Nance Kyloh
IPO:	Miller, Ritchie
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
ISO:	Don Greer
ISSO:	Doug Wells
LAB:	Ann Chick
LEGATT:	Jeffrey D. Kovar
POL:	Michael Klecheski

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet—Switzerland

December 10, 2008

Country Description: Switzerland is a highly developed democracy. Liechtenstein is a democratically run constitutional monarchy.

Entry Requirements: Switzerland is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Switzerland for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet.

Liechtenstein is not a party to the Schengen agreement. A visa is not required for stays up to 90 days.

For more information on entry requirements for both countries, travelers may contact the Embassy of Switzerland at 2900 Cathedral Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, telephone (202) 745-7900, or the nearest Swiss Consulate General in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, or San Francisco. Visit the Embassy of Switzerland's web site at http://www.swissemb.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Switzerland remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Switzerland'sopen borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. Although there have been no recent terrorist attacks in Switzerland, violence by anti-globalization, anti-Semitic, and anti-establishment (anarchist) groups does occur from time to time. This violence is typically in the form of property damage and clashes between these groups and the police. The potential for specific threats of violence involving American citizens in Switzerland is remote. Nevertheless, the Consular Agencies in Zurich and Geneva may close periodically to assess their security situation.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Switzerland has a low rate of violent crime. However, pick-pocketing and purse snatching do occur in the vicinity of train and bus stations, airports, and some public parks, especially during peak tourist periods (such as Summer and Christmas) and when conferences, shows, or exhibits are scheduled in major cities. Liechtenstein has a low crime rate. Travel-

ers may wish to exercise caution on trains, especially on overnight trains to neighboring countries. Thieves, who steal from passengers while they sleep, can enter even locked sleeping compartments. Thieves have been known to work in pairs to target train passengers; while one member of the pair creates a diversion at a train window or on a platform, the other steals items left briefly unattended.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Switzerland, through its 26 cantons (states), has programs to assist victims of crime and their immediate relatives. Medical, psychological, social, financial, and legal assistance are available throughout the country. These programs also protect the rights of the victim during criminal proceedings. The victim may receive compensation for some damages, if requested during the criminal procedure. Information is available at the Swiss Department of Justice located on Bundesrain 20, 3003 Bern, telephone: 41-31-322-4750, as well as on the Internet at http://www.bj.admin.ch/bj/en/home.html.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Switzerland is fire 118; police 117; medical 144.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is widely available. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Switzerland.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Switzerland is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Although many roads are mountainous and winding, road safety standards are high. In some mountain areas, vehicle snow chains are required in winter. Road travel can be more dangerous during summer, winter holidays, the Easter break, and Whitsunday weekend (late spring) because of increased traffic. Travel on expressways (indicated by green signs with a white expressway symbol) requires purchase of a sticker or "vignette," which must be affixed to the car's windshield. Vignettes can be purchased at most border crossings points, gas stations and at Swiss post offices. Drivers using the highway system without a vignette are subject to hefty fines levied on the spot. Public transportation in Switzerland and Liechtenstein is excellent.

Visit the website of Switzerland's national tourist office at http://www.myswitzerland.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Switzerland's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Switzerland's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Travelers who plan to participate in mountain activities (summer and winter) are strongly encouraged to buy mountain search and rescue insurance. Costs of search and rescue operations are the responsibility of the victim. Search and rescue insurance is available inexpensively in Switzerland and may be purchased at many Swiss post offices. Information can be obtained from the Swiss National Tourist Office, at http://www.myswitzerland.com, at most tourist information offices or with the Swiss Air Rescue Organization at http://www/rega.ch. Such insurance has proved useful as uninsured rescues can easily cost $25,000.

Switzerland's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036, and issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information call (212) 354-4480, send an email to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Switzer-

land's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Switzerland are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Switzerland are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Bern, with the Consular Agencies in Geneva or Zurich, or through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy, Consulate, or Consular Agent to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Jubilaeumstrasse 93, 3005 Bern; Tel. (41)(31) 357-7011, fax (41)(31) 357-7280. The Embassy's email address is bernacs@state.gov. The U.S. Embassy web site at http://bern.usembassy.gov answers many questions of interest to Americans visiting and residing in Switzerland.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Zurich is located at the American Center of Zurich, Dufourstrasse 101, 8008 Zurich; Tel: (41)(43) 499-2960, fax (41)(43) 499-2961. The U.S. Consular Agency in Geneva is located at rue Versonnex 7, CH-1207 Geneva, Tel: 022-840-51 60; fax 022-840-51 62. There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Liechtenstein.

For assistance and information on travel and security in Liechtenstein, U.S. citizens may contact or register at the U.S. Embassy in Bern at the address above.



LITHUANIA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Lithuania

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 65,200 sq. km. (26,080 sq. mi.); slightly larger than West Virginia.
Cities: (2008) Capital—Vilnius (pop. 542,809); other cities—Kaunas (358,107); Klaipeda (185,899); Siauliai (128,396).
Terrain: Lithuania's fertile, central lowland plains are separated by hilly uplands. A total of 758 rivers, many navigable, and 2,833 lakes cover the landscape. The coastline is 90 km. (56 mi.) long. Land use—44.2% arable land, 0.91% cultivated, 53.87% other.
Climate: With four distinct seasons, the climate is humid continental, with a moderating maritime influence from the Baltic Sea. January temperatures average -5ºC (23ºF); July, 17ºC (63ºF). The level of precipitation varies considerably from region to region: in the far west, average annual precipitation is 28-33 in., while in the central plain it is about 24 in.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Lithuanian(s).
Population: (2008) 3,354,700.
Annual growth rate: (2007) -0.7%. Birth rate—9.6/1,000. Death rate—13.5/1,000.
Population density: (2007) 51.8 per sq. km.
Ethnic groups: (2007) Lithuanians 84.6%, Poles 6.3%, Russians 5.1%.
Religions: (2001 census) Roman Catholic (79%), Russian Orthodox (4.1%), Protestant (including Lutheran and Evangelical Christian Baptist) (1.9%).
Languages: (2008) Lithuanian (official language) (84.6%), Russian, and Polish
Education: Years compulsory—10 (until the age of 16). Literacy—99.6%.
Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—6.9/1,000. Life expectancy—64.87 yrs. male, 77.20 yrs. female.
Work force: (2008) 1.59 million: services 61.3%; industry 30.3%; agriculture 8.4%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.
Constitution: On October 25, 1992, Lithuanians ratified a new constitution, which was officially signed on November 6 that year.
Government branches: Executive—President (chief of state), popularly elected every 5 years; Prime Minister (head of government); Legislative—Seimas (141-member Parliament). Judicial—Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, and Highest Administrative Court.
Political subdivisions: 10 counties and 60 municipalities.
Political parties: (December 2008) Four-party governing coalition has 82 members plus the Speaker. Conservatives—45 seats; National Revival Party faction—17 seats (including two independent members of parliament, or MPs) and the Speaker; Liberal Movement—11 seats; Liberal and Center Union faction—9 seats (including 1 independent MP). Opposition has 58 members: Social Democrat faction—25 seats (plus 1 independent MP); Order and Justice Party faction—18 seats (including 3 Polish Electoral Action Party MPs); Labor Party—10 seats; non-affiliated faction—4 seats (including 3 Peasants Party MPs and 1 Social Liberal MP).
Suffrage: universal adult (18 years of age).
Budget: (2008) $9.9 billion.

Economy

GDP: (2008 third quarter) $13.3 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 8.9%.
Annual inflation rate: (November 2008) 10.9%.
Unemployment rate: (2008 third quarter) 5.9%.
Per capita income: (2007) $11,348.
Natural resources: Limestone, clay, sand, gravel, iron ore, and granite.
Major sectors of the economy: (2007) manufacturing 20%, wholesale and retail trade 17%, transport and communications 13%.

Trade: Exports—(January-September 2008)—$15.9 billion: mineral products 26.5%, machinery and mechanical appliances 10.4%, vehicles and transport equipment 10.5%, chemicals 10%. Major export partners—EU 61.1%, CIS 24.6%. Imports (January-September 2008)—$20.8 billion: machinery and equipment 14.1%, mineral products 30.5%, transportation equipment 12.5%. Major import partners—EU 56.5%, CIS 35.0%.

GEOGRAPHY

The largest and most populous of the Baltic states, Lithuania is situated on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, in northeastern Europe. It is bordered by Latvia to the north, Belarus to the southeast, Poland to the southwest, and Kaliningrad, a territory of Russia, to the west. It has 60 miles of sandy coastline, of which only 24 miles face the open Baltic Sea. Lithuania's major warm-water port of Klaipeda lies at the narrow mouth of Kursiu Gulf, a shallow lagoon extending south to Kaliningrad. The Nemunas River and some of its tributaries are used for internal shipping. Situated between the 54th and 56th latitudes and the 20th and 27th longitudes, Lithuania is glacially flat, except for the hills (of no more than 300 meters) in the western and eastern highlands. The terrain is marked by numerous small lakes and swamps, and a mixed forest zone covers 30% of the country. According to some geographers, Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, lies at the geographical center of Europe.

PEOPLE

In spite of several border changes, Soviet deportations, a massacre of its Jewish population, and German and Polish repatriations, the population of Lithuania has maintained a fairly stable percentage of ethnic Lithuanians (from 79.3% in 1959 to 84.6% in 2007). Lithuania's citizenship law and constitution meet international and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards, guaranteeing universal human and civil rights. The Lithuanian language still retains the original sound system and morphological peculiarities of the prototypal Indo-European tongue and, therefore, is fascinating for linguistic study. Between 400 and 600 AD, the Lithuanian and Latvian languages split from the Eastern Baltic (Prussian) language group, which subsequently became extinct. The first known written Lithuanian text dates from a hymnal translation in 1545. Written with the Latin alphabet, Lithuanian has been the official language of Lithuania since 1989. While Lithuania was a member of the U.S.S.R., Russian was the official language, so many Lithuanians speak Russian as a second language. The resident Slavic populace generally speaks Russian or Polish as a first language.

HISTORY

Between the 7th and 2nd centuries BC, Baltic tribes established themselves on what is presently known as Lithuanian territory. These tribes were made up of a distinct Indo-European ethnic group whose descendents are the present-day Lithuanian and Latvian nations. The name of Lithuania, however, did not appear in European records until 1009 AD, when it was mentioned in the German manuscript Annals of Quedlinburg. During the period of 1236-1263, Duke Mindaugas united the various Baltic tribes and established the state of Lithuania, which was better able to resist the eastward expansion of the Teutonic Knights. In 1253, Mindaugas embraced Christianity for political reasons and accepted the crown from the Pope of Rome, becoming the first and only king in Lithuanian history.

After the assassination of Mindaugas and the ensuing civil war, Grand Duke Gediminas took control of Lithuania. He reigned from 1316 to 1341, during which the long-term expansion of Lithuania into the lands of the eastern Slavs began. He founded the modern capital city of Vilnius and started the Gediminas dynasty, which ruled Lithuania until 1572. By the end of the 14th century, Lithuania was the largest country in Europe, stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. In 1386, Grand Duke Jogaila of Lithuania was crowned the King of Poland, which intensified Lithuania's economic and cultural development and oriented it toward the West. It was at this time that the people of Lithuania embraced Christianity.

In 1401, the formal union between Poland and Lithuania was dissolved. While Jogaila remained the King of Poland, his cousin Grand Duke Vytautas became the ruler of Lithuania. In 1410, the armies of Poland and Lithuania together defeated the Teutonic Order in the Battle of Grunewald, the biggest battle of medieval Europe.

The 16th century witnessed a number of wars against the growing Russian state over the Slavic lands ruled by Lithuania. Needing an ally in those wars, Lithuania again united with Poland through The Union of Lublin in 1569. As a member of this Commonwealth, Lithuania retained its sovereignty and its institutions, including a separate army and currency. In 1795, the joint sate was dissolved by the third Partition of the Commonwealth, which forfeited its lands to Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Over 90% of Lithuania was incorporated into the Russian Empire and the remainder into Prussia. Attempts to restore independence in the uprisings of 1794, 1830-31, and 1863 were suppressed and followed by a tightened police regime and increasing Russification, including the 1864 ban on printing Lithuanian books in traditional Latin characters.

A market economy slowly developed with the abolition of serfdom in 1861. Lithuanian farmers grew stronger, and an increase in the number of intellectuals of peasant origin led to the growth of a Lithuanian national movement. In German-ruled East Prussia, also called Lithuania Minor, or Kaliningrad, Lithuanian publications were printed in large numbers and then smuggled into Russian-ruled Lithuania. The ban on the Lithuanian press was lifted in 1904.



During World War I, the German Army occupied Lithuania, and the occupation administration allowed a Lithuanian conference to convene in Vilnius in September 1917.

The conference adopted a resolution demanding the restoration of an independent Lithuanian state and elected the Lithuanian Council. On February 16, 1918, the council declared Lithuania's independence. The Seimas (Parliament) of Lithuania adopted a constitution on August 1, 1922 and declared Lithuania a parliamentary republic.

The interwar period of independence gave birth to the development of Lithuanian press, literature, music, arts, and theater as well as a comprehensive system of education with Lithuanian as the language of instruction. However, territorial disputes with Poland (over the Vilnius region and the Suvalkai region) and with Germany (over the Klaipëda region) preoccupied the foreign policy of the new state.

During the interwar period, the constitutional capital was Vilnius, although the city itself was annexed by Poland from 1920 to 1939. During this period the Lithuanian Government was relocated to Kaunas, which officially held the status of temporary capital. The German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 1939 first pulled Lithuania into the German sphere of influence and then brought it under Soviet domination. Soviet pressure and a complicated international situation forced Lithuania to sign an agreement with the U.S.S.R. on October 10, 1939. By means of this agreement, Lithuania was given back the city of Vilnius and the part of the Vilnius region seized by the Red Army during the Soviet-Polish war; in return, some 20,000 Soviet soldiers

were deployed in Lithuania. On August 3, 1940, Lithuania was proclaimed a Soviet Socialist Republic. Totalitarian rule was established, Sovietization of the economy and culture began, and Lithuanian state employees and public figures were arrested and exiled to Russia. During the mass deportation campaign of June 14-18, 1941, about 12,600 people were deported to Siberia without investigation or trial, 3,600 people were imprisoned, and more than 1,000 were killed.

Between 1940 and 1954, under the Nazi and then Soviet occupations, Lithuania lost over 780,000 residents. In World War II, German occupiers sent Lithuanians to forced labor camps in Germany. Almost 200,000, or 91%, of Lithuanian Jews were killed, one of the worst death rates of the Holocaust. After the retreat of the Wehrmacht in 1944, Lithuania was re-occupied by the Soviet Union, and an estimated 120,000 to 300,000 Lithuanians were either killed or deported to Siberia and other remote parts of the Soviet Union. Conversely, Soviet authorities encouraged the immigration to Lithuania of other Soviet workers, especially Russians, as a way of integrating Lithuania into the Soviet Union.

With the advent of perestroika and glasnost, Gorbachev's programs of social and political reforms in the late 1980s, communist rule eroded. Lithuania, led by Sàjûdis, an anti-communist and anti-Soviet independence movement, proclaimed its renewed independence on March 11, 1990 the first Soviet republic to do so. The Lithuanian Supreme Soviet formed a new Cabinet of Ministers and adopted the Provisional Fundamental Law of the State with a number of by-laws. In response, on the night of January 13, 1991, the Red Army attacked the Vilnius TV Tower, killing 14 civilians and injuring 700. Soviet forces, however, were unsuccessful in suppressing Lithuania's secession.

On February 4, 1991, Iceland became the first country to recognize Lithuanian independence. Sweden was the first to open an embassy in the country. The United States never recognized the Soviet claim to Lithuania and views the present Lithuanian Government as the legal continuation of the interwar republic. In July 2007, Lithuania celebrated the 85th anniversary of continuous diplomatic relations with the United States. Lithuania joined the United Nations on September 17, 1991.

Despite Lithuania's achievement of complete independence, sizable numbers of Russian forces remained on its territory. Withdrawal of those forces was one of Lithuania's top foreign policy priorities. On August 31, 1993, Lithuania and Russia signed an agreement whereby the last Red Army troops left the country. On May 31, 2001, Lithuania became the 141st member of the World Trade Organization. Desiring closer ties with the West, Lithuania became the first of the Baltic states to apply for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and on March 29, 2004, it joined the Alliance. On May 1 of the same year, Lithuania also joined the European Union.

Lithuania has been a staunch U.S. ally in the Global War on Terror, contributing to military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2005, Lithuania assumed the challenge of leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team as part of NATO's mission in Afghanistan. It has also deployed troops to Iraq under Polish, then British, and Danish command. In addition, Lithuania has participated in the peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. Similarly, Lithuania is a strong supporter of U.S. objectives in the area of democracy promotion. Making this a high priority for its foreign policy, Lithuania has provided development assistance and advice to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and the Caucasus. Lithuania also actively supports democratization efforts in Belarus and Kosovo.

The Lithuanian economy has shown strong growth in recent years, as Lithuania has actively pursued economic reforms. In 2007, Lithuania's GDP increased by 8.9%. Large growth rates driven by domestic consumption have made analysts talk about the potential for overheating of the economy. Growth for 2008 is predicted to be positive overall, between 3% and 5%, but Lithuania is likely to enter a recessionary period in 2009.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Lithuania is a multi-party, parliamentary democracy. The president, who is elected directly for 5 years, is head of state and commander in chief overseeing foreign and security policy. The president nominates the prime minister and his cabinet and a number of other top civil servants. The Seimas, a unicameral parliament, has 141 members that are elected for a 4-year term. About half of the members are elected in single constituencies (71), and the other half (70) are elected in a nationwide vote by party lists. A party must receive at least 5% of the national vote to be represented in the Seimas.

For the first nine years of its post-Soviet independence, voters in Lithuania shifted from right to left and back again, swinging between the Conservatives, led by Vytautas Landsbergis (now headed by Andrius Kubilius), and the Labor (former Communist) Party, led by former President Algirdas Brazauskas. This pattern was broken in the October 2000 elections, when the Liberal Union and New Union parties won the most votes and were able to form a centrist ruling coalition with minor partners. President Valdas Adamkus played a key role in bringing the new centrist parties together. The leader of the center-left New Union Party (also known as the Social Liberal Party), Arturas Paulauskas, became the Chairman of the Seimas, and the leader of the Liberal Union Party, Rolandas Paksas, became Prime Minister. The new coalition was fragile from the outset, as the Liberal Union was pro-business and right of center, while the New Union had a populist and leftist orientation. The government collapsed within 7 months and, in July 2001, the center-left New

Union Party forged an alliance with the left-wing Social Democratic Party and formed a new cabinet under former President Algirdas Brazauskas.

The new government tightened budgetary discipline, supported market reforms, and passed the legislation required to ensure entry into the European Union. Several years of solid economic growth helped to consolidate the government's popularity, despite discontent within two of its core constituencies—unskilled urban workers and farmers—who had expected more generous funding of social and agricultural programs. The government remained firmly in control, and by mid-2004 it was the longest serving administration since the recovery of independence.

In an unexpected political development in January 2003, Rolandas Paksas defeated the incumbent Valdas Adamkus in the second round of the presidential election to become Lithuania's third President since 1992. Paksas' tenure as president was short-lived. In December 2003, an ad hoc parliamentary commission found that President Paksas' vulnerability to influence constituted a threat to national security. On April 7, 2004, the Seimas removed President Paksas from office. Valdas Adamkus won the second round of presidential elections in June 2004 and was sworn in as president on July 12.

Brazauskas remained prime minister after the 2004 parliamentary elections, but the government collapsed in late May 2006 after the New Union and Labor parties withdrew from the coalition. A new minority coalition government headed by Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas, a Social Democrat, took office on July 18, 2006, and retained the support of the opposition Conservative party on the major issues until September 2007. On January 28, 2008 the Social Liberal party joined the coalition, giving it a bare majority.

In the October 2008 parliamentary elections, the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrat Party, widely known as the Conservatives, won a plurality, winning almost twice as many seats (45) as the second-place Social Democrats (25). The National Revival Party, a new party with numerous show business and TV-journalism celebrities in its top ranks, finished third (16 seats).

The Conservatives put together a four-party coalition with the National Revival, Liberal Movement, and Liberal and Center Union parties, and Conservative leader Andrius Kubilius became prime minister—a post he previously held in 1999-2000. National Revival founder and leader Arturas Valinskas became Seimas Speaker.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Valdas ADAMKUS**
Prime Min.: **Gediminas KIRKILAS**
Min. of Agriculture & Forestry: **Kazimira PRUNSKIENE**
Min. of Culture: **Jonas JUCAS**
Min. of Defense: **Juozas OLEKAS**
Min. of Economy: **Vytas NAVICKAS**
Min. of Education & Science: **Algirdas MONKEVICIUS**
Min. of Environment: **Arturas PAULAUSKAS**
Min. of Finance: **Rimantas SADZIUS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Petras VAITIEKUNAS**
Min. of Health: **Gediminas CERNIAUSKAS**
Min. of the Interior: **Regimantas CIUPAILA**
Min. of Justice: **Petras BAGUSKA**
Min. of Social Security & Labor: **Vilija BLINKEVICIUTE**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Algirdas BUTKEVICIUS**
Governor, Bank of Lithuania: **Reinoldijus SARKINAS**
Ambassador to the US: **Audrius BRUZGA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Dalius CEKUOLIS**

Lithuania maintains an embassy in the United States, temporarily located at 4590 MacArthur Blvd, Suite 200, Washington, DC, 20007, tel: (202) 234-5860.

ECONOMY

In the second half of the 20th century, the Lithuanian economy underwent fundamental transformations. The Soviet occupation of 1940 brought Lithuania intensive industrialization and economic integration into the U.S.S.R., although the level of technology and state concern for environmental, health, and labor issues lagged far behind Western standards. Urbanization increased from 39% in 1959 to 68% in 1989. From 1949 to 1952 the Soviets abolished private ownership in agriculture, establishing collective and state farms. Production declined and did not reach pre-war levels until the early 1960s. The intensification of agricultural production through intense chemical use and mechanization eventually doubled production but created additional ecological problems.

The disadvantages of a centrally planned economy became evident after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, when Lithuania began its transition to a market economy. Owing to the availability of inexpensive natural resources, the industrial sector had become excessively energy intensive, inefficient in its utilization of resources, and incapable of manufacturing internationally competitive products. More than 90% of Lithuania's trade was with the rest of the USSR, which supplied Lithuanian industry with raw materials for production and a market for its outputs. The need to sever these trading links and to reduce the inefficient industrial sector led to serious economic difficulties.

The process of privatization and the development of new companies slowly moved Lithuania from a command economy toward a free market. By 1998, the economy had survived the early years of uncertainty and several setbacks, including a banking crisis, and seemed poised for solid growth. However, the collapse of the Russian ruble in August 1998 shocked the economy into negative growth and forced the reorientation of trade from Russia toward the West. In 1997, exports to former Soviet

states were 45% of total Lithuanian exports. In 2006, exports to the East (the Commonwealth of Independent States—CIS) were only 21% of the total, while exports to the EU-25 (European Union 25) were 63%, and to the United States, 4.3%. At the end of the third quarter of 2008, Lithuania had accumulated foreign direct investments (FDI) of $12.8 billion, with U.S. investments amounting to $294 million, or 2.3% of FDI. The current account deficit in the second quarter of 2008 was 16.8% of GDP. However, preliminary figures show this dropping to 7.2% for the third quarter of 2008.

Lithuania has privatized nearly all formerly state-owned enterprises. More than 79% of the economy's output is generated by the private sector. The share of employees in the private sector exceeds 65%. The Government of Lithuania completed banking sector privatization in 2001, with 89% of this sector controlled by foreign—mainly Scandinavian—capital. The government has also completed privatization of the national gas and power companies with "Lithuanian Railways" and Lithuanian Post remaining state-owned.

The transportation infrastructure inherited from the Soviet period is adequate and has been generally well maintained since independence. Lithuania has one ice-free seaport with ferry services to German, Swedish, and Danish ports. There are operating commercial airports with scheduled international services at Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipeda. The road system is good. Telecommunications have improved greatly since independence as a result of heavy investment.

The last few years have been good for the Lithuanian economy. Gross domestic product rose by 7.6% in 2005 and 7.4% in 2006. In 2007, Lithuania's GDP grew by 8.9%. GDP is predicted to grow between 3% and 5% for 2008, with recession predicted for 2009. Economic growth was largely driven by private consumption. Lithuania's economy began to slow before worldwide financial turmoil developed in 2008, and the eventual effect of this turmoil upon the Lithuanian economy is not yet clear. The contribution of domestic market-oriented sectors has also increased. Growth in 2007 was strongest in construction, retail and wholesale trade, processing and light industries, and agriculture. In 2007, annual average inflation reached 5.8%, and the government's budget deficit stood at approximately 0.5% of GDP. The government budget deficit is predicted to be 2.35% of GDP for 2008. In 2008, inflation reached 11% in September, one of the highest levels in the EU. Construction activity decreased markedly in 2008, with this sector and real estate experiencing the brunt of the economic slowdown. Real estate prices dropped by approximately 20% compared to 2007. Greater development is needed in public policy and further progress in structural and agricultural reforms. However, the newly elected center-right coalition has a fiscal austerity plan that may implement some of these reforms. Lithuania pegged its national currency—the litas—to the euro on February 2, 2002 at the rate of LTL 3.4528 to EUR 1.

Lithuanian income levels lag behind those of older EU members. Lower wages and high income taxes may have been factors that contributed to the trend of emigration to the wealthiest EU countries after Lithuania joined the European Union in 2004. In 2008, the flat income tax rate was reduced to 24%. It may be reduced to 20% under the newly elected government's fiscal austerity plan. Moreover, in 2008, the minimum wage increased to $310 per month; the average wage now stands at $820 per month, a 17.9% increase from the previous year. Income tax reduction wage growth and global economic recession are starting to result in the return of some emigrants; in early 2006 emigration was 30% lower than in 2005, and in 2007 it dropped by approximately 4.7%.

The initial euro adoption target date of January 1, 2007 was postponed due to the high inflation rate of 2006. Achieving the Maastricht inflation criterion necessary to adopt the euro in 2010 will require significant fiscal tightening in Lithuania. Some commentators feel that euro adoption is unlikely before 2013. Temporary spikes from the necessary excise tax increases and longer-term convergence forces will probably keep inflation above the Maastricht reference value. Credit growth has slowed, but Lithuania has yet to exhibit any signs of financial instability.

DEFENSE

Lithuania, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since 2004, fully endorses the concept of "collective defense." National policy recognizes the primacy of NATO as the guarantor of security in Europe. The goal of Lithuania's defense policy is to create a military that can contribute to international missions through the NATO alliance, the UN, and other groups, and to continue to integrate Lithuania into Western defense structures. The Defense Ministry is responsible for combat forces, search and rescue operations, and intelligence. The government has committed to but never reached the goal of dedicating 2% of GDP to defense spending.

Lithuania maintains approximately 10,000 active duty troops and 8,000 reserve troops. The core of the Lithuanian force structure is the Iron Wolf Motorized Infantry Brigade, which consists of five battalions and appropriate support elements. The Lithuanian Air Force operates 17 fixed wing aircraft and nine helicopters. The Home Guard is organized into five districts.

The Border Police, with 5,400 guards, fall under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry; they are responsible for border protection, passport and customs duties, and the interdiction of smuggling and trafficking activities.

Lithuania cooperates with Estonia and Latvia in the joint naval squadron BALTRON, and plans to contribute to a trilateral Baltic land forces element for future NATO Response Force rotations. Lithuania deployed troops to Iraq until 2008 and has sol-

diers serving with Polish and Ukrainian counterparts in Kosovo. Since the summer of 2005, Lithuania has also been part of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, leading a 140-person Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghor province. A small special forces element also serves in Afghanistan under NATO command.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Lithuania became a member of the United Nations (UN) on September 18, 1991 and is a signatory to a number of UN organizations and other international agreements. It is also a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Coordinating Council, and the Council of Europe. Lithuania gained membership in the World Trade Organization on May 31, 2001. In November 2002, Lithuania was invited to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and officially became a member on March 29, 2004. On May 1 of that same year, Lithuania joined the European Union.

Lithuania's foreign policy is based primarily on protecting itself and the Eastern European region from what it perceives as an expansionist Russia. Lithuania uses its membership in both NATO and the EU to promote security and democracy in Eastern Europe. It strongly advocates NATO membership for both Georgia and Ukraine and increased EU political and economic engagement to the region as a whole, including its neighbor Belarus. Lithuania maintains foreign relations with 98 countries through a network of 42 embassies and 35 honorary consuls. It has seven diplomatic missions to international organizations and one special mission to Afghanistan.

Lithuania's liberal "zero-option" citizenship law has substantially erased tensions with its neighbors. Its suspension of two strongly ethnic Polish district councils on charges of blocking reform or disloyalty during the August 1991 coup cooled relations with Poland, but bilateral cooperation markedly increased with the holding of elections in those districts and the signing of a bilateral friendship treaty in 1994. Relations with Poland are now among the closest enjoyed by Lithuania. Although a similar bilateral friendship agreement was signed with Belarus in 1995, Lithuania has joined the United States and other European nations in strongly urging the Government of Belarus to adopt much-needed democratic and economic reforms. President Adamkus was instrumental in brokering a peaceful resolution to the electoral challenges in Ukraine in 2004, and Lithuania plays an important leadership role in promoting democracy throughout the region.

U.S.-LITHUANIAN RELATIONS

The United States established diplomatic relations with Lithuania on July 28, 1922. The Soviet invasion forced the closure of the Legation to Lithuania on September 5, 1940, but Lithuanian representation in the United States continued uninterrupted. The United States never recognized the forcible incorporation of Lithuania into the U.S.S.R. and views the present Government of Lithuania as a legal continuation of the interwar republic. In 2007, the United States and Lithuania celebrated 85 years of continuous diplomatic relations. Lithuania has enjoyed most-favored-nation treatment with the United States since December 1991. Since 1992, the United States has committed more than $100 million in Lithuania to economic and political transformation and to humanitarian needs. The United States and Lithuania signed an agreement on bilateral trade and intellectual property protection in 1994 and a bilateral investment treaty in 1997. In 1998, the United States signed a "Charter of Partnership" with Lithuania and the other Baltic countries establishing bilateral working groups focused on improving regional security, defense, and economic issues. Since 2004, the United States deals with Lithuania on regional security and defense matters primarily through NATO fora. In November 2008 Lithuania joined the Visa Waiver Program, which allows Lithuanians short-term travel to the United States visa-free.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Laurie L. Bateman
DHS/CIS:	Gilbert L. Jacobs (Copenhagen)
DHS/ICE:	Michael Shevock (Frankfurt)
ECO:	Daniel Gage
FCS:	David McNeill (Warsaw)
FM:	John F. Rexford
MGT:	Andrea S. Baker
POL/ECO:	Rebecca J. Dunham
AMB:	John A. Cloud
CON:	James D. Fellows
DCM:	Damian R. Leader
PAO:	Rona R. Rathod
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RSO:	Daniel M. Childs
AGR:	Eric A. Wenberg (Warsaw)
CLO:	Elaine Wright
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DEA:	Timothy Moran (Copenhagen)
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 18, 2008

Country Description: Lithuania is a stable democracy undergoing rapid economic growth. Tourist facilities in Vilnius, the capital, and to a lesser extent in Kaunas and Klaipeda, are similar to those available in other

European cities. In other parts of the country, however, some of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries may not be available.

Entry Requirements: Lithuania is a party to the Schengen Agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Lithuania for up to 90- days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. Travelers remaining in Lithuania for more than 90 days within any six-month period must apply for temporary residency. Lithuanian authorities recommend applying or a residency permit through a Lithuanian embassy or consulate before initial entry into Lithuania, as processing times can run beyond 90 days. All foreigners of non-European Union countries seeking entry into Lithuania must carry proof of a medical insurance policy contracted for payment of all costs of hospitalization and medical treatment in Lithuania. Visitors unable to demonstrate sufficient proof of medical insurance must purchase short-term insurance at the border from a Lithuanian provider for roughly $1.00 per day. The number of days will be calculated from the day of entry until the date on the return ticket. Children residing in Lithuania must have written permission to travel outside the country from at least one parent if their parents are not accompanying them on their trip. This policy is not applicable to temporary visitors. Visit the Embassy of Lithuania web site at www.ltembassyus.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Civil unrest is not a problem in Lithuania, and there have been no incidents of terrorism directed toward American interests. Incidents of anti-Americanism are rare.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Lithuania is a relatively safe country. Visitors should maintain the same personal security awareness that they would in any metropolitan U.S. city. Large amounts of cash and expensive jewelry should be secured in a hotel safe or left at home. Crimes against foreigners, while usually nonviolent, do occur. Pickpocketing and thefts are problems, so personal belongings should be well protected at all times. Theft from cars and car thefts occur regularly. Drivers should be wary of persons indicating they should pull over or that something is wrong with their car. Often, a second car or person is following, and when the driver of the targeted car gets out to see if there is a problem the person who has been following will either steal the driver's belongings from the vehicle or get in and drive off with the car. Drivers should never get out of the car to check for damage without first turning off the ignition and taking the keys. Valuables should not be left in plain sight in parked vehicles, as there have been increasing reports of car windows smashed and items stolen. If possible, American citizens should avoid walking alone at night. ATMs should be avoided after dark. In any public area, one should always be alert to being surrounded by two or more people at once. Additionally, criminals have a penchant for taking advantage of drunken pedestrians. Americans have reported being robbed and/or scammed while intoxicated.

Following a trend that has spread across Eastern and Central Europe, racially motivated verbal, and sometimes physical, harassment of foreigners of non-Caucasian ethnicity has been reported in major cities. Incidents of racially motivated attacks against American citizens have been reported in Klaipeda and Vilnius.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on these serious problems is available at www.cybercrime.gov.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. For more information about assistance for victims of crime in Lithuania, please visit the Embassy's web site at http://vilnius.usembassy.gov/service/crime-victim-assistance.html.

The local equivalent to the 911 emergency number in Lithuania is 112.

Medical Facilities And Health Information: Medical care in Lithuania has improved in the last 15 years, but medical facilities do not always meet Western standards. There are a few private clinics with medical supplies and services that nearly equal Western European or U.S. standards. Most medical supplies are now widely available, including disposable needles, anesthetics, antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals. However, hospitals and clinics still suffer from a lack of equipment and resources. Lithuania has highly trained medical professionals, some of whom speak English, but their availability is decreasing as they leave for employment opportunities abroad. Depending on his or her condition, a patient may not receive

an appointment with a specialist for several weeks. Western-quality dental care can be obtained in major cities. Elderly travelers who require medical care may face difficulties. Most pharmaceuticals sold in Lithuania are from Europe; travelers will not necessarily find the same brands that they use in the United States. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation can cost thousands of dollars or more. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services, particularly if immigration status in Lithuania is unclear.

Tick-borne encephalitis and lyme disease are widespread throughout the country. Those intending to visit parks or forested areas in Lithuania are urged to speak with their health care practitioners about immunization. Rabies is also increasingly prevalent in rural areas.

The Lithuanian Government does not require HIV testing for U.S. citizens. However, sexually transmitted diseases are a growing public health problem.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. All foreigners of non-European Union countries seeking entry into Lithuania must carry proof of a medical insurance policy contracted for payment of all costs of hospitalization and medical treatment in Lithuania (please see entry/exit requirements above).

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Lithuania is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The Police allow Americans to drive in Lithuania with an American driver's license for up to 90 days. Americans who reside in Lithuania for 185 days or more in one calendar year and who wish to continue driving in Lithuania must acquire a Lithuanian driver's license. The foreign license must be given to the Lithuanian Road Police to be processed by the Consular Department of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which in turn sends it to the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section, where the owner is expected to claim it.

Roads in Lithuania range from well-maintained two- to four-lane highways connecting major cities to small dirt roads traversing the countryside. Violation of traffic rules is common. It is not unusual to be overtaken by other automobiles, traveling at high speed, even in crowded urban areas. Driving at night, especially in the countryside, can be particularly hazardous. In summer, older seasonal vehicles and inexperienced drivers are extra hazards. Driving with caution is urged at all times. Driving while intoxicated is a very serious offense and carries heavy penalties. The speed limit is 50 km/hr in town and 90 km/hr out of town unless otherwise indicated. The phone number for roadside assistance is 8-800-01414 from a regular phone and 1414 from a GSM mobile phone. Seatbelts are mandatory for the driver and all passengers except children under the age of 12. During the winter, most major roads are cleared of snow. Winter or all-season tires are required from November 10th through April 1st. Studded tires are not allowed from April 10th through October 31st. Drivers must have at least their low beam lights on at all times while driving. Public transportation is generally safe. Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.tourism.lt and at www.lra.lt/index_en.html.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Lithuania, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Lithuania's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Lithuanian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the temporary importation into or export from Lithuania of items such as firearms and antiquities.

Telephone connections are generally good. American 1-800 numbers can be accessed from Lithuania but not on a toll-free basis; the international long distance rate per minute will be charged. Local Internet cafes offer computer access. ATMs are widely available. Most hotels and other businesses accept major credit cards.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Lithuanian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Lithuania are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime prosecut-

able in the United States. For more information about arrest procedures in Lithuania, please visit the Embassy's web site at http://vilnius.usembassy.gov/arrests.html.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Lithuania are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Lithuania. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Akmenu Gatve 6, tel. (370) (5) 266-5500 or 266-5600, fax (370) (5) 266-5590. Consular information can also be found at the Embassy Vilnius web site at http://vilnius.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Lithuania is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between Lithuania and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

According to Lithuanian law, only children whose parents are deceased or whose parents have had their parental rights taken away are eligible for adoption. There are few such children and the Lithuanian families interested in adopting are given precedence. Two United States embassies play complementary roles in the immigrant visa process for Lithuanian citizens, including adopted orphans. The United States Embassy in Warsaw, Poland ultimately issues all immigrant visas for citizens and residents of Lithuania. The United States Embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania conducts the mandatory I-604 Orphan Investigation interview for all orphan cases.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Lithuania is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Lithuania, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Lithuania also has the following requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents in Lithuania.

Age Requirements:: Prospective adoptive parents generally cannot be over 50 years of age. There must be a minimum age difference of 18 years between the prospective adoptive parents and the child.

Marriage Requirements:: Intercountry adoptions are usually limited to married couples. A single parent may be considered in exceptional cases when 1) the individual has been the foster parent of the particular child to be adopted, 2) the child has extremely serious health problems and no married couple wishes to adopt the child, or 3) the child is eight years of age or older and unable to be placed with another family.

Other Requirements: Certain medical conditions can disqualify prospective adoptive parents. The Government of Lithuania publishes a list of medical conditions. The list is maintained on the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service website. Some of the conditions are dipsomania (alcoholism), drug addiction "absent steady remission," mental diseases (not specified), AIDS, HIV positive status, infectious tuberculosis, chronic kidney insufficiency when dialysis is obligatory, Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's chorea, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease), epilepsy with mental and personality changes, multisystem degeneration and third or fourth stage cancers.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Lithuania is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Lithuania must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Lithuania's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Lithuania's Adoption Authority: The State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Lithuania is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Lithuania. After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS.

Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Lithuania. Lithuania's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Lithuania's law.

If both the United States and Lithuania determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for

intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Lithuania may provide you with a referral for a child.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify the Lithuania's adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service places approved prospective adoptive parents on a waiting list according to the date of submission of the complete set of documents. Once a child is matched, the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service issues special permission for the prospective adoptive parents to meet the child.

Role of the Court: After the Chairman of the Vilnius District Court verifies that all the documents are in order, he assigns the case to one of the Vilnius District Court judges for final review. The assigned judge will set a court date.

After the judge approves the adoption, there is a 40-day waiting period before the adoption is final. Adoptive parents should note that the adopted child remains in the custody of the institution where he/she resided prior to the hearing. Special permission may be granted in some cases for the child(ren) to reside with the adoptive parents in Lithuania.

Role of Adoption Agencies: The adoption agency forwards the prospective adoptive parents' letter of interest in adopting to the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service.

Time Frame: Once a family is approved to adopt, it can take several years for a child eligible for intercountry adoption to be matched with the prospective adoptive parents' preferences. After a referral has been made and accepted, an adoption petition can be filed with the court.

There is a 40-day waiting period from the time the court issues the final approval until it comes into force.

Adoption Application: The prospective adoptive parents submit their application (letter) to the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service. The letter should describe the gender and age of the child(ren) they are interested in adopting, prospective adoptive parents' ages and professions, and any family ties to Lithuania.

Adoption Fees: In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process. Some of the fees specifically associated with adopting from Lithuania include a $42 USD filing fee with the court for the adoption hearing. Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay adoption agencies for services rendered.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents that must accompany the letter requesting adoption:

- Information letter introducing the prospective adoptive parents (issued by the Central Governmental authority or accredited adoption association)
- Home Study copy (the socio-psychological study)
- Permit for adoption issued by a competent authority of the receiving state
- Confirmation of a competent authority of the receiving state that the adopted child will be permitted to enter the country for permanent residence
- Copies of prospective adoptive parents' passports or other personal identification documents
- Copies of birth certificates
- Copy of marriage certificate, divorce certificate (if divorced), or death certificate of the spouse (if widowed)
- Health certificates
- Certificates of the family's financial standing (income received and assets owned)
- Criminal record certificates
- Health certificates and copies of birth certificates of children residing together with prospective adoptive parents

If the family applies through an accredited adoption agency, the following documents must also be submitted:

- Power of attorney issued by the family to the agency
- Document issued by a competent authority of the receiving state certifying the authority of the agency to engage in intercountry adoption

The following is a list of documents that must accompany the letter requesting a hearing:

- Full names and addresses of the prospective adoptive parents
- Names and addresses of the Lithuanian state representative in charge of the orphanage or institution where the child resides
- Statement regarding why they want to adopt a child
- Statement as to whether the child is to be their stepchild (in cases where a foreigner wishes to adopt a child of his/her spouse in Lithuania or adoptive child)

- New name to be given to the adoptive child
- Affidavit from the birth parent(s) surrendering all rights to the child, if there are surviving biological parents OR a
- Lithuanian court decision regarding termination of parental rights
- Statement from the institution responsible for the child agreeing to the adoption
- Financial statement of the adoptive parents indicating that they are financially able to provide for the child
- Copy of the home study (updated by the authority or accredited adoption association that prepared the original home study)
- Health certificates
- Certificates of the family's financial standing
- Criminal record certificates
- Original birth certificate of the child
- Filing fee receipt

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Lithuania does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information

United States Embassy in Lithuania
Akmenu 6
Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel: 011-370-5-266-5500
Fax: 011-370-5-266-5590
Email: consec@state.gov
Internet:
http://vilnius.usembassy.gov/service.html

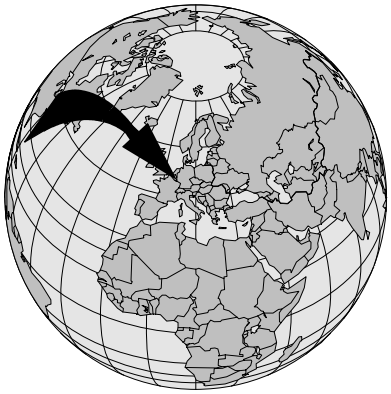
Lithuania's Adoption Authority
The State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service
Ministry of Social Security and Labour:
Sodu g. 15
LT-03211 Vilnius, Lithuania
Tel: 370-5-231-0928
Fax: 370-5-231-0927
Email: info@ivaikinimas.lt
Internet: www.ivaikinimas.lt

Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania
2300 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 302
Arlington, VA 22201
Tel: (202) 234-5860
Fax: (202) 328-0466
Email: info@ltembassyus.org
Internet: www.ltembassyus.org

Lithuania also has consulates in Chicago and New York.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



LUXEMBOURG

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 2,586 sq. km. (999 sq. mi.; about the size of Rhode Island).

Cities: Capital—Luxembourg City (pop. 83,800). Other cities—Esch-sur-Alzette (pop. 29,100), Differdange (pop. 20,100), Dudelange (pop. 18,000). (2007 figures from STATEC.)

Terrain: Continuation of Belgian Ardennes in the north, heavily forested and slightly mountainous; extension of French Lorraine plateau in the south, with open, rolling countryside.

Climate: Modified continental, rainy, with mild summers and moderate snowfall in winter.

People

Nationality: Noun—Luxembourger(s). Adjective—Luxembourgian, Luxembourgish.

Population: (2007) 480,222.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.2%.

Ethnic groups: Celtic base with French and German blend; large communities of ethnic Portuguese, Italians, French, Belgians, and Germans.

Religions: Historically and predominantly Roman Catholic. However, Luxembourgian law forbids the collection of data on religious practices.

Languages: Luxembourgish, French, and German; English is widely spoken.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—100%. Literacy—99%.

Health: Life expectancy (2007)—Avg. 79.03 years; males 75.76 years; females 82.52 years. Infant mortality rate (2007)—4.68/1,000.

Work force: (2006) 318,600, of which 126,800 commute from neighboring countries. European Union institutions employ 8,300. Services: (non-financial)—53%, (financial)—11%; commerce—14%; industrial and manufacturing—11%; construction—10%; agriculture—1%.

Unemployment rate: (2006) 4.5%, up from 3.9% in 2004 (but down from 4.3% in 2005).

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Independence: 1839.

Constitution: 1868.

Government branches: Executive—Grand Duke (head of state, ceremonial), Prime Minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral parliament (Chamber of Deputies with Council of State serving as a consultative body). Judicial—Superior Court.

Political parties: Christian Social Union (CSV), Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP), Democratic Party (DP), Green Party, Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR).

Suffrage: Universal over age of 18.

Budget: (2006) $19.07 billion.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $51.842 billion (official exchange rate).

Currency: euro (€). Exchange rate (September 8, 2008) €1 = $1.4346.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 4.5%.

Per capita income: (2007) $75,886 (PPP).

Inflation rate: (2006) 276%.

Natural resources: Iron ore, timber.

Agriculture: (2005: 0.4% of GDP) Dairy, wine, forestry, animal feed crops. Arable land—24%; forested land—21%.

Services: (2005: 83.3% of GDP) Banking and financial services predominate.

Industry: (2005: 16.3% of GDP) Steel, chemicals.

Trade: (2006) Exports—$24.22 billion: steel and other metallic products, chemicals, processed wood products, machinery and other manufactured equipment. Major markets—other European Union countries (esp. Germany, France, and Belgium). Imports—$24.22 billion: Machinery and other manufactured equipment, raw materials, chemicals, food products. Major suppliers—other European Union countries (esp. Belgium, Germany, and France).

HISTORY

After 400 years of domination by various European nations, Luxembourg was granted the status of Grand Duchy by the Congress of Vienna on June 9, 1815. Although Luxembourg considers 1835 (Treaty of London) to be its year of independence, it was not granted political autonomy until 1839 under King William I of the Netherlands, who also was the Grand Duke of Luxembourg. In 1867, Luxembourg was recognized as independent and guaranteed perpetual neutrality. After being occupied by Germany in both World Wars, Luxembourg abandoned neutrality and became a charter member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. It is also one of the six original members of the European Union, formed in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

The present sovereign, Grand Duke Henri, succeeded his father, Grand Duke Jean, on October 7, 2000. Grand Duke Jean announced his decision to abdicate in December 1999, after a 35-year reign.

The national language of Luxembourg is Luxembourgish, a blend of Dutch, old German, and Frankish elements. The official language of the civil service, law, and parliament is French, although criminal and legal debates are conducted partly in Luxembourgish and police case files are recorded in German. German is the primary language of the press. French and German are taught in the schools, with German spoken mainly at the primary level and French at the secondary level. In addition, English is taught in the local high schools. Most Luxembourgers, as a result, speak English with some level of fluency.

GOVERNMENT

Luxembourg has a parliamentary form of government with a constitutional monarchy by inheritance. Under the constitution of 1868, as amended, executive power is exercised by the Grand Duke and the Council of Government (cabinet), which includes the prime minister, who serves as head of government. The prime minister is the leader of the political party or coalition of parties having the most seats in parliament, known as the Chamber of Deputies.

Legislative power is vested in the Chamber of Deputies, the members of which are elected directly to 5-year terms. A second body, the "Conseil d'État" (Council of State), composed of 21 ordinary citizens appointed by the Grand Duke, advises the Chamber of Deputies in the drafting of legislation. The Council's opinions have no binding effect, and the responsibilities of its members are in addition to their normal professional duties.

Luxembourg law is a composite of local practice, legal tradition, and French, Belgian, and German systems. The apex of the judicial system is the Superior Court, whose judges are appointed by the Grand Duke.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Grand Duke: **HENRI**
Prime Min.: **Jean-Claude JUNCKER**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jean ASSELBORN**
Min. of Agriculture, Viticulture, & Rural Development: **Fernand BODEN**
Min. for Communications: **Jean-Louis SCHILTZ**
Min. of Culture, Higher Education, & Research: **Francois BILTGEN**
Min. of Defense: **Jean-Louis SCHILTZ**
Min. for Development Cooperation & Humanitarian Affairs: **Jean-Louis SCHILTZ**
Min. of Economy & Foreign Trade: **Jeannot KRECKE**
Min. of Environment: **Lucien LUX**
Min. of Equality of Opportunity: **Marie-Josee JACOBS**
Min. of Family & Integration: **Marie-Josee JACOBS**
Min. of Finance: **Jean-Claude JUNCKER**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Immigration: **Jean ASSELBORN**
Min. of Health & of Social Security: **Mars DI BARTOLOMEO**
Min. of Interior & of Land Management: **Jean-Marie HALSDORF**
Min. of Justice: **Luc FRIEDEN**
Min. of Labor & Employment: **Francois BILTGEN**
Min. of the Middle Class, of Tourism, & of Housing: **Fernand BODEN**
Min. of National Education & Professional Training: **Mady DELVAUX-STEHRES**
Min. of Civil Service & of Admin. Reform: **Claude WISELER**
Min. of Public Works: **Claude WISELER**
Min. of Religious Sects: **Francois BILTGEN**
Min. of Sports: **Jeannot KRECKE**
Min. of State: **Jean-Claude JUNCKER**
Min. of Transportation: **Lucien LUX**
Min. of Treasury & the Budget: **Luc FRIEDEN**
Min.-Del. for Foreign Affairs & Immigration: **Nicolas SCHMIT**
Sec. of State for Agriculture, Viticulture, & Rural Development: **Octavie MODERT**
Sec. of State for Culture, Higher Education, & Research: **Octavie MODERT**
Sec. of State for Relations With Parliament: **Octavie MODERT**
Chmn., Luxembourg Central Bank: **Yves MERSCH**
Ambassador to the US: **Joseph WEYLAND**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Jean-Marc HOSCHEIT**

The Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in the United States is located at 2200 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-265-4171), www.luxembourg-usa.org.

Consulates of Luxembourg are located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Fort Worth, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, and St. Paul.

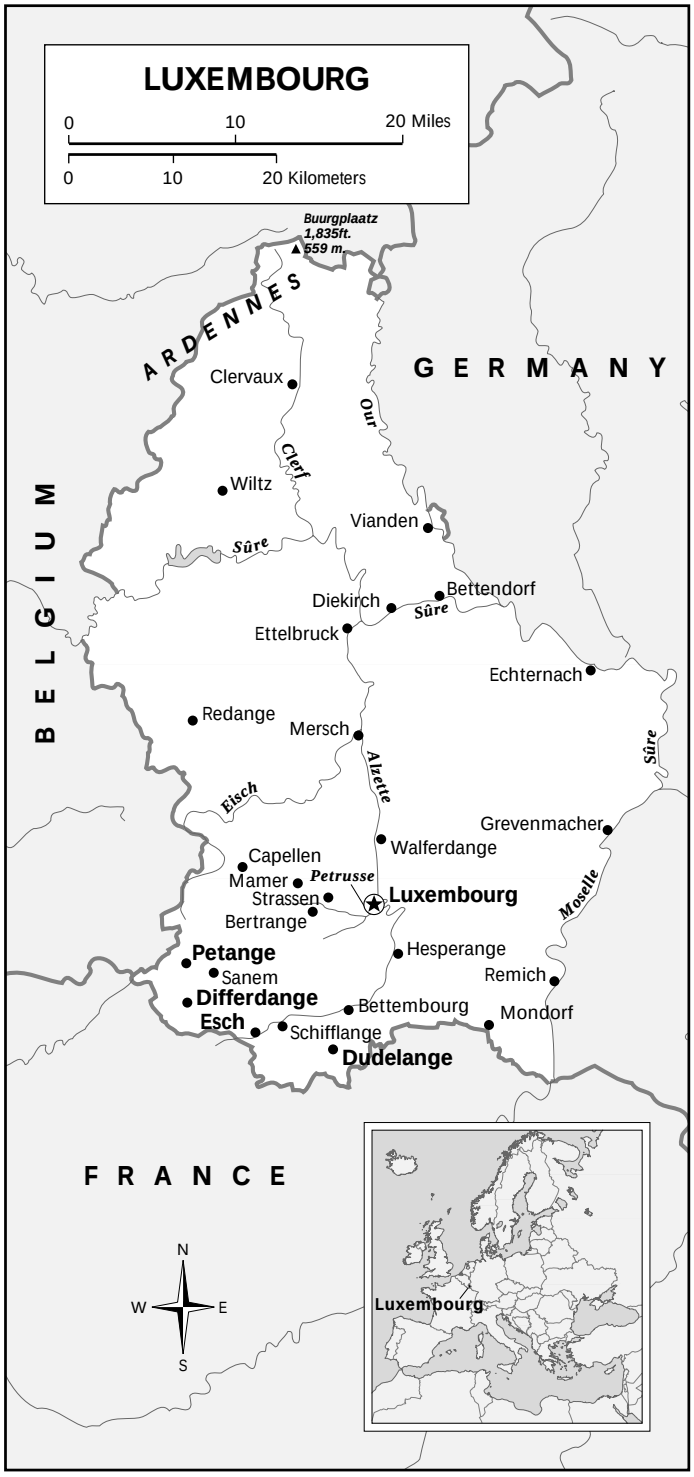
POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Luxembourg's political system has a strong local focus. National politicians very often begin their careers and establish their base serving as mayors, and members of the Chamber of Deputies are elected from one of four regions. The political culture favors consensus, and the parties coexist within the context of broad agreement on key issues, including

the value of deep European integration. Since the end of World War II the Christian Social Union (CSV) has been part of the governing coalitions and usually the dominant party. The only exception was from 1974-1979 when the CSV was in opposition to a governing coalition led by the Democratic Party (DP). The CSV resembles Christian democratic parties in other west European countries and enjoys broad popular support. Its leader, Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, in power since 1995, is the longest serving head of government in the European Union.

The Socialist Party (LSAP) is a center-left party similar to most social democratic parties in Europe. Initially founded by a worker's movement and a main defender of universal suffrage in 1919, the LSAP defends state intervention in the economy and the sustainability of the welfare system. Part of the government from 1984 to 1999, it lost its junior coalition status to the Democratic Party but regained it in the 2004 elections. While in the opposition, the LSAP voiced opposition to U.S. action in Iraq. The Democratic Party (DP) is a center-right party, drawing support from civil servants, the professions, and urban middle class. Like other west European liberal parties, it advocates both social legislation and minimum government involvement in the economy. It also is strongly pro-NATO. In the opposition from 1984 to 1999, the DP overcame the LSAP to claim the role of junior partner in the government from 1999-2004. It is currently again in the opposition. The Green Party has received growing support since it was officially formed in 1983. It opposes both nuclear weapons and nuclear power and supports environmental and ecological preservation measures. This party generally opposes Luxembourg's military policies, but it has shown some openness to peacekeeping missions.

National elections are held at least every five years and municipal elections every six years. In the June 2004 parliamentary elections the CSV won 24 seats, the LSAP 14, the DP 10, the Greens 7, and the ADR 5.



The ADR (Alternative Democratic Reform Party) when elected was known as the Action Committee for Democracy and Pension Rights. It now has only four members in the parliament after one member recently left the party and declared himself an independent.

ECONOMY

While Luxembourg is aptly described as the "Green Heart of Europe" in tourist literature, its pastoral land coexists with a highly industrialized and export-intensive economy. Lux-

embourg enjoys a degree of economic prosperity almost unique among industrialized democracies.

In 1876, English metallurgist Sidney Thomas invented a refining process that led to the development of the steel industry in Luxembourg and the founding of the Arbed company in 1911. In 2001, Arbed merged with Aceralia and Usinor to form Arcelor, which is headquartered in Luxembourg. Five years later, the company announced the acquisition of Canada's largest steel manufacturer, Dofasco. In June 2006, Arcelor merged with Mittal Steel to become Arcelor-Mittal, the largest steelmaker in the world. The company now produces 10% of the world's steel output. The iron and steel industry in Luxembourg comprises approximately 11% of the overall economy.

During the past few decades there has been a relative decline in the steel sector, offset by Luxembourg's emergence as a major financial services center. The overall services sector in 2005 comprised 83.3% of Luxembourg's GDP with it employing, in terms of percentage of workers, 78% of the labor force. The financial sector in 2005 continued to grow and made up 11% of Luxembourg's total labor force making it identical in size to the industrial labor force. In 2006 there were 156 banks in Luxembourg employing 24,752 people. Political stability, good communications, easy access to other European financial centers, skilled multilingual staff, and a tradition of banking secrecy have contributed to the growth of the financial sector. German banks represent the largest number, with Italian, French, Swiss, Belgian, American, and Japanese banks also heavily represented. Total banking assets in 2005 were $1 trillion. The funds industry is the second largest in the world after the U.S. with $2.158 trillion in domiciled funds.

Government policies promote the development of Luxembourg as an audiovisual and communications center. Radio-Television-Luxembourg is Europe's premier private radio and television broadcaster. The government-backed Luxembourg satellite company Société Européenne des Satellites (SES) was created in 1986 to install and operate a satellite telecommunications system for transmission of television programs throughout Europe. The first SES "ASTRA" satellite, a 16-channel RCA 4000, was launched by Ariane rocket in December 1988. SES presently operates 12 satellites. ASTRA 1H is an advanced satellite with a return channel capacity in the Ka band frequency range enabling two-way satellite communications directly to users' terminals.

Luxembourg offers a favorable climate to foreign investment. Successive governments have effectively attracted new investment in medium, light, and high-tech industry. Incentives cover taxes, construction, and plant equipment. The recent European Union (EU) directive on services supplied electronically has caused a number of companies to look to Luxembourg, with its relatively low value-added tax (VAT) rates, as a possible location for directing their European operations. U.S. firms are among the most prominent foreign investors, producing tires (Goodyear), chemicals (Dupont), glass (Guardian Industries), and a wide range of industrial equipment. The Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that total U.S. direct investment in Luxembourg (on a historical cost basis) was nearly $72 billion at the end of 2005. Foreign direct investment (FDI) data for Luxembourg must be interpreted cautiously, however, because of Luxembourg's role in financial intermediation, particularly involving Luxembourg-based holding companies. Labor relations have been peaceful since the 1930s. Most industrial workers are organized by unions linked to one of the major political parties. Representatives of business, unions, and government participate in the conduct of major labor negotiations. Unemployment in 2006 was 4.5%, up from 3.9% two years earlier. Luxembourg's small but productive agricultural sector employs 1% of the total labor force, a typical figure for a highly developed country. Most farms produce milk, meat, and foraging crops. Timber is another important sector. Luxembourg, being a part of the Moselle region, produces outstanding white wines.

Due to its powerful services sector, Luxembourg maintains a favorable current account balance, with a $4.63 billion surplus in 2006. Government finances have deteriorated over the past few years, with a 2006 budget deficit of $552 million.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Luxembourg has long been a prominent supporter of European political and economic integration. In efforts foreshadowing European integration, Luxembourg and Belgium in 1921 formed the Belgium-Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) to create an inter-exchangeable currency and a common customs regime. Luxembourg is a member of the Benelux Economic Union and was one of the founding members of the European Economic Community (now the European Union). It also participates in the Schengen Group, whose goal is the free movement of citizens among member states. At the same time, Luxembourgers have consistently recognized that European unity makes sense only in the context of a dynamic, transatlantic relationship and have traditionally pursued a pro-NATO, pro-U.S. foreign policy.

Luxembourg is the site of the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Auditors, European Investment Bank, and other vital EU organs. The Secretariat of the European Parliament is located in Luxembourg, but the Parliament usually meets in nearby Strasbourg. Luxembourg held the EU Presidency in the first half of 2005. Luxembourg budgeted $291 million for official development assistance (ODA) in 2007, or about 0.84% of its GNI. This places Luxembourg among the top three donor nations in the world, if calculated by percentage of GNI; Luxembourg has stated that it has a goal of eventually reaching 1% of GNI for its ODA.

DEFENSE

The Luxembourg Army is under civilian control. The country has no navy or air force. A 1967 law made the army an all-volunteer force with current strength of approximately 430 professional soldiers, about 340 enlisted recruits, and 110 civilians. A 2002 law now allows EU citizens, under certain conditions, to join the Luxembourg Army.

In 2005 Luxembourg spent approximately $310 million on defense, or about 0.85% of GDP. Luxembourg has participated in the European Corps (EUROCORPS) since 1994 and has contributed troops to UNPROFOR, IFOR, SFOR, and KFOR missions in the former Yugoslavia. Presently Luxembourg has one officer serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the European Union's ALTHEA mission and, until May 2007, a 26-person reconnaissance platoon deployed in Kosovo as its contribution to KFOR. Luxembourg also has nine soldiers in Afghanistan integrated into the Belgian forces deployed there. Luxembourg continues to take part in EU and NATO sponsored missions in Africa. Luxembourg has committed to sending a team of de-mining experts to participate in UNIFIL in Lebanon. Luxembourg has participated in the European Corps (EUROCORPS) since 1994 and has contributed troops to the UNPROFOR, IFOR, and KFOR missions in the former Yugoslavia. It has also participated with a small contingent in the NATO SFOR mission in Bosnia and currently participates in the NATO ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Luxembourg financially supported international peacekeeping missions during the 1991 Gulf War and in Rwanda and Albania and has provided humanitarian aid to Iraq. The army also has participated in humanitarian relief missions such as setting up refugee camps for Kurds and providing emergency supplies to Albania.

U.S. RELATIONS

Luxembourgers are deeply appreciative of the sacrifices made by Americans, leading to the country's liberation in the two World Wars of the 20th century. More than 5,000 American soldiers, including Gen. George S. Patton, are buried at the American Military Cemetery near the capital, and there are monuments in many towns to American liberators. The strong U.S.-Luxembourg relationship is expressed both bilaterally and through common membership in NATO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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RSO:	Kirby Rosenbluth
FMO:	John Parker
IMO:	Warren Gilsdorf
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Paris)
ISO:	Dennis Smith
ISSO:	Warren Gilsdorf
POL:	Tom Boughter

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 3, 2008

Country Description: Luxembourg is a highly developed, stable constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. Luxembourg is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Luxembourg for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. Sufficient funds and a return airline ticket are required. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. No immunization is necessary. For further information concerning entry requirements for Luxembourg, travelers may contact the Embassy of Luxembourg at 2200 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008, phone: (202) 265-4171 or 4172, or the Luxembourg Consulate General in New York, phone: (212) 888-6664 or in San Francisco, phone: (415) 788-0816. Visit the Embassy of Luxembourg web site at http://www.luxembourg-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Terrorist incidents are rare in Luxembourg. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Luxembourg's open borders with its Western European neighbors could allow the possibility of terrorist groups to enter/exit the country unnoticed.

Prior police approval is required for public demonstrations in Luxembourg, and police oversight is routinely provided to ensure adequate security for participants and passers-by. Nonetheless, situations may develop which could pose a threat to public safety. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid areas where public demonstrations are taking place.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The crime rate in Luxembourg is moderate when compared to other European countries. The predominant form of crime in Luxembourg is the non-violent theft of valuables through snatching of purses/bags or more sophisticated breaking and entering of unoccupied homes. Travelers should take common-sense precautions while in Luxembourg. In particular, travelers should be especially cautious while in public areas, the airport and train terminals, where pickpockets can be a problem. Luxembourg has many public parks that are safe during the daylight hours, though the volume of low-level drug vending has increased in some of the city parks. Tourists should avoid these parks after dark due to the higher risk at night. During the summer season, Americans should be particularly alert to purse snatchings and confidence scams against tourists. Incidents of petty crime spike during the annual "Schueberfouer," a traveling fun fair that visits the country every year for 3 weeks in the summer.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Luxembourg judicial authorities provide information, legal advice and psychological counseling at no charge to victims of crime (adults and children). Address: Service d'aide aux victimes, Parquet General, Galerie Kons, 24-26, place de la Gare, L-1616 Luxembourg. Phone: (352) 475821, extension 625, 627 or 628 Monday-Friday 8am-12pm and 2pm-6pm, in an emergency call (352) 621326595 Monday-Friday 8am-7pm. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Luxembourg is: 113.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are widely available. In an emergency, dial 112 for an ambulance or in case of fire; dial 113 for the police. Hospitals in Luxembourg operate on a 24-hour rotation system. The on-call emergency room can be determined by calling 112. Patients may self-refer to any clinic Monday-Friday between 8am-5pm. In Luxembourg City, three major hospitals offer comprehensive general medical and surgical treatment, as well as specialized care in orthopedics, cardiology and psychiatry. In addition, there are two pediatric clinics and two obstetric clinics in Luxembourg City. Hospitals also exist in the south of the country (Esch-sur-Alzette) and in the north (Wiltz). For more specialized care, including major burns, transfer to a regional burn center in Belgium or France is necessary.

Most drugstores are located in the city of Luxembourg but can also be found throughout the country in all major communes. Drugstores operate on a 24-hour rotation system for after-hours services, including emergency prescriptions. The on-call pharmacy is listed daily in the local newspaper or can be determined by calling 112. A doctor's prescription is sometimes necessary for drugs that are sold over the counter in the United States.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Luxembourg.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Luxembourg is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Luxembourg has a modern, well-maintained system of highways and secondary roads. Road signs and markings are clear and, as applicable, worded in French. Streets in the city, construction sites and crossroads are well illuminated at night. On highways, a digital alert system warns drivers of incidents or detours. Roads leading into and out of Luxembourg City are congested during the morning and evening rush hour. Visitors should drive defensively in high-volume commuter traffic. During the fall and winter, fog and ice can cause sudden slowdowns on highways and secondary roads.

In case of a car accident involving injury or dispute, it is advisable for a foreigner to call the police at 113. The police will make an official assessment of the accident's circumstances that can consequently be used if further legal action becomes necessary.

The daily mix of drivers from Luxembourg and its three neighboring countries results in a variety of driving practices and courtesies. While most drivers respect speed limits, traffic signals, and rules, others do not. Vehicle maintenance for cars registered in Luxembourg is controlled by the mandatory yearly car inspection; police can perform random road checks at any time. The possibility of

encountering an intoxicated driver increases on weekends, especially during the late evening hours. Driving while intoxicated may result in penalties including imprisonment from 8 days up to two years plus a fine of 251 to 5000 Euros (approximately US$300 to US$6,000).

Public transportation throughout the country, including bus services and taxis, is highly developed and is considered very safe. Emergency road services in Luxembourg are excellent. For breakdown and towing service call the ACL (Automobile Club Luxembourg) at 26000 or see the web site at www.acl. lu. In case of an accident, call 112 for a medical emergency and 113 for the police.

Visit the web site of the Luxembourg's national tourist office at www.ont.lu and the Luxembourg police at www.police.public.lu.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Luxembourg's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Luxembourg's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Luxembourg customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Luxembourg of items such as live animals, plants, endangered species, medication (except for personal use), firearms and ammunition, cultural artifacts, alcoholic beverages, and tobacco products. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Luxembourg in Washington or one of Luxembourg's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. The amount of imported currency is not limited. The Euro is the official currency in Luxembourg, and at the same time the valid currency in several other European countries. Luxembourg does not yet allow dual nationality. When obtaining Luxembourg nationality either through option or naturalization, the former nationality must be renounced.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Luxembourg's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Luxembourg are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Luxembourg are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Luxembourg. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 22, Blvd Emmanuel Servais, L-2535 Luxembourg City, phone: (352) 46 01 23 (available 24/7), fax: (352) 46 14 01. Consular Section phone: (352) 46 01 23 -22 13, Consular Section fax: (352) 46 19 39, email: LuxembourgConsular@state.gov. The U.S. Embassy's Internet home page is http://luxembourg.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Few children are adopted from Luxembourg. This flyer contains information on how to adopt from third countries if residing in Luxembourg.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
The government authority which oversees intercountry adoption in Luxembourg is:

Ministry of Family and Integration
Department of Adoption and Foster Care
12-14 avenue Emile Reuter
L-2420 Luxembourg
Tel: +352 478 6566
Fax: +352 24 18 87
Email: Jacques.kuntziger@fm.etat.lu
(Head of Department)

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Only married couples can adopt. One parent must be at least 25 years of age and the other at least 21. The parents must be at least 15 years older than the child (except in the case of adoption of a stepchild by the spouse, only 10 years' difference is required) and the child must not be older than 16. Both parents need to provide a medical certificate stating that neither of them nor anyone in the household

suffers from a medical or mental condition that could negatively affect the child. A child of 16 or older can still be adopted, but it will only be a'simple' adoption as explained below. However, the child will not qualify for U.S. immigrant visa.

Residency Requirements: According to article 370 of the law on adoption from June 13, 1989 adoption is open to Luxembourg citizens and foreigners. Foreign prospective parents have to fulfill the requirements for adoption as prescribed by the laws of their country. The Luxembourgish court presiding over the adoption will in fact verify that the parents fulfill all requirements for adoption in their own country and that the laws in the country of the child are respected.

In order for a Luxembourg court to decide on an adoption case, either the child or the prospective adoptive parents must reside in Luxembourg. There is no minimum period for this residency requirement. If the parents are not Luxembourg citizens, they must fulfill the requirements of their native country and demonstrate that they are eligible to adopt. If the parents do not have the same nationality and neither of them has Luxembourg nationality but are resident in Luxembourg, Luxembourg law will be applied.

Time Frame: It usually takes about two years to complete an adoption, from the moment the parents start gathering the paperwork to be approved until they adopt a child.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Adoption agencies must be licensed by the Luxembourg Government. Parents must use licensed agencies in order to get a residence permit for the child when he/she arrives from the country of origin. Please see the Hague Permanent Bureau web site for a list of accredited agencies for Luxembourg http://www.hcch.net.

Adoption Fees: The total fee for adoption covers is around 10,000 Euros; this covers the entire process, including medical expenses, adoption agency fees and notarials. The Luxembourg government subsidizes half of this total so prospective parents pay about 5.000 Euros.

Domestic adoption in Luxembourg: An adoption can only take place if it is considered to be in the best interest of the child. There are two types of adoption in Luxembourg, "plénière" (plenary) and "simple". In a plenary adoption, the adopted child loses all ties to his or her biological parents and receives the same hereditary rights as any children born to the adoptive parents. This form of adoption is irrevocable. In the case of'simple' adoption the child usually lives with the adopted family and takes the name of the adopted family. But the child keeps his/her hereditary rights and is still entitled to any child support or alimony paid to the biological family. The child sometimes keeps his/her original nationality. This form of adoption can be revoked if it is considered to be in the best interest of the child.

Intercountry Adoption to Luxembourg: Prospective adoptive parents first contact the adoption agency dealing with the country from which they wish to adopt a child. The agency then compiles a file on the aptitude and eligibility of the parents, and assembles all the required documentation.

For adoptions from countries not party to the Hague Adoption Convention, the case file is sent to the country of origin of the child. The Luxembourgish court deciding on the adoption will only make its decision once the parents have returned to Luxembourg with the child and after examining the child's original birth certificate, the adoption decree from the country of origin and the letter of consent/abandonment from the biological parents. There is no guarantee that the Luxembourg court will make a favorable decision on the adoption.

For an adoption from a country party to the Hague Adoption Convention, the adoption agency will compile a report, which the parents submit along with the rest of the file to the Luxembourg court deciding in the case. For adoptions from countries party to the Hague Adoption Convention, the Luxembourgish court only intervenes in the process of finding the parents eligible for adoption.

The Luxembourgish court accepts the judgment from the country of origin of the child and the adoption is recorded with the civil authorities. If the agency does not find the prospective adoptive parents eligible for adoption it can refuse to compile a report. If the court finds the parents eligible, the parents can contact the Ministry of Family for transmittal of the case file to the appropriate authorities of the country they wish to adopt from. All files concerning adoptions in countries party to the Hague Convention must go through the Ministry of Family.

Required Documents: The list of documents to be submitted varies from country to country. The following documents must be submitted if the parents wish to adopt a Luxembourgish child:

- Police record (Extrait de casier judiciaire). This is required even if the record is negative.
- Certificate of voter registration; or consular affidavit of nationality; or certified copy of passport or national ID card.
- Birth certificate of prospective adoptive parents.
- Medical certificate, less than three months old, certifying that neither of the parents nor anyone in their household suffers from a medical or mental condition that could harm the child.
- Marriage license.
- Medical certificate of the prospective adoptive child, less than three months old, certifying that there are no health-related reasons for which he/she should not be adopted.
- Proof of residence for the adoptive parents and proof of residency for the child.

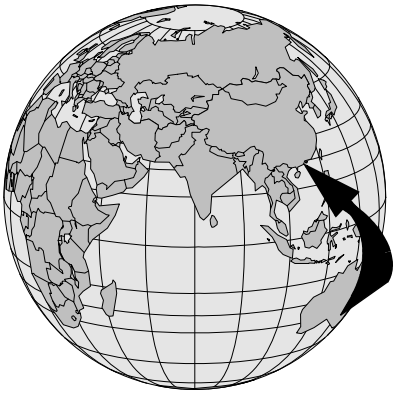
Embassy of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg
2200 Massachusetts Avenue,
NW, Washington, DC 20006
Tel. 202-265-4171
Fax: (202) 328-8270
Email: washington.info@mae.etat.lu
http://www.luxembourg-usa.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
22, Boulevard E. Servais
L-2535 Luxembourg
Phone: +352-460123 / 2213
Fax: +352-461939
http://luxembourg.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Luxembourg may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Luxembourg.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MACAU

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Macau Special Administrative Region

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 29.2 square kilometers total, with 9.3 sq. km. on a peninsula connected to China and the southern islands of Taipa (6.7 sq. km.), Coloane (7.6 sq. km.), and Co Tai (5.6 sq. km., reclaimed land between Taipa and Coloane) linked by bridge and causeway.

Terrain: Coastline is flat, inland is hilly and rocky.
Climate: Tropical monsoon; cool and humid in winter, hot and rainy from spring through summer.

People

Nationality: Noun—Macanese (sing. and pl.).
Population: (1st Quarter 2008) 543,000.
Population growth rate: (1st quarter 2008) 4.3%.
Ethnic groups: Chinese 94.3%, Portuguese 0.6%, Portuguese & Chinese or Portuguese & non-Chinese 1%.
Religions: Buddhist 17%, Roman Catholic 7%, Christian 2%.
Languages: In 1992, the government gave the Chinese (Cantonese) language official status and the same legal force as Portuguese, the official language.
Education: Literacy—91.3%.
Work force: Manufacturing—8.4%; construction—11.6%; wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants—24.3%; financial intermediation, real estate, and related business activities—9.6%; public administration, other community, social and personal services, including gaming—31.5%; transport, storage and communications—4.6%.

Government

Type: Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China since December 20, 1999 with its own mini-constitution (the Basic Law).
Government branches: Executive—President of the People's Republic of China (head of state), chief executive (head of government), Executive Council (cabinet). Legislative—Legislative Assembly. Judicial—Independent judicial system with a high court (the Court of Final Appeal).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $19.2 billion.
GDP real growth rate: (2007) 27.3%.
Per capita GDP: (2007) $36,300.
Agriculture: Products—rice and vegetables; most foodstuffs and water are imported.
Industry: Types—tourism, gambling, clothing, textiles, electronics, toys, footwear, construction, and real estate development.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$2.6 billion f.o.b.: textiles and clothing, manufactured goods (especially toys, footwear and machinery & mechanical appliances). Major markets—U.S. 40.6%, Hong Kong 13.1%, China 14.9%, EU 18.2%. Imports—$5.4 billion: consumer goods, foodstuffs, fuels, and raw materials. Major suppliers—China 42.6%, Hong Kong 10.1%, EU 15.7%, U.S. 5.6%, Taiwan 3.5%, Japan 9.0%.

PEOPLE

Macau's population is 94.3% Chinese, primarily Cantonese and some Hakka, both from nearby Guangdong Province. The remainder are of Portuguese or mixed Chinese-Portuguese ancestry. The official languages are Portuguese and Chinese (Cantonese). English is spoken in tourist areas. Macau has ten higher education institutions, including the University of Macau; 76.4% of the University of Macau's 5,838 students are local and 23.6% from overseas.

HISTORY

Chinese records of Macau date back to the establishment in 1152 of Xiangshan County under which

Macau was administered, though it remained unpopulated through most of the next century. Members of the South Sung (Song) Dynasty and some 50,000 followers were the first recorded inhabitants of the area, seeking refuge in Macau from invading Mongols in 1277. They were able to defend their settlements and establish themselves there.

The Hoklo Boat people were the first to show commercial interest in Macau as a trading center for the southern provinces. Macau did not develop as a major settlement until the Portuguese arrived in the 16th century. Portuguese traders used Macau as a staging port as early as 1516, making it the oldest European settlement in the Far East. In 1557, the Chinese agreed to a Portuguese settlement in Macau but did not recognize Portuguese sovereignty. Although a Portuguese municipal government was established, the sovereignty question remained unresolved.

Initially, the Portuguese developed Macau's port as a trading post for China-Japan trade and as a staging port on the long voyage from Lisbon to Nagasaki. When Chinese officials banned direct trade with Japan in 1547, Macau's Portuguese traders carried goods between the two countries. The first Portuguese governor was appointed to Macau in 1680, but the Chinese continued to assert their authority, collecting land and customs taxes. Portugal continued to pay rent to China until 1849, when the Portuguese abolished the Chinese customs house and declared Macau's "independence," a year which also saw Chinese retaliation and finally the assassination of Gov. Ferreira do Amaral.

On March 26, 1887, the Manchu government acknowledged the Portuguese right of "perpetual occupation." The Manchu-Portuguese agreement, known as the Protocol of Lisbon, was signed with the condition that Portugal would never surrender Macau to a third party without China's permission.

Macau enjoyed a brief period of economic prosperity during World War II as the only neutral port in South China, after the Japanese occupied Guangzhou (Canton) and Hong Kong. In 1943, Japan created a virtual protectorate over Macau. Japanese domination ended in August 1945.

When the Chinese communists came to power in 1949, they declared the Protocol of Lisbon to be invalid as an "unequal treaty" imposed by foreigners on China. However, Beijing was not ready to settle the treaty question, requesting maintenance of "the status quo" until a more appropriate time. Beijing took a similar position on treaties relating to the Hong Kong territories.

Riots broke out in 1966 when pro-communist Chinese elements and the Macau police clashed. The Portuguese Government reached an agreement with China to end the flow of refugees from China and to prohibit all communist demonstrations. This move ended the conflict, and relations between the government and the leftist organizations have remained peaceful.

The Portuguese tried once in 1966 after the riots in Macau, and again in 1974, the year of a military revolution in Portugal, to return Macau to Chinese sovereignty. China refused to reclaim Macau however, hoping to settle the question of Hong Kong first.

Portugal and China established diplomatic relations in 1979. A year later, Gen. Melo Egidio became the first Governor of Macau to visit China. The visit underscored both parties' interest in finding a mutually agreeable solution to Macau's status; negotiations began in 1985, a year after the signing of the Sino-U.K. agreement returning Hong Kong to China in 1997. The result was a 1987 agreement returning Macau to Chinese sovereignty as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China on December 20, 1999.

GOVERNMENT

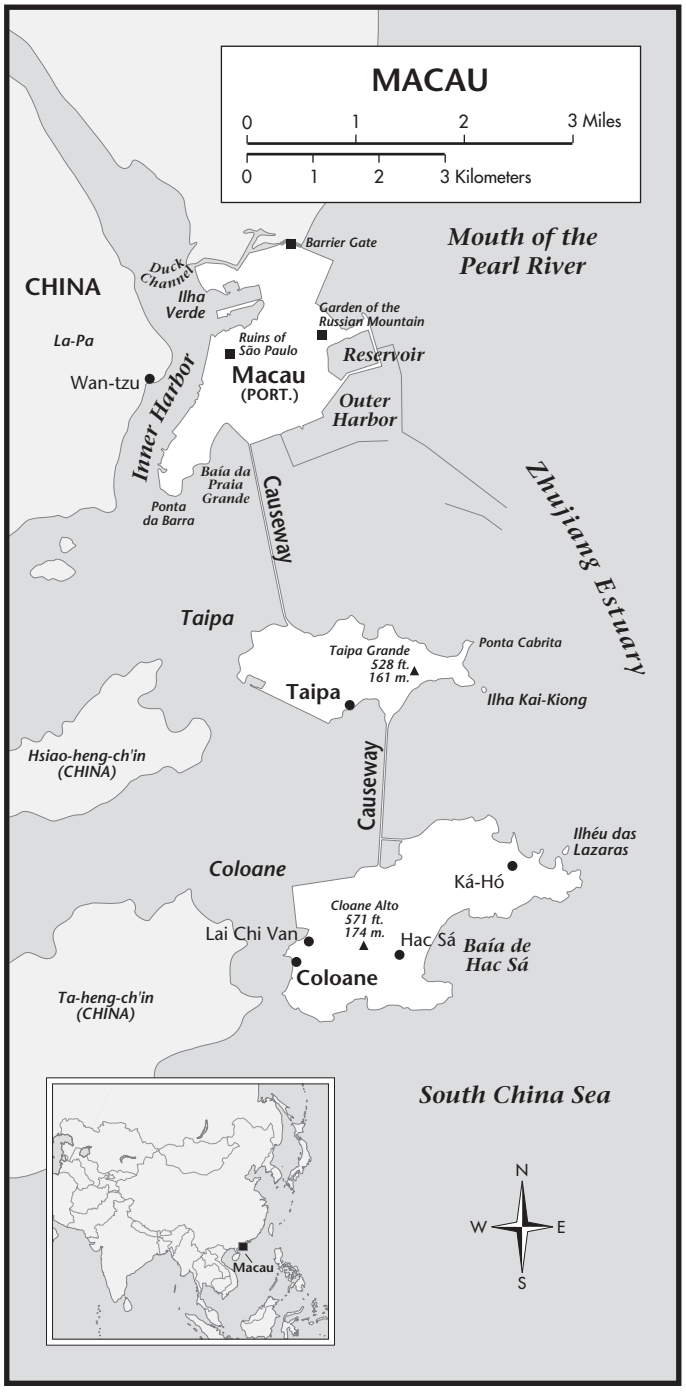
The chief executive is appointed by China's central government after selection by an election committee, whose members are nominated by corporate bodies. The chief executive appears before a cabinet, the Executive Council (Exco), of between 7 and 11 members. The latest Exco, appointed on December 15, 2004, has 10 members. The term of office of the chief executive is 5 years, and no individual may serve for more than two consecutive terms.

The chief executive has strong policy-making and executive powers similar to those of a president. These powers are, however, limited from above by the central government in Beijing, to whom the chief executive reports directly, and from below (to a more limited extent) by the legislature. Edmund Ho, a community leader and banker, is the first China-appointed chief executive of the Macau SAR, having replaced General de Rocha Viera on December 20, 1999. Ho was re-appointed to a second term on September 20, 2004.

The legislative organ of the territory is the Legislative Assembly, a 29-member body of 12 directly elected members, 10 indirectly elected members representing four interest groups: 1) employers; 2) labor; 3) professionals; and 4) charity, culture, education and sports. Seven members are appointed by the chief executive.

The Legislative Assembly is responsible for general lawmaking, including taxation, the passing of the budget, and socioeconomic legislation. In the last election, held in September 2005, pro-entertainment industry groups won five of the 12 directly elected seats, pro-democracy groups won two seats, and pro-China parties won four; a former civil servant took the remaining seat.

The next election will be held in 2009. The city of Macau and the islands of Taipa and Coloane each had a municipal council until January 1, 2002, when the Civic and Municipal



Bureau was formally established to replace the two municipal councils. The legal system is based largely on Portuguese law. The territory has its own independent judicial system, with a high court.

Judges are selected by a committee and appointed by the chief executive. Foreign judges may serve on the courts. In July 1999 the chief executive appointed a seven-person committee to select judges for the SAR. Twenty-four judges were recommended by the committee and were then appointed by Mr. Ho. Macau has three courts: the Court of the First Instance, the Court of the Second Instance, and the Court of Final Appeal, Macau's highest court. Sam Hou Fai is the President (Chief Justice) of the Court of Final Appeal.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 2/1/2008

(Special Admin. Region of the People's Republic of China)

Chief Executive: **Edmund HO Hau-wah**
Sec. for Admin. & Justice: **Florinda Da Rosa Silva CHAN**
Sec. for Economics & Finance: **Francis TAM Pak-yuen**
Sec. for Security: **CHEONG Kuoc Va**
Sec. for Social Affairs & Culture: **Fernando CHUI Sai-on**
Sec. for Transportation & Public Works: **AO Man Long**
Procurator Gen.: **HO Chio Meng**
Pres., Court of Final Appeal: **SAM Hou Fai**
Pres., Legislative Council: **Susana CHOU**
Commissioner, Audit: **Fatima Mei-lei CHOI**
Commissioner, Independent Commission Against Corruption: **CHEONG U**

ECONOMY

Macau's economy is based primarily on tourism, including gambling, and textile and garment manufacturing. Efforts to diversify have spawned other small industries, such as footwear, and machinery and mechanical appliances. The textile industry provided about 66% of export earnings in 2007, but total exports were only about 13% of Macau's total GDP. Gaming alone contributed almost 55% of GDP in 2007. The opening of the formerly monopolized gambling sector in 2002 has led to significant new investment in casinos, hotels, and related facilities. Almost 27 million tourists visited Macau in 2007, up 23% from 2006. The recent growth in gambling and tourism has been driven primarily by mainland Chinese and tourists from Hong Kong. Mainland Chinese tourists account for about 55% of all tourist arrivals to Macau. Macau depends on China for most of its food, fresh water, and energy imports. The European Union and Hong Kong are the main suppliers of raw materials and capital goods.

In the last few years much of Macau's manufacturing operations (mainly textiles and garments) have moved across the border to mainland China. Mainland competition, along with the 2005 end of Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA) quotas, which had provided a near guarantee of export markets, are slowly spelling the end of Macau's low-end mass production of textiles; the bulk of the SAR's merchandise export earnings. For future growth, Macau is betting heavily on becoming a regional center for gaming, tourism, conventions and corporate incentive travel; foreign and local investors have massively expanded the casino, hotel and restaurant sectors.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Macau's foreign relations and defense are the responsibility of China. China has, however, granted Macau considerable autonomy in economic and commercial relations. The U.S. Government has no offices in Macau. U.S. interests are represented by the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

HONG KONG (CG) 26 Garden Road, Central, APO/FPO AmConGen Hong Kong, PSC 461, Box 1, FPO AP 96521, (852) 2523-9011, Fax (852) 2845-1598, Workweek: 0830-1730, Website: hongkong.usconsulate.gov.

DCM OMS:	Virginia S. Burns
DHS/ICE:	Tatum King
FCS:	James W. Mayfield (Acting)
HRO:	Anush Dawidjan
MGT:	Michelle A. Burton (Acting)
POL/ECO:	Laurent D. Charbonnet
AMB:	Christopher J. Marut (Acting)
CON:	Steven S. Maloney
DCM:	Steven S. Maloney (Acting)
PAO:	Anthony A. Hutchinson
RSO:	Vincent D. Graham
ATO:	Philip A. Shull
DAO:	Capt. Theodore P. Algire
DEA:	Gene T. Goon
FMO:	Michelle A. Burton
IMO:	Gary Cook
IPO:	Roger J. Bjorkdahl
ISO:	Joan E. Hutfles
LEGATT:	Nelson Low

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 16, 2008

Country Description: Macau, formerly a Chinese territory under Portuguese administration, became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on December 20, 1999. The SAR maintains a high degree of autonomy, except in the areas of defense and foreign policy. Macau retains its own currency, laws, and border controls. Facilities for tourism are well developed. Gambling, tourism, and textile and apparel manufacturing are the largest sectors in Macau's economy. With a population of approximately 508,500, Macau covers a 28.2 square-kilometer area including the peninsula of Macau, connected to the PRC, and the two islands of Taipa and Coloane linked by a highway 2.2 km long.

Entry Requirements: Valid passports are required. Passports should be valid for 30 days beyond the intended period of stay in Macau. Because many neighboring areas require six months validity remaining on the passport, U.S. citizens planning travel beyond Macau should ensure that their passports are valid for at least six months from the date of their proposed entry into such areas. A visa is not required for tourist visits of up to 30 days.

Holders of a Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card or a Hong Kong Reentry Permit may use either document to enter Macau for a maximum stay of up to one (1) year. All visitors must present their passport or other valid travel document upon arrival. Visit the Macau Government Tourist Office web site at http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/7066.htm for the most current visa information.

U.S. citizens should obtain all required visas prior to departing the U.S. Specifically, U.S. citizens wishing to travel to the PRC from Macau require a PRC visa and should apply at the PRC Embassy or consulates in the United States Visas to the PRC can be obtained at the PRC Visa Office in Macau; however, they are often issued for a shorter length and fewer entries than those obtained in the U.S. Parents whose children hold U.S. passports should be aware that the PRC Visa Office may require original birth certificates or other U.S. documents for these children. Persons applying in Macau for PRC visas for U.S.-born children have been unable to obtain PRC visas without the certified U.S. birth certificate. Parents should consider bringing their children's birth certificates if applying for a PRC visa in Macau.

Safety and Security: Although there have been no terrorist incidents in Macau, the Department of State reminds Americans everywhere that U.S. citizens and interests are at a heightened risk of attack by terrorists. These individuals and groups have proven that they do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Because security awareness has been elevated within the United States, terrorists may target U.S. interests overseas. Private Americans should be aware of the potential risks when making travel plans and should remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and exercise caution. The State Department will continue to develop information about potential threats. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Petty street crime, including pick-pocketing, occasionally occurs in tourist areas in Macau, including in and around casinos and at the airport. Travelers should take caution with their personal belongings and travel documents at all times.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Macau is 999. In addition, tourists can dial 112 to report crimes directly related to travel, such as petty theft.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Several major hospitals in Macau have adequate medical facilities, and Kiang Wu and Conde de Sao Januario hospitals are able to provide emergency medical care. The U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong web site maintains a list of medical providers in Macau at http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov. Highly developed medical facilities and trained personnel are available in Hong Kong, which is about an hour by jetfoil and ten minutes by helicopter from Macau.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Macau.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

The H5N1 virus, a form of avian influenza, has been found in poultry and wild birds in Macau. While rare, human infection and deaths from H5N1 have been reported worldwide. Most reported cases of human infection with H5N1 viruses have occurred after contact with H5N1-infected poultry or birds.

Further information about avian influenza and about preparing for a possible influenza pandemic is available from our Avian Flu Fact Sheet, from www.pandemicflu.gov and from wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Macau is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Traffic moves on the left in Macau and roads are narrow and winding. Traffic is generally congested throughout the day. Most visitors to Macau choose not to drive. Taxis are plentiful and inexpensive by the airport, ferry terminal, and gaming venues. Public buses are also inexpensive and frequent but may be difficult to find outside major tourist areas.

For specific information concerning Macau driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Public Security Police Force at telephone (853) 2837 4214; fax (853) 2852 3407; email info@fsm.gov.mo or the Macau Transport Department (Comissariado de Transito de Macau), Ave Sidonio Pais, Macau; telephone (853) 374-214; fax (853) 522-966; web site http://www.iacm.gov.mo. (Please note: The web site is available only in Chinese and Portuguese.)

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Macau, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Macau's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with ICAO international aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Currency: There are no currency restrictions for tourists in Macau. Although the pataca is the official currency in Macau, Hong Kong currency is commonly used in transactions, especially in tourist areas. Travelers visiting Macau from Hong Kong may wish to bring sufficient Hong Kong dollars to cover their expenses. Credit cards and ATM network debit cards are widely accepted in Macau. Banks and major hotels accept traveler's checks.

Customs Regulations: Macau customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Macau of items such as firearms, ivory, certain categories of medications, and other goods. Please see the Macau Customs Service web site at http://www.customs.gov.mo/en/index1.htm for further information.

Visitors to Macau should be aware that the importation into the United States of counterfeit, brand-name items, such as watches, compact discs, computer software, and clothing, is prohibited by U.S. law.

Dual Nationality: Under the nationality law of the PRC, persons of Chinese descent who were born in the PRC, including Macau, are PRC citizens. However, under an agreement between the United States and the People's Republic of China, all U.S. citizens entering Macau on their U.S. passports, including such persons as may be considered PRC nationals by the PRC authorities, are considered U.S. citizens by the Macau SAR

authorities for purposes of ensuring U.S. consular access and protection during their initial legal stay of up to 30 days in Macau.

Dual national residents or former residents of Macau who wish to ensure U.S. consular access and protection after the initial 30-day period of visa-free admission into Macau should declare their U.S. nationality to the Macau Immigration Department upon arrival. Dual-national residents of Macau who enter Macau on travel documents other than their U.S. passports and who desire U.S. consular protection should declare their U.S. nationality as soon as possible after entry. This "declaration of change of nationality" will ensure U.S. consular protection. It may also result in loss of one's PRC nationality (but not necessarily one's right of abode). Whereas failure to declare U.S. nationality may jeopardize U.S. consular protection, such failure will not jeopardize one's U.S. citizenship.

Dual nationals contemplating onward travel into mainland China should be attentive to use of their U.S. passports. Dual nationals who enter or depart mainland China using a U.S. passport and a valid PRC visa retain the right of U.S. consular access and protection under the U.S.-PRC Consular Convention. The ability of the U.S. Embassy or Consulates General to provide normal consular services would be extremely limited should a dual national enter mainland China on a Macau SAR or other non-U.S. passport.

In addition to being subject to all Macau SAR laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may be subject to laws of Macau that impose special obligations on Macau citizens. For further information on consular protection and dual nationality please refer to our information on dual nationality.

Language: The official languages in the Macau SAR are Chinese and Portuguese; however, English is spoken in tourist areas.

Typhoons: During the storm season (July through September), the Macau Observatory (Direccao dos Servicos Meteorologicos e Geofisicos) issues typhoon warnings on an average of six times a year. The Macau Observatory has a good notification and monitoring system in place. Please consult the Macau Observatory's web site at http://www.smg.gov.mo for further information. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Macau's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Macau are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Macau are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Macau.

There is no U.S. diplomatic or consular presence in Macau. Consular assistance for U.S. citizens is provided by the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong, 26 Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong; telephone (852) 2523-9011 or (852) 2841-2211; fax (852) 2845-4845; e-mail acshk@state.gov, web site at hongkong.usconsulate.gov. The mailing address (from the U.S.) of the Consulate General in Hong Kong is PSC 461, Box 5, FPO, AP 96521-0006. Please check the U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong web site for current office hours. U.S. citizens living in or visiting Macau are encouraged to register at the Consular Section of the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong and obtain updated information on travel and security within Macau.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: U.S. citizen prospective adoptive parents who are interested in adopting from Macau are strongly encouraged to contact U.S. consular officials in Hong Kong before formalizing an adoption agreement in Macau, to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed that will make it possible for the child to obtain an. immigrant visa.

Patterns of Immigration: Very few intercountry adoptions occur in Macau. According to the Social Welfare Bureau in Macau, only one orphan has been adopted by a foreign family (Portuguese nationals) in the past five years.

Adoption Authority: The Social Welfare Bureau of the Macau Special

Administrative Region Government is the sole Adoption Authority in Macau. Contact information is as follows:

Social Welfare Bureau of the Macau Special Administrative Region Government
Estrada do Cemiterio, no. 6,
Macau, China;
Tel: (853) 3997716, 3997717, 3997736;
E-mail: srh@ias.gov.mo
Website: http://www.ias.gov.mo.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: To qualify to adopt a child in Macau, prospective parent(s) must meet one of the criteria listed below:

- Be a legally married couple (both over 25 years of age, married for at least three years and not de facto separated).
- Be a couple both over 25 years of age, who have been cohabitating for at least 5 years.
- Be a single person who is at least 28 years of age (unless the birth parent of the prospective adoptee has been living with the potential adopting parent under de facto marriage for over 3 years—in this case, the prospective adoptive parent must be at least 25 years old).

Prospective adoptive parents should be at least 18 years older than the child they hope to adopt. Likewise, there should not be more than a 50-year age gap between the age of either prospective adoptive parent and the prospective adoptee. Children born in Macau are Chinese nationals and ethnic-Chinese parents stand a better chance of getting matched with a child.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoption cases in Macau. Prospective adoptive parents should be aware that the Social Welfare Bureau will first try to find a family resident in Macau to adopt any available children.

Time Frame: The Social Welfare Bureau will review all adoption applications within 10 days and inform the facilitating Central Authority or adoption organization of the decision. The total time frame between the initial submission of the application and the final decision by the court can be more than one year. Should the adoption be approved, prospective adoptive parent(s) should be prepared to travel to Macau for approximately 2-3 weeks for legal proceedings and to escort the adoptee back to the United States.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

Adoption Fees: The Social Welfare Bureau does not charge any fees for the assessment and matching process. Prospective adoptive parents are responsible for paying all fees and expenses related to court proceedings, applications for certified documents, transportation, etc. An estimate of the fees associated with the adoption process in Macau was not provided to the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong.

Adoption Procedures: Parents hoping to adopt a child in Macau should submit an application to the Social Welfare Bureau. Applications can be submitted either through the Central Authority in the country where the parent(s) habitually reside or via a licensed agency/organization engaging in intermediary adoption activities. Prospective adoptive parents living in Macau and possessing valid Macau identity cards may submit an application directly to the Social Welfare Bureau.

The Social Welfare Bureau will review the adoption application and notify the relevant agency/organization of its decision. Once an application has been accepted, the Social Welfare Bureau will start the process of matching the prospective adoptive parent(s) with a child.

Once a match has been made, the Social Welfare Bureau will compile a "feasibility study" of the adoption. If, based on the findings of the study, the application is approved, the Social Welfare Bureau will initiate judicial entrustment procedures before a civil court (Tribunal Judicial de Base). Once an authorization for judicial entrustment has been obtained, arrangements will be made for the child to live abroad with the adoptive parent(s) for a trial period. Such trial periods typically last for up to one year. During this period, the Social Welfare Bureau will work with the relevant authorities in Singapore to determine whether the adoption by the applicant(s) would be in the best interests of the child. For the adoption to be legally finalized in Macau, a final adoption judgment must be submitted to the Social Welfare Bureau either by the relevant Central Authority of the country of the adoptive parents' habitual residence or by a certified adoption agency.

Required Documents: Any application to adopt a child in Macau must provide the following documentation:

- Proof that the biological parents of the prospective adoptee have given permission for the adoption. If the child is 12 years old or older, he/she must also consent to the adoption. Certain exemptions do exist, and prospective adoptive parents should consult legal counsel with knowledge of the laws of Macau.
- Documentation that the prospective adoptive parents have been evaluated and declared suitable to adopt by an authorized entity in their country of residence. The Social Welfare Bureau will accept a Notice of Favorable Determination Concerning Application for Advance Processing of an Orphan Petition (Form I-171H) together with a full home study report to fulfill this requirement.

- Proof that the laws in the prospective adoptive parents' country of residence allow the child and adoptive parents to live together for a sufficient period of time to establish a parent-child relationship.

- Proof of identity (U.S. passport), marriage certificate(s) or evidence of termination of previous marriage(s), proof of income, copies of school credentials, evidence of prior adoptions (if any), medical examination reports for the adoptive parent(s), police certification to show any existing criminal records, and family photos. Please note that notarized or certified copies of documents are generally accepted by authorities in Macau.

The Embassy of the People's Republic of China
2300 Connecticut Ave., NW,
Washington DC 20008
Tel: (202) 328-2500
Fax: (202) 588-0032
E-mail:
webmaster@china-embassy.org
Website:
http://www.china-embassy.org

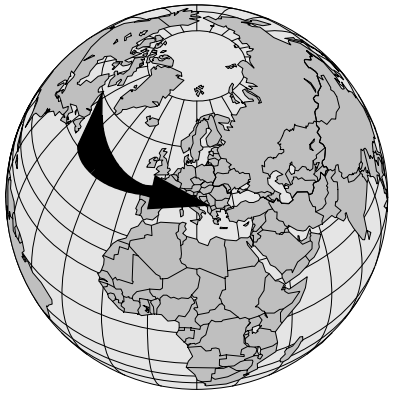
The People's Republic of China also has Consulates in Chicago, Houston, New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication,

Intercountry Adoptions. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong
Street Address
26 Garden Road, Central,
Hong Kong
Mailing Address from the U.S.
PSC 461, Box 5,
FPO AP 96521-0006;
Tel: (852) 2841-2211,
Fax (852) 2845-4845
Website:
http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/visa_inquiries.html

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Macau may be addressed to the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MACEDONIA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Macedonia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 25,713 square km. (slightly larger than Vermont).
Cities: (2001 est.) Capital—Skopje 600,000; Tetovo, Kumanovo, Gostivar and Bitola 100,000+.
Geography: Situated in the southern region of the Balkan Peninsula, Macedonia is landlocked and mountainous.
Climate: Three climatic types overlap—Mediterranean; moderately continental; and mountainous, producing hot, dry summers and cold, snowy winters.

People

Population: (2006 est.) 2,042,894.
Growth rate: (2006 est.) 0.2%.
Ethnic groups: (2002) Macedonian 64.18%, Albanian 25.17%, Turkish 3.85%, Roma 2.66%, Serb 1.78%.
Religions: Eastern Orthodox 65%, Muslim 29%, Catholic 4% and others 2%.
Languages: Macedonian 70%, Albanian 21%, Turkish 3%, Serbo-Croatian 3%, and others 3%.
Education: Years compulsory—8. Literacy—94.6%.
Health: (2006 est.) Infant mortality rate—11.1 deaths/per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy—males 71.79 years; females 76.43 years.
Labor force (2006) 903,576; employed 578,810: services—37.5%; industry and commerce—44.9%; agriculture—17.6%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.
Constitution: Adopted November 17, 1991; effective November 20, 1991. Amended January 6, 1992.
Independence: September 8, 1991 (from Yugoslavia).
Government branches: Executive—prime minister (head of government), council of ministers (cabinet), president (head of state). Legislative—unicameral parliament or Sobranie (120 members elected by popular vote to 4-year terms from party lists based on the percentage parties gain of the overall vote in each of six election units). Judicial—Supreme Court, State Judicial Council, Constitutional Court, Public Prosecutor's Office, Public Attorney. Legal system is based on civil law; judicial review of legislative acts.
Political subdivisions: 84 opstini (municipalities) plus the city of Skopje.
Suffrage: Universal at age 18.
Political parties: Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE); Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM); Democratic Union for Integration (DUI); Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA); New Social Democratic Party (NSDP); Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-People's Party (VMRO-NP); Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP); Democratic Renewal of Macedonia (DOM); National Democratic Party (NDP); Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP); Socialist Party of Macedonia (SPM); Liberal Party (LP); Democratic Alternative (DA); Democratic Union (DU); Democratic Party of the Turks in Macedonia (DPTM); Democratic League of Bosniaks; Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia, United Party of Romas in Macedonia; Democratic Union of Vlachs from Macedonia; Labor-Agricultural Party of Macedonia, Socialist-Christian Party of Macedonia.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $8.036 billion.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $3,720.

Real GDP growth: (1st quarter 2008 est.) 5.2%.

Annualized inflation rate: (1st half 2008) 10.1%.

Unemployment rate: (2007) 34.9%.

Trade: Significant exports—steel, textile products, chromium, lead, zinc, nickel, tobacco, lamb, and wine.

Exchange rate: (2007 avg.) 44.7 Macedonian denars = U.S.$1; (2006 avg.) 48.8 Macedonian denars = U.S.$1.

GEOGRAPHY

Macedonia is located in the heart of south central Europe. It shares a border with Greece to the south, Bulgaria to the east, Serbia (and Kosovo) to the north, and Albania to the west. The country is 80% mountainous, rising to its highest point at Mt. Korab (peak 2,764 m).

PEOPLE

Since the end of the Second World War, Macedonia's population has grown steadily, with the greatest increases occurring in the ethnic Albanian community. From 1953 through the time of the latest official census in 2002 (initial official results were released December 2003), the percentage of ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia rose threefold. The western part of the country, where most ethnic Albanians live, is the most heavily populated, with approximately 40% of the total population. As in many countries, people have moved into the cities in search of employment. Macedonia has also experienced sustained high rates of permanent or seasonal emigration.

HISTORY

Throughout its history, the present-day territory of Macedonia has been a crossroads for both traders and conquerors moving between the European continent and Asia Minor. Each of these transiting powers left its mark upon the region, giving rise to a rich and varied cultural and historical tradition.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the territory of Macedonia fell under the control of the Byzantine Empire in the 6th and 7th centuries. It was during this period that large groups of Slavic people migrated to the Balkan region. The Ottoman Turks conquered the territory in the 15th century; it remained under Ottoman Turkish rule until 1912.

After more than four centuries of rule, Ottoman power in the region began to wane, and by the middle of the 19th century, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia were competing for influence in the territory. During this time, a nationalist movement emerged and grew in Macedonia. The latter half of the 19th century, and continuing into the early part of the 20th century, was marked by sporadic nationalist uprisings, culminating in the Ilinden Uprising of August 2, 1903. Macedonian revolutionaries liberated the town of Krushevo and established the short-lived Republic of Krushevo, which was put down by Ottoman forces after 10 days. Following Ottoman Turkey's defeat by the allied Balkan countries—Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece—during the First Balkan War in autumn 1912, the same allies fought the Second Balkan War over the division of Macedonia. The August 1913 Treaty of Bucharest ended this conflict by dividing the territory between Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles sanctioned partitioning Macedonia between The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Bulgaria, and Greece. In the wake of the First World War, Vardar Macedonia (the present day area of the Republic of Macedonia) was incorporated into the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

Throughout much of the Second World War, Bulgaria and Italy occupied Macedonia. Many people joined partisan movements during this time and succeeded in liberating the region in late 1944. Following the war, Macedonia became one of the constituent republics of the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under Marshall Tito. During this period, Macedonian culture and language flourished.

As communism fell throughout Eastern Europe in the late 20th century, Macedonia followed its other federation partners and declared its independence from Yugoslavia in late 1991. Macedonia was the only republic of the former Yugoslavia whose secession in 1991 was not clouded by ethnic or other armed conflict, although the ethnic Albanian population declined to participate in the referendum on independence. The new Macedonian constitution took effect November 20, 1991 and called for a system of government based on a parliamentary democracy. The first democratically elected coalition government was led by Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and included the ethnic Albanian Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP). Kiro Gligorov became the first President of an independent Macedonia.

President Gligorov was the first president of a former Yugoslav republic to relinquish office. In accordance with the terms of the Macedonian constitution, his presidency ended in November 1999 after 8 years in office, which included surviving a car bombing assassination attempt in 1995. He was succeeded by former Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Trajkovski (VMRO-DPMNE), who defeated Tito Petkovski (SDSM) in a second-round run-off election for the presidency on November 14, 1999. Trajkovski's election was confirmed by a December 5, 1999 partial re-vote in 230 polling stations, which the Macedonian Supreme Court mandated due to election irregularities.

In November 1998 parliamentary elections, the SDSM lost its majority. A new coalition government emerged under the leadership of Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The initial coalition included the ethnic Albanian Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA).

During the Yugoslav period, Macedonian ethnic identity was evident in that most of Macedonia's Slavic population identified themselves as Macedonians, while several minority groups, in particular ethnic Albanians, retained their own distinct political culture and language. Although interethnic tensions simmered under Yugoslav authority and during the first decade of its independence, the country avoided ethnically motivated conflict until several years



after independence. Ethnic minority grievances, which had erupted on occasion (1995 and 1997), rapidly began to gain political currency in late 2000, leading many in the ethnic Albanian community in Macedonia to question their minority protection under, and participation in, the government. Tensions erupted into open hostilities in Macedonia in February 2001, when a group of ethnic Albanians near the Kosovo border carried out armed provocations that soon escalated into an insurgency. Purporting to fight for greater civil rights for ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, the group seized territory and launched attacks against government forces. Many observers ascribed other motives to the so-called National Liberation Army (NLA), including support for criminality and the assertion of political control over affected areas. The insurgency spread through northern and western Macedonia during the first half of 2001. Under international mediation, a cease-fire was brokered in July 2001, and the government coalition was expanded in July 2001 to form a grand coalition which included the major opposition parties.

The expanded coalition of ruling ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political leaders, with facilitation by U.S. and European Union (EU) diplomats, negotiated and then signed the Ohrid Framework Agreement in August 2001, which brought an end to the fighting. The agreement called for implementation of constitutional and legislative changes, which lay the foundation for improved civil rights for minority groups. The Macedonian parliament adopted the constitutional changes outlined in the accord in November 2001. The grand coalition disbanded following the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the passage of new constitutional amendments. A coalition led by Prime Minister Georgievski, including DPA and several smaller parties, completed its parliamentary term.

In September 2002 elections, an SDSM-led pre-election coalition won half of the 120 seats in parliament. Branko Crvenkovski was elected Prime Minister in coalition with the ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) party and the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP).

On February 26, 2004 President Trajkovski died in a plane crash in Bosnia. Presidential elections were held April 14 and 28, 2004. Then-Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski won the second round and was inaugurated President on May 12, 2004. The parliament confirmed Hari Kostov, former Interior Minister, as Prime Minister June 2, 2004. Prime Minister Kostov resigned November 15, 2004. On December 17, 2004, former Defense Minister Vlado Buckovski was confirmed by parliament as Prime Minister, maintaining the coalition with the ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and the Liberal-Democratic (LDP) parties. With international assistance, the SDSM-DUI-LDP governing coalition completed the legislative implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which is a precondition for Macedonia's integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. A November 7, 2004 referendum opposing completion of this process failed, freeing the way for the government to complete Framework Agreement implementation.

Local elections were held in March-April 2005 under a new territorial reorganization plan that consolidated the overall number of Macedonia's municipalities and created a number of ethnically-mixed municipalities in which ethnic Albanian populations

were dominant. The process of decentralization began in the new municipalities in July 2005 and is continuing.

The July 2006 parliamentary elections resulted in a VMRO-DPMNE-led government assuming power, in coalition with DPA, NSDP, and several smaller parties. The new government, which was confirmed in office by a parliamentary vote on August 26, 2006, stated its commitment to completing Framework Agreement implementation and reaffirmed its commitment to pursuing NATO and EU membership.

At NATO's Bucharest Summit in April 2008, all 26 NATO Allies agreed Macedonia had met the criteria for membership. Consensus on extending a NATO membership invitation could not be reached, due to the unresolved dispute with Greece over Macedonia's name.

Following the Bucharest Summit, the opposition DUI party, in collaboration with the governing VMRO-DPMNE and DPA parties, called for the dissolution of parliament and for early parliamentary elections, which were held in June 2008. On July 26, Prime Minister Gruevski was reconfirmed in office with a new coalition along with the DUI party and one smaller party. Next regular parliamentary elections should be in 2012.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The unicameral assembly (Sobranie) consists of 120 seats. Members are elected by popular vote from party lists, based on the percentage parties gain of the overall vote in each of six election districts of 20 seats each. Members of parliament have a 4-year mandate.

The Prime Minister is the head of government and is selected by the party or coalition that gains a majority of seats in parliament. The Prime Minister and other ministers must not be members of parliament. The President represents Macedonia at home and abroad. He is the commander in chief of the armed forces of Macedonia and heads its Security Council. The President is elected by general, direct ballot and has a term of 5 years, with the right to one re-election.

Presidential elections were held April 14 and 28, 2004 to succeed President Trajkovski, who died in office in February 2004. Local elections on the basis of a new municipal division mandated by the Framework Agreement were held in March-April 2005.

The court system consists of a Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and local and appeals courts. The State Judicial Council monitors the ethical conduct of judges and recommends to parliament the election of judges. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the country and is responsible for the equal administration of laws by all courts. Its judges are appointed by parliament without time limit. The Constitutional Court is responsible for the protection of constitutional and legal rights and for resolving conflicts of power between the three branches of government. Its 9 judges are appointed by parliament with a mandate of 9 years, without the possibility of re-election. An independent Public Prosecutor is appointed by parliament with a 6-year mandate.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Branko CRVENKOVSKI**
Prime Min.: **Nikola GRUEVSKI**
Dep. Prime Min. for Economic Affairs: **Zoran STAVRESKI**
Dep. Prime Min. for European Integration: **Ivica BOCEVSKI**
Dep. Prime Min. for Framework Agreement Implementation: **Abdilaqim ADEMI**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Waterways: **Aco SPASENOVSKI**
Min. of Culture: **Elizabeta KANCESKA-MILEVSKA**
Min. of Defense: **Zoran KONJANOVSKI**
Min. of Economy: **Fatmir BESIMI**
Min. of Education: **Pero STOJANOVSKI**
Min. of Environment & Physical Planning: **Nexhati JAKUPI**
Min. of Finance: **Trajko SLAVESKI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Antonio MILOSOSKI**
Min. of Health: **Bujar OSMANI**
Min. of Information Society: **Ivo IVANOVSKI**
Min. of the Interior: **Gordana JANKULOVSKA**
Min. of Justice: **Mihajlo MANEVSKI**
Min. of Labor & Social Policy: **Xhelal BAJRAMI**
Min. of Local Self-Govt.: **Musa XHAFERI**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Mile JANAKIESKI**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Nezdhet MUSTAFA**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Hadi NEZIRI**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Vele SAMAK**
Governor, Macedonian National Bank: **Petar GOSEV**
Ambassador to the US: **Zoran JOLEVSKI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Slobodan TASOVSKI**

The country maintains an embassy in the United States at 2129 Wyoming Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: (202) 667-0501; fax: (202) 667-2131). It maintains a Consulate General in Detroit: 2000 Town Center, Suite 1130, Southfield, MI 48075 (tel: (248) 354-5537; fax: (248) 354-5538).

ECONOMY

Macedonia is a small economy with a gross domestic product (GDP) of about $8 billion, representing about 0.01% of the total world output. It is an open economy, highly integrated into international trade, with a total trade-to-GDP ratio of 106.8% at the end of 2007. Agriculture and industry have been the two most important sectors of the economy in the past, but the services sector has gained prominence in recent years. Economic problems persist, even as Macedonia undertakes structural reforms to finish the transition to a market-oriented economy. A largely obsolete industrial infrastructure has not seen much investment during the transition period. Labor force education and skills are competitive in some technical areas and industries but significantly lacking in others. Without adequate job opportunities,

many with the best skills seek employment abroad. A low standard of living, high unemployment rate, and relatively modest economic growth rate are the central economic problems.

Five years of continuous economic expansion in Macedonia was interrupted by the 2001 conflict, which led to a contraction of 4.5% in 2001. Growth started to pick up in 2003 (2.8%) and continued in 2004 (4.1%), 2005 (4.1%), 2006 (4.0%), and 2007 (5.0%). Living standards still lag behind those enjoyed before independence. Real growth is projected to reach a rather optimistic 6% annually in 2008, with inflation of up to 5%. The United States is supporting Macedonia's transition to a democratic, secure, market-oriented society with substantial amounts of assistance.

Background

After the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1991, Macedonia, the former Yugoslavia's poorest republic, faced formidable economic challenges posed by both the transition to a market economy and a difficult regional situation. The breakup deprived Macedonia of key protected markets and large transfer payments from the central Yugoslav government. The war in Bosnia, international sanctions on Serbia, and the 1999 crisis in neighboring Kosovo delivered successive shocks to Macedonia's trade-dependent economy. The government's painful but necessary structural reforms and macroeconomic stabilization program generated additional economic dislocation. Macedonia's economy was hurt especially by a trade embargo imposed by Greece in February 1994 in a dispute over the country's name, flag, and constitution, and by international trade sanctions against Serbia that were not suspended until a month after conclusion of the Dayton Accords. The impact of the 2001 ethnic Albanian insurgency in Macedonia, decreased international demand for Macedonian products, canceled contracts in the textile and iron and steel industry, and poor restructuring of the private sector affected Macedonia's growth and foreign trade prospects through 2004. Macedonia's political and security situation is stable. This has allowed the government to refocus energies on domestic reforms, boosting economic growth, and attracting increased levels of foreign investment. In 2004, the government passed a progressive Trade Companies Law aimed at easing impediments to foreign investment, providing tax and investment incentives, and guaranteeing shareholder rights. In 2006, the government began implementing a one-stop procedure for business registration that considerably shortened the time required to register a new business. The government's fiscal policy, aligned with International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank policies, helped maintain a stable macroeconomic environment. Legislation that would further liberalize the telecommunications market, and completion of the first phase of privatization of the electricity sector, sent promising signals to investors. However, economic growth remained sub-par in 2005 and 2006, due in part to poor government results in combating corruption and a weak judiciary, as well as high domestic finance costs and continued bureaucratic obstacles to doing business. The new Government of Macedonia that took office in August 2006 put the fight against corruption and attracting foreign investors at the very top of its priority list. In 2007, it launched an expensive marketing campaign promoting the country as a good investment destination. It provided business incentives by cutting rates on profit tax and personal income tax, while implementing a "regulatory guillotine"—an activity which aims to significantly reduce procedures and legislative requirements for doing business.

Macroeconomy

Real GDP growth continued in 2008 at approximately the same tempo as in 2007. After growing by 4.1%, 4%, and 5% respectively in 2005, 2006, and 2007, it reached 5.2% in the first quarter of 2008. The growth was broad-based as value added increased in all sectors. Wholesale and retail trade sectors led the growth with a 10.2% annual increase, and construction followed with 9.7%. Agriculture turned from a 3% dip in 2007 to a 4.2% rise in the first quarter of 2008. Industrial output in the first five months of 2008 was 8.3% higher than in same period of 2007. Inflation unexpectedly surpassed projections, with the year-on-year consumer price index (CPI) rising by 6.1%. Growing food and energy prices pushed inflation up to 10.1% in the first half of 2008. The official unemployment rate came down a bit to 34.9% in 2007. Strong collection of revenues throughout 2007 resulted in a budget surplus of 0.3% of GDP, despite the projected deficit of 1% of GDP. Tax collection continued the upward trend in the first half of 2008, surpassing last year's first half performance by more than 20%. Expansionary monetary policy continued in 2008 as well, providing for total credit to the private sector at the end of May to grow by 43.4%. This alerted the Central Bank to raise interest rates on Central Bank bills, and put a ceiling on credit to households, but interest rates spreads continued to narrow. Import growth doubled while export-led growth remained stagnant, thus presenting a large trade deficit. At the end of May 2008, it amounted to 13.3% of GDP. As a result, the current account deficit widened to over 5% of GDP, already breaching the end-year target. Private transfers are stagnant compared to last year, and foreign direct investment (FDI), although higher than the same period of last year, is not enough to cover it. Foreign currency reserves dropped down to levels that barely cover three months of imports; further loss would seriously undermine the stability of the domestic currency. Public debt remained low at 29.3% of GDP at the end of April 2008, due to pre-paying debts to international financial institutions in 2007. In late 2005, Macedonian authorities concluded a three-year Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF and a Programmatic Development Policy Loan (PDPL) with the World Bank. In 2007 both financial institutions positively assessed the enforcement of the programs, allowing the Government of

Macedonia to withdraw a tranche of the PDPL 2 agreement worth $30 million.

Since the first withdrawal of $15.4 million in 2006, the SBA has been only precautionary as balance-of-payment support was no longer needed. In April 2008, the IMF Board approved the third positive review of the SBA, and the fourth and final review will take place in September together with Article IV consultations. As of the end of August 2008, when the previous SBA expired, the Government of Macedonia had not initiated negotiations for a new arrangement with the IMF. In March 2007, the World Bank Board adopted a new four-year Country Partnership Strategy for Macedonia, which could potentially bring to the country total lending of up to $280 million.

Trade

Macedonia remains committed to pursuing membership in the European Union and global economic structures. It became a full World Trade Organization (WTO) member in April 2003. Following a 1997 cooperation agreement with the European Union (EU), Macedonia signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in April 2001, giving Macedonia duty-free access to European markets. In December 2005, it moved a step forward, obtaining candidate country status for EU accession. Macedonia has had a foreign trade deficit since 1994, which reached a record high of $1.871 billion in 2007, or 23.3% of GDP. Total trade at the end of May 2008 (imports plus exports of goods and services) was $4.515 billion, and the trade deficit already amounted to $1.150 billion, or 13.3% of GDP. A significant 51.5% of Macedonia's total trade was with EU 27 countries. By separate countries, Macedonia's major trading partners are Serbia, Russia, Germany, and Greece. In the first five months of 2008, total trade between Macedonia and the United States was $37.6 million. U.S. exports accounted for 1.2% of Macedonia's total imports. U.S. meat, mainly poultry, and electrical machinery have been particularly attractive to Macedonian importers. Principal Macedonian exports to the United States are tobacco, apparel, footwear, and iron and steel.

Macedonia has Free Trade Agreements with Ukraine, Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association countries. Bilateral agreements with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and Moldova were replaced with the membership in the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which the other countries joined in December 2006.

DEFENSE

Macedonia established its armed forces following independence and the complete withdrawal of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) in March 1992. The Macedonian Armed Forces consist of an army, navy, air and air defense force, and a police force (under the Ministry of Interior). Under its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Membership Action Plan, Macedonia has launched a major effort to reform and reconstruct its armed forces with the goal of building and sustaining a modern, professional defense force of about 12,000 troops.

Successive Macedonian governments have viewed integration into Euro-Atlantic political, economic, and security institutions as the country's primary foreign policy goal. In pursuit of these goals, Macedonia is restructuring its military to be smaller, more affordable, defensively oriented, and interoperable with NATO. The Macedonian Government has welcomed close cooperation with the U.S. military and seeks to deepen this relationship as it restructures its forces.

Macedonia continues to play an indispensable role as the Kosovo Force's (KFOR) rear area, hosting the logistical supply line for KFOR troops in Kosovo. As part of these efforts, Macedonia hosts NATO troops, including U.S. troops, in support of NATO operations in Kosovo and to assist Macedonia's efforts to reform its military to meet NATO standards. Close U.S.-Macedonian bilateral defense cooperation continues. Macedonia also contributes troops to international coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and recently deployed troops and equipment to support the EU peace support operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In February 1994, Greece imposed a trade embargo on Macedonia due to disputes over the use of the name "Macedonia" and other issues. Greece and Macedonia signed an interim accord in October 1995 ending the embargo and opening the way to diplomatic recognition and increased trade. After signing the agreement with Greece, Macedonia joined the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP). Athens and Skopje began talks on the name issue in New York under UN auspices in December 1995, opening liaison offices in respective capitals January 1996. These talks continue.

The stability of the young state was gravely tested during the 1999 Kosovo crisis, when Macedonia temporarily hosted about 360,000 refugees from the violence and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. The refugee influx put significant stress on Macedonia's weak social infrastructure. With the help of NATO and the international community, Macedonia ultimately was able to accommodate the influx. Following the resolution of the conflict, the overwhelming majority of refugees returned to Kosovo. A small number of Roma refugees from Kosovo remains in Macedonia, most of them housed in the predominantly Roma municipality of Suto Orizari in the Skopje suburbs, and supported by the UNHCR. Macedonia enjoys good relations with its neighbors. It has strong trade and tourism ties with Greece, and has developed similarly robust political and trade ties with Albania and Bulgaria. Relations between Belgrade and Skopje are

good overall, although a dispute between the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Serb Orthodox Church has strained ties over the past two years.

Relations with Kosovo are good, with Macedonia having signed an Interim Free Trade Agreement with UNMIK in 2005 and with regular bilateral political contacts occurring between Pristina and Skopje since 2005. Under the auspices of the International Civilian Office, which is supervising independent Kosovo's implementation of the Ahtisaari Plan, the Government of Macedonia and Government of Kosovo are in discussions with the aim to complete the demarcation of their common border by April 2009.

Macedonia has made important strides toward Euro-Atlantic integration. Macedonia is an active participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace and Membership Action Plan, the OSCE, and United Nations, and was accepted as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in October 2002. In May 2003, Macedonia, Albania, Croatia, and the U.S. created the Adriatic Charter, modeled on the Baltic Charter, as a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation to advance each country's NATO candidacy. Since then, the Adriatic Charter countries have cooperated closely in regional military exercises, and have deployed a joint medical team to support international coalition operations in Afghanistan. At the NATO Bucharest Summit in April 2008, Albania and Croatia received invitations to join the Alliance. NATO Allies noted that Macedonia met NATO membership criteria, but could not reach consensus on issuing an invitation for membership, in the absence of a solution to Macedonia's dispute with NATO member Greece over Macedonia's name. The United States believes Macedonia has met the performance-based standards for membership. Allies agreed that Macedonia would be invited to join NATO as soon as the name issue is resolved.

In 1999, the EU agreed to pursue a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Macedonia; negotiations with Macedonia were launched April 5, 2000. The SAA was signed April 2001 and came into force in April 2004. Its trade and trade-related provisions have been in force since June 2001. In December 2005, the European Council granted candidate country status to Macedonia, taking into account the "substantial progress made in completing the legislative framework related to the Ohrid Framework Agreement, as well as its track record in implementing the Stabilization and Association Agreement (including its trade-related provisions) since 2001." It recommended beginning formal accession negotiations after Macedonia had made further progress on a number of reform fronts, including combating corruption; enacting judicial, administrative, and economic reforms; and conducting free and fair parliamentary elections, in accordance with European standards, in 2006. The Council also noted the need to consider further steps toward membership in light of the debate on the enlargement strategy, and the need for Macedonia to continue strong progress toward meeting the Copenhagen political criteria, as well as Stabilization and Association Agreement requirements. In March 2008, the Council provided the Government of Macedonia a list of benchmarks to guide Macedonia's preparations to open formal accession negotiations.

U.S.-MACEDONIAN RELATIONS

The United States and Macedonia have enjoyed good bilateral relations since Macedonia gained its independence in 1991. The United States formally recognized Macedonia on February 8, 1994, and the two countries established full diplomatic relations on September 13, 1995. The U.S. Liaison Office was upgraded to an Embassy in February 1996, and the first U.S. Ambassador to Skopje arrived in July 1996. The development of political relations between the United States and Macedonia has ushered in a whole host of other contacts between the two states. The United States, together with its European allies, strongly condemned the initiators of the 2001 insurgency in Macedonia and closely supported the government and major parties' successful efforts to forge a peaceful, political solution to the crisis through the Ohrid Framework Agreement. In partnership with the EU and other international organizations active in Macedonia, the United States is facilitating the Macedonian Government's implementation of the Framework Agreement and fostering long-term peace and stability in the country. Macedonia continues to make an important contribution to regional stability by facilitating the logistical supply of NATO (including U.S.) peacekeepers in Kosovo.

The United States strongly supports Macedonia's aspirations for full integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Today, Macedonia and the United States enjoy a cooperative relationship across a broad range of political, economic, cultural, military, and social issues. The United States has supported Macedonia's progress in building a democratic, secure, and market-oriented multiethnic society with large amounts of foreign assistance for democracy and economic reforms, defense reforms, and projects to strengthen rule of law and improve education. Bilateral assistance budgeted to Macedonia under the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act totaled over $440 million from 1990 to 2008. Macedonia received approximately $28 million in SEED Act assistance in 2007 and is receiving approximately $22 million in 2008.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs in Macedonia promote accelerated growth, support stronger democratic institutions, and help educate Macedonians for a modern economy. A focus of U.S. assistance has been to assist Macedonia in implementing the August 2001 Framework Agreement. Successful completion of the decentralization process is a remaining priority for framework implementation. USAID is targeting capacity building

for local government officials, who will have more authority and responsibility devolved from the central government, as well as providing grants to fund small-scale infrastructure projects.

A further priority of U.S. assistance is to facilitate Macedonia's transition to a market economy and increase employment and growth levels. USAID economic assistance is focused on two levels. At the macro-level, programs target improvements in the business-enabling environment by helping to bring legislative and regulatory frameworks in line with EU standards and improving the transparency and efficiency of government services through technology. At the micro-level, assistance is given to firms and agribusinesses to increase their competitiveness and productivity, coupled with initiatives to attract foreign investment and stimulate local investment. Training programs that provide career-enhancing education to prepare youth and adults for growth sectors are also supported. A resident U.S. Department of Treasury advisor, who will be phased out in 2008, is assisting the Ministry of Finance in improving strategy, planning and execution, and public expenditure management.

USAID is also focused on helping the Macedonian Government and civil society combat corruption, enhancing democratic political competition, supporting government decentralization and promoting the rule of law. USAID also supported the Government of Macedonia in developing a comprehensive State Program for the Prevention of Corruption with a detailed performance management system in 2007. A U.S. Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisor and a Senior Law Enforcement Advisor focus on strengthening the independence of the judiciary, efficacy of public prosecution, reform of criminal codes, increasing police capacity, and abating trafficking in persons and organized crime.

Complementing its assistance in Macedonia's political and economic transition, USAID programs improve education and human capacity in Macedonia through projects on the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. Targets include improving teaching techniques, modernizing vocational education, introducing information and communication technology (ICT) as a learning tool in the classroom, and providing broadband Internet service throughout the country using primary and secondary schools as a platform. Other programs address crosscutting issues, including interethnic cooperation, assistance to the Roma minority, performance improvement of key institutions, and corruption.

On May 7, 2008, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Minister Antonio Milososki signed a joint Declaration of Strategic Partnership and Cooperation affirming the determination of our governments to further expand and deepen the partnership between our two countries based upon common goals, interests, and values.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 5, 2008

Country Description: Macedonia is a parliamentary democracy that is steadily transforming its economy. Tourist facilities are available in the capital, Skopje, and other major towns. In tourist centers, such as Skopje and Ohrid, European-standard hotels and other travel amenities are available, while the standard of facilities throughout the rest of the country varies considerably.

Entry and Exit Requirements: Short trip for business or tourism: A valid passport is required for travel to Macedonia. A visa is not required for U.S. passport holders for tourist and business trips up to 90 days during a six-month period. As of September 1, 2008, Macedonia began requiring that all foreign citizens entering the country provide proof of health insurance at the port of entry. Entry stamps are issued at airports or land border crossing points, which grant permission to remain 90 days. All foreign citizens must register with local police within 24 hours of arrival. Those staying in private accommodations or renting an apartment should register in person at the police station nearest his/her place of residence, and should be accompanied to the station by the owner or landlord of the apartment. Hotels are responsible for the registration of foreign guests. Travelers who change addresses in Macedonia should notify the police station where they initially registered and reregister with the police station closest to the new place of residence.

An unaccompanied minor U.S. citizen who enters Macedonia should be in

possession of a parental or guardian statement of consent to enter and stay in the country. The statement of consent must be certified by a competent authority of the country from which s/he arrives or by a diplomatic or consular mission of the Republic of Macedonia abroad.

NOTE: A U.S. citizen who possesses more than one passport is required to leave the country with the travel document used for entry into the country.

Temporary residence: Individuals intending to work, study, or remain longer then 90 days in Macedonia must obtain an entry visa prior to their arrival in Macedonia. The practice of switching from tourist status to long-term status when already in Macedonia is no longer allowed. Those wanting to do so must leave Macedonia and apply for a long-term visa at a Macedonian Embassy or Consulate.

American citizens resident in the United States may apply at the Macedonian Embassy in Washington D.C., located at 2129 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008, Tel: (202) 667-0501; Fax: (202) 667-2131; E-mail: washington@mfa.gov.mk; usoffice@macedonianembassy.org, Web site: http://www.macedonianembassy.org.

The passport should be valid for at least three months longer than the validity of the visa. For additional information about the conditions and procedures for visa issuance, the applicant may visit www.mfa.gov.mk for a list of Macedonian Embassies and Consulates. Travelers should be aware that all border areas apart from designated border crossings are restricted zones. Presence in these zones is forbidden without prior official permission.

Safety and Security: The security situation in Macedonia is stable, although occasional criminal violence does occur. Americans should avoid areas with demonstrations, strikes, or roadblocks where large crowds are gathered, particularly those involving political causes or striking workers.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime in Macedonia is low by U.S. standards, and violent crime against Americans is rare. Pick-pocketing, theft, and other petty street crimes do occur, however, particularly in areas where tourists and foreigners congregate. American travelers are advised to take the same precautions against becoming crime victims as they would in any U.S. city.

Valuables, including cell phones and electronic items, should not be left in plain view in unattended vehicles. Windows and doors should be securely locked when residences are not occupied. Organized crime is present in Macedonia; organized criminal activity occasionally results in violent confrontations between members of rival organizations. ATM use is generally safe, however, travelers should take standard safety precautions.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are a victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to the local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Macedonia is: 192 for police and 194 for ambulance; outside the city of Skopje, dial 02 first.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Although many Macedonian physicians are trained to a high standard, and a number of well-equipped private clinics are available especially in Skopje, most public hospitals and clinics are not equipped and maintained at U.S. or Western European standards. Basic medical supplies are usually available, but specialized treatment may not be obtainable. Travelers with previously diagnosed medical conditions may wish to consult their physician before travel.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Macedonia.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Macedonia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving safely in Macedonia requires excellent defensive driving skills. Many drivers routinely ignore speed limits and other traffic regulations, such as stopping for red lights and stop signs. Drivers may make illegal left turns from the far right lane, or drive into oncoming lanes of traffic. The combination of speeding, unsafe driving practices, poor vehicle maintenance, the mixture of new and old vehicles on the roads, and poor lighting contributes to unsafe driving conditions. Pedestrians should exercise extreme caution when crossing the street even when using crosswalks, as local drivers rarely slow down or stop for pedestrians.

A valid U.S. driver's license in conjunction with an International Driving Permit is required for Americans driving in Macedonia. Driving is on the right side of the road. Speed limits are generally posted. Most major highways are in good repair, but many secondary urban and rural roads are poorly maintained and lit. Horse-drawn carts, livestock, dead animals, rocks, or other objects are sometimes found in the roadway. Some vehicles are old and lack standard front or rear lights. Secondary mountain roads can be narrow, poorly marked, lacking guardrails, and quickly become dangerous in inclement weather. Overall, public transportation in Macedonia is dilapidated. Roadside emergency services are limited.

In case of emergency, drivers may contact the police at telephone 192, the Ambulance Service at telephone 194, and Roadside Assistance at telephone 196.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Macedonia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Macedonia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

Special Circumstances: Macedonian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation to or exportation from Macedonia of certain items, including items deemed to be of historical value or significance. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. Visitors should always observe "no photographing" signs. If in doubt, please ask permission before taking photographs.

The local currency is the denar. While credit cards are accepted in larger stores and restaurants, cash in local currency is advised for purchases in small establishments.

Upon entry into Macedonia, every foreigner must declare all cash amounts of foreign currency greater than EUR (euro) 2,000 at the Customs Control Office. Failure to report funds in excess of this amount may result in the confiscation of the entire amount by the customs service. After going through the court system, an individual is normally required to pay a fine and the National Bank will also keep a certain percentage of the undeclared amount before it is released.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Macedonian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Macedonia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Prostitution is illegal in Macedonia.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Macedonia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Macedonia.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Skopje is located at Ilindenska bb, 1000 Skopje, tel. (389) (2) 311-6180, fax (389) (2) 321-3767, email: consularskopje@state.gov. Registration forms are available on the Embassy's web site, located at: http://skopje.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The office responsible for foreign adoptions in Macedonia is the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, whose address is:

14 Dame Gruev St.
Skopje 1000
Tel: ++389-2-3106-247 or 3117-288
Fax: ++389-2-3106-252

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents may be either married or single. However, preference is given to married couples. Adoptive parents must be at least 18 years older than their adoptive children, but no more than 45 years older. In exceptional circumstances, persons older than 45 may be permitted to adopt, but the age difference between the parent and child may not exceed 45 years. When it comes to the age difference, the age of the younger parent is taken into account. Note: Under U.S. law, at least one parent must be 25 years old.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements to complete an intercountry adoption in Macedonia. However, there is a fostering period of 2 to 3 months prior to the final adoption of the child, where the prospective adoptive parents are required to live with the child in Macedonia, before the final approval for adoption is given to the parents.

Time Frame: The adoption process may take varying amounts of time, depending on availability of children and the number of requests for adoption. The number of children available for adoption is usually much lower than the number of requests for adoption. In Macedonia, domestic adoptions have priority over intercountry adoptions.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no U.S. adoption agencies operating in Macedonia. However, the prospective parents may hire a Macedonian lawyer or an individual with a power of attorney authorizing him/her to find a suitable child and proceed with the adoption process. It is also possible for this entire process to be carried out by the prospective parents. The U.S. Embassy in Skopje maintains a list of attorneys, which can also be seen at http://skopje.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: The Macedonian government does not charge a fee for its role in the adoption process.

Adoption Procedures: Persons who wish to apply to adopt a child from Macedonia can do so by submitting the complete paperwork, along with a letter requesting permission to adopt, to the Adoption Board at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Parents and children are matched based on the needs of the child as well as the requirements of the prospective adoptive parents. If the match is successful, the Adoption Board gives an approval and forwards it to the Center for Social Welfare of the municipality in which the child originally resided.

The Center advises the family to come to Macedonia and proceed with the adoption process, which consists of releasing the child to the prospective parents for 2 to 3 months, and going through the fostering/adaptation period together. The parents are expected to rent an apartment or stay in a hotel for that period of time. After the adaptation period, the Center for Social Welfare submits a Proposal for Adoption to the Adoption Board, after which a date is set for the official adoption ceremony, which takes place at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

At the ceremony, the prospective parents must provide a licensed court translator and be in possession of their passports. The presence of the child is necessary if the child is over the age of 12. At the time of the adoption, the adoptive parents choose a name for the child, and designate a place of birth within Macedonia. The Adoption Board issues an official adoption decree.

The Center is in charge of obtaining a birth certificate for the child on which the names of the adoptive parents are listed as his/her parents. Once the adoption is completed, the next step for the adoptive parents is to apply for a passport for their adopted child with the branch office of the Macedonian Ministry of Interior, in order to apply for an immigrant visa at the American Embassy in Skopje.

The passport fee is $30.00 USD (subject to change). Information on the Macedonian adoption law can be found at the official website of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy at http://www.mtsp. gov.mk.

Required Documents: There is no specific application form. A request for adoption should be in the form of a letter, written by the prospective adoptive parents, detailing their circumstances and their desire for adoption, and bearing original signatures of both parents. It can be submitted by mail or through an authorized representative or attorney. The application must be accompanied by the following documents for each of the adoptive parents:

- Proof of Citizenship (certified copy of a Naturalization Certificate or passport);
- Home study conducted by a licensed U.S. adoption agency;
- Marriage Certificate (issued within the last 12 months);
- Birth Certificate for each parent (issued within the last 12 months);
- Medical certificate certifying good mental and physical condition of each parent;
- Police certificate issued by the local law enforcement authorities (stating that no criminal record exists);
- Certificate from the Office of Social Services from the parents' state of residence certifying that the adoptive parents were never deprived of their parental rights;
- A letter from the employer for each parent showing their current employment and their salary;

- Documents testifying to the prospective parents' income and property; i.e., proof of financial status sufficient to support a child;
- Notarized Certificate showing parents' educational background;
- Copy of a U.S. passport;
- Approved petition from DHS (Form I-171H).

All original documents and the application letter must be in English and each must be accompanied by a translation into Macedonian done by a licensed court translator. It is easier and less expensive to have the translations done in Macedonia.

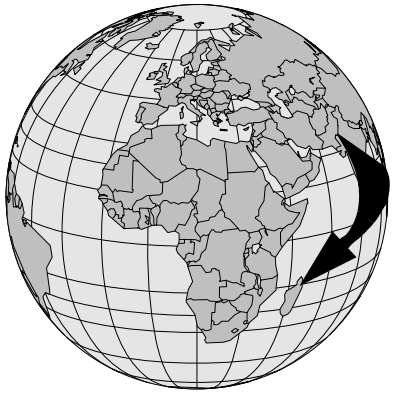
Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia
2129 Wyoming Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: 202-337-3063
E-mail:
usoffice@macedonianembassy.org

Macedonian Consulate General
2000 Town Center, Suite 1130
Southfield, MI 48075
Tel: 248-354-5537
E-mail: gkrmdetroit@sbcglobal.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Ilindenska, b.b.
1000 Skopje
Macedonia
Tel: ++389-2-3116-180
Fax: ++389-2-3213-767
Email: consularskopje@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Macedonia may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Skopje. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MADAGASCAR

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Madagascar

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 592,800 sq. km. (228,880 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Antananarivo (pop. about 1,300,000). Other cities—Antsirabe (about 500,000), Mahajanga (about 400,000), Toamasina (about 450,000).

Terrain: Mountainous central plateau, coastal plain.

Climate: Moderate interior, tropical coasts.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Malagasy.

Population: (2008, estimate) 20,042,551.

Annual population growth rate: (2005, World Bank) 2.7%.

Ethnic groups: 18 Malagasy tribes; small groups of Comorans, French, Indians, and Chinese.

Religions: Traditional beliefs 52%, Christian 41%, Muslim 7%.

Languages: Malagasy (official), French (official), English (official).

Education: Years compulsory—5. Attendance—65%. Literacy—70.7%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—76/1,000. Life expectancy—55.6 yrs.

Work force: (2000) 8 million. Agriculture—80%; industry—7%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: June 26, 1960.

Constitution: Entered into force in March 1998.

Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—National Assembly and Senate. Judicial—Supreme Court, High Court of Justice, Constitutional High Court.

Political subdivisions: Six autonomous provinces (faritany).

Political parties: There are several political parties. In the September 2007 National Assembly elections, the I Love Madagascar (TIM) Party won a majority of seats.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

National holidays: June 26.

Economy

GDP: (U.S.$, 2007 est. official exchange rate) $7.322 billion.

GDP per capita: (2007 est. PPP) $1,100.

Unemployment: no reliable data available.

Natural resources: Graphite, chrome, coal, bauxite, ilmenite, nickel, gold, tar sands, semiprecious stones, and hardwoods.

Agriculture: (26.8% of GDP, 2007 est.): Products—rice, livestock, seafood, coffee, vanilla, sugar, cloves, cotton, sisal, peanuts, and tobacco.

Industry: (15.8% of GDP, 2007 est.): Types—processed food, clothing, textiles, mining, paper, refined petroleum products, glassware, construction, soap, cement, tanning.

Trade: Exports (2007, f.o.b.) $989 million: apparel, shrimp, vanilla, coffee, cloves, graphite, essential oils, industrial minerals and gemstones. Major export markets—France, U.S., Germany, Italy, U.K. Imports (2007, f.o.b.) $1.933 billion: foodstuffs, fuel and energy, capital goods, vehicles, consumer goods and electronics. Major suppliers—France, China, Iran, Mauritius, Hong Kong.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Madagascar's population is predominantly of mixed Asian and African origin. Recent research suggests that the island was uninhabited until Indonesian seafarers arrived in roughly the first century A.D., probably by way of southern India and East Africa, where they acquired African wives and slaves. Subsequent migrations from both the Pacific and Africa further consolidated this original mixture, and 18 separate tribal groups emerged. Asian features are most predominant in the central highlands people, the Merina (3 million) and the Betsileo (2 million); the coastal people are of more clearly African origin.

The largest coastal groups are the Betsimisaraka (1.5 million) and the Tsimihety and Sakalava (700,000 each).

The Malagasy language is of Malayo-Polynesian origin and is generally spoken throughout the island. French is spoken among the educated population of this former French colony. English is becoming more widely spoken, and in 2003 the government began a pilot project of introducing the teaching of English into the primary grades of 44 schools, with hopes of taking the project nationwide. Most people practice traditional religions, which tend to emphasize links between the living and the dead. They believe that the dead join their ancestors in the ranks of divinity and that ancestors are intensely concerned with the fate of their living descendants. The Merina and Betsileo reburial practice of famadihana, or "turning over the dead" celebrate this spiritual communion. In this ritual, relatives' remains are removed from the family tomb, rewrapped in new silk shrouds, and returned to the tomb following festive ceremonies in their honor.

About 41% of the Malagasy are Christian, divided almost evenly between Roman Catholic and Protestant. Many incorporate the cult of the dead with their religious beliefs and bless their dead at church before proceeding with the traditional burial rites. They also may invite a pastor to attend a famadihana. While many Christians continue these practices, others consider them to be superstitions that should be abandoned. Many of the Christian churches are influential in politics. In the coastal regions of the provinces of Mahajanga and Antsiranana (Diego Suarez), Muslims constitute a significant minority. Muslims are divided between those of Malagasy ethnicity, Indo-Pakistanis, and Comorans.

The written history of Madagascar began in the seventh century A.D., when Arabs established trading posts along the northwest coast. European contact began in the 1500s, when Portuguese sea captain Diego Dias sighted the island after his ship became separated from a fleet bound for India. In the late 17th century, the French established trading posts along the east coast. From about 1774 to 1824, it was a favorite haunt for pirates, including Americans, one of whom brought Malagasy rice to South Carolina.

Beginning in the 1790s, Merina rulers succeeded in establishing hegemony over the major part of the island, including the coast. In 1817, the Merina ruler and the British governor of Mauritius concluded a treaty abolishing the slave trade, which had been important in Madagascar's economy. In return, the island received British military and financial assistance. British influence remained strong for several decades, during which the Merina court was converted to Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and Anglicanism. The British accepted the imposition of a French protectorate over Madagascar in 1885 in return for eventual control over Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania) and as part of an overall definition of spheres of influence in the area. Absolute French control over Madagascar was established by military force in 1895-96, and the Merina monarchy was abolished.

Malagasy troops fought in France, Morocco, and Syria during World War I. After France fell to the Germans, the Vichy government administered Madagascar. British troops occupied the strategic island in 1942 to preclude its seizure by the Japanese. The Free French received the island from the United Kingdom in 1943.

In 1947, with French prestige at low ebb, a nationalist uprising was suppressed after several months of bitter fighting. The French subsequently established reformed institutions in 1956 under the Loi Cadre (Overseas Reform Act), and Madagascar moved peacefully toward independence. The Malagasy Republic was proclaimed on October 14, 1958, as an autonomous state within the French Community. A period of provisional government ended with the adoption of a constitution in 1959 and full independence on June 26, 1960.

GOVERNMENT

In March 1998, Malagasy voters approved a revised Constitution. The principal institutions of the Republic of Madagascar are a presidency, a parliament (National Assembly and Senate), a prime ministry and cabinet, and an independent judiciary. The president is elected by direct universal suffrage for a 5-year term, renewable twice. The last presidential election was held on December 3, 2006.

In Madagascar, the parliament has two chambers; the National Assembly and the Senate. The last National Assembly election was held on September 23, 2007, and marked a significant reform to the parliament. The National Assembly previously had 160 members, elected for a four-year term in single-member and two-member constituencies. However, in July 2007, just before the National Assembly elections, a council of ministers agreed to reduce the number of parliamentarians from 160 to 127. Consequently, few of the 116 districts elected more than one member. Antananarivos' six districts, however, each elected two deputies. The Senate has 90 members, with 60 members elected for a six-year term, 10 for each province by provincial electors, and 30 members appointed.

The prime minister and members of parliament initiate legislation, and the government executes it. The president can dissolve the National Assembly. For its part, the National Assembly can pass a motion of censure and require the prime minister and council of ministers to step down. The Constitutional Court approves the constitutionality of new laws.

In an effort to decentralize administration, the 1998 constitution called for the six provinces (faritany) to become autonomous. The six provinces are Antananarivo, Mahajanga, Antsiranana, Toamasina, Fianarantsoa, and Toliary.

The provinces will be dissolved as a result of the new regional subdivision and the constitutional referendum of

2007. There is a timeframe of 30 months (until October 2009) for the transition.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Marc RAVALOMANANA**
Prime Min.: **Charles RABEMANANJARA, Gen.**
Min. of Agriculture & Animal Husbandry: **Marius RATOLOJANAHARY**
Min. of Civil Service, Labor, & Social Laws: **Jacky Mahafaly TSIANDOPY**
Min. of Commerce & Consumer Affairs: **Alphonse RALISON**
Min. of Decentralization & Territorial Admin.: **Yvan ANDRIANASANDRATRINIONY**
Min. of Defense: **Cecile Marie Ange MANOROHANTA**
Min. of Economy, Commerce, Planning, & Private Sector: **Ivohasina RAZAFIMAHEFA**
Min. of Energy & Mining: **Elise RAZAKA**
Min. of Environment, Water, Forest, & Tourism: **Harison Edmond RANDRIARIMANANA**
Min. of Finance & Budget: **Haja Nirina RAZAFINJATOVO**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Marcel RANJEVA, Gen.**
Min. of Health & Family Planning: **Jean Louis ROBINSON, Dr.**
Min. of Higher Education: **Jean Theodore RANJIVASON**
Min. of Industry & Handicrafts: **Mejamirado RAZAFIMIHARY**
Min. of Interior: **Charles RABEMANANJARA, Gen.**
Min. of Justice: **Bakolalao Ramanandraibe RANAIVOHARIVONY**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **Maharavo RODELYS**
Min. of National Education & Scientific Research: **Benjamin Radavidson ANDRIAMPARANY**
Min. of Population: **Jacob Felicien ANDRIAMPANJAVA**
Min. of Public Works & Meteorology: **Rolland RANDRIAMAMPIONONA**
Min. of Scientific Research: **Alidina EDOUARD**
Min. of Sports, Culture, & Hobbies: **Patrick RAMIARAMANA**
Min. of Technical & Professional Education: **Zoana BLAISE**
Min. of Telecommunications, Post, & Communications: **Bruno Ramaroson ANDRIATAVISON**
Min. of Transportation: **Julien Laporte RAVELONARIVO**
Min. of Urban & Regional Planning: **Julien REBOZA**
Sec. of State for Decentralization: **ENIAVOSOA**
Sec. of State for Fisheries & Ocean Resources: **Rarison Ramaroson HIPPOLYTE, RAdm.**
Sec. of State for Foreign Trade: **Henri RAKOTONIRAINY**
Sec. of State for Public Security & National Police: **Desire RASOLOFOMANANA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Gaston RAVELOJAONA**
Ambassador to the US: **Jocelyn Bertin RADIFERA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Zina ANDRIANARIVELO Razafy**

Madagascar maintains an embassy in the United States at 2374 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-265-5525).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Madagascar's first President, Philibert Tsiranana, was elected when his Social Democratic Party gained power at independence in 1960 and was reelected without opposition in March 1972. However, he resigned only 2 months later in response to massive antigovernment demonstrations. The unrest continued, and Tsiranana's successor, Gen. Gabriel Ramanantsoa, resigned on February 5, 1975, handing over executive power to Lt. Col. Richard Ratsimandrava, who was assassinated 6 days later. A provisional military directorate then ruled until a new government was formed in June 1975, under Didier Ratsiraka.

During the 16 subsequent years of President Ratsiraka's rule, Madagascar continued under a government committed to revolutionary socialism based on the 1975 Constitution establishing a highly centralized state. National elections in 1982 and 1989 returned Ratsiraka for a second and third 7-year presidential term. For much of this period, only limited and restrained political opposition was tolerated, with no direct criticism of the president permitted in the press. With an easing of restrictions on political expression, beginning in the late 1980s, the Ratsiraka regime came under increasing pressure to make fundamental changes. In response to a deteriorating economy, Ratsiraka relaxed socialist economic policies and instituted some liberal, private-sector reforms. These, along with political reforms like the elimination of press censorship in 1989 and the formation of more political parties in 1990, were insufficient to placate a growing opposition movement known as Hery Velona or "Active Forces." A number of already existing political parties and their leaders, among them Albert Zafy and Rakotoniaina Manandafy, anchored this movement which was especially strong in Antananarivo and the surrounding high plateau. In response to largely peaceful mass demonstrations and crippling general strikes, Ratsiraka replaced his prime minister in August 1991 but suffered an irreparable setback soon thereafter when his troops fired on peaceful demonstrators marching on his suburban palace, killing more than 30.

In an increasingly weakened position, Ratsiraka acceded to negotiations on the formation of a transitional government. The resulting "Panorama Convention" of October 31, 1991, stripped Ratsiraka of nearly all of his powers, created interim institutions, and set an 18-month timetable for completing a transition to a new form of constitutional government. The High Constitutional Court was retained as the ultimate judicial arbiter of the process.

In March 1992, a widely representative National Forum organized by the Malagasy Christian Council of Churches (FFKM) drafted a new Constitution. Troops guarding the proceedings clashed with pro-Ratsiraka "federalists" who tried to disrupt the forum in protest of draft constitutional provisions preventing the incumbent president from running again.

The text of the new Constitution was put to a nationwide referendum in August 1992 and approved by a wide

margin, despite efforts by federalists to disrupt balloting in several coastal areas.

Presidential elections were held on November 25, 1992, after the High Constitutional Court had ruled, over active forces objections, that Ratsiraka could become a candidate. Runoff elections were held in February 1993, and the leader of the Hery Velona movement, Albert Zafy, defeated Ratsiraka. Zafy was sworn in as President on March 27, 1993. After President Zafy's impeachment by the National Assembly in 1996 and the short quasi-presidency of Norbert Ratsirahonana, the 1997 elections once again pitted Zafy and Ratsiraka, with Ratsiraka this time emerging victorious. A National Assembly dominated by members of President Ratsiraka'a political party AREMA subsequently passed the 1998 Constitution, which considerably strengthened the presidency.

In December 2001, a presidential election was held in which both major candidates claimed victory. The Ministry of the Interior declared incumbent Ratsiraka of the AREMA party victorious. Marc Ravalomanana contested the results and claimed victory. A political crisis followed in which Ratsiraka supporters cut major transport routes from the primary port city to the capital city, a stronghold of Ravalomanana support. Sporadic violence and considerable economic disruption continued until July 2002 when Ratsiraka and several of his prominent supporters fled to exile in France. In addition to political differences, ethnic differences played a role in the crisis and continue to play a role in politics. Ratsiraka is from the coastal Betsimisarka tribe and Ravalomanana comes from the highland Merina tribe.

After the end of the 2002 political crisis, President Ravalomanana began many reform projects, forcefully advocating "rapid and durable development" and the launching of a battle against corruption. December 2002 legislative elections gave his newly formed TIM (Tiako-i-Madagasikara—I Love Madagascar) Party a commanding majority in the National Assembly. November 2003 municipal elections were conducted freely, returning a majority of supporters of the president, but also significant numbers of independent and regional opposition figures. Following the crisis of 2002, the President replaced provincial governors with appointed PDSs (Presidents des Delegations Speciales). This effectively



put an end to the "autonomous provinces," although they nominally remain in place because they are included in the constitution. Subsequent legislation established a structure of 22 regions to decentralize administration. In September 2004, the government named 22 Regional Chiefs, reporting directly to the President, to implement its decentralization plans. Rumors about the dissolution of the autonomous provinces had been around for some time, and on April 4, 2007 a constitutional referendum was held, in which the majority of the voters backed a revised constitution without any provinces. The new regions will become the highest level of subdivision.

ECONOMY

Structural reforms began in the late 1980s, initially under pressure form international financial institutions. An initial privatization program (1988-1993) and the development of an export processing zone (EPZ) regime in the early 1990s were key milestones in this effort. A period of significant stagnation from 1991-96 was followed by 5 years of solid economic growth and accelerating foreign investment, driven by a second wave of privatizations and EPZ development. Although structural reforms advanced, governance remained weak and perceived corruption in Madagascar was extremely high. During the period of solid growth from 1997 through 2001, poverty levels remained stubbornly high, especially in rural areas. A six-month political crisis triggered by a dispute over the outcome of the presidential elections held in December 2001 virtually halted economic activity in much of the country in the first half of 2002. Real GDP dropped 12.7% for the year 2002, inflows of foreign investment dropped sharply, and the crisis tarnished Madagascar's budding reputation as an African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) standout and a promising place to invest. Following resolution of the crisis, the economy rebounded with GDP growth of over 9% in 2003. Currency depreciation and rising inflation hampered economic performance in 2004-2005; by 2006 inflation had abated somewhat (to 11%) but growth remained sluggish (4.7% est.).

Following the 2002 political crisis, the government attempted to set a new course and build confidence, in coordination with international financial institutions and the donor community. Madagascar developed a recovery plan in collaboration with the private sector and donors and presented it at a "Friends of Madagascar" conference organized by the World Bank in Paris in July 2002. Donor countries demonstrated their confidence in the new government by pledging $1 billion in assistance over five years. The Malagasy Government identified road infrastructure as its principle priority and underlined its commitment to public-private partnership by establishing a joint public-private sector steering committee.

In 2000, Madagascar embarked on the preparation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. The boards of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank agreed in December 2000 that the country had reached the decision point for debt relief under the HIPC Initiative and defined a set of conditions for Madagascar to reach the completion point. In October 2004, the boards of the IMF and the World Bank determined that Madagascar had reached the completion point under the enhanced HIPC Initiative.

The Madagascar-U.S. Business Council was formed in Madagascar in 2002. The U.S.-Madagascar Business Council was formed in the United States in May 2003, and the two organizations continue to explore ways to work for the benefit of both groups.

The government of President Ravalomanana is aggressively seeking foreign investment and is tackling many of the obstacles to such investment, including combating corruption, reforming land-ownership laws, encouraging study of American and European business techniques, and active pursuit of foreign investors. President Ravalomanana rose to prominence through his agro-foods TIKO company, and is known for attempting to apply many of the lessons learned in the world of business to running the government.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Madagascar, which has historically been perceived as on the margin of mainstream African affairs, eagerly rejoined the African Union in July 2003 after a 14-month hiatus triggered by the 2002 political crisis, and joined the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2006. From 1978 until 1991, then-President Ratsiraka emphasized independence and nonalignment and followed an "all points" policy stressing ties with socialist and radical regimes, including North Korea, Cuba, Libya, and Iran. Taking office in 1993, President Albert Zafy expressed his desire for diplomatic relations with all countries. Early in his tenure, he established formal ties with South Korea and sent emissaries to Morocco.

Starting in 1997, globalization encouraged the government and President Ratsiraka to adhere to market-oriented policies and to engage world markets. External relations reflect this trend, although Madagascar's physical isolation and strong traditional insular orientation have limited its activity in regional economic organizations and relations with its East African neighbors. It enjoys closer and generally good relations with its Indian Ocean neighbors—Mauritius, Reunion, and the Comoros Islands. Active relationships with Europe, especially France, Germany, and Switzerland, as well as with Britain, Russia, Japan, India, and China have been strong since independence.

President Ravalomanana has stated that he welcomes relations with all countries interested in helping Madagascar to develop. He has consciously sought to strengthen relations with

Anglophone countries as a means of balancing traditionally strong French influence.

U.S.-MALAGASY RELATIONS

Relations with the United States date to the middle 1800s. The two countries concluded a commercial convention in 1867 and a treaty of peace, friendship, and commerce in 1881. Traditionally warm relations suffered considerably during the 1970s, when Madagascar expelled the U.S. ambassador, closed a NASA tracking station, and nationalized two U.S. oil companies. In 1980, relations at the ambassadorial level were restored.

Throughout the troubled period, commercial and cultural relations remained active. In 1990, Madagascar was designated as a priority aid recipient, and assistance increased from $15 million in 1989 to $40 million in 1993. Recent U.S. assistance has contributed to a population census and family planning programs; conservation of Madagascar's remarkable biodiversity, private sector development, agriculture, democracy and governance initiatives; and media training. Madagascar became the very first country with a Millennium Challenge Account compact when it signed an agreement worth $110 million in April 2006.The Ravalomanana government is especially positive about ties with the United States.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 6, 2008

Country Description: Madagascar is a developing island nation off the east coast of Africa. The primary languages are French and Malagasy. French is less spoken outside of major cities. Facilities for tourism are available, but vary in quality. Travelers seeking high-end accommodations should make reservations in advance.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Visas are available at all airports servicing international flights, but travelers who opt to obtain a visa at an airport should expect delays upon arrival. Visas obtained at the airport cannot be extended. Most international flights arrive in Antananarivo, but there are some limited international flights to/from the nearby islands of Comoros, Mayotte and Reunion from airports in Mahajanga, Toamasina (Tamatave), Nosy Be, Tolagnaro (Ft. Dauphin) and Antsiranana (Diego Suarez). There are also direct flights between Italy and Nosy Be. Evidence of yellow fever immunization is required for all travelers who have been in an infected zone within 6 months of their arrival in Madagascar.

Travelers may obtain the latest information and details on entry requirements from the Embassy of the Republic of Madagascar, 2374 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 265-5525/6; or the Malagasy Consulate in New York City, (212) 986-9491. Honorary consuls of Madagascar are located in Philadelphia, and San Diego. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Malagasy embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of Madagascar's web site at http://www.embassy.org/madagascar for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: There are random police vehicle checkpoints throughout Madagascar, so all visitors should carry photo identification (i.e., U.S. passport) in the event of police questioning. These check points are routine in nature, and should not result in vehicle and/or person searches as long as valid identification is shown.

Political demonstrations occur from time to time. There have been incidents of violence during demonstrations, but these have not been directed against Americans. Travelers should maintain security awareness at all times and should avoid political gatherings and street demonstrations. Certain large gatherings such as concerts or scenes of accidents also may pose a threat to foreigners.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The concerns for visitors to Antananarivo are crimes of opportunity such as pick pocketing, purse snatching and residential and vehicular theft. Although these incidents are generally non-violent, incidents involving violence by assailants do occur and are on the rise, particularly when the victim resists, and especially when multiple persons confront the victim. The Embassy has received reports of physical attacks against foreigners, including Americans, particularly in coastal tourist areas. A number of these attacks resulted in serious injuries and in some cases, fatalities. Criminal elements in Antananarivo and throughout Madagascar are becoming bolder when selecting their victims, and are also committing more crimes in areas that are considered to be "safe"—those that are generally well lit and well traveled by pedestrians and vehicles.

To reduce the risk of being victimized, travel in groups and avoid wearing expensive jewelry or carrying high cost electronic items (iPods, digital cameras, or high end cell phones) with you in public. Valuable items should never be left in an unattended vehicle or at a hotel (unless locked in the hotel safe). Walking at night, whether alone or in a group is not considered safe in urban areas, including in the vicinity of Western-standard hotels, restaurants and night clubs. Visitors are strongly discouraged from traveling outside of Antananarivo after dark due to banditry, lack of lighting, and poor road conditions. In the last six months there have been several incidents involving nighttime criminal activity that targeted vehicles outside of town. These events have involved villages designing a "trap" of sand, a tree log or some other substance or condition that makes the only viable road impassible. Local villagers then "assist" the stranded vehicle and expect monetary compensation. Others have involved armed criminals who stage a "breakdown" that blocks the roadway, forcing the victimized driver to slow down, and hence become more vulnerable.

Criminal gangs comprised of felons, ex-military and police from the former regime are known to commit home invasions and kidnappings, sometimes targeting foreigners. Organized gangs of bandits are known to patrol areas where foreigners, who are perceived to be wealthy, tend to congregate. Crimes such as burglary and robbery do occur in areas outside the capital and the threat of confrontational and violent crime has increased in rural and isolated areas throughout the last year. Specifically, Amboasary, a town in the southeast, has experienced a surge in armed robberies targeting not-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, Americans visiting Madagascar should not expect to experience any hostility or aggression solely because of their citizenship.

In major cities, the National Police is charged with maintaining peace and security. Outside of major cities, the Gendarmerie is primarily responsible for these duties. Due to lack of resources available to both law enforcement agencies, police response to victims of a crime is often limited, slow and ineffective.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to local police and to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

During an emergency, visitors to Antananarivo can contact local police at telephone numbers 117 and 22-357-09/10 or 22-227-35.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Standards of healthcare throughout Madagascar are well below U.S. standards. However, there are foreign physicians in Antananarivo representing a broad range of specialties, but their training is variable and often not to U.S. standards. The hospitals in Antananarivo vary greatly in standards of care. Medical care outside of Antananarivo is generally well below the care available in the capital city. Caution and good judgment should be exercised when seeking hospital and medical services. The Embassy maintains a list of hospitals and specialists. A Seventh Day Adventist dental clinic offers emergency procedures and x-ray facilities.

Some medications, generally of French origin, are available in Antananarivo. If you need to refill a prescription from home, it is important to carry a prescription from your doctor listing the medicine's generic name. There is limited availability of both prescription and over the counter medications, and outside of Antananarivo, medications may not be available. Travelers should have a supply of any needed medication sufficient for the entire length of a visit before arriving in Madagascar. Americans who will be carrying medications with them to Madagascar may wish to contact the Malagasy Embassy in Washington, D.C. regarding any restrictions on imports.

Ambulance services are available in Antananarivo with Polyclinique Ilafy at 22-425-66/69 or 033 11 458 48 / 032 07 409 38; Espace Medical at 22-625-66, 22-219-72, or 032-02-088-16 (cellular); and CDU (Centre de Diagnostic Medical d'Urgences) at 22 329 56 or 032 07 822 28 or 033 11 822 28. However, due to traffic jams, response times are often dangerously slow.

Malaria is prevalent, particularly in the coastal regions. Using preventive measures and malaria prophylaxis is strongly recommended. Rabies is endemic and there are many street dogs. It is recommended travelers have the pre-exposure vaccination series prior to arrival in Madagascar. If bitten by an animal, the effected area should immediately be washed with soap and running water for ten minutes. Seek medical care immedi-

ately. Plague is also endemic to Madagascar. While the reported HIV prevalence rate is low, particularly by African standards, Madagascar suffers from a very high reported incidence of other sexually transmitted diseases. The East African Indian Ocean islands have seen a rise in the cases of Chikungunya. As with malaria, Chikungunya and dengue are transmitted by mosquitoes. Every effort should be made to use repellants, proper clothing and barriers that discourage/prevent mosquito bites. The CDC web site contains further information on Chikungunya and dengue.

Travelers should drink bottled water or carbonated beverages. Local water is not generally potable. Water purification tablets may be used as necessary. Bottled water is readily available in Antananarivo but is less so outside the city. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Madagascar is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In Madagascar, one drives on the right side of the road, generally yielding the right of way to vehicles coming in from the left. Some major intersections and traffic circles have police directing traffic. If a policeman has his back to you at an intersection, you are required to stop. New laws make seatbelt use mandatory and prohibit cell phone use while driving, even with a hands-free attachment. Child safety seats and motorcycle helmets are not required in Madagascar. If you are caught driving under the influence of alcohol, your car will be impounded for a few days and you will have to pay a fine. If you are involved in an accident involving injuries and/or deaths, there is a mandatory court case. The losing party of the court case must then pay all costs. Except for Antananarivo's main streets and a few well-maintained routes to outlying cities, many roads are in various states of disrepair. Some may be impassable during the rainy season. Night travel by private or public transportation outside Antananarivo is strongly discouraged due to poor lighting and road conditions. Roads tend to be narrow and winding with many one-lane bridges and blind curves. Most vehicles tend to drive in the center of the road unless another vehicle is present. It is common to find livestock or human-drawn carts in the middle of the road, even at night. Local practice is to blow the horn before going around a curve, to let others know of one's presence. Few pedestrian crosswalks or working traffic signals exist.

Travel within Antananarivo can be difficult with poor road signage, streets congested with pedestrians, bicycles, animal carts, and vehicular traffic, and an abundance of one-way streets. Taxis are plentiful and are generally reasonably priced. Bargain for the fare prior to getting into a vehicle.

Most accidents are pedestrian-related, due to narrow roads and lack of sidewalks on many streets. When traveling between cities, travelers must have clear directions as there are rarely signs indicating where one must turn to reach a destination. Conditions of rural roads can degrade significantly and with little notice during the rainy season. Rental cars generally come with a driver who is responsible for maintaining the vehicle and sometimes acts as a tour guide. Public transportation is unreliable and vehicles are poorly maintained. Rail services are extremely limited and unreliable.

The Ministry of Public Works, telephone (20) 22-318-02, is Madagascar's authority responsible for road safety. During an emergency, visitors to Antananarivo can contact local police by dialing 117, 22-227-35, 22-357-09/10. American citizens can also call the U.S. Embassy at 22-212-57/58/59 if assistance is needed in communicating with law enforcement officials.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Madagascar, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Madagascar's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at www.faa.gov.

Domestic and international air services operate regularly but are subject to delays and occasional breakdowns. Air Madagascar often changes in-country flight schedules based on demand; flights that are not full may be cancelled with little or no prior warning to passengers. Overbooking is also common. Reconfirmation of tickets prior to flight day is recommended, especially when flying from provincial airports.

Special Circumstances: It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Madagascar in Washington or one of Madagascar's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. Taking photographs of air-

ports or military installations is prohibited. Madagascar is renowned for its natural resources. These include a wide variety of gemstones. The Government of Madagascar recently imposed restrictions on the export of precious gems; before purchasing or transporting any gemstones it is advisable to seek clarification of the applicable laws.

Madagascar is primarily a cash-driven economy. Although some high-end establishments catering to tourists accept credit cards, normally only Visa-logo cards, most shops and restaurants are cash only. Although the government changed the local currency from the Malagasy Franc (FMG) to the Ariary several years ago, many Malagasy still think in terms of FMG. When talking about prices, it is important to quantify whether the price is in Ariary or FMG. (1 Ariary = 5 FMG). A few ATMs are available in large cities. Dollars are not widely accepted.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Malagasy laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Malagasy are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States as well as in Madagascar.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Madagascar are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Madagascar. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 14-16 Rue Rainitovo, Antsahavola, Antananarivo. The mailing address is B.P. 620, Antsahavola, Antananarivo, Madagascar; telephone [261] (20) 22-212-57; fax [261] (20) 22-345-39. The Embassy's web site is located at www.usmission.mg.

Intercountry Adoption

April 4, 2007

Madagascar is a party to the Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (i.e., the Hague adoption convention). Madagascar recently passed a new adoption law based on the requirements of the Convention.

Please continue to check this web site from time to time or send an email to ConsAntan@state.gov if you have specific questions about adopting from Madagascar. We regret any inconvenience.



MALAWI

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Malawi

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 118,484 sq. km. (45,747 sq. mi.); land the size of Pennsylvania, with a lake the size of Vermont.

Cities: Capital—Lilongwe. Other cities—Blantyre (the commercial capital), Zomba, Mzuzu.

Terrain: Plateaus, highlands, and valleys. Lake Malawi (formerly referred to as Lake Nyasa) comprises about 20% of total area.

Climate: Predominately subtropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Malawian(s).

Population: (2008 est.) 13,066,320 (preliminary results from the 2008 Malawi population and housing census).

Annual growth rate: (2008) 2.8%.

Ethnic groups: Chewa, Nyanja, Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Ngonde, Asian, European.

Religions: Protestant 55%, Roman Catholic 20%, Muslim 20%, indigenous beliefs 3%, other 2%.

Languages: English (official), Chichewa (official), regional dialects, i.e., Chitumbuka, Chiyao, Chilomwe.

Education: Years compulsory—none. Enrollment (2006)—primary, 86%. Literacy (2004 est., age 15 and older)—69%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—72 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (at birth, 2005 est.)—40 yrs.

Government

Type: Multi-party democracy.

Independence: July 6, 1964.

Constitution: May 18, 1995.

Government branches: Executive—president (the president is both chief of state and head of government), first and second vice presidents, cabinet. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (193 members). Although the Malawian constitution provides for a Senate, in practice the legislative branch's upper house does not exist. Judicial—High Court, Supreme Court of Appeal, subordinate Magistrate Courts.

Political subdivisions: 28 districts.

Political parties: Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, ruling party) United Democratic Front (UDF), Malawi Congress Party (MCP), Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), New Republican Party (NRP), National Democratic Alliance (NDA), People's Progressive Movement (PPM), People's Transformation Party (PETRA), and Congress for National Unity (CONU). MCP and UDF are the two main opposition parties in parliament.

Suffrage: Universal at 18 years of age.

Central government budget: 2007/2008 budget is $1.2418 billion (MK 176.34 billion).

Economy

GDP: (2008 est.) $3.8 billion.

Annual real GDP growth rate: (2007) 7.4%.

Per capita GNI: (2008 est.) Approx. $289.50.

Avg. inflation rate: (2007) 7%.

Natural resources: Limestone, uranium (potential), coal, bauxite, phosphates, graphite, granite, black granite, vermilite, aquamarine, tourmaline, rubies, sapphires, rare earths.

Agriculture: (approx. 34.7% of GDP) Products—tobacco, sugar, cotton, tea, corn, potatoes, cassava (tapioca), sorghum, coffee, rice, groundnuts. Arable land—34%, of which 86% is cultivated.

Industry: (19.4% of GDP) Types—tea, tobacco, sugar, sawmill products, cement, consumer goods.

Trade: (2005 est.) Exports—$578 million: tobacco, tea, sugar, coffee, peanuts, wood products. Partners—U.S., U.K., South Africa, Germany, Japan. Imports—$1.066 billion: food, petroleum products, semimanufactures, consumer goods, transportation equipment. Partners—South Africa, Zimbabwe, Japan, U.S., U.K., Germany.

Fiscal year: July 1-June 30.

GEOGRAPHY

Malawi is situated in southeastern Africa. The Great Rift Valley traverses the country from north to south. In this deep trough lies Lake Malawi, the third-largest lake in Africa, comprising about 20% of Malawi's area. The Shire River flows from the south end of the lake and joins the Zambezi River 400 kilometers (250 mi.) farther south in Mozambique. East and west of the Rift Valley, the land forms high plateaus, generally between 900 and 1,200 meters (3,000-4,000 ft.) above sea level. In the north, the Nyika Uplands rise as high as 2,600 meters (8,500 ft.); south of the lake lie the Shire Highlands, with an elevation of 600-1,600 meters (2,000-5,000 ft.), rising to Mts. Zomba and Mulanje, 2,130 and 3,048 meters (7,000 and 10,000 ft.). In the extreme south, the elevation is only 60-90 meters (200-300 ft.) above sea level.

Malawi is one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most densely populated countries. The population of Lilongwe—Malawi's capital since 1971—exceeds 1.8 million (preliminary results from the 2008 Malawi population and housing census). All government ministries and the parliament are located in Lilongwe. Blantyre remains Malawi's major commercial center with a population near 1 million. Malawi's President resides in Lilongwe. The Supreme Court is seated in Blantyre.

Malawi's climate is generally subtropical. A rainy season runs from November through April. There is little to no rainfall throughout most of the country from May to October. It is hot and humid from October to April along the lake and in the Lower Shire Valley. Lilongwe is also hot and humid during these months, albeit far less than in the south. The rest of the country is warm during those months. From June through August, the lake areas and far south are comfortably warm, but the rest of Malawi can be chilly at night, with temperatures ranging from 5º-14ºC (41º-57ºF).

PEOPLE

Malawi derives its name from the Maravi, a Bantu people who came from the southern Congo about 600 years ago. On reaching the area north of Lake Malawi, the Maravi divided. One branch, the ancestors of the present-day Chewas, moved south to the west bank of the lake. The other, the ancestors of the Nyanjas, moved down the east bank to the southern part of the country.

By AD 1500, the two divisions of the tribe had established a kingdom stretching from north of the present-day city of Nkhotakota to the Zambezi River in the south, and from Lake Malawi in the east, to the Luangwa River in Zambia in the west.

Migrations and tribal conflicts precluded the formation of a cohesive Malawian society until the turn of the 20th century. In more recent years, ethnic and tribal distinctions have diminished. Regional distinctions and rivalries, however, persist. Despite some clear differences, no significant friction currently exists between tribal groups, and the concept of a Malawian nationality has begun to take hold. Predominately a rural people, Malawians are generally conservative and traditionally nonviolent.

The Chewas constitute 90% of the population of the central region; the Nyanja tribe predominates in the south and the Tumbuka in the north. In addition, significant numbers of the Tongas live in the north; Ngonis—an offshoot of the Zulus who came from South Africa in the early 1800s—live in the lower northern and lower central regions; and the Yao, who are mostly Muslim, live along the southeastern border with Mozambique.

HISTORY

Hominid remains and stone implements have been identified in Malawi dating back more than 1 million years, and early humans inhabited the vicinity of Lake Malawi 50,000 to 60,000 years ago. Human remains at a site dated about 8000 BC show physical characteristics similar to peoples living today in the Horn of Africa. At another site, dated 1500 BC, the remains possess features resembling Negro and Bushman people. Although the Portuguese reached the area in the 16th century, the first significant Western contact was the arrival of David Livingstone along the shore of Lake Malawi in 1859. Subsequently, Scottish Presbyterian churches established missions in Malawi. One of their objectives was to end the slave trade to the Persian Gulf that continued to the end of the 19th century. In 1878, a number of traders, mostly from Glasgow, formed the African Lakes Company to supply goods and services to the missionaries. Other missionaries, traders, hunters, and planters soon followed.

In 1883, a consul of the British Government was accredited to the "Kings and Chiefs of Central Africa," and in 1891, the British established the Nyasaland Protectorate (Nyasa is the Yao word for "lake"). Although the British remained in control during the first half of the 1900s, this period was marked by a number of unsuccessful Malawian attempts to obtain independence. A growing European and U.S.-educated African elite became increasingly vocal and politically active—first through associations, and after 1944, through the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC).

During the 1950s, pressure for independence increased when Nyasaland was joined with Northern and Southern Rhodesia in 1953 to form the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In July 1958, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda returned to the country after a long absence in the United States (where he had obtained his medical degree at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee in 1937), the United Kingdom (where he practiced medicine), and Ghana. He assumed leadership of the NAC, which later became the Malawi Congress Party (MCP). In 1959, Banda was sent to Gwelo Prison for his political activities but was released in 1960 to participate in a constitutional conference

in London. On April 15, 1961, the MCP won an overwhelming victory in elections for a new Legislative Council. It also gained an important role in the new Executive Council and ruled Nyasaland in all but name a year later. In a second constitutional conference in London in November 1962, the British Government agreed to give Nyasaland self-governing status the following year.

Dr. Banda became Prime Minister on February 1, 1963, although the British still controlled Malawi's financial, security, and judicial systems. A new constitution took effect in May 1963, providing for virtually complete internal self-government. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was dissolved on December 31, 1963, and Malawi became a fully independent member of the Commonwealth (formerly the British Commonwealth) on July 6, 1964. Two years later, Malawi adopted a new constitution and became a one-party state with Dr. Banda as its first President.

In 1970 Dr. Banda was declared President for life of the MCP, and in 1971 Banda consolidated his power and was named President for life of Malawi itself. The paramilitary wing of the Malawi Congress Party, the Young Pioneers, helped keep Malawi under authoritarian control until the 1990s. Increasing domestic unrest and pressure from Malawian churches and from the international community led to a referendum in which the Malawian people were asked to vote for either a multi-party democracy or the continuation of a one-party state.

On June 14, 1993, the people of Malawi voted overwhelmingly in favor of multi-party democracy. Free and fair national elections were held on May 17, 1994.



Bakili Muluzi, leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF), was elected President in those elections. The UDF won 82 of the 177 seats in the National Assembly and formed a coalition government with the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD). That coalition disbanded in June 1996, but some of its members remained in the government. The President was referred to as Dr. Muluzi, having received an honorary degree at Lincoln University in Missouri in 1995. Malawi's newly written constitution (1995) eliminated special powers previously reserved for the Malawi Congress Party. Accelerated economic liberalization and structural reform accompanied the political transition. On June 15, 1999, Malawi held its second democratic elections. Dr. Bakili Muluzi was re-elected to serve a second 5-year term as President,

despite an MCP-AFORD alliance that ran a joint slate against the UDF.

Malawi saw its first transition between democratically elected presidents in May 2004, when the UDF's presidential candidate Bingu wa Mutharika defeated MCP candidate John Tembo and Gwanda Chakuamba, who was backed by a grouping of opposition parties. European Union and Commonwealth observers said although voting passed peacefully, they were concerned about "serious inadequacies" in the poll. The UDF also did not win a majority of seats in parliament, as it had done in 1994 and 1999 elections. Through the politicking of party chairperson and former President Bakili Muluzi, the party successfully secured a majority by forming a "government of national unity" with several opposition parties. President Bingu wa Mutharika left the UDF party on February 5, 2005, citing differences with the UDF, particularly over his anti-corruption campaign. He formed the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) shortly thereafter, attracting a number of UDF and independent members of parliament (MPs) to his new party. The DPP, however, has also failed to acquire enough support for a majority in parliament, and continues to face stiff opposition from both the UDF and the MCP. Meanwhile, many politicians are already looking ahead to the next general elections in 2009, with Muluzi, Tembo, and Mutharika all expected to campaign for president. On September 14, 2007, after passing the budget, the President dismissed the National Assembly before the speaker of parliament could act on Section 65 of the constitution. Section 65, a major point of contention between the DPP and opposition parties, allows the speaker to declare vacant the seats of any MPs who change parties after being elected. After a protracted delay, on August 29, 2008 the National Assembly approved the national budget for 2008/2009, relieving some of the pressure on the government in the short term. The parties further agreed to implement Section 65 in the coming months.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Government of Malawi has been a multi-party democracy since 1994. Under the 1995 constitution, the president, who is both chief of state and head of the government, is chosen through universal direct suffrage every 5 years. Malawi has a vice president who is elected with the president. The president has the option of appointing a second vice president, who must be from a different party. The members of the presidentially appointed cabinet can be drawn from either within or outside of the legislature. Malawi's National Assembly has 193 seats, all directly elected to serve 5-year terms.

The constitution also provides for a second house, a Senate of 80 seats, but to date no action has been taken to create the Senate. The Senate is intended to provide representation for traditional leaders and the different geographical districts, as well as various special interest groups, such as women, youth, and the disabled.

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. Malawi's judicial system, based on the English model, is made up of magisterial lower courts, a high court, a Supreme Court of Appeal, and a constitutional court.

Local government is carried out in 28 districts within three regions administered by regional administrators and district commissioners who are appointed by the central government. Local elections, the first in the multiparty era, took place in on November 21, 2000. The UDF party won 70% of the

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Bingu wa MUTHARIKA**
Vice Pres.: **Cassim CHILUMPHA**
Min. of Agriculture & Food Security: **Bingu wa MUTHARIKA**
Min. of Economic Planning & Development: **Ken LIPENGA**
Min. of Education & Human Resources: **Bingu wa MUTHARIKA**
Min. of Factories & Technology Development: **John KHUMBO CHIRWA**
Min. of Finance: **Goodall GONDWE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Intl. Cooperation: **Joyce BANDA**
Min. of Gender, Child Welfare, & Community Services: **Kate KAINJA-KALULUMA**
Min. of Health: **Khumbo KACHALI**
Min. of Home Affairs & Internal Security:
Min. of Information & Civic Education: **Patricia KALIYATI**
Min. of Irrigation & Water Development: **Mohammed SIDIK MIA**
Min. of Justice & Constitutional Affairs: **Henry PHOYA**
Min. of Labor & Vocational Training: **Davis KATSONGA**
Min. of Lands, Physical Planning, & Surveys: **John KHUMBO CHIRWA**
Min. of Local Govt. & Rural Development: **George CHAPONDA**
Min. of Mines, Natural Resources, & Environmental Affairs: **Ted KALEBE**
Min. of National Defense: **Aaron SANGALA**
Min. of Social Development & Persons With Disabilities: **Clement KHEMBO**
Min. of Statutory Corporations & Civil Service: **Elizabeth AIPIRA**
Min. of Tourism, Wildlife, & Culture: **Callista CHIMOMBO**
Min. of Trade & Private-Sector Development: **Henry MUSSA**
Min. of Transport & Public Works: **Henry CHIMUNTHU-BANDA**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Culture: **Khumbo KACHALI**
Min. of State in the Office of the Pres.: **Richard MSOWOYA**
Attorney Gen.: **Jane ANSAH**
Governor, Reserve Bank: **Victor MBEWE**
Ambassador to the US: **Bernard SANDE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Steve MATENJE**

Malawi maintains an embassy in the United States at 1156 15th Street, NW, Suite 320, Washington, DC 20005 (tel. 202-721-0270; fax 202-721-0288). Malawi's Permanent Mission to the United Nations is located at 866 UN Plaza, Suite 486, New York, NY 10017 (tel.: 212-317-8738/8718; fax: 212-317-8729; e-mail: Malawinewyork@aol.com or MalawiU@aol.com).

Malawi also maintains an Honorary Consulate in Los Angeles at 44970

Via Renaissance, Temecula, California 92590 (office number, 951-676-2476; fax number, 951-676-1568; and e-mail, malawiconsul@yahoo.com).

ECONOMY

Malawi is a landlocked, densely populated country. Its economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. Malawi has few exploitable mineral resources. Its two most important export crops are tobacco and tea. Traditionally Malawi has been self-sufficient in its staple food, maize, and during the 1980s exported substantial quantities to its drought-stricken neighbors. Agriculture represents 34.7% of the GDP, accounts for over 80% of the labor force, and represents about 80% of all exports. Nearly 90% of the population engages in subsistence farming. Smallholder farmers produce a variety of crops, including maize (corn), beans, rice, cassava, tobacco, and groundnuts (peanuts).The agricultural sector contributes about 63.7% of total income for the rural population, 65% of manufacturing sector's raw materials, and approximately 87% of total employment. Financial wealth is generally concentrated in the hands of a small elite. Malawi's manufacturing industries are situated around the city of Blantyre.

Malawi's economic reliance on the export of agricultural commodities renders it particularly vulnerable to external shocks such as declining terms of trade and drought. High transport costs, which can comprise over 30% of its total import bill, constitute a serious impediment to economic development and trade. Malawi must import all its fuel products. Paucity of skilled labor; difficulty in obtaining expatriate employment permits; bureaucratic red tape; corruption; and inadequate and deteriorating road, electricity, water, and telecommunications infrastructure further hinder economic development in Malawi. However, recent government initiatives targeting improvements in the road infrastructure, together with private sector participation in railroad and telecommunications, have begun to render the investment environment more attractive.

Malawi has undertaken economic structural adjustment programs supported by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other donors since 1981. Broad reform objectives include stimulation of private sector activity and participation through the elimination of price controls and industrial licensing, liberalization of trade and foreign exchange, rationalization of taxes, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and civil service reform.

In May 2004, the IMF program begun in 2000 was canceled and a Staff-Monitored Program (SMP) was implemented. In the wake of questions about fiscal creditability, the SMP's goal was to give Malawi's newly-elected government the chance to establish a track record of fiscal discipline. A Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) was approved on August 5, 2005 after a successful SMP. In August 2006 Malawi successfully reached the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, resulting in debt relief from multilateral and Paris Club creditors. Over $2 billion in debt has since been cancelled, enabling the government to increase expenditures for development. Real GDP increased by an estimated 7.4% in 2007, a modest decline from 7.9% in 2006. Inflation has been largely under control since 2003, averaging 10% in that year and 7% in 2007. Discount and commercial lending rates have also declined from 40%-45% in 2003 to 22.5% currently. The government has moved away from controlling the exchange rate, allowing the Kwacha to drift since down since March 2005. As of January 2008 the Kwacha had depreciated to 140 to the U.S. dollar. Nevertheless, imports still heavily outweigh exports, and the country continues to suffer from a severe shortage of foreign exchange. Malawi has bilateral trade agreements with its two major trading partners, South Africa and Zimbabwe, both of which allow duty-free entry of Malawian products into their countries.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Malawi has continued the pro-Western foreign policy established by former President Banda. It maintains excellent diplomatic relations with principal Western countries. Malawi's close relations with South Africa throughout the apartheid era strained its relations with other African nations. Following the collapse of apartheid in 1994, Malawi developed, and currently maintains, strong diplomatic relations with all African countries.

Between 1985 and 1995, Malawi accommodated more than a million refugees from Mozambique. The refugee crisis placed a substantial strain on Malawi's economy but also drew significant inflows of international assistance. The accommodation and eventual repatriation of the Mozambicans is considered a major success by international organizations. In 1996, Malawi received a number of Rwandan and Congolese refugees seeking asylum. The government did not turn away refugees, but it did invoke the principle of "first country of asylum." Under this principle, refugees who requested asylum in another country first, or who had the opportunity to do so, would not subsequently be granted asylum in Malawi. There were no reports of the forcible repatriation of refugees.

Important bilateral donors, in addition to the U.S., include Canada, Libya, Germany, Iceland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. Multilateral donors include the World Bank, the IMF, the European Union, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations organizations.

Malawi is a member of the following international organizations: UN and some of its specialized and related agencies (i.e. UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO), IMF, World Bank, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Berne Convention, Universal Copyright Convention, African Union, Lome Convention, African Development

Bank (AFDB), Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), Non-aligned Movement, G-77, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

U.S.-MALAWIAN RELATIONS

The transition from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy significantly strengthened the already cordial U.S. relationship with Malawi. Significant numbers of Malawians study in the United States. The United States has an active Peace Corps program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, and an Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Malawi.

U.S. and Malawian views on the necessity of economic and political stability in southern Africa generally coincide. Through a pragmatic assessment of its own national interests and foreign policy objectives, Malawi advocates peaceful solutions to the region's problems through negotiation. Malawi works to achieve these objectives in the United Nations, COMESA, and SADC. Malawi is the first southern African country to receive peacekeeping training under the U.S.-sponsored African Crisis Response Force Initiative (ACRI) and has joined the successor program, African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA). It has an active slate of peacetime engagement military-to-military programs. The two countries maintain a continuing dialogue through diplomatic representatives and periodic visits by senior officials.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

The United States has a substantial foreign assistance program in Malawi. The U.S. Government has provided approximately $70 million annually in development assistance to Malawi under USAID's Country Strategic Plan (CSP). The primary goal of USAID assistance is poverty reduction and increased food security through broad-based, market-led economic growth, focusing on four areas: sustainable increases in rural incomes, increased civic involvement in the rule of law, improved access to and quality of health services, and improved access to quality basic education. The USAID program is implemented in partnership with the Government of Malawi, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), other U.S. Government agencies, U.S. private voluntary organizations, contractors, and other partners, including the private sector through public-private partnerships.

USAID's program to increase rural incomes includes training and technical assistance to increase smallholder (crop, dairy, forest, and fishery) productivity; foster additional trade linkages among small farmer producer associations, larger commodity-specific industry clusters, and export markets (e.g. cassava, chilies, ground nuts, cotton, coffee, etc.); improve access to demand-driven financial services for micro, small and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs); increase rural households' revenues from sustainable natural resource management; and improve food security for vulnerable families in Malawi's rural areas. USAID is also encouraging smallholders to diversify into dairy production, a very lucrative business in Malawi and well-suited to Malawi's limited land area. USAID grantee Land O' Lakes (LOL), partnering with World Wide Sires, continues to promote the growth of the dairy industry in Malawi through 55 dairy associations with over 6,376 members (46% of which are women). USAID, through the Presidential Initiative to End Hunger in Africa, improved output markets for a total of 177,468 rural households. USAID-supported microfinance institutions provided financial services to 189,782 clients and disbursed 351,319 loans valued at $35,876,401. U.S. Government funding totaling $700,000 was leveraged to provide up to $13 million in agricultural financing through Malawi's first Development Credit Authority (DCA).

The Democracy and Governance portfolio continued to evolve in 2007, which proved to be an important transition year for the MCC Threshold Country Program (TCP). Activities under the TCP reaped positive results in fighting corruption, improving fiscal responsibility, and establishing a more transparent and effective judiciary. Partly as a result of successes gained under the TCP, the Government of Malawi was the only country in the world selected by MCC in December 2007 for Compact eligibility. Several other Democracy and Governance activities continued to fight corruption in the private sector, educate at-risk youth of their civic responsibilities, and nurture Christian/Muslim dialogue and relationships. The Democracy and Governance office also initiated a public-private partnership with the Financial Services Volunteer Corps to assist the Reserve Bank of Malawi and private banks to further develop risk-based banking supervision capacity. Chancellor College and a U.S.-based Historically Based College/University (HBCU) also entered into a partnership to strengthen the government's legal aid programs.

As was the case in previous years, USAID continued to support the Sector Wide Approach to Health (SWAP) in 2007 through discrete initiatives aimed at "increased use of improved health behaviors and services" for maternal, child, and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. These sustained efforts over the last 7 years have had substantial impact on health indicators in the country. In the area of HIV prevention, for example, the number of USAID-assisted counseling and testing centers increased from 3 in 2000 to 276 in 2007, while the number of clients assisted at these sites per year increased from about 22,000 in 2000 to more than 192,000 in 2007. In addition, according to a national Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) completed in 2005 with support from USAID, USAID's Presidential Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief activities reached 1,351,404 people through ABC messages (abstinence from sexual activity, being faithful to a single partner, and cor-

rect and consistent condom use) and provided care to 57,356 HIV/AIDS orphans and vulnerable children. Under-five mortality rates declined from a high of 189 per thousand live births in 2000 to 133 per thousand live births in 2004; the total fertility rate (TFR) declined to 6 children per woman; and the proportion of Malawian children sleeping under an insecticide-treated bednets (ITN) (26% in 2004) was more than three times the proportion (8%) sleeping under an ITN in 2000.

Key achievements in 2007 under the Presidential Malaria Initiative (PMI) included: distribution of 185,400 long-lasting insecticide-treated mosquito nets and 2,607,480 doses of a new life-saving drug delivered nationwide.

Improving the quality and efficiency of basic education remain the major development challenges in the Malawi education system. USAID continues to fund activities that target quality of and access to the primary education sub-sector level, which is having a positive effect at both the local and national levels. At the local level, USAID-funded activities are helping communities and parents make more informed decisions to improve the quality of primary schooling.

In 2007, USAID continued its efforts in the education sector through: (1) development of teachers' professional skills through long-term undergraduate and graduate training in Malawi and the U.S.; (2) reinforcement of innovative classroom practices through pre-service and in-service teacher training; (3) participation of communities and teacher training colleges in HIV/AIDS outreach activities; (4) support of Government of Malawi adoption of key policy reforms in teacher education and HIV/AIDS; and (5) improving the quality and quantity of data available for policymaking. In 2007, USAID, through the African Education Initiative (AEI) and congressionally-mandated School Fees Initiative (SFI), improved the quality of and access to primary education for 624,032 children and enhanced the pedagogical skills of 10,355 teachers. The United States is the largest contributor to the World Food Program (WFP) in Malawi, providing over $100 million in food and other emergency assistance

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) operates two programs within Malawi: Global AIDS Program (GAP) and Malawi Malaria Program (MMP).

The CDC GAP office started in November 2001 with an emphasis on establishing long-term working relationships with the Malawi Government, the National AIDS Commission (NAC) and the Ministry of Health (MOH). The major areas of focus during the initial phase included strengthening Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT), HIV surveillance, evaluation, infrastructure, and capacity-building activities.

GAP Malawi supports multiple HIV surveillance activities including sentinel surveillance and the Priorities for Local AIDS Control Efforts (PLACE) survey.

In partnership with NAC, CDC GAP continued to strengthen VCT, developing multiple national VCT building blocks such as VCT Guidelines and VCT Training materials. CDC GAP also improved the communications and data analysis capacity at NAC by helping to establish their computer system and establish the foundation for data analysis.

The CDC MMP is jointly funded by USAID and CDC has evolved to provide more support to the national prevention and control program. CDC MMP has supported the work of the National Malaria Control Programme in developing the country strategic plan for Roll Back Malaria (RBM), developing the national "Malaria Policy," developing guidelines for the management of ITNs Program, and participating in other national program activities.

Peace Corps

The first Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Malawi in 1963. Under the conservative Banda regime, the program was suspended for several years due to the "nonconformist" role of some volunteers but was restored in 1978. Since that time, the program has developed a close working relationship with the Government of Malawi. In total, over 2,200 Americans have served as Peace Corps volunteers in Malawi. Currently, there are about 100 volunteers working in health, education, and environment.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LILONGWE (E) Area 40, Plot No.24, Kenyatta Road, Lilongwe 3, Malawi, 265-1-773-166, Fax 265-1-772-316, Workweek: 0730-1700 Mon-Thurs.; 0730-1330 Fri/no lunch, Website: http://lilongwe.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Ellen R. Bremenstul
AMB OMS:	Susan M. Hamric
CDC:	Austin H. Demby
ECO/COM:	Daniel N. Daley
MGT:	L. Eric Lindberg
POL/ECO:	Daniel N. Daley
AMB:	Alan W. Eastham
CON:	Janice M. Barnett
DCM:	Kevin K. Sullivan
PAO:	John E. Warner
GSO:	Daniel E. Slaven
RSO:	Maureen I. McGeough
AFSA:	Alisa Cameron
AGR:	Ryan P. McMullen
AID:	Curt Reintsma
CLO:	Samara L. Sanders
DAO:	Ltc. Ltc Ryan McMullen
EEO:	Karla R. Blunt
FMO:	Karla R. Blunt
ICASS Chair:	Austin Demby
IMO:	Joseph J. Farina
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Paris)
ISO:	Katina L. Johnson
POL:	John C. Letvin
State ICASS:	Austin Demby

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 21, 2008

Country Description: Malawi is a developing landlocked country in southern Africa. Tourist facilities in major cities and in resort areas are steadily improving, but remain limited. Aging infrastructure and lack of investment have rendered electricity, water supply, and telecommunications unreliable in rural areas.

Entry Requirements: A passport, return ticket, and adequate funds are required. U.S. citizens traveling to Malawi for tourism, transit or business for 30 days or less can obtain a visa at the airports or border points of entry at no cost.

Effective May 23, 2008, requests for visa extensions beyond 30 days are no longer free. There is an application fee of 5,000 Malawi kwacha (approximately $34 U.S.) for each 30-day extension, which is due once the application has been approved. American citizens are advised to apply prior to the expiration of visa. There is no guarantee your request will be granted. American citizens are reminded that they are subject to Malawi laws. Persons that overstay their visa expiration date even unknowingly have been fined, arrested and deported.

Americans wishing to volunteer, study, conduct research or business for more than 30 days in Malawi are responsible for requesting the correct type of visa from the Malawian Embassy or Consulate, prior to traveling to Malawi. There is no guarantee requests for changing one's immigration category (e.g., from tourist to Temporary Employment Permit) will be granted. Foreign citizens whose primary purpose of travel is to participate in religious activities (voluntary or paid) should obtain a Temporary Employment Visa (TEP) rather than a tourist visa through their sponsoring organization or business. Malawian immigration authorities and police have fined, arrested and deported American citizens who have entered Malawi with a tourist visa and conducted other business or volunteer services.

There is an airport departure tax, which is payable only in U.S. dollars, for all non-Malawians.

For the most current visa information, contact the Embassy of Malawi at 1029 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005, tel.: (202) 721-0270.

Safety and Security: Spontaneous civil disturbances, primarily related to labor and student strikes, occur, but are uncommon. U.S. citizens should avoid crowds, political rallies and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Even though Malawi is known as "the warm heart of Africa," there is a criminal element present. Most crimes against Americans involve property. Carjacking and residential break-ins are prevalent throughout Malawi. Perpetrators of these crimes are usually well-armed and may resort to violence with little provocation. Petty street crime (robbery and pick-pocketing) is common, and break-ins have also occurred in hotels/lodges throughout the country.

American citizens are urged to avoid traveling on foot at night, especially in urban areas, as armed muggings and assaults have increased. Specifically, expatriates have been targeted in Lilongwe, and several Americans have been injured. Even when walking in a large group, city streets should be considered unsafe after dark. Pedestrians should be cautious even during daylight hours. Visitors in need of transportation should request that hotel or restaurant management call a taxi or car service.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in Malawi are 997 for police, 999 for fire and 998 for ambulance service.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical are rudimentary and most local medical providers do not speak English fluently. Medications are not consistently available; many American medications are not available at all. For any major medical problems travelers should consider obtaining medical treatment in South Africa where advanced medical care is available. Purchasing medical evacuation insurance before travel is strongly recommended.

Health care institutions and providers require payment (primarily cash) at the time of service, and may even require payment before service is given. Minimal specialized care is available in Lilongwe and Blantyre.

Food-borne illnesses such as travelers' diarrhea, giardiasis and hepatitis A occur commonly. Travelers are urged to avoid tap water, ice cubes and unsterilized raw fruits and vegetables. Bottled water is recommended

for drinking and food preparation. Schistosomiasis (also known as Bilharzia) and malaria are endemic in Malawi. Malaria prophylaxis is strongly advised, and initiating prophylaxis prior to traveling is recommended. Visitors should consult their physicians to learn about prophylaxis and the possible side effects of various available medications. In addition, other personal protective measures such as the use of insect repellents help to reduce malaria risk. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what anti-malarial medications they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarial drugs, please visit the CDC travel health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria.

Trypanosomiasis (African Sleeping Sickness) is transmitted by the bite of a tsetse fly common to game parks in Malawi. Due to the potential complications of treating the disease, confirmed cases are medically evacuated for treatment.

HIV infection is endemic in the population. Travelers are advised to take appropriate precautions to limit the risk of transmission through blood or sexual contact. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Malawi.

Tuberculosis is prevalent as well. Caution should be exercised if visiting crowded settings for prolonged periods of time, especially public hospitals and prisons.

Other health risks include typhoid, tetanus, and rabies. Vaccination for these diseases is advised. Additionally, cholera outbreaks have been reported in crowded villages with poor sanitation but are rare in cities.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Malawi is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Malawi's principal highways are generally in good condition, although safety hazards include the lack of road shoulders, frequent potholes and bicyclists. Secondary roads are in poor repair and may be impassable to all but four-wheel drive vehicles during the rainy season (November-April). Public transportation, consisting primarily of minibuses, is unreliable and accidents are common. Given Malawi's high road accident rate, travelers should drive defensively and avoid road travel outside cities at night. Road support networks for stranded drivers do not exist. Police roadblocks are common and properly documented drivers usually pass quickly and without incident. Foreigners intending to remain in Malawi for an extended period of time are expected to obtain a locally-issued driver's license.

Motor vehicle accidents are of great concern due to atypical road hazards. There are no medical facilities that provide comprehensive emergency care comparable to U.S. standards. Travelers should always wear seatbelts, minimize driving at night, and never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

For specific information concerning Malawi driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Embassy of Malawi in Washington, D.C. on (202) 721-0270. For international driving permits contact AAA or the American Automobile Touring Alliance.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Malawi, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Malawi's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Wild animals may pose a danger. Travelers are advised that, even in the most serene settings, wild animals can pose a threat to life and safety. Travelers are cautioned to observe local or park regulations and heed all instructions given by tour guides.

Credit cards are not commonly accepted outside of major cities. There are a limited number of ATMs in Malawi that accept Visa, Mastercard and international ATM cards.

Dress codes against short skirts on women and long hair on men no longer exist, but travelers may wish to dress modestly, especially when visiting remote areas.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Malawi's laws, even unknowingly, may be

expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Malawi are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Malawi are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Malawi.Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Area 40, City Center, Lilongwe; telephone numbers are (265) 1-773-166, 1-773-342 and 1-773-367 (if dialing within Malawi add "0" before the "1"); fax (265) 1-774-976 (if dialing within Malawi add "0" before the "1"). The Embassy's mailing address is PO Box 30016, Lilongwe 3, Malawi.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Adoptive parents must foster a prospective adoptive child for 24 months in Malawi before an adoption may be finalized.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Malawi is the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services. Persons interested in adopting from Malawi should contact:

Mary Khonje
Social Welfare Officer
Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare
and Community Services
P/Bag 330
Lilongwe 3, Malawi
Phone +265-(0)1-77-04-11 x.247

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 25 years old and at least 21 years older than the child. Both married and single persons may adopt. However, single men may not adopt female children unless the court is satisfied that there are special circumstances, justifying an exception.

Residency Requirements: Adoptive parents must be resident in Malawi to adopt.

Time Frame: Malawian law requires a lengthy pre-adoption foster care period (at least two years).

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Malawi. For information regarding home studies, interested parties should contact the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services at Private Bag 330 Lilongwe 3 or telephone 01-770-411. The U.S. Embassy in Lilongwe maintains a list of English-speaking attorneys http://lilongwe.usembassy.gov/ainformation.html. The Embassy assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the individuals or of the firms whose names and addresses appear in the list.

Adoption Fees: On average, depending on the complexity of the case, the fees for a lawyer range between $350 and $500. Court filing fees and Registrar fees for the new birth certificate are under five dollars. The Malawian passport fee is approximately $30.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents often identify a child for adoption through local churches, orphanages, hospitals or missions. They then need to retain a lawyer to handle the application. The lawyer files a petition with the Magistrate Court of the district in Malawi where the adoptive parents reside. Once that is done, the Court chooses a social worker to be the child's "Guardian ad Litem" who investigates the circumstances of the prospective adoptee(s) and submits a Court Social Report (a home-study) to the High Court.

The Guardian ad Litem monitors the adoptive family during the 24 months by making home visits. After the 24 month foster care period is completed, the Court will rule whether the adoption can be finalized. The 24-month period starts from the time the child is placed in the home of the adoptive parents.

Required Documents: Malawi adoptions are governed by the country's Adoption of Children Act. Proof of the identity and nationality of the adoptive parents, a competed home-study and proof that the child is eligible for adoption are required.

Adoption cannot take place without the consent of every person who is a parent or guardian of the child who has custody of the child or who is likely to contribute to the support to the child.

Embassy of the Republic of Malawi

2408 Massachusetts Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20008

Tel: 202-797-1007

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details.

Embassy of the United States of America

P.O. Box 30016

16 Jomo Kenyatta Road

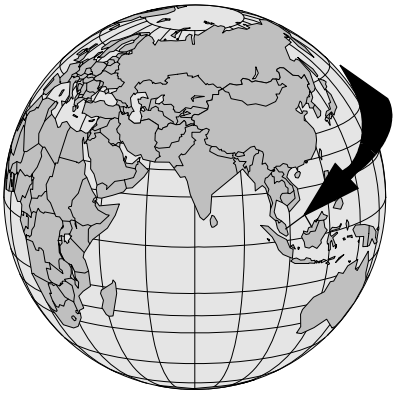
Lilongwe 3

Tel: 265-773-166

Fax: 265-774-976

http://lilongwe.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Malawi may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Lilongwe. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MALAYSIA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Malaysia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 329,749 sq. km. (127,316 sq. mi.); slightly larger than New Mexico.

Cities: Capital—Kuala Lumpur. Other cities—Penang, Ipoh, Malacca, Johor Baru, Shah Alam, Klang, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu

Terrain: Coastal plains and interior, jungle-covered mountains. The South China Sea separates peninsular Malaysia from East Malaysia on Borneo.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Malaysian(s).

Population: (2008) 27.5 million.

Annual growth rate: 2.0%.

Ethnic groups: Malay 53.3%, Chinese 26.0%, indigenous 11.8%, Indian 7.7%, others 1.2%.

Religions: Islam (60.4%), Buddhism (19.2%), Christianity (9.1%), Hinduism (6.3%), Confucianism (2.6%), tribal/folk (0.8%), other (0.4%), none/unknown (1.2%).

Languages: Bahasa Melayu (official), Chinese (various dialects), English, Tamil, indigenous.

Education: Years compulsory—6. Attendance—90.1% (primary), 60.0% (secondary). Literacy—93.5%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2007)—6.7/1,000. Life expectancy (2007)—female 76.4 yrs., male 71.9 yrs.

Work force: (10.89 million, 2007): Services—57%; industry—28% (manufacturing—19%, mining and construction—9%); agriculture—15%.

Government

Type: Federal parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch.

Independence: August 31, 1957. (Malaya, which is now peninsular Malaysia, became independent in 1957. In 1963 Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore formed Malaysia. Singapore became an independent country in 1965.)

Constitution: 1957.

Political subdivisions: 13 states and three federal territories (Kuala Lumpur, Labuan Island, Putrajaya federal administrative territory). Each state has an assembly and government headed by a chief minister. Nine of these states have hereditary rulers, generally titled "sultans," while the remaining four have appointed governors in counterpart positions.

Government branches: Executive—Yang di-Pertuan Agong (head of state and customarily referred to as the king; has ceremonial duties), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament, comprising 70-member Senate (26 elected by the 13 state assemblies, 44 appointed by the king on the prime minister's recommendation) and 219-member House of Representatives (elected from single-member districts). Judicial—Federal Court, Court of Appeals, high courts, session's courts, magistrate's courts, and juvenile courts. Sharia courts hear cases on certain matters involving Muslims only.

Political parties: Barisan Nasional (National Front)—a coalition comprising the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and 13 other parties, most of which are ethnically based; Democratic Action Party (DAP); Parti Islam se Malaysia (PAS); Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR). There are more than 30 registered political parties, including the foregoing, not all of which are represented in the federal parliament.

Suffrage: Universal adult (voting age 21).

Economy (2007)

Nominal GDP: $154.3 billion.

Annual real GDP growth rate: 5.9% (2006); 6.3% (2007).

Per capita (GDP) income: $5,610.

Natural resources: petroleum, liquefied natural gas (LNG), tin, minerals.

Agriculture: palm oil, rubber, timber, cocoa, rice, tropical fruit, fish, coconut.

Industry: Types—electronics, electrical products, chemicals, food and beverages, metal and machine products, apparel.
Trade: Merchandise exports—$185.0 billion: electronic products, manufactured goods, petroleum, palm oil, liquid natural gas, apparel, timber, rubber. Major markets—U.S. 15.6%, Singapore 14.6%, Japan 9.1%, China 8.8%. Merchandise imports—$154.0 billion: electronic products, machinery, chemicals, manufactured goods, petroleum products. Major suppliers—Japan 13.0%, China 12.9%, Singapore 11.5%, U.S. 10.8%.

PEOPLE

Malaysia's multi-racial society contains many ethnic groups. Malays comprise a majority of just over 50%. By constitutional definition, all Malays are Muslim. About a quarter of the population is ethnic Chinese, a group which historically played an important role in trade and business. Malaysians of Indian descent comprise about 7% of the population and include Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians. Non-Malay indigenous groups combine to make up approximately 11% of the population.

Population density is highest in peninsular Malaysia, home to some 20 million of the country's 27 million inhabitants. The remaining 7 million live on the Malaysian portion of the island of Borneo in the large but less densely-populated states of Sabah and Sarawak. More than half of Sarawak's residents and about two-thirds of Sabah's are from indigenous groups.

HISTORY

The early Buddhist Malay kingdom of Srivijaya, based at what is now Palembang, Sumatra, dominated much of the Malay peninsula from the 9th to the 13th centuries AD. The powerful Hindu kingdom of Majapahit, based on Java, gained control of the Malay peninsula in the 14th century. Conversion of the Malays to Islam, beginning in the early 14th century, accelerated with the rise of the state of Malacca under the rule of a Muslim prince in the 15th century. Malacca was a major regional commercial center, where Chinese, Arab, Malay, and Indian merchants traded precious goods.

Drawn by this rich trade, a Portuguese fleet conquered Malacca in 1511, marking the beginning of European expansion in Southeast Asia. The Dutch ousted the Portuguese from Malacca in 1641. The British obtained the island of Penang in 1786 and temporarily controlled Malacca with Dutch acquiescence from 1795 to 1818 to prevent it from falling to the French during the Napoleonic war. The British gained lasting possession of Malacca from the Dutch in 1824, through the Anglo-Dutch treaty, in exchange for territory on the island of Sumatra in what is today Indonesia.

In 1826, the British settlements of Malacca, Penang, and Singapore were combined to form the Colony of the Straits Settlements. From these strongholds, in the 19th and early 20th centuries the British established protectorates over the Malay sultanates on the peninsula. During their rule the British developed large-scale rubber and tin production and established a system of public administration. British control was interrupted by World War II and the Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945.

Popular sentiment for independence swelled during and after the war. The territories of peninsular Malaysia joined together to form the Federation of Malaya in 1948 and eventually negotiated independence from the British in 1957. Tunku Abdul Rahman became the first prime minister. In 1963 the British colonies of Singapore, Sarawak, and Sabah joined the Federation, which was renamed Malaysia. Singapore's membership was short-lived, however; it left in 1965 and became an independent republic.

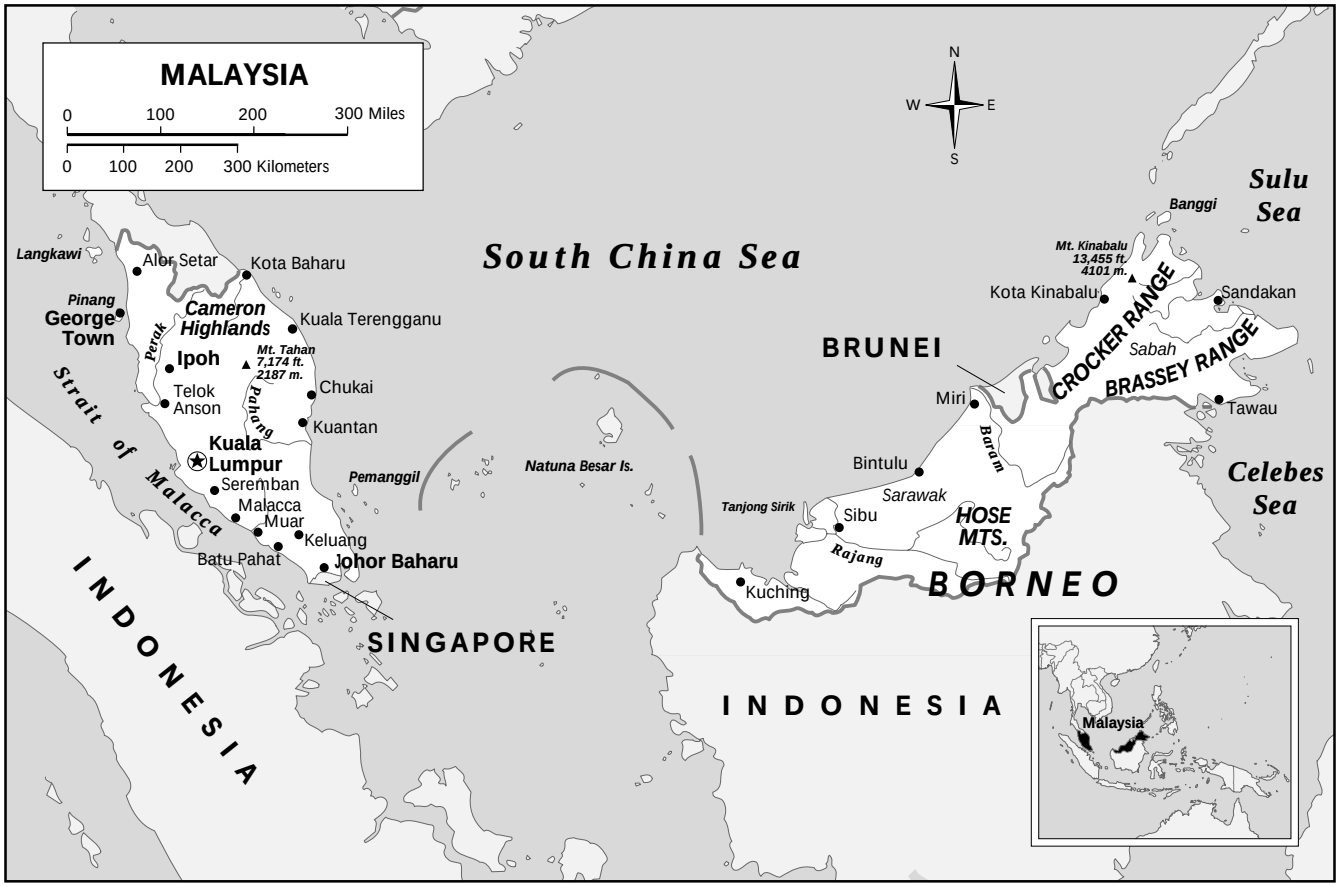
Neighboring Indonesia objected to the formation of Malaysia and began a program of economic, political, diplomatic, and military "confrontation" against the new country in 1963, which ended only after the fall of Indonesia's President Sukarno in 1966. Internally, local communists, nearly all Chinese, carried out a long, bitter insurgency both before and after independence, prompting the imposition of a state of emergency from 1948 to 1960. Small bands of guerrillas remained in bases along the rugged border with southern Thailand, occasionally entering northern Malaysia. These guerrillas finally signed a peace accord with the Malaysian Government in December 1989. A separate, small-scale communist insurgency that began in the mid-1960s in Sarawak also ended with the signing of a peace accord in October 1990.

GOVERNMENT

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy, nominally headed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, customarily referred to as the king. Kings are elected for 5-year terms from among the nine sultans of the peninsular Malaysian states. The king also is the leader of the Islamic faith in Malaysia.

Executive power is vested in the cabinet led by the prime minister; the Malaysian constitution stipulates that the prime minister must be a member of the lower house of parliament who, in the opinion of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, commands a majority in parliament. The cabinet is chosen from among members of both houses of parliament and is responsible to that body.

The bicameral parliament consists of the Senate (Dewan Negara) and the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat). All 70 Senate members sit for 3-year terms, which are normally extended for an additional 3 years; 26 are elected by the 13 state assemblies, and 44 are appointed by the king. Representatives of the House are elected from single-member districts by universal adult suffrage. The 219 members of the House of Representatives are elected to



parliamentary terms lasting up to 5 years. Legislative power is divided between federal and state legislatures.

The Malaysian legal system is based on English common law. The Federal Court reviews decisions referred from the Court of Appeal; it has original jurisdiction in constitutional matters and in disputes between states or between the federal government and a state. Peninsular Malaysia and the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak each have a high court.

The federal government has authority over external affairs, defense, internal security, justice (except civil law cases among Malays or other Muslims and other indigenous peoples, adjudicated under Islamic and traditional law), federal citizenship, finance, commerce, industry, communications, transportation, and other matters.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Paramount Ruler: **Sultan MIZAN Zainal Abidin ibni Al-Marhum, Sultan Mahmud Al-Muktafi Billah Shah**
Dep. Paramount Ruler: **Sultan ABDUL HALIM Muadzam Shah**
Prime Min.: **ABDULLAH bin Ahmad Badawi**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Mohamed NAJIB bin Abdul Razak**
Min. of Agriculture & Agro-Based Industry: **MUSTAPA Mohamed**
Min. of Defense: **Mohamed NAJIB bin Abdul Razak**
Min. of Domestic Trade & Consumer Affairs: **SHAHRIR Samad**
Min. of Education: **HISHAMUDDIN Tun Hussein**
Min. of Energy, Water, & Communications: **SHAZIMAN Abu Mansor**
Min. of Entrepreneurial & Cooperative Development: **NOH Omar**
Min. of Federal Territories: **ZULHASNAN Rafique**
Min. of Finance: **ABDULLAH bin Ahmad Badawi**
Second Min. of Finance: **NOR MOHAMED bin Yakcop**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **RAIS Yatim**
Min. of Health: **LIOW Tiong Lai**
Min. of Higher Education: **KHALED Nordin**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Syed HAMID bin Syed Jaafar Albar**
Min. of Housing & Local Govt.: **ONG Ka Chuan**
Min. of Human Resources: **S. SUBRAMANIAM**
Min. of Information: **AHMAD SHABERY Cheek**
Min. of Intl. Trade & Industry: **MUHYIDDIN bin Mohamed Yassin**
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment: **Douglas Unggah EMBAS**
Min. of Plantation Enterprises & Commodity: **Peter CHIN Fah Kui**
Min. of Rural & Regional Development: **MUHAMMAD Muhammad Taib**
Min. of Science, Technology, & Innovation: **Maximus ONGKILI**
Min. of Tourism: **AZALINA Othman**
Min. of Transport: **ONG Tee Keat**
Min. of Unity, Culture, Arts, & Heritage: **SHAFIE Apdal**

Min. of Women, Family, & Community Development: **NG Yen Yen**
Min. of Works: **Mohamed ZIN Mohamed**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **ISMAIL Sabri Yaacob**
Min. in the Dept. of the Prime Min.: **AHMAD ZAHID Hamidi**
Min. in the Dept. of the Prime Min.: **AMIRSHAM Abdul Aziz**
Min. in the Dept. of the Prime Min.: **Bernard Giluk DOMPOK**
Min. in the Dept. of the Prime Min.: **Mohamed NAZRI Abdul Aziz**
Min. in the Dept. of the Prime Min.: **Mohamed ZAID Ibrahim**
Governor, Central Bank: **ZETI Akhtar Aziz**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **HAMIDON Ali**

Malaysia maintains an embassy in the U.S. at 3516 International Court NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 572-9700; a Consulate General at 550 South Hope Street, Suite 400, Los Angeles, CA 90071, tel. (213) 892-1238; and a Consulate General at 313 East 43rd Street, New York City, NY 10017, tel. (212) 490-2722/23.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Malaysia's predominant political party, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), has held power in coalition with other parties since independence in 1957. The UMNO coalition's share of the vote declined in national elections held in May 1969, after which riots broke out in Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere, mainly between Malays and ethnic Chinese. Several hundred people were killed or injured. The government declared a state of emergency and suspended all parliamentary activities.

In the years that followed, Malaysia undertook several initiatives that became integral parts of its socioeconomic model. The New Economic Policy (NEP), launched in 1971, contained a series of affirmative action policies designed to benefit Malays and certain indigenous groups (together known as bumiputera or "sons of the soil"). The Constitution was amended to limit dissent against the specially-protected and sensitive portions of the Constitution pertaining to the social contract. The government identified intercommunal harmony as one of its official goals. The previous alliance of communally based parties was replaced with a broader coalition—the Barisan Nasional (BN) or National Front. The BN won large majorities in the 1974 federal and state elections.

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was Prime Minister between 1981 and 2003, leading UMNO and BN to successive election victories. Mahathir emphasized economic development during his tenure, in particular the export sector, as well as large scale infrastructure projects. Mahathir attributed the success of the Asian tiger economies to the "Asian values" of its people, which he believed were superior to those of the West. Mahathir sharply criticized the International Monetary Fund (IMF), international financiers such as George Soros, and Western governments during the sharp economic and financial crisis that affected Asia in 1997-8, and denied that the downturn was due to the failures of corruption and "crony capitalism."

The end of Mahathir's tenure was marred by a falling out with his deputy and presumed successor, Anwar Ibrahim. In September 1998, Mahathir dismissed Anwar and accused him of immoral and corrupt conduct. Although Anwar was convicted on both charges in 1999 and 2000, the trials were viewed as seriously flawed. Malaysia's Federal Court eventually freed Anwar after overturning his immoral conduct conviction in September 2004.

Mahathir stepped down as prime minister in October 2003 after 22 years in power, and his successor, Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, was sworn into office. Abdullah called elections and won an overwhelming victory in March 2004. Since taking office, Abdullah, an Islamic scholar, has promoted the concept of "Islam Hadhari" or "civilizational Islam," emphasizing the importance of education, social harmony, and economic progress. His relationship with Mahathir eventually soured, and the former prime minister now expresses regret at supporting Abdullah to be his successor. Malaysia held national elections in March 2008. UMNO and its coalition allies, together known as the Barisan Nasional or National Front, won a simple majority of the seats in the national parliament but for only the second time in history failed to gain the two-thirds majority necessary to amend the constitution. A loose coalition of opposition parties, called the Pakatan Rakyat or Peoples Alliance, led by Anwar Ibrahim, won 82 of 222 seats in parliament and took control of the state-level assemblies in five of Malaysia's thirteen states.

ECONOMY

Since it became independent, Malaysia's economic record has been one of Asia's best. Real gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an average of 6.5% per year from 1957 to 2005. Performance peaked in the early 1980s through the mid-1990s, as the economy experienced sustained rapid growth averaging almost 8% annually. High levels of foreign and domestic investment played a significant role as the economy diversified and modernized. Once heavily dependent on primary products such as rubber and tin, Malaysia today is a middle-income country with a multi-sector economy based on services and manufacturing. Malaysia is one of the world's largest exporters of semiconductor devices, electrical goods, and information and communication technology (ICT) products.

The government has taken an active role in guiding the nation's economic development. Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP), first established in 1971, sought to eradicate poverty and to enhance the economic standing of ethnic Malays and other indigenous peoples (collectively known as "bumiputeras"). One NEP goal was to expand the share of corporate equity owned by ethnic Malays. In June 1991, after the NEP expired, the government unveiled its National Devel-

opment Policy, which contained many of the NEP's goals. In April 2001, the government released a new plan, the "National Vision Policy," to guide development over the period 2001-2010. The National Vision Policy targets education for budget increases and seeks to refocus the economy toward higher-technology production. The stated goal is for Malaysia to be a fully developed economy by 2020.

The Malaysian economy went into sharp recession in 1997-1998 during the Asian financial crisis, which affected countries throughout the region, including South Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand. Malaysia's GDP contracted by more than 7% in 1998. Malaysia narrowly avoided a return to recession in 2001 when its economy was negatively impacted by the bursting of the dot-com bubble (which hurt the ICT sector) and slow growth or recession in many of its important export markets.

In July 2005, the government removed the 7-year old peg linking the ringgit's value to the U.S. dollar at an exchange rate of RM 3.8/U.S.$1.0. The dollar peg was replaced by a managed float against an undisclosed basket of currencies. The new exchange rate policy was designed to keep the ringgit more broadly stable and to avoid uncertain currency swings which could harm exports.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Regional cooperation is a cornerstone of Malaysia's foreign policy. It was a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and served as the group's chair most recently in 2005-2006. It hosted the ASEAN Summit and East Asia Summit in December 2005, as well as the ASEAN Ministerial and the ASEAN Regional Forum in July 2006.

Malaysia is an active member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the United Nations. It was chair of the OIC until March 2008 and has also chaired the NAM. Malaysia is a frequent contributor to UN and other peacekeeping and stabilization missions, including recent deployments to Lebanon, Timor-Leste, Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Kosovo.

U.S.-MALAYSIAN RELATIONS

The United States and Malaysia share a diverse and expanding partnership. Economic ties are robust. The United States is Malaysia's largest trading partner and Malaysia is the sixteenth-largest trading partner of the U.S. Annual two-way trade amounts to $44 billion. The United States and Malaysia launched negotiations for a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) in June 2006.

The United States is the largest foreign investor in Malaysia on a cumulative basis. American companies are particularly active in the energy, electronics, and manufacturing sectors. The U.S. direct investment position in Malaysia for 2006 was $12.45 billion.

The United States and Malaysia cooperate closely on security matters, including counter-terrorism, maritime domain awareness, and regional stability. The relationship between the U.S. and Malaysian militaries is also strong with numerous exchanges, training, joint exercises, and visits. The U.S. and Malaysia signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) in July 2006 during the visit to Kuala Lumpur by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

KUALA LUMPUR (E) 376 Jalan Tun Razak, APO/FPO US Embassy Kuala Lumpur, APO AP 96535-8152, [6] (03) 2168-5000, Fax [6] (03) 2142-2207, Workweek: 7:45am–4:30pm, Website: http://malaysia.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Vicki L. Meredith
AMB OMS:	Wendy R. Gralnek
DHS/ICE:	Michael J. Pfeiffer
ECO:	Matthew J. Matthews
FCS:	Nasir A. Abbasi
FM:	Carl Dodson
HRO:	Robert R. Kuntz
MGT:	Robert R. Kuntz
AMB:	James R. Keith
CON:	Vacant
DCM:	Robert G. Rapson
PAO:	Marrie Y. Schaefer
GSO:	Lori J. Antolinez
RSO:	Michael Stutzman
AFSA:	Vacant
AGR:	David W. Cottrell
CLO:	Jennifer M. Sanford
DAO:	Col. Yeong T. Pak
DEA:	Vacant
EEO:	Leslie David & James Dragon
FMO:	Gregory E. Sanford
ICASS Chair:	Vacant
IMO:	Jeffrey J. Hoover
IPO:	Marqui Neder
ISO:	David A. Penuel
ISSO:	Sheik W. Huie
LEGATT:	Christopher J. Haines
POL:	Mark D. Clark

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 24, 2008

Country Description: Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with an elected federal parliamentary government. The country is comprised of 13 states, 11 on the Malay Peninsula and two, Sabah and Sarawak, on the island of Borneo. There is also a federal district, which contains the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, the administrative center of Putrajaya, and the island of Labuan (located off the southwest coast of Sabah). Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country of 27 million people. Malays form the predominant ethnic group. The two other large ethnic groups in Malaysia are Chinese and Indians. Islam is the national religion. Bahasa Malaysia is the official language, although English is widely spoken. Travelers to Malaysia may access information on areas of interest through the Malaysian government's website at http://www.kln.gov.my/ and Tourism Malaysia's website at http://www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my.

Entry Requirements: American citizens are required to have a passport valid for at least six months to enter Malaysia, but Americans do not need to obtain a visa in advance for a pleasure or business trip if their stay in Malaysia is 90 days or less. Immigration officials will then place an entry stamp in their passport. While in Malaysia, Americans should carry their passports with them at all times.

Travelers are required to carry their passports for travel from peninsular Malaysia to eastern Malaysia (on the island of Borneo) and between the provinces of Sabah and Sarawak, both of which are on Borneo. Social visit passes (visas) issued at immigration points such as KLIA airport, Johor Bahru, and Kota Kinabalu (Sabah) for entry into peninsular Malaysia are not valid for entry into the state of Sarawak and usually have three months' validity. New social visit passes must be obtained upon arrival at Kuching or Miri airports in Sarawak. In most cases, social visit passes issued by Sarawak immigration officials are valid for any part of Malaysia and usually have one month's validity.

The Malaysian Passport is not valid for travel to the State of Israel. However, travelers with Israeli entry or exit stamps in their American passports do not encounter difficulty at Malaysian Immigration.

For more information on the latest entry procedures and requirements, contact the Embassy of Malaysia, 3516 International Court NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone: (202) 572-9700, email: malwashdc@kln.gov.by; the Malaysian consulates located in New York, telephone: (212) 490-2722, email: malnyc@yahoo.com; or Los Angeles, telephone: (213) 892-1238, e-mail: mwla@pacbell.net; or visit the Malaysian government's web site, which has information on Malaysian embassies and consulates abroad at www.kln.gov.my.

Visa Overstays: Malaysian immigration authorities routinely have detained foreigners who overstay their social visit passes (visas). In light of the arrests of several American citizens in connection with immigration sweeps conducted by Malaysian police and immigration authorities, American citizens should carry their passports (containing the Malaysian entry stamp) with them at all times. Depending upon the nature of the violation, detentions may last from a few hours to several weeks, pending a formal hearing. American citizens are urged to check their visa status periodically while in Malaysia and strictly follow immigration laws and regulations.

Safety and Security: The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens in Southeast Asia. Extremist groups in the region have demonstrated the capability to carry out attacks in locations where Westerners congregate, and these groups do not distinguish between civilian and official targets. The United States Government has designated two such groups, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. JI is linked to al-Qaeda and other regional terrorist groups, such as the ASG, and has cells operating throughout Southeast Asia.

There are indications that both criminal and terrorist groups continue to plan acts of violence against foreigners. The most recent incident involving American citizens occurred in 2000. The most recent incident involving other foreigners occurred in 2003. The ASG, based in the southern Philippines, has kidnapped foreigners in Malaysia. Criminal elements are also responsible for kidnapping and piracy committed against foreigners. These acts of violence have occurred in the eastern islands and coastal areas of the state of Sabah, closest to the maritime border with the Philippines.

For these reasons, the Department of State urges American citizens to evaluate carefully the risks of travel to the eastern islands and coastal areas of the state of Sabah. Americans who wish to visit these areas should exercise caution, remain alert to their surroundings, and use good personal security measures. Also, Americans who travel overland from Malaysia to Thailand should be aware of the Department of State's safety and security information for Thailand, and in particular for the several Thai provinces bordering Malaysia. Americans planning to travel to Malaysia are encouraged to register and update their contact information at http://www.travelregistration.state.gov.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's website where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Violent crime involving tourists and expatriates in Malaysia is relatively uncommon. Petty theft, particularly purse snatching and pick-pocketing, and residential burglaries are the most common criminal activity directed against foreigners. Other types of non-violent criminal activity include credit card fraud and automobile theft. Malaysia's national emergency number is 999 (equivalent to the U.S. 911). An alternate number is the Royal Malaysia Police Operations Center in Kuala Lumpur, 2115-9999. In tourist areas such as Bukit Bintang, Petaling Street (Chinatown) and Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, and the main square in Malacca, the police have established small "Tourist Police" stations.

Purse-Snatching: In most incidents, two men on a motorcycle speed up from behind a victim and the passenger on the back snatches a purse, handbag, or cellular phone. Thieves have also conducted snatch-thefts while leaning out of the passenger side of moving vehicles. These thefts occur at all hours and often in front of large groups of witnesses, even in upscale neighborhoods frequented by expatriates. Women walking by themselves or with small children are

the most common targets. Victims have been injured and even killed after falling and being dragged by thieves in cars or on motorcycles.

To avoid becoming the victim of a purse snatching, be alert and aware of your surroundings. Pedestrians should walk facing traffic and keep a close eye on all vehicular traffic, particularly motorcycles. If possible, try to walk on the sidewalk away from the curb. Avoid poorly lit streets, shortcuts, and narrow alleys. Purses or shoulder bags should be closed and tucked under the arm. Do not wrap the strap around your arm or shoulder. People have been injured or killed by being pulled to the ground by their purse straps as the thieves speed off. If your purse or bag is snatched, report the incident as soon as possible to the police.

Smash and Grab Robberies: The targets in these crimes, which are on the rise, are motorists who are stuck in traffic or stopped at a light. The usual scenario is that a pair of men on a motorcycle identifies a car with a lone passenger (male or female) and with valuables (purse, bag) visible. The men use a hammer or crowbar to smash the window of the car, grab the bag and speed off. When the motorist's windows are already open, the motorcyclists simply reach in and take bags off the seat of the car. These crimes can be prevented by keeping valuables out of sight.

Scams: An increasing number of Americans have been victims of scams originating in Malaysia. Confidence artists contact Americans through the internet, including dating web sites. These confidence artists almost always pose as American citizens who have unexpectedly experienced a medical, legal, financial or other type of "emergency" in Malaysia that requires the immediate financial assistance of the American citizen in the United States. Co-conspirators pose as Malaysian "lawyers" or medical professionals to verify the story and the supposed urgent need for cash. We strongly urge the American citizen in the United States to be very cautious about sending money to people who claim to be Americans in trouble in Malaysia. For additional information on these types of scams, see the Department of State's publication, International Financial Scams.

Credit Card Fraud: Travelers in Malaysia should avoid using credit cards, except at reputable establishments, and credit card numbers should be closely safeguarded at all times. Credit card fraud continues to be a serious problem in Malaysia, although enhanced technology has somewhat reduced reported instances of fraud. Unauthorized charges may not show on a credit card account for several months, but can unexpectedly appear in amounts of $5,000 or more. One of the more common methods is for retailers to swipe the credit card under the counter where account information is received into a machine containing a mobile phone SIM card and is transmitted to a criminal organization for reproduction. Travelers should watch retailers closely and any "under the table" transactions should be reported to the local police. In some cases sophisticated criminal organizations have tapped into data lines emanating from retail establishments. Credit card information is then stolen while it is being transmitted to financial institutions. If you must use a credit card in Malaysia, you are advised to check your account information frequently for fraudulent charges. ATM cards are safer as long as the machines where they are used are associated with reputable Malaysian banks.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Malaysia is "999."

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities and services are adequate in the larger cities, where Western-trained doctors can be found. The U.S. Embassy can provide a list of English-speaking doctors and hospitals upon request. Psychological and psychiatric medical and counseling services are limited. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars or more. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services although major credit cards are acceptable.

Malaysian ambulance attendants lack training equivalent to U.S. standards. Callers to Malaysia's "999" emergency number (equivalent to the U.S. 911) are connected to the Red Crescent, and patients are directed to whichever hospital the dispatcher chooses. Americans staying in Malaysia for extended periods, especially those who have known health problems, are advised to investigate private ambulance services in their area and to provide family and close contacts with the direct telephone number(s) of the service they prefer.

Air quality in Malaysia is acceptable most of the time. However, when burning of vegetation occurs in Malaysia and nearby countries, especially from March through June and during September and October, air quality can range from "unhealthy for sensitive groups" to "unhealthy."

For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Malaysia.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policies remain in force overseas and whether they cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, American citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Malaysia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Malaysia moves on the left side of the road, and most vehicles use right-hand drive. Seat belts are mandatory. Cell phones cannot be used while driving. Laws against drinking and driving are strictly enforced with stiff penalties. Motorcyclists attempt to circumvent traffic blockage by weaving in and out of traffic, temporarily using vacant oncoming traffic lanes, and running through red lights. This poses a hazard for both drivers and pedestrians unfamiliar with such traffic patterns. Drivers should use their turn signals well in advance of turning to alert motorcycles of their intent to turn. There has been a recent rise in the reported number of incidents involving late-night road rage. The majority of these violent incidents occur after midnight. Drivers are advised to avoid confrontational behavior if involved in an accident, especially with a motorcyclist. If threatened, drivers should leave the scene and file a report with the local police within 24 hours. Traffic is heavy during the morning and afternoon rush hours and slows down considerably when it rains; monsoon rains can quickly flood roads located in low lying areas. Bottlenecks are common in major cities. Development of the infrastructure has not kept pace with the proliferation of motorized vehicles. Multi-lane highways often merge into narrow two-lane roads in the center of town and cause added congestion. Many streets are narrow and winding. Taxis are metered, but some drivers charge a rate much higher than the metered rate during peak hours, when it is raining, or when the passenger's destination is to or through a heavily congested area.

Sobriety checkpoints: Police operate sobriety checkpoints in many entertainment districts frequented by expatriates. At these checkpoints, all drivers are required to submit to alcohol breath tests. A failure of the breath test results in an arrest. Laws against drinking and driving are strictly enforced with serious penalties.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Malaysia's Department of Civil Aviation as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Malaysia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Currency: Currency exchange is readily available; international bank-to-bank transfers may take several days and require adequate identification. Credit cards are accepted throughout the country, but travelers should be aware of the risk of fraud by criminal syndicates. ATMs can be a safer means of obtaining Malaysian Ringgit. Western Union money transfers are available through various Malaysian banks. To find a Western Union location in Malaysia, complete with address, you may access it through Western Union's web-site.

Customs Regulations: Malaysia's customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Malaysia of items such as firearms, narcotics, medication, business equipment, currency and books or other printed material, video, and audio recordings which might be considered obscene or in any way harmful to public interest and cultural property. It is advisable to contact the Malaysian Embassy in Washington, D.C., or one of Malaysia's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs' requirements.

Dual Nationality: Malaysia does not recognize or permit dual nationality. If Malaysian authorities learn that an American citizen is also a citizen of Malaysia, they may require that the dual national either renounce United States citizenship immediately or forfeit Malaysian citizenship. Dual American/Malaysian citizens should consider this issue seriously before traveling to Malaysia.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens are subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and do not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the law, even unknowingly, may be fined, expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or traf-

ficking in illegal drugs in Malaysia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Malaysia strictly enforces its drug laws. Malaysian legislation provides for a mandatory death penalty for convicted drug traffickers. Individuals arrested in possession of 15 grams (1/2 ounce) of heroin or 200 grams (seven ounces) of marijuana are presumed by law to be trafficking in drugs.

The Malaysian criminal code includes a provision for a sentence of caning for certain white-collar crimes, including criminal misappropriation, criminal breach of trust and cheating. Unauthorized collection and/or removal of local flora and fauna may be prosecuted as a crime and can result in heavy fines, expulsion, and/or imprisonment. Distribution of religious leaflets or books of another faith to Malaysian Muslims is illegal and may result in arrest and imprisonment.

Although access to prisoners is permitted, the U.S. Embassy may not learn of the arrest of U.S. citizens in smaller, more remote areas until several days after the incident. Prison conditions are harsh. American citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports and of their current social visit pass (visa) with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity, U.S. citizenship and legal status in Malaysia is readily available.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: American citizens living in or visiting Malaysia are encouraged to register their stay in Malaysia on line through the State Department's Travel Registration website or in person by visiting the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) section. The U.S. Embassy is located at 376 Jalan Tun Razak 50400, Kuala Lumpur. The local mailing address is P.O. Box No. 10035, 50700 Kuala Lumpur.

The U.S. Embassy's telephone (60-3) 2168-5000 is available 24 hours a day for emergencies such as arrests, serious illness/injury, or death of Americans, (after business hours, please press 1 at the recording). The ACS Unit's telephone number is (60-3) 2168-4997/4979, and the Consular section's fax number is (60-3) 2148-5801. The U.S. Embassy's general fax number is (60-3) 2142-2207 and Web site is http://malaysia.usembassy.gov. The Consular section's e-mail is klconsular@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Adoptions are not common in Malaysia. Adoptions of non-relatives are generally difficult and time-consuming procedures. Prospective parents may be required to remain in Malaysia for two or more years during the process. Prospective adoptive parent(s) who are non-Muslims may NOT adopt Muslim children. Prospective American guardians may also want to review our Shari'a Adoption Flyer on Guardianship in Muslim Countries.

Availability of Children for Adoption: Over the past ten years, five Malaysian children have received U.S. immigrant visas based on their adoption by U.S. parents.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Malaysia is the Family and Children's Division, Social Welfare Department, Ministry of National Unity and Social Development. You can reach them at:

14 th Floor Wisma Shen
50100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
Telephone: (6) (03) 269-25011
E-mail: pprljkm@kempadu.gov.my

Non-Muslim Adoptions: The adoption of a non-Muslim child is governed by the Adoption Act of 1952 (Act 257). The identification of a prospective child may occur privately through friends or relatives in Malaysia or through the Malaysian Social Welfare Department. Once the child has been identified, the prospective adoptive parent(s) must obtain a statutory declaration (notarized affidavit) from the biological parent(s) relinquishing all parental rights towards the child. The prospective adoptive parent notifies the Social Welfare Department of the Malaysian State in which he/she is resident of his/her intention to apply for an adoption order of the child. If the Social Welfare Department identified the child, an "offer" letter will be issued to the adoptive parents. This notification must be in writing. No matter how the child was identified, the adoptive parent(s) must reside with and care for the child not less than three (3) consecutive months before petitioning the Sessions Court or the High Court for the adoption order.

When an application for an adoption order is made, the Court appoints a guardian ad litem for the child. In most cases, the court will appoint a Social Welfare office employee. To safeguard the interests of the child before the Court, the guardian ad litem investigates the background and circumstances of the child and the adoptive parent(s), including all matters relevant to the proposed

adoption. The completed guardian ad litem report is submitted to the Court on the day of the hearing. The Court may issue an adoption order or an interim order awarding custody of the child to the adoptive parent(s) for a probationary period of not less than six months and not exceeding two years, subject to provisions for the maintenance, education and supervision of the welfare of the child.

The Registrar of the Court sends a certified copy of the adoption decree to the Registrar-General at the National Registration Department and to the adoptive parent(s) within seven days. The Registrar-General enters the adoption order in the Adopted Children Register. The Register entry serves as the child's official record instead of the original birth certificate. The adoptive parent may apply for a copy through the Registrar-General.

Muslim Adoptions: Only prospective adoptive parents who are Muslims may adopt Muslim children. The Registration of Adoptions Act of 1952 and relevant Shariah laws govern the adoption of a Muslim child in Malaysia. A prospective child may be identified privately or through the Social Welfare Department. A court petition is not required. The Muslim prospective adoptive parent applies to the National Registration Department to document the child as his/her adopted child. To qualify, the adoptive parent must have resided with and had continuous custody of the child for a period of not less than two years. The application should include evidence relating to the care, maintenance, and education of the child during the two years from the date of the biological parents statutory declaration (notarized affidavit) relinquishing all parental rights of the child.

If the National Registration Department is satisfied with the evidence submitted, an entry will be made in the Register and a certified copy of the entry delivered to the adoptive parents. If the Registration Department is not satisfied with the evidence, an officer from the Social Welfare Department will conduct an investigation on the well being of the child. Children adopted under the Registration of Adoptions Act cannot assume the name or inherit property of the adoptive parents.

Age and Civil Status Requirements: The adoptive parent must be an "ordinary resident" in Malaysia, who has been is working and living in Malaysia for at least two years prior to the application. One of the prospective parents in non-Muslim adoptions must be at least 25 years old and at least 21 years older. If the prospective adoptive parent is a relative of the child, he/she must be at least 21 years of age.

One of the prospective parents in Muslim adoptions must have attained the age of 25 and be at least 18 years older than the child. If the prospective adoptive parent is a brother, sister, uncle or aunt of the child, he/she must be at least have attained the age of 21.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no agencies in Malaysia. All adoption inquiries should be directed to the Social Welfare Department, Ministry of National Unity and Social Development.

Doctors: The U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur maintains current lists of doctors and sources for medical examinations that may be required.

Documentary Requirements: The prospective adoptive parent must present the following documents to the Malaysian Social Welfare Department under the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development:

- His/her valid passport
- The original birth certificate of the adoptive child
- Notarized letters of consent from the biological parents

U.S. Immigration Requirements: A Malaysian child, even if adopted by an American citizen, must obtain an immigrant visa before he or she can enter the U.S. as a lawful permanent resident. Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Malaysian Embassy in the United States

2401 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 328-2700
E-mail: mwwashdc@erols.com
Malaysia also has Consulates in New York City and Los Angeles.

U.S. Embassy

376 Jalan Tun Razak
50400 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: (6)(03) 2168-5000
Fax: (6)(03) 248-5801
E-mail: klconsular@state.gov

Questions: Specific questions regarding adoption in Malaysia may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. You may also contact the Office of Children's Issues, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-2818, telephone 1-888-407-4747 with specific questions.

Intercountry Adoption

Important Notice Regarding Adoptions from Sarawak
July 30, 2002

U.S. citizens contemplating adoption in Sarawak are advised to exercise extreme caution and should expect delays with no guarantee of approval for a U.S. immigrant visa for the adopted child. Sarawak's adoption law is separate and distinct from that of the rest of Malaysia and may not meet the requirements of U.S. immigration law. Moreover, local adoption facilitators" knowledge of and compliance with U.S. immigration law is unknown at this time.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Malaysia is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Malaysia and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. Therefore, there is no treaty remedy by which the left behind parent would be able to pursue recovery of the children should they be abducted to or wrongfully retained in Malaysia. Once in Malaysia, the child or children would be completely subject to Malaysian law for all matters including custody.

The United States is not a party to any treaty or convention on the enforcement of court orders. A custody decree issued by a court in the U.S. has no binding legal force abroad, although it may have a persuasive force in some countries. Furthermore, a U.S. custody decree may be considered by foreign courts and authorities as evidence and, in some cases, foreign courts may voluntarily recognize and enforce it on the basis of comity (the voluntary recognition by courts of one jurisdiction of the laws and judicial decisions of another).

Custody Disputes: Parental child abduction is not a crime under Malaysian law. Custody disputes are considered civil legal matters that must be resolved between the concerned parties or through the courts in Malaysia. Although there is no treaty in force between the United States and Malaysia on enforcement of judgments, the Malaysian courts will also take into consideration child custody decrees issued by foreign courts in deciding disputes regarding children residing in Malaysia. The Malaysian legal system is based on English common law.

The Federal courts have original jurisdiction in constitutional matters and in disputes between states and reviews decisions referred from the Court of Appeals. In addition to high courts, the Peninsular Malaysian states and the East Malaysian States of Sabah and Sarawak have magistrate courts, session courts, and juvenile courts. These courts would have jurisdiction on civil law cases, including child custody disputes among Malays or other Muslims/indigenous peoples. By Constitutional definition, all Malays are Muslim, and the "paramount ruler," customarily referred to as the "King" is also the leader of the Islamic faith in Malaysia. Malaysia's official religion is Islam and Islamic (Sharia) law applies in family and religious matter for all Muslims. Although civil law cases are adjudicated under Islamic and traditional law, certain cases involving Muslims only are heard in Sharia courts and Sharia law applies in family and religious matters. Questions on specific Islamic laws as they pertain to custody rights should be addressed to a lawyer licensed to practice in Malaysia.

In order to bring a custody issue before the local court, the left-behind parent will require the assistance of an attorney licensed to practice in Malaysia. Ideally, these orders and proceedings ensure due process under the local laws as well as providing protection for the child or children. A parent holding a custody decree issued in U.S. courts must retain local Malaysian counsel to apply to the Malaysian courts for recognition and enforcement of the U.S. decree, or to petition for custody of minors.

Although visitation rights for non-custodial parents are not expressly stipulated in Malaysian Civil Code, court judgments often provide visitation rights for non-custodial parents. Since compliance with the local court rulings is essentially voluntary, Malaysian police or local law enforcement are reluctant to get involved in custody disputes and could not be counted on to enforce custody decrees issued by the Malaysian courts. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Deportation: While there is an extradition treaty between the United States and Malaysia, parental child abduction is not an extraditable offense.

However, if the taking parent is a U.S. citizen whose U.S. passport has been revoked due to an outstanding federal Unlawful Flight to avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrant or indictment on charges of International Parental Kidnapping (IPKCA) in violation of 18 USC Section 1204, Malaysian authorities may consider deportation based on lack of a valid travel document.

Dual Nationality: A child with a parent who was born outside of the U.S. or who has acquired a second nationality through naturalization in another country may have a claim to citizenship in that country. There is no requirement that a U.S. citizen parent consent to the acquisition by his/her child of another nationality and in many cases a parent is unaware that his/her child may have dual citizenship. The Embassy of Malaysia in Washington D.C. will be able to provide more detailed information on whether your child has a claim.

Initiating Foreign Enforcement Proceedings Under Local Law: If a country is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, it may be necessary for you to initiate a child custody action in the courts in the foreign country.

For additional information, see judicial assistance for Malaysia on the Internet at http://caweb/cainternet/malaysia_legal.html.

Retaining a Foreign Attorney: A list of English speaking attorneys is available from the U.S. State Department Office of American Citizens Services.

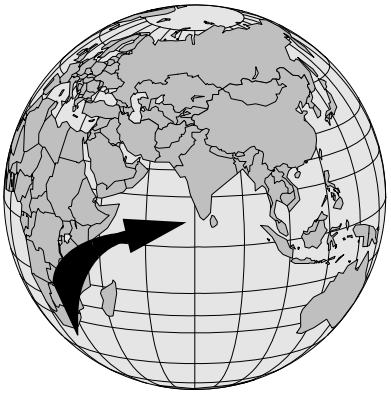
Legal Aid: Some countries provide legal aid services in child custody cases. The legal attache or consular section of the foreign embassy in Washington, D.C. may have specific guidance.

The ISS headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland, but information or assistance may be available through its New York branch at 10 W. 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018, Tel. No.: 212-532-6350. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) maintains a list of attorneys interested in Hague Convention and International Child Custody cases.

NCMEC handles all Hague Convention applications for return when children from other countries are abducted and believed to be in the U.S. You may obtain additional information about the attorney program at the National Center by calling 1-800-843-5678 or 703-274-3900. The Internet home page for the National Center can be reached directly at http://www.missingkids.org.

Criminal Remedies: Foreign countries may not recognize parental abduction as a crime. Please note that the extradition process applies only to the abducting adult/fugitive and not the child. The proper channel for the return of the child is through civil mechanisms or voluntary return arrangements. Additional information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



MALDIVES

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Maldives

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 298 sq. km. (115 sq. mi.), over 1,100 islands; twice the size of Washington, DC.
Cities: Capital—Male' (pop. 100,000).
Terrain: Flat islands.
Climate: Hot and humid.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Maldivian(s).
Population: 300,000 (plus 67,000 expatriate workers who are not counted in the census).
Population growth rate: 1.66%. Population growth rate has dropped dramatically in recent years.
Ethnic groups: South Indians, Sinhalese, Arabs.
Religions: Sunni Islam.
Languages: Dhivehi (official); many government officials speak English.
Education: Years compulsory—7. Enrollment—primary (grades 1-7) 97%; secondary (grades 8-10) 67%. Literacy—98%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—33/1,000. Life expectancy—68 years.
Resident work force: Community, social and personal services—21%; manufacturing—13%; fishing—11%; tourism—11%; transport, storage, and communication—9%; other—35%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: July 26, 1965 (formerly a British protectorate).
Constitution: August 7, 2008.
Government branches: Executive—president, cabinet. Legislative—unicameral Majlis (parliament). Judicial—High Court, Civil Court, Criminal Court, Family and Juvenile Court, and 204 general courts.
Political subdivisions: 19 atolls and capital city.
Political parties: Adhaalath Party, Dhivehi Raiyyethunge Party, Islamic Democratic Party, Maldivian Democratic Party, Social Liberal Party, Maldives National Congress, Maldives Social Democratic Party, Republican Party, others in formation.
Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $1.1 billion.
GDP growth rate: (2007) 6.6%.
Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $3,460.
Inflation: year over year (2007) 10.34%.
Percentages of GDP: (2007) Tourism—28%; transport and communications—20%; government—16%; manufacturing—7%; real estate—6%; fishing—5%; construction—6%; agriculture—2.5%; other—9%.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$232 million: fish products. Major markets—U.S., Thailand, EU, Sri Lanka, Japan (source: Maldives Customs Service). Imports—$936 million: oil, construction material, prepared foodstuffs, vegetables, animal products, electrical appliances, wood products, computers, transport equipment. Major suppliers—Singapore, U.A.E., India, EU, Sri Lanka, Malaysia.

PEOPLE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Maldives comprises 1,191 islands in the Indian Ocean. The earliest settlers were probably from southern India. Indo-European speakers followed them from Sri Lanka in the fourth and fifth centuries BC. In the 12th century AD, sailors from East Africa and Arab countries came to the islands. Today, the Maldivian ethnic identity is a blend of these cultures, reinforced by religion and language.

Originally Buddhists, Maldivians were converted to Sunni Islam in the mid-12th century. Islam is the official religion of the entire population. Strict adherence to Islamic precepts and close community relationships have historically helped keep crime low and under control. However, a growing heroin addiction problem and the emergence of youth gangs, especially in Male, have increased the crime rate and the incidence of street violence.

The official and common language is Dhivehi, an Indo-European language related to Sinhala, a language of Sri Lanka. The writing system is from right to left. English is used widely in commerce and increasingly as the medium of instruction in government schools.

Some social stratification exists on the islands. It is not rigid, since rank is based on varied factors, including occupation, wealth, perceived Islamic virtue, and family ties. Members of the social elite are concentrated in Male'.

The early history of the Maldives is obscure. According to Maldivian legend, a Sinhalese prince named KoiMale was stranded with his bride—daughter of the king of Sri Lanka—in a Maldivian lagoon and stayed on to rule as the first sultan.

Over the centuries, the islands have been visited and their development influenced by sailors from countries on the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean littorals. Mopla pirates from the Malabar Coast—present-day Kerala state in India—harassed the islands. In the 16th century, the Portuguese subjugated and ruled the islands for 15 years (1558-73) before being driven away by the warrior-patriot Muhammad Thakurufar Al-Azam.

Although governed as an independent Islamic sultanate for most of its history from 1153 to 1968, the Maldives was a British protectorate from 1887 until July 25, 1965. In 1953, there was a brief, abortive attempt at a republican form of government, after which the sultanate was re-imposed. Following independence from Britain in 1965, the sultanate continued to operate for another 3 years. On November 11, 1968, it was abolished and replaced by a republic, and the country assumed its present name.

Environmental Concerns

There is growing concern about coral reef and marine life damage because of coral mining (used for building and jewelry making), sand dredging, and solid waste pollution. Mining of sand and coral have removed the natural coral reef that protected several important islands, making them highly susceptible to the erosive effects of the sea.

The practices have recently been banned. In April 1987, high tides swept over the Maldives, inundating much of Male' and nearby islands. That event prompted high-level Maldivian interest in global climatic changes, as its highest point is about 8 feet above sea level.

Investment in Education

The government expenditure for education was 8% of GDP in 2006. Literacy in Maldives is high at 98%. Maldives has made great strides in primary and lower secondary education, with 100% enrollment in the primary level (grade 1 to 7) since 2002. Secondary school enrollment has also improved significantly, with about 80% progressing to secondary level. Lower secondary schools (grades 8 through 10) are located on 138 islands. The government intends to make 10 years of education available to all before 2010. Only a small proportion of children leave school with a qualification, and "Ordinary level" pass rates (at the completion of grade 10) are low for those who opt to take the examination. Access to higher secondary schools (grades 11 and 12) is limited as schools are located only on 14 islands (as of mid-2007). Access to tertiary education is more limited. Whereas for primary and lower secondary schools there is no gender bias, for upper secondary and tertiary education there is a bias in favor of boys.

The World Bank provided about $19 million for education development from 2000-2007. It plans to commit a further $5 million for education development in 2009. The World Bank has identified teacher training as a critical need as the country still relies heavily on expatriate teachers, as well as upgrading the curriculum and materials. Over 2000-2006, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed $7 million to support post-secondary education development in Maldives. ADB has committed $6.5 million for employment skills training over 2004-2009.

GOVERNMENT

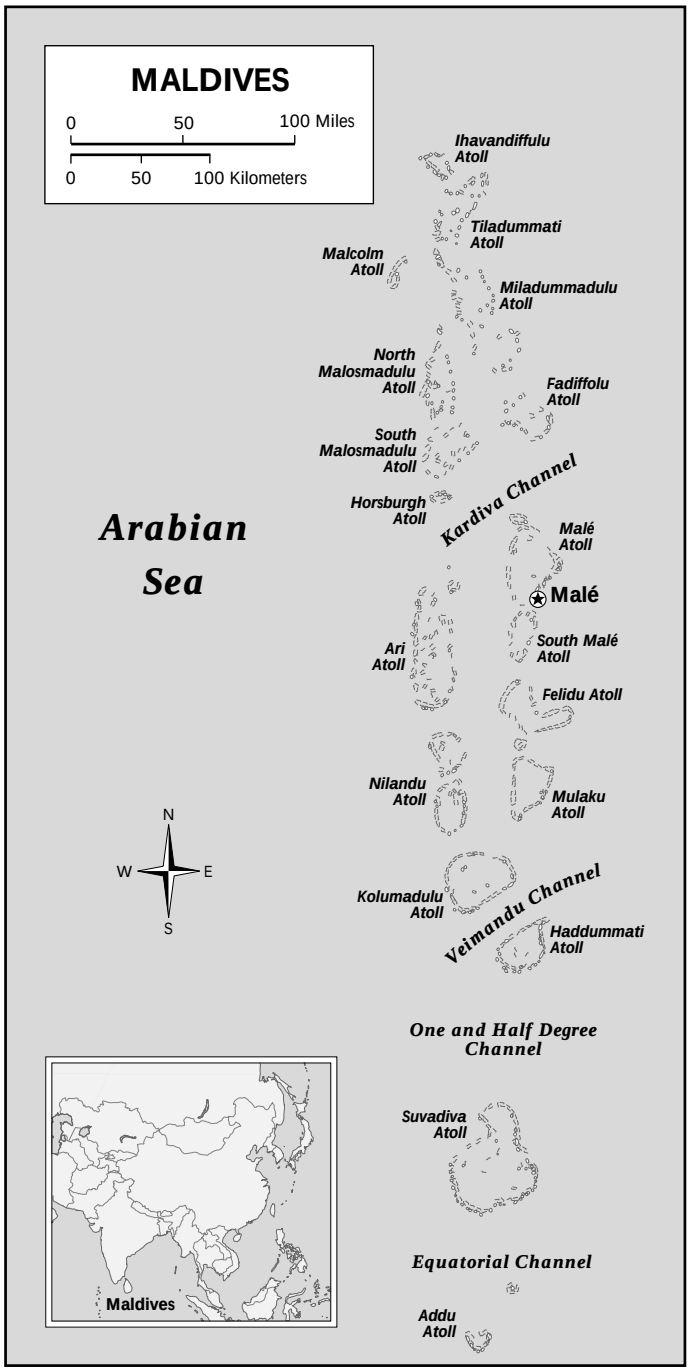
A 1968 referendum approved the constitution, making Maldives a republic with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The constitution was amended in 1970, 1972, 1975, and again in 2008.

Ibrahim Nasir, Prime Minister under the pre-1968 sultanate, became President and held office from 1968 to 1978. He was succeeded by Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who was elected President in 1978 and reelected in 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, and again in October 2003.

After 30 years of rule, in October 2008 Gayoom was defeated by Maldivian Democratic Party candidate Mohamed Nasheed in the first multiparty presidential elections held in 30 years. President Nasheed was inaugurated on November 11, 2008 as head of the executive branch. Nasheed reduced the number of government ministries from 21 to 14, appointed a 14-member cabinet, and replaced the eight Majlis members appointed by his predecessor.

The current unicameral Majlis, elected in 2005, is composed of 50 members serving 5-year terms. Two members from each atoll and Male' are elected directly by universal suffrage. Eight are appointed by the president. According to the 2008 constitution, the next Majlis will be convened after elections due by February 2009. It will be larger, will have no appointed members, and will be elected under a system that will more closely reflect the population differences between the atolls.

The Maldivian legal system—a mixture of traditional Islamic and common-law principles—is administered by secular officials, a chief justice, and lesser judges on each of the 19 atolls, who are currently appointed by the president. In the future, judi-



cial appointments are to be overseen by the independent Judicial Services Commission. A new Supreme Court appointed by the previous President, Gayoom, took office in September 2008. There is also an attorney general. Each inhabited island within an atoll has a chief who is responsible for law and order. Every atoll chief, appointed by the president, functions as a district officer in the British South Asian tradition.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

On November 8, 1988, Sri Lankan Tamil mercenaries tried to overthrow the Maldivian Government. At President Gayoom's request, the Indian military suppressed the coup attempt within 24 hours. In September 2003, following the death of an inmate, a brief prison riot broke out on an island near the capital Male'. Three other inmates were killed during the incident. In response to the killings of the inmates, brief rioting took place on the streets of Male'.

Under Gayoom, the government often prevented opposition rallies from taking place. President Gayoom's commitment to introduce political reforms in June 2004 was widely welcomed. A human rights commission was established, and a special Majlis, or parliament, was convened to consider changes in the constitution, including the legalization of political parties. In August 2004, however, a demonstration in the capital turned violent and the government declared an emergency and arrested a large number said to be connected to the protest. Some of those arrested were prominent in the reform movement, including several members of the special Majlis. Most were released a few months later.

The Maldives were badly hit by the Asian tsunami of December 26, 2004, which killed 82 and caused substantial damage to Maldives tourism, housing, and fishing infrastructure. The U.S. provided $1.6 million in immediate relief assistance. Despite the disaster, the Government of the Maldives held parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for December 31, on January 22, 2005. Reform candidates performed strongly. Following the poll, President Gayoom announced plans to establish multiparty democracy within a year.

In June 2005, the members of the People's Majlis unanimously voted to legally recognize political parties. In order of registration the first parties were the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party, the government's Dhivehi Raiyyethunge Party, the Adhaalath (Justice) Party, and the Islamic Democratic Party. More recently, a number of other parties formed, including the Social Liberal Party, the Maldivian National Congress, the Maldives Social Democratic Party, and the Republican Party. Some of these appear to have minimal public backing. Another political formation is the New

Maldives group, but it has not registered as a party. Throughout 2006, the opposition faced restrictions on freedom of assembly, and the government continued to arrest opposition activists. In March 2006, the government introduced a "Roadmap for Reform" and subsequently introduced several bills in parliament. In August 2007, voters decided via referendum that the Maldives' new constitution should provide for a presidential system of government (vice parliamentary). The special Majlis completed its work and the new constitution took effect in August 2008.

In accordance with the new constitution ratified by President Gayoom on August 7, 2008, the first round of presidential elections was held on October 10, 2008. As no candidate received 50% of the vote, a second round was held on October 29 between President Gayoom and Mohamed Nasheed. Nasheed won with 54% of the vote. Members of parliament declared their political affiliations long before the October 2008 multiparty elections. Five opposition leaders were allowed to contest the presidential elections, and the principal opposition candidate was elected. President Nasheed is among the founders of the Maldivian Democratic Party.

President Nasheed, a former Amnesty International "prisoner of conscience," has promised to further strengthen democracy and increase media freedom. During his campaign, Nasheed pledged that if elected, he would hold early presidential elections in the middle of his term. The government keeps a tight rein on expressions of Islamic extremism. It is investigating links between religious extremists and a September 2007 bombing in a Male' park that injured several tourists.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Maumoon Abdul GAYOOM**
Min. of Atolls Development: **Thasmeen ALI**
Min. of Construction & Public Infrastructure: **Mohamed Mauroof JAMEEL**
Min. of Defense & National Security: **Ismail SHAFEEU**
Min. of Economic Development & Trade:
Min. of Education: **Zaahiya ZAREER**
Min. of Environment, Energy, & Water:
Min. of Finance & Treasury: **Abdullah JIHAD**
Min. of Fisheries & Agriculture:
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Abdullah SHAHID**
Min. of Gender & Family: **Aishath Mohamed DIDI**
Min. of Health:
Min. of Higher Education, Employment, & Social Security: **Abdulla YAMEEN**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Abdullah Kamal DEEN**
Min. of Housing & Urban Development:
Min. of Information & Arts: **Mohamed NASHEED**
Min. of Justice:
Min. of Planning & National Development: **Hamdoon HAMEED**
Min. of the Pres.'s Office:
Min. of Presidential Affairs:
Min. of Tourism & Civil Aviation: **Abdullah MAUSOOM**
Min. of Transportation & Communication: **Mohamed SAEED**
Min. of Youth & Sports:
Attorney Gen.:
Governor, Maldives Monetary Authority: **Mohamed JALEEL**
Ambassador to the US: **Mohamed Hussain MANIKU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ahmed KHALEEL**

ECONOMY

The Maldivian economy is based on tourism and fishing. Of the Maldives' 1,191 islands, only 200 are inhabited. The population is scattered throughout the country, with the greatest concentration on the capital island, Male'. Limitations on potable water and arable land constrain expansion.

Development has been centered upon the tourism industry and its complementary service sectors, transport, distribution, real estate, construction, and government. Taxes on the tourist industry have been plowed into infrastructure and used to improve technology in the agricultural sector.

GDP in 2007 totaled $1.1 billion, or about $3,460 per capita. The Maldivian economy has made a remarkable recovery from the tsunami, which inflicted damages of about $375 million, excluding $100 million in damages to resorts, the bulk of which was covered by private insurance. A rebound in tourism, post-tsunami reconstruction, and new resort construction helped increase GDP by about 19% in 2006 and 6.6% in 2007 from a contraction of 4.5% in 2005. Inflation accelerated to about 10% in 2007 and to about 15% by May 2008. Due to rising imports and higher oil prices, the trade deficit ballooned to $700 million in 2007. However, due to a tourism boom and increase government borrowing, the balance of payments recorded a surplus of about $45 million in 2006 and 2007. Fiscal control has deteriorated due to tsunami reconstruction and in particular due to an increase in non-tsunami-related government expenditure. Government expenditure expanded to over 60% of GDP in 2005-2007, compared to 36% of GDP in 2004 before the tsunami. Government expenditure is projected to expand further to 73% of GDP in 2008. Consequently the budget deficit is projected at 10% of GDP in 2008. In July 2008 the government acknowledged that its economy is in a recession. While tsunami reconstruction is ongoing, the recovery process remains underfunded.

The Maldives had a merchandise trade deficit of under $300 million until 2003. Since then the trade deficit reached an unprecedented $700 million, largely the result of increased oil prices and increased imports of food and construction material.

International shipping to and from the Maldives is mainly operated by the private sector with only a small fraction of the tonnage carried on vessels operated by the national carrier, Maldives Shipping Management Ltd. Over the years, the Maldives has received economic assistance from multilateral development organizations, including the UN Development Program (UNDP), Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank.

Individual donors—including Japan, India, Australia, and European and Arab countries (including Islamic Development Bank and the Kuwaiti Fund)—also have contributed.

A 1956 bilateral agreement gave the United Kingdom the use of Gan—in Addu Atoll in the far south—for 20 years as an air facility in return for British aid. The agreement ended in 1976, shortly after the British closed the Gan air station.

Economic Sectors

Tourism. In recent years, Maldives has successfully marketed its natural assets for tourism—beautiful, unpolluted beaches on small coral islands, diving in blue waters abundant with tropical fish, and glorious sunsets. Tourism now brings in about $450 million a year. Tourism and related services contributed 28% of GDP in 2007.

Since the first resort was established in 1972, more than 90 islands have been developed, with a total capacity of some 17,500 beds. Maldives has embarked on a rapid tourism expansion plan. The government has awarded tenders for the development of about 40 new resorts. Over 650,000 tourists (mainly from Europe) visited Maldives in 2007. The average occupancy rate is over 80%, and reaches over 95% in the peak winter tourist season. Average tourist stay is 8 days.

Fishing. This sector employs about 11% of the labor force. The fisheries industry, including fish processing, traditionally contributes about 7% of GDP. Due to a drastic drop in the fish catch, the industry's contribution to GDP was only about 5% in 2007. Fish export earnings were estimated at $100 million in 2007. The use of nets is illegal; all fishing is done by line. Production was about 65,000 metric tons in 2007, most of which was skipjack tuna. More than 60% is exported, largely to Sri Lanka, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the European Union. Fresh, chilled, frozen, dried, salted, and canned tuna exports account for about 90% of all marine product exports.

Agriculture. Poor soil and scarce arable land have historically limited agriculture to a few subsistence crops, such as coconut, banana, breadfruit, papayas, mangoes, taro, betel, chilies, sweet potatoes, and onions. Almost all food, including staples, has to be imported. The December 2004 tsunami inundated several agricultural islands, which could take a significant amount of time to recover. Agriculture provides about 2.5% of GDP.

Manufacturing. The manufacturing sector provides less than 7% of GDP. Traditional industry consists of boat building and handicrafts, while modern industry is limited to a few tuna canneries, a bottling plant, and a few enterprises in the capital producing PVC pipe, soap, furniture, and food products. Five garment factories that had exported principally to the United States closed in 2005, following the expiration of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA) that had set quotas on developing country garment exports to developed countries. The loss of these factories has not proven an insurmountable hurdle, however, as most of the profits were repatriated and most of the labor was expatriate.

Other. The construction sector contributes approximately 6% of GDP due to tsunami reconstruction and new resort construction.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Maldives follows a nonaligned policy and is committed to maintaining friendly relations with all countries. According to the Foreign Ministry, the country has a UN Mission in New York, embassies in the United States (Washington, DC), Sri Lanka, China, the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, India, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia, as well as diplomatic missions in Geneva and Brussels. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka maintain resident embassies in Male'. Denmark, Norway, the U.K., Germany, Turkey, and Sweden have consular agencies in Male' under the supervision of their embassies in Sri Lanka and India. The UNDP has a representative resident in Male', as do the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Like the United States, many countries have nonresident ambassadors accredited to the Maldives, most of them based in Sri Lanka or India. The Maldives is a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). In 2009, Maldives will host the 16th annual South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit.

U.S. MALDIVIAN RELATIONS

The United States has friendly relations with the Republic of Maldives. The U.S. Ambassador and some Embassy staff in Sri Lanka are accredited to the Maldives and make periodic visits. The United States supports Maldivian independence and territorial integrity and publicly endorsed India's timely intervention on behalf of the Maldivian Government during the November 1988 coup attempt. U.S. Naval vessels have regularly called at Male' in recent years. The Maldives extended strong support to U.S. efforts to combat terrorism and terrorist financing in 2001-2002.

U.S. contributions to economic development in the Maldives have been made principally through international organization programs. Following the December 2004 tsunami, the U.S. and Maldives signed a bilateral assistance agreement for $8.6 million in reconstruction assistance. This assistance will help in the rebuilding of harbors, sewerage systems, and electrical generation facilities and in the development of aid absorption capacity in the Ministry of Finance.

The United States has directly funded training in airport management and narcotics interdiction and provided desktop computers for Maldivian customs, immigration, and drug-control efforts in recent years.

The United States also trains a small number of Maldivian military personnel annually. About 10 U.S. citizens are resident in the Maldives; some 5,000 Americans visit the Maldives annually.

The Maldives welcomes foreign investment, although the ambiguity of codified law acts as somewhat of a damper. Areas of opportunity for U.S. businesses include tourism, construction, and simple export-oriented manufacturing, such as garments and electrical appliance assembly. There is a shortage of local skilled labor, and most industrial labor has to be imported from Sri Lanka or elsewhere.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

COLOMBO (E) 210, Galle Road, Colombo 3,, 94-11-249-8500, Fax 94-11-243-7345, Workweek: M-Th:0800-1730, F:0800-12:00, Website: http://colombo.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Karie L. Ennis
AMB OMS:	Amanda T. Prytherch
ECO:	Robert R. Gabor
FM:	Sergio J. Tristan
HRO:	Alboino L. Deulus
IBB:	William S. Martin
MGT:	Alboino L. Deulus
AMB:	Robert O. Blake, Jr.
CON:	Christopher R. Green
DCM:	James R. Moore
PAO:	Terry J. White
COM:	Kami A. Witmer
GSO:	Yoshino E. Rosenstein
RSO:	Michael V. Perkins
AFSA:	Alboino L. Deulus
AID:	Rebecca W. Cohn
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Ltc. Lawrence A. Smith
EEO:	Lissa M. McAtee
FIN:	Alboino L. Deulus
FMO:	Alboino L. Deulus
ICASS Chair:	Rebecca W. Cohn
IMO:	Wayne J.Morrow
ISSO:	Wayne J. Morrow
POL:	Michael R. Detar
State ICASS:	Robert R. Gabor

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 18, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of the Maldives consists of 1,190 islands (fewer than 200 are inhabited) in the Indian Ocean, southwest of Sri Lanka. The Maldives has a population of 379,174, of whom about 104,000 reside in Male, the capital city. Beautiful atolls, inhabited by over 1,100 species of fish and other sea life, attract thousands of visitors each year. Tourism facilities are well developed on the resort islands. The tsunami of December 26, 2004 damaged several hotels and facilities on some of the islands, but all damaged tourism infrastructure has been rebuilt.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, along with an onward/return ticket and sufficient funds, is required for entry. A no-cost visitor visa valid for thirty days is issued upon arrival. The Department of Immigration and Emigration routinely approves requests for extension of stays up to ninety days for travelers who present evidence of sufficient funds and who stay in a resort or hotel or present a letter from a local sponsor. Anyone staying over sixty days without proper authorization faces heavy fines and deportation. All visitors departing the Republic of the Maldives (except diplomats and certain exempted travelers) must pay an airport departure tax, which is usually included in the price of an airline ticket. Travelers need a yellow fever immunization if they are arriving from an infected area.

Arrival by private boat: Travelers arriving by private yacht or boat are granted no-cost visas, usually valid until the expected date of departure. Vessels anchoring in atolls other than Male must have prior clearance through agents in Male. Maldivian customs, police and/or representatives of Maldivian immigration will meet all vessels, regardless of where they anchor. Vessels arriving with a dog on board will be permitted anchorage, but the dog will not be allowed off the vessel. Any firearms or ammunition on board will be held for bond until the vessel's departure.

Specific inquiries should be addressed to the Maldives High Commission in Colombo, Sri Lanka at No. 24, Melbourne Avenue, Colombo 4, telephone (94) (11) 2580076/2586762/2500943, or the Maldives Mission to the U.N. in New York, telephone (212) 599-6194.

Visit the web site of the Maldives Permanent Mission to the United Nations at www.maldivesmission-ny.com/eng/ for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: An explosion in Male's Sultan Park on September 29, 2007 wounded 12 tourists - two British, two Japanese and eight Chinese. There were no American injuries or fatalities in the incident. Maldivian police said the explosion, the first ever bomb blast in the Maldives, was caused by an improvised explosive device triggered by a mobile phone. The government quickly arrested several suspects, and is currently investigating links between the bombing and religious extremists.

Americans are cautioned against engaging in political activity in the Maldives. While demonstrations have become unruly on occasion, especially in Male, political violence in the Maldives is relatively rare.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The Maldives has a low crime rate, but theft of valuables left unattended on beaches or in hotels does occur. Drug use is on the rise and the penalty for drugs is severe.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

There is no 911 equivalent for medical emergencies in the Maldives. 119 is for the police only. A patient would have to call an individual hospital for ambulance services. Quality of medical care in such instances may be uncertain, as most ambulances are ill equipped.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The Maldives has limited medical facilities. There are two hospitals in Male: the government-owned Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGM) and the privately-owned Abduarahman Don Kaleyfan Hospital (ADK). ADK accepts some insurance plans, but IGM does not. The hospitals perform general, orthopedic and neurosurgery, but the Maldives has no trauma units, and spinal surgery is not available. Persons needing treatments not offered in the Maldives require evacuation to the nearest adequate medical facility, such as in Singapore.

Two recompression chambers are available in the Maldives. One is on Bandos Island (fifteen minutes by speedboat from Male) and the other is in Kuramathi (one hour by speed boat and about twenty minutes by air taxi from Male.) The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of the Maldives.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Maldives is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Only a few of the islands are large enough to support automobiles. Most transportation in the Maldives is by boat or seaplane (air taxi). The Maldives has good safety standards for land, sea, and air travel. Roads in Male and on the airport island are brick and generally well maintained. Dirt roads on resort islands are well kept by the resorts. Transportation on the small island on which the capital, Male, is situated, is either by foot or by readily-available taxis. Transportation between the airport and Male, as well as to nearby resort islands, is by motorized water taxi and speedboat. Several local companies provide seaplane and helicopter service to outlying islands. Air taxis stop flying one hour before sunset, and several resorts do not transport passengers by boat between the airport and the resort island later than one hour before sunset. Visitors to distant resorts arriving in the country at night can expect to stay overnight at a hotel in Male or at the airport hotel and should confirm transfer arrangements in advance.

Visit the web site of the Maldives national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.visitmaldives.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and the Maldives, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Maldives' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Religious Laws: Public observance of any religion other than Islam is prohibited. Religious gatherings such as Bible study groups are prohibited; however, a family unit may practice its religion, including Bible readings, within its residence. It is against the law to invite or encourage Maldivian citizens to attend these gatherings. Offenders may face jail sentences, expulsion and/or fines. In the past, several non-Maldivian families resident in the Maldives, including some Americans, were expelled for allegedly engaging in religious proselytizing. Although Maldivian law prohibits importing "idols for religious worship," tourists traveling to the resort islands are generally allowed to bring in items and texts used for personal religious observances.

Currency: Credit cards are increasingly accepted outside large hotels and resorts; cash payment in dollars is accepted at most retail shops and restaurants and by taxi drivers.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject

to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Maldivian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Maldives are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the Maldives. The U.S. Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka provides consular support for the Maldives. Americans living or traveling in the Maldives are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Colombo through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Maldives. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Colombo. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. As a trip from Colombo to the Maldives takes about 3 hours, consular support may be limited in an emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Colombo is located at 210 Galle Road, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka. The Embassy's telephone number during normal business hours Monday through Friday is (94) (11) 249-8500. The after-hours and emergency telephone number is (94) (11) 249-8888. The Consular Section fax number is (94) (11) 249-8590. The Embassy's Internet address is http://colombo.usembassy.gov. The email address for the consular section is colomboacs@state.gov or consularcolombo@state.gov.



MALI

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Mali

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,240,278 sq. km. (474,764 sq. mi.); about the size of Texas and California combined.

Cities: Capital—Bamako (pop. 1 million). Other cities—Segou (200,000), Sikasso (120,000), Mopti (90,000), Gao (65,000), Kayes (65,000), Timbuktu (38,000).

Terrain: Savannah and desert.

Climate: Semitropical in the south; arid in the north.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Malian(s).

Population: (2008 est.) 12.5 million.

Annual growth rate: 2.4%.

Ethnic groups: Manding (Bambara or Bamana, Malinke) 52%, Fulani 11%, Saracolé 7%, Mianka 4%, Songhai 7%, Tuareg and Maur 5%, other 14%.

Religions: Islam 90%, indigenous 6%, Christian 4%.

Languages: French (official) and Bambara (spoken by about 80% of the population).

Education: Attendance—64.3% (primary). Literacy—31%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—121/1,000. Life expectancy—47 yrs.

Work force: (4 million) Agriculture—70%; services—15%; industry and commerce—15%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: September 22, 1960.

Constitution: Approved by referendum January 12, 1992.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and commander in chief of the armed forces), prime minister (head of government). Legislative—National Assembly is the sole legislative arm of the government; currently consisting of 147 members. Judicial—Supreme Court with both judicial and administrative powers.

Political parties: Mali is a multiparty democracy. Fifteen political parties are represented in the National Assembly; others are active in local government.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Political subdivisions: Eight regions and capital district.

Budget: (2007) Revenues—$1,770 million; expenditures—$1,947 million; $177 million deficit.

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $5.847 billion.

Avg. annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 5.1%.

Per capita income: (2006 est.) $470.

Annual skilled worker's salary: $1,560.

Avg. inflation rate: (2005) -1.1%.

Natural resources: Gold, phosphate, kaolin, salt, and limestone currently mined; deposits of oil, bauxite, iron ore, manganese, lithium, and uranium are known or suspected.

Agriculture, livestock, and fishery: (36% of GDP) Products—millet, sorghum, corn, rice, livestock, sugar, cotton, groundnuts (peanuts), and tobacco.

Industry: (24% of GDP) Types—food processing, textiles, cigarettes, fish processing, metalworking, light manufacturing, plastics, and beverage bottling.

Services: (40% of GDP) Telecommunications, construction.

Trade: (2004) Exports—$1,078 million: cotton and cotton products, animals, fish, tannery products, groundnuts, diamonds, and gold. Major markets—France, Switzerland, Italy, Thailand, Cote d'Ivoire, and Algeria. Imports—$1,084 million: food, machinery and spare parts, vehicles, petroleum products, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, textiles. Major suppliers—France, Cote d'Ivoire, Belgium, Luxembourg, U.S. ($43 million), Germany, and Japan.

PEOPLE

Mali's population consists of diverse Sub-Saharan ethnic groups, sharing similar historic, cultural, and religious traditions. Exceptions are the Tuaregs and Maurs, desert nomads, related to the North African Berbers. The Tuaregs traditionally have opposed the central government. Starting in June 1990, armed attacks in the north by Tuaregs seeking greater autonomy led to clashes with the military. In April 1992, the government and most opposing factions signed a pact to end the fighting and restore stability in the north. Its major aims are to allow greater autonomy to the north and increase government resource allocation to what has been a traditionally impoverished region. The peace agreement was celebrated in 1996 in Timbuktu during an official and highly publicized ceremony called Flamme de la Paix—peace flame.

Historically, good inter-ethnic relations throughout the rest of the country were facilitated by easy mobility on the Niger River and across the country's vast savannahs. Each ethnic group was traditionally tied to a specific occupation, all working within close proximity. The Bambara, Malinke, and Dogon are farmers; the Fulani, Maur, and Tuareg are herders; the Soninkés or Saracolés are traders; while the Bozo are fishers. In recent years, this linkage has shifted as ethnic groups seek diverse, nontraditional sources of income.

Although each ethnic group speaks a separate language, nearly 80% of Malians communicate in Bambara, the common language of the marketplace. Malians enjoy a relative harmony rare in African states.

HISTORY

Malians express great pride in their ancestry. Mali is the cultural heir to the succession of ancient African empires—Ghana, Malinké, and Songhai—that occupied the West African savannah. These empires controlled Saharan trade and were in touch with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern centers of civilization. The Ghana Empire, dominated by the Soninke or Saracolé people and centered in the area along the Malian-Mauritanian frontier, was a powerful trading state from about A.D. 700 to 1075. The Malinke Kingdom of Mali had its origins on the upper Niger River in the 11th century. Expanding rapidly in the 13th century under the leadership of Soundiata Keita, it reached its height about 1325, when it conquered Timbuktu and Gao. Thereafter, the kingdom began to decline, and by the 15th century, it controlled only a small fraction of its former domain.

The Songhai Empire expanded its power from its center in Gao during the period 1465-1530. At its peak under Askia Mohammad I, it encompassed the Hausa states as far as Kano (in present-day Nigeria) and much of the territory that had belonged to the Mali Empire in the west. It was destroyed by a Moroccan invasion in 1591. Timbuktu was a center of commerce and of the Islamic faith throughout this period, and priceless manuscripts from this epoch are still preserved in Timbuktu. The United States and other donors are making efforts to help preserve these priceless manuscripts as part of Mali's cultural heritage.

French military penetration of the Soudan (the French name for the area) began around 1880. Ten years later, the French made a concerted effort to occupy the interior. The timing and resident military governors determined methods of their advances. A French civilian governor of Soudan was appointed in 1893, but resistance to French control did not end until 1898, when the Malinké warrior Samory Touré was defeated after 7 years of war. The French attempted to rule indirectly, but in many areas they disregarded traditional authorities and governed through appointed chiefs. As the colony of French Soudan, Mali was administered with other French colonial territories as the Federation of French West Africa.

In 1956, with the passing of France's Fundamental Law (Loi Cadre), the Territorial Assembly obtained extensive powers over internal affairs and was permitted to form a cabinet with executive authority over matters within the Assembly's competence. After the 1958 French constitutional referendum, the Republique Soudanaise became a member of the French Community and enjoyed complete internal autonomy.

In January 1959, Soudan joined Senegal to form the Mali Federation, which became fully independent within the French Community on June 20, 1960. The federation collapsed on August 20, 1960, when Senegal seceded. On September 22, Soudan proclaimed itself the Republic of Mali and withdrew from the French Community.

President Modibo Keita—whose party Union Soudanaise du Rassemblement Democratique Africain (US/RDA) had dominated preindependence politics—moved quickly to declare a single-party state and to pursue a socialist policy based on extensive nationalization. A continuously deteriorating economy led to a decision to rejoin the Franc Zone in 1967 and modify some of the economic excesses.

On November 19, 1968, a group of young officers staged a bloodless coup and set up a 14-member Military Committee for National Liberation (CMLN), with Lt. Moussa Traore as President. The military leaders attempted to pursue economic reforms but for several years faced debilitating internal political struggles and the disastrous Sahelian drought.

A new constitution, approved in 1974, created a one-party state and was designed to move Mali toward civilian rule. However, the military leaders remained in power. In September 1976, a new political party was established, the Democratic Union of the Malian People (UDPM), based on the concept of democratic centralism. Single-party presidential and legislative elections were held in June 1979, and Gen. Moussa Traore received



99% of the votes. His efforts at consolidating the single-party government were challenged in 1980 by student-led, anti-government demonstrations, which were brutally put down, and by three coup attempts.

The political situation stabilized during 1981 and 1982 and remained generally calm throughout the 1980s. The UDPM spread its structure to cercles and arrondissements (administrative subdivisions) across the land. Shifting its attention to Mali's economic difficulties, the government approved plans for cereal marketing liberalization, reform in the state enterprise system, and new incentives to private enterprise, and worked out a new structural adjustment agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). However, by 1990, there was growing dissatisfaction with the demands for austerity imposed by the IMF's economic reform programs and the perception that the President and his close associates were not themselves adhering to those demands.

As in other African countries, demands for multiparty democracy increased. The Traore government allowed some opening of the system, including the establishment of an independent press and independent political associations, but insisted that Mali was not ready for democracy. In early 1991, student-led, anti-government rioting broke out again, but this time government workers and others supported it. On March 26, 1991, after 4 days of intense anti-government rioting, a group of 17 military officers arrested President Traore and suspended the constitution. Within days, these officers joined with the Coordinating Committee of Democratic Associations to form a predominantly civilian, 25-member ruling body, the Transitional

Committee for the Salvation of the People (CTSP). The CTSP then appointed a civilian-led government. A national conference held in August 1991 produced a draft constitution (approved in a referendum January 12, 1992), a charter for political parties, and an electoral code. Political parties were allowed to form freely. Between January and April 1992, a president, National Assembly, and municipal councils were elected. On June 8, 1992, Alpha Oumar Konare, the candidate of the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA), was inaugurated as the President of Mali's Third Republic.

In 1997, attempts to renew national institutions through democratic elections ran into administrative difficulties, resulting in a court-ordered annulment of the legislative elections held in April 1997. The exercise, nonetheless, demonstrated the overwhelming strength of President Konare's ADEMA Party, causing some other historic parties to boycott subsequent elections. President Konare won the presidential election against scant opposition on May 11. In the two-round legislative elections conducted on July 21 and August 3, 1997, ADEMA secured more than 80% of the National Assembly seats.

General elections were organized in June and July 2002. President Konare did not seek reelection since he was serving his second and last term as required by the constitution. All political parties participated in the elections. In preparation for the elections, the government completed a new voter's list after a general census was administered a few months earlier with the support of all political parties. Retired General Amadou Toumani Toure, former head of state during Mali's transition (1991-1992) became the country's second democratically elected President as an independent candidate in 2002, and was reelected to a second 5-year term in 2007.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Under Mali's 1992 constitution, the president is chief of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. The president is elected to a 5-year term, with a limit of two terms. The president appoints the prime minister as head of government. The president chairs the Council of Ministers (the prime minister and currently 28 other ministers, including 5 women), which adopts proposals for laws submitted to the National Assembly for approval.

The National Assembly is the sole legislative arm of the government. It currently consists of 147 members. Representation is apportioned according to the population of administrative districts. Election is direct and by party or independent list. The term of office is 5 years. The Assembly meets for two regular sessions each year. It debates and votes on legislation proposed either by one of its members or by the government and has the right to question government ministers about government actions and policies. Sixteen political parties, aggregated into five parliamentary groups, are represented in the Assembly. In legislative elections held in July 2007, the ADEMA Party regained the majority it lost in 2002, winning 51 seats, ahead of another party aligned with President Toure, the Union for Republic and Democracy (URD), which won 36. The former majority party at the National Assembly, the Rassemblement Pour le Mali (RPM) of former Prime Minister Ibrahim B. Keita, won 11 seats. Other than the RPM, President Toure has the support of most of the political parties represented in the National Assembly.

Mali's constitution provides for a multiparty democracy, with the only restriction being a prohibition against parties based on ethnic, religious, regional, or gender lines. In addition to those political parties represented in the National Assembly, others are active in municipal councils. Administratively, Mali is divided into eight regions and the capital district of Bamako, each under the authority of an appointed governor. Each region consists of five to nine districts (or cercles), administered by prefets (commandants). Cercles are divided into communes, which, in turn, are divided into villages or quarters. The decentralization process has started with the establishment of 702 elected municipal councils, headed by elected mayors. Election of local officials took place; greater local control over finances and the reduction of administrative control by the central government are being implemented.

Mali's legal system is based on codes inherited at independence from France. New laws have been enacted to make the system conform to Malian life, but French colonial laws not abrogated still have the force of law. The constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary. However, the Ministry of Justice appoints judges and supervises both law enforcement and judicial functions. The Supreme Court has both judicial and administrative powers. Under the constitution, there is a separate constitutional court and a high court of justice with the power to try senior government officials in cases of treason.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Amadou Toumani TOURE**
Prime Minister: **Modibo SIDIBE**
Min. of Agriculture: **Tiemoko SANGARE**
Min. of Communications & Technology: **Diarra Mariam Flantie DIALLO**
Min. of Culture: **Mohamed El MOCTAR**
Min. of Defense & Veterans: **Natie PLEA**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Ahmadou Abdoulaye DIALLO**
Min. of Employment & Vocational Training: **Ibrahima N'DIAYE**
Min. of Environment & Sanitation: **Agatheane Ag A LASSANE**
Min. of Equipment & Transportation: **Ahmed Diane SEMEGA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Moctar OUANE**
Min. of Health: **Oumar Ibrahima TOURE**

Min. of Housing & Urbanism: **Gakou Salimata FOFONA**
Min. of Industry & Commerce: **Choguel MAIGA**
Min. of Internal Security & Civil Protection: **Sadio GASSAMA, Col.**
Min. of Justice & Keeper of the Seals: **Maharafa TRAORE**
Min. of Labor, State Reforms, & Relations With the Institutions: **Abdoul Wahab BERTHE**
Min. of Livestock & Fisheries: **Diallo Madeleine BA**
Min. of Malians Abroad & African Integration: **Badra Alou MACALOU**
Min. of Minerals, Energy, & Water Resources: **Ahmed SOW**
Min. of Planning & National Development: **Marimantia DIARRA**
Min. of Primary Education, Literacy, & National Languages: **Sidibe Aminata DIALLO**
Min. of Promotion of Investments & Medium & Small Enterprises: **Ousmane THIAM**
Min. of Promotion of Women, Child & Family Affairs: **Maiga Sina DAMBA**
Min. of Secondary & Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Amadou TOURE**
Min. of Social Development, Solidarity, & the Aged: **Sekou DIAKITE**
Min. of Territorial Administration & Local Communitites: **Kafougouna KONE, Gen.**
Min. of Tourism, Arts, & Crafts: **D'Diaye BA**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Hamane NIANG**
Ambassador to the US: **Abdoulaye DIOP**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Oumar DAOU**

Mali maintains an embassy in the United States at 2130 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-332-2249), and a permanent mission to the United Nations at 111 E. 69th Street, New York, NY 10020 (212-734-4150).

ECONOMY

Mali's per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of $470 (2006 est.) places it among the world's 10 poorest nations. Its potential wealth lies in mining and the production of agricultural commodities, livestock, and fish. Agricultural activities occupy 70% of Mali's labor force and provide 36% of the GDP. Cotton, gold, and livestock made up 80%-90% of total export earnings in Mali in 2006. Small-scale traditional farming dominates the agricultural sector, with subsistence farming—of cereals, primarily sorghum, millet, and maize—on about 90% of the 1.4 million hectares (3.4 million acres) under cultivation. The high cost of petroleum products, the fall in the world market price for cotton and gold, and corresponding loss of customs revenues put pressure on the economy and led the government to be very tight on cash disbursements in recent years. In addition, the 2002-2003 closure of the main import/export route to the port of Abidjan increased the pressure on the fragile Malian economy. Nonetheless, a focus on quality cotton production and double-digit increases in cereal and gold production boosted real GDP growth from 2.2% in 2004 to 5.1% in 2005.

The most productive agricultural area lies along the banks of the Niger River between Bamako and Mopti and extends south to the borders of Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso. Average rainfall varies in this region from 50 centimeters per year (20 in.) around Mopti to 140 centimeters (55 in.) in the south near Sikasso. This area is most important for the production of cotton, rice, millet, corn, vegetables, tobacco, and tree crops.

Rice is grown extensively along the banks of the Niger between Ségou and Mopti, with the most important rice-producing area at the Office du Niger, located north of Ségou toward the Mauritanian border. Using water diverted from the Niger, the Office du Niger irrigates about 80,000 hectares of land for rice and sugarcane production. About one-third of Mali's paddy rice is produced at the Office du Niger.

The Niger River also is an important source of fish, providing food for riverside communities; the surplus—smoked, salted, and dried—is exported. Due to drought and diversion of river water for agriculture, fish production has steadily declined since the early 1980s. The government has started plans to develop fish breeding, mainly in the Niger delta, in order to boost fish production.

Sorghum is planted extensively in the drier parts of the country and along the banks of the Niger in eastern Mali, as well as in the lakebeds in the Niger delta region. During the dry season, farmers near the town of Diré have cultivated wheat on irrigated fields for hundreds of years. Peanuts are grown throughout the country but are concentrated in the area around Kita, west of Bamako.

Mali's resource in livestock consists of millions of cattle, sheep, and goats. Approximately 40% of Mali's herds were lost during the great drought in 1972-74. The level was gradually restored, but the herds were again decimated in the 1983-85 drought. The overall size of Mali's herds is not expected to reach pre-drought levels in the north of the country, where encroachment of the desert has forced many nomadic herders to abandon pastoral activities and turn instead to farming. The largest concentrations of cattle are in the areas north of Bamako and Ségou extending into the Niger delta, but herding activity is gradually shifting southward, due to the effects of previous droughts.

With the technical support of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded projects, private cooperatives developed a regional border market in the southern city of Sikasso. Livestock professionals contributed to a steady increase in cattle exports. Sheep, goats, and camels are raised to the exclusion of cattle in the dry areas north and east of Timbuktu.

Until the mid-1960s, Mali was self-sufficient in grains—millet, sorghum, rice, and corn. Diminished harvests during bad years, a growing population, changing dietary habits, and, most importantly, policy constraints on agricultural production resulted in grain deficits almost every year from 1965 to 1986. Production has rebounded since 1987, however, thanks to agricultural policy reforms undertaken by the government and supported by the Western donor nations. Liberalization of producer prices and an open cereals market have created incentives to production. These reforms, combined with

adequate rainfall, successful integrated rural agriculture programs in the south, and improved management of the Office du Niger, have led to surplus cereal production over the past 5 years. Except for 2002 and 2004, annual rainfall, critical for Mali's agriculture, has been at or above average since 1993. Cereal production, including rice, grew annually until 2002, when the country experienced a food production deficit, alleviated by donors' massive contributions to food security stocks. Locust infestation during the 2004 agricultural campaign prompted the government to seek assistance from the donor community in order to fill the gap in the regions that had a significant production deficit. The government anticipates a record harvest of 3.4 million tons in 2006/2007 due to abundant rainfall, 16% more than the average production of the past 5 years. Mali's cotton production grew from 500,000 tons in 1997 to a record 620,000 tons in 2003-2004, making Mali the largest cotton producer on the African continent. In 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, cotton production retreated respectively to 590,000 and 500,000 tons as the parastatal cotton company CMDT focused on quality of harvested cotton rather than quantity.

Mining is still a growing industry in Mali, with gold accounting for some 80% of mining activity. There are considerable proven reserves of other minerals not currently exploited. In 2002, gold briefly became Mali's number one export, before cotton and livestock. There are two large private investments in gold mining: Anglo-American ($250 million) and Randgold ($140 million), both multinational South African companies located respectively in the western and southern part of the country.

During the colonial period, private capital investment was virtually nonexistent, and public investment was devoted largely to the Office du Niger irrigation scheme and to administrative expenses. Following independence, Mali built some light industries with the help of various donors. Manufacturing, consisting principally of processed agricultural products, accounted for about 24% of the GDP in 2005. Tourism remains a small part of Mali's economy; it is a sector with significant potential. Mali's national parks, its ancient cities and archeological sites, Niger River cruises, cultural festivals, and magnificent desert landscapes are major attractions. Mali also is home to a rare herd of elephants that continues its unique annual migration to the edges of the Sahara Desert in the northern part of the country.

Economic Reforms

With the encouragement of the major donors and international financial institutions, the Government of Mali initiated a series of adjustment and stabilization programs beginning in 1982. Measures were introduced to reduce budgetary deficits, public enterprise operating losses, and public sector arrears.

Under the economic reform program signed with the World Bank and the IMF in 1988, the government has taken a number of steps to liberalize the regulatory environment and thereby attract private investment. For example, applications for the establishment of business enterprises now enjoy "one window"—guichet unique—processing through a single ministry, allowing a business to be established in a matter of days. In addition, price controls on consumer goods have been progressively eliminated; the last price control, on petroleum products, was removed on July 1, 1992. Import quotas were eliminated in 1988, and export taxes were dropped in 1991. The Commerce Code was revised in 1991 to remove impediments to commercial activity. The investment and the mining codes also were revised in the early 1990s in order to present a good investment climate. Also in 1991, a system of commercial and administrative courts was established to handle private trade complaints and claims against the government. During the period 1988-96, the government implemented a large reform program of the public enterprise sector, including the privatization of 16 enterprises, the partial privatization of 12, and the liquidation of 20; others were restructured. Among the 20 enterprises left, eight were privatized, including the largest—the electricity and water company (Energie du Mali, or EDM), and the textile company (Industry Textile du Mali, or ITEMA). The privatization of EDM was initially considered as a success, but the company returned to the government portfolio in mid-2005 when the French concessionaire SAUR and the Government of Mali agreed to end the 20-year concession. The government completed the concession of the railroad company to the Salt Lake City-based Savage Corporation in 2005. The privatization process for the cotton seed oil factory (Huilerie Cotonniere du Mali, or Huicoma), was completed in June 2005. The privatization completion date for two major companies—Societé de Telecommunications du Mali (SOTELMA) and the Cotton Ginning Company (CMDT)—is still uncertain, although target dates are set for 2008.

In 1999, the executive board of the IMF approved a 3-year loan for Mali under the enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) to support the government's economic reform program, for a total of $63 million. For the third ESAF covering the period April 1999-March 2002, the IMF board of directors urged the Malian authorities to persevere with their policy of fiscal consolidation, including the modernizing of the tax system, and to deepen and accelerate structural reforms and rehabilitate the judicial system. Mali was selected in 1999 as an eligible country to the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program and has been benefiting from the program since FY 2000 as a budgetary support. In April 2003, Mali reached the HIPC completion point with the result that former debt payments will now be used to fund poverty alleviation programs. Total debt relief under the original and the enhanced HIPC initiative will amount to about $539 million, representing a 37% reduction. As one of 14 African nations that have reached the HIPC completion point, Mali will benefit from multilateral debt forgiveness under the G8 Gleneagles debt forgiveness agreement.

Foreign Aid

Mali is a major recipient of foreign aid from many sources, including multilateral organizations (most significantly the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and Arab Funds), and bilateral programs funded by the European Union, France, United States, Canada, Netherlands, and Germany. Before 1991, the former Soviet Union had been a major source of economic and military aid, including construction of a cement plant and the Kalana gold mine. Currently, aid from Russia is restricted mainly to training and provision of spare parts. Chinese aid remains high, and Chinese-Malian joint venture companies became more numerous during the period 1999-2002, leading to the opening of a Chinese investment center. The Chinese are major participants in the textile and the sugar refinery industries and in large-scale construction projects, including irrigation infrastructures in the Niger Valley Authority (Office du Niger), a bridge across the Niger, a conference center, an expressway in Bamako, a new national stadium in Bamako, four regional stadiums completed for the Africa Cup competition in 2002, and three regional stadiums to be completed by June 2007.

In 2003, U.S. assistance reached $44.2 million: This included $40.7 million in sector support made available through U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs; a Peace Corps program budget of $2.8 million for 190 volunteers serving in Mali; Self-Help and the Democracy Funds of $153,000; and State Department Public Diplomacy Funds of $300,000 for educational opportunities and local projects. Military assistance includes $100,000 for the International Military Education Training (IMET) program, and $200,000 for the Regional Defense Counter Terrorism Fellowship (RDCTF) program. The Department of State dedicated $1.05 million to train militaries of the Pan Sahel countries, including Mali. Mali was granted eligibility for funding from the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) in 2004 and 2005. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Government of Mali signed a compact in October 2006 for a U.S. $460 million grant to support Mali's proposal for an agro-business development, airport modernization and extension, and an industrial zone development. Mali was also granted eligibility for funding from the President's Malaria Initiative for about U.S. $75 million.

DEFENSE

Mali's armed forces number some 7,000 and are under the control of the Minister of Defense and Veterans, as is the National Guard. The Gendarmerie and local police forces are under the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection. The police and gendarmes share responsibility for internal security; the police are in charge of urban areas only. In the 1960s and 1970s, Mali's Army and Air Force relied primarily on the Soviet Union for materiel and training. A few Malians receive military training in the United States, France, and Germany. Under the Pan Sahel Initiative, more troops got training and equipment in 2003-2004 and in subsequent years. Military expenditures total about 13% of the national budget.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since independence in 1960, Malian governments have shifted from an ideological commitment to socialism and a policy alignment with communist states to pragmatism that judges issues and their merits, welcomes assistance from all sources, and encourages private investment. The present government, which assumed office in 2002, is committed to democracy, economic reform, free market policies, regional integration, and international cooperation on peacekeeping and counter-terrorism activities. Mali is a member of the UN and many of its specialized agencies, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank; the International Labor Organization (ILO); the International Telecommunications Union (ITU); and the Universal Postal Union (UPU). It also belongs to the African Union (AU); the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC); the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); and the African Development Bank (ADB). Mali also is an associate member of the European Union (EU).

Mali is active in regional organizations. It participates in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic Monetary Union (UEMOA) for regional economic integration; Liptako-Gourma Authority, which seeks to develop the contiguous areas of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso; the Niger River Commission; the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS); and the Senegal River Valley Development Organization (OMVS).

U.S.-MALIAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Malian relations are excellent and expanding. They are based on shared goals of averting suffering and strengthening democracy. The bilateral agenda is dominated by efforts to increase broad-based growth, improve health and educational facilities, promote the sustainable use of natural resources, reduce the population growth rate, counter the spread of highly infectious diseases, encourage regional stability, build peacekeeping capabilities, institutionalize respect for human rights, and strengthen democratic institutions in offering good governance. Mali currently is a small market for U.S. trade and investment, but there is potential for considerable growth as its economy expands.

Mali is a leading regional partner in the Global War on Terrorism. Mali also serves as an important laboratory for testing new anti-malaria medicines for use by American citizen travelers and for research that will have an Africa-wide impact. USAID, Peace Corps, and other U.S. Government programs play a significant role in fostering sustainable economic and social development. USAID programs

also strengthen efforts to consolidate the peace process in northern Mali and the region's socioeconomic and political integration. Defense Department security assistance programs and training support help permit Mali to achieve its potential in international peacekeeping and counterterrorism efforts.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM/CHG:	Mary Beth Leonard
FM:	John Beauchamp
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MGT:	Matthew Cook
PO/CON:	Aaron Sampson
POL/ECO:	Glenn Fedzer
AMB:	Terence McCulley
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GSO:	Todd Tiffany
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AFSA:	Aaron Sampson
AID:	Alex Newton
CLO:	Patricia Nicole Wright
DAO:	Ltc. Eric Dalton
EEO:	Williette Gooding
FMO:	Cynthia Rafferty
ICASS Chair:	Eric Dalton
IMO:	James Doucette
ISSO:	Jimmey Aucoin, Jr.
State ICASS:	Aaron Sampson

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 19, 2008

Country Description: Mali is a developing country in western Africa with a stable and democratic government. The official language is French. The capital is Bamako. Facilities for tourism are limited.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. All travelers must have international vaccination cards with a current yellow fever immunization. Travelers should obtain the latest visa information and entry requirements from the Republic of Mali Embassy at 2130 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 332-2249. Inquiries can be made at the nearest Malian embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of Mali web site at http://www.maliembassy.us/ for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The U.S. Embassy in Bamako strongly advises American citizens to avoid traveling to the northern regions of Mali. U.S. Government employees serving in Mali, including those on temporary duty, are required to have approval from the Chief of Mission prior to traveling to areas north of the Niger River, including Timbuktu and areas or north of Timbuktu. Travelers should exercise caution when traveling in any isolated areas.

In August 2007, Tuareg dissidents attacked and kidnapped civilian and military convoys near the Mali-Niger border. On January 3, 2008, four Italians were robbed at gunpoint near Araouane, 150 miles north of Timbuktu, by assailants whose affiliation remains unknown. Tuareg rebels in the Kidal region attacked Malian military units in Tinzawaten and Boughessa in March 2008, in Abeibara in May 2008, and in Tessalit in July 2008. On October 16, 2008, bandits in the Kidal region of Mali carjacked two vehicles belonging to the International Committee for the Red Cross.

Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has a presence in northern Mali. AQIM began as a terrorist group seeking the overthrow of the Algerian government, and has been designated as a terrorist organization by both the United States and the European Union. On October 31, 2008, in northern Mali, AQIM freed two Austrian tourists kidnapped in Tunisia eight months earlier. The group has declared its intention to attack Algerian and Western targets.

This recent activity and the porous nature of Mali's northern borders with Mauritania and Algeria, as well as its eastern border with Niger, reinforce long-standing concerns about security for travel in northern Mali. The Department of State strongly urges citizens to reconsider traveling to northern Mali, including Timbuktu and Essakane.

Northern Mali hosts several annual music festivals in the desert, including one north of Timbuktu at Essakane, one north of Kidal at Essouk, and another near Menaka. These are official events sanctioned by the Government of Mali. Americans planning to attend these festivals or otherwise travel to the northern regions of Mali, despite this caution, are urged to notify the U.S. Embassy about their plans by e-mail at consularbamako@state.gov.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Violent crime in Mali is infrequent, but petty crimes, such as pick pocketing and simple theft, are common in urban areas. Passports and wallets should be closely guarded when in crowded outdoor areas and open-air markets. Individuals traveling on the Bamako-Dakar railroad are advised to be vigilant for pickpockets, especially at night. Criminals will not hesitate to use violence if they encounter resistance from their victims. There are sporadic reports of nighttime robberies occurring on the roads outside of the capital; tourists should not drive outside of Bamako at night. Travelers should stay alert, remain in groups, and avoid poorly lit areas after dark.

Sporadic banditry and random carjacking have historically plagued Mali's vast desert region and its borders with Mauritania and Niger.

While banditry is not seen as targeting U.S. citizens specifically, such acts of violence cannot be predicted.

On July 1, 2008, six people working as USAID contractors were robbed of their vehicle and all belongings, at gunpoint, by three bandits between the villages of Temera and Bourem, approximately 120 km (75 miles) northeast of Gao along the Niger River.

From May 2008 until July 2008, there were a series of attacks at various Malian government installations. While most of these have been in eastern Mali, on May 6, bandits attacked a military outpost in Diabali, 175 km (110 miles) north of Segou. While these actions appear directed exclusively at government security facilities, including military, gendarmerie and national guard bases, bandits have been known to stop cars at gunpoint while making their escape. Those traveling or living in Mali are strongly encouraged to register with the Embassy to allow e-mail notification should further attacks occur. Please see the Registration/Embassy Location information at the end of this article.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Mali is: 1212.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Mali are limited, especially outside of the capital, Bamako. Psychiatric care is non-existent. The U.S. Embassy in Bamako maintains a list of physicians and other healthcare professionals who may see U.S. citizen patients. The Embassy cannot guarantee these services or specifically recommend any physicians.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to, or foreign residents of, Mali.

Many American medicines are unavailable; French medications are more easily found. Available medications can be obtained at pharmacies throughout Bamako, and are usually less expensive than those in the U.S. Travelers should carry with them an adequate supply of needed medication and prescription drugs, along with copies of the prescriptions, including the generic names for the drugs. Caution should be taken to avoid purchasing potentially dangerous counterfeit medications when buying on the local market in Mali.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Mali is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

U.S. citizens traveling by road in Mali should exercise caution. Mali has paved roads leading from Bamako to Segou, Mopti and Sikasso. During the rainy season from mid-June to mid-September, some unpaved roads may be impassable. On many roads outside of the capital, deep sand and ditches are common. Four-wheel drive vehicles with spare tires and emergency equipment are recommended. Nighttime driving is particularly hazardous and not recommended.

Drivers drive on the right hand side of the road in Mali. Speed limits range from 40-60 KM per hour (25-40 miles per hour) within towns to 100 KM per hour (60 miles per hour) between cities. Road conditions often require lower speeds. Due to safety concerns, we recommend against the use of motorbikes, van taxis, and public transportation. Excessive speeds, poorly maintained vehicles, lack of street lighting and livestock pose serious road hazards. Many vehicles are not maintained well and headlights are either extremely dim or not used. Driving conditions in the capital of Bamako can be particularly dangerous due to limited street lighting, the absence of sidewalks for pedestrians, and the number of motorcycles, mopeds and bicycles.

The Malian authority for road safety is the Compagnie Nationale de Circulation Routiere in Bamako at telephone (223) 22-38-83.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Mali, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Mali's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Mali is signatory to the Treaty on Cultural Property, which restricts exportation of Malian archeological objects, in particular those from the Niger River Valley. Visitors seeking to export any such property are required by Malian law to obtain an export authorization from the National Museum in Bamako. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Mali in Washington or the nearest Malian consulate for specific information regarding customs requirements. U.S. Customs and Border Protection may impose corresponding import restrictions in accordance with the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act.

Currency exchange facilities are slow and often involve out-of-date rates. The U.S. Embassy cannot provide exchange facilities for private Americans. There are a few ATMs in Bamako that accept American credit cards and debit cards with a Visa logo only. Maximum withdrawals are generally limited to $400, and local banks charge up to $20 per transaction for use of their ATMs. There are no ATMs outside of Bamako. Credit cards are accepted only at major hotels, a few travel agencies, and select restaurants. Cash advances on credit cards are available from only one bank in Mali, the BMCD Bank in Bamako, and the only card they accept for this is Visa.

The U.S. Embassy does not always receive timely notification by Malian authorities of the arrest of Americans. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their passport with them at all times, so that proof of identity and citizenship are readily available in the event of questioning by local authorities. If arrested, U.S. citizens should always politely insist they be allowed to contact the U.S. Embassy (see section on Registration/ Embassy Location below).

Photographing military subjects is restricted. One should also obtain explicit permission from the Malian government before photographing transportation facilities and government buildings. Taking a photograph without permission in any public area may provoke a response from security personnel or offend the people being photographed. Taking photos of the U.S. Embassy is also prohibited.

International telephone calls are expensive, and collect calls cannot be made from outside of Bamako.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Mali's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mali are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Mali are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy or through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Mali. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in ACI 2000 at Rue 243, Porte 297. The Embassy's mailing address is B.P. 34, Bamako, Mali. The telephone number is (223) 270-2300. The consular fax number is (223) 270-2340. The Embassy webpage is at http://mali.usembassy.gov.



MALTA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Malta

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 316 sq. km. (122 sq. mi.); about twice the size of the District of Columbia.
Cities: Valletta (capital), Sliema, Birkirkara.
Terrain: Low hills.
Climate: Mediterranean with hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Maltese.
Population: (2007) 401,880.
Ethnic groups: Caucasian Maltese.
Religions: (2003) Roman Catholic, 98%.
Languages: Maltese, English.
Education: (2003) Years compulsory—until age 16. Attendance—96%. Literacy—93%.
Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)—3.82. Life expectancy at birth—males 76.95, females 81.47 (2007 est.)
Work force: 149,008; public sector 29%, services 47%, manufacturing 16%, construction and quarrying 8%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: September 1964.
Constitution: 1964; revised 1974; revised 1987.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral House of Representatives. Judicial—Constitutional Court.
Political subdivisions: 13 electoral districts
Political parties: Nationalist Party, Malta Labor Party, Alternattiva Demokratika (Green Party), Azzjoni Nazzjonali (National Action).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $6.39 billion.
Annual growth rate: 5.5% (at 2006 market prices), 2.9% (2006 real terms).
Per capita income: $15,165.
National resources: Limestone, salt.
Services: (75% of GDP).
Industry: (22.5% of GDP) Types—, semiconductors, electronics, information and communications technology, shipbuilding and repair, rubber and plastic products, toys, jewelry, food, beverages.
Agriculture: (2.5% GDP) Products—fodder crops, potatoes, onions, Mediterranean fruits and vegetables.
Trade: (2006) Exports—$3.05 billion: Types—machinery and transport equipment, miscellaneous manufactured articles, chemicals, semi-manufactured goods, food, mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials, beverages and tobacco, crude materials. Major markets—Eurozone area, U.S., Singapore. Imports—$4.73 billion: Types—Machinery and transport equipment, miscellaneous manufactured articles, semi-manufactured goods, food, mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials, chemicals, beverages and tobacco, crude materials, miscellaneous transactions and commodities. Major suppliers—Eurozone area, U.K., Singapore, U.S.
Trade balance (2007) $1.68 billion.
Budget: (2008 revised estimates) Revenues $3.28 billion; expenditures $2.6 billion; capital expenditures of $449 million.
Exchange rate: (2007) $1=Euro 0.7306 (rate fluctuates).

PEOPLE

Malta is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with about 3,000 inhabitants per square mile (1,160 per square kilometer). This compares with about 55 per square mile (21 per square kilometer) for the United States. Inhabited since prehistoric times, Malta was first colonized by the Phoenicians. Subsequently, Romans, Arabs, Normans, the Knights Hospitallers of St. John of Jerusalem, and the British have

influenced Maltese life and culture to varying degrees. Most of the foreign community in Malta, predominantly active or retired British nationals and their dependents, centers around Sliema and surrounding suburbs. There is also a growing North African community of about 4,000 (2007).

The Constitution establishes Roman Catholicism as the religion of Malta; however, it also guarantees full liberty of conscience and freedom of worship and a number of faiths have places of worship on the island. Malta has two official languages—Maltese (a Semitic language with much vocabulary borrowed from Sicilian Italian) and English. The literacy rate has reached 93%, compared to 63% in 1946. Schooling is compulsory until age 16.

HISTORY

Malta was an important cultic center for earth-mother worship in the 4th millennium B.C. Archeological work shows a developed religious center there, including the world's oldest free-standing architecture, predating that of Sumer and Egypt. Malta's written history began well before the Christian era. The Phoenicians, and later the Carthaginians, established ports and trading settlements on the island. During the second Punic War (218 B.C.), Malta became part of the Roman Empire. During Roman rule, in A.D. 60, Saint Paul was shipwrecked on Malta. In 533 A.D. Malta became part of the Byzantine Empire and in 870 came under Arab control. Arab occupation and rule left a strong imprint on Maltese life, customs, and language. The Arabs were driven out in 1090 by a band of Norman adventurers under Count Roger of Normandy, who had established a kingdom in southern Italy and Sicily. Malta thus became an appendage of Sicily for 440 years. During this period, Malta was sold and resold to various feudal lords and barons and was dominated successively by the rulers of Swabia (now part of Germany), Aquitaine (now part of France), Aragon (now part of Spain), Castile (now part of Spain), and Spain. In 1522, Suleiman II drove the Knights of St. John out of Rhodes. They dispersed to their commanderies in Europe and after repeated requests for territory to Charles V, in 1530 the Knights were given sovereignty of Malta under the suzerainty of the Kings of Sicily. In 1523, a key date in Maltese history, the islands were ceded by Charles V of Spain to the Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. For the next 275 years, these famous "Knights of Malta" made the island their domain.

They built towns, palaces, churches, gardens, and fortifications and embellished the island with numerous works of art and enhanced cultural heritage. In 1565, Suleiman the Magnificent laid siege to Malta. After several months the Knights and the Maltese population prevailed and the Turks withdrew. Over the years, the power of the Knights declined, however, and their rule of Malta ended with their peaceful surrender to Napoleon in 1798.

The people of Malta rose against French rule, which lasted two years, and with the help of the British evicted them in 1800. In 1814, Malta voluntarily became part of the British Empire. Under the United Kingdom, the island became a military and naval fortress, the headquarters of the British Mediterranean fleet. During World War II, Malta survived relentless raids from German and Italian military forces (1940-43). A crucial moment in Maltese history was August 15, 1942, when five out of 14 vessels that formed part of "Operation Pedestal," and that included the American tanker SS Ohio, broke through the Nazi blockade of Malta to deliver fuel and food to the starving population. The arrival of the vessels was the turning point in the Maltese islands' fate and became known as the Santa Marija Convoy, for the August 15 Feast of the Assumption locally known as Santa Marija. In recognition, King George VI in 1942 awarded the George Cross "to the island fortress of Malta—its people and defenders." President Franklin Roosevelt, describing the wartime period, called Malta "one tiny bright flame in the darkness—a beacon of hope for the clearer days which have come." In September 1943, the Italian fleet's surrender in Malta was signed by U.S. General Dwight Eisenhower and Italian Marshal Pietro Badoglio. Victory Day, celebrated on September 8, commemorates victory in the 1565 Great Siege, and the end of the WWII attacks in Malta. Malta obtained independence on September 21, 1964, became a Republic on December 13, 1974, and a member of the European Union on May 1, 2004. The last British forces left in March 1979.

GOVERNMENT

Under its 1964 constitution, Malta became a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth. Queen Elizabeth II was Malta's sovereign, and a governor general exercised executive authority on her behalf, while the actual direction and control of the government and the nation's affairs were in the hands of the cabinet under the leadership of a Maltese prime minister.

On December 13, 1974, the constitution was revised, and Malta became a republic within the Commonwealth, with executive authority vested in a Maltese president. The president is appointed by parliament. In turn, he appoints as prime minister the leader of the party that wins a majority of seats in a general election for the unicameral House of Representatives.

The president also nominally appoints, upon recommendation of the prime minister, the individual ministers to head each of the government departments. The cabinet is selected from among the members of the House of Representatives, the number of which may vary between 65 and 69 members elected on the basis of proportional representation. The Constitution provides for general elections to be held at least every five years. Candidates are elected by the Single Transferable Vote system, where the surplus votes of an elected candidate are transferred to the candidate receiving the second preference votes. The process of vote transfers continues until all five can-



didates for a district are elected. Malta's judiciary is independent. The chief justice and 18 judges, one of whom is currently serving in an international court, are appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister after consultation with the leader of the opposition. Their mandatory retirement age is 65. The highest court, the Constitutional Court, hears appeals in cases involving violations of human rights, interpretation of the constitution, and invalidity of laws. It also has jurisdiction in cases concerning disputed parliamentary elections and electoral corrupt practices. There is a civil court, a family court, and a criminal court. In the latter, the presiding judge sits with a jury of nine. The court of appeal hears appeals from decisions of the civil court and of various boards and tribunals, including the Industrial, Small Claims, and Consumers' Tribunal. The court of criminal appeal hears appeals from judgments of conviction by the criminal court. There are also inferior courts presided over by a magistrate. The Local Councils Act, 1993 divided Malta into 68 localities, 14 of them in the smaller island of Gozo. Councilors are elected every three years by inhabitants who are registered as voters in the Electoral Register.

Elections are held by means of the system of proportional representation using the single transferable vote. The Mayor is the head of the Local Council and the representative of the Council for all effects under the Act. The Executive Secretary, who is appointed by the Council, is the executive, administrative, and financial head of the Council. All decisions are taken collectively with the other members of the Council. Local Councils are responsible for the general upkeep and embellishment of the locality, local wardens, and refuse collection; they carry out general administrative duties for the Central Government, such as collection of Government rents and funds and answering Government-related public inquiries. The Act also provides for Councils to make, amend and revoke by-laws as necessary for the better execution of the Councils' functions and to improve the localities' environment.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Edward FENECH-ADAMI**
Prime Min.: **Lawrence GONZI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Tonio BORG**
Min. for Communications & Projects: **Austin GATT**
Min. for Education & Culture: **Dolores CRISTINA**
Min. of Finance: **Tonio FENECH**
Min. for Gozo: **Giovanna DEBONO**
Min. for Justice & Home Affairs: **Carmelo MIFSUD BONNICI**
Min. of Resources & Rural Affairs: **George PULLICINO**
Min. of Social Policy: **John DALLI**
Governor, Central Bank: **Michael BONELLO**
Ambassador to the US: **Mark MICELI FARRUGIA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Saviour BORG**

Malta maintains an embassy in the United States at 2017 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (202-462-3611).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Two parties dominate Malta's polarized and evenly divided politics—the Nationalist Party, led by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi, and the Malta Labor Party. Elections invariably generate a widespread voter turnout; in March 2008 the turnout was 93%.

The margin between the two parties is so narrow that a 52% share of the votes is considered a "landslide" for the winning party. In the March 2008 elections, the Nationalist Party won reelection with 49.3% of the vote, earning it 35 seats, while the Labor Party received 48.8% of the vote (and 34 seats). While the two main parties dominate, two other parties were on the ballot in 2008, Alternative Demokratika (Green Party) and Azzjoni Nazzjonali (National Action); neither managed to secure a seat in parliament.

The first elections of European Parliament MPs were held on June 12, 2004 and resulted in the election of two candidates from the governing Nationalist Party and three from the opposition Malta Labor Party.

ECONOMY

During the first eight months of 2007, economic growth increased by 3.6%. Possessing few indigenous raw materials and a very small domestic market, Malta has based its economic development on the promotion of tourism, accounting for roughly 30% of GDP, and exports of manufactured goods, mainly semi-conductors, which account for some 75% of total Maltese exports. Since the beginning of the 1990s, expansion in these activities has been the principal engine for strong growth in the Maltese economy.

Tourist arrivals and foreign exchange earnings derived from tourism have steadily increased since the late 1970s. The introduction of low-cost flights in 2007 was the main contributor to the 7.6% increase in tourist arrivals since January 2007. Many cruise lines have also added Malta as a destination in 2007, and the sector has seen a 26.6% increase since January 2007. The relatively flexible labor markets kept unemployment fairly steady at 3.9% between January-June 2007. With its highly educated, English-speaking population, Malta has seen growth in high value-added manufacturing and in the services sector, away from the traditional low-cost manufacturing in textiles. The banking system remains highly concentrated with two of the four local commercial banks accounting for about 90% of total loans and deposits.

The Maltese Government has pursued a policy of gradual economic liberalization, taking some steps to shift the emphasis in trade and financial policies from reliance on direct government intervention and control to policy regimes that allow a greater role for market mechanisms. Malta's accession into the EU marked the total dismantling of protective import levies on industrial products, increasing the outward orientation of the economy. Malta joined the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (ERM-II) in 2005 to put itself on the path to enter the Eurozone, and in January 2008 it formally adopted the Euro as its official currency. Consolidation of public finances has improved over recent years. The budget deficit was brought down from 10.7% of GDP in 1998 to 2.5% of GDP in 2006, a figure that was below the 3% required by the Maastricht criteria. For this reason the European Commission abrogated the excessive deficit procedure for Malta earlier in 2007. The budget deficit for 2007 was estimated to be 1.6% of GDP.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Malta's diplomatic and consular representation includes accreditation to 152 foreign countries and international organizations. Malta is host to 20 resident diplomatic missions, and 112 countries have non-resident diplomatic representation. With its central location in the Mediterranean, Malta has long viewed itself as a bridge between Europe and North Africa, particularly Libya, with whom it has enjoyed positive diplomatic and commercial ties. Malta is one of the southernmost points of the European Union. Malta continues to be an active participant in the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the Council of Europe, OSCE, and various other international organizations. In these fora, Malta has frequently expressed its concern for the peace and economic development of the Mediterranean region. The Nationalist Party government is continuing a policy of neutrality and nonalignment but in a Western context. The government desires close relations with the United States, with an emphasis on increased trade and private investment. U.S. Navy ships resumed liberty calls in 1992 and currently visit on a regular basis.

U.S.-MALTESE RELATIONS

Malta and the United States established full diplomatic relations upon Malta's independence in 1964; overall relations are currently active and cordial. The United States has been sympathetic to Malta's campaign to attract private investment, and some firms operating in Malta have U.S. ownership or investment. These include major hotels, manufacturing and repair facilities, and some offices servicing local and regional operations.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

VALLETTA (E) 3 St. Anne's Street, Floriana, [356] 2561-4000, Fax [356] 2124-3229, Workweek: 8:00-4:30, Website: http://malta.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Renee Macewen
AMB OMS:	Diane Edge
COM/CON:	Matthew Scott
CON/POL/ECO:	Monica Cummings
ECO:	Noah Hardie
HRO:	Marietta Bartoletti
MGT:	Marietta Bartoletti
POL/ECO:	Monica Cummings
AMB:	Molly Bordonaro
CON:	Eric Catalfamo
DCM:	Jason Davis
PAO:	Cynthia Ehrlich
GSO:	Lolita Jones
RSO:	A.D. Aderinto
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Cdr. Philip Munaco
FMO:	Marietta Bartoletti
ICASS Chair:	Eric Catalfamo
IMO:	Bruce Macewen
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
ISO:	Terry Poczak
ISSO:	Bruce Macewen
State ICASS:	Marietta Bartoletti

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 26, 2008

Country Description: Malta is a small, developed, democratic Mediterranean island nation, positioned as a cultural stepping-stone between Europe and North Africa. Malta became a member of the European Union with nine other new member states on May 1, 2004, and became a full member of the Schengen area in March 2008. Tourist facilities of all categories are widely available.

Entry Requirements: Malta is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Malta for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. For further information concerning entry requirements for Malta, travelers should contact the Embassy of Malta at 2017 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20008, tel.: (202) 462-3611, website: http://www.foreign.gov.mt, or the Maltese Consulate in New York City, tel.: (212) 725-2345.

Safety and Security: Malta remains largely free of terrorist incidents. No indigenous terrorist or extremist groups are known to be active in Malta, and no foreign terrorist organization has carried out an attack against U.S. interests in Malta in recent years. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Malta has a low rate of violent crime. Theft of unattended personal property and car stereos from vehicles is a common problem. Visitors are strongly encouraged to secure their valuables, and be aware of pickpockets and purse snatchers. Such criminals focus on areas and establishments frequented by tourists. Caution is particularly urged in the Paceville nightclub area, where excessive drinking and poor crowd control have led to instances of violent behavior. Poverty, homelessness, and panhandling are almost nonexistent in Malta. All visitors to Malta should practice the same good, common sense personal security precautions that are part of everyday life in urban areas within the U.S., particularly when spending time in areas frequented by tourists.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The crime victim's assistance agency is 'APPOGG'-Support Line, tel: 179; web site: www.appogg.gov.mt.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in Malta are: Police 191; Ambulance 196; Fire 199.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is available through public and private hospitals. The quality of medical care in Malta is excellent. Private hospitals generally offer a higher standard of service than the public hospitals, and the majority of the best doctors practice in private medical facilities.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Malta is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Malta flows on the left, requiring attentiveness and caution from visitors from right-hand drive countries such as the United States. In addition, drivers may be erratic or undisciplined. Roads flood easily, and are often narrow, winding, and congested, with poor visibility around curves. Traffic arteries are prone to bottlenecks and accidents.

Buses are the primary means of public transportation. Though the bus fleet is being modernized, most buses are old, cramped, and not air-conditioned. Taxis are safe but expensive and are not metered; it is a good practice to agree with the driver in

advance on the charge. There is a Malta Tourist Information Office located at Freedom Square Valletta, Tel. No. 21-237-747, web site: www.mta.co.mt. Road safety information can be obtain through the Ministry for Urban Development & Roads web site at www.mudr.gov.mt.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Malta's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Malta's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Malta customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning currency restrictions and temporary importation into or export from Malta of items such as firearms, antiquities, and any item that might be deemed to have resalable value. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Malta in Washington or the Consulate of Malta in New York City for specific information regarding customs requirements. Malta's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters located at U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information call (212) 354-4480, send an e-mail to atacarnet@uscib.org or visit http://uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Malta's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Malta are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Malta are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Malta. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is on the third floor of the Development House, St. Anne Street, Floriana, Valletta, telephone (356) 2561-4000. The Consular Section's telephone number is (356) 2156-4115, fax: (356) 2124-3229, web site: http://malta.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Adoption Authority: The adoption authority in Malta is:

Department for Social Welfare Standard
Adoption Unit, Ministry for Families and Social Solidarity,
469, St. Joseph High Road
Santa Venera, Malta
Contact Person: Ms. Laura Aguis
email: laura.agius@gov.mt
Telephone:
(356) 21441311; 21470877
Fax: (356) 21- 447611

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptions in Malta are regulated by the Civil Code dating from 1962. The laws take into account developments in child welfare and suitability of pre-placement and placement. The following persons are eligible to apply to adopt a child:

- Single persons who have reached the age of thirty and have not attained the age of sixty.
- A couple who has been married and living together for at least five years. One of the spouses attained the age of thirty but has not reached the age of sixty.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be residents of Malta.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Those interested in adoption in Malta should refer directly to the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity. For attorneys with relevant experience and expertise please consult the attorneys list on the American Embassy Website: http://valletta.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: No processing fees are incurred in making use of the service of the Department of Family Welfare, Adoption Unit.

Adoption Procedures: Persons interested in adopting a child should

seek the advice of the Department for Social Welfare on the proper procedures to be adopted. All prospective adoptive parents will be required to attend preparation group sessions and a subsequent assessment. The preparatory group sessions and assessment normally takes seven to ten weeks to complete.

A declaration of eligibility and suitability is issued in favor of applicants who are deemed eligible as stipulated by the Civil Code and by a social worker following submission of the home study report.

Required Documents:

- Government issued certified copy of birth certificate/s from the Government of Malta Public Registry;
- Government issued certified copy of marriage certificate from the Government of Malta Public Registry;
- Certificate/s of conduct from the police;
- Blood test for HIV and hepatitis;
- Medical report/s by a family doctor on a form obtainable from the Adoption Unit;
- Photos of the applicants: sized 40mm x 30mm, colored with a white background;
- Statement of family income from the Government of Malta Inland Revenue Service for the previous tax year.

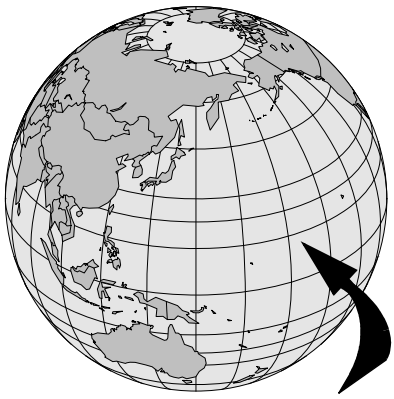
Embassy of Malta
2017 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 387-5470
E-mail:
Malta_Embassy@compuserve.com

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*.

Embassy of the United States
Development House, 3rd Floor
St. Anne Street, Floriana,
Malta VLT 01
Mailing address:
P.O. Box 535, Valletta,
Malta, CMR 01
Telephone Numbers: (356) 2561 4000
Fax: (356) 21 243229
E-mail: usembmalta@state.gov

Consulate General of the United States
Piazza della Repubblica
80122 Napoli, Italy
Tel. (+39) 081.5838.111
Fax (+39) 081.7611.869

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Malta may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Malta. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MARSHALL ISLANDS

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of the Marshall Islands

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 181 sq. km. (about 70 sq. mi.) of land area scattered over 750,000 sq. mi. of the Western Pacific.

Cities: Capital—Majuro (pop. 25,000 in 2005). Other towns—Ebeye (12,000 in 2005), Jaluit (1,700 est. 2005).

Terrain: 29 low-lying coral atolls and five single islands.

Climate: Tropical with a wet season from May to November.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Marshallese.

Population: (2006 est.) 52,338. (Figures do not include Marshallese in the U.S., where colonies of unknown sizes exist.)

Annual growth rate: (2006) 0.7% (due to high annual emigration).

Ethnic groups: 90% Marshallese, 10% estimated U.S., Filipino, Chinese, New Zealander, Australian, other Micronesian (FSM), Kiribati, Korean, and Fijian.

Religions: Christian, mostly Protestant.

Languages: Two major Marshallese dialects from Malayo-Polynesian family; English;

Education: Literacy (2002)—98% (officially based on question, "Do you read the bible?").

Health: Infant mortality rate—(2006) 3.0% Majuro and Ebeye, 9.4% on outer atolls. Life expectancy—men 65.7 yrs.; women 69.4 yrs.

Work force: (2006) 25,706 of working age: 39% employed, 61% unemployed or inactive. National and local government and government enterprises—45.9%; private enterprise and non-profits—41%; USAKA and foreign embassies—13%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy in free association with the U.S. A Compact of Free Association entered into force in 1986 and an Amended Compact entered into force May 1, 2004.

Independence: October 21, 1986 from the U.S.-administered UN trusteeship.

Constitution: May 1, 1979.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral parliament (Nitijela) and consultative Council of Iroij (traditional leaders). Judicial—Supreme Court, high court, district and community courts, traditional rights court.

Political parties: United Democratic Party and United People's Party.

Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Political subdivisions: 24 local governments.

Economy

GDP: (current market prices, 2007) $149.5 million est.

Natural resources: Marine resources, including mariculture and possible deep seabed minerals.

Agriculture: Products—Copra (dried coconut meat); taro and breadfruit are subsistence crops.

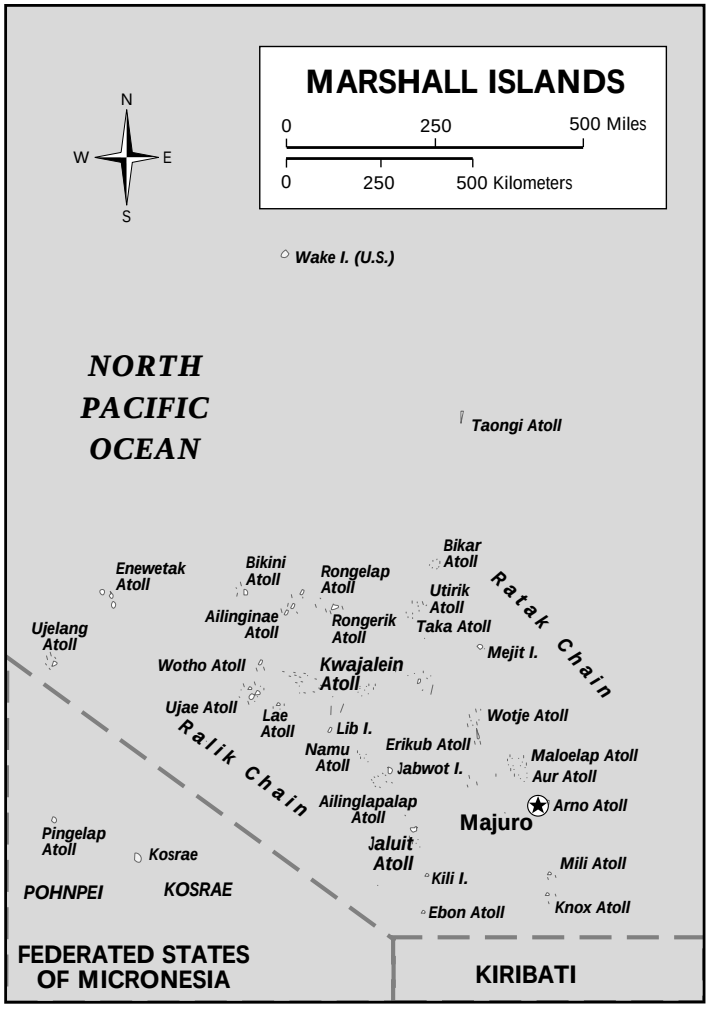
Industry: Types—Copra processing, fish processing, tourism, pearl farming, handicrafts.

Trade: Major trading partners—U.S., Japan, Australia, China, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Taiwan.

Currency: U.S. dollar.

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

The Marshall Islands is comprised of 29 atolls and five single islands, which form two parallel groups—the "Ratak" (sunrise) chain and the "Ralik" (sunset) chain. Two-thirds of the nation's population lives in Majuro and Ebeye. The outer islands are sparsely populated due to lack of employment opportunities and economic development. The Marshallese are of Micronesian origin, which is traced to a combination of peoples who emigrated from Southeast Asia



in the remote past. The matrilineal Marshallese culture revolves around a complex system of clans and lineages tied to land ownership.

Virtually all Marshallese are Christian, most of them Protestant. Other Christian denominations include Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Mormon, Salvation Army, and Jehovah's Witness. A small Bahai community also exists.

Marshallese is the official language. English is spoken to some extent by most of the adult urban population. However, both the Nitijela (parliament) and national radio use Marshallese. The public school system provides education through grade 12, although admission to secondary school is selective. The elementary program employs a bilingual/bicultural curriculum. English is introduced in the fourth grade. Many Marshallese and American observers have lamented the poor state of the public education system as a major stumbling block to economic development.

The Marshall Islands' largest secondary institution—the 2-year College of the Marshall Islands—has experienced U.S. accreditation problems since 2003. However, thanks to an increase in funding, it has shown steady improvement since and is heading toward full accreditation. The University of the South Pacific offers courses at a small campus on Majuro.

HISTORY

Little is clearly understood about the prehistory of the Marshall Islands. Researchers agree on little more than that successive waves of migratory peoples from Southeast Asia spread across the Western Pacific about 3,000 years ago and that some of them landed on and remained on these islands. The Spanish explorer de Saavedra landed there in 1529. They were named for English explorer John Marshall, who visited them in 1799. The Marshall Islands were claimed by Spain in 1874. Germany established a protectorate in 1885 and set up trading stations on the islands of Jaluit and Ebon to carry out the flourishing copra (dried coconut meat) trade. Marshallese Iroij (high chiefs) continued to rule under indirect colonial German administration.

At the beginning of World War I, Japan assumed control of the Marshall Islands. Their headquarters remained at the German center of administration, Jaluit. U.S. Marines and Army troops took control from the Japanese in early 1944, following intense fighting on Kwajalein and Enewetak atolls. In 1947, the United States, as the occupying power, entered into an agreement with the UN Security Council to administer Micronesia, including the Marshall Islands, as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. On May 1, 1979, in recognition of the evolving political status of the Marshall Islands, the United States recognized the constitution of the Marshall Islands and the establishment of the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The constitution incorporates both American and British constitutional concepts.

GOVERNMENT

The legislative branch of the government consists of the Nitijela (parliament) with an advisory council of high chiefs. The Nitijela has 33 members from 24 districts elected for concurrent 4-year terms. Members are called senators. The president is

elected by the Nitijela from among its members. Presidents pick cabinet members from the Nitijela. Amata Kabua was elected as the first president of the republic in 1979. Subsequently, he was re-elected to 4-year terms in 1983, 1987, 1991, and 1996. After Amata Kabua's death in office, his first cousin, Imata Kabua, won a special election in 1997. The third president, Kessai Note, served two 4-year terms from 2000 to 2008. The current president was elected in January 2008. The Republic of the Marshall Islands has four court systems: Supreme Court, high court, district and community courts, and the traditional rights court. Trial is by jury or judge. Jurisdiction of the traditional rights court is limited to cases involving titles or land rights or other disputes arising from customary law and traditional practice.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Litokwa TOMEING**
Min. of Assistance to the Pres.: **Christopher J. LOEAK**
Min. of Education: **Nidel LORAK**
Min. of Finance: **Jack ADING**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Anton "Tony" DEBRUM**
Min. of Health: **Amenta MATTHEW**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Norman MATTHEW**
Min. of Justice: **David KRAMER**
Min. of Public Works: **Kejjo BIEN**
Min. of Resources & Development: **Frederick H. MULLER**
Min. of Transportation & Communications: **Dennis MOMOTARO**
Ambassador to the US: **Banny DE BRUM**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Alfred CAPELLE**

The Republic of the Marshall Islands maintains an embassy at 2433 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-234-5414). It has a consulate at 1888 Lusitana St., Suite 301, Honolulu, HI 96813 (tel. 808-545-7767), and small embassies in Tokyo, Suva, and Taipei. The Marshall Islands' mission to the United Nations is located at the News Building, 220 E. 42nd St., 31st Floor, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-983-3040).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Citizens of the Marshall Islands live with a relatively new democratic political system combined with a hierarchical traditional culture. The first two presidents were chiefs. Former President Kessai Note is a commoner. The current president, Litokwa Tomeing, is a traditional chief. There have been a number of local and national elections since the Republic of the Marshall Islands was founded, and in general, democracy has functioned well. The United Democratic Party, running on a reform platform, won the 1999 parliamentary election, taking control of the presidency and cabinet. Elections on November 19, 2007 elected a new Nitijela that took office in January 2008, giving control of the government to the opposition.

ECONOMY

The government is the largest employer, employing 46% of the salaried work force. GDP is derived mainly from payments made by the United States under the terms of the Compact of Free Association. Direct U.S. aid accounted for 60.2% of the Marshall Islands' $124.6 million budget for FY 2007.

The economy combines a small subsistence sector and a modern urban sector. In short, fishing and breadfruit, banana, taro, and pandanus cultivation constitute the subsistence sector. On the outer islands, production of copra and handicrafts provides some cash income. The modern service-oriented economy is located in Majuro and Ebeye. It is sustained by government expenditures and the U.S. Army installation at Kwajalein Atoll. The airfield there also serves as a second national hub for international flights.

The modern sector consists of wholesale and retail trade; restaurants; banking and insurance; construction, repair, and professional services; and copra processing. Copra cake and oil are by far the nation's largest exports. A tuna loining plant that will employ 500 workers—starting at $1.50 per hour—reopened in early 2008. Copra production, the most important single commercial activity for the past 100 years, now depends on government subsidies. The subsidies, more a social policy than an economic strategy, are intended to help reduce migration from outer atolls to densely populated Majuro and Ebeye. Migration from the outer islands is estimated at 8% annually.

Marine resources, including fishing, aquaculture, tourism development, and agriculture, are top government development priorities. The Marshall Islands sells fishing rights to other nations as a source of income. Since 1990, the Marshall Islands has offered ship registrations under the Marshall Islands flag. It now registers about 1,400 vessels, the fourth-largest fleet in the world, and receives an income of approximately a million dollars annually. As a small nation, the Marshall Islands must import a wide variety of goods, including foodstuffs, consumer goods, machinery, and petroleum products.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

While the Government of the Marshall Islands is free to conduct its own foreign relations, it does so under the terms of the Compact of Free Association. Since independence, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has established relations with 67 nations, including most other Pacific Island nations. Regional cooperation, through membership in various regional and international organizations, is a key element in its foreign policy.

The Marshall Islands became a member of the United Nations in September 1991. The Marshall Islands maintains embassies in the U.S., Fiji, Japan, and Taiwan.

U.S.-MARSHALLESE RELATIONS

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a sovereign nation in "free association" with the United States. After more than a decade of negotiation, the Marshall Islands and the United States signed the Compact of Free Association on June 25, 1983. The people of the Marshall Islands approved the Compact in a UN-observed plebiscite on September 7, 1983. The U.S. Congress subsequently approved the Compact, adding several amendments which were accepted by the Government of the Marshall Islands, and the Compact entered into force on October 21, 1986. From 1999-2003, the two nations negotiated an Amended Compact that entered into force on May 1, 2004. Under the Amended Compact, the U.S. will provide the Marshall Islands at least $57 million every year until 2023, including contributions to a jointly managed Trust Fund. Marshallese will continue to have access to many U.S. programs and services. A Joint Economic Management and Financial Accountability Committee (JEMFAC) comprised of representatives of both governments will ensure that Compact assistance funds are spent effectively.

Under the Compact, the United States has full authority and responsibility for security and defense of the Marshall Islands, and the Government of the Marshall Islands is obligated to refrain from taking actions that would be incompatible with these security and defense responsibilities.

The Department of Defense, under a subsidiary government-to-government agreement of the original Compact, has use of the lagoon and several islands on Kwajalein Atoll. The atoll consists of approximately 90 islets around the largest lagoon in the world. The original agreement allowed the United States continued use of the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA) missile test range until 2016. An amendment to that agreement, extending U.S. rights until 2066 with an option until 2086, was negotiated in conjunction with the Amended Compact. Another major subsidiary agreement of the original Compact provides for settlement of all claims arising from the U.S. nuclear tests conducted at Bikini and Enewetak Atolls from 1946 to 1958. Under the terms of free association, more than 40 U.S. Government agencies such as the Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Postal Service, the Small Business Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency operate programs or render assistance to the Marshall Islands.

The United States and the Marshall Islands have full diplomatic relations. The Marshall Islands has expressed an interest in attracting U.S. investment.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MAJURO (E) PO BOX 1379, Majuro MH 96960, APO/FPO None -Pouch: 4380 Majuro Place, 692-247-4011, Fax 011 (692) 247-4012/5371, Workweek: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Website: http://majuro.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Darlene K. Korok
AMB OMS:	Darlene Korok
DCM/CHG:	Douglas Morris
AMB:	Clyde Bishop
CON:	Douglas Morris
DCM:	Douglas Morris
GSO:	Helen Dabbs
RSO:	Embassy Manila (Mr. Philip Sims)
EEO:	Darlene Korok
IPO:	Helen Dabbs
ISSO:	Helen Dabbs
MLO:	Tom Maus
POL:	Adam Mitchell

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 13, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of the Marshall Islands totals 70.5 square miles and is composed of two coral atoll chains in the Central Pacific. The Marshall Islands is a parliamentary democracy, and has signed a Compact of Free Association with the United States. It has a developing agrarian and service-oriented economy. Tourist facilities are not widely available, but those that exist are adequate. The capital, Majuro, has three major hotels. Several other atolls have limited guest quarters.

Entry Requirements: Visas are not required for U.S. citizens; U.S. citizens have liberal travel rights under the Compact of Free Association. There is a departure fee; diplomats are exempt. A health certificate is required if you are arriving from an area that is currently experiencing an epidemic. For visits over 30 days, an AIDS test may be required.

For further information on entry requirements for the Marshall Islands, please contact the Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, at 2433 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008. The telephone number is (202) 234-5414.

Safety and Security: Travel around the Marshall Islands is safe. Travelers should be aware that flights to outer islands are often cancelled, sometimes leaving visitors stranded. The Marshall Islands' reliance primarily on radio for communication among the remote outer islands causes some communication problems.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The Marshall Islands has a relatively low crime rate. The most common crimes are break-ins and

thefts from homes, hotel rooms, and vehicles, as well as occasional random acts of vandalism. There have been a few recent but isolated incidents in which U.S. citizens and other foreigners were assaulted. Travelers are advised to keep their hotel rooms or residences locked at all times. Occasionally fights and assaults do occur at nightclubs and bars. Visitors to those establishments, especially late in the evening, should be extra vigilant to ensure their personal security.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line for Police, Fire or Medical in the Marshall Islands is: 911 or 1911.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health facilities in the Marshall Islands are adequate for routine medical problems, but they are available only on Majuro and Ebeye. Majuro has a private clinic and a new public hospital. Ebeye has a public hospital. Most outer islands have medical dispensaries. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. However, medical restrictions generally do not apply to U.S. citizens entering the Marshall Islands under Free Association status. Please verify this information with the Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands at www.rmiembassyus.org before you travel.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Marshall Islands is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Majuro atoll has a paved road, but there are few traffic signs and no traffic lights. Drivers should be alert for animals roaming the streets and children darting onto the roads. Drinking and driving is common, especially on the weekends, so drivers should use caution. Walking beside the street can be dangerous due to poor lighting, absence of sidewalks and drivers who may have been drinking and driving.

Vehicle traffic proceeds slowly, rarely over 25 miles per hour. Some roads experience temporary flooding after heavy rains. Since there are few streetlights, visibility is poor, and night driving requires special caution. For specific information concerning drivers' permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Republic of the Marshall Islands' Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Marshall Islands' Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Marshall Islands' air carrier operations. For further information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The Republic of the Marshall Islands uses U.S. currency. Most hotels and a few restaurants accept VISA, MasterCard and American Express credit cards. Local telephone service as well as international long distance to anywhere worldwide is available on Majuro and Ebeye. Internet service is also available but can be expensive and it is usually dial up.

Customs authorities of the Marshall Islands strictly prohibit the importation of firearms, ammunition, explosives and indecent publications. Certification from the Quarantine Division is required to import animals, plants and fruits. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands in Washington, D.C., or one of the Marshall Islands' Consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements,especially when dealing with the importation of animals into the Marshall Islands.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under the U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Marshall Islands' laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Marshall Islands are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children

and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living in or visiting the Marshall Islands are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Majuro through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Marshall Islands. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy does not have a street address in Majuro. The Embassy is located on the ocean-side of the island's road, approximately 2 miles east of the airport. The U.S. Embassy's mailing address is PO Box 1379, Majuro, MH 96960-1379. The telephone number is (692) 247-4011. The fax number is (692) 247-4012. The U.S. Embassy web site is http://majuro.usembassy.gov.



MAURITANIA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Islamic Republic of Mauritania

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,030,070 sq. km. (419,212 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Texas and New Mexico combined.
Cities: (2004) Capital—Nouakchott (pop. 708,000). Other cities—Nouadhibou (72,000), Rosso (50,000), Kaedi (34,000), Zouerate (34,000), Kiffa (33,000), Atar (24,000).
Terrain: Northern four-fifths barren desert; southern 20% mainly Sahelian with small-scale irrigated and rain-fed agriculture in the Senegal River basin.
Climate: Predominantly hot and dry.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Mauritanian(s).
Population: (2007) 2,961,000.
Annual growth rate: 2.5%.
Ethnic groups: Arab-Berber (White Moor), Arab-Berber-Negroid (Black Moor), Haalpulaar, Soninke, Wolof (Black African Mauritanians).
Religions: Islam.
Languages: Arabic (official), Hassaniya (Arabic dialect), French, Pulaar, Wolof, and Soninke.
Education: Years compulsory—six. Attendance (student population enrolled in primary school)—82%. Adult literacy (% of population age 15+)—59%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—67/1,000. Life expectancy—64 yrs.
Work force: Agriculture and fisheries—50%. Services and commerce—20%. Government—20%. Industry and transportation—10%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: November 28, 1960.
Constitution: Approved 1991. Original constitution promulgated 1961.
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state). Legislative—bicameral national assembly, directly elected lower house (81 members), and upper house (56 members) chosen indirectly by municipal councilors. Judicial—a supreme court and lower courts are nominally independent but subject to control of executive branch; judicial decisions are rendered mainly on the basis of Shari'a (Islamic law) for social/family matters and a western style legal code, applied in commercial and some criminal cases.
Political parties: 21.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.
National day: November 28, Independence Day.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $2.8 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.9%.
Per capita income: (2006) $952.
Natural resources: petroleum, fish, iron ore, gypsum, copper, gum Arabic, phosphates, salt and gold.
Agriculture: (13% of GDP 2007) Products—livestock, traditional fisheries, millet, maize, wheat, dates, rice.
Industry: (47% of GDP 2007) Types—mining, commercial fishing.
Services: (41% of GDP 2007).
Trade: Exports (f.o.b.)—(2006, f.o.b.)—$1.4 billion: iron ore, fish and fish products, gold, copper, petroleum. Export partners (2007)—China 30.5%, France 9.5%, Italy 8.6%, Spain 8.5%, Japan 5.5%, Netherlands 5.3%, Belgium 5%, Cote d'Ivoire 4.7%. Imports (2006)—$1.5 billion: machinery and equipment, petroleum products, capital goods, foodstuffs, consumer goods. Import partners (2007)—France 16.7%, China 8.2%, Spain 6.8%, U.S. 6.2%, Belgium 5.8%, Brazil 5.5%.
Currency: Ouguiya (UM).
USAID: Total FY 2008 USAID development and security assistance to Mauritania—$21,106,735.

HISTORY

From the 3rd to 7th centuries, the migration of Berber tribes from North Africa displaced the Bafours, the original inhabitants of present-day Mauritania and the ancestors of the Soninke. Continued Arab-Berber

migration drove indigenous black Africans south to the Senegal River or enslaved them. By 1076, Islamic warrior monks (Almoravid or Al Murabitun) completed the conquest of southern Mauritania, defeating the ancient Ghana empire. Over the next 500 years, Arabs overcame fierce Berber resistance to dominate Mauritania. The Mauritanian Thirty-Year War (1644-74) was the unsuccessful final Berber effort to repel the Maqil Arab invaders led by the Beni Hassan tribe. The descendants of Beni Hassan warriors became the upper stratum of Moorish society. Berbers retained influence by producing the majority of the region's Marabouts—those who preserve and teach Islamic tradition. Hassaniya, a mainly oral, Berber-influenced Arabic dialect that derives its name from the Beni Hassan tribe, became the dominant language among the largely nomadic population. Within Moorish society, aristocratic and servant classes developed, yielding "white" (aristocracy) and "black" Moors (the enslaved indigenous class).

French colonization at the beginning of the 20th century brought legal prohibitions against slavery and an end to interclan warfare. During the colonial period, the population remained nomadic, but sedentary black Africans, whose ancestors had been expelled centuries earlier by the Moors, began to trickle back into southern Mauritania. As the country gained independence in 1960, the capital city of Nouakchott was founded at the site of a small colonial village. Ninety percent of the population was still nomadic. With independence, larger numbers of ethnic Sub-Saharan Africans (Haalpulaar, Soninke, and Wolof) entered Mauritania, moving into the area north of the Senegal River. Educated in French, many of these recent arrivals became clerks, soldiers, and administrators in the new state.

Moors reacted to this change by trying to Arabicize much of Mauritanian life, such as law and language. A schism developed between those who considered Mauritania to be an Arab country (mainly Moors) and those who sought a dominant role for the Sub-Saharan peoples. The discord between these two conflicting visions of Mauritanian society was evident during intercommunal violence that broke out in April 1989 (the "1989 Events").

The country's first president, Moktar Ould Daddah, served from independence until ousted in a bloodless coup on July 10, 1978. Mauritania was under military rule from 1978 to 1992, when the country's first multiparty elections were held following the July 1991 approval by referendum of a constitution.

The Democratic and Social Republican Party (PRDS), led by President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya, dominated Mauritanian politics from April 1992 until he was overthrown in August 2005. President Taya, who won elections in 1992 and 1997, first became chief of state through a December 12, 1984 bloodless coup which made him chairman of the committee of military officers that governed Mauritania from July 1978 to April 1992. A group of current and former Army officers launched a bloody but unsuccessful coup attempt on June 8, 2003.

On November 7, 2003, Mauritania's third presidential election since adopting the democratic process in 1992 took place. Incumbent President Taya was reelected. Several opposition groups alleged that the government had used fraudulent means to win the elections, but did not elect to pursue their grievances via available legal channels. The elections incorporated safeguards first adopted in 2001 municipal elections—published voter lists and hard-to-falsify voter identification cards.

On August 3, 2005, President Taya was deposed in a bloodless coup. Military commanders, led by Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Fal (alternative spelling: Vall) seized power while President Taya was attending the funeral of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd. Colonel Fal established the ruling Military Council for Justice and Democracy to run the country. The council dissolved the Parliament and appointed a transitional government. The Transitional Government quickly established a timetable for the establishment of democratic rule within two years' time that led to successful parliamentary elections in November 2006 and presidential elections in March 2007. A new democratically elected government under President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi was inaugurated on April 19, 2007.

On August 6, 2008, President Abdallahi was overthrown in a bloodless coup. General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz seized power after President Abdallahi issued a decree dismissing General Aziz and three other senior military officers. The country is currently run by a 12-member "High State Council" composed entirely of military officers. As of mid-December 2008, President Abdallahi remained under house arrest in his native village of Lemden.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Mauritania held a series of elections that began in November 2006 with a parliamentary vote and culminated March 25, 2007 with the second round of the presidential election. Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdellahi was elected President and took office on April 19, 2007. After almost 16 months of civilian rule, President Abdallahi was deposed on August 6, 2008 by a military-led coup, throwing the future of Mauritania's new-found democracy into doubt.

The government bureaucracy is composed of ministries, special agencies, and parastatal companies. The Ministry of Interior controls a system of regional governors and prefects modeled on the French system of local administration.

Under this system, Mauritania is divided into 13 regions (wilaya), including the capital district, Nouakchott. Control is tightly concentrated in the executive branch of the central government, but a series


MAURITANIA
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0 75 150 225 300 Kilometers
ALGERIA
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Al Bir Lahlou
Erg Iguidi
Chegga
Agmar
Bîr Mogreïn
'Ayoûn 'Abd el Mâlek
ATLANTIC OCEAN
WESTERN SAHARA
SAHARA DESERT
Fdérik
Zouérat
Kediet ej Jill 3,002 ft. 915 m.
Awaday
Bir Gandús
El Moueïla
El Mrâyer
MALI
Cap Blanc
Nouadhibou
Ouadane
Atar
Chinguetti
El Djouf
Baie de Lévrier
Tanoudert
Île Tidra
Akjoujt
Cap Timiris
Nouamrhar
Tidjikdja
Tichît
Nouakchott
Tijti
Boutilimit
Qualâta
Lac Rkiz
Aleg
'Ayoûn el 'Atroûs
Rosso
Senegal
Bogué
Kîfa
Néma
Diadé
Lemoïlé
Kaédi
Mbout
Médala
Maghama
Nioro du Sahel
Sélibaby
Bakel
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of national and municipal elections since 1992 have produced some decentralization.

Politics in Mauritania have always been heavily influenced by personalities, with any leader's ability to exercise political power dependent upon control over resources; perceived ability or integrity; and tribal, ethnic, family, and personal considerations. Conflict among White Moor, Black Moor, and Black African Mauritanian groups, centering on language, land tenure, and other issues, continues to be a major challenge to national unity. Political parties, illegal during the military period, were legalized again in 1991.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Mohamed Ould Abd AZIZ, Gen.**
Prime Min.: **Moulaye Ould Mohamed LAGHDAF**
Min. of Commerce, Handicraft, & Tourism: **Bamba Ould DERMANE**
Min. of Communications & Relations With Parliament: **Mohamed Ould Mohamed Abderrahmane Ould MOINE**
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Sports: **Sidi Ould SAMBA**
Min. of Education: **Ahmed Ould BA**
Min. of Equipment & Transportion: **Camara Moussa Seydi BOUBOU**
Min. of Finance: **Sid'Ahmed Ould RAISS**
Min. of Fisheries & Maritime Economy: **Hacenna Ould ELY**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Mohamed Mahmoud Ould MOHAMEDOU**
Min. of Habitat, Urban Affairs, & Territorial Admin.: **Sy ADAMA**
Min. of Health: **Mohamed Abdellahi Ould SIYAM**
Min. of Hydrology & Sanitation: **Mohamed Lemine Ould ABOYE**
Min. of Industry & Mines: **Mohamed Abdellahi Ould OUDAA**
Min. of Interior & Decentralization: **Mohamed Ould MAAOUYA**
Min. of Islamic Affairs & Religious Education: **Othmane Ould Chiekh Ahmed Aboul MAALI**
Min. of Justice: **Ahmedou Tidjane BAL**
Min. of National Defense: **Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamed LEMINE**
Min. of Petroleum & Energy: **Die Ould ZEINE**
Min. of Public Function, Employment, & Professional Training: **Hacen Ould Limam Ould Amar JOWDA**
Min. of Rural Development: **Messaouda Mint BAHAM**
Min. of Social, Child, & Family Affairs: **Selama Mint Cheikhna Ould LEMRABOTT**
Min. of Sec. Gen. of the Presidency of the High Council of State: **Mohamed Lemine Ould GUIG**
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. for Environment & Sustainable Development: **Mohamed Ould Ahmed SALEM**
State Sec. for Admin. Modernization & for Telecommunications & Informatics: **Sidi Ould MAYOUF**
State Sec. for Maghreb Affairs: **Mohamed Abderrahmane Ould Mohamed AHMED**
Sec. Gen. to the Govt.: **Ba OUSMANE**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Abderrahim Ould HADRAMI**

Mauritania maintains an embassy in the United States at 2129 Leroy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-232-5700, fax 202-232-5701) and a Permanent Mission to the United Nations at 211 East 43rd Street, Suite 2000, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-986-7963, fax 212-986-8419).

U.S.-MAURITANIAN RELATIONS

The United States strongly condemns the military coup that overthrew the legitimate and democratically-elected president in 2008. Furthermore, the United States considers the "High State Council" and its cabinet to be illegitimate and undemocratic. As a result, non-humanitarian U.S. Government aid to Mauritania has been suspended, and travel restrictions have been placed on military and civilian individuals who are obstructing the return to democratic government. The United States continues to call for the unconditional release of President Abdallahi, and for an immediate return to constitutional order.

The U.S. Government fully supported Mauritania's transition to democracy, and congratulated Mauritania on the successful series of 2006-2007 parliamentary and presidential elections. The U.S. condemned the August 2005 coup and the unconstitutional assumption of power by the Military Council for Justice and Democracy, and called for a return to a constitutional government through free and fair elections as soon as possible. The United States provided election-related assistance for voter education, political party training, and democracy building.

Before the 2005 coup, U.S.-Mauritania relations were excellent, but underwent several transformations since Mauritania gained independence. From 1960 to 1967, the United States maintained cordial relations with Mauritania and provided a small amount of economic assistance. During the June 1967 Middle East war, Mauritania broke diplomatic and consular relations with the United States but restored ties 2 years later and maintained relatively friendly relations until the late 1980s, despite disagreement over the Arab-Israeli issue.

The 1989 rupture between Mauritania and Senegal (the "1989 Events") that resulted in Mauritania's deportation of tens of thousands of its own citizens to Senegal, negatively affected U.S.-Mauritanian relations. (The Mauritanian Government, assisted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), began repatriating refugees in early 2008.) Moreover, Mauritania's perceived support of Iraq prior to and during the 1991 Gulf war further weakened the strained ties.

Relations between the U.S. and Mauritania reached a low in the spring of 1991, as details of the Mauritanian military's role in widespread human rights abuses surfaced. The U.S. responded by formally halting USAID operations and all military assistance to Mauritania. Relations also suffered in the 1990s as a result of repeated reports that slavery continued in some parts of Mauritania despite legal proscriptions. By the late 1990s, the Mauritanian Government: adopted policies facilitating the

return of those expelled or who fled during the 1989 Events; turned away from Iraq and toward the West; and initiated a poverty reduction strategy while securing debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. (See also Fact Sheet.) Improved relations with the United States, including the return of military cooperation and training programs, accompanied these changes. Mauritania formally opened diplomatic relations with Israel in 2000 and remains one of only three Arab League member-nations to have done so.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

NOUAKCHOTT (E) Rue Abdallaye, 222-525-2660, Fax 222-525-1592, INMARSAT Tel 8816 214 57838 or 8816 214 57839, Workweek: Sun-Wed 8:00-5:30, Thu 8:00–12:00, Website: http://mauritania.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Regina Wiener
AMB OMS:	Michelle Donnelly
ECO/COM:	Lindsay Kiefer
HRO:	Mira Hankins
MGT:	Jeannette C. Pina
AMB:	Mark M. Boulware
CON:	Lindsay Kiefer
DCM:	Dennis Hankins
PAO:	Vacant
GSO:	Susan Carl
RSO:	Anthony Lew
CLO:	Victoria Hougaard
DAO:	Maj. Charles Collins
FIN:	Magida Safaoui
ICASS Chair:	Margaret L. Heiser
IMO:	Eddie H. Martin
IPO:	David S. Yeager
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISSO:	Eddie H. Martin
POL:	Robert Lester
State ICASS:	Margaret L. Heiser

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 23, 2008

Country Description: Mauritania is a developing country in northwestern Africa. Arabic is the official language, but French is widely used and several local languages are also spoken. Tourist facilities in the capital, Nouakchott, are adequate, but limited or non-existent elsewhere.

Entry Requirements: A passport and a visa are required, as is evidence of a yellow fever vaccination. For the most current visa information, contact the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, 2129 Leroy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 232-5700, or the Mauritanian Permanent Mission to the UN, 211 East 43rd Street, Suite 2000, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 986-7963 or 8189, or e-mail Mauritania@ un.int. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Mauritanian embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: There is increasing activity by the terrorist group Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mauritania. On December 24, 2007, terrorists shot and killed four French tourists and wounded a fifth near the town of Aleg, in southeastern Mauritania. On December 26, 2007, terrorists killed four soldiers near the town of El Ghallaouiya in northern Mauritania. These two attacks were followed by an attack on the Israeli Embassy and an adjoining nightclub frequented by westerners early in the morning of February 1, 2008. The perpetrators of these attacks are believed to be linked to AQIM. These are the first attacks that have occurred in Mauritania since June 2005, when members of the terrorist group GSPC (now known as AQIM) attacked a military outpost based at Lemgheity, near the Algerian and Malian borders. In the attack, they killed or wounded about 35 soldiers. Travelers should avoid all non-essential travel to the Hodh El Charghi region of southeastern Mauritania due to increased AQIM activities in the border area. Official Americans continue to travel to the town of Atar, although AQIM has also talked about targeting Westerners there. Travelers should check http://mauritania.usembassy.gov for current Consular Warden messages concerning Mauritania.

Travelers should exercise prudence and caution when traveling in Mauritania. They should not venture outside of urban areas unless in a convoy and accompanied by an experienced guide, and even then only if equipped with sturdy vehicles and ample provisions. The U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott has received reports of banditry and smuggling in the more remote parts of Mauritania. Landmines also remain a danger along the border with the Western Sahara and travelers should cross only at designated border posts. The U.S. Embassy recommends that travelers avoid travel in regions north and east of Zouerate, Ouadane, and Tichit unless with a government escort. Travelers planning overland trips from Mauritania to Morocco, Algeria, Senegal or Mali should check with the U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott before setting out. For more information about travel in Mauritania, please see the section "Traffic Safety and Road Conditions" below.

The Mauritanian military led a bloodless coup on August 6, 2008. There has been increased political unrest following the coup, but no violence. There have also been increased political gatherings and street demonstrations. The police have been using tear gas to break up some anti-coup demonstrations. An increased police presence and additional vehicle controls may also be expected. U.S. citizens should avoid large crowds and maintain security awareness at all times.

In Nouakchott and other major cities in Mauritania, there is an increased security presence and additional checkpoints. Police routinely conduct road blocks at which they may ask for proof of identity and drivers' licenses. These checkpoints should be respected. Americans visiting Mauritania should be prepared for such inquiries and carry their identification cards at all times. It is best to drive cautiously and be prepared to stop at short notice.

American citizens should be aware of their surroundings at all times and maintain good personal security practices, including always locking

their homes and cars. They should avoid established patterns and take care not to draw attention to themselves. When going out, they should avoid being part of large, highly visible groups of Westerners and when in restaurants or cafes, avoid sitting in areas that are easily visible from the street.

Although U.S. citizens are generally welcomed in Mauritania, there were reports of anti-American incidents such as threats and stoning of vehicles, following the 1998 U.S.- and British-led intervention in Iraq, and demonstrations outside the Embassy during the 2003 U.S. intervention in Iraq. Some Muslim extremists have occasionally perceived Christian nongovernmental organizations as a threat. However, local authorities closely monitor political violence and religious extremist groups.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime in Mauritania is moderate but steadily increasing. Most incidents occur in the cities and larger towns, and are petty crimes such as pick pocketing and the theft of improperly secured and openly visible valuables left in vehicles. Most criminal activity occurs at night and walking alone at night is not advisable. Residential burglaries and robberies, particularly at the beaches in Nouakchott, are not uncommon. In Nouakchott, travelers should avoid the beach at night. During the day, beach-goers should travel in large groups or stay in popular areas because of the increase in the number of thefts and robberies, some involving injury to victims, reported there in the past several years. Violent crimes and crimes involving the use of weapons are rare, but increasing. Rapes and assaults have occurred and, in some instances, involved the American community. Foreign tourists, including Americans, might be targeted for kidnapping in Mauritania.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Mauritania are limited. There are few modern clinics or hospitals beyond the capital and a few major towns. At local pharmacies, some medicines are difficult to obtain; travelers are advised to bring their own supplies.

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease. Chloroquine-resistant P. falciparum malaria is a severe form of the disease that is found in many parts of western Africa, including Mauritania. Because travelers to Mauritania are at high risk for contracting malaria they should take one of the following anti-malarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have determined that a traveler who is on an appropriate anti-malarial drug has a greatly reduced chance of contracting the disease. In addition, other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, may help to reduce malaria risk. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what anti-malarial drugs they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and antimalarial drugs, please visit the CDC travelers' health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Mauritania is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Public transportation is not safe and road conditions in Mauritania are generally poor, particularly in the interior. Overland travel is difficult and roadside assistance is almost nonexistent. The country's size and harsh climate make road maintenance and repair especially problematic. Mauritania has only about 2,070 km (1,286 miles) of surfaced roads, 710 km (441 miles) of unsurfaced roads, and 5,140 km (3,194 miles) of unimproved tracks. Drivers should not offer rides to hitchhikers, nor

should visitors to Mauritania accept rides offered by strangers. The traditional route to Nouadhibou, prior to the completion of a paved road, was along the beach during low tide. Some travelers continue to use this route, as do visitors to coastal fishing villages and other points of interest, and smugglers and others who try to avoid the security checkpoints that are often established along the asphalt roads. Pedestrian visitors to the beach should exercise caution because of the beach's use as a route for motorized vehicles.

U.S. citizens traveling overland for long distances in Mauritania should travel in convoys and be sure to have suitable four-wheel drive vehicles, a local guide, an adequate supply of water and food, and a second fuel reservoir. Multiple vehicles are recommended in case of breakdown. A Global Position Satellite (GPS) receiver and satellite phone are essential when traveling in remote areas. Visitors are urged not to travel alone into the desert.

Driving in Mauritania is treacherous, and we encourage travelers to hire a trained local driver. Traffic patterns differ considerably from American-style "rules of the road," and many Mauritanians drive without regard to traffic signs or rules. Roadway obstructions and hazards caused by drifting sand, animals, and poor roads often plague motorists; when combined with the number of untrained drivers and poorly maintained vehicles, heightened caution is imperative at all times. Drivers should be alert to conditions and always wear their seat belts. Motorcycle and bicycle riders should wear helmets and protective clothing. Nighttime driving is discouraged.

The telecommunications infrastructure is limited and cellular telephone coverage is not wide spread. For those traveling outside the major urban areas, it is recommended to have a satellite telephone readily available.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Mauritania, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Mauritania's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Mauritanian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the temporary import or export of items such as firearms, narcotics, alcoholic drinks and pork products. Contact the Embassy of Mauritania in Washington, DC for specific information regarding customs regulations.

The local currency is the ouguiya, and it may not be imported or exported. Credit cards can be used only at a few hotels in the capital, Nouakchott, and the northwestern city of Nouadhibou. ATM machines are available only in Nouakchott. Major foreign currencies are changeable in banks and numerous currency exchanges; however, this service is not always available without advanced notice or prior arrangement. There is a risk of getting fraudulent bank notes even from banks which often do not have the security means to detect fake bank notes. Furthermore, credit card fraud is a problem, so it is strongly advisable to pay hotel bills in cash.

Islamic ideals and beliefs in the country encourage conservative dress. Sleeved garments and below-the-knee skirts are recommended, and people should avoid wearing shorts.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mauritania's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mauritania are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Mauritania are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Mauritania. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located between the Presidency building and the Spanish Embassy on Rue Abdallaye. The postal address is B.P. 222, Nouakchott, telephone (222) 525-2660/2663, 525-1141/45, or 525-3038 (ext. 5441), and fax (222) 525-1592. You may contact the Consular Section by e-mail at ConsularNKC@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: As a Muslim country that adheres to a strict interpretation of Islamic law, Mauritania does not allow full adoptions as these are understood in the West. It is sometimes possible for Mauritanian courts to grant guardianship (establishing a level of relationship short of adoption). Persons seeking guardianship of Mauritanian children must be relatives of the children and also either Muslim or living in a Muslim environment. Guardianship arrangements involving prospective U.S. guardians are further complicated by the fact that Mauritanian law prohibits non-family members from removing children from Mauritania. Prospective American Guardians may want to review our Shari'a Adoption flyer on Guardianship in Muslim Countries.

Patterns of Immigration: No Mauritanian orphans have received U.S. immigrant visas within the past five years.

Guardianship Authority In Mauritania: Ministry of Justice (MOJ).

This Ministry has no specialized office for Family or Children Issues. The office of the Minister or his Chargé de Mission can be contacted for such matters at (222) 525-8204 or (222) 525-7002.

Eligibility Requirements For Prospective Guardians: To qualify as a guardian one must be a blood-relative who is either Muslim or lives in a Muslim environment.

Residency Requirements: Since MOJ officials made it clear that no foreigner would be permitted to remove a child from the country, there is no information on guardianship-related residency requirements.

Time Frame: As there are no provisions for child emigration from Mauritania through guardianship, there is no information on how long it takes to complete guardianship requirements.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Because adoption as it is understood in the U.S. does not exist in Mauritania, there is no local role for adoption agencies. If U.S. citizens considering pursuing guardianship of a Mauritanian child want to engage the services of a U.S.-based agency to guide them through the overall process, including the U.S. immigration procedures, that is still possible. In such cases, prospective guardians should fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Adoption Fees: No fees are involved in obtaining a guardianship.

Adoption Procedures: Mauritanian law does not allow adoption. Mauritanian courts may, however, appoint a legal guardian for the child. The Mauritanian judicial system and adoption laws are found in the Family Code and use Sharia law as a basis. The Family Code states in the event of the inability of a parent to care for his/her, the Family Code gives a strict sequence of eligible blood relatives for guardianship. However, in Mauritania, it is up to the discretion of a judge to determine who is most eligible for the guardianship of a child. In 2002 the Mauritanian Ministry of Justice published a booklet, The Family Code, which includes sections on guardianship and custody. The Family Code does not cover scenarios in which a parent or legal guardian can pass guardianship to a foreigner. The law prohibits non-family members from removing children from Mauritanian soil.

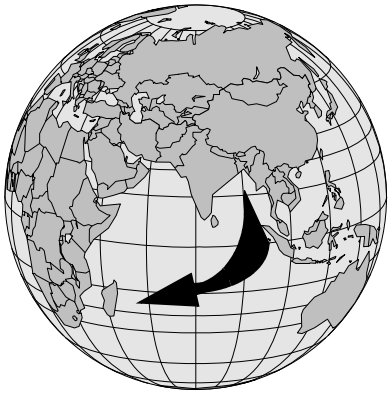
Documents Required For Guardianship: Individual judges hearing petitions for guardianship may require different types of documentation including the proof of blood relationship to the child. There are no established guidelines, and prospective guardians should be prepared to present whatever documents the judge requests.

Embassy of the Republic of Mauritania
2129 Leroy Place N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel. (202) 232-5700
Fax: (202) 319-2623

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
288. rue 42-100 (rue Abdallaye),
Nouakchott Mauritania. (Between the Presidency and Spanish Embassy)
Phone: (222) 525-2660
or 2663, ext. 4551
Fax: (222) 525-3945
Email: consularNKC@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Mauritania may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Nouakchott. For more information about the immigration process please e-mail the U.S. Embassy in Dakar at consulardakar@state.gov. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MAURITIUS

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Mauritius

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,865 sq. km. (720 sq. mi.), about the size of Rhode Island; 500 miles east of Madagascar, in the Indian Ocean.

Dependencies: Rodrigues Island, the Agalega Islands and Cargados Carajos Shoals; Mauritius also claims sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, part of the British Indian Ocean Territory, where U.S. Naval Support Facility at Diego Garcia is located.

Cities: Capital—Port Louis (pop. 146,319). Other cities—Beau Bassin and Rose Hill (105,377), Vacoas-Phoenix (101,789), Curepipe (82,756), Quatre Bornes (77,145).

Terrain: Volcanic island surrounded by coral reefs. A central plateau is rimmed by mountains.

Climate: Tropical; cyclone season mid-December-April.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Mauritian(s).

Population: (2008) 1,274,189, including Rodrigues, Agalega, and St. Brandon. Density—612/sq. km.

Avg. annual population growth: (2008) 0.8%.

Ethnic groups: Indo-Mauritians 68%, Creoles 27%, Sino-Mauritians 3%, Franco-Mauritians 2%.

Religions: Hindu 48%, Roman Catholic 23.6%, Muslim 16.6%, other Christian 8.6%, other 2.5%.

Languages: Creole (common), French, English (official), Hindi, Urdu, Hakka, Bhojpuri.

Education: Years compulsory—11 (primary school). Attendance (primary school)—virtually universal. Literacy—adult population 85%; school population 90%.

Health: (2008) Infant mortality rate—12.56/1000. Life expectancy—male 70.28 yrs., female 77.4 yrs.

Work force: (2005, 543,900) Manufacturing—19.8%; construction—9.7%; trade and tourism—22.3%; government services—16.6%; agriculture and fishing—9.6%; other—31.7%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: March 12, 1968 (became a republic in 1992).

Constitution: March 12, 1968.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 10.

Political parties: MSM (Militant Socialist Movement), MMM (Mauritian Militant Movement) and the Social Alliance (made up of several parties, including the Mauritian Labor Party).

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Defense: (2006) 1.7% of GDP.

Economy

GDP: (2007, official exchange rate) $6.959 billion.

Real growth rate: (2007) 4.6%.

Per capita income: (2007 PPP) $11,200.

Avg. inflation rate: (2007) 8.8%.

Natural resources: None.

Agriculture: (4.8% of GDP): Products—sugar, sugar derivatives, tea, tobacco, vegetables, fruits, flowers and fishing.

Manufacturing: including export processing zone (20% of GDP) Types—labor-intensive goods for export, including textiles and clothing, watches and clocks, jewelry, optical goods, toys and games, and cut flowers.

Tourism: (8.5% of GDP) Main countries of origin—France, including nearby French island Reunion, South Africa, and west European countries.

Financial services: 10.3% of GDP.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$2.218 billion: textiles and clothing, sugar, canned tuna, watches and clocks, jewelry, optical goods, toys and games, and flowers. Major markets—Europe and the U.S. Imports—$3.628 billion: meat, dairy products, fish,

wheat, rice, wheat flour, vegetable oil, petroleum products, iron and steel, cement, fertilizers, machinery and transport equipment, and textile industry raw materials. Major suppliers—South Africa, France, China, India, Bahrain, Finland, U.K., Japan, Australia, and Germany.
Fiscal year: July 1-June 30.

HISTORY

While Arab and Malay sailors knew of Mauritius as early as the 10th century AD and Portuguese sailors first visited in the 16th century, the island was first colonized in 1638 by the Dutch. Mauritius was populated over the next few centuries by waves of traders, planters and their slaves, indentured laborers, merchants, and artisans. The island was named in honor of Prince Maurice of Nassau by the Dutch, who abandoned the colony in 1710.

The French claimed Mauritius in 1715 and renamed it Ile de France. It became a prosperous colony under the French East India Company. The French Government took control in 1767, and the island served as a naval and privateer base during the Napoleonic wars. In 1810, Mauritius was captured by the British, whose possession of the island was confirmed 4 years later by the Treaty of Paris. French institutions, including the Napoleonic code of law, were maintained. The French language is still used more widely than English.

Mauritian Creoles trace their origins to the plantation owners and slaves who were brought to work the sugar fields. Indo-Mauritians are descended from Indian immigrants who arrived in the 19th century to work as indentured laborers after slavery was abolished in 1835. Included in the Indo-Mauritian community are Muslims (about 17% of the population) from the Indian subcontinent.

Franco-Mauritians control nearly all of the large sugar estates and are active in business and banking. As the Indian population became numerically dominant and the voting franchise was extended, political power shifted from the Franco-Mauritians and their Creole allies to the Hindus.

Elections in 1947 for the newly created Legislative Assembly marked Mauritius' first steps toward self-rule. An independence campaign gained momentum after 1961, when the British agreed to permit additional self-government and eventual independence. A coalition composed of the Mauritian Labor Party (MLP), the Muslim Committee of Action (CAM), and the Independent Forward Bloc (IFB)—a traditionalist Hindu party—won a majority in the 1967 Legislative Assembly election, despite opposition from Franco-Mauritian and Creole supporters of Gaetan Duval's Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD). The contest was interpreted locally as a referendum on independence. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, MLP leader and chief minister in the colonial government, became the first prime minister at independence, on March 12, 1968. This event was preceded by a period of communal strife, brought under control with assistance from British troops.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Mauritian politics are vibrant and characterized by coalition and alliance building. All parties are centrist and reflect a national consensus that supports democratic politics and a relatively open economy with a strong private sector. Parliamentary elections were held July 3, 2005.

Alone or in coalition, the Mauritian Labor Party (MLP) ruled from 1947 through 1982 and returned to power in 1995. The Mauritian Militant Movement/Mauritian Socialist Party (MMM/PSM) alliance won the 1982 election. In 1983, defectors from the MMM joined with the PSM to form the Militant Socialist Movement (MSM) and won a working majority. In July 1990, the MSM realigned with the MMM, and in September 1991, national elections won 59 of the 62 directly elected seats in parliament. In December 1995, the MLP returned to power, this time in coalition with the MMM. Labor's Navinchandra Ramgoolam, son of the country's first prime minister, became prime minister himself. Ramgoolam dismissed his MMM coalition partners in mid-1997, leaving Labor in power except for several small parties allied with it. Elections in September 2000 saw the re-emergence of the MSM-MMM as a winning alliance, as the coalition garnered 51.7% of the vote, and Sir Anerood Jugnauth once again became the prime minister with the caveat that midterm, the leader of the MMM party would take over as prime minister. In September 2003, in keeping with the campaign promise which forged the coalition, Jugnauth stepped down from office and deputy prime minister Paul Raymond Berenger became prime minister. One month later, Sir Anerood Jugnauth was sworn in as President of the Republic. Berenger became the first Catholic, Franco-Mauritian to head the government. The move created an historic precedent of having a non-Hindu, non-majority member head the national government. The 2005 parliamentary elections returned Navinchandra Ramgoolam to office as prime minister.

Mauritius became a republic on March 12, 1992. The most immediate result was that a Mauritian-born president became head of state, replacing Queen Elizabeth II. Under the amended constitution, political power remained with parliament. The Council of Ministers (cabinet), responsible for the direction and control of the government, consists of the prime minister (head of government), the leader of the majority party in the legislature, and about 20 ministries.

The unicameral National Assembly has up to 70 deputies. Sixty-two are elected by universal suffrage, and as many as eight "best losers" are chosen from the runners-up by the Electoral Supervisory Commission using a formula designed to give at least minimal representation to all ethnic communities and under-represented

parties. Elections are scheduled at least every 5 years. Mauritian law is an amalgam of French and British legal traditions. The Supreme Court—a chief justice and five other judges—is the highest judicial authority. There is an additional right of appeal to the Queen's Privy Council. Local government has nine administrative divisions, with municipal and town councils in urban areas and district and village councils in rural areas. The island of Rodrigues forms the country's 10th administrative division.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Anerood JUGNAUTH, Sir**
Prime Min.: **Navinchandra RAMGOOLAM, Dr.**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ahmed Rashid BEEBEEJAUN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Charles Gaetan Xavier Luc DUVAL**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ramakrishna SITHANEN**
Min. of Agro Industry & Fisheries: **Arvin BOOLELL**
Min. of Arts & Culture: **Mahendra GOWRESSOO**
Min. of Civil Service & Admin. Reforms: **Navinchandra RAMGOOLAM, Dr.**
Min. of Defense & Home Affairs: **Navinchandra RAMGOOLAM, Dr.**
Min. of Education & Human Resources: **Dharambeer GOKHOOL**
Min. of Environment & National Development Unit: **Anil Kumar BACHOO**
Min. of Finance & Economic Development: **Ramakrishna SITHANEN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Intl. Trade, & Cooperation: **Navinchandra RAMGOOLAM, Dr.**
Min. of Health & Quality of Life: **Satya Veyash FAUGOO**
Min. of Housing & Lands: **Mohammed Asraf Ally DULULL**
Min. of Industry, Small & Medium Enterprises, Commerce, & Cooperatives: **Rajeshwar JEETAH**
Min. of Information Technology & Telecommunications: **Marie Joseph Noel-Etienne Ghislain SINATAMBOU**
Min. of Justice & Human Rights: **Jayarama VALAYDEN**
Min. of Labor, Industrial Relations, & Employment: **Vasant Kumar BUNWAREE**
Min. of Local Govt.: **James Burty DAVID**
Min. of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport, & Shipping: **Ahmed Rashid BEEBEEJAUN**
Min. of Public Utilities: **Abu Twalib KASENALLY**
Min. of Rodrigues & Outer Islands: **Navinchandra RAMGOOLAM, Dr.**
Min. of Social Security, National Solidarity, & Senior Citizen Welfare &: Reform Institutions: **Sheilabai BAPPOO**
Min. of Tourism, Leisure, & External Communications: **Charles Gaetan Xavier Luc DUVAL**
Min. of Women's Rights, Child Development, Family Welfare, & Consumer Protection: **Indranee SEEBUN**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Sylvio Hock Sheen TANG WAH HING**
Attorney Gen.: **Jayarama VALAYDEN**
Governor, Central Bank: **Rameswurlall Basant ROI**
Ambassador to the US: **Usha JEETAH**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Somduth SOBORUN**

Mauritius maintains an embassy at 4301 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, (tel. 202-244-1491).

ECONOMY

Mauritius has one of the most successful and competitive economies in Africa; 2007 GDP at market prices was estimated at $6.959 billion (official exchange rate) and per capita income at $11,200 (purchasing power parity), one of the highest in Africa.

The economy is based on tourism, textiles, sugar, and financial services. In recent years, information and communication technology (ICT) and seafood have emerged as important sectors of the economy, growing by an average of 40% last year.

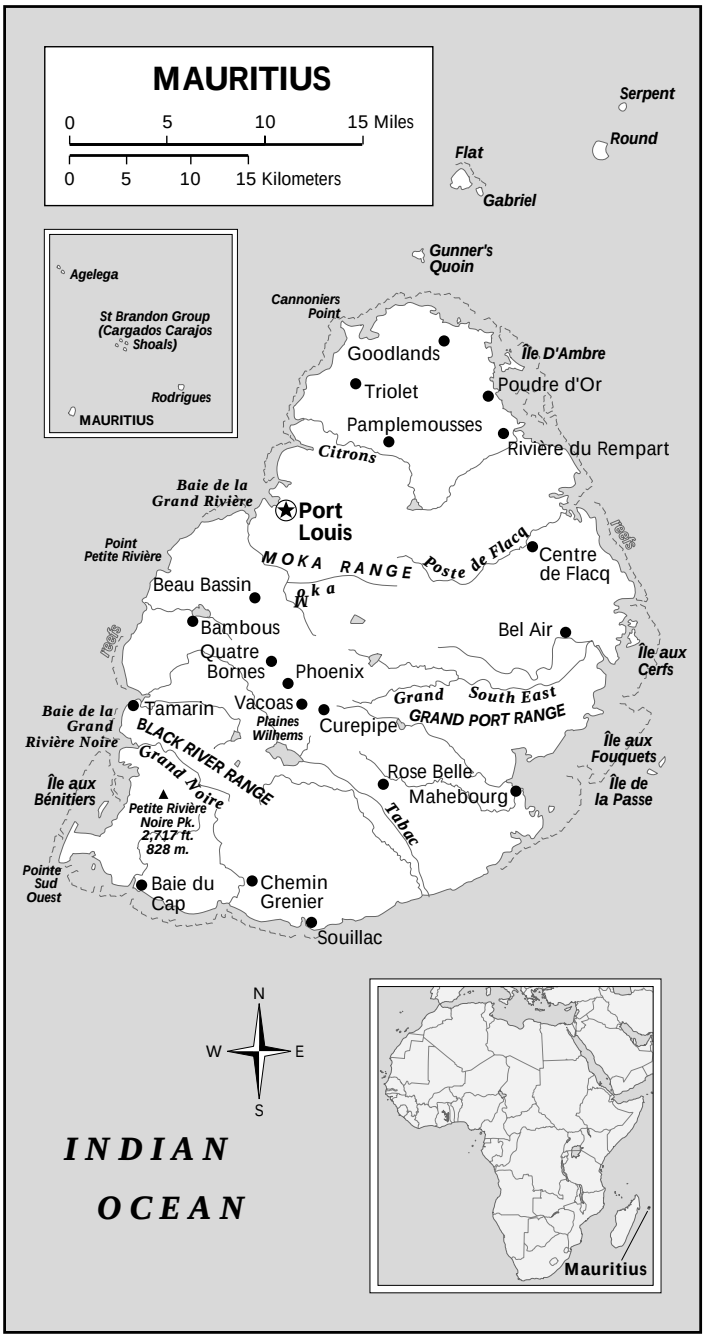
Over the past two decades, real output growth averaged just below 6% per year, leading to a more than doubling of per capita income and a marked improvement in social indicators. However, since 2002, the economy started to face some serious challenges as a result of globalization, involving the erosion of trade preferences for both textiles and sugar, two pillars of the economy. Economic growth declined to 3-4% while unemployment, government budget deficit, and public debt increased steadily. The government that took office in July 2005 embarked on a bold economic reform program aimed at moving Mauritius from reliance on trade preferences to global competitiveness.

The reform strategy, outlined in the FY 2006-2007 government budget, was designed not only to remedy fiscal weaknesses but also to open up the economy, facilitate business, improve the investment climate, and mobilize foreign direct investment and expertise. The reforms and the opening up of the economy have already started to positively impact the economy.

In addition to encouraging the restructuring and modernization of the textile and sugar sectors, the government is putting much emphasis on the development of the ICT sector and the promotion of Mauritius as a seafood hub in the region, using existing logistics and distribution facilities at the Freeport (free trade zone at the port and airport).

To further diversify the economic base and generate sustainable growth, the government is actively encouraging the following economic activities: (i) the land-based oceanic industry, (ii) hospitality and property development, (iii) healthcare and biomedical industry, (iv) agro-processing and biotechnology, and (v) the knowledge industry.

The business climate is friendly yet extremely competitive. The World Bank 2007 Doing Business Survey ranks Mauritius 32nd in the world and second in Africa for ease of doing business. Mauritius has a long tradition of private entrepreneurship, which has led to a strong and dynamic private sector. Firms entering the market will find a well-developed legal and commercial infrastructure. With regard to telecommunications, Mauritius has a well-developed digital infrastructure and offers state-of-the-art telecommunications facilities including international leased lines and high speed



Internet access. Telecommunications services were liberalized in January 2003. The government policy is to act as a facilitator to business, leaving production to the private sector. However, it still controls key utility services directly or through parastatals, including electricity, water, waste water, postal services, and broadcasting. The State Trading Corporation controls imports of rice, flour, petroleum products, and cement.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mauritius has strong and friendly relations with the West as well as with India and the countries of southern and eastern Africa. It is a member of the African Union (AU), World Trade Organization (WTO), the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Indian Ocean Commission, Community of Eastern and South African States (COMESA), and the recently formed Indian Ocean Rim Association. In 2004, then-Prime Minister Berenger became chairman of SADC for a one-year term. Trade, commitment to democracy, colonial and cultural ties, and the country's small size are driving forces behind Mauritian foreign policy. The country's political heritage and dependence on Western markets have led to close ties with the European Union and its member states, particularly the United Kingdom and France, which exercises sovereignty over neighboring Reunion. Considered part of Africa geographically, Mauritius has friendly relations with other African states in the region, particularly South Africa, by far its largest continental trading partner. Mauritian investors are gradually entering African markets, notably Madagascar and Mozambique. Mauritius coordinates much of its foreign policy with the Southern Africa Development Community and the African Union.

Relations with India are strong for both historical and commercial reasons. Foreign embassies in Mauritius include Australia, the United Kingdom, China, Egypt, France, India, Madagascar, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, and the United States.

DEFENSE

Mauritius does not have a standing army. All military, police, and security functions are carried out by 10,000 active-duty personnel under the command of the Commissioner of Police. The 8,000-member National Police is responsible for domestic law enforcement. The 1,400-member Special Mobile Force (SMF) and the 688-member National Coast Guard are the only two paramilitary units in Mauritius. Both units are composed of police officers on lengthy rotations to those services.

The SMF is organized as a ground infantry unit and engages extensively in civic works projects. The Coast Guard has four patrol craft for

search-and-rescue missions and surveillance of territorial waters. A 100-member police helicopter squadron assists in search-and-rescue operations. There also is a special supporting unit of 270 members trained in riot control. Military advisers from the United Kingdom and India work with the SMF, the Coast Guard, and the Police Helicopter Unit, and Mauritian police officers are trained in the United Kingdom, India, and France. The United States provides training to Mauritian security officers in such fields as counter-terrorism methods, seamanship, and maritime law enforcement.

U.S.-MAURITIAN RELATIONS

Official U.S. representation in Mauritius dates from the end of the 18th century. An American consulate established in 1794 closed in 1911. It was reopened in 1967 and elevated to embassy status upon the country's independence in 1968. Since 1970, the mission has been directed by a resident U.S. ambassador.

Relations between the United States and Mauritius are cordial and largely revolve around trade. The United States is Mauritius' third-largest market but ranks 12th in terms of exports to Mauritius. Principal imports from the U.S. include aircraft parts (for Air Mauritius), automatic data processing machines, diamonds, jewelry, radio/TV transmission apparatus, telecommunications equipment, agricultural/construction/industrial machinery and equipment, casino slot machines, outboard motors, books and encyclopedias, and industrial chemicals.

Mauritian exports to the U.S. include apparel, sugar, non-industrial diamonds, jewelry articles, live animals, sunglasses, rum, and cut flowers. Mauritian products that meet the rules of origin are eligible for duty- and quota-free entry in the U.S. market under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. In September 2006, the Governments of Mauritius and the United States signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement to remove impediments and further enhance trade and investment relations between the two countries.

More than 200 U.S. companies are represented in Mauritius. About 30 have offices in Mauritius, serving the domestic and/or the regional market, mainly in the information technology (IT), textile, fast food, express courier, and financial services sectors. The largest U.S. subsidiaries are Caltex Oil Mauritius and Esso Mauritius. U.S. brands are sold widely. Several U.S. franchises, notably Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, and McDonald's have been operating for a number of years in Mauritius. The United States funds a small military assistance program. The embassy also manages special self-help funds for community groups and nongovernmental organizations and a democracy and human rights fund.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PORT LOUIS (E) 4th Floor Rogers House, John Kennedy St., Port Louis, Mauritius, (230) 202-4400, Fax (230) 208-9534, INMARSAT Tel 881631439038/881631439039, Workweek: M-Th: 0730-1645; F:0730-1230, Website: mauritius.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Karen Miles
AMB OMS:	Marcia Romero
DHS/CIS:	Leslie A. Meeker
DHS/ICE:	Willis Reeves
FCS:	Craig Allen
HRO:	Ron Coles
MGT:	Tim Bashor
POL/ECO:	Quentin Barber
AMB:	Cesar Cabrera
CON:	Jason Hackworth
DCM:	Virginia Blaser
PAO:	Craig White
RSO:	Kevin Helm
AGR:	Scott Sindelar
CLO:	Jody Bashor
DAO:	Cdr. John Ries
FAA:	Moira Keane
FMO:	Tim Bashor
ICASS Chair:	Cdr. Matt Felt
IMO:	Christopher House
IRS:	Kathy Beck
ISO:	Stephen Cunningham
ISSO:	Christopher House
LAB:	Randy Fleitman
LEGATT:	Don Przybyla

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 21, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Mauritius is a small island nation of four inhabited and several other islands located in the southwestern Indian Ocean. Mauritius has a stable government and a diverse economy. Its per capita GDP of $6,300 is the second highest in Africa. Facilities for tourism are well developed. English is the official language of Mauritius, however Creole and French are also widely spoken. English may not be understood outside of main towns and tourist areas. The capital city is Port Louis.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, onward/return ticket, and proof of sufficient funds are required. Immigration authorities require the validity of the entrant's passport to be greater than six months upon both arrival and departure. Travelers must also provide a local address where they will be staying in Mauritius. Visas are issued at the point of entry. A tourist entry fee and the airport departure tax are included in the price of a plane ticket. Travelers coming from yellow fever-infected areas may be asked to present a yellow fever vaccination certificate. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of Mauritius, 4301 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 441, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 244-1491/2, or the Honorary Consulate in Los Angeles, telephone (310) 557-2009. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Mauritian embassy or consulate. Visit the web site of the Embassy of Mauritius for the most current visa information at http://www.maurinet.com/embasydc.html.

Safety and Security: Thefts in tourist areas are a concern, and visitors should keep track of their belongings at all times. Women are advised against walking alone, particularly on public beaches and at night. There

has been an increase in reports of sexual assault and harassment of foreign travelers. Americans should avoid crowds and street demonstrations, and maintain a low profile. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Although violent crimes are uncommon, petty crime is a problem. There is potential for pick pocketing and purse snatching, especially in crowded areas. Residential break-ins are reported frequently on the island. Most break-ins are surreptitious and do not involve violence, however some burglars have brandished weapons, such as knives or machetes. Although uncommon, there have been reports of armed robbery and assault. It is unwise to walk alone at night outside the immediate grounds of hotels. All individuals should exercise caution on beaches and poorly lit or deserted areas at night.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are available, but more limited than in the United States. Emergency assistance is limited. While public hospitals and clinics provide free care, many visitors may choose to be treated by private doctors and hospitals. Service Aide Medicale Urgence (SAMU) is a government organization that provides ambulance and emergency assistance in response to calls to 114 (Address: Volcy Pougnet Street, Port Louis). MegaCare is a private organization that provides assistance to subscribers only (Address: 99 Draper Avenue, Quatre Bornes; phone: 116; 464-6116).

Outbreaks of the mosquito borne virus Chikungunya have occurred in recent years; however, very few cases have been reported in 2007. For more information, please see the CDC's fact sheet on Chikungunya.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Mauritius is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving is on the left side of the road. Roads are sometimes narrow and uneven with inadequate lighting, which makes night driving hazardous. Speed limits are posted in kilometers per hour, but all road and traffic signs are posted in English. Drivers and all passengers are required to wear seat belts. Drivers and passengers on motorcycles are required to wear helmets. Babies and toddlers should be placed in child safety seats. Many accidents occur due to excessive speed and violations of road regulations.

Drivers involved in an accident are required by law to remain at the scene until the police arrive. However, if an angry crowd gathers and those involved in the accident feel threatened, police and judicial authorities have in the past not taken action against drivers who leave the scene if they have proceeded directly to a police station. While there are organizations that provide emergency or roadside assistance, their resources and capabilities are limited and they are on occasion unable to respond in non-life threatening incidents. Public transportation by bus is available between the main towns until 11:00 p.m. and in remote areas until 6 p.m. Taxis are also available.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Mauritius, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Mauritius' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Spear fishing equipment may not be imported into Mauritius. Animals may be required to undergo a quarantine period of up to six months, depending on country of origin and residence history. Please contact the Mauritian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals at (230) 464-5084 for specific information related to your pet.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mauritius' laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mauritius are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Mauritius are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Mauritius. Americans without Internet access may register directly at the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on the fourth floor of the Rogers House on John F. Kennedy Street in Port Louis, telephone (230) 202-4400; fax (230) 208-9534. The general Embassy email address is usembass@intent.mu. The Consular Section's email is PTLconsular@state.gov, and the web site is http://mauritius.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Immigrant visas for adopted Mauritian children are issued at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. For more information on scheduling a visa appointment, please see the immigrant visa page on the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya at http://nairobi.usembassy.gov/wwwhins1.html.

Patterns of Immigration: In the last five fiscal years no immigrant visas have been issued to Mauritian orphans.

Adoption Authority:
National Adoption Council (NAC)
3rd Floor Government Centre
Port Louis, Mauritius
Tel: (230) 201 3549; fax: 210 8151
Contact: Mrs. Baccha or Mrs. Purryag

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptive parents must be at least 15 years older than the child. Adoptive parents may be single or married.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements to complete an intercountry adoption in Mauritius.

Time Frame: The approval of the application takes approximately of 60 days, during which time the NAC verifies information regarding the biological child, including his actual home situation and information provided in the home study. There is an additional 15 days needed to complete court procedures for an adoption. If prospective parents are residing outside Mauritius, they may request a phone interview, but the Mauritian authorities view this as the exception rather than the rule. Adoptive parents will need to come to Mauritius at the time the adoption is brought before the judge for a decision.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: A lawyer may be needed to expedite matters. The U.S. Embassy in Port Louis has a list of attorneys who have indicated a willingness to work with U.S. citizens that can be made available upon request.

Neither the U.S. Embassy nor the Department of State assumes any responsibility for the quality of services provided by these attorneys or their employees. Please see the Embassy's web page for a list of attorneys practicing in Mauritius. http://mauritius usembassy.gov/attorneys.html.

Adoption Fees: A non-refundable 5,000 Mauritian Rupees (MRs) application fee together with a guarantee fee of MRs 20,000, refundable upon completion of the adoption, must be sent with the application and supporting documents to the NAC.

Adoption Procedures: The Mauritian National Adoption Council does not match adoptable orphans with prospective adoptive parents. Adoptable children are located through personal contacts with families who are unable to care for their child and are willing to give up their child for adoption. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to verify ahead of time that their Mauritian prospective adoptive child meets the definition of "legal orphan" as defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act Section 101(b)(1)(F). The application for adoption is filed with the NAC. Once it is approved, the case is brought before a judge.

The judge must approve the adoption. Adoptive parents are advised to consider retaining the services of an attorney to handle the judicial proceedings. Prospective adoptive parents must attend the adoption hearing in Mauritius.

Required Documents:

An application form for adoption must be filed at the National Adoption Council (NAC), along with the following documents:

- 4 photos of the child duly endorsed by a lawyer (the lawyer confirms the photo is a true photo of the child being adopted);
- Birth certificate of the child;
- 2 comprehensive medical certificates for the child from two different child specialists;
- Birth and marriage certificate(s) of the biological parents(if applicable);
- Divorce decree of the biological parents, if applicable;
- Medical certificate(s) of biological parents, if applicable;
- 2 recent passport size photos of the biological parents;
- Birth certificate(s) of prospective adoptive parents;
- Marriage certificate of prospective adoptive parents, if applicable;
- A home study from an adoption services provider in the US;
- Documentation of financial means of prospective adoptive parents;
- If applicable, documents of ownership of a house/estate;
- Report of any criminal record from the U.S. (U.S. state level will suffice);
- If either of the prospective adoptive parents is unable to have a child, medical certificate documenting this fact must be submitted;
- Guarantee that in case of an accident, a specified third party will take care of child;
- Progress report of a Mauritian child adopted by applicants, if applicable.

Embassy of the Republic of Mauritius
4301 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 441
Washington, DC 20008
Tel.: (202) 244-1491/1492
E-mail:
Mauritius.Embassy@prodigy.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
4th floor, Rogers House
John Kennedy Avenue
Port Louis, Mauritius
Email: usembass@intnet.mu
Tel:(230)202-4400
Fax:(230)208-9534

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Mauritius may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Port Louis. Questions about U.S. immigration procedures for adopted Mauritian children should be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MEXICO

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
United Mexican States

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,972,500 sq. km. (761,600 sq. mi.); about three times the size of Texas.

Cities: Capital—Mexico City (19.2 million, 2006 estimate for metro area). Other major cities—Guadalajara, Monterrey, Puebla, Ciudad Juarez, Tijuana, Acapulco, Merida, Leon, Veracruz.

Terrain: Coastal lowlands, central high plateaus, and mountains up to 5,400 m. (18,000 ft.).

Climate: Tropical to desert.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Mexican(s).

Population: (July 2008 est.) 109,955,400.

Annual growth rate: (2008 estimate) 2%.

Ethnic groups: Indian-Spanish (mestizo) 60%, Indian 30%, Caucasian 9%, other 1%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 89%, Protestant 6%, other 5%.

Languages: Spanish.

Education: Years compulsory—11 (note: preschool education was made mandatory in Dec. 2001). Literacy—91.4%.

Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—19.01/1000. Life expectancy—male 73.05 years; female 78.78 years.

Work force: (2006 est., 38.09 million) Agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing—21.0%; services—32.2%; commerce—16.9%; manufacturing—18.7%; construction—5.6%; transportation and communication—4.5%; mining and quarrying—1.0%.

Government

Type: Federal republic.

Independence: First proclaimed September 16, 1810; republic established 1824.

Constitution: February 5, 1917.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government). Legislative—bicameral. Judicial—Supreme Court, local and federal systems.

Political subdivisions: 31 states and a federal district.

Political parties: Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), National Action Party (PAN), Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Green Ecological Party (PVEM), Labor Party (PT), and several small parties.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (market exchange rate, 2007 est.) $893 billion.

GDP: (PPP method, 2007) $1.353 trillion.

Per capita GDP: (PPP method, 2007 est.): $12,400.

Annual real GDP growth: (2007) 3.3%; (2006) 4.8%; (2005) 3.0%; (2004) 4.4%; (2003) 1.4%; (2002) 0.8%; (2001) -0.2%; (2000) 6.6%.

Inflation rate: (2007) 3.8%; (2006) 3.4%; (2005) 3.3%; (2004) 5.2%; (2003) 4.0%; (2002) 5.7%; (2001) 4.4%; (2000) 9.0%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, silver, copper, gold, lead, zinc, natural gas, timber.

Agriculture: (3.5% of GDP) Products—corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, beans, cotton, coffee, fruit, tomatoes, beef, poultry, dairy products, wood products.

Industry: (26.6% of GDP) Types—food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel, petroleum, mining, textiles, clothing, motor vehicles, consumer durables.

Services: (69.5% of GDP): Types—commerce and tourism, financial services, transportation and communications.

Trade: (Goods) Exports (2007)—$272 billion f.o.b. Imports (2007)—$282 billion f.o.b. Exports to U.S. (2007)—$223 billion (82% of total). Imports from U.S. (2007)—$141 billion (50% of total). Major markets—U.S., EU, Canada.

PEOPLE

Mexico is the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world and the second most-populous country in Latin America after Portuguese-speaking Brazil. About 70% of the people live in urban areas. Many Mexicans emigrate from rural areas that lack job opportunities—such as the underdeveloped southern states and the crowded central plateau—to the industrialized urban centers and the developing areas along the U.S.-Mexico border. According to some estimates, the population of the area around Mexico City is about 18 million, which would make it the largest concentration of population in the Western Hemisphere. Cities bordering on the United States—such as Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez—and cities in the interior—such as Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Puebla—have undergone sharp rises in population in recent years.

Mexico has made great strides in improving access to education and literacy rates over the past few decades. According to a 2006 World Bank report, enrollment at the primary level is nearly universal, and more children are completing primary education. The average number of years of schooling for the population 15 years old and over was around eight years during the 2004-05 school year, a marked improvement on a decade earlier—when it was 6.8 years—but low compared with other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries.

HISTORY

Highly developed cultures, including those of the Olmecs, Mayas, Toltecs, and Aztecs, existed long before the Spanish conquest. Hernando Cortes conquered Mexico during the period 1519-21 and founded a Spanish colony that lasted nearly 300 years.

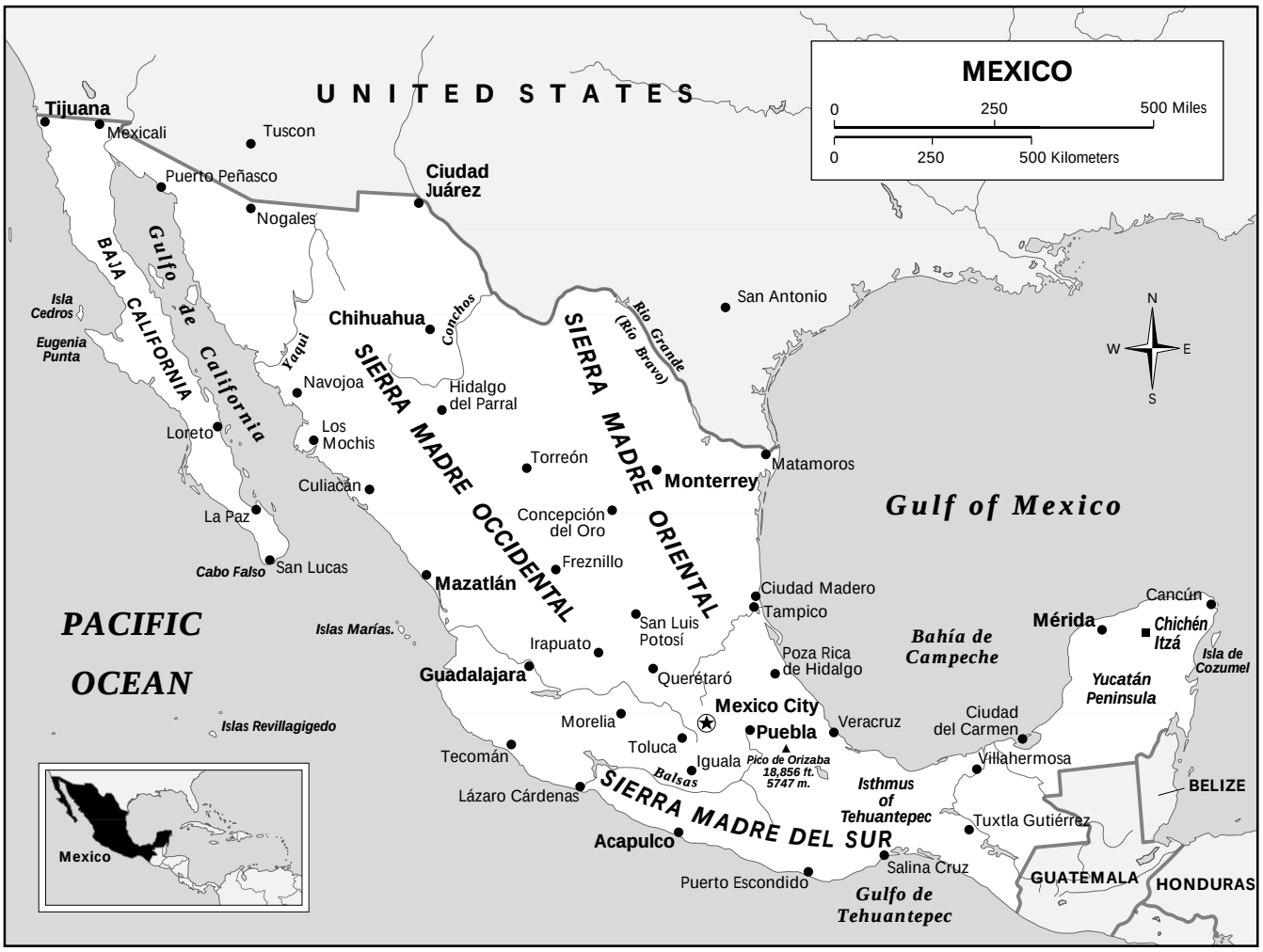
Independence from Spain was proclaimed by Father Miguel Hidalgo on September 16, 1810. Father Hidalgo's declaration of national independence, known in Mexico as the "Grito de Dolores," launched a decade long struggle for independence from Spain. Prominent figures in Mexico's war for independence were Father Jose Maria Morelos; Gen. Augustin de Iturbide, who defeated the Spaniards and ruled as Mexican emperor from 1822-23; and Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana, who went on to dominate Mexican politics from 1833 to 1855. An 1821 treaty recognized Mexican independence from Spain and called for a constitutional monarchy. The planned monarchy failed; a republic was proclaimed in December 1822 and established in 1824.

Throughout the rest of the 19th century, Mexico's government and economy were shaped by contentious debates among liberals and conservatives, republicans and monarchists, federalists and those who favored centralized government. During the two presidential terms of Benito Juarez (1858-71), Mexico experimented with modern democratic and economic reforms. President Juarez' terms of office, and Mexico's early experience with democracy, were interrupted by the Habsburg monarchy's rule of Mexico (1864-67), and was followed by the authoritarian government of Gen. Porfirio Diaz, who was president during most of the period between 1877 and 1911.

Mexico's severe social and economic problems erupted in a revolution that lasted from 1910-20 and gave rise to the 1917 constitution. Prominent leaders in this period—some of whom were rivals for power—were Francisco Madero, Venustiano Carranza, Pancho Villa, Alvaro Obregon, Victoriano Huerta, and Emiliano Zapata. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), formed in 1929 under a different name, emerged from the chaos of revolution as a vehicle for keeping political competition among a coalition of interests in peaceful channels. For 71 years, Mexico's national government was controlled by the PRI, which won every presidential race and most gubernatorial races until the July 2000 presidential election of Vicente Fox Quesada of the National Action Party (PAN), in what were widely considered at the time the freest and fairest elections in Mexico's history. President Fox completed his term on December 1, 2006, when Felipe Calderon assumed the presidency.

GOVERNMENT

The 1917 constitution provides for a federal republic with powers separated into independent executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Historically, the executive has been the dominant branch, with power vested in the president, who promulgates and executes the laws of the Congress. The Congress has played an increasingly important role since 1997, when opposition parties first made major gains. The president also legislates by executive decree in certain economic and financial fields, using powers delegated from the Congress. The president is elected by universal adult suffrage for a 6-year term and may not hold office a second time. There is no vice president; in the event of the removal or death of the president, a provisional president is elected by the Congress. The Congress is composed of a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. Consecutive re-election is prohibited. Senators are elected to 6-year terms, and deputies serve 3-year terms. The Senate's 128 seats are filled by a mixture of direct-election and proportional representation. In the lower chamber, 300 deputies are directly elected to represent single-member districts, and 200 are selected by a modified form of proportional representation from five electoral regions. The 200 proportional representation seats were created to help smaller parties gain access to the Chamber. The judiciary is divided into federal and state court systems, with federal courts having jurisdiction over most civil cases and those involving major felonies. Under the constitution, trial and sentencing must be completed within 12 months of arrest for crimes that would carry at least a 2-year sentence. In practice, the judicial system often does not meet this requirement. Trial is by judge, not jury, in most criminal cases. Defendants have a right to counsel, and public defenders are available. Other rights include



defense against self-incrimination, the right to confront one's accusers, and the right to a public trial. Supreme Court justices are appointed by the president and approved by the Senate.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Felipe de Jesus CALDERON Hinojosa**
Sec. of Agrarian Reform: **Abelardo ESCOBAR Prieto**
Sec. of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries, & Nutrition: **Alberto CARDENAS Jimenez**
Sec. of Communications & Transport: **Luis TELLEZ Kuenzler**
Sec. of Economy: **Eduardo SOJO Garza-Aldape**
Sec. of Energy: **Georgina KESSEL Martinez**
Sec. of Environment & Natural Resources: **Rafael ELVIRA Quesada**
Sec. of Finance & Public Credit: **Agustin CARSTENS Carstens**
Sec. of Foreign Relations: **Patricia ESPINOSA Cantellano**
Sec. of Government: **Juan Camilo MOURINO Terrazo**
Sec. of Health: **Jose Angel CORDOVA Villalobos**
Sec. of Labor & Social Welfare: **Javier LOZANO Alarcon**
Sec. of National Defense: **Guillermo GALVAN Galvan**
Sec. of the Navy: **Mariano Francisco SAYNEZ Mendoza**
Sec. of Public Education: **Josefina VAZQUEZ Mota**
Sec. of Public Security: **Genaro GARCIA Luna**
Sec. of Public Service: **Salvador VEGA Casillas**
Sec. of Social Development: **Ernesto Javier CORDERO Arroyo**
Sec. of Tourism: **Rodolfo ELIZONDO Torres**
Attorney Gen.: **Eduardo MEDINA MORA Icaza**
Governor, Bank of Mexico: **Guillermo ORTIZ Martinez**
Ambassador to the US: **Arturo SARUKHAN Casamitjana**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Claude HELLER Roussant**

Mexico maintains an embassy in the United States at 1911 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20006 (tel. 202-728-1600). Consular offices are located at 2827–16th St. NW, 20009 (tel. 202-736-1012), and the trade office is co-located at the embassy (tel. 202-728-1686).

Besides its embassy, Mexico maintains over 50 diplomatic offices in the U.S. Consulates general are located in Chicago, Dallas, Denver, El Paso, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Antonio, San

Diego, and San Francisco; consulates are (partial listing) in Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia, Seattle, St. Louis, and Tucson.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

President Felipe Calderon of the PAN was elected in 2006 in an extremely tight race, with a margin of less than one percent separating his vote total from that of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador ("AMLO") of the left-of-center Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). AMLO contested the results of the election, alleging that it was marred by widespread fraud. Mexico's Federal Electoral Tribunal, while acknowledging the presence of randomly-distributed irregularities, rejected AMLO's accusation of widespread fraud and upheld Calderon's victory on September 5, 2006.

In the 2006 elections, the PAN emerged as the largest party in both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, with just over 40% of the seats in each house of Congress. It does not enjoy a legislative majority. Although the PRI no longer controls the presidency and has fewer congressional seats than either the PAN or PRD, it remains a significant force in Mexican politics, holding 18 governorships and often playing a pivotal role in forming coalitions in the national Congress. The next congressional elections will take place in July 2009.

Reforms

One of President Fox's most important reforms was the passage and implementation of freedom of information (FOIA) laws. President Fox also highlighted the need for modernization of Mexico's criminal justice system, including the introduction of oral trials. Judicial reforms stalled at the federal level during the Fox years, but President Calderon succeeded in passing legislation to reform the federal judicial system. As of November 2008, approval for the reform had been granted by both houses of the Mexican Congress, and the required majority of the states. The reform legislation set a timetable of eight years for full implementation.

In addition to judicial reform, President Calderon has also succeeded in getting passed through Congress important fiscal, electoral, energy, and pension reforms. The administration is grappling with many economic challenges, including the need to upgrade infrastructure, modernize labor laws, and make the energy sector more competitive. President Calderon introduced a limited energy reform proposal, designed to strengthen the state oil company, Pemex, in April 2008. A compromise measure was passed on October 28, after more than five months of public debate. Calderon has stated that his top economic priorities remain reducing poverty and creating jobs.

ECONOMY

Mexico is highly dependent on exports to the U.S., which represent more than a quarter of the country's GDP. The result is that the Mexican economy is strongly linked to the U.S. business cycle, and has suffered from the economic slowdown in the United States. Real GDP grew by 4.8% in 2006 and by 3.3% in 2007, but is expected to grow only by about 2% in 2008 and from 0.5% to 1.5% in 2009.

Mexico's trade regime is among the most open in the world, with free trade agreements with the U.S., Canada, the EU, and many other countries (44 total). Since the 1994 devaluation of the peso, successive Mexican governments have improved the country's macroeconomic fundamentals. Inflation and public sector deficits are under control, while the current account balance and public debt profile have improved. As of October 2008, Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch Ratings had all issued investment-grade ratings for Mexico's sovereign debt.

Trade

Mexico is among the world's most open economies, but it is dependent on trade with the U.S., which bought about 82% of its exports in 2007. Top U.S. exports to Mexico include electronic equipment, motor vehicle parts, and chemicals. Top Mexican exports to the U.S. include petroleum, cars, and electronic equipment. There is considerable intra-company trade.

Mexico is an active and constructive member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It hosted the September 2003 WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun. The Mexican Government and many businesses support a Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Trade disputes between the United States and Mexico are generally settled through direct negotiations between the two countries or via WTO or North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) panels. The most significant areas of friction involve agricultural products such as livestock and sweeteners. To address the issues that affect these industries in a manner consistent with the principles of free trade, the United States and Mexico have established technical working groups.

Mexico's land transportation network is one of the most extensive in Latin America with 357,000 kilometers (km.) of paved roads, including more than 11,000 kilometers of four-lane paved roads. The 26,622 kilometers (16,268 mi.) of government-owned railroads in Mexico have been privatized through the sale of 50-year operating concessions.

Mexico's ports have experienced a boom in investment and traffic following a 1993 law that privatized the port system. Mexico's ports moved nearly 1.7 million containers in 2006. A number of international airlines serve Mexico, with direct or connecting flights from most major cities in the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, and Latin America. Most Mexican regional capitals and resorts have direct air services to Mexico City or the United States. In 2005, the Government of Mexico agreed to sell Mexicana, one of the two main national airlines, to a private investor, and did the same with Aeromexico in 2007. Airports are semi-

privatized with the government still the majority shareholder, but with each regional airport group maintaining operational autonomy.

The telecommunications sector is dominated by Telmex, the former state-owned monopoly. Several international companies compete in the sector with limited success. The teledensity rate in Mexico (around 19%) is below average in Latin America. Wireless penetration is much higher, with over 65 million wireless subscribers in the first quarter of 2008, although 31 million of these customers use prepaid cards, and many use their phones to receive calls only. Mexico's satellite service sector was opened to competition, including limited foreign direct investment, in 2001.

Agriculture

Only 13% of Mexico's land area is arable, of which less than 3% is irrigated. Top revenue-producing crops include corn, tomatoes, sugar cane, dry beans, and avocados. Mexico also generates significant revenue from the production of beef, poultry, pork, and dairy products. In total, agriculture accounted for 3.5% of GDP in 2007, yet agricultural employment accounted for over 14% of total employment. Most of the population is employed in the services sector (60% of total employment).

Implementation of NAFTA has opened Mexico's agricultural sector to the forces of globalization and competition, and some farmers have greatly benefited from greater market access. In particular, fruit and vegetable exports from Mexico have increased dramatically in recent years, exceeding $4 billion to the United States alone in 2007. However, structural inefficiencies that have existed for decades continue to limit improvements in productivity and living standards for many in the agricultural sector. These inefficiencies include a prevalence of small-scale producers, a lack of infrastructure, inadequate supplies of credit, a communal land structure for many producers, and a large subsistence rural population that is not part of the formal economy. It is estimated that half of Mexico's producers are subsistence farmers and over 60% produce corn or beans, with the majority of these farmers cultivating five hectares or less, although the number of Mexican farmers is steadily decreasing as they seek greater economic opportunities from off-farm employment.

Mexico subsidizes agricultural production through various support programs, the most notable being the PROCAMPO initiative.

Manufacturing and Foreign Investment

The manufacturing sector, which accounts for about 18% of GDP, grew by 1.5% in real terms in 2007. Construction grew by 2.6% in real terms in 2007.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Mexico for 2007 was $ 25 billion, up 22% over the previous year. The U.S. was once again the largest foreign investor in Mexico, accounting for 40% ($9.9 billion FDI from the U.S.) of reported FDI. The economic slowdown in the U.S. in 2008 has caused a significant decline in this figure.

Oil and Gas

In 2007 Mexico was the world's eighth-largest crude exporter, and the third-largest supplier of oil to the U.S. Oil and gas revenues provided more than one-third of all Mexican Government revenues.

Mexico's state-owned oil company, Pemex, holds a constitutionally established monopoly for the exploration, production, transportation, and marketing of the nation's oil. With its primary known oil reserves already in serious decline, Mexico will have to determine in the near future how it wants to harvest its harder-to-exploit probable reserves in order to avoid very difficult economic choices. The Mexican Congress passed energy reform legislation in October 2008 that gives Pemex more budgetary autonomy and transparency. However, the reforms do not open the petroleum sector to investment and will do little to address declining production. While private investment in natural gas transportation, distribution, and storage has been permitted, Pemex remains in sole control of natural gas exploration and production. Despite substantial reserves, Mexico is a net natural gas importer.

Transportation and Communications

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NATIONAL SECURITY

Mexico's armed forces number about 225,000. The army makes up about three-fourths of that total. The navy is a completely autonomous cabinet agency and as such there is no joint chief of staff position. Principal military roles include national defense, narcotics control, and civic action assignments such as search and rescue and disaster relief. Mexican military and naval forces provided disaster assistance to the U.S. in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which struck Louisiana and Mississippi in August 2005.

President Calderon has made public security a focus of his presidency and, in addition to passing judicial reform legislation, has launched aggressive operations against organized crime and drug traffickers in several states, raised pay for the military, and replaced numerous corrupt federal police officers. He has also, when necessary, been willing to deploy the Mexican Army in the states where the criminal cartels are dominant.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Traditionally, Mexico has sought to maintain its interests abroad and project its influence largely through moral persuasion and has championed the principles of nonintervention and self-determination. In its efforts to revitalize its economy and open up to international competition, Mexico has sought closer relations with the U.S., Western Europe, and the Pacific Basin. Presidents Fox and Calderon have more actively promoted international human rights and democracy and sought to increase Mexico's participation in international affairs.

Mexico actively participates in several international organizations; it has been elected to a seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2009-2010, having most recently held a seat during 2002-03. Mexico is a strong supporter of the United Nations and Organization of American States systems and also pursues its interests through a number of ad hoc international bodies. Mexico has been selective in its membership in other international organizations. It declined, for example, to become a member of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Nevertheless, Mexico does seek to diversify its diplomatic and economic relations, as demonstrated by its accession to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1986; its joining the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) in 1993; its becoming, in April 1994, the first Latin American member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and its entering the World Trade Organization as a founding member in 1996. Mexico attended the 1994 Summit of the Americas, held in Miami; managed coordination of the agenda item on education for the 1998 Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile; and hosted a Special Summit of the Americas in early 2004. Mexico hosted the September 2003 WTO Ministerial in Cancun and a Hemispheric Security Conference in October of the same year. It was elected to the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors in 2003. In 2002 it hosted the APEC Leaders' Meeting in Cabo San Lucas.

U.S.-MEXICAN RELATIONS

U.S. relations with Mexico are as important and complex as with any country in the world. A stable, democratic, and economically prosperous Mexico is fundamental to U.S. interests. U.S. relations with Mexico have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans—whether the issue is trade and economic reform, homeland security, drug control, migration, or the promotion of democracy. The U.S. and Mexico are partners in NAFTA, and enjoy a broad and expanding trade relationship. In March 2005, the U.S., Mexico, and Canada formed the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP), which contemplates trilateral and bilateral initiatives to develop new avenues of cooperation that will enhance North America's security, competitiveness, and economic resilience. The scope of U.S.-Mexican relations goes far beyond diplomatic and official contacts; it entails extensive commercial, cultural, and educational ties, as demonstrated by the annual figure of about a million legal border crossings a day. In addition, between a half-million and a million American citizens live in Mexico. More than 18,000 companies with U.S. investment have operations there, and the U.S. accounts for 47% of all foreign direct investment in Mexico. Along the 2,000-mile shared border, state and local governments interact closely.

There has been frequent contact at the highest levels. Presidents' meetings have included the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Meeting in Bangkok in October 2003 and President Bush's visits to Monterrey in January 2004 (Summit of the Americas) and March 2002. Presidents Bush and Fox met in Crawford in March 2005 where, along with then Canadian Prime Minister Martin, they launched the Security and Prosperity Partnership. They held a follow-on SPP meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Harper in Cancun in March 2006. President Calderon joined President Bush and Prime Minister Harper in Montebello, Canada in August 2007, and in New Orleans for the third SPP leaders' meeting in April 2008.

A strong partnership with Mexico is critical to combating terrorism and controlling the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. In recent years, cooperation on counter-narcotics and Mexico's own initiatives in fighting drug trafficking have been unprecedented. At the August 2007 SPP leaders' meeting in Montebello, Canada, Presidents Bush and Calderon announced the Merida Initiative to work together and with the countries of Central America to combat drug trafficking and organized crime in the region. In June 2008, President Bush signed the congressional appropriations bill that allocated $400 million in assistance to Mexico under the Merida Initiative.

Border and Environmental Affairs

Cooperation between the United States and Mexico along the 2,000-mile common border includes state and local problem-solving mechanisms; transportation planning; and institutions to address resource, environment, and health issues. In 1993, the Border Liaison Mechanism (BLM) was established. Chaired by U.S. and Mexican consuls, the BLMs operate in "sister city" pairs and have proven to be effective means of dealing with a variety of local issues ranging from accidental violation of sovereignty by law enforcement officials and charges of mistreatment of foreign nationals to coordination of port security and cooperation in public health matters such as tuberculosis.

As the number of people and the volume of cargo crossing the U.S.-Mexico border grow, so, too, does the need for coordinated infrastructure development. The multi-agency U.S.-Mexico Binational Group on Bridges and Border Crossings meets twice yearly to improve the efficiency of existing crossings and coordinate planning for new ones. The 10 U.S. and Mexican border states have become active participants in these meetings.

The United States and Mexico have a history of cooperation on environmental and natural resource issues, particularly in the border area, where there are serious environmental problems caused by rapid population growth, urbanization, and industrialization. Cooperative activities between the U.S. and Mexico take place under a number of agreements such as:

- An 1889 convention establishing the International Boundary Commission, reconstituted by the Water Treaty of 1944 as the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico (IBWC). The IBWC has settled many difficult U.S.-Mexico boundary and water problems, including the regularization of the Rio Grande near El Paso through the 1967 Chamizal settlement. The IBWC determines and accounts for national ownership of international waters, builds and operates water conservation and flood control projects, and constructs and maintains boundary markers on the land boundary and on international bridges. In recent years, the IBWC has worked to resolve long-standing border sanitation problems, to monitor the quantity and quality of border waters, and to address water delivery and sedimentation problems of the Colorado River.

- The 1983 La Paz Agreement to protect and improve the border environment and Border 2012, a 10-year, binational, results-oriented environmental program for the U.S.-Mexico border region. The Border 2012 Program is the latest multi-year, binational planning effort to be implemented under the La Paz Agreement and succeeds Border XXI, a five-year program that ended in 2000.

- A November 1993 agreement between the U.S. and Mexico, establishing the North American Development Bank (NADBank) and the Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) under the auspices of NAFTA, in order to address border environmental problems. The NADBank uses capital and grant funds contributed by Mexico and the U.S. to help finance border environmental infrastructure projects certified by the BECC. The BECC works with local communities to develop and certify environmental infrastructure projects, such as wastewater treatment plants, drinking water systems, and solid waste disposal facilities. Prior to 2005, both institutions had separate Boards of Directors. In an effort to improve efficiency, the separate Boards were merged into a single entity, which held its first meeting in June 2006.

- The 1993 North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), creating the North American Commission on Environmental Cooperation under NAFTA by the U.S., Mexico, and Canada, to improve enforcement of environmental laws and to address common environmental concerns.

- A series of agreements on border health (since 1942), wildlife and migratory birds (since 1936), national parks, forests, marine and atmospheric resources. In July 2000, the U.S. and Mexico signed an agreement to establish a binational Border Health Commission. The Border Health Commission meets annually and is made up of the federal secretaries of health, the 10 border states' chief health officers, and prominent community health professionals from both countries. A representative from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services manages the U.S. Section in El Paso, Texas.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 13, 2008

Country Description: Mexico is a Spanish-speaking country about three times the size of Texas, consisting of 31 states and one federal district. The capital is Mexico City. Mexico has a rapidly developing economy, ranked by the World Bank as the twelfth largest in the world.

The climate ranges from tropical to desert, and the terrain consists of coastal lowlands, central high plateaus, and mountains of up to 18,000 feet.

Many cities throughout Mexico are popular tourist destinations for U.S. citizens. Travelers should note that location-specific information contained below is not confined solely to those cities, but can reflect conditions throughout Mexico. Although the majority of visitors to Mexico thoroughly enjoy their stay, a small number experience difficulties and serious inconveniences.

Entry Requirements: For the latest entry requirements, contact the Embassy of Mexico web site at http://portal.sre.gob.mx/usa/ or contact the Embassy of Mexico at 1911 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20006, telephone (202) 736-1000 or any Mexican consulate in the United States for the most current information.

Land or sea travelers must have a valid U.S. passport (or U.S. citizenship documents such as a certified copy (not a simple photocopy or facsimile) of a U.S. birth certificate, a Naturalization Certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, or a Certificate of Citizenship are acceptable along with photo identification, such as a state or military issued ID). U.S. legal permanent residents in possession of their I-551 Permanent Resident card may board flights to the U.S. from Mexico.

Minors: Mexican law requires that any non-Mexican citizen under the age of 18 departing Mexico must carry notarized written permission from any parent or guardian not traveling with the child to or from Mexico. This permission must include the name of the parent, the name of the child, the name of anyone traveling with the child, and the notarized signature(s) of the absent parent(s). The State Department recommends that the permission should include travel dates, destinations, airlines and a brief summary of the circumstances surrounding the travel. The child must be carrying the original letter—not a facsimile or scanned copy—as well as proof of the parent/child relationship (usually a birth certificate or court document)—and an original custody decree, if applicable. Travelers should contact the Mexican Embassy or closest Mexican Consulate for current information.

Tourist Travel: U.S. citizens do not require a visa or a tourist card for tourist stays of 72 hours or less within "the border zone," defined as an area between 20 to 30 kilometers of the border with the U.S., depending on the location. U.S. citizens traveling as tourists beyond the border zone or entering Mexico by air must pay a fee to obtain a tourist card, also known as an FM-T, available from Mexican consulates, Mexican border crossing points, Mexican tourism offices, airports within the border zone and most airlines serving Mexico. The fee for the tourist card is generally included in the price of a plane ticket for travelers arriving by air.

Business Travel: Upon arrival in Mexico, business travelers must complete and submit a form (Form FM-N) authorizing the conduct of business, but not employment, for a 30-day period. Travelers entering Mexico for purposes other than tourism or business or for stays of longer than 180 days require a visa and must carry a valid U.S. passport. U.S. citizens planning to work or live in Mexico should apply for the appropriate Mexican visa at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., or nearest Mexican consulate in the United States.

Vehicle Permits: Tourists wishing to travel beyond the border zone with their vehicle must obtain a temporary import permit or risk having their vehicle confiscated by Mexican customs officials. At present the only exceptions to the requirement are travel in the Baja Peninsula and in the state of Sonora only for vehicles entering through the Nogales port of entry. Travelers are advised that the "Sonora Only" exception through the Nogales port of entry will expire at the end of 2007. To acquire a permit, one must submit evidence of citizenship, title for the vehicle, a vehicle registration certificate, a driver's license, and a processing fee to either a Banjercito (Mexican Army Bank) branch located at a Mexican Customs (Aduanas) office at the port of entry, or at one of the Mexican Consulates located in the U.S. Mexican law also requires the posting of a bond at a Banjercito office to guarantee the export of the car from Mexico within a time period determined at the time of the application. For this purpose, American Express, Visa or MasterCard credit card holders will be asked

to provide credit card information; others will need to make a cash deposit of between $200 and $400, depending on the make/model/year of the vehicle. In order to recover this bond or avoid credit card charges, travelers must go to any Mexican Customs office immediately prior to departing Mexico. Despite any advice, official or unofficial, to the contrary, vehicle permits cannot be obtained at checkpoints in the interior of Mexico.

Travelers should avoid individuals outside vehicle permit offices offering to obtain the permits without waiting in line, even if they appear to be government officials. There have been reports of fraudulent or counterfeit permits being issued adjacent to the vehicle import permit office in Nuevo Laredo and other border areas. If the proper permit is not obtained before entering Mexico and cannot be obtained at the Banjercito branch at the port of entry, do not proceed to the interior. Travelers without the proper permit may be incarcerated, fined and/or have their vehicle seized at immigration/customs checkpoints. For further information, contact Mexican Customs about appropriate vehicle permits.

Dual Nationality: Mexican law recognizes dual nationality for Mexicans by birth, meaning those born in Mexico or born abroad to Mexican parents. U.S. citizens who are also Mexican nationals are considered to be Mexican by local authorities. Dual-nationality status could hamper U.S. Government efforts to provide consular protection. Dual nationals are not subject to compulsory military service in Mexico. Travelers possessing both U.S. and Mexican nationalities must carry with them proof of their citizenship of both countries. Under Mexican law, dual nationals entering or departing Mexico must identify themselves as Mexican.

Safety and Security: Violence by criminal elements affects many parts of the country, urban and rural. Visitors to the U.S.-Mexico border region, including cities such as Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Nogales, Matamoros, and Monterrey should remain alert and be aware of their surroundings at all times. In its efforts to combat violence, the Government of Mexico has deployed military troops in various parts of the country. Military checkpoints increased in border areas in early 2008. U.S. citizens are advised to cooperate with official checkpoints when traveling on Mexican highways. Sporadic outbursts of politically motivated violence occur from time to time in certain areas of the country, particularly in the southern states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

Demonstrations: The Mexican Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners, and such actions may result in detention and/or deportation. Travelers should avoid political demonstrations and other activities that might be deemed political by the Mexican authorities. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. U.S. citizens are urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations, and to exercise caution if in the vicinity of any protests.

Chiapas: The Department of State recommends U.S. citizens traveling to the southern state of Chiapas remain cautious at all times. Armed rebels and armed civilian groups are present in some areas of the state, and there is often no effective law enforcement or police protection. Violent criminal gang activity along the state's southern border—mostly aimed at illegal migrants—continues to be a concern. U.S. citizens traveling to Chiapas are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy for further security information prior to traveling to the region.

General Safety: Standards of security, safety, and supervision may not reach those expected in the United States. This has contributed to deaths of U.S. citizens in automobile accidents, after falls from balconies or into open ditches, by drowning in the ocean as well as in hotel pools, and in water-sports mishaps, among others.

The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's travel web site where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Please visit the Safety Issues section for additional safety information.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Crime in Mexico continues at high levels, and it is often violent, especially in Mexico City, Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Monterrey, Acapulco, and the state of Sinaloa. Other metropolitan areas have lower, but still serious, levels of crime. Low apprehension and conviction rates of criminals contribute to Mexico's high crime rate. U.S. citizen victims of crime in Mexico are encouraged to report the incident to the nearest police headquarters and to the nearest U.S. consular office.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Personal Property: Travelers should always leave valuables and irreplaceable items in a safe place, or not bring them at all. All visitors are encouraged to make use of hotel safes when available, avoid wearing obviously expensive jewelry or designer clothing, and carry only the cash or credit cards that will be needed on each outing. There are a significant number of pickpocket, purse snatching, and hotel-room theft incidents. Public transportation is a particularly popular place for pickpockets.

When renting a vehicle, ensure that advertisements or labels for the rental agency are not prominently displayed on the vehicle. Avoid leaving valuables such as identification, passport and irreplaceable property in rental vehicles, even when locked.

A number of Americans have been arrested for passing on counterfeit currency they had earlier received in change. If you receive what you believe to be a counterfeit bank note, bring it to the attention of Mexican law enforcement.

Personal Safety: Visitors should be aware of their surroundings at all times, even when in areas generally considered safe. Women traveling alone are especially vulnerable and should exercise caution, particularly at night. Victims, who are almost always unaccompanied, have been raped, robbed of personal property, or abducted and then held while their credit cards were used at various businesses and Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). U.S. citizens should be very cautious in general when using ATMs in Mexico. If an ATM must be used, it should be accessed only during the business day at large protected facilities (preferably inside commercial establishments, rather than at glass-enclosed, highly visible ATMs on streets). U.S. and Mexican citizens are sometimes accosted on the street and forced to withdraw money from their accounts using their ATM cards.

Kidnapping, including the kidnapping of non-Mexicans, continues at alarming rates. So-called express kidnappings, an attempt to get quick cash in exchange for the release of an individual, have occurred in almost all the large cities in Mexico and appear to target not only the wealthy, but also the middle class. U.S. businesses with offices in Mexico or concerned U.S. citizens may contact the U.S. Embassy or any U.S. consulate to discuss precautions they should take.

Kidnapping in Mexico has become a lucrative business, whether it be an actual kidnapping or a virtual kidnapping. A common scam throughout Mexico is telephone kidnapping with a similar methodology. The virtual kidnapping calls typically include a distraught voice immediately after the phone is answered that serves as a ploy to elicit information about a potential victim. The caller then uses this knowledge to demand ransom for the release of the supposed victim. In the event of such a call stay calm since the vast majority of the calls are hoaxes; do not reveal any personal information; try to speak with the victim to corroborate identity; and contact the local police as well as the Embassy or nearest Consulate.

Criminal assaults occur on highways throughout Mexico; travelers should exercise extreme caution at all times, avoid traveling at night, and may wish to use toll ("cuota") roads rather than the less secure "free" ("libre") roads whenever possible. Always keep your car doors locked and your windows up while driving, whether on the highway or in town. When in heavy traffic or when stopped in traffic, leave enough room between vehicles to maneuver and escape, if necessary. In addition, U.S. citizens should not hitchhike with, accept rides from or offer rides to, strangers anywhere in Mexico. Tourists should not hike alone in backcountry areas, nor walk alone on lightly-frequented beaches, ruins or trails.

Street Crime: Armed street crime is a serious problem in all of the major cities. Some bars and nightclubs, especially in resort cities such as Cancun, Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan, Acapulco, and Tijuana, can be havens for drug dealers and petty criminals. Some establishments may contaminate or drug drinks to gain control over the patron.

All bus travel should be during daylight hours and on first-class conveyances. Although there have been several reports of bus hijackings and robberies on toll roads, buses on toll roads have a markedly lower rate of incidents than buses (second- and third-class) that travel the less secure "free" highways. The Embassy advises caution when traveling by bus from Acapulco toward Ixtapa or Huatulco. Although the police have made some progress in bringing this problem under control, armed robberies of entire busloads of passengers still occur.

Harassment/Extortion: In some instances, Americans have become victims of harassment, mistreatment and extortion by Mexican law enforcement and other officials. Mexican authorities have cooperated in investigating such cases, but one must have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint effectively. Please note this information if you ever have a problem with police or other officials. In addition, tourists should be wary of persons representing themselves as police officers or other officials. When in doubt, ask for identification. Be aware that offering a bribe to a public official to avoid a ticket or other penalty is a crime in Mexico.

It is increasingly common for extortionists to call prospective victims on the telephone, often posing as law enforcement or other officials, and demand payments in return for the release of an arrested family member, or to forestall a kidnapping. Prison inmates using smuggled cellular phones often place these calls. Persons receiving such calls should be extremely skeptical since most such demands or threats are baseless, and should contact the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. consulate, or the Department of State for assistance.

U.S. citizens may refer to A Safe Trip Abroad for ways to promote a trouble-free journey.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are a victim of a crime while overseas, you should report it immediately to the nearest U.S. consular office and make a report to Mexican authorities. Do not rely on hotel/restaurant/tour company management to make the report for you. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds can be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Under the best of circumstances, prosecution is very difficult (a fact some assailants appear to exploit knowingly), but no criminal investigation is possible without a formal complaint to Mexican authorities.

Victims of crime may also report the crime to the Mexican embassy or nearest Mexican consulate after arriving in the United States. Before doing so, please contact the U.S. Embassy or consulate in Mexico for assistance in coordinating with Mexican consular officials to obtain an official appointment for the victim or witness with the Mexican Embassy or consulate. Travelers are encouraged to report crimes as soon as possible. Delays in reporting the crime may hinder or even prevent prosecution in some cases.

Crime in Mexico City: In Mexico City, the most frequently reported crimes involving tourists are taxi robbery (see below), armed robbery, pick pocketing, and purse-snatching. In several cases, tourists have reported that men in uniforms perpetrated the crime, stopping vehicles and seeking money, or assaulting and robbing tourists walking late at night. As in any large city, individuals should exercise caution and be aware of their surroundings, especially when walking anywhere in the city.

Business travelers should be aware that theft occurs even in what appears to be secure locations. Theft of such items as briefcases and laptops occur frequently at the Benito Juarez International Airport and at business-class hotels. Arriving travelers who need to obtain pesos at the airport should use the exchange counters or ATMs in the arrival/departure gate area, where access is restricted, rather than changing money after passing through Customs, where they can be observed by criminals.

Exercise caution when utilizing credit or debit cards in ATM machines or dubious locales. There have been reports of instances in which U.S. citizens in Mexico have had their card numbers "skimmed" and the money in their debit accounts stolen or their credit cards fraudulently charged. ("Skimming" is the theft of credit card information by an employee of a legitimate merchant or bank, manually copying down numbers or using a magnetic stripe reader.) In addition to skimming, the risk of physical theft of credit or debit cards also exists. To prevent such theft, the Embassy recommends that travelers keep close track of their personal belongings when out and about and that they only carry that which is needed. If travelers choose to use credit cards, they should regularly check their account status to ensure its integrity.

Metro (subway) robberies are frequent in Mexico City. If riding the Metro or the city bus system, U.S. citizens should take extreme care with valuables and belongings. Avoid using Metro during busy commuting hours in the morning or afternoon. Tourists and residents alike should avoid driving alone at night anywhere in Mexico City.

Robbery and assault on passengers in taxis are frequent and violent in Mexico City, with passengers subjected to beating, shooting, and sexual assault. U.S. citizens visiting Mexico City should avoid taking any taxi not summoned by telephone or contacted in advance. When in need of a taxi, telephone a radio taxi or "sitio" (regulated taxi stand—pronounced "C-T-O"), and ask the dispatcher for the driver's name and the cab's license plate number. Ask the hotel concierge or other responsible individual to write down the license plate number of the cab that you entered. Avoid "libre" taxis and the Volkswagen beetle taxis altogether. Although "libre" taxis are more convenient and less expensive, these are less regulated, may be unregistered, and are potentially more dangerous.

Passengers arriving at Mexico City's Benito Juarez International Airport should take only airport taxis (which are white with a yellow stripe and a black airplane symbol) after pre-paying the fare at one of the special booths inside the airport.

Crime in Cancun, Acapulco, and Other Resort Areas: There have been a significant number of rapes reported in Cancun and other resort areas. Many of these have occurred at night or in the early morning. Attacks have also occurred on deserted beaches and in hotel rooms. Acquaintance rape is a serious problem. In other cases, hotel workers, taxi drivers, and security personnel have been implicated. Please refer to our information for Victims of Crime.

Drug-related violence, including shooting and kidnapping, has increased in Acapulco. Although this violence is not targeted at foreign residents or tourists, U.S. citizens in these areas should be vigilant in their personal safety.

See the information at http://travel.state.gov regarding Spring Break in Mexico if you are considering visiting Mexican resort areas during February through March when thousands of US college students traditionally arrive in those areas. Additional information designed specifically for traveling students is available at studentsabroad.state.gov.

Crime in Border Cities: Visitors to the U.S.–Mexico border region, including cities such as Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Nogales, Reynosa, Matamoros, and Monterrey, should remain alert and be aware of their surroundings at all times.

Some border cities have seen an increase in violence over the past year, some of which has been directed against U.S. citizens. Local police forces have been ineffective in maintaining security in some regions along the border. Drug-related violence has increased dramatically in recent months, and shows no sign of abating. While U.S. citizens not involved in criminal activities are generally not targeted, innocent

bystanders are at risk from the increase in violence in the streets of border cities.

In Ciudad Juarez, Monterrey, Nuevo Laredo, and Tijuana, shootings have taken place at busy intersections and at popular restaurants during daylight hours. The wave of violence has been aimed primarily at members of drug-trafficking organizations, criminal justice officials, and journalists. However, foreign visitors and residents, including U.S. citizens, have been among the victims of homicide and kidnapping in the border region. U.S. citizens are urged to be especially aware of safety and security concerns when visiting the border region and exercise commonsense precautions such as visiting only legitimate business and tourist areas of border towns during daylight hours. U.S. citizens who frequently make routine visits to border cities should vary their routes and times and are urged to park in well-lighted, paid, and guarded parking lots. Exercise caution when entering or exiting your vehicle and instruct all fellow travelers to enter and exit the vehicle safely and quickly.

Mexican authorities have failed to prosecute numerous crimes committed against U.S. citizens, including murder and kidnapping. Local police forces suffer from a lack of funds and training, and the judicial system is weak, overworked, and inefficient. Criminals, armed with an impressive array of weapons, know there is little chance they will be caught and punished. In some cases, assailants have been wearing full or partial police uniforms and have used vehicles that resemble police vehicles, indicating some elements of the police might be involved.

Visitors are very vulnerable when visiting the local "red-light districts," particularly if they are departing alone in the early hours of the morning. In Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana, there has also been a rise in automobile accidents in which municipal police extort money from U.S. citizen victims.

Criminal Penalties And Treatment of Prisoners: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. The trial process in Mexico is different from the trial process in the United States, and procedures may vary from state to state. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mexican laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mexico are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Sexual Offenses: Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Soliciting the services of a minor for sexual purposes is illegal in Mexico, and is punishable by imprisonment. The Mexican government has announced an aggressive program to discourage sexual tourism. Police authorities in the state of Baja California recently began enforcement of anti-pedophile legislation.

Arrests & Notifications: The Mexican government is required by international law to notify the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate promptly when a U.S. citizen is arrested, if the arrestee so requests. In practice, however, this notification can be delayed by months or may never occur at all, limiting the assistance the U.S. Government can provide. U.S. citizens should promptly identify themselves as such to the arresting officers, and should request that the Embassy or nearest consulate be notified immediately.

Prison Facilities: Prison conditions in Mexico can be extremely poor. In many facilities food is insufficient in both quantity and quality, and prisoners must pay for adequate nutrition from their own funds. Most Mexican prisons provide poor medical care, and even prisoners with urgent medical conditions receive only a minimum of attention. U.S. citizens who are incarcerated in Mexico are sometimes forced to pay hundreds and even thousands of dollars in "protection money" to fellow prisoners.

Prisoner Treatment/Interrogations: Mexican police regularly obtain information through torture and prosecutors use this evidence in courts. The Mexican Constitution and the law prohibit torture, and Mexico is party to several international anti-torture conventions, but courts continue to admit as evidence confessions extracted under torture. Authorities rarely punish officials for torture, which continues to occur in large part because confessions are the primary evidence in many criminal convictions. U.S. citizens have been brutalized, beaten, and even raped while in police custody. Since the beginning of 2002, 21 U.S. citizens have died in Mexican prisons, including five apparent homicides.

Drug Penalties and Prescription Medications: Penalties for drug offenses are strict, and convicted offenders can expect large fines and jail sentences up to 25 years. The purchase of controlled medication requires a prescription from a licensed Mexican physician; some Mexican doctors have been arrested for writing prescriptions without due cause. In those instances, U.S. citizens who bought the medications have been held in jail for months waiting for the Mexican judicial system to decide their fate. The Mexican list of controlled medication differs from that of the United States, and Mexican public health laws concerning controlled medication are unclear and often enforced selectively. To determine whether a particular medication is controlled in Mexico, and requires a prescription from a Mexican doctor for purchase, please consult the website of the Mexican Federal Commission for Protection Against Health Risks (Comisión Federal para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios—COFEPRIS) at Listado de Medicamentos Controlados, http://www.cofepris.gob.mx/pyp/estpsic/es.htm. This site is in Spanish only.

Buying Prescription Drugs: The U.S. Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens not travel to Mexico for the sole purpose of buying prescription drugs. U.S. citizens have been arrested and their medicines confiscated by the Mexican authorities when their prescriptions were written by a licensed American physician and filled by a licensed Mexican pharmacist. There have been cases of U.S. citizens buying prescription drugs in border cities only to be arrested soon after or have money extorted by criminals impersonating police officers. Those arrested are often held for the full 48 hours allowed by Mexican law without charges being filed, then released. During this interval, the detainees are often asked for bribes or are solicited by attorneys who demand large fees to secure their release, which will normally occur without any intercession as there are insufficient grounds to bring criminal charges against the individuals. In addition, U.S. law enforcement officials believe that as much as 25 percent of medications available in Mexico are counterfeit and substandard. Such counterfeit medications may be difficult to distinguish from the real medications and could pose serious health risks to consumers. The importation of prescription drugs into the United States can be illegal in certain circumstances. U.S. law generally permits persons to enter the United States with only an immediate (about one-month) supply of a prescription medication.

Criminal Penalties for Possession: The U.S. Embassy cautions that possession of any amount of prescription medication brought from the United States, including medications to treat HIV, and psychotropic drugs such as Valium, can result in arrest if Mexican authorities suspect abuse or if the quantity of the prescription medication exceeds the amount required for several days' use. Individuals should consider carrying a copy of the prescription and a Mexican doctor's letter explaining that the quantity of medication is appropriate for their personal medical use.

Importing Medicine to Mexico: To import prescription medication into Mexico for personal use, a foreigner must obtain a permit from the Mexican Health Department prior to importing the medicine into Mexico. Additional information in Spanish is available at http://www.cofepris.gob.mx.

For a fee, a customs broker can process the permit before the Mexican authorities on behalf of an individual. If using the services of a customs broker, it is advisable to agree upon the fees before telling the broker to proceed. Current information on local customs brokers (agencias aduanales) is available at the Mexico City yellow pages at http://www.seccionamarilla.com.mx.

Pirated Merchandise: Counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available in Mexico. Their sale is largely controlled by organized crime. Purchase for personal use is not criminalized in Mexico; however, bringing these goods back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. For more information on this serious problem visit the Special 301 Report at http://www.ustr.gov.

Firearms Penalties: The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against taking any type of firearm or ammunition into Mexico without prior written authorization from the Mexican authorities. Entering Mexico with a firearm, some kinds of knives or even a single round of ammunition is illegal, even if the weapon or ammunition is taken into Mexico unintentionally. The Mexican government strictly enforces its laws restricting the entry of firearms and ammunition along all land borders and at airports and seaports. Violations have resulted in arrests, convictions, and long prison sentences for U.S. citizens.

Vessels entering Mexican waters with firearms or ammunition on board must have a permit previously issued by the Mexican Embassy or a Mexican consulate. Mariners do not avoid prosecution by declaring their weapons at the port of entry. Before traveling, mariners who have obtained a Mexican firearm permit should contact Mexican port officials to receive guidance on the specific procedures used to report and secure weapons and ammunition.

Customs Regulations: U.S. citizens bringing gifts to friends and relatives in Mexico should be prepared to demonstrate to Mexican customs officials the origin and the value of the gifts. U.S. citizens entering Mexico by the land border can bring in gifts with a value of up to $50.00 duty-free, except for alcohol and tobacco products. U.S. citizens entering Mexico by air or sea can bring in gifts with a value of up to $300.00 duty-free.

Personal Effects: Tourists are allowed to bring in their personal effects duty-free. According to customs regulations, in addition to clothing, personal effects may include one camera, one video cassette player, one personal computer, one CD player, 5 DVDs, 20 music CDs or audiocassettes, 12 rolls of unused film, and one cellular phone. Any tourist carrying such items, even if duty-free, should enter the "Merchandise to Declare" lane at the first customs checkpoint. The tourist should be prepared to pay any assessed duty. Failure to declare personal effects routinely results in the seizure of the goods as contraband, plus the seizure of the vehicle in which the goods are traveling for attempted smuggling. The recovery of the seized vehicle involves the payment of substantial fines and attorney's fees.

Temporary Imports/Exports: Mexican customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Mexico of items such as trucks and autos, trailers, antiquities, medications, medical equipment, business equipment, etc. Prior to traveling, contact the Mexican Embassy or one of the Mexican consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Property Donations: U.S. citizens traveling to Mexico with goods intended for donation within Mexico, or traveling through Mexico with goods intended for donation in another country, should be aware of Mexican Customs regulations prohib-

iting importation of used clothing, textiles, and other used goods into Mexico. These regulations apply even to charitable donations. Individuals or groups wishing to make such donations should check with Mexican Customs for the list of prohibited items, and should hire an experienced customs broker in the U.S. to ensure compliance with Mexican law. The charitable individual or group, not the customs broker, will be held responsible for large fines or confiscation of goods if the documentation is incorrect. The website for Mexican Customs (Aduanas) is in Spanish only at Acerca de Aduana Mexico ("About Mexican Customs") at http://www.aduanas.sat.gob.mx/aduana_mexico/2007/A_body.htm. Mexican authorities require that all international transit through Mexico of persons and merchandise destined for Central or South America be handled only at the Los Indios Bridge located south of Harlingen, Texas on Route 509. The U.S. Consulate in Matamoros is the closest consulate to Los Indios Bridge and may be contacted for up-to-date information by calling 011-52-868-812-4402, ext. 273 or 280, or by checking their web site, http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov which lists in English the most common items prohibited from entry into Mexico.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical care can be found in major cities. Excellent health facilities are available in Mexico City, but training and availability of emergency responders may be below U.S. standards. Care in more remote areas is limited. Standards of medical training, patient care and business practices vary greatly among medical facilities in beach resorts throughout Mexico. In recent years, some U.S. citizens have complained that certain health-care facilities in beach resorts have taken advantage of them by overcharging or providing unnecessary medical care. Elective medical procedures may be less expensive than in the United States. However, visitors are cautioned that facilities may lack access to sufficient emergency support. The U.S. Embassy encourages visitors to obtain as much information about the facility and the medical personnel as possible when considering surgical or other procedures. The U.S. Embassy, U.S. consulates, and consular agencies maintain lists of reputable doctors and medical facilities that are available to assist U.S. citizens in need of medical care.

Water Quality: In many areas in Mexico, tap water is unsafe and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe although visitors should be aware that many restaurants and hotels serve tap water unless bottled water is specifically requested. Ice may also come from tap water and should be used with caution. Visitors should exercise caution when buying food or beverages from street vendors.

The quality of water along some beaches in or near Acapulco or other large coastal communities may be unsafe for swimming because of contamination. Swimming in contaminated water may cause diarrhea and/or other illnesses. Mexican government agencies monitor water quality in public beach areas but their standards and sampling techniques may differ from those in the United States.

Altitude: In high-altitude areas such as Mexico City (elevation 7,600 feet or about 1/2 mile higher than Denver, Colorado), most people need a short adjustment period. Reaction signs to high altitude include a lack of energy, shortness of breath, occasional dizziness, headache, and insomnia. Those with heart problems should consult their doctor before traveling. Air pollution in Mexico City and Guadalajara is severe, especially from December to May, and combined with high altitude could affect travelers with underlying respiratory problems.

Other Health Issues: Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. To ensure proper reimbursement of medical expenses by insurance carriers, the U.S. Embassy recommends that patients ensure they have sufficient documentation of their care and treatment before leaving the health care facility.

The Social Security Medicare Program does not provide coverage for hospital or medical costs outside the United States. Please see additional information on medical insurance abroad.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Mexico.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Mexico is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Public transportation vehicles, specifically taxis and city buses, often do not comply with traffic regulations, including observing speed limits and stopping at red lights.

Driving and Vehicle Regulations: U.S. driver's licenses are valid in Mexico. The Government of Mexico strictly regulates the entry of vehicles into Mexico.

Mexican law requires that only owners drive their vehicles, or that the

owner be inside the vehicle. If not, the vehicle may be seized by Mexican customs and will not be returned under any circumstances.

Insurance: Mexican insurance is required for all vehicles, including rental vehicles. Mexican auto insurance is sold in most cities and towns on both sides of the border. U.S. automobile liability insurance is not valid in Mexico, nor is most collision and comprehensive coverage issued by U.S. companies. Motor vehicle insurance is considered invalid in Mexico if the driver is found to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Road Emergencies and Automobile Accidents: If you have an emergency while driving, the equivalent of "911" in Mexico is "060," but this number is not always answered. If you are driving on a toll highway (or "cuota") or any other major highway, you may contact the Green Angels (Angeles Verdes), a fleet of trucks with bilingual crews. The Green Angels may be reached directly at (01) (55) 5250-8221. If you are unable to call them, pull off the road and lift the hood of your car, chances are they will find you.

If you are involved in an automobile accident, you will be taken into police custody until it can be determined who is liable and whether you have the ability to pay any penalty. If you do not have Mexican liability insurance, you may be prevented from departing the country even if you require life-saving medical care, and you are almost certain to spend some time in jail until all parties are satisfied that responsibility has been assigned and adequate financial satisfaction received. Drivers may face criminal charges if injuries or damages are serious.

Road Safety: Avoid driving on Mexican highways at night. Even multilane expressways in Mexico often have narrow lanes and steep shoulders. Single-vehicle rollover accidents involving U.S. citizens are very common, often resulting in the death or serious injury to vehicle occupants. Use extreme caution when approaching towns, on curves, and when passing large trucks. All vehicle occupants should use seatbelts at all times. Vehicular traffic in Mexico City is restricted in order to reduce air pollution. The restriction is based on the last digit of the vehicle license plate. This applies equally to permanent, temporary, and foreign (U.S.) plates. For additional information refer to http://www.hoynocircula.com.mx/ (Spanish only).

For additional information in English concerning Mexican driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, mandatory insurance, etc., please contact the Mexican Secretariat of Tourism (SECTUR) at telephone 1-800-44-MEXICO (639-426). Travelers can also consult http://www.mexonline.com/drivemex.htm. For detailed information in Spanish only, visit Mexican Customs' web site Importación Temporal de Vehículos ("Temporary Importation of Vehicles") at http://www.aduanas.sat.gob.mx. Travelers are advised to consult with the Mexican Embassy or the nearest Mexican consulate in the United States for additional, detailed information prior to entering Mexico. For travel information for the Baja California peninsula, you can also consult independent web sites Travel to Baja at http://www.traveltobaja.net/ or Discover Baja California at http://www.discoverbajacalifornia.com/home.htm.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Mexico's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Mexico's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Weather conditions may vary as they do in various parts of the United States. From June to November, the country may experience strong winds and rains as a result of hurricanes in the Gulf or along the Pacific Coast. Some areas may experience earth tremors. It is prudent to leave a detailed itinerary, including local contact information and expected time-date of return with a friend or family member.

Water Sports: Visitors to Mexico, including to local resort areas, should carefully assess the potential risk of recreational activities. Recreational facilities such as pools may not meet U.S. safety or sanitation standards. Do not swim in pools or at beaches without lifeguards. Several U.S. citizens have died in hotel pools in recent years. Swimming pool drain systems may not comply with U.S. safety standards and swimmers should exercise caution. Parents should watch minor children closely when they are in or around water. U.S. citizens have drowned or disappeared at both remote and popular beaches along the southwest coast of Mexico.

Warning flags on beaches should be taken seriously. If black flags are up, do not enter the water. In Cancun, there is often a very strong undertow along the beach from the Hyatt Regency all the way south to Club Med. Several drowning and near-drowning incidents have been reported on the east coast of Cozumel, particularly in the Playa San Martin-Chen Rio area. In Acapulco, avoid swimming outside the bay area. Several U.S. citizens have died while swimming in rough surf at the Revolcadero Beach near Acapulco. Despite U.S.-trained lifeguards, several U.S. citizens have drowned in the area of Zipolite Beach in Puerto Angel, Oaxaca, because of sudden waves and strong currents. Beaches on the Pacific side of the Baja California peninsula at Cabo San Lucas are dangerous due to rip tides and rogue waves; hazardous beaches in this area are clearly marked in English and Spanish. Do not swim alone in isolated beach areas. Beaches may not be well-marked, and strong currents could lead to dangerous conditions for even the most experienced swimmers. Do not dive into unknown bodies of water, because hidden rocks or shallow depths can cause serious injury or death.

Sports and aquatic equipment that you rent may not meet U.S. safety standards or be covered by any acci-

dent insurance. Scuba diving equipment may be substandard or defective due to frequent use. Inexperienced scuba divers in particular should beware of dive shops that promise to "certify" you after a few hours' instruction. Parasailing has killed U.S. citizen tourists who were dragged through palm trees or were slammed into hotel walls. Jet-ski accidents have killed U.S. citizen tourists, especially in group-outings when inexperienced guides allowed their clients to follow each other too closely.

Cancun and Other Resort Areas: Over 3 million U.S. citizens travel to Cancun and other Mexican beach resorts each year, including as many as 120,000 during "spring break" season, which normally begins in mid-February and runs about two months. Excessive alcohol consumption, especially by U.S. citizens under the legal U.S. drinking age, is a significant problem. The legal drinking age in Mexico is 18, but it is not uniformly enforced. Alcohol is implicated in the majority of arrests, violent crimes, accidents and deaths suffered by U.S. citizen tourists.

In recent years, moped rentals have become very widespread in Cancun and Cozumel, and the number of serious moped accidents has risen accordingly. Most operators carry no insurance and do not conduct safety checks. The U.S. Embassy recommends avoiding operators who do not provide a helmet with the rental. Some operators have been known to demand fees many times in excess of damages caused to the vehicles, even if renters have purchased insurance in advance. Vacationers at other beach resorts have encountered similar problems after accidents involving rented jet-skis. There have been cases of mobs gathering to prevent tourists from departing the scene and to intimidate them into paying exorbitant damage claims.

Motor Accidents: Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death of U.S. citizens in Mexico. Motorists should exercise special caution on the heavily-traveled expressway south of Cancun, particularly between Playa del Carmen and Tulum, where the road narrows from 4 divided lanes to two-way traffic on a narrow and poorly-maintained road.

Mountain Climbing and Hiking: Travelers who wish to climb Pico de Orizaba in Veracruz should be aware that summer droughts in recent years have removed much of the snow coating and turned the Jamapa Glacier into a high-speed ice chute, increasing the risk of death or serious injury. At least 17 climbers have died on the mountain and 39 have been injured in recent years, including U.S. citizens. Rescue teams operate without the benefit of sophisticated equipment. Any medical treatment provided in local hospitals or clinics must be paid in cash. While regulation of the ascent is minimal and guides are not required, the U.S. Embassy recommends hiring an experienced guide. The Colima Volcano, located approximately 20 miles north-northeast of Colima city in the state of Colima on the southwestern coast, is active and erupted several times in 2005. Travelers should not enter the prohibited area within a 4.5-mile radius of the volcano.

When departing on an outing to backcountry areas to hike or climb, it is prudent to leave a detailed itinerary, including route information and expected time and date of return with your hotel clerk or a friend or family member. Similarly, mariners preparing to depart from a Mexican harbor should visit the harbormaster and leave a detailed trip plan, including intended destination and crew and passenger information.

Marriage Requirements In Mexico: In general, to marry a Mexican national in Mexico, a U.S. citizen must be physically present in Mexico and present documents required by the jurisdiction where the marriage will take place. U.S. citizens who marry U.S. citizens or other non-Mexicans are not subject to a residence requirement, but are required to present their tourist cards. For additional information on marriages in Mexico, contact the U.S. Embassy or the nearest U.S. consulate.

Divorce requirements may vary according to jurisdiction. The U.S. Embassy recommends U.S. citizens consult a local attorney and/or the Mexican Embassy or nearest Mexican Consulate for information on divorces in Mexico.

Real Estate And Time-Shares: U.S. citizens should be aware of the risks inherent in purchasing real estate in Mexico, and should exercise extreme caution before entering into any form of commitment to invest in property there. Investors should hire competent Mexican legal counsel when contemplating any real estate investment. Mexican laws and practices regarding real estate differ substantially from those in the United States. Foreigners who purchase property in Mexico may find that property disputes with Mexican citizens may not be treated evenhandedly by Mexican criminal justice authorities and in the courts. Timeshare companies cannot be sued in U.S. courts unless they have an office or other business presence in the U.S. Consumers should contact a Mexican attorney, the Mexican consumer protection agency PROFECO at http://www.profeco.gob.mx or other consumer information agency for information on companies that operate outside of the U.S.

Ownership Restrictions: The Mexican Constitution prohibits direct ownership by foreigners of real estate within 100 kilometers (about 62 miles) of any border, and within 50 kilometers (about 31 miles) of any coastline. In order to permit foreign investment in these areas, the Mexican government has created a trust mechanism in which a bank has title to the property but a trust beneficiary enjoys the benefits of ownership. However, U.S. citizens are vulnerable to title challenges that may result in years of litigation and possible eviction. Although title insurance is available in the Baja Peninsula and in other parts of Mexico, it is virtually unknown and remains untested in most of the country.

In addition, Mexican law recognizes squatters' rights, and homeowners can spend thousands of dollars in

legal fees and years of frustration in trying to remove squatters who occupy their property.

Labor Laws: U.S. citizen property owners should consult legal counsel or local authorities before hiring employees to serve in their homes or on their vessels moored in Mexico. Several U.S. citizen property owners have faced lengthy lawsuits for failure to comply with Mexican labor laws regarding severance pay and Mexican social security benefits.

Time-share Investments: U.S. citizens should exercise caution when considering time-share investments and be aware of the aggressive tactics used by some time-share sales representatives. Buyers should be fully informed and take sufficient time to consider their decisions before signing time-share contracts, ideally after consulting an independent attorney. Mexican law allows time-share purchasers five days to cancel the contract for unconditional and full reimbursement.

U.S. citizens should never sign a contract that includes clauses penalizing the buyer who cancels within five days. The Department of State and the U.S. Mission in Mexico frequently receive complaints from U.S. citizens about extremely aggressive sales tactics, exaggerated claims of return on investment, lack of customer service and questionable business practices by time-share companies, resulting in substantial financial losses for time-share investors.

A formal complaint against any merchant should be filed with PROFECO, Mexico's federal consumer protection agency. PROFECO has the power to mediate disputes, investigate consumer complaints, order hearings, levy fines and sanctions for not appearing at hearings, and do price-check inspections of merchants. All complaints by U.S. citizens are handled by PROFECO's English-speaking office in Mexico City at 011-52-55-5211-1723 (phone), 011-52-55-5211-2052 (fax), or via email at extranjeros@profeco.gob.mx.

For more information, please see the PROFECO "Attention to Foreigners" web page at Profeco (Procuraduría Federal del Consumidor).

Alien Smuggling: Mexican authorities may prosecute anyone arrested for transporting aliens into or out of Mexico for alien smuggling in addition to any charges they may face in the other country involved, including the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. Mexico is the destination country of the greatest number of children abducted from the United States by a parent. A party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction since 1991, Mexico is not in full compliance with the Convention.

Behavior Modification Facilities: A number of facilities have opened in Mexico that offer behavior modification therapy for teenagers and others suffering from drug addiction and other behavioral or psychological problems. Standards applied by the Government of Mexico and local governments, where they exist, may not meet standards for similar facilities in the United States.

Parents planning to enroll their children in these facilities should investigate the facility first. Since 2004, Mexican officials have closed six adolescent behavior modification facilities in Baja California and another in the state of Jalisco due to health code and other violations. This was done on very short notice and caused serious inconvenience for the U.S. citizen students and their families. Another behavior modification facility in Sonora suddenly declared bankruptcy and closed its doors in March 2005, with a similarly disruptive impact on students.

Registration And Embassy And Consulate Locations: U.S. citizens living or traveling in Mexico for more than one day are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Mexico. U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate. By registering, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy or consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc; telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000. You may also contact the Embassy by e-mail at: ccs@usembassy.net.mx. The Embassy's web page is http://mexico.usembassy.gov. In addition to the Embassy, there are several United States Consulates and Consular Agencies located throughout Mexico:

Consulates:

- Ciudad Juarez: Avenida Lopez Mateos 924-N; telephone (52)(656) 611-3000.
- Guadalajara: Progreso 175, Col. Americana; telephone (52)(333) 268-2100.
- Hermosillo: Calle Monterrey 141 Poniente, Col. Esqueda; telephone (52)(662) 289-3500.
- Matamoros: Avenida Primera 2002 y Azaleas; telephone (52)(868) 812-4402.
- Merida: Calle 60 No. 338 K x 29 y 31, Col. Alcala Martin; telephone (52)(999) 942-5700.
- Monterrey: Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente; telephone (52)(818) 345-2120.
- Nogales: Calle San Jose, Fraccionamiento "Los Alamos"; telephone (52)(631) 311-8150.
- Nuevo Laredo: Calle Allende 3330, Col. Jardin; telephone (52)(867) 714-0512.

- Tijuana: Avenida Tapachula 96, Col. Hipodromo; telephone (52)(664) 622-7400.

Consular agencies:

- Acapulco: Hotel Continental Emporio, Costera Miguel Aleman 121—Local 14; telephone (52)(744) 484-0300 or (52)(744) 469-0556.
- Cabo San Lucas: Blvd. Marina Local C-4, Plaza Nautica, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(624) 143-3566.
- Cancun: Plaza Caracol Two, Second Level, No. 320-323, Boulevard Kukulkan, Km. 8.5, Zona Hotelera; telephone (52)(998) 883-0272.
- Ciudad Acuna: Alfonso Gonzalez Ocampo # 305, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(877) 772-8179.
- Cozumel: Plaza Villa Mar en El Centro, Plaza Principal, (Parque Juárez between Melgar and 5th Ave.) 2nd floor, Locales #8 and 9; telephone (52)(987) 872-4574.
- Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo: Hotel Fontan, Blvd. Ixtapa; telephone (52)(755) 553-2100.
- Mazatlan: Hotel Playa Mazatlán, Playa Gaviotas #202, Zona Dorada; telephone (52)(669) 916-5889.
- Oaxaca: Macedonio Alcala No. 407, Interior 20; telephone (52)(951) 514-3054 (52)
- Piedras Negras: Abasolo 211, Local #3, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(878) 782-5586 or (878) 782-8664.
- Playa del Carmen: The Palapa, Calle 1 Sur, between Avenida 15 and Avenida 20.; telephone (52)(984) 807-8355.
- Puerto Vallarta: Paradise Village Plaza, Paseo de los Cocoteros #1, Local #4, Interior #17, Nuevo Vallarta; telephone (52)(322) 222-0069.
- Reynosa: Calle Monterrey #390, Esq. Sinaloa, Col. Rodríguez; telephone: (52)(899) 923-9331
- San Luis Potosi: Edificio "Las Terrazas," Avenida Venustiano Carranza 2076-41, Col. Polanco; telephone (52)(444) 811-7802 or (444) 811-7803.
- San Miguel de Allende: Dr. Hernandez Macias #72; telephone (52)(415) 152-2357.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Mexico is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between Mexico and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law and regulations implementing the Convention. For detailed and updated information on these requirements, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Mexico has a complex system for adoptions, involving a Central Authority based in Mexico City and 31 adoption authorities (one in each Mexican state). The civil code in each state may vary, so prospective adoptive parents need to be aware of the state from which they plan to adopt and its applicable adoption laws.

Who Can Adopt? The process for legally adopting a child in the Republic of Mexico is long and sometimes difficult. Unscrupulous agents who obtain children outside the legal network sometimes approach couples. Adoptive children who enter the United States without an immigrant visa may later encounter problems with United States citizenship, schools, Social Security, etc., and risk being deported back to the Republic of Mexico even if they have legal United States-citizen parents under Mexican law.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Mexico also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Mexican adoption procedures include a one to three week pre-adoption trial period, during which the child lives with the prospective adoptive parent(s) in Mexico. Because of the large amount of paperwork in both the Mexican and American processes, the State System for the Full Development of the Family (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, or DIF) suggests adoptive parents be prepared to spend at least three months in Mexico including the pre-adoption trial period.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be over 25 years of age and at least 17 years older than the child. If married, only one parent must meet the age requirement.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents may be married or single, male or female.

Income Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must demonstrate the means to support the physical and educational needs of the child.

While similar, each Mexican state does have its own civil code governing adoptions. Therefore, it is important to check with each state, as the laws among states will vary.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Mexico is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Mexico must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. For example, the Convention requires that Mexico attempt to place a child with a family in-coun-

try before determining that a child is eligible for intercountry adoption. In addition to Mexico's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Mexican Central Authority: State System for the Full Development of the Family, Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Mexico is to select an accredited or approved adoption service provider in the United States. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Mexico.

Prospective adoptive parents should contact DIF in the state where the adoption will take place because procedures can vary by state.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your adoption service provider will forward your information to the Central Authority in Mexico. The DIF's Technical Councils on Adoptions will convene to review your application and determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Mexican law. Once approved, your name(s) will be added to a waiting list maintained by DIF as the legal representative for abandoned children and provider of foster care for abused or orphaned minors.

If both the United States and Mexico determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, DIF may provide you with a referral for a child. When you receive a referral from DIF, it will arrive in the form of a letter directly to you or to your adoption service provider, informing you that the application for adoption has been approved. All available information on the child will be provided to the prospective adoptive parent(s) at this time. If you agree to adopt the child, send a letter to DIF instructing them to continue with the adoption process. At this point, DIF will coordinate a meeting to introduce the child to the prospective adoptive parent(s).

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). USCIS will determine whether the child is eligible under United States immigration law to be adopted and enter the United States. Form I-800, like Form I-800A, must be submitted in the United States. However, USCIS regional offices in Mexico handle cases in particular states: USCIS Tijuana handles the Mexican states of Baja California, Sinaloa and Sonora. USCIS Ciudad Juarez handles Chihuahua and Durango. USCIS Monterrey handles Coahuila, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas and Aguascalientes. The rest of Mexico is handled by USCIS Mexico City.

After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular officer determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he or she will notify the DIF (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Prior to the adoption proceeding any further, the prospective adoptive parent(s) will be required to reside in Mexico with the child for a one to three week period of time.

Role of the Central Authority: The DIF is a government institution with branches in each Mexican state to handle family matters. The DIF acts as the legal representative for abandoned children and provides foster care for abused or orphaned minors. Children who are abandoned or orphaned can be given up for adoption by the DIF. The DIF and the Mexican Foreign Relations are assigned responsibility to study each child's eligibility for intercountry adoption and arrange adoptions. The DIF determines whether a family would be suitable for a particular child by ensuring that a home study has been done. The DIF makes every effort to place children with relatives or Mexican citizens living in Mexico before placing children for inter-country adoption.

Role of the Court: Judicial proceedings occur in Mexico depending on the laws of the state.

Role of the Adoption Agencies: Because Mexico is a Convention country, adoption services must be provided by an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, approved person, supervised provider, or exempted provider.

Time Frame: The general time frame for adoptions in Mexico ranges from three to eight months, but varies from state to state. Again, prospective adoptive parents should check with the state where the adoption will take place.

Adoption Application: The application should be filed by the prospective adoptive parent(s) or the adoption service provider with DIF.

Adoption Fees: DIF charges approximately $250 USD for adoption services but costs vary state-by-state. Generally, the fees include all applicable taxes. The DIF office also has its own lawyers and their services are also included in the fee. Using an attorney or adoption service provider for DIF adoptions is optional for the prospective adoptive parent(s). These expenses should have been itemized in the fees and estimated expenses section of your adoption services contract.

Documents Required: The following documents are required for adoption in Mexico:

- Certified copy of prospective adoptive parent's birth certificate or a United States passport as proof of United States citizenship;

- Certified copy of marriage certificate, if applicable;
- A statement from the employer of the prospective parent who is the primary supporter of the family. This statement must indicate the position, years of service with the employer, and salary;
- Copy of the most recent bank statement or other evidence of financial holdings as proof of financial solvency;
- Two letters of recommendation from people who can attest to the character of the adoptive parents. A married couple should obtain letters from persons who have known them as a married couple. Each letter should include the address and telephone number of the person writing the letter;
- Certificate from the state police from the prospective adoptive parent's state of residence in the United States verifying that the adoptive parents have no police record. The FBI fingerprint check for the I-800A fulfills this requirement;
- A copy of a social, economic, and psychological study of the parent's home situation conducted by an agency of the state of the child's proposed residence, or an adoption service provider authorized by that state to conduct such a study, and or by an appropriate public or private adoption service provider accredited or approved in the United States. The home study conducted for the I-800A fulfills this requirement;
- One 3x3-inch color photograph of each prospective adoptive parent; and
- Two 3x5-inch photographs of the prospective adoptive parent(s) in the home or on a family outing.

All documentation listed above must be apostilled by the Secretary of State of the United States state of origin of the document, translated into Spanish by an official translator of the Mexican Consulate nearest to the prospective adoptive parent's(s') place of residence in the United States. When all the documents have been assembled, they should be sent to the person or organization in Mexico acting as the adoption agent/representative for presentation to the Mexican court. For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Contact Information

United States Embassy in Mexico
Paseo de la Reforma 305
Colonia Cuauhtemoc
06500 Mexico, D.F.
Tel: 011-52-55-50-80-2000.

United States Consulate General,
Ciudad Juarez
Avenida Lopez Mateos 924 N
Ciudad Juarez, Mexico
Tel: 011-52-65-66-11-3000

Mexican Central Authority
Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF)
Website:
http://www.dif.gob.mx/directorio.htm

NOTE: Inquiries must be made in the Spanish language. If written inquiries are in English they must be accompanied by a translation.

Embassy of Mexico
Consular Section
2827 16th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009-4260
Tel: (202) 736-1000
Website: www.sre.gob.mex

Mexico also has consulates General in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, El Paso, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, and Hato Rey, Puerto Rico.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal require-

ments of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention") came into force between the United States and Mexico on October 1, 1991. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after October 1, 1991. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Mexico prior to October 1, 1991, may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention in some cases.

Mexico has established a Central Authority charged with applying the procedures of the Hague Convention by working with state authorities. The Mexican Central Authority is part of the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, or foreign ministry, and is responsible for cases of children taken from and taken to Mexico. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Non-Hague Civil Remedies: You may also seek recognition of an U.S. custody order in the Mexican courts. This process takes several months and you will need the services of a Mexican attorney. Please note the Mexican courts are not required to recognize a foreign court order. You may also seek custody through the Mexican court system. You will need the services of a Mexican attorney.

The non-Hague civil remedies noted above may be pursued in conjunction with your Hague application. The filing of a Hague application for return of a child, however, should result in a stay of any custody proceedings pending the outcome of the Hague hearing.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Please note that criminal charges may complicate a Hague Convention case. Contact the Mexico officer in the Office of Children's Issues for specific information.

Mexican Central Authority
ATTN: Lic. Rosa Isela Guerrero Alba
Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores
Oficina des Protecciones y Asuntos Consulares
Departamento de Derecho de Familia
Ricardo Flores Magón # 1, Planta Baja, Ala B
Col. Tlatelolco
06995 México, D.F.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov/family. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Travel Alert
October 14, 2008

This Travel Alert updates security information for U.S. citizens traveling and living in Mexico. It replaces the Travel Alert for Mexico dated April 14, 2008, and expires on April 14, 2009.

While millions of U.S. Citizens safely visit Mexico each year, including thousands who cross the land border every day for study, tourism or business, increased levels of violence make it imperative that travelers understand the risks of travel to Mexico, how best to avoid dangerous situations, and whom to contact if one is a victim of crime. Common-sense precautions, such as visiting only legitimate business and tourist areas, avoiding areas where prostitution and drug dealing might occur, and exercising prudence in where one visits during the evening hours and at night, can help ensure that travel to Mexico is safe and enjoyable.

Mexican drug cartels are engaged in an increasingly violent fight for control of narcotics trafficking routes along the U.S. - Mexico border in an apparent response to the Government of Mexico's initiatives to crack down on narco-trafficking organizations. In order to combat violence, the government of Mexico has deployed military troops in various parts of the country. U.S. citizens should cooperate fully with official checkpoints when traveling on Mexican highways.

Some recent Mexican army and police confrontations with drug cartels have taken on the characteristics of small-unit combat, with cartels employing automatic weapons and, on occasion, grenades. Firefights have taken place in many towns and cities across Mexico but particularly in northern Mexico, including Tijuana, Chihuahua City and Ciudad Juarez. The situation in northern Mexico remains fluid; the location and timing of future armed engagements cannot be predicted.

A number of areas along the border are experiencing rapid growth in the rates of many types of crime. More than 1,600 cars were reportedly stolen in Ciudad Juarez in the month of July 2008, and bank robberies there are up dramatically. Rates for robberies, homicides, petty thefts, and carjackings have all increased over the last year across Mexico generally, with notable spikes in Tijuana and northern Baja California. Cuidad Juarez, Tijuana, and Nogales are among the cities which have recently experienced public shootouts during daylight hours in shopping centers and other public venues. Criminals have followed and harassed U.S. citizens traveling in their vehicles in border areas including Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, Tijuana, and along Route 15 between Nogales and Hermosillo.

The situation in Ciudad Juarez is of special concern. Mexican authorities report that more than 1,000 people

have been killed there this year. U.S. citizens should pay close attention to their surroundings while traveling in Ciudad Juarez, avoid isolated locations during late night and early morning hours, and remain alert to news reports. A recent series of muggings near the U.S. Consulate General in Ciudad Juarez has targeted applicants for U.S. visas. Visa and other service seekers visiting the Consulate are encouraged to make provisions to pay for those services with something other than cash.

U.S. citizens are urged to be alert to safety and security concerns when visiting the border region. Criminals are armed with a wide array of sophisticated weapons. In some cases, assailants have worn full or partial police or military uniforms and have used vehicles that resemble police vehicles. While most of the crime victims are Mexican citizens, the uncertain security situation poses risks for U.S. citizens as well.U.S. citizen victims of crime in Mexico are urged to contact the consular section of the nearest U.S. consulate or Embassy for advice and assistance. Contact information is provided at the end of this message.

While the largest increase in violence has occurred near the U.S. border, U.S. citizens traveling elsewhere in Mexico should also exercise caution in unfamiliar areas and be aware of their surroundings at all times. Mexican and foreign bystanders have been injured or killed in some violent attacks, demonstrating the heightened risk in public places. In recent years, dozens of U.S. citizens have been kidnapped across Mexico and many cases remain unresolved. U.S. citizens who believe they are being targeted for kidnapping or other crimes should notify Mexican officials and the nearest American consulate or the Embassy as soon as possible. U.S. citizens should make every attempt to travel on main roads during daylight hours, particularly the toll ("cuota") roads, which are generally more secure. U.S. citizens are encouraged to stay in well-known tourist destinations and tourist areas of the cities with more adequate security, and provide an itinerary to a friend or family member not traveling with them. U.S. citizens should avoid traveling alone, and should carry a GSM-enabled cell phone that functions internationally. Refrain from displaying expensive-looking jewelry, large amounts of money, or other valuable items.

Demonstrations occur frequently throughout Mexico and usually are peaceful. However, even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate to violence unexpectedly. People have died during violent demonstrations, including an American citizen who was killed in Oaxaca in 2006. During demonstrations or law enforcement operations, U.S. citizens are advised to remain in their homes or hotels, avoid large crowds, and avoid the downtown and surrounding areas. Since the timing and routes of scheduled marches and demonstrations are always subject to change, U.S. citizens should monitor local media sources for new developments and exercise extreme caution while within the vicinity of protests. The Mexican Constitution prohibits political activities by foreigners, and such actions may result in detention and/or deportation. Therefore, U.S. citizens are advised to avoid participating in demonstrations or other activities that might be deemed political by Mexican authorities. In a recent incident, a Mexican Independence Day celebration was the target of a violent attack. As is always the case in any large gathering, U.S. citizens should remain alert to their surroundings. For more detailed information on staying safe in Mexico, please see the Mexico Country Specific Information at: http://travel.state.gov. Information on security and travel to popular tourist destinations is also provided in the publication: "Spring Break in Mexico-Know Before You Go!!" at http://travel.state.gov. For the latest security information, U.S. citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers from Mexico, a regular toll line at 001-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). American citizens traveling or residing overseas are encouraged to register with the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate on the State Department's travel registration website at https://travelregistration.state.gov/. For any emergencies involving U.S. citizens in Mexico, please contact the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc, telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000. You may also contact the Embassy by e-mail at: ccs@usembassy.net.mx. The Embassy's internet address is http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/.

Consulates:

Ciudad Juarez: Avenida Lopez Mateos 924-N, telephone (52)(656) 611-3000.

Guadalajara: Progreso 175, telephone (52)(333) 268-2100.

Hermosillo: Avenida Monterrey 141, telephone (52)(662) 289-3500.

Matamoros: Avenida Primera 2002, telephone (52)(868) 812-4402.

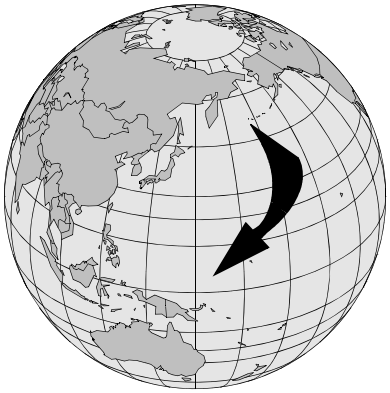
Merida: Calle 60 No. 338 K, telephone (52)(999) 942-5700

Monterrey: Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente, telephone (52)(818) 345-2120.

Nogales: Calle San Jose, Nogales, Sonora, telephone (52)(631) 311-8150.

Nuevo Laredo: Calle Allende 3330, Col. Jardin, telephone (52)(867) 714-0512.

Tijuana: Tapachula 96, telephone (52)(664) 622-7400.



MICRONESIA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 702 sq. km (about 270 sq. mi.) in four major island groups (Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae).
Cities: Capital—Palikir. Other cities—Kolonia, Weno, Colonia, Lelu.
Terrain: 607 mountainous islands and low-lying coral atolls.
Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Micronesian.
Population: 108,000.
Growth rate: 0.26%.
Ethnic groups: Nine ethnic Micronesian and Polynesian groups.
Religions: Roman Catholic 53%, Protestant 42.4%, others 4.6%.
Languages: English, and nine ethnic languages.
Education: Literacy—91%.
Health: Life expectancy—male 65.6 yrs.; female 66.9 yrs. Infant mortality rate—40.4/1,000.
Work force: More than 50% of workers are government employees.

Government

Type: Constitutional confederation in free association with the U.S. The first Compact of Free Association entered into force in 1986, and an Amended Compact entered into force June 30, 2004.
Independence: (from U.S.-administered UN trusteeship) November 3, 1986.
Constitution: May 10, 1979.
Government branches: Executive—President (chief of state and head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral Congress with 14 seats. Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political parties: No formal parties.

Economy (FY 2006 figures)

GDP: $204 million.
GDP per capita: (nominal) $2,191.
National income: (GDP + foreign assistance) $361 million.
National income per capita: $3,374.
GDP composition by sector: services 77%, agriculture 19%, industry 4%.
Industry: Types—fishing, agriculture, tourism.
Trade: Exports ($14 million)—fish, kava, betel nut. Export market—Japan (21%), US (25%), others (53%), U.S. Imports ($133 million)—food, manufactured goods, fuel. Import sources—U.S. (50%), Japan (11%), others (39%).
External debt: $ 60.81 million.
Currency: U.S. dollar.

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) consists of 607 islands extending 1,800 miles across the archipelago of the Caroline Islands east of the Philippines. The four states are the island groups of Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap, and Kosrae. The federal capital is Palikir, on Pohnpei.

The indigenous population consists of various ethno-linguistic groups. English has become the common language. The birth rate remains high at more than 3%, but the population of the four states remains almost constant due to emigration.

HISTORY

Ancestors of the Micronesians settled the Caroline Islands over 4,000 years ago. A decentralized chieftain-based system eventually evolved into a more centralized economic and religious empire based principally in Yap and Pohnpei. European explorers—first the Portuguese in search of the Spice Islands and then the Spanish—reached the Carolines in the 16th century, with the Spanish establishing sovereignty. The current FSM passed to German control in 1899, and then through the Treaty of Ver-

sailles to the Japanese in 1919. Following World War II, these islands became part of the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, administered by the United States.

On May 10, 1979, four of the Trust Territory districts ratified a new constitution to become the Federated States of Micronesia. The neighboring trust districts of Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands chose not to participate. The FSM signed a Compact of Free Association with the U.S. in 1986. An Amended Compact entered into force in June 2004.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The FSM is governed under a 1979 constitution, which guarantees fundamental human rights and establishes a separation of governmental powers. The unicameral Congress has 14 members elected by popular vote. Four senators at large—one from each state—serve 4-year terms; the remaining 10 senators represent single-member districts based on population and serve 2-year terms. The President and Vice President are elected by Congress from among the four senators at large who serve in 4-year seats. Once elected, the President and Vice President serve for four years. Their congressional seats are then filled by special elections. An appointed cabinet supports the president and vice president. There are no formal political parties.

The FSM is a confederation with a weak central government. Each of FSM's four states has its own constitution and its own elected legislature and governor. The state governments maintain considerable power, particularly regarding the implementation of budgetary policies.

The FSM's highest court is the Supreme Court, which is divided into trial and appellate divisions. The President appoints judges with the advice and consent of the Congress.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Emanuel MORI**
Vice President: **Alik ALIK**
Sec. of Education: **Casiano SHONIBER**
Sec. of Finance & Administration: **Finley PERMAN**
Sec. of Foreign Affairs: **Lorin ROBERT**
Sec. of Health & Social Affairs: **Vita Akapito SKILLING, Dr.**
Sec. of Justice: **Maketo ROBERT**
Sec. of Resource & Development: **Peter CHRISTIAN**
Sec. of Transportation, Communication, & Infrastructure: **Francis ITIMAI**
Speaker of the Congress: **Isaac FIGIR**
Ambassador to the US: **Yosiwo GEORGE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Masao NAKAYAMA**

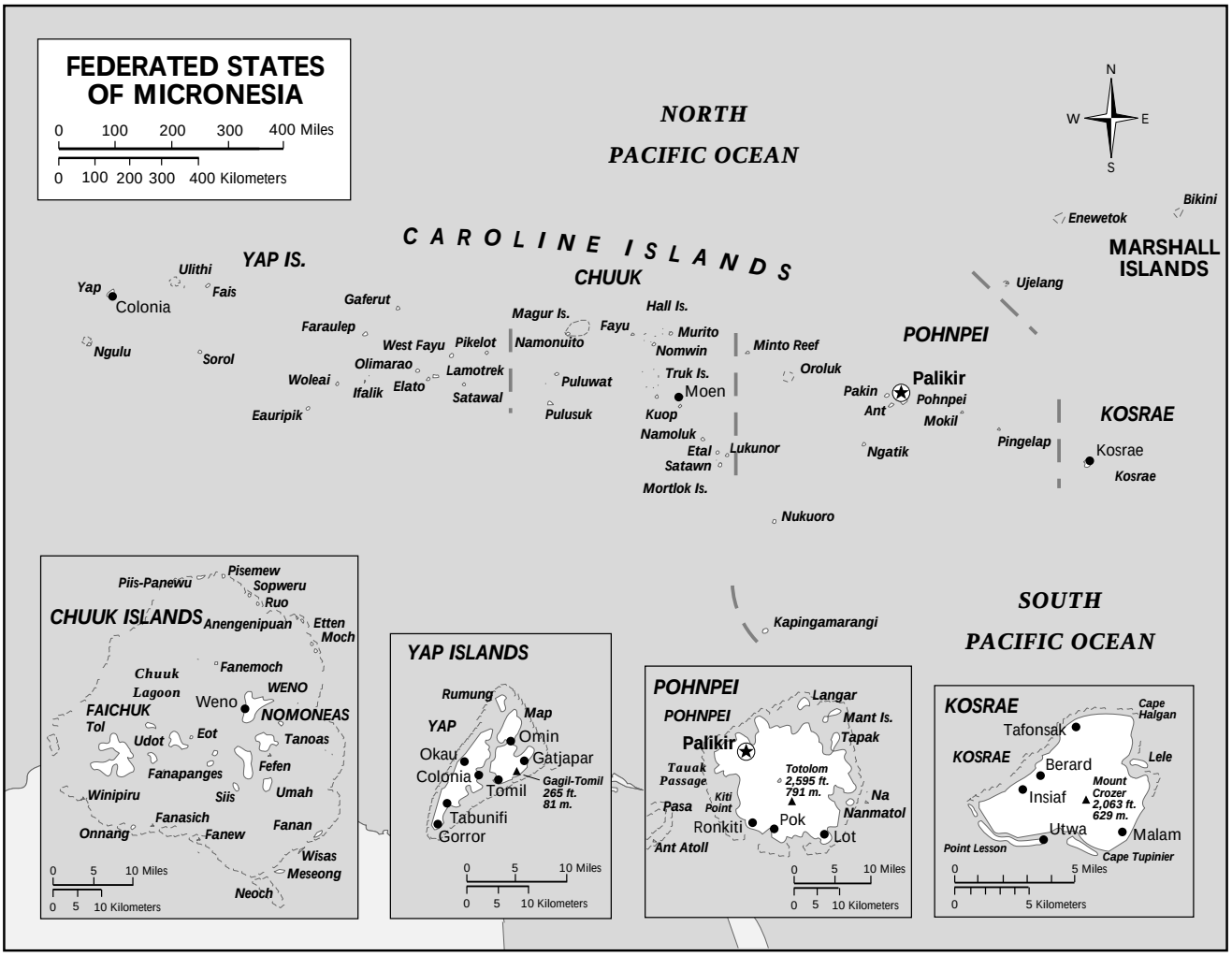
The FSM maintains an Embassy at 1725 N Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202-223-4383. Fax: 202-223-4391. Email: firstsecretary@fsmembassydc.org. Internet website: www.fsmembassydc.org. The FSM also maintains consulates in Honolulu and Guam.

ECONOMY

Under the terms of the Compact of Free Association, the U.S. provided the FSM with about $2 billion in grants and services between 1986 and 2001. The Compact's financial terms were renegotiated for the 20-year period 2004 through 2023, with the aim of encouraging sustainable development. The U.S. will provide almost $100 million in direct assistance every year until 2023, which includes the systematic reallocation of a portion of the direct aid to a jointly managed Trust Fund. Additional federal grants to the FSM total approximately $35 million annually. Assistance under the Amended Compact is distributed by grants in response to a transparent FSM budget process, focusing on the following six sectors: education, health, infrastructure, public sector capacity building, private sector development, and the environment. The U.S. Department of the Interior is responsible for monitoring and implementing the Amended Compact. The FSM government sector plays a central role in the economy as recipients and domestic administrators of Compact funds. The national and state-level governments employ over half of the country's workers, with government services accounting for more than 40% of GDP. Real wages nationwide have been flat for the past decade, as has the number of jobs in the economy (about 15,500.) Private sector jobs pay about half as much as public sector jobs.

The fishing industry is highly important. Foreign commercial fishing fleets pay over $14 million annually for the right to operate in FSM territorial waters. These licensing fees account for 28% of the national government revenues. Exports of marine products, mainly to Japan, account for nearly 85% of export revenues.

Visitor attractions include scuba diving, World War II battle sites, ecotourism, and the ancient ruined city of Nan Madol on Pohnpei. Some 18,000 tourists visit the islands each year. However, the tourist industry has been hampered by a lack of infrastructure and limited commercial air connections. The Asian Development Bank has identified tourism as one of FSM's highest potential growth industries. Agriculture is mainly subsistence farming. The principal crops are breadfruit, coconuts, bananas, betel nuts, cassava, taro, and kava. Less than 10% of the formal labor force and less than 7% of export revenue come from the agricultural sector. The large inflow of official assistance to FSM allows it to run a substantial trade deficit—imports outstrip exports by a seven-to-one ratio—and to have a much lighter tax burden than other states in the region (11% of GDP in FSM compared to 18%-25% elsewhere). The government borrowed against future Compact disbursements in the early 1990s, yielding a significant external debt, close to $60 million. In 2005, the FSM Government and Congress took positive steps toward establishing a nationwide tax system to improve collections and more fairly distribute the tax burden.



FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Government of the Federated States of Micronesia conducts its own foreign relations. Since independence, the FSM has established diplomatic relations with a number of nations, including most of its Pacific neighbors, Japan, Australia, and the People's Republic of China. Regional cooperation through various multilateral organizations is a key element of its foreign policy. The FSM became a member of the United Nations in 1991.

U.S.-MICRONESIAN RELATIONS

The Governments of the FSM and the U.S. maintain deep ties and a cooperative relationship. Reflecting a strong legacy of Trusteeship cooperation, over 25 U.S. federal agencies continue to maintain programs in the FSM. Under the Amended Compact, the U.S. has full authority and responsibility for the defense of the FSM.

This security relationship can be changed or terminated by mutual agreement. Also under the Compact, Micronesians can live, work, and study in the United States without a visa. Micronesians volunteer to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces at approximately double the per capita rate as Americans. Americans can live and work freely in the FSM without the need for a visa.

The U.S. will provide about $100 million annually in assistance to the FSM over the next 20 years. A Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO) consisting of representatives of both nations is responsible for ensuring that assistance funds are spent effectively, with the aim of fostering good governance and economic self-reliance. The basic relationship of free association continues indefinitely.

The United States is the FSM's largest trade partner.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

KOLONIA (E) P.O. Box 1286, Pohnpei FM 96941, APO/FPO No APO/FPO available at post., 691-320-2187, Fax 691-320-2186, INMARSAT Tel 011-872-383-132633, Workweek: Monday–Friday 8a.m. to 5 p.m., Website: http://kolonia.usembassy.gov.

DHS/CIS:	Guam/Honolulu
DHS/ICE:	Embassy Singapore
ECO:	Carl-Heinz Jason Wemhoener-Cuite
HRO:	Jonathan Floss
MGT:	Jonathan Floss
AMB:	Miriam Hughes
CON:	Carl-Heinz Jason Wemhoener-Cuite
DCM:	Arnold Campbell (Wae Tdy)
GSO:	Scott Anderson (Gsa)
RSO:	Embassy Manila
APHIS:	Embassy Canberra
FAA:	Barry Brayer
FMO:	Embassy Manila
ICASS Chair:	David Reside
IMO:	Robert Boylan (Ims)
IRS:	Embassy Tokyo
ISSO:	Jonathan Floss
POL:	Arnold Campbell (Wae Tdy)
State ICASS:	Carl-Heinz Jason Wemhoener-Cuite

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 22, 2008

Country Description: The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is composed of four states spanning dozens of atolls scattered over a million square miles of the north central Pacific. The four states are: Pohnpei (formerly Ponape), Kosrae (formerly Kusaie), Chuuk (formerly Truk) and Yap. The federal capital is located at Palikir, on the island of Pohnpei, close to Pohnpei's largest town, Kolonia. The FSM is a constitutional democracy and is party to a Compact of Free Association with the United States.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizens require a U.S. passport, a completed FSM Immigration Arrival and Departure Record (FSM Form 5004) and a completed FSM Customs Form to enter the FSM. The passport must be valid for at least 120 days beyond the date of entry into the FSM. Air carriers distribute the FSM Immigration Arrival and Departure Record and Customs Form prior to passengers' arrival at the point of entry. There is no limit to the length of time U.S. citizens and nationals may remain in the FSM. All states except Yap levy a departure fee. A health certificate may be required if the traveler is arriving from an area experiencing an epidemic. Visit the Embassy of the Federated States of Micronesia web site at www.fsmembassydc.org for the most current visa information. For more information about FSM entry requirements, travelers may consult the Embassy of the Federated States of Micronesia at 1725 N Street NW, Washington, DC 20038, tel: (202) 223-4383 or the Embassy's web site at http://www.visit-fsm.org/visitors/entry.html. The FSM also has Consulates in Honolulu and Guam.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens in the FSM should review their own personal security practices, be alert to any unusual activity around their homes or businesses, and report any significant incidents to local police authorities.

In the state of Yap, divers and travelers should be aware that there are approximately a dozen World War II era aerial bombs in shallow depths located in the adjacent channels of Yap harbor. While these devices have been in place for many decades, they nonetheless are considered live and dangerous and could possibly be detonated if a diver or other object were to collide with them. Other unexploded ordnance remains from the heavy fighting and bombardment that occurred in and around the atolls and islands of Micronesia during World War II. American citizens are advised to exercise caution when traveling or diving in the region, particularly in the waters surrounding Yap harbor and the adjacent channels.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel. state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: On occasion, foreigners have been subject to, and possibly singled out for, theft and verbal and physical abuse. Modern Western swimwear may be considered immodest by local standards, and persons wearing such clothing outside of hotels that cater to tourists could be subject to harassment.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in the FSM are: In Chuuk, Kosrae or Yap it is 911; in Pohnpei it is 320-221 (Police or Fire Department).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health care facilities in the FSM consist of hospitals on each of the four major islands and a few scattered clinics. These facilities sometimes lack basic supplies and medicines, and the quality of health care varies. Doctors and hospitals may expect immediate cash payment for health services. U.S. medical insurance is not always valid outside the United States. Supplemental medical insurance with specific coverage for overseas treatment and medical evacuation may prove useful. Medical evacuation for non-ambulatory patients may not be immediately available and can be very expensive. Scuba divers are advised that there are only two decompression chambers in the FSM (in Yap and Chuuk); their availability and staff experience in treating dive injuries varies.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe

food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Micronesia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In the FSM, driving is on the right-hand side of the road, as in the United States. However, unlike most cars in the United States, the majority of vehicles in FSM have the driver's seat situated on the right side. Traffic, particularly in the state capitals, is increasing. Congestion may be a problem at the beginning and end of the workday. Most roads are narrow and without sidewalks, creating a hazard for both drivers and pedestrians. Many roads are in poor condition, with potholes and little or no shoulder. Road conditions can worsen after heavy rains; coral surfaces are particularly likely to be slippery. Driving skills vary; drivers often make turns or stop to pick up pedestrians without warning. Roads outside the towns are often unpaved, and are used by pedestrians, children playing, animals, and drivers alike. Streetlights are rare. Taxis are available in state capitals, but visitors are advised to be careful, since some taxi drivers are reckless. There is no formal training in road safety, so many drivers are unaware of road safety rules.

Drunk drivers pose serious hazards, in particular on weekend evenings and holidays. Drivers are required by law to report immediately to local police authorities all accidents involving property damage or personal injury. Visit the web site of the FSM's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.visit-fsm.org.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in the FSM, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Micronesia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Continental Airlines is the only commercial carrier serving the FSM. Flight schedules and routes are limited and subject to change. There may be few alternatives if flights are canceled or missed. Flights are usually 100% booked, and aircraft weight is an issue due to short runways and the type of aircraft used. Because of these limitations and the numerous transit stops made (the typical routing to get to Kolonia would be via Honolulu with intermediate stops in Majuro, Kwajalein and Kosrae, or via Guam with a stop in Chuuk), with exiting and arriving passengers at each location, baggage sometimes may not be loaded at the departure point or may be off-loaded by mistake and left behind at an intermediate stop. Americans are advised to keep these logistical challenges in mind when traveling in this region. Missing baggage should be reported immediately to Continental Airlines ground personnel before onward flight departure.

Special Circumstances: Micronesian customs authorities assess import taxes on cigarettes, tobacco, alcoholic beverages, gasoline, and other personal items that exceed specified amounts. All imports are subject to physical inspection by customs officials. There are strict quarantine regulations restricting entry of plant and animal products. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Micronesia in Washington or one of Micronesia's consulates in Honolulu or Guam for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

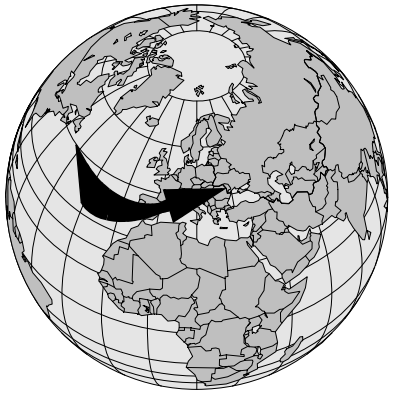
Persons violating Micronesian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Micronesia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Federated States of Micronesia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Micronesia.Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens

make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Kolonia does not issue U.S. passports; it accepts passport applications from persons living or traveling in the FSM and forwards them to the Honolulu Passport Agency in Hawaii for processing. The U.S. Passport Office in Guam does not issue U.S. passports, but it does accept passport applications and forwards them to Hawaii for processing.

The U.S. Embassy is located on Kaselehlie Street (the main downtown street) across from the Pohnpei Botanical Gardens. The mailing address is PO Box 1286, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia 96941. The telephone number is (691) 320-2187. The Duty Officer phone number is (691) 920-2369. The fax number is (691) 320-2186. The U.S. Embassy's web site can be accessed at http://kolonia.usembassy.gov.



MOLDOVA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Moldova

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 33,843 sq. km. (13,000 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Maryland.
Cities: Capital—Chisinau.
Terrain: Rolling steppe, gradual slope south to Black Sea.
Climate: Moderate winters, warm summers.
Time Zone: GMT+2

People

Nationality: Noun—Moldovan(s). Adjective—Moldovan.
Population: (January 2008) 4.2 million, excluding the estimated Transnistrian population of 533,000. An estimated 750,000 work outside the country.
Population growth rate: (2007) 0.3%.
Ethnic groups: (2004 census) Moldovan (83.7%), Ukrainian (6.6%), Russian (1.7%), Gagauz (4.5%), Bulgarian (1.7%), Romanian (1.4%), other (0.4%).
Religions: Christian Orthodox (93.3%), Baptist (1%), Adventist, Roman Catholic, Jewish.
Languages: Romanian (officially known as Moldovan), Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauz.
Education: Literacy—96%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—11/1,000. Life expectancy-68.4 years.
Work force: (1.3 million) Agriculture—41%; industry—12%; other—47%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: Adopted July 28, 1994.
Independence: August 27, 1991 (from Soviet Union).
Government branches: Executive—President (head of state), Prime Minister (head of Government), Government (cabinet). Legislative—unicameral Parliament. Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political subdivisions: 32 counties (raions), 4 municipalities, and one autonomous territorial unit.
Political parties: Communist Party, Christian Democratic People's Party, Our Moldova Alliance, Democratic Party, Social Liberal Party, Social-Democratic Party and the Party for Social Democracy.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007 preliminary) $4.5 billion ($3.4 billion in 2006; $2.9 billion in 2005; $2.6 billion in 2004).
GDP real growth rate: (2007) 3.0% (4.8% in 2006; 8.6% in 2005; 6.5% in 2004).
Per capita GDP: (2007) $1,259 ($950 in 2006; $890 in 2005; $766 in 2004; $540 in 2003).
Natural resources: Lignite, phosphates, gypsum, arable land, and limestone.
Agriculture: Products—vegetables, fruits, wine and spirits, grain, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, meat, milk, eggs, tobacco, walnuts.
Industry: Types—processed foods and beverages, including wine and refined sugar; processed fruit and vegetable products, including vegetable oil; dairy and meat products; tobacco items; metal processing and production of machinery; textiles and clothing, shoes; furniture.
Trade: (2007) Exports—1.342 billion (of which 50% went to the EU countries and some 40% to the former Soviet Union): textiles, clothing, foodstuffs, wine, and machinery. Major markets—Russia, Romania, Ukraine, Italy, Germany, and Belarus. Imports—$3.690 billion (of which 45% came from the EU countries and 36% from the former Soviet Union): gas, oil, coal, steel, machinery and equipment, chemical products, textiles, foodstuffs, automobiles, and other consumer durables. Major suppliers—Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Germany, Italy, and China.
Exchange rate: Leu/US$ (2007) average 12.13; 11.32 (end of year 2007); 13.13 (average in 2006); 12.60 (average in 2005); 12.33 (average in 2004); 13.94 (average in 2003).

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Ethnic groups represented in Moldova include Moldovan/Romanian, Ukrainian, Russian, Gagauz, and Bulgarian. Romanian (officially known as Moldovan) is the official language; Russian, Ukrainian, and Gagauz also are spoken. The great majority of Moldova's population is Christian Orthodox—90% of the population nominally belongs to one of the two main Orthodox denominations. The Moldovan Orthodox Church, an autonomous diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church and loyal to the Patriarch of Moscow, has 1,281 component parts, including churches, monasteries, and other buildings; the Bessarabian Orthodox Church, affiliated with the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate in Bucharest, has 309 component parts. In addition, followers of the Old Rite Russian Orthodox Church (Old Believers) have 15. The government does not seek out or record the number of adherents of religious organizations.

The Republic of Moldova occupies most of what has been known as Bessarabia. Moldova's location has made it a historic passageway between Asia and southern Europe, as well as the victim of frequent warfare. Greeks, Romans, Huns, and Bulgars invaded the area, which in the 13th century became part of the Mongol empire. An independent Moldovan state emerged briefly in the 14th century under celebrated leader Stefan the Great but subsequently fell under Ottoman Turkish rule in the 16th century.

After the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-12, the eastern half of Moldova (Bessarabia) between the Prut and the Dniester Rivers was ceded to Russia, while Romanian Moldavia (west of the Prut) remained with the Turks. Romania, which gained independence in 1878, took control of Russian-ruled Bessarabia in 1918. The Soviet Union never recognized the action and created an autonomous Moldavian republic on the east side of the Dniester River in 1924.

In 1940, Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), which established the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic by merging the autonomous republic east of the Dniester and the annexed Bessarabian portion. Stalin also stripped the three southern counties along the Black Sea coast from Moldova and incorporated them in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Romania sought to regain Bessarabia by joining with Germany in the 1941 attack on the Soviet Union. On June 22, 1941, German and Romanian troops crossed the border and deportations of the Jews from Bessarabia began immediately. By September 1941, most of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina had been transported in convoys and force marched to concentration camps in Transnistria. About 185,000 Jews were in the Transnistria area in concentration camps by 1942 in abysmal conditions. Very few were left alive in these camps when the Soviets reoccupied Bessarabia in 1944.

In September 1990, the Supreme Soviet elected Mircea Snegur as President of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova. A former Communist Party official, he endorsed independence from the Soviet Union and actively sought Western recognition. On May 23, 1991, the Supreme Soviet renamed itself the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, which subsequently declared its independence from the U.S.S.R.

In August 1991, Moldova's transition to democracy initially had been impeded by an ineffective Parliament, the lack of a new constitution, a separatist movement led by the Gagauz (Christian Turkic) minority in the south, and unrest in the Transnistria region on the left bank of the Nistru/Dniester River, where a separatist movement declared a "Transdniester Moldovan Republic" in September 1990. The Russian 14th Army intervened to stem widespread violence and support the Transnistrian regime which is led by supporters of the 1991 coup attempt in Moscow. In 1992, the government negotiated a cease-fire arrangement with Russian and Transnistrian officials, although tensions continue, and negotiations are ongoing. In February 1994, new legislative elections were held, and the ineffective Parliament that had been elected in 1990 to a 5-year term was replaced. A new constitution was adopted in July 1994. The conflict with the Gagauz minority was defused by the granting of local autonomy in 1994.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In 2000, Parliament passed a decree making Moldova a parliamentary republic, with the president elected by Parliament instead of by popular vote. Widespread popular dissatisfaction with previous governments and economic hardship led to a surprise at the polls in February 2001. In elections certified by international observers as free and fair, slightly over half of Moldova's voters cast their ballots for the Communist Party. Under the rules of Moldova's proportional representation system, the Communist faction, which in the previous Parliament consisted of 40 of Parliament's 101 seats, jumped to 71—a clear majority. The Parliament then elected the leader of the Communist faction, Vladimir Voronin, to be President.

President Voronin's first term was marked by up and down relations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Politically, the government was committed to the reduction of poverty by allocating more resources to social safety net items such as health, education, and increasing pensions and salaries. Voronin proceeded with former President Lucinschi's plans to privatize several important state-owned industries and even on occasion broke with his own party over important issues.

Under President Voronin, relations with the United States have remained strong. From January to April 2002, large demonstrations took place in opposition to several



controversial government proposals, including expanded use of the Russian language in schools and its designation as an official language. While the demonstrations were sometimes tense, the government did not use force and ultimately agreed to Council of Europe (CoE) mediation.

In March 2005 parliamentary elections, the Communist Party received 46.1% of the vote, or 56 seats in the 101-member Parliament—more than enough for the 51-vote minimum required to form a government, but short of the 61 votes necessary to elect a president. However, President Voronin was re-elected with support from the Christian Democratic People's Party and from the Democratic and Social Liberal party factions, after Voronin promised to deliver on needed reforms and Euro-Atlantic integration for the country. These defections broke apart the opposition unity of the pre-election Moldovan Democratic Bloc, led by Our Moldova Alliance (AMN) faction leader and former Chisinau Mayor Serafim Urechean.

Nationwide local elections in June 2007 showed improvement over nationwide parliamentary elections in 2005, with better access to the media for opposition candidates, and greater evidence of impartiality by the Central Election Commission. While the voting itself generally met international standards, the government's behavior in the campaign period—including bias in state media and misuse of administrative resources—remained a concern. The Communist Party suffered a significant setback, losing the high-profile Chisinau mayoral election and control of numerous local councils to opposition party coalitions. Elections in the semi-autonomous region of Gagauzia were held in December 2006, while elections for the region's legislature were conducted in March 2008. Mikhail Formuzal, a longtime opponent of President Voronin, was elected "Bashkan" (Governor) in December 2006. Results of the legislative elections were inconclusive: as of May 2008, the 35 members of the People's Assembly had not been able to elect a speaker, and the loyalties of the 21 independent members were not yet clear. Nationwide parliamentary elections are scheduled for March 2009, and the new Parliament will elect the next President of Moldova. In addition to state-sponsored media, there are several independent newspapers, radio and television stations, and news services. The independent media organizations, along with some that are affiliated with political parties, often criticize government policies. In August 2004, Teleradio Moldova (TRM) was officially transformed from a state-owned company into a public broadcaster. However, journalists and civil

society representatives, who claimed the process was nontransparent and meant to stack the new TRM staff with those favorable to the government, met this move with large protests. In February 2007, a controversial privatization process shut down the popular, pro-opposition Chisinau radio station Antena C, and installed new, pro-government management. The U.S. Ambassador, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and western diplomatic missions condemned the developments, which seemed to run counter to the Moldovan Broadcasting Code and risked silencing political opposition. Peaceful assembly is allowed, though permits for demonstrations must be obtained; private organizations, including political parties, are required to register with the government. Moldova enacted a new law on religion in July 2007. The new law, while noting the special status of the Moldovan Orthodox Church in Moldovan history and culture, in theory simplifies registration procedures and allows religious groups more access to public places. Although four religious groups have applied for registration under the new procedures, all four have been refused on what they claim are arbitrary grounds.

In February 2005, Brussels and Chisinau agreed on a European Union (EU)-Moldova Action Plan, a "roadmap" of reforms to strengthen the democratic and economic situation of the country and facilitate its Euro-Atlantic integration. Although Moldova has made some progress toward laying the structural and legislative foundation for reform, the EU has emphasized that more implementation is needed.

Transnistria

The population of the Moldovan region of Transnistria is approximately 40% Romanian/Moldovan, 28% Ukrainian, and 23% Russian. Separatist forces maintain control of the Transnistrian region, which lies along the Ukrainian border. Moldova has tried to meet the Russian minority's demands by offering the region rather broad cultural and political autonomy. The dispute has strained Moldova's relations with Russia. The July 1992 cease-fire agreement established a tripartite peacekeeping force comprised of Moldovan, Russian, and Transnistrian units.

Negotiations to resolve the conflict continue, and the cease-fire is still in effect. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is trying to facilitate a negotiated settlement and has had an observer mission in place for several years. In July 2002, OSCE, Russian, and Ukrainian mediators approved a document setting forth a blueprint for reuniting Moldova under a federal system. Over the next year and a half, the settlement talks alternated between periods of forward momentum and periods of no progress. In February 2003, the U.S. and EU imposed visa restrictions against the Transnistrian leadership. In April 2003, the Moldovan Government and the Transnistrian authorities agreed to establish a joint commission to draft a constitution for a reintegrated state. However, fundamental disagreements over the division of powers remained, and a settlement proved elusive.

President Voronin decided not to sign a Russian-brokered settlement with Transnistria in November 2003; the proposal—seen by many as pro-Transnistrian—sparked opposition protests. During the summer of 2004, the Transnistrian separatists forcibly closed several Romanian language Latin-script schools in the region, for which the regime was subject to international condemnation. In 2005, Tiraspol prevented several farmers on the right bank of the Nistru River from working their fields on the left bank, within Transnistria's "borders." The OSCE Mission to Moldova eventually mediated solutions to these crises.

After a 15-month pause, the sides met for a renewed round of settlement negotiations in October 2005. Mediators from Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE joined the Moldovan and Transnistrian representatives at the talks. In addition, the U.S. and EU joined the talks as observers. However, subsequent "5+2" negotiations have made little progress on a settlement or on withdrawal of Russian forces from Moldova: Russia still has weapons and munitions of the Operational Group of Russian Forces (formerly the Russian 14th Army) stationed in Transnistria, although it pledged to remove them under a timetable established at the 1999 OSCE Ministerial—the so-called "Istanbul Accords." However, there has been no progress on Russian withdrawals since early 2004.

In response to Moldova's call for international monitoring of the border, in December 2005 the EU dispatched a Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to help stem the flow of illegal trade between Ukraine and Moldova. In March 2006, Ukraine and Moldova began implementing a 2003 customs agreement, under which Transnistrian companies seeking to engage in cross-border trade must register in Chisinau. Despite the protests of Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov, all major Transnistrian businesses have subsequently registered. In what is seen as a response to the new customs procedures, the Smirnov regime boycotted the 5+2 talks in March 2006. Although formal 5+2 talks remain stalled, President Vladimir Voronin and Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov met in Bender on April 11, 2008, and agreed to initiate dialogue on confidence-building measures. Informal 5+2 discussions were held in Odessa, Ukraine, in April 2008 and focused on creating favorable conditions for resumption of formal talks. In September 2006, the Transnistrian regime held an "independence referendum." Despite the fact that the Smirnov regime claimed that the referendum demonstrated overwhelming support for independence, the vote was not monitored by any western organizations, and no country recognized the referendum or the independence of Transnistria.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Vladimir VORONIN**
Prime Min.: **Zinaida GRECEANII**

First Dep. Prime Min.: **Igor DODON**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Victor STEPANIUC**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Andrei STRATAN**
Min. of Agriculture & Food Industry: **Anatolie GORODENCO**
Min. of Construction & Territorial Development: **Vladimir BALDOVICI**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Artur COZMA**
Min. of Defense: **Vitalie VRABIE**
Min. of Economics & Trade: **Igor DODON**
Min. of Education, Youth, & Sport: **Larisa SAVGA**
Min. of Environment & Natural Resources: **Violeta IVANOV**
Min. of Finance: **Mariana DURLESTEANU**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Andrei STRATAN**
Min. of Health: **Larisa CATRINICI**
Min. of Information Development: **Pavel BUCEATCHI**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Valentin MEJINSCHI, Gen.**
Min. of Justice: **Vitalie PIRLOG**
Min. of Local Public Admin.: **Valentin GUZNAC**
Min. of Reintegration: **Vasile SOVA**
Min. of Social Protection, Family, & Children: **Galina BALMUS**
Min. of Transport & Roads Management: **Vasile URSU**
Sec., Supreme Security Council: **Ion MOREI**
Prosecutor Gen.: **Valeriu GURBULEA**
Dir., Security & Intelligence Service: **Artur RESETNICOV**
Pres., National Bank: **Leonid TALMACI**
Ambassador to the US: **Nicolae CHIRTOACA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

More information about Moldova can be found at the official (Romanian and Russian language) Government of Moldova website at www.moldova.md. The Moldova.org site is maintained by the Moldova Foundation, a non-governmental organization and has some useful links.

ECONOMY

Moldova remains the poorest country in Europe. It is landlocked, bounded by Ukraine on the east and Romania to the west. It is the second smallest of the former Soviet republics and the most densely populated. Industry accounts for less than 15% of its labor force, while agriculture's share is more than 40%. Moldova's proximity to the Black Sea gives it a mild and sunny climate. This makes the area ideal for agriculture and food processing, which accounts for one third of the country's GDP. The fertile soil supports wheat, corn, barley, tobacco, sugar beets, and soybeans. Beef and dairy cattle are raised, and beekeeping is widespread. Moldova's best-known product comes from its extensive and well-developed vineyards concentrated in the central and southern regions. In addition to world-class wine, Moldova produces liqueurs and champagne. It is also known for its sunflower seeds, walnuts, apples, and other fruits.

Like many other former Soviet republics, Moldova has experienced economic difficulties. Since its economy was highly dependent on the rest of the former Soviet Union for energy and raw materials, the breakdown in trade following the breakup of the Soviet Union had a serious effect, exacerbated at times by drought and civil conflict. The Russian ruble devaluation of 1998 had a deleterious effect on Moldova's economy, but economic growth was steady from 2000 to 2005, averaging 7% after years of recession since independence. Economic growth slowed in 2006 (4.8%) and 2007 (3%), brought on by strained relations with Russia and a series of consecutive shocks—a two-fold increase in gas prices and a politically-motivated Russian ban on Moldovan wine imports in 2006 and a severe drought in 2007.

Moldova has made progress in economic reform since independence. The government has liberalized most prices and has phased out subsidies on most basic consumer goods. A program begun in March 1993 has privatized 80% of all housing units and nearly 2,000 small, medium, and large enterprises. Other successes include the privatization of nearly all of Moldova's agricultural land from state to private ownership, as a result of an American assistance program, "Pamint" ("land"), completed in 2000. A stock market opened in June 1995.

Following the economic difficulties caused by the Russian currency crisis of 1998, inflation dropped to 4.4% in 2002, the lowest level since Moldova's independence. However, inflation spiked again to 15.7% in 2003 and never fell below 10% over the following years, rising as high as 14.1% in 2006 and 13.1% in 2007, one of the highest in the region. While relatively stable in recent years, the local currency has been appreciating because of a weakening U.S. dollar and pressure from record remittances from Moldovans working abroad. Reforms to the National Bank of Moldova in 2006 changed the central bank's policy priority from currency stability to price stability (fighting inflation). The National Bank of Moldova has the difficult task of sterilizing the money supply to contain stubbornly high inflation.

Moldova continues to make progress toward developing a viable free-market economy. Tight fiscal policy resulted in a slight deficit of 0.3% of GDP in 2007. The Moldovan economy continues to depend greatly on remittances sent from Moldovans working abroad. These inflows have increased to over $1.2 billion a year.

Privatization results in recent years were not significant. With mass privatization over, the government has been mostly selling state-owned residual shares in companies and focusing on efficient management of state assets. Total proceeds in 2007 amounted to $16.7 million. State-owned residual shares in 33 companies and one land plot in Chisinau were privatized in 2007. The government postponed indefinitely privatizations in the power, banking, telecommunications, and agribusiness sectors. In 2007, Parliament passed a new law, introducing new approaches to privatizing and managing state-owned assets. As the European Union expanded to Moldova's border, 2007 saw record high inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI). However, cumulative FDI since independence is only $1.81 billion, far below the country's needs. Sporadic and ineffective enforcement of the law, corruption, economic and political uncertainty, and government interference discourage greater FDI inflows.

Spurred by soaring consumption and higher energy prices, imports have been growing more rapidly than exports. The country lacks diversification in terms of sector development and export markets. In 2007, the country's trade deficit was $2.3 billion (compared with $1.6 billion in 2006).

In 2005, Russia enacted a ban on Moldovan agricultural products and in 2006, it banned imports of Moldovan wines. Although Russian President Putin announced an end to the wine ban in November 2006, actual resumption of wine exports came a year later. The November 2007 resumption of wine exports to Russia was a positive development, but full recovery of trade volumes will take time. The wine ban was particularly painful because, prior to the ban, Moldovan wines accounted for one-third of the country's exports and 80% of wine exports went to Russia. The Russian wine ban further widened the country's trade deficit. Moldova's exports to Russia declined by 47.6% in 2006 and total exports dropped 3.6%, resulting in a trade deficit of 47% of GDP. Some Moldovan wineries were successful in finding new, alternative markets for their products in 2007. The current Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) and EU autonomous trade preferences are incentives for further market diversification.

In January 2006, Russian energy giant Gazprom temporarily cut off natural gas deliveries to Ukraine and Moldova—which is almost completely dependent on its neighbors for energy—and subsequently doubled the price of gas to Moldova. The prices of Russian gas increased to U.S. $170 per one thousand cubic meters in 2007, U.S. $192 in the first quarter of 2008, and U.S. $212 in the second quarter of 2008. The prices will increase until 2011, reaching parity with the average EU price.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank resumed lending to Moldova in July 2002, and then suspended lending again in July 2003. In early 2006, Moldova reached agreement with the Paris Club on rescheduling Moldova's foreign debt. In addition, in the spring of 2006, the IMF reached an agreement with the Moldovan Government for a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility designed to bolster foreign reserves against external shocks with a 3-year, $180 million program that includes a new IMF loan to the National Bank of Moldova.

Moldova suffered from a severe drought during much of 2007 which caused hundreds of millions of dollars in agriculture sector losses and prompted concerns about food availability. In response to a request for assistance from the Government of Moldova, the United States provided $350,000 worth of seed to drought ravaged farmers in time for fall planting.

DEFENSE AND MILITARY ISSUES

Moldova has accepted all relevant arms control obligations of the former Soviet Union. On October 30, 1992, Moldova ratified the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, which establishes comprehensive limits on key categories of conventional military equipment and provides for the destruction of weapons in excess of those limits. It acceded to the provisions of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in October 1994 and to the Biological Weapons Convention in December 2004. It does not have nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. Moldova joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Partnership for Peace on March 16, 1994. Due to Moldova's constitutional neutrality, it is not a participant in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS—a group of 12 former Soviet republics) Collective Security Agreement.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Moldova's Parliament approved the country's membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States and a CIS charter on economic union in April 1994. In 1995, the country became the first former Soviet republic admitted to the Council of Europe. In addition to its membership in NATO's Partnership for Peace, Moldova also belongs to the United Nations, the OSCE, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Moldova is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In 1998, Moldova contributed to the founding of GUAM, a regional cooperative agreement made up of Georgia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan, in addition to Moldova. Although the agreement initially included a declaration of mutual defense, Moldova has since declared its disinterest in participating in any GUAM-based mutual defense initiative. Moldova has been involved in information exchange, trade and transportation, border control, and energy projects issues within this regional agreement. In 2006, the organization's members voted to change the name to the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM.

The past two years have seen significant developments in Moldova's relations with the West. In 2005, the European Union appointed a Special Representative for Moldova and the negotiations to resolve the Transnistrian conflict and the Delegation of the European Commission opened an office in Chisinau, In December 2005, Moldova welcomed an EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) along its Ukrainian border to crack down on smuggling, strengthen customs procedures and facilitate cross-border cooperation. In accordance with a 2005 Action Plan with the EU, Moldova has begun to harmonize Moldova's laws with those of the EU. As part of this, in late 2005, Moldova enacted its "Guillotine" laws, which slashed unnecessary business regulations, established a framework for relations between the private sector and government and created a mechanism to review the suitability of draft legislation.

In the atmosphere of heightened international sensitivity to terrorism following the events of September 11, 2001, Moldova has been a supporter of American efforts to increase international cooperation in combating terrorism. Moldova has sent demining units and peacekeepers to participate in post-conflict humanitarian assistance in Iraq.

U.S.-MOLDOVAN RELATIONS

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought an end to the Cold War and created the opportunity to build bilateral relations with the 15 new states that had made up the former U.S.S.R., as they began political and economic transformation.

The United States recognized the independence of Moldova on December 25, 1991 and opened an Embassy in its capital, Chisinau, in March 1992. The U.S. Ambassador to Moldova, Michael Kirby, arrived at post on September 1, 2006.

A trade agreement providing reciprocal most-favored-nation tariff treatment became effective in July 1992. An Overseas Private Investment Corporation agreement, which encourages U.S. private investment by providing direct loans and loan guarantees, was signed in June 1992. A bilateral investment treaty was signed in April 1993. Generalized system of preferences status was granted in August 1995, and some Eximbank coverage became available in November 1995.

In 2006, the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation approved Moldova's $24.7 million Threshold Country Plan to combat corruption. The MCC also ruled that Moldova is eligible to apply for full compact assistance, and the Moldovan Government submitted its compact proposal in 2008.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 10, 2008

Country Description: Moldova is a republic with a freely elected government. It has been an independent nation since 1991. Its capital, Chisinau, offers adequate hotels and restaurants, but tourist facilities in other parts of the country are not highly developed, and many of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries are not yet available.

Entry Requirements: Since January 1, 2007, citizens of the United States, EU member states, Canada, Switzerland, and Japan do not require visas to enter Moldova. For more information on entry requirements, please contact the Moldovan Embassy, 2101 S Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, telephone: (202) 667-1130, (202) 667-1131, or (202) 667-1137, fax: (202) 667-1204, e-mail: moldova@dgs.dgsys.com. Travelers may also wish to consult the Embassy of Moldova's web site at http://embassyrm.org/en/cons-serv/visas.html for general information on Moldovan visas and for application forms.

Safety and Security: The U.S. Government has no information related to the targeting of U.S. citizens, interests or facilities by terrorist organizations in Moldova, and no Americans have been killed or injured as a result of terrorist activity in Moldova. However, the U.S. government remains deeply concerned about the heightened threat of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests abroad. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. Because Moldovan Government authorities often ask to see identification on the street, Americans should carry a copy of their passport with them at all times.

There is a separatist regime in control of the Transnistria region that is not recognized by the United States. Consular assistance to American citizens in that region cannot be ensured. Travelers should exercise caution when visiting or transiting Transnistria. Travelers should be aware that there are numerous road checkpoints along roads leading into and out from Transnistria. Taking photographs of military facilities, public buildings, and security forces, including checkpoints along roads leading into and out from Transnistria, is strictly prohibited.

Racially motivated incidents against foreigners and persons of color have occurred in Moldova. Persons of African, Asian, or Arab heritage may be subject to various types of harassment, such as verbal abuse, and denied entrance into some clubs and restaurants. These Americans are also at risk for harassment by police authorities.

In some instances, Americans have become victims of harassment, mistreatment and extortion by Moldovan law enforcement and other officials. Low-level bribery attempts are commonplace in Moldova. These encounters should always be reported to the U.S. Embassy. Moldovan authorities have cooperated in investigating such cases, but those investigations enjoy the greatest chance of success when the officer is identified by name, physical description, or other identifying characteristics. Please note this information if you ever have a problem with police or other officials. Americans who have refused to pay bribes in Moldova generally report no consequences beyond being delayed or inconvenienced.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Moldova's economic difficulties, as well as organized criminal activity and more frequent travel by foreigners to Moldova, contribute to the risk visitors face from street crime, some potentially violent. While this risk is no greater than in most cities in the United States, many Americans have reported theft of money and small valuables from hotel rooms and local apartments. Cases of breaking and entering into homes and offices have occurred. Travelers are wise to exercise the same precautions with regard to personal safety and protection of valuables in Chisinau that they would in any major U.S. city.

Precautions should also be taken when using ATMs in Moldova. Some Americans have reported unauthorized withdrawals from their accounts after using ATMs. Instances have been reported of PIN theft from use of ATMs in Moldova, either by "skimming" devices, which record the ATM card information while in use, or by surreptitious observation.

Train and bus services are below Western European standards and some U.S. citizens have been victims of crimes involving thefts while traveling on international trains to and from Moldova.

Americans who use the Moldovan postal service report frequent losses from international letter and package mail.

Internet Fraud Warning: The Embassy is aware of various confidence schemes that have taken advantage of American citizens, frequently via the Internet. In some cases these involve the purchase or sale of items on the Internet in which the payment or shipment of goods was not completed by a Moldovan counterpart. In the spring of 2006, Moldovan police recovered over $250,000 in jewelry that was sent to "buyers" in Moldova from the U.S. via fake online escrow companies. Substantial criminal enterprises specializing in this type of crime (Internet auction fraud) are emerging in Moldova. In other cases, American citizens, particularly males, have met potential Moldovan fiancé(e)s on the Internet who have convinced them to send hundreds or even thousands of dollars, but have no intention of a serious relationship. Once the American citizen starts to question the reason for sending the money, the Moldovan fiancé(e)s suddenly ends his/her contact. On occasion, American citizens who come to Moldova to visit someone they have first met over the Internet have reported becoming subject to crimes such as extortion and involuntary detention. American citizens should be aware that any such activity committed by individuals in Moldova is subject to the Moldovan legal system and could prove difficult to prosecute. In the vast majority of cases, there is little that the U.S. Embassy can do to assist American citizens who are defrauded by Moldovans via the Internet.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Moldova is substandard throughout the country, including Chisinau. In the event of serious medical conditions every effort should be made to go to Western Europe. In the event of emergency, travelers should attempt first to contact the local ambulance service, which is trained to determine which medical facility is most appropriate for treatment and will transport the injured or sick person to that location. Hospital accommodations are inadequate throughout the country and advanced technology is lacking. Shortages of routine medications and supplies may be encountered. Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at particular risk due to inadequate medical facilities. The U.S. Embassy maintains lists of medical facilities and English-speaking doctors, but cannot guarantee or endorse competence. Visitors to Moldova are advised to bring their own supply of both prescription and common over-the-counter medications. Pharmacies are not stocked to Western standards and products are not labeled in English. Poor quality and/or fraudulent medications have been reported.

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to or foreign resi-

dents of Moldova. Short term visitors (periods of less than 90 days) do not require HIV testing. Applicants for residence permits, however, are required to submit to a HIV test and demonstrate that they are HIV negative. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Moldova at www.embassyrm.org before you travel.

Medical Information: Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Moldova; the World Health Organization (WHO) has placed it in its "highest risk" category. Travelers planning to stay in Moldova for more than 3 months should have a predeparture PPD skin test status documented. Given the way TB is transmitted, travelers should consider limiting their exposure to TB by avoiding crowded public places and public transportation whenever possible. Domestic help should be screened for TB. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Other major health concerns include Hepatitis A (food-borne), Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C (blood- and body fluids-borne). The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases is as high as it is in most developing countries.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the WHO's web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Moldova is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Moldova's highway infrastructure consists mainly of two-lane roads that often lack markings or signage, are unevenly maintained, and seldom have lighting. Caution should be taken to prevent collisions with agricultural vehicles and/or livestock. Urban roads in Moldova are infrequently maintained and often lack clear signs or lane markings.

Travel outside of urban areas before dawn and after dusk should be avoided if at all possible. Drivers and pedestrians should exercise extreme caution to avoid accidents, which are commonplace. Many Moldovan drivers would be considered aggressive or erratic by American standards. Many accidents involve drunk drivers. The quality and safety of public transportation vary widely. Trains, trolleybuses, and buses are often old and may frequently break down. Taxis are available in most urban areas, and vary from old Soviet-era vehicles to newer, Western European or American model vehicles.

Visit the website of the Moldova's national tourist office at http://www.turism.md.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Moldova, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Moldova's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Travelers are advised to register any foreign currency brought into Moldova with customs authorities upon entering the country. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Moldova in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Visas and residency: Current Moldovan Government (GOM) border registration procedures will remain unchanged under the new immigration law. As of January 1, 2007, U.S. and most other foreign nationals arriving in Moldova do not require a visa and are permitted stays of up to 90 days in any given six-month period. At the point of entry (i.e., airport or border), the Border Guard Service enters the traveler's personal data into a computer program and transfers the data to the GOM's Population Register. Visitors are not given a paper "registration receipt." U.S. citizens are able to enter Moldova through Transnistria. However, because they will not have been registered at the border, they will still have to register with the nearest office of the Ministry of Information Development (MID) within three days of arrival in right-bank (western) Moldova.

For stays exceeding 90 days, foreign nationals are required to obtain "immigration certificates" and residence permits from the National Bureau for Migration. Foreign nationals planning to work in Moldova must also obtain a work permit. Immigration, residence and work permits usually need to be extended annually, but may be issued for up to five years.

For more information on registering with Moldovan authorities, U.S. citizens are encouraged to call the Consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Chisinau at (373) (22) 40-83-00.

Requirement to Carry Documentation: As noted above, Moldovan police have the right to request identity documents from any person. Individuals who fail to produce appropriate ID upon request may be subject to detention and fines. Therefore, Americans are advised to carry their U.S. passports (or a copy of their passport's biographic information page) with registration card, if applicable, or a Moldovan-issued identification document when in public.

Consular Access: Moldovan law enforcement authorities, particularly in the Transnistria region, have an uneven record of reporting the arrest or detention of American citizens to the U.S. Embassy, as required under international agreements. American citizens are therefore advised that if they are detained or arrested by Moldovan authorities, they should immediately request that the U.S. Embassy be contacted. Moldovan authorities have generally respected such requests in a prompt manner.

Photography: Americans who choose to travel in Transnistria should be aware that foreigners have reported being detained or harassed by authorities for taking photographs of military facilities or public buildings. Photography of checkpoints along roads leading into and out from the Transnistria region, or the personnel working there, is prohibited.

Dual Nationality: Moldovan legislation allowing dual citizenship went into effect on October 18, 2003. There is no requirement that dual nationals enter Moldova on their Moldovan passports. For further questions, please contact the Moldovan Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Telephone and Postal Services: Outside of Chisinau, travelers may have difficulty finding public telephones and receiving or making international and local calls. Losses have been reported from international letter and package mail, both of which are subject to a customs inspection before delivery. "Express" mail services such as DHL and Federal Express are available in Chisinau, although in most instances prices are high, and shipments arrive from (or reach) the United States in no less than five (5) business days.

Disabled Access: Persons with disabilities should be aware that public facilities and transportation in Moldova are rarely designed or built in a way that allows for wheelchair access. Wheelchair entrances, ramps, lifts or similar accommodations are rare; those that do exist are often below Western standards and/or poorly maintained. Most streets, sidewalks and other public paths are not well maintained and can be hazardous, particularly in poor weather conditions.

Commercial Transactions: Although still generally a cash-only economy, traveler's checks and credit cards are becoming increasingly accepted in Chisinau, although locations that will accept them outside the capital are still rare. Some vendors require the customer dial in a PIN to authorize a sale by credit card. Caution is advised, however, as some travelers have reported incidents of unauthorized expenditures made on credit cards during or following their use in Moldova, and there have also been reported incidents of fraud and account theft using bank machines.

Business in Transnistria: As noted in the Safety and Security section above, a separatist regime controls a narrow strip of land in eastern Moldova known as Transnistria ("Pridnestrovie" in Russian). Individuals considering doing business in Transnistria should exercise extreme caution. The Embassy may not be able to offer consular or commercial services to Americans in Transnistria. Moldovan law requires firms (including those located in Transnistria) to register with the Moldovan Government and to use Moldovan customs seals on their exports. Under a December 2005 agreement between Moldova and Ukraine, Ukrainian customs and border officials require Moldovan customs seals on goods exported from Moldova, including Transnistria, and are enforcing this requirement with EU assistance. Transnistrian firms not legally registered with Moldovan authorities operate in contravention of Moldovan law, which may complicate or prevent the import or export of goods. The Government of Moldova has indicated that it will not recognize the validity of contracts for the privatization of firms in Transnistria that are concluded without the approval of the appropriate Moldovan authorities. A number of Internet fraud schemes have originated in Transnistria.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Moldovan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Moldova are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: U.S. Citizens who adopt a Moldovan child must ensure that the child has a visa valid for travel to Romania in the child's Moldovan passport. This visa is necessary to allow the child to travel to Bucharest, where the parents must apply at the U.S. Embassy for the child's immigrant visa to the United States. Without a Romanian visa, the child will be turned back at the airport or border crossing.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Moldova are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Moldova. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Chisinau, Moldova, Strada Alexei Mateevici 103; telephone: (373) (22) 23-37-72, after-hours telephone: (373) (22) 23-73-45; Consular Section Fax: (373) (22) 22-63-61. The Embassy's web site is http://moldova.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available

through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Moldova is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between Moldova and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Moldova is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Moldova, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government.

Adoption in Moldova can be a complicated process, sometimes involving long waits. Moldovan adoption law gives preference to Moldovan citizens and citizens of countries that have implemented the 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Moldova also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for foreign adoptive parents.

Age Requirements: The minimum age requirement for adoptive parents is 25. The maximum age is 50, unless one of the couple is under the age of 50.

Marriage Requirements: Married couples and single people may adopt. Unmarried couples may not adopt from Moldova.

Income Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must show financial stability.

Other Requirements: The presence of the following conditions disqualify prospective adoptive parents from adopting in Moldova: HIV/AIDS, psychological and behavioral disorders, drug addiction, chronic alcoholism, chronic somatic diseases (disability of the 1st and 2nd degree), various forms of cancer, Hepatitis B, C or D. The following conditions may temporarily disqualify a person from adopting: sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis and severe virulent diseases.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Moldova is a member of The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Moldova must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. For example, the Convention requires that Moldova attempt to place a child with a family in Moldova before determining that a child is eligible for intercountry adoption.

In addition to Moldova's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Intercountry adoptions are permitted in exceptional cases, when no relatives or other Moldovan families are able to adopt orphans or become their guardians. Children who have health or developmental problems that Moldovan families cannot afford to treat are also considered exceptional cases.

Waiting Period: Information about children eligible for adoption is published in the Monitorul official, the Moldovan Government's official register. For the first six months after this information is published, an adoptable child is eligible only for domestic adoption by Moldovan citizens. After six months, an adoptable child is eligible for intercountry adoption. Prospective adoptive parents may indicate the sex and age range of the child they prefer.

Moldovan Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child Adoption Department

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Moldova is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Moldova.

When adopting in Moldova, prospective adoptive parents are required to use an adoption agency that is also accredited in Moldova. Please find the list of accredited adoption providers in the Contacts section. A registered adoption agency, through its Moldovan representative, forwards the foreign prospective adoptive parents' file to the Adoption Department (See the list of required documents below.) The Adoption Department in turn forwards the file to the Education Directorate in the district where a prospective adoptable child resides.

After you choose an accredited adoption agency, you apply to be found eligible to adopt by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines you "eligible" and "suitable" to be an adoptive parent, your information will be forwarded to the adoption authority in Moldova. Moldova's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Moldovan law.

If both the United States and Moldova determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority will provide you with a referral for a child. You cannot identify a specific child that you would like to adopt prior to the adoption authority providing this referral.

The local Inspector for the Protection of Children's Rights in the district, together with a physician and the director of the orphanage, examines the file and matches the family with an eligible child.

The prospective adoptive parents are then provided with complete, official information about the child, including health and family background. The Moldovan representative sends the prospective adoptive parents this information including photographs or a video of the child. The representative will also send answers from the Moldovan authorities to all additional questions the prospective adoptive parents may have about the child. The prospective adoptive parents have the option to refuse a prospective adoptive child. If they do so, they must inform the Moldovan authorities in writing of their decision.

If the prospective adoptive parents agree to accept the child, they send a letter to the Adoption Department through their agency's representative, acknowledging that they are aware of any specific health or other problems, and accept the child. The orphanage receives a copy of the letter from the Adoption Department.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800).

After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application to a Consular Officer at the United States Embassy. If the Consular Office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify Moldova's adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

If approved, the Directorate of Education will forward a Notice of Approval of Adoption to the Adoption Department. The Adoption Department will then decide whether to approve the adoption. Although prospective adoptive parents do not need to travel to Moldova to meet the prospective adoptive child at the time of the acceptance of the match, both parents must appear in court in Moldova to finalize the adoption.

Role of the Adoption Authority: To begin the adoption process, a registered adoption agency, through its Moldovan representative, forwards the foreign prospective adoptive parents' file to the Adoption Department.

The Department in turn forwards the file to the Education Directorate in the district where a prospective adoptable child resides. Once a child has been selected the prospective adoptive parents send a letter to the Adoption Department through their agency's representative, acknowledging that they are aware of any specific health or other problems, and accept the child. The orphanage receives a copy of the letter the Department.

The district's Directorate of Education must then approve the prospective adoption and provide full information on the adoptive parents and the adoptive child to the Adoption Department. If approved, the Directorate of Education will forward a Notice of Approval of Adoption to the Department.

The Adoption Department will then decide whether to approve the adoption. Although prospective adoptive parents do not need to travel to Moldova to meet the prospective adoptive child at the time of the acceptance of the match, both parents must appear in court in Moldova to finalize the adoption.

Role of the Court: The approved adoption file proceeds to the court system through the district's Inspector for the Protection of Children's Rights. Once prospective adoptive parents satisfy the Moldovan adoption requirements, a judge must grant a final adoption.

Time Frame: An adoption can take six to nine months to complete from the time a child is matched with prospective adoptive parents until the completion of the adoption.

Adoption Fees: There is a Government fee of 1,500 EUR for each adopted child and cost of airfare for adoption-related travel. Separate attorneys' fees can vary greatly.

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required: The adoption application should contain:

- Name, year, month, and day of birth of prospective adoptive parent(s). Address and state of residence of the parent(s) is also required;
- Name, year, month, and day of birth of child to be adopted. Residence of the child to be adopted;
- Information regarding the biological parents and siblings of the prospective adoptive child;
- Request to change name and place of birth, and register the adoptive parents as the birth parents on the child's new birth certificate;
- Copy of prospective adoptive parent(s) birth certificate;
- Doctor's Certificate of Eligibility to Adopt;
- Employment certificate, including occupation, years of service, and income;
- Authenticated copy of Deed of Sale for a home, or lease agreement for residence; and
- Approval by the prospective adoptive parents' Government and permission for the adopted child to reside in the United States.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or

she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents.

For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Contact Information

United States Embassy in Moldova
103, A. Mateevici Street
Chisinau, Moldova MD 2009
Tel: (373 22) 408 300
Fax: (373 22) 226 361
E-mail: Chisinau-ca@state.gov
Internet:
www.moldova.usembassy.gov

United States Embassy in Bucharest, Romania
Street Nicolae Filipescu nr. 26
Bucharest, Romania
Tel: (40 21) 200 3300
Fax Immigrant section:
(40 21) 200 3505
Email: visasbucharest@state.gov
Internet:
http://bucharest.usembassy.gov.

Moldovan Adoption Authority
The Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Child Adoption Dept.
Ms. Eugenia Gonciar
Head of Department
1 Vasile Alecsandri Street,
office # 409
Chisinau, Moldova
Tel/Fax: (373 22) 725 300

Embassy of the Republic of Moldova
2101 S Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 667-1130
Fax: (202) 667-1204
www.embassyrm.org

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



MONACO

Compiled from the April 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Principality of Monaco

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1.95 sq. km. (0.8 sq. mi); about the size of New York City's Central Park.
Cities: Capital—Monaco, pop. 32,409 (July 2005 est.).
Terrain: Hilly.
Climate: Mediterranean with mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Monegasque.
Population: (July 2006 est.) 32,543.
Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 0.386%.
Ethnic groups: (2007) French 47%, Italian 16%, Monegasque 16%, other 21%.
Religions: Roman Catholic 90%, other 10%.
Languages: French (official), English, Italian, and Monegasque.
Education: Years compulsory—10, ages 6-16. Attendance—99%. Literacy—99%.
Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality—5.27 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—75.99 yrs. male; 83.85 yrs. female. Birth rate (2007 est.)—9.12 births/1,000 population. Death rate (2006 est.)—12.92 deaths/1,000 population.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.
Constitution: December 17, 1962 (amended in April 2002).
Government branches: Executive—Prince Albert II (chief of state), Minister of State Jean-Paul Proust (head of government), Council of Government (cabinet under authority of the monarch). Legislative—unicameral National Council (24 members). Judicial—Court of First Instance, Court of Appeal, High Court of Appeal, Criminal Court, Supreme Court.
Political subdivisions: Four quarters (quartiers)—Monaco-Ville, La Condamine, Monte-Carlo, Fontvieille.
Political parties: Union pour Monaco (UPM), National and Democratic Union (UND), Parti Monégasque (PM).
Suffrage: Universal adult at age 18.

Economy

GDP: Monaco does not publish economic figures such as gross domestic product, though estimates placed purchasing power parity GDP at $976.3 million in 2006.
Avg. annual growth rate: (2003 est.) 1.89%.
Per capita purchasing power parity GDP: (2006 est.) $30,000.
Work force: (2003, 41,708) Private sector—37,949. Public sector—3,759. Services—83.5%. Banking—23.43%. Tourism and hotel—11.64%. Retail—4.92%. Construction and public works—32.02%. Industry—6.98%.
Agriculture: None.
Industry: Types—tourism, construction, chemicals, food products, plastics, precision instruments, cosmetics, ceramics.
Trade: Imports (2005)—$916.1 million. Exports (2005)—$716.3 million. Note: full customs integration with France, which collects and rebates Monegasque trade duties; also participates in EU market system through customs union with France.
Currency: Monaco, along with France and the other 11 members of the European Monetary Union (EMU), adopted the euro ( ) as its official currency on January 1, 2002. As in other EMU states, euros minted in Monaco have special Monegasque features on one side of the coin.

GEOGRAPHY

The Principality of Monaco is the second-smallest independent state in the world, after the Holy See (Vatican City). It is located on the Mediterranean coast, 18 kilometers (11 mi.) east of Nice, France, and is surrounded on three sides by France. Monaco is divided into four sections: Monaco-Ville, the old city on a rocky

promontory extending into the Mediterranean; La Condamine, the section along the port; Monte-Carlo, the principal residential and resort area; and Fontvieille, a newly constructed area reclaimed from the sea.

The principality is noted for its beautiful natural scenery and mild, sunny climate. The average minimum temperature in January and February is 8ºC (47ºF); in July and August the average maximum temperature is 26ºC (78ºF).

PEOPLE

In July 2006, Monaco's population was estimated at 32,543, with an estimated average growth rate for 2007 of 0.386%.

French is the official language; English, Italian, and Monegasque (a blend of French and Italian) also are spoken. The literacy rate is 99%. Roman Catholicism is the official religion, with freedom of other religions guaranteed by the constitution.

HISTORY

Founded in 1215 as a colony of Genoa, Monaco has been ruled by the House of Grimaldi since 1297, except when under French control from 1789 to 1814. Designated as a protectorate of Sardinia from 1815 until 1860 by the Treaty of Vienna, Monaco's sovereignty was recognized by the Franco-Monegasque Treaty of 1861. The Prince of Monaco was an absolute ruler until a constitution was promulgated in 1911.

In July 1918, a treaty was signed providing for limited French protection over Monaco. The treaty, formally noted in the Treaty of Versailles, established that Monegasque policy would be aligned with French political, military, and economic interests.

A new constitution, proclaimed in 1962, abolished capital punishment, provided for female suffrage, and established a Supreme Court to guarantee fundamental liberties.

In 1993, Monaco became an official member of the United Nations with full voting rights. It joined the Council of Europe in 2004.

Three months after the death of his father, Prince Rainier III, on April 6, Prince Albert II formally acceded to the throne on July 12, 2005.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Monaco has been governed as a constitutional monarchy since 1911, with the Prince as chief of state. The executive branch consists of a Minister of State (head of government), who presides over a five-member Council of Government (cabinet). The Minister of State is responsible for foreign relations. As the Prince's representative, the Minister of State also directs the executive services, commands the police, and presides (with voting powers) over the Council of Government. The five members of the Council are respectively responsible for internal affairs, external affairs, the environment, finance and economy, and social affairs and health.

Under the 1962 constitution, the Prince shares his power with the unicameral National Council. Sixteen of the 24 members of this legislative body are elected by list majority system, and 8 by proportional representation to serve 5-year terms. The elections were last held on February 9, 2003, and will be held next in February 2008. If the Prince dissolves the National Council, new elections must be held within 3 months. Usually meeting twice annually, the Council votes on the budget and endorses laws proposed by the Prince.

Ordinances passed by the National Council are debated in the Council of Government, as are the ministerial decrees signed by the Minister of State. Once approved, the ordinances must be submitted to the Prince within 80 days for his signature, which makes them legally enforceable. If he does not express opposition within 10 days of submission, they become valid. Judicial power is invested in the Prince, who delegates judicial procedures to the various courts, which dispense justice in his name. The independence of the judges is guaranteed by the constitution. The Supreme Court is composed of five chief members and two assistant judges named by the Prince on the basis of nominations by the National Council and other government bodies. The Supreme Court is the highest court for judicial appeals and also interprets the constitution when necessary. Monaco's legal system, closely related to that of France, is patterned after the Napoleonic Code.

The principality's local affairs (the administration of the four quarters of Monaco-Ville, La Condamine, Monte Carlo, and Fontvieille) are directed by the Communal Council, which consists of 15 elected members and is presided over by the Mayor.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Chief of State: **ALBERT II, Prince**
Min. of State: **Jean-Paul PROUST**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Franck BIANCHERI**
Min. of Environmental Affairs & Town Planning: **Gilles TONELLI**
Min. of External Relations: **Rainier IMPERTI**
Min. of Social Affairs & Health: **Denis RAVERA**
Ambassador to the US: **Gilles NOGHES**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Gilles NOGHES**

ECONOMY

Monaco, located on the Mediterranean coast, has an economy primarily geared toward finance, commerce, and tourism. Low taxes have drawn many foreign companies to Monaco; the companies' production accounts for around 50% of the 593 million annual government income (2002). The enterprises pay a 33.33% tax only if more than 25% of their revenue is generated abroad. Ever since

Monaco's famed casino opened in 1856, the tourism industry has been booming. It currently accounts for close to 25% of the annual revenue.

Customs, postal services, telecommunications, and banking in Monaco are governed by an economic and customs union with France. The official currency is the euro.

Though official economic statistics are not published, 2006 estimates placed the gross domestic product at $976.3 million and the per capita income at $30,000. Monaco does not publish the figures for unemployment, but in 2005 the rate was estimated to be at 0%.

Monaco is noted for its activity in the field of marine sciences. Its Oceanographic Museum, formerly directed by Jacques Cousteau, is one of the most renowned institutions of its kind in the world. Monaco imports and exports products and services from all over the world. There is no commercial agriculture in Monaco.



FOREIGN RELATIONS

Monaco actively participates in the United Nations, which it joined in 1993. Monaco joined the Council of Europe on October 4, 2004. Monaco also is a member of many international and intergovernmental organizations, including Interpol, the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). The International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) is headquartered in Monaco.

The Principality of Monaco is a sovereign and independent state, linked closely to France by the Treaty of July 1918, which was formally noted in Article 436 of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919.

The foreign policy of Monaco is one illustration of this accord: France has agreed to defend the independence and sovereignty of Monaco, while the Monegasque Government has agreed to exercise its sovereign rights in conformity with French interests. Since then, the relations between the sovereign states of France and Monaco have been further defined in the Treaty of 1945 and the Agreement of 1963. In 2002, Monaco renegotiated its 1918 treaty with France. In 2005, it was ratified by both parties and entered into force. The terms of the treaty:

- Upgrade France's representation in Monaco from Consulate General to that of an embassy;
- Permit, for the first time, other countries to accredit ambassadors to Monaco; and
- Formally recognize the succession scheme set out in the 1962 Constitution, which extends eligibility to the Prince's daughters and other family members.

Although not a member of the European Union (EU), Monaco is closely associated with the economic apparatus of the EU through its customs union with France and its reliance upon the euro as its official currency.

Monaco has 10 diplomatic missions in Western Europe and permanent representation at the United Nations and the Council of Europe. It maintains honorary consulates in 106

cities in 45 countries. Seventy-six countries have consulates general, consulates, or honorary consulates in or accredited to Monaco.

U.S.-MONACO RELATIONS

The United States and Monaco enjoy excellent relations, which both countries seek to maintain and strengthen. From 1956 until her death in 1982, the American-born Grace Kelly was married to Prince Rainier III, Prince Albert's father. The United States does not yet have a diplomatic mission located in Monaco.

In December 2006, the United States and Monaco upgraded from consular to full diplomatic relations. Shortly after, Ambassador Craig Stapleton (France) was accredited to Monaco, and Ambassador Gilles Noghes became the first Monegasque ambassador to the United States.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PARIS (E) 2, avenue Gabriel, 75382 Paris Cedex 08, APO/FPO PSC 116, APO AE 09777-5000, (33) (1) 4312-2222, Fax 33-1-4266-9783, INMARSAT Tel 011-8816-4142-8701, 011-8816-4142-8702, 011-8816 -4142-8703, Workweek: Mon—Fri 9 a.m–6 p.m., Website: paris.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Ana V. Adler
AMB OMS:	Yvonne E. Deruiz
CDC:	Paula Fujiwara
DHS/ICE:	Lydia St. John-Mellado
ECO:	Seth D. Winnick
FCS:	Robert S. Connan
FM:	Carlos Edwards
HRO:	Douglas S. Dobson
MGT:	An T. Le
AMB:	Craig R. Stapleton
CG:	Catherine Barry
DCM:	Mark A. Pekala
PAO:	James L. Bullock
GSO:	Charles J. Hamblett
RSO:	Jan D. Abbott
AFSA:	Jerome Hohman
AGR:	Elizabeth Berry
AID:	George Carner
APHIS:	Alejandro Thiermann
CLO:	Sue Ann Giovengo
DAO:	Col. Raymond C. Hodgkins
DEA:	Robert W. Houston
EEO:	Lucia Keegan, Michele Bolin & Carrie Shirtz
EST:	Robert W. Dry
FAA:	Lirio Liu Nelson
FAA/CASLO:	Nouri Larbi
FMO:	Barry L. Haney
ICASS Chair:	Raymond C. Hodgkins
IMO:	Charles Shuster
IPO:	Richard T. Bowen, III
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
ISO:	Susan L. Hullinger
ISSO:	Michael Meaux
LAB:	William H. Owen
LEGATT:	Robin Gazawi
NAS:	Bill Barry
POL:	Josiah B. Rosenblatt
RAMC:	Jamie Seale

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet—France

December 22, 2008

Country Description: France is a developed and stable democracy with a modern economy. Monaco is a developed constitutional monarchy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: France is party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter France for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. A passport is required and should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. Anyone intending to stay more than 90 days must obtain the appropriate visa issued by one of the French Consulates in the U.S., prior to departure for France. This also applies to anyone considering marriage in France.

A passport is required to enter Monaco. A visa is not required for tourist/business stays up to 90 days in Monaco.

For further information concerning entry requirements for France, travelers may contact the Embassy of France at 4101 Reservoir Road NW, Washington, DC 20007, tel. (202) 944-6000, email: info@ambafrance-us.org, or the French Consulates General in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, or San Francisco. For further information on entry requirements to Monaco, travelers may contact the Embassy of the Principality of Monaco. 2314 Wyoming Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20008, Tel: 202-234-1530, email: embassy@monaco-usa.org, or the Consulate General of Monaco, 565 Fifth Avenue –23rd floor, New York, NY 10017, tel.: 212-286-0500, email: info@monaco-consulate.com. For more information, visit the Embassy of France web site at www.consulfrance-washington.org or the Embassy of the Principality of Monaco web site at http://www.monaco-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The Government of France maintains a threat rating system, known locally as "Vigipirate," similar to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Advisory System. Under this plan, in times of heightened security concerns, the government augments police with armed forces and increases visibility at airports, train and metro stations, and other high-profile locations such as schools, major tourist attractions, and government installations. Over the last few years, there have been numerous arrests of suspected Islamic militants involved in various terrorist plots. As with other countries in the Schengen area, France maintains open borders with its European neighbors, allowing the possibility of terrorist operatives entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

Political assassinations and bombings have occurred in France. The National Front for the Liberation of Corsica (FLNC), as part of its decades-long bombing campaign on the island of Corsica, continues to conduct limited operations in the south of France and on Corsica. In the 1990s there was a wave of bombings and attacks in Paris carried out by Algerian terrorists. Today, numerous radical Islamic groups claim sympathizers within France's large immigrant community, as evidenced by arrests over the last few years. Although Americans have not been specifically targeted in terrorist attacks in France within the past few

years, travelers should maintain vigilance. Immediately report unattended packages observed in public places or any other suspicious activities. French law enforcement authorities are proactive and will respond immediately. If there is a security incident or suspicious package, do not linger in the area to observe.

Although violent civil disorder is rare in France, in the past, student demonstrations, labor protests, and other types of demonstrations have developed into violent confrontations between demonstrators and police. This was the case in March/April 2006, when a series of large demonstrations took place in central Paris. Several weeks of unrest occurred in the suburbs of Paris, as well as in other French cities and towns, in November 2005. Neither of these periods of disorder exhibited any anti-U.S. sentiment, but it is important to remember that even a passerby can be harmed should demonstrations devolve into violence. Americans are advised to avoid street demonstrations, particularly if riot police are on the scene.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While both France and Monaco have relatively low rates of violent crime, a limited number of neighborhoods in the larger French cities merit extra caution. Additionally, although the overall crime rate has fallen slightly in recent years, the violent crime rate has increased. Thieves commonly target vehicles with non-local license plates, and work in or near tourist attractions such as museums, monuments, restaurants, hotels, beaches, trains, train stations, airports, and subways. Americans in France and Monaco should be particularly alert to pickpockets in train stations and subways. Travelers should keep photocopies of travel documents and credit cards separate from the originals, along with key telephone numbers to contact banks for credit card replacement.

Although thieves may operate anywhere, the U.S. Embassy in Paris receives frequent reports of theft from several areas in particular.

Paris: The Paris Police Prefecture published a pamphlet entitled "Paris in Complete Safety," which provides practical advice and useful telephone numbers for visitors and can be accessed at http://www.prefecture-police-paris.interieur.gouv.fr. Thieves operate on the rail link (RER) from Charles de Gaulle Airport to downtown Paris, where they prey on jet-lagged, luggage-burdened tourists. In one common ruse, a thief distracts a tourist with a question about directions while an accomplice steals a momentarily unguarded backpack, briefcase, or purse. Thieves also time their thefts to coincide with train stops so they may quickly exit the car just before the automatic doors close. Travelers should consider taking an airport shuttle bus or taxi from the airport into the city.

Reports of stolen purses, briefcases, and carry-on bags at Charles de Gaulle Airport are not uncommon. Travelers should monitor their bags at all times and never leave them unattended. As thieves commonly target laptop bags, travelers should avoid carrying passports and other valuables in computer bags. Another common method involves picking up a traveler's shoulder bag that has been placed on the floor while the traveler is busy at the ticket counter. Also be aware that unattended bags are subject to destruction by airport security.

There are reports of robberies in which thieves on motorcycles reach into a moving car by opening the car door or accessing an open window or even breaking the window to steal purses and other bags visible inside. The same technique is used against pedestrians walking with purses/bags/cameras slung over their street-side shoulder. Those traveling by car should remember to keep the windows up and the doors locked and items that may be attractive to thieves out of sight. Pedestrians are encouraged to remain aware of their surroundings at all times, and to keep bags slung across the body, with the bag hanging away from the street.

Many thefts occur on the Number One Subway Line, which runs through the center of Paris by many major tourist attractions (including the Grand Arch at La Défense, the Arc de Triomphe, the Champs Elysées, Place de la Concorde, the Louvre, and the Bastille). Pickpockets are especially active on this metro line during the summer months and use a number of techniques. The most common, and unfortunately the most successful, is the simple "bump and snatch," where an individual bumps into the tourist while at the same time reaching into the pockets/purse/bag. Visitors should be particularly careful when metro doors are closing, as this is a favored moment for the less-sophisticated pickpockets to simply grab valuables and jump through the closing doors, leaving the victim helplessly watching as the thief flees. Visitors are encouraged NOT to confront thieves aggressively; they often operate in groups and may become violent if cornered. Simply drawing attention to an attempted theft will most likely stop the operation, and result in a tactical withdrawal by the thief.

Gare du Nord train station, where the express trains from the airport arrive in Paris, is also a high-risk area for pocket-picking and theft. Travelers should also beware of thefts that occur on both overnight and day trains, especially on trains originating in Spain, Italy, and Belgium. These involve the theft of valuables while passengers are sleeping, or when the bags are left unattended.

In hotels, thieves target lobbies and breakfast rooms, and take advantage of a minute of inattention to snatch

jackets, purses, and backpacks. While many hotels do have safety latches that allow guests to secure their rooms from inside, this feature is not as universal as it is in the United States. If no chain or latch is present, a chair placed up against the door and wedged under the handle is usually an effective obstacle to surreptitious entry during the night. There are, however, reports of thieves breaking into hotel rooms on lower floors through open windows while the occupants are sleeping. To guard against this, hotel room windows should be kept locked at all times. Whenever possible, valuables should be kept in the hotel safe.

Many Americans report thefts occurring in restaurants and nightclubs/bars, where purses are stolen from the back of a chair or from under the table. Again, keep valuables on your person and do not leave them unattended or out of sight. Thefts also occur at the major department stores such as Galeries Lafayette and Printemps where tourists often place wallets, passports, and credit cards on cashier counters during transactions.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) are very common in France and provide ready access to cash, allowing travelers to carry as much money as they need for each day. The rates are competitive with local exchange bureaus, and an ATM transaction is easier than cashing a traveler's check. However, crime involving ATMs is increasing. Travelers should not use ATMs in isolated, unlit areas or where loiterers are present. Travelers should be especially aware of persons standing close enough to see the Personal Identification Number (PIN) being entered into the machine. Thieves often conduct successful scams by simply observing the PIN as it is entered and then stealing the card from the user in some other location. If the card becomes stuck, travelers should immediately report it to the bank where the machine is located.

Large criminal operations in Paris involving the use of ATMs that "eat" the user's ATM card have been reported. This most often happens during a weekend or at night when the bank is closed. The frustrated traveler often walks away after unsuccessfully trying to retrieve the card, with plans to return the first day the bank is open. In such cases, a criminal gang has modified the machine using an add-on device equipped with a microchip that records the user's PIN when it is typed in, and also prevents the card from being ejected. The criminal retrieves the card from the device once the visitor departs, downloads the recorded PIN and then goes to other ATMs and withdraws as much cash as possible. ATM users are strongly encouraged to carry a 24-hour emergency number for their ATM card and bank account that will enable the immediate prevention of withdrawals from the account if difficulties occur.

Pigalle is the "adult entertainment district" of Paris. Many entertainment establishments in this area engage in aggressive marketing and charge well beyond the normal rate for drinks. Reports of threats of violence to coerce patrons into paying exorbitant beverage tabs are not uncommon. There have also been several violent confrontations between rival gangs in the district, including one in August 2007 one block from the famous Moulin Rouge cabaret. Visitors are encouraged to avoid this area unless touring with a well-organized and reputable tour company.

Normandy: There has been an increase in break-ins and thefts from vehicles in the parking lots at the Normandy beaches and American cemeteries common. Valuables should not be left unattended in a car, and locking valuables in the trunk should not be considered a safeguard. Thieves often pry open car trunks to steal bags inside.

Southern France: Thefts from cars with unlocked doors or open windows stopped at red lights or caught in slow traffic are very common, particularly along the Riviera of the Nice-Antibes-Cannes area, and in Marseille. Car doors should be kept locked and windows raised at all times to prevent incidents of "snatch-and-grab" thefts. In this type of scenario, the thief is usually a passenger on a motorcycle. Break-ins of parked cars are also fairly common. Valuables should not be left in the car, not even in the trunk, when the vehicle is unattended.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. Under French law, compensation is available to victims of crime committed on French soil under certain circumstances.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency line in France are as follows: 17 (police emergency), 18 (fire department) and 15 (emergency medical/paramedic team/ambulance). In Monaco, the numbers are 17 (police emergency), 18 (fire department) and 9375-2525 (medical/paramedic team/ambulance).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care comparable to that found in the United States is widely available. In France, the phone number for emergency medical services is 15. In Monaco, the phone number for emergency medical services is 9375-2525.

The U.S. State Department is unaware of any HIV/AIDS related entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of France.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Dis-

ease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who. int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning France and Monaco is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Roads in France are generally comparable to those in the United States, but traffic engineering and driving habits pose special dangers. Usually, lane markings and sign placements are not as clear as in the United States. Drivers should be prepared to make last-minute maneuvers, as most French drivers do. The French typically drive more aggressively and faster than Americans, and tend to exceed posted speed limits. Right-of-way rules in France may differ from those in the United States. Drivers entering intersections from the right have priority over those on the left (unless specifically indicated otherwise), even when entering relatively large boulevards from small side streets. Many intersections in France are being replaced by traffic circles, where the right-of-way belongs to drivers in the circle.

On major highways, service stations are situated at least every 25 miles. Service stations are not as plentiful on secondary roads in France as they are in the United States. Paris, the capital and largest city in France, has an extensive and efficient public transportation system. The interconnecting system of buses, subways, and commuter rails serves more than 4 million people a day with a safety record comparable to or better than the systems of major American cities. Similar transportation systems are found in all major French cities. Between cities, France is served by an equally extensive rail service, which is reliable. High-speed rail links connect the major cities in France. Many cities are also served by frequent air service.

Visit the web site of the French and Monegasque National Tourist Office at http://franceguide.com. The website contains specific information concerning French and Monegasque driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of France's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of France's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: French and Monegasque customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from France of items such as firearms, antiquities, medications, business equipment, sales samples, and other items. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of France in Washington, DC, one of France's consulates in the United States, or the Consulate General of Monaco in New York for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating French or Monegasque laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in France or Monaco are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in France or Monaco are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within France and Monaco. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in cases of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Paris is located at 4 avenue Gabriel, 75008 Paris (Place de La Concorde, Metro Stop Concorde), tel. 011-33-1-43-12-22-22 or (in France) 01-43-12-22-22; fax: 011-33-1-42-96-28-39 for Passport Services, or fax 011-33-1-42-61-61-40 for Special Consular Services (emergencies). Further information can be obtained at the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://france.usembassy.gov.

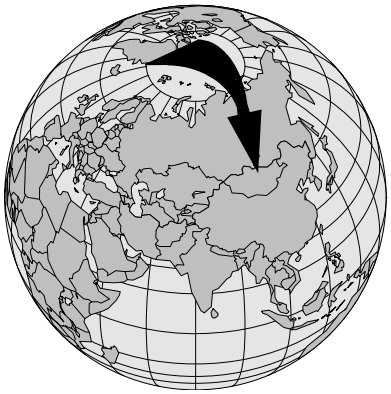
The Consulate General in Marseille is located at Place Varian Fry, 13006 Marseille, tel. 011-33-4-91-54-92-00, or (in France) 04-91-54-92-00; fax 011-33-4-91-55-55-56-95 or 011-33-4-91-55-09-47. Web site: http://france.usembassy.gov/marseille/default.htm. The Consulate General in Strasbourg is located at 15 Avenue d'Alsace, 67082 Strasbourg, tel. 011-33-3-88-35-31-04 or (in France) 03-88-35-31-04; fax 011-33-3-88-24-06-

95. The Consulate General in Strasbourg does not produce passports on the premises. American citizens in this area whose passports are lost or stolen and have urgent travel needs should contact the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Web site: www.amb-usa.fr/strasbourg.

The Consular Agency in Nice is located at 7, Avenue Gustave V, 3rd floor, 06000 Nice, tel. 011-33-4-93-88-89-55 or (in France) 04-93-88-89-55; fax 011-33-4-93-87-07-38. Web site: http://france.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Government also has consular representation in Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Rennes, and Toulouse that provide some services to Americans, by appointment only. The post in Bordeaux is located at 10 place de la Bourse, 33076 Bordeaux (entry on rue Fernand Philippart); tel. 011-33-5-56-48-63-85 or 05-56-48-63-85 in France; fax: 011-33-5-56-51-61-97. Web site: http://france.usembassy.gov/bordeaux/default.htm.

The post in Lille is located at 107, rue Royale, 59000 Lille; tel. 011-33-3-28-04-25-00 or 03-28-04-25-00 in France; fax: 011-33-3-20-74-88-23. Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/lille/default.htm. The post in Lyon is located at 1, quai Jules Courmont, 69002 Lyon; tel. 011-33-4-78-38- 33-03 or 04-78-38- 33-03 in France; fax: 011-33-4-72-41-71-81. Website: http://france. usembassy.gov. The post in Rennes is located at 30, quai Duguay Trouin, 35000 Rennes; tel. 011-33-2-23-44-09-60 or 02-23-44-09-60 in France; fax: 011-33-2-99-35-00-92. Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/rennes/default.htm.

The post in Toulouse is located at 25, Allée Jean Jaures, 31000 Toulouse; tel. 011-33-5-34-41-36-50 or 05-34-41-36-50 in France; fax: 011-33-5-34-41-16-19. Website: http://france.usembassy.gov/toulouse/default.htm.



MONGOLIA

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Mongolia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,566,500 sq. km. (604,103 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Alaska (land boundaries 8,114 km.).
Terrain: Almost 90% of land area is pasture or desert, of varying usefulness; 1% arable; 9% forested.
Climate: Continental, with little precipitation and sharp seasonal fluctuations.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Mongolian(s).
Population: (2008 est.) 2.9 million.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.5%.
Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—41/1,000. Life expectancy—67 yrs.
Ethnic groups: (2004) 85% Mongol (predominantly Khalkha), 7% Turkic (largest group, Kazakh) 4.6% Tungusic, and 3.4% others, including Chinese and Russian.
Languages: Mongolian, Kazakh, Russian, and English.
Religions: Tibetan Buddhist Lamaism 90%, Muslim 6% (primarily in the southwest), and Shamanism.
Education: Years compulsory—9 (provided free by the government). Literacy—more than 90%.

Government

Type: Multiparty parliamentary form of government.

Independence: gained in 1921; in 1990, democratic reform begun and shift from dependence on the former Soviet Union declared.

Constitution: 1960 and February 12, 1992.

Government branches: Executive—power is divided between a president (elected by a popular election in May 2005) and prime minister (current cabinet nominated by the prime minister was approved in December 2007 by the State Great Hural elected in June 2004). Legislative—State Great Hural (76 deputies). Judicial—Constitutional Court is empowered to supervise the implementation of the constitution, makes judgment on the violation of its provisions, and solves disputes. Legal code based on Continental and Russian law. Legal education at Mongolian State University and private universities. Mongolia accepts International Court of Justice jurisdiction.

Political parties: 18 registered political parties.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Political subdivisions: 21 aimags (provinces) and one city (Ulaanbaatar).

Economy

GDP in PPP: (2006 est.) $5.8 billion.
GDP growth: (2007) 9.9%.
Per capita GDP in PPP: (2006 est.) $2,402.
Natural resources: Coal, copper, molybdenum, iron, phosphates, tin, nickel, zinc, wolfram, fluorspar, gold, uranium, and petroleum.
Agriculture: (20.6% of 2007 GDP, livelihood for about 40% of population) Products—livestock and byproducts, hay fodder, vegetables.
Industry: (36% of 2007 GDP, includes mining 27.4%, manufacturing 6.1%, and utilities (electricity, gas, and water) 2.5%) Types—Minerals (primarily copper and gold), animal-derived products, building materials, food/beverage.
Trade: Total turnover of foreign trade for 2007 was $4.119 billion. Exports—$1.949 billion: minerals, livestock, animal products, and textiles. Markets—Asian countries (approx. 75%), European countries (approx. 10%), and countries of American continent (approx. 15%). Imports—$2.17 billion: machinery and equipment, fuels, food products, industrial consumer goods, chemicals, building equipment, vehicles, textiles. Suppliers—91 countries account for 93.2% of total imports, of which European countries (47%) and Asian countries (49%).

Aid received: From 1990-2006, official development assistance to Mongolia from bilateral and multilateral donors totaled over $3.457 billion. Received $175.58 million in official development assistance in 2007.

Fiscal year: Calendar year.

PEOPLE

Life in sparsely populated Mongolia has recently become more urbanized. Nearly half of the people live in urban centers, including the capital, Ulaanbaatar. Semi-nomadic life still predominates in the countryside, but settled agricultural communities are becoming more common.

Mongolia's birth rate is estimated at 21.2 births/1000 people (2007 est.). About two-thirds of the total population is under age 30, 28.5% of whom are under 14. Ethnic Mongols account for about 85% of Mongolia's population and consist of Khalkha and other groups, all distinguished primarily by dialects of the Mongol language. Mongol is an Altaic language—from the Altaic Mountains of Central Asia, a language family comprising the Turkic, Tungusic, and Mongolic subfamilies—and is related to Turkic (Uzbek, Turkish, and Kazakh), Korean, and, possibly, Japanese. Among ethnic Mongols, the Khalkha comprise 90% and the remaining 10% include Durbet Mongols in the north and Dariganga Mongols in the east. Turkic speakers (Kazakhs, Turvins, and Khotans) constitute 7% of Mongolia's population, and the rest are Tungusic-speakers, Chinese, and Russians. Most Russians left the country following the withdrawal of economic aid and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Traditionally, Tibetan Buddhist Lamaism was the predominant religion. However, it was suppressed under the communist regime until 1990, with only one showcase monastery allowed to remain. Since 1990, as liberalization began, Buddhism has enjoyed a resurgence. About 4 million ethnic Mongols live outside Mongolia; about 3.4 million live in China, mainly in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and some 500,000 live in Russia, primarily in Buryatia and Kalmykia.

HISTORY

In 1206 AD, a single Mongolian state was formed based on nomadic tribal groupings under the leadership of Chinggis ("Genghis") Khan. He and his immediate successors conquered nearly all of Asia and European Russia and sent armies as far as central Europe and Southeast Asia. Chinggis Khan's grandson Kublai Khan, who conquered China and established the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 AD), gained fame in Europe through the writings of Marco Polo. Although Mongol-led confederations sometimes exercised wide political power over their conquered territories, their strength declined rapidly after the Mongol dynasty in China was overthrown in 1368. The Manchus, a tribal group which conquered China in 1644 and formed the Qing dynasty, were able to bring Mongolia under Manchu control in 1691 as Outer Mongolia when the Khalkha Mongol nobles swore an oath of allegiance to the Manchu emperor. The Mongol rulers of Outer Mongolia enjoyed considerable autonomy under the Manchus, and all Chinese claims to Outer Mongolia following the establishment of the republic have rested on this oath. In 1727, Russia and Manchu China concluded the Treaty of Khiakta, delimiting the border between China and Mongolia that exists in large part today.

Outer Mongolia was a Chinese province (1691-1911), an autonomous state under Russian protection (1912-19), and again a Chinese province (1919-21). As Manchu authority in China waned, and as Russia and Japan confronted each other, Russia gave arms and diplomatic support to nationalists among the Mongol religious leaders and nobles. The Mongols accepted Russian aid and proclaimed their independence of Chinese rule in 1911, shortly after a successful Chinese revolt against the Manchus. By agreements signed in 1913 and 1915, the Russian Government forced the new Chinese Republican Government to accept Mongolian autonomy under continued Chinese control, presumably to discourage other foreign powers from approaching a newly independent Mongolian state that might seek support from as many foreign sources as possible. The Russian revolution and civil war afforded Chinese warlords an opportunity to re-establish their rule in Outer Mongolia, and Chinese troops were dispatched there in 1919. Following Soviet military victories over White Russian forces in the early 1920s and the occupation of the Mongolian capital Urga in July 1921, Moscow again became the major outside influence on Mongolia. The Mongolian People's Republic was proclaimed on November 25, 1924.

Between 1925 and 1928, power under the communist regime was consolidated by the Mongolian Peoples Revolutionary Party (MPRP). The MPRP left gradually undermined rightist elements, seizing control of the party and the government. Several factors characterized the country during this period: The society was basically nomadic and illiterate; there was no industrial proletariat; the aristocracy and the religious establishment shared the country's wealth; there was widespread popular obedience to traditional authorities; the party lacked grassroots support; and the government had little organization or experience. In an effort at swift socioeconomic reform, the leftist government applied extreme measures that attacked the two most dominant institutions in the country—the aristocracy and the religious establishment. Between 1932 and 1945, their excess zeal, intolerance, and inexperience led to anti-communist uprisings. In the late 1930s, purges directed at the religious institution resulted in the desecration of hundreds of Buddhist institutions and imprisonment of more than 10,000 people.

During World War II, because of a growing Japanese threat over the Mongolian-Manchurian border, the Soviet Union reversed the course of Mongolian socialism in favor of a new policy of economic gradualism and



buildup of the national defense. The Soviet-Mongolian army defeated Japanese forces that had invaded eastern Mongolia in the summer of 1939, and a truce was signed setting up a commission to define the Mongolian-Manchurian border in the autumn of that year.

Following the war, the Soviet Union reasserted its influence in Mongolia. Secure in its relations with Moscow, the Mongolian Government shifted to postwar development, focusing on civilian enterprise. International ties were expanded, and Mongolia established relations with North Korea and the new communist governments in Eastern Europe. It also increased its participation in communist-sponsored conferences and international organizations. Mongolia became a member of the United Nations in 1961. In the early 1960s, Mongolia attempted to maintain a neutral position amidst increasingly contentious Sino-Soviet polemics; this orientation changed in the middle of the decade. Mongolia and the Soviet Union signed an agreement in 1966 that introduced large-scale Soviet ground forces as part of Moscow's general buildup along the Sino-Soviet frontier.

During the period of Sino-Soviet tensions, relations between Mongolia and China deteriorated. In 1983, Mongolia systematically began expelling some of the 7,000 ethnic Chinese in Mongolia to China. Many of them had lived in Mongolia since the 1950s, when they were sent there to assist in construction projects.

Chronology of Mongolian History—921-Present

March 13, 1921: Provisional People's Government declares independence of Mongolia.

May 31, 1924: U.S.S.R. signs agreement with Peking government, referring to Outer Mongolia as an "integral part of the Republic of China," whose "sovereignty" therein the Soviet Union promises to respect.

May-September 16, 1939: Large scale fighting takes place between Japanese and Soviet-Mongolian forces along Khalkhyn Gol on Mongolia-Manchuria border, ending in defeat of the Japanese expeditionary force. Truce negotiated between U.S.S.R. and Japan.

October 6, 1949: Newly established People's Republic of China accepts recognition accorded Mongolia and agrees to establish diplomatic relations.

October 1961: Mongolia becomes a member of the United Nations.

January 27, 1987: Diplomatic relations established with the United States.

December 1989: First popular reform demonstrations. Mongolian Democratic Association organized.

January 1990: Large-scale demonstrations demanding democracy held in sub-zero weather.

March 2, 1990: Soviets and Mongolians announce that all Soviet troops will be withdrawn from Mongolia by 1992.

May 1990: Constitution amended to provide for multi-party system and new elections.

July 29, 1990: First democratic elections held.

September 3, 1990: First democratically elected People's Great Hural takes office.

February 12, 1992: New constitution goes into effect.

April 8, 1992: New election law passed.

June 28, 1992: Election for the first unicameral legislature (State Great Hural).

June 6, 1993: First direct presidential election.

June 30, 1996: Election resulted in peaceful transition of power from former communist party to coalition of democratic parties. From 1998-2000, four prime ministers and a series of cabinet changes. In early 2000, Democratic Coalition dissolved.

July 2, 2000: Election resulted in victory for the former communist Mongolian Peoples Revolutionary Party (MPRP); first-past-the-post electoral system enabled MPRP, with 52% of the popular vote, to win 95% of the parliamentary seats; formation of new government by Prime Minister N. Enkhbayar.

June 27, 2004: Motherland-Democracy Coalition formed in early 2004 to contest the parliamentary election. Election resulted in roughly 50/50 split of parliamentary seats between former communist party and democratic opposition and formation of new government by Prime Minister T. Elbegdorj (Democratic Party).

January 2006: MPRP ministers resigned from the government, and the government dissolved. A new coalition government was formed, led by the MPRP with the participation of four smaller parties.

October 2007: MPRP ousted its leader, Prime Minister Enkhbold, who resigned as Prime Minister. The new leader of the MPRP, Sanjaa Bayar, became Prime Minister. Prime Minister Bayar formed a new cabinet.

December 2007: Bayar's cabinet was approved.

July 1, 2008: Two days after parliamentary elections, and one day after the ruling MPRP claims a landslide victory, a sizeable protest outside the MPRP headquarters turned violent. The MPRP headquarters was burned beyond repair and clashes between civilians and security forces left at least five people dead, 13 missing, hundreds injured and hundreds in police detention. President Enkhbayar declared a four-day state of emergency, imposing a curfew, a ban on public gatherings, and a broadcast-news blackout (apart from the state broadcaster).

July and August 2008: Newly elected members of parliament from the opposition Democratic Party refused to take the oath of office, demanding, among other things, that the nine-member General Election Commission resign for alleged electoral shortcomings.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Until 1990, the Mongolian Government was modeled on the Soviet system; only the communist party—the MPRP—officially was permitted to function. After some instability during the first two decades of communist rule in Mongolia, there was no significant popular unrest until December 1989. Collectivization of animal husbandry, introduction of agriculture, and the extension of fixed abodes were all carried out without perceptible popular opposition.

The birth of perestroika in the former Soviet Union and the democracy movement in Eastern Europe were mirrored in Mongolia. The dramatic shift toward reform started in early 1990 when the first organized opposition group, the Mongolian Democratic Union, appeared. In the face of extended street protests in subzero weather and popular demands for faster reform, the politburo of the MPRP resigned in March 1990. In May, the constitution was amended, deleting reference to the MPRP's role as the guiding force in the country, legalizing opposition parties, creating a standing legislative body, and establishing the office of president.

Mongolia's first multi-party elections for a People's Great Hural were held on July 29, 1990. The MPRP won 85% of the seats. The People's Great Hural first met on September 3 and elected a president (MPRP), vice president (SDP—Social Democrats), prime minister (MPRP), and 50 members to the Baga Hural (small Hural). The vice president also was chairman of the Baga Hural. In November 1991, the People's Great Hural began discussion on a new constitution, which entered into force February 12. In addition to establishing Mongolia as an independent, sovereign republic and guaranteeing a number of rights and freedoms, the new constitution restructured the legislative branch of government, creating a unicameral legislature, the State Great Hural

(SGH). The 1992 constitution provided that the president would be elected by popular vote rather than by the legislature as before. In June 1993, incumbent Punsalmaagiyn Ochirbat won the first popular presidential election running as the candidate of the democratic opposition.

As the supreme government organ, the SGH is empowered to enact and amend laws, determine domestic and foreign policy, ratify international agreements, and declare a state of emergency. The SGH meets semiannually for 3-4 month sessions. SGH members elect a chairman and vice chairman who serve 4-year terms. SGH members are popularly elected by district for 4-year terms.

The president is the head of state, commander in chief of the armed forces, and head of the National Security Council. He is popularly elected by a national majority for a 4-year term and limited to two terms. The constitution empowers the president to propose a prime minister, call for the government's dissolution in consultation with the SGH chairman, initiate legislation, veto all or parts of legislation (the SGH can override the veto with a two-thirds majority), and issue decrees, which become effective with the prime minister's signature. In the absence, incapacity, or resignation of the president, the SGH chairman exercises presidential power until inauguration of a newly elected president.

The government, headed by the prime minister, has a 4-year term. The prime minister is nominated by the president and confirmed by the SGH. Under constitutional changes made in 2001, the president is required to nominate the prime ministerial candidate proposed by a party or coalition with a majority of members of the SGH. The prime minister chooses a cabinet, subject to SGH approval. Dissolution of the government occurs upon the prime minister's resignation, simultaneous resignation of half the cabinet, or after an SGH vote for dissolution.

Local hurals are elected by the 21 aimags (provinces) plus the capital, Ulaanbaatar. On the next lower administrative level, they are elected by provincial subdivisions and urban subdistricts in Ulaanbaatar and all aimags.

Political Parties

- Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party
- Democratic Party
- Motherland–Mongolian Democratic New Socialist Party
- National New Party
- Civil Will Party
- Mongolian People's Party
- Mongolian Green Party
- Mongolian Traditional United Party
- Mongolian National Solidarity Party
- Mongolian Liberal Democratic Party
- Mongolian Republican Party
- Mongolian Women's National United Party
- Mongolian Liberal Party
- Mongolian Social Democratic Party
- Freedom Implementing Party
- The Civil Movement Party
- The Development Program Party
- Mongolian Democratic Development Party

Legal System

The 1992 constitution empowered a General Council of Courts (GCC) to select all judges and protect their rights. The Supreme Court is the highest judicial body. Justices are nominated by the GCC and confirmed by the SGH and president. The court is constitutionally empowered to examine all lower court decisions—excluding specialized court rulings—upon appeal and provide official interpretations on all laws except the constitution.

Specialized civil, criminal, and administrative courts exist at all levels and are not subject to Supreme Court supervision. Local authorities—district and city governors—ensure that these courts abide by presidential decrees and SGH decisions. At the apex of the judicial system is the Constitutional Court, which consists of nine members, including a chairman, appointed for 6-year terms, whose jurisdiction extends solely over the interpretation of the constitution.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Nambaryn ENKHBAYAR**
Speaker, State Great Hural: **Danzan LUNDEEJANTSAN**
Prime Min.: **Sanjaa BAYAR**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Miyegombo ENKHBOLD**
Min. of Construction & Urban Development: **Tserendash TSOLMON**
Min. of Defense: **Jamyandorj BATKHUYAG**
Min. of Education, Culture, & Science: **Nordov BOLORMAA**
Min. of Environment: **Gankhuyag SHIILEGDAMBA**
Min. of Finance: **Chultem ULAAN**
Min. of Food & Agriculture: **Tserendorj GANKHUYAG**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Sanjaasuren OYUN**
Min. of Fuel & Energy: **Chimed KHURELBAATAR**
Min. of Health: **Byambaa BASEREEDENE**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Khalzkhuu NARANKHUU**
Min. of Justice & Home Affairs: **Tsend MUNHK-ORGIL**
Min. of Roads, Transportation, & Tourism: **Radnaabazar RASH**
Min. of Social Welfare & Labor: **Damdin DEMBEREL**
Chief, Cabinet Secretariat: **Nymaa ENKHBOLD**
Sec., National Security Council: **Manibadrakhyn GANBOLD**

Chief, Gen. Staff, Mongolian Armed Forces: **Tseveguren TOGOO, Lt. Gen.**
Governor, Bank of Mongolia: **Alag BATSUKH**
Ambassador to the US: **Khasbazaryn BEKHBAT**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Enkhtsetseg OCHIR**

Mongolia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2833 M Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20007; tel. (202) 333-7117, fax (202) 298-9227, website: www.mongolianembassy.us.

ECONOMY

Economic activity in Mongolia has traditionally been based on herding and agriculture. Mongolia has extensive mineral deposits; copper, coal, molybdenum, tin, tungsten, and gold account for a large part of industrial production. Soviet assistance, at its height one-third of GDP, disappeared almost overnight in 1990-91 at the time of the dismantlement of the U.S.S.R., leading to a very deep recession. Economic growth returned due to reform embracing free-market economics and extensive privatization of the formerly state-run economy. Severe winters and summer droughts in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 resulted in massive livestock die-off and anemic GDP growth of 1.1% in 2000 and 1% in 2001. This was compounded by falling prices for Mongolia's primary-sector exports and widespread opposition to privatization. Growth improved to 4% in 2002, 5% in 2003, 10.6% in 2004, 6.2% in 2005, 7.5% in 2006, and 9.9% in 2007. Much of the growth was due to high copper prices and new gold production. Besides agriculture (20.6% of GDP), dominant industries in the composition of GDP are mining (27.4%), trade and service (24.8%) and transportation, storage, and communication (12.2%). Mongolia's economy continues to be heavily influenced by its neighbors. For example, Mongolia purchases 80% of its petroleum products from Russia. China is Mongolia's chief export partner and a main source of the "shadow," or "gray," economy. The gray—largely cash—economy is estimated to be at least one-third the size of the official economy, but actual size is difficult to quantify since the money does not pass through the hands of tax authorities or the banking sector. Remittances from Mongolians working abroad, both legally and illegally, constitute a sizeable portion. Money laundering is growing as an accompanying concern. Mongolia settled its large debt to Russia at the end of 2003 on favorable terms. Mongolia, which joined the World Trade Organization in 1997, is the only member of that organization to not be a participant in a regional trade organization. Mongolia seeks to expand its participation and integration into Asian regional economic and trade regimes.

Because of Mongolia's remoteness and natural beauty, the tourism sector has recently shown signs of rapid growth. With spiking international commodity prices, there has been a surge of international interest in investing in Mongolia's minerals sector despite the absence of a policy environment firmly conducive to private investment. How effectively Mongolia mobilizes private international investment around its comparative advantages (mineral wealth, small population, and proximity to China and its burgeoning markets) will ultimately determine its success in sustaining rapid economic growth. Parliament passed a windfall profits tax on copper and gold that took effect in mid-2006, and tax reforms enacted on January 1, 2007 helped government revenues jump 33% in 2007. Meanwhile, major amendments to the minerals law allowed the government to take an equity stake in major new mines. However, in late 2007 and early 2008, Mongolia's parliament proved unable to approve other key amendments to Mongolia's minerals law; observers called such amendments crucial for the development of Mongolia's extractive industries. This failure frustrated many foreign and domestic investors and others who hoped to see Mongolia's promising mining sector grow rapidly.

Environment

As a result of rapid urbanization and industrial growth policies under the communist regime, Mongolia's deteriorating environment has become a major concern. The burning of soft coal by individual home or "ger" (yurt in Russian) owners, power plants, and factories in Ulaanbaatar has resulted in severely polluted air. Deforestation, overgrazed pastures, and efforts to increase grain and hay production by plowing up more virgin land have increased soil erosion from wind and rain. With the rapid growth of newly privatized herds, overgrazing in selected areas also is a concern. Recent rapid and relatively unregulated growth in the mining sector for minerals (gold, coal, etc.) has become the focus of public debate. A great deal of public attention is being paid to non-transparency of the government process of awarding licenses, the equitable sharing of economic rents between foreign investors and the Government of Mongolia, and the potential impact on the environment. However, the real environmental concern is the sharp boom in the number of informal gold miners, who frequently illegally use mercury, which may lead to an epidemic of mercury poisoning.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In the wake of the international socialist economic system's collapse and the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, Mongolians began to pursue an independent and nonaligned foreign policy. Mongolia is landlocked between Russia and China, and seeks cordial relations with both nations. At the same time, Mongolia has sought to advance its regional and global relations. Ties with Japan and South Korea are particularly strong. Japan is the largest bilateral aid donor to Mongolia, a position it has held since 1991. Mongolia has also made efforts to steadily boost ties with European countries.

As part of its aim to establish a more balanced nonaligned foreign policy, Mongolia has sought to take a more active role in the United Nations and other international organizations, and has pursued a more active role in Asian and northeast Asian affairs.

Mongolia became a full participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 1998 and a full member of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council in April 2000. Mongolia is currently seeking to join the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC). Mongolia is an observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, but has stated it does not intend to seek membership. Mongolia, which has diplomatic relations with both North and South Korea, has also sought to play a role in the Six-Party talks. In late 2007, Mongolia hosted a closed meeting between two Six-Party members, North Korea and Japan. Mongolia is also a founding member of the Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP) and hosted the group's planning meeting in Ulaanbaatar on July 1, 2008.

Mongolian relations with China began to improve in the mid-1980s when consular agreements were reached and cross-border trade contacts expanded. In May 1990, a Mongolian head of state visited China for the first time in 28 years. The cornerstone of the Mongolian-Chinese relationship is a 1994 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which codifies mutual respect for the independence and territorial integrity of both sides. China has objected strongly to visits since 1990 of the Dalai Lama; during the 2002 visit, China briefly disrupted railroad links for "technical" reasons. There are regular high-level visits and expanding trade ties. President Hu Jintao visited Mongolia in 2003 (his first international visit as China's President). President Bagabandi visited China in 2004, and President Enkhbayar visited in 2008.

After the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, Mongolia developed relations with the new independent states. Links with Russia and other republics were essential to contribute to stabilization of the Mongolian economy. In 1991, Mongolia and Russia concluded both a Joint Declaration of Cooperation and a bilateral trade agreement. This was followed by a 1993 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation establishing a new basis of equality in the relationship. Mongolian President Bagabandi visited Moscow in 1999, and Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Mongolia in 2000 in order to sign the 25-point Ulaanbaatar Declaration, reaffirming Mongol-Russian friendship and cooperation on numerous economic and political issues. In December 2003, Mongolia finally settled the Soviet-era debt it owed to Russia with a negotiated payment of $250 million. In July 2006, Prime Minister Fradkov visited Mongolia with a large business delegation. The Mongolian and Russian Governments continue to jointly own the railroad and the large Erdenet copper mine. Prime Minister Bayar visited Moscow in April 2008, and the following month President Enkhbayar met in Moscow with President Medvedev.

U.S.-MONGOLIAN RELATIONS

The U.S. Government recognized Mongolia in January 1987 and established its first embassy in Ulaanbaatar in June 1988. It formally opened in September 1988. The first U.S. ambassador to Mongolia, Richard L. Williams, was not a resident there. Joseph E. Lake, the first resident ambassador, arrived in July 1990. Secretary of State James A. Baker, III visited Mongolia in August 1990, and again in July 1991. Mongolia accredited its first ambassador to the United States in March 1989. Secretary of State Madeline Albright visited Mongolia in May 1998, and Prime Minister Enkhbayar visited Washington in November 2001. Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage visited Mongolia in January 2004, and President Bagabandi came to Washington for a meeting with President Bush in July 2004. President Bush, Mrs. Bush, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Mongolia in November 2005. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld visited in October 2005 and Speaker of the House of Representatives Dennis Hastert visited Mongolia in August 2005. Agriculture Secretary Johanns led a presidential delegation in July 2006 in conjunction with Mongolia's celebration of its 800th anniversary. President Enkhbayar visited the White House in October 2007 and the two Presidents signed the Millennium Challenge Compact for Mongolia.

The United States has sought to assist Mongolia's movement toward democracy and market-oriented reform and to expand relations with Mongolia primarily in the cultural and economic fields. In 1989 and 1990, a cultural accord, Peace Corps accord, consular convention, and Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) agreement were signed. A trade agreement was signed in January 1991 and a bilateral investment treaty in 1994. Mongolia was granted permanent normal trade relations (NTR) status and generalized system of preferences (GSP) eligibility in June 1999. In July 2004, the U.S. signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Mongolia to promote economic reform and more foreign investment. In July 2007, six members of the U.S. House of Representatives visited Mongolia to inaugurate an exchange program between lawmakers of the two countries. The return visit came in August 2007, with five members of the Mongolian parliament traveling to the U.S. In September 2007, the White House announced the proposed creation of an Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership, in which Mongolia was invited to take part. The initiative is aimed at providing a venue in which free nations can work together to support democratic values, strengthen democratic institutions, and assist those who are working to build and sustain free societies.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) plays a lead role in providing bilateral development assistance to Mongolia. The program emphasizes one major theme: sustainable, private sector-led economic growth and more effective and accountable governance. Total USAID assistance to Mongolia from 1991 through 2008 was about $174.5 million, all in grant form. USAID Mongolia's FY 2007 budget of $6.625 million a year promotes: a) economic growth by focusing on activities that

support macroeconomic policy reform, energy sector restructuring, financial sector reform, and micro and small enterprise development; and b) governing justly and democratically by focusing on activities supporting judicial sector reform, electoral reform, parliamentary reform, and anti-corruption.

In most years since 1993, the United States Department of Agriculture has provided food aid to Mongolia under the Food for Progress and 416(b) programs. The monetized proceeds of the food aid ($4.2 million in 2006) are used to support programs bolstering entrepreneurship, herder livelihood diversification, and better veterinary services.

The United States has also supported defense reform and an increased capacity by Mongolia's armed forces to participate in international peacekeeping operations. Mongolia has contributed small numbers of troops to coalition operations in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2003, gaining experience that enabled it to deploy armed peacekeepers to both UN and NATO peacekeeping missions in 2005. With U.S. Department of Defense assistance and cooperation, Mongolia and the U.S. jointly hosted "Khan Quest 06," the Asian region's premier peace-keeping exercise, in the summer of 2006 and "Khan Quest 07" a year later.

The Peace Corps has approximately 100 volunteers in Mongolia. They are engaged primarily in English teaching and teacher training activities. At the request of the Government of Mongolia, the Peace Corps has developed programs in the areas of public health, small business development, and youth development. In 2005 and 2006 Mongolian Government officials, including President Enkhbayar and Prime Minister Elbegdorj, requested significant increases in the number of volunteers serving in country. The Peace Corps has responded with a commitment to make modest annual increases until 2010.

Mongolia was one of the first countries eligible for the new Millennium Challenge Account initiative that began in 2004, administered by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). MCC's program focuses on providing grant support to countries that perform above the median in their income peer group on key indicators in three broad policy categories: ruling justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom. MCC-eligible countries propose projects that will significantly reduce poverty in their countries through stimulating economic growth.

On October 22, 2007, at a White House signing ceremony, President Bush and President Enkhbayar signed a Millennium Challenge Compact for Mongolia that calls for $285 million to be spent on four projects over a five-year period beginning in September 2008. The Compact will support efforts to broaden and deepen economic development in Mongolia by focusing on four key areas, including rail modernization, property rights, vocational education, and health. Implementing the program will enable key institutions and infrastructure to better support the country's burgeoning urbanized, market-based economy and help Mongolians to increase their incomes by becoming healthier and better trained, by using their land assets more productively, and by increasing their capacity to trade with the world.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ULAANBAATAR (E) Micro District 11, Big Ring Road, C.P.O. 1021, Ulaanbaatar, APO/FPO AmEmbassy Ulaanbaatar PSC 461, Box 300, FPO AP 96521-0002, (976-11) 329-095, Fax (976-11) 320-776, INMARSAT Tel 383130947, Workweek: M-F/ 0830-1230, 1300-1700, Website: mongolia.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Klopp, Deborah Ann
DHS/CIS:	(Beijing)
DHS/ICE:	(Beijing)
ECO:	Paul Herman
FM:	James Horner
MGT:	Harold Zappia
AMB:	Mark C. Minton
CON:	Robert Pope
DCM:	Brian Goldbeck
COM:	Paul Herman
GSO:	Dale Lawton
RSO:	John Koretke
AFSA:	Alexei Kral
AGR:	(Beijing)
AID:	Barry Primm
APHIS:	(Beijing)
ATF:	(Beijing)
ATO:	(Beijing)
CLO:	Janet Horner&Nicole Babb
DAO:	Ltc. Matthew Schwab
DEA:	(Beijing)
EPA:	(Beijing)
EST:	(Beijing)
FAA:	(Beijing)
FAA/CASLO:	(Beijing)
FMO:	Harold Zappia
ICASS Chair:	Barry Primm
IMO:	Randy Grover
IRS:	(Toyko)
ISSO:	Yi Zhou
LAB:	(Beijing)
LEGATT:	(Beijing)
MLO:	Ltc. Matthew Schwab
NAS:	(Beijing)
POL:	Greg Wiegand
RAMC:	(Bangkok)

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 21, 2008

Country Description: Mongolia is the size of Alaska and is a vast country of mountains, lakes, deserts and grasslands. It peacefully abandoned its communist system in 1990 and is successfully making the transition to a parliamentary democracy. Economic reforms continue. The country's development will depend on considerable infrastructure investment, particularly in the mining, energy, transportation, and communication sectors. Travelers to Mongolia should be aware that shortcomings in these areas might have an impact on travel plans.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required for American visitors. No visa is required for Americans visiting for fewer than 90 days; however, visitors planning to stay in Mongolia for more than 30 days are required to register with the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens in Ulaanbaatar within the first seven days of arrival. American visi-

tors who fail to register and who stay longer than 30 days, even for reasons beyond their control, will be stopped at departure, temporarily denied exit, and fined. It is recommended that visitors who will be in Mongolia beyond 30 days register with the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens within the first seven days of their arrival.

Americans planning to work or study in Mongolia should apply for a visa at a Mongolian embassy or consulate outside of Mongolia. Failure to do so may result in authorities denying registration, levying a fine, and requiring that the visitor leave the country. Travelers arriving or departing Mongolia through China or Russia should be aware of Chinese and Russian visa regulations (transiting twice will require a double- or multiple-entry visa) and note that some land-entry points have varying days and hours of operation. Many small land border posts do not operate on a fixed schedule. Travelers need to check with immigration authorities to make certain the post they intend to use will be open when they want to enter. Travelers planning travel to Russia should get visas prior to arriving in Mongolia, because they are difficult to obtain at the Russian Embassy in Mongolia. For more information on these requirements, see the Country Specific Information for Russia and China.

Travelers without Mongolian visas are subject to an exit tax payable either in U.S. dollars or Mongolian Tugrugs upon departure. American citizen visitors to Mongolia do not require a visa if they stay less than 30 days and no fee is payable if they depart within the 30 day period. If they stay longer without having registered with immigration, a penalty fee will be assessed at time of departure. Travelers should inquire whether the exit tax is included with the price of the airline ticket at the time of purchase. In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian if not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

Visit the Embassy of Mongolia web site at http://www.mongolianembassy.us for the most current visa information. Travelers can also contact the Embassy of Mongolia at 2833 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20007, telephone (202) 333-7117 for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: There have been no significant acts of terrorism or extremism in Mongolia. There are no regions of instability in the country. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid all protests, including political protests, and street demonstrations that occur occasionally in Ulaanbaatar, as the demonstrations may become violent.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Over the past few years there has been a significant rise in street crime in Mongolia, particularly in Ulaanbaatar, the capital. Violent crime, particularly aggravated assault, is increasing, and it is not advisable to walk alone through the city after dark. The most common crimes against foreigners are pick pocketing and bag snatching. There are reports of organized groups operating in open areas, usually after dark, who surround, grab, and choke an individual in order to search the victim's pockets. Thieves have also sliced victims' clothing in attempts to reach wallets, cell phones and other valuables. U.S. citizens who detect pick pocket attempts should not confront the thieves, as they may become violent. Caution is advised when using public transportation and in crowded public areas, such as open-air markets, the Central Post Office and the Gandan Monastery. Crime rises sharply before, during and after the Naadam Summer Festival in July and throughout the summer tourist season, as well as during and after Tsagaan Sar, the Winter Festival, in January or February.

Travelers should be extremely cautious at these specific locations:

- Chinggis Khan International Airport in Ulaanbaatar: tourists arriving and departing from this airport are frequently targeted for robbery and pick pocketing by organized groups.
- The State Department Store: tourists are targeted by organized pick pocket gangs at the entries/exits/elevators and the area surrounding the store.
- Naran Tuul Covered Market: Organized criminal groups look for and target foreigners for robbery and pick pocketing.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. American victims of crime in Mongolia should be prepared to hire their own translators and lawyers if they intend to pursue a criminal complaint against a Mongolian.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Mongolia are 102 to contact the police department and 103 for a medical emergency.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Mongolia are very limited and do not meet most Western standards, especially for emergency health care requirements. Many brand-name Western medicines are unavailable. Ulaanbaatar, the capital, has the majority of medical facilities inside the country; outside of Ulaanbaatar, medical facilities and treatment are extremely limited or non-existent. Specialized emergency care for infants and the elderly is not available. Infectious diseases, such as plague, meningococcal meningitis, and tuberculosis, are present at various times of the year. Sanitation in some restaurants is inadequate, particularly outside of Ulaanbaatar. Stomach illnesses are frequent. Bottled water and other routine precautions are advisable.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost tens of thousands of dollars. A June 2005 medical evacuation from Ulaanbaatar to Seoul, Korea, cost the patient $87,000. Doctors and hospitals usually expect immediate payment in cash for health services. Medical evacuation companies will not initiate an evacuation without a fee guarantee beforehand and in full. Please see Medical Information for Americans traveling abroad.

Local hospitals generally do not contact the Embassy about ill or injured Americans in their care; hospitalized American citizens who need Consular assistance from the Embassy should ask the doctor or hospital to contact the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar. For more information, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar, which has a list of medical facilities available to foreigners (also available on the U.S. Embassy web site at http://mongolia.usembassy.gov/) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's international traveler's hotline (see below).

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Mongolia.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Mongolia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Ulaanbaatar can be extremely difficult due to poorly maintained streets, malfunctioning traffic lights, inadequate street lighting, undisciplined pedestrians, and a shortage of traffic signs. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of vehicles on the roads in recent years, but the knowledge and skills of the driving population have not kept pace with the growth of automobiles. There are many metered taxis in Ulaanbaatar. There are a few car rental companies operating in Ulaanbaatar, but safety and maintenance standards are uncertain and rental vehicles should be utilized with caution. Another alternative is to hire a car and driver from local tourist companies. Public transportation within the capital is extensive, cheap, and generally reliable, but it is also extremely crowded with the result that pickpockets often victimize foreigners. There are few paved roads outside of the capital, and driving can be hazardous, particularly after dark. For specific information concerning Mongolian drivers permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, contact the Embassy of Mongolia at: 2833 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007, telephone (202) 333-7117.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.mongolianembassy.us/default.php.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Mongolia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Mongolia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at: http://www.faa.gov.

The U.S. Embassy prohibits U.S. government personnel from using the domestic services of Mongolian International Air Transport (MIAT) for official travel because of uncertainties regarding service and maintenance schedules, aircraft certification and insurance status. This prohibition does not extend to MIAT's international flights.

Special Circumstances: Traveler's checks in U.S. dollars are accepted at some hotels and may be converted to dollars or Tugrugs at several banks. Credit cards can be used at a variety of hotels, restaurants, and shops in Ulaanbaatar. Outside of the capital, travelers should have cash. Cash advances against credit cards are available at some commercial banks such as Trade and Development Bank, Golomt Bank, Khan Bank, and Xac Bank. International bank wire transfers are also possible. There are a handful of VISA and Maestro/Cirrus ATM machines in Ulaanbaatar, but they do not always function and are not reliable. ATM machines do not exist outside the capital.

U.S. consular offiers may not always receive timely notification of the detention or arrest of a U.S. citizen, particularly outside of Ulaanbaatar. American citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their passport with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, evidence of identity and citizenship are readily available. Severe fuel shortages and problems with central heating and electrical systems may cause seriously reduced heating levels and power outages in Ulaanbaatar and other cities during the winter. Smaller towns in the countryside may have no heat or electricity at all.

The Embassy advises all American residents in Mongolia to be prepared to depart if there is a complete energy failure. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Mongolian customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning import and export of items such as firearms, ammunition, and antiquities. Import of firearms or ammunition requires prior approval from the Government of Mongolia. Export of antiquities requires a special customs clearance certificate issued by authorized antique shops at the time of purchase. For additional information contact the Embassy of Mongolia at: 2833 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20007, telephone: (202) 333-7117.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Police officials will often require a visitor to remain in Mongolia for an indefinite period of time pending resolution of a filed complaint.

Persons violating Mongolian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mongolia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Mongolia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Mongolia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at: at Micro Region 11, Big Ring Road, Ulaanbaatar. The telephone number is (976) 11-329-095, the Consular Section fax number is (976) 11-353-788, and the Embassy's web site is http://ulaanbaatar.usembassy.gov. The Consular Section can be emailed directly at cons@usembassy.mn. The Consular Section is open for American Citizens Services Monday and Thursday from 1-3 p.m., except on U.S. and Mongolian holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar does not process immigrant visas at this time. After the adoption is completed, adoptive parents must take their child to the U.S. Embassy in Seoul, South Korea for immigrant visa processing and the orphan visa interview.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government offices responsible for adoptions in Mongolia are the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor of Mongolia (MSWL) and the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens.

Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor of Mongolia (MSWL)
Mailing Address:
United Nations Street 5
UB-46
Government Building No 2
Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor
Tel: 976-11-267635
Fax: 976-11-327635
Fax: 976-11-328634
Website:
http://www.mswl.pmis.gov.mn
E-mail:
sbaigalmaa@mswl.pmis.gov.mn

Office of Immigration,
Naturalization and Foreign Citizens,
Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs
Mailing Address:
Chinggis Avenue 11
Sukhbaatar District, Ulaanbaatar
210628
Ms. Purevee Bolormaa
Tel: 976-11-319588
Tel: 976-11-315323
Fax: 976-11-313259
Website:
http://www.mngimmigration.mn
E-mail: immigration_mn@yahoo.com

The Mongolian and U.S. authorities involved in the adoption and immigration process review each case individually to ensure that the child and the prospective adoptive family have met both countries' legal requirements.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The Mongolian embassy in Washington, D.C., has a web page devoted to the eligibility requirements for adopting Mongolian children. American citizens considering adopting from Mongolia should visit the Mongolian embassy's adoption page online at http://www.mongolianembassy.us.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents who apply through agencies authorized by the Mongolian Government. However, Mongolian Family Law does require persons adopting privately (i.e., not through an agency) to reside in Mongolia for at least six months.

Time Frame: It is hard to predict with certainty how much time is required to complete an adoption in Mongolia. The time frames provided in this flyer are intended as guidelines only, and the specific circumstances of each case can significantly impact the length of the process. As of March 2007, adoption procedure takes approximately twelve to eighteen months from the time the U.S. adoption agency or private U.S. citizens submitted the paperwork to MSWL to the time the MSWL gives it for final approval to the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Although the Government of Mongolia currently permits private adoptions, there has been some discussion of prohibiting these in the near future. Adoptive parents using an agency must use one of the Mongolian Government-approved adoption agencies. The U.S. Department of State does not assume any responsibility for the quality of services provided by these private adoption agencies or their employees.

Adoption Fees: There are no Mongolian government fees for adoption. Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay notary fees and/or fees for translation of documents.

Private adoptions: Foreign citizens who have resided in Mongolia for more than six months shall apply directly to the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labor (MSWL) about his/her request to adopt a Mongolian child. The MSWL is the Central Authority in Mongolia. The Department of Population Development, Social Welfare Policy and Coordination within the MSWL accepts all necessary documentation for adoption including a residency permit and/or work permit. This process generally takes between three and six months, although it has sometimes taken longer depending on the MSWL's workload. While Mongolian law does not currently require a home study, in practice the MSWL has recently been requiring home studies.

The U.S. Embassy in Mongolia believes that the home study requirement will be formalized in the future. The MSWL checks all documents and proposes a child for adoption. Once the prospective parents agree to the adoption, the case goes to the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens for final decision, which takes approximately one month.

Licensed Adoption Agency: The first step for a family residing in the United States is to apply to one of the Mongolian Government-approved U.S. adoption agencies (listed above) for a home study. Adoption agencies gather documents from prospective parents and present them to the MSWL.

Based on the home study, the MSWL will propose a child with whom to match the prospective parents. The adoption agency then presents the documentation to the Office of Immigration, Naturalization and Foreign Citizens for final approval. This process normally takes approximately one month.

Both Processes: Parents who have adopted a child (either independently or through an adoption agency) must register their adoption to the State and Civil Registration and Information Center (SCRIC), which then issues a birth certificate and adoption decree. The parent must be present at the registration.

Required Documents: For a list of document required by the government of Mongolia please see Article 58.3 of Mongolian family law available at www.mongolianembassy.us.

Embassy of Mongolia, Washington, D.C.
2833 M Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20007
Web:
http://www.mongolianembassy.us/

Permanent Mission of Mongolia to the United Nations in New York
6 East 77th Street,
New York, N.Y. 10021
Web: http://www.un.int./mongolia
E-mail: mongolia@un.int

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States of America, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
11 Micro District
Big Ring Road, POB 1021
Ulaanbaatar-13, Mongolia
http://
www.ulaanbaatar.usembassy.gov
E-mail: cons@usembassy.mn

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Mongolia may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar. Questions about the immigrant visa process for Mongolian children should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Seoul.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, Toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MONTENEGRO

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Montenegro

PROFILE

Geography

Area: Montenegro (13,938 sq. km.) is slightly smaller than Connecticut.

Cities: Capital—Podgorica. Other cities—Bar, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Budva, Cetinje, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Niksic, Pljevlja, Tivat, Ulcinj.

Terrain: Varied; mountainous regions with thick forests; central plains; southwestern Adriatic coast with high shoreline with very few islands off the coast.

Climate: Generally continental; Mediterranean along the coast.

People

Nationality: Noun—Montenegrin(s); adjective—Montenegrin.

Population: 630,548 (2004 Republic census).

Population growth rate: (2004) 3.5%.

Ethnic groups: (2004 census) Montenegrin 43%, Serbian 31%, Bosniak 8%, Albanian 5%, Muslim 5%, Croatian 1%, Roma 0.5%.

Religions: (2004 census) Orthodox 74%, Muslim 18%, Roman Catholic 4%.

Languages: Serbo-Croatian 95%, Albanian 5%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—14.2 deaths/1,000. Life expectancy—male 72.8 yrs., female 76.7 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Adopted October 19, 2007 and proclaimed October 22, 2007.

Independence: June 3, 2006 (declared by parliament after referendum in favor of independence from state union of Serbia and Montenegro).

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state); prime minister (head of government). Legislative—Montenegrin parliament. Judicial—Constitutional Court and Supreme Court.

Political parties: Albanian Alternative (AA), Bosniak Party (BS), Croatian Civic Initiative (HGI), Democratic League in Montenegro (DSCG), Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), Democratic Serbian Party (DSS), Democratic Union of Albanians (DUA), Liberal Party (LP), Movement for Change (PZP), Party of Serbian Radicals (SSR), Party of Serbian Unity (SSJ), People's Party of Montenegro (NS), People's Socialist Party (NSS), Serbian People's Party (SNS), Social Democratic Party (SDP), and Socialist People's Party (SNP).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $3.417 billion (€2.278 billion).

Real GDP growth rate: (2007/2008) 7%.

Per capita income: (2007) $5,511 (3,647 euros).

Inflation rate: (2007) 6.5%.

Natural resources: Bauxite.

Tourism: 20% of GDP.

Industry: 13.8% of GDP.

Services: 58% of GDP.

Trade: (2006) Exports—$820.5 million (€599 million). Major markets—Serbia ($232.2 million; €169.5 million), Italy ($224.9 million; €164.2 million), Greece ($100.8 million; €73.6 million) Hungary ($90.6 million; €66.2 million), Bosnia and Herzegovina ($41.3 million; €30.2 million). Imports—$2.923 billion (€2.134 billion). Major suppliers—Serbia ($874.1 million; €638.1 million), Germany ($292.1 million; €213.3 million), Italy ($285.2 million; €208.2 million), Croatia ($114.2 million, €83.4 million) Greece ($102.5 million; €74.8 million).

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Montenegro resisted the rule of the Ottoman Turks, maintaining its independence and playing off its powerful

neighbors against each other. Montenegro was recognized as an independent and sovereign principality by the Great Powers of Europe assembled at the Congress of Berlin on July 13, 1878.

During World War I, Montenegro fought on the side of the Allies but was defeated and occupied by Austria. Upon Austrian occupation, the Montenegrin king, King Nikola I, and his government went into exile. In late 1918, an Assembly met in Podgorica, and under the eyes of the Serbian army, deposed King Nikola and declared unification with Serbia. The government of Montenegro in exile denounced the Assembly's action, to no avail. From 1919 to 1941, Montenegro was part of what became known as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, despite armed resistance in the early 1920s to rule from Belgrade.

When Yugoslavia was invaded and partitioned by the Axis powers in April 1941, Montenegro was appropriated by the Italians under a nominally autonomous administration. While some Montenegrins sided with Italy, motivated by antipathy against past rule from Belgrade, the Partisan Revolt in Montenegro began early, on July 13, 1941, and initially scored impressive successes against the Italian occupiers. Throughout World War II, Montenegro served as an effective base and refuge for Tito's Partisans. After the war, Montenegro was granted the status of a republic within Yugoslavia.

The breakup of the Yugoslav federation after 1989 left Montenegro in a precarious position. Between 1991 and 1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia all seceded from Yugoslavia. On April 27, 1992 in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro joined in passing the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Though Montenegro reaffirmed its political attachment to Serbia, a sense of a distinct Montenegrin identity continued to thrive. The government of Montenegro was critical of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's 1998-99 campaign in Kosovo, and the ruling coalition parties boycotted the September 2000 federal elections, which led to the eventual removal of Milosevic's regime. In March 2002, the Belgrade Agreement was signed by the heads of the federal and republican governments, setting forth the parameters for a redefinition of Montenegro's relationship with Serbia within a joint state. On February 4, 2003, the F.R.Y. parliament ratified the Constitutional Charter, establishing a new state union and changing the name of the country from Yugoslavia to Serbia and Montenegro. On May 21, 2006, the Republic of Montenegro held a successful referendum on independence and declared independence on June 3.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Following Montenegro's declaration of independence, the first parliamentary elections were held on September 10, 2006. Both domestic and international observers assessed the elections as being generally in line with international standards. Zeljko Sturanovic of the leading Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) was appointed as Prime Minister. The newly elected Montenegrin parliament began work on the country's first post-independence constitution, which was adopted on October 19, 2007. The constitution, among other things, changed the country's official name to "Montenegro." European and Euro-Atlantic integration has been one of the driving forces behind the reform process that led to the signing of a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) on October 15, 2007. Following the resignation of Prime Minister Sturanovic due to health reasons in February 2008, President Vujanovic nominated (and parliament approved) the leader of the ruling DPS, former Montenegrin President and Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, as head of the government. Presidential elections were held on April 6, 2008, and incumbent President Vujanovic was elected for a second five-year term with 52% of the vote. Domestic and international observers assessed this election as being generally in line with international standards. The Government of Montenegro is continuing to promote reforms that will bring the country closer to Euro-Atlantic institutions. Despite considerable progress since independence and success in maintaining inter-ethnic harmony, some ethnic tensions remain. The country must also cope with rule of law issues and uneven regional economic development.

Legislature

The parliament is Montenegro's lawmaking body. Parliament has 81 members elected in general elections. According to the results of the 2006 parliamentary elections, the governing DPS/SDP coalition has 41 members of parliament, followed by the Serbian List alliance (12 seats), the SNP-NS-DSS coalition (11), the Movement for Change (11), the coalition of the Liberal and Bosniak parties (three), the DUA (one), Albanian Alternative (one), and the coalition of the Democratic Union in Montenegro —Party of Democratic Prosperity (one).

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Filip VUJANOVIC**
Prime Min.: **Milo DJUKANOVIC**
Dep. Prime Min. for Economic Policy: **Vujica LAZOVIC**
Dep. Prime Min. for European Integration: **Gordana DJUROVIC**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Water Management: **Milutin SIMOVIC**
Min. of Culture, Sports, & Media: **Branislav MICUNOVIC**
Min. of Defense: **Boro VUCINIC**
Min. for Economic Development: **Branimir GVOZDENOVIC**
Min. of Education & Science: **Sreten SKULETIC**
Min. of Finance: **Igor LUKSIC**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Milan ROCEN**
Min. of Health, Labor, & Social Insurance: **Miodrag RADUNOVIC**
Min. for Human & Minority Rights: **Fuad NIMANI**
Min. of Internal Affairs & Public Admin.: **Jusuf KALAMPEROVIC**



Min. of Justice: **Miras RADOVIC**
Min. of Transport, Maritime Affairs, &Telecommunications: **Andrija LOMPAR**
Min. of Tourism & Environmental Protection: **Predrag NENEZIC**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Suad NUMANOVIC**
Ambassador to the US: **Miodrag VLAHOVIC**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Nebojsa KALUDJEROVIC**

DEFENSE

The Montenegrin Government has established a military and a Ministry of Defense. Further reform and transformation of both institutions is underway. The Montenegrin military operates under the joint authority of the Security and Defense Council, which consists of the president, prime minister, and the speaker of parliament. Parliament also maintains oversight through its Security and Defense Committee. Montenegro officially entered NATO's Partnership for Peace in November 2006 and in April 2008 was invited to join an Intensified Political Dialogue with the Alliance.

ECONOMY

Montenegro has natural resources, primarily bauxite, adequate water supplies, and a climate conducive to agriculture and tourism. The establishment of the bauxite-alumina-aluminum industry after World War II provided Montenegro with a core strategic industry, which has suffered from high production costs since the first energy crisis in 1973. In the 1960s, tourism began its initial growth, largely attracting visitors from Eastern Europe. War and sanctions in the early 1990s hit Montenegro hard, and recovery only really began after the end of the Kosovo crisis in 1999 and the adoption of the deutschmark (DM) in November 1999, which largely disconnected Montenegro's economy from Serbia and the Serbian dinar.

During the last few years, Montenegro has created a business-friendly investment climate. The Euro replaced the DM on March 31, 2002. The country established the lowest

corporate tax rate in the region (9%) and Standard & Poors has given Montenegro a credit rating of BB+. In 2007, the inflation rate was 6.5%. More than 85% of capital value in Montenegrin companies had been privatized by December 2007. The banking sector, telecommunications, and oil import and distribution in Montenegro are 100% privately owned. Capital structure analysis shows that the state still has shares in 65 companies, and in 53.8% of those the state has more than 50% ownership. The biggest improvement Montenegro has made has been in the area of tax policy. Montenegro introduced value added tax (VAT) in April 2003, and introduced tax rates of 17% and 7% (for tourism) as of January 2006. The lower VAT rate for tourism is to encourage growth in this strategic industry. Montenegro also decreased the personal income tax (PIT), and a 15% flat rate was implemented in January 2007; a 12% rate will be implemented in January 2009.

Net foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2007 reached $1.379 billion, which was ten times higher than in 2004, and investment per capita is $2,223—one of the highest in Europe. In the first quarter of 2008, there was a 6.8% increase in direct foreign investments in Montenegro compared with the same period in 2007. According to preliminary data from the Montenegrin central bank, the amount of foreign investment from January to March 2008 was $294.8 million.

Tourism and tourism investments, particularly along the Adriatic coast, are booming. The independent World Travel and Tourism Council repeatedly has ranked Montenegro as the top-growing tourism destination in the world, with growth estimated at 10% annually through 2016.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since the June 3, 2006 declaration of independence, the European Union, Serbia, and all permanent members of the UN Security Council have recognized Montenegro. The UN General Assembly voted on June 28, 2006 to admit Montenegro as a new member state. Montenegro joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on June 22, 2006, and the Council of Europe on May 11, 2007.

Montenegro signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU in October 2007, concluded a World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement with the EU in April 2008, and was invited to join an Intensified Political Dialogue with NATO at the April 2008 Summit in Bucharest.

U.S.-MONTENEGRO RELATIONS

The United States recognized Montenegro on June 12, 2006 and formally established diplomatic relations on August 15 of that year. The U.S. maintains an Embassy in Podgorica. There are currently a variety of U.S. assistance programs in place in Montenegro to help improve the economic climate and strengthen democracy. These include initiatives to promote local economic growth and business development and strengthen rule of law and democratic institutions. President Vujanovic met U.S. Secretary of State Rice on May 1, 2007 during his visit to Washington, DC. Speaker of the Parliament Ranko Krivokapic visited Washington in November 2007 and met with Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Montenegrin military also established a partnership with the Maine Army National Guard, and efforts are underway to broaden this relationship to include cooperation in the civilian sector.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PODGORICA (E) Ljubljanska bb, 81000 Podgorica, Montenegro, +382-81-225-417, Fax +382-81-241-358, Workweek: Monday to Friday (0830-1700), Website: podgorica.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Megan E. Gallardo
MGT:	David A.Korponai
POL/ECO:	Marcus R. Micheli
AMB:	Roderick W. Moore
CON:	Gina M. Werth
DCM:	Arlene Ferrill
PAO:	Judith Jones
AID:	Joseph Taggart
CLO:	Ketevan Taggart
DAO:	Maj. David M. Knych
EEO:	Megan E. Gallardo
ISO:	Momcilo Vukovic
ISSO:	David Korponai

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 26, 2008

Country Description: Montenegro declared its independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on June 3, 2006, following a peaceful referendum process. Montenegro is a small Balkan country currently undergoing significant political and economic change. Tourist facilities are widely available but vary in quality and some may not be up to Western standards.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizens with tourist, official, or diplomatic passports do not require a visa for entry and stay in Montenegro for up to 90 days. If U.S. citizens decide to stay longer than 90 days they must apply for a temporary residence permit one week before the 90-day period expires. This applies to bearers of all types of U.S. passports—tourist, official, and diplomatic. The Government of Montenegro has established its Embassy in Washington, DC and a Consulate General in New York. The Embassy of Montenegro currently has no web site but can be reached at its Embassy in Washington, DC at (202) 234-6108 for the most current visa information.

Travelers are required to declare currency in excess of 3,000 Euros upon entry and must obtain from customs officials a declaration form that must be presented at departure. Failure to comply may result in confiscation of funds and criminal proceedings.

Visitors staying in private accommodations other than hotels must register with the police station responsible for the area in which they are staying within 24 hours of arrival. Failure to comply may result in a fine, incarceration, and/or expulsion. Persons who fail to register may face difficulties in departing the country. Visitors staying in hotels or tourist facilities are automatically registered with the police by the hotel.

Safety and Security: Threats to American interests are rare. Demonstrations, usually related to political activities, labor conditions or sporting events, have been peaceful or exhibited only low levels of violence.

Montenegrin nightclubs and tourist centers are popular with foreign tourists. Patrons should be aware that these establishments can be crowded and may not comply with western standards for occupancy control and fire safety.

Travelers in the region may wish to consider the safety of public transportation, including trains and buses, in view of aging and poorly maintained equipment.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Street crime in Podgorica is at a level to be expected for a small European city of 170,000 people. Residential break-ins present the greatest security concern for expatriates in Montenegro; however, the number is still relatively small. Violent crime is limited. Police have a limited ability to provide services in English.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency lines in Montenegro are 92 (land line) and 112 (mobile).

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Although many physicians in Montenegro are highly trained, hospitals and clinics are generally not equipped or maintained to Western standards. Medicines and basic medical supplies are largely obtainable in privately owned pharmacies. Hospitals and private clinics usually require payment in cash for all services. Montenegro has a small number of ambulances and consequently, emergency services are generally responsive in only the most severe cases. Otherwise, people are expected to provide their own transportation to hospitals and clinics.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Montenegro.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Montenegro is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Roads in Montenegro are often poorly maintained, especially in rural areas. Dangerous areas for road travel include a road called "Moraca Canyon," north of Podgorica. This is a twisting, two-lane road that is especially overcrowded in the summer. In the winter, the "Moraca Canyon" and northern parts of Montenegro are covered with snow, which may slow down traffic. Roads that lead to the Montenegro coastal areas are in better condition, but are overcrowded during summer season. Drivers should exercise extreme caution, as it is common for Montenegrin drivers to attempt to pass on winding roads and hills. Local drivers can be reckless and aggressive, and accidents are frequent.

The use of seat belts is mandatory and cell phone usage while driving is prohibited. Traffic law requires that vehicle lights must be switched on at all times while driving. A driver with a blood alcohol level higher than 0.5 g/kg (US equivalent of 0.05) is considered intoxicated. Roadside assistance is available by dialing 9807, +382 (0)20 234 467 or +382 (0)20 234 999. Other emergency numbers are police: 92, fire department: 93, and ambulance: 94.

Metered taxi service is safe and reasonably priced, although foreigners are sometimes charged higher rates. It is advisable to negotiate a price in advance of travel by taxi between cities.

Visit the website of Montenegro's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.visit-montenegro.org.

Aviation Safety Oversight: Since Montenegro's recent independence, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not separately assessed the Government of Montenegro's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. However, the FAA earlier assessed the Government of Serbia and Montenegro's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with ICAO standards for oversight of Serbia and Montenegro's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Dual U.S./Montenegrin nationals may be subject to laws that impose special obligations on Montenegrin citizens. According to Montenegro's Constitution adopted on October 19, 2007, all citizens may retain dual citizenship for one year while the Montenegrin government signs bilateral memorandums with individual countries. Adoption of a new citizenship law has been indefinitely postponed. Currently, Montenegro has no finalized bilateral citizenship agreements with any country. As of August 30, 2006, Montenegrin men are no longer required by Montenegrin law to perform military service. There are occasional water and electricity outages during peak summer season due to high demand.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Montenegrin law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Montenegro are strict and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Montenegro are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Montenegro. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Podgorica is located at Ljubljanska bb, tel: +382-81-225-417, fax: +382-81-241-358. For after hour emergencies, please call +382 (0)67 283 584. You may also visit the embassy's website at http://podgorica.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The United States recognized Montenegro as an independent state on June 12, 2006, following the June 3 declaration of independence by the Montenegrin Parliament. This flyer is based primarily on current Serbian law for intercountry adoption and will be updated if Montenegro changes its laws or procedures on intercountry adoption.

The United States has an Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia and a presence in Podgorica, Montenegro. Podgorica provides only limited consular services to American citizens. The U.S. Embassy in Belgrade provides all visa services, including immigrant visa services, to Montenegrin citizens at this time.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
Ministry of Social Affairs
Attn: Svjetlana Sovilj
Rimski trg BB
81000 Podgorica
Phone: +381 81 482-451
Fax: +381 81 234-256
www.minrada.vlada.cg.yu

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Montenegrin adoption law requires at least one of the prospective adoptive parents to be between 30 and 60 years of age. Prospective parents must have been married for at least three years when beginning the adoption process. Unmarried persons and same-sex couples are not permitted to adopt. Prospective adoptive parents will be disqualified from adopting they have been diagnosed with are mental disorders infectious diseases. Adoptive parents with other serious health conditions must demonstrate to the Ministry of Social Affairs their ability to raise the child.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for adoption. However, current law gives priority to prospective parents who are of Montenegrin origin.

Time Frame: The length of the adoption process varies greatly. If prospec-

tive adoptive parents have located a child prior to their arrival to Montenegro, the whole process may be finished within four weeks.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Montenegro. Adoptive parents must work directly with the Ministry of Social Affairs. However, U.S. citizens considering adopting from Serbia may still choose to work with an adoption agency to assist them with the U.S. portions of the process.

Adoption Fees: There are no government fees for adoption. The only fee to be paid is for the issuance of the passport for the adopted child. Currently, both Serbia and Montenegro still use passports issued by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The passport fee is around $15 depending on the exchange rate.

Adoption Procedures: Adoptive parents must first contact Ministry of Social Affairs of Montenegro. They must then submit the required documentation listed below. If determined eligible by the Ministry of Social Affairs, prospective adoptive parents will be instructed to contact the appropriate local authority.

Each municipality in Montenegro has its own authority called Center for Social Work (Centar za socijalni rad) which is part of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry will guide prospective parents to a local authority depending on the number of children awaiting adoption in that area.

Local authorities will attempt to match prospective parents with a child. When a match is made and the parents inform the local authorities to that affect, local authorities will schedule "Solemn Ceremony of Adoption (usually within few days).

Local authorities will then erase the names of the biological parents from the registry books and make a new entry with the names of the adopting parents.

This is also the time when the child's name can be formally changed, including the child's first name. Authorities will also issues an Adoption Decree (Resenje o usvojenju) which includes child's history and details on the adoption process, Birth certificate and passport.

Required Documents:

- Written request signed by both prospective adoptive parents;
- Parents' Birth Certificates;
- Marriage Certificate;
- Proof of Citizenship (passport);
- Passport copies;
- Evidence of employment and income;
- Evidence of assets;
- Medical certificate including a psychiatrist's report on the parents' suitability for the adoption process;
- Criminal records/Police certificates.

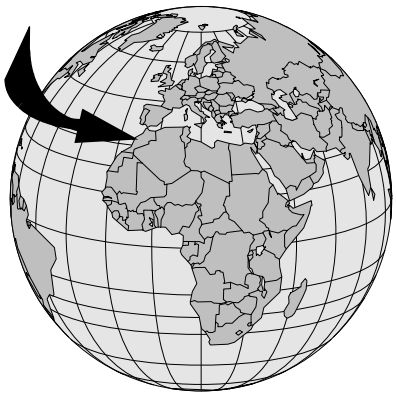
Montenegro has not yet established an embassy or consulate in the United States. The Serbian Embassy is located at:

2134 Kalorama Rd, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 332-0333
Fax: (202) 332-3933
Fax (Consular): (202) 332-5974
http://www.yuembusa.org
Serbia also has a Consulate General in Chicago.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Consulate
Ljubljanska bb
81000 Podgorica
Montenegro
Switchboard: +381 81 225 417
Fax: +381 81 241 358
E-mail: podgorica@state.gov
http://podgorica.usconsulate.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Montenegro may be addressed to the U.S. Government Office in Podgorica. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



MOROCCO

Compiled from the October 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Morocco

PROFILE

Geography

Location: North Africa, bordering the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, southern border with Western Sahara, eastern border with Algeria.
Area: 446,550 sq. km. (172,413 sq. mi.) slightly larger than California. (The disputed territory of Western Sahara comprises another 267,028 sq. km or 102,703 sq. mi.)
Cities: Rabat (capital), Casablanca, Marrakech, Fes, Meknes, Tangier.
Terrain: Coastal plains, mountains, desert.
Climate: Mediterranean to more extreme in the interior and south.
Land use: Arable land 19%; permanent crops 2%; other 79%.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Moroccan(s).
Population: (2007) 33,757,175. (The population of disputed territory Western Sahara is 350,000.)
Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.528%. Birth rate (2007 est.)—21.64 births/1,000 population; death rate (2007 est.)—5.54 deaths/1,000 population.
Ethnic groups: Arab-Berber 99%.
Religions: Muslim 99.99%, Jewish population estimated at 4,000 people, Christian population estimated at less than 1,000.
Languages: Arabic (official), several Berber dialects; French functions as the language of business, government, and diplomacy.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)—total population 51.7%; female 39.4% (2003 est.).
Health: Infant mortality rate (2007 est.)—38.85/1,000. Life expectancy at birth (2007 est.)—total population 71.22 yrs., male 68.88 yrs., female 73.67 yrs.
Work force: (2006) 11.25 million.
Unemployment rate: (2006 est.) 7.7%.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.
Constitution: March 1972, revised September 1992 and September 1996 (creating a bicameral legislature).
Independence: March 2, 1956.
Government branches: Executive—King (head of state), Prime Minister (head of government). Legislative—Bicameral Parliament. Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political parties: Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), Istiqlal (Independence) Party (PI), Party of Justice and Development (PJD), National Rally of Independents (RNI), Popular Movement (MP), National Popular Movement (MNP), Constitutional Union Party (UC), Democratic Forces Front, (FFD), National Democratic Party (PND), Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS), Democratic Union (UD), Democratic and Social Movement (MDS), Social Democratic Party (PSD), The Pact (AHD), Liberty Alliance (ADL), United Socialist Leftists (GSU), Moroccan Liberal Party (PML), Party of Reform and Development (PRD), Citizen Forces (FC), National Itihadi (Unity) Congress (CNI), Party of Action (PA), Social Center Party (PCS), Party of Environment and Development (PED), Citizens Initiative for Development (ICD), Party of Renewal and Equity (PRE), Consultation and Independence Party (PCI), Advancing Democratic and Social Party (PAGDS).
Suffrage: Universal starting at 18 years of age.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $56.72 billion.
GDP growth rate: (2006 est.) 6.7%
Per capita GDP: (PPP, 2006) $4,400.
Natural resources: Phosphates, fish, manganese, lead, silver, and copper.
Agriculture: Products—barley, citrus fruits, vegetables, olives, livestock, and fishing.
Industry: Types—phosphate mining, manufacturing and handicrafts, construction and public works, energy. Sector Information as %

GDP: (2006) Agriculture 13.3%, industry 31.2%, services 55.5%.
Currency: Moroccan dirham.
Trade: Exports—$11.72 billion (2006). Major partners—EU 71.5%, India 4.1%, U.S. 2.6%, and Brazil 2.4%. Imports— $21.22 billion (2006). Major partners—EU 52.1%, Saudi Arabia 4.8%, Russia 6.7%, China 5.2%, U.S. 3.4%.
Budget: Revenues, $15.85 billion; expenditures, $20.39 billion, including capital expenditures of $2.19 billion. (2006 est.). **External debt:** $17.9 billion (2006 est.).

PEOPLE

Moroccans are predominantly Sunni Muslims of Arab, Berber, or mixed Arab-Berber ancestry. The Arabs brought Islam, along with Arabic language and culture, to the region from the Arabian Peninsula during the Muslim conquests of the 7th century. Today, there remains a Jewish community of approximately 5,000, and a largely expatriate Christian population of 5,000, who enjoy religious freedom and full civil rights. Morocco is also home to a 300-500-person Baha'i community which, in recent years, has been able to worship free from government interference.

Arabic is Morocco's official language, but French is widely taught and serves as the primary language of commerce and government. Moroccan colloquial Arabic is composed of a unique combination of Arabic, Berber and French dialects. Along with Arabic, about 10 million Moroccans, predominantly in rural areas, also speak one of the three Moroccan Berber dialects (Tarifit, Tashelhit, and Tamazight). Spanish is also used in the northern part of the country. English is rapidly becoming the foreign language of choice among educated youth and is offered in all public schools from the fourth year on.

Most people live west of the Atlas Mountains, a range that insulates the country from the Sahara Desert. Casablanca is the center of commerce and industry and the leading port; Rabat is the seat of government; Tangier is the gateway to Spain and also a major port; "Arab" Fes is the cultural and religious center; and "Berber" Marrakech is a major tourist center.

Education in Morocco is free and compulsory through primary school (age 15). Nevertheless, many children—particularly girls in rural areas—do not attend school. The country's literacy rate reveals sharp gaps in education, both in terms of gender and location; while country-wide literacy rates are estimated at 39% among women and 64% among men, the female literacy rate in rural areas is only 10%.

Morocco is home to 14 public universities. Mohammed V University in Rabat is one of the country's most famous schools, with faculties of law, sciences, liberal arts, and medicine. Karaouine University, in Fes, is a longstanding center for Islamic studies and is the oldest university in the Maghreb. Morocco has one private, English language university, Al-Akhawayn, in Ifrane, founded in 1993 by King Hassan II and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. The curriculum is based on an American model.

HISTORY

Morocco's strategic location has shaped its history. Beginning with the Phoenicians, many foreigners were drawn to this area. Romans, Visigoths, Vandals and Byzantine Greeks ruled successively. Arab forces began occupying Morocco in the seventh century A.D., bringing their civilization and Islam. The Alaouite dynasty, which has ruled Morocco since 1649, claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad.

Morocco's location and resources led to early competition among European powers in Africa, beginning with successful Portuguese efforts to control the Atlantic coast in the 15th century. France showed a strong interest in Morocco as early as 1830. Following recognition by the United Kingdom in 1904 of France's "sphere of influence" in Morocco, the Algeciras Conference (1906) formalized France's "special position" and entrusted policing of Morocco to France and Spain jointly. The Treaty of Fes (1912) made Morocco a protectorate of France. By the same treaty, Spain assumed the role of protecting power over the northern and southern (Saharan) zones.

Nationalist political parties, which took shape under the French protectorate, began a strong campaign for independence after World War II. Declarations such as the Atlantic Charter (a joint U.S.-British statement set forth, among other things, the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they live), served as a base for the independence movement. A manifesto of the Istiqlal (Independence) Party in 1944 was one of the earliest public demands for independence. That party subsequently provided most of the leadership for the nationalist movement and remains a dominant political force.

In 1953, France exiled the highly respected Sultan Mohammed V and replaced him with the unpopular Mohammed Ben Aarafa. Ben Aarafa's reign was widely perceived as illegitimate, and sparked active opposition to French rule. France allowed Mohammed V to return in 1955, and by 1956, Morocco had regained its independence. In the year 2006, Moroccans celebrated their 50th year of independence from France. After gaining independence on March 2, 1956, Morocco regained control over certain Spanish-ruled areas through agreements with Spain in 1956 and 1958. The internationalized city of Tangier was reintegrated with the signing of the Tangier Protocol on October 29, 1956. The Spanish enclave of Ifni in the south became part of Morocco in 1969. Spain, however, retains control over the small coastal enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in the north. During the 1990s, King Hassan made great strides toward economic and political liberalization. King Hassan died on July 23, 1999, and was succeeded by his son, Mohammed VI, who pledged to continue these reforms. Under



Mohammed VI, the Moroccan Government has undertaken a number of economic, political, and social reforms, including the 2003 Moudawana, a reform of the family status code, and the 2006 Equity and Reconciliation Commission, which investigated allegations of human rights abuse from 1956 to 1999.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Morocco is divided into 16 administrative regions (further broken into provinces and prefectures); the regions are administered by Walis (governors) appointed by the King. The Moroccan Constitution provides for a monarchy with a Parliament and an independent judiciary. Ultimate authority rests with the King. The King presides over the Council of Ministers; appoints the prime minister following legislative elections; appoints all members of the govern-

ment taking into account the prime minister's recommendations; and may, at his discretion, terminate the tenure of any minister, dissolve the Parliament, call for new elections, or rule by decree. The King is the Commander in Chief of the military and holds the title of Amir al-Mou'minin, the country's religious leader.

Since the constitutional reform of 1996, the bicameral legislature consists of a lower chamber called the Chamber of Representatives, which is directly elected, and an upper chamber, the Chamber of Counselors, whose members are indirectly elected through various regional, local, and professional councils. The councils' members themselves are directly elected. Parliament's powers, though limited, were expanded under the 1992 and 1996 constitutional revisions to include budgetary matters, approval authority, and establishment of commissions of inquiry to investigate the government's actions. The lower chamber of Parliament may dissolve the government through a vote of no confidence.

Parliamentary elections were held in November 2002 and were considered largely free, fair, and transparent. At that time, King Mohammed VI formed a government appointing then-Interior Minister Driss Jettou as Prime Minister. Cabinet level positions were drawn from most major parties in the coalition.

Following the 2002 elections, King Mohammed VI highlighted several goals toward which the new government should work: expanded employment opportunities, economic development, meaningful education, and increased housing availability. To meet the King's objectives, the Jettou government embarked on a series of initiatives and reforms, which Jettou laid out in his early days as Prime Minister.

Jettou emphasized that modernization and revitalization of the country's infrastructure (roads, trains, communications, water, etc.) and national economy (support for Moroccan businesses, preparations for competition, modernization of modes of production, etc.), were necessary to further development progress in Morocco.

In order to create employment opportunities, the government is promoting investment in the tourism, industrial, fishing, and service industries, and is ameliorating, restructuring, and modernizing the education system.

Parliamentary elections were held in September 2007. Abbas El Fassi was designated to form a new government.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **MOHAMED VI**
Prime Min.: **Abbas EL FASSI**
Min. of Agriculture, Rural Development, & Sea Fisheries: **Aziz AKHENOUCH**
Min. of Communications & Govt. Spokesperson: **Khalid NACIRI**
Min. of Culture: **Touriya JABRANE**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Salaheddine MEZOUAR**
Min. of Employment & Vocational Training: **Jamal AGHMANI**
Min. of Energy, Mines, Water, & Environment: **Amina BENKHADRA**
Min. of Equipment & Transport: **Karim GHELLAB**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation: **Taieb FASSI-FIHRI**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **Abdelatif MAAZOZ**
Min. of Habous & Islamic Affairs: **Ahmed TOUFIQ**
Min. of Health: **Yasmina BADDOU**
Min. of Industry, Commerce, & New Technologies: **Ahmed CHAMI**
Min. of Interior: **Chakib BENMOUSSA**
Min. of Justice: **Abdelwahed RADI**
Min. of National Education, Higher Education, Staff Training, & Scientific Research: **Ahmed AKHCHICHINE**
Min. of Social Development, Family, & Solidarity: **Nouzha SKALLI**
Min. of State (Without Portfolio): **Mohamed EL YAZGHI**
Min. of Tourism, Handicrafts, & Social Economy: **Mohamed BOUSSAID**
Min. of Youth & Sport: **Nawal EL MOUTAWAKIL**
Min. in Charge of Relations With Parliament: **Mohamed Saad EL-ALAMI**
Sec. Gen. of the Govt.: **Abdessadek RABII**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation in Charge of Moroccan Expatriate Affairs: **Mohamed AMEUR**
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. in Charge of the Admin. of National Defense: **Abderrahmane SBAI**
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. in Charge of General & Economic Affairs: **Nizar BARAKA**
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. in Charge of Urbanization & Housing: **Ahmed Toufiq HEJIRA**
Sec. of State to the Min. of National Education, Higher Education, Staff Training, & Scientific Research: **Latifa LABIBDA**
Sec. of State to the Min. of Energy, Mines, Water, & Environment: **Abdelkebir ZAHOUD**
Sec. of State to the Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation: **Ahmed LAKHRIF**
Sec. of State to the Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation: **Latifa AKHERBACH**
Sec. of State to the Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. in Charge of Urbanization & Housing: **Abdeslam AL-MESBAHI**
Sec. of State to the Min. of Interior: **Saad HASSAR**
Sec. of State to the Min. of Tourism, Handicrafts, & Social Economy: **Anis BIROU**
Governor, Central Bank: **Abdelatif JOUAHRI**
Ambassador to the US: **Aziz MEKOUAR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Mustapha SAHEL**

Morocco maintains an embassy in the United States at 1601–21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-462-7979).

ECONOMY

Macroeconomic stability, coupled with low inflation and relatively slow economic growth, has characterized the Moroccan economy over the past several years. The government continues to pursue reform, liberalization, and modernization aimed at stimulating growth and creating jobs. Employment, however, remains overly dependent on the agriculture sector, which is extremely vulnerable to inconsistent rainfall. Morocco's primary economic challenge is to accelerate growth in order to reduce high levels of unemployment and underemployment. While overall unemployment stands at 7.7%, this figure masks significantly higher urban

unemployment, as high as 33% among urban youths. Through a foreign exchange rate anchor and well-managed monetary policy, Morocco has held inflation rates to industrial country levels over the past decade; inflation between 1999 and 2004 remained at 1.5% and fell to 1% in 2005. Despite criticism among exporters that the dirham has become badly overvalued, the country maintains a current account surplus. Foreign exchange reserves are strong, with over $16 billion in reserves, the equivalent of 11 months of imports at the end of 2005. The combination of strong foreign exchange reserves and active external debt management gives Morocco ample capacity to service its debt. Current external debt stands at about $17.9 billion.

Economic growth has been hampered by an over-reliance on the agriculture sector. Agriculture production is extremely susceptible to rainfall levels and ranges from 15% to 20% of GDP. Given that almost 40% of Morocco's population depends directly on agriculture, droughts have a severe negative effect on the economy.

The current government is continuing a series of structural reforms begun in recent years. The most promising reforms have been in the labor market and financial sectors, and privatization has accelerated the sale of Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) licenses in recent years. Morocco also has liberalized rules for oil and gas exploration and has granted concessions for many public services in major cities. The tender process in Morocco is becoming increasingly transparent. Many believe, however, that the process of economic reform must be accelerated in order to reduce urban unemployment.

In January 2006, the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the United States and Morocco went into effect. The FTA represents an important step towards President Bush's vision of a Middle East Free Trade Area and is the first in Africa. The U.S.-Morocco FTA eliminated tariffs on 95% of bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products with all remaining tariffs to be eliminated within nine years. The negotiations produced a comprehensive agreement covering not only market access but also intellectual property rights protection, transparency in government procurement, investments, services, and e-commerce. The FTA provides new trade and investment opportunities for both countries and will encourage economic reforms and liberalization already underway.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Morocco is a moderate Arab state which maintains close relations with Europe and the United States. It is a member of the UN and belongs to the Arab League, Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Non-Aligned Movement. King Mohammed VI is the chairman of the OIC's Al-Quds Jerusalem Committee. Although not a member of the African Union (formerly the Organization of African Unity—OAU), Morocco remains involved in African diplomacy. It contributes consistently to UN peacekeeping efforts on the continent.

Morocco is active in Maghreb, Arab, and African affairs. It supports the search for peace and moderation in the Middle East. In 1986, then-King Hassan II took the daring step of inviting then-Israeli Prime Minister Peres for talks, becoming only the second Arab leader to host an Israeli leader. Following the September 1993 signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, Morocco accelerated its economic ties and political contacts with Israel. In September 1994, Morocco and Israel announced the opening of bilateral liaison offices. These offices were closed in 2000 following sustained Israeli-Palestinian violence, but Moroccan-Israeli diplomatic contacts continue.

Morocco was the first Arab state to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and sent troops to help defend Saudi Arabia. Morocco maintains close relations with Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states, which have provided Morocco with substantial amounts of financial assistance. Morocco has supported efforts to stabilize Iraq following the downfall of Saddam Hussein.

Morocco was among the first Arab and Islamic states to denounce the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and declare solidarity with the American people in the war against terror. Morocco has seen its own terrorism at home as well. On May 16, 2003, Moroccan suicide bombers simultaneously attacked five sites in Casablanca, killing more than 40 people and wounding over 100. More than a million people subsequently demonstrated to condemn the attacks. In April 2007, a series of suicide bomb attacks occurred in central Casablanca, one taking place near the U.S. consulate general and one near the American Language Center. The bombings demonstrated Morocco's vulnerability to extremists who capitalize on widespread poverty and social exclusion.

The major issue in Morocco's foreign relations is its claim to Western Sahara. As a result of Algeria's continued support for the Polisario Front in the dispute over Western Sahara, relations between Morocco and Algeria have remained strained over the past several decades, although they have full diplomatic relations and there is periodic high-level contact between the two countries.

Western Sahara

For more than 30 years, Morocco and the independence-seeking Popular Front of the Liberation of Saguia al Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario Front) have vied for control of the Western Sahara, a former Spanish territory. Morocco's claim to sovereignty over the Western Sahara is based largely on a historical argument of traditional loyalty of the Sahrawi tribal leaders to the Moroccan sultan as spiritual leader and ruler. The Polisario claims to represent the aspirations of the Western Saharan inhabitants for indepen-

dence. Algeria claims none of the territory for itself but maintains that Sahrawis should determine the territory's future status.

From 1904 until 1975, Spain occupied the entire territory, which is divided into a northern portion, the Saguia el Hamra, and a southern two-thirds, known as Rio de Oro. In 1969, the Polisario Front was formed to combat the occupation of the territory. In November 1975, King Hassan mobilized 350,000 unarmed Moroccan citizens in what came to be known as the "Green March" into Western Sahara. The march was designed to both demonstrate and strengthen Moroccan claims to the territory. On November 14, Spain, Morocco, and Mauritania announced a tripartite agreement for an interim administration under which Spain agreed to share administrative authority with Morocco and Mauritania, leaving aside the question of sovereignty. With the establishment of a Moroccan and Mauritanian presence throughout the territory, however, Spain's role in the administration of the Western Sahara ceased.

After a period of hostilities, Mauritania withdrew from the territory in 1979 and signed a peace treaty with the Polisario, relinquishing all claims to the territory. Moroccan troops occupied the region vacated by Mauritania and later proclaimed the territory reintegrated into Morocco. Morocco subsequently built a fortified berm around three-fourths of Western Sahara and has de facto administrative control over 80% of the territory.

At the OAU (now African Union) summit in June 1981, King Hassan announced his willingness to hold a referendum in the Western Sahara. Subsequent meetings of an OAU Implementation Committee proposed a cease-fire, a UN peacekeeping force, and an interim administration to assist with an OAU-UN-supervised referendum on the issue of independence or annexation. In 1984, the OAU seated a delegation of the Sahara Democratic Arab Republic (SDAR), the shadow government of the Polisario. Morocco subsequently withdrew from the OAU. In 1988, Moroccan and Polisario representatives agreed on a joint UN/OAU settlement proposal for a referendum, but due to disagreements it never took place. In 1991, the UN brokered a cease-fire and settlement plan, and established the United Nations Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara (known by its French acronym, MINURSO), which deployed a roughly 200-person monitoring force to the territory.

The UN continues to explore with the parties ways of arriving at a mutually agreed political settlement and to promote confidence-building measures between the parties in the interim. In 2003, former Secretary of State James Baker, working as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's Personal Envoy, put forward a peace plan calling for a referendum on issues of autonomy or integration with Morocco. While the Polisario Front and the Algerian Government accepted the plan, Morocco rejected it. After a seven-year effort to assist the parties in coming to an agreement, James Baker resigned as Personal Envoy in June 2004. In August of the same year, Kofi Annan appointed Alvaro de Soto Special Representative for the Western Sahara, to continue Baker's work. Special Representative de Soto left MINURSO in May 2005, and was replaced in July 2005 by Peter van Walsum of the Netherlands.

The Western Sahara dispute remains the primary impediment to regional integration and development goals. The parties were able to set aside some of their differences when, in August 2004, U.S. Senator Richard Lugar led a mission to the region that resulted in the release of 404 Moroccan prisoners of war who had long been held by the Polisario. Today, approximately 90,000 Sahrawi refugees live in camps around Tindouf, Algeria. The exact number of refugees living in these camps is not known since there has never been a reliable census of the population. Several thousand Sahrawis also live in the Moroccan-controlled area of Western Sahara among a large number of Moroccan settlers. Morocco considers the Western Sahara part of its national territory, while Polisario insists on the right of the people of the Western Sahara to self-determination. Algeria supports self-determination of the Sahrawis. The issue remains a major stumbling block to Moroccan-Algerian relations and regional integration.

The United States has consistently encouraged the parties to work with the United Nations, and with each other, in a spirit of flexibility and compromise, to find a mutually acceptable settlement. In this regard, the U.S. has welcomed Morocco's recent introduction of an autonomy initiative, is encouraged that it has spurred discussion, and believes that it has created an opportunity for Morocco and the Polisario to come to an agreement on this long-simmering problem. The United Nations Security Council resolution, which provides MINURSO its mandate, has been renewed for six-month intervals since its inception and is expected to be approved for a subsequent extension in October 2007.

The U.S. has raised with the UN our support for direct negotiations without preconditions, as called for in the resolution, and in June and August 2007 the Moroccans and the Polisario, with Algeria and Mauritania participating as interested neighbor states, met for two rounds of talks in Manhasset, New York, mediated by Peter van Walsum.

U.S.-MOROCCAN RELATIONS

Morocco was the first country to seek diplomatic relations with the Government of the United States in 1777, and remains one of our oldest and closest allies in the region. Formal U.S. relations with Morocco date from 1787, when the two nations negotiated a Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Renegotiated in 1836, the treaty is still in force, constituting the longest unbroken treaty relationship in U.S. history. As testament to the special nature of the U.S.-Moroccan rela-

tionship, Tangier is home to the oldest U.S. diplomatic property in the world, and the only building on foreign soil that is listed in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, the American Legation in Tangier (now a museum).

U.S.-Moroccan relations, characterized by mutual respect and friendship, have remained strong through cooperation and sustained high-level dialogue. King Hassan II visited the United States several times during his reign as King, meeting with Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. King Mohammed VI has continued his father's tradition; he made his first trip to the U.S. as King on June 20, 2000. Prime Minister Jettou visited Washington in January 2004, and King Mohammed came to the United States in July 2004. Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell traveled to Morocco in December 2004 to co-chair with Foreign Minister Benaissa the first meeting of the G8-BMENA "Forum for the Future." In August 2007, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes visited Morocco to meet with Moroccan officials, Moroccan nongovernmental organizations, and students.

As a stable, democratizing, and liberalizing Arab Muslim nation, Morocco is important for U.S. interests in the Middle East. Accordingly, U.S. policy toward Morocco seeks sustained and strong engagement, and identifies priorities for reform, conflict resolution, counterterrorism cooperation, and public outreach.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and its predecessor agencies have managed an active and effective assistance program in Morocco since 1953, for a cumulative amount exceeding $2 billion. The amount of USAID assistance to Morocco in FY 2006 was $19.2 million, with an estimated $18.9 million allotted for FY 2007. USAID's current multi-sectoral strategy (2004-2008) consists of three strategic objectives in creating more opportunities for trade and investment, basic education and workforce training, and government responsiveness to citizen needs. The Peace Corps has been active in Morocco for more than 40 years, with the first group of 53 volunteers arriving in the country in 1963. Since that time, nearly 4,000 volunteers have served in Morocco, and have served in a variety of capacities including lab technology, urban development, commercial development, education, rural water supply, small business development, beekeeping, and English training. In 2007, 197 volunteers served in Morocco, working in four sectors: health, youth development, small business, and the environment.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

RABAT (E) 2 Avenue Mohamed El Fassi, 10 000 Rabat, Morocco, APO/FPO PSC 074, APO AE 09718, 212-3-776-2265, Fax 212-3-776-5661, Workweek: Mon-Fri 0800/1700, Website: http://rabat.usembassy.gov.

ECO:	Stuart Smith
FCS:	Rick Ortiz
FM:	Alfred Biteng
HRO:	Ronnie McCall
IBB:	David Strawman
MGT:	C. Alison Barkley
AMB:	Thomas T. Riley
DCM:	Robert P. Jackson
GSO:	Marika Zadva
RSO:	George G. Frederick
AID:	Monica Stein-Olson
CLO:	Betsy Smith
DAO:	Col. David Solomon
FMO:	Don Shaw
ICASS Chair:	Col. David Solomon
IMO:	Sherril Pavin
IPO:	Chris Gilbertson
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
LEGATT:	Dan Brady
POL:	Craig Karp
State ICASS:	Charles G. Cole

CASABLANCA (CG) 8 Moulay Youssef, Casablanca, Morocco 20000, APO/FPO PSC 74 BOX 24, APO AE 09718, 212-2-226-4550, Fax 212-2-220-8097, INMARSAT Tel 383133250/1, Workweek: Mon-Fri/0800-1700, Website: casablanca.usconsulate.gov.

CG OMS:	N Loy Higgins
DHS/ICE:	Gerry Noland
ECO:	Lauren M Ladenson
FCS:	Rick Ortiz
MGT:	Belgin J. Vanderploeg
PO/CON:	Miguel A. Ordonez
CG:	Douglas C Greene
PO:	Douglas C. Greene
PAO:	Charles Cole
COM:	Rick Ortiz
RSO:	Yvon Guillaume
CLO:	Jeff Ladenson
EEO:	Amy Wilson
IPO:	William D. Alston
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck–Resident In Paris
ISSO:	William D. Alston
LAB:	Amy Wilson
POL:	Amy M. Wilson

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 20, 2008

Country Description: Morocco is a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral Parliament and independent judiciary; however, ultimate authority rests with the king. The population is estimated to be 33 million. While Morocco has a developing economy, modern tourist facilities and means of transportation are widely available, though the quality may vary depending on price and location.

Entry Requirements: Travelers to Morocco must have a valid passport. Visas are not required for American tourists traveling to Morocco for fewer than 90 days. For visits of more than 90 days, Americans must apply at their local police station to extend their visas and provide a valid reason for the extension. Travelers who plan to reside in Morocco must obtain a residency permit. A residency permit may be requested and obtained from immigration authorities (Service Etranger) at the central police station of the district of residence. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. No vaccinations are required to enter Morocco.

Children born to a Moroccan father may experience difficulty in leaving Morocco without the father's permission. Under Moroccan law, these children are considered Moroccan citizens. Even if the children bear U.S. passports, immigration officials may require proof that the father has approved their departure before the children will be allowed to leave Morocco. Although women, regardless of their nationality, are normally granted custody of their children in divorces, the father must approve the children's departure from Morocco. Women married to Moroccans do not need their spouse's permission to leave Morocco.

For further information on entry/exit requirements for Morocco, please contact the Embassy of Morocco at 1601 21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20009, telephone (202) 462-7979 to 82, fax 202-462-7643, or the Moroccan Consulate General in New York at 10 E. 40th Street, New York, NY 10016, telephone (212) 758-2625, fax: 212-779-7441. Visit the Embassy of Morocco web site at http://moroccoembassy.com for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: In March and April 2007, a series of terrorist bombings occurred in Casablanca, two of which simultaneously occurred outside the U.S. Consulate General and the private American Language Center. In 2003, a series of similar attacks in Casablanca targeted hotels and restaurants. The potential for terrorist violence against American interests and citizens remains high in Morocco. Moroccan authorities continue to disrupt groups seeking to attack U.S. or Western-affiliated and Moroccan government targets, arresting numerous individuals associated with international terrorist groups. With indications that such groups still seek to carry out attacks in Morocco, it is important for American citizens to be keenly aware of their surroundings and adhere to prudent security practices such as avoiding predictable travel patterns and maintaining a low profile. Establishments that are readily identifiable with the United States are potential targets for attacks. These may include facilities where U.S. citizens and other foreigners congregate, including clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, hotels, movie theaters and other public areas. Such targets may also include establishments where activities occur that may offend religious sensitivities, such as casinos or places where alcoholic beverages are sold or consumed. All U.S. citizens are urged to remain alert to local security developments and be vigilant regarding their personal security and report any suspicious incidents or problems immediately to Moroccan authorities and the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Demonstrations occur frequently in Morocco and usually center on local domestic issues. During periods of heightened regional tension, large demonstrations may take place in the major cities. All demonstrations require a government permit, but on occasion spontaneous unauthorized demonstrations occur, which have greater potential for violence. In addition, various unions or political groups may organize strikes to protest an emerging issue or government policy. Travelers should be cognizant of the current levels of tension in Morocco and stay informed of regional issues that could resonate in Morocco and create an anti-American response. Avoid demonstrations if at all possible. If caught in a demonstration, remain calm and move away immediately when provided the opportunity.

For many years, the Western Sahara experienced armed conflict between government forces and the POLISARIO Front, which continues to seek independence for the territory. However, a U.N.-administered cease-fire has been in place since 1991. The conflict left thousands of unexploded mines in the Western Sahara and in areas of Mauritania adjacent to the Western Saharan border. Exploding mines are occasionally reported, and have caused death and injury. Travel to the Western Sahara remains restricted by the Moroccan government; persons planning to travel to the region should obtain information on clearance requirements from the Moroccan Embassy.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Crime in Morocco is a serious concern, particularly in the major cities and tourist areas. Aggressive panhandling, pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, theft from occupied vehicles stopped in traffic and harassment of women are the most frequently reported crimes. Criminals have used weapons, primarily knives, during some street robberies and burglaries. These have occurred at any time of day and night, not only in isolated places or areas less frequented by visitors, but in crowded areas as well. It is always best to have a travel companion and utilize taxis from point to point, particularly at night and when moving about unfamiliar areas. Residential break-ins also occur and have on occasion turned violent, but most criminals look for opportunities based on stealth rather than confrontation.

Women walking alone in certain areas of cities and rural areas are particularly vulnerable to harassment from men. Women are advised to travel with a companion or in a group when possible and to ignore any harassment. Responding to verbal harassment can escalate the situation. The best course of action is generally not to respond or make eye contact with the harasser.

Joggers should be mindful of traffic and remain in more heavily populated areas. It is always best to have a jogging companion and avoid isolated areas or jogging at night.

Taxis in Morocco are generally crime-free, although city buses are not considered safe. Trains are generally safe, but theft, regardless of the time of day, sometimes occurs. Avoid carrying large sums of cash and be particularly alert when using ATM machines. In the event you are victimized by crime or an attempted crime, or experience any security-related incident during your stay in Morocco, please report the incident to the local police and the U.S. Consulate General in Casablanca as soon as possible.

Fraud in Morocco may involve a wide range of situations from financial fraud to relationship fraud for the purpose of obtaining a visa. If you believe you are the victim of a fraudulent scheme, you may wish to consult with an attorney to best determine what your options are under Moroccan law. Since fraud can involve a wide range of circumstances, it is difficult to provide general guidelines on how to pursue criminal charges in these issues.

There have been instances in which an American has met a Moroccan online and come to live with or visit him or her in Morocco and found themselves in financial or otherwise difficult situations while in country. If you are concerned about a family member or friend who is visiting someone he or she met online, you can contact the American Citizens Services Unit at 212-22-26-71-51 or email acscasablanca@state.gov.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police to obtain a "certificat de perte" (statement of loss/theft) and to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Morocco is 190.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical care is available in Morocco's largest cities, particularly in Rabat and Casablanca, although not all facilities meet high-quality standards. Specialized care or treatment may not be available. Medical facilities are adequate for non-emergency matters, particularly in the urban areas, but most medical staff will have limited or no English skills. Most ordinary prescription and over-the-counter medicines are widely available. However, specialized prescriptions may be difficult to fill and availability of all medicines in rural areas is unreliable. Emergency and specialized care outside the major cities is far below U.S. standards, and in many instances may not be available at all. Travelers planning to drive in the mountains and other remote areas may wish to carry a medical kit and a Moroccan phone card for emergencies.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Morocco.

In the event of vehicle accidents involving injuries, immediate ambulance service usually is not available. The police emergency services telephone number is 190 (See Traffic Safety and Road Conditions section below).

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Morocco is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Traffic accidents are a significant hazard in Morocco. Driving practices are very poor, and have resulted in serious injuries to and fatalities of U.S. citizens. This is particularly true at dusk during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, when adherence to traffic regulations is lax, and from July to September when Moroccans resident abroad return from Europe by car in large numbers. Congested streets are characteristic of urban driving. Drivers should also exercise extreme caution when driving at night due to poor lighting systems along roads. Traffic signals do not always function, and are sometimes difficult to see. Modern freeways link the cities of Tangier, Rabat, Fez, Casablanca, and Marrakesh. Two-lane highways link other major cities.

Secondary routes in rural areas are often narrow and poorly paved. Roads through the Rif and Atlas mountains are steep, narrow, windy, and dangerous. Maximum caution should be exercised when driving in the mountains. Pedestrians, scooters, and animal-drawn conveyances are common on all roadways, including the freeways, and driving at night should be avoided, if possible. During the rainy season (November—March) flash flooding is frequent and sometimes severe, washing away roads and vehicles in rural areas. Often Moroccan police officers pull over drivers for inspection within the city and on

highways. Confiscation of a driver's license is possible if a violator is unable or unwilling to settle a fine at the time of a traffic stop. In the event of a traffic accident, including accidents involving injuries, the parties are required to remain at the scene and not move their vehicles until the police have arrived and documented all necessary information. The police emergency services telephone number is 190.

While public buses and taxis are inexpensive, drivers typically exhibit poor driving habits, and buses are frequently overcrowded. The train system has a good safety record. Trains, while sometimes crowded, are comfortable and generally on time.

Visit the website of the Moroccan National Tourist Office and the Moroccan Ministry of Transportation's road safety web site at http://www.mtpnet.gov.ma/MET_New.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Morocco's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Morocco's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The government of Morocco considers all persons born to Moroccan fathers to be Moroccan citizens. In addition to being subject to all American laws, U.S. citizens who also possess the nationality of Morocco may be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on citizens of Morocco. Recently, Morocco has begun allowing Moroccan mothers of children born outside of Morocco to petition for their children's citizenship. For further information on that process, please contact the Moroccan Consulate General in New York or the Embassy of Morocco in Washington DC.

Current Moroccan customs procedures do not provide for accurate or reliable registration of large quantities of U.S. dollars brought into the country by tourists or other visitors. As a result, travelers encounter difficulties when they attempt to depart with the money. In particular, American citizens with dual Moroccan nationality have been asked to provide proof of the source of the funds and have incurred heavy fines. The export of Moroccan currency (dirhams) is prohibited; however, Moroccan currency can be converted back into U.S. dollars prior to departure only if the traveler has a bank or money transfer receipt indicating he or she exchanged dollars for dirhams while in Morocco.

Also, Moroccan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Morocco of items such as firearms, religious materials, antiquities, business equipment, and large quantities of currency. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Morocco in Washington, DC or the Moroccan Consulate General in New York for specific information concerning customs requirements.

Islam is the official religion in Morocco. However, the constitution provides for the freedom to practice one's religion. The Moroccan government does not interfere with public worship by the country's Jewish minority or by expatriate Christians. Proselytizing is, however, prohibited. In the past, American citizens have been arrested, detained and/or expelled for discussing or trying to engage Moroccans in debate about Christianity.

Although rare, security personnel in Morocco may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with the authorities. As a general rule, travelers should not photograph diplomatic missions, government buildings or other sensitive facilities and, when in doubt, they should ask for permission from the appropriate Moroccan authorities.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Moroccan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Morocco are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Possession of pornography is also a crime subject to prosecution in Morocco.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Morocco are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Morocco. Americans without Internet access may register in person at the U.S. Consulate General located at 8 Boulevard Moulay Youssef, Casablanca. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. All consular matters for Americans in Morocco are handled at the U.S. Consulate General in Casablanca. The U.S. Embassy is located at 2 Avenue Mohammed Al Fassi (formerly Avenue de Marrakech) in the capital city of Rabat, telephone (212)(37) 76-22-65. The workweek is Monday to Friday; however, the Consulate is closed to the public on Fridays for all consular services with the exception of emergency services for American citizens. The consular section's American Citizens Services hotline is (212)(22)-26-71-51 and the fax number is (212) (22)-29-77-01. For

emergency services after-hours, please call the Duty Officer cell phone at (212)(61)17-23-67 for Casablanca and (212)(61)-13-19-39 for Rabat. Please note that for calls originating in Morocco, callers should dial 0 instead of 212.

Please visit http://www.usembassy.ma for information on services offered by the U.S. Embassy in Rabat and http://casablanca.usconsulate.gov for information on all consular services and other assistance offered at the U.S. Consulate General in Casablanca

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

Dual Nationality: The government of Morocco does not recognize "dual nationality." When the father is a citizen of Morocco, children automatically acquire Moroccan citizenship at birth, regardless of the country of birth, and must enter the country on Moroccan passports.

Enforcement of Foreign Court Orders: A parent can request that a foreign custody order be recognized in Morocco, but enforcement will result only if the order conforms to Moroccan law. Therefore, as a practical matter, foreign custody orders are not generally recognized in Morocco, and the parent must seek legal representation in Morocco and file for custody there.

Custody Disputes: When child custody disputes arise between parents, one of whom is a citizen of Morocco, custody decisions are based on Islamic law. Child custody cases are complex. Moroccan courts consider the parents' religion, place of permanent residence, income, and the mother's subsequent marital status.

Right of Custody and Travel Restrictions: Although women are normally granted custody of their children in divorces, regardless of nationality, the right of the father to control his children's travel outside of Morocco is inviolable. Therefore, even if the children bear U.S. passports, the father must approve the children's departure from Morocco. Immigration officials may require proof that the father approves the departure. Women must also obtain permission to move the children more than 100 kilometers from their last residence prior to the divorce. American women married to Moroccans do not have to have permission of their husband to leave Morocco alone. Specific questions regarding child custody in Morocco may be addressed to:

Embassy of the Kingdom of Morocco
1605 21st Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
Phone: (202) 462-7979 to 7982
Fax Number: (202) 265-0161

U.S. Embassy Casablanca
Consular Section
8 Boulevard Moulay Youssef
Casablanca, Morocco
Phone: [212] (2) 26-45-50
Fax Number: [212] (2) 20-41-27

Consular Section
U.S. Consulate General
PSC 74
Box 24
APO AE 06718

Passports for Minors and the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program: For more information on these topics, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

More Information: For more information on either preventing or responding to an international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



MOZAMBIQUE

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Mozambique

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 801,590 sq. km.; slightly less than twice the size of California.

Cities: Capital—Maputo (pop. 1.2 million—2005 est.); Beira, Matola, Nampula, Quelimane, Tete, Nacala.

Terrain: Varies from lowlands to high plateau.

Climate: Tropical to subtropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Mozambican(s).

Population: (2006 est.) 19.7 million; 48.2% male and 51.8% female.

Population annual growth rate: (2006) 1.3%.

Ethnic groups: Makua, Tsonga, Makonde, Shangaan, Shona, Sena, Ndau, and other indigenous groups, and approximately 10,000 Europeans, 35,000 Euro-Africans, and 15,000 South Asians.

Religions: Christian 40%, Muslim 20%, indigenous African and other beliefs 40% (1997 census—recent estimates give a higher Muslim percentage).

Languages: Portuguese (official), various indigenous languages.

Education: Mean years of schooling (adults over 25) men 2.1, women 1.2. Primary net enrolment rate (2003)—61%. Adult illiteracy rate (2003)—53.6%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—129/1,000. Life expectancy (2006)—40 years.

Work force: (9.4 million est. 2006) Agriculture—81%; industry—6%; services—13% (1997 estimate).

Government

Type: Multi-party democracy.

Independence: June 25, 1975.

Constitution: November 1990.

Government branches: Executive—President, Council of Ministers. Legislative—National Assembly, municipal assemblies. Judicial—Supreme Court, provincial, district, and municipal courts.

Political subdivisions: 10 provinces, 224 districts, and 33 municipalities, of which Maputo City is the largest.

Political parties: Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO); Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO); numerous small parties.

Suffrage: Universal adult, 18 years and older.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $6.4 billion.

Annual economic (GDP) growth rate: (2006) 7.9%.

Per capita GDP: (2006) $320.

Natural resources: Hydroelectric power, coal, natural gas, titanium ore, tantalite, graphite, iron ore, semi-precious stones, and arable land.

Agriculture: (21% of GDP; annual growth 7.9%) Exports—cotton, cashew nuts, sugarcane, tea, cassava (tapioca), corn, coconuts, sisal, citrus and tropical fruits, potatoes, sunflowers, beef and poultry. Domestically consumed food crops—corn, pigeon peas, cassava, rice, beef, pork, chicken, and goat.

Industry: (31% of GDP; annual growth 10%) Types—food, beverages, chemicals (fertilizer, soap, paints), aluminum, petroleum products, textiles, cement, glass, asbestos, and tobacco.

Services: (39.7% of GDP; annual growth 4.7%).

Trade: Imports (2006)—$2.82 billion. Import commodities—machinery and equipment, vehicles, fuel, chemicals, metal products, foodstuffs and textiles. Main suppliers—South Africa, Netherlands, Portugal. Exports (2006)—$2.43 billion. Export commodities—aluminum, cashews, prawns, cotton, sugar, citrus, timber, bulk electricity, natural gas. Main markets—Belgium, South Africa, Zimbabwe.

PEOPLE

Mozambique's major ethnic groups encompass numerous subgroups with

diverse languages, dialects, cultures, and histories. Many are linked to similar ethnic groups living in neighboring countries. The north-central provinces of Zambezia and Nampula are the most populous, with about 45% of the population. The estimated 4 million Makua are the dominant group in the northern part of the country—the Sena and Ndau are prominent in the Zambezi valley, and the Tsonga and Shangaan dominate in southern Mozambique.

Despite the influence of Islamic coastal traders and European colonizers, the people of Mozambique have largely retained an indigenous culture based on small-scale agriculture. Mozambique's most highly developed art forms are wood sculpture, for which the Makonde in northern Mozambique are particularly renowned, and dance. The middle and upper classes continue to be heavily influenced by the Portuguese colonial and linguistic heritage.

During the colonial era, Christian missionaries were active in Mozambique, and many foreign clergy remain in the country. According to the national census, about 40% of the population is Christian, at least 20% is Muslim, and the remainder adheres to traditional beliefs.

Under the colonial regime, educational opportunities for black Mozambicans were limited, and 93% of that population was illiterate. In fact, most of today's political leaders were educated in missionary schools. After independence, the government placed a high priority on expanding education, which reduced the illiteracy rate to about two-thirds as primary school enrollment increased. Unfortunately, in recent years school construction and teacher training enrollments have not kept up with population increases. With post-war enrollments reaching all-time highs, the quality of education has suffered.

HISTORY

Mozambique's first inhabitants were San hunter and gatherers, ancestors of the Khoisani peoples. Between the first and fourth centuries AD, waves of Bantu-speaking peoples migrated from the north through the Zambezi River valley and then gradually into the plateau and coastal areas. The Bantu were farmers and ironworkers.

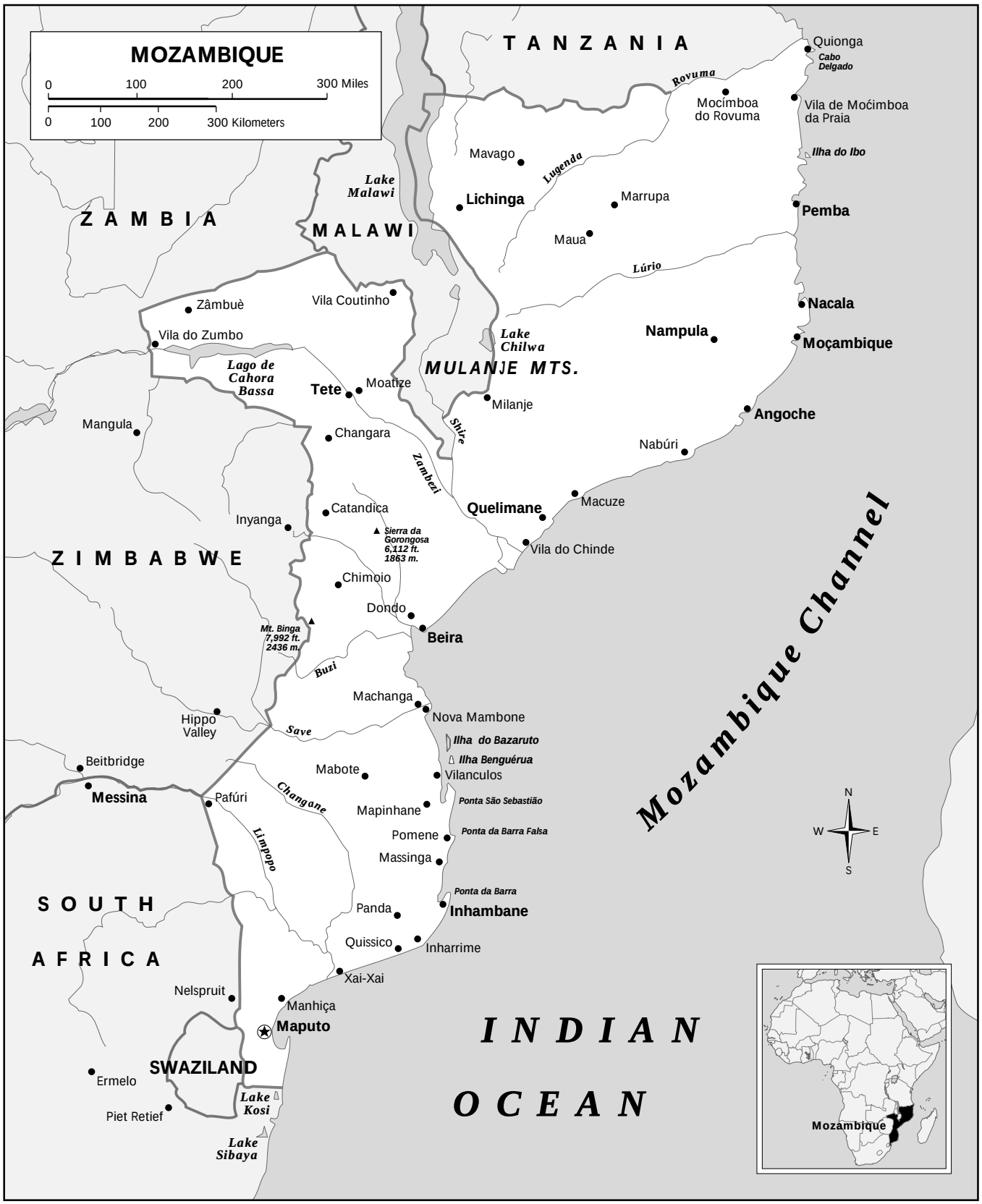
When Portuguese explorers reached Mozambique in 1498, Arab trading settlements had existed along the coast and outlying islands for several centuries. From about 1500, Portuguese trading posts and forts became regular ports of call on the new route to the east. Later, traders and prospectors penetrated the interior regions seeking gold and slaves. Although Portuguese influence gradually expanded, its power was limited and exercised through individual settlers who were granted extensive autonomy. As a result, investment lagged while Lisbon devoted itself to the more lucrative trade with India and the Far East and to the colonization of Brazil.

By the early 20th century the Portuguese had shifted the administration of much of the country to large private companies, controlled and financed mostly by the British, which established railroad lines to neighboring countries and supplied cheap—often forced—African labor to the mines and plantations of the nearby British colonies and South Africa. Because policies were designed to benefit white settlers and the Portuguese homeland, little attention was paid to Mozambique's national integration, its economic infrastructure, or the skills of its population.

After World War II, while many European nations were granting independence to their colonies, Portugal clung to the concept that Mozambique and other Portuguese possessions were overseas provinces of the mother country, and emigration to the colonies soared. Mozambique's Portuguese population at the time of independence was about 250,000. The drive for Mozambican independence developed apace, and in 1962 several anti-colonial political groups formed the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), which initiated an armed campaign against Portuguese colonial rule in September 1964. After 10 years of sporadic warfare and major political changes in Portugal, Mozambique became independent on June 25, 1975.

The last 30 years of Mozambique's history have reflected political developments elsewhere in the 20th century. Following the April 1974 coup in Lisbon, Portuguese colonialism collapsed. In Mozambique, the military decision to withdraw occurred within the context of a decade of armed anti-colonial struggle, initially led by American-educated Eduardo Mondlane, who was assassinated in 1969. When independence was achieved in 1975, the leaders of FRELIMO's military campaign rapidly established a one-party state allied to the Soviet bloc and outlawed rival political activity. FRELIMO eliminated political pluralism, religious educational institutions, and the role of traditional authorities.

The new government gave shelter and support to South African (ANC) and Zimbabwean (ZANU) liberation movements while the governments of first Rhodesia and later apartheid South Africa fostered and financed an armed rebel movement in central Mozambique called the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO). Civil war, sabotage from neighboring states, and economic collapse characterized the first decade of Mozambican independence. Also marking this period were the mass exodus of Portuguese nationals, weak infrastructure, nationalization, and economic mismanagement. During most of the civil war, the government was unable to exercise effective control outside of urban areas, many of which were cut off from the capital. An estimated 1 million Mozambicans perished during the civil war, 1.7 million took refuge in neighboring states, and several million more were internally displaced. In the third FRELIMO party congress in 1983, President Samora Machel conceded the failure of socialism and the need for major political and economic reforms. He died, along with several advisers, in a suspicious 1986 plane crash.


MOZAMBIQUE
0 100 200 300 Miles
0 100 200 300 Kilometers
TANZANIA
ZAMBIA
MALAWI
ZIMBABWE
SOUTH AFRICA
SWAZILAND
INDIAN OCEAN
Mozambique Channel
Lake Malawi
Lake Chilwa
Lake Kosi
Lake Sibaya
Lago de Cahora Bassa
MULANJE MTS.
Sierra da Gorongosa 6,112 ft. 1863 m.
Mt. Binga 7,992 ft. 2436 m.
Rovuma
Lugenda
Lúrio
Shire
Zambezi
Buzi
Save
Changane
Limpopo
Quionga
Cabo Delgado
Mocímboa do Rovuma
Vila de Moćimboa da Praia
Ilha do Ibo
Mavago
Lichinga
Marrupa
Maua
Pemba
Nacala
Nampula
Moçambique
Angoche
Nabúri
Milanje
Moatize
Tete
Vila Coutinho
Zâmbuè
Vila do Zumbo
Mangula
Changara
Inyanga
Catandica
Quelimane
Macuze
Vila do Chinde
Chimoio
Dondo
Beira
Machanga
Nova Mambone
Ilha do Bazaruto
Ilha Benguérua
Vilanculos
Ponta São Sebastião
Ponta da Barra Falsa
Ponta da Barra
Inhambane
Mapinhane
Pomene
Massinga
Mabote
Hippo Valley
Beitbridge
Messina
Pafúri
Panda
Quissico
Inharrime
Xai-Xai
Nelspruit
Manhiça
Maputo
Ermelo
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S
Mozambique

His successor, Joaquim Chissano, continued the reforms and began peace talks with RENAMO. The new constitution enacted in 1990 provided for a multi-party political system, market-based economy, and free elections. The civil war ended in October 1992 with the Rome General Peace Accords. Under supervision of the ONUMOZ peacekeeping force of the United Nations, peace returned to Mozambique.

By mid-1995 the more than 1.7 million Mozambican refugees who had sought asylum in neighboring Malawi, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Zambia, Tanzania, and South Africa as a result of war and drought had returned, as part of the largest repatriation witnessed in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, a further estimated 4 million internally displaced people returned to their areas of origin.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Mozambique is a multi-party democracy under the 1990 constitution. The executive branch comprises a president, prime minister, and Council of Ministers. There is a National Assembly and municipal assemblies. The judiciary comprises a Supreme Court and provincial, district, and municipal courts. Suffrage is universal at 18.

In 1994 the country held its first democratic elections. Joaquim Chissano was elected President with 53% of the vote, and a 250-member National Assembly was voted in with 129 FRELIMO deputies, 112 RENAMO deputies, and 9 representatives of three smaller parties that formed the Democratic Union (UD). Since its formation in 1994, the National Assembly has made some progress in becoming a body increasingly more independent of the executive. By 1999, more than one-half (53%) of the legislation passed originated in the Assembly.

After some delays, in 1998 the country held its first local elections to provide for local representation and some budgetary authority at the municipal level. The principal opposition party, RENAMO, boycotted the local elections, citing flaws in the registration process. Independent slates contested the elections and won seats in municipal assemblies. Turnout was very low.

In the aftermath of the 1998 local elections, the government resolved to make more accommodations to the opposition's procedural concerns for the second round of multiparty national elections in 1999. Working through the National Assembly, the electoral law was rewritten and passed by consensus in December 1998. Financed largely by international donors, a very successful voter registration was conducted from July to September 1999, providing voter registration cards to 85% of the potential electorate (more than 7 million voters).

The second general elections were held December 3-5, 1999, with high voter turnout. International and domestic observers agreed that the voting process was well organized and went smoothly. Both the opposition and observers subsequently cited flaws in the tabulation process that, had they not occurred, might have changed the outcome. In the end, however, international and domestic observers concluded that the close result of the vote reflected the will of the people.

President Chissano won the presidency with a margin of 4% points over the RENAMO-Electoral Union coalition candidate, Afonso Dhlakama, and began his 5-year term in January 2000. FRELIMO increased its majority in the National Assembly with 133 out of 250 seats. RENAMO-UE coalition won 116 seats, one went independent, and no third parties are represented.

The opposition coalition did not accept the National Election Commission's results of the presidential vote and filed a formal complaint to the Supreme Court. One month after the voting, the court dismissed the opposition's challenge and validated the election results. The opposition did not file a complaint about the results of the legislative vote.

The second local elections, involving 33 municipalities with some 2.4 million registered voters, took place in November 2003. This was the first time that FRELIMO, RENAMO-UE, and independent parties competed without significant boycotts. The 24% turnout was well above the 15% turnout in the first municipal elections. FRELIMO won 28 mayoral positions and the majority in 29 municipal assemblies, while RENAMO won 5 mayoral positions and the majority in 4 municipal assemblies. The voting was conducted in an orderly fashion without violent incidents. However, the period immediately after the elections was marked by objections about voter and candidate registration and vote tabulation, as well as calls for greater transparency.

In May 2004, the government approved a new general elections law that contained innovations based on the experience of the 2003 municipal elections.

The third general elections occurred on December 1-2, 2004. FRELIMO candidate Armando Guebuza won with 64% of the popular vote. His opponent, Afonso Dhlakama of RENAMO, received 32% of the popular vote. The estimated 44% turnout was well below the almost 70% turnout in the 1999 general elections. FRELIMO won 160 seats in Parliament. A coalition of RENAMO and several small parties won the 90 remaining seats. Armando Guebuza was inaugurated as the President of Mozambique on February 2, 2005. The government has scheduled provincial and municipal elections in 2008, and presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Armando GUEBUZA**
Prime Min.: **Luisa Dias DIOGO**

Min. of Agriculture: **Erasmo MUHATE**
Min. of Coordination of Environmental Action: **Alcinda ABREU**
Min. of Development & Planning: **Aiuba CUERENEIA**
Min. of Education & Culture: **Aires Bonifacio ALI**
Min. of Energy: **Salvador NAMBURETE**
Min. of Finance: **Manuel CHANG**
Min. of Fisheries: **Cadmiel MUTHEMBA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation: **Oldemiro BALOI**
Min. of Health: **Paulo Ivo GARRIDO**
Min. of Industry & Commerce: **Antonio FERNANDO**
Min. of Interior: **Jose MANDRA**
Min. of Justice: **Maria Benvinda LEVI**
Min. of Labor: **Helena TAIPO**
Min. of Mineral Resources: **Esperanca BIAS**
Min. of National Defense: **Fillipe NHUSSI**
Min. of Public Works & Housing: **Felicio ZACARIAS**
Min. of Science & Technology:
Min. of State Admin.: **Lucas CHOMERA**
Min. of Tourism: **Fernando SUMBANA, Jr.**
Min. of Transport & Communication: **Paulo ZUCULA**
Min. of Veteran's Affairs:
Min. of Women & Social Action: **Virgilia MATABELE**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **David SIMANGO**
Min. in the Presidency for Diplomatic Affairs: **Francisco Caetano MADEIRA**
Min. in the Presidency for Parliamentary Affairs: **Isabel Manuel NKAVADEKA**
Attorney Gen.: **Augusto PAULINO**
Governor, Bank of Mozambique: **Adriano Afonso MALEIANE**
Ambassador to the US: **Marcos Geraldo NAMASHULUA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Filipe CHIDUMO**

Mozambique maintains an embassy in the United States at 1525 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; tel: 202-293-7146; fax: 202-835-0245.

ECONOMY

Macroeconomic Review

Alleviating poverty. At the end of the civil war in 1992, Mozambique ranked among the poorest countries in the world. It still ranks among the least developed nations with very low socioeconomic indicators. In the last decade, however, Mozambique has experienced a notable economic recovery. Per capita GDP in 2006 was estimated at U.S. $320, a significant increase over the mid-1980s level of U.S. $120. With high foreign debt and a good track record on economic reform, Mozambique was the first African nation and sixth country worldwide to qualify for debt relief under the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) initial HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) Initiative. In April 2000, Mozambique qualified for the Enhanced HIPC program and reached its completion point in September 2001. This led to the Paris Club members agreeing in November 2001 to substantially reduce the remaining bilateral debt, resulting in the complete forgiveness of a considerable volume of bilateral debt. The United States already finished the process and has forgiven Mozambique's debt.

During their summit in Scotland in July 2005, the G8 nations agreed to significant multilateral debt relief for the world's least developed nations. On December 21, 2005, the IMF formalized the complete cancellation of all Mozambican IMF debt contracted prior to January 1, 2005, worth U.S. $153 million.

Rebounding growth. The resettlement of civil war refugees, political stability and continuing economic reforms have led to a high economic growth rate. Between 1994 and 2006, average annual GDP growth was approximately 8%. Mozambique achieved this growth rate even though the devastating floods of 2000 slowed GDP growth to 2.1%. The World Bank is predicting average growth of 7% through 2008. Future strong expansion requires continued economic reforms, major foreign direct investment, and the resurrection of the agriculture, transportation and tourism sectors. Focusing on economic growth in the agricultural sector is a major challenge for the government. Although more than 80% of the population engages in small-scale agriculture, the sector suffers from inadequate infrastructure, commercial networks and investment. However a majority of Mozambique's arable land is still uncultivated, leaving room for considerable growth.

Low inflation. The government's tight control of spending and the money supply, combined with financial sector reform, successfully reduced inflation from 70% in 1994 to less than 5% in 1998-1999. Economic disruptions resulting from the devastating floods of 2000 caused inflation to jump to 12.7% that year. The government is still working to bring inflation down to those lower numbers. In 2004 inflation was 9.1%; in 2005 it climbed to 11.2%; in 2006 it dropped back down to 9.4%. As of March 2007, the floating exchange rate was approximately 26 meticais per dollar. (Note: In July 2006 the government revised its currency, dropping three zeros. Thus a coin formerly worth 1,000 meticais was from then on worth only one metical. And thus, where a dollar previously had been worth, for example, 26,000 meticais, it was from July onward worth 26.)

Extensive economic reform. Economic reform has been extensive. More than 1,200 state-owned enterprises (mostly small) have been privatized. Preparations for privatization and/or sector liberalization are underway for the remaining parastatals, including telecommunications, electricity, ports, and the railroads. The government frequently selects a strategic foreign investor when privatizing a parastatal. Additionally, customs duties have been reduced, and customs management has been streamlined and reformed. The government introduced a value-added tax in 1999 as part of its efforts to increase domestic revenues.

Improving trade imbalance. In 2006 Mozambique exported U.S. $2.43 billion worth of goods and imported U.S. $2.82 billion worth of goods. Support programs provided by foreign donors and private financing of foreign direct investment megaprojects and their associated raw materials have largely compensated for balance-of-payment shortfalls.

The medium-term outlook for exports is encouraging, as a number of recent foreign investment projects have improved the trade balance. This export growth is expected to continue. MOZAL I, a large aluminum smelter that commenced production in mid-2000, greatly expanded Mozambique's trade volume. In April 2001, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) approved financing assistance for MOZAL II, which doubled overall production capacity. Phase two went online in April 2003, five months ahead of schedule, using primarily Mozambican workers during construction. Traditional Mozambican exports include cashews, shrimp, fish, copra, sugar, cotton, tea and citrus and exotic fruits. Most of these industries are being rehabilitated. In addition, Mozambique is less dependent upon imports for basic food and manufactured goods as the result of steady increases in local production.

SADC trade protocol. In December 1999, the Mozambican Council of Ministers approved the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Trade Protocol. The Protocol will create a free trade zone among more than 200 million consumers in the SADC region. Implementation of the Protocol began in 2002 and has an overall zero-tariff target set for 2008; however, Mozambique's country-specific zero-tariff goal is currently 2015. Mozambique joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) on August 26, 1995.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

While allegiances dating back to the liberation struggle remain relevant, Mozambique's foreign policy has become increasingly pragmatic. The twin pillars of Mozambique's foreign policy are maintenance of good relations with its neighbors and maintenance and expansion of ties to development partners.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Mozambique's foreign policy was inextricably linked to the struggles for majority rule in Rhodesia and South Africa, as well as superpower competition and the Cold War. Mozambique's decision to enforce UN sanctions against Rhodesia and deny that country access to the sea led Ian Smith's regime to undertake overt and covert actions to destabilize the country, including sponsoring the rebel group RENAMO. After the change of government in Zimbabwe in 1980, the apartheid regime in South Africa continued to finance the destabilization of Mozambique.

The 1984 Nkomati Accord, while failing in its goal of ending South African support to RENAMO, opened initial diplomatic contacts between the Mozambican and South African Governments. This process gained momentum with South Africa's elimination of apartheid, which culminated in the establishment of full diplomatic relations in October 1993. While relations with neighboring Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, and Tanzania show occasional strains, Mozambique's ties to these countries remain strong.

In the years immediately following its independence, Mozambique benefited from considerable assistance from some western countries, notably the Scandinavians. Moscow and its allies, however, became Mozambique's primary economic, military, and political supporters and its foreign policy reflected this linkage. This began to change in 1983; in 1984 Mozambique joined the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Western aid quickly replaced Soviet support, with the Scandinavians, the United States, the Netherlands, and the European Union becoming increasingly important sources of development assistance. Italy also maintains a profile in Mozambique as a result of its key role during the peace process. Relations with Portugal, the former colonial power, are complex and of some importance as Portuguese investors play a visible role in Mozambique's economy.

Mozambique is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and ranks among the moderate members of the African Bloc in the United Nations and other international organizations. Mozambique also belongs to the Organization of African Unity/African Union and the Southern African Development Community. In 1994, the government became a full member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in part to broaden its base of international support but also to please the country's sizeable Muslim population. Similarly, in early 1996 Mozambique joined its Anglophone neighbors in the Commonwealth. In the same year, Mozambique became a founding member and the first President of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), and maintains close ties with other Lusophone states.

U.S.-MOZAMBICAN RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Mozambique are good and steadily improving. By 1993, U.S. aid to Mozambique was prominent, due in part to significant emergency food assistance in the wake of the 1991-93 southern African drought, but more importantly in support of the peace and reconciliation process. During the process leading up to elections in October 1994, the United States served as a significant financier and member of the most important commissions established to monitor implementation of the Rome General Peace Accords. The United States is the largest bilateral donor to the country and plays a leading role in donor efforts to assist Mozambique.

The U.S. Embassy opened in Maputo on November 8, 1975, and the first American ambassador arrived in March 1976. In that same year, the United States extended a $10 million grant to the Government of Mozambique to help compensate for the economic costs of enforcing sanctions against Rhodesia. In 1977, however, largely motivated by a concern with human rights violations, the U.S. Congress prohibited the provision of development aid to Mozambique without a presidential certification that such aid would be in the foreign policy interests of the United States. Relations hit a nadir in March 1981,

when the Government of Mozambique expelled four members of the U.S. Embassy staff. In response, the United States suspended plans to provide development aid and to name a new ambassador to Mozambique. Relations between the two countries languished in a climate of stagnation and mutual suspicion.

Contacts between the two countries continued in the early 1980s as part of the U.S. administration's conflict resolution efforts in the region. In late 1983, a new U.S. ambassador arrived in Maputo, and the first Mozambican envoy to the United States arrived in Washington, signaling a thaw in the bilateral relationship. The United States subsequently responded to Mozambique's economic reform and drift away from Moscow's embrace by initiating an aid program in 1984. President Samora Machel paid a symbolically important official working visit to the United States in 1985, where he met President Reagan. After that meeting, a full U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) mission was established, and significant assistance for economic reform efforts began. President Chissano met with President Bush in September 2003; previously, he had met with Presidents Reagan (October 1987), Bush (March 1990), and Clinton (November 1998), and also with Secretaries of State Powell (February 2002) and Baker (July 1992). Since taking office in February 2005, President Guebuza has visited the United States on five occasions. In June 2005, President Guebuza visited Washington, DC to take part in President Bush's mini-summit on Africa, along with the leaders of Ghana, Namibia, Botswana, and Niger. Later that month, he attended the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) Business Summit in Baltimore. President Guebuza returned in September 2005 for the UN General Assembly in New York and in December 2005 attended the Fourth Development Cooperation Forum at the Carter Center in Atlanta. In 2006 he visited New York for the UN General Assembly, and in 2007 he visited Washington, DC for the signing of Mozambique's Millennium Challenge Corporation compact.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MAPUTO (E) 193 Kenneth Kaunda, APO/FPO 2330 Maputo Place, WashDC 20521-2330, 258 2149 27 97, Fax 258 2149 01 14, Workweek: 0730-1730 Monday-Thursday–0730-1130 Friday, Website: http://Mozambique.usembassy.gov.

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DAO:	John M. Roddy
EEO:	Mary K. Walz
FMO:	Debra Tracey
IMO:	Maurizio Vizani
IPO:	Nicholas Wingert
POL:	Leonel Miranda

Security Information

The security situation in Mozambique requires caution. Street crime and carjackings in urban areas occur frequently. Road travel can be hazardous and should not be undertaken after daylight hours. The abundance of weapons remaining from the country's civil war and police who are poorly trained, equipped, and motivated contribute to a serious crime situation.

Additionally, several hundred thousand mines were planted throughout Mozambique during the last three decades of conflict. Although mine clearing operations are underway, surface travel off main highways should be approached with caution.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 15, 2008

Country Description: Mozambique is a developing country in southern Africa which has steadily rebuilt its economy and civic institutions since ending a 16-year civil war in 1992. The country stabilized following Mozambique's first multi-party elections in October 1994, and a new president was elected in December 2004. Despite high economic growth rates in recent years, Mozambique remains among the world's poorest countries. Facilities for tourism in Maputo, the capital city, are steadily improving but remain limited in other areas as many of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries are not yet available. The official language is Portuguese, although English is spoken in many tourist areas, and in some rural areas only local languages are widely spoken.

Entry Requirements: A visa is required for entry into Mozambique. It is recommended that travelers acquire the appropriate visa prior to departing for Mozambique, although a one-entry visa can be obtained at country points of entry, including airports. Foreigners in Mozambique without a valid visa can expect to pay a substantial fine for each day they are in Mozambique illegally. The fine can be assessed upon departure or if caught while in Mozambique by authorities. The passports of all travelers who wish to enter Mozambique must be valid for six months upon arrival and must contain at least three clean (unstamped) visa pages each time entry is sought. The Mozambican Embassy and Consulates in South Africa charge up to five times the amount charged in the U.S. or at border crossing points for a tourist visa to Mozambique.

In September 2007 the Mozambican Interior and Health Ministries decreed that all travelers entering

Mozambique, having previously visited a country where yellow fever is present, must present a valid certification of vaccination against yellow fever. We recommend all travelers be vaccinated to avoid complications at the border. Any passenger who cannot present such a certificate at the port of entry will be vaccinated at a cost of $50 US dollars or the equivalent in metical. Additionally, all travelers entering Mozambique must carry their yellow vaccination book.

For further information on entry requirements, contact the Embassy of Mozambique located at 1525 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, telephone: (202) 293-7146, email: embamoc@aol.com, fax: (202) 835 0245, or the nearest Mozambican embassy or consulate. Visit the Embassy of Mozambique web site at http://www.embamoc-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Overland travel after dark is extremely dangerous due to poor road conditions, lack of emergency services, and the increased potential for vehicle hijacking. Visitors should be particularly vigilant when driving on the main thoroughfares connecting Mozambique and South Africa as incidents of vehicle theft, including assault and robbery, have been reported. Official Americans serving in Mozambique are prohibited from overland travel outside Maputo city limits after dark and are encouraged to travel in convoys of two or more vehicles when outside of the city during daylight hours. Accidents involving pedestrians are increasingly common, and some reports suggest pedestrians purposely throw themselves in front of vehicles driven by foreigners in order to extort reparation payment. Due to residual landmines, overland travelers are advised to remain on well-traveled roads or seek local information before going off-road outside of Maputo and other provincial capitals.

Drivers should obey police signals to stop at checkpoints, which are common throughout Mozambique. Foreigners in Mozambique for more than 90 days are required to have an International Driver's License or to obtain a Mozambican driver's license. Although demonstrations do occur in Mozambique, they are infrequent and there have been no recent demonstrations against U.S. interests. If any demonstrations do occur, they should be avoided.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the vast majority of visitors complete their travels in Mozambique without incident, the most serious threat facing U.S. citizens visiting Mozambique is crime. Street crimes, including mugging, purse snatching and pick-pocketing are common, both in Maputo and in secondary cities. Carjacking is increasingly common in Maputo. Visitors must be vigilant when out in public areas and should not display jewelry or other expensive items. Isolated areas should be avoided. Joggers and pedestrians have frequently been mugged, even during daylight hours. Visitors should take caution when walking at night, even in well-known tourist areas.

Mozambican police are not at the standard U.S. citizens are accustomed to in the United States and visitors should not expect the same level of police service.

Many airline trips from Mozambique to the U.S., Europe, or African destinations transit Johannesburg, South Africa. Baggage pilferage is an ongoing problem at Johannesburg's Oliver Tambo International Airport. Travelers are encouraged to secure their luggage, use an airport plastic wrapping service, and avoid placing currency, electronics, jewelry, cameras, cosmetics, running shoes, or other valuables in checked luggage. Having a complete inventory of items placed in checked baggage can aid in processing a claim if theft does occur.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

There is no local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Mozambique.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are rudimentary, and most medical providers do not speak fluent English. Medicines are not always consistently available. There are both public and private medical facilities in the city of Maputo and most provincial capitals. All health care institutions and providers require payment at the time of service, and may even require payment before service is given. While some private clinics accept credit cards, many medical facilities do not. Doctors and hospitals outside Maputo generally expect immediate cash payment for health services. Outside of Maputo, available medical care ranges from very basic to non-existent.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Mozambique.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Mozambique. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Mozambique is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The main north-south thoroughfare is passable until the city of Caia (Sofala province), where vehicle passengers must disembark and cross the Zambezi River by ferryboat. On the north side of the river, the road continues to the Northern provinces. The road network connecting provincial capitals is in fair condition, but can be riddled with potholes and other obstacles.

The EN4 toll road between Maputo and South Africa is well-maintained. Official Americans are prohibited from traveling outside cities after dark because of the increased risk of banditry, poor road conditions in some areas, poor maintenance of many vehicles in the country (e.g., no headlights or rear lights), as well as the threat imposed by livestock that graze on roadsides. Travel outside Maputo often requires a four-wheel drive vehicle, which creates an additional security risk since these vehicles are high-theft items. Public transportation is limited and often has poor safety standards. Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office at http://www.turismo mocambique.co.mz.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Mozambique, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Mozambique's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Mozambican law requires that all persons carry an identity document, such as a passport, when out in public, and produce it if requested by police. Notarized copies of both the biographic page of a passport and a valid Mozambican visa are acceptable forms of identification, although police will occasionally demand original documents. There are certain areas in Mozambique where pedestrian traffic is prohibited and the ban is strictly enforced. These areas include the front of the presidential offices located north of the Hotel Polana on the seaside of Avenida Julius Nyerere and the Praça dos Herois on Avenida Acordos de Lusaka near the airport, both in Maputo.

It is against the law to destroy Mozambican currency; offenders can expect a jail sentence or fine. The limit for an undeclared amount of U.S. dollars one can take out of the country is $5,000. The limit on local currency is 500 metical, which is approximately 20 U.S. dollars. Some American travelers have reported having difficulties cashing traveler's checks and have relied instead on ATMs and credit cards for money withdrawals in Mozambique. Outside of the major hotels and restaurants, credit cards are not widely accepted in Mozambique. The South African rand and U.S. dollar are sometimes accepted as legal tender, although this is more common in the southern part of the country or in tourist areas; all transactions must have a local currency (metical) payment option.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mozambique laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mozambique are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Mozambique are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Mozambique. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Maputo at 193 Avenida Kenneth Kaunda, telephone (258) 21 49 2797. The after-hours telephone number for use in emergencies is (258) 21 49 0723. The Consular Section's fax number is (258) 21 49 0448. The Consular Section's e-mail address is consular maputo@state.gov. The Embassy's web site is http://mozambique.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Prospective adoptive parents (prospective adoptive parents) must be legal residents of Mozambique and be present in the country for the duration of the adoption process. Married prospective adoptive parents must have been married for ten years prior to the initiation of the adoption process.

The Government of Mozambique requires a six month integration period after a prospective child is placed in the home and before the adoption can be finalized by the court. The government officially requires post-adoption monitoring until the child reaches 21 years. This requirement may be waived. However, if it is believed that the child will be adopted and immediately taken out of Mozambique, the courts may block an intercountry adoption.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics show that only 8 orphan visas have been issued to Mozambican orphans in the past five years.

Adoption Authority: The adoption authority for Mozambique is the Social Services National Directorate (Direcção Nacional da Acçao Social), which falls under the Ministry of Women and Social Action. Adoption information may be requested from this office by postal mail, international courier or phone using the following contact information: Rua de Tchamba nr. 86, Direcção Nacional de Acção Social, Departamento da Crianca (Social Services National Directorate, Children's Department, tel: +258 21 49 7901/3. Ms. Francisca Sales is the director of the Social Services National Directorate at the federal level. Municipal authorities oversee adoptions within their respective geographic areas of jurisdiction. American citizens wishing to adopt in Maputo should contact Ana Conwana, the head of the Maputo City's Social Service National Directorate office at (258) 21 306 846. Numbers for offices in other provinces can be obtained by contacting the national directorate at +258 21 49 7901/3.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must have legal residency in Mozambique and must have been married for ten years prior to the initiation of the adoption process. Single people are eligible to adopt. In addition, prospective adoptive parents must undergo a home study evaluation by Mozambican social and health workers, and must be certified "approvable for adoption." Gay and lesbian couples cannot officially be approved for adoption.

Residency Requirements: Mozambican law requires that prospective adoptive parents have legal residency in the country in order to be eligible to adopt. As such, the adoptive couple must be physically present in Mozambique for the duration of the adoption process.

Time Frame: The adoption process in Mozambique takes approximately 6 to 9 months. U.S. immigrant visa petitions for adopted minors are forwarded to the U.S. Consulate in Johannesburg for adjudication.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: As American citizens interested in adopting must be legal residents of Mozambique, agencies in the United States do not usually play a role in the adoption process. The U.S. Embassy maintains a list of attorneys. However, generally speaking, the services of a private attorney in Mozambique are not required for the adoption process. http://mozambique.usembassy.gov/legal_information.html.

Adoption Fees: There is a court fee of approximately $50, in addition to minor fees for forms and documents. Adoptive parents will also be responsible for acquiring official translations of both English- and Portuguese-language documents. http://mozambique.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Procedures: The first step in the adoption process is submission of a formal adoption request to the Social Services Directorate in the appropriate governing municipality. Together with the initial application, prospective parents should submit a certified true copy of their marriage certificate (translated into Portuguese), and photocopies of passports and Mozambican residency permits (known as a "DIRE"). Other supporting documents and required forms may be obtained from the Social Services office and the City Health Directorate.

The Social Services Directorate will then begin a lengthy investigation of the prospective parents' lifestyle, economic means, mental and physical health, and other details associated with a home study evaluation. During this time, the process of identifying a child for adoption—through an orphanage, for example—is also initiated.

As a final step, the Social Services Directorate will pass on the parents' petition for adoption to the Juvenile Court (Tribunal de Menores). If the court grants the order of adoption, a certificate of approval will be issued officially endorsing the adoption. The adoptive parent may then begin the process of registration, name change, application for new identity and nationality documents, etc.

Required Documents: Prospective adoptive parents should be prepared to submit certified copies of their marriage certificate, Mozambican residency cards, passports (all with official translations, if required),

along with bank statements and health certificates. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the Republic of Mozambique

1990 M Street, N.W.

Suite 570

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel: (202) 293-7146/9

Email: embamoc@aol.com

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy

Avenida Kenneth Kaunda 193

Maputo, Mozambique

Tel: (258) 21 49 2797

Fax: (258) 21 49 0448

ConsularMaputo@state.gov

http://Mozambique.USEmbassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

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Countries of the World

and Their Leaders Yearbook 2010

A Compilation of U.S. Department of State Reports on Contemporary Political and Economic Conditions, Government Personnel and Policies, Political Parties, Religions, History, Education, Press, Radio and TV, Climate, and Other Characteristics of Selected Countries of the World; Together with Travel Alerts, Passport and Visa Information, World Health Information for Travelers, and Customs and Duty Tips for Returning Residents

Volume 2

Background Notes: Namibia—Zimbabwe
International Treaty Organizations
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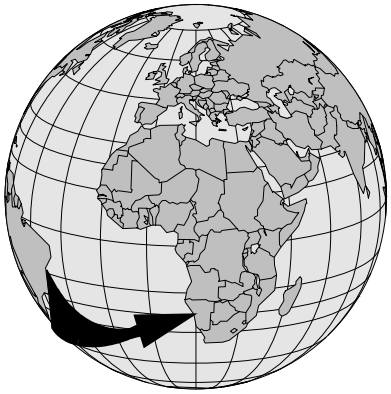
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Background Notes on Countries of the World

Namibia—Zimbabwe



NAMIBIA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Namibia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 823,145 sq. km. (320,827 sq. mi.); the size of Texas and Louisiana combined.

Cities: Capital—Windhoek (2001 census) pop. 233,529. Other cities—Grootfontein, Katima Mulilo, Keetmanshoop, Luderitz, Ondangwa, Oranjemund, Oshakati, Otjiwarongo, Swakopmund, Tsumeb, Walvis Bay.

Terrain: Varies from coastal desert to semiarid mountains and plateau.

Climate: Semidesert and high plateau.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Namibian(s).

Population: (2008 projected) 2.1 million.

Annual growth rate: (2001 est.) 2.6%. The population growth rate is depressed by an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate estimated to be 15.3%.

Ethnic groups: About 50% of the population belong to Ovambo ethnic group, and 9% to the Kavango ethnic group. Other ethnic groups are: Herero 7%, Damara 7%, Nama 5%, Caprivian 4%, San 3%, Baster 2%, and Tswana 0.5%.

Religions: Predominantly Christian; also indigenous beliefs.

Languages: English (official); Afrikaans, German, Oshivambo, Herero, Nama/Damara, other indigenous languages.

Education: Years compulsory—to age 16. Attendance (2001)—82%. Literacy (adults, 2005)—85%.

Work force: (2004) 493,448.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: March 21, 1990.

Government branches: Executive—president (elected for 5-year term), prime minister. Legislative—bicameral Parliament: National Assembly and National Council. Judicial—Supreme Court, the High Court, and lower courts.

Political subdivisions: 13 administrative regions.

Political parties: South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), United Democratic Front of Namibia (UDF), Congress of Democrats (COD), Republican Party (RP), National Unity Democratic Organization (NUDO), Monitor Action Group (MAG).

Suffrage: Universal adult.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $6.749 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 5.9%.

Per capita GNI: (2007) $3,360.

Inflation rate: (2008) 8.4%.

Natural resources: Diamonds, uranium, zinc, gold, copper, lead, tin, fluorspar, salt, fisheries, and wildlife.

Agriculture: (10.6% of GDP, 2007): Products—livestock and meat products, fish and fish products, grapes.

Mining: (12.4% of GDP, 2007): Gem-quality diamonds, uranium, zinc, copper, other.

Trade: Exports (2007)—$4.36 billion: diamonds, uranium, zinc, copper, lead, beef, cattle, fish, karakul pelts, grapes. Imports (2007)—$4.56 billion: foodstuffs, construction material, manufactured goods. Major partners—South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Germany, U.K., U.S.

Sources: Namibia Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS); Namibia Labor Force Survey; Namibia Population and Housing Census; Bank of Namibia; World Bank; UN Human Development Report.

PEOPLE

Namibians are of diverse ethnic origins. The principal groups are the Ovambo, Kavango, Herero/Himba, Damara, mixed race ("colored" and Rehoboth Baster), white (Afrikaner, German, and Portuguese), Nama, Caprivian, San, and Tswana.

The Ovambo make up about half of Namibia's people. The Ovambo, Kavango, and East Caprivian peoples, who occupy the relatively well-watered and wooded northern part of the country, are settled farmers and herders. Historically, these groups had little contact with the Nama, Damara, and Herero, who roamed the central part of the country vying for control of sparse pastureland. German colonial rule destroyed the war-making ability of the tribes but did not erase their identities or traditional organization. People from the more populous north have settled throughout the country in recent decades as a result of urbanization, industrialization, and the demand for labor.

Missionary work during the 1800s drew many Namibians to Christianity. While most Namibian Christians are Lutheran, there also are Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Jewish, African Methodist Episcopal, and Dutch Reformed Christians represented.

Education and services have been extended in varying degrees to most rural areas in recent years. The estimated adult literacy rate of Namibians was relatively high at 81% as of 2003. However, although the national literacy rate is estimated to be 81%, it is important to note that the number of Namibians who are functionally literate and have the skills that the labor market needs is significantly fewer.

HISTORY

The San are generally assumed to have been the earliest inhabitants of the region. Later inhabitants include the Nama and the Damara or Berg Dama. The Bantu-speaking Ovambo and Herero migrated from the north in about the 14th century A.D.

The inhospitable Namib Desert constituted a formidable barrier to European exploration until the late 18th century, when successions of travelers, traders, hunters, and missionaries explored the area. In 1878, the United Kingdom annexed Walvis Bay on behalf of Cape Colony, and the area was incorporated into the Cape of Good Hope in 1884. In 1883, a German trader, Adolf Luderitz, claimed the rest of the coastal region after negotiations with a local chief. Negotiations between the United Kingdom and Germany resulted in Germany's annexation of the coastal region, excluding Walvis Bay. The following year, the United Kingdom recognized the hinterland up to 20 degrees east longitude as a German sphere of influence. A region later known as the Caprivi Strip became a part of South West Africa after an agreement on July 1, 1890, between the United Kingdom and Germany. The British recognized that the strip would fall under German administration to provide access to the Zambezi River and German colonies in East Africa. In exchange, the British received the islands of Zanzibar and Heligoland.

German colonial power was consolidated, and prime grazing land passed to white control as a result of the Herero and Nama wars of 1904-08. German administration ended during World War I following South African occupation in 1915.

On December 17, 1920, South Africa undertook administration of South West Africa under the terms of Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and a mandate agreement by the League Council. The mandate agreement gave South Africa full power of administration and legislation over the territory. It required that South Africa promote the material and moral well-being and social progress of the people.

When the League of Nations was dissolved in 1946, the newly formed United Nations inherited its supervisory authority for the territory. South Africa refused UN requests to place the territory under a trusteeship agreement. During the 1960s, as the European powers granted independence to their colonies and trust territories in Africa, pressure mounted on South Africa to do so in Namibia, which was then known as South West Africa. In 1966, the UN General Assembly revoked South Africa's mandate. Also in 1966, the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) began its armed struggle to liberate Namibia, in part from bases abroad. After Angola became independent in 1975, SWAPO established bases in the southern part of that country. Hostilities intensified over the years, particularly in the north.

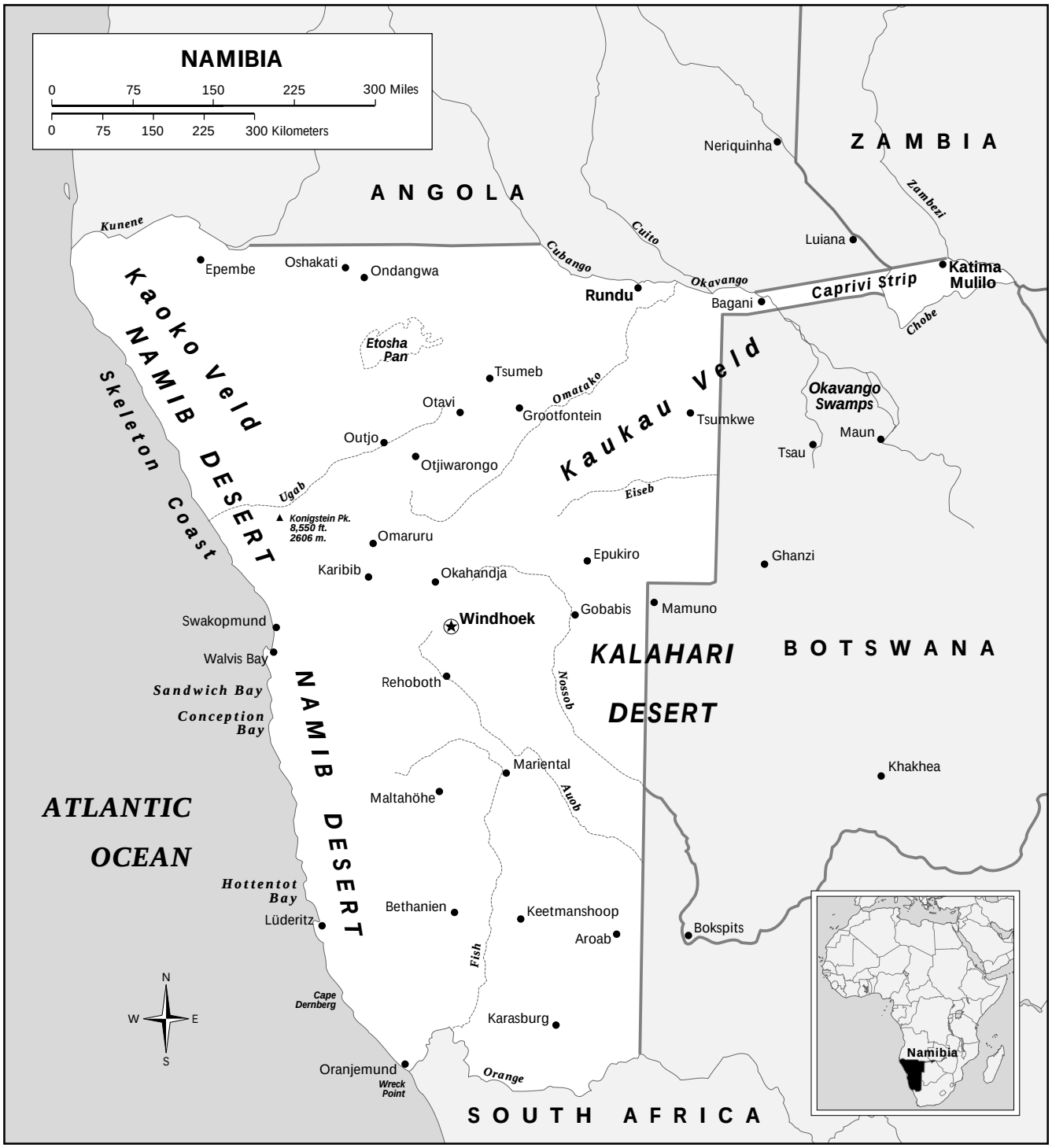
In a 1971 advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice upheld UN authority over Namibia, determining that the South African presence in Namibia was illegal and that South Africa therefore was obligated to withdraw its administration from Namibia immediately. The Court also advised UN member states to refrain from implying legal recognition or assistance to the South African presence.

International Pressure for Independence

In 1977, Western members of the UN Security Council, including Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States (known as the Western Contact Group), launched a joint diplomatic effort to bring an internationally acceptable transition to independence for Namibia. Their efforts led to the presentation in April 1978 of Security Council Resolution 435 for settling the Namibian problem.

The proposal, known as the UN Plan, was worked out after lengthy consultations with South Africa, the front-line states (Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), SWAPO, UN officials, and the Western Contact Group. It called for the holding of elections in Namibia under UN supervision and control, the cessation of all hostile acts by all parties, and restrictions on the activities of South African and Namibian military, paramilitary, and police.

South Africa agreed to cooperate in achieving the implementation of Resolution 435. Nonetheless, in December 1978, in defiance of the UN proposal, it unilaterally held elec-



tions in Namibia that were boycotted by SWAPO and a few other political parties. South Africa continued to administer Namibia through its installed multiracial coalitions. Negotiations after 1978 focused on issues such as supervision of elections connected with the implementation of the UN Plan.

Negotiations and Transition

Intense discussions between the concerned parties continued during the 1978-88 period, with the UN Secretary General's Special Representative, Martti Ahtisaari, playing a key role. The 1982 Constitutional Principles, agreed upon by the front-line states, SWAPO, and the Western Contact Group created the framework for Namibia's democratic constitution.

In May 1988, a U.S. mediation team, headed by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester A. Crocker, brought negotiators from Angola, Cuba, and South Africa, and

observers from the Soviet Union together in London. Intense diplomatic maneuvering characterized the next 7 months, as the parties worked out agreements to bring peace to the region and make implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 435 possible. On December 13, Cuba, South Africa, and the People's Republic of Angola agreed to a total Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola. The protocol also established a Joint Commission, consisting of the parties with the United States and the Soviet Union as observers, to oversee implementation of the accords. A bilateral agreement between Cuba and the People's Republic of Angola was signed in New York on December 22, 1988. On the same day a tripartite agreement, in which the parties recommended initiation of the UN Plan on April 1 and the Republic of South Africa agreed to withdraw its troops, was signed. Implementation of Resolution 435 officially began on April 1, 1989, when South African-appointed Administrator Gen. Louis Pienaar officially began administrating the territory's transition to independence. Special Representative Martti Ahtisaari arrived in Windhoek to begin performing his duties as head of the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG).

The transition got off to a shaky start on April 1 because, in contravention to SWAPO President Sam Nujoma's written assurances to the UN Secretary General to abide by a cease-fire and repatriate only unarmed insurgents, about 2,000 armed members of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), SWAPO's military wing, crossed the border from Angola in an apparent attempt to establish a military presence in northern Namibia. The Special Representative authorized a limited contingent of South African troops to aid the South West African police in restoring order. A period of intense fighting followed, during which 375 PLAN fighters were killed. At Mt. Etjo, a game park outside Windhoek, in a special meeting of the Joint Commission on April 9, a plan was put in place to confine the South African forces to base and return PLAN elements to Angola. While the problem was solved, minor disturbances in the north continued throughout the transition period. In October, under order of the UN Security Council, Pretoria demobilized members of the disbanded counterinsurgency unit, Koevoet (Afrikaans for "crowbar"), who had been incorporated into the South West African police.

The 11-month transition period went relatively smoothly. Political prisoners were granted amnesty, discriminatory legislation was repealed, South Africa withdrew all its forces from Namibia, and some 42,000 refugees returned safely and voluntarily under the auspices of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Almost 98% of registered voters turned out to elect members of the Constituent Assembly. The elections were held in November 1989 and were certified as free and fair by the Special Representative, with SWAPO taking 57% of the vote, just short of the two-thirds necessary to have a free hand in drafting the constitution. The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, the opposition party, received 29% of the vote. The Constituent Assembly held its first meeting on November 21 and its first act unanimously resolved to use the 1982 Constitutional Principles as the framework for Namibia's new constitution.

By February 9, 1990, the Constituent Assembly had drafted and adopted a constitution. March 21, independence day, was attended by Secretary of State James A. Baker III, who represented President George H.W. Bush. On that same day, he inaugurated the U.S. Embassy in Windhoek in recognition of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

On March 1, 1994, the coastal enclave of Walvis Bay and 12 offshore islands were transferred to Namibia by South Africa. This followed 3 years of bilateral negotiations between the two governments and the establishment of a transitional Joint Administrative Authority (JAA) in November 1992 to administer the 300-square mile territory. The peaceful resolution of this territorial dispute, which dated back to 1878, was praised by the United States and the international community, as it fulfilled the provisions of UN Security Council 432 (1978) which declared Walvis Bay to be an integral part of Namibia.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Namibia is a multiparty, multiracial democracy, with a president who is elected for 5-year term. The constitution establishes a bicameral Parliament and provides for general elections every 5 years and regional elections every 6 years. Members of the 72-seat National Assembly are elected on a party list system on a proportional basis. Members of the 26-seat National Council are elected from within popularly elected Regional Councils. The three branches of government are subject to checks and balances, and provision is made for judicial review. The judicial structure in Namibia largely parallels that of South Africa and comprises a Supreme Court, the High Court, and lower courts. Roman-Dutch law has been the common law of the territory since 1919. Namibia's unitary government is currently in the process of decentralization.

The constitution provides for the private ownership of property and for human rights protections, and states that Namibia should have a mixed economy and encourage foreign investment.

Sam Nujoma, leader of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), was President from Namibia's independence in 1990 until 2005. In November 2004, citizens elected Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation Hifikepunye Pohamba to be the next President. Pohamba was inaugurated in March 2005 in conjunction with celebrations marking the country's fifteenth anniversary. International and domestic observers agreed the 2004 elections were generally free and well administered despite some irregularities. Pohamba was elected President with

76.4% of the vote. SWAPO won 55 of the 72 elected seats in the National Assembly. Six opposition parties won a total of 17 seats, including the Congress of Democrats party, which won the largest number of opposition votes; the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance; the National Unity Democratic Organization; the United Democratic Front; the Republican Party; and the Monitor Action Group. The Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) was established in late 2007, and a number of high-profile individuals left SWAPO to join the RDP in late 2007-early 2008. The next presidential election is expected in late 2009.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Hifikepunye POHAMBA**
Prime Minister: **Nahas ANGULA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Libertina AMATHILA, Dr.**
Min. of Agriculture, Water, & Forestry: **Nickey IYAMBO**
Min. of Defense: **Charles NAMOLOH, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of Education: **Nangolo MBUMBA**
Min. of Environment & Tourism: **Willem KONJORE**
Min. of Finance: **Saara KUUGONGELWA-AMADHILA**
Min. of Fisheries & Marine Resources: **Abraham IYAMBO**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Marco HAUSIKU**
Min. of Gender Equality & Child Welfare: **Marlene MUNGUNDA**
Min. of Health & Social Service: **Richard KAMWI**
Min. of Home Affairs & Immigration: **Rosalia NGHINDINWA**
Min. of Information & Broadcasting: **Netumbo NANDI-NDAITWAH**
Min. of Justice: **Pendukeni IIVULA-ITHANA**
Min. of Labor & Social Welfare: **Alpheus NARUSEB**
Min. of Lands & Resettlement: **Jerry EKANDJO**
Min. of Mines & Energy: **Erkki NGHIMTINA**
Min. of Presidential Affairs: **Albert KAWANA**
Min. of Regional & Local Government, & Housing & Rural Development: **John PANDENI**
Min. of Safety & Security: **Peter TSHEEHAMA**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Immanuel NGATJIZEKO**
Min. of Veterans' Affairs: **Ngarikutuke TJIRIANGE**
Min. of Works, Transport, & Communication: **Joel KAAPANDA**
Min. of Youth & National Service: **John MUTORWA**
Dir. Gen., National Planning Commission: **Helmut ANGULA**
Attorney General: **Pendukeni IIVULA-ITHANA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Tom ALWEENDO**
Ambassador to the US: **Leonard IIPUMBU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Kaire Munionganda MBUENDE**

Namibia maintains an embassy in the United States at 1605 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington DC 20009 (tel: (202) 986-0540; fax: (202) 986-0443).

ECONOMY

The Namibian economy has a modern market sector, which produces most of the country's wealth, and a traditional subsistence sector. Namibia's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is relatively high among developing countries but obscures one of the most unequal income distributions on the African continent. Although the majority of the population depends on subsistence agriculture and herding, Namibia has more than 200,000 skilled workers, as well as a small, well-trained professional and managerial class.

The country's sophisticated formal economy is based on capital-intensive industry and farming. However, Namibia's economy is heavily dependent on the earnings generated from primary commodity exports in a few vital sectors, including minerals, livestock, and fish. Furthermore, the Namibian economy remains integrated with the economy of South Africa, as the bulk of Namibia's imports originate there.

Since independence, the Namibian Government has pursued free-market economic principles designed to promote commercial development and job creation to bring disadvantaged Namibians into the economic mainstream. To facilitate this goal, the government has actively courted donor assistance and foreign investment. The liberal Foreign Investment Act of 1990 provides for freedom from nationalization, freedom to remit capital and profits, currency convertibility, and a process for settling disputes equitably. Namibia is part of the Common Monetary Area (CMA) comprising Lesotho, Swaziland, and South Africa. Both the South African rand and the Namibian dollar are legal tender in Namibia, but the Namibian dollar is not accepted in South Africa. As a result of the CMA agreement, the scope for independent monetary policy in Namibia is limited. The Bank of Namibia regularly follows actions taken by the South African central bank.

Given its small domestic market but favorable location and a superb transport and communications base, Namibia is a leading advocate of regional economic integration. In addition to its membership in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Namibia presently belongs to the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) with South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Within SACU, no tariffs exist on goods produced in and moving among the member states. In July 2008, SACU signed a Trade, Investment and Development Cooperation Agreement (TIDCA) with the United States. SACU also has plans to negotiate free trade agreements with China, India, Kenya, and Nigeria. The SACU Secretariat is located in Windhoek.

Over 80% of Namibia's imports originate in South Africa, and many Namibian exports are destined for the South African market or transit that country. Outside of South Africa, the EU (primarily the U.K.) is the chief market for Namibian exports. Namibia's exports consist mainly of diamonds and other minerals, fish products, beef and meat products, grapes and light manufactures.

Namibia is seeking to diversify its trading relationships away from its

heavy dependence on South African goods and services. Europe has become a leading market for Namibian fish and meat, while mining concerns in Namibia have purchased heavy equipment and machinery from Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Namibia is an eligible country under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), but has had limited success with exports under this program.

In 1993, Namibia became a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) signatory, and the Minister of Trade and Industry represented Namibia at the Marrakech signing of the Uruguay Round Agreement in April 1994. Namibia has been a member of the World Trade Organization since its creation in 1995 and is a strong proponent of the Doha Development Agenda announced at the Fourth Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001. Namibia also is a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In December 2007 Namibia signed an interim Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union, which provides duty- and limited quota-free access to European markets for Namibian exports, thereby continuing many of the expiring trade benefits from the Cotonou Agreement. Negotiations continue over the new EPA, which must be finalized by the end of 2008.

Mining and Energy

Mining contributed approximately 12.4% of GDP in 2007. Diamond mining activities alone represented about 6%. Namibia's diamond production of about 2 million carats generates the bulk of its export earnings. Other important mineral resources are uranium, zinc, copper, lead, gold, fluorspar, and salt. Recent investments include the opening of Anglo American's $454 million Skorpion zinc mine in 2003 and the opening of Australia's Paladin Resources' Langer Heinrich Uranium mine in 2006. About three more uranium investment projects are in the pipeline. The country also is a source of natural stones such as granite and marble. Semiprecious stones are mined on a smaller scale. During the pre-independence period, large areas of Namibia, including offshore, were leased for oil prospecting. Natural gas was discovered in 1974 in the Kudu Field off the mouth of the Orange River. The field is thought to contain reserves of over 1.3 trillion cubic feet. The Kudu gas field development is led by Tullow Oil Plc. Tullow Oil owns 70% of the Kudu gas fields, Japanese firm Itochu Corporation owns 20%, and the Namibian Government through state petroleum firm, NAMCOR, owns the remaining 10%.

Plans are also underway to build the country's first combined cycle power station near Oranjemund. With power shortages facing the Southern African region, the government has stated its commitment to develop the Kudu gas field. However, supply of electricity in the short to medium term remains a challenge. Namibia has a well-developed legislative framework governing the upstream and downstream oil business. Currently there are eight companies exploring for oil and gas.

Agriculture

Although Namibian agriculture—excluding fishing—contributed about 6% of Namibia's GDP for the past five years, about 70% of the Namibian population depends on agricultural activities for livelihood, mostly in the subsistence sector. Animal products, live animals, and crop exports constitute roughly 5% of total Namibian exports. The government encourages local sourcing of agriculture products. Retailers of fruits, vegetables, and other crop products must purchase 27.5% of their stock from local farmers.

In the largely white-dominated commercial sector, agriculture consists primarily of livestock ranching. Cattle raising is predominant in the central and northern regions, while karakul sheep and goat farming are concentrated in the more arid southern regions. Subsistence farming is confined to the "communal lands" of the country's populous north, where roaming cattle herds are prevalent and the main crops are millet, sorghum, corn, and peanuts. Table grapes, grown mostly along the Orange River in the country's arid south, are becoming an increasingly important commercial crop and a significant employer of seasonal labor.

The government's land reform policy is shaped by two key pieces of legislation: the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act 6 of 1995 and the Communal Land Reform Act 5 of 2002. The government remains committed to a "willing seller, willing buyer" approach to land reform and to providing just compensation as directed by the Namibian constitution. As the government addresses the vital land and range management questions, water use issues and availability are considered.

Fishing

The clean, cold South Atlantic waters off the coast of Namibia are home to some of the richest fishing grounds in the world, with the potential for sustainable yields of up to 1.5 million metric tons per year. Commercial fishing and fish processing is one of the significant sectors of the Namibian economy in terms of employment, export earnings, and contribution to GDP.

The main species found in abundance off Namibia are pilchards (sardines), anchovy, hake, and horse mackerel. There also are smaller but significant quantities of sole, squid, deep-sea crab, rock lobster, and tuna. However, at the time of independence, fish stocks had fallen to dangerously low levels due to the lack of protection and conservation of the fisheries and the overexploitation of these resources. This trend appears to have been halted and reversed since independence, as the Namibian Government is now pursuing a conservative resource management policy along with an aggressive fisheries enforcement campaign. Namibia is a signatory to the Convention on Conservation and Management of Fisheries Resources in the South-East Atlantic (Seafo Convention). The country is also part of the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosys-

tem (BCLME) program, which is designed to help the Governments of Namibia, Angola, and South Africa manage their shared marine resources in an integrated and sustainable way.

Manufacturing and Infrastructure

In 2007, Namibia's manufacturing sector contributed about 14.3% of GDP. Namibian manufacturing has historically been inhibited by a small domestic market, dependence on imported goods, limited supply of local capital, widely dispersed population, small skilled labor force and high relative wage rates, and subsidized competition from South Africa.

Walvis Bay has a well-developed, deepwater port, considered by many one of the best in Western Africa, and Namibia's fishing infrastructure is most heavily concentrated there. The Namibian Government expects Walvis Bay to become an important commercial gateway to the Southern African region. Namibia also boasts modern civil aviation facilities and an extensive, well-maintained land transportation network. Construction continues to expand two major arteries—the Trans-Caprivi and Trans-Kalahari Highways—which will further open up the region's access to Walvis Bay.

Tourism

Tourism is a rapidly growing sector of the Namibian economy and a significant generator of employment. It is the third-largest source of foreign exchange after mining and fisheries. Although the majority of Namibia's international visitors originate in the region, other international travelers are increasingly attracted by the country's unique mix of political stability, cultural diversity, and geographic beauty. Tourism in Namibia has had a positive impact on resource conservation and rural development. Some 29 communal conservancies have been established across the country, resulting in enhanced land management while providing tens of thousands of rural Namibians with much needed income.

Labor

While most Namibians are economically active in one form or another, the bulk of this activity is in the informal sector, primarily subsistence agriculture. In the formal economy, official estimates of unemployment range from 30% to 40% of the work force.

A large number of Namibians seeking jobs in the formal sector are held back due to a lack of necessary skills or training. The government is aggressively pursuing education reform to address this problem.

There are two main trade union federations in Namibia representing workers: the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), which is affiliated with the ruling SWAPO party, and the Trade Union Congress of Namibia (TUCNA), which is not affiliated with any ruling party. Both unions have eight affiliated unions.

In 2007, Namibia passed a new labor act, which updates the 1992 law but also contains controversial new provisions, such as leave time and the banning of labor hire companies (temporary agencies). The new law is expected to be implemented in phases starting November 2008.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The constitution defines the role of the military as "defending the territory and national interests." Following independence, Namibia formed the National Defense Force (NDF), comprised of former enemies in a 23-year bush war, the PLAN and South West African territorial force. The NDF consists of five battalions and a small headquarters element. The NDF has a modest air wing and a maritime wing. Namibia contributed 900 troops to UN peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and has offered to volunteer troops to support peacekeeping operations in Darfur.

Namibia has had defense cooperation at various levels with several countries, including the United States. It also participates in regional peacekeeping efforts. The U.S. does not have an Article 98 agreement with Namibia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Namibia follows a largely independent foreign policy, with lingering affiliations with states that aided the independence struggle, including Libya, the People's Republic of China, and Cuba.

Namibia is developing trade and strengthening economic and political ties within the Southern African region. A dynamic member of the Southern African Development Community and the Southern African Customs Union, Namibia is a vocal advocate for greater regional integration.

Namibia became the 160th member of the United Nations on April 23, 1990, and the 50th member of the British Commonwealth upon independence.

U.S.-NAMIBIAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Namibian relations are good and continue to improve. Characterized by shared democratic values, commitment to rule of law, and respect for human rights, the bilateral relationship has been strengthened through trade ties and U.S. assistance programs. Namibia has been included in President Bush's International Mother and Child HIV Initiative and the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) bilateral presence in Namibia has been extended until 2010. In addition to the Embassy, the Centers for Disease Control, Peace Corps, and the Defense Department have offices in Windhoek. The Millennium Challenge Corporation has also established a permanent presence in Windhoek following the July 28, 2008 signing of a Compact agreement valued at approximately $304.5 million.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

WINDHOEK (E) 14 Lossen Str, 264-61-295-8500, Fax 264-61-295-8603, INMARSAT Tel 011-871-383-132-065, Workweek: M-Th(7:15-5:00)F(7:15-12:15), Website: http://windhoek.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Vacant
AMB OMS:	Eugenia Wray
CDC:	Jeffrey Hanson
ECO:	Vacant
FM:	Vacant
HRO:	Vacant
MGT:	Gaspar Guzman
AMB:	G. Dennise Mathieu
CON:	John Larochelle
DCM:	Ray Castillo
PAO:	Ray Castillo
GSO:	Brian Buckingham
RSO:	David Embden
AFSA:	Gaspar Guzman
AGR:	Scott Sindelar (Resident In Pretoria)
AID:	Debra Mosel
CLO:	Jeff Jenks
DAO:	Ltc. Christian Ramthun
EEO:	Vacant
FMO:	Wallace Eustis
ICASS Chair:	Dawn Broussard
IMO:	Gaspar Guzman
ISSO:	Gaspar Guzman
LAB:	Jeanine Collins (Resident In Johannesburg)
POL:	Sara Terbrueggen
State ICASS:	Vacant

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 16, 2007

Country Description: Namibia is a southern African country with a moderately developed economy. Facilities for tourism are good and generally increasing in quality. The capital is Windhoek.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are normally required. Bearers of U.S. passports who plan to visit Namibia for tourism for less than 90 days can obtain visas at the port of entry and do not need visas prior to entering the country. Travelers coming for work or study, whether paid or voluntary, must obtain a work or study permit prior to entering Namibia. All travelers traveling to or from Namibia via South Africa are strongly encouraged to have several unstamped visa pages left in their passports. South Africa requires two unstamped visa pages, and Namibia usually also requires an unstamped page to stamp a visa upon arrival. Visitors who do not have enough free visa pages in their passport risk being denied entry and returned to the U.S. at their own expense.

Travelers should obtain the latest information from the Embassy of Namibia located at 1605 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, telephone (202) 986-0540 or from the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the U.N. at 135 E. 36th St., New York, NY 10016, telephone (212) 685-2003, fax (212) 685-1561. Overseas, inquiries should be made to the nearest Namibian embassy. Visit the Embassy of Namibia's website at http://www.namibianembassyusa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: American citizens wishing to cross into Angola from Namibia should do so only at official border crossing areas and should consult the State Department's Country Specific Information for Angola.

American citizens should avoid street demonstrations. However, such events are rare in Namibia. American citizens traveling in Namibia are urged to contact the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Windhoek for the latest safety and security information.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is a serious concern in Namibia, but visitors who employ common-sense preventive measures normally enjoy an incident-free stay. Incidents of violent crime directed specifically against Americans or other foreigners are rare, but the number of overall incidents continues to increase. The most common crimes are property-motivated crimes of opportunity, including pick pocketing, purse snatching, vehicle theft, and vehicle break-ins. Taxi drivers have robbed several American passengers; if taxis must be used, radio taxis that display the NABTA logo (Namibia Bus and Taxi Association) are the most reliable. Violent crimes are less frequent than non-violent incidents. Common sense measures such as being alert to one's surroundings, avoiding isolated areas of town, not leaving valuables in parked cars, keeping car doors locked and windows up while driving, safeguarding purses, wallets and especially cellular phones are the best deterrents against becoming a victim. Drivers should exercise caution at rest stops outside of towns or away from gasoline stations.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Windhoek has a small number of private medical hospitals and clinics capable of providing emergency care and performing many routine procedures. Doctors, both general practitioners and specialists, as well as dentists, generally have

training and facilities that are comparable with U.S. standards. Facilities outside the capital vary widely. Several large towns have well-equipped facilities similar to those available in Windhoek, while smaller towns generally do not. Malaria is prevalent only in the north of the country. Malaria prophylaxis is not required in Windhoek but is suggested for travel to the north.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Namibia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In Namibia, driving is done on the left-hand side of the road. Many of Namibia's rural roads are gravel. Although these roads are generally well maintained, controlling a vehicle on gravel is significantly more difficult than on pavement. Drivers should not drive in excess of 80km per hour (45 mph) on gravel roads, should reduce speed significantly for curves or turns, and should heed all warning signs. Hitting a sand patch or driving around a curve too fast can easily result in a rollover or spinout. Many accidents on gravel roads occur when tourists exceed safe speeds on corners or in areas recently damaged by rains. Visitors are reminded that motor vehicle accidents are one of the primary causes of injury and death in Namibia, and drivers are therefore strongly urged to drive with caution.

For those driving outside of the capital, distances between cities can be considerable, and often gasoline is only available at a few service stations along a route. Fuel availability can be impacted by power outages as well. All travelers are encouraged to plan their route to ensure a sufficient supply of fuel, and are recommended to bring five liters of water per person when traveling on dirt roads to guard against dehydration if an accident should occur.

Turning on a red traffic light is not permitted in Namibia. Seat belts are required for all vehicle occupants. Motorcyclists are required by law to wear protective helmets. While child car seats are not required, they are recommended.

To drive legally while in Namibia, visitors staying more than a few weeks need an international driving permit. International driving permits must be obtained prior to leaving the U.S. and are available from either the American Automobile Association or the American Automobile Touring Alliance. Short-term visitors do not need an international driving permit; a valid U.S. driver's license is sufficient.

Roads in Namibia are generally well maintained. However, few have shoulders or "pull-off" lanes for broken vehicles. Wildlife wandering on roads is a special driving hazard in Namibia, especially at night. An encounter at high speeds with antelope or cattle can be fatal. The salt-surfaced roads at the coast can also be deceptively dangerous, especially when they have been made slick by morning or evening mist. Robbery has occurred at roadside "rest stops" and motorists are advised to take rest breaks in towns and/or at gasoline stations. Most major roads are undivided with one lane in each direction. Drivers should remain alert for passing vehicles and exercise caution when passing slow moving vehicles. Accidents involving drunk drivers are an increasing problem on major roads where there are high speed limits. Driving under the influence is illegal in Namibia. A charge of culpable homicide can be made against a driver involved in an accident resulting in death.

Roadside assistance and emergency medical services outside of Windhoek may be unreliable or non-existent. Assistance on main roads that link Namibia's larger towns, however, is generally good due to quality cell phone networks. Emergency services contact numbers vary from town to town. The Namibian telephone directory has a list of emergency contact numbers at the beginning of each town listing. It is recommended that Americans maintain a list of contact numbers for the area in which they plan to drive. Telephone numbers may change, and 24-hour availability of these numbers is not guaranteed.

Public transportation is not widely available outside of the capital. Taxis and municipal buses are the only forms of public transportation in Windhoek. Schedules and routes are limited. Car rentals or radio taxis are generally the best means of transport but may be relatively expensive. The Embassy has received reports of foreign citizens being robbed by drivers of taxis hailed on the streets of Windhoek. The Embassy has not received any such reports regarding radio taxis.

Flashing of high beams and similar signals could mean anything from a friendly greeting to a warning. When encountering a motorcade, motorists are encouraged to make way immediately and follow promptly any instructions given by the officials present.

Because of the possibility of intoxicated and/or reckless drivers, the poor mechanical condition of some motor vehicles, and the high incidence of single-vehicle rollover acci-

dents, Americans are urged to avoid hitchhiking in Namibia. Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety: http://www.met.gov.na/default.htm.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Namibia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Namibia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Wild animals may pose some danger. Travelers are advised that, even in the most serene settings, animals are wild and can pose a threat to life and safety. Travelers are cautioned to observe all local or park regulations and heed all instructions given by tour guides. In addition, tourists are advised that potentially dangerous areas sometimes lack fences and warning signs. Appropriate caution should be used in all unfamiliar surroundings. Namibia does not recognize dual citizenship for adults over the age of 18. Therefore, despite the fact that these individuals possess U.S. citizenship, they must enter and exit Namibia bearing a Namibian passport. Namibia recognizes dual citizenship up until the age of 18; however, such children must enter Namibia on their Namibian passport and may face questioning by an immigration officer before being permitted entry.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Namibian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Namibia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Americans should avoid purchasing diamonds and other protected resources outside of licensed retail establishments. The penalty for illegal dealing in diamonds in Namibia is stiff—up to U.S. $20,000 in fines or five years in prison—and the courts generally impose the maximum sentence. The purchase and exportation of other protected resources, such as elephant ivory, may also be prohibited by Namibian, international, and/or U.S. law.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Namibia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Namibia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located 14 Lossen Street, Ausspannplatz, Windhoek, telephone (264-61) 295-8500, fax (264-61) 295-8603. You can reach the Consular Section at extension 8551; i.e., (264-61) 295-8551 or via e-mail consularwindho@state.gov. The mailing address for the Embassy is Private Bag 12029, Windhoek, Namibia. The U.S. Embassy Windhoek website is http://windhoek.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: A recent Namibian High Court ruling makes intercountry adoption possible. However, there is not yet a new law governing this procedure. Foreign adoption is currently covered by an interim policy agreement between the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare in terms of The Children's Act of 1960. This policy makes it very difficult for non-resident foreigners to adopt. In general, only foreigners who are resident in Namibia have been allowed to adopt Namibian children. Further, the list of prospective adoptive parents in Namibia is longer than the list of children eligible for adoption, making adoption by non-resident foreigners even more difficult and lengthy.

Patterns of Immigration: Within the past five fiscal years, only one Namibian child has received a U.S. immigrant visa to go to the United States as the adopted child of a U.S. citizen.

Adoption Authortiy: The Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Ministry of Gender Equality & Child Welfare are the government agencies directly involved with adoption of Namibian children. The Ministry of general Equality and Child Welfare registers all adoptions, while the Ministry of Health and Social Services is the correspondent agency for International Social Services and handles international requests for information.

Ministry of Health and
Social Services
Tel: +264-61-203-2615
Ministerial Building, Harvey St.
P.O. Box 13198
Windhoek, Namibia
Ministry of Gender Equality and
Child Welfare

Tel: +264-61-283- 3164
P.O. Box 13359
Windhoek, Namibia

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Married couples may adopt jointly, or one spouse may adopt the other spouse's child. Single people, including those who are widowed, separated or divorced, may also adopt. In all cases, the prospective adoptive parent(s) must be at least 25 years of age and at least 15 years older than the child to be adopted.

Elibilility Requirements For Namibian Children: The Namibian government has set the following requirements for adoption to a foreigner:

- Proof that the biological parents are in no position to care for the child and have consented to the adoption, or are deceased;
- Proof that no family member or relative is able and willing to adopt the child; and
- Proof that no Namibian is interested and in a position to adopt the child.

A committee consisting of representatives of the Ministries of Health and Social Services, Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Home Affairs and Immigration, and Justice reviews all such applications. This group meets a few times a year and on an as-needed basis.

Residency Requirements: While there is no requirement for residency, no non-resident Americans have successfully adopted Namibian children.

Time Frame: Once a child has been identified for adoption, it takes from two to four months to obtain an Order of Adoption and the subsequent Registration of the Adoption with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. The Church Benevolence Board in Windhoek [telephone: +264-61-23-7296] is an accredited welfare organization and the primary adoption agency. The Church Benevolence Board maintains a register of individuals interested in adoption. The Embassy maintains a list of lawyers who practice in Namibia and who could assist in adoption cases, available at www.windhoek.usembassy.gov/lawyer_list. html.

Adoption Fees: The Namibian government does not charge any fees for its adoption procedures. Fees are charged by private social workers to complete a Home Study and by welfare organizations such as the Church Benevolence Board.

Adoption Procedures: The first step for adoption is identification of a prospective child to adopt. For those resident in Namibia, this can be done personally. In most instances, the adoption procedure is initiated by the prospective adoptive parent(s) contacting the Church Benevolence Board, which maintains a list of prospective adoptive parents and is tasked with identifying an orphan child eligible for adoption.

After such a child is identified, prospective adoptive parents have to file an Application for an Order of Adoption with the Magistrate's Court in the district in which the child normally resides. The Magistrate's Court then requests an adoption report, which is separate from a U.S. home study and is completed by a social worker from the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, or privately contracted.

If an adoption is initiated from overseas, the Ministry of Health and Social Services will first request a home study through International Social Services. After this report is received, the social worker will compile the report based on the home study, interviews with the prospective parent(s), and an assessment of the child's situation.

The court will grant the Order of Adoption after all criteria have been met, after which the adoption has to be registered with the Ministry of Health and Social Services. There are no fostering requirements before an Order of Adoption is granted.

There are various conditions for granting the Order of Adoption:

- The child's birth parents, if alive and still in possession of parental rights, have given their consent freely and with full understanding;
- The child has given his/her consent, if 10 years of age or older;
- The prospective parent(s) are twenty-five years old and at least fifteen years older than the child, and are married if adopting jointly;
- The prospective parents are willing and able to care for the child as shown by the report of the social worker;
- The proposed adoption will be in the best interests of the child, as shown by the report of the social worker.

After an Order of Adoption is approved, the adoption must be registered with the MGECW.

The MGECW enumerates several documents required to register the adoption. Once the adoption is registered, the adoptive child is considered to be the child of the adopted parents under Namibian law.

Required Documents:

- Application for order of adoption with the Namibian court;
- Consent by birth parent(s) to order of adoption (both parents

when child was born inside the marriage, only of the mother when the child was born out of wedlock) or death certificate of parent(s);

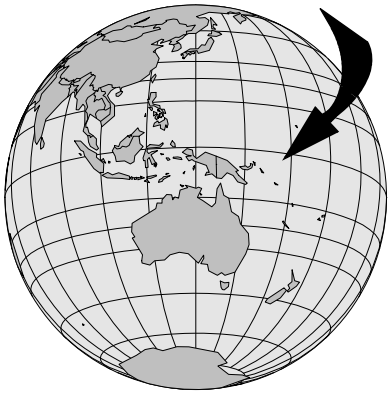
- Consent by child to order of adoption, if child is ten years of age or older;
- Order of adoption approved by the court;
- Adoption report by Social Worker;
- Birth certificate of adoptive child;
- Passports of adoptive parent(s);
- Marriage certificate of adoptive parents, if applicable;
- Court minutes from the session where the court granted the Order of adoption.

Embassy of the Republic of Namibia
1605 New Hampshire Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: 202-986-0540
info@ namibianembassyusa.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*.

U.S. Embassy
14 Lossen Street
Windhoek, Namibia
Tel: +264-61-295-8527
Fax: +264-61-295-8603
Email: Consularwindho@state.gov

For further information on intercountry adoption, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



NAURU

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Nauru

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 21 sq. km.
Cities: Capital—no official capital; government offices in Yaren District.
Terrain: Rough beach rises to a fertile but narrow ring around a raised, prehistoric coral reef plateau, studded with coral pinnacles exposed by phosphate mining.
Climate: Equatorial; monsoonal; rainy season (November to February); unreliable rainfall and prone to El Nino-linked droughts.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Nauruan(s).
Population: (2006) 10,700.
Age structure: (2006 est.): 38.7% below 15; 1.56% over 65.
Annual growth rate: (2006-2010 est.): 0.3%.
Ethnic groups: Nauruan 93%, Chinese 5%, other Pacific Islander 1%, European 1%.
Religions: Christian (two-thirds Protestant, one-third Roman Catholic).
Languages: Nauruan, English.
Education: (2004) Literacy—97%.
Health: (2002) Life expectancy (2004 est.) women 56.9 yrs.; men 49.0 yrs.; Infant mortality rate—10.14/1,000.
Work force: (2004 est.) 4,300.
Unemployment: (2004 est.) 50%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: 1968.
Independence: January 31, 1968.
Government branches: Executive—president and cabinet. Legislative—unicameral Parliament. Judicial—Supreme Court, Appellate Court, District Court, and Family Court.
Political subdivisions: 14 districts.
Political parties: Naoero Amo (Nauru First) Party.
Budget: (2007 est.) $14.96 million.
Suffrage: Universal at age 20.

Economy

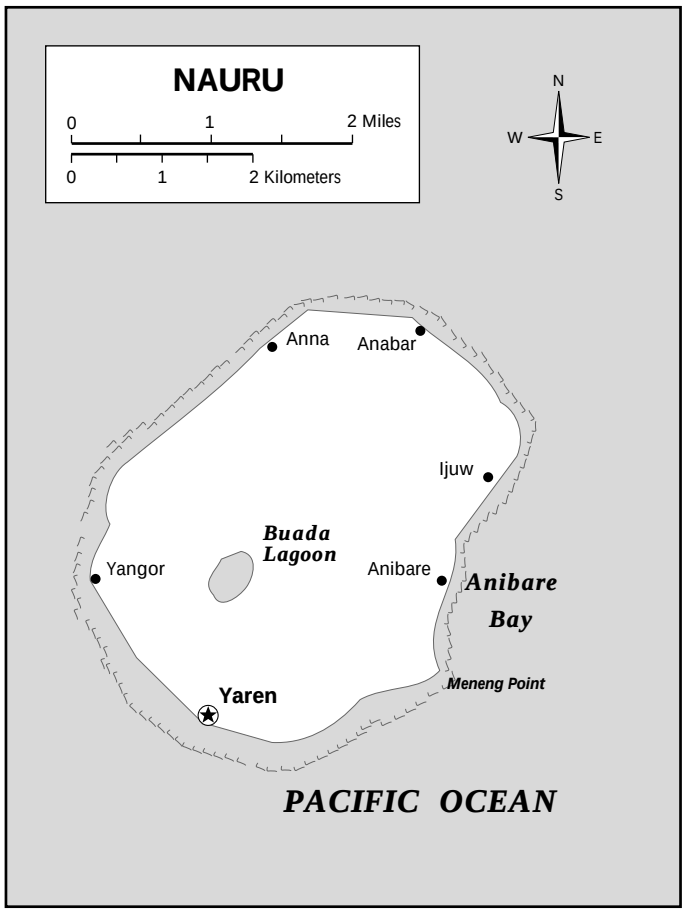
GDP: (2007 est.) $22.5 million.
Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $2,564.
Avg. inflation rate: (2005 est.) 3%.
Industry: Types—phosphate mining.
Trade: Exports (2054 est.)—$4.4 million; phosphates. Major export markets—Japan, Republic of Korea, India. Imports (2005 est.)—$29.9 million; food, fuel, manufactures. Major import sources—Australia, Republic of Korea, United States.
Currency: Australian dollar (A$).

GEOGRAPHY

Nauru is a small oval-shaped island in the western Pacific Ocean, located just 42 kilometers (26 mi.) south of the Equator. It is one of three great phosphate rock islands in the Pacific Ocean—the others are Banaba (Ocean Island) in Kiribati and Makatea in French Polynesia. Until recently Nauru's phosphate reserves were thought to be nearly depleted, but there are some indications that the potential for continued productive mining might exist. Phosphate mining in the central plateau has left a barren terrain of jagged, prehistoric coral pinnacles, up to 15 meters (49 ft.) high. A century of mining has stripped and devastated four-fifths of the total land area. Efforts to rehabilitate the mined-out areas have been unsuccessful.

The island is surrounded by a coral reef, exposed at low tide and dotted with pinnacles. The reef is bounded seaward by deep water, inside by a narrow sandy beach. A 150-300-meter (492-984 ft.) wide fertile coastal strip lies landward from the coast, ending in forested coral cliffs that rise to the now mined-out central plateau.

The highest point of the plateau is 65 meters (213 ft.) above sea level. The island's only fertile areas are within the narrow coastal belt, where there are coconut palms, pandanus trees, and indigenous hardwoods, and the land surrounding the inland Buada lagoon on the central plateau, where



bananas, pineapples, and some vegetables are grown. Some secondary vegetation has begun to cover the scarred central plateau and its coral pinnacles.

PEOPLE

Nauruans descended from Polynesian and Micronesian seafarers. Grouped in clans or tribes, early Nauruans traced their descent on the female side. They believed in a female deity, Eijebong, and a spirit land, also an island, called Buitani. Two of the 12 original tribal groups became extinct during the 20th century. Because of poor diet, alcohol abuse, and a sedentary lifestyle, Nauru has one of the world's highest levels of diabetes, renal failure and heart disease, exceeding 40% of the population.

HISTORY

Nauru had little contact with Europeans until whaling ships and other traders began to visit in the 1830s. The introduction of firearms and alcohol destroyed the peaceful coexistence of the 12 tribes living on the island. A 10-year internal war began in 1878 and resulted in a reduction of the population from 1,400 (1843) to around 900 (1888).

The island was allocated to Germany under the 1886 Anglo-German Convention. Phosphate was discovered a decade later and the Pacific Phosphate Company started to exploit the reserves in 1906, by agreement with Germany. Following the outbreak of World War I, Australian forces captured the island in 1914. After the war, the League of Nations assigned a joint trustee mandate over the island to Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. The three governments established the British Phosphate Commissioners, who exercised the rights to phosphate mining.

During World War II Japan occupied Nauru in August 1942 and deported 1,200 Nauruans to work as laborers in the Caroline Islands, where 463 died. The survivors returned to Nauru in January 1946.

After the war the island became a UN Trust Territory under Australia, in line with the previous League of Nations mandate, and it remained one until it became an independent republic in 1968. A plan by the partner governments to resettle the Nauruans (due to dwindling phosphate reserves and damage to the island from extensive mining) on Curtis Island off the north coast of Queensland, Australia, was abandoned in 1964 when the islanders decided not to move. In 1967, the Nauruans purchased the assets of the British Phosphate Commissioners, and in June 1970 control passed to the Nauru Phosphate Corporation.

In 1989 Nauru filed suit against Australia in the International Court of Justice in The Hague for damages caused by mining while the island was under Australian jurisdiction. Australia settled the case out of court in 1993, agreeing to pay a lump sum settlement of A$107 million (U.S.$85.6 million) and an annual stipend of the equivalent of A$2.5 million in 1993 dollars toward environmental rehabilitation.

GOVERNMENT

The country is governed by a unicameral Parliament consisting of 18 members elected at least triennially from 8 constituencies. Parliament elects the president, who is both chief of state and head of government, from among its members. The president appoints a cabinet from among members of Parliament. For its size, Nauru has a complex legal system. The Supreme Court, headed by the Chief Justice of Nauru, is paramount

on constitutional issues, but other cases can be appealed to the two-judge Appellate Court. Parliament cannot overturn court decisions, but Appellate Court rulings can be appealed to Australia's High Court; in practice, however, this rarely happens. Lower courts consist of the District Court and the Family Court, both of which are headed by a Resident Magistrate, who also is the Registrar of the Supreme Court. Finally, there also are two quasi-courts—the Public Service Appeal Board and the Police Service Board—both of which are presided over by the Chief Justice. There is a small police force of 109 members under civilian control. There are no armed forces.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Ludwig SCOTTY**
Min. Assisting the President: **David ADEANG**
Min. for Civil Aviation: **Ludwig SCOTTY**
Min. for Culture & Tourism: **Kieren KEKE, Dr.**
Min. for Customs: **David ADEANG**
Min. for Education & Vocational Training: **Baron WAQA**
Min. for Finance: **David ADEANG**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **David ADEANG**
Min. for Health: **Kieren KEKE, Dr.**
Min. for Internal Affairs: **David ADEANG**
Min. for Immigration: **Godfrey THOMA**
Min. for Island Development & Industry: **Frederick PITCHER**
Min. for Justice: **Godfrey THOMA**
Min. for Nauru Fisheries & Natural Resources: **Godfrey THOMA**
Min. for Public Service: **Ludwig SCOTTY**
Min. for Public Works: **Baron WAQA**
Min. for Shipping: **Kieren KEKE, Dr.**
Min. for Sports: **Godfrey THOMA**
Min. for Women's Affairs: **Kieren KEKE, Dr.**
Min. for Youth Affairs: **Baron WAQA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Marlene Inemwin MOSES**

Nauru does not currently have an embassy in the United States but does have a UN Mission at 800 2nd Ave, Suite 400D, New York, New York 10017 (tel: 212-937-0074, fax: 212-937-0079).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In recent decades, as turmoil grew over Nauru's uncertain future and economic failures, no-confidence votes that spurred changes of government became commonplace. In 1997 Nauru had four different presidents in as many months. Following the election of Ludwig Scotty in October 2004 and the naming of a reform-minded government, Nauru enjoyed a period of political stability. The Scotty team was re-elected to Parliament in August 2007. However, in December 2007 that team split and a no-confidence vote removed Scotty from power. Marcus Stephen assumed the presidency, and Nauru experienced several months of political volatility before snap elections held in April 2008 returned Stephen's government to power with a larger majority.

ECONOMY

Having once boasted the second-highest per capita GDP in the world thanks to its fabled phosphate mines, Nauru is today destitute. With the seeming depletion of readily accessible phosphate reserves in 2000, mining on a large-scale commercial basis ended. The decline of mining saw a dramatic economic contraction, compounded by past government corruption and disastrous mismanagement of trust funds that had been expected to provide post-mining revenue streams for Nauru's citizens. Since 2000, Nauru has relied largely on payments for fishing rights within its exclusive economic zone, earnings from hosting two Australian refugee processing camps, and massive injections of grants and development funding, principally from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China and more recently Taiwan. The government-owned mining company, the Republic of Nauru Phosphate Company or RONPhos has resumed mining and exporting phosphate and has reportedly made a small profit.

Although Nauru had a nominal per capita GDP in excess of $2,700, its economy is in deep crisis, and the resumption of mining promises only a limited respite as the country seeks to find a sustainable economic future. The private sector is very small and employs less than 300. Nauru imports well over 90% of its foodstuffs and other basic goods, but sea and air transport has become problematic. In December 2005, the national airline's remaining airplane was repossessed for non-payment, leaving Nauru dependent on chartered flights. In September 2006, with financing help from Taiwan, a replacement aircraft re-established scheduled commercial flights to Nauru and around the region under the new name of Our Airline. The provision of electricity and water, both dependent on expensive imported fuel, is limited and sporadic. With the help of the Pacific Islands Forum and numerous development partner nations, Nauru has embarked on a major, multi-year strategic national development program to achieve a sustainable economic framework for the country.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Following independence in 1968, Nauru joined the Commonwealth as a Special Member. Special Members take part in all Commonwealth activities except heads of government meetings. They are not assessed but make voluntary contributions toward the running of the Secretariat. They are eligible for all forms of technical assistance.

Nauru was admitted to the United Nations in 1999. It is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program, the South Pacific Commission, and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission.

In 2001 at Australia's request, Nauru became host to approximately 1,200 asylum seekers, mostly Afghan, who were intercepted while attempting to enter Australia illegally. By mid-2006, only a single Iraqi refugee remained on the island. In September

2006, Australia effectively re-opened the center by transferring seven Burmese asylum seekers there for assessment. In March 2007, Australia transferred 82 Sri Lankan refugees to Nauru. In exchange for housing the refugees, Australia provided Nauru with extensive grants and aid. However, in February 2008, the Australian Government closed the detention center in Nauru and the remaining 21 Sri Lankan asylum seekers were transferred to Australia.

During 2002 Nauru severed diplomatic recognition with Taiwan and signed an agreement to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. This move followed China's promise to provide more than U.S. $130 million in aid. In May 2005, Nauru re-established diplomatic ties with Taiwan, ending its relationship with China. Taiwan and Australia have the only diplomatic missions on Nauru. In March 2007, Nauru established an embassy in Taipei.

U.S.-NAURU RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Nauru are cordial. The U.S. has no consular or diplomatic offices in Nauru. Officers of the American Embassy in Suva, Fiji, are concurrently accredited to Nauru and make periodic visits.

Trade between the United States and Nauru is limited by the latter's small size and economic problems. The value of two-way trade in 2007 was $8.726 million.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SUVA (E) 31 Loftus Street, Suva, 679-331-4466, Fax 679-330-5106, Workweek: 0800–1730 (Mon-Thu), 0800–1500 (Fri), Website: http://suva.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Margaret Kennett
DCM/CHG:	Jeffrey Robertson
ECO:	Mark Prokop
HRO:	Ila Jurisson
MGT:	Ila Jurisson
CON:	Debra J. Towry
DCM:	Richard Pruett
PAO:	Jeffrey Robertson
COM:	Quinn N. Plant
GSO:	Scott Gallaway
RSO:	Mathew McCormack
CLO:	Lynne T. Murphy
DAO:	Ltc. Patrick D. Reardon
EEO:	Heather Coble
FMO:	Ila Jurisson
ICASS Chair:	Col. Patrick D. Reardon
IMO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISSO:	Steven A. Baldwin
POL:	Mark S. Prokop
State ICASS:	Joseph P. Murphy

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 20, 2008

Country Description: Nauru, a small single-island nation in the South Pacific, is located about 25 miles south of the equator. It is a constitutional republic with a parliamentary system of government. Tourist facilities are available on a limited basis. Yaren, the capital, has an international airport.

Entry Requirements: A visa, onward/return ticket, and proof of hotel bookings (or sponsorship from a resident of Nauru) are required for tourists. Tourist visas are issued for a maximum of thirty days. Travelers transiting with a valid ticket for an onward destination do not require a visa, provided that the first connecting flight departs within three days of arrival in Nauru. Business visitors must have a visa and a local sponsor. Nauru collects a departure tax that must be paid in cash and in Australian dollars.

For more information on entry/exit requirements, travelers may wish to contact Republic of Nauru Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York at 212-937-0074, or by fax at 212-937-0079. The address is: 800 Second Avenue, Suite 400A New York, NY 10017. E-mail addresses are: nauru@onecommonwealth.org and/or Nauru@un.int.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Nauru has a low crime rate. However, visitors should not be complacent regarding personal safety or the protection of valuables.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health care facilities in the Republic of Nauru are adequate for routine medical problems, but very limited in availability. Serious medical conditions requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and

insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Nauru. However, the Ministry of Health of Nauru is currently considering whether to put restrictions in place. Please inquire directly with Republic of Nauru Permanent Mission to the United Nations. Please see the Entry/Exit Requirements section for contact information.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Nauru is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left in Nauru. The main road circling the island is paved, but the remaining roads are unpaved. There is no organized roadside assistance, although there are a number of mechanics and car repair facilities on the island. Animals and pedestrians walking in the road make night driving hazardous. For specific information concerning Nauru driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Nauru Consulate General in Melbourne, Australia at telephone (613) 9653-5709, fax (613) 9654-4738.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Nauru as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: In Nauru, the Australian dollar is the legal currency. Travelers' checks and all major currencies are accepted by banks and may also be exchanged for local currency at some local hotels.

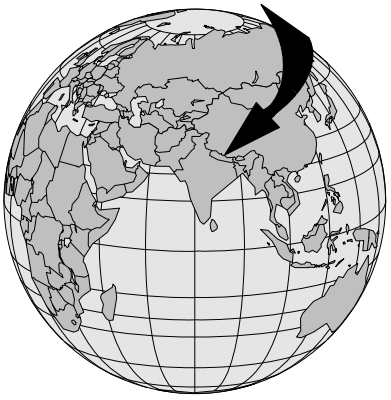
Nauru's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Nauru of items such as foodstuffs, animals, and pornographic materials. It is advisable to contact the Nauru Consulate General in Melbourne, Australia, for specific information regarding customs requirements.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. If detained, U.S. citizens are encouraged to request that a consular officer at the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji be notified.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Nauru law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy or diplomatic post in Nauru. The U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji, provides assistance for U.S. citizens in Nauru. Americans living or traveling in Nauru are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Suva through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security in Nauru. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The U.S. Embassy in Fiji is located at 31 Loftus Street in Fiji's capital city of Suva. The telephone number is (679) 331-4-466; the fax number is (679) 330-2-267. Information may also be obtained by visiting the Embassy's home page at http://suva.usembassy.gov. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.



NEPAL

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Nepal

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 147,181 sq. km. (56,136 sq. mi.), about the size and shape of Tennessee, bordering China and India.

Cities: Capital—Kathmandu (3 districts) (pop. 2.2 million est.). Other cities—Biratnagar, Patan, Pokhara, Birgunj, Dharan, Nepalgunj.

Terrain: Flat and fertile in the southern Terai region; terraced cultivation and swiftly flowing mountain rivers in the central hills; and the high Himalayas in the north. Eight of the world's ten highest peaks are in Nepal, including Mount Everest. Kathmandu, the capital, is in a broad valley at 1,310 meters (4,300 ft.) elevation.

Climate: Subtropical in the south to cool summers and severe winters in the northern mountains. The monsoon season is from June through September, during which showers occur almost every day, bringing 75 to 150 centimeters (30-60 in.) of rain.

Time zone: Nepal is 10 hours and 45 minutes ahead of Eastern Standard Time and does not observe daylight saving time.

People

Nationality: Noun—Nepali (sing.) or Nepalese (plural). Adjective—Nepalese or Nepali.

Population: (2007 estimate) 29 million.

Annual growth rate: (2007 estimate) 2.132%.

Population breakdown/distribution: Rural (86%); female (50%); in the southern Terai region (49%); in the hills (44%); in the mountains (7%).

Ethnic groups: (caste and ethnicity are often used interchangeably) Brahman, Chetri, Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Tharu, and others.

Religions: Hinduism (81%), Buddhism (11%), Islam (4%), and others (4%).

Languages: Nepali and more than 12 others.

Education: Years compulsory—0. Attendance—primary 80.4%, secondary 20%. Literacy—49% (63% male, 35% female).

Health: Infant mortality rate (2007 estimate)—63.7 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy (2007 estimate)—61.9 years for males and 65.5 years for females.

Work force: Agriculture—71%; industry—3%; services—11%; other—1%.

Government

Type: Representative democracy.

Constitution: Interim constitution promulgated on January 15, 2007. Constituent Assembly convened May 2008 to draft a new constitution.

Government branches: Executive—President (head of state), Prime Minister (head of government), interim Council of Ministers formed on April 1, 2007. Legislative—The Constituent Assembly is a unicameral Parliament, consisting of 601 members; 240 members were elected through a direct electoral process representing single-member constituencies across the country; 335 members were nominated from party lists through a proportional representation system; and 26 are to be nominated by the cabinet as representatives of ethnic and indigenous communities. Judicial—Supreme Court, 16 appellate courts, 75 district courts.

Political subdivisions: 5 development regions, 14 zones, and 75 districts. 75 district development committees, 58 municipalities, 3,913 village development committees, and 36,023 ward committees.

Political parties: Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (on the U.S. terrorist exclusion list), Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist, Madhesi People's Rights Forum, Tarai Madhes Democratic Party, Sadhbavana Party, Rastriya Prajatantra Party, and 18 others.

Elections: Constituent Assembly election held on April 10, 2008.

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Defense/police: (FY 2007/2008) $314 million.

National Day: Republic Day, Jestha 15 (May 28); Democracy Day, Falgun 7 (mid-February). (Note: Jestha and Falgun are months of the Nepalese calendar.)

Economy

GDP: (2006/2007) $10.23 billion.
Annual growth rate of real GDP: (FY 2006/2007) 2.5%.
Per capita income: (gross national product, FY 2006/2007) $387.
Avg. inflation rate: (Consumer Price Index, April 2008 est.) 896%.
Natural resources: Water, hydropower, scenic beauty, limited but fertile agricultural land, timber.
Agriculture: (36.1% of GDP) Products—rice, wheat, maize, sugarcane, oilseed, jute, millet, potatoes. Cultivated land—25%.
Industry: (7.8% of GDP) Types—carpets, pashmina, garments, cement, cigarettes, bricks, sugar, soap, matches, jute, manufactured goods, hydroelectric power.
Trade: (2006/2007) Exports—892 million: carpets, pashmina, garments. Major markets—Germany and the U.S. Imports—$2.79 billion: manufactured goods. Major supplier—India.
Budget: (FY 2007/2008) $2.59 billion; military allocation $167 million.
Exchange rate: (as of June 23, 2008) 68.45 Nepalese rupees=U.S. $1.00.
Fiscal year: July 16-July 15.

PEOPLE

Perched on the southern slopes of the Himalayan Mountains, Nepal is as ethnically diverse as its terrain of fertile plains, broad valleys, and the highest mountain peaks in the world. The Nepalese are descendants of three major migrations from India, Tibet, and central Asia.

Among the earliest inhabitants were the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley and aboriginal Tharus in the southern Terai region. The ancestors of the Brahman and Chetri caste groups came from India, while other ethnic groups trace their origins to central Asia and Tibet, including the Gurungs and Magars in the west, Rais and Limbus in the east, and Sherpas and Bhotias in the north.

The Terai, a part of the Ganges Basin with 20% of Nepal's land, is the country's breadbasket. Much of the population is physically and culturally similar to the Indo-Aryan people of northern India. People of Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid origin live in the hill regions. The mountainous highlands are sparsely populated. The Kathmandu Valley, in the middle hill region, constitutes a small fraction of the nation's area but is the most densely populated, with over 7% of the population.

Religion is important in Nepal; the Kathmandu Valley alone has more than 2,700 religious shrines. According to the 2001 census, Nepal is about 81% Hindu. Buddhists account for about 11% of the population. The interim constitution promulgated on January 15, 2007 declared the country a "secular state." Buddhist and Hindu shrines and festivals are respected and celebrated by many. The government celebrates most Hindu and some Buddhist holidays. Nepal also has small Muslim and Christian minorities. Certain animistic practices of old indigenous religions also survive.

Nepali is the official language, although over 100 regional and indigenous languages are spoken throughout the country. Derived from Sanskrit, Nepali is similar to Hindi and is spoken by about 90% of the population (although often as a second or third language). Many Nepalese in government and business also speak Hindi and English.

HISTORY

Early History

Modern Nepal was created in the latter half of the 18th century when Prithvi Narayan Shah, the ruler of the small principality of Gorkha, formed a unified country from a number of independent hill states. The country was frequently called the Gorkha Kingdom, the source of the term "Gurkha" used for Nepali soldiers.

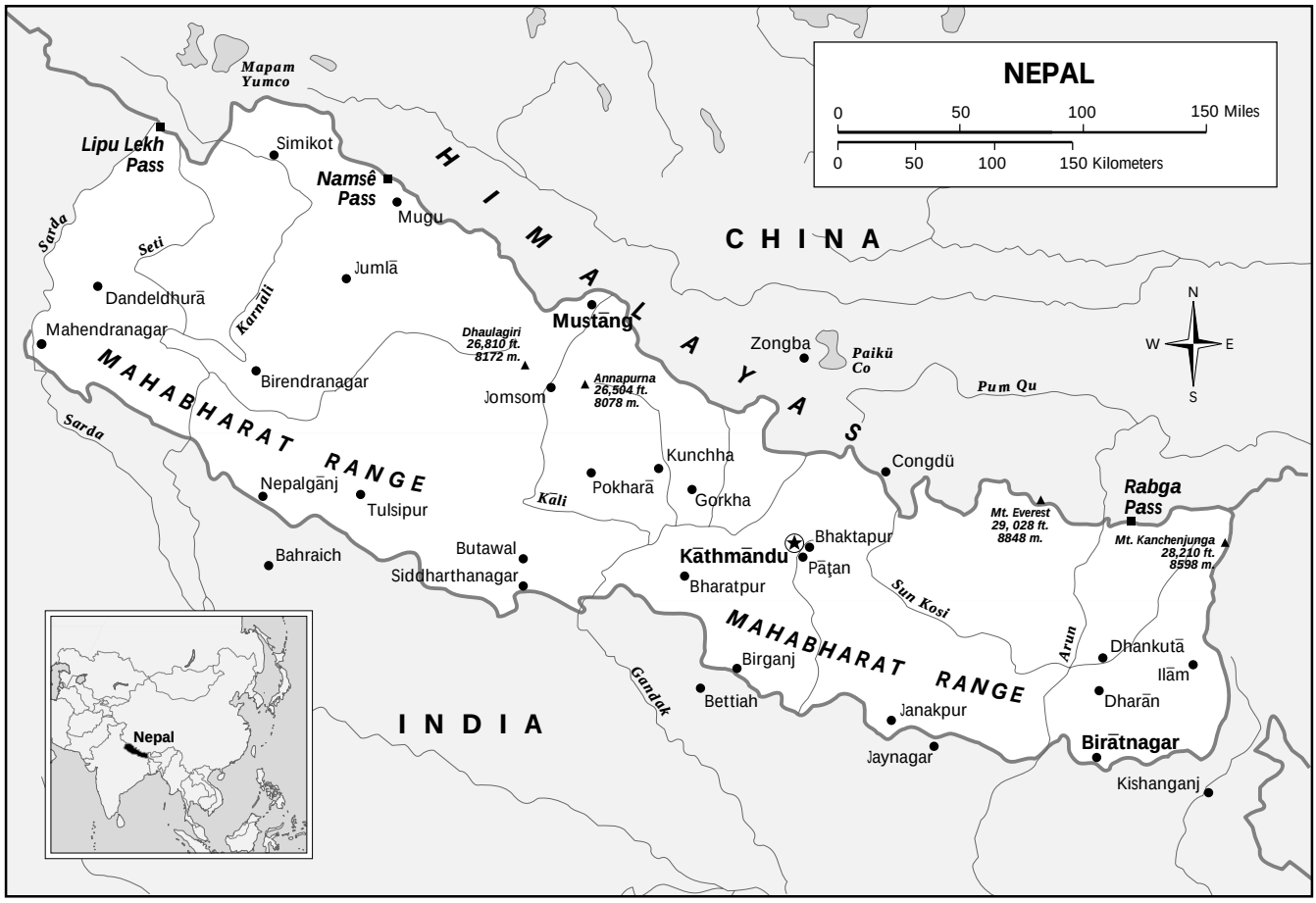
After 1800, the heirs of Prithvi Narayan Shah proved unable to maintain firm political control over Nepal. A period of internal turmoil followed, heightened by Nepal's defeat by the British in a war from 1814 to 1816. Stability was restored after 1846 when the Rana family gained power, entrenched itself through hereditary prime ministers, and reduced the monarch to a figurehead. The Rana regime, a highly centralized autocracy, pursued a policy of isolating Nepal from external influences. This policy helped Nepal maintain its national independence during the colonial era, but also impeded the country's economic development.

In 1950, King Tribhuvan, a direct descendant of Prithvi Narayan Shah, fled his "palace prison" to newly independent India, touching off an armed revolt against the Rana administration. This allowed the return of the Shah family to power and, eventually, the appointment of a non-Rana prime minister. A period of quasi-constitutional rule followed, during which the monarch, assisted by the leaders of fledgling political parties, governed the country. During the 1950s, efforts were made to frame a constitution for Nepal that would establish a representative form of government, based on the British model.

Democracy Develops

In early 1959, King Mahendra, who had succeeded his father Tribhuvan in 1955, issued a new constitution and the first democratic elections for a national assembly were held. The Nepali Congress Party, a moderate socialist group, gained a substantial victory in the election. Its leader, B.P. Koirala, formed a government and served as Prime Minister.

Declaring parliamentary democracy a failure eighteen months later, King Mahendra dismissed the Koirala government and promulgated a new constitution on December 16, 1962. The new constitution established a "par-



tyless" system of panchayats (councils), which King Mahendra claimed was a democratic form of government closer to Nepalese traditions. As a hierarchical structure progressing from village assemblies to a Rastriya Panchayat (National Parliament), the Panchayat system enshrined the absolute power of the monarchy and kept the King as head of state with sole authority over all governmental institutions, including the Cabinet (Council of Ministers) and the Parliament.

King Mahendra was succeeded by his 27-year-old son, King Birendra, in 1972. Amid student demonstrations and anti-regime activities in 1979, King Birendra called for a national referendum to decide the nature of Nepal's government—either the continuation of the Panchayat system with democratic reforms or the establishment of a multiparty system. The referendum was held in May 1980, and the Panchayat system won a narrow victory. The King carried out the promised reforms, including selection of the prime minister by the Rastriya Panchayat.

Movement to Restore Democracy

In 1990, the political parties again pressed the King and the government for change. Leftist parties united under a common banner of the United Left Front and joined forces with the Nepali Congress Party to launch strikes and demonstrations in the major cities of Nepal. This "Movement to Restore Democracy" was initially dealt with severely, with more than 50 persons killed by police gunfire and hundreds arrested. In April, the King capitulated. Consequently, he dissolved the Panchayat system, lifted the ban on political parties, and released all political prisoners. An interim government was sworn in on April 19, 1990, headed by Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as Prime Minister presiding over a cabinet made up of members of the Nepali Congress Party, the communist parties of Nepal, royal appointees, and independents. The new government drafted and promulgated a new constitution in November 1990, which enshrined fundamental human rights and established Nepal as a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarch. International observers characterized the May 1991 elections as free and fair, in which the Nepali Congress Party won 110 out of 205 seats to form the government.

In mid-1994, the Parliament was dissolved due to dissension within the Nepali Congress Party. The subsequent general election held Novem-

ber 15, 1994, gave no party a majority. The 1994 elections resulted in a Nepali Congress Party defeat and a hung Parliament, with a minority government led by the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist Party (CPN-UML); this made Nepal the world's first communist monarchy, with Man Mohan Adhikary as Prime Minister. The next five years saw five successive unstable coalition governments and the beginning of a Maoist insurgency.

Following the May 1999 general elections, the Nepali Congress Party once again headed a majority government after winning 113 out of 205 seats. But the pattern of short-lived governments persisted. There were three Nepali Congress Party Prime Ministers after the 1999 elections: K.P. Bhattarai (5/31/99-3/17/00); G. P. Koirala (3/20/00-7/19/01); and Sher Bahadur Deuba (7/23/01-10/04/02).

On June 1, 2001, Crown Prince Dipendra reportedly shot and killed his father King Birendra, his mother Queen Aishwarya, his brother, his sister, his father's younger brother Prince Dhirendra, and several aunts before turning the gun on himself. After his death two days later, the late King's surviving brother Gyanendra was proclaimed King.

Maoist Insurgency

In February 1996, the leaders of the Maoist United People's Front began a violent insurgency, waged through killings, torture, bombings, kidnappings, extortion, and intimidation against civilians, police, and public officials in more than 50 of the country's 75 districts. Over 13,000 police, civilians, and insurgents were killed in the conflict. The government and Maoists held peace talks in August, September, and November of 2001, but they were unsuccessful, and the Maoists resumed their violent insurgency. Shortly after the 2001 peace talks failed, King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency, which the Parliament approved by a two-thirds vote. On the recommendation of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, the King dissolved the House on May 22, 2002.

Struggle for Democracy Continues

In a sudden turn of events on October 4, 2002, King Gyanendra removed Prime Minister Deuba and assumed executive power. The entire Council of Ministers was also dissolved, and the November 13, 2002 elections to the dissolved House of Representatives were called off. After a week-long consultation with the leaders of various political parties, on October 11, 2002, the King appointed Lokendra Bahadur Chand as Prime Minister with a five-point directive that included creating an environment of peace and security as well as holding elections to the local bodies and the House of Representatives.

Under Chand's premiership, the government and Maoists declared a cease-fire on January 29, 2003. This marked the second cease-fire with the Maoists; the first, in 2001, had been broken by the Maoists. The 2003 cease-fire included an agreement to undertake initiatives to resolve the Maoist problem through dialogue and bring the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) back into mainstream politics. After the announcement of the 2003 cease-fire, the Chand government held two rounds of peace talks with the Maoists, in April and May. But in its effort to end political instability, it failed to secure the support of the leading political parties. In the face of growing pressure from political parties and their mass movement, Chand resigned from his post on May 30, 2003, after only seven months in power. The King appointed Surya Bahadur Thapa as the new Prime Minister on June 4, 2003, amidst opposition from the major political parties. Another round of peace talks was held in mid-August 2003, but on August 27, 2003 the Maoists broke the second cease-fire. Thapa resigned in May 2004 as a result of political pressure. In June 2004, the King reinstated formerly dismissed Sher Bahadur Deuba as Prime Minister.

King's Direct Rule

Citing a steady deterioration of conditions in the country, King Gyanendra dismissed the Cabinet and constituted a Council of Ministers under his own chairmanship on February 1, 2005. He stated that the Council of Ministers (i.e., Cabinet) would try to reactivate multi-party democracy within three years.

The King subsequently declared a state of emergency and suspended almost all fundamental rights for nearly three months. His new government was sworn in on February 2, 2005. The Council of Ministers under the King's chairmanship was reshuffled twice during the King's 15 months of direct rule.

People's Movement

In April 2006, the major political parties, in cooperation with the Maoists, organized massive countrywide demonstrations for the restoration of democracy, forcing the King to relinquish power. On April 24, 2006, King Gyanendra reinstated the 1999 Parliament. Former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala of the Nepali Congress Party was selected by the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) of political parties to again lead the government. The Maoists declared a unilateral cease-fire on April 26, and the new Koirala government announced its own unilateral cease-fire and plans for peace talks with the Maoist insurgents on May 3, 2006.

The SPA and the Maoists have since signed a number of agreements, including, in November 2006, a comprehensive peace agreement to end the decade-long insurgency. Both sides also agreed to an arms management process and elections for a Constituent Assembly. On January 15, 2007 a 329-member interim Parliament, including 83 Maoist representatives and other party representatives, was constituted. The first sitting of the Parliament unanimously endorsed an interim constitution, which replaced the constitution of 1990. On April 1, 2007, the ruling eight-party government formed an interim Council of Ministers through political consensus, including five Maoist ministers.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

A 10-year Maoist insurgency—punctuated by cease-fires in 2001, 2003, 2005, and 2006—began in 1996. After King Gyanendra announced the reinstatement of Parliament on April 24, 2006, the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire on April 26, 2006 which the new Koirala government reciprocated on May 3, 2006. The Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) and the Maoists signed five agreements, culminating in the comprehensive peace agreement of November 21, 2006, effectively ending the insurgency. However, Maoist violence and intimidation continued in spite of the agreement.

The main agenda of the SPA and the Maoists was to hold a Constituent Assembly (CA) election, with the primary responsibility of drafting and promulgating a new constitution defining the future political system in Nepal. The interim constitution, adopted on January 15, 2007, expressed full commitment to democratic ideals and norms, including competitive multi-party democracy, civil liberties, fundamental human rights, adult enfranchisement, periodic elections, press freedom, an independent judiciary, and the rule of law. The interim constitution also guaranteed the basic rights of Nepali citizens to formulate a constitution for themselves and to participate in the Constituent Assembly in an environment free from fear. The interim constitution transferred all powers of the King as head of state to the prime minister and stripped the King of any ceremonial constitutional role. Under the interim constitution, the fate of the monarchy was to be decided by the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly. The interim Parliament was a unicameral house.

After promulgation of the interim constitution, many socially marginalized ethnic communities, including the Madhesis of the lowland Terai, began widespread protests against the proposed proportional representation system incorporated in the new constitution. After a Maoist shot and killed one of the demonstrators, violent protests erupted with clashes between police and demonstrators and attacks on government facilities in at least 10 districts, resulting in the death of over 30 people. Prime Minister Koirala, in an address to the nation on February 7, 2007 promised to amend the constitution to meet the demands of the Terai people. However, the situation remained tense, with continuing protests and violence.

Twice deferred, Nepal's historic Constituent Assembly (CA) election was finally held on April 10, 2008. None of the parties succeeded in getting a simple majority in the CA. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) won 220 out of 575 elected seats, followed by the Nepali Congress with 110 seats, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) with 103 seats, and the Terai-based Madhesi People's Rights Forum with 52 seats. These numbers are only preliminary, as five seats still need to be determined through by-elections and the outcome of several races has been contested in the special election court.

The final list of members elected under the proportional representation system was released on May 8, 2008. The members of the Constituent Assembly were sworn in on May 27, 2008, and the first session of the CA was convened on May 28, 2008. In this session, the CA voted to declare Nepal a federal democratic republic by abolishing the monarchy. Out of 564 members of the CA who voted, 560 voted in favor and 4 against the motion.

While the CA has the prime responsibility of drafting a new constitution for Nepal, it also functions as a regular Parliament. Through the fourth amendment to the interim constitution of Nepal on May 28, 2008, the CA also established, for the first time, a largely ceremonial President as the constitutional head of state, as well as a Vice President. The Prime Minister continues to be the head of the government.

Nepal's judiciary is legally separated from the executive and legislative branches and, in practice, has increasingly shown the will to be independent of political influence. However, by asserting executive control over the judiciary, the interim constitution called into question this independence. Under the interim constitution, the Prime Minister appoints the Chief Justice on the recommendation of the Constitutional Council, and the Chief Justice appoints other judges on the recommendation of the Judicial Council. All lower court decisions, including acquittals, are subject to appeal. The Supreme Court is the court of last appeal.

Human Rights

Since political reform began in 1990, some progress has been achieved in the transition to a more open society with greater respect for human rights; however, substantial problems remain. Poorly trained police sometimes use excessive force in quelling violent demonstrations. In addition, there have been reports of torture during detention and widespread reports of custodial abuse. In 2000, the government established the National Human Rights Commission, a government-appointed commission with a mandate to investigate human rights violations. However, the government is sometimes slow to follow the commission's recommendations or to enforce accountability for recent and past abuses. The King's February 2005 dismissal of the government, subsequent imposition of emergency rule and suspension of many civil rights—including freedom of expression, assembly, and privacy—was a setback for human rights in Nepal. During this three-month period, censors were deployed to major newspapers, and many political leaders were kept under house arrest. The King's government restricted the media from publishing interviews, articles, or news items against the spirit of the royal proclamation of February 1, 2005 or in support of terrorist or destructive activities. The reinstated government, led by Prime Minister Koirala, reversed these decisions in May 2006. The interim constitution

promulgated on January 15, 2007 ensured unrestricted freedom of expression.

Both the Maoists and security personnel have committed numerous human rights violations. The Maoists have used tactics such as kidnapping, torture, bombings, intimidation, killings, and conscription of children. Within the Nepalese security forces, violations ranged from disappearances to executions. After the royal takeover on February 1, 2005 and subsequent imposition of the state of emergency, the security forces arrested many political leaders, student leaders, journalists, and human rights activists under the Public Security Act of 1989, although all were released by June 2005 when the King ended the state of emergency.

After the April 2006 cease-fire announced by the government and the Maoists, incidents of human rights violations by the government declined substantially while incidents of human rights violations by the Maoists remained relatively unabated. Even after signing a comprehensive peace agreement with the government in November 2006, Maoists' extortion, abduction, and intimidation largely remained uncontrolled. Although activities by other political parties have increased significantly in the rural parts of Nepal, political party representatives, police, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, and journalists reported continuous threats and intimidation by Maoist cadres. During the January-February 2007 uprising in the Terai, reports of government security forces using excessive force to quell demonstrations were common.

There are three major daily English-language newspapers, "The Kathmandu Post," "The Himalayan Times" and "The Rising Nepal." The last and its vernacular sister publication are owned by a government corporation. There are hundreds of smaller daily and weekly periodicals that are privately owned and of varying journalistic quality. Views expressed since the 1990 move to democracy are varied and vigorous. Currently, more than 75 radio and four television stations are privately owned and operated, following liberalization of licensing regulations. Radio Nepal and Nepal Television are government-owned and operated. There are nearly 200 cable television operators nationwide, and satellite dishes to receive television broadcasts abound. However, despite its prominence, the Nepali press is still frequently subject to violence and intimidation by political groups.

Trafficking in women and child labor remain serious problems. While Nepal is primarily a source country for destinations like India and the Middle East, internal trafficking is also a prominent issue. According to the State Department's 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report, 5,000 to 7,000 girls have been trafficked from rural parts of the country to Kathmandu, and there are over 20,000 child indentured domestic workers in Nepal. Lack of prosecution and police complicity in trafficking cases remain major problems. Discrimination against women and lower castes is prevalent.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Ram Baran YADAV, Dr.**
Vice Pres.: **Paramananda JHA**
Prime Min.: **Pushpa Kamal DAHAL**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Bamdev GAUTAM**
Min. of Agriculture & Cooperatives: **Jaya Prakash GUPTA**
Min. of Commerce & Supplies: **Rajendra MAHATO**
Min. of Culture & State Restructuring: **Gopal KIRANTI**
Min. of Defense: **Ram Bahadur THAPA**
Min. of Education: **Renu YADAV**
Min. of Environment, Science, & Technology: **Ganesh SHAH**
Min. of Finance: **Baburam BHATTARAI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Upendra YADAV**
Min. of Forest & Soil Conservation: **Kiran GURUNG**
Min. of Gen. Admin.: **Pampha BHUSAL**
Min. of Health & Population: **Giriraj Mani POKHREL**
Min. of Home: **Bamdev GAUTAM**
Min. of Industry: **Asta Laxmi SHAKYA**
Min. of Information & Communications: **Krishna Bahadur MAHARA**
Min. of Labor & Transport Management: **Lekh Raj BHATTA**
Min. of Land Reform & Management: **Matrika YADAV**
Min. of Law, Justice, & Constituent Assembly: **Dev GURUNG**
Min. of Local Development: **Ram Chandra JHA**
Min. of Peace & Rehabilitation: **Janardan Sharma PRABHAKAR**
Min. of Physical Planning & Public Works: **Vijaya Kumar GACHHEDAR**
Min. of Tourism & Civil Aviation: **Hisila YAMI**
Min. of Water Resources: **Bishnu PAUDEL**
Min. of Women, Children, & Social Welfare: **Puspha DAHAL**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Gopal SHAKYA**
Governor, Central Bank:
Ambassador to the US: **Suresh Chandra CHALISE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Madhu Raman ACHARYA**

Nepal maintains an Embassy in the United States at 2131 Leroy Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (Tel: 202-667-4550; fax: 202-667- 5534). The Nepalese Mission to the United Nations is at 300 E. 46th Street, New York, NY 10017 (Tel: 212-370-3988/ 3989).

ECONOMY

Nepal ranks among the world's poorest countries, with a per capita income of around $386 in 2007. Based on national calorie/GNP criteria, an estimated 31% of the population is below the poverty line. An isolated, agrarian society until the mid-20th century, Nepal entered the modern era in 1951 without schools, hospitals, roads, telecommunications, electric power, industry, or a civil service. The country has, however, made progress toward sustainable economic growth since the 1950s and is committed to a program of economic liberalization.

Nepal launched its 10th five-year economic development plan in 2002; its currency has been made convertible; and fourteen state enterprises have been privatized, seven liquidated, and two dissolved. Foreign aid accounts for more than half the development budget. The Government of

Nepal has shown an increasing commitment to fiscal transparency, good governance, and accountability. Also in 2002, the government began to prioritize development projects and eliminate wasteful spending. In consultation with civil society and donors, the government cut 160 development projects that were driven by political patronage.

Agriculture remains Nepal's principal economic activity, employing over 71% of the population and providing 36.1% of GDP. Only about 25% of the total area is cultivable; another 33% is forested; most of the rest is mountainous. Rice and wheat are the main food crops. The lowland Terai region produces an agricultural surplus, part of which supplies the food-deficient hill areas. Because of Nepal's dependence on agriculture, the magnitude of the annual monsoon rain strongly influences economic growth.

In FY 2006/2007 Nepal's exports increased by 4.2%, compared to an increase of 2.8% in FY 2005/2006. Imports grew by 11.3% in FY 2006/2007 as compared to 9.8% in FY 2005/2006. Exports were constrained by political turmoil and a poor investment climate. The trade deficit for FY 2005/2006 was $1.4 billion, which widened to $1.8 billion in FY 2006/2007. Real GDP growth during 1996-2002 averaged less than 5%. Real growth experienced a one-time jump in 1999, rising to 6%, before slipping back below 5%. In 2002, GDP recorded a negative growth rate of 0.33%, largely because of the Maoist insurgency. GDP grew 3.1% in FY 2002/2003 and 3.6% in FY 2003/2004, and again slipped to 2.4% in 2004/2005 and to 2.4% in FY 2005/2006, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Despite its growing trade deficit, Nepal traditionally has a balance of payments (BOP) surplus due to remittances from Nepalese working abroad. In FY 2006/2007, Nepal recorded a balance of payments surplus of $83.4 million (0.9% of GDP), as compared to $356.1 million in FY 2005/2006 (3.9% of GDP).The lower BOP surplus in FY 2006/2007 was mainly attributable to slower exports and remittances. While the current account decreased in FY 2006/2007, the capital account registered significant growth. Nepal receives substantial amounts of external assistance from India, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. Several multilateral organizations—including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the UN Development Program—also provide significant assistance. On April 23, 2004, Nepal became the 147th member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

With eight of the world's ten highest mountain peaks—including Mt. Everest at 8,848 m (29,000 ft)—Nepal is a tourist destination for hikers and mountain climbers. However, the decade-long insurgency and a global economic slowdown threatened the tourism industry. But 2007 witnessed a renewed wave of tourism. Figures from the Department of Immigration showed a 37.2% increase in arrivals in 2007, which surpassed the numbers of tourist arrivals during 1999, the peak tourism year prior to 2006. Since the political parties and Maoists brokered a comprehensive peace agreement in November 2006, renewed tourist arrivals have given relief to the tourism-based hotel, trekking, mountaineering, and aviation industries.

Swift rivers flowing south through the Himalayas have massive hydroelectric potential to service domestic power needs and growing demand from India. Only about 1% of Nepal's hydroelectric potential is currently tapped. Several hydroelectric projects, at Kulekhani and Marsyangdi, were completed in the early to late 1980s. In the early 1990s, one large public-sector project, the Kali Gandaki A (144 megawatts—MW), and a number of private projects were planned; some have been completed. Kali Gandaki A started commercial operation in August 2002. The most significant privately financed hydroelectric projects currently in operation are the Khimti Khola (60 MW) and Bhote Koshi (36 MW) projects.

The environmental impact of Nepal's hydroelectric projects has been limited by the fact that most are "run-of-river," with only one storage project undertaken to date. The planned private-sector West Seti (750 MW) storage project is dedicated to electricity exports. An Australian company signed a power purchase agreement with the Indian Power Trading Corporation in September 2002 and has the lead on the project. Negotiations with India for a power purchase agreement have been underway for several years, but agreement on pricing and capital financing remains a problem. The Government of Nepal has taken up the issue of project financing for the West Seti project with the EXIM Bank of China. Starting in December 2006, the Department of Electricity Development obtained proposals from 14 foreign companies for survey licenses of three projects—600 MW Budhi Gandaki, 402 MW Arun III, and 300 MW Upper Karnali. The Ministry of Water Resources, after delaying the evaluation process for more than a year, finally awarded the 300 MW Upper Karnali to Indian private sector developer GMR Energy Ltd. In March 2008, the 402 MW Arun III was awarded to India's state-owned Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN). The Department of Electricity Development had invited fresh global tenders for the 600 MW Budhi Gandi project in December 2007, but it failed to attract investors. Currently, domestic demand for electricity is increasing at 8%-10% a year.

Population pressure on natural resources is increasing. Overpopulation is already straining the "carrying capacity" of the middle hill areas, particularly the Kathmandu Valley, resulting in the depletion of forest cover for crops, fuel and fodder, and contributing to erosion and flooding. Additionally, water supplies within the Kathmandu Valley are not considered safe for consumption, and disease outbreaks are not uncommon. Although steep mountain terrain makes exploitation difficult, mineral surveys have found small deposits of limestone, magnesite, zinc, copper, iron, mica, lead, and cobalt.

Progress has been achieved in education, health, and infrastructure. A countrywide primary education system is under development, and Tribhuvan University has several campuses. Although eradication efforts continue, malaria has been controlled in the fertile but previously uninhabitable Terai region in the south. Kathmandu is linked to India and nearby hill regions by an expanding highway network.

DEFENSE

Nepal's military consists of the nearly 95,000-strong Nepalese Army (NA), which is organized into six divisions (Far-Western, Mid-Western, Western, Central, Eastern, and Valley Divisions) with separate Aviation, Parachute, and Security Brigades as well as brigade-sized directorates encompassing air defense, artillery, engineers, logistics, and signals which provide general support to the NA. According to recent amendments to the interim constitution, the President—when he or she is chosen—will be the Supreme Commander of the NA. The Prime Minister is currently Minister of Defense. General Rookmangud Katawal is Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), and also the senior commissioned officer of the NA. Talks are currently underway to negotiate the integration of the Maoist People's Liberation Army into the NA.

Since 1958, the NA has contributed over 50,000 peacekeepers to 28 peacekeeping missions such as the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the former Yugoslavia, the UN Operational Mission in Somalia II (UNOSOMII), the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), and the UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNTAET). NA units are presently serving in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and the UN Mission in Haiti (MINUSTOH), among others. Approximately 3,400 of the world-famous Nepalese Gurkha forces serve in the British Army, and 40,000 serve in the Indian Army.

The U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) coordinates U.S. military engagement and security assistance with Nepal through the Office of Defense Cooperation. Cumulative U.S. military assistance to the NA has consisted of $21.95 million in grant assistance: Foreign Military Financing (FMF) since 2002, annual professional and technical training provided under the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET grant for $752,000 in FY 2008), additional training provided under the Counter Terrorism (CT) Fellowship (approximately $200,000 annually), and approximately $0.5 million for Global Peace Operations Initiative funding to increase the pool of international peacekeepers and promote interoperability. Many NA officers attend U.S. military schools, conferences and seminars such as those provided by the National Defense University (NDU), Marshall Center, and the Asia Pacific Center for Strategic Studies (APCSS).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

As a small, landlocked country wedged between two much larger and far stronger powers, Nepal seeks good relations with both India and China. Nepal formally established relations with China in 1956 and, since then, their bilateral relations have generally been good. Because of strong cultural, religious, linguistic, and economic ties, Nepal's association with India traditionally has been close. India and Nepal restored trade relations in 1990 after a break caused by India's security concerns over Nepal's relations with China. A bilateral trade treaty signed with India in 1991 is renewed every five years. The most recent renewal was on March 6, 2007, which expires on March 5, 2012. A transit treaty with India, which allows Nepal to trade with other countries through the Calcutta/Haldia ports, was extended on March 30, 2006 for seven years.

Nepal played an active role in the formation of the economic development-oriented South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and is the site of its secretariat. Nepal is also a signatory of the agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), which came into force on January 1, 2006. A SAFTA tariff liberalization program (TLP) was scheduled to be implemented July 1, 2006. All member countries, except for Nepal, whose TLP started on August 1, 2006, reduced tariffs for each other. However, on July 1, 2006, Pakistan officially toughened its stance of not trading with India under the SAFTA arrangements and did not announce TLP for India. Due to the stalemate between India and Pakistan, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation Free Trade Agreement (BIMSTEC-FTA), which was initially scheduled to come into force on July 1, 2006, was deferred indefinitely. The BIMSTEC Summit scheduled for February 8, 2007, in India was also deferred due to political instability in member states, including Nepal. It has now been rescheduled for November 2008. On international issues, Nepal follows a non-aligned policy and often votes with the Non-Aligned Movement in the United Nations. Nepal participates in a number of UN specialized agencies and is a member of the World Trade Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Colombo Plan, and Asian Development Bank.

U.S.-NEPAL RELATIONS

The United States established official relations with Nepal in 1947 and opened its Kathmandu Embassy in 1959. Relations between the two countries have always been friendly. U.S. policy objectives toward Nepal center on helping Nepal build a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic society.

Since 1951, the United States has provided more than $1 billion in bilateral development assistance to Nepal. In recent years, annual bilateral U.S. assistance through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of

State has averaged $55 million. U.S. foreign assistance programs support Nepal's peace process and transition to democracy, and promote long-term development through agriculture, health, family planning, environmental protection, and vocational education programs in Nepal. The United States also contributes to international institutions and private voluntary organizations working in Nepal. The Peace Corps temporarily suspended its operations in Nepal in 2004 due to increasing security concerns, and officially terminated its Nepal program in 2006.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 29, 2008

Country Description: Nepal is a developing country with extensive tourist facilities, which vary widely in quality and price. The capital is Kathmandu. Nepal has suffered from political instability for almost 11 years. The Government signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement on November 21, 2006, formally ending the Maoist insurgency, which began in 1996. The Maoist insurgents and other political groups have yet to fully end the violence.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Travelers may obtain visas prior to travel or purchase two-month, single-entry visas or two-month, multiple-entry visas upon arrival at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu and at the following land border points of entry: Kakarvitta, Jhapa District (Eastern Nepal); Birgunj, Parsa District (Central Nepal); Kodari, Sindhupalchowk District (Northern Border); Belahia, Bhairahawa (Rupandehi District, Western Nepal); Jamunaha, Nepalgunj (Banke District, Mid-Western Nepal); Mohana, Dhangadhi (Kailali District, Far Western Nepal); and Gadda Chauki, Mahendranagar (Kanchanpur District, Far Western Nepal). Visas and information on entry/exit requirements can be obtained from the Embassy of Nepal at 2131 Leroy Place NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 667-4550 or the Consulate General in New York at (212) 370-3988.

Upon departure from Tribhuvan International Airport, all foreigners must pay an airport exit tax (currently approximately $27), regardless of the length of their stay. Tourists may stay in Nepal no longer than 150 days in any given calendar year.

Active duty U.S. military and Department of Defense contractors must obtain a country clearance from their parent units to be forwarded to the Defense Attaché's Office at the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu for both official and unofficial travel to Nepal.

Travelers occasionally report immigration difficulties with Chinese authorities when crossing the Nepal-China border over land in either direction. Chinese authorities often require American and other foreign tourists to organize "group" tours through established travel agencies as a pre-requisite for obtaining visas and entry permits into Tibet. U.S. citizens planning to travel to Tibet from Nepal may contact the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu for current information on the status of the border-crossing points. Travelers may also wish to check with the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Nepal for current regulations on entry into Tibet.

Visit the Embassy of Nepal web site at http://www.nepalembassyusa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: A Travel Warning remains in effect because the Department of State continues to be concerned about the security situation in Nepal. Despite the signing of the November 21, 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Maoists and other political movements continue extortion, abduction and killing. Since April 2006, numerous groups using violent methods to advance various political goals have formed in Nepal. Business people (both Nepalese and foreign) and tourists who resist Maoist extortion demands have been threatened, sometimes assaulted, and risk being detained. Maoist demonstrators have stopped and in some cases attacked vehicles, including those of the U.S. Embassy. Since early 2007, the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) has harassed and attacked established tourist facilities and infrastructure, and has threatened Kathmandu-based personnel of a U.S. non-governmental organization.

In May 2007, YCL cadre attacked with stones a UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) vehicle carrying the UNHCR Resident Representative and the U.S. Ambassador in Jhapa District in the Terai.

The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends against non-essential travel to the Terai, the southern region bordering India. Maoist splinter groups in the Terai as well as other violent Terai-based groups continue to kidnap and murder Nepalese citizens. Additionally, ongoing political agitation and civil unrest in the Terai, including violent clashes between

various political groups and Maoist splinter groups, as well as inter-communal violence and criminality, have increased. The random, indiscriminate, and unpredictable nature of these attacks creates the risk of U.S. citizens in Nepal being caught in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Since the ceasefire in April 2006, hotels and businesses frequented by American citizens have been the target of extortion demands and, in some cases, have become the focus of demonstrations. In November 2006, resident Americans reported that they were told that they would have to house and feed Maoists intending to participate in rallies in Kathmandu. In a few cases, local Nepali staff of the American residents were threatened or beaten when they attempted to resist this demand. The discrepancy between the Maoists' publicly stated intentions and their behavior, combined with their consistent anti-American rhetoric, remains a serious concern.

Americans traveling to Nepal should be aware of the potential for large or violent demonstrations. Frequently, demonstrators burn vehicles, throw rocks at passing motorists, and burn tires to block traffic. Given the frequency, nature, intensity and unpredictability of disturbances, American citizens are urged to exercise particular caution when demonstrations are announced or reported, avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring or crowds are forming, avoid road travel during these periods and maintain a low profile. Demonstrations can occur with little or no advance notice. American citizens are urged to consult media sources and the Embassy's web site (http://nepal.usembassy.gov) for current security information.

In a November 2002 press release, the Maoists claimed responsibility for targeting and murdering two locally-hired U.S. Embassy security guards. In 2003, the Department of State designated the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as a Terrorist Organization under the "Terrorist Exclusion List" of the Immigration and Nationality Act and under Executive Order 13224. These two designations make Maoists excludable from entry into the United States and bar U.S. citizens from transactions such as contribution of funds, goods, or services to, or for the benefit of, the Maoists.

The U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu requires pre-clearance of all travel outside the Kathmandu Valley by U.S. Government employees. U.S. citizens who decide to travel outside the Valley are strongly urged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu to discuss and register their planned itinerary and to receive the most recent security information before traveling. Nighttime road travel should be strictly avoided outside the Kathmandu Valley and minimized within Kathmandu.

Visitors in areas on or near the rim of the Kathmandu Valley, such as Shivapuri National Park, should be particularly cautious when traversing military camps or checkpoints and carefully follow the commands of security personnel. Military installations and checkpoints are often protected with explosive devices. Movement in such areas at or after dusk should not be undertaken. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Travel Warning for Nepal as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Bandhs (General Strikes): A "bandh" (forced closure of businesses, schools and halting of vehicular traffic) is a frequently used and long-standing form of political expression in Nepal. Many bandhs are enforced through intimidation and violence. During a recent bandh, an American citizen was injured when demonstrators threw a rock and broke the window of the vehicle in which he was traveling to the airport. Bandhs tend to be unpredictable and may take place without any prior notice. Bandhs typically draw thousands of demonstrators into the streets who sometimes incite or initiate violence. Bandhs tend to focus on the central areas of Kathmandu, but they also can be nationwide, and bandh-related violent disturbances occur throughout Nepal.

Bandhs in the Terai region of Nepal also occur and have been known to last for several weeks, causing acute shortages of daily food supplies and bringing vehicular traffic to a complete halt. Individuals have been reported kidnapped or killed for not complying with the bandhs in the region.

During bandhs, U.S. citizens are urged to avoid all unnecessary travel. If travel by vehicle is necessary, U.S. citizens should pay attention to the volume of traffic on the roads, waiting until a pattern of traffic is well established before undertaking travel, and maintaining a low profile throughout bandh periods. Buses, taxis, and other forms of public transportation may not operate during a bandh. Observance of bandhs, particularly in the transportation sector, may be higher outside the Valley, where a number of private buses and trucks have been stopped, torched, and their drivers beaten. U.S. citizens are strongly urged to avoid road travel outside the Kathmandu Valley, especially during scheduled bandhs. If you are planning air travel to or from Nepal during scheduled bandhs, be aware that transportation to and from airports throughout Nepal could be affected. Consult the U.S. Embassy web site at http://nepal.usembassy.gov for up-to-date information on upcoming bandhs as well as the latest security information.

Crime: Although the rate of violent crime is low in Kathmandu relative to that in comparably-sized American cities, crime in Kathmandu and in adjacent areas has risen dramatically since April 2006. Robbery and home-invasion robbery by armed gangs has increased, and in some cases American citizens have been victimized. The U.S. Embassy has received sev-

eral reports of individuals harassing American women in Kathmandu, and in one case an American woman was assaulted. In another case, when police detained two employees of a hotel where this occurred, the American-citizen victim was threatened by Maoists. The citizen was told that unless the two employees were released, the citizen would not be allowed to leave Nepal. Criminal activity and extortion of tourists occurs frequently along popular hiking trails. Trekkers and other individuals who resist extortion demands are threatened, sometimes assaulted, and risk being detained. In December 2007, Maoist cadres in the popular Annapurna circuit trekking area beat up a Swiss national who declined to pay the "donation" demanded by them. He sustained serious head injuries, requiring stitches.

In late 2005, two European women were murdered in Nargarjun Forest, a popular tourist destination near Kathmandu. The two murders occurred within weeks of each other and both involved women hiking alone. The body and valuables of one woman were recovered and theft did not appear to be the motivation behind the crime. Both crimes remain unsolved and no culprits have been identified.

Visitors should avoid walking alone after dark and carrying large sums of cash or wearing expensive jewelry. Women travelers are advised not to wear revealing clothing in public places as this can be culturally offensive to Nepalese. In addition, visitors should consider exchanging money only at banks and hotels and limiting shopping to daylight hours. There have been several reported incidents in which tourists have had their belongings stolen from their rooms while they were asleep. Valuables should be stored in the hotel safety deposit box and should never be left unattended in hotel rooms. Travelers should be especially alert at or near major tourist sites, where most pickpocketing occurs. Passports and cash should be carried in a protected neck pouch or money belt—not in a backpack or handbag. Nepali police forces have limited resources and lack sufficient manpower to effectively enforce law and order. Their services are not up to Western standards. Many cases reported to the police remain unresolved.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Nepal is: 100, which is manned 24/7 by the local police. While most Nepalese police officials understand and speak English, when calling the emergency number, you might wish to speak slowly so that the message that you wanted to pass gets across to the official clearly and without difficulty.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Nepal is extremely limited and is generally not up to Western standards. Typical travelers' complaints can be addressed by the clinics in Kathmandu, and some surgeries can also be performed in the capital. However, serious illnesses often require evacuation to the nearest adequate medical facility (in Singapore, Bangkok or New Delhi). Illnesses and injuries suffered while hiking in remote areas often require evacuation by helicopter to Kathmandu. Those trekking in remote areas of Nepal should factor the high costs of a potential helicopter rescue into their financial considerations. Travelers are urged to consider purchasing medical evacuation insurance if they plan to visit remote areas. There is minimal mental health care available in Nepal. Americans with mental health problems are generally stabilized and transported to the U.S. for care. The Consular Section in Kathmandu can provide a list of available medical facilities to Americans upon request. Medical facilities are often overwhelmed due to insufficient resources and the emergency services available fall far short of those expected in the U.S.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Nepal.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Nepal is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel via road in areas outside of the Kathmandu Valley remains dangerous and should be avoided. In general, roads in Nepal are in poor condition and lack basic safety features, resulting in significant numbers of accidents and fatalities. Moreover, Americans should consider

avoiding riding motorcycles in Nepal. In 2006, three foreigners were killed after they were hit by trucks while riding motorcycles on the highway. Visitors throughout Nepal, including in Kathmandu, should use metered taxis and avoid public buses and microbuses.

Various Nepalese political groups frequently announce road closures (blockades) in certain districts of Nepal and forcibly block major roads throughout the country, including roads to Tibet, India, Chitwan, Pokhara, and Jiri. Most recently, in May 2007, a number of Americans were stranded at the border crossing to India in southeastern Nepal for several days when the border was closed due to political demonstrations. In addition, during the monsoon season, heavy rains cause flooding and can wash out roads or make road travel difficult. U.S. citizens should travel into and within Nepal by air whenever possible.

In the Kathmandu Valley, traffic jams are common on major streets, particularly from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians and animals, all traveling at different speeds, congest narrow roads. Traffic is poorly regulated, and the volume of vehicles on the roads has increased by approximately 15 percent per year. Many drivers are neither properly licensed nor trained. Many vehicles are poorly maintained, and public vehicles are generally overloaded. Sidewalks and pedestrian crossings are nonexistent in most areas, and drivers do not yield the right-of-way to pedestrians. Pedestrians account for over 40% of all traffic fatalities in Nepal.

Visit the web site of Nepal's national tourist office at www.welcomenepal.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Nepal, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The Government of Nepal has authorized the Trekking Agency Association of Nepal (TAAN) and the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB) to implement a new system for foreign hikers called the Trekkers' Information Management System (TIMS). Beginning January 1, 2008, foreign visitors on hiking trips in Nepal, including those not with organized hiking groups, need to have a valid TIMS card issued by TAAN, its member agencies, or NTB. In the case of an emergency, the new system will help authorities ascertain the whereabouts of trekkers. TIMS cards are available free of charge through authorized trekking companies, the TAAN office in Kathmandu or Pokhara, and the NTB office.

Robberies, extortion and intimidation continue as in previous years throughout the Kathmandu Valley and the trekking areas in Nepal. Risks of encounters with Maoist groups, or groups posing as Maoists, are very high in nearly all trekking routes of Nepal, and injuries to foreigners for arguing or failing to pay extortion demands continue to occur. Checkpoints established by Maoist-affiliated groups where armed individuals demand payment for "trekking permits" still occur and pose a risk to travelers. Groups posing as Maoists have used violent tactics to intimidate tourists who initially refused to pay or were seen as argumentative. Americans are urged to refrain from arguing with such individuals or "talking back" to them, as such a response may increase the risk of violence.

U.S. citizens should never hike alone or become separated from larger traveling parties while on a trail. Solo trekking has contributed to injuries and deaths, and makes one more vulnerable to criminals. The safest option for all trekkers is to join an organized group and/or use a reputable firm that provides an experienced guide and porters who communicate in both Nepali and English. Destruction of telephone services to many trekking areas by the Maoist insurgents often complicates efforts to locate U.S. citizens and make arrangements for medical evacuations. U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to contact the Embassy in Kathmandu for the latest security information and to register their itinerary before undertaking treks outside the Kathmandu Valley. Trekkers are also advised to leave their itinerary with family or friends in the U.S. and to check in at police checkpoints where trekking permits are logged.

Trekking in Nepal involves walking over rugged, steep terrain, where one is exposed to the elements, often at high altitudes. Many popular trekking routes in Nepal cross passes as high as 18,000 feet. The U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu strongly recommends that U.S. citizens exercise extreme caution when trekking at high altitudes. Only experienced mountain travelers should tackle the Himalayas. Trekkers of all ages, experience, and fitness levels can experience Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), which can be deadly.

Trekkers should also be alert to the possibility of avalanches and landslides, even when trails are clear. Avalanches at the narrow gorge above Deurali on the route to the Annapurna Base Camp regularly result in the deaths of trekkers and climbers. Avalanches and landslides caused by severe storms have killed many foreign trekkers and their Nepalese guides, and have stranded hundreds of others. Trekking in Upper Mustang in certain National Park areas may require a special permit from the Government of Nepal and a fee. Americans are encouraged to check on the fees and permits prior to their travels.

A number of tourists have drowned while swimming in Phewa Lake and other adjoining lakes in Pokhara due to flash floods triggered by monsoon rains or after becoming entangled in submerged tree branches or roots.

Before leaving Kathmandu, trekkers can check with the Himalayan Rescue Association (phone: (977) (1) 4440-292/4440-293) or the U.S.

Embassy for reliable information about trail conditions and possible hazards in the high country.

Many Nepal-based volunteer organizations have recently formed and maintain websites. However, the Embassy has received reports from a number of American volunteers complaining that such organizations have swindled them after arriving in Nepal to work as volunteers. Americans are cautioned to be aware of this practice and encouraged to research the legitimacy of such organizations. The Social Service Council of the Government of Nepal maintains a list of legitimate volunteer organizations and information can be verified by emailing inquiries to swc@info.com.np.

Nepal has a controlled, or fixed, currency exchange rate with the Indian Rupee. To manage this rate of exchange, the Government of Nepal requires travelers to declare either the import or export of currency. As of this writing, travelers must declare any cash currency carried that exceeds $2,000 in value by filling out a custom's declaration form. The Nepalese Department of Immigration has reported an increasing number of foreigners being arrested for currency violations. Travelers should ensure that they keep a copy of the declaration form after customs officials have put the endorsement on the form to prevent any problems upon departure. Please note that this requirement is subject to change and travelers should contact the Embassy of Nepal in Washington to obtain the latest information. Consequences for violating this requirement could include seizure of all cash carried, fines, and imprisonment. It is illegal to possess 500 or 1,000 Indian Rupee notes in Nepal.

Nepalese customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning importation (even temporary) into or export from Nepal of items such as valuable metals, articles of archeological and religious importance, wildlife and related articles, drugs, arms and ammunition, and communications equipment. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Nepal in Washington or Nepal's Consulate General in New York for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Nepal is prone to earthquakes, landslides, and flooding. The Government of Nepal's ability to respond is limited. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Nepalese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Nepal are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Nepal are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Nepal. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located in Maharajgunj in Kathmandu, telephone (977) (1) 400-7200. The Consular Section can be reached through the Embassy switchboard at (977) (1) 400-7200, directly by fax at (977) (1) 400-7281 or email at consktm@state.gov. The U.S. Embassy's web site is http://nepal.usembassy. gov

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Nepal is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Nepal, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

United States citizens wishing to adopt a child in Nepal must meet both United States requirements and the requirements set by the Nepalese Government. Procedures for foreign adoptions in Nepal are unpredictable and the Nepalese Government requirements are not enforced uniformly. The Nepalese Government frequently changes requirements with little notice.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for adopting in Nepal.

Age Requirements: The age difference between prospective parents and the adoptive child must be at least 30 years.

Marriage Requirements: The couple must have been married for at

least four years prior to filing an adoption application and be "infertile." Single women between the age of 35 and 55 may also adopt. Single men may not adopt.

Who Can Be Adopted? Nepal has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. You cannot adopt a child in Nepal unless he or she meets the requirements outlined below.

In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Under Nepalese law, single mothers or married mothers who have been left by their husbands must meet stringent requirements regarding the relinquishment of their children for adoption. Fathers have twelve years from the child's birth to claim the child and assert custody rights. Unless a mother identifies the father and he agrees, in writing, to the child's adoption, the child will not be eligible for adoption. This can result in uncertainties as to a whether a child is actually eligible for adoption and may result in further investigations and delays.

Sibling Requirements: If the prospective parents already have a child or children of their own, Nepalese Government regulations state they only adopt a Nepalese child of the opposite sex of their biological child or children. Siblings of the opposite sex can be adopted together if other qualifications are met.

Nepalese Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (WCS) is the Nepalese Government office responsible for adoptions in Nepal. officially, the Ministry has recognized the Nepal Children's Organization (NCO), also known as Bal Mandir, to process adoptions, although adoptions through other orphanages are possible.

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Nepal is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

Most adoptive families work with an adoption agency in the United States to adopt from an orphanage in Nepal. Some orphanages have established relationships with specific adoption agencies in the United States and work only with those agencies. The United States Embassy in Kathmandu encourages all parents to work through a United States agency, as the adoption process in Nepal is quite complex; furthermore, experienced agencies are able to provide support and counseling services before, during, and after the adoption. The Nepalese Government does not require adoptive parents to work with specific agencies in the United States or Nepal. Only designated orphanages in Nepal are approved to process intercountry adoption cases. The United States Embassy in Kathmandu does not maintain a list of United States agencies or Nepalese orphanages processing intercountry adoption cases in Nepal as these may change frequently.

To bring an adopted child from Nepal to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS.

Adoptive parents in Nepal sign many documents in the process of completing an adoption. Many of these documents are in Nepalese, and English translations are not routinely provided. Parents are encouraged to have documents translated before they are signed. Shree Law Book Management Board is the official Governmental translation office. The office is located in Babar Mahal, Kathmandu. The United States Embassy requires both the original and the official translation of all case documents at the time of the immigrant visa interview. Please see the list of required documents. Nepal Children's Organization reviews applications and makes determinations if parents are eligible to adopt. The United States Embassy has no authority to challenge or change a decision by NCO to deny an application. Denial by NCO does not mean a definitive end to the process; parents may still able to proceed with a private agency.

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Nepal will provide you with a referral to a child.

Nepal Children's Organization reviews applications and makes determinations if parents are eligible to adopt. The United States Embassy has no authority to challenge or change a decision by NCO to deny an application. Denial by NCO does not mean a definitive end to the process; parents may still able to proceed with a private agency.

The Nepalese Government requires that all adoptive parents complete and sign a "Guarantee Letter." This letter, which is made part of the dossier that is submitted to the WCS serves to assure the Nepalese Government that the adoptive parents have been approved by the United States Government to be adoptive parents and that, if legally qualified, the child will be eligible to immigrate to the United States. This letter is completed after the child is assigned to the parents by the Nepalese orphanage or authority. The Guarantee Letter is a requirement of the Nepalese Government, not of the United States Government. The Nepalese Government requires that all adoptive parents complete and sign a "Guarantee Letter." This letter, which is made part of the dossier that is submitted to the WCS serves to assure the Nepalese Government that the adoptive parents have been approved by the United States Government to be adoptive parents and that, if legally qualified, the child will be eligible to immigrate to the United States. This letter is completed after the child is assigned to the parents by the Nepalese orphanage or authority. The Guarantee Letter is a requirement of the Nepalese Government, not of the United States Government.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (WCS) is the

Nepalese Government office responsible for adoptions in Nepal. officially, the Ministry has recognized the Nepal Children's Organization (NCO), also known as Bal Mandir, to process adoptions, although adoptions through other orphanages are possible.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Most adoptive families work with an adoption agency in the United States to adopt from an orphanage in Nepal. Some orphanages have established relationships with specific adoption agencies in the United States and work only with those agencies.

Time Frame: The process from the approval of the I-600A and the issuance of the Guarantee Letter to the approval of the adoption by the Nepalese Government varies in length from six months to two years. The process for adopting children over the age of three years sometimes is completed in a shorter time period. The timing is often uneven and inconsistent; changes in the security situation or the Government may lead to additional delays. Recent changes in adoption regulations may significantly impact adoption processing in Nepal.

Some adoptions in Nepal may be completed with one trip to Nepal; however, many adoptive parents travel to Nepal twice or more. On the first visit, they meet the child and complete initial paperwork required by the Nepalese Government. They then return to Nepal when the adoption is approved by the Nepalese Government to file for the immigrant visa.

Adoption Fees: The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare charges a fee of $300 for the adoption of an orphan from Nepal. Orphanages and local facilitators in Nepal often charge additional fees to process the adoption and to care for the child once the child has been assigned to adoptive parents but prior to the Nepalese Government approval of the adoption by the Nepalese Government. These fees vary widely. Adoptive parents have reported a wide variance in fees (between $3,000–$17,000 USD) charged by Nepalese orphanages, which are largely unregulated by the Nepalese Government. Many parents have reported that orphanages have charged them new and unexpected fees once the parents arrive in Nepal. Prospective parents are advised to obtain detailed receipts for all fees and donations paid to orphanages, either by the parents directly or through their United States adoption agencies. The United States Embassy requires a copy of receipts and information on fees paid in the United States and in Nepal at the time of the immigrant visa interview.

Documents Required: The Nepalese Government requires that all adoptive parents complete and sign a "Guarantee Letter." This letter, which is made part of the dossier that is submitted to the WCS serves to assure the Nepalese Government that the adoptive parents have been approved by the United States Government to be adoptive parents and that, if legally qualified, the child will be eligible to immigrate to the United States.

The processing of the Guarantee Letter also requires photographs of the child and parents and a letter from the Government of Nepal informing the United States Embassy of the details of the match between the child and the adoptive parents, including the child's name and date of birth. The child's photo must be affixed to the letter from the Nepalese orphanage to the United States Embassy.

The following are also necessary:

- Fingerprint report for the prospective adoptive parents;
- A favorable recommendation from the District Administrative officer (Chief District officer) where the child resides; and
- A death certificate and/or an affidavit of consent and irrevocable release of the child of biological parents for purposes of emigration and adoption.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Nepal does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Nepal
Maharajgunj, Kathmandu
Tel.: 977-1-400-7200
Fax: 977-1-400-7281
Email: consktm@state.gov
Internet: http://nepal.usembassy.gov

Nepal's Children Authority
Central office, Bal Mandir, Naxal
P O Box 6967, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 4 411202, 4 410 844, 4 419 219
Fax: + 977 1 4 414 485
E-mail: info@nconepal.org
Internet: www.nconepal.org

Royal Nepalese Embassy
2131 Leroy Pl NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: 202-667-4550
Internet: www.nepalembassyusa.org

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833)

Travel Warning

November 21, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Nepal and urges caution when traveling in country. The Department of State remains concerned about the security situation in Nepal and urges American citizens to obtain updated security information before they travel and to be prepared to change their plans on short notice. This replaces the Travel Warning for Nepal dated May 7, 2008 and updates safety and security information following the formation of the coalition government in August, 2008.

Despite the recent smooth transition of government, some unrest remains. The Young Communist League (YCL), a Maoist Party subgroup, continues to engage in extortion, abuse, and threats of violence, particularly in rural areas. Youth groups from the other two main political parties, the Nepali Congress (NC) and the United Marxist-Leninist Party (UML), have also formed and clashes continue among these political rivals. Violent actions by multiple armed splinter groups in the Terai region along the southern border with India remain a significant concern. While protests and pre-election localized bombing incidents have decreased, demonstrations and disruptions still occur. During demonstrations, protestors have used violence, including damaging vehicles, throwing rocks, and burning tires to block traffic. Given the nature, intensity, and unpredictability of disturbances, American citizens are urged to exercise special caution during times when demonstrations are announced, avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring or crowds are forming, avoid road travel, and maintain a low profile. Curfews can be announced with little or no advance notice. American citizens are urged to consult media sources and to register with the Embassy (see instructions below) for current security information. Crime in the Kathmandu Valley, including violent crime and harassment of women, continues to rise. Police resources to combat such crime are limited. Police have reported a number of robberies by armed gangs, sometimes resulting in injury to the victims.

The U.S. Embassy reports an increase in crime in some popular tourist areas such as Pokhara and the Thamel area of Kathmandu. Visitors to Nepal should practice good personal security when moving about, especially at night, and avoid walking alone after dark, carrying large sums of cash, or wearing expensive jewelry. In several reported incidents tourists have had their belongings stolen from their rooms while they were asleep. Solo trekkers have been robbed by small groups of young men, even on some popular trails. Some Young Communist League members extort money from foreign tourists along some popular trekking routes, and have threatened physical violence to Nepalis and non-Nepalis alike for violating localized strikes.

Travel via road in areas outside of the Kathmandu Valley is hazardous due to erratic drivers and frequent road accidents. Public transportation, such as microbuses and tuk tuks, should be avoided because they are often overfilled, driven unsafely, and mechanically unsound. American citizens should use taxis with meters or negotiate a price with the taxi driver before starting a trip. Most U.S. official travel outside the Kathmandu Valley, including by air, requires specific clearance by the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer. As a result, The U.S. Embassy's ability to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens may be limited. Active duty U.S. military and Department of Defense contractors must obtain a country clearance for official and personal travel to Nepal. The U.S. Government's designation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" organization under Executive Order 13224 and its inclusion on the "Terrorist Exclusion List" pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act remain in effect. These two designations make Maoists excludable from entry into the United States without a waiver and bar U.S. citizens from transactions such as contribution of funds, goods, or services to, or for the benefit of, the Maoists. For additional information, please refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" found at http://travel.state.gov. Americans living or traveling in Nepal are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website (https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/home.asp). The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu is located at Maharajgunj. The telephone number is 977-1-4007200, 4007201. The number for after-hours emergencies is 977-1-4007266, 4007269. The fax number is 977-1-4007281. The Consulate's e-mail address is consktm@state.gov and its Internet web page is http://nepal.usembassy.gov. U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's latest Country Specific Information for Nepal and the Worldwide Caution, available at http://travel.state.gov. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



NETHERLANDS

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of the Netherlands

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 41,526 sq. km. (16,485 sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Amsterdam (pop. 742,884). Other cities—The Hague, seat of government (473,941); Rotterdam (584,058); Utrecht (288,401).
Terrain: Coastal lowland.
Climate: Northern maritime.

People

Population: 16.5 million.
Nationality: Noun—Dutchmen and Dutchwomen. Adjective—Dutch.
Ethnic groups: Predominantly Dutch; largest minority communities are Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese.
Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, other.
Languages: Dutch.
Education: Years compulsory—13. Attendance—nearly 100%. Literacy—99%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—4.1/1,000. Life expectancy—80.15 yrs.
Work force: (civilians, 2007, 8.4 million): industry—19.6%; manufacturing—13.2%; services—77.3%; agriculture—3.1%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarch.
Constitution: 1814 and 1848.
Government branches: Executive—monarch (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament (First and Second Chambers). Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political subdivisions: 12 provinces.
Political parties: Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), Labor Party (PvdA), Socialist Party (SP), Liberal Party (VVD), other minor parties.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $792 billion.
GDP real growth rate: (2007) 3.5%.
GDP per capita: (2007 est.) $45,600.
Natural resources: Natural gas, petroleum, fertile soil.
Agriculture: (2% of GDP) Products—dairy, poultry, meat, flower bulbs, cut flowers, vegetables and fruits, sugar beets, potatoes, wheat, barley.
Industry: (24% of GDP): Types—agro-industries, steel and aluminum, metal and engineering products, electric machinery and equipment, bulk chemicals, natural gas, petroleum products, transport equipment, microelectronics.
Services: (74% of GDP): Types—trade, hotels, restaurants, transport, storage and communication, financial (banking and insurance) and business services, care and other.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$489.9 billion (f.o.b.): mineral fuels, chemicals, machinery and transport equipment, processed food and tobacco, agricultural products. Imports—$433.1 billion (f.o.b.): mineral fuels and crude petroleum, machinery, transportation equipment, consumer goods, foodstuffs. Major trading partners in 2007 (exports/imports)—EU (66%/47%), Germany (20%/17%), Belgium (9%/9%), China (1%/8%), United Kingdom (6%/8%), and U.S. (5%/8%).

HISTORY

The Dutch are primarily of Germanic stock with some Gallo-Celtic mixture. Their small homeland frequently has been threatened with destruction by the North Sea and has often been invaded by the great European powers.

Julius Caesar found the region which is now the Netherlands inhabited by Germanic tribes in the first century B.C. The western portion was inhabited by the Batavians and became part of a Roman province; the eastern portion was inhabited by the Frisians. Between the fourth and eighth centuries A.D., most of both portions were conquered by the Franks. The area later passed into the hands of

the House of Burgundy and the Austrian Habsburgs. Falling under harsh Spanish rule in the 16th century, the Dutch revolted in 1558 under the leadership of Willem of Orange. By virtue of the Union of Utrecht in 1579, the seven northern Dutch provinces became the Republic of the United Netherlands.

During the 17th century, considered its "golden era," the Netherlands became a great sea and colonial power. Among other achievements, this period saw the emergence of some of painting's "Old Masters," including Rembrandt and Hals, whose works—along with those of later artists such as Mondriaan and Van Gogh—are today on display in museums throughout the Netherlands and the world.

The country's importance declined, however, with the gradual loss of Dutch technological superiority and after wars with Spain, France, and England in the 17th and 18th century. The Dutch United Provinces supported the Americans in the Revolutionary War. In 1795, French troops ousted Willem V of Orange, the Stadhouder under the Dutch Republic and head of the House of Orange.

Following Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the Netherlands and Belgium became the "Kingdom of the United Netherlands" under King Willem I, son of Willem V of Orange. The Belgians withdrew from the union in 1830 to form their own kingdom. King Willem II was largely responsible for the liberalizing revision of the constitution in 1848.

The Netherlands prospered during the long reign of Willem III (1849-90). At the time of his death, his daughter Wilhelmina was 10 years old. Her mother, Queen Emma, reigned as regent until 1898, when Wilhelmina reached the age of 18 and became the monarch.

The Netherlands proclaimed neutrality at the start of both world wars. Although it escaped occupation in World War I, German troops overran the country in May 1940. Queen Wilhelmina fled to London and established a government-in-exile. During the war, the Nazis rounded up the Jewish population before deporting them to camps in the East. Over 75% of the Netherlands' 140,000 Jews died at the hands of the Nazis. Shortly after the Netherlands was liberated in May 1945, the Queen returned. Crown Princess Juliana acceded to the throne in 1948 upon her mother's abdication. In April 1980, Queen Juliana abdicated in favor of her daughter, now Queen Beatrix. Crown Prince Willem Alexander was born in 1967.

Elements of the Netherlands' once far-flung empire were granted either full independence or nearly complete autonomy after World War II. Indonesia formally gained its independence in 1949, and Suriname became independent in 1975. The five islands of the Netherlands Antilles (Curacao, Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius, and a part of St. Maarten) and Aruba are integral parts of the Netherlands realm but enjoy a large degree of autonomy.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The present constitution—which dates from 1848 and has been amended several times, most recently in 1983—protects individual and political freedoms, including freedom of religion. Although church and state are separate, a few historical ties remain; the royal family belongs to the Dutch Reformed Church (Protestant). Freedom of speech also is protected.

Government Structure

The country's government is based on the principles of ministerial responsibility and parliamentary government. The national government comprises three main institutions: the Monarch, the Council of Ministers, and the States General. There also are local governments.

The Monarch. The monarch is the titular head of state. The Queen's function is largely ceremonial, but she does have some influence deriving from the traditional veneration of the House of Orange, from which Dutch monarchs for more than three centuries have descended. Her influence also derives from her personal qualities as Queen and her power to appoint the "formateur," who forms the Council of Ministers following elections.

The Council of Ministers plans and implements government policy. The Monarch and the Council of Ministers together are called the Crown. Most ministers also head government ministries, although ministers-without-portfolio exist. The ministers, collectively and individually, are responsible to the States General (parliament). Unlike the British system, Dutch ministers cannot simultaneously be members of parliament.

The Council of State is a constitutionally established advisory body to the government that consists of members of the royal family and Crown-appointed members generally having political, commercial, diplomatic, or military experience. The Council of State must be consulted by the cabinet on proposed legislation before a law is submitted to the parliament. The Council of State also serves as a channel of appeal for citizens against executive branch decisions.

States General (parliament). The Dutch parliament consists of two houses, the First Chamber and the Second Chamber. Historically, Dutch governments have been based on the support of a majority in both houses of parliament. The Second Chamber is by far the more important of the two houses. It alone has the right to initiate legislation and amend bills submitted by the Council of Ministers. It shares with the First Chamber the right to question ministers and state secretaries.

The Second Chamber consists of 150 members, elected directly for a 4-year term—unless the government falls prematurely—on the basis of a



nationwide system of proportional representation. This system means that members represent the whole country—rather than individual districts as in the United States—and are normally elected on a party slate, not on a personal basis. There is no threshold for small-party representation. Campaigns are relatively short, lasting usually about a month, and the election budgets of each party tend to be less than $1 million. The electoral system makes a coalition government almost inevitable. The last election of the Second Chamber was in November 2006.

The First Chamber is composed of 75 members elected for 4-year terms by the 12 provincial legislatures. It cannot initiate or amend legislation, but its approval of bills passed by the Second Chamber is required before bills become law. The First Chamber generally meets only once a week, and its

members usually have other full-time jobs. The current First Chamber was elected following provincial elections in May 2007.

Courts. The judiciary comprises 62 cantonal courts, 19 district courts, five courts of appeal, and a Supreme Court that has 24 justices. All judicial appointments are made by the Crown. Judges nominally are appointed for life but actually are retired at age 70.

Local Government. The first-level administrative divisions are the 12 provinces, each governed by a locally elected provincial council and a provincial executive appointed by members of the provincial council. The province is formally headed by a queen's commissioner appointed by the Crown.

Current Government. General elections were held in November 2006. On February 22, 2007, a new center-left coalition government was sworn in, composed of the center-right Christian Democrats (CDA), Social Democrats (PvdA), and left-of-center orthodox Protestant Christian Union (CU) under CDA Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende. Given the consensus-based nature of Dutch politics, a change of government does not usually result in any drastic change in foreign or domestic policy. Descriptions of the four main parties follow.

The Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) was formed from the merger of the Catholic People's Party and two Protestant parties, the Anti-Revolutionary Party and the Christian-Historical Union. The merger process, begun in the early 1970s to try to stem the tide of losses suffered by religiously based parties, was completed in 1980. The CDA supports free enterprise and holds to the principle that government activity should supplement but not supplant communal action by citizens. On the political spectrum, the CDA sees its philosophy as standing between the "individualism" of the Liberals and the "statism" of the Labor Party. CDA has 41 seats in the current Second Chamber, more than any other party.

The Labor Party (PvdA), a classic European Social Democratic party, is left of center. It currently has 33 seats in the Second Chamber. Labor's program is based on greater social, political, and economic equality for all citizens, although in recent years the party has begun to debate the role of central government in that process. Although called the Labor Party, it has no formal links to the trade unions.

The Liberal (VVD) Party is "liberal" in the European, rather than American, sense of the word. It thus attaches great importance to private enterprise and the freedom of the individual in political, social, and economic affairs. The VVD is generally seen as the most conservative of the major parties. It currently has 22 seats in the Second Chamber.

The Socialist Party (SP) was founded as a grass root Marxist-Leninist movement in 1972. From the start Jan Maijnissen has been the driving force behind the party. Started at the local level, Marijnissen transformed the party into a working-class leftist alternative to the Labor Party and succeeded at being elected to parliament in 1994. At every subsequent election the party grew, and in November 2006 it obtained 25 seats, which made it the third largest party. The party is fundamentally nationalistic and opposes globalization, the European Union and Dutch participation in international peacekeeping. It also favors cutting defense spending by 40%.

Domestic Drug Policy

Despite intensified efforts by the Dutch Government to combat production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs, the Netherlands continues to be a significant transit point for drugs entering Europe (especially cocaine), an important producer and exporter of synthetic drugs, notably MDMA (Ecstasy), although MDMA production seems to be declining substantially. According to the National Police, the number of ecstasy tablets seized in the U.S. that could be linked to the Netherlands dropped significantly from 0.85 million in 2005 to only 5,390 tablets in 2006. The successful five-year strategy (2002-2006) against production, trade, and consumption of synthetic drugs was positively assessed at the end of 2006, and a new long-term plan was endorsed by parliament in June 2007.

The Dutch Opium Act punishes possession, commercial distribution, production, import, and export of all illicit drugs. Drug use, however, is not an offense. The act distinguishes between "hard" drugs that have "unacceptable" risks (e.g., heroin, cocaine, ecstasy) and "soft" drugs (cannabis products). One of the main aims of this policy is to separate the markets for soft and hard drugs so that soft drug users are less likely to come into contact with hard drugs. The sale of a small quantity (under five grams) of soft drugs in "coffeeshops" is tolerated, albeit under strict conditions and controls. The United States continues to disagree with this aspect of Dutch drug policy. Overall, the Health Ministry coordinates drug policy, while the Ministry of Justice is responsible for law enforcement. Matters relating to local government and the police are the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior. At the municipal level, policy is coordinated in tripartite consultations among the mayor, the chief public prosecutor, and the police.

The Netherlands has a wide variety of demand-reduction and "harm"-reduction programs reaching about 80% of the country's 24,000-46,000 opiate addicts. The number of opiate addicts has stabilized over the past few years, with the average age rising to 40, and the number of overdose deaths related to opiates stabilizing at between 30 and 50 per year.

Counterterrorism/ Homeland Security

The Netherlands supports the global coalition against terrorism with leadership, personnel and material, including the deployment of troops to Afghanistan. The Prime Minister stated the U.S. and his country stand "shoulder to shoulder" in the struggle for global security. The Netherlands is a party to all 12 UN counterterror-

ism conventions. In August 2004, the Act on Terrorist Crimes, implementing the 2002 European Union (EU) framework decision on combating terrorism, became effective. The Act makes recruitment for the Jihad and conspiracy with the aim of committing a serious terrorist crime separate criminal offenses. In 2008, parliament adopted the Act on Administrative National Security Measures, which allows the Interior Minister to issue restraining orders to prohibit a terrorist suspect's physical proximity to specific locations or persons. A bill making participation in a terrorist training camp a serious punishable offense is currently awaiting parliamentary action. In 2008, the public prosecutor's office filed appeals against two court verdicts acquitting some members of both the so-called "Hofstad" and "Piranha" terror groups of participating in a criminal and terrorist organization. The appeals are still pending. In September 2008, the National Counterterrorism Coordinator's Office (NCTb) maintained the terror threat level at "substantial" (the Netherlands has four threat levels: minimum, limited, substantial and critical). According to the NCTb, the Netherlands and its foreign interests may be among the priority targets of international jihad networks. The main reason for this is the short film "Fitna," produced by member of parliament Geert Wilders, which was released in March 2008. The film was highly critical of Islam, and was offensive to many Muslims. The Dutch have taken a leading role, particularly in the European Union, to establish financial protocols to combat terrorism. They have also donated to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide assistance to countries that lack the wherewithal to implement some of these measures immediately. They have taken steps to freeze the assets of individuals and groups included on the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1267 Sanctions Committee's consolidated list. In March 2006, the Dutch hosted a major international terrorist financing conference.

The Netherlands is an active participant in the Container Security Initiative at Rotterdam, one of Europe's busiest ports. In 2004, the Dutch, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy's Megaport/Second Line of Defense initiative, installed four portal monitors at the Port of Rotterdam. Since then, the Dutch have purchased 40 portal monitors that allows for almost complete coverage of the Port of Rotterdam. The Dutch Government also permitted U.S. CBP Immigration Liaison Officers to return to Schiphol Airport to assist with U.S.-bound passenger screening (the program is now known as the Immigration Advisory Program). In January 2005, the U.S. and Netherlands agreed to develop an International Registered Travelers program to facilitate travel that includes CBP's Trusted Traveler Program participants utilizing certain U.S. airports, and Dutch participants in Schiphol Airport's "Privium" program.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Queen: **BEATRIX**
Prime Min.: **Jan Peter BALKENENDE**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Wouter BOS**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Andre ROUVOET**
Min. of Agriculture, Nature, & Food Quality: **Gerda VERBURG**
Min. of Defense: **Eimert VAN MIDDELKOOP**
Min. of Development Cooperation: **Albert KOENDERS**
Min. of Economic Affairs: **Maria VAN DER HOEVEN**
Min. of Education, Culture, & Science: **Ronald PLASTERK**
Min. of the Environment & Spatial Planning: **Jacqueline CRAMER**
Min. of European Affairs: **Frans TIMMERMANS**
Min. of Finance: **Wouter BOS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Maxime VERHAGEN**
Min. of Gen. Affairs: **Jan Peter BALKENENDE**
Min. of Health, Welfare, & Sport: **Abraham "Ab" KLINK**
Min. of Housing, Communities, & Integration: **Ella VOGELAAR**
Min. of Interior & Kingdom Relations: **Guusje TER HORST**
Min. of Justice: **Ernst HIRSCH BALLIN**
Min. of Social Affairs & Employment: **Jan Piet Hein DONNER**
Min. of Transport, Public Works, & Water Management: **Camiel EURLINGS**
Min. of Youth & Family Affairs: **Andre ROUVOET**
State Sec. for Defense: **Jack DE VRIES**
State Sec. for Education, Culture, & Science: **Sharon DIJKSMA**
State Sec. for Education, Culture, & Science: **Marja VAN BIJSTERVELDT-VLIEGENTHART**
State Sec. for European Affairs: **Frans TIMMERMANS**
State Sec. for Finance: **Jan Kees DE JAGER**
State Sec. for Foreign Trade: **Frans HEEMSKERK**
State Sec. for Health, Welfare, & Sport: **Jet BUSSEMAKER**
State Sec. for Interior & Kingdom Relations: **Ank BIJLEVELD-SCHOUTEN**
State Sec. for Justice: **Nebahat ALBAYRAK**
State Sec. for Social Affairs & Employment: **Ahmed ABOUTALEB**
State Sec. for Transport, Public Works, & Water Management: **Tineke HUIZINGA-HERINGA**
Pres., The Netherlands Central Bank: **Nout WELLINK**
Ambassador to the US: **Christiaan Mark Johan KROENER**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Franciscus MAJOOR**

The Netherlands' embassy in the U.S. is at 4200 Linnean Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel: 202-244-5300; fax: 202-362-3430.

ECONOMY

After a strong performance in the 1990s, which brought unemployment to below 3%, the Dutch economy struggled through 2002 and 2003, plagued by relatively high costs and weak domestic demand. Real GDP growth recovered to 2.0% in 2004, but fell back slightly in 2005 to 1.5% largely due to lagging corporate investment and decreased government consumption. The economy grew by 2.9% in 2006. The 2007 growth rate of 3.5% was the highest since 2000. In 2007, the volume of imports increased 6% and exports 8%. In 2006 both grew by 10%.

Private consumption decreased by 1.2% in 2006—primarily due to reforms in the health care system which shifted health care spending

from private to public consumption—but grew by 2.1% in 2007. The unemployment rate dropped further from 5.5% in 2006 to 4.5% in 2007, but has stabilized in 2008. After a drop in the early 2000s, investment staged a recovery in 2005-2006. This upward trend in investment continued with an increase of 10% in 2007. Investment growth is expected to slow to 7.25% in 2008 and then decrease in 2009.

In recent years, many firms in the Netherlands cited a loss of competitiveness as a major impediment to growth as unit labor costs outpaced those of their major competitors, including within the euro area. Low wage rises enabled firms to regain some lost ground as collective wage agreements were signed before growth accelerated in 2006. However, the increasing labor shortage was reflected in higher wage demands in the second half of 2007. Inflation ranged from 1.1% to 1.7% between 2004 and 2007. The inflation rate increased quickly in 2008 to 3.2% in August, and it is feared that this trend will continue. However, the Dutch inflation rate is still among the lowest in the eurozone.

The Netherlands was one of the first EU member states to qualify for the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Its fiscal policy has sought to strike a balance between further reductions in public spending and lower taxes and social security contributions. After an unexpected sharp economic downturn in 2003 caused the nominal deficit to breach the 3% GDP limit set by the EMU's Growth and Stability Pact, the center-right coalition government agreed to a package of spending cuts, which helped to lower the budget deficit in 2004 and 2005. The government achieved a budget surplus of 0.6% in 2006 and 0.7% in 2007.

Government Role

Although the private sector is the cornerstone of the economy, the Netherlands has an important and vibrant public sector. The government plays a significant role through permit requirements and regulations pertaining to almost every aspect of economic activity. The government combines a rigorous and stable microeconomic policy with wide-ranging structural and regulatory reforms. The government has gradually reduced its role in the economy since the 1980s. Unabated privatization came to a halt in December 2007 when the government approved a policy that "the State will not pursue selling its interest in approximately 30 companies of 'vital interest' in which it is a shareholder including energy companies, financial services, and Schiphol airport."

Trade and Investment

The Netherlands, which derives more than two-thirds of GDP from merchandise and services trade, had a record trade surplus totaling 41 billion euros in 2007 (about $56 billion). Since there are no significant trade or investment barriers, the Netherlands remains a receptive market for U.S. exports and an important investment partner. The Netherlands is the eighth-largest destination for U.S. exports, as well as the fourth-largest direct investor in the United States. Dutch accumulated direct investment in the United States in 2006 was $189 billion. The United States is the third-largest investor in the Netherlands with direct investment of $216 billion as of 2006. There are more than 1,600 U.S. companies with subsidiaries or offices in the Netherlands. The Dutch are strong proponents of free trade and staunch allies of the U.S. in international fora such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Sectors of the Economy

Services account for almost three-quarters of the national income and are primarily in transportation, distribution, logistics, and financial areas, such as banking and insurance. Industrial activity generates about a fourth of the national product and is dominated by the metalworking, oil refining, chemical, and food processing industries. The agriculture and fisheries sector and traditional Dutch activities account for some 2% of GDP. Although Dutch crude oil production is small, the Netherlands is a relatively large producer and distributor of natural gas. The Slochteren gas fields in Groningen Province in the north are among the world's larger producing natural gas fields. Total proven reserves of natural gas situated on the mainland currently amount to about 2 trillion cubic meters. Roughly 80% is accounted for by reserves on the mainland, the remaining 20% accounted for by relatively small deposits on the North Sea continental shelf. Current gas production is running at an annual average of around 75 billion cubic meters, roughly half of which is exported to EU member countries.

Environmental Policy

The Netherlands is a small and densely populated country. Its economy depends on industry, particularly chemicals and metal processing, intensive agriculture and horticulture, and on its infrastructure, which takes advantage of the country's geographical position at the heart of Europe's transportation network. These factors have led to major pressure on the environment.

The National Environmental Policy Plan (NMP) sets out Dutch environmental policy. Under NMP-4, published in 2001, the government seeks to cut back on all forms of pollution by 80%-90% within one generation, meaning that by 2030, the present generation should be able to pass on a clean environment to the next one.

Although the environmental quality in the Netherlands has improved significantly, some important targets, particularly with respect to nitrogen oxide and ammonia emissions, climate change, and noise reduction, will be difficult to reach.

The Dutch Government works closely with industry and nongovernmental organizations to reach environmental targets. In order to meet the Kyoto target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 6% in the 2008-2012 period from 1990 levels, the govern-

ment reached an agreement with industry and the energy sector on emission rights trading. The current government's policy is to achieve a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 from 1990 levels.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Netherlands abandoned a long-standing policy of neutrality after World War II. The Dutch are engaged participants in international affairs. Dutch foreign policy is geared to promoting a wide variety of goals: the rule of law, human rights, and democracy. Priority is given to enhancing European integration, ensuring European security and stability (mainly through the mechanism of NATO and by emphasizing the important role the United States plays in the security of Europe), and participating in conflict management and peacekeeping missions.

The Netherlands generally pursues its foreign policy interests within the framework of multilateral organizations. The Netherlands is an active and responsible participant in the United Nations as well as other multilateral organizations such as NATO, the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the OECD, the WTO, and the International Monetary Fund. A centuries-old tradition of legal scholarship has made the Netherlands the home of the International Court of Justice; the Yugoslavia and Rwanda War Crimes Tribunals; the European judicial and police organizations Eurojust and Europol; the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; and International Criminal Court. Dutch security policy is based primarily on membership in NATO, which the Netherlands joined as a charter member in 1949.

The Dutch have traditionally been strong advocates of European integration, and most aspects of their foreign, economic, and trade policies are coordinated through the European Union. However, Dutch voters rejected the EU constitutional treaty in June 2005. Along with other EU members, the Netherlands is debating the future role of the EU.

The Netherlands' post-war Customs Union with Belgium and Luxembourg (the Benelux group) paved the way for the formation of the European Community (precursor to the EU). Likewise, the Benelux abolition of internal border controls was a model for the wider Schengen accord, which today has 15 European signatories, including the Netherlands, pledged to common visa policies and free movement of people and goods across common borders. The Dutch were key proponents of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and were the architects of the 1998 Treaty of Amsterdam. They have embraced the introduction of new member states and the common currency (euro). In recent years, however, the Dutch have become increasingly skeptical of the way the EU is run and of any further enlargements.

Foreign Aid

The Netherlands is among the world's leading aid donors, giving about 0.7% of its gross domestic product to development assistance and an additional 0.1% to environmental problems in developing countries, totaling about $6.3 billion in 2007. This ratio of aid to GDP is maintained as a firm policy target. The Dutch rank as the sixth-largest donor nation in dollar terms and the fifth most generous relative to GDP. Roughly half of Dutch aid is earmarked for Africa. The country consistently contributes large amounts of aid through multilateral channels, especially the UN Development Program, the international financial institutions, and EU programs. A portion of Dutch aid funds also are channeled through private ("cofinancing") organizations that have almost total autonomy in choice of projects. Minister for Development Cooperation Bert Koenders oversees the aid portfolio.

Dutch development strategy is anchored in the Millennium Development Goals. In October 2007, the Netherlands published its new policy, shifting priorities towards women's rights, fragile and conflict areas, climate change and economic growth. The new policy will reduce the number of "partner countries" receiving Dutch aid from 36 to 29.

The Dutch are the top donor of unearmarked assistance to UN humanitarian programs. For Afghanistan, the Netherlands spent $60 million on reconstruction in 2007, of which $35 million went to the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), $14 million to Law and Order Trust Fund (LOFTA) to pay Afghan National Police salaries, and $3 million to the legal sector. For Iraq, the Dutch have pledged $36 million in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance since March of 2003. In January 2006, the Netherlands signed a bilateral agreement with the Government of Iraq, canceling over $300 million in Iraqi debt, as part of Paris Club efforts to provide debt relief to Iraq.

Despite their commitment to official development assistance, the Dutch also champion the role of trade and private enterprise for their contributions to development. In recent years, the government has devised new programs to support private sector development in developing countries.

In November 2007, the Center for Global Development, in conjunction with Foreign Policy magazine and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, ranked the Netherlands number one in its 2007 Commitment to Development Index.

International Drug-Trafficking Control

The Dutch work closely with the United States and other countries on international programs against drug trafficking and organized crime. In July 2005, the two nations signed an agreement to expand information sharing and cooperative research on demand reduction. There is close Dutch-U.S. cooperation on joint counter-narcotics operations in the Caribbean. The Netherlands actively participates in the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). The 10-

year Forward Operation Locations agreement between the U.S. and the Kingdom for the establishment of forward operating locations on Aruba and Curacao became effective in October 2001. The Netherlands is a signatory to international counternarcotics agreements, a member of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the 1990 Strasbourg Convention on Money Laundering and Confiscation, and is a major contributor to international counternarcotics projects.

U.S. RELATIONS

The U.S. partnership with the Netherlands is one of its oldest continuous relationships and dates back to the American Revolution. The excellent bilateral relations are based on close historical and cultural ties as well as a common dedication to individual freedom and human rights. The Netherlands shares with the United States a liberal economic outlook and is firmly committed to free trade. The United States attaches great value to its strong economic and commercial ties with the Dutch. The Netherlands is the third-largest direct foreign investor in the United States, and the United States is the third-largest direct foreign investor in the Netherlands. The United States and the Netherlands often have similar positions on issues and work together both bilaterally and multilaterally in such institutions as the United Nations and NATO. The Dutch have worked with the United States at the WTO, in the OECD, as well as within the EU to advance the shared U.S. goal of a more open, honest, and market-led global economy. The Dutch, like the United States, supported the accession of 10 new members to the EU in 2004, and accession negotiations for Turkey in 2005.

The United States and the Netherlands joined NATO as charter members in 1949. The Dutch fought alongside the United States in the Korean War and the first Gulf War and have been active in global peacekeeping efforts in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The Netherlands played a leading role in the 1999 Kosovo air campaign. They currently are contributing to EU peacekeeping forces in Bosnia. In the initial phase of the recent Iraq conflict, the Dutch deployed Patriot missiles to protect NATO ally Turkey, and sent a battalion of troops to Iraq to participate in stabilization operations.

The Dutch also support and participate in NATO and EU training efforts in Iraq. They are active participants in the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Shirley E. Hampton
DHS/ICE:	David Atwood
ECO:	Karen L. Enstrom
FCS:	Maria Andrews
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MGT:	Solberg, Sarah A.
CG:	See Amsterdam
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RSO:	John T. Hislop III
AGR:	Stephen M. Huete
ATF:	John Cooper
CLO:	J. Hislop/C.Lande
DAO:	Capt. Devon G. Goldsmith
DEA:	Jeffrey R. Boobar
EEO:	Sherry Marlowe
FMO:	Sarah A. Solberg
ICASS Chair:	Timothy B. Bitzer
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AMSTERDAM (CG) Museumplein 19, 1071 DJ Amsterdam, APO/FPO PSC 71, Box 60; APO AE 09715, 31-20-575-5338, Fax 31-20-575-5310, INMARSAT Tel 8816-7631-0791, Workweek: M-F 0815–1700.

DHS/CIS:	Carey Davis
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EEO:	Michael Barkin

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 10, 2008

Country Description: The Netherlands is a highly developed, stable democracy. Tourist facilities are available throughout the Kingdom.

Entry Requirements: The Netherlands is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter the Netherlands for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. To be admitted into the Netherlands, travelers must have a return airline ticket, and enough money to finance the planned stay. For further information on entry requirements, contact the Embassy of the Netherlands at 4200 Linnean Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 244-5300, or one of the Dutch consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York or Miami, in addition to various honorary Dutch consulates throughout the United States. Additional information is available on the Netherlands' Board of Tourism and Conventions web site at http://us.holland.com. Visit the Embassy of the Netherlands web site at http://www.netherlands-embassy.org for the most current visa information. Information on work, residency and immigration requirements in the Netherlands can be found on the web site of the Dutch immigration authorities at http://www.ind.nl/nl/index.asp.

Safety and Security: Since 2004, heightened Dutch government security measures have been in place in response to concerns about terrorist activity in the Netherlands by inter-

national and domestic extremist groups. The Dutch government has determined the current terrorist threat level to be "substantial." This level, the second highest of four levels, is defined by the Dutch government as a "realistic possibility that an attack will occur" in the Netherlands.

U.S. citizens in the Netherlands are encouraged to monitor media reports, and are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. As with other countries in the Schengen area, the Netherlands' open borders with its European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

Demonstrations are commonplace in the Netherlands and may range in number from a few people to several thousand. Prior police notice is required for public demonstrations, and police oversight is routinely provided. Nonetheless, situations may develop which could pose a threat to public safety. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid areas in which public demonstrations are taking place.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts and additional resources can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While the rate of violent crime in the Netherlands is low, tourists are often targets of thieves. Visitors frequently fall prey to pickpockets, bag snatchers, and other petty burglars, who may target automobiles and hotel rooms. Room or hotel safes should be used, and baggage locked or secured when away from hotel rooms.

While thieves may operate anywhere, the U.S. Consulate General in Amsterdam receives frequent reports of thefts from specific areas. Within Amsterdam, thieves are very active in and around train and tram stations, the city center and public transport. More specifically, trains to and from Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport are considered to be high risk, and theft of hand luggage and laptop computers is common. Likewise, travelers on city trams to and from the Central Train Station are often targets for thieves and pickpockets. Thieves often work in pairs; one distracts the victim, often by asking for directions, while the accomplice moves in on the victim's momentarily unguarded property. The timing of these thefts usually coincides with train stops, enabling the thieves to escape. In addition, many Americans have reported that their purses and briefcases have been stolen while eating in downtown restaurants, including hotel breakfast rooms. Never leave your personal items or baggage unattended when going to the restroom, buffet table, etc.

Several American visitors have reported experiencing excessive drowsiness, confusion, dizziness, and nausea after drinking alcohol in public areas such as hotel bars and night clubs in several cities throughout the Netherlands. These effects may be the result of unknowingly ingesting drugs, such as flunitrazepam (Rohypnol), hydroxybutyrate (GHB), triazolam (Halcion), scopolamine, burundaga, ketamine and more recently MDMA (Ecstacy), surreptitiously placed in drinks. These drugs do not have a distinctive color, smell, or flavor and come in powder, liquid and pill forms. Never leave your drink unattended and do not accept drinks from strangers. If you believe you have been drugged, seek assistance immediately. Try to keep the container your drink was served in, and any amount that may be left, in order to assist the police with their investigation.

Confidence artists have victimized a number of Americans. Typically, a U.S. citizen is notified via email of a winning lottery ticket, an inheritance, or other offer, which requires his/her assistance and cooperation to conclude. The American is asked to forward advance payments for alleged "official expenses," "taxes," etc. and, often, to come to Amsterdam to conclude the operation. Several Americans have lost tens of thousands of dollars in such scams. Funds transferred in response to such offers can rarely be recovered. Information on fraud schemes can be found on the U.S. Consulate's web page at http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov/advance_fee_fraude.html. For additional information, please contact the nearest office of the U.S. Secret Service or visit that agency's web site at www.secretservice.gov. Additional information is also provided in the Department of State's pamphlet, International Financial Scams. The Dutch authorities would like to hear from you if you have been in touch with these criminals using a Dutch address and/or telephone number. They can be contacted at:

KLPD, Financial Crimes Unit
PO Box 3016
2700 KX Zoetermeer
The Netherlands
Attention : Project Apollo
email at WACN@klpd.politie. nl

The Dutch Embassy in Washington DC has a pre-prepared letter that can be used to inform the Dutch Police. The Embassy can be contacted via http://www.netherlands-embassy.org/homepage.asp.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find

an attorney if needed. The Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) of the Netherlands provides financial compensation, under specific circumstances, for victims of crime and for those who have suffered injuries and consequent loss caused by such incidents. The fund also provides for dependents or immediate family members of homicide victims. For more information, contact the Dutch Ministry of Justice at (31) (70) 414-2000. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the Netherlands is: 1-1-2.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical facilities are widely available. Emergency medical response can be accessed by calling 1-1-2. Pharmacies ("Apotheek") are widely available and can assist with emergency prescription needs. Some common medications are not available in the Netherlands without a prescription, and some prescription drugs cannot be sent to the country. Travelers are therefore urged to carry an adequate supply of prescription drugs in their original container, in their hand luggage. Some U.S. over-the-counter medications are not available in the Netherlands and travelers should carry an adequate supply of these as well. Those traveling with any preexisting medical problems should bring a letter from the attending physician, describing the medical condition and any prescription medications, including the generic name of prescribed drugs.

Vaccinations are not required for travel to the Netherlands. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Netherlands is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel in, around, and between cities is possible via a highly developed national train, light rail, tram, and bus network, by use of an extensive system of bike paths, and by automobile and motorcycle on the modern highway system. Rail is often a convenient alternative to driving, particularly in the areas around Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam, where road congestion is frequent. Rail network information is available at http://www.ns.nl.

Intercity travel by road is relatively safe in comparison to some other European countries. Nonetheless, more than 1,000 people die and another 10,000 are injured in traffic accidents in the Netherlands each year. More than two thirds of the fatal accidents occur outside urban areas. A valid driver's license issued by a Department of Motor Vehicles in the U.S. is valid for use in the Netherlands for up to 180 days while in tourist or visitor status. Seat belt and child seat use is compulsory. Driving is on the right side of the road. The maximum speed limit on highways is 120 km/h, with a highway speed limit of 100 km/h posted in most urban areas. Secondary roads and some urban area highways have a speed limit of 80 km/h. The speed limit in towns and cities is 50 km/h, with 30 km/h posted in residential areas. The Dutch government has reduced speed limits on certain roads near cities in an effort to reduce air pollution. During traffic jams, authorities also reduce speed limits; drivers should be sure to check for revised limits posted on electronic billboards above the highways. Speed limits are strictly enforced and authorities use multiple cameras to determine infringements, which can result in substantial fines. Please note that drivers must yield the right-of-way to drivers and bikers coming from the right at intersections or traffic circles, unless otherwise posted. The maximum allowable blood alcohol level in the Netherlands is 0.05%. The use of cellular telephones while driving is illegal without the use of a "hands-free" device, and is punishable by severe fines.

Lanes in the center of many urban two-way streets are reserved for buses, trams and taxis. In cities, pedestrians should be mindful of trams, which often cross or share bicycle and pedestrian paths. Motorists must be especially mindful of the priority rights of bicyclists. Pedestrians should not walk along bicycle paths, which are often on the sidewalk and usually designated by red pavement. Travelers should also be watchful for one-way roads.

Taxi service in the Netherlands is safe but expensive. Trams and buses are both convenient and economical, but often frequented by pickpockets.

Visit the web sites of the Netherlands' national tourist office at http://us.holland.com and the national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.rws.nl.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government ofThe Netherlands' Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Netherlands' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site athttp://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Dutch customs authorities stringently enforce regulations concerning importation into the Netherlands of items such as firearms and other controlled materi-

als. Contact the Embassy of the Netherlands in Washington, DC or one of the Dutch consulates in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles or New York for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Everyone age 14 and above is required to carry identification at all times. Accepted forms of identification for U.S. citizens are either a Dutch residence card, issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or a U.S. passport.

U.S. citizens who obtain Dutch nationality may be required by the Dutch authorities to relinquish their U.S. citizenship.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Dutch laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in The Netherlands are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Netherlands are encouraged to register with the U.S. Consulate General in Amsterdam through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within The Netherlands. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Consulate General. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in The Hague, at Lange Voorhout 102; tel. (31) (70) 310-2209. However, all requests for consular assistance should be directed to the Consulate General in Amsterdam at Museumplein 19, tel. (31) (20) 575-5309. The after-hours emergency telephone number is (31) (70) 310-2209.

The U.S. Embassy web site at http://netherlands.usembassy.gov and the U.S. Consulate General's web site at http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov answer many questions of interest to Americans visiting or residing in the Netherlands.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: In recent years about 50 Dutch-born children have been given up for adoption per year, all of whom were adopted in the Netherlands. The U.S. Consulate General in Amsterdam has not processed any cases involving native Dutch children for adoption in the United States in many years. Each year there are between 2,000 and 2,500 requests by residents of the Netherlands to register for the adoption of a child from overseas. The adoption procedure is essentially the same as for adoption of a child born in the Netherlands. U.S. citizens resident in the Netherlands who wish to adopt a child may consider carrying out the adoption procedure in the United States, then bringing the child to the Netherlands. Adoptions legally finalized in countries that have ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect to Intercountry Adoption are automatically recognized in the Netherlands. As the United States has not yet ratified the Convention, an adoption legally finalized in the U.S. must be recognized by a Dutch judge for it to be valid in the Netherlands.

This requires hiring a Dutch attorney. In most cases this process is straightforward. The Dutch Adoption Conflict Act determines what is required for recognition. Upon ratification of the Hague Convention by the United States an adoption finalized in the U.S. before the child enters the Netherlands will be immediately recognized in the Netherlands.

Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Justice is responsible for adoptions:

Ministry of Justice
Directie Justitiele Jeugdbescherming
Centrale Autoriteit Internationale Adoptie
PO Box 20301, 2500 EH
Den Haag, The Netherlands

All contact with the Ministry should be made through the Foundation for Adoption Services (Stichting Adoptievoorzieningen) listed hereafter. The Ministry is not, however, directly involved in the initial adoption procedures. To request an application for a "permit in principle" (Beginseltoestemming) to begin the adoption process, prospective adoptive parents should contact:

Stichting Adoptievoorzieningen
(Foundation for Adoption Services)
Postbus 290,
3500 AG Utrecht
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 30 233 0340
Fax: +31 30 232 1777
Email: (messages via website below)
Website: www.adoptie.nl

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Individuals, persons living together, and married couples may start an adoption procedure. Adopting a child jointly is only possible for married couples; it is not possible for persons living together and persons in registered partnerships. Those cases are considered, by law, to be single-parent adoption cases. Although the Netherlands is a jurisdiction that recognizes same-sex marriages, married same-sex couples only have the possibility of adopting a child born in the Netherlands.

The applicant(s) should be 41 years old or younger upon registration, although certain exceptions may be allowed up to age 44. Applicants must undergo health assessments, give permission for review of their judicial/police records, agree to obtain all required medical care and vaccinations for the child, and provide a surety for all costs related to the child and the adoption.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents in the Netherlands must have Dutch residence permits if they are not Dutch nationals, and must live in the Netherlands.

Time Frame: The entire adoption procedure in the Netherlands takes from three to five years.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents may visit: www. adoptie.nl for a list of licensed adoption agencies in the Netherlands. The U.S. Embassy and Consulate General in the Netherlands maintain a list of attorneys. This list is accessible at: http://netherlands.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: Compulsory preparation and information sessions cost $900 per applicant. The Foundation for Adoption Services estimates that total costs for adoption procedures in the child's country of origin, depending on the country and the intermediary organization involved, amount to between $7,500 and $20,000. Additional costs in the Netherlands include $1,000 to have a contact screened by one of the mediating organizations in cases of self-established contacts; $285 for the child's permit to stay in the Netherlands; $600 for the Dutch adoption declaration. Note: As of the date of this flyer, the exchange rate is one Euro to $1.28 U.S. dollars.

Adoption Procedures And Required Documents: Detailed and up-to-date information should be obtained from the Stichting Adoptievoorzieningen (Foundation for Adoption Services.

The Dutch adoption procedure is based on the Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention. Prospective adoptive parents register with the Foundation for Adoption Services. After a waiting period (currently 18-20 months), prospective adoptive parents complete six information sessions over three months.

After the prospective parents complete these sessions, their file is transferred to Dutch Child Protective Services, which evaluates the applicants' physical and mental health and suitability and arranges for a home study involving various meetings with social workers over the course of two to three months.

On the basis of the home study report, the Ministry of Justice determines whether a "permit in principle," valid for three years, will be issued, giving the prospective adoptive parents the authorization to begin the mediation process used to identify a well-suited parent-child match. Specific rules apply.

The child should be under six years old and the age difference between the future parent and the child should be no more than 40 years (certain exceptions apply to both conditions).

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
4200 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016-2138
Tel: (202) 244-5300
Fax: (202) 362-3430
Email: was@minbuza.nl (email)
Website:
www.netherlands-embassy.org

The Netherlands also has the following Consulates-General in the United States:

Consulate-General Chicago
Chicago, IL
312-856-0110 (phone)
312-856-9218 (fax)
chi@minbuza.nl (email)
www.cgchicago.org (website)

Consulate-General Los Angeles, CA
310-268-1598 (phone)
310-312-0989 (fax)
los@minbuza.nl (email)
www.ncla.org (website)

Consulate-General Miami
701 Brickell Ave, 5th floor
Miami, FL 33131
1-877-DUTCHHELP (phone)
1-877-388-2443 (phone)
786-866-0497 (fax)

Consulate General New York, NY
212-246-1429 (phone)
212-333-3603 (fax)
nlgovnyc@spacelab.net (email)
www.cgny.org (website)
Please call or e-mail us for an appointment.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General Amsterdam
Museumplein 19
1071 DJ Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in the Netherlands may be addressed to the U.S. Consulate General in Amsterdam. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI,

SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (the "Hague Convention") came into force between the United States and The Netherlands on September 1, 1990. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply only to children abducted or retained after September 1, 1990.

The Hague Convention does not apply to Aruba or the Netherlands Antilles.

Dutch Central Authority:
Directie
Justitiele Jeugd Beleid
Ministerie van Justitie
Postbus 20301
2500 EH DEN HAAG
The Netherlands

Legal Counsel: The Dutch Central Authority represents left-behind parents in court hearings on Hague applications for return and access. Central Authority officials speak and write English fluently. Parents may, if they desire, retain private Dutch legal counsel and have their Hague application handled directly by this attorney. In these cases, the Central Authority would play no role.

Judicial Procedure: Under Dutch law, the Dutch Central Authority must first send a letter by registered mail to the taking parent requesting him or her to voluntarily return the child. If the parent is not ready to do so, but there are indications that an amicable resolution might be reached, the Central Authority may act as an intermediary between the parents in attempts to arrive at a negotiated agreement. If no compromise between the parents can be attained, the Central Authority will file a petition in local court requesting a hearing under the Hague Convention. Petitions for return under the Hague Convention have priority in The Netherlands over routine family cases. Hearings for return are normally scheduled within one month and a decision is normally issued within two weeks. Hearings for access may take longer to schedule since they are considered less urgent. The left-behind parent is encouraged, but not required, to attend the hearing. The Central Authority can request that the left-behind parent be permitted to visit his or her child while in The Netherlands for the hearing. However, the taking parent can refuse this request. Once a court in The Netherlands orders the return of a child, these orders are immediately enforceable even if an appeal is lodged.

Rights Of Access: The Dutch Central Authority handles requests for access in the same manner as returns. The taking parent is asked by registered mail to advise whether he or she is willing to cooperate. If not, the Central Authority files a petition with the District Court. In most cases, the judge will request the Child Care and Protection Board to conduct an examination into the best interests of the child. Such an examination may include contacts between the left-behind parent and the child in the office of the Child Care and Protection Board and under supervision of the Board social worker. If necessary, the Board will seek assistance from child psychologists or psychiatrists.

The Board will submit a report to the judge after the parents have had the opportunity to make submissions. The report is then discussed in a hearing at which each parent can present his or her objections and arguments before a judge. If the parents agree, the case can be tried through a mediator. The Central Authority can provide the names of licensed mediators. The parents must bear the cost of the mediator.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

PLEASE NOTE THAT CRIMINAL CHARGES MAY COMPLICATE A HAGUE CONVENTION CASE IN THE NETHERLANDS.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Netherlands Antilles

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 960 sq. km. (597 sq. mi.); more than five times the size of Washington, DC; five islands divided geographically into the Windward Islands (northern) group (Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Sint Maarten) and the Leeward Islands (southern) group (Bonaire and Curaçao).
Cities: Capital—Willemstad (metropolitan).
Islands: Curaçao (pop. 137,094) Sint Maarten (38,959), Bonaire (11,537), Sint Eustatius (2,699), Saba (1,491).
Terrain: Generally hilly, volcanic interiors.
Climate: Tropical; ameliorated by northeast trade winds.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Dutch Antillean(s).
Population: (2007) 191,780.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 2.4%.
Ethnic groups: Mixed black 85%, mixed Latin American, white, East Asian.
Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Seventh-day Adventist, Islam, and Hindu.
Languages: Dutch (official), Papiamento (a Spanish-Portuguese-Dutch-English dialect) predominates, English is widely spoken, Spanish.
Education: Literacy—96.4% Curaçao; 96.3% Netherlands Antilles (2001).
Health: (2006 est.) Infant mortality rate (2006 est.)—7.0 deaths/1,000 live births; 59.7 live births per 1,000 women 15 to 44 years old. Life expectancy (2002)—female, 78.7 yrs. male, 72.1 yrs.
Work force: (77,516; 2005): Agriculture—1%; industry—8%; services—91%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary.
Independence: Part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
Constitution: December 1954, Statute of the Realm of the Netherlands, as amended.
Government branches: Executive—monarch represented by a governor-general (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Cabinet. Legislative—unicameral parliament. Judicial—Joint High Court of Justice appointed by the monarch.
Political subdivisions: Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, Bonaire, Curaçao.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.
Political parties: Curaçao—Partido Antia Restruktura (PAR); Frente Obrero Liberashon 30 di Mei (FOL); MAN; Partido Nashonal di Pueblo (PNP); Forsa Korsou; Niun Paso Atras (NPA); Partido Laboral Krusado Popular (PLKP); Pueblo Soberano; Partido Democraat (DP); Un Pueblo Nobo; Moviemenu Social Laboral (MSL); Curacao Nobo Nobo (CNN); Partido Adelanto Korsou (PAK); Vota Kontra; Geen Stap Terug (GST); Movementu Patriotiko Korsou (MPK); Socialistise Party Antilliaanse Nederlanders (SPAN); Ban-Vota; PAPPS; E Mayoria; ModPOR; Akshon Pro Independensha; Partido Trafiko Sigur (PTS); Lista Patriotiko Korsou (LPK); P-100. St. Maarten—St. Maarten Democratic Party (DP—St. Maarten); National Democratic Party (NDP); National Alliance (NA) (note: the National Alliance is a joint effort by the St. Maarten Patriotic Alliance and National Progressive Party); St. Maarten People's Party (SMPP); People's Progressive Alliance (PPA); United People's Labor Party (UPLP). Bonaire—Bonaire Democratic Party (DP—Bonaire); Patriotic Union of Bonaire (UPB); Bonaire Social Party (PABOSO); New Labor Party of Bonaire (POB). St. Eustatius—St. Eustatius Democratic Party (DP—St. Eustatius); St. Eustatius Alliance (SEA); People's Labor Party (PLP). Saba—Saba Labor Party (SLP); Windward Islands People's Movement (WIPM).

Economy (2005)

GDP: $3.3 billion.
Real growth rate: 1.2%.
GDP per capita: $17,800.

Natural resources: Beaches and offshore diving sites.
Tourism/services: (84% of GDP) Curaçao, Sint Maarten, Bonaire.
Industry: (15% of GDP) Types—petroleum refining (Curaçao), petroleum transshipment facilities (Curaçao and Bonaire), light manufacturing (Curaçao).
Agriculture: (1% of GDP) Products—aloes, sorghum, peanuts, vegetables, tropical fruit.
Trade: Exports ($3.4 billion)—petroleum products. Major markets—U.S. 24%, Venezuela 15%, Guatemala 10%, Singapore 6%. Imports ($3.5 billion)—machinery and electrical equipment, crude oil (for refining and re-export), chemicals, foodstuffs. Major suppliers—Venezuela 59.8%, U.S. 12.55%.
Exchange rate: (2005) U.S.$1=1.78 ANG (fixed).

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Curaçao

The Arawaks are recognized as the first human civilization to inhabit the Netherlands Antilles. A Spanish expedition led by Alonso de Ojeda claimed the island of Curaçao for Spain in 1499 and it remained under Spanish rule until the Dutch took control in 1634. Curaçao was a strategically important point for Dutch military advances against the Spanish and as the center of the Caribbean slave trade. Curaçao became the seat of the Netherlands Antilles Government in 1954.

Bonaire

With origins similar to Curaçao, Bonaire was captured by the Dutch in 1634, and was a granary for the Dutch East Indian Company until 1791, when the government reclaimed control.

Sint Eustatius

The first settlement in Sint Eustatius was established in 1636 and changed hands between the Dutch, French, and Spanish 22 times in its history. In the 18th century the island became a duty-free port for overburdened colonizers shipping back to the homeland, which propelled it into a major port with rapid population growth that lost momentum after the American-British peace treaty in 1783.

Saba

Columbus was the first to sight Saba, but it was the Dutch who colonized the island in 1640 with a party from Sint Eustatius. Because of its difficult terrain, the island's growth progressed slowly, and it remains the least populated island in the Dutch Kingdom.

Sint Maarten

The Dutch were the first to colonize Sint Maarten in 1631, but within 2 years the Spanish invaded and evacuated the settlers. The Dutch failed in an attempt to regain the island in 1644, but 4 years later the Spanish abandoned the island of their own accord. In 1648 the island was divided between the Dutch and the French; however, complete control of the island was seized numerous times in a series of conflicts. The British became involved as well, taking power for 6-year and 10-year stints. Finally, in 1817, the current partition line between Dutch and French was established. The island flourished under a slave-based plantation economy and the exportation of salt until abolition of slavery in 1863.

Unification

In 1845 the Dutch Windward islands united with Curaçao, Bonaire, and Aruba in a political unit. The abolition of slavery hurt the islands' economy until the 20th century, when oil was discovered off the shores of Venezuela and a refinery was established on Curaçao. In addition, during the same period, an offshore financial sector was created to serve Dutch business interests. Since 1945, the federation of the Netherlands Antilles—Curacao, Bonaire, Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Sint Maarten—have been autonomous in internal affairs. Aruba was part of this federation until January 1, 1986, when it gained status apart within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

About 85% of Curacao's population is of African derivation. The remaining 15% is made up of various races and nationalities, including Dutch, Portuguese, North Americans, natives from other Caribbean islands, Latin Americans, Sephardic Jews, Lebanese, and Asians. Roman Catholicism predominates, but several other religions are represented, which include Anglican, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, Mormon, Baptist, Islam, and Hindu. The Jewish community is the oldest in the Western Hemisphere, dating back to 1634. While faltering economic conditions caused the Netherlands Antilles to experience high rates of migration by citizens to the Netherlands from 1998-2002, this trend has largely been reversed in recent years.

GOVERNMENT

Current political relations between the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba stem from 1954 and are based on the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a voluntary arrangement between the Netherlands, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. At the time, the Charter represented an end to colonial relations and the acceptance of a new legal system in which each nation would look after their own interests independently, look after their common interests on the basis of equality and provide each other with mutual assistance. In 1975, Suriname left the Kingdom's political alliance. Since 1986, Aruba has had separate status within the Kingdom and is no longer part of the Netherlands Antilles. The Netherlands Antilles enjoys self-determination on all internal matters and defers to the Netherlands in matters of defense, foreign policy, and some judicial functions.

The Antilles is governed by a popularly elected unicameral "Staten" (parliament) of 22 members. It

chooses a prime minister (called minister president) and a Council of Ministers, consisting of six to eight other ministers. A governor, who serves a 6-year term, represents the monarch of the Netherlands. Local government is assigned authority independently on each island. Under the direction of a kingdom-appointed island governor, these local governments have a "Bestuurscollege" (administrative body) made up of commissioners who head the separate governmental departments.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor: **Frits GOEDGEDRAG**
Prime Min.: **Emily DE JONGH-ELHAGE**
Dep. Prime Min.:
Min. of Constitutional & Interior Affairs: **Richard GIBSON**
Min. of Economic Affairs & Labor:
Min. of Education & Cultural Affairs: **Maritza SILBERIE**
Min. of Finance: **Ersilia DE LANNOOY**
Min. of General Affairs & Foreign Relations: **Emily DE JONGH-ELHAGE**
Min. of Health & Social Affairs: **Joan THEODORA-BREWSTER, Dr.**
Min. of Justice: **Norberto RIBEIRO**
Min. of Telecommunications & Transportation: **Omayra LEEFLANG**
Min. Plenipotentiary to The Hague:
Dir., Bank of the Nertherlands Antilles: **Emsley TROMP**



POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In the parliamentary elections of January 27, 2006, the Antillean Restructuring Party (PAR) gained 5 of the 14 seats available in Curaçao, an increase of one seat from the 2002 elections. The PAR had emphasized unity in its electoral campaign with its popular new leader Emily de Jongh-Elhage. Former Prime Minister Etienne Ys had earlier stepped down as party leader. The Workers' Liberation Front (FOL) emerged with only 2 seats (5 seats in 2002), while the Labor Party People's Crusade (PLKP) did not get sufficient votes for a single seat (2 seats in 2002). During a previous government, FOL leader Anthony Godett had been convicted of corruption by local courts, which was later affirmed by the Supreme Court in the Netherlands. A coalition government was formed by the PAR, together with the National People's Party (PNP), St. Maarten's Democratic Party (DP—St. Maarten) and National Alliance (NA), and Bonaire's

Patriotic Union of Bonaire (UPB). Voters in the Netherlands Antilles have opted to dismantle the Netherlands Antilles and create new structures between the various islands and the Kingdom. St. Maarten and Curacao have opted for an autonomous country status within the Kingdom similar to Aruba's status. Saba, Sint Eustatius, and Bonaire have opted for closer ties to the Netherlands. The target date for implementing these changes is 2010-2011, but it is unclear if the target will be met.

Drug smuggling by means of swallowing narcotics packets and boarding flights was a major issue for the Netherlands Antilles, but has been significantly reduced through intensive cooperation among Dutch and Antillean law enforcement authorities.

ECONOMY

Tourism and the financial services sector have been the mainstays of the Netherlands Antilles' economy since the 1970s. The Central Bank reported that the economy of the Netherlands Antilles became somewhat stronger during 2006, backed by positive developments in the private and public sectors, led by the construction, wholesale and retail, and financial services sectors. The higher economic activities did translate into more jobs, as the unemployment rate fell to 14.7% in 2006. Inflationary pressures were up in 2006 as the annualized inflation rate soared to 3.4%, largely fueled by higher world oil prices. The islands' public finances are characterized by structurally high deficits and a high and rising debt ratio and as a result, interest payments absorb an increasing part of revenues. Overall, the islands enjoy a high per-capita income and a well-developed infrastructure compared with other countries in the region.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Netherlands Antilles conducts foreign affairs primarily through the Dutch Government. However, the Netherlands Antilles recently has strengthened its relations with other Caribbean governments. It has been granted observer status at the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and in December 1998, signed an agreement with the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) that made the Netherlands Antilles an associate member.

U.S.-NETHERLANDS ANTILLES RELATIONS

The United States maintains positive relations with the Netherlands Antilles and works cooperatively to combat narco-trafficking.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

CURACAO (CG) J.B. Gorsiraweg #1, 599-9-461-3066, Fax 599-9-461 - 6489, INMARSAT Tel 00-874-383-133-190, Workweek: M-F 8AM -5 PM AST, Website: curacao.usconsaulate.gov.

CM:	Timothy J. Dunn
CON/POL/ECO:	Vacant
MGT:	Donald J. Feeney
CG:	Timothy J. Dunn
PAO:	Vacant
RSO:	Timothy Dumas
DEA:	Michael Rzepczynski
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FMO:	Leticia Macapinlac
IMO:	Darrell Chapman
ISSO:	Vacant

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 12, 2008

Country Description: The five islands of Bonaire, Curaçao, Saba, St. Eustatius (or "Statia") and St. Maarten (Dutch side) comprise the Netherlands Antilles, an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other document compliant with the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit

travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

The U.S. Consulate recommends traveling in the Netherlands Antilles with a valid U.S. passport to avoid delays or misunderstandings. A lost or stolen passport is also easier to replace when outside the United States than other evidence of citizenship. Visitors to the Netherlands Antilles may be asked to show onward/return tickets or proof of sufficient funds for their stay. Length of stay is granted for two weeks and may be extended for 90 days by the head office of immigration. For further information, travelers may contact the Royal Netherlands Embassy, 4200 Linnean Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, telephone (202) 244-5300, or the Dutch Consulate in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Houston or Miami. Visit the web site for the Embassy of the Netherlands at http://www.netherlands-embassy.org/homepage.asp for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Drug-related organized crime exists within the Netherlands Antilles, but has not directly affected tourists in the past. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: In recent years, street crime has increased, especially in St. Maarten. Valuables, including passports, left unattended on beaches, in cars and hotel lobbies are easy targets for theft, and visitors should leave valuables and personal papers secured in their hotel. Burglary and break-ins are increasingly common at resorts, beach houses and hotels. Armed robbery occasionally occurs. The American boating community has reported a handful of incidents in the past, and visitors are urged to exercise reasonable caution in securing boats and belongings. Car theft, especially of rental vehicles for joy riding and stripping, can occur. Incidents of break-ins to rental cars to steal personal items have been reported by American tourists. Vehicle leases or rentals may not be fully covered by local insurance when a vehicle is stolen. Be sure you are sufficiently insured when renting vehicles and jet skis.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is generally good in Curaçao and St. Maarten, but may be limited on the other three islands. Hospitals have three classes of services i.e.: First Class: one patient to a room, air conditioning etc.; Second Class: two to six patients to a room, no air conditioning; Third Class: 15 to 30 people in one hall. Patients are accommodated according to their level of insurance.

Bonaire: The San Francisco hospital is a medical center (35 beds) with decompression facilities. The hospital has an air ambulance service to Curaçao and Aruba.

Curaçao: St. Elizabeth hospital is a public hospital that may be compared to midrange facilities in the United States. St. Elizabeth's hospital has a decompression chamber and qualified staff to assist scuba divers suffering from decompression sickness. Several private clinics provide good to excellent medical service.

St. Maarten: St. Maarten Medical Center (79 beds) is a relatively small hospital where general surgery is performed. Complex cases are sent to Curaçao.

Statia: Queen Beatrix Medical Center (20 beds). A medical facility well equipped for first aid. Surgery cases are sent to St. Maarten.

Saba: Saba Clinic (14 beds) is a well-equipped first aid facility. Surgery cases are sent to St. Maarten. The Saba Marine Park has a decompression chamber and qualified staff to assist scuba divers suffering from decompression sickness.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Netherlands Antilles is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in the Netherlands Antilles is on the right hand side. Right turns on red are prohibited, and traffic conditions require somewhat defensive driving. Local laws require drivers and passengers to wear seat belts and motorcyclists to wear helmets. Children under 4 years of age should be in child safety seats; children under 12 should ride in the back seat.

Nonexistent or hidden and poorly maintained street signs are the major road hazard in the Netherlands Antilles. Therefore, drivers should proceed through intersections with caution. Roads in the Netherlands Antilles are extremely slippery during rainfall. Night driving is reasonably safe in the Netherlands Antilles as long as drivers are familiar with the route and road conditions. Most streets are poorly lit or not lit at all. In Curacao, drivers should be aware of herds of goats that may cross the street unexpectedly. In Bonaire, wild donkeys may also cross the road.

Taxis are the easiest, yet most expensive form of transportation on the islands. As there are no meters, passengers should verify the price before entering the taxi. Fares quoted in U.S. dollars may be significantly higher than those quoted in the local currency. Vans are inexpensive and run non-stop during daytime with no fixed schedule. Each van has a specific route displayed in the front of the windshield. Buses, which run on the hour, have limited routes. The road conditions on the main thoroughfares are good to fair.

See road safety information at the following sites:

http://www.curacao.com
http://www.statiatourism.com
http://www.sabatourism.com
http://www.infobonaire.com
http://www.st-maarten.com

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Netherlands Antilles' Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Netherlands Antilles air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Dutch law in principle does not permit dual nationality. However, there are several exceptions to the rule. For example, American citizens who are married to Dutch citizens are exempt from the requirement to abandon their American nationality when they apply to become a Dutch citizen by naturalization. For detailed and specific information on this subject, contact the Embassy of the Netherlands in Washington or one of the Dutch consulates in the U.S. In addition to being subject to all Dutch laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on Dutch citizens.

Time-share buyers are cautioned about contracts that do not have a "non-disturbance or perpetuity protective clause" incorporated into the purchase agreement. Such a clause gives the time-share owner perpetuity of ownership should the facility be sold. Americans sometimes complain that the timeshare units are not adequately maintained, despite generally high annual maintenance fees. Because of the large number of complaints about misuse of maintenance fees, particularly in St. Maarten, prospective timeshare owners are advised to review the profit and loss statement for maintenance fees. Investors should note that a reputable accounting firm should audit profit and loss statements.

Potential investors should be aware that failed land development schemes involving time-share investments could result in financial losses. Interested investors may wish to seek professional advice regarding investments involving land development projects. Real estate investment problems that reach local courts are rarely settled in favor of foreign investors.

An unusually competitive fee to rent vehicles or equipment could indicate that the dealer is unlicensed or uninsured. The renter is often fully responsible for replacements costs and fees associated with any damages that occur during the rental period. Visitors may be required to pay these fees in full before leaving the Netherlands Antilles and may be subject to civil or criminal penalties if they cannot or will not make payment.

Netherlands Antilles customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Netherlands Antilles. For example, it is strictly prohibited to export pieces of coral and/or seashells.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law.

Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating the laws of the Netherlands Antilles, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Netherlands Antilles are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

The Netherlands Antilles has strict gun control laws; even a stray bullet in a suitcase can trigger a fine or time in jail. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: American citizens residing or

traveling in the Netherlands Antilles are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Netherlands Antilles. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Consulate General is located at J.B. Gorsiraweg #1, Willemstad, Curaçao, telephone (599-9) 461-3066; fax (599-9) 461-6489; e-mail address: acscuracao@state.gov.



NEW ZEALAND

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
New Zealand

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 270,500 sq. km.; about the size of Colorado.

Cities: (December 2006) Capital—Wellington (450,600). Other cities—Auckland (1,237,239), Christchurch (338,748), Hamilton (130,000).

Terrain: Highly varied, from snow-capped mountains to lowland plains.

Climate: Temperate to subtropical.

People

Nationality: Noun—New Zealander(s). Adjective—New Zealand.

Population: 4,280,000.

Annual growth rate: (since September 2007) 0.9%.

Ethnic groups: European 67.6%; Maori 14.6%; Asian 9.2%; other Polynesian Pacific peoples 6.9%; Middle Eastern, Latin American, and African 0.9%; other 10.7%. (Note: People can choose to identify with more than one ethnic group.)

Religions: Christian 50%, no religion 32.3%, not stated 7.3%, Hindu 1.6%, Buddhist 1.3%, Islam/Muslim 0.9%, Jewish 0.2%, Spiritualism/New Age 0.5%, other 0.6%.

Languages: English, Maori, New Zealand Sign Language.

Education: Years compulsory—ages 6-16. Attendance—100%. Literacy—99%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (December 2006)—5.1/1,000. Life expectancy (December 2006)—males 77.9 yrs., females 81.9 yrs.

Work force: 75.2% of 15-64 year olds or 2.057 million. Services and government—59%; manufacturing and construction—32%; agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and mining—8.9%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary.

Constitution: No formal, written constitution.

Independence: Declared a dominion in 1907.

Government branches: Executive—Queen Elizabeth II (chief of state, represented by a governor general), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral House of Representatives, commonly called parliament. Judicial—four-level system: District Courts, High Courts, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court, which in 2004 replaced the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London as New Zealand's highest court of appeal. There also are specialized courts, such as employment court, family courts, youth courts, and the Maori Land Court.

Political subdivisions: 12 regions with directly elected councils and 74 districts (15 of which are designated as cities) with elected councils. There also are a number of community boards and special-purpose bodies with partially elected, partially appointed memberships.

Political parties: National, Labour, ACT, United Future, Maori Party, Progressive Party, Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand, and several smaller parties not represented in parliament.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (as of statistical year ended March 2008) U.S. $127 billion (NZ $177.5).

Real annual GDP growth rate: As of December 2008 real GDP growth is estimated to fall to 0.3% for the year due to recessionary pressures. This is a fall from 7% growth in GDP registered in March 2008.

Per capita income: (March 2008): U.S. $29,855.

Exchange rate: (average for January to December 2008): U.S. $1 = NZ $1.388 (U.S. $0.72 = NZ $1).

Natural resources: Timber, natural gas, iron sand, coal.

Agriculture: (4.78% of GDP) Products—dairy products, meat, forestry products.

Industry: (goods-producing industries 20.5% of GDP, service industries 68.8% of GDP) Types—finance, insurance, and business services;

manufacturing; personal and community services; transport and communication; wholesale trade; construction; government administration and defense; fishing, forestry, and mining; electricity, gas, and water.

Trade: (October 2008) Exports to U.S.—2.936 billion: frozen beef, casein, whey, timber, sheep meat, wine, unwrought aluminum, cheese, and butter. Imports from U.S.—$3.203 billion: consisting primarily of aircraft petroleum oils (crude), medical or veterinary instruments, motor vehicles, computers, aircraft parts, machinery, turbojets, insecticides, and telephone equipment. Major trading partners (rank ordered)—Australia, United States, People's Republic of China, Japan, Singapore, and Germany.

PEOPLE

Most of the 4 million New Zealanders are of British origin. About 15% claim descent from the indigenous Maori population, which is of Polynesian origin. Nearly 76% of the people, including a large majority of Maori, live on the North Island. In addition, 265,974 Pacific peoples live in New Zealand. During the late 1870s, natural increase permanently replaced immigration as the chief contributor to population growth and accounted for more than 75% of population growth in the 20th century. Nearly 85% of New Zealand's population lives in urban areas (with almost one-third in Auckland alone), where the service and manufacturing industries are growing rapidly. New Zealanders colloquially refer to themselves as "Kiwis," after the country's native bird.

HISTORY

Archaeological evidence indicates that New Zealand was populated by fishing and hunting people of East Polynesian ancestry perhaps 1,000 years before Europeans arrived. Known to some scholars as the Moa-hunters, they may have merged with later waves of Polynesians who, according to Maori tradition, arrived between 952 and 1150. Some of the Maoris called their new homeland "Aotearoa," usually translated as "land of the long white cloud."

In 1642, Abel Tasman, a Dutch navigator, made the first recorded European sighting of New Zealand and sketched sections of the two main islands' west coasts. English Captain James Cook thoroughly explored the coastline during three South Pacific voyages beginning in 1769. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, lumbering, seal hunting, and whaling attracted a few European settlers to New Zealand. In 1840, the United Kingdom established British sovereignty through the Treaty of Waitangi signed that year with Maori chiefs.

In the same year, selected groups from the United Kingdom began the colonization process. Expanding European settlement led to conflict with Maori, most notably in the Maori land wars of the 1860s. British and colonial forces eventually overcame determined Maori resistance. During this period, many Maori died from disease and warfare, much of it intertribal.

Constitutional government began to develop in the 1850s. In 1867, the Maori won the right to a certain number of reserved seats in parliament. During this period, the livestock industry began to expand, and the foundations of New Zealand's modern economy took shape. By the end of the 19th century, improved transportation facilities made possible a great overseas trade in wool, meat, and dairy products.

By the 1890s, parliamentary government along democratic lines was well-established, and New Zealand's social institutions assumed their present form. Women received the right to vote in national elections in 1893. The turn of the century brought sweeping social reforms that built the foundation for New Zealand's version of the welfare state.

The Maori gradually recovered from population decline and, through interaction and intermarriage with settlers and missionaries, adopted much of European culture. In recent decades, Maori have become increasingly urbanized and have become more politically active and culturally assertive. New Zealand was declared a dominion by a royal proclamation in 1907. It achieved full internal and external autonomy by the Statute of Westminster Adoption Act in 1947, although this merely formalized a situation that had existed for many years.

GOVERNMENT

New Zealand has a parliamentary system of government closely patterned on that of the United Kingdom and is a fully independent member of the Commonwealth. It has no written constitution. Executive authority is vested in a cabinet led by the prime minister, who is the leader of the political party or coalition of parties holding the majority of seats in parliament. All cabinet ministers must be members of parliament and are collectively responsible to it.

The unicameral parliament (House of Representatives) usually has 122 seats, seven of which currently are reserved for Maori elected on a separate Maori roll. However, Maori also may run for, and have been elected to, non-reserved seats. Parliaments are elected for a maximum term of 3 years, although elections can be called sooner.

The judiciary consists of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Courts, and District Courts. New Zealand law has three principal sources—English common law, certain statutes of the U.K. Parliament enacted before 1947, and statutes of the New Zealand parliament. In interpreting common law, the courts have been concerned with preserving uniformity with common law as interpreted in the United Kingdom.

Local government in New Zealand has only the powers conferred upon it by parliament. The country's 12 regional councils are directly elected,

set their own tax rates, and have a chairperson elected by their members. Regional council responsibilities include environmental management, regional aspects of civil defense, and transportation planning. The 74 "territorial authorities"—15 city councils, 58 district councils in rural areas, and one county council for the Chatham Islands—are directly elected, raise local taxes at rates they themselves set, and are headed by popularly elected mayors. The territorial authorities may delegate powers to local community boards. These boards, instituted at the behest either local citizens or territorial authorities, advocate community views but cannot levy taxes, appoint staff, or own property.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Anand SATYANAND**
Prime Min.: **Helen CLARK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Michael CULLEN**
Min. of the Accident Compensation Corporation: **Maryan STREET**
Min. of Agriculture: **Jim ANDERTON**
Min. of Arts, Culture, & Heritage: **Helen CLARK**
Min. of Biosecurity: **Jim ANDERTON**
Min. of Broadcasting: **Trevor MALLARD**
Min. of Building Issues: **Shane JONES**
Min. of Civil Defense: **Rick BARKER**
Min. of Climate Change Issues: **David PARKER**
Min. of Commerce: **Lianne DALZIEL**
Min. of Communications: **David CUNLIFFE**
Min. of Community & Voluntary Sector: **Ruth DYSON**
Min. of Conservation: **Steve CHADWICK**
Min. of Consumer Affairs: **Judith TIZARD**
Min. of Corrections: **Phil GOFF**
Min. of Courts: **Rick BARKER**
Min. of Crown Research Institutes: **Steve MAHAREY**
Min. for Customs: **Nanaia MAHUTA**
Min. of Defense: **Phil GOFF**
Min. for Disarmament & Arms Control: **Phil GOFF**
Min. of Economic Development: **Pete HODGSON**
Min. of Education: **Chris CARTER**
Min. of Energy: **David PARKER**
Min. of Environment: **Trevor MALLARD**
Min. of Finance: **Michael CULLEN**
Min. of Fisheries: **Jim ANDERTON**
Min. of Food Safety: **Lianne DALZIEL**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Winston PETERS**
Min. of Forestry: **Jim ANDERTON**
Min. of Health: **David CUNLIFFE**
Min. of Housing: **Maryan STREET**
Min. of Information Technology: **David CUNLIFFE**
Min. of Immigration: **Clayton COSGROVE**
Min. of Industry & Regional Development: **Trevor MALLARD**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Rick BARKER**
Min. of Justice: **Annette KING**
Min. of Labor: **Trevor MALLARD**
Min. for Local Govt.: **Nanaia MAHUTA**
Min. of Maori Affairs: **Parekura HOROMIA**
Min. of Pacific Island Affairs: **Luamanuvao Winnie LABAN**
Min. of Police: **Annette KING**
Min. for Racing: **Winston PETERS**
Min. of Research, Science, & Technology: **Pete HODGSON**
Min. of Revenue: **Peter DUNNE**
Min. of Senior Citizens: **Ruth DYSON**
Min. of Social Development & Employment: **Ruth DYSON**
Min. of Sports & Recreation: **Clayton COSGROVE**
Min. of State-Owned Enterprises: **Trevor MALLARD**
Min. of State Services: **David PARKER**
Min. for Tertiary Education: **Pete HODGSON**
Min. of Tourism: **Damien O'CONNOR**
Min. of Trade: **Phil GOFF**
Min. for Trade Negotiations: **Phil GOFF**
Min. of Transport: **Anette KING**
Min. of Transport Safety: **Harry DUYNHOVEN**
Min. in Charge of the Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations: **Michael CULLEN**
Min of Veterans Affairs: **Rick BARKER**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **Steve CHADWICK**
Min. for Youth Affairs: **Nanaia MAHUTA**
Min. of State: **Mahara OKEROA**
Min. of State: **Mita RIRINUI**
Min. of State: **Dover SAMUELS**
Attorney Gen.: **Michael CULLEN**
Governor, Reserve Bank: **Alan BOLLARD**
Ambassador to the US: **Roy FERGUSON**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Rosemary BANKS**

New Zealand maintains an embassy in the United States at 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-328-4800, fax 202-667-5227). A consulate general is located in Los Angeles (tel. 310-207-1605, fax 310-207-3605). Tourism information is available through the New Zealand Tourism Board office in Santa Monica, California (toll-free tel. 800-388-5494) or through the following website: www.tourisminfo.govt.nz.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The traditionally conservative National Party and left-leaning Labour Party have dominated New Zealand political life since a Labour government came to power in 1935. During 14 years in office, the Labour Party implemented a broad array of social and economic legislation, including comprehensive social security, a large-scale public works program, a 40-hour workweek, a minimum basic wage, and compulsory unionism. The National Party won control of the government in 1949 and adopted many welfare measures instituted by the Labour Party. Except for two brief periods of Labour governments in 1957-60 and 1972-75, National held power until 1984. After regaining control in 1984, the Labour government instituted a series of radical market-oriented reforms in response to New Zealand's mounting external debt. It also enacted antinuclear legislation that effectively brought about New Zealand's suspension from the ANZUS security alliance with the United States and Australia.

In October 1990, the National Party again formed the government, for the first of three 3-year terms. In 1996, New Zealand inaugurated a mixed-member proportional (MMP) system to elect its parliament. The system was designed to increase representation of smaller parties in parliament and appears to have done so in the MMP elections to date. Since 1996, neither the National nor the Labour Party has had an absolute majority in parliament, and for all but one of those years, the government has been a minority one. The Labour Party won elections in November 1999 and again in July 2002. In 2002 Labour formed a coalition, minority government with the Progressive Coalition, a left-wing party holding two seats in parliament. The government relied



on support from the centrist United Future Party to pass legislation.

Following a narrow victory in the September 2005 general elections, Labour formed a coalition with the one-seat Progressive Party. The government also entered into limited support agreements with the United Future New Zealand and NZ First Parties, whose leaders were given ministerial positions outside of the cabinet. This gave Labour an effective one-seat majority with which to pass legislation in parliament. Labour has also secured an assurance from the Green Party that it will abstain from a vote of confidence against the government. There are 121 current members of parliament. The 2005 elections saw the new Maori Party win four out of the seven reserved Maori seats. There are currently two independent members of parliament (MPs) a former Labour Party MP and a former United Future New Zealand MP, both of whom left their respective parties in 2007.

The 2008 general election on November 8 was comfortably won by the John Key-led National Party. National won 45% of the popular vote

(58 seats) to Labour's 34% (43 seats). The Green Party won nine seats; ACT won five; the Maori Party picked up an additional Maori seat to bring its total number of seats to five; the Progressives and United Future won one seat each. New Zealand First, the party of former foreign minister Winston Peters, did not win enough votes to return to parliament. On November 16, Key announced the formation of a new National-led center-right government in coalition with the right-leaning ACT and the centrist United Future party. National also entered into a limited support agreement with the Maori Party. Collectively, this gives the government 69 votes to pass legislation in the new 122-member parliament, the two extra seats the results of an overhang from the election. The leaders of ACT and United Future were respectively given the local government and revenue ministerial portfolios. ACT's co-leader was given the consumer affairs ministerial portfolio. The co-leaders of the Maori Party were each given the Maori affairs and community ministerial portfolios, although their posts are outside of cabinet with the right to dissent on other policy issues outside portfolio areas. The government was sworn in on November 19, with Key becoming New Zealand's 38th prime minister. During her election night concession speech, outgoing Prime Minister Helen Clark announced that she would step down as Labour's leader after 15 years in charge. She was succeeded as party leader by Phil Goff. Clark will remain in parliament as Labour's foreign affairs spokesperson. The 49th parliament will commence on December 8, 2008.

ECONOMY

New Zealand's economy historically has been based on a foundation of exports from its very efficient agricultural system. Leading agricultural exports include dairy products, meat, forest products, fruit and vegetables, fish, and wool. New Zealand was a direct beneficiary of many of the reforms achieved under the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations, with agriculture in general and the dairy sector in particular enjoying many new trade opportunities.

The country has substantial hydroelectric power and reserves of natural gas, although the largest natural gas condensate and oil field—supplying nearly 75% of the country's hydrocarbons—is expected to be tapped out by 2009. Based on recent natural gas exploration between Australia and New Zealand, natural gas production is projected to increase by 3.5% by 2020. Leading manufacturing sectors are food processing, wood and paper products, and metal fabrication. Service industries, particularly financial, insurance, and business services, form a significant part of New Zealand's economy. As of March 2008 New Zealand had 1,506,000 Internet subscribers, amounting to approximately 65% of New Zealand households, ranking above Australia, the U.K., and the U.S.

Since 1984, government subsidies including for agriculture were eliminated; import regulations liberalized; tariffs unilaterally slashed; exchange rates freely floated; controls on interest rates, wages, and prices removed; and marginal rates of taxation reduced. Tight monetary policy and major efforts to reduce the government budget deficit brought the inflation rate down from an annual rate of more than 18% in 1987. The restructuring and sale of government-owned enterprises in the 1990s reduced government's role in the economy and permitted the retirement of some public debt. As a result, New Zealand is now one of the most open economies in the world.

In the statistical year ending March 2008 the economy was robust and grew by 7%, but recessionary pressure mid-year and the global financial downturn will see the year end with an estimated 2008 GDP growth rate of 0.3%. Demand for new housing is in part driven by immigration, but the net increase in new arrivals has begun to slow. The net permanent long-term migration inflow to New Zealand in the year ending February 2008 amounted to 4,600, down from a net inflow of 13,200 in 2007. As of October 2008, the net outflow of New Zealanders as permanent and long-term (PLT) to Australia was 34,600. This was up from 26,500 the previous year, and was higher than previous peaks recorded in January 1989 (33,700) and December 1979 (33,400). Over the statistical year ending September 2008, the unemployment rate increased to 4.2%, the highest level since December 2003. In September 2008, there were 94,000 people unemployed, 16,000 more than a year earlier.

Traditionally, New Zealand's economy has been helped by strong economic relations with Australia. New Zealand and Australia are partners in "Closer Economic Relations" (CER), which allows for free trade in goods and most services. Since 1990, CER has created a single market of more than 22 million people, and this has provided new opportunities for New Zealand exporters. Australia is now the destination of 25% of New Zealand's exports, compared to 14% in 1983. Both sides also have agreed to consider extending CER to product standardization and taxation policy. New Zealand has had a free trade agreement with Singapore since 2001. In July 2005, both countries joined with Chile and Brunei to form a Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership (TPP), liberalizing trade in goods and services between them. On September 22, 2008, comprehensive negotiations for the U.S. to join the TPP were launched, with talks scheduled to begin in early 2009. In April 2005, New Zealand initialed a free-trade deal with Thailand. In April 2008 New Zealand concluded a free trade agreement (FTA) with China and is negotiating an FTA with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). New Zealand held its first round of the New Zealand-GCC FTA in Wellington in July 2007 with representatives from the Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman). In December 2007, New Zealand and South Korea announced the beginning of a study group to explore the benefits of a bilateral free trade agreement. In June 2008, New Zealand and Japan established an

economic working group to review their bilateral economic relationship.

New Zealand's top six trading partners (total trade) ending statistical year October 2008 included Australia, the United States, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Singapore, and Germany. Australia continued as New Zealand's principal export market, worth $7.2 billion with exports to Australia rising by 30%. The United States and Japan were New Zealand's second- and third-largest export markets, receiving $2.9 billion and $2.5 billion worth of goods, respectively. New Zealand's fourth-largest export destination was China with exports worth $1.7 billion in statistical year ending October 2008.

The U.S. is the second-largest trading partner for New Zealand, with U.S. goods and services accounting for approximately 9% of all imports. The New Zealand dollar reached a 24-year high of over U.S. $0.80 in July 2007 (the highest since the New Zealand dollar was floated), but as of December 2008 the Kiwi dollar was trading at U.S. $0.55. New Zealand's total imports from the U.S., as of October 2008, amounted to U.S. $3.2 billion. The market-led economy offers many benefits for U.S. exporters and investors. Investment opportunities exist in chemicals, food preparation, finance, tourism, and forest products, as well as in franchising. The best sales and investment prospects are for whole aircraft and aircraft parts, medical or veterinary instruments, motor vehicles, information technology, hotel and restaurant equipment, telecommunications, tourism, franchising, food processing and packaging, and medical equipment. On the agricultural side, the best prospects are for fresh fruit, snack foods, and soybean meal.

New Zealand welcomes and encourages foreign investment without discrimination. The Overseas Investment Office (OIO) must give consent to foreign investments that would control 25% or more of businesses or property worth more than NZ$100 million. Restrictions and approval requirements also apply to certain investments in land and in the commercial fishing industry. OIO consent is based on a national interest determination. Foreign buyers of land can be required to report periodically on their compliance with the terms of the government's consent to their purchase. The OIO, part of Land Information New Zealand, took over the functions of the Overseas Investment Commission in August 2005. Full remittance of profits and capital is permitted through normal banking channels. As of March 2008, the U.S. accounted for 11.5% of all foreign direct investment in New Zealand, amounting to U.S. $7.72 billion.

A number of U.S. companies have subsidiary branches in New Zealand. Many operate through local agents, and some are in association in joint ventures. The American Chamber of Commerce is active in New Zealand, with its main office in Auckland.

NATIONAL SECURITY

New Zealand has three defense policy objectives—defend New Zealand against low-level threats, contribute to regional security, and play a part in global security efforts. New Zealand has considered its own national defense needs to be modest. Its defense budget generally has provided for selected upgrades in equipment. Shortly after winning the 1999 election, the Labour government canceled a lease-to-buy agreement with the U.S. for 28 F-16 aircraft. However, Labour did embark on a significant defense upgrade and acquisition plan. All three services have benefited from the upgrades/acquisitions. In 2001, the government contracted to purchase 105 LAVIIIs for U.S. $300 million, with delivery completed in 2005. The Army also purchased 321 Light Operational Vehicles to make its forces more mobile. In 2002, New Zealand announced planned upgrades of its P3 and C-130 Hercules aircraft, and purchased two Boeing 757 aircraft for U.S. $100 million. In 2006 New Zealand contracted with NH Industries to purchase eight NH-90 aircraft to start delivery in 2009. In 2007 they entered an agreement to purchase 12 A-109 light helicopters from Agosta to also start delivery in 2009. The P-3s, C-130s, and B-757s are all currently being upgraded/modified; one of the two B-757's modifications have been completed, and it has returned to service. In 2007, the Navy began accepting delivery of the Project Protector program, with an estimated value of U.S. $250 million, consisting of one multi-role vessel (MRV), two offshore patrol vessels (OPVs), and four inshore patrol vessels (IPVs). The Navy's two ANZAC frigates will receive ship support systems upgrades in late 2008/early 2009, and the Navy is requesting additional funding for weapons systems upgrades for 2010-2012.

In May 2001, the government announced it was scrapping its combat air force. New Zealand states it maintains a "credible minimum force," although critics maintain that the country's defense forces have fallen below this standard. New Zealand still maintains the fleet of A-4 Skyhawk jets and Aerromacche jets left over from the scrapping of its combat air force. Its attempts to sell the jets have thus far failed.

With a claimed area of direct strategic concern that extends from Australia to Southeast Asia to the South Pacific, New Zealand necessarily places substantial reliance on its defense relationship with other countries, in particular Australia. However, acknowledging the need to improve its defense capabilities, the government in 2005 announced the Defense Sustainability Initiative allocating an additional NZ$4.6 billion (U.S. $3.19 billion) over 10 years to modernize the country's defense equipment and infrastructure and increase its military personnel. The funding represented a 51% increase in defense spending since the Labour government took office in 1999.

New Zealand is an active participant in multilateral peacekeeping. It has taken a leading role in trying to bring peace, reconciliation, and reconstruction to the Solomon Islands and the neighboring island of Bougainville. New Zealand maintains a contingent in the Sinai Multinational Force and Observers and has contributed to UN

peacekeeping operations in Angola, Cambodia, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia. It also participated in the Multilateral Interception Force in the Persian Gulf. New Zealand's most recent peacekeeping operations experience has been in Timor-Leste, where it initially dispatched almost 10% of its entire defense force and continues to sustain a modest force. New Zealand participated in Operation Enduring Freedom and has fielded a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan's Bamian province. It continues to sustain that PRT and has deployed a frigate to the Gulf of Oman on three rotations, with the most recent in spring 2008. In support of the effort to reconstruct Iraq, New Zealand deployed an engineering team to the country.

New Zealand participates in sharing training facilities, personnel exchanges, and joint exercises with the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Brunei, Tonga, and South Pacific states. It also exercises with its Five-Power Defense Arrangement partners—Australia, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Singapore. Due to New Zealand's antinuclear policy, defense cooperation with the U.S., including training exercises, has been significantly restricted since 1986.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

New Zealand's foreign policy is oriented chiefly toward developed democratic nations and emerging Pacific economies. The country's major political parties have generally agreed on the broad outlines of foreign policy, and the current coalition government has been active in multilateral fora on issues of recurring interest to New Zealand—trade liberalization, environment, and arms control. New Zealand values the United Nations and its participation in that organization.

It also values its participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO); World Bank; International Monetary Fund (IMF); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); International Energy Agency; Asian Development Bank; South Pacific Forum; The Pacific Community; Colombo Plan; Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); and the International Whaling Commission. New Zealand also is an active member of the Commonwealth. Despite the 1985 rupture in the ANZUS alliance, New Zealand has maintained good working relations with the United States and Australia on a broad array of international issues.

In the past, New Zealand's geographic isolation and its agricultural economy's general prosperity tended to minimize public interest in world affairs. However, growing global trade and other international economic events have made New Zealanders increasingly aware of their country's dependence on stable overseas markets.

New Zealand's economic involvement with Asia has been increasingly important through expanding trade with the growing economies of Asia. New Zealand is a "dialogue partner" with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and an active participant in APEC. As a charter member of the Colombo Plan, New Zealand has provided Asian countries with technical assistance and capital. It also contributes through the Asian Development Bank and through UN programs and is a member of the UN Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific.

New Zealand has focused its bilateral economic assistance resources on projects in the South Pacific island states, especially on Bougainville. The country's long association with Samoa (formerly known as Western Samoa), reflected in a treaty of friendship signed in 1962, and its close association with Tonga have resulted in a flow of immigrants and visitors under work permit schemes from both countries. New Zealand administers the Tokelau Islands and provides foreign policy and economic support when requested for the freely associated self-governing states of the Cook Islands and Niue. Inhabitants of these areas hold New Zealand citizenship.

In 1947, New Zealand joined Australia, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States to form the South Pacific Commission, a regional body to promote the welfare of the Pacific region. New Zealand has been a leader in the organization. In 1971, New Zealand joined the other independent and self-governing states of the South Pacific to establish the South Pacific Forum (now known as the Pacific Islands Forum), which meets annually at the "heads of government" level.

U.S.-NEW ZEALAND RELATIONS

Bilateral relations are excellent. The United States and New Zealand share common elements of history and culture and a commitment to democratic principles. Senior-level officials regularly consult with each on issues of mutual importance. In March 2007, Prime Minister Clark visited Washington, DC, where she met with President George W. Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

The United States established consular representation in New Zealand in 1839 to represent and protect American shipping and whaling interests. Since the U.K. was responsible for New Zealand's foreign affairs, direct U.S.-New Zealand diplomatic ties were not established until 1942, when the Japanese threat encouraged close U.S.-New Zealand cooperation in the Pacific campaign. During the war, more than 400,000 American military personnel were stationed in New Zealand to prepare for crucial battles such as Tarawa and Guadalcanal.

New Zealand's relationship with the United States in the post-World War II period was closely associated with the Australian, New Zealand, United States (ANZUS) security treaty of 1951, under which signatories agreed

to consult in case of an attack in the Pacific and to "act to meet the common danger." During the postwar period, access to New Zealand ports by U.S. vessels contributed to the flexibility and effectiveness of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific. Growing concern about nuclear testing in the South Pacific and arms control issues contributed to the 1984 election of a Labour government committed to barring nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered warships from New Zealand ports. The government's anti-nuclear policy proved incompatible with long-standing, worldwide U.S. policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence or absence of nuclear weapons onboard U.S. vessels.

Implementation of New Zealand's policy effectively prevented practical alliance cooperation under ANZUS, and after extensive efforts to resolve the issue proved unsuccessful, in August 1986 the United States suspended its ANZUS security obligations to New Zealand. Even after President George H.W. Bush's 1991 announcement that U.S. surface ships do not normally carry nuclear weapons, New Zealand's legislation prohibiting visits of nuclear-powered ships continues to preclude a bilateral security alliance with the U.S. The legislation enjoys broad public and political support in New Zealand. The United States would welcome New Zealand's reassessment of its legislation to permit that country's return to full ANZUS cooperation.

Despite suspension of U.S. security obligations, the New Zealand Government has reaffirmed the importance it attaches to continued close political, economic, and social ties with the United States and Australia.

New Zealand is an active member of the global coalition in the War against Terrorism, and deployed SAS troops to Afghanistan, and naval and air assets to the Persian Gulf. New Zealand has worked closely with the U.S. to promote free trade in the WTO, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group, and other multilateral fora.

The U.S. and New Zealand work together closely on scientific research in the Antarctic. Christchurch is the staging area for joint logistical support operations serving U.S. permanent bases at McMurdo Station and South Pole, and New Zealand's Scott base, (located just three kilometers from McMurdo Station in the Ross Sea region).

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

WELLINGTON (E) 29 Fitzherbert Terrace, PO Box 1190, Thorndon, Wellington, APO/FPO PSC 467 Box 1, APO AP 96531-1034, (64)(4) 462-6001 (Mailroom), Fax (64)(4)472-3478, Workweek: 0815–1700 Monday to Friday, Website: http://newzealand.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	John Robertson
ECO:	Thomas Walsh
FM:	Preston Hatchell
MGT:	Judith H. Semilota
POL/ECO:	Margaret McKean
AMB:	William P. McCormick
DCM:	David J. Keegan
PAO:	Roy Glover
COM:	(Resident In Sydney)
GSO:	Andrea Gastaldo
RSO:	James P. Doherty
AGR:	Laura Scandurra
CLO:	Ursula Doherty/Stephanie Horry
DAO:	Capt. Rick Martinez
FMO:	Facilities:Preston Hatchell
ICASS Chair:	Laura Scandurra
IMO:	Ronald Rajkovich
ISSO:	Ishwaran Ravindranath
State ICASS:	Roy Glover

AUCKLAND (CG) Level 3 Citibank Building, 23 Customs St East, Private Bag 92022, Auckland, APO/FPO PSC 467 Box 99, APO AP 96531-1034, (64)(9)303-2724, Fax (64)(9)366-0870, Workweek: 0730 - 1700 Monday to Friday, Website: http://newzealand.usembassy.gov.

CG OMS:	Sherry Hare
MGT:	Katherine Greeley
AMB:	William P. McCormick
CG:	John Desrocher
CON:	Nicholas Greanias
DCM:	David J. Keegan
PAO:	Roy Glover (Resident In Wellington)
GSO:	Andrea Gastaldo(Resident In Wellington)
RSO:	James P. Doherty
CLO:	Ursula Doherty/Stephanie Horry
IMO:	Ronald Rajkovich (Resident In Wellington)
ISSO:	Katherine Greeley

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 22, 2008

Country Description: New Zealand is a highly developed, stable parliamentary democracy, which recognizes the British monarch as sovereign. It has a modern economy, and tourist facilities are widely available. The New Zealand Tourist Board, which has a wide range of information of interest to travelers, can be contacted via the internet at online http://www.newzealand.com/USA.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizens eligible for a visa waiver do not need a visa for tourist stays of three months or less. For more information about visa waivers and entry requirements, contact the Embassy of New Zealand: 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 328-4800; or the Consulate General of New Zealand in Los Angeles: 2425 Olympic Blvd Suite 600E, Santa Monica, CA 90404, telephone (310) 566-6555. Visit the Consulate of New Zealand web site at http://www.nzcgla.com for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens in New Zealand should review their personal security practices, be alert to any unusual activity around their homes or businesses, and report any significant incidents to local police.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the

U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime rates in New Zealand are low but have increased in recent years. The most prevalent crime is theft or attempted theft from cars, camper vans and hostels. To help protect against theft, do not leave passports, other valuable documents, or other items in unattended vehicles. Violent crime against tourists is unusual; however visitors who are traveling alone should be especially vigilant, and avoid isolated areas that are not frequented by the public.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

In New Zealand, a private organization called Victim Support works both independently and with the NZ Police to assist victims of crime. Victim Support is available 24 hours per day on 0800-842-846, 0800-Victim, by email at victim@xtra.co.nz.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in New Zealand is 111.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Quality medical care is widely available, but waiting lists exist for certain types of treatment. High-quality medication (both over-the-counter and prescription) is widely available at local pharmacies, though the products' names may differ from the American versions. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of New Zealand.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning New Zealand is provided for general reference only.

All traffic travels on the left in New Zealand, and drivers should exercise extra caution if accustomed to driving on the right. Driving on the wrong side of the road is a leading cause of serious injury and death for American tourists. Cars turning left must yield to oncoming cars that are turning right. Proceed carefully through intersections. Red means "stop"—do not turn at a red light.

New Zealand has only 100 miles of multilane divided motorways. Most intercity travel is accomplished on two lane roads. While these are in good condition, New Zealand's rugged terrain means motorists often encounter sharper curves and steeper grades than those found in the U.S. interstate highway system. Renting a car or camper is a popular way to enjoy New Zealand's natural beauty, but visitors unfamiliar with local conditions should drive particularly conservatively. Posted speed limit signs should be observed. Drivers should use caution to avoid animals when driving in rural areas.

Pedestrians are advised to look carefully in all directions before crossing a street or roadway, and to use crosswalks. Pedestrians do not have the right of way except in crosswalks. New Zealand law requires that cars yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk, and that cars stop at least two meters (approximately 6 feet) from a crosswalk that is in use. Traffic circles are common throughout New Zealand. When approaching a traffic circle, always yield to traffic coming from the right –noting that traffic already in the circle has the right-of-way—and merge to the left into the circle. Public transportation including buses, trains, and taxis is for the most part reliable and safe. In case of emergency, phone the local police at 111.

For specific information concerning the operation and rental of motor vehicles, contact the New Zealand Tourist Board via the Internet at http://www.newzealand.com/USA or the Land Transport Safety Authority at http://www.ltsa.govt.nz.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of New Zealand's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of New Zealand's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Some heavily populated parts of New Zealand are in areas of very high seismic activity. General information regarding disaster preparedness is available from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Many tourists come to New Zealand to participate in extreme adventure sports, such as bungee jumping, sky diving, hiking, rappelling, climbing, motorcycling, and kayaking. All too often, injuries and even death result from participation in such activities. Travelers are advised to employ caution and common sense when engaging in adventure sports. Never participate in such sports alone, always carry identification, and let someone else know where you are at all times. Before kayaking, check the river conditions and wear a life jacket. When hiking, rappelling, or climbing, carry a first aid kit, know the location of the nearest rescue center, and bring a friend along. New Zealand is an island nation, and the government is serious about preserving its delicate ecosystem. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) imposes strict regulations regarding what can be imported to New Zealand. People failing to declare goods that could be quarantined can be fined up to $100,000 NZ and/or face up to five years in prison. People failing to declare risk goods such as fresh fruit, seeds, and plants can receive an instant fine of $200 NZ. When importing a pet, thorough veterinary documentation and a quarantine period is required. Unfinished wood products, used hiking shoes and gardening tools, fresh food items, and items such as used pet carriers may be seized and destroyed by MAF. More information can be found at http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/personal-travel-belongings-and-mail/arriving-by-air/what-you-cannot-bring.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating New Zealand laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in New Zealand are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in New Zealand are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within New Zealand. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the embassy or consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in Wellington is located at 29 Fitzherbert Terrace, Thorndon, Wellington. The telephone number is (64)(4) 462-6000. The fax number is (64)(4) 471-2380. The Embassy's web site is http://wellington.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Embassy in Wellington does not have a consular section and thus cannot provide assistance to American citizens. All consular services for American citizens are provided by the Consulate General in Auckland.

The U.S. Consulate General in Auckland is located on the third floor of the Citigroup Centre, 23 Customs Street East, between Commerce and Queen Streets. The telephone number is (64)(9) 303-2724. The fax number is (64)(9) 366-0870. See information on services to Americans at http://wellington.usembassy.gov/service.html. All consular matters are handled at the Consulate General in Auckland.

For after-hours emergencies anywhere in New Zealand, a duty officer can be contacted by telephone. Persons seeking after-hours assistance may call (64)(4) 462-6000; after listening to a brief recording, the caller may leave a message on the voice mail system, describing the nature of the emergency and giving a point of contact. The phone system will automatically call the duty officer in Wellington or in Auckland, who will listen to the message and take the appropriate action.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: In New Zealand, married parents are the guardians (share custody) of any minor children unless there are court orders to the contrary. The parents of a child born out-of-wedlock have equal rights of custody if they were living together when the child was born, unless a court order has been made altering either parent's guardianship rights. In any New Zealand custody hearing, decisions are based on the "best interests" of the child and the gender of parent and/or child is not to play a role.

A child born in New Zealand is usually eligible for New Zealand citizen-

ship. If a child is born outside New Zealand and has a New Zealand citizen parent, that parent can file a claim for New Zealand "citizenship by descent" on behalf of the child at the nearest New Zealand Embassy or Consulate. The consent of the other parent is not required. Either parent can apply for a New Zealand passport; the signature/consent of the other parent is not required. A parent who does not want a New Zealand passport issued to his or her child must first obtain a New Zealand court order restricting the other parent's ability to apply for the child's passport. For more information, please contact a consular officer at the Embassy of New Zealand in Washington, D.C., telephone 202-328-4848. There is also a New Zealand Consulate in Los Angeles, California, telephone 310-207-1605. The Embassy maintains a website at http://www.nzemb.org.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

The Hague Convention: The United States is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The Hague Convention entered into force between the United States and New Zealand on October 1, 1991. Therefore, the Convention's provisions concerning return would apply to children abducted to or wrongfully retained in New Zealand after October 1, 1991. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to New Zealand prior to October 1, 1991, may still submit applications for access to the child under the Convention in some cases.

The designated Central Authority for all of New Zealand is the Ministry of Justice. Their address is P.O Box #180, Wellington, New Zealand. The international telephone number is 011-64-4-918-8800 and the international telefax number is 011-64-4-918-8820. There is no public e-mail address.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Recognition and Enforcement of U.S. Custody Orders: There is no arrangement that allows U.S. court orders to be automatically recognized and enforced in New Zealand. It is necessary to retain a solicitor to file for a so-called "Consent Order" in the New Zealand court. The solicitor will be able to advise a left-behind parent on what documents would be relevant to the particular case. There are no filing fees in the Family Court for custody orders. Legal fees are a matter for the client and the lawyer to resolve.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies relating to an international child abduction, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. You should be aware that filing criminal child abduction charges in the United States against a taking parent may jeopardize a New Zealand Hague Convention case. For example, the New Zealand courts may be reluctant to issue or enforce a return order if a taking parent, returning to the U.S. for the purpose of pursuing a custody case, might be arrested.

Additional Information: The State Department has general information about welfare visits, hiring a foreign attorney, service of process, enforcement of child support orders, and the international enforcement of judgments, which may supplement the country-specific information provided in this flier. These documents are available on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov or by calling the State Department's Office of Overseas Citizen Services at 1-202-647-5225.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: New Zealand is a receiving, not sending country for intercountry adoption. New Zealand usually requires prospective adoptive parents to be permanent residents of New Zealand and to have lived in New Zealand for the two years immediately preceding an application to adopt. New Zealand follows the principle of not allowing New Zealand-born children to be adopted internationally when there are appropriate placements available for them in New Zealand.

If the birth mother selects a specific U.S. citizen as an adoptive parent, an otherwise qualified child will not be able to obtain a U.S. immigrant visa as an orphan unless the mother is the sole or surviving parent and is incapable of providing proper care.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indi-

cate that no orphans from New Zealand have received U.S. immigrant visas during the past five years.

Adoption Authority:
Department of Child, Youth & Family Services (CYF)
Adoption Information Services Unit (AISU)
P.O. Box 2620
Wellington, New Zealand
Web site: www.cyf.govt.nz
E-Mail for Adoption Inquiries:
webadoption@cyf.govt.nz

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptions in New Zealand occur under the Adoptions Act of 1955 and the Adoptions (Intercountry) Act of 1997. This legislation is available at www.legislation.co.nz. The legislation requires applicants to have attained a minimum age for one adopting parent to be at least 25 years of age, and should be 20 years older than the child. For a relative/inter-family adoption the minimum age for adopting parent is 20 years. Both married couples and single people are eligible to adopt. However, unmarried couples (whether opposite-sex or same-sex) are not permitted to jointly adopt a child in New Zealand. In addition, the Adoption act requires applicants to be "fit and proper," a term that refers to prospective adoptive parents' mental and physical health, police record and ability to provide (including financially) for a child.

Residency Requirements: As was stated above, New Zealand usually requires applicants to be permanent residents of New Zealand and to have lived in New Zealand for the last two years prior to submitting an application to adopt.

Time Frame: For local adoptions by applicants resident in New Zealand the assessment process by CYF usually takes between three and nine months. Applicants then enter a waiting pool from which they can be selected by a birth mother to parent a child. The time spent in the waiting pool can range from one month to many years and there is no guarantee that a placement will be made. A birth mother is required to sign a release of her child through a lawyer. The birth mother has absolute control over whom she selects to adopt her baby.

Once the birth mother has chosen a family, the prospective adoptive parents apply to the court and are given custody of the child. The birth mother has one month to confirm her selection of the adopting parents, then the adopting parents apply for an interim order from the Court. A final Order usually takes nine months to be approved.

It is important to note that, under U.S. law, if the New Zealand citizen birth mother selects a specific U.S. citizen as an adoptive parent, an otherwise qualified child will not be able to obtain a U.S. immigrant visa as an orphan unless the mother is the sole or surviving parent and is incapable of providing proper care.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: An adoption in New Zealand can only be effected through CYF. There are no licensed or accredited agencies for local adoptions. For New Zealanders adopting from other countries that are party to the Hague Adoption Convention, there are two accredited agencies that may perform certain functions. The New Zealand central authority of Child, Youth & Family Services does all assessments for intercountry adoptions by New Zealanders and must approve all placements.

Attorneys are listed in the Yellow Pages of all New Zealand city telephone directories. The U.S. Consulate General in Auckland also maintains a list of attorneys. This is available at: http://wellington.usembassy.gov/lawyerlist.html.

The list does not constitute a recommendation of any specific attorneys' services, and the Consulate General cannot make recommendations of attorneys Americans may locate privately. However, CYF may be able to supply referrals.

Adoption Fees: For local adoptions there are no charges by government agencies (CYF and Court) but applicants pay for legal representation at court and this usually costs between NZ$2000 and NZ$4000. [As of the date of this flyer, the exchange rate is approximately NZ$1.41 to US$1.]

Adoption Procedures: There are two procedures for local and intercountry adoptions. For local adoptions, prospective adoptive parents are expected to appear in court for the Interim Order hearing and are sometimes requested to be present for the Final Order. There are no special considerations/short cuts for obtaining the adoption through the local system as the process is the same for all applicants. A pitfall to avoid would be trying to influence the outcome. It is illegal to advertise for a child to adopt. It is illegal to pay money in consideration of an adoption and it is illegal to take a child into a home for the purpose of adoption without either a Social Worker Approval or an Interim Order of Adoption. Penalties for breaches of these restrictions include fines and imprisonment. All applications for adoption in New Zealand must be investigated by NZCYF and their report is submitted to the court. No private practitioners or attorneys can report to the court.

Special provisions may apply if it is an inter-family adoption and the families concerned still should apply through NZCYF. In order take such a child into the U.S. the relevant requirements of U.S. immigration law on such adoptions must be met.

Required Documents: People resident in New Zealand who wish to adopt must complete an application form including references, consent to a police check, and a medical report. In the very rare case where a United States citizen is adopting in New Zealand (e.g., a relative of a child who needs adoption and cannot be placed with a relative in New Zealand), the process will be the same as for a local New Zealand adoption.

The applicants will be assessed (including a home study) by a CYF social worker or by an American equivalent in the United States.

New Zealand Embassy
37 Observatory Circle NW
Washington DC 20008
Ph: (202) 328-4848
email: nz@nzemb.org

New Zealand Consulate General
Suite 1150, 12400 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90025
Ph: (310) 207-1145
email:nzcg.la@verizon.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in New Zealand may be addressed to the U.S. Consulate General in Auckland. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



NICARAGUA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Nicaragua

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 129,494 sq. km. (59,998 sq. mi.); slightly larger than New York State.

Cities: Capital—Managua (pop. 1 million). Other major cities—Leon, Granada, Jinotega, Matagalpa, Chinandega, Masaya.

Terrain: Extensive Atlantic coastal plains rising to central interior mountains; narrow Pacific coastal plain interrupted by volcanoes.

Climate: Tropical in lowlands; cooler in highlands.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Nicaraguan(s).

Population: (2005) 5.4 million.

Annual growth rate: (2005) 1.7%. Density—42 per sq. km.

Ethnic groups: Mestizo (mixed European and indigenous) 69%, white 17%, black (Jamaican origin) 9%, indigenous 5%.

Religions: Predominantly Roman Catholic, with rapidly growing percentage of Evangelical Protestants.

Languages: Spanish (official), English and indigenous languages on Caribbean coast.

Education: Years compulsory—none enforced (28% of first graders eventually finish sixth grade). Literacy—67.5%.

Health: Life expectancy—72.9 yrs. Infant mortality rate—29/1,000.

Work force: (2004 est.) 1.9 million.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: 1821.

Constitution: The 1987 Sandinista-era constitution was changed in 1995 to provide for a more even distribution of power among the four branches of government and again in 2000 to increase the Supreme Court and the Controller General's Office and to make changes to the electoral laws. The changes in 2000 allowed for the president to be elected with 35% of the popular vote so long as there was at least a five percentage point difference between the first and second place candidates.

Government branches: Executive—president and vice president. Legislative—National Assembly (unicameral). Judicial—Supreme Court; subordinate appeals, district, and local courts; separate labor and administrative tribunals. Electoral—Supreme Electoral Council, responsible for organizing and holding elections.

Political subdivisions: 15 departments and two autonomous regions on the Atlantic coast; 145 municipalities.

Political parties: Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN); Nicaraguan Democratic Block (BDN); Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN); Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC); Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS).

Suffrage: Universal at 16.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $5.7 billion.

GDP real growth rate: (2007) 3.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $1,023.

Inflation rate: (2007) 16.9%.

Natural resources: arable land, fresh water, fisheries, gold, timber hydro and geothermal power potential.

Agriculture and agricultural processing: (33% of GDP): Products—corn, coffee, sugar, meat, rice, beans, bananas, beef, dairy.

Manufacturing: (11% of GDP) Types—textiles, paper and wood products, metal products petroleum refining, plastics.

Services: (51% of GDP) Types—banking, wholesale and retail distribution, telecommunications, and energy.

Construction: (5% of GDP) Types—housing and infrastructure.

Trade: (2007 est.) Normal exports—$1.202 billion (f.o.b.): coffee, seafood, beef, sugar, industrial goods, gold, bananas. Free trade zone exports—$1.088 billion, mostly textiles and

apparel, automobile wiring harnesses. Markets—United States, Central American Common Market, European Union (EU), Mexico, Japan. Imports—$3.294 billion (c.i.f.): petroleum, agricultural inputs and equipment, manufactured goods. Free trade zone imports—$783.6 million. Suppliers—Central American Common Market, United States, EU, Mexico, Venezuela, China.

PEOPLE

Most Nicaraguans are of both European and Indian ancestry, and the culture of the country reflects the Ibero-European and Indian heritage of its people. Only the Indians of the eastern half of the country remain ethnically distinct and retain tribal customs and languages. A large black minority, of Jamaican origin, is concentrated on the Caribbean coast. In the mid-1980s, the central government divided the eastern half of the country—the former department of Zelaya—into two autonomous regions and granted the people of the region limited self-rule.

Roman Catholicism is the major religion, but Evangelical Protestant groups have grown recently, and there are strong Anglican and Moravian communities on the Caribbean coast. Most Nicaraguans live in the Pacific lowlands and the adjacent interior highlands. The population is 58% urban.

HISTORY

Nicaragua takes its name from Nicarao, chief of the indigenous tribe that lived around present-day Lake Nicaragua during the late 1400s and early 1500s. In 1524, Hernandez de Cordoba founded the first Spanish permanent settlements in the region, including two of Nicaragua's principal towns: Granada on Lake Nicaragua, and Leon east of Lake Managua. Nicaragua gained independence from Spain in 1821, briefly becoming a part of the Mexican Empire and then a member of a federation of independent Central American provinces. In 1838, Nicaragua became an independent republic.

Much of Nicaragua's politics since independence has been characterized by the rivalry between the Liberal elite of Leon and the Conservative elite of Granada, which often led to civil war. Initially invited by the Liberals in 1855 to join their struggle against the Conservatives, an American named William Walker and his "filibusters" seized the presidency in 1856. The Liberals and Conservatives united to drive him out of office in 1857. Three decades of Conservative rule followed. Taking advantage of divisions within the Conservative ranks, Jose Santos Zelaya led a Liberal revolt that brought him to power in 1893. Zelaya ended a longstanding dispute with Britain over the Atlantic Coast in 1894, and reincorporated that region into Nicaragua.

By 1909, differences had developed over a trans-isthmian canal and concessions to Americans in Nicaragua; there also was concern about what was perceived as Nicaragua's destabilizing influence in the region. In 1909 the United States provided political support to Conservative-led forces rebelling against President Zelaya and intervened militarily to protect American lives and property. With the exception of a 9-month period in 1925-26, the United States maintained troops in Nicaragua from 1912 until 1933. From 1927 until 1933, U.S. Marines stationed in Nicaragua engaged in a running battle with rebel forces led by renegade Liberal Gen. Augusto Sandino, who rejected a 1927 negotiated agreement brokered by the United States to end the latest round of fighting between Liberals and Conservatives.

After the departure of U.S. troops, National Guard Commander Anastasio Somoza Garcia outmaneuvered his political opponents—including Sandino, who was assassinated by National Guard officers—and took over the presidency in 1936. Somoza and two sons who succeeded him maintained close ties with the United States. The Somoza dynasty ended in 1979 with a massive uprising led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), which had conducted a low scale guerrilla war against the Somoza regime since the early 1960s.

The FSLN established an authoritarian dictatorship soon after taking power. U.S.-Nicaraguan relations deteriorated rapidly as the regime nationalized many private industries, confiscated private property, supported Central American guerrilla movements, and maintained links to international terrorists. The United States suspended aid to Nicaragua in 1981. The Reagan administration provided assistance to the Nicaraguan resistance and in 1985 imposed an embargo on U.S.-Nicaraguan trade.

In response to both domestic and international pressure, the Sandinista regime entered into negotiations with the Nicaraguan resistance and agreed to nationwide elections in February 1990. In these elections, which were proclaimed free and fair by international observers, Nicaraguans elected as their President the National Opposition Union candidate, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of the slain journalist and editor of the daily newspaper La Prensa, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro.

During President Chamorro's nearly 7 years in office, her government achieved major progress toward consolidating democratic institutions, advancing national reconciliation, stabilizing the economy, privatizing state-owned enterprises, and reducing human rights violations. Despite a number of irregularities—which were due largely to logistical difficulties and a baroquely complicated electoral law—the October 20, 1996 presidential, legislative, and mayoral elections were judged free and fair by international observers and by the groundbreaking national electoral observer group Etica y Transparencia (Ethics and Transparency). This time Nicaraguans elected former Managua Mayor Arnoldo Alemán, leader of the center-right Liberal Alliance. The first transfer of power in recent Nicaraguan history from one democratically elected president to another took place on January 10, 1997, when the Alemán government



was inaugurated. Presidential and legislative elections were held in November 2001. Enrique Bolaños of the Liberal Constitutional Party was elected to the Nicaraguan presidency on November 4, 2001, defeating FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega by 14 percentage points.

The elections, characterized by international observers as free, fair and peaceful, reflected the maturing of Nicaragua's democratic institutions. During his campaign, President-elect Bolaños promised to reinvigorate the economy, create jobs, fight corruption, and support the war against terrorism. Bolaños was inaugurated on January 10, 2002. FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega won the presidential elections of November 5, 2006 with 38% of the vote, defeating a divided opposition. ALN candidate Eduardo Montealegre garnered 29%; Jose Rizo of the PLC received 26%; and MRS' Edmundo Jarquin polled fourth with 6%. Ortega was inaugurated on January 10, 2007. In early 2008 Eduardo Montealegre left the ALN and formed his own movement, Vamos con Eduardo (VCE), and ran for mayor of Managua. The VCE and PLC formed an alliance and will compete under the same banner in the November 2008 municipal elections.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Nicaragua is a constitutional democracy with executive, legislative, judicial, and electoral branches of government. In 1995, the executive and legislative branches negotiated a reform of the 1987 Sandinista constitution, which gave extensive new powers and independence to the legislature—the National Assembly—including permitting the Assembly to override a presidential veto with a simple majority vote and eliminating

the president's ability to pocket-veto a bill. Changes to the constitution in 2000 allowed for the president to be elected with 35% of the popular vote so long as there was a five percentage point difference between the first and second place candidates.

The president and the members of the unicameral National Assembly are elected to concurrent 5-year terms. The National Assembly consists of 92 total deputies (90 elected from party lists drawn at the departmental and national levels, plus the outgoing president and the candidate who finishes second in the presidential race).

The Supreme Court supervises the functioning of the still largely ineffective, often partisan, and overburdened judicial system. In 2000, as part of the PLC-FSLN pact, the number or Supreme Court justices was increased from 12 to 16. Supreme Court justices are elected to 5-year terms by the National Assembly. Led by a council of seven magistrates, the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) is the co-equal branch of government responsible for organizing and conducting elections, plebiscites, and referendums. The magistrates and their alternates are elected to 5-year terms by the National Assembly. Constitutional changes in 2000 expanded the number of CSE magistrates from five to seven and gave the PLC and the FSLN a freer hand to name party activists to the Council, prompting allegations that both parties were politicizing electoral institutions and processes and excluding smaller political parties.

Nicaragua's constitution guarantees the freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and association, religion, and movement within the country, as well as foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. In the run-up to the November 2008 municipal elections the government has made attempts to limit some of these rights, including limiting free and open discussion in the media and academia, and peaceful assembly. The constitution prohibits discrimination based on birth, nationality, political belief, race, gender, language, religion, opinion, national origin, and economic or social condition. All public and private sector workers, except the military, public safety workers, and police, are entitled to form and join unions of their own choosing, and they exercise this right extensively. Nearly half of Nicaragua's work force, including agricultural workers, is unionized, and most Nicaraguan unions are affiliated with either the FSLN or liberal political parties. Workers have the right to strike. Collective bargaining is becoming more common in the private sector.

Political Parties

The 2006 national elections resulted in the following distribution of the 92 seats in the National Assembly (installed January 9, 2007): FSLN—38; PLC—25; ALN—24; MRS—5. Subsequently, the political parties shuffled their composition and the make-up of the Assembly is now FSLN—38; PLC—25; BDN—15; ALN—6; MRS—3; and Independent—5.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra**
Vice Pres.: **Jaime MORALES Carazo**
Min. of Agriculture & Forestry: **Ariel BUCARDO**
Min. of Defense:
Min. of Education, Culture, & Sports: **Miguel de CASTILLA Urbina**
Min. of Environment & Natural Resources: **Juana ARGENAL**
Min. of Family:
Min. of Finance & Public Credit: **Alberto Jose GUEVARA Obregon**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Samuel SANTOS Lopez**
Min. of Govt.: **Ana Isabel MORALES Mazon**
Min. of Health: **Guillermo GONZALEZ**
Min. of Industry, Development, & Commerce: **Orlando SOLORZANO Delgadillo**
Min. of Labor: **Jeannette CHAVEZ Gomez**
Min. of Tourism:
Min. of Transportation & Infrastructure: **Pablo MARTINEZ**
Sec. of the Presidency:
Attorney Gen.: **Hernan ESTRADA**
Prosecutor Gen.:
Pres., Central Bank: **Antenor ROSALES**
Ambassador to the US: **Arturo CRUZ Sequeira, Jr.**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Maria RUBIALES de Chamorro**

Nicaragua maintains an embassy in the United States at 1627 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-939-6570).

ECONOMY

With a gross domestic product (GDP) of $5.7 billion and a per capita income of $1,023 in 2007, Nicaragua is the second-poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. From 1991 to 2006, three successive administrations focused on free market reform as the path to recovery from 12 years of economic freefall under the Sandinista regime and civil war of the 1980s. They achieved macroeconomic stability, cutting inflation from 33,500% in 1988 to 9.45% in 2006, and dramatic debt reduction through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, the Multilateral Debt Reduction Initiative, and a $1 billion commercial debt buyback led by the World Bank. By the end of 2007, external debt as a percentage of GDP was 59.1%, down from more than 400% in 1990. Since 1995, real economic growth averaged 4.0%. In 2006 and 2007, it came in a bit less than average, at 3.7% and 3.8%, respectively.

The pace of economic growth slowed in 2008, as growth in the agricultural sector was offset by a decrease in investment and rising wages, food prices, and energy costs. Inflation, which had been in the single digits for several years, appears on track to exceed 20% in 2008. Official unemployment was 4.9% in 2007, but most do not believe this reflects reality. Sixty percent of all workers earn a living in the informal sector, where underemployment is high and the data is not clear. In 2007, Nicaraguans received $740 million in remittances from abroad, the majority of which from the United States. This equals almost 13% of GDP. Because Nicaragua has abundant arable land

and water resources, agriculture will always be an important component of the economy. About a third of GDP revolves around agriculture, timber, and fishing. Opportunities exist in food and timber processing and preparation for export. Currently, most agriculture is small-scale and labor intensive. Livestock and dairy production have seen steady growth over the past decade and have taken the greatest advantage of free trade agreements. Many export products, especially coffee, have benefited from the recent rise in international commodity prices. Manufacturing accounts for about 11% of GDP and the construction sector another 5%. Services (banking, transportation, trade, retailing, and tourism) accounts for about half of GDP.

Social indicators for Nicaragua have improved since 1991. The current population of Nicaragua is 5.4 million; life expectancy at birth is 72.9 years. Nicaragua has steadily improved prenatal care coverage and made impressive gains in infant mortality, dropping from 52 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1991 to 29 per 1,000 in 2006. The country has successfully controlled the spread of many diseases by achieving and maintaining high vaccination coverage (85%) and introducing vaccines, for example, the MMR vaccine in 1998, the pentavalent vaccine in 1999, and the rotavirus vaccine in 2006. Since 2004, infectious disease has fallen from fourth to fifth place among the leading causes of death, with the number of such deaths down nearly 50% since 1996.

In 2007, the Minister of Education reported school enrollment as 86.5%. Nicaragua's score on the United Nations Human Development Index rose by 40% from 1990 to 2004 (from 0.496 to 0.698). Despite these statistical gains, the benefits of economic development have been uneven. Blackouts, water shortages, and high energy prices disproportionately affect the poorest in the population. Over 50% of Nicaraguans fall below the poverty line and poverty reduction, including advances in health education in rural areas, has been slow. Since taking office again in January 2007, President Daniel Ortega has maintained the legal and regulatory underpinnings of the market-based economic model of his predecessors, but has rejected what he terms the "neo-liberal economic model," and along with it capitalism and the United States, which he refers to as the imperial power. Instead, he has allied himself with the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), whose other members include Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, and Venezuela. In 2008, Ortega declared that socialism was the only path for Nicaragua if the country wanted to alleviate poverty.

Nonetheless, Nicaragua under Ortega has stayed current with its U.S.-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) obligations and signed a three-year Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in October 2007. As part of the IMF program, the Government of Nicaragua agreed to implement free market policies linked to targets on fiscal discipline, poverty spending, and energy regulation. The lack of transparency surrounding Venezuelan bilateral assistance, channeled through state-run enterprises rather than the official budget, has become a serious issue for the IMF and international donors. On September 10, 2008, with misgivings about fiscal transparency, the IMF released an additional $30 million to Nicaragua, the second tranche of its $110 million of its PRGF.

On April 1, 2006, CAFTA-DR entered into force for Nicaragua. Since 2005, Nicaraguan exports to the United States rose 36.3% to $1.6 billion in 2007, about 55% of all Nicaragua's exports. Textile and apparel account for three-fifths of these exports, while automobile wiring harnesses add another 10%. Other leading exports include coffee, meat, cigars, sugar, ethanol, and fresh fruit and vegetables, all of which have seen remarkable growth under CAFTA-DR. Market opportunities created by CAFTA-DR have contributed to the growing diversity of Nicaraguan exports. During the first full year of the agreement, Nicaragua shipped 274 new products to the United States. Since 2005, U.S. exports to Nicaragua rose 43.6% to $846.8 million. Other important trading partners for Nicaragua are its Central American neighbors, Mexico, and the European Union, with which it is negotiating a trade agreement as part of a Central American bloc.

Foreign investment inflows totaled $337 million in 2007, including U.S. firm Cone Denim's $100 million mill and Mexican and Spanish investment of $120 million in telecommunications infrastructure. There are over 100 companies operating in Nicaragua with some relation to a U.S. company, either wholly or partly owned subsidiaries, franchisees, or exclusive distributors of U.S. products. The largest are in energy, financial services, apparel, manufacturing, and fisheries.

Despite important protections for investment included in CAFTA-DR, the investment climate has steadily worsened since Ortega took office. President Ortega's decision to support radical regimes such as Iran and Cuba, his harsh rhetoric against the United States and capitalism, and his use of government institutions to persecute political enemies and their businesses, has had a negative effect on perceptions of country risk, which by some accounts has quadrupled since he assumed office.

Poor enforcement of property rights deters both foreign and domestic investment, especially in real estate development and tourism. Conflicting claims and weak enforcement of property rights has invited property disputes and litigation. Establishing verifiable title history is often entangled in legalities relating to the expropriation of 28,000 properties by the revolutionary government that Ortega led in the 1980s. The situation is not helped by a court system that is widely believed to be corrupt and subject to political influence. Illegal property seizures by private parties, occasionally in collaboration with corrupt municipal officials, often go unchallenged by the authorities, especially in the Atlantic regions and

interior regions of the north, where property rights are poorly defined and rule of law is weak. Foreign investor interest along the Pacific Coast has motivated some unscrupulous people to challenge ownership rights in the Departments of Rivas and Chinandega, with the hope of achieving some sort of cash settlement.

The U.S. Embassy's Economic and Commercial Section advances U.S. economic and business interests by briefing U.S. firms on opportunities and challenges to trade and investment in Nicaragua, encouraging key Nicaraguan decisionmakers to work with U.S. firms, helping to resolve problems that affect U.S. commercial interests, and working to change local economic and trade ground rules in order to afford U.S. firms a level playing field on which to compete.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The 1990 election victory of President Violeta Chamorro placed Nicaragua in the ranks of Latin American democracies. Nicaragua pursues an independent foreign policy. A participant of the Central American Security Commission (CASC), Nicaragua also has taken a leading role in pressing for regional demilitarization and peaceful settlement of disputes within states in the region. Nicaragua has submitted two territorial disputes—one with Honduras and the other with Colombia—to the International Court at The Hague for resolution. The dispute with Honduras was resolved by The Hague in October 2007, and Presidents Ortega and Zelaya (Honduras) met on October 8, 2007 to recognize the finality of the decision. In December 2007, the Hague issued an interim decision on the Colombia-Nicaragua dispute that granted sovereignty of the San Andres archipelago to Colombia, but urged both parties to work toward a mutually satisfactory resolution regarding the surrounding waters. Also in 2007, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador reached an agreement on fishing rights in the Gulf of Fonseca. On the San Juan River there have been disagreements regarding navigational rights in the Nicaragua-Costa Rica border area. Nicaragua and Costa Rica signed a 3-year agreement in September of 2002 to defer presenting these issues before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for resolution. After the two governments failed to reach an amicable solution, Costa Rica filed a case before the ICJ. While the case is currently pending, the two countries jointly fund community development projects in the border area. At the 1994 Summit of the Americas, Nicaragua joined six Central American neighbors in signing the Alliance for Sustainable Development, known as the Conjunta Centroamerica-USA, or CONCAUSA, to promote sustainable economic development in the region.

Nicaragua belongs to the United Nations and several specialized and related agencies, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labor Organization (ILO), and UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC). Nicaragua also is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Non-aligned Movement (NAM), the International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEA), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI).

U.S.-NICARAGUAN RELATIONS

U.S. policy aims to continue supporting the consolidation of the democratic process initiated in Nicaragua with the 1990 election of President Chamorro. The United States has promoted national reconciliation, encouraging Nicaraguans to resolve their problems through dialogue and compromise. It recognizes as legitimate all political forces that abide by the democratic process and eschew violence. U.S. assistance is focused on strengthening democratic institutions, stimulating sustainable economic growth, and supporting the health and basic education sectors.

Section 527 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1994 and 1995, prohibits U.S. assistance and support to any country in which U.S. citizens have not received adequate and effective compensation for outstanding claims against the government for confiscated property, as is the case in Nicaragua. The law provides authority to the President, which is delegated to the Secretary of State, to waive the prohibition when it is in the national interest. In July 2008, the Secretary issued the 15th waiver of the Section 527 prohibition based upon Nicaragua's progress in resolving U.S. citizen claims.

Other key U.S. policy goals for Nicaragua are:

- Improving respect for human rights and resolving outstanding high-profile human rights cases;
- Developing a free market economy with respect for property and intellectual property rights;
- Ensuring effective civilian control over defense and security policy;
- Increasing the effectiveness of Nicaragua's efforts to combat transborder crimes, including narcotics trafficking, money laundering, illegal alien smuggling, international terrorist and criminal organizations, and trafficking in persons; and
- Reforming the judicial system and implementing good governance.

Since 1990, the United States has provided over $2 billion in assistance to Nicaragua. About $489 million of that was for debt relief, and another $488 million was for balance-of-payments support. The U.S. also provided $94 million in 1999, 2000, and 2001 as part of its overall response to Hurricane Mitch. In response to Hurricane Felix, the United States pro-

vided over $15 million in direct aid to Nicaragua to support humanitarian relief and recovery operations from the damage inflicted in September 2007. Aside from funding for Hurricanes Mitch and Felix, the levels of assistance have fallen incrementally to reflect the improvements in Nicaragua. Assistance has been focused on promoting more citizen political participation, compromise, and government transparency; stimulating sustainable growth and income; and fostering better-educated and healthier families. The Millennium Challenge Corporation's 5-year, $175 million compact with the Republic of Nicaragua entered into force on May 26, 2006. The Millennium Challenge Compact will reduce poverty and spur economic growth by funding projects in the regions of León and Chinandega aimed at reducing transportation costs and improving access to markets for rural communities; increasing wages and profits from farming and related enterprises in the region; and attracting investment by strengthening property rights.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 22, 2008

Country Description: Nicaragua's fragile democracy remains under stress. Following municipal elections in November 2008, in which opposition leaders have charged massive fraud took place, political tensions have increased significantly. The economy remains among the poorest in the hemisphere. Crime has increased significantly in recent months.

The national language is Spanish, although many residents of the Caribbean coastal areas also speak English and indigenous languages. The climate is hot and humid, with the "summer" dry season running mid-November through mid-May and the "winter" rainy season running from mid-May through mid-November. Terrain ranges from the hilly and volcanic to coastal beaches and tropical jungles. Geological faults run throughout the country, along which active volcanoes are situated. Earthquakes are common, but the last major earthquake, which destroyed the city of Managua, occurred in 1972.

Nicaragua lacks tourist infrastructure. Except in the cities and major thoroughfares, most roads are unpaved. Public transportation is unsafe and there are no sidewalks. Most essential services are sporadic. Most hospitals are substandard. Hotels in Managua are adequate, but primarily are oriented to serve a business or government clientele. Potential tourists may want to obtain information from the National Tourism Institute (INTUR), the governmental agency responsible for developing, regulating, and promoting tourism in Nicaragua at http://www.intur.gob.ni.

Entry Requirements: A valid U.S. passport is required to enter Nicaragua. Although there is a bilateral agreement that waives the six-month validity passport requirement, U.S. citizens are urged to ensure that their passports are valid for the length of their projected stay in the country before traveling. U.S. citizens must have an onward or return ticket and evidence of sufficient funds to support themselves during their stay. A visa is not required for U.S. citizens; however, a tourist card must be purchased for $5 upon arrival. Tourist cards are typically issued for 30 to 90 days. A valid entry stamp is required to exit Nicaragua. Pay attention to the authorized stay that will be written into your entry stamp by the immigration inspector. Visitors remaining more than the authorized time must obtain an extension from Nicaraguan Immigration at http://www.migracion.gob.ni. Failure to do so will prevent departure until a fine is paid.

There is also a $32 departure tax. Many airlines include this tax in the price of the ticket. If the tax is not

included in the ticket, payment can be made at the airline counter upon departure.

Per Nicaraguan law, individuals should exit Nicaragua with the same passport with which they entered the country. Dual national minors who entered Nicaragua on their Nicaraguan passports will be subject to departure requirements specific to Nicaraguan children under the age of 18, even though they may also be citizens of other countries. More information on these requirements can be found on the U.S. Embassy web site at http://nicaragua.usembassy.gov/dual_nationality.html.

According to Nicaragua's Laws for Foreigners, foreigners must be in possession of a valid identity document at all times while in Nicaragua and may be required to show it to Nicaraguan authorities upon request. Acceptable identity documents are: (1) a permanent residency card, (2) temporary residency card, or (3) valid passport or travel document accompanied by an entry stamp.

In June 2006, Nicaragua entered a "Central America-4 (CA-4) Border Control Agreement" with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Under the terms of the agreement, citizens of the four countries may travel freely across land borders from one of the countries to any of the others without completing entry and exit formalities at Immigration checkpoints. U.S. citizens and other eligible foreign nationals, who legally enter any of the four countries, may similarly travel among the four without obtaining additional visas or tourist entry permits for the other three countries. Immigration officials at the first port of entry determine the length of stay, up to a maximum period of 90 days. Foreign tourists who wish to remain in the four-country region beyond the period initially granted for their visit are required to request a one-time extension of stay from local Immigration authorities in the country where the traveler is physically present, or travel outside the CA-4 countries and reapply for admission to the region. Foreigners "expelled" from any of the four countries are excluded from the entire "CA-4" region. In isolated cases, the lack of clarity in the implementing details of the CA-4 Border Control Agreement has caused temporary inconvenience to some travelers and has resulted in others being fined more than one hundred dollars or detained in custody for 72 hours or longer.

For the most current information about visas to visit Nicaragua, visit the Embassy of Nicaragua web site at http://www.cancilleria.gob.ni.

Safety and Security: Municipal elections took place across Nicaragua on November 9, 2008. Violent demonstrations followed as opposition groups questioned the authenticity of the results. Activities observed during protests included but were not limited to tear gas, rubber bullets, setting off fireworks, rock-throwing, tire burning, road blocks, bus and vehicle burning, and physical violence between law enforcement and protestors and between political rivals. Political demonstrations and strikes continue to occur sporadically, are usually limited to urban areas, and occasionally become violent. U.S. citizens are advised to monitor local media reports, to avoid crowds and blockades during such occurrences and to exercise caution when in the vicinity of any large gathering.

U.S. citizens are cautioned that strong currents and undertows off sections of Nicaragua's Pacific coast have resulted in a number of incidents of drowning. Powerful waves have also resulted in broken bones, and injuries caused by sting rays are not uncommon in popular resort bathing areas. Warning signs are not posted, and lifeguards and rescue equipment are not readily available. U.S. citizens contemplating beach activities in Nicaragua's Pacific waters should exercise appropriate caution.

Hiking in volcanic or other remote areas can be dangerous and travelers should take appropriate precautions. Hikers should have appropriate dress, footwear, and sufficient consumables for any trek undertaken. Individuals who travel to remote tourist or other areas for hiking activities are encouraged to hire a local guide familiar with the terrain and area. In particular, there have been instances of hikers perishing or losing their way on the volcanoes at Ometepe Island. While they may look like easy climbs, the terrain is treacherous and heavily overgrown.

Although extensive de-mining operations have been conducted to clear rural areas of northern Nicaragua of landmines left from the civil war in the 1980s, visitors venturing off the main roads in these areas are cautioned that the possibility of encountering landmines still exists.

Domestic travel within Nicaragua by land and air, particularly to the Atlantic side can be dangerous. Domestic airlines use small airstrips with minimal safety equipment and little boarding security.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Violent crime in Managua is increasing and petty street crimes are very common. Gang activity also is increasing, though not at levels found in neighboring Central American countries. Pick-pocketing and occasional armed robberies occur on crowded buses, at bus stops and in open markets like the Oriental and Huembes Markets. Gang violence, drive-by shootings, robbery, assault and stabbings are most frequently encountered in poorer neighborhoods, including the Ticabus area, a major arrival and departure point for tourist buses. However, in recent months it spread to more upscale neighborhoods and near major hotels, including the Zona Hippos. In 2008, a U.S. citizen was critically injured in a gang-motivated drive-by shooting

that occurred in the San Judas area. Another U.S. citizen was kidnapped and left for dead in the Villa Fontana area of Managua.

U.S. citizens are increasingly targeted shortly after arriving in the country by criminals posing as Nicaraguan police officers who pull their vehicles—including those operated by reputable hotels—over for inspection. In each case, the incidents happened after dark and involved gun-wielding assailants who robbed passengers of all valuables and drove them to remote locations where they were left to fend for themselves. Some assailants employed threats of physical violence. While the traditional scene of these attacks has been the Tipitapa-Masaya Highway, this activity has recently spread to the Managua-Leon Highway. The U.S. Embassy warns U.S. citizens to exercise extreme caution when driving at night from Managua's International Airport and to avoid traveling the Tipitapa-Masaya Highway at night.

U.S. citizens should exercise caution when approached by strangers offering assistance. Several U.S. citizens traveling by bus from San Juan del Sur to Managua have reported being victimized by fellow women travelers who offered to assist them in locating and/or sharing a taxi upon arrival in Managua. In all cases, upon entering the taxi, the U.S. citizens have been held at knife-point, robbed of their valuables, and driven around to ATM machines to withdraw funds from their accounts.

Violent criminal activities and petty crime are also increasing in the tourist destination of San Juan del Sur. In 2008, a U.S. citizen family was violently assaulted and kidnapped by several armed men. Other American citizens have been the victims of armed robberies by assailants wielding machetes, knives, and/or guns along the beaches in and around San Juan del Sur. U.S. citizens should exercise particular caution when visiting the following beaches: Maderas, Marsella, Yankee, Coco, and Remanso. Police coverage is extremely sparse outside major urban areas, particularly in Nicaragua's Atlantic coast autonomous regions. Lack of adequate police coverage has resulted in these areas being used by drug traffickers and other criminal elements. Street crime and petty theft are a common problem in Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields, and the Corn Islands along the Atlantic coast.

For security reasons, the Embassy has limited travel by its staff to the North and South Atlantic Autonomous Regions (RAAN and RAAS), including the Corn Islands. Given the area's geographical isolation, the Embassy's ability to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens who choose to travel in the Caribbean costal area is constrained. Police presence on Little Corn Island is made up of volunteers with little to no formal training, and is minimal on Corn Island and other remote areas.

In late 2007, a U.S. citizen was assaulted and violently raped while on vacation in Little Corn Island. U.S. citizens have previously been the victims of sexual assault on this island and other beaches in the country. The Embassy recommends traveling in groups when in isolated areas. Single travelers should exercise special caution while traveling in the Corn Islands and other remote areas of the country.

Throughout the country, U.S. travelers should utilize hotels and guest houses that have strong security elements in place, including but not limited to rooms equipped with safes for securing valuables and travel documents and adequate access control precautions.

Visitors should avoid walking and instead use officially registered taxicabs. Radio-dispatched taxis are recommended and can be found at the International Airport and at the larger hotels. Robbery, kidnapping, and assault on passengers in taxis in Managua are increasing in frequency and violence, with passengers subjected to beating, sexual assault, stabbings, and even murder. Several U.S. citizens reported brutal attacks in taxis during 2008, particularly around the International Airport area. Before taking a taxi, make sure that it has a red license plate and that the number is legible. Select taxis carefully and note the driver's name and license number. Instruct the driver not to pick up other passengers, agree on the fare before departing, and have small bills available for payment, as taxi drivers often do not make change. Also, check that the taxi is properly labeled with the cooperativa (company) name and logo. Purse and jewelry snatchings sometimes occur at stoplights. While riding in a vehicle, windows should be closed, car doors locked, and valuables placed out of sight.

Do not resist a robbery attempt. Many criminals have weapons, and most injuries and deaths have resulted when victims have resisted. Do not hitchhike or go home with strangers, particularly from nightspots. Travel in groups of two or more persons whenever possible.

Use the same common sense while traveling in Nicaragua that you would in any high-crime area of a major U.S. city. Do not wear excessive jewelry in downtown or rural areas. Do not carry large sums of money, ATM, or credit cards that are not needed, or other valuables.

Information for Victims of Crime:
The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is very limited, particularly outside Managua. Basic medical services are available in Managua and in many of the smaller towns and villages. However, treatment for many serious medical problems is either unavailable or available only in Managua. Emergency ambulance services, as well as certain types of medical equipment, medications and treatments, are not available in Nicaragua. Physicians and hospital personnel frequently do not speak English, and medical reports are written in Spanish. Patients must have good understand and an ability to speak Spanish in order to navigate the local medical resources.

In an emergency, individuals are taken to the nearest hospital that will accept a patient. This is usually a public hospital unless the individual or someone acting on their behalf indicates that they can pay for a private hospital. Payment for medical services is typically done on a cash basis, although the few private hospitals will accept major credit cards for payment. U.S. health insurance plans are not accepted in Nicaragua.

Dengue fever is endemic in Nicaragua. Currently, no vaccine or specific medication is available to prevent or treat Dengue fever. Malaria is endemic in the Atlantic coast region and anti-malarial medication should be taken before and after travel to this region. Travelers are advised to take a prophylactic regimen best suited to their health profile. No prophylaxis anti-malarial medication is required for Managua and the western, Pacific coast region. For both Dengue fever and malaria, the best prevention is the use of DEET insect repellant, as well as the wearing of protective clothing and bed-nets to prevent mosquito bites.

Tap water is not considered safe in Nicaragua. All persons should drink only bottled water.

Individuals traveling to Nicaragua should ensure that all their routine vaccinations are up to date. Vaccination against Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, rabies and typhoid is strongly recommended. A yellow fever vaccination is not required to enter Nicaragua unless the traveler has recently visited a country where yellow fever is endemic. Travelers taking prescription medications should bring an adequate supply with them when coming to Nicaragua. Many newer combination medications are not available in local pharmacies.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Nicaragua.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges U.S. citizens to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: Driving in Nicaragua poses many difficulties and risks, including mandatory arrest for drivers involved in accidents that result in death or serious injury until police are able to determine who is at fault.

Driving is on the right side of the road in Nicaragua. Motorists driving to Nicaragua should use the principal highways and official border crossings at Guasaule, El Espino, and Las Manos between Nicaragua and Honduras and Penas Blancas between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Although some of the principal highways connecting the major cities are in generally good condition, drivers should be aware that seasonal, torrential rains take a heavy toll on road beds. With few exceptions, secondary roads are in poor repair, potholed, poorly lit, frequently narrow, and lack shoulders. Road travel after dark is especially hazardous in all areas of the country. Motorists are encouraged to prepare accordingly and may want to carry a cellular phone in case of an emergency.

Some of the major highways and roads are undergoing major repair, repaving, and upgrading. Be on the lookout for detours and slow traffic on these roads. In general, road signs are poor to non-existent. Bicycles, oxcarts, dogs, horses, and vehicles without lights are at times encountered even on main thoroughfares in Nicaragua. Motorcycles, often carrying passengers, dart in and out of traffic with little or no warning. Many vehicles are in poor condition, travel very slowly, and break down without warning. Drivers should be especially careful on curves and hills, as many drivers will pass on blind spots. Speed limits vary depending on the type of road, but because the government lacks the resources, traffic rules are rarely enforced.

Due to the age and disrepair of many vehicles, many drivers will not signal their intentions using turn indicators. Rather, it is common for a vehicle operator to stick his hand out the window to signal a turn. If you do drive in Nicaragua, you need to exercise the utmost caution, drive defensively, and make sure you have insurance.

Nicaraguan law requires that a driver be taken into custody for driving under the influence or being involved in an accident that caused serious injury or death, even if the driver is insured and appears not to have been at fault. The minimum detention period is 48 hours; however, detentions frequently last until a judicial decision is reached (often weeks or months), or until a waiver is signed by the injured party (usually as the result of a cash settlement). Visitors to Nicaragua might want to

consider hiring a professional driver during their stay. Licensed drivers who are familiar with local roads can be hired through local car rental agencies. In case of accident, only the driver will be taken into custody.

The Embassy has received an increasing number of complaints from U.S. citizens who have been stopped by transit police authorities demanding bribes in order to avoid paying fines. Motorists in rental cars and those whose cars have foreign license plates are more likely to be stopped by transit police. Transit police have seized driver licenses and car registration documents from motorists who refuse to or are unable to pay. Subsequently, these drivers have reported difficulties in recovering the seized documents. U.S. citizens are urged to ensure that their vehicles comply fully with Nicaraguan transit regulations, including being in possession of an emergency triangle and fire extinguisher, and that the vehicle is properly registered. If transit police authorities demand an on-the-spot payment, drivers should ask for the officer's name and badge number, as well as a receipt, and inform the Embassy of when/where the event took place. (Reports should be sent via email to ACS.Managua@state.gov.) Rental car agencies should also be advised if their vehicles have been deemed negligent in meeting Nicaraguan transit regulations.

As noted in the "Crime" section above, several groups of U.S. citizens driving from Managua's International Airport at night have been robbed and kidnapped by men dressed as Nicaraguan police officers. While the majority of these crimes have occurred on the Tipitapa-Masaya Highway, recent reports indicate similar activity along the Managua-Leon Highway. The U.S. Embassy warns U.S. citizens to exercise extreme caution when driving at night from Managua's International Airport and to avoid traveling the Tipitapa-Masaya Highway at night.

Avoid taking public transportation buses. They are overcrowded, unsafe, and often are used by pickpockets. Because of the conditions discussed above, traffic accidents often result in serious injury or death. This is most often true when heavy vehicles, such as buses or trucks, are involved. Traditionally, vehicles involved in accidents in Nicaragua are not moved (even to clear traffic), until authorized by a police officer. Drivers who violate this norm may be held legally liable for the accident.

Regulations governing transit are administered by the National Police. For specific information concerning Nicaraguan driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, you may wish to refer to the National Police web site at http://www.policia.gob.ni. You may also contact the Embassy of Nicaragua or a Consulate for further information.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.mti.gob.ni.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Nicaragua's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Nicaragua's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Purchasing Property: U.S. citizens should be aware of the risks of purchasing real estate in Nicaragua and should exercise caution before committing to invest in property. The U.S. Embassy has seen an increase in property disputes over the last several years. The 1979-90 Sandinista government expropriated approximately 28,000 real properties, many of which are still involved in disputes or claims. Land title remains unclear in many cases. Although the government has resolved several thousand claims by U.S. citizens for compensation or return of properties, there remain hundreds of unresolved claims registered with the Embassy. Potential investors should engage competent local legal representation and investigate their purchases thoroughly in order to reduce the possibility of property disputes.

The Nicaraguan judicial system offers little relief when the purchase of a property winds up in court. The Embassy is aware of numerous cases in which buyers purchase property supported by what appear to be legal titles only to see themselves subsequently embroiled in legal battles when the titles are contested by an affected or otherwise interested third party. Once a property dispute enters the judicial arena, the outcome may be subject to corruption, political pressure, and influence peddling. Many coastal properties have been tied up in courts recently, leaving the "buyer" unable to proceed with the intended development pending lengthy and uncertain litigation. In other cases squatters have simply invaded the land while the police or judicial authorities are unable (or unwilling) to remove the trespassers. Again, the Embassy advises that those interested in purchasing Nicaraguan property exercise extreme caution.

Please note that Nicaraguan law currently prohibits any individual from buying beach-front property (including islands) unless the original land title was registered before the 1917 Nicaraguan Agrarian Reform Law. Coastal properties with titles predating 1917 are not risk-free, however. In 1987 the Nicaraguan Constitution established the property rights of indigenous communities over territory they have traditionally occupied. The Embassy advises extreme caution when considering the purchase of coastal property in Nicaragua.

Currency and Credit Cards: U.S. dollars are widely accepted throughout the country, and major credit cards are also typically accepted in hotels, restaurants, stores, and other businesses in urban and tourist areas. Visitors who need to change dollars are encouraged to do this at their hotel since this is typically the safest place. ATM machines are available at banks in addition to some shopping centers and gas stations in urban and tourist areas.

However, individuals should exercise caution when using an automatict-eller machine since they are typically in or near uncontrolled areas and criminal elements can easily see them withdrawing cash. Traveler's checks are accepted at a few major hotels and may also be exchanged for local currency at authorized exchange facilities ("casas de cambio"). Visitors will also find enterprising individuals - "Cambistas" - waving wads of cash in the street. Changing money in this fashion can be dangerous and is not recommended.

The U.S. Embassy has noted an increase in credit card fraud. Although local police authorities have made several arrests in conjunction with credit card scam operations, the danger for abuse continues. Illegal use can include "skimming" or making a copy of the magnetic strip on the credit card or simply copying the number for later use. U.S. citizens who do continue to use credit cards in Nicaragua are advised to check statements frequently to monitor for abuse and/or to ask banks to email them when transactions exceed a certain number or size.

Disaster Preparedness: Nicaragua is prone to a wide variety of natural disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanic eruptions. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Boundary Disputes: On the Atlantic side, nautical travelers should be aware that there is an ongoing boundary dispute with Colombia over the San Andres Island archipelago and the surrounding waters, specifically the area east of the 82nd and up to the 79th meridian. Furthermore, the Government of Nicaragua has also begun to exercise sovereignty over territorial waters that were formerly controlled by Honduras but recently awarded to Nicaragua by the International Court of Justice. Since October 2007, the Nicaraguan Navy has impounded about a dozen vessels, including two U.S.-owned vessels, for allegedly fishing without a Nicaraguan permit in theses zones. Maritime boundary disputes also exist on the Pacific side. In late-2007, the governments of Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador reached an accord regarding shared fishing rights in the Gulf of Fonseca; however, questions remain regarding boundary demarcations in the Gulf of Fonseca. Commercial fishing vessels should always ensure that they are properly licensed as problems have been reported in the areas off Cabo Gracias a Dios. As a result of these disputes, in June 2008, the U.S. Coast Guard published a Special Warning on Nicaragua in the U.S. Notice to Mariners, which can be found at http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/Lnm/d1/lnm01242008.pdf.

Travelers should also be aware that narcotics traffickers often use both the Caribbean and the Pacific coastal waters.

Customs Regulations: Before excavating archaeological materials, or agreeing to buy artifacts of historical value, all persons are strongly urged to consult with the National Patrimony Directorate of the Nicaraguan Institute of Culture. Nicaraguan law and a bilateral accord limit the acquisition, importation into the United States and commercialization of said goods. Severe criminal penalties may apply.

U.S. citizens planning to stay in Nicaragua for an extended period of time with the intention of bringing vehicles or household goods into the country should consult Nicaraguan customs officials prior to shipment.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Nicaraguan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Nicaragua are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. The judicial system is subject to corruption and political influence.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: U.S. citizens living or traveling in Nicaragua are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Nicaragua. U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, U.S. citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located Kilometer 4 1/2 (4.5) Carretera Sur, Managua; telephone (505) 266-6010 or 268-0123; after hours telephone (505) 266-6038; Consular Section fax (505) 266-9943; E-mail: consularmanagua@state.gov; online: http://managua.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Nicaragua is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Nicaraguan law does

not allow for a Nicaraguan child to travel to the United States to be adopted. Therefore, prospective adoptive parents must obtain a full and final adoption under Nicaraguan law before the child can immigrate to the United States. Prospective adoptive parents can expect a lengthy process to adopt a child in Nicaragua.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Nicaragua, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Nicaragua also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must either be Nicaraguan citizens or have a permanent residence in Nicaragua and plan to remain in Nicaragua until the child reaches 21 years of age. In the cases of United States citizens with an approved I-600 or I-600A, however, this residency requirement is typically waived.

Age Requirements: officially, prospective adoptive parents must be between 25 and 40 years of age. However, the Ministry of Family has been somewhat flexible on this requirement on a case-by-case basis.

Marriage Requirements: Both single and married couples are eligible to adopt.

Who Can Be Adopted? Nicaragua has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States. Learn more about United States immigration requirements.

Nicaragua's Adoption Authority: Mi Familia (Ministry of Family)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Nicaragua is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate. Learn more about choosing the right agency.

Prospective adoptive parents must work directly with the Ministry of Family until the final stage of the adoption. Once the Ministry of Family authorizes the adoption, the prospective adoptive parents may hire a Nicaraguan attorney to complete the adoption procedures. To bring an adopted child from Nicaragua to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS. The Ministry of Family will verify that the prospective adoptive parent(s) has/have been approved by USCIS to adopt a child from abroad and that they have translated and notarized copies of the home study conducted in the United States.

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Nicaragua will place you on a waiting list until a child is identified. It is important to note that the Ministry of Family will go through a number of steps to ensure that the child has been abandoned and that no biological family members are willing to take in the child. During this time, you will remain on the waiting list pending further processing even if you have already selected a specific child. The Ministry of Family will then provide you with a referral to a child. The child must be eligible to be adopted according to Nicaragua's requirements. The child must also meet the definition of an orphan under United States immigration law.

Role of the Adoption Authority: Once all the data is evaluated and necessary investigations performed, the case is presented to the Ministry of Family's adoption advisory council for a final decision on the adoption. Either the adoptive parent(s) or their lawyer should be present for these proceedings.

Role of the Court: Once the Ministry of Family approves the adoption, the decision is then sent to a judge to formally order the decision. The judge has the authority to deny a case when there is a concern for the child's welfare. These are exceptionally rare cases, with only one case denied in the last ten years. The Nicaraguan court issues the final adoption decree.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Prospective adoptive parents must work directly with the Ministry of Family until the final stage of the adoption. Once the Ministry of Family authorizes the adoption, the prospective adoptive parents may hire a Nicaraguan attorney to complete the adoption procedures. This may be advisable due to the complexity of the Nicaraguan legal system. A list of attorneys is available from the United States Embassy in Managua.

Adoption Application: The prospective adoptive parents should file the application with the Ministry of Family.

Time Frame: A Nicaraguan adoption takes anywhere from six months to one year, and in some cases even longer, to complete.

Adoption Fees: The Ministry of Family does not charge fees for adoptions. Typical charges will be legal fees and fees for obtaining notarized legal documents. The legal fees generally range from $1,200 to $1,500 USD.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents required for adoptions in Nicaragua:

- Original authenticated notice of approval (I-171H) issued by USCIS;
- Home study (I-600A fulfills this requirement);
- Psychological evaluation by a United States-based adoption agency;

- Birth certificate of prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Marriage certificate of prospective adoptive parents (if applicable);
- Letter of employment for the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Unites States police record (FBI fingerprints fulfill this requirement);
- Medical examination of adoptive parent (s);
- Two 2" x 2" color photographs of the prospective adoptive parent(s) with a white background; and
- Letter from a United States-based adoption agency indicating that it will follow-up with the case in the United States once the adoption has been completed in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Ministry of Family requires a United States-based adoption agency to conduct at least two family visits during the first year after the adoption and to report on the welfare of the child.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents.

The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: The Nicaraguan Ministry of Family requires a United States-based adoption agency to conduct at least two family visits during the first year after adoption and to report on the welfare of the child. These reports need to be sent directly to the Ministry of Family (Consejo de Adopción).

Contact Information
United States Embassy Managua, Nicaragua
Km 4 1/2 Carretera Sur
P.O. Box #: 327
Tel: 011-(505)-268-0123, ext. 4519/ 4767/4320
Fax: 011—(505)—266-9943

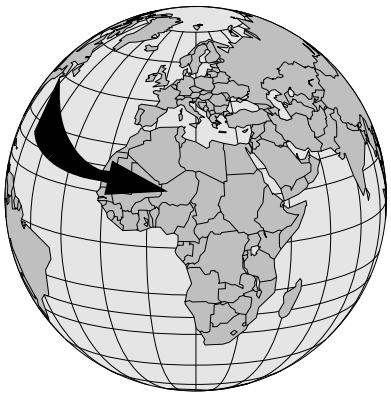
Nicaragua's Adoption Authority
Mi Familia (Ministry of Family)
De ENEL Central,
100 mts.
Al sur, Managua
Tel: (505) 278-1837/ (505) 278-5637, ext. 220 or 233

Embassy of Nicaragua
1627 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
Tel: (202) 939-6531/32
Website: www.cencilleria.gob.ni
Consular Section:
Tel: (202) 939-6541
Fax: (202) 939-6574
Internet: www.cancilleria.gob.ni

Nicaragua also has consulates in Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and San Francisco.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



NIGER

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Niger

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,267,000 sq. km (490,000 sq. mi.); about three times the size of California.
Cities: Capital—Niamey (pop. approx. 1 million). Other cities—Tahoua, Konni, Maradi, Zinder, Diffa, Dosso, Arlit, and Agadez.
Terrain: About two-thirds desert and mountains, one-third savanna.
Climate: Hot, dry, and dusty. Rainy season June–September.

People

Nationality: Noun and Adjective—Nigerien(s).
Population: (2007 est.) 14,853,000.
Annual growth rate: (2005) 3.3%.
Ethnic groups: Hausa 53%, Djerma (Zarma) 21%, Fulani 7%, Tuareg 11%, Beri Beri (Kanuri) 6%; Arab, Toubou, and Gourmantche 2%.
Religions: Islam (99%); remainder traditional and Christian.
Languages: French (official), Hausa, Djerma, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Tamachek, Toubou, Gourmantche, Arabic.
Education: Years compulsory—6. Attendance—45% (men), 31% (women). Literacy (2005)—28.7% (15% for women).
Health: Infant mortality rate—150/1,000. Life expectancy—54.5 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: August 3, 1960.
Constitution: The constitution of December 26, 1992 was revised by national referendum on May 12, 1996 and again by referendum on July 18, 1999.
Government branches: Executive—president and prime minister. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (113 MPs). Judicial—Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, High Court of Justice.
Political parties: Seven are represented in the National Assembly.
Suffrage: The constitution provides for universal suffrage for Nigeriens age 18 or older.
Political subdivisions: Eight regions subdivided into 36 districts (departments) and 265 communes (local councils).

Economy

GDP: (2006) $3.54 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2006) 4.8%.
Per capita GDP: (2006) $273.
Avg. inflation rate: (2006) 0.1%.
Natural resources: Uranium, gold, oil, coal, iron, tin, and phosphates.
Agriculture: (27.9% of GDP) Products—millet, sorghum, cowpeas, peanuts, cotton, and rice.
Industry: (10.5% of GDP) Types—textiles, cement, soap, and beverages.
Trade: (2006) Exports (freight on board—f.o.b.)—$275 million. Types—uranium, livestock, gold, cowpeas, and onions. Major markets—France 34.8%, Nigeria 16.7%, Japan 13.3%, Spain 9.5%, U.S. 0.3%. Imports (f.o.b.)—$792 million. Types—consumer goods, petroleum, foodstuffs, and industrial products. Major suppliers—France 16.3%, China 13.1%, U.S. 7.1%, Nigeria 6.6%, Cote d'Ivoire 6.3%, India 4.7%, Japan 3.9%.

PEOPLE

The largest ethnic groups in Niger are the Hausa, who also constitute the major ethnic group in northern Nigeria, and the Djerma-Songhai, who also are found in parts of Mali. Both groups, along with the Gourmantche, are sedentary farmers who live in the arable, southern tier of the country. The remainder of Nigeriens are nomadic or semi-nomadic livestock-raising peoples—Fulani, Tuareg, Kanuri, Arabs, and Toubou. With rapidly growing populations and the consequent competition for meager natural resources, lifestyles of agriculturalists and livestock herders are increasingly threatened.

Niger's high infant mortality rate is comparable to levels recorded in neighboring countries. However, the child mortality rate (deaths among

children under age of 5) is particularly high (198 per 1,000) due to generally poor health conditions and inadequate nutrition for most of the country's children. Nonetheless, Niger's fertility rate (7.8 births/woman), is among the highest in the world, and is far higher than the sub-Saharan African average of 5.4. Two-thirds (66.7%) of the Nigerien population is under age 25. Primary school net enrollment rate is 49% for boys and 31% for girls. Additional education occurs through thousands of Koranic schools.

HISTORY

Considerable evidence indicates that about 600,000 years ago, humans inhabited what has since become the desolate Sahara of northern Niger. Long before the arrival of French influence and control in the area, Niger was an important economic crossroads, and the empires of Songhai, Mali, Gao, Kanem, and Bornu, as well as a number of Hausa states, claimed control over portions of the area.

During recent centuries, the nomadic Tuareg formed large confederations, pushed southward, and, siding with various Hausa states, clashed with the Fulani Empire of Sokoto, which had gained control of much of the Hausa territory in the late 18th century.

In the 19th century, contact with the West began when the first European explorers—notably Mungo Park (British) and Heinrich Barth (German)—explored the area searching for the mouth of the Niger River. Although French efforts at pacification began before 1900, dissident ethnic groups, especially the desert Tuareg, were not subdued until 1922, when Niger became a French colony.

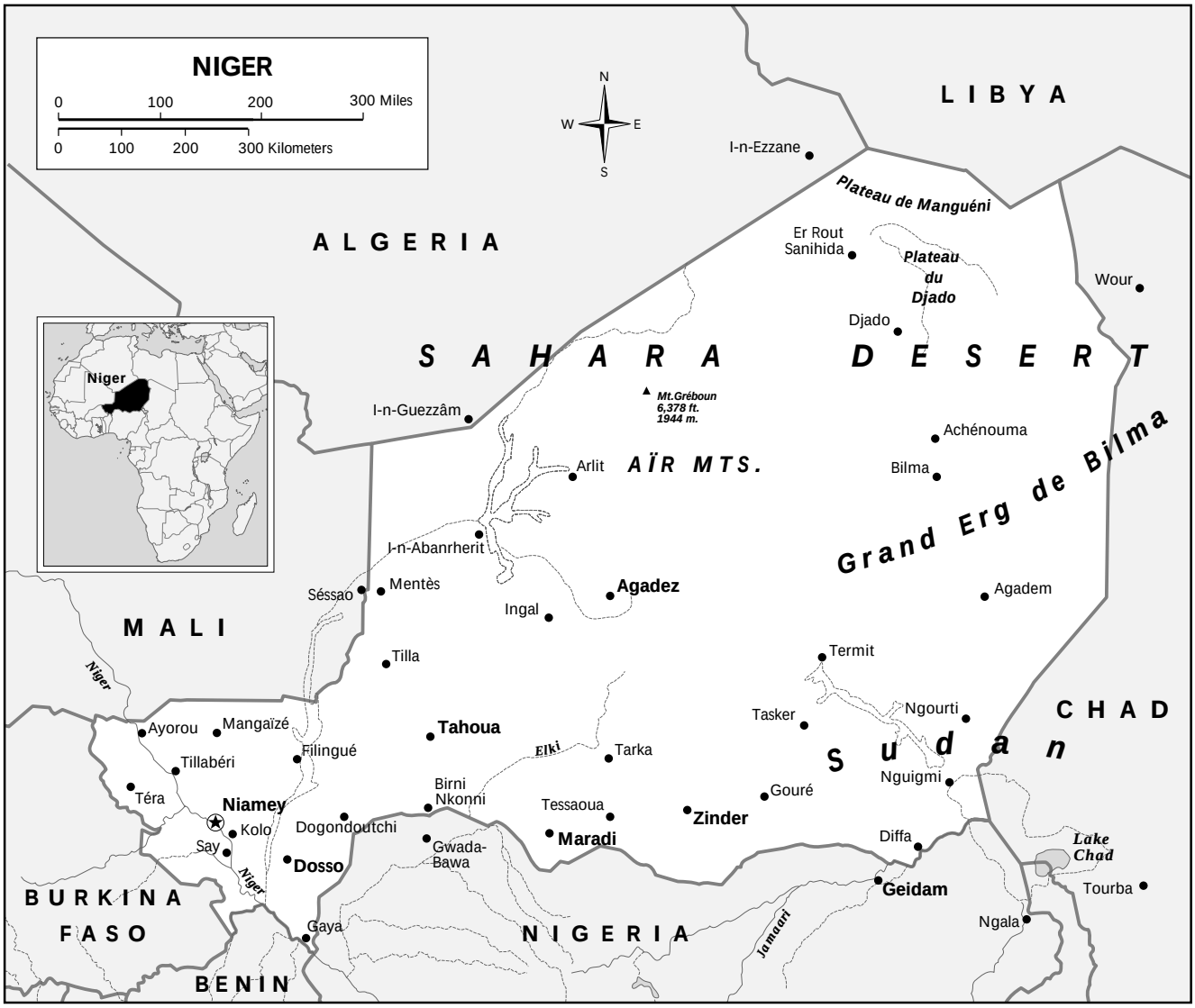
Niger's colonial history and development parallel that of other French West African territories. France administered its West African colonies through a governor general at Dakar, Senegal, and governors in the individual territories, including Niger. In addition to conferring French citizenship on the inhabitants of the territories, the 1946 French constitution provided for decentralization of power and limited participation in political life for local advisory assemblies.

A further revision in the organization of overseas territories occurred with the passage of the Overseas Reform Act (Loi Cadre) of July 23, 1956, followed by reorganization measures enacted by the French Parliament early in 1957. In addition to removing voting inequalities, these laws provided for creation of governmental organs, assuring individual territories a large measure of self-government. After the establishment of the Fifth French Republic on December 4, 1958, Niger became an autonomous state within the French Community. Following full independence on August 3, 1960, however, membership was allowed to lapse.

For its first 14 years as an independent state, Niger was run by a single-party civilian regime under the presidency of Hamani Diori. In 1974, a combination of devastating drought and accusations of rampant corruption resulted in a military coup that overthrew the Diori regime. Lieutenant Colonel Seyni Kountche and a small group of military ruled the country until Kountche's death in 1987. He was succeeded by his Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Ali Saibou, who released political prisoners, liberalized some of Niger's laws and policies, and promulgated a new constitution. However, President Saibou's efforts to control political reforms failed in the face of union and student demands to institute a multiparty democratic system. The Saibou regime acquiesced to these demands by the end of 1990. New political parties and civic associations sprang up, and a national conference was convened in July 1991 to prepare the way for the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of free and fair elections. The debate was often contentious and accusatory, but under the leadership of Prof. Andre Salifou, the conference developed consensus on the modalities of a transition government. A transition government was installed in November 1991 to manage the affairs of state until the institutions of the Third Republic were put into place in April 1993. While the economy deteriorated over the course of the transition, certain accomplishments stand out, including the successful conduct of a constitutional referendum; the adoption of key legislation such as the electoral and rural codes; and the holding of several free, fair, and nonviolent nationwide elections. Freedom of the press flourished with the appearance of several new independent newspapers.

Rivalries within a ruling coalition elected in 1993 led to governmental paralysis, which provided Col. Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara a rationale to overthrow the Third Republic and its President, Mahamane Ousmane, in January 1996. While leading a military authority that ran the government (Conseil de Salut National) during a 6-month transition period, Bare enlisted specialists to draft a new constitution for a Fourth Republic announced in May 1996. After dissolving the national electoral committee, Bare organized and won a flawed presidential election in July 1996 and his party won 90% of parliament seats in a flawed legislative election in November 1996. When his efforts to justify his coup and subsequent questionable elections failed to convince donors to restore multilateral and bilateral economic assistance, a desperate Bare ignored an international embargo against Libya and sought Libyan funds to aid Niger's economy. In repeated violations of basic civil liberties by the regime, opposition leaders were imprisoned; journalists often arrested, beaten, and deported by an unofficial militia composed of police and military; and independent media offices were looted and burned with impunity.

In the culmination of an initiative started under the 1991 national conference, however, the government signed peace accords in April 1995



with all Tuareg and Toubou groups that had been in rebellion since 1990, claiming they lacked attention and resources from the central government. The government agreed to absorb some former rebels into the military and, with French assistance, help others return to a productive civilian life.

In April 1999, Bare was overthrown and assassinated in a coup led by Maj. Daouda Mallam Wanke, who established a transitional National Reconciliation Council to oversee the drafting of a constitution for a Fifth Republic with a French style semi-presidential system. In votes that international observers found to be generally free and fair, the Nigerien electorate approved the new constitution in July 1999 and held legislative and presidential elections in October and November 1999. Heading a coalition of the National Movement for a Developing Society (MNSD) and the Democratic and Social Convention (CDS), Mamadou Tandja won the presidency.

In July 2004, Niger held municipal elections nationwide as part of its decentralization process. Some 3,700 people were elected to new local governments in 265 newly established communes. The ruling MNSD party won more positions than any other political party; however, opposition parties made significant gains.

In November and December 2004, Niger held presidential and legislative elections. Mamadou Tandja was elected to his second 5-year presidential term with 65% of the vote in an election that international observers called generally free and fair. This was the first presidential election with a democratically elected incumbent and a test to Niger's young democracy.

In the 2004 legislative elections, the National Movement for the Development of Society (MNSD), the Democratic and Socialist Convention (CDS), the Rally for Social Democracy (RSD), the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), the Nigerien Alliance for Democracy and Progress

(ANDP), and the Social Party for Nigerien Democracy (PSDN) coalition, which backed Tandja, won 88 of the 113 seats in the National Assembly.

A previously unknown group, the Mouvement des Nigeriens pour la Justice (MNJ), emerged in February 2007. The predominantly Tuareg group has issued a number of demands, mainly related to development in the north. It has attacked military and other facilities and laid landmines in the north. The resulting insecurity has devastated Niger's tourist industry and deterred investment in mining and oil. The government has labeled the MNJ criminals and traffickers, and refuses to negotiate with the group until it disarms.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Niger's new constitution was approved in July 1999. It restored the semi-presidential system of government of the December 1992 constitution (Third Republic) in which the president of the republic, elected by universal suffrage for a 5-year term, and a prime minister named by the president share executive power. As a reflection of Niger's increasing population, the unicameral legislature was expanded in 2004 to 113 deputies elected for a 5-year term under a proportional system of representation. Political parties must attain at least 5% of the vote in order to gain a seat in the legislature.

Niger's independent judicial system is composed of four higher courts—the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court, the High Court of Justice, and the Constitutional Court. In January 2007, the National Assembly voted to divide the Supreme Court into three high courts—an Administrative Court, a Supreme Court of Justice, and an Audit Court. The constitution also provides for the popular election of municipal and local officials, and the first-ever successful municipal elections took place July 24, 2004. The National Assembly passed in June 2002 a series of decentralization bills. As a first step, administrative powers have been distributed among 265 communes (local councils); in later stages, regions and departments will be established as decentralized entities. A new electoral code was adopted to reflect the decentralization context. The country is currently divided into 8 regions, which are subdivided into 36 districts (departments). The chief administrators in each region (Governor) and department (Prefect) are appointed by the government and function primarily as the local agents of the central authorities.

The current legislature elected in December 2004 contains seven political parties. President Mamadou Tandja was re-elected in December 2004 and reappointed Hama Amadou as Prime Minister. Mahamane Ousmane, the head of the CDS, was re-elected President of the National Assembly (parliament) by his peers. The new second term government of the Fifth Republic took office on December 30, 2004. In May 2007, Hama Amadou stepped down as Prime Minister following a vote of no confidence by the National Assembly related to allegations of his involvement in a corruption scandal, and President Tandja appointed Seini Oumarou Prime Minister as head of a new cabinet.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Mamadou TANDJA**
Prime Min.: **Seine OUMAROU**
Min. of Agricultural Development: **Moussa LABO**
Min. of African Integration & Nigeriens Abroad: **Saidou HACHIMOU**
Min. of Animal Resources: **Issiat KATO**
Min. of Basic Education & Literacy: **Ousame SAMBA**
Min. of Civil Service & Labor: **Kanda SIPTEY**
Min. of Commerce & Aviation: **Kindo HAMNI**
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Standardization: **Halidou BADJ**
Min. of Community Development: **Saad SOULEY**
Min. of Culture, Arts, & Communication: **Oumarou HADARI**
Min. of Defense: **Djida HAMADOU**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Ali Zeine LAMINE**
Min. of the Environment & the Fight Against Desertification: **Mohamed AKOTEY**
Min. of Equipment: **Omar SEYNI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Aichatou MINDAOUDOU**
Min. of Health & Disease Control: **Issa LAMINE**
Min. of Interior & Decentralization: **Albade ABOUBA**
Min. of Justice: **Dagra MAMADOU**
Min. of Mining & Energy: **Abdoulahi MOHAMED**
Min. of Population & Social Work: **Mamadou Zilla BOUKARI**
Min. of Privatization & Enterprise Restructuring: **Lawali Rahamatou GAZOBI**
Min. of Professional & Technical Training: **Maizama HADIZA**
Min. of Relations With Govt. Institutions: **Salifou Madou KELZOU**
Min. of Religious Affairs & Humanitarian Action: **Labo ISSAKA**
Min. of Secondary & Higher Education, Research, & Technology: **Sidikou OUMAROU**
Min. of Territorial Management & Community Development: **Moussa MAMANE**
Min. of Tourism & Handicrafts: **Amadou Aissa SIDDO**
Min. of Transport: **Souleymane KANE**
Min. of Urban Development, Housing, & Land Registry: **Aissa Abdoulaye DIALLO**
Min. of Water Resources, Environment, & Desertification Control: **Tassiou AMINOU**
Min. of Women's Promotion & Child Protection: **Barry BIBATA**
Min. of Young Business People's Promotion & Public Companies: **Salou GOBI**
Min. of Youth, Sports, & Francophonie Games: **Seydou ABDOURAHAMANIE**
Ambassador to the US: **Aminata Djibrilla Maiga TOURE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Aboubacar Ibrahim ABANI**

Next Elections Scheduled

Presidential elections—November/December 2009, two rounds; no date selected.

Legislative elections—December 2009; no date selected.

Local elections—Not scheduled, but expected in late 2008 or in 2009. Last local election was in July 2004.

ECONOMY

One of the poorest countries in the world, ranking last on the United Nations Human Development Index, Niger's economy is based largely on subsistence crops, livestock, and some of the world's largest uranium deposits. Traditional subsistence farming, herding, small trading, seasonal migration, and informal markets dominate an economy that generates few formal sector jobs.

Niger's agricultural and livestock sectors are the mainstay of all but 20% of the population. Fourteen percent of Niger's GDP is generated by livestock production—camels, goats, sheep, and cattle—said to support 29% of the population. The 15% of Niger's land that is arable is found mainly along its southern border with Nigeria. Rainfall varies and when insufficient, Niger has difficulty feeding its population and must rely on grain purchases and food aid to meet food requirements. In 2004 localized drought and locust infestations contributed to a drop in global harvests of 11% and led the Embassy to make a disaster declaration. This decrease, combined with chronic structural food insecurity, high malnutrition, and other market factors, triggered a food crisis which began in May-June of 2005. Although food security continues to be a concern, the food crisis has ended as a result of good cereal harvests in 2005, 2006, and 2007. Millet and sorghum are Niger's principal rain-fed subsistence crops. Cowpeas and onions are grown for commercial export, as are limited quantities of garlic, peppers, gum arabic, and sesame seeds.

In 2006, foreign exchange earnings from livestock (14.7%) were second only to those from uranium (55.4%), followed by gold (13.6%) and agricultural products (9.9%). Actual livestock exports far exceed official statistics, which often fail to detect large herds of animals informally crossing into Nigeria. Some hides and skins are exported, and some are transformed into handicrafts.

Recent global price increases have led to higher revenues for Niger's uranium sector, which provides approximately 55.4% of national export proceeds. The nation enjoyed substantial export earnings and rapid economic growth during the 1960s and 1970s; however, when the uranium-led boom ended in the early 1980s the economy stagnated. The French nuclear power concern AREVA owns controlling shares in Niger's two national mining companies. As a result of higher world prices in 2007, AREVA agreed to pay the Government of Niger double what it had been paying for uranium. In 2007 the U.S. public utility holding company Exelon Corporation signed a contract with the Government of Niger to buy 300 tons of uranium each year for the next 10 years. Although AREVA controls the only two existing uranium mines in Niger (COMINAK's underground mine and SOMAIR's open pit mine), in 2007 the Government of Niger awarded 122 new mineral exploration licenses to companies from France, China, Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and the United States.

Exploitable deposits of gold are known to exist in Niger in the region between the Niger River and the border with Burkina Faso. On October 5, 2004 President Tandja announced the official opening of the Samira Hill Gold Mine in the region of Tera and the first Nigerien gold ingot was presented to him.

This marked a historical moment for Niger as the Samira Hill Gold Mine represents the first commercial gold production in the country. Samira Hill is owned by a company called SML (Societe des Mines du Liptako), which is a joint venture between a Moroccan company—Societe SEMAFO Inc.—and a Canadian company—ETRUSCAN. Both companies own 80% (40%–40%) of SML and the GON 20%. In 2006, gold was Niger's third most important export, accounting for 13.6% of the country's total exports. In 2007 the Anglo-American company Caracal Gold Burkina was awarded two permits to explore for gold in the Tillaberi region. Niger has oil potential. In 2006 an ExxonMobil-Petronas joint venture ceased exploration activities at what may be Niger's largest oil deposit, the Agadem block, located north of Lake Chad. In 2007 nineteen companies vied for exploration and production rights to the Agadem block, but none of these bids were accepted. The Government of Niger is trying to attract new bids on the Agadem block for 2008.

The parastatal SONICHAR (Societe Nigerienne de Charbon) in Tchirozerine (north of Agadez) extracts coal from an open pit and fuels an electricity generating plant that supplies energy to the uranium mines. There are additional coal deposits southwest of the current mines. Substantial deposits of phosphates, iron, limestone, and gypsum also have been found in Niger.

Niger enjoyed increased economic competitiveness following the January 1994 devaluation of the Communaute Financiere Africaine (CFA) franc. Annual economic growth rates vary widely, due largely to the effect of rainfall on agricultural output. In 2005 the economy showed strong growth (7.1% real GDP growth) as a result of the agricultural sector's recovery from the poor harvests of 2004, and the continued growth of non-agricultural sectors. In 2006, the real GDP growth rate was at 5.1%.

The government actively seeks foreign private investment and considers it key to restoring economic growth and development. With the assistance of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), it has undertaken a concerted effort to revitalize the private sector. It revised the investment code (1997 and 2000), petroleum code (1992 and 2007), and mining code (1993) aimed at attracting investors.

Niger shares a common currency, the CFA franc, and a common central bank, the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), with seven other members of the West African

Monetary Union. The Treasury of the Government of France supplements the BCEAO's international reserves in order to maintain a fixed rate of 656 CFA to the euro.

Economic Reform

In January 2000, Niger's newly elected government inherited serious financial and economic problems, including a virtually empty treasury, past-due salaries (11 months of arrears) and scholarship payments, increased debt, reduced revenue performance, and lower public investment. In December 2000, Niger qualified for enhanced debt relief under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) program for Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and concluded an agreement with the Fund on a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). In January 2001, Niger reached its decision point and subsequently reached its completion point in 2004. The debt relief provided under the enhanced HIPC initiative significantly reduces Niger's annual debt service obligations, freeing about $40 million per year over the coming years for expenditures on basic health care, primary education, HIV/AIDS prevention, rural infrastructure, and other programs geared at poverty reduction. Debt service as a percent of government revenue was slashed from nearly 44% in 1999 to 10.9% in 2003 and will average 4.3% during 2010-2019. The debt relief cut debt service as a percentage of export revenue from more than 23% to 8.4% in 2003, and decreases it to about 5% in later years. In 2005, the IMF canceled all of Niger's debts to it (approximately $111 million) incurred before January 2005. In 2006, the African Development Fund canceled $193 million in debt for Niger. Furthermore, the World Bank announced that approximately $745 million in debt relief for Niger would be phased in over the next 37 years.

In its effort to consolidate macroeconomic stability under the PRGF, the government is also taking action to reduce corruption, and as the result of a participatory process encompassing civil society, has devised a Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan that focuses on improving health, primary education, rural infrastructure, agricultural production, environmental protection, and judicial reform. In late 2006, Niger qualified for the Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) Threshold Program. Niger will focus its MCC efforts on promoting girls' education, fighting corruption, and improving the business environment. Under the auspices of the World Bank, the government launched a major privatization effort in 1998 to divest itself of monopolies in water, power, and telecommunications and to transfer other public enterprises to private sector management. In 2001 Niger successfully privatized its telecommunications monopoly; however, the privatization of other industries has stalled. The privatization of the state-owned electric utility (NIGELEC) and the national oil distribution company (SONIDEP) are on hold indefinitely.

Foreign Aid

The most important donors in Niger are France, the European Union, the World Bank, the IMF, and UN agencies—UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, and UNFPA. Other donors include the United States, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, China, Italy, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Iran, Denmark, Canada, and Saudi Arabia. While the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) does not have a Mission in Niger, the United States is a major donor, contributing on average $30 million each year to Niger's development. In early 2008 Niger concluded an agreement for a $23 million Millennium Challenge Account threshold program. Niger is a key participant in the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism program. Niger also benefits from the largest non-emergency PL 480 food assistance program in West Africa. Foreign aid represents 8.3% of Niger's GDP and over 40% of government revenues.

DEFENSE

The Niger Armed Forces total 12,000 personnel with approximately 3,700 gendarmes, 300 air force, and 8,000 army personnel. The air force has four transport aircraft. The armed forces include general staff and battalion task force organizations consisting of two paratroop units, four light armored units, and nine motorized infantry units located in Tahoua, Agadez, Dirkou, Zinder, Nguigmi, N'Gourti, and Madewela. In 1991, Niger sent a 400-man military contingent to join the American-led allied forces against Iraq during the Gulf War. Niger provides a battalion of peace-keeping forces to the UN Mission in Cote d'Ivoire.

Niger's defense budget is modest, accounting for about 1.6% of government expenditures. France provides the largest share of military assistance to Niger. Approximately 18 French military advisers are in Niger. Many Nigerien military personnel receive training in France, and the Nigerien Armed Forces are equipped mainly with materiel either given by or purchased in France. Morocco, Algeria, China, and Libya are also providing military assistance. A small U.S. foreign military assistance program was initiated in 1983. A U.S. Defense Attaché office opened in June 1985 and assumed Security Assistance Office responsibilities in 1987. The office closed in 1996 following a coup d'état. The U.S. Defense Attaché office reopened in July 2000. The United States provided transportation and logistical assistance to Nigerien troops deployed to Cote d'Ivoire in 2003.

Additionally, the U.S. provided initial equipment training on vehicles and communications gear to a company of Nigerien soldiers as part of the Department of State Pan-Sahel Initiative. Military to military cooperation continues via the Trans Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership and other initiatives. EUCOM contributes funds for humanitarian assistance construction throughout the country. In 2007, a congressional waiver was granted which allows the

Niger military to participate in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, managed by the Defense Attache Office. This program funded $170,000 in training in 2007.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Niger pursues a moderate foreign policy and maintains friendly relations with the West and the Islamic world as well as nonaligned countries. It belongs to the United Nations and its main specialized agencies and in 1980-81 served on the UN Security Council. Niger maintains a special relationship with France and enjoys close relations with its West African neighbors. It is a charter member of the African Union and the West African Monetary Union and also belongs to the Niger River and Lake Chad Basin Commissions, the Economic Community of West African States, the Nonaligned Movement, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

U.S.-NIGERIEN RELATIONS

U.S. relations with Niger have generally been close and friendly since Niger attained independence. Although USAID does not have a Mission in Niger, $30 million in annual official aid is administered through American and local non-governmental organizations with programs addressing food security, health, local governance, youth training, girls' education, corruption control, and improving the business environment. The U.S. Peace Corps program in Niger started in 1962. It currently has about 130 volunteers in country and celebrated its 45th anniversary in Niger in September 2007.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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ISSO:	Freddy Mendez
MLO:	Ltc. Michael Regan
NAS:	Byron Tsao
POL:	Christopher T. Robinson

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

March 3, 2008

Country Description: Niger is a developing, landlocked African nation whose northern area includes the Sahara Desert. Tourism facilities are minimal, particularly outside the capital city, Niamey, and the ancient caravan city of Agadez. Ecotourism and adventure tourism opportunities are plentiful.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa, and proof of yellow fever inoculation are required. Travelers from countries without a Nigerien Embassy may be able to obtain a visa at the airport. Travelers from the United States should obtain a visa before arriving in Niger. Failure to do so could result in being denied entry to Niger. Travelers should obtain the latest information on entry/exit requirements from the Embassy of the Republic of Niger, 2204 R Street NW, Washington D.C. 20008, telephone: (202) 483-4224. Visit the Embassy of Niger web site at http://www.nigerembassyusa.org/for the most current visa information. Outside the U.S., inquiries should be made at the nearest Nigerien embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens are advised to avoid street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times. Large and small street demonstrations occur regularly in Niger. These demonstrations tend to take place near government buildings, university campuses, or other gathering places such as public parks. Although demonstrations can occur spontaneously, large student demonstrations typically begin in January and February and continue through May. American citizens are, therefore, urged to be particularly vigilant at these times. During previous student demonstrations, NGO and diplomatic vehicles bearing “IT"or “CD” plates have been targeted by rock throwing demonstrators. Many past demonstrations have featured rock throwing and tire burning, especially at key intersections in the city of Niamey.

Due to the abrupt nature of street demonstrations, it is not possible for the U.S. Embassy to notify American citizens each time a demonstration occurs. Consequently, Americans are reminded to maintain security awareness at all times and to avoid large public gatherings and street demonstrations. Americans are reminded that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational without much advanced warning. While the U.S. Embassy will endeavor to inform citizens of ongoing demonstrations through the warden system when possible, local radio and television stations are good sources for information about local events.

As of May 17, 2007, the U.S. Embassy in Niamey prohibits official personnel from traveling into areas of Niger to the north of Abalak. All American cit-

izens are strongly urged to follow the same guidelines due to the escalation of violence by the local rebel group, Movement for Justice in Niger (MNJ). Northern Niger, particularly in and around the cities of Iferouane, Arlit, and Agadez, is affected by MNJ activities. In July 2007, MNJ ambushed a convoy in the Agadez region, kidnapping a Chinese citizen and holding him for ten days. Futhermore, landmines have been placed in the region and several have exploded killing military and civilian personnel. There were several landmine incidents in the south of Niger with the most recent on January 9, 2008 in Niamey. They are disturbing because they were the first to occur outside the northern region where MNJ has operated. MNJ did not take responsibility for these landmines. Most recently, MNJ attacked the town of Tanout, killing several troops and capturing arms and several people, including the prefet. Several international organizations, including private and nongovernmental groups, have temporarily relocated personnel from these areas. On August 27, 2007, the President of Niger declared a State of Alert for the region of Agadez, to include the cities of Agadez, Arlit, and Iferouane. This State of Alert means that all travelers in and around these cities are liable to be stopped and held for questioning. Moreover, the Nigerien military now has the authority to hold individuals for questioning, without cause, for more than the standard 48-hours.

Foreigners who elect to travel in northern Niger despite the current security situation must submit an approved travel plan through the office of the Governor of Agadez. Travelers should first contact the Syndicat de Tourisme in Agadez (telephone: 96 98 78 81) to enlist the services of a registered tour operator, who will formally coordinate with Nigerien government and security officials on tourist safety and security in the North and who can facilitate the submission of the required itinerary and intended route.

For travel in any remote area of the country, the Department of State urges U.S. citizens to use registered guides, to travel with a minimum of two vehicles equipped with global positioning systems (GPS) and satellite phones. Travelers are advised to avoid restricted military areas and to consult local police authorities regarding their itinerary and security arrangements.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Note To Non Governmental Organization (NGO) Workers: Following the murder of a French tourist in the region of Agadez in December 2005, the Government of Niger (GON) began requiring that NGOs not only be registered and officially recognized but that they inform the GON of each mission they plan to undertake in Niger. To avoid detainment and/or expulsion by Nigerien authorities, Embassy Niamey strongly recommends that NGO workers make sure that their NGO has registered and received official recognition from the Government of Niger. For details on how to do this please visit the Managing Office of Decentralised Cooperation and Non Governmental Organizations (Direction De La Cooperation Decentralisee Et Des Organisations Non Gouvernementales) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministre des Affaires Etrangères).

Carry with them a copy of the official recognition (Arrêté) of the right of their NGO to operate in Niger.

If their international NGO sponsor is without a permanent presence in Niger, American citizens should verify that their NGO group has informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at least two weeks prior to the start of a mission in Niger. This notice should be in written form and should include the purpose of the mission, names of the individuals who will be working for the NGO on the mission, the dates of the mission, where the mission will take place and the types & license plate numbers of the vehicles involved in the mission. The Ministry of the Interior should be copied on this notice of mission.

If their NGO is a national NGO, i.e., has a headquarters operation in Niger, the American citizens should verify that their group has informed the Ministry of Territorial and Community Development (Minstre de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Développement Communautaire) at least two weeks prior to the start of a mission in Niger.

This notice should be in written form and should include the purpose of the mission, the names of the individuals who will be working for the NGO on the mission, the dates of the mission, where the mission will take place and the types & license plate numbers of the vehicles involved in the mission. The Ministry of the Interior should be copied on this notice of mission.

NGOs should ask for receipt of their notification provided to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Territorial and Community Development. Embassy Niamey strongly recommends that in addition to the above, NGO workers present themselves at the Regional Governor's office prior to beginning their mission in a particular portion of Niger. Again, NGO workers should ask for receipt of their presentation to the Regional Governor. It would also be wise to provide the Regional Governor with the same written notification that was provided to the Ministries listed above.

Crime: Crime is at a critical level due primarily to thefts, robberies, and residential break-ins. Foreigners are particularly vulnerable to attempts of bribery and extortion by law enforcement authorities. Thefts and petty crimes are common day or night. However, armed attacks are normally committed at night by

groups of two to four persons, with one assailant confronting the victim with a knife while the others provide surveillance or a show of force. Tourists should not walk alone around the Gaweye Hotel, National Museum, and on or near the Kennedy Bridge at any time, or the Petit Marche after dark. These areas are especially prone to muggings and should be avoided. Walking at night is not recommended as streetlights are scarce and criminals have the protection of darkness to commit their crimes. Recent criminal incidents in Niger have included carjackings, sexual assaults, home invasions, and muggings. In December 2000, an American was killed in a carjacking incident in Niamey, and another American was gravely wounded in a carjacking incident outside of Niamey in 2004. In 2007, two American citizens were raped and two others attacked with a machete. Travelers should always keep their doors locked and windows rolled up when stopped at stoplights.

In August 2004, an attack against 2 buses on the Agadez-Arlit road left 3 dead and numerous persons wounded. A French tourist was murdered by bandits in the Agadez region in December 2005 during a robbery attempt. In August 2006, several Italian tourists were abducted near the Niger-Chad border. They were robbed of some of there possessions and later released. Due to continued sporadic incidents of violence and banditry and other security concerns, the Department of State urges U.S. citizens visiting or residing in Niger to exercise caution when traveling within the northern and eastern parts of the country, especially along the borders of Mali, Libya, Algeria and Chad. Given the insecurity along these border regions, the Department of State recommends that American citizens in Niger avoid traveling overland to Algeria and Libya. In previous attacks, groups of foreign travelers, including Americans, have been robbed of vehicles, cash and belongings. The government of Niger is taking steps to address crime/banditry but operates under severe resource constraints.

Use caution and common sense at all times to avoid thieves and pickpockets. An information sheet on safety and security practices is available from the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Niamey.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health facilities are extremely limited in Niamey and urban centers, and completely inadequate outside the capital. Although physicians are generally well trained, even the best hospitals in Niamey suffer from inadequate facilities, antiquated equipment and shortages of supplies (particularly medicine). Emergency assistance is limited. Travelers must carry their own properly labeled supply of prescription drugs and preventative medicines.

Malaria is prevalent in Niger. Plasmodium falciparum malaria, the serious and sometimes fatal strain in Niger, is resistant to the anti-malarial drug chloroquine. Because travelers to Niger are at high risk for contracting malaria, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that travelers should take one of the following antimalarial drugs: mefloquine (Lariam), doxycycline, or atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone). The CDC has determined that a traveler who is on an appropriate antimalarial drug has a greatly reduced chance of contracting the disease. Other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, also help to reduce malaria risk. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and antimalarial drugs, please visit the CDC travelers' health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Tap water is unsafe to drink throughout Niger and should be avoided. Bottled water and beverages are safe, although visitors should be aware that many restaurants and hotels serve tap water. Ice made from tap water is also unsafe to consume.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Niger is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road safety throughout Niger is a concern, and visitors are strongly urged to avoid driving at night outside of major cities. The public transportation system, urban and rural road conditions, and the availability of roadside assistance are all poor. U.S. travelers should exercise caution on Niger's roads, as traffic accidents are frequent. The main causes of accidents are driver carelessness, excessive speed, poorly maintained vehicles, and poor to non-existent road surfaces. Other factors include the hazardous mix of bicycles, mopeds, unwary pedestrians, donkey carts, farm animals, and buses on roads that are generally unpaved and poorly lighted. Overloaded tractor-trailers, "bush taxis," and disabled vehicles are additional dangers on rural roads, where speeds are generally higher. Travel outside Niamey and other cities often requires four-wheel-drive vehicles, which creates an additional security risk since these vehicles—especially Toyota Land Cruisers—are high-theft items. Driving at night is always hazardous and should be avoided. Banditry is a continuing problem in northern and eastern Niger. There have been occasional carjackings and highway robberies throughout the country. While taxis are available at a fixed fare in Niamey, most are in poor condition, and do not meet basic U.S. road safety standards. Inter-city "bush-taxis" are available at negotiable fares, but these vehicles (minibuses, station wagons, and sedans) are generally older, unsafe models that are overloaded, poorly maintained, and driven by reckless operators seeking to save time and money. A national bus company (SNTV) operates coaches on inter-city routes and, since being reorganized in 2001, has provided reliable service and experienced no major accidents. Air Transport, Rimbo and Garba Messagé are private bus companies operating in Niger. There is some concern regarding the youth of drivers and the speed with which the private bus companies travel the Nigerien roads.

Visit the National Tourism Office on Rue de Grand Hotel in Niamey.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Niger, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Niger's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Dress Restrictions: Local culture and Islamic tradition encourage conservative dress for both men and women. There have been incidents of groups of men assaulting women who are, or appear to be, African and who are wearing other than traditional garments.

Photography Restrictions: Tourists are free to take pictures anywhere in Niger, except near military installations, radio and television stations, the Presidency Building, airport, or the Kennedy Bridge. Tourists should not photograph political and student demonstrations.

Currency Regulations: The West African Franc (FCFA) is the currency Niger shares with several other West African francophone countries, and is fully convertible into Euros. Foreign currency exchange over 1 million CFA (about $2,000 at 500 CFA/$1) requires authorization from the Ministry of Finance (available from all major banks).

Telephone Service: Due to poor line quality, callers often experience delays in getting a telephone line, and faxes are often garbled. Cellular phone service is available in Niamey and in many major cities.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Nigerien laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Niger are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Niger are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Niger. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on Rue des Ambassades, mailing address B.P. 11201, telephone numbers (227) 20-72-26-61 through 64, and fax numbers (227) 20-73-31-67 or 20-72-31-46. The Embassy's after hours emergency number is (227) 20-72-31-41. Embassy's Internet address is http://niamey.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current

understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Nigerien law does not technically permit adoptions by couples with biological children. A long-standing policy of granting exceptions is under review by the Direction de la Protection de l'Enfant (DPE).

Patterns of Immigration: In the last seven years, no Nigerien children have received U.S. immigrant visas on the basis of being orphans adopted by U.S. citizens.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Niger is:

Centre d'Accueil des enfants en difficulté familiale
Direction de la protection de l'enfant,
Ministère du Développement Social, de la Population, de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Protection de l'Enfant
BP 11386
Niamey, Niger
Telephone: 011-(227)-73-30-68

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: According to Nigerien law, the prospective adoptive parents must be married and one parent must be at least 35 years of age and they should have been married for a minimum of 10 years

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for adoptions in Niger.

Time Frame: According to Nigerien authorities, the procedures as outlined above take one to three months. However, experience has been that they (the Nigerien government) generally take six months to a year.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The sole agency authorized to handle adoptions in Niger is the "Centre d'Acceuil des Enfants en Difficulté Familiale," the Nigerien government entity cited above. However, this agency prefers that prospective adoptive parents work with an attorney who understands local law. Although not required by Nigerien law, it is recommended that prospective adoptive parent(s) hire a local lawyer to handle their case. The U.S. Embassy maintains a list of attorney's known to work with U.S. citizen, found at http://niamey.usembassy.gov/niger/attorney.html. This list does not imply an endorsement of specific attorneys by the Embassy.

Adoption Fees: Adoption fees vary from attorney to attorney and may include service fee for application filing, passport and birth certificate application, court fees etc.

Adoption Procedures: The prospective adoptive parent(s) must submit the documents listed below under "Documentary Requirements" to the Direction de la Protection de l'Enfant (DPE) at the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) For adoptions pursued from abroad, the adoptive parents are expected to hire a local attorney to represent prospective them.

Once the DPE has issued a favorable recommendation for the placement of a child with the prospective adoptive parents overseas, the latter can request the child to be provisionally placed with a foster family in Niger recommended by the adoptive parents until the final decision by the judge. If the prospective adoptive parents have not identified a Nigerien family to temporarily care for the child, then the child stays at the orphanage where he or she reides until the adoptive family arrives in Niger. Prospective adoptive parents resident in Niger can request provisional custody themselves at this same stage of the process.

Upon receipt of a request from prospective adoptive parents, the DPE reviews the file. After ensuring it is complete and fulfills the DPE's requirements, they forwards the case to the office of the Minister of Social Development for approval and transmission to the President of the Tribunal de la Justice for a hearing. The President of the Tribunal may direct a social worker to review the home study ("social survey") contained in the file. If the parents are adopting from overseas, a home study performed to meet the requirements of their country of residence will be sufficient (in the case of U.S. families, the I-600A home study), but must be accompanied by a French translation. Once the review of the file is complete, the greffier (court clerk) at the Tribunal schedules a hearing before the President of the Tribunal for the prospective adoptive parents. The President of the Tribunal sends a copy of the case file to the Procurer Général (District Attorney) and requests that office to direct a huissier (process server) to notify the prospective parents or their representative of the hearing date. This is the point at which the prospective adoptive parents must travel from the U.S. to Niger.

Unless the hearing reveals a documentary omission or other problems (depending on the individual case) the President of the Tribunal issues the formal custody decree at that time. After a two-month waiting period, during which the child may not leave Niger, the adoption becomes final and the adoptive parents can then proceed with obtaining a birth certificate for the child at the Etat Civil office at the Hotel de Ville (City Hall).

Documentary Requirements:

- A handwritten request/cover letter for the documents listed below delivered by the lawyer to the Direction de la Protection de l'Enfant at the Ministry of Social Development, signed by prospective adoptive parents;
- Marriage certificate of the prospective adoptive parents;
- Birth certificates of the prospective adoptive parents;
- Medical examination certificates for the prospective adoptive parents;
- ;Two photographs (b/w or color, any size) of the each of prospective adoptive parents;

- Sterility certificate for at least one prospective adoptive parent, if applicable. If neither is sterile, the prospective parents must state in the cover letter why they want to adopt a child;
- Nigerien police record for prospective adoptive parents is required for any time spent in Niger;
- Monthly or annual earnings statement;
- If the prospective adoptive parents (regardless of nationality) are resident in Niger, a certification of social survey ("home study") performed by a Nigerien social worker;
- A copy of the home study submitted to USCIS professionally translated into French will suffice. However, it must include a psychological evaluation of the parents;
- Nationality certificates or passports of prospective parents.

Nigerien Government Follow-Up: Nigerien officials may claim that the prospective adoptive parents must sign an agreement to pay for Nigerien social workers to travel and visit the family every two years until the adopted child reaches majority. This is not an actual Nigerien legal requirement. In practice, Nigerien authorities have accepted a letter from the social service agency with jurisdiction over the prospective parents' place of residence in the U.S. that it will monitor the child's post-adoption development.

Travel Document For Child: Some Nigerien authorities have taken the view that, once a Nigerien child has been adopted by a foreign couple, s/he no longer has Nigerien nationality under Nigerien law and thus is entitled only to a single-sheet temporary passport as a one-time travel document. The Nigerien passport office at the Direction Surveillance du Territoire at the Ministry of Interior, however, routinely issues Nigerien passports to children adopted by parents of various nationalities, and would do the same for those adopted by Americans. Using the Nigerien birth certificate listing them as the parents, the adoptive parents must submit the passport application through their attorney, but pay only the normal passport issuance fee. Depending on your attorney a service fee may be included in the attorney fees.

Embassy of Niger
2204 R. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel. (202) 483-4224
Fax. (202) 483—3169

Niger also has a mission to the United Nations in New York, but it does not handle consular issues, including those related to adoptions.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Rue des Ambassades, BP 11201
Niamey, Niger,
Tel. (227) 72-26-61
Fax. (227) 73-31-67
Email: consulateniamey@state.gov
http://niamey.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Niger may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Niamey. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



NIGERIA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Federal Republic of Nigeria

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 923.8 thousand sq. km. (356,700 sq. mi.) about the size of California, Nevada, and Arizona.

Cities: Capital—Abuja (pop. est. 452,000). Other cities—Kano (9.3 million), Lagos (9.01 million), Ibadan (5 million), Enugu (500,000).

Terrain: Ranges from southern coastal swamps to tropical forests, open woodlands, grasslands, and semi-desert in the far north. The highest regions are the Jos Plateau 1,200-2,400 meters above sea level and the mountains along the border with Cameroon.

Climate: Annual rainfall ranges from 381 cm. along the coast to 64 cm. or less in the far north.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Nigerian(s).

Population: (2007) 148 million.

Total fertility rate: (avg. number of children per woman in 2006) 5.4.

Ethnic groups: (250) Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, and Ijaw are the largest.

Religions: Muslim, Christian, indigenous African.

Languages: English (official), Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani, Ijaw, others.

Education: Attendance (secondary)—male 32%, female 27%. Literacy—39%-51%.

Health: Life expectancy (2006)—47 years.

Government

Type: Federal republic.

Independence: October 1, 1960.

Constitution: The 1999 constitution (based largely on the 1979 constitution) was promulgated by decree on May 5, 1999 and came into force on May 29, 1999.

Political subdivisions: 36 states plus Federal Capital Territory (Abuja); states divided into a total of 774 local government areas.

Total government expenditure: $23.4 billion, of which recurrent expenditures constitute $11.1 billion, capital expenditures $7.4 billion, statutory transfers $1.4 billion, and debt service $3.2 billion. Critical sectors—security and the Niger Delta (20%); education (8%); transportation (7%); agriculture and water (5%); and energy (5%).

Debt: including federal/state government debt, as percentage of GDP: 10.4%.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $166 billion (agriculture 33%; industry 39%; services 28%).

Real GDP growth rate (2007): 5.9%. Oil growth: -5.6%. Non-oil growth: 9.6%.

Per capita GDP: (2005 est.) $694.

Inflation: (2006) 8%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, tin, columbite, iron ore, coal, limestone, lead, zinc.

Agriculture: Products—cocoa, palm oil, yams, cassava, sorghum, millet, corn, rice, livestock, groundnuts, cotton.

Industry: Types—textiles, cement, food products, footwear, metal products, lumber, beer, detergents, car assembly.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$65.5 billion: fuels and mining products (97%); agricultural products (cocoa, rubber, oil, nuts) (2.2%); manufactures (0.8%). Partners—United States (38.3%); European Union (21.8%); India (9.9%); Brazil (6.8%); Japan (4%). Imports—$29.5 billion: machinery; chemicals; transport equipment; manufactured goods (72.3%); agricultural products (23.7%), fuels and mining products (4%). Partners—European Union (33.2%); United States (15.6%); China 7.2%; Korea (2.8%); U.A.E. (2.6%); others (15%).

Foreign direct investment: (FDI, 2007) 6.2% of GDP.

Official development assistance: (2006) $11.434 billion.

Currency: Naira (119 Naira = U.S. $1 as of November 24, 2008).

PEOPLE

The most populous country in Africa, Nigeria accounts for over half of West Africa's population. Although less than 25% of Nigerians are urban dwellers, at least 24 cities have populations of more than 100,000. The variety of customs, languages, and traditions among Nigeria's 250 ethnic groups gives the country a rich diversity. The dominant ethnic group in the northern two-thirds of the country is the Hausa-Fulani, most of whom are Muslim. Other major ethnic groups of the north are the Nupe, Tiv, and Kanuri. The Yoruba people are predominant in the southwest.

About half of the Yorubas are Christian and half Muslim. The predominantly Catholic Igbo are the largest ethnic group in the southeast, with the Efik, Ibibio, and Ijaw (the country's fourth-largest ethnic group) comprising a substantial segment of the population in that area. Persons of different language backgrounds most commonly communicate in English, although knowledge of two or more Nigerian languages is widespread. Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, and Ijaw are the most widely used Nigerian languages.

HISTORY

In the northern cities of Kano and Katsina, recorded history dates back to about 1000 AD. In the centuries that followed, these Hausa kingdoms and the Bornu empire near Lake Chad prospered as important terminals of north-south trade between North African Berbers and forest people who exchanged slaves, ivory, and kola nuts for salt, glass beads, coral, cloth, weapons, brass rods, and cowrie shells used as currency.

In the southwest, the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo was founded about 1400, and at its height from the 17th to 19th centuries attained a high level of political organization and extended as far as modern Togo. In the south central part of present-day Nigeria, as early as the 15th and 16th centuries, the kingdom of Benin had developed an efficient army; an elaborate ceremonial court; and artisans whose works in ivory, wood, bronze, and brass are prized throughout the world today. In the 17th through 19th centuries, European traders established coastal ports for the increasing traffic in slaves destined for the Americas. Commodity trade, especially in palm oil and timber, replaced slave trade in the 19th century, particularly under anti-slavery actions by the British Navy. In the early 19th century the Fulani leader, Usman dan Fodio, promulgated Islam and that brought most areas in the north under the loose control of an empire centered in Sokoto.

A British Sphere of Influence

Following the Napoleonic wars, the British expanded trade with the Nigerian interior. In 1885, British claims to a sphere of influence in that area received international recognition and, in the following year, the Royal Niger Company was chartered. In 1900, the company's territory came under the control of the British Government, which moved to consolidate its hold over the area of modern Nigeria. In 1914, the area was formally united as the "Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria."

Administratively, Nigeria remained divided into the northern and southern provinces and Lagos colony. Western education and the development of a modern economy proceeded more rapidly in the south than in the north, with consequences felt in Nigeria's political life ever since. Following World War II, in response to the growth of Nigerian nationalism and demands for independence, successive constitutions legislated by the British Government moved Nigeria toward self-government on a representative, increasingly federal, basis.

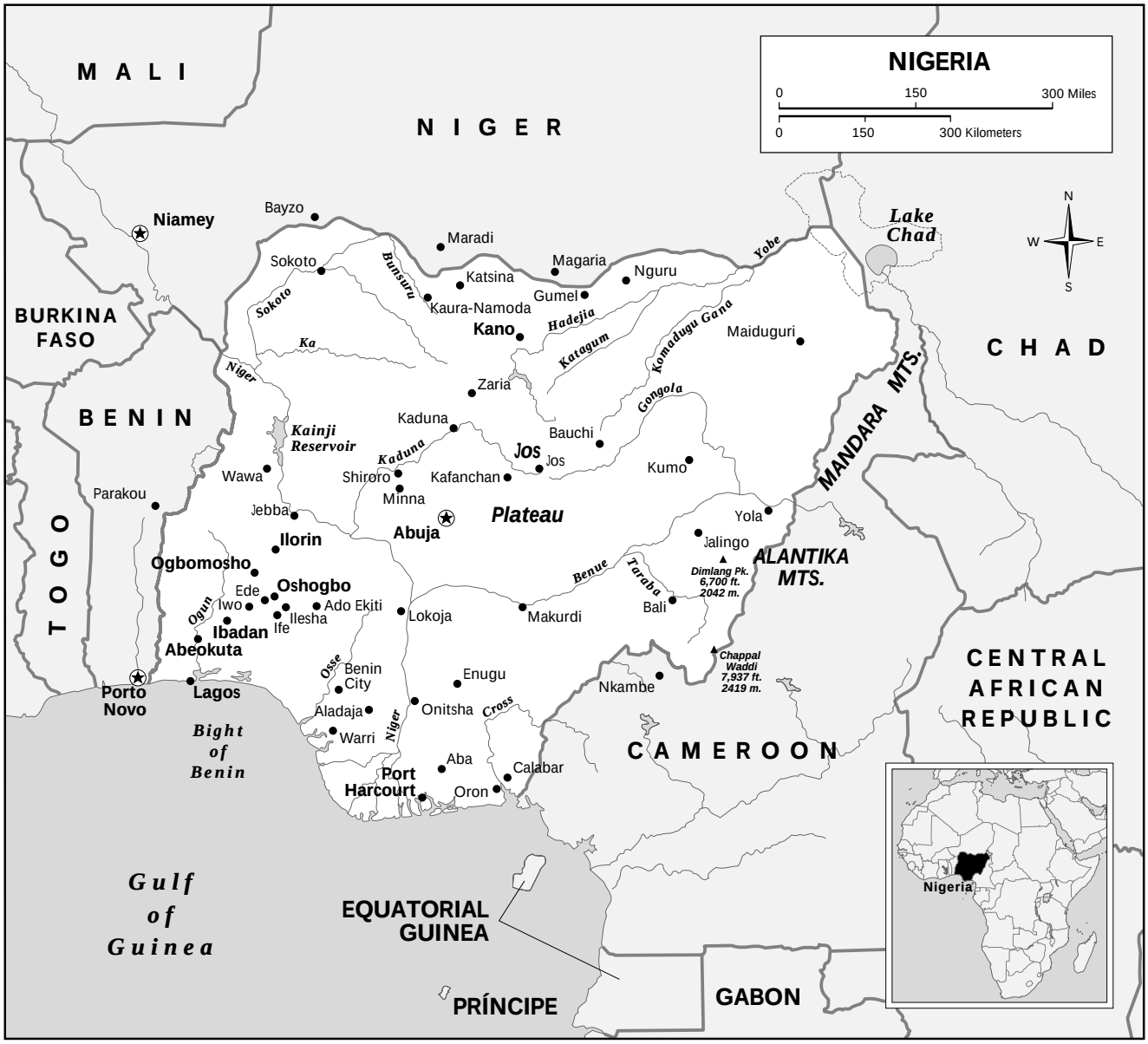
Independence

Nigeria was granted full independence in October 1960, as a federation of three regions (northern, western, and eastern) under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary form of government. Under the constitution, each of the three regions retained a substantial measure of self-government. The federal government was given exclusive powers in defense and security, foreign relations, and commercial and fiscal policies. In October 1963, Nigeria altered its relationship with the United Kingdom by proclaiming itself a federal republic and promulgating a new constitution. A fourth region (the midwest) was established that year. From the outset, Nigeria's ethnic, regional, and religious tensions were magnified by the significant disparities in economic and educational development between the south and the north.

On January 15, 1966, a small group of army officers, mostly southeastern Igbos, overthrew the government and assassinated the federal prime minister and the premiers of the northern and western regions. The federal military government that assumed power was unable to quiet ethnic tensions or produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of the country. Its efforts to abolish the federal structure greatly raised tensions and led to another coup in July. The coup-related massacre of thousands of Igbo in the north prompted hundreds of thousands of them to return to the southeast, where increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiment emerged.

In a move that gave greater autonomy to minority ethnic groups, the military divided the four regions into 12 states. The Igbo rejected attempts at constitutional revisions and insisted on full autonomy for the east. Finally, in May 1967, Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, the military governor of the eastern region, who emerged as the leader of increasing Igbo secessionist sentiment, declared the independence of the eastern region as the "Republic of Biafra." The ensuing civil war was bitter and bloody, ending in the defeat of Biafra in 1970.

Following the civil war, reconciliation was rapid and effective, and the country turned to the task of economic development. Foreign exchange earnings and government revenues increased spectacularly with the oil price rises of 1973-74. On July 29,



1975, Gen. Murtala Muhammed and a group of fellow officers staged a bloodless coup, accusing Gen. Yakubu Gowon's military government of delaying the promised return to civilian rule and becoming corrupt and ineffective.

General Muhammed replaced thousands of civil servants and announced a timetable for the resumption of civilian rule by October 1, 1979. Muhammed also announced the government's intention to create new states and to construct a new federal capital in the center of the country.

General Muhammed was assassinated on February 13, 1976, in an abortive coup. His chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, became head of state.

Obasanjo adhered meticulously to the schedule for return to civilian rule, moving to modernize and streamline the armed forces and seeking to use oil revenues to diversify and develop the country's economy. Seven new states were created in 1976, bringing the total to 19. The process of creating additional states continued until, in 1996, there were 36.

The Second Republic

A constituent assembly was elected in 1977 to draft a new constitution, which was published on September 21, 1978, when the ban on political activity, in effect since the advent of military rule, was lifted. Political parties were formed, and candidates were nominated for president and vice president, the two houses of the National Assembly, governorships, and state houses of assembly. In 1979, five political parties competed in a series of elections in which a northerner, Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), was elected president. All five parties

won representation in the National Assembly. In August 1983, Shagari and the NPN were returned to power in a landslide victory, with a majority of seats in the National Assembly and control of 12 state governments. But the elections were marred by violence, and allegations of widespread vote rigging and electoral malfeasance led to legal battles over the results.

On December 31, 1983, the military overthrew the Second Republic. Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the leader of the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the country's new ruling body. He charged the civilian government with economic mismanagement, widespread corruption, election fraud, and a general lack of concern for the problems of Nigerians. He also pledged to restore prosperity to Nigeria and to return the government to civilian rule but was stymied in his attempt to deal with Nigeria's severe economic problems. The Buhari government was peacefully overthrown by the SMC's third-ranking member, Army Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, in August 1985.

Babangida moved to restore freedom of the press and to release political detainees being held without charge. As part of a 15-month economic emergency, he announced stringent pay cuts for the military, police, and civil servants and enacted similar cuts for the private sector. Imports of rice, maize, and wheat were banned. Babangida led a national debate on proposed economic reform and recovery measures, which convinced him of intense opposition to an economic recovery package dependent on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan.

The Abortive Third Republic

In early 1989, a constituent assembly completed work on a constitution for the Third Republic, and political activity again was permitted. In April 1990, mid-level officers tried and failed to overthrow Babangida, and 69 accused coup plotters were later executed after secret trials before military tribunals. In December 1990 the first stage of partisan elections was held at the local government level, followed by gubernatorial and state legislative elections in December 1991; turnout was low but nonviolent. However, Babangida canceled primaries scheduled for August and September 1992 due to fraud. All announced candidates were disqualified from again standing for president once a new election format was selected. After delayed promises for elections in 1990, the government finally held a presidential election on June 12, 1993.

In what most observers deemed to be Nigeria's fairest elections, early returns indicated that wealthy Yoruba businessman M.K.O. Abiola had won a decisive victory. But on June 23, Babangida, using several pending lawsuits as a pretense, annulled the election, throwing Nigeria into turmoil. More than 100 persons were killed in riots before Babangida agreed to hand power to an "interim government" on August 27. Babangida then attempted to renege on his decision. Without popular and military support, he was forced to hand over to Ernest Shonekan, a prominent nonpartisan businessman. Shonekan was to rule until new elections, slated for February 1994. Although he had led Babangida's Transitional Council since early 1993, Shonekan was unable to reverse Nigeria's ever-growing economic problems or to defuse lingering political tension.

With the country sliding into chaos, Defense Minister Sani Abacha quickly assumed power and forced Shonekan's "resignation" on November 17, 1993. Abacha dissolved all democratic political institutions and replaced elected governors with military officers. Abacha promised to return the government to civilian rule but refused to announce a timetable. Following the annulment of the June 12 election, the United States and other nations imposed various sanctions on Nigeria, including restrictions on travel by government officials and their families and suspension of arms sales and military assistance. Additional sanctions were imposed as a result of Nigeria's failure to gain full certification for its counter-narcotics efforts.

Although Abacha's takeover was initially welcomed by many Nigerians, disenchantment grew rapidly. Many opposition figures formed the "National Democratic Coalition (NADECO)" to campaign for an immediate return to civilian rule, and most Nigerians boycotted the May 1994 polls for delegates to a government-sponsored Constitutional Conference. On June 11, 1994, using the groundwork laid by NADECO, Abiola declared himself president and went into hiding. He reemerged and was promptly arrested on June 23. A series of strikes by petroleum workers and other unions initially brought economic life in Lagos and the southwest to a standstill, but by mid-August Abacha had dismissed the national union leadership, arrested his opponents, closed media houses, and moved strongly to curb dissent. In early 1995, Abacha alleged that some 40 military officers and civilians were engaged in a coup plot, including former head of state Obasanjo and his deputy, retired Gen. Shehu Musa Yar'Adua. After a secret tribunal, most of the accused were convicted, and several death sentences were handed down. The tribunal also charged, convicted, and sentenced prominent human rights activists, journalists, and others—including relatives of the coup suspects—for their alleged "anti-regime" activities.

In an October 1, 1995 address to the nation, Gen. Sani Abacha announced the timetable for a 3-year transition to civilian rule. Public turnout for his sham local elections in December 1997 and in April 1998 state assembly and gubernatorial elections was under 10%, and public reaction to Abacha's presidential nomination by the five accepted parties was apathy and a near-complete boycott. Widely expected to succeed himself as a civilian president on October 1, 1998, he remained head of state until his death on June 8 of that year. During the Abacha regime, the government continued to enforce its arbitrary authority through the federal secu-

rity system—the military, the state security service, and the courts. Under Abacha, all branches of the security forces committed serious human rights abuses. Abacha was replaced by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who subsequently released almost all known civilian political detainees and decreased the number of reported human rights abuses.

Abubakar's Transition to Civilian Rule

During both the Abacha and Abubakar eras, Nigeria's main decision-making organ was the exclusively military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) which governed by decree. The PRC oversaw the 32-member federal executive council composed of civilians and military officers. Pending the promulgation of the constitution written by the constitutional conference in 1995, the government observed some provisions of the 1979 and 1989 constitutions. Neither Abacha nor Abubakar lifted the decree suspending the 1979 constitution, and the 1989 constitution was not implemented. The judiciary's authority and independence was significantly impaired during the Abacha era by the military regime's arrogation of judicial power and prohibition of court review of its action. The court system continued to be hampered by corruption and lack of resources after Abacha's death. In an attempt to alleviate such problems, Abubakar's government implemented a civil service pay raise and other reforms.

In August 1998, the Abubakar government appointed the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct elections for local government councils, state legislatures and governors, the National Assembly, and president. INEC held a series of four successive elections between December 1998 and February 1999. Former military head of state Olusegun Obasanjo, freed from prison by Abubakar, ran as a civilian candidate and won the presidential election. Irregularities marred the vote, and the defeated candidate, Chief Olu Falae, challenged the electoral results and Obasanjo's victory in court. The PRC promulgated a new constitution, based largely on the suspended 1979 constitution, before the May 29, 1999 inauguration of the new civilian president. The constitution included provisions for a bicameral legislature, the National Assembly, consisting of a 360-member House of Representatives and a 109-member Senate. The executive branch and the office of president retained strong federal powers. The legislature and judiciary, having suffered years of neglect, are finally rebuilding as institutions and beginning to exercise their constitutional roles in the balance of power.

The Obasanjo Administration

The emergence of a democratic Nigeria in May 1999 ended 16 years of consecutive military rule. Olusegun Obasanjo became the steward of a country suffering economic stagnation and the deterioration of most of its democratic institutions. Obasanjo, a former general, was admired for his stand against the Abacha dictatorship, his record of returning the federal government to civilian rule in 1979, and his claim to represent all Nigerians regardless of religion.

The new President took over a country that faced many problems, including a dysfunctional bureaucracy, collapsed infrastructure, and a military that wanted a reward for returning quietly to the barracks. The President moved quickly and retired hundreds of military officers who held political positions, established a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations, ordered the release of scores of persons held without charge, and rescinded a number of questionable licenses and contracts let by the previous military regimes. The government also moved to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted in overseas accounts.

Most civil society leaders and most Nigerians saw a marked improvement in human rights and democratic practice under Obasanjo. The press enjoyed greater freedom than under previous governments. As Nigeria works out representational democracy, there have been conflicts between the executive and legislative branches over major appropriations and other proposed legislation. A sign of federalism has been the growing visibility of state governors and the inherent friction between Abuja and the various state capitols over resource allocation.

In the years following the end of military rule, Nigeria witnessed recurrent incidents of ethno-religious and community conflicts, many of which derived from distorted use of oil revenue wealth, flaws in the 1999 constitution, and age-old disputes over the distribution of land and other resources. In May 1999, violence erupted in Kaduna State over the succession of an Emir, resulting in more than 100 deaths. In November 1999, the army destroyed the town of Odi in Bayelsa State and killed scores of civilians in retaliation for the murder of 12 policemen by a local gang. In Kaduna in February-May 2000 over 1,000 people died in rioting over the introduction of criminal Shar'ia in the state. Hundreds of ethnic Hausa were killed in reprisal attacks in southeastern Nigeria. In September 2001, over 2,000 people were killed in inter-religious rioting in Jos. In October 2001, hundreds were killed and thousands displaced in communal violence that spread across the Middle-Belt states of Benue, Taraba, and Nasarawa. On October 1, 2001, President Obasanjo announced the formation of a National Security Commission to address the issue of communal violence. In 2003, he was re-elected in contentious and highly flawed national elections and state gubernatorial elections, which were litigated over two years. Since 2006, violence, destruction of oil infrastructure, and kidnappings of primarily expatriates in the oil-rich Niger River Delta have intensified as militants demanded a greater share of federal revenue for states in the region, as well as benefits from community development. For many reasons, Nigeria's security services have been unable to respond effectively to the security threat, which is both political and criminal.

In May 2006, the National Assembly soundly defeated an attempt to amend the constitution by supporters of a third presidential term for President Obasanjo. This measure was packaged in a bundle of what were otherwise non-controversial amendments. Nigeria's citizens addressed this issue in a constitutional, democratic, and relatively peaceful process.

Civilian Transition

Nigeria held state legislative and gubernatorial elections on April 14 as well as presidential and national legislative elections on April 21, 2007, in which more than 35 political parties participated. Nigeria missed an opportunity to strengthen an element of its democracy through a sound electoral process. Analysis of the process by most international observers did not conform to what Nigeria's National Electoral Commission (INEC) reported. U.S. and international observers reported overall a seriously flawed process with credible reports of malfeasance and vote rigging in some constituencies. The scope of violence that occurred also was regrettable. There were considerable degrees of difference in the conduct of elections among states, but serious differences were also observed within states during the two polling dates. The main opposition parties, All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and the Action Congress (AC), as well as numerous smaller political parties and the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) have filed petitions to challenge the results of gubernatorial elections in 34 of Nigeria's 36 states. Challenges to the presidential election have been filed by the ANPP, AC, and others in the Federal Court of Appeals, but the opposition is not unified, and mass protests have not materialized. INEC's principal problems included politicization and lack of independence, lack of transparency in its operations and decision-making, and persistent failure to make adequate logistical arrangements for both voter registration and polling. With INEC's certification of the ruling party's presidential ticket as the winner with over 70% of the vote, Nigeria experienced its first transition of power between civilian administrations when President Obasanjo stepped down on May 29, 2007. Newly-elected President Umaru Yar'adua, a moderate and a respected governor from the northern state of Katsina, pledged publicly to make electoral reform, peace and security in the Niger Delta, and continued electoral reform his top priorities.

Much reform remains to be implemented, but the Yar'Adua administration has shown unprecedented restraint in allowing the legislative and judicial branches to operate freely. In October 2007 Patricia Etteh, the Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, resigned over allegations of corruption, after intense legislative and public pressure. Electoral tribunals and the courts had nullified at least six gubernatorial, nine Senate, 11 House, and 14 state-level House of Assembly elections from April 2007 based on technicalities. Of greater significance for Nigeria's system of checks and balances and the rule of law, on November 12, an appeals court upheld a lower court ruling that approved an opposition party's gubernatorial election appeal, effectively unseating the ruling party's incumbent in favor of the opposition candidate. On February 26, 2008 a tribunal upheld the results of the April 2007 presidential election. Two of the leading opposition candidates have appealed that ruling to Nigeria's Supreme Court, which might make a ruling in December 2008.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Umaru YAR'ADUA**
Vice Pres.: **Goodluck JONATHAN**
Min. of Agriculture & Water Resources: **Sayyadi Abba RUMA**
Min. of Commerce & Industry: **Charles Chukwuma UGWU**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Adetokunbo KAYODE**
Min. of Defense: **Mahmud Yayale AHMED**
Min. of Education: **Igwe AJA-NWACHUKWU**
Min. of Energy: **Umaru YAR'ADUA**
Min. of Environment & Housing: **Halima Tayo ALAO**
Min. of the Federal Capital Territory: **Aliyu Modibbo UMAR**
Min. of Finance: **Shamsuddeen USMAN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Ojo MADUEKWE**
Min. of Health:
Min. of Information & Communications: **John Ogar ADEY**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Godwin ABBE**
Min. of Justice: **Michael Kaase AONDOKAA**
Min. of Labor & Productivity: **Hassan LAWAL**
Min. of Mines & Steel Development: **Sarafa Tunji ISOLA**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Grace EKPIWWHRE**
Min. of Transport: **Deziani Alison MADUEKE**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **Saudatu Usman BUGUNDU**
Min. of Youth Development: **Akinlabe OLASUNKANMI**
Min. of State for Agriculture & Water Resources: **Adamu Maina WAZIRI**
Min. of State for Commerce & Industry: **Ahmed Garba BICHI**
Min. of State for Culture & Tourism: **Aliyu Idi HONG**
Min. of State for Defense: **Fidelia Auababa NJEZE**
Min. of State for Education: **Aishatu Kibril DOKKU**
Min. of State for Education: **Agada Anthony JERRY**
Min. of State for Energy (Gas): **Odusina Olatunde EMMANUEL**
Min. of State for Energy (Petroleum): **Henry Odin AJUMOGOBOA**
Min. of State for Energy (Power): **Fatima Balarabe IBRAHIM**
Min. of State for the Federal Capital Territory: **John James AKPANUDOEDEHE**
Min. of State for Finance: **Aderemi BABLOLA**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Baguda M. HIRSE**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Tijani Yahaya KAURA**
Min. of State for Health: **Gabriel Yajubu ADUKU**
Min. of State for Information & Communication: **Ibrahim Dasaki NAKADE**
Min. of State for Interior: **Hassan HARUNA**
Min. of State for Mines & Steel Development: **Ahmed Mohamed GUSAU**
Min. of State for Transport: **John Okechukwu EMEKA**
Min. & Dep. Chmn., National Planning Commission: **Muhammed Sanusi DAGGASI**

Min. & Chmn., National Sports Commission: **Abdulrahman Hassan GIMBA**

Governor, Central Bank: **Charles SOLUDO**

Ambassador to the US:

Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

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ECONOMY

Trade

Nigeria is the United States' largest trading partner in sub-Saharan Africa, largely due to the high level of petroleum imports from Nigeria, which supply 11% of U.S. oil imports—nearly 46% of Nigeria's daily oil production. Nigeria is the fifth-largest exporter of oil to the United States. Two-way trade was valued at $29 billion in 2007. Led by machinery, wheat, and motor vehicles, U.S. goods exports to Nigeria in 2007 were worth $4 billion. U.S. imports from Nigeria were $25 billion in 2007. U.S. imports from Nigeria consisted predominantly of oil. However, rubber products, cocoa, gum arabic, cashews, coffee, and ginger constituted over $70 million of U.S. imports from Nigeria in 2007. The U.S. trade deficit with Nigeria was $21 billion in 2007. Nigeria is the 50th-largest export market for U.S. goods and the 14th-largest exporter of goods to the United States. The United States is Nigeria's largest trading partner after the United Kingdom. Although the trade balance overwhelmingly favors Nigeria, thanks to oil exports, a large portion of U.S. exports to Nigeria is believed to enter the country outside of the Nigerian Government's official statistics, due to importers seeking to avoid Nigeria's excessive tariffs.

The United States is the largest foreign investor in Nigeria. The stock of U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in Nigeria in 2006 was $339 million, down from $2 billion in 2004. U.S. FDI in Nigeria is concentrated largely in the petroleum/mining and wholesale trade sectors. Exxon-Mobil and Chevron are the two largest U.S. corporate players in offshore oil and gas production.

In April 2008, the United States and Nigeria met under the existing Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) to advance the ongoing work program and to discuss improvements in Nigerian trade policies and market access. Among the topics discussed were cooperation in the World Trade Organization (WTO), market access, export diversification, intellectual property protection and enforcement, commercial issues, trade capacity building and technical assistance, infrastructure, and investment issues.

Dominated by Oil

The oil boom of the 1970s led Nigeria to neglect its strong agricultural and light manufacturing bases in favor of an unhealthy dependence on crude oil. In 2002 oil and gas exports accounted for more than 98% of export earnings and about 83% of federal government revenue. New oil wealth, the concurrent decline of other economic sectors, and a lurch toward a statist economic model fueled massive migration to the cities and led to increasingly widespread poverty, especially in rural areas. A collapse of basic infrastructure and social services since the early 1980s accompanied this trend. By 2002 Nigeria's per capita income had plunged to about one-quarter of its mid-1970s high, below the level at independence. Along with the endemic malaise of Nigeria's non-oil sectors, the economy continues to witness massive growth of "informal sector" economic activities, estimated by some to be as high as 75% of the total economy.

Nigeria's proven oil reserves are estimated to be 36 billion barrels; natural gas reserves are well over 100 trillion cubic feet. Nigeria is a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and in 2006 its crude oil production averaged around two million barrels per day. Poor corporate relations with indigenous communities, vandalism of oil infrastructure, severe ecological damage, and personal security problems throughout the Niger Delta oil-producing region continue to plague Nigeria's oil sector. Efforts are underway to reverse these troubles. In the absence of coherent government programs, the major multinational oil companies have launched their own community development programs. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was created to help catalyze economic and social development in the region, but it is widely perceived to be ineffective and opaque. Oil accounts for 90% of Nigeria's exports and over 80% of government revenue. Significant exports of liquefied natural gas started in late 1999 and are slated to expand as Nigeria seeks to eliminate gas flaring by 2009.

Nigeria inspects all imports on arrival, rather than at ports of origin; as a result, about 95% of containers are physically examined. This procedure, along with Nigeria's uneven application of import and labeling regulations and poor infrastructure, complicates the movement of goods through Nigeria's notoriously congested ports and increases the cost of doing business. The government has promoted foreign investment and encouraged reforms in these and other areas, but the investment climate remains daunting to all but the most determined.

Agriculture has suffered from years of mismanagement, inconsistent and poorly conceived government policies, and the lack of basic infrastructure. Still, the sector accounts for about 30% of GDP and two-thirds of employment. Agriculture provides a big chunk of non-oil growth, which in 2006 reached 9%. Poultry and cocoa are just two areas where production is not keeping pace with domestic or international demand. Fisheries also have great potential, but are poorly managed. Most critical for the coun-

try's future, Nigeria's land tenure system does not encourage long-term investment in technology or modern production methods and does not inspire the availability of rural credit.

Oil dependency, and the allure it generated of great wealth through government contracts, spawned other economic distortions. The country's high propensity to import means roughly 80% of government expenditures is recycled into foreign exchange. Cheap consumer imports, resulting from a chronically overvalued Naira, coupled with excessively high domestic production costs due in part to erratic electricity and fuel supply, have pushed down industrial capacity utilization to less than 30%. Many more Nigerian factories would have closed except for relatively low labor costs (10%-15%). Domestic manufacturers, especially pharmaceuticals and textiles, have lost their ability to compete in traditional regional markets; however, there are signs that some manufacturers have begun to address their competitiveness.

Arguably Nigeria's biggest macroeconomic achievement has been the sharp reduction in its external debt, which declined from 36% of GDP in 2004 to less than 4% of GDP in 2007. In October 2005, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved its first ever Policy Support Instrument for Nigeria. In December 2005, the United States and seven other Paris Club nations signed debt reduction agreements with Nigeria for $18 billion in debt reduction, with the proviso that Nigeria pay back its remaining $12 billion in debt by March 2006. The United States was one of the smaller creditors, and received about $356 million from Nigeria in return for over $600 million of debt reduction. Merrill Lynch won the right to take on $509 million of Nigeria's promissory debt (accrued since 1984) to the "London Club" of private creditors. This arrangement saved Nigeria about $34 million over a simple prepayment of the notes., Nigeria faces intense pressure to accept multibillion dollar loans for railroads, power plants, roads, and other infrastructure.

Expanded government spending also has led to upward pressure on consumer prices. Recent high world oil prices had resulted in the government now holding $60 billion in foreign exchange reserves. State and local governmental bodies demand access to this "windfall" revenue, creating a tug-of-war between the federal government—which seeks to control spending—and state governments desirous of augmented budgets, preventing the government from making provision for periods of lower oil prices.

One of Nigeria's greatest success stories has been the completion in early 2006 of a major overhaul of its banking system under aggressive Central Bank supervision. Reforms have reduced the number of banks from 89 to 25, increased a bank's minimal capital requirement to $190 million, and required banks to hold 40% of their deposits in liquid assets. Retail, corporate, and Internet banking are seen as intensively competitive, and the home loan market is considered moderately competitive. Less than 10% of lending is believed to be made to individuals. About 65% of the economically active population is serviced by the informal financial sector, e.g., microfinance institutions, moneylenders, friends, relatives, and credit unions. Since 1999, the Nigerian Stock Exchange has enjoyed strong performance, although equity as a means to foster corporate growth remains underutilized by Nigeria's private sector. Rural communities remain largely unbanked, the real estate sector and small businesses receive a low level of lending, and the credit card market remains at an early stage of development.

Nigeria's publicly owned transportation infrastructure is a major constraint to economic development. Principal ports are at Lagos (Apapa and Tin Can Island), Port Harcourt, and Calabar. Docking fees for freighters are among the highest in the world. Of the 80,500 kilometers (50,000 mi.) of roads, more than 15,000 kilometers (10,000 mi.) are officially paved, but many remain in poor shape. Extensive road repairs and new construction activities are gradually being implemented as state governments, in particular, spend their portions of enhanced government revenue allocations. The government implementation of 100% destination inspection of all goods entering Nigeria has resulted in long delays in clearing goods for importers and created new sources of corruption, since the ports lack adequate facilities to carry out the inspection. Four of Nigeria's airports—Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt and Abuja—currently receive international flights. There are several domestic private Nigerian carriers, and air service among Nigeria's cities is generally dependable. The maintenance culture of Nigeria's domestic airlines is not up to international standards.

Gradual Reform

Nigeria has made progress toward establishing a market-based economy. In recent years, it privatized the only government-owned petrochemical company and sold its interest in eight oil service companies. The Yar'Adua administration has paid especially close attention to due process by overturning or reviewing a number of suspect contracts awarded by its predecessor. Nigeria's implementation of non-tariff barriers has been arbitrary and uneven and continues to violate WTO prohibitions against trade bans. However, Nigeria has made some progress in its implementation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Common External Tariff by removing some textile items from its list of prohibited imports in 2006. In a September 2008 breakthrough, Nigeria decreased the number of banned import categories from 44 to 26 items, reduced a number of tariffs, and reiterated its commitment to harmonizing its tariff regime with its neighbors. Enforcement of criminal penalties against intellectual property rights (IPR) violations is weak, and firms that are successfully countering IPR piracy have generally done so through civil court cases. The government has created an intellectual property commission. Rules concerning sanitary and phytosanitary standards, testing, and labeling are well defined, but bureaucratic hur-

dles slow trade opportunities. The government is generally supportive of biotechnology cooperation, although legislation governing biosafety is sparse at best.

A co-member of the International Advisory Group of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) initiated by the G8, Nigeria's federal government is playing an important role in having volunteered to pilot the new disclosure and validation methodologies. It has completed a comprehensive audit of oil sector payments and government revenues from 1999-2004.

The federal government has passed implementing legislation on public procurement and fiscal transparency, but now it must ensure that Nigeria's 36 states pass and implement similar bills. It is perceived that government contracting remains rife with corruption and kickbacks, and that many state and local officials continue to steal public monies outright.

Nigeria's economic team has enjoyed an excellent reputation in the international community. The team produced an encouraging body of work, notably budgets described as "prudent and responsible" by the IMF and a detailed economic reform blueprint, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

Other positive developments have included: (1) government efforts to deregulate fuel prices; (2) Nigeria's participation in the EITI and commitment to the G8 Anticorruption/Transparency Initiative; (3) creation of what had been an effective Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which until 2008 had earned 150 convictions and recovered over $5 billion in mishandled funds; and (4) development of several governmental offices to better monitor official revenues and expenditures.

Nigeria is not on track to meet its Millennium Development Goals because of a lack of policy coordination between the federal, state, and local governments, a lack of funding commitments at the state and local levels; and a lack of available staff to implement and monitor projects on health, poverty, and education.

Investment

Although Nigeria must grapple with its decaying infrastructure and a poor regulatory environment, the country possesses many positive attributes for carefully targeted investment and will expand as both a regional and international market player. Profitable niche markets outside the energy sector, such as specialized telecommunication providers, have developed under the government's reform program. There is a growing Nigerian consensus that foreign investment is essential to realizing Nigeria's vast potential. Companies interested in long-term investment and joint ventures, especially those that use locally available raw materials, will find opportunities in the large national market. However, to improve prospects for success, potential investors must educate themselves extensively on local conditions and business practices, establish a local presence, and choose their partners carefully. The Nigerian Government is keenly aware that sustaining democratic principles, enhancing security for life and property, and rebuilding and maintaining infrastructure are necessary for the country to attract foreign investment.

DEFENSE

Active duty personnel in the three Nigerian armed services total approximately 76,000. The Nigerian Army, the largest of the services, has about 60,000 personnel deployed in two mechanized infantry divisions, one composite division (airborne and amphibious), the Lagos Garrison Command (a division size unit), and the Abuja-based Brigade of Guards. It has demonstrated its capability to mobilize, deploy, and sustain battalions in support of peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia, Angola, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sudan/Darfur, and Somalia. The Nigerian Navy (7,000) is equipped with frigates, fast attack, and coastal patrol boats. The Nigerian Air Force (9,000) flies transport, trainer, helicopter, and fighter aircraft, but most are currently not operational. Nigeria also has pursued a policy of developing domestic military production capabilities. Before the lifting of sanctions by many Western nations, Nigeria had turned to China, Russia, North Korea, and India for the purchase of military equipment and training.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since independence, Nigerian foreign policy has been characterized by a focus on Africa and by attachment to several fundamental principles: African unity and independence; peaceful settlement of disputes; nonalignment and nonintentional interference in the internal affairs of other nations; and regional economic cooperation and development. In pursuing the goal of regional economic cooperation and development, Nigeria helped create the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which seeks to harmonize trade and investment practices for its 15 West African member countries and ultimately to achieve a full customs union. Over the past decade, Nigeria has played a pivotal role in the support of peace in Africa. It provided the bulk of troops for the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), and the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and is anticipated to do so also in Somalia.

Nigeria has enjoyed generally good relations with its immediate neighbors. A longstanding border dispute with Cameroon over the potentially oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula was addressed by International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague in 2002. The ICJ awarded most of the disputed Bakassi Peninsula and maritime rights to Cameroon, and the UN established a Mixed Commission on implementing the ICJ ruling. On June 12, 2006 Nigerian President Obasanjo and Cameroonian President Biya signed an agreement in New York on implementing the ICJ

decision. Nigeria promptly withdrew its troops within 60 days. On August 14, 2008, Nigeria formally ceded Bakassi to Cameroon.

Nigeria is a member of the following international organizations: UN and many of its special and related agencies; World Trade Organization (WTO); International Monetary Fund (IMF); World Bank/IBRD; African Development Bank (AfDB); INTERPOL; Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); African Union (AU); Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA) and several other West African bodies; Commonwealth; Nonaligned Movement (NAM); and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), among others.

U.S.-NIGERIAN RELATIONS

Since the restoration of basic democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the bilateral relationship has continued to improve, and cooperation on many important foreign policy goals, such as regional peacekeeping, has been excellent.

The government has lent strong diplomatic support to U.S. Government counter-terrorism efforts in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The Government of Nigeria, in its official statements, has both condemned the terrorist attacks and supported military action against the Taliban and Al Qaida. Nigeria also has played a leading role in forging an anti-terrorism consensus among states in Sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated one million Nigerians and Nigerian Americans live, study, and work in the United States, while over 25,000 Americans live and work in Nigeria. President Yar'Adua visited President Bush at the White House on December 13, 2007.

U.S. Foreign Assistance Priorities

Democratic and economic progress in Nigeria is challenged by poor governance, entrenched corruption, internal conflict, ineffective service delivery, and pervasive poverty. Nigeria remains mired near the bottom of the United National Development Program (UNDP) human development index. While there has been notable progress in macroeconomic policy reform over the past few years, these reforms have yet to bring measurable improvements to the lives of the people. U.S. assistance is trying to help Nigeria address these challenges by fostering transparent and accountable governance; engaging civil society and government partners to battle corruption; increasing professionalism of the military and law enforcement agencies; strengthening health and education systems to deliver quality services; growing the non-oil economy; and improving the environment for regional and international trade. With national and local elections scheduled for mid-2011, efforts are also focused on creating an environment for transparent and credible elections.

Peace and Security: Prior decades of military rule had a negative effect on the professional development of the Nigerian armed forces. The Nigerian military is still in need of reform efforts to professionalize the officer and noncommissioned officer corps to include a focus on promoting effective civilian oversight and respect for human rights and the rule of law. U. S. assistance continues to provide equipment and training for Nigerian peacekeeping forces, which are deployed to peacekeeping missions throughout the continent. Funding assists in developing the capacity of government institutions and civil society to prevent, manage, and mitigate conflict. The U.S. program also builds Nigeria's capability to address threats to maritime security, including narcotics trafficking, and attempts to improve Nigeria's human rights record and enhance public trust in the security services.

Governing Justly and Democratically: U.S. funding advances the rule of law by strengthening the capacity and transparency of the justice system and building judicial independence at the federal level. Good governance and anti-corruption reform is enhanced by creating more responsive governance structures at the national and local levels, improving service delivery, and strengthening budget management capacity and fiscal oversight. The United States works directly with a diverse cross-section of Nigerian civil society organizations, building their internal management capacity and strengthening their ability to engage with the government on issues of fiscal accountability, budget monitoring, and extractive industries transparency. To lay the groundwork for credible elections in 2011, the United States will help to build local capacity in managing and coordinating elections infrastructure, and to promote civil society input into electoral and constitutional reform dialogue and oversight of the electoral process.

Investing in People: Helping Nigeria address the fundamental health and education needs of its citizens directly impacts governance, stability, and economic growth. Nigeria ranks 70 out of 71 countries in the 2008 Report on the State of the World's Mothers. The national average maternal mortality is about 800 per 100,000 live births, but the rate is at least three times higher in the northern states. Health-care consumers often opt to forego treatment, or to pay for treatment from unskilled providers. Almost one-third of women receive no antenatal care. Sixty-six percent of deliveries take place in the home, with only 35% assisted by trained health care personnel. The United States supports increased access to quality family planning and reproductive health services, focusing efforts in selected states with high unmet demand. Maternal and child health efforts target routine immunization, polio eradication, birth preparedness, and maternity services, seeking to reduce catastrophic rates of maternal and young child mortality. With Nigeria's child malaria mortality burden of over 300,000

preventable deaths per year, U.S. assistance increases access to proven preventive and curative interventions, including insecticide treated nets, net retreatment kits, and artemisinin combination therapy treatment for children and pregnant women. Nigeria has the largest tuberculosis (TB) burden in Africa. To reduce death and disability, especially in the vulnerable co-infected HIV/AIDS population, U.S. assistance aims to double the case detection rate and halve the incidence of TB over the next 10 years. Funding supports equitable access to quality basic education through teacher training, infrastructure improvement, and community involvement, focusing on public schools as well as Islamiyyah schools that provide both secular and religious education. U.S. assistance fosters higher education partnerships between American and Nigerian universities, focusing on institutions in the north. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Nigeria receives significant support to build partnerships with the host country to provide integrated prevention, care, and treatment programs throughout the country and support orphans and vulnerable children. As a result, in 2007 the World Bank noted that HIV-positive seroprevalence rates decreased to 3.1%.

Economic Growth: Funding will build trade and investment capacity and improve the enabling environment for agriculture and microfinance. The United States will continue to implement activities under the Global Food Security Response that will accelerate the uptake of proven production, processing, and marketing technologies, significantly increase the productivity of selected staple food crops, foster agricultural value chain development, and stimulate job creation through the growth of agribusiness enterprises. Customs regulation and policy reform will enhance regional trade, transport linkages, and smooth supply to regional markets, ensuring adherence to international standards. U.S. assistance will also focus on expanding investment opportunities, which are hampered by limited access to market-driven commercial financial services, including microfinance. U.S. assistance will also help expand access to credit through partnerships with commercial banks and increased capacity of microfinance institutions. The U.S. will partner with Nigeria's Central Bank to improve the policy environment for micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

Ongoing presidential initiatives with Nigeria include the African Growth and Competitiveness Initiative, fighting avian flu, the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa, and the Trans-Sahel Counter-Terrorism Program. Nigeria's eligibility for other regional activities include the Famine Early Warning System; Anti-Corruption Initiative; trafficking in persons; and the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Fund. Nigeria is a premier participant in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), for which about $467 million was committed in FY 2008.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ABUJA (E) Plot 1075, Diplomatic Drive, Central District, 011-234-9-461-4000, Fax 234-9-461-4305, Workweek: Monday-Thursday 7:30am–4:30pm, Friday 7:30am–1:30pm, Website: http://abuja.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Vacant
AMB OMS:	Lysa Walston
CDC:	John Vertefeuille
ECO:	Robert R. Tansey
FCS:	Robert Farris (Resident In Lagos)
FM:	Orlando Ocasio
HRO:	Anita Brown
MGT:	David Yeutter
AMB:	Robin R. Sanders
CON:	Victoria Coffineau
DCM:	Lisa Piascik
PAO:	Atim George
GSO:	Monique Austin
RSO:	Paul Brown
AGR:	Ali Abdi (Resident In Lagos)
AID:	Sharon Cromer
CLO:	Michele Ward
DEA:	Sam Gaye (Resident In Lagos)
FMO:	Kevin Doyle
IMO:	Todd D. Roe
IPO:	Josetito L. Nakpil
LEGATT:	Mark Johnson (Resident In Lagos)
NAS:	Mike Makalou
POL:	Walter Pflaumer

LAGOS (CG) 2 Walter Carrington Crescent, 011-234-1-261-0050/0078, Fax 234-1-261-1863, INMARSAT Tel 00-8816-763-10796, Workweek: M-F/ 0730-1600.

DCM OMS:	Patricia J. Able
CG OMS:	Cassandra Lewis
ECO:	Vacant
FCS:	Larry R. Farris
FM:	Scott McFadden
MGT:	Vick E. Hutchinson
POL/ECO:	Helen Hudson
AMB:	Robin Sanders
CG:	Donna Blair
CON:	Debra Heien
PAO:	Tim Gerhardson
GSO:	Neil Richter
RSO:	Robert E. Myers
AGR:	Ali Abdi
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Travis Mattson
DEA:	Sam Gaye
EEO:	Helen Hudson
FMO:	Sherrie Szymeczek
ICASS Chair:	Ae Abuja
IMO:	Todd D. Roe
IPO:	Kevin Williams
ISO:	Onnie B. Ogot
ISSO:	Onnie B. Ogot
LAB:	Vacant
LEGATT:	Ronald N. Nolan
POL:	Moved To Abuja
State ICASS:	Ae Abuja

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 2, 2008

Country Description: Nigeria is a developing country in western Africa that has experienced periods of political instability. It has the largest population on the continent, estimated at 144 million people, and its infrastructure is not fully functional or well maintained.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. The visa must be obtained in advance. Visas cannot be obtained aboard planes or at the airport. Promises of entry into Nigeria without a visa are credible indicators of fraudulent commercial schemes in which the perpetrators

seek to exploit the foreign traveler's illegal presence in Nigeria through threats of extortion or bodily harm. U.S. citizens cannot legally depart Nigeria unless they can prove, by presenting their entry visas, that they entered Nigeria legally. Entry information may be obtained at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 3519 International Court, NW, Washington, D.C., 20008, telephone (202) 822-1500, or at the Nigerian Consulate General in New York, telephone (212) 808-0301. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Nigerian embassy or consulate.

Visit the Embassy of Nigeria web site at www.nigeriaembassyusa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The Department of State continues to caution U.S. citizens about the possible dangers of travel to some parts of Nigeria. [Please also see the Crime Section below.] In light of the risk of kidnapping, crime, militant activity, or armed attacks, the U.S. Mission restricts the travel of U.S. government personnel to the following states to official travel only: Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers and Akwa Ibom in the Niger Delta, and Edo and Imo in the south. Only essential travel by non-official Americans is recommended to these areas. In addition, the military's Joint Task Force patrols the creeks in the Niger Delta because of ongoing militant and piracy incidents, especially against oil-related facilities or infrastructure, so individuals may be questioned, detained or arrested when traveling in these sensitive areas without evidence of permission from the Nigerian government or for carrying electronic equipment such as cameras, recorders, etc. Periodically, travel by U.S. mission personnel is restricted in certain parts of Nigeria based on changing security conditions, often due to crime, general strikes, or student/political demonstrations or disturbances. See the Department of State's Travel Warning for Nigeria for more information.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, by calling a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Violent crime committed by individual criminals and gangs, as well as by some persons wearing police and military uniforms, is a problem, especially in Lagos, Abuja and other large cities, although it can occur anywhere. Some visitors and resident Americans have experienced armed muggings, assaults, burglary, carjacking, kidnappings and extortion, often involving violence. Home invasions are on the rise in Lagos, with armed robbers accessing even guarded compounds by following, or tailgating, residents or visitors arriving by car into the compound, subduing guards and gaining entry into homes or apartments. Armed robbers in Lagos also access waterfront compounds by boat. U.S. citizens, as well as Nigerians and other expatriates, have been victims of armed robbery on roads to airports during both daylight and evening hours. Law enforcement authorities usually respond to crimes slowly or not at all, and provide little or no investigative support to victims. U.S. citizens and other expatriates have experienced harassment and shakedowns at checkpoints and during encounters with Nigerian officials.

Nigerian-operated fraud scams, known as 419s, are noted for their cleverness and ingenuity. These scams target foreigners worldwide, posing risks of both financial loss and personal danger to their victims. Scams are often initiated through internet postings or from internet cafes, by unsolicited emails, faxes, and letters, or can involve credit card use. As anywhere else, no one should provide personal or financial information to unknown parties or via Nigerian telephone lines. The expansion of bilateral law enforcement cooperation, which has resulted in numerous raids on commercial fraud premises, has reduced the overall level of overt fraud activity, but new types of sophisticated scams are introduced daily.

American citizens are very frequently the victims of Nigerian confidence artists offering companionship through internet dating websites. These confidence artists almost always pose as American citizens visiting or living in Nigeria who unexpectedly experience a medical, legal, financial or other type of "emergency" that requires the immediate financial assistance of the American citizen in the United States. In these cases, we strongly urge the American citizen in the United States to be very cautious about sending money to any unknown person purportedly acting on their behalf, or traveling to Nigeria to meet someone with whom their sole communications have been via the internet. Other common scams involve a promise of an inheritance windfall, work contracts in Nigeria, or an overpayment for goods purchased on-line. For additional information on these types of scams, see the Department of State's publication, International Financial Scams.

Commercial scams or stings that targets foreigners, including many U.S. citizens, continue to be a problem. One needs to be alert to scams that may involve U.S. citizens in illegal activity, resulting in arrest, extortion or bodily harm. These scams generally involve phony offers of either outright money transfers or lucrative sales or contracts with promises of large commissions or up-front payments, or improperly invoke the authority of one or more ministries or offices of the Nigerian government and may cite, by name, the involvement of a Nigerian government official. In some scams, government stationery and seals are also improperly used to advance the scam. The ability of U.S. consular officers to extricate U.S. citizens from unlawful business deals or scams and their subsequent consequences is extremely limited. U.S. citizens have been arrested by police officials and held for varying periods on charges of involvement in illegal business activ-

ity or scams. Nigerian police or other law enforcement officials do not always inform the U.S. Embassy or Consulate immediately of the arrest or detention of a U.S. citizen. The U.S. Department of Commerce has advisories to the U.S. business community on a variety of issues that should be seriously reviewed with respect to doing business in Nigeria. To check on a business's legitimacy while in the United States, contact the Nigeria Desk Officer at the International Trade Administration, Room 3317, Dept. of Commerce, Washington, D.C. 20230, telephone 1-800-USA-TRADE or (202) 482-5149, fax (202) 482-5198. If you are abroad, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

The Department of State encourages all travelers abroad to register their travel. The most convenient way to do so would be through the online travel registration page. Travelers may also register in person at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja or the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos. See the section on Registration/Embassy Location below.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Nigeria are poor. Diagnostic and treatment equipment is most often poorly maintained, and many medicines are unavailable. Counterfeit pharmaceuticals are a common problem and may be difficult to distinguish from genuine medications. This is particularly true of generics purchased at local pharmacies or street markets.

While Nigeria has many well-trained doctors, hospital facilities are generally of poor quality with inadequately trained nursing staff. Hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether or not their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Nigeria is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Roads in many areas are generally in poor condition, causing damage to vehicles and contributing to hazardous traffic conditions. There are few working traffic lights or stop signs. The rainy season from May to October is especially dangerous because of flooded roads and water-concealed potholes.

Excessive speed, unpredictable driving habits, and the lack of basic maintenance and safety equipment on many vehicles are additional hazards. Motorists seldom yield the right-of-way and give little consideration to pedestrians and cyclists. Gridlock is common in urban areas. Chronic fuel shortages have led to long lines at service stations, which disrupt or block traffic for extended periods.

Public transportation vehicles are unsafe due to poor maintenance, high speeds and overcrowding. Motorbikes, known in Nigeria as "okadas," are a common form of public transportation in many cities and pose particular danger to motorists, their own passengers and pedestrians. Motorbike drivers frequently weave in and out of traffic at high speeds and observe no traffic rules. Motorbikes are banned within Abuja's city limits. Passengers in local taxis have been driven to secluded locations where they were attacked and robbed. Several of the victims required hospitalization. The U.S. Mission advises that public transportation throughout Nigeria be avoided.

It is recommended that short-term visitors not drive in Nigeria. A Nigerian driver's license can take months to obtain, and to date an international driving permit is not recognized. Major hotels offer reliable car-hire services complete with drivers. Reliable car-hire services can also be obtained at the customer service centers at the airports in Lagos, Abuja, and Kano. Inter-city travelers must also consider that roadside assistance is extremely scarce, and as noted above medical facilities and emergency care are poor, meaning that being involved in a traffic incident might result in a lack of available medical facilities to treat either minor or life-threatening injuries.

All drivers and passengers are reminded to wear seat belts, lock doors, and raise windows. It is important to secure appropriate automobile insurance. It is also important to be aware that drivers and passengers of vehicles involved in accidents resulting in injury or death have experienced extra-judicial actions, i.e., mob attacks, official consequences such as fines and incarceration or involve-

ment with the victim's family. Night driving should be done with extreme caution, but it is recommended to avoid driving between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. as bandits and police roadblocks are more numerous at night. Streets are very poorly lit, and many vehicles are missing one or both headlights, tail lights, and reflectors.

The Government of Nigeria charges the Federal Road Safety Commission with providing maps and public information on specific road conditions. The Federal Road Safety Commission may be contacted by mail at: Ojodu-Isherri Road, PMB 21510, Ikeja, Lagos; telephone [243] (1) 802-850-5961 or [234] (1) 805-684-6911.

Aviation Safety Oversight: AAs there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Nigeria, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Nigeria'sCivil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

The Port Harcourt International Airport, which was closed in mid-2006 for rehabilitation, resumed operations in December 2007 for domestic daylight flights. Installations and improvements needed for international flights and night operations are expected to be completed in 2008.

Special Circumstances: Permission is required to take photographs or videotape any government buildings, airports, bridges, and in areas where the military is operating throughout the country. These sites include, but are not limited to, Federal buildings in the Three Arms Zone (Presidential palace area, National Assembly, Supreme Court/Judiciary) of the capital of Abuja, other government buildings around the country and foreign Embassies and Consulates. Many restricted sites are not clearly marked, and application of these restrictions is subject to interpretation by the Nigerian security services and can result in detention. Permission may be obtained from Nigeria's State Security Services, but even permission may not prevent the imposition of penalties or detention. Penalties for unauthorized photography or videography may include confiscation of the still or video camera, exposure of the film or deletion of film footage, a demand for payment of a fine or bribe, and/or detention, arrest, or physical assault. For these reasons, visitors to Nigeria should avoid taking still photos or videotaping in and around areas that are potentially restricted sites, including any government sites.

The Nigerian currency, the naira, is non-convertible. U.S. dollars are widely accepted. Nigeria is a cash economy, and it is usually necessary to carry sufficient currency to cover the expenses of a planned visit, which makes travelers an attractive target for criminals. Credit cards are rarely accepted beyond a few upscale hotels. Due to credit card fraud in Nigeria and by cohorts in the United States, credit card use should be considered carefully. While Citibank cashes some traveler's checks, most other banks do not. American Express does not have offices in Nigeria; however, Thomas Cook does. Inter-bank transfers are often difficult to accomplish, though money transfer services such as Western Union are available. For further information, visitors may contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Nigerian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Nigeria are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Nigeria are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Nigeria and other general information.Americans withoutInternet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 1075 Diplomatic Drive, Central Area, Abuja. American citizens can call [234] (9) 461-4176 during office hours (Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.). For after-hours emergencies, call [234] (9) 461-4000. The email address for the Consular Section in Abuja is ConsularAbuja@state.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General is located at 2 Walter Carrington Crescent, Victoria Island, Lagos. American citizens can call [234] (1) 261-1215 during office hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.). For after-hours emergencies, call [234] (1) 261-1414, 261-0050, 261-0078, 261-0139, or 261-6477. The e-mail address for the Consular Section in Lagos is Lagoscons2@state.gov.

The Embassy and Consulate website is http://nigeria.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State

Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Nigeria is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Nigerian adoption laws are complex and vary from state to state. In general, prospective adoptive parents who intend to adopt a specific child must first obtain temporary custody of the child. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to obtain information on adopting in individual states through the state social welfare office where the adoption will take place.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Nigeria, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Nigeria also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Nigerian law requires that a parent-child relationship be established before the court decision can be considered final. Each state determines the length of time it takes to establish the parent-child relationship.

Age Requirements: In Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Rivers, prospective adoptive parents must be at least 25 years of age and 21 years older than the child. For married couples, at least one parent must meet the age requirements.

Marriage Requirements: Both single individuals and married couples may adopt. Note that a single person will not be allowed to adopt a child of the opposite sex, except in extraordinary circumstances. In most states, married couples must adopt jointly.

Income Requirements: Nigeria does not have any income requirements for intercountry adoptions.

Who Can Be Adopted? In addition to Nigeria's requirements for the adoption eligibility, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Nigeria's Adoption Authority: The Magistrate Court (from the state where the child resides)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Nigeria is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Nigeria to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS. If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Nigeria will provide you with a referral to a child.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The social welfare office of the state where the child is located is considered the adoption authority. The application for adoption originates from the social welfare office of the state where the child is located. The Government office responsible for adoptions in Nigeria is the magistrate court of the state where the child is located.

Role of the Court: In most Nigerian states, the adoption process begins when an application for an adoption order is made in accordance with local requirements and submitted to the registrar of the competent court. The court then assigns a guardian ad litem for the child to represent him/her in the adoption proceedings. The guardian ad litem is the social welfare officer in charge of the area where the juvenile resides, or a probation officer or some other person suitably qualified in the opinion of the court of assignment. The guardian ad litem investigates the circumstances related to the proposed adoption and files a report to the court. The guardian ad litem represents the child's interests until the magistrate questions the prospective adoptive parents and grants the adoption order giving legal custody to the adoptive parents.

Role of Adoption Agencies: The United States Consulate General in Lagos is not aware of any legally recognized Nigerian agencies that assist adopting parents or any licensed Nigerian adoption agencies. Prospective adoptive parents can seek the assistance from a Nigerian attorney to facilitate the adoption process.

Adoption Application: The application is submitted to the registrar of the competent court.

Time Frame: Adoption procedures can take from a few months to over a year depending on the child's state of origin.

Adoption Fees: There are no standard fees charged apart from small filing fees to the court.

Documents Required: The paperwork involved in Nigerian adoptions is extensive and time-consuming to locate. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to consult with a Nigerian attorney about the document requirements for the state where they are adopting. The following is a list of some of the required documents:

- Birth certificates
- Marriage certificates
- Divorce decrees (where applicable)

Additional documents may be requested. If you are asked to provide proof that a document from the United States is authentic, we can help.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: What does Nigeria require of the adoptive parents after the adoption? Nigerian law has no post-adoption requirements for adoptive parents. Parents should confirm any post-adoption requirements with their legal representatives.

Contact Information
United States Consulate General, Lagos
2 Walter Carrington Crescent
Victoria Island, Lagos
Nigeria
Tel: (234)(1) 261-0050, 261-0078

United States Embassy in Nigeria
Abuja, Nigeria
Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive
Central Business District, Abuja, FCT
Tel: (234)(9)461-4262
Fax: (234)(9)-461-4171
Email: Consularabuja@state.gov.

Nigeria's Adoption Authority: Magistrate Court (where child resides)

Embassy of the Republic of Nigeria
3519 International Court, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 775-8400
Fax: (202) 775-1385
Internet:
http://www.nigeriaembassyusa.org/f_index.html

Consulate General of Nigeria, Atlanta
8060 Roswell Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30350
Tel: (770) 394-6261
Fax: (770) 394-4671
Email: info@nigeria-consulate-atl.org
Internet:
http://www.nigeria-consulate-atl.org

Consulate General of Nigeria, New York
828 2nd Avenue, 10th Floor
New York, New York 10017
Tel: (212) 850-2200
Email: info@nigeriamission.com
Internet:
http://www.nigeriahouse.com

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

Travel Warning

December 2, 2008

The U.S. Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Nigeria and recommends avoiding all but essential travel to the Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers. Violent crime is a problem in Lagos and other large cities as well as on the roads between cities. Tension between some Muslim and Christian communities, and between ethnic groups, occasionally results in violence, but is not directed specifically against American citizens. This replaces the Travel Warning for Nigeria dated October 30, 2007, to note restrictions on travel to the Delta region due to violence and to clarify regions of concern.

American citizens should defer all but essential travel to the Niger Delta states of Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers because of the continued risks of kidnapping, robbery, and other armed attacks in these areas, especially against oil-related facilities and other infrastructure. A loose alliance of militant groups has conducted a number of attacks, mostly in Rivers state, against oil installations and posts of the Nigerian military's Joint Task Force (JTF), which is attempting to eradicate the militant camps. Since January 2008, over 44 foreign national oil workers or businesspeople in parts of the Niger Delta region have been kidnapped from off-shore and land-based oil facilities, residential compounds, and public roadways. The Nigerian government considers militant camps and surrounding areas in the Delta region states of Delta, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, and Rivers to be conflict areas. Travel by foreigners to these areas without prior consultation and coordination with local security authorities is not recommended, as the Nigerian Government may see this activity as inappropriate and potentially illegal. Nigerian authorities detained six American citizens, including journalists, on six separate occasions, in this same region in 2008. The Nigerian government interrogated these Americans for lengthy periods without bringing formal charges, and ultimately deported them. Journalists are required to obtain a license from the Ministry of Information prior to traveling to conflict areas in the Niger Delta region states.

Many foreign oil companies operating in the Niger Delta states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers have implemented "essential travel only" policies for their personnel. The U.S. Mission currently requires advance permission for U.S. Government travel to these states, as well as the states of Edo and Imo, given the safety and security risk assessments, and the U.S. Embassy or Consulate's limited ability to provide assistance to people detained by Nigerian authorities in these states. American citizens who are resident in these Niger Delta states are advised to review their personal security in light of the information contained in this Travel Warning when deciding whether to remain.

Violent crime committed by individuals and gangs, as well as by some persons wearing police and military uniforms, is an ongoing problem, especially at night. Crime is particularly acute in Lagos. Traveling outside of major cities during hours of darkness is not recommended due to both crime and road safety concerns. Visitors to Nigeria, including American citizens, have been victims of armed robbery on the airport road from Lagos and Abuja during both daylight and nighttime hours. Some visitors and resident Americans have experienced armed muggings, assaults, burglary, kidnappings, and extortion, often involving violence, as well as carjackings, roadblock robberies, and armed break-ins.

Religious tension between some Muslim and Christian communities occasionally results in acts of isolated communal violence that could erupt quickly and without warning. So far, American citizens have not been directly targeted. The states of Kano and Kaduna are particularly volatile. Rival ethnic groups have clashed violently in Delta state around Warri city and in North-Central Plateau state.

U.S. citizens who travel to or reside in Nigeria are strongly advised to register through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

U.S. citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy in Abuja or the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos for up-to-date information on any restrictions. The U.S. Embassy in Abuja is open Monday-Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The U.S. Consulate General in Lagos is open Monday-Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The U.S. Embassy in Abuja can be contacted by phone at [234](9)461-4000. American citizens may contact the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos at [234](1)460-3600. You may also visit the U.S. Mission's website at http://nigeria.usembassy.gov.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's most recent Country Specific Information for Nigeria and the Worldwide Caution, which are located on the Department's web site at http://www.travel.state.gov. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



NORWAY

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Norway

PROFILE

Geography

Area: (including the island territories of Svalbard and Jan Mayen) 385,199 sq. km.; approximately the same size as New Mexico.

Cities: (2007) Capital—Oslo (pop. 839,423, including suburbs). Other cities—Bergen (248,668), Stavanger (212,691, including suburbs) Trondheim (166,304).

Terrain: Rugged with high plateaus, steep fjords, mountains, and fertile valleys. Norway's northern regions lie within the Arctic Circle, where there are borders with Finland and Russia, while much of the long border with Sweden runs through the Scandinavian mountains. This range, sloping to the south-east, is 1,530 km in length and has its highest areas in the south of Norway, where Galdhøpiggen, Norway's highest point, reaches a peak of 2,469 m (8,100 ft). Almost all of Norway is high ground; in the north the country becomes narrower, with mountains overlooking the fjords and the islands along the coast, and in the centre and south the mountains form a high plateau, where there are permanent ice fields. The only area of low ground is around the Oslo fjord and along the coast to Stavanger. The principal rivers are the Glomma, the Lågen and Tanaelv. Some 6% of Norway's total area of 323,802 sq km (125,020 sq miles) is inland water—mostly long, thin lakes. Two-thirds of the country is tundra, rock or snowfields, and one-quarter is forested, so good agricultural land is rare. Less than 3% of Norway is cultivated, and these areas are in the south-east and in the river valleys. The mountains of Norway are rich in minerals; there are deposits of iron ore, copper, titanium, coal, zinc, lead, nickel and pyrites, and large offshore reserves of petroleum and natural gas.

Climate: Temperate along the coast, colder inland. Although Norway crosses the Arctic Circle, the climate is not as cold as might be expected, since the North Atlantic Drift brings warm, damp air to the whole country. The geographical conditions give rise to great climatic variation: it is cooler inland and to the north, where winters are long and dark with much snow, but where the sun shines day and night for part of the summer. It is wetter on the west coast, where about 2,000 mm (78.7 ins) of rain falls annually on Bergen; the mean annual rainfall in the capital, Oslo, is 730 mm, most of which falls during the summer. Temperatures in Oslo are highest in July, when the average is 17.3°C (64°F), and lowest in January, when the average falls to -4.7°C (24°F).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Norwegian(s).

Population: (2007) 4,769,100.

Annual growth rate: (2006) 0.34%.

Population density: (2006) 15.2 per sq. km (excluding inland water).

Ethnic groups: Norwegian (Nordic, Alpine, Baltic), Sami, a racial-cultural minority of 40,000; foreign nationals (415,000) from Nordic and other countries.

Religions: (2004) Church of Norway (Lutheran), 88%; Pentecostal Christian, 1%; Roman Catholic, 1%; Other Christian, 2.4%; Muslim, 1.8%; other, none, or unknown, 8.1%.

Languages: Bokmål Norwegian (official), Nynorsk Norwegian (official), small Sami- and Finnish-speaking minorities, English is widely spoken (Sami is official in six municipalities).

Education: Years compulsory—10. Literacy—100%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2007)—3.1 deaths/1,000. Life expectancy (2006 est.)—men 78.2 yrs; women 82.7 yrs.

Work force: (2007) 2.5million: Legislators, senior officials and managers—5.8%, Professionals–11.3%, Technicians and associate professionals–25.2%, Clerks–6.9%, Service workers and market sales workers–24.2%, Agricultural, forestry and fishery workers–2.5%, Craft and related trades workers–11.3%, Plant

and machine operators and assemblers–7.3%, Other occupations and unspecified–5.3%.

Government

Type: Hereditary constitutional monarchy.
Independence: 1905.
Constitution: May 17, 1814.
Government branches: Executive—king (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). The Council is appointed by the monarch in accordance with the will of the Storting, to which the Council is responsible. Legislative—modified unicameral parliament (Storting, 165 members, elected for four years by universal adult suffrage). Judicial—Supreme Court, appellate courts, city and county courts.
Political parties: Labor, Progress, Conservative, Socialist Left, Christian Democratic, Center, Liberal.
Suffrage: Universal over 18.
Political subdivisions: 19 fylker (counties) and 431 municipalities, and Svalbard.
National holidays: (2008) January 1 (New Year's Day); March 20 (Maundy Thursday); March 21 (Good Friday); March 24 (Easter Monday); May 1 (Labor Day, Ascension Day); May 12 (Whit Monday); May 17 (Constitution Day); December 24 (Christmas Eve); December 25-26 (Christmas); December 31 (New Year's Eve).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $347 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 3.2%.
Per capita GDP: (2006) Purchasing power parity $73,800.
Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, iron ore, copper, lead, zinc, titanium, pyrites, nickel, fish, timber, hydropower.
Arable land: 2.7%.
Agriculture: Products—dairy, livestock, grain (barley, oats, wheat), potatoes and other vegetables, fruits and berries, furs, wool, pork, beef, veal, fish.
Industry: Types—petroleum and gas, food processing, shipbuilding, pulp and paper products, aluminum, ferroalloys, iron and steel, nickel, zinc, nitrogen, fertilizers, petrochemicals, hydroelectric power, refinery products, timber, mining, textiles, fishing, transport equipment, electronics.
Trade: (2007) Exports (f.o.b.)—$159.2 billion. Major markets: UK 26.8%, Germany 12.3%, Netherlands 10.2%, France 8.3%, US 6.2%, Sweden 7.5%. Imports (f.o.b.)—$ 104.7 billion. Major suppliers: Sweden 14.5%, Germany 13.5%, UK 7%, Denmark 6.2%, China 6%, US 4.8%.
GDP by activity: (2007) Oil and gas—23%; Manufacturing, mining, electricity, building and construction–16%; General Government–14%; VAT etc. 11%; Commodities, vehicle repairs etc.–7%; Communication and transport–6%; Agriculture, forestry and fishing –1%; Other services (commercial, housing, financial, private health/education, hotel & catering etc)–22%.

PEOPLE

Ethnically, Norwegians are predominantly Germanic, although in the far north there are communities of Sami who came to the area more than 10,000 years ago, probably from central Asia. In recent years, Norway has become home to increasing numbers of immigrants, foreign workers, and asylum-seekers from various parts of the world. Immigrants now total over 400,000; some have obtained Norwegian citizenship.

Although the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the state church, Norway has complete religious freedom. Education is free through the university level and is compulsory from ages 6 to 16. At least 12 months of military service and training are required of every eligible male. Norway's health system includes free hospital care, physicians' compensation, cash benefits during illness and pregnancy, and other medical and dental plans. There is a public pension system.

Norway is in the top rank of nations in the number of books printed per capita, even though Norwegian is one of the world's smallest language groups. Norway's most famous writer is the dramatist Henrik Ibsen. Artists Edvard Munch and Christian Krogh were Ibsen's contemporaries. Munch drew part of his inspiration from Europe and in turn exercised a strong influence on later European expressionists. Sculptor Gustav Vigeland has a permanent exhibition in the Vigeland Sculpture Park in Oslo. Musical development in Norway since Edvard Grieg has followed either native folk themes or, more recently, international trends.

HISTORY

The Viking period (9th to 11th centuries) was one of national unification and expansion. The unification of Viking settlements along the Norwegian coast was well advanced by the death, in 1030, of St. Olav, who had overseen the population's conversion to Christianity. A period of civil war ended in the 13th century when Norway expanded its control overseas to parts of the British Isles, Iceland, and Greenland. Norwegian territorial power peaked in 1265, and the following year the Isle of Man and the Hebrides were ceded to Scotland. Competition from the Hanseatic League and the spread of the Black Death weakened the country. The Norwegian royal line died out in 1387, as the country underwent a period of union with Denmark under King Olaf; union with Sweden followed in 1397. Attempts to keep all three countries united failed, with Sweden finally breaking away in 1521. By 1586, Norway had become part of the Danish kingdom.

The Napoleonic War saw Denmark side with France in 1807, following the British attack on Copenhagen. With Sweden joining the coalition against Napoleon in 1813, the Treaty of Kiel in 1814 transferred Norway to the Swedish King following Denmark's defeat. The Norwegians ignored this international agreement and chose the Danish Prince as their king and adopted the liberal Eidsvoll Constitution. After a few months a Swedish-Norwegian union was agreed under the Swedish crown, with Norway being granted its own



parliament (Storting) and government. However, the Swedish King attempted unsuccessfully to revise this constitution in the 1820s and 1830s, and parliamentary control over the executive was only obtained following a struggle during the 1870s and 1880s. Norwegian nationalism was associated with the creation of a national standard for written Norwegian based on dialects, rather than the Danish-based official language. There were numerous disputes between the Norwegian Government and Sweden, notably over requests for a Norwegian consular service to reflect the importance of Norway's expanding merchant fleet. In 1905 the union between the two countries was dissolved following two plebiscites in Norway, one opting for independence and one for a constitutional monarchy. Danish Prince Carl was unanimously elected as King by the

Storting in 1905 and took the name of Haakon VII (after the kings of independent Norway) on his arrival in Norway. Haakon died in 1957 and was succeeded by his son, Olav V, who died in January 1991. Upon Olav's death, his son Harald was crowned as King Harald V.

Norway was a nonbelligerent during World War I, but as a result of the German invasion and occupation during World War II, Norwegians generally became skeptical of the concept of neutrality and turned instead to collective security. During the German occupation 736 Norwegian Jews perished; Norwegians saved more than 900 Jews by hiding them and smuggling them across the border into Sweden. Norway was one of the signers of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 and was a founding member of the United Nations. The first UN General Secretary, Trygve Lie, was a Norwegian. Under the terms of the will of Alfred Nobel, the Storting (parliament) elects the five members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee who award the Nobel Peace Prize to champions of peace.

GOVERNMENT

The functions of the king are mainly ceremonial, but he has influence as the symbol of national unity. Although the 1814 constitution grants important executive powers to the king, these are almost always exercised by the Council of Ministers in the name of the king (King's Council). The Council of Ministers consists of a prime minister—chosen by the political parties represented in the Storting—and other ministers. The 169 members of the Storting are elected from 19 fylker (counties) for 4-year terms according to a complicated system of proportional representation. After elections, the Storting divides into two chambers, the Odelsting and the Lagting, which meet separately or jointly depending on the legislative issue under consideration.

The special High Court of the Realm hears impeachment cases; the regular courts include the Supreme Court (17 permanent judges and a president), courts of appeal, city and county courts, the labor court, and conciliation councils. Judges attached to regular courts are appointed by the king in council after nomination by the Ministry of Justice.

Each fylke is headed by a governor appointed by the king in council, with one governor exercising authority in both Oslo and the adjacent county of Akershus.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Until the 1981 election, Norway had been governed by majority Labor Party governments since 1935, except for three periods (1963, 1965-71, and 1972-73). The Labor Party lost its majority in the Storting in the 1981 elections.

From 1981 to 1997, governments alternated between Labor minority governments and Conservative-led coalition governments. The first government coalition led by Christian Democrat Kjell Magne Bondevik came to power in 1997, but fell in March 2000 over the issue of proposed gas-fired power plants, opposed by Bondevik due to their impact on climate change. The Labor Party's Jens Stoltenberg, a Brundtland protégé, took over in a minority Labor government but lost power in the September 2001 election when Labor posted its worse performance since World War I. Bondevik once again became Prime Minister, this time as head of a minority government with the Conservatives and Liberals in a coalition heavily dependent upon the right-populist Progress Party.

The September 2005 elections ended the Bondevik government, and the Labor party came back with its most substantial victory in years, securing 60 of the 169 seats in Parliament. While this election result once more made Labor the undisputed heavyweight in Norwegian politics, Stoltenberg, chastened by his previous stint as the head of a minority government, reached out to the far left Socialist Left party and agrarian Center party to form a coalition government that commanded a majority of seats in Parliament. The current government is the first majority government in Norway in over 20 years, but the governing coalition has had to bridge substantial policy differences to build this majority.

The government that took office in October 2005 issued a Northern Policy that represented a compromise between petroleum, fishing and environmental interests in the use of Norway's northern offshore area. This "High North" strategy has remained one of the constant themes of this government and encompasses many of the government's highest priorities, including environmental protection, responsible development of energy resources, maintaining a security presence in the Arctic and developing Norway's relations with Russia.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **HARALD V**
Prime Minister: **Jens STOLTENBERG**
Min. of Children & Equality: **Anniken HUITFELDT**
Min. of Culture & Church Affairs: **Trond GISKE**
Min. of Defense: **Anne-Grete STROM-ERICHSEN**
Min. of Education: **Bard Vegar SOLHJELL**
Min. of the Environment & Development Cooperation: **Erik SOLHEIM**
Min. of Finance: **Kristin HALVORSEN**
Min. of Fisheries & Coastal Affairs: **Helga PEDERSEN**
Min. of Food & Agriculture: **Lars Peder BREKK**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Jonas Gahr STORE**
Min. of Health & Social Care: **Bjarne Hakon HANSSEN**
Min. of International Development: **Erik SOLHEIM**
Min. of Justice & Police: **Knut STORBERGET**
Min. of Knowledge: **Oystein DJUPEDAL**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **Dag Terje ANDERSEN**

Min. of Local Govt. & Regional Development: **Magnhild Meltveit KLEPPA**
Min. of Modernization: **Heidi Grande ROYS**
Min. of Petroleum & Energy: **Terje RIIS-JOHANSEN**
Min. of Research & Higher Education: **Tora AASLAND**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Sylvia BRUSTAD**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Liv Signe NAVARSETE**
Governor, Bank of Norway: **Svein GJEDREM**
Ambassador to the US: **Wegger Christian STROMMEN**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Johan Ludvik LOVALD**

Norway maintains an embassy in the United States at 2720 34th Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-333-6000) and consulates in Houston, Minneapolis (may be closed in 2008), New York, and San Francisco.

ECONOMY

Norway is one of the world's richest countries in per capita terms. It has an important stake in promoting a liberal environment for foreign trade. Its large shipping fleet is one of the most modern among maritime nations. Metals, pulp and paper products, chemicals, shipbuilding, and fishing are the most significant traditional industries.

Norway's emergence as a major oil and gas producer in the mid-1970s transformed the economy. Large sums of investment capital poured into the offshore oil sector, leading to greater increases in Norwegian production costs and wages than in the rest of Western Europe up to the time of the global recovery of the mid-1980s. The influx of oil revenue also permitted Norway to expand an already extensive social welfare system. Norway has established a state Petroleum Fundthat exceeded $388 billion by end of December 2007. The fund is primarily designed to help finance government programs once oil and gas resources become depleted. Norway is currently enjoying large foreign trade surpluses thanks to high oil prices. Although Norway's unemployment rate has had a slight increase due to the international credit crisis it still remains low (2.8%- range). As yet, the country does not have a significant industrial or manufacturing base and, in banking and financial services, the country is in the process of liberalizing and consolidating the industry. Norway's restricted labor market has limited the country's ability for mainland growth, although growth in the service sector has been stronger than in manufacturing. Labor costs have increased at a rate higher than its major trade rivals, causing a continued loss in Norway's competitive advantage. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has applauded Norway's strong economy, with growth expected to continue into 2008.

Norway voted against joining the European Union (EU) in a 1994 referendum. With the exception of the agricultural and fisheries sectors, however, Norway enjoys free trade with the EU under the framework of the European Economic Area. This agreement aims to apply the four freedoms of the EU's internal market (goods, persons, services, and capital) to Norway. As a result, Norway normally adopts and implements most EU directives. The present government has agreed not to open the question of full membership of the EU during the 2005–09 legislative term. Norwegian monetary policy is aimed at maintaining a stable exchange rate for the krone against European currencies, of which the euro is a key operating parameter. Norway is not a member of the EU's Economic and Monetary Union and does not have a fixed exchange rate. Its principal trading partners are in the EU; the United States ranks sixth.

Energy Resources

Offshore hydrocarbon deposits were discovered in the 1960s, and development began in the 1970s. The growth of the petroleum sector has contributed significantly to Norwegian economic vitality. Current petroleum production capacity is approximately 2.6 million barrels per day. Production in gas has increased rapidly during the past several years as new fields are opened, with crude oil production in decline. Total production in 2007 was about 238 million cubic meters of oil equivalents, approximately 50% of which was crude oil. This represents a decline in crude oil production over the past year, accompanied by sharp increases in gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) production. Hydropower provides nearly all of Norway's electricity, and all of the gas and most of the oil produced is exported. Production increased significantly in the 1990s as new fields come on stream.

Norway is the world's fifth-largest oil exporter and third largest gas exporter, providing much of western Europe's crude oil and gas requirements. In 2006, Norwegian oil and gas exports accounted for over 50% of total merchandise exports. In addition, offshore exploration and production have stimulated onshore economic activities. Foreign companies, including many American ones, participate actively in the petroleum sector.

Petroleum resources are expected to become less abundant and less commercially exploitable over time and may be reaching a plateau. However, innovative use of extraction technologies has extended the lives of fields far beyond their expected closures. Declines in petroleum extraction revenue may be offset by increased revenue from the extraction of natural gas. For example, Norwegian natural gas production is projected to increase through new and existing fields, such as Snohvit and Troll. Note, however, that Snohvit's production has been severely affected by significant technological setbacks, including a cessation of operations in March 2008. Further, future gas production from the Troll (West) field has been limited by the government due to the field's declining oil resources. Given that the energy industry affects virtually every sector in the economy, diversification remains Norway's greatest challenge.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Norway supports international cooperation and the peaceful settlement of disputes, recognizing the need for maintaining national defense through collective security. Accordingly, the cornerstones of Norwegian policy are active membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and support for the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Norway also pursues a policy of economic, social, and cultural cooperation with other Nordic countries—Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland—through the Nordic Council and bilaterally. In addition to strengthening traditional ties with developed countries, Norway seeks to build friendly relations with developing countries and has undertaken humanitarian and development aid efforts with selected African and Asian nations. Norway also is dedicated to encouraging democracy, assisting refugees, promoting a global response to climate change and protecting human rights throughout the world.

U.S.-NORWAY RELATIONS

The United States and Norway enjoy a long tradition of friendly association. The relationship is strengthened by the millions of Norwegian-Americans in the United States and by about 20,000 U.S. citizens residing in Norway. The two countries enjoy an active cultural exchange, both officially and privately.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

OSLO (E) Henrik Ibsens gate 48, 0244 OSLO, APO/FPO AmEmbassy Oslo, PSC 69 Box 1000, APO AE 09707, [47]2130-8550, Fax +47-2243-0777, Workweek: 0800–1630, Website: http://oslo.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Olivia Lindenberg
AMB OMS:	Kelly Taylor
ECO/COM:	Edward Canuel
FM:	Jesus Vidal
MGT:	Nathan Bluhm
POL/ECO:	Kristen Bauer
AMB:	Ben Whitney
CON:	Maria Silver
DCM:	Kevin Johnson
PAO:	Hilary Olsin-Windecker
GSO:	Michael Delauder
RSO:	Colin Sullivan
AGR:	Resident Stockholm
CLO:	John Woynicki
DAO:	Capt. Russell Smith
EEO:	Maria Silver
FAA:	Resident London
FMO:	Nathan Bluhm
ICASS Chair:	Maria Silver
IMO:	Andrew Hoff
IRS:	Resident London
ISO:	Janet Van Coblijn
ISSO:	Daniel Malone
LEGATT:	Resident Copenhagen
State ICASS:	Maria Silver

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 10, 2008

Country Description: Norway is a highly developed stable democracy with a modern economy. The cost of living in Norway is high and tourist facilities are well developed and widely available.

Entry Requirements: Norway is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Norway for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet.

Contact the Royal Norwegian Embassy at 2720 34th Street NW, Washington, DC 20008-2714, Tel: 1-202-333-6000, web site: http://www.norway.org or the nearest Norwegian Consulate. Consulates are located in Houston, Minneapolis, New York City, and San Francisco. Information can also be obtained from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration at http://www.udi.no.

Safety and Security: Norway remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Norway's open borders with its European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. The U.S. government remains deeply concerned about the heightened threat of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests abroad. In the post-9/11 environment, Norway shares with the rest of the world an increased threat of international Islamic terrorism. Norway was among a list of countries named as legitimate targets in al-Qa'ida audiotapes released as recently as, 2006. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the State Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime Information: Norway has a relatively low crime rate. Most crimes involve the theft of personal property. Residential burglaries, auto theft, and vandalism to parked cars also occur. Most high-end value vehicles, especially in Oslo, have visible alarm system indicators to discourage joy riders or thieves. Persons who appear affluent or disoriented may become targets of pick-pockets and purse-snatchers, especially during the peak tourist season (May-September). Thieves frequently target tourists in airports, train stations, and hotels, particularly lobby/reception and restaurant areas.

Often such thieves work in pairs and use distraction as a method to steal purses or briefcases. While passports are frequently stolen in the course of these thefts, money, credit cards, and jewelry are the actual objects of interest. In some cases stolen passports

are recovered. Violent crime, although rare, occurs and appears to be increasing. Some thieves or burglars may have weapons.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

Norway has a program to provide financial compensation to victims who suffer serious criminal injuries. Claimants can obtain application forms from the Norwegian Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority at http://www.voldsoffererstatning.no/index.php?id=10. Please contact the U.S. Embassy in Oslo for further information. For further information about possible U.S. compensation, see our information for Victims of Crime.

The national emergency telephone numbers in Norway, equivalent to the "911" emergency line, are: Police 112, Fire 110, Ambulance 113.

Medical Facilities And Health Information: Medical facilities are widely available and of high quality, but may be limited outside the larger urban areas. The remote and sparse populations in northern Norway, and the dependency on ferries to cross fjords of western Norway, may affect transportation and ready access to medical facilities. The U.S. Embassy in Oslo maintains a list of emergency clinics in major cities.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Norway.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: Healthcare in Norway is very expensive and healthcare providers sometimes require payment at time of service. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Norway is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Public transportation in Norway is generally safe, and the maintenance and condition of urban roads are generally good. Rural road conditions are fair and the availability of roadside assistance is limited. Most roadways beyond the city limits of Oslo and other major cities tend to be simple two-lane roads. In mountainous areas of Norway, the roads also tend to be narrow and winding, with many tunnels. The northerly latitude can also cause road conditions to vary greatly, depending on weather and time of year. Many mountain roads are closed due to snow from late fall to late spring. The use of winter tires is mandatory on all motor vehicles from November to April.

Norwegian law requires that drivers always use their vehicle headlights when driving. Norwegian law also requires drivers to yield to vehicles coming from the right. In some, but not all, instances, major roads with "right of way" are marked. Seatbelts are mandatory for drivers and passengers.

Norway has some of the strictest laws in Europe concerning driving under the influence of alcohol; those laws prescribe heavy penalties for drivers convicted of having even a low blood alcohol level. Frequent road checks with mandatory breathalyzer tests and the promise of stiff jail sentences encourage alcohol-free driving. The maximum legal blood alcohol content level for driving a car in Norway is .02 per cent.

Automatic cameras placed by the police along roadways help to maintain speed limits, which are often lower than in other European countries. Fines–and sometimes even jail time–are imposed for violations.

For specific information concerning Norwegian driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Norwegian Tourist Board office at PO Box 4649, Grand Central Station, New York, New York 10163-4649 (tel.: 212-885-9700; fax: 212/885-9710) or visit their web site at http://www.norway.org/travel.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government ofNorway's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Norway's air carrier

operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Norway'slaws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Norway are strict and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living in or visiting Norway are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Norway.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located in Oslo near the Royal Palace at Henrik Ibsensgate 48; tel. 47/2244-8550 (24 hours), consular fax 47/2256-2751. The Embassy's web site is http://norway.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: There are very few children eligible for intercountry adoption from Norway, with a long waiting list of Norwegian prospective adoptive parents. While legally possible, intercountry adoption of a Norwegian orphan by foreigners is unlikely.

Patterns of Immigration: For at least the last five years, no Norwegian orphans have received U.S. immigrant visas. Within Norway, in 2003 (the latest year for which statistics are available), 870 orphans were adopted, most of them step-children.

Adoption Authority: The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (known by the Norwegian acronym "Bufdir"), a unit of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, is the authority on both domestic and intercountry adoptions in Norway. The Act on Adoption, which came into force on January 1, 1987, and government guidelines constitute the regulations for adoptions in Norway. Bufdir supervises the work of the Norwegian adoption organizations, maintains central adoption records and assigns a government grant to those who receive approval to adopt a child. Bufdir is also the Central Authority for the Hague Intercountry Adoption Convention, which came into force for Norway January 1, 1998.

Barne-ungdoms-og familiedirektoratet
Postboks 8113 Dep
Universitetsgata 7, 0032 Oslo
Tel: 47/2404-4000
Fax: 47/2404-4001
Email: post@bufdir.no
Web sites: www.bufdir.no

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Applications by parents who are 45 years or older than the prospective child are given additional scrutiny. There are cases, for example, in which one of the spouses is considerably younger than the other, or the family has already adopted a child. The prospective parents must show documents certifying their good health status, stable financial situation and have a clean police record. Those who apply together must be married, generally for at least two years. Persons living in registered partnership are not eligible to apply to adopt a child from outside Norway.

Residency Requirements: Temporary visitors to Norway cannot apply to adopt in Norway.

Time Frame: In general, it takes close to a year to prepare the required reports about the applying family.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

Adoption Procedures: In nearly all cases, the adoption is arranged through one of three accredited adoption organizations (specified on Bufdir web site). In intercountry adoptions, the Professional Board for Adoptions, composed of a medical doctor and two psychologists/psychiatrists, is responsible for the procedure.

If Bufdir reaches a negative conclusion about a requested adoption, the matter may be appealed to the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

Required Documents: Documentary requirements include, but are not limited to:

- a social report detailing the prospective adoptive parents' background, marriage, everyday life, interests and motives for wanting to adopt a child from abroad;
- the social worker's written impression of the applicants and their suitability to be adoptive parents;
- birth and marriage certificates;
- doctor's reports;
- police certificates; and,
- documentation of financial standing.

Royal Norwegian Embassy in Washington
2720 34th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202/333-6000
Fax: 202/337-0870
Email: emb.washington@mfa.no
Web site: www.norway.org/Embassy

Norway has Consulates General in New York, Houston, San Francisco and Minneapolis. See http://www.norway.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Henrik Ibsens Gate 48
0244 Oslo
Tel: 47/2244-8550
Fax: 47/2256-2751
Email: osloamcit@state.gov
Web site: www.usa.no

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Norway may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Norway. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

Procedures: The Ministry of Justice and Police, the Department of Civil Affairs, has been designated as the Central Authority for Norway for the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

Being an administrative authority, the Ministry itself has no jurisdiction to make a decision on whether the child should be returned or not. This jurisdiction belongs entirely to the courts.

Immediately upon receiving an application from the Central Authority of another contracting state, the Ministry will give the application a preliminary examination, to ensure that it is in conformity with the formal conditions laid down by the Convention, and that the documents required in Article 8 are enclosed.

If that is not the case, the application will immediately by returned to the requesting state for completion, or the lacking information will be asked for more informally by telephone or telefax to the requesting state. If the documents are not in English or Norwegian, the transmitting authority will be asked to provide a translation.

When all formal requirements are met, the application will immediately be sent to the competent local court for decision. The Act of 8 July 1988, Section 18, paragraph 1, lays down that the enforcement provisions of the Children's Act of 8 April 1981 and the general provisions of the Enforcement of Claims Act of 26 June 1992, shall apply correspondingly to decisions on the return of children.

The courts may also adopt an interim decision for the period up to the final judgment in the case, and may even adopt an interim decision before proceedings are instituted.

According to the Act of 8 July 1988, Section 18, paragraph 2, the judge may order that the Child Welfare Authorities shall take over custody of the child until the Hague application is finally decided, but this seldom happens.

According to the Act of 8 July 1988, Section 16, paragraph 1, the courts are to act quickly and without delay in dealing with applications for return of abducted children from another contracting state. If a court has not decided an application within six weeks of the application's filing, it shall report to the Central Authority of the requesting state the reasons for the delay—if the applicant or requesting state so demand.

Norway has made a reservation according to Article 42 of the Convention, provided for in Article 26, third paragraph. Norway will therefore not be obliged to assume any costs referred to in Article 26 that result from the participation of legal counsel or advisers, or from court proceedings, except insofar as those costs may be covered by Norway's system of legal aid and advice. An application for legal aid can be forwarded

through the Ministry to the competent authority (the County Governor).

Please note that the authority will do a means test of the application, based on the applicant's gross, net and capital income.

Norway has also made a reservation to Article 24 of the Convention. The Ministry will read and answer correspondence only in English. Correspondence in other languages will have to be translated by the submitting authority. The Office of Children's Issues is the U.S. Central Authority for the Hague Abduction Convention.

Central Authority for Norway
The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Police
Department of Civil Affairs
PO Box 8005 DEP.
N-0030 Oslo
Norway
Telephone: 011-47-2224 9090
Telefax: 011-47-22-242722
E-mail: postmottak@jd.dep.no

More Information: For further information and/or assistance in either preventing or responding to an international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



OMAN

Compiled from the June 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Sultanate of Oman

PROFILE

Geography

Area: About 309,500 sq. km. (approximately the size of the State of New Mexico). It is bordered on the north by the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), on the northwest by Saudi Arabia, and on the southwest by the Republic of Yemen. The Omani coastline stretches 3,165 km.

Cities: Capital—Muscat. Other cities—Salalah, Nizwa, Sohar, Sur.

Terrain: Mountains, plains, and arid plateau.

Climate: Hot and humid along the coast; hot and dry in the interior; summer monsoon in the far south.

People

Nationality: Noun—Oman. Adjective—Omani(s).

Population: (2006 est.) 3.20 million (includes 577,000 non-nationals).

Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 3.2%.

Ethnic groups: Arab, Baluchi, East African (Zanzabari), South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi).

Religions: Ibadhi; Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, Hindu, Christian.

Languages: Arabic (official), English, Baluchi, Urdu, Swahili, Hindi and Indian dialects.

Education: Literacy—approx. 80% (total population).

Health: (2006 est.) Infant mortality rate—18.28 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—73.62 years.

Work force: 920,000 total; Agriculture and fishing—approx. 50%.

Government

Type: Monarchy.

Constitution: None. On November 6, 1996, Sultan Qaboos issued a royal decree promulgating the Basic Statute which clarifies the royal succession, provides for a prime minister, bars ministers from holding interests in companies doing business with the government, establishes a bicameral parliament, and guarantees basic rights and responsibilities for Omani citizens.

Government branches: Executive—Sultan. Legislative—Majlis Oman (bicameral: State Council and Consultative Council). Judicial—Civil courts are divided into four departments: Criminal courts handle cases under the penal code; Shari'a (Islamic law) courts oversee personal status and family law issues; Commercial courts adjudicate business and commercial matters; Labor courts oversee labor and employment cases.

Political parties: None.

Suffrage: Universal adult.

Political subdivisions: Eight administrative regions—Muscat Governorate, Dhofar Governorate, Musandam Governorate, Al-Buraimi Governorate, Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhliya, Al Shariqiya, Al Wusta. There are 61 districts (wilayats).

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $39.50 billion.

Per capita GDP: (2006 est.) $13,845.

Real GDP growth rate: (2006 est.) 6.6%.

Natural resources: Oil, natural gas, copper, marble, limestone, gypsum, chromium.

Agriculture and fisheries: (2.1% of GDP). Products—dates, bananas, mangoes, alfalfa, other fruits and vegetables. Fisheries—kingfish, tuna, other fish, shrimp, lobster, abalone.

Industry: Types—crude petroleum (not including gas liquids) about 750,000 barrels per day; construction, petroleum refinery, copper mines and smelter, cement and various light industries.

Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$18.69 billion. Major markets—Japan (22.1%), China (15.2%), Thailand (12.6%), South Korea (19.9%), U.A.E. (9.4%). Imports—$8.83 billion: machinery, transportation equipment, manufactured goods, food, livestock, lubricants. Major suppliers—U.A.E. 27.6%, Japan 16.7%, U.K. 7.4%, U.S. 6.9%, Germany 5%.

PEOPLE

About 55% of the population lives in Muscat and the Batinah coastal plain northwest of the capital; about 215,000 live in the Dhofar (southern) region, and about 30,000 live in the remote Musandam Peninsula on the Strait of Hormuz. Some 660,000 expatriates live in Oman, most of whom are guest workers from South Asia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Philippines.

Since 1970, the government has given high priority to education in order to develop a domestic work force, which the government considers a vital factor in the country's economic and social progress. In 1986, Oman's first university, Sultan Qaboos University, opened. It has continued to expand, recently adding a law college, and remains the country's only major public university. In total, there are about 20 public post-secondary education institutions in Oman, including technical colleges, teacher training colleges, and health institutes. More than 300 full and partial scholarships are awarded each year for study abroad.

There are three private universities and 20 private post-secondary education institutions in Oman, including a banking college, a fire and safety college, a dentistry college, and business and management colleges. Most of these public and private post-secondary education institutions offer four-year degrees, while the remainder provide two-year post-secondary diplomas. Since 1999, the government has embarked on reforms in higher education designed to meet the needs of a growing population. Approximately 40% of Omani high school graduates pursue some type of post-secondary education.

HISTORY

Oman adopted Islam in the seventh century A.D., during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. Ibadhism, a form of Islam distinct from Shiaism and the "Orthodox" schools of Sunnism, became the dominant religious sect in Oman by the eighth century A.D. Oman is the only country in the Islamic world with a majority Ibadhi population. Ibadhism is known for its "moderate conservatism." One distinguishing feature of Ibadhism is the choice of ruler by communal consensus and consent.

Contact with Europe was established in 1508, when the Portuguese conquered parts of Oman's coastal region. Portugal's influence predominated for more than a century. Fortifications built during the Portuguese occupation can still be seen at Muscat.

Except for a period when Persia conquered parts of Oman, Oman has been an independent nation. After the Portuguese were expelled in 1650 and while resisting Persian attempts to establish hegemony, the Sultan of Oman extended his conquests to Zanzibar, other parts of the eastern coast of Africa, and portions of the southern Arabian Peninsula. During this period, political leadership shifted from the Ibadhi imams, who were elected religious leaders, to hereditary sultans who established their capital in Muscat. The Muscat rulers established trading posts on the Persian coast and also exercised a measure of control over the Makran coast (now Pakistan). By the early 19th century, Oman was the most powerful state in Arabia and had a major presence on the East African coast.

Oman was the object of Franco-British rivalry throughout the 18th century. During the 19th century, Oman and the United Kingdom concluded several treaties of friendship and commerce. In 1908, the British entered into an agreement of friendship. Their traditional association was confirmed in 1951 through a new treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation by which the United Kingdom recognized the Sultanate of Oman as a fully independent state.

When Sultan Sa'id bin Sultan Al-Busaid died in 1856, his sons quarreled over his succession. As a result of this struggle, the Omani empire—through the mediation of the British Government under the "Canning Award"—was divided in 1861 into two separate principalities—Zanzibar, with its East African dependencies, and Muscat and Oman. Zanzibar paid an annual subsidy to Muscat and Oman until its independence in early 1964.

During the late 19th and early to mid-20th centuries, the sultan in Muscat faced a rebellion by members of the Ibadhi sect residing in the interior of Oman, centered around the town of Nizwa, who wanted to be ruled exclusively by their religious leader, the Imam of Oman. This conflict was resolved temporarily by the Treaty of Seeb in 1920, which granted the imam autonomous rule in the interior, while recognizing the sovereignty of the sultan elsewhere.

Following the discovery of oil in the interior, the conflict flared up again in 1954, when the new imam led a sporadic 5-year rebellion against the sultan's efforts to extend government control into the interior. The insurgents were defeated in 1959 with British help. The sultan then terminated the Treaty of Seeb and eliminated the office of the imam. In the early 1960s, the imam, exiled to Saudi Arabia, obtained support from his hosts and other Arab governments, but this support ended in the 1980s.

In 1964, a separatist revolt began in Dhofar Province. Aided by communist and leftist governments such as the former South Yemen (People's Democratic Republic of Yemen), the rebels formed the Dhofar Liberation Front, which later merged with the Marxist-dominated Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf (PFLOAG). The PFLOAG's declared intention was to overthrow all traditional Arab Gulf regimes. In mid-1974, PFLOAG shortened its name to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO) and embarked on a political rather than a military approach to gain power in the other Gulf states, while continuing the guerrilla war in Dhofar.

With the help of British advisors, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id assumed power on July 23, 1970, in a palace coup



directed against his father, Sa'id bin Taymur, who later died in exile in London. The new sultan was confronted with insurgency in a country plagued by endemic disease, illiteracy, and poverty. One of the new sultan's first measures was to abolish many of his father's harsh restrictions, which had caused thousands of Omanis to leave the country, and to offer amnesty to opponents of the previous regime, many of whom returned to Oman. He also established a modern government structure and launched a major development program to upgrade educational and health facilities, build a modern infrastructure, and develop the country's natural resources.

In an effort to end the Dhofar insurgency, Sultan Qaboos expanded and re-equipped the armed forces and granted amnesty to all surrendered rebels while vigorously prosecuting the war in Dhofar. He obtained direct military support from the U.K., Iran, and Jordan. By early 1975, the guerrillas were confined to a 50-square kilometer (20-sq. mi.) area near the Yemen border and shortly thereafter were defeated. As the war drew to a close, civil action programs were given priority throughout Dhofar and helped win the allegiance of the people. The PFLO threat diminished further with the establishment of diplomatic relations in October 1983 between South Yemen and Oman, and South Yemen subsequently lessened propaganda and subversive activities against Oman. In late-1987, Oman opened an embassy in Aden, South Yemen, and appointed its first resident ambassador to the country.

Since his accession in 1970, Sultan Qaboos has balanced tribal, regional, and ethnic interests in composing the national administration. The Council of Ministers, which functions as a cabinet, consists of 30 ministers (but only 28 ministries), all directly appointed by Qaboos. The bicameral Majlis Oman's mandate is to review legislation pertaining to economic development and social services prior to its becoming law. The elected Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) may request ministers to appear before it. In early 2003, Sultan Qaboos declared universal suffrage for the October 2003 Majlis al-Shura elections. Two women were elected to sit with 81 male colleagues in those elections, which were observed to be free and fair. Roughly 194,000 Omani men and women, or 74% of registered voters, participated in the elections. Since 2003, Sultan Qaboos has also expanded the Majlis al-Dawla, or

State Council, to 59 members from 53, including nine women. The State Council acts as the upper chamber in Oman's bicameral representative body.

In November 1996, Sultan Qaboos presented his people with the "Basic Statute of the State," Oman's first written "constitution." It guarantees various rights within the framework of Shariah and customary law. It partially resuscitated long dormant conflict-of-interest measures by banning cabinet ministers from being officers of public shareholding firms. Perhaps most importantly, the Basic Statute provides rules for the royal succession.

The northern tip of Oman, called the Musandam Peninsula, is strategically located on the Strait of Hormuz, the entrance to the Gulf, 35 miles directly opposite Iran. Oman is concerned with regional stability and security, given tensions in the region, the proximity of Iran and Iraq, and the potential threat of political Islam. Oman maintained its diplomatic relations with Iraq throughout the Gulf War while supporting the UN allies by sending a contingent of troops to join coalition forces and by opening up to prepositioning of weapons and supplies. In addition, since 1980 Oman and the U.S. have been parties to a military cooperation agreement, which was revised and renewed in 2000. Oman also has long been an active participant in efforts to achieve Middle East peace.

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001, the Omani Government at all levels pledged and provided impressive support to the U.S.-led coalition against terrorism. Oman is a signatory of most UN-sponsored anti-terrorism treaties.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id rules with the aid of his ministers. His dynasty, the Al Sa'id, was founded about 250 years ago by Imam Ahmed bin Sa'id Al Bu Said. Sultan Qaboos is a direct descendant of the 19th century ruler, Sa'id bin Sultan, who first opened relations with the United States in 1833. The Sultanate has neither political parties nor legislature, although the bicameral representative bodies provide the government with advice.

Oman's judicial system traditionally has been based on the Shari'a—the Quranic laws and the oral teachings of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. Traditionally, Shari'a courts fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, Awqaf, and Islamic Affairs (since divided into the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs). Oman's first criminal code was not enacted until 1974.

In 1999, royal decrees placed the entire court system under the financial supervision of the Ministry of Justice, though the 1996 Basic Law ensures the independence of the judiciary. An independent Office of the Public Prosecutor also has been created (formerly a part of the Royal Oman Police), as has a supreme court. Regional court complexes are envisioned to house the various courts, including the courts of first instance for criminal cases and Shariah cases (family law and inheritance).

The country is divided into 61 administrative districts (wilayats), presided over by appointed executives (walis) responsible for settling local disputes, collecting taxes, and maintaining peace. Most wilayats are small in area, but can vary considerably in population. The 61 wilayats are divided into eight regions. Four of those regions (Muscat, Dhofar, Musandam, and Buraimi) have been accorded a special status as governorates. The governors of those four regions are appointed directly by the Sultan and hold Minister of State or Under Secretary rank. Walis, however, are appointed by the Minister of Interior.

In November 1991, Sultan Qaboos established the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council), which replaced the 10-year-old State Consultative Council, in an effort to systematize and broaden public participation in government. Representatives were chosen in the following manner: Local caucuses in each of the 59 districts sent forward the names of three nominees, whose credentials were reviewed by a cabinet committee. These names were then forwarded to the Sultan, who made the final selection. Since then, reforms have permitted Omanis to freely run for office in contested elections featuring universal adult suffrage. The Consultative Council serves as a conduit of information between the people and the government ministries. It is empowered to review drafts of and provide recommendations on economic and social legislation prepared by service ministries, such as communications and housing, and to approve state financial plans. Service ministers also may be summoned before the Majlis to respond to representatives' questions. It has no authority in the areas of foreign affairs, defense, security, and finance.

Although Oman enjoys a high degree of internal stability, regional tensions in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war, the Iran-Iraq war, and Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom continue to necessitate large defense expenditures. In 2006, Oman spent roughly $3.84 billion for defense and national security—over 33% of its public expenditures. Oman maintains a small but professional and effective military, supplied mainly with British equipment in addition to items from the United States, France, and other countries. British officers, on loan or on contract to the Sultanate, help staff the armed forces, although a program of "Omanization" has steadily increased the proportion of Omani officers over the past several years.

After North and South Yemen merged in May 1990, Oman settled its border disputes with the new Republic of Yemen on October 1, 1992. The two neighbors have cooperative bilateral relations. Oman's bor-

ders with all neighbors are demarcated, including a 2002 demarcation of the Oman-U.A.E. border that was ratified in 2003.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Sultan: **QABOOS bin Said al-Said**
Special Representative for His Majesty the Sultan: **THUWAYNI bin Shihab al-Said**
Prime Min.: **QABOOS bin Said al-Said**
Dep. Prime Min. for Cabinet Affairs: **FAHD bin Mahmud al-Said**
Min. of Agriculture: **Salim bin Hilal bin Ali al-KHALILI**
Min. of Awqaf & Religious Affairs: **Abdallah bin Muhammad bin Abdallah al-SALIMI**
Min. of Civil Services: **Muhammad bin Abdallah bin Isa al-HARTHI**
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Minerals: **MAQBUL bin Ali Sultan**
Min. of Defense: **QABOOS bin Said al-Said**
Min. of Diwan of the Royal Court: **SAYF bin Hamad al-Busaidi**
Min. of Education & Teaching: **Yahya bin Saud al-SALIMI**
Chmn., Electricity & Water Ministry: **Abdallah bin Muhammad al-MAHRUQI**
Min. of Environment & Climate Change: **HAMAD bin Faysal al-Busaidi**
Min. of Finance: **QABOOS bin Said al-Said**
Min. of Fisheries: **Muhammad bin Ali al-QATABI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **QABOOS bin Said al-Said**
Min. of Health: **Ali bin Muhammad bin MUSA, Dr.**
Min. of Higher Education: **RAWYA bint Saud al-Busaidi**
Min. of Housing: **Muhammad bin Saif al-SHABIBI**
Min. of Information: **Hamad bin Muhammad al-RASHIDI**
Min. of Interior: **SAUD bin Ibrahim al-Busaidi**
Min. of Justice: **Muhammad bin Abdallah bin Zahir al-HINAI**
Min. of Labor: **Juma bin Ali bin JUMA**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **Muhammad bin Ali bin Nasir al-ALAWI**
Min. of National Economy: **Ahmad bin Abd al-Nabi al-MAKKI**
Min. of National Heritage & Culture: **HAYTHIM bin Tariq al-Said**
Min. of Oil & Gas: **Muhammad bin Hamad bin Sayf al-RUMHI**
Min. of Palace Affairs: **ALI bin Hamud bin Ali al-Busaidi**
Min. of Regional Municipalities & Water Resources: **Abdallah bin Muhammad bin Abdallah al-RUWAS**
Min. of the Royal Office: **ALI MAJID bin Mussabagh al-Mamari, Gen.**
Min. of Social Development: **SHARIFA bint Khalfan bin Nasser al-Yahya**
Min. of Sports: **Ali bin Masud bin Ali al-SUNAIDI**
Min. of Tourism: **Rajiha bint Abd al-Amir bin ALI**
Min. of Transport & Communication: **KHAMIS bin Mubarak al-Alawi**
Min. of State & Governor, Muscat: **SAYID al-Mutasim bin Hamud al-Busaidi**
Min. of State & Governor, Dhofar: **MUHAMMAD bin Marhun bin Ali al-MAMARI**
Min. Responsible for Defense Affairs: **BADR bin Saud bin Harib al-Busaidi**
Min. Responsible for Foreign Affairs: **Yusuf bin ALAWI bin Abdallah**
Special Adviser to His Majesty: **Salim bin Abdallah al-GHAZALI**
Special Adviser to His Majesty for Culture: **Abd al-Aziz bin Muhammad al-RUWAS**
Special Adviser to His Majesty for Economic Planning Affairs: **Muhammad bin ZUBAYR**
Special Adviser to His Majesty for Environmental Affairs: **SHABIB bin Taymur al-Said**
Special Adviser to His Majesty for External Liaison: **Umar bin Abd al-Munim al-ZAWAWI**
Special Adviser to His Majesty for Security Affairs: **Abdallah bin Salih Khalfan al-HABSI, Lt. Gen.**
Governor, Central Bank of Oman: **QABOOS bin Said al-Said**
Executive Pres., Central Bank of Oman: **Hamud bin Sangur bin Hashim al-ZADJALI**
Ambassador to the US: **Hunaina bint Sultan bin Ahmad al-MUGHAIRI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Fuad bin Mubarak al-HINAI**

Oman maintains an embassy in the United States at 2535 Belmont Rd. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202/387-1980).

ECONOMY

When Oman declined as an entrepot for arms and slaves in the mid-19th century, much of its former prosperity was lost, and the economy turned almost exclusively to agriculture, camel and goat herding, fishing, and traditional handicrafts. Today, oil and gas fuel the economy, and revenues from petroleum products have enabled Oman's dramatic development over the past 36 years.

Oil was first discovered in the interior near Fahud in the western desert in 1964. Petroleum Development (Oman) Ltd. (PDO) began production in August 1967. The Omani Government owns 60% of PDO, and foreign interests own 40% (Royal Dutch Shell owns 34%; the remaining 6% is owned by Compagnie Francaise des Petroles [Total] and Partex). In 1976, Oman's oil production rose to 366,000 barrels per day (b/d) but declined gradually to about 285,000 b/d in late 1980 due to the depletion of recoverable reserves. From 1981 to 1986, Oman compensated for declining oil prices by increasing production levels to 600,000 b/d. With the collapse of oil prices in 1986, however, revenues dropped dramatically. Production was cut back temporarily in coordination with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)—of which Oman is not a member—and production levels again reached 600,000 b/d by mid-1987, which helped increase revenues. By 2000, production had climbed to more than 900,000 b/d; however, it declined to roughly 750,000 b/d for 2006.

Natural gas reserves, which will increasingly provide the fuel for industrial projects in Sohar and power generation and desalination plants throughout the Sultanate, stand at 24 trillion cubic feet. A liquefied natural gas (LNG) processing plant located in Sur was opened in 2000, with production capacity of 6.6 million tons per year (tons/yr), as well as unsubstantial gas liquids, including condensates. The completion of the plant's expansion in December 2005 has increased capacity to 10.3 million tons/yr.

Oman does not have the immense oil resources of some of its neighbors. Total proven reserves are about 4.8 billion barrels. Oman's complex geology makes exploration and production an expensive challenge. Recent improvements in technology, however, have enhanced recovery.

Agriculture and fishing are the traditional way of life in Oman. Dates, grown extensively in the Batinah coastal plain and the highlands, make up most of the country's agricultural exports. Coconut palms, wheat, and bananas also are grown, and cattle are raised in Dhofar. Other areas grow cereals and forage crops. Poultry production is steadily rising. Fish and shellfish exports totaled $104.7 million in 2006.

The government is undertaking many development projects to modernize the economy, improve the standard of living, and become a more active player in the global marketplace. Oman became a member of the World Trade Organization in October 2000, and continues to amend its financial and commercial practices to conform to international standards. Oman signed a Free Trade Agreement with the United States in January 2006, and continues to pursue, through the Gulf Cooperation Council, free trade agreements with a number of other key trading partners, including the EU and India.

Increases in agriculture and especially fish production are believed possible with the application of modern technology. The Muscat capital area has both an international airport at Seeb and a deepwater port at Mina Qaboos. The large-scale modern container port at Salalah, capital of the Dhofar Governorate, continues to operate at near-capacity levels. The government in early 2004 approved a project worth over $250 million to add two berths and extend the breakwater at the port. Port expansion is underway at Mina Qaboos, and a large industrial and container port is under construction in Sohar. A national road network includes a $400 million highway linking the northern and southern regions. The government will also expand passenger and cargo capacity at its main international airports at Seeb (Muscat) and Salalah, and will construct new airports at Sohar, Ras al-Hadd, and Duqm. In an effort to diversify the economy, in the early 1980s, the government built a $200-million copper mining and refining plant at Sohar. Other large industrial projects underway or being considered include an 80,000 b/d oil refinery, a large petrochemical complex, fertilizer and methanol plants, an aluminum smelter, and two cement factories. Industrial zones at Rusayl, Sohar, and several other locations showcase the country's modest light industries. Marble, limestone, and gypsum may prove commercially viable in the future.

The Omani Government embarked on its seventh 5-year plan in 2006. In its efforts to reduce its dependence on oil and expatriate labor, the government projects significant increases in spending on industrial and tourism-related projects to foster income diversification, job creation for Omanis in the private sector, and development of Oman's interior. Government programs offer soft loans and propose the building of new industrial estates in population centers outside the capital area. The government is giving greater emphasis to "Omanization" of the labor force, particularly in banking, hotels, and municipally sponsored shops benefiting from government subsidies. Currently, efforts are underway to liberalize investment opportunities in order to attract foreign capital.

Some of the largest budgetary outlays are in the areas of health services and basic education. The number of schools, hospitals, and clinics has risen exponentially since the accession of Sultan Qaboos in 1970.

U.S. firms face a small and highly competitive market dominated by trade with Japan and Britain and re-exports from the United Arab Emirates. The sale of U.S. products also is hampered by higher transportation costs and the lack of familiarity with Oman on the part of U.S. exporters. However, the traditional U.S. market in Oman, oil field supplies and services, should grow as the country's major oil producer continues a major expansion of fields and wells. Major new U.S. investments in oil production, industry, and tourism projects in 2005 totaled several billion dollars. Moreover, negotiations on the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA) were successfully concluded in October 2005; the FTA was ratified by the U.S. Congress and signed by President Bush in 2006 and is currently awaiting implementation. Once implemented, the FTA should provide further impetus to bilateral trade and investment.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

When Sultan Qaboos assumed power in 1970, Oman had limited contacts with the outside world, including neighboring Arab states. Only two countries, the United Kingdom and India, maintained a diplomatic presence in the country. A special treaty relationship permitted the United Kingdom close involvement in Oman's civil and military affairs. Ties with the United Kingdom have remained very close under Sultan Qaboos.

Since 1970, Oman has pursued a moderate foreign policy and expanded its diplomatic relations dramatically. It supported the 1979 Camp David accords and was one of three Arab League states, along with Somalia and Sudan, which did not break relations with Egypt after the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979. During the Iran-Iraq war, Oman maintained diplomatic relations with both sides while strongly backing UN Security Council resolutions calling for an end to the war. Oman has developed close ties to its neighbors; it joined the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council when it was established in 1981.

Oman has traditionally supported Middle East peace initiatives, as it did those in 1983. In April 1994, Oman hosted the plenary meeting of the Water Working Group of the peace process, the first Gulf state to do so. From 1996-2000, Oman and Israel exchanged trade offices. Oman closed the Israeli Trade Office in October 2000 in the wake of public demonstrations against Israel at the start of the second intifada.

During the Cold War period, Oman avoided relations with communist countries because of the communist

support for the insurgency in Dhofar. In recent years, Oman has undertaken diplomatic initiatives in the Central Asian republics, particularly in Kazakhstan, where it is involved in a joint oil pipeline project. In addition, Oman maintains good relations with Iran, and the two countries regularly exchange delegations. Oman is an active member in international and regional organizations, notably the Arab League and the GCC.

U.S.-OMANI RELATIONS

The United States has maintained relations with the Sultanate since the early years of American independence. A treaty of friendship and navigation, one of the first agreements of its kind with an Arab state, was concluded between the United States and Muscat in 1833. This treaty was replaced by the Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations, and Consular Rights signed at Salalah on December 20, 1958.

A U.S. consulate was maintained in Muscat from 1880 until 1915. Thereafter, U.S. interests in Oman were handled by U.S. diplomats resident in other countries. In 1972, the U.S. ambassador in Kuwait was accredited also as the first U.S. ambassador to Oman, and the U.S. embassy, headed by a resident charge d'affaires, was opened. The first resident U.S. ambassador took up his post in July 1974. The Oman embassy was opened in Washington, DC, in 1973.

U.S.-Omani relations were deepened in 1980 by the conclusion of two important agreements. One provided access to Omani military facilities by U.S. forces under agreed-upon conditions. The other agreement established a Joint Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation, located in Muscat, to provide U.S. economic assistance to Oman. The Joint Commission continued in existence until the mid-1990s. A Peace Corps program, which assisted Oman mainly in the fields of health and education, was initiated in 1973 and phased out in 1983. A team from the Federal Aviation Administration worked with Oman's Civil Aviation Department on a reimbursable basis but was phased out in 1992.

In March 2005, the U.S. and Oman launched negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement that were successfully concluded in October 2005. The FTA was signed on January 19, 2006, and is pending implementation.

In 1974 and April 1983, Sultan Qaboos made state visits to the United States. Vice President George H. Bush visited Oman in 1984 and 1986, and President Clinton visited briefly in March 2000. Vice President Cheney visited Oman in 2002, 2005, and 2006.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MUSCAT (E), APO/FPO Unit 73000, APO AE 09890-3000, [968] 2464-3400, Fax [968] 2464-3434, Workweek: SAT-WED/0800-1630, Website: http://oman.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Jan Wheeler
ECO/COM:	Brian M. Grimm
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MGT:	Edward Quinn
POL/ECO:	Brian Grimm
AMB:	Gary A Grappo
CON:	Daniel Phelps (Acting)
DCM:	Alfred Fonteneau
PAO:	Robert Arbuckle
GSO:	Konstantin Gojnycz
RSO:	Ronald Campbell
CLO:	Jennifer Richardson
DAO:	Col. David Crockett
FMO:	Douglas Sun
ICASS Chair:	Robert Arbuckle
IMO:	Deanne Bryant
ISO:	Robert Saunders
ISSO:	Deanne Bryant
LEGATT:	Martin Reardon (Res. Riyadh)
MLO:	Col. Thomas Milton
POL:	Eric Carlson
RAMC:	Fsc Bangkok

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 3, 2007

Country Description: The Sultanate of Oman, a land of great natural beauty on the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula, has a long and proud heritage. With a population of 2.6 million, Oman has seen rapid economic and social development in the past three decades. A monarchy governed by Sultan Qaboos bin Said, the country does not have political parties or a legislature, although a bicameral representative body (the lower house of which is directly elected) provides the government with advice and reviews draft legislation. While Oman is traditionally Islamic and Islam is the state religion, Omanis have for centuries lived with people of other faiths. Non-Muslims are free to worship at churches and temples built on land donated by the Sultan. The economy is largely dependent on the production and export of oil and natural gas, but is becoming increasingly more diversified. Excellent tourist facilities are available in the major cities of Muscat, Salalah, Sohar, and Nizwa and can increasingly be found elsewhere in the country. Travelers may wish to visit the Sultanate's tourism web site at http://www.omantourism.gov.om/ for more information.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and visa are required for entry into Oman. Omani embassies and consulates issue multiple-entry tourist and/or business visas valid for up to two years. Omani immigration officials at the port of entry determine the length of stay in Oman, which varies according to the purpose of travel. Alternatively, U.S. citizens may obtain a 30-day visa by presenting their U.S. passports on arrival at all Oman land, sea, and air entry points. The validity period of the applicant's passport should not be less than six months. Adequate funds and proof of an onward/return ticket, though not required, are strongly rec-

ommended. The fee is Rials Omani 6.00 (approximately USD 16.00). This visa can only be extended for an extra 30 days; a completed extension application form and the fee of Rials Omani 6.00 (USD 16.00) should be submitted to the Directorate General of Passports and Residence or to its branches at regional Royal Omani Police offices. Other categories of short-term visit/business/work contract visas are available, but these must be arranged in advance through an Omani sponsor. To obtain a visa or for details on entry and travel requirements, please contact the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman, 2535 Belmont Road NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 387-1980/2. Evidence of yellow fever immunization is required if the traveler enters from an infected area. Visit the Embassy of Oman web site at www.omani.info for the most current visa information.

Forbidden items: The Sultanate prohibits pornographic materials and firearms from entering Oman. Local law limits each traveler to two bottles of alcohol. Items subject to confiscation at the airport due to content considered culturally inappropriate include, but are not limited, to compact discs, digital video discs, and video and audiocassettes.

Safety and Security: There have been no instances in which U.S. citizens or facilities in Oman have been subject to terrorist attacks. However, the Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks against United States citizens and interests throughout the region. American citizens in Oman are urged to maintain a high level of security awareness. The State Department suggests that all Americans in Oman maintain an unpredictable schedule and vary travel routes whenever possible. Americans are also urged to treat mail or packages from unfamiliar sources with suspicion. Unusual mail or packages should be left unopened and reported to local authorities. U.S. citizens with security concerns are encouraged to contact local authorities and the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Muscat.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The incidence of street crime is low in Oman; violent crime is rare by U.S. standards, but can occur. Crimes of opportunity remain the most likely to affect visitors. Visitors to Oman should, therefore, take normal precautions, such as avoiding travel in deserted or unfamiliar areas and after dark. Visitors should also protect personal property from theft. In particular, valuables and currency should not be left unsecured in hotel rooms. Common sense and caution are always the best methods for crime prevention.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: There are a number of modern medical facilities in Oman. Local medical treatment varies from quite good to inadequate, depending in large part on location. Many Western pharmaceuticals can be found in Oman. Hospital emergency treatment is available. Doctors and hospitals often expect cash payment for health services. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Oman is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road Conditions and Hazards: Road conditions, lighting, and traffic safety in cities and on major highways are good. The condition of rural roads varies from good to poor. Travel between cities, especially at night, may be dangerous due to poor or no lighting, wandering livestock, and speeding drivers. The safety of public transportation is generally good. Taxis, minivans, and small buses may swerve to the side of the road to pick up passengers with little notice or regard for other vehicles.

Local Laws and Practices: Traffic laws in Oman are strictly enforced. Driving while under the influence of alcohol is prohibited, and there are stringent penalties for violating this law. Seat belt use is required, and the use of non-hands-free cellular telephones while driving is prohibited. In the event of a traffic violation and

fine, drivers should pay the fine as directed and should not attempt to pay or negotiate payment at the time of the traffic stop.

Effective June 1, 2007, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) introduced new procedures for minor Road Traffic Accidents (RTA) to reduce traffic jams. According to the ROP, the new procedure is currently in force in the Governorate of Muscat area and will eventually be implemented in the other governorates and regions of the Sultanate. American citizens considering driving in Oman are advised to familiarize themselves with the new procedures available on the ROP web site at http://www.rop.gov.om/english/index.asp under "Minor Road Traffic Accidents."

Note: Minor RTA are accidents causing minor damage to one or more vehicles that does not result in injuries, deaths, or material damage to public/private properties. Parties involved in such accidents should immediately move their vehicles to the side of the road.

American citizens involved in accidents outside of the Muscat area are advised not to move their vehicles from the accident location until the ROP gives them permission; moving a vehicle may be interpreted as an admission of guilt.

The use of European-style traffic circles is prevalent in Oman. However, unlike European traffic practice, the driver on the inside lane always has priority. A driver flashing his/her high beams is generally asking for a chance to pass. Turning right on a red traffic signal is prohibited.

Visitors should not drive without a valid license. Short-term visitors in possession of a valid U.S. driver's license may drive rental vehicles, but residents must have an Omani driver's license. To obtain an Omani license, a U.S. citizen must have a U.S. license that has been valid for at least one year or must take a driving test. Visitors hiring rental cars should insure the vehicles adequately against death, injury and loss or damage. Residents may insure their vehicles outside the Sultanate; however, third party liability insurance must be purchased locally.

Emergency Services: A modern ambulance service using American equipment and staff trained in the U.S. was instituted in 2004 and has been assessed as very good. The service currently serves only certain urban locations in Oman, including the capital area, but is eventually expected to provide coverage for motor vehicle accident victims throughout the entire Sultanate. For all traffic-related emergencies, the Royal Omani Police can be contacted by dialing "9999."

Visit the website of Oman's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.omantourism.gov.om.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Oman's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Oman's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: By Omani custom and law, expressing frustration either verbally or through otherwise innocuous hand gestures is considered insulting and abusive. Doing so could result in police action that may lead to a jail term and a fine. Confrontations of this nature occur mostly on Oman's roads, and visitors should exercise caution when dealing with difficult drivers.

Omani employers often ask that expatriate employees deposit their passports with the company as a condition of employment. While to an extent still customary, this practice is contrary to Omani law. The U.S. Embassy in Muscat advises Americans to exercise caution on the issue of permitting an employer to hold their passports, since this can operate as a restraint on travel and could give undue leverage to the employer in a dispute. U.S. passports are the property of the U.S. government. Islamic ideals provide the conservative foundation of Oman's customs, laws, and practices. Foreign visitors are expected to be sensitive to Islamic culture and not dress in a revealing or provocative style, including the wearing of sleeveless shirts and blouses, halter-tops and shorts. Athletic clothing is worn in public only when the wearer is obviously engaged in athletic activity. Western bathing attire, however, is the norm at hotel pools and beaches.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Omani laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Oman are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Oman are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Oman. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on Jamiat A'Duwal Al Arabiya Street, Al

Khuwair Area (Shatti Al-Qurum), in the capital city of Muscat. The mailing address is: PO Box 202, Medinat Al Sultan Qaboos 115, Sultanate of Oman, telephone: (968) 24-643-400, fax: (968) 24-643-535. The Embassy's Consular e-mail address is Consular-Muscat@state.gov and the web site is http://oman.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Omani nationals who are Muslims must adopt Oman children.

Availability of Children for Adoption: To date, no Omani children have been adopted by American citizens.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Oman is the Ministry of Social Affairs. Please contact Ms. Batool Hassan, Deputy Director of the Office of Children's and Women's Affairs (968) 601-598.

Age and Civil Status Requirements: The Omani Government requires that individuals who wish to adopt Omani children must have Omani nationality and must be of the Muslim faith. Married couples are preferred but single women may also be eligible to adopt under special circumstances.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: All adoptions are processed by the Government of Oman.

Doctors: The U.S. Embassy maintains current lists of doctors and sources for medicines, should either you or your child experience health problems while in Oman.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: A Oman child adopted by an American citizen must obtain an immigrant visa before he or she can enter the U.S. as a lawful permanent resident. Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http:/adoption.state.gov.

Omani Embassy in the United States
2535 Belmont Road, NW,
Washington, DC 20008
Tel. (202) 387-1980

U.S. Embassy
P.O. Box 202
Code 115 Madinat Al-Sultan Qaboos
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel. (968) 698-989 X 216, 294, or 435.
Fax (968) 699-189
E-mail: aemctcns@omantel.net.om

Questions: Specific questions regarding adoption in Oman may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy Muscat, Oman. You may also contact the Office of Children's Issues, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-2818, Tel: 1-888-407-4747 with specific questions.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Oman is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Oman and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Oman are subject to the jurisdiction of Omani courts, as well as to the country's laws and regulations. American citizens planning a trip to Oman with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: When child custody disputes arise between parents of any religion, the custody decisions by Omani courts are based on Islamic (Sharia) law. Custody cases can be very complex and are usually determined on a case-by-case basis. When making decisions regarding child custody matters, Omani courts consider the parents" religion(s), place(s) of permanent residence, income, and the parents" marital status. Omani law differentiates between custodianship and guardianship. Generally speaking, a custodian has been awarded custody of the child and is responsible for his/her upbringing including education and care. A guardian is responsible for the child's financial support.

Omani courts do not, as a general rule, award custody of "dual national" (U.S./Omani) children to an American mother or father, even one who is Muslim. A fundamental consideration of awarding custody is the parent's place(s) of permanent residence and degree of access to the children. Custody of very young children is generally granted to the mother as

long as certain restrictive conditions are met. Once the children come of age (for males completion of their seventh year of age, for females the onset of puberty), the father can appeal for, and will usually be awarded, full custody provided certain restrictive conditions are met. If a father were unable or unfit to be custodian of his children, the court may give custody to another family member. Sharia court judges have broad discretion in custody cases and often make exceptions to these general guidelines, particularly in cases in which a parent is from an influential family or has powerful connections in Oman.

Even when a mother is granted custody, the non-custodial father maintains a great deal of influence on the rearing of the children. In many cases, the father has been able to acquire legal custody of children against the wishes of the mother when she is unable or unwilling to meet certain conditions set by law for her to maintain her custodial rights. For example, if a mother refuses to give the father access to his child or attempts to leave Oman with the children without the court's permission, a mother's custody rights can be severed. The Omani court can sever a mother's custody if it determines that the mother is incapable of safeguarding the child or of bringing the child up in accordance with the appropriate religious standards. Either parent can lose custody by re-marrying a party considered "unmarriageable," or by residing in a home with people that might be "strangers." However, the final decision is left to the discretion of the Sharia court.

Sharia law forbids the removal of children from Oman without first obtaining permission from the court. The U.S. Embassy cannot prevent the Omani government from arresting and either deporting or prosecuting an American citizen who violates Omani law.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in an Omani court should retain an attorney in Oman. The State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Oman maintain a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by contacting either office. It is the responsibility of the prospective client to assess the capabilities of an attorney. The Embassy cannot recommend any specific attorney, and makes no claim as to the ability or the integrity of the attorneys on the list. The Embassy cannot pay for any legal expenses incurred.

U.S. Embassy Muscat
Consular Section
P.O. Box 202
Madinat al Sultan Qaboos 115
Sultanate of Oman
Telephone: [968] 698-989
Fax: [968] 699-189
Website: http://www.usa.gov.om
Consular Section:
aemctcns@omantel.net.om

The workweek for the Embassy is Saturday through Wednesday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

Specific questions regarding child custody in Oman should be addressed to an Omani attorney or to the Embassy of Oman at:

Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman
2535 Belmont Road, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 387-1980
Fax: (202) 745-4933

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Oman if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices. For example, an order from a U.S. court granting custody to an American parent will not be honored in Oman if the parent intends to take the child to live outside Oman. Nor will Omani courts enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Oman to pay child support.

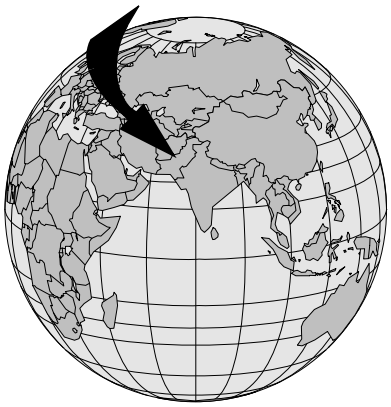
Visitation Rights: Non-custodial parents are generally entitled to visitation rights as determined by the Sharia judge.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized by the Sultanate of Oman. Children of Omani fathers automatically acquire Omani citizenship at birth and must enter and leave the country on Omani passports even if they are entitled to hold the passport of another country. Omani women cannot transmit citizenship to their children.

Travel Restrictions: When a custody case is pending with the Sharia court, children, regardless of their nationality, are generally subject to court-imposed travel restrictions. Either parent can request the court to restrict the travel of his/her minor children.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



PAKISTAN

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Islamic Republic of Pakistan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 803,943 sq. km. (310,527 sq. mi.); almost twice the size of California.

Cities: Capital—The city of Islamabad (pop. 800,000) and adjacent Rawalpindi (1,406, 214) comprise the national capital area with a combined population of 3.7 million. Other cities—Karachi (11,624,219) (2005 est.), Lahore (6,310,888) (2005 est.), Faisalabad (1,977,246) and Hyderabad (1,151,274).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Pakistan(i).

Population: (July 2008 est.) 164,762,040.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 1.81%.

Ethnic groups: Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushtun, Baloch, Muhajir (i.e., Urdu-speaking immigrants from India and their descendants), Saraiki, and Hazara.

Religions: Muslim 97%; small minorities of Christians, Hindus, and others.

Languages: Urdu (national and official), English, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushtu, Baloch, Hindko, Brahui, Saraiki (Punjabi variant).

Education: Literacy (2005 est.)—49.9%; male 63%; female 36%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2008 est.)—66.95/1,000. Life expectancy (2008 est.)—men 63.07 yrs., women 65.24 yrs.

Work force: (2004 est.) Agriculture—42%; services—38%; industry—20%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: August 14, 1947.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government). Legislative—Bicameral Parliament or Majlis-e-Shoora (100-seat Senate, 342-seat National Assembly). Judicial—Supreme Court, provincial high courts, Federal Islamic (or Shari'a) Court.

Political parties: Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), Pakistan Muslim League (PML), Muttahid Majlis-e-Amal (umbrella group) (MMA), and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Political subdivisions: 4 provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Northwest Frontier); also the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (composed of 7 tribal agencies—Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, North Waziristan, and South Waziristan) and the Pakistani-administered portion of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region (Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas).

Economy

GDP: (2007 est., official exchange rate): $143.8 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2005) 7.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est., PPP) $2,600.

Natural resources: Arable land, natural gas, limited oil, substantial hydropower potential, coal, iron ore, copper, salt, limestone.

Agriculture: Products—wheat, cotton, rice, sugarcane, eggs, fruits, vegetables, milk, beef, mutton.

Industry: Types—textiles & apparel, food processing, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, shrimp, fertilizer, and paper products.

Trade: (2007 est.) Exports—$16.31 billion: textiles (garments, bed linen, cotton cloth, and yarn), rice, leather goods, sports goods, carpets, rugs, chemicals and manufactures. Major partners—U.S. 21%, United Arab Emirates 9%, Afghanistan 7.7%, U.K. 5.1%, China 5.3%. Imports—$30.33 billion: petroleum, petroleum products, machinery, plastics, paper and paper board, transportation equipment, edible oils, pulses, iron and steel, tea. Major partners—China 13.8%, Saudi Arabia 10.5%, United

Arab Emirates 9.7%, Japan 5.7%, U.S. 6.5%, Kuwait 4.7%, Germany 4.1%.

PEOPLE

The majority of Pakistan's population lives in the Indus River valley and in an arc formed by the cities of Faisalabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi/Islamabad, and Peshawar. Although Urdu is an official language of Pakistan, it is spoken as a first language by only 8% of the population; 48% speak Punjabi, 12% Sindhi, 10% Saraiki, 8% Pushtu, 3% Baloch, and 3% other. Urdu, Punjabi, Pushtu, and Baloch are Indo-European languages. English is the other official language, and is widely used in government, commerce, the officer ranks of the military, and in many institutions of higher learning.

HISTORY

Pakistan, along with parts of western India, contains the archeological remains of an urban civilization dating back 4,500 years. Alexander the Great included the Indus Valley in his empire in 326 B.C., and his successors founded the Indo-Greek kingdom of Bactria based in what is today Afghanistan and extending to Peshawar. Following the rise of the Central Asian Kushan Empire in later centuries, the Buddhist culture of Afghanistan and Pakistan, centered on the city of Taxila just west of Islamabad, experienced a cultural renaissance known as the Gandhara period.

Pakistan's Islamic history began with the arrival of Muslim traders in the 8th century in Sindh. The collapse of the Mughal Empire in the 18th century provided an opportunity for the English East India Company to extend its control over much of the subcontinent. The Sikh adventurer, Ranjit Singh, carved out a dominion that extended from Kabul to Srinagar and Lahore, encompassing much of the northern area of modern Pakistan. British rule replaced the Sikhs in the first half of the 19th century. In a decision that had far-reaching consequences, the British permitted the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, a Sikh appointee, to continue in power. Pakistan emerged from an extended period of agitation by Muslims in the subcontinent to express their national identity free from British colonial domination as well as domination by what they perceived as a Hindu-controlled Indian National Congress. Muslim anti-colonial leaders formed the All-India Muslim League in 1906. Initially, the League adopted the same objective as the Congress—self-government for India within the British Empire—but Congress and the League were unable to agree on a formula that would ensure the protection of Muslim religious, economic, and political rights.

Pakistan and Partition

The idea of a separate Muslim state in British India first emerged in the 1930s. On March 23, 1940, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, formally endorsed the "Lahore Resolution," calling for the creation of an independent state in regions where Muslims constituted a majority. At the end of World War II, the United Kingdom moved with increasing urgency to grant India independence. The Congress Party and the Muslim League, however, could not agree on the terms for a Constitution or establishing an interim government. In June 1947, the British Government declared that it would bestow full dominion status upon two successor states—India and Pakistan, formed from areas in the subcontinent in which Muslims were the majority population. Under this arrangement, the various princely states could freely join either India or Pakistan. Accordingly, on August 14, 1947 Pakistan, comprising West Pakistan with the provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and East Pakistan with the province of Bengal, became independent. East Pakistan later became the independent nation of Bangladesh in 1971.

The Maharaja of Kashmir was reluctant to make a decision on accession to either Pakistan or India. However, armed incursions into the state by tribesman from the NWFP led him to seek military assistance from India. The Maharaja signed accession papers in October 1947 and allowed Indian troops into the state. The Government of Pakistan, however, refused to recognize the accession and campaigned to reverse the decision. The status of Kashmir remains in dispute to this day.

Independence

With the death in 1948 of its first head of state, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and the assassination in 1951 of its first prime minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, political instability and economic difficulty became prominent features of post-independence Pakistan. On October 7, 1958, President Iskander Mirza, with the support of the army, suspended the 1956 Constitution, imposed martial law, and canceled the elections scheduled for January 1959. Twenty days later the military sent Mirza into exile to Britain, and Gen. Mohammad Ayub Khan assumed control of a military dictatorship. After Pakistan's loss in the 1965 war against India, Ayub Khan's power declined. Subsequent political and economic grievances inspired agitation movements that compelled his resignation in March 1969. He handed over responsibility for governing to the commander in chief of the army, General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan, who became President and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

General elections held in December 1970 polarized relations between the eastern and western sections of Pakistan. The Awami League, which advocated autonomy for the more populous East Pakistan, swept the East Pakistan seats to gain a majority in Pakistan as a whole. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), founded and led by Ayub Khan's former Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, won a majority of the seats in West Pakistan, but the country was completely split with neither major party having any support in the other area. Negotiations to form a coalition government broke down. On March 26, 1971, following a bloody crackdown by the Pakistan Army, Bengali



nationalists declared an independent People's Republic of Bangladesh. As fighting grew between the army and the Bengalis, an estimated 10 million Bengalis sought refuge in India. On April 17, 1971, Bengali nationalists formed a provisional government in an area bordering India, and in November 1971, India sent its military into East Pakistan to intervene on the side of the Bangladeshis. On December 16, Pakistani forces surrendered in Dhaka, and East Pakistan became the new nation of Bangladesh. Yahya Khan then resigned the presidency and handed over leadership of the western part of Pakistan to Bhutto, who became President and the first civilian Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Bhutto moved decisively to restore national confidence and pursued an active foreign policy, taking a leading role in Islamic and Third World forums. Although Pakistan did not formally join the Non-Aligned Movement until 1979, the position of the Bhutto government coincided largely with that of the non-aligned nations. Domestically, Bhutto pursued a populist agenda and nationalized major industries and the banking system. In 1973, he promulgated a new Constitution accepted by most political elements and relinquished the presidency to become prime minister. Although Bhutto continued his populist and socialist rhetoric, he increasingly relied on Pakistan's urban industrialists and rural landlords. Over time the economy stagnated, largely as a result of the dislocation and uncertainty produced by Bhutto's frequently changing economic policies. When Bhutto proclaimed his own victory in the March 1977 national elections, the opposition

Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) denounced the results as fraudulent and demanded new elections. Bhutto resisted and later arrested the PNA leadership.

Muhammad Zia ul-Haq

With increasing anti-government unrest, the army grew restive. On July 5, 1977, the military removed Bhutto from power and arrested him, declared martial law, and suspended portions of the 1973 Constitution. Chief of Army Staff Gen. Muhammad Zia ul-Haq became Chief Martial Law Administrator and promised to hold new elections within 3 months.

Zia released Bhutto and asserted that he could contest new elections scheduled for October 1977. However, after it became clear that Bhutto's popularity had survived his government, Zia postponed the elections and began criminal investigations of the senior PPP leadership. Subsequently, Bhutto was convicted and sentenced to death for an alleged conspiracy to murder a political opponent. Despite international appeals on his behalf, Bhutto was hanged on April 6, 1979.

Zia assumed the presidency and called for elections in November. However, fearful of a PPP victory, Zia banned political activity in October 1979, and postponed national elections. This same year Zia also passed into law the Hudood Ordinance, which provides for harsh Quranic punishments for violations of Shari'a (Islamic law).

In 1980, most center and left parties, led by the PPP, formed the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The MRD demanded Zia's resignation, an end to martial law, new elections, and restoration of the Constitution, as it existed before Zia's takeover. In early December 1984, President Zia proclaimed a national referendum for December 19 on his "Islamization" program. After non-party based polls were held for the National and Provincial Assemblies in 1985, President Zia appointed Muhammad Khan Junejo as the Prime Minister. He implicitly linked approval of "Islamization" with a mandate for his continued presidency. Zia's opponents, led by the MRD, boycotted the elections. When the government claimed a 63% turnout, with more than 90% approving the referendum, many observers questioned the figures.

Sharif and Bhutto Civilian Governments

On August 17, 1988, a plane carrying President Zia, American Ambassador Arnold Raphel, U.S. Brig. General Herbert Wassom, and 28 Pakistani military officers crashed on a return flight from a military equipment trial near Bahawalpur, killing all on board. In accordance with the Constitution, Chairman of the Senate Ghulam Ishaq Khan became Acting President and announced that elections scheduled for November 1988 would take place. Elections were held on a party basis. On one side was an eight-party alliance and on the other, the PPP. The PPP won 94 seats out of 207 and the Islamic Democratic Alliance (IJI) won 54. Muhammad Khan Junejo lost from his home constituency. The president was bound to invite the PPP to from the government, but he delayed doing so for two weeks in order to give the IJI time to muster the support of other groups. Ultimately, the president asked PPP Co-chairperson Benazir Bhutto to form a government.

The PPP, under Benazir Bhutto's leadership, succeeded in forming a coalition government with several smaller parties, including the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Differing interpretations of constitutional authority, debates over the powers of the central government relative to those of the provinces, and the antagonistic relationship between the Bhutto administration and opposition governments in Punjab and Balochistan seriously impeded social and economic reform programs. Ethnic conflict, primarily in Sindh province, exacerbated these problems. A fragmentation in the governing coalition and the military's reluctance to support an apparently ineffectual and corrupt government were accompanied by a significant deterioration in law and order. In August 1990, President Khan, citing his powers under the eighth amendment to the Constitution, dismissed the Bhutto government and dissolved the national and provincial assemblies. New elections, held in October 1990, confirmed the political ascendancy of the IJI. In addition to a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, the alliance won control of all four provincial parliaments and enjoyed the support of the military and of President Khan. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as leader of the PML, the most prominent party in the IJI, was elected prime minister by the National Assembly.

Sharif emerged as the most secure and powerful Pakistani prime minister since the mid-1970s. Under his rule, the IJI achieved several important political victories. The implementation of Sharif's economic reform program; involving privatization, deregulation, and encouragement of private sector economic growth, greatly improved Pakistan's economic performance and business climate. The passage into law in May 1991 of a Shari'a bill, providing for widespread Islamization, legitimized the IJI government among much of Pakistani society.

However, Nawaz Sharif was not able to reconcile the different objectives of IJI's constituent parties. The largest religious party, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), abandoned the alliance because of its antagonism to what it regarded as PML hegemony. The government was weakened further by the military's suppression of the MQM, which had entered into coalition with the IJI to contain PPP influence, and allegations of corruption directed at Nawaz Sharif. In April 1993, President Khan, citing "maladministration, corruption, and nepotism" and espousal of political violence, dismissed the Sharif government, but the following month the Pakistan Supreme Court reinstated the National Assembly and the Nawaz Sharif government. Continued tensions between Sharif and Khan resulted in governmental gridlock and the Chief of Army Staff brokered an arrangement under which both the President and the

Prime Minister resigned their offices in July 1993. An interim government, headed by Moeen Qureshi, a former World Bank Vice President, took office with a mandate to hold national and provincial assembly elections in October. Despite its brief term, the Qureshi government adopted political, economic, and social reforms that generated considerable domestic support and foreign admiration.

In the October 1993 elections, the PPP won a plurality of seats in the National Assembly, and Benazir Bhutto was asked to form a government. However, because it did not acquire a majority in the National Assembly, the PPP's control of the government depended upon the continued support of numerous independent parties, particularly the PML/J (Pakistan Muslim League-Junejo). The unfavorable circumstances surrounding PPP rule—the imperative of preserving a coalition government, the formidable opposition of Nawaz Sharif's PML/N (Pakistani Muslim League-Nawaz) movement, and the insecure provincial administrations—presented significant difficulties for the government of Prime Minister Bhutto. However, the election of Prime Minister Bhutto's close associate, Farooq Leghari, as President in November 1993 gave her a stronger power base.

In November 1996, President Leghari dismissed the Bhutto government, charging it with corruption, mismanagement of the economy, and implication in extrajudicial killings in Karachi. Elections in February 1997, resulted in an overwhelming victory for the PML/N, and President Leghari called upon Nawaz Sharif to form a government. In March 1997, with the unanimous support of the National Assembly, Sharif amended the Constitution, stripping the President of the power to dismiss the government and making his power to appoint military service chiefs and provincial governors contingent on the "advice" of the Prime Minister. Another amendment prohibited elected members from "floor crossing" or voting against party positions. The Sharif government also engaged in a protracted dispute with the judiciary, culminating in the storming of the Supreme Court by ruling party loyalists and the engineered dismissal of the Chief Justice and the resignation of President Leghari in December 1997. The new President elected by Parliament, Rafiq Tarar, was a close associate of the Prime Minister. A one-sided, anti-corruption campaign was used to target opposition politicians and critics of the regime. Similarly, the government moved to restrict press criticism and ordered the arrest and beating of prominent journalists. As domestic criticism of Sharif's administration intensified, Sharif attempted to replace Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf on October 12, 1999, with a family loyalist, Director General of the Interservice Intelligence Directorate, Lt. Gen. Ziauddin. Although General Musharraf was out of the country at the time, the army moved quickly to depose Sharif.

Pervez Musharraf

Following the October 12 ouster of the government of Prime Minister Sharif, the military-led government stated its intention to restructure the political and electoral systems. On October 14, 1999, General Musharraf declared a state of emergency and issued the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), which suspended the federal and provincial Parliaments, held the Constitution in abeyance, and designated Musharraf as Chief Executive. Musharraf appointed an eight-member National Security Council to function as Pakistan's supreme governing body, with mixed military/civilian appointees; a civilian Cabinet; and a National Reconstruction Bureau to formulate structural reforms. On May 12, 2000, Pakistan's Supreme Court unanimously validated the October 1999 coup and granted Musharraf executive and legislative authority for 3 years from the coup date. On June 20, 2001, Musharraf named himself as president and was sworn in.

After the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked on September 11, 2001, Musharraf pledged complete cooperation with the United States in the war on terror, which included locating and shutting down terrorist training camps within Pakistan's borders, cracking down on extremist groups and withdrawing support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In a referendum held on April 30, 2002, Musharraf's presidency was extended by five more years. The handover from military to civilian rule came with parliamentary elections in November 2002, and the appointment of a civilian prime minister, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali. Having previously promised to give up his army post and become a civilian president, General Musharraf announced in late 2004 that he would retain his military role. In August 2004, Shaukat Aziz was sworn in as prime minister, having won a parliamentary vote of confidence, 191 of 342 votes, in which the opposition abstained.

On October 6, 2007, Musharraf was elected president for a 5-year term. He relinquished his army post in November 2007.

The government was dissolved in November 2007 after the completion of its 5-year term. Legislative elections were held in February 2008, and Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani became prime minister in March 2008.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Pervez Musharraf has been chief of state since June 20, 2001. A prolonged confrontation over authority between Parliament and the President ended in December 2002 with a compromise which permitted passage of the Legal Framework Order (LFO) of 2002, under the terms of which President Musharraf made his pledge to resign his military position as Commander-in-Chief in late 2004. However, in 2004 General Musharraf announced that he would retain his military role. On November 28, 2007, Musharraf relinquished his army post.

The Pakistan Constitution of 1973, amended substantially in 1985 under Zia ul-Haq, was suspended by the military government in October 1999. It was restored on December 31, 2002. Selected provisions of the Constitution pertaining to changes that President Musharraf made while the Constitution was suspended remain contested by political opponents.

The president is chosen for a five-year term by an electoral college consisting of the Senate, National Assembly, and the provincial assemblies. The prime minister is selected by the National Assembly for a four-year term. The bicameral parliament—or Majlis-e-Shoora—consists of the Senate (100 seats; members are indirectly elected by provincial assemblies) and the National Assembly (342 seats; 60 seats reserved for women, 10 seats reserved for minorities). Each of the four provinces—Punjab, Sindh, Northwest Frontier, and Balochistan—has a Chief Minister and provincial assembly. The Northern Areas, Azad Kashmir and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are administered by the federal government but enjoy considerable autonomy. The cabinet, National Security Council, and governors serve at the president's discretion.

The judicial system comprises a Supreme Court, provincial high courts, and Federal Islamic (or Shari'a) Court. The Supreme Court is Pakistan's highest court. The president appoints the chief justice and they together determine the other judicial appointments. Each province has a high court, the justices of which are appointed by the president after conferring with the chief justice of the Supreme Court and the provincial chief justice. The judiciary is proscribed from issuing any order contrary to the decisions of the President. Federal Sharia Court hears cases that primarily involve Sharia, or Islamic law. Legislation enacted in 1991 gave legal status to Sharia. Although Sharia was declared the law of the land, it did not replace the existing legal code.

The Pakistan Muslim League (PML), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) are national political parties, while the Muttahid Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)—an umbrella group of six religious parties, including the Jamaat-il-Islami—gained significant influence during the 2002 election. After those elections, the Pakistani political system remained highly fragmented, with no group winning a substantial majority of seats in the National Assembly, and religious groups banding together in the MMA to earn a significant portion of seats for the first time.

According to the constitution, Pakistan is a federation of four provinces: Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Punjab, and Sindh. Governors appointed by the president head the provinces. There is also the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and the Islamabad Capital Territory, which consists of the capital city of Islamabad. These areas and territory are under the jurisdiction of the federal government. The Northern Areas are administered as a de facto "Union Territory" and are treated as an integral part of Pakistan. The Pakistani-administered portion of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region includes Azad Kashmir, a separate and autonomous government that maintains strong ties to Pakistan.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Asif Ali ZARDARI**
Prime Min.: **Syed Yousuf Raza GILANI**
Senior Min.:
Min. of Commerce: **Chaudhry Ahmed MUKHTAR**
Min. of Communications: **Habib ur-RAHMAN**
Min. of Culture, Information, & Broadcasting: **Sherry REHMAN**
Min. of Defense: **Chaudhry Ahmed MUKHTAR**
Min. of Defense Production: **Rana Tanveer HUSSAIN**
Min. of Education & Minorities: **Ahsan IQBAL**
Min. of Environment: **Hameed Ullah Jan AFRIDI**
Min. of Finance, Revenue, Economic Affairs & Statistics: **Syed Naveed QAMAR**
Min. of Food, Livestock & Agriculture, & Narcotics Control: **Nazar Muhammad GONDAL**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Petroleum, & Natural Resources: **Makhdoom Shah Mehmood QURESHI**
Min. of Frontier Affairs (States & Frontier Regions) & Sports: **Najmuddin KHAN**
Min. of Housing & Works: **Haji Rehmatullah KAKAR**
Min. of Industries & Production: **Syed Naveed QAMAR**
Min. of Kashmir Affairs & Northern Areas, & Ports & Shipping: **Qamar Zaman KAIRA**
Min. of Labor, Manpower, & Overseas Pakistanis: **Syed Khursheed Ahmed SHAH**
Min. of Law & Justice: **Farooq H. NAIK**
Min. of Local Govt. & Rural Development: **Haji Ghulam Ahmad BILOUR**
Min. of Population Welfare: **Mir Humayun Aziz KURD**
Min. of Privatization & Investment: **Syed Naveed QAMAR**
Min. of Railways: **Sardar Mehtab Ahmad KHAN**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Tehmina DAULTANA**
Min. of Social Welfare & Special Education: **Nawabzada Khawaja Muhammad Khan HOTI**
Min. of Water & Power: **Raja Pervaiz ASHRAF**
Governor, State Bank of Pakistan: **Shamshad AKHTAR**
Ambassador to the US: **Husain HAQQANI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Abdullah Hussain HAROON**

Pakistan maintains an embassy in the United States at 3517 International Court NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-243-6500). It has consulates in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Houston.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Pakistan has the world's eighth-largest armed forces, which is generally well trained and disciplined. However, budget constraints and nation-building duties have reduced Pakistan's training tempo, which if not reversed, could affect the operational readiness of the armed forces. Likewise, Pakistan has had an increasingly difficult time maintaining its

aging fleet of U.S., Chinese, U.K., and French equipment. While industrial capabilities have expanded significantly, limited budget resources and sanctions have significantly constrained the government's efforts to modernize its armed forces.

Until 1990, the United States provided military aid to Pakistan to modernize its conventional defensive capability. The United States allocated about 40% of its assistance package to non-reimbursable credits for military purchases, the third-largest program behind Israel and Egypt. The remainder of the aid program was devoted to economic assistance. Sanctions put in place in 1990 denied Pakistan further military assistance due to the discovery of its program to develop nuclear weapons. Sanctions were tightened following Pakistan's nuclear tests in response to India's May 1998 tests and the military coup of 1999. Pakistan has remained a non-signatory of the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty.

The events of September 11, 2001, and Pakistan's agreement to support the United States led to a waiver of the sanctions, and military assistance resumed to provide spare parts and equipment to enhance Pakistan's capacity to police its western border with Afghanistan and address its legitimate security concerns. In 2003, President Bush announced that the United States would provide Pakistan with $3 billion in economic and military aid over 5 years. This assistance package commenced during FY 2005.

ECONOMY

The World Bank considers Pakistan a low-income country. No more than 49.9% of adults are literate, and life expectancy is about 63 years. The population, currently about 167 million, is growing at 1.81% annually.

In 2000, the government made significant macroeconomic reforms: Privatizing Pakistan's state-subsidized utilities, reforming the banking sector, instituting a world-class anti-money laundering law, cracking down on piracy of intellectual property, and moving to quickly resolving investor disputes. After September 11, 2001, and Pakistan's proclaimed commitment to fighting terror, many international sanctions, particularly those imposed by the United States, were lifted. Pakistan's economic prospects began to increase significantly due to unprecedented inflows of foreign assistance at the end of 2001. This trend is expected to continue through 2009. Foreign exchange reserves and exports grew to record levels after a sharp decline. The International Monetary Fund lauded Pakistan for its commitment in meeting lender requirements for a $1.3 billion IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility loan, which it completed in 2004, forgoing the final permitted tranche. The Government of Pakistan has been successful in issuing sovereign bonds, and has issued $600 million in Islamic bonds, putting Pakistan back on the investment map. Pakistan's search for additional foreign direct investment has been hampered by concerns about the security situation, domestic and regional political uncertainties, and questions about judicial transparency.

On October 8, 2005 a magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan. The epicenter of the earthquake was near Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistani-administered Kashmir, and approximately 60 miles north-northeast of Islamabad. An estimated 75,000 people were killed and 2.5 million people were left homeless. The disaster of such a huge magnitude galvanized an international rescue and reconstruction effort in support of the affected region. The earthquake cost Pakistan $1.1 billion in resettling those affected.

U.S. assistance has played a key role in moving Pakistan's economy from the brink of collapse to setting record high levels of foreign reserves and exports, dramatically lowering levels of solid debt. Also, despite the earthquake in 2005, GDP growth remained strong at 6.6% in fiscal year 2005/2006. In 2002, the United States led Paris Club efforts to reschedule Pakistan's debt on generous terms, and in April 2003 the United States reduced Pakistan's bilateral official debt by $1 billion. In 2004, approximately $500 million more in bilateral debt was granted. Consumer price inflation eased slightly to an average of 8% in 2005/2006 from 9.3% in 2004/2005.

Low levels of spending in the social services and high population growth have contributed to persistent poverty and unequal income distribution. The trends of resources being devoted to socioeconomic development and infrastructure projects have been improving since 2002, although expenditures remain below global averages. Pakistan's extreme poverty and underdevelopment are key concerns, especially in rural areas. Officials have committed to using international assistance—including a major part of the $3 billion five-year U.S. assistance package—to address Pakistan's long-term needs in the health and education sectors.

Reform

The government started pursuing market-based economic reform policies in the early 1980s. These reforms began to take hold in 1988, when the government launched an ambitious IMF-assisted structural adjustment program in response to chronic and unsustainable fiscal and external account deficits. The government began to remove barriers to foreign trade and investment, reform the financial system, ease foreign exchange controls, and privatize dozens of state-owned enterprises.

Although the economy became more structurally sound, it remained vulnerable to external and internal shocks, such as in 1992-93, when devastating floods and political uncertainty combined to depress economic growth sharply. The Asian financial crisis seriously affected Pakistan's major markets for its textile exports. For example, average real GDP growth from 1992 to 1998 dipped to 4.1% annually. Economic reform also was set back by Pakistan's nuclear tests in May 1998, and the subsequent economic sanctions imposed by

the G-7. International default was narrowly averted by the partial waiver of sanctions and the subsequent reinstatement of Pakistan's IMF enhanced structural adjustment facility/extended fund facility in early 1999, followed by Paris Club and London Club re-scheduling. After taking power in late 1999, President Musharraf instituted policies to stabilize Pakistan's macroeconomic situation. Pakistan continues to struggle with these reforms, having mixed success, especially in reducing its budget and current account deficits.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Pakistan's principal natural resources are arable land, water, hydroelectric potential, and natural gas reserves. About 28% of Pakistan's total land area is under cultivation and is watered by one of the largest irrigation systems in the world. Agriculture accounts for about 21% of GDP and employs about 42% of the labor force. The most important crops are cotton, wheat, rice, sugarcane, fruits, and vegetables, which together account for more than 75% of the value of total crop output. Despite intensive farming practices, Pakistan remains a net food importer. Pakistan exports rice, fish, fruits, and vegetables and imports vegetable oil, wheat, cotton (net importer), pulses, and consumer foods.

The economic importance of agriculture has declined since independence, when its share of GDP was around 53%. Following the poor harvest of 1993, the government introduced agriculture assistance policies, including increased support prices for many agricultural commodities and expanded availability of agricultural credit. From 1993 to 1997, real growth in the agricultural sector averaged 5.7% but declined to less than 3% in 2005. Agricultural reforms, including increased wheat and oilseed production, play a central role in the government's economic reform package. Heavy rains in 2005 provided the benefit of larger than average cotton, wheat, and rice crops, but also caused damage due to flooding and avalanches.

Pakistan has extensive energy resources, including fairly sizable natural gas reserves, some proven oil reserves, coal, and large hydropower potential. However, exploitation of energy resources has been slow due to a shortage of capital and domestic and international political constraints. For instance, domestic gas and petroleum production totals only about half the country's energy needs, and dependence on imported oil contributes to Pakistan's persistent trade deficits and shortage of foreign exchange. The government announced that privatization in the oil and gas sector is a priority.

Industry

Pakistan's manufacturing sector accounts for about 25% of GDP. Cotton textile production and apparel manufacturing are Pakistan's largest industries, accounting for about 70% of total exports. Other major industries include food processing, beverages, construction materials, clothing, and paper products. As technology improves in the industrial sector, it continues to grow. In 2005/2006, the manufacturing sector grew by 8.6%. Despite government efforts to privatize large-scale parastatal units, the public sector continues to account for a significant proportion of industry. In the face of an increasing trade deficit, the government seeks to diversify the country's industrial base and bolster export industries. Net foreign investment in Pakistani industries is only 0.5% of GDP.

Foreign Trade and Aid

Weak world demand for its exports and domestic political uncertainty have contributed to Pakistan's high trade deficit. In 2004, growth rebounded to approximately 6% with substantial improvement in public and external debt indicators and remained robust with 7.8% growth in 2005. Foreign reserves are at an all-time high of $11.5 billion. Pakistan's exports, which grew by 14.4% in 2005/2006, continue to be dominated by cotton textiles and apparel, despite government diversification efforts. Major imports include petroleum and petroleum products, edible oil, wheat, chemicals, fertilizer, capital goods, industrial raw materials, and consumer products, rising to 38.8% to $25.6 billion. External imbalance has left Pakistan with a growing foreign debt burden. The fiscal imbalance is reflected in a high level of total net public debt, which reached an estimated 92.6% of GDP in 2000-01, more than half involving external liabilities, but decreased to 72.7% in 2003. The fiscal deficit widened from 5.6% of GDP in 1994-95 to 7.7% in 1997-98 before declining to 4.5% in 2006. Despite a rise in tax collection, defense and development expenditure along with transfers to the provinces all rose in the 2006 budget, widening the deficit. Support for loss-making, state-owned enterprises and a weak domestic tax base are critical elements in the recurring fiscal deficits. The Pakistan Telecommunications Company Ltd. (PTCL) represented the largest of Pakistan's privatization programs for 2005. Despite its economic and political difficulties, Pakistan has taken steps to liberalize its trade and investment regimes, either unilaterally or in the context of commitments made with the World Trade Organization (WTO), IMF, and the World Bank. In 2004-2005, efforts in several crucial areas seemingly intensified, resulting in Pakistan becoming a more open and secure market for its trading partners.

Pakistan has received significant loan/grant assistance from international financial institutions (e.g., the IMF, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank) and bilateral donors, particularly after it began using its military/financial resources in the war on terror. The United States pledged $3 billion for FY 2005 to FY 2009 in economic and military aid to Pakistan. In addition, the IMF and World Bank have pledged $1 billion in loans to Pakistan. In 2004 to 2007 alone, the World Bank has pledged over $500 million in investment projects.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

After September 11, 2001, Pakistan's prominence in the international community increased significantly, as it pledged its alliance with the U.S. in the war on terror and made a commitment to eliminate terrorist camps on its territory. Historically, Pakistan has had difficult and volatile relations with India, long-standing close relations with China, extensive security and economic interests in the Persian Gulf, and wide-ranging bilateral relations with the United States and other Western countries. It expresses a strong desire for a stable Afghanistan.

India

Since partition, relations between Pakistan and India have been characterized by rivalry and suspicion. Although many issues divide the two countries, the most sensitive one since independence has been the status of Kashmir.

At the time of partition, the princely state of Kashmir, though ruled by a Hindu Maharajah, had an overwhelmingly Muslim population. When the Maharajah hesitated in acceding to either Pakistan or India in 1947, some of his Muslim subjects, later aided by tribesmen from Pakistan, revolted in favor of joining Pakistan. In exchange for military assistance in containing the revolt, the Kashmiri ruler offered his allegiance to India. Indian troops occupied the eastern portion of Kashmir, including its capital, Srinagar, while the western part came under Pakistani control.

India submitted this dispute to the United Nations on January 1, 1948. One year later, the UN arranged a cease-fire along a line dividing Kashmir but leaving the northern end of the line not demarcated and the Vale of Kashmir (with the majority of the population) under Indian control. India and Pakistan agreed to a resolution that called for a UN-supervised plebiscite to determine the state's future This plebiscite has not occurred because the main precondition, the withdrawal of both nations' forces from Kashmir, has failed to take place.

Full-scale hostilities erupted in September 1965, when India alleged that insurgents trained and supplied by Pakistan were operating in India-controlled Kashmir. Hostilities ceased 3 weeks later, following mediation efforts by the UN and interested countries. In January 1966, the leaders of India and Pakistan met in Tashkent, U.S.S.R., and agreed to attempt a peaceful settlement of Kashmir and their other differences.

Following the 1971 Indo-Pakistan conflict, President Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met in the hill station of Shimla, India, in July 1972. They agreed to a line of control in Kashmir resulting from the December 17, 1971, cease-fire, and endorsed the principle of settlement of bilateral disputes through peaceful means. In 1974, Pakistan and India agreed to resume postal and telecommunications linkages and to enact measures to facilitate travel. Trade and diplomatic relations were restored in 1976 after a hiatus of 5 years.

India's nuclear test in 1974 generated great uncertainty in Pakistan and is generally acknowledged to have been the impetus for Pakistan's nuclear weapons development program. In 1983, the Pakistani and Indian Governments accused each other of aiding separatists in their respective countries—Sikhs in India's Punjab state and Sindhis in Pakistan's Sindh province. In April 1984, tensions erupted after troops were deployed to the Siachen Glacier, a high-altitude, desolate area close to the China border not demarcated by the cease-fire agreement (Karachi Agreement) signed by Pakistan and India in 1949.

Tensions diminished after Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister in November 1984 and after a group of Sikh hijackers was brought to trial by Pakistan in March 1985. In December 1985, President Zia and Prime Minister Gandhi pledged not to attack each other's nuclear facilities. A formal "no attack" agreement was signed in January 1991. In early 1986, the Indian and Pakistani Governments began high-level talks to resolve the Siachen Glacier border dispute and to improve trade.

Bilateral tensions increased in early 1990, when Kashmiri militants began a campaign of violence against Indian Government authority in Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequent high-level bilateral meetings relieved the tensions between India and Pakistan, but relations worsened again after the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque by Hindu extremists in December 1992 and terrorist bombings in Bombay in March 1993. Talks between the Foreign Secretaries of both countries in January 1994 ended in deadlock.

More recently, the Indo-Pakistani relationship has veered sharply between rapprochement and conflict. After taking office in February 1997, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif moved to resume official dialog with India. A number of meetings at the foreign secretary and prime ministerial level took place, with positive atmospherics but little concrete progress. The relationship improved markedly when Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee traveled to Lahore for a summit with Sharif in February 1999. There was considerable hope that the meeting could lead to a breakthrough.

In spring 1999, infiltrators from Pakistan occupied positions on the Indian side of the Line of Control in the remote, mountainous area of Kashmir near Kargil, threatening the ability of India to supply its forces on Siachen Glacier. By early summer, serious fighting flared in the Kargil sector. The infiltrators withdrew following a meeting between Prime Minister Sharif and President Clinton in July. Relations between India and Pakistan were particularly strained during the 1999 coup in Islamabad. Then, just weeks after the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States, an attack on India's Parliament on December 13 further strained this relationship.

The prospects for better relations between India and Pakistan improved in early January 2004 when a summit meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) permitted India's Prime Minister Vajpayee to meet with President Musharraf. Both leaders agreed to establish a Composite Dialogue to resolve their disputes. The Composite Dialogue focuses on eight issues: confidence building measures, Kashmir, Wullar barrage, promotion of friendly exchanges, Siachen glacier, Sir creek, terrorism and drug trafficking, and economic and commercial cooperation. The first round of the Composite Dialogue was held in New Delhi on June 27-28, 2004.

Relations further improved when President Musharraf met Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New York in October 2004. Additional steps aimed at improving relations were announced when Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh visited Islamabad in February 2005 and in April 2005 when President Musharraf traveled to India to view a cricket match and hold discussions. In a further display of improved relations, bus service commenced from Pakistan-controlled Kashmir to Srinagar in April 2005. After a destructive earthquake hit the Kashmir region in October 2005, the two countries cooperated with each other to deal with the humanitarian crisis.

Musharraf and Singh last met in September 2006 at the Non-Aligned Summit in Havana. At this meeting, the two leaders condemned all acts of terrorism and agreed to continue the search for options acceptable to both sides for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of all issues, including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. The foreign secretaries of both nations opened the fourth round of the Composite Dialogue in Islamabad on March 13-14, 2007.

Afghanistan

Following the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Pakistani Government played a vital role in supporting the Afghan resistance movement and assisting Afghan refugees. After the Soviet withdrawal in February 1989, Pakistan, with cooperation from the world community, continued to provide extensive support for displaced Afghans. Continued turmoil in Afghanistan prevented the refugees from returning to their country. In 1999, more than 1.2 million registered Afghan refugees remained in Pakistan. Pakistan was one of three countries to recognize the Taliban regime of Afghanistan. International pressure after September 11, 2001, prompted Pakistan to reassess its relations with the Taliban regime and support the U.S. and international coalition in Operation Enduring Freedom to remove the Taliban from power. Pakistan has publicly expressed its support to Afghanistan's President Karzai and has pledged $100 million toward Afghanistan's reconstruction. Both nations are also working to strengthen cooperation along their rugged border, including making preparations to hold joint jirgas in their restive border areas.

People's Republic of China

In 1950, Pakistan was among the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC). Following the Sino-Indian hostilities of 1962, Pakistan's relations with China became stronger; since then, the countries have regularly exchanged high-level visits resulting in various agreements. China has provided economic, military, and technical assistance to Pakistan. Favorable relations with China have been a pillar of Pakistan's foreign policy. The PRC strongly supported Pakistan's opposition to Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and is perceived by Pakistan as a regional counterweight to India and Russia.

Iran and the Persian Gulf

Historically, Pakistan has had close geopolitical and cultural-religious linkages with Iran. However, strains in the relationship appeared following the Iranian revolution. Pakistan and Iran supported different factions in the Afghan conflict. Also, some Pakistanis suspect Iranian government support for the sectarian violence that has plagued Pakistan. However, relations between the countries have improved since their policies toward Afghanistan have converged with the fall of the Taliban. Both countries contend that they are on the road to strong and lasting friendly relations.

Pakistan historically has provided military personnel to strengthen Gulf-state defenses and to reinforce its own security interests in the area.

U.S.-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

The United States and Pakistan established diplomatic relations in 1947. The U.S. agreement to provide economic and military assistance to Pakistan and the latter's partnership in the Baghdad Pact/CENTO and SEATO strengthened relations between the nations. However, the U.S. suspension of military assistance during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war generated a widespread feeling in Pakistan that the United States was not a reliable ally. Even though the United States suspended military assistance to both countries involved in the conflict, the suspension of aid affected Pakistan much more severely. Gradually, relations improved, and arms sales were renewed in 1975. Then, in April 1979, the United States cut off economic assistance to Pakistan, except food assistance, as required under the Symington Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, due to concerns about Pakistan's nuclear program.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 highlighted the common interest of Pakistan and the United States in peace and stability in South Asia. In 1981, the United States and Pakistan agreed on a $3.2 billion military and economic assistance program aimed at helping Pakistan deal with the heightened threat to security in the region and its eco-

nomic development needs. Recognizing national security concerns and accepting Pakistan's assurances that it did not intend to construct a nuclear weapon, Congress waived restrictions (Symington Amendment) on military assistance to Pakistan. In March 1986, the two countries agreed on a second multi-year (FY 1988-93) $4 billion economic development and security assistance program. On October 1, 1990, however, the United States suspended all military assistance and new economic aid to Pakistan under the Pressler Amendment, which required that the President certify annually that Pakistan "does not possess a nuclear explosive device."

Several incidents of violence against American officials and U.S. mission employees in Pakistan have marred the relationship. In November 1979, false rumors that the United States had participated in the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca provoked a mob attack on the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad in which the chancery was set on fire resulting in the loss of life of American and Pakistani staff. In 1989, an attack on the American Center in Islamabad resulted in six Pakistanis being killed in crossfire with the police. In March 1995, two American employees of the consulate in Karachi were killed and one wounded in an attack on the home-to-office shuttle. In November 1997, four U.S. businessmen were brutally murdered while being driven to work in Karachi. In March 2002 a suicide attacker detonated explosives in a church in Islamabad, killing two Americans associated with the Embassy and three others. There were also unsuccessful attacks by terrorists on the Consulate General in Karachi in May 2002. Another bomb was detonated near American and other businesses in Karachi in November 2005, killing three people and wounding 15 others. On March 2, 2006, a suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives as a vehicle carrying an American Foreign Service officer passed by on its way to Consulate Karachi. The diplomat, the Consulate's locally-employed driver and three other people were killed in the blast; 52 others were wounded.

The decision by India to conduct nuclear tests in May 1998 and Pakistan's matching response set back U.S. relations in the region, which had seen renewed U.S. Government interest during the second Clinton Administration. A presidential visit scheduled for the first quarter of 1998 was postponed and, under the Glenn Amendment, sanctions restricted the provision of credits, military sales, economic assistance, and loans to the government. The October 1999 overthrow of the democratically elected Sharif government triggered an additional layer of sanctions under Section 508 of the Foreign Appropriations Act, which include restrictions on foreign military financing and economic assistance. U.S. Government assistance to Pakistan was subsequently limited mainly to refugee and counter-narcotics assistance.

The U.S.-Pakistan relationship changed significantly once Pakistan agreed to support the U.S. campaign to eliminate the Taliban in Afghanistan and to join the United States in the Global War on Terror. Since September 2001, Pakistan has provided extensive assistance in the war on terror by capturing more than 600 al-Qaida members and their allies. The United States has stepped up its economic assistance to Pakistan, providing debt relief and support for a major effort for education reform. During President Musharraf's visit to the United States in 2003, President Bush announced that the United States would provide Pakistan with $3 billion in economic and military aid over 5 years. This assistance package commenced during FY 2005.

Following the region's tragic October 8, 2005 earthquake, the United States responded immediately and generously to Pakistan's call for assistance. The response was consistent with U.S. humanitarian values and our deep commitment to Pakistan. At the subsequent reconstruction conference in Islamabad on November 19, 2005, the U.S. announced a $510 million commitment to Pakistan for earthquake relief and reconstruction, including humanitarian assistance, military support for relief operations, and anticipated U.S. private contributions.

In 2004, the United States recognized closer bilateral ties with Pakistan by designating Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally. President Bush visited Pakistan in March 2006, where he and President Musharraf reaffirmed their shared commitment to a broad and lasting strategic partnership, agreeing to continue their cooperation on a number of issues including: the war on terror, security in the region, strengthening democratic institutions, trade and investment, education, and earthquake relief and reconstruction.

The United States and Pakistan concluded the sale to Pakistan of F-16 aircraft in late 2006, further reflecting their deepening strategic partnership. President Musharraf visited Washington in September 2006, where he held a bilateral meeting with President Bush and also participated in a trilateral meeting with President Bush and President Karzai of Afghanistan. The U.S.-Pakistan strategic partnership is based on the shared interests of the United States and Pakistan in building stable and sustainable democracy and in promoting peace and security, stability, prosperity, and democracy in South Asia and across the globe.

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Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 21, 2008

Country Description: Pakistan is a parliamentary federal republic in South Asia, with a population of nearly 170 million people. Following successful elections in February 2008, Pakistan has a coalition government led by Prime Minister Yousef Gilani. Pakistan is a developing country, with some tourist facilities in major cities but limited in outlying areas.

The infrastructure of areas of Kashmir and the Northwest Frontier Province was devastated as a result of the October 8, 2005 earthquake and is not yet recovered.

Entry Requirements: All U.S. citizens traveling to Pakistan for any purpose are required to have valid U.S. passports and Pakistani-issued visas. Further information on entry requirements can be obtained from the Embassy of Pakistan at: 3517 International Court Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone: 202-243-6500; e-mail: info@pakistan-embassy.org; web site: http://www.pakistan-embassy.org.

Travelers may also contact one of the Consulates General of Pakistan in:

Boston: 20 Chestnut Street, Needham, MA 02492; telephone: (781) 455-8000; fax: (617) 266-6666; email: pakistan@tiac.net.

Chicago: 333 North Michigan Ave., Suite 728, Chicago, IL, 60601; telephone: (312) 781-1831; fax: (312) 781-1839; email: parepchicago@ yahoo. com.

Houston: 11850 Jones Road, Houston, TX, 77070; telephone: (281) 890-2223; fax: (281) 890-1433; email: parep houston@sbcglobal.net.

Los Angeles: 10850 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1100, Los Angeles, CA 90024; telephone: (310) 441-5114; fax: (310) 441-9256; email: info@pak consulatela.org.

New York: 12 East 65th St., New York, NY 10021; telephone: (212) 879-5800; fax: (212) 517-6987; website: www.pakistanconsulateny.org.

If a traveler plans to stay longer than the time listed on the visa, he or she must extend the stay with the local passport office of the Ministry of Interior. Visit the Embassy of Pakistan web site at http://www.pakistan-embassy.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: A number of extremist groups within Pakistan continue to target American and other Western interests and high-level Pakistani government officials. Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated willingness and capability to attack targets where Americans are known to congregate or visit. Terrorist actions may include, but are not limited to, suicide operations, bombing—including vehicle-borne explosives and improvised explosive devices—assassinations, carjacking, assault or kidnapping. U.S. Government personnel are not permitted to stay at or frequent major hotels in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. Government personnel have also been advised to restrict the number and frequency of trips to public markets, and to avoid public restaurants in Islamabad, Karachi, and Peshawar.

On November 12, 2008, an American government contractor and his driver in Peshawar were shot and killed in their car. In September 2008, over fifty people, including three Americans, were killed and hundreds were injured when a suicide bomber set off a truck filled with explosives outside a major international hotel in Islamabad. In August 2008 gunmen stopped and shot at the vehicle of an Ameri-

can diplomat in Peshawar. In March 2008, a restaurant frequented by westerners in Islamabad was bombed, killing one patron and seriously injuring several others, including four American diplomats. On March 2, 2006, an American diplomat, his locally employed driver, and three others were killed when a suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives in front of the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi. Fifty-two others were wounded in the attack.

Sectarian and extremist violence has resulted in fatal bomb attacks in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Lahore, and other Pakistani cities since 2006. Since 2007, over 1,000 bombings have killed more than 1,000 people throughout Pakistan and injured many more. Rallies, demonstrations, and processions occur from time to time throughout Pakistan on very short notice and have often taken on an anti-American or anti-Western character. Because of the possibility of violence, Americans are urged to avoid all public places of worship and areas where Westerners are known to congregate.

During the Islamic (Shi'a) religious observance of Moharram, rivalries and hostilities often increase.

In 2007 and 2008, several American citizens throughout Pakistan were kidnapped for ransom or for personal reasons. Kidnappings for ransom are particularly common in some parts of Pakistan, such as the Northwest Frontier Province and Sindh Province.

It is best to avoid public transportation. For security reasons, U.S. Mission personnel are prohibited from using taxis or buses. (See the Traffic Safety and Road Conditions section below).

Women are advised to dress conservatively, with arms and legs covered, and avoid walking around alone. It is unwise for anyone to travel on the streets late at night. Visitors to Pakistan should attempt to maintain a low profile, blend in, be aware of their surroundings, and seek security with their family or sponsoring organization.

Northern Areas—While we continue to discourage non-essential travel to Pakistan, we advise Americans wishing to trek in Gilgit, Hunza or Chitral to use only licensed guides and tourist agencies. While overall crime is low, there have been occasional assaults on foreign visitors.

Northwest Frontier Province—The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar has temporarily relocated some personnel to Islamabad while the Consulate reevaluates necessary security measures to operate under the heightened threat conditions. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Afghan border, and certain areas within the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), are designated as tribal areas and are not subject to normal government jurisdiction.

The Government of Pakistan requires all citizens of countries other than Pakistan and Afghanistan to obtain permission from the Home and Tribal Affairs Department prior to visiting these locations. The permit may stipulate that an armed escort must accompany the visitor. Even in the settled areas of the NWFP there is occasional ethnic, sectarian, and political violence. There have been dozens of bombings in Peshawar of varying sophistication since September 2006. Members of the Taliban and Al-Qaida are known to be in the FATA, and may also be in the settled areas. Due to security concerns the U.S. Government currently allows only essential travel within the FATA by American officials.

Kashmir—While direct military hostilities between India and Pakistan across the Line of Control (LOC) are infrequent, militant groups engaged in a long-running insurgency on the Indian side of the LOC are reported to have bases and supporters operating from the Pakistani side.

Most of these groups are anti-American, and some have attacked Americans and other Westerners. The Government of Pakistan restricts access to many parts of this region and requires that visitors obtain a permit from the Ministry of Interior before traveling.

Punjab Province—Violence has increased in Punjab Province. Since September 2007, several suicide operations have taken place, including attacks in Rawalpindi and Lahore. As a precaution against these possible dangers, U.S. citizens are cautioned to avoid public transportation and crowded areas. The Wagah border crossing into India near Lahore remains open daily (from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) for travel to and from India if the passport holder has a valid visa for both countries. Visitors are advised to confirm the current status of the border crossing prior to commencing travel.

Sindh Province—In Karachi and Hyderabad, there has been recurring violence characterized by bombings, violent demonstrations and shootings. An October 2007 suicide attack on former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto killed more than 130 and injured approximately 375 people in Karachi. In the aftermath of her December 2007 death, rioting in Karachi led to multiple deaths and injuries, as well as widespread property damage. In May 2008, clashing groups of lawyers burned buildings and vehicles in several areas of the city, resulting in at least 11 fatalities. Americans and other westerners continue to be a particular target of hostility and occasional anti-Western mob violence. The Consulate General in particular has been the target of several major terrorist attacks or plots in recent years, including the deadly March 2006 suicide attack described above. Non-essential travel to these cities is strongly discouraged. In rural Sindh Province, the security situation is hazardous, especially for those engaged in overland travel. The Government of Pakistan recommends that travelers limit their movements in Sindh Province.

Balochistan Province—The Province of Balochistan, which borders both Iran and Afghanistan, is notorious for narcotics and other forms of cross-border smuggling. Members of the

Taliban and Al-Qaida are also believed to be present there. Tribal unrest sometimes turns violent. Because provincial police presence is limited, travelers wishing to visit the interior of Balochistan should consult with the province's Home Secretary. Advance permission from provincial authorities is required for travel into many areas. Local authorities have detained travelers who lacked proper permission. Quetta, the provincial capital, has experienced an increase in bombings, occasional gun battles in the streets, and the imposition of curfews. Terrorist attacks against Pakistani government installations and infrastructure have been reported throughout 2005 and 2006.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet website where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is a serious concern for foreigners throughout Pakistan. Carjacking, armed robberies, house invasions, and other violent crimes occur in many major urban areas. Petty crime, especially theft of personal property, is common. American travelers to Pakistan are strongly advised to avoid traveling by taxi and other forms of public transportation, and have members of their host organizations or families meet them at the airport.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Pakistan is: 15.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate basic non-emergency medical care is available in major Pakistani cities, but is limited in rural areas. Facilities in the cities vary in level and range of services, resources, and cleanliness, and Americans may find them below U.S. standards; facilities in rural areas are consistently below U.S. standards. Medical facilities require prepayment and do not accept credit cards.

Water is not potable anywhere in Pakistan and sanitation in many restaurants is inadequate. Stomach illnesses are common.

Effective emergency response to personal injury and illness is virtually non-existent in Pakistan. Ambulances are few and are not necessarily staffed by medical personnel. Any emergency case should be transported immediately to a recommended emergency receiving room. Many American-brand medications are not widely available, but generic brands from well-known pharmaceuticals usually are. The quality of the locally-produced medications is uneven.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Pakistan.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. As noted above, emergency medical care in Pakistan is very limited. Medical evacuations from Pakistan may cost in excess of $45,000 for uninsured travelers requiring emergency assistance.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Pakistan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Pakistan moves on the left, opposite of U.S. traffic. In addition to this source of potential confusion, travel by road in Pakistan has a variety of other risks. Roads are crowded, drivers are often aggressive and poorly trained, and many vehicles, particularly large trucks and buses, are badly maintained. Donkeys, cattle, horse carts, and even the occasional camel can pose roadside hazards in some areas.

Roads, including most major highways, also suffer from poor maintenance and often have numerous potholes, sharp drop-offs and barriers that are not sign-posted. Extreme

caution should be exercised when traveling at night by road since many vehicles do not have proper illumination or dimmers nor are most roads properly illuminated or signed. Driving without experienced local drivers or guides is not recommended.

It is best to avoid public transportation. For security reasons, U.S. Mission personnel are prohibited from using taxis or buses. Visit the website of Pakistan's national tourist office at http://www.tourism.gov.pk/ and the national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.nha.gov.pk.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Pakistan's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Pakistan is largely a cash economy. Personal checks are not commonly accepted. Most Pakistanis do not use checking accounts for routine transactions. Outside major cities, even credit cards and travelers' checks are generally not accepted, and there have been numerous reports of credit card fraud. There are bank branches as well as registered moneychangers in all international airports. ATMs can also be found in major airports. English is widely spoken by professional-level airport staff.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Pakistani laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Pakistan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Pakistan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Pakistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad is located at Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5; telephone: (92-51) 208-0000; Consular Section telephone: (92-51) 208-2700; fax: (92-51) 282-2632; website: http://islamabad.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Karachi, located at 8 Abdullah Haroon Road, closed its public operations indefinitely due to security concerns. U.S. citizens requiring emergency assistance should call the Consular Section in Karachi; telephone: (92-21) 520-4200; fax: (92-21) 568-0496; website: http://karachi.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Consulate in Lahore is located on 50 Sharah-E-Abdul Hamid Bin Badees (Old Empress Road), near Shimla Hill Rotary; telephone: (92-42) 603-4000; fax: (92-42) 603-4200; website: http://lahore.usconsulate.gov/; email: amconsul@brain.net.pk.

The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar is located at 11 Hospital Road, Cantonment, Peshawar; telephone: (92-91) 526-8800; fax: (92-91) 528-4171; website: http://peshawar.usconsulate.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Pakistan is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Pakistan, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Interested United States citizens are strongly encouraged to contact United States consular officials in Islamabad before formalizing an adoption agreement to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed which will make it possible for the Embassy (Consulate) to issue a United States immigrant visa for the child.

In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, Pakistan also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Age Requirements: If single, the petitioner must be a United States citizen who is at least 24 years old when filing form I-600A, and at least 25 years old when filing form I-600. If married, only one spouse is technically the petitioner (must be a United States citizen). The other spouse (who does not have to be a United States citizen) must co-sign the forms, consent to the adoption, and be approved in the home study.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents can be married or single.

Who Can Be Adopted? Pakistan has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. It should be noted that Pakistan is not an easy country from which to adopt a child. If you have a particular child in mind for adoption, especially a relative, be sure to have a lawyer or USCIS assist you in determining if the child fits the definition of "orphan" before proceeding.

In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Pakistani Adoption Authority: Family Court

The Process: The first step in adopting a child is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

There are no adoption agencies in Pakistan; however, the American Embassy provides a list of attorneys that the parents can use.

To bring an adopted child from Pakistan to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS.

The adjudication of such petitions can be very time-consuming and parents are encouraged to begin the process well in advance.

In addition to meeting the United States requirements for adoptive parents, you need to meet the requirements of Pakistan as described in the Who Can Adopt section.

A prospective adoptive parent may file Form I-600A with the USCIS office having jurisdiction over their place of residence. Detailed information about filing these forms can be found on USCIS web site at http://www.uscis.gov.

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Pakistan will provide you with a referral to a child.

Documents Required: The following documents are required to complete the adoption process:

- Proof of United States citizenship of petitioner
- Proof of marriage of petitioner (if married); if the petitioner is unmarried but was previously married, submit proof of termination of all previous marriages
- Fingerprint cards of petitioner, spouse, and all other adult members of the petitioner's household
- Approved home-study

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Pakistan
Islamabad, Pakistan
Tel: (92) (51) 2-080-2700
Fax: (92) (51) 2-822-632
Internet:
www.usembassy.state.gov/pakistan

Embassy of Pakistan
3517 International Court NW
Washington, DC 20008.
Tel. (202)243-6500
Email:
info@imbassyofpakistanusa.org
Internet: www.pakistan-embassy.org

Pakistan also has consulates in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Houston and Boston.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov.

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is

provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

Under Pakistani family law, which is based on Islamic law, the father controls virtually all aspects of his family's life. He decides where his wife and children will live, how the children are to be educated and whether or where they may travel. Courts rarely, if ever, give custody of children to a woman who is not a Muslim, who will not raise the children as Muslims, does not plan to raise them in Pakistan, or has remarried. In all probability, even if the mother wins custody, the children would still need the father's permission, to leave the country. Any matter of custody in Pakistan can only be resolved through the appropriate local judicial system.

Currently, the only treaties which have any application to abductions of children from the United States are the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the extradition treaties which the United States has with individual countries. Pakistan is not a party to the Hague Convention, and there is no bilateral treaty in effect between the U.S. and Pakistan which would cover parental child abduction.

While the courts of Pakistan may take into account the laws of other countries, custody orders from other countries are viewed simply as evidence in a Pakistani proceeding. Possession of a custody order, even in the absence of such an order by the Pakistani spouse, will not automatically result in the return of an abducted child. That parent would have to appeal to the family court in order to try to obtain an order for custody.

Pakistan will recognize decrees of other countries, whether or not there are any formal treaties with them. Abduction by a father is considered abduction by Pakistani authorities (the implication being that it is considered to be an illegal action). However, a foreign-born mother with U.S. custody orders still is not automatically allowed to take possession of her children and depart the country. She would have to retain an attorney and appeal to the High court. The high court acts like a post office in such cases. They send the case to the appropriate district judge for execution. The District Court reviews the papers and then calls in the concerned parties for a hearing. In spite of the illegal action (the abduction), and even though the foreign-born mother has a court order, there is still a great possibility the mother will not be given custody of the child. Moreover, if she is granted custody, the father can appeal to the Supreme Court on a matter of law, which means there was some legal point which was not adhered to during the course of the hearing. If the Supreme Court grants custody (no cases have gone that far yet in this district), there is no further recourse for the father or mother. If the foreign-born mother is granted custody and the father does not comply with the court order, the children can be taken by force. In addition, other civil actions can be taken such as attaching the father s property or arresting him. If a foreign born mother were granted full custody of her child, the father has the right to refuse to allow the mother and child to depart if the court order does not specifically allow her to remove the children from Pakistan.

Although appeal to the courts may seem difficult to a mother seeking custody of her children, it is recommended that parents be urged to appeal to the courts or other legal resources available. If a foreign-born mother has the only court order (U.S. or other) in effect regarding the custody of her child, it is also recommended that in addition to appealing to the courts, she should seek assistance in effecting that order from other local authorities (i.e. from local police or school officials).

Parents seeking legal assistance in Pakistan should be advised that local attorneys in Pakistan do not research or investigate cases. Therefore, she must bring as much documentary evidence as she can when she comes to Pakistan. She may be able to hire a local investigator (attorneys also do not use the services of independent investigators) to gain whatever evidence she needs from Pakistan. At this point, it would probably be best for the mother to be present in Pakistan, at least part way through the investigation, to check on the actual progress being made and to try and minimize the possibility that the investigator will be bribed to alter his findings.

The mother might wish to have a U.S. attorney review all collected evidence for advice on what may be useful and what may not. Once all evidence is collected, a Pakistani attorney should be retained. Constitutionally, courts are bound to resolve such cases within six months. But in reality, such cases could take more than one year if there are appeals. Since Pakistani attorneys do not do investigations, the costs incurred are purely for court-related costs and are therefore likely to be affordable, running as low as 10,000 Pakistani Rupees (U.S. Dollars $400.00) to 50,000 Pakistani Rupees (U.S. Dollars 2,000.00).

There are major family court sections in the civil courts in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi, and Peshawar. In smaller towns, any judge could hear such a case.

In Pakistan, most mothers do not earn an income. The courts keep this is mind in determining what is in the best interests of the child. A father is legally bound to take care of his children no matter what since he is the income earner. A mother is not so bound. That is why, in most cases, the father is granted custody.

Laws protecting the rights of mothers are written into the Quran (Koran). Under Islamic law, a woman has the right to keep a boy child up to the age of seven years and a girl child up to the age of twelve. The Guardian and Wards Act of 1890 can be used to help American citizens in two categories of juvenile cases. It can be used to gain custody of a child for adoption purposes and it can be used to justify granting custody of a child to one parent or the other. According to the Act, a person who is granted custody of a child is given the responsibility to

take care of the child and any property or other inheritance that may belong to that child. Since any inheritance is most likely to come through the father, the father would most likely prevail in such a situation.

The Extradition Treaty of 1931 was signed under the British mandate and could be used as a basis of cooperation in child custody cases. The Extradition Act of 1972 was not made with the U.S., but it could be extended in the interest of an American claimant. However, extradition has not been a recourse to which the U.S. Government has resorted in child custody cases.

Travel Warning

November 21, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against non-essential travel to Pakistan in light of the threat of terrorist activity. This replaces the Travel Warning dated October 1, 2008, and updates information on security incidents, notes the temporary relocation of some employees from the US Consulate in Peshawar to Islamabad, and reminds U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns in Pakistan.

The presence of Al-Qaida, Taliban elements, and indigenous sectarian groups poses a potential danger to American citizens, especially in the western border regions of Pakistan. Continuing tensions in the Middle East also increase the possibility of violence against Westerners in Pakistan. Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and capability to attack targets where Americans are known to congregate or visit, such as hotels, clubs and restaurants, places of worship, schools, or outdoor recreation events. U.S. Government personnel are not permitted to stay at or frequent major hotels in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. Government personnel have also been advised to restrict the number and frequency of trips to public markets, and to avoid public restaurants in Islamabad, Karachi, and Peshawar.

On November 12, 2008, an American government contractor and his driver in Peshawar were shot and killed in their car. In September 2008, over fifty people, including three Americans, were killed and hundreds were injured when a suicide bomber set off a truck filled with explosives outside a major international hotel in Islamabad. In August 2008, gunmen stopped and shot at the vehicle of an American diplomat in Peshawar. In March 2008, a restaurant frequented by westerners in Islamabad was bombed, killing one patron and seriously injuring several others, including four American diplomats. On March 2, 2006, an American diplomat, a Consulate employee, and three others were killed when a suicide bomber detonated a car packed with explosives alongside the U.S. Consulate General in Karachi. Fifty-two others were wounded.

Sectarian and extremist violence has resulted in fatal bomb attacks in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Lahore, and other Pakistani cities in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Since 2007, over 1,000 bombings have killed more than 1,000 people throughout Pakistan and injured many more. Some of the attacks have occurred outside major hotels, in market areas and other locations frequented by Americans. Other recent targets have included restaurants, Pakistani government officials and buildings, and international NGOs.

In 2007 and 2008, several American citizens throughout Pakistan were kidnapped for ransom or for personal reasons. Kidnappings for ransom are particularly common in some parts of Pakistan, such as the Northwest Frontier Province and Sindh Province.

The Pakistani military has been engaged in an active campaign against militants in the Bajaur district of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Access to many areas of Pakistan, including the FATA along the Afghan border, and the area adjacent to the Line of Control (LOC) in the disputed territory of Kashmir, is restricted by local government authorities for non-Pakistanis. Travel to any restricted region requires official permission by the Government of Pakistan. Failure to obtain such permission in advance can result in arrest and detention by Pakistani authorities. Due to security concerns the U.S. Government currently allows only essential travel within the FATA by American officials.

The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar has temporarily relocated some personnel to Islamabad while the Consulate evaluates necessary security measures to operate under heightened threat conditions. The Consulate remains open.

Rallies, demonstrations, and processions occur regularly throughout Pakistan on very short notice. In the aftermath of the December 2007 death of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, widespread rioting in Karachi led to multiple deaths and injuries as well as widespread property damage. Demonstrations have often taken on an anti-American or anti-Western character, and Americans are urged to avoid large gatherings.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Pakistan despite this Travel Warning are encouraged to register with the Embassy in Islamabad or the Consulates in Karachi, Lahore, or Peshawar. This registration can be completed online through the Department of State's travel registration website: https://travelregistration.state.gov. Alternatively, Americans without Internet access should contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate for information on registering in person. Registration enables citizens to obtain updated information on travel and security within Pakistan via the emergency alert system (warden network).

Americans in country should take appropriate individual precautions to ensure their safety and security. These measures include maintaining good situational awareness, avoiding crowds and demonstrations and keeping a low profile. Americans should avoid setting patterns by varying times and routes for all

required travel. Americans should ensure that their travel documents and visas are valid at all times. Official Americans are instructed to avoid use of public transportation and restrict their use of personal vehicles in response to security concerns.

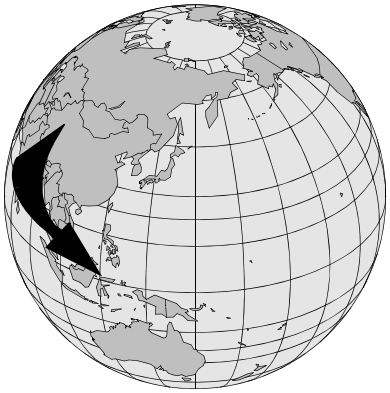
The U.S. Embassy in Islamabad is located at Diplomatic Enclave, Ramna 5; telephone: (92-51) 208-0000; Consular Section telephone: (92-51) 208-2700; fax: (92-51) 282-2632; website: http://islamabad.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Karachi is located at 8 Abdullah Haroon Road; telephone: (92-21) 520-4200 or (92-21) 520-4400 after hours; fax: (92-21) 568-0496; website: http://karachi.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Consulate in Lahore is located on 50 Sharah-E-Abdul Hamid Bin Badees (Old Empress Road), near Shimla Hill Rotary; tel:(92-42)603-4000 or (91-92)603-4250; fax: (92-42) 603-4200; website: http://lahore.usconsulate.gov; email: amconsul@brain.net.pk.

The U.S. Consulate in Peshawar is located at 11 Hospital Road, Cantonment, Peshawar; telephone: (92-91) 526-8800; fax: (92-91) 528-4171; website: http://Peshawar.usconsulate.gov.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the Worldwide Caution and the Pakistan Country Specific Information and Travel Warning can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



PALAU

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Palau

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 458 sq. km. (about 190 sq. mi.) in eight main islands plus more than 250 islets.

Cities: Capital—Melekeok (pop. 391).

Terrain: Varies from mountainous main island to smaller, reef-rimmed coral islands.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Palauan.

Population: Approximately 20,000 (non-Palauan population, approx. 5,500). Age structure—less than 15 years old, 5,150; 16-64 years old, 13,600; more than 65 years old, 1,130.

Population growth rate: 1.3%.

Ethnic groups: Palauans are Micronesian with Malayan and Melanesian elements.

Religions: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Modekngei (an indigenous Palauan religion).

Languages: English (official in all 16 states), Palauan.

Education: Literacy—92%.

Health: Life expectancy—male 68 yrs.; female 76 yrs. Infant mortality rate—16.2/1,000.

Work force: Public sector—56%; private sector—44%.

Government

Type: Constitutional republic in free association with United States.

Independence (from U.S.-administered UN trusteeship) October 1, 1994.

Constitution: January 1, 1981.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state and government), vice president, cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament elected by popular vote. Judicial—Supreme Court, National Court, Court of Common Pleas, and the Land Court.

Economy

GDP: (2006, provisional figure) $157.7 million.

GDP per capita: $7,921.

National income: (GDP + foreign assistance) $195.4 million.

National income per capita: $9,817.

GDP composition by sector: Public administration 23%, trade 20%, construction 15%, hotels and restaurants 11%, transportation and communications 9%, fisheries 2%, agriculture 1%, manufacturing and mining 1%.

Industry: Types—government, trade, construction, tourism.

Trade: Exports ($5.9 million, 2004)—fish, handicrafts. Export markets—U.S., Japan and Taiwan. Imports ($107.3 million)—fuel, food and beverages, manufactured goods. Import sources—U.S. (Guam), Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, and Korea.

External debt: (2006) $38 million.

Currency: U.S. dollar.

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

The Republic of Palau consists of eight principal islands and more than 250 smaller ones lying roughly 500 miles southeast of the Philippines. The islands of Palau constitute part of the Caroline Islands chain. About 70% of Palauans live in the capital city of Koror on Koror Island. The capital, however, relocated in 2006 from Koror to a newly constructed complex in Melekeok State on the larger but less developed island of Babeldaob—the second largest island in all of Micronesia after Guam.

HISTORY

Palau was initially settled more than 4,000 years ago, probably by migrants from what today is Indonesia. British traders became prominent visitors in the 18th century,

followed by expanding Spanish influence in the 19th century. Following its defeat in the Spanish-American War, Spain sold Palau and most of the rest of the Caroline Islands to Germany in 1899. Control passed to Japan in 1914 and then to the United States under UN auspices in 1947 as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

Four of the Trust Territory districts formed a single federated Micronesian state in 1979, but this eventually dissolved as the individual districts—long culturally distinct—opted for more locally popular status. Palau approved a new constitution in 1981, subsequently signing a Compact of Free Association with the United States in 1982. After eight referenda and an amendment to the Palauan constitution, the Compact went into effect on October 1, 1994, marking Palau's emergence from trusteeship to independence.

GOVERNMENT

Palau is a democratic republic with directly elected executive and legislative branches. Presidential elections take place every 4 years, at the same time as the United States' presidential election, to select the president and the vice president, who now run as a team. The Palau National Congress (Olbiil era Kelulau) has two houses. The Senate has nine members elected nationwide. The House of Delegates has 16 members, one each from Palau's 16 states. All of the legislators serve 4-year terms and are limited to three consecutive terms. Each state also elects its own governor and legislature.

The Council of Chiefs, comprising the highest traditional chiefs from each of the 16 states, is an advisory body to the president. The Council is consulted on matters concerning traditional laws and customs.

The judicial system consists of the Supreme Court—with trial and appellate divisions—the Court of Common Pleas, and the Land Court. (Palau's constitution has a provision for an additional National Court, but this is not currently active.) In November 2008 Palauans elected a new president and vice president: Johnson Toribiong and Kerai Mariur. They will take office in mid-January 2009. The same elections brought sweeping change to the legislature and passed more than 20 amendments to the constitution.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Tommy REMENGESAU, Jr.**
Vice President: **Elias Camsek CHIN**
Min. of Administration & Finance: **Elbuchel SADANG**
Min. of Commerce & Trade: **Otoichi BESEBES**
Min. of Community & Cultural Affairs: **Alexander R. MEREP**
Min. of Education: **Mario KATOSANG**
Min. of Health: **Victor Minoru YANO**
Min. of Justice: **Elias Camsek CHIN**
Min. of Resources & Development: **Fritz KOSHIBA**
Min. of State: **Temmy SHMULL**
Ambassador to the US: **Hersey KYOTA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Stuart BECK**

Palau maintains an embassy at 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20006 (tel: 202-452-6814, fax: 202-452-6281). The Republic of Palau's Mission to the United Nations is located at 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 575, New York, New York 10017 (tel: 212-813-0310, fax: 212-813-0317).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

While calm in recent years, Palau witnessed several instances of political violence in the 1980s. The republic's first president, Haruo I. Remeliik, was assassinated in 1985, with the Minister of State eventually found to be complicit in the crime. Palau's third president, Lazurus Salii, committed suicide in September 1988 amidst bribery allegations. Salii's personal assistant had been imprisoned several months earlier after being convicted of firing shots into the home of the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Legislation making Palau an "offshore" financial center was passed by the Senate in 1998. In 2001 Palau passed its first bank regulation and anti-money laundering laws.

ECONOMY

Palau's per capita GDP of $7,921 makes it one of the wealthier Pacific Island states. Nominal GDP increased by an annual average of nearly 14% from 1983 to 1990, and by an annual rate of over 10% from 1991 to 1997. Growth turned sharply negative in 1998 and 1999 as a result of the Asian financial crisis, but there has been a gradual rebound in recent years and the economy grew by 5.4% in 2005.

Tourism (and its attendant infrastructure changes) is Palau's main industry. Its major draws are its diverse and pristine marine environment, and its above-water tropical island beauty. The number of visitors—75% of whom come from Taiwan, Japan, and the U.S.—exceeded 82,000 in 2006, a 2% increase from 2005. Continental Airlines and Far Eastern Transport (FAT), have direct flights to Palau from Guam, Taiwan, and the Philippines. Japan Airlines runs chartered flights from Tokyo; Korean Airlines does the same from Seoul on a seasonal basis. In 2006 tourist spending in Palau was $62 million. Palauan tourism and environmental authorities would like to adjust the industry, simultaneously decreasing tourist volume and increasing income while by attracting more high-dollar tourists.

The service sector dominates the Palauan economy, contributing more than 50% of GDP and employing more than half of the work force. The government alone employs nearly 25% of workers and accounts for 23% of the GDP. One of the government's main responsibilities is administering external assistance. Under the terms of the Compact of Free Association with the United States, Palau will receive more than $450 million in



assistance over 15 years and is eligible to participate in more than 40 federal programs. The first grant of $142 million was made in 1994. Further annual payments in lesser amounts will be made through 2009. Total U.S. grant income in 2006 was $23.7 million. Construction is an important industrial activity, contributing over 15% of GDP. Several large infrastructure projects, including the Compact Road, relocation of the new capital, and new hotels, have boosted this sector's recent contribution to GDP.

Agriculture is mainly on a subsistence level, the principal crops being coconuts, taro, and bananas. Fishing is a potential source of revenue, but the islands' tuna output dropped by over one-third during the 1990s. Fishing industry revenues are mostly from license fees from fishing vessels. The main economic challenge confronting Palau is to ensure the long-term viability of its economy by reducing its reliance on foreign assistance. The Compact of Free Association created a trust fund to provide perennial budget support when U.S. direct assistance ends in 2009. The value of the trust fund in 2007 was approximately $175 million.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Palau gained its independence October 1, 1994 with the entry into force of the Compact of Free Association with the United States. Palau was the last component of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands to gain its independence. Under the Compact, the U.S. remains responsible for Palau's defense for 50 years.

The Compact of Free Association is subject to a bilateral review to be completed by the 15th anniversary of its adoption. Palau is a sovereign nation and conducts its own foreign relations. Since independence, Palau has established diplomatic relations with a number of nations, including many of its Pacific neighbors, and is one of two dozen nations that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

Palau was admitted to the United Nations on December 15, 1994, and has since joined a number of other international organizations.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

KOROR (E) P.O. Box 6028, Koror, PW 96940, (680)488-2920/2990, Fax (680)488-2911, INMARSAT Tel 383/32623/24, Workweek: 07:30-11:30 12:30-4:30.

DCM OMS:	Psa Francine Ngiraswe
DCM/CHG:	Mark J. Bezner
MGT:	Psa+ Valerie L. Polloi
CON:	Fsn Marjorie Towai
GSO:	Psa Raymond Barao
RSO:	Jacob M. Wohlman
FIN:	Psa Lucy Orrukem
ISO:	Psa+ Tulob J Temengil
ISSO:	Psa+ Valerie L. Polloi
POL:	Fsn Mona Carlson
State ICASS:	Non-Icass Post

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 11, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Palau is a constitutional democracy in free association with the United States. Palau is an archipelago consisting of several hundred volcanic and limestone islands and coral

atolls, few of which are inhabited, and is politically divided into 16 states. Palau's developing economy depends on tourism, marine resources and a small agricultural sector. There are two kinds of public transportation available, taxi and Airai bus service. Palau International Airport is located on Babeldaob Island, near Koror Island. Direct commercial air service exists from Manila, Taipei and Guam to Palau.

Entry Requirements: Citizens and nationals of the United States of America, with the exception to United States military personnel must have a valid passport or other travel document for entry. United States military personnel shall have in their possession official orders or documents certifying the status of the individual or group. Such orders or documents shall be shown on request to the appropriate authorities of the Government concerned.

For the purpose of their identification while in Palau, United States military dependents ten years of age or older shall have in their possession a personal identification card authorized by the Government of the United States which shall show the name, date of birth, status, and photograph of the bearer. Such card shall be shown on request to the appropriate authorities of the Government concerned. A passport shall not be considered valid if it expires in less than six months from date of entry. A visa is not required for U.S. citizens visiting Palau for one year or less, provided the visitor otherwise complies with applicable regulations, for example, on employment. For more information about entry requirements of Palau, travelers may consult with the Embassy of Palau, 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 452-6814. Visit the Embassy of Palau's web site at http://www.palauembassy.com/ for the most current information.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although, the crime rate in Palau is relatively low, foreign residents can be the target of petty and sometimes violent crimes, as well as other random acts against individuals and property. Therefore, visitors should not be complacent regarding personal safety or the protection of valuables.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Palau is: 911.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health facilities in Palau are adequate for routine medical care, but limited in availability and quality. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Serious medical conditions requiring hospitalization or evacuation to the United States, or elsewhere, may cost thousands of dollars.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Palau is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Palau accepts a driver's license issued by a U.S. state or military authority. Roads in Koror, where the vast majority of the population lives, are in fair condition, but lack sidewalks and have little or no shoulder. The main road connecting the airport with downtown Koror is being repaved; construction to be completed by the end of 2008. The Compact Road—the newly constructed roadway that loops around the large island of Babeldaob - is in excellent condition. Secondary roads connecting villages to the Compact Road vary in quality from good to rough. The national speed limit is 25 miles per hour, but drivers routinely ignore this limit on the good-quality roads, and traffic often moves more slowly in congested areas. Passing slow-moving vehicles is illegal, but drivers do this routinely, creating potentially dangerous situations. Drunken drivers are a late-night hazard in Palau.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers

registered in Palau, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Palau's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The official currency of Palau is the U.S. dollar. Major credit cards, including Visa, Mastercard, and American Express, are accepted in most locations catering to tourists. There are several ATMs in Koror, located at branches of U.S. banks. Koror State, where most tourist facilities are located, enforces a curfew between 2:30 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. Monday to Thursday, and between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. Friday to Sunday and on national holidays. Firearms of any kind are strictly prohibited in Palau. The penalty for possession of a firearm or ammunition is up to fifteen years imprisonment. Palau customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Palau of certain items. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Palau in Washington, D.C., for specific information regarding customs requirements.

General information regarding disaster preparedness is available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs' website, and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) home page at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Palauan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Palau are strict, and convicted traffickers face a mandatory twenty-five year jail sentence and USD 50,000 fine. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living in or visiting Palau are encouraged to register at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Koror or through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Palau.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Koror, the capital city, in an area known as Ngermid Hamlet. There is no street address. The mailing address is: PO Box 6028, Koror, Palau 96940. The telephone number is (680) 488-2920/2990. The fax number is (680) 488-2911. The Embassy does not issue passports; that function is performed by the Honolulu Passport Agency.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Important Note: Although the "Compact of Free Association" between Palau and the United States permits Palauan citizens to travel to the United States for some temporary purposes without a U.S. visa, this provision is NOT applicable to adopted children who will reside permanently with American families in the United States.

Prospective adoptive parents of Palauan children must go through the appropriate Palauan adoption procedures as well as the relevant U.S. immigration procedures related to adopted foreign orphans. Adopted Palauan children who enter the United States without a visa will later have difficulties adjusting their U.S. immigration status and, eventually, acquiring U.S. citizenship.

Patterns of Immigration: No Palauan children have received U.S. orphan immigrant visas in the past five fiscal years (2002-2006).

Adoption Authority: There is no specifically designated Palauan authority or agency overseeing adoption procedures. Americans considering adoption from Palau should begin by contacting a Palauan attorney to assist them in the judicial process.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Under Palauan law, both married couples and single individuals may adopt Palauan children if the Palauan authorities deem the prospective adoptive parents "suitable." Foreign citizens who are married to Palauan citizens may also adopt their Palauan stepchildren.

Residency Requirements: The Palauan government has no specific requirement or policy as regards the residency of foreign prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: The U.S. Embassy in Koror, Palau has indicated that Palauan adoptions generally take from one to two months to complete.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services.

Adoption Fees: Prospective adoptive parents should expect to pay a court filing fee in Palau of fifty U.S. dollars ($50). If they hire a local attorney to assist them in the adoption process, they would of course also have to pay the attorney. Attorneys' fees vary.

Adoption Procedures: Palauan adoption procedures are very straightforward: the prospective adoptive parents petition the court for adoption, and if the court grants the adoption, the child's name can be changed and the child may leave the country after receiving a U.S. immigrant visa.

Despite the apparent simplicity of this process, however, the U.S. Embassy in Koror strongly recommends that prospective adoptive parents residing outside of Palau hire a Palauan lawyer who will be easily able to investigate and provide to the court any/all relevant information on their background, living environment and financial status.

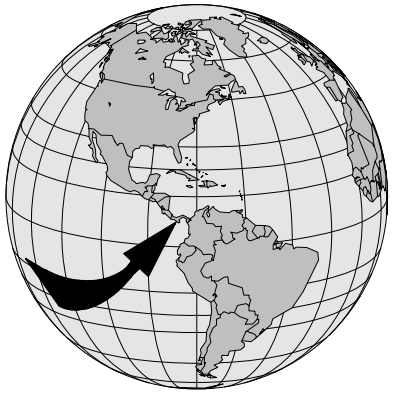
Required Documents: According to the Palauan authorities, the prospective adoptive parents must present the child's original Palauan birth certificate as well as a letter of consent from the child's birth parents.

Embassy of Palau
1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 452-6814
http://www.palauembassy.com

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy: The U.S. Embassy in Palau is located in Koror, the capital city, in an area known as Ngermid Hamlet. There is no street address. The mailing address is: P.O. Box 6028, Koror, Palau 96940. The telephone number is (680) 488-2920/2990. The fax number is (680) 488-2911.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Palau may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Koror. Questions about the immigrant visa process for Palauan orphans should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Manila. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



PANAMA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Panama

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 78,200 sq. km. (30,193 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than South Carolina. Panama occupies the southeastern end of the isthmus forming the land bridge between North and South America.

Cities: Capital—Panama City (1.1 million). Other cities—Colon (198,551), David (138,241).

Terrain: Mountainous (highest elevation Cerro Volcan Baru, 3,475 m.—11,468 ft.); coastline 2,857 km. (1,786 mi.).

Climate: Tropical, with average daily rainfall 28 mm. (1 in.) in winter.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Panamanian(s).

Population: (2004 estimate) 3.3 million.

Annual growth rate: 1.7%.

Ethnic groups: Mestizo (mixed African, Amerindian, and European ancestry) 70%, Amerindian and mixed (West Indian) 14%, Caucasian 10%, Amerindian 6%. Origins: 36.5% African, 37.6% indigenous and 25.9% Caucasian.

Religions: Roman Catholic 84%, Protestant 15%, other 1%.

Languages: Spanish (official); 14% speak English as their native tongue; various indigenous languages. Many Panamanians have a working knowledge of English and most professional college-educated Panamanians in Panama City are bilingual.

Education: Years compulsory—6. Attendance—95% for primary school-age children, 60% for secondary. Literacy—92.6% overall: urban 94%, rural 62%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2004)—14.9/1,000. Life expectancy—75.0 yrs.

Work force: (March 2007, 1.4 million) Commerce (wholesale and retail)—17.9%; agriculture, cattle, hunting, silviculture—16.1%; construction—9.8%; industries (manufactures)—9.2%; transportation, storage, communications—6.9%; private home domestic services—5.8%; public and defense administration—5.6%; hotels and restaurants—5.4%; other community and social activities, teaching—4.9%; real estate activities, business and rentals—4.8%; social and health services—3.5%; financial intermediation—2.0%.

Government

Type: Constitutional democracy.

Independence: November 3, 1903.

Constitution: October 11, 1972; amended 1983 and 1994 and reformed in 2004.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), two vice presidents. Legislative—National Assembly (unicameral, 78 members reduced to 74 members for September 2009 elections). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: Nine provinces and five (Indigenous) territories.

Political parties: The Panamenista Party (formerly the Arnulfista Party (PA); Democratic Change (CD); National Liberal Republican Movement (MOLIRENA); the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD); Patriotic Union (UP).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007, real) $17 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2005) 6.9%; (2006) 8.1%; (2007) 11.2%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $5.970.

Natural resources: Timber, seafood, copper.

Services: (80% of GDP) Finance, insurance, health and medical, transportation, telecommunications, the Canal and maritime services, tourism, Colon Free Zone, public administration, and general commerce.

Agriculture and fisheries: (7.4% of GDP) Products—bananas and other fruit, corn, sugar, rice, coffee, shrimp, timber, vegetables, livestock.

Industry/Manufacturing: (12.7% of GDP) Types—food and drink processing, petroleum products, chemicals, paper and paper products,

printing, mining, refined sugar, clothing, furniture, construction.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$9.3 billion: bananas, petroleum products, shrimp, sugar, coffee, and clothing. Exports to U.S.—$365 million (3.9% of total). Imports (goods)—$12.6 billion: capital goods, crude oil, foodstuffs, chemicals, other consumer and intermediate goods. Imports (goods) from U.S.—$3.7 billion (29.7% of total).

PEOPLE

Panamanians' culture, customs, and language are predominantly Caribbean Spanish. The majority of the population is ethnically mestizo or mixed Spanish, Indigenous, Chinese, and West Indian. Spanish is the official and dominant language; English is a common second language spoken by the West Indians and by many businesspeople and professionals. More than half the population lives in the Panama City-Colon metropolitan corridor.

Panama is rich in folklore and popular traditions. Lively salsa—a mixture of Latin American popular music, rhythm and blues, jazz, and rock—is a Panamanian specialty, and Ruben Blades its best-known performer and Minister of Tourism since September 2004. Indigenous influences dominate handicrafts such as the famous Kuna textile molas. Artist Roberto Lewis' Presidential Palace murals and his restoration work and ceiling in the National Theater are widely admired. As of 2004, more than 92,500 Panamanian students attended the University of Panama, the Technological University, and the University of Santa Maria La Antigua, a private Catholic institution. Including smaller colleges, there are 88 institutions of higher education in Panama. The first six years of primary education are compulsory, and for the 2004/2005 school year there were about 430,000 students enrolled in grades one through six. The total enrollment in the six secondary grades for the same period was 253,900. More than 90% of Panamanians are literate.

HISTORY

Panama's history has been shaped by the evolution of the world economy and the ambitions of great powers. The earliest known inhabitants of Panama were the Cuevas and the Coclé tribes, but they were decimated by disease and fighting when the Spanish arrived in the 1500s.

Rodrigo de Bastidas, sailing westward from Venezuela in 1501 in search of gold, was the first European to explore the Isthmus of Panama. A year later, Christopher Columbus visited the Isthmus and established a short-lived settlement in the Darien. Vasco Nunez de Balboa's tortuous trek from the Atlantic to the Pacific in 1513 demonstrated that the Isthmus was, indeed, the path between the seas, and Panama quickly became the crossroads and marketplace of Spain's empire in the New World. Gold and silver were brought by ship from South America, hauled across the Isthmus, and loaded aboard ships for Spain. The route became known as the Camino Real, or Royal Road, although it was more commonly known as Camino de Cruces (Road of the Crosses) because of the abundance of gravesites along the way.

Panama was part of the Spanish empire for 300 years (1538-1821). From the outset, Panamanian identity was based on a sense of "geographic destiny," and Panamanian fortunes fluctuated with the geopolitical importance of the Isthmus. The colonial experience also spawned Panamanian nationalism as well as a racially complex and highly stratified society, the source of internal conflicts that ran counter to the unifying force of nationalism.

Building the Canal

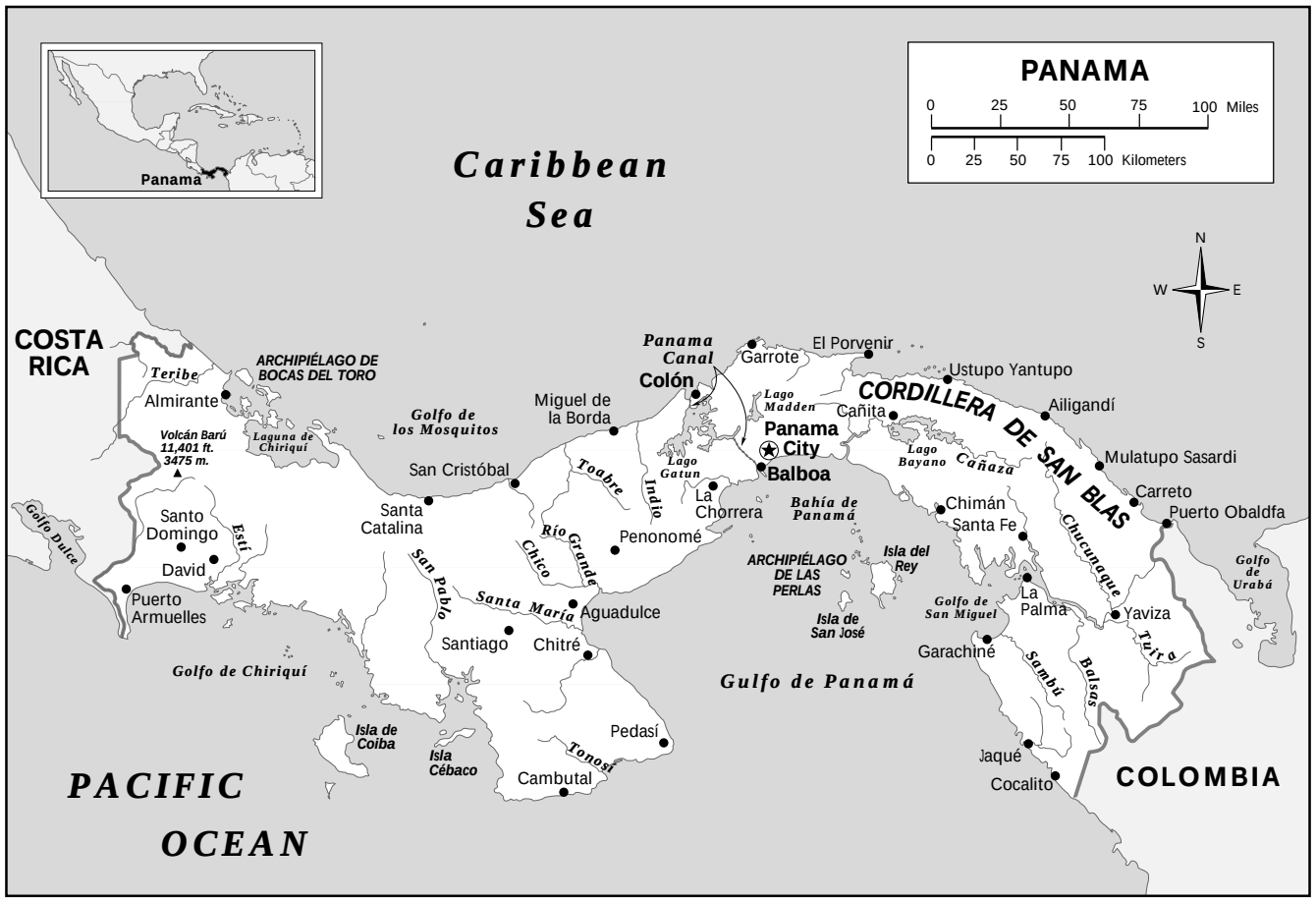
Modern Panamanian history has been shaped by its transisthmian canal, which had been a dream since the beginning of Spanish colonization. From 1880 to 1890, a French company under Ferdinand de Lesseps attempted unsuccessfully to construct a sea-level canal on the site of the present Panama Canal. In November 1903, with U.S. encouragement, Panama proclaimed its independence and concluded the Hay/Bunau-Varilla Treaty with the United States.

The treaty granted rights to the United States "as if it were sovereign" in a zone roughly 10 miles wide and 50 miles long. In that zone, the U.S. would build a canal, then administer, fortify, and defend it "in perpetuity." In 1914, the United States completed the existing 83-kilometer (52 mile) canal, which is one of the world's greatest feats of engineering. The early 1960s saw the beginning of sustained pressure in Panama for the renegotiation of this treaty.

Military Coups and Coalitions

From 1903 until 1968, Panama was a constitutional democracy dominated by a commercially oriented oligarchy. During the 1950s, the Panamanian military began to challenge the oligarchy's political hegemony. In October 1968, Dr. Arnulfo Arias Madrid, twice elected president and twice ousted by the Panamanian military, was ousted for a third time as president by the National Guard after only 10 days in office. A military government was established, and the commander of the National Guard, Brigadier General Omar Torrijos, soon emerged as the principal power in Panamanian political life. Torrijos' regime was harsh and corrupt, but his charisma, populist domestic programs, and nationalist (anti-U.S.) foreign policy appealed to the rural and urban constituencies largely ignored by the oligarchy.

Torrijos' death in 1981 altered the tone but not the direction of Panama's political evolution. Despite the 1983 constitutional amendments, which appeared to proscribe a political role for the military, the Panama Defense Forces (PDF), as they were then known, continued to dominate Panamanian political life behind a facade of civilian government. By this time, General Manuel Noriega was firmly in control of both the PDF and the civilian government.



The United States froze economic and military assistance to Panama in the summer of 1987 in response to the domestic political crisis in Panama and an attack on the U.S. Embassy. In April 1988, President Reagan invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, freezing Panamanian Government assets in all U.S. organizations. In May 1989 Panamanians voted overwhelmingly for the anti-Noriega candidates. The Noriega regime promptly annulled the election, and embarked on a new round of repression. By the fall of 1989 the regime was barely clinging to power, and the regime's paranoia made daily existence unsafe for American citizens.

On December 20, 1989, President George H.W. Bush ordered the U.S. military into Panama to protect U.S. lives and property, to fulfill U.S. treaty responsibilities to operate and defend the Canal, to assist the Panamanian people in restoring democracy, and to bring Noriega to justice. The U.S. troops involved in Operation Just Cause achieved their primary objectives quickly, and Noriega eventually surrendered to U.S. authorities. He completed his sentence for drug trafficking charges in September 2007. In August 2007, a U.S. federal court in Miami found Noriega extraditable to France to serve a sentence imposed there after an in absentia conviction for money laundering. Noriega remains in custody pending the outcome of his legal challenges to the certificate of extraditability issued August 2007.

Rebuilding Democracy

Panama's Electoral Tribunal moved quickly to rebuild the civilian constitutional government, reinstated the results of the May 1989 election on December 27, 1989, and confirmed the victory of President Guillermo Endara and Vice Presidents Guillermo Ford and Ricardo Arias Calderon.

During its 5-year term, the often-fractious Endara government struggled to meet the public's high expectations. Its new police force was a major improvement over its predecessor but was not fully able to deter crime. Ernesto Perez Balladares was sworn in as President on September 1, 1994, after an internationally monitored election campaign.

Perez Balladares ran as the candidate for a three-party coalition dominated by the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), the erstwhile political arm of military dictatorships. Perez Balladares worked skillfully during the campaign to rehabilitate the PRD's image, emphasizing the party's populist Torrijos roots rather than its association with Noriega. He won the election with only 33% of the vote when the major non-PRD forces splintered into competing factions. His administration carried out economic reforms and often worked closely with the U.S. on implementation of the Canal treaties.

On September 1, 1999, Mireya Moscoso, the widow of former Presi-

dent Arnulfo Arias Madrid, took office after defeating PRD candidate Martin Torrijos, son of the late dictator, in a free and fair election. During her administration, Moscoso attempted to strengthen social programs, especially for child and youth development, protection, and general welfare. Moscoso's administration successfully handled the Panama Canal transfer and was effective in the administration of the Canal.

The PRD's Martin Torrijos won the presidency and a legislative majority in the National Assembly in 2004. Torrijos ran his campaign on a platform of "zero tolerance" for corruption, a problem endemic to the Moscoso and Perez Balladares administrations. Since taking office, Torrijos has passed a number of laws making the government more transparent. He formed a National Anti-Corruption Council whose members represent the highest levels of government, as well as civil society, labor organizations, and religious leadership. In addition, many of his closest Cabinet ministers are non-political technocrats known for their support for the Torrijos government's anti-corruption aims. Despite the Torrijos administration's public stance on corruption, few high-profile cases, particularly involving political or business elites, have been acted upon.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Panama is a representative democracy with three branches of government: executive and legislative branches elected by direct vote for 5-year terms, and an independently appointed judiciary. The executive branch includes a president and two vice presidents. The legislative branch consists of a 78-member unicameral National Assembly. The Constitution was changed in 2004, however, and beginning with national elections in 2009, the executive branch will have only one vice president, and the membership of the National Assembly was to be capped at 71 (subsequently changed to 74). The judicial branch is organized under a nine-member Supreme Court (each judge is appointed for a 10-year term) and includes all tribunals and municipal courts. An autonomous Electoral Tribunal supervises voter registration, the election process, and the activities of political parties. Anyone over the age of 18 may vote.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The government has converted the former PDF into the Panamanian Public Force (PPF), a "law enforcement focused" force that is subordinate to civilian authority, composed, until August 2008, of four independent organizations: the Panamanian National Police (Policia Nacional de Panamá or PNP), National Maritime Service (Servicio Maritimo Nacional or SMN), the National Air Service (Servicio Aéreo Nacional or SAN), and the Institutional Protectional Service (Servicio de Protección Institucional or SPI). Utilizing special authority granted him by the National Assembly, President Torrijos enacted legislation in August 2008 that formed the National Frontier Service (Servicio Nacional de Fronteras or SENAFRONT), the National Aero-Naval Service (Servicio Nacional Aero-Naval or SENAN), and the Civilian Intelligence Service (Servicio Nacional de Ingteligencia y Seguridad - SENIS). The process by which President Torrijos enacted this legislation drew much public criticism, but his government moved forward on efforts to stand up these new entities beginning in September 2008. A constitutional amendment passed in 1994 permanently abolished the military.

Law enforcement units that are separated from the PPF, such as the Judicial Investigative Directorate (DIJ), also are directly subordinate to civilian authorities. The PPF budget, in contrast to the former PDF, is on public record and under the control of the executive. The lead criminal investigative entity is the DIJ. Previously under the nominal direction of the autonomous Attorney General and known as the Technical Judicial Police (PTJ), the DIJ is now part of the PNP though it maintains investigative links with the Attorney General's office.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Martin TORRIJOS Espino**
First Vice Pres.: **Samuel LEWIS Navarro**
Second Vice Pres.: **Ruben AROSEMENA Valdes**
Min. of Agricultural & Livestock Development: **Guillermo SALAZAR**
Min. of Commerce & Industries: **Carmen Gisela VERGARA**
Min. of Economy & Finances: **Carlos VALLARINO**
Min. of Education: **Salvador RODRIGUEZ**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Samuel LEWIS Navarro**
Min. of Govt. & Justice: **Daniel DELGADO Diamante**
Min. of Health: **Rosario TURNER**
Min. of Housing: **Gabriel DIEZ**
Min. of the Presidency: **Dilio ARCIA Torres**
Min. of Public Works: **Benjamin COLAMARCO**
Min. of Social Development: **Maria del Carmen ROQUEBERT Leon**
Min. of Work & Labor Development: **Edwin SALAMIN**
Min. of Youth, Women, Children, & Family Affairs: **Leonor CALDERON**
Attorney Gen.: **Ana Matilde GOMEZ Ruiloba**
Dir., Council for Public Security & National Defense: **Erick ESPINOSA Concepcion**
Manager, National Bank of Panama: **Juan Ricardo DE DIANOUS**
Ambassador to the US: **Federico Antonio HUMBERT Arias**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ricardo Alberto ARIAS Arias**

Panama maintains an embassy in the United States at 2862 McGill Terrace, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-483-1407), and consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orelans, New York, Philadelphia, San Juan, San Diego, San Francisco, and Tampa.

ECONOMY

Panama's economy is based primarily on a well-developed services sector that accounts for nearly 80% of GDP. Services include the Panama Canal, banking, the Colon Free Zone, insurance, container ports, flagship registry, tourism, and medical and healthcare.

In October 2006, Panamanians voted in favor of a $5.25 billion Canal expansion project to construct a third set of locks, which is expected to take eight to ten years to complete. The Government of Panama expects the project to be a transforming event for Panama that will provide 7,000-9,000 direct new jobs during the peak construction period of 2009-2011 and set the tone economically for years to come. The expansion is expected to be financed through a combination of increased tolls and debt.

GDP growth in the first three months of 2007 was 9.4%, surpassing most private and government projections and the robust growth seen in 2006 and 2005, which was 8.1% and 6.9%, respectively. Growth has been fueled by the construction sector, transportation, port and Panama Canal-related activities, and tourism. Though Panama has the highest GDP per capita in Central America, about 40% of its population remains mired in poverty.

Panama has bilateral free trade agreements with Chile, El Salvador, Taiwan, Singapore, Honduras, and Costa Rica. Panama is exploring free trade negotiations with Mexico and other Latin American countries. The U.S. and Panama signed a Trade Promotion Agreement (TPA) in June 2007. Panama ratified the agreement in July 2007; it still requires U.S. congressional approval to enter into force. This agreement will promote economic opportunity by eliminating tariffs and other barriers to trade of goods and services.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Panama is a member of the UN General Assembly and most major UN agencies, and started its fourth term as a member of the UN Security Council in January 2007. It maintains membership in several international financial institutions, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

Panama is a member of the Organization of American States and was a founding member of the Rio Group. Although it was suspended from the Latin American Economic System—known informally both as the Group of Eight and the Rio Group—in 1988 due to its internal political system under Noriega, Panama was readmitted in 1994 as an acknowledgment of its democratic credentials.

Panama also is one of the founding members of the Union of Banana Exporting Countries and belongs to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission. Panama is a member of the Central American Parliament as well as the Central American Integration System (SICA). Panama joined its six Central American neighbors at the 1994 Summit of the Americas in signing the Alliance for Sustainable Development, known as the Conjunta Centroamerica-USA or CONCAUSA, to promote sustainable economic development in the region.

U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS

The United States cooperates with the Panamanian Government in promoting economic, political, security, and social development through U.S. and international agencies. Cultural ties between the two countries are strong, and many Panamanians come to the United States for higher education and advanced training. In 2007, the U.S. and Panama partnered to launch a regional health worker training center. The center provides training to community healthcare workers in Panama and throughout Central America. About 25,000 American citizens reside in Panama, many retirees from the Panama Canal Commission and individuals who hold dual nationality. There is also a rapidly growing enclave of American retirees in the Chiriqui Province in western Panama.

Panama continues to fight against the illegal narcotics and arms trade. The country's proximity to major cocaine-producing nations and its role as a commercial and financial crossroads make it a country of special importance in this regard. The Panamanian Government has concluded agreements with the U.S. on maritime law enforcement, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and stolen vehicles. A three-year investigation by the Drug Prosecutors Office (DPO), the PTJ, and several other law enforcement agencies in the region culminated in the May 2006 arrest in Brazil of Pablo Rayo Montano, a Colombian-born drug kingpin. Assets located in Panama belonging to his criminal cartel were among those seized by the Government of Panama following his indictment by a U.S. federal court in Miami. In March 2007 the U.S. Coast Guard in cooperation with the Government of Panama seized over 38,000 lbs. of cocaine off the coast of Panama, the largest drug seizure in the eastern Pacific.

In the economic investment arena, the Panamanian Government has been successful in the enforcement of intellectual property rights and has concluded a Bilateral Investment Treaty Amendment with the United States and an agreement with the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. Although money laundering remains a problem, Panama passed significant reforms in 2000 intended to strengthen its cooperation against international financial crimes.

In January 2005, Panama sent election supervisors to Iraq as part of the International Mission for Iraqi Elections to monitor the national elections.

The Panama Canal Treaties

The 1977 Panama Canal Treaties entered into force on October 1, 1979. They replaced the 1903 Hay/Bunau-Varilla Treaty between the United States and Panama (modified in 1936 and 1955), and all other U.S.-Panama agreements concerning the Panama Canal, which were in force on that date. The treaties comprise a basic treaty governing the operation and defense of the Canal from October 1, 1979 to December 31, 1999 (Panama Canal Treaty) and a treaty guaranteeing the permanent neutrality of the Canal (Neutrality Treaty). The details of the arrangements for U.S. operation and defense of the Canal under the Panama Canal Treaty are spelled out in separate implementing agreements. The Canal Zone and its government ceased to exist when the treaties entered into force and Panama assumed jurisdiction over Canal Zone territories and functions, a process which was finalized on December 31, 1999.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PANAMA (E) Edificio 783, Avenida Demetrio Basilio Lakas, APO/FPO APO AA 34002, 011-507-207-7000, Fax (507)225-0949 -Exec Office, (507)207-7143–HRO, (507)207-1964–Mailroom, Workweek: 8am to 5pm with flex hours., Website: panama.usembassy.gov/panama-esp.

DCM OMS:	Toni Kula
AMB OMS:	Carol Johnson
DHS/CIS:	Donna Petree
DHS/ICE:	Edward Dolan, Jr..
ECO:	Timothy Lattimer
FCS:	Nicholas Kushova
FM:	Steven Kisling
MGT:	David Savastuk
AMB:	William Eaton
CON:	Susan Alexander
DCM:	Thomas Mesa
PAO:	Thoms E. Mesa
GSO:	James Dayringer
RSO:	Gary Sheppard
AID:	Littleton Tazewell
APHIS:	Dale Maki
CLO:	Maria Elena Guerra-Gomez
DAO:	Pedro Oliver
DEA:	Joseph Evans
FAA:	Victor Tamariz
FMO:	Harold E. Hodges
ICASS Chair:	Col. Pedro Oliver
IMO:	Nicholas Adams
IPO:	Keith Houk
ISO:	David Garcia
ISSO:	Keith Houk
LEGATT:	Paris N. Johnson
MLO:	Capt. Glenn Olarte
NAS:	Brian Walch
POL:	Brian Naranjo
State ICASS:	Susan Alexander

Other Contact Information

American Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Panama
Estafeta Balboa
Apartado 168
Panama, Republica de Panama
Tel: 507-269-3881
Fax: 507-223-3508
E-mail: amcham@pan.gbm.net

U.S. Department of State
Office of Central America and Panama Affairs (CEN-PAN)
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: (202) 647-3482
Fax: (202) 647-2597

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Office of Latin American and the Caribbean
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 202-482-0057
800-USA-TRADE
Fax: 202-482-0464
Home Page: http://trade.gov

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 5, 2008

Country Description: Panama has a developing economy. Outside the Panama City area, which has many first-class hotels and restaurants, tourist facilities vary in quality. The U.S. dollar is the paper currency of Panama, and is also referred to as the Panama balboa. Panama mints its own coinage.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizens traveling by air to and from Panama must present a valid passport when entering or re-entering the United States. Sea travelers must have a valid U.S. passport (or other original proof of U.S. citizenship, such as a certified U.S. birth certificate with a government-issued photo ID). American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on applying for a passport.

Panamanian law requires that travelers must either purchase a tourist card from the airline serving Panama or obtain a visa from a Panamanian embassy or consulate before traveling to Panama. Further information may be obtained from the Embassy of Panama, 2862 McGill Terrace NW, Washington, DC 20009, tel. (202) 483-1407, or the Panamanian consulates in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, San Juan, San Diego, San Francisco or Tampa.

U.S. citizens transiting the Panama Canal as passengers do not need to obtain visas, report to customs, or pay any fees. U.S. citizens piloting private craft through the canal should contact the Panama Canal Authority at 011-507-272-1111 or consult the canal's web page online at http://www.pancanal.com.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

Panamanian law requires all persons to carry official identification documents at all times. This law applies to both Panamanian citizens and visitors to the country. Due to an increase in illegal aliens in Panama, the police have been checking documents more frequently, resulting in the detention of people not carrying identification.

For this reason, all Americans are encouraged to carry their passports or other official identification at all times.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens are warned not to travel to Darien Province. Embassy personnel are only allowed to travel to Darien Province on official business with prior approval of the Embassy's Regional Security Officer. This restricted area encompasses the Darien National Park as well as privately owned nature reserves and tourist resorts. While no incidents have occurred at these resorts, U.S. citizens, other foreign nationals and Panamanian citizens have been the victims of violent crime, kidnapping and murder in this general area. Reliable communications and medical infrastructure are not readily available in the region, which makes travel therein potentially hazardous. Moreover, all around the Panama-Colombia border area the presence of Colombian terrorist groups, drug traffickers and other criminals is common, increasing the danger to travelers. Note: The Secretary of State has designated the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations.

There is increasing evidence that the Revolutionary Armed Forced of Colombia (FARC), a designated foreign terrorist organization, has increased its operations in Panama's Darien Province, including in areas far removed from the immediate vicinity of Panamanian-Colombian border. In February 2008 encounters between six FARC members and the Panamanian police near the city of Jaque resulted in the arrest of the FARC members.

From time to time, there may be demonstrations protesting internal Panamanian issues, or manifestations of anti-American sentiment by small but vociferous groups. While most demonstrations relate to labor disputes or other local issues and are typically non-violent, it is nonetheless a good security practice to avoid demonstrations. U.S. citizens are advised to exercise caution on the campus of the University of Panama, where members of radical, anti-U.S. student groups are active. For updated security information, contact the U.S. Embassy Consular Section at the address below.

Visitors should be cautious when swimming or wading at the beach. Some beaches, especially those on the Pacific Ocean, have dangerous currents that cause drowning deaths every year. These beaches are seldom posted with warning signs.

On the Pacific coast, boaters should be wary of vessels that may be transporting narcotics northward from Colombia. Special permission is needed from the Ministry of Government and Justice and the National Environment Authority to visit the National Park on Coiba Island. At this time, the island, a former penal colony, has fewer than 20 prisoners. Boaters should avoid the southeastern coast of Kuna Yala Comarca (San Blas Islands), south of Punta Carreto, on the Atlantic Coast.

Local maritime search and rescue capabilities are limited and well below U.S. standards.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime in Panama City is moderate but increasing, particularly because of the activities of youth gangs. The city of Colon is a high crime area. Police checkpoints have become commonplace on weekends on roads in both cities. Based upon reported incidents by local police, the high-crime areas around Panama City are San Miguelito, Rio Abajo, El Chorrillo, Ancon, Curundu, Veracruz Beach, Panama Viejo, and the Madden Dam overlook. Crimes there are typical of those that plague metropolitan areas and range from rapes to armed robberies, muggings, purse-snatchings, "express kidnappings" from ATM banking facilities, in which the victim is briefly kidnapped and robbed after withdrawing cash from an ATM, and petty theft. Tourists recently experienced a problem with armed bandits during an organized canoe trip on the Chagres River.

Panama City has a curfew for persons under 18 years of age. Under the law, students attending night classes must have a carnet or permit, issued by the school or, if employed, a Certificate of Employment. Minors who are picked up for a curfew violation are subject to detention at a police station until parents or legal guardians can arrange for them to be released into their custody. Parents or legal guardians may be fined up to U.S. $50.00 for the violation.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The Panamanian Government also sponsors a program for Assistance to Victims of Crimes. The program is managed by the Oficina de Asistencia a Víctimas de Crímenes, located at the Policia Tecnica Judicial in the Ancon area of Panama City, telephone number is 011-507-262-1973 or 011-507-512-2222.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Although Panama City has some very good hospitals and clinics, medical facilities outside of the capital are limited. When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the U.S. may cost well in excess of $50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties, whereas travelers who have purchased overseas medical insurance have, when a medical emergency occurs, found it to be life-saving. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death. In Panama, most hospitals accept credit cards for hospital charges, but not for doctors' fees.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Panama is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Panama's roads, traffic and transportation systems are generally safe, but traffic lights often do not exist, even at busy intersections. Driving is often hazardous and demanding due to dense traffic, undisciplined driving habits, poorly maintained streets, and a lack of effective signs and traffic signals. On roads where poor lighting and driving conditions prevail, night driving is difficult and should be approached with caution. Night driving is particularly hazardous on the old Panama City—Colon highway.

Buses and taxis are not always maintained in a safe operating condition due to lack of regulatory enforcement. Auto insurance is not mandatory and many drivers are uninsured. If an accident occurs, the law requires that the vehicles remain in place until a police officer responds to investigate. Traffic in Panama moves on the right, as in the U.S., and Panamanian law requires that drivers and passengers wear seat belts. Flooding during the April to December rainy season occasionally makes city streets impassible and washes out some roads in the interior of the country. In addition, rural areas are often poorly maintained and lack illumination at night. Such roads are generally less traveled and the availability of emergency roadside assistance is very limited. Road travel is more dangerous during the rainy season and in the interior from Carnival through Good Friday. Carnival starts the Saturday prior to Ash Wednesday and goes on for four days.

Traveling on the Pan American Highway: There is often construction at night on Panama's main Pan American highway. There are few signs alerting drivers to such construction and the highway is not well lit at night. When traveling on the highway, travelers should be aware of possible roadblocks. The Pan American Highway ends at Yaviza in the Darien Province of Panama and does not go through to Colombia. The paved portion of the road ends at Santa Fe, with all-weather surface through Canglón. Travelers going to South America by car may wish to ship their cars on a freighter.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Panama's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Panama's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Panamanian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Panama of items such as firearms and ammunition, cultural property, endangered wildlife species, narcotics, biological material, and food products. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Panama in Washington or one of Panama's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Panamanian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Panama are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country are crimes that are prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child

abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Panama are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Panama.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consular Section are located in Avenida Demetrio Basilio Lakas, Building No.783 in the Clayton section of Panama City.

The international mailing address is: Apartado 0816-02561, Zona 5, Panama, Republic of Panama. The U.S. mailing address is U.S. Embassy Panama, Department of State, Washington, DC 20521-9100. The telephone numbers for the Embassy are 011-507-207-7000, or for after-hours emergencies, 011-507-207-7200; Consular Section 011-507-207-7030 and fax 011-507-207-7278 or 011-507-207-7303. The Embassy web site is http://panama.usembassy.gov. E-mail inquiries may be addressed to Panama-ACS@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: In cases where the U.S. citizen is a resident of Panama and has an interest in filing a petition locally,the Department of Homeland Security in Panama is the first point of contact for an intercountry adoption. The DHS officer will approve the I-600 petition prior to receipt of an approved I-600A or Visas Thirty-Seven cable. The petition approval by DHS includes a field investigation.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government offices responsible for adoptions in Panama are the two major courts, the "Juzgado de la Niñez y Adolescencia" (Children and Minors' Court) and "Juzgados Seccionales de Familia" (Family Courts). There are 12 district courts throughout the provinces in Panama. In provinces that do not operate with either legal system, the "Juzgados de Circuitos, Ramo Civil" (Circuit Courts) will handle some adoption cases. Juzgado de la Niñez y Adolescencia—The Juzgado de la Niñez y Adolescencia has jurisdiction over adoption cases of abandoned children, wards of the court, or orphans.* The Juzgado de la Niñez y Adolescencia is the legal system for orphan adoptions in Panama. The courts generally require proof from the U.S. government such as the I-600A approval notification that the parent(s) are eligible for adoption.

Juzgados Seccionales de Familia—The Juzgados Seccionales de Familia have jurisdiction over adoption cases where the child has been placed under adoption by written consent of the child's birth parent(s).

Contact Information:
Ministerio de Desarrollo Social
Telephone: 279-0667, 279-0101
Fax: 279-0713
www.mides.gob.pa
adopciones@mides.gob.pa

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Panamanian law requires that prospective adoptive parent(s) fall within the following categories:

- The couple must have been married for at least two years.
- No family line adoptions, meaning grandparents may not adopt their grandchildren and siblings may not adopt their minor siblings.
- The courts do not separate siblings. If a parent would like to adopt one child, they must adopt the child's siblings.
- There must be an eighteen-year age difference between the prospective adoptive parent and the child.
- Same sex couples are not permitted to adopt children.

Residency Requirements: Panamanian courts allow U.S. citizens to adopt; however, Panamanian citizens are given preference. Under Panamanian adoption law, adopted children do not need to be orphans, though their natural parent(s) must have legally abandoned them. Most adoptions of Panamanian children by U.S. parents take place in Panama. Less frequently, Panamanian Courts may grant the U.S. citizens guardianship, allowing for adoption following the family's return to he United States. There are no legal impediments to granting guardianship, but the two court systems discourage this practice.

Time Frame: Adoptions in Panama typically take 18-24 months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Panama allows adoptions through private agencies and will work through any accredited United States adoption agency.

Adoption Fees: Attorney fees for an adoption in Panama vary from $1000 to $2500. Government processing fees vary on a case by case basis.

Adoption Procedures: All of the documents supporting the prospective adoptive parent(s)' authority to adopt must be translated into Spanish.

Both courts, the Juzgado de la Niñez y Adolescencia and the Juzgados Seccionales de Familia, have similar processes for intercountry adoption:

- An attorney must submit the necessary paperwork in the form of a "demanda" or petition, to the Panamanian courts.
- For the "Juzgados Seccionales de Familia," the prospective adoptive parent(s) must have the birth parent(s) sign a document that "irrevocably" grants custody to release the child for adoption and immigration to the adoptive parent(s) or adoption agency.
- Usually, the prospective adoptive parent(s) and their attorney will communicate with the judge's staff until the demanda is ready for review. If the judge approves the demanda, the judge will forward the documents to the "Registro Civil de Panama" (Civil Register). The adoption is not official until it is published in the Civil Register and the judge has signed a final decree.
- In adoption cases where prospective adoptive parent(s) are granted legal guardianship of a child in order to adopt the child in the United States, a Panamanian judge must interview the prospective adoptive parent(s) and determine that an adoption outside of Panama is in the best interests of the child. This often includes a psychological evaluation of the parent(s) by a social worker.
- A judge must approve the departure of a child from Panama if the child is leaving without the child's birth parent(s) or legal guardian. The judge will grant the prospective adoptive parents guardianship for a trial period. This trial period can take place in either the United States or Panama. If the judge determines that the child's adjustment has been successful, the adoption is finalized under Panamanian law. If the judge is concerned about the child's welfare, the judge may extend the trial period or cancel the process altogether.

Required Documents: For intercountry adoptions, the Government of Panama requires the below listed documents. English translations of Spanish documents are required. It is advisable to obtain several authenticated copies of the same document in case extra copies are requested or required.

- Birth certificate of each adoptive parent;
- Marriage certificate of each adoptive parent, and death or divorce certificate if either parent was previously married;
- Health certificate certifying good mental and physical health of each parent. The Panamanian authorities will accept a health certificate from the prospective adoptive parents' doctor in the U.S.;
- Certificate of good conduct from local police in adoptive parents' state of residence. The I-600A does not fulfill this requirement;
- Letter from employer(s) stating position and current salary. There is no minimum income requirement;
- 2 passport size photographs of each parent;
- 2 reference letters attesting to character, financial situation, and living conditions of adoptive parents;
- Sociological home study report conducted by U.S. social worker or U.S.-certified investigative agency approved by the Panamanian courts. Home studies conducted in the U.S. can be used if approved by the Panamanian courts;
- Psychological evaluation conducted by authorized medical officer in Panama or a U.S.-certified medical official approved by the Panamanian courts.

Embassy of the Republic of Panama
2862 McGill Terr., NW
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: 202-483-1407
Fax: 202-483-8413

Panama also has consulates in: Mobile, Alabama; Los Angeles, California; San Francisco, California; Miami, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; Honolulu, Hawaii; Chicago, Illinois; New Orleans, Louisiana; New York, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Houston, Texas, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Consulate
Clayton Building #520
1 st Floor
Panama City, Panama
Phone: 507-207-7000

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

Toll Free—For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, call Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747.



PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Independent State of Papua New Guinea

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 462,860 sq. km.; about the size of California.

Cities: Capital—Port Moresby (254,158). Other cities—Lae (78,038), Mt. Hagen (27,789).

Terrain: Mostly mountains with coastal lowlands and rolling foothills. The largest portion of the population lives in fertile highlands valleys that were unknown to the outside world until the 1930s, but that supported agriculture some 10,000 years ago, possibly before agriculture was developed elsewhere.

Climate: Tropical. NW monsoon, Dec.-Mar.; SE monsoon, May-Oct.

People

Population: (2007 est.) 6.7 million.

Annual growth rate: 3.1%.

Languages: Three official: English, Tok Pisin, and Motu. There are approximately 860 other languages.

Education: Years compulsory—0. Literacy—49.3%

Health: Infant mortality rate—65/1,000. Life expectancy—57 yrs.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: September 16, 1975.

Government branches: Executive—British monarch (chief of state), represented by governor general; prime minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral parliament. Judicial—independent; highest is Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 19 provinces and the national capital district (Port Moresby).

Political parties: National Alliance (NA), People's Progress Party (PPP), United Resources Party (URP), PNG Party (PNGP).

Suffrage: Universal over 18 years of age.

Economy (2006 est.)

Nominal GDP: (2006) U.S. $5.6 billion; PGK 17.3 billion.

Average exchange rate: (2006) U.S. $=Kina 3.06.

Real GDP growth rate: (2006) 3.7%.

Inflation rate: (2006) 2.9%.

Per capita GDP: U.S. $903.

Natural resources: Gold, copper ore, crude oil, natural gas, timber, fish, oil palm, tea, rubber, logs. Forestry (4% of GDP) marine (1% of GDP); minerals and oil (82% of GDP).

Agriculture: (13% of GDP): Major products—coffee, cocoa, coconuts, palm oil, timber, tea, vanilla.

Industry: (25% of GDP): Major sectors—copra crushing; palm oil processing; plywood production; wood chip production; mining of gold, silver, and copper; construction; tourism; crude oil production, refined petroleum production.

Trade: Exports—66% of GDP: gold, copper ore, oil, timber, palm oil, coffee. Major markets (in order by value—high to low)—Australia, Japan, Philippines, Germany, South Korea, China, United States, United Kingdom, Singapore, and Malaysia. Imports—31% of GDP: machinery and transport equipment, vehicles, manufactured goods, food, mineral fuels, chemicals. Major suppliers (in order by value—high to low)—Australia, United States, Singapore, Japan, China, New Zealand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and United Kingdom.

PEOPLE

The indigenous population of Papua New Guinea is one of the most heterogeneous in the world. Papua New Guinea has several thousand separate communities, most with only a few hundred people. Divided by language, customs, and tradition, some of these communities have engaged in low-scale tribal conflict with their neighbors for millennia. The advent of modern weapons and modern migration into urban areas has greatly magnified the impact of this lawlessness.

The isolation created by the mountainous terrain is so great that some groups, until recently, were unaware of the existence of neighboring groups only a few kilometers away. The diversity, reflected in a folk saying, "For each village, a different culture," is perhaps best shown in the local languages. Spoken mainly on the island of New Guinea—composed of Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian province of West Papua—some 800 of these languages have been identified; of these, only 350-450 are related. The remainder seem to be totally unrelated either to each other or to the other major groupings. Most native languages are spoken by a few hundred to a few thousand, although Enga, used in part of the highlands, is spoken by some 130,000 people. However, the Enga people are subdivided into clans that regularly conflict with each other. Many native languages are extremely complex grammatically.

Melanesian Pidgin serves as the lingua franca. English is spoken by educated people and in Milne Bay Province. The overall population density is low, although pockets of overpopulation exist. Papua New Guinea's Western Province averages one person per square kilometer (3 per sq. mi.). The Chimbu Province in the New Guinea highlands averages 20 persons per square kilometer (60 per sq. mi.) and has areas containing up to 200 people farming a square kilometer of land. The highlands are home to 40% of the population.

A considerable urban drift toward Port Moresby and other major centers has occurred in recent years. The trend toward urbanization accelerated in the 1990s, bringing in its wake squatter settlements, ethnic disputes, unemployment, and attendant social problems, especially violent crime.

Approximately 96% of the population is Christian. The churches with the largest number of members are the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Church, and the Seventh Day Adventist church. Although the major churches are under indigenous leadership, a large number of missionaries remain in the country. The bulk of the estimated 2,000 Americans resident in Papua New Guinea are missionaries and their families.

The non-Christian portion of the indigenous population, as well as a portion of the nominal Christians, practices a wide variety of religions that are an integral part of traditional culture, mainly animism (spirit worship) and ancestor cults.

Foreign residents comprise about 1% of the population. More than half are Australian; others are from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, the Philippines, and the United States, most of whom are missionaries. Since independence, about 900 foreigners have become naturalized citizens.

Though cultures vary widely, traditional Papua New Guinea social structures generally include the following characteristics:

- The practice of subsistence economy;
- Recognition of bonds of kinship with obligations extending beyond the immediate family group;
- Generally egalitarian relationships with an emphasis on acquired, rather than inherited, status; and
- A strong attachment of the people to land, which is held communally. Traditional communities do not recognize a permanent transfer of ownership when land is sold.

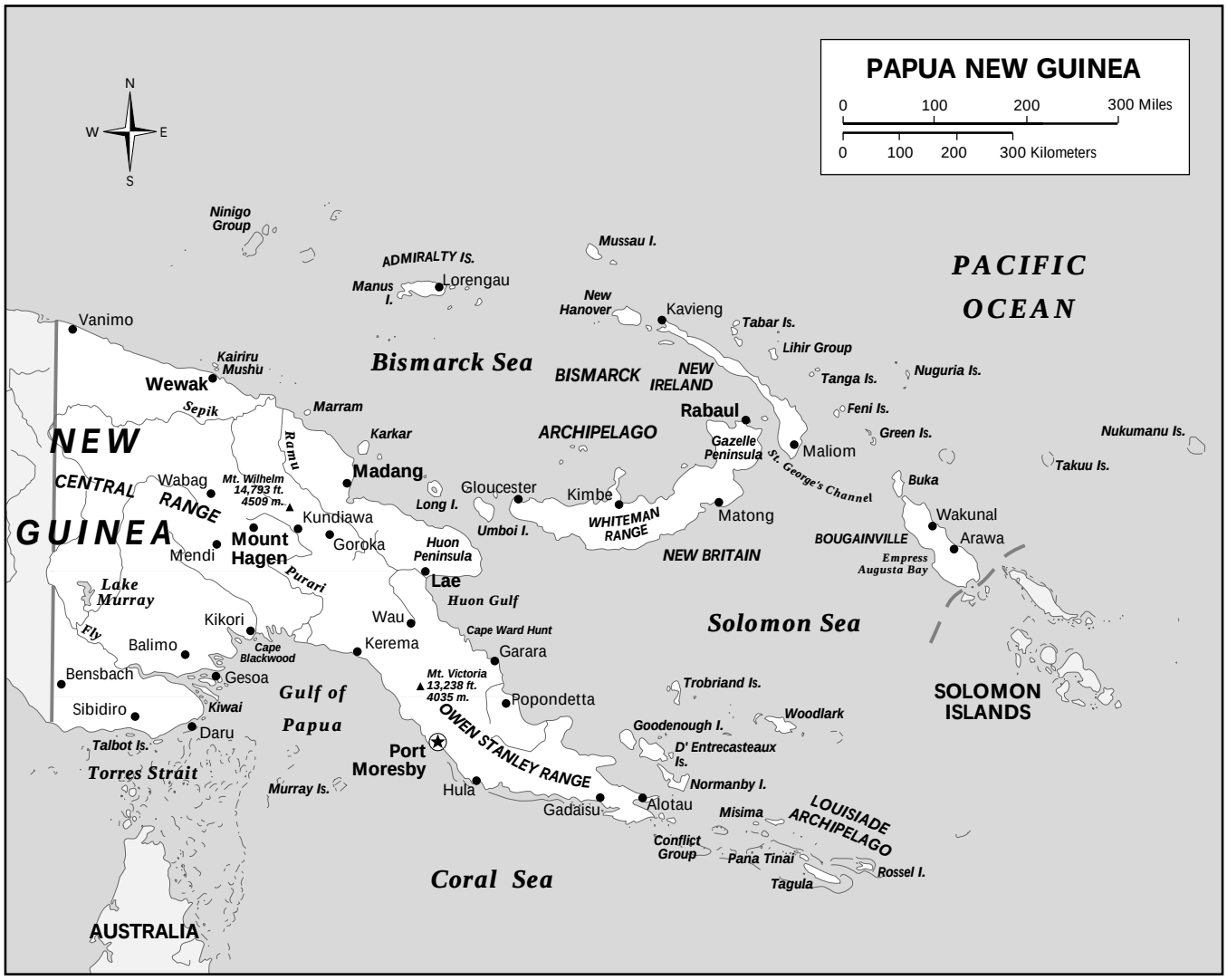
Though land and other possessions may be inherited through the female line in some cultures, women generally are considered and treated as inferiors. Gender violence is endemic. Patterns and frequency of sexual activity, though never publicly discussed, contribute to the current rapid spread of HIV. Most Papua New Guineans still adhere strongly to this traditional social structure, which has its roots in village life.

HISTORY

Archeological evidence indicates that humans arrived on New Guinea at least 60,000 years ago, probably by sea from Southeast Asia during an Ice Age period when the sea was lower and distances between islands shorter. Although the first arrivals were hunters and gatherers, early evidence shows that people managed the forest environment to provide food. There also are indications of gardening having been practiced at the same time that agriculture was developing in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Early garden crops—many of which are indigenous—included sugarcane, Pacific bananas, yams, and taros, while sago and pandanus were two commonly exploited native forest crops. Today's staples—sweet potatoes and pigs—were later arrivals, but shellfish and fish have long been mainstays of coastal dwellers' diets.

When Europeans first arrived, inhabitants of New Guinea and nearby islands—while still relying on bone, wood, and stone tools—had a productive agricultural system. They traded along the coast, where products mainly were pottery, shell ornaments, and foodstuffs, and in the interior, where forest products were exchanged for shells and other sea products.

The first Europeans to sight New Guinea were probably the Portuguese and Spanish navigators sailing in the South Pacific in the early part of the 16th century. In 1526-27, Don Jorge de Meneses accidentally came upon the principal island and is credited with naming it "Papua," a Malay word for the frizzled quality of Melanesian hair. The term "New Guinea" was applied to the island in 1545 by a Spaniard, Íñigo Ortiz de Retes, because of a fancied resemblance between the islands' inhabitants and those found on the African Guinea coast. Although European navigators visited the islands and explored their coastlines for the next 170 years, little was known of the inhabitants until the late 19th century.



New Guinea

With Europe's growing need for coconut oil, Godeffroy's of Hamburg, the largest trading firm in the Pacific, began trading for copra in the New Guinea Islands. In 1884, Germany formally took possession of the northeast quarter of the island and put its administration in the hands of a chartered company. In 1899, the German imperial government assumed direct control of the territory, thereafter known as German New Guinea. In 1914, Australian troops occupied German New Guinea, and it remained under Australian military control until 1921.

The British Government, on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia, assumed a mandate from the League of Nations for governing the Territory of New Guinea in 1920. That mandate was administered by the Australian Government until the Japanese invasion in December 1941 brought about its suspension. Following the surrender of the Japanese in 1945, civil administration of Papua as well as New Guinea was restored, and under the Papua New Guinea Provisional Administration Act, 1945-46, Papua and New Guinea were combined in an administrative union.

Papua

On November 6, 1884, a British protectorate was proclaimed over the southern coast of New Guinea (the area called Papua) and its adjacent islands. The protectorate, called British New Guinea, was annexed outright on September 4, 1888. The possession was placed under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1902. Following the passage of the Papua Act of 1905, British New Guinea became the Territory of Papua, and formal Australian administration began in 1906. Papua was administered under the Papua Act until the Japanese invaded the northern parts of the islands in 1941 and began to advance on Port Moresby and civil administration was suspended. During the war, Papua was governed by a military administration from Port Moresby, where Gen. Douglas MacArthur occasionally made his headquarters. As noted, it was later joined in an administrative union with New Guinea during 1945-46 following the surrender of Japan.

Postwar Developments

The Papua and New Guinea Act of 1949 formally approved the placing of New Guinea under the international trusteeship system and confirmed the administrative union of New Guinea and Papua under the title of "The Territory of Papua and New Guinea." The act provided for a Legislative Council (established in 1951), a judicial organization, a public service, and a system of local government. A House of Assembly replaced the Legislative Council in 1963, and the first House of Assembly opened on June 8, 1964. In 1972, the name of the territory was changed to Papua New Guinea.

Elections in 1972 resulted in the formation of a ministry headed by Chief Minister Michael Somare, who pledged to lead the country to self-government and then to independence. Papua New Guinea became self-governing in December 1973 and achieved independence on September 16, 1975. The 1977 national elections confirmed Michael Somare as Prime Minister at the head of a coalition led by the Pangu Party. However, his government lost a vote of no confidence in 1980 and was replaced by a new cabinet headed by Sir Julius Chan as Prime Minister. The 1982 elections increased Pangu's plurality, and parliament again chose Somare as Prime Minister. In November 1985, the Somare government lost a vote of no confidence, and the parliamentary majority elected Paias Wingti, at the head of a five-party coalition, as Prime Minister. A coalition, headed by Wingti, was victorious in very close elections in July 1987. In July 1988 a no-confidence vote toppled Wingti and brought to power Rabbie Namaliu, who a few weeks earlier had replaced Somare as leader of the Pangu Party. In 1992 Paias Wingti was elected Prime Minister. Sir Julius took his place in 1994 after a vote of no confidence. The 1997 elections brought Bill Skate to power as Prime Minister, but he was replaced by Sir Mekere Morauta after a vote of no confidence in 1999. Sir Michael Somare returned as Prime Minister after the 2002 general elections. He led his national alliance party into the 2007 elections and remained as the Prime Minister, becoming the longest-serving parliamentarian in the Commonwealth. Somare celebrated his 40th year in politics on March 16, 2008.

Such reversals of fortune and a revolving-door succession of prime ministers have characterized Papua New Guinea's national politics. From 1988 to 2002, the country had numerous prime ministers. A plethora of political parties, coalition governments, shifting party loyalties, and motions of no confidence in the leadership all lent an air of instability to political proceedings. For the first 27 years of independence, a "first past the post" electoral system resulted in many parliamentarians elected with less than 15% of their constituency. Fractious politics and a 75% loss rate for incumbents precluded the development of strong political parties or a stable national leadership. Many hope that limited preferential voting, introduced in 2003, and an organic law on political parties will stabilize national politics.

In the 2007 elections, 66 members of parliament lost their seats. The government was formed by a coalition of several parties, and Sir Michael Somare, the leader of the National Alliance (and the nation's first Prime Minister in 1975), was elected Prime Minister. His government was the first to complete a 5-year term since independence and hopes to complete a 10-year term.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Papua New Guinea, a constitutional monarchy, recognizes the Queen of England as head of state. She is represented by a Governor General who is elected by parliament and who performs mainly ceremonial functions. Papua New Guinea has three levels of government—national, provincial, and local. There is a 109-member unicameral parliament, whose members are elected every 5 years. The parliament in turn elects the prime minister, who appoints his cabinet from members of his party or coalition. Members of parliament are elected from 19 provinces and the national capital district of Port Moresby. Parliament introduced reforms in June 1995 to change the provincial government system, with regional (at-large) members of parliament becoming provincial governors, while retaining their national seats in parliament.

Papua New Guinea's judiciary is independent of the government. It protects constitutional rights and interprets the laws. There are several levels, culminating in the Supreme Court.

Papua New Guinea's politics are highly competitive with most members elected on a personal and ethnic basis within their constituencies rather than as a result of party affiliation. Members of parliament are now elected in a limited preferential voting (LPV) system. There are several parties, but party allegiances are not strong. Winning candidates are usually courted in efforts to forge the majority needed to form a government, and allegiances are fluid. No single party has yet won enough seats to form a government in its own right.

Papua New Guinea has a history of changes in government coalitions and leadership from within parliament during the 5-year intervals between national elections. New governments are protected by law from votes of no confidence for the first 18 months of their incumbency, and no votes of no confidence may be moved in the 12 months preceding a national election. In an effort to create greater stability by reducing incessant votes of no confidence, the Integrity of Political Parties Act was passed in 1999, forbidding members of each party in parliament from shifting loyalty to another party.

In 2003, the electoral system was changed to limited preferential voting, which has begun to encourage politicians to strike alliances and to be responsive to constituent concerns once elected. The new system was used in the 2007 national general

elections. However, 53 election petitions disputing returns were registered with the courts. Allegations included bribery, intimidation, block voting, and undue influence.

On Bougainville Island, a 10-year rebellion was halted by a truce in 1997 and a permanent cease-fire was signed in April 1998. A peace agreement between the Government and ex-combatants was signed in August 2001. Under the eyes of a regional peace-monitoring force and a UN observer mission, the government and provincial leaders established an interim administration and made significant progress toward complete surrender/destruction of weapons. A constitution was drafted in 2004 and provincial government elections were held in May 2005. The elections were deemed to be free and fair by international observers, and Joseph Kabui was elected to serve as the first president of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG). Bougainvilleans also participated in Papua New Guinea national elections in 2007 to elect representatives to the national parliament. Kabui died of a heart attack in June 2008, and a by-election for the presidency will be held November 28-December 5, 2008. A referendum was tentatively agreed to be held between 2015 and 2020, 10 to 15 years following formation of the ABG. Progress has been slow with the ABG initially focusing on disarmament, peace, and reconciliation. A small percentage of former fighters have created illegal "no go zones," particularly in the Central and South Bougainville.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor General: **Paulius MATANE, Sir**
Prime Minister: **Michael SOMARE, Sir**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Puka TEMU, Dr.**
Min. for Agriculture & Livestock: **John HICKEY**
Min. for Autonomy & Autonomous Regions: **Michael SOMARE, Sir**
Min. for Commerce & Industry: **Gabriel KAPRIS**
Min. for Communication & Information: **Patrick TAMMUR**
Min. for Community Development, Women, Religion, & Sports: **Carol KIDU**
Min. for Conservation & Environment: **Benny ALLAN**
Min. for Correctional Services: **Tony AIMO**
Min. for Culture & Tourism: **Charles ABEL**
Min. for Defense: **Bob DADAE**
Min. for Education: **Michael LAIMO**
Min. of Fisheries: **Ben SEMRI**
Min. for Foreign Affairs, Trade, & Immigration: **Sam ABAL**
Min. for Forestry: **Belden NAMAH**
Min. for Health & HIV/AIDS: **Sasa ZIBE**
Min. for Higher Education, Research, Science, & Technology: **Michael OGIO**
Min. for Housing & Urban Development: **Andrew KUMBAKOR**
Min. for Intergovernment Relations: **Job POMAT**
Min. for Internal Security: **Sani RAMBE**
Min. for Justice: **Allan MARAT**
Min. for Labor & Industrial Relations: **Mark MAIPAKAI**
Min. for Lands, Physical Planning, & Mining: **Puka TEMU, Dr.**
Min. for National Planning & District Development: **Paul TIENSTEN**
Min. for Petroleum & Energy: **William DUMA**
Min. for Public Enterprise: **Arthur SOMARE**
Min. for State Assisting the Prime Min. on Constitutional Matters: **Philemon EMBEL**
Min. for Treasury & Finance: **Patrick PRUAITCH**
Min. for Works, Transport, & Civil Aviation: **Don POYLE**
Attorney General: **Allan MARAT**
Governor, Central Bank: **Wilson KAMIT**
Ambassador to the US: **Evan PAKI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Robert AISI**

Papua New Guinea maintains an embassy at 1779 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036 (tel. 202-745-3680; fax 202-745-3679). The Papua New Guinea mission to the United Nations is at 801 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-682-6447).

ECONOMY

Papua New Guinea is rich in natural resources, including minerals, timber, and fish, and produces a variety of commercial agricultural products. The economy generally can be separated into subsistence and market sectors, although the distinction is blurred by smallholder cash cropping of coffee, cocoa, and copra. About 75% of the country's population relies primarily on the subsistence economy. The minerals, timber, and fish sectors are dominated by foreign investors.

Manufacturing continued to be slow in 2007. The service industry was stable, while tourism shows potential and remains largely untapped. Generally, economic activity continued to grow in 2007. The growth was boosted by favorable international commodity prices. Employment grew modestly. The financial sector enjoyed high liquidity, with increased lending due to low interest rates. Inflation remained low.

Mineral Resources

Papua New Guinea is richly endowed with gold, copper, oil, natural gas, and other minerals. In 2006 minerals and oil export receipts accounted for 82% of GDP. Government revenues and foreign exchange earnings depend heavily on mineral and oil exports. Indigenous landowners in areas affected by minerals projects also receive royalties from those operations. Copper and gold mines are currently in production at Porgera, Ok Tedi, Misima, and Lihir. A consortium led by Exxon/Mobil hopes to begin the commercialization of the country's estimated 22.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves through the construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) production facility by 2010. Interoil, an American-owned firm, opened Papua New Guinea's first oil refinery in 2004 and is exploring the feasibility of building a liquefied natural gas production facility by 2012 with production capacity of 32,500 barrels of product per day.

Agriculture, Timber, and Fish

Papua New Guinea also produces and exports valuable agricultural, timber, and marine products. Agriculture currently accounts for 13% of GDP and supports more than 75% of the population. Cash crops ranked by

value are coffee, oil, cocoa, copra, tea, rubber, and sugar. About 40% of the country is covered with exploitable trees, but a domestic woodworking industry has been slow to develop. A number of Southeast Asian companies are active in the timber industry, but World Bank and other donors have withdrawn support from the sector over concern for unregulated deforestation and environmental damage. Recently enacted forestry legislation has exacerbated those concerns. Papua New Guinea has an active tuna industry, but much of the catch is made by boats of other nations fishing in Papua New Guinea waters under license. Papua New Guinea is a signatory to the South Pacific Tuna Treaty (SPTT), under which U.S. purse seiners fish for tuna in the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of the Pacific Island parties. Locally produced fish exports are confined primarily to shrimp.

Industry

In general, the Papua New Guinea economy is highly dependent on imports for manufactured goods. Its industrial sector—exclusive of mining—accounts for only 9% of GDP and contributes little to exports. Small-scale industries produce beer, soap, concrete products, clothing, paper products, matches, ice cream, canned meat, fruit juices, furniture, plywood, and paint. The small domestic market, relatively high wages, and high transport costs are constraints to industrial development.

Trade and Investment

Australia, Singapore, and Japan are the principal exporters to Papua New Guinea. Petroleum and mining machinery and aircraft have been the strongest U.S. exports to Papua New Guinea.

Australia is Papua New Guinea's most important export market, followed by Japan and the European Union. The U.S. imports modest amounts of gold, copper ore, cocoa, coffee, and other agricultural products from Papua New Guinea. Most of those exports take place through third countries.

With the 2003 withdrawal of Chevron/Texaco, Australian companies are the most active in developing Papua New Guinea's mining and petroleum sectors. Exxon/Mobil retains a major share of natural gas reserves and is constructing a liquefied natural gas processing facility. Interoil, an American-owned firm backed by an Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) loan, operates an oil refinery in Port Moresby and is exploring the feasibility of building a liquefied natural gas processing facility. China is increasing its investment in Papua New Guinea, including development of the $1 billion Ramu nickel mine.

Papua New Guinea became a participating economy in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum in 1993. It joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1996. It is an observer at ASEAN and a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum. It has preferential tariff agreements with the markets of Melanesian and Pacific Island neighbors through the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Trade Agreement and the Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA).

Development Programs and Aid

Australia is by far the largest bilateral aid donor to Papua New Guinea, offering about $355 million a year in assistance. Budgetary support, which has been provided in decreasing amounts since independence, was phased out in 2000, with aid concentrated on project development. In 2004, Australia and Papua New Guinea embarked on the Enhanced Cooperation Program (ECP), under which Australia agreed to provide direct assistance, including 210 line police officers, to the Papua New Guinea constabulary. The ECP met with initial success, but was abruptly ended when Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court stripped Australian police officers of immunity in May 2005. Virtually all ECP personnel left Papua New Guinea following the court's decision. The governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia are now involved in protracted negotiations on a scaled-down version of the ECP. Other major sources of aid to Papua New Guinea are Japan, the European Union, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, the United Nations, the Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Volunteers from a number of countries and mission church workers also provide education, health, and development assistance throughout the country. Foreign assistance to Papua New Guinea is approximately $46 per capita. The U.S. funds a $1.5 million-per-year HIV/AIDS project in Papua New Guinea.

Current Economic Conditions

After years of decline and government deficit, Papua New Guinea was bolstered in recent years by a general rise in commodity prices and by government steps toward spending control. The economy continues to grow modestly and the government recorded a modest surplus in 2007. However, the economic improvements are based almost entirely on high commodity prices and the nation continues to have serious problems of corruption, a lack of law and order, land tenure concerns stifling investment, political interference in business, and a lack of political will to adopt needed sweeping reforms.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Papua New Guinea's foreign policy reflects close ties with Australia and other traditional allies. Papua New Guinea is by far the largest Pacific Island nation and has traditionally viewed itself as part of the Pacific. However, in recent years it has also been cultivating relations with Asian nations. Its views on international political and economic issues are generally moderate. Papua New Guinea has diplomatic relations with 56 countries.

U.S.-PAPUA NEW GUINEA RELATIONS

The United States and Papua New Guinea established diplomatic relations upon the latter's independence on September 16, 1975. The two nations belong to a variety of regional organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum; the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF); the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC); and the South Pacific Regional Environmental Program (SPREP).

One of the most successful cooperative multilateral efforts linking the U.S. and Papua New Guinea is the U.S.-Pacific Islands Multilateral Tuna Fisheries Treaty, under which the U.S. grants $18 million per year to Pacific Island parties and the latter provide access for U.S. fishing vessels. The United States has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Papua New Guinea and contributed to the rehabilitation of Bougainville.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funds a $1.5 million-per-year HIV/AIDS project in Papua New Guinea and contributed $150,000 to Oro disaster relief efforts. The Pacific Partnership 2008 mission provided humanitarian assistance in Port Moresby and Oro Province. School and health clinic engineering projects were completed and over 25,000 people received medical care. An ongoing International Military Education and Training (IMET) program and HIV/AIDS training program exists.

The U.S. also supports Papua New Guinea's efforts to protect biodiversity. The U.S. Government supports the International Coral Reef Initiative aimed at protecting reefs in tropical nations such as Papua New Guinea. U.S. military forces, through Pacific Command (PACOM) in Honolulu, Hawaii, provide training to the Papua New Guinea Defense Force (PNGDF) and have held small-scale joint training exercises. The U.S. provides police and other education and training courses to national security officials. The U.S. also annually sponsors a handful of Papua New Guinea officials and private citizens to meet and confer with their professional counterparts and to experience the U.S. firsthand through the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and workshops sponsored by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and the Asia Pacific Secretariat (APEC).

The U.S. Peace Corps ceased operations in Papua New Guinea in 2001 due to security concerns. About 2,000 U.S. citizens live in Papua New Guinea, with major concentrations at the headquarters of New Tribes Mission and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), both located in the Eastern Highlands Province.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PORT MORESBY (E) Douglas Street, P.O. Box 1492, NCD Port Moresby, 675-321-1455, Fax 675-320-0637, INMARSAT Tel 011-872-1534721, Workweek: 7:45am - 4:30pm, Website: portmoresby.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Christopher Call
MGT:	Mike Bakalar
POL/ECO:	Andrea Appell (Tdy)
AMB:	Leslie Rowe
CON:	Ed Fajardo
DCM:	Thomas Weinz
COM:	Andrea Appell (Tdy)
GSO:	Chris Beenhouwer
RSO:	Bernard Nixon
AFSA:	Chris Beenhouwer
CLO:	Irene Weinz
IMO:	Bill Hamer
ISSO:	Bill Hamer

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 17, 2008

Country Description: Papua New Guinea is a developing country in the Southwest Pacific. The capital is Port Moresby. Tourist facilities outside major towns are limited. Crime is a serious concern throughout Papua New Guinea.

Entry Requirements: Travelers must possess a valid passport, onward/return airline ticket, and proof of sufficient funds for the intended visit. Travelers may obtain business or tourist visas (valid for stays of up to 60 days, with extensions available for an additional 30 days) upon arrival at Jacksons International Airport in Port Moresby. All persons boarding international flights originating from Papua New Guinea pay a departure fee, which should be included in airline fares. Travelers may obtain more information on entry and exit requirements from the Embassy of Papua New Guinea, 1615 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009, tel. 202-745-3680, fax 202-745-3679, e-mail kunduwash@aol.com, or via the Papua New Guinea Embassy web site at http://www.pngembassy.org.

Travelers who plan to transit or visit Australia must enter with an Australian visa or, if eligible, an Electronic Travel Authority (ETA). The ETA replaces a visa and allows a stay of up to three months. It may be obtained for a small service fee at http://www.eta.immi.gov.au. Airlines and many travel agents in the United States are also able to issue ETA's. Travelers may obtain more information about Australian entry requirements from the Australian Embassy at 1601 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, tel. 202-797-3000, or via the Australian Embassy's web site at http://www.austemb.org.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

Civil Unrest/Political Tension: Tension between communal or clan

groups, particularly in the Highlands region, occasionally leads to outbreaks of tribal fighting, often involving the use of firearms. Travelers should consult with their tour operator, the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby, or with Papua New Guinean authorities before visiting the region.

Visitors intending to travel to the autonomous region of Bougainville Island should contact the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby for updated security information. Bougainville Island is not peaceful, law enforcement is weak, and tourist and transportation facilities are limited. We advise travelers to Bougainville, as in other parts of Papua New Guinea, to exercise a high degree of caution. Areas near the Panguna mine, located on the southern part of the Island of Bougainville, have been officially designated "no go zones" by the Autonomous Government of Bougainville; Americans should avoid those areas.

Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Papua New Guinea has a high crime rate. Numerous U.S. citizen residents and visitors have been victims of violent crime in recent years, and they have sometimes suffered severe injuries. Carjackings, armed robberies, and stoning of vehicles are problems in and around major cities such as Port Moresby, Lae, Mount Hagen, and Goroka, but can happen anywhere. Pickpockets and bag-snatchers frequent crowded public areas. Hiking or other travel in rural areas and visiting isolated public sites such as parks, golf courses, beaches, or cemeteries can be dangerous. Individuals traveling alone are at greater risk for robbery or gang rape than are those who are part of an organized tour or under escort. Visitors to Papua New Guinea should avoid using taxis or buses, known as Public Motor Vehicles (PMV's), and should instead rely on their sponsor or hotel to arrange for taxi service or a rental car.

Road travel outside of major towns can be hazardous because criminals set up roadblocks near bridges, curves in the road, or other features that restrict vehicle speed and mobility. Visitors should consult with the U.S. Embassy or with local law enforcement officials concerning security conditions before driving between towns. (See also Traffic Safety and Road Conditions below). Travel to isolated places in Papua New Guinea is possible primarily by small passenger aircraft; there are many small airstrips throughout the country. Security measures at these airports are rare. Organized tours booked through travel agencies remain the safest means to visit attractions in Papua New Guinea. The Embassy recommends that prospective visitors consult a Primer on Personal Security for Visitors to Papua New Guinea at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1757.html.

Kokoda Track: Americans should exercise a high degree of caution when walking the Kokoda Track and traveling through the areas adjacent to each end of the track. Travelers should travel with guides from a reputable tour company. This is particularly important given occasional threats by villagers to close parts of the track because of local land and compensation disputes. Trekkers should ensure that their tour company provides a permit in return for fees paid for this purpose. The Kokoda Track Authority (KTA) has stationed rangers along the track and at airports to collect fees from trekkers who have not obtained a valid trekking permit. The KTA can be contacted on telephone (675) 325 6165 regarding payment of the applicable fee.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Papua New Guinea is: 000.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Papua New Guinea vary from hospitals in Port Moresby and the larger towns to aid posts (including some missionary stations) in remote areas. Medical facilities vary in quality, but those in the larger towns are usually adequate for routine problems and some emergencies. However, equipment failures and sudden shortages of common medications can mean that even routine treatments and procedures (such as X-rays) may become unavailable. A hyperbaric recompression chamber for diving emergencies is available in Port Moresby. Pharmacies in Papua New Guinea are found only in urban centers and at missionary clinics. They are small and may be inadequately stocked. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for medical services.

Medical conditions arising as a result of diving accidents will almost always require medical evacuation to Australia, where more sophisticated facilities are available. Medical evacuation companies could charge thousands of dollars to transport a victim to Australia or the U.S. A last-minute, one-way commercial ticket from Port Moresby to Brisbane or Cairns costs upwards of US$250 for economy class and upwards of US$550 for business class. The most commonly used facilities are in Brisbane and Cairns, both in the Australian State of Queensland. Travelers who anticipate the possible need for medical treatment in Australia should obtain entry permission for Australia in advance. Entry permission for Australia can be granted by the Australian Embassy in Port Moresby, but it is easier to obtain it prior to leaving the United States

(see section above on Entry/Exit Requirements). The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Papua New Guinea. The Government of Papua New Guinea does not currently have any policy guidelines that prevent entry into the country by short- and long-term travelers and/or residents.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Papua New Guinea is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Papua New Guinea moves on the left. Travel on highways outside of major towns can be hazardous. Motor vehicle accidents, especially when passengers are sitting in the open bed of a pickup truck, are a common cause of serious injury in Papua New Guinea. Drivers and passengers are advised to wear seatbelts. There is no countrywide road network; roads are generally in poor repair, and flat tires occur routinely as a result of potholes and debris on the roadways. During the rainy season landslides can be a problem on some stretches of the Highlands Highway between Lae and Mount Hagen. Criminal roadblocks have occurred during the day and more widely after dark on the Highlands Highway. Visitors should consult with local authorities or the U.S. Embassy before traveling on the Highlands Highway. Crowds can react emotionally and violently after road accidents. Crowds form quickly after an accident and may attack those whom they hold responsible, stoning and/or burning their vehicles. Friends and relatives of an injured party may demand immediate compensation from the party they hold responsible for injuries, regardless of legal responsibility. Persons involved in accidents usually should proceed directly to the nearest police station rather than stop at the scene of an accident. For specific information concerning Papua New Guinea driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact Papua New Guinea's Tourist Promotion Authority via the Internet at http://www.pngtourism.org.pg.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Papua New Guinea, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Papua New Guinea's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For further information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Papua New Guinean and Australian customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Papua New Guinea and Australia of items such as firearms, certain prescription drugs, wooden artifacts, exotic animals, food, and sexually explicit material. Other products may be subject to quarantine. It is advisable to contact the Embassies of Papua New Guinea and Australia in Washington, D.C. for specific information regarding each country's customs requirements. (See the contact information in the section on Entry/Exit Requirements above.)

Natural Disasters: Papua New Guinea is prone to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and sudden tidal movements. There are numerous active volcanoes throughout Papua New Guinea. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Documentation: U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Papua New Guinea's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Papua New Guinea are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Homosexual activity is illegal in Papua New Guinea.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Papua New Guinea are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Depart-

ment's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Papua New Guinea. Americans without Internet access may register directly at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby and obtain updated information on travel and security within Papua New Guinea. The U.S. Embassy is located on Douglas Street, adjacent to the Bank of Papua New Guinea, in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. That address should be used for courier deliveries. The mailing address is P.O. Box 1492, Port Moresby, NCD 121, Papua New Guinea. The Embassy's telephone number is (675) 321-1455; the after hour's duty officer telephone number is (675) 601-9689); fax (675) 321-1593. Americans may submit consular inquiries by e-mail to ConsularPortMoresby@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

July 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Papua New Guinea is not a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. Papua New Guinea permits intercountry adoptions.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate only one immigrant visa has been issued to a Papua New Guinean orphan in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The central authority responsible for adoptions in Papua New Guinea is the Office of Child Welfare in the Department for Community Development.

Office of Child Welfare,
Department for Community Development
Sanbra Haus
P.O. Box 7354
Boroko, NCD
Papua New Guinea
Tel: 675-325-9893

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The Government of Papua New Guinea requires no age limit for adoptive parents if they are healthy, fit, and capable of caring for the child. However, they must be legally married and financially stable.

Residency Requirements: There is a minimum six-month period of residency required for adoptive parents, but they need not be permanent residents.

Time Frame: It takes approximately nine months from the time a child is matched with a family for adoption until the adoption is finalized.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Papua New Guinea. The Office of Child Welfare in the Department for Community Development and its Director assists in adoptions.

Adoption Fees: There are no government charges for adoptions of Papua New Guinean children. Attorneys' fees vary and it is advisable to contact an attorney to obtain accurate fee information.

Adoption Procedures: There is no application form for an adoption. The prospective adoptive parents must write a letter stating their intentions to adopt and address it to the Director of Child Welfare, Department for Community Development at Sanbra Haus, P.O. Box 7354, Boroko, NCD, Papua New Guinea.

Required Documents:

- Birth certificate
- Medical reports
- Bank Statements
- Marriage certificate, and
- Family photos

Embassy of Papua New Guinea
1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 805
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 745-3680
Fax: (202) 745-3679
E-mail: info@pngembassy.org
Internet address:
http://www.pngembassy.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy—Port Moresby
P.O. Box 1492
Port Moresby, N.C.D. 121
Papua New Guinea
Tel: +(675) 321-1455
Fax: +(675) 320-0637
E-mail: png@state.gov
Internet:
http://portmoresby.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Papua New Guinea may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



PARAGUAY

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Paraguay

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 406,752 sq. km. (157,047 sq. mi.); about the size of California.
Cities: Capital—Asuncion (pop. 539,000). Other cities—Ciudad del Este, Concepción, Encarnación, Pedro Juan Caballero, Coronel Oviedo.
Terrain: East of the Paraguay River—grassy plains, wooded hills, tropical forests; west of the Paraguay River (Chaco region)—low, flat, marshy plain.
Climate: Temperate east of the Paraguay River, semiarid to the west.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Paraguayan(s).
Population: (2006 est.) 6,506,464.
Annual population growth rate: 2.45% (2006 est.).
Ethnic groups: Mixed Spanish and Indian descent (mestizo) 95%.
Religions: Roman Catholic 90%; Mennonite and other Protestant denominations.
Languages: Spanish (language of business and government), Guarani (spoken and understood by 90% of the population).
Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—92%. Literacy—94%. (UNICEF)
Health: Infant mortality rate—29/1,000. Life expectancy—69 years male; 73 years female. (Population Reference Bureau)
Work force: (2002, 2.5 million) Agriculture—45%; industry and commerce—31%; services—19%; government—4%.

Government

Type: Constitutional Republic.
Independence: May 1811.
Constitution: June 1992.
Government branches: Executive—President. Legislative—Senate and Chamber of Deputies. Judicial—Supreme Court of Justice.
Political subdivisions: 17 departments, 1 capital city.
Political parties: National Republican Association/Colorado Party (ANR), Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), Beloved Fatherland (PQ), National Union of Ethical Citizens (UNACE), National Encounter Party (PEN), The Country in Solidarity Party (PPS), and numerous small parties not represented in Congress.
Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal and compulsory by law up to age 75.

Economy

(Source: Central Bank of Paraguay and the IMF)
GDP: (2007) $12.8 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 6.4%.
Per capita GDP: (2007) $1,928.
Natural resources: Hydropower, timber, iron ore, manganese, limestone.
Agriculture: (21.9% of GDP): Products—soybeans, cotton, beef, pork, cereals, sugarcane, cassava, fruits, vegetables. Arable land—9 million hectares, of which 35% is in production.
Manufacturing and construction: (18.7% of GDP): Types—sugar, cement, textiles, beverages, wood products.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$6.898 billion: soybeans and soy-related products, cereals, beef, wood, leather, cotton, sugar, apparel, tobacco. Major markets—Uruguay (22.0%), Brazil (17.2%), Russia (11.9%); the United States in 7th place with 3.3%. Imports—$7.012 billion: machinery and mechanical appliances; electrical machinery, equipment, and materials; mineral fuels and lubricants; motor vehicles, tractors, parts and accessories; plastics and articles thereof; fertilizers; beverages and tobacco; toys, games, and sporting equipment; chemical products; rubber and articles thereof; paper, paperboard and articles thereof. Major suppliers—China (27.0%), Brazil (20.0%), Argentina (13.6%), Japan (8.3%), and U.S. (6.3%).

PEOPLE

Paraguay's population is distributed unevenly throughout the country. The vast majority of the people live in the eastern region, most within 160 kilometers (100 mi.) of Asuncion, the capital and largest city. The Chaco, which accounts for about 60% of the territory, is home to less than 2% of the population. Ethnically, culturally, and socially, Paraguay has one of the most homogeneous populations in South America. About 95% of the people are of mixed Spanish and Guarani Indian descent. Little trace is left of the original Guarani culture except the language, which is understood by 90% of the population. About 75% of all Paraguayans speak Spanish. Guarani and Spanish are official languages. Brazilians, Argentines, Germans, Arabs, Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese are among those who have settled in Paraguay with Brazilians representing the largest number.

HISTORY

Pre-Columbian civilization in the fertile, wooded region that is now Paraguay consisted of numerous seminomadic, Guarani-speaking tribes, who were recognized for their fierce warrior traditions. They practiced a mythical polytheistic religion, which later blended with Christianity. Spanish explorer Juan de Salazar founded Asuncion on the Feast Day of the Assumption, August 15, 1537. The city eventually became the center of a Spanish colonial province. Paraguay declared its independence by overthrowing the local Spanish authorities in May 1811.

The country's formative years saw three strong leaders who established the tradition of personal rule that lasted until 1989: Jose Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia, Carlos Antonio Lopez, and his son, Francisco Solano Lopez. The younger Lopez waged a war against Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil (War of the Triple Alliance, 1864-70) in which Paraguay lost half its population; afterward, Brazilian troops occupied the country until 1874. A succession of presidents governed Paraguay under the banner of the Colorado Party from 1880 until 1904, when the Liberal party seized control, ruling with only a brief interruption until 1940.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Paraguayan politics were defined by the Chaco war against Bolivia, a civil war, dictatorships, and periods of extreme political instability. Gen. Alfredo Stroessner took power in May 1954. Elected to complete the unexpired term of his predecessor, he was reelected president seven times, ruling almost continuously under the state-of-siege provision of the constitution with support from the military and the Colorado Party. During Stroessner's 35-year reign, political freedoms were severely limited, and opponents of the regime were systematically harassed and persecuted in the name of national security and anticommunism. Though a 1967 constitution gave dubious legitimacy to Stroessner's control, Paraguay became progressively isolated from the world community.

On February 3, 1989, Stroessner was overthrown in a military coup headed by Gen. Andres Rodriguez. Rodriguez, as the Colorado Party candidate, easily won the presidency in elections held that May, and the Colorado Party dominated the Congress. In 1991 municipal elections, however, opposition candidates won several major urban centers, including Asuncion. As president, Rodriguez instituted political, legal, and economic reforms and initiated a rapprochement with the international community.

The June 1992 constitution established a democratic system of government and dramatically improved protection of fundamental rights. In May 1993, Colorado Party candidate Juan Carlos Wasmosy was elected as Paraguay's first civilian president in almost 40 years in what international observers deemed fair and free elections. The newly elected majority-opposition Congress quickly demonstrated its independence from the executive by rescinding legislation passed by the previous Colorado-dominated Congress. With support from the United States, the Organization of American States, and other countries in the region, the Paraguayan people rejected an April 1996 attempt by then-Army Chief Gen. Lino Oviedo to oust President Wasmosy, taking an important step to strengthen democracy.

Oviedo became the Colorado candidate for president in the 1998 election, but when the Supreme Court upheld in April his conviction on charges related to the 1996 coup attempt, he was not allowed to run and remained in confinement. His running mate, Raul Cubas Grau, became the Colorado Party's candidate and was elected in May. The assassination of Vice-President Luis Maria Argana and the killing of eight student anti-government demonstrators, allegedly carried out by Oviedo supporters, led to Cubas' resignation in March 1999. The President of the Senate, Luis Gonzalez Macchi, assumed the presidency and completed Cubas' term. Gonzalez Macchi offered cabinet positions in his government to senior representatives of all three political parties in an attempt to create a coalition government that proved short-lived. Gonzalez Macchi's government suffered many allegations of corruption, and Gonzalez himself was found not guilty in a Senate impeachment trial involving corruption and mismanagement charges in February 2003.

In April 2003, Colorado candidate Nicanor Duarte Frutos was elected president. He was inaugurated on August 15. Duarte's administration has established a mixed record on attacking corruption and improving the quality of management. In his first year, Duarte worked constructively with an opposition-controlled Congress, removing six Supreme Court justices suspected of corruption from office and enacting major tax reforms. While Duarte remains the most dominant political figure, he faced stiff opposition mid-term from the opposition strongly opposed to his efforts to amend the Constitution to allow him to run for reelection. Macroeconomic performance has improved significantly under the Duarte administration, with inflation



falling significantly, and the government clearing its arrears with international creditors. Unemployment remains stubbornly high and the living standard of most households has not improved. The administration has placed a strong emphasis on participating in international institutions and has used diplomacy to promote the opening of international markets to Paraguayan products. In June 2004, Oviedo returned to Paraguay from exile in Brazil and was imprisoned for his 1996 coup-plotting conviction. In November 2007, Oviedo's criminal charges were overturned by the Supreme Court, and he was allowed to participate in the April 2008 presidential elections.

On April 20, 2008, former Roman Catholic bishop Fernando Lugo (representing a coalition of opposition parties) was elected President. According to the National Election Tribunal (TSJE), Lugo won 40.8% of the vote. Colorado candidate Blanca Ovelar came in second with 30.6% of the vote, and UNACE's Lino Oviedo came in third with 21.9% of the vote. President-elect Lugo will assume office on August 15, 2008. Lugo has identified reduction of corruption and economic inequality as two of his priorities.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Paraguay's highly centralized government was fundamentally changed by the 1992 constitution, which provides for a division of powers. The president, popularly elected for a 5-year term, appoints a cabinet. The bicameral Congress consists of an 80-member Chamber of Deputies and a 45-member Senate, elected concurrently with the president through a proportional representation system. Deputies are elected by department and senators are elected nationwide. Paraguay's highest judicial body is the Supreme Court. A popularly elected governor heads each of Paraguay's 17 departments.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Fernando Armindo LUGO Mendez**
Vice Pres.: **Federico FRANCO**
Min. of Agriculture & Livestock: **Candido VERA Bejarano**
Min. of Communications: **Augusto DOS SANTOS**
Min. of Education & Culture: **Horacio GALEANO Perrone**
Min. of Emergency Preparedness: **Camilo SOARES Machado**
Min. of Finance: **Dionisio BORDA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Alejandro HAMED Franco**
Min. of Industry & Commerce: **Martin HEISECKE**
Min. of Interior: **Rafael FILIZZOLA**
Min. of Justice & Labor: **Blas LLANO**
Min. of National Defense: **Luis BAREIRO Spaini**
Min. of the Presidency: **Miguel LOPEZ Perito**
Min. of Public Health & Social Welfare: **Esperanza MARTINEZ**
Min. of Public Works: **Efrain ALEGRE**
Presidential Security Adviser:
Governor, Central Bank: **Jorge CORVALAN**
Ambassador to the US: **James SPALDING**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

Paraguay maintains an embassy in the United States at 2400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-483-6960). Consulates are in Miami, New York, and Los Angeles.

ECONOMY

Paraguay has a predominantly agricultural economy, with a struggling commercial sector. There is a large subsistence sector, including sizable urban unemployment and underemployment, and a large underground re-export sector. The country has vast hydroelectric resources, including the world's largest hydroelectric generation facility built and operated jointly with Brazil (Itaipú Dam), but it lacks significant mineral or petroleum resources.

The government welcomes foreign investment in principle and accords national treatment to foreign investors, but widespread corruption is a deterrent. The economy is dependent on exports of soybeans, cotton, grains, cattle, timber, and sugar; electricity generation, and to a decreasing degree on re-exporting to Brazil and Argentina products made elsewhere. It is, therefore, vulnerable to the vagaries of weather and to the fortunes of the Argentine and Brazilian economies.

Paraguay's real GDP in 2007 of $12.8 billion (in 2000 dollars) represented an increase of 30.6% from $9.8 billion in 2006. The per capita GDP rose to $1,928 in current U.S. dollar terms in 2007, up from $1,546 in 2006, and surpassing the peak of $1,793 in 1996. Given the importance of the informal sector, accurate economic measures are difficult to obtain. In 2007, Paraguay had a current account deficit of $73 million, derived from a small deficit in the trade of goods, but accompanied by a significant increase in agriculture exports and services (electricity), reflecting favorable market prices for agricultural commodities and exports of electricity from the hydroelectric dams. In 2007, official foreign exchange reserves rose to $2.4 billion, an increase of 41% over 2006, and over four times the figure for 2002 ($582.8 million). Foreign official debt fell slightly from $2.2 billion in 2006 to $2.1 billion in 2007. Inflation in 2007 was 6.0%, down from 12.5% in 2006, and 9.9% in 2005.

Agriculture and Commerce

Agricultural activities, most of which are for export, represent about 21.9% of GDP and employ just under half of the workforce. More than 250,000 families depend on subsistence farming activities and maintain marginal ties to the larger productive sector of the economy. In addition to the commercial sector with retail, banking, and professional services, there is significant activity involving the import of goods from Asia and the United States for re-export to neighboring countries.

The underground economy, which is not included in the national accounts, may equal the formal economy in size, although greater enforcement efforts by the tax administration and customs are having an impact on the informal sector.

DEFENSE

The constitution designates the president as commander in chief of the armed forces. Military service is compulsory, and all 18-year-old males—and 17 year olds in the year of their 18th birthday—are eligible to serve for one year on active duty. However, the 1992 constitution allows for conscientious objection. Of the three services, the army has the majority of personnel, resources, and influence. With about 7,000 personnel, it is organized into three corps, with six infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions.

The military has two primary functions: national defense (including internal order) and engaging in civic action programs as directed by the president.

The navy consists of approximately 2,000 personnel and in addition to its fleet, has an aviation section, a prefecture (river police), and a contin-

gent of marines (naval infantry). The air force, the smallest of the services, has approximately 1,200 personnel.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Paraguay is a member of the United Nations and several of its specialized agencies. It also belongs to the Organization of American States, the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Rio Group, INTERPOL, and MERCOSUR (the Southern Cone Common Market). Paraguay is closely aligned with its MERCOSUR partners on many political, economic, and social issues. It is the only country in South America that recognizes Taiwan and not the People's Republic of China.

U.S.-PARAGUAY RELATIONS

U.S. Interests in Paraguay

The United States and Paraguay have an extensive relationship at the government, business, and personal level. Paraguay is a partner in hemispheric initiatives to improve counternarcotics cooperation, combat money laundering, trafficking in persons, and other illicit cross-border activities, and adequately protect intellectual property rights. The United States looks to Paraguay, which has tropical forest and riverine resources, to engage in hemispheric efforts to ensure sustainable development. The United States and Paraguay also cooperate in a variety of international organizations.

Paraguay has taken significant steps to combat terrorism-financing activity in the tri-border area it shares with Argentina and Brazil. It participates in antiterrorism programs and fora, including the Three Plus One Security Dialogue, with its neighbors and the United States. The United States strongly supports consolidation of Paraguay's democracy and continued economic reform, the cornerstones of cooperation among countries in the hemisphere. The United States has played important roles in defending Paraguay's democratic institutions, in helping resolve the April 1996 crisis, and in ensuring that the March 1999 change of government took place without further bloodshed.

Bilateral trade with the United States has increased over the last 6 years, after a steady decline over several years due to a long-term recession of the Paraguayan economy. Although U.S. imports from Paraguay were only $68 million in 2007, up from $58 million in 2006, U.S. exports to Paraguay in 2007 were $1.2 billion, up from $910 million in 2006, according to U.S. Customs data. (Not all exports and imports are reflected in Paraguayan government data.) More than a dozen U.S. multinational firms have subsidiaries in Paraguay. These include firms in the computer, agro-industrial, telecom, banking, and other service industries. Some 75 U.S. businesses have agents or representatives in Paraguay, and more than 3,000 U.S. citizens reside in the country.

U.S. Assistance

The U.S. Government has assisted Paraguayan development since 1942. In 2006, Paraguay signed a $34.9 million Millennium Challenge Corporation's (MCC) Threshold Country Program (TCP) with the U.S. focused on supporting Paraguay's effort to combat impunity and informality. Also in 2006, Paraguay signed and ratified an agreement with the U.S. under the Tropical Forest Conservation Act that provides Paraguay with $7.4 million in relief and zeroing out its remaining bilateral debt in exchange for the Paraguayan Government's commitment to conserve and restore tropical forests in the southeastern region of the country. Separately, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports a variety of programs to strengthen Paraguay's democratic institutions in the areas of civil society, local government and decentralization, national reform of the state, rule-of-law, and anti-corruption. Other important areas of intervention are economic growth, the environment and public health. The total amount of the program was approximately $10 million in fiscal year 2006. The U.S. Department of State, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Department of Justice and the Department of Treasury provide technical assistance, equipment, and training to strengthen counter narcotics enforcement, combat trafficking in persons, promote respect for intellectual property rights, and to assist in the development and implementation of money laundering legislation and counter terrorism legislation.

- On December 19, 2003, U.S. and Paraguayan officials signed a new Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen the legal protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in Paraguay. The MOU was extended in 2006 through the end of 2007.

- Since 2003 the U.S. Government has had a Resident Justice Advisor in Paraguay to support efforts to combat money laundering and terrorist financing and other financial crimes as well as organized crime and corruption.

- Starting in 2004, a Resident Public Debt Advisor, a Resident Budget Advisor, and a Resident Tax Advisor from the Department of Treasury have been working with Paraguayan counterparts to implement essential reforms.

The U.S. Department of Defense (D0D) provides technical assistance and training to help modernize and professionalize the military, including by promoting respect for human rights and obedience to democratically elected civilian authorities. DOD also provides assistance to impoverished communities through its Humanitarian Assistance Program.

The Peace Corps has about 160 volunteers working throughout Paraguay on projects ranging from agriculture and natural resources to education, rural health, and urban youth development. 2007 marked the

40th anniversary of the Peace Corps in Paraguay. The Office of Public Diplomacy also is active in Paraguay, funding Fulbright and other scholarships to the U.S., U.S. scholars to Paraguay, other short- and long-term exchanges, English scholarship programs, donations of books and equipment, and a cultural preservation project to restore Paraguay's National Library.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ASUNCION (E) 1776 Avda. Mcal. Lopez, APO/FPO DPO AA 34036, 595-21-213715, Fax 595-21-213728, INMARSAT Tel 8816-76311050, Workweek: Mon-Thur:0730-1730; Fri: 0730-1130, Website: paraguay.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Pauline Maurantonio
AMB OMS:	Vacant
ECO/COM:	Luis Hernandez
HRO:	Karin Mac Guire
MGT:	Mona A. Kuntz
POL/ECO:	Joan P. Shaker
AMB:	James C. Cason
CON:	(Ernest J. Abisellan)
DCM:	Fitzpatrick, Michael J.
PAO:	(James Russo)
GSO:	(Priyadarshi, Sen
RSO:	Philippe Furstenberg
AFSA:	Vacant
AID:	John A. Beed
CLO:	Patricia Ubeda & Mario Cano
DAO:	Ltc. Patrick E. Mathes
DEA:	Hathaway, David J.
EEO:	Susan L. Babin
FMO:	Jing Edwards
ICASS Chair:	Sergio Guzman
IMO:	(Chaplin Bruce)
ISSO:	Colin McCannon
State ICASS:	Peter D. Andreoli

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Office of Latin America and the Caribbean
14th and Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: (202) 482-0477,
800-USA-TRADE
Fax: (202) 482-0464
http://trade.gov

Paraguayan-American Chamber of Commerce
General Díaz 521, Piso 4, Oficina 1
Edificio El Faro Internacional
Asuncion, Paraguay
Tel: (595) 21-442-135
E-mail: pamchamb@conexion.com.py
http://www.pamcham.com.py
(Branch office in Ciudad del Este)

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 15, 2008

Country Description: Paraguay is a constitutional democracy with a developing economy. Tourist facilities are adequate in the capital city of Asuncion, but they vary greatly in quality and prices. Travelers outside Asuncion should consider seeking travel agency assistance, as satisfactory or adequate tourist facilities are very limited in other major cities and almost nonexistent in remote areas.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. U.S. citizens traveling to Paraguay must submit completed visa applications in person or by secure messenger to the Paraguayan Embassy or one of the consulates and pay a fee. Paraguay issues visas for one-entry or multiple entries up to the validity of the U.S. passport. Applicants under 18 years of age traveling alone must appear with both of their parents or a legal guardian. In case of a guardian, an original and one copy of proof of legal guardianship are required. A document of authorization from parents/guardian will be accepted only if it is notarized and certified by the county clerk. Travelers entering or departing

Paraguay with regular U.S. passports will be fingerprinted. Some airlines include the Paraguayan airport departure tax in the price of the airline ticket. It is recommended that you check with the airline in order to determine whether or not the departure tax has been included. If the tax is not included in the airline ticket then payment would be required upon departure in either U.S. or local currency (no credit cards or checks accepted). Visit the Embassy of Paraguay web site at http://www.embaparusa.gov.py for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: As stated in the Department of State's latest Worldwide Caution, U.S. citizens overseas may be targeted by extremist groups and should maintain a high level of vigilance. The U.S. Embassy is not aware of any specific terrorist threat to Americans in Paraguay. Individuals and organizations providing financial support to extremist groups operate in Ciudad del Este and along the tri-border area between Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina. Small armed groups have also been reported to be operating in the San Pedro and Concepcion Departments. Drug trafficking remains a serious concern in the Department of Amambay. Because of concerns about the lack of security in border areas, the U.S. Embassy in Asuncion requires U.S. Government personnel and their family members to provide advance notice and a travel itinerary when traveling to Ciudad del Este or Pedro Juan Caballero. As a general precaution, the Embassy also counsels its employees traveling outside the capital to provide an itinerary including dates, contact names, and telephone numbers where the employee may be reached.

Since January 2007, there have been numerous kidnapping incidents mainly in the Alto Parana department. Targets have been members of the Paraguayan business community or their family members. It is believed that the individuals responsible for the kidnappings are financially motivated and have preselected their targets based on the victims' wealth.

U.S. citizens should avoid large gatherings or any other event where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest. Such activities have resulted in intermittent road closures including major routes traveled by tourists and residents. While generally nonviolent, demonstrations and/

or roadblocks have turned violent in the past. Areas where such closures and barricades exist should be avoided. U.S. citizens who encounter demonstrations and/or roadblocks should not attempt to continue the planned travel or to confront those at the roadblock. Instead, they should avoid areas where individuals are demonstrating and in case of roadblock, wait for the road to reopen or return to the origin of their trip. Uniformed police often conduct roving checks of vehicles and passengers.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, wherethe current Travel Warnings and Public Announcements including the Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime has increased in recent years with criminals often targeting those thought to be wealthy. Although most crime is nonviolent, there has been an increase in the use of weapons and there have been incidents where extreme violence has been used. U.S. citizens have on occasion been the victims of assaults, kidnappings, robberies, and rapes.

Local authorities frequently lack the training and resources to solve these cases. Under these circumstances, U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Paraguay should be aware of their surroundings and security at all times. They should take common sense precautions including refraining from displaying expensive-looking cameras and jewelry, large amounts of money, or other valuable items. Resistance to armed assailants has often aggravated the situation and therefore is not advised.

Armed robbery, carjackings, car theft, and home invasions are a problem in both urban and rural areas. Street crime, including pick pocketing and mugging, is prevalent in cities. The number of pick pocketing incidents and armed assaults is also increasing on public buses and in the downtown area of Asunción. As many incidents on public buses involve individuals snatching valuables, passengers should not wear expensive-looking jewelry or display other flashy items. There have been incidents of pilferage from checked baggage at both airports and bus terminals.

Travelers have found it prudent to hide valuables on their person or in carry-on luggage. Unauthorized ticket vendors also reportedly operate at the Asuncion bus terminal, badgering travelers into buying tickets for substandard or non-existent services.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

In Asuncion, the following phone numbers exist for roadside/ambulance assistance: Emergency Services, including police and ambulances: 911. Fire Department, including rescue of accident victims: 131, 132.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical facilities, prescription and over-the-counter medicine, supplies, and services are available only in Asuncion. Elsewhere, these are limited and may not exist. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to Paraguay or foreign residents of the country.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Paraguay is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

U.S. citizens have been injured and killed in traffic accidents. Only minimal standards must be met to obtain a Paraguayan driver's license, and driver education prior to licensing is not common. Drivers throughout Paraguay routinely ignore traffic regulations. No vehicle insurance is required, and many Paraguayans drive without any insurance coverage. Persons who drive in Paraguay should be prepared to drive defensively and with their own insurance in both urban and rural areas.

Public transportation is readily available for urban and inter-city travel. Buses vary in maintenance conditions and may not meet U.S. safety standards. Armed robberies and pick pocketing occur on buses in cities and rural areas, sometimes with the apparent collusion of the bus driver. Taxis are available and may be called using telephone numbers listed in the newspapers. No passenger train service exists. Bicycle travel may not be safe due to traffic and other road hazards.

Most urban streets consist of cobblestones over dirt. Some roads in Asuncion and other large cities are paved. However, these roads frequently develop potholes that often remain unrepaired. Nearly all rural roads are unpaved, and during rainy periods and the rainy season (November-March/April), they may be impassable. Road signs indicating hazards, such as sharp curves or major intersections, are lacking in many areas.

Driving or traveling at night is not advisable outside Asuncion because pedestrians, animals, or vehicles without proper lights are often on the roads. In addition, assaults and other crimes against motorists traveling at night have occurred. Extra precautions should be exercised along infrequently traveled portions of the rural roads.

Intercity highway maintenance is not equal to U.S. standards. The privately maintained toll road between Caaguazu and Ciudad del Este and the routes between Asuncion and Encarnacion and Asuncion and Pedro Juan Caballero are in good condition. Most other intercity routes are in good to fair condition, with brief stretches in poor condition. The Trans-Chaco route is in fair condition except for the portion between Mariscal Estigarribia and the Bolivian border, which is unpaved and at times impassable.

The Touring and Automobile Club provides some roadside assistance to its members. The Club may be contacted in Asuncion by visiting its offices at 25 de Mayo near Brazil, First Floor, or telephoning 210-550, 210-551, 210-552, 210-553, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to noon, except for Paraguayan holidays. The Touring Club also has offices in Ciudad del Este (tel. 061-512-340), Coronel Oviedo (tel. 0521-203-350), Encarnación (tel. 071-202-203), San Ignacio Misiones (tel. 082-232-080), Caaguazu Campo 9 (tel. 0528-222-211), Santani (tel. 043-20-314), Pozo Colorado (cell phone. 0981-939-611, Villa Florida (tel. 083-240-205) and Ybyyau (tel. 039-210-206). Towing services are scarce outside urban areas. Twenty-four-hour tow truck services from Asuncion may be contacted by telephoning (021) 224-366, (021) 208-400, (cellular service provider) Tigo by dialing *822 or 0971-951-930. For an extra fee, these companies may provide service outside Asuncion, but they typically demand immediate payment and may not accept credit cards.

Visit the web site of Paraguay's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.senatur.gov.py and http://www.mopc.gov.py.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Paraguay's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Paraguay's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Paraguay's customs authority may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Paraguay of items such as firearms, medications, toys resembling weapons, or protected species. It is advisable to contact the Paraguayan Embassy in Washington, D.C., or one of Paraguay's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Paraguay does not recognize dual Paraguayan nationality for American citizens. Under Article 150 of the Paraguayan Constitution, naturalized Paraguayans lose their nationality by virtue of a court ruling based on unjustified absence from the Republic for more than three years, or by voluntary adoption of another nationality.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Paraguay's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Paraguay are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Paraguay are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Paraguay. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 1776 Mariscal Lopez Avenue; telephone (011-595-21) 213-715, fax (011-595-21) 213-728; Internet: http://paraguay.usembassy.gov, email: paraguayusembassy@state.gov. The Consular Section is open for

U.S. citizen services, including registration, Monday through Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Fridays from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., except for U.S. and Paraguayan holidays; telephone (011-595-21) 213-715, fax (011-595-21) 228-603.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Presently, intercountry adoptions are not allowed in Paraguay. Paraguayan law gives preference in adoption to Paraguayan citizens and legal permanent residents of Paraguay, and prospective adoptive parents must reside in Paraguay.

Paraguyan government officials have to told the U.S. Embassy in Paraguay that should intercountry adoptions be permitted in the future, the government will only allow adoptions by citizens of countries that have ratified the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and signed an agreement with the central governmental authority overseeing adoptions.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The Parguayan adoption authority is the Centro de Adopciones (Adoption Center), which is under the authority of the National Secretariat of Childhood and Adolescence. Inquiries should be made in Spanish.

Address: Avenida Mariscal Lopez 1549 c/Pitiantuta, Asunción.
Phone: 595-21-207-160
Hours: Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The Paraguayan government restricts adoptions to couples who have been married for at least three years, male/female couples who have lived together for more than four years, or single women. Married couples are given preference, and single men cannot adopt. Adoptive parents must be between the ages of 25 and 50. Persons with infectious contagious diseases or mental illnesses are not eligible to adopt.

Residency Requirements: The government of Paraguay requires that adoptive parents must be Paraguayan citizens or legal permanent residents of Paraguay and must reside in Paraguay.

Time Frame: Total time to complete an adoption in Paraguay ranges from nine months to two years from the time the child is declared eligible for adoption to completion of the process. The child may be placed in the custody of the prospective adoptive parents pending the completion of the adoption.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: All adoptions must be processed through the Adoption Center, the contact information for which is listed above.

Adoption Fees: The Adoption Center does not charge a fee. Attorneys assisting adopting parents set their own fees, which vary greatly.

Adoption Procedures: No intercountry adoptions are permitted in Paraguay at this time. However, persons who meet the eligibility requirements listed above and who are interested in adopting a Paraguayan child must file an application form at the Adoption Center and provide the required documentation.

After a review of their application and completion of a home study, the names of individuals approved to adopt are placed on a list of available parents. When a child is abandoned or becomes an orphan, the Adoption Center is notified and must first attempt to find a relative to care for the child.

If no relative can be found, the child remains under the authority of the Adoption Center until a judicial declaration is made that the child is adoptable.

At that time, the court will usually release the child into the custody of the prospective adoptive parents. A child is assigned to prospective parents based on the Adoption Center's judgment of the best interests of the child.

Documents Required for Adoption in Paraguay:

- Prospective adoptive parent's proof of Paraguayan citizenship or legal permanent residence in Paraguay
- A copy of prospective adoptive parents marriage certificate (if applicable)
- Evidence of good conduct
- A home study carried out by an official from the Adoption Center regarding the health of the adoptive parent(s).

Embassy of Paraguay
2400 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20008
Phone: (202) 483 6960
Fax: (202) 234 4508
Email:
secretaria@embaparusa.gov.py
Website: www.embaparusa.gov.py

Paraguay also has Consulates General in Los Angeles, Miami, and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective*

Adoptive Children, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
1776 Mariscal Lopez Avenue
Telephone (011-595-21) 213-715
Fax (011-595-21) 213-728
Internet:
http://asuncion.usembassy.gov.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Paraguay may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Asunción. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Officeof Children's Issues, U.S.Department ofState, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



PERU

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Peru

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1.28 million sq. km. (496,225 sq. mi.). Peru is the third-largest country in South America and is approximately three times the size of California.

Cities: Lima (capital), Arequipa, Chiclayo, Cuzco, Huancayo, Ica, Trujillo, Ayacucho, Piura, Iquitos, Chimbote.

Terrain: Western arid coastal plains, central rugged Andean mountains, and eastern lowlands with tropical forests that are part of the Amazon basin.

Climate: Arid and mild in coastal area, temperate to frigid in the Andes, and warm and humid in the jungle lowlands.

People

Nationality: Peruvian.

Ethnic groups: Indigenous (45%), mixed background ("mestizo") (37%), European (15%), African, Japanese, Chinese, and other (3%).

Population: (2008) 28.7 million. Approximately 30% of the population lives in the Lima/Callao metropolitan area.

Annual population growth rate: (2007) 1.6%.

Religions: Roman Catholic (81%), other (10%).

Languages: Spanish is the principal language. Quechua, Aymara and other indigenous languages also have official status.

Education: Years compulsory—11. Attendance—92% ages 6-11, and 66% ages 12-16. Literacy—96% in urban areas, 80% in rural areas.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—29.96/1,000. Life expectancy (2007)—68.33 years male; 72.04 years female.

Unemployment in Lima: (2008) 8.4%; underemployment (2008) 49.7%.

Government

Type: Constitutional republic.

Independence: July 28, 1821.

Constitution: December 31, 1993.

Government branches: Executive—President, two Vice Presidents, and a Council of Ministers led by a Prime Minister. Legislative—Unicameral Congress. Judicial—Four-tier court structure consisting of Supreme Court and lower courts.

Political subdivisions: 25 departments subdivided into 180 provinces and 1,747 districts.

Political parties: Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), National Unity (UN), Peru Posible (PP), Popular Action (AP), Union for Peru (UPP), Solucion Popular, Somos Peru (SP).

Suffrage: Universal and mandatory for citizens 18 to 70.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $107.5 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 9.0%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $3,810.

Natural resources: Iron ore, copper, gold, silver, zinc, lead, fish, petroleum, natural gas, and forestry.

Manufacturing: (15.6% of GDP, 2007) Types—Food and beverages, textiles and apparel, nonferrous and precious metals, nonmetallic minerals, petroleum refining, paper, chemicals, iron and steel, fishmeal.

Agriculture: (9.2% of GDP, 2006) Products—Coffee, cotton, asparagus, paprika, artichokes, sugarcane, potatoes, rice, banana, maize, poultry, milk, others.

Other sectors: (by percentage of GDP in 2007) Services (55.0%), mining (5.8%), construction (5.6%), fisheries (0.5%).

Trade: (official GOP stats) Exports (2007)—$28.0 billion: gold, copper, fishmeal, petroleum, zinc, textiles, apparel, asparagus and coffee. Major markets (2007)—U.S. (19%), China (11%), Switzerland (8.5%), Japan (7.9%), Canada (6.5%), Chile (6.1%), Spain (3.5%), Brazil (3.4%). Imports (2007)—$19.6 billion: machinery, vehicles, processed food, petroleum and steel. Major suppliers (2007)—U.S. (17.7%), China (11.9%), Brazil (9.3%), Ecuador (7.8%), Argentina (5.2%), Colombia (4.9%).

PEOPLE

Peru is the fifth most populous country in Latin America (after Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Argentina). Twenty-one cities have a population of 100,000 or more. Rural migration has increased the urban population from 35.4% of the total population in 1940 to an estimated 74.6% as of 2005.

Most Peruvians are either Spanish-speaking mestizos—a term that usually refers to a mixture of indigenous and European/Caucasian—or Amerindians, largely Quechua-speaking indigenous people. Peruvians of European descent make up about 15% of the population. There also are small numbers of persons of African, Japanese, and Chinese ancestry. Socioeconomic and cultural indicators are increasingly important as identifiers. For example, Peruvians of Amerindian descent who have adopted aspects of Hispanic culture also are considered mestizo. With economic development, access to education, intermarriage, and large-scale migration from rural to urban areas, a more homogeneous national culture is developing, mainly along the relatively more prosperous coast. Peru's distinct geographical regions are mirrored in a socioeconomic divide between the coast's mestizo-Hispanic culture and the more diverse, traditional Andean cultures of the mountains and highlands.

HISTORY, GOVERNMENT, AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Inca Empire and Spanish Conquest

When the Spanish landed in 1531, Peru's territory was the nucleus of the highly developed Inca civilization. Centered at Cuzco, the Incan Empire extended over a vast region from northern Ecuador to central Chile. In search of Inca wealth, the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro, who arrived in the territory after the Incas had fought a debilitating civil war, conquered the weakened people. The Spanish captured the Incan capital at Cuzco by 1533, and consolidated their control by 1542. Gold and silver from the Andes enriched the conquerors, and Peru became the principal source of Spanish wealth and power in South America.

Pizarro founded Lima in 1535. The viceroyalty established at Lima in 1542 initially had jurisdiction over all of the Spanish colonies in South America. By the time of the wars of independence (1820-24), Lima had become one of the most distinguished and aristocratic colonial capital and the chief Spanish stronghold in the Americas.

Independence

Peru's independence movement was led by Jose de San Martin of Argentina and Simon Bolivar of Venezuela. San Martin proclaimed Peruvian independence from Spain on July 28, 1821. Emancipation was completed in December 1824, when Venezuelan General Antonio Jose de Sucre defeated the Spanish troops at Ayacucho, ending Spanish rule in South America. Spain subsequently made futile attempts to regain its former colonies, but in 1879 it finally recognized Peru's independence.

After independence, Peru and its neighbors engaged in intermittent territorial disputes. Chile's victory over Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific (1879-83) resulted in a territorial settlement in which Peru ceded the department of Tarapaca and the provinces of Tacna and Arica to Chile. In 1929, Chile returned Tacna to Peru. Following a clash between Peru and Ecuador in 1941, the Rio Protocol—of which the United States is one of four guarantors (along with Argentina, Brazil and Chile)—sought to establish the boundary between the two countries. Continuing boundary disagreement led to brief armed conflicts in early 1981 and early 1995, but in 1998 the governments of Peru and Ecuador signed an historic peace treaty and demarcated the border. In late 1999, the governments of Peru and Chile likewise implemented the last outstanding article of their 1929 border agreement. Peru and Chile still dispute the sea boundary.

Military Rule and Return to Democracy (1968–1980)

The military has been prominent in Peruvian history. Coups have repeatedly interrupted civilian constitutional government. The most recent period of military rule (1968-80) began when Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado overthrew elected President Fernando Belaunde Terry of the Popular Action Party (AP). As part of what has been called the "first phase" of the military government's nationalist program, Velasco undertook an extensive agrarian reform program and nationalized the fishmeal industry, some petroleum and mining companies, and several banks.

Because of Velasco's economic mismanagement and deteriorating health, he was replaced in 1975 by Gen. Francisco Morales Bermudez. Morales Bermudez tempered the authoritarian abuses of the Velasco administration and began the task of restoring the country's economy. Morales Bermudez presided over the return to civilian government under a new constitution and in the May 1980 elections, President Belaunde Terry was returned to office by an impressive plurality.

Instability in the 1980s (1982–1990)

Nagging economic problems left over from the military government persisted, worsened by an occurrence of the "El Niño" weather phenomenon in 1982-83, which caused widespread flooding in some parts of the country, severe droughts in others, and decimated the fishing industry. The fall in international commodity prices to their lowest levels since the Great Depression combined with the natural disasters to decrease production, depress wages, exacerbate unemploy-



ment, and spur inflation. The economic collapse was reflected in worsening living conditions for Peru's poor and provided a breeding ground for social and political discontent. The emergence of the terrorist group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in rural areas in 1980—followed shortly thereafter by the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in Lima—sent the country further into chaos. The terrorists were financed in part from alliances with narcotraffickers, who had established a stronghold in the Peruvian Andes during this period. Peru and Bolivia became the largest coca producers in the world, accounting for roughly four-fifths of the production in South America.

Amid inflation, economic hardship, and terrorism, the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) won the presidential election in 1985, bringing Alan García Pérez to office. The transfer of the presidency from Belaunde to García on July 28, 1985, was Peru's first transfer of power from one democratically elected leader to another in 40 years.

The Fujimori Decade (1990–2000)

Economic mismanagement by the García administration led to hyperinflation from 1988 to 1990. Concerned about the economy, the increasing

terrorist threat from Sendero Luminoso, and allegations of official corruption, voters chose a relatively unknown mathematician-turned-politician, Alberto Fujimori, as president in 1990. Fujimori felt he had a mandate for radical change. He immediately implemented drastic economic reforms to tackle inflation (which dropped from 7,650% in 1990 to 139% in 1991), but found opposition to further drastic measures, including dealing with the growing insurgency. On April 4, 1992, Fujimori dissolved the Congress in the "auto-coup," revised the constitution, and called new congressional elections. With a more pliant Congress, Fujimori proceeded to govern unimpeded. Large segments of the judiciary, the military and the media were co-opted by Fujimori's security advisor, the shadowy Vladimiro Montesinos. The government unleashed a counterattack against the insurgency that resulted in countless human right abuses and eventually quashed the Shining Path and MRTA. During this time he also privatized state-owned companies, removed investment barriers and significantly improved public finances.

Fujimori's constitutionally questionable decision to seek a third term, and subsequent tainted electoral victory in June 2000, brought political and economic turmoil. A bribery scandal that broke just weeks after he began his third term in July forced Fujimori to call new elections in which he would not run. Fujimori fled the country and resigned from office in November 2000. A caretaker government under Valentin Paniagua presided over new presidential and congressional elections in April 2001. The new elected government, led by President Alejandro Toledo, took office July 28, 2001.

The Toledo Administration (2001–2006)

The Toledo government successfully consolidated Peru's return to democracy, a process that had begun under President Paniagua. Despite being a frequent target of media criticism, Toledo maintained strong commitments to freedom of the press. The government undertook initiatives to implement the recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which had been charged with studying the circumstances surrounding the human rights abuses and violations committed between 1980 and 2000. Criminal charges for corruption and human rights violations were brought against former President Fujimori. Fujimori was detained in Chile in November 2005, and was extradited to face criminal charges in Peru in September 2007. On December 11, 2007, Fujimori was convicted of ordering an illegal search and seizure of documents, and was sentenced to six years in prison. His trial on human rights charges continues.

Under President Toledo, Peru signed a Trade Promotion Agreement with the U.S. Toledo also unveiled the construction of a road that will connect Brazil and Peru's isolated interior to the Pacific coast. Toledo's economic management led to an impressive economic boom in Peru that remains strong. Poverty reduction was uneven, however. Although poverty in some areas decreased by up to 37% during the Toledo Administration, nationally it only decreased by 5.6% and nearly half of Peruvians were still living below the poverty line. In 2005 the government implemented "Juntos," a program to double the income of people living in extreme poverty.

2006 Elections and Transition to the Garcia Administration

On June 4, 2006, APRA candidate Alan García Pérez was elected to the presidency by 52.5% of the voters in his runoff with Ollanta Humala, who ran under the Union for Peru, with the support of his Peruvian Nationalist Party. APRA also won 36 Congressional seats and controls the largest voting bloc. After a disappointing presidential term from 1985 to 1990, García returned to the presidency with promises to improve Peru's social condition, balancing economic stability with increased social spending. During his term, García has overseen a robust macroeconomic performance, including strong GDP growth and declining poverty levels (39.3% of Peruvians were "poor" and 13.7% "extremely poor" in 2007). Despite this broad success, however, global inflation has pushed up prices for basic goods consumed by the poor, causing a steep decline in García's level of public support. Internationally, García has sought to improve relations with Peru's South American neighbors and with the United States, and to present Peru's democratic and pro-free trade path as a model for the region. García helped convince the US Congress to pass the US-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement. He also signed deals with Canada and Singapore, and began trade negotiations with China, the European Union, and others.

Constitution and Political Institutions

The president is popularly elected for a five year term. A constitutional amendment passed in 2000 prevents reelection. The first and second vice presidents also are popularly elected but have no constitutional functions unless the president is unable to discharge his duties. The principal executive body is the Council of Ministers, comprised of 15 members and headed by a prime minister. The president appoints its members, who must be ratified by the Congress. All Executive laws sent to Congress must be approved by the Council of Ministers.

The legislative branch consists of a unicameral Congress of 120 members. In addition to passing laws, Congress ratifies treaties, authorizes government loans, and approves the government budget.

The judicial branch of government is headed by a 16-member Supreme Court. The Constitutional Tribunal interprets the constitution on matters of individual rights. Superior courts in departmental capitals review appeals from decisions by lower courts. Courts of first instance are located in provincial capitals and are divided into civil, penal, and special chambers. The judiciary has created several temporary specialized courts in an attempt to reduce the

large backlog of cases pending final court action. In 1996 a human rights ombudsman's office was created. Peru is divided into 25 regions. The regions are subdivided into provinces, which are composed of districts. High authorities in the regional and local levels are elected. The country's latest decentralization program is in hiatus after the proposal to merge departments was defeated in a national referendum in October 2005.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Alan GARCIA Perez**
First Vice Pres.: **Luis GIAMPIETRI Rojas**
Second Vice Pres.: **Lourdes MENDOZA del Solar**
Prime Min.: **Jorge DEL CASTILLO Galvez**
Min. of Agriculture: **Ismael BENAVIDES Ferreyros**
Min. of Commerce & Tourism: **Mercedes ARAOZ Fernandez**
Min. of Defense: **Antero FLORES-ARAOZ Esparza**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Luis VALDIVIESO Montano**
Min. of Education: **Jose Antonio CHANG Escobedo**
Min. of Energy & Mines: **Juan VALDIVIA Romero**
Min. of Environment: **Antonio BRACK Egg**
Min. of Foreign Relations: **Jose Antonio GARCIA BELAUNDE**
Min. of Health: **Hernan GARRIDO-LECCA Montanez**
Min. of Housing: **Enrique CORNEJO Ramirez**
Min. of Interior: **Luis ALVA CASTRO**
Min. of Justice: **Rosario FERNANDEZ Figueroa**
Min. of Labor: **Mario PASCO Cosmopolis**
Min. of Production: **Rafael REY Rey**
Min. of Transportation & Communications: **Veronica ZAVALA**
Min. of Women & Social Development: **Susana PINILLA Cisneros**
Pres., Central Reserve Bank: **Julio VELARDE**
Ambassador to the US: **Felipe ORTIZ de Zevallos**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Jorge VOTO-BERNALES Gatica**

Peru maintains an embassy in the United States at 1700 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (tel. (202) 833-9860/67, consular section: (202) 462-1084). Peru has consulates in Atlanta, New York, Paterson (NJ), Miami, Chicago, Houston, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, and Hartford.

ECONOMY

Peru's economy has shown strong growth over the past five years, helped by market-oriented economic reforms and privatizations in the 1990s, and measures taken since 2001 to promote trade and attract investment. GDP grew 9.0% in 2007, 7.7% in 2006, 6.8% in 2005, 5.0% in 2004, and 4.0% in 2003. President Alan García and his economic team have continued these policies. Recent economic expansion has been driven by construction, mining, export growth, investment, and domestic demand. Inflation averaged 1.8% in 2007, and the fiscal deficit was only 0.6% of GDP. Thanks to pre-payments, external debt in 2007 dropped to $20.1 billion, and foreign reserves were a record $27.7 billion.

Peru's economy is well managed, and better tax collection and growth are increasing revenues, with expenditures keeping pace. Private investment is rising and becoming more broad-based. Peru obtained investment grade status in 2008. The García administration is pursuing decentralization initiatives, and is focused on bringing more small businesses into the formal economy.

Foreign Trade

Peru and the U.S. signed the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) in April 2006 in Washington, DC. The PTPA was ratified by the Peruvian Congress in June 2006 and by the U.S. Congress in December 2007. The Peruvian government is working on changes to its environmental and intellectual property laws in order to allow the PTPA to enter into force. On February 29, 2008, the President signed legislation to extend the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA) until December 31, 2008. Peru's exports reached $28 billion in 2007, partially as a result of high mineral prices. Peru's major trading partners are the U.S., China, EU, Brazil, Switzerland, and Japan. According to USG statistics, Peru registered a surplus in its trade with the United States of $1.15 billion in 2007, exporting $5.27 billion and importing $4.12 billion. Peru's exports include gold, copper, fishmeal, petroleum, zinc, textiles, apparel, asparagus, and coffee. Imports include machinery, vehicles, processed food, petroleum and steel. Peru belongs to the Andean Community, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Peru has limited trade agreements with Chile and Mexico, and signed more robust agreements with Canada and Singapore in 2008.

Foreign Investment

The Peruvian Government actively seeks to attract both foreign and domestic investment in all sectors of the economy. The registered stock of foreign direct investment (FDI) is over $16 billion, though actual FDI is estimated to be much higher. The U.S., Spain, and the United Kingdom are the leading investors. FDI is concentrated in telecommunications, mining, manufacturing, finance, and electricity.

Mining and Energy

Peru is a source of both natural gas and petroleum. In August 2004, Peru inaugurated operations of the Camisea natural gas project. Camisea gas has transformed Peru's energy matrix, reducing the country's dependence on imported diesel. The $3.8 billion Peru LNG project, currently under construction, will liquefy natural gas for export to Mexico and possibly the west coast of the United States, converting Peru into a net energy exporter in 2010.

Peru is the world's top producer of silver, second in copper and zinc, third in tin, fourth in lead, and fifth in gold. Mineral exports have consistently

accounted for the most significant portion of Peru's export revenue, comprising 62% in 2007.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Peru generally enjoys friendly relations with its neighbors. In November 1999, Peru and Chile signed three agreements that put to rest the remaining obstacles holding up implementation of the 1929 Border Treaty. (The 1929 Border Treaty officially ended the 1879 War of the Pacific.) In late 2005, a declaration of maritime borders by Peru's Congress set off a new round of recriminations with Chile, which claims that the maritime borders were agreed to in fishing pacts dating from the early 1950s. In contrast, the Garcia administration has recently made overtures to Chile, aimed at improving that relationship.

In October 1998, Peru and Ecuador signed a peace accord to resolve once and for all border differences that had sparked violent confrontations. Peru and Ecuador are now jointly coordinating an internationally sponsored border integration project. The U.S. Government, as one of four guarantor states, was actively involved in facilitating the 1998 peace accord between Peru and Ecuador and remains committed to its implementation. The United States has pledged $40 million to the Peru-Ecuador border integration project and another $4 million to support Peruvian and Ecuadorian demining efforts along their common border.

In 1998, Peru became a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, facilitating closer ties and economic relations between Peru and Asian nations. Peru will host the APEC Summit in 2008.

Peru has been a member of the United Nations since 1949, and is a member of the Security Council. Peruvian Javier Perez de Cuellar served as UN Secretary General from 1981 to 1991.

Peru maintains 210 troops in peacekeeping operations in Haiti under the UN's MINUSTAH.

U.S.-PERUVIAN RELATIONS

The United States enjoys strong and cooperative relations with Peru. Relations were strained following the tainted re-election of former President Fujimori in June 2000, but improved with the installation of an interim government in November 2000 and the inauguration of the government of Alejandro Toledo in July 2001.

Relations with President García's administration are positive. The United States continues to promote the strengthening of democratic institutions and human rights safeguards in Peru and the integration of Peru into the world economy.

The United States and Peru cooperate on efforts to interdict the flow of narcotics, particularly cocaine, to the United States. Bilateral programs are now in effect to reduce the flow of drugs through Peru's port systems and to perform ground interdiction in tandem with successful law enforcement operations.

These U.S. Government-supported law enforcement efforts are complemented by an aggressive effort to establish an alternative development program for coca farmers in key coca growing areas to voluntarily reduce and eliminate coca cultivation. This effort is funded by the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

U.S. investment and tourism in Peru have grown substantially in recent years. The U.S. is Peru's number one trade partner, and economic and commercial ties will deepen with the implementation of the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA).

About 200,000 U.S. citizens visit Peru annually for business, tourism, and study. About 16,000 Americans reside in Peru, and more than 400 U.S. companies are represented in the country.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 17, 2008

Country Description: Peru is a developing country with an expanding tourism sector. A wide variety of tourist facilities and services are available, with quality varying according to price and location.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required to enter and depart Peru. Tourists must also provide evidence of return or onward travel. U.S. citizens may enter Peru for short-term tourist- or business-related visits of up to 90 days; however, the actual period authorized is determined by the Peruvian immigration officer at the time of entry into Peru. After admission, travelers may apply to extend their visa for an additional three months. Persons who remain beyond their period of authorized stay without obtaining a visa extension or a residence visa will have to pay a fine to depart Peru. Visitors for other than tourist or short-term business visit purposes must obtain a Peruvian visa in advance. Business workers (under contract) should ascertain the tax and exit regulations that apply to the specific visa they are granted. Peru does not require any immunizations for entry, although it recommends vaccination against Yellow Fever.

An international flight airport fee, payable in U.S. or local currency and assessed on a per-person basis, must be paid when departing Peru. There are also separate airport taxes for domestic flights charged at most domestic airports that must be paid before embarking. U.S. citizens whose passports are lost or stolen in Peru must obtain a new passport from the U.S. Embassy and present it, together with a police report on the loss or theft, to the main immigration office in downtown Lima, located at Prolongacion Espana 734, Brena, to obtain permission to depart. An additional immigration office is located within Lima's Jorge Chavez International Airport international departure terminal. For further information regarding entry requirements, travelers should contact the Peruvian Embassy at 1700 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036; telephone (202) 833-9860; http://www.peruvianembassy.us.

Note: As of June 1, 2004, it is illegal for any person within the United States, as well as U.S. citizens, nationals, and resident aliens elsewhere, to fly on or do business with Aero Continente and its successor, Nuevo Continente, an airline that is currently not in operation. Persons who violate this provision are subject to criminal and civil penalties under U.S. law. Further information on this matter is available on the U.S. Department of the Treasury's web site at http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac. FAA safety restrictions placed on Aero Continente are not related to this action.

Safety and Security: The Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) terrorist group is still active, and sporadic incidents of Shining Path violence have occurred in the recent past in rural provinces of Ayacucho, Huancavelica, Huanuco, Junin, and San Martin. The Shining Path has previously targeted U.S. interests and there are indications that it continues to do so. Other incidents have included attacks by large, heavily armed groups believed to be members of Shining Path on Peruvian army and police patrols in remote areas, as well as kidnappings of Peruvian and foreign aid workers. None of these incidents occurred in areas normally visited by tourists. Mining prospectors, adventure travelers, and others considering travel to remote areas of Peru are strongly advised to contact the U.S. Embassy in Lima for current security information.

A peace treaty ending the Peru/Ecuador border conflict was signed on October 26, 1998. The Peruvian government is working to remove mines and unexploded ordnance left over from the conflict, but crossing or approaching the Peru-Ecuador border anywhere except at official checkpoints can still be dangerous. The entire Peru/Colombia border area is very dangerous because of narcotics trafficking and the occasional incursions of armed guerrilla forces from Colombia into Peru's remote areas.

Political demonstrations and labor-related strikes and marches regularly occur in urban and some rural areas and sometimes affect major highways. They can also cause serious disruptions to road, air, and rail transportation. Demonstrations are often—but not always—announced in advance. While these activities are usually peaceful, they can escalate into violent confrontations. As a general rule, it is best to avoid large crowds and demonstrations. Visitors are encouraged to keep informed by following the local news and consulting hotel personnel and tour guides.

The U.S. Embassy restricts travel of U.S. government employees where terrorist groups and narcotics traffickers have recently resorted to violent actions, usually directed against local security forces, local government authorities, and some civilians. Overland travel in or near these areas, particularly at night, is risky.

Apart from the following list of locations restricted because of the danger from terrorist and narcotics groups,

Embassy employees are prohibited from nighttime overland travel anywhere outside major urban areas because of the risks posed from robbery and unsafe road conditions. The only exception is that nighttime travel by commercial bus on the Pan-American Highway is permitted for official or personal travel. Road travel along this route, by means other than commercial bus service, and nighttime travel via commercial bus service along other routes anywhere in Peru, continue to be prohibited for Embassy employees.

This list below is under continuous review, and travelers may contact the U.S. Embassy for updated information.

Ayacucho: *Restricted:* Provinces of La Mar and Huanta. Road travel from Ayacucho to San Francisco. *Permitted:* Daylight road travel from Ayacucho City to the city of Huanta. Staying within the city limits of Huanta. Daylight road travel from Pisco to Ayacucho City.

Cuzco: *Restricted:* 20-kilometer swath of territory contiguous to the Apurimac River and Ayacucho Department. *Permitted:* Everywhere else including Machu Picchu area and city of Cuzco.

Huancavelica: *Restricted:* Province of Pampas. *Permitted:* Train travel from Huancayo to Huancavelica City. Daylight road travel from Pisco to Ayacucho City.

Huánuco: *Restricted:* Provinces of Maranon, Huamalies, and Leonicio Prado. Road travel from Huánuco City to Tingo Maria City. *Permitted:* Flying into and staying within the city limits of Huánuco and Tingo María.

Junín: *Restricted:* Provinces of Satipo and Concepcion east of the Rio Mantaro. *Permitted:* Daylight travel from La Merced to Satipo.

Loreto: *Restricted:* 20-kilometer swath of territory contiguous to the Colombia border. Travel on the Putumayo River.

San Martín: *Restricted:* Province of Tocache. *Permitted:* Flying only into and remaining within the city limits of Tocache.

Ucayali: *Restricted:* Provinces of Padre Abad and Coronel Portillo west of Pucallpa City and west of Ucayali River. Road travel from Pucallpa to Aguaytia and all cities west of Aguaytia. *Permitted:* Flying into and remaining within the city limits of Pucallpa and Aguaytía; the province of Coronel Portillo east of the Ucayali River

Inca Trail hikers are significantly safer if they are part of a guided group trail hike. To protect natural resources along the Inca Trail, the Peruvian government charges fees for hiking the trail and instituted limits on the numbers of hikers permitted on the trail. Hikers in peak season (June–August) are advised to make reservations for the Inca Trail well in advance via a travel agency. Visitors should always register when entering national parks. Hikers should exercise extreme caution in steep or slippery areas, which are neither fenced nor marked. Several climbers have died or suffered serious injuries after falling while climbing Huayna Picchu, a peak near Machu Picchu. Only very basic medical assistance is available at Machu Picchu.

Adventure travelers should be aware that rescue capabilities are limited. In recent years, several hikers have died and others have had to be rescued after serious accidents in the Huaraz region of the Cordillera Blanca Mountains, where Peru's highest peaks are located. In late June 2006 three American citizens, along with their Peruvian guides, died in Huaraz province after a serious fall while trekking. Most rescues are carried out on foot because helicopters cannot fly to the high-altitude areas where hikers are stranded. U.S. citizens who plan to visit these mountainous areas in Ancash province should contact the Peruvian National Police's High Mountain Rescue Unit ("USAM") at telephone 51-1-575-4696, 51-1-575-4698, 51-1-575-1555; fax 51-1-575-3036, or e-mail: divsam@yahoo.com. Some USAM officers read and/or speak English. Swimmers, surfers, rafters, and boaters should be aware of strong currents in the Pacific Ocean and fast-moving rivers. Two American citizens and at least three foreign visitors were killed while white water rafting in 2006 and one U.S. citizen died while surfing. Seasonal rains can exacerbate the already dangerous conditions in Peru. Those considering white-water rafting should consult local authorities about recent weather and the impact on white-water rafting conditions. Be cautious in relying on those with a commercial interest in gauging conditions. Companies offering white-water rafting in Peru, their guides, and their equipment may not be held to the same standards as similar companies in the United States. Travelers are advised to seek advice from local residents before swimming in jungle lakes or rivers, where large reptiles or other dangerous creatures may live; caimans, resembling alligators, are found in most jungle areas of Peru. One crocodile species is native to the Tumbes area, but it is limited in numbers and range. All adventure travelers should leave detailed written plans and a timetable with a friend and with local authorities in the region, and they should carry waterproof identification and emergency contact information.

Travelers to all remote areas should check with local authorities about geographic, climatic, and security conditions.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Of the approximately 260,000 Americans who visit Peru each year, a small but growing num-

ber have been victims of serious crimes. The information below is intended to raise awareness of the potential for crime and suggest measures visitors can take to avoid becoming a victim.

Violent crime, including carjacking, assault, and armed robbery is common in Lima and other large cities. Resistance to violent crime often provokes greater violence, while victims who do not resist usually do not suffer serious physical harm. "Express kidnappings," in which criminals kidnap victims and seek to obtain funds from their bank accounts via automatic teller machines, occur frequently. Thieves often smash car windows at traffic lights to grab jewelry, purses, backpacks, or other visible items from a car. This type of assault is very common on main roads leading to Lima's Jorge Chavez International Airport, specifically along De la Marina and Faucett Avenues and Via de Evitamiento, but it can occur anywhere in congested traffic, particularly in downtown Lima. Travelers are encouraged to put all belongings, including purses, in the trunk of a car or taxi. Passengers who hail taxis on the street have been assaulted. Following the April 2007 armed robbery of a U.S. Embassy employee by a taxi driver, the Embassy's Regional Security Officer advised all Embassy personnel not to hail taxis on the street. It is safer to use telephone-dispatched radio taxis or car services associated with major hotels. Travelers should guard against the theft of luggage and other belongings, particularly U.S. passports, at the Lima airport.

Passengers arriving at Lima's Jorge Chavez International Airport should be cautious in making arrangements for ground transportation. Upon exiting the airport, travelers may be approached by persons seeming to know them, or who claim that a prearranged taxi has been sent to take them to their hotel. Some travelers have been charged exorbitant rates or taken to marginal hotels in unsafe parts of town. Travelers who are not being met by a known party or by a reputable travel agent or hotel shuttle are advised to arrange for a taxi inside the airport. At least two taxi companies maintain counters inside the international arrival area (between immigration clearance and baggage claim). An additional two companies have agents at the information kiosk just before the exit from the passenger arrival area.

The threat of street crime is greatest in areas that attract large crowds, particularly crowds of tourists or wealthy Peruvians. A crowd allows a thief (or thieves, since petty thieves often operate in a group) the opportunity to select and approach the potential victim without attracting attention. Visitors should be especially careful when visiting tourist areas in Lima such as the Plaza de Armas (Government Square), the Plaza San Martin, Acho Bullring, Pachacamac, and any location in downtown Lima. Additionally, visitors to municipal markets as well as the Gamarra textile district of La Victoria should be extremely cautious. Street crime is also prevalent in cities in Peru's interior, including Cuzco, Arequipa, Puno, and Juliaca. American citizens traveling alone or in unescorted groups are more vulnerable to street crime.

Visitors are advised to keep cash and identification in their front pockets and to limit their cash on hand and unnecessary credit cards. Replacing items such as credit cards, U.S. driver's licenses, and other identification while in Peru can be difficult and time-consuming. Handbags should not be carried, but if they are, they should be tucked into the crook of an arm or, if carrying a bag with a shoulder strap, do not allow the bag to hang freely, but keep a hand over the clasp. It is generally recommended that all jewelry be removed prior to going to a market or other crowded areas.

Theft of U.S. passports is quite common in Peru. Visitors are advised not to carry their U.S. passports if they are not needed. If the police request identification, a copy of the passport is acceptable. A copy of the data page, the page with the Peruvian visa, and a copy of the page with the Peruvian entry stamp should be carried.

Counterfeit U.S. currency is a growing and serious problem in Peru. In many areas of the city, moneychangers openly change money on the street. These individuals should be avoided as they are a conduit for counterfeit currency and in many cases, work in leagues with pickpockets by pointing out potential victims. In addition, these individuals have frequently been the victims of violent robberies in which bystanders have been injured. There have also been several reported incidents of counterfeit currency being paid out as winnings by casinos, though the Embassy has not received reports of this happening at larger, well-known casinos.

In the recent past, there have been a number of cases of armed robberies, rapes, other sexual assaults, and attempted rapes of U.S. citizens and other foreign tourists in Arequipa and in Cuzco city, as well as in the outlying areas in the vicinity of various Incan ruins. These assaults have occurred both during daylight hours and at night.

Some crimes in the city of Cuzco and in Arequipa have involved the drivers of rogue (or unregistered) taxis. Travelers should use only licensed, registered taxis such as those available from taxi stands in Cuzco displaying a blue decal issued by the municipal government on the windshield of the vehicle. Visitors should not accept offers of transportation or guide services from individuals seeking clients on the streets. In late 2006 there were several reports of U.S. citizens falling victim to so-called express kidnappings in Arequipa after taking taxis hailed on the street. On occasion, the victim was bound, beaten, and held for over 24 hours as the assailants attempted to empty cash from bank accounts with the victim's stolen ATM card.

Tourists should be particularly cautious when visiting the Sacsahuayman ruins outside Cuzco. They should not travel alone, but do so in as large a group as possible. Visitors should also avoid these areas at dawn, dusk, or nighttime, since roving gangs are known to frequent

these areas and prey on unsuspecting tourists. U.S. citizen backpackers have also been victims of armed robbery while hiking on trails other than the Inca Trail.

Peruvian law enforcement authorities have responded to rising crime by increasing the number of tourist police officers patrolling Cuzco and its outskirts on horseback and motorcycles. The officers have been dispatched to bus and train terminals, taxi stands, automatic teller machine locations, and other sites frequented by tourists, such as discotheques, restaurants, and craft fairs and shops.

Crime also occurs on roads, particularly at night and outside urban areas. Clandestine, impromptu roadblocks can appear on even major highways, where bus and automobile passengers are robbed. The risk is even greater on rural roads after dark. A number of Americans have been robbed on the road between Tarapoto and Yuriguaymas in recent months. In addition, numerous Americans have reported the theft of passports, cameras, and other valuables on overnight bus rides, by thieves who take advantage of sleeping passengers.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

U.S. citizen visitors to Peru should immediately report any criminal activity perpetrated against them to the nearest police station or tourist police ("POLTUR") office. Immediate action may result in the capture of the thieves and the recovery of stolen property. U.S. citizens should also report crimes to the U.S. Embassy in Lima (telephone 434-3000 during business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or 434-3032 for after-hours emergencies if calling from within Lima; add the prefix 01 if calling from the provinces). Victims of crime in Cuzco should contact the Consular Agent there (while in Cuzco, telephone 231-474; from Lima, callers must dial the prefix 084 for Cuzco).

The telephone number for the tourist police in Lima is 51-1-424-2053 (Lima north) or 51-1-460-4525 (Lima south). There are also tourist police offices in 15 other cities, including all major tourist destinations, such as Cuzco, Arequipa, and Puno.

Tourists may register complaints on a 24-hour hotline provided by INDECOPI (National Institute for the Defense of Competition and the Protection of Intellectual Property) by calling 51-1-224-7800 or 51-1-224-7777. Outside of Lima, callers should dial the prefix (01), then the aforementioned numbers, or call the toll-free number 0-800-44040 from any private telephone (the 800 number is not available from public payphones). The INDECOPI hotline will assist the caller in contacting the police to report a crime, but it is intended primarily to deal with non-emergency situations such as poor service from a travel agency or guide, lost property, or unfair charges.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local Peruvian phone system has incorporated the following phone numbers to allow access to emergency services: General Emergencies should be dialed by pressing 116, and Police Emergencies should be dialed by pressing 105.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is generally good in Lima and usually adequate in other major cities, but it is less so elsewhere in Peru. Urban private health care facilities are often better staffed and equipped than public or rural ones. Public hospital facilities in Cuzco, the prime tourist destination, are generally inadequate to handle serious medical conditions. Although some private hospital facilities in Cuzco may be able to treat acute medical problems, in general the seriously ill traveler should return to Lima for further care as soon as is medically feasible. Visitors to high-altitude Andean destinations such as Cuzco (11,000 feet), Machu Picchu (8,000 feet), or Lake Titicaca (13,000 feet) should discuss the trip with their personal physician prior to departing the United States. Travel to high altitudes could pose a serious risk of illness, hospitalization, and even death, particularly if the traveler has a medical condition that affects blood circulation or breathing. Several U.S. citizens have died in Peru from medical conditions exacerbated by altitude. Tourists or business visitors, particularly those who suffer from cardiac-related problems or high blood pressure, who wish to travel to high-altitude areas in Peru, should undergo a medical examination before traveling. New arrivals, even healthy and fit persons, will feel symptoms of hypoxia (lack of oxygen) at high-altitude, and most will need time to adjust to the altitude. Most people will have increased respiration and heart rate. Many will have headaches, difficulty sleeping, lack of appetite, minor gastric and intestinal upsets, and mood changes. To help prevent these complications, consult your personal physician, avoid alcohol and smoking for at least one week after arrival at high altitudes, and limit physical activity for the first 36 to 48 hours after arrival at high altitudes.

In jungle areas east of the Andes mountain range (cordillera), chloroquine-resistant malaria is a serious problem. Cholera, yellow fever, hepatitis, dengue fever, and other exotic and contagious diseases are also present. Yellow fever is endemic in

certain areas of Peru; in general, those areas are located on the eastern side of the cordillera and at lower elevations in jungle areas. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Peruvian government recommend that travelers to Peru receive a yellow fever vaccination and carry documentation of the vaccination with them on their trip. Diarrhea caused by contaminated food or water is very common in Peru, and is potentially serious.

If suffering from persistent symptoms, seek medical attention. Local tap water in Peru is not considered potable. Only bottled or treated (disinfected) water should be used for drinking. Fruits and vegetables should be washed and/or disinfected with care, and meats and fish should be thoroughly cooked. Eggs, meat, un-pasteurized cheese, and seafood are common sources of the bacteria that can cause travelers' diarrhea, and they should be properly prepared or avoided.

Over the last few years, at least five American citizen visitors have died during liposuction operations in Peru. While some of these deaths occurred in ill-equipped, makeshift clinics, travelers are urged to carefully assess the risks of having this type of surgery performed overseas, even when opting for a treatment at one of the better-known clinics.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Peru is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving conditions in Peru are very different than those found in the U.S. and can be considerably more dangerous. Visitors are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with local law and driving customs before attempting to operate vehicles. Road travel at night is extremely dangerous due to poor road markings and frequent unmarked road hazards. Drivers should not travel alone on rural roads, even in daylight. Convoy travel is preferable. Spare tires, parts, and fuel are needed when traveling in remote areas, where distances between service areas are great. Fog is common on coastal and mountain highways, and the resulting poor visibility frequently causes accidents. Inter-city bus travel is dangerous. Armed robbers, who force passengers off buses and steal all their belongings, sometimes hold up inter-city buses at night. Bus accidents resulting in multiple deaths and injuries are common, and they are frequently attributed to excessive speed, poor bus maintenance, and driver fatigue. For further information, travelers may contact their nearest automobile club, or (for information in Spanish) the Associacion Automotriz del Peru, 299 Avenida Dos de Mayo, San Isidro, Lima 27, Peru, telephone 51-1-440-0495, or at http://www.aap.org.pe.

Visit Peru's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety web site at http://www.peru.info/peru.asp.

Special Circumstances: The government of Peru prohibits the exportation of archaeological artifacts and colonial art. These restrictions include archaeological material from the pre-Hispanic cultures and certain ethnological materials from the colonial period of Peru, which are considered protected Peruvian cultural patrimony. U.S. law enforcement authorities can take action even after importation into the United States has occurred. For more information, contact Art Historian Dr. Alvaro Roca-Rey Miro Quesada, National Cultural Institute (Instituto Nacional de Cultura—INC), Direccion de Fomento de las Artes at 51-1-476-9900, and/or Archaeologist Ms. Alejandra Figueroa Flores, Direccion de Registro de Patrimonio Arqueologico, at 51-1-476-9887. Travelers buying art should be aware that unscrupulous traders might try to sell them articles that cannot be exported from Peru. Peruvian customs authorities may seize such articles, and the traveler may be subject to criminal penalties. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Visitors who purchase reproductions of colonial or pre-colonial art should buy only from reputable dealers, and they should insist on documentation from Peru's National Institute of Culture (INC) showing that the object is a reproduction and may be exported. Peruvian customs authorities may retain articles lacking such documentation and forward them to INC for evaluation. If the objects are found to be reproductions, they may eventually be returned to the purchaser, but, storage and shipping charges are the responsibility of the purchaser.

Vendors in jungle cities and airports sell live animals and birds, as well as handicrafts made from insects, feathers, or other natural products. Under Peruvian law, it is illegal to remove certain flora and fauna items from their place of origin to another part of Peru or to export them to a foreign country. Travelers have been detained and arrested by the Ecology Police in Lima for carrying such items.

Information on U.S. regulations for the importation of plant and animal products is available from the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture via the web at http://www.aphis.usda.gov. Travelers bringing animals to the United States may also wish to consult with U.S. Customs or the Fish and Wildlife Service of the U.S. Department of Interior. Travelers wishing to bring animals from the United States into Peru should consult the Peruvian Servicio Nacional de Sanidad Agraria (SENASA) at 51-1-313-3300. Information regarding current restrictions is available on the SENASA web site at http://www.senasa.gob.pe.

Peruvian customs regulations require that many electronic items or items for commercial use be declared upon entering the country. Failure to make a full and accurate declaration can lead to arrest and incarceration or significant fines.

Philanthropic groups and individuals planning to enter Peru with medical supplies in quantities greater than for personal use are strongly advised to consult with a Peruvian consulate in the United States prior to arrival in Peru. Peruvian Customs authorities will seize any merchandise that is not properly documented, even if intended for charitable or philanthropic use. The cost of retrieving seized goods can often exceed the value of the merchandise.

Travelers should be aware that some drugs and other products readily available over-the-counter or by prescription in Peru are illegal in the United States. The prescription sedative flumitrapezan (Rohypnol) is one such drug; others may come on the market at any time. Although cocaleaf tea is a popular beverage and folk remedy for altitude sickness in Peru, possession of these tea bags, which are sold in most Peruvian supermarkets, is illegal in the United States.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed Peru's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Peru's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Peru's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Peru are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Disaster Preparedness: Peru is an earthquake-prone country. U.S. citizens in areas affected by earthquakes can expect to experience temporary difficulty communicating with family and friends in the U.S. and in securing prompt onward overland transportation out of the affected areas. You are strongly encouraged to register your trip with the Embassy and to contact your family directly or, if unavailable, the U.S. Embassy following a significant disaster. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Peru are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Peru. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located in Surco, Monterrico, a suburb of Lima, at Avenida Encalada, Block Seventeen; telephone 51-1-434-3000 during business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.), or 51-1-434-3032 for after-hours emergencies; fax 51-1-618-2397, or 51-1-618-2724 (American Citizen Services Unit); web site—http://lima.usembassy.gov. The Consular Section is open for American Citizen Services, including registration, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. weekdays, excluding U.S. and Peruvian holidays.

The U.S. Consular Agent in Cusco may be reached at 51-84-231-474; or by email at consagentcuzco@terra.com.pe. The Consular Agency can provide information and assistance to U.S. citizen travelers who are victims of crime or need other assistance.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Peru is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore, all adoptions between Peru and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption web-

site at http://adoption.state.gov. Peruvian law restricts inter-country adoption to children who have been deemed legally abandoned. A Peruvian court must make a legal finding of abandonment before the child is assigned to prospective parents. In effect, this provision prohibits so-called "direct" adoptions, in which a birth parent gives a child directly (or via an intermediary) to specific prospective parent(s) for adoption. It also prohibits adoptive parents from searching for and locating a child on their own.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Peru is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Peru, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Peru also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There is no minimum residency requirement for intercountry adoptions. Prospective adoptive parents can travel to Peru, remain in Peru to complete the adoption, and travel back to the United States without fulfilling a minimum residency period. Although both adoptive parents do not need to be present in Peru for the entire processing time, both must be present for the provisional placement, evaluation, and ratification of the adoption through the court.

Age Requirements: The age and civil status of the prospective adoptive parents determines the age range of the adopted child:

- Married parents between 25 and 43 years old may adopt children up to the age of three.
- Married parents between 44 and 50 years old may adopt children between three and six years of age.
- Married parents between 51 and 55 years old may adopt children age six and older.
- Single parents between 35 and 50 years old may adopt children age five and older.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents can be married or single.

Income Requirements: There are no specific income requirements; however, prospective adoptive parents will have to provide documentation detailing their current income.

Other Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must pass a psychological evaluation.

Prospective adoptive parents of dual or mixed American and Peruvian nationality who wish to adopt a blood relative and travel to the United States with the adopted child should ensure that the adoption process complies with The Hague Adoption Convention.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Peru is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Peru must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Peru's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Abandonment Requirements: Peruvian law restricts inter-country adoption to children who have been deemed legally abandoned. A Peruvian court must make a legal finding of abandonment before the child is assigned to prospective parents. In effect, this provision prohibits so-called "direct" adoptions, in which a birth parent gives a child directly (or via an intermediary) to specific prospective parent(s) for adoption. It also prohibits prospective adoptive parents from searching for and locating a child on their own.

Age Requirements: Peru allows children up to 18 years of age to be adopted. United States law requires that the I-800A petition to classify an adopted child as an immediate relative be filed before the child's 16th birthday.

Peru's Central Authority: Ministry for Women and Social Development (MIMDES)

The Process: In Peru, there are two separate processes for adoption. International adoptions are normally processed through the Ministry for Women and Social Development (MIMDES), which is in charge of certifying compliance with The Hague Adoption Convention. In cases involving Peruvian nationals adopting a blood relative, it is possible under Peruvian law to complete the adoption without involving MIMDES. If an adoption process is completed without MIMDES' prior certification of Hague compliance, it may be impossible for the United States Embassy to issue a Hague Convention adoptee visa.

The first step in adopting a child from Peru is to select an accredited or approved adoption service provider in the United States. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Peru.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you have been provisionally approved as "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your adoption service provider will forward your information to the Central Authority in Peru. The MIMDES will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Peru's law.

If both the United States and the MIMDES Board of Directors determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the MIMDES will tentatively assign a child to the prospective adoptive parent(s) and forward information regarding the assigned child to the parent's(s') adoption service provider. MIMDES assigns the United States adoption service provider a specific amount of time (usually 15-20 working days) to confirm the prospective adoptive parent's(s') intention to adopt the child.

Provisional custody is awarded to the prospective adoptive parents shortly after their arrival in Peru. After 10-15 days, a social worker assigned to the case will issue a report attesting to the compatibility and bonding of the child and the prospective parents. If the report is favorable, both of the prospective adoptive parents appear in court to ratify their adoption request, after which the judge may issue the final adoption decree.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800, Petition to Classify a Convention adoptee as an Immediate Relative). USCIS will determine whether the child is eligible under United States immigration law to be adopted and enter the United States.

After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy in Lima. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he or she will notify MIMDES (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

The process for finalizing the adoption (or gaining legal custody) in Peru generally includes the following.

Role of the Central Authority: The MIMDES Board of Directors approves the prospective adoptive parents' completed dossier and tentatively assigns a child to them. Information concerning the child is forward to the adoption service provider. When the adoption is completed, the adoption is entered into a national adoption registry maintained by MIMDES.

Role of the Court: Provisional custody is awarded to the prospective adoptive parents shortly after their arrival in Peru. After 10-15 days, a social worker assigned to the case will issue a report attesting to the compatibility and bonding of the child and the prospective parents. If the report is favorable, both of the prospective adoptive parents appear in court to ratify their adoption request, after which the judge may issue the final adoption decree.

If married, Peruvian law mandates that both prospective adoptive parents must be present for the provisional placement, evaluation, and ratification of the adoption through the court.

Role of Adoption Service Providers: The adoption service provider assists the prospective adoptive parent(s) with completing the dossier. It will also notify the prospective adoptive parent(s) when a child has been assigned. The provider responds to the MIMDES within the mandated timeframe (usually 15–20 working days) of the parent's(s') intention to adopt the child.

Time Frame: Intercountry adoptions from Peru can be time consuming. The total time (from the initial inquiry with an approved adoption agency until the child arrives in the United States) can take many months and often over a year. Both prospective adoptive parents do not need to be present in Peru for the entire time; however, they must be present for the provisional placement, evaluation, and ratification of the adoption through the court. Prospective adoptive parents should expect to stay in Peru for approximately eight weeks (and sometimes longer) to complete an adoption.

Adoption Application: The adoption application is filed with the Ministry for Women and Social Development (MIMDES).

Adoption Fees: There are no specified adoption fees for intercountry adoptions from Peru.

Documents Required: The following is a list of some of the documents necessary to complete an intercountry adoption in Peru:

- Original birth certificates for each parent and for other children in the family;
- Marriage certificate, if applicable;
- Divorce certificate(s), where applicable;
- Death certificate in cases where the prospective adoptive parent is a widow or widower;
- Legalized copy of the prospective adoptive parent's(s') passport(s);
- Police reports from the prospective adoptive parent's(s') place of residence;
- Medical exam results;
- Photographs;
- Job letters; and
- Tax returns.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Peruvian law also imposes post adoption reporting requirements for intercountry adoptions such that parents who leave Peru with their adopted child are required to report on the well-being of the child to the Peruvian Government for a set period of time after returning to their home country.

Contact Information

United States Embassy in Peru
Avenida La Encalada, Cuadra 17 s/n
Monterrico, Surco, Lima 33
Peru
Tel: (51)(1) 434-3000
Fax: (51)(1) 434-3037
Website: http://lima.usembassy.gov

Peru's Central Authority
Ministry for Women and Social Development (MIMDES)
Av. Arequipa 381-B
Sta. Beatriz, Lima 1
Peru
Tel: (51)(1) 332-0733
Fax: (51)(1) 332-0733
Email: postmaster@mimdes.gob.pe
Website:
http://www.mimdes.gob.pe/sna

Embassy of Peru
1700 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20036-1903
Tel: (202) 833-9860 to 9869
Fax: (202) 659-8124
Website: www.peruvianembassy.us

Peruvian Consulates General are located in Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Hartford, CT; Houston, TX; Los Angeles,CA; Miami, FL; Paterson, NJ; New York, NY; and San Francisco, CA.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
Email: AskCI@state.gov.
Website: http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, contact the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



PHILIPPINES

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of the Philippines

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 300,000 sq. km. (117,187 sq. mi.).
Cities: (2007 estimate): Capital—Manila (pop. 11.55 million in metropolitan area); other cities—Davao City (1.36 million); Cebu City (0.80 million).
Terrain: Islands, 65% mountainous, with narrow coastal lowlands.
Climate: Tropical, astride typhoon belt.

People

Nationality: Noun—Filipino(s). Adjective—Philippine.
Population: (2008 estimate): 90.5 million.
Annual growth rate: (2007 estimate): 2.04%.

Ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese.
Religions: (based on 2000 census): Roman Catholic 80.9%, Muslim 5%, Evangelical 2.8%, Iglesia ni Kristo 2.3%, Aglipayan 2%, other Christian 4.5%, other 1.8%, unspecified 0.6%, none 0.1%.
Languages: Pilipino (based on Tagalog), national language; English, language of government and instruction in education.
Education: Years compulsory—6 (note: 6 years of primary education free and compulsory; 4 years of secondary education free but not compulsory). Attendance (2007)—84% in elementary grades, 58% in secondary grades. Literacy (2003)—93.4%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—24 per 1,000. Life expectancy (2005)—67.80 yrs. for males; 72.50 yrs. for females.

Work force: (2007): 36.22 million. Services (including commerce and government, 2007)—50%; agriculture—35%; industry—15%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: 1946.

Constitution: February 11, 1987.

Government branches: Executive—president and vice president. Legislative—bicameral legislature. Judicial—independent.

Political subdivisions: 15 regions and Metro Manila (National Capital Region), 79 provinces, 115 cities.

Political parties: Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, Nationalist People's Coalition, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, Liberal Party, Aksiyon Demokratiko, Partido Demokratikong Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan, and other small parties.

Suffrage: Universal, but not compulsory, at age 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $144.1 billion.
Annual GDP growth rate: (2007) 7.2% at constant prices.
GDP per capita: (2007) $1,627.
Natural resources: Copper, nickel, iron, cobalt, silver, gold.
Agriculture: Products—rice, coconut products, sugar, corn, pork, bananas, pineapple products, aquaculture, mangoes, eggs.
Industry: Types—textiles and garments, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, wood products, food processing, electronics assembly, petroleum refining, fishing.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$50.5 billion. Imports—$55.5 billion.

PEOPLE

The majority of Philippine people are descendants of Indonesians and Malays who migrated to the islands in successive waves over many centuries and largely displaced the aboriginal inhabitants. The largest ethnic minority now is the mainland Asians (called Chinese), who have played an important role in commerce for many centuries since they first came to the islands to trade. Arabs and Indians also traveled and traded in the Philippines in the first and early second millennium. As a result of intermarriage, many Filipinos have some Asian mainland, Spanish, American,



Arab, or Indian ancestry. After the mainland Asians, Americans and Spaniards constitute the next largest minorities in the country. More than 90% of the people are Christian as a result of the nearly 400 years of Spanish and American rule. The major non-Hispanicized groups are the Muslim population, concentrated in the Sulu Archipelago and in central and western Mindanao, and the mountain aboriginal groups of northern Luzon. Small forest tribes still live in the more remote areas of Mindanao.

About 87 languages and dialects are spoken, most belonging to the Malay-Polynesian linguistic family. Of these, eight are the first languages of more than 85% of the population. The three principal indigenous languages are Cebuano, spoken in the Visayas; Tagalog, predominant in the area around Manila; and Ilocano, spoken in northern Luzon. Since 1939, in an effort to develop national unity, the government has promoted the use of the national language, Pilipino, which is based on Tagalog.

Pilipino is taught in all schools and is gaining widespread acceptance across the archipelago. Many use English, Fukienese, or Mandarin as second languages. Nearly all professionals, academics, and government workers speak some English. In January 2003, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the Department of Education to restore English as the medium of instruction in all schools and universities. Only a few Filipino families use Spanish as a second language.

The Philippines has one of the highest literacy rates in the developing world. About 93 percent of the population 10 years of age and older are literate.

HISTORY

The history of the Philippines can be divided into four distinct phases: the pre-Spanish period (before 1521); the Spanish period (1521-1898); the American period (1898-1946); and the post-independence period (1946-present).

Pre-Spanish Period

The first people in the Philippines, the Negritos, are believed to have come to the islands 30,000 years ago from Borneo and Sumatra, making their way across then-existing land bridges. Subsequently, Malays came from the south in successive waves,

the earliest by land bridges and later in boats by sea. The Malays settled in scattered communities, named barangays after the large outrigger boats in which they arrived, and ruled by chieftains known as datus. Chinese merchants and traders arrived and settled in the ninth century, sometimes traveling on the ships of Arab traders, introducing Islam in the south and extending some influence even into Luzon. The Malays, however, remained the dominant group until the Spanish arrived in the 16th century.

Spanish Period

Ferdinand Magellan reached the Philippines and claimed the archipelago for Spain in 1521, but stayed for only a few days. Christianity was established in the Philippines only after the arrival of the succeeding Spanish expeditionary forces (the first led by Legazpi in the 16th century) and the Spanish Jesuits, and in the 17th and 18th centuries by the conquistadores.

Until Mexico proclaimed independence from Spain in 1810 the islands were under the administrative control of Spanish North America, and there was significant migration between North America and the Philippines. This period was the era of conversion to Roman Catholicism. A Spanish colonial social system was developed with a local government centered in Manila and with considerable clerical influence. Spanish influence was strongest in Luzon and the central Philippines but less so in Mindanao, save for certain coastal cities.

The long period of Spanish rule was marked by numerous uprisings. Towards the latter half of the 19th century, European-educated Filipinos or ilustrados (such as the Chinese Filipino national hero Jose Rizal) began to criticize the excesses of Spanish rule and instilled a new sense of national identity. This movement gave inspiration to the final revolt against Spain that began in 1896 under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo (another Chinese Filipino) and continued until the Americans defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898, during the Spanish-American War. Aguinaldo declared independence from Spain on June 12, 1898.

American Period

Following Admiral George Dewey's defeat of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, the U.S. occupied the Philippines. Spain ceded the islands to the United States under the terms of the Treaty of Paris (December 10, 1898) that ended the war.

A war of resistance against U.S. rule, led by revolutionary General Aguinaldo, broke out in 1899. This conflict claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Filipinos and thousands of Americans. Filipinos and an increasing number of American historians refer to these hostilities as the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), and in 1999, the U.S. Library of Congress reclassified its references to use this term. In 1901, Aguinaldo was captured and swore allegiance to the U.S., and resistance gradually died out until the conflict ended with a Peace Proclamation on July 4, 1902. However, armed resistance continued sporadically until 1913, especially among the Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu, with heavy casualties on both sides.

U.S. administration of the Philippines was always declared to be temporary and aimed to develop institutions that would permit and encourage the eventual establishment of a free and democratic government. Therefore, U.S. officials concentrated on the creation of such practical supports for democratic government as public education, public infrastructure, and a sound legal system.

The first legislative assembly was elected in 1907, and a bicameral legislature, largely under Filipino control, was established. A civil service was formed and was gradually taken over by the Filipinos, who had effectively gained control by the end of World War I. The Catholic Church was disestablished, and a considerable amount of church land was purchased and redistributed. In 1935, under the terms of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, the Philippines became a self-governing commonwealth. Manuel Quezon was elected president of the new government, which was designed to prepare the country for independence after a 10-year transition period. World War II intervened, however, and in May 1942, Corregidor, the last American/Filipino stronghold, fell. U.S. forces in the Philippines surrendered to the Japanese, placing the islands under Japanese control. During the occupation, thousands of Filipinos fought a running guerilla campaign against Japanese forces.

The full-scale war to regain the Philippines began when General Douglas MacArthur landed on Leyte on October 20, 1944. Filipinos and Americans fought together until the Japanese surrendered in September 1945. Much of Manila was destroyed during the final months of the fighting, making it the second most devastated city in World War II after Warsaw. In total, an estimated one million Filipinos lost their lives in the war.

Due to the Japanese occupation, the guerrilla warfare that followed, and the battles leading to liberation, the country suffered great damage and a complete organizational breakdown. Despite the shaken state of the country, the U.S. and the Philippines decided to move forward with plans for independence. On July 4, 1946, the Philippine Islands became the independent Republic of the Philippines, in accordance with the terms of the Tydings-McDuffie Act. In 1962, the official Philippine Independence Day was changed from July 4 to June 12, commemorating the date independence from Spain was declared by Emilio Aguinaldo in 1898.

Post-Independence Period

The early years of independence were dominated by U.S.-assisted postwar reconstruction. The communist-inspired Huk Rebellion (1945-53) complicated recovery efforts before its successful suppression under the

leadership of President Ramon Magsaysay. The succeeding administrations of Presidents Carlos P. Garcia (1957-61) and Diosdado Macapagal (1961-65) sought to expand Philippine ties to its Asian neighbors, implement domestic reform programs, and develop and diversify the economy.

In 1972, President Ferdinand E. Marcos (1965-86) declared martial law, citing growing lawlessness and open rebellion by the communist rebels as his justification. Marcos governed from 1973 until mid-1981 in accordance with the transitory provisions of a new constitution that replaced the commonwealth constitution of 1935. He suppressed democratic institutions and restricted civil liberties during the martial law period, ruling largely by decree and popular referenda. The government began a process of political normalization during 1978-81, culminating in the reelection of President Marcos to a six-year term that would have ended in 1987. The Marcos government's respect for human rights remained low despite the end of martial law on January 17, 1981. His government retained its wide arrest and detention powers, and corruption and cronyism contributed to a serious decline in economic growth and development.

The assassination of opposition leader Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino upon his return to the Philippines in 1983 after a long period of exile coalesced popular dissatisfaction with Marcos and set in motion a succession of events that culminated in a snap presidential election in February 1986. The opposition united under Aquino's widow, Corazon Aquino, and Salvador Laurel, head of the United Nationalist Democratic Organization (UNIDO). The election was marred by widespread electoral fraud on the part of Marcos and his supporters. International observers, including a U.S. delegation led by Senator Richard Lugar (R-Indiana), denounced the official results. Marcos was forced to flee the Philippines in the face of a peaceful civilian-military uprising that ousted him and installed Corazon Aquino as president on February 25, 1986. Under Aquino's presidency, progress was made in revitalizing democratic institutions and civil liberties. However, the administration was also viewed by many as weak and fractious, and a return to full political stability and economic development was hampered by several attempted coups staged by disaffected members of the Philippine military.

Fidel Ramos was elected president in 1992. Early in his administration, Ramos declared "national reconciliation" his highest priority. He legalized the Communist Party and created the National Unification Commission (NUC) to lay the groundwork for talks with communist insurgents, Muslim separatists, and military rebels. In June 1994, President Ramos signed into law a general conditional amnesty covering all rebel groups, as well as Philippine military and police personnel accused of crimes committed while fighting the insurgents. In October 1995, the government signed an agreement bringing the military insurgency to an end. A peace agreement with one major Muslim insurgent group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), was signed in 1996, using the existing Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) as a vehicle for self-government.

Popular movie actor Joseph Ejercito Estrada's election as president in May 1998 marked the Philippines' third democratic succession since the ouster of Marcos. Estrada was elected with overwhelming mass support on a platform promising poverty alleviation and an anti-crime crackdown.

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, elected vice president in 1998, assumed the presidency in January 2001 after widespread demonstrations that followed the breakdown of Estrada's impeachment trial on corruption charges. The Philippine Supreme Court subsequently endorsed unanimously the constitutionality of the transfer of power. National and local elections took place in May 2004. Under the constitution, Arroyo was eligible for another six-year term as president, and she won a hard-fought campaign against her primary challenger, movie actor Fernando Poe, Jr., in elections held May 10, 2004. Noli De Castro was elected vice president.

Impeachment charges were brought against Arroyo in June 2005 for allegedly tampering with the results of the elections after purported tapes of her speaking with an electoral official during the vote count surfaced, but Congress rejected the charges in September 2005. Similar charges were discussed and dismissed by Congress in 2006 and 2007, and again raised in 2008.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Philippines has a representative democracy modeled on the U.S. system. The 1987 constitution, adopted during the Aquino administration, reestablished a presidential system of government with a bicameral legislature and an independent judiciary. The president is limited to one six-year term. Provision also was made in the constitution for autonomous regions in Muslim areas of Mindanao and in the Cordillera region of northern Luzon, where many aboriginal tribes still live.

The 24-member Philippine Senate is elected at large, and all senators serve six-year terms. Half are elected every three years. There are currently 240 members in the House of Representatives, 219 of whom represent single-member districts. The remaining 21 House seats are occupied by sectoral party representatives elected at large, called party list representatives. All representatives serve three-year terms, with a maximum of three consecutive terms. On May 14, 2007, legislative and local elections were held. President Arroyo's coalition won the majority of the seats in the House of Representatives, gubernatorial seats, and city mayoral seats. However, the President's coalition won only three out of 12 vacant seats in the Philippine Senate. Although the election was

marred by some violence and irregularities, civil society monitoring groups played a welcome and active role in ensuring a relatively fair and democratic process. The next presidential and congressional elections are scheduled for May 2010.

The government continues to face threats from terrorist groups, including three terrorist groups on the U.S. Government's Foreign Terrorist Organization list. The terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which gained international notoriety with its kidnappings of foreign tourists in the southern islands, remains a major problem for the government, along with members of the Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).

Efforts to track down and interdict ASG and JI members have met with some success, especially in Basilan and Jolo, where U.S. troops provide counter terrorism assistance and training to Philippine soldiers, along with conducting humanitarian activities. In August 2006, the Armed Forces of the Philippines began a major offensive against ASG and JI on the island of Jolo. This offensive was successful and resulted in the deaths of Abu Sayyaf leader Khadafy Janjalani and his deputy, Abu Solaiman. The U.S. Government provided rewards to Philippine citizens whose information led to these deaths in the military operations, as well as to many other operations against terrorist leaders. The broad-based efforts to weaken terrorist organizations have resulted in over 200 terrorists being killed or captured in 2007 and 2008.

An international monitoring team continues to watch over a cease-fire agreement between the government and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). In June 2003, the MILF issued a formal renunciation of terrorism. In August 2008, during peace talks mediated by the Government of Malaysia, the Philippine government and the MILF reached agreement in principle on a territorial agreement. However, intervention by the Philippine Supreme Court, and its subsequent October 14 ruling that the draft agreement was unconstitutional, have sent all parties back to the drawing board. Fighting flared up after the agreement was struck down in court and has continued sporadically in central Mindanao.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Gloria MACAPAGAL-ARROYO**
Vice Pres.: **Manuel Noli DE CASTRO, Jr.**
Executive Sec.: **Eduardo ERMITA**
Chief of Staff: **Jose SALCEDA**
Sec. of Agrarian Reform: **Nasser PANGANDAMAN**
Sec. of Agriculture: **Arthur YAP**
Sec. of the Budget & Management: **Rolando ANDAYA**
Sec. of Education, Culture, & Sports: **Jesli LAPUS**
Sec. of Energy: **Angelo REYES**
Sec. of Environment & Natural Resources: **Jose ATIENZA, Jr.**
Sec. of Finance: **Margarito Gary TEVES**
Sec. of Foreign Affairs: **Alberto ROMULO**
Sec. of Health: **Francisco DUQUE III**
Sec. of Interior & Local Govt.: **Ronaldo PUNO**
Sec. of Justice: **Raul GONZALEZ**
Sec. of Labor & Employment: **Marianito D. ROQUE**
Sec. of National Defense: **Gilberto TEODORO, Jr.**
Sec. of Public Works & Highways: **Hermogenes EBDANE, Jr.**
Sec. of Science & Technology: **Estrella ALABASTRO**
Sec. of Social Welfare & Development: **Esperanza CABRAL**
Sec. of Socioeconomic Planning: **Ralph RECTO**
Sec. of Tourism: **Joseph DURANO**
Sec. of Trade & Industry: **Peter FAVILA**
Sec. of Transportation & Communications: **Leandro MENDOZA**
National Security Adviser: **Norberto GONZALES**
Governor, Central Bank: **Amando TETANGCO, Jr.**
Ambassador to the US: **Willy GAA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Hilario G. DAVIDE, Jr.**

The Republic of the Philippines maintains an embassy in the United States at 1600 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036 (tel. 202-467-9300). Consulates general are in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Honolulu, and Agana (Guam).

ECONOMY

Since the end of World War II, the Philippine economy has been on an unfortunate trajectory, going from one of the richest countries in Asia (following Japan) to one of the poorest. Growth immediately after the war was rapid, but slowed over time. Years of economic mismanagement and political volatility during the Marcos regime contributed to economic stagnation and resulted in macroeconomic instability. A severe recession from 1984 through 1985 saw the economy shrink by more than 10 percent, and perceptions of political instability during the Aquino administration further dampened economic activity.

During the 1990s, the Philippine government introduced a broad range of economic reforms designed to spur business growth and foreign investment. As a result, the Philippines saw a period of higher growth, although the Asian financial crisis in 1997 slowed Philippine economic development once again.

Despite occasional challenges to her presidency and resistance to pro-liberalization reforms by vested interests, President Arroyo made considerable progress in restoring macroeconomic stability with the help of a well-regarded economic team. Nonetheless, long-term economic growth remains threatened crumbling infrastructure and education systems, and trade and investment barriers. International competitiveness rankings have slipped.

The service sector contributes more than half of overall Philippine economic output, followed by industry (about a third), and agriculture (less than 20%). Important industries include food processing; textiles and garments; electronics and automobile parts; and business process outsourcing. Most industries are concentrated in the urban areas around metropolitan Manila. Mining also has great potential in the Philippines, which possesses significant reserves of chromate, nickel, and copper. Significant

natural gas finds off the islands of Palawan have added to the country's substantial geothermal, hydro, and coal energy reserves.

Today's Economy

The Philippine economy seems comparatively well-equipped to weather the global financial crisis in the short term as a result of the efforts over the past few years to control the fiscal deficit, bring down debt ratios, and adopt internationally-accepted banking sector capital adequacy standards. The Philippine banking sector—which comprises 80% of total financial system resources—has limited direct exposure to distressed financial institutions overseas (i.e., $2 billion, less than 2 percent of aggregate banking system assets). Conservative regulatory policies, including the prohibition of investments in structured products, shielded the insurance sector from exposure to distressed financial firms. While direct financial exposure to problematic investments and financial institutions is limited, the impact of external shocks to economic growth, poverty alleviation, employment, remittances, credit availability, and overall investment prospects is a concern.

GDP grew by 7.3 percent in 2007, the fastest annual pace of growth in over three decades, capping nine consecutive quarters of growth at greater than 5 percent. Historically, the Philippines has struggled to sustain growth over 5 percent. GDP increased by 5.4 percent in 2006, 4.9 percent in 2005, and 6.4 percent in 2004. Growth in 2007 was fueled by increased government and private construction expenditures; a robust information communications technology industry; improved post-drought agricultural harvests; and strong private consumption, spurred in part by $14.4 billion in remittances from overseas workers (equivalent to about 10 percent of GDP).

The services sector, which now accounts for about 55 percent of Philippine GDP, grew by 8.7 percent in 2007. Business process outsourcing (BPO) has been the fastest-growing segment of the Philippine economy, totaling an estimated 10 percent of the global outsourcing market and generating an estimated $5 billion in revenues in 2007 (equivalent to about 3.5 percent of Philippine GDP). BPO revenue grew 40 percent during 2006 and 2007. The construction industry grew by almost 20 percent in real terms during 2007, fueled by a 30 percent real increase in government construction expenditures and a 10 percent increase in private construction investment. Tourism and mining continued to emerge as key industries in 2007. Tourism enjoyed a record year in 2007, with over 3 million arrivals from overseas spending more than $5 billion and helping to fuel air transportation growth of 15 percent. Mining and quarrying grew by 25 percent.

However, real year-on-year GDP growth slowed to 4.6% during the first half of 2008 and is expected to end the year closer to 4%, reflecting the impact of high food and fuel prices and global financial uncertainties on the domestic economy. It will take a higher, sustained economic growth path to make more appreciable progress in poverty alleviation given the Philippines' annual population growth rate of 2 percent, one of the highest in Asia. The portion of the population living below the national poverty line increased from 30 percent to 33 percent between 2003 and 2006, equivalent to an additional 3.8 million poor Filipinos. Slower economic growth here and abroad and uncertainties over domestic and overseas employment opportunities threaten to push more Filipinos into poverty.

At $8.6 billion, the overall balance of payments ended 2007 with a record surplus resulting from higher overseas workers remittances, tourism receipts, BPO-related revenues, portfolio investments, and official development assistance funds. Growth in merchandise exports, relying heavily on electronics shipments for about two-thirds of export revenues, slowed to 6 percent (from 15 percent in 2006). January-August 2008 merchandise exports decelerated further to 4.4% growth year-on-year. Although there has been some improvement over the years, the local value added of electronics exports remains relatively low at about 30 percent. Net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow rose from a low base to nearly $3 billion in 2006 and 2007— nearly double the 2005 level—but still lags most regional neighbors. Net FDI will end 2008 weaker, with net inflows estimated at $716 million during the first eight months of 2008, down 59% year-on-year. The BOP surplus had contracted to $2 billion as of September 2008, partly reflecting higher import bills for rice and fuel and net outflows of jittery foreign portfolio capital. The United States remains the Philippines' largest trading partner with over $17 billion in two-way trade, and the largest investor with more than $6.5 billion in total FDI.

The Philippine stock market index—which closed 2007 among the top performers in East Asia—has since declined and, as of the third week of October 2008, had slipped to a near three-year low. As of the third week of October, the index had slipped by about 27% from August 2007 and by 46% from the end of 2007. The Philippine peso, which appreciated about 16 percent against the U.S. dollar over the course of 2007, has since weakened and closed the third week of October 2008 down 18% from the beginning of the year. Gross international reserves ended 2007 up nearly 47 percent year-on-year to a new record high of $33.7 billion, and had increased further to nearly $36.7 billion as of September 2008, adequate for nearly 6 months of goods and services imports and equivalent to 2.7 times foreign debts maturing over the next 12 months.

Efforts in recent years to reduce the public sector deficit by raising new taxes have helped reduce high debt ratios, create additional fiscal space to increase spending on vital social services and infrastructure after years of tight budgets, and improve confidence. December 2004 legislation provided for biennial adjustments to the excise tax rates for tobacco and liquor products until 2011, while a law signed in January

2005 seeks to institute a performance-based rewards system in the government's revenue collection agencies.

The national government worked to reduce its fiscal deficits for five consecutive years to 0.1 percent of GDP in 2007 and had hoped to balance the budget in 2008, two years ahead of its original plan. The government has since reverted to the 2010 balanced-budget schedule in order to stimulate the economy and temper the adverse impact of global external shocks on the already high number of Filipinos struggling with poverty. The national government's deficit-reduction program helped yield modest primary surpluses during 2006 and 2007. While more reforms and greater transparency are needed, tighter financial controls over state-owned companies and initiatives to improve the longer-term viability of state-run pension funds also contributed to recent surpluses. Although still high, the debt of the consolidated public sector has declined to under 75 percent of GDP. Major credit rating agencies raised their rating outlook for Philippine sovereign debt from "negative" to "stable" in recognition of fiscal progress and declining debt ratios. Looking forward, further reforms are needed to ease fiscal pressures from large losses being sustained by a number of government-owned firms and to control and manage contingent liabilities. Despite recent improvements, challenges still remain to the long-term viability of state-run pension funds. The national government's tax-to-GDP ratio (14% in 2007) remains low relative to historical performance and vis-à-vis regional standards. The government has intermittently relied on heftier privatization receipts to make up for the shortfall in targeted tax collections but this is not a sustainable revenue source.

The Philippine Congress enacted an anti-money laundering law in September 2001 and followed through with amendments in March 2003 to address remaining legal concerns posed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The FATF removed the Philippines from its list of Non-Cooperating Countries and Territories in February 2005, noting the significant progress made to remedy concerns and deficiencies identified by the FATF to improve implementation. The Egmont Group, the international network of financial intelligence units, admitted the Philippines to its membership in June 2005.

Seven years after the Arroyo administration enacted legislation to rationalize the electric power sector and privatize the government's debt-saddled National Power Corporation (NPC), significant progress was made in 2007, notably the privatization of the state-owned transmission company (Transco) and sales of 68% of total generating assets in Luzon and the Visayas.

The U.S. Trade Representative removed the Philippines from its Special 301 Priority Watch List in 2006, reflecting improvement in its enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR) protection. It maintained the Philippines on the Special 301 Watch List in 2007. However, sustained effort and continuing progress on key IPR issues will be essential to maintain this status.

Despite a number of policy reforms, the Philippines continues to face important challenges and must sustain the reform momentum to catch up with regional neighbors, spur investments, achieve higher growth, generate employment, and alleviate poverty for a rapidly expanding population. Absent new revenue measures, sustained fiscal stability will require more aggressive tax collection efficiency to address the severe under-spending in infrastructure and social services after years of tight budgets. Continuing efforts to fast-track power sector privatization remain critical to the long-term stability of public sector finances, ensuring reliable electricity supply, and bringing down the cost of power.

Potential foreign investors, as well as tourists, remain concerned about law and order, inadequate infrastructure, policy and regulatory instability, and governance issues. While trade liberalization presents significant opportunities, intensifying global competition and the emergence of low-wage export economies also pose challenges. Competition from other Southeast Asian countries and from China for investment underlines the need for sustained progress on structural reforms to remove bottlenecks to growth, to lower costs of doing business, and to promote good public and private sector governance. The government has been working to reinvigorate its anti-corruption drive, and the Office of the Ombudsman has reported improved conviction rates. Nevertheless, its slipping anti-corruption ranking indicates that the Philippines' efforts are lagging and that more needs to be done to improve international perception of its anti-corruption campaign—an effort that will require strong political will and significantly greater financial and human resources.

Agriculture and Forestry

Arable farmland comprises more than 40 percent of the total land area. Although the Philippines is rich in agricultural potential, inadequate infrastructure, lack of financing, and government policies have limited productivity gains. Philippine farms produce food crops for domestic consumption and cash crops for export. The agricultural sector employs more than one-third of the work force but provides less than a fifth of GDP.

Decades of uncontrolled logging and slash-and-burn agriculture in marginal upland areas have stripped forests, with critical implications for the ecological balance. Although the government has instituted conservation programs, deforestation remains a severe problem.

With its 7,107 islands, the Philippines has a very diverse range of fishing areas. Notwithstanding good prospects for marine fisheries, the industry continues to face a difficult future due to destructive fishing methods, a lack of funds, and inadequate government support.

Agriculture generally suffers from low productivity, low economies of scale, and inadequate infrastructure support. Agricultural output increased by 5.1 percent in real terms during 2004 but stagnated to 2.24 percent in 2005 due to drought and intermittent weather disturbances. Despite the adverse effects of successive and very strong typhoons in the last four months of 2006, the overall annual farm output expanded by 3.8 percent. In 2007, the sector grew by 4.68 percent, led by gains in the fisheries subsector.

Industry

Industrial production is centered on the processing and assembly operations of the following: food, beverages, tobacco, rubber products, textiles, clothing and footwear, pharmaceuticals, paints, plywood and veneer, paper and paper products, small appliances, and electronics. Heavier industries are dominated by the production of cement, glass, industrial chemicals, fertilizers, iron and steel, and refined petroleum products. Newer industries, particularly production of semiconductors and other intermediate goods for incorporation into consumer electronics are important components of Philippine exports and are located in special export processing zones.

The industrial sector is concentrated in urban areas, especially in the metropolitan Manila region, and has only weak linkages to the rural economy. Inadequate infrastructure, transportation, and communication have so far inhibited faster industrial growth, although significant strides have been made in addressing the last of these elements.

Mining

The Philippines is one of the world's most highly mineralized countries, with untapped mineral wealth estimated at more than $840 billion. Philippine copper, gold, and chromate deposits are among the largest in the world. Other important minerals include nickel, silver, coal, gypsum, and sulfur. The Philippines also has significant deposits of clay, limestone, marble, silica, and phosphate. The discovery of natural gas reserves off Palawan has been brought on-line to generate electricity.

Despite its rich mineral deposits, the Philippine mining industry is just a fraction of what it was in the 1970s and 1980s when the country ranked among the ten leading gold and copper producers worldwide. Low metal prices, high production costs, and lack of investment in infrastructure have contributed to the industry's overall decline. A December 2004 Supreme Court decision upheld the constitutionality of the 1995 Mining Act, thereby allowing up to 100% foreign-owned companies to invest in large-scale exploration, development, and utilization of minerals, oil, and gas.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In its foreign policy, the Philippines cultivates constructive relations with its Asian neighbors, with whom it is linked through membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. The Philippines chaired ASEAN from 2006 to 2007, hosting the ASEAN Heads of State Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. The Philippines is a member of the UN and some of its specialized agencies, and served a two-year term as a member of the UN Security Council from January 2004-2006, acting as UNSC President in September 2005. Since 1992, the Philippines has been a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. The government is seeking observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The Philippines has played a key role in ASEAN in recent years, ratifying the ASEAN Charter in October 2008. The Philippines also values its relations with the countries of the Middle East, in no small part because hundreds of thousands of Filipinos are employed in that region. The welfare of the some four to five million overseas Filipino contract workers is considered to be a pillar of Philippine foreign policy. Foreign exchange remittances from these workers exceed 11 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

The fundamental Philippine attachment to democracy and human rights is also reflected in its foreign policy. Philippine soldiers and police have participated in a number of multilateral civilian police and peacekeeping operations, and a Philippine Army general served as the first commander of the UN Peacekeeping Operation in East Timor. The Philippines presently has peacekeepers in Haiti and Liberia. The Philippines also participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom, deploying some 50 troops to Iraq in 2003. (These troops were subsequently withdrawn in 2004 after a Filipino overseas worker was kidnapped.) The Philippine Government also has been active in efforts to reduce tensions among rival claimants to the territories and waters of the resource-rich South China Sea.

U.S.-PHILIPPINE RELATIONS

U.S.-Philippine relations are based on shared history and commitment to democratic principles, as well as on economic ties. The historical and cultural links between the Philippines and the U.S. remain strong. The Philippines modeled its governmental institutions on those of the U.S. and continues to share a commitment to democracy and human rights. At the most fundamental level of bilateral relations, human links continue to form a strong bridge between the two countries. There are an estimated four million Americans of Philippine ancestry in the United States, and more than 250,000 American citizens in the Philippines.

Until November 1992, pursuant to the 1947 Military Bases Agreement, the United States maintained and operated major facilities at Clark Air Base, Subic Bay Naval Complex, and several small subsidiary installations in the Philippines. In August 1991, negotiators from the two countries

reached agreement on a draft treaty providing for use of Subic Bay Naval Base by U.S. forces for 10 years. The draft treaty did not include use of Clark Air Base, which had been so heavily damaged by the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo that the U.S. decided to abandon it.

In September 1991, the Philippine Senate rejected the bases treaty, and despite further efforts to salvage the situation, the two sides could not reach an agreement. As a result, the Philippine Government informed the U.S. on December 6, 1991, that it would have one year to complete withdrawal. That withdrawal went smoothly and was completed ahead of schedule, with the last U.S. forces departing on November 24, 1992. On departure, the U.S. Government turned over assets worth more than $1.3 billion to the Philippines, including an airport and ship-repair facility. Agencies formed by the Philippine Government have converted the former military bases for civilian commercial use, with Subic Bay serving as a flagship for that effort. The post-U.S. bases era has seen U.S.-Philippine relations improved and broadened, with a prominent focus on economic and commercial ties while maintaining the importance of the security dimension. U.S. investment continues to play an important role in the Philippine economy, while a strong security relationship rests on the 1952 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT). In February 1998, U.S. and Philippine negotiators concluded the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), paving the way for increased military cooperation under the MDT. The agreement was approved by the Philippine Senate in May 1999 and entered into force on June 1, 1999. Under the VFA, the U.S. has conducted ship visits to Philippine ports and has resumed large combined military exercises with Philippine forces. Key events in the bilateral relationship include the July 4, 1996 declaration by President Ramos of Philippine-American Friendship Day in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Philippine independence. Ramos visited the U.S. in April 1998, and then-President Estrada visited in July 2000. President Arroyo met with President Bush in an official working visit in November 2001 and made a state visit in Washington on May 19, 2003. President Bush made a state visit to the Philippines on October 18, 2003, during which he addressed a joint session of the Philippine Congress—the first American President to do so since Dwight D. Eisenhower. There are regular U.S. cabinet-level and congressional visits to the Philippines as well.

President Arroyo has repeatedly stressed the close friendship between the Philippines and the U.S. and her desire to expand bilateral ties further. Both governments seek to revitalize and strengthen their partnership by working toward greater security, prosperity, and service to Filipinos and Americans alike. Inaugurated into office on the same day as President Bush, President Arroyo lent strong support to the global war on terrorism. In October 2003, the U.S. designated the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally. That same month, the Philippines joined the select group of countries to have ratified all 12 UN counterterrorism conventions.

The annual Balikatan (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) bilateral military exercises contribute directly to the Philippine armed forces' efforts to root out Abu Sayyaf and Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists and bring development to formerly terrorist-plagued areas, notably Basilan and Jolo. They include not only combined military training but also civil-military affairs and humanitarian projects. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program is the largest in the Pacific and the third-largest in the world, and a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) was signed in November 2002. Similarly, law enforcement cooperation has reached new levels: U.S. and Philippine agencies have cooperated to bring charges against numerous terrorists, to implement the countries' extradition treaty, and to train thousands of Filipino law enforcement officers. There is a Senior Law Enforcement Advisor helping the Philippine National Police with its Transformation Program. In FY 2008, the U.S. Government—working closely with the Philippine Government, civil society, the private sector, and other donors—provided $132 million in grant funds to support a more peaceful and prosperous Philippines. About 60 percent of economic assistance resources are targeted for Mindanao, for programs that promote economic growth, mitigate conflict, and promote peace and security. The United States supports programs that promote good governance at the national and local levels, improve electoral systems, promote rule of law, help address constraints to trade and investment, improve revenue collection/administration and fiscal transparency, and enhance the ability of military and civilian law enforcement agencies to maintain peace and security. Many programs across other sectors—including health, education, agricultural productivity, microenterprise development, and natural resource management—also support improved governance, human capital development, poverty alleviation, and/or sustainable growth. Health-related assistance programs include reproductive health, maternal and child care, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS control, and avian flu preparedness. The United States also provides humanitarian assistance to internally-displaced persons in conflict-affected areas and to victims of natural disasters (including $5 million in reconstruction assistance for the typhoon-battered Bicol region in FY 2007). In 2006, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) granted $21 million to the Philippines for a two-year Threshold Program targeted at addressing corruption in revenue administration and improving the capabilities of the Office of the Ombudsman. The success of this Threshold Program contributed to the MCC awarding the Philippines Compact eligibility status in March 2008.

Nearly 400,000 Americans visit the Philippines each year. Providing government services to U.S. and other citizens, therefore, constitutes an important aspect of the bilateral relationship. Those services include veterans' affairs, social security, and

consular operations. Benefits to Filipinos and U.S. citizens resident in the Philippines from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Social Security Administration totaled approximately $330 million in 2007. Many people-to-people programs exist between the United States and the Philippines, including Fulbright, International Visitors, and Aquino Fellowship exchange programs, as well as the U.S. Peace Corps.

Trade and Investment

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 17, 2008

Country Description: The Philippines is an emerging economy with a democratic system of government, located in Southeast Asia. The archipelago consists of more than 7,000 islands, of which over 800 are inhabited. The major island groupings are Luzon in the north, the Visayas in the center and Mindanao in the south. Tourist facilities are available within population centers and the main tourist areas. English is widely spoken in the Philippines, and most signs are in English.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizens may enter the Philippines without a visa upon presentation of their U.S. passport, valid for at least six months after the date of entry into the Philippines, and a return ticket to the United States or an onward ticket to another country. Upon arrival immigration authorities will annotate your passport with an entry visa valid for 21 days. If you plan to stay longer than 21 days you must apply for an extension at the Philippine Bureau of Immigration and Deportation's main office at Magallanes Drive; Intramuros, Manila, Philippines, or at any of its provincial offices (http://www.immigration.gov.ph).

Persons who overstay their visas are subject to fines and detention by Philippine immigration authorities.

American citizens are urged to remain aware of their visa status while in the Philippines and to strictly follow immigration laws and regulations. Travelers departing the country from international airports must pay a Passenger Service Charge in Philippine Pesos. For further information on entry/exit requirements, please contact the Embassy of the Philippines at: 1600 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20036 (telephone: (202) 467-9300), or one of the Philippine consulates in the United States (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) or via the Internet at http://www.philippineembassy-usa.org.

Special requirements exist for the entry of unaccompanied minors. In an effort to prevent international child abduction, the Philippine government requires that a waiver of exclusion be obtained from a Philippine Embassy or Consulate or from the Bureau of Immigration and Detention in Manila for a child under 15 years of age who plans to enter the Philippines unaccompanied by either a parent or legal guardian prior to the child's entry into the Philippines.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens contemplating travel to the Philippines should carefully consider the risks to their safety and security while there, including those due to terrorism. While travelers may encounter such threats anywhere in the Philippines, the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago are of particular concern. Travelers should exercise extreme caution in both central and western Mindanao as well as in the Sulu Archipelago.

Kidnap for ransom gangs operate in the Philippines. In October 2007, one such gang abducted a visiting U.S. citizen whose whereabouts are unknown at this time. Several other foreigners were also kidnapped for ransom in 2007. The New People's Army (NPA), a terrorist organization, operates in many rural areas of the Philippines, including in the northern island of Luzon. While it has not targeted foreigners in several years, the NPA could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities, and it often demands "revolutionary taxes."

Terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group, the Jema'ah Islamiyah and groups that have broken away from the more mainstream Moro Islamic Liberation Front or Moro National Liberation Front, have carried out bombings resulting in deaths, injuries and property damage. In November 2007, a bombing outside the House of Representatives in Metro Manila resulted in a number of deaths and injuries to bystanders. On January 3, 2008, a bomb exploded at a Cotabato City disco pub, killing one and injuring eight. The central and western areas of Mindanao have also experienced bombings targeting bus terminals and public buildings. While those responsible do not appear to have targeted foreigners, travelers should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas; U.S. Government employees must seek special permission for travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. When traveling in Mindanao, U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profile, limit their length of stay and exercise extreme caution. Some foreigners who reside in or visit western and central Mindanao hire their own private security personnel.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: As in many of the major metropolitan areas in the United States, crime is a significant concern in Metro Manila. As a rule of thumb, Americans should exercise good judgment and remain aware of their surroundings. Reports of confidence games, pick pocketing, internet scams and credit card fraud are common. Be wary of unknown individuals who attempt to befriend you, especially just after you arrive in country. A number of robberies and assaults involving the "date rape drug" (known locally as Ativan) have occurred; the drug is generally administered to unwitting male or female victims via food or drink. It is best not to accept food, drink, or rides in private vehicles from strangers, even if they appear legitimate. While Americans are not typically targeted for kidnapping, kidnappings and violent assaults do occur in the Metro Manila area.

Taxis are the recommended form of public transportation. However, the following safeguards are important: do not enter a taxi if it has already accepted another passenger; and request that the meter be used. If the driver is unwilling to comply with your requests, it is best to wait for another cab. It is also a good idea to make a mental note of the license plate number should there be a problem. When driving in the city, make certain that the doors are locked and the windows rolled up. All other forms of public transportation, such as the light rail system, buses and "jeepneys" should be avoided for both safety and security reasons.

Visitors should also be vigilant when using credit cards. One common form of credit card fraud involves the illicit use of an electronic device to retrieve and record information, including the PIN, from the card's magnetic strip. The information is then used to make unauthorized purchases. To limit your vulnerability to this scam, never let your card out of your sight.

A continuing problem is the commercial scam or sting that attempts to sell or to seek negotiation of fraudulent U.S. securities. Visitors and residents should be wary when presented with supposed Federal Reserve Notes or U.S. securities for sale or negotiation. For further information, consult the Federal Reserve System's web site at http://www.federalreserve.gov.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are

widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The Philippines has a victim compensation program to provide financial compensation to victims of violent or personal crime and of unjust imprisonment. Information may be obtained from the Philippine Department of Justice at 011-632-536-0447 or via the Internet at http://www.doj.gov.ph.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical care is available in major cities in the Philippines, but even the best hospitals may not meet the standards of medical care, sanitation, and facilities provided by hospitals and doctors in the United States. Medical care is limited in rural and more remote areas.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost several or even tens of thousands of dollars. Most hospitals will require a down payment of estimated fees in cash at the time of admission. In some cases, public and private hospitals have withheld lifesaving medicines and treatments for nonpayment of bills. Hospitals also frequently refuse to discharge patients or release important medical documents until the bill has been paid in full. A list of doctors and medical facilities in the Philippines is available on the web page of the U.S. Embassy in Manila at http://manila.usembassy.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in the Philippines. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB, http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Philippines is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Travel within the Philippine archipelago is possible by boat, plane, bus, or car. Few tourists rent cars to drive, as the road system is crowded and drivers are undisciplined. Driving off the national highways and paved roads is particularly dangerous, especially at night, and should be avoided. To avoid overcrowded or unsafe transport, exercise caution in planning travel by older, inter-island ferryboats, or other public conveyances. For specific information concerning Philippine driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. at tel. (202) 467-9300 or one of the Philippine consulates in the United State (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) or via the Internet at http://www.philippineembassy-usa.org. Please see also related information from the Philippine Department of Tourism at http://www.tourism.gov.ph and http://www.dotpcvc.gov.ph.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Philippine's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the Philippine's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Marriage in the Philippines: The Philippine Government requires foreigners who wish to marry in the Philippines to obtain from the U.S. Embassy a "Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" before filing an application for a marriage license. Because there is no national register of marriages in the United States, the U.S. Embassy cannot provide such a certification. As a result, the Philippine Government will accept an "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" in its place. Americans may execute this affidavit at the U.S. Embassy in Manila Monday-Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., except for Philippine or American holidays. The American must present his/her U.S. passport. There is a fee of $30.00 or its peso equivalent for the affidavit. Philippine authorities will not accept any substitute document issued in the United States. Before traveling to the Philippines to be married, U.S. military personnel should contact their personnel office regarding Department of Defense joint service regulations.

Execution of the affidavit by a U.S. consular officer is a notarial act and the consular officer is authorized by U.S. law to refuse to perform the service if the document will be used for a purpose patently unlawful, improper, or inimical to the best interests of the United States. Entering into a marriage contract for the principal purpose of facilitating immigration to the United States for an alien is an unlawful act, and the U.S. Code provides penalties for individuals who commit perjury in an affidavit taken by a consular officer.

Relationship fraud is a persistent problem in the Philippines, and it is not uncommon for Filipinos to enter into marriages with Americans solely for immigration purposes. Relationships developed via correspondence, particularly those begun on the Internet, are particularly susceptible to manipulation.

The Marriage Application Process: Once an American citizen has obtained from the U.S. Embassy an "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage," he/she may file an application for a marriage license at the office of the Philippine Civil Registrar in the town or city where one of the parties is a resident. The U.S. citizen applicant must present: (a) the affidavit; (b) divorce decree(s) or death certificate(s), if applicable (required to verify civil status and legal capacity to contract marriage); (c) his/her U.S. passport; and (d) documentation regarding parental consent or advice, if applicable. (Persons aged 18 to 21 must have written parental consent to marry in the Philippines; those aged 22 to 24 must have received parental advice. Philippine law prohibits marriage for persons under the age of 18.) A judge, a minister, or other person authorized by the Philippine Government can perform the marriage. Marriage to a U.S. citizen confers neither citizenship nor an automatic eligibility for entry to the United States. A foreign spouse requires an immigrant visa to live in the United States. Questions about filing a petition to bring a foreign spouse to the United States may be directed to the nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service office, to the U.S. Department of State's Visa Office (telephone: (202) 663-1225) or, while in the Philippines, to the U.S. Embassy's Immigrant Visa Unit at http://philippines.usembassy.gov.

Disaster Preparedness: The Philippines is a volcano-, typhoon- and earthquake-prone country. From May to December, typhoons and flash floods often occur. Flooding can cause road delays and cut off bridges. Typhoons in the vicinity of the Philippines can interrupt air and sea links within the country. Updated information on typhoons is available at the following web sites: http://metocph.nmci.navy.mil; http://www.pagasa.com and http://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph. Volcanic activity is frequent, and periodically the Philippine Government announces alerts for specific volcanoes. Updated information on volcanoes in the Philippines is available at http://volcanoes.usgs.gov. Earthquakes can also occur throughout the country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the Philippines National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) at http://ndcc.gov.ph/ndcc/ and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Customs Regulations: Philippine customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Philippines of items such as firearms and currency. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, DC or one of the Philippine consulates in the United States (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) for specific information regarding customs requirements. Counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available in the Philippines; transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the Philippine's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Philippines are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Under the Protect Act of April 2003, it is a crime, prosecutable in the United States, for a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien, to travel to a foreign country to engage in criminal sexual activity or to engage in illicit sexual conduct in a foreign country. It is important to note that under the new legislation, the act of illicit sexual conduct is sufficient to violate the law—the intent to travel for the purpose of engaging in the criminal sexual activity does not need to be proven. For purposes of the PROTECT Act, illicit sexual conduct means: (1) a sexual act with a person under 18 years of age that would be illegal in the United States or (2) any commercial sex act in a foreign country with a person under the age of 18.

The Philippine Bureau of Immigration arrests several Americans each year on immigration charges of "undesirability," sometimes based solely on complaints arising from personal or business disputes in the Philippines. Frequently, these detainees cannot be deported and/or released from custody until substantial fines are paid and any underlying criminal charges are resolved—a process that sometimes takes months, or even years. Fraud, swindling, "bad debts," and failure to provide spousal and child support are also serious criminal offenses in the Philippines, as is the illegal recruitment of Philippine citizens for employment overseas. Several Americans are currently serving lengthy prison sentences for illegal recruitment activi-

ties. The Philippine Government also has strict laws against the possession of firearms, and several foreigners have been sentenced to life imprisonment for bringing firearms into the country. Americans who are arrested overseas should immediately ask to contact a U.S. Embassy representative.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in the Philippines are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Philippines. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. (63) (2) 301-2000. The American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is (63) (2) 522-3242 and the ACS web page is at http://philippines.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

The Philippines is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between The Philippines and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from The Philippines, you must be found eligible to be an adoptive parent by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, The Philippines also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: United States citizens interested in adopting a Filipino child while they are living in The Philippines must be residents of the Philippines for at least three years prior to the filing of the adoption petition, maintain such residence until the adoption is finalized, and posses a certificate of legal capacity to adopt issued by the appropriate agency from the state of residence.

Prospective adoptive parents who meet these requirements should file a petition for adoption with the Philippines Court to begin the adoption process.

United States citizens not meeting these residency requirements will have to adopt through the Inter-Country Adoption Board procedures.

The Philippines Government may waive these requirements if the prospective adoptive parent is a former Filipino citizen who seeks to adopt a relative within the fourth degree of consanguinity as defined by Philippines law, or the prospective adoptive parent is a person who seeks to adopt the legitimate child of his/her Filipino spouse.

Age Requirements: There is no age limit for married prospective adoptive parents. Single prospective adoptive parents must be at least 24 years old at the time of filing the adoption petition.

Marriage Requirements: If prospective adoptive parents are married, they must file jointly for adoption.

Income Requirements: There are no minimum income requirements set by The Philippines. Prospective Adoptive Parents must prove financial stability.

Other Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must not have ever been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude. Parents must be in a position to provide proper care and support and to give necessary moral values and example to all his/her children, including the child to be adopted. Prospective adoptive parents agree to uphold the basic rights of the child as embodied under The Philippines laws and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Who Can Adopt? The Philippines has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Relinquishment Requirements: A child is "committed" by way of the "Deed of Voluntary Commitment," a document used by DSWD asking for signature from the biological parents prior to matching the child with a prospective adoptive parent. The document is essentially the consent of the parent(s), releasing the child to DSWD for subsequent adoption. In the event that the child is abandoned or neglected and no parent is available to sign the "Deed of Voluntary Commitment," the DSWD instead obtains a commitment order from the court. This endorsement certifies that intercountry adoption is in the best interests of the child.

The Philippine's Adoption Authority: The Inter-Country Adoption Board

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from The Philippines is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been

accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and The Philippines.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in The Philippines. The Philippines' adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Filipino law.

The Philippines adoption authority matches the prospective adoptive parents with a child. The Central Authority prepares a report that determines that: the child is adoptable, the envisaged placement is in the best interest of the child, the birth parent or legal custodian has freely consented in writing to the adoption, and no payment has been made to obtain the consent necessary for the adoption to be completed.

After you accept a referral to a child, you will apply to the US Government, Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800).

The Consular officer will review the child's information and evaluate the child for possible visa ineligibilities. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify the Philippines' adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Court: The Regional Trial Courts are responsible for domestic adoptions in The Philippines. This is where prospective adoptive parents file adoption petitions.

Adoption Application: To start the Philippine adoption process, prospective adoptive parents or their accredited FAA must contact the Philippine Inter-country Adoption Board (ICAB).

The prospective adoptive parents file an application with the ICAB through a United States adoption agency. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) should endorse to the ICAB a child who has been previously committed to the Philippine Government.

The Inter-Country Adoption Placement Committee matches the child with a person or couple interested in adopting and refers its proposal to ICAB for approval. If the match is approved, the concerned adoption agency in the United States shall be sent a notice of matching proposal.

The prospective adoptive parents shall notify the adoption agency in the United States of his/her decision within 15 days of receipt of the matching proposal. The Philippine Inter-Country Adoption Act prohibits contact between the prospective adoptive parents and child's parents / guardians or custodians.

The ICAB shall issue the Placement Authority within five working days upon receipt of the prospective adoptive parents' acceptance of the matching proposal.

The adoptive parents must escort the child from The Philippines to the United States. Upon assuming custody of the child, the adoptive parents enter a six-month trial period where the accredited adoption agency in the United States monitors the child's welfare.

After completion of the trial custody period, the adoptive parent should file a petition for adoption before the court in the United States. The final United States adoption decree should be submitted to ICAB within a month after its issuance.

Time Frame: Adoption processing depends upon many variables, including the availability of children to be matched with prospective adoptive parents, the number of prospective adoptive parents on the waiting list, and the caseload of social service agencies and the courts.

Adoption Fees: Fees can vary widely depending upon the adoption agency used.

Documents Required: The following documents, which must be written and officially translated into English, shall accompany the prospective adoptive parents' application for adoption:

- Family and Home Study Reports on the family and home of the prospective adoptive parents;
- Birth Certificates of prospective adoptive parents;
- Marriage certificate or Decree of Absolute divorce, if applicable;
- Written consent of the prospective adoptive parents' biological or adopted children who are ten years of age or over, witnessed by the social worker after proper counseling;
- Physical and medical evaluation by a duly licensed physician and psychological evaluation by a psychologist;
- Latest income tax return or any other documents showing financial capability;
- Clearance issued by the police of other proper Government agency of the place of residence;
- Character reference from the local church minister/priest, employer, or a non-relative member of the immediate community who have known the prospective adoptive parents for at least five (5) years;
- Certification from the United States Department of Justice or other appropriate Government agency that the prospective adoptive parents are qualified to adopt under their national law and that

the child to be adopted is allowed to enter the country for trial custody and reside permanently once adopted; and

- Recent postcard-size pictures of the prospective adoptive parents and all immediate family.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption. state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents.

For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree.

To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Contact Information
US Embassy in The Philippines
Embassy of the United States of America, Manila, Philippines
1201 Roxas Boulevard
Ermita, Metro Manila–1000
Tel: (632) 528-6300

The Philippine's Adoption Authority
The Inter-Country Adoption Board
P.O. Box 1622
#2 Chicago corner Ermin Garcia Streets
Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines
Tel: (632) 721-9781/82; (632) 726-4551/68
Fax: (632) 727-2026
E-mail: icaba@skyinet.net
Internet: www.skyinet.net/~icaba

Embassy of the Philippines
1600 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 467-9300
Fax: (202) 467-9417
Email:
consular@philippineembassy-usa.org
Website:
www.philippineembassy-usa.org

The Philippines also has consulates in Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Philippines is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between the Philippines and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. Therefore, there is no treaty remedy by which the left behind parent would be able to pursue recovery of the child or children should they be abducted to or wrongfully retained in the Philippines. Once in the Philippines, the child or children would be completely subject to Philippine law for all matters including custody.

The United States is not a party to any treaty or convention on the enforcement of court orders. A custody decree issued by a court in the U.S. has no binding legal force abroad, although it may have a persuasive force in some countries. Furthermore, a U.S. custody decree may be considered by foreign courts and authorities as evidence and, in some cases, foreign courts may voluntarily recognize and enforce it on the basis of comity (the voluntary recognition by courts of one jurisdiction of the laws and judicial decisions of another).

Custody Disputes: Parental child abduction is not a crime under Philippine law. Custody disputes are considered civil legal matters that must be resolved between the concerned parties or through the courts in the Philippines.

Philippine authorities advise the American Embassy that generally the Philippine courts will give custody of children under the age of seven to the mother, provided there is no evidence that would indicate that the mother is unfit to raise the child. Although there is no treaty in force between the United States and the Philippines on enforcement of judgments, the Philippine courts will also

take into consideration child custody decrees issued by foreign courts in deciding disputes regarding children residing in the Philippines.

The Department of Justice in the Philippines states that, in general, redress in child custody cases is sought through habeas corpus orders/ proceedings in court. These orders can be obtained on an expedited basis and direct law enforcement to locate and take a child into custody for the purposes of an emergency hearing. Ideally, these orders and proceedings ensure due process under the local laws as well as providing protection for the child or children. In order to bring a custody issue before the Domestic Relations/Family Court, the left-behind parent will require the assistance of an attorney licensed to practice in the Philippines. A parent holding a custody decree issued in U.S. courts must therefore retain local counsel in the Philippines to apply to the Philippine courts for recognition and enforcement of the U.S. decree, or to invoke the writ of habeas corpus. Although visitation rights for non-custodial parents are not expressly stipulated in the Philippine Civil Code, court judgments often provide visitation rights for non-custodial parents. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/ childabduction.

Deportation: While there is an extradition treaty between the United States and the Philippines, parental child abduction is not an extraditable offense. However, if the taking parent is a U.S. citizen whose U.S. passport has been revoked due to an outstanding federal Unlawful Flight to avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrant or indictment on charges of International Parental Kidnapping (IPKCA), Philippine authorities may consider deportation based on lack of a valid travel document.

Dual Nationality: A child with a parent who was born outside of the U.S. or who has acquired a second nationality through naturalization in another country may have a claim to citizenship in that country. There is no requirement that a U.S. citizen parent consent to the acquisition by his/her child of another nationality and in many cases a parent is unaware that his/her child may have dual citizenship. The Embassy of the Philippines in Washington D.C. will be able to provide more detailed information on whether your child has a claim.

Initiating Foreign Enforcement Proceedings Under Local Law: If a country is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, it may be necessary for you to initiate a child custody action in the courts in the foreign country. This usually will require retaining the services of an attorney abroad. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel. state.gov/childabduction.

Retaining a Foreign Attorney: A list of English speaking attorneys is available from the U.S. State Department Office of American Citizens Services. See also the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory available in law libraries. It may be helpful to provide your foreign attorney with copies of any state laws concerning child custody orders and their enforcement in the U.S.

Legal Aid: Some countries provide legal aid services in child custody cases. The legal attache or consular section of the foreign embassy in Washington, D.C. may have specific guidance. Legal aid information may also be available from a local branch of the International Social Service. The ISS' headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland, but information or assistance may be available through its New York branch at 10 W. 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10018, Tel. No.: 212-532-6350. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children maintains a list of attorneys interested in Hague Convention and International Child Custody cases.

Criminal Remedies: The Department of Justice, Office of International Affairs works with US prosecuting attorneys, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and with Interpol (an international police agency) in a joint cooperative effort to return persons charged with US crimes from foreign countries. Extradition of the abducting adult may not result in the return of the child. Foreign countries may refuse to extradite a person to the US if that person is also a citizen of the foreign country. Foreign countries may not recognize parental abduction as a crime. Please note that the extradition process applies only to the abducting adult/ fugitive and not the child. The proper channel for the return of the child is through civil mechanisms or voluntary return arrangements. Additional information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp. ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Travel Warning

February 13, 2008

This Travel Warning updates information on the security situation and reminds Americans of the risks of travel in the Philippines. This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for the Philippines issued April 27, 2007.

U.S. citizens contemplating travel to the Philippines should carefully consider the risks to their safety and security while there, including those due to terrorism. While travelers may encounter such threats anywhere in the Philippines, the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago are of particular concern. Travelers should exercise extreme caution

in both central and western Mindanao as well as in the Sulu Archipelago.

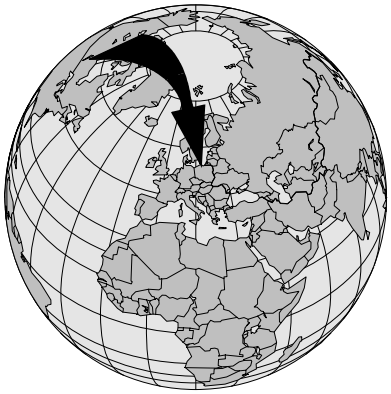
Kidnap for ransom gangs operate in the Philippines. In October 2007, one such gang abducted a visiting U.S. citizen whose whereabouts are unknown at this time. Several other foreigners were also kidnapped for ransom in 2007. The New People's Army (NPA), a terrorist organization, operates in many rural areas of the Philippines, including in the northern island of Luzon. While it has not targeted foreigners in several years, the NPA could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities, and it often demands "revolutionary taxes."

Terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Jema'ah Islamiyah, and groups that have broken away from the more mainstream Moro Islamic Liberation Front or Moro National Liberation Front, have carried out bombings resulting in deaths, injuries and property damage. On January 3, 2008, a bomb exploded at a Cotabato City disco pub, killing one and injuring eight. The central and western areas of Mindanao have also experienced bombings targeting bus terminals and public buildings. While those responsible do not appear to have targeted foreigners, travelers should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas; a recent bombing outside the House of Representatives in Metro Manila resulted in a number of deaths and injuries to bystanders.

U.S. Government employees must seek special permission for travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. When traveling in Mindanao, U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profile, limit their length of stay, and exercise extreme caution. Some foreigners who reside in or visit western and central Mindanao hire their own security.

The Department strongly encourages Americans in the Philippines to register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Manila through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is 63-2-301-2017 and the ACS web page is at http://manila.usembassy.gov/wwwh 3004.html.

For information on general crime and security issues, U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for the Philippines and the Worldwide Caution, located at http://travel.state.gov. American citizens may also obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 from the United States and Canada, or 202-501-4444 from overseas.



POLAND

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Poland

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 312,683 sq. km. (120,725 sq. mi.); about the size of New Mexico.

Cities: (2004) Capital—Warsaw (pop. 1,690,821). Other cities—Lodz (776,297), Krakow (757,957), Wroclaw (636,854), Poznan (573,003), Gdansk (460,524).

Terrain: Flat plain, except mountains along southern border.

Climate: Temperate continental.

People

Nationality: Noun—Pole(s). Adjective—Polish.

Population: (2007) 38.2 million.

Annual growth rate: Unchanging.

Ethnic groups: Polish 98%, German, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian.

Religions: Roman Catholic 90%, Eastern Orthodox, Uniate, Protestant, Judaism.

Languages: Polish.

Education: Literacy—98%.

Health: (2006) Infant mortality rate—7.2/1,000. Life expectancy—males 71 yrs., females 79 yrs.

Work force: 17.2 million. Industry and construction—29%; agriculture—16%; services—54%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: The constitution now in effect was approved by a national referendum on May 25, 1997. The constitution codifies Poland's democratic norms and establishes checks and balances among the president, prime minister, and parliament. It also enhances several key elements of democracy, including judicial review and the legislative process, while continuing to guarantee the wide range of civil rights, such as the right to free speech, press, and assembly, which Poles have enjoyed since 1989.

Government branches: Executive—head of state (president), head of government (prime minister). Legislative—bicameral National Assembly (lower house—Sejm, upper house—Senat). Judicial—Supreme Court, provincial and local courts, constitutional tribunal.

Political subdivisions: 16 provinces (voivodships).

Political parties: (in parliament) Civic Platform (PO), Law and Justice (PiS), Left and Democrats (LiD) and the Polish People's Party (PSL).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $420 billion.

Real GDP growth: (2007) 6.6%.

Per capita GDP: (2007) $11,030.

Inflation: (2007, average) 2,5%.

Natural resources: Coal, copper, sulfur, natural gas, silver, lead, salt.

Agriculture: Products—grains, hogs, dairy, potatoes, horticulture, sugarbeets, oilseed.

Industry: Types—machine building, iron and steel, mining, shipbuilding, automobiles, furniture, textiles and apparel, chemicals, food processing, glass, beverages.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$143.7 billion: furniture, cars, ships, coal, apparel. Imports—$158.8 billion: crude oil, passenger cars, pharmaceuticals, car parts, computers.

PEOPLE

Poland today is ethnically almost homogeneous (98% Polish), in contrast with the World War II period, when there were significant ethnic minorities—4.5 million Ukrainians, 3 million Jews, 1 million Belorussians, and 800,000 Germans. The majority of the Jews were murdered during the German occupation in World War II, and many others emigrated in the succeeding years.

Most Germans left Poland at the end of the war, while many Ukrainians and Belorussians lived in territories incorporated into the then-U.S.S.R. Small Ukrainian, Belorussian, Slovakian, and Lithuanian minorities reside along the borders, and a German minority is concentrated near the southwest city of Opole.

HISTORY

Poland's written history begins with the reign of Mieszko I, who accepted Christianity for himself and his kingdom in AD 966. The Polish state reached its zenith under the Jagiellonian dynasty in the years following the union with Lithuania in 1386 and the subsequent defeat of the Teutonic Knights at Grunwald in 1410. The monarchy survived many upheavals but eventually went into a decline, which ended with the final partition of Poland by Prussia, Russia, and Austria in 1795.

Independence for Poland was one of the 14 points enunciated by President Woodrow Wilson during World War I. Many Polish Americans enlisted in the military services to further this aim, and the United States worked at the postwar conference to ensure its implementation.

However, the Poles were largely responsible for achieving their own independence in 1918. Authoritarian rule predominated for most of the period before World War II. On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Ribbentrop-Molotov nonaggression pact, which secretly provided for the dismemberment of Poland into Nazi and Soviet-controlled zones. On September 1, 1939, Hitler ordered his troops into Poland. On September 17, Soviet troops invaded and then occupied eastern Poland under the terms of this agreement. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Poland was completely occupied by German troops.

The Poles formed an underground resistance movement and a government in exile, first in Paris and later in London, which was recognized by the Soviet Union. During World War II, 400,000 Poles fought under Soviet command, and 200,000 went into combat on Western fronts in units loyal to the Polish government in exile.

In April 1943, the Soviet Union broke relations with the Polish government in exile after the German military announced that they had discovered mass graves of murdered Polish army officers at Katyn, in the U.S.S.R. (The Soviets claimed that the Poles had insulted them by requesting that the Red Cross investigate these reports.) In July 1944, the Soviet Red Army entered Poland and established a communist-controlled "Polish Committee of National Liberation" at Lublin.

Resistance against the Nazis in Warsaw, including uprisings by Jews in the Warsaw ghetto and by the Polish underground, was brutally suppressed. As the Germans retreated in January 1945, they leveled the city.

During the war, about 6 million Poles were killed, and 2.5 million were deported to Germany for forced labor. More than 3 million Jews (all but about 100,000 of the Jewish population) were killed in death camps like those at Oswiecim (Auschwitz), Treblinka, and Majdanek.

Following the Yalta Conference in February 1945, a Polish Provisional Government of National Unity was formed in June 1945; the U.S. recognized it the next month. Although the Yalta agreement called for free elections, those held in January 1947 were controlled by the Communist Party. The communists then established a regime entirely under their domination.

Communist Party Domination

In October 1956, after the 20th ("de-Stalinization") Soviet Party Congress in Moscow and riots by workers in Poznan, there was a shakeup in the communist regime. While retaining most traditional communist economic and social aims, the regime of First Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka liberalized Polish internal life.

In 1968, the trend reversed when student demonstrations were suppressed and an "anti-Zionist" campaign initially directed against Gomulka supporters within the party eventually led to the emigration of much of Poland's remaining Jewish population. In December 1970, disturbances and strikes in the port cities of Gdansk, Gdynia, and Szczecin, triggered by a price increase for essential consumer goods, reflected deep dissatisfaction with living and working conditions in the country. Edward Gierek replaced Gomulka as First Secretary.

Fueled by large infusions of Western credit, Poland's economic growth rate was one of the world's highest during the first half of the 1970s. But much of the borrowed capital was misspent, and the centrally planned economy was unable to use the new resources effectively. The growing debt burden became insupportable in the late 1970s, and economic growth had become negative by 1979.

In October 1978, the Bishop of Krakow, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, became Pope John Paul II, head of the Roman Catholic Church. Polish Catholics rejoiced at the elevation of a Pole to the papacy and greeted his June 1979 visit to Poland with an outpouring of emotion.

In July 1980, with the Polish foreign debt at more than $20 billion, the government made another attempt to increase meat prices. A chain reaction of strikes virtually paralyzed the Baltic coast by the end of August and, for the first time, closed most coalmines in Silesia. Poland was entering into an extended crisis that would change the course of its future development.

The Solidarity Movement

On August 31, 1980, workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, led by an electrician named Lech Walesa, signed a 21-point agreement with the government that ended their strike. Similar agreements were signed at Szczecin and in Silesia. The key provision of these agreements was the guarantee of the workers' right to form independent trade unions and the right to strike. After the Gdansk agreement was signed, a new national union movement—"Solidarity"—swept Poland.



The discontent underlying the strikes was intensified by revelations of widespread corruption and mismanagement within the Polish state and party leadership. In September 1980, Gierek was replaced by Stanislaw Kania as First Secretary.

Alarmed by the rapid deterioration of the PZPR's authority following the Gdansk agreement, the Soviet Union proceeded with a massive military buildup along Poland's border in December 1980. In February 1981, Defense Minister Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski assumed the position of Prime Minister as well, and in October 1981, he also was named party First Secretary. At the first Solidarity national congress in September-October 1981, Lech Walesa was elected national chairman of the union.

On December 12-13, the regime declared martial law, under which the army and special riot police were used to crush the union. Virtually all Solidarity leaders and many affiliated intellectuals were arrested or detained. The United States and other Western countries responded to martial law by imposing economic sanctions against the Polish regime and against the Soviet Union. Unrest in Poland continued for several years thereafter.

In a series of slow, uneven steps, the Polish regime rescinded martial law. In December 1982, martial law was suspended, and a small number of political prisoners were released. Although martial law formally ended in July 1983 and a general amnesty was enacted, several hundred political prisoners remained in jail. In July 1984, another general amnesty was declared, and 2 years later, the government had released nearly all political prisoners. The authorities continued, however, to harass dissidents and Solidarity activists. Solidarity remained proscribed and its publications banned. Independent publications were censored.

Roundtable Talks and Elections

The government's inability to forestall Poland's economic decline led to waves of strikes across the country in April, May, and August 1988. In an attempt to take control of the situation, the government gave de facto recognition to Solidarity, and Interior Minister Kiszczak began talks with

Lech Walesa on August 31. These talks broke off in October, but a new series, the "roundtable" talks, began in February 1989. These talks produced an agreement in April for partly open National Assembly elections. The June election produced a Sejm (lower house), in which one-third of the seats went to communists and one-third went to the two parties which had hitherto been their coalition partners. The remaining one-third of the seats in the Sejm and all those in the Senat were freely contested; virtually all of these were won by candidates supported by Solidarity.

The failure of the communists at the polls produced a political crisis. The roundtable agreement called for a communist president, and on July 19, the National Assembly, with the support of some Solidarity deputies, elected General Jaruzelski to that office. Two attempts by the communists to form governments failed, however.

On August 19, President Jaruzelski asked journalist/Solidarity activist Tadeusz Mazowiecki to form a government; on September 12, the Sejm voted approval of Prime Minister Mazowiecki and his cabinet. For the first time in more than 40 years, Poland had a government led by non-communists.

In December 1989, the Sejm approved the government's reform program to transform the Polish economy rapidly from centrally planned to free-market, amended the constitution to eliminate references to the "leading role" of the Communist Party, and renamed the country the "Republic of Poland." The Polish United Workers' (Communist) Party dissolved itself in January 1990, creating in its place a new party, Social Democracy of the Republic of Poland. Most of the property of the former Communist Party was turned over to the state.

The May 1990 local elections were entirely free. Candidates supported by Solidarity's Citizens' Committees won most of the races they contested, although voter turnout was only a little over 40%. The cabinet was reshuffled in July 1990; the national defense and interior affairs ministers—holdovers from the previous communist government—were among those replaced.

In October 1990, the constitution was amended to curtail the term of President Jaruzelski. In December, Lech Walesa became the first popularly elected President of Poland.

The Republic of Poland

The Republic of Poland in the early 1990s made great progress toward achieving a fully democratic government and a market economy. In November 1990, Lech Walesa was elected President for a 5-year term. Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, at Walesa's request, formed a government and served as its Prime Minister until October 1991, introducing world prices and greatly expanding the scope of private enterprise.

Poland's first free parliamentary elections were held in 1991. More than 100 parties participated, representing a full spectrum of political views. No single party received more than 13% of the total vote.

Since 1991, Poland has conducted six general parliamentary elections and four presidential elections—all free and fair. Incumbent governments have transferred power smoothly and constitutionally in every instance to their successors. The post-Solidarity center-right and post-Communist center-left have each controlled the parliament and the presidency since 1991. Most recently, Poles elected Law and Justice (PiS) candidate and Mayor of Warsaw Lech Kaczynski to a 5-year term as President. Kazcynski narrowly defeated Civic Platform (PO) candidate Donald Tusk and was sworn in December 23, 2005.

PiS was also the top vote-getter in September 25, 2005, parliamentary elections. After coalition talks with runner-up PO collapsed, PiS alone formed a minority government under Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz. Frustrated by its inability to achieve its legislative program alone, PiS formed a formal coalition government with Self-Defense (SO) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) in April 2006. In July 2006, Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz resigned and was replaced by PiS party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski as Prime Minister. Parliamentary elections were held again in October 2007, and Donald Tusk became Prime Minister in November 2007.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The current government structure consists of a council of ministers led by a Prime Minister, typically chosen from the majority coalition in the bicameral legislature's lower house (Sejm). The president, elected every five years for no more than two terms, is the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The judicial branch plays a minor role in decision-making.

The parliament consists of the 460-member Sejm and the 100-member Senat, or upper house. The new constitution and the reformed administrative division (as of 1999) required a revision of the election ordinance (passed in April 2001). The most important changes were liquidation of a national list (all deputies are elected by voters in electoral districts) and introduction of a new method of calculating seats (the modified St. Lague method replaced the d'Hondt method, thus eliminating the premium for the top parties). The law stipulated that with the exception of guaranteed seats for small ethnic parties, only parties receiving at least 5% of the total vote could enter parliament.

Parties represented in the newly elected Sejm are Civic Platform (PO), Law and Justice (PiS), Left and Democrats (LiD), and the Polish People's Party (PSL).

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Lech KACZYNSKI**
Prime Min.: **Donald TUSK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Waldemar PAWLAK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Grzegorz SCHETYNA**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Marek SAWICKI**
Min. of Culture & National Heritage: **Bogdan ZDROJEWSKI**
Min. of Economy: **Waldemar PAWLAK**
Min. of Education: **Katarzyna HALL**
Min. of Environment: **Maciej NOWICKI**
Min. of Finance: **Jacek ROSTOWSKI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Radoslaw SIKORSKI**
Min. of Health: **Ewa KOPACZ**
Min. of Infrastructure: **Cezary GRABARCZYK**
Min. of Interior & Admin.: **Grzegorz SCHETYNA**
Min. of Justice: **Zbigniew CWIAKALSKI**
Min. of Labor & Social Policy: **Jolanta FEDAK**
Min. of National Defense: **Bogdan KLICH**
Min. of Regional Development: **Elzbieta BIENKOWSKA**
Min. of Science & Higher Education: **Barbara KUDRYCKA**
Min. of Sport: **Miroslaw DRZEWIECKI**
Min. of Treasury: **Aleksander GRAD**
Chief, Office of the Prime Min.: **Tomasz ARABSKI**
Pres., Polish National Bank: **Slawomir SKRZYPEK**
Ambassador to the US: **Robert KUPIECKI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Andrzej TOWPIK**

Poland maintains an embassy in the United States at 2640 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-234-3800/3801/3802); the consular annex is at 2224 Wyoming Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-234-3800). Poland has consulates in Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles.

ECONOMY

The Polish economy grew rapidly in the mid-1990s, slowed considerably in 2001 and 2002, and returned again to healthy growth rates in 2003. Poland's gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an annualized rate of 6.1% in the first quarter of 2008. Faster growth has begun to reduce persistently high unemployment, from nearly 20% in the middle of 2004 to 10.6% in April 2008. Tight monetary policy and dramatic productivity growth have helped to hold down inflation, which was 2.5% on average in 2007. The prospects for inflation in 2008 due to growing fuel and food prices are less optimistic. Poland's current account deficit increased from 1.4% of GDP in 2005 to 3.7% in 2007. The budget deficit was only 1.5% of GDP in 2007 compared with 4.9% in 2002 and is likely to stay around a 2% level in 2008.

Throughout the 1990s, the United States and other Western countries supported the growth of a free enterprise economy by reducing Poland's foreign debt burden, providing economic aid, and lowering trade barriers. Poland graduated from U.S Agency for International Development (USAID) assistance in 2000 and paid the balance of its U.S.-held Paris Club debt in 2005. Poland officially joined the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004.

Agriculture

Agriculture employs 16.1% of the work force but contributes only 5% to the gross domestic product (GDP), reflecting relatively low productivity. Unlike the industrial sector, Poland's agricultural sector remained largely in private hands during the decades of communist rule. Most of the former state farms are now leased to farmer tenants. Lack of credit is hampering efforts to sell former state farmland. Currently, Poland's 2 million private farms occupy 90% of all farmland and account for roughly the same percentage of total agricultural production. These farms are small—8 hectares (ha) on average—and often fragmented. Farms with an area exceeding 15 ha accounted for only 9% of the total number of farms but cover 45% of total agricultural area. Over half of all farming households in Poland produce only for their own needs with little, if any, commercial sales.

Poland is a net exporter of confectionery, processed fruit and vegetables, meat, and dairy products. Processors often rely on imports to supplement domestic supplies of wheat, feed grains, vegetable oil, and protein meals, which are generally insufficient to meet domestic demand. However, Poland is the leading producer in Europe of potatoes and rye and is one of the world's largest producers of sugarbeets. Poland also is a significant producer of rapeseed, grains, hogs, and cattle. Attempts to increase domestic feed grain production are hampered by the short growing season, poor soil, and the small size of farms.

Pressure to restructure the agriculture sector intensified as Poland prepared to accede to the European Union, which is unwilling to subsidize the vast number of subsistence farms that do not produce for the market. The changes in agriculture are likely to strain Poland's social fabric, tearing at the heart of the traditional, family-based small farm as the younger generation drifts toward the cities. Nonetheless, dramatically increasing agricultural exports to the EU-15 (38% growth in 2005) and payments to farmers from Brussels following accession have enriched Polish commercial farmers and dramatically increase support for EU membership in Poland's rural areas.

Industry

Before World War II, Poland's industrial base was concentrated in the coal, textile, chemical, machinery, iron, and steel sectors. Today it extends to fertilizers, petrochemicals, machine tools, electrical machinery, electronics, and shipbuilding.

Poland's industrial base suffered greatly during World War II, and many resources were directed toward reconstruction. The communist economic system imposed in the late 1940s created large and unwieldy economic structures operated under a tight central command. In part because of this systemic rigidity, the economy performed poorly even in comparison with other economies in central Europe.

In 1990, the Mazowiecki government began a comprehensive reform program to replace the centralized com-

mand economy with a market-oriented system. While the results overall have been impressive, many large state-owned industrial enterprises, particularly the railroad and the mining, steel, and defense sectors, have remained resistant to the change and downsizing required to survive in an open market economy.

Economic Reform Program and Direct Foreign Investment

The economic reforms introduced in 1990 removed price controls, eliminated most subsidies to industry, opened markets to international competition, and imposed strict budgetary and monetary discipline. Poland was the first former centrally planned economy in central Europe to end its recession and return to growth in the early 1990s. The private sector now accounts for over two-thirds of GDP.

In early 2002, the government announced a new set of economic reforms known as the Hausner Plan, designed in many ways to complete the process launched in 1990. The package acknowledged the need to improve Poland's investment climate, particularly the conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises, and better prepare the economy to compete as a European Union (EU) member. The government also aimed to improve Poland's public finances to prepare for eventual adoption of the euro. Though the government was able to enact only portions of the Hausner Plan, those successes coupled with successful monetary efforts to strengthen the zloty, have put Poland within reach of the National Bank's goal of Euro accession in 2008-2009.

As a result of Poland's growth and investment-friendly climate, the country has received over $85 billion in direct foreign investment (DFI) since 1990, with roughly $7 billion in 2004 alone. According to a recently publish report by Ernst and Young, Poland is tied with Germany as the most attractive destination for foreign investment in Europe. The availability of cheap land and a large, relatively skilled labor force are among Polish strengths. However, the government continues to play a strong role in the economy, as seen in excessive red tape and the high level of politicization in many business decisions. Investors complain that state regulation is not transparent or predictable, and the economy suffers from a lack of competition in many sectors, notably telecommunications.

Foreign Trade

With the collapse of the ruble-based COMECON trading bloc in 1990, Poland scrambled to reorient its trade. As early as 1996, 70% of its trade was with EU-15 members, and neighboring Germany today is Poland's dominant trading partner. Most of Poland's imports are capital goods needed for industrial retooling and for manufacturing inputs, rather than imports for consumption. Therefore, a deficit is expected and should even be regarded as positive at this point. Poland, a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and European Union, applies the EU's common external tariff to goods from other countries—including the U.S.

In the year after it joined the EU, Poland experienced an overall growth in exports of 30%. This growth was not confined to trade among EU partners: while exports to EU countries rose by 27%, exports to developing countries rose by 46%, and exports to Russia rose an unexpected 77%. Poland's trade balance continued to improve, with export growth significantly outpacing import growth. Opportunities for trade and investment continue to exist across virtually all sectors. The American Chamber of Commerce in Poland, founded in 1991 with seven members, now has more than 300 members. Strong economic growth potential, a large domestic market, EU membership, and political stability are the top reasons U.S. and other foreign companies do business in Poland.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Poland became an associate member of the EU and its defensive arm, the Western European Union, in 1994. In a June 2003 national referendum, the Polish people approved EU accession by an overwhelming margin, and Poland gained full membership in May 2004.

Changes since 1989 have redrawn the map of central Europe, and Poland has had to forge relationships with seven new neighbors. Poland has actively pursued good relations, signing friendship treaties replacing links severed by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. The Poles have forged special relationships with Lithuania and particularly Ukraine in an effort to firmly anchor these states to the West.

Poland became a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in March 1999 as part of the first wave of enlargement outlined at the July 1997 NATO Summit in Madrid. Poland's top national security goal is to further integrate with NATO and other west European defense, economic, and political institutions while modernizing and reorganizing its military. Polish military doctrine reflects the same defense posture as its Alliance partners.

Poland maintains a sizable armed force currently numbering about 140,572 troops divided among an army of 87,877, an air and defense force of 31,147, and a navy of 21,548. Poland relies on military conscription for the majority of its personnel strength. All males (with some exceptions) are subject to a 12-month term of military service. The Polish military continues to restructure and to modernize its equipment. The Polish Defense Ministry General Staff and the Land Forces staff have recently reorganized the latter into a NATO-compatible J/G-1 through J/G-6 structure. Although budget constraints remain a drag on modernization, Poland has been able to move

forward with U.S. assistance on acquiring 48 F-16 multi-role fighters, C-130 cargo planes, HMMWVs, and other items key to the military's restructuring.

Poland continues to be a regional leader in support and participation in the NATO Partnership for Peace Program and has actively engaged most of its neighbors and other regional actors to build stable foundations for future European security arrangements. Poland continues its long record of strong support for UN peacekeeping operations by maintaining a unit in Southern Lebanon, a battalion in NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR), and by providing and actually deploying the KFOR strategic reserve to Kosovo. Polish military forces have served in both Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

U.S.-POLISH RELATIONS

The United States established diplomatic relations with the newly formed Polish Republic in April 1919. After Gomulka came to power in 1956, relations with the United States began to improve. However, during the 1960s, reversion to a policy of full and unquestioning support for Soviet foreign policy objectives and anti-Semitic feelings in Poland caused those relations to stagnate. U.S.-Polish relations improved significantly after Gierek succeeded Gomulka and expressed his interest in improving relations with the United States. A consular agreement was signed in 1972.

In 1974 Gierek was the first Polish leader to visit the United States. This action, among others, demonstrated that both sides wished to facilitate better relations.

The birth of Solidarity in 1980 raised the hope that progress would be made in Poland's external relations as well as in its domestic development. During this time, the United States provided $765 million in agricultural assistance. Human rights and individual freedom issues, however, were not improved upon, and the U.S. revoked Poland's most-favored-nation (MFN) status in response to the Polish Government's decision to ban Solidarity. MFN status was reinstated in 1987, and diplomatic relations were upgraded.

The United States and Poland have enjoyed warm bilateral relations since 1989. Every post-1989 Polish government has been a strong supporter of continued American military and economic presence in Europe. As well as supporting the Global War on Terror, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and coalition efforts in Iraq, Poland cooperates closely with American diplomacy on such issues as democratization, nuclear proliferation, human rights, regional cooperation in central and eastern Europe, and UN reform.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Lenese Walls
AMB OMS:	Diana Hall
CG OMS:	Paula Costantino
ECO:	Richard Rorvig
FM:	Mike Hampton
HRO:	Christine Stockman
MGT:	Michael S. Tulley
AMB:	Victor Ashe
CG:	Philip A. Min
DCM:	Pamela Quanrud
PAO:	Edward Kulakowski
COM:	John McCaslin
GSO:	Jack Hinden
RSO:	John P. Davis
AGR:	Eric Wenberg
CLO:	Krystsina Turner
DEA:	Charles Tomaszewski
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 10, 2008

Country Description: Poland is a stable, free-market democracy, and has been a member of the European Union since 2004.

Entry Requirements: Poland is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Poland for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay.

Polish immigration officials may ask travelers for proof of sufficient financial resources to cover their proposed stay in Poland, generally viewed as 100 zloty per day. Additionally, citizens of non-EU countries, including the United States, should carry proof of adequate medical insurance in case of an accident or hospitalization while in Poland. Polish immigration officials may ask for documentation of such insurance or proof of sufficient financial resources (at least 400 zloty per day) to cover such costs. Those who lack insurance or access to adequate financial resources may be denied admission to Poland. Medicare does not cover health costs incurred while abroad.

Poland requires Polish citizens (including American citizens who are or can be claimed as Polish citizens) to enter and depart Poland using a Polish passport. Americans who are also Polish citizens or who are unsure if they hold Polish citizenship should contact the nearest Polish consular office for further information.

For further information on entry requirements, please contact the consular section of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland at 2224 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 234-3800, or the Polish consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles or New York. Visit the Embassy of Poland web site at http://www.polandembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Poland remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Poland's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security.

Demonstrations are commonplace in Poland and may range in number from a few people to several thousand. Prior police notice is required for public demonstrations and police oversight is routinely provided. Nonetheless, situations may develop which could pose a threat to public safety. U.S. citizens are advised to avoid areas in which public demonstrations are taking place.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While Poland generally has a low rate of violent crime, the incidence of street crime, which sometimes involves violence, is moderate. Major cities have higher rates of crime against residents and foreign visitors than other areas.

Organized groups of thieves and pickpockets operate at major tourist destinations, in train stations, and on trains, trams, and buses in major cities. Thieves will target overnight trains. Most pick-pocketing on trains occurs during boarding; in the most common scenario, a group of well-dressed young men will surround a passenger in the narrow aisle of the train, jostling/pick-pocketing him or her as they supposedly attempt to get around the passenger. Keep an eye on cell phones; they are prized by thieves. Beware of taxi drivers who approach you at the airport or who do not display telephone numbers and a company name; these drivers usually charge exorbitant rates. Order your taxi by telephone and at the airport use only taxis in the designated taxi ranks.

Car thefts and car-jackings are significantly declining; however, theft from vehicles remains a constant concern. Drivers should be wary of people indicating they should pull over or that something is wrong with their cars; when such drivers pull over to see if there is a problem, they may find themselves suddenly surrounded by thieves from a second vehicle. Drivers encountering someone indicating that there is trouble with their car and the problem is not apparent should continue driving until they find a safe spot (a crowded gas station, supermarket, or even police station) to inspect their vehicles. There also have been incidents of thieves opening or breaking passenger-side doors and windows in slow or stopped traffic to take purses or briefcases left on the seat beside the driver. Those traveling by car should remember to keep windows closed and doors locked. American tourists of Asian and African descent have reported being targets of verbal harassment and physical attacks while traveling in Poland.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Poland is: 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical care is available in Poland, but hospital facilities and nursing support are not comparable to American standards. Physicians are generally well trained but specific emergency services may be lacking in certain regions, especially in Poland's small towns and rural areas. Younger doctors generally speak English, though nursing staff often does not. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Medications are generally available, although they may not be specific U.S. brand-name drugs.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to, or foreign residents of, Poland.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline

for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: Polish immigration law requires travelers either to carry adequate medical insurance in case of accident or hospitalization while in Poland or to be able to document access to sufficient financial resources (at least 400 zlotys per day) to cover such medical emergencies. Failure to carry insurance or the inability to provide documentation of sufficient financial resources if requested may result in a traveler being denied admission to Poland. Medicare does not cover Americans in Poland. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Poland is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

An International Driving Permit (IDP), obtained prior to departure from the U.S., must accompany a U.S. driver's license. A U.S. driver's license without an IDP is insufficient for use in Poland, and Americans cannot obtain IDPs in Poland. Only two U.S. automobile associations—the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the American Automobile Touring Alliance (AATA)—have been authorized by the U.S. Department of State to distribute IDPs. Polish roadside services, while not at Western levels, are rapidly improving. Polski Zwiazek Motorowy Auto-Tour has multilingual operators and provides assistance countrywide; they can be reached by calling 9281 or 9637 preceded by the city code (outside of Warsaw 022-9281). The police emergency number is 997, fire service is 998, and ambulance service is 999. Mobile phone users can dial 112 for emergency assistance. Seat belts are compulsory in both the front and back seats, and children under the age of 10 are prohibited from riding in the front seat. You must use Headlights at all times, day and night. Using your cellular phone while driving is prohibited, except for "hands-free" models.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of cars on Polish roads. Driving, especially after dark, is hazardous. Roads are generally narrow, poorly lighted, frequently under repair (especially in the summer months), and are often also used by pedestrians and cyclists. The Ministry of Infrastructure has a program called "Black Spot" (Czarny Punkt), which puts signs in places with a particularly high number of accidents and/or casualties. These signs have a black spot on a yellow background, and the road area around the "black spot" is marked with red diagonal lines.

Alcohol consumption is frequently a contributing factor in accidents. Polish laws provide virtually zero tolerance for driving under the influence of alcohol, and penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol (defined as a blood alcohol level of 0.02 or higher) include a fine and probation or imprisonment for up to two years. Penalties for drivers involved in accidents are severe, and can be imprisonment from six months to eight years.

Within cities, taxis are available at major hotels and designated stands or may be ordered in advance. Some drivers accept credit cards and/or speak English. Travelers should be wary of hailing taxis on the street, especially those that do not have a telephone number displayed, because these may not have meters, and many of them charge more. Do not accept assistance from "taxi drivers" who approach you in the arrivals terminal or outside the doors at Warsaw Airport. Travelers availing themselves of these "services" often find themselves charged significantly more than the usual fare. Use only taxis at designated airport taxi ranks.

Visit the website of Poland's National Tourist Office at http://www.polandtour.org and Poland's Ministry of Transport responsible for road safety, at http://www.mt.gov.pl.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Poland's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Poland's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Visitors importing more than 10,000 Euros should, as part of the arrivals process, complete a form to declare currency, traveler's checks, and other cash instruments. This form should be stamped by Polish Customs and retained by the traveler for presentation on departure. Undeclared cash may be confiscated upon departure, and visitors carrying undeclared cash may be prosecuted. Most banks now cash traveler's checks, ATMs are readily available, and credit cards increasingly accepted. Polish customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the export of items such as works of art, particularly those created before 1953. Works produced by living artists after 1953 may be exported with permission from the Provincial Conservator of Relics. Some works of art produced after 1953 may still be subject to a ban on exportation if the artist is no longer living and the work is considered of high cultural value. If you are importing an item or work of art like those described above, even if only temporary (e.g., for an exhibit or performance) you should declare it to customs upon entry and carry proof of ownership in order to avoid problems on departure. Contact the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C., or one of the Polish consulates in the United

States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Poland does not recognize (although it does not prohibit) dual nationality. A person holding Polish and U.S. citizenship is deemed by Poland to be a Pole and subject to Polish law.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Polish laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Poland are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Poland are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Poland. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Warsaw is located at Aleje Ujazdowskie 29/31. The Consular Section entrance is located around the corner at Ulica Piekna 12. The Embassy's telephone number is (48) (22) 504-2000. This number can be called 24 hours/day: for emergencies after business hours, press "0." The Embassy's fax number is (48)(22) 504-2688 and the fax number for the Consular Section is (48)(22) 627-4734 (consular fax only checked during normal business hours). The U.S. Consulate General in Krakow is located at Ulica Stolarska 9. The Consulate General's telephone number is (48)(12) 424-5100; fax (48)(12) 424-5103; after-hours cellular phone (for emergencies only) 601-483-348. A Consular Agency providing limited consular services in Poznan is located at Ulica Paderewskiego 8. The Consular Agency's telephone number is (48)(61) 851-8516; fax (48)(61) 851-8966. The Embassy's web site is at http://poland.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Poland is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between Poland and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Poland is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Poland, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government.

At the present time, Polish judges require both adoptive parents to have met the child prior to adoption. In rare cases, a judge may permit an adoption when only one prospective parent has met the child prior to adoption. In such cases, the documentary requirements for prospective parents will differ slightly.

In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Poland also has the following requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no Polish residence requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Age Requirements: Under Polish law, there are no formal, legal restrictions on the age of prospective adoptive parents. In practice, however, prospective adoptive parents may be up to 40 years older than the child.

Marriage Requirements: Both married and single prospective adoptive parents are permitted to adopt a child in Poland.

Other Requirements: Non-Catholic prospective adoptive parents are permitted to adoptive a child in Poland.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Poland is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Poland must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Poland's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Only adoption centers authorized by the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare can evaluate a Polish child's eligibility for intercountry adoption. At present, only the Public Adoptive-Guardian Center (Publiczny Osrodek Adopcyjno-Opiekunczy) has this authorization. The Public Adoptive-Guardian Center maintains a list of all children residing in orphanages who are available for intercountry adoption because their parents have died, have relinquished all rights to them, or have had them relinquished by a court.

Polish Adoption Authority: Public Adoptive-Guardian Center (Publiczny Osrodek Adopcyjno-Opiekunczy)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Poland is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Poland.

There are three adoption centers in Poland that are authorized to qualify foreign prospective parents for adoption in Poland. The prospective parents or duly-licensed American adoption agencies may submit documents of candidates for adoption only to these centers. You will find their information in the Contacts section.

Prospective adoptive parents who wish to use the Public Adoptive-Guardian Center may contact the Center directly or through an attorney or licensed adoption agency. The National Adoptive-Guardian Center of the Children's Friends Society or Catholic Adoptive-Guardian Center, however, may only be contacted through accredited adoption agencies in the United States.

Polish adoption law does not explicitly forbid directed or private adoptions. However, Polish law only allows intercountry adoption of orphans listed by the Public Adoptive-Guardian Center. This Center will only list orphans for intercountry adoption for whom no adopting Polish family can be found. Thus, in practice it is extremely difficult to arrange a directed adoption between a birth parent and prospective adoptive parent without violating Polish law.

Before considering "direct" or "private" adoptions in any country, please contact the office of Children's Issues, Department of State.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Poland. Poland's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Polish law. If both the United States and Poland determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Poland may provide you with a referral for a child.

After the child has been identified and the prospective adoptive parents agree to continue with the adoption process, a formal request to adopt the child is then filed with the Polish court in the region where the child resides. The documentation should consist of the original documents previously submitted to the Public Adoptive-Guardian Center plus three sets of copies of the Polish translations (one for the judge, one for the prosecutor, and one for the legal guardian of the child).

In addition, a copy of the state adoption law where the prospective adoptive parents reside must also be submitted with a Polish translation. Please be advised that it is rarely possible to switch jurisdictions. Polish law requires both prospective adoptive parents to be present during the adoption hearing. This proceeding consists of at least two hearings. At the first hearing, the judge will grant permission for the prospective adoptive parents to visit with the child and spend the day with the child(ren) before returning them to the orphanage. At the discretion of the judge, this first hearing may be conducted without the presence of the prospective adoptive parents. Personal interaction between the child and the prospective adoptive parents is mandatory and will later be evaluated by a local adoption center psychologist.

After you accept a match with a child, you will apply to the USCIS for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800). After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application for to a Consular officer at the United States Embassy. The Consular officer will review the child's information and evaluate the child for possible visa ineligibilities. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify Poland's adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

At the second hearing, the judge will usually make the final decision granting adoption to the prospective adoptive parents. Once the final hearing has been held and the adoption is approved, a 21-day waiting period is imposed before the adoption is finalized. This period may be shortened to 14 days at the judge's discretion.

Role of Adoption Agencies: There are three adoption centers in Poland that are authorized to qualify foreign prospective parents for adoption in Poland.

Time Frame: Polish adoption procedures are complicated, time consuming, and often require professional legal guidance. The entire process may take a year or more. Two trips to Poland may sometimes be necessary before all requirements are completed.

There is a 21-day appeal period between the time of the final adoption hearing and the time the court's decision goes into legal force. At the judge's discretion, this appeal period may be shortened to 14 days. In general, prospective adoptive parents can expect to stay in Poland for at least four to six weeks before they can obtain all proper documentation and a new passport for the child.

Adoption Fees: There is no fee for registering as a prospective adoptive family with any of the three authorized adoption centers in Poland. However, prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay the following fees and costs in connection with a Polish adoption:

- original complete birth certificate (25 PLN per copy)
- new complete birth certificate (25 PLN per copy)
- Polish passport (45 PLN)

- certified copies of adoption records (20 PLN)
- immigrant visa fee ($380)
- medical exam (200 PLN)
- vaccination form fee (25 PLN)
- translations of Polish documents into English (30-40 PLN per page)
- court interpretation services (200-600 PLN per hour)

In some areas of Poland, adoptive parents may also be financially responsible for the costs of housing the child in the orphanage from the time the adoption is final and until the adoptive parents remove the child from the orphanage.

It is also customary, but not required, for adoptive parents to make donations in the amount of $300-$1000 USD each to the orphanage where their child was living and/or to the private adoption center (National Adoptive-Guardian Center of the Children's Friends Society or Catholic Adoptive-Guardian Center) who assisted in the adoption processing. It is not appropriate to make a donation to the Governmental agency, Public Adoptive-Guardian Center.

In the adoption services contract that you sign at the beginning of the adoption process, your agency will itemize the fees and estimated expenses related to your adoption process.

Documents Required:

- An application to the Public Adoptive-Guardian Center
- Birth certificate(s) of the prospective adoptive parent(s)
- Marriage certificate(s), and proof of termination of previous marriage(s), if applicable
- Good conduct police certificate from the local police department where the prospective adoptive parents reside
- Evidence of financial stability, such as tax returns, deeds to property, bank statements, letters from employers stating salary and length of service
- Proof of citizenship (e.g., copy of passport)
- Certificate attesting to good physical and mental health of the prospective adoptive parents
- Evidence of approval by local social service authorities for adoption as well as a copy of the home study conducted by a licensed agency
- Evidence of approval from the United States Government to bring an adopted child into the United States (i.e., approved petition)

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents.

For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Poland requires adoptive parents to submit post adoption reports. Your adoption agency may be able to help you with this process.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Poland
Consular Section
IV Unit/Adoptions
Ul. Piekna 12
00-540 Warsaw, Poland
Tel: 48-22-625-1401
or 48-22-504-2106;
Fax: 48-22-504-2039
E-mail: adoptwrw@state.gov
http://warsaw.usembassy.gov

Polish Adoption Authority
Mrs. Elzbieta Podczaska, Director
Publiczny Osrodek Adopcyjno-Opiekunczy
ul. Nowogrodzka #75
02-018 Warszawa
Tel/fax: 48-22-622-0370, 0371, or 0372 (Please note that Mrs. Podczaska does not speak English, but members of her staff do.)
e-mail: poaowa@poczta.onet.pl

Embassy of the Republic of Poland
Consular Section
2224 Wyoming Ave N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel. 202/232-4517 or—4528
Internet:
http://www.polandembassy.org

Poland also has consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

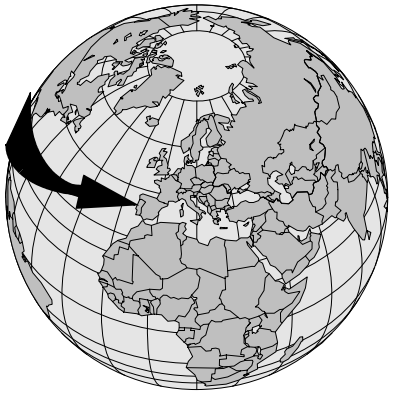
November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state. gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction came into force between the United States and Poland on November 1, 1992. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after November 1, 1992. Parents and legal guardians of children taken to Poland prior to November 1, 1992 may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention. Do not wait to get a custody order to begin the application process. Submit your completed, signed, application as soon as possible. For more information on The Hague Convention, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state. gov/childabduction.

For a list of contact names and addresses for Central Authorities, review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



PORTUGAL

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Portuguese Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 92,391 sq. km.; includes continental Portugal, the Azores (2,333 sq. km.) and Madeira Islands (828 sq. km.); slightly smaller than the State of Indiana; located in Europe's southwest corner bordered by Spain (North and East, 1,214 km.) and the Atlantic Ocean (West and South, 1,793 km.).

Cities: Lisbon (capital, metropolitan area pop. 2.1 million); Porto (metropolitan area pop. 1.9 million).

Terrain: Mountainous in the north; rolling plains in the central and southern regions.

Climate: Maritime temperate (Atlantic-Mediterranean); average annual temperature is 61°F. Temperatures may drop into the low 30s (°F) at night during the coldest months, with daytime highs in the 50s and 60s. The remainder of the year is normally sunny with minimal rainfall. Days are pleasant, with temperatures seldom exceeding 95°F, except in the southern interior of the country; afternoons and evenings are breezy, with nighttime temperatures in the 60s and low 70s; May-October (dry and warm), November-April (cool with rain and wind in the north, mild in the south).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Portuguese (singular and plural).

Population: (2007 est.): 10.6 million. Ages 0 to 14 years—1.6 million (male 840,000; female 798,000). Ages 15 to 24 years—1.3 million (male 646,000; female 620,000). Ages 25 to 64 years—5.9 million (male 2,881,000; female 2,987,000). Ages 65 and over years—1.8 million (male 764,000; female 1,065,000).

Population density: 114 per sq. km. (44 per sq. mi.).

Annual growth rate: (2008 est) 0.8%.

Ethnic groups: Homogeneous Mediterranean stock with small minority groups from Africa (Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique), South America (Brazil) and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Romania).

Religions: Roman Catholic 92%, Protestant 4%, atheists 3%, others 1%.

Languages: Portuguese.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy (2004)—93.3%.

Health: (2007 est.): Birth rate—10.59/1,000 (1.07 male/female). Death rate—10.56/1,000. Infant mortality rate—4.9/1,000. Life expectancy—77.87 years.

Work force: (2008 est.) 5.6 million. Government and services (60%); industry and manufacturing (30%); agriculture and fishing (10%).

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Effective April 25, 1976; revised 1982, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2004, and 2005.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), Council of State (presidential advisory body), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers. Legislative—unicameral Assembly of the Republic (230 deputies): PS=121, PSD=75, PCP=11, CDS/PP=12, BE=8, PEV=2, NINSC=1. Judicial—Supreme Court, District Courts, Appeals Courts, Constitutional Tribunal.

Political subdivisions: 18 Districts (Lisbon, Leiria, Santarem, Setubal, Beja, Faro, Evora, Portalegre, Castelo Branco, Guarda, Coimbra, Aveiro, Viseu, Braganca, Vila Real, Porto, Braga, Viana do Castelo); 2 Autonomous Island Regions (the Azores and Madeira).

Political parties: Socialist Party (PS), Social Democratic Party (PSD); Portuguese Communist Party (PCP); Popular Party (CDS/PP); Left Bloc (BE); Green Party (PEV).

Economy

GDP: (2008 est.): €169 billion (approx. $228 billion).

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 0.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2008 est.): €15,945 (approx. $21,547).

Avg. inflation rate: (2008 est.) 2.46%.
Natural resources: Fish, tungsten, iron, copper, tin, and uranium ores.
Agriculture: Products—forestry, fisheries, cork, wine.
Services: (gross value added 69.2%) Wholesale and retail trade; hotels and tourism; restaurants; transport, storage and communication; real estate; banking and finance; repair; government, civil, and public sectors.
Industry: (gross value added 28.3%) Textiles, clothing, footwear, wood and cork, paper, chemicals, auto-parts manufacturing, base metals, diary products, wine and other foods, porcelain and ceramics; glassware, technology; telecommunications.
Agriculture: (gross value added 2.5%) Livestock, crops, fish.
Trade: (2007) Exports——€37.5 billion (approx. $50.6 billion): machinery and tools 19.8%; vehicles and other transport materials 12.8%; base metals 8.8%; clothing 6.9%; plastics and rubber 5.7%; minerals and mineral products 5.7%; chemical products 5.1%; food products 4.6%; textile materials 4.5%; wood pulp and paper 4.5%; oil products 4.4%; wood and cork 4.3%; agricultural products 3.9%; footwear 3.5%; optical and precision instruments 0.9%; skin and leather 0.3%. Imports—€57 billion (approx. $77 billion): machinery and tools 19.8%; minerals and mineral products 14.0%; vehicles and other transport material 12.0%; base metals 9.9%; agricultural products 9.0%; chemical products 8.7%; plastics and rubber 5.0%; food products 3.6%; textile materials 3.1%; clothing 2.8%; wood pulp and paper 2.4%; optical and precision instruments 2.1%; minerals and mineral products 1.6%; wood and cork 1.3%; skins and leather 1.0%; footwear 0.9%. Export partners—Spain (27.47%); Germany (13.2%); France (12.46%); United Kingdom (6.0%); United States (4.9%); others (35.6%). All EU-27 (76.41%). Import partners—Spain (31%); Germany (13.1%); France (8.46%); Italy (5.5%); United States (1.6%); others (40.4%). All EU-27 (75.4%).
U.S. trade with Portugal (2007): Exports—$2.4 billion: electrical machinery, telecommunications 37.2%; aerospace 16.5%; machinery and mechanical appliances, computers 9%; oil seeds and grains 4.9%; all others 32.4%. Imports—$3.1 billion: mineral fuels, oils 25.7%; electrical machinery, telecommunications 14.9%; vehicles and parts 13.2%; cork and articles of cork 6.1%; all others 40.1%.
Foreign direct investment (FDI, 2007): Incoming FDI by industry: manufacturing—29.1%; real estate, rentals and services to companies—25.5%; wholesale and retail—23.8%; financial activities—8.4%; transport, warehousing, and communication—5.2%; construction—2.0%; electricity, gas, water—0.8%; exploration industry—0.7%; agriculture, silviculture, and fisheries—0.2%; other—4.3%. Incoming FDI by country in Euros (total €30 billion; approx. $40.5 billion): Germany—19.9%; United Kingdom—15.5%; Netherlands—14.7%; Spain—13.0%; France—11.2%; Luxembourg—4.3%; Belgium—3.0%; Switzerland—2.9%; United States—2.6%; Ireland—2.1%; other—10.8%. Portuguese FDI abroad by country in Euros (total €12.3 billion; approx. $16.62 billion): Netherlands—37.2%; Spain—12.8%; Brazil—4.6%; United Kingdom—4.6%; Angola—3.6%; United States—3.4%; Turkey—2.3%; Poland—2.2%; Luxembourg—2.0%; Romania—1.4%; other—25.9%.
Exchange rate (October 24, 2008): US$1 = €0.74 EUR.

HISTORY

Portugal is one of the oldest states in Europe. It traces its modern history to A.D. 1140 when, following a 9-year rebellion against the King of Leon-Castile, Afonso Henriques, the Count of Portugal, became the country's first king, Afonso I. Afonso and his successors expanded their territory southward, capturing Lisbon from the Moors in 1147. The approximate present-day boundaries were secured in 1249 by Afonso III.

By 1337, Portuguese explorers had reached the Canary Islands. Inspired by Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), explorers such as Vasco da Gama, Bartolomeu Dias, and Pedro Alvares Cabral made explorations from Brazil to India and Japan. Portugal eventually became a massive colonial empire with vast territories in Africa and Latin America (Brazil) and outposts in the Far East (East Timor, Macau, Goa).

Dynastic disputes led in 1580 to the succession of Philip II of Spain to the Portuguese throne. A revolt ended Spanish hegemony in 1640, and the House of Braganca was established as Portugal's ruling family, lasting until the establishment of the Portuguese Republic in 1910.

During the next 16 years, intense political rivalries and economic instability undermined newly established democratic institutions. Responding to pressing economic problems, a military government, which had taken power in 1926, named a prominent university economist, Dr. Antonio Salazar, as finance minister in 1928 and prime minister in 1932. For the next 42 years, Salazar and his successor, Marcelo Caetano, appointed prime minister in 1968, ruled Portugal as an authoritarian "corporate" state. Unlike most other European countries, Portugal did not play a combatant role in World War II. It was a charter member of NATO, joining in 1949.

In the early 1960s, wars with independence movements in Portugal's African territories began to drain labor and wealth from Portugal. Professional dissatisfaction within the military, coupled with a growing sense of the futility of the African conflicts, led to the formation of the clandestine "Armed Forces Movement" in 1973.

The downfall of the Portuguese corporate state came on April 25, 1974, when the Armed Forces Movement seized power in a nearly bloodless coup and established a provisional military government.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Portugal moved from authoritarian rule to parliamentary democracy following the 1974 military coup against dictator Marcello Caetano, himself a continuation of the long-running dictatorship of Antonio Salazar. After a period of instability and communist agitation, Portugal ratified a new Constitution in 1976. Subsequent revisions of the Constitution placed the military under strict civilian control; trimmed the powers of the president; and laid the groundwork for a stable, pluralistic liberal democracy, as well as privatization of nationalized firms and the government-owned communications media. Portugal joined the European Union in 1986, and has moved toward greater political and economic integration with Europe ever since. The four main branches of the national government are the presidency, the prime minister and Council of Ministers (the government), the Assembly of the Republic (the parliament), and the judiciary. The president, elected to a five-year term by direct, universal suffrage, also is commander in chief of the armed forces. Presidential powers include confirming the prime minister and Council of Ministers; dismissing the prime minister; dissolving the assembly to call early elections; vetoing legislation, which may be overridden by the assembly; and declaring a state of war or siege. The Council of State, a presidential advisory body, is composed of six senior civilian officers, former presidents elected under the 1976 constitution, five members chosen by the assembly, and five selected by the president.

The government is headed by the prime minister, who is nominated by the assembly for confirmation by the president. The prime minister then names the Council of Ministers. A new government is required to present its governing platform to the assembly for approval.

The Assembly of the Republic is a unicameral body composed of 230 deputies. Elected by universal suffrage according to a system of proportional representation, deputies serve terms of office of four years, unless the president dissolves the assembly and calls for new elections.

The national Supreme Court is the court of last appeal. Military, administrative, and fiscal courts are designated as separate court categories. A nine-member Constitutional Tribunal reviews the constitutionality of legislation.

The Azores and Madeira Islands have constitutionally mandated autonomous status. A regional autonomy statute promulgated in 1980 established the Government of the Autonomous Region of the Azores; the Government of the Autonomous Region of Madeira operates under a provisional autonomy statute in effect since 1976. Continental Portugal is divided into 18 districts, each headed by a governor appointed by the Minister of Internal Administration.

Current Administration

Parliamentary elections on February 20, 2005, gave the Socialist Party a comfortable majority for the new Prime Minister, Jose Socrates. Socrates' government formally assumed power March 12, 2005. The Socialist Party's 2005 victory followed a period of transition after center-right (PSD) Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durão Barroso resigned to accept the nomination as President of the European Commission. Durão Barroso, elected in 2002, committed his government to public-sector austerity and business incentives to promote growth, trade, and productivity. It faced rising unemployment, meeting euro-zone fiscal requirements, and adapting to European Union and NATO enlargement.

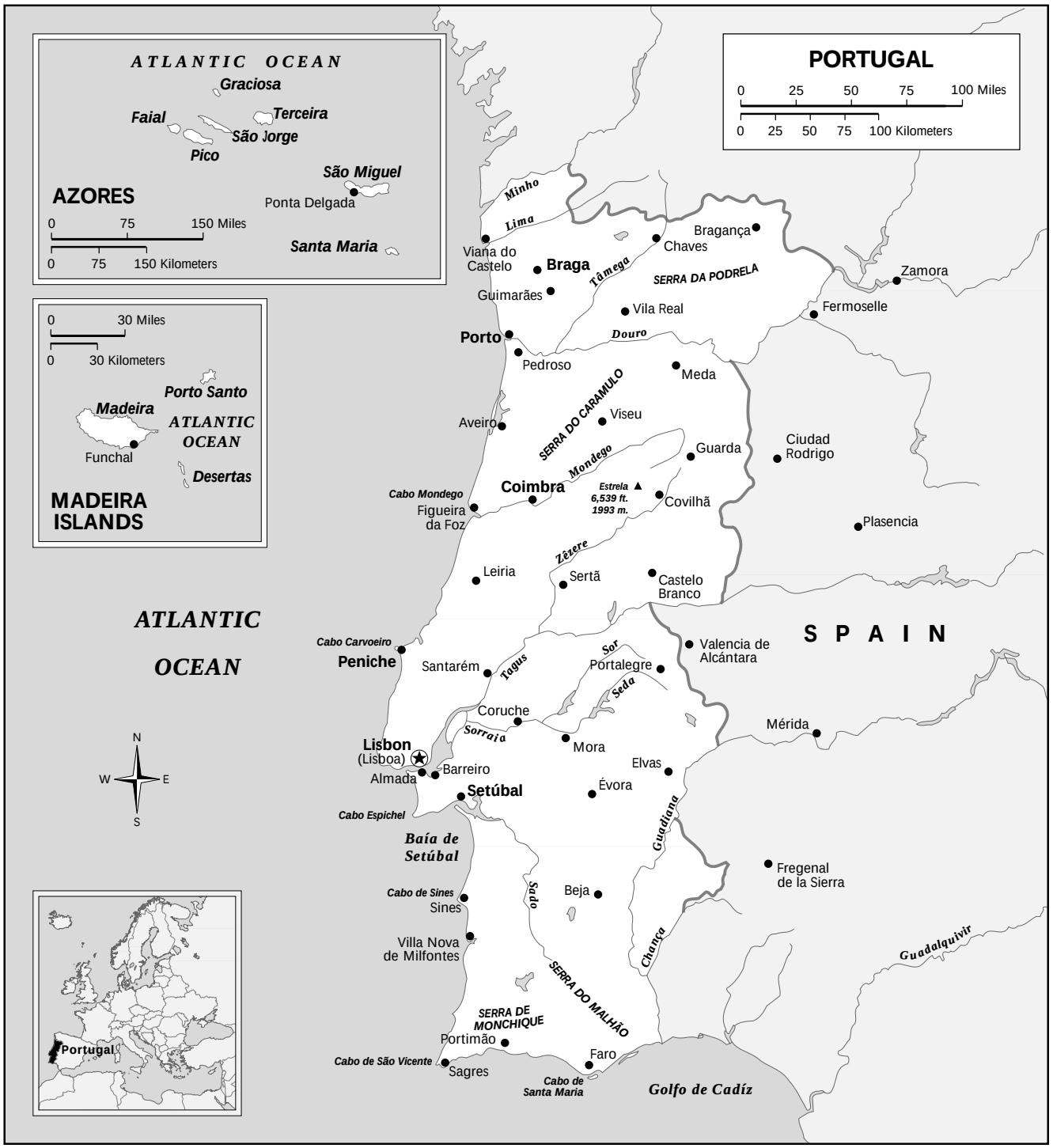
After Durão Barroso's resignation, President Jorge Sampaio asked the former mayor of Lisbon, Pedro Santana Lopes, to form a new government. Sampaio lost confidence in that government by the end of 2004, dissolved parliament, and called for new parliamentary elections. Social Democrat Anibal Cavaco Silva, a center-right candidate and former Prime Minister, won the Portuguese presidential election on January 22, 2006 with 50.6% of the vote. He was sworn in on March 9, 2006, replacing outgoing Socialist President Sampaio.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Anibal Antonio CAVACO SILVA**
Prime Min.: **Jose SOCRATES**
Min. of State: **Luis AMADO**
Min. of State: **Fernando TEIXEIRA DOS SANTOS**
Min. for Agriculture, Rural Development, & Fisheries: **Jaime SILVA**
Min. for Culture: **Isabel PIRES DE LIMA**
Min. for Economy & Innovation: **Manuel PINHO**
Min. for Education: **Maria DE LURDES RODRIGUES**
Min. for Environment, Territorial Planning, & Regional Development: **Francisco NUNES CORREIA**
Min. for Finance: **Fernando TEIXEIRA DOS SANTOS**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Luis AMADO**
Min. for Health: **Antonio CORREIA DE CAMPOS**
Min. for Internal Admin.: **Rui PEREIRA**
Min. for Justice: **Alberto COSTA**
Min. for National Defense: **Nuno SEVERIANO TEIXEIRA**
Min. for Parliamentary Affairs: **Agusto SANTOS SILVA**
Min. for the Presidency: **Pedro SILVA PEREIRA**
Min. for Public Works, Transportation, & Communications: **Mario LINO**
Min. for Science, Technology, & Higher Education: **Mariano GAGO**
Min. for Work & Social Solidarity: **Jose VIEIRA DA SILVA**
Governor, Bank of Portugal: **Victor CONSTANCIO**
Ambassador to the US: **Joao DE VALLERA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Joao SALGUEIRO**

Portugal maintains an embassy in the United States at 2012 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036; Tel. 202-350-5400; Fax 202-462-3726 and consulates general in New York City, Boston, San Francisco, and Newark, NJ; consulates in Providence, RI and New Bedford,



MA; and honorary consulates in Honolulu, Los Angeles, Houston, New Orleans, Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami, San Juan, and Waterbury. The Portuguese National Tourist Office in the United States is located at 590 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10036 (tel: 212-354-4403).

ECONOMY

Portugal's membership in the European Union (EU) contributed to stable economic growth, largely through increased trade and an inflow of EU funds for infrastructure improvements. Furthermore, Portugal's 1999 entry into the European Monetary Union (EMU) brought exchange rate stability, lower inflation, and lower interest rates. Falling interest rates, in turn, lowered the cost of public debt and helped the country achieve its fiscal targets. Until 2001, average annual growth rates consistently

exceeded those of the EU average. However, a dramatic increase in private sector loans led to a serious external imbalance, with large current and capital account deficits that year.

The Government of Portugal managed to keep the budget deficit under 3% in accordance with the Eurozone's Stability and Growth Pact during 2002-2004. However, in 2005 Portugal acknowledged breaching the target when its budget deficit surged to an all-time high of 6.1%. Since that time, the Socrates government has worked hard to bring the budget situation under control. In 2006, the government reduced the deficit to 3.9%, mainly through revenue-generating measures (i.e., increased collection enforcement and higher taxes). The 2007 budget further reduced the deficit to 2.6% through spending cuts and structural reforms, and the 2008 budget brought the deficit down to 2.2%, the lowest rate in 30 years. The proposed 2009 budget projects the same 2.2%, as additional spending is offset by additional tax revenue. Helped in part by a wider EU recovery, the Portuguese economy grew by 1.9% in 2007, up from 1.4% the year before. A slowing regional economy meant the economy grew by only 0.8% in 2008, short of predictions, and the 2009 budget estimates 0.6% growth in 2009. Unemployment was 7.3% in early 2008.

The service sector, comprised of the public service, retail, tourism, and recreation, is now Portugal's largest employer, having overtaken the traditionally predominant manufacturing and agriculture sectors since the country joined the EU in 1986. EU expansion into Eastern Europe has erased Portugal's historic competitive advantage and relatively low labor costs, particularly in the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. The government is working to change Portugal's economic development model from one based on public consumption and public investment to one focused on exports, private investment, and development of the high-tech sector.

Due to slow economic growth, Portugal has lost ground relative to the rest of the EU since 2002. It is projected that Portugal's 2008 per capita GDP will stand at 65.6% of the EU-27 average and that it will drop to 19th in purchasing power parity behind Cyprus, Greece, the Czech Republic, Malta, and Estonia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Portugal has been a significant beneficiary of European Union funding and is a strong proponent of European integration. Portugal held the presidency of the EU Council for the third time during the latter half of 2007. During its presidency, Portugal oversaw the signing of a new EU reform treaty, staged EU summits with Brazil, Russia, India, China, and Ukraine, and held a second EU-Africa summit.

Portugal is a founding member of NATO; it is an active member of the alliance by, for example, contributing proportionally large contingents in Balkans peacekeeping forces. Portuguese forces also participate in NATO operations in Afghanistan. Portugal proposed the creation of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) to improve its ties with other Portuguese-speaking countries, and it currently holds the chairmanship of the Community of Democracies (CD). Portugal has also participated in a series of Ibero-American summits. Portugal was a strong advocate of independence for Timor-Leste, a former Portuguese colony, and has committed troops and money to Timor-Leste in close cooperation with the United States, Asian allies, and the United Nations. Portugal contributed a small gendarme force to Iraq that it withdrew in February 2005, and has contributed funds and personnel for other training and development projects for Iraq reconstruction, including the NATO Training Mission. Portuguese forces are also part of the UN force in Lebanon.

U.S.-PORTUGUESE RELATIONS

Bilateral ties date from the earliest years of the United States. Following the Revolutionary War, Portugal was among the first countries to recognize the United States. On February 21, 1791, President George Washington opened formal diplomatic relations, naming Col. David Humphreys as U.S. minister.

Contributing to the strong ties between the United States and Portugal are the sizable Portuguese communities in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, California, and Hawaii. The latest census estimates that 1.3 million individuals living in the United States are of Portuguese ancestry, with a large percentage coming from the Azores. There are about 20,000 Americans living in Portugal.

The defense relationship between the United States and Portugal is excellent, centered on the 1995 Agreement on Cooperation and Defense (ACD). For 50 years, Lajes Air Base in the Azores has played an important role in supporting U.S. military aircraft. Most recent missions are engaged in counter-terrorism and humanitarian efforts, including operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Portugal defines itself as "Atlanticist," emphasizing its support for strong European ties with the United States, particularly on defense and security issues. Portugal sees its role as host of NATO's "Joint Command Lisbon," located near Lisbon, as an important sign of alliance interest in transatlantic security issues.

U.S.-Portuguese trade is relatively small, with the United States exporting $2.4 billion worth of goods in 2007 and importing an estimated $3.1 billion. While total Portuguese trade has increased dramatically over the last 10 years, the U.S. percentage of Portugal's exports and imports has been growing at a slower rate. The Portuguese Government is seeking to increase exports of textiles and footwear to the United States and is

encouraging greater bilateral investment. U.S. firms play significant roles in the pharmaceutical, computer, and retail sectors in Portugal, but their involvement in the automotive manufacturing sector has declined in recent years.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LISBON (E) Av. Forças Armadas, 131, 1649-044 Lisboa, APO/FPO PSC 83, APO AE 09726, IVG: 884-0000 comm 351 21 727-3300, Fax 011-351 21 727-2354, Workweek: Mon-Fri 8:00-5:00, Website: http://lisbon.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Angelica Mendez
AMB OMS:	Antoinette Wilson
ECO:	Cari Enav
FM:	David Simpkins
HRO:	Martina Polt
MGT:	Jesse Coronado
AMB:	Thomas F. Stephenson
CG:	Eugene Sweeney
DCM:	David Ballard
PAO:	R. Wes Carrington
COM:	Dillon Banerjee
GSO:	Jim Stover
RSO:	Tom Haycraft
AGR:	Steven Hammond (Resident In Madrid)
CLO:	Gena Stish
DAO:	Col. Rick Villalobos
DEA:	Alfredo Christlieb (Resident In Madrid)
FAA:	Anthony F. Fazio (Resident In Paris)
FAA/CASLO:	Vacant (Resident In Madrid)
FMO:	Martina Polt
ICASS Chair:	Smsgt Darrell Johnson
IMO:	Daniel Fern
IRS:	Frederick D. Pablo (Resident In Paris)
LEGATT:	Ed Sanchez (Resident In Madrid)
MLO:	Cdr. Ted Bradfield
POL:	Matt Harrington

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 18, 2008

Country Description: Portugal is a developed and stable democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: Portugal is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Portugal for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet.

Portuguese law requires some non-European Union foreign nationals to register with immigration officials within three working days of entering Portugal. The law affects those who transit another Schengen area country by air en route to Portugal and stay at noncommercial accommodations.

Travelers may also contact the Embassy of Portugal at 2012 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036, tel. (202) 350-5400, or the Portuguese Consulates in Boston, MA; New Bedford, MA; Providence, RI; New York, NY; Newark, NJ; San Francisco, CA; or Los Angeles, CA. Visit the Government of Portugal's web site at http://embassyportugal-us.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Portugal remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Portugal's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

Brief general strikes and public protests by public sector employees, industrial workers and/or university student groups take place with some frequency, but are usually publicized in advance and are rarely violent.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. The Portuguese national emergency response telephone number is 112. This service is similar to the U.S. 911 emergency response telephone number and may be called from all telephones, including cell phones, for police, fire and medical emergencies. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Portugal has a relatively low rate of violent crime. Travelers may become targets of pickpockets and purse snatchers, particularly at popular tourist sites, restaurants, or on public transportation. Rental cars and vehicles with non-local license plates can be targets for break-ins; travelers should remove visible luggage from vehicles upon parking. Travelers should also avoid using automatic teller machines in isolated or poorly lit areas. Drivers in Portugal should keep car doors locked when stopped at intersections. In general, visitors to Portugal should carry limited cash and credit cards on their person, and leave extra cash, credit cards, and personal documents at home or in a hotel safe. While thieves may operate anywhere, the U.S. Embassy receives most reports of theft from the following areas.

Lisbon: Pick pocketing and purse snatching in the Lisbon area sometimes occurs in buses, restaurants, the airport, trains, train stations, and trams, especially aboard tram number 28 to the Castle of São Jorge. Theft of purses, briefcases and wallets also occurs in hotel lobbies, restaurants and elevators. At restaurants, items hung over the backs of chairs or placed on the floor may be stolen. There have been reports of theft of unattended luggage from the Lisbon Airport. Special care should be taken in the Santa Apolonia and Rossio train stations, the Alfama and Bairro Alto districts, the Castle of São Jorge and the area of Belm.

Outside Lisbon: Thefts have been reported in the towns of Sintra, Cascais, Mafra, Fatima and in the

Algarve. Automobile break-ins sometimes occur in parking areas at tourist attractions and near restaurants. Special care should be taken in parking at the Moorish Castle and Pena Palace in Sintra and at the beachfront areas of Guincho, Cabo da Roca, and Boca do Inferno.

Azores: Pick pocketing and purse snatching are not common occurrences in the Azores. There are no reports of organized crime or gangs.

Madeira: Pick pocketing, while infrequent, may occur in the Old Town and Santa Catarina Park areas of Funchal.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Portugal has a crime victim's assistance program, administered through an organization known by its acronym, "APAV." Click here for more information (translated into English). Office hours are weekdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and 2–5 p.m. Phone: [351] 707 20 00 77. To learn about possible sources of American compensation, see our information on Victims of Crime.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Portugal is: 1-1-2. English-speaking operators are normally available.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is available, but facilities may be limited outside urban areas. Public hospitals offer services at a lower cost generally than private hospitals but sometimes do not maintain the same standards as hospitals in the United States. Travelers are encouraged to obtain insurance that would cover medical services from a private Portuguese hospital or clinic. Private hospitals will ask for a credit card or other form of payment upon admission. In a life-threatening emergency, an ambulance can be requested by calling the national emergency response telephone number 1-1-2. On the other hand, private ambulances should only be used for transport, not life-threatening emergencies, and usually require on-the-spot payment. Note that the responsiveness of emergency services is often not up to U.S. standards.

Travelers sometimes request that relatives or friends in the U.S. mail prescription medicines to them in Portugal, but to do so violates Portuguese law and usually results in the shipment of medications being impounded by Portuguese Customs. When this occurs, the medications may not be released. Travelers who use prescription medicine should bring a sufficient supply with them to cover their anticipated stay in Portugal, along with a copy of their physician's prescription. Should an unforeseen need for prescription refills or new medications arise, Portuguese pharmacies generally carry equivalent medications to those found in the United States, however, they may be sold under a different brand, may not be available in the same dosage, and may require a prescription from a local doctor.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Portugal.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Portugal is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Portugal has one of the highest rates of automobile accidents and related fatalities in Europe. Drivers should use extreme caution, as local driving habits, high speeds, and poorly marked roads pose special hazards. In Portugal, fines for traffic violations are substantial and usually must be paid on the spot. Taxis are a reliable means of transportation, though travelers should be alert to possible discrepancies between the meter fare and the amount requested by the driver. Buses are reliable and inexpensive.

In the Azores, driving can be treacherous due to narrow cobblestone streets, blind curves, unprotected embankments, herds of cows in the countryside roads, and the high speeds of other drivers. In contrast to the situation on the Portuguese mainland, traffic violations are registered by radar and later forwarded to the offender via the postal service; payments are not made on the spot. Taxis do not have meters. The fare consists of a base fee plus a posted rate per kilometer traveled. Public buses are inexpensive. Bus services begin at 7:00 a.m. and generally operate until 8:00 p.m. depending on the destination.

U.S. visitors to Portugal may drive with a valid U.S. driver's license for up to six months. For international driving permits, please contact AAA or the National Auto Club. For specific information concerning Portuguese driver's permits, vehicle inspection and mandatory insurance, please contact the Portuguese National Tourist Office by telephone at 1-800-767-8842 or visit the website for the Portuguese Directorate-General for Traffic at www.dgv.pt.

Visit the website of Portugal's national tourist office at www.portugal.org, or the national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.dgv.pt.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Portugal's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Portugal's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Portuguese customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Portugal of such items as firearms, antiquities, medications, business equipment, sales samples and other items. It is advisable to contact a Portuguese Embassy or Consulate in the U.S. for specific information regarding customs requirements. Portugal's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/ Temporary Admission) carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes.

ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of The Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA carnet in the United States. For additional information, please telephone (212) 354-4480, or send an e-mail to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Portugal's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Portugal are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Portugal are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Portugal. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on Avenida das Forças Armadas, in the neighborhood of Sete Rios. Telephone (351)(21) 727-3300, fax (351)(21) 727-2354, Internet home page: lisbon.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulate in the Azores is located in the city of Ponta Delgada on the island of San Miguel. The address is Av. Principe do Monaco, 6-2o, phone 351-296-282-216, fax 351-296-28-72-16.

There is a part-time U.S. Consular Agency in Funchal, on the island of Madeira, on Rua Alfandega, no 10-2, Room A-B, phone 351-291-235-636, fax 351-291-229-360. The Consular Agency is open Monday through Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Intercountry adoptions are permitted between Portugal and the United States. However, according to Portuguese adoption law only children who have no possibility of being adopted by applicants in Portugal are available for intercountry adoption. As a result, the youngest children available for intercountry adoption often have medical issues or are older, i.e., from 10 to 14 years of age.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The central authority (CA) for intercountry adoption in Portugal is the General Directorate of Welfare and Social Services, Families and Children (Direcção-Geral da Segurança Social, da Família e da Criança) in the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity.

Direcção-Geral da Segurança Social,
da Família e da Criança
Av. da República, 67

1069-033 Lisboa—Portugal
Tel.: 00 351 217 920 100; Fax: 00 351 217 934 739;
e-mail: dgssfc@seg-social.pt
Contact: Dra. Graça Ribeiro

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents:

- Persons who have been married or living in a common-law relationship for more than 4 years and who are both over age 25;
- Single persons over age 30;
- Persons under age 60, provided that the age difference between the child and the adopter does not exceed 50 years.

Residency Requirements: A U.S. citizen residing outside of Portugal who wishes to obtain the Portuguese Court's authorization to transfer a Portuguese orphan to the U.S. for the purposes of adoption in the U.S. does not need to establish residency in Portugal. However, a U.S. citizen who wishes to fully complete the adoption of a child in Portugal must be a legal resident of Portugal.

Time Frame: The amount of time needed to complete a process in Portugal varies considerably from case to case. According to Portuguese authorities, the average amount of time to complete an intercountry adoption is three months.

The intercountry adoption process involves the Portuguese judicial system, in coordination with the Portuguese Central Authority as well as the Ministry's local Welfare and Social Services office (Centro Distrital da Segurança Social).

Adoption Agencies: To date, No U.S. private adoption agency has applied accreditation by the Government of Portugal to transmit intercountry adoption cases directly to the Portuguese Central Authority.

However, the Portuguese CA has advised the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon that private adoption agencies licensed in the U.S. may initiate intercountry adoption requests and submit them to the Portuguese CA if they do so through a competent U.S. State authority, i.e., a state-level government agency that has oversight over adoption issues.

Adoption Fees: The adoption process is free of charge in Portugal. There are no fees for court services.

Adoption Eligibility: Portuguese children may become eligible for adoption in Portugal or in a receiving State under the following circumstances:

- if the minor is a child of unknown or deceased parents;
- if there has been previous consent to the adoption, i.e., the biological parents have given their authorization before a Portuguese court;
- if the parents have abandoned the minor;
- if the parents, by action or omission, have put in danger the minor's safety, health, moral formation or education, in ways which, by their gravity, seriously compromise the proper bonds of affection and affiliation;
- if the parents of a minor sheltered in a private home or in an institution have revealed a manifest lack of interest in the child, seriously compromising the proper bonds of affection and affiliation, at a minimum, during the three-month period prior to the submission of a petition to the court requesting the entrustment of the child for future adoption.

Adoption Procedures: To apply to become an adoptive parent, the following steps must be taken:

- A home study must be performed in the United States by a competent adoption organization.
- The home study and other relevant documents must be submitted by the adoption organization to the competent State agency in the U.S. state in which the adoption of the child will be completed, for that agency's approval.
- Once approved, the state agency forwards the adoption package to the Portuguese CA.
- Upon the Portuguese CA's finding that the case meets the legal requirements of the state of origin and the receiving state, the CA will submit a report to the Portuguese court, recommending that the child be placed with the prospective adoptive parents and released for intercountry adoption. The CA will also request that legal guardianship be transferred from the foster care home where the minor resides to the prospective adopting parents. The Portuguese Welfare and Social Services office will also be notified of the steps that are being taken regarding the minor.
- Prospective adoptive parents will subsequently be notified by the court to appear for a hearing before the Family Court Judge. They must appear in person. Attorneys may not represent prospective adopting parents in Court.
- Upon the successful conclusion of the judicial proceedings, the Court issues legal guardianship, awards legal custody of the child to the prospective adoptive parents and releases the child for intercountry adoption. The court must also authorize the travel of the minor with the adopting parents to be adopted abroad.

Required Documents:

- Home study report (social and psychological evaluation);
- Certificate of eligibility and suitability to adopt in Portugal;
- Criminal record;
- Health certificate;
- Residence certificate;
- Marriage certificate, or, if applicable, statement proving that the couple live as common-law husband/wife;

- Birth certificate(s) of prospective adoptive parents;
- Income certificate;
- Identity card or passport;
- The prospective adoptive parents' consent to have the competent authorities in the Receiving State supervise the integration of the child with the family during the pre-adoption period and producing progress reports on the situation each six months until the full adoption is ordered;
- Agreement by the prospective adoptive parents to forward to the Portuguese Central Authority an abstract of the U.S. Court's full adoption decree dully certified with the seal of the Apostille Convention.

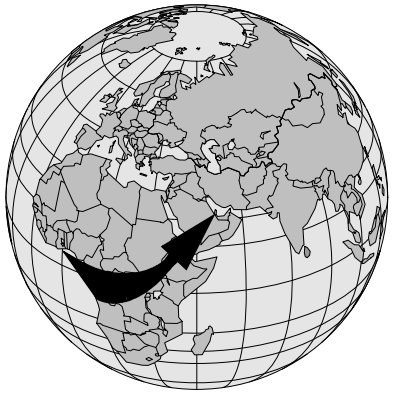
Embassy of Portugal
2012 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel. 202-350-5400
Fax 202-462-3726

Portugal also has consulates general in Boston, Newark, New York, and San Francisco. There are also consulates in Providence, Rhode Island and New Bedford, Massachusetts.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Avenida das Forças Armadas
1600-081 LISBOA
Apartado 43033
1601-301 LISBOA
Tel: 351-21-727-3300
Fax: 351-21-726-9109
E-mail: conslisbon@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Portugal may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



QATAR

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
State of Qatar

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 11,437 sq. km. (4,427 sq. mi.); about the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined.

Cities: Capital—Doha 431,525 (2005 est.). Other cities—Messaieed, Al-Khor, Dukhan, Ruwais.

Terrain: Mostly desert, flat, barren.

Climate: Hot and humid, with a mild winter.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Qatari(s).

Population: (May 2008 est.) 1,448,446; males 1,096,815 (75.7%); females 351,630 (24.3%).

Population growth: (May 2008 est.) 59.6%.

Ethnic groups: Qatari (Arab) 20%; other Arab 20%; Indian 20%; Filipino 10%; Nepali 10%; Pakistani 7%; Sri Lankan 5%; other 5%.

Religions: Islam (state religion, claimed by virtually all of the indigenous population).

Languages: Arabic (official); English (widely spoken).

Education: Compulsory—ages 6-16. Attendance—98%. Literacy (2004 est.)—89% total population, 89.1% male, 88.6% female.

Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—17.46/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—74.14 years.

Work force: (2006) 508,000. Private sector—61.2%; mixed sector—28.5%; government—5.6%.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Independence: September 3, 1971.

Constitution: Approved by popular vote 2003; came into force June 2005.

Government branches: Executive—Council of Ministers. Legislative—Advisory Council (currently appointed pending elections in 2008; has assumed only limited responsibility to date). Judicial—independent.

Political subdivisions: Fully centralized government; nine municipalities.

Political parties: None.

Suffrage: Universal over age 18, since 1999.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $63.8 billion.

Real growth rate: (2007) 12.5%.

Per capita income: (2007) $67,000.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, fish.

Agriculture: Accounts for less than 2% of GDP. Products—fruits and vegetables (most food is imported).

Industry: Types—oil production and refining and natural gas development (60% of GDP), mining, manufacturing, construction, and power.

Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$34 billion, principally oil 47% and gas 36%. Partners (2005)—Japan 36.3%, South Korea 19.1%, Singapore 8.1%, India 5.1%, U.A.E. 2.9%, U.S. 1.2%. Imports—$6.7 billion, principally consumer goods, machinery, food. Partners (2005)—France 11.8%, Japan 10.7% U.S. 10.6%, Germany 8.5%, Saudi Arabia 7.4%, U.K. 7.1%, Italy 6.6%, South Korea 5.6%, U.A.E. 4.9%.

PEOPLE

Natives of the Arabian Peninsula, many Qataris are descended from a number of migratory tribes that came to Qatar in the 18th century from the neighboring areas of Nejd and Al-Hasa. Some came from neighboring Gulf emirates and others are descended from Persian merchants. Most of Qatar's 907,229 inhabitants live in Doha, the capital. Foreigners with temporary residence status make up about three-fourths of the population. Foreign workers comprise 52% of the total population and make up about 89% of the total labor force. Most are South and Southeast Asians, Egyptians, Palestinians, Jordanians, and Iranians. About 8,000 U.S. citizens reside in Qatar.

For centuries, the main sources of wealth were pearling, fishing, and trade. At one time, Qataris owned nearly one-third of the Persian Gulf fishing fleet. With the Great Depression and the introduction of Japan's cultured-pearl industry, pearling in Qatar declined drastically.

The Qataris are mainly Sunni Muslims. Islam is the official religion, and Islamic jurisprudence is the basis of Qatar's legal system, although civil courts have jurisdiction over commercial law. Arabic is the official language, and English is widely spoken. Education is compulsory and free for all Arab residents 6-16 years old. Qatar has an increasingly high literacy rate.

HISTORY

Qatar has been inhabited for millennia. The Al Khalifa family of Bahrain dominated the area until 1868 when, at the request of Qatari nobles, the British negotiated the termination of the Bahraini claim, except for the payment of tribute. The tribute ended when the Ottoman Empire occupied Qatar in 1872.

When the Ottomans left at the beginning of World War I, the British recognized Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani as ruler. The Al Thani family had lived in Qatar for 200 years. The 1916 treaty between the United Kingdom and Sheikh Abdullah was similar to those entered into by the British with other Gulf principalities. Under it, the ruler agreed not to dispose of any of his territory except to the U.K. and not to enter into relationships with any other foreign government without British consent. In return, the British promised to protect Qatar from all aggression by sea and to lend their good offices in case of a land attack. A 1934 treaty granted more extensive British protection.

In 1935, a 75-year oil concession was granted to the Qatar Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of the Iraq Petroleum Company, which was owned by Anglo-Dutch, French, and U.S. interests. High-quality oil was discovered in 1940 at Dukhan, on the western side of the Qatari peninsula. However, the start of WWII delayed exploitation of Qatar's oil resources, and oil exports did not begin until 1949.

During the 1950s and 1960s gradually increasing oil revenues brought prosperity, rapid immigration, substantial social progress, and the beginnings of Qatar's modern history. When the U.K. announced a policy in 1968 (reaffirmed in March 1971) of ending the treaty relationships with the Gulf sheikdoms, Qatar joined the other eight states then under British protection (the seven trucial sheikdoms—the present United Arab Emirates—and Bahrain) in a plan to form a union of Arab emirates. By mid-1971, as the termination date of the British treaty relationship (end of 1971) approached, the nine still had not agreed on terms of union. Accordingly, Qatar declared independence as a separate entity and became the fully independent State of Qatar on September 3, 1971.

In February 1972, the Heir Apparent, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad, deposed his cousin, Amir Ahmad, and assumed power. Key members of the Al Thani family supported this move, which took place without violence or signs of political unrest.

On June 27, 1995, the Deputy Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, deposed his father Amir Khalifa in a bloodless coup. An unsuccessful counter-coup was staged in 1996. The Amir and his father are now reconciled, though some supporters of the counter-coup remain in prison. The Amir announced his intention for Qatar to move toward democracy and has permitted a freer and more open press and municipal elections as a precursor to expected parliamentary elections. Qatari citizens approved a new constitution via public referendum in April 2003, which came into force in June 2005.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The ruling Al Thani family continued to hold power following the declaration of independence in 1971. The head of state is the Amir, and the right to rule Qatar is passed on within the Al Thani family. Politically, Qatar is evolving from a traditional society to one based on more formal and democratic institutions to meet the requirements of social and economic progress. The country's constitution formalizes the hereditary rule of the Al Thani family, but it also establishes an elected legislative body and makes government ministers accountable to the legislature. In current practice, the Amir's role is influenced by continuing traditions of consultation, rule by consensus, and the citizen's right to appeal personally to the Amir. The Amir, while directly accountable to no one, cannot violate the Shari'a (Islamic law) and, in practice, must consider the opinions of leading families and the religious establishment.

The opinions of the people are institutionalized in the Advisory Council, an appointed body that assists the Amir in formulating policy. However, it is possible that the first elections for this body will occur in 2008. Elections in 1999, in which both men and women participated, resulted in the formation of a municipal council. One woman candidate was elected to the municipal council in 2003. Municipal elections were held for the third time in April 2007.

There has been no serious challenge to Al Thani rule. As the most visible sign of the move toward openness, the Al Jazeera satellite television station based in Qatar is considered the most free and unfettered broadcast source in the Arab world. In practice, however, Al Jazeera rarely criticizes the ruling Al Thani family.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Amir: **HAMAD bin Khalifa Al Thani**
Prime Min.: **HAMAD bin Jasim bin Jabir Al Thani**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Abdallah bin Hamad al-ATIYAH**
Min. of Business & Commerce: **FAHD bin Jasim Al Thani**
Min. of Cabinet Affairs: **NASIR bin Muhammad Al Thani**
Min. of Communications & Transport: **AHMAD bin Nasir Al Thani**
Min. of Culture & Heritage: **Hamad bin Abd al-Aziz al-KAWARI**
Min. of Defense: **HAMAD bin Khalifa Al Thani**
Min. of Education: **Shaykha bint Ahmad al-MAHMUD**
Min. of Electricity & Water: **Abdallah bin Hamad al-ATIYAH**
Min. of Endowments & Islamic Affairs: **Ahmad Ghurab al-MARRI**
Min. of Energy & Industry: **Abdallah bin Hamad al-ATIYAH**
Min. of Environment: **Abdallah bin Barak al-MEADADI**
Min. of Finance & Economy: **Yusif Husayn al-KAMAL**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **HAMAD bin Jasim bin Jabir Al Thani**
Min. of Interior: **ABDALLAH bin Khalid Al Thani**
Min. of International Cooperation: **Khalid bin Muhammad al-ATIYAH**
Min. of Justice: **Hasan bin Abdallah al-GHANIM**
Min. of Labor: **Sultan Hasan al-Dhabit al-DUSARI**
Min. of Municipal Affairs & Agriculture: **ABD al-Rahman bin Khalifa bin Abd al-Aziz Al Thani**
Min. of Public Health: **GHALIYAH bint Muhammad Al Thani, Dr.**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Nasir al-HUMAYDI**
Min. of State: **HAMAD bin Abdallah bin Muhammad Al Thani**
Min. of State: **HAMAD bin Suhaym Al Thani**
Min. of State for Cabinet Affairs (Acting): **Sultan Hasan al-Dhabit al-DUSARI**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Ahmad bin Abdallah al-MAHMUD**
Min. of State for Internal Affairs: **ABDALLAH bin Nasir bin Khalifa Al Thani**
Governor, Central Bank: **ABDALLAH bin Saud Al Thani**
Ambassador to the US: **Ali Fahad al-Shahwany al-HAJRI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Nasir bin Abd al-Aziz al-NASIR**

Qatar maintains an embassy in the United States at 2555 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037 (tel. 202-274-1600) and a consulate in Houston at 4265 San Felipe Street, Suite 1100, Houston, Texas 77207 (tel. 713-968-9840). Qatar's Permanent Mission to the United Nations is at 747 Third Ave., 22nd floor, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-486-9335).

DEFENSE

Qatar's defense expenditures are estimated to be in the range of 10% of GDP. Qatar maintains a modest military force of about 12,000 men, including an army, navy, and air force. The country has a public security force of about 8,000 men, including a coast guard, national firefighting force, air wing, marine police, and an internal security force. Qatar also has signed defense pacts with the U.S., U.K., and France. Qatar plays an active role in the collective defense efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC—the regional organization of the Arab states in the Gulf; the other five members are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the U.A.E., and Oman). Qatari forces played an important role in the first Gulf War, and Qatar has supported U.S. military operations critical to the success of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Qatar hosts CENTCOM Forward Headquarters.

ECONOMY

Oil formed the cornerstone of Qatar's economy well into the 1990s and still accounts for about 62% of total government revenue. In 1973, oil production and revenues increased sizably, moving Qatar out of the rank of the world's poorest countries and providing it with one of the highest per capita incomes. In 2007, Qatar's per capita income of nearly $67,000 was the fifth-highest in the world.

Qatar's economy suffered a downturn from in the mid-1990s. Lower Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil production quotas, a fall in oil prices, and the generally unpromising outlook on international markets reduced oil earnings. In turn, the Qatari Government cut spending plans to match lower income. The resulting recessionary local business climate caused many firms to lay off expatriate staff. With the economy recovering in the late 1990s, expatriate populations have grown again.

Oil production is currently around 835,000 barrels a day (bpd), and is expected to reach 1.1 million bpd by 2009. At the current production pace, oil reserves are expected to last more than 40 years. Moreover, Qatar's proven reserves of gas are the third-largest in the world, exceeding 900 trillion cubic feet (14% of the world's total proven gas reserves). Qatar shares with Iran the largest single non-associated gas field in the world, the North Field. Qatar is now the world's largest producer of liquefied natural gas (LNG), with a capacity of more than 31 million metric tons per annum (mmta), and it expects to reach 77.5 mmta of LNG exports by 2010. By 2010, Qatar will account for one-third of the world's LNG supply.

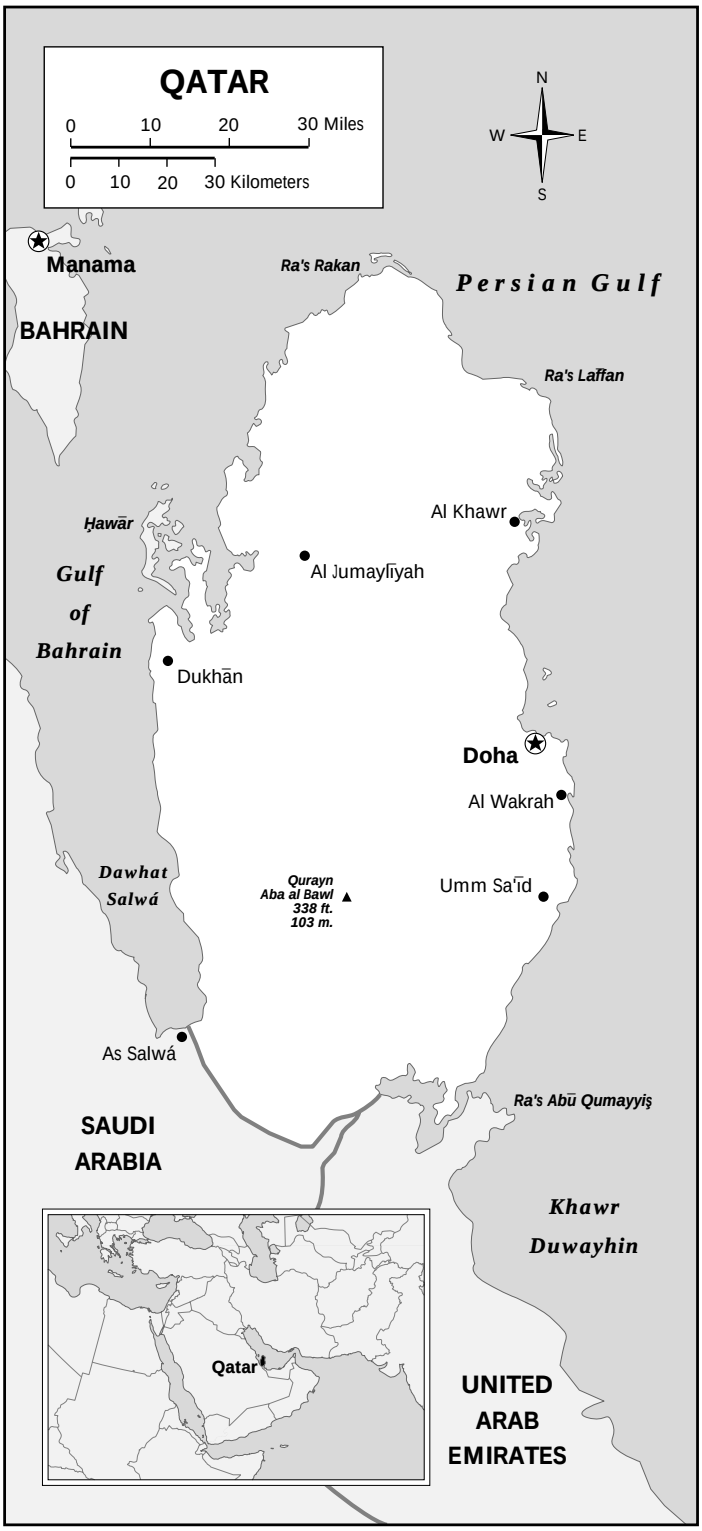
The 1991 completion of the $1.5-billion Phase I of the North Field gas development project strongly boosted the economy. In 1996, Qatar began exporting liquefied natural gas to Japan. Further phases of North Field gas development costing billions of dollars are in various stages of planning and development, and Qatar has concluded agreements with the U.A.E. to export gas via pipelines and to Spain, Turkey, Italy, the U.S., France, South Korea, India, China, Taiwan, and the U.K. via ship. However, the government has halted any further expansion of gas production until 2010, as it assesses its plans for future exploitation of the field.

Qatar's natural gas liquefaction facilities and related industries are located in Ras Laffan Industrial City, site of the world's largest LNG exports of more than 31 million metric tons per year. Qatar's heavy industrial base, located in Messaieed, includes a refinery with a 140,000

bpd capacity, a fertilizer plant for urea and ammonia, a steel plant, and a petrochemical plant, and several new petrochemical plants will be built in the coming years. All these industries use gas for fuel. Most are joint ventures between U.S., European, and Japanese firms and the state-owned Qatar Petroleum (QP). The U.S. is the major equipment supplier for Qatar's oil and gas industry, and U.S. companies are playing a major role in the development of the oil and gas sector and petrochemicals.

The country's economic growth has been stunning. Qatar's nominal GDP, currently $63.8 billion, had recently been growing at an average of 15%, and the 2007 growth rate was 12.5%. Qatar's per capita GDP is $67,000, and projected to soon be the highest in the world. The Qatari Government's strategy is to utilize its wealth to generate more wealth by diversifying the economic base of the country beyond hydrocarbons.

Qatar pursues a vigorous program of "Qatarization," under which all joint venture industries and government departments strive to move Qatari nationals into positions of greater authority. Growing numbers of foreign-educated Qataris, including many educated in the U.S., are returning home to assume key positions formerly occupied by expatriates. In order to control the influx of expatriate workers, Qatar has tightened the administration of its foreign manpower programs over the past several years. Security is the principal basis for Qatar's strict entry and immigration rules and regulations.



FOREIGN RELATIONS

Qatar achieved full independence in an atmosphere of cooperation with the U.K. and friendship with neighboring states. Most Arab states, the U.K., and the U.S. were among the first countries to recognize Qatar, and the state promptly gained admittance to the United Nations and the Arab League. Qatar established diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. and China in 1988. It was an early member of OPEC and a founding member of the GCC. In September 1992, tensions arose with Saudi Arabia when Saudi forces allegedly attacked a Qatari border post, resulting in two deaths. Relations have since improved, and a joint commission has been set up to demarcate the border as agreed between the two governments. Most, but not all, of the border issues have been resolved. For years, both Qatar and Bahrain claimed ownership of

the Hawar Islands. The case was eventually referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. The ICJ issued a ruling in June 2001, which both sides accepted. In the agreement Bahrain kept the main Hawar Island but dropped claims to parts of mainland Qatar, while Qatar retained significant maritime areas and their resources.

U.S.-QATARI RELATIONS

Bilateral relations are strong and expanding. The U.S. embassy was opened in March 1973. The first resident U.S. ambassador arrived in July 1974. Ties between the U.S. and Qatar are excellent. Amir Hamad last visited Washington in 2004, and President Bush visited Qatar in 2003. Qatar and the United States coordinate closely on regional diplomatic initiatives, cooperate to increase security in the Gulf, and enjoy extensive economic links, especially in the hydrocarbons sector. Qatar sees the development of a world-class educational system as key to its continued success. As a result, hundreds of Qataris study in the United States. Cornell University has established a degree-granting branch medical school campus in Doha, and other universities including Texas A&M, Carnegie Mellon University, the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Design, and the Georgetown School of Foreign Service also have branch campuses in Qatar's "Education City" complex.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

DOHA (E) 22 February Street, APO/FPO Box 520, APO AE 09898, (974) 488-4101, Fax (974) 488-4298, INMARSAT Tel 383132075, Workweek: Sunday -Thursday, 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Website: http://qatar.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Oumnia Turner
AMB OMS:	Steve Rogerson
ECO:	Dave Fabrycky
FM:	Michael McMahon
MGT:	Wesley Green IV
POL/ECO:	Steve Rice
US REP:	Ltc. Reggie Hall
CON:	Tim Ponce
DCM:	Michael Ratney
PAO:	Joey Hood
GSO:	Jack Poo
RSO:	Frank Theus
CLO:	Renee Reardon
FMO:	Tony Zaccagnino
IMO:	Barbara Darnielle
ISO:	Brian Ahern
ISSO:	Brian Ahern
LEGATT:	Martin Reardon
State ICASS:	Joey Hood

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 10, 2008

Country Description: Qatar is a monarchy governed by the ruling Al Thani family in consultation with a council of ministers, an appointed advisory council and an elected municipal council. Islamic ideals and beliefs provide the foundation of the country's customs, laws and practices. Located in the heart of the Persian Gulf, Qatar is a dynamic, modernizing, rapidly developing country that is among the wealthiest per capita in the world. The capital is Doha. Tourist facilities are available.

Entry Requirements: Passports and visas are required. U.S. citizens may obtain a single-entry tourist or business visa at Doha International Airport upon arrival. Single entry visas cost $28 and must be paid by credit card only. Cash is not accepted. Visas are valid for 30 days and may be extended for an additional 30 days for a $28 fee through the Airport Visas Section of the Immigration Department located next to Doha International Airport. However, U.S.-citizen travelers will be able to clear Qatari immigration more quickly and be granted a longer stay in country by obtaining visas prior to arrival. Former resident permit holders who return to Qatar for a short business or tourist trip may still obtain a visa on arrival at Doha International Airport. To facilitate entry with Qatari Immigration, former resident permit holders should carry a "no objection letter" issued by their former sponsor.

If planning to arrive at another port of entry in Qatar or if a previous resident of Qatar whose visa had been cancelled early or for whom a sponsor may have filed a complaint, travelers should obtain a tourist or business visa in advance of their arrival from a Qatari embassy or consulate abroad or online at Qatar's E-Government English language web site, http://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/portal. Travelers should also note that the Qatari Government charges $55 for each day that an individual overstays a visa, up to a maximum amount of $3,300.

For further information on visas, residence permits and entry requirements, please visit the Qatar's E-Government English language web site, http://portal.www.gov.qa/wps/portal. Travelers may also contact the Embassy of the State of Qatar (www.qatarembassy.net) at 2555 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone (202) 274-1600, fax (202) 237-0061. They may also contact the Consulate General of the State of Qatar, 1990 Post Oak Blvd. Suite 810, Houston TX 77056, telephone (713) 355-8221, fax (713) 355-8184, send email inquiries to info@qatarembassy.org.

Military personnel are subject to different entry/exit requirements and should refer to www.fcg.pentagon.mil for specific information pertaining to their travel requirements.

NOTE FOR DUAL NATIONALS: Qatari law requires that Qatari citizens only hold Qatari citizenship and enter and exit on a Qatari passport. Qatari authorities have confiscated the passports of U.S. citizens who acquired Qatari citizenship through marriage to a Qatari national or by virtue of birth in the U.S. In several cases, Qatari authorities informed U.S. citizens that their U.S. citizenship had been revoked and was no longer valid.

However, foreign governments have no authority to revoke the citizenship

of a U.S. citizen. If this occurs, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Doha immediately.

Safety and Security: Incidents of violence are rare in Qatar, although attacks against Western targets have occurred. To provide for public security, a large police presence is deployed throughout the country. American citizens in Qatar are strongly encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance, be aware of local events and take the appropriate steps to bolster their personal security at all times.

The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. interests worldwide, including the Middle East. Both historical and recurring information suggests that al-Qa'ida and affiliated organizations continue to plan strikes against Western targets; these attacks may employ a wide variety of tactics to include assassination, kidnapping, hijacking and bombing. On March 19, 2005, a suicide bomber detonated a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) at a theater in Doha regularly frequented by westerners; a citizen of the United Kingdom was killed, and several other individuals were injured.

Increased security at official facilities has led terrorists and their sympathizers to seek softer, less fortified targets; the March 2005 theater attack in Doha is one such example. Other locations of potential concern include any venue where U.S. citizens and other foreigners are known to congregate in large numbers such as public assemblies, sporting events, restaurants, residential areas, clubs, places of worship, schools, hotels, etc. The Government of Qatar occasionally provides security for such locations and events, but to varying degrees. In most instances, the Embassy cannot gauge the appropriateness of security for a given event prior to its commencement. The Embassy strongly encourages American citizens to avoid large crowds and demonstrations whenever possible.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts and additional resources can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The crime rate in Qatar is generally low. A large police presence is apparent to travelers throughout the country. Incidents of violence are rare but have occurred more frequently as Doha's population and economic pressures on expatriate workers have increased substantially during the past few years. Local and third country national young men have been known to verbally and physically harass unaccompanied, expatriate women.

Reports of petty theft have been growing, including ATM and credit card theft, purse snatching and pick-pocketing. Travelers are cautioned not to leave valuables such as cash, jewelry, and electronic items unsecured in hotel rooms or unattended in public places.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Doha. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Qatar is: 999. The Qatari Police can be contacted for emergency assistance by dialing 999 from any telephone in Qatar.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good modern medical care and medicines are available in Doha, although only basic or no medical care may be available in Qatar's smaller cities or outlying areas. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals expect immediate cash payment for health services. Information about the Qatari national healthcare system is available at http://www.hmc.org.qa.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Qatar does not allow individuals with HIV/AIDS to enter the country. Medical exams are required for all long-term visitors and residents. Individuals who have HIV/AIDS may be subject to deportation. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Qatar at www.qatarembassy.net before you travel.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S.

citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Qatar is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Short-term visitors should obtain a valid International Driving Permit prior to arrival and should not drive in Qatar on a U.S. driver's license. New and prospective residents should obtain a permanent Qatari Driving License immediately after arrival. To obtain a Qatari driver's license, American citizens will need a valid U.S. driver's license. American citizens should renew their driver's license before leaving the U.S. Qatari authorities will not accept learner's permits and temporary permits as valid driver's licenses. Short-term visitors and business travelers can also obtain a Temporary Qatari Driving License by presenting their U.S. driver's license at any branch of Qatar's Traffic Police. Once an American citizen holds a valid Qatari residence permit, they are no longer permitted to drive in Qatar with an International Driving Permit or a Temporary Qatar Driving License.

Traffic accidents are among Qatar's leading causes of death. Safety regulations in Qatar are improving thanks to a more stringent traffic law adopted in October 2007 and a country-wide traffic safety campaign. However, informal rules of the road and the combination of local and third-country-national driving customs often prove frustrating for first-time drivers in Qatar. The combination of Qatar's extensive use of roundabouts, many road construction projects and the high speeds at which drivers may travel can prove challenging. The rate of automobile accidents due to driver error and excessive speed is declining but remains higher than in the United States. In rural areas, poor lighting, wandering camels and un-shouldered roads present other hazards.

Despite aggressive driving on Qatar's roads, drivers should avoid altercations or arguments over traffic incidents, particularly with Qatari citizens who, if insulted, have filed complaints with local police that resulted in the arrest and overnight detention of U.S. citizens. Drivers can be held liable for injuries to other persons involved in a vehicular accident, and local police have detained U.S. citizens overnight until the extent of the person's injuries were known. Due to its conservative Islamic norms, Qatar maintains a zero-tolerance policy against drinking and driving. Qatar's Traffic Police have arrested Americans for driving after consuming amounts of alcohol at even smaller levels normally accepted in the U.S.

Any motor vehicle over five years old cannot be imported into the country. For specific information concerning Qatari driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact either the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Washington, DC or the Consulate General of the State of Qatar in Houston, Texas.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Qatar's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Qatar's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Qatari customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning importation into Qatar of items such as alcohol, narcotics, pork products, firearms, or anything deemed pornographic by Qatari authorities. While importation of religious material for personal use is acceptable, importation of religious material for the purpose of proselytizing is not. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Washington, D.C., or the Consulate General of the State of Qatar in Houston for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Pets entering Qatar require an import permit from the Ministry of Agriculture. Cats with proper documentation are allowed to enter with no difficulty, but some breeds of dogs, especially large dogs, are not admitted. Application forms for import permits may be obtained from the Ministry of Agriculture through a sponsoring employer. A copy of the pet's health certificate and vaccination record must be submitted with the application. Qatari law does not recognize dual nationality. Persons who possess Qatari citizenship in addition to U.S. citizenship are considered Qatari citizens by the State of Qatar and are subject to Qatar's laws. Qatari citizenship imposes special obligations, particularly with regard to child custody and exiting or entering the country. For additional information, please refer to our dual nationality flyer or contact the U.S. Embassy in Doha.

All U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their passports with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. Qatari employers/sponsors customarily hold passports of foreign (i.e., non-Qatari) employees during the terms of their employment in Qatar. Residents carry a Qatari Identification Card (Iqama) for identification in place of a passport. Foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, may not leave Qatar without permission in the form of exit visas obtained by their employer/sponsor.

The U.S. Embassy in Doha cannot assist U.S. citizens in Qatar to obtain third-country visas for unofficial travel.

Islam provides the foundation of Qatar's customs, laws and practices. Foreign visitors are expected to remain sensitive to the Islamic culture and not dress in a revealing or provocative manner, including the wearing of sleeveless shirts and blouses, halter-tops and shorts. Western bathing attire is worn only at hotel pools and beaches.

Business And Employment Contracts: The written, Arabic text of a contract governs employment and business arrangements under Qatari

law. Before signing a contract, U.S. citizens and companies should obtain an independent English translation of the original Arabic to ensure a full understanding of the contract's terms, limits, and agreements. No U.S. citizen should work in Qatar or make a business arrangement without having seen and understood the full written contract. Verbal assurances or side letters are not binding in Qatar.

In the event of a contract or employment dispute, Qatari authorities refer to the Arabic language of a contract. Since a Qatari sponsor holds the employee's passport and controls the issuance of exit visas, U.S. citizens will be unable to leave Qatar without their sponsor's approval in the event of an emergency or employment or business dispute. Any U.S. citizen who breaks an employment or business contract may have to pay substantial penalties before being allowed to depart Qatar. Qatari law favors employers over employees, and Qatari sponsors have substantial leverage in any negotiations and may block the departure of the employee or bar future employment in Qatar. If a sponsor files a complaint against an employee who departed Qatar, the employee may be barred from returning to Qatar, even on a subsequent tourist or airport visa.

Transferring employment in Qatar requires the permission of the previous employer, which is discretionary, and is subject to approval by the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry of the Interior has denied employment transfers in the past, including ordering U.S. citizens deported and barred from re-entry to Qatar for two years. The U.S. Embassy has no standing in Qatar's courts, cannot sponsor visas, and cannot mediate labor or business disputes. U.S. consular officers can provide lists of local attorneys to help U.S. citizens settle disputes, but ultimate responsibility for the resolution of disputes through Qatar's legal system lies with the parties involved.

To obtain a residence permit in Qatar, the Government of Qatar usually requires foreign citizens to provide a police clearance certificate from their home countries. Prospective residents can obtain a U.S. police clearance certificate two ways: through a local or state law enforcement agency or through the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). In both cases, the clearance will run against the National Crime Information Center, which contains all federal, state and local criminal records. Please visit our web site http://qatar.usembassy.gov/police-clearances.html for more information. This process requires several weeks, and the U.S. Embassy in Doha strongly recommends that prospective residents obtain a U.S. police clearance before they arrive in Qatar.

For more information on business opportunities and practices in Qatar, please visit the Foreign Commercial Service's Country Commercial Guide for Qatar at http://www.buyusa.gov/qatar.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Criminal offenses are punished according to Qatari laws, which in some cases are based on Islamic law and sometimes more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Qatari laws, even unknowingly, may be arrested, imprisoned, deported, or subject to a ban from departing Qatar. Travel bans are not lifted until both parties resolve a dispute and the case is abandoned or, if not, until the matter is resolved by a court, which may require months to process the case. Qatari law enforcement authorities have detained potential witnesses or relatives without charges or access to legal counsel during the investigation of a crime.

The U.S. Embassy in Doha cautions American citizens that Qatari police have arrested American citizens suspected of or witness to a crime, including traffic accidents involving injuries to pedestrians or the occupants of other cars, traffic arguments, slander, and a variety of lesser offenses. Once arrested, the Qatari Police have no independent authority to grant a release, an authority reserved solely for Qatar's Public Prosecution and Courts. As a result, arrested Americans, regardless of the charges, often spend one or two nights in jail awaiting a hearing with Qatar's Public Prosecution or the appropriate court.

Qatari law enforcement authorities do not routinely notify the U.S. Embassy in Doha of a U.S. citizen's arrest and, for more serious crimes, may not allow a U.S. Embassy official to visit an arrested U.S. citizen until the initial interrogation is completed. Upon arrest, U.S. citizens should ask to speak to the U.S. Embassy immediately, and if not allowed, request a friend or family member notify the U.S. Embassy through the contact information below.

Incidents involving insults or obscene language/gestures often result in arrest, overnight imprisonment and/or fines whether the incident occurs between private parties or involves officers of the law. Insulting someone in public is considered a punishable offense. Drunk driving, public intoxication and other alcohol-related offenses are treated with severity and will result in arrest, heavy fines, imprisonment, or expulsion from the country. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Qatar are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Homosexual activity is considered to be a criminal offense, and those convicted may be sentenced to lashing and/or a prison sentence, and/or deportation. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Qatar are encouraged to register

with the U.S. Embassy in Doha through the State Department's travel registration web site to obtain updated information on travel and security within Qatar. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Doha. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the U.S. Embassy in Doha to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in the Al-Luqta District on 22nd February Street, PO Box 2399, Doha; phone (974) 488-4101, extension 0 or 6500. For after-hours emergencies, U.S. citizens may call (974) 488-4101, extension 0 or 6600, to reach the duty officer. On the Internet, you may reach the Embassy web site at http://qatar.usembassy.gov for additional information and operating hours. The embassy observes a Sunday through Thursday workweek. Government offices and most businesses in Qatar also observe a Sunday through Thursday workweek.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Qatar is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Qatar and the United States addressing international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Qatar place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts, as well as the country's laws and regulations. American citizens planning a trip to Qatar with dual- national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: When child custody disputes arise between parents of any religion, the custody decisions by Qatari courts are based on Islamic (Shari'a) law. Custody cases can be very complex and are usually determined on a case-by-case basis. When making decisions regarding child custody matters, Qatari courts consider the parents' religion(s), place(s) of permanent residence, income, and marital status.

Qatari law differentiates between custodianship and guardianship. Generally speaking, a custodian is awarded physical custody of the child and is responsible for his/her upbringing including education and daily care. A guardian is responsible for the child's financial support and can be held responsible for ensuring a sound upbringing, such as proper religious foundation. In many cases, the guardian (frequently male) must grant permission for children to depart Qatar.

Qatari courts do not, as a general rule, award custody of "dual national" (U.S./Qatari) children to an American mother or father, even one who is Muslim. A fundamental consideration in awarding custody is a parent's place of permanent residence and degree of access to the children. Custody of very young children is generally granted to the mother, as long as certain restrictive conditions are met. Once the children come of age (for males, completion of their seventh year of age, for females, the onset of puberty), the father can appeal for, and will usually be awarded, full custody, provided certain restrictive conditions are met. If a father is unable or unfit to be custodian of his children, the court may give custody to another family member. Shari'a court judges have broad discretion in custody cases and often make exceptions to these general guidelines, particularly in cases in which a parent is from an influential family or has powerful connections in Qatar.

Even when a mother is granted custody, the non-custodial father maintains a great deal of influence on the rearing of the children. In many cases, the father has been able to acquire legal custody of children against the wishes of the mother when she is unable or unwilling to meet certain conditions set by law for her to maintain her custodial rights. For example, if a mother refuses to give the father access to his child or attempts to leave Qatar with the children without the court's permission, a mother's custody rights can be severed. The Qatari court can sever a mother's custody if it determines that the mother is incapable of safeguarding the child or of bringing the child up in accordance with the appropriate religious standards. Either parent can lose custody by re-marrying a party considered "unmarriageable," or by residing in a home with people that might be "strangers." However, the final decision is left to the discretion of the Shari'a court. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Qatari court should retain an attorney in Qatar. The State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Qatar maintain a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by contacting either office. It is the responsibility of the prospective client to assess the capabilities of an attorney.

The Embassy cannot recommend any specific attorney, and makes no claim as to the ability or the integrity of the attorneys on the list. Questions involving Qatari law should be addressed to a Qatari attorney or to the Embassy of Qatar at:

Embassy of the State of Qatar
4200 Wisconsin Avenue, NW,
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20016
Telephone: (202) 274-1600

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Qatar if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices. For example, an order from a U.S. court granting custody to an American mother will not be honored in Qatar if the mother intends to

take the child to live outside Qatar. Courts in Qatar will not enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Qatar to pay child support.

Visitation Rights: In cases where the father has custody of a child, visitation by the mother is entirely at the discretion of the father. Upon a non-Qatari parent's departure from Qatar, the Qatari parent (either the mother or father) may request an immigration stop against the other parent, thereby preventing future entry into Qatar even with a valid visa. For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



ROMANIA

Compiled from the April 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Romania

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 237,499 sq. km. (91,699 sq. mi.); somewhat smaller than New York and Pennsylvania combined.

Cities: Capital—Bucharest (pop. 2.02 million). Other cities—Iasi (350,000), Constanta (344,000), Timisoara (327,000), Cluj-Napoca (334,000), Galati (331,000), Brasov (316,000).

Terrain: Consists mainly of rolling, fertile plains; hilly in the eastern regions of the middle Danube basin; and major mountain ranges running north and west in the center of the country, which collectively are known as the Carpathians.

Climate: Moderate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Romanian(s).

Population: 21.6 million (December 2006).

Annual population growth rate: -0.3%.

Ethnic groups: Romanians 89%, Hungarians 7.1%, Germans 0.5%, Ukrainians, Serbs, Croats, Russians, Turks, and Roma 2.5%.

Religions: Orthodox 86.8%, Roman Catholic 5%, Reformed Protestant, Baptist, and Pentecostal 5%, Greek Catholic (Uniate) 1 to 3%, Muslim 0.2%, Jewish less than 0.1%.

Languages: Romanian (official). Other languages—Hungarian, German.

Education: Years compulsory—10. Attendance—98%. Literacy—98%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—18.7/1000 (2001); 18.6/1,000 (2002). Life expectancy—men 67.61 yrs., women 74.9 yrs.

Work force: (June 2007) 9.4 million. Agriculture—3.0 million, industry and construction—2.8 million, services—3.3 million, other—0.3 million.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: December 8, 1991, amended by referendum October 18-19, 2003.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers. Legislative—bicameral Parliament. Judicial—Constitutional Court, High Court of Cassation and Justice, and lower courts.

Political subdivisions: 41 counties plus the city of Bucharest.

Political parties: Political parties represented in the Parliament are the Social Democratic Party (PSD); the National Liberal Party (PNL); the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L); the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR); the Conservative Party (PC); the Greater Romania Party (PRM). Other political parties include National Democratic Christian Peasant Party (PNTCD), the New Generation Party (PNG), National Initiative Party (PIN) as well as political organizations of minorities.

Suffrage: Universal from age 18.

Defense: 1.9% of GDP.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $122.3 billion.

Annual GDP growth rate: (2006) +7.7%; +5.8% (Jan.-June 2007).

GDP per capita: (2006) $5,662.

Natural resources: Oil, timber, natural gas, coal, salt, iron ore.

Agriculture: (2006) Percent of GDP—8.0%. Products—corn, wheat, potatoes, oilseeds, vegetables, livestock, fish, and forestry.

Industry: (2006) Percent of GDP—23.9%. Types—machine building, mining, construction materials, metal production and processing, chemicals, food processing, textiles, clothing. Industrial output increased by 7.1% in 2006 and 6.1% in Jan.-June 2007.

Services: (2006) Percent of GDP—61.1%.

Construction: (2006) Percent of GDP—7.0%.

Trade: Exports (2006)—$32.3 billion; (Jan.-June 2007) $18.6 billion. Types—textiles, chemicals, light

manufactures, wood products, fuels, processed metals, machinery and equipment. Exports to the U.S. (2006)—$827.5 million; (Jan.-June 2007) $391 million. Major markets—Italy, Germany, Turkey, France, Hungary, U.K., U.S. (2.6%). Imports (2006)—$50.9 billion; (Jan.-June 2007) $31.3 billion. Types—machinery and equipment, textiles, fuel, coking coal, iron ore, machinery and equipment, and mineral products. Imports from the U.S. (2006)—$1.2 billion; (Jan.-June 2007) $414.1 million. Major suppliers—Germany, Italy, Russia, France, Turkey, Austria, U.K., China, Hungary, U.S. (2.4%).

Exchange rate: 2.38 new Lei=U.S.$1 (end-October 2007).

GEOGRAPHY

Extending inland halfway across the Balkan Peninsula and covering a large elliptical area of 237,499 square kilometers (91,699 sq. mi.), Romania occupies the greater part of the lower basin of the Danube River system and the hilly eastern regions of the middle Danube basin. It lies on either side of the mountain systems collectively known as the Carpathians, which form the natural barrier between the two Danube basins.

Romania's location gives it a continental climate, particularly in Moldavia and Wallachia (geographic areas east of the Carpathians and south of the Transylvanian Alps, respectively) and to a lesser extent in centrally located Transylvania, where the climate is more moderate. A long and at times severe winter (December-March), a hot summer (April-July), and a prolonged autumn (August-November) are the principal seasons, with a rapid transition from spring to summer. In Bucharest, the daily minimum temperature in January averages -7°C (20°F), and the daily maximum temperature in July averages 29ºC (85ºF).

PEOPLE

About 89% of the people are ethnic Romanians, a group that—in contrast to its Slav or Hungarian neighbors—traces itself to Latin-speaking Romans, who in the second and third centuries A.D. conquered and settled among the ancient Dacians, a Thracian people. As a result, the Romanian language, although containing elements of Slavic, Turkish, and other languages, is a romance language related to French and Italian.

Hungarians and Roma are the principal minorities, with a declining German population and smaller numbers of Serbs, Croats, Ukrainians, Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Great Russians, and others. Minority populations are greatest in Transylvania and the Banat, areas in the north and west, which belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until World War I. Even before union with Romania, ethnic Romanians comprised the overall majority in Transylvania. However, ethnic Hungarians and Germans were the dominant urban population until relatively recently, and ethnic Hungarians still are the majority in a few districts.

Before World War II, minorities represented more than 28% of the total population. During the war that percentage was halved, largely by the loss of the border areas of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (to the former Soviet Union—now Moldova and a portion of south-west Ukraine) and southern Dobrudja (to Bulgaria), as well as by the postwar flight or deportation of ethnic Germans. In the last several decades, more than two-thirds of the remaining ethnic Germans in Romania emigrated to Germany.

Romanian troops during World War II participated in the destruction of the Jewish communities of Bessarabia and Transnistria (both now comprising the independent Republic of Moldova) and Bukovina (now part of Ukraine). Although subjected to harsh persecution, including government-sanctioned pogroms and killings, most Jews from the territory now comprising Romania survived the Holocaust. Mass emigration, mostly to Israel, has reduced the surviving Jewish community from over 300,000 to less than 10,000.

Religious affiliation tends to follow ethnic lines, with most ethnic Romanians identifying with the Romanian Orthodox Church. Also ethnically Romanian is the Greek Catholic or Uniate church, reunified with the Orthodox Church by fiat in 1948, and restored after the 1989 revolution. The 2002 census indicates that less than 1% of the population is Greek Catholic, as opposed to about 10% prior to 1948. Roman Catholics, largely ethnic Hungarians and Germans, constitute about 5% of the population; Calvinists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Lutherans make up another 5%. There are smaller numbers of Unitarians, Muslims, and other religions.

Romania's rich cultural traditions have been nourished by many sources, some of which predate the Roman occupation. The traditional folk arts, including dance, music, wood-carving, ceramics, weaving and embroidery of costumes and household decorations still flourish in many parts of the country. Despite strong Austrian, German, and especially French influence, many of Romania's great artists, such as the painter Nicolae Grigorescu, the poet Mihai Eminescu, the composer George Enescu, and the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, drew their inspiration from Romanian folk traditions.

The country's many Orthodox monasteries, as well as the Transylvanian Catholic and Evangelical Churches, some of which date back to the 13th century, are repositories of artistic treasures. The famous painted monasteries of Bukovina make an important contribution to European architecture.

Poetry and the theater play an important role in contemporary Romanian life. Classic Romanian plays, such as those of Ion Luca Caragiale, as well as works by modern or avant-garde Romanian and international playwrights, find sophisticated and



enthusiastic audiences in the many theaters of the capital and of the smaller cities.

HISTORY

Since about 200 B.C., when it was settled by the Dacians, a Thracian tribe, Romania has been in the path of a series of migrations and conquests. Under the emperor Trajan early in the second century A.D., Dacia was incorporated into the Roman Empire, but was abandoned by a declining Rome less than two centuries later. Romania disappeared from recorded history for hundreds of years, to reemerge in the medieval period as the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Heavily taxed and badly administered under the Ottoman Empire, the two Principalities were unified under a single native prince in 1859, and had their full independence ratified in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. A German prince, Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, was crowned first King of Romania in 1881.

The new state, squeezed between the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires, looked to the West, particularly France, for its cultural, educational, and administrative models. Romania was an ally of the Entente and the U.S. in World War I, and was granted substantial territories with Romanian populations, notably Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina, after the war.

Most of Romania's pre-World War II governments maintained the forms, but not always the substance, of a liberal constitutional monarchy. The fascist Iron Guard movement, exploiting a quasi-mystical nationalism, fear of communism, and resentment of alleged foreign and Jewish domination of the economy, was a key destabilizing factor, which led to the creation of a royal dictatorship in 1938 under King Carol II. In 1940, the authoritarian General Antonescu

took control. Romania entered World War II on the side of the Axis Powers in June 1941, invading the Soviet Union to recover Bessarabia and Bukovina, which had been annexed in 1940.

In August 1944, a coup led by King Michael, with support from opposition politicians and the army, deposed the Antonescu dictatorship and put Romania's battered armies on the side of the Allies. Romania incurred additional heavy casualties fighting alongside the Soviet Union against the Germans in Transylvania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

According to the officially recognized 2004 Wiesel Commission report, Romanian authorities were responsible for the death of between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews in the territories under Romanian jurisdiction (including Bessarabia, Bukovina, and Transnistria) out of a population of approximately 760,000. In addition, 132,000 Romanian Jews were killed by the pro-Nazi Hungarian authorities in Transylvania.

A peace treaty, signed in Paris on February 10, 1947, confirmed the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, but restored the part of northern Transylvania granted to Hungary in 1940 by Hitler. The treaty also required massive war reparations by Romania to the Soviet Union, whose occupying forces left in 1958.

The Soviets pressed for inclusion of Romania's heretofore negligible Communist Party in the post-war government, while non-communist political leaders were steadily eliminated from political life. King Michael abdicated under pressure in December 1947, when the Romanian People's Republic was declared, and went into exile.

By the late 1950s, Romania's communist government began to assert some independence from the Soviet Union. Nicolae Ceausescu became head of the Communist Party in 1965 and head of state in 1967. Ceausescu's denunciation of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and a brief relaxation in internal repression helped give him a positive image both at home and in the West. Seduced by Ceausescu's "independent" foreign policy, Western leaders were slow to turn against a regime that, by the late 1970s, had become increasingly harsh, arbitrary, and capricious. Rapid economic growth fueled by foreign credits gradually gave way to economic autarchy accompanied by wrenching austerity and severe political repression.

After the collapse of communism in the rest of Eastern Europe in the late summer and fall of 1989, a mid-December protest in Timisoara against the forced relocation of an ethnic Hungarian pastor grew into a country-wide protest against the Ceausescu regime, sweeping the dictator from power. Ceausescu and his wife were executed on December 25, 1989, after a cursory military trial. About 1,500 people were killed in confused street fighting. An impromptu governing coalition, the National Salvation Front (FSN), installed itself and proclaimed the restoration of democracy and freedom. The Communist Party was dissolved and its assets transferred to the state. Ceausescu's most unpopular measures, such as bans on private commercial entities and independent political activity, were repealed.

Ion Iliescu, a former Communist Party official demoted by Ceausescu in the 1970s, emerged as the leader of the NSF. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on May 20, 1990. Running against representatives of the pre-war National Peasants' Party and National Liberal Party, Iliescu won 85% of the vote. The NSF captured two-thirds of the seats in Parliament, and named a university professor, Petre Roman, as Prime Minister. The new government began cautious free market reforms such as opening the economy to consumer imports and establishing the independence of the National Bank. Romania has made great progress in institutionalizing democratic principles, civil liberties, and respect for human rights since the revolution. Nevertheless, the legacy of 44 years of communist rule cannot quickly be eliminated. Membership in the Romanian Communist Party was usually the prerequisite for higher education, foreign travel, or a good job, while the extensive internal security apparatus subverted normal social and political relations. To the few active dissidents, who suffered gravely under Ceausescu and his predecessors, many of those who came forward as politicians after the revolution seemed tainted by association with the previous regime.

Over 200 new political parties sprang up after 1989, gravitating around personalities rather than programs. All major parties espoused democracy and market reforms, but the governing National Salvation Front proposed slower, more cautious economic reforms. In contrast, the opposition's main parties, the National Liberal Party (PNL), and the National Peasant-Christian Democrat Party (PNTCD) favored quick, sweeping reforms, immediate privatization, and reducing the role of the ex-communist elite.

In the 1990 general elections, the FSN and its candidate for presidency, Ion Iliescu, won with a large majority of the votes (66.31% and 85.07%, respectively). The strongest parties in opposition were the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), with 7.23%, and the PNL, with 6.41%.

Unhappy at the continued political and economic influence of members of the Ceausescu-era elite, anti-communist protesters camped in University Square in April 1990. When miners from the Jiu Valley descended on Bucharest two months later and brutally dispersed the remaining "hooligans," President Iliescu expressed public thanks, thus convincing many that the government had sponsored the miners' actions. The miners also attacked the headquarters and houses of opposition leaders. The Roman government fell in late September 1991, when the miners returned to Bucharest to demand higher salaries and better living conditions. Theodor Stolojan was appointed to head an interim government until new elections could be

held. Parliament drafted a new democratic constitution, approved by popular referendum in December 1991. The FSN split into two groups, led by Ion Iliescu (FDSN) and Petre Roman (FSN) in March 1992; Roman's party subsequently adopted the name Democratic Party (PD). National elections in September 1992 returned President Iliescu by a clear majority, and gave his party, the FDSN, a plurality. With parliamentary support from the nationalist PUNR and PRM parties, and the ex-communist PSM party, a technocratic government was formed in November 1992 under Prime Minister Nicolae Vacaroiu, an economist. The FDSN became the Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR) in July 1993. The Vacaroiu government ruled in coalition with three smaller parties, all of which abandoned the coalition by the time of the November 1996 elections.

The 1992 elections revealed a continuing political cleavage between major urban centers and the countryside. Rural voters, who were grateful for the restoration of most agricultural land to farmers but fearful of change, strongly favored President Ion Iliescu and the FDSN, while the urban electorate favored the CDR (a coalition made up by several parties—among which the PNTCD and the PNL were the strongest—and civic organizations) and quicker reform. Iliescu easily won reelection over a field of five other candidates. The FDSN won a plurality in both chambers of Parliament. With the CDR, the second-largest parliamentary group, reluctant to take part in a national unity coalition, the FDSN (now PDSR) formed a government under Prime Minister Nicolae Vacaroiu, with parliamentary support from the PUNR, PRM, and PSM. PRM and PSM left the government in October and December 1995, respectively.

The 1996 local elections demonstrated a major shift in the political orientation of the Romanian electorate. Opposition parties swept Bucharest and many of the larger cities. This trend continued in the national elections that same year, where the opposition dominated the cities and made steep inroads into rural areas theretofore dominated by President Iliescu and the PDSR, which lost many voters in their traditional strongholds outside Transylvania. The campaign of the opposition hammered away on the twin themes of the need to squelch corruption and to launch economic reform. The message resonated with the electorate, which swept Emil Constantinescu and parties allied to him to power in free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections. The coalition government formed in December 1996 took the historic step of inviting the UDMR and its Hungarian ethnic backers into government.

The coalition government retained power for four years despite constant internal frictions and three prime ministers, the last being the Governor of the National Bank, Mugur Isarescu.

In elections in November 2000, the electorate punished the coalition parties for their corruption and failure to improve the standard of living. The PDSR (renamed PSD—Social Democratic Party at June 16, 2001 Congress) came back into power, albeit as a minority government. In the concurrent presidential elections, former President Ion Iliescu decisively defeated the extreme nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM) leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor.

The PSD government, led by Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, forged a de facto governing coalition with the ethnic Hungarian UDMR, ushering in four years of relatively stable government. The PSD guided Romania toward greater macro-economic stability, although endemic corruption remained a major problem. In September 2003, the center-right National Liberal Party (PNL) and centrist Democratic Party (PD) formed an alliance at a national and local level, in anticipation of 2004 local and national elections. Romania then moved closer toward a political system dominated by two large political blocs.

In October 2003 citizens voted in favor of major amendments to the constitution in a nationwide referendum to bring Romania's organic law into compliance with European Union standards.

On November 28, 2004, Romania again held parliamentary and the first round of presidential elections. In the December 12 presidential runoff election, former Bucharest Mayor Traian Basescu, representing the center-right PNL-PD alliance, delivered a surprise defeat to PSD candidate Nastase. Basescu appointed PNL leader Calin Popescu-Tariceanu as Prime Minister, whose government was approved by the Parliament on December 28, 2004.

This coalition unraveled due to enmity between the President and Prime Minister by April 2007. Since April 3, 2007, Prime Minister Tariceanu's PNL party has run an ultra-minority government in coalition with the UDMR and tacit support of the PSD.

GOVERNMENT

Romania's 1991 constitution proclaims Romania a democracy and market economy, in which human dignity, civic rights and freedoms, the unhindered development of human personality, justice, and political pluralism are supreme and guaranteed values. The constitution directs the state to implement free trade, protect the principle of competition, and provide a favorable framework for production. The constitution provides for a president, a Parliament, a Constitutional Court and a separate system of lower courts that includes a Supreme Court.

The two-chamber Parliament, consisting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, is the law-making authority. Deputies and senators are elected for 4-year terms by universal suffrage. Elected officials at all levels of government, with the exception of the president and mayors, are selected on the basis of party lists, with parliamentary seats, city and county council representation, all allocated in proportion to party

choices made by the electorate. The president is elected by popular vote for a maximum of two terms. The length of the term was extended from four to five years in an October 2003 constitutional referendum. He is the Chief of State, charged with safeguarding the constitution, foreign affairs, and the proper functioning of public authorities. He is supreme commander of the armed forces and chairman of the Supreme Defense Council. According to the constitution, he acts as mediator among the power centers within the state, as well as between the state and society. The president nominates the prime minister, who in turn appoints the government, which must be confirmed by a vote of confidence from Parliament.

The Constitutional Court adjudicates the constitutionality of challenged laws and decrees. The court consists of nine judges, appointed for non-concurrent terms of 9 years. Three judges are appointed by the Chamber of Deputies, three by the Senate, and three by the president of Romania.

The Romanian legal system is based on the Napoleonic Code. The judiciary is to be independent, and judges appointed by the president are not removable. The president and other judges of the High Court of Cassation and Justice are appointed for terms of 6 years and may serve consecutive terms. Proceedings are public, except in special circumstances provided for by law.

The Ministry of Justice represents "the general interests of society" and defends the legal order as well as citizens' rights and freedoms. The ministry is to discharge its powers through independent, impartial public prosecutors.

For territorial and administrative purposes, Romania is divided into 41 counties and the city of Bucharest. Each county is governed by an elected county council. Local councils and elected mayors are the public administration authorities in villages and towns. The county council is the public administration authority that coordinates the activities of all village and town councils in a county. The central government appoints a prefect for each county and the Bucharest municipality. The prefect is the representative of the central government at the local level and directs any public services of the ministries and other central agencies at the county level.

A prefect may block the action of a local authority if he deems it unlawful or unconstitutional. The matter is then decided by an administrative court. Under legislation in force since January 1999, local councils have control over spending of their allocations from the central government budget, as well as authority to raise additional revenue locally.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Traian BASESCU**
Prime Min.: **Calin Popescu-TARICEANU**
Dep. Prime Min. for Culture, Education, & European Integration:
Min. of Admin. Reform & Interior: **Cristian DAVID**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Dacian CIOLOS**
Min. of Communication & Information Technology: **Karoly BORBELY**
Min. of Culture & Religious Affairs: **Adrian IORGULESCU**
Min. of Defense: **Teodor Viorel MELESCANU**
Min. of Development, Public Works, & Housing: **Laszlo BORBELY**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Varujan VOSGANIAN**
Min. of Education, Youth, & Research: **Cristian ADOMNITEI**
Min. of Environment & Sustainable Development: **Attila KORODI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Lazar COMANESCU**
Min. of Health: **Eugen NICOLAESCU**
Min. of Justice: **Catalin PREDOIU**
Min. of Labor, Social Solidarity, & Family: **Paul PACURARU**
Min. for Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises, Trade, Tourism, &Freelance Professions: **Ovidiu SILAGHI**
Min. of Transport: **Ludovic ORBAN**
Min.-Del. for Relations With Parliament: **Mihai Alexandru VOICU**
Governor, National Bank of Romania: **Mugur ISARESCU**

Ambassador to the US: **Adrian VIERITA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Simona-Mirela MICULESCU**

Romania maintains an embassy in the United States at 1607 23rd St., NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-232-3694, fax: 202-232-4748).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

November 2004 elections left the Romanian parliament closely divided between the center-right PNL-PD alliance and the PSD, which each hold between 30-40% of the seats in each chamber. The PNL-PD, however, forged a parliamentary majority with the support of the UDMR, PC and (in the lower house) the ethnic minority party representatives. The extreme nationalist PRM won fewer seats than in the 2000 elections, but remained a significant political player. Although the PNL and PD voted as a bloc in the parliament and ran candidates on a common list in the 2004 parliamentary elections, the two parties remained separated. On several occasions since 2005, President Traian Basescu has publicly expressed support for snap parliamentary elections. Parliamentary leaders have steadily opposed calling new elections.

After Romania's accession to the EU on January 1, 2007, the cooperation between PD President Basescu and PNL Prime Minister Tariceanu devolved into political infighting. The political turmoil resulted in a rupture of the PD-PNL alliance in April 2007, the 30-day suspension of the President in May, and the President's campaign to force a change from party list representational voting to single-member districts. Prime Minister Tariceanu continues to head a minority government in coalition with the UDMR and with the tacit support of the Socialist opposition.

Political parties represent a broad range of views and interests, and elected officials and other public figures freely express their views. Civil

society watchdog groups remain relatively small but have grown in influence. The press is free and outspoken, although there have been incidents of politically motivated intimidation and even violence against journalists and media management, particularly prior to 2004 national elections. Independent radio networks have proliferated, and several private television networks now operate nationwide. In addition, a large number of local private television networks have emerged.

Through support of or participation in consecutive government coalitions, the UDMR has ensured the continuing influence of the ethnic Hungarian minority in national government. In addition, consecutive governments have sought to improve the socio-economic situation of the Roma minority, which continues to suffer from severe poverty in many areas and discrimination. Although according to government statistics Roma officially represent 2.5% of the population, Romani organizations claim the percentage is actually several percentage points higher.

The restitution of private and religious property seized under communism or during World War II continues to move slowly. Particularly problematic is the return of Greek-Catholic churches, which were given to the Romanian Orthodox Church by the communist regime. The Romanian Orthodox Church thus far has turned over very few of these churches, many of which had belonged to the Greek Catholic community for hundreds of years. Romania has repealed communist-era legislation criminalizing homosexual acts and banned xenophobic and racist groups and their activities. Romanian law does not prohibit women's participation in government or politics, but societal attitudes remain a significant barrier. Women hold some high positions in government and roughly 10% of the seats in each chamber in the Parliament.

ECONOMY

Romania is a country of considerable potential: rich agricultural lands; diverse energy sources (coal, oil, natural gas, hydro, and nuclear); a substantial industrial base encompassing almost the full range of manufacturing activities; an educated work force; and opportunities for expanded development in tourism on the Black Sea and in the Carpathian mountains. The Romanian Government borrowed heavily from the West in the 1970s to build a substantial state-owned industrial base. Following the 1979 oil price shock and a debt rescheduling in 1981, Ceausescu decreed that Romania would no longer be subject to foreign creditors. By the end of 1989, Romania had paid off a foreign debt of about $10.5 billion through an unprecedented effort that wreaked havoc on the economy and living standards. Vital imports were slashed and food and fuel strictly rationed, while the government exported everything it could to earn hard currency. With investment slashed, Romania's infrastructure fell behind its historically poorer Balkan neighbors.

Since the fall of the Ceausescu regime in 1989, successive governments sought to build a Western-style market economy. The pace of restructuring was slow, but by 1994 the legal basis for a market economy was largely in place. After the 1996 elections, the coalition government attempted to eliminate consumer subsidies, float prices, liberalize exchange rates, and put in place a tight monetary policy. The Parliament enacted laws permitting foreign entities incorporated in Romania to purchase land. Foreign capital investment in Romania has been increasing rapidly, although it remains less in per capita terms than in some other countries of East and Central Europe.

Romania was the largest U.S. trading partner in Eastern Europe until Ceausescu's 1988 renunciation of most favored nation (MFN or non-discriminatory) trading status resulted in high U.S. tariffs on Romanian products. Congress approved restoration of MFN status effective November 8, 1993, as part of a new Bilateral Trade Agreement. Tariffs on most Romanian products dropped to zero in February 1994, with the inclusion of Romania in the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Major Romanian exports to the U.S. include shoes, clothing, steel, and chemicals. Romania signed an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU) in 1992 and a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1993, codifying Romania's access to European markets and creating the basic framework for further economic integration. At its Helsinki Summit in December 1999, the European Union invited Romania to formally begin accession negotiations. In December 2004, the EU Commission concluded pre-accession negotiations with Romania. In April 2005, the EU signed an accession treaty with Romania and its neighbor, Bulgaria, and in January 2007, they were both welcomed as new EU members.

Privatization of industry was first pursued with the transfer in 1992 of 30% of the shares of some 6,000 state-owned enterprises to five private ownership funds, in which each adult citizen received certificates of ownership. The remaining 70% ownership of the enterprises was transferred to a state ownership fund. With the assistance of the World Bank, European Union, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Romania succeeded in privatizing most industrial state-owned enterprises, including some large state-owned energy companies. Romania completed the privatization of the largest commercial bank (BCR) in 2006. The privatization of the last state-owned bank—the National Savings Bank (CEC)—was stopped in 2006 and has been indefinitely postponed. Four of the country's eight regional electricity distributors have now been privatized. Privatization of natural gas distribution companies also progressed with the sale of Romania's two regional gas distributors, Distrigaz Nord (to E.ON Ruhrgas of Germany) and Distrigaz Sud (to Gaz de France). Further progress in energy sector privatization, how-

ever, has been delayed as the government reconsiders its strategy on the Rovinari, Turceni, and Craiova energy complexes, contemplating the creation of an integrated, state-owned energy producer. Romania has a nuclear power plant at Cernavoda, with one nuclear reactor in operation since 1996 and a second one commissioned in the fall of 2007.

The return of collectivized farmland to its cultivators, one of the first initiatives of the post-December 1989 revolution government, resulted in a short-term decrease in agricultural production. Some four million small parcels representing 80% of the arable surface were returned to original owners or their heirs. Many of the recipients were elderly or city dwellers, and the slow progress of granting formal land titles remains an obstacle to leasing or selling land to active farmers.

Financial and technical assistance continues to flow from the U.S., European Union, other industrial nations, and international financial institutions facilitating Romania's reintegration into the world economy. The International Monetary Fund, World Bank (IBRD), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) all have programs and resident representatives in Romania, although USAID programs will phase out completely by June 1, 2008. As of August 2007, Romania had attracted $21.8 billion in foreign direct investment. Of this total, U.S. direct investment accounted for $915.7 million (4.9%), ranking sixth among national investors but first among non-EU countries.

After years of IMF-guided economic reforms, Romania' stand-by agreement with the IMF expired on July 7, 2006. Romania's inflation rate has steadily decreased, while growth rates have been between 4% and 8% since 2001. However, the IMF has been critical of Romania's 2005 adoption of a 16% flat tax, pointing to the country's low rate of tax collection as a medium- to long-term impediment to growth. The IMF has also criticized Romania's public sector wage policy as inflationary. Public sector wages increased 36% through 2006, and the Government of Romania approved public sector wage increases of 14%-19% over three rounds in 2007. Analysts have warned about increasing macroeconomic imbalances, such as the growing current account deficit (10.3% of GDP in 2006 and possibly reaching 15% in 2007, the IMF estimated). This along with deteriorating education and health services, aging and inadequate physical infrastructure, and a looming real estate price bubble are all seen as threats to future growth.

Romania's budget deficits also dropped under IMF guidance, though the trend is reversing. Actual deficits decreased from 4% of GDP in 1999 to only 0.8% in 2005 and 1.7% in 2006. However, the 2007 deficit rose to 2.5% of GDP, driven by rising spending on infrastructure, public sector wages, and pension increases. The IMF had recommended that Romania strive to keep the 2007 deficit below 2%, dropping to 1% of GDP in 2008. The IMF also advised that Romania is lacking a realistic fiscal policy framework for the medium term. The country made progress in combating domestic tax arrears and expanding the tax base in 2005, though Romania has one of the lowest collection rates in Europe, at 31.0% of GDP in 2006.

Unemployment was officially 3.9% in August 2007, although these figures do not capture high levels of temporary emigration, gray-market employment, or under-employment.

In the early 1990s, inflation was one of Romania's most serious economic problems. Inflation rates have gradually declined, finally reaching single digits in 2004. Inflation in 2006 stood at a historical low of 4.9%. The Central Bank set an ambitious annual target band of 4% plus/minus 1% for 2007, but outside analysts noted that inflationary pressures were growing and predicted that the rate for the year would slightly exceed the top of this band.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since December 1989, Romania has actively pursued a policy of strengthening relations with the West in general, more specifically with the U.S. and the European Union. Romania was a helpful partner to the allied forces during the first Gulf War, particularly during its service as president of the UN Security Council. Romania has been active in peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, UNAVEM in Angola, IFOR/SFOR in Bosnia, KFOR in Kosovo, and in Albania. Romania also offered important logistical support to allied military operations in Iraq in 2003 and, after the cessation of organized hostilities, has been participating in security and reconstruction activities. Romania is a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which it chaired in 2001.

Romania was the first country to enroll in the NATO Partnership for Peace program. NATO member states invited Romania to join the Alliance in 2002, based on Romania's rapid progress in modernizing its armed forces and its contributions to allied peacekeeping and other military operations. Romania officially became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on March 29, 2004 after depositing its instruments of treaty ratification in Washington, DC. In 1996, Romania signed and ratified a basic bilateral treaty with Hungary that settled outstanding issues and laid the foundation for closer, more cooperative relations. In June 1997, Romania signed a bilateral treaty with Ukraine that resolved certain territorial and minority issues, among others. Romania also signed a basic bilateral treaty with Russia in July 2003.

Romania hosted President Bush's final NATO Summit April 2-4, 2008. The venue symbolized the expansion of the Alliance from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and set new goals for years to come.

Romania acceded to the European Union on January 1, 2007 along with

Bulgaria, bringing the number of EU states to 27. Romania is a strong advocate for a "larger Europe," encouraging other countries that were formerly part of the Soviet sphere to integrate into both NATO and the EU.

Romania has been actively involved in regional organizations, such as the Southeast Europe Cooperation Initiative (SECI) and the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe, and has been a positive force in supporting stability and cooperation in the area.

Romania maintains good diplomatic relations with Israel and was supportive of the Middle East peace negotiations initiated after the Gulf conflict in 1991. Romania also is a founding member of the Black Sea Consortium for Economic Development. It joined the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1972, and is a member of the World Trade Organization.

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Romanian National Tourist Office
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Romanian Cultural Center
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DEFENSE

In accordance with the December 1991 Romanian constitution, the Romanian armed forces have the defensive mission of ensuring the territorial integrity of the country. The military enjoys popular support, partly because of its role in supporting the December 1989 revolution. The army is the largest service. Romania has an all-volunteer military force; conscription ended in 2007. The Romanian armed forces have about 75,000 military personnel and 15,000 civilians, for a total of 90,000 men and women. Out of these 75,000, about 45,800 are in the Land Forces. In 1993, the U.S. military began training of Romanian military and civilian officials through IMET and other exchange programs, emphasizing civilian democratic control over the military.

U.S.-ROMANIAN RELATIONS

Cold during the early post-war period, U.S. bilateral relations with Romania began to improve in the early 1960s with the signing of an agreement providing for partial settlement of American property claims. Cultural, scientific, and educational exchanges were initiated, and in 1964 the legations of both nations were promoted to full embassies.

Responding to Ceausescu's calculated distancing of Romania from Soviet foreign policy, particularly Romania's continued diplomatic relations with Israel and denunciation of the 1968 Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, President Nixon paid an official visit to Romania in August 1969. Despite political differences, high-level contacts continued between U.S. and Romanian leaders throughout the decade of the 1970s, culminating in the 1978 state visit to Washington by President and Mrs. Ceausescu.

In 1972, a consular convention to facilitate protection of citizens and their property in both countries was signed. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) facilities were granted, and Romania became eligible for U.S. Export-Import Bank credits.

A trade agreement signed in April 1975 accorded most favored nation (MFN) status to Romania under section 402 of the Trade Reform Act of 1974 (the Jackson-Vanik amendment that links MFN to a country's performance on emigration). This status was renewed yearly after congressional review of a presidential determination that Romania was making progress toward freedom of emigration.

In the mid-1980s, criticism of Romania's deteriorating human rights record, particularly regarding mistreatment of religious and ethnic minorities, spurred attempts by Congress to withdraw MFN status. In 1988, to preempt congressional action, Ceausescu renounced MFN treatment, calling Jackson-Vanik and other human rights requirements unacceptable interference in Romanian sovereignty.

After welcoming the revolution of December 1989 with a visit by Secretary of State Baker in February 1990, the U.S. Government expressed concern that opposition parties had faced discriminatory treatment in the May 1990 elections, when the National Salvation Front won a sweeping victory. The slow progress of subsequent political and economic reform increased that concern, and relations with Romania cooled sharply after the June 1990 intervention of the miners in University Square. Anxious to cultivate better relations with the U.S. and Europe, and disappointed at the poor results from its gradualist economic reform strategy, the Stolojan government undertook some economic reforms and conducted free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections in September 1992. Encouraged by the conduct of local elections in February 1992, Deputy Secretary of State Eagleburger paid a visit in May 1992. Congress restored MFN in November 1993 in recognition of Romania's progress in instituting political and economic reform. In 1996, the U.S. Congress voted to extend permanent MFN graduation to Romania. As Romania's policies became unequivocally pro-Western, the United States moved to deepen relations. President Clinton visited Bucharest in 1997. The two countries initiated cooperation on shared goals, including eco-

nomic and political development, defense reform, and non-traditional threats (such as trans-border crime and non-proliferation).

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, Romania has been fully supportive of the U.S. in the Global War on Terror. Romania was invited to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in November 2002 and formally joined NATO on March 29, 2004 after depositing its instruments of treaty ratification in Washington, DC. President Bush helped commemorate Romania's NATO accession when he visited Bucharest in November 2002. On that occasion he congratulated the Romanian people on building democratic institutions and a market economy following the fall of communism. Romanian troops serve alongside U.S. troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

In March 2005, President Traian Basescu made his first official visit to Washington to meet with President Bush, Secretary of State Rice, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and other senior U.S. officials. In December 2005, Secretary Rice visited Bucharest to meet with President Basescu and to sign a bilateral defense cooperation agreement that will allow for the joint use of Romanian military facilities by U.S. troops. The first proof of principle exercise took place at Mihail-Kogalniceanu Air Base from August to October 2007.

President Bush held separate bilateral meetings with both President Basescu and Prime Minister Tariceanu during his NATO Summit visit in 2008. Secretary Rice and Defense Secretary Gates were also in attendance.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM:	Mark Taplin
PAO:	Judith Moon
GSO:	John Smith
RSO:	Robert Weitzel
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AID:	Debra Mosel
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FMO:	Robert Young
IMO:	Ross Campbell
IPO:	Chandra Masdar
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 18, 2008

Country Description: Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007. Rapid economic growth in recent years has improved tourist and transportation infrastructure in many areas.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. U.S. citizen visitors are granted 90 days of stay without a visa within a given six-month period. An exit visa must be obtained in cases of overstay. For stays longer than 90 days, an extension of stay may be obtained in Romania from the Romanian Immigration Office in the area of residence (http://aps.mai.gov.ro) The Romanian Government is enforcing visa regulations more vigorously and a record of visa overstay can result in payment of large fines and the denial of entry without visa for a specified time. Visitors can obtain information regarding entry requirements from the Romanian Embassy at 1607 23rd Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone number (202) 232-4747, or the Romanian Consulates in Los Angeles, Chicago, or New York City. Web site: http://www.roembus.org.

U.S. visa information for Romanians and other foreign citizens can be found on the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest at http://bucharest.usembassy.gov or the Department's travel web site.

Safety and Security: The assessed threat to visitors as the result of political violence is medium. The Romanian Government does give permission to groups who wish to assemble for demonstration purposes. Demonstrations are normally well-contained and the police are close at hand and efficient. Nevertheless, for general safety purposes, it is wise to stay away from these gatherings and be alert to the fact that the normal traffic patterns can be disrupted during and just after the event.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While most crimes in Romania are non-violent and non-confrontational, crimes do occur in which victims suffer personal harm. Crimes against tourists, including robbery, mugging, pickpocketing and confidence schemes, remain a problem in Romania. Organized groups of thieves and pickpockets, sometimes including minors, operate in train stations and on trains, subways, and buses in major cities. A number of thefts and assaults have occurred on overnight trains, including thefts from passengers in closed compartments. The Embassy recommends using the highest class available for train travel.

Money exchange schemes targeting travelers are common in Romania. Some of these ploys have become rather sophisticated, involving indi-

viduals posing as plainclothes policemen, who approach the potential victim, flash a badge, and ask for the victim's passport and wallet. In many of these cases, the thieves succeed in obtaining passports, credit cards, and other personal documents. Credit card and Internet fraud remain among the most common crimes affecting foreigners in Romania.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. To contact the local police, dial 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Romania is generally not up to Western standards, and basic medical supplies are limited, especially outside major cities. Some medical providers that are up to Western quality standards are available in Bucharest and other cities, but can be difficult to identify and locate. Travelers seeking medical treatment should therefore choose their provider carefully. A list of hospitals and physicians is available on the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest at http://bucharest.usembassy.gov. Information regarding health threats or other medical issues affecting visitors to Romania can also be found at this site. The emergency telephone number for ambulance and other emergency services is 112. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Romania.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Americans who wish to extend their stay in Romania must present health insurance that applies overseas for the duration of their intended stay in Romania.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Romania is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Road conditions vary widely throughout Romania. While major streets in larger cities and major inter-city roads are in fair to good condition, many other roads are in poor repair, badly lit, narrow, or lack marked lanes. Pedestrians, animals, people on bicycles, and horse-drawn carts that are extremely difficult to see, especially at night, also use many roads, particularly in rural areas. Roads, especially in the mountains, can be particularly dangerous when wet or covered with snow or ice.

Romanian traffic laws are very strict. The traffic police can confiscate any form of driver's license or permit for 1-3 months and payment of fines may be requested at the time of the infractions. Some examples when this might occur are failure to yield the right of way, failure to yield to pedestrians at crosswalks, and failure to stop at a red light or stop sign. Romanian traffic law provides for retention of licenses and possible imprisonment for driving under the influence of alcohol or for causing an accident resulting in injury or death. There is zero tolerance for driving under the influence of alcohol and police are required to give breathalyzer tests at the scene of an accident to all drivers. Refusal to take a breathalyzer test will result in criminal penalties regardless of whether or not alcohol was involved; in spite of these strict rules, however, many drivers in Romania drive aggressively and often do not follow traffic laws or yield the right of way. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that defensive driving be practiced while driving in Romania. U.S. driver's licenses are only valid in Romania for up to 90 days. Before the 90-day period has expired, U.S. citizens must either obtain an international driving permit in addition to their U.S. driver's license or a Romanian driver's license. Wearing a seat belt is mandatory. Children under 12 years of age may not be transported in the front seat. Drivers must yield to pedestrians at all marked pedestrian crosswalks, but many of these are poorly maintained, difficult to see, and sometimes located in unexpected places for foreign drivers.

Unless otherwise marked with road signs, speed limits are as follows:

- Inter-city traffic on highways: 130 km/hr for cars and motorcycles, 110 km/hr for vans
- Urban traffic: 50 km/hr Express and European roads; 100 km/hour for cars and motorcycles, 90 km/hour for vans

- All other roads: 90 km/hr for cars and motorcycles, 80 km/hr for vans

Motor vehicles with trailers and drivers with less than one year of driving experience have speed limits 20 km/hr slower than those listed above.

Inter-city travel is generally done via trains and buses, which vary in terms of quality, safety, cost, and reliability. Pickpockets pose a danger on night trains and in train stations. Inter-city travel by taxi is much more expensive and safety depends on the quality of the driver. Many older taxis are not equipped with seat belts. To avoid being overcharged, passengers should request the taxi by phone and make sure the taxi has an operational meter, or agree upon a price before entering the taxi.

The host country authority responsible for road safety is the Traffic Police of the Romanian Ministry of Interior. Emergency roadside help and information may be reached by dialing 9271 for vehicle assistance and towing services. For ambulance services, fire brigade, or police, dial 112.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.romaniatourism.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Romania's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Romania's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Romania is largely a "cash only" economy. While an increasing number of businesses do accept credit cards, travelers are advised to use cash for goods and services rendered due to the prevalence of credit card fraud. Vendors have been known to misuse credit card information by making illegal purchases on individual's accounts. To make a credit card purchase, a PIN is usually required. There are an increasing number of ATMs located throughout major cities, and increasingly sophisticated identity theft rings are targeting them. Travelers should try to use ATMs located inside banks and check for any evidence of tampering with the machine before use. Travelers' checks are of limited use but may be used to purchase local currency at some exchange houses.

Americans should exercise caution when traveling to Romania to meet individuals known only through contact over the Internet. A significant number of confidence scams have been uncovered involving Romanians who contact their prospective American victims through chat rooms or personal advertisements. They generally identify themselves as young Romanian women and develop a "relationship" with their victim over time. Variations of this scam have emerged, but money extortion remains the ultimate goal. Americans who suspect they may have fallen victim to this kind of scam should contact American Citizens Services at the U.S. Embassy.

While the population of stray dogs in and around Bucharest has decreased in recent years, groups of dogs are still found in some areas and attacks on pedestrians and joggers are not uncommon. While there have not been any reported problems with rabies, travelers are advised to avoid all stray dogs.

Romania's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Romania of items such as firearms, antiquities, and medications. Romanian law allows travelers to bring cash into or out of Romania; however, sums larger than 10,000 Euros or the equivalent must be declared. Travelers are advised to contact the Embassy of Romania in Washington or one of Romania's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Romania is an earthquake-prone country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available on the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) web site at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Romania's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Romania are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Under Romanian law, engaging in sexual conduct with a minor under the age of 15 or a minor between the ages of 15 and 18 where the adult has abused the minor's trust or had influence/authority over the minor is a crime punishable with a 3-10 year prison sentence. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with someone who has a physical or psychological disability is punishable with a 3-12 year prison sentence. Distribution of obscene materials depicting minors is a crime punishable with a 1-5 year prison sentence. Prostitution is illegal in Romania, regardless of the age of the participants.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. In 2005, Romania banned intercountry adoptions except by grandparents.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Romania are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain

updated information on travel and security within Romania. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Strada Tudor Arghezi 7-9, telephone (40) 21-200-3300. In life or death emergencies, an after hours duty officer may be reached by calling (40) 21-200-3433. Consular services for U.S. citizens are performed at the Consular Section located at Strada Filipescu no. 26 (formerly Strada Snagov), one block from the U.S. Embassy at the corner of Strada Batistei. The Consular Section can be reached through the Embassy operator at (40) 21-200-3300, and faxes can be sent to (40) 21 200-3381 or 200-3578.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Romanian law currently does not allow for intercountry adoption except by the biological grandparents of the child.

Romania is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between Romania and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention.

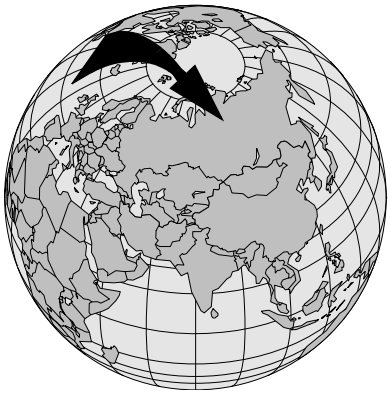
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RUSSIA

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Russian Federation

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 17 million sq. km. (6.5 million sq. mi.); about 1.8 times the size of the United States.

Cities: Capital—Moscow (pop. 10.4 million). Other cities—St. Petersburg (4.6 million), Novosibirsk (1.4 million), Nizhniy Novgorod (1.3 million).

Terrain: Broad plain with low hills west of Urals; vast coniferous forest and tundra in Siberia; uplands and mountains (Caucasus range) along southern borders.

Climate: Northern continental.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Russian(s).

Population: (January 2008) 142 million.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) -0.484% (population declining).

Ethnic groups: Russian 79.8%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 2%, other 14.4%.

Religions: Russian Orthodox, Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Protestant, Buddhist, other.

Languages: Russian (official); more than 140 other languages and dialects.

Education: (total pop.) Literacy—99.4%.

Health: Life expectancy (2007 est.)—59.12 yrs. men, 73.03 yrs. women.

Work force: (73.88 million) (2006 est.) Production and economic services—84%; government—16%.

Government

Type: Federation.

Independence: August 24, 1991.

Constitution: December 12, 1993.

Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister (chairman of the government). Legislative—Federal Assembly (Federation Council, State Duma). Judicial—Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Court of Arbitration, Office of Procurator General.

Political parties: The December 2007 Duma elections were contested by United Russia, the Communist Party (KPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), For a Just Russia, the Union of Right Forces (SPS), Yabloko, and four other minor parties. SPS and Yabloko, parties favoring liberal reforms, failed to clear the 7% threshold to enter the Duma as a party.

Political subdivisions: 21 autonomous republics, 47 oblasts, 2 federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg) and 14 autonomous territories and regions.

Suffrage: Universal at 18 years.

Economy

GDP: (2007 estimate) $1.34 trillion.

Growth rate: (2007 estimate) 8.1%.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, timber, furs, precious and nonferrous metals.

Agriculture: Products—Grain, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, meat, dairy products.

Industry: Types—Complete range of manufactures: automobiles, trucks, trains, agricultural equipment, advanced aircraft, aerospace, machine and equipment products; mining and extractive industry; medical and scientific instruments; construction equipment.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$355 billion: petroleum and petroleum products, natural gas, woods and wood products, metals, chemicals. Major markets—EU, CIS, China, Japan. Imports—$223 billion: machinery and equipment, chemicals, consumer goods, medicines, meat, sugar, semi-finished metal products. Major partners—EU, U.S., NIS, Japan, China.

U.S. exports—$7.4 billion. Principal U.S. exports (2007)—oil/gas equipment, autos/parts, meat, aircraft, electrical machinery, medical equipment, plastics, cosmetics, and chemicals. U.S. imports—$19.4 billion. Principal U.S. imports (2006)—oil, chemicals, aluminum, iron/steel, precious stones, nickel, fish and crustaceans, copper, base metals, and wood.

PEOPLE

Most of the roughly 142 million Russians derive from the Eastern Slavic family of peoples, whose original homeland was probably present-day Poland. Russian is the official language of Russia and is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Russian is also the language of such giants of world literature as Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn.

Russia's educational system has produced nearly 100% literacy. About 3 million students attend Russia's 519 institutions of higher education and 48 universities, but continued reform is critical to producing students with skills to adapt to a market economy. Because great emphasis is placed on science and technology in education, Russian medical, mathematical, scientific, and space and aviation research is still generally of a high order. The number of doctors in relation to the population is high by American standards, although medical care in Russia, even in major cities, is generally far below Western standards. The unraveling of the Soviet state in its last decades and the physical and psychological traumas of transition during the 1990s resulted in a steady decline in the health of the Russian people. Currently Russia faces a demographic crisis as births lag far behind deaths. While its population is aging, skyrocketing deaths of working-age males due to cardiovascular disease is a major cause of Russia's demographic woes. A rapid increase in HIV/AIDS infections and tuberculosis compounds the problem. In 2007, life expectancy at birth was 59 for men and 73 for women. The large annual excess of deaths over births is expected to cut Russia's population by 30% over the next 50 years.

The Russian labor force is undergoing tremendous changes. Although well educated and skilled, it is largely mismatched to the rapidly changing needs of the Russian economy. Official unemployment has dropped in recent years to 6.9%, and labor shortages have started to appear in some high-skilled job markets. Nonetheless, pockets of high unemployment remain and many Russian workers are underemployed. Unemployment is highest among women and young people. Following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic dislocation it engendered, the standard of living fell dramatically. However, real disposable incomes have doubled since 1999, and experts estimate that the middle class ranges from one-fifth to one-third of the population. In 2006, 15.8% of the population lived below the subsistence level, in contrast to 38.1% in 1998.

Moscow is Russia's capital and largest city (population 8.3 million). Moscow is also increasingly important as an economic and business center; it has become Russia's principal magnet for foreign investment and business presence. Its cultural tradition is rich, and there are many museums devoted to art, literature, music, dance, history, and science, as well as hundreds of churches and dozens of notable cathedrals.

The second-largest city in Russia is St. Petersburg, which was established by Peter the Great in 1703 to be the capital of the Russian Empire as part of his Western-looking reforms. The city was called Petrograd during World War I and Leningrad after 1924. In 1991, as the result of a city referendum, it was renamed St. Petersburg. Under the tsars, the city was Russia's cultural, intellectual, commercial, financial, and industrial center. After Lenin moved the capital back to Moscow in 1918, the city's political significance declined, but it remained a cultural, scientific, and military-industrial center. The Hermitage, formerly the Winter Palace of the tsars, is one of the world's great fine arts museums. Russia has an area of about 17 million square kilometers (6.5 million sq. mi.); in geographic terms, this makes Russia the largest country in the world by more than 2.5 million square miles. But with a population density of about 22 persons per square mile (9 per sq. km.), it is sparsely populated, and most of its residents live in urban areas.

HISTORY

Although human experience on the territory of present-day Russia dates back to Paleolithic times, the first lineal predecessor of the modern Russian state was founded in 862. The political entity known as Kievan Rus was established in Kiev in 962 and lasted until the 12th century. In the 10th century, Christianity became the state religion under Vladimir, who adopted Greek Orthodox rites. Consequently, Byzantine culture predominated, as is evident in much of Russia's architectural, musical, and artistic heritage. Over the next centuries, various invaders assaulted the Kievan state and, finally, Mongols under Batu Khan destroyed the main population centers except for Novgorod and Pskov in the 13th century and prevailed over the region until 1480. Some historians believe that the Mongol period had a lasting impact on Russian political culture.

In the post-Mongol period, Muscovy gradually became the dominant principality and was able, through diplomacy and conquest, to establish suzerainty over European Russia. Ivan III (1462-1505) referred to his empire as "the Third Rome" and considered it heir to the Byzantine tradition. Ivan IV (the Terrible) (1530-1584) was the first Russian ruler to call himself tsar. He pushed Russian eastward with his conquests but his later reign was marked by the cruelty that earned him his familiar epithet. He was succeeded by Boris Godunov, whose reign commenced the so-called Time of Troubles. Relative stability was achieved when Michael Romanov established the dynasty that bore his name in 1613.



During the reign of Peter the Great (1689-1725), modernization and European influences spread in Russia. Peter created Western-style military forces, subordinated the Russian Orthodox Church hierarchy to the tsar, reformed the entire governmental structure, and established the beginnings of a Western-style education system. He moved the capital westward from Moscow to St. Petersburg, his newly-established city on the Baltic. His introduction of European customs generated nationalistic resentments in society and spawned the philosophical rivalry between "Westernizers" and nationalistic "Slavophiles" that remains a key dynamic of current Russian social and political thought.

Catherine the Great continued Peter's expansionist policies and established Russia as a European power. During her reign (1762-96), power was centralized in the monarchy, and administrative reforms concentrated great wealth and privilege in the hands of the Russian nobility. Catherine was also known as an enthusiastic patron of art, literature and education and for her correspondence with Voltaire and other Enlightenment figures. Catherine also engaged in a territorial resettlement of Jews into what became known as "The Pale of Settlement," where great numbers of Jews were concentrated and later subject to vicious attacks known as pogroms.

Alexander I (1801-1825) began his reign as a reformer, but after defeating Napoleon's 1812 attempt to conquer Russia, he became much more conservative and rolled back many of his early reforms. During this era, Russia gained control of Georgia and much of the Caucasus. Throughout the 19th century, the Russian Government sought to suppress repeated attempts at reform and attempts at liberation by various national movements, particularly under the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855). Its economy failed to compete with those of Western countries. Russian cities were growing without an industrial base to generate employment, although emancipation of the serfs in 1861 foreshadowed urbanization and rapid industrialization late in the century. At the same time, Russia expanded into the rest of the Caucasus, Central Asia and across Siberia. The port of Vladivostok was opened on the Pacific coast in 1860. The Trans-Siberian Railroad opened vast frontiers to development late in the century. In the 19th century, Russian culture flourished as Russian artists made significant contributions to world literature, visual arts, dance, and music. The names of Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Gogal, Repin, and Tchaik-

ovsky became known to the world. Alexander II (1855-1881), a relatively liberal tsar, emancipated the serfs. His 1881 assassination, however, prompted the reactionary rule of Alexander III (1881-1894). At the turn of the century, imperial decline became evident. Russia was defeated in the unpopular Russo-Japanese war in 1905. The Russian Revolution of 1905 forced Tsar Nicholas II (1894-1917) to grant a constitution and introduce limited democratic reforms. The government suppressed opposition and manipulated popular anger into anti-Semitic pogroms. Attempts at economic change, such as land reform, were incomplete.

1917 Revolution and the U.S.S.R.

The ruinous effects of World War I, combined with internal pressures, sparked the March 1917 uprising that led Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate the throne. A provisional government came to power, headed by Aleksandr Kerenskiy. On November 7, 1917, the Bolshevik Party, led by Vladimir Lenin, seized control and established the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. Civil war broke out in 1918 between Lenin's "Red" army and various "White" forces and lasted until 1920, when, despite foreign interventions and a war with Poland, the Bolsheviks triumphed. After the Red army conquered Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, a new nation, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), was formed in 1922.

First among its political figures was Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Party and head of the first Soviet Government, who died in 1924. In the late 1920s, Josef Stalin emerged as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) amidst intra-party rivalries; he maintained complete control over Soviet domestic and international policy until his death in 1953. In the 1930s, Stalin oversaw the forced collectivization of tens of millions of its citizens in state agricultural and industrial enterprises. Millions died in the process. Millions more died in political purges, the vast penal and labor system, and in state-created famines. Initially allied to Nazi Germany, which resulted in significant territorial additions on its western border, the U.S.S.R. was attacked by the Axis on June 22, 1941. Twenty million Soviet citizens died during World War II in the successful effort to defeat the Axis, in addition to over two million Soviet Jews who perished in the Holocaust. After the war, the U.S.S.R. became one of the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council. In 1949, the U.S.S.R. developed its own nuclear arsenal.

Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, served as Communist Party leader until he was ousted in 1964. Aleksey Kosygin became Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Leonid Brezhnev was made First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee in 1964. In 1971, Brezhnev rose to become "first among equals" in a collective leadership. Brezhnev died in 1982 and was succeeded by Yuriy Andropov (1982-84) and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-85). In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the next (and last) General Secretary of the CPSU. Gorbachev introduced policies of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness). But his efforts to reform the creaky Communist system from within failed. The people of the Soviet Union were not content with half-freedoms granted by Moscow; they demanded more and the system collapsed. Boris Yeltsin was elected the first president of the Russian Federation in 1991. Russia, Ukraine and Belarus formed the Commonwealth of Independent States in December 1991. Gorbachev resigned as Soviet President on December 25, 1991. Eleven days later, the U.S.S.R. was formally dissolved.

The Russian Federation

After the December 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation became its successor state, inheriting its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, as well as the bulk of its foreign assets and debt. By the fall of 1993, politics in Russia reached a stalemate between President Yeltsin and the parliament. The parliament had succeeded in blocking, overturning, or ignoring the President's initiatives on drafting a new constitution, conducting new elections, and making further progress on democratic and economic reforms.

In a dramatic speech in September 1993, President Yeltsin dissolved the Russian parliament and called for new national elections and a new constitution. The standoff between the executive branch and opponents in the legislature turned violent in October after supporters of the parliament tried to instigate an armed insurrection. Yeltsin ordered the army to respond with force to capture the parliament building and crush the insurrection. In December 1993, voters elected a new parliament and approved a new constitution that had been drafted by the Yeltsin government. Yeltsin remained the dominant political figure, although a broad array of parties, including ultranationalists, liberals, agrarians, and communists, had substantial representation in the parliament and competed actively in elections at all levels of government.

In late 1994, the Russian security forces launched a brutal operation in the Republic of Chechnya against rebels who were intent on separation from Russia. Along with their opponents, Russian forces committed numerous violations of human rights. The protracted conflict, which received close scrutiny in the Russian media, raised serious human rights and humanitarian concerns abroad as well as within Russia. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to institute a cease-fire, in August 1996 the Russian and Chechen authorities negotiated a settlement that resulted in a complete withdrawal of Russian troops and the holding of elections in January 1997. A peace treaty was concluded in May 1997. Following a number of terrorist incidents blamed on Chechen separatists, the Russian government launched a new military campaign into Chechnya. By spring 2000, federal forces claimed control over Chechen territory, but fighting continues as rebel fighters regularly ambush Russian forces in the region. Throughout 2002 and 2003, the abil-

ity of Chechen separatists to battle the Russian forces waned but they claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist acts. In 2005 and 2006, key separatist leaders were killed by Russian forces.The situation stabilized after Ramzan Kadyrov was confirmed as Chechen President, although small-scale fighting continues between rebel forces and local law enforcement.

On December 31, 1999 Boris Yeltsin resigned, and Vladimir Putin was named Acting President. In March 2000, he won election in his own right as Russia's second president with 53% of the vote. Putin moved quickly to reassert Moscow's control over the regions, whose governors had confidently ignored edicts from Boris Yeltsin. He sent his own "plenipotentiary representatives" (commonly called 'polpred' in Russian) to ensure that Moscow's policies were followed in recalcitrant regions and republics. He won enactment of liberal economic reforms that rescued a faltering economy and stopped a spiral of hyperinflation. Putin achieved wide popularity by stabilizing the government, especially in marked contrast to what many Russians saw as the chaos of the latter Yeltsin years. The economy grew, both because of rising oil prices and in part because Putin was able to achieve reforms in banking, labor, and private property. During this time, Russia also moved closer to the U.S., especially after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. In 2002, the NATO-Russia Council was established, giving Russia a voice in NATO discussions.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In the political system established by the 1993 constitution, the president wields considerable executive power. There is no vice president, and the legislative branch is far weaker than the executive. The bicameral legislature consists of the lower house (State Duma) and the upper house (the Federation Council). The president nominates the highest state officials, including the prime minister, who must be approved by the Duma. The president can pass decrees without consent from the Duma. He also is head of the armed forces and of the Security Council.

Duma elections were held most recently on December 2, 2007, and presidential elections on March 2, 2008. The pro-government party, United Russia, won a constitutional majority (more than two-thirds) of the seats in the Duma. Of the three other parties that won seats in the Duma, two of them—Just Russia and the Liberal Democratic Party—are considered to have a pro-Kremlin orientation. The final party represented in the Duma—the Communist Party—is the only opposition party. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights did not observe the Duma elections because of restrictions placed on the observer mission by the Government of Russia and delays in issuing visas. Parliamentarians of the OSCE and the Council of Europe who observed the elections concluded that they were "not fair and failed to meet many OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections." They noted that the elections took place in an atmosphere which seriously limited political competition. Frequent abuses of administrative resources, media coverage strongly in favor of United Russia, and the revised election code combined to hinder political pluralism.

Dmitriy Medvedev, running as United Russia's candidate, was elected to a four-year term as President on March 2, 2008, with 70.28% of the vote. The Russian constitution does not allow presidents to serve more than two consecutive terms. Next elections for the Duma are scheduled to occur in December 2011 and for President in March 2012.

Russia is a federation, but the precise distribution of powers between the central government and the regional and local authorities is still evolving. The Russian Federation consists of 84 administrative units, including two federal cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg. The constitution explicitly defines the federal government's exclusive powers, but it also describes most key regional issues as the joint responsibility of the federal government and the regional administrative units. In 2000, President Putin grouped the regions into seven federal districts, with presidential appointees established in Moscow and six provincial capitals. In March 2004, the Constitution was amended to permit the merger of some regional administrative units. A law enacted in December 2004 eliminated the direct election of the country's regional leaders. Governors are now nominated by the president and subject to confirmation by regional legislatures.

Judicial System

The Russian judicial system consists of the Constitutional Court, courts of general jurisdiction, military courts, and arbitrage courts (which hear commercial disputes). The Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation is a court of limited subject matter jurisdiction. The 1993 constitution empowers the Constitutional Court to arbitrate disputes between the executive and legislative branches and between Moscow and the regional and local governments. The court also is authorized to rule on violations of constitutional rights, to examine appeals from various bodies, and to participate in impeachment proceedings against the president. The July 1994 Law on the Constitutional Court prohibits the court from examining cases on its own initiative and limits the scope of issues the court can hear. The system of general jurisdiction courts includes the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, regional level courts, district level courts and justices of the peace.

The Duma passed a Criminal Procedure Code and other judicial reforms during its 2001 session. These reforms help make the Russian judicial system more compatible with its Western counterparts and are seen by most as an accomplishment in human rights. The reforms have rein-

troduced jury trials in certain criminal cases and created a more adversarial system of criminal trials that protect the rights of defendants more adequately. In 2002, the introduction of the new code led to significant reductions in time spent in detention for new detainees, and the number of suspects placed in pretrial detention declined by 30%. Another significant advance in the new Code is the transfer from the Procuracy to the courts of the authority to issue search and arrest warrants. There are rising concerns, however, that prosecutors have selectively targeted individuals for political reasons, as in the prosecution of Yukos Oil CEO Mikhail Khodorkovskiy.

In spite of the general tendency to increase judicial independence (for example, by recent considerable salary raise to judges), many judges still see their role not as of impartial and independent arbiters, but as of government officials protecting state interests. See below for more information on the commercial court/business law.

Human Rights

Russia's human rights record remains uneven and poor in some areas. Despite significant improvements in conditions following the end of the Soviet Union, problem areas remain. In particular, the Russian Government's policy in the North Caucasus has been a cause for international concern. Although the government has recognized the legitimacy of international human rights standards, the institutionalization of procedures to safeguard these rights has lagged. There are, however, some indications that the law is becoming an increasingly important tool for those seeking to protect human rights.

The judiciary is not independent, is often subject to manipulation by political authorities, and is plagued by large case backlogs and trial delays. Lengthy pretrial detention remains a serious problem. Russia has one of the highest prison population rates in the world, at 685 per 100,000. There are credible reports of beating and torture of inmates and detainees by law enforcement and correctional officials, and brutality perpetrated by the prisoners themselves, some of whom are informally granted authority to enforce order within the prisons. Prison conditions fall well below international standards and extreme overcrowding is common. In 2001, President Putin ordered a moratorium on the death penalty. There are reports that the Russian Government might still be violating promises they made upon entering the European Council, especially in terms of prison control and conditions.

In Chechnya, there have been credible allegations of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by Russian and pro-Moscow Chechen forces. Chechen rebels also have committed abuses and acts of terrorism. Although the number of kidnappings and disappearances committed by government and rebel forces markedly declined in Chechnya in 2007, similar incidents have been reported in neighboring Ingushetiya and Dagestan. Russian authorities have introduced some improvements, such as requiring the presence of civilian investigators during all large-scale military operations and targeted search and seizure operations. Human rights groups claim that most abuses remain uninvestigated and unpunished and have spread more broadly in the North Caucasus.

The Russian constitution provides for freedom of religion, the equality of all religions before the law, and the separation of church and state. More than 70% of Russians identify themselves as Russian Orthodox. While Muslims, Jews, and other religious minorities continue to encounter prejudice and societal discrimination, they have not been inhibited by the government in the free practice of their religion. High-ranking federal officials have condemned anti-Semitic hate crimes, but law enforcement bodies have not always effectively prosecuted those responsible. The Federal Registration Service and some local officials continue to prevent some religious minorities from registering locally or from acquiring property. One legal requirement (namely that religious groups be established at least 15 years before being able to register as a religious organization) continues to prevent the Church of Scientology from registering outside of the city of Moscow.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, in practice government pressure on the media persists, resulting in numerous infringements of these rights. The government uses direct ownership or ownership by large private companies with links to the government to control or influence the major media outlets, especially television, through direct control and through self-censorship by editors and journalists. The government uses its controlling ownership in major national television and radio stations, as well as the majority of influential regional ones, to restrict access to information about issues deemed sensitive, including coverage of opposition political parties and movements. Unsolved murders of journalists, including the murder of respected investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya in October 2006, have caused significant international concern and increased the reluctance of journalists to cover controversial subjects.

The 2006 law on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) created a burdensome registration process for all NGOs with stricter requirements for foreign-funded NGOs and more relaxed requirements for religious organizations. The law and implementing regulations impose onerous paperwork reporting burdens on NGOs, which many medium and small NGOs have been unable to meet as evidenced by the fact that only 36% of local NGOs had met their reporting requirements by October 2007. This law was used to close an NGO for the first time in January 2007 on the basis of extremism charges. Most foreign NGOs have successfully re-registered.

The constitution guarantees citizens the right to choose their place of residence and to travel abroad. Some big-city governments, however, have

restricted this right through residential registration rules that closely resemble Soviet-era restrictions. These restrictions, though, are widely circumvented, as evidenced by the large number of undocumented foreign workers in these cities. The freedom to travel abroad and emigrate is respected although restrictions may apply to those who have had access to state secrets, or who have court orders against them for default on debts. Since 1994, the U.S. President has found Russia to be in full compliance with the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Dmitriy Anatolyevich MEDVEDEV**
Premier: **Vladimir Vladimirovich PUTIN**
First Dep. Premier: **Igor Ivanovich SHUVALOV**
First Dep. Premier: **Viktor Alekseyevich ZUBKOV**
Dep. Premier: **Sergey Borisovich IVANOV**
Dep. Premier: **Aleksey Leonidovich KUDRIN**
Dep. Premier: **Igor Ivanovich SECHIN**
Dep. Premier: **Sergey Semenovich SOBYANIN**
Dep. Premier: **Aleksandr Dmitriyevich ZHUKOV**
Min. of Agriculture: **Aleksey Vasilyevich GORDEYEV**
Min. of Civil Defense, Emergencies, & Natural Disasters: **Sergey Kuzhugetovich SHOYGU**
Min. of Communications & Mass Media: **Igor Olegovich SHCHEGOLEV**
Min. of Culture: **Aleksandr Alekseyevich AVDEYEV**
Min. of Defense: **Anatoliy Eduardovich SERDYUKOV**
Min. of Economic Development: **Elvira Sakhipzadovna NABIULLINA**
Min. of Education & Science: **Andrey Aleksandrovich FURSENKO**
Min. of Energy: **Sergey Ivanovich SHMATKO**
Min. of Finance: **Aleksey Leonidovich KUDRIN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Sergey Viktorovich LAVROV**
Min. of Health & Social Development: **Tatyana Alekseyevna GOLIKOVA**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Viktor Borisovich KHRISTENKO**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Rashid Gumarovich NURGALIYEV**
Min. of Justice: **Aleksandr Vladimirovich KONOVALOV**
Min. of Natural Resources & Ecology: **Yuriy Petrovich TRUTNEV**
Min. of Regional Development: **Dmitriy Nikolayevich KOZAK**
Min. of Sport, Tourism, & Youth Policy: **Vitaliy Leontyevich MUTKO**
Min. of Transportation: **Igor Yevgenyevich LEVITIN**
Dir., Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR): **Mikhail Yefimovich FRADKOV**
Dir., Federal Security Service (FSB): **Aleksandr Vasilyevich BORTNIKOV**
Head, Govt. Apparatus: **Sergey Semenovich SOBYANIN**
Sec., Security Council: **Nikolay Platonovich PATRUSHEV**
Procurator Gen.: **Yuriy Yakovlevich CHAYKA**
Chmn., Central Bank of Russia: **Sergey Mikhaylovich IGNATYEV**
Ambassador to the US: **Sergey Ivanovich KISLYAK**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Vitaliy Ivanovich CHURKIN**

The Russian Federation maintains an embassy at 2650 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20007 (tel. 202-298-5700) and a consular section at 2641 Tunlaw Road, Washington, DC (tel. 202-939-8907/8913/8918). Russian consulates also are located in Houston, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle.

ECONOMY

The Russian economy underwent tremendous stress in the 1990s as it moved from a centrally planned economy to a free market system. Difficulties in implementing fiscal reforms aimed at raising government revenues and a dependence on short-term borrowing to finance budget deficits led to a serious financial crisis in 1998. Lower prices for Russia's major export earners (oil and minerals) and a loss of investor confidence due to the Asian financial crisis exacerbated financial problems. The result was a rapid and steep decline (60%) in the value of the ruble, flight of foreign investment, delayed payments on sovereign and private debts, a breakdown of commercial transactions through the banking system, and the threat of runaway inflation.

Still, Russia has weathered the crisis well. In the nine years following the financial crisis, GDP growth averaged 7% due to a devalued ruble, implementation of key economic reforms (tax, banking, labor and land codes), tight fiscal policy, and favorable commodities prices. Household consumption and fixed capital investments have both grown by about 10 percent per year since 1999 and have replaced net exports as the main drivers of demand growth. Inflation and exchange rates have stabilized due to a prudent fiscal policy (Russia has run a budget surplus since 2003). The government created a stabilization/rainy day fund ($156 billion at the end of 2007), and has the third-largest foreign exchange reserves in the world (close to $476 billion at the end of 2007) which should shelter it from commodity price shocks.

Russia's balance of payments continues to show dynamic growth. The current account balance fell slightly, from $95.3 billion in 2006 to $78.3 billion in 2007, as imports increased rapidly. Large amounts of capital moved into Russia in 2007. The capital account balance was $84.3 billion, compared to $6.1 billion in 2006. In addition, net private capital flows continued to increase in 2007 to $81.2 billion from $40.9 billion in 2006. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows continued to improve in 2007 to $52.5 billion compared to $32.4 billion in 2006. As of July 1, 2006, the ruble is convertible for both current and capital transactions. Russia prepaid its entire Soviet-era Paris Club debt of $22 billion in late 2006. Russia maintains relatively small amounts of sovereign debt. In 2007, total sovereign foreign debt was $36 billion, or about 3% of GDP, down from $45 billion at the end of 2006. Russia's total public and private foreign debt at the end of 2007 was $460 billion, or 34% of GDP. Russia currently has a sovereign investment-grade rating from Standard and Poor's of BBB+.

Although the economy has begun to diversify, the government budget remains dependent on oil and gas revenues; consumption and investment are, however, contributing to an increasing share to GDP growth.

While currently sheltered from external price shocks, the government realizes the need to intensify reforms that will promote new investment in aging infrastructure and continued productivity gains. The government believes it can do this by creating state-sponsored investment funds, special economic zones, and by exercising control of strategic enterprises (a law defining strategic sectors was passed by the Duma in March 2008). Although investors are returning to Russia, excessive bureaucracy, corruption, insufficient and insufficiently enforced legislation, selective interpretation of laws (particularly tax laws), unclear limits and conditions on foreign investment, obsolete infrastructure, and stalled economic reforms still remain a problem. In 2005, the government announced reform programs in four priority areas (health, education, housing, and agriculture), but further work is needed on them as well as in financial regulation, civil service reform, and reform of government monopolies, such as railroads, gas, and electricity.

Gross Domestic Product

A strong expansion in domestic demand continues to drive GDP growth, despite a slowdown in manufacturing. GDP growth and industrial production for 2007 were 8.1% and 6.3%, respectively, relative to 6.7% and 4.8% in 2006. GDP growth is currently derived from non-tradable sectors, but investment remains concentrated in tradables (oil and gas). Construction continued to be the fastest-growing sector of the economy, expanding by 22% in 2007. The main private sector services—wholesale and retail trade, banking and insurance, and transportation and communications—showed strong growth of about 10%. In contrast, public sector services lagged behind in 2007 with only 1.6%-2.4% growth in education and health care, although public administration increased to 7.5%. Recent productivity growth has still been strong in some parts of domestic manufacturing. Real disposable incomes grew by 10.4% in 2007 spurring considerable growth in private consumption.

Monetary Policy

Large balance of payments surpluses have complicated monetary policy for Russia. The Central Bank has followed a policy of managed appreciation to ease the impact on domestic producers and has sterilized capital inflows with its large budget surpluses. However, the Central Bank also has been buying back dollars, pumping additional ruble liquidity into the system. Given the rising demand for money, this has softened the inflationary impact, but these policy choices have complicated the government's efforts to lower inflation to the single digits. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rose to 11.9% in 2007.

Government Spending/ Taxation

The Russian federal budget has run growing surpluses since 2001, as the government has taxed and saved much of the rapidly increasing oil revenues. In 2007 the federal budget surplus was 5.5% of GDP. Despite strong pressures to relax spending ahead of elections, the government has loosened its spending gradually, as the economy is running at near capacity and there are dangers of increasing inflation and rapid exchange rate appreciation. Spending increases to date have mostly been for increased salaries of government employees and pensions, but some money is also being dedicated to special investment funds and tax breaks to develop new industries in special economic zones. The government overhauled its tax system for both corporations and individuals in 2000-01, introducing a 13% flat tax for individuals and a unified tax for corporations, which improved overall collection. Business has put pressure on the government to reduce value added taxes (VAT) on oil and gas, but the government has postponed this discussion. Tax enforcement of disputes continues to be uneven and unpredictable.

Population

Russia's population was 142 million as of January 1, 2008. It declined at a lower rate in 2007 than in 2006 and previous years due to a significant (8%) increase in the birth rate and a 5% reduction in the death rate. The improvements may in part be attributed to the implementation of a National Priority Health Project and financial incentives to mothers having two or more children. Life expectancy remains low compared to developed countries but rose to 60.37 years for men and 73.23 for women in 2006. Cardiovascular diseases, cancer, traffic accidents and violence continue to be major causes of death among working age men. Many premature deaths are attributed to excessive alcohol consumption and smoking. To combat the looming demographic crisis, in October 2007 then-President Putin approved the concept of demographic policy for the years 2008-2025. The program aims to increase life expectancy, reduce mortality, increase the birth rate, improve the population's health, and develop a sound migration policy. The government instituted the National Priority Health Project and "mother's capital" in order to slow the population decline. These programs have had short-term success; Russia's population declined by 0.14% compared to 0.42% in 2006. It is unknown if such programs offer a long-term solution. In April 2008, the government approved joining the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which is expected eventually to reduce extremely high smoking rates.

HIV/AIDS

At the end of 2007, there were 403,000 HIV cases officially registered in Russia, though many experts believe the actual number of cases may be two to three times higher (1 million to 1.3 million HIV cases). Prevalence of HIV cases was 270.1 per 100,000 people in 2007, higher than the 2006 indicator of 243 per 100,000. The chief form of transmission continued to be intravenous drug use, which accounted for 65% of new HIV cases in 2007. More than 44% of new HIV cases are identified in females, and transmission through heterosexual sex has grown rapidly. The number of secondary, AIDS-associated diseases has increased more

than twofold in 2007. As a result, the number of deaths from AIDS has grown by 10% compared to 2006. The Government of Russia implements HIV treatment and prevention programs through its National Priority Health Project, Federal Targeted Program, and Global Fund Grants. The government currently spends over $250 million per year on HIV/AIDS treatment programs and will spend over $42 million over the next five years to support HIV/AIDS vaccine research. At the September 2003 Camp David Summit, and again at the Bratislava meeting in February 2005, Presidents Bush and Putin pledged to deepen ongoing cooperation between the two countries to fight HIV/AIDS.

Commercial Law

Russia has a body of conflicting, overlapping and rapidly changing laws, decrees and regulations, which has resulted in an ad hoc and unpredictable approach to doing business. In this environment, negotiations and contracts from commercial transactions are complex and protracted. Uneven implementation of laws creates further complications. Regional and local courts are often subject to political pressure, and corruption is widespread. However, more and more small and medium businesses in recent years have reported fewer difficulties in this regard, especially in the Moscow region. In addition, Russian businesses are increasingly turning to the courts to resolve disputes. Russia's World Trade Organization (WTO) accession process is also helping to bring the country's legal and regulatory regime in line with internationally accepted practices.

Natural Resources

The mineral-packed Ural Mountains and the vast oil, gas, coal, and timber reserves of Siberia and the Russian Far East make Russia rich in natural resources. However, most such resources are located in remote and climatically unfavorable areas that are difficult to develop and far from Russian ports. Nevertheless, Russia is a leading producer and exporter of minerals, gold, and all major fuels. Natural resources, especially energy, dominate Russian exports. Ninety percent of Russian exports to the United States are minerals or other raw materials.

Industry

Russia is one of the most industrialized of the former Soviet republics. However, years of very low investment have left much of Russian industry antiquated and highly inefficient. Besides its resource-based industries, it has developed large manufacturing capacities, notably in metals, food products, and transport equipment. Russia is now the world's third-largest exporter of steel and primary aluminum.

Russia inherited most of the defense industrial base of the Soviet Union, so armaments remain an important export category for Russia. Efforts have been made with varying success over the past few years to convert defense industries to civilian use, and the Russian Government is engaged in an ongoing process to privatize many of the state-owned enterprises.

Agriculture

Russia has relatively little area for agriculture, but given its massive expanses, the country still accounts for about 9% of the world's arable land. Grain production for export is concentrated in the south of European Russia, with additional grain for domestic consumption grown throughout the rest of non-Arctic Russia west of the Urals as well as western Siberia.

Livestock production was in decline from 1990 to 2006, when new government support policies were instituted to stimulate cattle and hog raising. Poultry production has rebounded and is rising at 17% per year. Small plots averaging one acre in size, urban and suburban gardens, and gardening cooperatives produce over half of Russia's food output. Former state and collective farms have been largely privatized, but management quality is uneven and profitability is highly dependent on proximity to major urban markets. Foreigners are not allowed to own farmland, although long-term leases are permitted.

Investment/Banking

Russia attracted $52.5 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2007 (4.1% of GDP), up from $32.4 billion in FDI in 2006. Russia's annual FDI figures are now in line with those of China, India, and Brazil. However, Russia's per capita cumulative FDI still lags far behind such countries as Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. The paradox is that Russia's challenging business climate, lack of transparency, and weak rule of law/corruption has taken a back seat to Russia's extraordinary macroeconomic fundamentals and the consumer and retail boom, which is providing double digit returns to investors and attracting new flows. Russian domestic investment is also returning home, as the foreign investment coming into Russia from havens like Cyprus and Gibraltar, is actually returning Russian capital. Retail loans amounted to $132.1 billion at the end of 2007, up from $78.4 billion at the end of 2006. Retail deposits increased to $209.3 billion from $144.1 billion from $95.7 billion over the same period. Also, currently deposits are fully insured up to $4,000 and an additional $12,000 is insured at 90%.

Although still small by international standards, the Russian banking sector is growing fast and is becoming a larger source of investment funds. To meet a growing demand for loans, which they were unable to cover with domestic deposits, Russian banks borrowed heavily abroad in 2007, accounting for 57% of the private-sector capital inflows in that year. Ruble lending has increased since the October 1998 financial crisis, and in 2007 loans were 66% of total bank assets, with consumer loans posting the fastest growth at 57% that same year. Fewer Russians prefer to keep their money outside the banking sector, the recent appreciation of the ruble against the dollar has persuaded many Russians to keep their money in rubles or other currencies such as

the euro, and retail deposits grew by 35% in 2007. Despite recent growth, the poorly developed banking system, along with contradictory regulations across banking, bond, and equity markets, still makes it difficult for entrepreneurs to raise capital as well as to permit capital transfer from a capital-rich sector such as energy to capital-poor sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing and to diversify risk.

Banks still perceive small and medium commercial lending as risky, and some banks are inexperienced with assessing credit risk, though the situation is improving. In 2004, Russia enacted a deposit insurance law to protect deposits up to 100,000 rubles (about $3,700) per depositor. Subsequent amendments to the law increased the Deposit Insurance Agency's coverage for deposits up to 400,000 rubles.

Trade

The U.S. exported $7.4 billion in goods to Russia in 2007, a 57% increase from the previous year. Corresponding U.S. imports from Russia were $19.4 billion, down a slight 2%. Russia is currently the 20th-largest export market for U.S. goods. Russian exports to the U.S. were fuel oil, inorganic chemicals, aluminum, and precious stones. U.S. exports to Russia were machinery, vehicles, meat (mostly poultry), aircraft, electrical equipment, and high-tech products.

Russia's overall trade surplus in 2007 was $132 billion, roughly equal to the $139 billion surplus in 2006. World prices continue to have a major effect on export performance, since commodities—particularly oil, natural gas, metals, and timber—comprise most of Russian exports. Russian GDP growth and the surplus/deficit in the Russian Federation state budget are closely linked to world oil prices.

Russia is in the process of negotiating terms of accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The U.S. and Russia concluded a bilateral WTO accession agreement in late 2006, and negotiations continued in 2007 on meeting WTO requirements for accession. Russia reports that it has yet to conclude bilateral agreements with Saudi Arabia and Georgia.

According to the 2005 U.S. Trade Representative's National Trade Estimate, Russia continues to maintain a number of barriers with respect to imports, including tariffs and tariff-rate quotas; discriminatory and prohibitive charges and fees; and discriminatory licensing, registration, and certification regimes. Discussions continue within the context of Russia's WTO accession to eliminate these measures or modify them to be consistent with internationally accepted trade policy practices. Nontariff barriers are frequently used to restrict foreign access to the market and are also a significant topic in Russia's WTO negotiations. In addition, large losses to U.S. audiovisual and other companies in Russia owing to poor enforcement of intellectual property rights in Russia are an ongoing irritant in U.S.-Russia trade relations. Russia continues to work to bring its technical regulations, including those related to product and food safety, into conformity with international standards.

DEFENSE

Russia's efforts to transform its Soviet-legacy military into a smaller, lighter and more mobile force continue to be hampered by an ossified military leadership, discipline problems and human rights violations, limited funding and demographics. Recent steps by the Government of Russia suggest a desire to reform. There has been an increased emphasis on practical training, and the government is introducing bills to improve the organization of the military.

Despite recent increases in the budget, however, defense spending is still unable to sustain Russia's oversized military. Current troop strength, estimated at 1.1 million, is large in comparison to Russia's GDP and military budget, which continues to make the process of transformation to a professional army difficult. This is the result of the Soviet legacy and military thinking that has changed little since the Cold War. Senior Russian leaders continue to emphasize a reliance on a large strategic nuclear force capable of deterring a massive nuclear attack.

Russian military salaries are low. Theoretically, the army provides all necessities, but housing and food shortages continue to plague the armed forces. Problems with both discipline and brutal hazing are common as well. Such conditions continue to encourage draft evasion and efforts to delay military service. Moreover, military officials complain that new recruit cohorts are plagued by increasing incidences of poor education, communicable diseases, and criminality. HIV infection rates in the Russian army are estimated to be between two and five times higher than in the general population, and tuberculosis is a persistent problem.

The Russian Government has stated a desire to convert to a professional army, but implementation has been progressing slowly. In an effort to make military service more attractive, the tour of duty for conscripts was reduced to one year (from 18 months) beginning in 2008, and the military is offering increased pay and benefits to raise the number of professional servicemen. Current plans envision a transition to a mixed force, in which professional soldiers fill approximately 70%, including in select units, and conscription fills 30%. There is also an effort to develop a non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps, but the military faces difficulties recruiting NCOs, and has done little to develop the mechanisms and capability to sustain such a force.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In the years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia took important steps to become a full partner in the world's principal political groupings. On December 27, 1991, Russia assumed the permanent UN Security Council seat formerly held by the

Soviet Union. Russia also is a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Russia and the European Union (EU) signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. It signed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Partnership for Peace initiative in 1994. The NATO-Russia Founding Act established the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) in 1997, with the NATO-Russia Council superseding the PJC in 2002. Russia, despite misgivings, did not actively oppose enlargement of NATO by members of the former Warsaw Pact and the Baltic states, which had been forcibly integrated into the Soviet Union. However, Russia has recently stressed its strong opposition to the membership aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia.

Over the past several years Russia has increased its international profile, played an increasing role in regional issues, and been more assertive in dealing with its neighbors. The rise in energy prices has given it leverage over countries which are dependent on Russian sources. Russia continues to support separatist regimes in Georgia and Moldova.

U.S.-RUSSIA RELATIONS

The United States and Russia share common interests on a broad range of issues, including counterterrorism and the drastic reduction of our strategic arsenals. Russia shares our basic goal of stemming the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. The Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, launched in 1992 to facilitate dismantlement of weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union, was renewed in 2006 until 2013. At the 2006 G8 Summit in St. Petersburg, the U.S. and Russia announced the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism to keep terrorists from acquiring nuclear materials. We are working with Russia to bring Iran's nuclear programs into compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) rules and United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1737, 1747, and 1803. On North Korea, Russia is a participant in the Six-Party Talks aimed at the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Russia also takes part in the Middle East Peace Process "Quartet" (along with the UN and the EU). Russia now interacts with NATO members as an equal through the NATO-Russia Council but without veto power over NATO decisions. During the past several years, Russia has intensified its efforts to combat trafficking in persons. We are cooperating in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

U.S. Assistance to Russia

For more detailed information on U.S. Government assistance to Russia, please see the annual reports to Congress on U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia, which are available in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs section on the State Department's website. A 2008 fact sheet on U.S. assistance to Russia can be found at http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/103515.htm.

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Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 20, 2008

Country Description: Russia is a vast and diverse nation that continues to evolve politically, economically, and socially. Travel and living conditions in Russia contrast sharply with those in the United States. Major urban centers show tremendous differences in economic development compared to rural areas. While good tourist facilities exist in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and some other large cities, they are not developed in most of Russia, and some of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries are not yet available. Travel to the Caucasus region of Russia is dangerous. The Department of State recommends Americans not travel to Chechnya and adjoining areas, and recommends that Americans who are in these regions depart immediately.

Entry Requirements: The Russian government maintains a restrictive and complicated visa regime for foreigners who visit, transit, or reside in the Russian Federation. A U.S. citizen who does not comply with Russian visa laws can be subject to arrest, fines, and/or deportation. Russian authorities will not allow a U.S. citizen traveler with an expired visa to depart the country, effectively stranding the person for up to 20 days, until local authorities grant an exit visa.

The Government of Russia does not recognize the standing of the U.S. diplomatic mission to intervene in visa matters, including situations in which an American is stranded because of an expired visa. U.S. citizens should also be aware that Russian immigration and visa laws change regularly, and the implementation of new regulations has not always been transparent or predictable.

Dual citizens who also carry Russian passports face additional complicated regulations. Dual citizen minors who travel on their Russian passports also face special problems. International cruise ship passengers do not need visas if they remain with authorized tour groups at all times while ashore.

Sponsorship: Under Russian law, every foreign traveler must have a Russian-based sponsor, which could be a hotel, tour company, relative, employer, university, etc. Even if a visa was obtained through a travel agency in the United States, there is always a Russian legal entity whose name is indicated on the visa and who is considered to be the legal sponsor. Russian law requires that the sponsor must apply on the traveler's behalf for replacement, extension, or changes to a Russian visa. U.S. citizens are strongly advised to ensure that they have contact information for the visa sponsor prior to arrival in Russia, as the sponsor's assistance will be essential to resolve any visa problems.

Entry Visas: To enter Russia for any purpose, a U.S. citizen must possess a valid U.S. passport and a bona fide visa issued by a Russian Embassy or Consulate. It is impossible to obtain an entry visa upon arrival, so travelers must apply for their visas well in advance. U.S. citizens who apply for Russian visas in third countries where they do not have permission to stay more than 90 days may face considerable delays in visa processing. Travelers who arrive in Russia without an entry visa will not be permitted to enter the country, and face immediate return to the point of embarkation at their own expense.

A Russian entry/exit visa has two dates written in the European style (day/month/year) as opposed to the American style (month/day/year). The first date indicates the earliest day a traveler may enter Russia; the second date indicates the date by which a traveler must leave Russia. A Russian visa is only valid for those exact dates and cannot be extended after the traveler has arrived in the country, except in the case of a medical emergency.

Russian tourist visas are often granted only for the specific dates mentioned in the invitation letter provided by the sponsor. U.S. citizens sometimes receive visas valid for periods as short as four days. Even if the visa is misdated through error of a Russian Embassy or Consulate, the traveler will still not be allowed into Russia before the visa start date or be allowed to leave after the visa expiration date. Any mistakes in visa dates must be corrected before the traveler enters Russia. It is helpful to have someone who reads Russian check the visa before departing the United States. Travelers should ensure that their visas reflect intended activities in Russia (e.g., tourism, study, business, etc.).

U.S. citizens who are denied visas may seek a clarification from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 32/34 Smolenskaya-Sennaya Pl., Moscow, Russia, 119200, e-mail ministry@mid.ru. The U.S. Embassy and the Consulates General, however, cannot advocate on behalf of private U.S. citizens who have been refused visas or denied entry into Russia.

Limitations on Length of Stay: In October 2007, the Russian government made significant changes to its rules regarding the length of stay permitted to most foreign visitors. For any visa issued on or after October 18, 2007, unless that visa specifically authorizes employment or

study, a foreigner may stay in Russia only 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies to business, tourist, humanitarian and cultural visas, among other categories.

Exit Visa: A valid visa is necessary to depart Russia. Travelers who overstay their visa's validity, even for one day, will be prevented from leaving until their sponsor intervenes and requests a visa extension on their behalf. Russian authorities may take up to 20 calendar days to authorize an exit visa, during which time the traveler will be stranded in Russia at his or her own expense. The ability of the Embassy or Consulates General to intervene in these situations is extremely limited.

Travelers with expired visas should also be aware that they may have difficulty checking into a hotel, hostel, or other lodging establishment. There are no adequate public shelters or safe havens in Russia and neither the U.S. Embassy nor the Consulates General have means to accommodate such stranded travelers.

Visitors who lose their U.S. passports and Russian visas to accident or theft must immediately replace their passports at the U.S. Embassy or one of the Consulates General. The traveler must then enlist the visa sponsor to obtain a new visa in order to depart the country. As noted above, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates General are not able to intercede in cases in which visas must be replaced. It is helpful to make a photocopy of your visa in the event of loss, but a copy is not sufficient to permit departure.

Travelers who are departing Russia by train should be aware that if they board a train on the last day of a visa's validity, Russian immigration officials may consider the visa to have expired if the train crosses the international border after midnight on the day of expiry. The Embassy and Consulates General are aware of cases in which travelers have been detained at border crossings, unable to leave Russia, because their visas were expired by a matter of hours or minutes.

Visas for students and English teachers sometimes allow only one entry. In these cases, the sponsoring school is responsible for registering the visa and migration card and obtaining an exit visa. Obtaining an exit visa can take up to twenty days so students and teachers need to plan accordingly. Please see the section below regarding Teaching in Russia.

Migration Card: All foreigners entering Russia must fill out a two-part migration card upon arrival. The traveler deposits one part of the card with immigration authorities at the port of entry, and keeps the other part for the duration of his or her stay. Upon departure, the traveler must submit his or her card to immigration authorities. Foreign visitors to Russia are normally required to present their migration cards in order to register at hotels.

Migration cards, in theory, are available at all ports of entry from Russian immigration officials (Border Guards). The cards are generally distributed to passengers on incoming flights and left in literature racks at arrival points. Officials at borders and airports usually do not point out these cards to travelers; it is up to the individual travelers to find them and fill them out.

Replacing a lost or stolen migration card is extremely difficult. While authorities will not prevent foreigners from leaving the country if they cannot present their migration cards, travelers could experience problems when trying to re-enter Russia at a future date.

Although Russia and Belarus use the same migration card, travelers should be aware that each country maintains its own visa regime. U.S. citizens wishing to travel to both nations must apply for two separate visas. A traveler entering Russia directly from Belarus is not required to obtain a new migration card, but at his or her option may do so if blank ones are available at the time of entry.

Visa Registration: Travelers who spend more than three days in Russia must register their visa and migration card through their sponsor. Travelers staying in a hotel must register their visa and migration card with their hotel within one day. Even travelers who spend less than three days in one place are encouraged to register their visas. If a traveler chooses not to register a stay of less than three days, he or she is advised to keep copies of tickets, hotel bills, or itineraries in order to prove compliance with the law.

U.S. citizens should be aware that Russian police officers have the authority to stop people and request their identity and travel documents at any time, and without cause. Due to the possibility of random document checks by police, travelers should carry their original passports, migration cards, and visas with them at all times.

Transit Visas: Travelers intending to transit through Russia en route to a third country must have a Russian transit visa. Even travelers who are simply changing planes in Moscow or another international airport in Russia for an onward destination will be asked to present a transit visa issued by a Russian Embassy or Consulate. Russian authorities may refuse to allow a U.S. citizen who does not have a transit visa to continue with his or her travel, obliging the person to immediately return to the point of embarkation at the traveler's own expense.

Restricted Areas: U.S. citizens should be aware that there are several closed cities and regions in Russia. Travelers who attempt to enter these areas without prior authorization are subject to arrest, fines, and/or deportation. A traveler must list on the visa application all areas to be visited and subsequently register with authorities upon arrival at each destination. Travelers should check with their sponsor, hotel, or the nearest office of the Russian Federal Migration Service before traveling to unfamiliar cities and towns.

American Citizens Also Holding Russian Passports: Dual U.S./Russian nationals who enter Russia on

Russian passports face several possible difficulties. Russian authorities will not permit departure from Russia if the person's Russian passport has expired or has been lost, whether or not the traveler also has a valid U.S. passport. In these cases the traveler will be required to obtain a new Russian passport, a process that can take several months. In order to apply for a Russian visa in a U.S. passport, however, Russian consular officials normally require a person to renounce his or her Russian citizenship.

Russian external passports extended by Russian Consulates or Embassies overseas are not considered valid for departure from Russia no matter how long the extension. Bearers of such passports will have to apply for a new passport inside the country. Males of conscript age (18 - 27 years old) who are deemed to be Russian citizens may experience problems if they have not satisfied their military service requirement.

Minors: American citizen minors who also have Russian citizenship and who are traveling on their Russian passports must have a power-of-attorney, written in Russian, allowing them to travel if they are traveling alone or in the company of adults who are not their parents. Such minors will be prevented from entering or leaving Russia if they cannot present such a power-of-attorney.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated special procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian if not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not legally required, may facilitate entry/departure. For further information, please see the Department of State's webpage regarding the prevention of international child abduction.

International Cruise Ship Passengers: International cruise ship passengers are permitted to visit Russian ports without a visa for a period of up to 72 hours. Passengers who wish to go ashore during port calls may do so without visas provided that they are with an organized tour at all times, accompanied by a tour operator who has been duly licensed by Russian authorities. These special entry/exit requirements do not apply to river boat cruise passengers and travelers coming to Russia on package tours. These travelers will need to apply for visas prior to entry, and should follow the general guidelines for entry/exit requirements.

For additional information concerning travel to Russia, U.S. citizens may contact the Embassy of the Russian Federation, Consular Section, 2641 Tunlaw Rd. NW, Washington, DC 20007, tel. 202-939-8907, http://www.russianembassy.org. In addition, there are Russian Consulates in:

Houston: 1333 West Loop South, Ste.1300, Houston, TX 77027, tel. 713-337-3300;

New York: 9 East 91 St., New York, NY 10128, tel. 212-348-0926;

San Francisco: 2790 Green St., San Francisco, CA 94123, tel. 415-928-6878 or 415-202-9800; and

Seattle: 2323 Westin Building, 2001 6th Ave., Seattle, WA 98121, tel. 206-728-1910.

Safety and Security: Due to continued civil and political unrest throughout much of the Caucasus region, the Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against travel to Chechnya and all areas that border it: North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Stavropol, Karachayevo-Cherkessiya, and Kabardino-Balkariya. The U.S. Government's ability to assist Americans who travel to the northern Caucasus is extremely limited. Throughout the region, local criminal gangs have kidnapped foreigners, including Americans, for ransom. U.S. citizens have disappeared in Chechnya and remain missing. Close contacts with the local population do not guarantee safety. There have been several kidnappings of foreigners and Russians working for media and non-governmental organizations in the region. Due to the ongoing security concerns, U.S. Government travel to the area is very limited. American citizens residing in these areas should depart immediately as the safety of Americans and other foreigners cannot be effectively guaranteed.

Acts of terrorism, including bombings and hostage taking, have occurred in Russia over the last several years. Bombings have occurred at Russian government buildings, hotels, tourist sites, markets, entertainment venues, schools, residential complexes, and on public transportation including subways, buses, trains, and scheduled commercial flights. Hostage-taking incidents have included a raid on a school that resulted in horrific losses of life of children, teachers, and parents.

There is no current indication that American institutions or citizens are targets, but there is a general risk of American citizens being victims of indiscriminate terrorist attacks. American citizens in Russia should be aware of their personal surroundings and follow good security practices. Americans are urged to remain vigilant and exercise good judgment and discretion when using any form of public transportation. When traveling, Americans may wish to provide a friend, family member, or coworker a copy of their itinerary. Americans should avoid large crowds and public gatherings that lack enhanced security measures. Travelers should also exercise a high degree of caution and remain alert when patronizing restaurants, casinos, nightclubs, bars, theaters, etc., especially during peak hours of business.

American citizens living in Russia or traveling there for even a few days are strongly urged to register with the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate General. Registration will allow the embassy to provide direct information on the security situation as necessary. Registration can be done on-line and can be done in advance of travel.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The U.S. Embassy and Consulates General continue to receive reports of unprovoked, violent harassment against racial and ethnic minorities, including well-publicized cases in which members of minorities have been beaten and in several instances, murdered. Travelers are urged to exercise caution in areas frequented by "skinhead" groups and wherever large crowds have gathered. Americans most at risk are those of African, South Asian, or East Asian descent, or those who, because of their complexion, are perceived to be from the Caucasus region or the Middle East. These Americans are also at risk for harassment by police authorities.

Visitors to Russia need to be alert to their surroundings. In large cities, they need to take the same precautions against assault, robbery, or pickpockets that they would take in any large U.S. city:

- keep billfolds in inner front pockets,
- carry purses tucked securely under arms,
- wear the shoulder strap of cameras or bags across the chest,
- walk away from the curb and carry purses away from the street.

The most vulnerable areas include underground walkways and the subway, overnight trains, train stations, airports, markets, tourist attractions, and restaurants.

Groups of children and adolescents have been aggressive in some cities, swarming victims, or assaulting and knocking them down. They frequently target persons who are perceived as vulnerable, especially elderly tourists or persons traveling alone. Some victims report that the attackers use knives. Persons carrying valuables in backpacks, in back pockets of pants and in coat pockets are especially vulnerable to pickpockets.

Foreigners who have been drinking alcohol are especially vulnerable to assault and robbery in or around nightclubs or bars, or on their way home. Some travelers have been drugged at bars, while others have taken strangers back to their lodgings, where they were drugged, robbed and/or assaulted.

In many cases involving stolen credit cards, thieves use them immediately. Victims of credit card or ATM card theft should report the theft to the credit card company or bank without delay.

Travelers are advised to be vigilant in bus and train stations and on public transport. Always watch for pickpockets in these areas. Bogus trolley inspectors, who aim to extort a bribe from individuals while checking for trolley tickets are also a threat. Travelers have generally found it safer to travel in groups organized by reputable tour agencies. Robberies may occur in taxis shared with strangers. Travelers should be aware that there are few registered taxi services in Russia and should be aware of the safety risks inherent in flagging down informal or "gypsy" cabs.

A common street scam in Russia is the "turkey drop" in which an individual "accidentally" drops the money on the ground in front of an intended victim, while a confederate either waits for the money to be picked up, or picks up the money himself and offers to split it with the pedestrian. The individual who dropped the currency returns, aggressively accusing both of stealing the money. This confrontation generally results in the pedestrian's money being stolen. Avoidance is the best defense. Do not get trapped into picking up the money, and walk quickly away from the scene. To avoid highway crime, travelers should try not to drive at night, especially when alone, or sleep in vehicles along the road. Travelers should not, under any circumstances, pick up hitchhikers: they not only pose a threat to physical safety, but also put the driver in danger of being arrested for unwittingly transporting narcotics.

Extortion and corruption are common in the business environment. Threats of violence and acts of violence are commonly resorted to in business disputes. Organized criminal groups and sometimes local police target foreign businesses in many cities and have been known to demand protection money. Many Western firms hire security services that have improved their overall security, although this is no guarantee. Small businesses are particularly vulnerable. U.S. citizens are encouraged to report all extortion attempts to the Russian authorities and to inform consular officials at the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate General.

Travelers should be aware that certain activities that would be normal business activities in the United States and other countries are either illegal under the Russian legal code or are considered suspect by the FSB (Federal Security Service). U.S. citizens should be particularly aware of potential risks involved in any commercial activity with the Russian military-industrial complex, including research institutes, design bureaus, production facilities or other high technology, government-related institutions. Any misunderstanding or dispute in such transactions can attract the involvement of the security services and lead to investigation or prosecution for espionage. Rules governing the treatment of information remain poorly defined.

It is not uncommon for foreigners in general to become victims of harassment, mistreatment and extortion by law enforcement and other officials. Police do not need to show probable cause in order to stop, question or detain individuals. If stopped, travelers should try to obtain, if safe to do

so, the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number, and note where the stop happened, as this information assists local officials in identifying the perpetrators. Authorities are concerned about these incidents and have cooperated in investigating such cases. Travelers should report crimes to the U.S. Embassy or the nearest Consulate General.

Internet Dating Schemes: The U.S. Embassy receives reports almost every day of fraud committed against U.S. citizens by Internet correspondents professing love and romantic interest. Typically, the correspondent asks the U.S. citizen to send money or credit card information for living expenses, travel expenses, or "visa costs." The anonymity of the Internet means that the U.S. citizen cannot be sure of the real name, age, marital status, nationality, or gender of the correspondent. The U.S. Embassy has received many reports of citizens losing thousands of dollars through such scams. American citizens are advised never to send money to anyone they have not met in person.

In many countries around the world including Russia, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. In Russia, CD and DVD piracy is an especially serious problem. Transactions involving such products are illegal under Russian law, and the Russian government has markedly increased its enforcement activities against intellectual property rights infringements. In addition, bringing counterfeit and pirated products back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in most localities is below Western standards; shortages of medical supplies, differing practice standards and the lack of comprehensive primary care all combine to make the medical system difficult to negotiate as well as suspect. The few facilities in Moscow and St. Petersburg that approach acceptable standards do not necessarily accept all cases (i.e., they may not be licensed to treat trauma, infectious disease or maternity cases). Access to these facilities usually requires cash or credit card payment at Western rates at the time of service.

Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at particular risk. Elective surgeries requiring blood transfusions and non-essential blood transfusions are not recommended, due to uncertainties surrounding the local blood supply. Most hospitals and clinics in major urban areas have adopted the use of disposable IV supplies, syringes and needles as standard practice; however, travelers to remote areas might consider bringing a supply of sterile, disposable syringes and corresponding IV supplies for eventualities. Travelers should refrain from visiting tattoo parlors or piercing services due to the risk of infection.

Outbreaks of diphtheria and Hepatitis A have been reported throughout the country, even in large cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend up-to-date tetanus and diphtheria immunizations before traveling to Russia and neighboring countries. Typhoid can be a concern for those who plan to travel extensively in the region. Rarely, cases of cholera have also been reported throughout the area. Drinking bottled water can reduce the risk of exposure to infectious and noxious agents. Tap water in Russia, outside of Moscow, is generally considered unsafe to drink. Travelers are strongly urged to use bottled water for drinking and food preparation. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Russia. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Rates of HIV infection have risen markedly in recent years. While most prevalent among intravenous drug users, prostitutes, and their clients, the HIV/AIDS rate in the general population is increasing. Reported cases of syphilis are much higher than in the United States, and some sources suggest that gonorrhea and chlamydia are also more prevalent than in Western Europe or the United States. Travelers should be aware of the related health and legal risks.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Medicare does not provide benefits for medical care overseas. Travelers should consider obtaining traveler's insurance prior to going abroad.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Russia is provided for general reference only,

and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. In some areas of Russia roads are practically non-existent. Persons planning to drive in Russia should adhere to all local driving regulations; these are strictly enforced and violators are subject to severe legal penalties. Drivers should be aware that Russia practices a zero tolerance policy with regard to alcohol consumption prior to driving. The maximum punishment is a two-year suspension of a driver's license. An intoxicated driver may also be detained until they are deemed to be sober.

Avoid excessive speed and, if at all possible, do not drive at night, particularly outside of major cities. In rural areas, it is not uncommon to find livestock crossing roadways at any given time. Construction sites or stranded vehicles are often unmarked by flares or other warning signals. Sometimes cars have only one headlight with many cars lacking brake lights. Bicycles seldom have lights or reflectors. Due to these road conditions, be prepared for sudden stops at any time. Learn about your route from an auto club, guidebook or government tourist office. Some routes have heavy truck and bus traffic, while others have poor or nonexistent shoulders; many are one-way or do not permit left-hand turns. Also, some of the newer roads have very few restaurants, motels, gas stations or auto repair shops along their routes. For your safety, have your vehicle serviced and in optimum condition before you travel. It is wise to bring an extra fan belt, fuses and other spare parts.

A valid U.S. driver's license with a notarized Russian translation or a valid Russian license is necessary to drive a vehicle in Russia. Tourists may use international driver's licenses issued by the American Automobile Association to drive in Russia. Foreigners in Russia on a business visa or with a permanent residence status in Russia are required by law to have a Russian driver's license. In order to obtain this license one has to take the appropriate exams in Russian. An American driver's license cannot be exchanged for a Russian license. Travelers without a valid license are often subject to prolonged stops by police and fines.

Drivers must carry third party liability insurance under a policy valid in Russia. U.S. automobile liability insurance is not valid in Russia nor are most collision and comprehensive coverage policies issued by U.S. companies. A good rule of thumb is to buy coverage equivalent to that which you carry in the United States.

Roadside checkpoints are commonplace. These checkpoints are ostensibly in place to detect narcotics, alien smuggling, and firearms violations. However, they are generally viewed as a means for traffic police to extract cash "fines."

For specific information concerning Russian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please refer to the Russia national tourist organization at www.russia-travel.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Russia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Russia's air carrier operations. For more information travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Travelers should be aware that local air carriers in remote regions may not meet internationally accepted customer service standards. Some local airlines do not have advance reservation systems but sell tickets for cash at the airport. Flights often are canceled if more than 30% of the seats remain unsold. Travelers should have their passports with them at all times.

Teaching In Russia: Many Americans come to Russia to teach English, and some have complained about schools' failure to facilitate proper visas and pay agreed salaries. Prospective teachers should ensure that schools are prepared to comply with Russian laws governing the employment and documentation of foreigners, including proper visa support, registration and legal salary payments.

Prospective teachers should ask for references from other foreigners who have taught at the school being considered and should consider insisting upon written contracts stipulating the provisions of their employment, just as they would in the United States. Warning signs include instructions to arrive in Russia on a tourist visa and "change status" later, payment under the table (in cash with no documentation or tax withholding), and requirements that the school retain a passport for the length of the employment. (Upon arrival, a legal employee must surrender his or her passport for registration by the employer but this process should take less then three weeks.)

Currency: The Russian ruble is the only legal tender currency. It is illegal to pay for goods and services in U.S. dollars except at authorized retail establishments. Worn U.S. bills or bills marked in any way are often not accepted at banks and exchange offices.

Travelers need no longer bring large amounts of hard currency unless they expect to travel in rural areas. ATMs are plentiful in major cities. Travelers should follow all normal precautions about using ATMs. In particular, they should avoid "stand-alone" machines and opt for machines at banks or higher-class hotels and stores. Credit card acceptance, while not universal, is rapidly spreading in Moscow and to a lesser extent in other large cities. Travelers should check in advance whether a specific store, restaurant, or hotel accepts credit cards. Outside of major cities, commercial enterprises still operate largely on a cash basis and travelers should plan accordingly.

Customs Regulations: There have been increasing reports of rigorous searches of baggage and stricter enforcement of customs regulations against the exportation of items of

"cultural value." Visitors to Russia have been arrested for attempting to leave the country with antique items which they believed were legally purchased from licensed vendors. Travelers should obtain receipts for all high-value items (including caviar) purchased in Russia. Any article that could appear old or as having cultural value to the Customs Service, including artwork, icons, samovars, rugs, military medals and antiques, must have a certificate indicating that it has no historical or cultural value. Certificates will not be granted for the export of articles that are more than 100 years old, irrespective of the value. These certificates may be obtained from the Russian Ministry of Culture. For further information, Russian speakers may call the Airport Sheremetyevo-2 Customs Information Service in Moscow at (7) (495) 578-2125/578-2120. In St. Petersburg, the Ministry of Culture may be reached at 311-3496.

Russia also has very strict rules on the importation of large quantities of medication: certain prescription and over-the-counter drugs common in the United States are prohibited in Russia, and large quantities of any medicine will receive scrutiny. It is advisable to contact a Russian Embassy or Consulate for specific information regarding this or other customs regulations.

The importation and use of Global Positioning Systems (GPSs) and other radio electronic devices are sometimes subject to special rules and regulations in Russia. The Russian Customs Service has most recently stated that terminal GPSs can be imported upon their simple declaration on arrival. A special customs permit should be obtained in the case of importation of a GPS to be used as a peripheral device to a separate computer and/or antenna to increase its capability.

In general, mapping and natural resource data collection activities associated with normal commercial and scientific collaboration may result in seizure of the associated equipment and/or arrest. The penalty for using a GPS device in a manner which is determined to compromise Russian national security can be a prison term of ten to twenty years.

Visitors may bring regular cellular telephones to Russia without restriction. Satellite telephones require advance approval from the Russian authorities. The State Customs Committee has stated that there are no restrictions on bringing laptop computers into the country for personal use. The software, however, can be inspected upon departure. Hardware and software found to contain sensitive or encrypted data may be subject to confiscation.

Travelers should address specific questions to the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation, e-mail: webmaster@mail.customs.ru, web site: http://www.customs.ru/en.

Great care should be taken to safeguard against the loss of airline tickets for Russian carriers. Generally, a central office must authorize the replacement of lost airline tickets, which can take 24 hours or more. In some cases, Americans who have lost their tickets just prior to their flights on local airlines have been forced to buy new full-fare tickets or miss the flight because replacement tickets were not authorized in time.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Russian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Russia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Russia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Russia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy's consular section is located at Novinskiy Bulvar 21, Moscow, metro station Barrikadnaya. The Embassy's switchboard is tel. (7) (495) 728-5000, and the American Citizen Services Unit at tel. (7) (495) 728-5577. In the event of an after-hours emergency, please contact the main switchboard. The American Citizens Services Unit may also be contacted by fax at (7) (495) 728-5084, by e-mail at moscowwarden@state.govand through the Embassy web site at http://moscow.usembassy.gov.

U.S. Consulates General are located in:

St. Petersburg
15 Ulitsa Furshtadtskaya,
St. Petersburg 191028
Tel: (7) (812) 331-2600
Fax: (7) (812) 331-2646
Email: acsstpete@state.gov
Web site:
http://stpetersburg.usconsulate.gov

Vladivostok
32 Ulitsa Pushkinskaya,
Vladivostok 690001
Tel: (7) (4232) 30-00-70
Fax: (7) (4232) 30-00-91
After-hours emergencies:
(7) (4232) 71 00 67
E-mail: vladcons@state.gov
Web site:
http://vladivostok.usconsulate.gov

Yekaterinburg
Ulitsa Gogolya 15a, 4th floor,
Yekaterinburg 620151
Tel: (7) (343)379-3001
Fax: (7) (343) 379-4515
After-hours emergencies:
(7) 8 902 84 16653
Email: consulyekat@state.gov
Web site:
http://yekaterinburg.usconsulate.gov

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Russia is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Russia, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. For detailed information on USCIS requirements for adoption, please review the Intercountry Adoption section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, Russia also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoptions from Russia. Prospective adoptive parents will have to come to Russia twice during the adoption process.

Age Requirements: For single persons who wish to adopt, there must be a 16 year age difference between the prospective parent and the prospective child. There are no age requirements for married couples.

Marriage Requirements: Both married couples and single persons may adopt. Single persons must be at least 16 years older than the adoptive child.

Other Requirements: Russia has some medical requirements for prospective adoptive parents. Prospective adoptive parents should consult their adoption agencies concerning medical conditions. Some disqualifying conditions include tuberculosis (active and chronic), illness of the internal organs and nervous system, dysfunction of the limbs, infectious diseases, drug and alcohol addictions, psychiatric disorders, and any disability preventing the person from working.

Who Can Be Adopted? Russia has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

Waiting Period: The Russian Government maintains a database of children without parental care. Under Russian law, a child must be registered first on the local databank for one month, the regional databank for one month, and the federal databank for six months before the child can be released for intercountry adoption. Therefore, the total amount of time before a child is released for intercountry adoption is usually eight months.

Russia's Adoption Authority: Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Russia is usually to select an agency or attorney in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

Adoptive parents who work through an adoption agency must use an agency that the Russian Government has accredited to provide adoption services. For additional information on which United States agencies have Russian accreditation, please visit the United States Embassy in Moscow website. The United States Embassy discourages intercountry adoptions conducted independently without the assistance of an accredited agency.

To bring an adopted child from Russia to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (FORM I-600A) by the United States Government, Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Russia will provide you with a referral to a child.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Education reviews the request to adopt in that region. Upon approval, the parents are directed to an orphanage. The Ministry also assists the Adoption Agency with pre-selecting the child.

Role of the Court: The prospective adoptive parents apply for a court date after they have traveled to Russia to meet and select a child. It may take four to six weeks to receive a court date. Prospective adoptive parents are advised to return to the United States so there are no problems with the validity of their visa.

For the court date, parents must produce three additional documents which must be signed in front of a Russian notary. The documents verify that they have been informed of the child's medical conditions and they accept them, they will register their adopted child with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and they will provide post-placement reports.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Prospective adoptive parents must work through an agency that the Russian Government has accredited to provide adoption services.

Adoption Application: Once the prospective adoptive parents identify

the adoptive child, they fill out the adoption application. The application is obtained from the Russian court where the adoption hearings will take place.

Time Frame: The average time for the adoption process is six to twelve months from the time the I-600A petition is approved to the date of the immigrant visa interview.

Adoption Fees: The average total cost for intercountry adoptions from Russia are approximately $20,000 to $30,000 USD. This includes travel, lodging, and fees.

Documents Required: The following documents are needed to register an adopted child with the MFA:

- Parent's passports (photocopies are not acceptable)
- Letter from the orphanage (orphanage release)
- Letter from the Ministry of Education of Russia
- Court decision
- Adoption certificate
- Application for Registration and two photos of the child

The Consular Section of the MFA is open for intake Monday—Friday from 9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. They are open Monday—Thursday from 3:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m., and Friday from 2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m., for issuance of completed registration and documents.

The process takes two days since documents are issued the day after they are received.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Adopted Russian children must be registered with the Government of Russia either by registering with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) before they leave the country or by working with their adoption agency to register their adopted children with the G.O.R. when they return to the United States If registering prior to departing Russia. United States citizen families should do this after an adopted child has received an immigrant visa to the United States.

Russia requires periodic post-adoption placement reports on the welfare of the adopted orphan in his or her American family. The initial post-placement report is due six months after the court decision went into effect. The second report is due six months after the first report but no later than 12 months after the court decision. The third report is due at 24 months and the fourth at 36 months.

Contact Information

United States Embassy in Russia
#21 Novinsky Blvd.
Moscow, Russia 123242
Tel: 728-5000 switchboard
728-5567 (orphan visas)
Fax: 728-5247 (orphans only)
Internet:
http://moscow.usembassy.gov

Russia's Adoption Authority
Ministry of Education and Science
#11 Tverskaya Street
Moscow, Russia 125993 GSP 3
Tel: 011-7-095-629-6610

Embassy of the Russian Federation
2650 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
Tel: 202-298-5700
Fax: 202-298-5735
Internet:
http://www.russianembassy.org

The Russian Federation also has consulates in San Francisco, New York, and Seattle.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



RWANDA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Rwanda

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 26,338 sq. km. (10,169 sq. km.); about the size of Maryland.
Cities: Capital—Kigali (est. pop. 800,000). Other cities—Gitarama, Butare, Ruhengeri, Gisenyi.
Terrain: Uplands and hills.
Climate: Mild and temperate, with two rainy seasons.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Rwandan(s).
Population: (July 2008 est.) approximately 10,180,000.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 2.8%.
Ethnic groups: Hutu 85%, Tutsi 14%, Twa 1%.
Religions: Christian 93.5%, traditional African 0.1%, Muslim 4.6%, 1.7% claim no religious beliefs.
Languages: French, English, Kinyarwanda.
Education: Years compulsory—6. Attendance—75% (prewar). Literacy—70.4%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2008 est.)—83.4 deaths/1,000. Life expectancy (2008 est.)—49.8 years.
Work force: Agriculture—90%; industry and commerce, services, and government—10% (2000).

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 1, 1962.

Constitution: May 26, 2003.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government). Broad-based government of national unity formed after the 1994 civil war. Elections in 2003 elected a president, 80-seat Chamber of Deputies and 26-member Senate. Legislative—Chamber of Deputies; Senate. Judicial—Supreme Court; High Courts of the Republic; Provincial Courts; District Courts; mediation committees.

Political subdivisions: 4 provinces plus Kigali; 30 districts; 416 sectors; 2,148 cells.

Political parties: There are nine political parties, including the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which leads a coalition that includes the Centrist Democratic Party (PDC), the Rwandan Socialist Party (PSR), the Ideal [formerly Islamic] Democratic Party (PDI), and the Democratic Popular Union (UPDR). Other parties include the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the Liberal Party (PL), the Concord Progressive Party (PPC), and the Prosperity and Solidarity Party (PSP).

Suffrage: Universal for citizens over 18—except refugees, prisoners, and certain categories of convicts.

Budget: (2007 est.) 31.7 billions of Rwandan francs ($29 million) Revenues—$28 million. Expenditures—$29 million.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $2.8 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2007 est.) 6.3%.

Per capita income: (2006 est.) $260. Purchasing power parity (2006 est.) $1,600.

Average inflation rate: (2007 est.) 9.4%.

Agriculture: (2007) 36.2% of GDP. Products—coffee, tea, pyrethrum (insecticide made from chrysanthemums), bananas, beans, sorghum, potatoes, livestock.

Industry: (2007) 15.3% of GDP. Types—cement, agricultural products, beer production, soft drinks, soap, furniture, shoes, plastic goods, textiles, cigarettes, pharmaceuticals.

Services: (2007) 42.7%

Trade: (2007 est.) Exports—$145 million: tea, coffee, coltan, cassiterite, hides, iron ore, and tin. Major markets—China, Belgium, and Germany. Imports (2007 est.)—$488 million f.o.b.: foodstuffs, machinery and equipment, steel, petroleum products, cement, and construction material. Major suppliers—Kenya, Germany, Belgium, France, Uganda, and Israel.

GEOGRAPHY

Rwanda's countryside is covered by grasslands and small farms extending over rolling hills, with areas of rugged mountains that extend southeast from a chain of volcanoes in the northwest. The divide between the Congo and Nile drainage systems extends from north to south through western Rwanda at an average elevation of almost 9,000 feet. On the western slopes of this ridgeline, the land slopes abruptly toward Lake Kivu and the Ruzizi River valley, which form the western boundary with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) and constitute part of the Great Rift valley. The eastern slopes are more moderate, with rolling hills extending across central uplands at gradually reducing altitudes, to the plains, swamps, and lakes of the eastern border region.

Although located only two degrees south of the Equator, Rwanda's high elevation makes the climate temperate. The average daily temperature near Lake Kivu, at an altitude of 4,800 feet (1,463 meters) is 73o F (23o C). During the two rainy seasons (February-May and September-December), heavy downpours occur almost daily, alternating with sunny weather. Annual rainfall averages 80 centimeters (31 in.) but is generally heavier in the western and northwestern mountains than in the eastern savannas.

PEOPLE

Rwanda's population density, even after the 1994 genocide, is currently the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly every family in this country with few villages lives in a self-contained compound on a hillside. The urban concentrations are grouped around administrative centers. The indigenous population consists of three ethnic groups. The Hutus, who comprise the majority of the population (85%), are traditionally farmers of Bantu origin. The Tutsis (14%) are traditionally a pastoral people who arrived in the area in the 15th century. Until 1959, they formed the dominant caste under a feudal system based on cattle holding. The Twa (1%) are thought to be the remnants of the earliest settlers of the region. Over 70% of the adult population is literate, but not more than 5% have received secondary education. During 1994-95, most primary schools and more than half of prewar secondary schools reopened. The national university in Butare reopened in April 1995; enrollment is over 7,000. Rebuilding the educational system continues to be a high priority of the Rwandan Government.

HISTORY

According to folklore, Tutsi cattle breeders began arriving in the area from the Horn of Africa in the 15th century and gradually subjugated the Hutu inhabitants. The Tutsis established a monarchy headed by a mwami (king) and a feudal hierarchy of Tutsi nobles and gentry. Through a contract known as ubuhake, the Hutu farmers pledged their services and those of their descendants to a Tutsi lord in return for the loan of cattle and use of pastures and arable land. Thus, the Tutsi reduced the Hutu to virtual serfdom. However, boundaries of race and class became less distinct over the years as some Tutsi declined until they enjoyed few advantages over the Hutu. The first European known to have visited Rwanda was German Count Von Goetzen in 1894. He was followed by missionaries, notably the "White Fathers." In 1899, the mwami submitted to a German protectorate without resistance. Belgian troops from Zaire chased the small number of Germans out of Rwanda in 1915 and took control of the country.

After World War I, the League of Nations mandated Rwanda and its southern neighbor, Burundi, to Belgium as the territory of Ruanda-Urundi. Following World War II, Ruanda-Urundi became a UN Trust Territory with Belgium as the administrative authority. Reforms instituted by the Belgians in the 1950s encouraged the growth of democratic political institutions but were resisted by the Tutsi traditionalists who saw in them a threat to Tutsi rule. An increasingly restive Hutu population, encouraged by the Belgian military, sparked a revolt in November 1959, resulting in the overthrow of the Tutsi monarchy. Two years later, the Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement (PARMEHUTU) won an overwhelming victory in a UN-supervised referendum.

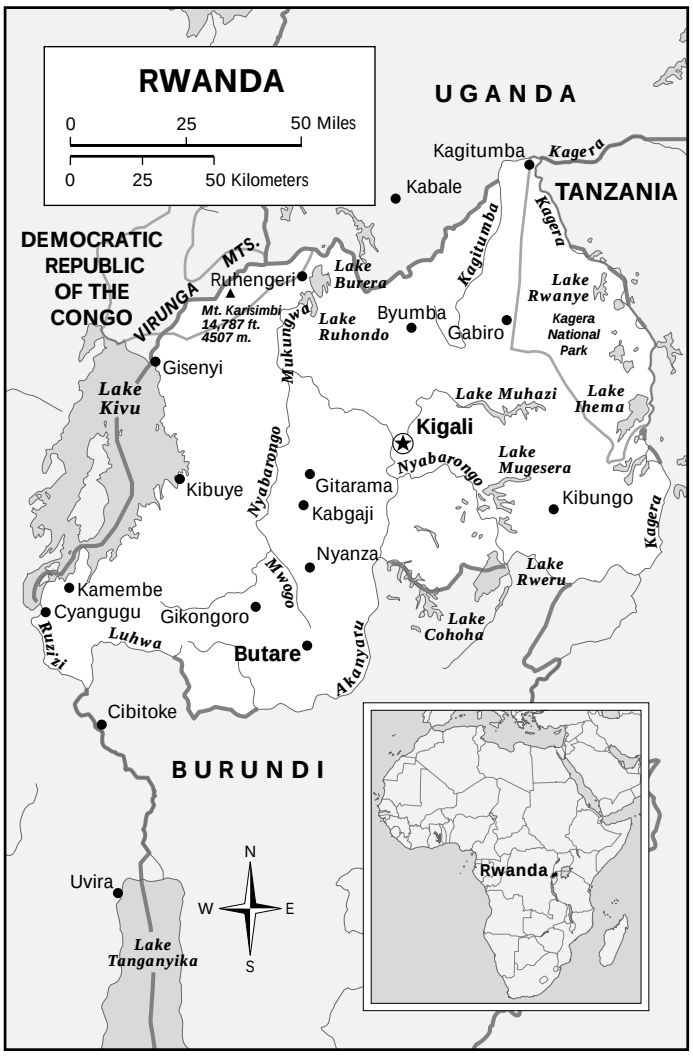
During the 1959 revolt and its aftermath, more than 160,000 Tutsis fled to neighboring countries. The PARMEHUTU government, formed as a result of the September 1961 election, was granted internal autonomy by Belgium on January 1, 1962. A June 1962 UN General Assembly resolution terminated the Belgian trusteeship and granted full independence to Rwanda (and Burundi) effective July 1, 1962.

Gregoire Kayibanda, leader of the PARMEHUTU Party, became Rwanda's first elected president, leading a one-party government chosen from the membership of the directly elected unicameral National Assembly. Peaceful negotiation of international problems, social and economic elevation of the masses, and integrated development of Rwanda were the ideals of the Kayibanda regime; in reality the Kayibanda government promoted a Hutu-supremicist ideology.

Relations with 43 countries, including the United States, were established in the first 10 years. Despite the progress made, inefficiency and corruption began festering in government ministries in the mid-1960s. On July 5, 1973, the military took power under the leadership of Maj. Gen. Juvenal Habyarimana, who dissolved the National Assembly and the PARMEHUTU Party and abolished all political activity.

In 1975, President Habyarimana formed the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND) whose goals were to promote peace, unity, and national development. The movement was organized from the "hillside" to the national level and included elected and appointed offi-

cials.Under MRND aegis, Rwandans went to the polls in December 1978, overwhelmingly endorsed a new constitution, and confirmed President Habyarimana as president. President Habyarimana was re-elected in 1983 and again in 1988, when he was the sole candidate. Responding to public pressure for political reform, President Habyarimana announced in July 1990 his intention to transform Rwanda's one-party state into a multi-party democracy.



On October 1, 1990, Rwandan exiles banded together as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and invaded Rwanda from their base in Uganda. The rebel force, composed primarily of ethnic Tutsis, blamed the government for failing to democratize and resolve the problems of some 500,000 Tutsi refugees living in the diaspora around the world. The war dragged on for almost 2 years until a cease-fire accord was signed July 12, 1992, in Arusha, Tanzania, fixing a timetable for an end to the fighting and political talks, leading to a peace accord and power sharing, and authorizing a neutral military observer group under the auspices of the Organization for African Unity. A cease-fire took effect July 31, 1992, and political talks began August 10, 1992.

On April 6, 1994, the airplane carrying President Habyarimana and the President of Burundi was shot down as it prepared to land at Kigali. Both presidents were killed. As though the shooting down was a signal, military and militia groups began rounding up and killing all Tutsis and political moderates, regardless of their ethnic background.

The prime minister and her 10 Belgian bodyguards were among the first victims. The killing swiftly spread from Kigali to all corners of the country; between April 6 and the beginning of July, a genocide of unprecedented swiftness left up to 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus dead at the hands of organized bands of militia—Interahamwe. Even ordinary citizens were called on to kill their neighbors by local officials and government-sponsored radio. The president's MRND Party was implicated in organizing many aspects of the genocide. The RPF battalion stationed in Kigali under the Arusha accords came under attack immediately after the shooting down of the president's plane. The battalion fought its way out of Kigali and joined up with RPF units in the north. The RPF then resumed its invasion, and civil war raged concurrently with the genocide for 2 months. French forces landed in Goma, Zaire, in June 1994 on a humanitarian mission. They deployed throughout southwest Rwanda in an area they called "Zone Turquoise," ostensibly to quell the genocide and stop the fighting there; many members of the genocidal rump regime established after the genocide escaped through the French zone to eastern Congo. The Rwandan Army was quickly defeated by the RPF and fled across the border to Zaire followed by some 2 million refugees who fled to Zaire, Tanzania, and Burundi. The RPF took Kigali on July 4, 1994, and the war ended on July 16, 1994. The RPF took control of a country ravaged by war and genocide. Up to 1 million had been murdered, another 2 million or so had fled, and another million or so were displaced internally.

The international community responded with one of the largest humanitarian relief efforts ever mounted. The United States was one of the largest contributors. The UN peacekeeping operation, UNAMIR, was drawn down during the fighting but brought back up to strength after the RPF victory. UNAMIR remained in Rwanda until March 8, 1996.

Following an uprising by the ethnic Tutsi Banyamulenge people in eastern Zaire in October 1996, a huge movement of refugees began which brought more than 600,000 back to Rwanda in the last 2 weeks of November. This massive repatriation was followed at the end of December 1996 by the return of another 500,000 from Tanzania, again in a huge, spontaneous wave. Less than 100,000 Rwandans are estimated to remain outside of Rwanda, and they are thought to be the remnants of the defeated army of the former genocidal government, its allies in the civilian militias known as Interahamwe, and soldiers recruited in the refugee camps before 1996.

In 2001, the government began implementation of a grassroots village-level justice system, known as gacaca, in order to address the enormous backlog of cases. Despite periodic prison releases, including the most recent January 2006 release of approximately 7,000 prisoners, tens of thousands of individuals remain in the prison system, some scheduled to face the traditional court system, some awaiting trial by gacaca courts, some convicted by gacaca courts and returned to serve their sentences. By the end of 2006, 818,000 genocide suspects had been identified by the gacaca courts. These courts hope to complete their caseload by the end of 2008.

In January 2008 a moderate earthquake in neighboring D.R.C., near the southern Rwandan border town of Cyangugu, caused several dozen deaths and hundreds of injuries in two Rwandan districts, with hundreds of homes rendered uninhabitable and several churches demolished. Rwandan authorities responded quickly to the tragedy and, with the assistance of local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), assisted those in need.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

After its military victory in July 1994, the RPF organized a coalition government similar to that established by President Habyarimana in 1992. Called "The Broad Based Government of National Unity," its fundamental law is based on a combination of the June 1991 constitution, the Arusha accords, and political declarations by the parties. The MRND Party was outlawed. In April 2003, the transitional National Assembly recommended the dissolution of the Democratic Republican Party (MDR), one of eight political parties participating in the Government of National Unity since 1994. Human rights groups noted the subsequent disappearances of political figures associated with the MDR, including at least one parliamentarian serving in the National Assembly. On May 26, 2003, Rwanda adopted a new constitution that eliminated reference to ethnicity and set the stage for presidential and legislative elections in August and September 2003. The seven remaining political parties endorsed incumbent Paul Kagame for president, who was elected to a 7-year term on August 25, 2003. Rwanda held its first-ever legislative elections September 29 to October 2, 2003. A ninth political party formed after these 2003 elections. In the spring of 2006, the government conducted local nonpartisan elections for district mayors and for sector and cell executive committees. Elections for the House of Delegates will occur in September 2008.

Challenges facing the government include promoting further democratization and judicial reform; completion of prosecution of hundreds of thousands of individuals for crimes relating to the 1994 genocide, either by the regular court system or the gacaca system; preventing the recurrence of any insurgency directed by ex-military and Interahamwe militia who remain in eastern Congo; and the continuing work on medium- and long-term development planning.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Paul KAGAME**
Prime Min.: **Bernard MAKUZA**
Min. of Agriculture & Animal Resources: **Christopher BAZIVAMO**
Min. of Cabinet Affairs: **Charles MURIGANDE**
Min. of Defense & National Security: **Marcel GATSINZI, Gen.**
Min. of East African Community: **Monique MUKARURIZA**
Min. of Education: **Daphrose GAHAKWA**
Min. of Finance & Economic Planning: **James MUSONI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Regional Cooperation: **Rosemary Kobusingye MUSEMINARI**
Min. of Health: **Jean Damascene NTAWUKULIRYAYO, Dr.**
Min. of Infrastructure: **Linda BIHIRE**
Min. of Internal Security: **Fazil Musa HARERIMANA**
Min. of Justice: **Tharcisse KARUGARAMA**
Min. of Local Govt., Good Governance, Community Development, & Social Affairs: **Protais MUSONI**
Min. of Natural Resources: **Stanislas KAMANZI**
Min. of Public Service & Labor: **Anastse MUREKEZI**
Min. of Sports & Culture: **Joseph HABINEZA**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Monique NSANZABAGANWA**
Min. of Youth: **Protais MITALI**
Min. in the Office of the Pres.: **Solina NYIRAHABIMANA**
Min. in the Office of the Pres. in Charge of Science, Technology, & Scientific Research: **Romain MURENZI**
Min. in the Office of the Prime Min. in Charge of Gender & Women in Development: **Jeanne d'Arc MUJAWAMARIYA**
Min. in the Office of the Prime Min. in Charge of Information: **Louise MUSHIKIWABO**
Min. of State for Agriculture in the Min. of Agriculture & Animal Resources: **Agnes KALIBATA**
Min. of State for Community Development & Social Affairs in the Min. of Local Govt., Good Governance, Community Development, & Social Affairs: **Christine NYATANYI**
Min. of State for Energy in the Min. of Infrastructure: **Albert BUTARE**
Min. of State for Environment, Water, & Mines in the Min. of Natural Resources: **Bikoro MUNYANGANIZI**

Min. of State for HIV/AIDS & Other Epidemics, Min. of Health: **Innocent NYARUHIRIRA, Dr.**
Min. of State for Industry & Investment Promotion in the Min. of Trade & Industry: **Vincent KAREGA**
Min. of State for Labor in the Min. of Public Service & Labor: **Angelina MUGANZA**
Min. of State for Lands & Environment in the Min. of Natural Resources: **Patricia HAJABAKIGA**
Min. of State for Primary & Secondary Education in the Min. of Education: **Theoneste MUTSINDASHYAKA**
Attorney Gen.: **Tharcisse KARUGARAMA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Francois KANIMBA**
Ambassador to the US: **Zac NSENGA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Joseph NSENGIMANA**

Rwanda maintains an embassy in the United States at 1714 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-232-2882).

ECONOMY

The Rwandan economy is based on the largely rain-fed agricultural production of small, semi-subsistence, and increasingly fragmented farms. It has few natural resources to exploit and a small, uncompetitive industrial sector. While the production of coffee and tea is well suited to the small farms, steep slopes, and cool climates of Rwanda, the average family farm size is one-half hectare, unsuitable for most agro-business purposes, especially in view of government ownership of all land and the resettlement of displaced persons. Agribusiness accounts for 36.2% (2007 est.) of Rwanda's GDP and 40.2% of exports. Minerals in 2007 accounted for 35.9% of export earnings, followed by tourism, tea and coffee, and pyrethrum (whose extract is used in insect repellant). Mountain gorillas and other upscale eco-tourism venues are increasingly important sources of tourism revenue. Rwanda's tourism and hospitality sector requires further development. Rwanda is a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the East African Community. Some 34% of Rwanda's imports originate in Africa, 90% from COMESA countries. The Government of Rwanda has sought to privatize several key firms. Rwandatel, the government fixed-line provider and the country's second-largest mobile phone provider, sold to American-led Terracom in 2006, was resold to a Libyan firm in 2007. The government in the last several years also sold off several government-owned tea estates, and made great strides in completing privatization of the banking sector. Electrogaz, the utility monopoly, remains to be privatized, as do several other parastatals.

During the 5 years of civil war that culminated in the 1994 genocide, GDP declined in 3 out of 5 years, posting a dramatic decline at more than 40% in 1994, the year of the genocide. The 9% increase in real GDP for 1995, the first postwar year, signaled the resurgence of economic activity, due primarily to massive foreign aid.

In the immediate postwar period—mid-1994 through 1995—emergency humanitarian assistance of more than $307.4 million was largely directed to relief efforts in Rwanda and in the refugee camps in neighboring countries where Rwandans fled during the war. In 1996, humanitarian relief aid began to shift to reconstruction and development assistance.

Since 1996, Rwanda has experienced steady economic recovery, thanks to foreign aid and governmental reforms. Since 2002, the GDP growth rate has ranged from 3%-9% per annum, and inflation had ranged between 2%-9%. Rwanda depends on significant foreign imports (over $400 million per year). Exports have increased, up to $145 million in 2007. Private investment remains below expectations despite an open trade policy, a favorable investment climate, cheap and abundant labor, tax incentives to businesses, stable internal security, and crime rates that are comparatively low. Investment insurance also is available through the Africa Trade Insurance Agency or the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. The weakness of exports as well as low domestic savings rates are threats to future growth. The Government of Rwanda remains committed to a strong and enduring economic climate for the country. To this end the government focuses on poverty reduction, infrastructure development, privatization of government-owned assets, expansion of the export base, and liberalization of trade. The implementation of a value added tax of 18% and improved tax collections are having a positive impact on government revenues and thereby services rendered. Banking reform and low corruption also are favorable current trends. Agricultural reforms, improved farming methods, and increased use of fertilizers are improving crop yields and national food supply. Moreover, the government is pursing educational and healthcare programs that bode well for the long-term quality of Rwanda's human resource skills base.

Many challenges remain for Rwanda. Rwanda is dependent on significant foreign aid. Exports continue to lag far behind imports and will continue to affect the health of the economy. Inflation may become a problem due to the large influx of donor funds. The persistent lack of economic diversification beyond the production of tea, coffee, and minerals keeps the country vulnerable to market fluctuations. Rwanda's landlocked situation necessitates strong highway infrastructure maintenance, and good transport linkages to neighboring countries, especially Uganda and Tanzania, are critical. Transportation costs remain high and, therefore, burden import and export costs. Rwanda has no railway system for port access in Tanzania, although the nearest railhead from Kigali is 380 kilometers away at Isaka, Tanzania. The development of small manufacturing and service industries is needed, and the tourism industry has far greater potential given the current stability, travel infrastructure, and available animal parks as well as other potential tourist sites. In 2006, Rwanda completed the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt initiative, significantly lowering its foreign debt load.

American business interest in Rwanda, other than in tea and telecommunications, is weak, and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has yet to make a significant impact in Rwanda. Energy needs will stress natural resources in wood and gas, but hydroelectric power development is underway, albeit primarily in the planning stages, as is methane development. Rwanda does not have nuclear power or coal resources. Finally, Rwanda's fertility rate—averaging 5.43 births (2006 est.) per woman—will continue to stress services, and diseases such as AIDS/HIV transmission, malaria, and tuberculosis will have a major impact on human resources.

Rwanda's government-run radio broadcasts 15 hours a day in Kinyarwanda, English, and French, the national languages. News programs include regular re-broadcasts from international radio such as Voice of America, BBC and Deutsche Welle. There is one government-operated television station. In addition to government-operated Radio Rwanda, there are a number of independent FM radio stations.

There are few independent newspapers; most newspapers publish in Kinyarwanda on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis. Several Western nations, including the United States, are working to encourage freedom of the press, the free exchange of ideas, and responsible journalism.

Defense

The military establishment is comprised of a well-trained army and a small, rotary-wing air force. Defense spending continues to represent a disproportionate share of the national budget, largely due to continuing security problems along the frontiers with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi in the aftermath of the war.

Following withdrawal of Rwandan Armed Forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in October 2002, the government completely restructured the military and launched an ambitious plan to demobilize thousands of soldiers. At end state, Rwanda will have a small, well-equipped army of 25,000 soldiers.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Rwanda is an active member of the international community and has remained in the international spotlight since the genocide. Rwanda is an active member of the UN, having presided over the Security Council during part of 1995. The UN assistance mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), a UN Chapter Six peacekeeping operation, involved personnel from more than a dozen countries. Most of the UN development and humanitarian agencies have had a large presence in Rwanda. At the height of the humanitarian emergency, more than 200 nongovernmental organizations were carrying out humanitarian operations. In addition to receiving assistance from the international community, Rwanda has also contributed to international peacekeeping missions. Currently, Rwanda Defense Forces (RDF) has deployed four battalions in support of the UNAMID Mission in Sudan.

Several west European and African nations, including Belgium, Canada, China, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Libya, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, the Holy See, and the European Union maintain diplomatic missions in Kigali.

In 1998, Rwanda, along with Uganda, invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) to back Congolese rebels trying to overthrow then-President Laurent Kabila. Rwandan troops pulled out of the D.R.C. in October 2002, in accordance with the Lusaka cease-fire agreement.

In the fall of 2006, Rwanda broke diplomatic relations with France, following a French judge's indictment of senior Rwandan officials on charges of having participated in the shooting down of the presidential jet in 1994. Rwanda rejects these charges. Rwanda, along with Burundi, joined the East African Community in 2007.

U.S.-RWANDAN RELATIONS

U.S. Government interests have shifted significantly since the 1994 genocide from a strictly humanitarian concern focusing on stability and security to a strong partnership with the Government of Rwanda focusing on sustainable development. The largest U.S. Government programs are the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the President's Malaria Initiative, which aim to reduce the impact of these debilitating diseases in Rwanda. Other activities promote rural economic growth and support good governance and decentralization. Overall U.S. foreign assistance to Rwanda has increased four-fold over the past four years.

A major focus of bilateral relations is the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) program. In support of the overall Government of Rwanda development plan, USAID aims to improve the health and livelihoods of Rwandans and increase economic and political development. To achieve this, USAID activities focus on:

- Prevention, treatment and care of HIV/AIDS;
- Reducing mortality and morbidity due to malaria;
- Increasing access to, and use of, voluntary family planning methods;
- Improving maternal and child health;
- Promoting rural economic growth through specialty coffee, dairy, and eco-tourism;
- Encouraging participatory governance and decentralization in 12 target districts;
- Promoting a democratic Rwanda, where the government respects human rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law; and

- Providing food aid to the most vulnerable populations.

The Mission is currently implementing a number of activities related to the goals above, and is working closely with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to obtain approval of the Threshold Country Plan submitted by the Government of Rwanda in November 2007. Once approved, the plan will be implemented by USAID and will focus on strengthening the justice sector and civic participation, and promoting civil rights and liberties.

The State Department's Public Affairs section maintains a cultural center in Kigali, which offers public access to English-language publications and information on the United States.

American business interests have been small; currently, private U.S. investment is limited to the tea industry, franchising (FedEx, Coca-Cola, Western Union, and Moneygram) and small holdings in service and manufacturing concerns. Annual U.S. exports to Rwanda, under $10 million annually from 1990-93, exceeded $40 million in 1994 and 1995. Although exports decreased in the years immediately after the genocide, in 2007 they were estimated at approximately $17 million, a 20% increase over 2006.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Patricia Marks
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ISSO:	Christopher Fletcher
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State ICASS:	Richard Kaminski

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 19, 2008

Country Description: Rwanda is a landlocked developing country in central Africa which has made considerable progress in rebuilding its infrastructure and establishing security since the 1994 civil war and genocide in which at least 800,000 people were killed. Economic activity and tourism are on the rise in Rwanda. Hotels and guesthouses are adequate in Kigali, the capital, and in major towns, but are limited in remote areas.

Entry Requirements: A passport and evidence of yellow fever immunization are required. Visas are not required for American citizens entering Rwanda for less than 90 days. U.S. citizens planning on working in Rwanda should apply for a work permit at the Directorate of Immigration as soon as possible after arrival in Rwanda. Detailed entry information may be obtained from Rwanda's Directorate of Immigration at: http://www.migration.gov.rw/ or from the Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda, 1714 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington DC 20009, telephone 202-232-2882, fax 202-232-4544, web site http://www.rwandaembassy.org. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Rwandan Embassy or Consulate.

Safety and Security: There are currently no travel restrictions in place within Rwanda, but travelers should use caution when traveling near or crossing the border into Burundi, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Uganda.

In March 2005, the Congo-based Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), comprising ex-Rwandese Armed Forces, Interahamwe, and other extremists, announced it would end its armed struggle against the Government of Rwanda, but thousands of combatants are estimated to remain in eastern Congo. The combatants currently are not well-organized or funded, nor do they pose a serious threat to Rwandan security. However, in early March 2007, in Gisenyi Province (near the Volcanoes National Park in northwestern Rwanda) they launched a mortar round and rocket into Rwandan territory. There were no casualties, and it appears to have been an isolated incident. While visitors may travel freely to Volcanoes National Park, they are not permitted to visit the park without permission from Rwanda's Office of Tourism and National Parks (ORTPN). ORTPN stipulates that the park can only be used for gorilla tours and nature walks. Since December 2006, all restrictions have been lifted in the Nyungwe Forest near the Burundian border in southwestern Rwanda. In the past, the FDLR infiltrated Rwanda from Burundi through the Nyungwe Forest, but the last reported incident in the park was in November 2003. However, FDLR rebel factions are known to operate in northeastern DRC, Burundi, Tanzania, and Uganda, including near the popular tourist area of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park. For information on travel to those and other countries, and for the latest security information, American citizens traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

From time to time, travel by U.S. Embassy personnel may be restricted based on changing security conditions. Visitors are encouraged to con-

tact the appropriate U.S. Embassy Regional Security Office or Consular Section for the latest security information, including developments in eastern Congo, Uganda and Burundi. (See Registration/Embassy Location section below.) Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Pick-pocketing in crowded public places is common, as is petty theft from cars and hotel rooms. Although violent crimes such as carjacking, robbery, and home invasion occur in Kigali, they are rarely committed against foreigners. Americans are advised to remain alert, exercise caution, and follow appropriate personal security measures. Although many parts of Kigali are safe at night, walking alone after dark is not recommended since foreigners, including Americans, have occasionally been the targets of robbery.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The U.S. Embassy provides some information on its web site about criminal justice in Rwanda at http://rwanda.usembassy.gov.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical and dental facilities are limited, and some medicines are in short supply or unavailable. Travelers should bring their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. In Kigali, Americans may go to King Faisal Hospital, a private facility that offers limited services and dental facilities. There is also a missionary dental clinic and a few private dentists. American-operated charitable hospitals with some surgical facilities can be found in Kibagora, in southwestern Rwanda, in Ruhengeri, near the gorilla trekking area, and in Rwinkavu, near the entrance to Akagera National Park. The U.S. Embassy maintains on its website a current list of healthcare providers and facilities in Rwanda at http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html; this list is also included in the Consular Section's welcome packets for American citizens. There are periodic outbreaks of meningitis in Rwanda. Yellow fever can cause serious medical problems, but the vaccine, required for entry, is very effective in preventing the disease. Malaria is endemic to Rwanda. All visitors are strongly encouraged to take prophylactic medications to prevent malaria. These should be initiated prior to entry into the endemic area. Because of possible counterfeit of antimalarial medications, these should be obtained from a reliable pharmaceutical source. Multiple outbreaks of ebola have been reported in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda in the past year, but none within Rwanda.

Information about vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Rwanda is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

and dental facilities are limited, and some medicines are in short supply or unavailable. Travelers should bring their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. In Kigali, Americans may go to King Faisal Hospital, a private facility that offers limited services and dental facilities. There is also a missionary dental clinic and a few private dentists. American-operated charitable hospitals with some surgical facilities can be found in Kibagora, in southwestern Rwanda, in Ruhengeri, near the gorilla trekking area, and in Rwinkavu, near the entrance to Akagera National Park. The U.S. Embassy maintains on its website a current list of healthcare providers and facilities in Rwanda at http://rwanda.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html; this list is also included in the Consular Section's welcome packets for American citizens. There are periodic outbreaks of meningitis in Rwanda. Yellow fever can cause serious medical problems, but the vaccine, required for entry, is very effective in preventing the disease. Malaria is endemic to Rwanda. All visitors are strongly encouraged to take prophylactic medications to prevent malaria. These should be initiated prior to entry into the endemic area. Because of possible counterfeit of antimalarial medications, these should be obtained from a reliable pharmaceutical source. Multiple outbreaks of ebola have been reported in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda in the past year, but none within Rwanda.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.gov.rw.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Rwanda, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Rwanda's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov. In recent months, Rwandair, which charters aircraft to fly its routes, has had difficulties maintaining its schedule, resulting in delayed and cancelled flights which have left passengers stranded for extended periods.

Special Circumstances: Telephone communication to and from Rwanda is generally reliable. Cellular telephones and Internet connections are available in Kigali and large towns. Non-biodegradable plastic bags have been banned in Rwanda and travelers carrying them upon arrival at the Kayibanda International airport may have them confiscated and have to pay approximately $4 for a reusable cloth replacement.

International ATMs are not available in Rwanda. The Rwandan franc is freely exchangeable for hard currencies in banks and the Bureaux de Change. Several Kigali banks can handle wire transfers from U.S. banks, including Western Union. Credit cards are accepted at only a few hotels in Kigali and only to settle hotel bills. Hotels currently accepting credit cards for payment include the Kigali Serena (formerly Intercontinental) Hotel, the Hotel des Mille Collines, the Novotel Umubano, Stipp Hotel and the Kivu Sun Hotel. Note that there may be an added fee for using a credit card.

Travelers should expect to handle most expenses, including air tickets, in cash. Traveler's checks can be cashed only at commercial banks. Because some travelers have had difficulty using U.S. currency printed before the year 2000, the Embassy recommends traveling with newer U.S. currency notes.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Rwandan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Rwanda are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. Both foreigners and Rwandans taking Rwandan children to live outside Rwanda, e.g., after adoption, must obtain an exit permission letter from the Ministry of Family and Gender located within the Primature complex at P.O. Box 969, Kigali, Rwanda; Tel: 011-250-587-128; Fax: 011-250-587-127.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Rwanda are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Rwanda. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 2657 Avenue de la Gendarmerie; the mailing address is B.P. 28, Kigali, Rwanda; tel. (250) 596-400,; fax: (250) 596-591. The Consular Section's email address is consularkigali@state.gov. The Embassy's web site is http://rwanda.usembassy.gov. American Citizen Services hours are Tuesdays from 9:00 -17:00 and Fridays from 9:00–12:00 except on U.S. and Rwandan holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Dsiclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Immigrant visas for Rwandan citizens including adopted orphans are issued at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. Please visit the web site for the Immigrant Visa Section at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi for information on immigrant visa services. http://nairobi.usembassy.gov/wwwhins1.html or e-mail: nairobiivdv@state.gov. Please check with the Kenyan Embassy in Washington about visa requirements to travel to Nairobi.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that eight immigrant visas were issued to Rwandan orphans in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority:
Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF)
P.O. Box 969
Kigali, Rwanda
Tel: 011-250-587-128
Fax: 011-250-587-127

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptive parents must be under age 50. However, a judge can waive the age requirement.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for foreign adoptive parents.

Time Frame: Allow 1-2 months to complete the Rwandan adoption and subsequent U.S. immigration procedures.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no known Rwandan or U.S. adoption agencies that provide adoption services in Rwanda. Upon request, the U.S. Embassy can provide a list of attorneys. Neither the Department of State nor the U.S. Embassy can vouch for the efficacy or professionalism of any attorneys on this list.

Adoption Fees: There are no Rwandan government fees associated with intercountry adoptions. However, adoptive parents can expect to pay attorneys' fees for services rendered.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents must petition the local court having jurisdiction over the prospective adoptive child's residence. Once the adoption is approved, the adoption decree is filed at the local vital records registry for the child's place of residence. Documents are filed with the Ministry of Family and Gender. A travel letter is required for the child to exit Rwanda. Documents from the Government of Rwanda are in French. Prospective adoptive parents will need English translations of the birth certificates and death certificates (if applicable) of the adopted child's birth parents to complete immigrant visa processing in Nairobi. The U.S. Embassy in Rwanda can assist in locating translation services, but no U.S. Government resources are available for translating documents.

Required Documents:

- Birth certificate(s) of the adoptive parent(s). If a birth certificate is unavailable, a legal or administrative certificate that proves date of birth and identity may be submitted;
- Original birth certificate of the child to be adopted;
- Marriage Certificate of adoptive parents;
- Waiver of age limit certificate, if applicable (for adoptive parents over the age of 50);
- The "Act of Adoption," which is prepared by the local Bureau de l'Etat Civil (Vital Statistics Office);
- Declaration of the adoptive parent's spouse and adult children consenting to the adoption;
- The Adoption Act. The act must reference the information on the birth and death certificates, whichever are applicable, as well as the identities/documents of the adopting persons (passports and International Adoptive Home Study);
- Authorization letter for departing Rwanda (issued by the Ministry of Family and Gender);
- Legal Judgment Document (a court order approving the adoption), which is prepared by the local court having jurisdiction where the child is located;
- Recommendation from Rwandan Embassy in Washington, DC;
- Home Study Report;
- Certificate of Good Behavior/ Police Record;
- Certificate of Complete Identification;
- Household Composition;
- Proof of Income;
- Adoption acceptance letter from US Department of State.

Note: Documents should be certified by a notary public as well as by the Rwandan Embassy in the U.S., if possible.

Rwandan Embassy in the United States
1714 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20009
Phone: 202-232-2882/3/4
Fax: 202-232-4544
e-mail:
rwandaembassy@rwandaembassy.org
http://www.rwandaembassy.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States of America
337 Boulevard de la Revolution
B.P. 28
Kigali, Rwanda
E-mail: consularkigali@state.gov
Website: http://kigali.usembassy.gov
Tel: (250) 505601, 505602, 505603
Extension: 3241
Fax: (250) 572128

Embassy of the United States of America
United Nations Avenue, Gigiri
P.O. Box 606
00621 Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: 254-20-363-6000
fax: 254-20-363-6410

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Rwanda may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Rwanda. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



ST. KITTS AND NEVIS

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis

PROFILE

Geography

Area: St. Kitts 168 sq. km. (65 sq. mi.); Nevis 93 sq. km. (36 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Basseterre (pop. about 15,000).

Terrain: Generally mountainous; highest elevations are 1,156 m. (3,792 ft.) at Mt. Liamuiga on St. Kitts and 985 m; (3,232 ft.) at Nevis peak on Nevis.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Kittitian(s), Nevisian(s).

Population: (2007) 39,129.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 1%.

Ethnic groups: Predominantly of African origin; some of British, Portuguese, and Lebanese descent.

Religions: Principally Anglican, with Evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic minorities.

Languages: English (official).

Education: (2005) Adult literacy—97.8%.

Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—14.5/1,000. Life expectancy—men 68 years; women 72 years.

Unemployment: (2006) 5.1%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy; independent sovereign state within the Commonwealth.

Constitution: 1983.

Independence: September 19, 1983.

Government branches: Executive—governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Parliament. Judicial—magistrate's courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), final appeal to Privy Council in London.

Political subdivisions: 14 parishes.

Political parties: St. Kitts and Nevis Labour Party (ruling), People's Action Movement (PAM), Concerned Citizens Movement (a Nevis-based party), and Nevis Reformation Party.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $477.4 million.

GDP growth rate: (2006) 5.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2006) $8,546.

Inflation: (2006) 5.25%.

Natural resources: Negligible.

Agriculture: Sugarcane, rice, yams, bananas, fish, cotton, peanuts, vegetables.

Industry: Financial and business services, tourism, construction, clothing, footwear, beverages, and tobacco.

Trade: (2006) Exports—$31 million (merchandise) and $139 million (commercial services). Major markets—United States (91.9%), EU (3.0%), Trinidad and Tobago (2%), Netherlands Antilles (0.8%), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (0.3%). Imports—$210 million (merchandise) and $87 million (commercial services). Major suppliers—United States (57.9%), Trinidad and Tobago (14.1%), European Union (9.3%), Japan (3.8%), and Barbados (2.8%).

Exchange rate: EC$2.70 = U.S. $1.

HISTORY

At the time of European discovery, Carib Indians inhabited the islands of St. Kitts and Nevis. Christopher Columbus landed on the larger island in 1493 on his second voyage and named it after St. Christopher, his patron saint. Columbus also discovered Nevis on his second voyage, reportedly calling it Nevis because of its resemblance to a snowcapped mountain (in Spanish, "nuestra senora de las nieves" or our lady of the snows). European settlement did not officially begin until 1623-24, when first English, then French settlers arrived on St. Christopher's Island, whose name the English shortened to St. Kitts Island. As the first English colony in the Caribbean, St. Kitts served as a base for further

colonization in the region. The English and French held St. Kitts jointly from 1628 to 1713. During the 17th century, intermittent warfare between French and English settlers ravaged the island's economy. Meanwhile Nevis, settled by English settlers in 1628, grew prosperous under English rule.

St. Kitts was ceded to Great Britain by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The French seized both St. Kitts and Nevis in 1782. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 definitively awarded both islands to Britain. They were part of the colony of the Leeward Islands from 1871-1956, and of the West Indies Federation from 1958-62. In 1967, together with Anguilla, they became a self-governing state in association with Great Britain; Anguilla seceded late that year and remains a British dependency. The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis attained full independence on September 19, 1983.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

As head of state, Queen Elizabeth II is represented in St. Kitts and Nevis by a governor general, who acts on the advice of the prime minister and the cabinet. The prime minister is the leader of the majority party of the House of Representatives, and the cabinet conducts affairs of state. St. Kitts and Nevis has a bicameral legislature: An 11-member Senate appointed by the governor general (mainly on the advice of the prime minister and the leader of the opposition); and an 11-member popularly elected House of Representatives which has eight St. Kitts seats and three Nevis seats. The prime minister and the cabinet are responsible to the Parliament.

St. Kitts and Nevis has enjoyed a long history of free and fair elections, although the outcome of elections in 1993 was strongly protested by the opposition and the Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System (RSS) was briefly deployed to restore order. The elections in 1995 were contested by the two major parties, the ruling People's Action Movement (PAM) and the St. Kitts and Nevis Labour Party. Labour won seven of the 11 seats, with Dr. Denzil Douglas becoming prime minister. In the 2004 elections, Denzil Douglas and the Labour Party were returned to power, winning seven of the eight seats allotted to St. Kitts in the Parliament. The Nevis-based Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM) won two seats, the Nevis Reformation Party (NRP) won one seat, and the PAM party won one seat. The next elections are constitutionally due by October 2009, but many believe that Douglas will call elections in late 2008. The constitution gives Nevis considerable autonomy. Nevis has an island assembly, a premier, and a deputy governor general. Under certain specified conditions, it may secede from the federation. In accordance with its rights under the Constitution, in 1996 the Nevis Island Administration under the Concerned Citizens' Movement (CCM) of Premier Vance Amory initiated steps towards secession from the Federation, the most recent being a referendum in 1998 that failed to secure the required two-thirds majority for secession. In the July 10, 2006 Nevis elections for the Nevis Island Administration, the NRP won three of the five seats; the CCM won two. The NRP's Joseph Parry assumed the premiership of Nevis. While opposing secession, the Government acknowledged the constitutional rights of Nevisians to determine their future independence. Constitutional safeguards include freedom of speech, press, worship, movement, and association. Like its neighbors in the English-speaking Caribbean, St. Kitts and Nevis has an excellent human rights record. Its judicial system is modeled on British practice and procedure and its jurisprudence on English common law.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Cuthbert Montraville SEBASTIAN**
Prime Min.: **Denzil DOUGLAS, Dr.**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Sam CONDOR**
Min. of Agriculture & Fisheries: **Cedric Roy LIBURD**
Min. of Consumer Affairs: **Timothy HARRIS**
Min. of Education: **Sam CONDOR**
Min of Finance & Intl. Trade: **Timothy HARRIS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Denzil DOUGLAS, Dr.**
Min. of Health: **Rupert Emmanuel HERBERT**
Min. of Housing: **Cedric Roy LIBURD**
Min. of Immigration: **Denzil DOUGLAS, Dr.**
Min. of Industry & Commerce: **Timothy HARRIS**
Min. of Information & Technology: **Sam CONDOR**
Min. of Justice & Legal Affairs: **Dennis MERCHANT**
Min. of Labor: **Sam CONDOR**
Min. of National Security: **Denzil DOUGLAS, Dr.**
Min. of Public Works, Utilities, Transport, & Posts: **Earl Asim MARTIN**
Min. of Social & Community Development & Gender Affairs: **Rupert HERBERT**
Min. of Sustainable Development: **Denzil DOUGLAS, Dr.**
Min. of Tourism, Culture, & Sport: **Denzil DOUGLAS, Dr.**
Min. of Youth Affairs & Social Security: **Sam CONDOR**
Min. of State in the Office of the Prime Min. With the Responsibility for Education, Youth Affairs, Labor, Social Security, Information, & Technology: **Nigel Alexis CARTY**
Min. of State in the Office of the Prime Min. With the Responsibility for Tourism, Sports, & Culture: **Richard SKERRIT**
Attorney Gen.: **Dennis MERCHANT**
Ambassador to the US: **Izben Cordinal WILLIAMS**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Delano Frank BART**

The embassy of St. Kitts and Nevis is located at 3216 New Mexico Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20016 (tel. 202-686-2636).

ECONOMY

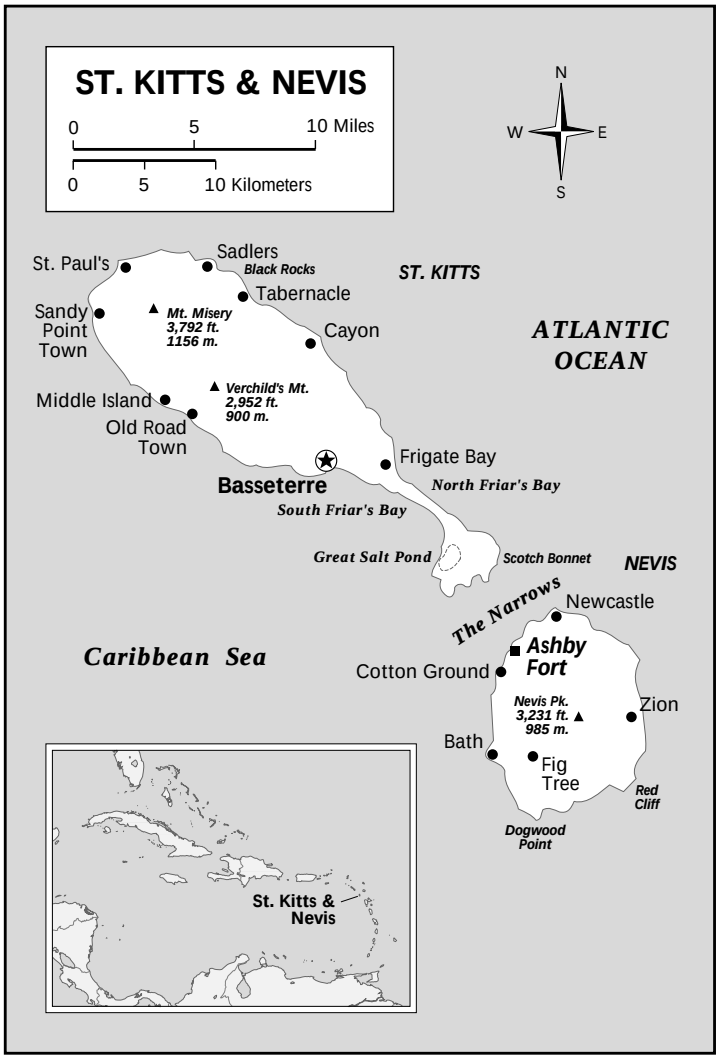
St. Kitts and Nevis was the last sugar monoculture in the Eastern Caribbean until the government decided to close the sugar industry in 2005, after decades of losses at the state-run sugar company. To compensate for the loss of the sugar industry, the

Government of St. Kitts and Nevis has begun exploring alternative energy uses for sugar cane. The United States and Brazil have agreed to develop biofuels programs in the region.

The economy of St. Kitts and Nevis experienced strong growth for most of the 1990s, but hurricanes in 1998 and 1999 and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks hurt the tourism-dependent economy. Economic growth picked up in 2004, with a real GDP growth rate of 6.4%, followed by 4.1% growth in 2005. The GDP growth rate rose to 5.8% in 2006, mostly as a result of diversification into tourism and construction related to the Cricket World Cup. Tourism has shown the greatest growth and is now a major foreign exchange earner for St. Kitts and Nevis, as evidenced by an 83% increase in foreign direct investment in a range of tourism-related projects. Recent significant investment included a 648-room Marriott hotel and convention center that opened in December 2002, as well as 2007 plans for "Christophe Harbor," a U.S. investor-funded $500 million resort project. The government instituted a program of investment incentives for businesses considering the possibility of locating in St. Kitts or Nevis, encouraging domestic and foreign private investment. Government policies provide liberal tax holidays, duty-free import of equipment and materials, and subsidies for training provided to local personnel.

However, the debt of public enterprises has increased, and total public and publicly guaranteed debt reached $290,740,000 in 2006. Consumer prices have risen marginally over the past few years. The rate of inflation, as measured by the change in the CPI, rose on average by 5.3% in 2006, compared with 3.6% in 2005 and 2.3% in 2004.

St. Kitts and Nevis is a member of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues the Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC$) for all members of the ECCU. The ECCB also manages monetary policy, and regulates and supervises commercial banking activities in its member countries. The ECCB has kept the EC$ pegged at EC$2.7 to U.S. $1.



FOREIGN RELATIONS

St. Kitts and Nevis maintains diplomatic relations with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Taiwan, Cuba, and South Korea, as well as with many Latin American countries and neighboring Eastern Caribbean states. It is a member of the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of American States, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, the Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System (RSS), and the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank is headquartered in St. Kitts. St. Kitts and Nevis has chosen to recognize Taiwan instead of the People's Republic of China.

U.S.-ST. KITTS AND NEVIS RELATIONS

Since St. Kitts and Nevis attained full independence in 1983, relations with the United States have been friendly. The United States seeks to help St. Kitts and Nevis develop economically and to help strengthen its moderate, democratic, parliamentary form of government. St. Kitts and Nevis is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative. U.S. assis-

tance is primarily channeled through multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), as well as the USAID office in Bridgetown, Barbados. In addition, St. Kitts and Nevis benefits from U.S. military exercises and humanitarian civic action construction projects. St. Kitts and Nevis is strategically placed in the Leeward Islands, near maritime transport lanes of major importance to the United States. St. Kitts and Nevis' location close to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands makes the two-island federation attractive to narcotics traffickers. To counter this threat, the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis cooperates with the United States in the fight against illegal narcotics. In 1995, the Government signed a maritime law enforcement treaty with the United States, later amended with an overflight/order-to-land amendment in 1996. St. Kitts and Nevis also signed an updated extradition treaty with the United States in 1996, and a mutual legal assistance treaty in 1997. St. Kitts and Nevis is a popular American tourist destination. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, tourism declined, but the islands have seen growing numbers of visitors in recent years. Fewer than 1,000 U.S. citizens reside on the island, although students and staff of Ross University Veterinary School and the Medical University of the Americas (Nevis) constitute a significant population of U.S. citizens. The United States maintains no official presence in St. Kitts and Nevis. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados and frequently travel to St. Kitts and Nevis. A U.S. consular agent residing in nearby Antigua, however, assists U.S. citizens in St. Kitts and Nevis.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRIDGETOWN (E) Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael BB 14006, APO/FPO APO AA 34055, 246-436-4950, Fax 246-429-5246, Workweek: Mon-Fri: 8.00–4.30, Website: bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Hillaire Campbell
AMB OMS:	Honora L. Myers
ECO:	Bryan R Switzer
FM:	Maurice Pettiford
HRO:	Peggy Laurance (Residence In Ft Lauderdale)
MGT:	Philip A. Dubois
AMB:	Mary M. Ourisman
CG:	Clyde I. Howard
DCM:	D. Brent Hardt
PAO:	John C. Roberts
GSO:	Yoshino Rosenstein
RSO:	Gary Truchot
AFSA:	Arend Zwartjes
AID:	James Goggin
CLO:	Lauren Mchugh/Tamie Harvey
DAO:	Ltc. Cdr. Stephen Leslie (Res. Caracas)
DEA:	Charles Graham
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FAA:	Dawn Flanagan (Res. Washington)
FMO:	Rajiv Malik
IMO:	Frank Sauer
IRS:	Cheryl Kast
ISO:	Norman G B Ellasos
ISSO:	Ricardo Cabrera
LAB:	John C. Aller
LEGATT:	Samuel Bryant, Jr.
MLO:	Lcdr. Cdr. Edward Gaynor
NAS:	Ian Campbell
POL:	Ian Campbell

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 466-7464
Fax: (202) 822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: For information, travelers can contact the Embassy of St. Kitts and Nevis, 3216 New Mexico Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016, telephone (202) 686-2636, the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, or via the Internet at http://www.stkittsnevis.org. St. Kitts and Nevis is a developing Caribbean nation consisting of two islands. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements. Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports. Visitors may be asked to present an onward/return ticket and proof of sufficient funds to cover the cost of their visit. Stays of up to three months are granted at immigration. Anyone requiring an extension must apply to the Ministry of National Security. There is an airport departure tax and environmental levy charged when leaving the country.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Petty street crime occurs in St. Kitts and Nevis, as well as the occasional burglary; visitors and residents should take common-sense precautions. Travelers should avoid carrying large amounts of cash and use hotel safety deposit facilities to safeguard valuables and travel documents. Travelers should not leave valuables unattended on the beach or in cars and should exercise caution when walking alone at night.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is limited. The main hospitals are Joseph N. France General Hospital (telephone (869) 465-2551) on St. Kitts and Alexandria Hospital (telephone (869) 469-5473) on Nevis. St. Kitts has two additional hospitals and both islands have several health clinics. Neither island has a hyperbaric chamber. Divers suffering from decompression illness are transported to the island of Saba, in the Netherlands Antilles. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the U.S. can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning St. Kitts and Nevis is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in St. Kitts and Nevis moves on the left-hand side of the road. Roads are reasonably well paved but narrow and sometimes poorly marked. Drivers often stop on the side of or in the middle of the road to visit with other drivers, blocking one lane of traffic. Honking one's horn is a common form of greeting, not a warning. Travelers are required to obtain a visitor's drivers license, which may be obtained from the Traffic Department or the Fire Station for a small fee on presentation of a valid home or international license. Public Transportation consists of mini-buses and taxis. Established fares are available from airport dispatchers and local hotels. Complaints regarding taxi or minibus services may be lodged with The Department of Tourism or with your hotel. More detailed information on roads and traffic safety can be obtained from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Environment, Bay Road, Pelican Mall, P.O. Box 132, Basseterre, St. Kitts, telephone (869) 465-4040. For specific information concerning St. Kitts and Nevis driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the St. Kitts and Nevis national tourist organization via the Internet at http://www.stkitts-tourism.com/index.asp.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis' Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of St. Kitts and Nevis' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in St. Kitts and Nevis. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados, is responsible for American citizen services in these islands. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports or other proof of citizenship with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. All Caribbean countries can be affected by hurricanes. The hurricane season normally runs from June to the end of November, but there have been hurricanes in December in recent years. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www. fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the laws of St. Kitts and Nevis, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in St. Kitts and Nevis are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in St. Kitts and Nevis are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within St. Kitts and Nevis. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Barbados in the Wildey Business Part, Wildey, St. Michael telephone 1-246-436-4950, website http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

The Consular Section telephone number is 1-246-431-0225. The Consular Section fax number is 1-246-431-0179. The Embassy web address is http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, except Barbados and U.S. holidays. In certain circumstances, the U.S. Consular Agency in Antigua can be of assistance. Persons seeking assistance should call the Consular Agent at 1-268-463-6531 to schedule an appointment.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The St. Kitts/Nevis Adoption of Children act does not differentiate between adoption by nationals and foreigners. The applicant must, however, be resident and domiciled in St. Kitts/Nevis in order to be eligible to adopt a child. The adoption of a female child by a single male is not permitted unless a family tie exists.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Procedures: Children do not have to be orphans to be adopted. An orphan is defined as a truant child, a child who has no natural parents or other legal guardians or other persons responsible for his/her maintenance, care, and upbringing. Children do not have to be abandoned for purposes of adoption. The adoption process averages approximately 6 months. The judicial court of St. Kitts/Nevis is responsible for the legal proceedings. The court appoints a guardian ad litem who provides a written study on the home of the applicant to the court. A private lawyer represents the adopting parents and a government appointed lawyer represents the child to be adopted. The cost for adoption is approximately U.S. dollars 745. It is illegal for any adopter, parent or guardian, except with the sanction of the court, to receive any payment or other reward or to give or take any such payment or reward for adoption. An application for an adoption order must contain a statement that no such payment was received or made. There are no exit controls on children leaving St. Kitts/Nevis.

Age And Civil Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be 25 years old and must be 21 years older than the child to be adopted.

Doctors: The US Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados maintains current lists of doctors and sources for medicines should either you or your child experience health problems while in St. Kitts/Nevis.

The US Embassy in Barbados is the nearest US embassy to St. Kitts/Nevis. The US Embassy in Barbados is located at: The Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Bldg. Broad Street, Bridgetown (PO Box 302) or FPO AA 34055 (Tel: 809-436-4950).

Additional Information: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Questions: Specific questions regarding adoptions in St. Kitts and Nevis may be addressed to the Consular Section of the US Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados. You may also contact the Office of Children's Issues, 2401 E Street, N.W., Room L127, Washington, D.C. 20037; Phone: (202) 737000; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



ST. LUCIA

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Saint Lucia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 619 sq. km. (238 sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Castries (pop. est. 67,000); Micoud; Gros-Islet; Vieux Fort; Soufriere.
Terrain: Mountainous.
Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—St. Lucian(s).
Population: (2006) 166,014.
Annual growth rate: (2006) 0.74%.
Ethnic groups: African descent 90%, mixed 6%, East Indian 3%, European 1%.
Religions: Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, various Protestant denominations.
Languages: English (official); a French patois is common throughout the country.
Education: (2004) Adult literacy—94.8%.
Health: (2006) Infant mortality rate—12/1,000. Life expectancy—men 73 years; women 76 years.
Unemployment: (2006) 15.7%.

Government

Type: Westminster-style parliamentary democracy.
Independence: February 22, 1979.
Constitution: 1979.
Government branches: Executive—governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament. Judicial—district courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), final appeal to Privy Council in London.
Political subdivisions: 11 parishes.
Political parties: United Workers Party (incumbent); St. Lucia Labour Party.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $899 million.
GDP growth rate: (2006) 4.5%.
Per capita GDP: (2006) $4,803.
Inflation of consumer prices: (2006) 2.34%.
Natural resources: Forests, minerals (pumice), mineral springs.
Agriculture: Bananas, cocoa, coconut, citrus fruits, and livestock.
Manufacturing: Garments, electronic components, beverages, corrugated boxes.
Services: Tourism and offshore banking.
Trade: (2005) Exports—$64 million (merchandise) and $389 million (commercial services). Major markets—European Union (28.2%), Trinidad and Tobago (22.5%), United States (14.0%), Barbados (10.1%), and Grenada (5.2%). Imports—$475 million (merchandise) and $159 million (commercial services). Major suppliers—United States (43.9%), Trinidad and Tobago (14.2%), European Union (14.2%), Japan (4.6%), and Barbados (3.0%).
Exchange rate: EC$2.70 = U.S. $1.

PEOPLE

St. Lucia's population is predominantly of African and mixed African-European descent, with small East Indian and European minorities. English is the official language, although many St. Lucians speak a French patois. Ninety percent of the population is Roman Catholic, a further reflection of early French influence on the island. The population of just over 165,000 is evenly divided between urban and rural areas, although the capital, Castries, contains more than one-third of the population.

HISTORY

St. Lucia's first known inhabitants were the Arawaks, believed to have come from northern South America in 200-400 A.D. Numerous archaeological sites on the island have produced specimens of the Arawaks' well-developed pottery. Caribs



gradually replaced Arawaks during the period from 800-1000 A.D. Europeans first landed on the island in either 1492 or 1502 during Spain's early exploration of the Caribbean. The Dutch, English, and French all tried to establish trading outposts on St. Lucia in the 17th century but faced opposition from the Caribs.

The English, with their headquarters in Barbados, and the French, based in Martinique, found St. Lucia attractive after the sugar industry developed in the 18th century. Britain eventually triumphed, with France permanently ceding St. Lucia in 1815. In 1838, St. Lucia was incorporated into the British Windward Islands administration, headquartered in Barbados. This lasted until 1885, when the capital was moved to Grenada.

Increasing self-governance has marked St. Lucia's 20th-century history. A 1924 constitution gave the island its first form of representative government, with a minority of elected members in the previously all-nominated legislative council. Universal adult suffrage was introduced in 1951, and elected members became a majority of the council. Ministerial government was introduced in 1956, and in 1958 St. Lucia joined the short-lived West Indies Federation, a semi-autonomous dependency of the United Kingdom. When the federation collapsed in 1962, following Jamaica's withdrawal, a smaller federation was briefly attempted. After the second failure, the United Kingdom and the six windward and leeward islands—Grenada, St. Vincent, Dominica, Antigua, St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla, and St. Lucia—developed a novel form of cooperation called associated statehood.

As an associated state of the United Kingdom from 1967 to 1979, St. Lucia had full responsibility for internal self-government but left its external affairs and defense responsibilities to the United Kingdom. This interim arrangement ended on February 22, 1979, when St. Lucia achieved full independence. St. Lucia continues to recognize Queen Elizabeth II as titular head of state and is an active member of the Commonwealth. The island continues to cooperate with its neighbors through the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), the East Caribbean Common Market (ECCM), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the Regional Security System (RSS).

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

St. Lucia is a parliamentary democracy modeled on the Westminster system. The head of state is Queen Elizabeth II, represented by a governor general, appointed by the Queen as her representative. The governor general exercises ceremonial functions, but residual powers, under the constitution, can be used at the governor general's discretion. The actual power in St. Lucia lies with the prime minister and the cabinet, usually representing the majority party in parliament.

The bicameral parliament consists of a 17-member House of Assembly whose members are elected by universal adult suffrage for 5-year terms and an 11-member senate appointed by the governor general. The parliament may be dissolved by the governor general at any point during its 5-year term, either at the request of the prime minister—in order to take the nation into early elections—or at the governor general's own discretion, if the house passes a vote of no-confidence in the government.

St. Lucia has an independent judiciary composed of district courts and a high court. Cases may be appealed to the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeals and, ultimately, to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London. The island is divided into 10 administrative divisions, including the capital, Castries. Popularly elected local governments in most towns and villages perform such tasks as regulation of sanitation and markets and maintenance of cemeteries and secondary roads. St. Lucia has no army but maintains a coast guard and a paramilitary Special Services Unit within its police force.

The United Workers Party (UWP) was once the dominant force in the politics of St. Lucia. Until 1997, the UWP governed the country for all but three years since independence. John Compton was premier of St. Lucia from 1964 until independence in February 1979 and remained prime minister until elections later that year. The St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP) won the first post-independence elections in July 1979, taking 12 of 17 seats in parliament. A period of turbulence ensued, in which squabbling within the party led to several changes of prime minister. Pressure from the private sector and the unions forced the government to resign in 1982. New elections were then called and were won resoundingly by Compton's UWP, which took 14 of 17 seats.

The UWP was re-elected on April 16, 1987, but with only nine of 17 seats. Seeking to increase his slim margin, Prime Minister Compton suspended parliament and called new elections on April 30. This unprecedented snap election, however, gave Compton the same results as before—the UWP retained nine seats and the SLP eight. In April 1992, Prime Minister Compton's government again defeated the SLP. In this election, however, the government increased its majority in parliament to 11 seats.

In 1996, Compton announced his resignation as prime minister in favor of his chosen successor Dr. Vaughan Lewis, former director-general of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Dr. Lewis became Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development on April 2, 1996. The SLP also had a change of leadership with former CARICOM official Dr. Kenny Anthony succeeding businessman Julian Hunte. In elections held May 23, 1997, the St. Lucia Labour Party won all but one of the 17 seats in parliament, and Dr. Kenny Anthony became Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning and Development on May 24, 1997. In elections of December 3, 2001, the SLP won 14 of the 17 available seats. The leader of the UWP, Dr. Morella Joseph, failed to win a seat. Marcus Nicholas served as leader of the parliamentary opposition. Former Prime Minister Sir John Compton came out of retirement to become leader of the opposition UWP in 2005. The United Workers Party won an upset victory in elections held December 11, 2006, taking 11 seats against 6 won by the St. Lucia Labour Party. Sir John Compton once again returned to the position of Prime Minister, as well as Minister of Finance.

In May 2007, Prime Minister Compton became ill and appointed Minister for Health Stephenson King as Acting Prime Minister. King served in this capacity until Compton passed away on September 7, 2007. Two days later, King was sworn in as Prime Minister.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Pearlette LOUISY, Dame**
Prime Min.: **Stephenson KING**
Min. for Agriculture, Lands, Forestry, & Fisheries: **Ezechiel JOSEPH**
Min. for Communications, Works, Transport, & Public Utilities: **Guy Eardley JOSEPH**
Min. for Education & Culture: **Arsene Vigil JAMES**
Min. for Finance, Economic Affairs, Economic Planning, National Development, & External Affairs: **Stephenson KING**
Min. for Health Wellness, Family Affairs, National Mobilization, Human Services, & Gender Relations: **Keith MONDESIR, Dr.**
Min. for Home Affairs & National Security: **George Guy MAYERS**
Min. for Industry, Trade, Commerce, Investment, & Consumer Affairs: **Rufus BOUSQUET**
Min. for Justice: **Nicholas FREDERICK**
Min. for Labor, Information, & Broadcasting: **Edmund ESTAPHANE**
Min. for Physical Planning, Urban Renewal, Local Govt., & the Environment: **Richard FREDRICK**
Min. for Social Transformation, Public Service, Human Resource Development, Youth, & Sports: **Lenard MONTOUTE**
Min. for Tourism & Civil Aviation: **Allen CHASTANET**
Attorney Gen.: **Nicholas FREDERICK**
Ambassador to the US: **Sonia JOHNNY**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Julian HUNTE**

St. Lucia maintains an embassy at 3216 New Mexico Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20016 (tel. 202-364-6792). St. Lucia also maintains consulates general in New York and Miami.

ECONOMY

St. Lucia's economy depends primarily on revenue from tourism and banana production, with some contribution from small-scale manufacturing. All sectors of the economy have benefited from infrastructure improvements in roads, communications, water supply, sewerage, and port facilities. These improvements, combined with a stable political environment and educated work force, have attracted foreign investors in several different sectors. Although St. Lucia enjoys a steady flow of investment in tourism, the single most significant foreign investment is Hess Oil's large petroleum storage and transshipment terminal. In addition, the Caribbean Development Bank funded an extensive airport expansion project. Although banana revenues have helped fund the country's development since the 1960s, the industry is now in a terminal decline, due to competition from lower-cost Latin American banana producers and soon-to-be reduced European Union trade preferences. The country is encouraging farmers to plant crops such as cocoa, mangos, and avocados to diversify its agricultural production and provide jobs for displaced banana workers.

Tourism recovered in 2004, following the post-September 11, 2001 recession, and continued to grow in 2005, making up more than 48% of St. Lucia's GDP. The hotel and restaurant industry grew by 6.3% during 2005. Stay-over arrivals increased by 6.5%, and the United States remained the most important market, accounting for 35.4% of these arrivals. Yacht passengers rose by 21.9%. Redeployment of cruise ships, remedial berth construction, and high fuel costs prevented higher growth rates. However, several investors have planned new tourism projects for the island, including a large hotel and resort in the southern part of the island. St. Lucia's currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (EC$), a regional currency shared among members of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues the EC$, manages monetary policy, and regulates and supervises commercial banking activities in its member countries. The ECCB has kept the EC$ pegged at EC$2.7=U.S. $1. St. Lucia is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative and is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM). The country hosts the headquarters of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Historically, the major thrust of foreign affairs for St. Lucia has been economic development. The government is seeking balanced international relations with emphasis on mutual economic cooperation and trade and investment. It seeks to conduct its foreign policy chiefly through its membership in the OECS. St. Lucia participated in the 1983 Grenada mission, sending members of its Special Services Unit into active duty. St. Lucia is a member of the Commonwealth, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the United Nations. It maintains friendly relations with the major powers active in the Caribbean, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and France. St. Lucia has been active in eastern Caribbean regional affairs through the OECS and CARICOM. St. Lucia has chosen to recognize Taiwan instead of the People's Republic of China.

U.S.-ST. LUCIAN RELATIONS

The United States and St. Lucia have a cooperative relationship. The United States supports the St. Lucian Government's efforts to expand its economic base and improve the lives of its citizens. The Government of St. Lucia has cooperated with the United States on security concerns. U.S. assistance is primarily channeled through multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, and the USAID office in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Peace Corps, whose Eastern Caribbean regional headquarters is located in St. Lucia, has 22 volunteers in St. Lucia, working primarily in business development, education, and health. U.S. security assistance programs provide limited training to the paramilitary Special Services Unit and the coast guard. In addition, St. Lucia receives U.S. counternarcotics assistance and benefits from U.S. military exercises and humanitarian civic action construction projects.

St. Lucia and the United States share interest in combating international crime and narcotics trafficking. Because of St. Lucia's geographical location, it is an appealing transit point for traffickers. In response to this threat, the Government of St. Lucia has concluded various bilateral treaties with the United States, including a Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement (subsequently amended to include overflight and order-to-land provisions), a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, and an Extradition Treaty.

More Americans visit St. Lucia than any other national group. In 2005, tourist visitors totaled over 700,000, mainly from the United States, the United Kingdom, and CARICOM. Cruise ship arrivals in 2005 were down by 18% over 2004, while the number of stay-over visitors increased slightly in the same period.

The United States maintains no diplomatic presence in St. Lucia. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados and frequently travel to St. Lucia.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRIDGETOWN (E) Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael BB 14006, APO/FPO APO AA 34055, 246-436-4950, Fax 246-429-5246, Workweek: Mon-Fri: 8.00–4.30, Website: bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Hillaire Campbell
AMB OMS:	Honora L. Myers
ECO:	Bryan R Switzer
FM:	Maurice Pettiford
HRO:	Peggy Laurance (Residence In Ft Lauderdale)
MGT:	Philip A. Dubois
AMB:	Mary M. Ourisman
CG:	Clyde I. Howard
DCM:	D. Brent Hardt
PAO:	John C. Roberts
GSO:	Yoshino Rosenstein
RSO:	Gary Truchot
AFSA:	Arend Zwartjes
AID:	James Goggin
CLO:	Lauren Mchugh/Tamie Harvey
DAO:	Ltc. Cdr. Stephen Leslie (Res. Caracas)
DEA:	Charles Graham
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FAA:	Dawn Flanagan (Res. Washington)
FMO:	Rajiv Malik
IMO:	Frank Sauer
IRS:	Cheryl Kast
ISO:	Norman G B Ellasos
ISSO:	Ricardo Cabrera
LAB:	John C. Aller
LEGATT:	Samuel Bryant, Jr.
MLO:	Lcdr. Cdr. Edward Gaynor
NAS:	Ian Campbell
POL:	Ian Campbell

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 466-7464
Fax: (202) 822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: St. Lucia is an English-speaking, developing Caribbean island nation. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: In 2006, there were five reported incidents of U.S. citizen visitors to St. Lucia staying in boutique hotels in rural areas being robbed at gunpoint in their rooms; some of the victims were assaulted and one was raped. In September 2007, a U.S. citizen was robbed in her room at a resort hotel near Castries by armed men. While authorities detained suspects in some of the cases, no one has been prosecuted. Efforts by the Saint Lucian authorities to improve public safety on the island are ongoing. Visitors should inquire about their hotel's security arrangements before making reservations. Valuables left unattended on beaches and in rental cars are vulnerable to theft. Visitors should use caution, especially at night and in lightly frequented areas.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is limited. There are two public hospitals and one private hospital in St. Lucia, neither of which provide the same level of care found in an American hospital. The main hospital is Victo-

ria Hospital (Telephone (758) 452-2421). There is no hyperbaric chamber; divers requiring treatment for decompression illness must be evacuated from the island. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning St. Lucia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Vehicles travel on the left side of the road in St. Lucia. Roads are reasonably well paved but poorly marked, narrow and winding, with steep inclines/declines throughout the island. There are few guardrails in areas that have precipitous drop-offs from the road. In spite of these conditions, drivers often travel at excessive speed, and accidents are common. St. Lucia is served by privately owned and operated mini-buses, plying licensed designated routes. While most such services operate only on weekdays during daylight hours, some may operate at night and on weekends and holidays. Taxis are available at generally reasonable rates, but tourists are vulnerable to being overcharged. When using minibus or taxi services, travelers should agree to a fare ahead of time. When hiring a service at night, travelers should take precautions such as having their hotel call a reputable company for service. For additional general information about road safety, including links to foreign government sites, please refer to our Road Safety page. For specific information concerning St. Lucia driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the St. Lucia National Tourist Organization offices in New York via phone at (212) 867-2950 or via the Internet at http://www.stlucia.org.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of St. Lucia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of St. Lucia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate on St. Lucia. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados is responsible for consular issues on St. Lucia, including American citizen services. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating St. Lucia's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in St. Lucia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in St. Lucia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within St. Lucia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in Barbados in the Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael, telephone 1-246-436-4950, website http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov. The telephone number for the Consular Section is 1-246-431-0225. The Consular Section fax number is 1-246-431-0179. The Embassy web address is http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, except Barbados and U.S. holidays.

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: St. Lucia is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between St. Lucia and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction.

American citizens who travel to St. Lucia place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to St. Lucia with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In St. Lucia parents who are legally married share the custody of their children. If they are not married, by law the custody is granted to the mother unless there are known facts of inappropriate behavior, mental or social problems. Foreign court orders are not automatically recognized.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in St. Lucia.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has been granted custody of a child, the other parent is usually granted visitation rights. The American Embassy in Bridgetown has reported few problems for non-custodial parents exercising their visitation rights.

If a custodial parent fails to allow visitation, the non-custodial parent may appeal to the court.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is recognized under St. Lucian law.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave St. Lucia.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a St. Lucian court should retain an attorney in St. Lucia. The U.S. Embassy in Barbados maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy at:

U.S. Embassy Bridgetown
Consular Section
ALICO Building, Cheapside
P O Box 302
Bridgetown
Barbados
Telephone: [246] 421-0225
Fax: [246] 431-0179
Web site: www.usembassy.state.gov

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov.

You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
St. Vincent and the Grenadines

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 340 sq. km. (130 sq. mi.); slightly less than twice the size of Washington, DC. The Grenadines include 32 islands, the largest of which are Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, and Union. Some of the smaller islands are privately owned.
Cities: Capital—Kingstown.
Terrain: Volcanic and mountainous, with the highest peak, Soufriere, rising to 1,219 meters (4,000 ft.).
Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Vincentian.
Population: (2008) 118,100.
Annual growth rate: (2006) 0.5%.
Ethnic groups: African descent (66%), mixed (19%), West Indian (6%), Carib Indian (2%), other (7%).
Religions: Anglican (47%), Methodist (28%), Roman Catholic (13%), other Protestant denominations, Seventh-day Adventist, and Hindu.
Languages: English (official); some French Patois spoken.
Education: (2004) Adult literacy—88.1%.
Health: (2006) Infant mortality rate—17/1,000. Life expectancy—men 69 years; women 74 years.
Work force: (2006) 57,695.
Unemployment: (2004) 12%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy; independent sovereign state within the Commonwealth.
Independence: October 27, 1979.
Constitution: October 27, 1979.
Government branches: Executive—governor general (representing Queen Elizabeth II, head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral legislature with 15-member elected House of Assembly and six-member appointed Senate. Judicial—district courts, Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court (High Court and Court of Appeals), final appeal to the Privy Council in London.
Political subdivisions: Six parishes.
Political parties: Unity Labour Party (ULP, incumbent), New Democratic Party (NDP).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $422.5 million.
GDP growth: (2005) 4.9%.
Per capita GDP: (2005) $3,594.
Inflation: (2006) 3.0%.
Natural resources: Timber.
Agriculture: Mostly bananas.
Industry: Plastic products, food processing, cement, furniture, clothing, starch, and detergents.
Trade: (2005) Exports—$40 million (merchandise) and $155 million (commercial services). Major markets—European Union (27.2%), Barbados (12.7%), Trinidad and Tobago (12.3%), Saint Lucia (10.9%), and the United States (9.2%). Imports—$240 million (merchandise) and $74 million (commercial services). Major suppliers—United States (33.3%), Trinidad and Tobago (23.6%), European Union (15.1%), Japan (4.2%), and Barbados (3.9%).
Exchange rate: EC$2.70 = U.S. $1.

PEOPLE

Most Vincentians are the descendants of African slaves brought to the island to work on plantations. There also are a few white descendants of English colonists, as well as some East Indians, Carib Indians, and a sizable minority of mixed race. The country's official language is English, but a French patois may be heard on some of the Grenadine Islands.

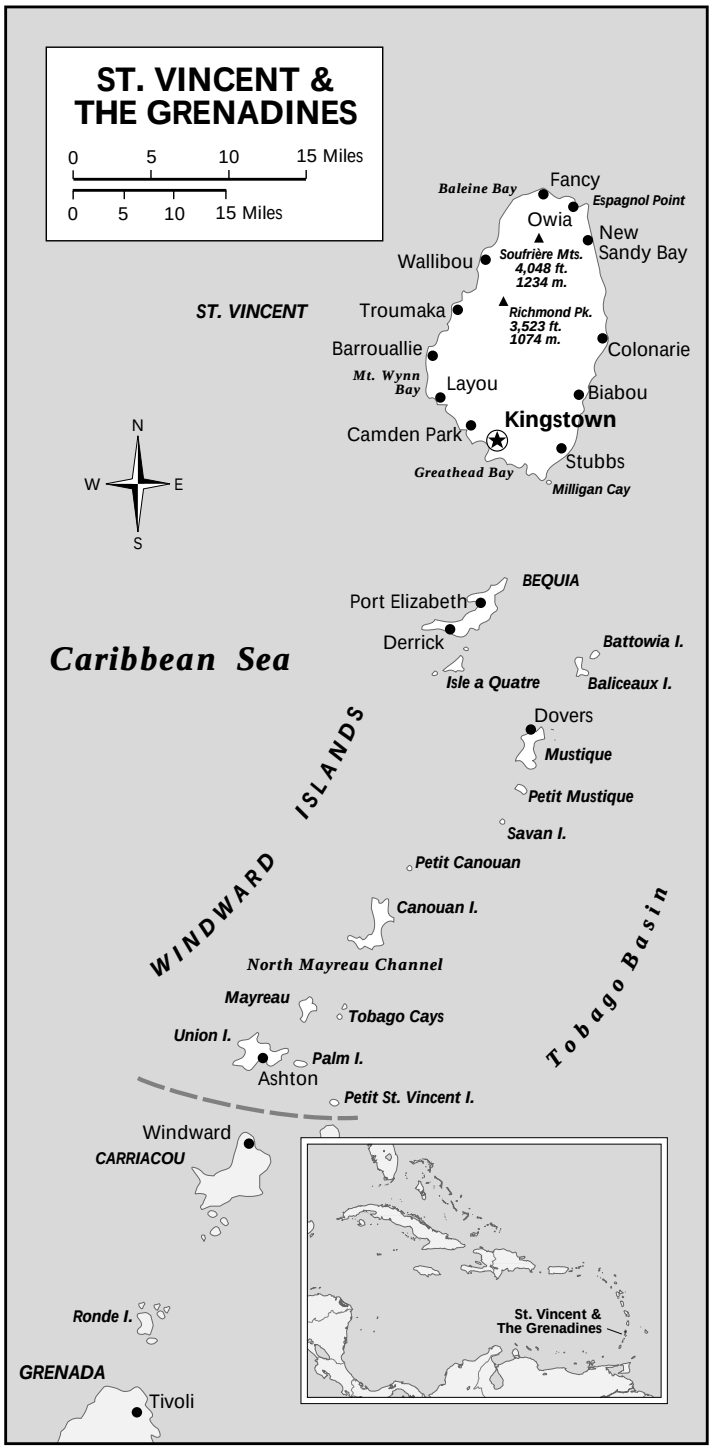
HISTORY

Carib Indians aggressively prevented European settlement on St. Vincent until the 18th century. African slaves—whether shipwrecked or escaped from St. Lucia and Grenada and seeking refuge in St. Vincent—intermarried with the Caribs and became known as "black Caribs." Beginning in 1719, French settlers

cultivated coffee, tobacco, indigo, cotton, and sugar on plantations worked by African slaves. In 1763, St. Vincent was ceded to Britain. Restored to French rule in 1779, St. Vincent was regained by the British under the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. Conflict between the British and the black Caribs continued until 1796, when General Abercrombie crushed a revolt fomented by the French radical Victor Hugues. More than 5,000 black Caribs were eventually deported to Roatan, an island off the coast of Honduras. Slavery was abolished in 1834; the resulting labor shortages on the plantations attracted Portuguese immigrants in the 1840s and east Indians in the 1860s. Conditions remained harsh for both former slaves and immigrant agricultural workers, as depressed world sugar prices kept the economy stagnant until the turn of the century. From 1763 until independence, St. Vincent passed through various stages of colonial status under the British. A representative assembly was authorized in 1776, Crown Colony government installed in 1877, a legislative council created in 1925, and universal adult suffrage granted in 1951.

During this period, the British made several unsuccessful attempts to affiliate St. Vincent with other Windward Islands in order to govern the region through a unified administration. The most notable was the West Indies Federation, which collapsed in 1962. St. Vincent was granted associate statehood status in 1969, giving it complete control over its internal affairs. Following a referendum in 1979, St. Vincent and the Grenadines became the last of the Windward Islands to gain independence.

Natural disasters have plagued the country throughout the 20th century. In 1902, the La Soufriere volcano erupted, killing 2,000 people. Much farmland was damaged, and the economy deteriorated. In April 1979, La Soufriere erupted again. Although no one was killed, thousands had to be evacuated, and there was extensive agricultural damage. In 1980 and 1987, hurricanes devastated banana and coconut plantations; 1998 and 1999 also saw very active hurricane seasons, with hurricane Lenny in 1999 causing extensive damage to the west coast of the island.



GOVERNMENT

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth of Nations. Queen Elizabeth II is head of state and is represented on the island by a governor general, an office with mostly ceremonial functions. Control of the government rests with the prime minister and the cabinet.

The parliament is a unicameral body, consisting of 15 elected members and

six appointed senators. The governor general appoints senators, four on the advice of the prime minister and two on the advice of the leader of the opposition. The parliamentary term of office is five years, although the prime minister may call elections at any time.

As in other English-speaking Caribbean countries, the judiciary in St. Vincent is rooted in British common law. There are 11 courts in three magisterial districts. The Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, comprising a High Court and a Court of Appeals, is known in St. Vincent as the St. Vincent and the Grenadines supreme court. The court of last resort is the judicial committee of Her Majesty's Privy Council in London.

There is no local government in St. Vincent, and all six parishes are administered by the central government.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Frederick Nathaniel BALLANTYNE, Sir**
Prime Min.: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Louis STRAKER**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Fisheries: **Montgomery DANIEL**
Min. of Education: **Girlyn MIGUEL**
Min. of Energy: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Min. of Finance & Economic Planning: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Min. of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, & Trade: **Louis STRAKER**
Min. of Grenadine Affairs & Legal Affairs: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Min. of Health & the Environment: **Douglas SLATER**
Min. of Housing, Informal Human Settlements, Physical Planning, & Lands & Surveys: **Julian FRANCIS**
Min. of Information: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Min. of Labor: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Min. of National Mobilization, Social Development, NGO Relations, Family, Gender Affairs, & Persons With Disabilities: **Michael BROWNE**
Min. of National Security: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Min. of Planning & Economic Development: **Ralph E. GONSALVES**
Min. of Rural Transformation, Information, Public Service, & Ecclesiastical Affairs: **Selmon WATERS**
Min. of Telecommunications, Science, Technology, & Industry: **Jerrol THOMPSON**
Min. of Tourism, Youth, & Sports: **Glen BEACHE**
Min. of Transportation & Works: **Clayton BURGIN**
Min. of Urban Development, Labor, Culture, & Electoral Matters: **Renee BAPTISTE**
Attorney Gen.: **Judith JONES-MORGAN**
Ambassador to the US: **La Celia Aritha PRINCE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Camillo GONSALVES**

St. Vincent and the Grenadines maintains an embassy at 3216 New Mexico Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20016 (tel. 202-364-6730). St. Vincent also has a consul resident in New York.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The People's Political Party (PPP), founded in 1952 by Ebenezer Joshua, was the first major political party in St. Vincent. The PPP had its roots in the labor movement and was in the forefront of national policy prior to independence, winning elections from 1957 through 1966. With the development of a more conservative black middle class, however, the party began to lose support steadily, until it collapsed after a rout in the 1979 elections. The party dissolved itself in 1984.

Founded in 1955, the St. Vincent Labour Party (SVLP), under R. Milton Cato, gained the support of the middle class. With a conservative law-and-order message and a pro-Western foreign policy, the SVLP dominated politics from the mid-1960s until the mid-1980s. Following victories in the 1967 and 1974 elections, the SVLP led the island to independence, winning the first post-independence election in 1979. Expecting an easy victory for the SVLP in 1984, Cato called early elections. The results were surprising: with a record 89% voter turnout, James F. Mitchell's New Democratic Party (NDP) won nine seats in the House of Assembly.

Bolstered by a resurgent economy in the mid-1980s, Mitchell led his party to an unprecedented sweep of all 15 House of Assembly seats in the 1989 elections. The opposition emerged from the election weakened and fragmented but was able to win three seats during the February 1994 elections under a "unity" coalition. In 1998, Prime Minister Mitchell and the NDP were returned to power for an unprecedented fourth term but only with a slim margin of 8 seats to 7 seats for the Unity Labour Party (ULP). The NDP was able to accomplish a return to power while receiving a lesser share of the popular vote, approximately 45% to the ULP's 55%. In March 2001, the ULP, led by Ralph Gonsalves, assumed power after winning 12 of the 15 seats in Parliament.

In the December 2005 parliamentary elections, Prime Minister Gonsalves and the ULP retained their 12-3 majority over the NDP.

ECONOMY

Banana production employs upwards of 60% of the work force and accounts for 50% of merchandise exports in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, with an emphasis on the main island of St. Vincent. Such reliance on one crop has made the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in banana prices and reduced European Union trade preferences. To combat these vulnerabilities, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is focused on diversifying its economy away from reliance on bananas. Recently, there has been a parallel reduction in licit agriculture and a rise in marijuana cultivation, making St. Vincent and the Grenadines the largest marijuana producer in the Eastern Caribbean.

In contrast to developments on the main island, tourism in the Grenadines has grown to become a very important part of the economy, and

the chief earner of foreign exchange for the country as a whole. The Grenadines have become a favorite of high-end tourism and the focus of new development in the country. Super-luxury resorts, yachting tourism, and a commitment by the government to rehabilitate and protect the Tobago Keys as a national park have all contributed to strong tourism returns in the Grenadines.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines' currency is the Eastern Caribbean Dollar (EC$), a regional currency shared among members of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU). The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) issues the EC$, manages monetary policy, and regulates and supervises commercial banking activities in its member countries. The ECCB has kept the EC$ pegged at EC$2.7=U.S. $1.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative that grants duty-free entry into the United States for many goods. St. Vincent and the Grenadines also belongs to the predominantly English-speaking Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

St. Vincent and the Grenadines maintains close ties to the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, and is a member of regional political and economic organizations such as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and CARICOM. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is also a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). St. Vincent and the Grenadines has chosen to recognize Taiwan instead of the People's Republic of China.

U.S.-ST. VINCENT RELATIONS

The United States and St. Vincent have solid bilateral relations. Both governments are concerned with eradicating local marijuana cultivation and combating the transshipment of narcotics. In 1995, the United States and St. Vincent signed a Maritime Law Enforcement Agreement. In 1996, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines signed an Extradition Treaty with the United States. In 1997, the two countries signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty.

The United States supports the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines' efforts to expand its economic base and to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens. U.S. assistance is channeled primarily through multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. The United States has 27 Peace Corps volunteers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, working in business development, education, and health. The U.S. military also provides assistance through construction and humanitarian civic action projects.

A relatively small number of Americans—fewer than 1,000—reside on the islands.

The United States maintains no official presence in St. Vincent. The Ambassador and Embassy officers are resident in Barbados and frequently travel to St. Vincent.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRIDGETOWN (E) Wildey Business Park, Wildey, St. Michael BB 14006, APO/FPO APO AA 34055, 246-436-4950, Fax 246-429-5246, Workweek: Mon-Fri: 8.00–4.30, Website: bridgetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Hillaire Campbell
AMB OMS:	Honora L. Myers
ECO:	Bryan R Switzer
FM:	Maurice Pettiford
HRO:	Peggy Laurance (Residence In Ft Lauderdale)
MGT:	Philip A. Dubois
AMB:	Mary M. Ourisman
CG:	Clyde I. Howard
DCM:	D. Brent Hardt
PAO:	John C. Roberts
GSO:	Yoshino Rosenstein
RSO:	Gary Truchot
AFSA:	Arend Zwartjes
AID:	James Goggin
CLO:	Lauren Mchugh/Tamie Harvey
DAO:	Ltc. Cdr. Stephen Leslie (Res. Caracas)
DEA:	Charles Graham
EEO:	Ricardo Cabrera
FAA:	Dawn Flanagan (Res. Washington)
FMO:	Rajiv Malik
IMO:	Frank Sauer
IRS:	Cheryl Kast
ISO:	Norman G B Ellasos
ISSO:	Ricardo Cabrera
LAB:	John C. Aller
LEGATT:	Samuel Bryant, Jr.
MLO:	Lcdr. Cdr. Edward Gaynor
NAS:	Ian Campbell
POL:	Ian Campbell

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE

Caribbean/Latin American Action
1818 N Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-466-7464
Fax: 202-822-0075

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 2, 2008

Country Description: St. Vincent and the Grenadines is an English-speaking developing Caribbean island nation. Tourism facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: For information concerning entry requirements,

travelers can contact the Embassy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 3216 New Mexico Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016, telephone (202) 364-6730, or the consulate in New York.

All Americans traveling by air outside the United States are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. This requirement will be extended to sea travel (except closed loop cruises), including ferry service, by the summer of 2009. Until then, U.S. citizens traveling by sea must have government-issued photo identification and a document showing their U.S. citizenship (for example, a birth certificate or certificate of nationalization), or other WHTI compliant document such as a passport card for entry or re-entry to the U.S. Sea travelers should also check with their cruise line and countries of destination for any foreign entry requirements.

Applications for the new U.S. Passport Card are now being accepted. Based on current projections, we expect the passport card to be in full production beginning in July 2008. The card may not be used to travel by air and is available only to U.S. citizens. Further information on the Passport Card is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppt_card/ppt_card_3926.html and upcoming changes to U.S. passport policy can be found on the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cbpmc/cbpmc_2223.html. We strongly encourage all American citizen travelers to apply for a U.S. passport well in advance of anticipated travel. American citizens can visit travel.state.gov or call 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778) for information on how to apply for their passports.

U.S. citizens should take special care to secure these documents while traveling, as it can be time-consuming and difficult to acquire new proof of citizenship to facilitate return travel should the original documents be lost or stolen.

U.S. citizens traveling to St. Vincent and the Grenadines must also present an onward or return ticket.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Petty street crime occurs in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. From time to time, property has been stolen from yachts anchored in the Grenadines. Valuables left unattended on beaches are vulnerable to theft. Persons interested in nature walks or hikes in the northern areas of St. Vincent should arrange in advance with a local tour operator for a guide; these areas are isolated, and police presence is limited.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are limited. The main hospital is Milton Cato Memorial Hospital (Telephone (784) 456-1185). There is a hospital in the capital, Kingstown, but serious medical problems may require evacuation to another island or the United States. There is no hyperbaric chamber; divers requiring treatment for decompression illness must be evacuated from the island. The closest hyperbaric chamber is located in Barbados. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and the hospital often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning St. Vincent and the Grenadines is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Vehicles travel on the left side of the road. Roads are narrow, and generally poorly paved, with steep inclines throughout the islands. Taxis and buses are relatively safe, but buses are often overcrowded. Vans are gen-

erally overcrowded and frequently travel at high rates of speed. Night driving is discouraged in mountainous areas because the roads are not well marked; there are few, if any, guardrails, and roads are steep and winding.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines' Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of St. Vincent and the Grenadines' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: All Caribbean countries can be affected by hurricanes. The hurricane season normally runs from June to the end of November, but there have been hurricanes in December in recent years. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados is responsible for consular issues on the islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, including American Citizens Services. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their citizenship documents with them at all times so that if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating St. Vincent and the Grenadines' laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown is located in the Wildey Business Park in suburban Wildey, south and east of downtown Bridgetown. The main number is (246) 431-0225; after hours, the Embassy duty officer can be reached by calling (246) 436-4950. The website for Embassy Bridgetown is http://bridgetown.usembassy.gov. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday, except Barbados and U.S. holidays.



SAMOA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Independent State of Samoa

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 2,934 sq. km. (1,133 sq. mi.) in two main islands plus seven smaller ones.
Cities: Capital (pop. 34,000)—Apia.
Terrain: Mountainous with narrow coastal plain.
Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Samoan.
Population: (2007 est.) 182,548. Age structure (2006)—60.81% under 15; 14.6% over 65.
Growth rate: 1.4% (mainly due to emigration).
Ethnic groups: Samoan 92.6%, Euronesian (mixed European and Polynesian) 7%, European 0.4%.
Religions: Christian 98.9%.
Languages: Samoan, English.
Education: Literacy—98.6%.
Health: Life expectancy—male 67.8 yrs.; female 74.2 yrs. Infant mortality rate—24/1,000.
Work force: Agriculture—2%; services—50%.

Government

Type: Mix of parliamentary democracy and Fa'aSamoa (Samoan custom/ 'way').
Independence: (from New Zealand-administered UN trusteeship) January 1, 1962.
Constitution: January 1, 1962.
Government branches: Executive—head of state (5-year term; elected by parliament), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral parliament (Fono). Judicial—Court of Appeal, Supreme Court, and supporting hierarchy.
Political parties: Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP), Samoa Democratic United Party (SDUP), Samoa Party (SP), Tautua Samoa Party (TSP), and The People's Party (TPP).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $571.6 million.
GDP per capita: (2007) $3,131.
GDP composition by sector: Services 75.3%, industry 13.1%, agriculture 11.6%.
Industry: Types—tourism, coconuts, small scale manufacturing, fishing.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$13.37 million: fish, coconut products, nonu fruit products, processing of automotive components, beer, taro. Export markets—New Zealand, Australia, U.S. (includes American Samoa). Imports—$247 million: food and beverages, industrial supplies. Import sources—New Zealand, Hong Kong, U.S. ($19.99 million), Australia, Japan, and Fiji.
External debt: (2007) $202.8 million (99.9% is owed to multilateral lenders).
Currency: Tala (or Samoan dollar).

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Samoa consists of the two large islands of Upolu and Savai'i and seven small islets located about halfway between Hawaii and New Zealand in the Polynesian region of the South Pacific. The main island of Upolu is home to nearly three-quarters of Samoa's population and its capital city of Apia. The climate is tropical, with a rainy season from November to April. The Fa'a Samoa, or traditional Samoan way, remains a strong force in Samoan life and politics. Despite centuries of European influence, Samoa maintains its historical customs, social systems, and language, which is believed to be the oldest form of Polynesian speech still in existence. Only the Maoris of New Zealand outnumber the Samoans among Polynesian groups.

HISTORY

Migrants from Southeast Asia arrived in the Samoan islands more than 2,000 years ago and from there

settled the rest of Polynesia further to the east. Contact with Europeans began in the early 1700s but did not intensify until the arrival of English missionaries and traders in the 1830s. At the turn of the 20th century, the Samoan islands were split into two sections. The eastern islands became territories of the United States in 1904 and today are known as American Samoa. The western islands became known as Western Samoa (now the Independent State of Samoa), passing from German control to New Zealand in 1914. New Zealand administered Western Samoa under the auspices of the League of Nations and then as a UN trusteeship until independence in 1962. Western Samoa was the first Pacific Island country to gain its independence. In July 1997 the Constitution was amended to change the country's name from Western Samoa to Samoa (officially the "Independent State of Samoa"). Western Samoa had been known simply as Samoa in the United Nations since joining the organization in 1976. The neighboring U.S. territory of American Samoa protested the move, feeling that the change diminished its own Samoan identity. American Samoans still use the terms Western Samoa and Western Samoans.

GOVERNMENT

The 1960 Constitution, which formally came into force with independence, is based on the British Westminster parliamentary system, modified to take account of Samoan customs. Malietoa Tanumafili held the post of head of state for 45 years until his death in May 2007. His successor, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, was selected by the Fono for a 5-year term.

The unicameral legislature (Fono) contains 49 members serving 5-year terms. Forty-seven are elected from territorial districts by ethnic Samoans districts; the other two are chosen by non-Samoans on separate electoral rolls. Universal suffrage was extended in 1990, but only chiefs (matai) may stand for election to the Samoan seats. The voting age is 21 years and over. There are more than 30,000 matais in the country, about 8% of whom are women.

The prime minister is chosen by a majority in the Fono and is appointed by the head of state to form a government. The 12 cabinet ministers are appointed by the head of state on the advice of the prime minister, and subject to the continuing confidence of the Fono.

The judicial system is based on English common law and local customs. The Supreme Court is the court of highest jurisdiction. Its chief justice is appointed by the head of state upon the recommendation of the prime minister.

Principal Government Officials

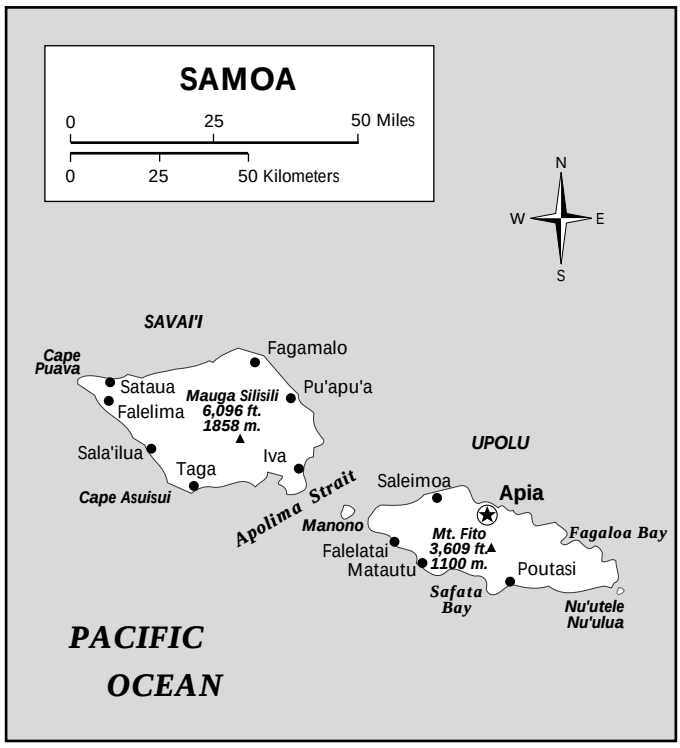
Last Updated: 11/12/08

Chief of State: **Tui Atua Tupua Tupuola Efi TAMASESE**
Prime Min.: **Sailele Malielegaoi TUILAEPA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Telefoni Retzlaff MISA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Tavaga Kitiona Seuala TAUA**
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Labor: **Telefoni Retzlaff MISA**
Min. of Communication & Information Technology: **Pa'aga Neri SAFUNEITUUGA**
Min. of Education, Sports, & Culture: **Alapati Poese TOOMATA**
Min. of Finance: **Lee Hang NIKO**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Trade: **Sailele Malielegaoi TUILA'EPA**
Min. of Health: **Amataga Alesana Gildow GATOLOAIFAANA**
Min. of Justice & Courts Admin.: **Mesi Galo UNASA**
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment: **Liuga FAUMUINA**
Min. of Police: **Sailele Malielegaoi TUILAEPA**
Min. of Revenue: **Anasii Leota TUUU**
Min. of Telecommunications: **Sailele Malielegaoi TUILAEPA**
Min. of Women, Community, & Social Development: **Naomi Mataafa FIAME**
Min. of Works, Transport, & Infrastructure: **Sofara Aveau TUISUGALETAUA**
Attorney Gen.: **Brenda HEATHER-LATU**
Governor, Central Bank: **Papali'i Tommy SCANLAN**
Ambassador to the US: **Ali'ioaga Feturi ELISAIA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ali'ioaga Feturi ELISAIA**

Samoa maintains its diplomatic representation in the United States at 800 2nd Avenue, Suite 400D, New York, NY 10017; tel: 212-599-6196.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) has held majority in the Fono for the past six consecutive 5-year terms. HRPP leader Tofilau Eti Alesana served as prime minister for nearly all of the period between 1982 and 1998, when he resigned due to health problems. Tofilau Eti Alesana was replaced by his deputy Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi. Parliamentary elections are held every 5 years, and the last was held in March 2006. The Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP), led by Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, won 35 of the 49 seats. After the elections, the Samoa Democratic United Party (SDUP) was the opposition party but since then has suffered defections and divisions that have reduced it below the eight members required by parliamentary orders to constitute an official parliamentary party. Its remaining adherents have thus officially become independents, and as of March 2008 there was no recognized opposition party. The Supreme Court ordered by-elections, due to bribery and death of a member of parliament, that saw HRPP gain two extra seats to 37 of the 49 seats. In March 2008, two HRPP members left the party in a dispute over legislation proposed by the Prime Minister to change the "road code" from driving on the right (American) side to driving on the left (British) side, which will come into effect September 2009. These resignations—the first in recent years—left the HRPP with 35 seats. In July 2008, two new political parties were formed: Tautua Samoa Party (TSP), consisting of Independents and the two individuals who had defected from HRPP (however, not recognized in parliament because standing



orders state they must have registered before the general election); and The People's Party (TPP), formed from a group protesting the government's legislation to switch the driving side of the road.

ECONOMY

The Samoan economy is dependent on agricultural exports, tourism, and capital flows from abroad. The effects of three natural disasters in the early 1990s were overcome by the middle of the decade, but economic growth cooled again with the regional economic downturn. Long-run development depends upon upgrading the tourist infrastructure, attracting foreign investment, and further diversification of the economy.

Two major cyclones hit Samoa at the beginning of the 1990s. Cyclone Ofa left an estimated 10,000 islanders homeless in February 1990; Cyclone Val caused 13 deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage in December 1991. As a result, GDP declined by nearly 50% from 1989 to 1991.

Further economic problems occurred in 1994 with an outbreak of taro leaf blight and the near collapse of the national airline Polynesian Airlines. Taro, a root crop, traditionally was Samoa's largest export, generating more than half of all export revenue in 1993. But a fungal blight decimated the plants, and in each year since 1994 taro exports have accounted for less than 1% of export revenue.

The government responded to these shocks with a major program of road building and post-cyclone infrastructure repair. Economic reforms were stepped up, including the liberalization of exchange controls. GDP growth rebounded to over 6% in both 1995 and 1996 before slowing again at the end of the decade.

The primary sector (agriculture, forestry, and fishing) employs less than 2% of the labor force and produces 11.6% of GDP. Important products include coconuts and fish. The service sector accounts for about three-quarters of GDP and employs approximately 50% of the labor force. Tourism is the largest-single activity, more than doubling in visitor numbers and revenue over the last decade. More than 122,000 visitors arrived in Samoa in 2007, contributing over $116.5 million to the local economy. About 40% of the tourist numbers came from New Zealand, 21% from American Samoa, and 7% from the United States. Visitors from other Pacific Islands doubled in 2007, mainly for the Samoan-hosted South Pacific Games in September.

Industry accounts for about 13% of GDP while employing less than 6% of the work force. The largest industrial venture is Yazaki Samoa, a Japanese-owned company processing automotive components for export to Australia under a concessional market-access arrangement. The Yazaki plant employs more than 2,000 workers and makes up over 20% of the manufacturing sector's total output. New Zealand is Samoa's principal trading partner, typically providing between 35% and 40% of imports and purchasing 45%-50% of exports. The increasing number of Asian-owned businesses in Samoa has led the increasing trade with Hong Kong and Japan. Australia, the U.S., including American Samoa, and Fiji also are important trading partners. Samoa's principal exports are coconut products, nonu fruit, and fish. Its main imports are food and beverages, industrial supplies, and fuels.

The collapse of taro exports in 1994 has had the unintended effect of modestly diversifying Samoa's export products and markets. Prior to the taro leaf blight, Samoa's exports consisted of taro ($1.1 million), coconut cream ($540,000), and "other" ($350,000). Ninety percent of exports went to the Pacific region, and only 1% went to Europe. Forced to look for alternatives to taro, Samoa's exporters have dramatically increased the production of copra, coconut oil, and fish. These three products, which combined to produce export revenue of less than $100,000 in 1993, now account for over $6.7 million. There also has been a relative shift from Pacific markets to European ones, which now receive nearly 15% of Samoa's exports. Samoa's exports are still concentrated in fish ($5.8 million), nonu fruit products ($3.27 mil-

lion), and coconut products ($0.9 million worth of copra, copra meal, coconut oil, and coconut cream), but are at least somewhat more diverse than before.

In April 1998, Samoa applied for World Trade Organization membership. The accession process is still in place as negotiations at a bilateral level to resolve opening market access. Samoa's bid for membership moved forward with the successful conclusion of bilateral trade negotiations with New Zealand.

Samoa annually receives important financial assistance from abroad. The more than 100,000 Samoans who live overseas provide two sources of revenue. Their direct remittances have amounted to $128.2 million per year recently (about 24% of GDP), and they account for more than half of all tourist visits. In addition to the expatriate community, Samoa also receives more than $28 million annually in official bilateral development assistance from sources led by China, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. These three sources of revenue—tourism, private transfers, and official transfers—allow Samoa to cover its persistently large trade deficit.

In March 2006, the United Nations reviewed Samoa's status as a Least Developed Country and recommended graduation into Developing Country status. Samoa has sought a review of the decision on grounds of economic and environment vulnerability, although graduation may improve Samoa's international ratings for investment risk.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND U.S.-SAMOAN RELATIONS

The Samoan Government is generally conservative and pro-Western, with a strong interest in regional political and economic issues. At independence in 1962, Samoa signed a Treaty of Friendship with New Zealand. This treaty confirms the special relationship between the two countries and provides a framework for their interaction. Under the terms of the treaty, Samoa can request that New Zealand act as a channel of communication to governments and international organizations outside the immediate area of the Pacific islands.

Samoa also can request defense assistance, which New Zealand is required to consider (Samoa does not maintain a formal military). Overall Samoa has strong links with New Zealand, where many Samoans now live and many others were educated.

The Samoan Government was an outspoken critic of the French decision to resume nuclear weapons testing in the South Pacific in 1995. Large-scale street demonstrations were held in Apia against the French tests, which concluded in 1996. The Samoan Government also banned visits to Samoa by French warships and aircraft for several years. This ban has now been lifted, and a French warship visited Apia in July 2006.

The Government of Samoa has a strong relationship with the Government of the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). The P.R.C. has provided substantial assistance to Samoa, including an economic grant agreement for new development projects valued at $2.6 million concluded in April 2007. Assistance from the P.R.C. has been especially focused on construction projects, including the main government building as well as performance venues for the South Pacific Games, which Samoa hosted in August/September 2007. In August 2008, the P.R.C.-funded parliamentary offices were opened with the Justice building set for completion by mid-2009.

A $64 million concessionary loan was also signed in September 2008 between the two countries for the construction of a multi-storey office and conference building. Since 1967, the United States has supported a substantial Peace Corps program in Samoa. Over 1,900 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Samoa over that time, with 40 Volunteers currently in-country. Peace Corps programs emphasize village-based development and capacity building. Other forms of U.S. assistance to Samoa are limited. Relations with the U.S. reached an all-time high in July 2008, when Secretary of State Rice visited Samoa and met with Prime Minister Tuilaepa as well as her counterparts from other Pacific Island nations.

This was the second time a Secretary of State had visited in 20 years; George Schultz visited in 1987. The U.S. Embassy, staffed by a single officer, is the smallest Embassy in Samoa (although a few countries have honorary consuls) and one of the few one-officer U.S. Embassies in the world.

Samoa participated in a first round of negotiations with its Pacific Island neighbors for a regional trade agreement in August 2000. Samoa is a member of the United Nations and strong advocate of the Pacific Commission and Pacific Islands Forum.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

APIA (E) U.S. Embassy, 5th Floor, ACB House, Matafele, Apia, Samoa, APO/FPO American Embassy, PSC 467 BOX 1, APO AP 96531-1034, (685) 21-631, Fax (685) 22-030, Workweek: Monday to Friday, 0815–1700, Website: http://samoa.usembassy.gov.

CA:	Nicholas Greanias (Auckland)
DCM/CHG:	George W. Colvin Jr.
MGT:	Judith H. Semilota (Wellington)
AMB:	William P. McCormick (Resident Wellington)
PAO:	Roy Glover (Wellington)
GSO:	Andrea Gastaldo (Wellington)
RSO:	James Doherty
DAO:	Capt. Dawn H. Driesbach (Wellington)
FMO:	Gunther Uhlmann (Wellington)
ICASS Chair:	Non-Icass Post
ISSO:	See Dcm/Charge
State ICASS:	Non-Icass Post

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 18, 2008

Country Description: Samoa consists of the two large islands of Upolu and Savai'i and seven small islets. The country has a stable parliamentary democracy with a developing economy. Tourist facilities are accessible by bus, taxi and car and are within walking distance of access roads. Infrastructure is adequate in Apia, the capital, but it is limited in other areas. Nearly all Internet connections use a relatively slow dial-up method. Samoa has two digital telephone service providers, and visitors can easily purchase prepaid phones that cover virtually the entire country. The Samoa Tourism Authority, at http://www.visitsamoa.ws/, provides a wide range of information of interest to travelers.

Entry Requirements: U.S. nationals who are not U.S. citizens, and who are resident in American Samoa, must obtain a visitor permit prior to all travel to Samoa. U.S. nationals have not been permitted to travel to Samoa on certificates of identity since May 2005 except on a case-by-case basis. (U.S. law distinguishes between individuals who are citizens and those who are nationals. The U.S. passport bio-page shows one's status as either a citizen or a non-citizen national.) As of March 22, 2006, visitor permits to travel to Samoa can be applied for at the new Samoa Consulate General office in Pago Pago, American Samoa. The Samoa Consulate General address is P.O. Box 1313, Pago Pago, American Samoa, telephone (684) 633-5919, fax (684) 633-5929. A valid passport and an onward/return ticket are required for all Americans (both citizens and nationals) to travel to Samoa. Visitor permits are not required for U.S. citizens (they are required for U.S. nationals) seeking to stay in Samoa for up to 60 days. All visitors are required to pay a departure tax of 40 Tala (approximately 17.50 USD) upon leaving the country. Further information about entry requirements and the departure tax may be obtained from the Samoa Mission to the United Nations at 800-2nd Avenue, Suite 400J, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 599-6196, fax (212) 599-0797, or email Samoa@un.int. Visit the Embassy ofSamoa web site at http://www2.un.int/public/Samoa/ for the most current visa information or visit the Samoa Immigration web site at http://www.samoaimmigration.gov.ws

Safety and Security: In Apia and many villages, stray dogs wander the streets. Visitors should not approach or feed them; they can become aggressive in the presence of food or if they feel threatened.

Although there have been no major accidents involving the ferry service linking Upolu and Savai'i, vessels are sometimes overloaded. One of the ferries, a multi-deck automobile ferry, sometimes transports passengers on its automobile deck. Americans who choose to use this ferry are encouraged not to remain in the automobile deck during the crossing and to ride only in the passenger compartment in order to avoid injury from shifting vehicles.

Samoa has numerous "blowholes" (lava tubes open to the sea where wave action produces, often spectacular, geysers). These blowholes are popular tourist attractions. The footing around the mouths of most blowholes is very slippery. To avoid being swept in, visitors should not approach too closely and should never stand between the opening of the blowhole and the sea.

Snorkeling and diving in ocean lagoons is a popular activity for many visitors to Samoa. Tide changes can produce powerful currents in these lagoons. Visitors are encouraged to consult local residents and tour operators about hazards and conditions at a particular location before venturing into the water.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Overall, Samoa is considered a low threat environment. Nevertheless, visitors should remain aware of their surroundings, lock their doors at night, and not leave their belongings unattended. Incidents of petty theft/robberies of personal effects are common. Some such incidents have involved residential break-ins. While rare, violent assaults, including sexual assaults have occurred in Samoa.

No specific groups have been targeted, nor have there been any racially motivated or hate crimes against Americans. Police responsiveness in Apia is generally good. Because of the very limited police presence elsewhere in Samoa (where order is maintained primarily by local village authorities), police responsiveness elsewhere is problematic.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Samoa is: 994 for fire emergencies, 996 for the Ambulance and 995 for the Police.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health care facilities in Samoa are adequate for routine medical treatment, but are limited in range and availability; complex illnesses and life-threatening emergencies generally need to be treated elsewhere. Dental facilities do not meet U.S. standards, but good dental treatment and some emergency care can be obtained nearby at the LBJ Tropical Medical Center in Pago Pago, American Samoa. The national hospital and a small private hospital are located in Apia, and there are several small district hospitals on Savai'i and in outlying areas of Upolu. There are no hyperbaric chambers on any of the islands for the treatment of scuba diving related injuries. Serious cases of decompression sickness are evacuated to the nearest treatment center in Suva, Fiji, or Auckland, New Zealand.

Serious medical conditions and treatments that require hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Travelers should carry emergency evacuation insurance. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. There is no reported incidence of malaria or rabies in Samoa. Occasional outbreaks of typhoid and nonhemorrhagic dengue do occur.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Samoa is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Safety of public transportation and rural road conditions in Samoa are considered to be fair, while urban road conditions/maintenance is considered to be good. Taxis are widely available and used by Samoans and visitors alike; buses are slow, generally crowded and uncomfortable, and rarely utilized by visitors. Rental cars can also be obtained. No roadside assistance is available. Most major roads are tar-sealed, but secondary roads are predominantly dirt and gravel and may be overgrown with vegetation. A four-wheel drive vehicle is recommended for travel on these roads. Travelers should be aware that vehicle safety regulations are rarely enforced and traffic violations occur routinely. Roads outside Apia are often narrow, winding, relatively steep, with narrow or no shoulders, and poorly lighted. Pedestrians as well as vehicles and livestock regularly travel these roads. Due to poor and deteriorating road conditions, night driving on unlit rural roads can be dangerous and should be avoided if possible. Roads in Samoa often traverse small streams. Drivers are urged to exercise extreme caution when fording these streams, which can become swollen and dangerous with little warning. Vehicles should never enter a stream if the roadbed is not visible or if the water's depth exceeds the vehicle's clearance.

Speed limits in Samoa are 25 miles per hour in the Apia area and 35 miles per hour outside Apia, with certain exceptions. At unmarked intersections, traffic on the left has the right of way. As in the United States, vehicular traffic moves on the right side of the road; although right-hand-drive vehicles (mainly from New Zealand) do exist in Samoa. In April 2008, Samoa adopted legislation mandating a change from driving on the right side of the road to driving on the left side (as in the United Kingdom) and forbidding further importation of left-hand drive vehicles. The date of the change has not been set, although some sources suggest it may occur in the latter part of 2009.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office at Samoa Tourism Authority at www.visitsamoa.ws.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government ofSamoa's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Samoa's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Some overseas treatment centers, known as Behavior Modification Facilities, operate in Samoa. Though these facilities may be operated and staffed by U.S. citizens, the Samoan government is solely responsible for compliance with local safety, health, sanitation and educational laws and regulations, including all licensing requirements of the staff in country. These standards, if any, may not be strictly enforced or meet the standards of similar facilities in the U.S. Parents should be aware that U.S. citizens and non-citizen nationals 14 years of age and older have a right to apply for a passport and to request repatriation assistance from the U.S. government, both without parental consent. Any U.S. citizen or non-citizen enrollee has the right to contact a representative from the U.S. Embassy. For further information, consult the Department of State's Fact Sheet on Behavior Modification Facilities, available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page. Parents may also contact the U.S. Embassy in Apia or the country officer in the Office of American Citizens Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs at 202-647-5226.

Financial Transactions: Although some businesses (especially those in Apia or those frequented by tourists) do accept credit cards, many (including gas stations) do not. Major credit cards (Visa, Master Card, and American Express) are accepted at major hotels and some restaurants and stores. Samoan currency can be obtained from ATMs, which are located in Faleolo Airport and in many locations in Apia. For more information on ATM locations and banking services see ANZ web site at http://www.anz.com/samoa/overview.asp and WESTPAC web site at http://www.westpac.com.

Disaster Preparedness: Samoa is located in an area of high seismic activity. Although the probability that a major earthquake would occur during an individual trip is remote, earthquakes can and will continue to happen. Major cyclones have occurred in the past and are always a concern. Strong winds and very heavy rains are common, especially during the rainy season from November to April.

During this period, Samoa receives most of its annual average of over 130 inches of rain. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) web site at http://www.fema.gov.

Customs Regulations: Samoa customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Samoa of items such as firearms, fruits, pets and other animals, and drugs. It is advisable to contact the Samoan Mission to the United Nations at 800 2nd Avenue, Suite 400J, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 599-6196 for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Samoa's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Samoa are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: Samoa is not a member of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Samoa are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within-Samoa. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in the Accident Compensation Board (ACB) Building, Fifth Floor, Apia. The Embassy is open to the public from 8:15 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday—Friday. The Embassy's mailing address is U.S. Embassy, P.O. Box 3430, Apia, Samoa 0815. The telephone numbers are (685) 21436/21631/22696 and 21452. The fax number is (685) 22030.

An Embassy officer can be reached after hours in an emergency involving the welfare of a U.S. citizen or non-citizen national at (685) 21514 or (685) 777-1776. Visit the U.S. Embassy's web site at http://samoa.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Samoan law places restrictions on the "overseas adoption" of Samoan children by any person who is not a citizen of Samoa. The American Embassy Apia, Samoa, does not process immigrant visas. This process must be completed through the American Consulate General in Auckland, New Zealand.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authorities: The government offices responsible for adoptions in Samoa are:

Ministry of Justice & Courts Administration
APIA
Ph: (685) 22-671
Fax: (685) 21-050
Office of the Attorney General
P.O. Box 27, APIA
Ph: (685) 20-295
e-mail: attorney.general@samoa.ws

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must be of the age of majority, which is 21. They may be married or single. Samoan law requires that before any Samoan court grants an adoption of a Samoan child to a citizen of another country, the Samoan Attorney General must certify that the child has no suitable

family members in Samoa who are willing and able to care for the child in Samoa and there is no other suitable arrangement available in Samoa.

Residency Requirements: There is no specific requirement that the applicants be residents of Samoa.

Time Frame: The adoption process may take from several months to a year or more.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Samoan law requires that adoption agencies, prior to facilitating adoptions in or from Samoa, must be registered with the Samoan Government and have the prior written authorization from the Attorney General.

The U.S. Embassy in Apia maintains a list of attorneys at: http://wellington.usembassy.gov/pacific_islands. html.

Adoption Fees: Attorneys' fees range from $900- $1200. In addition, prospective adoptive parents should expect to pay approximately $300 for justice and court administration fees.

Adoption Procedures: Adoption applications must be made to the Magistrates Court, which may in turn determine that the Supreme Court should review the case. As was stated above, certification from the Attorney General that the child has no family or other possibilities within Samoa is required before an adoption decree may be granted.

Required Documents:

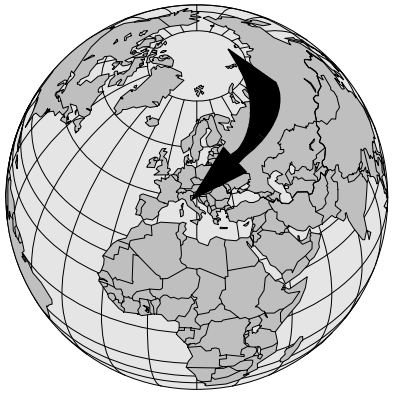
- Original Birth Certificates for adoptive parents
- Original Marriage Certificate for adoptive parents
- Proof of Citizenship—Naturalization Certificates/Passports
- Original birth certificate for adopted child
- Proof of ownership of home from adoptive parents—proof of adequate space in the home to accommodate an additional household member

Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400J
New York, New York 10017
Tel: 212 599 6196
Fax: 212 599 0797
Email: samoa@un.int

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

American Embassy
5th Floor, ACB Building,
Matafele Street
Apia, SAMOA
Phone: (685) 21436
Fax: (685) 22030
Email: AmEmbApia@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Samoa may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Apia, Samoa or the U.S. Consulate General in Auckland, New Zealand. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SAN MARINO

Compiled from the April 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of San Marino

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 61.2 sq. km.; about one-third the size of Washington, DC.
Cities: Capital—San Marino (pop. 4,482). Other cities—Serravalle, Borgo Maggiore, Domagnano.
Terrain: Rugged mountains.
Climate: Mediterranean; mild to cool winters; warm, sunny summers.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Sammarinese.
Population: (December 2007) 30,780.
Ethnic groups: Sammarinese, Italian.
Religions: Roman Catholic.
Languages: Italian.
Education: Literacy—96%.
Health: Infant mortality rate: (2006)—5.63/1,000 live birth rates. Life expectancy (2006)—79.6 for men and 85.2 for women.
Work force: (December 2007) 22,056.

Government

Type: Independent republic.
Constitution: October 8, 1600, electoral law of 1926 and manuscript of rights (1974) serve some of the functions of the Constitution.
Government branches: Captain Regent Rosa Zafferani and Captain Regent Federico Pedini Amati (co-chiefs of state); Congress of State (cabinet) elected by the Great and General Council; Secretary of State for Foreign and Political Affairs Fiorenzo Stofli (head of government). Legislative—unicameral parliament: 60-member Great and General Council. Judicial—Council of Twelve.
Political subdivisions: 9 municipalities.
Political parties: Christian Democratic Party of San Marino, Party of Socialists and Democrats, National Alliance, Popular Alliance, United Left, New Socialist Party, We Sammarinesi, Sammarinesi for Freedom, and Democrats of the Center.
Suffrage: Universal, 18 years of age.

Economy

GDP: (2007 estimate) Euros 1.277 billion (approx. $1.85 billion).
Per capita income: (2006) Euros 29,560 (approx. $42,560).
GDP growth: (2007 est.) 6.3%.
Natural resources: Building stone.
Agriculture: Products—wheat, grapes, maize, olives, cattle, pigs, horses, meat, cheese, hides.
Industry: Types—tourism, textiles, electronics, ceramics, cement, wine.
Trade: Exports (2005)—2.035 billion Euros (approx. $2.9 billion). 90% to Italy. Imports (2005)—2.076 billion Euros (approx. $3.0 billion) manufactured goods, food. Partners—Italy, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, South America, China, Taiwan.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The population of San Marino is comprised of native Sammarinese and Italian citizens. Crop farming, sheep farming, and the working of stone from the quarries formed the early backbone of San Marino's economy. It has no mineral resources, and today most of the land is cultivated or covered by woods.

According to tradition, San Marino was founded in AD 301 when a Christian stonemason named Marinus the Dalmatian fled to the island of Arbe to escape the anti-Christian Roman Emperor Diocletian. Marinus hid on the peak of Mount Titano and founded a small community of people following their Christian beliefs. It is certain that the area had been inhabited since prehistoric times, although evidence of existence on Mount Titano only dates back to the Middle Ages. In memory of the stonecutter, the land was renamed "Land of San Marino" and was finally changed to its present-day name, "Republic of San Marino."

The original government structure was composed of a self-governed assembly known as the Arengo, which consisted of the heads of each family. In 1243, the positions of Captains Regent (Capitani Reggenti) were established to be the joint heads of state.

The land area of San Marino consisted only of Mount Titano until 1463, at which time the republic entered into an alliance against Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, Lord of Rimini, who was later defeated. As a result, Pope Pius II Piccolomini gave San Marino the towns of Fiorentino, Montegiardino, and Serravalle. Later that year, the town of Faetano joined the republic on its own accord. Since then, the size of San Marino has remained unchanged.

San Marino has been occupied by foreign militaries twice in its history, both for only short periods of time. In 1503, Cesare Borgia, known as Valentino, occupied the republic until his death several months later. In 1739, Cardinal Alberoni used military force to occupy the country. Civil disobedience was used to protest his occupation, and clandestine notes sent to the Pope to obtain justice were answered by the Pope's recognition of San Marino's rights and restoration of San Marino's independence.



GOVERNMENT

The Arengo, initially formed with the heads of each family, relinquished its power to the Great and General Council. In 1243, the first two Captains Regent were nominated by the Council, and this method of nomination is still in use today. The Council is composed of 60 members who are elected every 5 years under a proportional representation system in all nine administrative districts. These districts (Townships) correspond to the old parishes of the Republic, and each one is ruled by a Council, which is chaired by a Captain elected every 5 years. The Great and General Council approves the budget, as well as the nominations of Captains Regent and heads of the Executive.

Every 6 months, the Council elects two Captains Regent to be the heads of state. The Regents are chosen from opposing parties so they can keep an eye on each other. They serve a 6-month term. The investiture of the Captains Regent takes place on April 1 and October 1 in every year. Once this term is over, citizens have 3 days in which to file complaints about the previous Regents' activities. If they warrant it, judicial proceedings against the former head(s) of state can be initiated.

The State Congress, composed of 10 Secretaries, wields executive power. The 10 Secretaries are (1) Secretary of State for Foreign and Political Affairs, and Economic Planning; (2) Secretary of State for Internal Affairs and Civil Defense; (3) Secretary of State for Finance, Budget, and Relations with the State Philatelic and Numismatic Office; (4) Secretary of State for Education, Culture, University and Social Affairs; (5) Secretary of State for Territory, Environment and Agriculture; (6) Secretary of State for Health and Social Security; (7) Secretary of State for Industry, Trade and Relations with the Azienda Autonoma di Stato for Services; (8) Secretary of State for Communication, Transport, Tourism, and Sport; (9) Secretary of State for Justice, Information, and Peace; and (10) Secretary of State for Labor and Cooperation.

The Great and General Council elects the Council of Twelve for the duration of the Legislature and serves a jurisdictional body that also acts as a

third instance Court of Appeals. Two government inspectors represent the State in financial and patrimonial questions.

The Legislative body consists of the Great and General Council, the parliament, and a unicameral Chamber. The members of parliament are usually elected every five years and are in charge of legislation, justice, and the administration of jurisdiction. In addition, they are tasked with electing the Captains Regent, the State Congress, the Council of Twelve, the Advising Commission, and the Government Unions once the Council nominates them. Parliament also has the power to ratify contracts with other countries. The parliament is divided into five different Advising Commissions consisting of 15 councils which examine, propose, and discuss the implementation of new laws that are on being submitted to the Great and General Council.

The judiciary is composed of the commissioner of the law, the judging magistrate, the appellate judge, the juvenile court, and the judge of last appeal. The commissioner tries civil and penal cases with penalties not exceeding a three-year sentence. The judging magistrates, who are appointed by parliament for a three-year term and can be indefinitely reappointed, preside over all other cases.

Reform legislation, enacted in 2004, no longer requires that the country's lower court judges be noncitizens; however, most lower court judges remained Italian citizens. A local conciliation judge handles cases of minor importance. Under the same reform, the final court of review is the judge of the last appeal. In civil matters, this judge confirms or overrules either the lower court judgment or an appellate decision; in criminal matters, he judges on the legitimacy of detention measures and on the enforcement of a judgment.

On April 28, 2005 a new act established the country's constitutional court with the following functions: 1) to verify that laws, acts, and traditions that are given the force of law conform to constitutional precepts; 2) to verify the admissibility of a referendum; 3) to decide on conflicts between constitutional institutions; 4) to control the activity of the Captains Regent. The court is composed of three standing judges and three alternate judges. They are selected by the Great and General Council with a two-thirds majority to a four-year term. After the first selection one-third of the members of the court are reselected every two years.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Captain Regent (Co-Head of State): **Federico Pedini AMATI**

Captain Regent (Co-Head of State): **Rosa ZAFFERANI**

Sec. of Budget & Finance: **Stefano MACINA**

Sec. of Health & Social Security: **Fabio BERARDI**

Sec. of Industry, Trade, & Research: **Tito MASI**

Sec. of Interior & Civil Protection: **Valeria CIAVATTA**

Sec. of Justice, Information, & Peace: **Ivan FOSCHI**

Sec. of Labor: **Antonello BACCIOCCHI**

Sec. of Public Education, Culture, & Social Affairs: **Francesca MICHELOTTI**

Sec. of State for Foreign & Political Affairs & for Economic Planning: **Fiorenzo STOLFI**

Sec. of Territory, Environment, & Agriculture: **Marino RICCARDI**

Sec. of Tourism, Telecommunications, Transportation, Economic Cooperation, & Sports: **Paride ANDREOLI**

Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Daniele BODINI**

San Marino has honorary Consulates General in Washington, DC and New York and honorary Consulates in Detroit and Honolulu. The honorary Consulate General in Washington, DC is located at 1899 L Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036.

The Republic of San Marino's Web Site provides information on politics, trade, and events in San Marino.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

San Marino is a multi-party democratic republic. The two main parties are the Christian Democratic Party of San Marino (PDCS), and the Party of Socialists and Democrats (PSD), in addition to several other smaller parties. Due to the small size and low population of San Marino, it is difficult for any party to gain a pure majority, and most of the time the government is run by a coalition. Following the June 2006 election results, the PSD formed a center-left coalition government with the Popular Alliance and the United Left parties. After a government crisis in the fall of 2007, the four members of the Democrats of the Center also joined the ruling coalition.

Because tourism accounts for more than 50% of the economic sector, the government relies not only on taxes and customs for revenue but also the sale of coins and postage stamps to collectors throughout the world. In addition, the Italian Government pays San Marino an annual budget subsidy provided under the terms of the Basic Treaty with Italy. In recent years banking has also become an important economic activity.

Harmonization of statutes and policies with the EU is a major domestic and foreign policy priority of the republic. Another priority issue is the signing of a cooperation agreement with Italy, San Marino's most important economic partner.

ECONOMY

San Marino's per capita income in 2005 stood at 28,570 Euros (approx. $41,400) with more than 50% coming from the tourism industry, which draws about 2 million people annually.

Traditional economic activities in San Marino were food crops, sheep farming, and stone quarrying. Today farming activities focus on grain, vines, and orchards, as well as animal

husbandry (cattle and swine). Besides the tourism industry, San Marino makes most of its income from the banking industry and from the manufacture and export of ceramics, tiles, furniture, clothing, paints, fabrics, and spirits/wines. The per capita level of output and standard of living in San Marino are comparable to those of Italy. In addition, San Marino maintains the lowest unemployment rate in Europe and no national debt.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

San Marino is an active player in the international community. Currently, the Republic has diplomatic relations with over 70 countries. Italy is the only country represented by an ambassador resident in San Marino. The Papal Nuncio, based in Rome, is the dean of San Marino's diplomatic corps.

San Marino is a full member of the United Nations (UN), International Court of Justice (ICJ), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Health Organization (WHO), World Tourism Organization (WTO), Council of Europe, International Red Cross Organization, the International Institution for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIIT), and Interpol, among others. It also cooperates with UNICEF and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and has official relations with the European Union (EU). From May-November 1990 and from November 2006-May 2007, San Marino held the semi-annual presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, headquartered in Strasbourg, France.

U.S.-SAN MARINO RELATIONS

The United States and San Marino enjoy friendly diplomatic relations. San Marino consistently supports U.S. foreign policy positions, as well as U.S. candidates to international organizations. The two countries are on excellent terms. In September 2006 President George W. Bush appointed Ambassador to Italy Ronald P. Spogli to serve concurrently as Ambassador to San Marino. Ambassador Spogli is the first U.S. Ambassador to San Marino in the country's history. In July 2007, Ambassador Paolo Rondelli became San Marino's first ambassador to the U.S. For consular purposes, the republic is within the jurisdiction of the Florence consular district. Consulate officials regularly visit San Marino to carry out diplomatic demarches, represent U.S. interests, and administer consular services.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

FLORENCE (CG) Lungarno A. Vespucci, 38, APO/FPO PSC 59 Box 100 (f) APO AE 09624, +39-055-266-951, Fax 39-055-284088, Workweek: 8:30–5:30 Mon to Fri, Website: http://florence.usconsulate.gov.

CG OMS:	Kathryn Rakich
CG:	Nora Dempsey
PO:	Nora Dempsey
CON:	Kershaw John

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet—Italy

June 10, 2008

Country Description: Italy is a developed democracy with a modern economy. The Holy See is a sovereign entity that serves as the ecclesiastical, governmental and administrative capital of the Roman Catholic Church, physically located within the State of the Vatican City inside Rome, with a unique, non-traditional economy. San Marino is a developed, constitutional democratic republic, also independent of Italy, with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. Italian authorities may deny entry to travelers who attempt to enter without a valid passport. A visa is not required for tourist stays up to three months. However, for all other purposes, such as work, study, etc., a visa is required and must be obtained from the Italian Embassy or Consulates before entering Italy. For further information concerning visas and entry requirements for Italy, travelers may contact the Embassy of Italy at 3000 Whitehaven St NW, Washington, DC 20008, via telephone at (202) 612-4400 or via the Internet: http://www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it/ambasciata_washington, or Italian Consulates General in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, or San Francisco, accessible through the above Internet site.

Americans staying or traveling within Italy for less than three (3) months are considered non-residents. This includes persons on vacation, those taking professional trips, students registered at an authorized school, or persons performing research or independent study.

As of May 28, 2007, under Italian law (http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/07068l.htm), all non-residents are required to complete a dichiarazione di presenza (declaration of presence). Tourists arriving from a non-Schengen-country (e.g. the United States) should obtain a stamp in their passport at the airport on the day of arrival. This stamp is considered the equivalent of the declaration of presence. Tourists arriving from a Schengen-country (e.g. France) must request the declaration of presence form from a local police office (commissariato di zona), police headquarters (questura) or their place of stay (e.g hotel, hostel, campgrounds) and submit the form to the police or to their place of stay within eight business days of arrival. It is important that applicants keep a copy of the receipt issued by the Italian authorities. Failure to complete a declaration of presence is punishable by expulsion from Italy. Additional information may be obtained (in Italian only)

via Internet from the following websites: www.portaleimmigrazione.it and http://www.poliziadistato.it/pds/ps/immigrazione/soggiorno. htm.

Americans staying in Italy for more than three (3) months are considered residents and must obtain a permesso di soggiorno (permit of stay). This includes Americans who will work or transact business and persons who want to simply live in Italy. An application "kit" for the permesso di soggiorno may be requested from one of 14,000 national post offices (Poste Italiane). The kit must then be returned to one of 5,332 designated Post Office acceptance locations. It is important that applicants keep a copy of the receipt issued by the Post Office. Additional information may be obtained from an Italian immigration website via Internet at: http://www.portaleimmigrazione.it. Within 20 days of receiving the permit to stay in Italy, Americans must go to the local Vital Statistics Bureau (Anagrafe of the Comune) to apply for residency. It generally takes one to two months to receive the certificate of residence (Certificato di Residenza).

Safety and Security: There have been occasional episodes of politically motivated violence in Italy, most often connected to Italian internal developments or social issues. At various times, Italian authorities have found bombs outside public buildings, have received bomb threats and were subjects of letter bombs. Firebombs or Molotov cocktails have been thrown at buildings or offices in the middle of the night. These incidents have all been attributed to organized crime or anarchist movements. Americans were not targeted or injured in these instances.

Demonstrations may have an anti-American character. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful have the potential to turn into confrontational situations and possibly escalate into violence. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Italy should take common sense precautions and follow news reports carefully in order to avoid demonstrations and to be aware of heightened security and potential delays when they occur. Italy remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Italy's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State Burea of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Italy has a moderate rate of violent crime, some of which is directed towards tourists, principally for motives of theft. Some travelers have been victims of rape and beatings. There have also been incidents of drinks laced with drugs being used by criminals to rob, and in some cases, assault tourists. Many of these incidents have occurred in the vicinity of Rome's Termini train station and at major tourist centers such as Campo de Fiori and Piazza Navona, as well as in Florence and Naples. Criminals using this tactic "befriend" a traveler at a train station, bus stop, restaurant, café or bar in tourist areas, then eventually offer a drink laced with a sleeping drug. When the tourist falls asleep, criminals steal the traveler's valuables. There have also been instances where the victim was assaulted, either physically or sexually.

Americans are urged to exercise caution at train stations and airports, and when frequenting nightclubs, bars and outdoor cafes, particularly at night, because criminals may make initial contact with potential victims in such settings. Individuals under the effect of alcohol may become victims of crime, including robbery, physical and sexual assault, due to their impaired ability to judge situations and make decisions. This is particularly a problem for younger Americans visiting Italy, where the age limit on the sale of alcoholic beverages is lower than in most U.S. states. If you are a victim of such a crime, please file a police report and contact the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate. There are also in-country organizations, which provide counseling, medical, and legal assistance to certain crime victims.

Petty crimes such as pick pocketing, theft from parked cars, and purse snatching are serious problems, especially in large cities. Pickpockets sometimes dress like businessmen so tourists should not be lulled into a false sense of security by believing that well-dressed individuals are not potential pickpockets or thieves. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites, on public buses or trains, or at the major railway stations: Rome's Termini; Milan's Centrale; Florence's Santa Maria Novella; and Naples' Centrale and Piazza Garibaldi. Travelers should also be alert to theft in Milan's Malpensa Airport, particularly at car rental agencies. Clients of Internet cafes in major cities have been targeted. Tourists who have tried to resist petty thieves on motor scooters have suffered broken arms and collarbones.

Thieves in Italy often work in groups or pairs. Pairs of accomplices or groups of street urchins are known to divert tourists' attention so that another can pickpocket them. In one particular routine, one thief throws trash, waste or ketchup at the victim; a second thief assists the victim in cleaning up the mess; and the third discreetly takes the victim's belongings. Criminals on crowded public transportation slit the bottoms of purses or bags with a razor blade or sharp knife, then remove the contents. Theft of small items such as radios, luggage, cameras, briefcases, and even cigarettes from parked cars is a major problem.

Carjackings and thefts have also been reported from occupied vehicles waiting in traffic or stopped at traffic lights. Vehicles parked near beaches during the summer have been broken into and items stolen. Robbers take

items from cars at gas stations often by smashing car windows. In a scam practiced on the highways, one thief signals a flat tire to the driver of another car and encourages the driver to pull over. Often, the tire has been punctured by an accomplice, while in other instances, there may, in fact, be nothing wrong with the vehicle.

When the driver stops, one thief helps change the tire, while the other takes the driver's belongings. Use particular caution driving at night on highways, when there may be a greater incidence of robbery attempts. There have been occasional reports of break-ins of rental cars driven by Americans when the precautions mentioned above were not followed during stops at highway service areas.

On trains, a commonly reported trick involves one or more persons who pretend to befriend a traveler and offer drugged food or drink. Also, thieves have been known to impersonate police officers to gain the confidence of tourists. The thief shows the prospective victim a circular plastic sign with the words "police" or "international police." If this happens, the tourist should insist on seeing the officer's identification card (documento), as impersonators tend not to carry forged documents. Tourists should immediately report thefts or other crimes to the local police.

The U.S. Secret Service in Rome has been advised of, and is assisting Italian Law Enforcement authorities in investigating, an increase in the appearance of ATM skimming devices. These devices are attached to legitimate bank ATMs, usually located in tourist areas, and capture the account information stored electronically on the card's magnetic strip. The devices consist of a card reader installed over the legitimate reader and a pin-hole video camera mounted above the keypad that records the customer's PIN. ATMs with skimming devices installed may also allow normal transactions to occur. The victim's information is sold, traded on-line or encoded on another card such as a hotel key card to access the compromised account. Here are some helpful hints to protect yourself and to identify skimming devices:

- Use ATMs located in well-lit public areas, or secured inside the bank/business
- Cover the keypad with one hand as you enter your PIN
- Look for gaps, tampered appearance, or other irregularities between the metal faceplate of the ATM and the card reader
- Avoid card readers that are not flush with the face of the ATM
- Monitor your account statements for unauthorized transactions

Organized criminal groups operate throughout Italy, but are more prevalent in the south. They have occasionally resorted to violence to intimidate or to settle disputes. Though the activities of such groups are not generally targeted at tourists, visitors should be aware that innocent bystanders could be injured.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

According to Italian Law (Law 80 of May 14, 2005), anyone caught buying counterfeit goods (for example, DVDs, CDs, watches, purses, bags, belts, sunglasses, etc.) is subject to a fine of no less than EUR 1,000. Police in major Italian cities enforce this law to varying degrees. Travelers are advised to purchase products only from stores and other licensed retailers to avoid unknowingly buying counterfeit and illegal merchandise.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Lost or stolen credit cards present risk of identity theft and should be cancelled immediately. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are available, but may be limited outside urban areas. Public hospitals, though generally free of charge for emergency services, sometimes do not maintain the same standards as hospitals in the United States, so travelers are encouraged to obtain insurance that would cover a stay in a private Italian hospital or clinic. It is almost impossible to obtain an itemized hospital bill from public hospitals, as required by many U.S. insurance companies, because the Italian National Health Service charges one inclusive rate (care services, bed and board). For information on avian influenza (bird flu), please refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

In Naples and the region of Campania, a perennial problem exists due to periodic garbage collection strikes and inadequate dump facilities. Residents often resort to burning the garbage which can give off toxic substances that can aggravate respiratory problems. Warm summer temperatures further aggravate this problem.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Italy is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Streets in historic city centers are often narrow, winding and congested. Motor scooters are very popular and drivers often see themselves as exempt from conventions that apply to automobiles. Travelers who rent scooters should be particularly cautious. Pedestrians and drivers should be constantly alert to the possibility of scooters' sudden presence. Throughout Italy, the number of pedestrian deaths and injuries are increasing. Most deaths and injuries involve pedestrians or cyclists who are involved in collisions with scooters or other vehicles. U.S. citizens should remain vigilant and alert while walking or cycling near traffic. Pedestrians should be careful, as sidewalks, especially in major cities, can be extremely congested and uneven, and drivers of bicycles, motorcycles and other vehicles routinely ignore traffic signals and traffic flows, routinely park and even drive on sidewalks. For safety, pedestrians should look carefully in both directions before crossing streets, even when using a marked crosswalk with a green "avanti" ("walk") light illuminated.

Traffic lights are limited, often disobeyed, and a different convention of right-of-way is observed. Italy has over 5,600 kilometers (3,480 mi.) of "Autostrada," or superhighways. Commercial and individual vehicles travel and pass on these well-maintained roads at very high speeds. Accidents occur in which contributing factors include excessive speed, alcohol/drug use and/or sleepiness of long-distance drivers. Italy has one of the highest rates of car accident deaths in the European Union.

In rural areas, a wide range of speed on highways makes for hazardous driving. Roads are generally narrow and often have no guardrails. Travelers in northern Italy, especially in winter, should be aware of fog and poor visibility, responsible for multiple-car accidents each year. Most Italian automobiles are equipped with special fog lights. Roadside assistance in Italy is excellent on the well-maintained toll roads, but limited on secondary roads. Use of safety belts and child restraining devices is mandatory and headlights should be on at all times outside of urban areas.

U.S. citizens driving in Italy are reminded that they must adhere to the local driving laws and regulations. Vehicle traffic in some historic downtown areas of cities and towns throughout Italy is limited by a system of permits (called "ZTL" and functioning the same way as an "EasyPass" system in the U.S. might on the freeway). Cameras record the license plates of cars driving in parts of the city that require a permit. Although most of the automated verification stations are clearly marked, if a driver passes one it is impossible to know at the time that a violation occurred or has been recorded. Violators are not pulled over or stopped, and there is no personal contact with a police officer. Whenever possible, the fines imposed for these violations are forwarded to the driver's home in the U.S. to request payment. The fines are cumulative for each time a driver passes a control point. A similar system of automated traffic control cameras is in place in many parts of the highway system and is used to ticket speeding violations.

U.S. citizens driving in Italy should also note that, according to Italian regulation, if a resident of a non-European Union country (e.g. the United States) violates a traffic law (e.g. for speeding), the violator must pay the fine at the time the violation occurs to the police officer issuing the ticket. If the citizen does not or cannot pay the fine at the time, Italian regulation allows the police officer to confiscate the offender's vehicle (even if the vehicle is a rental vehicle.)

For specific information concerning Italian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) offices via the Internet at: http://www.enit.it, tel: 212-245-4822 or the A.C.I. (Automobile Club Italiano) at Via Magenta 5, 00185 Rome, tel: 39-06-4477. For information on obtaining international drivers licenses, contact AAA or the American Automobile Touring Alliance. Visit the website of the country's national tourist office online at www.italiantourism.com and national authority responsible for road safety at www.infrastrutturetrasporti.it.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Italy's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Italy's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Strikes and other work stoppages occur frequently in the transportation sector (national airlines, airports, trains, and bus lines). Most are announced in advance and are of short duration. Information on strikes may be found at http://www.infrastrutture.gov.it/page/NuovoSito/site.php. Reconfirmation of domestic and international flight reservations is highly recommended.

U. S citizens using public transportation while in Italy are reminded that they must adhere to local transporta-

tion laws and regulations. Travelers must purchase train tickets and validate them by punching them in validating machines usually located near the entrance of train tracks prior to boarding. Failure to follow this procedure may result in an on-the-spot fine by an inspector on the train. Travelers must purchase bus tickets prior to boarding and validate them immediately after boarding. Tickets may be purchased at tobacco stores or kiosks. Failure to follow this procedure may result in an immediate fine imposed by an inspector on the bus. If the violator does not pay the fine on the spot, it will automatically double and will be forwarded to the violator's home address.

Disaster Preparedness: Several major earthquake fault lines cross Italy. Principal Italian cities, with the exception of Naples, do not lie near these faults, but smaller tourist towns, like Assisi, do and have suffered earthquakes. General information about disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. Detailed information on Italy's earthquake fault lines is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at http://www.usgs.gov.

Italy also has several active volcanoes generating geothermal events. Mt. Etna, on the eastern tip of the island of Sicily, has been erupting intermittently since 2000. Mt. Vesuvius, located near Naples, is currently capped and not active. Activity at Mt. Vesuvius is monitored by an active seismic network and sensor system, and no recent seismic activity has been recorded. Two of Italy's smaller islands, Stromboli and Vulcano in the Aeolian Island chain north of Sicily, also have active volcanoes with lava flows. Detailed information on volcano activity in Italy is available from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) at http://www.usgs.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations. They may differ significantly from those of the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Italian law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use or trafficking in illegal drugs in Italy are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Italy are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Italy. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Via V. Veneto 119/A, tel: 39-06-46741 and fax: 39-06-4674-2217; Internet address: http://italy.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulates are located in:

Florence: Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci 38, tel: 39-055-266-951, consular fax: 399-055-215-550;

Milan: Via Principe Amedeo 2/10, tel: 39-02-290-351, and fax: 39-02-290-35-273;

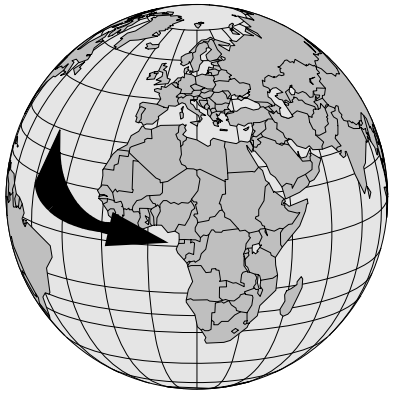
Naples: Piazza della Repubblica, tel: 39-081-583-8111, and consular fax: 39-081-583-8275.

There are U.S. Consular Agents located in:

Genoa: Via Dante 2, tel: 39-010-584-492, and fax: 39-010-553-3033;

Palermo: Via Vaccarini 1, tel: 39-091-305-857, and fax: 39-091-625-6026;

Venice: Viale Galileo Galilei, 30, tel: 39-041-541-5944, and fax: 39-041-541-6654.



SÃO TOMÉ & PRÍNCIPE

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe

PROFILE

Geography

Location: Western Africa; islands straddling the equator in the Gulf of Guinea west of Gabon.

Area: 1,001 sq. km. (386 sq. mi.); about the size of metropolitan Indianapolis, or one-third the size of Rhode Island.

Cities: Capital—São Tomé. Other cities—Trinidade, Santana, Angolares, Neves, Santo Antonio.

Terrain: Two small, volcanic islands.

Climate: Tropical, with wet and dry seasons, influenced by the mountainous topography.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—São Toméan(s).

Population: (July 2008 est.) 206,178.

Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 3.116%.

Ethnic groups: Mixed African, Portuguese-African.

Religions: Christian (Roman Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, Seventh-day Adventist) 80%.

Languages: Portuguese (official).

Education: Literacy (census 2001)—68.1%. Years compulsory—to secondary level.

Health: Life expectancy (2008 est.)—68 yrs. Infant mortality rate (2008 est.)—38.36/1,000.

Work force: (by household, 2000 UN Development Program est.) Agriculture—15.3%; industry, commerce, services—36.5%; government—11.5%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: July 12, 1975 (from Portugal).

Constitution: November 5, 1975; revised September 1990, following a national referendum, revised again January 2003.

Government branches: Executive—president and prime minister. Legislative—National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: Seven counties, six on São Tomé and one on Príncipe.

Political parties: Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe (MLSTP), Party of Democratic Convergence (PCD), Independent Democratic Action (ADI), Democratic Movement Force of Change (MDFM), Christian Democratic Front-Socialist Union Party (FDC-PSU), Santomean Workers Party (PTS); Popular Party of Progress (PPP), and National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP).

Suffrage: Universal adult.

Economy

GDP: (2007 est.) $119 million.

Annual real GDP growth rate: (2007 est.) 6.0%.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $881.

Consumer price inflation: (2007 est.) 19.9%.

Natural resources: Agricultural products, fish, petroleum (not yet exploited).

Agriculture: (16.6% of GDP, 2006) Products—cocoa, coconuts, copra, palm kernels, cinnamon, pepper, coffee, bananas, beans, poultry. Cultivated land—484 sq. kilometers.

Industry: (15.3% of GDP, 2006) Types—light construction, shirts, soap, beer, fisheries, shrimp processing, palm oil.

Trade: Exports (2007 est.)—$4 million (f.o.b.): 95% cocoa, copra, palm kernels, coffee. Major markets—Portugal, Netherlands, Spain, Germany, China. Imports (2007 est.)—$73 million (f.o.b.): food, fuel, machinery and electrical equipment. Major suppliers—Portugal (43%), France (16%), U.K. (14%).

Total external debt: (2007 est.) none.

Fiscal year: Calendar year.

GEOGRAPHY

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, situated in the equatorial Atlantic about 300 and 250 kilometers (200 mi. and 150 mi.), respectively, off the

northwest coast of Gabon, constitute Africa's smallest country. Both are part of an extinct volcanic mountain range, which also includes the island of Bioko in Equatorial Guinea to the north and Mount Cameroon on the African west coast.

São Tomé is 50 kilometers (31 mi.) long and 32 kilometers (20 mi.) wide and the more mountainous of the two islands. Its peaks reach 2,024 meters (6,640 ft.). Príncipe is about 30 kilometers (19 mi.) long and 6 kilometers (4 mi.) wide. Swift streams radiating down the mountains through lush forest and cropland to the sea cross both islands.

At sea level, the climate is tropical—hot and humid with average yearly temperatures of about 27ºC (80ºF) and little daily variation. At the interior's higher altitudes, the average yearly temperature is 20ºC (68ºF), and nights are generally cool.

Annual rainfall varies from 500 centimeters (200 in.) on the southwestern slopes to 100 centimeters (40 in.) in the northern lowlands. The rainy season runs from October to May.

PEOPLE

Of São Tomé and Príncipe's total population, about 137,500 live on São Tomé and 6,000 on Príncipe. All are descended from various ethnic groups that have migrated to the islands since 1485. Six groups are identifiable:

- Mestico, or mixed-blood, descendants of African slaves brought to the islands during the early years of settlement from Benin, Gabon, and Congo (these people also are known as filhos da terra or "sons of the land");
- Angolares, reputedly descendants of Angolan slaves who survived a 1540 shipwreck and now earn their livelihood fishing;
- Forros, descendants of freed slaves when slavery was abolished;
- Servicais, contract laborers from Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde, living temporarily on the islands;
- Tongas, children of servicais born on the islands; and
- Europeans, primarily Portuguese.

In the 1970s, there were two significant population movements—the exodus of most of the 4,000 Portuguese residents and the influx of several hundred São Toméan refugees from Angola. The islanders have been absorbed largely into a common Luso-African culture. Almost all belong to the Roman Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, or Seventh-day Adventist Churches, which in turn retain close ties with churches in Portugal.

HISTORY

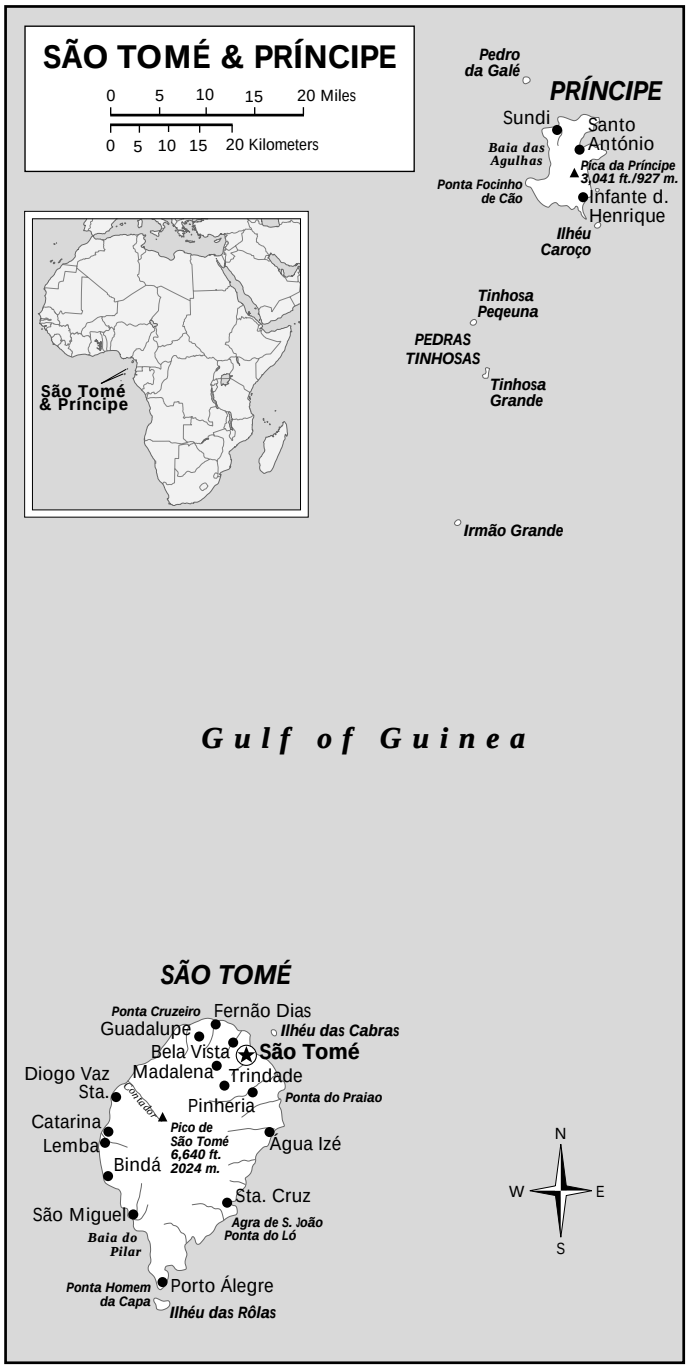
The islands were first discovered by Portuguese navigators between 1469 and 1472. The first successful settlement of São Tomé was established in 1493 by Alvaro Caminha, who received the land as a grant from the Portuguese crown. Príncipe was settled in 1500 under a similar arrangement. By the mid-1500s, with the help of slave labor, the Portuguese settlers had turned the islands into Africa's foremost exporter of sugar. São Tomé and Príncipe were taken over and administered by the Portuguese crown in 1522 and 1573, respectively.

Sugar cultivation declined over the next 100 years, and by the mid-1600s, São Tomé was little more than a port of call for bunkering ships. In the early 1800s, two new cash crops, coffee and cocoa, were introduced. The rich volcanic soils proved well suited to the new cash crop industry, and soon extensive plantations (rocas), owned by Portuguese companies or absentee landlords, occupied almost all of the good farmland. By 1908, São Tomé had become the world's largest producer of cocoa, still the country's most important crop.

The rocas system, which gave the plantation managers a high degree of authority, led to abuses against the African farm workers. Although Portugal officially abolished slavery in 1876, the practice of forced paid labor continued. In the early 1900s, an internationally publicized controversy arose over charges that Angolan contract workers were being subjected to forced labor and unsatisfactory working conditions. Sporadic labor unrest and dissatisfaction continued well into the 20th century, culminating in an outbreak of riots in 1953 in which several hundred African laborers were killed in a clash with their Portuguese rulers. This "Batepa Massacre" remains a major event in the colonial history of the islands, and the government officially observes its anniversary.

By the late 1950s, when other emerging nations across the African Continent were demanding independence, a small group of São Toméans had formed the Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe (MLSTP), which eventually established its base in nearby Gabon. Picking up momentum in the 1960s, events moved quickly after the overthrow of the Salazar and Caetano dictatorship in Portugal in April 1974. The new Portuguese regime was committed to the dissolution of its overseas colonies; in November 1974, their representatives met with the MLSTP in Algiers and worked out an agreement for the transfer of sovereignty. After a period of transitional government, São Tomé and Príncipe achieved independence on July 12, 1975, choosing as its first President the MLSTP Secretary General, Manuel Pinto da Costa.

In 1990, São Tomé became one of the first African countries to embrace democratic reform. Changes to the constitution, including the legalization of opposition political parties, led to nonviolent, free, and transparent elections in 1991. Miguel Trovoada, a former Prime Minister who had been in exile since 1986, returned as an independent candidate and was elected President. Trovoada was reelected in São Tomé's second multiparty presidential election in 1996.



The Party of Democratic Convergence (PCD) toppled the MLSTP to take a majority of seats in the National Assembly, with the MLSTP becoming an important and vocal minority party. Municipal elections followed in late 1992, in which the MLSTP came back to win a majority of seats on five of seven regional councils. In early legislative elections in October 1994, the MLSTP won a plurality of seats in the Assembly. It regained an outright majority of seats in the November 1998 elections. The Government of São Tomé fully functions under a multiparty system. Presidential elections were held in July 2001. The candidate backed by the Independent Democratic Action Party, Fradique de Menezes, was elected in the first round and inaugurated on September 3. Parliamentary elections held in March 2002 led to a coalition government after no party gained a majority of seats. An attempted coup d'etat in July 2003 by a few members of the military and the Christian Democratic Front (mostly representative of former São Toméan volunteers from the apartheid-era Republic of South African Army) was reversed by international, including American, mediation without bloodshed. In September 2004, President de Menezes dismissed the Prime Minister and appointed a new cabinet, which was accepted by the majority party. In June 2005, following public discontent with oil exploration licenses granted in the Joint Development Zone (JDZ) with Nigeria, the MLSTP, the party with the largest number of seats in the National Assembly, and its coalition partners threatened to resign from government and force early parliamentary elections. After several days of negotiations, the President and the MLSTP agreed to form a new government and to avoid early elections. The new government included Maria Silveira, the well-respected head of the Central Bank, who served concurrently as Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

The March 2006 legislative elections went forward without a hitch, with President Menezes' party, the Movement for the Democratic Force of Change (MDFM), winning 23 seats and taking an unexpected lead ahead of MLSTP. MLSTP came in second with 19 seats, and the Independent Democratic Alliance (ADI) came in third with 12 seats. Amidst negotiations to form a new coalition government, President Menezes nominated a new prime minister and cabinet.

July 30, 2006 marked São Tomé and Príncipe's fourth democratic, multiparty presidential elections. The elections were regarded by both local, and international observers as being free and fair and Incumbent Fradique de Menezes was announced the winner with approximately 60 % of the vote. Voter turnout was relatively high with 63% of the 91, 000 registered voters casting ballots.

In November 2007, President de Menezes dismissed and replaced several ministers in his government following significant public criticism of souring economic conditions and the government's handling of recurring

mutinies by dissident police officers. The changes took place peacefully and without incident. During another government shakeup in February 2008, President de Menezes appointed Patrice Trovoada as Prime Minister.

On May 20, 2008 the government collapsed after losing a parliamentary vote of confidence. The opposition Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe-Social Democratic Party (MLSTP-PSD), with the support of Party of Democratic Convergence (PCD), asserted that Prime Minister Trovoada had failed to deliver on reforms that he promised when he entered office. Joachim Rafael Branco became Prime Minister in June 2008.

GOVERNMENT

Following the promulgation of a new constitution in 1990, São Tomé and Príncipe held multiparty elections for the first time since independence. Shortly after the constitution took effect, the National Assembly formally legalized opposition parties. Independent candidates also were permitted to participate in the January 1991 legislative elections. The 55-member National Assembly is the supreme organ of the state and the highest legislative body. Its members are elected for a 4-year term and meet semiannually.

The president of the republic is elected to a 5-year term by direct universal suffrage and a secret ballot, and may hold office up to two consecutive terms. Candidates are chosen at their party's national conference or individuals may run independently. A presidential candidate must obtain an outright majority of the popular vote in either a first or second round of voting in order to be elected president. The prime minister is named by the president but must be ratified by the majority party and thus normally comes from a list of its choosing. The prime minister, in turn, names the 14 members of the Cabinet. Justice is administered at the highest level by the Supreme Court. Formerly responsible to the National Assembly, the judiciary is now independent under the current constitution. Administratively, the country is divided into seven municipal districts, six on São Tomé and one comprising Príncipe. Governing councils in each district maintain a limited number of autonomous decision-making powers, and are reelected every 5 years.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Fradique DE MENEZES**
Prime Min.: **Joachim Rafael BRANCO**
Min. of Agriculture, Rural Development, & Fisheries: **Jose Luis Xavier MENDES**
Min. of Commerce, Tourism, & Industry: **Celestino Da Graca ANDRADA**
Min. of Education & Culture: **Jorge Lopes Bom JESUS**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation: **Carlos Alberto Pires TINY**
Min. of Health: **Arlindo de CARVALHO**
Min. of Internal Affairs & Civilian Protection: **Raul Antonio Da Costa CRAVID**
Min. of Justice, Govt. Reform, & Parliamentary Affairs: **Justino VEIGA**
Min. of Labor, Solidarity, Women, & Family Affairs: **Maria Tome De ARAUJO**
Min. of National Defense & Internal Order: **Elsa Texeira De Barros PINTO**
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment: **Agostinho Da Silveira RITA**
Min. of Planning & Finance: **Angela Viegas SANTIAGO**
Min. of Public Works & Infrastructure, Urban Development, Transportation, & Communications: **Benjamin Vera CRUZ**
Min. of State for Press, Youth, & Sports: **Maria De Cristo Da Costa CARVALHO**
Governor, Bank of Sao Tome & Principe:
Ambassador to the US: **Ovidio Manuel BARBOSA PEQUENO**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

The São Tomé and Príncipe Mission to the United Nations, which also is the São Toméan Embassy to the United States, is located at 400 Park Avenue, 7th floor, New York, NY 10022 (tel. 212-317-0580; email stp@un.int).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since the constitutional reforms of 1990 and the elections of 1991, Sao Tome has made great strides toward developing its democratic institutions and further guaranteeing the civil and human rights of its citizens. Sao Tomeans have freely changed their government through peaceful and transparent elections. And while there have been disagreements and political conflicts within the branches of government and the National Assembly, the debates have been carried out and resolved in open, democratic, and legal fora, in accordance with the provisions of Sao Tomean law. A number of political parties actively participate in government and openly express their views. Freedom of the press is respected, and there are several independent newspapers in addition to the government bulletin. The government's respect for human rights is exemplary; the government does not engage in repressive measures against its citizens, and respect for individuals' rights to due process and protection from government abuses is widely honored. Freedom of expression is accepted, and the government has taken no repressive measures to silence critics. The ongoing negotiations to establish a new government may create a level of paralysis in the government's operations, but thus far daily activities are continuing.

ECONOMY

Since the 1800s, the economy of São Tomé and Príncipe has been based on plantation agriculture. At the time of independence, Portuguese-owned plantations occupied 90% of the cultivated area. After independence, control of these plantations passed to various state-owned agricultural enterprises, which have since been privatized. The dominant crop on São Tomé is cocoa, representing about 95% of exports. Other export crops include copra, palm kernels, and coffee.

Domestic food-crop production is inadequate to meet local consumption, so the country imports some of its food. Efforts have been made by the government in recent years to expand food production, and several projects have been undertaken, largely financed by foreign donors.

Other than agriculture, the main economic activities are fishing and a small industrial sector engaged in processing local agricultural products and producing a few basic consumer goods. The scenic islands have potential for tourism, and the government is attempting to improve its rudimentary tourist industry infrastructure. The government sector accounts for about 11% of employment.

Following independence, the country had a centrally directed economy with most means of production owned and controlled by the state. The original constitution guaranteed a 'mixed economy,' with privately owned cooperatives combined with publicly owned property and means of production. In the 1980s and 1990s, the economy of São Tomé encountered major difficulties. Economic growth stagnated, and cocoa exports dropped in both value and volume, creating large balance-of-payments deficits. Efforts to redistribute plantation land resulted in decreased cocoa production. At the same time, the international price of cocoa slumped.

In response to its economic downturn, the government undertook a series of far-reaching economic reforms. In 1987, the government implemented an International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment program, and invited greater private participation in management of the parastatals, as well as in the agricultural, commercial, banking, and tourism sectors. The focus of economic reform since the early 1990s has been widespread privatization, especially of the state-run agricultural and industrial sectors.

The São Toméan Government has traditionally been reliant on foreign assistance from various donors, including the UN Development Program, the World Bank, the European Union (EU), Portugal, Taiwan, and the African Development Bank. São Tomé qualified for debt relief when it reached decision point under the IMF's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) in December 2000, but went off track on its poverty reduction program in early 2001. After four years and satisfactory performance on an interim staff-monitored program, the IMF approved a new three-year $4.3 million Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) program for São Tomé in September 2005. The ambitious new program aims to reduce inflation to a single-digit number, address the country's macroeconomic imbalances, and substantially reduce poverty.

In 2001, São Tomé and Nigeria reached agreement on joint exploration for petroleum in waters claimed by the two countries. After a lengthy series of negotiations, in April 2003 the joint development zone (JDZ) was opened for bids by international oil firms. The JDZ was divided into 9 blocks; the winning bids for block one, ChevronTexaco, ExxonMobil, and the Norwegian firm Equity Energy, were announced in April 2004, with São Tomé to take in 40% of the $123 million bid, and Nigeria the other 60%. Blocks 2 through 6 were allocated in June 2005. Nigeria and São Tomé signed production sharing contracts with the winning bidders in November 2005.

Chevron became the first firm to start exploratory drilling in January 2006. Portugal remains one of São Tomé's major trading partners, particularly as a source of imports. Food, manufactured articles, machinery, and transportation equipment are imported primarily from the EU.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Until independence in 1975, São Tomé and Príncipe had few ties abroad except those that passed through Portugal. Following independence, the new government sought to expand its diplomatic relationships. A common language, tradition, and colonial experience have led to close collaboration between São Tomé and other ex-Portuguese colonies in Africa, particularly Angola. São Toméan relations with other African countries in the region, such as Gabon and the Republic of the Congo, also are good. In December 2000, São Tomé signed the African Union treaty; the National Assembly later ratified it.

The São Toméan Government has generally maintained a foreign policy based on nonalignment and cooperation with any country willing to assist in its economic development. In recent years, it also has increasingly emphasized ties to the United States and western Europe.

U.S.-SAO TOMEAN RELATIONS

The United States was among the first countries to accredit an ambassador to São Tomé and Príncipe. The U.S. Ambassador based in Gabon is accredited to São Tomé on a non-resident basis.

The Ambassador and Embassy staff make regular visits to the islands. The first São Toméan Ambassador to the United States, resident in New York City, was accredited in 1985. In 1986, São Toméan President da Costa visited the United States and met with then-Vice President George H.W. Bush.

U.S. relations with São Tomé are excellent. In 1992, the Voice of America (VOA) and the Government of São Tomé signed a long-term agreement for the establishment of a relay transmitter station in São Tomé; VOA currently broadcasts to much of Africa from this facility.

The U.S. Government also maintains a number of smaller assistance programs in São Tomé, administered through non-governmental organizations or the Embassy in Libreville.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LIBREVILLE (E) Boulevard du Bord de Mer, BP 4000, Libreville, [241] 76-20-03/04, Fax [241] 74-55-07, Workweek: MON-THU 08:00-17:15 and FRI 08:00-14:00.

AMB OMS:	Debra Debose
ECO:	John Corrao
MGT:	Charles Morrill
AMB:	Eunice Reddick
CON:	Vacant
DCM:	Nathan Holt
PAO:	John Carrao
GSO:	Heather Cole
RSO:	Bart Sandlin
CLO:	Sylvia Matthews
DAO:	Ltc. Rene Dechaine
ICASS Chair:	Jim Matthews
IMO:	Jim Matthews
ISO:	Mike Moffatt
POL:	Leslie Doumbia

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 15, 2008

Country Description: São Tomé and Príncipe is a developing nation, comprising the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, located off the western coast of central Africa. Facilities for tourism are limited, but adequate.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa, and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required for entry. Visas must be obtained in advance. Travelers can obtain visas and the latest information on entry requirements from the Permanent Mission of São Tomé and Príncipe to the UN, 400 Park Ave., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10022, telephone (212) 317-0533, fax (212) 317-0580. Travelers transiting through Gabon can also obtain visas and the latest information on entry requirements from the São Tomé and Príncipe Embassy to Gabon, B.P. 49, Libreville, Gabon, telephone (241) 72-15-27, fax (241) 72-15-28. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest São Toméan and Príncipian embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: Americans should maintain security awareness at all times. There have been recent, isolated incidents of civil unrest in the capital city. Large gatherings or any other events where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest should be avoided.

Americans may contact the U.S. Embassy in Gabon for the most up-to-date information on safety and security. The Embassy informs the registered resident U.S citizen community of security matters through a warden system. In the event of a fire, dial 112 on the telephone.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

For further information on safety and security in Sao Tome & Principe, please visit the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) web site at www.osac.gov, and use the "Jump to Country" pull-down menu to reach the Sao Tome and Principe Country Profile.

Crime: Crimes such as burglary, pick-pocketing and armed robberies in homes do occur on the islands, particularly around the winter holidays. Such crimes can occur anywhere, but are more prevalent in public places, such as in markets, on the streets, or near hotels. Do not display large amounts of cash in public. If possible, leave valuables and extra cash at your hotel while sightseeing or visiting the beach. When dining in restaurants or visiting markets, it is recommended that one carry only minimal amounts of cash and avoid wearing excessive amounts of jewelry. If involved in an attempted robbery or carjacking, Americans are encouraged to comply with the attacker to avoid injury and to report all incidents to the police and the U.S. Embassy in Libreville. Police response time to reports of crime can be slow.

While scams and confidence schemes are not common, travelers should exercise caution. The prevalence of sexual assault is low, and no specific groups seem to be targets for victimization.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in São Tomé and Príncipe to reach the police is 22-22-22.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in São Tomé and Príncipe are extremely limited. There is one hospital in the country, on the island of São Tomé, and several foreign-run clinics. However, the level of care is low. For all but minor medical needs, it is necessary to travel to Libreville (Gabon), Lisbon (Portugal), or elsewhere. Additionally, some medicines are not available; travelers should carry properly labeled required medicines and medications with them.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of São Tomé and Príncipe. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be

obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning São Tomé and Príncipe is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Streets in the city of São Tomé are paved, but large potholes are common. Major roads outside of town are also paved. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and animals on the roads can be a major hazard. Outside of the city of São Tomé, there are no sidewalks or shoulders along the side of roads. In rural areas outside of the capital city, drivers are expected to honk the car's horn periodically as a warning signal of their approach. There is no street lighting outside of the capital. Some roads may be impassable without a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

Only a few miles of improved roads exist on the island of Príncipe; the conditions are similar to those found on São Tomé. Although taking taxis is fairly safe, it is advisable to rent a car instead. If you must take a taxi, exercise caution, and negotiate the rate before entering the taxi.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and São Tomé and Príncipe, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed São Tomé and Príncipe's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: São Tomé and Príncipe is a Lusophone country; travelers who do not speak Portuguese may face difficulties associated with the language barrier.

Americans should always carry identification with them in the event they are stopped by police. Taking photographs of military or government buildings is strictly forbidden.

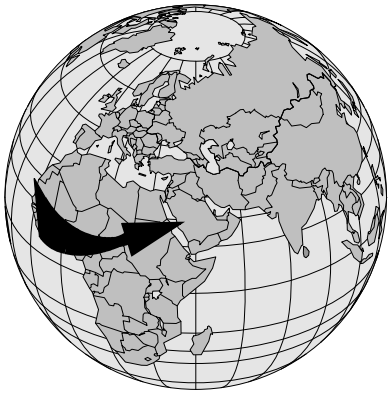
São Tomé and Príncipe is largely a cash economy. Credit cards are accepted at only a few major hotels. Travelers' checks can be cashed or dollars exchanged for dobra at hotels and at one private bank in São Tomé city, but transaction fees can be high. U.S. dollars are widely accepted at tourist establishments.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating São Tomé and Príncipian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in São Tomé and Príncipe are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Although there is no U.S. Embassy in São Tomé and Príncipe, the U.S. Embassy in Libreville, Gabon is also accredited to São Tomé and Príncipe and can provide assistance to Americans there. All Americans in São Tomé and Príncipe are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Gabon through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within São Tomé and Príncipe. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, Americans make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located in downtown Libreville on the Boulevard du Bord de Mer. The mailing address is Centre Ville, B.P. 4000, Libreville, Gabon. The telephone numbers are (241) 76-20-03 or (241) 76-20-04. The fax numbers are (241) 74-55-07 or (241) 76-88-49 and the web site is http://libreville.usembassy.gov.



SAUDI ARABIA

Compiled from the January 2009 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1,960,582 sq. km. (784,233 sq. mi.), slightly more than one-fifth the size of the continental United States.
Cities: (2006 est.) Capital—Riyadh (pop. 4.3 million). Other cities—Jeddah (3.4 million), Makkah, (1.6 million), Dammam/Khobar/Dhahran, (1.6 million).
Terrain: Primarily desert with rugged mountains in the southwest.
Climate: Arid, with great extremes of temperature in the interior; humidity and temperature are both high along the coast.

People

Nationality: Noun—Saudi(s). Adjective—Saudi Arabian or Saudi.
Population: (July 2008 est.) 28 million (22.6 million Saudis, 5.8 million foreign nationals).
Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 1.9%.
Ethnic groups: Arab (90% of native pop.), Afro-Asian (10% of native pop.).
Religions: Islam.
Languages: Arabic (official).
Education: Literacy—Total: 78.8% (male 84.7%, female 70.8%).
Health: Infant mortality rate (2008 est.)—12.01/1,000. Life expectancy—male 74 years, female 78 years.
Work force: 6.49 million, about 35% foreign workers (2005 est.); industry—25%; services (including government)—63%; agriculture—12%.

Government

Type: Monarchy with Council of Ministers and Consultative Council.
Unification: September 23, 1932.
Constitution: The Holy Qur'an (governed according to Islamic law), Shari'a, and the Basic Law.
Government branches: Executive—King (chief of state and head of government). Legislative—a Consultative Council with advisory powers was formed September 1993. Judicial—Supreme Council of Justice, Islamic Courts of First Instance and Appeals.
Political subdivisions: 13 provinces.
Political parties: None.

Economy

GDP: (2008 est.) $527 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 6.1%.
Per capita GDP: (2008) $21,062.
Natural resources: Hydrocarbons, gold, uranium, bauxite, coal, iron, phosphate, tungsten, zinc, silver, copper.
Agriculture: Products—dates, grains, livestock, vegetables. Arable land—1.76%.
Industry: Types—petroleum, petrochemicals, cement, fertilizer, light industry.
Trade: (2008 est.) Exports—$364 billion: petroleum and petroleum products. Imports—$103 billion: manufactured goods, transportation equipment, clothing and textiles, processed food products. Major trading partners—China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, U.K., U.S. (2006).

PEOPLE

Saudi Arabia's 2008 population was estimated to be about 28 million, including about 5.6 million resident foreigners. Until the 1960s, most of the population was nomadic or seminomadic; due to rapid economic and urban growth, more than 95% of the population now is settled. Some cities and oases have densities of more than 1,000 people per square kilometer (2,600 per sq. mi).

Saudi Arabia is known as the birthplace of Islam, which in the century following Muhammad's death in 632 A.D. spread west to Spain and east to India. Islam obliges all Muslims to make the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Makkah, at least once during their lifetime if they are able to do so. The cultural environment in Saudi Arabia is highly conservative; the country



adheres to a strict interpretation of Islamic religious law (Shari'a). Cultural presentations must conform to narrowly defined standards of ethics. Men and women are not permitted to attend public events together and are segregated in the work place.

Most Saudis are ethnically Arab. Some are of mixed ethnic origin and are descended from Turks, Iranians, Indonesians, Indians, Africans, and others, most of whom immigrated as pilgrims and reside in the Hijaz region along the Red Sea coast. Many Arabs from nearby countries are employed in the kingdom. There also are significant numbers of Asian expatriates mostly from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Westerners in Saudi Arabia number under 100,000.

HISTORY

Except for a few major cities and oases, the harsh climate historically prevented much settlement of the Arabian Peninsula. People of various cultures have lived in the peninsula over a span of more than 5,000 years. The Dilmun culture, along the Gulf coast, was contemporaneous with the Sumerians and ancient Egyptians, and most of the empires of the ancient world traded with the states that existed on the peninsula, which lay along important trade routes.

The Saudi state began in central Arabia in about 1750. A local ruler, Muhammad bin Saud, joined forces with an Islamic reformer, Muham-

mad Abd Al-Wahhab, to create a new political entity. Over the next 150 years, the fortunes of the Saud family rose and fell several times as Saudi rulers contended with Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and other Arabian families for control on the peninsula. The modern Saudi kingdom was founded by the late King Abdul Aziz Al Saud (known internationally as Ibn Saud, or "Son of Saud"). In 1902, Abdul Aziz recaptured Riyadh, the Al Saud dynasty's ancestral capital, from the rival Al-Rashid family. Continuing his conquests, Abdul Aziz subdued Al-Hasa in the east, the rest of the central Nejd region, and the Hijaz along the Red Sea coast between 1913 and 1926. In 1932, Abdul Aziz declared these regions unified as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Boundaries with Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait were established by a series of treaties negotiated in the 1920s, with two "neutral zones"—one with Iraq and the other with Kuwait—created. The Saudi-Kuwaiti neutral zone was administratively partitioned in 1971, with each state continuing to share the petroleum resources of the former zone equally. Tentative agreement on the partition of the Saudi-Iraqi neutral zone was reached in 1981, and partition was finalized by 1983. The country's southern boundary with Yemen was partially defined by the 1934 Treaty of Taif, which ended a brief border war between the two states. A June 2000 treaty further delineated portions of the boundary with Yemen. The location and status of Saudi Arabia's boundary with the United Arab Emirates is not final; a de facto boundary reflects a 1974 agreement. The border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar was resolved in March 2001. The border with Oman also is not demarcated.

King Abdul Aziz died in 1953 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Saud, who reigned for 11 years. In 1964, Saud abdicated in favor of his half-brother, Faisal, who had served as Foreign Minister. Because of fiscal difficulties, King Saud had been persuaded in 1958 to delegate direct conduct of Saudi Government affairs to Faisal as Prime Minister; Saud briefly regained control of the government in 1960-62. In October 1962, Faisal outlined a broad reform program, stressing economic development. Proclaimed King in 1964 by senior royal family members and religious leaders, Faisal also continued to serve as Prime Minister. This practice has been followed by subsequent kings.

The mid-1960s saw external pressures generated by Saudi-Egyptian differences over Yemen. When civil war broke out in 1962 between Yemeni royalists and republicans, Egyptian forces entered Yemen to support the new republican government, while Saudi Arabia backed the royalists. Tensions subsided only after 1967, when Egypt withdrew its troops from Yemen.

Saudi forces did not participate in the Six-Day (Arab-Israeli) War of June 1967, but the government later provided annual subsidies to Egypt, Jordan, and Syria to support their economies. During the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Saudi Arabia participated in the Arab oil boycott of the United States and Netherlands. A founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Saudi Arabia had joined other member countries in moderate oil price increases beginning in 1971. After the 1973 war, the price of oil rose substantially, dramatically increasing Saudi Arabia's wealth and political influence.

In 1975, King Faisal was assassinated by a nephew, who was executed after an extensive investigation concluded that he acted alone. Faisal was succeeded by his half-brother Khalid as King and Prime Minister; their half-brother Prince Fahd was named Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister. King Khalid empowered Crown Prince Fahd to oversee many aspects of the government's international and domestic affairs. Economic development continued rapidly under King Khalid, and the kingdom assumed a more influential role in regional politics and international economic and financial matters.

In June 1982, King Khalid died, and Fahd became King and Prime Minister in a smooth transition. Another half-brother, Prince Abdallah, Commander of the Saudi National Guard, was named Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister. King Fahd's full brother, Prince Sultan, the Minister of Defense and Aviation, became Second Deputy Prime Minister. Under King Fahd, the Saudi economy adjusted to sharply lower oil revenues resulting from declining global oil prices. Saudi Arabia supported neutral shipping in the Gulf during periods of the Iran-Iraq war and aided Iraq's war-strained economy. King Fahd played a major part in bringing about the August 1988 cease-fire between Iraq and Iran and in organizing and strengthening the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a group of six Arabian Gulf states dedicated to fostering regional economic cooperation and peaceful development.

In 1990-91, King Fahd played a key role before and during the Gulf war, helping consolidate the coalition of forces against Iraq and define the tone of the operation as a multilateral effort to reestablish the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait. Acting as a rallying point and personal spokesman for the coalition, King Fahd helped bring together his nation's GCC, Western, and Arab allies, as well as nonaligned nations from Africa and the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. He used his influence as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to persuade other Arab and Islamic nations to join the coalition.

King Fahd suffered a stroke in November 1995. From 1997, Crown Prince Abdallah took on much of the day-to-day responsibilities of running the government. Upon King Fahd's death on August 1, 2005, Abdallah assumed the throne as King. Prince Sultan, Minister of Defense and Aviation, became Crown Prince and First Deputy Prime Minister. Since ascending to the throne, King Abdallah has continued to pursue an incremental program of social, economic, and political reforms.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The central institution of Saudi Arabian Government is the monarchy. The Basic Law adopted in 1992 declared that Saudi Arabia is a monarchy ruled by the sons and grandsons of King Abd Al Aziz Al Saud, and that the Holy Qur'an is the constitution of the country, which is governed on the basis of Islamic law (Shari'a). There are no political parties or national elections; however, the country held its first municipal elections in 2005. The king's powers are limited because he must observe the Shari'a and other Saudi traditions. He also must retain a consensus of the Saudi royal family, religious leaders (ulema), and other important elements in Saudi society. In the past the leading members of the royal family chose the king from among themselves with the subsequent approval of the ulema. In November 2006, King Abdallah established an Allegiance Commission that will select future crown princes, a step designed to help formalize the selection process.

Saudi kings gradually have developed a central government. Since 1953, the Council of Ministers, appointed by and responsible to the king, has advised on the formulation of general policy and directed the activities of the growing bureaucracy. This council consists of a prime minister, the first and second deputy prime ministers, 20 ministers (of whom the minister of defense also is the second deputy prime minister), two ministers of state, and a small number of advisers and heads of major autonomous organizations.

Legislation is by resolution of the Council of Ministers and the Shura Council, ratified by royal decree, and must be compatible with the Shari'a. Justice is administered according to the Shari'a by a system of religious courts whose judges are appointed by the king on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council, composed of 12 senior jurists. The independence of the judiciary is protected by law. The king acts as the highest court of appeal and has the power to pardon. Access to high officials (usually at a majlis, or public audience) and the right to petition them directly are well-established traditions.

The kingdom is divided into 13 provinces governed by princes or close relatives of the royal family. All governors are appointed by the King.

In March 1992, King Fahd issued several decrees outlining the basic statutes of government and codifying for the first time procedures concerning the royal succession. The King's political reform program also provided for the establishment of a national Consultative Council, with appointed members having advisory powers to review and give advice on issues of public interest. It also outlined a framework for councils at the provincial or emirate level.

In September 1993, King Fahd issued additional reform decrees, appointing the members of the national Consultative Council and spelling out procedures for the new council's operations. He announced reforms regarding the Council of Ministers, including term limitations of 4 years and regulations to prohibit conflict of interest for ministers and other high-level officials. The members of 13 provincial councils and the councils' operating regulations also were announced in September 1993. In February, March, and April 2005, Saudis voted in the country's first municipal elections in more than 50 years. Women, and male members of the military, were not permitted to vote.

In July 1997, the membership of the Consultative Council was expanded from 60 to 90 members, and again in May 2001 from 90 to 120 members. In 2005, membership was expanded to 150 members. Membership has changed significantly during expansions of the council as many members have not been reappointed. The role of the council is gradually expanding as it gains experience.

In November 2006, King Abdallah announced the formation of an Allegiance Commission which, in the future, will select the Crown Prince. The Commission will be charged to select a crown prince to replace Prince Sultan. A December 2007 royal decree named the initial members fo the Commission, all of whom are sons of grandsons of the Kingdoms' founder, King Abdul Aziz. Only the direct male descendants of Abdul Aziz are eligible to become crown prince or king.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **ABDALLAH bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**
Prime Min.: **ABDALLAH bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**
Dep. Prime Min.: **SULTAN bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**
Min. of Agriculture: **Fahd bin Abd al-Rahman bin Sulayman BALGHUNAYM**
Min. of Civil Service: **Muhammad bin Ali FAYIZ**
Min. of Commerce & Industry: **Abdallah bin Zainal ALI REZA**
Min. of Communications & Information Technology: **Muhammad bin Jamil bin Ahmad MULLA**
Min. of Culture & Information: **Iyad bin Amin MADANI**
Min. of Defense & Aviation: **SULTAN bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**
Min. of Economy & Planning: **Khalid bin Muhammad al-QUSAYBI**
Min. of Education: **Abdallah bin Salih al-UBAYD**
Min. of Finance: **Ibrahim Abd al-Aziz al-ASAF**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **SAUD al-Faysal bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**
Min. of Health: **Hamad bin Abdallah al-MANAI**
Min. of Higher Education: **Khalid bin Muhammad al-ANQARI**
Min. of Interior: **NAYIF bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**
Min. for Islamic Affairs, Endowment, Call, & Guidance: **Salih bin Abd al-Aziz bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-SHAYKH**
Min. of Justice: **Abdallah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-SHAYKH**
Min. of Labor: **Ghazi bin Abd al-Rahman al-QUSAYBI**
Min. of Municipal & Rural Affairs: **MITIB bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**

Min. of Petroleum & Mineral Resources: **Ali Ibrahim al-NAIMI**
Min. of Pilgrimage Affairs & Religious Trusts: **Fuad Abd al-Salam Muhammad al-FARSI**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Yusif bin Ahmad al-UTHAYMAYN**
Min. of Transport: **Jubarah SURAYSRI**
Min. of Water & Electricity: **Abdallah al-HUSAYN**
Min. of State: **Musaid bin Muhammad al-AYBAN**
Min. of State: **Abd al-Aziz bin Abdallah al-KHUWAYTIR**
Min. of State: **Mutalib bin Abdallah al-NAFISA**
Min. of State: **ABD AL-AZIZ bin Fahd bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud**
Pres., Higher Council of Ulema: **Abdallah bin Ahmad bin Yusif ZAYNAL**
Governor, Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency: **Hamad bin Saud al-SAYARI**
Ambassador to the US: **Adil al-Ahmad al-JUBAYR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Fawzi bin Abd al-Majid SHUBUKSHI**

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is located at 601 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037; tel. 202-342-3800.

ECONOMY

Oil was discovered in Saudi Arabia by U.S. geologists in the 1930s, although large scale production did not begin until after World War II. Oil wealth has made possible rapid economic development, which began in earnest in the 1960s and accelerated spectacularly in the 1970s, transforming the kingdom.

Saudi oil reserves are the largest in the world, and Saudi Arabia is the world's leading oil producer and exporter. Oil accounts for more than 90% of the country's exports and nearly 75% of government revenues. Proven reserves are estimated to be 263 billion barrels, about one-quarter of world oil reserves.

More than 95% of all Saudi oil is produced on behalf of the Saudi Government by the parastatal giant Saudi ARAMCO. In June 1993, Saudi ARAMCO absorbed the state marketing and refining company (SAMAREC), becoming the world's largest fully integrated oil company. Most Saudi oil exports move by tanker from Gulf terminals at Ras Tanura and Ju'aymah. The remaining oil exports are transported via the east-west pipeline across the kingdom to the Red Sea port of Yanbu. Due to a sharp rise in petroleum revenues in 1974 following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Saudi Arabia became one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. It enjoyed a substantial surplus in its overall trade with other countries; imports increased rapidly; and ample government revenues were available for development, defense, and aid to other Arab and Islamic countries.

But higher oil prices led to development of more oil fields around the world and reduced global consumption. The result, beginning in the mid-1980s, was a worldwide oil glut, which introduced an element of planning uncertainty for the first time in a decade. Saudi oil production, which had increased to almost 10 million barrels per day (b/d) during 1980-81, dropped to about 2 million b/d in 1985. Budgetary deficits developed, and the government drew down its foreign assets. Responding to financial pressures, Saudi Arabia gave up its role as the "swing producer" within OPEC in the summer of 1985 and accepted a production quota. Since then, Saudi oil policy has been guided by a desire to maintain market and quota shares and to support stability in the international oil market.

Saudi Arabia was a key player in coordinating the successful 1999 campaign of OPEC and other oil-producing countries to raise the price of oil to its highest level since the Gulf War by managing production and supply of petroleum. That same year, Saudi Arabia established the Supreme Economic Council to formulate and better coordinate economic development policies in order to accelerate institutional and industrial reform.

In response to increasing international demand for oil, Saudi ARAMCO is engaged in an expansion of its oil production capacity, and plans to raise its capacity from the current 9.5-10 million barrels/day (mb/d) to 12 mb/d within the next several years. Saudi ARAMCO is also increasing production of associated and non-associated natural gas to feed the expanding petrochemical sector. Notably, Saudi Arabia has awarded contracts to foreign companies to conduct gas exploration in selected regions of the country—the first such foreign participation in the petroleum sector upstream since the nationalization of ARAMCO in the 1970s.

Saudi Arabia continues to pursue rapid industrial expansion, led by the petrochemical sector. The Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), a parastatal petrochemical company, is now one of the world's leading petrochemical producers, and the government promotes private sector involvement in petrochemicals. The government also plans new investments in the mining sector and in refining,

After Saudi Arabia announced its intention to join the World Trade Organization (WTO), negotiations focused on increasing market access to foreign goods and services and the timeframe for becoming fully compliant with WTO obligations. In April 2000, the government established the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority to encourage foreign direct investment in the country. Saudi Arabia signed a Trade Investment Framework Agreement with the U.S. in July 2003, and joined the WTO in December 2005.

Through 5-year development plans, the government has sought to allocate its petroleum income to transform its relatively undeveloped, oil-based economy into that of a modern industrial state while maintaining the kingdom's traditional Islamic values and customs. Although economic planners have not achieved all their goals, the economy has progressed rapidly. Oil wealth has increased the standard of living of most Saudis. However, significant population growth has strained the government's ability to finance further

improvements in the country's standard of living. Heavy dependence on petroleum revenue continues, but industry and agriculture now account for a larger share of economic activity. The mismatch between the job skills of Saudi graduates and the needs of the private job market at all levels remains the principal obstacle to economic diversification and development; about 4.6 million non-Saudis are employed in the economy.

Saudi Arabia's first two development plans, covering the 1970s, emphasized infrastructure. The results were impressive—the total length of paved highways tripled, power generation increased by a multiple of 28, and the capacity of the seaports grew tenfold. For the third plan (1980-85), the emphasis changed. Spending on infrastructure declined, but it rose markedly on education, health, and social services. The share for diversifying and expanding productive sectors of the economy (primarily industry) did not rise as planned, but the two industrial cities of Jubail and Yanbu—built around the use of the country's oil and gas to produce steel, petrochemicals, fertilizer, and refined oil products—were largely completed.

In the fourth plan (1985-90), the country's basic infrastructure was viewed as largely complete, but education and training remained areas of concern. Private enterprise was encouraged, and foreign investment in the form of joint ventures with Saudi public and private companies was welcomed. The private sector became more important, rising to 70% of non-oil GDP by 1987. While still concentrated in trade and commerce, private investment increased in industry, agriculture, banking, and construction companies. These private investments were supported by generous government financing and incentive programs. The objective was for the private sector to have 70% to 80% ownership in most joint venture enterprises.

The fifth plan (1990-95) emphasized consolidation of the country's defenses; improved and more efficient government social services; regional development; and, most importantly, creating greater private-sector employment opportunities for Saudis by reducing the number of foreign workers.

The sixth plan (1996-2000) focused on lowering the cost of government services without cutting them and sought to expand educational training programs. The plan called for reducing the kingdom's dependence on the petroleum sector by diversifying economic activity, particularly in the private sector, with special emphasis on industry and agriculture. It also continued the effort to "Saudiize" the labor force.

The seventh plan (2000-2004) focused more on economic diversification and a greater role of the private sector in the Saudi economy. For the period 2000-2004, the Saudi Government aimed at an average GDP growth rate of 3.16% each year, with projected growths of 5.04% for the private sector and 4.01% for the non-oil sector. The government also set a target of creating 817,300 new jobs for Saudi nationals.

The eighth plan (2005-2010) again focuses on economic diversification in addition to education and inclusion of women in society. The plan calls for establishing new universities and new colleges with technical specializations. Privatization as well as emphases on a knowledge-based economy and tourism will help promote the goal of economic diversification.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Saudi foreign policy objectives are to maintain its security and its paramount position on the Arabian Peninsula, defend general Arab and Islamic interests, promote solidarity among Islamic governments, and maintain cooperative relations with other oil-producing and major oil-consuming countries.

Saudi Arabia signed the UN Charter in 1945. The country plays a prominent and constructive role in the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and Arab and Islamic financial and development assistance institutions. One of the largest aid donors in the world, it still gives some aid to a number of Arab, African, and Asian countries. Jeddah is the headquarters of the Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its subsidiary organization, the Islamic Development Bank, founded in 1969. Membership in the 11-member OPEC and in the technically and economically oriented Arab producer group—the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries—facilitates coordination of Saudi oil policies with other oil-exporting governments. As the world's leading exporter of petroleum, Saudi Arabia has a special interest in preserving a stable and long-term market for its vast oil resources by allying itself with healthy Western economies which can protect the value of Saudi financial assets. It generally has acted to stabilize the world oil market and tried to moderate sharp price movements.

The Saudi Government frequently helps mediate regional crises and supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. A charter member of the Arab League, Saudi Arabia supports the position that Israel must withdraw from the territories which it occupied in June 1967, as according to United Nations Resolution 242. Saudi Arabia supports a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict but rejected the Camp David accords, claiming that they would be unable to achieve a comprehensive political solution that would ensure Palestinian rights and adequately address the status of Jerusalem. Although Saudi Arabia broke diplomatic relations with and suspended aid to Egypt in the wake of Camp David, the two countries renewed formal ties in 1987. In March 2002, then-Crown Prince Abdallah offered a Middle East peace plan, now known as the Arab Peace Initiative, at the annual summit of the Arab League in which Arab governments would offer "normal relations and the security of Israel in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab lands, recogni-

tion of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the return of Palestinian refugees." In March 2007 the Arab League reiterated its support for the Arab Peace Initiative by emphasizing that it will be the foundation for a broad Arab-Israeli peace. In November 2007, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal attended the Annapolis Conference, along with more than 50 representatives of concerned countries and international organizations. The Conference was convened to express the broad support of the international community for the Israeli and Palestinian leaders' courageous efforts and was a launching point for negotiations designed to lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state and the realization of Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Saudi Arabia supports the establishment of a unified, independent and sovereign Iraq. The Kingdom is a charter member of the International Compact with Iraq and participates in the Expanded Iraq Neighbors process. In January 2008, Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal reiterated Saudi Arabia's intention to open a diplomatic mission in Baghdad and appoint an ambassador.

In 1990-91, Saudi Arabia played an important role in the Gulf War, developing new allies and improving existing relationships between Saudi Arabia and some other countries. However, there also were diplomatic and financial costs. Relations between Saudi Arabia and Tunisia, Algeria, and Libya deteriorated. Each country had remained silent following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait but called for an end to violence once the deployment of coalition troops began. Relations between these countries and Saudi Arabia have returned to their pre-war status. Saudi Arabia's relations with those countries which expressed support for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait—Yemen, Jordan, and Sudan—were severely strained during and immediately after the war. For example, several hundred thousand Yemenis were expelled from Saudi Arabia after the Government of Yemen announced its position, thus exacerbating an existing border dispute. Saudi-Yemeni relations, especially in the wake of the 1994 Yemen civil war, remain fragile and of significant concern to the Saudi Government. The Palestine Liberation Organization's support for Iraq cost it financial aid as well as good relations with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Recently, though, Saudi Arabia's relations with Jordan and the Palestinian Authority have improved, with the Saudi Government providing assistance for the Palestinian Authority.

During and after the Gulf War, the Government of Saudi Arabia provided water, food, shelter, and fuel for coalition forces in the region. There also were monetary payments to some coalition partners. Saudi Arabia's combined costs in payments, foregone revenues, and donated supplies were $55 billion. More than $15 billion went toward reimbursing the United States alone.

Since ascending to the throne, King Abdallah has followed a more activist foreign policy, offering Saudi assistance and support in efforts to resolve regional crises in Lebanon, Sudan, and Somalia; fostering Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts; and increasing Saudi diplomatic engagement around the world. In particular, he has pursued an Interfaith Dialogue Initiative to encourage religious tolerance on a global level, which was endorsed in a session of the UN General Assembly in November 2008.

U.S.-SAUDI ARABIAN RELATIONS

Saudi Arabia's unique role in the Arab and Islamic worlds, its possession of the world's largest reserves of oil, and its strategic location make its friendship important to the United States. Diplomatic relations were established in 1933; the U.S. embassy opened in Jeddah in 1944 and moved to Riyadh in 1984. The Jeddah embassy became a U.S. consulate. Meanwhile, a U.S. consulate opened in Dhahran in 1944.

The United States and Saudi Arabia share a common concern about regional security, oil exports and imports, and sustainable development. Close consultations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have developed on international, economic, and development issues such as the Middle East peace process and shared interests in the Gulf. The continued availability of reliable sources of oil, particularly from Saudi Arabia, remains important to the prosperity of the United States as well as to Europe and Japan. Saudi Arabia is one of the leading sources of imported oil for the United States, providing more than one million barrels/day of oil to the U.S. The U.S. is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner, and Saudi Arabia is the largest U.S. export market in the Middle East.

In addition to economic ties, a long-standing security relationship continues to be important in U.S.-Saudi relations. A U.S. military training mission established at Dhahran in 1953 provides training and support in the use of weapons and other security-related services to the Saudi armed forces. The United States has sold Saudi Arabia military aircraft (F-15s, AWACS, and UH-60 Blackhawks), air defense weaponry (Patriot and Hawk missiles), armored vehicles (M1A2 Abrams tanks and M-2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles), and other equipment. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had a long-term role in military and civilian construction activities in the Kingdom. The U.S., as part of the Gulf Security Dialogue with individual Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members, has announced plans to sell advanced, primarily defensive, military equipment to GCC members, including Saudi Arabia, to support the efforts of these countries to increase their capacity for self-defense.

In August 2003, following the U.S.-led war in Iraq in March and April 2003, the United States withdrew its troops stationed in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia's relations with the United States were strained after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in which 15 of the suicide bombers

were Saudi citizens. In May 2003, a terrorist organization directly affiliated with al-Qaida launched a violent campaign of terror in Saudi Arabia. On May 12, suicide bombers killed 35 people, including nine Americans, in attacks at three housing compounds for Westerners in Riyadh. On November 8, 2003 terrorists attacked another compound housing foreign workers from mainly Arab countries. At least 18 people, including 5 children died in this attack, and more than 100 were injured. On May 1, 2004 terrorists killed two Americans in the Yanbu oil facility in the western part of the country. On May 29, 2004 terrorists killed one American and wounded several others in attacks on an official building and housing compound in al-Khobar in the Eastern Province.

On June 6, terrorists shot and killed a BBC journalist. On June 9 and June 12, 2004 terrorists killed Americans Robert Jacobs and Kenneth Scroggs. On June 18, 2004 terrorists kidnapped and beheaded American Paul Johnson. On December 6, 2004 terrorists attacked the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah, killing five consulate employees. Terrorists also targeted and killed other foreign nationalities during this time.

Saudi security services have waged an active counterterrorism campaign that has largely neutralized this terrorist organization, though sproradic instances of terrorism still occur. In May 2006, terrorists attempted to attack the important ARAMCO oil-processing facility near Abqaiq. In February 2007, four French nationals were killed in western Saudi Arabia in a suspected terrorist attack.

Saudi Arabia is an important partner in the campaign against terrorism, providing assistance in the military, diplomatic, and financial arenas. Counterterrorism cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United States increased significantly after the May 12, 2003 bombings in Riyadh and continues today. In February 2005, the Saudi government sponsored the first ever Counter-Terrorism International Conference in Riyadh.

Human Rights

Despite close cooperation on security issues, the United States remains concerned about human rights conditions in Saudi Arabia. Principal human rights problems include abuse of prisoners and incommunicado detention; prohibitions or severe restrictions on the freedoms of speech, press, peaceful assembly and association, and religion; denial of the right of citizens to change their government; systematic discrimination against women and ethnic and religious minorities; and suppression of workers' rights.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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FCS:	Nasir Abbasi
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HRO:	Stephen Bopp
MGT:	James A. Paige
AMB:	Ford Fraker
CG:	Donald Jacobson
CON:	Donald Jacobsen
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ATO:	Frederick Giles
DAO:	Col. Robert J. Rosedale
EEO:	Joyce Coates
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ICASS Chair:	David H. Rundell
IMO:	Leon Galanos
IPO:	Francoise Blais
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Resident In Paris)
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DCM/CHG:	Jared S. Caplan
FCS:	Marilyn Taylor
FM:	Yaseen Karaman
HRO:	Steven D. Bopp
MGT:	Cb Toney
POL/ECO:	Kelly Cohun
AMB:	Ford M. Fraker
CG:	Cb Toney/Acting
PO:	Cb Toney
CON:	Patricia Aguilera
DCM:	Michael Gfoeller
GSO:	Eric Hansen
RSO:	Gary Stoner
CLO:	Cb Toney
EEO:	Cb Toney
FMO:	Joyce A. Coates
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IPO:	Sandra Suty
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 25, 2008

Country Description: Saudi Arabia is a monarchy ruled by a king chosen

from and by members of the Al Saud family. The king rules through royal decrees issued in conjunction with the Council of Ministers, and with advice from the Consultative Council. The king appoints members of both councils. Islamic law is the basis of the authority of the monarchy and provides the foundation of the country's conservative customs and social practices. Saudi Arabia has a modern and well-developed infrastructure, and facilities for travelers are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A passport valid for at least six months and a visa are required for entry. Visas are issued for business and work, to visit close relatives, and for transit and religious visits. Visas for tourism are issued only for approved tour groups following organized itineraries. Airport and seaport visas are not available. All visas require a sponsor, can take several months to process, and must be obtained prior to arrival. In the past, American citizens have reported they were refused a Saudi visa because their passports reflected travel to Israel or indicated they were born in Israel, although this has not happened recently. Women visitors and residents are required to be met by their sponsor upon arrival. Women traveling alone, who are not met by sponsors, have experienced delays before being allowed to enter the country or to continue on other flights.

Women considering relocating to Saudi Arabia should be keenly aware that women and children residing in Saudi Arabia as members of a Saudi household (including adult American-citizen women married to Saudi men, adult American-citizen women who are the unmarried daughters of Saudi fathers, and American-citizen boys under the age of 21 who are the sons of Saudi fathers) are considered household property and require the permission of the Saudi male head of their household to leave the country. Married women require their husband's permission to depart the country, while unmarried women and children require the permission of their father or male guardian. The U.S. Embassy can intercede with the Saudi government to request exit permission for an adult American woman (wife or daughter of a Saudi citizen), but there is no guarantee of success, or even of timely response. Mothers are not able to obtain permission for the departure of minor children without the father's agreement.

As of February 20, 2008, a new regulation went into effect requiring Saudi men seeking the mandatory permission from their government to marry foreign women to sign a binding document granting irrevocable permission for foreign born spouses and children of those foreign spouses to travel freely and unhindered in and out of Saudi Arabia. However, this regulation is not retroactive. Under Saudi law, women married to Saudi men prior to the effective date of these new regulations still need their husbands' permission to leave Saudi Arabia, and their children still require their fathers' permission to leave the country.

Visitors that overstay their visit in the Kingdom are subject to a 10,000 Saudi Riyal (or $2,667) fine and incarceration pending deportation proceedings. Americans should request clarification from Saudi Immigration authorities upon arrival as to the permitted length of stay. A common mistake among visitors is confusing the validity of their Saudi visa for the permitted length of stay in the Kingdom. The U.S. Mission in Saudi Arabia has received several reports of Americans fined for inadvertently overstaying their permitted time in the Kingdom. It can take up to two weeks to resolve such an error with Immigration.

Americans entering Saudi Arabia on visitor visas normally do not need an exit permit but may be prevented from departing the country if they are involved in a legal dispute. American citizens involved in labor disputes or employment dismissal will not be granted an exit permit prior to court resolution or abandonment of the case by the American citizen. Saudi sponsors have substantial leverage in the negotiations and may block departure or bar future employment in the country. As of June 2007, all travelers to and from the Kingdom carrying cash amounts, transferable monetary instruments, or precious metals exceeding 60,000 Saudi Riyals (or $16,000) are required to declare them to Saudi Customs. Customs forms are available at all Saudi ports or downloadable from http://www.customs. gov.sa. Failure to declare or provide accurate information can lead to prosecution, legal penalties and confiscation.

Visitors to Saudi Arabia should generally obtain a meningitis vaccination prior to arrival. A medical report or physical examination is required to obtain work and residence permits.

Residents in Saudi Arabia who are departing the country must obtain an exit permit prior to leaving and an exit/reentry permit if they intend to return to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi sponsor's approval is required for exit permits.

Dual Nationality: Several American citizens of Saudi descent have encountered difficulty leaving the Kingdom after entering on a Laissez Passer rather than a Saudi or U.S. passport. As a Saudi exit visa in a U.S. passport or a new Saudi passport and U.S. visa may take months to obtain, Saudi missions abroad sometimes propose to issue a Laissez Passer to Saudi passport applicants, rather than a Saudi passport. This, however, only leads to difficulties when the traveler wishes to depart the Kingdom to return to the U.S. In particular, American citizens of Saudi descent should be aware that the Saudi government may refuse to recognize a U.S. passport presented by a Saudi passport applicant as valid for travel out of Saudi Arabia, if it was not used to enter Saudi Arabia. Also, American citizens of Saudi descent should understand that Saudi nationality is not confirmed quickly or easily, and documentary requirements encountered in Saudi Arabia may differ from those described by Saudi missions abroad.

We strongly recommend that American citizens who also have Saudi nationality enter Saudi Arabia with

either a Saudi passport or U.S. passport and Saudi visa, but not with a Laissez Passer. For further information on entry/exit requirements, travelers may contact the following Saudi government offices in the U.S.:

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 601 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone (202) 342-3800. The Embassy's home page is http://www.saudiembassy.net.

Saudi Consulate General in Houston: 5718 Westheimer, Suite 1500, Houston, TX 77057, tel: (713) 785-5577.

Saudi Consulate General in Los Angeles: Sawtelle Courtyard Building, 2045 Sawtelle Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90025, tel: (310) 479-6000.

Saudi Consulate General in New York: 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 480, New York, NY 10017, tel: (212) 752-2740.

Visit the Embassy of Saudi Arabia web site at http://saudiembassy.net for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: In the most recent Travel Warning for Saudi Arabia, the Department of State urges U.S. citizens to consider carefully the risks of traveling to Saudi Arabia. There is an on-going security threat due to the continued presence of terrorist groups, some affiliated with al Qaida, who may target Western interests, housing compounds, and other facilities where Westerners congregate. These terrorist groups may also target Saudi Government facilities and economic/commercial targets within the Kingdom.

In February 2007, four French tourists were killed by terrorists on a desert track north of Medina. A gunman fired shots at the U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah in May 2006. In February 2006, an attack was attempted on Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq in the Eastern Province. An armed attack on the U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah on December 6, 2004, resulted in five deaths and eleven serious injuries among non-U.S. staff members.

Although terrorists have not conducted a successful attack against Westerners since February 2007, the United States Mission in Saudi Arabia remains an unaccompanied post as a result of continued security concerns. The Department of State has approved a family visitation program, in part because of the significant progress Saudi security forces have made in counteracting the terrorist threat within Saudi Arabia as they continue to arrest and break up extremist cells.

American citizens who choose to visit Saudi Arabia are strongly urged to avoid staying in hotels or housing compounds that do not apply stringent security measures and are also advised to maintain good situational awareness when visiting commercial establishments frequented by Westerners. American citizens also are advised to keep a low profile; vary times and routes of travel; exercise caution while driving, entering or exiting vehicles; and ensure that travel documents and visas are current and valid.

From time to time, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Saudi Arabia may restrict travel of official Americans or suspend public services for security reasons. In those instances, the Embassy and Consulates will keep the local American citizen community apprised through the Warden System and make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. Warden Messages can be found on the U.S. Embassy Riyadh web site at http://riyadh.usembassy.gov.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, and Saudi Arabia Travel Warning can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Street crime is generally not a problem for travelers in Saudi Arabia. However, private Saudi citizens who perceive that a foreigner is not observing conservative standards of conduct may harass, pursue, or assault that person. The U.S. Embassy in Riyadh cautions American citizens that Saudi Arabian police authorities have detained potential witnesses to crimes without charges or access to legal counsel, and with limited or delayed consular access, during the investigative stage of criminal cases, which can take months. On occasion, Saudi authorities have temporarily confiscated the personal effects of detained potential witnesses. Even when released from detention, witnesses to criminal incidents may be prohibited from leaving the country until investigation of the incident is complete. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft of a U.S. passport abroad should be reported immediately to local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Saudi Arabia is 999.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good modern medical

care and medicines are available in several hospitals and health centers in the major cities of Saudi Arabia, but only adequate medical care may be available in the outlying areas. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Saudi Arabia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Short-term male visitors may drive on their U.S. driver's license. American men employed in Saudi Arabia should obtain a local driver's license with the Department of Traffic Police. Women are not allowed to drive or ride bicycles on public roads.

Traffic accidents are a significant hazard in Saudi Arabia. Driving habits are generally poor, and accidents involving vehicles driven by minors are not uncommon. In the event of a traffic accident resulting in personal injury, all persons involved (if not in the hospital) may be taken to the local police station.

Drivers are likely to be held for several days until responsibility is determined and any reparations paid. In many cases, all drivers are held in custody regardless of fault. Those involved in an accident should immediately contact their sponsor and the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate.

Visit the web site of Saudi Arabia's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.sct.gov.sa/, which also includes specific information concerning Saudi Arabian driving permits, vehicle inspections, road tax and mandatory insurance. Contact information for the Supreme Commission for Tourism is: Kindi Center, D.Q., PO Box 66680, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 11586, telephone: 011-966-1-480-8855, web site http://www.sct.gov.sa.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Saudi Arabia's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Saudi Arabia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Residents working in Saudi Arabia generally must surrender their passports while in the Kingdom. The sponsor (normally the employer) obtains work and residence permits for the employee and for any family members. Family members of those working are not required by law to surrender their passports, though they often do. Residents carry a Saudi residence permit (Iqama) for identification in place of their passports. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates General in Saudi Arabia cannot sponsor private American citizens for Saudi visas.

A married woman should be aware that she must have her husband's permission to depart or have their children depart Saudi Arabia. This is true even if the woman and/or children are U.S. citizens and even if her husband does not have Saudi nationality. The Saudi Government has added new regulations to Saudi men wishing to marry foreigners. Saudi men must first sign a binding document granting irrevocable permission for their foreign born spouses and children born of foreign spouses, to travel freely and unhindered in and out of Saudi Arabia before the Saudi Government will give permission for him to marry. This regulation is not retroactive. The U.S. Embassy can intercede with the Saudi government to request exit permission for adult American women who are not affected by this new regulation, but will not be able to obtain permission for the departure of minor children without the father's agreement (See Entry/Exit Requirements section above). Obtaining exit permission for an adult American woman can take many months.

The Saudi government does not recognize dual nationality. Saudi authorities have confiscated the U.S. passports of U.S. citizens and dual (Saudi/U.S.) nationals when they have applied for Saudi citizenship or a Saudi passport. This does not constitute loss of U.S. citizenship, but should be reported to the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh or the Consulates General in Jeddah or Dhahran. For additional information, please refer to the Bureau of Consular Affairs dual nationality flyer.

Saudi customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning importation into Saudi Arabia of such banned items as alcohol products, weapons and any item that is held to be contrary to the tenets of Islam, such as pork products and pornography. Imported and domestic audiovisual media and reading matter are censored.

Saudi customs and postal officials broadly define what is contrary to Islam, and therefore prohibited. Christmas decorations, fashion mag-

azines, and "suggestive" videos may be confiscated and the owner subject to penalties and fines.

Importing Animals: Dogs, regardless of their breed, may only enter Saudi Arabia if their importation paperwork describes them as 'guard dogs' or 'hunting dogs'. Cats and dogs entering Saudi Arabia require a Veterinary Health Certificate and a letter from the veterinary private practitioner dated and addressed to the Director of Customs, Saudi Arabia. Both documents must be authenticated by the Department of Agriculture Veterinary Service Office and the State Department's Authentications Office and attested by the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia.

The certificate must indicate that the animal was examined, that rabies and other vaccines are current, and must confirm that the animal is free from diseases. Information on the name, breed, sex, color and age of the animal must also be stated. Birds generally require a prior import permit issued by the Saudi National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD). However, all birds coming from the U.S. and transiting via a third country are not permitted entry in the Kingdom due to the lack of quarantine facilities and the existing virus-related import ban on all birds.

Business Contracts: The written Arabic text of a contract governs employment and business arrangements under Saudi law. Before signing a contract, American companies should obtain an independent translation to ensure a full understanding of the contract's terms, limits, and agreements. No American should come to work in Saudi Arabia or make a business arrangement without having seen and understood the full written contract. Verbal assurances or side letters are not binding under Saudi law. In the event of any contract dispute, the Saudi authorities refer to the contract. Since the Saudi sponsor holds the employee's passport and controls the issuance of exit permits, Americans cannot simply leave Saudi Arabia in the event of a labor or business dispute. An American who wishes to break an employment or business contract may have to pay substantial penalties before being allowed to leave Saudi Arabia. To change employers in Saudi Arabia requires the permission of the previous employer, which is discretionary. Saudi courts take seriously their responsibility to adjudicate disputes.

This process, which is performed in accordance with Saudi law and customs, may require the hiring of legal counsel, should not be entered into without an Arabic translator, and can take several months. The U.S. Embassy and U.S. Consulates General cannot adjudicate labor or business disputes or provide translation services. U.S. consular officers can provide lists of local attorneys to help U.S. citizens settle business disputes, but ultimate responsibility for the resolution of disputes through the Saudi legal system lies with the parties involved.

Standards Of Conduct And Religious Police: Islam is the official religion of the country and pervades all aspects of life in Saudi Arabia. Public display of non-Islamic religious articles such as crosses and Bibles is not permitted. Travel to Makkah (Mecca) and Medina, the cities where the two holiest mosques of Islam are located, is forbidden to non-Muslims.

The norms for public behavior in Saudi Arabia are extremely conservative, and religious police, known as Mutawwa, are charged with enforcing these standards. Mutawwa are required to carry special identification and usually are accompanied by uniformed police; however, in some cases they have detained persons even without police presence. To ensure that conservative standards of conduct are observed, the Saudi religious police have accosted or arrested foreigners, including U.S. citizens, for improper dress or other alleged infractions, such as consumption of alcohol or association by a female with a male to whom she is not related. While most incidents have resulted only in inconvenience or embarrassment, the potential exists for an individual to be physically harmed or deported. U.S. citizens who are involved in an incident with the Mutawwa should report the incident to the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh or the U.S. Consulates General in Jeddah or Dhahran. The Saudi Embassy in Washington advises women traveling to Saudi Arabia to dress in a conservative fashion, wearing ankle-length dresses with long sleeves, and not to wear trousers in public. In many areas of Saudi Arabia, particularly Riyadh and the central part of the Kingdom, Mutawwa pressure women to wear a full-length black covering known as an Abaya, and to cover their heads. Most women in these areas therefore wear an Abaya and carry a headscarf to avoid being accosted. Women who appear to be of Arab or Asian origin, especially those presumed to be Muslims, face a greater risk of being confronted.

Some Mutawwa try to enforce the rule that men and women who are beyond childhood years may not mingle in public unless they are family or close relatives. Mutawwa may ask to see proof that a couple is married or related. Women who are arrested for socializing with a man who is not a relative may be charged with prostitution.

Some restaurants, particularly fast-food outlets, have refused to serve women who are not accompanied by a close male relative. In addition, many restaurants no longer have a "family section" in which women are permitted to eat. These restrictions are not always posted, and in some cases women violating this policy have been arrested. This is more common in Riyadh and the more conservative central Nejd region.

In public, dancing, playing music and showing movies are forbidden.

The Hajj and Umrah: American Muslims who plan to participate in the annual Hajj or Umrah pilgrimages to the holy cities of Makkah (Mecca) and Medina should pay close attention to the following.

For those interested in performing Hajj visits, all travel plans should be made through a Saudi-government-

approved travel agent in order to obtain entry, accommodation, and transportation in Saudi Arabia during the Hajj season.

See the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia web site at http://www.saudiembassy.net/ for further information.

Hajj and Umrah visas are required for all U.S. citizens, and are valid only for travel to the Holy Cities of Makkah (Mecca) and Medina. Onward travel to Riyadh or other Saudi Arabian cities is usually not permitted during the Hajj. During Umrah, visitors may obtain permission after arrangements have been made with a travel agency to travel to other cities in Saudi Arabia. Umrah visa holders may only visit Saudi Arabia outside of the annual Hajj period. Please note that the U.S. Consulate in Jeddah cannot assist in arranging such travel permissions within Saudi Arabia.

Foreign Muslim residents of the Kingdom may perform the Hajj once every five years. Advance approval must be obtained from an immigration office with the approval of the Saudi sponsor. U.S. citizen residents of Saudi Arabia must travel with Saudi-government-approved sponsor groups to perform Hajj.

King Abdul Aziz International Airport in Jeddah is large and modern, with special terminal facilities to accommodate hundreds of thousands of pilgrims. However, due to the extremely large number of people arriving, waiting time at the airport upon arrival during the Hajj may be as long as ten hours. Pilgrims should plan on a lengthy wait before leaving the airport on their way to Makkah or Medina. Travelers with only carry-on bags will find baggage transfer at the airport much easier than will those with checked baggage. Some Hajj pilgrims now fly directly to Medina and proceed to Makkah by road. There is no airport in Makkah. Before leaving home, travelers should make at least two copies of their passports, including the pages stamped with Saudi visas. One copy should be left with someone at home and one taken with the traveler and kept in a secure location when possible. It is mandatory for Hajj visitors to turn U.S. passports over to the tour group organizer upon arrival in the Kingdom, and passports are returned only immediately prior to departure while at the airport. This is a Hajj Ministry-mandated practice for all Hajj pilgrims, and it has proved effective in nearly eliminating lost and stolen passport problems. Upon arrival, all pilgrims are issued an identification card and wristband that they should carry as identification at all times. Umrah visitors do not receive an identification card or wristband. Hajj and Umrah pilgrims have reported thefts (including of passports) at the pilgrimage sites to Consulate General Jeddah. As such, a money belt or pouch is the best way to carry valuables. Upon arrival it is possible to buy what is known as a "Hajj belt," which is somewhat larger than American equivalents. Pilgrims should bring sufficient funds to cover any unforeseen emergencies. If pilgrims need to purchase Saudi Riyals, there are exchange and ATM facilities available in the airports and in all major cities of Saudi Arabia.

The Hajj has been an attractive target for defrauding unsuspecting tourists. Travelers should be aware and vigilant of unscrupulous tour operators who abandon tourists, leaving them with unpaid bills, and hoteliers who demand the payment of exorbitant "hidden charges" for the return of passports. Pilgrims are urged to deal only with licensed and established tour operators. In addition, the Saudi Arabian government has experienced and helpful personnel available from the government's Ministry of Hajj in the Holy Cities area during the Hajj season. Communications facilities to contact family in the United States are available in all parts of Saudi Arabia. "Internet cafés" are available in all major cities. Before arriving in Saudi Arabia for Hajj or Umrah, establish a communication routine for family and friends with whom you wish to keep in contact. Travelers should expect crowded conditions during the Hajj.

Temperatures in Makkah range between 60 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter months of December, January, and February. There are many facilities providing water, public accommodations, and other amenities. In case of emergency, Hajj pilgrims should first contact the United Agents Office (Makkah), telephone (02) 542-7003, or (02) 542-0992, or National Adilla Est. (Medina), telephone (04) 826-0088, and then contact the American Consulate General in Jeddah, telephone (02) 667-0080.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Saudi Arabian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, imprisoned or even executed. Suspects may be detained without charges or legal counsel, and with limited consular access, for months during the investigative stage of criminal cases. Penalties for the import, manufacture, possession, and consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect jail sentences, fines, public flogging, and/or deportation. The penalty for drug trafficking in Saudi Arabia is death. Saudi officials make no exceptions. Customs inspections at ports of entry are thorough. The U.S. Embassy and Consulates General have no standing in Saudi courts to obtain leniency for an American convicted of alcohol or drug offenses. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Saudi authorities do not permit criticism of Islam or the royal family. The government prohibits the public practice of religions other than Islam. Non-Muslims suspected of violating these restrictions have been jailed.

Homosexual activity is considered to be a criminal offense and those convicted may be sentenced to lashing, prison, or death.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in Saudi Arabia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Saudi Arabia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. Registration information and a link to subscribe to warden messages can be found in the American Citizens Services page of the Embassy web site at http://usembassyriyadh.biglist.com/sub. The U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is located at Collector Road M, Riyadh Diplomatic Quarter. The international mailing address is PO Box 94309, Riyadh 11693. Mail may also be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to: U.S. Embassy, Unit 61307, APO AE 09803-1307. The Embassy telephone number is (966) (1) 488-3800; fax is (966) (1) 483-0773.

The U.S. Consulate General in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, is located between Aramco Headquarters and the old Dhahran Airport at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals highway exit. The international mailing address is PO Box 38955, Doha-Dhahran 31942. Mail may also be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to: Unit 66803, APO AE 09858-6803. The telephone number is (966) (3) 330-3200; fax is (966) (3) 330-0464. The U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, is located on Palestine Road, Ruwais. The international mailing address is PO Box 149, Jeddah. Mail may also be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to: Unit 62112, APO AE 09811-2112. The telephone number is (966) (2) 667-0080; fax is (966) (2) 669-3078 or 669-3098.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The basis for the Saudi judicial system, and Saudi family law, is a strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law. Thus, there is no adoption under Saudi law, only legal guardianship which the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in the Department of Homeland Security and the Board of Immigration Appeals have deemed insufficient for the purposes of immigration under the Immigration and Nationality Act.

The American Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia however, can, process immigrant visas for orphans adopted in other countries and brought to Saudi Arabia to live with American citizen families temporarily resident in the Kingdom.

Availability of Children for Adoption: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Doctors: The U.S. Embassy in Riyadh and Consulates General in Jeddah and Dhahran maintain lists of doctors and sources for medicines, should you experience health problems while in Saudi Arabia.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: A Saudi Arabian child adopted by an American citizen must obtain an immigrant visa before he or she can enter the U.S. as a lawful permanent resident. Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the
Kingdom Saudi Arabia
601 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 342-3800

Saudi Arabia also has Consulates in Los Angeles, California, New York, and Houston, Dhahran, and Jeddah.

Embassy of the
United States of America
P. O. Box 94309
Riyadh 11693
Saudi Arabia

Embassy of the
United States of America
Unit 61307
APO, AE 09803-1307
Tel: 966-1-488-3800, x1132 (Immigrant Visa Unit)
Fax: 966-1-488-7275

Questions: Specific questions regarding adoption in Saudi Arabia may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. You may also contact the Office of Children's Issues, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-2818, telephone 1-888-407-4747 with specific questions.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens

Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Saudi Arabia and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction.

American citizens who travel to Saudi Arabia are subject to the jurisdiction of Saudi courts, as well as to the country's laws and regulations. This holds true for all legal matters including child custody. Parents planning to travel with their children to Saudi Arabia should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Saudi Arabia, child custody is based on Islamic law. The primary concern of Saudi courts in deciding child custody cases is that the child be raised in accordance with the Islamic faith. Most custody disputes in Saudi Arabia are handled by the Islamic "Shari'a" courts. In rare cases, the Board of Grievances, a religious appeals court, has ruled on custody disputes.

Saudi courts generally do not award custody of children to non-Saudi women. If the mother is an Arab Muslim, judges will usually not grant her custody of children unless she is residing in Saudi Arabia, or the father is not a Muslim. All Saudi citizens are considered to be Muslim. Since Saudi women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims, custody disputes between a Saudi mother and American father would be heard by the Shari'a court, which would usually apply Islamic rules of custody and decide the case on its merits.

If the mother wins custody, the father is usually granted visitation rights. According to Saudi law, a child whose mother is Saudi and father is non-Saudi is not granted Saudi citizenship. However, even if an American father wins custody of his children, he may still need permission from the Saudi mother to remove the children from Saudi Arabia. Saudi courts hesitate to rule in a child custody case if both parents are non-Muslim. The court will refer the case to the family court in the country from which the parents came. Often, if pressured to address such a situation, the court will rule that both parents should be deported from Saudi Arabia to avoid complications and embarrassment.

Normally, under Shari'a law, a mother can maintain custody of her male children until the age of nine, and female children until age seven. In practice the courts favor keeping children within a strict Islamic environment. Shari'a court judges have broad discretion in custody cases and often make exceptions to these general guidelines.

Even when a mother who is residing in Saudi Arabia is granted physical custody of children, the father maintains legal custody and has the right to determine where the children live and travel. In many cases, the father has been able to assume legal custody of children against the wishes of the mother when she is unable or unwilling to meet certain conditions set by law for her to maintain her custodial rights. For example, if the mother moves to another country, the father is entitled to have custody. A court can sever a mother's custody if it determines that the mother is incapable of safeguarding the child or of bringing the child up in accordance with the appropriate religious standards. The mother can lose custody by re-marrying a non-Muslim, or by residing in a home with non-relatives. Shari'a law allows custody of children to be awarded to the closest male relative of a Saudi father in the case of death or imprisonment of the father, even if the Saudi father has made clear his wish that the children's mother have full custody.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Saudi court should retain an attorney in Saudi Arabia. The U.S. Embassy in Riyadh and the Consulates General in Dhahran and Jeddah maintain lists of attorneys willing to represent American clients. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are generally not enforceable in Saudi Arabia. For example, an order from a U.S. court granting custody to an American parent will not be honored in Saudi Arabia. Courts in Saudi Arabia will not enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Saudi Arabia to pay child support.

Visitation Rights: Women entering Saudi Arabia with the intent of visiting their children may do so only with the written permission of the father of the children. The father must file a "statement of no objection" with the Saudi Ministry of Interior before the mother will be granted a visa to enter the Kingdom. This includes Muslim fathers who are non-Saudi nationals. If the father refuses to sponsor the mother, or to authorize a child's travel to another country, there is little that can be done to effect a visit. Women visitors are required to be met by their sponsor upon arrival in Saudi Arabia.

If a non-Saudi father wants to enter the Kingdom to visit his children, he can do so by applying for a Saudi visa with proof that his children are living in Saudi Arabia. Saudi authorities may consult with the mother if she is Saudi, who may be able to prevent issuance of the visa.

Some American Muslim parents have considered traveling to Saudi Arabia on Umrah (religious pilgrimage to Mecca) as a means to visit their children. However, issuance of an Umrah visa does not guarantee that a parent will be permitted to see his or her children once in the Kingdom. Persons who obtain a visa for business or

religious visits (Hajj and Umrah) with the intention of visiting their children may face legal penalties including detention and/or deportation.

Before traveling to Saudi Arabia to visit their children, women should consider whether they obtained a complete Islamic declaration of divorce from the Shari'a court in Saudi Arabia. Secular, American divorce orders are not recognized by the Shari'a courts. Although an Islamic divorce can be obtained from several mosques within the U.S., it has been the experience of several divorced spouses in the U.S. that the Shari'a courts in Saudi Arabia will not recognize orders originating from an American mosque. The purpose of obtaining a Shari'a declaration is to establish the legal personal status of the mother prior to traveling to the Kingdom. If an American woman is considered to still be married, the "husband" can prohibit the woman from departing Saudi Arabia. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Saudi law. Children of Saudi fathers automatically acquire Saudi citizenship at birth, regardless of where the child was born. Saudi women cannot transmit citizenship; therefore, their children would acquire only the citizenship of the father. Saudis must enter and leave the country on Saudi passports even if they are entitled to hold the passport of another country.

Travel Restrictions: Exit visas are required to leave Saudi Arabia. The U.S. Embassy or Consulates General cannot obtain exit visas for American citizens. Women must have permission from their husband or father to exit Saudi Arabia. The government of Saudi Arabia has been known to issue international arrest warrants against women who have taken their children from Saudi Arabia without the father's permission.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Travel Warning

July 9, 2008

This Travel Warning updates information on the security situation in Saudi Arabia and reminds U.S. citizens of recommended security precautions. It supersedes the Travel Warning issued December 19, 2007.

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to consider carefully the risks of traveling to Saudi Arabia. There is an ongoing security threat due to the continued presence of terrorist groups, some affiliated with al Qaida, who may target Western interests, housing compounds, and other facilities where Westerners congregate. These terrorist groups may also target Saudi Government facilities and economic/commercial targets within the Kingdom.

In February 2007, four French tourists were killed in a terrorist incident on a desert track north of Medina. A gunman fired shots at the U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah in May 2006. In February 2006, an attack was attempted on Saudi oil facilities in Abqaiq in the Eastern Province. An armed attack on the U.S. Consulate General in Jeddah on December 6, 2004, resulted in five deaths and eleven serious injuries among non-U.S. staff members.

Although terrorists have not conducted a successful attack against Westerners since February 2007, the United States Mission in Saudi Arabia remains an unaccompanied post as a result of continued security concerns. The Department of State has approved a family visitation program, in part because of the significant progress Saudi security forces have made in counteracting the terrorist threat within Saudi Arabia as they continue to arrest and break up terrorist cells.

From time to time, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Saudi Arabia may restrict travel of official Americans or suspend public services for security reasons. In those instances, the Embassy and Consulates will keep the local American citizen community apprised through the Warden system and make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. Warden messages can be found on the U.S. Embassy Riyadh website: http://riyadh.usembassy.gov.

American citizens who choose to visit Saudi Arabia are strongly urged to avoid staying in hotels or housing compounds that do not apply stringent security measures and are also advised to maintain good situational awareness when visiting commercial establishments frequented by Westerners.

American citizens also are advised to keep a low profile; vary times and routes of travel; exercise caution while driving, entering or exiting vehicles; and ensure that travel documents and visas are current and valid.

The Department of State advises that under Saudi law, married women need the permission of their husbands to leave Saudi Arabia and their children will require their father's permission to exit the country. This is true regardless of nationality. The U.S. Embassy has very limited ability to facilitate exit permission.

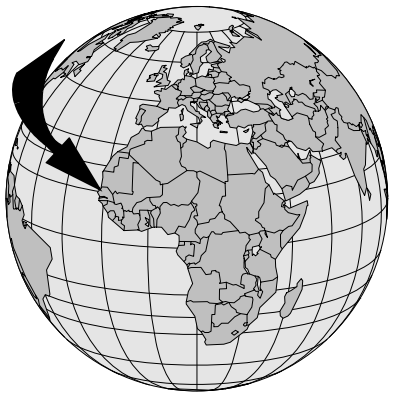
On February 20, 2008, a new regulation took effect. It requires Saudi men seeking the mandatory permission from their government to marry a for-

eign woman to sign a binding document granting irrevocable permission for their foreign-born spouse, and children born to them and that spouse, to travel freely and unhindered in and out of Saudi Arabia. However, this regulation is not retroactive. Under Saudi law, women married to Saudi males prior to the effective date of these new regulations still need the permission of their husbands to leave Saudi Arabia, and their children require the permission of their fathers to leave the country. Updated information on travel and security in Saudi Arabia may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 from within the U.S. or Canada or, from outside the U.S. or Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.)

For additional information, consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Saudi Arabia, and the Worldwide Caution at http://travel.state.gov.

U.S. citizens who require emergency services may telephone the Embassy in Riyadh at (966) (1) 488-3800, the Consulate in Jeddah at (966) (2) 667-0080, or the Consulate in Dhahran at (966) (3) 330-3200.



SENEGAL

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Senegal

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 196,840 sq. km. (76,000 sq. mi.), about the size of South Dakota.

Cities: Capital—Dakar. Other cities—Diourbel, Kaolack, Kolda, Louga, Rufisque, Saint-Louis, Thies, Tambacounda, Ziguinchor, Fatick, Matam, Kedougou, Sedhiou.

Terrain: Flat or rising to foothills.

Climate: Tropical/Sahelian—desert or grasslands in the north, heavier vegetation in the south and southeast.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Senegalese (sing. and pl.).

Population: (2007 est.) 12,521,851.

Annual growth rate: 2%.

Ethnic groups: Wolof 43%; Fulani (Peulh) and Toucouleur 23%; Serer 15%; Diola, Mandingo, and others 19%.

Religions: Muslim 95%, Christian 4%, traditional 1%.

Languages: French (official), Wolof, Pulaar, Serer, Diola, Mandingo, Soninke.

Education: Attendance—primary 75.8%, middle school 26.5%, secondary 11% (estimated). Literacy—50.7%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—60.15/1,000. Life expectancy—56.69 yrs.

Work force: (4.0 million) Agriculture—70% (subsistence or cash crops). Wage earners (350,000) private sector 61%, government and parapublic 39%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: April 4, 1960.

Constitution: March 3, 1963, last amended in 2001.

Government branches: Executive—President (chief of state, commander in chief of armed forces). Legislative—Bi-cameral parliament with a 150 member National Assembly and a 100 member Senate. Judicial—Constitutional Council (appointed by the president from senior magistrates and eminent academics and attorneys), Court of Final Appeals, Council of State.

Political subdivisions: 14 regions, 34 departments, 320 rural councils.

Political parties: 72 political parties are registered, the most important of which are the Democratic Party of Senegal (PDS), Rewmi, Socialist Party (PS), the Alliance of Forces for Progress (AFP), "AND JEF/PADS," the Union for Democratic Renewal (URD), "JEF JEL," the National Democratic Rally (RND), and the Independence and Labor Party (PIT).

Suffrage: Universal adult, over 18.

Budget: (2007) revenues: $2.948 billion; expenditures: $3.036 billion; including capital expenditures of $1.302 billion

Defense: (2007) $133 million

National holidays: April 4, Independence Day.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $10.6 billion

Real annual growth rate: 4.6% (2007 estimate)

Per capita GDP: (2006) $700—in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) $1,936 (2007).

Natural resources: Fish, peanuts, phosphate, iron ore, gold, titanium, oil and gas, cotton.

Primary sector: Agriculture represents 15% of GDP. Products—peanuts, millet, sorghum, manioc, rice, cotton, vegetables and flowers, fruit.

Secondary sector: 21.4% of GDP, of which industry and mining represent 22%. Types—fishing; agricultural product processing; light manufacturing; mining including energy, oil mining, and construction.

Tertiary sector: 63% of GDP of which services represent 40% of GDP and trade 22% of GDP.

Trade: (2006) Exports—$1.407 billion (fish products, peanut products, phosphate products). Major markets—France, other European Union, West African CFA zone. Imports—$3.040 billion (food, con-

sumer goods, petroleum, machinery, transport equipment, petroleum products, computer equipment). Major suppliers—France, Nigeria, Cameroon, United States.

Exchange rate: Fixed to the euro. African Financial Community (CFA) 656 CFA =1 euro.

Economic aid received: In October 2007, major donors pledged approximately $4 billion in assistance for the next four years; U.S. assistance was around $55 million in 2007.

GEOGRAPHY

Senegal is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau. The Gambia penetrates more than 320 kilometers (200 mi.) into Senegal. Well-defined dry and humid seasons result from northeast winter winds and southwest summer winds. Dakar's annual rainfall of about 61 centimeters (24 in.) occurs between June and October when maximum temperatures average 27ºC (82ºF); December to February minimum temperatures are about 17ºC (63ºF). Interior temperatures are higher than along the coast, and rainfall increases substantially farther south, exceeding 150 centimeters (60 in.) annually in some areas.

PEOPLE

About 75% of Senegal's population is rural. In rural areas, density varies from about 77 per square kilometer (200 per sq. mi.) in the west-central region to 2 per square kilometer (5 per sq. mi.) in the arid eastern section. About 50,000 Europeans (mostly French) and Lebanese reside in Senegal, mainly in the cities. French is the official language but is used regularly only by the literate minority. All Senegalese speak an indigenous language, of which Wolof has the largest usage.

HISTORY

Archaeological findings throughout the area indicate that Senegal was inhabited in prehistoric times. Islam established itself in the Senegal River valley in the 11th century; 95% of Senegalese today are Muslims. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the area came under the influence of the Mandingo empires to the east; the Jolof Empire of Senegal also was founded during this time.

In January 1959, Senegal and the French Soudan merged to form the Mali Federation, which became fully independent on June 20, 1960, as a result of the independence and the transfer of power agreement signed with France on April 4, 1960. Due to internal political difficulties, the Federation broke up on August 20, 1960. Senegal and Soudan (renamed the Republic of Mali) proclaimed independence. Leopold Sedar Senghor, internationally known poet, politician, and statesman, was elected Senegal's first President in August 1960.

After the breakup of the Mali Federation, President Senghor and Prime Minister Mamadou Dia governed together under a parliamentary system. In December 1962, their political rivalry led to an attempted coup by Prime Minister Dia. Although this was put down without bloodshed, Dia was arrested and imprisoned, and Senegal adopted a new constitution that consolidated the President's power. In 1980, President Senghor decided to retire from politics, and he handed over power in 1981 to his handpicked successor, Abdou Diouf. Abdou Diouf was President from 1981-2000. He encouraged broader political participation, reduced government involvement in the economy, and widened Senegal's diplomatic engagements, particularly with other developing nations. Domestic politics on occasion spilled over into street violence, border tensions, and a violent separatist movement in the southern region of the Casamance. Nevertheless, Senegal's commitment to democracy and human rights strengthened. Diouf served four terms as President. In the presidential election of 2000, he was defeated, in a free and fair election, by opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade. Senegal experienced its second peaceful transition of power, and its first from one political party to another. Parliamentary and presidential elections were held in 2007.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Senegal is a secular republic with a strong presidency, bi-cameral legislature, reasonably independent judiciary, and multiple political parties. Senegal is one of the few African states that has never experienced a coup d'état. As noted above, power was transferred peacefully, if not altogether democratically, from Senghor to Diouf in 1981, and once again, this time in fully democratic elections, from Diouf to Wade in March 2000.

The president is elected by universal adult suffrage to a 5-year term. The Bi-cameral Parliament has a National Assembly with150 members, who are elected separately from the president and a Senate with 100 members of which 35 are elected and 65 are chosen by the President. The Socialist Party dominated the National Assembly until April 2001, when in free and fair legislative elections President Wade's coalition won a majority (89 of 120 seats). The Cour de Cassation (Highest Appeals Court, equivalent to the U.S. Supreme Court) and the Constitutional Council, the justices of which are named by the president, are the nation's highest tribunals. Senegal is divided into 14 administrative regions, each headed by a governor appointed by and responsible to the president. The law on decentralization, which came into effect in January 1997, distributed significant central government authority to regional assemblies.

Senegal's principal political party was for 40 years the Socialist Party (PS). Its domination of political life came to an end in March 2000, when Abdoulaye Wade, the leader of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) and leader of the opposition for more than 25 years, won the presidency. Under the terms of the 2001 constitu-



tion, future presidents will serve for 5 years and be limited to two terms. Wade was the last President to be elected to a 7-year term.

On February 25, 2007 President Abdoulaye Wade (pronounced "wahd") won 56 percent of the vote in a field of 15 candidates, with 73 percent of registered voters going to the polls. Twice-postponed parliamentary elections took place on June 3, but most of the major opposition parties boycotted them, allowing the ruling Senegalese Democratic party (PDS) and its allies to capture 131 of the 150 seats in the National Assembly that met for the first time on June 20. In 2000 and 2007, Wade won open, peaceful and highly competitive elections due to a strong Senegalese national desire for change after nearly 40 years of Socialist Party governments. Having come under tough scrutiny and criticism for not having realized many of his campaign promises, he has undertaken major public works projects that benefited him politically.

President Wade has advanced a liberal agenda for Senegal, including privatizations and other market-opening measures. He has a strong interest in raising Senegal's regional and international profile. The country, nevertheless, has limited means with which to implement ambitious ideas. The liberalization of the economy is proceeding, but at a slow pace. Senegal continues to play a significant role in regional and international organizations. President Wade has made excellent relations with the United States a high priority.

There are presently 72 registered political parties, most of which are marginal and little more than platforms for their leaders. The principal political parties, however, constitute a true multiparty, democratic political culture, and they have contributed to one of the most successful democratic transitions in Africa, even among all developing countries. A flourishing independent media,

largely free from official or informal control, also contributes to the democratic politics of Senegal. The country's generally tolerant culture, largely free from ethnic or religious tensions, has provided a resilient base for democratic politics.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Abdoulaye WADE**
Prime Min.: **Cheikh Hadjibou SOUMARE**
Min. of Armed Forces: **Becaye DIOP**
Min. of Civil Service, Labor, & Professional Orgs.: **Innocence NTAB**
Min. of Commerce: **Mamadou Diop DECROIX**
Min. of Competitiveness & Good Governance: **Fatou DIAGNE**
Min. of Craft Industry, Mining, & Industry: **Madicke NIANG**
Min. of Culture & Listed Historic Heritage: **Birame DIOUF**
Min. of Decentralization & Local Development: **Ousmane Masseck NDIAYE**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Abdoulaye DIOP**
Min. of Education: **Moustapha SOURANG**
Min. of Energy: **Samuel Ameth SARR**
Min. of Environment & Conservation: **Souleymane Ndene NDIAYE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Cheikh Tidiane GADIO**
Min. of Health & Medical Prevention: **Issa Mbaye SAMB**
Min. of Information, Institutional Relations, & Govt. Spokesperson: **Bacar DIA**
Min. of Infrastructure, Urban Hydraulics, & Sanitation: **Habib SY**
Min. of Interior: **Ousmane NGOM**
Min. of Justice: **Cheikh Tidiane SY**
Min. of Land & Air Transportation: **Farba SENGHOR**
Min. of Living Environment & Public Health:
Min. of Maritime Economy: **Djibo LEYTI KA**
Min. of Microfinance & Decentralized Cooperation: **Abdourahim AGNE**
Min. of National Languages & Francophonie: **Mamadou MAKALOU**
Min. of National Solidarity: **Fatou Bintou Taya NDIAYE**
Min. of Rural Development & Agriculture: **Amath SALL**
Min. of Rural Hydraulics, National River System, Retention Basins, & Artificial Lakes: **Adama SALL**
Min. of Sports: **El Hadj Daouda FAYE**
Min. of Technical Education & Vocational Training: **Diame SIGNATE**
Min. of Telecommunications, Posts & Information & Communication Technologies: **Sophie Gladima SIBY**
Min. of Tourism: **Fatou GASSAMA**
Min. of Urban Planning, Housing, & Construction: **Oumar SARR**
Min. of Women's Affairs & Entrepreneurship: **Awa NDIAYE**
Min. of Youth & Employment: **Mamadou Lamine KEITA**
Ambassador to the US: **Amadou BA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Paul BADJI**

Senegal maintains an embassy in the United States at 2112 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-234-0540), and a Mission to the United Nations at 392 Fifth Avenue, 9th floor, New York, NY 10018 (tel. 212-517-9030).

ECONOMY

The former capital of French West Africa, Senegal is a semi-arid country located on the westernmost point of Africa. Predominantly rural and with limited natural resources, the country earns foreign exchange from fish, phosphates, peanuts, tourism, and services. Its economy is highly vulnerable to variations in rainfall and changes in world commodity prices. Senegal depends heavily on foreign assistance, which in 2007 represented about 23% of overall government spending—including both current expenditures and capital investments—or African Financial Community (CFA) 315 billion (U.S.$630 million).

The fishing sector has replaced the groundnut sector as Senegal's export leader. Its export earnings reached $249 million in 2005. The industrial fishing operations struggle with high costs, and Senegalese tuna is rapidly losing the French market to more efficient Asian competitors.

Phosphate production, the second major foreign exchange earner, has been steady at about $230 million (around 1500 tons). Exports of peanut products reached $63 million in 2003. Peanut production has decreased by 30%, one of its lowest levels. Receipts from tourism, the fourth major foreign exchange earner, have picked up since the January 1994 devaluation. Today, tourism constitute between 5 and 6% of national income. Senegal has about 250 tourist class hotels and the sector employs about 100.000 people.

Senegal's Agency for the Promotion of Investment (APIX) plays an important role in the government's foreign investment program. Its objective is to increase the investment rate from its current level of 20.6% to 30%. Currently, there are no restrictions on the transfer or repatriation of capital and income earned, or investment financed with convertible foreign exchange.

Direct U.S. investment in Senegal remains about $38 million, mainly in petroleum marketing, pharmaceuticals manufacturing, chemicals, and banking. Economic assistance comes largely from France, the IMF, the World Bank, and the United States. The European Union, the African Development bank, China, Canada, Spain, Japan, and Germany also provide fund significant aid programs.

Senegal has well-developed though costly port facilities, an international airport serving 28 international airlines that serves as a regional hub, and a reasonable telecommunications infrastructure, including a fiber optics backbone and cellular phone penetration approaching 15% of the population.

DEFENSE

Senegal has well-trained and disciplined armed forces consisting of about 17,000 personnel in the army, air force, navy, and gendarmerie. The Senegalese military force receives most of its training, equipment, and support from France and the United States. Germany also provides support but on a smaller scale. Military noninterference in political affairs has contributed to Senegal's stability since independence.

Senegal has participated in many international and regional peacekeeping missions. Its history of participation in peacekeeping is impressive. Most recently, Senegal provided peacekeeping forces for the African Union (AU) mission in Darfur, Sudan (AMIS), the UN mission in Liberia (UNIMIL), and the UN mission in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOMCI), where Lieutenant General Abdoulaye. Fall, who is now Chief of Defense of the Senegalese Armed Forces, was the Force Commander. In 2000, Senegal sent a battalion to the Democratic Republic of Congo to participate in MONUC, the UN peacekeeping mission, and agreed to deploy a U.S.-trained battalion to Sierra Leone to participate in UNAMSIL, another UN peacekeeping mission. A Senegalese contingent was deployed on a peacekeeping mission to the Central African Republic in 1997, and in 1994, Senegal sent a battalion-sized force to Rwanda to participate in the UN peacekeeping mission there. In 1992 Senegal sent 1,500 men to the ECOMOG peacekeeping group in Liberia, and in 1991, it was the only Sub-Saharan nation to send a contingent to participate in Operation Desert Storm in the Middle East.

In August 1981, the Senegalese military was invited into The Gambia by President Dawda Kairaba Jawara to put down a coup attempt. In August 1989, Senegalese-Gambian military cooperation, which began with the joint Senegalese-Gambian efforts during the 1981 coup attempt, ceased with the dissolution of the Senegambian Confederation. Senegal intervened in the Guinea-Bissau civil war in 1998 at the request of former President Vieira.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

President Senghor advocated close relations with France and negotiation and compromise as the best means of resolving international differences. To a large extent, the two succeeding Presidents have carried on Senghor's policies and philosophies. Senegal has long supported functional integration among French-speaking West African states through the West African Economic and Monetary Union. Senegal has a high profile in many international organizations and was a member of the UN Security Council in 1988-89. It was elected to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1997. Friendly to the West, especially to France and to the U.S., Senegal also is a vigorous proponent of more assistance from developed countries to the Third World. Senegal enjoys mostly cordial relations with its neighbors. Clear progress have been made on many fronts with Mauritania to include border security, resource management, economic integration and the return of an estimated 30,000 Afro-Mauritanian refugees living in Senegal.

U.S.-SENEGALESE RELATIONS

Senegal enjoys an excellent relationship with the United States. The Government of Senegal is known and respected for its able diplomats and has often supported the U.S. in the United Nations, including with troop contributions for peacekeeping activities. The United States maintains friendly relations with Senegal and provides considerable economic and technical assistance. About 300 Senegalese students come to the United States each year for study. President Diouf paid his first official visit to Washington, DC, in August 1983 and traveled several times to the U.S. thereafter. Senegal was President George W. Bush's first stop in his July 2003 visit to Africa. In June 2001, President Wade met President Bush at the White House. Senegal hosted the Second African-African American Summit in 1995. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton began her trip to Africa in March 1997 with a visit to Senegal, and President Bill Clinton visited Senegal in 1998. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner visited Senegal in August 2001. Foreign Minister Gadio met Secretary of State Colin Powell in September and November 2001. Senegal took a strong position against terrorism in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the U.S., and in October 2001 hosted a conference establishing the African Pact Against Terrorism. On July 20, 2005, Secretary Rice attended the fourth annual African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum held in Dakar, Senegal. That year's Forum focused on increasing investment initiatives and facilitating economic and political development in Africa. In June 2007, First Lady Laura Bush made Senegal her first stop during a four country Africa tour in support of the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and the President Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) implements the U.S. Government's development assistance program. USAID's strategy focuses on promoting economic growth/private sector development by expanding microfinance and business development services and commercializing natural and non-traditional products; improving local delivery of services and sustainable use of resources; increasing use of decentralized health services; and improving middle school education, especially for girls. In addition, there is a conflict resolution and rehabilitation program to improve conditions for peace in Senegal's two southern regions known as the "Casamance". USAID provided $29.9 million in development assistance to Senegal in fiscal year 2005.

The Peace Corps program in Senegal has approximately 150 volunteers serving in agriculture, forestry, health, and small business development. The U.S. Embassy's Cultural Affairs Section administers the Fulbright, Humphrey, and International Visitor exchange programs. The Fulbright teacher, researcher, and lecturer programs are two-way exchanges; hence the section also supports American grantees in Senegal during their stay. In addition to exchanges, the section organizes numerous programs for the Senegalese public including U.S. speaker programs, fine arts programs, film

festivals, and a book club. Finally, the section organizes an annual regional colloquium for American Studies professionals, journalists, and civic leaders from over 15 countries in Africa.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB:	Marcia S. Bernicat
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GSO:	Alan Roecks
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AFSA:	Charles Marietta
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AID:	Kevin Mullally
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 8, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Senegal is a developing West African country. The capital is Dakar. Facilities for tourists are widely available but vary in quality.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. For U.S. passport holders, a visa is not required for stays of less than 90 days. Current yellow fever vaccination is mandatory to enter Senegal and meningitis vaccination is highly recommended if the traveler is arriving from or has recently traveled to an endemic area. Travelers unable to provide proof of vaccinations may be required to pay for and receive vaccinations at the Dakar airport. Travelers should obtain the latest information on entry requirements from the Embassy of Senegal, 2112 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 234-0540, and at the Senegal Tourism Authority's official web site, http://www.senegal-tourism.com. Overseas inquiries should be made at the nearest Senegalese embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: Public demonstrations, political gatherings, and student protests are relatively common in Senegal, both in Dakar and in outlying regions, particularly on Friday afternoons. In the past, these events have sometimes turned violent. Due to the potential for violence, U.S. citizens should avoid political gatherings and street demonstrations, and maintain security awareness at all times. For guidelines on dealing safely with public demonstrations, please see the American Citizen Services page of the U.S. Embassy Dakar web site at http://dakar.usembassy.gov/service.html.

Lac Rose (Pink Lake) is a popular tourist destination in Senegal. The Lac Rose area has a large number of tourists and isolated beach areas, but lacks multiple exit and entry points. The U.S. Embassy recommends that all visitors to Lac Rose and its surrounding beaches be particularly vigilant and not travel alone.

Banditry occurs with some regularity on the main highways after dark, particularly in the central and eastern area of Senegal, including around Tambacounda and Matam. Bandits often target RN2 (National Road) between Ndioum and Kidira and occasionally target RN1 between Kidira and Tambacounda.

The U.S. Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens avoid non-essential travel to the Casamance region west of the city of Kolda, except direct air travel to the Cap Skirring resort area or to the city of Ziguinchor. If travel is deemed essential, the U.S. Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens carefully monitor the security situation before traveling. There are currently instances of fighting in the Casamance region (composed of the Ziguinchor and Kolda regions) involving factions of the Casamance separatist MFDC (Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance) in southern Senegal and the Senegalese military. Some military and political leaders in the Casamance region have been killed. In May 2008, rebels kidnapped 16 local residents 5 kilometers from Ziguinchor and then cut off their left ears before releasing them. That same month two soldiers and a peasant were killed in other clashes near the same area. Reports of banditry in the area remain high. In addition, vehicles have been attacked by armed bandits even during daylight hours on well-traveled roads. On February 14, 2007, four people were killed when their bus was attacked after being stopped at a roadblock.

Landmine explosions continue to plague inhabitants of the Casamance, with fatalities and serious injury continuing into 2008. One man was killed in Tounkara, approximately 70 kilometers north of Ziquinchor. A Senegalese soldier was injured by a landmine near Boutoupa-Camaracounda, on the border with Guinea Bissau. Since 1990, more than 1,000 people have been killed by land mines in the Casamance. The U.S. Embassy strongly recommends that U.S. citizens remain on well-traveled routes at all times.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747

toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Minor street crime is very common in Senegal, particularly in cities. Most reported incidents involve pickpockets and purse-snatchers, who are especially active in large crowds and around tourists. Aggressive vendors, panhandlers and street children may attempt to divert the victim's attention while an accomplice carries out the crime. To avoid theft, U.S. citizens should avoid walking alone in isolated areas or on beaches, particularly at night, lock their doors and close their windows when driving, and avoid public transportation. Americans should not walk on dark streets at night, even in groups. To minimize inconvenience in the event of theft, U.S. citizens should carry copies, rather than originals, of their passports and other identification documents. U.S. citizens should carry a credit card only if it will be used soon, rather than carrying it as a routine practice. There is traditionally an increase in crime before major religious holidays.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to use common sense and situational awareness to ensure personal safety and to reduce the risk of becoming a crime victim. Always be aware of the surroundings, especially in large cities and crowded places such as markets and taxi parks. Keep a low profile, remain vigilant, and avoid potential conflict situations. Do not wear flashy clothing or jewelry, and be cautious about displaying any amount of currency in public. Use common sense when faced with something out of the ordinary or if someone is following you.

While violent crime is not common in Senegal, it does occur. There have been incidents in the past year of Americans in groups of two or three being robbed at knife-point. If confronted by criminals, remember that cash and valuables can be replaced, but life and health cannot. U.S. citizens are encouraged to walk away from a criminal confrontation no matter the material cost. Break-ins at residential houses occur frequently as in major cities everywhere. Persons who plan to reside in Senegal on a long-term basis should take measures to protect their dwellings. Long-term residents should consider installation of window grilles, solid core doors with well-functioning locks, and an alarm system. In the past year, a number of American citizen residences have experienced burglaries. No violence or personal injuries have been reported in these cases, in which the burglars appear to have been exclusively seeking financial gain.

Fraud is prevalent in Senegal and U.S. citizens are often the target of scams that may cause both financial loss and physical harm. Typically, business scam operations begin with an unsolicited communication (usually by e-mail) from an unknown individual who describes a situation that promises quick financial gain, often by the transfer of a large sum of money or valuables out of West Africa. The perpetrators of these scams often claim to be victims of various western African conflicts (notably refugees from Sierra Leone) or relatives of present or former political leaders.

There are many variations of these business scams. In some cases, a series of "advance fees" must be paid in order to conclude the transaction, such as fees to open a bank account, or to pay certain taxes. In fact, the final payoff does not exist since the purpose of the scam is simply to collect the advance fees. Another common variation consists of a request for the U.S. citizen's bank account information, purportedly to transfer money into the account. Once the perpetrator obtains this information, however, he or she then simply transfers all money out of the victim's account. Other variations include apparently legitimate business deals requiring advance payments on contracts and offers to sell gold at a very low price. In the last case, the seller may present real gold to be verified then substitute fake gold and disappear with the payment. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of advance-fee fraud or business scam is to use common sense: If an offer seems too good to be true, it is probably a scam. You should carefully research any unsolicited business proposal originating in Senegal before you commit funds, provide goods or services, or undertake travel.

Visa scams take advantage of people who wish to travel to the U.S. Generally, these scams "guarantee" a U.S. visa for participants who pay a large sum of money to register for a conference or attend an event in the United States. In fact, only consular officers of the U.S. State Department may issue visas, so any offer that guarantees a U.S. visa is a scam. Please refer to the State Department web site at http://travel.state.gov or the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Dakar at http://dakar.usembassy.gov/visas.html for authoritative information about the visa process and the costs involved.

In addition to business and visa scams, personal and dating scams are also prevalent. U.S. citizens should be wary of persons claiming to live in Senegal who profess friendship or romantic interest over the Internet. A chat or e-mail exchange which quickly moves to discussion of intimate matters is often an indication of a scam. Beware of any request or appeal for money.

In a typical personal scam, the scammer typically asks the U.S. citizen to send money for essential purposes: living or travel expenses, medical treatment, visa costs or bribes to free unjustly imprisoned family members. Scammers often claim emergency circumstances, hoping that the intended victim will send money quickly and without careful consideration. Many variations of these scams exist, all with the principal goal of soliciting money from the victim. Several U.S. citizens in West Africa have reported losing thousands of dollars through such scams. The anonymity of the Internet means that the U.S. citizen cannot be sure of the real name, age, marital status, nationality or even gender of the correspondent. In some cases, the correspondent is a fictitious persona created only to lure the U.S. citizen into sending money.

U.S. citizens may prepay for a plane ticket directly with an airline rather than wiring money for transportation to the traveler. U.S. citizens may also research the legitimate immigration process with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) web site at http://www.uscis.gov.

U.S. citizens who are victims or witnesses of a crime are encouraged to report crimes to the police by telephoning 800-00-20-20; 800-00-17-00, Senegal's police hotline numbers. Another 24 hour phone number for the police in Senegal is 33-821-2431. The Government of Senegal has also created a tourist police unit, which may be reached at (+221)33 860-3810.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Senegal is 800-00-20-20 and 800-00-17-00.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Several hospitals and clinics in the capital, Dakar, can treat major and minor injuries and illnesses. There is inadequate inpatient psychiatric care and limited office-based psychiatric treatment. Public hospitals do not meet U.S. standards. Medical facilities outside Dakar are limited.

French medications are far more readily available than American pharmaceuticals, and drugs in stock are often listed under the French trade name. Medications may be obtained at pharmacies throughout Dakar and in other areas frequented by tourists, and are usually less expensive than in the U.S. Travelers should carry a supply of any needed prescription medicines, along with copies of the prescriptions, including the generic name for the drugs, and a supply of preferred over-the-counter medications.

Malaria is a serious risk to travelers in Senegal. Travelers should consult their physician to discuss the benefits and risks of taking anti-malarial medication. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what anti-malarial medications they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarial drugs, visit the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/faq.htm.

Water supplies in Senegal are not consistently free of disease-causing microorganisms. For this reason, the Embassy recommends drinking filtered or boiled water, particularly for babies under one year of age. Raw vegetables and fruits should be washed in a bleach solution before eating.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States.

The information below concerning Senegal is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Senegal is very different from driving in the United States. Many U.S. citizens find the traffic in Senegal chaotic, particularly in Dakar. Drivers tend to exceed speed limits, follow other vehicles closely, ignore lane markings and attempt to pass even when facing oncoming traffic. Many vehicles are not well-maintained; headlights may be either extremely dim or not used at all. Roadways are poorly lit and poorly marked and many sections have deteriorated surfaces. Some roads have sidewalks or sufficient space for pedestrian traffic; others do not, and pedestrians are forced to walk along the roadway. Due to limited street lighting, pedestrians are difficult to see at night. Drivers in both rural and urban areas may expect to frequently encounter and share the road with motorcycles, bicyclists, pedestrians, livestock and animal carts. Caution and defensive driving techniques are strongly recommended.

While most main roads in Senegal are in relatively good condition for daytime driving, smaller roads are poor by American standards. During the rainy season, many roads are passable only with four-wheel drive vehicles.

Travelers may be stopped at police roadblocks throughout the country, where their vehicles and luggage may be searched. Service stations are available along main roads. Due to poor road conditions and the risk of crime, driving outside major cities at night is not recommended. Due to

language barriers (outside Dakar, relatively few Senegalese speak French) and the lack of roadside assistance, receiving help may be difficult in the event of distress.

For safety reasons, the Embassy recommends against the use of motorbikes, van taxis ("cars rapides"), and public transportation. They can be dangerous due to overloading, careless driving, inadequate maintenance, and the lack of basic safety equipment such as seat belts. Regulated orange-striped sedan auto taxis are safer, but make sure to agree on a fare before beginning the trip.

In Senegal, one drives on the right-hand side. Vehicles give priority to traffic coming from the right, except at traffic circles, where vehicles already in the circle have the right of way. Before January 2005, however, cars entering traffic circles had the right of way. This change is not well known, so drivers should exercise extreme caution at traffic circles.

All drivers are expected to carry the following documents in their vehicles and present them at any time at the request of the police: (1) valid driver's license; (2) valid insurance papers; (3) vehicle registration/immatriculation card ("carte grise"); (4) "vignette" tax disc for the current year; and (5) valid identification. If Americans carry a copy of their U.S. passport, the copy must be clear enough to identify the driver of the vehicle.

Third-party insurance is required for all drivers in Senegal. In an accident, a driver's third-party insurance only covers damages to the other driver and his/her vehicle. Third-party insurance does not cover damages or injuries to the at-fault driver. In other words, if you are involved in an accident resulting in injuries and you are not at fault, this insurance will cover the cost of damages to the other driver and vehicle.

However, if you are at fault, your third-party insurance will only cover all damage to the other driver and his/her vehicle, and you will have to pay for damages to your own vehicle yourself or through additional insurance. If the accident results in a death and you are at fault, the Senegalese court will decide the penalty involved. The penalty can involve imprisonment if the accident is related to drunk driving.

Senegalese law prohibits the use of cell phones while driving, unless the driver is using "hands-free" equipment. Protective helmets are mandatory for all bicycle, moped, scooter and motorcycle drivers/riders and passengers.

When police officers stop a vehicle for a traffic violation, the police officer will generally confiscate the driver's license or ID card until the fine is paid. We encourage you to comply with the request. Sometimes, police officers try to solicit bribes instead of or in addition to the fine. The U.S. Embassy does not encourage paying bribes. Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.senegal-tourism.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Senegal, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Senegal's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Senegalese law requires that all persons carry personal identification at all times, and all Senegalese law enforcement officials have the authority to challenge suspicious activity and to request personal identification. Be aware that they may request personal identification even without cause, which is generally not the case in the U.S. If a U.S. citizen does not cooperate and provide identification, s/he may be detained for up to 48 hours without the filing of formal charges.

The U.S. Embassy does not always receive timely notification by Senegalese authorities of the arrest of U.S. citizens. U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a notarized copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. If arrested, U.S. citizens should always ask to be allowed to contact the U.S. Embassy. You may not bring several types of items into Senegal without clearance by Senegalese customs officials: these include computers and computer parts, video cameras and players, stereo equipment, tape players, auto parts, and various tools and spare parts. Airport customs officials may hold such items if brought in as baggage or carry-on luggage. Travelers should check with the Embassy of Senegal in Washington, DC, regarding these restrictions.

Senegalese customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information, call (212) 354-4480, send an email to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

Travelers can obtain cash from some ATMs in Senegal. Travelers can get cash and/or traveler's checks through international credit cards, such as Master Card, Visa, and American Express, by presenting their credit card at a local financial institution sponsoring their card. Travelers can transfer cash through Western Union and Moneygram.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking

the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violatingSenegalese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Senegalare severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Senegal are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Senegal. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Avenue Jean XXIII, Dakar; the mailing address is B.P. 49, Dakar, Senegal. The telephone number is (221) 33 829-2100; after hours (221) 33 829 2209. The U.S. Embassy web site is http://dakar.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Senegalese adoption law states that only individuals who are unable to have biological children may adopt a child. However, the President of the Republic can grant an exemption, which must be obtained before filing a request to adopt with the Regional Court of Dakar.

If an individual is seeking to adopt his or her spouse's children, the law requires that the couple not yet have any children from their union on the day they file their request. Couples who cannot have children due to medical reasons are given priority. According to the Senegalese adoption law, children from three months to 18 years old may be adopted.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that only three immigrant visas have been issued to Senegalese orphans in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Justice, Office of Open-System Educative Action and Social Welfare (Office de Action Educative au Milieu Ouvert—AEMO) is responsible for intercountry adoptions in Senegal. Adoption laws are outlined in the Senegalese Family Code (Code de la Famille).

Coordination AEMO
Ministere de la Justice
Bloc des Madeleines
Dakar, Senegal
The Dakar AEMO Regional Coordinator is SECK, Daouda
Website: http://www.justice.gouv.sn/
Tel: (221) 821-5720

Types Of Adoption: There are two types of adoptions in Senegal: simple adoption and full adoption.

In a simple adoption, the adopted child does not change his/her family name and the child's age can range from three months to 18 years. (Please note that in order to meet the definition of orphan under the Immigration and Nationality Act, the child must be adopted while under the age of 16 or, if over the age of 16, must be adopted concurrently with a sibling who is under the age of 16.)

The ties of the child to his/her birth family are not severed and the child may continue to have contact with his or her biological family. Simple adoptions are revocable.

In contrast, full adoptions are irrevocable and are granted when one or both parents have died and any living biological parent has irrevocably severed ties with the child. In order to complete an intercountry adoption in Senegal, prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to obtain a full adoption rather than a simple adoption. If a simple adoption is obtained, the adoption court order should indicate that the child is released for emigration. In order to adopt, the prospective adoptive parents must have a local attorney and meet the eligibility requirements.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: According to Senegal's adoption law, the adoption must meet the following criteria:

- the adoption should benefit the child;
- the child should be under the age 18 and not emancipated (under 16 to immigrate to U.S.);
- the adoption must be with the full consent of the child if s/he is 15 years old or older, unless s/he is mentally disabled;
- the adoptive parents must be 15 years older than the child to be adopted. In the case of step-children, the required age difference is 10 years;
- the adoptive parents applying jointly have to be married more than five years, are not legally or voluntarily separated, and one of

the them is at least 30 years old. Unmarried adoptive parents must be 35 years or older. The rules are the same for single men as for single women.

Residency Requirements: According to AEMO, there are no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: There are no fixed timelines for adopting a child in Senegal. According to Senegalese authorities, the adoption process can take from one to three years to complete.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Only full adoption is recognized for U.S. immigration purposes. There are no adoption service providers (i.e., adoption agencies or facilitators) in Senegal. A local attorney is required to handle all of the requisite legal paperwork. The U.S. Embassy is not aware of any attorneys or organizations that specialize in adoptions.

Adoption Fees: The fee for issuing an adoption court order is 6,000 West African Francs (CFAF) or approximately $12. This does not include additional fees that may be incurred for the attorney's time, translation, and other expenses.

Adoption Procedures: Once prospective adoptive parents are cleared for adoption in their home state and have completed the initial processing requirements of the U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, the next step is to submit an official request with the intent to adopt to the Regional Court of Dakar.

Prospective adoptive parents do not have to be physically present in Senegal to submit a request. An attorney representing them may do so on their behalf. In this request, prospective parents may express preferences regarding the age and sex of the child they wish to adopt; however, that does not mean that their preferences will be honored. Prospective adoptive parents may not select a child in advance.

Once the Senegalese government approves their request, the prospective adoptive parents will have to wait for a child to become available. Then, they will receive a letter from the Regional Court of Dakar telling them that a child has become available and when they can travel to Senegal to meet the child and complete the remaining legal procedures.

The letter also includes information about the sex and age of the child. No medical information is provided unless it is requested. If the prospective adoptive parents are not able to travel to Senegal for their appointment, they will be given a new appointment. If they miss the second appointment, AEMO will offer the child to another family.

According to AEMO, it is not mandatory for both prospective adoptive parents to travel to Senegal to escort the child. Once the prospective adoptive parents arrive in the country, they need to meet with the adoption judge at the Regional Court of Dakar in the Justice Minister's office, who personally issues the adoption court orders that parents use to obtain the release of the adopted child from the orphanage. According to AEMO, prospective adoptive parents cannot visit the child before the court order is issued.

After prospective adoptive parents have seen the child, they have three options: 1) take the child out of the orphanage; 2) leave the child at the orphanage and visit daily in order to bond with the child; or 3) reject the child. For the second option, parents may choose to stay at the orphanage until they leave the country, but they will have to make their own arrangements with the orphanage staff.

The prospective adoptive parents may decline the child, but they will not be allowed to adopt another child in Senegal and their approved adoption request and court order will be immediately revoked.

Prospective adoptive parents will receive a birth for the child from the Senegalese government with a Christian and Muslim name. This birth certificate will enable the adoptive parents to apply for a certificate of citizenship and a Senegalese passport. Prospective adoptive parents may submit a request to the Regional Court of Dakar to change the child's name after the child has been officially adopted.

The new name will have to be recorded in the appropriate birth register. If the prospective adoptive parents decide to change the child's name, they may apply for the child's passport after this process has been completed.

The adoption process for Senegalese citizens wishing to adopt in Senegal may be different than the one described above, and Americans who are also citizens of Senegal should consult a local attorney for assistance.

Required Documents: All documents should be notarized and translated into French.

- Certified true copies of the adopting parent(s)' birth certificates;
- Adoptive parents' police record or certification of the lack thereof;
- Certified true copies of the adopting parents' marriage certificate, if applicable;
- Notarized Copies of each Prospective Adoptive Parent's Passport;
- Financial documents of the adopting parents (employment records, documentation of assets, retirement and social security);
- Approved I-600A from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS);
- Home study performed by a licensed agent/agency in the prospective parents' U.S. state of residence;
- A letter addressed to the President of the Regional Court of Dakar;

- A medical certificate certifying that the couple cannot have biological children or an exemption from the President of the Republic for those who have biological children.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Avenue Jean XXIII, angle Rue Jacques Bugnicourt—BP 49
Dakar, Senegal
Telephone: (221) 823-4296
Fax: (221) 822-5903
Email: ConsularDakar@state.gov
Mailing Address:
Consular Section
2130 Dakar Place
Washington, D.C. 20521-2130

International Mailing Address:
U.S. Embassy-Consular Section
Avenue Jean XXIII, angle Rue Jacques Bugnicourt—BP 49
Dakar, Senegal

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Senegal may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Dakar. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-404-4747.



SERBIA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Serbia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: Serbia (77,474 sq. km.) is slightly smaller than Maine.

Cities: Capital—Belgrade. Other cities—Pancevo, Novi Pazar, Uzice, Novi Sad, Subotica, Bor, Nis.

Terrain: Varied; in the north, rich fertile plains; in the east, limestone ranges and basins; in the southeast, mountains and hills.

Climate: In the north, continental climate (cold winter and hot, humid summers with well-distributed rainfall); central portion, continental and Mediterranean climate; to the south, hot, dry summers and autumns and relatively cold winters with heavy snowfall inland.

People (2004 est.)

Nationality: Noun—Serb(s); adjective—Serbian.

Population: (2002 Republic census) Serbia (not including Kosovo) 7,478,820.

Population growth rate: -3.5%.

Ethnic groups: (2002 population census, without Kosovo) Serbian 83%, Hungarian 4%, Bosnian 2%, Albanian 1%, Montenegrin 1%, other 9%.

Religions: (2002 population census, without Kosovo) Orthodox 85%, Roman Catholic 5.5%, Muslim 3%, Protestant 1%, other 5.5%.

Languages: Serbian 88%, Hungarian 3.8%, Bosnian 2%, Albanian 1%, others 5%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—8.1 deaths/1,000. Life expectancy—males 72.44 yrs., female 77.86 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Adopted in an October 28-29, 2006 referendum.

Independence: April 11, 1992 (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (F.R.Y.) formed as self-proclaimed successor to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). On February 4, 2003, the F.R.Y. parliament adopted a new Constitutional Charter establishing the state union of Serbia and Montenegro. On May 21, 2006, the Republic of Montenegro held a successful referendum on independence and after Montenegro's declaration of independence on June 3, the parliament of Serbia stated that the Republic of Serbia was the continuity of the state union, rendering the two republics independent and sovereign countries.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state); prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—Parliament. Judicial—Federal Court (Savezni Sud) and Constitutional Court.

Political parties: Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians (SVM), Christian Democratic Party of Serbia (DHSS), Democratic Community of Vojvodian Hungarians (DZVM), Democratic Party (DS), Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), Democratic Party of Albanians (PDSh), Force of Serbia (PSS), G-17 Plus (G-17), League for Sumadija (LS), League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Movement for Democratic Progress (LDP-Albanians), New Serbia (NS), Party of Democratic Action (SDA—Bosniaks), Party of Democratic Action (PVD—Albanians), People's Party (NP), Sandzak Democratic Party (SDP—Bosniaks), Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Social Democratic Union (SDU), Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS—former Communist Party), Yugoslav United Left (JUL).

Suffrage: 16 years of age if employed; universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $43.5 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2007) 7.5%.

GDP per capita: (2007) $5,400.

Inflation rate: (2007) 10.1%.

Natural resources: Coal, petroleum, natural gas, antimony, copper, lead, zinc, timber, bauxite, gold, silver, navigable rivers.

Agriculture: 11% of GDP.
Industry: 18% of GDP.
Services: 21% of GDP.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$8.8 billion. Major markets—Italy, Germany, Bosnia, Montenegro. Imports—$18.5 billion. Major suppliers—Germany, Italy, Russia, China.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The first Serbian kingdom was created in 1170 A.D. by Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the Nemanjic dynasty, whose son was canonized as St. Sava and became the patron saint of the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church founded in 1219. Serbia's territories expanded under the rule of King Milutin, who seized territory in nearby Macedonia from the Byzantines, and reached their peak under Milutin's son, Stefan Dusan (1331-55). However, Serbian power waned after Stefan's death in 1355, and at the Battle of Kosovo (June 28. 1389) the Serbs were defeated by the Turks. Following the Battle of Smederevo in 1459, the Ottoman empire exerted complete control over all Serb lands.

Serbs lived under the rule of the Ottoman sultans for nearly 370 years, though the Serbian Orthodox Church, with several disruptions, transmitted Serbian heritage and helped preserve Serbian identity during this period. Movements for Serbian independence began with uprisings led by Karadjordje Petrovic (1804-13) and Milos Obrenovic (1815-17), founders of two rival dynasties that would rule Serbia until World War I. Serbia became an internationally recognized principality under Turkish suzerainty and Russian protection after the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829. After waging war against Turkey in support of Bosnian rebels in 1876, Serbia formally gained independence in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin, largely thanks to Russian support. Following Austria-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia, Serbia led a successful coalition of Montenegrin, Bulgarian, and Greek troops (the Balkan League) that in 1913 seized remaining Ottoman-controlled territory in Europe and established Serbia as a regional military leader.

The assassination of Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914 in Sarajevo by a Bosnian Serb, Gavrilo Princip, set off a series of diplomatic and military actions among the great powers that culminated in World War I. Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian forces occupied Serbia soon after World War I began. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary at the war's end in 1918, Vojvodina and Montenegro united with Serbia, and former south Slav subjects of the Habsburgs sought the protection of the Serbian crown within the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Serbia was the dominant partner in this state, which in 1929 adopted the name Yugoslavia.

The kingdom soon encountered resistance when Croatians began to resent control from Belgrade. This pressure prompted King Alexander I to split the traditional regions into nine administrative provinces. During World War II, the Axis powers occupied Yugoslavia. Royal army soldiers, calling themselves Chetniks, formed a Serbian resistance movement, but the communist Partisans, with Soviet and Anglo-American help, succeeded in defeating the Chetniks and forcing German forces from Yugoslavia by 1944. In an effort to avoid Serbian domination during the postwar years, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro were given separate and equal republican status within the new socialist federation of Yugoslavia; Kosovo and Vojvodina were made autonomous provinces within Yugoslavia.

Despite the appearance of a federal system of government in Yugoslavia, Serbian communists ruled Yugoslavia's political life for the next four decades under Josip Broz Tito, a former Bolshevik and committed communist. After Tito made several significant foreign policy decisions without consulting Moscow, Yugoslavia in 1948 was expelled from the Soviet bloc, signifying a split with Moscow that left Tito independent to accept aid from the Marshall Plan and become a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. Communist rule transformed Serbia from an agrarian into an industrial society; however, by the 1980s, Yugoslavia's economy started to fail. With the death of Tito in 1980, separatist and nationalist tensions emerged in Yugoslavia.

In the late 1980s, Slobodan Milosevic propelled himself to power in Belgrade by exploiting Serbian nationalism, especially over Kosovo. In 1989, he arranged the elimination of Kosovo's autonomy in favor of direct rule from Belgrade. Belgrade ordered the firing of large numbers of Albanian state employees, whose jobs were then taken by Serbs. As a result of this oppression, Kosovo Albanian leaders led a peaceful resistance movement in the early 1990s and established a parallel government funded mainly by the Albanian diaspora.

Between 1991 and 1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia all seceded from Yugoslavia. On April 27, 1992, in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro joined in passing the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (F.R.Y.).

Kosovo's peaceful resistance movement failed to yield results, and in 1997 the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began an armed resistance. The KLA's main goal was to secure the independence of Kosovo.

In late 1998, Milosevic unleashed a brutal police and military campaign against the separatist KLA, which included atrocities against civilian noncombatants. For the duration of Milosevic's campaign, large numbers of ethnic Albanians were either displaced from their homes in Kosovo or killed by Serbian troops or police. These acts, and Serbia's refusal to sign the Rambouillet Accords, provoked 79 days of bombing by NATO forces from March to June 1999 and led the UN Security Council to authorize, through UNSC Resolution 1244 (June 10, 1999), an international civil and military presence in Kosovo, placing these international presences



under UN auspices, calling for a process to determine Kosovo's status, and calling for UN interim administration of Kosovo. Following Milosevic's capitulation, international forces—including the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led security force KFOR—moved into Kosovo. In March 2002, the heads of the federal and republican governments signed the Belgrade Agreement, setting forth the parameters for a redefinition of Montenegro's relationship with Serbia within a joint state. On February 4, 2003, the F.R.Y. parliament ratified the Constitutional Charter, establishing a new state union and changing the name of the country from Yugoslavia to Serbia and Montenegro. On May 21, 2006, the Republic of Montenegro held a successful referendum on independence and declared independence on June 3. Thereafter, the parliament of Serbia stated that the Republic of Serbia was the continuity of the state union, changing the name of the country from Serbia and Montenegro to the Republic of Serbia, with Serbia retaining Serbia and Montenegro's

membership in all international organizations and bodies. On February 17, 2008, Kosovo declared its independence following a 120-day last-ditch effort by the EU-Russia-U.S. Troika to facilitate an agreement between Serbia and Kosovo on the latter's status.

The UNSC was deadlocked on a way forward on Kosovo status and how to act on the report of UN Special Envoy Maarti Ahtisaari in mid-2007. The United States officially recognized Kosovo's independence the following day. More than 50 nations recognized Kosovo as of late 2008. Serbia has rejected Kosovo independence. Government officials declared their intent to pursue all peaceful, political, and diplomatic means to retain Kosovo and sought a UN resolution to request that the International Court of Justice review the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence. After a vigorous lobbying campaign, on October 9, 2008, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of Serbia's proposal.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Routine federal elections in September 2000 resulted in a narrow official victory for Slobodan Milosevic and his coalition against Vojislav Kostunica, the consensus presidential candidate of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), an umbrella group of 18 anti-Milosevic political parties. After Milosevic's victory was documented to be fraudulent, citizens across Serbia turned out in street protests in support of Kostunica. On October 5, 2000, Milosevic was forced to concede defeat after mass protests across Serbia. The new F.R.Y. President Vojislav Kostunica was soon joined at the top of the domestic Serbian political scene by the Democratic Party's (DS) Zoran Djindjic, who was elected Prime Minister of Serbia at the head of the DOS ticket in parliamentary elections that December. After an initial honeymoon period Djindjic and the DS found themselves increasingly at odds with the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and the rest of DOS regarding the nature and pace of reform. Although initial reform efforts were highly successful, especially in the economic and fiscal sectors, by the middle of 2002, the nationalist Kostunica and the pragmatic Djindjic were openly in conflict with each other.

Despite the initial euphoria of replacing Milosevic's autocratic regime, the Serbian population by mid-2002 slid into apathy and disillusionment with its leading politicians in reaction to this political maneuvering. This political stalemate continued for much of 2002, and reform initiatives stalled. Two rounds of elections for the republic presidency in late 2002 failed because of insufficient voter turnout (Serbian law required participation by more than 50% of registered voters).

On March 12, 2003, Serbian Prime Minister Djindjic was assassinated by organized crime elements threatened by his pursuit of anti-crime measures. Zoran Zivkovic, a vice-president of Djindjic's DS party, was elected Prime Minister in March 2003, but a series of scandals plagued the new government, which ultimately led to early elections.

Republic of Serbia presidential elections were again held on November 16, 2003. These elections were also declared invalid because of insufficient voter turnout. Following the December 2003 parliamentary elections, a new minority government was formed with the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), G17+, and the Serbian Renewal Movement/New Serbia (SPO/NS) coalition and the tacit support of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). Former F.R.Y. president Vojislav Kostunica was named Prime Minister.

On June 27, 2004, after changes to the election law to allow for a valid election with turnout of less than 50% of registered voters, Boris Tadic (DS) defeated Radical Party candidate Tomislav Nikolic by a slim margin and was elected President of Serbia. President Tadic's Democratic Party (DS) did not join the governing coalition but worked with Serbia's democratic forces to advance the reform agenda.

Following the adoption of a new Constitution in October 2006, Serbia held parliamentary elections on January 21, 2007. A government was formed in May 2007, with a coalition of the DS, DSS, and G17+. The coalition chose Prime Minister Kostunica to continue in his position. On February 3, 2008, in run-off presidential elections, Boris Tadic again defeated Radical Party candidate Tomislav Nikolic by a slim margin and was re-elected President of Serbia. Following the collapse of the governing coalition in March 2008, new parliamentary elections were held on May 11, 2008. The Democratic Party-led list, "For a European Serbia," won nearly 39% of the vote, and in July 2008 formed a coalition government with the Socialists and ethnic minority parties. In September 2008, SRS deputy president and two-time presidential candidate Tomislav Nikolic split from the SRS and formed the Forward Serbia caucus consisting of 20 parliamentarians drawn from the SRS. As of November 2008, the SRS maintained 58 seats in parliament and Nikolic's Forward Serbia caucus formed the basis for the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), which Nikolic and former Radical General Secretary Aleksandar Vucic officially formed in October 2008.

Legislature

The Serbian National Assembly, a unicameral parliament, is the law-making body of the Republic of Serbia.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Boris TADIC**
Prime Min.: **Mirko CVETKOVIC**
First Dep. Prime Min.: **Ivica DACIC**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Mladjan DINKIC**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Bozidar DJELIC**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jovan KRKOBABIC**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Water Management: **Sasa DRAGIN**
Min. of Culture: **Nebojsa BRADIC**

Min. of Defense: **Dragan SUTANOVAC**
Min. of Diaspora: **Srdjan SRECKOVIC**
Min. of Economy & Regional Development: **Mladjan DINKIC**
Min. of Education: **Zarko OBRADOVIC**
Min. of Energy & Mining: **Petar SKUNDRIC**
Min. of Environment & Spacial Planning: **Oliver DULIC**
Min. of Finance: **Diana DRAGUTINOVIC**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Vuk JEREMIC**
Min. of Health: **Tomica MILOSAVLJEVIC**
Min. of Human & Minority Rights: **Svetozar CIPLIC**
Min. of Infrastructure: **Milutin MRKONJIC**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Ivica DACIC**
Min. of Justice: **Snezana MALOVIC**
Min. of Kosovo & Metohija: **Goran BOGDANOVIC**
Min. of Labor & Social Policy: **Rasim LJAJIC**
Min. for National Investment Plan: **Verica KALANOVIC**
Min. of Public Admin. & Local Self-Govt.: **Milan MARKOVIC**
Min. of Religion: **Bogoljub SIJAKOVIC**
Min. of Science & Technological Development: **Bozidar DJELIC**
Min. of Telecommunications & Information Society: **Jasna MATIC**
Min. of Trade & Services: **Slobodan MILOSAVLJEVIC**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Snezana SAMARDZIC-MARKOVIC**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Sulejman UGLJANIN**
Governor, National Bank of Serbia: **Radovan JELASIC**
Ambassador to the US: **Ivan VUJACIC**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Pavle JEVREMOVIC**

DEFENSE

Military branches include the Army of Serbia, which includes ground forces with internal and border troops, and air and air defense forces, and Civil Defense. Civilians fit for military service were estimated at about 2,088,595 for 2001.

The 2002 estimate for military expenditures as percentage of GDP was 3.6%. The Ministry of Defense has undertaken significant reform initiatives, which, if continued, will help move Serbia closer to full Euro-Atlantic integration.

ECONOMY

Serbia's economic progress since the fall of Milosevic has been substantial, but economic reform and restructuring are continuing challenges for the Serbian Government. Serbia is still far behind its neighbors, with GDP only now returning to levels comparable to 1989. Growth in 2007 was a healthy 7.5%, but this pace slowed during 2008. In 2007, Serbia recorded strong foreign direct investment (FDI) of $2.2 billion, but greenfield investment remains limited. The privatization of the banking sector has been completed, with over 70% of assets owned by foreigners.

While economic reform has been moving forward in many areas, enterprise sector reform is still halting. Over 26% of all persons employed in Serbia work for state-owned enterprises or the central and local governments. Privatization of the least attractive socially-owned companies has been left for the very last and will not be completed until sometime in 2009.

During 2008, the Serbian Government signed an agreement with car maker Fiat to purchase and invest in Zastava, Serbia's state-owned car manufacturer. This agreement revitalized interest in Serbia's industrial heartland. In addition, major U.S. investors such as U.S. Steel and Ball Packaging announced additional investments to expand production capacity in Serbia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

From the breakup of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia in 1989, the foreign policy of the F.R.Y. was characterized primarily by a desire to secure its political and geopolitical position and the solidarity of ethnic Serbs in the Balkan region through a strong nationalist campaign. The F.R.Y. supported and exploited the expansion of violent conflicts—in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and its own province, Kosovo—in order to advance its policies. However, in 2002, the F.R.Y. resolved its longstanding border dispute with Macedonia and established full diplomatic relations with its neighbor and former adversary Croatia.

Also in 2002, the F.R.Y. Government established a commission to coordinate cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and began serving warrants for the arrest of persons indicted for war crimes who sought refuge in the country. The crackdown on organized crime following the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Djindjic also resulted in the apprehension and transfer to The Hague of several persons indicted for war crimes. In 2004 and 2005, a significant number of ICTY indictees surrendered to the tribunal. In 2007, Serbia assisted in the arrest of two of the remaining six persons indicted for war crimes, Zdravko Tolimir and Vlastimir Djordjevic, and in 2008 the government arrested and extradited Stojan Zupljanin and Radovan Karadzic. Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic and Croatian Serb political leader Goran Hadzic remain at large, but the government has indicated its intention to apprehend these individuals. Serbia's ICTY obligations will not be fully met until Mladic and Hadzic are in The Hague.

Immediately preceding the NATO bombing campaign of the F.R.Y. in March 1999, the U.S. and most European countries severed relations with Belgrade, and the U.S. Embassy was closed. After October 5, 2000, foreign embassies, including that of the U.S., reopened, and Serbia, as the successor state to the F.R.Y., regained its seat in such international organizations as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN, and is actively participating in International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank projects. In 2003, Serbia was admitted to the Council of Europe and in 2006 joined NATO's Partnership for Peace. Serbia has also indicated its desire to join the European Union (EU). Both NATO and the EU have made full ICTY cooperation a prerequisite for Serbia's increased cooperation with these organizations. Serbia and the EU signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA)—the first

step toward eventual accession—in April 2008, but the EU immediately froze the related Interim Trade Agreement pending full cooperation with the ICTY.

Serbia's bilateral relationship with many countries was chilled following Kosovo's independence in February 2008. In the days following Kosovo's independence, rioters in Belgrade attacked the embassies of several countries, including the United States, causing severe property damage. Serbia recalled its ambassadors for consultations from all countries that formally recognized Kosovo. Serbia returned its ambassadors to EU countries in July 2008 and to the remaining countries in October 2008. Serbia adopted a policy of expelling the ambassadors of countries that recognized Kosovo after the UN General Assembly's approval of a resolution referring the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence to the International Court of Justice in early October, Subsequently, Serbia expelled the ambassadors of neighboring Montenegro and Macedonia as well as the ambassadors of Malaysia and the U.A.E.

Foreign Aid

At the social, political, and geographic crossroads between Eastern and Western Europe, Serbia occupies a key strategic juncture in the Balkans. The U.S. has been engaged in assisting Serbia's transition to a market-oriented democracy since 1997. Despite political uncertainty, U.S. Government assistance to Serbia continues to promote opportunities for economic growth, build capacity with key counterparts, and work steadily to move the country toward stability and Euro-Atlantic integration.

U.S. assistance to Serbia is strategically targeted to address priority U.S. foreign policy objectives and to promote Serbia's successful transition to a functioning market economy and stable pluralistic democracy. These resources, although modest in comparison to the European Union and other multilateral donors, have proven to be instrumental in leveraging other investments and in focusing Serbia's reform agenda. Annual congressional restrictions have been imposed on U.S. assistance to Serbia in order to ensure that the country meets its obligation to comply with the rulings of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). In August 2008, Secretary Rice certified that Serbia was cooperating with the ICTY.

U.S.-SERBIA RELATIONS

After severing diplomatic relations in March 1999, the U.S. Embassy formally reopened in May 2001. The Serbian Embassy in Washington and the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade have reestablished bilateral relations and provide a full range of consular services. Serbia currently enjoys stable diplomatic relations with all of its neighbors except Kosovo. After recalling its ambassador to Washington in February 2008 in the wake of Kosovo's declaration of independence, Serbia in October 2008 returned Ambassador Vujacic to Washington.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BELGRADE (E) Kneza Milosa 50, 381-11-361-9344, Fax 381-11-361-8230, Workweek: 8:30 to 5:00 GMT+1, Website: http://belgrade.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Kevin Phillips
AMB OMS:	Jeanne Kincaid
ECO:	Troy Pederson
FCS:	Cameron Werker
FM:	Vacant
HRO:	Terence Cunniffe
ICITAP:	Gary Bennett
MGT:	Thatcher Scharpf
OPDAT:	Daniel Lemisch
AMB:	Cameron Munter
CG:	Carolyn Gorman
DCM:	Jennifer Brush
PAO:	Rian Harris
GSO:	Jonathan Mennuti
RSO:	Tim Riley
AFSA:	Nikolas Trendowski
AGR:	Hoa Huynh (Resident In Sofia)
AID:	Michael Harvey
CLO:	Susan McSweeney-Cappello
DAO:	Ltc. Eric Von-Tersch
EEO:	Jeanne Kincaid
FMO:	Terence Cunniffe
IMO:	Jim Bayer (Acting)
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISO:	Jim Bayer (Acting)
POL:	Deborah Mennuti

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 27, 2008

Country Description: Serbia is a country that continues to undergo political changes. In 2006, Montenegro declared its independence from Serbia, changing the name of the country from Serbia and Montenegro to the Republic of Serbia, with the Republic of Montenegro becoming a separate state. This change has had minimal impact on foreign travelers. On February 17, 2008 Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia; it is not yet clear how this change will affect foreign travelers.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required for travel to Serbia. U.S. citizens with tourist, official, or diplomatic passports do not require a visa for entry and stay in Serbia for up to 90 days within a six-month period. It is not possible to apply for or obtain temporary residence permits, required for stays of longer than 90 days, outside of Serbia. U.S. citizens already in Serbia who wish to remain in Serbia for more than 90 days must obtain a temporary residence permit from the local police having jurisdiction over their place of residence in Serbia. With their residency application, applicants will need to provide a copy of their birth and marriage certificates (if applicable), obtained within 90 days before application, and a police report authenticated for use abroad from their state of residence in the U.S. or from the country where they permanently reside. All documents should have an "apostille" stamp certifying their authenticity. Information regarding apostilles and authentication of documents is available at http://travel.state.gov/law/

info/judicial/judicial_701.html. For further information on entry requirements for Serbia, including information regarding requirements for residency and work permits, travelers may contact the Serbian Embassy in Washington at telephone (202) 332-0333 or fax (202) 332-3933. The address of the Embassy is 2134 Kalorama Road, Washington, DC 20008 and the web site is http://www.mfa.gov.yu. Alternatively, travelers may also contact the Consulate General in Chicago at telephone (312) 670-6707 or fax (312) 670-6787 or by email at yuconsulate@aol.com. The address of the Chicago Consulate is 201 East Ohio St., Suite 200, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Travelers who obtain a new U.S. passport while in Serbia and do not have a prior passport or other evidence of their entry (for example, in cases of a lost or stolen passport or a child born in Serbia) will not be allowed to depart the country without an exit visa obtained from the Ministry of Interior. Similarly, travelers who use a different country's passport to enter than to exit (for example, entering with a Serbian passport or Serbian "National ID Card" and attempting to exit with a U.S. passport) are likely to have difficulty exiting Serbia due to the lack of an entry stamp in their passport. Note that Montenegro and Kosovo have their own immigration requirements.

Travelers who enter Serbia with more than the equivalent of 10,000 euros in cash are required to declare all currency upon entry and must obtain from customs officials a declaration that must be presented at departure. Failure to comply may result in the confiscation of all funds. Please refer to our Customs Information to learn more about customs regulations.

Registration with Local Authorities: Visitors staying in private accommodations must register with the police station responsible for the area in which they are staying within 24 hours of arrival. Failure to comply may result in a fine, incarceration, and/or expulsion. Persons who fail to register may face difficulties in departing the country. Visitors staying in hotels or tourist facilities are automatically registered with the police by the hotel. Additional information about visa requirements and the obligation of foreigners to register their location is available from the Government of Serbia at http://www.mup.sr.gov.yu.

Safety and Security: Occasional demonstrations occur. After Kosovo declared its independence in February 2008, large-scale demonstrations took place in Belgrade that turned violent. During these demonstrations, the U.S. Embassy was heavily damaged and one protestor lost his life. We wish to remind U.S. citizens that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful have the potential to turn into confrontational situations and possibly escalate into violence. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Serbia should take commonsense precautions to avoid demonstrations and to be aware of heightened security and potential delays when they occur. Anti-American sentiment tends to be highest surrounding the anniversary dates of the 1999 NATO bombing campaign or during times of unusually high tension in Kosovo. In some instances, Serb victories in high profile international sporting events have triggered demonstrations. Most demonstrations have been peaceful or were marked by only low levels of violence.

Travelers to southern Serbia should be aware that the security situation in southern Serbia has the potential to deteriorate quickly. U.S. Government employees on official business near the border between Serbia and Kosovo travel in fully armored vehicles. Persons contemplating travel in southern Serbia near the Kosovo border should register with the U.S. Embassy and check in with the Embassy regularly for the latest security updates.

Local Belgrade nightclubs are becoming increasingly popular with foreign tourists. Patrons should be aware that these establishments can be crowded and may not comply with Western standards for occupancy control and fire safety.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Updated information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.

Crime: While Belgrade is not afflicted with high levels of street crime, pick-pocketing and purse snatchings can occur. The same precautions one would take in any large city in the United States should serve well in Belgrade. Crimes tend to be based on opportunity rather than targeting. Unsecured vehicles, items left in plain sight within vehicles, open gates, and open garage doors are inviting targets. Difficult economic conditions have led to the growth of an organized criminal class. Violent crime is most commonly associated with organized crime activities. While confrontational and gratuitously violent crimes rarely target tourists, Mafia-style reprisals have sometimes occurred, including in hotels, restaurants, shops and on the street, and the threat of passersby being affected is possible. Bombs targeting specific individuals have detonated in popular business and restaurant areas, usually after midnight and in the early morning hours.

Car thefts or break-ins can occur at all times of day or night in all sections of Belgrade and other parts of the country if vehicles do not have additional security devices like fuel line interrupter switches or steering wheel locking devices. As in other parts of the world, travelers should

be especially on guard while walking in city centers. In case of emergency, the police telephone number is 92.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy or Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Although many physicians in Serbia are highly trained, hospitals, clinics, and ambulances are generally not equipped and maintained to Western standards. Medicines and basic medical supplies are largely obtainable in privately owned pharmacies. Hospitals require payment in cash for all services, and do not accept health insurance as compensation.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Serbia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Roads in Serbia are often poorly maintained, especially in rural areas. During winter months, fog can obscure visibility while driving. Fog can be extremely heavy in Vojvodina, the region between Belgrade and the border with Hungary. Road tolls for foreign-registered vehicles remain high. The use of seat belts is mandatory. A driver with a blood alcohol level higher than 0.05 is considered intoxicated. Roadside assistance is available by dialing 987. Other emergency numbers are police: 92, fire department: 93, and ambulance: 94.

Metered taxi service is safe and reasonably priced, although foreigners are sometimes charged higher rates. Buses and trams are overcrowded in Belgrade and in other areas of Serbia, and are poorly maintained.

More specific information concerning Serbian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance in the Serbian language from Serbian Automotive Association can be found at www.amss.org.yu.

Some general information about driving conditions is available in English at the Belgrade Tourism Organization's web site at www.tob.co.yu/english/index.html.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Serbia's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Serbia's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Travelers entering Serbia with more than 5,000 euros in cash are required to declare all currency upon entry and obtain from customs officials a declaration form that must be presented at departure. Failure to comply may result in the confiscation of all funds. The U.S. Embassy has been contacted by many American citizens who have failed to comply with this requirement and consequently had thousands of dollars seized by the Government of Serbia. It is advisable to contact the Serbian Embassy in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements.

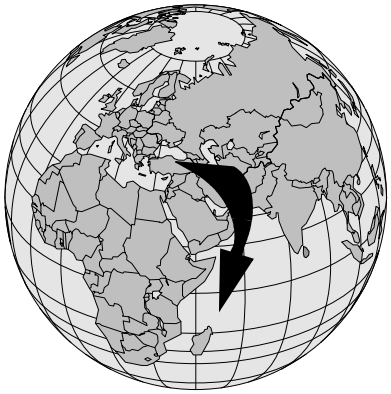
Dual U.S./Serbian nationals may be subject to laws that impose special obligations on Serbian citizens. Serbian males between the ages of 18 and 27 are required by law to perform military service. This applies to any individual whom the authorities consider to be Serbian -regardless of whether or not the individual considers himself Serbian, has a foreign citizenship and passport, or was born or lives outside of Serbia. If remaining in Serbia for more than the 90-day period permitted for tourism or business, men of Serbian descent may be prevented from leaving until they complete their military obligations or receive a waiver. Obligatory non-voluntary military service in Serbia will not affect U.S. citizenship. Specific questions on this subject should be addressed to the citizenship section of the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Serbian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Serbia are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living in or traveling in Serbia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy of Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security in Serbia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Belgrade is located at 50 Kneza Milosa Street. The Embassy and consular section telephone number is 381-11-3619-344, and the same number should be used for after hour emergencies. The Consular Section fax number is 381-11-3615-989. The web site is http://belgrade.usembassy.gov.



SEYCHELLES

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Seychelles

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 444 sq. km; about 2.5 times the size of Washington DC.
Major islands: Mahe and Praslin.
Cities: Capital—Victoria.
Terrain: About half of the islands are granitic in origin, with narrow coastal strips and central ranges of hills rising to 905 m. The other half are coral atolls, many uninhabitable.
Climate: Tropical marine.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Seychellois.
Population: (2008 est.) 82,247.
Annual growth rate: (2008 est.) 0.42%.
Ethnic groups: Creole (European, Asian, and African).
Religions: Catholic 82.3%, Anglican Church 6.4%, Seventh Day Adventist 1.1%, other Christian 3.4%, Hindu 2.1%, Muslim 1.1%, other 1.5%, unspecified 1.5%, none 0.6%.
Languages: Official languages are Creole, English, and French.
Education: Public schools and private schools, compulsory through grade 10. Literacy (1994)—87.5%.
Health: Free government health services for all people. Life expectancy—male 65.48 yrs, female 73.63 yrs. Infant mortality rate—14.36/1000.
Work force: 32,382 with 3,550 unemployed. Industries include tourism, fishing, manufacturing, and construction.

Government

Type: Multiple-party republic.
Independence: June 29, 1976.
Constitution: June 18, 1993.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government). Legislative—unicameral National Assembly with 34 seats (25 directly elected and 9 allocated on a proportional basis). Judicial—Supreme Court, Appeals Court.
Political parties: Democratic Party (DP), Seychelles National Party (SNP), Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF).
Suffrage: Universal at 17.

Economy

GDP: (2007, official exchange rate): $710 million.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 6.3%.
Per capita income: (2007, purchasing power parity): $16,600.
Average inflation rate: (2005) 0.9%.
Natural resources: Fish.
Agriculture: Copra, cinnamon, vanilla, coconuts, sweet potatoes, tapioca, bananas, tuna, chicken, teas.
Industry: Tourism, re-exports, maritime services.
Trade: Exports (2007)—$400 million: canned tuna, frozen/fresh fish, frozen prawns, cinnamon bark. Imports (2007)—$720 million. Major partners—France, Italy, U.K., Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Saudi Arabia.
Exchange rate: (May 2007) 6.10 rupees=U.S.$1.
Aid per capita: (2003) $110.

GEOGRAPHY

Seychelles is located in the Indian Ocean about 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) east of Kenya. The nation is an archipelago of 115 tropical islands with two distinct collections of islands, some comprised of granite and others of coral. The Mahe Group consists of 42 granite islands, all within a 56-kilometer (35-mi.) radius of the main island of Mahe. These islands are rocky, and most have a narrow coastal stripe and a central range of hills rising as high as 914 meters (3,000 ft.). Mahe is the largest island—9,142 sq. km (55 sq. mi.)—and is the site of Victoria, the capital. The coral islands are flat with elevated coral reefs at different stages of formation. They have no fresh water; human life can be sustained on them only with difficulty.

The climate is equable and healthy, although quite humid, as the islands

are small and subject to marine influences. The temperature varies little throughout the year. Temperatures on Mahe vary from 24ºC to 29.9ºC (75ºF-85ºF), and rainfall ranges from 288 centimeters (90 in.) annually at Victoria to 355 centimeters (140 in.) on the mountain slopes. Precipitation is somewhat less on the other islands. During the coolest months, July and August, the temperature drops to as low as 70ºF. The southeast trade winds blow regularly from May to November, and this is the most pleasant time of the year. The hot months are from December to April, with higher humidity (80). March and April are the hottest months, but the temperature seldom exceeds 88ºF. Most of the islands lie outside the cyclone belt, so high winds are rare.

PEOPLE

About 90% of the Seychellois people live on Mahe Island. Most others live on Praslin and La Digue, with the remaining smaller islands either sparsely populated or uninhabited.

Most Seychellois are descendants of early French settlers and the African slaves brought to the Seychelles in the 19th century by the British, who freed them from slave ships on the East African coast. Indians and Chinese (1.1% of the population) account for the other permanent inhabitants. In 2006, about 4,000 expatriates lived and worked in Seychelles. Of those, about 65 were American.

Seychelles culture is a mixture of French and African (Creole) influences. Creole is the native language of 94% of the people; however, English and French are commonly used. English remains the language of government and commerce.

About 92% of the population over age 15 is literate, and the literacy rate of school-aged children has risen to well over 98%. Increases are expected, as nearly all children of primary school age attend school, and the government encourages adult education.

HISTORY

The Seychelles islands remained uninhabited for more than 150 years after they became known to Western explorers. The islands appeared on Portuguese charts as early as 1505, although Arabs may have visited them much earlier. In 1742, the French Governor of Mauritius, Mahe de Labourdonais, sent an expedition to the islands. A second expedition in 1756 reasserted formal possession by France and gave the islands their present name in honor of the French finance minister under King Louis XV. The new French colony barely survived its first decade and did not begin to flourish until 1794, when Queau de Quincy became commandant.

The Seychelles islands were captured and freed several times during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, then passed officially to the British under the 1814 Treaty of Paris.

From the date of its founding by the French until 1903, the Seychelles colony was regarded as a dependency of Mauritius, which also passed from the French to British rule in 1814. In 1888, a separate administrator and executive and administrative councils were established for the Seychelles archipelago. Nine years later, the administrator acquired full powers of a British colonial governor, and on August 31, 1903, Seychelles became a separate British Crown Colony.

By 1963, political parties had developed in the Seychelles colony. Elections in 1963 were contested for the first time on party lines. In 1964 two new parties, the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) led by James Mancham, and the Seychelles People's Unity Party (SPUP) led by France Albert Rene, replaced existing parties.

In March 1970, colonial and political representatives of Seychelles met in London for a constitutional convention. Elections in November 1970 brought the resulting constitution into effect. In the November 1970 elections, the SDP won 10 seats, and the SPUP won 5 in the Legislative Assembly. Under the new constitution, Mancham became the Chief Minister of the colony.

Further elections were held in April 1974, in which both major political parties campaigned for independence. During the April 1974 elections, the SDP increased its majority in the Legislative Assembly by 3 seats, gaining all but 2 of the 15 seats. Demarcation of constituencies was such that the SDP achieved this majority by winning only 52% of the popular vote.

Following the 1974 election, negotiations with the British resulted in an agreement by which Seychelles became a sovereign republic on June 29, 1976. The SDP and SPUP formed a coalition government in June 1975 to lead Seychelles to independence. The British Government was asked to appoint an electoral review commission so that divergent views on the electoral system and composition of the legislature could be reconciled.

As a result, 10 seats were added to the Legislative Assembly, 5 to be nominated by each party. A cabinet of ministers also was formed consisting of 8 members of the SDP and 4 of the SPUP, with Chief Minister Mancham becoming Prime Minister. With independence on June 29, 1976, Mancham assumed the office of President and Rene became Prime Minister.

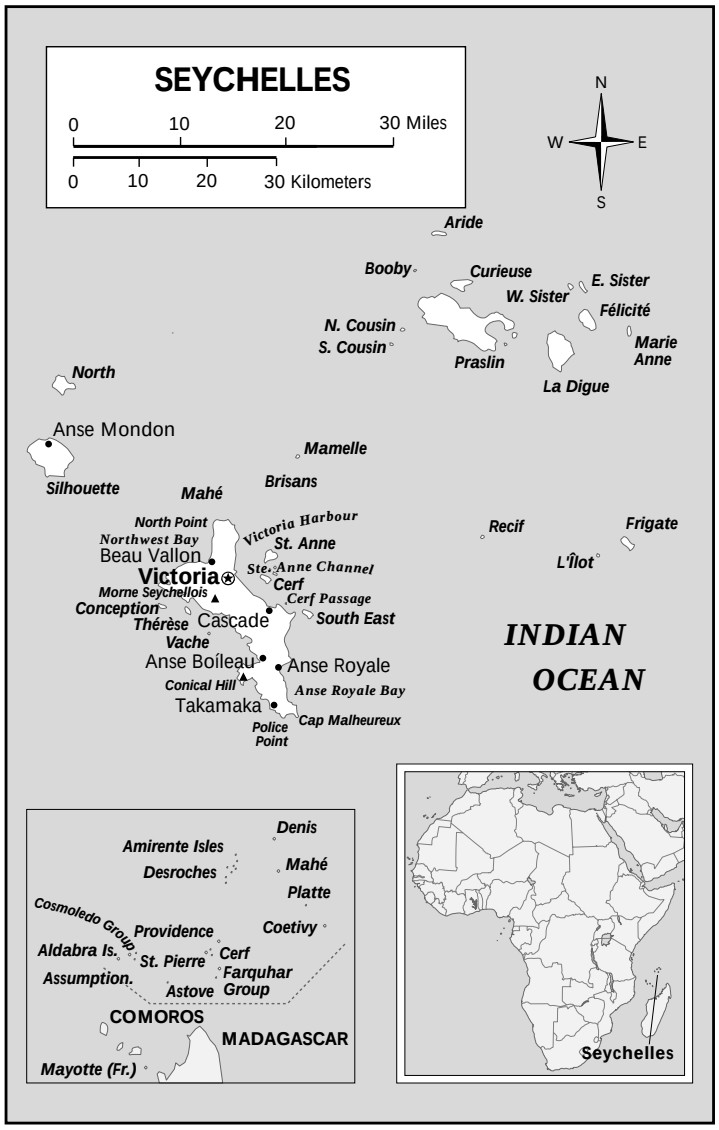
The negotiations following the 1974 elections also restored the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar, and Des Roches to Seychelles upon independence; those islands had been transferred in November 1965 from Seychelles to form part of the new British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

Although the SDP/SPUP coalition appeared to operate smoothly, political divisions between the two parties continued. On June 5, 1977, during Mancham's absence at the London Commonwealth Conference, supporters of Prime Minister Rene overthrew Mancham in a smoothly executed coup and installed Rene as President.

President Rene suspended the constitution and dismissed the parliament. The country was ruled by decree until June 1979, when a new constitution was adopted.

In November 1981, a group of mercenaries attempted to overthrow the Rene government but failed when they were detected at the airport and repelled. The government was threatened again by an army mutiny in August 1982, but it was quelled after 2 days when loyal troops, reinforced by Tanzanian forces, recaptured rebel-held installations. At an Extraordinary Congress of the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) on December 4, 1991, President Rene announced a return to the multiparty system of government after almost 16 years of one-party rule. On December 27, 1991, the Constitution of Seychelles was amended to allow for the registration of political parties. Among the exiles returning to Seychelles was James Mancham, who returned in April 1992 to revive his party, the Democratic Party (DP). By the end of that month, eight political parties had registered to contest the first stage of the transition process: election to the constitutional commission, which took place on July 23-26, 1992. The constitutional commission was made up of 22 elected members, 14 from the SPPF and 8 from the DP. It commenced work on August 27, 1992 with both President Rene and Mancham calling for national reconciliation and consensus on a new democratic constitution. A consensus text was agreed upon on May 7, 1993, and a referendum to approve it was called for June 15-18. The draft was approved with 73.9% of the electorate in favor of it and 24.1% against.

July 23-26, 1993 saw the first multiparty presidential and legislative elections held under the new constitution, as well as a resounding victory for President Rene. Three political groups contested the elections—the SPPF, the DP, and the United Opposition (UO)—a coalition of three smaller political parties, including Parti Seselwa. Two other smaller opposition parties threw in their lot with the DP. All participating parties and international observer groups accepted the results as "free and fair."



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The president is both the chief of state and head of government and is elected by popular vote for a 5-year term. The Council of Ministers serves as a cabinet, and its members are appointed by the president. The unicameral National Assembly has 34 seats—25 elected by popular vote and 9 allocated on a proportional basis to parties winning at least 10% of the vote; members serve 5-year terms. The judicial branch includes a Court of Appeal and Supreme Court; judges

Three candidates contested the March 20-22, 1998 presidential election—Albert Rene, SPPF; James Mancham, DP; and Wavel Ramkalawan—and once again President Rene and his SPPF party won a landslide victory. The President's popularity in elections jumped to 66.6% in 1998 from 59.5% in 1993, while the SPPF garnered 61.7% of the total votes cast in the 1998 National Assembly election, compared to 56.5% in 1993. In 2001 President Rene was re-elected once again.

for both courts are appointed by the president. The legal system is based on English common law, French civil law, and customary law.

Seychelles has had a multi-party system with the adoption of a new Constitution in 1992. Since then, multi-party elections took place in 1993, 1998, 2001, 2006, and 2007. The Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) won the presidency and majority in the National Assembly in all of the elections.

Presidential elections were held in July 2006. Incumbent President James Michel of the Seychelles People's Progressive Front, who was appointed to power by former President Rene in 2004, won his first elected term. The final vote count was 53.73% for Michel to 45.71% for opposition alliance candidate and Seychelles National Party (SNP) leader, Wavel Ramkalawan. The electoral process for the 2006 presidential elections was determined to be credible by international observers. Following a six-month boycott in the National Assembly by the SNP opposition party, President Michel dissolved the National Assembly on March 20, 2007. Early elections to fill the vacated National Assembly seats were held May 10-12, 2007. The SPPF won 18 district seats and the SNP/DP alliance won seven district seats. Under the system of proportional representation, the SPPF won five seats and the SNP/DP alliance won four seats. The electoral process for the 2007 National Assembly elections was determined to be credible by international observers.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **James Alix MICHEL**
Vice Pres.: **Joseph BELMONT**
Min. of Community Development, Youth, Sports, & Culture: **Vincent MERITON**
Min. of Defense: **James Alix MICHEL**
Min. of Education: **Bernard SHAMLAYE**
Min. of Employment & Human Resources Development: **Macsuzy MONDON**
Min. of Environment, National Resources, & Transport: **Joel MORGAN**
Min. of Finance & Designated Min.: **Danny FAURE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Patrick Georges PILLAY**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **James Alix MICHEL**
Min. of National Development: **Jacqueline DUGASSE**
Min. of the Police: **James Alix MICHEL**
Min. for Risk & Disaster Management: **James Alix MICHEL**
Min. of Social Development & Health: **Marie-Pierre LLOYD**
Governor, Central Bank: **Francis CHANG LENG**
Ambassador to the US: **Jean Ronald JUMEAU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Jean Ronald JUMEAU**

ECONOMY

Seychelles's economy rests on tourism and fishing. Employment, foreign earnings, construction, banking, and commerce are all largely dependent on these two industries.

The services sector—including transport, communications, commerce, and tourism—has accounted for close to 70% of GDP in recent years. The share of manufacturing has been between 15-20% of GDP, although it fluctuates from year to year owing to changes in output from the Indian Ocean Tuna cannery. Public investment in infrastructure has kept construction buoyant, with its share of GDP at around 10%. Given the shortage of arable land, agriculture, forestry, and fishing (excluding tuna) make a small contribution to national output.

GDP in 2007 was at $710 million (official exchange rate) and income per capita was at $16,600 (purchasing power parity). This puts the island in the World Bank's "upper middle-income" bracket with the result that Seychelles is low on the agenda of international donors and aid flows are limited. However, given the small size of the economy, the island remains vulnerable to external shocks.

Although the per capita income is over $16,000 (PPP), residents often have difficulty obtaining even basic foodstuffs, such as rice and sugar. Government mismanagement and excessive economic regulations, including a manipulated exchange rate, have resulted in foreign exchange shortages and a parallel market currency exchange rate double the official rate.

In 2005 and 2006, the government implemented several measures toward the liberalization of the trade regime and the privatization of state-owned entities, such as the removal of import licenses and the partial sale of the public insurance company SACOS. In October 2006, the Minister of Finance announced measures to start the process of a gradual liberalization of foreign exchange transactions. These limited measures, however, are unlikely to influence an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which continues to press for devaluation as an important step toward resolving the persistent shortage of foreign exchange.

Although Seychelles is eligible for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), it has failed to take advantage of AGOA thus far. Seychelles is not qualified for apparel benefits under AGOA and, in any case, its apparel manufacturing capacity is negligible.

DEFENSE

In 2002, Seychelles had a defense force (Seychelles People's Defence Forces) of about 800 army personnel, including 300 in the presidential protection unit. The army has one infantry battalion and two artillery elements. Paramilitary forces include a national guard consisting of 1,000 people and a coast guard estimated at 250 and divided into two divisions, the naval wing and security or infantry division.

The Seychelles Coast Guard (SCG), which was created in 1992, assumes many of the maritime roles commonly associated with the U.S. Coast Guard. They recently acquired responsibility for search and rescue for vessel inci-

dents as well as environmental protection from the Port and Marine Services Division. SCG has several operational vessels: the Russian-built Fortune, the Italian-built Andromache, the Scorpio, two Indian manufactured vessels, four Motor Life Boats, and the luxury yacht Gemini that also is used as the presidential yacht.

The air wing of the defense force separated from the coast guard in 1997 and does not have any dedicated aircraft, but it sometimes supplies pilots and aircrews to fly search and rescue missions. Their primary duty is to train pilots.

The Island Development Corporation (IDC) maintains the pool of aircraft, using them for sources of income by chartering them out. The aircraft inventory includes one Caravan F-406, one Defender, one Cessna 150, and one Beech 1900.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Seychelles follows a policy of what it describes as "positive" nonalignment and strongly supports the principle of reduced superpower presence in the Indian Ocean.

The Seychelles Government is one of the proponents of the Indian Ocean zone of peace concept, and it has promoted an end to the U.S. presence on Diego Garcia. Seychelles' foreign policy position has placed it generally toward the left of the spectrum within the Nonaligned Movement.

The Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, France, India, China, and Cuba maintain embassies in Victoria. Seychelles has an ambassador resident in New York dually accredited to the United Nations and to the United States and Canada. It also has a resident ambassador to France and Belgium. In early 2007, the Seychelles Government announced the opening of new missions in South Africa, China, Italy, and India. Seychelles is a member of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM), the African Union, Commonwealth, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), La Francophonie, and the UN and some of its specialized and related agencies.

U.S.-SEYCHELLES RELATIONS

The year 1963 marked the beginning of an official U.S. presence in Seychelles when the U.S. Air Force Tracking Station was built and put into operation on Mahe. The USAF Tracking Station facilities were situated on land that was leased from the Seychelles Government ($4.5 million annually).

The station's complement consisted of five uniformed Air Force personnel (two officers and three sergeants), 65 employees of Loral Corporation and Johnson Instruments, and 150 Seychellois employees. The USAF Tracking Station officially closed down on September 30, 1996.

Peace Corps Volunteers served in Seychelles between 1974 and 1995. A U.S. consulate was opened in May 1976 and became an Embassy after Seychelles' independence in June 1976. The Embassy was subsequently closed in August 1996, and the United States opened a consular agency on September 2, 1996 to provide services to residents of Seychelles. The agency is under the supervision of the American Embassy in Port Louis, Mauritius. The U.S. Ambassador to Mauritius also is accredited to Seychelles.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PORT LOUIS (E) 4th Floor Rogers House, John Kennedy St., Port Louis, Mauritius, (230) 202-4400, Fax (230) 208-9534, INMARSAT Tel 881631439038/881631439039, Workweek: M-Th: 0730-1645; F:0730-1230, Website: mauritius.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Karen Miles
AMB OMS:	Marcia Romero
DHS/CIS:	Leslie A. Meeker
DHS/ICE:	Willis Reeves
FCS:	Craig Allen
HRO:	Ron Coles
MGT:	Tim Bashor
POL/ECO:	Quentin Barber
AMB:	Cesar Cabrera
CON:	Jason Hackworth
DCM:	Virginia Blaser
PAO:	Craig White
RSO:	Kevin Helm
AGR:	Scott Sindelar
CLO:	Jody Bashor
DAO:	Cdr. John Ries
FAA:	Moira Keane
FMO:	Tim Bashor
ICASS Chair:	Cdr. Matt Felt
IMO:	Christopher House
IRS:	Kathy Beck
ISO:	Stephen Cunningham
ISSO:	Christopher House
LAB:	Randy Fleitman
LEGATT:	Don Przybyla

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 7, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Seychelles consists of 115 islands off the east coast of Africa. The main islands of this archipelago include Mahe, which is the largest, followed by Praslin and La Digue. The total population is approximately 81,000. The capital, Victoria, is located on Mahe.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, onward/return ticket, the local address where the visitor will stay, and proof of sufficient funds are required. A one-month entry visa may be obtained upon arrival and may be extended for a period of up to one year. There is an airport departure tax of approximately $40, which must be paid in U.S. dollars. This charge is typically included in the cost of an airline ticket. Travelers should contact the Permanent Mission of the Seychelles to the United Nations, 800 Second Avenue, Suite 400C, New York, NY 10017; telephone number (212) 972-1785, for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens should avoid crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations. It is dangerous to swim alone at isolated beaches, especially after dark, due to strong currents. For the latest secu-

rity information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Petty crime is a problem, but violent crime against tourists is rare. To reduce the risk of theft, travelers should keep valuables in hotel safes and close and lock hotel windows at night, even while the room is occupied. Hotels that do not have private safes in the rooms will usually have one at the reception desk. Travelers are also advised to take precautions and not leave bags unattended on the beach or in cars while swimming.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The 24 hour emergency number for all medical emergencies is 999. Medical facilities in Seychelles are limited, especially on the isolated islands where doctors are often unavailable. There is one government-owned hospital and several private clinics.

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of cases of chikungunya, a viral disease transmitted to humans by the bite of infected mosquitoes, and also of leptospirosis, a bacterial disease transmitted to humans and animals by exposure to water contaminated by infected animals. For more information and information on current outbreaks, please see the CDC's fact sheets on chikungunya and on leptospirosis at http://www.cdc.gov.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Seychelles is provided for general reference only and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

In Seychelles, one drives on the left side of the street. Roads are generally well maintained but are narrow and winding. Drivers should exercise caution due to a lack of shoulders and inadequate street lighting. Speed limits range from 25 to 50 miles an hour. Drivers and front seat passengers are required to wear seat belts. There are no laws regarding child safety seats.

Public transportation by bus is good but tends to be crowded during rush hours and usually requires several transfers to reach a desired destination. Taxis are also available.

The Seychelles Ministry of Health operates an ambulance service on the islands of Mahe, Praslin, and La Digue that can be contacted by dialing 999. Assistance on the more remote islands is limited. For more information, contact the Ministry of Health at P.O. Box 52, Victoria, Mahé, Seychelles; telephone (248) 388 000; email: mohps@seychelles.net.

For specific information concerning Seychelles driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Seychelles Ministry of Tourism via email at dgtmtca@seychelles.net. You may also contact the Seychelles Tourism Marketing Authority via email at seychelles@aspureasitgets.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Seychelles, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Seychelles' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Due to strict laws regulating foreign exchange, all visitors are required to settle bills for tourism-related services in foreign currency, i.e., U.S. Dollars, Pounds Sterling, Euros, etc. Generally, cash, traveler's checks, and some credit cards are accepted. This regulation applies to all hotel, restaurant, car/driver rental, tours, boat charters, and scuba diving charges, as well as purchases in shops. Bills for taxis and other incidentals may be settled in Seychellois rupees but it is advisable to inquire prior to engaging services.

Visitors should note that automatic teller machines (ATMs) only distribute Seychellois rupees, and the Sey-

chellois government limits the amount of Seychellois rupees visitors can convert back into foreign exchange before leaving the country. Banks are currently authorized to convert 800 rupees back into foreign currency and will do so only upon presentation of an exchange receipt. It is advisable to spend all rupees prior to passing customs and immigration at the airport. It can be difficult to obtain foreign exchange while in Seychelles, so visitors may wish to bring some cash with them and check on options for payment of tourism-related services before arrival. Exchanging money on the informal, black market is a criminal offense.

For more information on foreign exchange in Seychelles, please visit the Government of Seychelles' Central CBS Bank web site at http://www.cbs.sc/ferd.html.

The Government of Seychelles prohibits wearing any camouflage apparel in the country unless one is participating in a sanctioned, military activity.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Seychelles' law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Seychelles are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sex with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, and is prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Seychelles are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Port Louis Mauritius through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Seychelles. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Rogers House, Fourth Floor, Port Louis, Mauritius. The telephone numbers are (230) 202 4400; fax (230) 208 9534. In the event of an after hours emergency, the Embassy duty officer may be contacted at (230) 253 3641. The Embassy website is http://mauritius.usembassy.gov, email usembass@intnet.mu.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Victoria, Seychelles is open to U.S. citizens Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 8:30 to 12:30. U.S. citizens are able to obtain passport applications, Social Security applications, and consular report of birth applications there.

The U.S. Consular Agency is located at Oliaji Trade Center, Victoria, Mahe; telephone (248) 225-256; fax (248) 225-189; e-mail consular agencyseychelles@gm-ail.com. The international mailing address is U.S. Consular Agency, P.O. Box 251, Victoria, Mahe, Seychelles.

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics show that there have only been three orphan immigrant visas issued to children from Seychelles in the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority:
Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
Social Services Section
Oceangate House
P O Box 190
Victoria
Seychelles

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: An adoption application may be made by a married couple or by a single person who is at least 21 years of age.

Residency Requirements: Adoptive parents are required to live with the child for at least three months before the adoption is finalized.

Time Frame: More than three months. The adoptive parent is required to stay in the country for at least three months for the purpose of monitoring the adoption and being available to the Social Services Department.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no private adoption agencies. The Social Services Department oversees the adoption process.

Adoption Fees: There are no social service fees. The only fees involved are related to attorneys' fees.

Adoption Procedures: The prospective adoptive parents need to first identify a child and obtain the consent from biological parents. The "consent to an adoption order" must be signed by the biological parent(s) in front of a judge or notary. Prospective adoptive parents must undergo a medical test to determine their medical fitness with regards to raising children. The exam may be completed

by any doctor in Seychelles. Prospective parents may obtain a form entitled "Medical cerficates as to health of applicants" from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

Medical tests are also required from the prospective adoptees. Once this is done, the prospective adoptive parents may apply for adoption to the Supreme Court of Seychelles. The Department of Social Service's role is to carry out an investigation with respect to the applicant's suitability to adopt and to make an appropriate recommendation to the Supreme Court of Seychelles with respect to the application for adoption. They typically review the following:

- Experience, attitude and ability to raise a child;
- Background of prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Civil status (stability);
- Employment status/income;
- Housing/home condition (a U.S. home study may be accepted in lieu of this requirement);
- Attitude of other members of the household;
- Biological parents' understanding of what an adoption order entails and reasons for consenting to the adoption;
- The child's feelings with regards to the adoption (if child is old enough).

Required Documents:

- Identity of adoptive parents;
- Marriage certificate, if married;
- Medical certificate of adoptive parents and child to be adopted;
- Completed application for an adoption order;
- Documents of consent from adoptive child's biological parent(s).

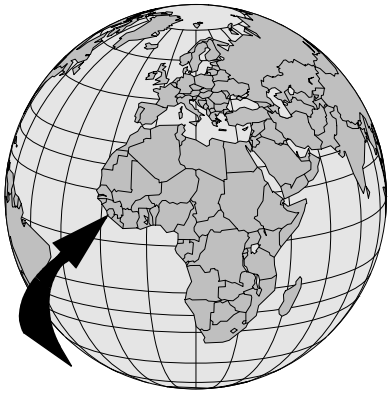
Embassy of the
Republic of Seychelles
c/o Permanent Mission of Seychelles to the United Nations
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400,
New York NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 687-9766
Fax: (212) 972-1786

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States of America
4th Floor, Rogers House
John Kennedy Street
Port Louis, Mauritius
Email: PTLConsular@state.gov
Tel: (230) 202-4400
Fax: (230) 208 9534

U.S. Embassy
P.O. Box 606
Village Market
00621 Nairobi, Kenya

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Seychelles may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Mauritius. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SIERRA LEONE

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Sierra Leone

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 71,740 sq. km. (29,925 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than South Carolina.

Cities: Capital—Freetown (est. 786,900). Provincial capitals—Southern Province, Bo; Eastern Province, Kenema; Northern Province, Makeni.

Terrain: Mangrove swamps and beaches and mostly shallow bays along the coast, wooded hills along the immediate interior, and a mountainous plateau in the interior.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Sierra Leonean(s).

Population: (2007 est.) 6,144,562.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.292%.

Ethnic groups: Temne 30%, Mende 30%, Krio 1%, balance spread over 15 other tribal groups, and a small Lebanese community.

Religions: (est.) Muslim 60%, Christian 30%, animist 10%.

Languages: English, Krio, Temne, Mende, and 15 other indigenous languages.

Education: (2002) Literacy—36%.

Health: Life expectancy (2007 est.)—40.58 years. Infant mortality rate—158.27 deaths/1,000 live births. HIV infection rate for adults, ages 15-49 years (2002 est.)—1.4%.

Work force: Agriculture—52.5%; industry—30.6%; services—16.9%.

Government

Type: Republic with a democratically elected president and unicameral parliament.

Independence: From Britain, April 27, 1961.

Constitution: October 1, 1991.

Political parties: The Political Parties Registration Commission was formed in late 2005 to review registered parties to see whether they still met registration requirements. Most of the parties are inactive. Major parties—Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), All People's Congress (APC), Peace and Liberation Party (PLP), and People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC).

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $1.233 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2006 est.) 6.8%.

Avg. annual inflation rate: (2005 IMF est.) 8.5%.

Natural resources: Diamonds, rutile, bauxite, gold, iron ore, ilmenorutile, platinum, chromite, manganese, cassiterite, molybdenite, as well as forests, abundant fresh water, and rich offshore fishing grounds.

Agriculture: Products—coffee, cocoa, ginger, palm kernels, cassava, bananas, citrus, peanuts, cashews, plantains, rice, sweet potatoes, vegetables. Land—30% potentially arable, 8% cultivated.

Industry: Types—diamonds, bauxite, and rutile mining; forestry; fishing; beverages; cigarettes; flour; cement and other construction goods; plastics; tourism.

Trade: (Oct. 2004-Oct. 2005) Exports—$158 million: rutile, diamonds, bauxite, coffee, cocoa, fishes. Major destinations of exports—Belgium, Germany, U.S., and India. Imports—$330 million: foodstuffs, machinery and equipment, fuel and lubricants, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, building materials, light consumer goods, used clothing, textiles. Main origins of imports—Germany, Cote d'Ivoire (fuel), U.K., U.S., China (manufactured goods).

PEOPLE

The indigenous population is made up of 18 ethnic groups. The Temne in the north and the Mende in the South are the largest. About 60,000 are Krio, the descendants of freed slaves who returned to Sierra Leone from Great Britain and North America and from slave ships captured on the high seas. In addition, about 4,000 Lebanese, 500 Indians, and 2,000 Europe-

ans reside in the country. In the past, Sierra Leoneans were noted for their educational achievements, trading activity, entrepreneurial skills, and arts and crafts work, particularly woodcarving. Many are part of larger ethnic networks extending into several countries, which link West African states in the area. However, the level of education and infrastructure has declined sharply over the last 30 years.

HISTORY

European contacts with Sierra Leone were among the first in West Africa. In 1652, the first slaves in North America were brought from Sierra Leone to the Sea Islands off the coast of the southern United States. During the 1700s there was a thriving trade bringing slaves from Sierra Leone to the plantations of South Carolina and Georgia where their rice-farming skills made them particularly valuable.

In 1787 the British helped 400 freed slaves from the United States, Nova Scotia, and Great Britain return to Sierra Leone to settle in what they called the "Province of Freedom." Disease and hostility from the indigenous people nearly eliminated the first group of returnees. This settlement was joined by other groups of freed slaves and soon became known as Freetown. In 1792, Freetown became one of Britain's first colonies in West Africa.

Thousands of slaves were returned to or liberated in Freetown. Most chose to remain in Sierra Leone. These returned Africans—or Krio as they came to be called—were from all areas of Africa. Cut off from their homes and traditions by the experience of slavery, they assimilated some aspects of British styles of life and built a flourishing trade on the West African coast.

In the early 19th century, Freetown served as the residence of the British governor who also ruled the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and The Gambia settlements. Sierra Leone served as the educational center of British West Africa as well. Fourah Bay College, established in 1827, rapidly became a magnet for English-speaking Africans on the West Coast. For more than a century, it was the only European-style university in western Sub-Saharan Africa.

The colonial history of Sierra Leone was not placid. The indigenous people mounted several unsuccessful revolts against British rule and Krio domination. Most of the 20th century history of the colony was peaceful, however, and independence was achieved without violence. The 1951 constitution provided a framework for decolonization. Local ministerial responsibility was introduced in 1953, when Sir Milton Margai was appointed Chief Minister. He became Prime Minister after successful completion of constitutional talks in London in 1960. Independence came in April 1961, and Sierra Leone opted for a parliamentary system within the British Commonwealth. Sir Milton's Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) led the country to independence and the first general election under universal adult franchise in May 1962. Upon Sir Milton's death in 1964, his half-brother, Sir Albert Margai, succeeded him as Prime Minister.

In closely contested elections in March 1967, the All Peoples Congress (APC) won a plurality of the parliamentary seats. Accordingly, the Governor General (representing the British Monarch) declared Siaka Stevens—APC leader and Mayor of Freetown—as the new Prime Minister. Within a few hours, Stevens and Margai were placed under house arrest by Brigadier David Lansana, the Commander of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF), on grounds that the determination of office should await the election of the tribal representatives to the house. Another group of officers soon staged another coup, only to be later ousted in a third coup, the "sergeants' revolt," and Stevens at last, in April 1968, assumed the office of Prime Minister under the restored constitution. Siaka Stevens remained as head of state until 1985. Under his rule, in 1978, the constitution was amended and all political parties, other than the ruling APC, were banned.

In August 1985, the APC named military commander Maj. Gen. Joseph Saidu Momoh, Steven's own choice, as the party candidate. Momoh was elected President in a one-party referendum on October 1, 1985. In October 1991 Momoh had the constitution amended once again, re-establishing a multi-party system. Under Momoh, APC rule was increasingly marked by abuses of power. Earlier in 1991, in March, a small band of men who called themselves the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under the leadership of a former-corporal, Foday Sankoh, began to attack villages in eastern Sierra Leone on the Liberian border. Fighting continued in the ensuing months, with the RUF gaining control of the diamond mines in the Kono district and pushing the Sierra Leone army back towards Freetown. On April 29, 1992, a group of young military officers, led by Capt. Valentine Strasser, launched a military coup, which sent Momoh into exile in Guinea and established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) as the ruling authority in Sierra Leone.

The NPRC proved to be nearly as ineffectual as the Momoh government in repelling the RUF. More and more of the country fell to RUF fighters, so that by 1995 they held much of the countryside and were on the doorsteps of Freetown. To retrieve the situation, the NPRC hired several hundred mercenaries from the private firm Executive Outcomes. Within a month they had driven RUF fighters back to enclaves along Sierra Leone's borders.

As a result of popular demand and mounting international pressure, the NPRC agreed to hand over power to a civilian government via presidential and parliamentary elections, which were held in April 1996. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, a diplomat who had worked at the UN for more than 20 years, won the presidential election. Because of the prevailing war conditions, parliamentary elections were conducted, for the first time, under

the system of proportional representation. However, on May 25, 1997 the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Maj. Johnny Paul Koroma, overthrew President Kabbah and later invited the RUF to join the government. In March 1998 the Nigerian-led ECOMOG forces ousted the AFRC junta after 10 months in office, and reinstated the democratically elected government of President Kabbah. The RUF's renewed attempts to overthrow the government in January 1999 brought the fighting to parts of Freetown, leaving thousands dead and wounded. ECOMOG forces drove back the RUF attack several weeks later.



After the events of May 2000, a new cease-fire was necessary to reinvigorate the peace process. This agreement was signed in Abuja in November of that year. However, Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration (DDR) did not resume, and fighting continued. In late 2000, Guinean forces entered Sierra Leone to attack RUF bases from which attacks had been launched against Liberian dissidents in Guinea. A second Abuja Agreement, in May 2001, set the stage for a resumption of DDR on a wide scale and a significant reduction in hostilities. As disarmament progressed, the government began to reassert its authority in formerly rebel-held areas. By early 2002, some 72,000 ex-combatants had been disarmed and demobilized, although many still awaited re-integration assistance. On January 18, 2002 President Kabbah declared the civil war officially over. In May 2002 President Kabbah was re-elected to a five-year term along with the SLPP, which also won a landslide victory. The RUF political wing, the RUFP, failed to win a single seat in parliament. The elections were marked by irregularities and allegations of fraud, but not to a degree to significantly affect the outcome. On July 28, 2002 the British withdrew a 200-man

With the assistance of the international community, President Kabbah and RUF leader Sankoh on July 7, 1999, signed the Lomé Peace Agreement, which made Sankoh Vice President and gave other RUF members positions in the government. The accord called for an international peacekeeping force run initially by both ECOMOG and the United Nations. The UN Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999, with an initial force of 6,000. ECOMOG forces departed in April 2000. Almost immediately, however, the RUF began to violate the agreement, most notably by holding hundreds of UNAMSIL personnel hostage and capturing their arms and ammunition in the first half of 2000. On May 8, 2000, members of the RUF shot and killed as many as 20 people demonstrating against the RUF violations outside Sankoh's house in Freetown. As a result, Sankoh and other senior members of the RUF were arrested and the group was stripped of its positions in government.

military contingent that had been in country since the summer of 2000, leaving behind a 105-strong military training team to work to professionalize the Sierra Leonean army. In November 2002, UNAMSIL gradually began drawing down personnel until the end of its formal peacekeeping mission in December 2005. Following the end of the UNAMSIL mandate, the UN established the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), which assumed a peacebuilding mandate.

In the summer of 2002, Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) began operations. The Lomé Accord had called for the establishment of a TRC to provide a forum for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations during the conflict to tell their stories and to facilitate genuine reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its Final Report to the government in October 2004. In June 2005, the Government of Sierra Leone issued a White Paper on the Commission's final report which accepted some but not all of the Commission's recommendations. Members of civil society groups dismissed the government's response as too vague and continued to criticize the government for its failure to follow up on the report's recommendations.

The Special Court was established by an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone pursuant to Security Council resolution 1315 (2000) of 14 August 2000. The Court's mandate is to try those who "bear the greatest responsibility for the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes and serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as crimes under relevant Sierra Leonean law within the territory of Sierra Leone since November 30, 1996." The Special Court has issued indictments against ## individuals representing all three warring factions of Sierra Leone's civil conflict in addition to the case against former Liberian President Charles Ghankay Taylor. On June 20, 2007, the Court issued its first verdicts in the trial of the AFRC accused Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu all of whom were found guilty on 11 of 14 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Court issued an indictment against a fourth AFRC defendant, former junta leader Johnny Paul Koroma, who is rumored to have been killed, though his death remains unconfirmed. In the trial against the leaders of the Civil Defense Forces (CDF) accused, on August 2, 2007, the court found Moinana Fofana and Allieu Kondewa guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. A third defendant in the CDF trial, Sam Hinga Norman, the former Minister of Interior and head of the CDF died in Dakar prior to the announcement of a judgment.

Five alleged leaders of the RUF, Foday Saybana Sankoh, Sam Bockarie, Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon, and Augustine Gbao, were indicted on 18 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. The indictments against Sankoh and Bockarie were withdrawn on 8 December 2003 due to the deaths of the two accused. On March 25, 2006, with the election of Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo permitted transfer of Charles Taylor, who had been living in exile in the Nigerian coastal town of Calobar, to Sierra Leone for prosecution.

Two days later, Taylor attempted to flee Nigeria, but he was apprehended by Nigerian authorities and transferred to Freetown under UN guard. Taylor is now being held in The Hague, where he awaits trial before the Special Court on 11 indictments of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Taylor is being tried before the Special Court on 11 indictments of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Sierra Leone is a republic with an executive president and a multi-party system of government with a 124-seat parliament (112 elected members and 12 paramount chiefs). On August 11, 2007, Sierra Leone held nationwide presidential and parliamentary elections for the first time since the departure of UN peacekeepers. In the parliamentary elections, the National Election Commission reported the All People's Congress (APC) won a parliamentary majority taking 59 of 112 seats, while the ruling Sierra Leone's People's Party (SLPP) took 43 seats. The People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) won 10 seats in Parliament. In addition to their peaceful administration, the 2007 parliamentary elections were notable for the return to a constituency-based system, as called for in the 1991 constitution. In preparation for the elections, Sierra Leone redrew parliament's constituency boundaries for the first time since 1985.

According to the NEC official results of the August 11 presidential election, APC presidential candidate Ernest Koroma won 44.3 percent of the total 1,839,208 votes cast, while former Vice President and SLPP presidential candidate, Solomon Berewa, finished with 38.9 percent. PMDC presidential candidate Charles Margai placed third receiving 13.9 of the vote. Because none of the candidates won the 55 percent of the vote needed to win in the first round, a run-off election was held on September 8, 2007. The two leading candidates, former Vice President Solomon Berewa of the SLPP and Ernest Bai Koroma of the APC contest the second round. On September 17 Sierra Leone's National Election Commission declared Ernest Bai Koroma the winner with 54.6 percent of the vote. President Koroma was sworn in later that day at the Sierra Leone Statehouse.

Sierra Leone's judicial system consists of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, High Court of Justice, and magistrate courts. The president appoints and parliament approves justices for the three courts. Local chieftaincy courts administer customary law with lay judges; appeals from these lower courts are heard by the superior courts. Judicial presence outside the capital district remains limited, which contributes to excessive delays in the justice system.

Although magistrate courts function in all 12 judicial districts, magistrates appointed to those courts did not reside there permanently and complained that they had insufficient resources to do their job. Justices of the peace or customary law partially fill the gap. Civil rights and religious freedom are respected. A critical press continues to operate, although journalists and editors are occasionally arrested for publishing articles the government considers inflammatory.

In 2000 the Government of Sierra Leone promulgated the Anti-Corruption Act to combat endemic corruption. The Anti Corruption Commission has not been able to secure convictions of high-level government officials, but has worked to raise national awareness of the problem and build in safeguards in "corruption hotspot" ministries.

The basic unit of local government outside the Western Area has generally been the chiefdom, headed by a paramount chief, who is elected for a life term. In May 2004, however, the first local government elections in 32 years were held in 311 wards nationwide. There are now 12 district councils and 5 town councils outside the Western Area. The Western Area has a rural area council and a city council for Freetown, the nation's capital. The local councils are gradually assuming responsibility for functions previously carried out by the central government. As devolution progresses, chiefdom and council authorities are starting to work together to collect taxes. While district and town councils are responsible for service delivery, chiefdom authorities maintain their own infrastructure of police and courts, which are also funded by local taxes.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Ernest Bai KOROMA**
Vice Pres.: **Samuel SAMSUMANA**
Min. of Agriculture & Food Security: **Sam SESAY**
Min. of Country Planning, Forestry, Environment, & Social Welfare: **Alfred Bobson SESAY**
Min. of Defense & National Security: **Paulo CONTEH**
Min. of Development & Economic Planning: **Mohammed B. DARAMY**
Min. of Education, Youth, & Sport: **Minkailu BAH**
Min. of Energy & Power: **Haja Afsatu KABBA**
Min. of Finance & Development: **David Omashola CAREW**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Intl. Cooperation: **Zainab Hawa BANGURA**
Min. of Health: **Soccoh KABIA, Dr.**
Min. of Housing & Infrastructural Development: **John SAAD**
Min. of Information & Broadcasting: **Ibrahim Ben KARGBO**
Min. of Internal Affairs & Local Governments: **Dauda KAMARA**
Min. of Justice & Attorney Gen.: **Abdul SERRY-KAMAL**
Min. of Labor & Industrial Relations: **Minkailu MANSARAY**
Min. of Local Government & Community Development: **Sidikie BRIMA**
Min. of Marine Resources: **Moses KAPU**
Min. of Mineral Resources: **Abubacar JALLOH**
Min. of Presidential & Public Affairs: **Alpha KANU**
Min. of Social Welfare: **Musu KANDEH**
Min. of Tourism & Cultural Affairs: **Hindole TRYE**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Alimamy KOROMA**
Min. of Transport & Aviation: **Kemoh SESAY**
Min. of State for Eastern Region: **Sahr Randolph FILLIE-FABOE**
Min. of State for Northern Region: **Alex Alie KARGBO**
Min. of State for Southern Region: **S. U. M. JAH**
Governor, Central Bank: **Samira KAMARA**
Ambassador to the US: **Ibrahim M. KAMARA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Joe Robert PEMAGBI**

Sierra Leone maintains an embassy in the United States at 1701 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC, 20009, tel. 202-939-9261, www.embassyofsierraleone.org; and a permanent mission to the United Nations in New York at 245 East 49th Street, New York, New York 10017, tel. (212) 688-1656.

ECONOMY

Rich in minerals, Sierra Leone has relied on the mining sector in general, and diamonds in particular, for its economic base. In the 1970s and early 1980s, economic growth rate slowed because of a decline in the mining sector and increasing corruption among government officials. By the 1990s economic activity was declining and economic infrastructure had become seriously degraded. Over the next decade much of Sierra Leone's formal economy was destroyed in the country's civil war. Since the cessation of hostilities in January 2002, massive infusions of outside assistance have helped Sierra Leone begin to recover.

Full recovery to pre-war economic levels will require hundreds of millions of additional dollars and many more years of serious effort by the Government of Sierra Leone and donor governments. Much of Sierra Leone's recovery will depend on the success of Government of Sierra Leone efforts to limit official corruption, which many feel was the chief culprit for the country's descent into civil war. A key indicator of success will be the effectiveness of government management of its diamond sector. About two-thirds of the population engages in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52.5% of national income. The government is trying to increase food and cash crop production and upgrade small farmer skills. Also, the government works with several foreign donors to operate integrated rural development and agricultural projects.

Mineral exports remain Sierra Leone's principal foreign exchange earner. Sierra Leone is a major pro-

ducer of gem-quality diamonds. Though rich in this resource, the country has historically struggled to manage its exploitation and export. Annual production estimates range between $250-300 million. However, not all of that passes through formal export channels, although formal exports have dramatically improved since the days of civil war (1999: $1.2 million; 2000: $7 million; 2001: $26 million; 2002: $42 million; 2003: $76 million; 2004: $127 million; 2005: $142 million). The balance is smuggled, where it possibly is used for money laundering or financing illicit activities. Efforts to improve the management of the export trade have met with some success. In October 2000, a UN-approved export certification system for exporting diamonds from Sierra Leone was put into place that led to a dramatic increase in legal exports. In 2001, the Government of Sierra Leone created a mining community development fund, which returns a portion of diamond export taxes to diamond mining communities. The fund was created to raise local communities' stake in the legal diamond trade.

Sierra Leone has one of the world's largest deposits of rutile, a titanium ore used as paint pigment and welding rod coatings. Sierra Rutile Limited, owned by a consortium of U.S. and European investors, began commercial mining operations near Bonthe in early 1979. Sierra Rutile was then the largest nonpetroleum U.S. investment in West Africa. The export of 88,000 tons realized $75 million in export earnings in 1990. The company and the Government of Sierra Leone concluded a new agreement on the terms of the company's concession in Sierra Leone in 1990. Rutile and bauxite mining operations were suspended when rebels invaded the mining sites in 1995, but exports resumed in 2005.

Since independence, the Government of Sierra Leone has encouraged foreign investment, although the business climate has been hampered by a shortage of foreign exchange, corruption, and uncertainty resulting from civil conflicts. Investors are protected by an agreement that allows for arbitration under the 1965 World Bank Convention. Legislation provides for transfer of interest, dividends, and capital. The government passed the Investment Promotion Act in August 2004 to attract foreign investors and has been working with international financial institutions to lower its administrative barriers to trade.

Sierra Leone is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). With Liberia and Guinea, it formed the Mano River Union (MRU) customs union, primarily designed to implement development projects and promote regional economic integration. However, the MRU has been inactive because of domestic problems and internal and cross-border conflicts in all three countries. The future of the MRU depends on the ability of its members to deal with the fallout from these internal and regional problems. Sierra Leone's latest International Monetary Fund (IMF) poverty reduction and growth facility (PRGF) expired in June 2005. A new agreement is not yet in place, but Sierra Leone's economic policy is expected to shift from post-conflict stabilization to poverty-reduction efforts, including good governance and fighting corruption; job creation; and food security.

Sierra Leone continues to rely on significant amounts of foreign assistance, principally from multilateral donors. The bilateral donors include the United States, Italy, and Germany, but the largest are the United Kingdom and the European Union.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Sierra Leone has maintained cordial relations with the West, in particular with the United Kingdom. It also maintains diplomatic relations with China, Libya, Cuba, and Iran.

Sierra Leone is a member of the UN and its specialized agencies, the Commonwealth, the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Development Bank (AFDB), the Mano River Union (MRU), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

U.S.-SIERRA LEONE RELATIONS

U.S. relations with Sierra Leone began with missionary activities in the 19th century. In 1959, the U.S. opened a consulate in Freetown and elevated it to embassy status when Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. U.S.-Sierra Leone relations today are cordial, with ethnic ties between groups in the two countries receiving increasing historical interest. Many thousands of Sierra Leoneans reside in the United States. In fiscal year 2006, total U.S. bilateral aid to Sierra Leone in all categories was $29.538 million. U.S. assistance focused on the consolidation of peace, democracy and human rights, health education, particularly combating HIV/AIDS, and human resources development.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

FREETOWN (E) Leicester, Freetown, 232-22-515-000 or 232-76-515-000, Fax 232-22-515-225, Workweek: M-T 0800-1715, F 0800-1300, Website: http://freetown.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Becky Cheney
AMB OMS:	Lontria A. Beale
FM:	Dirk Rettberg
HRO:	Judy Marcouiller
MGT:	Ola Criss
POL/ECO:	Amy Lemar
AMB:	June C. Perry
CON:	Reginald Mchugh
DCM:	Elizabeth Susie Pratt
PAO:	Danna Van Brandt
GSO:	James Kennedy
RSO:	Bryan Scruggs
AFSA:	Clara D. Pieh
AID:	Christine M. Sheckler
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Ltc. Leslie M. Bryant
DEA:	Sam Gaye-Res Lagos
EEO:	Meg E. Riggs–Resident In Monrovia
FMO:	Ola Criss
ICASS Chair:	Christine Sheckler
IMO:	Josh Hromatka

IRS: Kathy Beck
ISSO: Josh Hromatka
LEGATT: Alvie L. Price
State ICASS: Danna Van Brandt

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 10, 2008

Country Description: Sierra Leone is a developing country in western Africa still recovering from a ten-year civil war that ended in 2002. English is the official language, but Krio, an English-based language, is widely used. Tourist facilities in the capital, Freetown, are limited; elsewhere, they are rudimentary or nonexistent.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Visitors are strongly encouraged to obtain visas in advance of travel to Sierra Leone. Visitors to Sierra Leone are required to show International Certificates of Vaccination (yellow card) upon arrival at the airport with a record of vaccination against yellow fever. The Embassy of Sierra Leone is located at 1701 19th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009; telephone (202) 939-9261.

The Embassy also maintains a web site at www.embassyofsierraleone.org. Information may also be obtained from the Sierra Leonean Mission to the United Nations, 245 East 49th St., New York, NY 10017; telephone (212) 688-1656 and from the website of the Sierra Leonean High Commission in London at www.slhc-uk.org.uk. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Sierra Leonean embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: Security in Sierra Leone has improved significantly since the end of the civil war in 2002. The United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) withdrew in December 2005 and Sierra Leone resumed responsibilities for its own security. The Sierra Leonean police are working to improve their professionalism and capabilities, but fall short of American standards in response time, communications, and specialty skills.

Areas outside Freetown lack most basic services. Embassy employees are free to travel throughout Sierra Leone. Travelers are urged to exercise caution, however, especially when traveling beyond the capital. Road conditions are hazardous and serious vehicle accidents are common. Emergency response to vehicular and other accidents ranges from slow to nonexistent.

There are occasional unauthorized, possibly armed, roadblocks outside Freetown, where travelers might be asked to pay a small amount of money to the personnel manning the roadblock. Because many Sierra Leoneans do not speak English, especially outside of Freetown, it can be difficult for foreigners to communicate their identity. Public demonstrations are rare but can turn violent. U.S. citizens should are advised to avoid large crowds, political rallies, and street demonstrations, and maintain security awareness at all times.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Entrenched poverty in Sierra Leone has led to criminality. Visitors and resident Americans have experienced armed mugging, assault and burglary. Petty crime and pick pocketing of wallets, cell phones, and passports are very common especially on the ferry to and from Lungi International Airport. Law enforcement authorities usually respond to crimes slowly, if at all. Police investigative response is often incomplete and don't provide support to victims. Inefficiency and corruption is a serious problem at all levels within the government of Sierra Leone. Americans traveling to or residing in Sierra Leone should maintain a heightened sense of awareness of their surroundings to help avoid becoming the victims of crime.

Upon arrival in Sierra Leone, U.S. citizens are urged to register at the Embassy in Freetown (see Registration/Embassy Location section below) where they may obtain current safety information and advice on minimizing risks.

The Embassy receives regular reports from potential American investors who have been victims of fraud, often in the mining industry. While law enforcement authorities have been involved in investigating the cases, many remain unresolved. Investors are urged to proceed cautiously when engaging in business transactions with individuals presenting themselves as legitimate diamond/gold dealers. It is not uncommon for registered diamond/gold dealers to target foreigners using sophisticated scams resulting in significant financial loss.

Business fraud is rampant and the perpetrators often target foreigners, including Americans. Schemes previously associated with Nigeria are now prevalent throughout West Africa, including Sierra Leone, and pose a danger of grave financial loss. Typically these scams begin with unsolicited communication (usually e-mails) from strangers who promise quick financial gain, often by transferring large sums of money or valuables out of the country, but then require a series of "advance fees" to be paid, such as fees for legal documents or taxes. Of course, the final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scam is simply to collect the advance fees. A common variation is the scammer's claim to be a refugee or émigré of a prominent West African family, or a relative of a present or former political leader who needs assistance in transferring large sums of cash. Still other variations appear to be legitimate business deals that require advance payments on contracts. Sometimes victims are convinced to provide bank account and credit card information and financial

authorization that drains their accounts, incurs large debts against their credit, and takes their life savings.

The best way to avoid becoming a victim of advance-fee fraud is common sense—if a proposition looks too good to be true, it probably is. You should carefully check and research any unsolicited business proposal before committing any funds, providing any goods or services, or undertaking any travel. It is virtually impossible to recover money lost through these scams. Please see the Department of State's brochure on International Financial Scams for more information.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Quality and comprehensive medical services are very limited in Freetown, and are almost nonexistent for all but most minor treatment outside of the capital. Persons with unstable chronic medical conditions that require on-going medical treatment or medications are discouraged from traveling to Sierra Leone. Medicines are in short supply and due to inadequate diagnostic equipment, lack of medical resources and limited medical specialty personnel, complex diagnosis and treatment are unavailable. The quality of medications in Sierra Leone is inconsistent and counterfeit drugs remain a problem. Local pharmacies are generally unreliable. In the event medications are needed, such as over-the-counter medication, antibiotics, allergy remedies, or malaria prophylaxis, travelers may contact U.S. Embassy Health Unit personnel to receive general information about reliable pharmacies.

Medical facilities in Sierra Leone are scarce and for the most part sub-standard; outside the capital, standards are even lower. There is no ambulance service in Sierra Leone, trauma care is extremely limited, and local hospitals should only be used in the event of an extreme medical emergency.

Many primary health care workers, especially in rural areas, lack adequate professional training. Instances of misdiagnosis, improper treatment, and the administration of improper drugs have been reported. Life-threatening emergencies often require evacuation by air ambulance at the patient's expense. For a list of hospitals, visit our web site at http://visitfreetown.usembassy.gov.

Gastrointestinal diseases and malaria pose serious risk to travelers in Sierra Leone. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Sierra Leone is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Most main roads in Freetown are narrow and paved but have potholes; extremely narrow unpaved side streets are generally navigable. Most roads outside Freetown are unpaved and are generally passable with a 4-wheel drive vehicle. However, certain stretches of mapped road are often impassable during the rainy season, which usually lasts from May to September. During the rainy season, add several hours to travel time between Freetown and outlying areas. There is a major road repair and resurfacing program going on throughout the country that is slowly improving the quality of roads. Public transport (bus or group taxi) is erratic, unsafe, and not recommended. U.S. government employees are prohibited from using public transportation except for taxis that operate in conjunction with an approved hotel and that are rented on a daily basis.

Many vehicles on the road in Sierra Leone are unsafe and accidents resulting from the poor condition of these vehicles, including multi-vehicle accidents, are common. Many drivers on the road in Sierra Leone are inexperienced and often drive without proper license or training. Serious accidents are common, especially outside of Freetown, where the relative lack of traffic allows for greater speeds.

The chance of being involved in an accident increases greatly when traveling at night, and Embassy officials are not authorized to travel outside of major cities after dark.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Sierra Leone, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Sierra Leone's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet website at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Lungi Airport is located across a large body of water from Freetown. There are usually four travel options to/from Lungi airport: helicopter, ferry, hovercraft and by road. While none is without risk, all are used by Embassy personnel. The cost for the ferry service is minimal; however, the service experiences frequent delays, and the ferry terminal is located in East Freetown, which has a higher crime rate than other parts of the capital. When the hovercraft and helicopter services are operating, they charge approximately $50-70 each way (payable in U.S. currency). Passengers departing Freetown by air should expect to pay an airport tax of $40.00 (payable in U.S. Dollars).

Sierra Leone is a cash economy. However, an anti-money laundering law passed in July 2005 prohibits importing more than $10,000 in cash except through a financial institution. Travelers are advised not to use credit cards in Sierra Leone because very few facilities accept them and there is a serious risk that using a card will lead to the number being stolen for use in fraudulent transactions. There are no ATMs connected to international networks. Travelers' checks are not usually accepted as payment; however, they can be cashed at some banks including Sierra Leone Commercial Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and Rokel Commercial Bank. The traveler must have proof of identification and a signed receipt by the institution where the travelers' checks were purchased. Currency exchanges should be handled through a bank or established foreign exchange bureau. Exchanging money with street vendors is dangerous because criminals may "mark" such people for future attack and there is the risk of receiving counterfeit currency. Sierra Leone's customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning the export of gems and precious minerals, such as diamonds and gold. All mineral resources, including gold and diamonds, belong to the State and only the government of Sierra Leone can issue mining and export licenses. The legal authority for the issuance of licenses is vested in the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources. Failure to comply with relevant legislation can lead to serious criminal penalties. For further information on mining activities in Sierra Leone, contact the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources: The Director of Mines, Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources, Fifth Floor, Youyi Building, Brookfields, Freetown, Sierra Leone; tel. (232-22) 240-420 or 240-176; fax (232-22) 240-574.

Corruption is a problem in Sierra Leone. Travelers requesting service from government officials at any level may be asked for bribes. Corrupt government officials should be reported to the Anti-Corruption Commission at one of the following locations: The Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission, 3 Gloucester Street, Freetown; 14a Lightfoot Boston Street, Freetown; 37 Kissy Town Road, Bo, Southern Province; Independence Square, Rogbaneh Road, Makeni; tel. (232- 22) 229-984 or 227-100 or 221-701; fax (232-22) 221-900; email: acc@sierratel.sl or info@anticorruption.sl, the web site for the Anti Corruption Commission in Sierra Leone at http://www.anticorruptionsl.org/anonymous.html.

Travelers must obtain official permission to photograph government buildings, airports, bridges, or official facilities including the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the United States Embassy. Areas where photography is prohibited may not be clearly marked or defined. People sometimes do not want to be photographed for religious reasons or may want to be paid for posing. Photographers should ask permission before taking someone's picture.

U.S. citizens who are also Sierra Leonean nationals must provide proof of payment of taxes on revenues earned in Sierra Leone before being granted clearance to depart the country. The Government of Sierra Leone now recognizes dual U.S.-Sierra Leonean citizenship. However; the U.S. Embassy may have difficulty assisting American citizens involved in legal or criminal proceedings if they entered the country on a Sierra Leonean passport.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Sierra Leone's judiciary is under-funded and overburdened, and offenders often must endure lengthy pre-trial or pre-hearing delays and detention. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Sierra Leone laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Sierra Leone are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Travelers should carefully check their passport to see the length of time they are permitted to remain in the country and the validity of their visa. Travelers leaving the country with an expired visa may incur additional charges. Any Sierra Leonean visa issues can be regulated at the immigration office at Rawdon Street in Freetown.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov. A significant number of American prospective adoptive parents have found that Sierra Leonean children offered for adoption are not orphans under U.S. immigration law,

which has ultimately resulted in denials of U.S. immigrant visas for children they adopt in Sierra Leonean courts.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Sierra Leone are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Sierra Leone. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Leicester Square, Regent; tel. (232) (22) 515 000 or (232) (76) 515 000; fax (232) (22) 515 355. The Embassy maintains a home page on the Internet at http://freetown.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

December 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Under Sierra Leonean law, adoptive parents are currently required to be resident in Sierra Leone for six months and to attend the court hearing for the adoption. Although in the past the High Court of Sierra Leone would sometimes waive either the personal appearance of prospective adoptive parents at adoption proceedings or the six-month residency requirement, this was always at the Court's discretion and should not be considered the norm. The High Court is currently reviewing its application of the Adoption Act and practices may change without notice.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs is the government office responsible for overseeing adoptions and child welfare issues in Sierra Leone. The High Court is the only authority in Sierra Leone that can issue an order granting an adoption or legal custody of minor children. The Ministry's address is:

Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender & Children's Affairs
New England, Freetown
Sierra Leone
Tel: (232) 22 241 256

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Any adult may adopt children. There are no marriage requirements or specific age requirements. The place of birth and residence of the adoptive parent are not determining factors.

Residency Requirements: Adoptive parents are currently required to be resident in Sierra Leone for six months and to attend the court hearing for the adoption. In the past, the High Court of Sierra Leone sometimes waived the six-month residency requirement required by the Sierra Leone Adoption Act of 1989. This was always at the Court's discretion, and should not be considered the norm. The High Court does continue to mandate that adoptive parents personally attend the court hearing for the adoption. The High Court is currently reviewing its application of the Adoption Act and practices may change without notice.

Time Frame: There are no fixed time lines or constraints on the Court's processing of adoptions. In the past, U.S. prospective adoptive parents have taken between six months to two years to complete the adoption procedures.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: The U.S. Embassy in Freetown maintains a list of local attorneys which is available upon request. There are no registered adoption agencies in Sierra Leone. There are organizations registered as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or private voluntary organizations (PVOs) that provide assistance to children and facilitate intercountry adoptions. While the Government of Sierra Leone does not have a list of registered NGOs or PVOs, your adoption agency should be able to provide you with copies of a local organization's registration certificates. The U.S. Embassy cannot recommend the services of any specific attorney or organization.

Adoption Fees: Official government fees associated with adoptions in Sierra Leone are minimal and consist mainly of court filing costs. Such filing fees normally are less than U.S. $10. The cost of employing local counsel varies, but prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay several hundred dollars at a minimum for an attorney. Some adoption agencies charge prospective adoptive parents monthly maintenance fees that can be several hundred dollars per month. While monthly maintenance fees are legal in Sierra Leone, it appears that some local orphanages may have delayed adoption proceedings in order to continue payments of maintenance fees longer than necessary.

Adoption Procedures: Most prospective adoptive parents work through an adoption agency in the U.S., which in turn maintains a relationship with an orphanage or organization in Sierra Leone, throughout the adoption process. To initiate an adoption, an attorney in Sierra Leone sends a letter with relevant documents attached to the Social Development Officer in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs in Freetown. After the Social Development Officer approves the

prospective adoption the attorney files a petition for adoption with the High Court of the Sierra Leone. The petition usually contains the following information:

- name, age, residence, and marital status of the petitioners;
- name, date and place of birth of the child;
- the date and manner in which the petitioners or orphanage acquired physical custody of the child;
- facts (if any) that render consent of either birth parent unnecessary;
- the petitioners' desire to adopt the child; and
- the child's change of name, if any.

Following the filing of the petition, the High Court normally serves notice on all interested parties. The High Court may require written consent by the biological parents. If the child was born in wedlock, the consent of both parents may be required. If the child was born out of wedlock, only the mother must consent. The High Court will not require the consent of the biological parents if those parents have legally abandoned the child, if a Sierra Leonean governmental or judicial authority has terminated their parental rights or appointed a different legal guardian for the children, or if the parents are deceased. Birth parents who have granted consent to the adoption may withdraw this consent at any point during the adoption proceedings, with the High Court's permission.

The High Court may order an investigation by an investigator appointed by the Court. The investigator should file a written report of the investigation with the High Court within 30 days of issuance of the investigation order. The High Court will schedule a hearing. The High Court currently requires at least one prospect adopting parent and the adoptive children to attend the hearing. The High Court may waive the appearance of the child for good cause and will usually state this in the order of adoption. The High Court must be satisfied that the "moral and temporal interests" of the child will be served by the adoption. While the High Court usually makes a ruling after one hearing, in some cases it will request additional documentation and/or investigation and schedule another hearing. If the High Court approves the adoption, it will issue a court order that either grants a full and final adoption, or authorizes the leave to adopt. There are no fixed time-lines or constraints on the High Court's processing of adoptions.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Required Documents:

- Petition for Adoption;
- Written consent of living biological parents;
- Affidavits concerning the prospective adoptive parents;
- Marriage certificate if appropriate;
- Evidence of finances such as bank statements and job letters;
- The High Court may also require additional documentation on a case-by-case basis.

Embassy of Sierra Leone
1701 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
Telephone: (202) 939-9261
Fax: (202) 483-1793

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Leicester
Freetown, Sierra Leone
Telephone: 232-22-515-000 or
232-76-515-000
E-mail: consularfreetown@state.gov

Mailing Address:
U.S. Embassy
Consular Section
2160 Freetown Place
Washington, DC 20521-2160

International Mailing Address:
Consular Section
American Embassy
P O Box 50
Freetown, Sierra Leone
or
Consular Section
U.S. Embassy
Leicester
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Sierra Leone may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone by emailing consularfreetown@state.gov or the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal by emailing consulardakar@state.gov. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SINGAPORE

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Singapore

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 704 sq. km. (271 sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Singapore (country is a city-state).
Terrain: Lowland.
Climate: Tropical.

People

Population: (2007) 4.59 million (including permanent residents, foreign workers).
Annual growth rate: (2007) 4.3% (total); 1.6% (Singapore citizens and permanent residents).
Ethnic groups: Chinese 75.2%, Malays 13.7%, Indians 8.8%.
Religions: Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Christian, Hindu.
Languages: English, Mandarin and other Chinese dialects, Malay, Tamil.
Education: Years compulsory—six. Attendance—96.1%. Literacy—95.7%.
Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—2.1/1,000. Life expectancy—78.2 yrs. male, 82.9 yrs. female.
Work force: (2007, 2.75 million) Manufacturing—20.8%; services—67.7%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary republic.
Constitution: June 3, 1959 (amended 1965 and 1991).
Independence: August 9, 1965.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state, 6-yr. term); prime minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral 84-member Parliament (maximum 5-yr. term). Judicial—High Court, Court of Appeal, subordinate courts.
Political parties: People's Action Party (PAP), Workers' Party (WP), Singapore's Peoples Party (SPP), Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), Singapore Democratic Alliance.
Suffrage: Universal and compulsory at 21.
Budget: (FY 2008) $26.8 billion.
Defense: (FY 2008) 4.0% of gross domestic product.
National holidays: August 9.

Economy

GDP: (2007 real, 2000 prices) $168.7 billion.
Annual real growth rate: 7.3% (2005), 8.2% (2006), 7.7% (2007).
Per capita GNP: (2007) $36,771.
Natural resources: None.
Agriculture: (under 0.5% of GDP) Products—poultry, orchids, vegetables, fruits, ornamental fish.
Manufacturing: (26.2% of real GDP) Types—electronic and electrical products and components, petroleum products, machinery and metal products, chemical and pharmaceutical products, transport equipment (mainly aircraft repairs/maintenance, shipbuilding/repair and oil rigs), food and beverages, printing and publishing, textiles and garments, plastic products/modules, instrumentation equipment.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$313 billion: petroleum products, food/beverages, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, industrial machinery and equipment, electronic components, telecommunication apparatus, transport equipment. Major markets—Malaysia (12.9%), EU (10.7%), Hong Kong (10.5%), Indonesia (9.8%), China (9.7%), United States (8.8%), and Japan (4.8%). Imports—$275 billion: aircraft, crude oil and petroleum products, electronic components, radio and television receivers/parts, motor vehicles, chemicals, food/beverages, iron/steel, electricity generators. Major suppliers—Malaysia (13.1%), EU (12.4%), United States (12.3%), China (12.1%), and Japan (8.2%).

PEOPLE

Singapore is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The annual growth rate for 2007 (mid-year) was 4.4%, including resident foreigners. Singapore has a varied linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage. Malay is the national language, but Chinese, English, and Tamil also are official languages. English is the language of administration and also

is widely used in the professions, businesses, and schools. The government has mandated that English be the primary language used at all levels of the school systems, and it aims to provide at least 10 years of education for every child. In 2007, primary and secondary school students totaled about 534,737, or 11.7% of the entire population. In 2007, enrollment at public universities was 65,746 (full-time/part-time) and 72,379 at the polytechnics. The Institute of Technical Education for basic technical and commerce skills has 23,465 students. The country's literacy rate is 95.7%.

Singapore generally allows religious freedom, although religious groups are subject to government scrutiny, and some religious sects are restricted or banned. Almost all Malays are Muslim; other Singaporeans are Taoists, Buddhists, Confucianists, Christians, Hindus, or Sikhs.

HISTORY

Although Singapore's history dates from the 11th century, the island was little known to the West until the 19th century, when in 1819, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles arrived as an agent of the British East India Company. In 1824, the British purchased Singapore Island, and by 1825, the city of Singapore had become a major port, with trade exceeding that of Malaya's Malacca and Penang combined. In 1826, Singapore, Penang, and Malacca were combined as the Straits Settlements to form an outlying residency of the British East India Company; in 1867, the Straits Settlements were made a British Crown Colony, an arrangement that continued until 1946.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the advent of steamships launched an era of prosperity for Singapore as transit trade expanded throughout Southeast Asia. In the 20th century, the automobile industry's demand for rubber from Southeast Asia and the packaging industry's need for tin helped make Singapore one of the world's major ports. In 1921, the British constructed a naval base, which was soon supplemented by an air base. But the Japanese captured the island in February 1942, and it remained under their control until September 1945, when the British returned.

In 1946, the Straits Settlements was dissolved; Penang and Malacca became part of the Malayan Union, and Singapore became a separate British Crown Colony. In 1959, Singapore became self-governing, and, in 1963, it joined the newly independent Federation of Malaya, Sabah, and Sarawak—the latter two former British Borneo territories—to form Malaysia.

Indonesia adopted a policy of "confrontation" against the new federation, charging that it was a "British colonial creation," and severed trade with Malaysia. The move particularly affected Singapore, since Indonesia had been the island's second-largest trading partner. The political dispute was resolved in 1966, and Indonesia resumed trade with Singapore.

After a period of friction between Singapore and the central government in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore separated from Malaysia on August 9, 1965, and became an independent republic.

GOVERNMENT

According to the constitution, as amended in 1965, Singapore is a republic with a parliamentary system of government. Political authority rests with the prime minister and the cabinet. The prime minister is the leader of the political party or coalition of parties having the majority of seats in Parliament. The president, who is chief of state, previously exercised only ceremonial duties. As a result of 1991 constitutional changes, the president is now elected and exercises expanded powers over legislative appointments, government budgetary affairs, and internal security matters. The unicameral Parliament currently consists of 84 members elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage, and up to nine "nominated" members of Parliament. A constitutional provision assures at least three opposition members, even if fewer than three actually are elected. A "nonconstituency" seat held by the opposition under this provision since 1997 was again filled after the last election held on May 6, 2006. In the May 2006 general election, the governing People's Action Party (PAP) won 82 of the 84 seats.

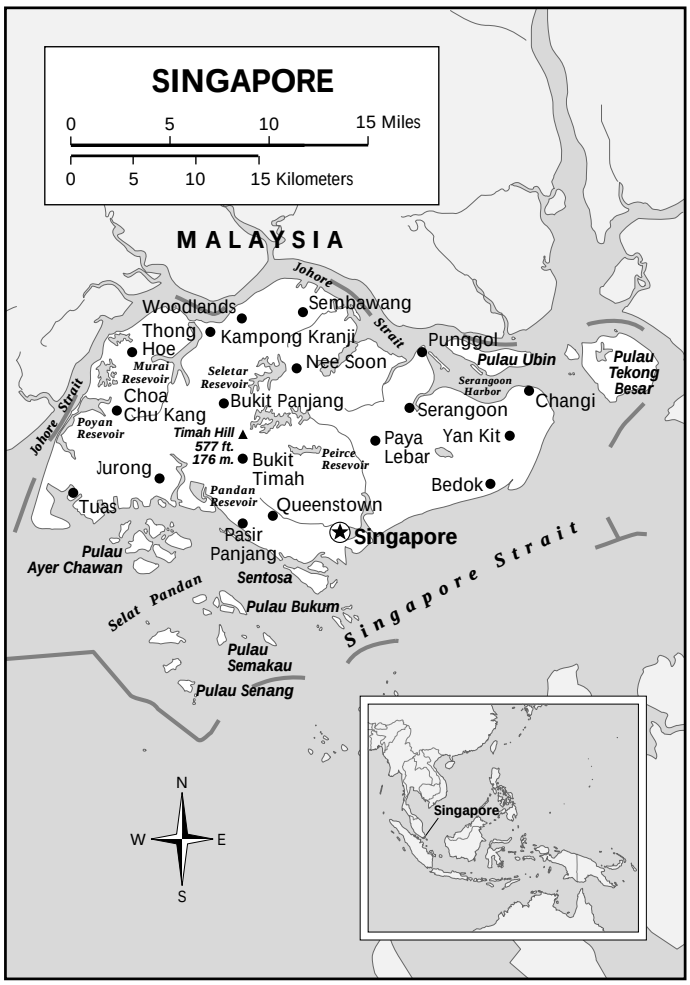
The president appoints nominated members of Parliament from among nominations by a special select committee. Nominated members of Parliament (NMP's) enjoy the same privileges as members of Parliament but cannot vote on constitutional matters or expenditures of funds. The maximum term of anyone in Parliament is 5 years. NMP's serve for two-and-a-half-year terms. Voting has been compulsory since 1959.

Judicial power is vested in the High Court and the Court of Appeal. The High Court exercises original criminal and civil jurisdiction in serious cases as well as appellate jurisdiction from subordinate courts. Its chief justice, senior judge, and twelve judges are appointed by the president. Appeals from the High Court are heard by the Court of Appeal. The right of appeal to the Privy Council in London was abolished effective April 1994.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Sellapan Rama NATHAN**
Prime Min.: **LEE Hsien Loong**
Dep. Prime Min., Prime Minister's Office: **Shunmugam JAYAKUMAR**
Dep. Prime Min., Prime Minister's Office: **WONG Kan Seng**
Senior Min., Prime Minister's Office: **GOH Chok Tong**
Min. Mentor, Prime Minister's Office: **LEE Kuan Yew**
Coordinating Min. for National Security, Prime Minister's Office: **Shunmugam JAYAKUMAR**
Min. for Community Development, Youth, & Sports: **Vivian BALAKRISHNAN**
Min. for Defense: **TEO Chee Hean, RAdm. (Ret.)**



Min. for Education: **NG Eng Hen**
Min. for the Environment & Water Resources: **YAACOB Ibrahim**
Min. for Finance: **THARMAN Shanmugaratnam**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **George Yong-Boon YEO**
Min. for Health: **KHAW Boon Wan**
Min. for Home Affairs: **WONG Kan Seng**
Min. for Information, Communications, & the Arts: **LEE Boon Yang**
Min. for Law: **K. SHANMUGAM**
Min. for Manpower (Acting): **GAN Kim Yong**
Min. in Charge of Muslim Affairs: **YAACOB Ibrahim**
Min. for National Development: **MAH Bow Tan**
Min. for Trade & Industry: **LIM Hng Kiang**
Min. for Transport: **Raymond LIM Siang Keat**
Min., Prime Minister's Office: **LIM Swee Say**
Min., Prime Minister's Office: **LIM Boon Heng**
Chmn., Monetary Authority of Singapore: **GOH Chok Tong**
Ambassador to the US: **CHAN Heng Chee**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Vanu Gopala MENON**

Singapore maintains an embassy in the United States at 3501 International Place NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202/537-3100, fax 202/537-0876).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The ruling political party in Singapore, reelected continuously since 1959, is the People's Action Party (PAP), headed by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. The PAP has held the overwhelming majority of seats in Parliament since 1966, when the opposition Barisan Sosialis Party (Socialist Front), a left-wing group that split off from the PAP in 1961, resigned from Parliament, leaving the PAP as the sole representative party. In the general elections of 1968, 1972, 1976, and 1980, the PAP won all of the seats in an expanding Parliament.

Workers' Party Secretary General J.B. Jeyaretnam became the first opposition party member of Parliament in 15 years when he won a 1981 by-election. Opposition parties gained small numbers of seats in the general elections of 1984 (2 out of 79), 1988 (1 of 81), 1991 (4 of 81), 1997 (2 of 83), 2001 (2 of 84) and 2006 (2 of 84). Meanwhile, the PAP's share of the popular vote in contested seats decreased from 75% in 2001 to 66.6% in 2006. In the 2006 election, opposition parties together contested 47 of the 84 seats, the largest number in 18 years.

ECONOMY

Singapore's strategic location on major sea lanes and its industrious population have given the country an economic importance in Southeast Asia disproportionate to its small size. Upon independence in 1965, Singapore was faced with a lack of physical resources and a small domestic market. In response, the Singapore Government adopted a pro-business, pro-foreign investment, export-oriented economic policy framework, combined with state-directed investments in strategic government-owned corporations. Singapore's economic strategy proved a success, producing real growth that averaged 8.0% from 1960 to 1999. The economy picked up after the 1997 regional financial crisis, with a growth rate of 9.4% for 2000, but then fell back in tandem with the economic slowdown in the United States, Japan, and the European Union (EU), as well as the worldwide electronics slump, so that GDP shrank by 2.4% in 2001. The economy rebounded in 2002, expanding 4.0%; but it posted a slower 2.9% growth in

2003, due to the effect of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in the first half of the year. From 2004 to 2007, the economy expanded by 9.0%, 7.3%, 8.2%, and 7.7%, respectively, driven by the growth in world demand for electronics, pharmaceuticals, other manufactured goods and financial services, and in the economies of its major trading partners—the United States, European Union, Japan, and China, as well as expanding emerging markets such as India. Singapore's largely corruption-free government, skilled work force, and advanced and efficient infrastructure have attracted investments from more than 7,000 multinational corporations from the United States, Japan, and Europe. Also present are 1,500 companies from China and another 1,500 from India.

Foreign firms are found in almost all sectors of the economy. Multinational corporations account for more than two-thirds of manufacturing output and direct export sales, although certain services sectors remain dominated by government-linked companies.

Manufacturing and services are the twin engines of the Singapore economy and accounted for 26.2% and 63.3%, respectively, of Singapore's gross domestic product in 2007. The electronics and chemicals industries lead Singapore's manufacturing sector, accounting for 31.6% and 33.3%, respectively, of Singapore's manufacturing output in 2007. To inject new life to the tourism sector, which faced a 20% fall in receipts between 1993-2000 and a declining share of East Asia Pacific tourism receipts from 8.2% to 5.8%, the government in April 2005 approved the development of two casinos that should result in investments of more than U.S. $5 billion. Las Vegas Sands' Marina Bay Sands Resort is scheduled to be completed in late 2009, while Genting International's Resort World is scheduled to open by 2010.

To maintain its competitive position despite rising wages, the government seeks to promote higher value-added activities in the manufacturing and services sectors. It also has opened, or is in the process of opening, the financial services, telecommunications, and power generation and retailing sectors to foreign service-providers and greater competition. The government also has pursued cost-cutting measures, including tax cuts and wage and rent reductions, to lower the cost of doing business in Singapore. The government is actively negotiating five free trade agreements (FTAs) with emerging economic partners and has already concluded 12 FTAs with many of its key trade partners, including one with the United States that came into force January 1, 2004. As a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Singapore is part of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), and is signatory to ASEAN FTAs with China, Korea, Japan, India, and a joint agreement with New Zealand and Australia.

Trade, Investment, and Aid

Singapore's total trade in 2007 amounted to $588 billion, an increase of 4.5% from 2006. In 2007, Singapore's imports totaled $275 billion, and exports totaled $313 billion. Malaysia was Singapore's main import source, as well as its largest export market, absorbing 12.9% of Singapore's exports, followed by the EU (10.7%), Hong Kong (10.5%), China (9.7%), and the United States (8.8%). Singapore was the 15th-largest trading partner of the United States. Re-exports accounted for 48.4% of Singapore's total sales to other countries in 2007. Singapore's principal exports are petroleum products, food and beverages, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, electronic components, telecommunication apparatus, and transport equipment. Singapore's main imports are aircraft, crude oil and petroleum products, electronic components, consumer electronics, industrial machinery and equipment, motor vehicles, chemicals, food and beverages, electricity generators, and iron and steel. Singapore continues to attract investment funds on a large scale despite its relatively high-cost operating environment. The United States leads in foreign investment, accounting for 19% of new commitments to the manufacturing sector in 2007. As of 2007, the stock of investment by U.S. companies in the manufacturing and services sectors in Singapore reached about $82.6 billion (total assets). The bulk of U.S. investment is in electronics manufacturing, oil refining and storage, and the chemical industry. About 1,500 U.S. firms operate in Singapore.

The government also has encouraged firms to invest outside Singapore, with the country's total direct investments abroad reaching $147.5 billion by the end of 2006. China was the top destination, accounting for 13.6% of total overseas investments, followed by Malaysia (7.7%), Indonesia (7.3%), United Kingdom (7.0%) Hong Kong (6.2%), Thailand (5.0%), Australia (4.2%) and the United States (3.8%).

Labor

As of end-2007, Singapore had a total labor force of about 2.75 million. The National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), the sole trade union federation, comprises almost 99% of total organized labor. Extensive legislation covers general labor and trade union matters. The Industrial Arbitration Court handles labor-management disputes that cannot be resolved informally through the Ministry of Labor. The Singapore Government has stressed the importance of cooperation between unions, management, and government ("tripartism"), as well as the early resolution of disputes. There has been only one strike in the past 15 years. Singapore has enjoyed virtually full employment for long periods of time. Amid slower economic growth in 2003, unemployment rose to 4.6%. As of the end of June 2008, the unemployment rate was 2.3%. Much of the unemployment is structural, as low-skill manufacturing operations move overseas. Since 1990, the number of foreign workers in Singapore has increased rapidly to cope with labor shortages. Foreign workers comprise 27.5% of the labor force; the great majority of these are unskilled workers.

Transportation and Communications

Situated at the crossroads of international shipping and air routes, Singapore is a center for transportation and communication in Southeast Asia. Singapore's Changi International Airport is a regional aviation hub served by 81 airlines. A third terminal opened in January 2008, and a dedicated low-cost terminal for budget airlines has operated since 2006. The Port of Singapore is among the world's busiest, and was the busiest for containerized transshipment traffic in 2007. The country also is linked by road and rail to Malaysia and Thailand.

Telecommunications and Internet facilities are state-of-the-art, providing high-quality communications with the rest of the world. Radio and television stations are all ultimately government-owned or government-linked. The print media is dominated by a company with close ties to the government. Daily newspapers are published in English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil.

DEFENSE

Singapore relies primarily on its own defense forces, which are continuously being modernized. The defense budget accounts for approximately 30% of government operating expenditures (or 4% of GDP). A career military force of 55,000 is supplemented by 300,000 persons, either on active National Service, which is compulsory for able-bodied young men, or on Reserve. The Singapore Armed Forces engage in joint training with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and with the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and India. Singapore also conducts military training on Taiwan.

Singapore is a member of the Five-Power Defense Arrangement together with the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia. The arrangement obligates members to consult in the event of external threat and provides for stationing Commonwealth forces in Singapore. Singapore has consistently supported a strong U.S. military presence in the Asia-Pacific region. In 1990, the United States and Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which allows United States access to Singapore facilities at Paya Lebar Airbase and the Sembawang wharves. Under the MOU, a U.S. Navy logistics unit was established in Singapore in 1992; U.S. fighter aircraft deploy periodically to Singapore for exercises, and a number of U.S. military vessels visit Singapore. The MOU was amended in 1999 to permit U.S. naval vessels to berth at the Changi Naval Base, which was completed in early 2001. In July 2005, the United States and Singapore signed a Strategic Framework Agreement to expand cooperation in defense and security.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Singapore is nonaligned. It is a member of the United Nations—it occupied a rotational seat on the Security Council 2001-02—and several of its specialized and related agencies, and also of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth. Singapore has participated in UN peacekeeping/observer missions in Kuwait, Angola, Namibia, Cambodia, and East Timor. It provided a training unit to assist in training Iraqi police, and Singapore has deployed naval ships, air force transport planes, and refueling tankers to the Persian Gulf to support the multinational coalition effort to bring stability and security to Iraq. Singapore supports the concept of Southeast Asian regionalism and plays an active role in ASEAN and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

U.S.-SINGAPORE RELATIONS

The United States has maintained formal diplomatic relations with Singapore since that country became independent in 1965. Singapore's efforts to maintain economic growth and political stability and its support for regional cooperation harmonize with U.S. policy in the region and form a solid basis for amicable relations between the two countries. The United States and Singapore signed a bilateral free trade agreement on May 6, 2003; the agreement entered into force on January 1, 2004. The growth of U.S. investment in Singapore and the large number of Americans living there enhance opportunities for contact between Singapore and the United States. Many Singaporeans visit and study in the United States. Singapore is a Visa Waiver Program country.

The U.S. Government sponsors visitors from Singapore each year under the International Visitor Program. The U.S. Government provides Fulbright awards to enable selected American professors to teach or conduct research at the National University of Singapore and the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. It awards scholarships to outstanding Singaporean students for graduate studies at American universities and to American students to study in Singapore. The U.S. Government also sponsors occasional cultural presentations in Singapore. The East-West Center and private American organizations, such as the Asia and Ford Foundations, also sponsor exchanges involving Singaporeans.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SINGAPORE (E) 27 Napier Road, Singapore 258508, APO/FPO FPO AP 96507, [65] 6476-9100, Fax [65] 6476-9340, Workweek: 8:30 am -5:15 p.m. (Mondays to Fridays), Website: http://singapore.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Aline J. Noble
AMB OMS:	Patricia G. Lara
DHS/ICE:	James Ink
FCS:	Daniel L. Thompson
FM:	Randy D. Calvert
HRO:	Aaron B. Fields
MGT:	Karen C. Stanton
POL/ECO:	Howard V. Reed
AMB:	Patricia L. Herbold
CON:	Mary R. Avery
DCM:	Daniel L. Shields III
PAO:	Aruna Amirthanayagam

GSO:	Charles W. Davis
RSO:	David C. Hartinger
AFSA:	John R. Groch
AGR:	David W. Cottrell
CLO:	Lynn Finchum
DAO:	Capt. Alan Oshirak
DEA:	Russell Holske
EEO:	Mari J. Womack
FAA:	Christopher D. Metts
FMO:	Tor R. Petersen
ICASS Chair:	Mary T. Walsh
IMO:	Mari J. Womack
IPO:	Jerry A. Lopez
ISO:	William B. Jamerson
ISSO:	Vacant
LEGATT:	Julio Quinones Jr.
State ICASS:	Howard V. Reed

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 12, 2008

Country Description: Singapore is a small, stable, highly developed country with an elected parliamentary system of government. Tourist facilities are modern and widely available. Singapore's resident population of over 4.6 million inhabitants (including permanent residents and foreign workers) comprises 75% Chinese, 14% Malay, 9% Indian and 2% others. English is widely spoken. Criminal penalties are strict and law enforcement rigorous; see sections on "Entry/Exit Requirements," "Special Circumstances," and "Criminal Penalties," below, for further details.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required. U.S. citizens do not need a visa if their visit is for business or social purposes and their stay is for 90 days or less. Travelers to the region should note that Singapore and some neighboring countries do not allow Americans to enter under any circumstances with fewer than six months of validity remaining on their passport. Female U.S. citizens who are pregnant when they apply to enter Singapore for a social visit are no longer required to make prior application through the nearest Singapore overseas mission or to provide documentation from a U.S. embassy concerning the nationality the child will acquire at birth.

Specific information about entry requirements for Singapore may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Singapore at 3501 International Place NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 537-3100. Visit the Embassy of Singapore's web site at http://www.mfa.gov.sg/washington for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: In 2001, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), a terrorist organization with links to Al Qaeda, planned attacks in Singapore against government and private targets associated with the United States, Singapore and other countries. These plans were disrupted and the JI organization in Singapore was dismantled. On February 27, 2008 suspected JI leader Mas Selamat Kastari escaped from detention in Singapore. His current whereabouts are unknown. Singapore remains a target of interest for terrorist groups. The Department of State remains concerned because extremist groups in Southeast Asia continue to demonstrate the desire and capability to carry out attacks against locations where Westerners congregate. Terrorist groups do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Americans residing in or traveling to Singapore and neighboring countries should therefore exercise caution, especially in locations where Americans and other Westerners live, work, congregate, shop or visit. U.S. citizens should remain vigilant about their personal security and surroundings.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Major crimes against tourists in Singapore are uncommon. Petty crimes such as pick pocketing and purse or briefcase snatching occur in tourist areas, hotels and at the airport. Travelers should exercise the same caution that they would in any large city.

Credit cards are widely accepted in Singapore. Visitors should be aware that credit card fraud is on the rise and should practice standard precautions to avoid falling victim of credit card fraud: do not carry multiple credit cards on your person; do not allow credit cards to be removed from your line of sight; avoid giving credit card information over the phone and use only secure internet connections for financial transactions.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is widely available in Singapore. Doctors and hospitals expect immediate payment for health services by credit card or cash and generally do not accept U.S. health insurance. Recipients of health care should be aware that Ministry of Health auditors in certain circumstances may be granted access to patient medical records without the consent of the patient, and, in certain circumstances, physicians may be required to provide information relating to the diagnosis or treatment without the patient's consent.

Despite vigorous mosquito eradication efforts in Singapore, from time to time Singapore experiences a spike in the number of dengue fever cases. Outbreaks tend to be clustered in res-

idential areas, but there have been no reports of clusters in primary tourist areas, such as the Night Safari, the Singapore zoo, or Orchard Road.

In January 2008, a new strain of the viral disease Chikungunya was detected in Singapore. A dozen cases of the disease, which like Dengue Fever is transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, were documented. There were no deaths. Unlike prior cases in Singapore, these cases were contracted locally and the outbreak centered around guest worker housing on Clive Street.

Information on dengue fever, vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Singapore is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Singapore has a highly developed and well-maintained road and highway network. Driving is done on the left-hand side of the road. Motorists should be particularly aware of motorcyclists, who often ignore lane markings. Lanes are frequently closed without warning due to construction throughout the city. Public transportation and taxis are abundant, inexpensive, and reliable. Visitors should consider using this form of transportation. The Automobile Association of Singapore provides roadside assistance, and the Land Transport Authority has rescue vehicles on the road at all hours. In addition, closed circuit cameras monitor all major roads. As with all laws in Singapore, those involving traffic rules, vehicle registration, and liability in case of accident are strictly enforced, and failure to follow them may result in criminal penalties.

Singapore has one of the worst road-fatality records among developed countries. In 2006, 2.4 deaths were logged for every 10,000 vehicles in Singapore, compared to 0.8 in Japan, 1.2 in Australia and 1.8 in the United States. For specific information concerning Singaporean driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Singaporean National Tourist Board located at 590 Fifth Ave., Twelfth Floor, New York, NY 10036, tel. 1-212-302-4861 or fax: 1-212-302-4801.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government ofSingapore's Civil Aviation Authorityas being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Singapore's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Singapore customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary import and export of items such as weapons, illegal drugs, certain religious materials, pornographic material, videotapes, CDs, DVDs, and software (for censorship or pirating reasons). Singapore customs authorities' definition of "weapon" is very broad, and, in addition to firearms, includes many items which are not necessarily seen as weapons in the United States, such as dive knives, kitchen knives, handcuffs, and expended shell casings. Carrying any of these items without permission may result in your immediate arrest. All baggage is x-rayed at every port of entry, so placing such items in checked baggage will also be inspected for regulated items.

It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Singapore in Washington, D.C. at 3501 International Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, tel. (202) 537-3100, http://www.mfa.gov.sg/washington/ for specific information regarding customs requirements. You may also visit Singapore Customs' web site, http://www.customs.gov.sg. Singapore customs officials encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA carnet headquarters located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA carnet in the United States. For additional information, please call 1-212- 354-4480, or send an e-mail to atacarnet@uscib.org or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. A current list of those countries with serious problems in this regard can be found at http://www.ustr.gov.

Automated teller machines (ATMs) are plentiful in Singapore, and they are the best method of obtaining cash. Bank transfers generally take weeks, and surcharges are steep. Transfers from commercial services such as American Express and Western Union are generally efficient. Americans may be asked by police or employers to surrender their passports in lieu of surety (guaranteed) bonds. Americans should carefully consider whether they wish to surrender their passport rather than seek some other type of surety, particularly if the passport is requested by someone who is not a government

official (e.g., an employer). Note that Singapore does not recognize dual nationality beyond the age of 21, and it strictly enforces universal national service (NS) for all male citizens and permanent residents. Male U.S. citizens who automatically acquired Singaporean citizenship and continue to reside in Singapore are liable for Singapore national service once they reach the age of 18. Travel abroad of Singaporean males may require Singapore Government approval as they approach national service age and may be restricted when they reach sixteen-and-a-half years of age. Under Singaporean law, an individual who automatically acquires Singaporean citizenship at birth retains that status even after acquiring the citizenship of another country, including U.S. citizenship. Males may renounce Singaporean citizenship only after having completed at least two years of national service. U.S. citizenship are subject to this law. Dual nationals, Singapore Permanent Residents, and their parents should contact the Ministry of Defense in Singapore to determine if there will be a national service obligation.

National-service-liable males who migrated from Singapore before age 11 and have not enjoyed significant socio-economic benefits of citizenship (e.g., applied for a Singapore identity card or studied in Singapore beyond the age of 11) are allowed to renounce their Singapore citizenship if they do not wish to fulfill their NS obligations. They will be required to register for national service with Central Manpower Base and apply for deferment from full-time NS until the age of 21, pending the renunciation of their Singapore citizenship. They can continue to make short social visits to Singapore and will not be required to serve NS if they renounced their citizenship at age 21.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe in Singapore than for similar offenses in the United States, and persons violating Singapore laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

There are strict penalties for possession and use of drugs as well as for trafficking in illegal drugs. Trafficking charges may be brought based on the quantity of illegal drugs in a subject's possession, regardless of whether there is any proven or demonstrated intent to distribute the drugs. Singapore has a mandatory death penalty for many narcotics offenses. Convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Singapore police have the authority to compel both residents and non-residents to submit to random drug analysis, and do not distinguish between drugs consumed before or after entering Singapore in applying local laws.

Visitors should be aware of Singapore's strict laws and penalties for a variety of actions that might not be illegal or might be considered minor offenses in the United States. These include jaywalking, littering, and spitting. Singapore has a mandatory caning sentence for vandalism offenses and caning may also be imposed for immigration violations and other offenses. Commercial disputes that may be handled as civil suits in the United States can escalate to criminal cases in Singapore, and result in heavy fines and prison sentences. There are no jury trials in Singapore, judges hear cases and decide sentencing. The Government of Singapore does not provide legal assistance except in capital cases; legal assistance may be available in some other cases through the Law Society.

There are strict penalties for those who possess or carry arms, or who commit crimes with arms. Singaporean authorities define "arm" as any firearm, air-gun, air-pistol, automatic gun, automatic pistol and any other kind of gun or pistol from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged or from which noxious liquid, flame or fumes can be emitted, and any component part thereof. This definition also includes any bomb or grenade and any component part thereof. The unlawful possession of any arm or ammunition could result in imprisonment and caning. Any person convicted of committing a crime with an arm could receive punishment which could result in the maximum penalty of imprisonment for life and caning. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. In Singapore, local law prohibits causing or encouraging prostitution of, or engaging in sexual relations with, a female below the age of 16. An indecent assault against anyone, male or female, regardless of age, is also prohibited. Those convicted of causing or encouraging the prostitution of, or the commission of unlawful sexual relations with, or the indecent assault on, a female below the age of 16 years could be sentenced to imprisonment of up to 3 years and a fine of $2,000 or both. Singapore enforces strict laws pertaining to the propriety of behavior between people, and the modesty of individuals. The Singaporean law "Outrage of Modesty" is defined as an assault, or use of criminal force on any person, intended to, or knowing it to be likely to, outrage the modesty of that person. Penalties may include imprisonment for up to 2 years, a fine, caning, or a combination thereof. Men are sometimes accused of inappropriately touching other people, often women, resulting in their prosecution and punishment under this Singaporean law.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Singapore are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and obtain updated information on travel and security within Singapore. Americans without Internet access

may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 27 Napier Road, Singapore 258508, tel. [65] 6476-9100, fax [65] 6476-9340; web site, http://singapore.usembassy.gov. In case of emergencies after working hours, the duty officer at the Embassy may be contacted by calling tel. [65] 6476-9100.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Adoptions Of Non-Singaporean Children: The U.S. Embassy in Singapore is aware of cases in which American families have concluded adoptions in Singapore involving children of other nationalities. It is critical that prospective adoptive parents understand that the laws of the child's country of birth may remain relevant, even if the child has departed that country and is now residing in Singapore. It is doubly important, therefore, that American prospective adoptive parents resident in Singapore and considering adopting a child born outside Singapore first consult with the U.S. Embassy prior to proceeding.

Patterns of Immigration: The U.S. Embassy in Singapore has not processed an adoption case involving a Singapore-born child and an American citizen adoptive parent in at least the past five years. This reflects the fact that, for social and cultural reasons, orphaned Singaporean children are usually taken in by family members or adopted by Singaporeans. In addition, Singaporean law gives preference to prospective adoptive parents who are citizens of Singapore, and children available for adoption by foreigners may be more likely to have physical or mental disabilities.

Adoption Authority: The government office with overall responsibility for adoptions in Singapore is the

Ministry of Community
Development, Youth and Sports
Family Development Division
Telephone: 6355-6388
Fax: 6258-4823
Email:
mcys_family_town@mcys.gov.sg

Mailing Address:
Adoption Services
510 Thomson Road
13th Storey SLF Building
Singapore 298135
Web sites: www.mcys.gov.sg or
www.familytown.gov.sg

Additional legal information regarding adoptions can be found at: www.familycourtofsingapore.gov.sg

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Under Singaporean law, prospective adoptive parents must be residents of Singapore and at least 25 years old. They must also be at least 21 years older than the child whom they plan to adopt.

These age restrictions may be waived in certain circumstances, including if there is a blood relationship between the child and the prospective parent(s).

Married couples must adopt jointly unless the non-adopting spouse cannot be found, is unable to give consent, or is separated from the adopting spouse and the separation is likely to become permanent. Single men may not adopt female children except in rare cases as determined by the court.

Residency Requirements: Singapore law requires an applicant to have a "settled abode" in Singapore. Applicants must therefore show they have a "home" in Singapore and have legal immigration status (e.g., employment pass, permanent residency, etc.) that would allow them to have some basis for residency.

Time Frame: In a case with no complications (e.g., no documents need to checked, home studies have been completed, etc.) adoptions in Singapore can generally be finalized within 4-6 months. After the child has been legally adopted in Singapore, processing time for a U.S. immigrant visa will take on average another 1-2 months for an uncomplicated case.

Adoption Fees: Adopting a child in Singapore is a complex legal process requiring several court appearances. The Government of Singapore recommends the use of a lawyer, and prospective adoptive parents would have to pay for the lawyer costs., which vary by firm.

Although the prospective adoptive parents will not pay any fees directly to the court, the lawyer's fee will include court costs In addition, adoptive parents will have to pay approximately $900 for a home study report performed by an agency licensed by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.

Singaporean society is virtually corruption-free and "additional" or "hidden" fees are not likely to be encountered in the adoption process. Furthermore, it is illegal for a person giving up a child for adoption to receive or ask for monetary payment in exchange for the child.

It is also illegal for the petitioner (applicant) to make any monetary payment for adopting a child, unless approved by the court.

Adoption Procedures: The Singaporean adoption process consists of five basic steps, outlined in detail below, including court appearances at which the applicants and/or the applicants' attorneys will need to

appear. As Singapore requires adoptive parents to be residents of Singapore, applicants are presumed to be in the country and available to file applications and appear as required by Singaporean authorities. In brief, prospective adoptive parents petition the Family Court for adoption of the child. This can be done through an attorney or in person.

The Family Court will then appoint the Director of Social Welfare, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) as the child's Guardian ad litem (temporary legal guardian). MCYS then conducts the necessary investigations and prepares an affidavit and investigation report.

Finally, the Family Court grants the Adoption Order and a new birth certificate is issued for the child. Foreigners wishing to adopt a child in Singapore must complete a Home Study Report (HSR) before proceeding with immigration and legal procedures for adoption.

The HSR is an assessment of a family's readiness to care for an adopted child, bearing in mind the child's best interests and the appropriateness of the prospective home. The Home Study Report is also designed to help prospective parents prepare for the adoption process and subsequent raising of an adopted child.

The HSR must be completed by an agency accredited by MCYS, and takes approximately five weeks to be completed. The process typically includes a series of home visits and interviews with relevant family members and friends. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Documentary Requirements: The petitioners (the persons making the application) are required to stamp and file the following documents at the Family Court Registry at the outset of the process:

- 2 copies of the adoption petition;
- the original consent of the birth parents / guardian (together with the original translation if the consent is not in the English language);
- the original consent of the parent or guardian of the birth parent of the infant if the birth parent is a minor (together with the original translation if the consent is not in the English language);
- the original birth certificate of the infant to be adopted (together with the original translation if the birth certificate is not in the English language);
- an affidavit exhibiting the endorsement of the child's Dependants' Pass if the child is not a Singapore citizen or permanent resident;
- certified true copies of the petitioners' work permits / employment passes / dependants' passes if the petitioners are not Singapore citizens or permanent residents;
- the original marriage certificate of the petitioners;
- 2 copies of the Application for Dispensation of Consent and supporting affidavit to dispense with the consent of the birth parents and/or service of documents on the birth parents, if such consent cannot be obtained; and
- A copy of the death certificate of the birth parent who had passed away (if applicable).

Singaporean Embassy
3501 International Place, NW,
Washington DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 537-3100
Fax: (202) 537-0876
E-mail: singemb@bellatlantic.net
Website:
http://www.mfa.gov.sg/washington

Singapore also has consulates in New York and San Francisco. There are also Honorary Consulates-General in Chicago, Houston, and Miami.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States
27 Napier Road
Singapore 258508
PHONE: 011-65-6476-9100
FAX: 011-65-6476-9232
EMAIL:
SingaporeCON@state.gov
(attn: IV Unit)

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Singapore may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Singapore at the address, phone and fax numbers provided earlier in this flyer. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Singapore is not a party to the Hague Convention

on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Singapore and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Singapore place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Singapore with dual-national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: In Singapore, parents who are legally married share the custody of their children. If they are not married, by law the custody is granted to the mother unless there are known facts of inappropriate behavior, mental or social problems.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Singapore, unless a Singaporean court formally recognizes them.

Visitation Rights: In cases where legal custody has been granted and the judgment has been rendered, the non-custodial parent can petition the court for visitation rights within the court-ordered decision or come to a verbal agreement with the custodial parent.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Singaporean law beyond the age of 21.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Singapore.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Singaporean court should retain an attorney in Singapore. The American Embassy in Singapore maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. A copy of this list may be obtained by requesting one from the Embassy or at http://singapore.usembassy.gov/consular/amcit/attorneys.shtml.

U.S. Embassy in Singapore
Consular Section
27 Napier Road
Singapore 258508
Telephone: 011-65-6476-9100
Fax: 011-65-6476-9232
Web site:
http://www.usembassysingapore.org.sg

Embassy of Singapore
3501 International Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 537-3100

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



SLOVAKIA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
The Slovak Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 48,845 sq. km. (about twice the size of New Hampshire).

Land boundaries: (total) 1,524 km. Austria 91 km.; Czech Republic 215 km.; Hungary 677 km.; Poland 444 km.; Ukraine 97 km.

Cities: Capital—Bratislava.

Terrain: Landlocked with high mountains in the north, low mountains in the center, hills to the west, Danube River basin in the south.

Climate: Temperate; average temperature in January 26.5ºF; in July 68ºF. Annual precipitation 24”-40”.

Elevation: Lowest point, Bodrog River 94 m. Highest point, Gerlachovsky 2,655 m.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Slovak(s).

Population: (May 2001 census*) 5,379,455. Bratislava (428,672), Kosice (236,093), Zilina (156,361), Nitra (163,540), Presov (161,782), Banska Bystrica (111,984).

Annual population growth rate: (2001 est.) 0.13%.

Ethnic groups: (2001) Slovaks 85.8%, Hungarians 9.7%, Roma 1.7%, Czechs 0.8%, Ruthenians 0.4%, Ukranians 0.2%, other 1.4%. Unofficial estimates place the Roma population between 6%-10%.

Religions: (2001) Roman Catholic 69%, Protestant 9%, Greek Catholic 4%, Orthodox 0.9%, other 0.6%, unknown 3.5%, 13% report no affiliation.

Languages: Slovak (official), Hungarian, Ruthenian, Romany, and Ukrainian.

Education: Literacy—99%.

Health: Life expectancy (2001)—78 yrs. females; 70 yrs. males.

Work force: (2.1 million in 2001) Industry, construction, commerce—61%; financial, commercial, health services—18%; government and education—15%; agriculture—6%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: The Slovak Republic was established January 1, 1993 (former Czechoslovak Republic established 1918).

Constitution: Signed September 3, 1992.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—National Council of the Slovak Republic (150 seats). Judicial—Supreme Court, Constitutional Court.

Political parties: Distribution of the 150 parliamentary seats is SMER (Direction) 50 seats; Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) 28 seats; Slovak National Party (SNS) 19 seats; Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) 20 seats; Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) 15 seats; Christian-Democratic Movement (KDH) 9 seats, Slovak Conservative Democrats (KDS) 4 seats; Unaffiliated 5 seats. Other parties include Alliance of New Citizens; Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS); Freedom Forum (SF); People’s Union (LU).

Suffrage: Universal at 18 years.

Political subdivisions: Eight administrative regions, 79 districts.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $92.6 billion.

GDP growth rate: (2007) 10.4%.

Nominal GDP per capita: (2007) $17,110 (International Monetary Fund).

Unemployment: (May 2007) 7.6%.

Natural resources: Antimony, mercury, iron, copper, lead, zinc, magnesite, limestone, lignite, uranium (not yet in production).

Agriculture: Products—grains, potatoes, poultry, cattle, hogs, sugar, beets, hops, fruit, forest products.

Industry: Types—iron and steel, chemicals, automobiles, light industry, food processing, back-office support, engineering, building materials.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$71.1 billion: vehicles, iron and steel, machinery and energy equipment, plastics, fiber optics. Imports (2007)—$72.1

billion: mineral fuels and oils, machinery, audio/video equipment, vehicles. Partners (2006)—Germany 23.7%, Czech Republic 14.1%, Italy 6.5%, Poland 6.2%, Austria 6%, Hungary 5.8%, France 4.3%, Netherlands 4.2%.

Foreign investment: (1989-2006, OECD data) Cumulative—$17.3 billion, FDI inflow $4.2 billion in 2006 (highest-ever FDI inflows). Sources of direct foreign investment—Netherlands 19.5%, Germany 18.2%, Austria14.8%, Italy 12.4%, Hungary 6.1%, U.K. 5.3%, Czech Republic 4.1%, Republic of Korea 3.6%, U.S. 3.3% (9th largest investor)**, Cyprus 2.7%. Sectors of direct foreign investment—industrial production, financial services, energy production and distribution, wholesale and retail trade, transportation and telecommunications.

*Figures are based on immediate city's (not region) permanent resident population.

**Government of Slovakia official statistic. A recent U.S. Embassy survey found that, taking into account investments of U.S. subsidiaries in Europe, U.S. investment is more than 15% of the total.

PEOPLE

The majority of the 5.4 million inhabitants of the Slovak Republic are Slovak (85.8%). Hungarians are the largest ethnic minority (9.7%) and are concentrated in the southern and eastern regions of Slovakia. Up to 7% of the population is thought to be Roma, although the last official census (2001) put their number at 1.7%. Other ethnic groups include Czechs, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Germans, and Poles. The Slovak constitution guarantees freedom of religion. The majority of Slovak citizens (69%) are Roman Catholic; the second-largest group is Protestants (9%). About 3, 000 Jews remain of the estimated pre-WWII population of 120,000. The official state language is Slovak, and Hungarian is widely spoken in the southern region.

Despite its modern European economy and society, Slovakia has a significant rural element. About 45% of Slovaks live in villages of less than 5,000 people, and 14% in villages of less than 1,000.

HISTORY

Slovak history can find its roots in the Great Moravian Empire, founded in the early ninth century. The territory of Great Moravia included all of present western and central Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and parts of neighboring Poland, Hungary, and Germany. Saint Cyril and Methodius, known for the creation of a Cyrillic alphabet, came to Great Moravia in the early tenth century as missionaries to spread Christianity upon the invitation of the king. The empire collapsed after only eighty years as a result of the political intrigues and external pressures from invading forces. Slovaks then became part of the Hungarian Kingdom, where they remained for the next 1,000 years. Bratislava became the Hungarian capital for nearly two and a half centuries when the Turks overran Hungary in the early 16th century.

Revolutions inspired by nationalism swept through Central Europe in 1848, which led to the codification of the Slovak language by Ludovit Stur in 1846 and later the formation of the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1867. As language and education policies favoring the use of Hungarian, which came to be known as Magyarization, grew stricter, Slovak nationalism grew stronger. Slovak intellectuals cultivated closer cultural ties with the Czechs, who were themselves ruled by the Austrians. After the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian State after WWI, the concept of a single Czecho-Slovakian unified state came to fruition. Tomas Masaryk signed the Pittsburgh Agreement, declaring the intent of the Czech and Slovaks to found a new state in May 1918, and a year later become Czechoslovakia's first president.

After the 1938 Munich agreement that forced Czechoslovakia to cede territory to Germany, Slovakia declared its autonomy. Slovakia became a Nazi puppet state led by the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso. During this period, approximately 70,000 Slovak Jews were sent to concentration camps to perish in the Holocaust. Roma, while persecuted under the Tiso regime, were not deported by the Slovak Hlinka guards. An undetermined number of Roma were deported from the southern part of Slovakia when it was occupied by Hungary in 1944. The Slovak National Uprising, a resistance movement against the fascist Slovak state, occurred in 1944 with the participation of Slovaks, Russians, Jews, and some allied forces but was put down by Nazi forces.

At the conclusion of WWII, the reunified Czechoslovakia was considered within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. The communist party, supported by the U.S.S.R., took over political power in February 1948 and began to centralize power. The next four decades were characterized by strict communist rule, interrupted only briefly during the Prague Spring of 1968. The Slovak born Communist leader Alexander Dubcek presided over a thawing of communist power and proposed political, social, and economic reforms in his effort to make "socialism with a human face" a reality. Concern among other Warsaw Pact governments that Dubcek had gone too far prompted an invasion and Dubcek's removal from his position.

The 1970s were characterized by the development of a dissident movement. On January 1, 1977 more than 250 human rights activists signed a manifesto called Charter 77, which criticized the government for failing to meet its human rights obligation. The so-called "Candle Demonstration," which took place in Bratislava in March 1988, was the first mass demonstration of the 1980s against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The Demonstration, organized by Roman Catholic groups asking for religious freedom in Czechoslovakia, was brutally suppressed by the police.



On November 17, 1989, a series of public protests, known as the "Velvet Revolution," began and led to the downfall of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Dissident groups, such as Charter 77 in the Czech Republic and Public Against Violence in Slovakia, united to form a transitional government and assist with the first democratic elections since 1948. Several new parties emerged to fill the political spectrum.

After the 1992 elections, Vladimir Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), based on its appeal on fairness to Slovak demands for autonomy, emerged as the leading party in Slovakia. In June 1992, the Slovak parliament voted to declare sovereignty and the federation dissolved peacefully on January 1, 1993. Meciar's party—the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)—ruled Slovakia the first 5 years as an independent state. His authoritarian style as Prime Minister created international concerns about the democratic development of Slovakia. In the 1998 elections, Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) received about 27% of the vote, but went into the opposition, unable to find coalition partners.

A reform-oriented coalition formed a government led by Mikulas Dzurinda, the chairman of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU). The first Dzurinda government made political and economic reforms that enabled Slovakia to enter the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), close virtually all chapters in European Union (EU) negotiations, and make the country a strong candidate for North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession. However, the popularity of the governing parties declined sharply, and several new parties gained relatively high levels of support in public opinion polls.

In the September 2002 parliamentary election, a last-minute surge in support for the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU) gave Dzurinda a mandate for a second term. He formed a government with three other center-right parties: the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK), Christian Democrats (KDH), and Alliance of New Citizens (ANO).

The main priorities of the coalition were ensuring a strong Slovak performance within NATO and the EU, fighting corruption, attracting foreign investment, and reforming social services, such as the health care system. Following a summer 2003 parliamentary shake-up, the government lost its narrow parliamentary majority and controlled only 69 of the 150 seats; however, the coalition was relatively stable because of the parties' similar political philosophies and conflicts between opposition parties.

Slovakia officially became a member of NATO on March 29, 2004 and joined the EU on May 1, 2004. The government strongly supported Slovakia's NATO and EU accession and continued the democratic and free market-oriented reforms begun by the first Dzurinda government.

Parliamentary elections were held June 17, 2006. Robert Fico became Prime Minister, leading a coalition of SMER (Direction), the Slovak National Party (SNS), and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS).

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Slovakia's highest legislative body is the 150-seat unicameral National Council of the Slovak Republic. Delegates are elected for 4-year terms on the basis of proportional representation. The Slovak political scene supports a wide spectrum of political parties, including several social democratic parties and the nationalistic Slovak National Party.

In January 1999, Parliament passed a constitutional amendment allowing for direct election of the president. Kosice Mayor Rudolf Schuster was elected president in a May 1999 runoff with former Prime Minister Meciar and took office on June 15, 1999. On April 17, 2004, Ivan Gasparovic, a former Meciar deputy, was elected president; he was inaugurated on June 15, 2004. Virtually all executive powers of government belong to the prime minister, but the president does serve as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, can grant pardons, and has the right to return legislation to Parliament. Parliament, however, can override this veto with a simple majority of the 150 members of Parliament.

The country's highest appellate forum is the Supreme Court; below that are regional, district, and military courts. In certain cases the law provides for decisions of tribunals of judges to be attended by lay judges from the citizenry. Slovakia also has a special Constitutional Court, which rules on constitutional issues. The 13 members of this court are appointed by the president from a slate of candidates nominated by Parliament.

In 2002, Parliament passed legislation that created a Judicial Council. This 18-member council, composed of judges, law professors, and other legal experts, is now responsible for the nomination of judges. All judges, except those of the Constitutional Court, are appointed by the president from a list proposed by the Judicial Council. The Council also is responsible for appointing Disciplinary Senates in cases of judicial misconduct.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Ivan GASPAROVIC**
Prime Min.: **Robert FICO**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Robert KALINAK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Jan MIKOLAJ**
Dep. Prime Min. for European Affairs, Human Rights, & Minorities: **Dusan CAPLOVIC**
Dep. Prime Min. for Legislation: **Stefan HARABIN**
Min. of Agriculture: **Stanislav BECIK**
Min. of Construction & Regional Development: **Marian JANUSEK**
Min. of Culture: **Marek MADARIC**
Min. of Defense: **Jaroslav BASKA**
Min. of Economy: **Lubomir JAHNATEK**
Min. of Education: **Jan MIKOLAJ**
Min. of Environment: **Jan CHRBET**
Min. of Finance: **Jan POCIATEK**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Jan KUBIS**
Min. of Health: **Richard RASI**
Min. of Interior: **Robert KALINAK**
Min. of Justice: **Stefan HARABIN**
Min. of Labor, Social Affairs, & Family: **Viera TOMANOVA**
Min. of Transportation, Post, & Telecommunications: **Lubomir VAZNY**
Governor, Central Bank of Slovakia: **Ivan SRAMKO**
Ambassador to the US: **Rastislav KACER**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Peter BURIAN**

The Slovak Republic has an embassy in the United States, located at 3523 International Court, NW, Washington, DC, 20008.

Slovakia maintains a permanent mission to the United Nations in New York and 11 honorary consulates in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Denver, Kansas City, Indianapolis, Miami, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco. Slovakia opened consulates general in New York in September 2003 and in Los Angeles in April 2005.

ECONOMY

Since the establishment of the Slovak Republic in January 1993, Slovakia has continued the difficult transformation from a centrally-planned to a modern market-oriented economy. This reform slowed in the 1994-98 period due to the crony capitalism and irresponsible fiscal policies of Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar's government. While economic growth and other fundamentals improved steadily during Meciar's term, public and private debt and trade deficits soared, and privatization, often tarnished by corrupt insider deals, progressed only in fits and starts. Real annual GDP growth peaked at 6.5% in 1995 but declined to 1.3% in 1999. Much of the growth in the Meciar era, however, was attributable to high government spending and over-borrowing rather than productive economic activity.

The pace of economic reforms picked up during the second administration of Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda, which oversaw the simplification of the tax system, reforms of the labor code and pension systems, and a large number of privatizations. The economy grew 8.3% in 2006 (the highest economic growth among OECD members and third highest growth in Central Europe), and 10.4 in 2007, and was predicted to continue at this pace through the remainder of 2007.

Slovakia entered into the European Exchange Rate Mechanism in November 2005, and will join the Euro Zone on January 1, 2009 having met the Maastricht Criteria. Headline consumer price inflation dropped from 26% in 1993 to 4.5% in 2006, and fell below 2.4% in the first

months of 2007, supported by falling world energy prices and exchange rate appreciation. The current account deficit, including the cost of the second pension pillar, reached 3.3% in 2006, but the general government deficit for 2007 is forecast at 2.9%. Government debt was 33% of GDP in 2006.

The exchange rate has remained within the 15% fluctuation bands around the central ERM2 rate, but the central parity rate of the Slovak koruna against the Euro was revalued by 8.5% to SKK 35.4424 in March 2007 in view of significant inflows of foreign direct investment followed by the progressive acceleration of economic growth and substantial appreciation of the estimated equilibrium real exchange rate.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Slovakia has increased dramatically. Cheap and skilled labor force, low taxes, a 19% flat tax for corporations and individuals, no dividend taxes, a relatively liberal labor code and a favorable geographical location are Slovakia's main advantages for foreign investors. Major pillars of sound economic reforms remain untouched even after the 2006 elections. FDI inflow grew more than 600% from 2000 and cumulatively reached an all-time high of $17.3 billion in 2006, or around $18,000 per capita by the end of 2006. The total inflow of FDI in 2006 was $1.31 billion.

Germany is Slovakia's largest trading partner, purchasing 23.52% of Slovakia's exports and supplying 20.48% of its imports in 2006. Other major partners include the Czech Republic (13.9% imports and 12.3% exports), Italy (6.48% and 4.52%), Russia (1.64% and 11.24%), and Austria (5.98% and 3.37%). Slovakia imports nearly all of its oil and gas from Russia and its export markets are primarily OECD and EU countries. More than 85.1% of its trade is with EU members and with OECD countries (89.7%). Slovakia's exports to the United States made up 3.16% of its overall exports in 2006 ($1,319.2 million), while imports from the U.S. account for 1.25% of its total purchases abroad ($559.1 million).

NATIONAL SECURITY

The armed forces of the Slovak Republic number about 14,000 uniformed personnel and are made up of Land Forces, Air Forces (which includes air defense forces) and a Joint Training and Doctrine Command. Land forces consist of two mechanized infantry brigades, one with two mech battalions (BMP-1), a tank battalion (T-72), and a combined artillery battalion. The other brigade has three mech battalions (BMP-2). Each maneuver brigade is or is planned to be task organized with combat support units, such as an artillery battalion, an engineer battalion, a logistics support battalion, and an air defense battery. Other land forces include a separate NBC battalion, engineer battalion, ISTAR company, signal battalion and command support battalion. Air and Air Defense Forces are comprised of a fighter wing of MiG-29s, a wing of Mi-24 attack and Mi-17 utility helicopters, and a SAM brigade. Military police are under the command of the Ministry of Defense and a special operations regiment falls under the Land Forces Command. The armed forces are among the most respected national institutions according to national opinion polls.

Slovakia's ambitious roadmap for defense reform is the Force 2015 Long-Term Plan, which strikes a well-reasoned balance between requirements and resources and envisions a professionalized, combat-capable force of 18,000 uniformed personnel. Slovakia has about 480 personnel deployed to coalition and NATO-led operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo, as well as UN-led peace support operations (PSOs) worldwide. Defense spending was 1.6% of GDP in 2006.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Slovakia officially became a member of the NATO on March 29, 2004 and joined the EU in May 2004. Slovakia has been an active participant in U.S. and NATO-led military actions and a partner in the war on terrorism. A military engineering brigade on the ground in Iraq from August 2003 departed in February 2007. A 57-man military engineering brigade is present at Kadahar airbase in Afghanistan, and the Slovak Parliament approved in December 2007 an increase in Slovakia's commitment to ISAF that will bring the total deployment to 115 in 2008. Slovakia participates in a joint Czech-Slovak peacekeeping force in Kosovo.

Slovakia is a member of the United Nations and participates in its specialized agencies. It is a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the OECD. It also is part of the Visegrad Four (Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland), a forum for discussing areas of common concern. Upon the division of Czechoslovakia in 1993, Slovakia and the Czech Republic entered into a customs union, which facilitates a relatively free flow of goods and services. On December 21, 2007, Slovakia joined the Schengen zone. Slovakia maintains diplomatic relations with 134 countries. There are 35 embassies and 26 honorary consulates in Bratislava.

U.S.-SLOVAKIA RELATIONS

The fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989 and the subsequent split of the two republics on January 1, 1993, allowed for renewed cooperation between the United States and Slovakia. The election of a pro-Western, reformist government in late 1998 further boosted close ties between the countries. The United States delivered more than $200 million after 1990 to support the rebuilding of a healthy democracy and market economy in Slovakia, primarily through programs administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Slovakia and the United States retain strong diplomatic ties and cooperate in the military and law

enforcement areas. The U.S. Department of Defense programs have contributed significantly to Slovak military reforms.

Millions of Americans have their roots in Slovakia, and many retain strong cultural and familial ties to the Slovak Republic. President Woodrow Wilson and the United States played a major role in the establishment of the original Czechoslovak state on October 28, 1918, and President Wilson's Fourteen Points were the basis for the union of the Czechs and Slovaks. Tomas Masaryk, the father of the Czechoslovak state and its first president, visited the United States during World War I and used the U.S. Constitution as a model for the first Czechoslovak Constitution.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BRATISLAVA (E) Hviezdoslavovo Sq. 5, APO/FPO Unit 5840 Box xxxx, APO AE 09736-xxxx, +421-2-5443-3338, Fax +421-2-5441-5148, INMARSAT Tel Unclass 683-142-116; Stu III, 683-142-117, Workweek: M-F, 8:00-16:30, Website: slovakia.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Dolores Ogle, Rover
AMB OMS:	Dianne Zalewski
ECO:	Chip Laitinen
FCS:	David Ponsar
MGT:	Charles Eaton
AMB:	Vincent Obsitnik
CON:	Robin Haase
DCM:	Lawrence Silverman
PAO:	Edward Kemp
GSO:	Andrew Hogenboom
RSO:	Reinshagen, Alex
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Ltc. David Galles
EEO:	Keith Hughes
ICASS Chair:	Chip Laitinen
IMO:	Paul Echaniz
IPO:	Andre Velez
IRS:	Susan Stanley (In Frankfurt)
ISO:	Nijay Saini
LEGATT:	Temp (In Prague)
POL:	Susan Ball
State ICASS:	Chip Laitinen

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 9, 2008

Country Description: The Slovak Republic is a rapidly developing European nation. Tourist facilities are not as developed as those found in Western Europe, particularly outside the major cities, and some goods and services taken for granted in other European countries are occasionally unavailable.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. A visa is not required for stays for tourism or business up to 90 days within six months of the date of first entry into the Slovak Republic.All foreigners seeking entry into the Slovak Republic must carry proof of a medical insurance policy contracted for payment of all costs for hospitalization and medical treatment in the Slovak Republic. Border police have the right to request evidence of finances sufficient to pay for the proposed stay in the Slovak Republic in the amount of $50 per person per day. Current information can be found on the Slovak Embassy's web site at www.slovakembassy-us.org.

All persons in Slovakia over the age of 15 must carry official identification at all times. American citizens staying overnight in Slovakia must register with the local Border and Aliens Police within three working days. Persons staying hotels are registered automatically.

Note: On December 21, 2007, Slovakia became a member of a group of countries collectively known as "Schengen countries" or the "Schengen zone". Americans may enter and remain within the entire Schengen zone without a visa for no more than 90 days in any six-month period. If an American has just spent 60 days in another Schengen country, for example, he or she would be permitted to enter Slovakia only for the remaining 30 days. It is not possible to extend a tourist stay beyond 90 days in the Schengen zone. Once an American has used his/her 90 days, he/she cannot reenter Slovakia until he/she has spent at least three months outside the Schengen zone.

Although European Union regulations require that non-EU visitors obtain a stamp in their passport upon initial entry to a Schengen country, many borders are not staffed with officers carrying out this function. If an American citizen wishes to ensure that his or her entry is properly documented, it may be necessary to request a stamp at an official point of entry. Under local law, travelers without a stamp in their passport may be questioned and asked to document the length of their stay in Schengen countries, and could face possible fines or other repercussions if unable to do so.

Persons wishing to remain in Slovakia longer than 90 days or arriving for purposes other than tourism or business travel may apply for temporary residency and/or work permits shortly after arrival in Slovakia. However, it is strongly recommended that such persons review the requirements and begin preparing their applications prior to travel, as many documents required of U.S. citizens are more easily obtained in the United States. For example, U.S. citizens must submit a certificate not older than 90 days showing the result of a fingerprint records check by the FBI. As authorities in Slovakia cannot take fingerprints for this purpose, it is extremely difficult to obtain this certificate after arrival in Slovakia. In addition, Slovakia requires all documents (birth certificates, etc) intended for official use in Slovakia to be authenticated (e.g. to have an apostille).

Safety and Security: Taking photographs of security/military installations (for example, military bases, government buildings, nuclear power plants, etc.) is prohibited. Violation of this law may result in confiscation of the film, a reprimand or fine, or even expulsion from the country. Serious cases may be reported to and handled by local and/or military police.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.

Crime: The Slovak Republic has a high rate of crime. Police forces suffer from a lack of manpower resources and equipment. Local police are not likely to speak English. Western visitors, especially short-term visitors such as tourist and students, are the primary foreign targets of street crime. The majority of street crime is non-violent and ranges from pickpocketing (particularly in the summer) and purse and cellular telephone snatchings to mugging, armed robbery, shooting, drugging and robbing of unsuspecting victims at nightspots and bars. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites (such as Bratislava's Old Town area) or on public buses or trains. Thieves in the Slovak Republic often work in groups or pairs. In most cases, one thief distracts the victim another performs the robbery, and then hands off the stolen item to a nearby accomplice. Groups of street children are known to divert tourists' attention so that a member of their group can pickpocket the tourists while they are distracted. Do not leave personal items in unattended vehicles, even if locked.

Reports of racially motivated incidents against foreigners and minorities, particularly perpetrated by groups with a history of targeting persons of Roma, African, or Asian descent, have occurred in the Slovak Republic and are occurring with a greater frequency across most of Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to incidents of assault, persons of Roma, African, or Asian heritage may be subject to various types of harassment, such as verbal abuse.

Both indigenous and foreign organized crime groups are well-established in the Slovak Republic. They do not target U.S. or other foreign individuals and tend to co-exist peacefully in the tourist district so as not to scare away tourist dollars. Though not common, violent incidents sometimes do occur outside of Old Town Bratislava.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy or Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are available in the Slovak Republic, although the quality and availability varies within the country. Ambulances are only a means of transportation to the hospital; they may not have life support stabilization equipment on board. Only a limited number of doctors speak English.Doctors and hospitals expect cash payment for health services unless the patient can present an insurance number from the Slovak National Insurance Company. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost tens of thousands of dollars or more.

Medical prescriptions issued in the U.S. are not valid in the Slovak Republic. If needed, a local doctor must issue a prescription. Medicines are generally available locally, if not under the American name the doctor can be consulted for a substitute. The Ministry of Health of Slovak Republic administers the use of medicines and medicine brought to the Slovak Republic for personal use may become subject to comparison against the list of those authorized for use in the Slovak Republic.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Slovak Republic is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Roads in the Slovak Republic typically are safe and well maintained. Four-lane highways exist in and around Bratislava. However, most roads outside of built-up areas are two lanes only, and aggressive drivers attempting to pass at unsafe speeds pose a serious hazard. Due to poor lighting and narrow, winding roads, nighttime driving outside of built-up areas is not recommended.

From November through March there is often heavy snowfall, which is not adequately cleared from many rural roads. Roads in the mountainous northern part of the country are particularly prone to hazardous con-

ditions during winter months. Winter tires are recommended and chains are necessary in certain mountainous areas.

In the Slovak Republic, vehicles travel on the right side of the road. Headlights must be used at all times (day and night) from October 15 until March 15. The maximum legal speed on highways is 130 kilometers per hour (78 mph). On smaller roads the maximum speed in 90 kph (54 mph). The limit in towns is 60 kph (36 mph). Use of cellular phones while driving is strictly prohibited. Safety reflection vests and first aid kits are compulsory equipment of each vehicle.

Drivers must yield the right of way to all vehicles with flashing blue lights (police, ambulances, fire trucks, motorcades).Vehicles with yellow or orange lights usually means that traffic must slow down. Drivers must always be cautious, however, as many slowly moving vehicles, such as agricultural vehicles, are not well marked.

Driving under the influence of alcohol is strictly prohibited. The blood alcohol tolerance level is zero percent.

Penalties for drivers involved in car accidents involving injury of death are decided by a court of law. Penalties for minor offenses are not generally large, but foreigners are sometimes targeted for additional sums. Anyone suspecting this has occurred should ask for a written receipt and note the name and number of the traffic officer imposing the fine.

Gasoline is readily available, although many gas stations are closed on Sunday, especially in rural areas. Gas stations typically do not offer repair service; private mechanics must be found. Most gas stations accept credit cards, but mechanics less frequently accept them, so travelers should expect to pay for these services in cash.

A highway user decal must be purchased for travel on most major roads outside of Bratislava. The decal is valid for the calendar year in which it is purchased, and is available at gas stations, post offices and some newspaper kiosks. The cost is 1100 Sk (Slovak crowns) for all vehicles up to 3.5 tons. A short-term decal valid for 30 days may be purchased for 300 Sk and for 7 days for 150Sk.

Taxi companies provide generally reliable, safe, and economical services. Avoid independent cabs that do not prominently display a company name. Visitors should be alert to the potential for substantial overcharging by taxis, particularly in areas frequented by tourists. Radio-dispatched taxis are often much more reliable.

Buses, trolleys, and trams are mechanically safe, but there have been reports of thefts on city transportation and of harassment by the transport police. On public transportation it is obligatory to have a time-ticket validated after entering the vehicle (valid for 10, 20, 60 minutes), or a prepaid zone ticket (24-.48-.168-hour, 1-month, 3-month and 1-year). Children from 6 to 15 years of age pay reduced fares. Passengers who are traveling without a valid ticket will be fined by the ticker inspector. The ticket inspector has to have an identification card and must provide a ticket for the fine. More information is provided in English at http://www.imhd.sk/ba.

Inter-city travel is widely available by bus, train, or taxi and is generally safe (inquire about taxi fares in advance). There are regular international trains and buses which are mechanically safe. However, there is a danger of theft, even from locked compartments, particularly on international night trains serving Warsaw, Prague and Budapest. Taxi drivers with special permits may provide international taxi service. A motorcycle driver's license and helmet are required. Small motorcycles are not allowed on highways. All traffic regulations apply.

Tourists coming to the Slovak Republic are required to have an International Drivers' Permit. A U.S. driver's license alone is not sufficient to drive in Slovakia. The U.S. driver's license must be accompanied by an International Driver's Permit, obtainable in the United States from the American Automobile Association and the American Automobile Touring Alliance.

A Slovak Driver's License can be applied for at the Dopravny Inpsektorat in the district of the applicant's place of residence in the Slovak Republic. Completion of the regular driving course and a written examination (in Slovak) are required for issuance of a Slovak driver's license. For specific information concerning Slovak driver's permit, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Slovak Embassy in Washington, DC.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in the Slovak Republic, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Slovak Republic's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Slovak customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Slovak Republic of items such as firearms, antiquities, medications, business equipment, etc. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, D.C, or one of the Slovak consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Slovak laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or traf-

ficking in illegal drugs in Slovakia are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living in the Slovak Republic are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy of Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Slovak Republic.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy in Bratislava is located at Hviezdoslavov 4, Bratislava telephone (421)(2)5443 0861; (421)(2) 5443 3338, fax (421)(2) 5441 8861; mailing address: U.S. Embassy, PO Box 309, 814 99 Bratislava, Slovak Republic; e-mail: cons@ueembassy.sk; web site: http://slovakia.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
Centrum Pre Medzinárodnoprávnu Ochranu Detí a Mládeže
(Center for the International Legal Protection of Children and Youth)
Župné nám. č. 6
P. O. Box 57
814 99 Bratislava
Tel: +4212/59330501
Tel 2: +4212/59330502
Fax: +4212/5933 0698
Open for walk-in public: 8:00 do 16:00, Wednesdays only
E-mail: cipc@employment.gov.sk

The Center for the International Legal Protection of Children and Youth ("the Center") primarily communicates with the partnership centers in other member countries of the Hague Convention. It will respond to private calls only if the caller is a long-term resident of Slovakia.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Slovak law sets no age limits for adoptive parents. The law does recommend, however, that the age difference between child and adoptive parents be "adequate." U.S. Embassy officials have been told that the age difference should be at least 15 years, and no more than 40 years. Both couples and single persons may apply to adopt Slovak children.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents (prospective adoptive parents) must, during the whole adoption procedure, have the status of long-term or permanent residents of Slovakia or another country that is party to the Hague Convention, and must be physically present in that country.

Time Frame: Prospective adoptive parents are required to reside with their adoptive child for 6 months to a year before an adoption is finalized. An adoption may take up to two years to complete.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no government-approved adoption agencies; individual cases are handled directly by the Center and by the court. This means that an adoption cannot be mediated by any adoption agency.

An application from a prospective adoptive parents residing in another Hague country must be filed directly with the Center or, if the prospective adoptive parents resides in Slovakia, with the local Office of Employment, Social Affairs and Family in the prospective adoptive parents' district of residence. A local attorney may be of assistance. A list of English speaking attorneys is available at www.sak.sk.

Court fees: If the case is processed under the Hague Convention, there are no fees. If the case is pursued by prospective parents who are residents of Slovakia, the maximum fee is 5000 Slovak crowns (SK). Administrative fees for translation of documents and authentication of documents can be charged, usually about $15 per page. Issuance of Birth Certificate and authentication: 600 SK; Issuance of passport to minor under 5 years of age: 250 SK; minor under 15 years of age: 400 SK; expedited issuance within 24 hours is 2000 SK.

If an attorney is hired, the fees for provided services are paid to the attorney directly and should be negotiated directly with the attorney.

Adoption Procedures: Slovak orphanages for children up to age 3 are administered by the Slovak Ministry of Health; orphanages for children of ages 3-18 are administered by the Ministry of Education.

Slovak law requires that the child reside from six months to one year with the prospective adoptive parents (prospective adoptive parents) before a court may issue a final adoption decree.

The child would live with the prospective adoptive parents in a pre-adoption foster care situation. During this period the family would be observed by social workers representing the child. In Hague Convention adoptions, all documents should be prepared in accordance with requirements of the Central Authority of the prospective adoptive parents' country of residence. prospective adoptive parents residing in Slovakia should contact the Office of the Social Affairs, Employment and Family having jurisdiction over their place of residence. In their case, all documents must be from Slovakia.

They will need proof of a sound financial situation as well as good physical and mental health. They will be required to obtain a home study and a psychological assessment. prospective adoptive parents who are not citizens of Slovakia will also be required to present a good-conduct statement from their country of origin,

Required Documents: Applications for adoption must be supported by the following basic documents:

- Home study from an accredited social agency in Slovakia
- Good conduct statement (police report from the country of the adoptive parent)
- Proof of financial situation
- Good health condition report
- Psychological assessment test

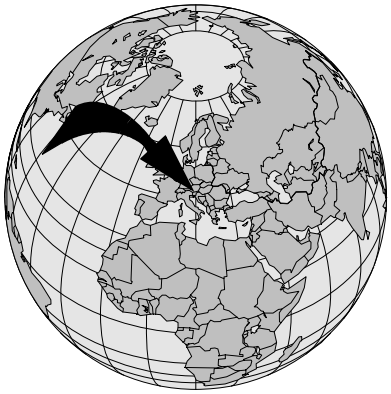
Slovak Embassy In The United States:
3523 International Court N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-237-1054
Fax: 202-237-6438
Email: info@slovakembassy-us.org
http://www.slovakembassy-us.org

Consulate General of the Slovak Republic
801 Second Avenue, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Tel: 212-286-8434
Fax: 212-286-8439
Email:
slovakconsulate_ny@verizon.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Hviezdoslavovo nam. 4
811 02 Bratislava
Slovakia
Tel: 011-421 2-5443 0861
Fax: 011-421 2-5441 8861
Email: cons@usembassy.sk
http://www.usembassy.sk

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Slovakia may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava. Questions concerning the U.S. immigrant visa process for Slovak children should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Prague, Czech Republic, via the web site provided above. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SLOVENIA

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Slovenia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 20,273 square kilometers (7,906 sq. mi.) slightly smaller than New Jersey.

Cities: Capital—Ljubljana (2002 census pop. 265,881). Other cities—Maribor (110,668), Kranj (51,225), Celje (48,081), Koper (47,539).

Terrain: Mountains rising to more than 2,500 meters (8,200 ft.) in the north, wide plateaus over 1,000 meters (3,280 ft.) high in the southeast, Karst limestone region of caves in the south-southwest, hills in the east, and approximately 50 kilometers (39 mi.) of coastline on the Adriatic Sea.

Land use: (2006) 63.3% forests, 24.2% agricultural land, 12.5% noncultivated land.

Climate: Temperate, with regional variations. Average temperature in the mountain region in January is below 0°C (32°F), in the interior from 0°C -2°C (32°F-36°F), and along the coast from 2°C -4°C (36°F-39°F); in July, average temperature in the interior is 20°C -22°C (68°F-72°F), along the coast 22°C -24°C (72°F-75°F). Average annual rainfall is from 800 mm (31 in.) in the east to 3,000 mm (117 in.) in the northwest.

People

Nationality: Noun—Slovene(s). Adjective—Slovenian.

Population: (March 2008): 2,028,630.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 0.8%.

Ethnic groups: (2002 census) Slovenes 83.06%, Croats 1.81%, Serbs 1.98%, Bosniaks 1.10%, Hungarians 0.32%, Montenegrins 0.14%, Macedonians 0.20%, Albanians 0.31%, Italians 0.11%, Roma 0.17%.

Religions: (2002 census) Roman Catholic 57.8%, refused to reply 15.7%, atheist 10.1%, Orthodox Christian 2.3%, Muslim 2.4%.

Languages: The official language is Slovene. Hungarian and Italian are spoken in the border regions, and German fluency is common near the Austrian border. Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian are spoken by a sizable (6% of the population) minority. English is widely understood by business people and students.

Education: Elementary school (26.1%), high school (54.1%), 2, and 4-year university degree (13%). Data according to 2002 census.

Health: Infant mortality rate: (2007)—2.1/1,000 births. Life expectancy (2006)—74.84 years for men, 81.89 years for women.

Work force: (2006) 1,032,000.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: On June 25, 1991, the Republic of Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia. The United States and the European Union recognized Slovenia in 1992.

Constitution: Adopted on December 23, 1991.

Government branches: Executive—president, head of state, directly elected for a maximum of two consecutive 5-year terms. Legislative—bicameral legislature (Parliament is composed of the National Assembly, with 90 deputies directly elected on party basis for 4-year terms, and the National Council, with 40 members elected by the National Assembly to represent social, economic, professional, and local interests for 5-year terms); prime minister, head of government, nominated by the president and elected by the National Assembly. Judicial—Constitutional Court, regular courts, and a public prosecutor.

Political parties: National Assembly seats—Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) 29 seats; Social Democrats (SD) 14; Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS) 11; New Slovenia - Christian People's Party (NSi) 9; Slovene People's Party (SLS) 7; Zares 7; Slovene National Party (SNS) 3, Lipa (new party established by three former SNS members) 3; Democratic

Party of Slovenian Pensioners (DeSUS) 4; Italian minority 1; Hungarian minority 1.

Suffrage: Universal over 18 years of age; permanent residents may vote in local elections.

Political subdivisions: 201 local administrative units.

Government Budget: $21.568 billion (2007); defense, 1.65% GDP (2007).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $51.99 million.

Real GDP growth rate: (2007) 6.1%.

GDP per capita in PPP: (2007) $25,755.

Natural resources: Coal, mercury, timber.

Agriculture/forestry/fishing: (approx. 2% of GDP) Products—wheat, corn, poultry, beef, pork, milk, potatoes, orchard fruits, wine.

Industry: (approx. 34% of GDP) Types—electrical equipment, chemical products, textiles, food products, electricity, metal products, wood products, transportation equipment.

Services: (approx. 63% of GDP) Types—retail, transportation, communications, real estate and other business activities.

Trade: Exports (2007) $30.047 billion)—machinery, transportation equipment, manufactured articles, chemical products. To U.S.—$506 million (2006). Imports (2007: $33.305 billion)—machinery, transportation equipment, manufactured articles, mineral fuels and lubricants. From U.S.—$289 million (2004). Major trading partners—Germany, Italy, Croatia, Austria, France, and Russia. Trade with the U.S. accounts for about 1.5% of total trade. Foreign direct investment in 2005: $144.2 million (1.6% of total FDI in Slovenia).

Foreign direct investment: in 2005 $93 million (1.6% of total FDI in Slovenia).

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Slovenia is situated at the crossroads of central Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Balkans. The Alps—including the Julian Alps, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the Karavanke chain, and the Pohorje Massif—dominate northern Slovenia near Austria. Slovenia's Adriatic coastline extends for approximately 48 kilometers (30 mi.) from Italy to Croatia. The term "karst"—a limestone region of underground rivers, gorges, and caves—originated in Slovenia's Karst plateau between Ljubljana and the Italian border. On the Pannonian plain to the east and northeast, toward the Croatian and Hungarian borders, the landscape is essentially flat. However, the majority of Slovenian terrain is hilly or mountainous, with around 90% of the surface 200 meters or more above sea level.

The majority of Slovenia's population is Slovene (over 83%). Hungarians and Italians have the status of indigenous minorities under the Slovenian constitution, which guarantees them seats in the National Assembly. Most other minority groups, particularly those from the former Yugoslavia, immigrated after World War II for economic reasons. Slovenes are predominantly Roman Catholic, though the country also has a small number of Protestants, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Slovene is a Slavic language, written in the Roman script.

HISTORY

Slovenia is today a vibrant democracy, but the roots of this democracy go back deep in Slovene history. According to the 16th century French political philosopher, Jean Bodin, Slovenes practiced the unique custom of the Installation of the Dukes of Carinthia for almost 1,000 years, until the late 14th century. According to some scholars, Bodin's account of how Slovene farmers contractually consented to be governed by the Duke influenced Thomas Jefferson's drafting of the Declaration of Independence. From as early as the 9th century, Slovenia had fallen under foreign rulers, including partial control by Bavarian dukes and the Republic of Venice. With the exception of Napoleon's 4-year tutelage of parts of Slovenia and Croatia—the "Illyrian Provinces"—Slovenia was part of the Habsburg Empire from the 14th century until 1918. Nevertheless, Slovenia resisted Germanizing influences and retained its unique Slavic language and culture.

In 1918, Slovenia joined with other southern Slav states in forming the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as part of the peace plan at the end of World War I. Renamed in 1929 under a Serbian monarch, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia fell to the Axis powers during World War II. Following communist partisan resistance to German, Hungarian, and Italian occupation and elimination of rival resistance groups, socialist Yugoslavia was born under the helm of Josip Broz Tito. During the communist era, Slovenia became Yugoslavia's most prosperous republic, at the forefront of Yugoslavia's unique version of communism. Within a few years of Tito's death in 1980, Belgrade initiated plans to further concentrate political and economic power in its hands.

Defying the politicians in Belgrade, Slovenia underwent a flowering of democracy and an opening of its society in cultural, civic, and economic realms to a degree almost unprecedented in the communist world. In September 1989, the General Assembly of the Yugoslav Republic of Slovenia adopted an amendment to its constitution asserting Slovenia's right to secede from Yugoslavia. On December 23, 1990, 88% of Slovenia's population voted for independence in a referendum, and on June 25, 1991, the Republic of Slovenia declared its independence. A nearly bloodless 10-day war with Yugoslavia followed. Yugoslav forces withdrew after Slovenia demonstrated stiff resistance to Belgrade.

As a young independent republic, Slovenia pursued economic stabilization and further political openness, while



emphasizing its Western outlook and central European heritage. Reflecting its success in these goals, Slovenia became a member both of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) in March and May, respectively, of 2004. Today Slovenia is a stable democracy that is increasing its international engagement. Slovenia is one of the top foreign investors in the former Yugoslavia, and a charter World Trade Organization (WTO) member. Members of the Slovenian Armed Forces are participating in NATO, EU, and UN operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and elsewhere. Slovenia served as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman-in-Office in 2005, was the Chairman of the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors in 2006-2007, and was the first of the ten 2004 EU newcomers to hold the EU's rotating presidency in the first half of 2008. Though small in size, Slovenia enjoys a growing regional profile and plays a role on the world stage that is out of proportion to its size.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Slovenia enjoys excellent relations with the United States and cooperates with it actively on a number of fronts. From 1998 to 2000, Slovenia occupied a non-permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council and in that capacity distinguished itself with a constructive, creative, and consensus-oriented activism. Slovenia has been a member of the UN since May 1992 and of the Council of Europe since May 1993. Slovenia signed an association agreement with the EU in 1996 and became a full EU member state on May 1, 2004. Slovenia officially became a member of NATO on March 29, 2004. Slovenia is a member of all major international financial institutions—the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank Group, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development—as well as 40 other international organizations, among them the WTO, of which it is a founding member.

Since the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia has instituted a stable, multi-party, democratic political system, characterized by regular elections, a free press, and an excellent human rights record. Slovenia is a parliamentary democracy and constitutional republic. Within its government, power is shared between a directly elected president, a prime

minister, and a bicameral legislature (Parliament). Parliament is composed of the 90-member National Assembly—which takes the lead on virtually all legislative issues—and the National Council, a largely advisory body composed of representatives from social, economic, professional, and local interests. The Constitutional Court has the highest power of review of legislation to ensure its consistency with Slovenia's constitution. Its nine judges are elected by the National Assembly for a single 9-year term.

Slovenia's first President, Milan Kucan, concluded his second and final term in December 2002. Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek defeated opposition candidate Barbara Brezigar in the 2002 presidential elections by a comfortable margin and was inaugurated as Kucan's successor on December 22, 2002. Finance Minister Anton Rop succeeded Drnovšek as Prime Minister in December 2002, and his center-left governing coalition commanded an almost two-thirds majority in the National Assembly until October 2004. In the October 2004 election, Janez Jansa's center-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) made a strong showing, winning a relative majority with over 29% of the vote. Janez Jansa was sworn in as Prime Minister on November 9, 2004 and the National Assembly confirmed the new cabinet on December 3. In November 2007 elections, Danilo Turk succeeded Janez Drnovsek as President of the Republic of Slovenia with 68% of the vote.

The government and most of the Slovenian polity share a common view of the desirability of a close association with the West, specifically of membership in both the EU and NATO. For all the apparent bitterness that divides left and right wings, there are few fundamental philosophical differences between them in the area of public policy. Slovenian society is built on consensus, which has converged on a social-democrat model. Political differences tend to have their roots in the roles that groups and individuals played during the years of communist rule and the struggle for independence. As the most prosperous republic of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia emerged from its brief 10-day war of secession in 1991 as an independent nation for the first time in its history. Since that time, the country has made steady but cautious progress toward developing a market economy. Economic reforms introduced shortly after independence led to healthy economic growth. Despite the halting pace of reform and signs of slowing gross domestic product (GDP) growth today, Slovenes now enjoy the highest per capita income of all the transition economies of central Europe.

The Slovenes have pursued internal economic restructuring with caution. The Jansa government, elected on a platform supporting widespread economic reform, has found delivering on its ambitious promises more challenging than expected. The first phase of privatization (socially-owned property under the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or S.F.R.Y., system) is now complete. However, sales of several remaining large state holdings, planned for several years now, have yet to come to fruition. The Jansa government has said that it is committed to seeing this final stage of privatization happen under its administration.

Foreign trade is very important to the Slovenian economy. Nearly two-thirds of Slovenia's overall trade is with the EU and the vast majority of this is with Germany, Italy, Austria, and France. While the service sector is the largest part of the economy as a percentage of GDP, manufacturing accounts for most employment, with machinery and other manufactured products comprising the major exports. Labor force surveys put unemployment at 5.7% (2007). Inflation, after declining from 3.6% in 2004 to 2.5% in 2005 and 2006, returned to 3.6% for 2007. The average annual inflation index through June 2008 was 7.6%. Gross domestic product grew by about 6.1% in 2007. Slovenia joined the Euro Zone in January 2007.

In the 15 years since independence, Slovenia has made tremendous progress establishing democratic institutions, enshrining respect for human rights, establishing a market economy, and adapting its military to Western norms and standards. In contrast to its southern neighbors, civil tranquility and strong economic growth have marked this period. Upon achieving independence, Slovenia offered citizenship to all residents, regardless of ethnicity or origin, avoiding a sectarian trap that has caught out many central European countries. However, debate continues on how best to accommodate an estimated 18,000 undocumented non-Slovenes who were resident in Slovenia at the time of independence, but whose records were "erased" when they did not take citizenship. Many in this group have regularized their status or left the country; however, it is estimated that around 4000 cases remain unresolved. Slovenia willingly accepted nearly 100,000 refugees from the fighting in Bosnia and has since participated in international stabilization efforts in the region.

On the international front, Slovenia has rapidly integrated into the Euro-Atlantic community of nations. With successful NATO (66% in favor) and EU (91% in favor) referenda in March 2003, Slovenia achieved upon accession in 2004 its two primary foreign policy goals—membership in the EU and NATO. In 2005, Slovenia served as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman-in-Office. Slovenia also participates in the Stability Pact and the Southeast Europe Cooperation Initiative (SECI). Slovenia is one of the focus countries for the U.S. southeast European policy aimed at reinforcing regional stability and integration. The Slovenian Government is well-positioned to be an influential partner for other southeast European governments at different stages of reform and integration, and has introduced initiatives towards this goal, including the establishment of the Center for European Perspective and the Bled Strategic Forum.

To these ends, the U.S. urges Slovenia to maintain momentum on internal economic, political, and legal reforms,

while expanding their international cooperation as resources allow. U.S. and allied efforts to assist Slovenia's military restructuring and modernization efforts are ongoing. Slovenia successfully faced its largest organizational challenge since independence when it was the first of the ten 2004 EU newcomers to hold the EU's rotating presidency from January through June 2008.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Danilo TURK**
Prime Min.: **Janez JANSA**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Nutrition: **Iztok JARC**
Min. of Culture: **Vasko SIMONITI**
Min. of Defense: **Karl ERJAVEC**
Min. of Economic Affairs: **Andrej VIZJAK**
Min. of Education & Sports: **Milan ZVER**
Min. of Environment & Spatial Planning: **Janez PODOBNIK**
Min. of Finance: **Andrej BAJUK**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Dimitrij RUPEL**
Min. of Health: **Zofija Mazej KUKOVIC**
Min. of Higher Education, Science, & Technology: **Mojca Kucler DOLINAR**
Min. of Interior: **Dragutin MATE**
Min. of Justice: **Lovro STURM**
Min. of Labor, Family, & Social Affairs: **Marjeta COTMAN**
Min. of Public Admin.: **Gregor VIRANT**
Min. of Transport & Communication: **Radovan ZERJAV**
Min. Without Portfolio for Local Self-Govt. & Regional Policy: **Ivan ZAGAR**
Min. Without Portfolio for Development: **Ziga TURK**
Governor, National Bank: **Marko KRANJEC**
Ambassador to the US: **Samuel ZBOGAR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Sanja STIGLIC**

Slovenia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2410 California Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel.: (202) 386-6601; fax: (202) 386-6633). The embassy webpage is http://washington.embassy.si/index.php?id=51&L=1.

ECONOMY

Slovenia's economic success clearly illustrates the benefits of embracing liberal trade, following the rule of law, and rewarding enterprise. This success, however, is not unprecedented for Slovenia. Although it comprised only about one-thirteenth of Yugoslavia's total population, it was the most productive of the Yugoslav republics, accounting for one-fifth of its GDP and one-third of its exports. The country already enjoyed a relatively prosperous economy and strong market ties to the West when it gained independence in 1991. Since independence, Slovenia has pursued diversification of its trade toward the West and integration into Western and transatlantic institutions vigorously. In so doing, it has made substantial progress in its transition to a market economy, particularly becoming party to a number of bilateral and regional free trade agreements. Slovenia is a founding member of the WTO and joined the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) in 1996. Slovenia also participates in SECI, as well as in the Central European Initiative, the Royaumont Process, and the Black Sea Economic Council. Slovenia became a new EU member state on May 1, 2004.

Today, Slovenia is one the best economic performers in central and eastern Europe, with a GDP per capita in PPP in 2007 at $25,755. Slovenia benefits from a well-educated and productive work force as well as dynamic and effective political and economic institutions. Although Slovenia has taken a cautious, deliberate approach to economic management and reform, with heavy emphasis on achieving consensus before proceeding, its overall record is one of relative success.

Slovenia has enjoyed healthy growth figures for the past 8 years, averaging over 4.0% annual GDP growth. The European economic slowdown reduced the pace of growth somewhat beginning in 2001. GDP grew by 6.1% in 2007. Slovenia's economy is highly dependent on foreign trade. About two-thirds of Slovenia's trade is with the EU. Additionally, the country has penetrated successfully the south and east markets, including the former Soviet Union region. This high level of openness makes Slovenia extremely sensitive to economic conditions in its main trading partners and changes in its international price competitiveness. Keeping labor costs in line with productivity is thus a key challenge for Slovenia's economic well-being. Services contributed the most to the national output in 2007, accounting for 63.5% of GDP. Industry and construction comprised 34.4% of GDP; and, agriculture, forestry, and fishing accounted for 2% of GDP.

Economic management in Slovenia is relatively good. Public finances showed modest deficit of 0.1% of GDP in 2007. The government policy is aimed toward maintaining the deficit at or below 1% of GDP. The budget of 2008 constrains public deficit to 0.9% of GDP, well within Maastricht parameters. The current account balance has improved significantly as a result of stronger exports and a changed composition of imports by economic purpose. In 2007, the current account balance showed a deficit of $2.222 billion. After the adoption of the Euro, controlling inflation remains a top government priority.

Due to its macroeconomic stability, favorable foreign debt position, and successful accession to the EU, Slovenia consistently receives the highest credit rating of all transition economies—receiving the top regional honors in a recent Dunn & Bradstreet survey. Slovenia's ability to meet its growth rate objectives will largely depend on the state of the world economy, since exports demand in Slovenia's primary market has stalled. Foreign direct investment (FDI) will take up the slack to some extent, as analysts forecast FDI levels will continue to increase with further privatization of state assets, including portions of the telecommunications, financial, and energy sectors. Slovenia must carefully address fiscal, monetary, and FDI policy, in light of the high deficit in pension accounts, its vulnerable Western export markets, and inflation concerns. Slovenian enterprises have a tradition of

market orientation that has served them well in the transition period, as they moved energetically to reorient trade from former Yugoslav markets to those of central and eastern Europe. However, in many cases under the Slovenian brand of privatization, managers and workers in formerly "socially owned" enterprises have become the majority shareholders, perpetuating the practices of "worker management" that were the hallmark of the Yugoslav brand of socialism. Difficulties associated with that model are expected to decrease under competitive pressures, as shares in these firms change hands, and as EU reforms introduce more Western-oriented governance practices.

Slovenia has taken some important steps in recent years to free up its financial markets. This sector historically has been one of the most protected, reflecting Slovenian concerns over limited capacity to face global competition and a desire to maintain domestic control over finance. A combination of market forces, changes in Bank of Slovenia regulations, and national legislation are moving this sector increasingly in a more globally oriented direction. In 2003, several measures were introduced to make both portfolio and direct investments easier and more transparent in Slovenia and to conduct many financial operations, including banking, securities brokering, and undertaking various credit transactions. Most remaining barriers were removed by May 1, 2004—for instance, marketing of foreign mutual investment funds is now allowed. The banking sector also is showing signs of stirring from its relative inactivity, as pressures build to consolidate Slovenia's myriad banks and as privatization of two of the largest banks proceeds. While Belgian KBC is the main owner of Nova Ljubljanska Banka (NLB) with 34%, little progress has been made in the privatization of NKBM bank, Slovenia's largest bank, which is still 100% state owned. The government continues to downsize state shares in the insurance sector; however, the government-owned Triglav still controls nearly half of the insurance market. Other insurance companies have been privatized or are foreign-owned. Government efforts and reforms designed to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) have proven somewhat successful—FDI is continuing to slowly grow. However, FDI fell sharply in 2003 due to a lack of any major privatization deal or foreign acquisition. Slovenia's traditional anti-inflation policy in the past relied heavily on capital inflow restrictions. Its slow privatization process favored domestic investors and prescribed long lag time on share trading, complicated by a cultural wariness of being "bought up" by foreigners. As such, Slovenia has had a number of impediments to full foreign participation in its economy. However, a number of these barriers to FDI were fully removed in 2002. As a result, expected foreign takeovers of Slovenian blue chip companies, as well as EU membership, have fueled investors' interest in the country. Acquisitions by multinational companies—KBC of Belgium's takeover of significant share of Nova Ljubljanska Banka, Swiss Novartis' takeover of Lek Pharmaceuticals, and recent interest of foreigners in national telecom—clearly demonstrate the attractiveness of the Slovenian economy, particularly to European investors seeking a platform to support expansion into southeastern Europe. U.S. investments in Slovenia have been more modest; Goodyear is the largest American investor. Even with these successes, much of the economy remains in state hands and foreign direct investment in Slovenia is one of the lowest in the EU on a per capita basis.

The current government's ability to follow through on pledges to accelerate privatization of a number of large state holdings and increase FDI will be key to Slovenia's economic future. In late 2005, the government's new Committee for Economic Reforms was elevated to cabinet-level status with a program including plans for lowering the tax burden, privatizing state-controlled firms, improving the flexibility of the labor market, and increasing the government's efficiency. Many of the committee members and heads have resigned due to inability to make any significant progress. Though progress has been stalled on the program, the Jansa government has pledged to move forward with the planned reforms, which also in the vast majority have not been realized thus far. Slovenia's position with respect to other central and eastern European (CEE) countries will decline without vigorous pursuit of economic reform.

DEFENSE

Slovenian Armed Forces

After successful resistance to the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) following the 10-day war of independence in 1991, Slovenia faced the challenge of establishing independent armed forces. The Slovene Armed Forces underwent a major reorganization from 2003 to 2005, with the goal of changing from a conscription-based territorial defense force to a professional, deployable, and combat capable military with NATO. Conscription ended earlier than expected, in October 2003, and compulsory reserve service will end by 2010. As of March 2008, Slovenia's professional force included 7,050 soldiers and 7,359 reservists. The current force structure consists of one fully professional motorized infantry brigade and two cadre/reserve force mechanized brigades. The professional brigade represents Slovenia's deployable reaction force. The Slovene Armed Forces also include a small air force, equipped with helicopters and turbo-prop fixed wing aircraft, and a naval attachment, including a coastal patrol boat. The United States provides bilateral military assistance to Slovenia, including through the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program, the State Partnership Program (aligned with Colorado), the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, the EUCOM Joint Contact Team Program, and the Regional Counterterrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP).

NATO

After receiving an invitation to join NATO at the NATO Prague Summit in November 2002, Slovenes approved NATO accession with a vote of 66% in a March 2003 referendum. The National Assembly ratified accession to the North Atlantic Treaty in February 2004, and Slovenia officially became a member of the Alliance on March 29, 2004. After gaining independence, Slovenia avidly sought NATO membership as part of its overall strategy of integration into the most important international economic, financial, and security organizations.

Slovenia's current international commitments show its willingness to become a co-provider of security in the region. Slovenia contributed helicopters, medical personnel, military police, and an infantry company to the NATO Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) and continues to be very active in the European Union Force (EUFOR). As of June 2008, Slovenia had 34 troops deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina (ALTHEA, EUFOR, Joint Enterprise, NATO). In Kosovo, Slovenia actively participates in the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) with 363 troops.

There are 65 Slovenian personnel with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan, 2 instructors to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, 14 troops in Lebanon (UNIFIL), 3 in Syria (UNTSO), 15 at the EU Mission in Chad, and 1 in the U.S. (CENTCOM, NATO).

The Government of Slovenia has diligently pursued its restructuring, reorganization, modernization, and procurement with the paramount goal of NATO interoperability. The United States has encouraged Slovenia to maintain the pace of reform—including the establishment of closer links with regional partners—even following its attainment of full membership in NATO.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

In regular public statements, Slovenia's highest politicians underscore their government's commitment to expanding cooperative arrangements with neighbors and active contributions to international efforts aimed at bringing stability to southeast Europe. Resource limitations are a concern for the government, which does not wish to see itself spread too thin. Nonetheless, the Slovenes are taking concrete steps toward a more outward looking and constructive role in regional and international security arrangements, as resources allow.

Multilateral

The Slovenian Armed Forces has over 500 troops deployed to support the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the NATO Training Mission (NTM-I) in Iraq, EU Mission Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR), and other multilateral operations.

Slovenia takes an active role in humanitarian assistance with donations to the victims of the Southeast Asian tsunami, the Pakistani earthquake, and Hurricane Katrina, as well as ongoing assistance to refugees in Darfur and support for the World Food Program.

Through its International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF), Slovenia has created the demining instrument of choice for the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the rest of the Balkans, and now even further afield in Central Asia and Cyprus. The organization has raised over $203 million since its inception in 1998 (with the United States contributing over $92 million).

Slovenia served as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE in 2005 and the Chairman of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors for 2006-2007.

Slovenia is engaged with 29 countries in bilateral military exchange—most actively with the U.S.—and in regional cooperative arrangements in central and southeast Europe; it participates in or intends to contribute forces for five major multinational regional peacekeeping bodies.

Slovenia participates in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their delivery systems, and related materials worldwide.

Slovenia has ratified all 13 international anti-terrorism conventions.

Slovenia is party to the Wassenaar arrangement controlling exports of weapons and sensitive technology to countries of concern

Slovenia is an active participant in Southeast European Defense Ministerial (SEDM) activities.

Relations with Neighbors

Slovenia's bilateral relations with its neighbors are generally harmonious and cooperative. However, there remain a few unresolved disputes with Croatia related to the succession of the former Yugoslavia, including demarcation of their common border. In addition, unlike the other successor states of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia did not normalize relations with Serbia and Montenegro until after the passing from power of Slobodan Milosevic (although the Slovenes did open a representative office in Podgorica to work with Montenegrin President Djukanovic's government).

With its entry into the European Union, Slovenia has become a strong advocate for the inclusion of other former Yugoslav republics into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Slovenia's strong political ties to the region are complemented by strong economic ties. Slovenia is among the largest foreign investors in the region.

Italy. Italian-Slovenian bilateral relations are also very good. By mid-

1996, property restitution disputes derived from World War II had been set aside, allowing a dramatic improvement in relations. In 2001, the Italian Senate voted final approval of legislation resolving some minor differences remaining over minority rights issues and over the compensation for property abandoned by Italian refugees fleeing communist Yugoslavia in the postwar period. Recently there have been some accusations of Italians not consulting with Slovenia regarding their plans with gas terminals in the middle of the bay and near the Slovene-Italian land border, which could have an environmental impact on Slovenia as well.

Hungary. Relations are excellent with Hungary. Hungarian (as well as Italian) minorities in Slovenia are accorded special treatment under the Slovenian constitution, including a permanent parliamentary seat. Within the Multilateral Cooperation Initiative between Slovenia, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia, cooperation exists in numerous fields, including military (Multinational Land Force peacekeeping brigade), transportation, combating money laundering and organized crime, non-proliferation, border crossings, and environmental issues.

Austria. Austro-Slovenian relations are close with occasional disputes related to support for the other country's minorities. In 2005 and 2006 this was dominated by an ongoing question about whether to allow bilingual (German and Slovenian) signage on Austrian territory near the Slovenian border. Questions regarding nuclear power in Slovenia and the basis for the settlement of the Austrian State Treaty appear to have been solved. Economic cooperation is expanding, including a joint project for development of border regions.

Croatia. Though somewhat rocky at times, Croatian-Slovenian relations are solid. Outstanding issues include a few remaining maritime and land border disputes, property rights, Croatian depositors' savings in the Ljubljanska Banka from Yugoslav times, and Krsko nuclear plant. In 2003, Croatia declared its intention to claim a 200-mile exclusive economic zone in the Adriatic Sea, which would effectively cut off Slovenia's use of international waters. Multilateral discussions among Slovenia, Croatia, and Italy on this issue continue with the European Commission's participation. In a series of high-level meetings since the latter half of 1998, Slovenia and Croatia have been engaged in settling bilateral differences, a process that accelerated after the death of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman in 1999 and has intensified under the government of Prime Minister Janez Jansa elected in October 2004. In order to aid the stabilization of this part of Europe, Slovenia has supported Croatia's efforts to draw closer to European institutions.

Slovenia and Croatia most recently made an effort to improve relations during a joint government session on June 10, 2005 where three bilateral agreements were signed: Joint Statement on Avoiding of Conflicts, Bilateral Agreement on Avoiding Double Taxation, and an establishment of a joint Historical Commission for the border issue. Though several nagging issues remain to be solved, less formal meetings between Slovenian and Croatian sides occur regularly.

U.S.-SLOVENIAN RELATIONS

Since Slovenia achieved its independence in 1991 the United States and Slovenia have developed strong, cooperative relations on a broad range of issues, from promoting regional security to developing closer bilateral trade and investment ties. The U.S. was very supportive of Slovenia's entrance into NATO and other Euro-Atlantic agreements and institutions.

The first official U.S. presence in Slovenia dates from the early 1970s, when the United States Information Service (USIS) opened a library and American press and cultural center in Ljubljana. From its opening through 1992, the American Center worked to develop closer grassroots relations between the United States and the people of the then-Slovenian Republic of Yugoslavia. On December 23, 1990, the Slovene people voted in a plebiscite to separate from greater Yugoslavia. On June 25, 1991, the new Republic of Slovenia officially declared its independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. A 10-day war commenced, during which Slovenian territorial troops fought off incursions by the Yugoslav National Army. The United States formally recognized the new republic on April 7, 1992. To develop U.S. diplomatic relations with the new state, the United States opened a new Embassy in Ljubljana in August 1992.

Since 1992, the United States and the Republic of Slovenia have developed an impressive track record of cooperation on bilateral, regional, and global issues. The United States has worked closely with the Slovenes to resolve succession issues stemming from the breakup of Yugoslavia. Slovenia provided invaluable assistance to the United States and NATO by facilitating the deployment of the Implementation Force (IFOR)—and subsequently SFOR—to Bosnia after the conclusion of the Dayton accords. With strong U.S. support, Slovenia has developed the International Trust Fund as the demining instrument of choice in the Balkans and is expanding operations to include the Caucasus.

On the economic front, the United States has worked to develop bilateral trade and investment with Slovenia. U.S. trade (imports and exports) with Slovenia for 2006 was $883.5 million. Under the Support for Eastern European Democracy (SEED) Act, the U.S. provided technical assistance on enterprise competitiveness, banking and pension reform, competition policy, and debt restructuring. Reflecting the progress Slovenia has made in these areas, Slovenia was among the first transition countries to "graduate" from the SEED program.

The United States supported Slovenia's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance and continues to work with

the Slovenian military to promote greater cooperation and interoperability with NATO forces. The United States and Slovenia hold periodic high-level security consultations to help Slovenia achieve this national objective. The U.S. European Command provides a liaison team that works with the Ministry of Defense full-time to develop greater familiarity with NATO structures and procedures.

In October 1997, Slovenia joined the group of countries—now numbering 27—whose citizens enjoy the privilege of visa-free travel to the United States.

Given Slovenia's economic success and location, its history, language, business ties, and insights into the region, Slovenia is an important partner in advancing the shared goal of regional political and economic stability. The utility of this partnership was demonstrated by effective U.S.-Slovenian cooperation on a broad mix of issues at the U.S.-EU Summit held in Ljubljana in June 2008. More than geographically, Slovenia is a bridge from developed Europe into the Balkans, an area of the continent where significant diplomatic and security challenges remain.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Cook, Joyce D
ECO:	Kim, Juliana J.
MGT:	Burns, Brendan R.
AMB:	Ghafari, Yousif B.
CON:	Luster, Aaron L.
DCM:	Coleman, Maryruth
PAO:	Shultz, Sue M.
GSO:	Burns, Brendan R.
RSO:	Teno, Teresa A.
AFSA:	Jones Jr., Frank R
CLO:	Mandic, Vedrana
DAO:	Ltc. Ltc. Vestal, Jeff L., Usa
EEO:	Nice, Marlene M.
FMO:	
ICASS Chair:	Smith, Glen R.
IMO:	Jones Jr., Frank R
IRS:	Beck, Kathy J.
ISSO:	Branks, Scott E.
POL:	Shelton, Grace W.
State ICASS:	Luster, Aaron L.

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 29, 2008

Country Description: Slovenia operates under a parliamentary democracy. In May 2004, Slovenia became a member of the European Union. Tourist facilities are widely available throughout the country.

Entry Requirements: Slovenia is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Slovenia for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our fact sheet. Slovene authorities may confiscate passports with signs of damage, such as missing pages, as suspicious documents, potentially causing travel delays.

All non-EU citizens staying longer than 3 days in Slovenia must register with the local police within 3 days of arrival and inform the office about any change in their address. Registration of foreign visitors staying in hotels or accommodations rented through an accommodation company is done automatically by the hotelier or accommodation company, but visitors staying with family members must register themselves. Registration is available 24 hours a day at police stations and is free of charge. Failure to register can result in a significant fine of up to 400 euros.

Americans are permitted up to 90 days stay within any six-month period. For further information on entry requirements for Slovenia, travelers may contact the Embassy of Slovenia at 2410 California Street NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 386-6610; the Consulate General of Slovenia in New York City, tel. (2l2) 370-3006; or the Consulate General in Cleveland, Ohio, tel. (216) 589-9220. Visit the Embassy of Slovenia's web site at http://washington.embassy.si/index.php?id=51&L=1 for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Slovenia remains largely free of terrorist incidents. This assessment takes into account historical data relevant to terrorist activities and recent reporting indicating whether acts could be conducted without prior advance warnings. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Slovenia shares open borders with its Western European neighbors, allowing the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

There are occasional political demonstrations in city centers in Slovenia. They occur most often in central Ljubljana in areas around Kongresni Trg (Congress Square), in front of the Parliament building, around other government facilities, and, at times, near the American Embassy. These demonstrations are usually peaceful and generally are not anti-American in nature. However, there have been demonstrations that voiced anti-American sentiments. American citizens should keep in mind that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. For additional information, Americans are encouraged to check the U.S. Embassy web site at http://slovenia.usembassy.gov or call the Embassy at 386-1-200-5595 or 200-5599 (200-5556 after hours and on weekends/ holidays).

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's

Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Slovenia's overall crime rate is low and violent crimes are relatively uncommon. Most crimes tend to be non-violent and directed towards obtaining personal property, such as purse-snatching, pick-pocketing, and residential and vehicle break-ins. Visitors should take normal security precautions and are requested to report any incidents to the local police.

Vehicle break-in/theft is a continuous problem in Slovenia. Individuals should always lock vehicles, use vehicle anti-theft devices, park in well-lighted areas, and secure vehicles in residential or hotel garages.

Residential burglaries occur where there are security vulnerabilities and/or where residents are not implementing residential security practices. Recent burglary reports indicate access was gained when doors were not properly secured with an appropriate lock.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Adequate medical care is readily available. Travelers to Slovenia may obtain a list of English-speaking physicians at the U.S. Embassy or online at http://slovenia.usembassy.gov/medical_ass-istance.html. Antibiotics, as well as other American-equivalent prescription medications are available at local pharmacies. In Slovenia all medications, including drugs considered over-the–counter and first aid supplies, are dispensed through pharmacies ("lekarna"). For those persons who engage in outdoor activities, a vaccine to prevent tick-borne encephalitis is recommended. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Slovenia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Slovenia has a well-developed road network that is safe for travel. Highways connect to neighboring cities and countries and are clearly signposted; road signs and traffic rules are consistent with those used throughout Europe. As the number of cars in Slovenia continues to rise, roads are becoming more heavily congested during the weekends on major routes and during rush hours. Parking is difficult and can be expensive in the center of Ljubljana. Traffic moves on the right. Third party liability insurance is required for all vehicles; coverage is purchased locally. Travelers should be alert to aggressive drivers both in cities and on highways. Many of the serious accidents in Slovenia occur as a result of high-speed driving. Emergency roadside help and information may be found by dialing 1-987 for vehicle assistance and towing services, 112 for an ambulance or fire brigade, and 113 for police. By Slovene law, the maximum legal blood-alcohol limit for drivers is 0.05.

U.S. visitors or U.S. residents in Slovenia must be in possession of both a valid U.S. driver's license and an International Driver's License in order to drive in Slovenia. International Driver's Licenses are valid for a maximum of one year, after which residents of Slovenia are required to obtain a Slovene driver's license. Note that applying for and obtaining a Slovene drivers license is far easier if undertaken during the first year of residence in Slovenia rather than after the first year has elapsed. Current information about traffic and road conditions is available in English by calling (01) 530-5300 and online at http://www.amzs.si/?jezik=1033.

The speed limit is 50kph/30 mph in urban areas, 130 kph/80 mph on expressways (the "avtocesta"). Motorists are required to have their headlights on during the daytime; drivers and passengers alike must wear seat belts; motorcyclists and their passengers must wear approved helmets. The use of handheld cellular telephones while driving is prohibited in Slovenia. For more specific information, visit the web site of Slovenia's national tourist office and national authority for road safety at http://www.slovenia-tourism.si.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Slovenia, the U.S. Federal Aviation

Administration (FAA) has not assessed Slovenia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Slovenia became a member of the European Union in May 2004. Its customs regulations have been fully harmonized with those of the E.U.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Slovenian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Slovenia are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in both Slovenia and the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Sloveniaare encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Slovenia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Presernova 31, Ljubljana 1000, Tel: (386)(1) 200-5500 or Fax: (386)(1) 200-5535. The Embassy's web site is http://slovenia.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

December 2006

The adoption authority for Slovenia, the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Affairs, has advised the U.S. Embassy in Ljubljana that Slovene law only permits intercountry adoption if no Slovene adoptive parents can be found. The number of Slovene adoptive parents waiting to adopt is very long as there are few children eligible for adoption.



SOLOMON ISLANDS

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Solomon Islands

PROFILE

Geography

Area: Land—27,556 sq. km. (11,599 sq. mi.). Archipelago—725,197 sq. km. (280,000 sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Honiara (on the island of Guadalcanal), pop. 54,600. Other towns—Gizo, Auki, Kirakira.
Terrain: Mountainous islands.
Climate: Tropical monsoon.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Solomon Islander(s).
Population: (2006) 552,438.
Annual growth rate: 2.8%.
Ethnic groups: (2002) Melanesian 93%, Polynesian 4%, Micronesian 1.5%, other 1.5%.
Religions: Christian 95%—more than one-third Anglican (Archdiocese of Melanesia), Roman Catholic 19%, South Sea Evangelical 17%, United Church (Methodist) 11%, Seventh-day Adventist 10%.
Languages: English (official); about 120 vernaculars, including Solomon Islands pidgin.
Education: (2003) Years compulsory—none. Attendance—79.6% primary school; 14% secondary school. Adult literacy—76.6%.
Health: (2003) Infant mortality rate—19/1,000. Life expectancy—62.3 yrs.
Work force: (264,900, 2002) Agriculture—75%. Industry and commerce—5%. Services—20%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth.
Constitution: May 1978.
Independence: July 7, 1978.
Government branches: Executive—British monarch represented by a governor general (head of state); prime minister (head of government). Legislative—50-member Parliament elected every 4 years. Judicial—high court plus magistrates court; system of custom land courts throughout islands.
Political subdivisions: Nine provinces and Honiara town.
Political parties: Association of Independent Members (AIM), People's Alliance Party (PAP), Socred, Rural Advancement Party (RAP), Lafari Party, Christian Alliance Party, Democratic Party, National Party, Liberal Party, Labor Party.
Suffrage: Universal over 18.
National holidays: July 7.

Economy

GDP: (December 2007) $270 million.
Annual growth rate: (December 2007) 10%.
Per capita income: (2005) $474.
Avg. inflation rate: (December 2007) 10%.
Natural resources: Forests, fish, agricultural land, marine products, gold.
Agriculture: Products—copra, cocoa, palm oil, palm kernels and subsistence crops of yams, taro, bananas, pineapple.
Industry: Types—fish canning, sawmilling, boats, rattan and wood furniture, fiberglass products, shell jewelry, tobacco, beer, clothing, soap, nails, handicrafts.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$432 million: timber, fish, cocoa, copra, palm oil. Major markets—China 28.2%, South Korea 15.7%, Thailand 15.7%, Japan 9.7%, Philippines 5.1%, Vietnam 3.1%. Imports—$614 million: mineral fuels, food, machinery and transport equipment, and basic manufactures. Major suppliers—Australia 25.3%, Singapore 23.8%, New Zealand 5.3%, India 4.8%, Japan 3.9%.
Exchange rate: (2005 average) Solomon Islands $1=about U.S.$0.13.

GEOGRAPHY

The Solomon Islands form an archipelago in the Southwest Pacific about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 mi.) northeast of Australia. With terrain ranging from ruggedly mountainous islands to low-lying coral atolls, the Solomon Islands stretch in a 1,450-kilometer (900 mi.) chain southeast

from Papua New Guinea across the Coral Sea to Vanuatu. The main islands of Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal, Malaita, and Makira have rainforested mountain ranges of mainly volcanic origin, deep narrow valleys, and coastal belts lined with coconut palms and ringed by reefs. The smaller islands are atolls and raised coral reefs, often spectacularly beautiful. The Solomon Islands region is geologically active, and earth tremors are frequent.

The islands' ocean-equatorial climate is extremely humid throughout the year, with a mean temperature of 27ºC (80ºF) and few extremes of temperature or weather. June through August is the cooler period. Though seasons are not pronounced, the northwesterly winds of November through April bring more frequent rainfall and occasional squalls or cyclones. The annual rainfall is about 305 centimeters (120 in.). More than 90% of the islands traditionally were forested, but this has come under severe pressure from current logging operations. The coastal strips are sheltered by mangrove and coconut trees. Luxuriant rainforest covers the interiors of the large islands. Soil quality ranges from extremely rich volcanic to relatively infertile limestone. More than 230 varieties of orchids and other tropical flowers brighten the landscape.

PEOPLE

The Solomon Islanders comprise diverse cultures, languages, and customs. Ninety-three percent are Melanesian, 4% Polynesian, and 1.5% Micronesian. In addition, small numbers of Europeans and Chinese are registered. About 120 vernacular languages are spoken.

Most people reside in small, widely dispersed settlements along the coasts. Sixty percent live in localities with fewer than 200 persons, and only 17% reside in urban areas.

The capital city of Honiara, situated on Guadalcanal, the largest island, has 54,600 inhabitants. The other principal towns are Gizo, Auki, and Kirakira. Most Solomon Islanders are Christian, with the Anglican, Roman Catholic, South Seas Evangelical, and Seventh-day Adventist faiths predominating. About 5% of the population maintains traditional beliefs.

The chief characteristics of the traditional Melanesian social structure are:

- The practice of subsistence economy;
- The recognition of bonds of kinship, with important obligations extending beyond the immediate family group; local and clan loyalties far outweigh regional or national affiliations;
- Generally egalitarian relationships, emphasizing acquired rather than inherited status; and
- A strong attachment of the people to the land.

Most Solomon Islanders maintain this traditional social structure and find their roots in village life.

HISTORY

Although little prehistory of the Solomon Islands is known, material excavated on Santa Ana, Guadalcanal, and Gawa indicates that a hunter-gatherer people lived on the larger islands as early as 1000 B.C. Some Solomon Islanders are descendants of Neolithic Austronesian-speaking peoples who migrated from Southeast Asia.

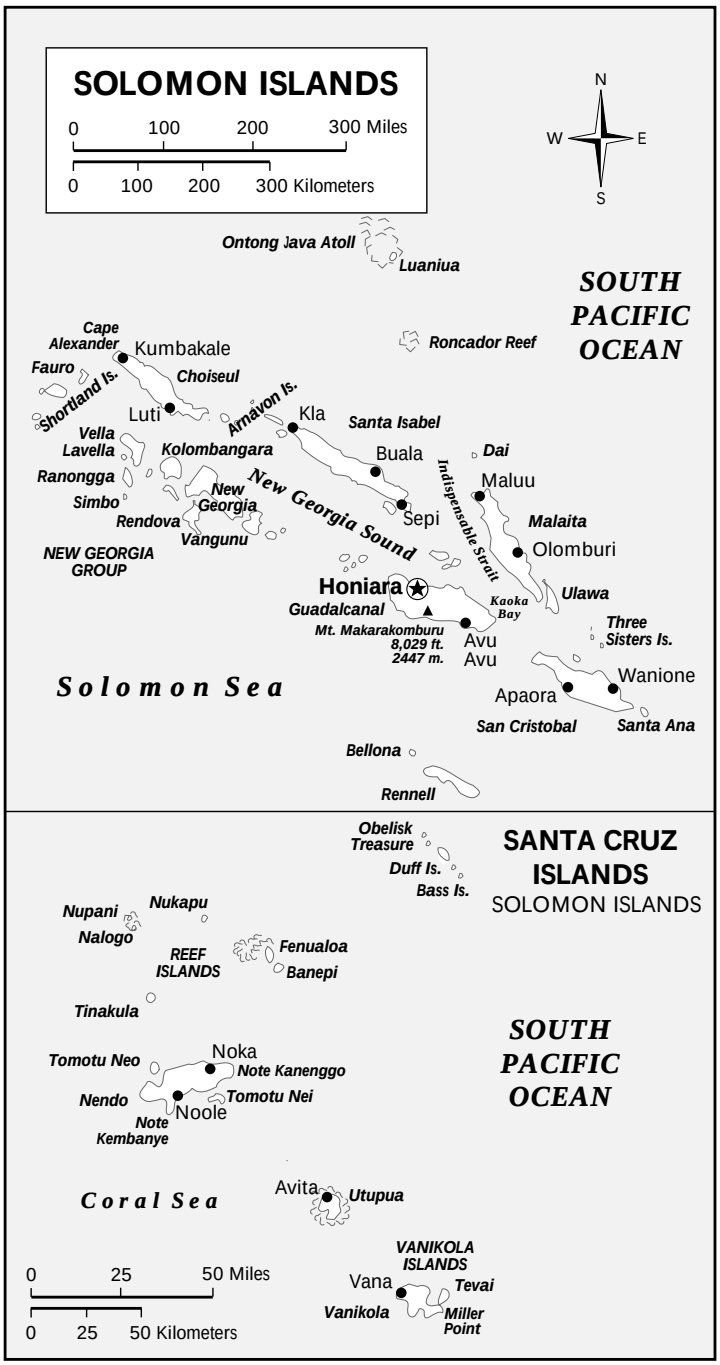
The European discoverer of the Solomons was the Spanish explorer Alvaro de Mendana Y Neyra, who set out from Peru in 1567 to seek the legendary Isles of Solomon. British mariner Philip Carteret entered Solomon waters in 1767. In the years that followed, visits by explorers were more frequent. Missionaries began visiting the Solomons in the mid-1800s. They made little progress at first, because "blackbirding"—the often brutal recruitment of laborers for the sugar plantations in Queensland and Fiji—led to a series of reprisals and massacres. The evils of the labor trade prompted the United Kingdom to declare a protectorate over the southern Solomons in 1893. In 1898 and 1899, more outlying islands were added to the protectorate; in 1900 the remainder of the archipelago, an area previously under German jurisdiction, was transferred to British administration. Under the protectorate, missionaries settled in the Solomons, converting most of the population to Christianity.

In the early 20th century, several British and Australian firms began large-scale coconut planting. Economic growth was slow, however, and the islanders benefited little. With the outbreak of World War II, most planters and traders were evacuated to Australia, and most cultivation ceased.

From May 1942, when the Battle of the Coral Sea was fought, until December 1943, the Solomons were almost constantly a scene of combat. Although U.S. forces landed on Guadalcanal virtually unopposed in August 1942, they were soon engaged in a bloody fight for control of the islands' airstrip, which the U.S. forces named Henderson Field. One of the most furious sea battles ever fought took place off Savo Island, near Guadalcanal, also in August 1942. Before the Japanese completely withdrew from Guadalcanal in February 1943, over 7,000 Americans and 21,000 Japanese died. By December 1943, the Allies were in command of the entire Solomon chain. The large-scale American presence toward the end of the war, which dwarfed anything seen before in the islands, triggered various millennial movements and left a lasting legacy of friendship.

Postwar Developments

Following the end of World War II, the British colonial government returned. The capital was moved from Tulagi to Honiara to take advantage of the infrastructure left behind by the U.S. military. A native movement known as the Marching Rule defied government authority.



There was much disorder until some of the leaders were jailed in late 1948. Throughout the 1950s, other indigenous dissident groups appeared and disappeared without gaining strength. In 1960, an advisory council of Solomon Islanders was superseded by a legislative council, and an executive council was created as the protectorate's policymaking body. The council was given progressively more authority. In 1974, a new constitution was adopted establishing a parliamentary democracy and ministerial system of government. In mid-1975, the name Solomon Islands officially replaced that of British Solomon Islands Protectorate.

On January 2, 1976, the Solomons became self-governing, and independence followed on July 7, 1978.

GOVERNMENT

The Solomon Islands is a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth, with a unicameral Parliament and a ministerial system of government. The British monarch is represented by a governor general, chosen by the Parliament for a 5-year term. The national Parliament has 50 members, elected for 4-year terms. However, Parliament may be dissolved by majority vote of its members before the completion of its term. Parliamentary representation is based on single-member constituencies. Suffrage is universal for citizens over age 18. The prime minister, elected by Parliament, chooses the other members of the cabinet. Each ministry is headed by a cabinet member, who is assisted by a permanent secretary, a career public servant, who directs the staff of the ministry. For local government, the country is divided into 10 administrative areas, of which nine are provinces administered by elected provincial assemblies, and the 10th is the town of Honiara, administered by the Honiara Town Council.

Land ownership is reserved for Solomon Islanders. At the time of independence, citizenship was granted to all persons whose parents are or were both British protected persons and members of a group, tribe, or line indigenous to the Solomon Islands. The law provides that resident expatriates, such as the Chinese and Kiribati, may obtain citizenship through naturalization. Land generally is still held on a family or village basis and may be handed down from mother or father according to local custom. The islanders are reluctant to provide land for nontraditional economic undertakings, and this has resulted in continual disputes over land ownership. No military forces are maintained by the Solomon Islands, although the police force of nearly 500 includes a border protection element. The police also have responsibility for fire service, disaster relief, and maritime surveillance. The police force is headed by a commissioner, appointed by the Governor General and responsible to the

prime minister. Peter Marshall, a New Zealander, was appointed as police commissioner In May 2008.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Solomon Islands governments are characterized by weak political parties and highly unstable parliamentary coalitions. They are subject to frequent votes of no confidence, and government leadership changes frequently as a result. Cabinet changes are common.

The first post-independence government was elected in August 1980. Prime Minister Peter Kenilorea was head of government until September 1981, when he was succeeded by Solomon Mamaloni as the result of a realignment within the parliamentary coalitions. Following the November 1984 elections, Kenilorea was again elected Prime Minister, to be replaced in 1986 by his former deputy Ezekiel Alebua following shifts within the parliamentary coalitions. The next election, held in early 1989, returned Solomon Mamaloni as Prime Minister. Francis Billy Hilly was elected Prime Minister following the national elections in June 1993, and headed the government until November 1994 when a shift in parliamentary loyalties brought Solomon Mamaloni back to power.

The national election of August 6, 1997 resulted in Bartholomew Ulufa'alu's election as Prime Minister, heading a coalition government, which christened itself the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change. However, governance was slipping as the performance of the police and other government agencies deteriorated due to ethnic rivalries. The capital of Honiara on Guadalcanal was increasingly populated by migrants from the island of Malaita. In June 2000, an insurrection mounted by militants from the island of Malaita resulted in the brief detention of Ulufa'alu and his subsequent forced resignation. Manasseh Sogavare, leader of the People's Progressive Party, was chosen Prime Minister by a loose coalition of parties. Guadalcanal militants retaliated and sought to drive Malaitan settlers from Guadalcanal, resulting in the closure of a large oil-palm estate and gold mine which were vital to exports but whose workforce was largely Malaitan.

New elections in December 2001 brought Sir Allan Kemakeza into the Prime Minister's chair with the support of a coalition of parties. Kemakeza attempted to address the deteriorating law and order situation in the country, but the prevailing atmosphere of lawlessness, widespread extortion, and ineffective police prompted a formal request by the Solomon Islands Government for outside help. With the country bankrupt and the capital in chaos, the request was unanimously supported in Parliament.

The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a multinational police-centered force organized by Australia, arrived in the country in 2003 at the government's invitation to assist in restoring law and order and rebuilding the country's institutions. The peace proved to be fragile, and fierce rioting occurred soon after the April 2006 general election and the election of Snyder Rini as Prime Minister in mid-April. Most of the violence was directed against businesses owned by ethnic Chinese in Honiara, with the almost complete destruction of the Chinatown commercial district. Mr. Rini resigned shortly after the riots, and a parliamentary vote saw Manasseh Sogavare elected as the new Prime Minister in May 2006. The civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

Relations between RAMSI and the Sogavare government were increasingly strained after the controversial July 2007 appointment of Julian Moti, wanted by Australia on child sex offense charges, as attorney general. On December 13, Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare's coalition government lost a parliamentary vote of no confidence, and on December 20, Parliament elected Derek Sikua as Prime Minister. In December 2007 the Sikua government dismissed Moti and deported him to Australia. Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's visit to the Solomon Islands in March 2008 began a new era of bilateral relations.

Principal Government Officials

ast Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Nathaniel WAENA, Sir**
Prime Min.: **Derek SIKUA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Fred FONO**
Min. of Agriculture & Livestock: **Selwyn RIUMANA**
Min. of Commerce, Trade, & Employment: **Francis Billy HILLY**
Min. of Communications & Aviation: **Varian LONGMEI**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Seth GUKUNA**
Min. of Development Planning & Aid Coordination: **Steve ABANA**
Min. of Education & Human Resources Development: **Job Duddley TAUSINGA**
Min. of Environment, Conservation, & Meteorology: **Gordon Darcy LILO**
Min. of Finance & Treasury: **Snyder RINI**
Min. of Fisheries & Marine Resources: **Nollen LENI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **William HAOMAE**
Min. of Forestry: **Allan KEMAKEZA, Sir**
Min. of Health & Medical Services: **Johnson KOLI**
Min. of Home Affairs: **James TORA**
Min. of Indigenous Affairs: **Fred FONO**
Min. of Infrastructure Development: **Stanley SOFU**
Min. of Justice & Legal Affairs: **Toswel KAUA**
Min. of Lands, Housing, & Surveys: **Martin MAGGA**
Min. of Mines, Energy, & Rural Electrification: **Edward HUNI'EHU**
Min. of National Reconciliation & Peace: **Sam IDURI**
Min. of Police & National Security: **Samuel MANETOALI**
Min. of Provincial Govt.: **David Dei PACHA**
Min. of Public Service: **Milner TOZAKA**
Min. of Rural Development: **Fred FONO**
Min. of Women, Youth, & Children Affairs: **Peter TOM**
Governor, Central Bank: **Rick HOU**
Ambassador to the US: **Collin David BECK**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Collin David BECK**

The Solomon Islands mission to the United Nations is located at 800 Second Avenue, Suite 400L, New York, NY 10017 (tel: 212-599-6192/93; fax: 212-661-8925).

ECONOMY

Its per capita GDP of $474 ranks Solomon Islands as a lesser developed nation, and more than 75% of its labor force is engaged in subsistence farming and fishing. Until 1998, when world prices for tropical timber fell steeply, timber was Solomon Islands main export product, and, in recent years, Solomon Islands forests were dangerously overexploited. Other important cash crops and exports include copra and palm oil. In 1998 Ross Mining of Australia began producing gold at Gold Ridge on Guadalcanal. Minerals exploration in other areas continued. However in the wake of the ethnic violence in June 2000, exports of palm oil and gold ceased while exports of timber fell. Exports are just now beginning to recover.

Exploitation of Solomon Islands' rich fisheries offers the best prospect for further export and domestic economic expansion. However, a Japanese joint venture, Solomon Taiyo Ltd., which operated the only fish cannery in the country, closed in mid-2000 as a result of the ethnic disturbances. Though the plant has reopened under local management, the export of tuna has not resumed. Negotiations are underway which may lead to the eventual reopening of the Gold Ridge mine and the major oil-palm plantation.

Tourism, particularly diving, is an important service industry for Solomon Islands. Growth in that industry is hampered, however, by political instability, security issues, lack of infrastructure, and transportation limitations.

Solomon Islands was particularly hard hit by the Asian economic crisis even before the ethnic violence of June 2000. The Asian Development Bank estimates that the crash of the market for tropical timber reduced Solomon Island's GDP by between 15%-25%. About one-half of all jobs in the timber industry were lost. The government has said it will reform timber harvesting policies with the aim of resuming logging on a more sustainable basis.

The Solomon Islands Government was insolvent by 2002. Since the RAMSI intervention in 2003, the government has recast its budget, and has taken a hard look at priorities. It has consolidated and renegotiated its domestic debt and with Australian backing, is now seeking to renegotiate its foreign obligations. Much work remains to be done. Ongoing political instability continues to negatively impact economic development.

Principal aid donors are Australia, New Zealand, the European Union, Japan, and the Republic of China.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Countries with diplomatic missions in the Solomon Islands are Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and Japan. The Solomon Islands also has diplomatic relations with the Republic of China, which has a resident representative in Honiara.

The U.S. Ambassador resident in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea is accredited to the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands' Permanent Representative to the United Nations also is accredited as its ambassador to the United States and Canada.

Relations with Papua New Guinea, which had become strained because of an influx of refugees from the Bougainville rebellion and attacks on the northern islands of the Solomon Islands by elements pursuing Bougainvillean rebels, have been repaired. A peace accord on Bougainville confirmed in 1998 has removed the armed threat, and the two nations regularized border operations in a 2004 agreement.

Relations with Australia, which plays a major role in the RAMSI mission, have been strained. The Solomon Islands Government declared the former Australian High Commissioner persona non grata, and delayed the credentialing of his replacement for several weeks.

Membership in International Organizations

Solomon Islands is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, Pacific Community, Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), International Monetary Fund, and the European Economic Community/African, Caribbean, Pacific Group (EEC/ACP)/ (Lome Convention).

U.S.-SOLOMON ISLANDS RELATIONS

The United States and Solomon Islands established diplomatic relations following its independence on July 7, 1978. U.S. representation is handled by the United States Embassy at Port Moresby where the Ambassador is resident. In recognition of the close ties forged between the United States and the people of the Solomon Islands during World War II, the U.S. Congress financed the construction of the Solomon Islands Parliament building. There are approximately 95 American citizens residing permanently in Solomon Islands. The two nations belong to a variety of regional organizations, including the Pacific Community and the Pacific Regional Environmental Program. The United States and Solomon Islands also cooperate under the U.S.-Pacific Islands multilateral Tuna Fisheries Treaty, under which the U.S. grants $18 million per year to Pacific island parties and the latter provide access to U.S. fishing vessels.

The U.S. coast guard provides training to Solomon Islands border protection officers, and the U.S. military also provides appropriate military

education and training courses to national security officials. The U.S. Peace Corps suspended its program in June 2000 due to the ethnic violence and breakdown in governance. More than 70 volunteers, serving throughout the country in rural community development, education, environmental management, and youth programs, were evacuated. U.S. trade with Solomon Islands is very limited. In 2001 U.S. exports to Solomon Islands were less than 5% of all exports, while Solomon Islands exports to the United States in that year were negligible. Following the April 2, 2007 earthquake and tsunami, the United States provided $250,000 in humanitarian assistance grants and deployed the USNS Stockham with helicopter support to the affected area.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PORT MORESBY (E) Douglas Street, P.O. Box 1492, NCD Port Moresby, 675-321-1455, Fax 675-320-0637, INMARSAT Tel 011-872-1534721, Workweek: 7:45am-4:30pm, Website: portmoresby. usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Christopher Call
MGT:	Mike Bakalar
POL/ECO:	Andrea Appell (Tdy)
AMB:	Leslie Rowe
CON:	Ed Fajardo
DCM:	Thomas Weinz
COM:	Andrea Appell (Tdy)
GSO:	Chris Beenhouwer
RSO:	Bernard Nixon
AFSA:	Chris Beenhouwer
CLO:	Irene Weinz
IMO:	Bill Hamer
ISSO:	Bill Hamer

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 13, 2008

Country Description: The Solomon Islands form an Archipelago in the southwest Pacific Ocean about 1,200 miles northeast of Australia. The capital, Honiara, is located on the Island of Guadalcanal. The Solomon Islands are a parliamentary democracy within the British Commonwealth. Tourism facilities are limited, particularly outside Honiara.

Entry Requirements: U.S. passport holders do not require visas to enter the Solomon Islands. Passports, onward/return tickets and proof of sufficient funds for the duration of stay are required. Visitor permits are granted upon arrival at Henderson International Airport in Honiara. Visitors may enter any number of times provided the total period in the Solomon Islands does not exceed 90 days in a 12-month period. Persons arriving on one-way airline tickets must have documentation stating their business, for example, a work permit if taking if taking up employment in the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands government strictly enforces immigration laws, and travelers may face fines and other penalties if they remain in the country beyond the authorized period of stay.

Persons arriving on yachts should visit the nearest immigration office to complete arrival forms for issuance of visitors' permits.

Travelers who plan to depart on a yacht should apply for a visitor's permit before their arrival in the Solomon Islands, to the Director of Immigration (via fax to the U.S. Consular Agent in Honiara at 677-27429). The application should state the traveler's arrival date, vessel name and registration details, vessel's arrival date, approximate time traveler will spend in the Solomon Islands, and it should request entry on a one-way (arrival only) airline ticket. The Director will issue a permit to be presented at airline check-in. If the traveler does not have this permit, she/he may be denied boarding.

For more information about entry requirements, travelers may contact the Solomon Islands Mission to the United Nations at 800 Second Avenue, Suite 8008, New York, NY 10017-4709; Tel: (212) 599-6192 or 6193. Travelers who anticipate the possibility of transiting or visiting Australia are advised to obtain an electronic travel authority (ETA) or visa for Australia before leaving the United States. An ETA may be obtained for a small service fee at http://www.eta.immi.gov.au. Airlines and many travel agents in the United States are also able to issue ETAs.

Safety and Security: Since July 24, 2003, the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a coalition of Pacific Island states that includes military and police forces from Australia and several other Pacific Island nations, has helped the Solomon Islands improve law and order. The Solomon Islands government and the vast majority of its citizens have welcomed the intervention.

Relations between the Solomon Islands government and Australia and RAMSI are strained, resulting in increased racial tensions. Americans should be aware that the public does not distinguish between Australians and Americans. It is generally safe to walk alone during the day; however, walking alone at night is discouraged.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. The U.S. Consular Agent in Honiara also has available up-to-date safety and security information at (677) 23426 and (677) 94731, or Fax (677) 27429.

Crime: Major crimes against travelers are uncommon, although incidences of theft, mugging, and extortion are increasing. Some 350 RAMSI Police are working alongside Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) to respond to any situation requiring police. Lawlessness is increasing in

Honiara, mostly in the form of petty crime (theft and harassment for money). The isolated incidents of harassment of expatriates that have increased in Honiara since April 2006 are generally minor and associated with alcohol and fringe elements of the community. House and vehicle break-ins occur, with expatriates particularly targeted. Some recent episodes have involved violence and the use or threatened use of knives.

Gang-based criminal activity has increased in and around the Burns Creek area in East Honiara, and in the Borderline area, which is close to the Japanese memorial. It is not advisable to go alone to the Japanese memorial.

Americans should be aware that the public does not distinguish between Australians and Americans.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and to the nearest U.S. Consular Agent in Honiara, or the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Consular Agent or the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Consular Agent or Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the Solomon Islands is: 999.

Other emergency numbers are:

Ambulance, Hospital —911
National Disaster—955
Fire—988

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Hospitals has deteriorated seriously, although it is expected to improve as the country's overall economic condition continues to improve. The nearest reliable medical facilities are in Australia or New Zealand. There is a hyperbaric recompression chamber in Honiara at the In-the-Zone Medical Centre, phone (677) 23485 or (677) 23482; however, medical conditions resulting from diving accidents may require medical evacuation to Australia or New Zealand. Serious medical conditions requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to Australia, New Zealand or the United States can cost thousands of dollars. The incidence of malaria is high. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Travelers who anticipate the possible need for medical treatment in Australia should obtain entry permission for Australia in advance. Entry permission for Australia can be granted by the Australian High Commission in Honiara, but it is easier to obtain it prior to leaving the United States (see section above on Entry/Exit Requirements).

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of Solomon Islands. Per Solomon Islands Immigration Act Cap 60, Section 4 (1) (d) and section 11, subsection (2), an immigration officer can bar a visitor from entering the country or deport an immigrant if he or she refuses to submit to an examination by a government medical officer after being required to do so.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerningthe Solomon Islandsis provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Vehicular traffic in the Solomon Islands moves on the left. Paved roads are found only in and around Honiara, located on Guadalcanal Island. These two-lane paved roads are poorly marked and have many potholes. Roads are not well lit at night. The remaining roads in the Solomon Islands are made of coral or gravel, or are dirt tracks. Travelers must take care when driving off main roads to avoid trespassing on communal land. For information concerning the rental and operation of motor vehicles in the Solomon Islands, contact our Consular Agent in Honiara. For specific information concerning Solomon Islands driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, visit the Solomon Islands Department of Commerce web site at http://www.commerce.gov.sb.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and the Solomon Islands, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Solomon Islands' Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The Solomon Islands' customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export

from the Solomon Islands of items such as firearms and ammunition, sexually explicit material, and certain prescription drugs. Other items may be subject to quarantine regulations or import duty. The Solomon Islands' government prohibits the export of military artifacts from World War II. It is advisable to contact the Solomon Islands' Mission to the United Nations for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Disaster Preparedness: The Solomon Islands lie in the South Pacific cyclonic trajectory, and are vulnerable to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and sudden tidal movements. The Pacific cyclone season extends from November through March. General information regarding disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the Solomon Islandslaws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Solomon Islands are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy in the Solomon Islands. However, there is a U.S. Consular Agent in Honiara. The Consular Agent has general information and forms, such as passport applications, and can be contacted at the United States Consular Agency, Commonwealth Avenue, Point Cruz, telephone number is (677) 23426 or (677) 98367, cell number is (677) 94731, home number is (677) 22539; fax (677) 27429; e-mail keithieusa@solomon.com.sb or us_consular@solomon.com.sb. For additional information and to download forms, please visit our Virtual Embassy for the Solomon Islands at http://www.usvpp-solomonislands.org.

The U.S. Embassy in Papua New Guinea provides primary assistance for U.S. citizens in the Solomon Islands. The Embassy is located on Douglas Street, adjacent to the Bank of Papua New Guinea, in Port Moresby.

Use that address for courier service deliveries. The mailing address is PO Box 1492, Port Moresby, N.C.D. 121, Papua New Guinea; the telephone number is (675) 321-1455; after hours duty officer telephone number is (675) 683-7943; Fax (675) 321-1593. American citizens may submit consular inquiries via e-mail to ConsularPortMoresby@state.gov. The web site for the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby is http://portmoresby.usembassy.gov.

Americans living or traveling in the Solomon Islands are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to visit the Consular Agency in Honiara to obtain updated information on travel and security within the Solomon Islands. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the Embassy or Consular Agency. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Solomon Islands law states that prospective adoptive parents who wish to adopt a child from the Solomon Islands MUST be domiciled in the Solomon Islands at the time of the adoption.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that no orphans from the Solomon Islands have received an adoption-based immigrant visa in the past five years.

Adoption Authority: Adoptions are processed through the High Court of the Solomon Islands based on an application prepared by the prospective adoptive parents and a Home Study. The Home Study Report is prepared by the Social Welfare Department and is submitted to the High Court during the adoption application process.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must be 25 years of age or older (or 21 years or older, if related to the child) and can be either single or married. Although there are no income requirements, prospective adoptive parents must satisfy the Social Welfare Office of the Solomon Islands that they are financially secure.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be domiciled in the Solomon Islands. The child has to have lived with the prospective adoptive parents for three months before the adoption

may be finalized. Also, prospective adoptive parents cannot apply to the court for an adoption order before the child has attained the age of six weeks.

Time Frame: The estimated time for an adoption to be processed is at least four to five months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in the Solomon Islands. However, American prospective adoptive parents may still wish to enlist the services of an American adoption agency to assist them with the overall intercountry adoption process.

Adoption Fees: American prospective adoptive parents should expect to pay adoption-related fees of less than $300 to the Solomon Islands government. It may or may not be necessary for prospective parents to pay additional fees to lawyers, depending on the services rendered.

Adoption Procedures: Applications for adoption are obtained from private attorneys in the Solomon Islands. The completed dossiers are then sent to the High Court with a notice to the Provincial Secretary.

Prospective adoptive parents must also submit to an interview with a Social Welfare Officer. The Social Welfare Office will perform a Home Study and a Home Study report will be submitted to the High Court. In addition, the birth mother of the child must sign a consent form no earlier than six weeks after the child's birth allowing for adoption of the child. The Social Welfare Office will obtain the birth mother's written consent to adopt.

Required Documents: When submitted to the Solomon Islands authorities, the adoption dossier must contain:

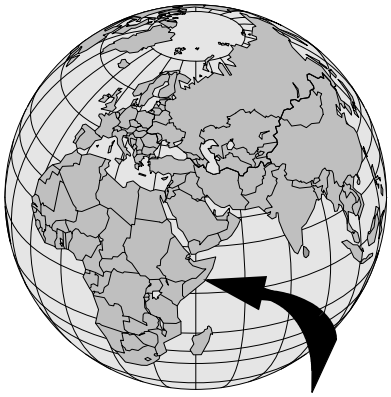
- A completed adoption application,
- Birth Certificate,
- Medical Reports (for both the child and the prospective adoptive parents),
- Home Study,
- Bank Statements of prospective adopting parents,
- Marriage License, if applicable.

Permanent Representative of Solomon Islands to the United Nations
800 Second Avenue,
Suite 400L,
New York, NY 10017-4709
Tel: (212) 599-6192/6193,
Fax: (212) 661-8925

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Douglas Street,
P.O. Box 1492,
Port Moresby, N.C.D. 121,
Papua New Guinea
Telephone: (675) 321-1455;
Fax: (675) 321-1593.
E-mail:
ConsularPortMoresby@state.gov.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in the Solomon Islands may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, via the contact information listed above. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SOMALIA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Somalia

NOTE: There is no official U.S. representation in Somalia. Statistical data on Somalia in this report are subject to dispute and error.

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 637,657 sq. km.; slightly smaller than Texas.

Cities: Capital—Mogadishu. Other cities—Beledweyne, Kismayo, Baidoa, Jowhar, Merca, Gaalkayo, Bosasso, Hargeisa, Berbera.

Terrain: Mostly flat to undulating plateau rising to hills in the north.

Climate: Principally desert; December to February—northeast monsoon, moderate temperatures in north, and very hot in the south; May to October—southwest monsoon, torrid in the north, and hot in the south; irregular rainfall; hot and humid periods (tangambili) between monsoons.

People

Nationality: Noun—Somali(s). Adjective—Somali.

Population: (2006 est., no census exists) 8.8 million (of which an estimated 2 million in Somaliland).

Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 2.85%.

Ethnic groups: Somali, with a small non-Somali minority (mostly Bantu and Arabs).

Religions: 99.9% Muslim.

Languages: Somali (official), Arabic, Italian, English.

Education: Literacy—total population that can read and write, 37.8%: male 49.7%; female 25.8%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—114.9/1,000 live births. Life expectancy at birth—total population: 48.7 yrs.

Work force: (3.7 million; very few are skilled workers) Pastoral nomad—60%. Agriculture, government, trading, fishing, industry, handicrafts, and other—40%.

Government

Type: Transitional government, known as the Transitional Federal Government, established in October 2004 with a 5-year mandate leading to the establishment of a permanent government following national elections in 2009.

Independence: July 1, 1960 (from a merger between the former Somaliland Protectorate under British rule, which became independent from the U.K. on June 26, 1960, and Italian Somaliland, which became independent from the Italian-administered UN trusteeship on July 1, 1960, to form the Somali Republic).

Constitution: None in force. Note: A Transitional Federal Charter was established in February 2004 and is expected to serve as the basis for a future constitution in Somalia. In August 2004, the Somali Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA) was established as part of the IGAD-led Somalia National Reconciliation Conference in accordance with the Charter. The Somalia National Reconciliation Conference concluded following the election of a Transitional President in October 2004.

Government branches: Executive—On October 10, 2004, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected Transitional Federal President of Somalia for a five-year period. On October 29, 2007, Ali Mohamed Gedi resigned as Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government. On November 22, 2007, President Yusuf appointed Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein as the new Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government. A cabinet, known as the Council of Ministers, also exists. Legislative—parliamentary: Transitional Federal Assembly, established in August 2004. Sheikh Adan Mohamed Nur was elected Speaker of the Assembly on January 31, 2007. Judicial—Supreme Court not functioning; no functioning nationwide legal system; informal legal system based on previously codified law, Islamic (shari'a) law, customary practices, and the provisions of the Transitional Federal Charter.

Political parties: None.

Note: In 1991, a congress drawn from the inhabitants of the former Somaliland Protectorate declared withdrawal from the 1960 union with Somalia to form the self-declared

Republic of Somaliland. Somaliland has not received international recognition, but has maintained a de jure separate status since that time. Its form of government is republican, with a bicameral legislature including an elected elders chamber and a house of representatives.

The judiciary is independent, and various political parties exist. In line with the Somaliland Constitution, Vice President Dahir Riyale Kahin assumed the presidency following the death of former president Mohamed Ibrahim Egal in 2002.

Kahin was elected President of Somaliland in elections determined to be free and fair by international observers in May 2003.

Elections for the 84-member lower house of parliament took place on September 29, 2005 and were described as transparent and credible by international observers.

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal (no nationwide elections).

Political subdivisions: 18 regions (plural—NA; singular—Gobolka). Awdal, Bakool, Banaadir, Bari, Bay, Galguduud, Gedo, Hiraan, Jubbada Dhexe, Jubbada Hoose, Mudug, Nugaal, Sanaag, Shabeellaha Dhexe, Shabeellah Hoose, Sool, Togdheer, Woqooyi Galbeed.

Budget: N/A.

Defense: N/A.

National holidays: July 1 (June 26 in Somaliland).

Economy

GDP: (2005 est.) U.S. $4.809 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2005 est.) 2.4%.

Per capita GDP: (2005 est.) $600.

Avg. inflation rate: N/A.

Natural resources: Largely unexploited reserves of iron ore, tin, gypsum, bauxite, uranium, copper, and salt; likely petroleum and natural gas reserves.

Agriculture: Products—livestock, fish, bananas, corn, sorghum, sugar. Arable land—13%, of which 2% is cultivated.

Industry: Types—Telecommunications, livestock, fishing, textiles, transportation, and limited financial services.

Somalia's surprisingly innovative private sector has continued to function despite the lack of a functioning central government since 1991.

Trade: Exports—$241 million (f.o.b., 2004 est.) livestock, bananas, hides, fish, charcoal, scrap metal. Major markets—United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Oman. Imports—$576 million (f.o.b., 2004 est.) food grains, animal and vegetable oils, petroleum products, construction materials, manufactured products, qat. Major suppliers—Djibouti, Kenya, Brazil, India, United Arab Emirates, Oman.

Aid disbursed: N/A. Primary aid donors—United States, European Union, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

Remittances: (2006 est.) $800 million to $1 billion.

GEOGRAPHY

Somalia is located on the east coast of Africa on and north of the Equator and, with Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Kenya, is often referred to as the Horn of Africa. It comprises Italy's former Trust Territory of Somalia and the former British Protectorate of Somaliland (now seeking recognition as an independent state). The coastline extends 2,720 kilometers (1,700 mi.).

The northern part of the country is hilly, and in many places the altitude ranges between 900 and 2,100 meters (3,000 ft.-7,000 ft.) above sea level. The central and southern areas are flat, with an average altitude of less than 180 meters (600 ft.). The Juba and the Shabelle Rivers rise in Ethiopia and flow south across the country toward the Indian Ocean. The Shabelle, however, does not reach the sea.

Major climatic factors are a year-round hot climate, seasonal monsoon winds, and irregular rainfall with recurring droughts. Mean daily maximum temperatures range from 30ºC to 40ºC (85o F-105ºF), except at higher elevations and along the east coast. Mean daily minimums usually vary from about 15ºC to 30ºC (60ºF-85ºF). The southwest monsoon, a sea breeze, makes the period from about May to October the mildest season in Somalia. The December-February period of the northeast monsoon also is relatively mild, although prevailing climatic conditions in Somalia are rarely pleasant. The "tangambili" periods that intervene between the two rainy seasons (October-November and March-May) are hot and humid.

PEOPLE

The Cushitic populations of the Somali Coast in the Horn of Africa have an ancient history. Known by ancient Arabs as the Berberi, archaeological evidence indicates their presence in the Horn of Africa by A.D. 100 and possibly earlier. As early as the seventh century A.D., the indigenous Cushitic peoples began to mingle with Arab and Persian traders who had settled along the coast. Interaction over the centuries led to the emergence of a Somali culture bound by common traditions, a single language, and the Islamic faith.

The Somali-populated region of the Horn of Africa stretches from the Gulf of Tadjoura in modern-day Djibouti through Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, and down to the coastal regions of southern Kenya. Unlike many countries in Africa, the Somali nation extends beyond its national borders. Since gaining independence in 1960, the goal of Somali nationalism, also known as Pan-Somalism, has been the unification of all Somali populations, forming a Greater Somalia. This issue has been a major cause of past crises between Somalia and its neighbors—Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti.

Today, about 60% of all Somalis are nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists who raise cattle, camels, sheep, and goats. About 25% of the population is settled farmers who live mainly in the fertile agricultural zone between the Juba and Shabelle Rivers in southern Somalia. The remainder of the population (15%-20%) is urban.



Sizable ethnic groups in the country include Bantu agricultural workers, several thousand Arabs and some hundreds of Indians and Pakistanis. Nearly all inhabitants speak the Somali language, which remained unwritten until October 1973, when the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) proclaimed it the nation's official language and decreed an orthography using Latin letters. Somali is now the language of instruction in schools, although Arabic, English, and Italian also are used extensively.

HISTORY

Early history traces the development of the Somali state to an Arab sultanate, which was founded in the seventh century A.D. by Koreishite immigrants from Yemen. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Portuguese traders landed in present Somali territory and ruled several coastal towns. The sultan of Oman and Zanzibar subsequently took control of these towns and their surrounding territory.

Somalia's modern history began in the late 19th century, when various European powers began to trade and establish themselves in the area. The British East India Company's desire for unrestricted harbor facilities led to the conclusion of treaties with the sultan of Tajura as early as 1840. It was not until 1886, however, that the British gained control over northern Somalia through treaties with various Somali chiefs who were guaranteed British protection. British objectives centered on safeguarding trade links to the east and securing

local sources of food and provisions for its coaling station in Aden. The boundary between Ethiopia and British Somaliland was established in 1897 through treaty negotiations between British negotiators and King Menelik.

During the first two decades of this century, British rule was challenged through persistent attacks by a dervish rebellion led by Mohamed Abdullah, known as the "Mad Mullah" by the British. A long series of intermittent engagements and truces ended in 1920 when British warplanes bombed Abdullah's stronghold at Taleex. Although Abdullah was defeated as much by rival Somali factions as by British forces, he was lauded as a popular hero and stands as a major figure of national identity to many Somalis.

In 1885, Italy obtained commercial advantages in the area from the sultan of Zanzibar and in 1889 concluded agreements with the sultans of Obbia and Aluula, who placed their territories under Italy's protection. Between 1897 and 1908, Italy made agreements with the Ethiopians and the British that marked out the boundaries of Italian Somaliland. The Italian Government assumed direct administration, giving the territory colonial status.

Italian occupation gradually extended inland. In 1924, the Jubaland Province of Kenya, including the town and port of Kismayo, was ceded to Italy by the United Kingdom. The subjugation and occupation of the independent sultanates of Obbia and Mijertein, begun in 1925, were completed in 1927. In the late 1920s, Italian and Somali influence expanded into the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia. Continuing incursions climaxed in 1935 when Italian forces launched an offensive that led to the capture of Addis Ababa and the Italian annexation of Ethiopia in 1936.

Following Italy's declaration of war on the United Kingdom in June 1940, Italian troops overran British Somaliland and drove out the British garrison. In 1941, British forces began operations against the Italian East African Empire and quickly brought the greater part of Italian Somaliland under British control. From 1941 to 1950, while Somalia was under British military administration, transition toward self-government was begun through the establishment of local courts, planning committees, and the Protectorate Advisory Council. In 1948 Britain turned the Ogaden and neighboring Somali territories over to Ethiopia.

In Article 23 of the 1947 peace treaty, Italy renounced all rights and titles to Italian Somaliland. In accordance with treaty stipulations, on September 15, 1948, the Four Powers referred the question of disposal of former Italian colonies to the UN General Assembly. On November 21, 1949, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending that Italian Somaliland be placed under an international trusteeship system for 10 years, with Italy as the administering authority, followed by independence for Italian Somaliland. In 1959, at the request of the Somali Government, the UN General Assembly advanced the date of independence from December 2 to July 1, 1960.

Meanwhile, rapid progress toward self-government was being made in British Somaliland. Elections for the Legislative Assembly were held in February 1960, and one of the first acts of the new legislature was to request that the United Kingdom grant the area independence so that it could be united with Italian Somaliland when the latter became independent. The protectorate became independent on June 26, 1960; five days later, on July 1, it joined Italian Somaliland to form the Somali Republic.

In June 1961, Somalia adopted its first national constitution in a countrywide referendum, which provided for a democratic state with a parliamentary form of government based on European models. During the early post-independence period, political parties were a fluid concept, with one-person political parties forming before an election, only to defect to the winning party following the election. A constitutional conference in Mogadishu in April 1960, which made the system of government in the southern Somali trust territory the basis for the future government structure of the Somali Republic, resulted in the concentration of political power in the former Italian Somalia capital of Mogadishu and a southern-dominated central government, with most key government positions occupied by southern Somalis, producing increased disenchantment with the union in the former British-controlled north. Pan-Somali nationalism, with the goal of uniting the Somali-populated regions of French Somaliland (Djibouti), Kenya and Ethiopia into a Greater Somalia, remained the driving political ideology in the initial post-independence period.

Under the leadership of Mohamed Ibrahim Egal (prime minister from 1967 to 1969), however, Somalia renounced its claims to the Somali-populated regions of Ethiopia and Kenya, greatly improving its relations with both countries. Egal attempted a similar approach with Ethiopia, but the move towards reconciliation with Ethiopia, which had been a traditional enemy of Somalia since the 16th century, made many Somalis furious, including the army. Egal's reconciliation effort toward Ethiopia is argued to be one of the principal factors that provoked a bloodless coup on October 21, 1969 and subsequent installation of Maj. Gen. Mohamed Siad Barre as president, bringing an abrupt end to the process of party-based constitutional democracy in Somalia.

Following the coup, executive and legislative power was vested in the 20-member Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC), headed by Barre. The SRC pursued a course of "scientific socialism" that reflected both ideological and economic dependence on the Soviet Union. The government instituted a national security service, centralized control over information, and initiated a number of grassroots development projects. Barre reduced political freedoms and used military force to seize and redistribute rich farmlands in the interriverine areas of southern Somalia, relying on the

use of force and terror against the Somali population to consolidate his political power base.

The SRC became increasingly radical in foreign affairs, and in 1974, Somalia and the Soviet Union concluded a treaty of friendship and cooperation. As early as 1972, tensions began increasing along the Somali-Ethiopian border; these tensions heightened after the accession to power in Ethiopia in 1973 of the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime, which turned increasingly toward the Soviet Union. In the mid-1970s, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) began guerrilla operations in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. Following the overthrow of the Ethiopian Emperor in 1975, Somalia invaded Ethiopia in 1977 in a second attempt to regain the Ogaden, and the second attempt initially appeared to be in Somalia's favor. The SNA moved quickly toward Harer, Jijiga, and Dire Dawa, the principal cities of the region. However, following the Ethiopian revolution, the new Ethiopian government shifted its alliance from the West to the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union supplied Ethiopia with 10,000-15,000 Cuban troops and Soviet military advisors during the 1977-78 Ogaden war, shifting the advantage to Ethiopia and resulting in Somalia's defeat. In November 1977, Barre expelled all Soviet advisers and abrogated the friendship agreement with the U.S.S.R. In March 1978, Somali forces retreated into Somalia; however, the WSLF continued to carry out sporadic but greatly reduced guerrilla activity in the Ogaden. Such activities also were subsequently undertaken by another dissident group, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

Following the 1977-1978 Ogaden war, desperate to find a strong external alliance to replace the Soviet Union, Somalia abandoned its Socialist ideology and turned to the West for international support, military equipment, and economic aid. In 1978, the United States reopened the U.S. Agency for International Development mission in Somalia. Two years later, an agreement was concluded that gave U.S. forces access to military facilities at the port of Berbera in northwestern Somalia. In the summer of 1982, Ethiopian forces invaded Somalia along the central border, and the United States provided two emergency airlifts to help Somalia defend its territorial integrity. From 1982 to 1988, the United States viewed Somalia as a partner in defense in the context of the Cold War. Somali officers of the National Armed Forces were trained in U.S. military schools in civilian as well as military subjects.

Following the Ogaden war, the Barre regime violently suppressed opposition movements and ethnic groups, particularly the Isaaq clan in the northern region, using the military and elite security forces to quash any hint of rebellion. By the 1980s, an all-out civil war developed in Somalia. Opposition groups began to form following the end of the Ogaden war, beginning in 1979 with a group of dissatisfied army officers known as the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). In 1981, as a result of increased northern discontent with the Barre regime, the Somali National Movement (SNM), composed mainly of the Isaaq clan, was formed in Hargeisa with the stated goal of overthrowing of the Barre regime. In January 1989, the United Somali Congress (USC), an opposition group of Somalis from the Hawiye clan, was formed as a political movement in Rome. A military wing of the USC was formed in Ethiopia in late 1989 under the leadership of Mohamed Farah "Aideed," a former political prisoner imprisoned by Barre from 1969-75. Aideed also formed alliances with other opposition groups, including the SNM and the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), an Ogadeen sub-clan force under Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess in the Bakool and Bay regions of Southern Somalia. In 1988, at the President's order, aircraft from the Somali National Air Force bombed the city of Hargeisa in northwestern Somalia, the former capital of British Somaliland, killing nearly 10,000 civilians and insurgents. The warfare in the northwest sped up the decay already evident elsewhere in the republic. Economic crisis, brought on by the cost of anti-insurgency activities, caused further hardship as Siad Barre and his cronies looted the national treasury.

By the end of the 1980s, armed opposition to Barre's government, fully operational in the northern regions, had spread to the central and southern regions. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis fled their homes, claiming refugee status in neighboring Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya. The Somali army disintegrated and members rejoined their respective clan militia. Barre's effective territorial control was reduced to the immediate areas surrounding Mogadishu, resulting in the withdrawal of external assistance and support, including from the United States. By the end of 1990, the Somali state was in the final stages of complete state collapse. In the first week of December 1990, Barre declared a state of emergency as USC and SNM forces advanced toward Mogadishu. In January 1991, armed opposition factions drove Barre out of power, resulting in the complete collapse of the central government. Barre later died in exile in Nigeria. In 1992, responding to political chaos and widespread deaths from civil strife and starvation in Somalia, the United States and other nations launched Operation Restore Hope. Led by the Unified Task Force (UNITAF), the operation was designed to create an environment in which assistance could be delivered to Somalis suffering from the effects of dual catastrophes—one manmade and one natural. UNITAF was followed by the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). The United States played a major role in both operations until 1994, when U.S. forces withdrew.

Following the collapse of the Barre regime in 1991, various groupings of Somali factions sought to control the national territory (or portions thereof) and fought small wars with one another. Approximately 14 national reconciliation conferences were convened over the succeeding decade. Efforts at mediation of the Somali internal dispute were also undertaken by many regional states. In the mid-1990s, Ethiopia played

host to several Somali peace conferences and initiated talks at the Ethiopian city of Sodere, which led to some degree of agreement between competing factions. The Governments of Egypt, Yemen, Kenya, and Italy also have attempted to bring the Somali factions together. In 1997, the Organization of African Unity and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) gave Ethiopia the mandate to pursue Somali reconciliation. In 2000, Djibouti hosted a major reconciliation conference (the 13th such effort), which in August resulted in creation of the Transitional National Government (TNG), whose 3-year mandate expired in August 2003. The absence of a central government in Somalia also allowed outside forces to become more influential by supporting various groups and persons in Somalia, particularly Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya, all of which have supported various Somali factions and transitional governments.

GOVERNMENT

A transitional government, the components of which are known as the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) was formed in 2004 following the conclusion of a 2-year reconciliation conference. The TFIs include a transitional parliament, known as the Transitional Federal Assembly (formed in August 2004), as well as a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) that includes a transitional President, Prime Minister and a cabinet known as the "Council of Ministers." For administrative purposes, Somalia is divided into 18 regions; the nature, authority, and structure of regional governments vary, where they exist.

Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected as Transitional Federal President of Somalia in October 2004. On October 29, 2007, Ali Mohamed Gedi resigned as Prime Minister of the TFG; Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein was appointed Prime Minister on November 22 and confirmed by the Parliament on November 24, 2007. Following a no-confidence motion against former Speaker of Parliament Shariff Hassan Sheikh Adan on January 17, Sheikh Adan Mohamed Nur was elected the new Speaker on January 31, 2007. A cabinet known as the Council of Ministers also exists; a new cabinet of 15 ministers was appointed on January 8, 2008 and approved by Parliament on January 11, 2008.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Abdullahi YUSUF Ahmed**

Prime Min.: **Nur HASSAN Hussein**

Dep. Prime Min.: **SALIM Aliyow Ibrow**

Dep. Prime Min.: **Aydid Abdullahi Ilka HANAF**

Dep. Prime Min.: **Ahmad ABDISALAM**

Min. of Agriculture, Water, & Urban Development: **Mustafa Ali DHUHULOW**

Min. of Air & Land Transport: **Mohamed Ibrahim Mohamed HABSADE**

Min. of Defense: **MUHYADIN Muhammad Ali Ibrahim**

Min. of Education & Culture: **Aydid Abdullahi Ilka HANAF**

Min. of Finance & Planning: **Muhammad Ali HAMUD**

Min. of Foreign Affairs & Intl. Cooperation: **Ali Ahmed JAMA Jangeli**

Min. of Information & Youth: **Ahmad ABDISALAM**

Min. of Internal Affairs & National Security: **MUSE Nur Amin**

Min. of Justice & Religious Affairs: **SALIM Aliyow Ibrow**

Min. of Minerals & Energy: **Muhammad Ali SALAH**

Min. of Posts & Communications: **ABDI MOHAMED Tarrah**

Min. of Public Works & Construction: **Nur Idow BEYLE**

Min. of Regional Development, Federal Affairs, & Reconciliation: **ABDIRIZAL Ashkir Abdi**

Min. of Trade, Industry, & Tourism: **Hussein Elabe FAHIYE**

Min. of Gender Development & Family Affairs: **Khadija Muhammad DIRIYE**

Governor, Central Bank:

Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Elmi Ahmed DUALE**

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

In early 2002, Kenya organized a reconciliation effort under IGAD auspices known as the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference, which concluded in October 2004. In August 2004, the Somali Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA) was established as part of the IGAD-led process. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected President of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia on October 10, 2004. The components of the TFG, including the Parliament and Executive, are known as the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs).

Two regional administrations exist in northern Somalia—the self-declared "Republic of Somaliland" in the northwest and the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in the northeast. In Somaliland, which is made up of the former British protectorate, Dahir Riyale Kahin was elected President in presidential elections deemed free and fair by international observers in May 2003. The area of Puntland declared itself autonomous (although not independent) in 1998 with its capital at Garowe. General Mohamed Adde Muse was elected President by the Puntland parliament in January 2005. Puntland declared it would remain autonomous until a federated Somalia state was established.

ECONOMY

Somalia lacks natural resources and faces major development challenges, and recent economic reverses have left its people increasingly dependent on remittances from abroad. Its economy is pastoral and agricultural, with livestock—principally camels, cattle, sheep, and goats—representing the main form of wealth. Livestock exports in recent years have been severely reduced by periodic bans, ostensibly for concerns of animal health, by Arabian Peninsula states. Drought has also impaired agricultural and livestock production.

Because rainfall is scanty and irregular, farming generally is limited to certain coastal districts, areas near Hargeisa, and the Juba and Shabelle River valleys. The agricultural sector of the economy consists mainly of banana plantations located in the south, which has used modern irrigation systems and up-to-date farm machinery.

A small fishing industry exists in the north where tuna, shark, and other warm-water fish are caught, although fishing production is seriously affected by poaching. Aromatic woods—frankincense and myrrh—from a small and diminishing forest also contribute to the country's exports. Minerals, including uranium and likely deposits of petroleum and natural gas, are found throughout the country, but have not been exploited commercially. Petroleum exploration efforts have ceased due to insecurity and instability. Illegal production in the south of charcoal for export has led to widespread deforestation. With the help of foreign aid, small industries such as textiles, handicrafts, meat processing, and printing are being established. The absence of central government authority, as well as profiteering from counterfeiting, has rapidly debased Somalia's currency. By the spring of 2002, the Somali shilling had fallen to over 30,000 shillings to the U.S. dollar. The self-declared Republic of Somaliland issues its own currency, the Somaliland shilling, which is not accepted outside of the self-declared republic.

There are no railways in Somalia; internal transportation is by truck and bus. The national road system nominally comprises 22,100 kilometers (13,702 mi.) of roads that include about 2,600 kilometers (1,612 mi.) of all-weather roads, although most roads have received little maintenance for years and have seriously deteriorated.

Air transportation is provided by small air charter firms and craft used by drug smugglers. A number of airlines operate from Hargeisa. Some private airlines, including Daallo Airlines, serve several domestic locations as well as Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates. The UN and other NGOs operate air service for their missions.

The European Community and the World Bank jointly financed construction of a deepwater port at Mogadishu (currently closed). The Soviet Union improved Somalia's deepwater port at Berbera in 1969. Facilities at Berbera were further improved by a U.S. military construction program completed in 1985, but they have since become dilapidated. During the 1990s the United States renovated a deepwater port at Kismayo that serves the fertile Juba River basin and is vital to Somalia's banana export industry. Smaller ports are located at Merca, Brava, and Bossaso. Absence of security and lack of maintenance and improvement are major issues at most Somali ports.

Radiotelephone service is available to both to regional and international locations. The public telecommunications system has been destroyed or dismantled, but cellular phone service is readily available throughout the country. Somalia is linked to the outside world via ship-to-shore communications (INMARSAT) as well as links to overseas satellite operators by private telecommunications operators (including cellular telephone systems) in major towns. Radio broadcasting stations operate at Mogadishu, Hargeisa, and Galkaiyo, with programs in Somali and some other languages. There are two television broadcast stations in Mogadishu and one in Hargeisa.

DEFENSE

The Transitional Federal Government and other various groups throughout Somalia are estimated to control militias ranging in strength from hundreds to thousands. Some groups possess limited inventories of older armored vehicles and other heavy weapons, and small arms are prevalent throughout Somalia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Somalia followed a foreign policy of nonalignment for a brief period following independence. In 1970, the Siad Barre regime declared a national ideology based on scientific Socialism and aligned its foreign policy with the Soviet Union and China.

In the 1980s, Somalia shifted its alignment to the West following a territorial conflict with Ethiopia over the disputed Somali-populated region of the Ogaden from 1977-78, which was supported by the Soviet Union. The central government also sought ties with many Arab countries, and continued to receive financial and military support from several Arab countries prior to its collapse in 1991.

In 1963, Somalia severed diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom for a period following a dispute over Kenya's Somali-populated northeastern region (Northern Frontier District), an area inhabited mainly by Somalis. Related problems have arisen from the boundary with Ethiopia and the large-scale migrations of Somali nomads between Ethiopia and Somalia.

In the aftermath of the 1977-78 war between Somalia and Ethiopia, the Government of Somalia continued to call for self-determination for ethnic Somalis living in the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia. At the March 1983 Nonaligned Movement summit in New Delhi, President Siad Barre stated that Somalia harbored no expansionist aims and was willing to negotiate with Ethiopia over the disputed Ogaden region.

Following the collapse of the Barre regime, the foreign policy of the various entities in Somalia, including the Transitional Federal Government, has centered on gaining international recognition, winning international support for national reconciliation, and obtaining international economic assistance.

U.S.-SOMALI RELATIONS

Although the U.S. never formally severed diplomatic relations with Somalia, the U.S. Embassy in Somalia has been closed since the collapse of the Siad Barre government in 1991. The United States maintains regular dialogue with the Transitional Federal Government and other key stakeholders in Somalia through the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. Consular coverage for Somalia also is maintained by U.S. Embassy Nairobi, while American Citizens Services in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland are provided by the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

NAIROBI (E) United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, APO/FPO Unit 64100, APO AE 09831, 254-20-363-6000, INMARSAT Tel 683-142-148, Workweek: Monday-Thursday, 0715-1630; Friday, 0715-1215, Website: http://nairobi.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Lisa Coles
AMB OMS:	Karen Landherr
CDC:	Jonathan Mermin
CG OMS:	Virginia Dowling
DEP PERM REP:	Rachel Birthisel
DHS/CIS:	Linda Dougherty
ECO:	Eugene Young
FCS:	Jim Sullivan
FM:	Robert Wilkinson
HRO:	Ronald Coles
MGT:	Michael Hoza
US PERM REP:	James Stewart
AMB:	Michael E. Ranneberger
CG:	David Abell
CON:	Brian Denver
DCM:	Pamela Slutz
PAO:	Thomas Dowling
GSO:	Salma Rahman
RSO:	Jeffrey Breed
AGR:	Stephen Hammond
AID:	Erna Kerst
CLO:	Martha Fleming
DAO:	Ltc. Thomas Wahlert
FMO:	Tedla Yitna
ICASS Chair:	Pamela Howard-Reguindin
IMO:	Anthony Muse
IPO:	Chris Pinzino
ISO:	Mark Myelle
ISSO:	David Fritts
LAB:	William Lehmberg
LEGATT:	David Ford
POL:	Mitch Benedict

DJIBOUTI (E) Plateau du Serpent, Blvd Marechal Joffre, P.O. Box 185, (253) 35-39-95, Fax (253) 35-39-40, INMARSAT Tel 68-313-4545/68-313-4546, Workweek: Sunday-Thursday, 08:00-16:30, Website: http://djibouti.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Diana Jackson
AMB OMS:	Melissa Pousette
DCM/CHG:	Kathleen List
ECO/COM:	Rebecca Hunter
MGT:	Richard Denniston
POL/ECO:	Rebecca Hunter
AMB:	W. Stuart Symington
CON:	Solange Garvey
DCM:	Eric Wong
PAO:	Niles Cole
GSO:	John E. Taylor
RSO:	Ellen Tannor
AID:	Janet Schulman
CLO:	Jessica Eicher and Kimberley Bunnell
EEO:	Niles Cole
IMO:	Michael George
IPO:	Nicholas Eicher
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Resident In Paris)

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 4, 2008

Country Description: Since the collapse of the central government in 1991, Somalia has been subject to widespread violence and instability. A Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established in 2004 to guide the country through a transitional process designed to—result in a new constitution and elections in 2009. However, the TFG lacks governance capacity and exercises only limited control of Mogadishu and parts of southern and central Somalia. General insecurity and inter- and intra-clan violence frequently occur throughout the country, and attacks and fighting between anti-government elements and TFG and Ethiopian forces take place regularly in Mogadishu. The United States has no official representation in Somalia.

In 1991, the northwest part of the country proclaimed itself the Republic of Somaliland, and it now has its own regional governing authority; however, Somaliland has not received international recognition as an independent state. The northeastern section of Somalia, known as the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, has also made efforts to establish a regional governing authority. Somalia's economy was seriously damaged by the civil war and its aftermath, but the private sector is trying to reemerge. Tourist facilities are nonexistent.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required for travel to Somaliland and Puntland. Both regions require a visa and issue their own at their respective ports of entry. For travel to other parts of Somalia, including Mogadishu, a passport is required; however, there is no established governing authority capable of issuing a universally recognized visa. Air and seaports are under the control of local authorities that make varying determinations of what is required of travelers who attempt to use these ports of entry.

Travelers may obtain the latest information on visas as well as any additional details regarding entry requirements from the Permanent Representative of the Somali Republic to the United Nations, telephone (212) 688-9410/5046; fax (212) 759-0651, located at 425 East 61st Street, Suite 702, New York, NY 10021. Persons outside the United States may attempt to contact the nearest Somali embassy or consulate. All such establishments, where they exist, are affiliated with the TFG, whose authority is not established throughout Somalia.

Safety and Security: Since the U.S. does not have an Embassy or any other diplomatic presence in any part of Somalia, including Somaliland and Puntland, the U.S. government cannot provide any consular services to U.S. citizens in Somalia. Limited American Citizen Services are available for travelers to Somalia at the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Djibouti.

While Somaliland has experienced a level of stability that has not been present in other parts of Somalia,

please note that the Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against all travel to Somalia, including the self-proclaimed "independent Republic of Somaliland"—see Department's Travel Warning for Somalia. Travelers insisting on traveling to Somaliland despite this warning should nevertheless always check current conditions in Somaliland before traveling. Terrorist attacks have occurred against international relief workers, including Westerners, throughout Somalia, Puntland, and Somaliland. In early 2006, an American citizen living and working in southern Somalia was kidnapped and held for ransom before being released. In July 2007, kidnapping threats were issued against international humanitarian assistance workers in Puntland. In 2007 and 2008, there were several violent kidnappings and eight assassinations of staff working for international organizations. Additionally, there have been threats against Westerners in Somalia, including Somaliland. Terrorist operatives and armed groups in Somalia have demonstrated the intent to attack air operations at Mogadishu International Airport. Additionally, a foreign terrorist organization is ostensibly in control of the southern port city of Kismayo and has openly threatened air traffic out of the local airport. Armed conflict is commonplace in the capital city of Mogadishu. All visitors are urged to restrict their movements in the region. Persons traveling to or through this area should also be aware that incidents such as armed banditry, road assaults, kidnappings for ransom, shootings and grenade attacks on public markets, and detonations of anti-personnel and-vehicle land mines regularly occur. Sporadic outbreaks of civil unrest persist and armed conflict also occurs in the rest of the country. Also, illegal roadblocks remain common throughout Somalia and have resulted in serious injury or death.

Cross-border violence occurs periodically. The area near Somalia's border with Kenya has been the site of numerous incidents of violent criminal activity, including kidnappings and grenade attacks on hostels used by international aid workers. U.S. citizens who decide to visit the area should be aware that they could encounter such criminal activity.

Americans considering seaborne travel around Somalia's coastal waters should exercise extreme caution, given numerous recent incidents of vessel hijacking and/or piracy. Since 2005 there have been numerous acts and attempted acts of piracy in Somalia's coastal waters, especially off of the Horn of Africa. Piracy remains rampant off the shores of south central Somalia and Puntland. Seaborne travelers should exercise extreme caution, as these groups have proven themselves well armed and dangerous. When transiting in and around the Horn of Africa and/or in the Red Sea, it is strongly recommended that vessels convoy and maintain good communications contact at all times. Marine channels 13 and 16 VHF-FM are international call-up and emergency channels and are commonly monitored by ships at sea. 2182 MHz is the HF international call-up and emergency channel. In the Gulf of Aden, transit routes farther offshore reduce, but do not eliminate, the risk of contact with suspected assailants. Wherever possible, travel in trafficked sea-lanes. Avoid loitering in or transiting isolated or remote areas. In the event of an attack, consider activating the "Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRB)." Vessels may also contact the Yemeni Coast Guard 24-hour Operations Center at (967) 1-562-402. The Operations Center staff speaks English. Due to distances involved, there may be a considerable delay before assistance arrives.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Pervasive and violent crime is an extension of the general state of insecurity in Somalia. Serious, brutal, and often fatal crimes are very common. Kidnapping and robbery are a particular problem in Mogadishu and other areas of the south.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Somalia are extremely limited. Travelers who insist on ignoring the warnings above should carry personal supplies of medications with them.

Malaria is endemic in many areas. There have been outbreaks of cholera in Mogadishu, Kismayo in the south, and Puntland in the northeast. For additional information on malaria and cholera, including protective measures, see the CDC travelers' health web page at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Travelers are strongly encouraged to purchase such insurance prior to traveling to East Africa if not already covered under their current medical plan.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Somalia is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

There are no traffic lights in the country except in Hargeisa in Somaliland. The poor condition of most roads makes driving hazardous. Night driving can be dangerous due to the absence of lighting.

Recent occurrences of land mine detonations on roads point to a potentially fatal risk for drivers.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Somalia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Somalia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Water and electricity systems are poor. Functioning telecommunications systems exist in major towns in Somalia.

There is no organized system of criminal justice in Somalia, nor is there any recognized or established authority to administer a uniform application of due process. Enforcement of criminal laws is, therefore, haphazard to nonexistent. Locally established courts operate throughout Somalia under a combination of Somali customary and Islamic Shari'a law, some of which may be hostile towards foreigners.

The Somali shilling is the unit of currency except in Somaliland, which uses the Somaliland shilling. U.S. dollars are accepted everywhere. Credit cards are not accepted in Somalia.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating laws in Somalia, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Somalia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

In accordance with Somali customary law, any child whose father is a Somali citizen is also considered to be a Somali citizen. Somali children require their father's permission to leave the country.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy in Somalia. U.S. citizens who plan to enter Somalia despite the Travel Warning are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Somalia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. Travelers to Somaliland should register with the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti, and travelers to Puntland or southern Somalia should register with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

The U.S. Embassy in Djibouti is located at Plateau du Serpent, Boulevard Marechal Joffre, Djibouti City; telephone (253) 35-39-95. The after-hours telephone number is (253) 35-13-43. The mailing address is Ambassade Americaine, B.P. 185, Djibouti, Republique de Djibouti. The workweek in Djibouti is Sunday through Thursday. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone (254)(20) 363-6000; fax (254)(20) 363-6410. In the event of an after-hours emergency, the Embassy duty officer is available at (254)(20) 363-6170. The Embassy's mailing address is P.O. Box 606 Village Market, 00621 Nairobi, Kenya, or mail using U.S. domestic postage may be addressed to Unit 64100, APO AE 09831, USA.

Travel Warning

November 15, 2008

The State Department warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Somalia and recommends that American citizens avoid all travel to Somalia. This replaces the Travel Warning dated October 24, 2008 to note terrorist attacks in the regions of Somaliland and Puntland.

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens against all travel to Somalia, including northern Somalia. On October 29, 2008, terrorists launched several coordinated and near-simultaneous attacks involving multiple car bombs against local and international targets in the regions of Somaliland and Puntland. There is no U.S. Embassy or other U.S. diplomatic presence in Somalia. Consequently, the U.S. government is not in a position to assist or effectively provide services to U.S. citizens in

Somalia. Terrorist operatives and armed groups in Somalia have demonstrated their intent and capability to attack air operations at Mogadishu International Airport. Kidnapping, murder, illegal roadblocks, banditry, and other violent incidents and threats to U.S. citizens and other foreigners can occur in many regions. Inter-clan and inter-factional fighting flares up with little or no warning. Unpredictable armed conflicts among rival militias are prevalent in southern Somalia, particularly in and around Mogadishu. This has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Somali nationals and the displacement of nearly one million people. In December 2006, Ethiopian military forces entered Somalia in support of the Somali Transitional Federal Government. The continuing Ethiopian military presence and support for the Transitional Federal Government has heightened tensions among rival political and clan factions within Somalia.

The Sanaag and Sool Regions in eastern Somaliland, bordering on Puntland (northeastern Somalia), are subject to insecurity due to ongoing border disputes and inter-clan fighting. There also have been several fatal attacks and violent kidnappings against international relief workers, including Westerners, throughout Somalia, Somaliland, and Puntland. Lines of control in Mogadishu are unclear and frequently shift, making movement within Mogadishu extremely hazardous. Violent riots have recently occurred in Mogadishu, as thousands of civilians protested rising food prices and the devaluation of the Somali currency.

Recently, insurgents and extremist elements opposed to the Somali government conducted hit-and-run attacks on several towns in central and southern Somalia, to include the districts of Gedo and Bay (especially the vicinity of Baidoa) in the south.

U.S. citizens also are urged to use extreme caution when sailing near the coast of Somalia. Merchant vessels, fishing boats, and recreational craft all risk seizure by pirates and having their crews held for ransom in the waters off the Horn of Africa, most especially in the international waters near Somalia. There have been numerous such incidents, highlighting the continuing danger of maritime travel near the Horn of Africa. If transit around the Horn of Africa is necessary, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys, and maintain good communications contact at all times.

U.S. citizens who travel to Somalia despite this Travel Warning are urged to register through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov and obtain updated information on travel and security from the U.S. Embassies in neighboring countries. Travelers to the self-declared "Republic of Somaliland" should register with the U.S. Embassy in Djibouti, and travelers to Puntland or southern Somalia should register with the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi.

The U.S. Embassy in Djibouti is located at Plateau du Serpent, Boulevard Marechal Joffre, Djibouti City; telephone (253) 35-39-95; after-hours telephone number (253) 35-13-43. The mailing address is Ambassade Americaine, B.P. 185, Djibouti, Republique de Djibouti, and their workweek is Sunday through Thursday. The U.S. Embassy in Nairobi is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya; telephone (254)(20) 363-6000; after-hours emergencies (254)(20) 363-6170. The mailing address is P.O. Box 606 Village Market 00621, Nairobi, Kenya.

U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Somalia and the Worldwide Caution, which are located on the Department's internet website at http://travel.state.gov. Travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. or outside the U.S. and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.



SOUTH AFRICA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of South Africa

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 1.2 million sq. km. (470,462 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capitals—Administrative, Pretoria; Legislative, Cape Town; Judicial, Bloemfontein. Other cities—Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth.

Terrain: Plateau, savanna, desert, mountains, coastal plains.

Climate: moderate; similar to southern California.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—South African(s).

Annual growth rate: (2006 World Bank Group) 1.1%.

Population: (2007, 47.9 million) Composition—black 79.7%; white 9.1%; colored 8.8%; Asian (Indian) 2.2%. Official figures from 2007 South African Census at http://www.statssa.gov.za.

Languages: Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga (all official languages).

Religions: Predominantly Christian; traditional African, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish.

Education: Years compulsory—7-15 years of age for all children. The South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996, passed by Parliament in 1996, aims to achieve greater educational opportunities for black children, mandating a single syllabus and more equitable funding for schools.

Health: Infant mortality rate: (2007)—58 per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy—52 yrs. women; 49 yrs. men. Health data from 2007 Census Report: http://www.statssa.gov.za.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: The Union of South Africa was created on May 31, 1910; became sovereign state within British Empire in 1934; became a republic on May 31, 1961; left the Commonwealth in October 1968; rejoined the Commonwealth in June 1994.

Constitution: Entered into force February 3, 1997.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state) elected to a 5-year term by the National Assembly. Legislative—bicameral Parliament consisting of 490 members in two chambers. National Assembly (400 members) elected by a system of proportional representation. National Council of Provinces consisting of 90 delegates (10 from each province) and 10 nonvoting delegates representing local government. Judicial—Constitutional Court interprets and decides constitutional issues; Supreme Court of Appeal is the highest court for interpreting and deciding nonconstitutional matters.

Political subdivisions: Nine provinces: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, North-West, Northern Cape, Limpopo, Western Cape.

Political parties: African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Vryheidsfront Plus/Freedom Front Plus (FF+), Pan-African Congress (PAC), African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), United Democratic Movement (UDM), and Azanian Peoples Organization (Azapo).

Suffrage: Citizens and permanent residents 18 and older.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $283 billion.

Real GDP growth rate: (2007) 5.1%.

GDP per capita: (2007) $5,900.

Unemployment: (September 2007) 23%.

Natural resources: Almost all essential commodities, except petroleum products and bauxite. Only country in the world that manufactures fuel from coal.

Industry: Types—minerals, mining, motor vehicles and parts, machinery, textiles, chemicals, fertilizer, information technology, electronics, other manufacturing, and agro-processing.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$69.7 billion; merchandise exports: gold, other minerals and metals, agricultural products, motor vehicles and parts. Major markets—U.S., Japan, Germany, U.K., East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa. Imports—$79.7 billion: machinery, transport equipment, chemicals, petroleum products, textiles, and scientific instruments. Major suppliers—Germany, China, U.S., Japan, U.K.

GDP composition: (2007) Agriculture and mining (primary sector)—8%; industry (secondary sector)—22%; services (tertiary sector)—70%. World's largest producer of platinum, gold, and chromium; also significant coal production.

PEOPLE

Until 1991, South African law divided the population into four major racial categories: Africans (black), whites, coloreds, and Asians. Although this law has been abolished, many South Africans still view themselves and each other according to these categories. Black Africans comprise about 79% of the population and are divided into a number of different ethnic groups. Whites comprise about 10% of the population. They are primarily descendants of Dutch, French, English, and German settlers who began arriving at the Cape of Good Hope in the late 17th century. Coloreds are mixed-race people primarily descending from the earliest settlers and the indigenous peoples. They comprise about 9% of the total population. Asians descend from Indian workers brought to South Africa in the mid-19th century to work on the sugar estates in Natal. They constitute about 2.5% of the population and are concentrated in the KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Education is in transition. Under the apartheid system schools were segregated, and the quantity and quality of education varied significantly across racial groups. The laws governing this segregation have been abolished. The long and arduous process of restructuring the country's educational system has begun and is ongoing. The challenge is to create a single, nondiscriminatory, nonracial system that offers the same standards of education to all people.

HISTORY

People have inhabited southern Africa for thousands of years. Members of the Khoisan language groups are the oldest surviving inhabitants of the land, but only a few are left in South Africa today—and they are located in the western sections. Most of today's black South Africans belong to the Bantu language group, which migrated south from central Africa, settling in the Transvaal region sometime before AD 100. The Nguni, ancestors of the Zulu and Xhosa, occupied most of the eastern coast by 1500.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach the Cape of Good Hope, arriving in 1488. However, permanent white settlement did not begin until 1652 when the Dutch East India Company established a provisioning station on the Cape. In subsequent decades, French Huguenot refugees, the Dutch, and Germans began to settle in the Cape. Collectively, they form the Afrikaner segment of today's population. The establishment of these settlements had far-reaching social and political effects on the groups already settled in the area, leading to upheaval in these societies and the subjugation of their people.

By 1779, European settlements extended throughout the southern part of the Cape and east toward the Great Fish River. It was here that Dutch authorities and the Xhosa fought the first frontier war. The British gained control of the Cape of Good Hope at the end of the 18th century. Subsequent British settlement and rule marked the beginning of a long conflict between the Afrikaners and the English.

Beginning in 1836, partly to escape British rule and cultural hegemony and partly out of resentment at the recent abolition of slavery, many Afrikaner farmers (Boers) undertook a northern migration that became known as the "Great Trek." This movement brought them into contact and conflict with African groups in the area, the most formidable of which were the Zulus. Under their powerful leader, Shaka (1787-1828), the Zulus conquered most of the territory between the Drakensberg Mountains and the sea (now KwaZulu-Natal).

In 1828, Shaka was assassinated and replaced by his half-brother Dingane. In 1838, Dingane was defeated and deported by the Voortrekkers (people of the Great Trek) at the battle of Blood River. The Zulus, nonetheless, remained a potent force, defeating the British in the historic battle of Isandhlwana before themselves being finally conquered in 1879.

In 1852 and 1854, the independent Boer Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State were created. Relations between the republics and the British Government were strained. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1870 and the discovery of large gold deposits in the Witwatersrand region of the Transvaal in 1886 caused an influx of European (mainly British) immigration and investment. In addition to resident black Africans, many blacks from neighboring countries also moved into the area to work in the mines. The construction by mine owners of hostels to house and control their workers set patterns that later extended throughout the region.

Boer reactions to this influx and British political intrigues led to the Anglo-Boer Wars of 1880-81 and 1899-1902. British forces prevailed in the conflict, and the republics were incorporated into the British Empire. In May 1910, the two republics and the British colonies of the Cape and Natal formed the Union of South Africa, a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. The Union's constitution kept all political power in the hands of whites.

In 1912, the South Africa Native National Congress was founded in Bloemfontein and eventually became



known as the African National Congress (ANC). Its goals were the elimination of restrictions based on color and the enfranchisement of and parliamentary representation for blacks. Despite these efforts the government continued to pass laws limiting the rights and freedoms of blacks.

In 1948, the National Party (NP) won the all-white elections and began passing legislation codifying and enforcing an even stricter policy of white domination and racial separation known as "apartheid" (separateness). In the early 1960s, following a protest in Sharpeville in which 69 protesters were killed by police and 180 injured, the ANC and Pan-African Congress (PAC) were banned. Nelson Mandela and many other anti-apartheid leaders were convicted and imprisoned on charges of treason.

The ANC and PAC were forced underground and fought apartheid through guerrilla warfare and sabotage. In May 1961, South Africa relinquished its dominion status and declared itself a republic. It withdrew from the Commonwealth in part because of international protests against apartheid. In 1984, a new constitution came into effect in which whites allowed coloreds and Asians a limited role in the national government and control over their own affairs in certain areas. Ultimately, however, all power remained in white hands. Blacks remained effectively disenfranchised.

Popular uprisings in black and colored townships in 1976 and 1985

helped to convince some NP members of the need for change. Secret discussions between those members and Nelson Mandela began in 1986. In February 1990, State President F.W. de Klerk, who had come to power in September 1989, announced the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC, and all other anti-apartheid groups. Two weeks later, Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

In 1991, the Group Areas Act, Land Acts, and the Population Registration Act—the last of the so-called "pillars of apartheid"—were abolished. A long series of negotiations ensued, resulting in a new constitution promulgated into law in December 1993. The country's first nonracial elections were held on April 26-28, 1994, resulting in the installation of Nelson Mandela as President on May 10, 1994.

Following the 1994 elections, South Africa was governed under an interim constitution establishing a Government of National Unity (GNU). This constitution required the Constitutional Assembly (CA) to draft and approve a permanent constitution by May 9, 1996. After review by the Constitutional Court and intensive negotiations within the CA, the Constitutional Court certified a revised draft on December 2, 1996. President Mandela signed the new constitution into law on December 10, and it entered into force on February 3, 1997. The GNU ostensibly remained in effect until the 1999 national elections. The parties originally comprising the GNU—the ANC, the NP, and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)—shared executive power. On June 30, 1996, the NP withdrew from the GNU to become part of the opposition.

During Nelson Mandela's 5-year term as President of South Africa, the government committed itself to reforming the country. The ANC-led government focused on social issues that were neglected during the apartheid era such as unemployment, housing shortages, and crime. Mandela's administration began to reintroduce South Africa into the global economy by implementing a market-driven economic plan known as Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). In order to heal the wounds created by apartheid, the government created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. During the first term of the ANC's post-apartheid rule, President Mandela concentrated on national reconciliation, seeking to forge a single South African identity and sense of purpose among a diverse and splintered populace, riven by years of conflict. The diminution of political violence after 1994 and its virtual disappearance by 1996 were testament to the abilities of Mandela to achieve this difficult goal.

Nelson Mandela stepped down as President of the ANC at the party's national congress in December 1997, when Thabo Mbeki assumed the mantle of leadership. Mbeki won the presidency of South Africa after national elections in 1999, when the ANC won just shy of a two-thirds majority in Parliament. President Mbeki shifted the focus of government from reconciliation to transformation, particularly on the economic front. With political transformation and the foundation of a strong democratic system in place after two free and fair national elections, the ANC recognized the need to focus on bringing economic power to the black majority in South Africa. In April 2004, the ANC won nearly 70% of the national vote, and Mbeki was reelected for his second 5-year term. In his 2004 State of the Nation address, Mbeki promised his government would reduce poverty, stimulate economic growth, and fight crime. Mbeki said that the government would play a more prominent role in economic development. Despite the fact that he was prevented by term limits from running for a third term as State President, Mbeki ran for a third term as ANC chair in party elections in December 2007. He was defeated by Jacob Zuma, an ANC stalwart with a populist following, a result that signaled widespread dissatisfaction with Mbeki's remote governing style, and his government's failure to adequately address poverty and other development issues. On September 20, 2008, Mbeki was "recalled" by the ANC and replaced by Kgalema Motlanthe as President on September 25. Motlanthe will serve the remainder of Mbeki's terms until national elections are held in April 2009.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

South Africa is a multiparty parliamentary democracy in which constitutional power is shared between the president and the Parliament.

The Parliament consists of two houses, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, which are responsible for drafting the laws of the republic. The National Assembly also has specific control over bills relating to monetary matters. The current 400-member National Assembly was retained under the 1997 constitution, although the constitution allows for a range of between 350 and 400 members. The Assembly is elected by a system of "list proportional representation." Each of the parties appearing on the ballot submits a rank-ordered list of candidates. The voters then cast their ballots for a party.

Seats in the Assembly are allocated based on the percentage of votes each party receives. In the 2004 elections, the ANC won 279 seats in the Assembly, more than a two-thirds majority and an increase of 13 seats from 1999; the Democratic Alliance (DA) won 50, the IFP 28, the New National Party (NNP) 7, the United Democratic Movement (UDM) 9, and other groups won the remaining 27. In the 2004 electoral campaign, the ANC aligned with the NNP, and the DA aligned with the IFP. Shortly afterward, the NNP announced that it would merge with the ANC. A new Assembly will be elected in 2009.

The National Council of Provinces (NCOP) consists of 90 members, 10 from each of the nine provinces. The NCOP replaced the former Senate as

the second chamber of Parliament and was created to give a greater voice to provincial interests. It must approve legislation that involves shared national and provincial competencies as defined by an annex to the constitution. Each provincial delegation consists of six permanent and four rotating delegates.

The president is the head of state. Following the April 14, 2004 elections, the National Assembly reelected Thabo Mbeki as President. The president's constitutional responsibilities include assigning cabinet portfolios, signing bills into law, and serving as commander in chief of the military. The president works closely with the deputy president and the cabinet. There are currently 28 posts in the cabinet. Of the 28 ministers, Mbeki appointed two from outside the ANC—one from the former NNP and one from the Azanian Peoples Organization (Azapo). On June 14, 2005, President Mbeki informed the South African Parliament that then-Deputy President Jacob Zuma was being "released" from his duties following the conviction of a close associate on corruption charges relating to monetary payments to Zuma. On June 22, Mbeki named former Minister for Minerals and Energy Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka to the position of Deputy President, the first woman to hold this office.

On December 18, 2007, the African National Congress elected Jacob Zuma to the post of ANC President after a hard-fought campaign between Zuma and Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki remains the country's President despite this victory and a shake-up in the composition of the ANC National Executive Committee membership.

The third arm of the central government is an independent judiciary. The Constitutional Court is the highest court for interpreting and deciding constitutional issues, while the Supreme Court of Appeal is the highest court for nonconstitutional matters. Most cases are heard in the extensive system of High Courts and Magistrates Courts. The constitution's bill of rights provides for due process including the right to a fair, public trial within a reasonable time of being charged and the right to appeal to a higher court. The bill of rights also guarantees fundamental political and social rights of South Africa's citizens.

Challenges Ahead

South Africa's post-apartheid governments have made remarkable progress in consolidating the nation's peaceful transition to democracy. Programs to improve the delivery of essential social services to the majority of the population are underway. Access to better opportunities in education and business is becoming more widespread. Nevertheless, transforming South Africa's society to remove the legacy of apartheid will be a long-term process requiring the sustained commitment of the leaders and people of the nation's disparate groups.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), chaired by 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, helped to advance the reconciliation process. Constituted in 1996 and having completed its work by 2001, the TRC was empowered to investigate apartheid-era human rights abuses committed between 1960 and May 10, 1994; to grant amnesty to those who committed politically motivated crimes; and to recommend compensation to victims of abuses. In November 2003, the Government began allocation of $4,600 (R30,000) reparations to individual apartheid victims. The TRC's mandate was part of the larger process of reconciling the often conflicting political, economic, and cultural interests held by the many peoples that make up South Africa's diverse population. The ability of the government and people to agree on many basic questions of how to order the country's new society will remain a critical challenge.

One important issue continues to be the relationship of provincial and local administrative structures to the national government. Prior to April 27, 1994, South Africa was divided into four provinces and 10 black "homelands," four of which were considered independent by the South African Government. Both the interim constitution and the 1997 constitution abolished this system and substituted nine provinces. Each province has an elected legislature and chief executive—the provincial premier. Although in form a federal system, in practice the nature of the relationship between the central and provincial governments continues to be the subject of considerable debate, particularly among groups desiring a greater measure of autonomy from the central government. A key step in defining the relationship came in 1997 when provincial governments were given more than half of central government funding and permitted to develop and manage their own budgets. However, the national government exerts a measure of control over provinces by appointing provincial premiers.

Although South Africa's economy is in many areas highly developed, the exclusionary nature of apartheid and distortions caused in part by the country's international isolation until the 1990s have left major weaknesses. The economy is now in a process of transition as the government seeks to address the inequities of apartheid, stimulate growth, and create jobs. Business, meanwhile, is becoming more integrated into the international system, and foreign investment has increased dramatically over the past several years. Still, the economic disparities between population groups are expected to persist for many years, remaining an area of priority attention for the government.

Human Rights

The 1997 constitution's bill of rights provides extensive guarantees, including equality before the law and prohibitions against discrimination; the right to life, privacy, property, and freedom and security of the person; prohibition against slavery and forced labor; and freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and association. The legal rights of criminal suspects also are enumerated, as are citizens'

entitlements to a safe environment, housing, education, and health care. The constitution provides for an independent and impartial judiciary, and, in practice, these provisions are respected.

Since the abolition of apartheid, levels of political violence in South Africa have dropped dramatically. Violent crime and organized criminal activity are at high levels and are a grave concern. Partly as a result, vigilante action and mob justice sometimes occur.

Some members of the police commit abuses, and deaths in police custody as a result of excessive force remain a problem. The government has taken action to investigate and punish some of those who commit such abuses. In April 1997, the government established an Independent Complaints Directorate to investigate deaths in police custody and deaths resulting from police action.

Although South Africa's society is undergoing a rapid transformation, some discrimination against women continues, and discrimination against those living with HIV/AIDS remains. Violence against women and children also is a serious problem.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Thabo Mvuyelwa MBEKI**
Dep. Pres.: **Phumzile Gloria MLAMBO-NGCUKA**
Min. of Agriculture & Land Affairs: **Lulama XINGWANA**
Min. of Arts & Culture: **Pallo JORDAN**
Min. of Communications: **Ivy MATSEPE-CASABURRI**
Min. of Correctional Services: **Ngconde BALFOUR**
Min. of Defense: **Mosiuoa LEKOTA**
Min. of Education: **Naledi PANDOR**
Min. of Environment & Tourism: **Marthinus VAN SCHALKWYK**
Min. of Finance: **Trevor MANUEL**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Nkosazana DLAMINI-ZUMA**
Min. of Health: **Manto TSHABALALA-MSIMANG**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Nosiviwe MAPISA-NQAKULA**
Min. of Housing: **Lindiwe SISULU**
Min. of Intelligence: **Ronnie KASRILS**
Min. of Justice & Constitutional Affairs: **Bridgitte MABANDLA**
Min. of Labor: **Membathisi MDLADLANA**
Min. of Minerals & Energy: **Buyelwa Patience SONJICA**
Min. of Provincial & Local Govt.: **Sydney MUFAMADI**
Min. of Public Enterprises: **Alexander ERWIN**
Min. of Public Service & Admin.: **Geraldine FRASER-MOLEKETI**
Min. of Public Works: **Angela Thoko DIDIZA**
Min. of Safety & Security: **Charles NQAKULA**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Mosibudi MANGENA**
Min. of Social Development: **Zola SKWEYIYA**
Min. of Sport & Recreation: **Makenkesi STOFILE**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Mandisi MPAHLWA**
Min. of Transport: **Jeffrey Thamsanqa RADEBE**
Min. of Water & Forestry: **Lindiwe Benedicta HENDRICKS**
Min. in the Presidency: **Kgalema MOTLANTHE**
Min. in the Presidency: **Essop PAHAD**
Governor, Reserve Bank: **Tito MBOWENI**
Ambassador to the US: **Welile Augustine NHLAPO**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Dumisani Shadrack KUMALO**

The Republic of South Africa maintains an embassy in the United States at 3051 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel. (202) 232-4400.

ECONOMY

South Africa has a two-tiered economy; one rivaling other developed countries and the other with only the most basic infrastructure. It therefore is a productive and industrialized economy that exhibits many characteristics associated with developing countries, including a division of labor between formal and informal sectors, and uneven distribution of wealth and income. The formal sector, based on mining, manufacturing, services, and agriculture, is well developed.

The transition to a democratic, nonracial government, begun in early 1990, stimulated a debate on the direction of economic policies to achieve sustained economic growth while at the same time redressing the socioeconomic disparities created by apartheid. The Government of National Unity's initial blueprint to address this problem was the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). The RDP was designed to create programs to improve the standard of living for the majority of the population by providing housing—a planned 1 million new homes in 5 years—basic services, education, and health care. While a specific "ministry" for the RDP no longer exists, a number of government ministries and offices are charged with supporting RDP programs and goals.

The Government of South Africa demonstrated its commitment to open markets, privatization, and a favorable investment climate with its release of the crucial Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy—the neoliberal economic strategy to cover 1996-2000. The strategy had mixed success. It brought greater financial discipline and macroeconomic stability but has failed to deliver in key areas. Formal employment continued to decline, and despite the ongoing efforts of black empowerment and signs of a fledgling black middle class and social mobility, the country's wealth remains very unequally distributed along racial lines. However, South Africa's budgetary reforms such as the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and the Public Finance Management Act—which aims at better reporting, auditing, and increased accountability—and the structural changes to its monetary policy framework—including inflation targeting—have created transparency and predictability and are widely acclaimed. Trade liberalization also has progressed substantially since the early 1990s. South Africa has reduced its import-weighted average tariff rate from more than 20% in 1994 to 7% in 2002. These efforts, together with South Africa's implementation of its World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations and its

constructive role in launching the Doha Development Round, show South Africa's acceptance of free market principles.

Financial Policy

South Africa has a sophisticated financial structure with a large and active stock exchange that ranks 17th in the world in terms of total market capitalization. The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) performs all central banking functions. The SARB is independent and operates in much the same way as Western central banks, influencing interest rates and controlling liquidity through its interest rates on funds provided to private sector banks. Quantitative credit controls and administrative control of deposit and lending rates have largely disappeared. South African banks adhere to the Bank of International Standards core standards.

The South African Government has taken steps to gradually reduce remaining foreign exchange controls, which apply only to South African residents. Private citizens are now allowed a one-time investment of up to 750,000 rand (R) in offshore accounts. Since 2001, South African companies may invest up to R750 million in Africa and R500 million elsewhere.

Trade and Investment

South Africa has rich mineral resources. It is the world's largest producer and exporter of gold and platinum and also exports a significant amount of coal. During 2000, platinum overtook gold as South Africa's largest foreign exchange earner. The value-added processing of minerals to produce ferroalloys, stainless steels, and similar products is a major industry and an important growth area. The country's diverse manufacturing industry is a world leader in several specialized sectors, including railway rolling stock, synthetic fuels, and mining equipment and machinery.

Primary agriculture accounts for about 4% of the gross domestic product. Major crops include citrus and deciduous fruits, corn, wheat, dairy products, sugarcane, tobacco, wine, and wool. South Africa has many developed irrigation schemes and is a net exporter of food.

South Africa's transportation infrastructure is well-developed, supporting both domestic and regional needs. The Johannesburg International Airport serves as a hub for flights to other southern African countries. The domestic telecommunications infrastructure provides modern and efficient service to urban areas, including cellular and Internet services. In 1997, Telkom, the South African telecommunications parastatal, was partly privatized and entered into a strategic equity partnership with a consortium of two companies, including SBC, a U.S. telecommunications company. In exchange for exclusivity to provide certain services for 5 years, Telkom assumed an obligation to facilitate network modernization and expansion into unserved areas. The government is evaluating a proposal to establish a second network operator to compete with Telkom across its spectrum of services. Three cellular companies provide service to over 9 million subscribers.

South Africa's GDP is expected to increase gradually during the next few years, and 2007 estimated growth was 5.1%. Annual GDP growth between 1994 and 2004 averaged 3.0%. In 2003, real GDP growth slowed to a rate of 2.8%, but increased to 3.7% in 2004. The government estimates that the economy must achieve growth at a minimum of 6% to offset unemployment, which was estimated at 23% in September 2007, although unofficial sources put it as high as 41%. In an effort to boost economic growth and spur job creation, the government has launched special investment corridors to promote development in specific regions and also is working to encourage small, medium, and microenterprise development. One of the great successes of the ANC government has been to get consumer inflation, which had been running in the double digits for over 20 years, under control. By 1998, inflation had fallen to 6.9%, and in 1999 and 2000 inflation was running at less than 6.0%. The rand's rapid depreciation in late 2001, however, led to greater inflationary pressure, causing 2002 inflation of 9.2%. The South African Government cut the inflation rate to 4% in 2004, and the rand appreciated 39% from 2002 to 2004. The South African Reserve Bank increased interest rates, which along with the 28% rand appreciation in 2003 led to a reduced consumer inflation of 5.8%. The government also has made inroads into reducing the fiscal deficit and increasing foreign currency reserves. The government deficit was 1.1% of GDP in 2002 and 2.6% in 2003. The government's 2005 budget called for a moderate increase in spending to promote faster growth and poverty alleviation, while curbing budget deficits.

Exports amounted to 24.6% of GDP in 2007. South Africa's major trading partners include the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Japan. South Africa's trade with other Sub-Saharan African countries, particularly those in the southern Africa region, has increased substantially. South Africa is a member of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In August 1996, South Africa signed a regional trade protocol agreement with its SADC partners. The agreement was ratified in December 1999, and implementation began in September 2000. It aims to provide duty-free treatment for 85% of trade by 2008 and 100% by 2012.

South Africa has made great progress in dismantling its old economic system, which was based on import substitution, high tariffs and subsidies, anticompetitive behavior, and extensive government intervention in the economy. The leadership has moved to reduce the government's role in the economy and to promote private sector investment and competition. It has significantly reduced tariffs and export subsidies, loosened exchange controls, cut the secondary tax on corporate dividends, and improved enforcement of intellectual property

laws. A competition law was passed and became effective on September 1, 1999. A U.S.-South Africa bilateral tax treaty went into effect on January 1, 1998, and a bilateral trade and investment framework agreement was signed in February 1999.

South Africa is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). U.S. products qualify for South Africa's most-favored-nation tariff rates. South Africa also is an eligible country for the benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and most of its products can enter the United States market duty free. South Africa has done away with most import permits except on used products and products regulated by international treaties. It also remains committed to the simplification and continued reduction of tariffs within the WTO framework and maintains active discussions with that body and its major trading partners.

As a result of a November 1993 bilateral agreement, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) can assist U.S. investors in the South African market with services such as political risk insurance and loans and loan guarantees. In July 1996, the United States and South Africa signed an investment fund protocol for a $120 million OPIC fund to make equity investments in South Africa and southern Africa. The Trade and Development Agency also has been actively involved in funding feasibility studies and identifying investment opportunities in South Africa for U.S. businesses.

HIV/AIDS

South Africa is one of the countries most affected by HIV, with 5.3 million HIV infected individuals. Nineteen percent of the 15-49 year old population is infected, and in parts of the country more than 35% of women of childbearing age are infected. Overall, 11-12% of the population is infected. About 1,700 new infections occur each day, and approximately 40% of deaths are believed to be AIDS-related. There are approximately 660,000 children who have lost one or both parents, and by 2008 1.6 million children will have been orphaned by AIDS. Without effective prevention and treatment 5-7 million cumulative AIDS deaths are anticipated by 2010 (with 1.5 million deaths in 2010 alone), and there will be over 1 million sick with AIDS. The epidemic could cost South Africa as much as 17% in GDP growth by 2010. The extraction industries, education, and health are among the sectors that will be severely affected. A 2003 national operational plan provides the structure for a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS, including a national rollout of antiretroviral therapy.

Environment

South Africa's Government is committed to managing the country's rich and varied natural resources in a responsible and sustainable manner. In addition, numerous South African non-governmental organizations have emerged as a potent force in the public policy debate on the environment. In international environmental organizations, South Africa is seen as a key leader among developing countries on issues such as climate change, conservation, and biodiversity. This leading role was underscored by South Africa's selection to host the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

South African forces fought on the Allied side in World Wars I and II and participated in the postwar UN force in Korea. South Africa was a founding member of the League of Nations and in 1927 established a Department of External Affairs with diplomatic missions in the main west European countries and in the United States. At the founding of the League of Nations, South Africa was given the mandate to govern Southwest Africa, now Namibia, which had been a German colony before World War I. In 1990, Namibia attained independence, with the exception of the enclave of Walvis Bay, which was reintegrated into Namibia in March 1994. After South Africa held its first nonracial election in April 1994, most sanctions imposed by the international community in opposition to the system of apartheid were lifted. On June 1, 1994, South Africa rejoined the Commonwealth, and on June 23, 1994, the UN General Assembly accepted its credentials. South Africa served as the African Union's (AU) first president from July 2003 to July 2004.

Having emerged from the international isolation of the apartheid era, South Africa has become a leading international actor. Its principal foreign policy objective is to promote the economic, political, and cultural regeneration of Africa, through the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD); to promote the peaceful resolution of conflict in Africa; and to use multilateral bodies to insure that developing countries' voices are heard on international issues. South Africa has played a key role in seeking an end to various conflicts and political crises on the African continent, including in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Comoros. South Africa has pursued "quiet diplomacy" in its approach to the crisis in Zimbabwe.

U.S.-SOUTH AFRICAN RELATIONS

The United States has maintained an official presence in South Africa since 1799, when an American consulate was opened in Cape Town. The U.S. Embassy is located in Pretoria, and Consulates General are in Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town. Americans and South Africans also have many nongovernmental ties; for example, black and white American missionaries have a long history of activity in South Africa. South Africans (particularly the ANC leadership) also acknowledge support from and ties to the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. From the 1970s through the early 1990s, U.S.-South Africa relations were severely affected by South Africa's racial policies. However, since the abolition of apartheid and democratic elections of

April 1994, the United States has enjoyed an excellent bilateral relationship with South Africa. Although there are differences of position between the two governments—for example, regarding Iraq—they do not impede cooperation on a broad range of key issues. Bilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism, fighting HIV/AIDS, and military relations has been particularly positive. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States also provides assistance to South Africa to help it meet its development goals. Peace Corps volunteers began working in South Africa in 1997.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PRETORIA (E) 877 Pretorius Street, Arcadia, APO/FPO 9300 Pretoria Pl, Washington DC 20521-9300, (27) (12) 431-4000, Fax (27) (12) 342-2299, Workweek: Flex with 8-5 standard., Website: pretoria.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Linda Ingalls
AMB OMS:	Irvina Wallace
CDC:	Okey Nwanyanwu
DHS/ICE:	Willis Reeves
ECO:	Perry Ball
FM:	Larry Bowman
HHS:	Mary Fanning
HRO:	William Holden
IBB:	Paula Caffey
MGT:	Russell G. Leclair, Jr.
AMB:	Eric M. Bost
CON:	Anita Le Clair
DCM:	Donald Teitelbaum
PAO:	Mary Deane Conners
GSO:	Peter Drew
RSO:	Don Schenck
AGR:	Scott Sindelar
AID:	Carleene Dei
APHIS:	Ken Nagata
CLO:	Linda Lockwood
DAO:	Col. Michael E. Garrison
DEA:	Jeff Breeden
EEO:	Mary Ellen Koenig
EST:	Nikki Brajevich
FMO:	James Inder
ICASS Chair:	Craig Allen
IMO:	Mark Butchart
IPO:	Holly McRea
IRS:	Garrard, Linda (Resident In London)
ISO:	William J. Johnson
ISSO:	Zekarious Gebeyeou
LEGATT:	Donald Przybyla
POL:	Raymond Brown
State ICASS:	Perry Ball

CAPE TOWN (CG) 2 Reddam Ave, Tokai 7945, APO/FPO (NO APO AT POST) 2480 Cape Town Place, Washington DC 20521-2480, 27-21 -702-7300, Fax 27-21-702-7429, Workweek: M-F 8am to 5pm, Website: http://pretoria.usembassy.gov.

CG OMS:	Antonette Schroeder
DPO:	Paul Patin
FCS:	Tyrena Holley
FM:	Johnny Shields
MGT:	Chris Dye
POL/ECO:	Stephanie Eshelman
SPSH:	Maya Patin
CG:	Helen La Lime
PAO:	Paul Patin
IPO:	Jeff Schroeder
POL:	Jeffrey Glassman

DURBAN (CG) 303 West Street, 31st floor., Durban 4001, APO/FPO 2490 Durban Place, Dulles, VA 20189-2490, (27)(31) 305-7600, Fax (27)(31) 305-7650, Workweek: M-F 0800-1700, Website: usembassy.state.gov/southafrica/

DHS/ICE:	Fuad Hafidh
MGT:	Sherry Z. Sykes
POL/ECO:	Stephanie Bowers
AMB:	Eric Bost
CG:	Eugene Young
CON:	Leslie Livingood
DCM:	Don Teitelbaum
PAO:	J. Riley Sever
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JOHANNESBURG (CG) 1 River Street, Killarney 2193, Johannesburg, South Africa, APO/FPO 2500 Johannesburg Place, Dulles, VA 20189-2500, 27-11-644-8000, Fax 27-11-646-6915, Workweek: M–F/0800–1700

CG OMS:	Ldelores Applel
DHS/CIS:	Dhs/Cis
DPO:	Charles Luoma-Overstreet
FCS:	Craig Allen
IBB:	Paula Caffey
MGT:	Maureen M. Danzot
CG:	Steven P. Coffman
CON:	Charles Luoma-Overstreet
PAO:	Todd P. Haskell
RSO:	Stephen A Rice
AFSA:	Todd P. Haskell
FIN:	Tda Douglas Shuster
IPO:	Rose D Pegues
IRS:	Linda M. Garrard (Resident In London)
ISO:	Pic B Jordan
ISSO:	Rose D. Pegues
LAB:	Jeanine Collins

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 26, 2008

Country Description: South Africa is in many respects a developed country, but much of its population lives in poverty. All major urban areas have modern, world-class hotels and tourist facilities. Game parks and areas most often visited by tourists have a wide range of facilities. Food and water are generally safe, and a wide variety of consumer goods and pharmaceuticals are readily available. The capital is Pretoria, while the seat of parliament is located in Cape Town. Johannesburg is the financial capital and largest city in South Africa. Durban is home to Africa's busiest port and is the number one tourist destination for South Africans.

Entry Requirements: It is recommended that the passports of all travelers to South Africa contain at least two completely blank (unstamped) visa pages each time entry is sought. These pages are in addition to the endorsement/amendment pages (as many as four) at the back of the passport. While South African statutes require one, completely blank visa page, this rule has been applied inconsistently by South African immigration officials. In addition, any trip to a neighboring country would necessitate another blank page upon return. Travelers lacking adequate blank pages in the passport may be refused entry into South Africa, fined, and returned to their point of origin at the traveler's expense. South African authorities have denied the diplomatic missions access to assist in these cases. As a general precaution, all travelers are advised to carry a photocopy of the photo/bio information page of their passport and keep it in a location separate from the passport.

Visitors to South Africa for tourism, short business meetings, or those in transit do not require visas for stays

of up to 90 days. In the event that a traveler overstays that period without a permit issued by the South African Department of Home Affairs, they may be subject to a fine of up to 3,000 rand (approximately 415 US dollars). All others, including academics, students on educational trips, and volunteers, may need visas. Americans who intend to work in South Africa must apply for work permits before arrival; otherwise they risk being refused admission and returned to their point of origin. It is strongly suggested that all travelers check the latest requirements with the nearest South African Embassy or Consulate before traveling.

Travelers entering South Africa from countries where yellow fever is endemic are often required to present their yellow World Health Organization (WHO) vaccination record or other proof of inoculation. If they are unable to do so, they must be inoculated at the airport in order to be permitted entry.

Visit the Embassy of South Africa web site at http://www.saembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Travelers are encouraged to be vigilant and avoid any large gathering, particularly protests and demonstrations. The possibility of violence, including threats against American interests, should not be discounted, particularly in times of heightened world tension.

South Africa has seen a number of attacks directed at foreigners—particularly refugees or immigrants from other African nations. Many of the attacks were centered in Johannesburg and the province of Gauteng in low income neighborhoods and informal settlements, but incidents of mob violence have taken place throughout the country. Many individuals have been killed in these incidents and many more, both targeted victims and bystanders, have been injured. While there have been no reports of Americans or other non-African visitors being targeted, these incidents of mob violence have sprung up quickly and proven difficult for local authorities to control. American residents and visitors are advised to listen to local media for reports of such incidents and to avoid areas (including but not limited to townships) where they may be likely to occur.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the vast majority of visitors complete their travels in South Africa without incident, visitors should be aware that criminal activity, often violent, occurs routinely. Notwithstanding government anti-crime efforts, violent crimes such as armed robbery, carjacking, mugging, "smash and grab" attacks on vehicles, and other incidents are regularly reported by visitors and resident Americans.

Visitors and residents are advised of ongoing criminal activity involving organized crime gangs targeting individuals at shopping centers and in particular at the OR Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg. Once a victim has been identified, he/she is followed back to his/her residence and robbed, usually at gunpoint, although the use of force is generally reserved for those offering some form of resistance. These gangs tend to target more "affluent" individuals, including people driving expensive cars, wearing eye-catching jewelry, flashing large amounts of cash, and/or making high-value purchases. Criminals also gravitate towards "soft" targets—people who appear preoccupied and do not pay attention to their immediate surroundings. Tourists have been targeted in a similar fashion at the airport. It appears that criminals may view certain incoming travelers as suitable targets (due perhaps to dress, jewelry or use of an ATM) and notify confederates who follow the travelers to rob them at their destination or even en route. Visitors who believe they are being followed should drive directly to a police station or other public location.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) have increasingly been targeted by criminals. The use of commercial explosives to blow up ATMs is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa. In 2006, 54 such attacks were recorded. In 2007, the number of ATM bombings jumped to 387. While statistically affecting only a small percentage of machines, in the first half of 2008, the number of attacks was nearly 200. ATM bombings have usually taken place in the early hours of the morning in remote or isolated areas although recent attacks have taken place at gas stations and shopping complexes. Criminals also loiter near ATM machines and target persons withdrawing cash. Based on these threats, the following security precautions are recommended: Avoid using ATMs in dark, remote, or isolated areas. ATMs located inside shopping malls, hotels, and banks are preferred since they are normally high-traffic areas, and monitored by security guards and cameras. Avoid using an ATM with a cord or other foreign object attached to it. Should you notice a suspicious device on an ATM, immediately leave the area; take cover, and notify the police. Shrapnel and debris from an explosion can travel long distances and cause serious injury or death. Before withdrawing money, scan the area for any suspicious persons or activity. Should anyone approach you while you are withdrawing money, immediately cancel the transaction and leave the area. Should you be confronted by an armed individual - immediately comply, avoid making sudden movements, and do not offer any form of resistance. Any hesitation on your part could be perceived as a threat which may result in unnecessary violence. Criminals do not discriminate. Members of the international diplomatic community have recently been included as targets of crime.

Motorists are urged to be extremely cautious when approaching intersec-

tions and to hide bags, cell phones, and other valuables from view. Criminals are on the lookout for valuable items they can see through the car windows (see mention of "smash and grab" under traffic safety). Doors should be kept locked and windows rolled up at all times.

Crimes against property, such as carjacking, have often been accompanied by violent acts, including murder, when victims resist or are slow to respond to attackers' demands. South Africa also has the highest incidence of reported rape in the world. Foreigners are not specifically targeted, but several have been the victims of rape. Victims of violent crime, especially rape, are strongly encouraged to seek immediate medical attention, including antiretroviral therapy against HIV/AIDS. Questions about how to receive such treatment should be directed to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Criminal activity, such as assault, armed robbery, and theft is particularly high in areas surrounding many hotels and public transportation centers, especially in major cities. Theft of passports and other valuables is most likely to occur at airports, bus terminals, and train stations. A number of Americans have been mugged or violently attacked on commuter and metro trains, especially between Johannesburg and Pretoria. Several American travelers also reported theft of personal belongings after strangers whom they invited into their hotel drugged them. In at least one instance, an American died after being drugged and robbed in this manner.

There is a serious baggage pilferage problem at OR Tambo, Johannesburg and Cape Town International airports, particularly affecting travelers changing airlines and those flying on smaller airlines—passengers flying on major international carriers may not be affected to the same degree. Travelers are encouraged to secure their luggage with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) approved locks, use an airport plastic wrapping service, and avoid placing electronics, jewelry, cameras or other valuables in checked luggage. Make an inventory of items in checked baggage to aid in claims processing if theft does occur.

In the Western Cape, police resources have been strained by continuing gang conflicts and vigilante violence in the low income areas and informal settlements in Cape Town. The Cape Flats area, surrounding townships, and squatter camps adjacent to the city center, should be avoided by people unfamiliar with the area. Additionally, travelers should be aware that muggings have become common along many popular routes on Table Mountain, a prime tourist destination in Cape Town. Visitors to Table Mountain should be vigilant, hike in groups, and not carry valuables.

Armed robbery of cash-in-transit vehicles and personnel occurs throughout South Africa and peaks during December and January due to the increase in cash flow from commercial stores to banks. These attacks have also included incidents at major malls and in large grocery stores. Individuals should raise their level of situational awareness while in the vicinity of cash-in-transit vehicles and personnel and should avoid areas where they are located to the maximum extent possible.

Credit card fraud, counterfeit U.S. currency, and various check-cashing scams are frequently reported. Do not accept "assistance" from anyone, or agree to assist others with ATM transactions. Travelers should try to avoid using ATMs after bank business hours or in remote locations. When giving your credit card to a store or restaurant employee for processing, do not let them take the card out of your sight. Visitors should also beware of telephone or email schemes, which attempt to win the confidence of an unsuspecting American who is persuaded either to provide privileged financial information or travel to South Africa to assist in a supposedly lucrative business venture.

To check on a business's legitimacy while in the U.S., contact the International Trade Administration, Room 3317, Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230, telephone: 1-800-USA-TRADE or 202-482-5149, fax: 202-482-5198. If you are abroad, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in South Africa is 10111.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Private medical facilities are good in urban areas and in the vicinity of game parks, but they may be limited elsewhere. Pharmacies are well stocked and equivalents to most American medicines are available.

While most of South Africa is malaria free, malaria risk exists throughout the year in rural low-altitude areas of Northern (Limpopo) and Mpumalanga provinces, including Kruger National Park and neighboring game reserves. Risk also exists in the coastal lowlands of KwaZulu-Natal north of the Tugela River (including in Zululand, but excluding urban areas of Richards Bay). In all risk areas, risk is much lower from June to September. Visitors should prepare accordingly and use malaria prophylaxis. For information on malaria, its prevention, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarial drugs, please visit the CDC travelers' health web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe

food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in South Africa. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning South Africa is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Visitors intending to drive in South Africa are strongly encouraged to obtain an international driver's permit prior to their departure from the U.S. You may wish to contact the nearest South African Embassy or Consulate for up to date information about driver's license requirements. While South African law does not normally require International driver's licenses for stays of less than six months, insurance companies for both long-term residents and rental car customers often require proof of a South African or international drivers' license in order to honor an insurance claim, even when such proof was not requested at the time the policy was secured.

Unlike the United States, where traffic moves on the right hand side of the road, traffic in South Africa moves on the left. Care must also be taken when crossing streets as a pedestrian. Travelers should use caution at all times when driving, and especially avoid nighttime travel outside major cities. Road conditions are generally good in South Africa. However, excessive speed, poor lighting on rural roads, and insufficient regulatory control of vehicle maintenance and operator licensing have resulted in a high and rapidly increasing number of traffic fatalities. Drivers should also take care to avoid pedestrians crossing roads, which frequently occur on major highways.

'Smash and grab' robberies are common throughout South Africa, particularly in urban areas, at traffic lights, and on highway off-ramps. In these cases an individual, often appearing to be a vendor or beggar, will walk down between lines of vehicles waiting at an intersection, surveying the contents of vehicles, especially on the passenger seat, for targets of opportunity. Once a promising candidate is located, the perpetrator will quickly smash the window and grab the item off the seat, departing at a run, often before the driver can even decipher what has happened. In another scenario an individual (or two working in tandem) may indicate to a driver an apparent flat tire or other problem and wait for the driver to pull over or exit the car before grabbing exposed valuables. Drivers should be particularly careful of this problem and avoid carrying anything of value (e.g., briefcases, purses, cell phones, etc.) inside the car that could attract potential assailants.

Travelers are advised to carry mobile phones. U.S. mobile phones may not work in South Africa, but rental mobile phones are widely available and may be rented from kiosks at major airports. The nationwide emergency number for the police is 10111, and the nationwide number for ambulance service is 10177. It is not necessary to dial an area code for these numbers. Callers from mobile phones may not necessarily be connected immediately to the nearest emergency service. The rate of response varies from to area to area, but is generally slower than response to 911 calls in the United States.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at www.nra.co.za. You may also contact South Africa's national tourist office at 1-800-593-1318.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of South Africa's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of South Africa's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Approximately one-quarter of the population of South Africa is infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Public awareness in the country as to how to protect against infection is increasing. However, travelers are advised to exercise appropriate precautions if engaging in sexual activity, or if they become exposed to a blood source other than that supplied by a hospital for transfusion purpose.

While visiting game parks and reserves, it is dangerous to leave one's vehicle or otherwise be on foot, even in the presence of a guide. Several incidents of wild animal attacks on tourists in the region have resulted in death or serious injury. If visiting South Africa's expansive coastline, be mindful of the possible presence of sharks when swimming or engaging in water sports. In 2005 and 2006, in the False Bay area of the Western Cape, several people were attacked by sharks; some of the attacks were fatal. Should a shark be spotted close to the shore, local authorities will sound a warning siren to notify the public.

Eskom, the major supplier of electricity in South Africa, has reported that the demand for electricity may exceed the available supply from time to

time. In order to manage the situation Eskom periodically interrupts the supply to certain areas in rolling blackouts termed "load shedding." Although information about possible outages is available on Eskom's web site http://www.eskom.co.za, they do not always adhere to the published schedule.

Unexpected power outages may strand individuals in extremely difficult or vulnerable circumstances such as in elevators or, in recent instances, on board the Table Mountain aerial cable car in Cape Town. Power failures may result in considerable inconvenience as most tourist sites are not equipped with generators and may be closed without prior notification. Blackouts may also contribute to traffic congestion, traffic signal failures and hazardous intersections. Please be mindful of any situation in which a sudden break in power could result in potential harm.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating South African laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in South Africa are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in South Africa are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within South Africa. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 877 Pretorius Street, Arcadia in Pretoria, telephone (27-12) 431-4000 (from South Africa 012-431-4000), fax (27-12) 431-5504 (from South Africa 012-431-5504). The U.S. Embassy web site is http://pretoria.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg provides consular services for Americans in the Pretoria area. The Consulate General in Johannesburg is located at No. 1 River Street (corner of River and Riviera Road), Killarney, Johannesburg telephone (27-11) 644-8000 (from South Africa 011-644-8000), fax (27-11) 646-6916 (from South Africa (011-646-6916). Its consular jurisdiction includes Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West, and Free State provinces. The Consulate General in Cape Town is located at 2 Reddam Avenue, West Lake 7945, telephone (27-21) 702-7300 (from South Africa 021-702-7300), fax (27-21) 702-7493 (from South Africa 021-702-7493). Its consular jurisdiction includes Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Northern Cape provinces. The Consulate General in Durban is located at the Old Mutual Building, 31st floor, 303 West Street, telephone (27-31) 305-7600 (from South Africa 031-305-7600), fax (27-31) 305-7691 (from South Africa 031-305-7691). Its consular jurisdiction is KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: South African law recognizes two kinds of adoptions by foreigners: 1) those completed by foreign residents of South Africa, and 2) intercountry adoptions where foreigners are given children to adopt in their home country. The first category requires the foreigners to be resident for five years in South Africa and the adoptions are handled by an accredited agency and finalized by the Department of Social Development. The second category is only available to citizens of countries with a working agreement between them and South Africa. At this time, the United States does not have a working agreement of this type.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government offices responsible for adoptions in South Africa are the following:

Commissioner of Child Welfare
Private Bag X61
Pretoria 0001, South Africa
Tel: 012-328-4026

Department of Social Development
Registrar of Adoptions
Private Bag X901
Pretoria 0001, South Africa
Tel: 012-312-7592
Fax: 012-312-7837

The Commissioner of Child Welfare is responsible to the Department of Justice and is required for inter-country adoptions. The Department of Social Development is the central authority for all adoptions.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: For adoptive American parents living in South Africa, there is a 5-year residency requirement. Eligibility requirements beyond that change based on the circumstances of the case in question. For example, family members will be given preference over non-relatives regardless of age.

Residency Requirements: There is a five year residency requirement, which can include the two-year vetting process. South African authorities will approve adoptions by U.S. citizen families who have been residents in South Africa or in cases in which one spouse is South African.

Time Frame: It can take up to two years to complete South Africa adoption requirements.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents should seek out an accredited South African organization to facilitate the process. Unfortunately, there is not comprehensive list of agencies available at this time. Many of these organizations are faith-based and can be contacted directly.

Adoption Fees: There are no government fees for adoption services. Adoption agencies and social organizations charges fees for services which can vary depending on the organization.

Adoption Procedures: The adoption procedure is initiated by contacting an accredited welfare organization. After a home study has been completed by an accredited organization, the case is referred to a children's court for the final hearing. An order of adoption terminates all the rights and obligations existing between the child and any prior legally-recognized parents. The adopted child is thereafter deemed by law to be the legitimate child of the adoptive parent(s). The order of adoption confers the surname of the adoptive parent on the adopted child.

There have been a number of cases in which American Citizens have been issued "Guardianship Orders" from the South African High Court. These orders do not constitute "irrevocable release for adoption and immigration" as required by United States Immigration Law. As such, they cannot be used for immigration purposes, essentially eliminating the possibility of Immediate Relative-4 (IR-4) visas (immigrant visas for orphans who will emigrate and be adopted in the United States) from South Africa. The consent of the child's biological father, except in cases of rape or incest, must be obtained before a child born out of wedlock is placed for adoption. Unmarried fathers have the right to apply for access, custody or guardianship. Previously, only the consent of the biological mother was required. However, married or biological divorced fathers can prevent their wives or former wives from having their children adopted.

According to South African law, a child born to parents who are not married to each other at the time of birth is illegitimate. A child born to unmarried parents becomes legitimate as soon as they marry. Normally, the mother of an illegitimate child is not only the legal guardian of her child, but also has custody even if she herself is still a minor. Only if it is proven that she is unfit to have custody can the child be taken from her and placed in alternative custody. Under current laws, the birth of an illegitimate child must normally be registered in the surname of the mother; the illegitimate child may take the surname of its father only if the father has formally acknowledged them in the birth register. The mother alone has the right to decide what the child's first name or names should be.

Required Documents: Because of the South African order of precedence for adopting orphans, the document requirements are different for each case. Below are the South African documents the U.S. Consulate General requires in order to issue immigrant visas for children who are fully adopted under South African law.

- Evidence that the child is an orphan;
- A final decree of adoption that must reflect that both spouses (prospective adoptive parents) were parties to the adoption;
- Evidence of compliance with all relevant South African regulations;
- The orphan's long-form South African birth certificate showing the biological parent(s)'s name; also, a new full birth certificate is required showing the new adoptive parents' names.

Embassy of the Republic of South Africa

3051 Massachusetts Avenue, NW.

Washington, D.C. 20008

Telephone: 202-232-4400

South Africa has Consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General

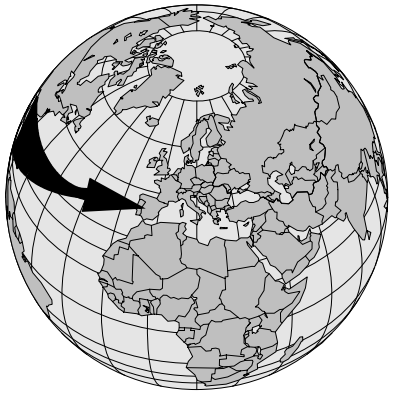
River Street, Killarney, Johannesburg 2193

Tel: 011-644-8000

Fax: 011-646-6916

The United States also has Consulates General in Westlake (Capetown) and Durban.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in South Africa may be addressed to the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SPAIN

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Spain

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 504,750 sq. km. (194,884 sq. mi.), including the Balearic and Canary Islands; about the size of Arizona and Utah combined.

Cities: Capital—Madrid (5.5 million). Other cities—Barcelona (4.9 million), Valencia (2.3 million), Seville (1.8 million), Malaga (1.3 million), Zaragoza (871,000), Bilbao (353,950).

Terrain: High plateaus, lowland areas such as narrow coastal plains, and mountainous regions.

Climate: Temperate. Summers are hot in the interior and more moderate and cloudy along the coast; winters are cold in interior and partly cloudy and cool along the coast.

Time zone: Spanish mainland and Balearic Isles—local time is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) in winter and 2 hours ahead in summer. Canary Islands are on GMT.

People

Nationality: Noun—Spaniard(s). Adjective—Spanish.

Population: (2008 est.) 45,200,737.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 0.116%.

Ethnic groups: Distinct ethnic groups within Spain include the Basques, Catalans, and Galicians.

Religions: Predominantly Roman Catholic; Protestant and Islamic faiths also have a significant presence.

Languages: Spanish (official) 74%, Catalan-Valenciana 17%, Galician 7%, Basque 2%.

Education: Years compulsory—to age 16. Literacy (2007 est.)—97%.

Work force: (20.4 million): Services—66.4%; agriculture—4.2%; construction—13.1%; industry—16.3% (2008 est.).

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy (Juan Carlos I proclaimed King November 22, 1975).

Constitution: 1978.

Government branches: Executive—president of government nominated by monarch, subject to approval by democratically elected Congress of Deputies. Legislative—bicameral Cortes: a 350-seat Congress of Deputies (elected by the d'Hondt system of proportional representation) and a Senate. Four senators are elected in each of 47 peninsular provinces, 16 are elected from the three island provinces, and Ceuta and Melilla elect two each; this accounts for 208 senators. The parliaments of the 17 autonomous regions also elect one senator as well as one additional senator for every 1 million inhabitants within their territory (about 20 senators). Judicial—Constitutional Tribunal has jurisdiction over constitutional issues. Supreme Tribunal heads system comprising territorial, provincial, regional, and municipal courts.

Political subdivisions: 47 peninsular and three island provinces; two enclaves on the Mediterranean coast of Morocco (Ceuta and Melilla) and three island groups along that coast—Alhucemas, Penon de Velez de la Gomera, and the Chafarinas Islands.

Political parties: Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), Popular Party (PP), and the United Left (IU) coalition. Key regional parties are the Convergence and Union (CIU) in Catalonia and the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) in the Basque country.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $1.439 trillion (seventh-largest Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—OECD—economy).

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 3.8%.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $31,831.

Natural resources: Coal, lignite, iron ore, uranium, mercury, pyrites, fluorspar, gypsum, zinc, lead, tungsten, copper, kaolin, hydroelectric power.

Agriculture and fisheries: (2.6% of GDP, 2007 est.): Products—grains, vegetables, citrus and deciduous

fruits, wine, olives and olive oil, sunflowers, livestock.

Industry: (13.51% of GDP, 2007 est.): Types—processed foods, textiles, footwear, petrochemicals, steel, automobiles, consumer goods, electronics.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$248.7 billion: automobiles, fruits, minerals, metals, clothing, footwear, textiles. Major markets—EU 70.1%, U.S. 4.17%. Imports—$289.8 billion: petroleum, oilseeds, aircraft, grains, chemicals, machinery, transportation equipment, fish, consumer goods. Major sources—EU 59.1%, U.S. 3.54%.

Exchange rate: (2007) 0.731 euros=U.S.$1.

PEOPLE

Spain's population density, lower than that of most European countries, is roughly equivalent to New England's. In recent years, following a longstanding pattern in the rest of Europe, rural populations are moving to cities. Urban areas are also experiencing a significant increase in immigrant populations, chiefly from North Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe.

Spain has no official religion. The constitution of 1978 disestablished the Roman Catholic Church as the official state religion, while recognizing the role it plays in Spanish society. More than 90% of the population is at least nominally Catholic. Among the remaining population, there are about 1.2 million evangelical Christians and other Protestants (2007 est.), 1 million Muslims (2007 est.), and 48,000 Jews (2007 est.).

Educational System

About 70% of Spain's student population attends public schools or universities. The remainder attend private schools or universities, the great majority of which are operated by the Catholic Church. Compulsory education begins with primary school or general basic education for ages 6-14. It is free in public schools and in many private schools, most of which receive government subsidies. Following graduation, students attend either a secondary school offering a general high school diploma or a school of professional education (corresponding to grades 9-12 in the United States) offering a vocational training program. The Spanish university system offers degree and postgraduate programs in all fields—law, sciences, humanities, and medicine—and the superior technical schools offer programs in engineering and architecture.

HISTORY

The Iberian Peninsula has been settled for millennia. In fact, some of Europe's most impressive Paleolithic cultural sites are located in Spain, including the famous caves at Altamira that contain spectacular paintings dating from about 15,000 to 25,000 years ago. The Basques, Europe's oldest surviving group, are also the first identifiable people of the peninsula.

Beginning in the ninth century BC, Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, and Celts entered the Iberian Peninsula. The Romans followed in the second century BC and laid the groundwork for Spain's present language, religion, and laws. Although the Visigoths arrived in the fifth century AD, the last Roman strongholds along the southern coast did not fall until the seventh century AD. In 711, North African Moors sailed across the straits, swept into Andalusia, and within a few years, pushed the Visigoths up the peninsula to the Cantabrian Mountains. The Reconquest—efforts to drive out the Moors—lasted until 1492. By 1512, the unification of present-day Spain was complete.

During the 16th century, Spain became the most powerful nation in Europe, due to the immense wealth derived from its presence in the Americas. But a series of long, costly wars and revolts, capped by the defeat by the English of the "Invincible Armada" in 1588, began a steady decline of Spanish power in Europe. Controversy over succession to the throne consumed the country during the 18th century, leading to an occupation by France during the Napoleonic era in the early 1800s and a series of armed conflicts throughout much of the 19th century.

The 19th century saw the revolt and independence of most of Spain's colonies in the Western Hemisphere; three wars over the succession issue; the brief ousting of the monarchy and establishment of the First Republic (1873-74); and, finally, the Spanish-American War (1898), in which Spain lost Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines to the United States. A period of dictatorial rule (1923-31) ended with the establishment of the Second Republic. It was dominated by increasing political polarization, culminating in the leftist Popular Front electoral victory in 1936. Pressures from all sides, coupled with growing and unchecked violence, led to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936.

Following the victory of his nationalist forces in 1939, General Francisco Franco ruled a nation exhausted politically and economically. Spain was officially neutral during World War II but followed a pro-Axis policy. Therefore, the victorious Allies isolated Spain at the beginning of the postwar period, and the country did not join the United Nations until 1955. In 1959, under an International Monetary Fund stabilization plan, the country began liberalizing trade and capital flows, particularly foreign direct investment.

Despite the success of economic liberalization, Spain remained the most closed economy in Western Europe—judged by the small measure of foreign trade to economic activity—and the pace of reform slackened during the 1960s as the state remained committed to "guiding" the economy. Nevertheless, in the 1960s and 1970s, Spain was transformed into a modern industrial economy with a thriving tourism sector. Its economic expansion led to improved income distribution and helped develop a large middle class. Social changes brought about by economic prosperity and the inflow of new ideas helped set



the stage for Spain's transition to democracy during the latter half of the 1970s. Upon the death of General Franco in November 1975, Franco's personally designated heir Prince Juan Carlos de Borbon y Borbon assumed the titles of king and chief of state. Dissatisfied with the slow pace of post-Franco liberalization, he replaced Franco's last Prime Minister with Adolfo Suarez in July 1976. Suarez entered office promising that elections would be held within one year, and his government moved to enact a series of laws to liberalize the new regime. Spain's first elections since 1936 to the Cortes (Parliament) were held on June 15, 1977.

Prime Minister Suarez's Union of the Democratic Center (UCD), a moderate center-right coalition, won 34% of the vote and the largest bloc of seats in the Cortes. Under Suarez, the new Cortes set about drafting a democratic constitution that was overwhelmingly approved by voters in a national referendum in December 1978.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Parliamentary democracy was restored following the death of General Franco in 1975, who had ruled since the end of the civil war in 1939. The 1978 constitution established Spain as a parliamentary monarchy, with the prime minister responsible to the bicameral Cortes (Congress of Deputies and Senate) elected every 4 years. On February 23, 1981, rebel elements among the security forces seized the Cortes and tried to impose a military-backed government. However, the great majority of the military forces remained loyal to King Juan Carlos, who used his personal authority to put down the bloodless coup attempt. In October 1982, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), led by Felipe Gonzalez, swept both the Congress of Deputies and Senate, winning an absolute majority. Gonzalez and the PSOE ruled for the next 13 years. During that period, Spain joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Community. In March 1996, Jose Maria Aznar's Popular Party (PP) won a plurality of

votes. Aznar moved to decentralize powers to the regions and liberalize the economy, with a program of privatization, labor market reform, and measures designed to increase competition in selected markets. During Aznar's first term, Spain fully integrated into European institutions, qualifying for the European Monetary Union. During this period, Spain participated, along with the United States and other NATO allies, in military operations in the former Yugoslavia. President Aznar and the PP won reelection in March 2000, obtaining absolute majorities in both houses of parliament.

After the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, President Aznar became a key ally in the fight against terrorism. Spain backed the military action against the Taliban in Afghanistan and took a leadership role within the European Union (EU) in pushing for increased international cooperation on terrorism. The Aznar government, with a rotating seat on the UN Security Council, supported the intervention in Iraq.

Spanish parliamentary elections on March 14, 2004 came only three days after a devastating terrorist attack on Madrid commuter rail lines that killed 191 and wounded over 1,400. With large voter turnout, PSOE won the election and its leader, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, took office on April 17, 2004. Carrying out campaign promises, the Zapatero government immediately withdrew Spanish forces from Iraq but has continued to support Iraq reconstruction efforts. The Zapatero government has supported coalition efforts in Afghanistan, including maintaining troop support for 2004 and 2005 elections, supported reconstruction efforts in Haiti, sent troops to UNIFIL in Lebanon, and cooperated on counterterrorism issues and many other issues of importance to the U.S. Zapatero was re-elected for a second term as President on March 9, 2008.

Local Government

The 1978 constitution authorized the creation of regional autonomous governments. By 1985, 17 regions covering all of peninsular Spain, the Canaries, and the Balearic Islands had negotiated autonomy statutes with the central government. In 1979, the first autonomous elections were held in the Basque and Catalan regions, which have the strongest regional traditions by virtue of their history and separate languages. Since then, autonomous governments have been created in the remainder of the 17 regions. The central government continues to devolve powers to the regional governments, which will eventually have full responsibility for health care and education, as well as other social programs.

Terrorism

The Government of Spain is involved in a long-running campaign against Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), a terrorist organization founded in 1959 and dedicated to promoting Basque independence. ETA targets Spanish security forces, military personnel, Spanish Government officials, and politicians of the Popular Party and the Socialist Party (PSOE.) The group has carried out numerous bombings against Spanish Government facilities and economic targets, including a car bomb assassination attempt on then-opposition leader Aznar in 1995, in which his armored car was destroyed but he was unhurt. The Spanish Government attributes over 800 deaths to ETA terrorism since its campaign of violence began. In recent years, the government has had more success in controlling ETA, due in part to increased security cooperation with French authorities.

In November 1999, ETA ended a ceasefire it declared in September 1998. Following the end of that ceasefire, ETA conducted a campaign of violence and has been blamed for the deaths of some 46 Spanish citizens and officials. Each attack has been followed by massive anti-ETA demonstrations around the country, clearly demonstrating that the majority of Spaniards, including the majority of Spain's Basque populace, have no tolerance for continued ETA violence. In March 2006, ETA declared another ceasefire, which it ended in June 2007. In December 2007, two members of the Guardia Civil were murdered in Southern France while participating in an operation to locate the military head of ETA. Two ETA members suspected of the killings have been arrested. Days before Spain's general elections in March 2008, former councilman Isaias Carrasco was murdered outside of his home by an ETA gunman. It was seen by many as a political move by ETA to try and influence the elections.

The government continues to pursue vigorous counterterrorist policy and has worked closely with its international allies to foil several suspected ETA attacks. In May 2008, Francisco Javier Lopez Pena, the political-military head of ETA, was arrested in Bordeaux. His arrest was seen as a severe blow to the leadership of ETA. He had been a part of ETA since 1980 and was suspected of coordinating many bombings as well as pushing for an end to the 2006 ceasefire.

Spain also contends with GRAPO, an urban left-wing terrorist group that seeks to overthrow the Spanish Government and establish a Marxist state. It opposes Spanish participation in NATO and U.S. military presence in Spain and has a long history of assassinations, bombings, and kidnappings mostly against Spanish interests during the 1970s and 1980s.

In a June 2000 communiqué following the explosions of two small devices in Barcelona, GRAPO claimed responsibility for several terrorist attacks throughout Spain during the past year. These attacks included two failed armored car robberies, one in which two security officers died, and four bombings of political party offices during the 1999/2000 election campaign. In 2002 and 2003, Spanish and French authorities were successful in hampering the organization's activities through sweeping arrests, including some of the group's leadership.

Al Qaeda is known to operate cells in Spain. On March 11, 2004, only three days before national elections, 10 bombs were detonated on crowded commuter trains during rush hour.

Three were deactivated by security forces and one was found unexploded. Evidence quickly surfaced that jihadist terrorists with possible ties to the Al Qaeda network were responsible for the attack that killed 191 people. Spanish investigative services and the judicial system have aggressively sought to arrest and prosecute suspected Al Qaeda members and actively cooperate with foreign governments to diminish the transnational terrorist threat. A Spanish court convicted 18 individuals in September 2005 for their role in supporting Al Qaeda, and Spanish police disrupted numerous Islamist extremist cells operating in the country. The trial against 29 people for their alleged participation in the Madrid March 11, 2004 terrorist attack started in February 2007, and was declared ready for judgment at the end of June. One of the 29 was absolved during the trial. The prosecutor asked for sentences as high as 30,000 years of jail for some of them. In October 2007 three of the suspects were convicted of murder for their roles in the 2004 attack. The three combined received over 42,000 years in prison. Overall, 21 of 28 defendants were found guilty of some offense for their role in the bombings. In January 2008, Spanish authorities in Barcelona arrested 14 people believed to be connected to a Pakistani terrorist cell allegedly sympathetic to Al Qaeda. The group, potentially linked to Islamic terrorist activities, was believed to be on the verge of a terrorist bombing campaign in Spain and possibly other parts of Europe. An informant working for the French intelligence services notified Spanish authorities of the pending attack.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Chief of State: **JUAN CARLOS I, King**
Pres. of the Govt.: **Jose Luis RODRIGUEZ ZAPATERO**
First Vice Pres.: **Maria Teresa FERNANDEZ DE LA VEGA**
Second Vice Pres.: **Pedro SOLBES**
Min. of Culture: **Cesar Antonio MOLINA**
Min. of Defense: **Carme CHACON**
Min. of Development: **Magdalena ALVAREZ**
Min. of Economy & Finance: **Pedro SOLBES**
Min. of Education, Social Affairs, & Sport: **Mercedes CABRERA**
Min. of Environment & Rural & Marine Environment: **Elena ESPINOSA**
Min. of Equality: **Bibiana AIDO**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation: **Miguel Angel MORATINOS**
Min. of Health & Consumer Affairs: **Bernat SORIA**
Min. of Housing: **Beatriz CORREDOR**
Min. of Industry, Tourism, & Commerce: **Miguel SEBASTIAN**
Min. of Interior: **Alfredo Perez RUBALCABA**
Min. of Justice: **Mariano FERNANDEZ BERMEJO**
Min. of Labor & Immigration: **Celestino CORBACHO**
Min. of the Presidency: **Maria Teresa FERNANDEZ DE LA VEGA**
Min. of Public Admin.: **Elena SALGADO**
Min. of Science & Innovation: **Cristina GARMENDIA**
Governor, Bank of Spain: **Miguel Angel FERNANDEZ ORDONEZ**
Ambassador to the US: **Jorge DEZCALLAR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Juan Antonio YANEZ-BARNUEVO**

Spain maintains an embassy in the United States at 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037 (tel. 202-452-0100) and consulates in many larger U.S. cities.

ECONOMY

Spain's accession to the European Community—now European Union (EU)—in January 1986 required the country to open its economy to trade and investment, modernize its industrial base, improve infrastructure, and revise economic legislation to conform to EU guidelines. In doing so, Spain increased gross domestic product (GDP) growth, reduced the public debt to GDP ratio, reduced unemployment from 23% in 1986 to 9.6% in first quarter 2008, and reduced inflation to under 3%, although it had risen to 4.7% as of May 2008. The fundamental challenges remaining for Spain include decreasing unemployment further, reforming labor laws lowering inflation, and raising per capita GDP. Following peak growth years in the late 1980s, the Spanish economy entered into recession in mid-1992. The economy recovered during the first Aznar administration (1996-2000), driven by a return of consumer confidence and increased private consumption, although growth has slowed in recent years.

Unemployment remains a problem at 8.47% (2007, first quarter), but this still represents a significant improvement from previous levels. Devaluations of the peseta during the 1990s made Spanish exports more competitive, but the strength of the euro since its adoption has raised recent concerns that Spanish exports are being priced out of the range of foreign buyers.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

After the return of democracy following the death of General Franco in 1975, Spain's foreign policy priorities were to break out of the diplomatic isolation of the Franco years and expand diplomatic relations, enter the European Community, and define security relations with the West.

As a member of NATO since 1982, Spain has established itself as a major participant in multilateral international security activities. Spain's EU membership represents an important part of its foreign policy. Even on many international issues beyond Western Europe, Spain prefers to coordinate its efforts with its EU partners through the European political cooperation mechanism.

With the normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel and Albania in 1986, Spain virtually completed the process of universalizing its diplomatic relations. The only country with which it now does not have diplomatic relations is North Korea.

Spain has maintained its special identification with Latin America. Its policy emphasizes the concept of Hispanidad, a mixture of linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural, and historical

ties binding Spanish-speaking America to Spain. Spain has been an effective example of transition from authoritarianism to democracy, as shown in the many trips that Spain's King and Prime Ministers have made to the region. Spain maintains economic and technical cooperation programs and cultural exchanges with Latin America, both bilaterally and within the EU.

Spain also continues to focus attention on North Africa, especially on Morocco. This concern is dictated by geographic proximity and long historical contacts, as well as by the two Spanish enclave cities of Ceuta and Melilla on the northern coast of Africa. While Spain's departure from its former colony of Western Sahara ended direct Spanish participation in Morocco, it maintains an interest in the peaceful resolution of the conflict brought about there by decolonization. These issues were highlighted by a crisis in 2002, when Spanish forces evicted a small contingent of Moroccans from a tiny islet off Morocco's coast following that nation's attempt to assert sovereignty over the island.

Meanwhile, Spain has gradually begun to broaden its contacts with Sub-Saharan Africa. It has a particular interest in its former colony of Equatorial Guinea, where it maintains a large aid program. In relations with the Arab world, Spain has sought to promote European-Mediterranean dialogue. Spain strongly supports the EU's "Barcelona Process" which seeks to expand dialogue and trade between Europe and the nations of North Africa and the Middle East, including Israel.

It is seen by some as too greatly favoring the European Union. Other proposals are on the table, including one put forward by French President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007. The latest meeting on the Barcelona initiative was held on November 29, 2005.

Spain has been successful in managing its relations with its two European neighbors, France and Portugal. The accession of Spain and Portugal to the EU has helped ease some of their periodic trade frictions by putting these into an EU context. Franco-Spanish bilateral cooperation is enhanced by joint action against Basque ETA terrorism. Ties with the United Kingdom are generally good, although the question of Gibraltar remains a sensitive issue.

U.S.-SPANISH RELATIONS

Spain and the United States have a long history of official relations and are closely associated in many fields. In addition to U.S. and Spanish cooperation in NATO, defense and security relations between the two countries are regulated by a 1989 Agreement on Defense Cooperation, revised in 2003. Under this agreement, Spain authorized the United States to use certain facilities at Spanish military installations.

The two countries also cooperate in several other important areas. Under a 1964 agreement (currently being renegotiated), the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Spanish National Institute of Aerospace Technology (INTA) jointly operate the Madrid Deep Space Communications Complex in support of Earth orbital and solar system exploration missions. The Madrid Complex is one of the three-largest tracking and data acquisition complexes comprising NASA's Deep Space Network. An agreement on cultural and educational cooperation was signed on June 7, 1989.

A new element, supported by both the public and private sectors, gives a different dimension to the programs carried out by the joint committee for cultural and educational cooperation. These joint committee activities complement the binational Fulbright program for graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and visiting professors, which became the largest in the world in 1989. Besides assisting in these exchange endeavors, the U.S. Embassy also conducts a program of official visits between Spain and the United States. Spain and the U.S. are strong allies in the fight against terrorism.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MADRID (E) C/ Serrano 75, APO/FPO PSC 61 Box, APO AE 09642, (34) 91-587-2200, Fax (34) 91-587-2303, INMARSAT Tel 8816-763-10973, Workweek: 09:00 to 18:00, Website: http://madrid.usembassy. gov.

DCM OMS:	Sharron Amis
AMB OMS:	Irene Buentello
DHS/CIS:	Vacant
DHS/ICE:	Luis Alvarez
ECO:	James Dudley
FCS:	Jim Wilson
FM:	James M. Wilt
HRO:	A.W. (Bill) Michael
MGT:	Gary Bagley
AMB:	Eduardo Aguirre, Jr.
CG:	Daniel Keller
DCM:	Hugo Llorens
PAO:	Josie Shumake
GSO:	Omar Bsaies
RSO:	John Young
AFSA:	Carl Schonander
AGR:	Stephen Hammond
CLO:	Katerina Marrano/Mimi Rhodes
DAO:	Capt. Kevin Little
DEA:	Joe Bond
EST:	C. Darren Perdue
FAA/CASLO:	Vacant
FMO:	R. Chance Sullivan
IMO:	Lorraine Morris
IPO:	Robert Hong
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck (Resident In Paris)
ISO:	William Jamerson
ISSO:	Robert Hong/William Jamerson
LEGATT:	Marc L. Varri
POL:	William Duncan

BARCELONA (CG) Reina Elisenda de Montcada 23, APO/FPO PSC 61, Box 5, APO AE 09642, 34 93 280 2227, Fax (34) (93) 205 5206, Workweek: Mon to Fri, 08:30–17:30, Website: http://barcelona.usconsulate.gov.

MGT:	David Mico
CG:	Todd D. Robinson
CON:	David Mico
CLO:	Embassy Madrid
IMO:	Embassy Madrid

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 15, 2008

Country Description: Spain and Andorra are both highly developed and stable democracies with modern economies. Spain is a member of NATO and the European Union.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required for both countries. U.S. citizens can stay without a visa for a tourist/business stay of up to 90 days. That period begins when you enter any of the Schengen countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. Individuals who enter Spain or Andorra without a visa are not authorized to work. American citizens planning to study in Spain should be aware that Spanish immigration regulations require applications for student visas to be submitted 60 days before anticipated travel to Spain.

Note: Although European Union regulations require that non-EU visitors obtain a stamp in their passport upon initial entry to a Schengen country, many borders are not staffed with officers carrying out this function. If an American citizen wishes to ensure that his or her entry is properly documented, it may be necessary to request a stamp at an official point of entry. Under local law, travelers without a stamp in their passport may be questioned and asked to document the length of their stay in Schengen countries at the time of departure or at any other point during their visit, and could face possible fines or other repercussions if unable to do so.

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parent(s) or legal guardian not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

For further information concerning entry requirements for Spain, travelers should contact the Embassy of Spain at 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone (202) 452-0100, or the nearest Spanish Consulate in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, or San Juan. Spanish government web sites with information about entry requirements (in Spanish) can be found at http://www.mae.es and http://www.mir.es. Additional information may be obtained from the Tourist Office of Spain in New York, telephone (212) 265-8822, or via the Internet at www.spain.info.

For further information on entry requirements to Andorra, travelers should contact the Andorran Mission to the UN, 2 U.N. Plaza, 25th floor, New York, NY 10018, telephone (212) 750-8064 or via the Internet at http://www.andorra.ad. Visit the Embassy of Spain and Andorra web sites for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Spain and Andorra share with the rest of the world an increased threat of international terrorist incidents. Like other countries in the Schengen area, Spain's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering and exiting the country with anonymity. Spain's proximity to North Africa makes it vulnerable to attack from Al Qaeda of the Maghreb terrorists. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

In the deadliest terrorist attack in recent European history, on March 11, 2004, Islamic extremists bombed four commuter trains entering Madrid, causing 191 deaths and over 1,400 injuries. Spanish authorities tried the suspected terrorists and their co-conspirators in February 2007 and convicted 21 in October 2007.

The Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorist organization remains active in Spain. ETA has historically avoided targeting foreigners, directing their attacks against the police, military, local politicians, and Spanish government targets as well as attempts to disrupt transportation and daily life. However, foreigners have been killed or injured collaterally in ETA attacks, as was the case with the Barajas Airport bombing in December 2006, in which two Ecuadorian nationals were killed. In addition, bombs have been used as part of criminal extortion of businesses, particularly in the Basque region. The risk of "being in the wrong place at the wrong time" in event of an ETA action is a concern for foreign visitors and tourists. U.S. tourists traveling to Spain should remain vigilant, exercise caution, monitor local developments, and avoid demonstrations and other potentially violent situations.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: has a moderate rate of crime and most of the estimated one million American tourists have trouble free visits to Spain each year, street crimes against tourists occur in the principal tourist areas. Madrid and Barcelona, in particular, report incidents of pickpocketing, mugging and occasional violent attacks, some of which require the victim to seek medical attention. Although crimes occur at all times of day and night and to people of all ages, older tourists and Asian Americans seem to be particularly at risk. Criminals frequent tourist areas and major attractions such as museums, monuments, restaurants, outdoor cafes, Internet cafes, hotel lobbies, beach resorts, city buses, subways, trains, train stations, airports, and ATMs.

In Madrid, incidents have been reported in all major tourist areas, including the area near the Prado Museum, near Atocha train station, in Retiro Park, in areas of old Madrid including near the Royal Palace and in Plaza Mayor. There has been an increase in the number of passport and bag thefts reported at Madrid's Barajas Airport, local hotels, as well as in El Rastro (Madrid's flea market) and in the Metro.

In Barcelona, the largest number of incidents reported also occurred in major tourist areas, on Las Ramblas, Barcelona's El Prat airport, Sants train station, Metro stations, in the Sagrada Familia Area, in the Gothic Quarter, in Parc Güell, in Plaza Real, and along Barcelona's beaches. There has been a rise in the number of thefts reported at the Port Olimpic Area and nearby beaches.

Travelers should remain alert to their personal security and exercise caution. Travelers are encouraged to carry limited cash, only one credit card, and a copy of their passport; leaving extra cash, extra credit cards, passports and personal documents in a safe location. When carrying documents, credit cards or cash, you are encouraged to secure them in a hard-to-reach place and not to carry all valuables together in a purse or backpack.

Thieves often work in teams of two or more people. In many cases, one person distracts a victim while the accomplices perform the robbery. For example, someone might wave a map in your face and ask for directions, "inadvertently" spill something on you, or help you clean-up bird droppings thrown on by a third unseen accomplice. While your attention is diverted, an accomplice makes off with the valuables. Thieves may drop coins or keys at your feet to distract you and try to take your belongings while you are trying to help. Attacks are sometimes initiated from behind, with the victim being grabbed around the neck and choked by one assailant while others rifle through or grab the belongings. A group of assailants may surround the victim in a crowded popular tourist area or on public transportation, and only after the group has departed does the person discover he/she has been robbed. Purse-snatchers may grab purses or wallets and run away, or immediately pass the stolen item to an accomplice. A passenger on a passing motorcycle sometimes robs pedestrians. There have been increasing reports of thieves posing as plainclothes police officers, beckoning to pedestrians from cars and sometimes confronting them on the street and asking for documents or to inspect their cash for counterfeit bills, which they ultimately "confiscate" as evidence. The U.S. Embassy in Madrid has received several reports of cars on limited access motorways being pulled over by supposed unmarked police cars. The Spanish police do not operate in this fashion. American citizens are encouraged to ask for a uniformed law enforcement officer if approached.

Theft from vehicles is also common. "Good Samaritan" scams are unfortunately common, where a passing car or helpful stranger will attempt to divert the driver's attention by indicating there is a flat tire or mechanical problem. When the driver stops to check the vehicle, the "Good Samaritan" will appear to help the driver and passengers while the accomplice steals from the unlocked car. Drivers should be cautious about accepting help from anyone other than a uniformed Spanish police officer or Civil Guard. Items high in value like luggage, cameras, laptop computers, or briefcases are often stolen from cars. Travelers are advised not to leave valuables in parked cars, and to keep doors locked, windows rolled up, and valuables out of sight when driving.

While the incidence of sexual assault is statistically very low, attacks do occur. Spanish authorities have warned of availability of so-called "date-rape" drugs and other drugs, including "GBH" and liquid ecstasy. Americans should not lower their personal security awareness because they are on vacation.

A number of American citizens have been victims of lottery or advance fee scams in which a person is lured to Spain to finalize a financial transaction. Often the victims are initially contacted via internet or fax and informed they have won the Spanish Lottery (El Gordo), inherited money from a distant relative, or are needed to assist in a major financial transaction from one country to another. For more information, please see the Bureau of Consular Affairs web site on International Financial Scams.

Andorra has a low rate of crime.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

The Embassy's U.S. Commercial Service has seen an upswing in a type of scam targeting U.S. businesses, utilizing the name of a legitimate Spanish concern and legitimate-appearing Spanish bank references. The scam usually involves a temptingly large order or business proposal. The U.S. Commercial Service in Spain at http://www.buyusa.gov/spain/en/ stands ready to counsel any U.S. firm which would like to verify the legitimacy of an unsolicited business proposal purporting to come from a Spanish firm.

Information for Victims of Crime:
The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, Consular Officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find

an attorney if needed. Consular staff are prepared to assist victims of crime in anyway they can.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is available in both Spain and Andorra. Regulations regarding medications may vary from those in the U.S.; Americans with need for specific medications are encouraged to bring a supply sufficient for their anticipated period of stay as the medication may not be available and customs regulations may prohibit certain medications to be mailed from the United States to Spain or Andorra. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance companies prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans may not cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. You should contact your insurance provider before departure so appropriate arrangements can be made. Many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of $50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties, whereas travelers who have purchased overseas medical insurance have found it to be life saving when a medical emergency has occurred. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or if you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc. gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Spain and Andorra is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Madrid and Barcelona is faster-paced than in U.S. cities and can be unnerving due to unfamiliar signs or motorbikes weaving between traffic lanes. Drivers should always obey the closest traffic light, as there are separate pedestrian lights in the city. Drivers should be alert when driving at night in urban areas, due to the possibility of encountering drivers or pedestrians under the influence of alcohol. Night driving in isolated rural areas can be dangerous, because of farm animals and poorly marked roads. Rural traffic is generally heavier in July and August as well as during the Christmas and Easter seasons.

Traffic regulations in effect in Spain include the prohibition on the use of a mobile phone without a hands-free device while driving a car. There is a fine of 300 euros for violation of this regulation and loss of driving privileges. In addition, all drivers and passengers are required to carry a reflective vest and put it on if they need to stop on the roadside. A reflective triangle warning sign for a vehicle stopped on the side of the road is also mandatory. Those renting vehicles are encouraged to check with the rental company about traffic regulations and safety equipment. U.S. citizens using U.S. issued drivers licenses must obtain International Driving Permits prior to their arrival if they plan to drive in Spain. Pedestrians should use designated crossing areas when crossing streets and obey traffic lights.

Public transportation in large cities is generally excellent. All major cities have metered taxis, and extra charges must be posted in the vehicle. Travelers are advised to use only clearly identified cabs and to ensure that taxi drivers always switch on the meter. A green light on the roof indicates that the taxi is available. Rail service is comfortable and reliable, but varies in quality and speed. Intercity buses are usually comfortable and inexpensive.

For specific information concerning Spanish driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Spanish National Tourist Organization offices in New York via the Internet at www.okspain.org. For information about driving in Andorra refer to the Andorran website at http://www.andorra.ad.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Spain's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Spain's air carrier operations.

As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Andorra, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not

assessed Andorra's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with ICAO aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Spain in Washington, DC or one of Spain's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Spain's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters, located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036, issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information, please call (212) 354-4480, or send an e-mail to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit www. uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences.

Persons violating Spain or Andorra's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Spain and Andorra are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

The cities of Madrid and Barcelona and The Balearics Regional Government have banned the consumption of alcohol in the street, other than in registered street cafes and bars. Visitors to Madrid, Barcelona, Mallorca, Ibiza, and Menorca should be aware that failure to respect this law might result in the imposition of fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Spain or Andorra are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site to obtain updated information on travel and security within Spain or Andorra.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Serrano 75; telephone (34) (91) 587-2200, and fax (34) (91) 587-2303. U.S. citizens who register in the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy, Consulate General, or one of the Consular Agencies listed below can obtain updated information on travel and security within Spain or Andorra. Additional information is available through the U.S. Embassy's home page at http://madrid.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Consulate in Barcelona is located at Paseo Reina Elisenda 23-25; telephone (34)(93) 280-2227 and fax (34)(93) 205-5206. Visitors to Barcelona can access additional information from the Consulate General's web page at http://madrid.usembassy.gov/barcelonaen.html.

There are six consular agencies in Spain, which provide limited services to American citizens, but are not authorized to issue passports. Anyone requesting service at one of the consular agencies should call ahead to verify that the service requested will be available on the day you expect to visit the agency.

Fuengirola (in Malaga Province), at Avenida Juan Gomez Juanito #8, Edificio Lucia 1C, Fuengirola 29640 Spain. Telephone (34)(952) 474-891 and fax (34)(952) 465-189. Hours 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

La Coruna, at Canton Grande 6, La Coruna 15003 Spain. Telephone (34) (981) 213-233 and fax (34)(981 22 28 08). Hours 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Las Palmas, at Edificio Arca, Calle Los Martinez de Escobar 3, Oficina 7, Las Palmas, Gran Canaria 35007 Spain. Telephone (34)(928) 222-552 and fax (34)(928) 225-863. Hours 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Palma de Mallorca, Edificio Reina Constanza, Porto Pi, 8, 9-D, 07015 Palma de Mallorca 07015 Spain. Telephone (34)(971) 40-3707 or 40-3905 and fax (34)(971) 40-3971. Hours 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Seville, at Plaza Nueva 8-8 duplicado, 2nd Floor, Office E-2 No.4, Sevilla, 41101 Spain. Telephone: (34)(65) 422-8751 and fax (34)(91) 422-0791. Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Valencia, at Doctor Romagosa #1, 2-J, 46002, Valencia 46002 Spain. Telephone (34)(96)-351-6973 and fax (34)(96) 352-9565. Hours 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. For Andorra, please contact the U.S. Consulate in Barcelona.

International Parental Child Abduction

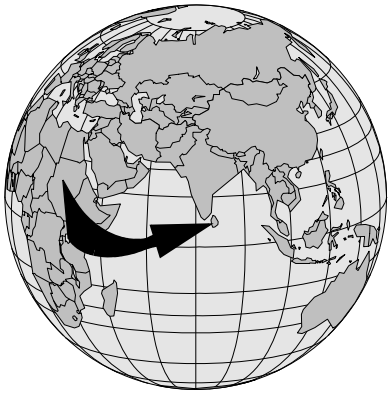
November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction came into force between the United States and Spain on July 1, 1988. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after July 1, 1988. Please Note: Do not wait to get a custody order to begin the application process. Submit your completed, signed, application as soon as possible.

For more information on The Hague Convention, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/child-abduction. For a list of contact names and addresses for Central Authorities, review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



SRI LANKA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 65,610 sq. km. (25,332 sq. mi.); about the size of West Virginia.

Cities: Capital—Colombo (pop. est. 1.3 million—urban area). Sri Jayewardenepura-Kotte is the officially designated capital and is the site of Parliament, but it is currently only an administrative center. Other cities—Kandy (150,000), Galle (110,000), Jaffna (100,000).

Terrain: Coastal plains in the northern third of country; hills and mountains in south-central Sri Lanka rise to more than 2,133 meters (7,000 ft.).

Climate: Tropical. Rainy seasons—light in northeast, fall and winter, with average rainfall of 50 in.; heavy in southwest, summer and fall, with average rainfall of 200 in.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Sri Lankan(s).

Population: 20.1 million.

Annual growth rate: 1.1%.

Ethnic groups: (2002) Sinhalese (74%), Tamils (18%), Muslims (7%), others (1%).

Religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity.

Languages: Sinhala and Tamil (official), English.

Education: Years compulsory—to age 14. Primary school attendance—96.5%. Literacy—91%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—14/1,000. Life expectancy—72 yrs. (male); 77 yrs. (female).

Work force: 7.04 million (excluding Northern and Eastern provinces).

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: February 4, 1948.

Constitution: August 31, 1978.

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Government branches: Executive—president, chief of state and head of government, elected for a 6-year term. Legislative—unicameral 225-member Parliament. Judicial—Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, subordinate courts.

Political subdivisions: Nine provinces and 25 administrative districts.

Political parties: Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, National Freedom Front, Jathika Hela Urumaya, Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Tamil National Alliance, United National Party, Tamileela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal, Sri Lankan Muslim Congress, National Unity Alliance, Ceylon Workers' Congress, Up-Country People's Front, several small Tamil and Muslim parties, Marxists, and others.

Economy (2007)

GDP: $32.3 billion.

Annual growth rate: 6.8%.

Natural resources: Limestone, graphite, mineral sands, gems, and phosphate.

Agriculture: (12% of GDP) Major products—rice, tea, rubber, coconut, and spices.

Services: (60% of GDP) Major types—tourism, wholesale and retail trade, transport, telecom, financial services.

Industry: (28% of GDP) Major types—garments and leather goods, rubber products, food processing, chemicals, refined petroleum, gems and jewelry, non-metallic mineral-based products, and construction.

Trade: Exports—$7.7 billion: garments, tea, rubber products, jewelry and gems, refined petroleum, and coconuts. Major markets—U.S. ($2.1 billion), U.K., India. Imports—$11.3 billion. Major suppliers—India, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Iran, Malaysia, Japan, U.K., U.A.E., Belgium, Indonesia, South Korea, U.S. ($227 million).

PEOPLE

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (formerly known as Ceylon) is an island in the Indian Ocean about 28 kilometers (18 mi.) off the southeastern coast of India with a

population of about 19 million. Density is highest in the southwest where Colombo, the country's main port and industrial center, is located. The net population growth is about 1.3%. Sri Lanka is ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse. Sinhalese make up 74% of the population and are concentrated in the densely populated southwest. Sri Lankan Tamils, citizens whose South Indian ancestors have lived on the island for centuries, total about 12%, live throughout the country, and predominate in the Northern Province.

Indian Tamils, a distinct ethnic group, represent about 5% of the population. The British brought them to Sri Lanka in the 19th century as tea and rubber plantation workers, and they remain concentrated in the "tea country" of south-central Sri Lanka. In accordance with a 1964 agreement with India, Sri Lanka granted citizenship to 230,000 "stateless" Indian Tamils in 1988. Under the pact, India granted citizenship to the remainder, some 200,000 of whom now live in India. Another 75,000 Indian Tamils, who themselves or whose parents once applied for Indian citizenship, chose to remain in Sri Lanka and have since been granted Sri Lankan citizenship.

Other minorities include Muslims (both Moors and Malays), at about 7% of the population; Burghers, who are descendants of European colonists, principally from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (U.K.); and aboriginal Veddahs. Most Sinhalese are Buddhist; most Tamils are Hindu. The majority of Sri Lanka's Muslims practice Sunni Islam. Sizable minorities of both Sinhalese and Tamils are Christians, most of whom are Roman Catholic. The 1978 constitution, while assuring freedom of religion, grants primacy to Buddhism.

Sinhala, an Indo-European language, is the native tongue of the Sinhalese. Tamils and most Muslims speak Tamil, part of the South Indian Dravidian linguistic group. Use of English has declined since independence, but it continues to be spoken by many in the middle and upper middle classes, particularly in Colombo. The government is seeking to reverse the decline in the use of English, mainly for economic but also for political reasons. Both Sinhala and Tamil are official languages.

HISTORY

The actual origins of the Sinhalese are shrouded in myth. Most believe they came to Sri Lanka from northern India during the 6th century BC. Buddhism arrived from the subcontinent 300 years later and spread rapidly. Buddhism and a sophisticated system of irrigation became the pillars of classical Sinhalese civilization (200 BC-1200 AD) that flourished in the north-central part of the island. Invasions from southern India, combined with internecine strife, pushed Sinhalese kingdoms southward.

The island's contact with the outside world began early. Roman sailors called the island Taprobane. Arab traders knew it as "Serendip," the root of the word "serendipity." Beginning in 1505, Portuguese traders, in search of cinnamon and other spices, seized the island's coastal areas and spread Catholicism. The Dutch supplanted the Portuguese in 1658. Although the British ejected the Dutch in 1796, Dutch law remains an important part of Sri Lankan jurisprudence. In 1815, the British defeated the king of Kandy, last of the native rulers, and created the Crown Colony of Ceylon. They established a plantation economy based on tea, rubber, and coconuts. In 1931, the British granted Ceylon limited self-rule and a universal franchise. Ceylon became independent on February 4, 1948.

Post-Independence Politics

Sri Lankan politics since independence have been strongly democratic. Two major parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), have generally alternated rule.

The UNP ruled first from 1948-56 under three Prime Ministers—D.S. Senanayake, his son Dudley, and Sir John Kotelawala. The SLFP ruled from 1956-65, with a short hiatus in 1960, first under S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and then, after his assassination in 1959, under his widow, Sirimavo, the world's first female chief executive in modern times. Dudley Senanayake and the UNP returned to power in 1965.

In 1970, Mrs. Bandaranaike again assumed the premiership. A year later, an insurrection by followers of the Maoist "Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna" (JVP, or "People's Liberation Front") broke out. The SLFP government suppressed the revolt and declared a state of emergency that lasted 6 years.

In 1972, Mrs. Bandaranaike's government introduced a new constitution, which changed the country's name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka, declared it a republic, made protection of Buddhism a constitutional principle, and created a weak president appointed by the prime minister. Its economic policies during this period were highly socialist and included the nationalization of large tea and rubber plantations and other private industries.

The UNP, under J.R. Jayewardene, returned to power in 1977. The Jayewardene government opened the economy and, in 1978, introduced a new constitution based on the French model, a key element of which was the creation of a strong executive presidency. J.R. Jayewardene was elected President by Parliament in 1978 and by nationwide election in 1982. In 1982, a national referendum extended the life of Parliament another 6 years.

The UNP's Ranasinghe Premadasa, Prime Minister in the Jayewardene government, narrowly defeated Mrs. Bandaranaike (SLFP) in the 1988 presidential elections. The UNP also won an absolute majority in the 1989 parliamentary elections. Mr. Premadasa was assassinated on May 1, 1993 by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam ("LTTE" or "Tigers"), and was replaced by then-Prime Minister Dingiri Banda Wijetunga, who

appointed Ranil Wickremesinghe Prime Minister. The SLFP, the main party in the People's Alliance (PA) coalition, returned to power in 1994 for the first time in 17 years. The PA won a plurality in the August 1994 parliamentary elections and formed a coalition government with Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga as Prime Minister. Prime Minister Kumaratunga later won the November 1994 presidential elections and appointed her mother (former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike) to replace her as Prime Minister. President Kumaratunga won re-election to another 6-year term in December 1999. In August 2000, Mrs. Bandaranaike resigned as Prime Minister for health reasons, and Ratnasiri Wickramanayaka was appointed to take her place. In December 2001, the UNP assumed power, led by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe. Chandrika Kumaratunga remained as President. In November of 2003, President Kumaratunga suddenly took control of three key ministries, triggering a serious cohabitation crisis.

In January 2004, the SLFP and the JVP formed a political grouping known as the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA). In February, President Kumaratunga dissolved Parliament and called for fresh elections. In these elections, which took place in April 2004, the UPFA received 45% of the vote, with the UNP receiving 37% of the vote. While it did not win enough seats to command a majority in Parliament, the UPFA was able to form a government and appoint a cabinet headed by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The JVP later broke with the SLFP and left the government, but has often supported it from outside.

Presidential elections were held in November 2005. Mahinda Rajapaksa became President, and Ratnasiri Wickramanayake became Prime Minister. The current government has a majority in the Parliament through a coalition with a number of small minority parties and the backing of 17 dissident UNP members.



Communal Crisis

Historical divisions continue to have an impact on Sri Lankan society and politics. From independence, the Tamil minority has been uneasy with the country's unitary form of government and apprehensive that the Sinhalese majority would abuse Tamil rights. Those fears were reinforced when S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike triumphed in the 1956 elections after appealing to Sinhalese nationalism. His declaration that Sinhala was the country's official language—an act felt by Tamils to be a denigration of their own tongue—was the first in a series of steps over the following decades that appeared discriminatory to Tamils. Tamils also protested government educational policies and agriculture programs that

encouraged Sinhalese farmers from the south to move to newly irrigated lands in the east. The decades following 1956 saw intermittent outbreaks of communal violence and growing radicalization among Tamil groups. By the mid-1970s Tamil politicians were moving from support for federalism to a demand for a separate Tamil state—"Tamil Eelam"—in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, areas of traditional Tamil settlement. In the 1977 elections, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) won all the seats in Tamil areas on a platform of separatism. Other groups—particularly the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers)—sought an independent state by force.

In 1983, the death of 13 Sinhalese soldiers at the hands of the LTTE unleashed the largest outburst of communal violence in the country's history. Hundreds of Tamils were killed in Colombo and elsewhere, tens of thousands were left homeless, and more than 100,000 fled to south India. The north and east became the scene of bloodshed as security forces attempted to suppress the LTTE and other militant groups. Terrorist incidents occurred in Colombo and other cities. Each side in the conflict accused the other of violating human rights. The conflict assumed an international dimension when the Sri Lankan Government accused India of supporting the Tamil insurgents.

In October 1997, the U.S. Government designated the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organization under provisions of the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 and has maintained this designation since then, most recently redesignating the group in October of 2003. The U.S. Government in November 2007 froze the U.S.-held assets of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation, a charitable organization associated with the LTTE.

Indian Peacekeeping

By mid-1987, India intervened in the conflict by air-dropping supplies to prevent what it felt was harsh treatment and starvation of the Tamil population in the Jaffna Peninsula caused by an economic blockade by Colombo. Under a July 29, 1987, accord (the Indo-Lanka Accord) signed by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene, the Sri Lankan Government made a number of concessions to Tamil demands, which included devolution of power to the provinces, merger—subject to later referendum—of the northern and eastern provinces, and official status for the Tamil language. India agreed to establish order in the north and east with an Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) and to cease assisting Tamil insurgents. Militant groups, although initially reluctant, agreed to surrender their arms to the IPKF.

Within weeks, however, the LTTE declared its intent to continue its armed struggle for an independent Tamil Eelam and refused to disarm. The IPKF found itself engaged in a bloody police action against the LTTE. Further complicating the return to peace was a burgeoning Sinhalese insurgency in the south. The JVP, relatively quiescent since the 1971 insurrection, began to reassert itself in 1987. Capitalizing on opposition to the Indo-Lankan Accord in the Sinhalese community, the JVP launched an intimidation campaign against supporters of the accord. Numerous UNP and other government supporters were assassinated. The government, relieved of its security burden by the IPKF in the north and east, intensified its efforts in the south. The JVP was crushed but at a high cost in human lives.

From April 1989 through June 1990, the government engaged in direct communications with the LTTE leadership. In the meantime, fighting between the LTTE and the IPKF escalated in the north. India withdrew the last of its forces from Sri Lanka in early 1990, and fighting between the LTTE and the government resumed. Both the LTTE and government forces committed serious human rights violations. In January 1995, the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE agreed to a cessation of hostilities as a preliminary step in a government-initiated plan for peace negotiations. After 3 months, however, the LTTE unilaterally resumed hostilities. The government then adopted a policy of military engagement with the Tigers, with government forces liberating Jaffna from LTTE control by mid-1996 and moving against LTTE positions in the northern part of the country called the Vanni. An LTTE counteroffensive begun in October 1999 reversed most government gains and by May 2000 threatened government forces in Jaffna. Heavy fighting continued into 2001.

Peace Process and Resumption of Conflict

In December 2001, with the election of a new UNP government, the LTTE and government declared unilateral cease-fires. In February 2002, the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) and LTTE signed a ceasefire agreement sponsored by peace process facilitator Norway. Peace talks began in Norway in December 2002. The Tigers dropped out of talks in February 2003, however, claiming they were being marginalized. In July 2004, the first suicide bomb since 2001 struck Colombo.

In March 2004, Eastern Tiger commander Karuna broke with the LTTE, going underground with his supporters. In March 2006, the Karuna faction registered a political party, the Tamil People's Liberation Tigers (TMVP). The LTTE and the Karuna faction have targeted each other in low-level attacks since that time. In late 2007, Sivanesethurai Chandrakanthan ("Pillaiyan") took over the leadership of the TMVP.

Over 30,000 Sri Lankans died in the December 2004 tsunami, and hundreds of thousands of others fled their homes. In June 2005, the GSL and LTTE reached an agreement to share $3 billion in international tsunami aid. However, the agreement was challenged in court and was never implemented. In August 2005, the LTTE assassinated Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, an ethnic Tamil. Parliament passed a state of emergency regulation that has been renewed every month since then.

During the November 2005 presidential election, the LTTE enforced a voting boycott in areas under its control. As a result, perceived hard-liner Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) Mahinda Rajapaksa won by a narrow margin. Low-level violence between the LTTE and security forces escalated. In December 2005, pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance MP Joseph Pararajasingham was assassinated within a GSL high security zone in the eastern town of Batticaloa.

In February 2006, exactly four years after the ceasefire agreement was signed, the GSL and LTTE renewed their commitment to the agreement at talks in Geneva. There was a lull in violence until April 2006, when an explosion rocked a Sinhalese market in Trincomalee, followed by limited Sinhalese backlash against Tamils. Several days later, an LTTE suicide bomber attacked the main army compound in Colombo, killing eight soldiers and seriously wounding Army Commander General Fonseka. The government retaliated with air strikes on Tiger targets. In June 2006, an LTTE suicide bomber succeeded in killing Army third-in-command General Kulatunga in a suburb of Colombo.

The European Union banned the LTTE as a terrorist organization on May 30, 2006. In June 2006, GSL and LTTE delegations flew to Oslo to discuss the future of the Scandinavian-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM). The Tigers refused to sit for talks with the GSL and instead demanded the SLMM remove any monitors from EU-member nations.

Heavy fighting in August 2006, the worst since the 2002 ceasefire, killed hundreds of people and caused tens of thousands to flee their homes when the Tamil Tiger rebels clashed with government forces in the north and east. In September 2006, the government carried out the first major seizure of enemy territory by either side since the 2002 ceasefire when it drove Tamil Tiger rebels from the entrance of the strategic Trincomalee harbor.

In October 2006, the LTTE attacked a Navy bus convoy at a transit point in Habarana, killing 90 sailors, and a few days later, attacked the Sri Lankan Navy Headquarters in Galle, a major tourist destination in the far south. Peace talks in Geneva at the end of October ended with no progress. The LTTE attempted to assassinate the Defense Secretary by bombing his motorcade in December 2006, but he escaped unharmed. Government troops took control of the LTTE's eastern stronghold of Vakarai in January 2007, resulting in thousands more internally displaced persons. In March 2007, the Tamil Tiger rebels launched their first-ever air attack, which targeted the Katunayake Air Force base adjacent to Bandaranaike International Airport. By July 2007, however, the government had recaptured the remaining territory held in the Eastern Province from the Tigers. In November 2007, a Sri Lankan Air Force bomb killed LTTE political chief and number two leader, S.P. Tamilchelvan. Also during that month, the LTTE detonated a bomb in a busy Colombo shopping center, killing 17 and wounding many more.

In January 2008, the government announced that it was unilaterally abrogating the 2002 ceasefire agreement. Government forces stepped up their campaign to assert control over the northern areas still led by the LTTE. The LTTE resisted government advances into the north and carried out attacks on economic and civilian targets in the south.

In May 2008, elections were held for the first time to fill the newly created Eastern Provincial Council covering the Ampara, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee districts. Although opposition parties alleged widespread vote-rigging, the government's United People's Freedom Alliance in a coalition with the TMVP secured the majority in the new Provincial Council, and TMVP leader Sivanesethurai Chandrakanthan ("Pillaiyan") was sworn in by President Rajapaksa as Chief Minister.

GOVERNMENT

Under the 1978 constitution, the president of the republic, directly elected for a 6-year term, is chief of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the armed forces. Responsible to Parliament for the exercise of duties under the constitution and laws, the president may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of Parliament with the concurrence of the Supreme Court.

The president appoints and heads a cabinet of ministers responsible to Parliament. The president's deputy is the prime minister, who leads the ruling party in Parliament. A parliamentary no-confidence vote requires dissolution of the cabinet and the appointment of a new one by the president.

Parliament is a unicameral 225-member legislature elected by universal suffrage and proportional representation to a 6-year term. The president may summon, suspend, or end a legislative session and dissolve Parliament. Parliament reserves the power to make all laws.

Sri Lanka's judiciary consists of a Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court, and a number of subordinate courts. Sri Lanka's legal system reflects diverse cultural influences. Criminal law is fundamentally British. Basic civil law is Roman-Dutch. Laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, and inheritance are communal.

Under the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of July 1987 and the 13th amendment to the constitution, the Government of Sri Lanka agreed to devolve significant authority to the provinces. Provincial Councils are directly elected for 5-year terms. The leader of the council majority serves as the province's chief minister; a provincial governor is appointed by the president. The councils possess limited powers in education, health, rural development, social services, agriculture, security, and local taxation. Many of these powers are shared or subject to central government oversight. As a result, the Provincial Councils have

never functioned effectively. Devolution proposals under consideration as a means of finding a political solution to the ethnic conflict foresee a strengthening of the Provincial Councils, with greater autonomy from central control. Predating the accord are municipal, urban, and rural councils with limited powers.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Mahinda RAJAPAKSA**
Prime Min.: **Ratnasiri WICKREMANAYAKE**
Min. of Agricultural Development & Agrarian Services Development: **Maithripala SIRISENA**
Min. of Child Development & Women's Empowerment: **Sumedha JAYASENA**
Min. of Community Development & Social Inequity Eradication: **P. CHANDRASEKARAN**
Min. of Constitutional Affairs & National Integration: **D. E. W. GUNASEKARA**
Min. of Construction & Engineering Services: **Rajitha SENARATNE**
Min. of Cultural Affairs: **Mahinda Yapa ABEYWARDENA**
Min. of Defense: **Mahinda RAJAPAKSA**
Min. of Disaster Management & Human Rights: **Mahinda SAMARASINGHE**
Min. of Education: **Susil PREMAJAYANTHA**
Min. of Enterprise Development & Investment Promotion: **Sarath AMUNUGAMA**
Min. of Environment: **Champika RANAWAKA**
Min. of Export Development & International Trade: **G. L. PEIRIS**
Min. of Finance & Planning: **Mahinda RAJAPAKSA**
Min. of Fisheries & Aquatic Resources: **Felix PERERA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Rohitha BOGOLLAGAMA**
Min. of Foreign Employment Promotion & Welfare: **Kehelilya RAMBUKWELLA**
Min. of Heath Care & Nutrition: **Nimal Siripala DE SILVA**
Min. of Higher Education: **Wisva WARNAPALA**
Min. of Highways & Road Development: **Jeyaraj FERNANDOPULLE**
Min. of Housing & Common Amenities: **Ferial ASHRAFF**
Min. of Indigenous Medicine: **Tissa KARALLIYADDE**
Min. of Industrial Development: **Kumara WELGAMA**
Min. of Internal Admin.: **Ratnasiri WICKREMANAYAKE**
Min. of Irrigation & Water Management: **Chamal RAJAPAKSA**
Min. of Justice: **Amarasiri DODANGODA**
Min. of Labor Relations & Manpower: **Athauda SENAVIRATNE**
Min. of Land & Land Development: **Jeewan KUMARATUNGE**
Min. of Livestock Development: **R. M. C. B. RATNAYAKE**
Min. of Local Govt. & Provincial Councils: **Janaka Bandara TENNEKOON**
Min. of Mass Media & Information: **Anura Priyadharshana YAPA**
Min. of National Herritage: **Anura BANDARANAIKE**
Min. of Parliamentary Affairs: **M. H. MOHAMED**
Min. of Petroleum & Petroleum Resources Development: **A. H. M. FOWZIE**
Min. of Plan & Implementation: **P. DAYARATNE**
Min. of Plantation Industries: **D. M. JAYARATNE**
Min. of Ports & Aviation: **Chamal RAJAPAKSA**
Min. of Posts & Telecommunications: **Rauff HAKEEM**
Min. of Power & Energy: **John SENAVIRATNE**
Min. of Public Admin. & Home Affairs: **Karu JAYASURIYA**
Min. of Public Estate Management & Development: **Milroy FERNANDO**
Min. of Resettlement & Disaster Relief Service: **Abdul Risath BATHIYUTHEEN**
Min. of Rural Industries & Self-Employment Promotion: **R. M. S. B. NAVINNA**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Tissa WITARANA**
Min. of Social Services & Social Welfare: **Douglas DEVANANDA**
Min. of Special Projects: **Mahinda WIJESEKERA**
Min. of Sports & Public Relations: **Gamini LOKUGE**
Min. of Supplementary Crops Development: **Dharmadasa BANDA**
Min. of Tourism: **Milinda MORAGODA**
Min. of Trade, Marketing Development, Cooperatives, & Consumer Affairs: **Bandula GUNAWARDENA**
Min. of Transport: **Dullas ALAHAPPERUMA**
Min. of Urban Development & Sacred Area Development: **Dinesh GUNAWARDENA**
Min. of Vocational & Technical Training: **Piyasena GAMAGE**
Min. of Water Supply & Drainage: **A. L. M. ATHAULLAH**
Min. of Youth Affairs: **Pavithra WANNIARACHCHI**
Min. of Youth Empowerment & Socioeconomic Development: **Arumugam THONDAMAN**
Governor, Central Bank: **Ajith Nivard CABRAAL**
Ambassador to the US: **Bernard GOONETILLEKE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Prasad KARIYAWASAM**

Sri Lanka maintains an embassy in the United States at 2148 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-483-4025).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Sri Lanka's two major political parties—the UNP and the SLFP—embrace democratic values, international nonalignment, and encouragement of Sinhalese culture. Past differences between the two on foreign and economic policy have narrowed. The SLFP, however, envisions a broader role for the state in general.

Sri Lanka has a multi-party democracy that enjoys considerable stability despite relatively high levels of political violence. LTTE violence is largely confined to the Northern and Eastern provinces, which are 6 to 8 hours by road from the capital. Economic targets included the airport in July 2001, the Colombo World Trade Center in October 1997, and the central bank in January 1996. In January 1998, the LTTE detonated a truck bomb in Kandy, damaging the Temple of the Tooth relic, the holiest Buddhist shrine in the country. After a lull following the 2002 ceasefire, LTTE-perpetrated terrorist bombings directed against politicians and civilian targets have become more common in Colombo, Kandy, and elsewhere in the country. LTTE terrorist activities have generally been aimed at destabilizing Sri Lanka politically, economically, and socially. LTTE attacks on key political figures include the attempted assassinations of Social Affairs Minister Douglas Devananda in November 2007 and of Secretary of Defense Gothabaya Rajapaksa in December 2006, the assassination of Army General Kula-

tunga in June 2006, the attempted assassination of Army Commander General Fonseka in April 2006, the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in August 2005, the killing of the Industrial Development Minister by suicide bombing in June 2000, and the December 1999 attempted assassination of President Kumaratunga. The LTTE is also suspected of being behind the assassinations of two government ministers in early 2008.

ECONOMY

Sri Lanka is a lower-middle income developing nation with a gross domestic product of about $32 billion. This translates into a per capita income of $1,600. Sri Lanka's 91% literacy rate in local languages, and life expectancy of 72 years rank well above those of India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. English language ability is relatively high but has declined significantly since the 1970s.

Sri Lanka's income inequality is severe, with striking differences between rural and urban areas. About 15% of the country's population of 20.1 million remains impoverished. Civil conflict, falling agricultural labor productivity, lack of income-earning opportunities for the rural population, high inflation and poor infrastructure outside the Western Province are impediments to poverty reduction.

In 1978, Sri Lanka shifted away from a socialist orientation and opened its economy to foreign investment. But the pace of reform has been uneven. A period of aggressive economic reform under the UNP-led government that ruled from 2002 to 2004 was followed by a more statist approach under former President Chandrika Kumaratunga and current President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Despite a brutal civil war since 1983, economic growth has averaged around 4.5%. In 2001, however, GDP growth was negative 1.4%—the only contraction since independence. Growth recovered to 4.0% in 2002. Following the 2002 ceasefire and subsequent economic reforms, the economy grew more rapidly, recording growth rates of 6.0% in 2003 and 5.4% in 2004. The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami killed 32,000 people, displaced 443,000, and caused an estimated $1 billion in damage. The tsunami's overall economic impact was less severe than originally feared, with the economy growing by 6% in 2005 as the damage was offset by the reconstruction effort. The economic situation in Sri Lanka is stable, but hampered by the resumption of hostilities between the government and the LTTE, escalating oil prices, and high inflation and interest rates. GDP grew by 6.8% in 2007, down from 7.7% growth in 2006. Sri Lanka's key exports such as garments and tea performed well. Remittances from foreign workers, estimated at $2.5 billion, also helped the economy.

President Rajapaksa's broad economic strategy was outlined in his election manifesto "Mahinda Chintana" (Mahinda's Thoughts), which now guides government economic policy. Mahinda Chintana policies focus on poverty alleviation and steering investment to disadvantaged areas; developing the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector; promotion of agriculture; and expanding the already enormous civil service. The Rajapaksa government rejects the privatization of state enterprises, including "strategic" enterprises such as state-owned banks, airports, and electrical utilities. Instead, it plans to retain ownership and management of these enterprises and make them profitable.

The future of Sri Lanka's economic health primarily depends on political stability, return to peace, and continued policy reforms—particularly in the area of fiscal discipline and budget management. Rising oil costs and the 24-year conflict have contributed to Sri Lanka's high public debt load (86% of GDP in 2007). Sri Lanka needs economic growth rates of 7-8% and investment levels of about 30% of GDP for a sustainable reduction in unemployment and poverty. In the past 10 years, investment levels have averaged around 25% of GDP. Sri Lanka depends on a continued strong global economy for investment and for expansion of its export base. The government plans an ambitious infrastructure development program to boost growth. It hopes to diversify export products and destinations to make use of the Indo-Lanka and Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreements, GSP Plus treatment by the European Union and other regional and bilateral preferential trading agreements.

The service sector is the largest component of GDP at around 60%. In 2007, the service sector continued its strong expansion, fueled primarily by strong growth in telecom, trading, transport, and financial services. Public administration and defense expenditures increased in 2007 due to resumption of hostilities, expansion of public sector employment, and the expenses associated with maintaining a 106-minister cabinet. There also is a growing information technology sector, especially information technology training and software development. The tourism sector has been impeded by the volatile security situation.

Industry accounts for 28% of GDP. Manufacturing is the largest industrial subsector, accounting for 18% of GDP. The construction sector accounts for 6% of GDP. Mining and quarrying account for 2% of GDP. Electricity, gas and water account for 2% of GDP. Within the manufacturing sector, food, beverage, and tobacco is the largest subsector in terms of value addition, accounting for 46%. Textiles, apparel, and leather is the second-largest sector with 24% of value addition. The third-largest sector in value added terms is chemical, petroleum, rubber, and plastic products.

Agriculture has lost its relative importance to the Sri Lankan economy in recent decades. It employs 31% of the working population, but accounts for only about 12% of GDP. Rice, the staple cereal, is cultivated extensively.

The plantation sector consists of tea, rubber, and coconut; in recent years, the tea crop has made significant contributions to export earnings.

Trade and Foreign Assistance

Sri Lanka's exports (mainly apparel, tea, rubber, gems and jewelry) are estimated at $7.7 billion and imports (mainly oil, textiles, food, and machinery) were estimated at $11.3 billion for 2007. The resulting large trade deficit was financed primarily by remittances from Sri Lankan expatriate workers, foreign assistance, and commercial borrowing. Sri Lanka must diversify its exports beyond garments and tea. Garment exports face increased competition since the 2005 expiration of the worldwide Multifiber Arrangement. Sri Lanka's exports to the European Union (EU) increased sharply in 2006-2007 due to duty-free entry of goods under the EU GSP Plus program, granted in 2005 to help Sri Lanka rebuild after the 2004 tsunami. The GSP Plus program expires at the end of 2008 and its renewal is uncertain. The tea industry is challenged by a shortage of plantation labor and by growing competition.

Exports to the United States, Sri Lanka's most important single-country market, were estimated to be around $2.1 billion for 2007, or 27% of total exports. As a result of the GSP Plus program, the EU as a whole is Sri Lanka's biggest export market. For many years, the United States has been Sri Lanka's biggest market for garments, taking almost 50% of total garment exports. India is Sri Lanka's largest supplier, accounting for 21% of imports valued at over $2.6 billion. United States exports to Sri Lanka were estimated to be around $230 million for 2007, consisting primarily of wheat, electrical apparatus, textiles and specialized fabrics, medical and scientific equipment, plastics, and paper.

Sri Lanka is highly dependent on foreign assistance, with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Japan, and other donors disbursing loans totaling $1.4 billion in 2007. Iran is becoming the largest provider of foreign assistance. During the Iranian President's visit in April 2008, Iran committed $450 million for the Uma Oya multipurpose irrigation project. Iran is also a major lender to Sri Lanka and has provided infrastructure project loans and an interest-free credit facility for oil imports. Under this facility, Sri Lanka has imported substantial amount of oil (valued at $700 million as of June 30, 2008). Iran promised assistance for modernization of Sri Lanka's only oil refinery, though no firm commitments are in place. China has also become a major lender for infrastructure projects, such as a new port and a coal power plant. Foreign grants amounted to $275 million in 2007. While implementation of aid projects has been spotty over the years, the government is trying to improve this record by streamlining tender processes and increasing project management skills.

Labor

The unemployment rate has declined in recent years to about 6.3% in 2007. The rate of unemployment among women and high school and college graduates, however, has been proportionally higher than the rate for less-educated workers. The government has embarked on educational reforms it hopes will lead to better preparation of students and better matches between graduates and jobs.

Approximately 20% of the 7.04 million-strong work force is unionized, but union membership is declining. There are more than 1,650 registered trade unions, many of which have 50 or fewer members, and 19 federations. Many unions have political affiliations. The Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) and Lanka Jathika estate workers union are the two largest unions, representing workers in plantation sector. The president of the CWC also is Minister of Youth Empowerment and Socio Economic Development. Other strong and influential trade unions include the Ceylon Mercantile Union, Sri Lanka Nidhahas Sevaka Sangamaya, Jathika Sevaka Sangayama, Ceylon Federation of Trade Unions, Ceylon Bank Employees Union, Union of Post and Telecommunication Officers, Conference of Public Sector Independent Trade Unions, and the JVP-aligned Inter-Company Trade Union.

Public sector trade unions have recently resisted government moves to restructure the state-owned electrical utility board and the petroleum company.

There are 1.5 million Sri Lankan citizens working abroad. A majority are women working as housemaids. Remittances from migrant workers, estimated at around $2.5 billion in 2007, are an important source of foreign exchange for Sri Lanka, second only to earnings from apparel exports.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Sri Lanka traditionally follows a nonaligned foreign policy but has been seeking closer relations with the United States since December 2001. It participates in multilateral diplomacy, particularly at the United Nations, where it seeks to promote sovereignty, independence, and development in the developing world. Sri Lanka was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It also is a member of the Commonwealth, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, and the Colombo Plan. Sri Lanka continues its active participation in the NAM, while also stressing the importance it places on regionalism by playing a strong role in SAARC.

U.S.-SRI LANKAN RELATIONS

The United States enjoys cordial relations with Sri Lanka that are based, in large part, on shared democratic traditions. U.S. policy toward Sri Lanka is characterized by respect for its independence, sovereignty, and moderate nonaligned foreign policy; support for the country's unity, terri-

torial integrity, and democratic institutions; and encouragement of its social and economic development. The United States is a strong supporter of ethnic reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

U.S. assistance has totaled more than $1.63 billion since Sri Lanka's independence in 1948. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), it has contributed to Sri Lanka's economic growth with projects designed to reduce unemployment, improve housing, develop the Colombo Stock Exchange, modernize the judicial system, and improve competitiveness. At the June 2003 Tokyo Donors' Conference on Sri Lanka, the United States pledged $54 million, including $40.4 million of USAID funding. Following the 2004 tsunami, the United States is providing $135 million in relief and reconstruction assistance.

In addition, the International Broadcast Bureau (IBB)—formerly Voice of America (VOA)—operates a radio-transmitting station in Sri Lanka. The U.S. Armed Forces maintain a limited military-to-military relationship with the Sri Lanka defense establishment.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Amanda T. Prytherch
ECO:	Robert R. Gabor
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CON:	Christopher R. Green
DCM:	James R. Moore
PAO:	Terry J. White
COM:	Kami A. Witmer
GSO:	Yoshino E. Rosenstein
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 30, 2008

Country Description: Sri Lanka is a presidential parliamentary democracy with a developing economy. Civil war and terrorism have seriously disrupted the country since 1983. On January 16, 2008, the government formally withdrew from the Ceasefire Agreement they signed with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2002. Despite the armed insurgency, Sri Lanka's beaches, hill country, and archeological sites continue to attract thousands of visitors each year from around the world. The Asian Tsunami on December 26, 2004 caused severe damage and loss of life to several coastal areas of eastern, southern, and southwestern Sri Lanka. Most affected resorts have completely recovered. The capital city of Colombo, the Cultural Triangle (Kandy, Anuradhapura, and Polonnaruwa), and many southern beach towns have good tourist facilities.

Entry Requirements: A passport and onward/return ticket and proof of sufficient funds are required. A no-cost landing visa, valid for 30 days, will be granted only to tourists at the time of entry into Sri Lanka. Business travelers are required to have a visa prior to arrival. Individuals traveling to Sri Lanka for purposes other than tourism (i.e. religious work, volunteering or working) must obtain an entry visa from the nearest Sri Lankan Embassy or Consulate before their arrival in Sri Lanka. Foreigners entering Sri Lanka on a landing/tourist visa cannot convert their visa to a non-tourist one, and risk deportation if they engage in activities other than tourism without the appropriate visa. Visitors staying more than 30 days for any purpose must obtain a visa extension from the Department of Immigration and Emigration in Colombo and pay the relevant visa fees. Travelers need yellow fever and cholera immunizations if they are arriving from an infected area. Sri Lankan law requires all foreign guests in private households to register in person at the nearest local police station. Individuals who stay in private households without registering may be temporarily detained for questioning. This requirement does not apply to individuals staying in hotels or guesthouses.

Specific inquiries should be addressed to the Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2148 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 483-4025, fax numbers (202) 232-7181, e-mail address:consular@slembassyusa.org, the Sri Lankan Consulate General in Los Angeles at 3250 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1405, Los Angeles, CA 90010, telephone (213) 387-0210, or the U.N. Mission in New York City, telephone (212) 986-7040. There are several honorary Sri Lankan consuls general and consuls in the United States. They can be located at the Sri Lankan Embassy web site. Visit the Embassy of Sri Lanka web site at http://www.slembassyusa.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The Department of State urges American citizens to carefully evaluate the risks of travel to Sri Lanka and specifically warns Americans against travel to the Northern Province and most of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. All of the Northern Province remains dangerous. In Anuradhapura District of the North Central Province, the areas north of Medawachchiya, the A14 road, and the road from Medawachchiya and Horowupatna are dangerous. Non-official travel by U.S. Government personnel to the Eastern Province, other than the A6 road corridor and Trincomalee Town in Trincomalee District, and areas in Ampara District south of the A4 road and west of Maha Oya is prohibited. Official travel by U.S. Government

personnel in the North and East is restricted. While the government has effectively controlled the eastern part of the country since July 2007, security in much of the province is not yet assured. Some LTTE members and larger numbers of armed paramilitary members remain active in the area, leading to instability and incidents of violence. Americans are particularly warned against travel to LTTE-controlled areas in the north, where ongoing conflict between government and LTTE forces poses severe hazards. Roads are substandard and areas recently affected by the conflict may contain both marked and unmarked mine fields, making travel there very dangerous. Police, medical and other emergency help is severely limited or unavailable. Communications within the eastern areas are also limited, with limited cell phone accessibility and very limited landline telephone access. The U.S. Embassy may not be able to provide consular services in a timely manner to American citizens who travel to the North and East. Americans should consider their personal security foremost before considering traveling or working in northern or eastern Sri Lanka.

Since fighting resumed in mid-2006, more than 5,000 persons have been killed. Since 1997, the State Department has included the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on its list of foreign terrorist organizations. Terrorist activities such as suicide bombings and targeted assassinations in the capital city of Colombo and other areas of the country remain a serious threat. The LTTE and other groups have targeted Sri Lankan security forces, government officials, and civilians. With military operations against the LTTE in northern Sri Lanka escalating, the U.S. Embassy expects that retaliation by the LTTE in the form of assassinations and bombings in the Colombo area and other parts of the country will continue and likely increase.

Throughout its history, the LTTE have engaged in numerous terrorist acts, including suicide bombings at political rallies, government buildings, major economic targets, and military installations. Although there is no indication that American citizens were targeted in these attacks, and none were injured, there is a heightened risk of American citizens being victims of violence by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. On October 28, 2008, an LTTE fixed-wing aircraft attack damaged the main power plant in Colombo. On October 6, 2008, 28 civilians were killed and 80 injured in a suspected suicide attack at the opening of a political party office in Anurdhapura. Sri Lanka's International Airport briefly curtailed operations following an April 2007 attack by LTTE aircraft against the adjacent Katunayake Air Force Base. Also in April, LTTE aircraft also attacked two oil facilities in the Colombo area. LTTE activity has also taken place in the vicinity of Colombo's harbor and port. In February 2007, Sri Lankan forces reported sinking LTTE boats as they attempted to enter Colombo.

LTTE have targeted civilians, in addition to military personnel and government officials. On June 6, 2008, an anti-personnel mine aimed at a passenger bus in Colombo killed 22 civilians and injured 70 others. The same day, another anti-personnel mine that detonated in a passenger bus in Kandy killed 2 civilians. On May 31, 2008, a grenade attack on a bus stop in Wellawatta killed two people and wounded 10. On May 26, a train bombing in Dehiwala killed nine civilians and injured 84. On February 3, 2008, a suicide attacker detonated an explosive device inside Colombo's main railway station, killing 14 civilians and wounding approximately 100 others. The same day, seven were injured when a grenade was detonated in the Dehiwala Zoo. On February 2, 2008, a bomb on a bus going from Kandy to Anuradhapura exploded in Dambulla, killing 20 civilians and injuring over 50. On January 16, 2008, a terrorist attack against civilians traveling on a bus in Uva Province killed at least 24 people, including many women and children, and more than 60 people were injured. In November 2007, a bomb exploded in a clothing store at Nugegoda Junction, a busy suburb of Colombo, killing at least 17 and injuring more than 30 civilians. In light of attacks against civilian buses and trains, American citizens are strongly cautioned against traveling by bus or train in Sri Lanka. U.S. Government personnel are currently prohibited from using these modes of transportation.

The Department of State strongly advises American tourists to avoid military bases and vehicles and VIP security convoys. On January 8, 2008 a fragmentation mine explosion fatally wounded a government minister in the vicinity of Ja-Ela, on the main road between Colombo and Sri Lanka's International Airport. The blast claimed two lives and injured more than 10 security personnel and civilians. In December 2006, the LTTE attacked the motorcade of Defense Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa in downtown Colombo. In April 2006, a female suicide bomber attacked the Commander of the Sri Lankan Army at army headquarters in Colombo, killing several members of his staff. Americans are also strongly advised to avoid political rallies and other mass gatherings, and to limit their exposure to government buildings if possible.

Non-Sri Lankan citizens of Tamil heritage have occasionally been detained during security operations. U.S. citizens of any ethnic heritage are encouraged to keep their passports with them at all times. In the event of a terrorist attack, Americans should monitor local radio and television, seek cover away from windows, and return to their homes or hotels when it is safe to do so. In the event of LTTE air attacks, Americans are advised to remain in their homes or hotels away from windows during air attacks to avoid falling shrapnel or bullets. If traveling, individuals should find a safe location inside a building as soon as possible. The Government of Sri Lanka has periodically imposed curfews in Colombo; Americans should strictly observe curfew regulations and monitor local radio and television. As security forces increase their vigilance, travelers in Colombo are often the subject of searches by the police. U.S. citizens should expect frequent delays in

travel due to the deteriorating security situation in Sri Lanka. American citizens should comply with instructions from the security forces. Americans are strongly advised against taking photographs of Sri Lankan military bases, foreign missions in Sri Lanka and government buildings, which could be a violation of the law under current security restrictions in the country.

Tourists should be aware that the LTTE has the capability to operate in several national parks in the North and East of Sri Lanka, including parks that remain open to the public. In October 2007, the LTTE attacked a Sri Lankan army camp in Yala National Wildlife Sanctuary, located in southeastern Sri Lanka, killing six soldiers and wounding three others. The incident took place in a tourist area of the wildlife park, but foreigners were not the object of the attack and none were injured. However, the incident highlights the prevailing risk to non-combatants of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While Sri Lanka has a high crime rate, relatively few incidents have been directed against the American community residing in Colombo. Most of the violent crimes occur within the local community, although violent crime directed at foreigners is not unheard of. Routine petty crime, especially theft of personal property and pick pocketing, is not uncommon if the traveler does not take appropriate safeguards. Street hustlers or "touts" are common around hotels, shopping centers and tourist sites. Incidents of credit card fraud are increasing, and travelers should consider paying in cash, whenever possible, and should carefully review billing statements to ensure that purchases displayed on the statements are accurate. Brawls in nightclubs and bars are not uncommon and sometimes involve foreigners.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. American citizens, who are victims of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist with finding appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can provide information on the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Sri Lanka is:119 for the police (answered 24 hours); 112 if dialed from a cell phone.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities outside Colombo are limited. The U.S. Embassy maintains a list of private physicians who may be consulted. Medical supplies are uneven; travelers should carry any special medications with them. There are six large hospitals in the Colombo area, including three with emergency trauma service— Asiri Hospital, Apollo Hospital, and the government-run General Hospital. Serious medical problems may require evacuation to the United States or to the nearest country where adequate medical facilities or treatment is available, usually Thailand or Singapore. Neither Thailand nor Singapore requires American citizens to have an entry visa.

Several mosquito-borne diseases, including chikungunya, dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis and malaria, are present in Sri Lanka. Adequate mosquito protection is strongly advised. Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of Sri Lanka. Although there are no specific entry barriers relating specifically to HIV/AIDS, Sri Lankan law does allow for immigration officers to refer travelers to a physician for examination if s/he judges them to pose a public health risk. In practice this is a rare occurrence, but travelers should be aware that Sri Lankan law allows for the denial of entry to any foreigner whom a physician, upon referral from an immigration officer, certifies as medically undesirable. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Sri Lanka at www.slembassyusa.org before you travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Sri Lanka is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Vehicular traffic moves on the left (British style). Traffic in Colombo is very congested. Narrow two-lane

highways, overloaded trucks, dangerously-driven buses and a variety of conveyances on the road, ranging from ox carts and bicycles to new four-wheel-drive jeeps, make driving a challenge and dangerous. Unexpected road blocks and one-way streets are common and may not be clearly marked.

Many visitors hire cars and drivers for long trips through the country. Individuals choosing to hire three-wheeled vehicles should negotiate prices beforehand to avoid confrontations. Please refer to our Road Safety page for more information. Visit the web site of Sri Lanka's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.lanka.net.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Sri Lanka, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Sri Lanka's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Sri Lanka recognizes dual nationality in some cases. For further information, please contact the Sri Lankan Embassy in Washington DC, the Consulate General in Los Angeles, or the U.N. Mission in New York City.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Sri Lanka's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Sri Lanka are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Sri Lanka are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Sri Lanka. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Colombo. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in located at 210 Galle Road, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka. The Embassy's telephone number during normal business hours Monday through Friday is (94) (11) 249 8500. The after-hours and emergency telephone number is (94) (11) 249 8888. The Consular Section fax number is (94)-(11)-249 8590. The Embassy's Internet address is http://colombo.usembassy.gov. The Consular Section has a specific email address dedicated to American Citizens Services at ColomboACS@state.gov. The general email address for the consular section is consularcolombo@state.gov. The Embassy in Colombo also covers the Republic of Maldives.

Intercountry Adoption

March 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International sAdoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Important Notes: The Commissioner of Probation and Child Care Services in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital, has advised the U.S. Embassy that foreign nationals residing in Sri Lanka are not permitted to adopt Sri Lankan children. In addition, foreign citizens may not adopt children under three months old. U.S. citizens interested in adopting from Sri Lanka are strongly encouraged to contact U.S. consular officials in Sri Lanka before formalizing an adoption agreement to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed that will make it possible for the Embassy to issue a U.S. immigrant visa for the child.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Sri Lanka is:

Department of Probation and Child Care Services

LHP Building, 2nd floor

150/8 Nawala Rd.

Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Telephone No. 94-11-285-3575 or 94-11-2853553

Fax No. 94-11-2852393

Website: usembassy.colombo.gov; email address: consularcolombo@state.gov

The Department's hours of operation are from 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m.

Every application for adoption must be in conformity with the provisions of the Adoption of Children's Ordinance (Chapter 61), as amended. The Sri Lankan Department of Probation and Child Care Services may, as needed, amend the adoption procedures.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Under Sri Lankan law, adoption by single persons is not permitted. An application for adoption must be made jointly by a husband and wife. Each of the applicants must be over the age of 25 years and not less than 21 years older than the child for whom the application is made. Both husband and wife must be present during the court proceedings unless the court waives personal appearances on the grounds of ill health (supported by a medical practitioner recognized by the U.S. Government). In such cases, a power of attorney will also be necessary.

Residency Requirements: As was noted earlier in this flyer, the Commissioner of Probation and Child Care Services has advised the U.S. Embassy in Colombo that foreign nationals residing in Sri Lanka are not permitted to adopt Sri Lankan children.

Time Frame: The process for adopting a child from Sri Lanka is lengthy. Under Sri Lankan procedures, an application from foreign prospective adoptive parents to adopt a Sri Lankan child must be registered with the Sri Lankan government for at least one year before a child may be matched with that family. This is even before the actual court process or any required travel by the prospective parents to Sri Lanka. Prospective adoptive parents should be prepared to stay for a period of about four weeks for the court procedures to be finalized. Once the child has received a U.S. immigrant visa, the family should be able to depart the country the following day.

Fees: Prospective adoptive parents should abstain from making any payment or giving any reward to any person in consideration of the adoption except such as the Court may sanction. Legal action would be taken against those who commit this offense. The fee a lawyer would charge for an adoption case is approximately about $500 and the court fees will be only $1 (Rs. 100/-).

The lawyers' fees could vary from lawyer to lawyer and the court does not have any control over this.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Foreign prospective adoptive parents are not allowed, on their own, to locate children for adoption. Only the Sri Lankan State Receiving Homes and Voluntary Children's Homes that have been registered with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services for over five years may perform this function. These Homes (also referred to in this flyer as Sri Lankan adoption agencies) must also have specific authorization of the Commissioner of Probation.

Adoption Procedures: The District Court of Colombo and the District Court of Colombo South are empowered to make orders of adoption of Sri Lankan children by persons not resident and domiciled in Sri Lanka.

Foreigners who do not reside in Sri Lanka should note and follow the procedures below in order to pursue the adoption of a Sri Lankan child.

- Have a home study conducted in the United States.
- Collect other required documents.
- Send in the application. The application should be in the form of a letter, in duplicate, addressed to the Commissioner of Probation and Child Care Services.
- File I-600A Petition with U.S. Immigration.
- Wait for the "Letter of Allocation" from the Sri Lankan Adoption Agency.
- Make Arrangements to Travel.
- Immediately upon arrival in Sri Lanka, prospective adoptive parents should contact the U.S. Embassy in Colombo to ensure that everything is in order for the processing of an immigrant visa and to obtain additional information on adoption procedures.
- Contact the Social Worker. The Commissioner of Probation & Child Care Services will have assigned a social worker to the case.
- Visit the Child. After the interview, the prospective parents will be issued a letter from the Commissioner authorizing them to see the child at the specified children's home.
- Prospective adoptive parents must engage a Sri Lankan attorney for the legal proceedings. The U.S. Embassy in Colombo has a list of Sri Lankan attorneys who have indicated a willingness to assist U.S. citizens in Sri Lankan legal cases. This list may be found at: http:\\colombo.usembassy.gov. The attorney will petition for the adoption. If all is in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations, the court issues an order of adoption.
- Obtain the Certificate of Adoption.
- Obtain a Sri Lankan Passport for the Adopted Child.
- Apply for and Obtain a U.S. Immigrant Visa for the Child.
- Submit Post-Placement Reports.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of Sri Lanka
2148 Wyoming Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: 202-483-4026 to 28
Fax: 202-232-7181
Email address: slembassy@clark.net

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
210, Galle Road
Colombo 03, Sri Lanka
Tel: 94-1-448007
Fax: 94-1-437345, 436943
Home page:
http://www.usia.gov/posts/sri-lanka
or
www.travel.state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions regarding adoption in Sri Lanka may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Colombo. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747 with specific questions.

Travel Warning

December 22, 2008

The Department of State warns American citizens traveling to or living in Sri Lanka about the continuing danger of terrorist attacks throughout the country. This replaces the Travel Warning for Sri Lanka dated June 13, 2008 and highlights changes in locations of security concerns, and notes recent terrorist attacks.

The Department of State urges American citizens to evaluate carefully the risks of travel to Sri Lanka and specifically warns Americans against travel to the Northern Province and most of the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. All of the Northern Province remains dangerous. In Anuradhapura District of the North Central Province, the areas north of Medawachchiya, the A14 road, and the road from Medawachchiya and Horowupatna are dangerous. Non-official travel by U.S. Government personnel to the Eastern Province, other than the A6 road corridor and Trincomalee Town in Trincomalee District, and areas in Ampara District south of the A4 road and west of Maha Oya, is prohibited. Since early January 2008, fighting between the Sri Lankan military, paramilitary groups and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has increased, and bomb explosions in densely populated areas have killed dozens of civilians, including in some areas frequented by foreign tourists. Although there is no specific indication that American citizens or institutions have been targeted, there is a heightened risk of American citizens becoming victims of violence just by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. American citizens who decide to travel to Sri Lanka despite this Travel Warning should be aware of their personal surroundings and follow prudent security practices. Americans should avoid large crowds and public gatherings and should particularly avoid political rallies, military bases, and government and military vehicle convoys, which are frequent targets of LTTE attacks. Americans are also strongly advised against using public transportation in Sri Lanka, as civilian buses and trains have increasingly been the targets of terrorist bomb attacks in recent months. U.S. Government personnel are currently prohibited from using these modes of transportation.

Recent incidents include an October 28, 2008 LTTE aircraft attack that damaged the main power plant in Colombo, and a suicide bombing on October 6, 2008 that killed 28 civilians and injured 80 at the opening of a political party office in Anuradhapura.

On June 6, 2008, 22 civilians were killed and 70 injured by an anti-personnel mine aimed at a passenger bus in Colombo. The same day, two people were killed by another anti-personnel mine detonated in a passenger bus in Kandy. On May 31, 2008, a grenade attack on a bus stop in Wellawatta killed two people and wounded 10. On May 26, nine civilians were killed and 84 injured in a train bombing in Dehiwala. On February 3, 2008, 14 civilians were killed and approximately 100 were injured when a suicide attacker detonated an explosive device inside the main railway station in Colombo. The same day, seven were injured when a grenade was detonated at the Dehiwala Zoo in Colombo. On February 2, 2008, a bomb on a bus from Kandy, headed for Anuradhapura, exploded in Dambulla and killed 18 civilians and injured over 50.

Americans are also advised to avoid government buildings, military installations, and government vehicle convoys. On January 8, 2008, a government minister was killed and several persons were injured when his vehicle was attacked on the road between Colombo's international airport and central Colombo. In 2007, the LTTE also attacked an Army camp in Yala National Sanctuary, and the Katunayake Air Force Base in Colombo was attacked by LTTE aircraft, causing brief suspension of operations at the adjacent Bandaranaike International Airport. Foreign tourists were not specifically targeted in these attacks and none were injured.

While the government has effectively controlled the eastern part of the country since July 2007, security in much of the Eastern Province is not yet assured. Some LTTE members and larger numbers of armed paramilitary members are active in the area, leading to instability and incidents of violence. This situation is likely to continue for some time. Americans are particularly warned against travel to LTTE-controlled areas in the north, which may pose severe hazards.

Americans should comply with all instructions from security forces and police when traveling in Sri Lanka. American citizens, including those of Sri Lankan origin, whether living in Sri Lanka or traveling there even for only a few days, are strongly urged to register with the Embassy. Registration will allow the embassy to provide direct information on the security situation as necessary. Registration is done on-line and can be done in advance of travel at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs. Information on registering can also be found at the Embassy website: http://srilanka.usembassy.gov or at the Department of State's Consular

Affairs website: http://travel.state.gov/travel. The U.S. Embassy is located at 210 Galle Road, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka. The Embassy's telephone number during normal business hours Monday through Friday is (94) (11) 249 8500. The after-hours emergency telephone number is (94) (11) 249 8888. The Consular Section fax number is (94) (11)-249 8590. The Embassy's web site is http://srilanka.usembassy.gov. The Consular Section has a specific email address dedicated to American Citizens Services at ColomboACS@state.gov. The general email address for the consular section is consularcolombo@state.gov. The Embassy in Colombo also covers the Republic of Maldives.

As the Department continues to develop information on any potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through its consular information documents, including the Worldwide Caution, available on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. In addition to information on the Internet, travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or, outside the U.S. and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



SUDAN

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of the Sudan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 2.5 million sq. km. (967,500 sq. mi.); the largest country in Africa and almost the size of continental U.S. east of the Mississippi River.

Cities: Capital—Khartoum (pop. 1.4 million). Other cities—Omdurman (2.1 million), Port Sudan (pop. 450,000), Kassala, Kosti, Juba (capital of southern region).

Land boundaries: Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, and Uganda.

Terrain: Generally flat with mountains in east and west. Khartoum is situated at the confluence of the Blue and White Nile Rivers. The southern regions are inundated during the annual floods of the Nile River system (the Suud or swamps).

Climate: Desert and savanna in the north and central regions and tropical in the south.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective (sing. and pl.)—Sudanese.

Population: (2007 est.) 39.4 million; 30%-33% urban.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.1%.

Ethnic groups: Arab/Muslim north and black African/Christian and animist south.

Religions: Islam (official), indigenous beliefs (southern Sudan), Christianity.

Languages: Arabic (official), English, tribal languages.

Education: Years compulsory—8. Attendance—35%-40%. Literacy—61%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—92/1,000. Life expectancy—49.1 yrs.

Work force: Agriculture—80%; industry and commerce—7%; government—13%.

Government

Independence: January 1, 1956.

Type: Provisional Government established by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in January 2005 that provides for power sharing pending national elections. National elections are to occur no later than July 2009.

Constitution: The Interim National Constitution was adopted on July 6, 2005. It was drafted by the National Constitutional Review Commission, as mandated by the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The Government of Southern Sudan also has a constitution adopted in December 2005; it was certified by the Ministry of Justice to be in conformance with the Interim National Constitution and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Government branches: Executive—executive authority is held by the president, who also is the prime minister, head of state, head of government, and commander in chief of the armed forces. Effective July 9, 2005, the executive branch includes a first vice president and a vice president. As stipulated by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the first vice president position is held by a person selected by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) who concurrently serves as President of the GOSS. Legislative—National Legislature. The National Assembly, the lower house, has 450 members with a power-sharing formula which allows the ruling National Congress Party 52% of seats, the SPLM 28%, and other Northern and Southern parties, 14% and 6% respectively. There is also an upper house, the Council of States, which is composed of two appointed representatives from each of the nation's 26 states, including two observers from Abyei. Judicial—High Court, Minister of Justice, Attorney General, civil and special tribunals.

Political subdivisions: Twenty-six states, each with a governor appointed by the president, along with a state cabinet and a state legislative assembly.

Political parties: Currently there are several political parties in both the nation's north and south. All political parties were banned following the June 30, 1989 military coup.

Political associations, which take the place of parties, were authorized in 2000. Some parties are in self-imposed exile.
Budget: (2007 est.) $9.7 billion.
Defense: (2004 est.) 40% of GNP.

Economy

GDP: (2007, PPP) $107.86 billion.
GDP annual growth rate: (2007) 12.8%.
Per capita income: GDP: (2007) $2,500.
Avg. annual inflation rate: (2007) 5.3%.
Natural resources: Modest reserves of oil, natural gas, gold, iron ore, copper, and other industrial metals.
Agriculture: Products—cotton, peanuts, sorghum, sesame seeds, gum arabic, sugarcane, millet, livestock.
Industry: Types—motor vehicle assembly, cement, cotton, edible oils and sugar refining.
Trade: (2007 est.) Exports—$9.156 billion: crude oil and petroleum products, cotton, gold, sorghum, peanuts, gum arabic, sugar, meat, hides, live animals, and sesame seeds. Major markets—Egypt, Persian Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, China, South Korea. Imports (2007 est.)—$8.262 billion: oil and petroleum products, oil pipeline, pumping and refining equipment, chemical products and equipment, wheat and wheat flour, transport equipment, foodstuffs, tea, agricultural inputs and machinery, industrial inputs and manufactured goods. Major suppliers—European Union, China, Malaysia, Canada, U.K., Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Persian Gulf states, and surrounding East African nations.
Fiscal year: January 1-December 31.

PEOPLE

Sudan's population is one of the most diverse on the African continent. There are two distinct major cultures—"Arab" and black African—with hundreds of ethnic and tribal subdivisions and language groups, which make effective collaboration among them a major political challenge. The northern states cover most of the Sudan and include most of the urban centers. Most of the 22 million Sudanese who live in this region are Arabic-speaking Muslims, though the majority also uses a non-Arabic mother tongue—e.g., Nubian, Beja, Fur, Nuban, Ingessana, etc. Among these are several distinct tribal groups: the Kababish of northern Kordofan, a camel-raising people; the Ja'alin and Shaigiyya groups of settled tribes along the rivers; the seminomadic Baggara of Kordofan and Darfur; the Hamitic Beja in the Red Sea area and Nubians of the northern Nile areas, some of whom have been resettled on the Atbara River; and the Nuba of southern Kordofan and Fur in the western reaches of the country.

The southern region has a population of around 6 million and a predominantly rural, subsistence economy. Except for a ten-year hiatus, Southern Sudan has been embroiled in conflict since Sudan's independence in 1956, resulting in major destruction and displacement since independence. More than 2 million people died over the course of the war, and more than 4 million are internally displaced or became refugees as a result of the civil war and war-related impacts. The Southern Sudanese practice mainly indigenous traditional beliefs, although Christian missionaries have converted some. The South also contains many tribal groups and many more languages than are used in the North. The Dinka—whose population is estimated at more than 1 million—is the largest of the many black African tribes of the Sudan. Along with the Shilluk and the Nuer, they are among the Nilotic tribes. The Azande, Bor, and Jo Luo are "Sudanic" tribes in the west, and the Acholi and Lotuhu live in the extreme south, extending into Uganda.

In 2007, Sudan's population reached an estimated 39 million. With the establishment of the National Population Census Council, a population census began in April 2008 in preparation for national elections in 2009. The population of metropolitan Khartoum (including Khartoum, Omdurman, and North Khartoum) is growing rapidly and ranges from 6-7 million, including around 2 million internally displaced persons from the former southern war zone as well as western and eastern regions affected by drought, conflict, and marginalization. In Darfur, there are an estimated 2.4 million internally displaced persons, another 250,000 refugees in 12 camps in neighboring Chad, and an additional 5,000-7,000 in the border area.

HISTORY

Sudan was a collection of small, independent kingdoms and principalities from the beginning of the Christian era until 1820-21, when Egypt conquered and unified the northern portion of the country. However, neither the Egyptian nor the Mahdist state (1883-1898) had any effective control of the southern region outside of a few garrisons. Southern Sudan remained an area of fragmented tribes, subject to frequent attacks by slave raiders. In 1881, a religious leader named Muhammad ibn Abdalla proclaimed himself the Mahdi, or the "expected one," and began a religious crusade to unify the tribes in western and central Sudan. His followers took on the name "Ansars" (the followers) which they continue to use today and are associated with the single largest political grouping, the Umma Party, led by a descendant of the Mahdi, Sadiq al Mahdi. Taking advantage of dissatisfaction resulting from Ottoman-Egyptian exploitation and maladministration, the Mahdi led a nationalist revolt culminating in the fall of Khartoum in 1885. The Mahdi died shortly thereafter, but his state survived until overwhelmed by an invading Anglo-Egyptian force under Lord Kitchener in 1898. While nominally administered jointly by Egypt and Britain, Britain exercised control, formulated policies, and supplied most of the top administrators.

Independence

In February 1953, the United Kingdom and Egypt concluded an agreement providing for Sudanese self-government and self-determination. The transitional period toward independence began with the inauguration of the first parliament in 1954. With the consent of the British and Egyptian Governments, Sudan achieved independence on January 1, 1956, under a provisional constitution. This constitution was silent on two crucial issues for southern leaders—the secular or Islamic character of the state and its federal or unitary structure. However, the Arab-led Khartoum government reneged on promises to southerners to create a federal system, which led to a mutiny by southern army officers that launched 17 years of civil war (1955-72).

Sudan has been at war with itself for more than three quarters of its existence. Since independence, protracted conflict rooted in deep cultural and religious differences retarded Sudan's economic and political development and forced massive internal displacement of its people. Northerners, who have traditionally controlled the country, have sought to unify it along the lines of Arabism and Islam despite the opposition of non-Muslims, southerners, and marginalized peoples in the west and east. The resultant civil strife affected Sudan's neighbors, as they alternately sheltered fleeing refugees or served as operating bases for rebel movements.

In 1958, General Ibrahim Abboud seized power and pursued a policy of Arabization and Islamicization in the south that strengthened southern opposition. General Abboud was overthrown in 1964 and a civilian caretaker government assumed control. Southern leaders eventually divided into two factions, those who advocated a federal solution and those who argued for self-determination, a euphemism for secession since it was assumed the south would vote for independence if given the choice. Until 1969, there was a succession of governments that proved unable either to agree on a permanent constitution or to cope with problems of factionalism, economic stagnation, and ethnic dissidence. These regimes were dominated by "Arab" Muslims who asserted their Arab-Islamic agenda and refused any kind of self-determination for southern Sudan.

In May 1969, a group of communist and socialist officers led by Colonel Gaafar Muhammad Nimeiri, seized power. A month after coming to power, Nimeiri proclaimed socialism (instead of Islamism) for the country and outlined a policy of granting autonomy to the south. Nimeiri in turn was the target of a coup attempt by communist members of the government. It failed and Nimeiri ordered a massive purge of communists. This alienated the Soviet Union, which withdrew its support. Already lacking support from the Muslim parties he had chased from power, Nimeiri could no longer count on the communist faction. Having alienated the right and the left, Nimeiri turned to the south as a way of expanding his limited powerbase. He pursued peace initiatives with Sudan's hostile neighbors, Ethiopia and Uganda, signing agreements that committed each signatory to withdraw support for the other's rebel movements. He then initiated negotiations with the southern rebels and signed an agreement in Addis Ababa in 1972 that granted a measure of autonomy to the south. Southern support helped him put down two coup attempts, one initiated by officers from the western regions of Darfur and Kordofan who wanted for their region the same privileges granted to the south.

However, the Addis Ababa Agreement had no support from either the secularist or Islamic northern parties. Nimeiri concluded that their lack of support was more threatening to his regime than lack of support from the south so he announced a policy of national reconciliation with all the religious opposition forces. These parties did not feel bound to observe an agreement they perceived as an obstacle to furthering an Islamist state. The scales against the peace agreement were tipped in 1979 when Chevron discovered oil in the south. Northern pressure built to abrogate those provisions of the peace treaty granting financial autonomy to the south. Ultimately in 1983, Nimeiri abolished the southern region, declared Arabic the official language of the south (instead of English) and transferred control of southern armed forces to the central government. This was effectively a unilateral abrogation of the 1972 peace treaty. The second Sudan civil war effectively began in January 1983 when southern soldiers mutinied rather than follow orders transferring them to the north. In September 1983, as part of an Islamicization campaign, President Nimeiri announced that traditional Islamic punishments drawn from Shari'a (Islamic Law) would be incorporated into the penal code. This was controversial even among Muslim groups. Amputations for theft and public lashings for alcohol possession became common. Southerners and other non-Muslims living in the north were also subjected to these punishments. In April 1985, while out of the country, Nimeiri was overthrown by a popular uprising in Khartoum provoked by a collapsing economy, the war in the south, and political repression. Gen. Suwar al-Dahab headed the transitional government. One of its first acts was to suspend the 1983 constitution and disband Nimeiri's Sudan Socialist Union.

Elections were held in April 1986, and a civilian government took over after the April 1986 elections. There were tentative moves towards negotiating peace with the South. However, any proposal to exempt the South from Islamic law was unacceptable to those who supported Arabic supremacy. In 1989, an Islamic army faction, led by General Omar al-Bashir, mounted a coup and installed the National Islamic Front. The new government's commitment to the Islamic cause intensified the north-south conflict.

Meanwhile, the period of the 1990s saw a growing sense of alienation in the western and eastern regions of Sudan from the Arab center. The rulers in Khartoum were seen as less and less responsive to the concerns and grievances of both Muslim and



non-Muslim populations across the country. Alienation from the "Arab" center caused various groups to grow sympathetic to the southern rebels led by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), and in some cases, prompted them to flight alongside it.

The Bashir government combined internal political repression with international Islamist activism. It supported radical Islamist groups in Algeria and supported Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Khartoum was established as a base for militant Islamist groups: radical movements and terrorist organizations like Osama Bin Laden's al Qaida were provided a safe haven and logistical aid in return for financial support. In 1996, the U.N. imposed sanctions on Sudan for alleged connections to the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak. Its policy toward the South was to pursue the war against the rebels while trying to manipulate them by highlighting tribal divisions. Ultimately, this policy resulted in the rebels' uniting under the leadership of Colonel John Garang. During this period, the rebels also enjoyed support from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Uganda. The Bashir government's "Pan-Islamic" foreign policy, which provided support for neighboring radical Islamist groups, was partly responsible for this support for the rebels.

The 1990s saw a succession of regional efforts to broker an end to

the Sudanese civil war. Beginning in 1993, the leaders of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Kenya pursued a peace initiative for the Sudan under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), but results were mixed. Despite that record, the IGAD initiative promulgated the 1994 Declaration of Principles (DOP) that aimed to identify the essential elements necessary to a just and comprehensive peace settlement; i.e., the relationship between religion and the state, power sharing, wealth sharing, and the right of self-determination for the South. The Sudanese Government did not sign the DOP until 1997 after major battlefield losses to the SPLA. That year, the Khartoum government signed a series of agreements with rebel factions under the banner of "Peace from Within." These included the Khartoum, Nuba Mountains, and Fashoda Agreements that ended military conflict between the government and significant rebel factions. Many of those leaders then moved to Khartoum where they assumed marginal roles in the central government or collaborated with the government in military engagements against the SPLA. These three agreements paralleled the terms and conditions of the IGAD agreement, calling for a degree of autonomy for the South and the right of self-determination.

However, by mid-2001, prospects for peace in Sudan appeared fairly remote. A few days before the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the Bush Administration named former Senator John Danforth as its Presidential Envoy for Peace in the Sudan. His role was to explore the prospects that the U.S. could play a useful role in the search for a just end to the civil war, and enhance the delivery of humanitarian aid to reduce the suffering of the Sudanese people stemming from the effects of civil war. The terrorist attacks of September 11 dramatically impacted the bilateral relationship between the United States and the Khartoum government. (For "U.S.-Sudanese Relations," see below.)

End to the Civil War

In July 2002, the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A reached a historic agreement on the role of state and religion and the right of southern Sudan to self-determination. This agreement, known as the Machakos Protocol and named after the town in Kenya where the peace talks were held, concluded the first round of talks sponsored by the IGAD. The effort was mediated by retired Kenyan General Lazaro Sumbeiywo. Peace talks resumed and continued during 2003, with discussions regarding wealth sharing and three contested areas.

On November 19, 2004, the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A signed a declaration committing themselves to conclude a final comprehensive peace agreement by December 31, 2004, in the context of an extraordinary session of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in Nairobi, Kenya—only the fifth time the Council has met outside of New York since its founding. At this session, the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 1574, which welcomed the commitment of the government and the SPLM/A to achieve agreement by the end of 2004, and underscored the international community's intention to assist the Sudanese people and support implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement. It also demanded that the Government of Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) halt all violence in Darfur.

In keeping with their commitment to the UNSC, the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A initialed the final elements of the comprehensive agreement on December 31, 2004. The two parties formally signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on January 9, 2005. The U.S. and the international community have welcomed this decisive step forward for peace in Sudan.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Comprehensive Peace Agreement

The 2005 CPA established a new Government of National Unity (GNU) and the interim Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) and called for wealth-sharing, power-sharing, and security arrangements between the two parties. The historic agreement provides for a ceasefire, withdrawal of troops from southern Sudan, and the repatriation and resettlement of refugees. It also stipulates that by the end of the six-year interim period, during which the various provisions of the CPA are implemented, there will be elections at all levels, including for president, state governors, and national and state legislatures.

On July 9, 2005, the Presidency was inaugurated with al-Bashir sworn in as President and John Garang, SPLM leader, installed as First Vice President. Ratification of the Interim National Constitution followed. The Constitution declares Sudan to be a "democratic, decentralized, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual State." On July 30, 2005, the charismatic and revered SPLM leader John Garang died in a helicopter crash. The SPLM immediately named Salva Kiir, Garang' s deputy, as First Vice President. As stipulated in the CPA, Kiir now holds the posts of President of the Government of Southern Sudan and Commander-in-Chief of the SPLA.

Implemented provisions of the CPA include the formation of the National Legislature, appointment of Cabinet members, establishment of the Government of Southern Sudan and the signing of the Southern Sudan Constitution, and the appointment of state governors and adoption of state constitutions.

A number of CPA-mandated commissions have also been created. Thus

far, those formed include the Assessment and Evaluation Commission, National Petroleum Commission, Fiscal and Financial Allocation and Monitoring Commission, and the North-South Border Commission. The Ceasefire Political Commission, Joint Defense Board, and Ceasefire Joint Military Committee were also established as part of the security arrangements of the CPA. Some commissions remain outstanding.

With the establishment of the National Population Census Council, a population census began in April 2008 in preparation for national elections in 2009. The CPA mandates that the Government of Southern Sudan hold a referendum at the end of a six-year interim period in 2011, allowing southerners to secede if they so wish. On January 9, 2007, commemoration of the second anniversary of the CPA was held in Juba. During the ceremony, President Bashir and First Vice President Kiir exchanged forceful accusations concerning the delays in the implementation of the agreement. In his remarks, Salva Kiir described the achievement of the CPA as the most important achievement in modern Sudanese history and confirmed that there would be no retreat from the path of peace. While some progress has been achieved during the last two years, meaningful implementation of key CPA requirements has faltered, and relations between the National Congress Party (NCP) and SPLM were at an all-time low at the end of 2007. In October 2007, a lack of progress on issues such as north-south border demarcation, certain security provisions, and north-south sharing of oil revenues threatened to erode the CPA as the SPLM threatened a permanent withdrawal from the Government of National Unity. International attention maintains focus on the CPA as the mainstay of peace in Sudan in response to calls for reinvigorated CPA implementation. Implementation of the CPA is moving forward slowly, but the return to peace in Southern Sudan has brought political, civil, and economic dividends.

Darfur

In 2003, while the historic north-south conflict was on its way to resolution, increasing reports of attacks on civilians, especially aimed at non-Arab tribes, began to surface. A rebellion broke out in Darfur, in the extremely marginalized western Sudan, led by two rebel groups—the SLM/A and the JEM. These groups represented agrarian farmers who are mostly non-Arabized black African Muslims. In seeking to defeat the rebel movements, the Government of Sudan increased arms and support to local tribal and other militias, which have come to be known as the "Janjaweed." Their members were composed mostly of Arabized black African Muslims who herded cattle, camels, and other livestock. Attacks on the civilian population by the Janjaweed, often with the direct support of Government of Sudan forces, have led to the death of tens of thousands of persons in Darfur, with an estimated 2.0 million internally displaced persons and another 234,000 refugees in neighboring Chad.

On September 9, 2004, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "genocide has been committed in Darfur and that the Government of Sudan and the Janjaweed bear responsibility—and that genocide may still be occurring." President Bush echoed this in July 2005, when he stated that the situation in Darfur was "clearly genocide." A cease-fire between the parties was signed in N'Djamena, Chad, on April 8, 2004. However, despite the deployment of an African Union Military Mission to monitor implementation of the cease-fire and investigate violations, violence has continued. The SLM/A and JEM negotiated with the Government of Sudan under African Union auspices, resulting in additional protocols addressing the humanitarian and security aspects of the conflict on November 9, 2004. Like previous agreements, however, these were violated by both sides. Talks resumed in Abuja on June 10, 2005, resulting in a July 6 signing of a Declaration of Principles. Further talks were held in the fall and early winter of 2005 and covered power sharing, wealth sharing, and security arrangements. These negotiations were complicated by a split in SLM/A leadership.

The African Union, with the support of the UNSC, the U.S., and the rest of the international community, began deploying a larger monitoring and observer force in October 2004. The UNSC had passed three resolutions (1556, 1564, and 1574), all intended to move the Government of Sudan to rein in the Janjaweed, protect the civilian population and humanitarian participants, seek avenues toward a political settlement to the humanitarian and political crisis, and recognize the need for the rapid deployment of an expanded African Union mission in Darfur. The U.S. has been a leader in pressing for strong international action by the United Nations and its agencies.

A series of UNSC resolutions in late March 2005 underscored the concerns of the international community regarding Sudan's continuing conflicts. Resolution 1590 established the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) for an initial period of six months and decided that UNMIS would consist of up to 10,000 military personnel and up to 715 civilian police personnel. It requested UNMIS to coordinate with the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to foster peace in Darfur, support implementation of the CPA, facilitate the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons, provide humanitarian demining assistance, and protect human rights. The resolution also called on the Government of Sudan and rebel groups to resume the Abuja talks and support a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Darfur, including ensuring safe access for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Resolution 1591 criticized the Government of Sudan and rebels in Darfur for having failed to comply with several previous UNSC resolutions, for ceasefire violations, and for human rights abuses. The resolution also called on all parties to resume the Abuja talks and to support a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Darfur; it also forms a monitoring committee charged with enforcing a travel ban and asset freeze of those determined to impede

the peace process, or violate human rights. Additionally, the resolution demanded that the Government of Sudan cease conducting offensive military flights in and over the Darfur region. Finally, Resolution 1593 referred the situation in Darfur to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and called on the Government of Sudan and all other parties to the conflict in Darfur to cooperate with the ICC.

On May 5, 2006, under strong pressure from the African Union (AU) and the international community, the government and an SLM/A faction led by Minni Minawi signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in Abuja. Unfortunately, the conflict in Darfur intensified shortly thereafter, led by rebel groups who refused to sign. In late August government forces began a major offensive on rebel areas in Northern Darfur. On August 30, the Security Council adopted UNSCR 1706, authorizing the transition of AMIS to a larger more robust UN peacekeeping operation. To further facilitate an end to the conflict in Darfur, President Bush announced the appointment of Andrew S. Natsios as the Special Envoy for Sudan on September 19, 2006.

In an effort to resolve Sudan's opposition to a UN force, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and African Union Commission Chair Alpha Oumar Konare convened a meeting of key international officials and representatives of several African and Arab states in Addis Ababa on November 16, 2006. The agreement reached with the Government of Sudan provided for UN support to AMIS in three phases—light, heavy, and a joint AU/UN hybrid support operation. On November 30, the African Union Peace and Security Council also endorsed the Addis Ababa conclusions.

International efforts in 2007 focused on rallying support for DPA signatory and non-signatory rebel movements for renewed peace talks, and on finalizing plans for the joint AU/UN hybrid peacekeeping operation. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1769 on July 31, 2007, providing a Chapter 7 mandate and authorizing a peacekeeping force of up to 26,000 uniformed personnel to deploy to Darfur. The UN African Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) transitioned smoothly from AMIS on December 31, 2007. UNAMID is an unprecedented force—it is the first hybrid force in UN history and once fully deployed, it will be the largest peacekeeping force in UN history.

Following the passage of UNSCR 1769, a conference was held August 3-5 in Arusha, Tanzania between key UN and AU officials and delegates from Darfur rebel groups. Many movements' political and military leaderships were brought into the discussion in preparation for earnest peace talks. Peace talks between the Government of Sudan and rebel factions took place in Sirte, Libya on October 27, 2007; however, limited rebel participation and continuing disagreement about objectives and processes limited the effectiveness of these talks. Following, the Sirte talks, the SPLM hosted workshops in Juba, Southern Sudan to unite the rebel groups and allow them to come together to present a common front during negotiations. The Juba talks led to a combination of rebel factions from an estimated 27 groups to 5 groups. The U.S. continues to support the efforts of the UN and AU to host workshops for the rebel groups as a foundation for future negotiations.

On December 21, 2007, President Bush announced the appointment of Ambassador Richard S. Williamson as Special Envoy for Sudan following Andrew S. Natsios' resignation.

Humanitarian Situation

In 2008, Sudan continues to cope with the countrywide effects of conflict, displacement, and insecurity. During more than 20 years of conflict between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army, violence, famine, and disease killed more than 2 million people, forced an estimated 600,000 people to seek refuge in neighboring countries, and displaced approximately 4 million others within Sudan, creating the world's largest population of internally displaced people. Since the 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which officially ended the North-South conflict, the UN estimates that nearly 2 million displaced people have returned to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas of Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile, and Abyei.

The conflict in the western region of Darfur entered its fifth year in 2008, despite a 2006 peace agreement between the Government of National Unity and one faction of the Sudan Liberation Army. Fighting among armed opposition group factions, the Sudanese Armed Forces, and militias continues, displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians. The complex emergency in Darfur affects approximately 4.2 million people, including more than 2.4 million internally displaced people.

The U.S. Government is the leading international donor to Sudan and has contributed more than $4 billion in humanitarian, development, peacekeeping, and reconstruction assistance for the people in Sudan and eastern Chad since fiscal year (FY) 2004, including more than $1 billion in FY 2007 alone. The U.S. Mission in Sudan has declared disasters due to the complex emergency on an annual basis since 1987. On October 16, 2007, U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Alberto M. Fernandez renewed the Sudan disaster declaration for FY 2008. The U.S. Government continues to lead the international effort to support implementation of the CPA, while providing for the humanitarian needs of conflict-affected populations throughout the country. U.S. Government humanitarian assistance to Sudan includes food aid, provision of health care, water, sanitation, and hygiene, as well as programs for nutrition, agriculture, protection, and economic recovery.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Umar Hassan Ahmad al-BASHIR, Fd. Mar.**
First Vice Pres.: **Salva KIIR Mayardit**

Vice Pres.: **Ali Osman TAHA**
Senior Asst. to the Pres.: **Minni Arkou MINNAWI**
Asst. to the Pres.: **Nafie Ali NAFIE**
Min. of Agriculture & Forestry: **Zubeir Beshir TAHA**
Min. of Animal & Resources: **Mohamed Ahmed al-Tahir Abu KALABISH**
Min. of Cabinet Affairs: **PAGAN Amum Okiech**
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Sport: **Mohammed Yusuf ABDALLAH**
Min. of Defense: **Abdel Rahim Mohammed HUSSEIN**
Min. of Energy & Mining: **Al Zubayr Ahmad al HASAN**
Min. of Environment & Urban Development: **Ahmed Babkir NAHAR**
Min. of Federal Govt.: **Abdalrahman SAID, Lt. Gen. (Ret.)**
Min. of Finance & National Economy: **Awad Ahmed AL-JAZ**
Min. of Finance & Planning: **Zubeir Mohammed HASSAN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **DENG Alor Kuol**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **James KOK Rio**
Min. of Gen. Education: **Hamid Muhammad IBRAHIM**
Min. of Health: **Tabita SOKAYA**
Min. of Higher Education: **George BORENG Niyami**
Min. of Humanitarian Affairs: **Harun Ron LUAL**
Min. of Industry: **Jalal AL-DUGAIR**
Min. of Information & Communication: **Zahawi Ibrahim MALEK**
Min. of Interior: **Ibrahim Mahmoud HAMID**
Min. of Intl. Cooperation: **AL-TIJANI Saleh Hudeib**
Min. of Investment: **KOSTI Manibe**
Min. of Justice & Prosecutor Gen.: **Abdel Basit Saleh SABDARAT**
Min. of Labor & Human Resources: **Alison MANANI Magaya**
Min. of Parliamentary Affairs: **Josheph OKELO**
Min. of the Presidency: **BAKRI Hassan Saleh**
Min. of Religious Affairs & Waqf: **Azhari Al-Tigani Awad AL-SID**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Ibrahim Ahmed OMER**
Min. of Tourism: **Josef MALWAL**
Min. of Transportation: **Philip Thon LIK**
Min. of Water Resources: **Kamal Ali MOHAMMED**
Attorney Gen.: **Ali Mohamed Osman YASSIN**
Governor, Central Bank of Sudan: **Muhammad al-Hasan SABIR**
Charge d'Affaires to the US: **John UKEC Leuth**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem MOHAMAD**

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ECONOMY

Sudan's economy is booming on the back of increases in oil production, high oil prices, and large inflows of foreign direct investment. GDP growth registered more than 10% per year in 2006 and 2007. However, the Darfur conflict, the aftermath of two decades of civil war in the south, the lack of basic infrastructure in large areas, and a reliance by much of the population on subsistence agriculture ensure much of the population will remain at or below the poverty line for years despite rapid rises in average per capita income. The country continued taking some steps toward transitioning from a socialist to a market-based economy, although the government and governing party supporters remained heavily involved in the economy.

Sudan's primary resources are agricultural, but oil production and export have taken on greater importance since October 2000. Although the country is trying to diversify its cash crops, cotton, and gum arabic remain its major agricultural exports. Grain sorghum (dura) is the principal food crop, and millet and wheat are grown for domestic consumption. Sesame seeds and peanuts are cultivated for domestic consumption and increasingly for export. Livestock production has vast potential, and many animals, particularly camels and sheep, are exported to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries. However, Sudan remains a net importer of food. Problems of irrigation and transportation remain the greatest constraints to a more dynamic agricultural economy.

The country's transportation facilities are heavily concentrated in the North and consist of one 4,800-kilometer (2,748-miles), single-track railroad with a feeder line, supplemented by limited river steamers, Sudan Airways, and about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) of paved and gravel road—primarily in greater Khartoum, Port Sudan, and the North. Some north-south roads that serve the oil fields of central/south Sudan have been built; and a 1,400 kilometer. (840 miles) oil pipeline goes from the oil fields via the Nuba Mountains and Khartoum to the oil export terminal in Port Sudan on the Red Sea.

Sudan's limited industrial development consists of agricultural processing and various light industries located in Khartoum North. In recent years, the GIAD industrial complex introduced the assembly of small autos and trucks, and some heavy military equipment such as armored personnel carriers and the proposed "Bashir" main battle tank. Although Sudan is reputed to have great mineral resources, exploration has been quite limited, and the country's real potential is unknown. Small quantities of asbestos, chromium, and mica are exploited commercially.

Extensive petroleum exploration began in the mid-1970s and might cover all of Sudan's economic and energy needs. Significant finds were made in the Upper Nile region and commercial quantities of oil began to be exported in October 2000, reducing Sudan's outflow of foreign exchange for imported petroleum products. There are indications of significant potential reserves of oil and natural gas in Southern Sudan, the Kordofan region and the Red Sea province.

Sudan is seeking to expand its installed capacity of electrical generation of around 300 megawatts—of which 180 megawatts is hydroelectric and the rest, thermal. Considering the continuing U.S. economic, trade, and financial sanctions regime, European investors are the most likely providers of technology for this purpose. More than 70% of Sudan's hydropower comes from the Roseires

Dam on the Blue Nile grid. Various projects are proposed to expand hydropower, thermal generation, and other sources of energy, but so far the government has had difficulty arranging sufficient financing.

The Merowe dam project has received a boost from various Arab funds. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development donated $150 million, the Abu Dhabi Development Fund $100 million, the Kuwaiti Development Fund $150 million, and the Saudi Fund $150 million. The Sultanate of Oman may finance the dam power plant with $106 million. The Merowe dam, if built, would have a capacity of 1,250 megawatts. It would be built at the Nile's fourth cataract. Egypt has not voiced major objections on the issue of Nile water diversion, which Sudan's hydroelectric project would entail. The estimated total cost of the dam is $1.8 billion.

Historically, the U.S., the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) have supplied most of Sudan's economic assistance. Sudan's role as an economic link between Arab and African countries is reflected by the presence in Khartoum of the Arab Bank for African Development. The World Bank had been the largest source of development loans.

Sudan will require extraordinary levels of program assistance and debt relief to manage a foreign debt exceeding $21 billion, more than the country's entire annual gross domestic product. During the late 1970s and 1980s, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and key donors worked closely to promote reforms to counter the effect of inefficient economic policies and practices. By 1984, a combination of factors—including drought, inflation, and confused application of Islamic law—reduced donor disbursements, and capital flight led to a serious foreign-exchange crisis and increased shortages of imported inputs and commodities. More significantly, the 1989 revolution caused many donors in Europe, the U.S., and Canada to suspend official development assistance, but not humanitarian aid. However, as Sudan became the world's largest debtor to the World Bank and IMF by 1993, its relationship with the international financial institutions soured in the mid-1990s and has yet to be fully rehabilitated. The government fell out of compliance with an IMF standby program and accumulated substantial arrearages on repurchase obligations. A 4-year economic reform plan was announced in 1988 but was not pursued.

An economic reform plan was announced in 1989 and implementation began on a 3-year economic restructuring program designed to reduce the public sector deficit, end subsidies, privatize state enterprises, and encourage new foreign and domestic investment. In 1993, the IMF suspended Sudan's voting rights and the World Bank suspended Sudan's right to make withdrawals under effective and fully disbursed loans and credits. Lome Funds and European Union agricultural credits, totaling more than 1 billion euros, also were suspended.

Sudan produces about 401,000 barrels per day (b/d) (2005 est.) of oil, which brought in about $1.9 billion in 2005 and provides 70% of the country's total export earnings. Although final figures are not yet available, these earnings may have risen to an estimated $2 billion as of the end of 2004. The oil production was expected to reach 500,000 barrels by 2005. With a resolution of its 21-year civil war, Sudan and its people can now begin to reap the benefit from its natural resources, rebuild its infrastructure, increase oil production and exports, and be able to attain its export and development potential.

In 2000-2001, Sudan's current account entered surplus for the first time since independence. In 1993, currency controls were imposed, making it illegal to possess foreign exchange without approval. In 1999, liberalization of foreign exchange markets ameliorated this constraint somewhat. Exports other than oil are largely stagnant. The small industrial sector remains in the doldrums, and Sudan's inadequate and declining infrastructure inhibits economic growth.

DEFENSE

The Sudan People's Armed Forces is a 100,000-member army supported by a small air force and navy. Irregular tribal and former rebel militias and Popular Defense Forces supplement the army's strength in the field. This is a mixed force, having the additional duty of maintaining internal security. Some SPLM and NDA troops are former army members. During the 1990s, periodic purges of the professional officer corps by the ruling Islamist regime eroded command authority as well as war-fighting capabilities. Indeed, the Sudanese Government admitted it was incapable of carrying out its war aims against the SPLA and NDA without employing former rebel and Arab militias to fight in support of regular troops.

Sudan's military forces historically have been hampered by limited and outdated equipment. In the 1980s, the U.S. worked with the Sudanese Government to upgrade equipment with special emphasis on airlift capacity and logistics. All U.S. military assistance was terminated following the military coup of 1989. Oil revenues have allowed the government to purchase modern weapons systems, including Hind helicopter gunships, Anatov medium bombers, MiG 23 fighter aircraft, mobile artillery pieces, and light assault weapons. Sudan now receives most of its military equipment from China, Russia, and Libya.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Solidarity with other Arab countries has been a feature of Sudan's foreign policy. When the Arab-Israeli war began in June 1967, Sudan declared war on Israel. However, in the early 1970s, Sudan gradually shifted its stance and was supportive of the Camp David Accords.

Relations between Sudan and Libya deteriorated in the early 1970s and reached a low in October 1981, when Libya began a policy of cross-border raids into western Sudan. After the 1985 coup in Sudan, the military government resumed diplomatic relations with Libya, as part of a policy of improving relations with neighboring and Arab states. In early 1990, Libya and the Sudan announced that they would seek "unity, but this unity was not implemented. During the 1990s, as Sudan sought to steer a non-aligned course, courting Western aid and seeking rapprochement with Arab states, its relations with the U.S. grew increasingly strained. Sudan's ties with countries like North Korea and Libya and its support for regional insurgencies such as Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Eritrean Islamic Jihad, Ethiopian Islamic Jihad, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Lord's Resistance Army generated great concern about its contribution to regional instability. Allegations of the government's complicity in the assassination attempt against the Egyptian President in Ethiopia in 1995 led to UNSC sanctions against the Sudan. By the late 1990s, Sudan experienced strained or broken diplomatic relations with most of its nine neighboring countries. However, since 2000, Sudan has actively sought regional rapprochement that has rehabilitated most of these relations.

U.S.-SUDANESE RELATIONS

The United States is a major donor of humanitarian aid to Sudan, and the U.S. has welcomed steps toward peace in the country. The U.S. also has been a leader in pressing for strong international action by the United Nations and its agencies in Darfur. The U.S. and the international community welcomed the January 9, 2005 signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the May 5, 2006 signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), while a series of UN Security Council resolutions in late March 2005 and 2006 underscored concerns about Sudan's continuing conflicts. On September 11, 2006 the U.S. linked improved relations to Sudanese acceptance of a UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur. Since that time, the U.S. has been successful in bringing new economic sanctions against Sudan, as well as ushering in the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1769 on July 31, 2007, which mandated the rapid deployment of a joint African Union/United Nations hybrid peacekeeping force to Darfur.

A Review of Relations

Sudan broke diplomatic relations with the U.S. in June 1967, following the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli War. Relations improved after July 1971, when the Sudanese Communist Party attempted to overthrow President Nimeiri, and Nimeiri suspected Soviet involvement. U.S. assistance for resettlement of refugees following the 1972 peace settlement with the south added further improved relations.

On March 1, 1973, Palestinian terrorists of the "Black September" organization murdered U.S. Ambassador Cleo A. Noel and Deputy Chief of Mission Curtis G. Moore in Khartoum. Sudanese officials arrested the terrorists and tried them on murder charges. In June 1974, however, they were released to the custody of the Egyptian Government. The U.S. Ambassador to the Sudan was withdrawn in protest. Although the U.S. Ambassador returned to Khartoum in November, relations with the Sudan remained static until early 1976, when President Nimeiri mediated the release of 10 American hostages being held by Eritrean insurgents in rebel strongholds in northern Ethiopia. In 1976, the U.S. decided to resume economic assistance to the Sudan.

In late 1985, there was a reduction in staff at the U.S. Embassy in Khartoum because of the presence in Khartoum of a large contingent of Libyan terrorists. In April 1986, relations with Sudan deteriorated when the U.S. bombed Tripoli, Libya. A U.S. Embassy employee was shot on April 16, 1986. Immediately following this incident, all non-essential personnel and all dependents left for six months. At this time, Sudan was the single largest recipient of U.S. development and military assistance in sub-Saharan Africa. However, official U.S. development assistance was suspended in 1989 in the wake of the military coup against the elected government, which brought to power the National Islamist Front led by General Bashir.

U.S. relations with Sudan were further strained in the 1990s. Sudan backed Iraq in its invasion of Kuwait and provided sanctuary and assistance to Islamic terrorist groups. In the early and mid-1990s, Carlos the Jackal, Osama bin Laden, Abu Nidal, and other terrorist leaders resided in Khartoum. Sudan's role in the radical Pan-Arab Islamic Conference represented a matter of great concern to the security of American officials and dependents in Khartoum, resulting in several drawdowns and/or evacuations of U.S. personnel from Khartoum in the early-mid 1990s. Sudan's Islamist links with international terrorist organizations represented a special matter of concern for the U.S. Government, leading to Sudan's 1993 designation as a state sponsor of terrorism and a suspension of U.S. Embassy operations in Khartoum in 1996. In October 1997, the U.S. imposed comprehensive economic, trade, and financial sanctions against the Sudan. In August 1998, in the wake of the East Africa embassy bombings, the U.S. launched cruise missile strikes against Khartoum. The last U.S. Ambassador to the Sudan, Ambassador Tim Carney, departed post prior to this event and no new ambassador has been designated since. The U.S. Embassy is headed by a chargé d'affaires.

The U.S. and Sudan entered into a bilateral dialogue on counter-terrorism in May 2000. Sudan has provided concrete cooperation against international terrorism since the September 11, 2001, terrorism strikes on New York and Washington. However, although Sudan publicly supported the international coalition actions

against the al Qaida network and the Taliban in Afghanistan, the government criticized the U.S. strikes in that country and opposed a widening of the effort against international terrorism to other countries. Sudan remains on the state sponsors of terrorism list.

In response to the Government of Sudan's continued complicity in unabated violence occurring in Darfur, President Bush imposed new economic sanctions on Sudan in May 2007. The sanctions blocked assets of Sudanese citizens implicated in Darfur violence, and also sanctioned additional companies owned or controlled by the Government of Sudan. Sanctions continue to underscore U.S. efforts to end the suffering of the millions of Sudanese affected by the crisis in Darfur.

Despite policy differences, the U.S. has been a major donor of humanitarian aid to the Sudan throughout the last quarter century. The U.S. was a major donor in the March 1989 "Operation Lifeline Sudan," which delivered 100,000 metric tons of food into both government and SPLA-held areas of the Sudan, thus averting widespread starvation. In 1991, the U.S. made major donations to alleviate food shortages caused by a two-year drought. In a similar drought in 2000-01, the U.S. and the international community responded to avert mass starvation in the Sudan. In 2001 the Bush Administration named a Presidential Envoy for Peace in the Sudan to explore what role the U.S. could play in ending Sudan's civil war and enhancing the delivery of humanitarian aid. For fiscal years 2005-2007, the U.S. Government committed over $4 billion to Sudan for humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping in Darfur as well as support for implementation of the peace accord and reconstruction and development in Southern Sudan.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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PAO:	Joel Maybury
GSO:	Arne Baker
RSO:	Chuck Lisenbee
AID:	Patrick Fleuret
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EEO:	Sergey A Olhovsky
FMO:	Andres Jaramillo
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 29, 2008

Country Description: Sudan is a diverse, developing country in northeastern Africa. The capital city is Khartoum. The civil war between the northern and southern regions, which began in 1983, ended in 2005. A multi-party conflict continues in the west in Darfur, and the armed Ugandan group known as The Lord's Resistance Army is present in the south. Security conditions are adverse in these and some other regions. Transportation networks and other forms of infrastructure are poor and do not meet western standards. Even where available, water and electric services suffer frequent outages.

Entry Requirements: The Government of Sudan requires all travelers to present a passport and an entry visa. Most travelers must obtain the entry visa before arrival; only American citizens who also possess a Sudanese national identification document (such as a Sudanese passport or national identification card) may apply for an entry visa at Khartoum International Airport. The Government of Sudan routinely denies visas to travelers whose passports contain visas issued by the Government of Israel or other evidence of travel to Israel such as exit or entry stamps.

Travelers must obtain an exit visa before departure from Sudan as well as pay any airport departure tax not included in the traveler's airline ticket. Visitors may obtain the latest information and further details from the Embassy of Sudan, 2210 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel.: 202-338-8565.

Travel permits issued by the semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) or by the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) are not adequate for entry to the country, although travelers may find these documents useful to present to local authorities when in the south. Personal baggage, including computers, is routinely searched upon arrival to and departure from Sudan. The authorities will seize material deemed objectionable, such as alcohol or pornography, and may detain or arrest the traveler. Travelers intending to bring electronic items should inquire about entry requirements when they apply for a visa; restrictions apply to many devices, including video cameras, satellite phones, facsimile machines, televisions, and telephones. Travelers are not allowed to depart Sudan with ivory, some other animal products, or large quantities of gold.

All visitors must register with the authorities within three days of arrival. Travelers must register within 72 hours of arrival in Sudan at the Ministry of Interior. All foreigners traveling more than 25 kilometers outside of Khartoum must obtain a travel permit from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs in Khartoum. This applies to all travel, including private, commercial, and humanitarian activities. Americans risk detention by Sudanese authorities when traveling more than 25 kilometers outside of Khartoum without a travel permit issued by the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. Travelers

must register again with the police within 24 hours of arrival. The government requires a separate travel permit for travel to Darfur. These regulations are strictly enforced and even travelers with proper documentation may expect delay or temporary detention from the security forces, especially outside the capital. Authorities expect travelers to strictly respect roadblocks and other checkpoints.

Travelers who wish to take any photographs must obtain a photography permit from the Government of Sudan, Ministry of Interior, Department of Aliens.

Safety and Security: On January 1, 2008, unknown assailants shot and killed two U.S. Embassy employees - an American USAID officer and a Sudanese national driver. Terrorists are known to operate in Sudan and continue to seek opportunities to carry out attacks against U.S. interests. Terrorist actions may include suicide operations, bombings, or kidnappings. U.S. citizens should be aware of the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in public places, which include tourist sites and locations where westerners are known to congregate, and commercial operations associated with U.S. or Western interests. Terrorists are known to have targeted both official facilities and residential compounds. Anti-American sentiment is prevalent and Americans should exercise utmost caution at all times.

The U.S. Embassy's ability to provide consular services in Sudan, including emergency assistance, is severely limited. Many areas outside the capital of Khartoum are extremely difficult to access.

Travel in many parts of Sudan is hazardous. Outside the major cities infrastructure is extremely poor, medical care is limited, and very few facilities for tourists exist.

Conflict among various armed groups and government forces continues in western Sudan, in the states of North Darfur, South Darfur, and West Darfur. Banditry and lawlessness are also common in the west. Many local residents are in camps for internally-displaced persons, and receive humanitarian assistance for basic needs such as food, water, and shelter. Expatriate humanitarian workers have been the targets of carjackings and burglaries.

Land mines remain a major hazard in southern Sudan, especially south of the city of Juba. Visitors should travel only on main roads unless a competent de-mining authority such as the UN has marked an area as clear of mines. The armed Ugandan group known as The Lord's Resistance Army is present along the southern border and reportedly has announced it will target Americans.

Occasional clashes between armed groups representing communal interests continue to occur in the centrally-located states of Upper Nile, Blue Nile, and Bahr al Ghazal. Banditry also occurs.

Sudan shares porous land borders with nine other countries, including Chad, the Central African Republic, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. Conflict in these countries occasionally spills over into Sudan.

Americans considering sea travel in Sudan's coastal waters should exercise caution as there have been incidents of armed attacks and robberies by unknown groups in recent years, including one involving two American vessels. Exercise extreme caution, as these groups are considered armed and dangerous. When transiting in and around the Horn of Africa and/or in the Red Sea near Yemen, it is strongly recommended that vessels convoy in groups and maintain good communications contact at all times. Marine channels 13 and 16 VHF-FM are international call-up and emergency channels, and are commonly monitored by ships at sea. 2182 Mhz is the HF international call-up and emergency channel. Wherever possible, travel in trafficked sea-lanes. Avoid loitering in or transiting isolated or remote areas. In case of emergency, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. In the event of an attack, consider activating Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is on the increase throughout Sudan. Additional security measures should be taken at places of residence to protect life and property. Anti-American sentiments can be found throughout the country. Americans should exercise caution by avoiding crowded public areas and public gatherings. Americans should avoid traveling alone. Report all instances of anti-American acts and crime targeting westerners to the American Embassy, and report incidents of crime to the Sudanese Police.

Americans should guard their backpacks or hand luggage. When traveling by air, travelers should maintain constant contact with their baggage and assure that they do not contain illicit items, such as alcohol or military ordinance. Americans have been removed from international airlines and detained when suspect items have been detected in checked baggage.

Carjacking and armed robbery continue to occur in western and southern Sudan. Sexual assault is more prevalent in the areas of armed conflict. Travelers who do not use the services of reputable travel firms or knowledgeable guides or drivers are especially at risk. Travel outside of Khartoum should be undertaken with a minimum of two vehicles so that there is a backup in case of mechanical failure or other emergency. Solo camping is always risky.

The Sudanese mail system can be unreliable. International couriers

provide the safest means of shipping envelopes and packages, although anything of value should be insured.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Individuals with medical conditions which may require treatment are discouraged from traveling to Sudan. Medical facilities in Khartoum fall short of U.S. standards; outside the capital, very few facilities exist and hospitals and clinics are poorly equipped. Travelers must pay cash in advance for any medical treatment. Ambulance services are not available. Medicines are available only intermittently; travelers should bring sufficient supplies of needed medicines in clearly-marked containers.

Malaria is prevalent in all areas of Sudan. The strain is resistant to chloroquine and can be fatal. Consult a health practitioner before traveling, obtain suitable anti-malarial drugs, and use protective measures, such as insect repellent, protective clothing, and mosquito nets. Travelers who become ill with a fever or a flu-like illness while in Sudan, or within a year after departure, should promptly seek medical care and inform their physician of their travel history and the kind of anti-malarial drugs used. For additional information about malaria and anti-malarial drugs please see the Center for Disease Control travelers' health web site, http://www.cdc.gov.

Officially, people with HIV are not granted a visa and are not permitted to enter Sudan. A negative HIV test result must be presented at a Sudanese embassy or at Khartoum airport in order to obtain a visa. However, anecdotal reports indicate this requirement is not enforced in practice. Please confirm this requirement with the Embassy of Sudan at www.sudanembassy.org.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's I nternet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Sudan is provided for general reference only, and may not be accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road conditions throughout Sudan are hazardous due to erratic driver behavior, pedestrians and animals in the roadways, and the lack of basic safety equipment on many vehicles. Only major highways and some streets in the cities are paved; many roads are narrow, rutted, and poorly maintained. Local drivers do not observe conventions for the right-of-way, stop in the road without warning, and frequently exceed safe speeds for road, traffic, and weather conditions. Driving at night is dangerous and should be avoided if possible; many vehicles operate without lights.

In the north and west, dust storms and sand storms, known locally as haboobs, greatly reduce visibility when they occur. Roads in these areas can be quickly covered with shifting sand at any season of the year. Roads in southern Sudan often are impassable during the rainy season, from March to October.

U.S. citizens are subject to the laws of the country in which they are traveling, including traffic laws. In Sudan vehicles have the steering wheel on the left side and drivers use the right side of the road.

Traffic from side streets on the right has the right-of-way when entering a cross street, including fast-moving main streets. Traffic on the right has the right-of-way at stops. Right turns on a red light are prohibited. Speed limits are not posted, but the legal speed limit for passenger cars on inter-city highways is 120 kph (about 70 mph), while in most urban areas the limit is 60 kph (about 35 mph.) The speed limit in congested areas and school zones is 40 kph (about 25 mph).

Many local drivers carry no insurance despite the legal requirement that all motor vehicle operators purchase third-party liability insurance from the government. Persons involved in an accident resulting in death or injury must report the incident to the nearest police station or police officer as soon as possible. Persons found at fault can expect fines, revocation of driving privileges, and jail sentences, depending on the nature and extent of the accident. Persons convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol face fines, jail sentences, and corporal punishment.

Americans may use their U.S. driver's licenses for up to 90 days after arrival in Sudan, and then must carry either an International Driving Permit (IDP) or a Sudanese driver's license. There are no restrictions on vehicle

types, including motorcycles and motorized tricycles. Public transportation is limited to within and between major urban areas. Passenger facilities are basic and crowded, especially during rush hours and periods of seasonal travel. Schedules are unpublished and subject to change without notice. Vehicle maintenance does not meet U.S. standards. There is routine passenger train service on the route from Khartoum to Wadi Halfa (on the border with Egypt) and to Port Sudan (on the Red Sea.) Bus service between major cities is regular and inexpensive. Intra-city bus service in the major urban areas is regular, but most buses and bus stops are privately-operated and unmarked. Taxis are available in the major cities at hotels, tourist sites, and government offices. The motorized rickshaws in common use in Khartoum are unsafe. Travelers are encouraged to hire cars and drivers from reputable sources with qualified drivers and safe vehicles. Irregularly-scheduled minibuses provide some public transit to rural communities; many areas lack any public transportation.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Sudan, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Sudan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's I nternet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Enforcement of aviation safety standards in Sudan is uneven; civil aviation in Sudan continues to experience air incidents and accidents, including 5 crashes with at least 64 fatalities between November 8, 2007, and June 30, 2008. Incidents included engine failures, collapsed landing gear, and planes veering off the runway. Whenever possible, Americans traveling to Sudan despite the ongoing travel warning are advised to travel directly to their destinations on international carriers from countries whose civil aviation authorities meet international aviation safety standards for the oversight of their air carrier operations under the FAA's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program. Adverse seasonal weather conditions, such as dust or sand storms in the north between April and June and severe rain storms in the south between March and October, cause frequent flight cancellations.

Two hijackings originated in Sudan in 2007; no passengers were harmed.

Special Circumstances: In November 1997, the U.S. imposed comprehensive financial and commercial sanctions against Sudan, prohibiting U.S. transactions with Sudan. Travelers intending to visit Sudan despite the Travel Warning should contact the Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), Office of Compliance, telephone 1-800-540-6322 or 202-622-2490, regarding the effect of these sanctions.

Travelers must be prepared to pay cash for all purchases, including hotel bills, airfares purchased locally, and all other travel expenses. Major credit cards, including Visa, MasterCard, or American Express, cannot be used in Sudan due to U.S. sanctions. Sudan has no international ATMs. Local ATMs draw on local banks only.

Travelers, including journalists, must obtain a photography permit before taking any photographs. Even with a photography permit, photographing military areas, bridges, drainage stations, broadcast stations, public utilities, slum areas, and beggars is prohibited.

Sudan is a conservative society, particularly in the capital and other areas where the Muslim population is the majority. Alcohol is prohibited by law and modest dress is expected. Loose, long-sleeved shirts and full-length skirts or slacks are recommended attire for women visitors. Women who are not Muslim are not expected or required to cover their heads. Men may wear short-sleeved shirts but short pants are not acceptable in public.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Sudanese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in alcohol or illegal drugs in Sudan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States as well in Sudan.

Sudan's Public Order Courts have continued to serve as the state mechanism for morality enforcement since the early 1980's. Today the court still issues punishments ranging from fines, to lashings, to lengthy prison sentences for offences such as drinking alcohol, wearing inappropriate clothing, or associating with unmarried women.

Children's Issues: Sudan does not permit foreigners to adopt children who are Sudanese citizens. For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues web page.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Sudan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Sudan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Sharia Ali Abdel Latif, Khartoum, Sudan; tel: 249 1 83 774-701, http://khartoum.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption
June 2006

The Department of State has occasionally received inquiries from American citizens concerned about the plight of the children of Sudan and wondering about the possibility of adopting them. At this time, it is not generally possible to adopt Sudanese children, for several reasons. Intercountry adoptions are fundamentally private civil legal matters governed by the laws of the children's home country, which has the primary responsibility and jurisdiction for deciding what would be in the children's best interests.

The U.S. and international media have occasionally reported on the difficult situation faced by Sudanese children, and it is completely understandable that some American citizens want to respond to such stories by offering to open their homes and adopt these children in need. However, it is a generally agreed international principle that uprooting children during a war, natural disaster or other crisis may in fact exacerbate the children's situation. It can be extremely difficult in such circumstances to determine whether children who appear to be orphans truly are. It is also not uncommon in a hostile situation for parents to send their children out of the area, or for families to become separated during an evacuation. Even when it can be demonstrated that children are indeed orphaned or abandoned, they are often taken in by other relatives. Staying with relatives in extended family units is generally a better solution than uprooting a child completely.

There are still ways in which U.S. citizens can help the children of Sudan. Many American non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Sudan say that what is needed most at this time are financial contributions. Individuals who wish to assist can do the most good by making a financial contribution to an established NGO that will be well placed to respond to Sudan's most urgent needs, including those related to the children of Sudan.

Travel Warning
October 2, 2008

This Travel Warning updates U.S. citizens to security concerns in Sudan. The Department of State continues to warn against all travel to Sudan due to the threats from armed conflicts and from terrorism. American citizens who choose to remain in Sudan should review their security posture, and take appropriate precautions in light of the January 2008 murder of two American Embassy employees and ongoing violence in many regions of the country. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Sudan issued on March 14, 2008.

On January 1, 2008, two American Embassy employees were assassinated while traveling in their vehicle in Khartoum. In May 2008, the city of Omdurman, adjacent to Khartoum, was attacked by armed militias. The Embassy has implemented heightened security measures to protect Embassy personnel when traveling in Sudan, which include obtaining advance permission for all travel and modes of transportation to be used. American citizens residing in Sudan are urged to carefully review and assess their safety and security situations, take appropriate security precautions, and to practice situational awareness at all times to ensure personal safety.

The Department of State continues to warn U.S. citizens against all travel to Sudan, particularly in the Darfur area, where violence between government forces and various armed militias continues. Americans and other westerners have been victims of carjacking and armed robbery while traveling in Sudan. Land travel at night should be avoided.

Travelers are reminded that the U.S. Government has received indications of terrorist threats aimed at American and western interests in Sudan. Terrorist actions may include suicide operations, bombings, or kidnappings. U.S. citizens should be aware of the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in public places, which include tourist sites and locations where westerners are known to congregate, and commercial operations associated with U.S. or western interests. Anti-western demonstrations periodically occur, mostly in the capital city of Khartoum.

Travel anywhere in Sudan, including Khartoum and the adjacent town of Omdurman, is potentially dangerous. Sporadic violence instigated by militias has occurred in South Sudan. Militia forces have also attacked locations in the south. Threats have been made against foreigners working in the oil industry in Upper Nile state.

Enforcement of aviation safety standards in Sudan is uneven; civil aviation in Sudan continues to experience air incidents and accidents, including five crashes with at least 64 fatalities between November 8, 2007, and September 21, 2008. Incidents included engine failures, collapsed landing gear, and planes veering off the runway. In August, 2008, a domestic plane originating in Nyala, Darfur was hijacked and forced to land in Libya.

Whenever possible, Americans traveling to Sudan despite the ongoing travel warning are advised to travel directly to their destinations on international carriers from countries whose civil aviation authorities meet international aviation safety standards for the oversight of their air carrier operations under the FAA's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) program.

Americans who travel to Sudan despite this Travel Warning must possess a valid passport with at least six months of validity and a Sudanese visa. Travelers must apply for a visa in their own country of residence. In August 2006, five foreigners, including two Americans, were arrested and detained in Darfur after entering Sudan via the Chadian border town of Banal without the appropriate documentation. Several of these individuals had solicited and obtained escorts in Chad who allegedly promised to facilitate entry into Sudan but who were ultimately unable to follow through with their commitments. Without appropriate travel documents and permits, travelers may

face arrest and detention for crimes including illegal entry, publication of false information, and espionage. If convicted, sentences range from deportation to life in prison or the death penalty.

The Sudanese Government requires that anyone seeking to travel outside a 25 kilometer radius of Khartoum obtain a special travel permit. The Government has placed additional permit requirements for travel to Darfur. This includes humanitarian workers, journalists, photographers, and other media employees. Separate additional permits are required to take photographs, even for private use, and to conduct journalism anywhere in Sudan. Additional information about entry requirements for Sudan and other countries is located on the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov.

U.S. citizens are strongly urged to register with the Embassy in Khartoum or through the State Department's Travel Registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Sharia Ali Abdul Latif, Khartoum; tel. (249-183) 774-701/2/3 (outside Sudan); tel. (0183) 774-701/2/3 (inside Sudan.) For after-hours emergencies, please call 249-183-774-700 and ask to be connected to the Duty Officer.



SURINAME

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Suriname

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 163,194 sq. km. (63,037 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Georgia.

Cities: Capital—Paramaribo (pop. 242,946). Other cities—Nieuw Nickerie, Moengo, Brownsweg, Albina.

Terrain: Rain forest, savanna, coastal swamps, hills.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun—Surinamer(s). Adjective—Surinamese.

Population: (2004 census) 492,829.

Annual growth rate: (2004) 1.30%.

Ethnic groups: Hindustani (East Indian) 27%, Creole 18%, Javanese 15%, Maroon 15%, Mixed 12.5%, Amerindians 3.7%, Chinese 1.8% (percentages from 2004 census).

Religions: Hindu, Muslim, Roman Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Moravian, several other Christian denominations, Jewish, Baha'i.

Languages: Dutch (official), English, Sranan Tongo (Creole language), Hindustani, Javanese.

Education: Years compulsory—ages 6-12. Literacy—90%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2004)—7 per 1,000. Life expectancy (2003)—71 yrs.

Work force: (100,000) Government—35%; private sector—41%; parastatal companies—10%; unemployed—14%.

Government

Type: Constitutional democracy.

Constitution: September 30, 1987.

Independence: November 25, 1975.

Government branches: Executive—president, vice president, Council of Ministers. Legislative—elected 51-member National Assembly made up of representatives of political parties. Judicial—Court of Justice.

Political subdivisions: 10 districts.

Political parties: Governing coalition—National Party of Suriname (NPS); Progressive Reform Party (VHP); Pertjaja Luhur; A—Combination, a coalition of General Interior Development Party (ABOP), Brotherhood and Unity in Politics (BEP), and Seeka; Suriname Workers Party (SPA); Democratic Alternative '91 (DA' 91). Other parties in the National Assembly—National Democratic Party (NDP), Democratic National Platform 2000 (DNP 2000), Alternative 1 (A1), Party for Renewal and Development (BVD), Javanese Indonesian Peasants Party (KTPI).

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: (2008 est.) $2.81 billion (Source: IMF).

Annual growth rate real GDP: (2007 actual) 5.5%.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $4,830.

Inflation: (2007) 7%.

Natural resources: Bauxite, gold, oil, iron ore, other minerals; forests; hydroelectric potential; fish and shrimp.

Agriculture: Products—rice, bananas, timber, and citrus fruits.

Industry: Types—alumina, oil, gold, fish, shrimp, lumber.

Trade: (Source: IMF) Exports (2007)— $1.542 billion: alumina, gold, crude oil, wood and wood products, rice, bananas, fish, and shrimp. Major markets (2007)—Canada (23%), Norway (14.4%), U.S. (12.1%), Trinidad (7.2%), France (5.4%), Iceland (2.1%). Imports (2007)—$1.242 billion: machinery and transport equipment, manufactured goods, mineral fuels including lubricants, food and live animals. Major suppliers (2007)—U.S. (31.7%), Netherlands (20.4%), Trinidad and Tobago (17.9%), Japan (3.6%), China (5.5%), Brazil (2.9%).

PEOPLE

Most Surinamese live in the narrow, northern coastal plain. The population is one of the most ethnically

diverse in the world. Each ethnic group preserves its own culture, and many institutions, including political parties, tend to follow ethnic lines. Informal relationships vary: the upper classes of all ethnic backgrounds mix freely; outside of the elite, social relations tend to remain within ethnic groupings. All groups may be found in schools and the workplace.

HISTORY

Arawak and Carib tribes lived in the region before Columbus sighted the coast in 1498. Spain officially claimed the area in 1593, but Spanish and Portuguese explorers of the time gave the area little attention. Dutch settlement began in 1616 at the mouths of several rivers between present-day Georgetown, Guyana, and Cayenne, French Guiana.

Suriname became a Dutch colony in 1667. The new colony, Dutch Guiana, did not thrive. Historians cite several reasons for this, including Holland's preoccupation with its more extensive (and profitable) East Indian territories, violent conflict between whites and native tribes, and frequent uprisings by the imported slave population, which was often treated with extraordinary cruelty. Barely, if at all, assimilated into plantation society, many of the slaves fled to the interior, where they maintained a West African culture and established the six major Bush Negro tribes in existence today: the Djuka, Saramaccaner, Matuwari, Paramaccaner, Quinti, and Aluku.

Plantations steadily declined in importance as labor costs rose. Rice, bananas, and citrus fruits replaced the traditional crops of sugar, coffee, and cocoa. Exports of gold rose beginning in 1900. The Dutch government gave little financial support to the colony. Suriname's economy was transformed in the years following World War I, when an American firm (ALCOA) began exploiting bauxite deposits in East Suriname. Bauxite processing and then alumina production began in 1916. During World War II, more than 75% of U.S. bauxite imports came from Suriname.

In 1951, Suriname began to acquire a growing measure of autonomy from the Netherlands. Suriname became an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on December 15, 1954, and gained independence, with Dutch consent, on November 25, 1975.

Most of Suriname's political parties took shape during the autonomy period and were overwhelmingly based on ethnicity. For example, the National Party of Suriname found its support among the Creoles, the Progressive Reform Party members came from the Hindustani population, and the Indonesian Peasant's Party was Javanese. Other smaller parties found support by appealing to voters on an ideological or pro-independence platform; the Partij Nationalistische Republiek (PNR) was among the most important. Its members pressed most strongly for independence and for the introduction of leftist political and economic measures. Many former PNR members would go on to play a key role following the coup of February 1980.

Suriname was a parliamentary democracy in the years immediately following independence. Henk Arron became the first Prime Minister and was re-elected in 1977. On February 25, 1980, 16 noncommissioned officers overthrew the elected government, which many accused of inefficiency and mismanagement. The military-dominated government then suspended the constitution, dissolved the legislature, and formed a regime that ruled by decree. Although a civilian filled the post of president, a military man, Desi Bouterse, actually ruled the country.

Throughout 1982, pressure grew for a return to civilian rule. In early December 1982, military authorities cracked down, arresting and killing 15 prominent opposition leaders, including journalists, lawyers, and trade union leaders. Following the murders, the United States and the Netherlands suspended economic and military cooperation with the Bouterse regime, which increasingly began to follow an erratic but often leftist-oriented political course. The regime restricted the press and limited the rights of its citizens. The economy declined rapidly after the suspension of economic aid from the Netherlands.

Continuing economic decline brought pressure for change. During the 1984-87 period, the Bouterse regime tried to end the crisis by appointing a succession of nominally civilian-led cabinets. Many figures in the government came from the traditional political parties that had been shoved aside during the coup. The military eventually agreed to free elections in 1987, a new constitution, and a civilian government.

Another pressure for change had erupted in July 1986, when a Maroon insurgency, led by former soldier Ronnie Brunswijk, began attacking economic targets in the country's interior. In response, the army ravaged villages and killed suspected Brunswijk supporters. Thousands of Maroons fled to nearby French Guiana. In an effort to end the bloodshed, the Surinamese Government negotiated a peace treaty, called the Kourou Accord, with Brunswijk in 1989. However, Bouterse and other military leaders blocked the accord's implementation.

On December 24, 1990, military officers forced the resignations of the civilian President and Vice President elected in 1987. Military-selected replacements were hastily approved by the National Assembly on December 29. Faced with mounting pressure from the U.S., other nations, the Organization of American States (OAS), and other international organizations, the government held new elections on May 25, 1991. The New Front (NF) Coalition, comprised of the Creole-based National Party of Suriname (NPS), the Hindustani-based Progressive Reform Party (VHP), the Javanese-based Indonesian Peasant's Party (KTPI), and the



labor-oriented Surinamese Workers Party (SPA) were able to win a majority in the National Assembly. On September 6, 1991, NPS candidate Ronald Venetiaan was elected President, and the VHP's Jules Ajodhia became Vice President.

The Venetiaan government was able to effect a settlement to Suriname's domestic insurgency through the August 1992 Peace Accord with Bush Negro and Amerindian rebels. In April 1993, Desi Bouterse left his position as commander of the armed forces and was replaced by Arthy Gorre, a military officer committed to bringing the armed forces under civilian government control. Economic reforms instituted by the Venetiaan government eventually helped curb inflation, unify the official and unofficial exchange rates, and improve the government's economic situation by re-establishing relations with the Dutch, thereby opening the way for a major influx of Dutch financial assistance. Despite these successes, the governing coalition lost support and failed to retain control of the government in the subsequent round of national elections.

The rival National Democratic Party (NDP), founded in the early 1990s by Desi Bouterse, benefited from the New Front government's loss of popularity. The NDP won more National Assembly seats (16 of 51) than any other party in the May 1996 national elections, and in September 1996, joined with the KTPI, dissenters from the VHP, and several smaller parties to elect NDP vice chairman Jules Wijdenbosch president of an NDP-led coalition government. Divisions and subsequent reshufflings of coalition members in the fall of 1997 and early 1998 weakened the coalition's mandate and slowed legislative action.

In May 1999, after mass demonstrations protesting poor economic conditions, the government was forced to call early elections. The elections in May 2000 returned Ronald Venetiaan and his New Front coalition to the presidency. The NF based its campaign on a platform to fix the faltering Surinamese economy. In the national election held on May 25, 2005, the ruling NF coalition suffered a significant setback due to widespread dissatisfaction with the state of the economy and the public perception that the NF had produced few tangible gains. The NF won just 23 seats, falling short of a majority in the National Assembly, and immediately entered into negotiations with the Maroon-based "A" Combination and the A-1 Coalition to form a working majority. Desi Bouterse's NDP more than doubled its representation in the National Assembly, winning 15 seats. Bouterse, the NDP's declared presidential candidate, withdrew from the race days before the National Assembly convened to vote for the next president and tapped his running mate, Rabin Parmessar, to run as the NDP's candidate. In the National Assembly, the NF challenged Parmessar's Surinamese citizenship, displaying copies of a Dutch passport issued to Parmessar in

2004. Parmessar was eventually allowed to stand for election, and parliament later confirmed his Surinamese citizenship. After two votes, no candidate received the required two-thirds majority, pushing the final decision in August 2005 to a special session of the United People's Assembly, where President Venetiaan was reelected with a significant majority of votes from the local, district, and national assembly members gathered. His running mate, Ramdien Sardjoe, was elected as vice president. While the Venetiaan administration has made progress in stabilizing the economy, tensions within the coalition have impeded progress and stymied legislative action.

Long-anticipated legal proceedings began in November 2007 with the issuance of summonses to 25 defendants accused of participating in the December 8, 1982 murders of 15 political opponents of the former military-dominated government. The court martial tribunal convened on November 30, 2007, with a series of preliminary motions. The actual trial, with judges hearing witness testimonies, started on July 4, 2008.

GOVERNMENT

The Republic of Suriname is a constitutional democracy based on the 1987 constitution. The legislative branch of government consists of a 51-member unicameral National Assembly, simultaneously and popularly elected for a 5-year term.

The executive branch is headed by the president, who is elected by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly or, failing that, by a majority of the People's Assembly for a 5-year term. If at least two-thirds of the National Assembly cannot agree to vote for one presidential candidate, a People's Assembly is formed from all National Assembly delegates and regional and municipal representatives who were elected by popular vote in the most recent national election. A vice president, normally elected at the same time as the president, needs a simple majority in the National Assembly or People's Assembly to be elected for a 5-year term. As head of government, the president appoints a cabinet of ministers. There is no constitutional provision for removal or replacement of the president unless he resigns.

A 15-member State Advisory Council advises the president in the conduct of policy. Eleven of the 15 council seats are allotted by proportional representation of all political parties represented in the National Assembly. The president chairs the council; two seats are allotted to representatives of labor, and two are allotted to employers' organizations.

The judiciary is headed by the Court of Justice (Supreme Court). This court supervises the magistrate courts. Members are appointed for life by the president in consultation with the National Assembly, the State Advisory Council, and the National Order of Private Attorneys.

The country is divided into 10 administrative districts, each headed by a district commissioner appointed by the president. The commissioner is similar to the governor of a U.S. State but serves at the president's pleasure.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Ronald VENETIAAN**
Vice Pres.: **Ramdien SARDJOE**
Min. of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, & Fisheries: **Kermechend RAGHOEBARSINGH**
Min. of Defense: **Ivan FERNALD**
Min. of Education & Human Development: **Edwin WOLF**
Min. of Finance: **Humphrey HILDENBERG**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Lygia KRAAG-KETELDIJK**
Min. of Health: **Celcius WATERBERG**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Urmila JOELLA-SEWNUNDUN**
Min. of Interior: **Maurits HASSANKHAN**
Min. of Justice & Police: **Chandrikapersad SANTOKHI**
Min. of Labor: **Joyce AMARELLO-WILLIAMS**
Min. of Natural Resources: **Gregory RUSLAND**
Min. of Planning & Development Cooperation: **Rick Van RAVENSWAAY**
Min. of Public Works: **Ganeshkoemar KANHAI**
Min. of Regional Development: **Michel FELISIE**
Min. of Social Affairs & Housing: **Hendrik SETROWIDJOJO**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Clifford MARICA**
Min. of Transportation, Communication, & Tourism: **Guno CASTELEN**
Min. of Zoning: **Michael JONG TJIEN FA**
Pres., Central Bank: **Andre TELTING**
Ambassador to the US: **Jaques R. KROSS**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Henry Leonard MACDONALD**

Suriname maintains an embassy in the United States at 4301 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 460, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-244-7488; fax 202-244-5878). There also is a Suriname consulate general at 7235 NW 19th St., Suite A, Miami, FL 33136 (tel. 305-593-2163).

NATIONAL SECURITY

Surinamese armed forces consist of the national army under the control of the Minister of Defense and a smaller civil police force, which is under the authority of the Minister of Justice and Police. The national armed forces comprise some 2,500 personnel, the majority of whom are deployed as light infantry security forces. A small air force, navy, and military police unit also exist. The Netherlands has provided limited military assistance to the Surinamese armed forces since the election of a democratic government in 1991. In recent years, the U.S. has provided training to military officers and policymakers to promote a better understanding of the role of the military in a civilian government, as well as to improve the professional capabilities of its officers and senior personnel. The U.S. also provides

assistance and training for disaster preparedness and mitigation as well as significant support for humanitarian aid projects. Since the mid-1990s, the People's Republic of China has provided small amounts of military equipment and logistical material to the Surinamese armed forces. The Netherlands, France, Venezuela, and Brazil also have working relationships with the Surinamese military.

Suriname's borders are porous; largely uninhabited, unguarded, and ungoverned rain forest and rivers make up the eastern, western, and southern borders, and the navy's capability to police Suriname's northern Atlantic coast is limited. Protecting natural resources from illegal exploitation such as unlicensed gold mining is difficult, and significant tax revenue is lost. Porous borders also make Suriname a target for transshipment of drugs. Since 2000, arrests and prosecutions of drug smugglers have increased, partially due to funding and training for police capacity through the U.S. State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement.

ECONOMY

Suriname's economy has been dominated by the exports of alumina, oil, and gold. Other export products include bananas, shrimp and fish, rice, and lumber. In 2007, gold, alumina, and oil accounted for 31.7%, 41.9%, and 7%, respectively, of Suriname's exports. The government's income from oil, however, surpassed that of alumina with 13.5% of government revenues and grants coming from the oil sector, while alumina's contribution was 9.6%. In export revenues for 2007, alumina accounted for 26.7%, gold for 20.2%, and oil for 4.5% of GDP. According to the IMF, Suriname's economy was expected to continue its strong growth primarily due to strong commodity prices and improvements in policies. Even though some economic diversification has taken place, the country's economy remains dependent on its mineral resources.

Suriname's bauxite deposits have been among the world's richest. Active in Suriname since 1916, SURALCO, a subsidiary of the Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), has had a long-standing working relationship with the Australian-owned BHPBilliton. The future of Suriname's bauxite industry has reached a critical point as SURALCO and BHPBilliton are in the final stages of their Moengo operations in Eastern Suriname, once the heart and soul of Suriname's bauxite industry. BHPBilliton officially shut down its operations in the Lelydorp mine, and the complete supply of bauxite to the SURALCO refinery hinges on the two transition mines of Kaaimangrasie and Klaverblad. Reserves in the two transition mines are projected to be depleted in 2010. Anticipating the depletion of bauxite reserves at its existing mines, the government and BHPBilliton signed a cooperation agreement to jointly exploit the proven bauxite reserves of 300 million tons in the Bakhuys region of Western Suriname. The government set up its own mining company, AlumSur, that the Minister of Natural Resources asserts will be a major stakeholder in any Bakhuys operation. To date SURALCO has not delivered a formal response to the Government of Suriname regarding its potential interest in also exploiting the Bakhuys Region. The government has also hinted at the existence of private negotiations with a third company. Other proven reserves, sufficient to last until 2045, exist in the east, west, and north of the country. However, distance and topography make their immediate development costly.

The severe shortage of affordable energy sources has hampered Suriname's ability to expand its industries. This goes for the bauxite sector as well. Currently running on diesel-fueled generators, SURALCO has indicated that any expansion of operations to include mining and refining reserves from West Suriname will depend on Suriname expanding its energy-generating sources. To alleviate some of Suriname's energy woes, the state-owned oil company, Staatsolie, built a 14 megawatt (MW) diesel-generated energy plant in 2006. In its most recently updated expansion plan, the company intends to expand the capacity of the plant to 18 MW. The electricity company recently completed the renovation and upgrade of the 45 MW diesel generator power plant in Paramaribo. Suriname and France recently signed an agreement that would connect the power grids of Suriname and French Guiana.

The gold mining sector is largely informal, unregulated, and small scale, but constitutes an important part of the informal economy (estimated at as much as 100% of GDP), and must be brought into the realm of tax and environmental authorities. In the official sector the Gross Rosebel Goldmines, wholly owned by the Canadian firm IAMGOLD, commenced its operations in 2004 and immediately positioned itself as the most productive and low-cost of all mines owned by IAMGOLD. Strikes leading to a 24% wage increase changed this rank, however, and the mine is currently ranked third. A new player in the Surinamese gold sector is the U.S. firm Newmont Mining Corporation. The company formed a joint venture with SURALCO, called Surgold, and commenced negotiations with the government for a production license. If approved, Surgold will establish the country's second gold refinery, to be operational in 2010. The reserves in the company's concession area are estimated to be 3 million troy ounces.

Suriname has also attracted the attention of international companies interested in extensive development of a tropical hardwoods industry and possible diamond mining. However, proposals for exploitation of the country's tropical forests and undeveloped regions of the interior traditionally inhabited by indigenous and Maroon communities have raised the concerns of environmentalists and human rights activists in Suriname and abroad.

The sector with the most promising outlook for rapid, near future expansion is the oil sector. A 2000 study by the U.S. Geological Survey suggests

that there may be up 15 billion barrels of oil in the Guyana Plateau. The state-owned oil company, Staatsolie, is by law the only company with the right to operate in Suriname's oil sector. Other companies can only access the market through production sharing agreements with Staatsolie. With its current output at 15,000 barrels per day (bpd), Staatsolie announced a robust expansion plan titled "Vision 2020" that would seek to expand output to 18,000 bpd by 2012. Staatsolie also plans to expand its onshore exploration research in order to increase reserves by 30 million barrels per 5-year period. In order to reach this goal, the company signed a production sharing agreement with the Australian company Hardman Resources. Staatsolie further intends to establish and develop near shore reserves. In its offshore activities, the company has production sharing agreements with the Spanish Repsol YPF (2004), the Danish Maersk Oil (2004), the American Occidental Petroleum Corporation (2005), and most recently the U.S. firm Murphy Oil. The much anticipated results from Repsol YPF's first test well were disappointing as it did not hit oil, and the evaluation of the drill results has postponed further test wells. The other companies operating offshore have not reached the test well drilling stage. Staatsolie plans to expand its refinery and capacity to 15,000 bpd. The company has also indicated that it wants to expand its downstream market to include more than diesel fuel. With reserves currently estimated at 88 million barrels, Staatsolie recently rolled out a $50 million onshore exploration program to expand its reserves.

In an effort to address the problem of Suriname's ailing 110 parastatals, the government has introduced a plan that would strengthen them, after which they would be privatized. The first parastatals chosen for this experiment were the banana company, Surland; the wood processing company, Bruynzeel; and the rice company, SML. After closing for more than 7 months in 2002, the banana company was reopened under the new name SBBS. With financial assistance from the European Union, the government completely restructured SBBS. The company is currently producing and exporting at record levels. The company is, however, not yet out of debt. The debt is primarily due to licensing fees SBBS paid for entry into the European market. In July 2008, the government announced an open tender for the privatization of SBBS. Both the Government of Suriname and the European Commission have indicated the need for SBBS to partner with a much larger company that has the international market access. The primary candidates could be the Univeg Group, an international fruits and vegetables conglomerate headquartered in Belgium, and Fyffes, Surland's former European partner headquartered in Ireland. Privatization attempts for the struggling wood parastatal Bruynzeel have failed. The government recently indicated it had no intention to hold an open tender and that it would develop the natural resources itself. In February 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture held a fourth bidding round for its ailing rice company SML. This round resulted in a division of the company's assets, which were sold to different bidders. The government has some significant outstanding debt from this company that remains to be paid.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since gaining independence, Suriname has become a member of the United Nations, the OAS, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Non-Aligned Movement. Suriname is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market and the Association of Caribbean States; it is associated with the European Union through the Lome Convention. The Netherlands remains Suriname's biggest donor, but it has been surpassed by the U.S. as a trade partner. Suriname participates in the Amazonian Pact, a grouping of the countries of the Amazon Basin that focuses on protection of the Amazon region's natural resources from environmental degradation. Reflecting its status as a major bauxite producer, Suriname is also a member of the International Bauxite Association. The country also belongs to the Economic Commission for Latin America, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. In 2008, Suriname signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

At independence, Suriname signed an agreement with the Netherlands providing for about $1.5 billion in development assistance grants and loans over a 10- to 15-year period. Initial disbursements amounted to about $100 million per year, but were discontinued during military rule. After the return to a democratically elected government in 1991, Dutch aid resumed. The Dutch relationship continued to be an important factor in the economy; with the Dutch insisting that Suriname undertake economic reforms and produce specific plans acceptable to the Dutch for projects on which aid funds could be spent. In 2000, the Dutch revised the structure of their aid package and signaled to the Surinamese authorities their decision to disburse aid by sectoral priorities as opposed to individual projects. In 2001 both governments agreed to spend the remaining development funds to finance programs in 6 different sectors: health care, education, environment, agriculture, housing, and governance.

Relations with the Dutch have been complicated by Dutch prosecution of Desi Bouterse in absentia on drug charges, and by legal maneuvering by Dutch prosecutors trying to bring charges relating to the December 1982 murders. (A Dutch appellate court in 2000 found Bouterse guilty of one drug-related charge; the decision was upheld on appeal.)

Bilateral cooperation agreements with several countries in the region have underscored the government's interest in strengthening regional ties. The return to Suriname from French Guiana of about 8,000 refugees from the 1986-91 Interior War between the military and domestic

insurgents has improved relations with French authorities. Longstanding border disputes with Guyana and French Guiana remain unresolved. Negotiations with the Government of Guyana brokered by the Jamaican Prime Minister in 2000 did not produce an agreement, but the countries agreed to restart talks after Guyanese national elections in 2001. In January 2002, the presidents of Suriname and Guyana met in Suriname and agreed to resume negotiations, establishing the Suriname-Guyana border commission. In 2004 Guyana brought a complaint against Suriname under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regarding their maritime border dispute. In 2007, the UN International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) ruled that both Suriname and Guyana are entitled to their share of the disputed offshore basin which is believed to be rich in oil and gas deposits. Using the equidistance line, the tribunal awarded Suriname 6,900 sq. miles and Guyana 12,800 sq. miles of this basin. Suriname's earlier dispute with Brazil ended amicably after formal demarcation of their shared border.

U.S.-SURINAMESE RELATIONS

Since the reestablishment of a democratic, elected government in 1991, the United States has maintained positive and mutually beneficial relations with Suriname based on the principles of democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law, and civilian authority over the military. To further strengthen civil society and bolster democratic institutions, the U.S. has provided training regarding appropriate roles for the military in civil society to some of Suriname's military officers and decision makers. To assist Suriname in the fight against drugs and associated criminal activity, the U.S. has helped train Surinamese anti-drug squad personnel. The U.S. and Suriname also have significant partnerships in fighting trafficking in persons and money laundering.

Since 2000, the U.S. has donated a criminal records database to the police as well as computers, vehicles, and radio equipment. Projects through which the U.S. has supported the judicial system include case management and computer hardware donation. Along with training projects, these programs have led to a strong relationship with law enforcement entities in Suriname. The United States has also worked with the Surinamese Ministries of Health, Education, and Defense to execute humanitarian engineering and health projects throughout the country.

The U.S. Peace Corps in Suriname works with the Ministry of Regional Development and rural communities to encourage community development in Suriname's interior.

Suriname is densely forested, and increased interest in large-scale commercial logging and mining in Suriname's interior have raised environmental concerns. The U.S. Forest Service, the Smithsonian, and numerous non-governmental environmental organizations have promoted technical cooperation with Suriname's government to prevent destruction of the country's tropical rain forest, one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world. U.S. experts have worked closely with local natural resource officials to encourage sustainable development of the interior and alternatives such as ecotourism. On December 1, 2000, UNESCO designated the 1.6 million hectare Central Suriname Nature Reserve a World Heritage site. Suriname's tourism sector remains a minor part of the economy, and tourist infrastructure is limited (in 2004, some 145,000 foreign tourists visited Suriname).

Suriname's efforts in recent years to liberalize economic policy created new possibilities for U.S. exports and investments. The U.S. remains one of Suriname's principal trading partners, largely due to ALCOA's longstanding investment in Suriname's bauxite mining and processing industry. Several U.S. corporations represented by Surinamese firms acting as dealers are active in Suriname, largely in the mining, consumer goods, and service sectors. Principal U.S. exports to Suriname include chemicals, vehicles, machine parts, meat, and wheat. U.S. consumer products are increasingly available through Suriname's many trading companies. Opportunities for U.S. exporters, service companies, and engineering firms will probably expand over the next decade.

Suriname is looking to U.S. and other foreign investors to assist in the commercial development of its vast natural resources and to help finance infrastructure improvements. Enactment of a new investment code and intellectual property rights protection legislation which would strengthen Suriname's attractiveness to investors has been discussed; the investment law was approved by the National Assembly and is currently being revised by the Ministry of Finance.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 19, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Suriname is a developing nation located on the northern coast of South America. Tourist facilities are widely available in the capital city of Paramaribo; they are less developed and in some cases non-existent in the country's rugged jungle interior. English is widely used, and most tourist arrangements can be made in English.

Entry Requirements: A passport, valid visa, and, if traveling by air, return ticket are required for travel to Suriname. There is a processing fee for business and tourist visas, and visas must be obtained before arrival in Suriname. A business visa requires a letter from the sponsoring company detailing the reason for the visit. There is an airport departure charge and a terminal fee, normally included in the price of airfare. Travelers arriving from Guyana, French Guiana, and Brazil are required to show proof of a yellow fever vaccination. For further information, travelers can contact the Embassy of the Republic of Suriname, 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 460, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 244-7488, email: embsur@erols.com, or the Consulate of Suriname in Miami, 7235 NW 19th Street, Suite A, Miami, Fl 33126, telephone (305) 593-2697. Visit the Embassy of Suriname web site at www.surinameembassy.org for the most current visa information. Important information for foreigners who have the intention of staying longer than three months: s of October 1, 2008, persons who intend to stay longer than three months in Suriname must apply for an Authorization for Temporary Stay (MVK) before travel to Suriname. The above implies that foreigners who need a visa (with the exception of foreigners of Surinamese origin) who have traveled to Suriname on a tourist or business visa will not be able to apply for residence during their stay in Suriname.

Safety and Security: Demonstrations do occur, primarily in the capital or second cities, and are usually peaceful, but American citizens traveling to or residing in Suriname should take common-sense precautions and avoid large gatherings or other events where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest. Travelers proceeding to the interior may encounter difficulties due to limited government authority. Limited transportation and communications may hamper the ability of the U.S. Embassy to assist in an emergency situation.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Criminal activity throughout the country is on the rise and foreigners, including Americans, may be viewed as targets of opportunity. Burglary, armed robbery, and violent crime occur with some frequency in Paramaribo and in outlying areas. Pick-pocketing and robbery are increasingly common in the major business and shopping districts of the capital. Visitors should avoid wearing expensive or flashy jewelry or displaying large amounts of money in public.

There have been several reports of criminal incidents in the vicinity of the major tourist hotels and night walks outside the immediate vicinity of the hotels are therefore to be avoided. Visitors should avoid the Palm Garden area ("Palmentuin" in Dutch) after dark, as there is no police presence and it is commonly the site of criminal activity.

Theft from vehicles is infrequent, but it does occur, especially in areas near the business district. Drivers are cautioned not to leave packages and other belongings in plain view in their vehicles. There have been reports of carjackings within Paramaribo, particularly in residential areas. When driving, car windows should be closed and doors locked. The use of public minibuses is discouraged, due to widespread unsafe driving and poor maintenance.

Travel to the interior is usually trouble-free, but there have been reports of tourists being robbed. Police presence outside Paramaribo is minimal, and banditry and lawlessness are occasionally of concern in the cities of Albina and Moengo and the district of Brokopondo, as well as along the East-West Highway between Paramaribo and Albina and the Afobakka Highway in the district of Para. There have been reports of attempted and actual carjackings committed by gangs of men along the East-West Highway. Travelers proceeding to the interior are advised to make use of well-established tour companies for a safer experience. The emergency number 115 is used for police, fire, and rescue and normally does not provide English-language services.

Fire and rescue services provide a relatively timely response, but police response, especially during nighttime hours, is a rarity for all but the most serious of crimes.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care, including emergency medical care, is limited and does not meet U.S. standards. There is one public emergency room in Paramaribo with only a small ambulance fleet providing emergency transport with limited first response capabilities. The emergency room has no neurosurgeon, and other medical specialists may not always be available. As a rule, hospital facilities are not air-conditioned, although private rooms with individual air-conditioning are available at extra cost and on a space-available basis. Emergency medical care outside Paramaribo is limited and is virtually non-existent in the interior of the country.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Suriname is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left in Suriname; left-hand-drive cars are allowed on the road. Excessive speed, unpredictable movements by vehicles, and motorcyclists/bicycles, unusual right of way patterns, poorly maintained roads, and a lack of basic safety equipment on many vehicles are daily hazards on Surinamese roads. As of January 2007, seatbelts are required for all passengers of automobiles, and drivers must use a hands-free device if using a mobile phone while driving. Visitors are encouraged to use automobiles equipped with seat belts and to avoid the use of motorcycles or scooters. An international driver's license is necessary to rent a car.

The major roads in Paramaribo are usually paved, but not always well maintained. Large potholes are common on city streets, especially during the rainy seasons, which last from approximately mid-November to January, and from April to July (rainy seasons can differ from year to year by as much as six weeks). Roads are often not marked with traffic lines. Many main thoroughfares do not have sidewalks, forcing pedestrians, motorcycles, and bicycle traffic to share the same space.

The East-West Highway, a paved road that stretches from Nieuw Nickerie in the west to Albina in the east, runs through extensive agriculture areas; it is not uncommon to encounter slow-moving farm traffic or animals on the road. Travelers should exercise caution when driving to and from Nieuw Nickerie at night due to poor lighting and sharp road turns without adequate warning signs. There are few service stations along the road, and western style rest stops are non-existent. The road is not always well maintained, and during the rainy season, large, sometimes impassable, sink holes develop along the road. Police recommend that travelers check with the police station in Albina for the latest safety information regarding travel between Paramaribo and Albina.

Roads in the interior are sporadically maintained dirt roads that pass through rugged, sparsely populated rain forest. Some roads are passable for sedans in the dry season, but they deteriorate rapidly during the rainy season. Interior roads are not lit, nor are there service stations or emergency call boxes. Bridges in the interior are in various states of repair. Travelers are advised to consult with local sources, including The Foundation for Nature Conservation in Suriname, or STINASU, at telephone (597) 421-683 or 476-579, or with their hotels regarding interior road conditions before proceeding.

For specific information concerning Suriname driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, and mandatory insurance, please contact the Embassy of Suriname in Washington, D.C., or the Consulate of Suriname in Miami. Visit the web site of Suriname Tourism Foundation for further information at www.suriname-tourism.org/cms.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration

(FAA) has assessed the Government of Suriname's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Suriname's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Credit cards are not widely accepted outside the major hotels and upscale restaurants. Travelers should contact their intended hotel or tour company to confirm that credit cards are accepted. Currently, only one bank, Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (RBTT), has Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) accepting foreign ATM cards. In order to withdraw money from the ATM machines of other banks, you must have a local Surinamese bank account and ATM card.

Visitors can exchange currency at banks, hotels and official exchange houses, which are called "cambios." Exchanging money outside of these locations is illegal and can be dangerous. Telephone service within Suriname can be problematic, especially during periods of heavy rains.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Suriname's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Suriname are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans residing or traveling in Suriname are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Suriname. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Dr. Sophie Redmondstraat 129, telephone (011) (597) 472-900, web site http://suriname.usembassy.gov. The Consular Section hours of operation for routine American citizen services are Mondays and Wednesdays from 8:00 to 10:00 AM, or by appointment, except on American and Surinamese holidays. U.S. citizens requiring emergency assistance on evenings, weekends, and holidays may contact an Embassy duty officer by cell phone at (011) (597) 088-08302. The U.S. Embassy in Paramaribo also provides consular services for French Guiana.

Intercountry Adoption

April 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Suriname is the Bureau of Family Rights and Affairs (Bureau Voor Familierechtelijke Zaken).

Address:
Bureau Voor Familerechtelijke Zaken
Grote Combeweg no. 7
Paramaribo, Suriname
Telephone Numbers:
+597 478759
+597 475763
+597 476485
Fax: +597 478759

Mailing Address:
Bureau Voor
Familierechtelijke Zaken
Aan Postbus 67
Paramaribo, Suriname
Email Address:
bufazsur@hotmail.com
bufazsur@yahoo.com

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents who are married must be at least 18 years older than the child. Married prospective adoptive parents must be married for at least three years to adopt. Single prospective adoptive parents must be at least 25 years of age. The age difference between the parents and the child may not be more than 50 years for the father and 40 years for the mother.

Residency Requirements: The Surinamese government has no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: The time frame for adoption processing varies. The local adoption authority states that processing is handled on a case-by-case basis and ranges from months to years for foreign-based adoptions.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Prospective adoptive parents

are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

Adoption Fees: The Surinamese government has no fees for adoption services, but prospective adoptive parents may be responsible for some associated costs such as hospital and orphanage fees.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents interested in adopting from Suriname should first contact the Bureau of Family Rights and Affairs, which assists in identifying a child to be placed with the prospective adoptive parents. Once a specific child is identified, the adoption request is filed in quintuple with the Cantonal Judge in Suriname, together with the birth certificates of the adoptive child and the adoptive parent(s). The Bureau of Family Rights and Affairs conducts an investigation to determine whether the request of the prospective adoptive parents is in the best interest of the adoptive child. The investigation typically lasts three months, but can sometimes take much longer.

Court proceedings are held following the investigation. The biological parents of the child may participate in the proceedings. The proceedings are closed to the general public. The personal appearance of the prospective adoptive parents is not required. The custody decree is registered with the civil registry of births where the adopted child registered.

Required Documents:

- A home study;
- Proof that the prospective adoptive parent(s) is living abroad;
- Marriage certificate of prospective adoptive parent(s), if applicable;
- Birth certificates of the prospective adoptive parent(s);
- Medical clearance for the prospective parent(s);
- Job letter from the prospective parent(s)' employer;
- Statement from the judicial authorities that the couple has permission to bring the child into the U.S. or into a third country;
- Statement from the judicial authorities that the couple, according to U.S. law, can adopt the child.

Embassy Of Suriname
Van Ness Centre EVE Suite 108
4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 244 7590
Fax: (202) 244 5878

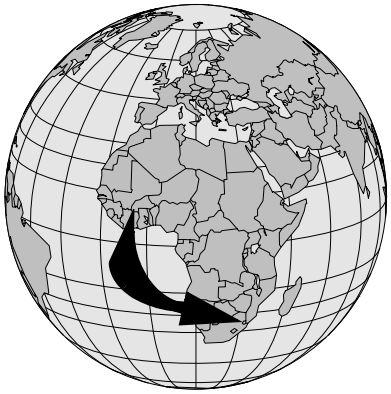
Consulate General In Miami
6303 Blue Lagoon Drive, Suite 325
Miami, FL 33126
Tel: (305) 265 4655

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Paramaribo
Dr. Sophieredmondstraat 129
Paramaribo, Suriname
Tel: +597 472900
Fax: +597 425788

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Suriname may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Paramaribo.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SWAZILAND

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Swaziland

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 17,363 sq. km. (6,704 sq. miles); slightly smaller than New Jersey.
Cities: Mbabane (capital, pop. 60,000), Manzini (principal commercial city, pop. 65,000).
Terrain: Mountainous plateau to savanna.
Climate: Near temperate to tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Swazi(s).
Population: 1,128,814.
Annual growth rate: -0.41%.
Ethnic groups: African 97%, European 3%
Religions: Zionist 40% (a blend of Christianity and indigenous ancestral worship), Roman Catholic 20%, Muslim 10%, other (includes Anglican, Baha'i, Methodist, Mormon, Jewish) 30%
Education: Years compulsory—none. Attendance—65% primary and 44% secondary. Literacy—81.6%
Health: Infant mortality rate (2007)—70/1,000. Life expectancy—40 years. The prevalence of HIV in Swaziland's adult population is 39%, the highest in the world.
Work force: Agriculture and forestry—21.4%; construction—6.1%; distribution—10.5%; finance—8.3%; manufacturing—20.1%; mining and quarry—1%; services—32.6%; transport—2.9%.

Government

Type: Monarchy.

Independence: September 6, 1968.

Constitution: On July 26, 2005, King Mswati III ratified Swaziland's constitution. This is Swaziland's first constitution in over 30 years. It went into effect February 8, 2006.

Government branches: Executive—monarch (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet (appointed by the king at the recommendation of the prime minister). Legislative—Parliament consisting of the House of Assembly (65 members: 55 elected, 10 appointed by the king) and Senate (30 members: 10 appointed by the House of Assembly, 20 appointed by the king). Judicial—a dual court system of traditional courts under chiefs and a Roman-Dutch system comprising magistrates courts, High Court, Supreme Court (formerly Court of Appeals).

Political subdivisions: 4 regions, 9 municipal governments, and 55 tinkhundla centers (traditional administrative units).

Political parties: None registered, though the new Constitution does not forbid parties.

Suffrage: Universal after 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $2.9 billion.
GDP real growth rate: (2007) 2.4%.
Per capita income: (2007) $4,800.
Inflation: (2007) 8.2%.
Natural resources: Coal, diamonds, quarry stone, timber, talc.
Agriculture: (11.8% of GDP) Products—sugarcane, corn, citrus fruits, livestock, wood, pineapple, tobacco, rice, peanuts.
Manufacturing: (45.7% of GDP) Types—sugar refining, light manufactured goods, wood pulp, textiles, processed foods, consumer goods.
Trade: (2006) Exports—$1.93 billion: soft drink concentrates, sugar, pulp, canned fruits, cotton yarn. Major markets—South Africa, EU, Mozambique, U.S. Imports—$1.91 billion: chemicals, clothing, foodstuffs, machinery, motor vehicles, petroleum products.

PEOPLE

The majority of the population is ethnic Swazi, mixed with a small number of Zulus and non-Africans. Traditionally Swazis have been subsistence farmers and herders, but some now work in the growing urban formal economy and in government. Some Swazis work in the mines in South Africa. Christianity in Swaziland is sometimes mixed with tradi-

tional beliefs and practices. Most Swazis ascribe a special spiritual role to the monarch.

The country's official languages are Siswati (a language related to Zulu) and English. Government and commercial business is conducted mainly in English.

HISTORY

According to tradition, the people of the present Swazi nation migrated south before the 16th century to what is now Mozambique. Following a series of conflicts with people living in the area of modern Maputo, the Swazis settled in northern Zululand in about 1750. Unable to match the growing Zulu strength, the Swazis moved gradually northward in the 1800s and established themselves in the area of modern or present Swaziland.

They consolidated their hold under several able leaders. The most important was Mswati II, from whom the Swazis derive their name. Under his leadership in the 1840s, the Swazis expanded their territory to the northwest and stabilized the southern frontier with the Zulus.

Contact with the British came early in Mswati's reign, when he asked British authorities in South Africa for assistance against Zulu raids into Swaziland. It also was during Mswati's reign that the first whites settled in the country. Following Mswati's death, the Swazis reached agreements with British and South African authorities over a range of issues, including independence, claims on resources by Europeans, administrative authority, and security. South Africans administered the Swazi interests from 1894 to 1902. In 1902 the British assumed control.

In 1921, after more than 20 years of rule by Queen Regent Lobatsibeni, Sobhuza II became Ngwenyama (lion) or head of the Swazi nation. The same year, Swaziland established its first legislative body—an advisory council of elected European representatives mandated to advise the British high commissioner on non-Swazi affairs. In 1944, the high commissioner conceded that the council had no official status and recognized the paramount chief, or king, as the native authority for the territory to issue legally enforceable orders to the Swazis.

In the early years of colonial rule, the British had expected that Swaziland would eventually be incorporated into South Africa. After World War II, however, South Africa's intensification of racial discrimination induced the United Kingdom to prepare Swaziland for independence. Political activity intensified in the early 1960s. Several political parties were formed and jostled for independence and economic development. The largely urban parties had few ties to the rural areas, where the majority of Swazis lived. The traditional Swazi leaders, including King Sobhuza II and his Inner Council, formed the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM), a political group that capitalized on its close identification with the Swazi way of life. Responding to pressure for political change, the colonial government scheduled an election in mid-1964 for the first legislative council in which the Swazis would participate. In the election, the INM and four other parties, most having more radical platforms, competed in the election. The INM won all 24 elective seats.

Having solidified its political base, INM incorporated many demands of the more radical parties, especially that of immediate independence. In 1966, the U.K. Government agreed to discuss a new constitution. A constitutional committee agreed on a constitutional monarchy for Swaziland, with self-government to follow parliamentary elections in 1967. Swaziland became independent on September 6, 1968. Swaziland's post-independence elections were held in May 1972. The INM received close to 75% of the vote. The Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) received slightly more than 20% of the vote, which gained the party three seats in parliament.

In response to the NNLC's showing, King Sobhuza repealed the 1968 constitution on April 12, 1973 and dissolved parliament. He assumed all powers of government and prohibited all political activities and trade unions from operating. He justified his actions as having removed alien and divisive political practices incompatible with the Swazi way of life. In January 1979, a new parliament was convened, chosen partly through indirect elections and partly through direct appointment by the King.

King Sobhuza II died in August 1982, and Queen Regent Dzeliwe assumed the duties of the head of state. In 1984, an internal dispute led to the replacement of the Prime Minister and eventual replacement of Dzeliwe by a new Queen Regent Ntombi. Ntombi's only child, Prince Makhosetive, was named heir to the Swazi throne. Real power at this time was concentrated in the Liqoqo, a supreme traditional advisory body that claimed to give binding advice to the Queen Regent. In October 1985, Queen Regent Ntombi demonstrated her power by dismissing the leading figures of the Liqoqo. Prince Makhosetive returned from school in England to ascend to the throne and help end the continuing internal disputes. He was enthroned as Mswati III on April 25, 1986. Shortly afterwards he abolished the Liqoqo. In November 1987, a new parliament was elected and a new cabinet appointed.

In 1988 and 1989, an underground political party, the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) criticized the King and his government, calling for democratic reforms. In response to this political threat and to growing popular calls for greater accountability within government, the King and the Prime Minister initiated an ongoing national debate on the constitutional and political future of Swaziland. This debate produced a handful of political reforms, approved by the King, including direct and indirect voting, in the 1993 national elections.

Although domestic groups and international observers criticized the gov-

ernment in late 2002 for interfering with the independence of the judiciary, parliament, and freedom of the press, significant improvements have been made concerning rule of law in the past two years. Swaziland's Court of Appeals resumed hearing cases in late 2004 after a two-year absence in protest of the government's refusal to abide by the court's decisions in two important rulings. In addition, the new Constitution went into effect in early 2006, and the 1973 proclamation, which, among other measures, banned political parties, lapsed at that time.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

On July 26, 2005 King Mswati III ratified Swaziland's constitution. It went into effect February 8, 2006. This is Swaziland's first constitution in over 30 years.

According to Swazi law and custom, the monarch holds supreme executive, legislative, and judicial powers. In general practice, however, the monarch's power is delegated through a dualistic system: modern, statutory bodies, like the cabinet; and less formal traditional government structures. The king must approve legislation passed by parliament before it becomes law. The prime minister, who is head of government, and the cabinet, which is recommended by the prime minister and approved by the king, exercise executive authority. At present, parliament consists of a 65-seat House of Assembly (55 members are elected through popular vote; 10 are appointed by the king) and 30-seat Senate (10 members are appointed by the House of Assembly, and 20 are appointed by the king). House of Assembly elections were last on September 19, 2008. While King Mswati announced that Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini would serve as his new Prime Minister on October 16, cabinet was officially dissolved immediately before the elections and all other ministers have yet to be named.

For local administration Swaziland is divided into four regions, each with an administrator appointed by the king. Parallel to the government structure is the traditional system consisting of the king and his advisers, traditional courts, 55 tinkhundla (subregional districts in which traditional chiefs are grouped), and 366 chiefdoms. Swaziland is a member of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), with which the U.S. began negotiating a free trade agreement in May 2003. The other members of SACU are Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, and South Africa.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **MSWATI III**
Prime Minister: **Absalom Themba DLAMINI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Albert SHABANGU**
Min. for Agriculture: **Mtiti FAKUDZE**
Min. for Economic Planning: **Absalom Muntu DLAMINI, Rev.**
Min. for Education: **Constance SIMELANE**
Min. for Enterprise & Employment: **Lufto DLAMINI**
Min. for Finance: **Majozi SITHOLE**
Min. for Foreign Affairs & Trade: **Moses Mathedele DLAMINI**
Min. for Health: **Mfomfo NKAMBULE**
Min. for Home Affairs: **GABHENI, Prince**
Min. for Housing & Urban Development: **Mabili DLAMINI**
Min. for Justice: **David DLAMINI, Prince**
Min. for Natural Resources: **Dumsile SUKATI**
Min. for Public Service & Information: **Themba MSIBI**
Min. for Public Works & Transport: **Elijah SHONGWE**
Min. for Regional Development: **Sipho SHONGWE**
Min. for Tourism & Environment: **Thandie SHONGWE**
Governor, Central Bank: **Martin DLAMINI**
Ambassador to the US: **Mary Madzandza KANYA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Phesheya Mbongeni DLAMINI**

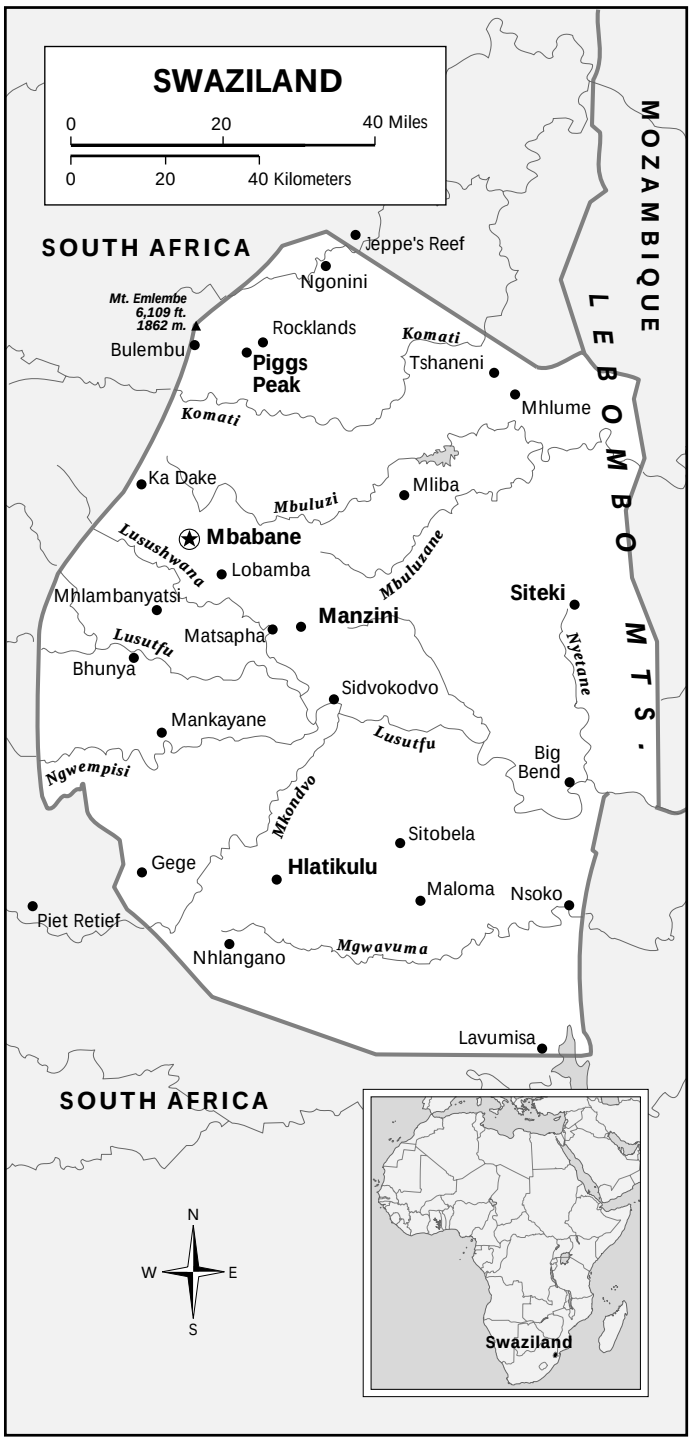
Swaziland maintains an embassy in the United States at 1712 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel: 202-234-5002; fax: 202-234-8254). Swaziland's UN Mission is located at 408 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022 (tel: 212-371-8910; fax: 212-754-2755).

ECONOMY

Swaziland ranks as a lower middle income country but it's estimated that 69 percent of the population lives in poverty. Most of the high-level economic activity is in the hands of non-Africans, but ethnic Swazis are becoming more active. Small entrepreneurs are moving into middle management positions. Although 70% of Swazis live in rural areas, nearly every homestead has a wage earner. The past few years have seen wavering economic growth, which has been exacerbated by the economy's inability to create new jobs at the same rate that new job seekers enter the market. This is due in part to the country's population growth rate, which strains the natural heritage and the country's ability to provide adequate social services, such as health care and education. Overgrazing, soil depletion, drought, and floods are persistent problems.

Nearly 60% of Swazi territory is held by the Crown in trust of the Swazi nation. The balance is privately owned, much of it by foreigners. The question of land use and ownership remains a very sensitive one. For Swazis living on rural homesteads, the principal occupation is either subsistence farming or livestock herding. Culturally, cattle are important symbols of wealth and status, but they are being used increasingly for milk, meat, and profit.

Swaziland enjoys well-developed road links with South Africa. It also has railroads running east to west and north to south. The older east-west link, called the Goba line, makes it possible to export bulk goods from Swaziland through the Port of Maputo in Mozambique. Until recently, most of Swaziland's imports were shipped through this port. Conflict in Mozambique in the 1980s diverted many Swazi exports to ports in South Africa. A north-south rail link, completed in 1986, provides a



connection between the Eastern Transvaal rail network and the South African ports of Richard's Bay and Durban.

The sugar industry, based solely on irrigated cane, is Swaziland's leading export earner and private-sector employer. Soft drink concentrate (a U.S. investment) another large export earner, followed by wood pulp and lumber from cultivated pine forests. Pineapple and citrus fruit are other important agricultural exports.

Swaziland mines coal and diamonds for export. There also is a quarry industry for domestic consumption. Mining contributes about 1.8% of Swaziland's GDP each year but has been declining in importance in recent years. Recently, a number of industrial firms have located at the industrial estate at Matsapha near Manzini. In addition to processed agricultural and forestry products, the industrial sector at Matsapha also produces garments, textiles, and a variety of light manufactured products. The Swaziland Industrial Development Company (SIDC) and the Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority (SIPA) have assisted in bringing many of these industries to the country. Government programs encourage Swazi entrepreneurs to run small and medium-sized firms. Tourism also is important, attracting more than 424,000 visitors annually, mostly from Europe and South Africa.

From the mid-1980s, foreign investment in the manufacturing sector boosted economic growth rates significantly. Beginning in mid-1985, the depreciated value of the currency increased the competitiveness of Swazi exports and moderated the growth of imports, generating trade surpluses. During the 1990s, the country often ran small trade deficits. South Africa and the European Union are major customers for Swazi exports.

Swaziland became eligible for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2000 and qualified for the apparel provision in 2001. AGOA created over 30,000 jobs, mostly for women, in Swaziland's apparel industry. However, the industry suffered in 2005-2006, due to both increased global competition as a result of the end of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) on January 1, 2005, and the strong Rand (Swaziland's currency is linked to the South African Rand at par), which reduced exports. There are an estimated 16,000 people employed in the apparel industry.

Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, and the Republic of South Africa form the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), where import duties apply uniformly to member countries. Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa

also are members of the Common Monetary Area (CMA) in which repatriation and unrestricted funds are permitted. Swaziland issues its own currency, the lilangeni (plural: emalangeni).

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Swaziland is a member of the United Nations, the African Union, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). It is presently the chair of the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Organ for Defense, Politics, and Security. Ten accredited ambassadors or honorary consuls are resident in the country. Swaziland maintains diplomatic missions in Brussels, Copenhagen, Kuala Lumpur, London, Maputo, Nairobi, Pretoria, Taipei, the United Nations, and Washington.

U.S.-SWAZILAND RELATIONS

The United States seeks to maintain and strengthen the good bilateral relations that have existed since the kingdom became independent in 1968. U.S. policy stresses continued economic and political reform and improved industrial relations. The United States assists Swaziland with a number of HIV/AIDS initiatives and programs implemented through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Peace Corps, African Development Foundation, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Defense. In addition, the U.S. supports small enterprise development, education, military training, institutional and human resources development, agricultural development, and trade capacity building. The U.S. is also the largest bilateral donor to the Global Fund, Swaziland's principal HIV/AIDS funding source. The U.S. Government sends about 4 Swazi professionals to the United States each year, from both the public and private sectors, primarily for master's degrees, and about 5 others for three- to four-week International Visitor programs. About 6 military members are sent to the United States for education and training purposes. In 2003, Peace Corps volunteers returned to Swaziland after a nine-year absence. The current Peace Corps/Swaziland program, Community Health Project, focuses on HIV/AIDS and provides assistance in the execution of two components of the HIV/AIDS national strategy—risk reduction and mitigation of the impact of the disease. Volunteers encourage youth to engage in appropriate behaviors that will reduce the spread of HIV; they work with children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and they assist in capacity building for non-governmental organizations and community based organizations.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MBABANE (E) 2350 Mbabane Place, Dulles, VA 20189-2350, 268-404-6441/2/3/3/4/5, Fax 268-404-5959, Workweek: M-Th, 7:30-5:00; F, 7:30-1:30, Website: http://mbabane.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Brenda M. Dudley
CDC:	George Bicego
CON/POL/ECO:	Davinia Seay
MGT:	Sarah Morrison
SPSH:	Des Diallo
AMB:	Maurice S. Parker
DCM:	Sarah Morrison
PAO:	Tanya Ward
GSO:	Anthony Loh
RSO:	J Scott Mooneyham
CLO:	Lisa Mooneyham
EEO:	Vacant
IMO:	Louis Fleitz
ISSO:	Louis Fleitz
State ICASS:	Anthony Loh

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 6, 2008

Country Description: Swaziland is a small developing nation in southern Africa. Several well-developed facilities for tourism are available. The capital is Mbabane.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. Visas are not required for tourists and business travelers arriving in Swaziland for short visits (less than 60 days) on standard U.S. passports. Most travelers visiting Swaziland enter through South Africa.

Please Note: All travelers traveling to South Africa are strongly encouraged to have several unstamped visa pages left in their passports. South Africa requires two unstamped visa pages, excluding amendment pages, to enter the country. Visitors who do not have enough free visa pages in their passport risk being denied entry and returned to the U.S. at their own expense.

For further information on Swaziland's visa requirements, contact the Embassy of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 1712 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009; phone (202) 234-5002.

Safety and Security: Public protests, demonstrations, and strikes occur from time to time in Swaziland and are mostly in response to ongoing labor relations/difficulties. When a strike is pending, armed soldiers may be called to augment the police force, and they have used force to disrupt such events. During the course of such events, police may not distinguish between "innocent bystanders" and protesters. Americans should avoid crowds, political rallies and street demonstrations. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Violent crime is a concern and is the most significant threat to American citizens visiting or working in Swaziland. Incidents of petty crime and occasionally violent crime are most prevalent in Mbabane, the capital city, and Manzini, Swaziland's urban industrial center, but also affect most other urban and rural areas. Criminals will resort to force if necessary, including deadly force, in order to accomplish their goal. Gangs are not deterred by confrontations with their intended victims. Carjacking occurs and, as with other crimes, can be potentially violent if victims do not immediately cooperate.

Congested dark urban areas are particularly dangerous at night and daytime attacks are not uncommon. The presence of others on the street should not be misinterpreted as an indication of security. Many victims report being robbed in the presence of large numbers of witnesses. Pedestrians are cautioned not to wear jewelry or carry expensive or unnecessary valuables in public. American citizens are also advised against displaying cell phones and large sums of cash, as they are targets for thieves. Money should only be converted at authorized currency exchanges and never with street vendors.

Crime victims should immediately report the incident to the nearest police station. If there is an emergency, the police can be contacted by dialing 999.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Swaziland is: 999.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are limited throughout Swaziland. Although the Mbabane Clinic in the capital is small and currently undergoing building renovations, it is well equipped and well staffed for minor procedures. For advanced care, Americans often choose to go to South Africa where better facilities and specialists exist. Most prescription drugs are available locally or can be imported from South Africa, but travelers are advised to bring sufficient quantities of their own required medication. A doctor's note describing the medication may be helpful if questioned by authorities. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Swaziland. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en. The Swaziland Embassy site indicates that vaccination against yellow fever and cholera may be required, but can be secured in Swaziland.

Travelers should be aware that Swaziland suffers from one of the highest rates of TB and HIV/AIDS in the world, and take adequate precautions to avoid exposure.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Swaziland is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic accidents in Swaziland may pose an even greater hazard than crime. Visitors should use extreme caution when driving, given the relatively high rates of speed of drivers on major thoroughfares. Other hazards include poor lighting and traffic signals; presence of pedestrians, animals, and slower moving vehicles; aggressive driving behavior; and erratic stopping for pedestrian and animals. Traffic drives on the left in Swaziland, which requires U.S. drivers to exercise particular caution. Special care should be used in driving at night and in fog, especially in rural areas. Rural and suburban areas are poorly lit and pose additional safety hazards as pedestrians and animals cross the road. Many vehicles are poorly maintained and lack headlights.

Extreme caution is recommended if/when using mini-bus taxis, which follow fixed routes and are flagged down by passengers almost everywhere on the streets and roads of Swaziland. Many of these vehicles fail to meet minimal safety standards. Drivers frequently overload the vehicles and travel at excessive speeds. Fatal accidents involving these conveyances are very common.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Swaziland's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Swaziland's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: It is illegal to photograph Swaziland's government buildings, members of the Swazi armed forces, royal residences

and official ceremonies without prior permission from government authorities.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Swazilandlaws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Swaziland are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: Because Embassy Mbabane does not process immigrant visas, adoptions of Swazi children are processed at Consulate General Johannesburg, South Africa. For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Swaziland are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security Swaziland. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located in the Central Bank Building on Mahlokohla Street in the capital city of Mbabane. The mailing address is Box 199, Mbabane, Swaziland. The telephone number is (268) 404-6441/5; fax (268) 404-5959.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel. Intercountry adoptions in Swaziland are governed by the Adoption of Children Act of 1952. Under this law, an adopted child cannot be removed from the Kingdom of Swaziland within one year of adoption unless permission has been obtained, in writing, from the Minister of Home Affairs.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that only one immigrant visa was issued to an orphan from Swaziland in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Swaziland is:

Department of Social Welfare
Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
Box 5
Mbabane, Swaziland
Tel: +268-404-2431
Fax: +268-404-2092

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parent(s) are required to undergo a home study by a Social Welfare Officer. The adoptive parent(s) must be at least 25 years old and at least 25 years older than the child, if the adopted child is over 16 years of age. In addition, the law requires that adoptive parent(s) be "qualified" and of "good repute." Note: U.S. immigration law requires that an adopted orphan be under the age of sixteen in order to qualify for a U.S. immigrant visa.

Residency Requirements: Swaziland has no residency requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Time Frame: The time frame for adoption procedures differs widely and depends in large part on how quickly prospective adoptive parents(s) and their agents collect the necessary paperwork. From start to finish, the process can take up to three months. Applying for a Swaziland passport for the child (necessary for the U.S. immigrant visa application) can take additional time.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies or adoption attorneys in Swaziland. Prospective adoptive parents apply directly to the Department of Social Welfare. However, prospective adoptive parents must hire a local attorney to assist them with some steps in the process. The U.S. Embassy in Swaziland has a list of lawyers known to work with U.S. citizens. Please contact the U.S. Embassy in Mbabane for a list of lawyers. Neither the U.S. Department of State nor the U.S. Embassy in Mbabane can vouch for the efficacy or professionalism of attorneys referenced on this list.

Adoption Fees: The Department of Social Welfare does not charge any fees for processing adoptions; nor does the Magistrate's Courts. Appropriate lawyers' fees will apply. All paperwork submitted to the Courts or to the Department of Social Welfare must get a "revenue stamp" (E10 or USD $1.50) and the fee for a passport is Emalangeni 150 (USD $25).

Adoption Procedures: Adoption procedures are initiated when a prospective adoptive parent(s), having first identified the child to be adopted, submits an adoption request to the Department of Social Welfare office in the district where the child resides. The Department will have one of its Social Welfare Officers conduct a home study, if the prospective adoptive parents reside in Swaziland.

In the case where the adoptive parents reside outside Swaziland, the Department of Social Welfare will generally accept a home study completed by a reputable adoption agency.

The prospective adoptive parents should hire a lawyer to refer the case to the Magistrate's Court for an adoption hearing. Amongst other considerations, the Court must decide that the adoption is in the best interests of the child. In addition, the Court must receive consent from the child's parents, from the guardian in the case where the parents are deceased, or from the child if he/she is over 10 years of age. An adoption order terminates all rights and legal responsibilities existing between the child and any legally recognized parent or extended family. The adopted child is thereafter deemed by law to be the legitimate child of the adoptive parents. Prospective parents can apply for a revised Swaziland birth certificate based on the official order of adoption.

An adopted child cannot be removed from the Kingdom of Swaziland within one year of adoption unless permission has been obtained, in writing, from the Minister of Home Affairs. Once permission has been obtained, the parents may apply to the Ministry of Home Affairs for the passport. The passport fee is E150 (USD $25).

Required Documents:

- Request for adoption to the Department of Social Welfare;
- Home study;
- Identification of prospective adoptive parents;
- Other documents may be requested as the case proceeds.

Embassy of the Kingdom of Swaziland
1712 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Tel: +202-234-5002

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy, Mbabane
Central Bank Building
Mahlokohla Street, Mbabane
Box 199
Mbabane, Swaziland
Tel: +268-404-6441/5
Fax: +268-404-5959
Email: consularmbaban@state.gov

The U.S. Embassy in Swaziland does not conduct immigrant visa interviews or make decisions in immigrant visa cases. All immigrant visa applications for citizens of Swaziland, including adopted children, are reviewed at the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Swaziland may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Swaziland. Questions about U.S. immigrant visas for adopted children from Swaziland should be directed to the U.S. Consulate General in Johannesburg at the address provided above. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



SWEDEN

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Sweden

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 449,964 sq. km. (173,731 sq. mi.)—slightly larger than California.

Cities: Capital—Stockholm (city population: 795,163). Other cities—Göteborg (city population: 493,498), Malmö (city population: 280,801).

Terrain: Generally flat or rolling. Three of the principal rivers, the Ume, the Torne and the Angerman, flow into the Gulf of Bothnia. The highest areas are found in the Kjolen mountain range along the border with Norway, where peaks rise to over 1,500 m; the highest point is at the northern tip of this range, at Kebnekaise, which reaches 2,111 m (6,926 ft.). South of the mountains is the lakeland area, where the Vanern, the largest lake in western Europe—over twice the size of Luxembourg—is situated. South of the lakes is the infertile Smaland plateau, surrounded by the lowland plains that border the sea. The mountainous regions and some northern parts of Sweden are covered in snow for much of the year, and only 8% of the country is given over to agriculture.

Climate: Temperate in south with cold, cloudy winters and cool, partly cloudy summers; sub-arctic in the north. The north of Sweden lies within the Arctic Circle, and continental influences also contribute to the cold climate. In northern areas winters are usually long and extremely cold. The south of Sweden benefits from maritime influences, however, and the climate is milder. In the capital, Stockholm, on the southeast coast, daily average temperatures only fall to -3.1ºC (27ºF) in February, the coldest month, and are as warm as 17.8ºC (64ºF) in July. The mean annual rainfall in Stockholm is 22 in., with the largest amount of rain falling between July and September.

People

Nationality: Noun—Swedes; adjective—Swedish.

Population: (May 2008) 9,208,034.

Annual population growth rate: (May 2008) 0.78%.

Ethnic groups: Indigenous Swedes, ethnic Finns, ethnic Sami.

Immigrants (2007): 1.2 million of Sweden's residents are foreign-born; 17.3% of all Swedes are either born abroad or have two parents born abroad. In 2007 99,485 people immigrated to Sweden. The immigrant groups are Finns, Iraqis, ex-Yugoslavia nationals, Somalis, Iranians, Norwegians, Danes, and Poles.

Religions: Lutheran (80%), Muslim (5%), Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Baptist, Jewish, Buddhist.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy—99%.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2006)—2.78/1,000. Life expectancy—men 78.94 years, women 82.99 years.

Work force: (45.10 million, July 2008 est.): Services—70.7%; industry—28.2%; agriculture—1.1%. Unemployment (May 2008)—5.9%.

Unemployment: (2007)—5.2%.

National holidays: (2008): January 1 (New Year's Day); January 6 (Epiphany); March 21 (Good Friday); March 22 (Easter); March 23 (Easter Sunday); March 24 (Easter Monday); May 1 (May Day and Ascension Day); May 11 (Whit Sunday); June 6 (National Day); June 21 (Midsummer Holiday); November 1 (All Saints' Day); December 25 (Christmas); December 26 (Boxing Day).

The eve of a holiday is as important—or more so—than the holiday itself. Most Swedes have the day off, including those working in the civil service, banks, public transport, hospitals, shops, and the media. Others have at least a half-day. This applies especially to Midsummer's Eve, All Saints' Day Eve, and Christmas Eve. The eve of May Day is called Valborg Eve or St Walpurgis. When a holiday falls on a Thursday many Swedes have the following Friday off in addition. When a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday it is not taken on the following Monday.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.
Constitution: The Swedish Constitution is based on four fundamental laws: the Instrument of Government (originally dating from June 6, 1809), the Act of Succession (1810), the Freedom of the Press Act (1949), and the Riksdag Act. Following partial reforms in 1968 and 1969, a new Instrument of Government and a new Riksdag Act were adopted in 1973 and 1974, and the revised Constitution came into force on January 1, 1975, replacing the Acts of 1809, 1866, and 1949.
Government branches: Executive—monarch (head of state); prime minister (head of government); Cabinet, responsible to parliament. Legislative—unicameral parliament (Riksdag—349 members). Judicial—84 district courts, 10 appeal courts and 2 superior courts.
Political subdivisions: 21 counties, 18 county councils, 290 municipalities, and two regions.
Political parties: The Moderate Party (conservative), the Liberal Party, the Center Party, the Christian Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Left Party, and the Green Party.
Suffrage: Universal, 18 years of age. After 3 years of legal residence, immigrants may vote in county and municipal elections (but not in national elections).

Economy

GDP: (2007, purchasing power parity) $308.9 billion.
GDP: (2007, official exchange rate) $384.1 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 2.7%.
Per capita income: (2007, purchasing power parity) $36,500.
Inflation rate: (June 2008) 3.2%.
Natural resources: Forests, hydroelectric power, iron ore, copper, lead, zinc, gold, silver, tungsten, uranium, arsenic, feldspar, timber.
Agriculture: (2007, 1.4% of GDP) Products—dairy products, meat, grains (barley, wheat), sugar beets, potatoes, wood. Arable land—6 million acres.
Industry: (2007, 28.9% of GDP) Types—machinery/metal products (iron and steel), electrical equipment, aircraft, paper products, precision equipment (bearings, radio and telephone parts, armaments), wood pulp and paper products, processed foods.
Services: (2006, 69.8% of GDP) Types—telecommunications, computer equipment, biotech.
Trade: Exports (2007)—$170.2 billion. Types—machinery, transport equipment, motor vehicles, wood products, paper, pulp, chemicals, iron and steel products and manufactured goods. Major trading partners, exports (2008)—Germany 10.3%, Norway 9.1%, U.K. 7.7%, U.S. 7.0%, EU total 61.6%. Imports (2007)—$150.6 billion. Types—machinery, petroleum and petroleum products, chemicals, motor vehicles, iron and steel, foodstuffs, clothing. Major trading partners, imports (2008)—Germany 18.4%, Denmark 9.5%, Norway 8.8%, U.K. 6.9%, Netherlands 5.8%, Finland 5.5%, France 5.3%, EU total 70.9%.

PEOPLE

Sweden has one of the world's highest life expectancies and one of the lowest birth rates. The country counts at least 17,000 Sami among its population. About one-fifth of Sweden's population are immigrants or have at least one foreign-born parent. The largest immigrant groups are from Finland, Iraq, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iran, Norway, Denmark, and Poland. This reflects Nordic immigration, earlier periods of labor immigration, and later decades of refugee and family immigration.

Swedish is a Germanic language related to Danish and Norwegian but different in pronunciation and orthography. English is by far the leading foreign language, particularly among students and those under age 50.

Sweden has an extensive child-care system that guarantees a place for all young children from 2-6 years old in a public day-care facility. From ages 7-16, children attend compulsory comprehensive school. After completing the ninth grade, 90% attend upper secondary school for either academic or technical education. Swedes benefit from an extensive social welfare system, which provides childcare and maternity and paternity leave, a ceiling on health care costs, old-age pensions, and sick leave, among other benefits. Parents are entitled to a total of 480 days' paid leave at 80% of a government-determined salary cap between birth and the child's eighth birthday. The parents may split those days however they wish, but 60 of the days are reserved specifically for the father. The parents may also take an additional five months of unpaid leave.

HISTORY

During the seventh and eighth centuries, the Swedes were merchant seamen well known for their far-reaching trade. In the ninth century, Nordic Vikings raided and ravaged the European continent as far as the Black and Caspian Seas. During the 11th and 12th centuries, Sweden gradually became a unified Christian kingdom that later included Finland. Queen Margaret of Denmark united all the Nordic lands in the "Kalmar Union" in 1397. Continual tension within the countries and within the union gradually led to open conflict between the Swedes and the Danes in the 15th century. The union's final disintegration in the early 16th century brought on a long-lived rivalry between Norway and Denmark on one side and Sweden and Finland on the other.

In the 16th century, Gustav Vasa fought for an independent Sweden, crushing an attempt to restore the Kalmar Union and laying the foundation for modern Sweden. At the same time, he broke with the Catholic Church and established the Reformation. During the 17th century, after winning wars against Denmark, Russia, and Poland, Sweden-Finland (with scarcely more than 1 million inhabitants) emerged as a great power. Its contributions during the Thirty Years War under Gustav II Adolf (Gustavus Adolphus) determined the political as well as the reli-

gious balance of power in Europe. By 1658, Sweden ruled several provinces of Denmark as well as what is now Finland, Ingermanland (in which St. Petersburg is located), Estonia, Latvia, and important coastal towns and other areas of northern Germany. Russia, Saxony-Poland, and Denmark-Norway pooled their power in 1700 and attacked the Swedish-Finnish empire. Although the young Swedish King Karl XII (also known as Charles XII) won spectacular victories in the early years of the Great Northern War, his plan to attack Moscow and force Russia into peace proved too ambitious; he fell in battle in 1718. In the subsequent peace treaties, the allied powers, joined by Prussia and England-Hanover, ended Sweden's reign as a great power.

Sweden suffered further territorial losses during the Napoleonic wars and was forced to cede Finland to Russia in 1809. The following year, the Swedish King's adopted heir, French Marshal Bernadotte, was elected Crown Prince as Karl Johan by the Riksdag (parliament). In 1813, his forces joined the allies against Napoleon. The Congress of Vienna compensated Sweden for its lost German territory through a merger of the Swedish and Norwegian crowns in a dual monarchy. Sweden's last war was fought in 1814. It was a brief confrontation with Norway to restrain their demands for independence. The war resulted in Norway entering into union with Sweden, but with its own constitution and parliament. The Sweden-Norway union was peacefully dissolved at Norway's request in 1905.

Sweden's predominantly agricultural economy shifted gradually from village to private farm-based agriculture during the Industrial Revolution, but this change failed to bring economic and social improvements commensurate with the rate of population growth. About 1 million Swedes immigrated to the United States between 1850 and 1890.



favor of free enterprise, the introduction of taxation and voting reforms, the installation of a national military service, and the rise in the electorate of three major party groups—Social Democratic Party, Liberal Party, and Conservative Party. During and after World War I, in which Sweden remained neutral, the country benefited from the worldwide demand for

Swedish steel, ball bearings, wood pulp, and matches. Postwar prosperity provided the foundations for the social welfare policies characteristic of modern Sweden. Foreign policy concerns in the 1930s centered on Soviet and German expansionism, which stimulated abortive efforts at Nordic defense cooperation. Sweden followed a policy of armed neutrality during World War II and currently remains nonaligned.

Sweden became a member of the European Union (EU) in 1995. In September 2003 Sweden held a referendum on entering the European Monetary Union. The Swedish people rejected participation, with 56% voting against and 42% for. All parliamentary parties pledged to respect the outcome of the referendum. No new referendum is currently planned.

GOVERNMENT

Sweden's government is a limited constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. Popular government in Sweden rests upon ancient tradition. The Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) stems from tribal courts (Ting) and the election of kings during the Viking era. It became a permanent institution in the 15th century.

King Carl XVI Gustaf (Bernadotte) ascended to the throne on September 15, 1973. His authority is symbolic and representational. Executive authority is vested in the Cabinet, which consists of a prime minister and 22 ministers who run the governmental departments. The current "Alliance" government, led by Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, came to power in September 2006.

Sweden has three levels of government: national, regional, and local. In addition, there is a European level, which has acquired increasing importance following Sweden's entry into the EU. Parliamentary, municipal, and county council elections are held every four years. The 349-member unicameral Riksdag has legislative powers, and is in session generally from September through mid-June. Proposals for new laws are presented by the government, which also implements decisions made by the Riksdag. The government is assisted in its work by the Government Offices, comprising a number of ministries, and some 300 central government agencies and public administrations.

Sweden is divided into 21 counties (län), 18 county councils (landsting), 290 municipalities (kommuner), and two semi-independent regions. Each county is headed by a governor, who is appointed by the central government. The counties coordinate administration with national political goals for the county. The county council (landsting) is a regional government that is popularly elected with particular responsibility for health and medical care. The municipalities are local governments that deal with issues such as education, public transportation and social welfare. Elected municipal councils are headed by executive committees roughly analogous to the boards of commissioners found in some U.S. cities.

Swedish law draws upon Germanic and Roman traditions. It is neither as codified as French law nor as dependent on judicial precedent as U.S. law. Legislative and judicial institutions include, in addition to the Riksdag, the Supreme Court, the Supreme Administrative Court, the Labor Court, the Law Council, District Courts and Courts of Appeal, and the Public Prosecutor's Office. The parliamentary ombudsmen and the Chancellor of Justice oversee the application of laws with particular attention to abuses of authority.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **CARL XVI GUSTAF**
Prime Min.: **Fredrik REINFELDT**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Maud OLOFSSON**
Min. of Agriculture, Food, & Fisheries: **Eskil ERLANDSSON**
Min. of Culture: **Lena Adelsohn LILJEROTH**
Min. of Defense: **Sten TOLGFORS**
Min. of Education: **Lars LEIJONBORG**
Min. of Enterprise & Energy: **Maud OLOFSSON**
Min. of Environment: **Andreas CARLGREN**
Min. of European Affairs: **Cecila MALMSTROM**
Min. of Finance: **Anders BORG**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Carl BILDT**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **Ewa BJORLING**
Min. of Health & Elderly Care: **Maria LARSSON**
Min. of Infrastructure: **Asa TORSTENSSON**
Min. of Integration & Gender Equality Affairs: **Nyamko SABUNI**
Min. for International Development Cooperation: **Gunilla CARLSSON**
Min. of Justice: **Beatrice ASK**
Min. for Labor Market Issues: **Sven Otto LITTORIN**
Min. of Local Government & Financial Markets: **Mats ODELL**
Min. of Migration: **Tobias BILLSTROM**
Min. of Schools: **Jan BJORKLAND**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Goran HAGGLUND**
Min. of Social Benefits: **Cristina Husmark PEHRSSON**
Governor, Swedish Central Bank: **Stefan INGVES**
Ambassador to the US: **Jonas HAFSTROM**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Anders LIDEN**

Sweden maintains an embassy in the United States at 2900 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007. Telephone: 202-467-2600, Internet: http://www.swedenabroad.com/washington.

Consulates General are in New York and Los Angeles. There also are consulates in 31 other U.S. cities. Contact the embassy for locations and telephone numbers.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Ordinary general elections to the Swedish Parliament are held every fourth year on the third Sunday in September. County council and municipal council elections take place at the same time. A barrier rule exists to prevent very small parties from gaining representation in the Parliament. A party must thus

receive at least 4% of the votes in the entire country or 12% in a single electoral district to qualify for any seats.

The most recent elections were held on September 17, 2006. The Alliance for Sweden (a coalition of four center-right parties—the Moderate Party, the Liberal Party, the Christian Democrat, and the Center Party) won 178 of the 349 seats, securing Moderate Fredrik Reinfeldt the position of Prime Minister. The 2006 election results for Sweden's major parties were as follows: the Social Democratic Party (34.99%; 130 seats), the Moderate Party (26.23%; 97 seats), the Center Party (7.88%; 29 seats), the Liberal Party (7.54%; 28 seats), the Christian Democrats (6.59%; 24 seats), the Left Party (5.85%; 22 seats), and the Green Party (5.24%; 19 seats).

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) has a base of blue-collar workers and public sector employees. It derives much of its power from strong links with the National Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), which represents blue-collar workers. The party program combines a commitment to social welfare programs and government direction of the economy. The Social Democratic Party has led the government for 65 of the 76 years since 1932; the 2006 election ended its most recent term of 12 consecutive years in office.

The Moderate Party emphasizes personal freedom, free enterprise, and reduction of the public-sector growth rate, while still supporting most of the social benefits introduced since the 1930s. The party also supports a strong military and Sweden's membership in the EU. Its voter base is urban business people and professionals, but the party also attracts young voters, main-street shop owners, and, to some extent, blue-collar workers. Moderate Party Leader Reinfeldt followed an election strategy that remodeled his party as "New Moderates," moving away from the party's right-wing, upper-class roots to appeal to a large middle ground of voters and successfully winning over many who had until then supported the SDP, as well as others who had previously voted for the smaller, non-socialist parties. Reinfeldt was instrumental in uniting into one party the previously separate four center-right parties. The Alliance offered alternative policies on job creation that persuaded voters. The Center Party maintains close ties to rural Sweden. The main priorities of the party include providing a sound economic climate for business and job creation, rural development, climate change and environmental concerns (including nuclear power), and health and welfare issues.

The Left Party, formerly the Communist Party, focuses on feminist issues, employment in the public sector, and the environment. It opposes privatization, cuts in public expenditure, Swedish participation in NATO activities, and EU membership. Its voter base consists mainly of young people, public sector employees, feminists, journalists, and former social democrats.

The Christian Democrat Party is conservative and value-oriented. Its voter base is primarily among members of conservative churches and rural populations. Christian Democrats seek government support for families and better ethical practices to improve care for the elderly.

The Liberal Party's platform is "social responsibility without socialism," which includes a commitment to a free-market economy combined with comprehensive Swedish social welfare programs. Foreign aid, education and women's equality also are popular issues. The Liberal Party base is mainly centered in educated middle-class voters.

The Green Party is a leftist environmentalist party that attracts young people. The Greens support a phasing-out of nuclear energy in Sweden and hope to replace it with alternative, environmentally friendly energy sources.

The next Swedish election for Parliament is scheduled to be held in 2010. In 2009 Sweden will vote for its representatives to the European Parliament.

ECONOMY

Sweden is a highly industrialized country. Agriculture, once accounting for nearly all of Sweden's economy, now employs less than 2% of the labor force. Extensive forests, rich iron ore deposits, and hydroelectric power are the natural resources which, through the application of technology and efficient organization, have enabled Sweden to become a leading producing and exporting nation.

The Swedish economic picture has brightened significantly since the severe recession in the early 1990s, but has recently been showing signs of possibly heading toward a new recession. Growth has been strong in recent years, with an annual average GDP growth rate of 2.7% in 2005, 4.1% in 2006, 2.7% in 2007, and an expected drop in 2008 to 2.4%. The inflation rate was low in 2006, with an annual average of about 1.5%. The rate increased to 2.2% in 2007. Unemployment has been a stubborn problem, but is now improving. In 2006 the unemployment rate reached 7.1%, but in 2007 it fell to 6.2% and in 2008 it is expected to drop to 5.8%. Since the mid-1990s, Sweden's export sector has grown significantly as the information technology (IT), telecommunications, and services industries have overtaken traditional industries such as steel, paper, and pulp. The overall current-account surplus has traditionally been much smaller than the merchandise trade balance, as Sweden has generally run a deficit on trade in services, net income flows, and unrequited transfers. Since 2003, however, this has not been the case, as the services balance swung into surplus in 2003 and has improved further since then. The income account also shifted from deficit into surplus in 2003, before slipping back to register small deficits in the years through 2007. Although the transfers balance remained in deficit, mainly as a result of Sweden's contributions to the EU budget, the overall current-account surplus was larger than the trade surplus from 2003 to 2005. Most categories of services exports produced an improvement over this period, but the biggest contribution

came from business services exports, followed by transportation and royalties and license fees.

Central government debt rose from 2002-2005 but fell between 2005 and 2007, and the debt is expected to continue falling in 2008 and 2009. As a percentage of GDP, public debt was 57% in 2000 and is expected to fall to 27% in 2009. In 2007 the central government had a surplus of $17.2 billion. For 2008 and 2009, surpluses of $17.4 billion and $17.7 billion are estimated. These figures show great improvement of the Swedish economy since the crisis of the early 1990s. The government plans to sell $31 billion in state assets during the next three years to further stimulate growth and raise revenue to pay down the federal debt. The new, strict budget process calls for spending ceilings set by Parliament. In 2007 the ceiling was set at $159.8 billion. These budget reforms, in combination with a constitutional change to the Swedish Central Bank, an independent entity, have greatly improved policy credibility. The effects of this improved credibility can be seen in the long-term interest rate margin compared against the Euro, which is negligible. From the perspective of longer-term fiscal sustainability, the anticipated reform of old-age pensions entered into force in 1999. The pension reform entails a far more robust system vis-à-vis adverse demographic and economic trends, which should keep the ratio of total pension disbursements to the aggregate wage bill close to 20% in the decades ahead. Both fiscal consolidation and pension reform have put public finances back on sustainable footing.

Almost 80% of the Swedish labor force is unionized. For most unions there is a counterpart employers' organization for businesses. The unions and employer organizations are independent of both the government and political parties, although the largest federation of unions, the National Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), always has maintained close links to the largest political party, the Social Democrats. There is no national minimum wage. Instead, wages are set by collective bargaining. U.S. direct investment in Sweden in 2006 (January-September) was approximately $2.16 billion. Major investments were made in computer software and hardware, IT/telecommunications, industrial goods, and health care.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Swedish foreign policy is based on the premise that national security is best served by staying out of military alliances in peacetime in order to remain neutral in the event of war. In 2002 Sweden redefined its security position from neutral to one of non-alignment in peacetime with the ability to cooperate with military alliances in peacekeeping and peace-building missions. Internationally, the Swedish Government gives special focus to disarmament, arms control, and nuclear nonproliferation. Sweden has greatly contributed to numerous international peacekeeping operations under UN, EU, and NATO auspices, including the NATO-led peacekeeping forces in the Balkans (KFOR). The country contributes to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and in March 2006 assumed leadership of the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Mazar-e-Sharif. Sweden also is part of EUFOR's mission to create peace and stability in eastern Chad and the northeast part of the Central African Republic, the area bordering Darfur.

Sweden is an active and vocal participant in the United Nations, the World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), and other international institutions. In January 1995 Sweden became a full member of the European Union after a referendum was passed with a 52.3% majority. Sweden became a member partially because it was increasingly isolated outside the economic framework of the Maastricht Treaty. Sweden is a member of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PFP). Sweden also cooperates closely with its Nordic neighbors, formally in economic and social matters through the Nordic Council of Ministers and informally in political matters through direct consultation.

The Swedish Government does not consider its nonalignment status to preclude it from being outspoken on international issues. Government leaders focus political and financial attention on fostering democracy in developing countries, paying particular attention to key African nations. During the Cold War, Sweden was suspicious of the superpowers, which it saw as making decisions affecting small countries without always consulting those countries. With the end of the Cold War, that suspicion has lessened somewhat, although Sweden still chooses to remain nonaligned.

U.S.-SWEDEN RELATIONS

Friendship and cooperation between the United States and Sweden is strong and close. The United States welcomes Sweden's membership in NATO's PFP and our ongoing cooperation in promoting democracy and freedom. Swedish-American friendship is buttressed by the presence of nearly 14 million Americans of Swedish heritage. Both countries in 1988 celebrated the 350th anniversary of the first Swedish settlement in the United States.

Embassy Stockholm's "One Big Thing" Alternative Energy Initiative. In September 2006 Embassy Stockholm launched the "One Big Thing" initiative, a mission-wide project to collaborate with Sweden on achieving a breakthrough in alternative energy. As the Embassy's highest priority, the One Big Thing encompasses four goals focusing on technology/research and development; financing and investment; public awareness; and policy. Accomplishments to date include a $5 million

grant from the U.S. Government's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for Swedish Biofuels AB, a company that produces biofuels for jet engines. The Embassy assisted Volvo in bringing its public/private partnership funding proposal for research on improved efficiency for heavy trucks to the attention of senior Department of Energy (DOE) officials, resulting in a $12 million agreement between the two governments and Volvo to fund several different projects. The Embassy arranged for the Saab 9.5 Biofuel car to be sent to DOE for testing to validate performance claims. In April 2007 Ambassador Wood introduced 30 Swedish alternative energy companies to American venture capital firms at a California seminar. As of January 2008, this list of investible companies had grown to include 47 companies. In August 2008 the first holder of the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Alternative Energy Technology arrived at Chalmers University in Goteborg. This new American Fulbright position was created through a donation from Sweden's Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation. The donation supports the One Big Thing in the short term with teaching and research projects, and in the long term by establishing linkages between universities and scholars. In May 2007 the Embassy and the State Department in Washington initiated a meeting between President Bush and Prime Minister Reinfeldt at the White House to discuss climate change and U.S.-Swedish cooperation, and facilitated the Prime Minister's visit to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Colorado. These meetings led to the conclusion and signing of a U.S.-Sweden biofuels cooperation agreement in June 2007.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 14, 2008

Country Description: Sweden is a highly developed stable democracy with a modern economy.

Entry Requirements: Sweden is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Sweden for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. For further details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our Schengen Fact Sheet. Contact the Swedish Embassy at 901 30th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007, tel: (202) 467-2600 (mailing address 2900 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC), or the Swedish Consulate General in New York at (212) 583-2550. Visit the Sweden Abroad web site at www.swedenabroad.com for the most current visa information. Sweden's immigration authorities (Migrationsverket) also maintain a home page at http://www.migrationsverket.se/english.jsp.

Safety and Security: Sweden remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Sweden's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found. Up to date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Sweden has a low crime rate with rare, but increasing, instances of violent crime. Most crimes involve the theft of personal property from cars or residences or in public areas. Pickpockets and purse-snatchers are becoming more prevalent. Many American citizens fall victim to these highly skilled thieves, especially at the main train stations in Stockholm and Gothenburg and during bus or train transit to and from airports. Do not put any bags containing valuables, such as your passport, down on the ground. Computer bags are particularly desirable. Pickpockets and purse-snatchers often work in pairs or groups with one distracting the victim while another grabs valuables. Often they operate in or near major tourist attractions such as Stockholm's Old Town, restaurants, amusement parks, museums, bars, buses, long distance trains, subway trains, train and bus stations, and airports. Hotel breakfast rooms and lobbies attract professional, well-dressed thieves who blend in with guests and target purses and briefcases left unguarded by unsuspecting tourists and business travelers. Valuables should not be left in parked vehicles.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you

are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Sweden has a limited criminal injuries compensation program for victims of violent, personal, and property crime. Foreign citizens who are victims of crime on Swedish territory are eligible to apply for compensation, but if the victim and offender's affiliation to Sweden is transitory in nature, compensation may not be awarded even though the crime occurred on Swedish soil.

Application forms in English are available at local police stations and other government agencies as well as on the Internet at http://www.brottsoffermyndigheten.se. Claimants are generally notified of the program's decision within four months.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Sweden is 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care is comparable to that found in the United States. The Swedish medical system is a state-run system, so instead of visiting a local private general practitioner, travelers can visit a local medical center or clinic, called an "Akutmottagning" or "Vardcentral." Patients should be prepared to present their passports. In case of a medical emergency, use the emergency telephone number "112" (see above) to contact the appropriate emergency service.

Travelers with special medical needs should consult with their personal physician and take appropriate precautions, including bringing adequate supplies of necessary medication. Medicines may be brought into the country as long as they are intended for the traveler's personal use. Medications categorized as narcotics may only be brought into the country to cover the traveler's personal use for a maximum of five days and must be accompanied by a medical certificate stating why the traveler needs them. In addition, stringent Swedish customs regulations prohibit travelers from receiving drugs from abroad after having arrived in the country.

Travelers may also find local physicians reluctant to prescribe equivalent quantities or dosages. Prescriptions are dispensed at state-run pharmacies called "Apotek" in Swedish. Most pharmacies are open during normal shopping hours but major cities have a 24-hour pharmacy.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Sweden.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Sweden is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

A valid U.S. driver's license may be used while visiting Sweden, but drivers must be at least 18 years of age. Driving in Sweden is on the right. Road signs use standard international symbols and Swedish text. Many urban streets have traffic lanes reserved for public transportation only.

Swedish roads are comparable to those in the U.S., though secondary roads may be less heavily traveled. These secondary routes often narrow to two lanes with a wider shoulder. Slower vehicles are expected to move onto the shoulder to allow faster moving vehicles to pass. All vehicles must have headlights lit when on the road, no matter what time of day. The use of snow tires is mandatory between December 1 and March 31 and, experience in driving on ice and snow is recommended before navigating Sweden's winter roads.

Public transport in Sweden is of good quality and is the recommended method of travel. Passenger trains, intercity buses, and plane flights provide regular service over longer distances. Public transportation in urban centers includes buses, subways, trams, suburban trains, and taxis. Taxis are more expensive than in major U.S. cities. Most local residents use public transport in Stockholm as parking can be hard to find and expensive. The bus, train, and subway systems are relatively safe.

Use of seat belts is mandatory for drivers and all passengers, and children under the age of seven must be seated in approved child or booster seats. The maximum speed limit is 110 kilometers per hour. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including prescription drugs, is considered a very serious offense. The rules are stringently enforced and fines can be severe. Violations can result in severe fines and possible jail sentences.

Emergency services for traffic accidents can be reached by calling 112 (the equivalent to 911 in the U.S.).

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.visitsweden.se and at http://www.vv.se.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Sweden's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Sweden's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Please see http://www.tullverket.se/en for customs information specific to Sweden.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Sweden's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Sweden are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. There is no bail system in Sweden and non-resident Americans who are arrested may be held in custody until the trial is complete. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Sweden are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Sweden. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Dag Hammarskjoldsvag 31, telephone: (46) (8) 783-5300, fax: (46) (8) 783-5480 and after-hours telephone: (46) (8) 783-5310. The Embassy's web site is http://stockholm.usembassy. gov.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Sweden is not considered a country of origin for parents seeking orphaned children to adopt. Very few Swedish children are available for adoption. Most intercountry adoptions in Sweden are by legal residents of Sweden who adopt in third countries. This flyer explains how to adopt in a third country as a Swedish resident.

In the rare case that a non-resident American citizen would be allowed to adopt a Swedish orphan (related family member for example), the District Court (Tingsratten, www.dom.se) for the area where the child resides would be the appropriate court to hear the case. Prospective adoptive parents who are considering such an adoption should contact an adoption agency in the United States to begin the process.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics no immigrant visas have been issued to Swedish orphans in the last five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: The government office responsible for adoptions in Sweden is the Swedish national Board for Intercountry Adoptions (MIA).

The Swedish National Board of Intercountry Adoptions (MIA)
Box 308
101 26 Stockholm
Tel: +46 (8) 54555680
Fax: +46 (8) 650 4110
info@mia.adopt.se
www.mia.adopt.se

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Any man or woman 25 years old or older, whether single or married, may adopt with the permission of the court. The right to adopt is also provided for persons ages 18-25 if the adoption involves a related child, e.g. a niece or a nephew, or the adoptive child of his or her spouse or if special circumstances exist. Spouses must adopt jointly. However, one of the spouses may adopt a child separately when the other spouse's whereabouts are unknown or is suffering from a serious mental illness. One spouse may also, with the consent of the other spouse, adopt that spouse's child as his or her own child.

Residency Requirements: Adoptive parents must be legally resident in Sweden to adopt in third countries.

Time Frame: The adoption process in Sweden can take from two to three years from when the Swedish authorities approve the application of the adoptive parents until the parents receive the child.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: A list of Swedish adoption agencies authorized to provide adoption services in third countries is available at www.mia.adopt.se.

Adoption Fees: Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay from approximately US$10,000 to 20,000 for adoption services, a price that does not include the cost for the trip to pick up the child and return to Sweden. Most parents can qualify for a Swedish government grant of approximately US$5,000 when they return with the child to Sweden.

Adoption Procedures: The Swedish National Board for Intercountry Adoptions web site www.mia.adopt.se has detailed information about Swedish adoption law, policy and procedures. Information is provided in both Swedish and English.

Required Documents: A list of documents needed to apply for adoption in a third country as a Swedish resident can be found at:

Embassy of Sweden
1501 M. Street N.W., Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20005-1702
Tel: +1-202-467 2600
Fax: +1-202-467 2699
Email: ambassaden.washington@foreign.ministry.se
http://www.swedenabroad.se

Sweden has Consulates General in Los Angeles, New York, San Diego, and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Consulate in Sweden
Dag Hammarskjölds Väg 31,
SE-115 89 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: (+46) 8 783 5300
StockholmWeb@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Sweden, including the adoption from third countries of children who will reside in Sweden, may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Sweden is a civil-law country. Judicial proceedings in a civil-law country generally differ from those in the United States, a common-law country, in several significant ways. For example, juries are not used. Legal cases are heard and decided by a judge or panel of judges that can include lay judges. Evidence can be presented and arguments can be made in oral hearings, but such hearings tend to play a secondary role, supplementing extensive written submissions to the judge. The judge normally can play a more active role in proceedings than is common in U.S. courts. In Sweden, the civil courts handle divorce and custody cases, while Hague cases are heard in Stockholm City Court.

Swedish courts do not generally recognize, register, or enforce foreign court orders regarding custody, although a U.S. statute or court order may be considered in adjudication of a Hague case to determine if a removal/retention was "wrongful." The Swedish government provides Legal Aid for individuals involved in Swedish custody proceedings and in Hague cases, depending on the level of income, but regardless of nationality.

Custody: In Sweden, married parents have joint custody of a child from birth until the child reaches the age of 18. Under Swedish law, a mother who bears a child out of wedlock is automatically initially granted sole custody of the child. Upon the birth of such a child, the Swedish Tax Authority (responsible for birth registrations in Sweden) informs the social welfare board that a child has been born out of wedlock. The social welfare board, in turn, contacts the mother and requests that both parents appear and execute an acknowledgement of paternity. The parents are given the opportunity to decide if they will agree to joint custody. The documents are then approved by the social welfare board and forwarded to the Tax Authority. The Tax Authority maintains up-to-date records on the child's custodial parent(s), known in Sweden as "vardnadshavare." Swedish authorities report that out-of-wedlock fathers have the same custody/access rights as every other father. The U.S. Embassy in Stockholm has found, in the cases known to it, that fathers of children born out of wedlock have rarely been able to obtain custody or visitation without the mother's consent.

The Swedish Children and Parents Code prescribes that the "best interests of the child" are of paramount consideration for any orders and decisions regarding custody, residence and contact. The Code also states that when deciding what constitutes a child's "best interests," special consideration should be given to a child's need for contact with both parents.

Access: Swedish courts have extremely wide latitude with respect to access orders. However, appeals may complicate a court's ability to enforce access/visitation orders. A

court may refuse to enforce an access order if the court is convinced that circumstances have manifestly changed since the order was made or that it is in the "best interests" of the child to revisit the order. It is important to note that Swedish courts do not have the equivalent of "contempt of court," a strong enforcement tool used by U.S. courts.

In the United States, a judge can order a party to comply with legal rulings or face arrest, imprisonment and/or a fine. In Sweden a parent who refuses to obey a Swedish court order may, if there are special reasons, risk penalty of a fine in order to secure that he or she will entrust the other parent with the child. The neglect to comply with the court order may also affect that parent's future possibilities to maintain custody of the child.

Swedish authorities report that gender bias is prohibited by the Swedish constitution. The U.S. Embassy in Stockholm notes that in non-Hague Convention cases involving American fathers and Swedish mothers, the Swedish courts have more often given custody to the Swedish mother. The Embassy has also found that the Swedish courts tend to favor Swedish mothers in cases involving visitation and access conflicts. Swedish courts have enforced very few of the rulings favorable to American fathers.

Criminal aspects: It is a crime under Swedish penal law to abduct children.

Swedish citizenship: A child always acquires Swedish citizenship through a Swedish-citizen mother, whether she is married or unmarried and whether the child is born in Sweden or in another country. To register a child who was born either in Sweden or abroad as a Swedish citizen, the mother shows proof of her Swedish citizenship and the child's birth certificate.

A child born in Sweden to a Swedish-citizen unmarried father and a foreign mother acquires Swedish citizenship. A child born in the U.S. to an unmarried Swedish citizen father can acquire Swedish citizenship through an application to the Swedish "Migrationsverket." The father must show proof of his Swedish citizenship, his tax registration (Personbevis), the child's birth certificate, and the non-Swedish citizen mother's consent. Swedish citizenship is documented by registering a child with the Swedish Tax Authority.

Swedish passports: In Sweden, a passport for a child under the age of 18 cannot be issued unless the child's custodians have agreed in writing. When applying for a passport for a child, the parents must provide the passport authority with documents regarding the child's identity, the identity of the custodians, the written consent of both custodians and a photograph of the child.

A photograph is not necessary if the child is under the age of five, but without a photograph, the passport is only valid until the child reaches the age of seven. When a photograph is added to the application, whether or not the child is over the age of five, the child must be present when the application is handed in. If the child can write, he/she must also sign the application.

A parent who has a Swedish sole or joint custody order can ask that the issuance of a Swedish passport to the child be blocked or that an already-issued passport be confiscated. Parents can also request lookouts at Swedish ports of departure to prevent the departure of a child if they have a Swedish court order that supports the request. If such a lookout is not in place, Swedish authorities will generally not ask for any document other than a valid passport or other travel document for a departing child.

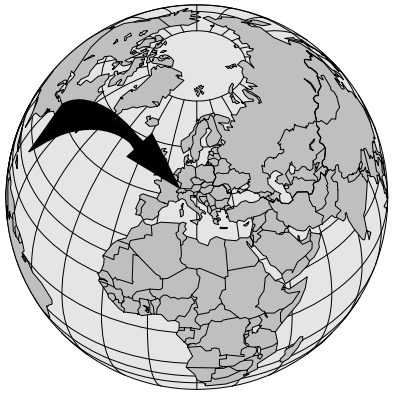
Preventing issuance of a Swedish passport: If your child has a claim to Swedish citizenship, you may be able to prevent the issuance of a Swedish passport to your child. You will need documents showing that you have joint or sole custody of the child, identity documents, a marriage certificate (if applicable) and the child's birth certificate. If you are in Sweden and have a Swedish court order, the request should be made at a police station. If you are in the United States and you have a U.S. court order (one that prohibits the removal of the child and/or issuance of a passport may be the most effective), you should contact a consular officer at the Swedish Embassy in Washington, D.C. (202-467-2600), or the nearest Swedish Consulate (California [310-445-4008] or New York [212-583-2550]) to discuss restricting the issuance of a Swedish passport to a child.

The Hague Convention: The United States is a party to Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The Hague Convention is an international treaty. The Hague Convention does not deal with child custody itself, but determines the jurisdiction where those custody issues should be adjudicated.

The Hague Convention entered into force between the United States and Sweden on June 1, 1989. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after that date.

The Swedish Central Authority performs an administrative role in processing Hague applications. The Central Authority is located in the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for Consular Affairs and Civil Law. The address is SE-103 39 Stockholm, Sweden.

The international telephone number is 011-46-8-405-1000 and the international telefax number is 011-46-8-723-1176. For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



SWITZERLAND

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Swiss Confederation

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 41,285 sq. km. (15,941 sq. mi.); about the size of Vermont and New Hampshire combined.
Cities: Capital—Bern (population about 123,000). Other cities—Zurich (341,000), Geneva (176,000), Basel (165,000), Lausanne (116,000).
Terrain: 60% mountains, the remainder hills and plateau. Switzerland straddles the central ranges of the Alps.
Climate: Temperate, varying with altitude and season.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Swiss (singular and plural).
Population: (2007 est.) 7,591,400.
Annual growth rate: 3.2%.
Ethnic groups: Mixed European.
Religions: Roman Catholic 42%, Protestant 33%, Muslim 4.3%, others 5.4%, no religion 11%.
Languages: German 63.7%, French 20.4%, Italian 6.5%, Romansch 0.5%, other 9.4%.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance—100%. Literacy—100%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—3.9/1,000. Life expectancy—men 78.7 yrs., women 83.9 yrs.
Work force: (3.96 million) Agriculture and forestry—4.2%. Industry and business—25.6%. Services and government—70.2%.

Government

Type: Federal state.
Independence: The first Swiss Confederation was founded in August 1291 as a defensive alliance among three cantons. The Swiss Confederation established independence from the Holy Roman Empire in 1499.
Constitution: 1848; extensively amended in 1874; fully revised in 2000
Government branches: Executive—Federal Council, a collegium of seven members, headed by a rotating one-year presidency. Legislative—Federal Assembly (bicameral: Council of States, 46 members; National Council, 200 members). Judicial—Federal Tribunal.
Political subdivisions: 26 cantons (states) with considerable autonomy.
Political parties: Swiss People's Party (SVP), Social Democratic Party (SP), Free Democratic Party (FDP), Christian Democratic Party (CVP), and several smaller parties representing localities or views from extreme left to extreme right.
Suffrage: In federal matters, universal over 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $478 billion (478 billion Swiss francs [SFr]).
Government expenses: (in GDP%) 29.1% (federal, cantonal, and local).
Annual growth rate: (2007) 3.1%
Unemployment: (February 2008) 2.8%.
Per capita income: $63,196 (63,198 Swiss francs).
Avg. inflation rate: (June 2007) 0.6%.
Natural resources: Water power, timber, salt.
Agriculture: (1% of GDP) Products—dairy (24%), livestock (26%), grains (4%), fruit and vegetables, potatoes, wine (15%). Arable land (1999) 26%.
Industry: (est. 29% of GDP) Types—machinery, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, time pieces, precision instruments, textiles and clothing, pigment, transportation equipment.
Services: (70% of GDP).
Trade: (2006) Exports—$177.2 billion (177.2 billion Swiss francs): food, beverages, and tobacco (20.5%); metal and chemical industries (14.5%); precision instruments (12%); watches (11%); machinery and electronics (10%); clothing (7.5%). Major markets—EU, United States, Canada, CIS, India, Brazil, Japan. Imports (2007)—$189.6 billion (189.6 billion Swiss francs): consumer goods (8%); equipment (10%); energy (25%); raw materials (12%). Major suppliers—EU, U.S., Canada, CIS, South Africa.
Exchange rate: (April 2008) Swiss francs per U.S. dollar=1.0.

PEOPLE

Switzerland sits at the crossroads of several major European cultures, which have heavily influenced the country's languages and cultural practices. Switzerland has four official languages—German, French, Italian, and Romansch (based on Latin and spoken by a small minority in the Canton Graubunden). The German spoken is predominantly a Swiss dialect, but newspapers and some broadcasts use High German. Many Swiss speak more than one language. English is widely known, especially among professionals.

More than 75% of the population lives in the central plain, which stretches between the Alps and the Jura Mountains and from Geneva in the southwest to the Rhine River and Lake Constance in the northeast. Resident foreigners and temporary foreign workers make up about 20% of the population.

According to the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics, the population in Switzerland increased to 7,507,300 in 2006. Three-quarters of this growth was attributed to migration. Switzerland naturalized 22% more people in 2006 compared to 2005, totaling 46,700 persons. By the end of 2006, there were 850,000 foreigners working legally in Switzerland. The number of German immigrants, as confirmed in earlier reports, increased by 10.6% (+10,000). Portuguese workers also increased by 7.4% (+7000). On the other hand, the number of the Italians continued to drop by 3.2% (-5,000).

Almost all Swiss are literate. Switzerland's 13 university institutes enrolled 111,100 students in the academic year of 2004-05. About 25% of the adult population holds a diploma of higher learning.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of worship, and the different religious communities co-exist peacefully.

Switzerland consistently ranks high on quality of life indices, including highest per capita income, one of the highest concentrations of computer and Internet usage per capita, highest insurance coverage per individual, and high health care rates. For these and many other reasons, it serves as an excellent test market for businesses hoping to introduce new products into Europe.

HISTORY

Originally inhabited by the Helvetians, or Helvetic Celts, the territory comprising modern Switzerland came under Roman rule during the Gallic wars in the 1st century BC and remained a Roman province until the 4th century AD. Under Roman influence, the population reached a high level of civilization and enjoyed a flourishing commerce. Important cities, such as Geneva, Basel, and Zurich, were linked by military roads that also served as trade arteries between Rome and the northern tribes.

After the decline of the Roman Empire, Switzerland was invaded by Germanic tribes from the north and west. Some tribes, such as the Alemanni in central and northeastern Switzerland, and the Burgundians, who ruled western Switzerland, settled there. In 800, the country became part of Charlemagne's empire. It later passed under the dominion of the Holy Roman emperors in the form of small ecclesiastic and temporal holdings subject to imperial sovereignty.

With the opening of a new important north-south trade route across the Alps in the early 13th century, the Empire's rulers began to attach more importance to the remote Swiss mountain valleys, which were granted some degree of autonomy under direct imperial rule. Fearful of the popular disturbances flaring up following the death of the Holy Roman Emperor in 1291, the ruling families from Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden signed a charter to keep public peace and pledging mutual support in upholding autonomous administrative and judicial rule. The anniversary of the charter's signature (August 1, 1291) today is celebrated as Switzerland's National Day. Between 1315 and 1388 the Swiss Confederates inflicted three crushing defeats on the Habsburgs, whose aspiration to regional dominion clashed with Swiss self-determination. During that period, five other localities (cantons in modern-day parlance) joined the original three in the Swiss Confederation. Buoyed by their feats, the Swiss Confederates continuously expanded their borders by military means and gained formal independence from the Holy Roman Empire in 1499. Routed by the French and Venetians near Milan in 1515, they renounced expansionist policies. By then the Swiss Confederation had become a union of 13 localities with a regularly convening diet administering the subject territories. Swiss mercenaries continued for centuries to serve in other armies; the Swiss Guard of the Pope is a vestige of this tradition.

The Reformation led to a division between the Protestant followers of Zwingli and Calvin in the German and French parts of the country respectively, and the Catholics. Despite two centuries of civil strife, the common interest in the joint subject territories kept the Swiss Confederation from falling apart. The traffic in mercenaries as well as the alienation between the predominantly Protestant Swiss and their Catholic neighbors kept the Swiss Confederation out of the wars of the European powers, which formally recognized Swiss neutrality in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The Swiss remained neutral during the War of the First Coalition against revolutionary France, but Napoleon, nonetheless, invaded and annexed much of the country in 1797-98, replacing the loose confederation with a centrally governed unitary state.

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 reestablished the old confederation of sovereign states and enshrined Switzerland's status of permanent armed neutrality in international law. In 1848, after a brief civil war between Protestant liberals seeking a centralized national state and Catholic conservatives clinging on to the old order,



the majority of Swiss Cantons opted for a Federal State, modeled in part on the U.S. Constitution. The Swiss Constitution established a range of civic liberties and made far-reaching provisions to maintain cantonal autonomy to placate the vanquished Catholic minority. The Swiss amended their Constitution extensively in 1874, establishing federal responsibility for defense, trade, and legal matters, as well as introducing direct democracy by popular referendum. To this day, cantonal autonomy and referendum democracy remain trademarks of the Swiss polity.

Switzerland industrialized rapidly during the 19th century and by 1850 had become the second most industrialized country in Europe after Great Britain. During World War I serious tension developed between the German, French, and Italian-speaking parts of the country, and Switzerland came close to violating its neutrality but managed to stay out of hostilities. Labor unrest culminating in a general strike in 1918 marked the interwar period, but in 1937 employers and the largest trade union concluded a formal agreement to settle disputes peacefully, which governs workplace relations to the present day. During World War II, Switzerland came under heavy pressure from the fascist powers, which after the fall of France in 1940 completely surrounded the country. Some political and economic leaders displayed a mood of appeasement, but a combination of tactical accommodation and demonstrative readiness to defend the country helped Switzerland survive unscathed.

The Cold War enhanced the role of neutral Switzerland and offered the country a way out of its diplomatic isolation after World War II. Economically, Switzerland integrated itself into the American-led Western postwar order, but it remained reluctant

to enter supranational bodies. Switzerland did not join the United Nations, even though Geneva became host to the UN's European headquarters, and the country played an active role in many of the UN's specialized agencies. Switzerland also remained aloof in the face of European integration efforts, waiting until 1963 to join the Council of Europe. It still remains outside the European Union. Instead, Switzerland in 1960 helped form the European Free Trade Area, which did not strive for political union. Following the Cold War, Switzerland joined the Bretton Woods institutions in 1992 and finally became a member of the United Nations in 2002.

GOVERNMENT

Switzerland is a federal state composed of 26 cantons (20 are "full" cantons and six "half" cantons for purposes of representation in the federal legislature) that retain attributes of sovereignty, such as fiscal autonomy and the right to manage internal cantonal affairs. Under the 2000 Constitution, cantons hold all powers not specifically delegated to the federation. Switzerland's federal institutions are:

- A bicameral legislature—the Federal Assembly;
- A collegial executive of seven members—the Federal Council; and
- A judiciary consisting of a regular court in Lausanne—the Federal Tribunal—and special military and administrative courts. The Federal Insurance Tribunal is an independent division of the Federal Tribunal that handles social security questions; its seat is in Lucerne. The Federal Criminal Court, located in Bellinzona, is the court of first instance for all criminal cases under federal jurisdiction.

The Constitution provides for separation of the three branches of government.

The Federal Assembly is the primary seat of power, although in practice the executive branch has been increasing its power at the expense of the legislative branch. The Federal Assembly has two houses—the Council of States and the National Council. These two houses have equal powers in all respects, including the right to introduce legislation. Legislation cannot be vetoed by the executive nor reviewed for constitutionality by the judiciary, but all laws (except the budget) can be reviewed by popular referendum before taking effect. The 46 members of the Council of States (two from each canton and one from each half canton) are directly elected in each canton by majority voting. The 200 members of the National Council are directly elected in each canton under a system of proportional representation. Members of both houses serve for 4 years.

The Federal Assembly meets quarterly for 3-week plenary sessions. The parliamentary committees of the two houses, which are often key in shaping legislation, meet behind closed doors, but both majority and minority positions are presented during the plenary sessions. The Federal Assembly is a militia parliament, and members commonly retain their traditional professions. Individual members of parliament have no personal staff.

The Assembly can be legally dissolved only after the adoption of a popular initiative calling for a complete revision of the Constitution. All citizens 18 or older have the right to vote and run for office in national, cantonal, and communal elections unless individually disqualified by the relevant legislature.

A strong emphasis on ballot votes arises out of the traditional Swiss belief that the will of the people is the final national authority. Every constitutional amendment adopted by parliament is automatically brought to the ballot and has to carry a double majority of votes and states in order to become effective. The voters themselves may actively seek changes to the Constitution by means of the popular initiative: 100,000 voters may with their signatures request a national vote on a proposed constitutional amendment. New federal legislation also is subject to popular review, under the so-called referendum: 50,000 signatures suffice to call a ballot vote on any federal law adopted by parliament. The Assembly can declare an act to be too urgent to allow time for popular consideration, but this is rare. At any rate, an act passed urgently must have a time limit and is later subject to the same constitutional provisions on popular review as other legislation.

The top executive body is the seven-member cabinet called the Federal Council. The Federal Assembly individually elects the seven Federal Councilors in a joint session of both houses at the opening of a new legislature. Federal Councilors are elected for 4-year terms; there are no term limits and no provision to recall the cabinet or individual members during the legislature. Each year, the Federal Assembly elects from among the seven Federal Councilors a president and vice president, following the principle of seniority. The member who is vice president one year traditionally is elected president the next. Although the Constitution provides that the Federal Assembly chooses and supervises the cabinet, the latter has gradually assumed a preeminent role in directing the legislative process as well as executing federal laws.

Under an arrangement between the four major parties called the "magic formula" which was introduced in 1959 but ended in December 2003, two Federal Councilors (ministers) were elected each from the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats, and the Free Democrats and one from the Swiss People's Party. Under the new magic formula starting January 1, 2004, the new party composition of the cabinet changed to the following composition: 1 Christian Democrat, 2 Social Democrats, 2 Free Democrats, and 2 representatives of the Swiss People's Party.

The Constitution requires that Federal Councilors act collectively in all matters, not as individual ministers or as representatives of their parties.

Each Councilor heads one of seven federal departments and is responsible for preparing legislation pertaining to matters under its jurisdiction. The president, who remains responsible for the department he heads, has limited prerogatives and is first among equals (there is no formal prime minister).

The administration of justice is primarily a cantonal function. The Federal Tribunal is limited in its jurisdiction. Its principal function is to hear appeals of civil and criminal cases. It also hears complaints of violations of the constitutional rights of citizens and has authority to review cantonal court decisions involving federal law as well as certain administrative rulings of federal departments. However, it has no power to review federal legislation for constitutionality. The Tribunal's 30 full-time and 30 part-time judges are elected by the Federal Assembly for 6-year terms. The Federal Criminal Court is the court of first instance for criminal cases involving organized and white-collar crime, money laundering, and corruption, which are under federal jurisdiction. The Court's 11 judges are elected by the Federal Assembly for 6-year terms.

The cantons regulate local government. The basic unit of local government, which administers a village, town, or city, is the commune or municipality. Citizenship is derived from membership in a commune and can be conferred on non-Swiss by a commune. Cantons are subordinate to federal authority but keep autonomy in implementing federal law.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Pascal COUCHEPIN**
Vice President: **Hans-Rudolf MERZ**
Chief, Federal Dept. of Defense, Civil Protection, & Sports: **Samuel SCHMID**
Chief, Federal Dept. of Economic Affairs: **Doris LEUTHARD**
Chief, Federal Dept. of Finance: **Hans-Rudolf MERZ**
Chief, Federal Dept. of Foreign Affairs: **Micheline CALMY-REY**
Chief, Federal Dept. of Home Affairs: **Pascal COUCHEPIN**
Chief, Federal Dept. of Justice & Police: **Eveline WIDMER-SCHLUMPF**
Chief, Federal Dept. of Transportation, Communications, & Energy: **Moritz LEUENBERGER**
Federal Chancellor: **Corina CASANOVA**
Chmn., Swiss National Bank: **Jean-Pierre ROTH**
Ambassador to the US: **Urs ZISWILER**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Peter MAURER**

Switzerland maintains an embassy in the United States at 2900 Cathedral Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008. Consulates General are in Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. Swiss national tourist offices are in Chicago, New York, and San Francisco.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Switzerland has a stable government and a diverse society. Quadrennial national elections typically produce only marginal changes in party representation. In recent years, Switzerland has seen a gradual shift in the party landscape. The rightist Swiss People's Party (SVP), traditionally the junior partner in the four-party coalition government, has almost tripled its share of the popular vote from 11% in 1987 to 22.5% in 1999, to 26.6% in 2003, and finally to 29% in October 2007, thus overtaking its three major rivals. In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the SVP picked up an additional seven seats in the 200-seat National Council (lower house). This brings the SVP to 62 seats total. The Greens gained more than 2% points and seven seats in the National Council, bringing their total shares to 9.6% and 20 respectively. They also for the first time gained seats in the Council of States (upper house). The Christian Democratic Party (CVP) booked modest gains of 0.2% and three seats, for a total of 14.6% and 31 seats in the National Council. This halted a downward trend that had cost the CVP a seat on the Federal Council to the SVP in 2003. The FDP lost 1.7% and five seats in the National Council, dropping to 15.6% of the votership and 31 seats in the National Council. Total voter turnout was 48%, a gain of 2.8% over the 2003 elections.

On December 12, 2007, the center-left parliamentary caucuses refused to re-elect the SVP's Christoph Blocher (then-Justice Minister) to the Federal Council, and instead elected Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, a SVP cantonal minister from Graubunden. Christoph Blocher had been the SVP's candidate for the Federal Council seat. In reaction to this outcome, the SVP leadership called on Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf and Defense Minister Samuel Schmid (also of the SVP) not to accept their seats on the Federal Council, and the SVP announced that it was taking on the role of parliamentary opposition. Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf and Samuel Schmid, however, decided to accept their elections to serve on the Federal Council, and subsequently were excluded from the SVP parliamentary caucus.

The Constitution limits federal influence in the formulation of domestic policy and emphasizes the roles of private enterprise and cantonal government. However, the Confederation has been compelled to enlarge its policymaking powers in recent years to cope with national problems such as education, agriculture, energy, environment, organized crime, and narcotics.

ECONOMY

Despite a dearth of natural resources, the Swiss economy is among the world's most advanced and prosperous. Per capita income is virtually the highest in the world, as are wages. Trade has been the key to prosperity in Switzerland. The country is dependent upon export markets to generate income while dependent upon imports for raw materials and to expand the range of goods and services available in the country. Switzerland has liberal investment and trade policies, notwithstanding agriculture, and a conservative fiscal policy. The Swiss legal system is highly

developed, commercial law is well defined, and solid laws and policies protect investments. The Swiss franc is one of the world's soundest currencies, and the country is known for its high standard of banking and financial services. Switzerland is a member of a number of international economic organizations, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The Swiss economy expanded by 3.1% in 2007. GDP growth was primarily due to the positive evolution of private consumption and expansion of investment in fixed assets and software. For once, all export industries benefited from increased demand from foreign markets. Bilateral trade in goods grew 11% in 2007, and the U.S. ran a $2.2 billion bilateral surplus, up from $145 million in 2006. Overall, Switzerland's trade grew 11% in 2007, and its global trade surplus expanded to SFr. 14 billion. On the inflation side, import prices increased more rapidly than exports.

Switzerland was ranked as the second most competitive economy in the World Economic Forum's 2007 Global Competitiveness Report, reflecting the country's sound institutional environment, excellent infrastructure, efficient markets, competent macroeconomic management, world-class educational attainment, and high levels of technological innovation, which boost Switzerland's competitiveness in the global economy. The country has a well-developed infrastructure for scientific research, companies spend generously on research and development (R&D), and intellectual property protection is strong. Business activity benefits from a well-developed institutional framework, characterized by the rule of law, an efficient judicial system, and high levels of transparency and accountability within public institutions. Higher education and training are rapidly growing in importance as engines of productivity growth.

Being a nation that depends upon exports for economic growth, and due to the fact that it is so closely linked to the economies of Western Europe and the United States, Switzerland was not able to escape recent slowdowns experienced in these countries. During most of the 1990s, the Swiss economy was Western Europe's weakest, with annual GDP growth averaging 0% between 1991 and 1997. Beginning in late 1997, the economy steadily gained momentum until peaking in 2000 with 3% growth in real terms. The economy returned to lackluster growth during 2001-2003, but has been growing at or above potential since 2004—2.5% per annum. The Swiss Economic Ministry reports that strong global demand, particularly in the U.S. and Asia, and better Euro zone growth has helped Switzerland's economic recovery. Long-run economic growth, however, is predicated on structural reforms. In order to maximize its economic potential, Switzerland will need to push through difficult agrarian and competition policy reforms. These are essential if the government is to reduce its budget deficits and meet its 3% growth target.

The recent economic upswing had some positive impact on the labor market. Unemployment decreased from 4.1% in December 2003 to 2.7% in September 2007. Swiss in the 15-25 age bracket continue to fight unemployment numbers with a rate of 5.4%, and hotel and restaurant industry workers with 10.4%. One-fourth of the country's full-time workers are unionized. In general, labor/management relations are good, mostly characterized by a willingness on both sides to settle disputes by negotiations rather than by labor action. About 600 collective bargaining agreements exist today in Switzerland and are regularly renewed without major problems. However, the mood is changing. The massive layoffs that resulted from both the global economic slowdown and major management scandals have strained the traditional Swiss "labor peace." Swiss trade unions encouraged strikes against several companies. Nevertheless, total days lost to strikes remain among the lowest in the OECD.

Switzerland's machinery, metals, electronics, and chemicals sectors are world-renowned for precision and quality. Together they account for well over half of Swiss export revenues. In agriculture, Switzerland is about 60% self-sufficient. Only 7.5% of the remaining imports originated from the U.S. Swiss farmers are one of the most highly protected and subsidized producer groups in the world. OECD estimates show that Switzerland is subsidizing more than 70% of its agriculture, compared to 35% in the EU. The parliament agreed in 2007 to reduce the level of subsidies from SFr 14.1 billion (U.S. $14.1 billion) to SFr 13.6 billion (U.S. $13.6 billion) from 2008-2011, approved value-added tax (VAT) exemptions for local biofuel production, and accepted international parallel imports for fertilizers and tractors—Swiss farmers will be allowed to import tractors produced in China or India and sold in the EU, and could save up to $50 million (SFr 50 million) annually. German fertilizer imports could save another $25 million (SFr 25 million). The parliament also rejected the government's proposal to reduce the subsidized price for cheese production, and decided to keep the price at 15 centimes per liter.

Tourism, banking, engineering, and insurance are significant sectors of the economy and heavily influence the country's economic policies. Swiss trading companies have unique marketing expertise in many parts of the world, including Eastern Europe, the Far East, Africa, and the Middle East. Not only does Switzerland have a highly developed tourism infrastructure (making it a good market for tourism-related equipment and services), the Swiss also are intrepid travelers. Per capita, more Swiss visit the United States every year than from any other country. Tourism is the most important U.S. export to Switzerland (earning almost $1.5 billion). In 2004, more than 285,000 Swiss came to the United States as tourists.

The Swiss economy earns roughly half of its corporate earnings from the export industry, and 62% of Swiss exports are destined for the EU mar-

ket. The EU is Switzerland's largest trading partner, and economic and trade barriers between them are minimal. In the wake of the Swiss voters' rejection of the European Economic Area Agreement in 1992, the Swiss Government set its sights on negotiating bilateral sectoral agreements with the EU. After more than 4 years of negotiations, an agreement covering seven sectors (research, public procurement, technical barriers to trade, agriculture, civil aviation, land transport, and the free movement of persons) was achieved at the end of 1998. Parliament officially endorsed the so-called "Bilaterals I" in 1999, and the Swiss people approved them in a referendum in May 2000. The agreements, which had to be ratified by the European Parliament as well as legislatures in all 15 EU member states, entered into force on June 1, 2002. Switzerland has so far attempted to mitigate possible adverse effects of non-membership by conforming many of its regulations, standards, and practices to EU directives and norms. Full access to the Swiss market for the original 15 EU member states entered into force in June 2004, ending as a result the "national preference". The Swiss agreed to extend these preferences to the 10 new EU members on September 25, 2005 but restrictions will remain until 2011. A facultative referendum against the Bilaterals I and the extension of the free movement of persons to Romania and Bulgaria is likely until mid-2009, and the SVP has threatened to derail the extension of the agreement unless the EU drops its demands on Swiss cantonal taxation (see below). The political campaign, aimed at collecting the required 50,000 signatures to call for the referendum, is likely to start in 2008.

The Swiss Government embarked in July 2001 on a second round of bilateral negotiations with the EU known as "Bilaterals II". Talks focused on customs fraud, environment, statistics, trade in processed agricultural goods, media, the taxation of savings, and police/judicial cooperation (dubbed the Schengen-Dublin accords). Amid a fierce political debate over the essence of Swiss-EU relations and populist warnings against EU workers and criminals entering Switzerland, the Schengen-Dublin package was approved on June 5, 2005 by 54.6% of Swiss voters. Fears of cheap labor coming from new EU member states have prompted the government to provide for tripartite surveillance committees to ensure that decent wages are enforced. The EU still has to ratify the extension of Schengen to Switzerland, and implement the bilateral agreements on R&D and media cooperation. If ratified in time by EU member states, the Schengen agreement for Switzerland will enter into force on November 1, 2008.

The Swiss federal government remains deeply divided over EU membership as its long-term goal, and in a March 2001 referendum more than 70% of Swiss voters rejected rapid steps toward EU membership. Switzerland nevertheless expressed interest in reaching a third layer of bilateral agreements that would involve energy, the Galileo satellite navigation system, health, and agriculture. But recent harsh criticism by the European Commission against preferential cantonal tax treatment for foreign holdings cooled the political climate surrounding the EU.

The government also decided in November 2006 to once more consider adoption of the EU "Cassis-de-Dijon" principle for trade after a first setback in 2004. If adopted, EU products could be imported in Switzerland without having to go through the burdensome Swiss certification and Swiss language requirement process. Currently, Swiss retail prices are on average 20-40% higher than in the EU. If parallel imports are allowed under adoption of the Cassis-de-Dijon principle, prices could drop by 10%. Possible exceptions have been reduced from 129 products to 40, but hurdles remain on some products.

The government has reaffirmed its wish to strengthen ties with other non-EU trading partners in Asia and America. Exploratory talks on a Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Switzerland failed to result in negotiations, due to Swiss problems with free trade in agriculture, but the two sides did agree to a new framework for economic, trade, and investment discussions. This new agreement is the Swiss-U.S. Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum (the "Forum") and is currently assessing areas where the two governments could facilitate greater trade and investment flows.

Switzerland ranks 17th among the main trading partners of the U.S. worldwide. The United States is the second-largest importer (11.5%) of Swiss goods after Germany (20%). The U.S. exports more to Switzerland each year than to all the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe combined, and Switzerland imports more U.S. products and services than does Spain. In addition, the United States is the largest foreign investor in Switzerland, and conversely, the primary destination of Swiss foreign investment. It is estimated that 200,000 American jobs depend on Swiss foreign investments. Total U.S.-Swiss bilateral trade increased from $15.33 billion during 2003 to $16 billion in 2004.

DEFENSE

On May 18, 2003, Swiss voters approved the military reform project "Army XXI" that will reduce the size of the Swiss Army by approximately half. In January 2004, the 524,000-strong militia started paring down to 220,000 conscripts, including 80,000 reservists. All able-bodied Swiss males aged 20 to 30 must serve. Thereafter, most personnel are assigned to civil protection duties until the age of 37.

A new category of soldiers called "single-term conscripts" will discharge the total time of active duty service of about 300 days in one stint. Recruiting is on a voluntary basis and should not exceed 20% of a year's draft. The armed forces have a small nucleus of about 3,600 professional staff, half of whom are either instructors or staff officers, with the remainder mostly being fortification guards. The army

has virtually no full-time active combat units but is capable of full mobilization within 72 hours. Women may volunteer to serve in the armed forces and may now join all units, including combat troops. About 2,000 women already serve in the army but, so far, have not been allowed to use weapons for purposes other than self-defense.

The armed forces are organized in four army corps and an air force and are equipped with modern, sophisticated, and well-maintained gear. In 1993, the Swiss Government procured 34 FA-18s from the United States.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

On September 10, 2002, Switzerland became a full member of the United Nations. Switzerland had previously been involved as party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice and member of most UN specialized agencies, as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency. Switzerland has long participated in many UN activities, including the Economic Commission for Europe, UN Environment Program, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN Conference for Trade and Development, UN Industrial Development Organization, and the Universal Postal Union (UPU). Prior to its formal accession, Switzerland had maintained a permanent observer mission at UN Headquarters since 1948.

Switzerland also is a member of the following international organizations: World Trade Organization, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Free Trade Association, Bank for International Settlements, Council of Europe, and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In 1992, Swiss voters approved membership in the Bretton Woods organizations but later that year rejected the European Economic Area agreement, which the government viewed as a first step toward EU membership.

The Swiss Constitution declares the preservation of Switzerland's independence and welfare as the supreme objective of Swiss foreign policy. Below this overarching goal, the Constitution sets five specific foreign policy objectives: further the peaceful coexistence of nations; promote respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of the law; promote Swiss economic interests abroad, alleviate need and poverty in the world; and the preservation of natural resources.

Traditionally, Switzerland has avoided alliances that might entail military, political, or direct economic action, but in recent years the Swiss have broadened the scope of activities in which they feel able to participate without compromising their neutrality. Swiss voters first rejected UN membership by a 3-to-1 margin in 1986 but in March 2002 adopted it, albeit in a very close election, making Switzerland the first country to join the UN based on a popular referendum decision. In similar fashion, the electorate rejected a government proposition to deploy Swiss troops as UN peacekeepers (Blue Helmets) in 1994, but Switzerland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1996 and 1997, respectively, and deployed Yellow Berets to support the OSCE in Bosnia. In June 2001, Swiss voters approved new legislation providing for the deployment of armed Swiss troops for international peacekeeping missions under UN or OSCE auspices as well as closer international cooperation in military training.

Switzerland maintains diplomatic relations with almost all countries and historically has served as a neutral intermediary and host to major international treaty conferences. The country has no major dispute in its bilateral relations. Since 1980, Switzerland has represented U.S. interests in Iran. Switzerland played a key role in brokering a truce agreement between the Sudanese Government and Sudan's Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) for the Nuba Mountain region, signed after a week's negotiations taking place near Lucerne in January 2002.

Switzerland (mainly Geneva) is home to many international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (whose flag is essentially the Swiss flag with colors reversed—the Red Cross historically being a Swiss organization). One of the first international organizations, the Universal Postal Union, is located in Bern.

The Swiss Government on June 25, 2003, eased most of the sanctions against the Republic of Iraq in accord with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1483. The government lifted the trade embargo, flight restrictions, and financial sanctions in place since August 1990. The weapons embargo and the asset freeze, the scope of which was extended, remain in force, and restrictions on the trade in Iraqi cultural goods were newly imposed. Though not a member at the time, Switzerland had joined UN sanctions against Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait. Switzerland in recent years joined UN and EU economic sanctions imposed on Sierra Leone, UNITA (Angola), Liberia, Serbia and Montenegro, Burma, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Cote d'Ivoire. On October 15, 2003, the Federal Council ended the import restrictions on raw diamonds from Sierra Leone and lifted sanctions against Libya.

Switzerland in October 2000 implemented an ordinance to enforce UN sanctions against the Taliban (UNSCR 1267), which it subsequently amended in April 2001 in accord with tighter UN regulations (UNSCR 1333). On May 2, 2002, the Swiss Government eased the sanctions regime in accord with UNSCR 1388 and 1390, lifting the ban on the sale of acetic acid (used in drug production), Afghani Airlines, and Afghani diplomatic representations. The weapons embargo, travel restrictions, and financial sanctions remain in force. The Swiss Government in November 2001 issued an ordinance declaring illegal the terrorist organization al Qaeda as well as possible successor or supporting organizations. More than 200 individuals or

companies linked to international terrorism have been blacklisted to have their assets frozen. Thus far, Swiss authorities have blocked about 72 accounts totaling 34 million francs.

Switzerland has furnished military observers and medical teams to several UN operations. Switzerland is an active participant in the OSCE, its foreign minister serving as Chairman-in-Office for 1996. Switzerland also is an active participant in the major nonproliferation and export control regimes.

Under a series of treaties concluded after World War I, Switzerland assumed responsibility for the diplomatic and consular representation of Liechtenstein, the protection of its borders, and the regulation of its customs.

U.S.-SWISS RELATIONS

Switzerland is a democratic country subscribing to most of the ideals with which the United States is identified. The country is politically stable with a fundamentally strong economy. It occupies an important strategic position within Europe and possesses a strong military capability. It has played an increasingly important role in supporting the spread of democratic institutions and values worldwide, as well as providing humanitarian relief and economic development assistance. U.S. policy toward Switzerland takes these factors into account and endeavors to cooperate with Switzerland to the extent consistent with Swiss neutrality.

The first 4 years of cooperation under the U.S.-Swiss Joint Economic Commission (JEC) invigorated bilateral ties by recording achievements in a number of areas, including consultations on anti-money laundering efforts, counter-terrorism, and pharmaceutical regulatory cooperation; an e-government conference; and the re-establishment of the Fulbright student/cultural exchange program. The United States and Switzerland signed three new agreements in 2006 that will complement the JEC and will deepen our cooperation and improve our relationship. The first of the new agreements is the Enhanced Political Framework and was signed by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns and Swiss State Secretary Michael Ambahl. The second agreement is the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum and was signed by then-U.S. Trade Representative Robert Portman and then-Economics and Trade Minister Joseph Deiss. The last agreement is the revised Operative Working Arrangement on Law Enforcement Cooperation on Counterterrorism and was signed by U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez and Swiss Justice Minister Christoph Blocher.

The first official U.S.-Swiss consular relations were established in the late 1820s. Diplomatic relations were established in 1853. The U.S. ambassador to Switzerland also is accredited to the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

BERN (E) Sulgeneckstrasse 19, CH-3007, Bern, APO/FPO No APO, 41-31-357-7011, Fax 41–31–357-7344, Workweek: Mon.–Fri., 8:30 -5:30, Website: http://bern.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Rebecca Eggert
AMB OMS:	Emily Dirk
DHS/ICE:	Joe Catanzarite
ECO:	Bill Duff
FCS:	Julie Snyder
FM:	Gary David Edwards
MGT:	Jonathan Schools
POL/ECO:	Vacant
AMB:	Peter R. Coneway
CG:	Doria Rosen
DCM:	Leigh Carter
PAO:	Lisbeth Keefe
GSO:	John Schuch
RSO:	Brian Murphy
CLO:	Roman Riedmueller
DAO:	Col. Dorothea Cypher-Erickson
DEA:	Joe Kipp
IMO:	Stephen McCain
IRS:	Kathy Beck (Paris)
ISO:	Novaro Casci
ISSO:	Leo Ruiz
LEGATT:	Daniel Boyd
POL:	Christopher Buck
State ICASS:	Lisbeth Keefe

GENEVA (M) 11 Rte de Pregny, 1292 Chambesy, Geneva, Switzerland, 41-22-749-4111, Fax 41-22-749-4892, INMARSAT Tel 764114496/9, Workweek: M-F 8:30-5:30, Website: http://geneva.usmission.gov.

DCM OMS:	Nancy Doe
AMB OMS:	Abigail Erickson
ECO:	Lisa Carle
HHS:	David E. Hohman
MGT:	Larry Richter
AMB:	Warren W. Tichenor
DCM:	Mark Storella
PAO:	David Gilmour
GSO:	Anne Coughlin
RSO:	Mark G. Bandik
AID:	David Reimer (Rma)
CLO:	Lisa Myers
FMO:	Louis Nelli
ICASS Chair:	Nance Kyloh
IPO:	Miller, Ritchie
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
ISO:	Don Greer
ISSO:	Doug Wells
LAB:	Ann Chick
LEGATT:	Jeffrey D. Kovar
POL:	Michael Klecheski

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 10, 2008

Country Description: Switzerland is a highly developed democracy. Liechtenstein is a democratically run constitutional monarchy.

Entry Requirements: Switzerland is a party to the Schengen agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Switzerland for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay.

Liechtenstein is not a party to the Schengen agreement. A visa is not required for stays up to 90 days.

For more information on entry requirements for both countries, travelers may contact the Embassy of Switzerland at 2900 Cathedral Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008,

telephone (202) 745-7900, or the nearest Swiss Consulate General in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, or San Francisco. Visit the Embassy of Switzerland's web site at http://www.swissemb.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Switzerland remains largely free of terrorist incidents. However, like other countries in the Schengen area, Switzerland'sopen borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility of terrorist groups entering/exiting the country with anonymity. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. Although there have been no recent terrorist attacks in Switzerland, violence by anti-globalization, anti-Semitic, and anti-establishment (anarchist) groups does occur from time to time. This violence is typically in the form of property damage and clashes between these groups and the police. The potential for specific threats of violence involving American citizens in Switzerland is remote. Nevertheless, the Consular Agencies in Zurich and Geneva may close periodically to assess their security situation.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Switzerland has a low rate of violent crime. However, pick-pocketing and purse snatching do occur in the vicinity of train and bus stations, airports, and some public parks, especially during peak tourist periods (such as Summer and Christmas) and when conferences, shows, or exhibits are scheduled in major cities. Liechtenstein has a low crime rate. Travelers may wish to exercise caution on trains, especially on overnight trains to neighboring countries. Thieves, who steal from passengers while they sleep, can enter even locked sleeping compartments. Thieves have been known to work in pairs to target train passengers; while one member of the pair creates a diversion at a train window or on a platform, the other steals items left briefly unattended.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Switzerland, through its 26 cantons (states), has programs to assist victims of crime and their immediate relatives. Medical, psychological, social, financial, and legal assistance are available throughout the country. These programs also protect the rights of the victim during criminal proceedings. The victim may receive compensation for some damages, if requested during the criminal procedure. Information is available at the Swiss Department of Justice located on Bundesrain 20, 3003 Bern, telephone: 41-31-322-4750, as well as on the Internet at http://www.bj.admin.ch/bj/en/home.html.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Switzerland is fire 118; police 117; medical 144.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Good medical care is widely available. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith. The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Switzerland.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Switzerland is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Although many roads are mountainous and winding, road safety standards are high. In some mountain areas, vehicle snow chains are required in winter. Road travel can be more dangerous during summer, winter holidays, the Easter break, and Whitsunday weekend (late spring) because of increased traffic. Travel on expressways (indicated by green signs with a white expressway symbol) requires purchase of a sticker or "vignette," which must be affixed to the car's windshield. Vignettes can be purchased at most border crossings points, gas stations and at Swiss post offices. Drivers using the highway system without a vignette are subject to hefty fines levied on the spot. Public transportation in Switzerland and Liechtenstein is excellent.

Visit the website of Switzerland's national tourist office at http://www.myswitzerland.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration

(FAA) has assessed the Government of Switzerland's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Switzerland's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Travelers who plan to participate in mountain activities (summer and winter) are strongly encouraged to buy mountain search and rescue insurance. Costs of search and rescue operations are the responsibility of the victim. Search and rescue insurance is available inexpensively in Switzerland and may be purchased at many Swiss post offices. Information can be obtained from the Swiss National Tourist Office, at http://www.myswitzerland.com, at most tourist information offices or with the Swiss Air Rescue Organization at http://www/rega.ch. Such insurance has proved useful as uninsured rescues can easily cost $25,000.

Switzerland's customs authorities encourage the use of an ATA (Admission Temporaire/Admission) Carnet for the temporary admission of professional equipment, commercial samples, and/or goods for exhibitions and fair purposes. ATA Carnet Headquarters located at the U.S. Council for International Business, 1212 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036, and issues and guarantees the ATA Carnet in the United States. For additional information call (212) 354-4480, send an email to atacarnet@uscib.org, or visit http://www.uscib.org for details.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Switzerland's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Switzerland are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Switzerland are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Bern, with the Consular Agencies in Geneva or Zurich, or through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy, Consulate, or Consular Agent to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Jubilaeumstrasse 93, 3005 Bern; Tel. (41)(31) 357-7011, fax (41)(31) 357-7280. The Embassy's email address is bernacs@state.gov. The U.S. Embassy web site at http://bern.usembassy.gov answers many questions of interest to Americans visiting and residing in Switzerland.

The U.S. Consular Agency in Zurich is located at the American Center of Zurich, Dufourstrasse 101, 8008 Zurich; Tel: (41)(43) 499-2960, fax (41)(43) 499-2961. The U.S. Consular Agency in Geneva is located at rue Versonnex 7, CH-1207 Geneva, Tel: 022-840-51 60; fax 022-840-51 62. There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in Liechtenstein.

For assistance and information on travel and security in Liechtenstein, U.S. citizens may contact or register at the U.S. Embassy in Bern at the address above.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please **Note:** There are very few children eligible for intercountry adoption from Switzerland, with a long waiting list of Swiss prospective adoptive parents. While legally possible, intercountry adoption of a Swiss orphan by foreigners is unlikely. Most Swiss go overseas to adopt. Switzerland should be regarded as a receiving State only.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics show that no Swiss orphans have been adopted by American citizens in the last five years.

Adoption Authority: The Government office responsible for adoptions in Switzerland is the Municipality (Gemeinde) and/or the local Guardianship Board, depending on where the adopting prospective adoptive parent(s) resides. Each of the 26 Cantons in Switzerland now has a Central Authority. The prospective adopting parents should contact the Cantonal Central Authority (CCA). A list of approved agencies is available from the Embassy or on the Internet at www.bj.admin.ch.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Both spouses must be 35 years of age or older. If a couple has not met the age requirement, they have to have been married for at least 5 years. Single people

must be 35 years of age or older. Medical ineligibilities are decided on a case-by-case basis case taking the surrounding circumstances into consideration.

Switzerland does not, for example, disqualify prospective adoptive parents who are HIV positive. During the obligatory medical examination, the health and medical status of the adopting couple or individual will be analyzed and taken into consideration together with the pre-adoption home study report.

Residency Requirements: Adoptive parents are required to have their habitual residency in Switzerland. The prospective adoptive parents need to be generally involved in the Swiss way of life, such as social activities, friends, and interests. Prospective adoptive parents will be asked to attend a pre-adoption interview with the Cantonal Central Authority (CCA) where the adoption procedure and criteria will be discussed. The home study will also be organized by the CCA with the CCA's appointed social worker.

The above speaks of the prospective adoptive parents who are seeking to adopt from other countries (not Swiss orphans) although the same would also apply to Swiss prospective adoptive parents seeking to adopt Swiss orphans).

Time Frame: Adoption procedures take a minimum of six months to complete. Prospective adoptive parents are expected to remain in Switzerland the entire time. The time frame also depends very much upon the country of origin of the adoptive child. A social inquiry can take up to two years to complete, although two years is generally the maximum amount of time required.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Adoption agencies must be licensed or accredited by the Swiss Government. Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov for a list of agencies.

Adoption Fees: Fees vary from Canton to Canton. One can expect to pay an average of 1,000-2,500 Swiss Francs (or approximately USD 830-2,060 according to the exchange rate). There are also private agency fees to take into consideration.

Adoption Procedures: Adoption procedures (a child coming from abroad to Switzerland) are very complicated and depend upon the requirements of the child's country of origin. The Swiss procedure is for the prospective adoptive parents to go to the Cantonal Authority to apply for an adoption procedure and attend a session on adoption protocol, organized by the Cantonal Central Authority (CCA). The concept of the adoption procedure in general is to convey to the prospective adoptive parents the intricacy involved in an adoption procedure. Information is given on the various countries where the child or children originate from, legal formalities (in Switzerland), costs involved, home study information, and a chance for the prospective adoptive parents to ask about the adoption procedure. Thereafter, if the adoptive parents still wish to adopt a child, they must submit a formal application at the Cantonal Central Authority, and, if the application is accepted by the CCA, the Cantonal Authority will issue a formal decision and the procedure will go ahead with:

- Medical examination;
- Psychologist's opinion (if required by the country of origin);
- Request for a criminal record (if prospective parents are U.S. citizens, a criminal record from the United States);
- Salary and tax report, and;
- Any other formalities requested by the country of origin (if the country is already chosen).

A home study will be completed by a social worker in accordance with the CCA. (This could also be an appointed official of the CCA. Social workers sometimes work within the CCA but they are always under the responsibility of the CAA.)

Switzerland is a member of the Convention of 29 May 1993 on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Convention). With regards to pitfalls, it is advisable to adopt a child from a country that is party to this Convention. This will ensure that certain procedures are followed in respect to the child's best interest and protection against abuses like trafficking, prostitution etc. Furthermore, if an adoption is proclaimed/accepted by the authorities of the country of origin which is a Contracting State to the Hague Convention, the adoption will automatically be recognized by Switzerland according to Article 23 of the Convention.

If the country is not party to the Hague Convention, the country of origin will apply their own specific procedure, meaning there is less chance of a guarantee. The country of origin will issue a judgment allowing the prospective adoptive parents to adopt.

Required Documents: The requirements of the child's country of origin have to be taken into consideration, including psychological analysis, medical report that may need to include certain tests such as HIV, sterility tests, and any other medical tests required by the country of origin.

- Home Study Report carried out by a social worker;
- Certificate that the applicants are qualified to adopt and that the child to be adopted is permitted to enter the Switzerland (i.e., the adoption has to be authorized by the Canton);
- Salary statement, proving a regular income;
- Tax report;
- Criminal record;
- Marriage certificate (for a couple).

Recognition of an adoption finalized in a non-Hague state in favor of an American couple living in Switzer-

land is quite complicated and may vary according to personal status (nationalities of both parents, place of residence, Swiss or American eligibility to adopt, etc.).

Prospective adoptive parents should contact legal counsel or the CCA to get proper information before they start an adoption procedure.

Non-Hague adoptions are not recognized by the Swiss Government. In such cases the child will not arrive in Switzerland as an adopted child. The child will arrive as a"Plegekind" or Foster Child.

Embassy of Switzerland

2900 Cathedral Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20008

Tel: (202) 745-7900

Fax: (202) 387-2564

Internet: www.Swissemb.org

Switzerland also has consulates in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy

Jubilaumsstrasse 93-95

3005 Bern

Internet: http://bern.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Switzerland may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Bern. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

The Swiss Central Authority of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction has informed the Department of State of the following general information concerning the operation of the Convention in Switzerland.

Judicial Procedure: Upon receipt of a Hague application, the Swiss Central Authority usually tries to get in touch with the abducting parent in order to find out if a mediated solution can be achieved. If this is not the case, or if the applicant requests to commence the judicial procedure immediately in view of obtaining a court order under the Hague Convention, the applicant is sent a list of attorneys from the respective canton who are willing to take Hague cases.

The applicant can also let the Central Authority choose the attorney for him/her. It is up to the attorney to commence the judicial procedure, to file the application of legal aid (if applicable) and to take the necessary steps in view of obtaining an enforcement of the final judgment.

Switzerland has no unified civil procedure law and no uniform court system, and the designation of the courts, rules of procedure and conditions for appeals vary considerably. A judgment rendered by the court of first instance (often called the District Court) can normally be reviewed by the court of second instance (called Superior Court, Court of Appeals, etc.). Finally, it is possible to file a further appeal with the Federal (Supreme) Court in Lausanne, Switzerland's highest judicial authority. No writ of certiorari must be obtained in order to get access to the Federal Court, but the complaints that can be raised in this stage of the lawsuit are normally limited to the violation of constitutional rights (including a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights). A final decision should usually not be expected in less than six months.

Attorneys: The applicant can choose an attorney from a list that will be provided by the Swiss Central Attorney, or he/she can let the Central Authority choose the attorney for him/her. There is a large number of attorneys who speak and write English fluently. The attorney must be paid only if the applicant is not entitled to legal aid. The attorney fees are ruled by cantonal law and differ widely. The fee normally can be negotiated between attorney and client, but no contingent fee is allowed.

Legal Aid: Switzerland has established a system of legal aid that is governed (in accordance with Article 42 of the Hague Convention) by cantonal law, although a minimal standard and guidelines are set by the case law of the Federal Court. Pursuant to this case law, an applicant is entitled to legal aid if he or she is indigent (unable to pay a living for him/herself and his/her family in addition to the legal fees) and if the chances of winning the case are greater than the chances of losing it. Legal aid covers both the court costs (which are considerably higher than those in the U.S.) as well as the attorney's fees.

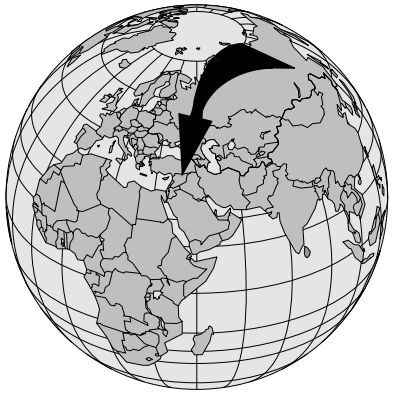
It is up to the attorney to file the request for legal aid with the court or the competent authority before commencing the Hague procedure. There are no application forms available. In general, documents indicating the monthly or annual income and expenses as well as assets and debts are required. The quicker these docu-

ments are conveyed to the attorney, the quicker a preliminary decision regarding legal aid can be obtained.

Rights of Access: The Swiss Central Authority tries to help parents exercise their rights of access pursuant to Article 21 of the Hague Convention. This obligation normally is fulfilled through intermediaries, mostly local guardianship authorities or juvenile services. This includes proceedings in view of negotiating mediated solutions and organizing locations and supervision in order to permit the meeting of a child with the parent. The Central Authority furthermore helps to find an attorney if no mediated solution can be found and a court must resolve the dispute. If the child's habitual residence is in Switzerland, the conditions and requirements of such a decision are set forth by Swiss law. If the conditions of rights of access have already been determined in a decision rendered by a U.S. court in the habitual residence of the child, then the Swiss court organizes the protection of the rights of access pursuant to Article 21 of the Hague Convention.

Translation of Documents: The Swiss Central Authority accepts all documents in English. Translation into German, French or Italian, as the language of the court might be, will be required if the document must be presented to a court, but the translation need not be sent with the Hague application.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



SYRIA

Compiled from the May 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Syrian Arab Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 185,170 sq. km. (71,504 sq. mi.), including 1,295 sq. km. of Israeli-occupied territory; about the size of North Dakota.

Cities: Capital—Damascus (pop. 4 million). Other cities—Aleppo (4.2 million), Homs (1.6 million), Hama (1.4 million), Idleb (1.3 million), al-Hasakeh (1.2 million), Dayr al-Zur (1.1), Latakia (0.9 million), Dar'a (0.9), al-Raqqa (0.8), and Tartous (0.7).

Terrain: Narrow coastal plain with a double mountain belt in the west; large, semiarid and desert plateau to the east.

Climate: Mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Syrian(s).

Population: (2005 est.)*: 18.6 million.

Growth rate: (2005 est.) 2.45%.

Ethnic groups: Arabs (90%), Kurds (9%), Armenians, Circassians, Turkomans.

Religions: Sunni Muslims (74%), Alawis (12%), Christians (10%), Druze (3%), and small numbers of other Muslim sects, Jews, and Yazidis.

Languages: Arabic (official), English (widely understood in major cities only), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian.

Education: (2005 est.) Years compulsory—primary, 6 yrs. Attendance—97.9%. Literacy (2004)—79.6%; 86% male, 73.6% female.

Health: (2004) Infant mortality rate—17.1/1,000. Life expectancy—68.47 yrs. male, 71.02 yrs. female.

Work force: (6.1 million, 2004 est.) **Services:** (including government); agriculture; industry and commerce.

Government

Type: Republic, under Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party regimes since March 1963.

Independence: April 17, 1946.

Constitution: March 13, 1973.

Government branches: Executive—president, two vice presidents, prime minister, Council of Ministers (cabinet). Legislative—unicameral People's Council. Judicial—Supreme Constitutional Court, High Judicial Council, Court of Cassation, State Security Courts.

Political subdivisions: 13 provinces and city of Damascus (administered as a separate unit).

Political parties: Arab Socialist Resurrection (Ba'ath) Party, Syrian Arab Socialist Party, Arab Socialist Union, Syrian Communist Party, Arab Socialist Unionist Movement, Democratic Socialist Union Party, and some 15 very small quasi-tolerated political parties, generally considered opposition-oriented but enfeebled and reluctant to challenge the government.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy (2005 est.)

GDP: (2005 nominal)*: $27.3 billion.

Real growth rate: 2.9%.

Per capita GDP: $1464.

Natural resources: Crude oil and natural gas, phosphates, asphalt, rock salt, marble, gypsum, iron ore, chrome, and manganese ores.

Agriculture: Products—cotton, wheat, barley, sugar beets, fruits and vegetables. Arable land—32%.

Industry: Types—mining, manufacturing (textiles, food processing), construction, petroleum.

Trade: Exports—$10.2 billion: petroleum, textiles, phosphates, antiquities, fruits and vegetables, cotton. Major markets—EU, Arab countries, United States, New Independent States, Eastern Europe. Imports—$10.8 billion: foodstuffs, metal and metal products, machinery, textiles, petroleum. Major suppliers—Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, China, U.S., Japan.

*According to IMF statistics

PEOPLE

Ethnic Syrians are of Semitic stock. Syria's population is 90% Muslim—74% Sunni, and 16% other Muslim groups, including the Alawi, Shi'a, and Druze—and 10% Christian. There also is a tiny Syrian Jewish community.

Arabic is the official, and most widely spoken, language. Arabs, including some 500,000 Palestinian and up to 1.3 million Iraqi refugees, make up 90% of the population. Many educated Syrians also speak English or French, but English is the more widely understood. The Kurds, many of whom speak the banned Kurdish language, make up 9% of the population and live mostly in the northeast corner of Syria, though sizable Kurdish communities live in most major Syrian cities as well. Armenian and Turkic are spoken among the small Armenian and Turkoman populations.

Most people live in the Euphrates River valley and along the coastal plain, a fertile strip between the coastal mountains and the desert. Overall population density is about 140 per sq. mi. Education is free and compulsory from ages 6 to 11. Schooling consists of 6 years of primary education followed by a 3-year general or vocational training period and a 3-year academic or vocational program. The second 3-year period of academic training is required for university admission. Total enrollment at post-secondary schools is over 150,000. The literacy rate of Syrians aged 15 and older is 88% for males and 74% for females.

Ancient Syria's cultural and artistic achievements and contributions are many. Archaeologists have discovered extensive writings and evidence of a brilliant culture rivaling those of Mesopotamia and Egypt in and around the ancient city of Ebla. Later Syrian scholars and artists contributed to Hellenistic and Roman thought and culture. Zeno of Sidon founded the Epicurean school; Cicero was a pupil of Antiochus of Ascalon at Athens; and the writings of Posidonius of Apamea influenced Livy and Plutarch. Syrians have contributed to Arabic literature and music and have a proud tradition of oral and written poetry. Although declining, the world-famous handicraft industry still employs thousands.

HISTORY

Archaeologists have demonstrated that Syria was the center of one of the most ancient civilizations on earth. Around the excavated city of Ebla in northern Syria, discovered in 1975, a great Semitic empire spread from the Red Sea north to Turkey and east to Mesopotamia from 2500 to 2400 B.C. The city of Ebla alone during that time had a population estimated at 260,000. Scholars believe the language of Ebla to be the oldest Semitic language.

Syria was occupied successively by Canaanites, Phoenicians, Hebrews, Arameans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Nabataeans, Byzantines, and, in part, Crusaders before finally coming under the control of the Ottoman Turks. Syria is significant in the history of Christianity; Paul was converted on the road to Damascus and established the first organized Christian Church at Antioch in ancient Syria, from which he left on many of his missionary journeys.

Damascus, settled about 2500 B.C., is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It came under Muslim rule in A.D. 636. Immediately thereafter, the city's power and prestige reached its peak, and it became the capital of the Omayyad Empire, which extended from Spain to India from A.D. 661 to A.D. 750, when the Abbasid caliphate was established at Baghdad, Iraq.

Damascus became a provincial capital of the Mameluke Empire around 1260. It was largely destroyed in 1400 by Tamerlane, the Mongol conqueror, who removed many of its craftsmen to Samarkand. Rebuilt, it continued to serve as a capital until 1516. In 1517, it fell under Ottoman rule. The Ottomans remained for the next 400 years, except for a brief occupation by Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt from 1832 to 1840.

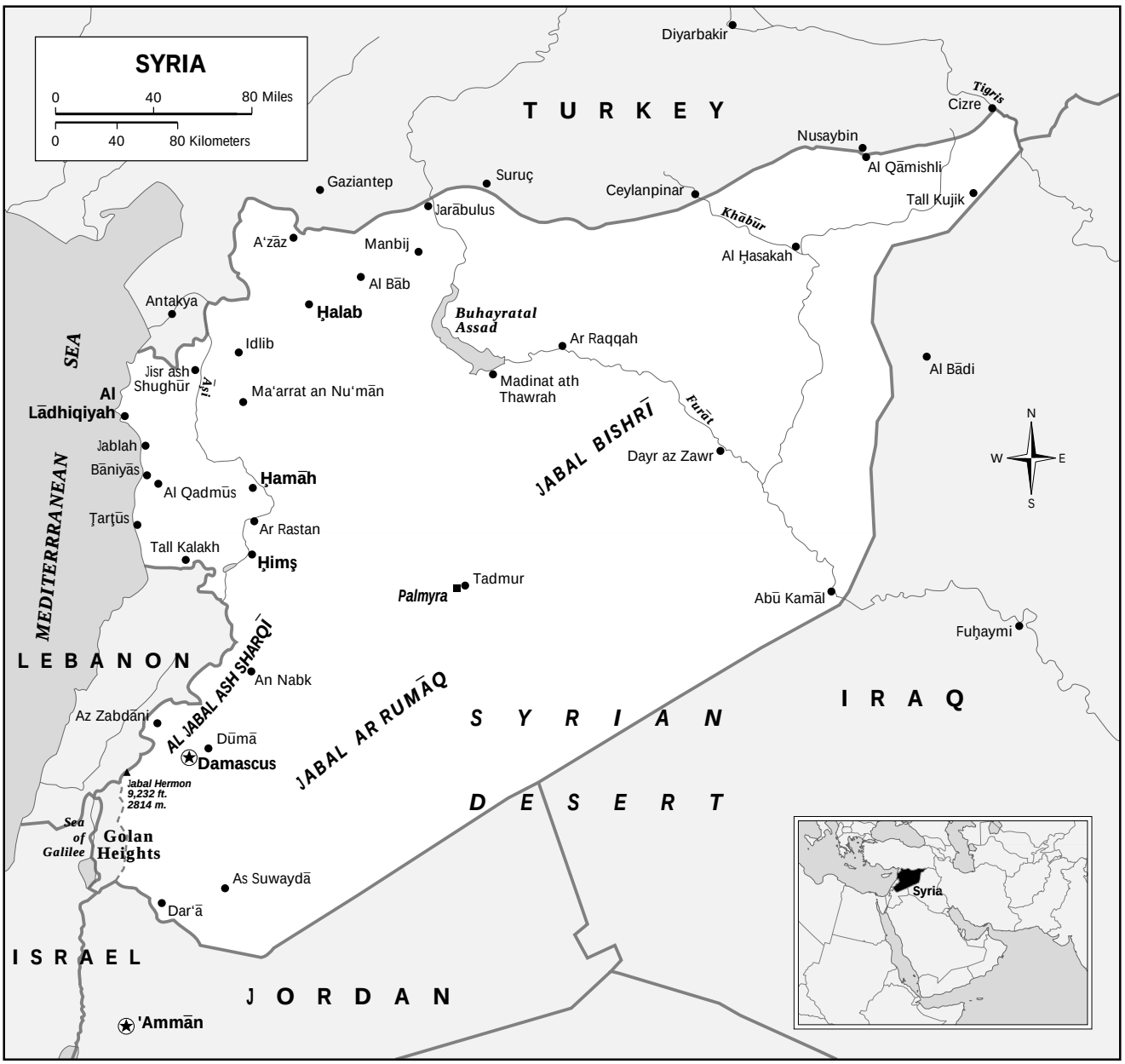
French Occupation

In 1920, an independent Arab Kingdom of Syria was established under King Faysal of the Hashemite family, who later became King of Iraq. However, his rule over Syria ended after only a few months, following the clash between his Syrian Arab forces and regular French forces at the battle of Maysalun. French troops occupied Syria later that year after the League of Nations put Syria under French mandate. With the fall of France in 1940, Syria came under the control of the Vichy Government until the British and Free French occupied the country in July 1941. Continuing pressure from Syrian nationalist groups forced the French to evacuate their troops in April 1946, leaving the country in the hands of a republican government that had been formed during the mandate.

Independence to 1970

Although rapid economic development followed the declaration of independence of April 17, 1946, Syrian politics from independence through the late 1960s were marked by upheaval. A series of military coups, begun in 1949, undermined civilian rule and led to army colonel Adib Shishakli's seizure of power in 1951. After the overthrow of President Shishakli in a 1954 coup, continued political maneuvering supported by competing factions in the military eventually brought Arab nationalist and socialist elements to power.

Syria's political instability during the years after the 1954 coup, the parallelism of Syrian and Egyptian policies, and the appeal of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's leadership in the wake of the 1956 Suez crisis created support in Syria for union with Egypt. On February 1, 1958, the two countries merged to create the United Arab Republic, and all Syrian political parties ceased overt activities.



The union was not a success, however. Following a military coup on September 28, 1961, Syria seceded, reestablishing itself as the Syrian Arab Republic. Instability characterized the next 18 months, with various coups culminating on March 8, 1963, in the installation by leftist Syrian Army officers of the National Council of the Revolutionary Command (NCRC), a group of military and civilian officials who assumed control of all executive and legislative authority. The takeover was engineered by members of the Arab Socialist Resurrection Party (Ba'ath Party), which had been active in Syria and other Arab countries since the late 1940s. The new cabinet was dominated by Ba'ath members.

The Ba'ath takeover in Syria followed a Ba'ath coup in Iraq the previous month. The new Syrian Government explored the possibility of federation with Egypt and Ba'ath—controlled Iraq. An agreement was concluded in Cairo on April 17, 1963, for a referendum on unity to be held in September 1963. However, serious disagreements among the parties soon developed, and the tripartite federation failed to materialize. Thereafter, the Ba'ath regimes in Syria and Iraq began to work for bilateral unity. These plans foundered in November 1963, when the Ba'ath regime in Iraq was overthrown. In May 1964, President Amin Hafiz of the NCRC promulgated a provisional constitution providing for a National Council of the Revolution (NCR), an appointed legislature composed of representatives of mass organizations—labor, peasant, and professional unions—a

presidential council, in which executive power was vested, and a cabinet. On February 23, 1966, a group of army officers carried out a successful, intra-party coup, imprisoned President Hafiz, dissolved the cabinet and the NCR, abrogated the provisional constitution, and designated a regionalist, civilian Ba'ath government. The coup leaders described it as a "rectification" of Ba'ath Party principles. The defeat of the Syrians and Egyptians in the June 1967 war with Israel weakened the radical socialist regime established by the 1966 coup. Conflict developed between a moderate military wing and a more extremist civilian wing of the Ba'ath Party. The 1970 retreat of Syrian forces sent to aid the PLO during the "Black September" hostilities with Jordan reflected this political disagreement within the ruling Ba'ath leadership. On November 13, 1970, Minister of Defense Hafiz al-Asad affected a bloodless military coup, ousting the civilian party leadership and assuming the role of prime minister.

1970 to 2000

Upon assuming power, Hafiz al-Asad moved quickly to create an organizational infrastructure for his government and to consolidate control. The Provisional Regional Command of Asad's Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party nominated a 173-member legislature, the People's Council, in which the Ba'ath Party took 87 seats. The remaining seats were divided among "popular organizations" and other minor parties. In March 1971, the party held its regional congress and elected a new 21-member Regional Command headed by Asad. In the same month, a national referendum was held to confirm Asad as President for a 7-year term. In March 1972, to broaden the base of his government, Asad formed the National Progressive Front, a coalition of parties led by the Ba'ath Party, and elections were held to establish local councils in each of Syria's 14 governorates. In March 1973, a new Syrian constitution went into effect followed shortly thereafter by parliamentary elections for the People's Council, the first such elections since 1962.

The authoritarian regime was not without its critics, though most were quickly dealt with. A serious challenge arose in the late 1970s, however, from fundamentalist Sunni Muslims, who reject the basic values of the secular Ba'ath program and object to rule by the Alawis, whom they consider heretical. From 1976 until its suppression in 1982, the archconservative Muslim Brotherhood led an armed insurgency against the regime. In response to an attempted uprising by the brotherhood in February 1982, the government crushed the fundamentalist opposition centered in the city of Hama, leveling parts of the city with artillery fire and causing many thousands of dead and wounded. Since then, public manifestations of anti-regime activity have been very limited.

Syria's 1990 participation in the U.S.-led multinational coalition aligned against Saddam Hussein marked a dramatic watershed in Syria's relations both with other Arab states and with the West. Syria participated in the multilateral Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid in October 1991, and during the 1990s engaged in direct, face-to-face negotiations with Israel. These negotiations failed, and there have been no further Syrian-Israeli talks since President Hafiz Al-Asad's meeting with then President Bill Clinton in Geneva in March 2000.

Hafiz Al-Asad died on June 10, 2000, after 30 years in power. Immediately following Al-Asad's death, the Parliament amended the constitution, reducing the mandatory minimum age of the President from 40 to 34 years old, which allowed his son, Bashar Al-Asad legally to be eligible for nomination by the ruling Ba'ath party. On July 10, 2000, Bashar Al-Asad was elected President by referendum in which he ran unopposed, garnering 97.29% of the vote, according to Syrian Government statistics. He was inaugurated into office on July 17, 2000 for a 7-year term.

2000 to 2007

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 the Syrian Government began limited cooperation with United States in the global war against terrorism. However, Syria opposed the Iraq war in March 2003, and bilateral relations with the United States swiftly deteriorated. In December 2003, President Bush signed into law the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003, which provided for the imposition of a series of sanctions against Syria if Syria did not end its support for Palestinian terrorist groups, end its military and security interference in Lebanon, cease its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and meet its obligations under United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq. In May 2004, the President determined that Syria had not met these conditions and implemented sanctions that prohibit the export to Syria of U.S. products except for food and medicine, and the taking off from or landing in the United States of Syrian Government-owned aircraft. At the same time, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced its intention to order U.S. financial institutions to sever correspondent accounts with the Commercial Bank of Syria based on money-laundering concerns, pursuant to Section 311 of the USA PATRIOT Act. Acting under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), the President also authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to freeze assets belonging to certain Syrian individuals and entities.

Tensions between Syria and the United States intensified from late 2004 to 2007, primarily over issues relating to Iraq and Lebanon. The U.S. Government recalled its Ambassador to Syria in February 2005, after the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri. Sensing its international isolation, the Syrians shored up their relations with Iran and radical Palestinians groups based in Damascus, and cracked down on any signs of internal dissent. There has been little movement on political

reform, with more public focus on limited economic liberalizations. The Syrian Government has provided some cooperation to the UN Independent International Investigation Commission, headed by Serge Brammertz, which is investigating the killing of Hariri. Since the 34-day conflict in Lebanon in July and August 2006, evidence of Syrian compliance with its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1701 not to rearm the Lebanese group Hezbollah is unpersuasive. On April 17, 2007, the United Nations Security Council welcomed the Secretary General's intention to evaluate the situation along the entire Syria-Lebanon border and invited the Secretary General to dispatch an independent mission to fully assess the monitoring of the border, and to report back on its findings and recommendations.

GOVERNMENT

The Syrian constitution vests the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party with leadership functions in the state and society and provides broad powers to the president. The president, approved by referendum for a 7-year term, is also Secretary General of the Ba'ath Party and leader of the National Progressive Front, which is a coalition of 10 political parties authorized by the regime. The president has the right to appoint ministers, to declare war and states of emergency, to issue laws (which, except in the case of emergency, require ratification by the People's Council), to declare amnesty, to amend the constitution, and to appoint civil servants and military personnel. The Emergency Law, which effectively suspends most constitutional protections for Syrians, has been in effect since 1963.

The National Progressive Front also acts as a forum in which economic policies are debated and the country's political orientation is determined. However, because of Ba'ath Party dominance, the National Progressive Front has traditionally exercised little independent power.

The Syrian constitution of 1973 requires that the president be Muslim but does not make Islam the state religion. Islamic jurisprudence, however, is required to be a main source of legislation. The judicial system in Syria is an amalgam of Ottoman, French, and Islamic laws, with three levels of courts: courts of first instance, courts of appeals, and the constitutional court, the highest tribunal. In addition, religious courts handle questions of personal and family law.

The Ba'ath Party emphasizes socialism and secular Arabism. Although Ba'ath Party doctrine seeks to build pan-Arab rather than ethnic identity, ethnic, religious, and regional allegiances remain important in Syria.

Members of President Asad's own minority sect, the Alawis, hold most of the important military and security positions, while Sunnis (in 2006) controlled ten of 14 positions on the powerful Ba'ath Party Regional Command. In recent years there has been a gradual decline in the party's preeminence. The party also is heavily influenced by the security services and the military, the latter of which consumes a large share of Syria's economic resources.

Syria is divided administratively into 14 provinces, one of which is Damascus. A governor for each province is appointed by the President. The governor is assisted by an elected provincial council.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Bashar al-ASAD**
Vice President: **Farouk al-SHARA**
Vice President: **Najah al-ATTAR**
Prime Minister: **Muhammad Naji al-UTRI**
Dep. Prime Min. for Economic Affairs: **Abdallah al-DARDARI**
Min. of Agriculture: **Adil SAFIR**
Min. of Construction & Housing: **Hamud al-HUSAYN**
Min. of Culture: **Riyad Nasan AGHA**
Min. of Defense: **Hassan Ali TURKMANI, Lt. Gen.**
Min. of Economy & Trade: **Amir Husni LUTFI**
Min. of Education: **Ali SAD**
Min. of Electricity: **Ahmad Khalid al-ALI**
Min. of Environment & Local Government: **Hilal al-ATRASH**
Min. of Expatriates: **Buthaynah SHABAAN**
Min. of Finance: **Muhammad al-HUSAYN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Walid MUALEM**
Min. of Health: **Mahir HUSAMI, Dr.**
Min. of Higher Education: **Ghiath BARAKAT**
Min. of Industry: **Fuad Isa JUNI**
Min. of Information: **Muhsin BILAL, Dr.**
Min. of Interior: **Basam ABD AL-MAJID, Gen.**
Min. of Irrigation: **Nadir al-BUNI**
Min. of Justice: **Muhammad al-GHAFRI**
Min. of Labor & Social Affairs: **Dayala al-Haj ARIF**
Min. of Oil: **Sufiyan al-AW**
Min. of Presidency Affairs: **Ghasan LAHAM**
Min. of Religious Endowments: **Muhammad Abd al-Satar al-SAYID**
Min. of Telecommunications & Technology: **Imad Abd al-Ghani SABUNI**
Min. of Tourism: **Sadallah Agha al-QALA**
Min. of Transport: **Yarub Sulayman BADR**
Min. of State: **Yusuf Sulayman AHMAD**
Min. of State: **Husayn Mahmud FARZAT**
Min. of State: **Ghayth JARATLI**
Min. of State: **Muhammad Yahya KHARAT**
Min. of State: **Hasan al-SARI**
Min. of State: **Bashar SHAR**
Min. of State: **Yusuf SUWAYD**
Governor, Central Bank: **Adib MAYALA**
Ambassador to the US: **Imad MUSTAFA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Bashar al-JAFARI**

Syria maintains an embassy in the United States at 2215 Wyoming Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-232-6313; fax: 202-234-9548). Consular section hours are 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. Syria also has an honorary consul at 5433 Westheimer Rd., Suite 1020, Houston, TX 77056 (tel. 713-622-8860; fax. 713-965-9632).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Officially, Syria is a republic. In reality, however, it is an authoritarian regime that exhibits only the forms of a democratic system. Although citizens ostensibly vote for the President and members of Parliament, they do not have the right to change their government. The late President Hafiz Al-Asad was confirmed by unopposed referenda five times. His son, Bashar Al-Asad, also was confirmed by an unopposed referendum in July 2000. The President and his senior aides, particularly those in the military and security services, ultimately make most basic decisions in political and economic life, with a very limited degree of public accountability. Political opposition to the President is not tolerated. Syria has been under a state of emergency since 1963. Syrian governments have justified martial law by the state of war, which continues to exist with Israel and by continuing threats posed by terrorist groups.

The Asad regime (little has changed since Bashar Al-Asad succeeded his father) has held power longer than any other Syrian government since independence; its survival is due partly to a strong desire for stability and the regime's success in giving groups such as religious minorities and peasant farmers a stake in society. The expansion of the government bureaucracy has also created a large class loyal to the regime. The President's continuing strength is due also to the army's continued loyalty and the effectiveness of Syria's large internal security apparatus. The leadership of both is comprised largely of members of Asad's own Alawi sect. The several main branches of the security services operate independently of each other and outside of the legal system. Each continues to be responsible for human rights violations.

All three branches of government are guided by the views of the Ba'ath Party, whose primacy in state institutions is assured by the constitution. The Ba'ath platform is proclaimed succinctly in the party's slogan: "Unity, freedom, and socialism." The party has traditionally been considered both socialist, advocating state ownership of the means of industrial production and the redistribution of agricultural land, and revolutionary, dedicated to carrying a socialist revolution to every part of the Arab world. Founded by Michel 'Aflaq, a Syrian Christian and Salah al-Din Al-Bitar, a Syrian Sunni, the Ba'ath Party embraces secularism and has attracted supporters of all faiths in many Arab countries, especially Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Since August 1990, however, the party has tended to de-emphasize socialism and to stress both pan-Arab unity and the need for gradual reform of the Syrian economy.

Nine smaller political parties are permitted to exist and, along with the Ba'ath Party, make up the National Progressive Front (NPF), a grouping of parties that represents the sole framework of legal political party participation for citizens. While created ostensibly to give the appearance of a multi-party system, the NPF is dominated by the Ba'ath Party and does not change the essentially one-party character of the political system. Non-Ba'ath parties included in the NPF represent small political groupings of a few hundred members each and conform strictly to Ba'ath Party and government policies. There were reports in 2005, in the wake of the June Ba'ath Party Congress, that the government was considering legislation to permit the formation of new political parties and the legalization of parties previously banned. These changes have not taken place. In addition, some 15 small independent parties outside the NPF operate without government sanction.

The Ba'ath Party dominates the parliament, which is known as the People's Council. With members elected every 4 years, the Council has no independent authority. The executive branch retains ultimate control over the legislative process, although parliamentarians may criticize policies and modify draft laws; according to the constitution and its bylaws, a group of 10 parliamentarians can propose legislation. During 2001, two independent members of parliament, Ma'mun al-Humsy and Riad Seif, who had advocated political reforms, were stripped of their parliamentary immunity and tried and convicted of charges of "attempting to illegally change the constitution." Seif was released from prison in early 2006, but remains under strict surveillance by the security services. The government has allowed independent non-NPF candidates to run for a limited allotment of seats in the 250-member People's Council. Following the April 22-23, 2007 parliamentary elections, the NPF strengthened its hold on parliament, with the number of non-NPF deputies shrinking from 83 to 80, ensuring a permanent absolute majority for the Ba'ath Party-dominated NPF.

There was a surge of interest in political reform after Bashar al-Asad assumed power in 2000. Human rights activists and other civil society advocates, as well as some parliamentarians, became more outspoken during a period referred to as "Damascus Spring" (July 2000-February 2001). Asad also made a series of appointments of reform-minded advisors to formal and less formal positions, and included a number of similarly oriented individuals in his cabinet. The 2001 arrest and long-term detention of the two reformist parliamentarians and the apparent marginalizing of some of the reformist advisors in the past five years, indicate that the pace of any political reform in Syria is likely to be much slower than the short-lived Damascus Spring promised. A crackdown on civil society in 2005, in the wake of Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon, and again in the late winter and spring of 2006, reinforced the perception that any steps toward political form were likely to be halting and piecemeal at best.

ECONOMY

Syria is a middle-income, developing country with an economy based on

agriculture, oil, industry, and tourism. However, Syria's economy faces serious challenges and impediments to growth, including: a large and poorly performing public sector; declining rates of oil production; widening non-oil deficit; wide scale corruption; weak financial and capital markets; and high rates of unemployment tied to a high population growth rate. In addition, Syria currently is the subject of U.S. economic sanctions under the Syria Accountability Act, which prohibits the export and re-export of most U.S. products to Syria.

As a result of an inefficient and corrupt centrally planned economy, Syria has low rates of investment, and low levels of industrial and agricultural productivity. Its GDP growth rate was approximately 2.9% in 2005, according to IMF statistics. The two main pillars of the Syrian economy have been agriculture and oil. Agriculture, for instance, accounts for 25% of GDP and employs 42% of the total labor force. The government hopes to attract new investment in the tourism, natural gas, and service sectors to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil and agriculture. The government has begun to institute economic reforms aimed at liberalizing most markets, but reform thus far has been slow and ad hoc. For ideological reasons, privatization of government enterprises is explicitly rejected. Therefore major sectors of the economy including refining, ports operation, air transportation, power generation, and water distribution, remain firmly controlled by the government.

The Bashar al-Asad government started its reform efforts by changing the regulatory environment in the financial sector. In 2001, Syria legalized private banking and the sector, while still nascent, has been growing quickly in the last four years. Controls on foreign exchange continue to be one of the biggest impediments to the growth of the banking sector, although Syria has taken gradual steps to loosen those controls. In 2003, the government canceled a law that criminalized private sector use of foreign currencies, and in 2005 it issued legislation that allows licensed private banks to sell specific amounts of foreign currency to Syrian citizens under certain circumstances and to the private sector to finance imports. Syria's exchange rate is fixed, and the government maintains two official rates—one rate on which the budget and the value of imports, customs, and other official transactions are based, and a second set by the Central Bank on a daily basis that covers all other financial transactions. There is, however, still an active black market for foreign currency.

Given the policies adopted from the 1960s through the late 1980s, which included nationalization of companies and private assets, Syria failed to join an increasingly interconnected global economy. Syria withdrew from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1951 because of Israel's accession. It is not a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), although it submitted a request to begin the accession process in 2001. Syria is developing regional free trade agreements. As of January 1, 2005, the Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement (GAFTA) came into effect and customs duties were eliminated between Syria and all other members of GAFTA. In addition, Syria has signed a free trade agreement with Turkey, which came into force in January 2007, and initialed an Association Agreement with the EU, which has yet to be signed. Although Syria claims a recent boom in non-oil exports, its trade numbers are notoriously inaccurate and out-of-date. Syria's main exports include crude oil, refined products, raw cotton, clothing, fruits, and grains. The bulk of Syrian imports are raw materials essential for industry, vehicles, agricultural equipment, and heavy machinery. Earnings from oil exports as well as remittances from Syrian workers are the government's most important sources of foreign exchange.

Syria has produced heavy-grade oil from fields located in the northeast since the late 1960s. In the early 1980s, light-grade, low-sulphur oil was discovered near Dayr al-Zur in eastern Syria. Syria's rate of oil production has been decreasing steadily, from a peak close to 600,000 barrels per day (bpd) in 1995 down to approximately 425,000 bpd in 2005. Experts generally agree that Syria will become a net importer of petroleum not later than 2012. Syria exported roughly 200,000 bpd in 2005, and oil still accounts for a majority of the country's export income. Syria also produces 22 million cubic meters of gas per day, with estimated reserves around 8.5 trillion cubic feet. While the government has begun to work with international energy companies in the hopes of eventually becoming a gas exporter, all gas currently produced is consumed domestically. Some basic commodities, such as diesel, continue to be heavily subsidized, and social services are provided for nominal charges. The subsidies are becoming harder to sustain as the gap between consumption and production continues to increase. Syria has a population of approximately 19 million people, and Syrian Government figures place the population growth rate at 2.45%, with 75% of the population under the age of 35 and more than 40% under the age of 15. Approximately 200,000 people enter the labor market every year. According to Syrian Government statistics, the unemployment rate is 7.5%, however, more accurate independent sources place it closer to 20%. Government and public sector employees constitute over one quarter of the total labor force and are paid very low salaries and wages. Government officials acknowledge that the economy is not growing at a pace sufficient to create enough new jobs annually to match population growth. The UNDP announced in 2005 that 30% of the Syrian population lives in poverty and 11.4% live below the subsistence level.

Syria has made progress in easing its heavy foreign debt burden through bilateral rescheduling deals with its key creditors in Europe, most importantly Russia, Germany, and France. Syria has also settled its debt with Iran and the World Bank. In December 2004, Syria and Poland reached an agreement by which Syria would pay $27 million out of the total $261.7 million debt. In January 2005, Russia forgave 80% of Syria's $13 billion

long-outstanding debt, and later that year Syria reached an agreement with Slovakia, and the Czech Republic to settle debt estimated at $1.6 billion. Again Syria was forgiven the bulk of its debt, in exchange for a one time payment of $150 million.

NATIONAL SECURITY

President Bashar Al-Asad is commander in chief of the Syrian armed forces, comprised of some 400,000 troops upon mobilization. The military is a conscripted force; males serve 24 months in the military upon reaching the age of 18. Some 17,000 Syrian soldiers formerly deployed in Lebanon have been withdrawn to Syria in response to UNSCR 1559, which was passed in the fall of 2004. Demands that Syria comply with 1559 intensified after the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

Syria's military remains one of the largest in the region, although the breakup of the Soviet Union—long the principal source of training, material, and credit for the Syrian forces—slowed Syria's ability to acquire modern military equipment. Syria received significant financial aid from Gulf Arab states in the 1990s as a result of its participation in the first Gulf War, with a sizable portion of these funds earmarked for military spending. Besides sustaining its conventional forces, Syria seeks to develop its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capability.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Ensuring national security, increasing influence among its Arab neighbors, and achieving a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement, which includes the return of the Golan Heights, are the primary goals of President Asad's foreign policy.

Relations with Other Arab Countries

Syria reestablished full diplomatic relations with Egypt in 1989. In the 1990-91 Gulf War, Syria joined other Arab states in the U.S.-led multinational coalition against Iraq. In 1998, Syria began a slow rapprochement with Iraq, driven primarily by economic needs. Syria continues to play an active pan-Arab role, although in the wake of the Hariri assassination, Syria became more isolated diplomatically, both in the region and beyond.

Though it voted in favor of UNSCR 1441 in 2002, Syria was against coalition military action in Iraq in 2003. However, the Syrian Government accepted UNSCR 1483 (after being absent for the actual vote), which lifted sanctions on Iraq and established a framework to assist the Iraqi people in determining their political future and rebuilding their economy. Syria also voted for UNSCR 1511, which called for greater international involvement in Iraq and addressed the transfer of sovereignty from the U.S.-led coalition. Since the transfer of sovereignty in Iraq on June 28, 2004, Syria extended qualified support to the Iraqi Government and pledged to cooperate in the areas of border security, repatriation of Iraqi assets, and eventual restoration of formal diplomatic relations. While Syria has taken some steps to tighten controls along the Syria-Iraq border, Syria remains one of the primary transit points for foreign fighters entering Iraq. Consequently, relations between Syria and the Iraqi Government remained strained. However, following a series of visits between high-level officials from both governments—including Foreign Minister Mu'allim's November 2006 visit to Baghdad and Iraqi President Talabani's subsequent visit to Damascus—formal diplomatic relations were finally established in December 2006. That same month, the Ministers of Interior from both countries signed a Memorandum of Security Understanding aimed at improving border security and combating terrorism and crime. Iraq continues to call for more action on the part of Syria to control its border and to prevent Iraqi and Arab elements residing in—or transiting—Syria from contributing financially, politically, or militarily to the insurgency in Iraq.

Involvement in Lebanon

Syria has played an important role in Lebanon by virtue of its history, size, power, and economy. Lebanon was part of post-Ottoman Syria until 1926. The presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon dated to 1976, when President Hafiz al-Asad intervened in the Lebanese civil war on behalf of Maronite Christians. Following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Syrian and Israeli forces clashed in eastern Lebanon. However, Syrian opposition blocked implementation of the May 17, 1983, Lebanese-Israeli accord on the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon.

In 1989, Syria endorsed the Charter of National Reconciliation, or "Taif Accord," a comprehensive plan for ending the Lebanese conflict negotiated under the auspices of Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco. In May 1991, Lebanon and Syria signed the treaty of brotherhood, cooperation, and coordination called for in the Taif Accord.

According to the U.S. interpretation of the Taif Accord, Syria and Lebanon were to have decided on the redeployment of Syrian forces from Beirut and other coastal areas of Lebanon by September 1992. Israeli occupation of Lebanon until May 2000, the breakdown of peace negotiations between Syria and Israel that same year, and intensifying Arab/Israeli tensions since the start of the second Palestinian uprising in September 2000 helped delay full implementation of the Taif Accords. The United Nations declared that Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon fulfilled the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 425. However, Syria and Lebanon claimed that UNSCR 425 had not been fully implemented because Israel did not withdraw from an area of the Golan Heights called Sheba Farms, which had been occupied by Israel in 1967, and which Syria now claimed was part of Lebanon. The United Nations does not rec-

ognize this claim. However, Lebanese resistance groups such as Hezbollah use it to justify attacks against Israeli forces in that region. The danger of Hezbollah's tactics was highlighted when Hezbollah's attacks on and hostage-taking of Israeli soldiers on July 12, 2006 sparked a 34-day conflict in Lebanon. After the conflict, the passing of UNSCR 1701 authorized the enhancement of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Before the conflict, UNIFIL authorized a presence of 2,000 troops in southern Lebanon; post-conflict, this ceiling is to be raised to 15,000. As of September 2006, 5,000 troops had deployed to southern Lebanon. UNIFIL is tasked with ensuring peace and security along the frontier and overseeing the eventual return of effective Lebanese government and military authority throughout the border region.

Until its withdrawal in April 2005, Syria maintained approximately 17,000 troops in Lebanon. A September 2004 vote by Lebanon's Chamber of Deputies to amend the constitution to extend Lebanese President Lahoud's term in office by three years amplified the question of Lebanese sovereignty and the continuing Syrian presence. The vote was clearly taken under Syrian pressure, exercised in part through Syria's military intelligence service, whose chief in Lebanon had acted as a virtual proconsul for many years. The UN Security Council expressed its concern over the situation by passing Resolution 1559, which called for the withdrawal of all remaining foreign forces from Lebanon, disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces throughout the country, and a free and fair electoral process in the presidential election.

Former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 19 others were assassinated in Beirut by a car bomb on February 14, 2005. The assassination spurred massive protests in Beirut and international pressure that led to the withdrawal of the remaining Syrian military troops from Lebanon on April 26, 2005. Rafiq Hariri's assassination was just one of a number of attacks that continue to target high-profile Lebanese critics of Syria. The UN International Independent Investigative Commission (UNIIIC) headed by Serge Brammertz is investigating Hariri's assassination and is expected to report its findings to the Security Council by June 2007.

The United States supports a sovereign, independent Lebanon, free of all foreign forces, and believes that the best interests of both Lebanon and Syria are served by a positive and constructive relationship based upon principles of mutual respect and nonintervention between two neighboring sovereign and independent states. The United States calls for Syrian non-interference in Lebanon, consistent with UNSCR 1559 and 1701.

Arab-Israeli Relations

Syria was an active belligerent in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights and the city of Quneitra. Following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, which left Israel in occupation of additional Syrian territory, Syria accepted UN Security Council Resolution 338, which signaled an implicit acceptance of Resolution 242. Resolution 242, which became the basis for the peace process negotiations begun in Madrid in 1981, calls for a just and lasting Middle East peace to include withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in 1967; termination of the state of belligerency; and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of all regional states and of their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

As a result of the mediation efforts of then U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Syria and Israel concluded a disengagement agreement in May 1974, enabling Syria to recover territory lost in the October war and part of the Golan Heights occupied by Israel since 1967, including Quneitra. The two sides have effectively implemented the agreement, which is monitored by UN forces.

In December 1981, the Israeli Knesset voted to extend Israeli law to the part of the Golan Heights over which Israel retained control. The UN Security Council subsequently passed a resolution calling on Israel to rescind this measure. Syria participated in the Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid in October 1991. Negotiations were conducted intermittently through the 1990s, and came very close to succeeding. However, the parties were unable to come to an agreement over Syria's nonnegotiable demand that Israel withdraw to the positions it held on June 4, 1967. The peace process collapsed following the outbreak of the second Palestinian (Intifada) uprising in September 2000, though Syria continues to call for a comprehensive settlement based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and the land-for-peace formula adopted at the 1991 Madrid conference.

Tensions between Israel and Syria increased as the second Intifada dragged on, primarily as a result of Syria's unwillingness to stop giving sanctuary to Palestinian terrorist groups conducting operations against Israel. In October 2003, following a suicide bombing carried out by a member of Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Haifa that killed 20 Israeli citizens, Israeli Defense Forces attacked a suspected Palestinian terrorist training camp 15 kilometers north of Damascus. This was the first such Israeli attack deep inside Syrian territory since the 1973 war. During the summer of 2006 tensions again heightened due to Israeli fighter jets buzzing President Asad's summer castle in response to Syria's support for the Palestinian group Hamas, Syria's support of Hezbollah during the July-August 2006 conflict in Lebanon, and the possible rearming of Hezbollah in potential violation of UN Resolution 1701. Rumors of back-channel negotiations in 2006-2007 between the Israeli and Syrian Governments were discounted by both Israel and Syria, with spokespersons for both countries indicating that any such talks were not officially sanctioned.

Membership in International Organizations

Syria is a member of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Arab League, Arab Monetary Fund, Council of Arab Economic Unity, Customs Cooperation Council, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Food and Agricultural Organization, Group of 24, Group of 77, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Chamber of Commerce, International Development Association, Islamic Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Finance Corporation, International Labor Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Maritime Organization, INTERPOL, International Olympic Committee, International Organization for Standardization, International Telecommunication Union, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Non-Aligned Movement, Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, Organization of the Islamic Conference, United Nations, UN Conference on Trade and Development, UN Industrial Development Organization, UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Universal Postal Union, World Federation of Trade Unions, World Health Organization, World Meteorological Organization, and World Tourism Organization.

Syria's 2-year term as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council ended in December 2003.

U.S.-SYRIAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Syrian relations, severed in 1967, were resumed in June 1974, following the achievement of the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement. In 1990-91, Syria cooperated with the United States as a member of the multinational coalition of forces in the Gulf War. The U.S. and Syria also consulted closely on the Taif Accord, ending the civil war in Lebanon. In 1991, President Asad made a historic decision to accept then President Bush's invitation to attend a Middle East peace conference and to engage in subsequent bilateral negotiations with Israel. Syria's efforts to secure the release of Western hostages held in Lebanon and its lifting of restrictions on travel by Syrian Jews helped to further improve relations between Syria and the United States. There were several presidential summits; the last one occurred when then-President Clinton met the late President Hafiz al-Asad in Geneva in March 2000. In the aftermath of September 11th the Syrian Government began limited cooperation with U.S. in the war against terror.

Syria has been on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism since the list's inception in 1979. Because of its continuing support and safe haven for terrorist organizations, Syria is subject to legislatively mandated penalties, including export sanctions and ineligibility to receive most forms of U.S. aid or to purchase U.S. military equipment. In 1986, the U.S. withdrew its ambassador and imposed additional administrative sanctions on Syria in response to evidence of direct Syrian involvement in an attempt to blow up an Israeli airplane. A U.S. ambassador returned to Damascus in 1987, partially in response to positive Syrian actions against terrorism such as expelling the Abu Nidal Organization from Syria and helping free an American hostage earlier that year.

However, relations since the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri have considerably deteriorated. Issues of U.S. concern include the Syrian Government's failure to prevent Syria from becoming a major transit point for foreign fighters entering Iraq, its refusal to deport from Syria former Saddam regime elements who are supporting the insurgency in Iraq, its ongoing interference in Lebanese affairs, its protection of the leadership of Palestinian rejectionist groups in Damascus, its deplorable human rights record, and its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. In May 2004, the Bush administration, pursuant to the provisions of the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, imposed sanctions on Syria which banned nearly all exports to Syria except food and medicine. In February 2005, in the wake of the Hariri assassination, the U.S. recalled its Ambassador to Washington.

On September 12, 2006 the U.S. Embassy was attacked by four armed assailants with guns, grenades and a car bomb (which failed to detonate). Syrian Security Forces successfully countered the attack, killing all four attackers. Two other Syrians killed during the attack were a government security guard and a passerby. The Syrian Government publicly stated that terrorists had carried out the attack. The U.S. Government has not received an official Syrian Government assessment of the motives or organization behind the attack, but security was upgraded at U.S. facilities. Both the Syrian ambassador to the U.S., Imad Mushtapha, and President Bashar Asad, however, blamed U.S. foreign policy in the region as contributing to the incident.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

DAMASCUS (E) 2, Al-Mansour Street, PO Box 29, APO/FPO AMEMB, Unit 70200, Box (D), APO AE 09892-0200, (963)-11-3391-4444, Fax (963-11) 3391-3999, Workweek: Sunday-Thursday, 8:00-5:00, Website: http://damascus.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Erlinda Ramos
DCM/CHG:	Michael Corbin
ECO:	Todd Holmstrom
FM:	Dave Stewart
MGT:	John J. Finnegan, Jr.
POL/ECO:	Timothy Pounds
CON:	Patricia Fietz
PAO:	Katherine Van De Vate
GSO:	Susan Walsh
RSO:	Daniel Chase
AFSA:	Kristina Lorenger
CLO:	Monessa Chase
DAO:	Col. Patrick Michelson

FMO: Margarita Halle
ICASS Chair: Mitchell Lopez
IMO: James Lyne
IPO: Lee Ackermann
ISO: Clif Miller
ISSO: Mohammed Farah
State ICASS: Pamela Mills

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 13, 2008

Country Description: Since March 1963, the Syrian Arab Republic has been ruled by an authoritarian regime dominated by the Socialist Ba'ath Party. While the ruling Ba'ath party espouses a largely secular ideology, Islamic traditions and beliefs provide a conservative foundation for the country's customs and practices. Syria has a developing, centrally-planned economy with large public (30%), agricultural (25%), and industrial (20%) sectors. Tourist facilities are available, but vary in quality depending on price and location.

Entry Requirements: A passport and a visa are required. Visas must be obtained prior to arrival in Syria from a Syrian diplomatic mission located in the traveler's country of residence, although the Syrian visa policy with respect to American diplomats and citizens is currently under review. Foreigners who wish to stay 15 days or more in Syria must register with Syrian immigration authorities by their 15th day. Syrian-American men or American men of Syrian origin, even those born in the United States, may be subject to compulsory military service unless they receive a temporary or permanent exemption from a Syrian diplomatic mission abroad prior to their entry into Syria. (Please see the section on Special Circumstances below.) Syria charges a departure tax for all visitors except those on diplomatic passports. As of July 1, 2008, the tax is 1,500 Syrian Pounds if departing from the airport; 500 Syrian Pounds if departing via one of the land borders.

The Syrian government rigidly enforces restrictions on prior travel to Israel, and does not allow persons with passports bearing Israeli visa or entry/exit stamps to enter the country. Syrian immigration authorities will not admit travelers with Israeli stamps in their passports, Jordanian entry cachets or cachets from other countries that suggest prior travel to Israel. Likewise, the absence of entry stamps from a country adjacent to Israel, which the traveler has just visited, will cause Syrian immigration officials to refuse admittance. Entry into Syria via the land border with Israel is not possible. American-citizen travelers suspected of having traveled to Israel have been detained for questioning.

Syrian security officials are also sensitive about travel to Iraq. There have been instances in which Americans, especially those of Arab descent, believed to have traveled to Iraq were detained for questioning at ports of entry/exit. Americans seeking to travel to Iraq through Syria have also on occasion been turned around and/or detained. On a number of occasions the border between Iraq and Syria has been closed without notice, stranding Americans on either side of the border.

Children under the age of eighteen whose fathers are Syrian or of Syrian descent must have their fathers' permission to leave Syria, even if the parents are separated or divorced and the mother has been granted full custody by a Syrian court. Women in Syria are often subject to strict family controls. On occasion, families of Syrian-American women visiting Syria have attempted to prevent them from leaving the country. This can be a particular problem for young single women of marriageable age. Although a woman does not need her husband's explicit consent every time she wishes to leave Syria, a Syrian husband may take legal action to prevent his wife from leaving the country, regardless of her nationality. Once such legal orders are in place, the U.S. Embassy cannot help American citizens leave Syria. Visit the Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic, 2215 Wyoming Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone (202) 232-6313 or check the Syrian Embassy's home page at http://www.syrianembassy.us for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Syria is included on the Department of State's List of State Sponsors of Terrorism. A number of the terrorist groups that have offices in Syria oppose U.S. policies in the Middle East. On September 12, 2006, the U.S. Embassy in Damascus was attacked by assailants using improvised explosives, gunfire, and two vehicles laden with explosives. On February 4, 2006, mobs protesting caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed destroyed the Norwegian and Chilean embassies and severely damaged the Danish and Swedish diplomatic missions. On April 27, 2004 there was a violent clash in which three people died in an area of Damascus where many foreign citizens reside. It has never been clear whether the shootout with Syrian security forces involved common criminals or terrorists. In 1998 and 2000, mobs attacked the U.S. Ambassador's Residence and the U.S. Embassy, respectively. In 1997, twenty-two people were killed when a public bus was bombed in downtown Damascus. All of these attacks serve as reminders that Syria is not immune from political or purely criminal violence. Americans traveling through the area should remain aware that U.S. interests and citizens might be targeted.

Security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephones, and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. Additionally, Americans should be aware that conversations on the topics of political, religious and other freedoms are not seen as merely healthy debate in Syria and could lead to arrest. Note that possession of specific-use electronic devices including GPS, short-wave or handheld radio equipment, or similar devices in Syria is illegal. For the lat-

est security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts and additional resources can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: While a few cases of theft, burglary and assault have been reported to the Embassy, crime is generally not a serious problem for travelers in Syria. It is important to note, however, that Syria is not crime free. Specifically, incidents of credit card and ATM fraud, and physical harassment of women, are on the rise.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to the local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalents for the "911" emergency line in Syria are: 110 for ambulance, 113 for fire and 112 for the police.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Basic medical care and medicines are available in Syria's principal cities, but not necessarily in outlying areas. Serious illnesses and emergencies may require evacuation to a Western medical facility.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to or foreign residents of Syria. There are no special immunizations required for entry to Syria. AIDS tests are mandatory for foreigners' ages 15 to 60 who wish to reside in Syria. The AIDS test must be conducted in Syria at a facility approved by the Syrian Ministry of Health. A residence permit will not be issued until the absence of the HIV virus has been determined. Foreigners wishing to marry Syrian nationals in Syria must also be tested for HIV. Syria usually will not give visas or residency permits to students wishing to study religion or Arabic in private religious institutions. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Syria at http://www.syrianembassy.us/ before you travel.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Syria is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Syria is hazardous and requires great caution. Although drivers generally follow traffic signs and signals, they often maneuver aggressively and show little regard for vehicles traveling behind or to the sides of them. Lane markings are usually ignored. Vehicles within Syrian traffic circles must give way to entering traffic, unlike in the United States. At night, it is very hard to see pedestrians, who often walk into traffic with little warning. Outside major cities it is common to find pedestrians, animals and vehicles without lights on the roads at night. Pedestrians must also exercise caution. Parked cars, deteriorating pavement, and guard posts obstruct sidewalks, often forcing pedestrians to walk in the street. Vehicles often do not stop for pedestrians, and regularly run red lights or "jump" the green light well before it changes.

For specific information concerning Syrian driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Syrian Embassy in Washington, D.C. at 2215 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. 202-232-6313.

Aviation Safety Oversight: Sanctions resulting from the passage of the Syria Accountability Act prohibit aircraft of any air carrier owned or controlled by the Syrian government to take off from or land in the United States. As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by air carriers registered in Syria, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Syria's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov. The U.S. Embassy in Damascus has advised its employees to avoid travel on Syrian Arab Airlines (Syrian Air or SAA) whenever possible due to concerns regarding the airline's ability to maintain its airplanes. SAA has, on its own initiative, grounded individual aircraft with significant maintenance or service issues; however, concerns persist that some planes still being flown may lack certain safety equipment or may have undergone repairs that have not been reviewed by the manufacturer.

Special Circumstances: Syrian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Syria of items such as weapons, narcotics, alcohol, tobacco, cheese, fruits, pharmaceuticals, modems, cosmetics, and some electrical appliances. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Syria in Washington, D.C. for specific information regarding customs requirements. Please see our Customs Information.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, they will have proof of identity and U.S. citizenship readily available. Although Syria is a signatory to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Syrian officials generally do not notify the American Embassy when American citizens are arrested. When the American Embassy learns of arrests of Americans and requests consular access, individual police officials have, on their own initiative, responded promptly and allowed consular officers to visit the prisoners. However, security officials have also in the past denied Embassy requests for consular access, especially in the case of dual citizens.

Foreign currencies can be exchanged for Syrian pounds only at government-approved exchange centers and licensed private banks. Syrian pounds cannot be changed back into foreign currency. Very few places in Syria accept credit cards. Foreigners visiting Syria are required to pay hotel bills in US dollars or Euros. Travelers' checks are not accepted for payment in Syria, and banks will not cash them unless the traveler has an account at the bank in question. There are no US-based banks operating in Syria. There are six private banks operating in Syria, with branches and ATMs in most major cities. These ATMs usually honor major debit/credit systems. Funds may be transferred into Syria through Western Union. Wiring of funds through private banks is possible only if the traveler already holds an account with the bank in Syria;, transferring funds through the Commercial Bank of Syria is not possible due to U.S. sanctions. Syrian-American and Palestinian-American men who have never served in the Syrian military and who are planning to visit Syria are strongly urged to check with the Syrian Embassy in Washington, D.C. prior to traveling concerning compulsory military service. American men over the age of 18, even those who have never resided in or visited Syria, whose fathers are of Syrian descent, are required to complete military service or pay to be exempted. Possession of a U.S. passport does not absolve the bearer of this obligation.

The fee for exemption from military service ranges from $5,000 to $15,000 USD, depending upon circumstances, for Syrian-American and Palestinian-American men who live abroad. In January 2005 the Syrian government reduced mandatory military service from 30 months to 24 months. It also announced that Syrians born outside of Syria and residing abroad until the age of 18 have the option of being exempted from their service by paying $2,000 USD. Those born in Syria who left the country before reaching the age of 11, and have resided abroad for more than 15 years can be exempted by paying $5,000 USD. Contact the Syrian Embassy in Washington, DC, for more information (See Entry/Exit Requirements section above).

President Bush signed an executive order on May 11, 2004, implementing sanctions in accordance with the Syria Accountability Act. These sanctions prohibit the export to Syria of products of the United States other than food or medicine, and prohibit any commercial aircraft owned or controlled by the Syrian government from taking off from or landing in the United States. Under the authority provided in Section 5(b) of the Act, the President has determined that it is in the national security interest of the United States to waive the application of these sanctions in certain cases and for certain products, as specified in the Department of Commerce's General Order No. 2. For additional information about implementation of the Syria Accountability Act, consult the Department of Commerce web site at (http://www.bis.doc.gov).

Since 1979, the United States has designated Syria a State Sponsor of Terrorism due to its support for groups such as Hizbollah and Palestinian terrorist groups. The Terrorism List Government Sanctions Regulations prohibit U.S. persons from receiving unlicensed donations from the Syrian government. Additionally, U.S. persons are prohibited from engaging in financial transactions which a U.S. person knows or has reasonable cause to believe pose a risk of furthering terrorists' acts in the United States. For additional information about the Terrorism List Government Sanctions Regulations, consult the terrorism brochure on the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) home page on the Internet at http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/ or via OFAC's info-by-fax service at (202) 622-0077.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Syrian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Syria are strict and convicted offenders can expect prison sentences and heavy fines. Penalties for possession of even small amounts of illegal drugs for personal use are severe in Syria. Persons convicted in Syria for growing, processing, or smuggling drugs face the death penalty, which may be reduced to a minimum of 20 years' imprisonment. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children

and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Syria are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Syria. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 2 Al-Mansour St., Abu Roumaneh, Damascus.

The international mailing address is PO Box 29, Damascus. Mail may also be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to: American Embassy Damascus, Department of State, Washington, DC 20521-6110. Telephone numbers are (963) (11) 3391-4444, fax number is (963)(11) 3391-3999, e-mail: acsdamascus@state.gov. The government workweek in Syria is Sunday through Thursday; the private sector generally works Saturday through Thursday. The U.S. Embassy is open Sunday through Thursday. Additional information may be found on the Embassy web site at http://damascus.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

December 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Islamic Shari'a law does not allow for full adoptions as generally understood in the United States. However, immigrant visas may be issued in cases IF the Islamic court grants custody of an orphan to a guardian and where that court understands that custody of the orphan to be transferred through guardianship, and that the parents intend to obtain a full and final adoption of the child once that child is in the United States and expressly signals that agreement.

In Syria, only Catholic civil law recognizes full and final adoptions as a legal convention and defines the conditions, rights and duties thereof. Catholic orphanages in Syria may have children available for adoption by Catholic or Eastern Orthodox families and so prospective adopting parents WOULD NOT have to obtain special permission from Syrian courts allowing Catholic orphans to be adopted in the United States as has to be done with Islamic orphans.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: Governmental orphanages are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs. The main office is "Zaid Bin Haretha" located at Masaken Barzeh, Damascus.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Only one person of a married couple may adopt, or both spouses must adopt the child jointly. The prospective adoptive parent(s) must be at least 40 years old and the age difference between the prospective adoptive parent(s) and the child must be at least 18 years. In the case of a Catholic child, at least one of the prospective adoptive parents must be Catholic, unless the church authority makes an exception for a prospective adoptive parent that is from another Eastern Christian denomination, i.e. Greek Orthodox.

Residency Requirements: Adoptions of Catholic orphans do not require residency in Syria for prospective parents.

Time Frame: Due to the fact that the adoption of Catholic orphans has only been made possible since the establishment of the Catholic Civil code in July, 2006, average time frames have not yet been established.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Syria. Churches and governmental orphanages care for abandoned children but may not always have the legal expertise to process an adoption. Attorneys who specialize in family law may assist in handling adoption cases. The U.S. Embassy in Damascus maintains a list of lawyers. This list is available by calling the Consular Section at 963-11-3391-4444.

Adoption Fees: There are no published, official governmental fees, but some offices may charge fees to process a case.

Adoption Procedures: Because the adoption of Catholic orphans is a religious procedure in Syria, it must be supervised by authorized church authorities and must also be approved by the relevant civil authorities.

A foundling child takes the religious affiliation of the orphanage that receives the baby. An adoption request for that child must be submitted to the presiding judge of the religious court of the community to which the child belongs. The religious court will investigate the case, which entails proof of the good moral reputation of the prospective adoptive parent(s) and financial support for the child. If the court does not find any grounds for objection to adoption, the court will issue a decree confirming the adoption. The court's final decision on the adoption must be affirmed by the bishop of the same relevant jurisdiction.

To be valid, the adoption decree must be granted exequatur, or endorsed, by the Civil Courts Enforcement

Bureau. The adoption decree must then be submitted to the Syrian Bureau of Vital Statistics so that the civil status of the adopted child can be amended in the registry book. The child will take the family name of the adoptive parents. Approval of the institution or organization where the child was found may be sometimes required.

The adoption decree must accompany the application for a Syrian identity card and the abstract for individual civil status record. After the identity card is issued, an application for a Syrian passport must be submitted at the Syrian Immigration & Passport Office in Damascus.

The consent of the prospective adoptive parent(s) as well as the sole surviving parent, or the guardian, if applicable, is required. In all cases, if the child is old enough, his/her consent is also required. There is no specific age of consent but practice indicates that age 10-12 or older is customary. If the child is too young to give consent, then the minor's guardian or the church authorities must consent. In the case where both parents of the minor have passed away, the consent of the head of the religious authority will be required. Moreover, the religious authority must consent to the adoption. Consent cannot be obtained by coercion or fraud.

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Requirements for Porpspective Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must meet the following conditions in order to adopt Catholic orphans:

- The adoption shall be for valid reasons and in the interest of the children.
- Good behavior of prospective adoptive parents.
- The adoptive parents must be at least 18 years older than the child.
- The adoptive parents must be Catholic or, with church approval, of an Eastern Orthodox church.
- Approval of the adoption by the two adoptive parents.
- The adoptive parents must be 40 years old at a minimum.
- Consent of the adoptive child, if the child is of an age capable of making a decision (usually from 10-12 years old and up).

Syrian Embassy in the United States
Embassy of Syria, Washington, D.C.
2215 Wyoming Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 232-6313
Fax: (202) 265-4585
Email: info@syrembassy.net
Website:
http://www.syrianembassy.us

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States of America, Damascus
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P.O. Box 29
Damascus, Syria
Tel: (963) 11-3391-4444
Fax (Consular Section):
(963) 11-331-9678
http://damascus.usembassy.gov/consular.html

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Syria may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Damascus. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

Travel Warning
April 15, 2008

This Travel Warning alerts U.S. citizens to ongoing safety and security concerns in Syria. American citizens are urged to thoroughly consider the risks of travel to Syria and to take adequate precautions to ensure their safety. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Syria issued on September 18, 2007.

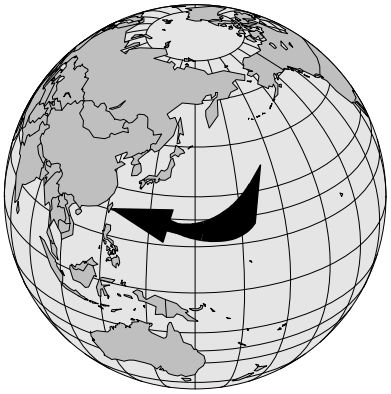
A number of terrorist groups that oppose U.S. policies have offices in Syria. Since 1979, the United States has designated Syria a State Sponsor of Terrorism due to its support for organizations such as Hizbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In addition, other extremist groups are present in Syria. These groups have the potential to be either the targets of or perpetrators of acts of violence. On February 12, 2008, an explosion occurred in the residential Kafer Soseh neighborhood of Damascus, killing Imad Moughniyeh, a senior Hizbollah operative. In 2006, the U.S. Embassy in Damascus was attacked by terrorists armed with guns, grenades, and a car bomb. The Syrian Government has allowed anti-U.S. demonstrations to occur; the latest was on March 3, 2008. Anti-U.S. demonstrations date back to September 2005, some of which have turned violent and led to damage to Western embassies, including the U.S. Embassy.

U.S. citizens who remain in or travel to Syria are encouraged to register at the consular section of the U.S. Embassy in Damascus, and to obtain updated information on travel and security in Syria. Americans in Syria should exercise caution and take prudent measures to maintain their security. These measures include being aware of their surroundings, avoiding crowds and demonstrations, keeping a low profile, varying times and routes for all travel, and ensuring travel documents are current.

U.S. consular personnel remain available to provide emergency information and services to American citizens. The U.S. Embassy in Damascus, Syria, is located at 2, Al-Mansour St.,

Abu Roumaneh. The Embassy telephone number is (963) (11) 3391-4444, fax (963) (11) 331-9678, e-mail: acsdamascus@state.gov. American citizens may register with the Embassy online by visiting https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs.

Additional information may be found on the Embassy website at http://usembassy.state.gov/damascus. Updated information on travel and security in Syria may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. Additional details can be found in the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Syria, and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Department's Internet website at http://travel.state.gov.



TAIWAN

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Taiwan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 36,189 sq. km. (13,973 sq. mi.).

Cities: (2008) Capital—Taipei (pop. 2.6 million). Other cities—(Kaohsiung 1.5 million), Taichung (1.06 million).
Terrain: Two thirds of the island is largely mountainous with 100 peaks over 3,000 meters (9,843 ft.).
Climate: Maritime subtropical.

People

Population: (2008) 23 million.
Annual growth rate: (2008) 0.39%.
Languages: Mandarin Chinese (official), Taiwanese, Hakka.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Attendance (2007)—99.30%. Literacy (2007)—97.63%.
Health: Infant mortality rate: (2007)—0.47%. Life expectancy (2006)—77.90 yrs; male 74.86 yrs.; female 81.41 yrs.
Work force: (2008)10.8 million.

Government

Type: Multi-party democracy. There are two major parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The KMT holds a majority of 81 followed by the DPP with 27 seats in the 113-seat Legislative Yuan (LY), with the remaining seats held by independents and small parties.
Constitution: December 25, 1946; last amended 2005.
Government branches: (Yuan) Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Control, Examination.
Political parties: Kuomintang (KMT or Nationalist Party); Democratic Progressive Party (DPP); several small parties.
Suffrage: Universal over 20 years of age.
Budget: (FY 2008) $51.5 billion.
Defense: proposed (2008) 20.1% of entire budget.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $383 billion.
Real annual growth rate: (2007 estimated) 5.7%.
Per capita GDP: (2007) $16,790.
Unemployment: (June 2008) 3.95%.
Natural resources: Small deposits of coal, natural gas, limestone, marble, and asbestos.
Agriculture: (1.4% of GDP) Major products—pork, rice, fruit and vegetables, sugarcane, poultry, shrimp, eel.
Services: (71.1% of GDP).
Industry: (27.5% of GDP) Types—electronics and computer products, chemicals and petrochemicals, basic metals, machinery, textiles, transport equipment, plastics, machinery.
Trade: (2007) Exports—Exports—$247 billion: electronics, optical and precision instruments, information and communications products, textile products, basic metals, plastic and rubber products. Major markets—U.S. $32 billion, P.R.C. and Hong Kong $100 billion, Japan $16 billion. Imports—$219 billion: electronics, optical and precision instruments, information and communications products, machinery and electrical products, chemicals, basic metals, transport equipment, crude oil. Major suppliers—Japan $46 billion, P.R.C. $30 billion, U.S. $27 billion.

PEOPLE

Taiwan has a population of 23 million. More than 18 million, the "native" Taiwanese, are descendants of Chinese who migrated from Fujian and Guangdong Provinces on the mainland, primarily in the 18th and 19th centuries. The "mainlanders," who arrived in Taiwan after 1945, came from all parts of mainland China. About 484,000 indigenous peoples inhabit the mountainous central and eastern parts of the island and are believed to be of Malayo-Polynesian origin. Of Taiwan's total population, approximately one million, or 4.4%, currently reside in mainland China.

Education

Since 1979, six years of elementary school and three years of junior high have been compulsory for all children. About 96% of junior high graduates continue their studies in either a senior high or vocational school. Taiwan has an extensive higher education system with 163 institutions of higher learning. In 2007, about 159,000 students attempted to enter higher education institutes; about 74% of the candidates were accepted by a college or university. Opportunities for graduate education are expanding in Taiwan, but many students travel abroad for advanced education. In FY 2007, over 15,000 U.S. student visas were issued to Taiwan passport holders.

Languages

A large majority of people in Taiwan speak Mandarin Chinese, which has been the medium of instruction in the schools for more than five decades. Native Taiwanese and many others also speak one of the Southern Fujianese dialects, Min-nan, also known as Taiwanese. Recently there has been a growing use of Taiwanese in the broadcast media. The Hakka, who are concentrated in several counties throughout Taiwan, have their own distinct dialect. As a result of the half-century of Japanese rule, many older people also can speak Japanese. The method of Chinese romanization most commonly used in Taiwan is the Wade-Giles system. In 2002, Taiwan authorities announced adoption of the pinyin system also used on the mainland to replace the Wade-Giles system, but its use is not consistent throughout society, often resulting in two or more romanizations for the same place or person.

Religions

According to Taiwan's Interior Ministry figures, there are about 11.2 million religious believers in Taiwan, with more than 75% identifying themselves as Buddhists or Taoists. At the same time, there is also a strong belief in traditional folk religion throughout the island. These are not mutually exclusive, and many people practice a combination of the three. Confucianism also is an honored school of thought and ethical code. Christian churches have been active on Taiwan for many years, and today, the population includes a small but significant percentage of Christians.

Culture

Taiwan's culture is a blend of its distinctive Chinese, Japanese, and Western influences. Fine arts, folk traditions, and popular culture embody traditional and modern, Asian, and Western motifs. One of Taiwan's greatest attractions is the Palace Museum, which houses over 650,000 pieces of Chinese bronze, jade, calligraphy, painting, and porcelain. This collection was moved from the mainland in 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (KMT) fled to Taiwan. The collection is so extensive that only 1% is on display at any one time.

HISTORY

Taiwan's indigenous peoples, who originated in Austronesia and southern Asia, have lived on Taiwan for 12,000 to 15,000 years. Significant migration to Taiwan from the Chinese mainland began as early as A.D. 500. Dutch traders first claimed the island in 1624 as a base for Dutch commerce with Japan and the China coast. Two years later, the Spanish established a settlement on the northwest coast of Taiwan, which they occupied until 1642 when they were driven out by the Dutch. Dutch colonists administered the island and its predominantly aboriginal population until 1661. The first major influx of migrants from the Chinese mainland came during the Dutch period, sparked by the political and economic chaos on the China coast during the Manchu invasion and the end of the Ming Dynasty.

In 1664, a fleet led by the Ming loyalist Cheng Ch'eng-kung (Zheng Chenggong, known in the West as Koxinga) retreated from the mainland and occupied Taiwan. Cheng expelled the Dutch and established Taiwan as a base in his attempt to restore the Ming Dynasty. He died shortly thereafter, and in 1683, his successors submitted to Manchu (Qing Dynasty) control. From 1680, the Qing Dynasty ruled Taiwan as a prefecture and, in 1875, divided the island into two prefectures, north and south. In 1887 the island was made into a separate Chinese province.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, migration from Fujian and Guangdong provinces steadily increased, and Chinese supplanted aborigines as the dominant population group. In 1895, a weakened Imperial China ceded Taiwan to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki following the first Sino-Japanese war.

During its 50 years (1895-1945) of rule, Japan expended considerable effort in developing Taiwan's economy. At the same time, Japanese rule led to the "Japanization" of the island, including compulsory Japanese education and forcing residents of Taiwan to adopt Japanese names.

At the end of World War II in 1945, Taiwan reverted to Chinese rule. During the immediate postwar period, the Nationalist Chinese (KMT) administration on Taiwan was repressive and corrupt, leading to local discontent. Anti-mainlander violence flared on February 28, 1947, prompted by an incident in which a cigarette seller was injured and a passerby was shot to death by Nationalist authorities. The island-wide rioting was brutally put down by Nationalist Chinese troops, who killed thousands of people. As a result of the February 28 Incident, the native Taiwanese felt a deep-seated bitterness toward the mainlanders. For 50 years the KMT authorities suppressed accounts of this episode in Taiwan history. In 1995 a monument was dedicated to the victims of the "2-28 Incident," and for the first time, Taiwan's leader, President Lee Teng-hui, publicly apologized for the Nationalists' brutality.

Starting before World War II and continuing afterwards, a civil war was fought on the mainland between Chiang Kai-shek's KMT government



and the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong. When the civil war ended in 1949, 2 million refugees, predominately from the Nationalist government, military, and business community, fled to Taiwan. In October 1949 the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) was founded on the mainland by the victorious communists. Chiang Kai-shek established a "provisional" KMT capital in Taipei in December 1949. During the 1950s, the KMT authorities implemented a far-reaching and highly successful land reform program on Taiwan. They redistributed land among small farmers and compensated large landowners with commodities certificates and stock in state-owned industries. Although this left some large landowners impoverished, others turned their compensation into capital and started commercial and industrial enterprises. These entrepreneurs were to become Taiwan's first industrial capitalists. Together with refugee businessmen from the mainland, they managed Taiwan's transition from an agricultural to a commercial, industrial economy.

Taiwan has developed steadily into a major international trading power with $466 billion in two-way trade (2007). Taiwan's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2002 has expanded its trade opportunities and further strengthened its standing in the global economy. Tremendous prosperity on the island has been accompanied by economic and social stability. Chiang Kai-shek's successor, his son Chiang Ching-kuo, began to liberalize Taiwan's political system, a process that accelerated when President Lee Teng-hui took office in 1988. The direct election of Lee Teng-hui as president in 1996 was followed by opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shui-bian's election victory in March 2000. Chen was re-elected in March 2004 in a tightly contested election. The KMT's Ma Ying-jeou won the March 2008 presidential election by a substantial majority and took office on May 20, 2008.

ADMINISTRATION

The authorities in Taipei exercise control over Taiwan, Kinmen, Matsu, the Penghus (Pescadores) and several other smaller islands. Taiwan is divided into counties, provincial municipalities, and two special municipalities, Taipei and Kaohsiung. At the end of 1998, the Constitution was amended to make all counties and cities directly administered by the Executive Yuan. From 1949 until 1991, the authorities on Taiwan claimed to be the sole legitimate government of all of China, including the mainland. In keeping with that claim, when the Nationalists retreated to Taiwan in 1949, they re-established the full array of central political bodies, which had existed on the mainland. While much of this structure remains in place, the authorities on Taiwan in 1991 aban-

doned their claim of governing mainland China, stating that they do not "dispute the fact that the P.R.C. controls mainland China." The first National Assembly, elected on the mainland in 1947 to carry out the duties of choosing the President and amending the constitution, was re-established on Taiwan when the KMT moved. Because it was impossible to hold subsequent elections to represent constituencies on the mainland, representatives elected in 1947-48 held these seats "indefinitely." In June l990, however, the Council of Grand Justices mandated the retirement, effective December 1991, of all remaining "indefinitely" elected members of the National Assembly and other bodies.

The second National Assembly, elected in 1991, was composed of 325 members. The majority were elected directly, while 100 were chosen from party slates in proportion to the popular vote. This National Assembly amended the Constitution in 1994, paving the way for the direct election of the President and Vice President the first of which was held in March 1996. In April 2000, the members of the National Assembly voted to permit their terms of office to expire without holding new elections. The National Assembly elected in May 2005 voted to abolish itself the following month, leaving Taiwan with a unicameral legislature. The President is both leader of Taiwan and Commander-in-Chief of its armed forces. The President has authority over four of the five administrative branches (Yuan) Executive, Control, Judicial, and Examination. The President appoints the President of the Executive Yuan, who also serves as the Premier. The Premier and the cabinet members are responsible for government policy and administration.

The main lawmaking body, the Legislative Yuan (LY), was originally elected in the late 1940s in parallel with the National Assembly. The first LY had 773 seats and was viewed as a "rubber stamp" institution. The second LY was not elected until 1992. The third LY, elected in 1995, had 157 members serving 3-year terms, while the fourth LY, elected in 1998, was enlarged to 225 members. The LY has greatly enhanced its standing in relation to the Executive Yuan and has established itself as a major player on the central level. With increasing strength, size, and complexity, the LY now mirrors Taiwan's recently liberalized political system. In the 1992 and 1995 elections, the main opposition party—the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)—challenged the half-century of Kuomintang (KMT) dominance of the Legislature. In both elections, the DPP won a significant share of the LY seats, leaving only half of the LY seats in the hands of the KMT. In 2001, the DPP won a plurality of LY seats—88 to the KMT's 66, the People First Party's 45, the Taiwan Solidarity Union's 13, and 13 won by other parties and independents. In the December 2004 LY election, the Pan-Blue coalition won a slender majority of 114 of the 225 seats compared to the Pan-Green coalition's 101. The LY was halved in size from 225 to 113 seats by constitutional amendments in 2005. In the January 2008 LY election, the first to be held under this new structure, the KMT won an absolute majority of 81 seats to the DPP's 27 seats, with the remaining five seats going to independent and small party candidates.

In 1994, when the National Assembly voted to allow direct popular election of the President, the LY passed legislation allowing for the direct election of the Governor of Taiwan Province and the mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung Special Municipalities. These elections were first held in December 1994. In a move to streamline administration, the position of elected Governor was abolished at the end of 1998, and most other elements of the Taiwan Provincial Government have been eliminated.

The Control Yuan (CY) monitors the efficiency of public service and investigates instances of corruption. The 29 Control Yuan members are appointed by the President and approved by the Legislative Yuan; they serve 6-year terms. In recent years, the Control Yuan has become more activist, and it has conducted several major investigations and impeachments. From January 2005 to August 2008 the Control Yuan was inactive because the Pan-Blue dominated LY has refused to approve the new slate of CY members proposed by President Chen. The new Control Yuan members appointed by President Ma took office on August 1, 2008.

The Judicial Yuan (JY) administers Taiwan's court system. It includes a 16-member Council of Grand Justices (COGJ) that interprets the constitution. Grand Justices are appointed by the President, with the consent of the National Assembly, to 9-year terms.

The Examination Yuan (EY) functions as a civil service commission and includes two ministries: the Ministry of Examination, which recruits officials through competitive examination, and the Ministry of Personnel, which manages the civil service. The President appoints the President of the Examination Yuan.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **MA Ying-jeou**
Vice Pres.: **Vincent SIEW**
Pres., Executive Yuan (Premier): **LIU Chao-shiuan**
Vice Pres., Executive Yuan (Vice Premier): **Paul CHIU**
Sec. Gen., Executive Yuan: **Steve HSIEH**
Pres., Control Yuan:
Pres., Examination Yuan:
Pres., Judicial Yuan:
Pres., Legislative Yuan: **WANG Jin-pyng**
Min. of Economic Affairs: **YIIN Chii-ming**
Min. of Education: **CHENG Jui-cheng**
Min. of Finance: **LEE Shu-te**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Francisco OU**
Min. of Health: **LIN Fang-yue**
Min. of Interior: **LIAO Liao-i**
Min. of Justice: **WANG Ching-feng**
Min. of National Defense: **CHEN Chao-min**
Min. of Transportation & Communications: **MAO Chih-kuo**
Min. Without Portfolio: **CHANG Chin-fu**
Min. Without Portfolio: **CHU Yun-peng**
Min. Without Portfolio: **TSAI Hsun-hsiung**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Ovid TSENG**
Min. Without Portfolio:
Min. Without Portfolio:

Min. Without Portfolio:
Chmn., Agricultural Council: **CHEN Wu-hsiung**
Chmn., Atomic Energy Council: **TSAI Chun-hung**
Chmn., Central Election Commission:
Chmn., Consumer Protection Commission: **Paul CHIU**
Chmn., Cultural Affairs Council: **HUANG Pi-tuan**
Chmn., Economic Planning & Development Council: **CHEN Tien-chih**
Chmn., Fair Trade Commission:
Chmn., Labor Affairs Council: **Jennifer WANG**
Chmn., Mainland Affairs Council: **LAI Shin-yuan**
Chmn., Mongolian & Tibetan Affairs Commission: **KAO Su-po**
Chmn., National Palace Museum: **CHOU Kung-hsin**
Chmn., National Science Council: **LEE Lo-chuan**
Chmn., National Youth Commission: **WANG Yu-ting**
Chmn., Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission: **WU Ying-yi**
Chmn., Public Construction Commission: **FAN Liang-hsiu**
Chmn., Research, Development, & Evaluation Commission: **CHIANG Yi-hua**
Chmn., Sports Affairs Council: **TAI Shia-ling**
Chmn., Veterans Affairs Commission: **KAO Hua-chu**
Governor, Central Bank of the Republic of China (Taiwan):
Representative to the US:

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Until 1986, Taiwan's political system was controlled by one party, the Kuomintang (KMT), the chairman of which was also Taiwan's top leader. As the ruling party, the KMT was able to fill appointed positions with its members and maintain political control of the island.

Before the 1986 island-wide elections, many "nonpartisans" grouped together to create Taiwan's first new opposition political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Despite an official ban on forming new political parties, Taiwan authorities did not prohibit the DPP from operating, and DPP and independent candidates captured more than 20% of the vote in the 1986 elections. In 1987, President Chiang Ching-kuo ended the nearly four decades of martial law under which dissent had been suppressed. Since then, Taiwan has taken dramatic steps to improve respect for human rights and create a democratic political system, including ending almost all restrictions on the press. Vice President Lee Teng-hui succeeded Chiang Ching-kuo as president upon Chiang's death in 1988, and in 1990 the National Assembly (NA) elected Lee to a six-year term as President, the final indirect presidential election conducted by the NA. Under President Lee, the Legislative Yuan (LY) passed the Civic Organizations Law in 1989, which allowed for the formation of new political parties, thereby legalizing the DPP. In 1992, the DPP won 51 seats in the 161-seat LY, increasing the DPP's influence on legislative decisions. Chen Shui-bian's victory in the Taipei mayoral election in December 1994 further enhanced the profile of the DPP, which won 45 of the 157 seats in the 1995 LY elections.

In 1996, the KMT's Lee Teng-hui was elected President and Lien Chan Vice President in the first direct presidential election by Taiwan's voters. In the November 1997 local elections, the DPP won 12 of the 23 county magistrate and city mayor contests to the KMT's 8, outpolling the KMT for the first time in a major election. In a three-way contest in March 2000, DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian became the first opposition party candidate to win the presidency. His victory resulted in the first-ever transition of the presidency from one political party to another, validating Taiwan's democratic political system. President Chen was re-elected by 50.1% of the popular vote to a second term in a very tight contest on March 20, 2004. The election was marred by a shooting incident the day before the election during which President Chen and his running mate Vice President Annette Lu were slightly wounded. While the opposition contested the results, it was the first time that the DPP had won an outright majority in an island-wide election. Taiwan's second democratic transition of ruling party followed the March 22, 2008, presidential election, which went decisively (58%) to KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou. Together with the KMT legislative victory two months earlier, Taiwan now had a unified government under KMT control.

The March 2004 election also included two "defensive referenda." Historically, referenda have been closely tied to the question of Taiwan independence, and thus a highly sensitive issue in cross-Strait relations. Both referenda in 2004 failed to meet the required participation threshold of 50% of eligible voters, as did four more referenda held in conjunction with the 2008 legislative and presidential elections. The 2008 DPP referendum on joining the UN under the name Taiwan was especially controversial.

The final National Assembly passed a set of constitutional amendments in June 2005 that halved the number of LY seats from 225 to 113 and created single-member legislative election districts beginning with the January 2008 legislative election. The constitutional revisions also abolished the National Assembly and provided for the public to confirm or reject future constitutional amendments passed by the Legislative Yuan. President Chen's controversial efforts to promote a second round of constitutional revisions focused on changing the government structure were unsuccessful. The P.R.C. accused him of using the constitution issue to move Taiwan toward independence. While not entirely ruling out future constitutional changes, President Ma has stressed the need to implement rather than revise the constitution.

In the December 2004 legislative elections, the ruling DPP won a plurality with 89 of the 225 seats, gaining 2 seats more than it did in 2001, but the opposition KMT and its Pan-Blue allies continued to hold a narrow majority in the Legislative Yuan. The ruling DPP's inability to form a majority coalition led to gridlock in the LY until 2008. Following a landslide victory in December 2005 local elections, the KMT won the 2006 mayoral election in Taipei City, while

the DPP won in Kaohsiung City. In the January 2008 elections for the downsized 113-seat LY, the KMT won 81 seats and KMT allies won a further five seats, giving them a three-quarters majority over the DPP, which won just 27 seats.

Political Parties

In addition to the Kuomintang (KMT) (described above in 'History' and 'Political Conditions'), the other major political party is the DPP, whose membership is made up largely of native Taiwanese, and whose platform includes outspoken positions on some of the most sensitive issues in Taiwan politics. For example, the DPP maintains that Taiwan is an entity separate from mainland China, in contrast to the KMT position that Taiwan and the mainland, though currently divided, are both part of "one China." In sharp contrast to the tenets of both KMT and P.R.C. policy, a number of prominent DPP politicians openly advocate independence for Taiwan.

There are a number of small political parties, including the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), the People First Party (PFP), and the New Party (NP). After the 2000 presidential election, former KMT President Lee Teng-hui broke with the KMT and in 2001 formed the pro-independence Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU), which allied itself with the DPP, an alliance that largely fell apart over time. The TSU failed to elect any members to the LY in January 2008. The People First Party (PFP) was formed in the wake of the March 2000 presidential election by disgruntled KMT members who supported the presidential bid of former KMT Taiwan Provincial Governor James Soong, who did not receive the KMT nomination. The PFP and KMT subsequently formed the "Pan-Blue" Alliance to oppose the DPP government. The PFP, however, gradually shrank and it largely merged with the KMT in the runup to the January 2008 LY elections, although one PFP candidate did win election to the LY under the name PFP. The New Party, which also split from the KMT, holds several seats on the Taipei City Council, but has no legislators at this point. In addition, there are more than 100 other registered small political parties, such as the Hakka Party, the Green Party, and the Constitution Party. None of these small parties received more than 1% or 2% of votes in the January 2008 LY election.

Taiwan and the Mainland

Over the past several years, Taiwan has relaxed restrictions on unofficial contacts with the P.R.C., and cross-Strait interaction has mushroomed. In January 2001, Taiwan formally allowed the "three mini-links" (direct trade, travel, and postal links) from Kinmen (Quemoy) and Matsu Islands to Fujian Province and permitted direct cross-Strait trade in February 2002. Cross-Strait trade has grown rapidly over the past 10 years. China is Taiwan's largest trading partner, and Taiwan is China's fifth-largest. Estimates of Taiwan investment on the mainland, both officially approved by Taiwan authorities and investment made by Taiwan firms through third parties, start from $100 billion, making Taiwan and Hong Kong the two largest investors. This trade runs heavily in Taiwan's favor and continues to grow, providing another engine for the island's economy.

In February 2003, Taiwan and the P.R.C. agreed to allow Taiwan carriers to fly non-stop (although routed via Hong Kong or Macau airspace) to bring Taiwan residents on the mainland home for the Lunar New Year holiday. The two sides agreed to conduct Lunar New Year charter flights again in 2005, with flights operated by both Taiwan and P.R.C. carriers flying over, but not having to land in, Hong Kong or Macau. Over time these flights were expanded to cover three other major holidays. In June 2008, Taiwan and P.R.C. carriers began operating cross-Strait charter flights every weekend. These flights are open to mainland tourists, as well as Taiwan and foreign travelers. The Ma administration has stated its goal to eventually turn these charters into regular flights that operate daily and to add cargo flights as well.

The development of semiofficial cross-Strait relations has had ups and downs. In April 1993, the first round of high-level cross-Strait talks was held in Singapore between the heads of two private intermediary organizations—Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the P.R.C.'s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS). These talks primarily addressed technical issues relating to cross-Strait interactions. Beijing suspended lower-level talks from 1995-97 following President Lee's U.S. visit. SEF Chairman Koo Chen-fu visited the mainland in October 1998 for the second round of high-level talks. In 1999 Beijing once again suspended the cross-Strait dialogue, suspending plans for a visit by ARATS Chairman Wang Daohan to Taiwan, because of statements by President Lee that relations between the P.R.C. and Taiwan should be conducted as "state-to-state" or at least as "special state-to-state relations." Since his May 20, 2000 inauguration, President Chen called for resuming the cross-Strait dialogue without any preconditions, but the P.R.C. insisted President Chen must first acknowledge what it claimed was the "1992 consensus" on one China reached by the two sides. The cross-Strait dialogue remained suspended for the entire eight years of President Chen's two terms. Nonetheless, economic and social ties continued to develop rapidly despite the "one China" obstacle and Taiwan's resentment over the P.R.C.'s March 2005 "Anti-Secession Law," and the two sides were able through intermediary organizations to reach agreements on holiday cross-Strait charter flights. The KMT began its own dialogue with Beijing in 2005. President Ma has moved quickly to resume the cross-Strait dialogue, expand charter flights, and take other steps to enhance cross-Strait relations. The United States has welcomed and encouraged the cross-Strait dialogue as a process which contributes to a reduction of tension and to an environment conducive to the eventual peaceful resolution of the outstanding differences between the two sides. The United States believes that differences between Taipei and Beijing should be

resolved peacefully in a manner acceptable to people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

ECONOMY

Through decades of hard work and sound economic management, Taiwan has transformed itself from an underdeveloped, agricultural island to an economic power that is a leading producer of high-technology goods. In the 1960s, foreign investment in Taiwan helped introduce modern, labor-intensive technology to the island, and Taiwan became a major exporter of labor-intensive products. In the 1980s, focus shifted toward increasingly sophisticated, capital-intensive and technology-intensive products for export and toward developing the service sector. At the same time, the appreciation of the New Taiwan dollar (NTD), rising labor costs, and increasing environmental consciousness in Taiwan caused many labor-intensive industries, such as shoe manufacturing, to move to China and Southeast Asia. Taiwan has transformed itself from a recipient of U.S. aid in the 1950s and early 1960s to an aid donor and major foreign investor, especially in Asia. Taiwan is now a creditor economy, holding the world's fifth-largest stock of foreign exchange reserves ($291 billion as of July 2008). Although Taiwan enjoyed sustained economic growth, full employment, and low inflation for many years, in 2001, Taiwan joined other regional economies in its first recession since 1949. Since 2002, Taiwan's economic growth has ranged from 3.5% to 6.2% per year. With the current global economic downturn, however, slower growth is expected for 2008. Inflation is also rising in line with global commodities, and in July 2008 inflation reached a 14-year high of 5.9%.

Foreign Trade

Foreign trade has been the engine of Taiwan's rapid growth during the past 50 years. Taiwan's economy remains export-oriented, so it depends on an open world trade regime and remains vulnerable to fluctuations in the world economy. The total value of trade increased more than five-fold in the 1960s, nearly ten-fold in the 1970s, doubled in the 1980s, and nearly doubled again in the 1990s. In the first half of this decade, exports grew 60%. Export composition changed from predominantly agricultural commodities to industrial goods (now 98%). The electronics sector is Taiwan's most important industrial export sector and is the largest recipient of U.S. investment. Taiwan became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as a special customs territory in January 2002.

Taiwan firms are the world's largest suppliers of computer monitors and leaders in PC manufacturing, although now much of the final assembly of these products occurs overseas, typically in China. Textile and apparel production continues to move to lower-cost locations overseas, but is still a major industrial export sector and employs about 200,000 people. Imports are dominated by raw materials and capital goods, which account for more than 90% of the total. Taiwan imports coal, oil and gas to meet most of its energy needs. Reflecting the large Taiwan investment in China, it supplanted the United States as Taiwan's largest trade partner in 2003. In 2007, China (including Hong Kong) accounted for over 28% of Taiwan's total trade and almost 41% of Taiwan's exports. Japan was Taiwan's second-largest trading partner with 13% of total trade, including 21% of Taiwan's imports. The U.S. is now Taiwan's third-largest trade partner, taking 12.6% of Taiwan's exports and supplying 12% of its imports. Taiwan is the United States' ninth-largest trading partner; Taiwan's two-way trade with the United States amounted to $65 billion in 2007. Imports from the United States consist mostly of agricultural and industrial raw materials as well as machinery and equipment. Exports to the United States are mainly electronics and consumer goods. The United States, Hong Kong, China, and Japan account for 60.2% of Taiwan's exports, and the United States, Japan, and China provide almost 46.6% of Taiwan's imports. As Taiwan's per capita income level has risen, demand for imported, high-quality consumer goods has increased. The U.S. trade deficit with Taiwan in 2007 was $11.9 billion, down 21% from $15.2 billion in 2006. Even though Taiwan maintains formal diplomatic relations with about a score of its trading partners, Taiwan maintains trade offices in nearly 100 countries. Taiwan is a member of the Asian Development Bank, the WTO, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Taiwan is also an observer at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These developments reflect Taiwan's economic importance and its desire to become further integrated into the global economy.

Agriculture

Although only about one-quarter of Taiwan's land area is arable, virtually all farmland is intensely cultivated, with some areas suitable for two and even three crops a year. Agriculture comprises only about 1.4% of Taiwan's GDP. Taiwan's main crops are rice, sugarcane, fruit, and vegetables. While largely self-sufficient in rice production, Taiwan imports large amounts of wheat, corn, and soybeans, mostly from the United States. Poultry and pork production are mainstays of the livestock sector and the major demand drivers for imported corn and soybeans. Rising standards of living have led to increased demand for a wide variety of high-quality food products, much of it imported. Overall, U.S. agricultural and food products account for more than 30% of Taiwan's agricultural import demand. U.S. food and agricultural exports total about $2.5 billion annually, making Taiwan the United States' sixth-largest agricultural export destination. Taiwan's agricultural exports include frozen fish, aquaculture and sea products, canned and frozen vegetables, and grain products. Taiwan's imports of agricultural products have increased since its WTO accession in 2002, and it is slowly liberalizing previously protected agricultural markets.

Economic Outlook

Taiwan faces many of the same economic issues as other developed economies. As labor-intensive industries have relocated to countries with low-cost labor, Taiwan's future development will rely on further transformation to a high technology and service-oriented economy and carving out its niche in the global supply chain. Taiwan's economy has become increasingly linked with China, and the current Ma administration is expected to further develop these links and liberalize cross-Strait economic relations. Taiwan official statistics indicate that Taiwan firms had invested about U.S. $65 billion in China through 2007, which is more than half of Taiwan's stock of direct foreign investment. Many unofficial estimates put the actual number well over U.S. $100 billion. More than one million Taiwan people are estimated to be residing in China, and more than 70,000 Taiwan companies have operations there. Taiwan firms are increasingly acting as management centers that take in orders, produce them in Taiwan, the mainland, or Southeast Asia and then ship the final products to the U.S. and other markets.

DEFENSE

In proportion to its population, Taiwan still maintains a large military establishment. Defense expenditures accounted for NTD 304.9 billion (approximately U.S. $9.5 billion), 2.43% of GDP in 2007; and the 2008 central budget proposal increased defense expenditures to NTD 334 billion (approximately U.S. $10.5 billion), 2.94% of GDP. The military's primary mission is the defense of Taiwan against the P.R.C., which is seen as the predominant threat and which has not renounced the use of force against Taiwan. Taiwan's armed forces were reduced as part of a reform initiative from 1997 to 2001, going from about 450,000 to 385,000, with further reductions since then bringing the total force level down to just under 275,000. Registered reservists reportedly totaled 3,870,000 in 1997. Conscription remains universal for qualified males between the ages of 18 and 30. In 2007 the length of conscription service was dropped from 16 to 12 months, with a view to moving toward an all-volunteer force over the next several years. For qualified applicants, alternative service is available in police and fire departments and public clinics, as well as through teaching in some rural schools. Applicants with advanced degrees may qualify for National Defense Service, consisting of reserve officer training followed by four years of work in a government or academic research institution.

Taiwan's armed forces are equipped with weapons obtained primarily from the United States. In recent years, however, Taiwan also has procured some weapons from other Western nations and has stressed military "self-reliance," which has resulted in the growth of indigenous military production in certain fields. In 2007 Taiwan's legislature approved funding for certain defensive weapons systems the U.S. agreed to sell Taiwan in 2001 and earlier. These included the Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC-2 upgrade) missile defense system, P-3C maritime patrol aircraft, and a preliminary study of diesel-electric submarines. These systems would give Taiwan key capabilities in missile defense and anti-submarine warfare to remedy vulnerabilities in countering the P.R.C.'s accelerated military modernization. Taiwan adheres to the principles of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has stated that it does not intend to produce nuclear weapons.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The People's Republic of China replaced Taiwan at the United Nations in 1971, and Taiwan's diplomatic position has continued to erode, as many countries changed their official recognition from Taipei to Beijing. As of September 2008, Taiwan had formal diplomatic ties with 23 countries. At the same time, Taiwan has cultivated informal ties with most countries to offset its diplomatic isolation and to expand its economic relations. Many nations have set up unofficial organizations to carry out commercial and other relations with Taiwan. Including its official overseas missions and its unofficial representative and/or trade offices, Taiwan is represented in 122 countries. During the administration of President Chen, Taiwan lobbied strongly for admission into the United Nations and other international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO). The P.R.C. opposes Taiwan's membership in such organizations, most of which require statehood for membership, because it considers Taiwan to be a part of its territory, not a separate sovereign state. The administration of President Ma has called for a "diplomatic truce" with Beijing, under which Taiwan would retain its existing diplomatic allies but not seek to win over countries that recognize the P.R.C. The Ma administration also hopes to expand Taiwan's "international space," increasing its participation in international organizations, such as the WHO.

U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

On January 1, 1979, the United States changed its diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. In the U.S.-P.R.C. Joint Communiqué that announced the change, the United States recognized the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China and acknowledged the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China. The Joint Communiqué also stated that within this context the people of the United States will maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people on Taiwan.

On April 10, 1979, President Carter signed into law the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), which created domestic legal authority for the conduct of unofficial relations with Taiwan. U.S. commercial, cultural, and other interaction with the people on Taiwan is

facilitated through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), a private nonprofit corporation. The Institute has its headquarters in the Washington, DC area and has offices in Taipei and Kaohsiung. It is authorized to issue visas, accept passport applications, and provide assistance to U.S. citizens in Taiwan. A counterpart organization, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO), has been established by the Taiwan authorities. It has its headquarters in Taipei, the representative branch office in Washington, DC, and 12 other Taipei Economic and Cultural Offices (TECO) in the continental U.S. and Guam. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) continues to provide the legal basis for the unofficial relationship between the U.S. and Taiwan, and enshrines the U.S. commitment to assisting Taiwan maintain its defensive capability.

Following de-recognition, the United States terminated its Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan. However, the United States has continued the sale of appropriate defensive military equipment to Taiwan in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act, which provides for such sales and which declares that peace and stability in the area are in U.S. interests. Sales of defensive military equipment are also consistent with the 1982 U.S.-P.R.C. Joint Communiqué.

The United States position on Taiwan is reflected in the Three Communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The U.S. insists on the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait differences and encourages dialogue to help advance such an outcome. The U.S. does not support Taiwan independence. President Bush stated on December 9, 2003 that the United States is opposed to any attempt by either side to unilaterally alter the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. While the United States welcomes recent exchanges that enhance channels of communication between leaders in Beijing and Taipei, the United States urges Beijing and Taipei to further advance cross-Strait cooperation and dialogue, including direct discussions between the authorities in Beijing and elected leaders in Taipei. U.S. commercial ties with Taiwan have been maintained and have expanded since 1979. Taiwan continues to enjoy Export-Import Bank financing, Overseas Private Investment Corporation guarantees, normal trade relations (NTR) status, and ready access to U.S. markets. In recent years, AIT commercial dealings with Taiwan have focused on expanding market access for American goods and services. AIT has been engaged in a series of trade discussions, which have focused on protection of intellectual property rights and market access for U.S. goods and services.

Maintaining diplomatic relations with the P.R.C. has been recognized to be in the long-term interest of the United States by seven consecutive administrations; however, maintaining strong, unofficial relations with Taiwan also a major U.S. goal, in line with our desire to further peace and stability in Asia. In keeping with our one China policy, the U.S. does not support Taiwan independence, but it does support Taiwan's membership in appropriate international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and the Asian Development Bank, where statehood is not a requirement for membership. In addition, the U.S. supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in appropriate international organizations where its membership is not possible.

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Taiwan Representative Office
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Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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PO:	Christian M. Castro
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COM:	Janee Pierre-Louis
POL:	Christian M. Castro

TAIPEI 7, Lane 134, Xinyi Road, Sec 3, Taipei 106, Taiwan, [886] (2) 2162-2000, Fax [886] (2) 2162-2251, Workweek: 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Website: http://www.ait.org.tw/en.

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

August 18, 2008

The Department of State provides information to assist travelers in better understanding foreign locations they may visit and the known risks that they should consider. Travelers traveling to Taiwan are encouraged to inform themselves about Taiwan prior to commencement of travel. It is the traveler's responsibility to obtain a U.S. passport from the Department of State and the appropriate visas from the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representative's Office (TECRO) in Washington, D.C., or the nearest office of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO). When making reservations, travelers should discuss cancellation policies with their travel agent, travel insurer or airline, as scheduled trips abroad may be nonrefundable. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation; Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad.

Country Description: Taiwan is a stable democracy with a strong and well-developed economy. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: U.S. passport holders will be allowed to enter Taiwan without a visa for up to thirty days (no extensions or change of status allowed) if they have a passport valid for at least six months from the date of entry into Taiwan and a confirmed return or onward air ticket. Travelers must have already met any additional visa requirements for the next destination, if applicable.

Visitors with passports valid for less than six months from the date of entry into Taiwan must apply for a landing visa, which has a duration of stay of no more than 30 days, or until the passport's expiration date, whichever comes first. Extensions are not permitted. Travelers who apply outside of Taiwan at Taiwan Overseas Missions for a landing visa will be charged a processing fee of US $131. Travelers who apply for a landing visa upon arrival in Taiwan will be charged NT $4,900. This fee includes a NT $800 service charge and can be paid only in Taiwan currency.

U.S. travelers planning to visit longer than 30 days may apply for and receive a visitor visa at one of the Taiwan Overseas Missions. The processing fee is U.S. $131; an additional $65.50 will be charged for expedited processing. Travelers arriving in Taiwan with a valid passport and valid Taiwan visa may be admitted for up to 60 days for multiple entries even if their passports are valid for less than 6 months.

For specific information about application, entry requirements and fees, travelers should contact the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO), 4201 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20016-2137, via either its main telephone number, (202) 895-1800, or its visa section telephone number, (202) 895-1814. TECRO's visa website is http://www.taiwanembassy.org. The main fax number at TECRO is (202) 363-0999, and the visa section fax number is (202) 895-0017. TECO (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office) also has offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Guam, Honolulu, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco and Seattle.

Safety and Security: For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up to date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Public Demonstrations: Taiwan is a modern democracy with vibrant public participation. Political demonstrations are common, especially around election time. Since Taiwan democratized in the early 1990s, there have been very few cases of violence associated with political demonstrations. But even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any political demonstrations.

Crime: Although the overall violent crime rate in Taiwan is relatively low, travelers should avoid high crime areas, such as areas where massage parlors, illegal "barbershops," and illegal "nightclubs" run by criminals prevail. In contrast to their counterparts, legal barbershops prominently display the usual grooming services. Illegal nightclubs have no advertisement and are publicized by word of mouth only. Public transportation, including the buses and the subway, is generally safe in Taiwan, but women should exercise caution when traveling alone in taxis late at night. In several parts of Taiwan, incidents of purse snatching by thieves on motorcycles have been reported.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at www.cybercrime.gov.

The emergency telephone number for Taiwan services (ambulance, fire, police) is 119. Taiwan Police offers a 24-hour telephone line for foreigners in English: 0800-024-111.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the National Immigration

Agency and to American Institute in Taiwan (AIT)-Taipei or AIT-Kaohsiung. The National Immigration Agency has foreign affairs sections that are usually staffed by English-speaking officers. National Immigration Agency contact numbers for the major cities in Taiwan are as follows: Taipei (02) 2389-9983, Kaohsiung (07) 282-1400, Tainan (06) 293-7641, Taichung (04) 2254-9981, Taitung (089) 342-251, Pingtung (08) 721-6665.

If you are the victim of a crime while in Taiwan, in addition to reporting to the local police, contact AIT-Taipei (02) 2162-2000 or AIT-Kaohsiung (07) 238-7744 for assistance. AIT's consular staff can, for example, help you find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds can be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help explain the local criminal justice process and assist with finding an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Health facilities in Taiwan are adequate for routine and emergency medical treatment. Physicians are well trained and many have studied in the U.S. and speak English. State-of-the-art medical equipment is available at many clinics and hospitals. Hospitals' nursing services provide medication dispensing and wound care, but generally not the daily patient maintenance functions found in U.S. hospitals. Ambulances are available in Taiwan but are not like those in the U.S. There are no trained Emergency Medical System Technicians accompanying an ambulance, unless within 2 kilometers of National Taiwan University Hospital or Veterans General Hospital. For information on specific clinics and hospitals, please refer to the AIT web page at http://www.ait.org.tw/en/uscitizens/HealthCareInTW.asp

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

English speakers experiencing a personal crisis in Taiwan can contact the Community Services Center in Taipei (www.community.com.tw) at (02) 2836-8134 or (02) 2838-4947 to arrange counseling or to contact a support group.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Taiwan. However, persons staying over 90 days or applying for residency or work permits must be tested for HIV/AIDS.

Medical Insurance: Doctors and hospitals in Taiwan expect immediate cash payment for health services, although some private clinics may accept credit cards. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While outside the United States, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Taiwan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Roads in Taiwan's major cities are generally congested, and the many scooters and motorcycles that weave in and out of traffic make driving conditions worse. Pedestrians should exercise caution when crossing streets because many drivers do not respect the pedestrian's right of way. Special caution should be taken when driving on mountain roads, which are typically narrow, winding, and poorly banked, and which may be impassable after heavy rains. The national authority responsible for road safety in Taiwan is the Traffic Safety Committee, MOTC. For general information on tourism in Taiwan information may be found at www.tbroc.gov.tw (Taiwan Tourism Bureau—Ministry of Transportation and Communication).

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Taiwan's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Screening Process: Because of the need for early detection and prevention of communicable diseases, all arriving passengers are scanned with an infrared thermal apparatus to test for elevated temperatures. Passengers with elevated temperatures are required to fill out the Communicable Disease Survey Form and will then be evaluated for additional testing and/or follow up with local health authorities.

Customs Regulations: Taiwan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary import or export of items such as: firearms, antiquities, medications, currency, ivory, etc. It is advisable to contact the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECRO) in Washington or one of the TECO offices in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Disaster Preparedness: Taiwan is subject to strong earthquakes that can occur anywhere on the island. Taiwan is also hit by typhoons, usually from July to October. Travelers planning a trip to Taiwan can obtain general information about natural disaster preparedness on the Inter-

net from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. Additional information about currently active typhoons can be obtained on the University of Hawaii tropical storm page at http://www.solar.ifa.hawaii.edu/Tropical/tropical.html. The Central Weather Bureau of Taiwan also maintains a web site that provides information about typhoons and earthquakes. Its Internet address is http://www.cwb.gov.tw.

Dual Nationality and Compulsory Military Service: Taiwan law provides for compulsory military service. Men between the ages of 18 and 36 who were born in Taiwan or who have ever held a Taiwan passport should be aware that they may be subject to compulsory military service in Taiwan, even if they are also U.S. citizens, and even if they have entered Taiwan on U.S. passports. Potentially affected individuals are urged to consult with the nearest office of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in the United States before visiting Taiwan to determine whether they are subject to the military service requirement.

English Language Programming: The International Community Radio Taipei (ICRT) www.icrt.com.tw provides all of Taiwan with English-language programming 24 hours a day. In the event of an emergency or an approaching typhoon, travelers in the Taipei and Kaohsiung areas should tune their radios to FM 100.7 for English-language updates. Travelers can find ICRT in Taichung at FM 100.1. Travelers can listen to ICRT's live broadcasting on the Internet at http://www.icrt.com.tw/en/D01.php. TV news in English is available on channel 53 at 6:00 a.m. and at 11:45 pm on Formosa Television, or at its web site http://englishnews.ftv.com.tw. The three main English-language daily newspapers published in Taiwan are Taipei Times, Taiwan News and China Post. In addition to the print versions, readers can read their content online at http://www.taipeitimes.com, http://www.etaiwannews.com and http://www.chinapost.com.tw.

Judicial Assistance: Judicial assistance is provided by authorities on Taiwan in response to letters rogatory from foreign courts in accordance with Taiwan's "Law Governing Extension of Assistance to Foreign Courts." For further information regarding judicial assistance in Taiwan please go to the following website: http://www.ait.org.tw/en/uscitizens/judicial.asp.

AUTHORITY—22 U.S.C. 3306(b) provides acts performed by officers of the American Institute in Taiwan under 22 U.S.C. 3306 are valid, as if performed by any other person authorized under the laws of the United States to perform such acts (consular officers). The American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) is a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the District of Colombia. 22 U.S.C. 3305, 3306(a)(3). The judicial assistance acts of AIT personnel parallel the acts performed by U.S. consular officers under 28 U.S.C. 1781 (a)(2). See Sec. 1-201(h) of Executive Order No. 12143, 44 Fed. Reg. 37191 (June 23, 1979). Pursuant to Section 10(a) of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), 22 U.S.C. 3309(a), the Taiwan Economic Cultural Representative's Office ("TECRO") is the instrumentality established by the people of Taiwan having the necessary authority under the laws of Taiwan to take actions on behalf of Taiwan in accordance with the Act.

Criminal Penalties: While outside the United States, a U.S. citizen is subject to local laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Taiwan's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Taiwan are severe and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign state is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: The American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) is authorized by law to perform American citizen services. Americans living or traveling in Taiwan are encouraged to register with AIT through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Taiwan. Americans resident in Taiwan are encouraged also to become a member of AIT's group email notifications by sending an email to aittaipeiacs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Americans without Internet access may register directly with AIT Taipei or AIT Kaohsiung. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The American Institute in Taiwan is a full passport services agency. Processing time for routine passports is about two weeks. The American Institute in Taiwan is located at No.7 Lane 134, Hsin Yi Road Section 3, Taipei, Taiwan, telephone: (886) 2-2162-2000; fax: (886) 2-2162-2239, web site: http://www.ait.org.tw. The American Institute in Taiwan branch office is located at No. 2 Chung Cheng 3rd Road, 5th Floor, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, telephone: (886) 7-238-7744; fax: (886) 7-238-5237. AIT's citizen services section can also be contacted by e-mail at aitamcit@mail.ait.org.tw. In case of emergencies after working hours, the duty officer at the American Institute in Taiwan at Taipei may be contacted at (886) 2-2162-2000.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports

online at http://adoption.state.gov. Taiwan is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

The United States does not have formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. All Consular and other representative functions are handled by the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), a non-profit, private corporation authorized by the Taiwan Relations Act to conduct and carry out programs, transactions, and other relations between the United States and Taiwan.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Taiwan, you must be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

In addition to the United States requirements for adoptive parents, Taiwan also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are currently no residency requirements that prospective adoptive parents must meet in order to adopt an orphan from Taiwan.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be at least twenty years older than the child to be adopted. Taiwanese regulations further stipulate that adopting parents must be adults not older than 55 years of age.

Marriage Requirements: A married person who adopts a child shall do so jointly with his/her spouse.

Income Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must have a stable residence, legitimate work and sufficient financial means.

Who Can Be Adopted? A child must meet the definition of an orphan under United States law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States.

In addition to these requirements, Taiwan has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. You cannot adopt a child in Taiwan unless he or she meets the requirements outlined below.

No child adopted may be:

- Directly related by blood to the prospective adoptive parents;
- Directly related by marriage, except in the adoption of the other spouse's child as a stepchild; or
- Indirectly related by blood, such as cousins (unless removed by a certain degree), the spouse of a sibling, or a sibling of your spouse. (Taiwan law is very detailed about what degree of indirect blood relation is excluded from adoption. If prospective adoptive parents are concerned about possible blood ties with the child they wish to adopt, they should contact AIT for clarification before proceeding with the adoption.)

Waiting Period: The average time to complete an intercountry adoption in Taiwan is approximately 10 months from initial contact with the adoption agency in the United States until the immigrant visa is issued.

Taiwan's Adoption Authority: Children's Bureau (Er Tong Ju), Ministry of Interior

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Taiwan is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the United States state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Taiwan to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the USCIS. If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Taiwan will provide you with a referral to a child.

Role of the Adoption Authority: Although the Children's Bureau is Taiwan's Adoption Authority, as soon as prospective adoptive parents arrive in Taiwan, they should contact AIT's Consular Section to register their presence in Taiwan.

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Tel: (886) 02-2162-2005
Fax: (886) 02-2162-2253
Email: visaiv@mail.ait.org.tw

Role of the Court: All applications for adoption are first submitted to the Taiwan District Court.

Role of Adoption Agencies: Most adoptions are processed through local orphanages identified by United States or other foreign-based adoption agencies.

Adoption Application: An application for adoption is first submitted to the Taiwan District Court. After one to two months, the adoptive parent(s) or a designated representative will receive a notice to appear. During this waiting period, a Taiwan social worker from the local bureau of social affairs or a designated agency will review the foreign (United States) home study. After the hearing, the court will rule on the adoption (usually within two months) and publish a final ruling three weeks later. The third step is to register the adoption at the Taiwan Registrar's office by submitting the original court ruling, final ruling, and the power of attorney certified at the Taiwan Foreign Affairs Police Station at the Taiwan Registrar's office. This usually takes only one hour.

Time Frame: The average time to complete an intercountry adoption in Taiwan is approximately 10 months from initial contact with the adoption agency in the United States until the immigrant visa is issued.

Adoption Fees: The following fees apply to adoptions in Taiwan:

- Court processing fee–US $5
- Taiwan passport application fee (regular fee)–US $30
- Expedited application–US $70
- Taiwan Household Registry (HHR) application fee–US $ 0.30 per copy
- Translation fees–VARIABLE
- Notary fees–US $25 per document

Documents Required: After a child has been identified, the prospective parents must submit the following documents:

- Power of attorney, in English and Chinese, appointing the Taiwan orphanage or social worker to represent them;
- United States home study and Chinese translation;
- Evidence of prospective adoptive parents' right to adopt in the United States (included in United States-certified home study);
- I-797 approval notice of I-600A from DHS;
- Copy of United States prospective adoptive parents' home state adoption laws and Chinese translation;
- Signed adoption agreement notarized by the TECO (Taipei Economic and Cultural office) having jurisdiction over the place of the parent(s)' residence (in English and Chinese); and
- Other documents (birth certificates, marriage certificates, etc.) may be requested by the orphanage, agency, or Taiwan authorities.

Chinese translations prepared in the United States must be certified by the TECRO/TECO office for that district and English versions must be notarized by a United States notary public.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Taiwan requires five years of post-placement reports. In the first year, post placement reports are required at three, six and twelve months; after that one report per year is required. (This means seven reports over a five-year period.) The reports, which include photos of the child, must be completed by licensed social workers or agencies through home visits.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Taiwan
Consular Section
Immigrant Visa Unit, 3rd Floor
American Institute in Taiwan
Number 7, Lane 134
Hsin Yi Rd, Section 3
Taipei 106, Taiwan
Tel: (886) 02-2162-2005
Fax: (886) 02-2162-2253
Email: visaiv@mail.ait.org.tw

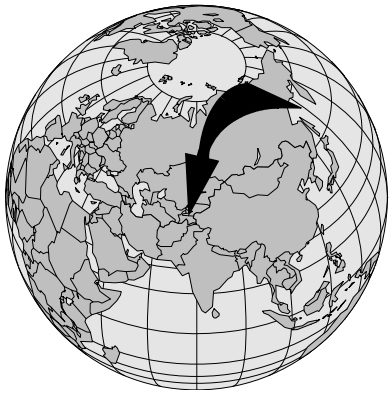
Taiwan's Adoption Authority
Children's Bureau (Er Tong Ju), Ministry of Interior
7F, No. 503 Li-Ming Road, Section 2
Nantun, Taichung 408, Taiwan
Tel: (04)-2250-2850
Fax: (04)-2250-2903
Internet: http://www.cbi.gov.tw

Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representation office (TECRO) in the United States
4201 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20016
Tel: (202) 895-1800
Email: tecroinfodc@tecro-info.org

Taiwan also has offices (consulates) in: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Guam, Honolulu, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco and Seattle.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



TAJIKISTAN

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Tajikistan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 143,100 sq. km.

Cities: Capital—Dushanbe.

Terrain: Pamir and Alay mountains dominate landscape; western Ferghana valley in north, Kofarnihon and Vakhsh Valleys in southwest.

Climate: Mid-latitude continental, hot summers, mild winters; semiarid to polar in Pamir mountains.

People

Nationality: Tajikistani.

Population: (Oct. 2007 est.) 7,181,400.

Population growth rate: (2006 est.) 2.19%.

Ethnic groups: Tajik 74%, Uzbek 23%, Russian and others 3%.

Religions: (2003 est.) Sunni Muslim 95%, Shi'a Muslim 3%, other 2 %.

Languages: Tajik (sole official language as of 1994); Russian widely used in government and business; 77% of the country, however, is rural and they speak mostly Tajik.

Education: Literacy (according to Tajikistan official statistics, 2003)—88%. The Tajik education system is still struggling through a period of decline since independence.

Health: Life expectancy—61.68 years men; 67.59 years women. Infant mortality rate—110.76 deaths/1,000 live births (2005 est.).

Work force: (2003 est.) 3.301 million.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: September 9, 1991 (from Soviet Union).

Constitution: November 6, 1994.

Government branches: Executive—chief of state: President Emomali RAHMON since November 6, 1994; head of state and Supreme Assembly chairman since November 19, 1992; head of government (appointed by the president): Prime Minister Oqil OQILOV since January 20, 1999; Oqilov has reached mandatory retirement age, and will soon be replaced. Cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president, approved by the Supreme Assembly. Elections: president elected by popular vote for a 7-year term; election last held November 6, 2006. Election results: Emomali RAHMON 79.3%, Olimjon BOBOYEV 6.2%, Amir QARAQULOV 5.3%, Ismoil TALBAKOV 5.1%, Abduhalim GHAFFOROV 2.8%. Legislative—bicameral Supreme Assembly or Majlisi Oli consists of the Assembly of Representatives or Majlisi Namoyanandagon (lower chamber; 63 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve 5-year terms) and the National Assembly or Majlisi Milliy (upper chamber; 33 seats; members are indirectly elected by popular vote to serve 5-year terms, 25 selected by local deputies, 8 appointed by the president, plus former presidents of Tajikistan—currently there is one; all serve 5-year terms). Elections: last held February 27, 2005 for the Assembly of Representatives. Election results: percent of vote by party—People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan 74.9%, Communist Party 13.64%, Islamic Revival 8.94%, other 2.5%. Judicial—Supreme Court; judges are appointed by the president.

Political parties: People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan or PDPT [Emomali RAHMON]; Islamic Revival Party or IRPT [Muhiddin KABIRI]; Tajik Communist Party or CPT [Shodi SHABDOLOV]; Democratic Party or DPT [Masud Sobirov heads government-recognized faction; (Mahmadruzi IZKANDAROV, currently serving 23-year prison term, is chairman of original DPT; Rahmatullo VALIYEV is deputy)]; Social Democratic Party or SDPT [Rahmatullo ZOYIROV]; Socialist Party of Tajikistan or SPT [Abdukhalim GAFFOROV; (Murhuseyn NARZIEV heads the original SPT party that is currently unrecognized by the government)]; Agrarian Party or APT [Amir Birievich QARAQULOV]; Party of Economic Reform or PERT [Olimjon BOBOYEV].

Suffrage: 18 years of age, universal.

Defense: (2003 est.) Military manpower (availability)—1,273,700.

Economy

GDP nominal: (2008 projected) $4.3 billion.

GDP nominal per capita: (2007 est.) U.S. $561. Purchasing power parity is about $1,500.

GDP real growth rate: (2008 projected) 5%.

Inflation rate: (consumer prices, 2007 est.) 20%.

Natural resources: Hydropower, some petroleum, uranium, gold, mercury, brown coal, lead, zinc, antimony, tungsten.

Unemployment: (2008 projected) 2.3%. The official rate is estimated based on the number of registered unemployment benefit recipients; underemployment also is very high, approximately 40% of the workforce; 53% live below the poverty line (2008).

Agriculture: Products—cotton, grain, fruits, grapes, vegetables; cattle, sheep, goats.

Industry: Types—aluminum, zinc, lead, chemicals and fertilizers, cement, vegetable oil, textiles, metal-cutting machine tools, refrigerators and freezers.

Trade: Exports (Jan.-April 2008)—$470.1 million f.o.b.: aluminum, electricity, cotton, gold, fruits, vegetable oil, textiles. Partners include—Netherlands, Turkey, China. Imports (Jan.-April 2008)—$1.27 billion f.o.b.: electricity, petroleum products, aluminum oxide, machinery and equipment, foodstuffs. Partners include—Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, China, Ukraine, Italy, Turkmenistan.

Total external debt: (April 2008) $1.222 billion; total bilateral external debt (2006)—$185.3 million, of which Uzbekistan $73.1 million, U.S. $16.3 million, Turkey $10.3 million, Kazakhstan $10.9 million, Russia $30 million; total multilateral debt (April 2008)—$650.5 million, of which World Bank $349.8 million, IMF $44.4 million, ADB $139.9 million.

Debt/GDP ratio: (2007 est.) 30.5%.

GEOGRAPHY

At 36'40' northern latitude and 41'14' eastern longitude, Tajikistan is nestled between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to the north and west, China to the east, and Afghanistan to the south. Tajikistan is home to some of the highest mountains in the world, including the Pamir and Alay ranges. Ninety-three percent of Tajikistan is mountainous with altitudes ranging from 1,000 feet to 27,000 feet, with nearly 50% of Tajikistan's territory above 10,000 feet. Earthquakes are of varying degrees and are frequent. The massive mountain ranges are cut by hundreds of canyons and gorges; at the bottom of these run streams which flow into larger river valleys where the majority of the country's population lives and works. The principal rivers of Central Asia, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, both flow through Tajikistan, fed by melting snow from mountains of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Flooding and landslides sometimes occur during the annual spring thaw.

PEOPLE

Contemporary Tajiks are the descendants of ancient Eastern Iranian inhabitants of Central Asia, in particular the Soghdians and the Bactrians, and possibly other groups, with an admixture of western Iranian Persians and non-Iranian peoples, Mongols, and Turkic peoples. Until the 20th century, people in the region used two types of distinction to identify themselves: way of life—either nomadic or sedentary—and place of residence. By the late 19th century, the Tajik and Uzbek peoples had lived in proximity for centuries and often used—and continue to use—each other's languages. The division of Central Asia into five Soviet Republics in the 1920s imposed artificial divisions on a region in which many different peoples lived intermixed.

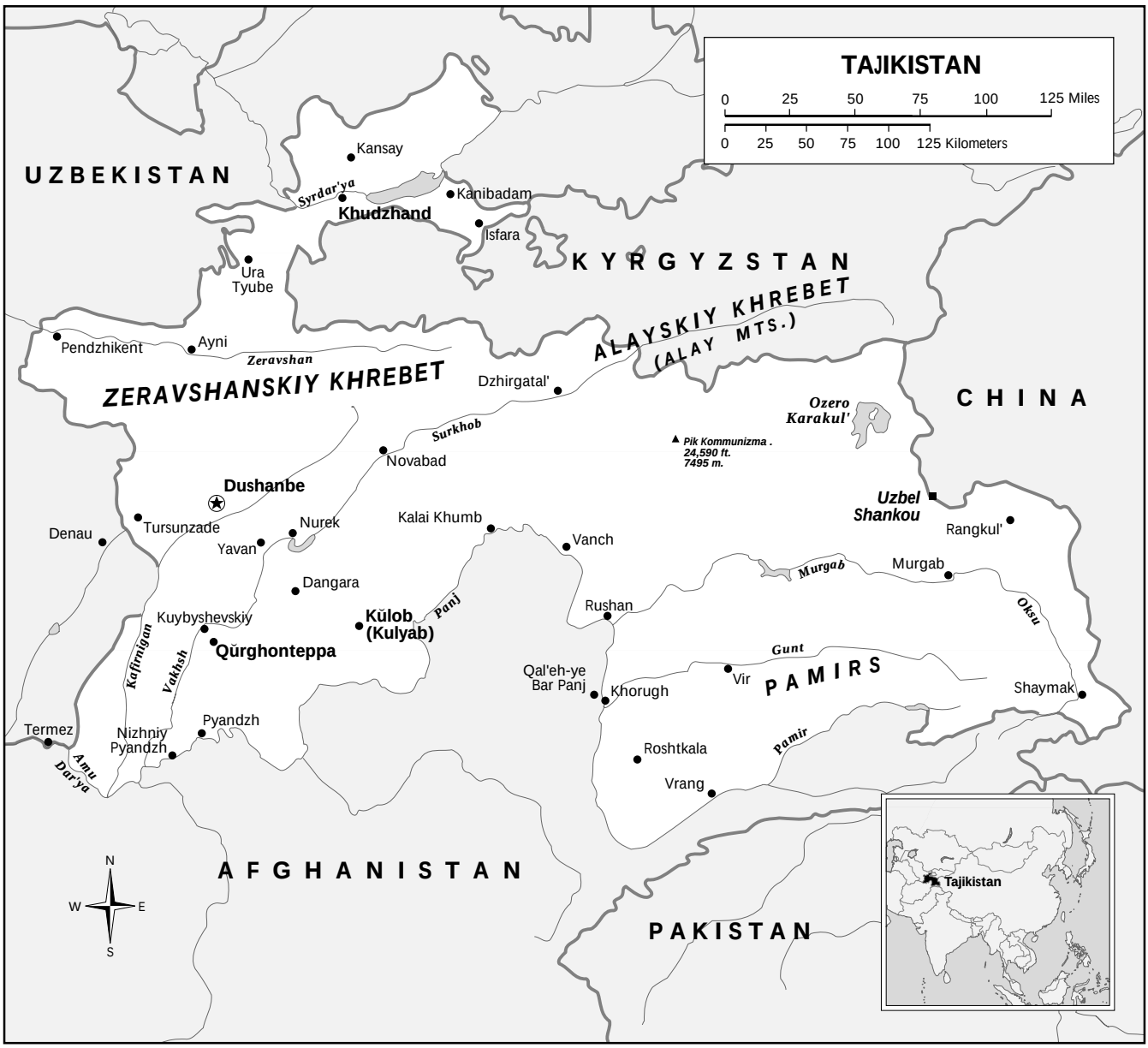
HISTORY

The current Tajik Republic hearkens back to the Samanid Empire (A.D. 875-999), which ruled what is now Tajikistan as well as territory to the south and west, as their role model and name for their currency. During their reign, the Samanids supported the revival of the written Persian language in the wake of the Arab Islamic conquest in the early 8th century and played an important role in preserving the culture of the pre-Islamic Persian-speaking world. They were the last Persian-speaking empire to rule Central Asia.

The expanding Russian Empire encompassed the territory that is now Tajikistan, along with most of the rest of Central Asia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Russian rule collapsed briefly after the Russian Revolution of 1917, as the Bolsheviks consolidated their power and were embroiled in a civil war in other regions of the former Russian Empire. As the Bolsheviks attempted to regain Central Asia in the 1920s, an indigenous Central Asian resistance movement based in the Ferghana Valley, the "Basmachi movement," resisted but was eliminated by 1925. Tajikistan became fully established under Soviet control with the creation of Tajikistan as an autonomous Soviet socialist republic within Uzbekistan in 1924, and as an independent Soviet socialist republic in 1929.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The Republic of Tajikistan gained its independence during the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) on September 9, 1991 and soon fell into a civil war. From 1992 to 1997 internal fighting ensued between old-guard regionally based ruling elites and disenfranchised regions, democratic liberal reformists, and Islamists loosely organized in a United Tajik Opposition (UTO).



Other combatants and armed bands that flourished in this civil chaos simply reflected the breakdown of central authority rather than loyalty to a political faction. The height of hostilities occurred between 1992 and 1993. By 1997, the predominantly Kulyabi-led Tajik Government and the UTO had negotiated a power-sharing peace accord and implemented it by 2000.

The last Russian border guards protecting Tajikistan's 1,400 km border with Afghanistan completed their withdrawal in July 2005. Russia maintains its military presence in Tajikistan with the basing of the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division that never left Tajikistan when it became independent. Most of these Russian-led forces, however, are local Tajik noncommissioned officers and soldiers.

Tajikistan's most recent presidential election in 2006 and its 2005 parliamentary elections were considered to be flawed and unfair but peaceful. While the government and the now-incorporated former opposition continue to distrust each other, they have often found a way to work with each other and are committed to peacefully resolving their differences. In June 2003, Tajikistan held a flawed referendum to enact a package of constitutional changes, including a provision to allow President Rahmon the possibility of re-election to up to two additional 7-year terms after his term expired in 2006. The February 2005 parliamentary elections, in which the ruling party secured 49 of the 63 seats, failed to meet many key Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) standards on democratic elections, but there were some improvements over previous elections.

After the November 6, 2006 presidential election in which President Rahmon secured a new 7-year term in office, the OSCE determined that democratic practices were not fully tested "due to the absence of genuine competition, which provided voters with only nominal choice." There were four other candidates on the ballot but no strong opposition candidate. The strongest opposition party, the IRPT, decided not to field a candidate and two other parties (the DPT and SDPT) boycotted the election.

Lack of transparency in the legislative process and significant concerns regarding due process demonstrate the weakness of civil society in the country. Corruption is pervasive, and numerous observers have noted that power has been consolidated into the hands of a relatively small number of individuals.

Afghanistan continues to represent the primary security concern in Tajikistan's immediate neighborhood, although much less so than in earlier years. With the ouster of the former Taliban government from Afghanistan, Tajikistan now has much friendlier relations with its neighbor to the south. The Taliban-allied Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a U.S. Government-declared terrorist organization formerly active in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, has also been greatly diminished as a threat to Tajikistan's domestic stability. Rampant illicit trafficking of Afghan opium and heroin through Tajikistan remains a serious long-term threat to Tajikistan's stability and development, fostering corruption, violent crime, HIV/AIDS, and economic distortions.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Emomali RAHMON**
Prime Min.: **Oqil OQILOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Murodali ALIMARDON**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Asadullo GHULOMOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ruqiya QURBANOVA**
Min. of Agriculture: **Qosim QOSIMOV**
Min. of Culture: **Mirzoshohrukh ASRORI**
Min. of Defense: **Sherali KHAYRULLOYEV, Col. Gen.**
Min. of Economy & Trade: **Gulomjon BOBOEV**
Min. of Education: **Abdujabbor RAHMONOV**
Min. of Energy & Industry: **Sherali GUL**
Min. of Finance: **Safarali NAJMUDDINOV**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Hamrohon ZARIFI**
Min. of Health: **Nusratullo SALIMOV**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Mahmadnazar SOLEHOV**
Min. of Justice: **Bakhtiyor KHUDOYOROV**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Shukhurjon ZUHOROV**
Min. of Land Improvement & Water Economy: **Masaid HOMIDOV**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Abdurahim ASHUR**
Chmn., State Committee on National Security: **Khayridin ABDURAHIMOV**
Chmn., State Committee on State Property: **Farrukh HAMRALIYEV**
Chmn., State Committee on Statistics: **Mirgand SHABOZOV**
Prosecutor Gen.: **Bobojon BOBOKHONOV**
Dir., Drug Control Agency: **Rustam NAZAROV, Lt. Gen.**
Chmn., National Bank: **Sharif RAHIMZODA**
Ambassador to the US: **Abdujabbor SHIRINOV**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Sirojidin ASLOV**

Tajikistan established an embassy in Washington, DC in temporary offices in February 2003, and formally opened its first permanent chancery building in March 2004. Tajikistan's embassy in the United States is at 1005 New Hampshire Ave NW, Washington, DC 20037 (tel.: 202-233-6090; fax: 202-223-6091).

ECONOMY

Tajikistan is the poorest Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) country and one of the poorest countries in the world. Foreign revenue is precariously dependent upon exports of cotton and aluminum, and on foreign remittance flows from Tajik migrant workers abroad, mainly in Russia. The economy is highly vulnerable to external shocks. Tajikistan has great hydropower potential, and has focused on attracting investment for projects for internal use and electricity exports. Meanwhile, the country faces severe electricity shortages, particularly during the winter, when many citizens receive two to four hours of electricity each day.

Tajikistan has followed a relatively strict fiscal and monetary policy, which has resulted in macroeconomic stability. However, government interference in the economy and massive corruption stifle economic growth and private investment. The government has attracted state-led investment for major infrastructure projects rather than implementing the necessary economic reforms to attract private investors. Two-thirds of the workforce of Tajikistan is in agriculture, most of them pressured to grow cotton. Tajikistan struggles to implement agricultural reforms that would allow this two-thirds of the population to farm the crop of their choice. Income from narcotics trafficking, while difficult to quantify, has an increasingly visible impact on the Tajik economy.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

With the ouster of the former Taliban government from Afghanistan, Tajikistan now has much friendlier relations with its neighbor to the south. Though a pull-out of Russian border guards was completed in July 2005, Tajikistan continues to permit basing of the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division that never left Tajikistan when it became independent.

Tajikistan has a difficult relationship with Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is concerned about Tajikistan's plan to develop hydropower, which Uzbekistan views as a threat to downstream irrigation.

Border disagreements arise sporadically between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. For the most part these are harmless disagreements concerning people mov-

ing across mostly unmarked borders, but occasionally disputes develop into situations where gunfire is exchanged.

U.S.-TAJIK RELATIONS

The United States remains committed to assisting Tajikistan in its economic and political development, as Tajikistan continues to recover from its civil war legacy. U.S. assistance efforts are evolving away from humanitarian aid and political reconciliation, as those needs increasingly have been met. Instead, our efforts are targeted toward broader goals of democratic and economic reforms.

U.S.-Tajik relations have developed considerably since September 11, 2001. The two countries now have a broad-based relationship, cooperating in such areas as counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, and regional growth and stability. In light of the Russian border forces' withdrawal from the Tajik-Afghan border, the U.S. Government leads an international donor effort to enhance Tajikistan's territorial integrity, prevent the transit of narcotics and material or technology related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and support a stable, peaceful Tajikistan in order to prevent the spread of influence and activities of radical groups and terrorists.

We continue to assist Tajikistan on economic reforms and integration into the broader global marketplace, for example in pursuing World Trade Organization (WTO) accession. U.S. assistance also supports health and education, as well as democracy, media, and local governance. Tajikistan has been a strong supporter of U.S. efforts in the war on terrorism and in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

A U.S. Government-funded $36 million bridge over the Pyanzh River connecting Sher Khan, Afghanistan with Nizhniy Pyanzh, Tajikistan opened for commercial traffic in October 2007 and about 200 trucks cross daily. Since the opening, trade volume has tripled. The bridge will continue to enhance economic and commercial opportunities on both sides of the river, allowing goods and people to move across more easily. On the Afghan side, the bridge road will connect to the Afghan Ring Road.

The United States recognized Tajikistan on December 25, 1991, the day the U.S.S.R. dissolved, and opened a temporary Embassy in a hotel in the capital, Dushanbe, in March 1992. After the bombings of U.S. Embassies in Africa in 1998, Embassy Dushanbe American personnel were temporarily relocated to Almaty, Kazakhstan, due to heightened Embassy security standards. American Embassy Dushanbe has since returned to full operations and in July 2006 moved into a purpose-built Embassy compound.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

DUSHANBE (E) 109-A Ismoili Somoni Ave, Dushanbe, APO/FPO 7090 Dushanbe Place, Dulles, VA 20189, (992)37-229-2000, Fax (992) 37-229-2050, Workweek: M-F, 8 am–5 pm, Website:/dushanbe.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Carole D. Akgun
FM:	Norman Knight
MGT:	David Schafer
POL/ECO:	D. Matt Purl
AMB:	Tracey Jacobson
CON:	Gregory Pfleger
DCM:	Thomas Hushek
PAO:	Jacqueline McKennan
GSO:	Trevor Olson
RSO:	Seth Green
AFSA:	Trevor Olson
AID:	Carolyn Bryan
CLO:	Oxana Valeeva
DAO:	Ltc. Daniel Green
DEA:	Paul Hackett
EEO:	Gregory Pfleger
ICASS Chair:	Kelsey Harris-Smith
IMO:	Anthony Skok
IRS:	Susan Stanley
LEGATT:	Howard Leadbetter
State ICASS:	D. Matt Purl

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 9, 2008

Country Description: Tajikistan remains the poorest of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. It is a nominally constitutional, democratic, and secular republic, dominated by President Emomali Rahmon who has been in power since 1992. Tourist facilities are undeveloped and many goods and services usually available in other countries are unavailable.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and visa are required to enter and exit Tajikistan, as well as for registration at hotels. The visa should be valid for the entire period of stay in country, through departure, and travelers should ideally request visas which allow for changing travel dates. Failure to produce a valid visa will require the traveler to leave the country immediately. Travelers planning to arrive in Tajikistan from countries that have Tajik embassies or consulates must obtain Tajik visas abroad prior to their travel. Tajikistan is represented by embassies and consulates in the following countries: United States of America, United Kingdom, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Turkey, China, Afghanistan (Kabul, Mazori Sharif), Iran, Pakistan, India, Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Egypt, and United Arab Emirates (Dubai). Travelers arriving in Tajikistan from countries in which there are no Tajik embassies or consulates must have Tajik visa support, in the form of a letter from the Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) confirming that a visa may be issued, in order to receive a Tajik visa at the Dushanbe International Airport upon arrival. Travelers need to have two passport-size photos and a passport valid for at least six months longer than the duration of the planned stay in Tajikistan. Visas issued at the Dushanbe airport are normally valid for only 45 days. This

"upon arrival" visa service does not apply to any other Tajik airports or land borders.

Travelers staying in Tajikistan three days or longer must, within three days of arrival in Tajikistan, obtain registration stamps at the MFA or the Department of Visas and Registration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (OVIR), depending on whether the purpose of the visit to Tajikistan is for official or personal travel. Immigration authorities may deny the departure of travelers who failed to register their visas until after they have paid a fine and obtained the registration stamps at the MFA or OVIR.

In order to receive visa support, an organization inviting a traveler to Tajikistan must submit a request to the MFA at least two weeks in advance of the planned travel date to Tajikistan. Persons planning to arrive in Tajikistan at the invitation of a private Tajik resident (e.g., a friend or relative in Tajikistan) need to obtain a notification letter from OVIR. According to OVIR, it may take up to 45 days to obtain the notification letter. The MFA will issue Tajik visa support on the basis of the OVIR notification letter. The inviting party will send a copy of visa support to the traveler. The original MFA visa support will be sent to the Consular bureau at Dushanbe airport. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, persons traveling at the invitation of Tajik organizations or travel agencies, who are applying for visas at Tajik embassies or consulates abroad, will be able to obtain single-entry Tajik visas valid for 45 days upon direct submission of their visa request to the Tajik embassy or consulate (without a visa support letter). With the issuance of visa support, travelers applying for visas at Tajik embassies or consulates abroad will be able to obtain multiple-entry visas valid for a maximum of three months. Travelers who would like their visas extended need to apply for extension in advance through the MFA (official travelers) or OVIR (tourist or commercial travelers). Entry into the Gorno-Badakhshan region, both from inside and outside of Tajikistan, requires special authorization in advance in addition to a valid Tajik visa. Travelers can obtain this authorization at Tajik embassies and consulates abroad, or by applying to the MFA or OVIR once in Tajikistan. Tajik authorities advise that sponsoring organizations in Tajikistan submit requests for travel authorization for the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region at least two weeks in advance of the planned travel. The Tajik MFA or OVIR will list the names of the settlements and cities in Gorno-Badakhshan which the traveler plans on visiting in the travel authorization stamp. The Gorno-Badakhshan travel authorization is not written on a Tajik visa sticker; it is a separate note put in a passport.

The government of Tajikistan requires visitors who remain in country for more than 90 days to present a medical certificate showing that they are HIV-free, or to submit to an HIV test in Tajikistan. HIV is a growing health threat in Tajikistan.

Visit the Embassy of Tajikistan web site at http://www.tjus.org for the most current visa information.

Note: Departure options from Tajikistan may be limited in an emergency. U.S. citizens, their family members, and their dependents can maximize departure options by obtaining extended visas for travel to countries with reliable connections to Tajikistan, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Russia. Other destinations, notably Turkey, offer several flights a week and do not require American citizens to obtain visas in advance. Please note, however, that in emergency situations, flights may be suspended.

Safety and Security: Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), al-Qaida, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement remain active in Central Asia, as do anti-Western, anti-Semitic extremist organizations such as Hizb'ut-Tahrir. These groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and may attempt to target U.S. Government or private interests in the region, including in Tajikistan. Terrorist attacks involving the use of suicide bombers have previously taken place in neighboring Uzbekistan. Taliban resurgence and successful operations in Afghanistan, including attacks in the north, could also affect the security situation in southern Tajikistan.

Minor explosions have occasionally occurred in Dushanbe in the last two years. These explosions usually happen at night. In June 2007, an individual threw a grenade at the Supreme Court building. Witnesses and unofficial reports indicate that three guards were killed, although no official reports confirmed this. In November 2007, a small explosive killed an individual outside the Kokhi Vahhdat conference center in the center of Dushanbe. In both cases, no individual or organization claimed responsibility and authorities continue to investigate. Also in November 2007, a small improvised explosive device destroyed the official car belonging to the Commander of the President's National Guard. Incursions along the Afghan border have resulted in shootings and kidnappings; however, most are believed to be related to narcotics trafficking. None of these incidents have indicated the targeting of Americans or Westerners.

Criminal groups and terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Because of increased security at official U.S. facilities, terrorists are seeking softer civilian targets such as residential areas, clubs and restaurants, places of worship, hotels, outdoor recreation events, and other venues. The limited number of facilities catering to Westerners presents a heightened risk. American travelers should also avoid demonstrations and large crowds. Demonstrations and mobs are rare in Tajikistan following the 1992-1997 civil war, and police reaction to such behavior is unpredictable.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel

Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert and the Travel Alert for Central Asia, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The current crime rating for Dushanbe is high. The primary concern is the inability of Tajikistan's law enforcement entities to provide adequate and immediate assistance. Lack of manpower, low salaries, and inadequate training all contribute to a lack of professionalism. Tajikistan's struggling economy and high unemployment have resulted in incidents of street crime, including pick pocketings, muggings and armed robberies. Alcohol-related incidents such as bar fights and drunk driving are common. Criminals are not deterred by the risk of confrontation and tend to operate in groups of two or more to decrease their chances of arrest. When crimes do occur, they can be violent in nature. Additionally, the lack of a free media, and the infrequent public outreach between the government and the public through the media, does not provide the average citizen current and accurate information to make informed decisions about safety.

Government statistics are typically inaccurate because many crimes are not reported to law enforcement organizations. Often police refuse to open minor or routine cases that seem too difficult to resolve. In 2007, the Ministry of Interior reported a number of arrests related to organized crime, although overall reported crimes saw a slight decrease. The Ministry also reported a slight increase in firearm and drug-related offenses compared to previous years.

Crimes of opportunity can occur against anyone, and the Embassy reminds visitors to be careful and cautious in their own personal security, whether within the city limits of Dushanbe or in the more remote areas of the country. Americans should be aware that danger increases after dark, and they are advised to use caution when traveling alone or on foot after dark. The U.S. Embassy encourages visitors to travel in pairs and to notify colleagues of their whereabouts when not working, especially during evening hours. Travelers are also encouraged to carry a copy of their passport (separate from their wallets) to speed up issuance of a new passport in case of theft.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Tajikistan is: 01—Fire, 02—Police, 03—Ambulance.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The quality of Tajikistan's medical infrastructure is significantly below Western standards, with severe shortages of basic medical supplies, including disposable needles, anesthetics, and antibiotics. Many trained medical personnel left the country during and following the civil war. Elderly travelers and those with pre-existing health problems may be at particular risk due to inadequate medical facilities.

Significant disease outbreaks are possible due to population shifts and a decline in some immunization coverage among the general population. There have been outbreaks of typhoid in the Dushanbe area and in the south, and the risk of contracting malaria, cholera, and water-borne illnesses is high. Throughout Central Asia, rates of infection of various forms of hepatitis and tuberculosis (including drug-resistant strains) are on the rise. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Tajikistan. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on tuberculosis at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. It is advised to drink only bottled or thoroughly boiled water while in Tajikistan.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Tajikistan. However, the government of Tajikistan does require visitors who remain in country for more than 90 days to present a medical certificate showing that they are HIV-free, or to submit to an HIV test in Tajikistan. HIV is a growing health threat in Tajikistan.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith. Pandemic and avian flu information is available at www.pandemicflu.gov.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Tajikistan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel to, from, and within Tajikistan is difficult and unreliable. Neighboring countries may unilaterally close borders and some borders are poorly delineated. Armed police or military checkpoints can make road travel outside of Dushanbe more difficult. Crossing the Tajik-Uzbek border, in particular, has been known to present difficulties for drivers operating vehicles with non-Tajik government-issued plates. Road travel should be undertaken only in daylight hours and on routes known to the traveler or a reliable escort. Those traveling to Gorno-Badakhshan by car should do so only during daylight hours. The roads traverse mountainous terrain along the Afghan border that is difficult to navigate, even in daylight hours. Public transportation vehicles in the city are often overcrowded and not always safe. If you are driving, be vigilant because pedestrians often tend to cross the street at inappropriate places or walk along the highway without paying attention to vehicular traffic. Bus services between major cities have been severely disrupted by border closures and should not be relied upon. The State Traffic Inspectorate (GAI, or in Tajiki, BDA), which has checkpoints in many cities and at regular intervals along all highways outside the city, frequently stops vehicles for inspection of the vehicle and the driver's documents.

During the winter months, the potential dangers when traveling outside of Dushanbe in the mountainous areas of the country are heightened. Every year, accidents and casualties occur on Tajikistan's mountain roads and passes, often when drivers ignore warnings not to travel over a closed mountain pass. Avalanches are a common occurrence in Tajikistan's mountains during the winter months. The tunnel bypassing the Anzob Pass is still not complete and travel via this construction project is not advised in any season. Please exercise caution and limit winter travel to Tajikistan's mountain regions.

In certain parts of the country, including in the Vakhsh and Rasht valleys and along the Afghan-Tajik border, land mines and cluster munitions form an additional hazard. If an area has land mine warning signs, or is marked off with red and white plastic tape, heed the warning and do not venture off the road. In all cases, do not pick up or handle anything that looks like unexploded munitions.

Emergency phone numbers: police—02, ambulance—03, state traffic control (GAI) duty officer—35-45-45.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Tajikistan, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Tajikistan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Tajikistan has a cash-only economy. International banking services are limited, but ATM machines have been installed in several locations. Cash is dispensed in both U.S. and local currency. Few establishments in the country accept credit cards and none accepts traveler's checks. Tajikistan's national currency is the Somoni, which is convertible.

Tajik customs authorities may subject all items that are imported into or exported from Tajikistan to a high level of scrutiny. The Government of Tajikistan may enforce strict customs regulations against those who import and export goods. The export of antiques and cultural valuables requires special permission. There are also currency restrictions. Travelers must fill out a Customs Declaration Form upon arrival in Tajikistan, have it stamped by Tajik customs officials at the port of entry and retain the form until departure to demonstrate that the travelers are not leaving Tajikistan with more money than they brought into the country. Please contact the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in the United States, 1005 New Hampshire Avenue NW, Washington, DC, 20037; telephone (202) 223-6090, fax: (202) 223-6091, e-mail: tajikistan@verizon.net, web site: http://www.tjus.org for specific information about customs requirements.

The Republic of Tajikistan does not recognize dual citizenship with most countries, including the United States (one exception is with Russia, where dual citizenship is regulated by a special interstate agreement). Dual nationals who attempt to leave Tajikistan on U.S. passports without valid Tajik visas in them are likely to have problems with immigration authorities upon departing Tajikistan.

Travelers to Tajikistan are subject to frequent document inspections by local police. U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to carry copies of their U.S. passports, Tajik visas, and visa registration at all times (including while traveling within Tajikistan) so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity, U.S. citizenship, and valid visa status in Tajikistan are readily available. Always check your visa and registration validity dates so that these documents can be renewed if necessary before they expire. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest, including many government buildings, may result in problems with the authorities. In accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and certain bilateral agreements, local authorities must grant a U.S. consular officer access to any U.S. citizen who is arrested. U.S. citizens who are arrested or detained should ask to contact the U.S. Embassy immediately. Tajikistan is an earthquake-prone country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Tajik laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Tajikistan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Tajikistan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Tajikistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 109A Ismoili Somoni Avenue, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Main Phone: 992-37-229-2000, Consular Direct Line: 992-37-229-23-00, consular fax: 992-37-229-23-09, embassy fax: 992-37-2050, Duty Officer: 992-90-770-10-32, web site: http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Important Notes: On May 3, 2006, Tajikistan changed its Family Code to prohibit intercountry adoption of Tajik orphans. While couples which consist of at least one Tajik citizen will still be allowed to adopt according to the below procedures, all other adoptions by non-Tajik citizens are expressly forbidden by Tajik law.

Adoption Authority: The Department of Care and Guardianship (under the Tajik Ministry of Education) and the district education committee covering the child's place of residence (under the local mayor's office) both play important roles in identifying children as adoptable orphans and evaluating the appropriateness of prospective adoptive parents. Final adoption decisions are made in courts.

Age, Civil Status And Residency Requirements: At least one prospective adoptive parent must be Tajik citizen. Single parents may adopt but there must be at least 16 years' difference between the adoptive parent and adoptive child. However, Tajik authorities will allow adoption by a single parent only if they are fully convinced that the adoptive parent's age, health condition and financial status will enable him/her to provide adequate support and education for the child until adulthood.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no recognized adoption agencies in Tajikistan and there are few attorneys who will agree to even take on adoption cases, although there are several who have experience.

Fees: Tajikistan ranks among the most corrupt countries in the world. There are no set official fees for adoption and unofficial fees are rumored to vary widely, from $500 to $20,000.

Adoption Procedures: The following adoption procedures are related to the domestic Tajik adoption process, and are not always applied to (or successful in) intercountry adoption cases.

Applications for adoption should be filed with district or city courts having jurisdiction over the child's or the adoptive parents' place of residence in Tajikistan. Before the application is filed, the child must be registered as an orphan with both the Department of Care and Guardianship (under the Tajik Ministry of Education) and the district education committee covering the child's place of residence (under the local mayor's office). These departments review the child's and prospective parents' living conditions, ensure that the prospective adoptive parents met the Tajik requirement of meeting with the adoptive child in person, determine whether there are claims against the adoption (e.g., from other family members), and find out the child's attitude towards the adoption. (Children over age 10 cannot be adopted without their permission.) All adoptive parents are required to meet with the child in person before the court hearing and to be personally present at the court hearing. Representatives of the Care and Guardianship district committee, the prosecutor, and the orphanage must also be present at the hearing, and a failure by any of these to be present may later be used to invalidate the court decision. Tajik authorities believe that birth parents' rights always have priority and birth parents may withdraw their permission for the child's adoption at any time before the court decision is made. If

the child's birth parents are known and alive, the judge may invite them to the court hearing. Any person or entity who believes that his/her rights were violated by the adoption may file an appeal to have the adoption declared void. Not only the birth parents, but also other heirs of the adoptive parents, the prosecutor, or other Tajik government offices (Care and Guardianship Departments) may file such an appeal. Even the child him/herself, once having reached the age of majority, may request that the adoption be voided. If the court declares the adoption void, it can return the child to the birth parents or to the Tajik Care and Guardianship Departments. If there are no challenges to the adoption and the court approves the adoption, the adoptive parents can obtain the adoption certificate and the new birth certificate (showing the child's new name and the adoptive parents' names) from the Tajik civil registration office (ZAGS). Please note that in cases of issuance of a child's birth certificate to a single mother, ZAGS frequently writes a fictitious father's name in the birth certificate. A single adoptive mother should either ask ZAGS officials not to do this or should keep the court decision or statement from ZAGS to confirm that a single mother adopted the child. In the case of an adoption by a single, U.S. citizen mother, she will need these documents at the immigrant visa interview and also later when applying for a U.S. passport for the child. After the adoption certificate and the new birth certificate have been obtained, the adoptive parent(s) can apply for the child's Tajik international passport. This is done at the Visa and Registration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (OVIR). Once the adoption is finalized, the birth certificate has been reissued, and the child's passport is in hand, the parents can contact the U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan to make an appointment for an interview with a U.S. consular officer. The purpose of this interview is so that the consular officer can completed the Report on Overseas Orphan Investigation (Form I-604). When this report is completed, the parents can then contact the U.S. Embassy in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to arrange to apply for the immigrant visa for the adopted child. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Documentary Requirements: The adoption application to the Tajik court should include (but is not limited to):

- Home Study Report prepared by a competent authority of the prospective adoptive parents' country of residence
- Written recommendation of the Tajik Care and Guardianship Department
- Approval from the prospective adoptive parents' country of residence that they may apply to adopt a child internationally
- Copies of prospective adoptive parents' passports
- Prospective adoptive parents' marriage certificate/divorce certificate (if applicable)
- Police certificate for the adoptive parents
- Medical examination report describing the prospective adoptive parents' health condition
- Financial documents showing prospective adoptive parents' salary and income: employment verification letter, bank statements, tax forms
- Evidence of prospective adoptive parents' place of residence
- Certificate showing how many people there are in the prospective adoptive parents' family, including all dependents, to assess financial means
- Notarized agreement of biological parents (if they are known and alive) or guardians for adoption of the child
- Written permission from the head of the orphanage or hospital where the child resides (if applicable)
- Original birth certificate of the adoptive child
- Child's statement agreeing to be adopted (if s/he is over ten years old)
- Medical report on the child's health condition and physical and mental development

All of these documents must be translated into Tajik or Russian, notarized and authenticated.

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan

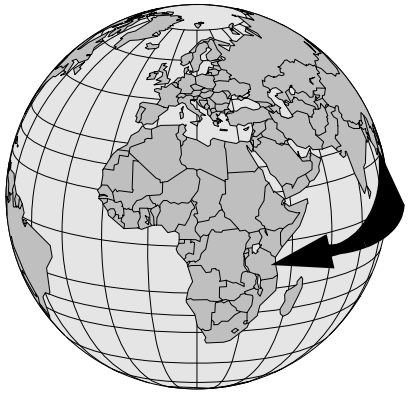
1005 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
Phone: (202) 223-6090
Fax: (202) 223-6091
E-mail: tajikistan@verizon.net
Website: http://www.tjus.org

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy

10 Pavlov Street
Dushanbe, Tajikistan 734003
Tel. (92-372) 21-03-48, 21-03-52, 24-15-60, 21-20-57
Fax: (92-372) 21-03-62 or 51-00-29
E-mail:
DushanbeConsular@state.gov
Website:
http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Tajikistan may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



TANZANIA

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
United Republic of Tanzania

PROFILE

Geography

Area: Mainland—945,000 sq. km. (378,000 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than New Mexico and Texas combined. Zanzibar—1,658 sq. km. (640 sq. mi.).

Cities: Capital—Dar es Salaam (executive), Dodoma (legislative), Major metropolises—Arusha, Mwanza, Mbeya, Mtwara, Stonetown in Zanzibar.

Terrain: Varied.

Climate: Varies from tropical to arid to temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Tanzanian(s); Zanzibari(s).

Population: Mainland—39.3 million. Zanzibar—1 million (est.).

Religions: Muslim 40%, Christian 40%, indigenous beliefs 20%.

Languages: Kiswahili (official), English.

Education: Attendance—73.2% Mainland (primary); 71.4% Zanzibar. Literacy: Females 67% Mainland; 76.8% Zanzibar. Literacy: Males 79.9% Mainland; 86% Zanzibar.

Health: Infant mortality rate—68/1,000. Life expectancy—50 years.

Work force: Agriculture—80%; industry, commerce, government—20%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: Tanganyika 1961, Zanzibar 1963. Union formed in April 1964.

Constitution: 1982.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and commander in chief), vice president, and prime minister. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly (for the Union), House of Representatives (for Zanzibar only). Judicial—Mainland: Court of Appeals, High Courts, Resident Magistrate Courts, district courts, and primary courts; Zanzibar: High Court, people's district courts, kadhis court (Islamic courts).

Political parties: 1. Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), 2. The Civic United Front (CUF), 3. Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA), 4. Union for Multiparty Democracy (UMD), 5. National Convention for Construction and Reform (NCCR-Mageuzi), 6. National League for Democracy (NLD), 7. National Reconstruction for Alliance (NRA), 8. Tanzania Democratic Alliance Party (TADEA), 9. Tanzania Labour Party (TLP), 10. United Democratic Party (UDP), 11. Demokrasia Makini (MAKINI), 12. United Peoples' Democratic Party (UPDP), 13. Chama cha Haki na Ustawi (CHAUSTA), 14. The Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD), 15. Democratic Party (DP), 16. Progressive Party of Tanzania (PPT-Maendeleo), 17. Jahazi Asilia.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Political subdivisions: 26 regions (21 on mainland, 3 on Zanzibar, 2 on Pemba).

Economy

GDP: (2007) $16.18 billion.

Average growth rate: (2007) 7.3%.

Per capita income: (2007) $400.

Natural resources: Hydroelectric potential, coal, iron, gemstones, gold, natural gas, nickel, diamonds, crude oil potential, forest products, wildlife, fisheries.

Agriculture: (2007) 42.5% of GDP. Products—coffee, cotton, tea, tobacco, cloves, sisal, cashew nuts, maize, livestock, sugar cane, paddy, wheat, pyrethrum.

Industry/manufacturing (2007) 18.9% of GDP. Types—textiles, agroprocessing, light manufacturing, construction, steel, aluminum, paints, cement, cooking oil, beer, mineral water and soft drinks.

Trade: (2007) Exports—$2.22 billion (merchandise exports, 2007): coffee, cotton, tea, sisal, cashew nuts, tobacco, cut flowers, seaweed, cloves, fish and fish products, minerals (diamonds, gold, and gemstones), manufactured goods, horticultural

products; services (tourism services, communication, construction, insurance, financial, computer, information, government, royalties, personal and other businesses). Major markets—U.K., Germany, India, Japan, Italy, China, Bahrain, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand, Pakistan, Indonesia. Primary imports—petroleum, consumer goods, machinery and transport equipment, used clothing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals. Major suppliers—U.K., Germany, Japan, India, Italy, U.S., United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, Kenya.

PEOPLE

Population distribution in Tanzania is extremely uneven. Density varies from 1 person per square kilometer (3 per sq. mi.) in arid regions to 51 per square kilometer (133 per sq. mi.) in the mainland's well-watered highlands to 134 per square kilometer (347 per sq. mi.) on Zanzibar. More than 80% of the population is rural. Dar es Salaam is the capital and largest city; Dodoma, located in the center of Tanzania, has been designated the legislative capital and the Parliament meets there four times a year.

The African population consists of more than 120 ethnic groups, of which the Sukuma, Haya, Nyakyusa, Nyamwezi, and Chaga have more than 1 million members each. The majority of Tanzanians, including such large tribes as the Sukuma and the Nyamwezi, are of Bantu stock. Groups of Nilotic or related origin include the nomadic Masai and the Luo, both of which are found in greater numbers in neighboring Kenya. Two small groups speak languages of the Khoisan family peculiar to the Bushman and Hottentot peoples. Cushitic-speaking peoples, originally from the Ethiopian highlands, reside in a few areas of Tanzania.

Although much of Zanzibar's African population came from the mainland, one group known as Shirazis traces its origins to the island's early Persian settlers. Non-Africans residing on the mainland and Zanzibar account for 1% of the total population. The Asian community, including Hindus, Sikhs, Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, and Goans, has declined by 50% in the past decade to 50,000 on the mainland and 4,000 on Zanzibar. An estimated 70,000 Arabs and 10,000 Europeans reside in Tanzania.

Each ethnic group has its own language, but the national language is Kiswahili, a Bantu-based tongue with strong Arabic borrowings.

HISTORY

Tanganyika/Tanzania

Northern Tanganyika's famed Olduvai Gorge has provided rich evidence of the area's prehistory, including fossil remains of some of humanity's earliest ancestors. Discoveries suggest that East Africa may have been the site of human origin.

Little is known of the history of Tanganyika's interior during the early centuries of the Christian era. The area is believed to have been inhabited originally by ethnic groups using a click-tongue language similar to that of Southern Africa's Bushmen and Hottentots. Although remnants of these early tribes still exist, most were gradually displaced by Bantu farmers migrating from the west and south and by Nilotes and related northern peoples. Some of these groups had well-organized societies and controlled extensive areas by the time the Arab slavers, European explorers, and missionaries penetrated the interior in the first half of the 19th century.

The coastal area first felt the impact of foreign influence as early as the 8th century, when Arab traders arrived. By the 12th century, traders and immigrants came from as far away as Persia (now Iran) and India. They built a series of highly developed city and trading states along the coast, the principal one being Kibaha, a settlement of Persian origin that held ascendancy until the Portuguese destroyed it in the early 1500s.

The Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama explored the East African coast in 1498 on his voyage to India. By 1506, the Portuguese claimed control over the entire coast. This control was nominal, however, because the Portuguese did not colonize the area or explore the interior. Assisted by Omani Arabs, the indigenous coastal dwellers succeeded in driving the Portuguese from the area north of the Ruvuma River by the early 18th century. Claiming the coastal strip, Omani Sultan Seyyid Said (l804-56) moved his capital to Zanzibar in 1841.

European exploration of the interior began in the mid-19th century. Two German missionaries reached Mt. Kilimanjaro in the 1840s. British explorers Richard Burton and John Speke crossed the interior to Lake Tanganyika in 1857. David Livingstone, the Scottish missionary-explorer who crusaded against the slave trade, established his last mission at Ujiji, where he was "found" by Henry Morton Stanley, an American journalist-explorer, who had been commissioned by the New York Herald to locate him.

German colonial interests were first advanced in 1884. Karl Peters, who formed the Society for German Colonization, concluded a series of treaties by which tribal chiefs in the interior accepted German "protection." Prince Otto von Bismarck's government backed Peters in the subsequent establishment of the German East Africa Company.

In 1886 and 1890, Anglo-German agreements were negotiated that delineated the British and German spheres of influence in the interior of East Africa and along the coastal strip previously claimed by the Omani sultan of Zanzibar. In 1891, the German Government took over direct administration of the territory from the German East Africa Company and appointed a governor with headquarters at Dar es Salaam.

Although the German colonial administration brought cash crops, railroads, and roads to Tanganyika, European rule provoked African's



resistance, culminating in the Maji Maji rebellion of 1905-07. The rebellion, which temporarily united a number of southern tribes and ended only after an estimated 120,000 Africans had died from fighting or starvation, is considered by most Tanzanians to have been one of the first stirrings of nationalism.

German colonial domination of Tanganyika ended after World War I when control of most of the territory passed to the United Kingdom under a League of Nations mandate. After World War II, Tanganyika became a UN trust territory under British control. Subsequent years witnessed Tanganyika moving gradually toward self-government and independence.

In 1954, Julius K. Nyerere, a school teacher who was then one of only two Tanganyikans educated abroad at the university level, organized a political party—the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). TANU-supported candidates were victorious in the Legislative Council elections of September 1958 and February 1959. In December 1959, the United Kingdom agreed to the establishment of internal self-government following general elections to be held in August 1960. Nyerere was named chief minister of the subsequent government.

In May l961, Tanganyika became autonomous, and Nyerere became

Prime Minister under a new constitution. Full independence was achieved on December 9, 1961. Julius. Nyerere was elected President when Tanganyika became a republic within the Commonwealth a year after independence.

Zanzibar

An early Arab/Persian trading center, Zanzibar fell under Portuguese domination in the 16th and early 17th centuries but was retaken by Omani Arabs in the early 18th century. The height of Arab rule came during the reign of Sultan Seyyid Said, who encouraged the development of clove plantations, using the island's slave labor.

The Arabs established their own garrisons at Zanzibar, Pemba, and Kilwa and carried on a lucrative trade in slaves and ivory. By 1840, Said had transferred his capital from Muscat to Zanzibar and established a ruling Arab elite. The island's commerce fell increasingly into the hands of traders from the Indian subcontinent, who Said encouraged to settle on the island.

Zanzibar's spices attracted ships from as far away as the United States. A U.S. consulate was established on the island in 1837. The United Kingdom's early interest in Zanzibar was motivated by both commerce and the determination to end the slave trade. In 1822, the British signed the first of a series of treaties with Sultan Said to curb this trade, but not until 1876 was the sale of slaves finally prohibited.

The Anglo-German agreement of 1890 made Zanzibar and Pemba a British protectorate. British rule through a Sultan remained largely unchanged from the late 19th century until after World War II.

Zanzibar's political development began in earnest after 1956, when provision was first made for the election of six nongovernmental members to the Legislative Council. Two parties were formed: the Zanzibar Nationalist Party (ZNP), representing the dominant Arab and "Arabized" minority, and the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), led by Abeid Karume and representing the Shirazis and the African majority.

The first elections were held in July 1957. The ASP won three of the six elected seats, with the remainder going to independents. Following the election, the ASP split; some of its Shirazi supporters left to form the Zanzibar and Pemba People's Party (ZPPP). The January 1961 election resulted in a deadlock between the ASP and a ZNP-ZPPP coalition.

United Republic of Tanzania

Zanzibar received its independence from the United Kingdom on December 19, 1963, as a constitutional monarchy under the sultan. On January 12, 1964, the African majority revolted against the sultan and a new government was formed with the ASP leader, Abeid Karume, as President of Zanzibar and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council. Under the terms of its political union with Tanganyika in April 1964, the Zanzibar Government retained considerable local autonomy.

On April 26, 1964, Tanganyika united with Zanzibar to form the United Republic of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. The country was renamed the United Republic of Tanzania on October 29, 1964.

To form a sole ruling party in both parts of the union Nyerere merged TANU with the Zanzibar ruling party, the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP) of Zanzibar to form the CCM (Chama cha Mapinduzi-CCM Revolutionary Party), on February 5, 1977. The CCM was to be the sole instrument for mobilizing and controlling the population in all significant political or economic activities. He envisioned the party as a "two-way street" for the flow of ideas and policy directives between the village level and the government. On April 26, 1977, the union of the two parties was ratified in a new constitution. The merger was reinforced by principles enunciated in the 1982 union constitution and reaffirmed in the constitution of 1984. President Nyerere stepped down from office and was succeeded as President by Ali Hassan Mwinyi in 1985. Nyerere retained his position as Chairman of the ruling CCM party for 5 more years and was influential in Tanzanian politics until his death in October 1999. The current President, Jakaya Kikwete, was elected in December 2005. Zanzibar President Amani Abeid Karume, the son of Zanzibar's first president, was elected in 2000, in general elections that were marked by widespread irregularities throughout the Isles. His predecessor, Salmin Amour, was first elected in single-party elections in 1990, then re-elected in 1995 in Zanzibar's first multi-party elections. These elections also were tainted by violence and serious irregularities in the voting process.

GOVERNMENT

Tanzania's president and National Assembly members are elected concurrently by direct popular vote for 5-year terms. The president appoints a prime minister who serves as the government's leader in the National Assembly. The president selects his cabinet from among National Assembly members. The Constitution also empowers him to nominate 10 non-elected members of Parliament, who also are eligible to become cabinet members. Elections for president and all National Assembly seats were held in December 2005.

The unicameral National Assembly has up to 325 members: the Attorney General, the Speaker, five members elected from the Zanzibar House of Representatives to participate in the Parliament, 75 special women's seats apportioned among the political parties based on their election results, 233 constituent seats from the mainland, and up to 10 members nominated by the president. In 2006, the president nominated seven members and the Speaker was elected to a constituent seat, bringing the total number of Members of Parliament to 320. The ruling party, CCM, holds about 82% of the seats in the Assembly. Laws passed by the National Assem-

bly are valid for Zanzibar only in specifically designated union matters. Zanzibar's House of Representatives has jurisdiction over all non-union matters. There are currently 81 members in the House of Representatives in Zanzibar: 50 elected by the people, 10 appointed by the president of Zanzibar, 5 ex officio members, an attorney general appointed by the president, and 15 special seats allocated to women. Ostensibly, Zanzibar's House of Representatives can make laws for Zanzibar without the approval of the union government as long as it does not involve union-designated matters. The terms of office for Zanzibar's president and House of Representatives also are 5 years. The semiautonomous relationship between Zanzibar and the union is a relatively unique system of government.

Tanzania has a five-level judiciary combining the jurisdictions of tribal, Islamic, and British common law. Appeal is from the primary courts through the district courts, resident magistrate courts, to the high courts, and the high courts to the Court of Appeals. District and resident court magistrates are appointed by the Chief Justice, except for judges of the High Court and Court of Appeals, who are appointed by the president. The Zanzibari court system parallels the legal system of the union, and all cases tried in Zanzibari courts, except for those involving constitutional issues and Islamic law, can be appealed to the Court of Appeals of the union. A commercial court was established on the mainland in September 1999 as a division of the High Court.

For administrative purposes, Tanzania is divided into 26 regions—21 on the mainland, 3 on Zanzibar, and 2 on Pemba. Ninety-nine district councils have been created to further increase local authority. These districts are also now referred to as local government authorities. Currently there are 114 councils operating in 99 districts, 22 are urban and 92 are rural. The 22 urban units are classified further as city (Dar es Salaam and Mwanza), municipal (Arusha, Dodoma, Iringa, Kilimanjaro, Mbeya, Morogoro, Shinyanga, Tabora, and Tanga), and town councils (the remaining 11 communities).

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Jakaya Mrisho KIKWETE**
Vice Pres.: **Ali Mohamed SHEIN, Dr.**
Prime Min.: **Peter Mizengo PINDA**
Pres. of Zanzibar: **Amani Abeid KARUME**
Min. of Agriculture, Food Security, & Cooperatives: **Peter MSOLA**
Min. of Communication, Science, & Technology: **Shukuru Jumanne KAWAMBWA**
Min. of Community Development, Gender, & Children: **Margaret SITTA**
Min. of Defense & National Service: **Hussein MWINYI**
Min. of East Africa Cooperation Affairs: **Diodorus KAMALA**
Min. of Education & Vocational Training: **Jumanne MAGHEMBE**
Min. of Energy & Mineral Resources: **William NGELEJA**
Min. of Finance, Planning, Economy, & Empowerment: **Mustapha MKULO**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Intl. Cooperation: **Bernard Kamillius MEMBE**
Min. of Health & Social Welfare: **David Homeli MWAKYUSA**
Min. of Home Affairs, Public Safety, & Security: **Lawrence MASHA**
Min. of Industry, Trade, & Marketing: **Mary NAGU**
Min. of Information, Culture, & Sports: **George Huruma MKUCHIKA, Capt.**
Min. of Infrastructure Development: **Andrew John CHENGE**
Min. of Justice & Constitutional Affairs: **Mathias CHIKAWE**
Min. of Labor, Employment, & Youth Development: **Athumani Juma KAPUYA**
Min. of Lands & Human Settlement Development: **John CHILIGATI**
Min. of Livestock Development & Fisheries: **John MAGUFULI**
Min. of Natural Resources & Tourism: **Shamsa MWANGUNGA**
Min. of Water & Irrigation: **Mark MWANDOSYA**
Min. of State for Good Governance, Pres.'s Office: **Sophia SIMBA**
Min. of State for Regional Admin. & Local Govt., Pres.'s Office: **Stephen WASSIRA**
Min. of State for Environment, Vice Pres.'s Office: **Batilda BURIANI**
Min. of State for Union Affairs, Vice Pres.'s Office: **Mohamed Khatib SEIF**
Min. of State for Policy, Coordination, & Parliamentary Affairs, Prime Min.'s Office: **Philip MARMO**
Attorney Gen.: **Johnson MWANYIKA**
Governor, Central Bank: **Benno NDULU**
Ambassador to the US: **Ombeni Y. SEFUE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Augustine Philip MAHIGA**

Tanzania maintains an embassy in the United States at 2139 R Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-939-6125).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

From independence in 1961 until the mid-1980s, Tanzania was a one-party state, with a socialist model of economic development. Beginning in the mid-1980s, under the administration of President Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Tanzania undertook a number of political and economic reforms. In January and February 1992, the government decided to adopt multiparty democracy. Legal and constitutional changes led to the registration of 11 political parties. Two parliamentary by-elections (won by CCM) in early 1994 were the first-ever multiparty elections in Tanzanian history.

In October 2000, Tanzania held its second multi-party general elections. The ruling CCM party's candidate, Benjamin W. Mkapa, defeated his three main rivals, winning the presidential election with 71% of the vote. In the parliamentary elections, CCM won 202 of the 232 elected seats. In the Zanzibar presidential election, Abeid Amani Karume, the son of former President Abeid Karume, defeated CUF candidate Seif Sharif Hamad. The election was marred by irregularities, especially on Zanzibar, and subsequent political violence claimed at least 23 lives in January 2001, mostly on Pemba island. Also, 16 CUF members were expelled from the Union Parliament after boycotting the legislature to protest the Zanzibar election results.

In October 2001, the CCM and the CUF parties signed a reconciliation agreement which called for electoral

reforms on Zanzibar and set up a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the deaths that occurred in January 2001 on Pemba. The agreement also led to the presidential appointment of an additional CUF official to become a member of the Union Parliament. Changes to the Zanzibar Constitution in April 2002 allowed both the CCM and CUF parties to nominate members to the Zanzibar Electoral Commission. In May 2003, the Zanzibar Electoral Commission conducted by-elections to fill vacant seats in the parliament, including those seats vacated by the CUF boycott. Observers considered these by-elections, the first major test of the reconciliation agreement, to be free, fair, and peaceful.

In October 2005, presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place. However, the death of an opposition vice presidential candidate forced a postponement until December. Zanzibari presidential elections went forward as scheduled. Although there were many administrative improvements over the 2000 elections in Zanzibar, the poll was marred by violence and intimidation. Abeid Amani Karume edged out Seif Sharif Hamad 53% to 46% in an election widely deemed to have had serious irregularities by international observers. In contrast, the December 2005 elections in mainland Tanzania proceeded with few if any problems, and the popular Kikwete won by over 80% of the vote. The ruling CCM party also picked up additional parliamentary seats, leaving the opposition parties fractured and marginalized.

In February 2008, President Kikwete dissolved his cabinet after then-Prime Minister Edward Lowassa and two ministers resigned. Prime Minister Lowassa offered his resignation after a parliamentary select committee report alleged Lowassa used undue influence to help secure a major energy contract for a company that had no prior experience in the energy sector and ended up providing none of the promised energy. President Kikwete quickly nominated and the National Assembly approved a new cabinet. Mizengo Kayanza Peter Pinda was selected as the new Prime Minister. President Kikwete, Vice President Ali Mohamed Shein, Prime Minister Mizengo Kayanza Peter Pinda, and National Assembly members will serve until the next general elections in 2010. Similarly, Zanzibar President Karume and members of the Zanzibar House of Representatives also will complete their terms of office in 2010.

ECONOMY

Significant measures have been taken to liberalize the Tanzanian economy along market lines and encourage both foreign and domestic private investment. Beginning in 1986, the Government of Tanzania embarked on an adjustment program to dismantle state economic controls and encourage more active participation of the private sector in the economy. The program included a comprehensive package of policies which reduced the budget deficit and improved monetary control, substantially depreciated the overvalued exchange rate, liberalized the trade regime, removed most price controls, eased restrictions on the marketing of food crops, freed interest rates, and initiated a restructuring of the financial sector.

In February 2007 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the final review of Tanzania's second Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement and approved a three-year Policy Support Instrument (PSI) as a successor to the PRGF. Tanzania had implemented a second three-year PRGF in August 2003. From April 2000 to June 2003, the Tanzanian Government successfully completed a previous three-year PRGF. The PRGF was the successor program to the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) Tanzania had from 1996-1999. Tanzania also embarked on a major restructuring of state-owned enterprises. Overall, real GDP growth has averaged about 6% a year over the past seven years, higher than the annual average growth of less than 5% in the late 1990s, but not enough to improve the lives of average Tanzanians. The economy remains overwhelmingly donor-dependent. Tanzania had an external debt of U.S. $5.36 billion, down from U.S. $5.74 billion recorded as of the end of December 2006, while domestic debt increased to U.S. $1.67 billion from U.S. $1.43 billion during the same period. During 2007, external debt service payments amounted to U.S. $42.0 million compared with U.S. $90.3 million paid in 2006. The drastic fall in the actual debt service is associated with the debt relief arising from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC) and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), and accumulation of arrears on non-serviced debts.

Agriculture dominates the economy, providing about 42% of GDP and 80% of employment. Cash crops, including coffee, tea, cotton, cashews, sisal, cloves, and pyrethrum, account for the vast majority of export earnings. While the volume of major crops—both cash and goods marketed through official channels—have increased in recent years, large amounts of produce never reach the market. Poor pricing and unreliable cash flow to farmers continue to frustrate the agricultural sector.

Accounting for about 18% of GDP, Tanzania's industrial sector is one of the smallest in Africa. It was hard hit during the 2002-2003 drought years and again in 2005-2006 by persistent power shortages caused by low rainfall in the hydroelectric dam catchment area, a condition compounded by years of neglect and bad management at the state-controlled electric company. Management of the electric company was contracted to the private sector in 2003.

The main industrial activities (90%) are dominated by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) specializing in food processing including dairy products, meat packing, preserving fruits and vegetables, production of textile and apparel, leather tanning and plastics. A few larger factories (10%) manufacture cement, rolled steel, corrugated iron, aluminum sheets, cigarettes, beer and bottling beverages, fruit juices and mineral

water. Other factories produce raw materials, import substitutes, and processed agricultural products. Poor infrastructure in water and electricity supply systems continues to hinder factory production. In general, Tanzania's manufacturing sector targets primarily the domestic market with limited exports of manufactured goods. Most of the industry is concentrated in Dar es Salaam.

Despite Tanzania's past record of political stability, an unattractive investment climate has discouraged foreign investment. Government steps to improve the business climate include redrawing tax codes, floating the exchange rate, licensing foreign banks, and creating an investment promotion center to cut red tape. In terms of mineral resources and the largely untapped tourism sector, Tanzania could become a viable and attractive market for U.S. goods and services.

Zanzibar's economy is based primarily on the production of cloves (90% grown on the island of Pemba), the principal foreign exchange earner. Exports have suffered with the downturn in the clove market. Tourism is a promising sector with a number of new hotels and resorts have been built in recent years.

The Government of Zanzibar legalized foreign exchange bureaus on the islands before the mainland Tanzania moved to do so. The effect was to increase the availability of consumer commodities. Furthermore, with external funding, the Government of Zanzibar plans to make the port of Zanzibar a free port. In 2007, the rehabilitation of Zanzibar's port facilities commenced with assistance from European donors. The island's manufacturing sector is limited mainly to import substitution industries, such as cigarettes, shoes, and process agricultural products. In 1992, the government designated two export-producing zones and encouraged the development of offshore financial services. Zanzibar still imports much of its staple requirements, petroleum products, and manufactured articles.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

During the Cold War era, Tanzania played an important role in regional and international organizations. Tanzania's first president, Julius Nyerere, was one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Additionally, Tanzania played an active role in the front-line states, the G-77, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). One of Africa's best-known elder statesmen, Nyerere was personally active in many of these organizations, and served chairman of the OAU (1984-85) and chairman of six front-line states concerned with eliminating apartheid in Southern Africa. Nyerere's death, in October 1999, is still commemorated annually.

Tanzania enjoys good relations with its neighbors in the region and in recent years has been an active participant in efforts to promote the peaceful resolution of disputes. Tanzania helped to broker peace talks to end the conflict in Burundi; a comprehensive cease-fire was signed in Dar es Salaam on September 7, 2006. Tanzania also supports the Lusaka agreement concerning the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In March 1996, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya revived discussion of economic and regional cooperation. These talks culminated with the signing of an East African Cooperation Treaty in September 1999; a treaty establishing a Customs Union was signed in March 2004. The Customs Union went into effect January 1, 2005 and, in time, should lead to complete economic integration. On July 1, 2007 Rwanda and Burundi joined the EAC and the Customs Union as full members. Tanzania is the only country in East Africa which also is a member of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). In January 2005, Tanzania became a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, serving a two-year term that ended on December 31, 2006. In February 2008, President Kikwete was selected to chair the African Union for a one-year term.

U.S.-TANZANIAN RELATIONS

The U.S. has historically enjoyed very good relations with Tanzania. The relationship became closer after terrorists bombed the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam on August 7, 1998. With the election of President Kikwete, the relationship has blossomed into warmer relations than at any time since Tanzania achieved independence. In February 2008, President Bush made an official four-day visit to Tanzania. President Kikwete, who has visited the U.S. repeatedly, made a reciprocal official visit to Washington in August 2008.

The U.S. Government provides assistance to Tanzania to support programs in the areas of peace and security, democracy, health, education, economic growth, and natural resource management. Tanzania is a major recipient of funding for the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI). In September 2008, Tanzania's $698 million Millennium Challenge Compact entered into force. The Peace Corps program, revitalized in 1979, provides assistance in education through the provision of teachers. Peace Corps also is assisting in health and environment sectors. Currently, about 147 volunteers are serving in Tanzania.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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AMB OMS:	Chad Weininger
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FM:	Richard McManaway
MGT:	Tuli Mushingi
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CON:	Robert Hannan
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PAO: Jeffery Salaiz
COM: Randall Robinson
GSO: Michael Davids
RSO: Vacant
AFSA: Lauren Bradley
AGR: Kevin Smith (Nrb)
AID: Pamela White
DAO: Ltc. Tim Mitchell
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ICASS Chair: Steve Cowper
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 4, 2008

Country Description: Tanzania is a developing East African nation noted for both its history of stability and its astounding natural beauty. A robust tourist industry provides all levels of tourist amenities, although higher-end facilities are concentrated mainly in the cities and selected game parks. The United Republic of Tanzania was formed in 1964 with the union of the mainland country of Tanganyika and the Zanzibar archipelago, which comprises the islands of Unguja and Pemba. Unguja is the much larger and more populous of the two islands and it is commonly referred to as Zanzibar, as is its main city, Stonetown.

Zanzibar enjoys an autonomous status in many areas of governance and has a separate legal system from the mainland. The legislative capital of Tanzania is Dodoma. The U.S. Embassy is in Tanzania's largest city, Dar es Salaam, the location of most government offices, and the commercial center of the country.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required for travel to Tanzania. U.S. citizens with valid passports may obtain a visa either before arriving in Tanzania or at any port of entry staffed by immigration officials. The current fee for a visa has recently risen to $100 for a 12-month multiple-entry tourist visa to reciprocate the fee the United States charges visa applicants. This could rise again as the U.S. application fee rises. Some border posts and embassies may have technical difficulty in producing the 12-month visa. They may make hand-written annotations on the computer printed visa. U.S. passports should be valid for a minimum of six months beyond the date the visa is obtained, whether it is acquired beforehand or at the port of entry. Also, foreigners are required to show their passports when entering or exiting Zanzibar.

The web site of the Embassy of Tanzania in Washington, DC states that yellow fever vaccination is required only for persons from, or those who have visited yellow fever endemic countries.

Tanzanian law is very strict on visa categories. A recurring problem encountered by Americans is that volunteer activity—even if the traveler is paying for the volunteer opportunity—is prohibited on a tourist visa. Americans who are traveling to Tanzania for short or long term volunteer projects should review their status with the sponsoring organization before entering the country.

Travelers are reminded to safeguard their U.S. passports while in Tanzania. Passport loss can lead to delays in departing the country and can cause disruption of travel. Tanzanian authorities require that travelers who are not in possession of the visa and entry stamps obtained upon admission to Tanzania visit the immigration office prior to departure to regularize their status. Persons attempting to depart the country without proper documentation may be subject to fines or delays in departure. Visit the Embassy of Tanzania's web site at http://www.tanzaniaembassy-us.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Terrorist incidents in the recent past highlight the continuing threat posed by terrorism in East Africa and the capacity of terrorist groups to carry out such attacks. On August 7, 1998, terrorists bombed the U.S. Embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, Kenya. On November 28, 2002, terrorists bombed a hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, approximately 50 miles north of the Kenya-Tanzania border, and unsuccessfully attempted to shoot down an Israeli charter plane departing Mombassa Airport. U.S. citizens should be aware of the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets including usual gathering places of tourists and Westerners. At all times, travelers should maintain a high level of security vigilance. They should avoid political rallies and related public gatherings. In the past, peaceful demonstrations have turned violent with little or no warning as riot police clashed with demonstrators.

The population in Zanzibar is majority Muslim and holds traditional values. Some Zanzibar newspapers have warned that women who dress immodestly may be subject to harassment. American citizens are advised to dress modestly and to refrain from intemperate public behavior. As in Dar es Salaam, Americans in Zanzibar should also avoid political rallies and related public gatherings. The potential for political related violence should not be overlooked.

The area near Tanzania's borders with Rwanda and Burundi has been the site of minor military clashes, and refugee flows across the borders into Tanzania continue. There have been a number of incidents of criminal and violent activity in the region. Travelers to this area should exercise caution. U.S. officials, in keeping with UN security procedures, request police escorts on parts of the Rusomo to Kahama road near the Rwandan border because of an increase in armed bandit attacks.

Inter-city transportation routes between major destinations such as Arusha and Dar es Salaam are serviced by a variety of carriers that offer differing levels of safety and comfort. U.S. citizens who travel by bus are urged to select carriers who use modern equipment and to avoid utilizing vehicles that are in obvious disrepair. Americans on long-haul bus routes in Tanzania have been victims of "druggings" in which drug-laced food and drink are used to

sedate unsuspecting passengers so their belongings can be stolen easily. Travelers are cautioned not to accept food or beverages from fellow passengers.

In-town transportation is best accomplished using taxis or hired drivers from a reputable source. Travelers should be wary of using the ubiquitous microbuses (dala-dalas), which are frequently overcrowded, poorly maintained, a common site of petty theft, and whose operation is generally unsafe.

A continuing concern is Tourè Drive on Msasani Peninsula in Dar es Salaam. It is the beach front road leading from the Sea Cliff Hotel into town and provides an inviting view of the ocean. However, there are regular reports of daytime muggings, pickpocketing, and theft from cars. This road continues to be an area of concern any time of day, on foot, or in vehicles. US government personnel are expressly advised to avoid walking or running along Tourè Drive.

Crime: Crime is a serious problem in Tanzania, and visitors should be alert and cautious. Street crime in Dar es Salaam is common and includes mugging, vehicle theft, "smash and grab" attacks on vehicles, armed robbery, and burglary. Thieves and pickpockets on buses and trains steal from inattentive passengers.

Crime involving firearms is becoming more common. A series of robberies involving increasing levels of violence has occurred along the coast and on Zanzibar. Robbers have held up tour buses and dive boats at gunpoint. In July 2004, a group of volunteer conservation workers was attacked on Pemba Island. Two of the group suffered gunshot wounds. In the spring of 2008, there were a string of armed robberies in hotels along the east coast of Ungunja (the main island) in Zanzibar.

Pedestrians on beaches and footpaths, both in isolated areas and in popular tourist venues, are often targeted for robbery or assault. This is especially true on Zanzibar and in Dar es Salaam and its environs. Visitors should limit the amount of cash they carry and leave valuables, such as passports, jewelry and airline tickets, in a hotel safe or other secure place. Cameras are highly coveted by thieves, and should be guarded carefully. Because of the potential for fraud, credit cards should only be used in reputable tourist hotels. Sexual assaults involving tourists are also an increasing concern. Travelers are warned to avoid walking alone after dark. Relations between consenting adults of the same sex are still illegal in Tanzania although no one has been prosecuted in reportedly decades. Any public displays of affection are disapproved of by Tanzanian society. Public displays of affection between persons of the same sex could result in violence.

Travelers should contract only with legitimate tour guides, preferably arranged by a known travel agency or hotel. The Embassy has received reports of female tourists being maneuvered into unsafe situations by gregarious men offering to show them certain sights or locales. When alone with the women, the men made sexual advances that escalated to assaults. Travelers are advised to be wary of "spontaneous" offers of sightseeing and to avoid being alone with "friendly" strangers who propose special, customized sightseeing trips.

In Arusha, the high number of foreign tourists attracts pickpockets and bag snatchers. Occasionally, these crimes escalate into violence. Travelers are strongly encouraged not to walk around at dusk or later, and to avoid the section of Arusha on the far side of the Themi River at all times on foot. Long time residents say that crime in Arusha peaks around the December-January holiday season. Travelers should be even more vigilant during these months.

Americans residing in Arusha report a steady increase in crimes targeting the homes of expatriates living in the region. These armed home invasions usually involve some violence and some victims have received serious injuries. Americans choosing to reside in the area should ensure that their homes have a safe haven—a secure area with reinforced barriers into which inhabitants can retreat and remain safe if the intruders come into the home. Residents in Arusha strongly recommend retaining a professional security company with 24-hour guards and roving patrols.

In northern Tanzania, there have been incidents of armed, violent robberies of Americans. While very frightening, the number of these attacks is small and the majority of American tourists enjoy Tanzania in peace. Travelers are always urged to practice common sense security and remain vigilant of their surroundings. If a situation does not seem right, travelers should follow their instincts and leave the scene.

Carjacking has occurred in both rural and urban areas. Visitors are advised to drive with doors locked and windows rolled up. Travelers are urged not to stop between populated areas and to travel in convoys if possible.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are limited and medicines are sometimes unavailable, even in Dar es Salaam. There are hospitals on Zanzibar that can treat minor ailments. For any major medical problems, including dental work, travelers should consider obtaining medical treatment in Nairobi or South Africa where more advanced medical care is available.

Cholera is prevalent in many areas of Tanzania, and several strains of malaria are endemic. Malaria suppressants are advised, and travelers are strongly advised to carry malaria suppressants with them. Visitors should consult their physicians before traveling to learn about prophylaxis and the possible side effects of various available medications.

In addition, other personal protective measures, such as the use of insect repellents, help to reduce malaria risk. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what anti-malarial medications they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, protection from insect bites, and anti-malarial drugs, please visit the CDC travel health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Tanzania. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Tap water in Tanzania is unsafe to drink. Travelers are strongly urged to use bottled water for drinking and food preparation.

The HIV infection rate in the population is around seven percent. The infection is even more prevalent among prostitutes and their clients. Travelers should be aware of the related health and legal risks.

East African Trypanosomiasis (Sleeping sickness) is carried by the tse-tse fly, which is endemic to the northern safari circuit of Tanzania. The disease itself is very rare but present. Travelers are advised to use normal precautions to avoid insect bites. Prompt diagnosis and treatment are essential if there is an infection. If symptoms appear, even months later, health care practitioners should be told of the visit to East Africa and the possibility of exposure.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Tanzania is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Road and traffic conditions in Tanzania differ markedly from those found in the United States and present hazards that require drivers to exercise continual alertness and caution.

Traffic in Tanzania moves on the left. Drivers and pedestrians alike must maintain vigilance, looking both ways before turning or crossing a road.

Drivers are advised against nighttime travel. Roadways are often not marked and many lack both streetlights and shoulders. Pedestrians, cyclists, and animals are often encountered on unlit roads after dark, as are slow-moving trucks and cars traveling without lights. Carjacking and other related crimes are more common during the nighttime hours. Traveling in rural areas after dark is strongly discouraged.

Although a number of inter-city highways are periodically repaved and maintained, maintenance schedules are erratic and even good roads may deteriorate precipitously in periods of inclement weather. During the rainy season (late March to mid-June), many roads in Tanzania, both urban and rural, are passable only with four-wheel-drive vehicles.

In urban areas, it is common to find main arterial roads paved and maintained, while secondary streets are severely rutted and passable only with high-clearance vehicles. Traffic lights are often out of order, and care should be exercised at any traffic intersection, whether controlled or not, as many drivers disregard signals.

Excessive speed, unpredictable driving habits, and the lack of basic safety equipment on many vehicles pose serious traffic hazards.

Tanzanian law requires all motor vehicle operators to be in possession of a valid driver's license. Persons staying in Tanzania for six months or less may use a valid U.S. driver's license after validation by local traffic authorities, or an international driver's license. Persons intending to remain in Tanzania for more than six months are required to obtain a Tanzanian driver's license. All vehicles are required to carry third-party liability insurance.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Tanzania, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Tanzania's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Every year, thousands of Americans have a truly awe-inspiring experience in Tanzania enjoying its natural wonders. However, these activities do have inherent risks. A handful of tourists are mauled or killed by wild

animals. Climbers are injured or killed in rockslides or succumb to altitude sickness or hypothermia. Safaris and mountain expeditions in general require sustained physical exertion and can aggravate existing chronic health problems. In past years, Americans have died while on safari in accidents or from natural causes related to the exertion of the trip or environmental factors. Most tour operators offer structured, safe excursions into parks, the mountains, and other wildlife areas. Travelers must also play a responsible role in maintaining their safety. Travelers are reminded to maintain a safe distance from animals and to remain in vehicles or other protected enclosures when venturing into game parks. Persons with chronic health problems should weigh the risks before joining an extended trip in the African wilderness. Climbers should familiarize themselves with the signs of altitude sickness and heed the advice of the professionals organizing the ascents.

U.S. citizens should carry a copy of their U.S. passport with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, they have readily available proof of identity and U.S. citizenship. Travelers and U.S. citizens resident in Tanzania are strongly urged to maintain legal immigration status while in Tanzania to avoid difficulties with local immigration authorities. U.S. citizens who are arrested or detained have the right to have the U.S. Embassy notified of their situation and should request that notification be made.

Credit cards may be used at some major hotels, but are not widely accepted in Tanzania. In the larger urban areas, ATM machines are usually available at major banks. Travelers are advised to check with their home banking institution regarding international ATM use. Travelers should bring sufficient cash or traveler's checks for their trip if they will be spending time outside of the large cities.

Photography of military installations is forbidden. Individuals have been detained and/or had their cameras and film confiscated for taking pictures of hospitals, schools, bridges, industrial sites, and airports. Installations that are prohibited from being photographed are not always marked.

There have been several recent cases of American businesspersons who have fallen victim to scams involving the sale of copper and other resources at cut-rate prices. Potential buyers are urged to be very cautious of good deals offered by agents based in Tanzania. Such precautions as using an escrow account arranged by an attorney outside of Tanzania should be considered.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Tanzanian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Tanzania are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Tanzania are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Tanzania. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 686 Old Bagamoyo Road, Msasani, Dar es Salaam. The telephone number is [255] (22)266 8001. The direct extension for the Consular Section is x4122. After hours, the Embassy Duty Officer can be reached through the main embassy number. The Consular Section fax number is [255] (22) 266 8274. The email address for American Citizen Services is drsacs@state.gov. The Embassy web site is http://tanzania.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

October 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
Department of Social Welfare
Regional C.C.M Building, Lumumba Street
P.O. Box 1949
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Telephone: (+255) 22-218-4281

Eligibility Requirements For Adoptive Parent(s): Under Tanzanian law, an unmarried person must be at least 25 years of age and be at least 21 years older than the child. A single male cannot adopt a female child except by court order which is granted only under exceptional circumstances.

Residency Requirements: In order to adopt a child in Tanzania, the American citizen or citizens must be residents of Tanzania. The Tanzanian Department of Social Welfare considers a person to be resident if that person holds a Resident Permit (Class A, B or C) a Dependent's Pass or an Exemption Permit and lives in Tanzania. This requirement is never waived.

Time Frame: Adoptions may take up to 18 months in Tanzania.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Upon inquiry, the Department of Social Welfare will provide a list of participating adoption agencies and attorneys to adopting parents.

Department of Social Welfare
Regional C.C.M Building, Lumumba Street
P.O. Box 1949
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Telephone: (+255) 22-218-4281

Adoption Fees: The Government of Tanzania does not charge a fee for adoption but legal fees can be between $800 and $1,500.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents contact the District Social Welfare Office for an application form for a child for foster care. Prospective adoptive parents must arrange with the District Social Welfare Officer to begin the homestudy process. The homestudy will consist of at least four interviews with the family, including at least one visit to the family's home. The homestudy will evaluate the prospective adoptive parents' physical, mental and emotional health as well as financial and marital (in the case of married couples) stability.

The District Social Welfare Officer will send the foster care application, homestudy and other relevant supporting documents to the Commissioner for Social Welfare for approval. When the foster care application has been approved by the Commissioner for Social Welfare, the District Social Welfare Officer will identify children who are eligible for adoption and who meet the criteria of the prospective adoptive parents. Once a child has been identified and accepted by the prospective adoptive parents, the District Social Welfare Officer will place the identified child with the prospective adoptive parents for a foster care period of not less than three months. After the foster care period, the prospective adoptive parents will meet with the District Social Welfare Officer to discuss whether they wish to adopt the child and whether the District Social Welfare Officer intends to approve an application by the prospective parents to adopt. Provided that the District Social Welfare Officer approves the adoption, the District Social Welfare Officer will submit a report and recommendation to the Commissioner of Social Welfare.

If they have not already done so, prospective adoptive parents retain Tanzanian attorney experienced in adoption procedures. The Law Society of Tanganyika should be able to recommend an attorney or a firm of attorneys to the prospective adoptive parents. Also, the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam maintains a list of attorneys that adoptive parents may consult.

The prospective adoptive parent's attorney will assist them in filing a petition to legally adopt their foster child and obtain a court order from the High Court. Close contact should be maintained with the Social Welfare Department during this period, as that agency will submit a report to the Court in its capacity as the court-appointed Guardian ad Litem of the child.

In addition to the High Court Adoption Order, the prospective adoptive parent's attorney should also assist you in obtaining an Adoption Certificate for the adopted child. All children will need a valid passport issued by their country of origin.

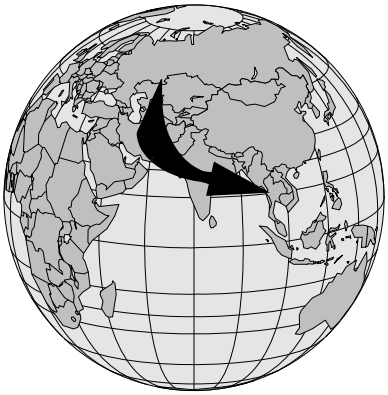
Required Documents: No specific documents are required, although it may be prudent to carry documents relating to identity, marital status, family status and financial means. Passports must include valid residency permits.

Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania
2139 R Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
Tel: (202) 939-6125
Fax: (292) 797-7408

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult the Department of Homeland Security's, United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.* Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States of America
686 Old Bagamoyo Road
Msasani, P.O. Box 9123
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
Email: drsacs@state.gov
Website:
http://tanzania.usembassy.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Tanzania may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



THAILAND

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Thailand

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 513,115 sq. km. (198,114 sq. mi.); equivalent to the size of France, or slightly smaller than Texas.
Cities: Capital—Bangkok (population 9,668,854); Nakhon Ratchasima (pop. 437,386 for Muang district and 2,565,685 for the whole province), Chiang Mai (pop. 247,672 for Muang district and 1,595,855 for the whole province).
Terrain: Densely populated central plain; northeastern plateau; mountain range in the west; southern isthmus joins the land mass with Malaysia.
Climate: Tropical monsoon.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Thai.
Population: (2006) 65.28 million. (Data based on Bank of Thailand.)
Work force: (2006) 36.43 million.
Annual population growth rate: (2006 est.) 0.3%.
Ethnic groups: Thai 89%, other 11%.
Religions: Buddhist 94-95%, Muslim 4-5%, Christian, Hindu, Brahmin, other.
Languages: Thai (official language); English is the second language of the elite; regional dialects.
Education: Years compulsory—12. Literacy—94.9% male, 90.5% female.
Health: (2006 est.) Infant mortality rate—19.5/1,000. Life expectancy—68 years male, 75 years female.

Government

Type: Thailand remains a constitutional monarchy. Prime Minister, Cabinet, and National Legislative Assembly were appointed by the leaders of a September 19, 2006 coup d'etat. Military leaders constitute a Council for National Security. The current structure will remain in place until a democratically elected government takes office.
Constitution: Thailand adopted its current constitution following an August 19, 2007 referendum.
Independence: Never colonized; traditional founding date 1238.
Government branches: Executive—King (chief of state), Prime Minister (head of government). Legislative—National Assembly (unicameral, appointed by the military leadership). Judicial—composed of the Constitutional Tribunal, the Courts of Justice, and the Administrative Courts.
Political subdivisions: 76 provinces, including Bangkok municipality, subdivided into 877 districts, 7,255 tambon administration, and 74,944 villages.
Political parties: Multi-party system; Communist Party is prohibited.
Suffrage: Universal and compulsory at 18 years of age.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $246 billion.
Annual GDP growth rate: (2007) 4.8%.
Per capita income: (2007) $3,737.
Unemployment rate: (2007) 1.5% of total labor force.
Natural resources: Tin, rubber, natural gas, tungsten, tantalum, timber, lead, fish, gypsum, lignite, fluorite.
Agriculture: (8.9% of GDP) Products—rice, tapioca, rubber, corn, sugarcane, coconuts, soybeans.
Industry: Types—tourism, textiles, garments, agricultural processing, cement, integrated circuits, jewelry, electronics, and auto assembly.
Trade: (2007) Merchandise exports—$152.5 billion. Products—automatic data processing machines and parts, automobiles and parts, precious stones and jewelry, refined fuels, rubber, electronic integrated circuits, polymers of ethylene and propylene, rice, iron and steel and their products, rubber products, chemical products. Major markets—ASEAN, EU, U.S., Japan, China, and Singapore. Merchandise imports—$140.0 billion. Products—crude oil, machinery and parts, electrical machinery and parts, chemicals, iron and steel and their products, electrical circuits panels, computers and

parts, other metal ores and metal waste scrap, ships and boats and floating structure, jewelry including silver and gold. Major suppliers—Japan, ASEAN, China, EU, U.S. and Malaysia.

PEOPLE

Thailand's population is relatively homogeneous. More than 85% speak a dialect of Thai and share a common culture. This core population includes the central Thai (33.7% of the population, including Bangkok), Northeastern Thai (34.2%), northern Thai (18.8%), and southern Thai (13.3%).

The language of the central Thai population is the language taught in schools and used in government. Several other small Thai-speaking groups include the Shan, Lue, and Phutai.

Up to 12% of Thai are of significant Chinese heritage, but the Sino-Thai community is the best integrated in Southeast Asia. Malay-speaking Muslims of the south comprise another significant minority group (2.3%). Other groups include the Khmer; the Mon, who are substantially assimilated with the Thai; and the Vietnamese. Smaller mountain-dwelling tribes, such as the Hmong and Mein, as well as the Karen, number about 788,024.

The population is mostly rural, concentrated in the rice-growing areas of the central, northeastern, and northern regions. However, as Thailand continues to industrialize, its urban population—31.6% of total population, principally in the Bangkok area—is growing.

Thailand's highly successful government-sponsored family planning program has resulted in a dramatic decline in population growth from 3.1% in 1960 to less than 1% today. Life expectancy also has risen, a positive reflection of Thailand's efforts at public health education. However, the AIDS epidemic has had a major impact on the Thai population. Today, over 500,000 Thais live with HIV or AIDS—approximately 1.4% of the adult population. Each year, 25-30,000 Thais die from AIDS-related causes. Ninety percent of them are aged 20-49, the most productive sector of the workforce. The situation could have been worse; an aggressive public education campaign in the early 1990s reduced the number of new HIV infections from over 100,000 annually to around 15,000 annually now.

The constitution mandates 12 years of free education, however, this is not provided universally. Education accounts for 18.0% of total government expenditures.

Theravada Buddhism is the major religion of Thailand and is the religion of about 95% of its people. The government permits religious diversity, and other major religions are represented. Spirit worship and animism are widely practiced.

HISTORY

Southeast Asia has been inhabited for more than half a million years. Archaeological studies suggest that by 4000 BC, communities in what is now Thailand had emerged as centers of early bronze metallurgy. This development, along with the cultivation of wet rice, provided the impetus for social and political organization. Research suggests that these innovations may actually have been transmitted from there to the rest of Asia, including to China.

The Thai are related linguistically to Tai groups originating in southern China. Migrations from southern China to Southeast Asia may have occurred in the 6th and 7th centuries. Malay, Mon, and Khmer civilizations flourished in the region prior to the arrival of the ethnic Tai.

Thais date the founding of their nation to the 13th century. According to tradition, in 1238, Thai chieftains overthrew their Khmer overlords at Sukhothai and established a Thai kingdom. After its decline, a new Thai kingdom emerged in 1350 on the Chao Praya River. At the same time, there was an equally important Tai kingdom of Lanna, centered in Chiang Mai, which rivaled Sukhothai and Ayutthaya for centuries, and which defines northern Thai identity to this day.

The first ruler of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya, King Rama Thibodi, made two important contributions to Thai history: the establishment and promotion of Theravada Buddhism as the official religion—to differentiate his kingdom from the neighboring Hindu kingdom of Angkor—and the compilation of the Dharmashastra, a legal code based on Hindu sources and traditional Thai custom. The Dharmashastra remained a tool of Thai law until late in the 19th century. Beginning with the Portuguese in the 16th century, Ayutthaya had some contact with the West, but until the 1800s, its relations with neighboring kingdoms and principalities, as well as with China, were of primary importance.

After more than 400 years of power, in 1767, the Kingdom of Ayutthaya was brought down by invading Burmese armies and its capital burned. After a single-reign capital established at Thonburi by Taksin, a new capital city was founded in 1782, across the Chao Phraya at the site of present-day Bangkok, by the founder of the Chakri dynasty. The first Chakri king was crowned Rama I. Rama I's heirs became increasingly concerned with the threat of European colonialism after British victories in neighboring Burma in 1826.

The first Thai recognition of Western power in the region was the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United Kingdom in 1826. In 1833, the United States began diplomatic exchanges with Siam, as Thailand was called until 1938. However, it was during the later reigns of Rama IV (or King Mongkut, 1851-68), and his son Rama V (King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), that Thailand established firm rapprochement with Western powers. The Thais believe that the diplomatic skills of these monarchs, combined with the modernizing reforms of the Thai



Government, made Siam the only country in South and Southeast Asia to avoid European colonization.

In 1932, a bloodless coup transformed the Government of Thailand from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) initially accepted this change but later surrendered the kingship to his 10-year-old nephew. Upon his abdication, King Prajadhipok said that the obligation of a ruler was to reign for the good of the whole people, not for a select few.

Although nominally a constitutional monarchy after 1932, Thailand was ruled by a series of military governments interspersed with brief periods of democracy. Following the 1932 revolution that imposed constitutional limits on the monarchy, Thai politics was dominated for a half-century by a military and bureaucratic elite.

Changes of government were effected primarily by means of a long series of mostly bloodless coups. Thailand was occupied by the Japanese during the Second World War until Japan's defeat in 1945.

Beginning with a brief experiment in democracy during the mid-1970s, civilian democratic political institutions slowly gained greater authority, culminating in 1988 when Chatichai Choonavan—leader of the Thai Nation Party—assumed office as the country's first democratically elected Prime Minister in more than a decade. Three years later, yet another bloodless coup ended his term.

Shortly afterward, the military appointed Anand Panyarachun, a businessman and former diplomat, to head a largely civilian interim government and promised to hold elections in the near future.

However, following inconclusive elections, former army commander Suchinda Kraprayoon was appointed Prime Minister. Thais reacted to the appointment by demanding an end to military influence in government. Demonstrations were violently suppressed by the military; in May 1992, soldiers killed at least 50 protesters.

Domestic and international reaction to the violence forced Suchinda to resign, and the nation once again turned to Anand Panyarachun, who was named interim Prime Minister until new elections in September 1992. In those elections, the political parties that had opposed the military in May 1992 won by a narrow majority, and Chuan Leekpai, a leader of the Democratic Party, became Prime Minister. Chuan dissolved Parliament in May 1995, and the Thai Nation Party won the largest number of parliamentary seats in subsequent elections. Party leader Banharn Silpa-Archa became Prime Minister but held the office only little more than a year. Following elections held in November 1996, Chavalit Youngchaiyudh formed a coalition government and became Prime Minister. The onset of the Asian financial crisis caused a loss of confidence in the Chavalit government and forced him to hand over power to Chuan Leekpai in November 1997. Chuan formed a coalition government based on the themes of prudent economic management and institution of political reforms mandated by Thailand's 1997 constitution.

In January 2001, telecommunications multimillionaire Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party won a decisive victory on a populist platform of economic growth and development. In the February 2005 elections, Thaksin was re-elected by an even greater majority, sweeping 377 out of 500 parliamentary seats. Soon after Prime Minister Thaksin's second term began, allegations of corruption emerged against his government. Peaceful anti-government mass demonstrations grew, and thousands marched in the streets to demand Thaksin's resignation. Prime Minister Thaksin dissolved the Parliament in February 2006 and declared snap elections in April. The main opposition parties boycotted the polls, and the judiciary subsequently annulled the elections.

Before new elections could be held, on September 19, 2006 in a non-violent coup d'etat, a group of top military officers overthrew the caretaker administration of Thaksin Shinawatra, repealed the constitution, and abolished both houses of Parliament. Soon thereafter, the coup leaders promulgated an interim constitution and appointed Surayud Chulanont as interim Prime Minister. In a national referendum on August 19, 2007, a majority of Thai voters approved a new constitution drafted by an assembly appointed by the coup leaders. The interim government held multi-party elections under provisions of the new constitution on December 23, 2007, which resulted in the People's Power Party (PPP) winning a plurality of 233 of the 480 seats in the lower house of Parliament. PPP leader Samak Sundaravej formed a coalition government and formally took office as Prime Minister on February 6, 2008.

Thailand's southern border provinces have long been host to a secessionist movement. Since 2004, violent ethnic Malay separatists have conducted an insurgency in the provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, and Songkhla against symbols and representatives of government authority, as well as against civilians, which has resulted in hundreds of deaths.

Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, Thailand has had very close relations with the United States. Threatened by communist revolutions in neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, Thailand actively sought U.S. assistance to contain communist expansion in the region. Thailand also has been an active member in multilateral organizations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. From 1992 and until the 2006 coup, the country was considered a functioning democracy with constitutional changes of government. Generally free and fair multi-party elections held in December 2007 subsequently restored democratic governance. The King has been given little direct power under Thailand's constitutions but is a symbol of national identity and unity. King Bhumibol (Rama IX)—who has been on the throne since 1946—commands enormous popular respect and moral authority, which he has used on occasion to resolve political crises that have threatened national stability.

Under the 2007 constitution, the National Assembly consists of two chambers—the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate is a non-partisan body with 150 members, 76 of whom are directly elected (one per province). The remaining 74 are appointed by a panel comprised of judges and senior independent officials from a list of candidates compiled by the Election Commission. The House has 480 members, 400 of whom are directly elected from constituent districts and the remainder drawn proportionally from party lists.

Thailand's legal system blends principles of traditional Thai and Western laws. Under the constitution, the Constitutional Court is the highest court of appeals, though its jurisdiction is limited to clearly defined constitutional issues. Its members are nominated by a committee of judges, leaders in Parliament, and senior independent officials, whose nominees are confirmed by the Senate and appointed by the King. The Courts of Justice have jurisdiction over criminal and civil cases and are organized in three tiers: Courts of First Instance, the Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court of Justice. Administrative courts have jurisdiction over suits between private parties and the government, and cases in which one government entity is suing another. In Thailand's southern border provinces, where Muslims constitute the majority of the population, Provincial Islamic Committees have limited jurisdiction over probate, family, marriage, and divorce cases.

Thailand's 76 provinces include the metropolis of greater Bangkok.

Bangkok's governor is popularly elected, but those of the remaining provinces are career civil servants appointed by the Ministry of Interior.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Thai officials are addressed by the first element in their names.

King: **PHUMIPHON Adunyadet**
Prime Min.: **SOMCHAI Wongsawat**
Dep. Prime Min.: **CHAWALIT Yongchaiyut**
Dep. Prime Min.: **CHAWARAT Chanweerakun**
Dep. Prime Min.: **OLARN Chaipravat**
Dep. Prime Min.: **SANAN Kachornprasat**
Dep. Prime Min.: **SOMPONG Amornwiwat**
Min. to the Prime Min.'s Office: **SUKHUMPONG Ngonkham**
Min. to the Prime Min.'s Office: **SUPON Fong-ngam**
Min. of Agriculture & Cooperatives: **SOMSAK Prisnananthakun**
Min. of Commerce: **CHAIYA Sasomsab**
Min. of Culture: **WORAWAT Ua-apinyakun**
Min. of Defense: **SOMCHAI Wongsawat**
Min. of Education: **SRIMUANG Charoensiri**
Min. of Energy: **WANNARAT Charnnukun**
Min. of Finance: **SUCHAT Thadathamrongwet**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **SOMPONG Amornwiwat**
Min. of Industry: **PRACHA Promnok**
Min. of Information & Communications Technology: **MAN Patanothai**
Min. of Interior: **KOWIT Wattana**
Min. of Justice: **SOMSAK Kiatsuranon**
Min. of Labor: **URAIWAN Thienthong**
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment: **ANONGWAN Thepsuthin**
Min. of Public Health: **CHALERM Yubamrung**
Min. of Science & Technology: **WUTTHIPONG Chaisaeng**
Min. of Social Development & Human Security: **UDOMDET Rattanasathien**
Min. of Tourism & Sports: **WEERASAK Kowsurat**
Min. of Transport: **SANTI Promphan**
Governor, Bank of Thailand: **THARISA Watthanaket**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **DON Pramudwinai**

Thailand maintains an embassy in the United States at 1024 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington DC 20007 (tel. 202-944-3600). Consulates are located in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

ECONOMY

The Thai economy is export-dependent, with exports of goods and services accounting for over 70% of GDP in 2007. Thailand's recovery from the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis relied largely on external demand from the United States and other foreign markets. From 2001-2006, the administration of former Prime Minister Thaksin embraced a "dual track" economic policy that combined domestic stimulus programs with Thailand's traditional promotion of open markets and foreign investment. Real GDP growth strengthened sharply from 2.2% in 2001 to 7.1% in 2003 and 6.3% in 2004. In 2005-2007, economic expansion moderated, averaging 4.5% to 5.0% real GDP growth, due to domestic political uncertainty, rising violence in Thailand's four southernmost provinces, and repercussions from the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. Thailand's economy in 2007 relied heavily on resilient export growth (at an 18.6% annual rate), particularly in the automobile, petrochemicals, and electronics sectors.

Before the 1997 financial crisis, the Thai economy had years of manufacturing-led economic growth—averaging 9.4% for the decade up to 1996. Relatively abundant and inexpensive labor and natural resources, fiscal conservatism, open foreign investment policies, and encouragement of the private sector underlay the economic success in the years up to 1997. The economy is essentially a free-enterprise system. Certain services—such as power generation, transportation, and communications—are state-owned and operated, but the government is considering privatizing them in the wake of the financial crisis. The timetable for privatization of some state-owned enterprises, however, has slipped due to resistance from labor unions and parts of civil society. Despite the resistance, some firms were successfully privatized, such as Airports of Thailand (renamed from Airport Authority of Thailand), PTT Public Company Limited (renamed from the Petroleum Authority of Thailand), and MCOT (renamed from Mass Communication Authority of Thailand).

The Royal Thai Government welcomes foreign investment, and investors who are willing to meet certain requirements can apply for special investment privileges through the Board of Investment. To attract additional foreign investment, the government has modified its investment regulations. In a reaction to former Prime Minister Thaksin's 2006 sale of his telecommunications company to foreign investors, the interim Thai government introduced amendments to the Foreign Business Act in 2007 which would have further restricted non-Thais from owning or controlling businesses operating in the Thai services sector. The National Assembly did not complete consideration of the amendments before its session concluded at the end of 2007. However, the new government has stated its intention to liberalize the act rather than strengthen the restrictions.

The organized labor movement remains weak and divided in Thailand; less than 2% of the work force is unionized. In 2000, the State Enterprise Labor Relations Act (SELRA) was passed, giving public sector employees similar rights to those of private sector workers, including the right to unionize.

Roughly 40% of Thailand's labor force is employed in agriculture (data based on Bank of Thailand.) Rice is the country's most important crop; Thailand is the largest exporter in the world rice market. Other agricultural commodities produced in significant amounts include fish and fishery products, tapioca, rubber, corn, and sugar. Exports of processed foods such as canned tuna, canned pineapples, and frozen shrimp are on the rise.

Thailand's increasingly diversified manufacturing sector is the largest contributor to growth. Industries reg-

istering rapid increases in production included computers and electronics, furniture, wood products, canned food, toys, plastic products, gems, and jewelry. High-technology products such as integrated circuits and parts, hard disc drives, electrical appliances, vehicles, and vehicle parts are now leading Thailand's strong growth in exports. The appreciation of the Thai baht to the U.S. dollar relative to other regional currencies during the 2006-2007 period has dampened some of Thailand's exports, and export sector margins have been affected. To help arrest baht appreciation, the Bank of Thailand applied controls on the import of capital into the country in December 2006. Nevertheless, the baht continued to appreciate.

The United States is Thailand's largest export market and third-largest supplier after Japan and China. While Thailand's traditional major markets have been North America, Japan, and Europe, economic recovery among Thailand's regional trading partners has helped Thai export growth (21.6% in 2004, 15.0% in 2005, 17.4% in 2006, and 18.6% in 2007). Export growth has been highest in some of Thailand's non-traditional export markets including India, China, and the Middle East. Due to domestic political uncertainty and concern about government's economic policies, Thai domestic demand and private investment were flat from early 2006 through late 2007.

Machinery and parts, vehicles, electronic integrated circuits, chemicals, crude oil and fuels, and iron and steel are among Thailand's principal imports. The moderation in import levels (7.0% increase in 2006 versus 26.0% in 2005) reflects the low confidence of both consumers and investors.

Thailand is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Cairns Group of agricultural exporters. Tourism contributes significantly to the Thai economy (about 6%). Tourist arrivals, which declined in 2005 due to the tsunami catastrophe, recovered strongly in 2006.

Bangkok and its environs are the most prosperous part of Thailand, and the barren northeast is the poorest. An overriding concern of successive Thai Governments, and a particularly strong focus of the Thaksin government, has been to reduce these regional income differentials, which have been exacerbated by rapid economic growth in and around Bangkok and the financial crisis. The government has tried to stimulate provincial economic growth with programs such as the Eastern Seaboard project and the development of an alternate deep-sea port on Thailand's southern peninsula. It also is conducting discussions with Malaysia to focus on economic development along the Thai-Malaysian border.

Although the economy has demonstrated moderate positive growth since 1999, future performance depends on continued reform of the financial sector, corporate debt restructuring, attracting foreign investment, and improving domestic investment and consumption to balance past reliance on exports. Telecommunications, transportation networks, and electricity generation showed increasing strain during the period of sustained economic growth and may pose a future challenge. Thailand's growing shortage of engineers and skilled technical personnel may limit its future technological creativity and productivity.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Thailand's foreign policy emphasizes a close and longstanding security relationship with the United States. It also strongly supports ASEAN's efforts to promote economic development, social integration, and stability throughout the region. Thailand will assume the chairmanship of ASEAN in July 2008 and will host the ASEAN Summit (heads of government meeting) in late 2008.

Thailand participates fully in international and regional organizations. It has developed increasingly close ties with other ASEAN members—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Vietnam—whose foreign and economic ministers hold annual meetings. Regional cooperation is progressing in economic, trade, banking, political, and cultural matters.

Thailand continues to take an active role on the international stage. When East Timor gained independence from Indonesia, Thailand, for the first time in its history, contributed troops to the international peacekeeping effort. As part of its effort to increase international ties, Thailand has reached out to such regional organizations as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thailand has contributed troops to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

U.S.-THAI RELATIONS

Since World War II, the United States and Thailand have developed close relations, as reflected in several bilateral treaties and by both countries' participation in UN multilateral activities and agreements. The principal bilateral arrangement is the 1966 Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations, which facilitates U.S. and Thai companies' economic access to one another's markets. Other important agreements address civil uses of atomic energy, sales of agricultural commodities, investment guarantees, and military and economic assistance. In June 2004 the United States and Thailand initiated negotiations on a free trade agreement which, when concluded, will reduce and eliminate barriers to trade and investment between the two countries. These negotiations were placed on hold following the dissolution of the Thai Parliament in February 2006 and the subsequent coup in September.

The United States and Thailand are among the signatories of the 1954 Manila pact of the former Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).

Article IV(1) of this treaty provides that, in the event of armed attack in the treaty area (which includes Thailand), each member would "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." Despite the dissolution of the SEATO in 1977, the Manila pact remains in force and, together with the Thanat-Rusk communiqué of 1962, constitutes the basis of U.S. security commitments to Thailand. Thailand continues to be a key security ally in Asia, along with Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea. In December 2003, Thailand was designated a Major Non-NATO Ally.

Thailand's stability and independence are important to the maintenance of peace in the region. Economic assistance has been extended in various fields, including rural development, health, family planning, education, and science and technology. The formal U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program ended in 1995. However, there are a number of targeted assistance programs which continue in areas of mutually defined importance, including: health and HIV/AIDS programming; refugee assistance; and trafficking in persons. The U.S. Peace Corps in Thailand has approximately 100 volunteers, focused on primary education, with an integrated program involving teacher training, health education, and environmental education.

Thailand has received U.S. military equipment, essential supplies, training, and assistance in the construction and improvement of facilities and installations for much of the period since 1950. Over recent decades, U.S. security assistance included military training programs carried out in the United States and elsewhere.

A small U.S. military advisory group in Thailand oversaw the delivery of equipment to the Thai Armed Forces and the training of Thai military personnel in its use and maintenance. Funding for the International Military Education and Training and the Foreign Military Financing programs, along with selected other programs totaling $29 million, was suspended following the September 19, 2006 coup d'etat in Thailand. Funding for these programs resumed after a democratically elected government took office in February 2008. As part of their mutual defense cooperation over the last decade, Thailand and the United States have developed a vigorous joint military exercise program, which engages all the services of each nation and averages 40 joint exercises per year.

Thailand remains a trafficking route for narcotics from the Golden Triangle—the intersection of Burma, Laos, and Thailand—to both the domestic Thai and international markets. The large-scale production and shipment of opium and heroin shipments from Burma of previous years have largely been replaced by widespread smuggling of methamphetamine tablets, although heroin seizures along the border continue to take place with some frequency. The United States and Thailand work closely together and with the United Nations on a broad range of programs to halt illicit drug trafficking and other criminal activity, such as trafficking in persons. The U.S. supports the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok, which provides counter-narcotics and anti-crime capacity-building programs to law enforcement and judicial officials from a number of regional countries.

Trade and Investment

The United States is Thailand's second-largest trading partner after Japan; in 2007 merchandise imports from Thailand totaled $22.6 billion, and merchandise exports totaled $8.4 billion. The U.S., Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and the European Union are among Thailand's largest foreign investors. U.S. investment, concentrated in the petroleum and chemicals, finance, consumer products, and automobile production sectors, is estimated at $23 billion.

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Last Updated: 8/12/08

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CG:	William Bartlett
CON:	William Bartlett
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COM:	Ann Bacher
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RSO:	Larry Salmon
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AGR:	Gary Meyer
AID:	Olivier Carduner
ATO:	Charles Dickens
CLO:	Helen Lynch/Lin Gilliland
DAO:	Col. Stephen E. McKeag
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EEO:	Eric Milstead
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 1, 2008

Country Description: Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. Thailand adopted its current constitution following an August 19, 2007, referendum. Multi-party elections held on December 23, 2007, under the provisions of the new constitution resulted in the People's Power Party (PPP) winning a plurality of the seats in the lower house of Parliament and the formation of a coalition government. Most of the population is Buddhist and ethnically Thai. Standard Thai is the official language of Thailand and is spoken in every province, though many areas also have a local dialect. Most Thais working in the tourist industry and in businesses dealing with foreigners can speak at least rudimentary English. Thailand is a popular travel destination, and tourist facilities and services are available throughout the country. At many tourist attractions, including national parks, foreigners are charged admission fees up to ten times higher than those charged to Thais.

Entry Requirements: U.S. citizen tourists staying for fewer than 30 days do not require a visa, but must possess a passport and may be asked to show an onward/return ticket. Effective October 1, 2006, persons entering Thailand without a visa will be allowed to stay in Thailand for 30 days per visit. The total duration of stay in Thailand for persons who enter Thailand without a visa cannot exceed 90 days during any six-month period, counting from the date of first entry. Travelers must pay a Passenger Service Charge in Thai baht when departing from any of Thailand's international airports.

When a traveler enters the country, Thai Immigration stamps in his or her passport the date on which the traveler's authorized stay in Thailand will expire. Any traveler remaining in Thailand beyond this date without having received an official extension will be assessed an immediate cash fine when departing Thailand. Any foreigner found by police to be out of legal status prior to departure (during a Thai Immigration "sweep" through a guesthouse, for example) will be jailed, fined, and then deported at his or her own expense, and may be barred from reentering Thailand.

In this regard, American citizens should be aware that private "visa extension services," even those advertising in major periodicals or located close to Immigration offices or police stations, are illegal. A number of Americans are arrested at border crossings each year when the visas and entry stamps they have obtained through these illegal services are discovered to be counterfeit.

Thailand's Entry/Exit information is subject to change without notice. For further information on Thailand's entry/exit requirements, contact the Royal Thai Embassy, 1024 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007, telephone (202) 944-3600, or contact the Thai consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles, or New York City. Visit the Embassy of Thailand web site at http://www.thaiembdc.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: The State Department is concerned that there is an increased risk of terrorism in Southeast Asia, including in Thailand. American citizens traveling to Thailand should therefore exercise caution, especially in locations where Westerners congregate, such as clubs, discos, bars, restaurants, hotels, places of worship, schools, outdoor recreation venues, tourist areas, beach resorts, and other places frequented by foreigners. They should remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and avoid crowds and demonstrations. For more information on terrorist threats against Americans worldwide, and steps that U.S. citizens should take as a result of these threats, please see the Worldwide Caution.

On September 30, 2007, a small bomb exploded near the Army headquarters in Bangkok, causing minor injuries to passersby, and on May 6, 2007, a small bomb exploded near the Chitralada Palace. On January 30, 2007, two grenades were fired at the offices of a local newspaper in northern Bangkok and a nearby hotel car park. There were no reports of casualties. On December 31, 2006, a series of bombs exploded at six different locations in Bangkok. The bombs killed three Thai citizens and injured dozens, including six foreign tourists. It remains unclear who is behind the bombings. The Department of State advises all American citizens residing in or traveling to Bangkok to monitor events closely, to avoid any large public gatherings, and to exercise discretion when moving about Bangkok.

The far south of Thailand has been experiencing almost daily incidents of criminally and politically motivated violence, including incidents attributed to armed local separatist/extremist groups. On March 15, 2008, two bombs exploded at the CS Pattani Hotel in Pattani Province in southern Thailand. Two people died and thirteen were injured. A car bomb exploded in Yala Province on the same day, killing the driver. Although the extremist groups have continued to focus primarily on Thai government interests in the southern provinces, some of the recent violence in the area has targeted public places, including areas where tourists may congregate. In February 2007, Thai press reported that senior Thai officials expressed concern the violence in the south could move to Bangkok, particularly during Thai holidays and special occasions. On September 17, 2006, a series of bombs detonated in a commercial district of Hat Yai, killing one American citizen and injuring another. On August 31, 2006, a series of 22 bombs exploded inside commercial banks in Yala province, injuring 28 people. In 2005 two American citizens were injured when a bomb detonated in the Hat Yai airport. Attacks in the area have increasingly been targeted against commercial areas where foreigners congregate. The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to defer

non-emergency travel to the far south of Thailand: Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, Satun and Songkhla provinces, including the town of Hat Yai. If U.S. citizens must travel to these areas, they should exercise special caution and remain vigilant with regard to their personal security. Travelers should be aware that Thai authorities have on occasion instituted special security measures in affected areas, such as curfews, military patrols, or random searches of train passengers.

Travelers should also be aware that between 2004 and 2006, seven Lao- and Hmong-American citizens were murdered in northern and northeastern Thailand near the border with Laos. During the same period, a number of non-Americans with ties to Laos were murdered in this region of Thailand. In addition, in March 2006, a Hmong-American disappeared from his residence in Chiang Mai along with seven other individuals. In most of these cases, no arrests have been made. If U.S. citizens, particularly Lao-Americans or Hmong-Americans, must travel to these areas, they should exercise caution and remain vigilant with regard to their personal security. It is recommended that persons wishing to travel to border areas check first with the Thai Police and the U.S. Consulate General in Chiang Mai or the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok or the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane. In addition to these cases, three Hmong-American men went missing in August 2007 after reportedly going on a business trip to Xieng Khouang Province in Laos. The Government of Laos stated that the three departed Laos for Thailand, but none of the three has contacted family members in the U.S. since they were last seen in 2007.

The Thai/Burma border is the site of on-going conflicts between the Burmese Army and armed opposition groups as well as clashes between Thai security forces and armed drug traffickers. Pirates, bandits and drug traffickers operate in these border areas. There remains a possibility of significant flare-ups of military activity on the Burmese side of the border that could spill over into immediately adjacent areas of northern Thailand. Visitors should travel off-road in undeveloped areas only with local guides who are familiar with the area. Border closings and re-openings occur frequently, and U.S. citizens considering traveling into Burma from Thailand should be aware that in the event of a border closure they may not be able to re-enter Thailand. In light of the continuing unsettled situation along Thailand border with Burma and the possibility of frequent closings to all traffic, the Department of State recommends that all Americans exercise caution when traveling in remote or rural areas immediately adjacent to the Burma border. Tourists should obtain information from Thai authorities about whether official border crossing points are open, and should cross into neighboring countries only at designated crossing points. Licensed guides can help ensure that trekkers do not cross inadvertently into a neighboring country.

Thailand experienced a number of large, public demonstrations, primarily in Bangkok and Chiang Mai during the political unrest that led to a military coup in September 2006. The protests subsided following the return to a democratically elected government; however a potential for renewed protests remains.All demonstrations are unpredictable, and any demonstration can turn violent without warning. For this reason, the Embassy encourages all Americans to monitor local media for announcements of possible demonstrations and to avoid the areas where demonstrations might occur. If a demonstration is expected to pass near U.S. Embassy facilities, Embassy entrances and functions may be restricted, depending on circumstances. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the crime threat in Bangkok remains lower than that in many American cities, crimes of opportunity such as pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, and burglary have become more common in recent years. Travelers should be especially wary when walking in crowded markets, tourist sites and bus or train stations. Many American citizens have reported having passports, wallets, and other valuables stolen in Bangkok's Chatuchak Weekend Market, usually by thieves who cut into purses or bags with a razor and remove items surreptitiously. Police at the Market usually refuse to issue police reports for foreign victims of theft, requiring them instead to travel several miles to the central Tourist Police office. Violent crimes against foreigners are relatively rare.However, there has been a recent upsurge in violent crime against tourists, including the murder of several independent travelers, on the southern islands of Phuket and Koh Samui. Independent travelers should exercise caution and stay in vicinity of other travelers, especially in the beach areas of these islands.

Reports of serious crimes involving taxis or "tuk-tuks" (three-wheeled taxis) are also relatively rare, although attempts to charge excessive fares occur regularly. Several taxi-related incidents involving foreign passengers occur in Bangkok each year. Americans should not hesitate to ask to be let out of a taxi immediately if the driver is acting suspiciously or driving erratically. (See also the Safety and Road Conditions section.)

When arriving at Bangkok's airport, travelers should use only taxis from the airport's official taxi stand, cars from the airport limousine counters, or airport buses. All major hotels in Bangkok can also arrange to have a car and driver meet incoming flights. It is uncommon for Thai taxis to pick up additional passengers. Travelers should be wary of drivers seeking to do so, and should never enter a cab that has someone besides the driver in it.

Americans frequently encounter taxi drivers and others who tout gem stores or entertainment venues. These touts receive kickbacks or commissions that drive up the prices of the goods or services, and travelers should not accept tours or other offers from them. Scams involving gems, city tours, entertainment venues and credit cards are common, especially in areas heavily visited by tourists. Credit cards should be used only in reputable, established businesses, and the amount charged should be checked for accuracy.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) receives over 1,000 complaints each year from visitors who have been cheated on gem purchases. Gem scams usually follow a predictable pattern. Someone approaches a tourist outside of a well-known tourist attraction such as the Grand Palace or the Jim Thompson House and says that the attraction is closed. The friendly stranger quickly gains the tourist's confidence, and suggests a visit to a temple that is supposedly open only one day per year; the stranger then mentions in passing that a special once-a-year government-sponsored gem sale is going on, and directs the tourist to a waiting tuk-tuk. At the temple, another stranger—sometimes a foreigner – engages the tourist in conversation and, by seeming coincidence, also mentions the "special" gem sale. The tourist agrees to go look at the gem shop, and is soon convinced to buy thousands of dollars worth of jewels that can supposedly be sold in the U.S. for a 100% profit. When the tourist actually has the goods appraised, they turn out to be of minimal value, and the shop's money-back guarantee is not honored. No matter what a tout may say, no jewelry stores are owned, operated, or sponsored by the Thai Government or by the Thai royal family. Lists of gem dealers who have promised to abide by TAT guidelines are available online at http://www.tatnews.org/special_interest/shopping/979.asp, and detailed information on gem scams can be found on numerous Internet websites. A traveler who has fallen victim to a gem scam should contact the local branch of the Tourist Police, or call their country-wide toll-free number: 1155. Although most bars and entertainment venues operate honestly, some, especially in tourist areas such as Patpong, at times try to charge exorbitant amounts for drinks or unadvertised cover charges, and threaten violence if the charges are not paid. If victimized in this fashion, travelers should not attempt to resolve the problem themselves, but should instead pay the price demanded and then seek out a nearby Tourist Police officer for help in getting restitution. (If no officer is nearby, the Tourist Police may be contacted toll-free by dialing 1155.)

There have been occasional reports of scopolamine drugging perpetrated by prostitutes or unscrupulous bar workers for the purpose of robbery. (Scopolamine is a powerful sedative.) Tourists have also been victimized by drugged food and drink, usually offered by a friendly stranger, sometimes posing as a fellow traveler on an overnight bus or train. In addition, casual acquaintances met in a bar or on the street may pose a threat. Travelers are advised to avoid leaving drinks or food unattended, and should avoid going alone to unfamiliar venues. Some trekking tour companies, particularly in Northern Thailand, have been known to make drugs available to trekkers. Travelers should not accept drugs of any kind, as the drugs may be altered or harmful, and the use or sale of narcotic drugs is illegal in Thailand.

Pirated Merchandise: Counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available in Thailand. The manufacture and sale of pirated goods, including music, movies, software, and counterfeit luxury goods and apparel, is a crime in Thailand and is frequently controlled by organized crime networks. Bringing these goods back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. For more information on the serious nature of this intellectual property crime, visit the Special 301 Report at http://www.ustr.gov.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical treatment is generally adequate throughout Thailand. In Bangkok, excellent facilities exist for routine, long-term and emergency health care.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Other Health Information: Thailand has been experiencing an epidemic of HIV infection and AIDS. Heterosexual transmission accounts for most HIV infections, and HIV is common among prostitutes of both sexes, as well as among injection drug users. HIV infections among men who have sex with other men appear to be on the rise. Additionally, alco-

holic beverages, medications and drugs may be more potent or of a different composition than similar ones in the United States. Several U.S. citizen tourists die in Thailand each year of apparent premature heart attacks after drinking alcohol or using drugs.

The CDC, WHO, and Thai authorities have confirmed human cases of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, commonly known as the "bird flu." Travelers to Thailand and other countries affected by the virus are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. In addition, the CDC and WHO recommend eating only fully cooked poultry and eggs.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Thailand is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left in Thailand, although motorcycles and motorized carts often drive (illegally) against the traffic flow. The city of Bangkok has heavy traffic composed of motorcycles, cars, trucks, buses, and three-wheeled tuk-tuks. For safety, pedestrians should use overhead walkways whenever possible and should look carefully in both directions before crossing streets, even when using a marked crosswalk with a green "walk" light illuminated. This is particularly true in front of the U.S. Embassy on Bangkok's Wireless Road, where many pedestrians have died crossing the street, and where several American citizens have been seriously injured. The Embassy has instructed its employees to use the pedestrian bridge to cross the road at all times, and other Americans are advised to do the same.

Traffic accidents are common in Thailand, and those involving motorcycles can be particularly deadly. The Embassy has sent a notice to Embassy staff and family members strongly recommending that they refrain from using motorcycles (especially motorcycle taxis), mopeds, and tuk-tuks in Bangkok, and the Embassy advises American visitors and residents to follow this recommendation as well. Use of motorcycle helmets is mandatory, but this law is seldom enforced. The accident rate in Thailand is particularly high during long holidays, when alcohol use and traffic are both heavier than normal. During the Songkran (Thai New Year) holiday in April, the problem is further exacerbated by people throwing water at passing vehicles as part of the traditional celebration.

Paved roads, many of them four lanes wide, connect Thailand's major cities. On the country's numerous two-lane roads, however, slow-moving trucks limit speed and visibility. Speeding, reckless passing, and failure to obey traffic laws is common in all regions of Thailand, as is the consumption by commercial drivers of alcohol, amphetamines and other stimulants. Serious bus crashes occur frequently, especially on overnight trips, and sometimes result in fatalities. Congested roads and a scarcity of ambulances can make it difficult for accident victims to receive timely medical attention. Thailand requires that all vehicles be covered by third-party liability insurance for death or injury, but there is no mandatory coverage for property damage. The Embassy strongly encourages its employees to obtain liability insurance coverage over and above the minimum third party liability insurance required by the Thai Government. American citizen motorists should consider this as well, as the more affluent driver, even if not at fault, is frequently compelled to cover the expenses of the other party in an accident in Thailand.

Travelers in Bangkok may wish to travel about the city using the BTS "Skytrain" elevated mass transit system or the underground Metro system, which operate daily from 6 a.m. to midnight. Bangkok also has an extensive bus system, but buses can be overcrowded, and are often driven with little or no regard for passenger safety. Cities elsewhere in Thailand typically have only rudimentary public transportation, and usually do not have metered taxis. In many cases, motorcycle taxis, tuk-tuks, bicycle-powered rickshaws, and pick-up trucks will be the only options available for travelers without their own transport. Americans should be cautious when using these services, as all can be dangerous in fast or heavy traffic.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Thailand's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Thailand's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

On September 16, 2007, One-Two-Go flight OG269 crashed at Phuket International Airport, killing 90 people, including five American citizens. The cause of the accident is still under investigation.

Special Circumstances: Thai customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Thailand of items such as firearms, explosives, narcotics and drugs, radio equipment, books or other printed material and video or audio recordings which might be considered subversive to national security, obscene, or in any way harmful to the public interest and cultural property. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Thailand in Washington, D.C., or one of the Thai consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Please see our information on Customs Information.

Strong seasonal undercurrents at popular beach resorts pose a sometimes-fatal threat to surfers and swimmers. During the monsoon season from May through October, drowning is the leading cause of death for tourists visiting the resort island of Phuket. Some, but not all, beaches have warning flags to indi-

cate the degree of risk (red flag: sea condition dangerous for swimming; yellow flag: sea condition rough, swim with caution; green flag: sea condition stable).

Boat safety has become an increasing concern in Thailand. Ferries and speedboats used to transport tourists and local nationals to and from the many islands off the Thai mainland are often overcrowded and carry insufficient safety equipment. In January 2005, three U.S. citizen tourists died when the over-crowded speedboat they were in capsized and sank off the coast of Koh Samui. Three months later, two U.S. citizens narrowly escaped death when their dive boat sank off the coast near Phuket. The Department of State encourages U.S. citizens to avoid travel on overcrowded boats, and to ensure that proper safety equipment (including life preservers) is available before boarding any boat or ferry.

The rental of cars, motorbikes and jet skis is common in the tourist areas. Many rental companies ask to hold the renters passport as a deposit. If there is damage to the vehicle, the company often holds the passport until the renter pays for the damage. For this reason, a passport should not be used as a deposit or collateral. There are have been reports that some companies charge the renter for damage that they did not cause. Renters should be certain to examine the vehicle and note any pre-existing damage before operating the vehicle.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Thai laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

In this connection, it is a criminal offense to make negative comments about the King or other members of the royal family. Thais hold the King in the highest regard, and it is a serious crime to make critical or defamatory comments about him. This particular crime, called "lese majeste," is punishable by a prison sentence of three to fifteen years. Purposely tearing or destroying Thai bank notes, which carry an image of the King, may be considered such an offense, as can spitting on or otherwise defiling an official uniform bearing royal insignia.

The Thai Government has publicly stated that it will not tolerate the use of Thai territory as a base by groups trying to overthrow or destabilize the governments of nearby countries. Numerous American citizens have been arrested or detained under suspicion of carrying out such activities; sometimes these detentions are carried out by military authorities, and the Embassy does not learn of them until many days after the fact. Many other Americans suspected of advocating the armed overthrow of other governments have been "blacklisted" from entering the country. Americans should be aware that attempts to overthrow foreign governments by force may violate U.S. law as well as Thai law.

Penalties for the possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Thailand are severe. Convicted offenders can expect long prison sentences under harsh conditions, and often heavy fines as well. Thailand also has a death penalty for serious drug offenses, and has executed convicted traffickers. The U.S. Embassy frequently does not learn of the arrest of U.S. citizens for minor drug offenses, particularly in southern Thailand, until several days after the incident.

Engaging in illicit sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Please see our information on Criminal Penalties.

Thai police occasionally raid discos, bars, or nightclubs looking for underage patrons and drug users. During the raids, they typically check the IDs of all customers in the establishment, and then make each person provide a urine sample to be checked for narcotics. Foreigners are not excused from these checks, and anyone whose urine tests positive for drugs is arrested and charged. Although some Thai civil libertarians have questioned the constitutionality of these forced urine tests, the Embassy is unaware of any successful challenge to the practice, and customers can be jailed if they do not cooperate.

Shoplifting, even for low-value goods is strictly prosecuted. Arrests for shoplifting even low-value items can result in large fines and lengthy detention.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living in or visiting Thailand are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok or the U.S. Consulate in Chiang Mai through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Thailand. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at 95 Wireless Road in Bangkok; the U.S. mailing address is APO AP 96546-0001. The central switchboard number is (66-2) 205-4000; the American Citizen Services Unit number is (66-2) 205-4049; and the fax number is (66-2) 205-4103. The web site for the U.S. Embassy is http://bangkok.usembassy.gov. American citizens can register online via the web site. Questions regarding American Citizens Services can be submitted by E-mail to acsbkk@state.gov. The U.S. Consulate General in Chiang Mai is located at 387 Wichayanond Road; the U.S. mailing address is Box C, APO AP 96546. The telephone number is (66-53) 252-629 and the fax number is (66-53) 252-633.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available

through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Thailand is party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). Therefore all adoptions between Thailand and the United States must meet the requirements of the Convention and United States law implementing the Convention. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Who Can Adopt? Adoption between the United States and Thailand is governed by The Hague Adoption Convention. Therefore to adopt from Thailand, you must first be found eligible to adopt by the United States Government. In addition to the United States requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Thailand also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoptions from Thailand.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 25 years old and 15 years older than the child to be adopted.

Marriage Requirements: A prospective adoptive parent can be single or married. If married, the prospective adoptive parent must have a legitimate spouse and must have been married for at least 3 years.

Income Requirements: While there are no formal income requirements, prospective adoptive parents must provide proof of income with their application.

Other Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be legally qualified under United States law to adopt a child.

Who Can Be Adopted? Because Thailand is party to The Hague Adoption Convention, children from Thailand must meet the requirements of the Convention in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to Thailand's requirements, a child must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee for you to bring him or her back to the United States.

Thailand also has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. You cannot adopt a child in Thailand unless he or she meets the requirements outlined below.

Sibling Requirements: It is not possible to apply for more than one child at a time, except for twins, siblings, or in cases of adoption of the children of the applicant's Thai spouse. Department of Social Development and Welfare (DSDW) advises that it is extremely unlikely that an abandoned child under the age of one year would be available for foreign adoption.

Waiting Period: It is hard to predict with certainty how much time is required to complete an adoption in Thailand. The time frames provided in this flyer are intended as guidelines only, and the specific circumstances of each case could affect significantly how long it takes. The most recent reports indicate that waiting periods range from approximately 24-30 months from the time the United States adoption agency submitted the paperwork of the prospective adopter to the time the child is placed with the prospective adoptive parents.

Thailand's Adoption Authority: Department of Social Development and Welfare (DSDW)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Thailand is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only these agencies and attorneys can provide adoption services between the United States and Thailand.

After you choose an accredited adoption service provider, you apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-800A) by the USCIS. Once the United States Government determines that you are "eligible" and "suitable" to adopt, you or your agency will forward your information to the adoption authority in Thailand. Thailand's adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under Thai law.

If both the United States and Thailand determine that you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Thailand may provide you with a referral for a child.

Once the DSDW approves the application, it matches the application with a specific child. The DSDW then sends the prospective adoptive parent(s) a letter of introduction about the child, including photographs and the child's health record. This document is commonly called a 'referral.' Prospective adoptive parents who still have questions about the child after reviewing this information may follow up with the DSDW either directly or via their adoption agency.

Note that Thailand law does not allow applications for more than one child at a time, except twins, siblings, or adoption of Thai spouse's children. In general, abandoned children under one year will not be available for foreign adoption.

After you accept a referral with a child, you will apply to the US Government, Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (Form I-800).

The Consular officer will review the child's information and evaluate the child for possible visa ineligibilities. If the Consular office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will

notify Thailand's adoption authority (Article 5 letter). For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until this takes place.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The DSDW matches the child with the prospective adoptive parents. Once DSDW is notified of the prospective adoptive parents' acceptance of the child, it forwards the application to the Child Adoption Board (CAB). After receiving official authorization from the Minister of Social Development and Human Security, DSDW schedules the interview between the prospective adoptive parents and CAB. DSDW issues the documents necessary for the child's travel.

Role of the Court: The court finalizes the adoption after the prospective adoptive parents have successfully completed their pre-adoption placement requirements.

These requirements include the three bi-monthly reports on the pre-adoption placement, CAB approval for final adoption, and adoption registration within six months of notification by the CAB.

Role of Adoption Agencies: The adoption service provider assembles the application forms and supporting documents for submission to DSDW.

Adoption Application: The adoption application is submitted to the DSDW.

Time Frame: While there is no specific timeframe noted for the completion of an intercountry adoption from Thailand, it should be noted that the adoption process can be lengthy.

Documents Required: The following is a list of documents that must be submitted with the application:

- Home study–The home study must be conducted or endorsed by one of the DSDW approved agencies. Any home study done by a non-DSDW approved agency must obtain an endorsement from a DSDW approved agency agreeing to supervise the pre-adoption placement.
- Confirmation Statement–The adoption service provider must confirm that once the adoption is finalized under Thai law that it will also be legalized in the prospective adoptive parents' state of residence.
- Formal Commitment Statement–If the prospective adoptive parents reside in Thailand, DSDW's social worker will conduct three bi-monthly home visits and supervise the pre-adoption placement of the child. Once DSDW is satisfied with the pre-adoption placement, DSDW reports their findings to the Child Adoption Board (CAB) who will approve the child for adoption.
- If the prospective adoptive parents do not reside in Thailand, the adoption service provider must formally commit to supervise a pre-adoption placement for at least six months and conduct at least three bi-monthly progress reports that will be provided to the DSDW.
- Medical Certificate–The certificate verifies the prospective adoptive parents' good physical health, mental stability, and infertility (if applicable).
- Birth Certificates
- Marriage Certificate (if applicable)
- Proof of Termination of Previous Marriages–Death certificate of spouse or divorce decree
- Proof of Occupation and Income–Letter from employer
- Complete Financial Statement–The statement should indicate all assets and liabilities.
- Recommendations from Two Responsible Persons
- Current License of Adoption Service Provider
- Photographs of Prospective Adoptive Parents –Four (4.5 cm x 6 cm) photographs from each prospective adoptive parent and their children

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents.

For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Adoptive parents are required to register the adoption with the Thai Embassy or Consulate and the United States authority.

Contact Information
United States Embassy in Thailand
Consular Section
95 Wireless Road
Bangkok, Thailand 10330
Tel: (66)(2) 205-4000
Fax: (66)(2) 253-6250
Email: visasbkk@state.gov
Internet:
http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/consulcm/index.htm

Thailand's Adoption Authority
225 Ratchawithi Road
Bangkok 10400
Tel: (66) (2) 354-7515
Email: adoption@loxinfo.co.th

The Royal Thai Embassy
Washington, D.C.
1024 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C., 20007
Tel: (202) 944-3600
Internet: http://www.thaiembdc.org

Thailand also has consulates in Chicago, Los Angeles and New York City.

Office of Children's Issues
United States Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Parental Kidnapping is not a crime in Thailand and Thai authorities will not issue a warrant or become involved should one parent take a child without the other parent's authorization. The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction cannot be invoked if a child is taken from the United States to Thailand, or vice versa, by one parent against the wishes of the other parent or in violation of a U.S. custody order.

Child Custody: Under Thai law, the question of child custody is addressed in Book Five of the Thai Civil and Commercial Code under the general headings Termination of Marriage and Rights and Duties of Parent and Child. For more information, please review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

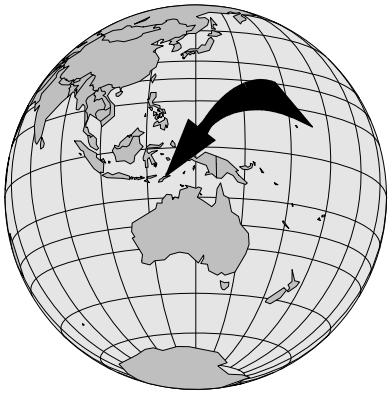
Enforcement Of Foreign Orders: Foreign orders (including U.S. custody orders) are not enforced/enforceable in Thailand. American citizens who travel to Thailand place themselves under the jurisdiction of Thai courts. If a taking parent chooses to remain in Thailand with a child or leave a child behind in Thailand, the U.S. Embassy cannot force either the taking parent or the Thai Government to return the child to the United States. American citizens planning a trip to Thailand with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Acquiring Thai Nationality: The Thai Nationality Act, Doc No. 2, B.E. 2535 (1992), states that any child born in Thailand of at least one Thai-citizen parent is a Thai citizen. If the child is born outside of Thailand, and has at least one Thai-citizen parent, the Thai parent can report the birth of the child to the nearest Thai Embassy or Consulate and the child will acquire Thai citizenship.

Special Courts: Juvenile and Family Courts to hear custody cases can be found only in Bangkok and a few of the larger cities in Thailand

Thai Passports For Children: Parents wishing to obtain a Thai passport for their child must present a Birth Certificate (for children under14 years-old) or Thai identity card (for children between 15-20 years-old) of the child, the House Registration Certificate and the identity cards of mother and father. Both parents must accompany their minor child during the application process. In case one of the parents is unable to be present, he/she must sign a letter of consent, which must be brought to the office by the other parent and the minor.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



TIMOR-LESTE

Compiled from the April 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 15,007 sq. km.
Cities: Capital—Dili; Baucau.
Terrain: Mountainous.
Climate: Tropical; hot, semi-arid; rainy and dry seasons.

People

Nationality: Noun—Timorese; adjective—Timorese.
Population: (2007) 1,100,000.
Religions: Catholic 96.5%.
Languages: Portuguese, Tetum (official languages); English, Bahasa Indonesia (working languages).
Education: Literacy—43%.
Health: Life expectancy—47.9/51.8 years (male/female). Child mortality rate (under 5)—91/69 (male/female) per 1,000 population.

Government

Type: Parliamentary republic.
Independence: (from Portugal) November 28, 1975. Restoration of independence: May 20, 2002.
Constitution: March 2002.
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral parliament. Judicial—Supreme Court and supporting hierarchy. As the Supreme Court has not yet been formed, the Court of Appeal functions, on an interim basis, as the Supreme Court.
Political parties: Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (FRETILIN), National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT), Democratic Party (PD), Social Democratic Party (PSD), Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT), National Unity Party (PUN), People's Party of Timor (PPT), Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain (KOTA), and National Union of Timorese Resistance (UNDERTIM).

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $320 million.
GDP per capita: (nominal 2007 est.) $373.
GDP composition by sector: (2006) Services 55%, agriculture 32%, industry 13%.
Industry: Types—coffee, oil and natural gas.
Trade: Exports—coffee, oil and natural gas. Major markets—Australia, Europe, Japan, United States. Imports—basic manufactures, commodities. Major sources—Australia, Europe, Indonesia, Japan, United States.

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Timor-Leste is located in Southeast Asia, on the southernmost edge of the Indonesian archipelago, northwest of Australia. The country includes the eastern half of Timor island as well as the Oecussi enclave in the northwest portion of Indonesian West Timor, and the islands of Atauro and Jaco. The mixed Malay and Pacific Islander culture of the Timorese people reflects the geography of the country on the border of those two cultural areas. Portuguese influence during the centuries of colonial rule resulted in a substantial majority of the population identifying itself as Roman Catholic. Some of those who consider themselves Catholic practice a mixed form of religion that includes local animist customs. As a result of the colonial education system and the 23-year Indonesian occupation, approximately 13.5% of Timorese speak Portuguese, 43.3% speak Bahasa Indonesia, and 5.8% speak English, according to the 2004 census. Tetum, the most common of the local languages, is spoken by approximately 91% of the population, although only 46.2% speak Tetum Prasa, the form of Tetum dominant in the Dili district. Mambae, Kemak, and Fataluku are also widely spoken. This linguistic diversity is enshrined in the country's constitution, which designates

Portuguese and Tetum as official languages and English and Bahasa Indonesia as working languages.

HISTORY

Portuguese and Dutch traders made the first western contact with Timor in the early 16th century. Sandalwood and spice traders, as well as missionaries, maintained sporadic contact with the island until 1642, when the Portuguese moved into Timor in strength. The Portuguese and the Dutch, based at the western end of the island in Kupang, battled for influence until the present-day borders were agreed to by the colonial powers in 1906. Imperial Japan occupied East Timor from 1942-45. Portugal resumed colonial authority over East Timor in 1945 after the Japanese defeat in World War II.

Following a military coup in Lisbon in April 1974, Portugal began a rapid and disorganized decolonization process in most of its overseas territories, including East Timor. Political tensions—exacerbated by Indonesian involvement—heated up, and on August 11, 1975, the Timorese Democratic Union Party (UDT) launched a coup d'état in Dili. The putsch was followed by a brief but bloody civil war in which the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) pushed UDT forces into Indonesian West Timor. Shortly after the FRETILIN victory in late September, Indonesian forces began incursions into East Timor. On October 16, five journalists from Australia, Britain, and New Zealand were murdered in the East Timorese town of Balibo shortly after they had filmed regular Indonesian army troops invading East Timorese territory. On November 28, FRETILIN declared East Timor an independent state, and Indonesia responded by launching a full-scale military invasion on December 7. On December 22, 1975 the UN Security Council called on Indonesia to withdraw its troops from East Timor.

Declaring a provisional government made up of Timorese allies on January 13, 1976, the Indonesian Government said it was acting to forestall civil strife in East Timor and to prevent the consolidation of power by the FRETILIN party. The Indonesians claimed that FRETILIN was communist in nature, while the party's leadership described itself as social democratic. Coming on the heels of the communist victories in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, the Indonesian claims were accepted by many in the West. Major powers also had little incentive to confront Indonesia over a territory seen as peripheral to their security interests. Nonetheless, the widespread popular support shown for the guerilla resistance launched by the Timorese made clear that the Indonesian occupation was not welcome. The Timorese were not permitted to determine their own political fate via a free vote, and the Indonesian occupation was never recognized by the United Nations.

The Indonesian occupation of Timor was initially characterized by a program of brutal military repression. Beginning in the late 1980s, however, the occupation was increasingly characterized by programs to win the "hearts-and-minds" of the Timorese through the use of economic development assistance and job creation while maintaining a strict policy of political repression, although serious human rights violations—such as the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre—continued. Estimates of the number of Timorese who lost their lives to violence and hunger during the Indonesian occupation range from 100,000 to 250,000. On January 27, 1999, Indonesian President B.J. Habibie announced his government's desire to hold a referendum in which the people of East Timor would chose between autonomy within Indonesia and independence. Under an agreement among the United Nations, Portugal, and Indonesia, the referendum was held on August 30, 1999. When the results were announced on September 4—78% voted for independence with a 98.6% turnout—Timorese militias organized and supported by the Indonesian military (TNI) commenced a large-scale, scorched-earth campaign of retribution. While pro-independence FALINTIL guerillas remained cantoned in UN-supervised camps, the militia and the TNI killed approximately 1,300 Timorese and forcibly relocated as many as 300,000 people into West Timor as refugees. The majority of the country's infrastructure, including homes, irrigation systems, water supply systems, and schools, and nearly 100% of the country's electrical grid were destroyed. On September 20, 1999 the Australian-led peacekeeping troops of the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) deployed to the country, bringing the violence to an end.

Timor-Leste became a fully independent republic with a parliamentary form of government on May 20, 2002, following approximately two and a half years under the authority of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). The country's first parliament was formed from the 88-member Constituent Assembly chosen in free and fair, UN-supervised elections in August 2001. The FRETILIN Party won the majority of Assembly seats. Mari Alkatiri, FRETILIN's Secretary General, became the first Prime Minister, and the country's 29-member cabinet was dominated by FRETILIN. Xanana Gusmao was elected in free and fair elections on April 14, 2002 as President. UNTAET's mandate ended with East Timor's independence, but a successor organization, the UN Mission for the Support of East Timor (UNMISET), was established to provide additional support to the government. UNMISET's mandate expired on May 20, 2005 after the UN Security Council unanimously approved the creation of a small special political mission in Timor-Leste, the UN Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), to take its place. Under the constitution ratified in March 2002, "laws and regulations in force continue to be applicable to all matters except to the extent that they are inconsistent with the Constitution." Many Indonesian and UNTAET laws and regulations remain in effect, but are being gradually replaced by Timorese laws.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS



Despite the winding down of the UN presence in Timor-Leste, the institutions comprising the country's armed forces (F-FDTL) and police (PNTL) remained fragile and the authority of the state much more tenuous than most observers assumed at the time. In February 2006, approximately 400 military personnel (from a total military strength of 1,400) petitioned President Gusmao to address their complaints of discrimination against "westerners" or Loro Monu people by "easterners" or Loro Sae people in the military. Shortly after being dismissed by the F-FDTL commander, the petitioners staged protests in Dili. On April 28, the protests turned violent.

Citing ineffective police response, the government called in the F-FDTL to respond. The rioting and the police and military response resulted in six confirmed deaths. In response to the events of April 28, large numbers of people began to flee their homes for internally displaced persons (IDP) camps or the outlying districts and several members of the F-FDTL, including the commander of the Military Police, left their posts in protest of the military intervention. The violence escalated, with a series of deadly clashes among the F-FDTL, dissident military forces, civilians, and some police occurring on May 23-24, followed by deadly conflict between the F-FDTL and the PNTL on May 25. After these clashes civil order collapsed. Mob and gang violence took over the capital, resulting in additional deaths, widespread destruction of property, and the continued displacement of thousands of Dili residents.

At the peak of the crisis, approximately 80,000 IDPs fled to the districts and approximately 70,000 resided in camps in Dili. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and international relief organizations provided vital services to the camps that included water and sanitation facilities, camp management support, hygiene kits, and mosquito nets. USAID also supported Timor-Leste's independent public radio and television broadcast services to ensure that reliable and timely information about current political events reached Timorese citizens. On May 28, the Government of Timor-Leste requested the Governments of Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Portugal to send security forces to stabilize the country. During June 2006, there was increasing pressure on Prime Minister Alkatiri to resign as criticisms of his handling of the crisis mounted. Moreover, serious allegations emerged that he and other senior officials had been involved in illegal arms distribution. President Gusmao publicly requested that the prime minister step down, and threatened to resign himself if Alkatiri remained in office. Alkatiri resigned on June 27. Jose Ramos-Horta—the Foreign and Defense Minister in the Alkatiri government—became Prime Minister on July 10, and a new cabinet was sworn in on July 14, 2006.

As requested by the Government of Timor-Leste, the UN Security Council extended the small UN political mission, UNOTIL, through the summer while members considered the mandate of a more robust UN mission to assist Timor-Leste overcome its crisis. The United States coordinated closely with members of the Core Group on Timor-Leste (Australia, Brazil, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, and the United Kingdom) and the European Union to obtain approval of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), which provided for a UN-led policing component of up to 1,608 personnel. UNMIT's mandate, set forth in UN Security Council Resolution 1704 approved on August 25, 2006, calls for the UN mission to assist in restoring stability, rebuilding the institutions comprising the security sector, supporting the Government of Timor-Leste in conducting the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, and achieving accountability for the crimes against humanity and other atrocities committed in 1999, among other aims. The UN Security Council extended UNMIT's mandate for one

year in February 2007 and again on February 25, 2008. (UNMIT's own website provides additional information: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmit)

Although security in Dili has been significantly improved in comparison to the violence and anarchy that reigned in May and June, neither the establishment of a new government nor the expansion of the UN mission has reduced the levels of violence and criminality to their pre-April 2006 levels. While the overwhelming majority of the current violence is Timorese-on-Timorese perpetrated by gangs or martial arts groups, foreign nationals have also been targeted. Although much of the current fighting reflects a continuing lack of law and order underscored by the absence of judicial accountability, many observers note that communal and gang violence has been employed in many cases toward political ends.

As of January 2008, approximately 30,000 displaced persons live in over 30 camps in and around Dili. Another 70,000 or so IDPs remain in the outlying districts. Numbers of displaced persons remain essentially unchanged from late 2006. Police functions in Dili are currently under UN control, while members of the PNTL are being gradually reintegrated into city policing following vetting for criminal or ethical violations. UN officials and other observers expect the reform of the country's security sector to be a long-term challenge.

Timor-Leste held presidential elections in the spring of 2007. On April 9, voters chose from a slate of eight candidates. With a voter turnout of almost 82%, the top two finishers were the FRETILIN Party candidate Francisco "Lu-olo" Guterres, who received 28% of the vote, and Jose Ramos-Horta, who received 22% of the vote after stepping down as Prime Minister to run as an independent candidate with the endorsement of former President Xanana Gusmao. In the runoff election on May 9, required because the electoral law specifies that a candidate must win a majority, Ramos-Horta won by a landslide, receiving 69% of the vote. The presidential elections experienced some procedural glitches, but were largely free of violence and significant irregularity.

The presidency is a mostly ceremonial position, with executive power concentrated in the office of the prime minister. The majority party in parliament normally determines the next prime minister. With the support of UNMIT and international donors, the Government of Timor-Leste held parliamentary elections on June 30, 2007. Observers agree that the elections were generally free and fair. FRETILIN won the most seats in parliament, but no single party won a majority and the various parties did not agree to form a national unity government. On August 6, 2007, President Ramos-Horta asked Xanana Gusmao, the leader of a coalition with a majority of the seats in the parliament (the Alliance with a Parliamentary Majority or AMP), to form a government. Gusmao was sworn in as Prime Minister along with most of the other ministers in the new government on August 8, 2007. Although the June elections proceeded in a largely peaceful atmosphere, violent disturbances broke out in several areas of Dili and the eastern districts of Baucau and Viqueque when the president announced the formation of a new government as FRETILIN partisans took to the streets to protest that they had not been given an opportunity to form a government. The unrest subsided within days, but the affected areas remained tense for several weeks thereafter and FRETILIN continues to assert that the AMP government is unconstitutional although it participates actively in the work of the national parliament.

FRETILIN's peaceful handover of power to the AMP government represents a significant milestone in Timor-Leste's political development. Upon taking office, the AMP government put the problems of the internally displaced persons, the petitioners, and other issues flowing from the crisis of 2006 at the top of its policy agenda. After obtaining parliamentary approval for a transitional 2007 budget and the fiscal year 2008 budget, the AMP launched its National Recovery Strategy in December 2007. The National Recovery Strategy consists of five pillars that aim to give substance to its name, "Building the Future Together" (Hamutuk Hari'i Futuru):

- Building Homes Together, or return and resettlement of IDPs;
- Building Protection Together, or provision of social welfare support to vulnerable groups;
- Building Stability Together, or creating an atmosphere of stability for the return of the IDPs and resolution of the claims of the petitioners, among other issues;
- Building Social Economy Together, or promotion of economic development;
- Building Trust Together, or promotion of trust-building between the people and the government through community dialogue, and engagement with youth groups.

In November and December 2007 the Government of Timor-Leste hosted several visits by high-level UN officials, including Under Secretary for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and a delegation from the UN Security Council, all of whom urged Timorese leaders to work together to tackle pressing issues in a coordinated way in the national interest.

On February 11, 2008 followers of former military police commander and fugitive Alfredo Reinado attacked President Ramos-Horta. Ramos-Horta sustained gunshot injuries and was airlifted to Darwin, Australia. Prime Minister Gusmao escaped unharmed after his bodyguards thwarted a separate attack against him the same day. The president's bodyguards killed Reinado.

The national parliament imposed a state of emergency, which it has since extended, while the government seeks to apprehend the attackers. World leaders and the UN Security

Council immediately condemned these attacks against Timor-Leste's democratically elected leaders.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Jose RAMOS-HORTA**
Prime Minister: **Kay Rala Xanana GUSMAO**
First Dep. Prime Min.: **Jose Luis GUTERRES**
Min. for Agriculture, Fisheries, & Forestry:
Min. for Development: **Joao GONCALVES**
Min. for Education: **Joao CANCIO**
Min. for Finance: **Emilia PIRES**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Zacarias DA COSTA**
Min. for Health: **Nelson MARTINS**
Min. for Infrastructure: **Pedro LAY**
Min. for Justice: **Lucia LOBATO**
Min. for Social Solidarity:
Min. for State Admin.: **Arcangelo LEITE**
Min. for Tourism, Commerce, & Industry: **Gil da Costa ALVES**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Nelson SANTOS**

Timor-Leste maintains an embassy at 4201 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (telephone: 202-966-3202). Timor-Leste Government website: http://www.timor-leste.gov.tl.

ECONOMY

As the poorest nation in Asia, Timor-Leste faces daunting challenges. Basic income, health, and literacy indicators are among the lowest in Asia. Severe shortages of trained and competent personnel to staff newly established executive, legislative, and judicial institutions hinder progress. Rural areas, lacking in infrastructure and resources, remain brutally poor, and the relatively few urban areas cannot provide adequate jobs for the country's growing labor force. Many cities, including the country's second largest, Baucau, lack routine electrical service. Rural families' access to electricity and clean water is very limited. Unemployment and underemployment combined are estimated to be as high as 70%. While revenues from offshore oil and gas reserves offer great hope for the country, effective use of those resources will require a major transformation of the country's current human and institutional infrastructure.

Timor-Leste has made significant progress in a number of areas since independence. It has become a full-fledged member of the international community, joining the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In July 2005, parliament unanimously passed a law creating a petroleum fund to effectively manage and invest oil revenues to ensure these funds are invested in the country's development after exploitation of these resources ends. While a nascent legal system has been put into place, the justice system remains among the weakest performing sector of government, still unable to perform its most basic functions without substantial assistance by outside professionals. Efforts are underway to put in place the institutions required to protect human rights, rebuild the economy, create employment opportunities, and reestablish essential public services.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Timor-Leste joined the United Nations on September 27, 2002. It is pursuing membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and became a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 2005. Timor-Leste's foreign policy has placed a high priority on its relationships with Indonesia; regional friends such as Malaysia and Singapore; and donors such as Australia, the United States, the European Union, Japan, and Portugal.

Relations Between Indonesia and Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste and Indonesia have full diplomatic relations. In 2005 Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono visited Timor-Leste, including the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili where Indonesian troops had massacred hundreds of Timorese in 1991. Yudhoyono prayed and laid a heart-shaped wreath at the cemetery, symbolizing the improving ties between the two nations. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami devastated parts of Indonesia, the Government of Timor-Leste contributed humanitarian assistance to the victims. Likewise, the Indonesian Government sent humanitarian assistance to help those displaced by the unrest in Dili in 2006. After assuming office in May 2007, President Ramos-Horta traveled to Jakarta for his first state visit abroad. When former President Suharto died in January 2008, Prime Minister Gusmao and other senior officials traveled to Indonesia to pay their respects.

In 2005, both nations created a bilateral Truth and Friendship Commission (TFC) in order "to establish the conclusive truth in regard to the events prior to and immediately after the popular consultation in 1999, with a view to promoting reconciliation and friendship, and ensuring the non-recurrence of similar events." The United States has encouraged both Indonesia and Timor-Leste to ensure that the TFC achieves a credible outcome and that the TFC process is transparent, holds public hearings, has international participation, and names the names of those individuals who perpetrated the serious crimes. Respected international human rights groups, however, have criticized the TFC because its limited terms of reference for achieving these ends do not provide for prosecutions or similar measures to achieve accountability, and because the TFC has made no clear progress to date.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND TIMOR-LESTE

Timor-Leste maintains an embassy in Washington, DC, as well as a Permanent Mission in New York at the United Nations. The United States has a large bilateral development

assistance program—$20.6 million in fiscal year 2007—and also contributes funds as a major member of a number of multilateral agencies such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. The U.S. Peace Corps has operated in Timor-Leste since 2002, but it suspended operations in May 2006 due to the unrest and instability.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

DILI (E) Av.de Portugal, Pantai Kelapa, Dili, East Timor, APO/FPO American Embassy-Jakarta, Unit 8129, Box D, FPO AP 96520; Official pouch: 8250 Dili Place, Washington, D.C. 20521-8250, (670) 332-4684, Fax (670) 331-3206, Workweek: 8:00 am–5:00 pm.

AMB OMS:	Kim Stockdale
MGT:	Steve Hunt
POL/ECO:	Roberto Quiroz
AMB:	Hans G Klemm
CON:	Roberto Quiroz
DCM:	Henry Rector
RSO:	Bruce Paluch
AID:	Mark White
CLO:	Meital May
FMO:	Charlie Slater
ICASS Chair:	Henry Rector
IMO:	James May
ISSO:	James May
MLO:	Maj. Ronald D. Sargent

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 23, 2008

Country Description: Occupying 5,743 square miles on the eastern half of an island in the Timor Sea between Indonesia and Australia, Timor-Leste has a population of approximately 1.1 million people. Timor-Leste became independent on May 20, 2002, and is now a democratically governed, independent nation with an elected President and Parliament.

In the violence that followed Timor-Leste's 1999 independence referendum, the country's infrastructure, never robust, was totally destroyed and has been only partially rebuilt. In April 2006, violence erupted again in and around the capital, Dili, resulting in further damage to infrastructure and setting back economic growth. Electricity, telephone and telecommunications, roads and lodging remain unreliable, particularly outside of the capital. Timor-Leste's economy relies largely on international assistance and revenues from oil and gas production.

Entry Requirements: A passport valid for six months beyond the intended date of departure from Timor-Leste is required. Tourist visas are not required prior to arrival, but travelers arriving in Timor-Leste without a visa will need to pay a $30 fee for the 30-day visa. There is an additional fee for each 30-day renewal of this tourist visa. Visitors traveling via air must transit Singapore; Darwin, Australia; or Bali, Indonesia en route to Timor-Leste.

Safety and Security: American citizens in Timor-Leste should exercise caution, use common sense, avoid large gatherings, remain alert with regard to their personal security, and avoid travel after dark to the extent possible. Americans should exercise caution in public places, including, but not limited to, clubs, restaurants, bars, schools, places of worship, outdoor recreational events, hotels, resorts and beaches and other locations frequented by foreigners.

American citizens should maintain a high level of security awareness while moving around in Dili; be alert to the potential for violence; and avoid demonstrations, large political gatherings, and areas where disturbances have occurred. Demonstrations can occur at or near symbols and institutions of the Government of Timor-Leste, including government buildings and houses belonging to prominent politicians. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. Although social and political tensions have diminished in 2008, American citizens should exercise particular caution in sites of past unrest. These areas in Dili include the international airport and its surroundings, and the areas around internally displaced persons camps in the city.

Gang-related violence occurs sporadically in Dili, and Americans risk intentional or inadvertent injury when traveling in affected areas. While the overwhelming majority of gang-related criminal violence has been Timorese-on-Timorese, foreigners have been caught up in such violence and there have been credible reports of anti-Western attacks, most recently during a surge of violence in Dili in and Baucau in August 2007. About 30,000 internally displaced persons remain in camps in and around Dili, several of which have been sites of recurring incidents of violence.

Timor-Leste's state institutions comprising the security sector remain fragile, and the country depends upon international police and security forces to assist in the maintenance of public security. Although authorities have made progress toward restoring public security in recent months, the risk of further violent civil unrest persists.

Timor-Leste has experienced several major episodes of violent civil disorder in recent years. When demonstrations in April 2006 protesting the Government's dismissal of 595 members of the armed forces escalated into rioting, civil order in and around the capital Dili broke down. Tens of thousands of Timorese fled the violence and settled in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Government asked for the deployment of international security forces to assist in restoring order. An Australian-led International Stabilization Force of about 1,000 troops remains in Timor-Leste.

Also at the Government's request, the UN Security Council extended its mission in Timor-Leste. On August 25, 2006, the UN Security Council approved a new expanded mission (the UN Integrated Mission for Timor-Leste, or UNMIT) providing for a policing component of up to

1,608 personnel. The Security Council extended the mandate of UNMIT for one year in February 2007 and again for one year on February 25, 2008. The Timorese national police (PNTL) in Dili were disbanded and are being reconstituted under UNMIT guidance. For more information on UNMIT, consult http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unmit.

In April through June 2007, the Government of Timor-Leste held three rounds of national elections in a largely peaceful atmosphere. Localized, sporadic violence erupted in August after the President announced the formation of a new government. International forces, alongside members of the National Police of Timor-Leste, contained the violence and the affected communities returned to normal. The security situation can, however, deteriorate without warning, and the risk that foreigners may be specifically targeted persists. On February 11, 2008, armed rebels attacked President Jose Ramos-Horta, who sustained gunshot injuries and was evacuated to Australia for medical treatment. Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao escaped unharmed when his bodyguards thwarted a separate attack against him the same day. All of the rebels involved in this incident are now in custody.

Americans are advised that international security forces and UN police and the Timorese security forces occasionally establish security checkpoints along roads. These legitimate checkpoints are intended to enhance security and should be respected. There are also occasional illegal checkpoints which Americans should avoid, but which to date have been primarily targeted at Timorese. Americans traveling in Timor-Leste should remember that despite its small size, much of the territory is isolated and can be difficult to reach by available transportation or communication links.

Travelers and residents should always ensure that passports and important personal papers are in order in the event it becomes necessary to leave the country quickly for any reason. Likewise, travelers should be aware that the U.S. Embassy in Dili is not able to issue emergency passports and has only limited capacity to process passport renewals.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crimes such as pick pocketing, purse snatchings, residential and automobile break-ins and theft occurs throughout the country, but are more frequent in Dili, the capital. Victims who resist may be subject to physical violence. Gang related violence occurs, and has targeted foreign nationals. Stone-throwing attacks on vehicles occur during periods of gang conflicts and civil unrest, and have resulted in serious injury and death. Visitors should avoid travel at night or in unfamiliar areas alone. Women should avoid traveling alone, especially at night because sexual assault or banditry is possible. Timor-Leste is a socially conservative country, and travelers should avoid wearing revealing clothing, particularly in crowded public areas such as markets.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Those in need of police assistance should call the National Police of Timor-Leste at 112 or 723-0365. The UN Security Operations Center can be reached at 723-0635. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Although limited emergency medical care is available in Dili, options for routine medical care throughout the country are extremely limited. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to Australia, the nearest point with acceptable medical care, to Singapore, or to the United States, can cost thousands of dollars.

The Government of Timor-Leste does not have any policy restricting the entry of persons with HIV/AIDS or imposing restrictions on residents of Timor-Leste with HIV/AIDS.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's I internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The infor-

mation below concerning Timor-Leste is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

All traffic operates on the left side of the road, and most vehicles use right-hand drive. Roads are often poorly maintained and four-wheel drive may be required in some areas. Non-existent lighting and poor road conditions make driving at night hazardous. Taxis, small buses and mini-vans provide public transportation in Dili and elsewhere. However, public transportation is generally overcrowded, uncomfortable, and below international safety standards. Public transportation operators have been known to unexpectedly drop passengers at locations other than their destination due to the operators' fears about certain areas or hours. Disagreement about fares has occasionally led to hostilities. Public transport is generally inadvisable and is unavailable after dark.

Driving in Dili is especially hazardous, with large trucks and military vehicles sharing the streets with vendors, pedestrians and livestock. Many cars and especially motorcycles operate at night without lights.

During the rainy season, travel on all cross-island roadways should be considered to be risky. U.S. citizens should use caution when traveling on the cross-island roadways in the mountain areas of Aileu, Ermera, Manatuto, Ainaro and Manufahi provinces. In December 2003, rain showers severely damaged several cross-island roadways, and several UN vehicles had to be airlifted out of the area south of Aileu due to landslides and roadway damage.

Accidents occur frequently. When there is an accident, the police should be contacted. It is not uncommon for bystanders to attack the driver perceived to be responsible for a traffic accident. This is more common in rural areas and in accidents involving Timorese drivers but crowds have occasionally attacked expatriate drivers at the scene of an accident. If a U.S. citizen involved in an accident reasonably believes that there is a threat of bodily harm from people at the scene of the accident, it is advisable to drive to the police station or U.S. Embassy before stopping.

While it is possible to obtain insurance for vehicles in Timor-Leste, only a handful of foreigners have done so, and virtually no one else has automobile insurance. Most traffic accidents are settled informally between those involved.

Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.timor-leste.gov.tl.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Timor-Leste, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Timor-Leste's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

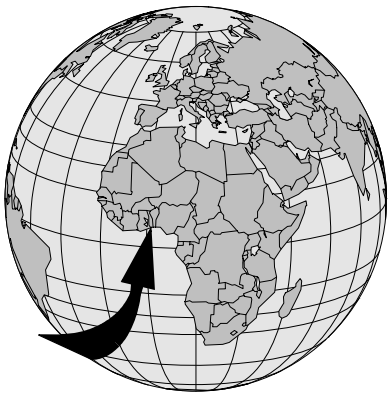
Special Circumstances: Timor-Leste remains in a state of transition. The country faces continuing challenges that limit its law enforcement capability. Many civil and governmental institutions are still being developed with international assistance. U.S. citizens traveling or doing business in Timor-Leste may find it difficult to identify legal or administrative mechanisms if problems arise.

The U.S. dollar is the official currency of Timor-Leste. Money can be exchanged at the three banks in Dili, but only to or from a limited number of currencies. Only a few establishments accept credit cards, usually requiring a substantial additional fee, and visitors should be prepared to settle all bills in cash. Dili has several ATM machines that accept U.S.-issued bankcards. Travelers should not plan to rely exclusively on these machines, as they are frequently inoperative.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Timor-Leste's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Timor-Leste are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Timor-Leste are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Timor-Leste. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Avenida de Portugal, Praia dos Coqueiros, Dili, Timor-Leste, tel: (670) 332-4684, fax: (670) 331-3206. The web site is http://timor-leste.usembassy.gov.



TOGO

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Togolese Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 56,785 sq. km.; slightly smaller than West Virginia.

Cities: Capital—Lome 1,008,000 (pop. 2007 est.); other major cities—Sokode 111,200, Kara 104,900, Atakpame 77,300, Dapaong 53,600.

Terrain: Savannah and hills and coastal plain.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective (sing. and pl.)—Togolese.

Population: (2006) 6,300,000.

Annual growth rate: (2006) 2.4%.

Ethnic groups: Ewe, Mina, Kabye, Cotocoli, Moba.

Religions: (est.) Animist 33%, Christian 47.1%, Muslim 13.7%, other 6.1%.

Languages: French (official), local (Ewe, Mina, Kabye).

Education: Attendance (2006)—74.6% of age group 6-11 enrolled. Literacy (2006)—male 70%, female 44%.

Health: Life expectancy (2003)—male 51 yrs, female 55 yrs.

Work force: (1999 est.) Total—2 million (43% of the total population); rural work force (est.)—1,350,000; urban work force (est.)—650,000.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: April 27, 1960 (from French-administered UN trusteeship).

Constitution: Adopted 1992.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state); prime minister (head of government). Legislative—National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 30 prefectures.

Political parties: Rassemblement du Peuple Togolais (RPT); Union des Forces de Changement (UFC); Comite d'action pour le Renouveau (CAR), Pan-African Patriotic Convergence Party (CPP), Democratic Convention of the Togolese People (CDPA).

Suffrage: Universal adult.

National holidays: Independence Day, April 27.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $2.2 billion.

Per capita income: (2006) $350.

Natural resources: Phosphates, limestone, marble.

Agriculture: (43.6% of 2005 GDP) Products—yams, cassava, corn, millet, sorghum, cocoa, coffee, rice, cotton.

Industry: (24% of 2005 GDP) Types—mining, manufacturing, construction, energy.

Services: 32.4% of 2005 GDP.

Trade: (2005) Exports—$739 million: phosphates, cocoa, coffee, cotton. Imports—$1 billion: consumer goods, including foodstuffs, fabrics, clothes, vehicles, equipment. Major partners—Ghana, France, Cote d'Ivoire, Germany, Nigeria, Canada, People's Republic of China, Benin.

GEOGRAPHY

Togo is bounded by Ghana, Burkina Faso, Benin, and the Gulf of Guinea. It stretches 579 kilometers (360 mi.) north from the gulf and is only 160 kilometers (100 mi.) wide at the broadest point. The country consists primarily of two savanna plains regions separated by a southwest-northeast range of hills (the Chaine du Togo).

Togo's climate varies from tropical to savanna. The south is humid, with temperatures ranging from 23ºC to 32ºC (75ºF to 90ºF). In the north, temperature fluctuations are greater—from 18ºC to more than 38ºC (65ºF to 100ºF).

PEOPLE

Togo's population of 6.3 million people (2006 est.) is composed of about 21 ethnic groups. The two major groups are the Ewe in the South and the

Kabye in the North. Population distribution is very uneven due to soil and terrain variations. The population is generally concentrated in the south and along the major north-south highway connecting the coast to the Sahel. The ethnic groups of the coastal region, particularly the Ewes (about 21% of the population), constitute the bulk of the civil servants, professionals, and merchants, due in part to the former colonial administrations which provided greater infrastructure development in the south. The Kabye (12% of the population) live on marginal land and traditionally have emigrated south from their home area in the Kara region to seek employment. Their historical means of social advancement has been through the military and law enforcement forces, and they continue to dominate these services.

Most of the southern peoples use the Ewe or Mina languages, which are closely related and spoken in commercial sectors throughout Togo. French, the official language, is used in administration and documentation. The public primary schools combine French with Ewe or Kabye as languages of instruction, depending on the region. English is spoken in neighboring Ghana and is taught in Togolese secondary schools. As a result, many Togolese, especially in the south and along the Ghana border, speak some English.

HISTORY

The Ewes moved into the area which is now Togo from the Niger River valley between the 12th and 14th centuries. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Portuguese explorers and traders visited the coast. For the next 200 years, the coastal region was a major raiding center for Europeans in search of slaves, earning Togo and the surrounding region the name "The Slave Coast." In an 1884 treaty signed at Togoville, Germany declared a protectorate over a stretch of territory along the coast and gradually extended its control inland. Because it became Germany's only self-supporting colony, Togoland was known as its model possession. In 1914, Togoland was invaded by French and British forces and fell after brief resistance. Following the war, Togoland became a League of Nations mandate divided for administrative purposes between France and the United Kingdom.

After World War II, the mandate became a UN trust territory administered by the United Kingdom and France. During the mandate and trusteeship periods, western Togo was administered as part of the British Gold Coast. In 1957, the residents of British Togoland voted to join the Gold Coast as part of the new independent nation of Ghana.

By statute in 1955, French Togo became an autonomous republic within the French union, although it retained its UN trusteeship status. A legislative assembly elected by universal adult suffrage had considerable power over internal affairs, with an elected executive body headed by a prime minister responsible to the legislature. These changes were embodied in a constitution approved in a 1956 referendum. On September 10, 1956, Nicholas Grunitzky became prime minister of the Republic of Togo. However, due to irregularities in the plebiscite, an unsupervised general election was held in 1958 and won by Sylvanus Olympio. On April 27, 1960, in a smooth transition, Togo severed its constitutional ties with France, shed its UN trusteeship status, and became fully independent under a provisional constitution with Olympio as president.

A new constitution in 1961 established an executive president, elected for 7 years by universal suffrage, and a weak National Assembly. The president was empowered to appoint ministers and dissolve the assembly, holding a monopoly of executive power. In elections that year, from which Grunitzky's party was disqualified, Olympio's party won 90% of the vote and all 51 National Assembly seats, and he became Togo's first elected president.

During this period, four principal political parties existed in Togo: the leftist Juvento (Togolese Youth Movement); the Union Democratique des Populations Togolaises (IDPT); the Parti Togolais Du Progres (PTP), founded by Grunitzky but having limited support; and the Unite Togolaise (UT), the party of President Olympio. Rivalries between elements of these parties had begun as early as the 1940s, and they came to a head with Olympio dissolving the opposition parties in January 1962, ostensibly because of plots against the majority party government. Many opposition members, including Grunitzky, fled to avoid arrest.

On January 13, 1963, President Olympio was assassinated in an uprising of army non-commissioned officers dissatisfied with conditions following their discharge from the French army. Grunitzky returned from exile 2 days later to head a provisional government with the title of prime minister. On May 5, 1963, the Togolese adopted a new constitution which reinstated a multi-party system, chose deputies from all political parties for the National Assembly, and elected Grunitzky as president and Antoine Meatchi as vice president. Nine days later, President Grunitzky formed a government in which all parties were represented.

During the next several years, the Grunitzky government's power became insecure. On November 21, 1966, an attempt to overthrow Grunitzky, inspired principally by civilian political opponents in the UT party, was unsuccessful. Grunitzky then tried to lessen his reliance on the army, but on January 13, 1967, Lt. Col. Etienne Eyadema (later Gen. Gnassingbe Eyadema) ousted President Grunitzky in a bloodless military coup. Political parties were banned, and all constitutional processes were suspended. The committee of national reconciliation ruled the country until April 14, when Eyadema assumed the presidency. In late 1969, a single national political party, the Rally of the Togolese People (RPT), was created, and President Eyadema was elected party president on November 29, 1969. In 1972, a national referendum, in which Eyadema ran unopposed, confirmed his

role as the country's president. In late 1979, Eyadema declared a third republic and a transition to greater civilian rule with a mixed civilian and military cabinet. He garnered 99.97% of the vote in uncontested presidential elections held in late 1979 and early 1980. A new constitution also provided for a national assembly to serve primarily as a consultative body. Eyadema was reelected to a third consecutive 7-year term in December 1986 with 99.5% of the vote in an uncontested election. On September 23, 1986, a group of some 70 armed Togolese dissidents crossed into Lome from Ghana in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Eyadema government.

In 1989 and 1990, Togo, like many other countries, was affected by the winds of democratic change sweeping eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. On October 5, 1990, the trial of students who handed out antigovernment tracts sparked riots in Lome. Antigovernment demonstrations and violent clashes with the security forces marked the months that followed. In April 1991, the government began negotiations with newly formed opposition groups and agreed to a general amnesty that permitted exiled political opponents to return to Togo. After a general strike and further demonstrations, the government and opposition signed an agreement to hold a "national forum" on June 12, 1991.

The national forum, dominated by opponents of President Eyadema, opened in July 1991 and immediately declared itself to be a sovereign "National Conference." Although subjected to severe harassment from the government, the conference drafted an interim constitution calling for a 1-year transitional regime tasked with organizing free elections for a new government. The conference selected Joseph Kokou Koffigoh, a lawyer and human rights group head, as transitional prime minister but kept President Eyadema as chief of state for the transition, although with limited powers. A test of wills between the president and his opponents followed over the next 3 years during which President Eyadema



gradually gained the upper hand. Frequent political paralysis and intermittent violence marked this period. Following a vote by the transitional legislature (High Council of the Republic) to dissolve the President's political party—the RPT—in November 1991, the army attacked the prime minister's office on December 3 and captured the prime minister. Koffigoh then formed a second transition government in January 1992 with substantial participation by ministers from the President's party. Opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio, son of the slain president Sylvanus Olympio, was ambushed and seriously wounded, apparently by soldiers, on May 5, 1992.

In July and August 1992, a commission composed of presidential and opposition representatives negotiated a new political agreement. On September 27, the public overwhelmingly approved the text of a new, democratic constitution, formally initiating Togo's fourth republic.

The democratic process was set back in October 1992, when elements of the army held the interim legislature hostage for 24 hours. This effectively put an end to the interim legislature. In retaliation, on November 16, opposition political parties and labor unions declared a general strike intended to force President Eyadema to agree to satisfactory conditions for elections. The general strike largely shut down Lome for months and resulted in severe damage to the economy.

In January 1993, President Eyadema declared the transition at an end and reappointed Koffigoh as prime minister under Eyadema's authority. This set off public demonstrations, and, on January 25, members of the security forces fired on peaceful demonstrators, killing at least 19. In the ensuing days, several security force members were waylaid and injured or killed by civilian oppositionists. On January 30, 1994, elements of the military went on an 8-hour rampage throughout Lome, firing indiscriminately and killing at least 12 people. This incident provoked more than 300,000 Togolese to flee Lome for Benin, Ghana, or the interior of Togo. Most had returned by early 1996. On March 25, 1993, armed Togolese dissident commandos based in Ghana attacked Lome's main military camp and tried unsuccessfully to kill President Eyadema. They inflicted significant casualties, however, which set off lethal reprisals by the military against soldiers thought to be associated with the attackers.

Under substantial domestic and foreign pressure and the burden of the general strike, the presidential faction entered negotiations with the opposition in early 1993. Four rounds of talks led to the July 11 Ouagadougou agreement, which set forth conditions for upcoming presidential and legislative elections and ended the general strike as of August 3, 1993. The presidential elections were set for August 25, but hasty and inadequate technical preparations, concerns about fraud, and the lack of effective campaign organization by the opposition led the chief opposition candidates—former minister and Organization of African Unity Secretary General Edem Kodjo and lawyer Yawovi Agboyibo—to drop out of the race before election day and to call for a boycott. President Eyadema won the elections by a 96.42% vote against token opposition. About 36% of the voters went to the polls; the others boycotted.

Ghana-based armed dissidents launched a new commando attack on military sites in Lome in January 1994. President Eyadema was unhurt, and the attack and subsequent reaction by the Togolese armed forces resulted in hundreds of deaths, mostly civilian. The government went ahead with legislative elections on February 6 and February 20, 1994. In generally free and fair polls as witnessed by international observers, the allied opposition parties UTD and CAR together won a narrow majority in the National Assembly.

On April 22, President Eyadema named Edem Kodjo, the head of the smaller opposition party, the UTD, as prime minister instead of Yawovi Agboyibo, whose CAR party had far more seats. Kodjo's acceptance of the post of prime minister provoked the CAR to break the opposition alliance and refuse to join the Kodjo government.

Kodjo was then forced to form a governing coalition with the RPT. Kodjo's government emphasized economic recovery, building democratic institutions and the rule of law and the return of Togolese refugees abroad. In early 1995, the government made slow progress toward its goals, aided by the CAR's August 1995 decision to end a 9-month boycott of the National Assembly. However, Kodjo was forced to reshuffle his government in late 1995, strengthening the representation by Eyadema's RPT party, and he resigned in August 1996. Eyadema reemerged with a sure grip on power, controlling most aspects of government.

In the June 1998 presidential election, the government prevented citizens from effectively exercising the right to vote. The Interior Ministry declared Eyadema the winner with 52% of the vote in the 1998 election; however, serious irregularities in the government's conduct of the election strongly favored the incumbent and appear to have affected the outcome materially. Although the government did not obstruct the functioning of political opponents openly, the President used the strength of the military and his government allies to intimidate and harass citizens and opposition groups. The government and the state remained highly centralized: President Eyadema's national government appointed the officials and controlled the budgets of all subnational government entities, including prefectures and municipalities, and influenced the selection of traditional chiefs.

The second multi-party legislative elections of Eyadema's 33-year rule were held on March 21, 1999. However, the opposition boycotted the election, in which the ruling party won 79 of the 81 seats in the National Assembly. Those two seats went to candidates from little-known independent parties. Procedural problems and significant fraud, particularly misrepresentation of voter turnout,

marred the legislative elections. After the legislative election, the government announced that it would continue to pursue dialog with the opposition. In June 1999, the RPT and opposition parties met in Paris, in the presence of facilitators representing France, Germany, the European Union (EU), and La Francophonie (an international organization of French-speaking countries), to agree on security measures for formal negotiations in Lome.

In July 1999, the government and the opposition began discussions, and on July 29, 1999, all sides signed an accord called the "Lome Framework Agreement," which included a pledge by President Eyadema that he would respect the constitution and not seek another term as president after his current one expired in 2003. The accord also called for the negotiation of a legal status for opposition leaders, as well as for former heads of state (such as their immunity from prosecution for acts in office). In addition, the accord addressed the rights and duties of political parties and the media, the safe return of refugees, and the security of all citizens. The accord also contained a provision for compensating victims of political violence. The President agreed to dissolve the National Assembly in March and hold new legislative elections, which would be supervised by an independent national election commission (CENI) and which would use the single-ballot method to protect against some of the abuses of past elections. However, the March 2000 date passed without presidential action, and new legislative elections were ultimately rescheduled for October 2001. Because of funding problems and disagreements between the government and opposition, the elections were again delayed, this time until March 2002.

In May 2002 the government scrapped CENI, blaming the opposition for its inability to function. In its stead, the government appointed seven magistrates to oversee preparations for legislative elections. Not surprisingly, the opposition announced it would boycott them. Held in October, as a result of the opposition's boycott the government party won more than two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly. In December 2002, Eyadema's government used this rubber-stamp parliament to amend Togo's constitution, allowing President Eyadema to run for an "unlimited" number of terms. A further amendment stated that candidates must reside in the country for at least 12 months before an election, a provision that barred the participation in the upcoming presidential election of popular Union des Forces du Progres (UFC) candidate, Gilchrist Olympio, who had been in exile since 1992. The presidential election was held June 1, 2003. President Eyadema was re-elected with 57% of the votes, amid allegations of widespread vote rigging.

On April 14, 2004, the Government of Togo signed an agreement with the European Union that included 22 commitments the Government of Togo must honor as a precondition for resumption of EU aid. Two of the most important of these commitments were a constructive national dialogue between the Government of Togo and the traditional opposition parties and free and democratic legislative elections.

By November 2004, Togo had made modest progress on some commitments, releasing 500 prisoners, removing prison sentences from most provisions of the Press Code, and initiating a dialogue with the core opposition parties. Consultations were ongoing with the European Union with regard to when and how to resume development cooperation.

On February 4, 2005 President Gnassingbe Eyadema died. In an unconstitutional move, the military leadership swore in as President Faure Gnassingbe, the late President Eyadema's son. Immediate condemnation by African leaders followed by sanctions of the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union combined with pressure from the international community led finally to a decision on February 25 for Faure Gnassingbe to step down. Protest efforts by the public included a large demonstration in Lome that was permitted to proceed peacefully. Prior to stepping down, Gnassingbe was selected as leader of the ruling party and named as a candidate in the announced presidential elections to choose a successor to Eyadema. Abass Bonfoh, National Assembly Vice President, was selected to serve as Speaker of the National Assembly and therefore simultaneously became interim President. Real power apparently was retained by Gnassingbe as he continued to use the offices of the President while the interim President operated from the National Assembly.

Deeply flawed elections held in April 2005 were marred by violence and widespread accusations of vote tampering, causing tens of thousands of Togolese to flee to neighboring Benin and Ghana. Faure Gnassingbe was pronounced the winner and was pressed by the international community—including regional heads of state—to form a government of national unity, including key opposition figures. After Gnassingbe failed to reach agreement with the opposition, he named as Prime Minister Edem Kodjo of the CPP, an original founder of the ruling RPT and former OAU Secretary-General and Togolese Prime Minister. Kodjo subsequently named a cabinet that kept security-related ministries in the hands of the RPT and did not include any representatives from the genuine opposition.

In August 2006 President Gnassingbe and members of the opposition signed the Global Political Agreement (GPA), bringing an end to the political crisis triggered by Gnassingbe Eyadema's death in February 2005 and the flawed and violent electoral process that followed. The GPA provided for a transitional unity government whose primary purpose would be to prepare for benchmark legislative elections. CAR opposition party leader and human rights lawyer Yawovi Agboyibo was appointed Prime Minister of the transitional government in September 2006. Leopold Gnininvi, president of the CDPA party, was appointed minister of state for mines and energy. The third opposition party, UFC, headed

by Gilchrist Olympio, declined to join the government, but agreed to participate in the national electoral commission and the National Dialogue follow-up committee, chaired by Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore.

The legislative elections held on October 14, 2007, in which all opposition parties participated, were declared free and fair by international and national election observers. The RPT, with 50 seats, won a majority. The UFC took 27 seats, with the CAR receiving the remaining 4. RPT members were elected to all the internal leadership positions within the National Assembly.

On December 3, 2007, President Gnassingbe appointed as the new Prime Minister Komlan Mally, an RPT member and former Minister of Urban Development. The President named the rest of his cabinet on December 13, 2007 from the RPT and a number of lesser parties. The number of ministries was reduced substantially, down to 22 from 35. The other two parties elected to the National Assembly, the UFC and CAR, are not represented in the cabinet.

On September 5, 2008, Prime Minister Mally submitted his resignation to President Faure, who named Gilbert Fossoun Houngbo, formerly of the UNDP, to the position two days later. The rest of the cabinet was named on September 16, 2008 and is composed of members of the RPT, the CDPA, the CPP, and civil society. The number of ministers rose from 22 to 26, plus two secretaries of state.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

President Gnassingbe faces a significant challenge, balancing entrenched interests with the need to implement democratic reforms and revive Togo's deteriorating economy. Togo's long-suffering population has seen its living standards decline precipitously since the beginning of the 1990s. The Togolese judiciary is modeled on the French system. For administrative purposes, Togo is divided into 30 prefectures, each having an appointed prefect.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Faure GNASSINGBE**
Prime Min.: **Gilbert HOUNGBO**
Min. of Agriculture, Animal Breeding, & Fisheries: **Charles AGBA**
Min. of Cities: **Marc AKITEM**
Min. of Commerce, Industry, & Trades: **Jean-Lucien Savi de TOVE**
Min. of Communication & Civic Education: **Kokou TOZOUN**
Min. of Culture, Tourism, & Leisure: **Gabriel DOSSEH-ANYROH**
Min. of Development & Territorial Management: **Yendja YENTCHABRE**
Min. of Economy, Finance, & Privatization: **Payadowa BOUKPESSI**
Min. of Environment & Forest Resources: **Issifou OKOULOU-KANTCHATI**
Min. of Equipment, Transportation, Posts, & Telecommunications: **Kokouvi DOGBE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs & Regional Integration: **Leopold GNININVI**
Min. of Health: **Suzanne ASSOUMA**
Min. of Higher Education & Research: **Fidel NOUBOUKPO**
Min. of Human Rights, Democracy, & Reconciliation: **Loreta AKUETE**
Min. of Justice & Keeper of the Seals: **Tchessa ABI**
Min. of Labor, Employment, & Civil Service: **Yves NAGOU**
Min. of Mines, Energy, & Water: **Kokou AGBEMADON**
Min. of Population, Social Affairs, & Advancement of Women: **Kangi DIALLO, Dr.**
Min. of Primary & Secondary Education: **Komi KLASSOU**
Min. of Relations With Institutions of the Republic: **Comlangan D'ALMEIDA**
Min. of Security: **Pitalouna-Ani LAOKPESSI, Col.**
Min. of Social Promotion, Women's Promotion, & Child Protection: **Sayo BOYOTI**
Min. of Technical Education & Professional Training: **Antoine EDOH**
Min. of Territorial Admin. & Decentralization: **Katari FOLI-BAZI**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Agouta OUYENGA**
Min.-Del. to the Pres. in Charge of Defense & Veterans Affairs:
Min.-Del. to the Prime Min. in Charge of the Private Sector & the Development of the Free Trade Zone: **Idrissa DERMANE**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of Foreign Affairs & African Integration: **Gilbert BAWARA**
Min.-Del. to the Min. of Agriculture, Animal Breeding, & Fisheries: **Kassegne ADJONOU**
Sec. of State to the Min. for Population, Social Affairs, & Advancement of Women: **Agnele MENSAH**
Sec. of State to the Min. of Youth & Sports: **Gilbert ATSU**
Dir., Central Bank:
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Roland Yao KPOTSRA**

ECONOMY

Subsistence agriculture and commerce are the main economic activities in Togo; the majority of the population depends on subsistence agriculture. Food and cash crop production employs the majority of the labor force and contributes about 42% to the gross domestic product (GDP). Coffee and cocoa are traditionally the major cash crops for export. Cotton cultivation increased rapidly in the 1990s, with 173,000 metric tons produced in 1999. After a disastrous harvest in 2001 (113,000 metric tons), production rebounded to 168,000 metric tons in 2002. However, cotton exports have plummeted in recent years due to arrears in payments to farmers, low cotton prices, and poor weather conditions; many cotton farmers have switched to other crops. As of December 2007, the Togolese Government had paid back all arrears to cotton farmers, and the industry is recovering slowly. Despite insufficient rainfall in some areas, the Togolese Government has achieved its goal of self-sufficiency in food crops—corn, cassava, yams, sorghum, millet, and groundnut. Small and medium-sized farms produce most of the food crop; farms range in size from one to three hectares.

Commerce is the most important economic activity in Togo after agriculture. Lome is an important regional trading center. Its port operates 24 hours a day, mainly transporting goods to the inland countries of Mali,

Burkina Faso, and Niger. Lome's "Grand Marche" is known for its entrepreneurial market women, who have a stronghold on many areas of trade, notably in African cloth. In addition to textiles, Togo is an important center for re-export of alcohol, cigarettes, perfume, and used automobiles to neighboring countries. Political instability during the last decade has, however, eroded Togo's position as a trading center.

In the industrial sector, phosphates are Togo's most important commodity. The country has an estimated 60 million metric tons of phosphate reserves. From a highpoint of 2.7 million tons in 1997, production dropped to approximately 1.3 million tons in 2002. The fall in production is partly the result of the depletion of easily accessible deposits and the lack of funds for new investment. The formerly state-run company benefited from private management, which took over in 2001, but the phosphate industry has all but collapsed in recent years. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommended a financial and strategic audit of the sector and that the government seek a new investor to take over. Togo also has substantial limestone and marble deposits.

When bilateral donors cut off assistance to Togo in the early 1990s as a result of the regimes' poor democracy and human rights performance, the country was unable to service its debts to multilateral lenders, who ceased their programs as a result. As part of the Government of Togo's strategy to address donor concerns, in 2006 it undertook discussions with the IMF toward the resumption of a country program. Togo successfully completed an IMF Staff-Monitored Program in mid-2007. Talks are underway to relaunch a regular program, which would hasten Togo's eligibility for World Bank assistance and multilateral debt relief. After the successful legislative elections in October 2007, missions from the EU, IMF, and World Bank visited Togo to assess the financial state of the country. The EU, immediately after the elections, reinitiated assistance with a grant of 26 million Euros to be used for urban development and democracy projects. As of fall 2006, Togo was $104.5 million in arrears to the World Bank and owed $15.4 million to the African Development Bank (ADB).

Togo is one of 16 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The ECOWAS development fund is based in Lome. Togo also is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), which groups eight West African countries using the CFA franc; the eight countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. The West African Development Bank (BOAD), which is associated with UEMOA, is based in Lome. Togo long served as a regional banking center, but that position has been eroded by the political instability and economic downturn of the early 1990s. Historically, France has been Togo's principal trading partner, although other European Union countries are important to Togo's economy.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Although Togo's foreign policy is nonaligned, it has strong historical and cultural ties with western Europe, especially France and Germany, the former colonial powers. Togo recognizes the People's Republic of China, North Korea, and Cuba. It re-established relations with Israel in 1987.

Togo pursues an active foreign policy and participates in many international organizations. It is particularly active in West African regional affairs and in the African Union. Relations between Togo and neighboring states are generally good.

U.S.-TOGOLESE RELATIONS

one of Togo's major trade partners. The largest share of U.S. exports to Togo generally has been used clothing and scrap textiles. Other important U.S. exports include rice, wheat, shoes, and tobacco products, and U.S. personal computers and other office electronics are becoming more widely used.

The Government of Togo, with the support of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), established an export processing zone (EPZ) in Togo in 1989. The zone has attracted private investors interested in manufacturing, assembly, and food processing, primarily for the export market. USAID closed its local office in 1994 and runs local development programs from its office in Accra through nongovernmental organizations in Togo.

Peace Corps began its work in Togo in 1962, which since that time has hosted more than 2,200 Peace Corps Volunteers. Currently there are 114 Volunteers serving in Togo. Volunteers have a successful history of collaboration and involvement with the Togolese people at all levels. Their efforts build upon counterpart relationships and emphasize low-cost solutions that make maximum use of local resources. Partnering with local and international organizations is an important component of Volunteer project activities. Volunteers work to promote self-sufficiency in the areas of small business development, education, environment, and health. All Volunteers, regardless of sector, are trained in how to promote HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LOME (E) 4332 Boulevard Gnassingbe Eyadema, BP 852, Cite-OUA Lome, Togo, APO/FPO 2300 Lome Place, Washington, DC 20521-2300, (228) 261-5470, Fax (228) 261-5501, INMARSAT Tel 00 874 683 134 145, Workweek: 0730-1700 (M-TH), 0730-1230 (F), Website: togo.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS: Kathy Cavanagh
FM: Gary Arkwood

MGT:	Ruth D. Wagoner
POL/ECO:	Susan Walke
AMB:	David B. Dunn
CON:	Melanie Zimmerman
DCM:	J.A. Diffily
PAO:	Mary Daschbach
GSO:	Philip Wilson
RSO:	Matthew Golbus
DAO:	Ltc. Benjamin W. Moody (Accra)
IMO:	David J. Ifversen
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 10, 2008

Country Description: Togo is a small, economically stagnant country in West Africa in a state of political uncertainty. French is the official language, but Ewe and Mina are commonly spoken as well. Tourism facilities are limited, especially outside the capital city, Lomé.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Travelers are encouraged to obtain visas prior to arrival due to recent difficulties with requesting them at the airport in Lomé or at some of the land borders. Visas issued in Togo are limited to 7 days and can take an hour or more to be issued. Travelers applying for visa extensions can also experience significant delays. Vaccination against yellow fever is required before entry. U.S. citizens should carry copies of their U.S. passports and vaccination records with them at all times while traveling in Togo so that, if questioned by local officials, they have proof of identity, U.S. citizenship, and required vaccinations readily available.

Travelers may obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of the Republic of Togo, 2208 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; telephone (202) 234-4212. Overseas, inquiries should be made at the nearest Togolese embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens are urged to avoid political rallies, street demonstrations, and maintain security awareness at all times. Togo has experienced periodic violence, strikes, and political tensions since 1990. Following the death of President Eyadema in February 2005, political activists took to the streets and held demonstrations throughout the country that resulted in more than 500 deaths. Land borders with Ghana and Benin are routinely shut down during elections. The October 2007 legislative elections were nonviolent with only minor incidents reported during the single post-election demonstration. The next major elections are the presidential elections scheduled for 2010.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Over the past year, Togo has seen a marked increase in incidents of violent crime throughout the country, including several recent machete attacks in poorly lit areas of Lomé. Rapid inflation and food shortages have contributed to increases in already critical crime levels in urban areas. Particular areas for Americans to avoid within Lomé, especially during the hours of darkness, include the Grand Marché area, the beach road, and the Ghana-Togo border areas. Travelers should avoid the beach even during daylight hours as purse-snatchings and muggings occur there regularly.

Pick pocketing and theft are common in Togo, especially along the beach and in the market areas of Lomé. While incidents of residential burglary are less common against foreigners, carjacking is on the rise, and even western diplomats have been victims of carjacking. Theft while riding in taxis is also increasing, as thieves steal bags, wallets, and passports. Taxicabs should not be shared with strangers.

Perpetrators of business fraud often target foreigners, including Americans. Formerly associated with Nigeria, these fraud schemes are now prevalent throughout western Africa, including Togo, and pose a danger of both financial loss and physical harm. An increasing number of Americans have been the targets of such scams, losing anywhere from several thousand to several hundred thousand dollars. Typically, these scam operations begin with an unsolicited communication, usually by e-mail, from an unknown individual who describes a situation that promises quick financial gain, often by assisting in the transfer of a large sum of money or valuables out of the country. The scenarios vary: an American must pretend to be the next-of-kin to a recently deceased Togolese who left a fortune unclaimed in a Togolese bank, or a person claiming to be related to present or former political leaders needs assistance in transferring large sums of cash, or even a business deal that appears to be legitimate. The requests are usually for the payment of advance fees, attorneys' fees, or down payments on contracts. The final payoff does not exist; the purpose of the scam is to get any money possible and to gain information about the American's bank account. The best way to avoid becoming a victim of advance-fee fraud is common sense—if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. You should carefully check out any unsolicited business proposals originating in Togo before you commit any funds, provide any goods or services, or undertake any travel. Please check the Embassy web site at http://togo.usembassy.gov for the most current information on fraud in Togo. For additional information, please see the Department of State brochure on International Financial Scams.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the near-

est U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Togo is: 117 or 171 for police, 172 for Gendarmerie, 242 for the Pharmacy on Duty, and 118 for Fire Services.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Togo are limited and of very poor quality, with no adequate emergency medical care. Availability of medications through local pharmacies is unreliable, and travelers should carry all necessary medications, properly labeled, with them. Malaria, a serious and sometimes fatal disease, is prevalent in Togo. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC travelers' health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria.

According to the Togolese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health, there are no HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Togo.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Togo is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

While some major thoroughfares in urban parts of Togo are paved, many secondary streets are not, and become severely flooded every time it rains. Driving conditions are hazardous throughout Togo due to the presence of pedestrians, large numbers of small motorcycles, disorderly drivers (moped, car and truck drivers), livestock on the roadways, and the poor condition of the roads, including deep potholes.

Overland travel off the main network of roads generally requires a four-wheel-drive vehicle. Many drivers in Togo do not obey traffic laws and most traffic signals do not function properly. Drivers should be prepared for other vehicles to run red lights or stops signs and drive in the wrong direction on one-way streets.

Nighttime travel on unfamiliar roads is dangerous. Poorly marked checkpoints, often manned by armed, undisciplined soldiers, exist throughout the country, including in the capital. Banditry, including demands for bribes at checkpoints, has been reported on major inter-city highways, including the Lomé-Cotonou coastal highway.

Travelers are advised to be aware of their surroundings and to drive defensively. At official checkpoints, Togolese security officials prefer that you approach with your dome light on, and have your driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance ready.

Americans should be aware of the staged-accident ploy when driving in Lomé. In this scam, a motorbike will cut in front of you, cause a collision, and draw a crowd, which can turn hostile if you attempt to leave the scene of the so-called accident. Such encounters appear designed to extort money from the vehicle driver. Pedestrians also cause staged accidents. Genuine accidents can also draw hostile crowds. Travelers should drive with their car doors locked and windows closed, and have a cell phone in the vehicle. If you are involved in this kind of accident and can drive away, you should leave the scene, drive to a safe location, and alert both the police and the U.S. Embassy. Violent carjackings are periodically reported in Togo and tend to increase during the summer months and holiday season.

Travelers are advised to exercise caution when using any form of local public transportation. Never get into a taxi with unknown passengers and always agree on the fare before getting in.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Togo, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Togo's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Power outages, voltage fluctuations, and water shortages are common throughout the country. Only certain U.S. credit cards are accepted in Togo. Most major hotels and their restaurants accept American Express, MasterCard, and Visa, while smaller hotels and restaurants do not. Travelers planning to use credit cards should know which cards are accepted before they commit to any transaction. Travelers should keep all credit card

receipts, as unauthorized card use and overcharging are common. There are some Automatic Teller Machines that dispense local currency in major banks and they are generally considered safe. Well-known money transfer firms, including Western Union, operate in Togo.

Photographing places affiliated with the government of Togo, including official government buildings, border crossings, checkpoints, police stations, military bases, utility buildings, airports, government vehicles, and government or military personnel, is strictly prohibited, and local authorities will confiscate film and cameras. Government buildings are not always clearly identifiable, as they vary from being very well marked to being not marked at all.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Togolese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Togoleseare severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Togoare encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Togo. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located on Boulevard Eyadema, Neighborhood Lomé II, Lomé; telephone (228) 261-5470, fax (228) 261-5499. The local mailing address is B.P. 852, Lomé. Its web site is http://lome.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding.

Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that only two orphan visas have been issued to Togolese children within the past five fiscal years.

Adoption Authority: According to the Togolese Civil Code (article 224), the request for adoption must be presented to the Court of the residence of the adoptee. However, the High Court of Lomé has jurisdiction over intercountry adoptions by default.

While a High Court Judge may pronounce a full and final adoption, he/she may do so only after consulting with the Ministry of Social Affairs, and specifically the Adoption office within. The High Court, with the assistance of the Ministry of Social Affairs, will identify and match a child with potential adoptive parents if needed.

High Court of Lomé
Tel: (228) 221 56 39 (this is in fact the social affairs office's number)
B.P. 342
Lomé, Togo

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: According to articles 209 and 210 of the Togolese Civil Code, both married couples (married for at least five years, not separated, and one spouse above 30 years old) and single individuals of 35 years old or older may adopt, provided that at the time of their application to adopt a Togolese child, the applicants do not already have biological children together (a couple with biological children from another union may adopt as long as they have no biological children together at the time of the adoption). The Ministry of Social Affairs does not allow same sex couples to adopt in Togo.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoptions.

Time Frame: When the adoption concerns a child chosen by the adoptive parents, the process can take up to three (3) months, and in some much cases, longer. When the government places a child with prospective adoptive parents, the length of time will vary depending of the complexity of the case and availability of a child.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no private adoption agencies in Togo and attorneys are not authorized to sign adoption decrees. (The only document that notaries are authorized to issue is the Notarized Adoption Consent to be included in file for the Court review and decision. The Notarized Adoption Consent document occurs only after a home study.

Notaries can assist prospective parents in locating the correct office responsible for each paper. They can give some local guidance in what can

be a very confusing bureaucratic process. Prospective adoptive parents can expect to pay attorneys fees for services rendered.

Prospective adoptive parents should contact the U.S. Embassy in Lomé for an updated list of local notaries. Please be advised that some lawyers and notaries may promise to facilitate adoptions or help families overcome legal ineligibilities preventing them from adopting in Togo. The Ministry of Social Affairs has emphasized that these lawyers have no influence in the adoption process, only the High Court and Social Affairs do. The Ministry of Social Affairs has reiterated that the Adoption laws are not flexible and must be abided by fully.

Adoption Fees: Fees involved in the adoption procedure vary from case to case. Prospective adoptive parents should expect to pay a minimum of $150 to as high as $1,000. Also, applicants should include a self-addressed envelope for return postage in their application package to the High Court. The standard postage to the US is CFA 650, which is a little over a dollar. Prospective adoptive parents may wish to consult with overseas delivery services to find out the exact price for pre-paid envelopes for document deliveries from Togo.

Adoption Procedures: An adoption file should first start with an appointment with the officer in charge of adoption at the High Court of Lomé. Tel: (228) 221 56 39. The U.S. Embassy can set up the appointment for you.

The documents and fees incorporated in this flyer should be taken as a guideline; procedures tend to change frequently and without notice, so the court officer will be able to give you specific information on what will be required for each case.

An Application for adoption in form of a letter should be addressed to the President of the High Court of Lomé or the Court of residence of the adoptee together with a required documentation listed below. If a couple initiated the application, both should sign the letter. If the prospective adoptive parent(s) wish to express preferences regarding the age and gender of the child whom they would like to adopt, this information should be included in the letter.

The file should be addressed to:

Service Social près le Tribunal de Première Instance de Lomé
B.P. 342
Contact: Mr. Djikounou Kodjo,
911 5026
Lomé, Togo
Tel. 221 5639

If the adoptive parents have not yet identified a child, the High Court can identify a child who is eligible for adoption. The High Court works with a local NGO (Terre des Hommes) and orphanages. There are no pre-adoption fostering requirements.

Required Documents:

- The adoption request to the President of the High Court of Lomé or other competent court with exact age and gender of prospective adoptee;
- A police clearance certificate for each applicant (in the case of a couple);
- A legalized copy of birth certificate for each applicant (in the case of a couple);
- A legalized copy of marriage certificate for couple;
- A Medical certificate for each applicant;
- A Proof of financial resources (e.g. pay slips/latest bank statement);
- An approved I-600A from USCIS;
- A copy of the Home Study report;
- A copy of the psychological investigation report;
- Photographs (of applicants and their apartment/home);
- Letters of recommendation from family, friends or acquaintances;
- A prepaid or pre-stamped envelope;
- A Notarized Adoption Consent document expressing the consent of both parties (in the case of an adoption by consent).

Simple versus Plenary/Full adoption: For the moment Togolese law does not recognize simple adoption and only offers plenary/full adoptions. Plenary adoption severs the biological ties of a child with his biological antecedents and replaces them with a new identity, that of his adoptive parents.

Adoption versus Legal Guardianship: Togolese child and family law stipulates that the legal guardianship of a child or the delegation of parental authority can be granted in cases where the child is an orphan, or in instances where he/she is considered abandoned or needy with no family to provide elementary care.

The legal guardianship and the delegation of parental authority can be an alternative to adoption and not a conduit to adoption. While by effect of law, the adoption creates a relation of affiliation independently of the origin of the adoptee; the legal guardianship and the delegation of parental authority rather authorize the placement of a child with a family until his/her age of majority. The legal guardianship and the delegation of parental authority can be ended at any time by decision of the Court if new conditions arise.

The High Court, in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs, grants legal guardianship and delegation of parental authority in consideration of the highest interest of the child. However, the Court does not authorize the child to be placed or taken out of the country in view of a full and final adoption. Hence, obtaining custody of a child in order to bring that child to the US to complete an adoption is not legal and should not be envisaged.

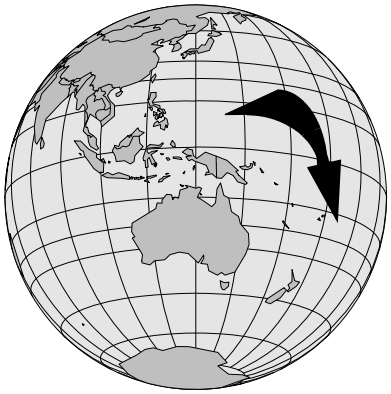
Embassy of the Republic of Togo
2208 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: 202-234-4212/3

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
International Mailing Address
Boulevard Eyadema
B.P. 852
Lomé, Togo
U.S. Mailing Address
Department of State
2300 Lomé Place
Washington, DC 20521-2300

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Togo may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Lomé.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



TONGA

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Kingdom of Tonga

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 747 sq. km. (288 sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Nuku'alofa (pop. 34,000).
Terrain: 171 islands, mainly raised coral but some volcanic; 48 inhabited.
Climate: Tropical, modified by trade winds. Warm season (December to May), cool season (May to December).

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Tongan(s).
Population: (2006 census) 101,990.
Age structure: 38% below 15; 8% over 60.
Annual growth rate: (2006) 0.4%.
Ethnic groups: Tongan 98%, other Polynesian, European.
Religions: Christian.
Languages: Tongan, English.
Education: Literacy (2004)—98.9%.
Health: Infant mortality rate (2006 est.)—19/1,000. Life expectancy at birth—68.56 yrs.: female—73 years; male—67.3 years.
Work force: (2003) 36,500: Agriculture—65%.
Unemployment: (2003) 5.2%.

Government

Type: Constitutional hereditary monarchy.
Constitution: 1875 (revised 1970).
Independence: June 4, 1970.
Government branches: Executive—monarch, prime minister, and cabinet. Legislative—unicameral Legislative Assembly. Judicial—Court of Appeals (Privy Council), Supreme Court, Land Court, Magistrates' Court.
Political subdivisions: Three main island groups—Ha'apai, Tongatapu, Vava'u.
Political parties: People's Democratic Party, Friendly Islands Human Rights and Democratic Movement, Paati Langafonua Tu'uloa.
Suffrage: Universal at age 21.
Budget: (2008/2009 est.) $132 million.

Economy (all figures in U.S. dollars)

GDP: (2006) $232 million.
Per capita GDP: (2006) $2,274.
GDP real growth rate: (2007) 3.5%.
Natural resources: Fish.
Agriculture: (25% of GDP) Products—squash, vanilla beans, root crops, fish, other marine products.
Industry: 17% of GNP.
Services: (2006/2007 est.) 57% of GDP.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$5.7 million; squash, fish, vanilla beans, root crops. Major export markets—New Zealand, U.S, Australia, Japan, Fiji. Imports—$117.9 million; food, machinery and transport equipment, fuels, chemicals. Major import sources—New Zealand, Fiji, Australia, U.S.,Japan
Fiscal year: July 1 to June 30.

GEOGRAPHY

Tonga is an archipelago directly south of Western Samoa. Its 171 islands, 48 of them inhabited, are divided into three main groups—Vava'u, Ha'apai, and Tongatapu—and cover an 800-kilometer (500 mi.)-long north-south line. The largest island, Tongatapu, on which the capital city of Nuku'alofa is located, covers 257 square kilometers (99 sq. mi.). Geologically the Tongan islands are of two types: most have a limestone base formed from uplifted coral formations; others consist of limestone overlaying a volcanic base.

The climate is basically subtropical with a distinct warm period (December-April), during which the temperatures rise above 32ºC (90ºF), and a cooler period (May-November), with temperatures rarely rising above 27ºC (80ºF). The temperature increases from 23ºC to 27ºC (74ºF to 80ºF), and the annual rainfall is from 170 to 297 centimeters (67-117 in.) as one moves from Tongatapu in the south to the more northerly islands closer to the Equator. The mean daily humidity is 80%.

PEOPLE

Tongans, a Polynesian group with a very small mixture of Melanesian, represent more than 98% of the inhabitants. The rest are European, mixed European, and other Pacific Islanders. There also are about 500 Chinese.

More than two-thirds of the population of the Kingdom of Tonga live on its main island, Tongatapu. An increasing number of Tongans have moved into Nuku'alofa, Tonga's capital and only urban and commercial center, where increasingly Western and indigenous Polynesian cultural and living patterns have blended. For instance, the extended family lifestyle is declining, with young couples choosing to live on their own. Nonetheless, village life and kinship ties continue to be important throughout the country. The Christian faith that has dominated Tongan life for almost two centuries is still influential. All commerce and entertainment activities cease on Sunday from midnight, and the constitution declares the Sabbath to be sacred, forever. However, within the past five years, an unsuccessful attempt was made in parliament to amend the Sunday law.

Primary education between ages 6 and 14 is compulsory and free in state schools. The state owns and operates 99% of the primary schools and 44% of secondary schools. Higher education includes teacher training, nursing and medical training, a small private university, a women's business college, and a number of private agricultural schools. Most higher education is pursued overseas.

HISTORY

The word Tonga means "south" in numerous Polynesian languages. Some scholars believe the inhabitants originally came from the islands now known as Samoa. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Tonga islands have been settled since at least 500 B.C., and local traditions have carefully preserved the names of the Tongan sovereigns for about 1,000 years. The power of the Tongan monarchy reached its height in the 13th century. At the time, chieftains exercised political influence as far away as Samoa.

During the 14th century, the King of Tonga delegated much of his temporal power to a brother while retaining the spiritual authority. Sometime later, this process was repeated by the second royal line, thus resulting in three distinct lines: the Tu'i Tonga with spiritual authority, which is believed to have extended over much of Polynesia; the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua; and the Tu'i Kanokupolu. The latter two had temporal authority for carrying out much of the day-to-day administration of the kingdom.

Dutch navigators in 1616 were the first Europeans to sight the Tongan archipelago. The main island of Tongatapu was first visited by the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1643. Continual contact with Europeans, however, did not begin until more than 125 years later. Captain James Cook visited the islands in 1773 and 1777 and gave the archipelago the name "the Friendly Islands" because of the gentle nature of the people he encountered. He, of course, was never aware of the acrimonious debate that raged among contending nobles over who should have the honor of attacking Cook's tiny fleet and killing its sailors. In 1789, the famous mutiny on the British ship, Bounty, took place in the waters between the Ha'apai and Nomuka island groups.

Shortly after Captain Cook's last visit, warfare broke out in the islands as the three lines of kings contended for dominance. At about the same time, young Tongan nobles serving as mercenaries took Tongan culture to Fiji's most eastern island group, the Laus. The first missionaries, attached to the London Missionary Society, arrived in Tonga in 1747. A second missionary group followed in 1822, led by Walter Lawry of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. They converted Taufa'ahau, one of the claimants to the Tu'i Kanokupolu line, and Christianity began to spread throughout the islands.

At the time of his conversion, Taufa'ahau took the name of Siaosi (George) and his consort assumed the name Salote (Charlotte) in honor of King George III and Queen Charlotte of England. In the following years, he united all of the Tongan islands for the first time in recorded history. In 1845, he was formally proclaimed King George Tupou I, and the present dynasty was founded.

He established a constitution and a parliamentary government based, in some respects, on the British model. In 1862, he abolished the existing system of semi-serfdom and established an entirely alien system of land tenure. Under this system every male Tongan, upon reaching the age of 16, was entitled to rent—for life and at a nominal fee—a plot of bushland (called "api tukuhau") of 8.25 acres, plus a village allotment of about three-eights of an acre for his home (api kolo).

Tonga concluded a treaty of friendship and protection with the United Kingdom in 1900 and came under British protection. It retained its independence and autonomy, while the United Kingdom agreed to handle its foreign affairs and protect it from external attack.

During World War II, in close collaboration with New Zealand, Tonga formed a local defense force of about 2,000 troops that saw action in the Solomon Islands. In addition, New Zealand and U.S. troops were stationed on Tongatapu, which became a staging point for shipping.

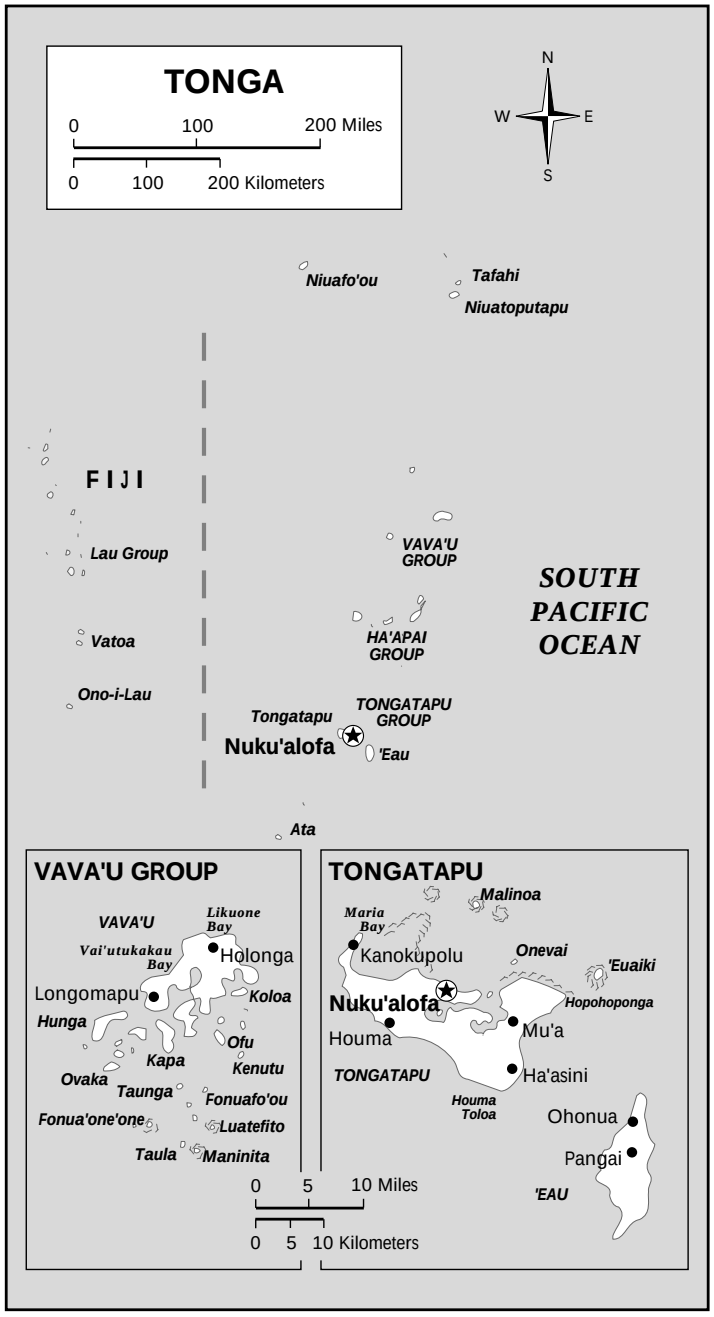
A new treaty of friendship and protection with the United Kingdom, signed in 1958 and ratified in May 1959, provided for a British Commissioner and consul in Tonga who were responsible to the Governor of Fiji in his capacity as British Chief Commissioner for Tonga. In mid-1965 the British Commissioner and consul became directly responsible to the U.K. Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs. Tonga became fully independent on June 4, 1970, an event officially designated by the King as Tonga's "reentry into the community of nations." On August 1, 2008, King

Siaosi Tupou V, who ascended the throne in September 2006, was formally crowned as Tonga's king.

GOVERNMENT

Tonga is the South Pacific's last Polynesian kingdom. Its executive branch includes the prime minister and the cabinet, which becomes the Privy Council when presided over by the monarch. In intervals between legislative sessions, the Privy Council makes ordinances, which become law if confirmed by the legislature. The unicameral Legislative Assembly is controlled by the royal family and nobles. It consists of nine nobles who are elected by the 33 hereditary nobles of Tonga and nine people's representatives elected by universal adult suffrage for 3-year terms. The cabinet includes 12 ministers, appointed by the monarch, currently including two from the nine selected nobles' representatives and two from the nine elected people's representatives. The governors of Ha'apai and Vava'u are appointed to their offices and serve as ex officio members of the cabinet. The Legislative Assembly sits for 4 or 5 months a year.

Tonga's court system consists of the Court of Appeal (Privy Council), the Supreme Court, the Magistrates' Court, and the Land Court. Judges are appointed by the monarch. The only form of local government is through town and district officials who have been popularly elected since 1965. The town official represents the central government in the villages; the district official has authority over a group of villages.



Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

King: **Siaosi TUPOU V**
Prime Minister: **Feleti SEVELE**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Viliami TANGI, Dr.**
Min. of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries, & Forestry: **Peauafi HAUKINIMA**
Min. of Civil Aviation, Marine, & Ports: **Paul KARALUS**
Min. of Communication: **Feleti SEVELE**
Min. of Defense: **Sonatane Tu'akinamolahi Taumoepeau TUPOU**
Min. of Disaster Relief & Activities: **Feleti SEVELE**
Min. of Education, Women's Affairs, & Culture: **Tevita Hala PALEFAU**
Min. of Finance: **Siosiua UTOIKAMANU**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Sonatane Tu'akinamolahi Taumoepeau TUPOU**
Min. of Health: **Vailami TANGI, Dr.**
Min. of Justice: **Malia Viviena 'Alisi Numia Afeaki TAUMOEPEAU**
Min. of Labor, Commerce, & Industries: **Feleti SEVELE**
Min. of Lands, Survey, Natural Resources, & Environment: **Siosaia Ma'Ulupekotofa TUITA**
Min. of Police, Fire Services, & Prisons: **Taimani SIAOSI 'Aho**
Min. of Tourism: **Fineasi FUNAKI**
Min. of Training, Employment, Youth, & Sports: **TU'IVAKANO**
Min. of Works: **NUKU**

Attorney General: **Malia Viviena 'Alisi Numia Afeaki TAUMOEPEAU**
Governor, National Reserve Bank: **Siosiua UTOIKAMANU**
Ambassador to the US: **Fekitamoeloa 'UTOIKAMANU**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Fekitamoeloa 'UTOIKAMANU**

Tonga maintains an embassy at 250 East 51st Street, New York, New York 10022 (tel: 917-369-1136; fax: 917-369-1024). In addition, Tonga has a Consulate General in San Francisco.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

For most of the 20th century Tonga was quiet, inward-looking, and somewhat isolated from developments elsewhere in the world. The Tongans, as a whole, continue to cling to many of their old traditions, including a respect for the nobility. However, an increasingly popular pro-democracy movement is articulating a rising demand for more rights for the common people and curbs to the influence of the nobility. Tonga's complex social structure is essentially broken into three tiers: the king, the nobles, and the commoners. Between the king, nobles, and commoners are matapule, sometimes called "talking chiefs," who are allied with the king or a noble, and who may also hold estates. Obligations and responsibilities among the groups are reciprocal, and although the nobility are able to extract favors from people living on their estates, they likewise must extend favors to their people. Status and rank play a powerful role in personal relationships, even within families.

Tongans are beginning to confront the problem of how to preserve their cultural identity and traditions in the wake of the increasing impact of Western technology and culture. Migration and the gradual monetization of the economy have led to the breakdown of the traditional extended family. Some of the poor, traditionally cared for by the extended family, are now being left without visible means of support. The rapidly increasing population is already too great to provide the constitutionally mandated 8.25-acre plot of land or api tukuhau due each male at age 16. Population density reached 132 persons per square kilometer in 2002, fueling the growing population shift from farm and village to urban centers, where traditional societal and political structures are undergoing steady change. Increasing educational opportunities, expanded media penetration and foreign influences via the country's extensive diaspora have raised the political awareness of Tonga's commoners and stimulated dissent against the current system of government. In the past two decades, calls for political reform have gained wide-ranging support and momentum.

Historically, political reform has been slow in the kingdom. In a departure from this, the late King of Tonga announced in late 2004 that he would henceforth include people's representatives in the 12-member appointed cabinet. Following elections in March 2005, the king appointed two of nine recently elected people's representatives and two nobles' representatives as cabinet ministers. In April 2005, Tonga's first official political party, the People's Democratic Party, was formed, and its candidate was elected to parliament in special May by-elections held to fill the two people's representational seats vacated by the king's cabinet appointments. The by-election also resulted in the election of the first woman to sit in the Tongan parliament in 24 years. Out of the nine current people's representatives, seven are members of Tongan democratic movements and two are independent. When the princely prime minister resigned from office in early 2006, People's Representative Feleti Sevele was appointed as the first commoner prime minister in modern times.

In November 2006, days of political demonstrations deteriorated into a riot, leaving the central business district of Nuku'alofa in ruins. The government declared a state of emergency to restore law and order to the capital. The state of emergency was repeatedly extended, and was still in place in October 2008. In recent years, the king has repeatedly expressed support for political reforms. In August 2007, a tripartite committee of cabinet, nobles', and people's representatives issued a report to the Legislative Assembly recommending major changes to the political system that would result in a sizable majority of people's representatives in the Assembly, with the Assembly then choosing a prime minister from among its members. The prime minister would in turn select a cabinet from among the Assembly members. The Assembly endorsed the committee's report "in general," prior to adjourning in October 2007,. In July 2008, the Assembly passed legislation to establish a constitutional and electoral reform commission charged with undertaking preparatory work for the 2010 political reforms.

ECONOMY

Tonga's economy is characterized by a large non-monetary sector and a heavy dependence on remittances from the more than half of the country's population that lives abroad, chiefly in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Much of the monetary sector of the economy is dominated, if not owned, by the royal family and nobles. This is particularly true of telecommunications and electricity generation and supply. Many small businesses, particularly in the retail sector on Tongatapu, are owned by recent Chinese immigrants who arrived under a cash-for-passports scheme ended in 1998. Royal-owned and Chinese businesses were among those targeted in the November 2006 rioting.

The manufacturing sector consists of handicrafts and a few other very small-scale industries, which together contribute only about 3% of GDP. Commercial business activities are to a large extent dominated by large trading companies found throughout the South Pacific. In September 1974, the country's first com-

mercial trading bank, the Bank of Tonga, opened. Following the destruction of the capital's commercial center in the November 2006 riots, government, business, and international donors have combined forces to support the reconstruction of Nuku'alofa.

Rural Tongans rely on plantation and subsistence agriculture. Squash pumpkins, vanilla beans, and root crops such as cassava and yams, coffee, and noni are the major cash crops. Pigs and poultry are the major types of livestock. Horses are kept for draft purposes, primarily by farmers working their api. More cattle are being raised, and beef imports are declining. Fisheries are also a growing export sector, with tuna, beche de mer, and seaweed being the major marine export products.

Tonga's development plans emphasize a growing private sector, upgrading agricultural productivity, revitalizing the squash and vanilla bean industries, developing tourism, and improving the island's communications and transportation systems. Substantial progress has been made, but much work remains to be done. A small but growing construction sector is developing in response to the inflow of aid monies and remittances from Tongans abroad. Government, international development agencies, and major donor nations have together identified a number of promising means to diversity the Tongan economy. One hope is seen in fisheries; tests have shown that sufficient skipjack tuna pass through Tongan waters to support a fishing industry. Another potential development activity is exploitation of forests, which cover 35% of the kingdom's land area. Plantation coconut trees past their prime bearing years also provide a potential source of lumber.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Tonga maintains cordial relations with most countries and has close relations with its Pacific neighbors. It is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum. In 1998, it recognized China and broke relations with Taiwan. In 1972, Tonga laid claim to the tide-washed, isolated Minerva Reefs, some 480 kilometers southwest of Nuku'alofa, to forestall efforts by a private Anglo-American group to establish an independent Republic of Minerva on the reefs. The reefs are regularly patrolled by the Tonga Defense Services.

DEFENSE

The Tonga Defense Service (TDS) is a 500-person force. The force is comprised of a headquarters platoon and a light infantry company. A coastal naval unit of four small patrol boats and amphibious landing craft operates as a component of the TDS. The force's mission is to assist in maintenance of public order, to patrol coastal waters and fishing zones, and to engage in civic action and national development projects. The main base of operations is the capital, Nuku'alofa. The TDS is partially supported by defense cooperation agreements with both Australia and New Zealand, which support the TDS with small in-country detachments of military technicians. The United States military provides training to the TDS and conducts humanitarian civic action projects in Tonga. Since 2002, TDS soldiers have been deployed as part of a multi-national regional peacekeeping force in the Solomon Islands. Tonga's third contingent of TDS soldiers deployed to Iraq departed for Baghdad in February 2008. Since the November 2006 riots, TDS have had authority to maintain law and order and assist the police within a declared restricted area of Nuku'alofa.

U.S.-TONGA RELATIONS

The United States and Tonga enjoy close cooperation on a range of international issues. Officers of the American Embassy in Suva, Fiji, are concurrently accredited to Tonga and make periodic visits since the United States has no permanent consular or diplomatic offices in Tonga. Peace Corps Volunteers teach and provide technical assistance to Tongans. Tonga has no embassy in Washington, DC, but has a permanent representative to the United Nations in New York who also is accredited as ambassador to the United States. A large number of Tongans reside in the United States, particularly in Utah, California, and Hawaii. Trade between the U.S. and Tonga is relatively low, but it has seen a steady increase in recent years. In 2001 U.S. exports to Tonga totaled $4.8 million, and by 2005 they had increased to $10.78 million. In 2005, the U.S. imports from Tonga totaled $6.45 million.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SUVA (E) 31 Loftus Street, Suva, 679-331-4466, Fax 679-330-5106, Workweek: 0800–1730 (Mon-Thu), 0800–1500 (Fri), Website: http://suva.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Margaret Kennett
DCM/CHG:	Jeffrey Robertson
ECO:	Mark Prokop
HRO:	Ila Jurisson
MGT:	Ila Jurisson
CON:	Debra J. Towry
DCM:	Richard Pruett
PAO:	Jeffrey Robertson
COM:	Quinn N. Plant
GSO:	Scott Gallaway
RSO:	Mathew McCormack
CLO:	Lynne T. Murphy
DAO:	Ltc. Patrick D. Reardon
EEO:	Heather Coble
FMO:	Ila Jurisson
ICASS Chair:	Col. Patrick D. Reardon
IMO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISSO:	Steven A. Baldwin
POL:	Mark S. Prokop
State ICASS:	Joseph P. Murphy

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 16, 2008

Country Description: Tonga is a South Pacific island nation consisting

of 171 islands, of which 45 are inhabited. Tonga is a constitutional monarchy and a member of the British Commonwealth. Its agrarian economy is developing and its tourist industry, although limited, is growing. Tourist facilities are concentrated in and around the main island of Tongatapu where the capital, Nuku'alofa, is located.

The Tongan Tourist Bureau has a wide range of information of interest to travelers. The web site is www.tongaholiday.com.

Entry Requirements: A passport and an onward/return ticket are required. Visas are not required for stays of up to 30 days. Tonga collects a departure tax. For further information about entry requirements, travelers, particularly those planning to enter by sea, may wish to contact the Consulate General of Tonga at 360 Post Street, Suite 604, San Francisco, California 94108; telephone 415-781-0365.

Safety and Security: An organized movement for political reform exists in Tonga. Protests in November 2006 became violent, resulting in fires that destroyed much of the downtown area of Nuku'alofa. American citizens are advised to avoid large public gatherings and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations, as they could turn violent at any time. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site where the current Worldwide Caution Public Announcement, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements can be found. Up-to-date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Tonga has three emergency contact numbers: 911 connects to the Tonga Telecommunications emergency operators; 922 connects directly to the police; and 933 connects directly to the hospital. Americans requiring immediate emergency services in Tonga should call one of these emergency contact numbers.

Crime: Although the crime rate in Tonga is low compared to that in the U.S. and most European countries, petty crime and theft does take place. Though rare, crimes against persons occur as well. Visitors should not be complacent regarding personal safety or the protection of valuables.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji at (679) 331 4466 (ask for American Citizen Services). If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Tonga are extremely limited. The cities of Nuku'alofa and Neiafu have hospitals with limited emergency and outpatient facilities. Local residents and visitors with serious medical problems are often referred to New Zealand for treatment. For additional information on medical visas for New Zealand, contact the Embassy of New Zealand, 37 Observatory Circle NW, Washington, DC 20008, (202) 328-4800 or the Consulate General in Los Angeles (310) 207-1605. Serious medical conditions requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Tonga is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

No roadside assistance is available. Traffic moves on the left in Tonga. While roads in Nuku'alofa are paved, most other roads are not. Animals and unwary pedestrians walking in the road make night driving on unlit secondary roads hazardous.

For specific information concerning Tonga driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Consulate General of Tonga in San Francisco. Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.tongaholiday.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Tonga's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Tonga's air carrier operations.

For further information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Tonga's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Tonga of items such as firearms, explosives, motor vehicles, eggs, and certain types of alcohol. It is advisable to contact the Consulate General of Tonga in San Francisco for specific information regarding customs requirements.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. U.S. citizens who are detained are encouraged to request that a consular officer from the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji, be notified.

The cyclone season is November through April. The Fiji Meteorological Service maintains a Tropical Cyclone Warning Center (TCWC) in Nadi serving the Southwest Pacific Region. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available online at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1207.html and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than those in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Tongan law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy or other U.S. diplomatic or consular post in Tonga. The U.S. Embassy in Fiji provides assistance for U.S. citizens in Tonga. Americans living or traveling in Tonga are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Suva through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Tonga.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The U.S. Embassy in Fiji is located at 31 Loftus Street in Fiji's capital city of Suva. The telephone number is (679) 331-4466; the fax number is (679) 330-2267. Information may also be obtained by visiting the Embassy's home page at http://suva.usembassy.gov. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Tongan law states that prospective adopting parents must reside with the child for period of at least six months prior to the application for adoption of that child. In addition, under Tongan law, only illegitimate children may be adopted.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The Supreme Court of the Kingdom of Tonga is the adoption authority. The address for the Supreme Court in Tonga is:

P. O. Box 11
Nuku'alofa, Tonga
Phone: (676) 23599.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Tongan law permits both single and married foreigners to adopt Tongan children. There is no specific minimum or maximum age requirement for adoptive parents. However, the prospective parents must show themselves able to provide adequate emotional and financial support for the child. Under no circumstances are proxy adoptions allowed.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must reside with the child for six months prior to the application for adoption of that child. The Supreme Court occasionally waives the residency requirements in exceptional cases.

Time Frame: Currently, the typical time frame from physically meeting the child to having an adoption order is six to eight months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Adoption agencies and intermediaries specializing in adoption do not exist in Tonga.

Many prospective adoptive parents work through church organizations in Tonga to request assistance in identifying children who might be available for adoption. In practice, most Tongan adoptions occur within the child's birth family.

Although Tonga does not have adoption agencies, American prospective adoptive parents may still choose to work with a U.S. adoption agency to assist with the U.S. portions of the adoption process. If they do so, they should fully research any such adoption agency or facilitator.

Adoption Fees: The Tongan government fee is around US$17 per child, up to a maximum of less than US$25 if adopting more than one child. Tongan attorney fees generally range between US$300 and US$400 per child.

Adoption Procedures: Prospective adoptive parents must first identify a child whom they wish to adopt. They then file an application for letters of adoption with the office of the Registrar of the Supreme Court. After reviewing the application to ensure that it is in order, the Supreme Court appoints a Guardian Ad Litem (usually a representative from Crown Law) to compile a report with recommendations on whether or not the applicants should be granted letters of adoption.

When the Court receives the Guardian Ad Litem report, it will set a date to hear the application, which is usually done in chambers in the presence of the applicants. At that hearing, the judge will make a decision and notify the applicants (if they aren't present).

It is customary for Tongans who wish to adopt a child to contribute to the child's maintenance between the time of the request to the biological mother and the issuance of letters of adoption. All other payments are prohibited. An affidavit of declarations about the applicants must specifically declare any payments.

The sworn affidavit of declaration from prospective adoptive parents must declare any payments made towards the welfare of the child. Tongan authorities take child buying very seriously and they would like to rule out is any circumstance/instance in which the child's biological mother is paid to give her consent to the adoption of the child.

Almost all Tongan adoptions involve direct relinquishments of children by their birth mothers to the adoptive parents, and almost all are arranged either between relatives, by close friends, or through religious institutions.

Please note that in some instances, such direct relinquishments, while appropriate under Tongan law, may complicate the U.S. immigration process.

American prospective adoptive parents considering a Tongan adoption in which the child will be directly relinquished should contact the U.S. Embassy in Suva (Fiji) early in the process to confirm whether the circumstances of their specific case will or will not preclude the child's immigration to the United States.

Required Documents: Prospective adopting parents must provide the following documents when submitting an application for adoption to the Tonga Supreme Court:

- An independent home study report must be submitted by all overseas applicants for adoptions.
- Application for adoption.
- Evidence that the adoption is in the best interest of the child. (For example, a statement of the prospective adoptive parents' motives for adoption, proof of financial capabilities, etc.)
- Child's original birth certificate.
- Prospective adoptive parents' marriage license (if married).
- Prospective adoptive parents' birth certificates.
- Prospective adoptive parents' financial information, such as bank statements, job letters, etc.
- Death certificate(s) of birth parents of child (if deceased).
- Consent to adoption from biological mother.
- Sworn affidavits of applicants for letters of adoption and sworn affidavits of the child's biological parents.
- Two letters of support/recommendations from the prospective adoptive parents neighbors or friends stating the suitability of applicants for adopting.
- Fee of US $5.00 for the application for adoption.

Once the application is approved, the applicants have to pay a second fee of US$12.00 for the Letter of Adoption.

Guardianship: The Tongan Legal Guardianship Act of 2004 makes it possible for Tongan authorities to grant legal guardianship of legitimate children under age 18.

However, Tongan law is silent about (neither prohibits nor approves) whether such children may be removed from Tonga to be adopted in another country. American citizens interested in pursuing legal guardianship of a Tongan child should consult a Tongan attorney for the latest information.

Passports: Current Tongan law places restrictions on the issuance of Tongan passports to Tongan children adopted by foreigners. The children may obtain Tongan passports, but only in their birth (rather than adoptive) names.

It is advisable that applicants for letters of adoption that their prospective adoptive child already has a Tongan passport before the adoption order has been granted. American prospective adoptive parents do not have legal standing to apply for a Tongan passport for a minor child.

The biological parent or a Tongan legal guardian must consent to the passport application. Tongan law clearly states, "The adopted person shall bear the name of and be deemed to be of the same nationality as the person to whom Letters of Adoption have been granted by the Court."

Note: The Tongan Government is proposing to pass a Dual Nationality Law in the near future. It is unclear, however, what this law may contain or how it may affect adoptions of Tongan children.

Embassy of the Kingdom of Tonga
250 East 51st Street,
New York, NY 10022
Tel: (917) 369-1136
Fax: (917) 369-1024

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigrationo of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States
31 Loftus Street
P.O. Box 21
Suva, Fiji
Tel: (679) 331-4466
E-mail: consularsuva@state.gov
Web site: http://suva.usembassy.gov/index.html

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Tonga may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Suva.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, Toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 5,128 sq. km. (1,980 sq. mi.), about the size of Delaware. Trinidad—4,828 sq. km. (1,864 sq. mi). Tobago—300 sq. km. (116 sq. mi).
Cities: Capital—Port of Spain (metropolitan pop. 310,000). Other cities—San Fernando, Chaguanas, Arima, Scarborough (Tobago).
Terrain: Plains and low mountains.
Climate: Tropical; principal rainy season is June through December.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Trinidadian(s) and Tobagonian(s). (Note: A popular combination name for Trinidadians and Tobagonians is Trinbagonians.)
Population: (2007 est.) 1,303,188.
Annual growth rate: 0.4%.
Ethnic groups: (2000) East Indian 40.0%, African 37.5%, mixed 20.5%, European 0.6%, Chinese 0.3%, other/not stated 1.1%.
Religions: (2000) Roman Catholic 26.0%, Hindu 22.5%, Anglican 7.8%, Pentecostal 6.8%, Baptist 7.2%, other Christian 5.8%, Muslim 5.8%, Seventh Day Adventist 4%, other 10.8%, unspecified 1.4%, none 1.9%.
Languages: English.
Education: Years compulsory—8. Literacy—98.6%.
Health: Infant mortality rate: (2005 est.)—25.81/1,000. Life expectancy (2006 est.)—66 yrs. male; 68 yrs. female.
Work force: (615,400 in 2007 est.) Trade and services 44.1%, construction 16.8%, government 20.1%, manufacturing 10.2%, agriculture/sugar 3.9%, oil/gas 3.8%, utilities 1.1%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.
Independence: August 31, 1962.
Constitution: September 24, 1976.
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral parliament. Judicial—independent court system; highest court of appeal is Privy Council (London).
Political subdivisions: Nine regional corporations, two city corporations, three borough corporations, one ward (Trinidad); Tobago House of Assembly.
Political parties: People's National Movement (PNM); United National Congress (UNC); Congress of the People (COP); other minor parties, including the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR).
Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy (2007 est.)

GDP: U.S. $20.9 billion (current prices).
Annual growth rate: 5.5% (2007 est.), 12.2% (2006 preliminary).
Per capita income: U.S. $16,041.
Natural resources: Oil and natural gas, timber, fish. Petroleum (crude oil, natural gas, petrochemicals) 44.3% of GDP.
Financial services: 13.5% of GDP.
Distribution including restaurants: 14% of GDP.
Manufacturing: (food and beverages, assembly, chemicals, printing) 7.2% of GDP: (excludes oil refining and petrochemical industries).
Construction and Quarrying: 7.4% of GDP.
Transport/storage/communication: 6.6% of GDP.
Government: 4.6% of GDP.
Education, cultural community services: 2% of GDP.
Electricity and water: 1.3% of GDP.
Agriculture: (sugar, poultry, other meat, vegetables, citrus) 0.4% of GDP.
Hotels and guesthouses: 0.2% of GDP.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Columbus landed on and named Trinidad in 1498, and Spaniards settled the island a century later. Spanish colonizers largely wiped out the original inhabitants—Arawak and

Carib Indians—and the survivors were gradually assimilated. Although it attracted French, free black, and other non-Spanish settlers, Trinidad remained under Spanish rule until the British captured it in 1797. During the colonial period, Trinidad's economy relied on large sugar and cocoa plantations. Tobago's development was similar to other plantation islands in the Lesser Antilles and quite different from Trinidad.

During the colonial period, French, Dutch, and British forces fought over possession of Tobago, and the island changed hands 22 times—more often than any other West Indies island. Britain took final possession of Tobago in 1803. The two islands of Trinidad and Tobago were incorporated into a single colony in 1888. Trinidad and Tobago achieved full independence in 1962 and joined the British Commonwealth. Trinidad and Tobago became a republic in 1976.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago are mainly of African or East Indian descent. Virtually all speak English. Small percentages also speak Hindi, French patois, and several other dialects. Trinidad has two major folk traditions: Creole and East Indian. Creole is a mixture of African elements with Spanish, French, and English colonial culture. Trinidad's East Indian culture came to the island beginning May 30, 1845 with the arrival of indentured servants brought to fill a labor shortage created by the emancipation of the African slaves in 1838. Most remained on the land, and they still dominate the agricultural sector, but many have become prominent in business and the professions. East Indians have retained much of their own way of life, including Hindu and Muslim religious festivals and practices.

GOVERNMENT

Trinidad and Tobago is a unitary state, with a parliamentary democracy modeled after that of Great Britain. Although completely independent, Trinidad and Tobago acknowledged the British monarch as the figurehead chief of state from 1962 until 1976. In 1976 the country adopted a republican Constitution, replacing Queen Elizabeth with a president elected by Parliament. The general direction and control of the government rests with the cabinet, led by a prime minister and answerable to the bicameral Parliament.

The members of the House of Representatives are elected to terms of at least 5 years. Elections may be called earlier by the president at the request of the prime minister or after a vote of no confidence in the House of Representatives. Parliamentary elections took place on November 5, 2007; the number of seats contested in the House of Representatives in that vote increased from 36 to 41.

The Senate's 31 members are appointed by the president: 16 on the advice of the prime minister, 6 on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and 9 independents selected by the president from among outstanding members of the community. Elected councils administer the nine regional, two city, and three borough corporations on Trinidad. Since 1980 the Tobago House of Assembly has governed Tobago with limited responsibility for local matters.

The country's highest court is the Court of Appeal, whose chief justice is appointed by the president after consultation with the prime minister and leader of the opposition. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London decides final appeal on some matters. Member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) selected Trinidad as the headquarters site for the new Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which is intended eventually to replace the Privy Council for all CARICOM states. The CCJ heard its first case in August 2005. Despite having its seat in Port of Spain, the CCJ has not yet supplanted the Privy Council for Trinidad and Tobago due to a legislative dispute over constitutional reform.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **George Maxwell RICHARDS**
Prime Min.: **Patrick MANNING**
Min. of Agriculture, Land, & Marine Resources: **Arnold PIGGOTT**
Min. of Community Development, Culture, & Gender Affairs: **Marlene MCDONALD**
Min. of Education: **Esther LE GENDRE**
Min. of Energy & Energy Industries: **Conrad ENILL**
Min. of Finance: **Karen NUNEZ-TESHEIRA**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Paula GOPEE-SCOON**
Min. of Health: **Jerry NARACE**
Min. of Labor & Small & Micro-Enterprise Development: **Rennie DUMAS**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **Peter TAYLOR**
Min. of Local Govt.: **Hazel MANNING**
Min. of National Security: **Martin JOSEPH**
Min. of Planning, Housing, & the Environment: **Emily GAYNOR DICK-FORDE**
Min. of Public Admin.: **Kennedy SWARTSINGH**
Min. of Public Information: **Neil PARSANLAL**
Min. of Public Utilities: **Mustapha ABDUL-HAMID**
Min. of Science, Technology, & Tertiary Education: **Christine KANGALOO**
Min. of Social Development: **Amery BROWNE**
Min. of Sports & Youth Affairs: **Gary HUNT**
Min. of Trade & Industry: **Lenny SAITH**
Min. of Tourism: **Joseph ROSS**
Min. of Works & Transport: **Colm IMBERT**
Min. in the Ministry of Finance: **Mariano BROWNE**
Min. in the Office of the Prime Min.: **Lenny SAITH**
Attorney Gen.: **Bridgette ANNISETTE-GEORGE**
Governor, Central Bank: **Ewart WILIAMS**
Ambassador to the US: **Glenda MOREAN-PHILLIP**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Marina Annette VALERE**

The embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is located at 1708 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036 (tel. 202-467-6490; fax. 202-785-3130).



POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The first political party in Trinidad and Tobago with a continuing organization and program—the People's National Movement (PNM)—emerged in 1956 under Dr. Eric Williams, who became Prime Minister upon independence and remained in that position until his death in 1981. Politics have generally run along ethnic lines, with Afro-Trinidadians supporting the PNM and Indo-Trinidadians supporting various Indian-majority parties, such as the United National Congress (UNC). Most political parties, however, have sought to broaden their appeal and their candidate lists for the November elections reflect this.The PNM remained in power following the death of Dr. Williams, but its 30-year rule ended in 1986 when the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), a "rainbow party" aimed at Trinidadians of both African and Indian descent, won a landslide victory by capturing 33 of 36 seats. Tobago's A.N.R. Robinson, the NAR political leader, became Prime Minister. The NAR began to break down when the Indian component withdrew in 1988. Basdeo Panday, leader of the old United Labor Front (ULF), formed the new opposition with the UNC.

In July 1990, the Jamaat al Muslimeen, an extremist Black Muslim group with an unresolved grievance against the government over land claims, tried to overthrow the NAR government. The group held the prime minister and members of parliament hostage for 5 days while rioting and looting shook Port of Spain. After a long standoff with the police and military, Jamaat leader Yasin Abu Bakr and his followers surrendered to Trinidad and Tobago authorities. In 1992 the Court of Appeal upheld the validity of a government amnesty given to the Jamaat members during the hostage crisis. Abu Bakr and 113 other Jamaat members were jailed for two years while other courts debated the amnesty's validity. All 114 members were eventually released after a ruling by the U.K. Privy Council.

In 1991 elections, the NAR lost control of the government to the PNM, led by Patrick Manning who became prime minister. The Panday-led UNC finished second and replaced the NAR as chief opposition party. In 1995 Manning called for elections, in which the PNM and UNC both won 17 seats and the NAR won two seats. The UNC allied with the NAR and formed the new government, with Panday becoming prime minister—the first prime minister of East Indian descent. Although elections held in 2000 returned the UNC to power, the UNC government fell in 2001 with the defection of three of its parliamentarians, and the subsequent elections resulted in an even 18-18 split between the UNC and the PNM. President A.N.R. Robinson bypassed his former party colleague Panday by inviting PNM leader Manning to form a government, but the inability to break the tie delayed Parliament from meeting. Manning called elections in 2002, after which the PNM formed the next government with a 20-16 majority.

Elections were held again on November 5, 2007, with the PNM winning 26 seats and the UNC securing the remaining 15; the recently-formed Congress of the People party (COP) won no seats. Prime Minister Manning took his oath of office on November 7 to begin another 5-year term. All three major parties are committed to free market economic policies and

increased foreign investment. Trinidad and Tobago has remained cooperative with the United States in the regional fight against narcotics trafficking and on other issues.

ECONOMY

The twin-island nation of Trinidad and Tobago continues to experience real GDP growth as a result of economic reforms, tight monetary policy, fiscal responsibility, and high oil prices. In 2006 the country experienced a real GDP growth rate of 12.2%. This was expected to level off to 5.5% in 2007. The PNM-led government continues its sound macroeconomic policies. Long-term growth looks promising, as Trinidad and Tobago further develops its oil and gas resources and the industries dependent on natural gas, including petrochemicals, fertilizers, iron/steel and aluminum. Additional growth potential also exists in financial services, telecommunications and transport. Strong growth in Trinidad and Tobago over the past few years has led to trade surpluses, even with high import levels due to industrial expansion and increased consumer demand. The debt service ratio was 2.8% in 2006, up from 1.8% in 2005. In 2006, unemployment fell to 5% down from 6.7% in 2005. In the first quarter of 2007, unemployment was at 6.5%. Headline inflation peaked at 10% (year-on-year) in October 2006, then moderated to 7.9% as of August 2007. Food price inflation slowed to 16.7% (year-on-year) in August 2007, down from 22% in October 2006. After raising its interest rates eight times in 2006, the Central Bank has maintained the rate at 8.0% since September 2006. There are no currency or capital controls and the Central Bank maintains the TT dollar in a lightly managed, stable float against the U.S. dollar. From October 2006 to March 2007, the exchange rate experienced some fluctuation between TT$6.3122 and TT$6.3288 to US $1. The rate as of October 9, 2007, was TT$6.3335 to US$1.

Trinidad and Tobago has made a transition from an oil-based economy to one based on natural gas. In 2006, natural gas production averaged 4000 million standard cubic feet per day (mmscf/d), compared with 3200 mmscf/d in 2005. The petrochemical sector, including plants producing methanol, ammonia, urea, and natural gas liquids, has continued to grow in line with natural gas production, which continues to expand and should meet the needs of new industrial plants coming on stream over the next few years, including iron, aluminum, ethylene and propylene. In December 2005, the Atlantic LNG fourth production module or "train" for liquefied natural gas (LNG) began production. Train 4 has increased Atlantic LNG's overall output capacity by almost 50% and is among the largest LNG trains in the world at 5.2 million tons/year of LNG. Trinidad and Tobago is the fifth-largest exporter of LNG in the world and the single largest supplier of LNG to the U.S., supplying two-thirds of all LNG imported into the U.S. As a result of Atlantic LNG Train 4, the energy sector experienced 21.4% growth in 2006 and accounted for nearly 47% of GDP at that year's end.

Growth in the non-energy sector was projected to increase slightly, from 6.6% in 2006 to 6.7% in 2007. The manufacturing sector was estimated to be growing by 8.0% in 2007, down from 9.4% in 2006. The food, beverage and tobacco industry is expected to expand at a rate of 13.4%, up from 8.4% in 2006. This is due to improved performance in meat, poultry, and fish (19%); tobacco (32%); alcoholic beverages (25%); and non-alcoholic beverages (15%). In 2007, slower growth was also expected in other industries, with chemicals and non-metallic minerals expected to slow to 6.4% in 2007 from 12.3% in 2006, and assembly type and related industries slowing to 5.1% growth in 2007 from 10.1% in 2006. Improved growth was expected from the remaining industries, i.e., wood and related products (4.5%); printing and publishing (7.7%); textile, garments, and footwear (0.6%); and miscellaneous manufacturing (11.9%). Services sector growth was expected to reach 5.2% in 2007, up from 4.3% in 2006, led by construction sector growth resulting from Trinidad and Tobago Government investment in housing and infrastructure and the commencement of new infrastructure projects such as the highway interchange. A marginal increase of 0.3% was projected for the domestic agriculture sector. The government is seeking to diversify the economy to reduce dependence on the energy sector and to achieve self-sustaining growth. The diversification strategy focuses on seven key industries: yachting; fish and fish processing; merchant marine; music and entertainment; film; food and beverage; and printing and packaging. A national research and development fund will be established to stimulate innovation and investment in a new technology park, currently under construction.

Trinidad and Tobago has an open investment climate. Since 1992, almost all investment barriers have been eliminated. The government continues to welcome foreign investors. The government has a double taxation agreement, a bilateral investment treaty and an intellectual property rights agreement with the United States. The stock of U.S. direct investment in Trinidad and Tobago was $3.85 billion as of 2006. Total foreign direct investment inflows over the last five years amounted to approximately US$6 billion. Among recent and ongoing investment projects are several involving U.S. firms: ISG Trinidad started operations in November 2004 in a plant that has the capacity to produce 500,000 metric tons annually of hot briquetted iron. In December 2006 Nucor began producing direct reduced iron for shipment to the U.S. at its plant in Trinidad, which has a production capacity of 2.0 million tons per year. Two aluminum smelter plants are also planned, one of them to be owned by Alcoa. The first major business-class hotel to be opened in several years bears the Marriott Courtyard brand. A Hyatt-managed hotel was scheduled to open in late 2007, part of a multimillion-dollar waterfront development project in Port of Spain.

Trinidad and Tobago's infrastructure is adequate by regional standards.

Expansion of the Crown Point airport on Tobago is being planned, which follows opening of the Piarco terminal on Trinidad in 2000. There is an extensive network of paved roads. Traffic is a worsening problem throughout Trinidad, as the road network is not well suited to the rising volume of vehicles and only a rudimentary mass transport system exists as an alternative. Utilities are fairly reliable in cities, but some rural areas suffer from power failures, water shortages in the dry season, and flooding in the rainy season due to inadequate drainage. Infrastructure improvement is one of the government's budget priorities, especially rehabilitating rural roads and bridges, rural electrification, flood control, and improved drainage and sewerage. The government has awarded a contract for the preliminary design of a light rail system which is projected to be completed in five to six years.

Telephone service is modern and fairly reliable, although significantly more costly to consumers than comparable U.S. service, including for wireline, wireless, and broadband services. Change began in the wireless market when the new Telecommunications Authority invited two firms to offer competition to state-owned monopoly incumbent TSTT (co-owned by Cable & Wireless). Two wireless providers, bmobile and Digicel, are already operational, while a third licensee, Laqtel, had not launched service as of October 2007. Two companies, Telestar Cable System Limited and Green Dot Limited, won an October 2007 Telecommunication Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) auction for radio spectrum to provide public Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) services. Improvements in service and price are likely as competition in the Internet services market increases in coming years.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

As the most industrialized and second-largest country in the English-speaking Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago has taken a leading role in the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), and strongly supports CARICOM economic integration efforts and has advocated for a greater measure of political security and integration. CARICOM members are working to establish a Single Market and Economy (CSME). In early 2006, Trinidad and Tobago, in conjunction with the larger CARICOM nations, inaugurated the CARICOM Single Market, a precursor to the full CSME. As a first step toward greater security integration, Trinidad and Tobago and the other members of CARICOM collaborated with the U.S. on an Advance Passenger Information System in preparation for the 2007 Cricket World Cup tournament, which took place in nine Caribbean venues in March and April 2007.

Trinidad and Tobago is active in the Summit of the Americas (SOA) process of the Organization of American States (OAS). It recently hosted hemisphere-wide ministerial meetings on energy (2004) and education (2005), as well as an OAS meeting on terrorism and security (also 2005). It also hosted a negotiating session in 2003 for the OAS Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and aspires to hosting an eventual FTAA secretariat. It will host the SOA summit in 2009.

Trinidad and Tobago is a democracy that maintains close relations with its Caribbean neighbors and major North American and European trading partners. After its 1962 independence, Trinidad and Tobago joined the UN and the Commonwealth. In 1967, it became the first Commonwealth country to join the OAS. In 1995, Trinidad played host to the inaugural meeting of the Association of Caribbean States and has become the headquarters location for this 25-member grouping, which seeks to further economic progress and cooperation among its members.

U.S.-TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO RELATIONS

The United States and Trinidad and Tobago enjoy cordial relations. U.S. interests here and throughout the hemisphere focus on increasing investment and trade, and ensuring more stable supplies of energy. They also include enhancing Trinidad and Tobago's political and social stability and positive regional role through assistance in drug interdiction, health issues, and legal affairs. The U.S. embassy was established in Port of Spain in 1962, replacing the former consulate general.

International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs were suspended in 2003 under the terms of the American Service Members Protection Act (ASPA), because Trinidad and Tobago, a member of the International Criminal Court, had not concluded a bilateral non-surrender or "Article 98" agreement with the United States. However, when the Congress de-linked IMET funding from the Article 98 sanctions, a nominal allocation of $45,000 in IMET was reinstated for late 2007. Currently, the main source of financial assistance provided to the defense force is through State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funds, Traditional Commander's Activities funds, the State Partnership Program (with Delaware), and IMET. Assistance to Trinidad and Tobago from U.S. military, law enforcement authorities, and in the area of health issues remains important to the bilateral relationship and to accomplishing U.S. policy objectives.

The U.S. Government also provides technical assistance to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago through a number of existing agreements. The Department of Homeland Security has a Customs Advisory Team working with the Ministry of Finance to update its procedures. Similarly, the Treasury Department had an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) advising team that worked with the Board of

Inland Revenue modernizing its tax administration; this long-running project ended in October 2007. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a part of the Department of Health and Human Services, collaborates with the Trinidad-based Caribbean Epidemiology Center (CAREC) and other regional partners to provide technical assistance and financial support for HIV/AIDS-related epidemiology surveillance and public health training in the region.

U.S. commercial ties with Trinidad and Tobago have always been strong and have grown substantially in the last several years due to economic liberalization. U.S. firms have invested more than a billion dollars in recent years—mostly in the petrochemical, oil/gas, and iron/steel sectors. Many of America's largest corporations have commercial links with Trinidad and Tobago, and more than 30 U.S. firms have offices and operations in the country. Trinidad and Tobago is a beneficiary of the U.S. Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). The U.S. embassy actively fosters bilateral business ties and provides a number of commercial services to potential investors and traders. A double-taxation agreement has existed since the early 1970s. A tax information exchange agreement was signed in 1989, and a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and an Intellectual Property Rights agreement were signed in 1994. The BIT entered into force in 1996. Other agreements include Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance treaties, which have been in force since 1999. An agreement on Maritime Cooperation was signed in 1996.

There are large numbers of U.S. citizens and permanent residents of Trinidadian origin living in the United States (mostly in New York and Florida), which keeps cultural ties strong. About 20,000 U.S. citizens visit Trinidad and Tobago on vacation or for business every year, and more than 4,600 American citizens are residents.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PORT OF SPAIN (E) 15 Queen's Park West, (868) 622-6371-6, Fax (868) 822-5905, INMARSAT Tel (8816) 3143 9021, Workweek: Mon-Fri, 7:30 am-4:30 pm, Website: http://trinidad.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Tracey De Rosa
AMB OMS:	Karen Baker-Ramroop
DHS/ICE:	Karl Brown
ECO:	John N. Ries
FCS:	Michael L. McGee (Res. In Santo Domingo)
FM:	John Bronte-Tinkew
MGT:	Terrence Flynn
AMB:	Dr. Roy L. Austin
CON:	Armando Armendariz
DCM:	Leonard Kusnitz
PAO:	Michelle L. Jones
GSO:	Wayne Reed
RSO:	Mark S. Lewis
AGR:	Paul Hoffman (Res. Miami)
CLO:	Zoe Friloux/Claudia Kuebler
DAO:	Col. Lee Bauer (Res. In Caracas)
DEA:	Dave Joseph
EEO:	Armando Armendariz
FAA:	Mayte Ashby (Res. Miami)
FMO:	Leticia Macapinlac
IMO:	Reginald E. Hopson
ISSO:	Reginald E. Hopson
LAB:	James M. Kuebler
LEGATT:	Marvin Freeman
MLO:	Lcdr. Christopher Boes
POL:	John A. Cushing
State ICASS:	John N. Ries

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Trade Information Center
14th and Constitution, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 1-800-USA-TRADE
http://www.export.gov/exportbasics/ticredirect.asp

American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad and Tobago
62 Maraval Road, Port of Spain
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
Tel: (868) 622-4466, 622-0340 and 628-2508
Fax: (868) 628-9428
E-mail: inbox@amchamtt.com
http://www.amchamtt.com

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

April 13, 2007

Country Description: Trinidad and Tobago is a developing nation in the Caribbean composed of two islands. The islands gained independence from the British in 1962. The country is one of the most prosperous in the Caribbean, largely as a result of petroleum and natural gas industries. Tourist travel is mostly to the smaller of the two sister islands, Tobago. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport is required of U.S. citizens for entry to Trinidad and Tobago. U.S. citizens do not need a visa for tourism or business-related visits of 90 days or less. Work permits are required for compensated and some non-compensated employment, including missionary work. Visas may be required for travel for purposes other than business or tourism. For further information concerning entry, employment and customs requirements, travelers may contact the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago, 1708 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20036, telephone (202) 467-6490, email embttgo@erols.com, or the Trinidad and Tobago Consulates in Miami or New York City. Visit the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago's website at http://ttembassy.cjb.net.

Safety and Security: American citizens traveling to or residing in Trinidad and Tobago should avoid large crowds and demonstrations. While non-violent demonstrations occur on occasion, widespread civil disorder is not typical.The downtown area of Port of Spain experienced four bombings in 2005.While no similar incidents have occurred since that time, the perpetrator(s) have not been arrested and their identities and motive remain unknown.Americans living or visiting Port of Spain are advised to exercise caution, especially

in crowded urban areas. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Incidents of violent crime have been steadily on the rise on both islands. Visitors to Trinidad and Tobago should exercise caution and good judgment, as in any large urban area, particularly when traveling after dark from Trinidad's Piarco Airport. There have been incidents involving armed robbers trailing arriving passengers from the airport and then accosting them outside the gates of their residences. Areas to avoid in Trinidad include Laventille, Morvant, Sea Lots, South Belmont, scenic rest stops, walking across the Queen's Park Savannah, and downtown Port of Spain (after dark), as tourists are particularly vulnerable to pick pocketing and armed assaults in these locations. Holiday periods, especially Christmas and Carnival, often see an increase in criminal activity.

Violent crimes, including assault, kidnapping for ransom, sexual assault and murder, have involved foreign residents and tourists, including U.S. citizens. The perpetrators of many these crimes have not been arrested.

Burglaries of private residences are common. Robbery is a risk, particularly in urban areas and especially near ATMs and shopping malls. Visitors should avoid wearing expensive jewelry or displaying large amounts of money in public. One victim was targeted for driving an expensive new car. In some cases, robberies of Americans have turned violent and resulted in injuries after the victim resisted handing over valuables.

In Tobago, the media have reported an increase in the incidence of violent crimes. While local authorities have announced increased measures to fight crime, the U.S. Embassy advises that when making reservations at private accommodations, visitors should ensure that 24-hour security is provided. There have been reports of home invasions in the Mt. Irvine area, and robberies occurring on isolated beaches in Tobago. Visitors to Tobago should ensure that all villas or private homes have adequate security measures.

Visitors to Trinidad and Tobago are also advised to be cautious when visiting isolated beaches or scenic overlooks where robberies can occur. In particular, we advise against visiting the Ft. George scenic overlook in Port of Spain because of lack of security and a number of recent armed robberies at that site. Tourists at La Brea Pitch Lake in South Trinidad were targets of criminals in 2004 and 2005. Visitors should not walk alone or in unfamiliar areas. Valuables left unattended on beaches and in other public places are vulnerable to theft. Visitors should avoid neighborhoods known for high crime rates. When in doubt, consult the establishment where you are staying to identify areas to be avoided.

Taxis available at the major hotels or through pre-arranged pick-ups with reputable companies are generally safe and reliable. The U.S. Embassy urges caution in the use of the small buses or vans in Trinidad, known as "Maxi Taxis" (full-size inter-city buses are usually safe). Unmarked shared taxis authorized to pick up passengers will have the letter 'H' as the first letter on their license plates. Some shared taxis and maxi taxis have been linked to petty crime and serious traffic accidents. Valuables including travel documents should not be left unattended in parked cars, especially in parking lots, as several thefts have been reported.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: We strongly recommend that you obtain comprehensive travel and medical insurance before traveling. Medical care is limited compared to that in the United States. Care at public health facilities is significantly below U.S. standards for treatment of serious injuries and illness, with limited access to supplies and medications. While care at some private facilities is better than at most public health facilities, patients may be expected to prove their ability to pay before assistance is given, even in emergency situations. Patients requiring blood transfusions are expected to arrange for at least the same amount to be donated on their behalf. Physicians and nurses may go on strike, causing serious strain on both public and private medical resources. Ambulance service is extremely limited both in the quality of emergency care and in the availability of vehicles in many parts of the country.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Ameri-

cans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Trinidad and Tobago is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left in Trinidad and Tobago. Most vehicles are right-hand drive, but left-hand drive vehicles are permitted. Rental cars are available, and are generally right-hand drive. A U.S. driver's license and/or an International Driving Permit are valid for up to 90 days after arrival. Seatbelts are required for drivers and front seat passengers, and cars may be pulled over and drivers fined for not wearing seatbelts. Older cars are not required to be equipped with rear seatbelts; many taxis, being older cars, thus lack rear seatbelts. There are no particular requirements for child safety seats.

Trinidad has several good four-lane highways and one controlled-access highway. However, road quality decreases quickly on secondary roads. Rural roads are narrow and often have deep drainage ditches on either side. Some are in poor repair, and are frequently congested. Night travel should be avoided other than on major highways. Roadside assistance exists, but is extremely limited and subject to lengthy delays. The Ministry of Works and Transport is responsible for road conditions and safety in the country. Emergency ambulance services exist but may take prolonged amounts of time to reach the site of an accident and may not provide service in rural areas.

Trinidadian drivers often use hand signals to indicate turning, stopping, or slowing, which do not necessarily correspond to hand signals used in the United States. Trinidadian drivers are generally courteous, but can be flexible with the rules of the road. For example, cars traveling north on a two way street may cross into the southbound lane to stop and let passengers out. Visitors need to be attentive and alert. Intoxicated drivers on the road are a particular concern on the weekends, especially after dark when many locals are going to or returning from social events. Drivers should take extra precaution on narrow and windy roads leading in and out of beaches and small towns in Trinidad and Tobago. As always, defensive driving is strongly encouraged.

The country has an extensive system of taxis, maxi-taxis (vans) and some larger buses. Although the larger inter-city buses are generally safe, the maxi-taxis have been linked to many road accidents and some instances of crime. Fares should be agreed upon in advance. Taxis will often stop at any point along the road to pick up or discharge passengers, often with little or no warning.

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office www.visittnt.com. The Ministry of Works and Transport is the national authority responsible for road safety.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Trinidad and Tobago's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's website at http://www.faa.gov.

Marine Safety and Oversight: Visitors arriving in Trinidad and Tobago aboard a private vessel must register any firearms with local customs authorities. Failure to declare firearms or making false customs declarations is a serious offense. U.S. citizens have been jailed and fined for possession of unlicensed firearms and ammunition, attempting to export ammunition, making false customs declarations and not declaring their firearms.

There is a small community of private boat owners who stay in Trinidad temporarily during the hurricane season. There have been several incidents within the past few months in which vessels were boarded and the occupants were assaulted and robbed. Sailors should report any incidents to the Coast Guard and local police, and are encouraged to check with the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard and yacht facility managers for current information.

Special Circumstances: Trinidad and Tobago is prone to occasional, moderate earthquakes. Tobago has suffered extensive damage by only two hurricanes since 1963. In 2004, parts of Tobago were severely affected by flooding and mudslides from Hurricane Ivan and several other major storms that followed soon thereafter. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offences. Persons violating Trinidad and Tobago's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Trinidad and Tobago are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Suspected offenders may be jailed until the trial date, which can be months or even years after the arrest.

Many of the US citizens incarcerated in Trinidad and Tobago were caught attempting to take suitcases or packages containing drugs out of the country. Even if the package or suitcase is being carried for someone else, the traveler is liable for its contents. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child

pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Americans should also be aware that cursing and use of foul language in public is a criminal offense in Trinidad and Tobago, subject to arrest and fines. Several Americans have been arrested recently for this offense. While the penalty for public cursing is usually a fine, it can cause considerable disruption in travel plans due to the realities of an arrest and requirement to appear at hearings, and even incarceration if bail cannot be posted. Travelers are also cautioned against wearing military or camouflage clothing in public, as it is against local laws to do so, unless they are in Trinidad and Tobago on official military business. We have had reports of local immigration and customs officials detaining children wearing camouflage outfits and confiscating the clothing.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Trinidad and Tobago are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Trinidad and Tobago. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located 15 Queen's Park West, telephone 868-622-6371, Consular Section fax 868-822-5555, web site http://trinidad.usembassy.gov/american_citizen_registration2.html. Hours of operation are 7:30 AM—12:00 PM, and 1:00 PM through 4:00 PM Monday—Friday, except U.S. and Trinidad and Tobago national holidays. For additional information please visit our website at http://trinidad.usembassy.gov or email your inquiries at acspos@state.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

August 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

There are two ways of gaining custody of a child from Trinidad and Tobago obtaining an adoption order or legal guardianship.

Adoption Order: The first option is to go through the adoption process and obtain an adoption order. If the prospective adoptive parent(s) is a resident of Trinidad and Tobago, then the Adoption Board acts as the lead agency in the adoption process. If the prospective adoptive parent(s) are not residents of Trinidad and Tobago, they must contact an adoption agency that handles intercountry adoption. Since intercountry adoptions are adjudicated through the High Court and not the Adoption Board, prospective adoptive parents are advised to contact an attorney since these are done through the High Court and not handled by the Adoption Board.

An adoption order issued by the Court carries different rights to the adopting parents than Guardianship/custody Order, in the latter cases, the birth parents still retain parental rights. With an Adoption Order the birth parents are required to relinquish their rights.

Legal Guardianship: The second option is to seek legal guardianship of a child from the courts in Trinidad and Tobago for the purpose of adopting the child in the United States. While considerably less burdensome than seeking a formal adoption in Trinidad and Tobago, prospective parents need to keep in mind that legal guardianship is not as secure as an adoption order. Legal guardianship does not provide full parental rights to the adopting party. Legal guardianship is also vulnerable to revocation by the courts if the biological parents or other relatives subsequently petition the courts for a change of guardianship.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: To obtain an Adoption Order in Trinidad and Tobago, prospective adoptive parents must contact the Adoption Board, which is the only organization authorized to process the application and make recommendations to the courts for legal adoptions.

Adoption Board
55-57 St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain, Trinidad
Telephone: (868) 627-4447

The Adoption Board is not responsible for legal guardianship cases. To seek legal guardianship, the prospective guardians need to contact the Clerk of the Peace through the courts in Trinidad and Tobago.

Probation Office
3rdFloor ANSA House
Corner of Queen and Henry Streets
Port of Spain, Trinidad
Telephone: (868) 623-8180

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The government of Trinidad and Tobago allows married couples and single women to adopt. Single men may not adopt. The adoptive parent(s) must be at least 25 years old and 21 years older than the child they are adopting. A married couple or unmarried individuals, either male or female, are allowed to gain legal guardianship.

Please note that the guardian must be at least 25 years old and there is no specification as to an age difference between the guardian and the

child. First preference is given to citizens/nationals of Trinidad and Tobago to adopt a child.

Residency Requirements: Applicant(s) for adoption orders should be residents of Trinidad and Tobago and must have residential status proof from Trinidadian immigration authority in order to establish residency. Foreigners may apply to the High Court for an Adoption Order for a child born in Trinidad, Orders are granted in certain limited circumstances as outlined in Adoption of Children Act 2000.

Time Frame: Adoption Orders take more than six months due to the Adoption Board's six-month probation period. Securing legal guardianship can take anywhere from one week to several months depending on the cooperation of the parties and the time availability of the courts.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Laws in Trinidad and Tobago make it illegal for any local persons or local agencies other than the Adoption Board and or the Courts to facilitate adoptions. Where persons have a guardianship Order, they may still apply for adoption of the child through an intercountry adoption agency, but the Guardianship Order should also include that the child be sent abroad for adoption. For adoption where the prospective adoptive parents are not residing in Trinidad, an application must be made to the High Court for an adoption order. Local attorneys may be contacted to interpret local adoption laws.

Adoption Fees: Adoption in Trinidad and Tobago is free. Payment to anyone, other than an attorney for their legal services, is illegal.

Adoption Procedures: The local adoption process begins with the prospective adoptive parent(s) filing a formal application that can be obtained only from the Adoption Board. Prospective adoptive parents will have to appear in person in order to obtain these forms. However, if an order is applied for through the Courts, the attorney drafts the legal documents after taking instruction from their clients and submitting medical reports to the Adoption Board. The Board may request additional documents depending on the circumstances of each case. Prospective adoptive parents will be made aware of additional requirements when they attend the initial interview with the Board. Once the process is initiated, the Board identifies children eligible for adoption. Children are typically are referred to the Boar by children's homes and institutions. The Adoption Board confirms consent of the birth parent(s) or current guardian(s) to relinquish custody of the child. The Adoption Board will then grant temporary custody to the prospective adoptive parents. If the child is orphaned due to the death of the birth parent(s), the official death certificate of the parent(s) must be provided. Meanwhile, the Welfare Officers in Trinidad and Tobago complete a home study report to ensure that the adoption will be beneficial to the child. The Adoption Board then reviews all the information and decides whether a probationary period can be granted to the prospective parents. The probationary period is a minimum of six months and is a requirement that must be completed in Trinidad and Tobago in order to bring the case before the courts. The Adoption Board may extend the probationary period if it feels more time is needed in the trial period. During this period the Adoption Board keeps a close supervision of the child and monitors the child's reactions to the new family. At any point during the probationary period, the Adoption Board may terminate the temporary custody if it feels that the child is in a harmful situation. Upon the completion of the probationary period, whether by notice of the Adoption Board or by its expiration, the prospective adoptive parents may apply to the court for an adoption order to finalize the adoption. Once the Court grants an adoption order, the process is finalized.

To gain legal guardianship, the prospective guardians should contact the Clerk of the Peace in their district. The Clerk of the Peace will arrange for the prospective guardian to fill out the necessary forms and will set a court date. The Probation Office, which works with and takes instructions from the court, will also require proof that the prospective guardians are deemed fit (International Social Services certification is acceptable) and investigate the appropriateness of the change in guardianship. All the information will be presented before the Magistrate and the court will make a final decision based on the recommendations from the Probation Office.

Required Documents for an Adoption Order:

- Original certified birth certificates of the prospective adoptive parents and child; Certificate of successful immunization record of child issued by the Ministry of Health;
- Result of blood test of the prospective adoptive parents and child;
- Result of chest x-ray of the prospective adoptive parents and child;
- Medical fitness examination conducted in Trinidad and Tobago for the prospective adoptive parents;
- Original certified copy of the prospective adoptive parents' marriage certificate (if applicable);
- Original certified death registration of the child's birth parents (if applicable) or consent from the child's birth parents. If the birth parents are alive, they must relinquish rights;
- Photographs in color—one full length and one head and shoulders of applicant(s);
- Other general forms given by the Adoption Board. Prospective adoptive parents should contact the Adoption Board for more information.

Required Documents for Legal Guardianship: Current valid photo ID of prospective guardian(s) and original or certified copy of birth certificate of applicants and the child.

Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago
1708 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-467-6490

Trinidad and Tobago also maintains Consulates General in Miami and New York City.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children, as* well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
15 Queen's Park West (PO Box 752)
Port of Spain, Trinidad
Tel: 868-622-6371 through 6

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Trinidad and Tobago may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Port-of-Spain.

General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S.Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Trinidad and Tobago is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, but the treaty has not yet entered into force between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, the Convention cannot be used as a remedy to recover a child abducted from the United States to Trinidad and Tobago or to gain access (visitation) to such a child; however, local authorities may be willing to implement Hague precepts in individual cases pending final entry into force. American citizens who travel to Trinidad and Tobago place themselves under the jurisdiction of local courts. American citizens planning a trip to Trinidad and Tobago with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: Relevant laws in Trinidadian courts base custodianship decisions on the best interests of the child.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Trinidad and Tobago if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices. Courts do not yet enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Trinidad and Tobago to pay child support.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has been granted custody of a child, the other parent is usually granted visitation rights. If a custodial parent fails to allow visitation, the non-custodial parent may appeal to the court.

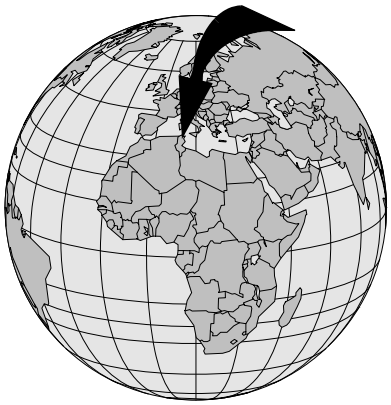
Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is recognized under Trinidadian law. Children born anywhere in the world to parents from Trinidad and Tobago automatically acquire Trinidadian citizenship.

Travel Restrictions: No exit visas are required to leave Trinidad and Tobago. However, a parent without any custody order may face legal difficulties if he or she attempts to take a child out of Trinidad and Tobago against the will of the other parent. Immigration officials at the airport or seaport, if informed of the dispute, may not allow the child to exit.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Trinidadian court should retain an attorney in Trinidad and Tobago. The U.S. Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



TUNISIA

Compiled from the February 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Tunisian Republic

PROFILE

Geography

Location: North Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Algeria and Libya.
Area: 163,610 sq. km. (63,378 sq. mi.), slightly smaller than Missouri.
Cities: Capital—Tunis; Greater Tunis Area, Sfax, Nabeul, Sousse.
Terrain: Arable land in north and along central coast; south is mostly semiarid or desert.
Climate: Hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters.
Land use: Arable land, 17.05%; permanent crops, 13.08%; other, 69.87%.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Tunisian(s).
Population: (2007) 10,276,185.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 0.99%. Birth rate—15.54 births/1,000 population. Death rate—5.17 deaths/1,000 population.
Ethnic groups: Arab-Berber 98%, European 1%, other 1%.
Religions: Muslim 98%, Christian 1%, Jewish less than 1%.
Languages: Arabic (official), French.
Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy (definition—age 15 and over can read and write, 2006 est.)—74.3%.
Health: (2007) Infant mortality rate—22.94 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—75.34 total, 73.6 years male, 77.21 years female.
Work force: (2007) 3.591 million.
Unemployment rate: (2007) 13.9%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Constitution: June 1, 1959; amended July 12, 1988, June 29, 1999, and June 1, 2002.
Independence: March 20, 1956.
Government branches: Executive—chief of state President Zine El Abidine BEN ALI (since November 7, 1987) head of government, Prime Minister Mohamed GHANNOUCHI (since November 17, 1999) cabinet, Council of Ministers appointed by the president; president elected by popular vote for a 5-year term; election last held October 24, 2004 (next to be held in October 2009); prime minister appointed by the president. Election results: President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali reelected for a fourth term; candidates from opposition: Mohamed Bouchiha (PUP), Mohamed Ali Halouani (Et-Tajdid) and Mounir Beji (PSL); percentage of vote—Zine El Abidine Ben Ali 94.49% (officially).
Legislative—bicameral. Chamber of Deputies or Majlis al-Nuwaab (189 seats; 5-year terms; 152 seats are elected by popular vote for party lists on a winner-take-all basis). An additional 37 seats (20% of the total) are distributed to opposition parties on a proportional basis as provided for in 1999 constitutional amendments. Elections last held October 24, 2004 (next to be held in October 2009). Election results: percentage of vote by party—RCD 92%; seats by party—RCD 152, MDS 14, PUP 11, UDU 7, Et-Tajdid 3, PSL 2. Note: The opposition increased number of seats from 34 to 37. A referendum in 2002 created a second chamber, the Chamber of Advisors. Elections for the Chamber of Advisors were held in July 2005. Judicial—Nominally independent District Courts, Courts of Appeal, Highest Court (Cour de Cassation). Judges of the Highest Court are appointed by the President.
Political parties: Democratic Constitutional Rally (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique—ruling party) or RCD, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali; Et-Tajdid Movement (Mohamed Harmel); Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties or FDTL (Mustapha Ben Jaafar); Liberal Social Party or PSL (Mondher Thabet); Movement of Democratic Socialists or MDS (Ismail Boulahia); Popular Unity Party or PUP (Mohamed Bouchiha); Unionist Democratic Union or UDU (Ahmed Inoubli); Progressive Democratic Party or PDP (Maya Jribi); Green Party for Progress or PVP (Mongi Khamassi).

Political pressure groups and leaders: Authorized—Tunisian Human Rights League or LTDH (Mokhtar Trifi); Tunisian Association of Democratic Women or ATFD (Khadija Cherif); Tunisian Bar Association (Adbessatar Ben Moussa); National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists or SNJT (Neji Bhouri). Unauthorized —An-Nahdha (Renaissance) the Islamic fundamentalist party (Rached El Ghanouchi, in exile); National Council for Liberties in Tunisia or CNLT (Sihem Ben Sedrine); Movement of 18 October (Nejib Chebbi, Hamma Hammami, et. al) Congress for the Republic or CPR (Moncef Marzouki); Tunisian Communist Labor Party or POCT (Hamma Hammami); Tunisian Green Party or PVT (Abdelkader Zitouni); International Association for the Support of Political Prisoners or AISPP (Co-ordinator: Mokhtar Yahyaoui); Tunisian Journalists' Syndicate or SJT (Lotfi Hajji).
Political subdivisions: 24 governorates—Ariana, Beja, Ben Arous, Bizerte, El Kef, Gabes, Gafsa, Jendouba, Kairouan, Kasserine, Kebili, Mahdia, Manouba, Medenine, Monastir, Nabeul, Sfax, Sidi Bou Zid, Siliana, Sousse, Tataouine, Tozeur, Tunis, Zaghouan.
Suffrage: Universal at 20. (Active duty members of the military cannot vote.)

Economy

Real GDP: (2006, 2000$ mil) $25,498.
Real GDP growth rate: (2006) 5.2%.
Per capita GDP, PPP: (2007, IMF): $9,630.
Natural resources: natural gas, crude oil, phosphates, salt, iron ore.
Agriculture: Products—olives, dates, citrus, almonds, grains.
Industry: Types—petroleum, mining (particularly phosphate), textiles, footwear, food processing.
Services: Tourism, commerce, transport, communications.
Sector information as % GDP: (2006 est.) Agriculture, 12%; industry, 33%; services, 55%.
Trade: (2005) Exports—$11.7 billion: hydrocarbons, agricultural products, phosphates, chemicals, textiles, mechanical, electric components. By region—Africa 9.9%, Americas 3.1%, Asia 3.7%, Europe 83.3%. By country (U.S.$million)—France, $3807.07, Italy, $2598.46, Germany, $926.0, Spain, $739.0; Libya, $635.15; Belgium, $282.61; UK, $322.0; U.S. $145.6. Imports ($15.2 billion)—industrial goods and equipment, hydrocarbons, food, consumer goods. By region—Africa 7.8%, Americas 5.9% Asia 10.5%, Europe 75.8%. By country (U.S.$million)—France $3461.61, Italy $2836.15, Germany $1200.61, Spain $714.69, Libya $743.0, China $501.84, U.S. $435.15.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Modern Tunisians are the descendents of indigenous Berbers and of people from numerous civilizations that have invaded, migrated to, and been assimilated into the population over the millennia. Recorded history in Tunisia begins with the arrival of Phoenicians, who founded Carthage and other North African settlements in the 8th century B.C. Carthage became a major sea power, clashing with Rome for control of the Mediterranean until it was defeated and captured by the Romans in 146 B.C. The Romans ruled and settled in North Africa until the 5th century, when the Roman Empire fell and Tunisia was invaded by European tribes, including the Vandals. The Muslim conquest in the 7th century transformed Tunisia and the make-up of its population, with subsequent waves of migration from around the Arab and Ottoman world, including significant numbers of Spanish Muslims and Jews at the end of the 15th century. Tunisia became a center of Arab culture and learning and was assimilated into the Turkish Ottoman Empire in the 16th century. It was a French protectorate from 1881 until independence in 1956, and retains close political, economic, and cultural ties with France.

Nearly all Tunisians (98% of the population) are Muslim. There has been a Jewish population on the southern island of Djerba for 2000 years, and there remains a small Jewish population in Tunis and other cities, which is mainly descended from those who fled Spain in the late 15th century. A small Christian community is dispersed throughout the country, and includes foreign residents, as well as a few hundred native-born citizens who have converted to Christianity. Small nomadic indigenous minorities have been mostly assimilated into the larger population.

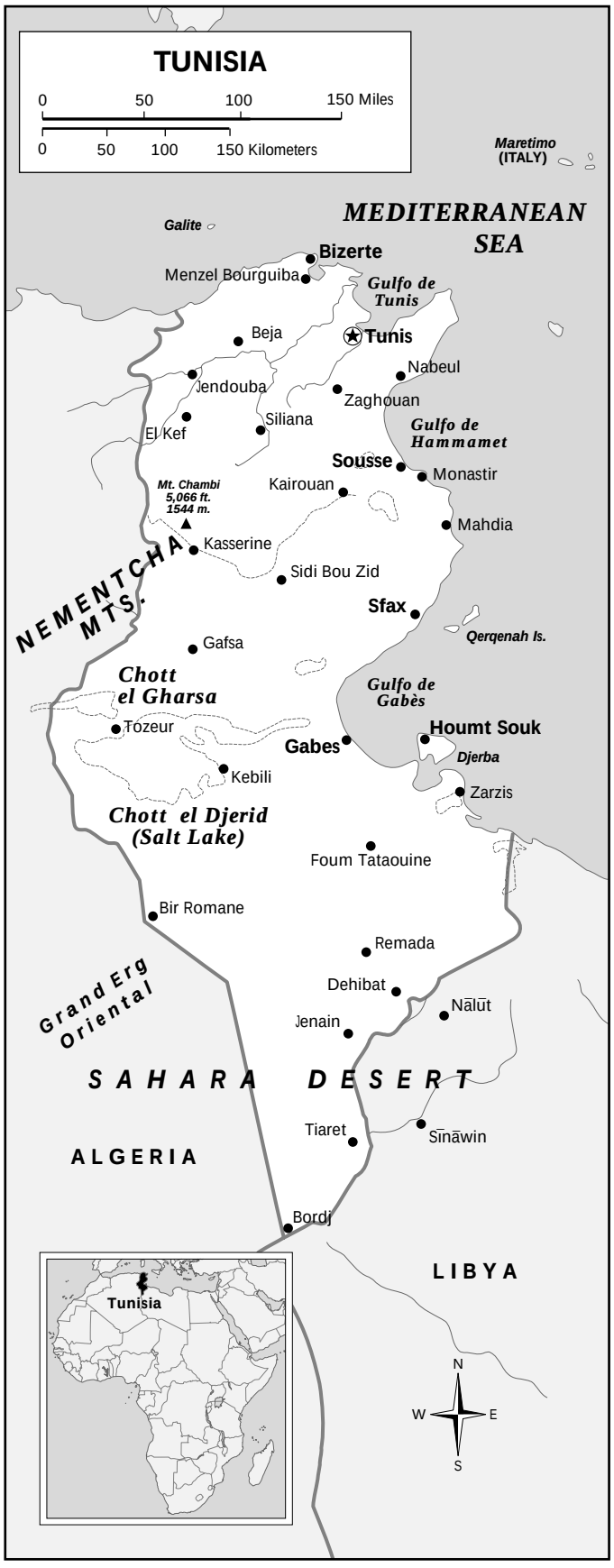
GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Tunisia is a republic with a strong presidential system dominated by a single political party. President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has been in office since 1987, when he deposed Habib Bourguiba, president since Tunisia's independence from France in 1956. The ruling party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD), was the sole legal party for 25 years—including when it was known as the Socialist Destourian Party (PSD)—and still dominates political life. The president is elected to 5-year terms—with virtually no opposition—and appoints a prime minister and cabinet, who play a strong role in the execution of policy. Regional governors and local administrators are also appointed by the central government; largely consultative mayors and municipal councils are elected. There is a bicameral legislative body. The Chamber of Deputies has 189 seats, 20% of which are reserved for the opposition. It plays a limited role as an arena for debate on national policy but never originates legislation and virtually always passes bills presented by the executive with only minor changes. A referendum in 2002 created a second chamber, the Chamber of Advisors. First-time elections for the Chamber of Advisors were held in July 2005. The judiciary is nominally independent, but responds to executive direction, especially in politically sensitive cases. The military is professional and does not play a role in politics.

Tunisia's independence from France in 1956 ended a protectorate established in 1881. President Bourguiba, who had been the leader of the independence movement, declared Tunisia a republic in 1957, ending the nominal rule of the Ottoman Beys. In June 1959, Tunisia adopted a constitution modeled on the French system, which established the basic outline of the highly centralized presidential system that continues today. The military was given a defined defensive role, which excluded participation in politics. Starting from independence, President Bourguiba placed strong emphasis on economic and social development, especially education, the status of women, and the creation of jobs, policies that continued under the Ben Ali administration. The result was strong social progress—high literacy and school attendance rates, low population growth rates, and relatively low poverty rates—and generally steady economic growth. These pragmatic policies have contributed to social and political stability.

Progress toward full democracy has been slow. Over the years, President Bourguiba stood unopposed for reelection several times and was named "President for Life" in 1974 by a constitutional amendment. At the time of independence, the Neo-Destourian Party (later the PSD)—enjoying broad support because of its role at the forefront of the independence movement—became the sole legal party. Opposition parties were banned until 1981.

When President Ben Ali came to power in 1987, he promised greater democratic openness and respect for human rights, signing a "national pact" with opposition parties. He oversaw constitutional and legal changes, including abolishing the concept of President for life, the establishment of presidential term limits, and provision for greater opposition party participation in political life. But the ruling party, renamed the Democratic Constitutional Rally (RCD), continued to dominate the political scene because of its historic popularity and the advantage it enjoyed as the ruling party. Ben Ali



ran for re-election unopposed in 1989 and 1994. In the multiparty era, he won 99.44% of the vote in 1999 and 94.49% of the vote in 2004. In both elections he faced weak opponents. The RCD won all seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 1989, and won all of the directly elected seats in the 1994, 1999, and 2004 elections. However, constitutional amendments provided for the distribution of additional seats to the opposition parties by 1999 and 2004. Currently, five opposition parties share 37 of the 189 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. A May 2002 referendum approved constitutional changes proposed by Ben Ali that allowed him to run for a fourth term in 2004 (and a fifth, his final, because of age limits on presidential candidates, in 2009), and provided judicial immunity during and after his presidency. The referendum also created a second parliamentary chamber, the Chamber of Advisors, and provided for other changes.

There are currently eight legal opposition parties, the Social Democratic Movement (MDS), the Popular Unity Party (PUP), the Union of Democratic Unionists (UDU), Et-Tajdid (also called the Renewal Movement), the Liberal Social Party (PSL), and the Green Party for Progress (PVP), plus the Democratic Progressive Party (PDP) and the Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties (FDTL), the only two not represented in the Chamber of Deputies. The parties are generally weak and divided and face considerable restrictions on their ability to organize. The Islamist opposition party, An-Nahdha, was allowed to operate openly in the late 1980s and early 1990s despite a ban on religiously based parties. The government outlawed An-Nahdha as a terrorist organization in 1991 and arrested its leaders and thousands of party members and sympathizers, accusing them of plotting to overthrow the president. The party is no longer openly active in Tunisia, and its leaders operate from exile in London. Several pro-democracy activists have been denied permission to establish other opposition political parties.

While there are thousands of official, established non-governmental organizations, civil society remains weak. The Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), the first human rights organization in Africa and the Arab world, operates under restrictions and suffers from internal divisions. The Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD), the Young Lawyers Association, and the Bar Association also are active. The government has denied legal status to a handful of other human rights advocacy groups who, nonetheless, attempt to organize and publicize information on the human rights situation in the country.

Despite the Government of Tunisia's stated committed to making progress toward a democratic system, citizens do not enjoy political freedom. The government imposes restrictions on freedom of association and speech and does not allow a free press. Many critics have called for clearer, effective distinctions between executive, legislative, and judicial powers. Foreign media, including foreign-based satellite television channels, have criticized the Tunisian Government for the lack of press freedom. Tunisia ranked number 148 out of 167 countries in the 2006 Reporters Without Borders list of World Press Freedom rankings. As reflected in the State Department's annual human rights report, there are frequent reports of widespread torture and abuse of prisoners, especially political prisoners.

Trade unions have played a key role in Tunisia's history since the struggle for independence, when the 1952 assassination of labor leader Farhat Hached was a catalyst for the final push against French domination. The General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), the country's sole labor confederation, has generally focused on bread-and-butter issues, but at some critical moments in Tunisia's history has played a decisive role in the nation's political life. Despite a drop in union membership from 400,000 to about 250,000 as the structure of the Tunisian economy changed, the UGTT continues to hold a prominent place in Tunisia's political and social life, and negotiates with government and the umbrella employer group for higher wages and better benefits. The current leadership under Abdessalem Jerad was elected at the 21st UGTT Congress held in December 2006. In January 2008, members of the Tunisian Journalists' Association (AJT) dissolved the association and created a union, the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT). Neji Bhouri, who billed himself as an independent, was elected its first president. The International Federation of Journalists had suspended the AJT's membership from 2004-2007 for failing to defend freedom of the press. The new union promised to defend the rights of journalists and promote freedom of expression.

Tunisia is a leader in the Arab world in promoting the legal and social status of women. A Personal Status Code was adopted shortly after independence in 1956, which, among other things, gave women full legal status (allowing them to run and own businesses, have bank accounts, and seek passports under their own authority). It also, for the first time in the Arab world, outlawed polygamy. The government required parents to send girls to school, and today more than 50% of university students are women. Rights of women and children were further enhanced by 1993 reforms, which included a provision to allow Tunisian women to transmit citizenship even if they are married to a foreigner and living abroad. The government has supported a remarkably successful family planning program that has reduced the population growth rate to just over 1% per annum, contributing to Tunisia's economic and social stability.

Tunisia's judiciary is headed by the Court of Cassation, whose judges are appointed by the president. The country is divided administratively into 24 governorates. The president appoints all governors.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Zine el Abidine BEN ALI**
Prime Min.: **Mohamed GHANNOUCHI**

Special Adviser to the Pres. & Spokesman of the Republic: **Abdelaziz BEN DHIA**
Min. of Agriculture & Water Resources: **Abdessalem MANSOUR**
Min. of Communication Technologies: **Haj KLAI**
Min. of Communications & Relations With the Chamber of Deputies & the Chamber of Counselors: **Rafaa DEKHIL**
Min. of Culture & Protection of National Heritage: **Abderraouf EL BASTI**
Min. of Development & Intl. Cooperation: **Mohamed Nouri JOUINI**
Min. of Education & Vocational Training: **Hatem BEN SALEM**
Min. of Employment & Vocational Integration of Youth: **Slim TLETLI**
Min. of Environment & Sustainable Development: **Nadhir HAMADA**
Min. of Equipment, Housing, & Land Development: **Slaheddine MALOUCHE**
Min. of Finance: **Mohamed Rachid KECHICHE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Abdelwaheb ABDALLAH**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Lazhar BOUOUNI**
Min. of Industry, Energy, & Small- & Medium-Size Enterprises: **Afif CHELBI**
Min. of the Interior & Local Development: **Rafiq BELHAJ KACEM**
Min. of Justice & Human Rights: **Bechir TEKKARI**
Min. of National Defense: **Kamel MORJANE**
Min. of Public Health: **Mondher ZENAIDI**
Min. of Public Property & Real Estate Affairs: **Ridha GRIRA**
Min. of Religious Affairs: **Boubaker EL-AKHZOURI**
Min. of Scientific Research, Technology, & Expertise Development: **Taieb HADHRI**
Min. of Social Affairs, Solidarity, & Tunisians Living Abroad: **Ali CHAOUCH**
Min. of Tourism: **Khelil LAJIMI**
Min. of Trade & Handicrafts: **Ridha TOUITI**
Min. of Transport: **Abderrahim ZOUARI**
Min. of Women, Children, & Family Affairs: **Sarra Kanoun JARRAYA**
Min. of Youth, Sport, & Physical Education: **Samir LABIDI**
Min.-Dir. of the Presidential Cabinet: **Ahmed Eyadh OUEDERNI**
Sec. Gen. of the Govt.: **Mounir JAIDANE**
Governor, Central Bank: **Taoufik BACCAR**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Habib MANSOUR**

Tunisia's embassy in the United States is located at 1515 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005 (tel. 1-202-862-1850, fax 1-202-862-1858).

ECONOMY

Tunisia's economy has emerged from rigid state control and is now mostly liberalized. World Bank and IMF support, coupled with prudent economic policies implemented by the Tunisian Government in the mid-eighties after a balance of payments crisis, has resulted in regular stable growth. Although this faltered after 9/11, the economy has since bounced back, thanks to healthy exports, renewed growth in tourism, and favorable climatic conditions which boosted agricultural production.

Manufacturing industries, producing largely for export, are a major source of foreign currency revenue. Industrial production represents about 28% of GDP and primarily consists of petroleum, mining (particularly phosphates), textiles, footwear, food processing, and electrical and mechanical manufactures. Textiles are a major source of foreign currency revenue, with more than 90% of production being exported. While the end of the Multifiber Arrangement in 2005 eroded Tunisia's competitiveness in its traditional European textile markets, to counteract this, manufacturers are successfully upgrading product lines and exporting smaller quantities of higher value items.

Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange, representing about 20% of hard currency receipts, as well as an important sector for employment. In 2006, 6.5 million tourists visited Tunisia, hailing largely from Europe and North Africa. While the influx of tourists represents a boon to the economy. Tunisia's large expatriate population (about 1 million) also makes a positive and significant contribution. Over the past five years, remittances from abroad averaged 1.61 million dinars (approximately 1.21 million USD) a year, or roughly 5% of Tunisia's GDP and one fourth of the country's foreign currency earnings.

Soaring oil prices have hit the Tunisian economy hard. The country is a net importer of hydrocarbon products. Domestic crude production is approximately 112,000 barrels per day, but refining capacity is only about 30,000 barrels a day. Proven reserves are in the region of 300 million barrels. Tunisia has one oil refinery in Bizerte on the north coast and in May 2006 awarded a tender for a second at La Skhira near Gabes to Qatar Petroleum. Natural gas production is currently about 3 million tons oil equivalent Proven reserves are about 2.8 trillion cubic feet, two-thirds of which are located offshore. British Gas is the major developer of the natural gas industry, and the largest foreign investor in Tunisia.

Economically and commercially, Tunisia is very closely linked to Europe. Tunisia signed an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), which went into effect on January 1, 2008. The agreement eliminates customs tariffs and other trade barriers on a wide range of goods and services. To help prepare the Tunisian economy for this opening, the Tunisian Government in 1996 embarked on an industrial upgrading program, called "Mise a Niveau." The goal of the program was to improve the competitiveness of Tunisian industry. Launched on a pilot scale in 1996, the program, supported in part by EU grants, has consisted of technical assistance, training, subsidies, and infrastructure upgrades aimed at encouraging and assisting Tunisian private sector restructuring and modernization.

EU member states also provide the bulk of foreign direct investment (FDI), much of which has come in under the Government of Tunisia's privatization program launched in 1987. In May 2006 the Government of Tunisia announced that overall its privatization program had raised $1.9 billion, of which $1.4 billion was foreign capital. This does not include the $2.25 billion the Government of Tunisia recently received for the sale

to Dubai Holding of a 35% share in the national telecommunications authority, Tunisie Telecom. Persian Gulf investments in telecommunications, real estate, and energy are also a major source of FDI.

A Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the U.S. was signed in October 2002 and follow-up TIFA Council meetings were held in October 2003 and June 2005, but little progress has been made toward generating the necessary reforms required to engender a free trade agreement between the U.S. and Tunisia. A TIFA Council meeting is planned for March 2008. The framework for a multilateral trade agreement with Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, known as the Agadir Agreement, has also been signed. The Agadir Agreement creates a potential market of over 100 million people across North Africa and into the Middle East.

The government still retains control over certain "strategic" sectors of the economy (finance, hydrocarbons, aviation, electricity and gas distribution, and water resources) but the private sector is playing an increasingly important role. Tunisia is a founding member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and is publicly committed to a free trade regime and export-led growth. Most goods can be imported without prior licensing, although non-tariff administrative barriers sometimes delay imports of goods. Significant import duties, coupled with high consumption taxes on certain items and a value-added tax (VAT), add considerably to the local price of imported goods.

The Government of Tunisia is beginning to take a more proactive stance on intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement and education. Tunisia's recent intellectual property rights law is designed to meet WTO TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property) minimum standards and there is on-going collaboration between the United States and Tunisian governments to promote public awareness of these rights.

Tunisia's timely completion of its IMF program (1987-1994) and subsequent fiscal conservatism have earned it investment grade ratings from a number of international institutions, although Standard and Poor has noted that ratings on Tunisia are constrained by its highly centralized political system and the need for further structural reforms. In mid-2005 the Tunisian Central Bank issued a new Euro-denominated bond on the London financial market. The issue totaled over $450 million (400 million Euros) with a maturity of 15 years. In 2004 the Government of Tunisia sold a similar bond with a total value of nearly $550 million and seven-year maturity.

The Central Bank is moving from direct management of the financial sector towards a more traditional supervisory and regulatory role. Commercial banks are permitted to participate in the forward foreign exchange market. The dinar is convertible for current account transactions but some convertible dinar/foreign exchange account transactions still require Central Bank authorization. Total convertibility of the Tunisian dinar is probably still some years away. The dinar is traded on an intra-bank market. Trading operates around a managed float established by the Central Bank (based upon a basket of the Euro, the U.S. Dollar and the Japanese Yen). The stock exchange remains under the supervision of the state-run financial market council, and lists about 50 companies. A new phase of the Mise a Niveau program aims to double this figure.

Tunisia has a relatively well-developed infrastructure that includes six commercial seaports and six international airports. The contract to build a seventh international airport at Enfidha was awarded to the Turkish holding company Tepe Akfen Ventisres (TAV) in March 2007. A tender for a deep water port in the same region is expected also.

Average annual income per capita in Tunisia is approaching $3000. The minimum monthly legal wage for a 48-hour week was recently raised to approximately $180. Tunisia's goal of pushing per capita incomes into the middle emerging market level calls for an average 6-7% growth rate instead of 4-5%. In 2006, GDP growth was 5.2 %, but inflation spiked to 4.5 %, from 2 % the year before. Official figures claim unemployment is around 14%, but it is generally believed to be much higher in some regions. Despite the present low rate of population growth, a demographic peak is now hitting higher education and the job market. Tunisia has invested heavily in education and the number of students enrolled at university has soared from 41,000 in 1986 to over 360,000. Providing jobs for these highly educated people represents a major challenge for the Government of Tunisia.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

President Ben Ali has maintained Tunisia's long-time policy of seeking good relations with the West, including the United States, while playing an active role in Arab and African regional bodies. President Bourguiba took a nonaligned stance but emphasized close relations with Europe and the United States.

Tunisia has long been a voice for moderation and realism in the Middle East. President Bourguiba was the first Arab leader to call for the recognition of Israel, in a speech in Jericho in 1965. Tunisia served as the headquarters of the Arab League from 1979 to 1990 and hosted the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) headquarters from 1982 to 1993. (The PLO Political Department remains in Tunis.) Tunisia consistently has played a moderating role in the negotiations for a comprehensive Middle East peace. In 1993, Tunisia was the first Arab country to host an official Israeli delegation as part of the Middle East peace process. The Government of Tunisia operated an Interests Section in Israel from April 1996 until the outbreak of the second Intifada in 2000. Israeli citizens may travel to Tunisia on their Israeli passports. Wedged between Algeria and Libya, Tunisia has

sought to maintain good relations with its neighbors despite occasionally strained relations. Tunisia and Algeria resolved a longstanding border dispute in 1993 and have cooperated in the construction of a natural gas pipeline through Tunisia that connects Algeria to Italy. In 2002, Tunisia signed an agreement with Algeria to demarcate the maritime frontier between the two countries.

Tunisia's relations with Libya have been erratic since Tunisia annulled a brief agreement to form a union in 1974. Diplomatic relations were broken in 1976, restored in 1977, and deteriorated again in 1980, when Libyan-trained rebels attempted to seize the town of Gafsa. In 1982, the International Court of Justice ruled in Libya's favor in the partition of the oil-rich continental shelf it shares with Tunisia. Libya's 1985 expulsion of Tunisian workers and military threats led Tunisia to sever relations. Relations were normalized again in 1987. While supporting the UN sanctions imposed following airline bombings, Tunisia has been careful to maintain positive relations with her neighbor. Tunisia supported the lifting of UN sanctions against Libya in 2003, and Libya is again becoming a major trading partner, with 2005 exports to Libya valued at $472.2 million and imports at $509.9 million.

Tunisia has supported the development of the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), which includes Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, and Libya. Progress on Maghreb integration remains stymied, however, as a result of bilateral tensions between some member countries. Tunisia has played a positive role in trying to resolve these tensions.

U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONS

The United States has very good relations with Tunisia, which date back more than 200 years. The United States has maintained official representation in Tunis almost continuously since 1795, and the American Friendship Treaty with Tunisia was signed in 1799. The two governments are not linked by security treaties, but relations have been close since Tunisia's independence. U.S.-Tunisian relations suffered briefly after the 1985 Israeli raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis, after the 1988 Tunis assassination of PLO terrorist Abu Jihad, and in 1990 during the Gulf War. In each case, however, relations warmed again quickly, reflecting strong bilateral ties. The United States and Tunisia have an active schedule of joint military exercises. U.S. security assistance historically has played an important role in cementing relations. The U.S.-Tunisian Joint Military Commission meets annually to discuss military cooperation, Tunisia's defense modernization program, and other security matters.

The United States first provided economic and technical assistance to Tunisia under a bilateral agreement signed March 26, 1957. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) managed a successful program until its departure in 1994, when Tunisia's economic advances led to the country's "graduation" from USAID funding. Tunisia enthusiastically supported the U.S.-North African Economic Partnership (USNAEP), designed to promote U.S. investment in, and economic integration of, the Maghreb region. The program provided over $4 million in assistance to Tunisia between 2001 and 2003. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was launched in 2002 and incorporated the former USNAEP economic reform projects while adding bilateral and regional projects for education reform, civil society development and women's empowerment. In 2004, the MEPI Regional Office opened in Embassy Tunis. The Regional Office is staffed by American diplomats and regional specialists. It is responsible for coordinating MEPI activities in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia in close coordination with the American Embassies in those countries.

American private assistance has been provided liberally since independence by foundations, religious groups, universities, and philanthropic organizations. The U.S. Government has supported Tunisia's efforts to attract foreign investment. The United States and Tunisia concluded a bilateral investment treaty in 1990 and an agreement to avoid double taxation in 1989. In October 2002, the U.S. and Tunisia signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), and in October 2003 held the first TIFA Council meeting in Washington, DC.

American firms seeking to invest in Tunisia and export to Tunisia can receive insurance and financing for their business through U.S. Government agencies, including the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Export-Import Bank. The best prospects for foreigners interested in the Tunisian market are in high technology, energy, agribusiness, food processing, medical care and equipment, and the environmental and tourism sectors.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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DCM OMS:	Christine Kucera
AMB OMS:	Gloria Hubbard
DIR:	Lynn E. Donovan (Fsi Arabic School)
ECO:	Victoria Taylor
ECO/COM:	Beth Mitchell
FM:	Dennis Anderson
HRO:	Dawn F. Scott
MGT:	Clyde L Jardine
PAO/ADV:	Matthew Long
PO/CON:	Sean Cooper
POL/ECO:	Dorothy Shea
AMB:	Robert Godec
CON:	Sean Cooper
DCM:	Marc Desjardins
PAO:	Patricia K. Kabra
RSO:	James J. Murphy
AFSA:	Patricia K. Kabra
AGR:	Michael J. Fay (Res. Rabat)
CLO:	Christine Murphy
DAO:	Col. Warren Gunderman
EEO:	Sean Cooper
FAA:	Lirio Liu (Res. Paris)

FMO: William V. Chiplis
ICASS Chair: Col. Michael W. Green
IMO: John E. Combs
IPO: Phillip Brown
IRS: Kathy J. Beck (Res. Paris)
ISO: Melinda Isachsen
ISSO: Andrew Berdy
LAB: Susannah E. Cooper
LEGATT: Andre Khoury (Res. Rabat)
MLO: Ltc. Jeffrey Pannaman
State ICASS: Vacant

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 15, 2008

Country Description: Tunisia is a presidential republic with a developing economy. Tourist facilities are widely available in large urban and major resort areas.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. For U.S. passport holders, a visa is not necessary for stays of up to four months; however, a residence permit is needed for longer stays. The residence permit can be obtained from the central police station of the district of residence. Americans born in the Middle East or with Arabic names have experienced delays in clearing immigration upon arrival. American citizens of Tunisian origin are expected to enter and exit Tunisia on their Tunisian passports. If a Tunisian-American succeeds in entering using a U.S. passport, he or she will still have to present a Tunisian passport to exit the country.

For further information concerning entry/exit requirements for Tunisia, travelers may contact the Embassy of Tunisia at 1515 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005, tel. 202-862-1850.

Tunisian/American children must always have both parents' permission to exit the country, even if one parent has sole custody.

Safety and Security: There have been no instances in which U.S. citizens or facilities in Tunisia have been subject to terrorist attacks. However, in January 2007, Tunisian security forces announced the disruption of a terrorist group which they believe intended to attack targets including the U.S. Embassy in Tunis. On April 11, 2002, Al-Qaida terrorists used a truck bomb to attack a synagogue on the Tunisian island of Djerba and a number of Western tourists were killed. Tunisian nationals have been involved in international terrorism, and international terrorist organizations have on multiple occasions called for attacks in North Africa, including Tunisia. There have also been reported threats to tourist facilities.

Recent terrorist attacks in Algeria, the November 2, 2007 announcement of the merger of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group with Al-Qaida and the cancellation of the 2008 Dakar Rally are all indicative of an increased threat in the region. The December 2007 sentencing of 30 Tunisian individuals for terrorist related activities in December 2006/ January 2007 may also encourage anti-Western sentiment or reactions toward the Government of Tunisia.

Tunisia has open borders with Libya and Algeria. Please refer to the Country Specific Information and other international travel safety and security information for those countries. Al-Qaida in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of two Austrian tourists in Tunisia in late February 2008. The two Austrians had been driving a four-wheel-drive vehicle in the southern desert. AQIM is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, and the presence of AQIM in North Africa presents potential dangers to travelers. During late 2002 and early 2003, a number of tourists, several of whom crossed into Algeria from Tunisia, were kidnapped in the Sahara desert areas of southeastern Algeria. Travelers should remain particularly alert in areas near the Algerian border. Please see the section below on Traffic Safety and Road Conditions for more information about traveling in the desert.

In May and June 2008, there were also reports of disturbances in communities in the south of Tunisia near the Algerian border. While these disturbances appear to be triggered by economic concerns, and not directed toward Western tourists, travelers in these areas are urged to remain alert to local security developments and to be vigilant regarding their personal security.

Government security forces, including the police and National Guard, are visibly present throughout Tunisia. Travelers should heed directions given by uniformed security officials, and are encouraged to always carry a copy of their passport as proof of nationality and identity. Security personnel, including plainclothes officials, may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. It is against Tunisian law to photograph government offices and other security facilities. Suspicious incidents or problems should be reported immediately to Tunisian authorities and the U.S. Embassy.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Criminals have targeted tourists and business travelers for theft, pick pocketing, and scams. Care should be taken with wallets and other valuables kept in handbags or backpacks that can be easily opened from behind in crowded streets or marketplaces. Criminals may violently grab at items worn around the neck (purses, necklaces, backpacks) and then run away, sometimes causing injury to their victims. Criminals have been known to rob pedestrians by snatching purses and handbags from their victims while on a motorcycle.

Harassment of unaccompanied females occurs rarely in hotels, but it occurs more frequently elsewhere. Dressing in a conservative manner can diminish potential harassment, especially for young women. It is always wise to travel in groups of two or more people. Women are advised against walking alone in isolated areas. Travelers are advised to avoid buses and commuter rail when possible, and to never enter a taxi if another passenger is present.

Theft from vehicles is also common. Items high in value like luggage, cameras, laptop computers, or briefcases are often stolen from cars. Travelers are advised not to leave valuables in parked cars, and to keep doors locked, windows rolled up and valuables out of sight. Americans resident in Tunisia are also advised to not leave items of value unattended in the yards of their homes, as there have been reports of theft of items such as tools and bicycles.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while in Tunisia, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy for assistance, telephone: 71-107-000. The Embassy staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Tunisia is 197. Emergency services are widely available in the larger towns; however, they can be less reliable in rural areas.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Tunisia is adequate, with a number of new, private "polyclinics" available that function as simple hospitals and can provide a variety of procedures. Specialized care or treatment may not be available. Facilities that can handle complex trauma cases are virtually non-existent. While most private clinics have a few physicians who are fluent in English, the medical establishment uses French and all of the ancillary staff in every clinic communicates in Arabic and/or French. Public hospitals are overcrowded, under-equipped and understaffed. In general, nursing care does not conform to U.S. standards.

Immediate ambulance service may not be available outside of urban areas. Even in urban areas, emergency response times can be much longer than in the United States. Doctors and hospitals expect immediate cash payment for healthcare services, although some hospitals may accept credit cards. Over-the-counter medications are available; however, travelers should bring with them a full supply of medications that are needed on a regular basis. The U.S. Embassy in Tunis maintains a list of doctors and medical practitioners (dentists, etc.) who can be contacted for assistance.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Tunisia.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Tunisia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving in Tunisia can be dangerous. It is recommended that visitors avoid driving after dark outside of Tunis or the major resort areas. Driving practices are poor. Drivers fail to obey the rules of the road even in the presence of the police. Traffic signs and signals are often ignored, and drivers sometimes drive vehicles on the wrong side of the road. Faster drivers tend to drive on the left while slower drivers stay to the right. Traffic lane markings are widely ignored. Bicycles, mopeds and motorcycles are operated without sufficient lights or reflectors, making them difficult to see darting in and out of traffic. Motorists should also be aware of animals on the roads, particularly in rural areas.

Pedestrians present an additional challenge as they continuously dodge traffic (even on controlled-access highways) and do not pay attention to vehicles. Pedestrians and cyclists should be aware that drivers rarely yield and will not always stop at either crosswalks or stoplights. Defensive driving is a must when driving in Tunisia. Drivers may be stopped for inspection by police officers within cities and on highways at any time, and drivers should comply.

Drivers should also be aware that if they are involved in a motor accident which results in death or serious injury of another person, the police may take them into protective custody until they are absolved of responsibility. This can mean spending a period varying from one day to two months in detention. As with any arrest or detention, Americans taken into custody should immediately request that the police inform the Embassy of their whereabouts.

Travel in the desert areas of southern Tunisia presents additional challenges. Many roads are unimproved, and even well-traveled routes are subject to blowing sands that can create hazards for vehicles. Persons driving off the major paved roads are encouraged to ensure that their vehicles are appropriate for off-road driving conditions, and are equipped with appropriate spares and supplies—including water and food. Groups should generally travel in multiple vehicles, so if a vehicle becomes disabled or immobilized, the group can return in the operable vehicle(s).

Desert regions are subject to extreme temperatures, from sub-freezing evenings in the winter to dangerously hot daytime temperatures in the summer. In addition, there are many areas in the southern desert regions with little or no cellular telephone service. The Tunisian National Guard encourages persons traveling into the desert to register their travel beforehand. For details on how and where to register, please visit the U.S. Embassy's desert travel page at http://tunis.usembassy.gov.

Emergency services are widely available in the larger towns. They can be less reliable in rural areas. Emergency service numbers are:

Police (Police secours): 197
Fire Department: 198
Ambulance (SAMU): 190
Towing (SOS Remorquage 24/24): 71 801 211, 71 840 840

Visit the website of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.tourismtunisia.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Tunisia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Tunisia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Currency: Travelers' checks and credit cards are accepted at some establishments in Tunisia, mainly in urban or tourist areas. Cash machines (ATMs) are available in urban and tourist areas. The Tunisian dinar is not a fully convertible currency. While the export or import of Tunisian banknotes and coins is prohibited, the export of foreign currency declared when entering Tunisia is allowed. Tourists are expected to make foreign exchange transactions at authorized banks and to retain receipts. A tourist may reconvert to foreign currency 30 percent of the amount previously exchanged into dinars, up to a maximum of $100. Declaring foreign currency when entering Tunisia and obtaining receipts for dinars purchased thereafter will facilitate the conversion of dinars to U.S. dollars when leaving the country. Please keep all receipts of monetary transactions for presentation when departing.

Workweek: Normal working days are Monday to Friday, with government offices open on Saturday mornings. Many stores are closed on Sunday, except in resort areas where most remain open.

Proselytizing: Islam is the state religion of Tunisia and the government does not interfere with the country's religious minorities' public worship. Many religious denominations hold regularly scheduled services. However, it is illegal to proselytize or engage in other activities that the Tunisian authorities could view as encouraging conversion to another faith. In the past, Americans who engaged in such activities were asked to leave the country.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Tunisian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Tunisia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Tunisian law includes penalties for failure to respect government officials. Individuals, including U.S. citizens, have been sentenced to jail for cursing at police officers. Homosexuality is illegal in Tunisia, and can be punished by imprisonment. Possession of pornography can also lead to criminal charges. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Tunisia are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site, so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Tunisia. Americans may also register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Zone Nord Est des Berges du Lac, Nord de Tunis 2045 La Goulette, Tunisie Tel: (216) 71-107-000, Fax: (216) 71964-360, Internet: http://tunisia.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The U.S. Embassy in Tunis has been informed that Law No. 58-27, Articles 8 to 16, covers Tunisian adoptions. The law contains no nationality or religious requirements but in practice Tunisian judges have generally held that prospective adoptive parents must be Muslim and of Tunisian descent.

Usually, they will only grant adoptions to Muslims who are living in Tunisia or an Islamic Arab country and who have some family ties to Tunisia.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
Institut National de la Protection de l'Enfance
2010 Manoubia
Tunis, Tunisie
Tel: (216) 71-606-938 or 71-606-890

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: The prospective adoptive parents must be at least 20 years of age, married and not legally barred from adoption.

Divorced or widowed individuals may not adopt without the express consent of a judge. Single individuals or common-law partners may not adopt.Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 15 years older than the child.

Prospective adoptive parents must be able to prove they have sufficient revenue to support the child. It is extremely rare for foreigners to be allowed to adopt in Tunisia. Tunisian judges have generally held that prospective adoptive parents must be Muslim and of Tunisian descent. Usually, they will only grant adoptions to Muslims who are living in Tunisia or an Islamic Arab country and who also have some family ties to Tunisia.

Time Frame:

- One month for review of submitted documentation by the Institut National de la Protection de l'Enfance
- "Undetermined" amount of time for review of file by psychologists and other authorities (estimated time: 1-2 months)
- 3 months of visits by the Institut National to the home of the potential parents to make sure the home is ready for the child
- 3 months of visits by the Institut National to the home of the potential parents after the child has been placed there

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies operating in Tunisia. However, U.S. citizen prospective adoptive parents of a Tunisian orphan may choose to employ the services of an adoption agency or attorney to assist them with the U.S. immigration portion of the process.

Adoption Fees: There are no Tunisian government fees for processing an adoption case.

Adoption Procedures: A completed adoption file containing the documents listed below may be mailed or hand-delivered to the Institut National de la Protection de l'Enfance at: Institut National de la Protection de l'Enfance; 2010 Manoubia; Tunis, Tunisie.

Required Documents:

- Petition to adopt a child signed by the prospective adoptive parents
- Marriage certificate (or death or divorce certificate where applicable)
- 4 prepaid envelopes
- Birth certificates of both prospective adoptive parents
- A copy of Tunisian social security card
- 2 photographs of each prospective adoptive parent
- Police certificates of both prospective adoptive parents
- Medical certificates of both prospective adoptive parents
- Proof of revenue

Embassy of Tunisia
1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
Phone: (202) 862-1850
Fax: (202) 862 1858

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Tunis
1053 Les Berges du Lac
Tunis, Tunisia
Phone: +216 71-107-000
Fax: +216 71-964-360
Email: ConsularTunis@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Tunisia may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Tunis. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

Dual Nationality: When one of the parents is Tunisian, a child is considered Tunisian regardless of the child's place of birth or whether the child had acquired the nationality of another country.

Residency: Tunisian courts expect that parents seeking child custody have established residency in Tunisia.

Enforcement of Foreign Custody Orders: The parent can request that a foreign child custody order be recognized in Tunisia, but enforcement will result only if the custody order conforms with Tunisian child custody law. Therefore, as a practical matter, foreign child custody orders are not generally recognized in Tunisia, and the parent must seek legal representation in Tunisia and file for custody in Tunisia.

Custody Disputes: When a child custody dispute arises between parents, one of whom is a Tunisian, the courts determine which parent is awarded legal custody of a child. Child custody laws in Tunisia are codified in the Child Code Law 67 of the Code du Statut Personnel Tunisian. Tunisian judges take into consideration the welfare and protection of the child and the eligibility of the parent seeking custody. (The parent must be over 21 years old, sound of mind, able to support and care for the child, and free from contagious diseases.)

Right of Custody and Visitation: The court will conduct an investigation to determine which parent will benefit the child the most. The court will base its custody decision on its assessment of what is in the best interests of the child. The law does not specify religious or nationality conditions for the mother. Even when Tunisian courts award legal custody to the mother, the father retains certain rights. The father may control the child's welfare, enroll the child in school and provide for the child's education. Tunisian courts do grant visitation rights to the non-custodial parent.

Travel Restrictions on Minor Children: Special authorization from the court must be obtained before the child can stay overnight outside the custodial parent's home. If the custodial parent moves and the move interferes with the other parent's rights and duties, the custodial parent can lose legal custody of the child. Imprisonment can result if the non-custodial parent takes the child without the consent of the custodial parent. Unless the child is at risk, the mother, as custodial parent, must give her permission before the father can take the child from her residence. A minor child, under the age of 20 years cannot be taken outside Tunisia without the father's permission or the court's authorization, when the mother has been awarded custody.

Specific questions regarding child custody in Tunisia may be addressed to:

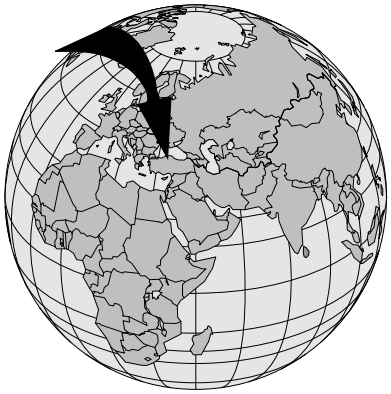
Embassy of Tunisia
1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
Phone: (202) 862-1850

U.S. Embassy Tunis
144 Avenue de la Liberte
1002 Tunis-Belvedere
Phone: (216) (1) 7782-566, ext. 4280
Fax (216) (1) 789-719 or 788-928

Hours: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, except during July & August when hours are 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM.

Passports for Minors and the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program: For more information on these topics, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this publication and review current reports from the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.

More Information: For further information and/or assistance in either preventing or responding to an international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at (202) 736-9090 or visit its web site at www.travel.state.gov/childabduction.



TURKEY

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Turkey

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 780,580 sq. km.

Cities: Capital—Ankara (pop. 3.9 million). Other cities—Istanbul (11.3 million), Izmir (2.6 million), Bursa (1.5 million), Adana (1.5 million), Gaziantep (1.2 million).

Terrain: Narrow coastal plain surrounds Anatolia, an inland plateau becomes increasingly rugged as it progresses eastward. Turkey includes one of the more earthquake-prone areas of the world.

Climate: Moderate in coastal areas, harsher temperatures inland.

People

Nationality: Noun—Turk(s). Adjective—Turkish.

Population: (2007) 70.5 million.

Annual population growth rate: (2004 est.) 1.33%.

Ethnic groups: Turkish, Kurdish, other.

Religions: Muslim 99%, Christian, Bahai, and Jewish.

Languages: Turkish (official), Kurdish, Zaza, Arabic, Armenian, Greek.

Education: Years compulsory—8. Attendance—97.6%. Literacy—86.5%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—39.4/1,000. Life expectancy—68.5 yrs.

Work force: (23 million) Agriculture—35.6%; industry—17.5%; services—47.2%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: October 29, 1923.

Constitution: November 7, 1982.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state), prime minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet—appointed by the president on the nomination of the prime minister). Legislative—Grand National Assembly (550 members) chosen by national elections at least every 5 years. Judicial—Constitutional Court, Court of Cassation, Council of State, and other courts.

Political parties: Justice and Development Party (AKP) (340 seats), Republican People's Party (CHP) (97 seats), Nationalist Action Party (MHP) (70 seats), Democratic Society Party (DTP) (21 seats), Democratic Left Party (DSP) (13 seats), Freedom and Democracy Party (ODP) (1 seat), Grand Unity Party (BBP) (1 seat), and five independents.

Suffrage: Universal, 18 and older.

National holidays: Republic Day, October 29.

Economy

GDP: (2005) $361.5 billion; (2006) $390.4 billion; (2007) $490 billion.

Annual real GDP growth rate: (2005) 7.4%; (2006) 6.0%; (2007) 4.6%.

GDP per capita: (2005) $5,016; (2006) $5,349; (2007) $6,830.

Annual inflation rate /CPI: (2005) 7.7%; (2006) 9.7%; (2007) 8.4%.

Natural resources: Coal, chromium, mercury, copper, boron, oil, gold.

Agriculture: (10.5% of GNP) Major cash crops—cotton, sugar beets, hazelnuts, wheat, barley, and tobacco. Provides 26% of jobs and 4% of exports.

Industry: (25.4% of GNP) Major growth sector, types—automotive, electronics, food processing, textiles, basic metals, chemicals, and petrochemicals. Provides 20% of jobs.

Trade: Exports (merchandise)—2005) $73.1 billion; (2006) $83.5 billion; (2007) $106 billion: textiles and apparel, industrial machinery, iron and steel, electronics, petroleum products, and motor vehicles. Imports (merchandise)—(2005) $116 billion; (2006) $135.5 billion; (2007) $167 billion: petroleum, machinery, motor vehicles, electronics, iron, steel, plastics precious metals. Major partners—Germany, U.S., Italy, France, Russia, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, U.K.

PEOPLE

Modern Turkey encompasses bustling cosmopolitan centers, pastoral farming villages, barren wastelands, peaceful Aegean coastlines, and steep mountain regions. More than half of Turkey's population lives in urban areas that juxtapose Western lifestyles with more traditional ways of life. The Turkish state has been officially secular since 1924. Approximately 99% of the population is Muslim. Most Turkish Muslims follow the Sunni traditions of Islam, although a significant number follow Alevi and Shiite traditions. Questions regarding role of religion in society and government, the role of linguistic and ethnic identity, and the public's expectation to live in security dominate public discourse. Turkish citizens who assert a Kurdish identity constitute an ethnic and linguistic group that is estimated at up to 12 million in number.

HISTORY

Mustafa Kemal, celebrated by the Turkish State as a Turkish World War I hero and later known as "Ataturk" or "father of the Turks," led the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 after the collapse of the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire and a three-year war of independence. The empire, which at its peak controlled vast stretches of northern Africa, southeastern Europe, and western Asia, had failed to keep pace with European social and technological developments. The rise of national consciousness impelled several national groups within the Empire to seek independence as nation-states, leading to the empire's fragmentation. This process culminated in the disastrous Ottoman participation in World War I as a German ally. Defeated, shorn of much of its former territory, and partly occupied by forces of the victorious European states, the Ottoman structure was repudiated by Turkish nationalists brought together under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. The nationalists expelled invading Greek, Russian, French and Italian forces from Anatolia in a bitter war. After the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey the temporal and religious ruling institutions of the old empire (the sultanate and caliphate) were abolished.

The leaders of the new republic concentrated on consolidating their power and modernizing and Westernizing what had been the empire's core—Asian Anatolia and a part of European Thrace. Social, political, linguistic, and economic reforms and attitudes decreed by Ataturk from 1924-1934 continue to be referred to as the ideological base of modern Turkey. In the post-Ataturk era, and especially after the military coup of 1960, this ideology came to be known as "Kemalism" and his reforms began to be referred to as "revolutions." Kemalism comprises a Turkish form of secularism, strong nationalism, statism, and to a degree a western orientation. The continued validity and applicability of Kemalism are the subject of lively debate in Turkey's political life. The current ruling AK Party comes from a tradition that challenges many of the Kemalist precepts and is driven in its reform efforts by a desire to achieve EU accession.

Turkey entered World War II on the Allied side until shortly before the war ended, becoming a charter member of the United Nations. Difficulties faced by Greece after World War II in quelling a communist rebellion and demands by the Soviet Union for military bases in the Turkish Straits prompted the United States to declare the Truman Doctrine in 1947. The doctrine enunciated American intentions to guarantee the security of Turkey and Greece and resulted in large scale U.S. military and economic aid under the Marshall Plan. After participating with United Nations forces in the Korean conflict, Turkey in 1952 joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Turkey is currently a European Union candidate.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The 1982 Constitution, drafted by the military in the wake of a 1980 military coup, proclaims Turkey's system of government as democratic, secular, and parliamentary. The presidency's powers are not precisely defined in practice, and the president's influence depends on his personality and political weight. The president and the Council of Ministers led by the prime minister share executive powers. The current president, who has broad powers of appointment and supervision, was elected by Parliament in August 2007 for a seven-year term. Pursuant to a constitutional amendment package approved by voters in an October 2007 referendum, the president is directly elected by the voters for a term of 5 years and can serve for a maximum of two terms. The prime minister administers the government. The prime minister and the Council of Ministers are responsible to Parliament.

The 550-member Parliament carries out legislative functions. Election is by the D'Hondt system of party-list proportional representation. To participate in the distribution of seats, a party must obtain at least 10% of the votes cast at the national level as well as a percentage of votes in the contested district according to a complex formula. The president enacts laws passed by Parliament within 15 days. With the exception of budgetary laws, the president may return a law to the Parliament for reconsideration. If Parliament reenacts the law, it is binding, although the president may then apply to the Constitutional Court for a reversal of the law. Constitutional amendments pass with a 60% vote, but require a popular referendum unless passed with a two-thirds majority; the president may also submit amendments passed with a two-thirds majority to a popular referendum.

The judiciary is declared to be independent, but the need for judicial reform and confirmation of its inde-



pendence are subjects of open debate. Internationally recognized human rights, including freedom of thought, expression, assembly, and travel, are officially enshrined in the Constitution but have at times been narrowly interpreted, can be limited in times of emergency and cannot be used to violate what the Constitution and the courts consider the integrity of the state or to impose a system of government based on religion, ethnicity, or the domination of one social class. The Constitution prohibits torture or ill treatment; the current government has focused on ensuring that practice matches principle. Labor rights, including the right to strike, are recognized in the Constitution but can be restricted.

The high court system includes a Constitutional Court responsible for judicial review of legislation, a Court of Cassation (or Supreme Court of Appeals), a Council of State serving as the high administrative and appeals court, a Court of Accounts, and a Military Court of Appeals. The High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, appointed by the president, supervises the judiciary.

In the November 2002 election of Turkey's 58th government, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) captured 34.3% of the total votes, making Abdullah Gul Prime Minister, followed by the Republican People's Party (CHP) with 19.39% of the vote, led by Deniz Baykal. A special General Election was held again in the province of Siirt in March 2003, resulting in the election of AKP's chairman Recep Tayyip Erdogan to a seat in Parliament, allowing him to become prime minister. AKP and CHP were the only parties to surpass the 10% threshold required to hold seats in Parliament. The elections resulted in 363 of the 550 seats going to AKP, 178 seats to CHP, and 9 as independent. Due to a reshuffle in party affiliation and resignations, by 2007, AKP held 353 seats, CHP held 151 seats, Anavatan Party held 20 seats, independents held 10 seats, and five joined the True Path Party (DYP). In March 2004 nationwide local elections, AKP won 57 of 81 provincial capital municipalities and, with 41.8% of the votes for provincial council seats, consolidated its hold on power.

The Turkish Grand National Assembly was to have elected in May 2007 a new president to succeed President Sezer, whose term ended on May 16. Opposition parties led a Constitutional Court challenge to the electoral procedures, which resulted in a series of proposed constitutional amendments and early general elections on July 22. AKP won 46.6% of the vote, followed by CHP (20.9%), MHP (14.3%) and independents (5.2%). The new Parliament, which was sworn in on August 4, 2007 included 341 AKP members, 97 CHP members, 71 Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)

members, 20 Democratic Society Party (DTP) members, 13 Democratic Left Party (DSP) members, one Freedom and Democracy Party (ODP) member, one Grand Unity Party (BBP) member, and five independents. Following the election, Sezer reappointed Erdogan as Prime Minister and then-Foreign Minister Gul again declared his presidential candidacy. The Parliament elected Gul in the third round of voting on August 28, 2007. Following Gul's move to the presidency, AKP seats in Parliament total 340; an MHP deputy died in August 2007, bringing the number of MHP members to 70; and the ban on a DTP deputy expired in July 2008, raising the number of DTP members to 21. President Gul approved Erdogan's proposed cabinet on August 29, 2007, and the new government received a vote of confidence on September 5. Nationwide local elections for municipal assembly and mayoral positions are scheduled for March 2009.

In March 2008 the Constitutional Court agreed to hear a case to close down the AKP because of alleged "anti-secular" activities that contravene the Turkish Constitution. Seventy-one AKP members, including President Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan, were named in the case and could have been barred from politics for five years. On July 30, 2008 the court voted six in favor and five against closing down AKP; seven votes were required to close down the party. The court decided to cut the party's state funding, worth about $58 million, in half. None of the AKP members were banned.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Abdullah GUL**
Prime Min.: **Recep Tayyip ERDOGAN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Cemil CICEK**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Nazim EKREN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Hayati YAZICI**
Min. of State: **Mehmet AYDIN**
Min. of State: **Murat BASESGIOGLU**
Min. of State: **Cemil CICEK**
Min. of State: **Nimet CUBUKCU**
Min. of State: **Nazim EKREN**
Min. of State: **Mehmet SIMSEK**
Min. of State: **Kursad TUZMEN**
Min. of State: **Hayati YAZICI**
Min. of State: **Mustafa Said YAZICIOGLU**
Min. of Agriculture & Village Affairs: **Mehmet Mehdi EKER**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Ertugrul GUNAY**
Min. of Energy & Natural Resources: **Mehmet Hilmi GULER**
Min. of Environment & Forestry: **Veysel EROGLU**
Min. of Finance: **Kemal UNAKITAN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Ali BABACAN**
Min. of Health: **Recep AKDAG**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Mehmet Zafer CAGLAYAN**
Min. of Interior: **Besir ATALAY**
Min. of Justice: **Mehmet Ali SAHIN**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Faruk CELIK**
Min. of National Defense: **Mehmet Vecdi GONUL**
Min. of National Education: **Huseyin CELIK**
Min. of Public Works & Housing: **Faruk Nafiz OZAK**
Min. of Transportation: **Binali YILDIRIM**
Governor, Central Bank: **Durmus YILMAZ**
Ambassador to the US: **Nabi SENSOY**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Baki ILKIN**

Turkey maintains an embassy in the United States at 2525 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, tel. (202) 612-6700. Consulates general in Chicago (360 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1405, Chicago, IL 60601, tel: 312-263-0644, ext. 28); Los Angeles (4801 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 310, Los Angeles, CA 90010, tel: 323-937-0118); New York (821 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, tel: 212-949-0160); and Houston (1990 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 1300, Houston, TX 77056, tel: 713-622-5849). The Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations is located on 821 United Nations Plaza, 10th floor, New York, NY 10017, tel: 212-949-0150.

ECONOMY

Turkey is a large, middle-income country with relatively few natural resources. Its economy is currently in transition from a high degree of reliance on agriculture and heavy industrial economy to a more diversified economy with an increasingly large and globalized services sector. Coming out of a tradition of a state-directed economy that was relatively closed to the outside world, Prime Minister and then President Turgut Ozal began to open up the economy in the 1980s, leading to the signing of a Customs Union with the European Union in 1995. In the 1990s, Turkey's economy suffered from a series of coalition governments with weak economic policies, leading to high-inflation boom-and-bust cycles that culminated in a severe banking and economic crisis in 2001 and a deep economic downturn (GNP fell 9.5% in 2001) and increase in unemployment.

Turkey's economy has recovered strongly from the 2001 recession thanks to good monetary and fiscal policies and structural economic reforms made with the support of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The independence of the Central Bank has been firmly established, a floating exchange rate system has been put in place, and the government's overall budget deficit has been substantially reduced. In addition, there have been substantial reforms in the financial, energy, and telecommunications sectors that have included the privatization of several large state-owned institutions.

Turkey's economy grew an average of 6.0% per year from 2002 through 2007—one of the highest sustained rates of growth in the world. It is expected to grow about 5.5% in 2008. Inflation and interest rates have fallen significantly, the currency has stabilized, government debt has declined to more supportable levels, and business and consumer confidence have returned. At the same time, booming economic growth has contributed to a growing current account deficit. Though Turkey's vulnerabilities have been greatly reduced, the economy could still face problems in the event there is a sudden change in investor sentiment. Continued implementation of reforms, including tight fiscal policy; securing independent Central Bank monetary policies, is essential to sustain growth and stability.

After years of low levels of foreign direct investment (FDI), in January-November 2007, Turkey succeeded in attracting $16.6 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) and is expected to attract a similar level in 2008. A series of large privatizations, the stability fostered by the start of Turkey's EU accession negotiations, strong and stable growth, and structural changes in the banking, retail, and telecommunications sectors have all contributed to the rise in foreign investment.

Turkey has taken steps to improve its investment climate through administrative streamlining, an end to foreign investment screening, and strengthened intellectual property legislation. However, a number of disputes involving foreign investors in Turkey and certain policies, such as high taxation and continuing gaps in the intellectual property regime, inhibit investment. Turkey has a number of bilateral investment and tax treaties, including with the United States, which guarantee free repatriation of capital in convertible currencies and eliminate double taxation.

EU Accession

Turkey's principal ongoing economic challenge is providing for the needs of a fast-growing, young population. Raising living standards to those prevalent in Europe will require high rates of GDP growth sustained over many years. This will entail continued structural reforms that encourage both domestic and foreign investment. Principal areas for reform identified by international financial intuitions include increasing flexibility in the labor market, making the educational sector more responsive to the needs of the economy and ensuring faster and more predictable operation of the judicial system. As an aspirant to membership in the European Union, Turkey aims to adopt the EU's basic system of national law and regulation (the acquis communautaire) by 2014. While implementing some elements of the acquis will be costly and difficult (for example in the areas of environmental protection and agriculture), its adoption will make a significant contribution to modernizing the economy.

Energy

Installed electricity generation capacity in Turkey reached 40,000 megawatts (MW) as of 2007. Fossil fuels account for 68% of the total installed capacity and hydro, geothermal, and wind account for the remaining 32%. Electricity demand in Turkey has been above the average rate of GNP growth over the last few years. This, combined with the lack of investment in the sector, mainly due to the Government of Turkey's (GOT) control over prices and slow progress in market liberalization, increased concerns regarding electricity shortages. According to official data, Turkey will face electricity shortages as of 2009, while market experts expected the shortages as early as summer 2008. The GOT is working on new legislation to encourage investments in the sector, which is expected to introduce incentives for companies bringing their facilities online by 2012. Turkey also plans to privatize its electricity generation and distribution facilities in 2008.

Oil provides about 43% of Turkey's total energy requirements; around 90% is imported. Domestic production is mostly from small fields in the southeast. New exploration is taking place in the eastern Black Sea. In 2004, the Parliament approved a petroleum market reform bill that liberalized consumer prices and would lead to the privatization of the state refining company TUPRAS, which was privatized in 2005. Turkey has a refining capacity of 714,275 barrels per day (b/d).

Turkey acts as an important link in the East-West Southern Energy Corridor bringing Caspian, Central Asian, and Middle Eastern energy to Europe and world markets. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which came online in July 2006, delivers 1 million barrels/day of petroleum, and in 2007, the South Caucasus Pipeline (from Shah Deniz) started bringing natural gas from Azerbaijan to Turkey. Turkey's interconnector pipeline to Greece, an important step in bringing Caspian natural gas to Europe via Turkey, came online in November 2007.

Telecommunications

Parliament enacted legislation separating telecommunications policy and regulatory functions in January 2000, by establishing an independent regulatory body, the Telecommunication Authority. The Authority is responsible for issuing licenses, supervising operators, and taking necessary technical measures against violations of the rules. Most regulatory functions of the Transport Ministry were transferred to the Authority, and the regulator is slowly gaining competence and independence. The long-expected privatization of the state-owned telecommunications company was accomplished by the sale of 55% of Turk Telekom to the Saudi-owned Oger Group in November 2005.

With liberalization and growth in the economy, there is growing competition for Internet provision, but Turk Telekom remains the sole provider of ADSL wide band Internet.

Environment

With the establishment of the Environment Ministry in 1991, Turkey began to make significant progress addressing its most pressing environmental problems. The most dramatic improvements were significant reductions of air pollution in Istanbul and Ankara. However, progress has been slow on the remaining—and serious—environmental challenges facing Turkey.

In 2003, the Ministry of Environment was merged with the Forestry Ministry. With its goal to join the EU, Turkey has made commendable progress in updating and modernizing its environmental legislation. However, environmental concerns are not fully integrated into public decision-making and enforcement can be weak. Turkey faces a backlog of environmental problems, requiring enormous outlays for infrastructure.

The most pressing needs are for water treatment plants, wastewater treatment facilities, solid waste management, and conservation of biodiversity. The discovery of a number of chemical waste sites in 2006 has highlighted weakness in environmental law and oversight.

After long years of silence, Turkey's becoming a signatory of the Kyoto Protocol was back on the agenda in 2007, and a focus of Prime Minister Erdogan's speech at the UN General Assembly. Despite the positive approach, Turkey would still like to keep its reservation to get developing country treatment with regard to the emission levels set by the protocol.

Transport

The Turkish Government gives a special priority to major infrastructure projects, especially in the transport sector. The government is in the process of building new airports and highways, thanks to an increased public investment budget. The government will realize many of these projects by utilizing the build-operate-transfer (BOT) model.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Turkey's primary political, economic, and security ties are with the West, although some voices call for a more "Eurasian" orientation.

Turkey entered NATO in 1952 and serves as the organization's vital eastern anchor, controlling the straits leading from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and sharing a border with Syria, Iraq, and Iran. A NATO headquarters is located in Izmir. Besides its relationships with NATO and the EU, Turkey is a member of the OECD, the Council of Europe, and OSCE. Turkey also is a member of the UN and the Islamic Conference Organization (OIC).

In December 1999, Turkey became a candidate for EU membership. On December 17, 2004, the EU decided to begin formal accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005.

Turkey and the EU formed a customs union beginning January 1, 1996. The agreement covers industrial and processed agricultural goods.

Turkey is harmonizing its laws and regulations with EU standards. Turkey adopted the EU's Common External Tariff regime, effectively lowering Turkey's tariffs for third countries, including the United States.

On October 3, 2005, Turkey and the EU reached agreement for Turkey to begin negotiations on accession to the European Union. Turkey and EU officials have begun the process of screening Turkey's laws and policies in order to begin negotiating the individual chapters required for ultimate EU accession.

Turkey opened and provisionally closed in 2006 one EU negotiating chapter on science and technology. Another chapter on statistics was opened in February 2007, and two more were opened in June 2007. Eight chapters, mostly related to trade, were suspended by the European Council in December 2006 after Turkey declined to open its ports and airports to Cypriot vessels—a commitment Turkey made as part of the Ankara Protocol and its EU Customs Union membership.

Two new chapters were opened in December 2007 under the Portuguese Presidency, and the Slovenian Presidency opened two additional chapters in June 2008.

Turkey is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It has signed free trade agreements with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Israel, and many other countries. In 1992 Turkey and 10 other regional nations formed the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Council to expand regional trade and economic cooperation. Turkey chaired BSEC in 2007 and hosted in Istanbul the 15th BSEC Summit in June 2007.

U.S.-TURKEY RELATIONS

U.S.-Turkish friendship dates to the late 18th century and was officially sealed by a treaty in 1830. The present close relationship began with the agreement of July 12, 1947, which implemented the Truman Doctrine. As part of the cooperative effort to further Turkish economic and military self-reliance, the United States has loaned and granted Turkey more than $12.5 billion in economic aid and more than $14 billion in military assistance.

U.S.-Turkish relations focus on areas such as strategic energy cooperation, trade and investment, security ties, regional stability, the global war on terrorism, and human rights progress. Relations were strained when Turkey refused in March 2003 to allow U.S. troops to deploy through its territory to Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom, but regained momentum steadily thereafter and mutual interests remain strong across a wide spectrum of issues. On July 5, 2006, Secretary Rice and then-Foreign Minister Gul signed a Shared Vision Statement to highlight the common values and goals between our two countries and to lay out a framework for increased strategic dialogue. U.S. President Bush welcomed Prime Minister Erdogan to Washington for a White House visit on November 5, 2007, during which he committed to provide greater assistance to Turkey in its fight against terrorism from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK or Kongra Gel), which he characterized as a "common enemy" of Turkey, Iraq, and the United States. He reiterated this commitment during President Gul's January 8, 2008, White House visit.

The U.S. and Turkey for several years have had a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, which last met in Washington in April 2007. In 2002, the two countries indicated their joint intent to upgrade bilateral economic relations by launching an Economic Partnership Commission, which last convened in Washington in

April 2008. In 2006, Turkish exports to the U.S. totaled about $5.4 billion, and U.S. exports to Turkey totaled $5.7 billion.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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GSO:	Robert McKay
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CLO:	Michele Destito
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CLO:	Stacey L Williams
DEA:	Timothy K. Scott
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 18, 2008

Country Description: Turkey is a moderately developed nation with a wide range of tourist facilities of all classes in the main tourist destinations.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Currently, holders of all types of passports can purchase a 90-day sticker visa at the port of entry for USD $20 cash if they are traveling to Turkey as tourists. For further information, travelers in the U.S. may contact the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey at 2525 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone: (202) 612-6700, or the Turkish Consulates General in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, or New York. Visit the Embassy of Turkey web site at http://www.turkishembassy.org for the most current visa information. Overseas, travelers may contact a Turkish embassy or consulate. Holders of official and diplomatic passports on official business must obtain a visa from a Turkish embassy or consulate before arriving in Turkey.

All travelers planning to stay more than three months for any purpose are required to obtain a visa from a Turkish embassy or consulate. Such travelers must also apply for a residence/work permit or Turkish ID card within the first month of their arrival in Turkey. This includes anyone who plans to spend more than three months doing research, studying, or working in Turkey.

All travelers are advised to obtain entry stamps on the passport page containing their visa at the first port of entry before transferring to domestic flights. Failure to obtain entry stamps at the port of entry may cause serious difficulties for travelers when they attempt to depart the country. On multiple occasions, Turkish authorities have detained overnight travelers in such situations.

Crossing the border with Iraq can be time-consuming, as the Turkish Government tightly controls entry and exit. All travelers wishing to cross into Iraq from Turkey must still have a valid travel document, such as a passport; travelers wishing to enter Turkey from Iraq must have both a valid travel document and current Turkish visa.

Safety and Security: Terrorist bombings over the past five years—some causing significant numbers of casualties—have struck religious, government, government-owned, political, tourist and business targets in a number of locations in Turkey. A variety of leftist or Islamic terrorist groups have targeted U.S. and Western interests as well. Terrorists claiming association with al-Qa'ida were responsible for suicide bombings in Istanbul in 2003 that targeted Western interests. In August 2005, Turkish police uncovered a planned terrorist attack by a transnational group targeting maritime interests in Turkey. The possibility of terrorist attacks, both transnational and indigenous, remains high.

The Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK, also known as Kongra Gel) is one of the most active terrorist organizations in Turkey. Over the last few decades, the PKK has been responsible for the deaths of more than 30,000 Turkish citizens. This indigenous terrorist group continues to target Turkish officials and various civilian facilities.

The following paragraphs describe the extent of terrorist activity in major cities and regions in Turkey.

Ankara: In May 2007, an explosive device was detonated by a suicide bomber in the Ulus district of Ankara during rush hour, resulting in six deaths and injuring more than 100. While there was no claim made by the PKK, the material used in the device was similar to that frequently used by the group. In September 2007, 600 kilograms of explosives were found in a minivan parked in a multi-story car park in the central Sihhiye area of Ankara. Investigations revealed a suspect with ties to the PKK.

Istanbul: In November 2003, al-Qa'ida-associated suicide bombers attacked the British Consulate, an HSBC Bank, and two synagogues, killing dozens and wounding hundreds of people. These incidents represent a significant change from prior attacks in Turkey and showed an increased willingness on the part of terrorists to attack Western targets.

On July 9, 2008, a terrorist attack on the Turkish police guarding the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul resulted in three police officer deaths and wounding two other police personnel. At this time, responsibility for the attack has not been claimed by or assigned to a specific terrorist group.

In April 2007, Turkish police captured a PKK terrorist in one of Istanbul's major tourist centers, Taksim Square. The female terrorist was intercepted carrying a bomb made of five kilograms of A-4 explosive; the target was a large gathering celebrating the founding of the Turkish police. In December 2007, a suspected male PKK member carrying three kilograms of A-4 explosive material in a backpack was arrested by Turkish National Police in Istanbul's Mecidiyekoy Square; the intended target was the Mecidiyekoy subway station.

In Istanbul, small-scale bombings and violent demonstrations, and more recently vehicle arsons, have occurred regularly since 2006. Most, but not all, of these incidents have happened in neighborhoods not generally frequented by tourists. PKK supporters on a number of occasions have set public buses on fire after ordering passengers to disembark. In April 2006, an attack of this type resulted in three deaths and at least one severe wounding. Thus far, no attacks on buses have taken place in tourist areas of the city.

Mediterranean/Aegean Regions: The Kurdistan Liberation Falcons (TAK, also known as the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks), which was designated a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" organization by the Department of State in January 2008 and is ostensibly aligned with the PKK, has warned tourists not to visit Turkey. Consistent with its threats, this group claimed responsibility for a number of bombings in tourist areas in the Mediterranean and Aegean coastal resort areas (as well as in Istanbul). In July 2005, TAK claimed responsibility for a bomb that ripped through a minibus in the holiday resort town of Kusadasi, killing five persons, including a British tourist and an Irish tourist. In June 2006, the group also was responsible for an explosion that killed three European tourists in Manavgat, a town in Antalya Province, as well as other attacks in the Antalya and Mugla Provinces. In August 2006, ten Britons and six Turks were injured when their minibus was blown up in Marmaris, and a bomb killed three and injured 87 in a blast at a shopping area in the city of Antalya.

Eastern and Southeastern Provinces (including Adana): The PKK retains a presence in certain parts of southeastern Turkey, and regularly carries out attacks focused primarily on security personnel; occasionally, however, attacks injure or kill civilians. Travel is difficult and should be considered dangerous in some portions of this region. Americans traveling in southeastern Turkey, as well as to Mt. Ararat in the Agri, northeast, should exercise extreme caution.

On July 3, 2008, three German tourists were kidnapped by armed PKK militants while camped on Mt. Ararat with their 13-member climbing team. This kidnapping highlights the risks to traveling in this area and in Turkey's southeast.

Roadside explosions caused by remote-controlled land mines or other improvised explosive devices in the Batman, Sirnak, Hakkâri, Siirt, Mardin, Diyarbakir and Tunceli provinces occur regularly. Sound bombs are a frequent event throughout the region. There have also been a number of PKK raids on Jandarma posts and ambushes of Turkish security force vehicle patrols in many of Turkey's rural southeastern areas. In 2005, the PKK attacked two trains and kidnapped two Turkish government employees in the region. In August 2006, two bombs exploded in Adana, injuring four people. In September 2006, a bomb detonated in the city of Diyarbakir, killing ten and injuring 15 Turkish nationals. In January 2008, a PKK remote controlled car bomb killed seven people and injured 66 when it exploded on a street in downtown Diyarbakir.

Terrorist activity aside, the southeast area has also had a history of civil unrest of which travelers should be aware. Regional civil unrest that began in late March 2006 prompted clashes involving Turkish security forces and protestors, and left approximately a dozen people killed and several hundred wounded.

Visitors to southeastern Turkey should use commercial air travel whenever possible. If road travel is necessary, travelers are advised to drive only during daylight hours and on major highways. The Turkish Jandarma and police forces monitor checkpoints on roads throughout the southeastern region. Travelers should be cooperative if stopped at any checkpoint. Drivers and all pas-

sengers in the vehicle should be prepared to provide identification cards or passports, a driver's license, and vehicle registration if stopped. At these checkpoints, roll down the driver's side window (the passenger side also, in vehicles with tinted windows) when stopped by security force officials. Security forces can then safely inspect the vehicle and its occupants. Remain calm, do not make any sudden movements, and obey all instructions immediately. Security officials may restrict access to some roads at times, and security force escort vehicles may be required to "convoy" visitors through troublesome areas. In some cases, this must be arranged in advance. Use of public transportation, at any time, is strongly discouraged in the southeastern region.

In June 2007, the Turkish General Staff declared parts of the southeastern provinces of Sirnak, Hakkâri, and Siirt as "sensitive areas" due to ongoing counter-insurgency operations carried out by Turkish military forces. Access to these areas, mostly along the Iraqi border, is controlled by the security forces. The Turkish government has extended this designation until September 2008.

Department of State personnel are subject to travel restrictions in the provinces of Sirnak, Diyarbakir, Van, Siirt, Mus, Mardin, Batman, Bingol, Tunceli, Hakkâri, Bitlis, and Elazig. U.S. military and Department of Defense civilians should consult their local area commander regarding any restrictions in effect for southeastern Turkey. Mount Ararat, in the Agri province, is a special military zone and access permission must be obtained from the Turkish government through a Turkish embassy or consulate before coming to Turkey.

For all of Turkey, travelers are cautioned not to accept letters, parcels, or other items from strangers for delivery either in or outside of Turkey. The PKK has attempted to use foreigners to deliver messages and packages in or outside of Turkey. If discovered, individuals could be arrested for aiding and abetting the terrorist organization.

In addition to terrorist activities, there have been several recent instances of violence targeting Christians in Turkey: the fatal shooting of a Catholic priest in Trabzon in February 2006; the murder of Armenian Turkish writer/journalist Hrant Dink in Istanbul in January 2007; the brutal murder of three Christians, one of them a German citizen, in a Bible bookstore in Malatya in April 2007; and the stabbing of a Catholic priest in Izmir in December 2007.

Americans should exercise caution and good judgment, keep a low profile, and remain vigilant with regard to their personal security. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. As security is increased at official U.S. facilities, terrorists will seek softer targets. These may include facilities where Americans and Westerners are known to live, congregate, shop, or visit. U.S. citizens should remain in a heightened state of personal security awareness when attendance at such locations is unavoidable.

International and domestic political issues sometimes trigger demonstrations in most major cities in Turkey. We wish to remind American citizens that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations, if possible, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-free line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The rate of street crime is relatively low in Turkey, although it has increased in large urban centers such as Istanbul and Izmir. In Istanbul, petty street crime is most common in tourist areas such as Taksim Square, Sultanahmet and in the areas around the Grand Bazaar and Spice (Egyptian) Bazaar. It is strongly recommended that you carry only what is needed, and leave your U.S. passport in your hotel safe.

As in other large metropolitan areas throughout the world, common street crimes include pocket picking, purse snatching, and mugging. Often the crime is preceded by some sort of diversion such as an argument, a fight, or someone bumping you. In other cases, English- or French-speaking foreigners have befriended tourists and then drugged them, using tea, juice, alcohol, or food. Two common drugs used are Nembutal and benzodiazepine which, when used incorrectly, can cause death. In other cases, tourists are invited to visit clubs or bars, and then presented with inflated bills (often exceeding $1,000), and coerced to pay them by credit card or to withdraw cash from a nearby ATM to cover the charge. Residential crime appears to be on the increase in major cities, with criminals targeting ground floor apartments for theft. Visitors should not be complacent regarding personal safety or the protection of valuables. The same precautions employed in the United States should be followed in Turkey.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropri-

ate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent of the "911" emergency line (for police, fire or ambulance) in Turkey is 155. The emergency number for ambulance assistance only is 112.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Turkish hospitals vary greatly. The new, private hospitals in Ankara, Antalya, and Istanbul have modern facilities and equipment, numerous U.S.-trained specialists, and international accreditation. However, they still may be unable to treat certain serious conditions. The State Department prefers medical evacuation for its personnel who will be giving birth; however there are private hospitals in Ankara and Istanbul whose level of obstetric care is considered to meet Western standards. Those planning to remain in Turkey for a prolonged period of time should consider bringing or securing a supply of necessary chronic medications (e.g., heart medications, birth control pills) to cover them while they are in the country, as certain medications are difficult to obtain in Turkey. Nursing care and diagnostic testing (including mammograms) meet American standards at specific institutions in the larger cities. Health care standards are lower in small cities in Turkey in comparison to bigger cities such as Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, and Adana.

Travelers are advised to drink only bottled water or water that has been filtered and boiled. Bottled beverages are considered safe to drink. Most local dairy products, including milk, yogurt, and cheese, are safe to consume. However, care must be taken when purchasing all perishable products, as many vendors do not have adequate refrigeration. Travelers are advised to wash vegetables and fruits thoroughly and to cook meat thoroughly before eating.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Turkey. However, visitors or foreign residents with HIV/AIDS should register with the Ministry of Health upon their arrival into Turkey.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Avian Influenza: In January 2006, the WHO and Turkish authorities confirmed human cases of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, commonly known as the "bird flu." The Government of Turkey immediately quarantined the affected region (mostly eastern and southeastern region) and no human cases have been reported since then. Travelers to Turkey and other countries affected by the virus are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. In addition, the CDC and WHO recommend eating only fully cooked poultry and eggs. For the most current information and links on avian influenza in Turkey, see the State Department's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet or visit the web site of the U.S. Embassy in Ankara at http://turkey.usembassy.gov.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Turkey is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.Motorists should drive defensively at all times and take every precaution for safety while driving in Turkey. Drivers routinely ignore traffic regulations, including driving through red lights and stop signs and turning left from the far right hand lane. These driving practices cause frequent traffic accidents. Statistics released by the Turkish State Statistics Institute indicate that daytime hours are the most dangerous times on local highways. Drivers should be aware of several driving practices that are prevalent in Turkey. Normally drivers who experience car troubles or accidents pull over by the side of the road and turn on their emergency lights to warn other drivers, but many drivers place a large rock or a pile of rocks on the road about 10-15 meters behind their vehicles instead of turning on their emergency lights.

Drivers should exercise extreme caution while driving at night. The Embassy recommends that you not drive after dark outside of major cities. Some local drivers tend to drive without their lights on or with very low lights, making it impossible to see their vehicles. While driving, it is also not unusual to come across dead animals, large rocks, missing sewer covers, deep holes or objects that have fallen from trucks.

Roads in Turkey run the full spectrum from single lane country roads to modern, divided, Trans-European motorways built to European standards. Highways in the southwestern, coastal portion of the country, which is frequented by tourists, are generally in good condition and well maintained.

Further information is available on the Embassy's web site at http://turkey.usembassy.gov. For more information on driving in Turkey, visit the

web site of the Embassy of Turkey at http://www.turkishembassy.org or the Turkey Road Report on http://www.asirt.org.

Those who wish to enter the country with their own vehicle will have to provide the following documentation: passport, international driving license, car license (note: if the vehicle belongs to another individual, a power of attorney is needed), international green card (insurance card) with the "valid in Turkey" sign visible, and a transit book "carnet de passage" (for those who want to proceed to the Middle East). The vehicle can be brought into Turkey for up to 6 months. If an extension is needed, apply to the Turkish Touring and Automobile Club (Turkiye Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu 1.Oto Sanayi Sitesi Yani, 4.Levent, Istanbul, Tel: (212) 282 81 40 or Fax: (212) 282 80 42), or to the General Directorate of Customs (Gumrukler Genel Md.lugu Ulus Ankara Tel: (312) 306-8000, Fax: (312) 306-8995, 306-8965 or 306-8195) before the end of the period declared.

In Case of an Accident: Drivers are to remain at the traffic accident site, and they are not to move their vehicle—even to move it out of the way—until the Traffic Police arrive. Drivers can be held liable for the accident otherwise. The accident should be reported to the Traffic Police (Tel: 154) or Gendarme (Tel. 156). That report will then need to be certified by the nearest local authority. The owner should apply to the customs authority with his passport and report. If the vehicle can be repaired, it is necessary to inform the customs authority first and then take the vehicle to a garage. If the vehicle is not repairable and if the owner wishes to leave the country without his vehicle, he has to deliver it to the nearest customs office, and the registration of his vehicle on his passport will be cancelled. (Only after the cancellation can the owner of the vehicle leave the country.)

Train Travel: There have been several train accidents on the popular Ankara-Istanbul train route. These accidents have led to loss of life and injury. In 2003 there were 556 accidents (collisions, derailments, falling from train) resulting in 162 fatalities and 299 injuries on trains throughout Turkey. Previous year's statistics reflect the same pattern. Two large accidents in 2004 on the Ankara-Istanbul line resulted in 45 fatalities and scores of injured alone.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Turkey's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Turkey's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Turkish customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Turkey of items such as antiquities (very broadly defined) or other important artwork and cultural artifacts. At the time of departure, travelers who purchase such items may be asked to present a receipt from the seller, as well as the official museum export certificate required by law. Contact the Embassy of Turkey in Washington or one of Turkey's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

In addition to being subject to all Turkish laws affecting U.S. citizens, dual nationals may also be subject to additional laws that impose special obligations on Turkish citizens. Male U.S. citizens over the age of 18 who are also considered to be Turkish citizens may be subject to conscription and compulsory military service upon arrival and to other aspects of Turkish law while in Turkey. Those who may be affected are strongly advised to consult with Turkish officials and inquire at a Turkish embassy or consulate to determine their status before traveling. The Government of Turkey will not permit American officials to visit or provide consular assistance to Turkish/American dual nationals arrested in Turkey.

On January 1, 2005 six zeroes were dropped from the Turkish Lira. One million Turkish Lira is now equal to 1 New Turkish Lira. Although old banknotes and coins were taken out of circulation at the end of 2005, some vendors and businesses continue to list their prices in the old currency. For more information please see the web site of the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey at http://www.tcmb.gov.tr/yeni/eng/index.html.

Disaster Preparedness: Turkey is a seismically active country and earthquakes occur throughout Turkey. A major earthquake along the North Anatolian fault line in 1999 killed approximately 18,000 in the Izmit area (more than one hour's travel east of Istanbul in light traffic). American citizens should make contingency plans and leave emergency contact information with family members outside of Turkey.

General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov. The U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul can provide a Disaster Preparedness checklist upon request to CA_Istanbul@state.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Turkish laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Turkey are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Insulting the State: It is illegal to show disrespect to the name or image of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, or to insult the Turkish government, flag, or security forces.

Proselytizing: Although there is no specific law against proselytizing, some activities can lead to arrest under laws that regulate expression, educational institutions, and religious meetings. The Department of State's Annual Report on International Religious Freedom contains additional information on religious freedom in Turkey. The report is available on the Department's web site, http://www.state.gov.

Cultural Artifacts: Turkish law has a broad definition of "antiquities" and makes it a crime to remove any from the country. Offenders are prosecuted. Under Turkish law, all historic sites such as fortresses, castles and ruins, and everything in them or on the grounds or in the water, are the property of the Turkish government. While many sites do not have signs cautioning the unwary, official silence does not mean official consent. Certain antiquities may be purchased, but only from authorized dealers who have been issued a certificate by a museum for each item they are authorized to sell. If an antiquity has been purchased without having obtained the necessary certificate, competent museum personnel should evaluate it before its removal from Turkey. You may be arrested and placed in jail for one month or longer even for accidental cases.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Turkey are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Turkey. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency and to make preparations of emergency situations.

The U.S. Embassy in Ankara is at 110 Ataturk Boulevard, tel.: (90) (312) 455-5555, fax (90)(312) 468-6131. Visa information is also available at (90) (212) 344-4444. The web site is http://ankara.usembassy.gov. Non-emergency e-mail messages about consular matters may be sent through the web site.

The U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul is located at Kaplicalar Mevkii Sokak No. 2, 34460, Istinye, Sariyer, tel.: (90) (212) 335-9000, fax (90) (212) 335-9102. Istanbul-specific information can also be accessed via the Consulate General's web site http://istanbul.usconsulate.gov. Non-emergency e-mail messages about consular matters may be sent to email: ca_istanbul@state.gov.

The U.S. Consulate in Adana is located at Girne Bulvari No. 212, Guzelevler Mahallesi, Yuregir, Adana, Turkey. Tel: (90) (322) 346-6262, fax (90) (322) 346-7916. General information can be accessed at the Consulate's web site at http://adana.usconsulate.gov.

The U.S. Consular Agent in Izmir can be contacted at (90) (232) 464-8755.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency
(T.C. Basbakanlik Sosyal Hizmetler ve Cocuk Esirgeme Kurumu Genel Mudurlugu)
Address: Anafartalar Cad. N: 70 Ulus Ankara, Turkey
Phone: 90-312-310 2460
Web Address: www.shcek.gov.tr

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Adoptive parents may be single or married. A couple may adopt together or separately, and should have been married for at least five years. If only one parent adopts the child, the other must give his or her consent. Priority is given to childless, married couples, but couples with children are not prohibited from adopting.

The adoptive parent must be at least 30 years of age and there must be at least an 18-year age difference between the prospective parent and child. Adoptive parents must not be over the age of 40 if they wish to adopt children who are under one year old. Prospective adoptive parents who are over 40 can only adopt older children.

Those who reach 41 during the waiting period after submitting their application will be asked to adopt older children. Foreign nationals who do not speak Turkish and who are between the ages of 30 and 40 may only adopt children under the age of three.

Adoptive parents must be psychologically and biologically healthy, have a certain level of education and culture to raise a child in a safe and good environment and be financially capable of providing for the child. Adoptive parents must not have been convicted of a crime of moral turpitude and cannot be users of illicit

drugs. All conditions and requirements that are mentioned above are evaluated by the General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection Agency officials.

Residency Requirements: Turkish law requires prospective adoptive parents to spend a year caring for the child in Turkey prior to finalizing the adoption. Although Turkish law allows for a child to leave Turkey during the one-year probationary period, a U.S. visa cannot be issued until the probationary period is over and the adoption is final. U.S. prospective adoptive parents should be prepared to remain in Turkey for one year.

Time Frame: Families are normally able to finalize the adoption in Turkish court in two to three weeks once they complete the one-year probationary period. Obtaining a Turkish passport, a new birth certificate and the U.S. immigrant visa can take an average of 7-10 days after the adoption is finalized.

According to the law, the adoption procedure must be completed within certain periods of time. It can be completed on time when ISS, the General Directorate of Social Service & Child Protection Agency and the prospective family work in coordination.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: For adoptions through the governmental orphanages, International Social Services (ISS) submits the adoption paperwork to the Turkish Government on behalf of the adopting parents. For private adoptions, the paperwork is submitted by an attorney directly to the court. There are no private adoption agencies or non-governmental organizations handling adoption cases.

Adopting parents are not required to have a legal representative to process an adoption in Turkey. However, families that do not do so may face some problems with language or have difficulty navigating the Turkish adoption process. The U.S. Embassy in Ankara recommends families consider engaging a translator or an English-speaking attorney. A list of such attorneys is available on the Embassy website at http://ankara.usembassy.gov. This list does not imply an endorsement of specific attorneys.

Adoption Fees: There are no Turkish government fees for adoption. Prospective adoptive families can expect to pay notary public ($20-$50 per document depending on the subject), translations ($10 per page), birth registration ($10 -$20), and the child's Turkish passport of the child ($80-$100).

Adoption Procedures: There are three categories of children who are eligible for adoption: children who are abandoned by their families immediately after their birth, children who are abandoned to the orphanage by their families, children whose parents are considered homeless. When prospective adoptive parents choose to register with one of these categories, they must wait until a suitable child in that category becomes available. They cannot be considered for more than one category. This may cause further procedural delays.

Orphanages are state controlled and follow comprehensive guidelines concerning placement of children. Private adoptions occur when an individual or couple finds a child and adopts him/her directly with the consent of the child's birth parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

State Agency Adoption: Foreign nationals who have permits to reside in Turkey for more than one year and Turkish-American families residing outside of Turkey can submit their applications directly to the General Directorate of Social Service & Child Protection Agency. Foreign nationals not resident in Turkey should submit their applications to the authorized institutions in their respective countries. Turkish families are given preference in adoption of children between the ages of 0 and 6. The Child Protection Agency requires that at least one of the adoptive parents be a Turkish citizen to adopt an orphan over the age of three. Foreign nationals can generally only adopt children who cannot be placed with Turkish families or who have special needs. International Social Services (ISS) prepares adoption files where the foreign prospective adoptive parents reside. Social workers at prospective adoptive parents' country observe and interview families, who then prepare a report approving the family for intercountry adoption. ISS forwards the original report with a translation, along with the financial documentation, medical records and police clearance records to the General Directorate of the Social Services & Child Protection Agency.

Once the administrative process (which can take several months) is completed, the family is contacted and invited to Turkey to meet children eligible for intercountry adoption. During the meeting the family may meet one or multiple available children. Should the family decide on a child, the legal adoption procedure begins with a one-year care contract signed between the prospective adoptive parents and the Director of Social Services & Child Protection in the city where the child resides. The one-year contract makes the prospective adoptive parents responsible for the child's welfare, education and medical care for the pre-adoption year. The Care Contract does permit the prospective adoptive parents to remove the child from Turkey of the child's legal guardian consents, the Turkish adoption authority are aware, and the prospective adoptive parents commit to not finalizing and adoption of the child while outside Turkey. At the end of the one-year period, adopting parents and the child are required to return to court so a Turkish judge can finalize the adoption. Once the judge approves the adoption, the child is then registered as the son/daughter of the adoptive family and has the same legal status as a biological child. Turkish-American dual nationals are able to adopt children with or without medical problems Turkish-American dual nationals submit an application directly to the General Directorate of the Social Services & Child Protection Agency. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Private Adoption: If an individual or family locates an orphan through private sources (not through an orphanage) and meets the requirements of the Turkish Civil Code for adoption, the adoption may proceed. Because this is an adoption agreement directly between the biological and adopting parents, no government care contract is signed. Turkish law still requires the adopting parents to care for the child for one year prior to finalizing the adoption. The one-year period is enforced when the court gives temporary physical custody to the adopting parents but orders them to return after a year to finalize the adoption. Please keep in mind, directed adoptions in which a child with two living birth parents is relinquished directly to U.S. prospective adoptive parents may disqualify a child from receiving a U.S. immigrant visa.

Required Documents: Non-Turks who have permits to reside in Turkey for more than one year and the Turkish families who are residing outside Turkey can submit their applications directly to the General Directorate of Social Service & Child Protection Agency. Foreign nationals should submit their applications to the authorized institutions (ISS or U.S. equivalent) in their home country. Turkish nationals should contact the General Directorate of Social Service & Child Protection Agency in writing or in person. The agency sends a statement and a form for the prospective adoptive parents to complete. Prospective adoptive parents may also be required to provide more documentation during the procedure (e.g. marriage certificate, birth record, financial documents, police clearance documents, health records).

All documents not in English must be accompanied by certified Turkish translations. The translation must include a statement signed by the translator that states that the translation is accurate.

Embassy of the Republic of Turkey
2525 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 612-6700
Fax: (202) 612-6744
E-mail: contact@turkishembassy.org
http://www.turkishembassy.org/index.php

Turkey also has Consulates General in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, and New York.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

American Embassy Ankara
110 Ataturk Blvd.
Kavaklidere
06100 Ankara, Turkey
Phone: 90-312-455 5555
Fax: 90-312-468 6103
Web Address: ankara.usembassy.gov

American Consulate General Istanbul
Mesrutiyet Caddesi No: 104/10
Tepebasi 80050 Istanbul, Turkey
Phone: 90-212-251 3602
Fax: 90-212-251 3632

Additional Information: Specific questions about intercountry adoption in Turkey may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Ankara. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



TURKMENISTAN

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Turkmenistan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 488,100 sq. km. (303,292 sq. mi.).
Cities: Capital—Ashgabat. Other cities—Turkmenabat (formerly Chardjou/Charjew), Dashoguz (formerly Dashowuz), Mary, Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk).
Terrain: 80% covered in subtropical, sandy Karakum Desert, with dunes rising to the Kopet Dag Mountains in the south along the border with Iran; borders the Caspian Sea to the west and the Amu Darya River and Uzbekistan to the east; borders Afghanistan to the southeast, Kazakhstan to the north.
Climate: Subtropical desert.

People

Nationality: Turkmenistani.
Population: (July 2007 est.) 5 million.
Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 1.62%.
Ethnic groups: (2003 est.) Turkmen 85%, Uzbek 5%, Russian 4%, other 6%.
Religions: Muslim 89%, Eastern Orthodox 9%, unknown 2%.
Languages: Turkmen 72%, Russian 12%, Uzbek 9%, other 7%.
Education: (2002 est.) Literacy—98.8%.
Health: (2007 est.) Infant mortality rate—53.49/1,000. Life expectancy—68.3 years.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: October 27, 1991 (from the Soviet Union).
Constitution: May 18, 1992.
Government branches: Executive—President. Legislative—Mejlis (Parliament); Halk Maslahaty (People's Council). Judicial—Supreme Court.
Political subdivisions: 5 Welayats (provinces)—Ahal Welayat (Ashgabat), Balkan Welayat (Balkanabat), Dashoguz Welayat (formerly Dashowuz), Lebap Welayat (Turkmenabat, formerly Chardjou/Charjew), Mary Welayat.
Political parties: Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (opposition parties are outlawed).

Economy (2006 est.)

GDP: (PPP—purchasing power parity) $42.84 billion.
GDP per capita: (PPP) $8,500.
GDP real growth rate: (IMF estimate) 6%. Note: official government statistics show 21.4% growth, but these estimates are unreliable.
Inflation rate: 11%.
Agriculture: Products—cotton, grain, livestock.
Industry: Types—natural gas, oil, petroleum products, textiles, food processing.
Trade: Exports ($5.4 billion)—gas 50%, oil and oil products 32%, cotton 2%. Partners—Russia, Iran, Italy, Turkey. Imports ($3.9 billion)—manufactured goods 65%, consumer goods 34%. Partners—Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, U.A.E., China, United States.
Debt, external: unknown.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

The majority of Turkmenistan's citizens are ethnic Turkmen; other ethnic groups include Russian, Uzbek, and Kazakh. Turkmen is the official language of Turkmenistan, though Russian still is widely spoken as a "language of inter-ethnic communication" (per the 1992 constitution). Education is universal and mandatory through the secondary level, the total duration of which is 10 years.

The territory of Turkmenistan has been populated since ancient times, as armies from one empire to another decamped on their way to more prosperous territories. Tribes of horse-breeding Turkmen drifted into the territory of Turkmenistan, possibly from the Altay Mountains, and grazed along the outskirts of the Kar-

akum Desert into Persia, Syria, and Anatolia. Alexander the Great conquered the territory in the 4th century B.C. on his way to India. One hundred fifty years later the Parthian Kingdom took control of Turkmenistan, establishing its capital in Nisa, an area now located in the suburbs of the modern-day capital of Ashgabat. In the 7th century A.D. Arabs conquered this region, bringing with them the Islamic religion and incorporating the Turkmen into Middle Eastern culture. It was around this time that the famous "Silk Road" was established as a major trading route between Asia and Europe.

In the middle of the 11th century, the powerful Turks of the Seljuk Empire concentrated their strength in the territory of Turkmenistan in an attempt to expand into Afghanistan. The empire broke down in the second half of the 12th century, and the Turkmen lost their independence when Genghis Khan took control of the eastern Caspian Sea region on his march west. For the next seven centuries, the Turkmen people lived under various empires and fought constant intertribal wars.

From the 16th century on, Turkmen raiders on horseback preyed on passing caravans, pillaging and taking prisoners for the slave trade. In order to consolidate the Tsarist Empire in Central Asia, and upon the pretext of freeing Russian citizens from slavery, Russia sent forces to Turkmenistan, and in 1881 fighting climaxed with the massacre of 7,000 Turkmen at the desert fortress of Gokdepe, near modern Ashgabat; another 8,000 were killed trying to flee across the desert. By 1894 imperial Russia had taken control of Turkmenistan. The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and subsequent political unrest led to the declaration of the Turkmen Republic as one of the 15 republics of the Soviet Union in 1924. At this time the modern borders of Turkmenistan were formed.

The Turkmen Republic was under full control of Moscow, which exploited its raw material resources for the purposes of the Soviet Union. Sovereignty was only a formality since Russia ultimately ruled all Soviet states. Following the end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan declared its independence on October 27, 1991. Saparmyrat Niyazov became the first president of the new republic and remained the supreme decision-maker, "president for life," until his death in 2006.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Although the constitution declares the country to be a secular democracy and presidential republic, Turkmenistan is an authoritarian state that was dominated by its first president, Saparmyrat Niyazov, who retained his monopoly on political power until his death on December 21, 2006. The Halk Maslahaty (People's Council) decided on December 26 to select Niyazov's successor through public elections on February 11, 2007. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov became president through a public election in which the population eagerly participated, even though the election did not meet international standards.

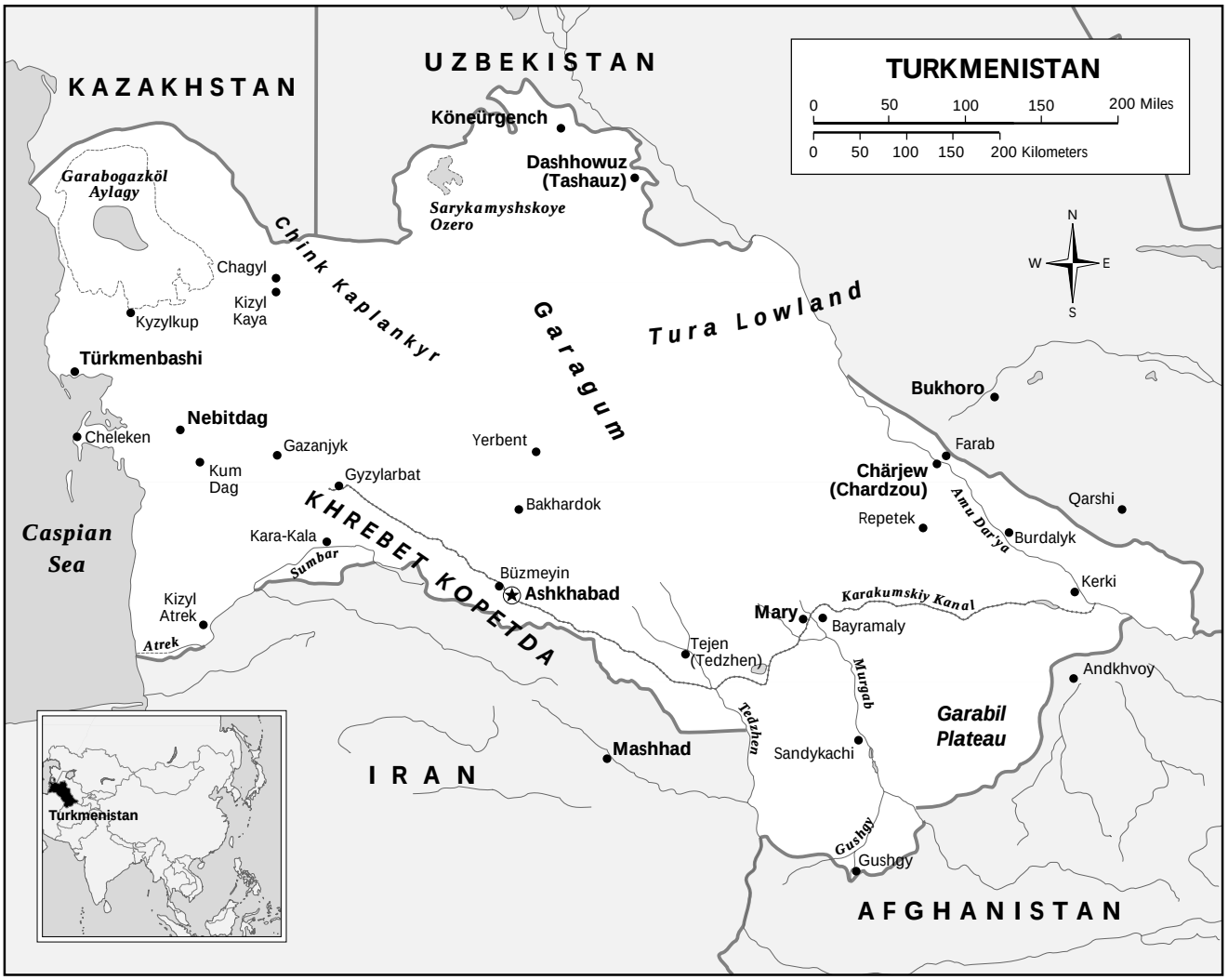
Government efforts continue to focus on fostering centralized state control. The president controls the parliament and the judiciary. The civilian authorities maintain effective control of the security forces. Neither independent political activity nor opposition candidates are allowed in Turkmenistan. The Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT) is the only legal political party. Political gatherings are illegal unless government-sanctioned, and the citizens of Turkmenistan do not have the means to change their government democratically.

On November 25, 2002, an armed attack against then-President Niyazov's motorcade occurred, and the Government of Turkmenistan moved quickly against perceived sources of opposition. There were widespread reports of human rights abuses committed by officials investigating the attack, including torture and punishment of families of the accused. The Government of Turkmenistan denied the charges, but refused to allow independent observers at trials, to accept a mandatory Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) fact-finding mission, or to permit the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) access to prisons. It also instituted new measures to stifle dissent and limit contact with the outside world.

While the constitution provides for freedom of the press, there is virtually no freedom of the press or of association. The government has full control of all media and restricts foreign publications. International satellite TV is available.

The population is 89% Sunni Muslim. The constitution provides for freedom of religion and does not establish a state religion; however, in practice, the government continues to monitor all forms of religious expression. Amendments to the law on religious organizations adopted in March 2004 reduced membership requirements from 500 to 5 for registration purposes. All groups must register in order to gain legal status with the government. Until 2004 the only religions that were registered successfully were Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodox Christianity. By January 2006, nine minority religious groups had registered. The government limits the activities of unregistered religious congregations by prohibiting them from gathering publicly, proselytizing, and disseminating religious materials.

The government has started to review and rewrite its legislation with the stated goal of meeting international standards, including the criminal and criminal procedures codes and laws on religion and assembly. In late September 2008, a revised national constitution was adopted. It included provisions for a strengthened and enlarged Mejlis (parliament), eliminated many of former President Niyazov's arbitrary addenda, and contained some rights-related textual changes the interna-



tional community had suggested. Most notably, it eliminated the Halk Maslahaty (Peoples Council), an oversized, bureaucratic, and largely rubber-stamp body whose powers have largely been transferred to the Mejlis.

A legacy of a Soviet-style command economy greatly limits equality of opportunity. Industry is almost entirely dominated by government or government-owned entities. Services are now largely in the private sector. Agriculture is dominated by a state order system, mainly for wheat and cotton, although about 50% of food production is in private hands.

Women face discrimination, and their freedom is further restricted due to traditional socio-religious norms. All citizens are required to carry internal passports, noting place of residence. President Niyazov introduced a new migration law in late 2005 that suggested a reimposition of exit restrictions on Turkmen citizens. As of August 2006, the law was not fully implemented and its effect remained unclear. In July 2007, the government rescinded the requirement for citizens to acquire visas for travel to border areas.

Corruption is pervasive. Power is concentrated in the president. The judiciary is subservient to the president, with all judges appointed for 5-year terms by the president without legislative review.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

According to the Turkmen Constitution, the president serves as de facto chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Pres.: **Gurbanguly BERDIMUHAMEDOW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Agriculture & Water Resources: **Myratgeldi AKMAMMEDOW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Construction: **Deryageldi ORAZOW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Economy & Finance: **Hojamyrat GELDIMYRADOW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Education, Health, Science, Religious Affairs, & Tourism: **Hydyr SAPARLYYEW**

Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Energy & Industry: **Nazarguly SAGULYYEW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Intl. Relations: **Rasit MEREDOW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Media & Culture: **Maysa YAZMUHAMMEDOWA**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Oil & Gas: **Tacberdi TAGYYEW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Trade, Commerce, Textiles, & Customs: **Hojamuhammet MUHAMMEDOW**
Dep. Chmn. of the Cabinet of Ministers for Transport & Communication (Acting): **Nazarguly SAGULYYEW**
Min. of Agriculture: **Esenmyrat ORAZGELDIYEW**
Min. of Communication: **Resulberdi HOJAGURBANOW**
Min. of Construction: **Samuhammet DURDYLYYEW**
Min. of Construction Materials: **Yazmirat HOMMADOW**
Min. of Culture & TV & Radio of Turkmenistan: **Gulmyrat MYRADOW**
Min. of Defense: **Agageldi MAMMETGELDIYEW**
Min. of Economics & Development: **Basimmyrat HOJAMAMMEDOW**
Min. of Education: **Muhammetgeldi ANNAAMANOW**
Min. of Energy & Industry: **Gurbannur ANNAWELIYEW**
Min. of Environmental Protection: **Magtymguly AKMYRADOW**
Min. of Finance: **Annamuhammet GOCYYEW**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Rasit MEREDOW**
Min. of Health & Medical Industry: **Ata SERDAROW**
Min. of Industry & Construction Materials: **Jumadurdy KAKALYYEW**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Orazgeldi AMANMYRADOW**
Min. of Justice: **Myrat GARRYYEW**
Min. of National Security: **Carymyrat AMANOW**
Min. of Oil & Gas Industry & Mineral Resources (Acting): **Bayramgeldi NEDIROW**
Min. of Railways: **Orazberdi HUDAYBERDIYEW**
Min. of Textile Industry: **Hojamyrat METEKOW**
Min. of Trade & Foreign Economic Relations: **Nokerguly ATAGULYEW**
Min. of Transport: **Gurbanmyrat HANGULYYEW**
Min. of Water Resources: **Annageldi YAZMYRADOW**
Min. of Welfare & Social Protection: **Gurbandurdy KAKALYYEW**
Head, State Concern for Turkmen Roads: **Asyr SARYBAYEW**
Prosecutor Gen.: **Cary HOJAMYRADOW**
Chmn., Central Bank: **Guwancmyrat GEKLENOW**
Ambassador to the US: **Meret ORAZOW**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Aksoltan ATAYEWA**

Turkmenistan maintains an embassy at 2207 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008; tel: (202) 588-1500, fax: (202) 588-0697, web site: http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org.

ECONOMY

Turkmenistan is an important supplier of raw materials, especially natural gas, petrochemicals and raw cotton. With the 2007 harvest of 920,000 tons, Turkmenistan is the second-largest cotton producer in the former Soviet Union after Uzbekistan. However, the crop yield has been steadily declining since independence because of poor irrigation and management practices.

While outside estimates place Turkmenistan's proven natural gas reserves among those of the top 15 of gas-producing countries, Turkmenistan's claims place its reserves at far higher than outside sources consider credible. In January 2005 Turkmenistan claimed its current recoverable gas resources to be as much as 20.42 trillion cubic meters (tcm), but controversy surrounding the as yet unreleased certified audit results of Turkmenistan's single largest field, Dovletabad, casts doubts on the verifiability of Turkmenistan's claims for its total reserves. To increase transparency, the president ordered that a new audit be carried out by a respected international firm, and that audit reportedly is starting with Turkmenistan's newest field in South Yoloten.

Despite its non-transparency about gas reserves, Turkmenistan remains the second-largest gas producer in the former Soviet Union after Russia. Production figures have been consistently climbing since 1998 when Turkmenistan was virtually cut off from all outside markets by Russia. Turkmenistan's 2007 output was an estimated 72 billion cubic meters (bcm); the bulk of which (50 bcm) went to Russia.

Turkmenistan relies almost exclusively on Russia for its energy export routes because most of the pipeline network is laid on Russian territory. Turkmenistan currently holds a contract with Gazprom to supply annually 50 bcm. In the first half of 2008, Turkmenistan received $130 per 1,000 cubic meters from Gazprom; that figure increased to $150 per 1,000 cubic meters on July 1. China has exploration and production rights on the right bank of the Amu Darya river in the east. Turkmenistan has contracted to provide China 30 bcm per year, beginning in 2010 when a new pipeline is due to be completed. Turkmenistan also exports to Iran about 8 bcm a year.

Turkmenistan's 2007 oil production increased by almost a million tons to 9.8 million tons. Among other major exports are liquefied natural gas (LNG) and polypropylene.

Turkmenistan has taken a cautious approach to economic reform, hoping to use gas sales to sustain inefficiencies in its economy. The private sector remains insignificant, with a substantial private share only in food processing, consumer trade and services. Despite the increased inflow of gas revenue, prospects in the near future are uncertain. Turkmenistan's statistics are closely held state secrets, and published GDP and other figures are subject to wide margins of error. Turkmenistan's unrealistic goal of "self-sufficiency" also artificially sustains the cultivation of inefficient crops, such as wheat and cotton. The 2006 UN Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report places Turkmenistan in the category of "medium human development" although the unemployment and underemployment rates may be as high as 70%. Turkmenistan has cooperated with the international community to transport humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Turkmenistan's declaration of "permanent neutrality" was formally recognized by the United Nations in 1995. Although the Government of Turkmenistan has favored high-profile purchases from the United States like Boeing aircraft, it has significant commercial relationships with Turkey, Russia, and Iran, and increasingly with China. The government worked closely with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan until September 11, 2001, and until that time had a growing cross-border trade with the regime in Afghanistan.

The five states of Central Asia wrestle with sharing limited water resources and environmental degradation caused by the shrinking of the Aral Sea. Multilaterally accepted Caspian Sea seabed and maritime boundaries have not yet been established. Up to now, Iran has insisted on dividing the Caspian Sea into five equal sectors while Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Russia have generally agreed upon equidistant seabed boundaries. Turkmenistan is negotiating bilateral delimitation with Azerbaijan.

U.S.-TURKMENISTAN RELATIONS

For several years, Turkmenistan was a key player in the U.S. Caspian Basin Energy Initiative, which sought to facilitate negotiations between commercial partners and the Governments of Turkmenistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey to build a pipeline under the Caspian Sea and export Turkmen gas to the Turkish domestic energy market and beyond—the so-called Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCGP). However, the Government of Turkmenistan essentially removed itself from the negotiations in 2000 by refusing all offers by its commercial partners and making unrealistic demands for billion-dollar "pre-financing." Following a tripartite summit with the presidents of Russia and Kazakhstan in May 2007 in which gas was a major topic, however, President Berdimuhamedov again resurrected the idea of a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline, explicitly refusing to rule out the possibility of constructing such a pipeline in the future.

The United States and Turkmenistan agreed in February 2007 to "turn a new page" in the bilateral relationship and find ways to cooperate on political and human rights reform, economic and agricultural reform, education and health care, energy, and security.

U.S. criticism of the Government of Turkmenistan's crackdown against perceived sources of political opposition after the November 2002 motorcade attack led to a marked downturn in bilateral relations between the Governments of the United States and Turkmenistan. However, currently the Government of Turkmenistan is interested in engaging with the United States in several areas, including security and energy issues. In order to secure and maintain this engagement, the government has been willing to take some small steps forward in democratic reform, such as lifting exit visas and allowing the registration of some religious minorities. Its human rights record, however, remains poor. Diplomatic missions from various countries and international organizations have joined together to persuade the Government of Turkmenistan to improve its human rights practices, but their efforts have not yet led to significant improvements overall.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ASHGABAT (E) No. 9 Pushkin Street, Ashgabat, 99312-350045, Fax 99312-392614, Workweek: Monday thru Friday, 9:00-18:00, Website: http://turkmenistan.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Maria Fotheringham
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CON:	Elizabeth Webster
DCM:	Sylvia Curran
PAO:	Andrew Paul
GSO:	Samuel Dykema
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CLO:	Carrie Kotara And Ewa Paul
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

September 2, 2008

Country Description: Turkmenistan is a Central Asian nation roughly the size of California. It shares borders with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. Turkmenistan gained its independence in 1991 during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Primarily a desert country, it has a population of around six million people. Tourist facilities, especially outside of the capital city of Ashgabat, are not highly developed. Many of the goods and services taken for granted in North American and Western European countries are not yet available. Travel within the country can be difficult due to limited infrastructure and government-imposed internal travel restrictions.

Entry Requirements: American citizens must have a valid passport and visa and/or letter of invitation from the Government of Turkmenistan to enter and exit Turkmenistan. To apply for a visa, all U.S. citizens must complete an application and have a letter of invitation approved by the State Migration Service (SMS), formerly known as the State Service for the Registration of Foreigners (SSRF), in Ashgabat. An individual or organization in Turkmenistan must submit the letter of invitation on behalf of an American citizen to the SMS accompanied by a copy of the traveler's passport ID page. Each traveler's passport must be valid for at least 6 months following the date of the application. The SMS requires at least 15 working

days for approval. The U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat does not issue letters of invitation to citizens interested in private travel to Turkmenistan. Applications for a visa can be submitted to the Embassy of Turkmenistan in Washington, D.C., or directly to the SMS in Ashgabat. Under local law, a traveler with a stamped and approved invitation letter may also obtain a visa at the Ashgabat International Airport upon arrival in Turkmenistan; however, some travelers have reported difficulties with airlines not boarding passengers who only have approved invitation letters in lieu of a visa for onward travel to Turkmenistan. Travelers are strongly recommended to obtain a visa before traveling.

The price for the visa will vary according to the intended length of stay. For an additional charge, the SMS can extend a visa in Ashgabat beyond its initial validity. Any traveler arriving without a visa or without the documents necessary to obtain a visa will be denied entry and may be held at the airport or border until the traveler has secured transportation out of Turkmenistan. Based on past incidents, the Embassy discourages travelers from planning to use transit visas in lieu of obtaining tourist visas through a travel agency. The U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat is unable to intervene with Turkmenistani authorities regarding the admission of private travelers to Turkmenistan. Travelers departing Turkmenistan must have a current valid visa or they will be denied exit until they have extended the validity of the visa through their departure date. In addition, U.S. citizens traveling in Turkmenistan should be aware that they need special permission from the SMS to travel to areas of the country that have been restricted by the Government of Turkmenistan, including almost all border areas.

Upon arrival at an airport or border entry point, foreigners will be charged approximately $12 for an immigration card issued by Turkmen authorities. All foreigners are required to carry this immigration card for the duration of their stay in Turkmenistan. Authorities will collect the immigration card upon departure. Those departing Turkmenistan from the Ashgabat airport and flying with a non-Turkmenistani flagged carrier are required to pay a $25 departure fee.

In addition to the immigration requirements mentioned above, foreigners are subject to local registration requirements. Americans who plan to stay more than three working days in Turkmenistan must register with the SMS. SMS offices are located in all of Turkmenistan's five major cities: Ashgabat, Dashoguz, Mary, Turkmenabat and Turkmenbashy. Foreigners who plan to travel outside of the city in which they will register must inform the SMS in advance; otherwise travelers will face fines or deportation. One day prior to their departure from Turkmenistan, foreigners must return to an SMS office to register the departure. Foreigners should be registered and deregistered at the SMS in the city in which their sponsoring organization is located. Foreigners who fail to register their departure may be prevented by immigration authorities from leaving the country until they have done so. The penalties for remaining in Turkmenistan with an expired visa or for failing to register with SMS include fines, arrest, and/or deportation. Foreigners who are deported for these violations may be prohibited from returning to Turkmenistan for up to five years. American citizens in Turkmenistan are strongly urged to ensure that their visas do not expire and that they register with SMS upon arrival and upon departure.

Visitors holding tourist visas organized by a travel agency must stay in hotels; other visitors may stay in private accommodations whose owner must register the visitor's presence. Visit the Embassy of Turkmenistan web site at http://turkmenistanembassy.org for the most current visa information.

Several popular travel guides discuss traveling by "ferry" across the Caspian Sea from Baku, Azerbaijan, to the port of Turkmenbashy in western Turkmenistan. Some travelers have faced problems attempting to travel to Turkmenistan by boat. Travelers should be aware that these "ferries" are in fact cargo ships that take on some passengers incidental to their primary function. Passengers are generally not provided food or water on these ships, and sleeping and sanitary facilities are likely to be rudimentary. Travelers should be aware that ships arriving at the port of Turkmenbashy often wait days offshore for outgoing ships to vacate the dock to allow incoming ships to disembark. Some travelers have spent more than a week offshore while their ship awaited permission to enter the port, and they have run out of stores of food and water, or had their Turkmen visas expire before they could be used. For this and other reasons travelers, especially those who plan to enter Turkmenistan by boat, are discouraged from using transit visas to enter Turkmenistan.

At Ashgabat International Airport, most airlines do not accept payment for tickets by credit card, or in any currency other than US dollars or Turkmen manat. Travelers planning direct transit through Turkmenistan en route to another country should be aware that if they are stranded due to a missed connection, they will not be allowed to leave the arrival detention area until they are able to buy a ticket for an onward flight out of Turkmenistan. For this reason, the Embassy discourages travelers from planning to directly transit through Ashgabat International Airport.

Safety and Security: Those considering travel to Turkmenistan should take the country's proximity to regions of past and current instability into account before making any plans. The Government of Turkmenistan has designated many areas throughout the country as "restricted zones," particularly the border areas next to Iran, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan, the entire region of Dashoguz (including Dashoguz city), and areas of the Caspian coast. Travel to these areas by foreigners is forbidden without special permission from the Government of Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan Airlines, the national airline, will not sell a ticket to any traveler who intends to travel

to a "restricted zone" without proof of permission from the government. Travelers who wish to visit a "restricted zone" must have a valid passport and visa and must apply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a special permit. There is a minimum processing time of 10 working days for these permits.

Visible police and military presence in Turkmenistan is common. Both uniformed and plainclothes officials frequently ask to see passports, visas, migration cards, and SMS registrations. Travelers should ask to see identification if they are not certain that the person requesting the information is an official. These documentation checks, and residence and vehicle searches, are common. Security personnel maintain checkpoints on major roads.

Security personnel may at times place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephones, and fax machines may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched. Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest, such as government buildings, may result in problems with authorities. Visitors should ask whether buildings may be photographed.

Supporters of extremist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Al-Qaeda, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement remain active in Central Asia. These groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and may attempt to target U.S. Government or private interests in the region, including in Turkmenistan. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Because of increased security at official U.S. facilities, terrorists are seeking softer civilian targets such as residential areas, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, hotels, schools, outdoor recreation events, resorts, beaches, maritime facilities, and commercial aircraft.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affair's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Although the government's official policy is to report that there is no violent crime, there are incidents of assault, rape, and murder sometimes directed at foreigners. Prostitution, heroin use, and economic conditions are all factors contributing to the incidence of violent crimes. Petty theft is common in crowded public places such as the local bazaars. Visitors should take appropriate measures to safeguard their passports and valuables in such areas. Also, visitors should not leave their valuables in plain view within a parked vehicle. Several recent cases suggest that there has been an increase in theft from parked vehicles.

Foreign visitors, including American citizens, present an attractive target for criminals. Travelers should exercise the same common sense, good judgment, and caution as they would in any major U.S. city. For instance, one should avoid carrying large sums of money in public. Travelers should avoid walking alone after dark, and women specifically should avoid being alone in isolated areas. Most taxis are not regulated by any government licensing agency and drivers are usually private citizens looking to make money. The majority of cars will not have seat belts or other safety devices, and drivers may not have had any formal driver training. For safety reasons, visitors should strongly consider hiring a private car and driver through their travel agency or hotel. There is one government-owned and regulated taxi company, operating in Ashgabat, which charges a flat fee of 30,000 Turkmen Manat (about $2 at the July 2008 exchange rate) for a one-way trip within Ashgabat city limits. Its telephone number is: (993 12) 32-97-75. If using local unregulated taxis, passengers should always negotiate fares with taxi drivers in advance, and extreme caution should be used when using taxis after dark, especially when there are other passengers in the vehicle.

Prostitution is illegal, and prostitutes have been known to accompany men to their residences or hotel rooms in order to steal from them, sometimes with the help of an accomplice. The authorities will generally consider any woman leaving a discotheque with a foreign man late at night to be a prostitute, and on that basis, the foreigner may be detained. In recent years, at least one foreigner was kept in jail for fifteen days on charges of soliciting prostitution. Travelers should be aware that U.S. law provides for criminal prosecution in U.S. federal courts of American citizens who have solicited a prostitute under the age of 18 while traveling abroad.

Police can ask anyone to present identity papers at any time, but authorities are especially aggressive late at night. Even if valid papers are presented, the police may ask for a bribe. For this reason, those going from place to place late at night should consider using a trusted driver.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing these products back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds

could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Turkmenistan is: 03.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Turkmenistan is limited and well below North American and Western European standards. All visitors are strongly advised to purchase medical evacuation insurance to cover costs associated with transporting them to adequate medical facilities in the event of serious illness or injury. Such travel can be expensive if undertaken under emergency conditions, and absent this insurance, medical evacuation travel may be logistically impossible on an emergency basis. Travelers with medical conditions should consult their regular physician to determine whether travel to Turkmenistan is advisable in light of the level of available health care. Resident American citizens travel to Western Europe or North America for treatment of any serious medical condition. The U.S. Embassy maintains a list of public hospitals and English-speaking physicians in the country, however the standard of care at these hospitals cannot be considered comparable to Western standards. Basic medical supplies, including disposable needles, anesthetics, and antibiotics are often in short supply. Two private clinics have foreign medical practitioners (generally Turkish) who may be available for consultations and treatment; these clinics, however, have refused in some cases to admit patients with serious conditions, regardless of the patient's ability to pay for treatment. Even at these hospitals, the standard of care is low compared to Western standards. Travelers requiring prescription medications should bring sufficient supplies of all necessary medications and appropriate documentation to ensure no problems with customs officials upon arrival.

Some HIV/AIDS entry restrictions exist for visitors to and foreign residents of Turkmenistan. Currently, HIV tests are not required for applicants requesting tourist visas, however, should an individual be discovered to be HIV positive, that status would be grounds for denial of a visa or deportation. All individuals requesting residence visas are required to submit to an HIV test. Please verify this information with the Embassy of Turkmenistan at http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org before you travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Please see our information on medical insurance overseas. All travelers are strongly encouraged to obtain medical evacuation insurance, in light of the substandard health care available in Turkmenistan. Information on companies that provide medical evacuation insurance for Turkmenistan is available on the U.S. Embassy website at http://turkmenistan.usembassy.gov.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Turkmenistan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Road conditions in Turkmenistan make driving difficult and sometimes dangerous. Most roads outside of major cities are narrow, riddled with potholes, unlit at night, and without proper road signs. Driving at night on these roads should be avoided. City roads are better in comparison to rural routes but may be hazardous due to potholes, uncovered manholes, poor lighting, and heavy pedestrian traffic. Pedestrians frequently cross against traffic and create dangerous conditions. Traffic accidents involving serious injury to drivers, passengers, and pedestrians are common.

In general, visitors should use caution when driving in Turkmenistan. Drivers pay little attention to lanes and other road markings, with weaving and sudden lane changes a common occurrence (usually without use of a turn signal). Drivers will often encounter cars going the wrong way on one-way streets or divided highways. Cars also frequently make left-turns from the right lane and vice-versa. Pedestrians regularly walk or stand in the middle of busy streets during the day and night, often without paying attention to oncoming traffic.

Roadside assistance does not exist in Turkmenistan, where vast stretches of highway are often unmarked. Police checkpoints (where cars are required to stop and register) are a common feature on major routes between cities. The U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat has received reports that police stationed at checkpoints may arbitrarily fine motorists. Local law requires that traffic fines be paid within 12 hours. If a fine is not paid within that period, the amount may double every 12 hours up to 72 hours, after which time the vehicle in question may be seized.

Travelers who wish to drive in Turkmenistan must have a valid international driving permit. Foreigners who plan to reside in Turkmenistan must apply for a local driver's license with the Road Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan. American citizens who

want more specific information about driving in Turkmenistan should contact the Embassy of Turkmenistan at 2207 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington DC 20008, telephone (202) 588-1500.

For specific information concerning Turkmenistan driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Turkmenistan National Tourist Organization offices at its Permanent Mission in New York. The address is: 136 East 67th Street, NY, NY 10021. The phone number is 1-212-472-5921.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Turkmenistan, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Turkmenistan's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Travelers may experience significant delays, unexpected re-routing, and sudden cancellations of flights, including those of Turkmenistan Airlines (Turkmenhowayollary), the national airline. Travelers have reported difficulties securing reservations and purchasing tickets from Turkmenistan Airlines on both domestic and international flights, which are routinely overbooked.

Special Circumstances: Turkmenistan has a cash-only economy. However, several new hotels accept credit cards. Vnesheconombank and the National Bank of Pakistan cash traveler's checks and personal checks for a fee, although cashing a personal check is a lengthy process that could require up to two months. Vnesheconombank also accepts Visa for cash advances, for a fee.

Although the manat is the official currency, U.S. dollars are widely accepted and are required as payment for certain goods and services. Travelers may wish to bring sufficient U.S. currency to exchange into manat to cover expenses not payable in U.S. Dollars. Old U.S. dollar bills (issued before 1990) and/or those in poor condition (with tears, writing or stamps) are not acceptable forms of currency in Turkmenistan. Banks frequently do not have small bills for change.

In 2008, the government of Turkmenistan, unified its dual currency exchange rate by bringing the commercial and governmental exchange rates together. This change occurred incrementally, contributing to wild currency speculation by average citizens, many of whom keep their savings in U.S. dollars in their homes, rather than in bank accounts. As a result, the banks, at times, have imposed limits on the amount of currency that could be exchanged by an individual on a particular day. Travelers should check with their travel agencies to discuss options for currency exchange if a limitation should happen during their visit to Turkmenistan.

Turkmenistan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Turkmenistan of items such as carpets, jewelry, musical instruments, pieces of art, archaeological artifacts, antiques, protected animals, etc. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Turkmenistan in Washington for specific information regarding customs requirements. Travelers who wish to take carpets out of Turkmenistan must obtain a certificate from the Carpet Museum in central Ashgabat indicating that the carpet is not of historical value. Some private shops may have carpets for sale for which they have already obtained certificates; buyers should be sure to ask about customs certificates before purchasing any carpet. In addition, buyers may have to pay a tax calculated according to the size of the carpet. Travelers who have purchased other items that could be perceived to be of historical value, such as jewelry, have also reported difficulties in taking these items out of Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan's indigenous dog, the Alabay, is considered a national treasure and is banned for export without prior permission. American citizens should also check to ensure that any item they intend to bring into the United States is permitted by U.S. customs regulations.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports and visas with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship, are readily available.

Travelers to Turkmenistan should be aware that there are several types of poisonous snakes and insects indigenous to the country. Even in cities, it is common to encounter cobras and scorpions, especially in areas covered with tall grass. Travelers are advised to be alert to these dangers to avoid being bitten or stung.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Turkmenistani laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Turkmenistan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Disaster Preparedness: Turkmenistan is an earthquake-prone country. Building practices within Turkmenistan do not generally meet U.S. seismic standards. In addition, local authorities do not have sufficient resources to respond to a large-scale disaster. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children

and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Turkmenistan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Turkmenistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 9 1984 (Pushkin Street), off Magtymguly Street, tel. (993-12) 35-00-45; fax (993-12) 39-26-14. The Consular Section can also be contacted by e-mail at: consularashgab@state.gov.

The embassy's Internet address is http://turkmenistan.usembassy.gov. The Consular Section is open for American Citizens services every Monday through Friday afternoon, excepting holidays. American Citizens are requested to call for an appointment for services except in cases of emergency.

Intercountry Adoption

January 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

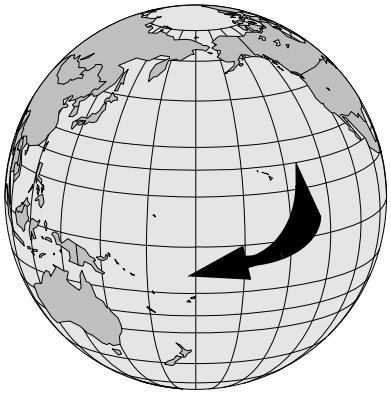
Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that only one immigrant visa has been issued to a Turkmenistan orphan in the last five fiscal years. The U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat continues to seek clarification from the government of Turkmenistan regarding the legal procedures for intercountry adoption. This flyer will be updates as new information becomes available.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
9 Pushkin Street
Telephone: 993-12 35-00-45,
Fax: 993-12-35-00-49

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Turkmenistan may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



TUVALU

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Tuvalu

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 26 sq. km.
Cities: Capital—Funafuti.
Terrain: Very low lying and narrow coral atolls.
Climate: Tropical; moderated by easterly trade winds (March-November); westerly gales and heavy rain (November-March).

People

Nationality: Noun—Tuvaluan (s); adjective—Tuvaluan.
Population: (2006 est.) 9,652. Age structure (2006 est.)—34.2% under 15; 3.6% over 65.
Growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.5%.
Ethnic groups: Polynesians 96%, Micronesians 4%.
Religions: Church of Tuvalu (Congregationalist) 97%; Seventh-day Adventist 1.4%, Baha'i 1%, other 0.6%.
Languages: Tuvaluan, English, Samoan, Kiribati (on the island of Nui) also spoken.
Education: (2004) Literacy—95%.
Health: (2004) Life expectancy—total 61.5 yrs.; male 61 yrs; female 62. Infant mortality rate (2004)—36/1,000.
Work force: (2004 est.) total 6,000; formal sector 2,400.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy.
Independence: (from U.K.) October 1, 1978.
Constitution: October 1, 1978.
Government branches: Executive—Governor General is appointed by the British monarch on recommendation of the Prime Minister, who is head of the government. Legislative—unicameral Parliament, also called House of Assembly (15 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve 4-year term). Judicial—High Court with eight Island Courts (with limited jurisdiction). Rulings from High Court can be appealed to the Court of Appeal in Fiji.
Political parties: None.

Economy (all figures in U.S. $)

GDP: (2007 est.) $26.7 million.
GDP per capita: (2007 est.) $2,718.
Industry: Types—fishing, tourism (government and NGO officials on business), copra.
Trade: Exports (2007 est.)—$100,410; stamps, copra, handicrafts. Major markets—Fiji, Australia, New Zealand. Imports (2007 est.)—$15.5 million; prepared foodstuffs, mineral products, machinery, animals and animal products. Major sources—Australia, Fiji, Singapore, New Zealand.
Currency: Australian dollar (A$).

GEOGRAPHY

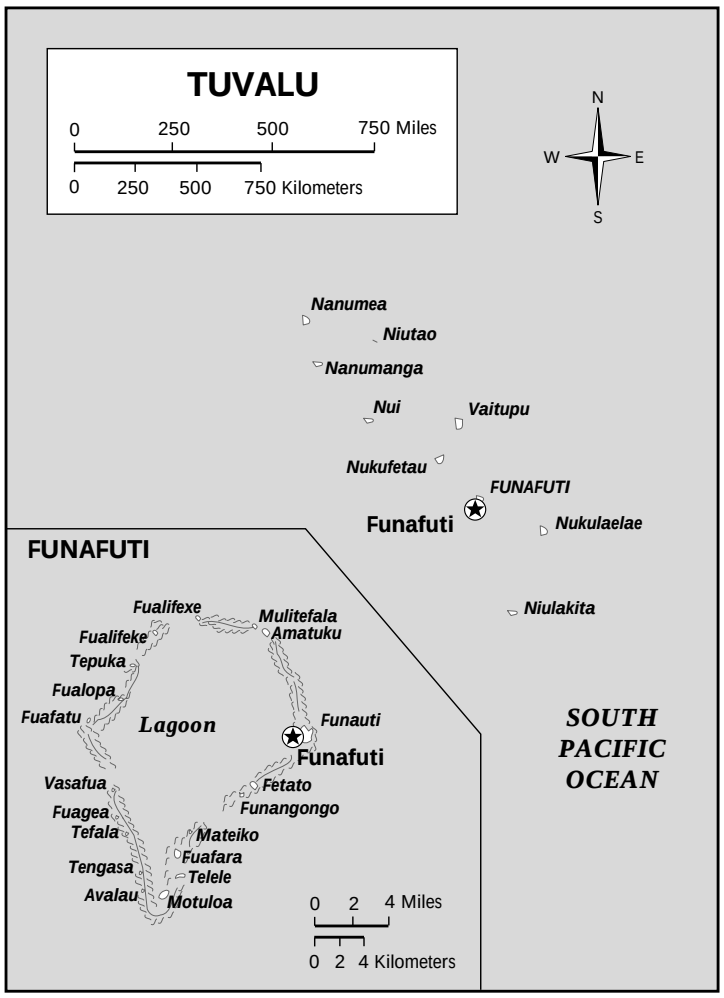
The Western Pacific nation of Tuvalu, formerly known as the Ellice Islands, is situated 4,000 kilometer (2,486 mi.) northeast of Australia. It is halfway from Hawaii to Australia. Tuvalu consists of four reef islands and five true atolls, with poor soil and a total land area of only about 26 sq. km. (10 sq. mi.). Tuvalu has westerly gales and heavy rain from November to March and tropical temperatures moderated by easterly winds from March-November. The land is very low lying with narrow coral atolls. The highest elevation is five meters above sea level.

PEOPLE

96% of Tuvaluans are ethnic Polynesians, closely related to the people of Samoa and Tonga. The vast majority belong to the Church of Tuvalu, a Protestant denomination. Conversion began in the 1860s with the arrival of a Congregationalist missionary from the Cook Islands.

HISTORY

The Spanish were the first Europeans to see the islands in the 1500s. However, in 1819, Captain De Pey-



ster, an American in command of the British merchant ship Rebecca named the main island in the group Ellice's Island after a British politician who owned the cargo aboard his ship. In 1841, the U.S. Exploring Expedition commanded by Charles Wilkes visited three of Tuvalu's islands and welcomed visitors to his ships. Other early interactions with the outside world were far less benign. In 1863, hundreds of people from the southern islands were kidnapped when they were lured aboard slave ships with promises that they would be taught about Christianity.

Those islanders were forced to work under horrific conditions in the guano mines of Peru. Eventually, the islands came under British influence in the late 19th century. The Ellice Islands were administered by Britain as part of a protectorate (1892-1916) and later as part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands colony (1916-74). During World War II, several thousand American troops were in the islands. Beginning in October 1942, U.S. forces built airbases on the islands of Funafuti, Nanumea, and Nukufetau. Friendly cooperation was the hallmark of relations between the local people and the troops, mainly U.S. Marines and U.S. Navy SeaBees.

The airstrip in the capital of Funafuti, originally built by the U.S. during the war, is still in use, as is the "American Passage" that was blasted through Nanumea's reef by SeaBees assisted by local divers. In 1974 the Ellice Islanders voted for separate British dependency status as Tuvalu, separating from the Gilbert Islands, which became Kiribati upon independence. Tuvalu became fully independent in 1978 and in 1979 signed a treaty of friendship with the United States, which recognized Tuvalu's possession of four islets formerly claimed by the United States.

GOVERNMENT

Queen Elizabeth II is the head of state, represented by the Governor General, who is appointed by the Queen on advice of the Prime Minister. Members of the Parliament elect the Prime Minister. The Cabinet is appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The legislative branch is a unicameral Parliament, also called House of Assembly (15 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve 4-year terms). Tuvalu maintains an independent judiciary consisting of a High Court and eight island courts. The rulings of the High Court can be appealed to the Tuvalu Court of Appeal.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Governor Gen.: **Filomea TELITO, Honorable Rev.**
Prime Minister: **Apisai IELEMIA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Saufatu SOPOANGA**
Min. for Communications & Transport: **Saufatu SOPOANGA**
Min. for Education & Sports: **Alesana K. SELUKA, Dr.**
Min. for Finance, Economic Planning, & Industries: **Lotoala METIA**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Apisai IELEMIA**
Min. for Health: **Alesana K. SELUKA, Dr.**
Min. for Home Affairs, Rural & Urban Development: **Leti PELESALA**
Min. for Labor: **Maatia TOAFA**
Min. for Natural Resources: **Samuelu P. TEO**
Min. for Works & Energy: **Saufatu SOPOANGA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Enele Sosene SOPOAGA**

Tuvalu maintains a diplomatic mission in New York at 800 2nd Ave, Suite 400B New York, New York 10017 (tel: 212-490-0534; fax: 212-937-0692).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Democratic values in Tuvalu are strong, with free elections every 4 years by universal adult suffrage. There are no formal political parties; election campaigns are largely on the basis of home island/personal/family ties and reputation. Members of Parliament have very close ties to the islands they represent. Often the northern islands in the country compete against the southern islands, with the capital isle of Funafuti holding the balance of power. Traditional chiefs and island councils also still play significant roles in influencing island affairs, particularly on the outer islands. A long-held distinction between chiefs and commoners is slowly disappearing, and chiefs are now more often selected on merit rather than by birth.

Tuvalu has had a number of prime ministers. This in part reflects the pressures affecting the small nation, including the transition from an exchange economy to a money economy, an adopted system of government with only limited regard for Tuvaluan traditions of decision making, and the lack of a clear national path to implement Tuvalu's vision for the future.

After elections in August 2006, Apisai Ielemia, a former opposition member of Parliament, became Prime Minister. He replaced Maatia Toafa, who took power in October 2004 after a vote of no confidence against his predecessor. Apisai Ielemia is the tenth Prime Minister of Tuvalu. He also holds the portfolio of Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labor.

ECONOMY

The economy suffers from Tuvalu's remoteness and lack of natural resources. Virtually the only jobs in the islands that pay a steady wage or salary are with the government, and nearly 70 percent of the formal workforce is employed in the public sector. Subsistence farming and fishing remain the primary economic activities, particularly away from the capital island of Funafuti. There is relatively little disparity between rich and poor in the country.

The Australian dollar (A$) is the currency of Tuvalu. Tuvalu's GDP per capita was about U.S.$2,718 in 2007. Only about one third of the labor force participates in the formal wage economy. The remaining 70% work primarily in rural subsistence and livelihood activities. There is growing youth unemployment and few new jobs are being created. Some 900-1,000 Tuvaluan men are trained, certified and active as seafarers. The Asian Development Bank estimates that, at any one time, about 15 percent of the adult male population works abroad as seafarers. Remittances from seafarers (estimated at U.S. $1.5-3 million per annum) are a major source of income for families in the country, and there is a steady annual uptake of young Tuvaluan men to the Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute.

The Tuvalu Trust Fund (TTF), a prudently managed overseas investment fund, has contributed roughly 11% of the annual government budget each year since 1990. The TTF was created from donations by Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom (along with Tuvalu's own contribution) at independence. The TTF has grown from about A$27 million to some A$100 million (est. 2006). Earnings from the TTF provide an important cushion against Tuvalu's volatile income from fishing license fees and royalties from the sale of the dot-TV Internet domain. Initial windfall income from the domain name paid most of the costs of paving the streets of Funafuti and installing street lighting in mid-2002. Sales of national stamps and coins provide another minor source of income for the government. Tuvalu is a safe country of unspoiled natural beauty and friendly people, but remoteness and lack of infrastructure have constricted Tuvalu's ability to develop its tourism potential.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Tuvalu maintains an independent but generally pro-Western foreign policy. It maintains close relations with Fiji, New Zealand and Australia. It has diplomatic relations with Taiwan, which maintains the only resident embassy in Tuvalu and has a large assistance program in the islands. There is no U.S. embassy in Tuvalu, but U.S. diplomats from the U.S. embassy in Fiji are accredited to Tuvalu and visit there regularly. Tuvalu became a member of United Nations in 2000 and maintains a mission at the UN in New York.

Tuvalu's only other diplomatic office is its High Commission in Suva, Fiji. Tuvalu is an active member of the Pacific Islands Forum and a member of the Asian Development Bank. A major international priority for Tuvalu in the UN and other international fora has been promoting concern about global warming and possible sea level rise. Tuvalu advocates ratification and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SUVA (E) 31 Loftus Street, Suva, 679-331-4466, Fax 679-330-5106, Workweek: 0800–1730 (Mon-Thu), 0800–1500 (Fri), Website: http://suva.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Margaret Kennett
DCM/CHG:	Jeffrey Robertson
ECO:	Mark Prokop
HRO:	Ila Jurisson
MGT:	Ila Jurisson
CON:	Debra J. Towry
DCM:	Richard Pruett
PAO:	Jeffrey Robertson
COM:	Quinn N. Plant
GSO:	Scott Gallaway
RSO:	Mathew McCormack
CLO:	Lynne T. Murphy
DAO:	Ltc. Patrick D. Reardon
EEO:	Heather Coble
FMO:	Ila Jurisson
ICASS Chair:	Col. Patrick D. Reardon
IMO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISO:	Steven A. Baldwin
ISSO:	Steven A. Baldwin
POL:	Mark S. Prokop
State ICASS:	Joseph P. Murphy

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 17, 2008

Country Description: Tuvalu is a South Pacific island nation consisting of four reef islands and five atolls. A self-governing member of the British Commonwealth, Tuvalu has a parliamentary system of government.

Entry Requirements: A passport, onward/return ticket, and proof of sufficient funds for the stay in Tuvalu are required. Visitor permits valid for up to three months are issued upon arrival. For further information about entry requirements, travelers may wish to contact the Tuvalu Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, Suite 400 B, 800 2nd Avenue, NY 10017, tel.: (212) 490-0534, fax: (212) 808-4975. This is particularly true for those persons planning to enter by sea.

Safety and Security: Americans in Tuvalu requiring immediate emergency assistance should call the 24-hour police command center in Tuvalu at (688) 20726.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Tuvalu has a low crime rate. However, visitors should not be complacent regarding personal safety or the protection of valuables.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds may be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical and dental care is very limited in Tuvalu, including in the capital, Funafuti. Serious medical problems are referred to Guam or Hawaii. Serious medical conditions requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Tuvalu.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Tuvalu is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic moves on the left in Tuvalu. The main roads on Funafuti have been paved, but most roads on these tiny islands are generally unpaved. Animals and unwary pedestrians walking in the road make night driving on unlit secondary roads hazardous. For specific information concerning Tuvalu driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, contact the Tuvalu Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Tuvalu, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Tuvalu's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: In Tuvalu, the Australian dollar is the legal currency. Traveler's checks and all major currencies are accepted by banks and may also be exchanged for local currency at some local hotels. Visa and MasterCard are accepted at most hotels. Expect to pay cash for hotel bills.

Tuvalu's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Tuvalu of items such as agricultural products. It is advisable to contact the Office of the Tuvalu Permanent Representative in New York, for specific information regarding customs requirements.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proofs of

identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. If detained, U.S. citizens are encouraged to request that a consular officer at the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji, be notified.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Tuvalu's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Tuvalu are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website online at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: There is no U.S. Embassy or diplomatic post in Tuvalu. The U.S. Embassy in Fiji provides assistance for U.S. citizens in Tuvalu. Americans living or traveling in Tuvalu are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Suva through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Tuvalu. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji. The U.S. Embassy in Fiji is located at 31 Loftus Street in the capital city of Suva. The telephone number is (679) 331-4466; the fax number is (679) 330-2267. Information may also be obtained by visiting the Embassy's home page at http://suva.usembassy.gov. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.



UGANDA

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Uganda

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 241,040 sq. km. (93,070 sq. mi.); about the size of Oregon.

Cities: Capital—Kampala (2002 pop. 1.2 million). Other cities—Jinja, Gulu, Mbale, Mbarara.

Terrain: 18% inland water and swamp; 12% national parks, forest, and game reserves; 70% forest, woodland, grassland.

Climate: In the northeast, semi-arid—rainfall less than 50 cm. (20 in.); in southwest, rainfall 130 cm. (50 in.) or more. Two dry seasons: Dec.-Feb. and June-July.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Ugandan(s).

Population: (2007) 30.9 million.

Annual growth rate: (2004 est.) 4.0%.

Ethnic groups: African 99%, European, Asian, Arab 1%.

Religions: (2007) Christian 85%, Muslim 12%, other 2%.

Languages: English (official); Luganda and Swahili widely used; other Bantu and Nilotic languages.

Education: Attendance (2000; primary school enrollment, public and private)—89%. Literacy (2003)—70%.

Health: Infant mortality rate—86/1,000. Life expectancy—45.3 yrs.

Government

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Ratified July 12, 1995; promulgated October 8, 1995.

Independence: October 9, 1962.

Government branches: Executive—president, vice president, prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—parliament. Judicial—Magistrate's Court, High Court, Court of Appeals, Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 80 districts.

Political parties: In 2006, approximately 33 parties were allowed to function, including political parties that existed in 1986, when the National Resistance Movement assumed power.

Suffrage: Universal adult.

National holidays: Independence Day, October 9.

Economy

GDP: (nominal, 2006/2007) $10.8 billion.

Inflation rate: (annual headline or CPI, 2006/2007) 7.6%.

Natural resources: Copper, cobalt, limestone, phosphate, oil.

Agriculture: Cash crops—coffee, tea, cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, cut flowers, vanilla. Food crops—bananas, corn, cassava, potatoes, millet, pulses. Livestock and fisheries—beef, goat meat, milk, Nile perch, tilapia.

Industry: Processing of agricultural products (cotton ginning, coffee curing), cement production, light consumer goods, textiles.

Trade: Exports (2006/2007)—$1.5 billion: coffee, fish and fish products, tea, electricity, horticultural products, vanilla, cut flowers, remittances from abroad. Major markets—EU, Kenya, South Africa, U.K., U.S. Imports (2006/2007)—$2.5 billion: capital equipment, vehicles, petroleum, medical supplies, chemical, cereals. Major suppliers—OPEC countries, Kenya, EU, India, South Africa, China, U.S.

Fiscal year: July 1-June 30.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Africans of three main ethnic groups—Bantu, Nilotic, and Nilo-Hamitic—constitute most of the population. The Bantu are the most numerous and include the Baganda, which, with 18% of the population, constitute the largest single ethnic group. Individual ethnic groups in the southwest include the Banyankole and Bahima, 10%; the Bakiga, 8%; the Banyarwanda, 6%; the Bunyoro, 3%; and the Batoro, 3%. Residents of the north, largely Nilotic, include the Langi, 6%, and

the Acholi, 4%. In the northwest are the Lugbara, 4%, and the Karamojong, 2%, occupy the considerably drier, largely pastoral territory in the northeast. The Basoga, 8% and the Bagisu, 5% are among ethnic groups in the East. Europeans, Asians, and Arabs make up about 1% of the population with other groups accounting for the remainder.

Uganda's population is predominately rural, and its population density highest in the southern regions. Until 1972, Asians constituted the largest nonindigenous ethnic group in Uganda. In that year, the Idi Amin regime expelled 50,000 Asians, who had been engaged in trade, industry, and various professions. In the years since Amin's overthrow in 1979, Asians have slowly returned and now number around 30,000. Other nonindigenous people in Uganda include Arabs, Western missionaries, nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers, diplomats, and business people.

When Arab traders moved inland from their enclaves along the Indian Ocean coast of East Africa and reached the interior of Uganda in the 1830s, they found several African kingdoms with well-developed political institutions dating back several centuries. These traders were followed in the 1860s by British explorers searching for the source of the Nile River. Protestant missionaries entered the country in 1877, followed by Catholic missionaries in 1879.

In 1888, control of the emerging British "sphere of interest" in East Africa was assigned by royal charter to the Imperial British East Africa Company, an arrangement strengthened in 1890 by an Anglo-German agreement confirming British dominance over Kenya and Uganda. In 1894, the Kingdom of Buganda was placed under a formal British protectorate.

Britain granted internal self-government to Uganda in 1961, with the first elections held on March 1, 1961. Benedicto Kiwanuka of the Democratic Party became the first Chief Minister. Uganda maintained its Commonwealth membership. A second round of elections in April 1962 elected members to a new National Assembly. Milton Obote, leader of the majority coalition in the National Assembly, became prime minister and led Uganda to formal independence on October 9, 1962.

In succeeding years, supporters of a centralized state vied with those in favor of a loose federation and a strong role for tribally-based local kingdoms. Political maneuvering climaxed in February 1966, when Prime Minister Milton Obote suspended the constitution, assumed all government powers, and removed the ceremonial president and vice president. In September 1967, a new constitution proclaimed Uganda a republic, gave the president even greater powers, and abolished the traditional kingdoms. On January 25, 1971, Obote's government was ousted in a military coup led by armed forces commander Idi Amin Dada. Amin declared himself president, dissolved the parliament, and amended the constitution to give himself absolute power.

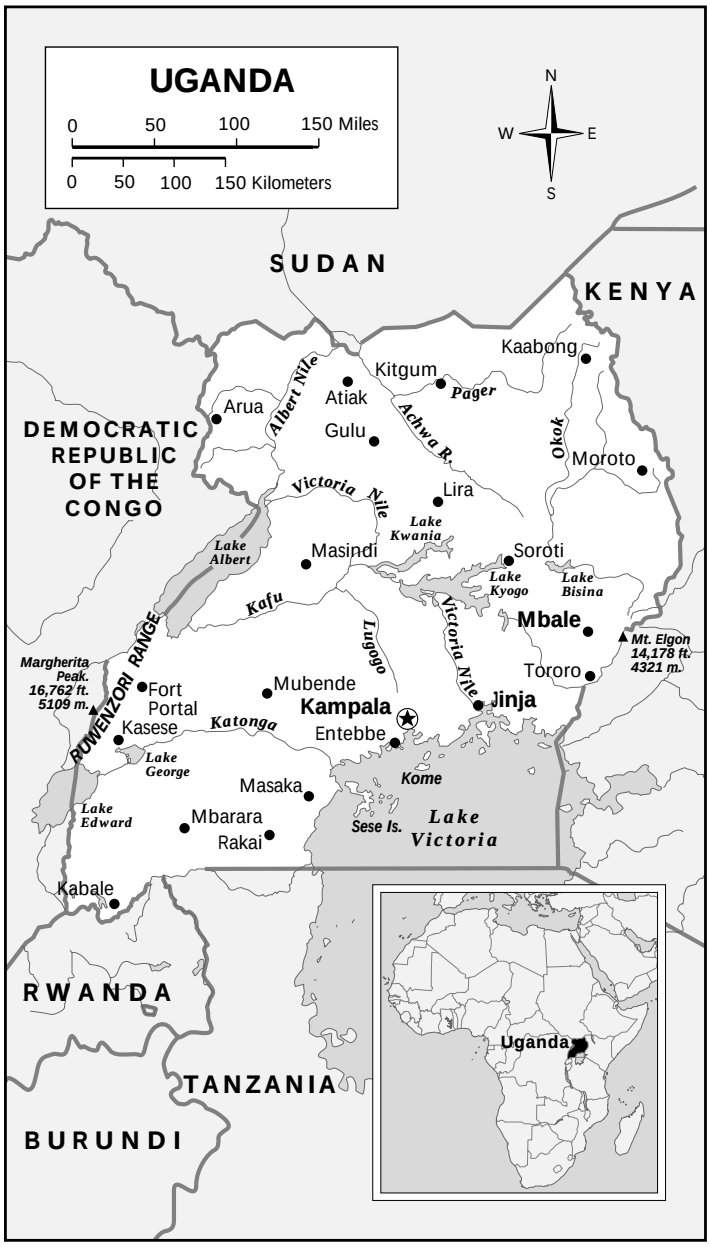
Idi Amin's 8-year rule produced economic decline, social disintegration, and massive human rights violations. The Acholi and Langi ethnic groups were particular objects of Amin's political persecution because they had supported Obote and made up a large part of the army. In 1978, the International Commission of Jurists estimated that more than 100,000 Ugandans had been murdered during Amin's reign of terror; some authorities place the figure much higher.

In October 1978, Tanzanian armed forces repulsed an incursion of Amin's troops into Tanzanian territory. The Tanzanian force, backed by Ugandan exiles, waged a war of liberation against Amin's troops and Libyan soldiers sent to help him. On April 11, 1979, Kampala was captured, and Amin fled with his remaining forces.

After Amin's removal, the Uganda National Liberation Front formed an interim government with Yusuf Lule as president. This government adopted a ministerial system of administration and created a quasi-parliamentary organ known as the National Consultative Commission (NCC). The NCC and the Lule cabinet reflected widely differing political views. In June 1979, following a dispute over the extent of presidential powers, the NCC replaced Lule with Godfrey Binaisa. In a continuing dispute over the powers of the interim presidency, Binaisa was removed in May 1980. Thereafter, Uganda was ruled by a military commission chaired by Paulo Muwanga. December 1980 elections returned the UPC to power under the leadership of President Obote, with Muwanga serving as vice president. Under Obote, the security forces had one of the world's worst human rights records. In their efforts to stamp out an insurgency led by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA), they laid waste to a substantial section of the country, especially in the Luwero area north of Kampala.

Obote ruled until July 27, 1985, when an army brigade, composed mostly of ethnic Acholi troops and commanded by Lt. Gen. Basilio Olara-Okello, took Kampala and proclaimed a military government. Obote fled to exile in Zambia. The new regime, headed by former defense force commander Gen. Tito Okello (no relation to Lt. Gen. Olara-Okello), opened negotiations with Museveni's insurgent forces and pledged to improve respect for human rights, end tribal rivalry, and conduct free and fair elections. In the meantime, massive human rights violations continued as the Okello government murdered civilians and ravaged the countryside in order to destroy the NRA's support.

Negotiations between the Okello government and the NRA were conducted in Nairobi in the fall of 1985, with Kenyan President Daniel Moi seeking a cease-fire and a coalition government in Uganda. Although agreeing in late 1985 to a cease-fire, the NRA continued fighting, seized Kampala in late January 1986, and assumed control of the country, forcing Okello to flee north into Sudan. Museveni's forces organized a government with Museveni as president and dominated by the political grouping called the National Resistance Move-



ment (NRM or the "Movement"). A referendum was held in March 2000 on whether Uganda should retain the Movement system, with limited operation of political parties, or adopt multi-party politics. Although 70% of voters endorsed retention of the Movement system, the referendum was widely criticized for low voter turnout and unfair restrictions on Movement opponents. Museveni was reelected to a second five-year term in March 2001. Parliamentary elections were held in June 2001, and more than 50% of contested seats were won by newcomers. Movement supporters nevertheless remained in firm control of the legislative branch. Observers believed that the 2001 presidential and parliamentary elections generally reflected the will of the electorate; however, both were marred by serious irregularities, particularly in the period leading up to the elections, such as restrictions on political party activities, incidents of violence, voter intimidation, and fraud. A Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) issued a report proposing comprehensive constitutional change in December 2003. The government, however, took issue with many CRC recommendations and made counter-proposals in September 2004. A July 2005 national referendum resulted in the adoption of a multiparty system of government and the subsequent inclusion of opposition parties in elections and government.

In February 2006, the country held its first multiparty general elections since President Museveni came to power in 1986. The election generally reflected the will of the people, although serious irregularities occurred. Ruling NRM candidate President Museveni was declared the winner with 59.26% of the vote, giving him a third term in office following the passage of a controversial amendment in June 2005 to eliminate presidential term limits. Opposition FDC leader Kizza Besigye captured 37.39% of the vote, while the remaining contestants received less than 2% of the vote each, according to official figures from the Electoral Commission.

GOVERNMENT

The 1995 constitution established Uganda as a republic with an executive, legislative, and judicial branch. The constitution provides for an executive president, to be elected every 5 years. President Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986, was elected in 1996 and reelected in 2001 and 2006. Legislative responsibility is vested in the parliament; legislative elections were last held February 2006. There are currently 102 women representatives in the 332-member parliament. The Ugandan judiciary operates as an independent branch of government and consists of magistrate's courts, high courts, courts of appeals, and the Supreme Court. Parliament and the judiciary have significant amounts of independence and wield significant power.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Yoweri Kaguta MUSEVENI**
Vice Pres.: **Gilbert Balibaseka BUKENYA, Dr.**
Prime Min.: **Apolo NSIBAMBI**

First Dep. Prime Min.: **Eriya KATEGAYA**
Second Dep. Prime Min.: **Henry KAJURA**
Third Dep. Prime Min.: **Kirunda KIVEJINJA**
Min. for Agriculture, Animal Industry, & Fisheries: **Hillary ONEK**
Min. for Communication & Information Communication Technology: **Hamu MULIIRA**
Min. for Defense: **Crispus KIYONGA**
Min. in Charge of East African Affairs: **Eriya KATEGAYA**
Min. for Education & Sports: **Namirembe BITAMAZIRE**
Min. for Energy & Minerals: **Daudi MIGEREKO**
Min. for Finance, Planning, & Economic Development: **Ezra SURUMA**
Min. for Foreign Affairs: **Sam KUTESA**
Min. for Gender, Labor, & Social Affairs: **Syda BUMBA**
Min. for General Duties, Office of the Prime Min.: **Adolf MWESIGE**
Min. for Health: **Stephen MALLINGA, Dr.**
Min. for Information & National Guidance: **Kirunda KIVEJINJA**
Min. for Internal Affairs: **Ruhakana RUGUNDA**
Min. for Justice & Constitutional Affairs: **Khiddu MAKUBUYA**
Min. for Lands, Housing, & Urban Development: **Omara ATUBO**
Min. for Local Govt.: **Kahinda OTAFIIRE, Maj. Gen.**
Min. for the Presidency: **Beatrice WABUDEYA**
Min. for Public Service: **Henry KAJURA**
Min. for Relief & Disaster Preparedness: **Tarsis KABWEGYERE**
Min. for Security: **Amama MBABAZI**
Min. for Trade & Industry: **Janat MUKWAYA**
Min. for Water & Environment: **Maria MUTAGAMBA**
Min. for Works: **John NASASIRA**
Min. of State for Agriculture: **Kibirige SSEBUNYA**
Min. of State for Animal Industry: **Bright RWAMIRAMA, Maj.**
Min. of State for Defense: **Ruth NANKABIRWA**
Min. of State for Disabilities: **Sulaiman MADADA**
Min. of State for Energy: **Simon D'UJANGA**
Min. of State for Environment: **Jessica ERIYO**
Min. of State for Finance (General Duties): **Fred OMACH**
Min. of State for Fisheries: **Fred MUKISA**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs (Intl. Affairs): **Okello ORYEM**
Min. of State for Gender (Women): **Rukia ISANGA**
Min. of State for Health (General): **Richard NDUHURA**
Min. of State for Higher Education: **Gabriel OPIO**
Min. of State for Housing: **Werikhe KAFABUSA**
Min. of State for Industry: **Ephraim KAMUNTU**
Min. of State for Information Communication Technology: **Nsambu BALINTUMA**
Min. of State for Internal Affairs: **Matia KASAIJA**
Min. of State for Investment: **Ssemakula KIWANUKA**
Min. of State for Justice: **Fred RUHINDI**
Min. of State for Labor: **Mwesigwa RUKUTANA**
Min. of State for Lands: **Atwoki KASIRIVU**
Min. of State for Local Govt.: **Hope MWESIGYE**
Min. of State for Microfinance: **Salim SALEH**
Min. of State for Minerals: **Kamanda BATARINGAYA**
Min. of State for Planning:
Min. of State for Primary Education: **Peter LOKERIS**
Min. of State for Primary Health Care: **Otaala EMMANUEL, Dr.**
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Min. of State for Public Service: **Sezi MBAGUTA**
Min. of State for Regional Affairs: **Isaac MUSUMBA**
Min. of State for Sports: **Charles BAKABULINDI**
Min. of State for Tourism: **Serapio RUKUNDO**
Min. of State for Trade: **Nelson Gagawala WAMBUZI**
Min. of State for Transport: **Simon EJUA**
Min. of State for Urban Development: **Urbane TIBAMANYA**
Min. of State for Water: **Jenipher NAMUYANGU**
Min. of State for Works: **John BYABAGAMBI**
Min. of State for Youth: **James KINOBE**
Min. of State for Karamoja, Office of the Prime Min.: **Tom BUTIME**
Min. of State for Luwero Triangle, Office of the Prime Min.: **Nyombi THEMBO**
Min. of State for Northern Uganda, Office of the Prime Min.: **David WAKIKONA**
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Min. of State in the Office of the Vice Pres.: **James BABA**
Min. of State for Economic Monitoring, Office of the Vice Pres.: **Kagimu KIWANUKA**
Min. of State for Ethics, Office of the Vice Pres.: **Nsabo BUTURO**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Dorothy HYUHA**
Chief Whip: **Kabakumba MASIKO**
Attorney Gen.: **Khiddu MAKUBUYA**
Dep. Attorney Gen.: **Adolf MWESIGYE**
Governor, Bank of Uganda: **Emmanuel TUMUSIIME-MUTEBILE**
Ambassador to the US: **Perezi Karukubiro KAMUNANWIRE**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Francis K. BUTAGIRA**

Uganda maintains an embassy in the United States at 5909 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011 (tel. 202-726-7100).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since assuming power, Museveni and his government have largely put an end to the human rights abuses of earlier governments, initiated substantial economic liberalization and general press freedom, and instituted economic reforms in accord with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and donor governments.

The vicious and cult-like Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which seeks to overthrow the Ugandan Government, has murdered and kidnapped civilians in the north and east since 1986. Although the LRA does not threaten the stability of the government, LRA violence at one time displaced up to 1.7 million people, creating a humanitarian catastrophe, particularly when they were forced into internally displaced persons (IDP) camps for their own protection. The Uganda Peoples Defense Force (UPDF) launched "Operation Iron Fist" against LRA rebels in northern Uganda in 2002 and conducted operations against LRA sanctuaries in southern Sudan with the permission of the Sudanese Government. The Sudanese Government had previously supported the LRA.

There have been significant new developments in this conflict since January 2006. With the signing of the Sudanese "Comprehensive Peace Agreement," the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) was created. To protect this fragile peace from

LRA incursions in southern Sudan, Riek Machar, a GOSS Vice President, launched efforts to broker a peace agreement between the Government of Uganda and the LRA in July 2006. Those talks are ongoing and represent the first time there has been meaningful progress in ending this conflict. As a result, many northern Ugandans are leaving the IDP camps and returning to their villages.

In 1998, Uganda deployed a sizable military force to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.), ostensibly to prevent attacks from Ugandan rebel groups operating there. There were widespread allegations that Ugandan military and civilian officials were involved in the illegal exploitation of D.R.C. natural resources. After much international pressure, Uganda withdrew its troops from D.R.C. in June 2003. Relations with the D.R.C., however, continue to be frosty. When the LRA left southern Sudan and relocated to eastern Congo in September 2005, Museveni threatened to enter D.R.C. and go after the LRA if neither Congo nor the UN peacekeepers in the region would take action. The recent peace talks have taken a lot of steam out of those threats, however, and Uganda seems focused on seeing the talks to conclusion.

ECONOMY

Uganda's economy has great potential. Endowed with significant natural resources, including ample fertile land, regular rainfall, and mineral deposits, it appeared poised for rapid economic growth and development at independence. However, chronic political instability and erratic economic management produced a record of persistent economic decline that left Uganda among the world's poorest and least-developed countries.

Since assuming power in early 1986, Museveni's government has taken important steps toward economic rehabilitation. The country's infrastructure—notably its transportation and communications systems that were destroyed by war and neglect—is being rebuilt. Recognizing the need for increased external support, Uganda negotiated a policy framework paper with the IMF and the World Bank in 1987. It subsequently began implementing economic policies designed to restore price stability and sustainable balance of payments, improve capacity utilization, rehabilitate infrastructure, restore producer incentives through proper price policies, and improve resource mobilization and allocation in the public sector.

Uganda's macroeconomic policies are sound and contributed to a 7% growth rate in fiscal year 2006-2007, compared to 5.1% in FY 2005-2006. Inflation, which ran at 240% in 1987 and 42% in June 1992, was 5.1% in 2003, but bounced up to 7.7% in 2007, well above the government's annual target average of 5%, as food prices rose.

Investment as a percentage of GDP was estimated at 24% in 2006/2007 compared to 15.7% in 2002/2003. Private sector investment, largely financed by private transfers from abroad, was 20% of GDP in 2006/2007. In the same year, gross national savings as a percentage of GDP fell to an estimated 12%, from 13% the previous fiscal year. The Ugandan Government has worked with donor countries to reschedule or cancel substantial portions of the country's external debts.

Agricultural products supply nearly all of Uganda's foreign exchange earnings, with coffee (of which Uganda is Africa's second leading producer) accounting for about 19% and fish 15.5% of the country's exports in 2002. Exports of non-traditional products, including apparel, hides, skins, vanilla, vegetables, fruits, cut flowers, and fish are growing, while traditional exports such as cotton, tea, and tobacco continue to be mainstays.

Most industry is related to agriculture. The industrial sector is being rehabilitated to resume production of building and construction materials, such as cement, reinforcing rods, corrugated roofing sheets, and paint. Domestically produced consumer goods include plastics, soap, cork, beer, and soft drinks. Uganda has about 45,000 kilometers (28,000 mi.), of roads, of which 10,000 (6,213 miles) kilometers are main roads and 35,000 kilometers (21,747 miles) are feeder roads. Only 3,000 kilometers (1,864 mi.) are paved, and most roads radiate from Kampala. The country has about 1,350 kilometers (800 mi.) of rail lines, but most of it is not currently in use. A railroad originating at Mombasa on the Indian Ocean connects with Tororo, where it branches westward to Jinja, Kampala, and Kasese and northward to Mbale, Soroti, Lira, Gulu, and Pakwach. Uganda's important road and rail links to Mombasa serve its transport needs and also those of its neighbors-Rwanda, Burundi, and parts of Congo and Sudan. An international airport is at Entebbe on the shore of Lake Victoria, some 32 kilometers (20 mi.) south of Kampala.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Ugandan Government generally seeks good relations with other nations without reference to ideological orientation. Relations with Rwanda, Congo and Sudan have sometimes been strained because of security concerns. President Museveni has been active in attempts implement a peace agreement Burundi and has supported peace initiatives in Sudan and Somalia.

In the past, neighbors were concerned about Uganda's relationship with Libya, which had supplied military equipment and bartered fuel to Uganda. In addition to its friendly ties to Western nations, Uganda has maintained ties with North Korea. Uganda's has strained relations with Sudan because of past Sudanese support for the LRA. The LRA seeks to overthrow the Uganda Government and has inflicted brutal violence on the population in northern Uganda, including rape, kidnapping, torture, and murder. In 2002 Uganda and Sudan reestablished diplomatic ties and signed a protocol permitting the

UPDF to enter southern Sudan and engage the LRA. The protocol must be renewed periodically. Another rebel group operating in western Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, near the Rwenzori Mountains, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), emerged as a localized threat in 1996 and inflicted substantial suffering on the population in the area. It has largely been defeated by the UPDF and the affected areas of western Uganda have been secured. Remnants of the ADF remain in eastern Congo.

DEFENSE

The Uganda Peoples Defense Force (UPDF)—previously the National Resistance Army—constitutes the armed forces of Uganda. Prior to 2000, U.S. military forces participated with the UPDF in training activities under the African Crisis Response Initiative. U.S. military assistance was terminated in 2000 as a result of the Ugandan incursion into the D.R.C. Following the June 2003 UPDF withdrawal of troops from the D.R.C., the U.S. restarted limited nonlethal military assistance.

U.S.-UGANDAN RELATIONS

Although U.S.-Ugandan relations were strained during the rule of Idi Amin in the 1970s, relations improved after Amin's fall. In mid-1979, the United States reopened its embassy in Kampala. Relations with successor governments were cordial, although Obote and his administration rejected strong U.S. criticism of Uganda's human rights situation.

Bilateral relations between the United States and Uganda have been good since Museveni assumed power, and the United States has welcomed his efforts to end human rights abuses and to pursue economic reform. Uganda is a strong supporter of the global war against terrorism. The United States is helping Uganda achieve export-led economic growth through the African Growth and Opportunity Act and provides a significant amount of development assistance. At the same time, the United States is concerned about continuing human rights problems and the pace of progress toward the establishment of genuine political pluralism.

U.S. development assistance in Uganda has the overall goal of reducing mass poverty. Most U.S. program assistance is focused in the areas of health, education and agriculture. Both the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have major programs to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Other programs promote trade and investment, curb environmental degradation, encourage the peaceful resolution of local and international conflicts, and promote honest and open government.

The United States also provides large amounts of humanitarian assistance to populations without access to adequate food supplies because of conflict, drought and other factors. U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers are active in primary teacher training and HIV/AIDS programs. The Department of State carries out cultural exchange programs, brings Fulbright lecturers and researchers to Uganda, and sponsors U.S. study and tour programs for a wide variety of officials from government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Through Ambassador's Self-Help Fund, local groups in poor areas receive assistance for small projects with a high level of community involvement. U.S.-Ugandan relations also benefit from significant contributions to health care, nutrition, education, and park systems from U.S. missionaries, non-governmental organizations, private universities, HIV/AIDS researchers, and wildlife organizations. Expatriate Ugandans living in the U.S. also promote stronger links between the two countries.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 6, 2008

Country Description: Uganda is a landlocked, developing country in central eastern Africa. Infrastructure is adequate in Kampala, the capital, but is limited in other areas.

Entry Requirements: A passport valid for three months beyond the date of entry, visa and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required. Visas are available at Entebbe Airport upon arrival or may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Uganda. The current fee for a three month tourist visa obtained upon arrival at Entebbe Airport is $50.00. Airline companies may also require

travelers to have a visa before boarding. Travelers should obtain the latest information and details from the Embassy of the Republic of Uganda at 5911 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011; telephone (202) 726-7100; web site: http://www.ugandaembassy.com; e-mail: info@ugandaembassyus.org. Travelers may also contact the Ugandan Permanent Mission to the United Nations, telephone (212) 949-0110. Overseas, inquiries may be made at the nearest Ugandan embassy or consulate.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens living in or planning to visit Uganda should be aware of threats to their safety from insurgent groups and banditry, particularly in the northern region near the border with Sudan and along the western and southwestern borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Insurgent groups have in the past specifically targeted U.S. citizens. They have engaged in murder, armed attacks, kidnapping, and the placement of land mines. Although isolated, incidents occur with little or no warning.

Due to security concerns from potential insurgent activity or armed banditry, U.S. Government employees must have prior authorization from the U.S. Chief of Mission in Uganda to visit the following districts: Abim, Adjumani, Amolatar, Amuria, Amuru (Amuru District includes the segment of Murchison Falls National Park that is north of the Victoria Nile River), Apac, Arua, Bundibugyo, Dokolo, Gulu, Kaabong, Kaberamaido, Katakwi, Kitgum, Koboko, Kotido, Lira, Maracha-Terego, Moroto, Moyo, Nakapiripirit, Nebbi, Oyam, Pader, and Yumbe. Note: Prior authorization is not required by employees to travel to the towns of Lira, Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader provided the travel is only during daylight hours on designated primary roads and the employee does not conduct any activity outside of the town limits.

American citizens traveling to northern Uganda, especially in those districts bordering southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are advised to exercise caution due to insurgent activity and lawlessness. Negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgent group and the Government of Uganda continue, but reports indicate that the LRA has resumed attacks on civilian populations in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo, southern Sudan, and the Central African Republic. Absent a comprehensive peace agreement, there remains a potential for conflict and continued attacks by LRA-affiliated groups and individuals within the region. In addition, other armed groups operate in remote areas of the lawless border region and pose a threat to safety and security. The Government of Uganda is deploying additional civilian police officers throughout the northern districts, yet these civilian police officers lack critical resources: transportation, facilities, and equipment. Banditry-related activities often go unchallenged due to lack of a robust civilian police presence in northern Uganda.

LRA road ambushes and attacks in northern Uganda and southern Sudan killed both foreign nationals and Ugandan citizens in 2005 and early 2006. One attack that killed a foreign national in November 2005 took place within the boundaries of Murchison Falls National Park, a popular tourist destination. Following the 2005 attack within Murchison Falls National Park, the Ugandan Government strengthened its security presence within the park environs. When visiting the park, American citizens are advised to restrict all activity on the northern bank of the Victoria Nile River to the game viewing area west of Paraa Safari Lodge known as the "Buligi Circuit" or the "Delta Circuit Area."

In March 2004, two Americans were killed in Yumbe District by a group of armed men who attacked the school compound where the Americans were working as missionaries. The Americans were taken out of their home and murdered. The murders were never solved and the motives behind the school attack remain unclear.

American citizens traveling to northern Uganda are advised to ensure that they have made appropriate travel, lodging, and communication arrangements with their sponsoring organization before visiting the region. Local officials in northern Uganda have expressed concern for the safety and security of foreigners visiting Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps, and have also expressed concern about foreign nationals traveling to the region apparently to assist with relief efforts, but without any specific arrangements with a sponsoring organization. Foreign citizens who travel to the region without a sponsoring organization may not find secure lodging or safe transport, and may become more susceptible to crime. They may also find that local officials are unable to provide assistance in the event of an emergency.

Armed banditry and attacks on vehicles are also very common in the Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda, and the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) continues to implement a program to disarm Karamojong warriors. Past incidents have included ambushes of UPDF troops, and attacks on vehicles, residences, and towns that resulted in multiple deaths. Most of the violence occurred in the districts of Kaabong, Kotido, and Abim, although some violent incidents also occurred in Moroto and Nakapiripirit Districts. American citizens are advised to avoid travel to the Karamoja region given the frequent insecurity.

On August 8, 2007, a group of armed assailants entered Uganda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and raided Butogota, a town in Kanungu District. Three Ugandans were killed and many others assaulted during the raid. Ugandan officials believe that the perpetrators of the attack were members of one of the various militia groups operating in the southwestern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or possibly remnants of the "Interahamwe," a group that participated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and was also responsible for the 1999 attack on Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The 1999 Bwindi attack killed four Ugandans and eight foreign tourists. The 2007 raid

on Butogota is in a district transited by tourists traveling to Bwindi, a popular gorilla-trekking destination. Within Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, armed security personnel accompany tourists on the daily gorilla hikes and the UPDF maintains a military presence within the park. At Ishasha Camp, another popular tourist destination located in the southern sector of Queen Elizabeth National Park, the UPDF also maintains a small military base for security purposes.

In 2006 and 2007 further north along the western border, the UPDF intercepted and engaged elements of another insurgent group that had entered Uganda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In September 2006, the UPDF killed six members of the Allied Democratic Front (ADF) rebel group in two separate incidents. On March 27, 2007, the UPDF engaged a group of suspected ADF rebels in Bundibugyo District, killing 34 and capturing five others. On April 13, 2007, the UPDF intercepted another group of suspected ADF rebels, engaging in an intense firefight approximately two kilometers from the Semliki Safari Lodge. No additional incidents have been reported in the Semliki area since the spring 2007 ADF incursion into Uganda.

There have also been several violent incidents on Lake Albert, a lake in western Uganda intersected by the international border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On August 2, 2007, a British citizen employed by an oil exploration company was killed during a firefight that occurred between a UPDF boat and an armed Congolese group that had approached an oil exploration vessel. On September 24, 2007, another firefight occurred on the lake between UPDF and Congolese military forces that resulted in multiple fatalities.

Although relatively secure in past years, during early 2008 there were two security incidents in the area of Mount Elgon National Park in eastern Uganda. In February 2008, a Belgian tourist climbing Mt. Elgon in the company of park rangers was shot and killed. The attack occurred while the group was camped for the night and assailants fired into the campsite. The tourist was reportedly struck by gunfire when exiting her tent in the darkness. Ugandan security and park officials suspected that the attack was perpetrated by smugglers engaged in cattle rustling or other illicit activities that are common in the border area.

In March 2008, the Kenyan Government initiated military operations against the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) militia group on the Kenyan side of the Mt. Elgon area. The Ugandan Government also increased military troop deployments and security patrols in the Mt. Elgon area, and intercepted a number of armed militia members apparently seeking refuge in the caves and rough terrain found at the higher elevations of Mt. Elgon.

Before planning to climb Mt. Elgon, American citizens should obtain up-to-date information regarding security on the mountain and the status of military operations against the SLDF from either the U.S. Embassy in Kampala or the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA).

Demonstrations take place in Kampala and other Ugandan cities from time to time in response to world events or local developments. In most cases, these demonstrations occur with no warning and demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly violent. American citizens are therefore urged to avoid the areas of demonstrations if possible, and to exercise caution if they find themselves in the vicinity of any demonstration. American citizens should stay current with media coverage of local events and be aware of their surroundings at all times. Because many demonstrations are spontaneous events, the U.S. Embassy may not always be able to alert American citizens that a demonstration is taking place and to avoid a specific area. If employed with an institution or other large organization, American citizens may find it helpful and request that local employees notify expatriates when they learn of a demonstration from local radio reports or other sources. Recent protests have occurred over land disputes involving Kampala market areas, university closures and strikes, opposition party demonstrations, and protests by taxi drivers over the enforcement of traffic regulations.

Crime: Crimes such as pick pocketing, purse snatching, and thefts from hotels and parked vehicles or vehicles stalled in traffic jams are common. The Embassy receives frequent reports of theft of items from locked vehicles, even when the stolen items were secured out of sight and the vehicle was parked in an area patrolled by uniformed security personnel. Pick pocketing and the theft of purses and bags is also very common on public transportation. Armed robberies of pedestrians also occur, sometimes during daylight hours and in public places. Although infrequent, the Embassy also receives reports of armed carjackings and highway robbery. In May 2007, two American citizens reported an attempted robbery when they were traveling near the town of Bugiri in eastern Uganda. The Americans reported that a second vehicle with at least one armed assailant tried to stop their vehicle by forcing it off the road. This incident occurred during daylight hours. On June 27, 2007, two American citizens were robbed and held at gunpoint when the vehicle transporting them to Entebbe Airport was stopped by a group of armed men. This incident occurred during the early morning hours on Entebbe Road. Although some of these attacks are violent, victims are generally injured only if they resist. U.S. Embassy employees are advised against using roads at night, especially in areas outside the limits of cities and large towns.

Home burglaries also do occur and sometimes turn violent. In April 2008, the Ugandan police reported an increase in armed robberies in the Kampala neighborhoods of Bukoto, Kisaasi, Kiwatule, Naalya, Najera, and Ntinda. Several of these robberies occurred as the victims were arriving at their residences after

nightfall and the assailants struck as they were entering their residential compounds.

Women traveling alone are particularly susceptible to becoming crime victims. In early 2008, there was an increase in reports of sexual assaults against expatriate females. In some instances, the victims were walking alone, or were single passengers on one of the common modes of public transport which include "boda boda" motorcycle taxis. If the victim of a sexual assault, medical assistance should be sought immediately and counseling provided regarding prophylactic treatment to help prevent the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. A list of local medical providers can be found on the U.S. Embassy website at http://kampala.usembassy.gov.

American citizens visiting Uganda are advised not to accept food or drink offered from a stranger, even a child, because such food may contain narcotics used to incapacitate a victim and facilitate a robbery or sexual assault. In addition, patrons of bars, casinos, nightclubs, and other entertainment centers should never leave their drink or food unattended. When visiting such establishments, it is advisable to remain with a group of friends as single individuals are more likely to be targeted. Victims have included female patrons who reported they were drugged, and taken to another location and sexually assaulted. Robberies have been facilitated on public transportation under similar circumstances. In 2006, an American citizen traveling by bus from Kenya to Uganda was incapacitated and robbed on the bus when the passenger accepted a sealed beverage from a fellow traveler. Expatriates traveling by bus to the popular tourist destination of Bwindi Impenetrable National Forest in southwest Uganda were also incapacitated and robbed when they accepted snacks from fellow bus passengers.

There has been a recent, marked increase in financial crime, including fraud involving wire transfers, credit cards, checks, and advance fee fraud perpetrated via email. The U.S. Embassy recommends using money orders for all fund transfers and protecting all bank account information.

An increasing number of U.S. exporters (primarily vendors of expensive consumer goods such as computers, stereo equipment, and electronics) have been targeted by a sophisticated check fraud scheme. A fictitious company in Uganda locates a vendor on the Internet, makes e-mail contact to order goods, and pays with a third-party check. The checks, written on U.S. accounts and made out to entities in Uganda for small amounts, are intercepted, washed and presented for payment of the goods with the U.S. vendor as payee and an altered amount. If the goods are shipped before the check clears, the U.S. shipper will have little recourse, as the goods are picked up at the airport and the company cannot be traced. American companies receiving orders from Uganda are encouraged to check with the Economic and Commercial Section in the Embassy to verify the legitimacy of the company. The Embassy strongly cautions U.S. vendors against accepting third-party checks as payment for any goods to be shipped to Uganda.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance.

The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Uganda, including Kampala, are limited and not equipped to handle most emergencies, especially those requiring surgery. Outside Kampala, hospitals are scarce and offer only basic services. Equipment and medicines are often in short supply or unavailable. Travelers should carry their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. A list of medical providers is available at the U.S. Embassy. Malaria is prevalent in Uganda. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and tell the physician their travel history and what antimalarials they have been taking. For additional information on malaria, including protective measures, see the CDC Travelers' Health web site at http://www.cdc.gov/malaria.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Uganda has experienced recent outbreaks of Marburg Hemorrhagic Fever, Ebola Hemorrhagic Fever, Pneumonic Plague, Meningitis, and other types of infectious diseases.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The infor-

mation below concerning Uganda is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Most inter-city transportation in Uganda is by small van or large bus. Many drivers of these vehicles have little training and some are reckless. Small vans and large buses are often poorly maintained, travel at high speeds, and are the principal vehicles involved in the many deadly single and multi-vehicle accidents along Ugandan roads. Large trucks on the highways are often over-loaded, with inadequately secured cargo and poor braking systems. Alcohol frequently is a contributing factor in road accidents, particularly at night. Drivers are advised to take extra care when driving. Nighttime driving and road transportation should be avoided whenever possible. Pedestrians often walk in the roads and may not be visible to motorists. Large branches or rocks in the road sometimes indicate an upcoming obstruction or other hazard. Highway travel at night is particularly dangerous, including the road between Entebbe Airport and Kampala. The Embassy recommends caution on this road and use of a reliable taxi service to and from the airport.

Traffic accidents draw crowds. Ugandan law requires that the drivers stop and exchange information and assist any injured persons. In some cases where serious injury has occurred, there is the possibility of mob anger. In these instances, Ugandans often do not get out of their cars, but drive to the nearest police station to report the accident.

For specific information concerning Ugandan driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Uganda Tourist Board, IPS building, 14, Parliament Avenue, Kampala, Uganda; telephone 256-414-342196. You may also wish to consult their web site at http://www.visituganda.com, or, for information on government agencies, see http://myuganda.co.ug.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Uganda, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Uganda's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Please note that U.S. currency notes in $20 and $50 denominations are exchanged at a lower rate than $100 currency notes. In addition, travelers often find that they cannot exchange or use U.S. currency printed earlier than the year 2000. Travelers who find they cannot pay for accommodation or expenses often must request that friends or family wire money to them in Uganda. There are offices that facilitate Western Union, MoneyGram, and other types of money transfers in Kampala and other cities throughout the country. ATMs are available in Uganda, particularly in downtown Kampala, but usually only customers who have an account with a specific Ugandan bank may use them. A few machines function with overseas accounts.

Ugandan Customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the importation of pets. A Ugandan import permit is required, along with an up-to-date rabies vaccination certificate and a veterinary certificate of health issued by a USDA-approved veterinarian no more than thirty days before arrival. Travelers are advised to contact the Ugandan Embassy in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. Please see our Customs Information.

Photography in tourist locations is permitted. However, taking pictures of military/police installations or personnel is prohibited. Military and police officers have detained tourists for taking photographs of Entebbe Airport and of the area around Owen Falls Dam, near Jinja, although the prohibition on taking photographs is not publicly displayed on signs.

The U.S. Embassy receives frequent inquiries from American citizens wishing to register a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in Uganda. Information about registering an NGO can be obtained from the Ugandan NGO Board which has offices within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The NGO Board can be reached on phone number: 256 414 341 556. One of the requirements for registering an NGO is that a foreign national employee must provide a Certificate of Good Conduct/Criminal Background Check. The U.S. Embassy Kampala cannot provide this service, so American citizens intending to travel to Uganda as an employee of an NGO or who plan to register an NGO should obtain a Certificate of Good Conduct from their local police or the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) before departing the United States. More information on how to obtain a Criminal Background Check can be found on the FBI web site at http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/fprequest.htm.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Ugandan laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Uganda are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling

in Uganda are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Uganda. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 1577 Ggaba Road, Kampala; telephone 256-414-259-791 or 256 414 306 001; fax 256-414-258-451; e-mail: Kampalauscitizen@state.gov. The U.S. Embassy web site is http://kampala.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Uganda is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Uganda, you must be found eligible to adopt by the U.S. Government. For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Ugandan law places restrictions on the ability of foreign citizens to adopt Ugandan children. The Children's Act states that a foreign citizen may, in exceptional circumstances, adopt a Ugandan child, if the foreigner has resided in Uganda for at least three years and if the foreigner has also fostered the child for 36 months. However, High Court judges have made some exceptions to these three-year residency and fostering requirements on a case-by-case basis if it was deemed in the best interests of the child.

Ugandan High Court judges have also exercised discretion in approving legal guardianship decrees (which may permit the child to emigrate for full and final adoption abroad) in certain cases where the prospective adoptive parents were unable to meet the requirements for adoption in Uganda. In addition to these U.S. requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Uganda also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Unless a judge waives the fostering requirements, prospective adoptive parents must reside in Uganda with their prospective adoptive child for three years. This means that a foreign citizen may adopt a Ugandan child if the foreigner has resided in Uganda for at least three years, and has also fostered the child for 36 months.

Age Requirements: Applicants must be at least 25 years old and 21 years older than the child they plan to adopt. In the case of a married couple, it is sufficient for one spouse to meet these requirements.

Marriage Requirements: Married couples must adopt jointly. Single parents may adopt, but they may not adopt a child of the opposite sex (unless an exception is made).

Income Requirements: There are no specific income requirements for Ugandan adoption, although prospective adoptive parents must be able to prove financial stability.

Other: Foreign adoptive parents must demonstrate they have no criminal record, and that they have been approved by their country of nationality to adopt. Applicants must demonstrate financial stability.

Who Can Be Adopted? Uganda has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States. Learn more about these U.S. requirements.

Relinquishment Requirements: Children who are 14 years old or older must consent to the adoption. The consent of both biological parents, if known, must be obtained and may be withdrawn prior to the execution of the adoption order. Under U.S. immigration law, if both biological parents for a child are living, they must independently release their child for adoption and emigration abroad, prior to U.S. prospective adoptive parents being identified.

Uganda's Adoption Authority: The Department of Youth and Child Affairs

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Uganda is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the U.S. state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Uganda to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the U.S. Government, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Uganda will provide you with a referral to a child.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The Department of Youth and Child Affairs oversees Probation and Social Welfare officers assigned to magistrate courts. Prospective adoptive parents work with the Probation and Social Welfare officers in the region where the child resides. These officers monitor and record the progress of the adoptive family during the 36-month fostering period.

Role of the Court: Foreign citizens wishing to adopt a child in Uganda are required to file a petition with the High Court of Uganda after they have

identified a child they wish to adopt. Prospective adoptive parents are required to appear in person, and the court requires that the local Probation and Social Welfare officer overseeing the case submit a report with his/her recommendation. In certain cases, the court may also request that other individuals or authorities submit a report in respect to the adoption petition.

For instance, in many cases orphanage directors are requested to submit information about children that were placed in their care. Children who are 14 years old or older must consent to the adoption. The consent of both biological parents, if known, must be obtained and may be withdrawn prior to the execution of the adoption order. Under U.S. immigration law, if both biological parents for a child are living, they must independently release their child for adoption and emigration abroad, prior to U.S. prospective adoptive parents being identified.

The Ugandan Government also permits foreign citizens to obtain legal guardianship of orphans and, in some cases allows, it permits the child to emigrate from Uganda for full and final adoption abroad. For U.S. citizens, this means the prospective adoptive child may qualify for an Immediate Relative 4 visa (IR-4) for the purpose of emigration and adoption in the United States.

In order to file for an IR-4 visa for the child, the legal guardianship order and the accompanying court ruling must state clearly that the High Court is aware of, and concurs with, the intention of the legal guardian to take the child out of Uganda for full and final adoption abroad. Once the child immigrates to the United States, the legal guardians must file for adoption with a U.S. state court.

Role of Adoption Agencies: There are no adoption agencies that provide adoption services in Uganda, although there are a number of non-governmental organizations and interest groups that advocate for children's rights. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing authority in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

Time Frame: Prospective adoptive parents should allow sufficient time to complete the necessary processing of the case both with the Ugandan High Court, and the U.S. Embassy. The court process often takes at least three weeks from the initial court appearance, the execution of the adoption or legal guardianship decree, and the issuance of a court ruling. The U.S. Embassy in Kampala is responsible for processing all immigrant adoption cases from Uganda. Prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Kampala well in advance of their anticipated arrival in Uganda. This will assist the Embassy in processing your paperwork.

Adoption Fees: Court fees are less than $100.00 and may vary according to the number of documents that require notarization. Attorney's fees can range from $500 to $2,000. The U.S. Embassy in Uganda discourages the payment of any fees that are not properly receipted, for example, "donations," or "expediting" fees, which may be requested from prospective adoptive parents. Such fees have the appearance of "buying" a baby and put all future adoptions in Uganda at risk.

Documents Required: To adopt from Uganda, the following documents must be submitted to the Ugandan High Court:

- Marriage certificate of adoptive parents;
- Police clearances;
- Proof of financial stability, including tax returns and bank statements;
- A report from the Probation and Social Welfare officer, or a U.S. home study if the prospective parents do not reside in Uganda;
- Adoption order from the High Court of Uganda;
- Death certificates for the biological parent(s), and/or other documentary evidence that demonstrates the child's orphan status such as orphanage records, statements from local Government or hospital officials, Probation and Social Welfare officer's report, etc.; and
- Assurance that the adoptive parent(s)'s country will respect and recognize the adoption order issued by the Ugandan Court. The Ugandan attorney working with the adoptive parents usually provides a letter or brief statement to the High Court that the United States will recognize the adoption decree. The U.S. Child and Citizenship Act of 2000 meets this requirement.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court

in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Once the adoption is finalized, adoptive parents must register the adoption with the Registrar General's office in Kampala. The Registrar General informs the Ugandan Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the adoption.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will maintain the adopted child's records, which will remain available to the child.

Contact Information

U.S. Embassy in Uganda
Plot 1577 Ggaba Road
P.O. Box 7007, Kampala
Uganda
Telephone: 256 41 259 791/5
Email:
KampalaUSCitizen@state.gov
Web site:
http://kampala.usembassy.gov

Ugandan Adoption Authority
The Department of Youth
and Child Affairs
Ministry of Gender, Labor
and Social Development
Simbamanyo House, Plot 2
Lumumba Avenue
Kampala, Uganda
Telephone: 256-41-347 854/5
E-mail: ps@mglsd.go.ug
Web site: http://www.mglsd.go.ug

Embassy of the Republic of Uganda
5911 16th Street, NW,
Washington DC 20011
Tel: (202) 726-7100

Office of Children's Issues
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



UKRAINE

Compiled from the March 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Ukraine

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 233,000 sq. mi., the largest country wholly in Europe.
Cities: Capital—Kyiv (also transliterated as Kiev, pop. 2.8 million). Other cities—Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Odesa, Lviv.
Terrain: A vast plain mostly bounded by the Carpathian mountains in the southwest and by the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov in the South.
Climate: Continental temperate, except in southern Crimea, which has a sub-tropical climate.

People

Population: (est.) 46.3 million.
Nationality: Noun—Ukrainian(s); adjective—Ukrainian.
Ethnic groups: Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians, Moldovans, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Jews, Poles, Crimean Tatars, and other groups.
Religions: Ukrainian Orthodoxy, Ukrainian Greek Catholicism, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Islam, others.
Languages: Ukrainian (official), Russian, others.
Education: Literacy—99.7%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—9.9/1,000; life expectancy—64.71 yrs. males, 75.59 yrs. females.
Work force: 22.3 million. Industry and construction—32%; agriculture and forestry—24%; health, education, and culture—17%; transport and communication—7%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary-presidential.
Independence: August 24, 1991.
Constitution: First post-Soviet constitution adopted June 28, 1996, amended January 1, 2006.
Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—450-member unicameral parliament, the Supreme Rada (members elected to 4-year terms from party lists by proportional vote). Judicial—Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, local courts, and Constitutional Court.
Political parties: Wide range of active political parties and blocs, from leftist to center and center-right to ultra-nationalist.
Suffrage: Universal at 18.
Political subdivisions: 24 provinces (oblasts), Crimean autonomous republic, and two cities with special status—Kyiv and Sevastopol.

Economy

PPP GDP: (2007 est.) $321.3 billion.
Nominal GDP: (2007 est.) $90.1 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007 gov. est.) 6.9%.
PPP per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $6,900.
Nominal per capita GDP: (2006 est.) $1,746.
Natural resources: Vast fertile lands, coal, ironstone, complex ore, various large mineral deposits, timber.
Agriculture: Products—Grain, sugar, sunflower seeds.
Industry: Types—Ferrous metals and products, oil and gas transport, coke, fertilizer, airplanes, turbines, metallurgical equipment, diesel locomotives, tractors.
Trade: (2006) Exports of goods and services—$46.68 billion: Ferrous and nonferrous metals, mineral products, chemicals, energy transport services, machinery, transport equipment, grain, and textiles. Imports—$54.3 billion: Energy, mineral fuel and oil, machinery and parts, transportation equipment, chemicals, textiles, and paper.

PEOPLE

The population of Ukraine is about 46.3 million. Ethnic Ukrainians make up about 73% of the total; ethnic Russians number about 22%, ethnic Belarusians number about 5%. The industrial regions in the east and southeast are the most heavily populated, and the population is about 67% urban. Ukrainian and Russian

are the principal languages. Although Russian is very widely spoken, in the 1989 census (the latest official figures) 88% of the population identified Ukrainian as their native language. There are also small Tatar and Hellenic minorities centered mainly in Crimea. The dominant religions are the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (which practices Orthodox rites but recognizes the Roman Catholic Pope as head of the Church). The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is divided between a Moscow Patriarchate and a separate Kyiv Patriarchate, which was established after Ukrainian independence and which declared independence from Moscow. In addition to these, there are also the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

The birth rate in Ukraine is declining. About 70% of adult Ukrainians have a secondary or higher education. Ukraine has about 150 colleges and universities, of which the most important are in Kyiv, Lviv, and Kharkiv. There are about 70,000 scholars in 80 research institutes.

HISTORY

The first identifiable groups to populate what is now Ukraine were Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, and Goths, among other nomadic peoples who arrived throughout the first millennium B.C. These peoples were well known to colonists and traders in the ancient world, including Greeks and Romans, who established trading outposts that eventually became city-states. Slavic tribes occupied central and eastern Ukraine in the sixth century A.D. and played an important role in the establishment of Kyiv. Kievan Rus Prince Volodymyr converted the Kievan nobility and most of the population to Christianity in 988. Situated on lucrative trade routes, Kyiv quickly prospered as the center of the powerful state of Kievan Rus. In the 11th century, Kievan Rus was, geographically, the largest state in Europe. Conflict among the feudal lords led to decline in the 12th century. Mongol raiders razed Kyiv in the 13th century.

Most of the territory of what is modern Ukraine was annexed by Poland and Lithuania in the 14th century, but during that time, Ukrainians began to conceive of themselves as a distinct people, a feeling that survived subsequent partitioning by greater powers over the next centuries. Ukrainian peasants who fled the Polish effort to force them into servitude came to be known as Cossacks and earned a reputation for their fierce martial spirit and love of freedom. In 1667, Ukraine was partitioned between Poland and Russia. In 1793, when Poland was partitioned, much of modern-day Ukraine was integrated into the Russian Empire.

The 19th century found the region largely agricultural, with a few cities and centers of trade and learning. The region was under the control of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the extreme west and the Russian Empire elsewhere. Ukrainian writers and intellectuals were inspired by the nationalistic spirit stirring other European peoples existing under other imperial governments and were determined to revive Ukrainian linguistic and cultural traditions and reestablish a Ukrainian state. Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861), national hero of Ukraine, presented the intellectual maturity of the Ukrainian language and culture through his work as a poet and artist. Imperial Russia, however, imposed strict limits on attempts to elevate Ukrainian culture, even banning the use and study of the Ukrainian language.

When World War I and the Russian revolution shattered the Habsburg and Russian empires, Ukrainians declared independent statehood. In 1917 the Central Rada proclaimed Ukrainian autonomy and in 1918, following the Bolshevik seizure of power in Petrograd, the Ukrainian National Republic declared independence under President Mykhaylo Hrushevsky. After three years of conflict and civil war, however, the western part of Ukrainian territory was incorporated into Poland, while the larger, central and eastern regions were incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1922 as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The Ukrainian national idea persevered during the twenties, but with Stalin's rise to power and the campaign of forced collectivization, the Soviet leadership imposed a campaign of terror that ravaged the intellectual class. The Soviet government under Stalin also created an artificial famine (called the Holodomor in Ukrainian) as part of his forced collectivization policies, which killed millions of previously independent peasants and others throughout the country. Estimates of deaths from the 1932-33 famine alone range from 3 million to 7 million.

When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, some Ukrainians, particularly in the west, welcomed what they saw as liberation from Communist rule, but this did not last as they quickly came to understand the nature of Nazi rule. Nazi brutality was directed principally against Ukraine's Jews (of whom an estimated 1 million were killed), but also against many other Ukrainians. Babyn Yar in Kyiv was the site of one of the most horrific Nazi massacres of Ukrainian Jews, ethnic Ukrainians, and many others. Kyiv and other parts of the country were heavily damaged.

After the Nazi and Soviet invasions of Poland in 1939, the western Ukrainian regions were incorporated into the Soviet Union. Armed resistance against Soviet authority continued as late as the 1950s. During periods of relative liberalization—as under Nikita Khrushchev from 1955 to 1964 and during the period of "perestroika" under Mikhail Gorbachev—Ukrainian communists pursued nationalist objectives. The 1986 explosion at the Chornobyl (Chernobyl in Russian) nuclear power plant, located in the Ukrainian SSR, and the Soviet Government's initial efforts to conceal the extent of the catastrophe from its own people and the world, was a watershed for many Ukrainians in exposing the severe problems of the Soviet system. Ukraine became an indepen-



dent state on August 24, 1991, and was a co-founder of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, although it has not officially joined the organization.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Ukraine has a parliamentary-presidential system of government with separate executive, judicial, and legislative branches. The president nominates the defense and foreign ministers, and the Prosecutor General and Chief of the State Security Service (SBU), each of whom must be confirmed by the parliament. Beginning in 2006, the 450-member unicameral parliament (Supreme Rada) names the prime minister, who in turn nominates other ministers. The Supreme Rada initiates legislation, ratifies international agreements, and approves the budget. Its members are elected to five-year terms. Following free elections held on December 1, 1991, Leonid M. Kravchuk, former chairman of the Ukrainian Rada, was elected to a five-year term, and became Ukraine's first president. At the same time, a referendum on independence was approved by more than 90% of the voters.

Shortly after becoming independent, Ukraine named a parliamentary commission to prepare a new constitution, adopted a multi-party system, and adopted legislative guarantees of civil and political rights for national minorities. A new, democratic constitution was adopted on June 28, 1996, which mandates a pluralistic political system with protection of basic human rights and liberties. Amendments that took effect January 1, 2006, shifted significant powers from the president to the prime minister and Supreme Rada.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law, although religious organizations are required to register with local authorities and with the central government. Minority rights are respected in accordance with a 1991 law guaranteeing ethnic minorities the right to schools and cultural facilities and the use of national languages in conducting personal business. According to the constitution, Ukrainian is the only official state language. In Crimea and some parts of eastern Ukraine—areas with substantial ethnic Russian minori-

ties—local and regional governments permit Russian as a language for local official correspondence.

Freedom of speech and press are guaranteed by law and by the constitution, and authorities generally respect these rights. Prior to the "Orange Revolution," however, authorities sometimes interfered with the news media through intimidation and other forms of pressure. In particular, the failure of the government to conduct a thorough, credible, and transparent investigation into the 2000 disappearance and murder of independent journalist Heorhiy Gongadze, in which then-government officials have been credibly implicated, negatively affected Ukraine's international image. Freedom of the media and respect for citizens' rights have increased markedly since the government of President Yushchenko took office in January 2005.

Ethnic tensions in Crimea during 1992 prompted a number of pro-Russian political organizations to advocate secession of Crimea and annexation to Russia. (Crimea was ceded by the RFSSR to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954, in recognition of historic links and for economic convenience, to mark the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's union with Russia.) In July 1992, the Crimean and Ukrainian parliaments determined that Crimea would remain under Ukrainian jurisdiction while retaining significant cultural and economic autonomy.

Official trade unions have been grouped under the Federation of Trade Unions. A number of independent unions, which emerged during 1992, among them the Independent Union of Miners of Ukraine, have formed the Consultative Council of Free Trade Unions. While the right to strike is legally guaranteed, strikes based solely on political demands are prohibited.

In July 1994, Leonid Kuchma was elected as Ukraine's second president in free and fair elections. Kuchma was reelected in November 1999 to another five-year term, with 56% of the vote. International observers criticized aspects of the election, especially slanted media coverage; however, the outcome of the vote was not called into question. Ukraine's March 2002 parliamentary elections were characterized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) as flawed, but an improvement over the 1998 elections. The pro-presidential For a United Ukraine bloc won the largest number of seats, followed by the reformist Our Ukraine bloc of Viktor Yushchenko (who was then a former Prime Minister), and the Communist Party.

The campaign leading to the October 31, 2004 presidential election was characterized by widespread violations of democratic norms, including government intimidation of the opposition and of independent media, abuse of state administrative resources, highly skewed media coverage, and numerous provocations. The two major candidates—Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych and opposition leader (and former Prime Minister) Viktor Yushchenko—each garnered between 39% and 40% of the vote and proceeded to a winner-take-all second round. The November 21 runoff election was marred by credible reports of widespread and significant violations, including illegal expulsion of opposition representatives from election commissions, multiple voting by busloads of people, abuse of absentee ballots, reports of coercion of votes in schools and prisons, and an abnormally high number of (easily manipulated) mobile ballot box votes. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of Kyiv and other cities to protest electoral fraud and express support for Yushchenko, and conducted ongoing peaceful demonstrations during what came to be known as the "Orange Revolution."

The OSCE International Election Observation Mission found that the November 21 run-off election "did not meet a considerable number of OSCE commitments and Council of Europe and other European standards for democratic elections." Other independent observers were similarly critical. On November 24, the CEC declared Yanukovych the winner with 49.46% compared to 46.61% for Yushchenko. The U.S. and Europe refused to accept the result as legitimate due to the numerous, uninvestigated reports of fraud. On November 27, Ukraine's Supreme Rada passed a resolution declaring that the election results as announced did not represent the will of the people. On December 1, the Rada passed a vote of "no confidence" in the government. On December 3, Ukraine's Supreme Court invalidated the CEC's announced results and mandated a repeat of the second round vote to take place on December 26. An agreement mediated by European leaders resulted in new legislation being passed by the Rada and signed by the President December 8. The electoral law was reformed to close loopholes that had permitted pervasive electoral fraud. The constitution was amended to transfer power, especially with respect to appointment of ministers, from the president to the prime minister.

The December 26 re-vote took place in an atmosphere of calm. While irregularities were noted, observers found no systemic or massive fraud. The OSCE Mission noted that " Ukraine's elections have moved substantially closer to meeting OSCE and other European standards." On January 10, 2005, after the CEC and the Supreme Court had considered and rejected numerous complaints and appeals filed by the Yanukovych campaign, the CEC certified the results: Yushchenko had won 51.99% of the votes, with 44.20% for Yanukovych. President Yushchenko was inaugurated January 23, 2005.

Ukraine held parliamentary and local elections on March 26, 2006. International observers noted that conduct of the Rada election was in line with international standards for democratic elections, making this the most free and fair in Ukraine's history. Unlike the first rounds of the 2004 presidential election, candidates and parties were able to express themselves freely in a lively press and assembled without hindrance. There was no systemic abuse of administrative resources as there had been under the previous regime. The Party of Regions and the bloc of former Prime Minster Tymoshenko

(BYuT), whose government the President dismissed in September 2005, finished ahead of the pro-presidential Our Ukraine bloc. Other parties passing the 3% threshold to enter parliament were the Socialist Party of Ukraine and the Communist Party of Ukraine. No party held the majority of Rada seats needed to form a government. Following four months of difficult negotiations, the Anti-Crisis Coalition was formed by Party of Regions, the Socialists, and the Communists. The new coalition formed a government, confirmed August 4, 2006, led by Prime Minister Yanukovych. This, the first government formed after the extensive constitutional amendments brokered as part of the Orange Revolution, saw the Prime Minister's influence and power growing, often at the expense of the President.

On April 3, 2007, President Yushchenko dissolved the Supreme Rada and called for preterm elections. Months of political stalemate followed, with the Anti-Crisis Coalition continuing to hold Rada sessions, even after opposition parties Our Ukraine and BYuT resigned their seats and deprived the parliament of a constitutional quorum. On May 27, Yushchenko, Yanukovych, and Rada Speaker Moroz reached a political agreement on new elections, which were held September 30, 2007. International observers judged this vote to be in line with international democratic standards. Once again, Party of Regions finished in first place, but BYuT gained eight percentage points over its 2006 results, for a strong second-place finish. As a result, BYuT and Our Ukraine, which came in a distant third, garnered enough votes to form a thin three-seat majority. The Communist Party and Bloc Lytvyn, headed by former Rada Speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn, also crossed the 3% threshold.

The new coalition nominated Yuliya Tymoshenko as Prime Minister; she was confirmed December 18, 2007. The rest of the cabinet is split 50-50 between representatives from BYuT and Our Ukraine (which is now called Our Ukraine-People's Self Defense.) So far, Prime Minister Tymoshenko and President Yushchenko are cooperating more constructively than they did in 2005 as they tackle an ambitious agenda of reforms and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Security forces are controlled by the president, although they are subject to investigation by a permanent parliamentary commission. Surveillance is permitted for reasons of national security.

After independence, Ukraine established its own military forces of about 780,000 from the troops and equipment inherited from the Soviet Union. Under defense reform legislation passed in 2004, Ukraine is strengthening civilian control of the military, professionalizing its noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps, modernizing force structure to improve interoperability with NATO, and reducing troop numbers, all with an eye toward achieving NATO standards. Current force levels are approximately 225,000 (plus 90,000 civilian workers in the Ministry of Defense). The Ministry of Defense plans to continue force reductions by approximately 20,000 personnel per year to reach a final end state of 143,000 by 2011. Ukraine's stated national policy is Euro-Atlantic integration, including with both NATO and the European Union (EU). NATO offered Ukraine an "Intensified Dialogue on Membership Issues" in April 2005. Ukraine had previously signed an agreement with NATO on using Ukraine's strategic airlift capabilities and has been an active participant in Partnership for Peace exercises, in Balkans peacekeeping, and Coalition operations in Iraq. Ukrainian units have been serving in the U.S. sector in Kosovo, and served in the Polish-led division in Iraq. Currently, Ukraine participates in six United Nations peacekeeping missions and has up to 50 troops serving in supporting roles in Iraq. In January 2008 Ukraine formally requested a NATO Membership Action Plan, noting that a final decision on membership would be determined by a national referendum.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Viktor YUSHCHENKO**
Prime Min.: **Yuliya TYMOSHENKO**
First Dep. Prime Min.: **Oleksandr TURCHYNOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Hryhoriy NEMYRYA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ivan VASYUNYK**
Min. of the Cabinet of Ministers: **Petro KRUPKO**
Min. of Agriculture: **Yuriy MELNYK**
Min. of the Coal Industry: **Viktor POLTAVETS**
Min. of Communal Services: **Oleksiy KUCHERENKO**
Min. of Culture & Tourism: **Vasyl VOVKUN**
Min. of Defense: **Yuriy YEKHANUROV**
Min. of Economics: **Bohdan DANYLYSHYN**
Min. of Emergencies: **Volodymyr SHANDRA**
Min. of Environmental Protection: **Heorhiy FYLYPCHUK**
Min. of Family, Children, & Sports: **Yuriy PAVLENKO**
Min. of Finance: **Viktor PYNZENYK**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Volodymyr OHRYZKO**
Min. of Fuel & Energy: **Yuriy PRODAN**
Min. of Health: **Vasyl KNYAZEVYCH**
Min. of Industrial Policy: **Volodymyr NOVYTSKYY**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Yuriy LUTSENKO**
Min. of Justice: **Mykola ONISHCHUK**
Min. of Labor & Social Policy: **Lyudmyla DENYSOVA**
Min. of Regional Development & Construction: **Vasyl KUYBIDA**
Min. of Science & Education: **Ivan VAKARCHUK**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Yosip VINSKYY**
Sec. of the Presidential Secretariat: **Viktor BALOHA**
Sec., National Security & Defense Council: **Rayisa BOHATYROVA**
Chmn., State Security Service of Ukraine (Acting): **Valentyn NALYVAYCHENKO**
Prosecutor Gen.: **Oleksandr MEDVEDKO**
Chmn., State Property Fund: **Valentyna SEMENYUK**
Chmn., National Bank: **Volodymyr STELMAKH**
Ambassador to the US: **Oleh SHAMSHUR**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Yuriy SERHEYEV**

Ukraine maintains an embassy at 3350 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20007 (tel. 202-349-2920).

ECONOMY

With rich farmlands, a well-developed industrial base, highly trained labor, and a good education system, Ukraine has the potential to become a major European economy. After eight straight years of sharp economic decline from the early to late 1990s, the standard of living for most citizens declined more than 50%, leading to widespread poverty. Beginning in 2000 economic growth has averaged over 7% per year, reaching 12.1% in 2004 and 7.2% in 2007. Personal incomes are rising. The macro economy is stable, with the hyperinflation of the early post-Soviet period gone, although inflation did accelerate from 11.6% to 16.6% in 2007. Ukraine's currency, the hryvnia, was introduced in September 1996 and has remained stable despite a small nominal appreciation in April 2005. While economic growth continues, Ukraine's long-term economic prospects depend on acceleration of market reforms. The economy remains burdened by excessive government regulation, corruption, and lack of law enforcement, and while the government has taken steps against corruption and small and medium enterprises have been largely privatized, much remains to be done to restructure and privatize key sectors such as energy and telecommunications and to allow the free sale of farmland.

Ukraine is rich in natural resources. It has a major ferrous metal industry, producing cast iron, steel, and steel pipe, and its chemical industry produces coke, mineral fertilizers, and sulfuric acid. Manufactured goods include airplanes, turbines, metallurgical equipment, diesel locomotives, and tractors. It also is a major producer of grain, sunflower seeds, and beet sugar and has a broad industrial base, including much of the former U.S.S.R.'s space and rocket industry. Although proven onshore and offshore oil and natural gas reserves are small, there is now petroleum exploration interest in the Ukrainian portion of the Black Sea. It has important energy sources, such as coal, and large mineral deposits, and is one of the world's leading energy transit countries, providing transportation of Russian and Caspian oil and gas across its territory.

Ukraine encourages foreign trade and investment. Foreigners have the right to purchase businesses and property, to repatriate revenue and profits, and to receive compensation in the event that property were to be nationalized by a future government. However, complex laws and regulations, poor corporate governance, weak enforcement of contract law by courts and particularly corruption have discouraged broad foreign direct investment in Ukraine. While there is a functioning stock market, the lack of protection for minority shareholder rights severely restricts portfolio investment activities. Total foreign direct investment in Ukraine was approximately $26.9 billion as of October 1, 2007. At $581 per capita, this was one of the lowest figures in the region.

While countries of the former Soviet Union remain important trading partners, especially Russia and Turkmenistan for energy imports, Ukraine's trade is becoming more diversified. Europe is now the destination of about one-third of Ukraine's exports, while around one-quarter of Ukraine's exports go to Russia and the CIS. Steel constitutes nearly 40% of exports. Ukraine imports almost 80% of its oil and 77% of its natural gas. Russia ranks as Ukraine's principal supplier of oil and Russian firms now own and/or operate the majority of Ukraine's refining capacity. Natural gas imports, which are brokered through the intermediary company RosUkrEnergo, currently come from Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, which deliver the gas through a pipeline system owned and controlled by Gazprom, Russia's state-owned gas monopoly. In 2005 and 2006, Ukraine switched from barter to cash payments for gas imports. Ukraine controls the gas pipelines on its territory that are also used to transit Russian gas to Western Europe. The complex relationship between supplier, transporter, and consumer has led to some tensions, including Russia's decision to cut off gas supplies for three days in January 2006 and for three days in March 2008.

In 1992, Ukraine became a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The Government of Ukraine's 12-month $605 million precautionary standby agreement with the IMF expired in March 2005, and Ukraine currently does not receive IMF financing. In Article IV Consultations, the IMF recommends fiscal discipline and structural reforms, particularly of Ukraine's pension system. In July 2005, the World Bank approved a $250 million Development Policy Loan (formerly a Programmatic Adjustment Loan) to support reforms to improve the investment climate, public administration and financial management, and social inclusion. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) project outlays increased by 51% in 2006 to 797 million Euros, bringing its portfolio to 2.86 billion Euros.

Ukraine is a member of the EBRD but not a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Ukraine applied for membership in the WTO in 1995 and has made significant progress in recent years. Accession to the WTO is expected to occur in 2008.

Environmental Issues

Ukraine is interested in cooperating on regional environmental issues. Conservation of natural resources is a stated high priority, although implementation suffers from a lack of financial resources. Ukraine established its first nature preserve, Askania-Nova, in 1921 and has a program to breed endangered species.

Ukraine has significant environmental problems, especially those resulting from the Chornobyl nuclear power plant disaster in 1986 and from industrial pollution. In accordance with its agreement with the G7 and European Commission in 1995,

Ukraine permanently closed the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant in December of 2000. Urgent measures for radiation and worker safety as well as structural stabilization measures to the "sarcophagus" erected by the Soviet Union are largely complete, and the contract for construction of the new shelter to be built around the sarcophagus was awarded in September 2007.

Ukraine also has established a Ministry of Environment and has introduced a pollution fee system, which levies taxes on air and water emissions and solid waste disposal. The resulting revenues are channeled to environmental protection activities, but enforcement of this pollution fee system is lax. Ukraine ratified the Kyoto Protocol in April 2004.

Construction of a shipping canal through a UN-protected core biosphere reserve in the Danube Delta, which began in May 2004, is an environmental issue of international interest.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The government has declared Euro-Atlantic integration to be its primary foreign policy objective and has sought to maintain good relations with Russia. The European Union's Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Ukraine went into force on March 1, 1998. After the 2004 round of EU expansion, the EU did not signal a willingness to consider Ukraine for an association agreement, as Ukraine had hoped for, but instead included it in the European Neighborhood Policy, disappointing many Ukrainians. The EU and Ukraine are negotiating a "new enhanced agreement," which could also incorporate a free trade agreement that would be established after Ukrainian WTO accession. On January 31, 1992, Ukraine joined the then-Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (now the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe—OSCE), and on March 10, 1992, it became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. Ukraine signed a Charter Agreement with NATO in 1997, sent troops to Kosovo in close cooperation with NATO countries, signed an agreement for NATO use of Ukrainian strategic airlift assets, and has declared interest in eventual membership. It is the most active member of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). In April 2005, NATO offered an "Intensified Dialogue on Membership Issues" to Ukraine, and in January 2008 Ukraine requested a NATO Membership Action Plan.

Ukraine maintains peaceful and constructive relations with all its neighbors, though there are some unresolved maritime issues along the Danube and in the Black Sea with Romania; it has especially close ties with Poland and Russia. Relations with Russia are complicated by differing foreign policy priorities in the region, energy dependence, payment arrears, disagreement over compliance with the 1997 agreement on the stationing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, and a dispute over bilateral boundaries in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. Ukraine co-founded the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on December 8, 1991, but in January 1993 it refused to endorse a draft charter strengthening political, economic, and defense ties among CIS members. Ukraine was a founding member of GUAM (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova) and has taken the lead with Georgia to promote cooperation among emerging democracies in the Community for Democratic Choice, which held its first summit meeting December 1-2, 2005 in Kyiv.

In 1999-2001, Ukraine served as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Soviet Ukraine joined the United Nations in 1945 as one of the original members following a Western compromise with the Soviet Union, which had asked for seats for all 15 of its union republics. Ukraine has consistently supported peaceful, negotiated settlements to disputes. It has participated in the five-sided (now "5+2") talks on the conflict in Moldova and under President Yushchenko has actively boosted efforts to seek a resolution. Ukraine has also promoted a peaceful resolution to conflict in the post-Soviet state of Georgia and has advocated a return to democracy in neighboring Belarus. Ukraine has also made a substantial contribution to UN peacekeeping operations since 1992.

U.S.-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991 brought an end to the Cold War and created an opportunity to build bilateral relations with the New Independent States (NIS) as they began a political and economic transformation. On December 25, 1991, the United States officially recognized the independence of Ukraine. It upgraded its consulate in the capital, Kyiv, to embassy status on January 21, 1992. The U.S. ambassador to Ukraine is William B. Taylor, the sixth U.S. ambassador since Ukrainian independence.

The United States attaches great importance to the success of Ukraine's transition to a democratic state with a flourishing market economy. Following a period of economic decline characterized by high inflation and a continued reliance on state controls, the Ukrainian Government began taking steps in the fall of 1999 to reinvigorate economic reform. Ukraine's democratic "Orange Revolution" has led to closer cooperation and more open dialogue between Ukraine and the United States. The United States granted Ukraine market economy status in February 2006. In March 2006, the United States terminated the application of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the Trade Act of 1974 to Ukraine, providing Ukraine permanent normal trade relations status. U.S. policy remains centered on realizing and strengthening a democratic, prosperous, and secure Ukraine more closely integrated into Europe and Euro-Atlantic structures.

U.S. Assistance to Ukraine

A cornerstone for the continuing U.S. partnership with Ukraine and the other NIS has been the Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act (FSA), enacted in October 1992. Ukraine has been a primary recipient of FSA assistance. Total U.S. assistance since independence has been more than $3 billion. U.S. assistance to Ukraine is targeted to promote political, security, and economic reform and to address urgent health and humanitarian needs. The U.S. has consistently encouraged Ukraine's transition to a democratic society with a prosperous market-based economy. For more detailed information on these programs, please see the "Annual Report to Congress on U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperative Activities with Eurasia," which is available on the State Department's website at the following address: http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ace. Information is also available on USAID's website at the address: http://www.usaid.gov.

In November 2006, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) selected Ukraine to be eligible to apply for compact assistance. Ukraine already participates in the MCC Threshold Program, and in December 2006 signed a $45 million Threshold Program agreement. This program, which began implementation in early 2007, aims to reduce corruption in the public sector through civil society monitoring and advocacy, judicial reform, increased government monitoring and enforcement of ethical and administrative standards, streamlining and enforcing regulations, and combating corruption in higher education. Ukraine is beginning the process of developing a Compact proposal, and successful implementation of the Threshold Program will be necessary before the MCC will enter into a Compact with Ukraine. Information is also available on the MCC website at the following address: http://www.mcc.gov.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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RSO:	Ron Catipon
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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 29, 2008

Country Description: Ukraine is undergoing profound political and economic change as it moves from its Soviet past toward a market economy, multi-party democracy, and integration into Euro-Atlantic and other international institutions. In recent years, the availability of goods and services has increased along with increased rates of growth in Ukraine's economy, and facilities for travelers have improved somewhat. Nonetheless, the availability of travel and tourist services remains uneven throughout the country, and Ukraine still lacks the abundance of many of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries.

Entry Requirements: A passport valid for six months beyond the planned date of travel is required for entry. U.S. citizens are exempt from the requirement to have a Ukrainian visa as long as the duration of their stay in Ukraine does not exceed 180 days and the purpose of their travel is tourism, private travel, or business. U.S. citizens whose planned stay in Ukraine exceeds 180 days must have visas authorizing their entry into Ukraine. If the purpose of their visit is other than tourism, private travel, or business, an appropriate visa must be obtained regardless of the length of stay. The Government of Ukraine does not issue visas at its borders or ports of entry. Visas must be obtained in advance by those who need them.

U.S. citizens may apply for all types of visas through Ukrainian Embassies and Consulates overseas. Contact details for Ukrainian Embassies and Consulates are available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs web site at http://www.mfa.gov.ua/mfa/en/305.htm or http://www.mfa.gov.ua/mfa/en/403.htm.

Visas may also be obtained from the Consular Office of the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington, D.C., or from Ukrainian Consulates General in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco.

Visas may be obtained from the Consular Office of the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington, D.C., or from Ukrainian Consulates General in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. For additional information about Ukrainian visas and related policy, please contact the Ukrainian Embassy or Consulate nearest you.

Embassy of Ukraine
3350 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20007
Tel: (202) 333-0606
Fax: (202) 333-0817
Website: http://www.mfa.gov.ua/usa/en

Consulate General of Ukraine in New York
240 East 49th Street
New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 371-5690
Fax: (212) 371-5547
Web site: http://www.ukrconsul.org

Consulate General of Ukraine in San Francisco
530 Bush Street, Suite 402
San Francisco, CA 94108
Tel: (415) 398-0240
Fax: (415) 398-5039
Web site: http://www.ukrainesf.com

Consulate General of Ukraine in Chicago
10 East Huron St.
Chicago, IL 60611
Tel: (312) 642 4388
Fax: (312) 642 4385
Web site: http://www.ukrchicago.com

Please check your visa carefully upon receipt and pay careful attention to validity dates. Each traveler is responsible for understanding the type of visa issued and the provisions of the visa. Frequently, American citizens are refused reentry into Ukraine because they thought they possessed multiple entry visas, but in fact their visas were valid for only a single entry. In some cases, Americans attempt to enter Ukraine before their visas become valid. This is a common mistake, since in Ukraine the date is written day-month-year, not month-day-year. Thus, a visa issued on 01/05/08 is valid from May 1, 2008 and NOT from January 5, 2008. Such travelers can be detained at the port of entry, refused admission, and sent back to the country from which they traveled. The U.S. Embassy in Kyiv is unable to assist travelers in these situations.

American citizens traveling to or staying in Ukraine are reminded of the recent changes to Ukrainian Immigration Law. Mandatory registration for short-term visits of up to 180 days is completed at the border by border control offices and is valid for a period of 180 days in one year. In other words, a traveler may come to Ukraine as a tourist for a cumulative period of 180 days within a consecutive period of 360 days without a visa. The calculation of the 180-day period begins from the date of the first entry into Ukraine. This regulation applies to all American citizens irrespective of the date of their entry into Ukraine.

Future extensions for stays exceeding 180 days are completed through the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs' Office of Citizenship, Immigration and Registration (OVIR). Most cities have several OVIR offices. Extensions are not automatic, however, and are valid only for continued presence in the country. It is not possible to depart Ukraine and return on the extension, nor can an adjustment to visa status be made from within Ukraine. Applications for extension of registration should be submitted at least three days before the current registration expires.

Travelers who intend to visit Russia from Ukraine must also have a Russian visa. The Consular Section of the Russian Embassy in Ukraine is located at Prospekt Kutuzova 8, tel.: (380-44) 284-6816, fax 284-7936, e-mail: general@rucons.kiev.ua, http://www.embrus.org.ua.

Visitors to Ukraine should note that Ukrainian law requires them to obtain mandatory health insurance. For more information see the section on Medical Insurance below.

Visit the Embassy of Ukraine's web site at http://www.mfa.gov.ua/usa/en/1609.htm for the most current visa information. Also, see the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' web site at http://www.mfa.gov.ua/usa/en or http://www.ukraineinfo.org.

Safety and Security: Ukraine is largely free of significant civil unrest or any organized anti-American domestic political movements. Occasionally, mass demonstrations occur in larger cities, such as Kyiv, and are usually sponsored by individual political organizations. There has been an upsurge in the number of anti-NATO protests; these protests are likely to increase in size and frequency as Ukraine pursues closer ties to the alliance. While the majority of these protests are small and peaceful, they can still result in violence and it is best to avoid such gatherings.

There also have been increasing incidents of racially-motivated violence; groups of "skinheads" and neo-Nazis target people of Asian, African, or other non-European descent, as well as religious minorities, in Kyiv and throughout Ukraine (see the section on Crime below).

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Ukraine is undergoing a significant economic, political, and social transformation, and income disparities have grown sharply. As a result, foreign visitors may be perceived as wealthy and easy targets for criminals. Americans often stand out in Ukraine, and are therefore more likely to be targeted than in Western European countries, where incomes are higher and Americans may blend in better.

Most street crime ranges from various scams, simple pocket picking, purse snatching, and theft of personal items from parked cars, to mugging, armed robbery, or the drugging of unsuspecting victims at nightspots and bars (where they are then robbed). Cases of assaults in apartment building corridors, elevators, and stairwells, as well as armed break-ins and crimes involving small caliber firearms have been reported.

A commonly reported scam in Kyiv is"The Wallet Scam," which involves a person dropping a wallet or a packet of money near a potential victim. After the victim picks up the wallet and attempts to return it to the individual who "dropped" it, the perpetrator then claims that the wallet is missing money and accuses the victim of stealing it. The perpetrator either threatens to call the police if the victim does not pay, or asks the victim to show his or her wallet to the perpetrator to ensure that the victim did not take any money. When the victim produces his or her wallet, the perpetrator grabs the money and

flees. Another variant involves a second person who claims to be a police officer and who approaches the victim after the wallet has been picked up. This second person also asks to see the wallet, grabbing the money and fleeing or, through sleight-of-hand, stealing the victim's money.

While most travelers do not encounter problems with crime in Ukraine, there has been an increase in the number of hate crimes directed at ethnic and religious minorities over the past few years. Many of these incidents are conducted by "skinheads" or neo-Nazis in Kyiv, but similar crimes have also been reported throughout the country. In Kyiv, these incidents have occurred without provocation in prominent downtown areas commonly frequented by tourists. While the majority of people targeted have been of Asian, African, or other non-European descent, all travelers should exercise caution. In addition to incidents of assault, racial minorities may be subject to various types of harassment, such as being stopped on the street by both civilians and law enforcement officials. Individuals belonging to religious minorities have also been harassed and assaulted in Kyiv and throughout Ukraine.

The police and government's slow response to hate crimes is a continuing concern. Although senior Government of Ukraine officials (including the President and Prime Minister) have publicly deplored these hate crimes and groups, Ukrainian street-level law enforcement activities are unable to effectively deter hate crimes or adequately protect racial minorities. The Embassy has received numerous reports from victims of violent hate crimes, as well as from bystanders, stating that uniformed police officers observed the assaults and did nothing to prevent the attacks, to assist the victims afterward, or to investigate and apprehend the attackers. The Government of Ukraine took initial steps to address the problem in the final months of 2007 with the establishment of special law enforcement units to prevent and investigate hate crimes in Ukraine. It remains to be seen if these units will be effective. Credit card and ATM fraud is an issue. Ukraine generally operates as a cash economy, and money scams are widespread. Although credit card and ATM use among Ukrainians is increasingly common, it is nevertheless strongly recommended that visitors and permanent residents of Ukraine exercise caution when using credit cards or ATM cards at any establishment in Ukraine.

Burglaries of apartments and vehicles represent a significant threat to long-term residents. Although few cars are actually stolen, primarily because of increased use of alarm systems and security wheel locks, vehicular break-ins and vehicular vandalism are common.

Ukraine lacks reliable tourist and travel services for foreign victims of crime. Transferring funds from the United States, replacing stolen traveler's checks or airline tickets, or canceling credit cards can be difficult and time consuming. There are few safe low-cost lodgings, such as youth hostels. Public facilities in Ukraine are generally not equipped to accommodate persons with physical disabilities.

Over the past several years, the Embassy has received a number of reports of harassment and intimidation directed against foreign businesspersons and interests. While these reports have become much less frequent in recent years, they have not ended entirely. Reported incidents range from physical threats (possibly motivated by rival commercial interests tied to organized crime), to local government entities engaging in such practices as arbitrary termination or amendment of business licenses, dilution of corporate stock to diminish U.S. investor interest, delays of payment or delivery of goods, and arbitrary "inspections" by tax, safety or other officials that appear designed to harm the business rather than a genuine attempt at good governance. American businesses and other private sector organizations are also encouraged to read the most recent Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Annual Crime and Safety Report for Ukraine at https://www.osac.gov. The Embassy suggests refraining from wiring money unless the recipient is well-known and the purpose of business is clear. American citizens have reported transferring money to Ukraine to pay for goods purchased from residents of Ukraine via online auction sites, but never receiving the goods in return. The Embassy regularly receives complaints from Americans regarding scams involving marriage and dating services. Numerous Americans have lost money to agencies and individuals that claimed they could arrange for student or fiancée visas to the U.S. Additional information is available on our web site in a document titled "Marriage Brokers" at http://kyiv.usembassy.gov and on the Department of State's web site under Ukraine: Internet and Other Fraud Schemes.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to both the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you in finding appropriate medical care, contacting family members or friends and explaining how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of a crime abroad is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to provide a list of local attorneys who have informed the Embassy that they are willing to take foreign clients.

There is no local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Ukraine. There are emergency numbers to call in case of:

Fire–01
Police–02
Ambulance–03

If dialing from a cellular phone, dial 101, 102, or 103 respectively or call the cellular phone operator for assistance.

Visitors should be aware that Ukrainian police and emergency services still generally remain below Western European and U.S. standards in terms of training, responsiveness, and effectiveness. American citizens have reported waiting sometimes hours for Ukrainian police and ambulance services to respond to calls for emergency assistance. Although this may be atypical, it does nevertheless occur.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: The Embassy recommends that ill or infirm persons not travel to Ukraine. Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at risk due to inadequate medical facilities. The U.S. Embassy maintains a list of hospitals and clinics with some English-speaking staff at http://kyiv.usembassy.gov/amcit_medical_serv_eng.html. Many facilities have only limited English speakers. There are no hospitals in Ukraine which accept American health insurance plans for payment, and the level of medical care is not equal to that found in American hospitals. (Some facilities are adequate for basic services. Basic medical supplies are available; however, travelers requiring prescription medicine should bring their own. When a patient is hospitalized, the patient, relative, or acquaintance must supply bandages, medication, and food. The Embassy also recommends that travelers obtain private medical evacuation insurance prior to traveling to Ukraine.

Medical evacuation remains the best way to secure western medical care. This option, however, is very expensive and could take at least several hours to arrange. Travelers may wish to purchase medical evacuation insurance prior to travel, or have access to substantial lines of credit to cover the cost of medical evacuation. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy has information on various air ambulance companies that perform medical evacuations to Europe or to the U.S. at http://kyiv.usembassy.gov/amcit_medical_evac_eng.html. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to other European countries can cost from $25,000 to $50,000, and to the U.S. as much as $70,000 or more. More information can be found on the U.S. Embassy's web site in the document "Medical Services in Kyiv," at http://kyiv.usembassy.gov/amcit_medical_eng.html.

In December 2005, Ukraine reported the first cases of H5N1 ("avian influenza," "avian flu," "bird flu," "chicken flu") among birds in Crimea. Further outbreaks followed in 2006. On January 18, 2008, another outbreak of the H5N1 avian influenza virus was detected at a poultry farm in the Krasnogvardiyskyi Rayon in Crimea. There are no registered human cases of H5N1 in Ukraine.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to Ukraine. HIV/AIDS and/or tuberculosis positive applicants cannot obtain permanent residency status in Ukraine, and waivers are not granted.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

The Ukrainian parliament passed a law in 1997 whereby all visitors to Ukraine are required to obtain mandatory health insurance. According to information from the Ukrainian authorities, the cost of this medical insurance depends on the anticipated length of a foreigner's stay in Ukraine. The cost for the insurance is approximately 25 cents per day (more for short stays). This required insurance can be purchased after arrival and covers only the costs of basic medical care inside Ukraine; it does not cover medical evacuation. Failure to purchase mandatory health insurance often results in refusal of treatment at Ukrainian public hospitals and clinics. Private clinics do not require Ukrainian public health insurance, but can be as expensive as similar clinics in the United States and may require payment in advance. More information can be found online in Ukrainian at http://www.pro100.com.ua, or by calling +38 (044) 206 2885 from abroad or 8-800-500-1080 from within Ukraine.

Radiation and Nuclear Safety: In 1986, the Chornobyl incident resulted in the largest short-term, unintentional, accidental release of radioactive materials to the atmosphere ever recorded. The highest areas of radioactive ground contamination occurred within thirty kilometers of the Chornobyl nuclear power station. The city of Kyiv was not badly affected because of the wind direction, but it was not completely spared. The last operating reactor at the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant site closed officially on December 15, 2000. All identified stabilization measures on the existing sarcophagus are complete, and preparatory work to start construction of the new shelter is almost nearing completion. The contract for the new Chornobyl shelter was awarded in September 2007 and its construction is projected to be completed in 2012. The Ukrainian government has an effective program

of monitoring fresh foods and meats sold in local markets. Street purchase of produce should be avoided. Wild berries, mushrooms, and wild fowl and game should be avoided, as these have been found to retain higher than average levels of radiation. Background levels of radiation are monitored regularly by the Embassy and, to date, have not exceeded the level found on the Eastern seaboard of the United States. If external radiation levels are high enough to require evacuation, the U.S. Embassy will notify the American community through the Embassy warden e-mail and text messaging system.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Ukraine is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Generally, roads in Ukraine outside major urban areas are in poor condition and are poorly lit. Visitors should drive defensively at all times, since local drivers often disregard traffic rules. Drivers are often poorly trained or drive without a valid driver's license. Drivers can also be very aggressive, and they normally do not respect the rights of pedestrians, even at clearly marked pedestrian crossings. Pedestrians should also be aware of cars driving or attempting to park on sidewalks. Many cars do not meet the safety standards common in America.

Due to heavy traffic and congested roads, vehicle accidents are a common occurrence in larger Ukrainian cities, especially in Kyiv. In Ukraine, it is mandatory for motorists involved in vehicle accidents not to remove the vehicle from the site of the accident, unless it presents a clear safety concern. Local police must be notified and will report to the scene to conduct an investigation. Persons should be prepared to wait until the police arrive and complete their report. Due to traffic and slow response, it may take up to several hours for police to arrive. When police arrive, they will ascertain responsibility, take the drivers' personal information, and file a report of the accident.

Cross-country travel at night and in winter can be particularly dangerous. The Embassy strongly recommends that visitors and permanent residents of Ukraine refrain from driving their private vehicles after dark outside of major cities. However, major roads are drivable during daylight hours. Roadside services such as gas stations and repair facilities are becoming more common, particularly on the main national and regional overland highways and in large and mid-size cities.

Nonetheless, such services are far from American standards, and travelers should plan accordingly. There have been isolated reports of carjackings of western-made or foreign-registered cars. There has also been an increase in the number of documented reports of criminal acts (primarily theft) occurring on trains and other modes of public transport.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Ukraine's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Ukraine's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site.

Special Circumstances: Ukraine does not recognize dual nationality. American citizens entering Ukraine with a Ukrainian passport will be treated as Ukrainian citizens by the local authorities. This may include being required to perform mandatory military service. Also, Ukrainians who have immigrated to the U.S. without obtaining the proper exit visa from Ukrainian authorities may be subject to civil or criminal penalties, and will be required to obtain an exit visa before returning to the U.S.

Ukraine is a cash economy. Traveler's checks and credit cards are gaining wider acceptance in larger cities. Even in Kyiv, however, acceptance of credit cards is not nearly as widespread as in the U.S. or in Western European countries. Expect credit card use to be limited to some hotels, upscale restaurants, international airlines, and the rapidly growing, but still select number of up-market stores.

Exchanging U.S. dollars into the national Ukrainian currency, hryvnya, is simple and unproblematic, as licensed exchange booths are widespread, and exchange rates are normally clearly advertised. Currency exchange is only legal at such licensed exchange booths, banks, and currency exchange desks at hotels; anyone caught dealing on the black market can expect to be detained by the local militia.

There are many banks and licensed currency exchange booths located in major cities. ATMs (a.k.a. bankomats) are becoming more common throughout Ukraine, particularly in Kyiv and in other larger cities. In smaller cities and towns, ATMs are still virtually non-existent. Most ATMs disperse cash only in the local currency, hryvnya. The difficulties of a currency shortage can be avoided by coming to Ukraine with a sufficient supply of hard currency to cover necessary obligations during travel. Funds may be transferred by wire, advances may be drawn on credit cards, and traveler's checks may be cashed at many locations. Again, the Embassy emphasizes that the incidence of credit card and ATM bankcard fraud is high, and strongly recommends that visitors and permanent residents of Ukraine refrain from using credit cards or ATMs.

Customs regulations prohibit sending cash, traveler's checks, personal checks, credit cards, or passports or other forms of identification through the international mail system, as well as via courier mail (FedEx, DHL, etc.). Customs authorities regularly confiscate these items as contraband. Ukrainian customs authorities may also enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Ukraine of items such as firearms, antiquities, currency, etc. It is advisable to contact the Embassy

of Ukraine in Washington, or one of Ukraine's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. As in many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Ukrainian law requires that travelers declare all cash and jewelry, regardless of value, upon entering Ukraine. Travelers should fill out a customs declaration and ask customs officials to stamp it. According to Ukrainian law, foreign citizens may bring up to $15,000 in cash, or up to $30,000 in traveler's checks, into Ukraine without a special license. A traveler must declare the imported currency. If customs officials determine that a traveler entering or exiting the country is carrying undeclared currency, they can and often do confiscate the undeclared funds. When leaving the country, foreign travelers are only allowed to take out a maximum of $3,000 in cash, or as much cash as they declared upon their entry into Ukraine. If a traveler wants to take out more than $3,000, the traveler must have a customs declaration proving that he or she in fact brought the corresponding sum of money into the country.

Travelers desiring to bring more than $15,000 into Ukraine must obtain a special license AFTER entering the country.

Special Circumstances: Ukraine does not recognize dual nationality. American citizens entering Ukraine with a Ukrainian passport will be treated as Ukrainian citizens by the local authorities. This may include being required to perform mandatory military service. Also, Ukrainians who have immigrated to the U.S. without obtaining the proper exit visa from Ukrainian authorities may be subject to civil or criminal penalties, and will be required to obtain an exit visa before returning to the U.S. For additional information, see our dual nationality information. Under Ukrainian law, Ukrainian police are permitted to stop anyone for any reason and check his/her identification documents. Ukrainian police may check foreigners' passports to verify their legal presence in Ukraine. Ukrainian law requires foreign visitors to carry their passports and immigration cards with them at all times and these are the only two documents that will be recognized by Ukrainian police. Police are further permitted to detain anyone for up to 72 hours without formal charges.

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Customs regulations prohibit sending cash, traveler's checks, personal checks, credit cards, passports, or other forms of identification through the international mail system, as well as via courier mail (FedEx, DHL, etc.). Customs authorities regularly confiscate these items as contraband. Ukrainian customs authorities may also enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Ukraine of items such as firearms, antiquities, currency, etc. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington, or one of Ukraine's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements. State Customs Service of Ukraine can also be contacted for advice at (38 044) 249 9284 or (38 044) 522 8169. The web site is http://www.customs.gov.ua/dmsu/control/uk/index. Operators speak only Ukrainian or Russian. As in many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

A traveler may take up to EUR 10,000 or its equivalent into or out of Ukraine. To transport a greater amount, proof of the source of the money (a bank reference) must be presented, or travelers face forfeiture to Ukrainian customs and a court appearance. Currency must be declared before checking in at airports.

Ukraine has strict limitations for the export of antiques and other goods and artifacts deemed to be of particularly important historical or cultural value. This includes, but is not limited to, any items produced before 1950. American citizens must adhere to these restrictions as a matter of law. Please contact the Kyiv Department of Culture, Expertise Section at (38-044) 279-6109 or (38-044) 279-5647, if you have any questions

regarding items you own, wish to purchase, and/or plan to export. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Ukraine in Washington, or one of Ukraine's consulates in the United States, for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating Ukraine's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Ukraine are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Ukraine are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Ukraine. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy is located at #6 Mykoly Pymonenka St., 01901 Kyiv, Ukraine. Telephone: (38-044) 490-4422, fax 486-3393. The Embassy is located at #10 Yuriy Kotsyubynsky St. 01901 Kyiv, Ukraine. Tel.: (38-044) 490-4000.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues.

For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Ukraine is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Ukraine, you must be found eligible to adopt by the U.S. Government. The U.S. Government agency responsible for making this determination is the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

In addition to these U.S. requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Ukraine also has the following requirements for prospective adoptive parents:

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for intercountry adoption from Ukraine.

Age Requirements: Under a Ukrainian law which came into effect on April 24, 2008, prospective adoptive parents must be at least 21 years old, and at least 15 years older, but not more than 45 years older than the adopted child. If only one of the adoptive parents complies with these age requirements, the adoption can be completed in the younger parent's name only. If the child is being adopted by a relative, the age difference is not considered.

Marriage Requirements: Foreign citizens must be married in order to be eligible to adopt from Ukraine.

Income Requirements: While there are no specified income requirements, prospective adoptive parents are required to submit documentation identifying their income/financial standing.

Who Can Be Adopted? Ukraine has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States. Learn more about these U.S. requirements.

Ukraine's Adoption Authority: State Department for Adoptions and Protection of Rights of the Child (SDAPRC)

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Ukraine is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the U.S. state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Ukraine to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the U.S. Government, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Ukraine will provide you with a referral to a child. The child must be eligible to be adopted according to Ukraine's requirements. The child must also meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. law.

Role of the Adoption Authority: The SDAPRC processes the documents submitted by the prospective adoptive parents and enters them into its database (within 20 working

days). Upon approval of the application, the prospective adoptive parents receive an appointment to visit the SDAPRC to view information on eligible orphans for intercountry adoption and who are within the parents' specified age range. SDAPRC issues a letter of referral allowing the parents to visit an orphanage to meet and make contact with a child. In addition to the referral letter, the prospective adoptive parents receive their documents (bound, numbered, sealed, and signed by an official in charge of SDAPRC) along with a separate sheet specifying the number of pages and the prospective adoptive parents' registration file code.

SDAPRC officials will not meet with prospective adoptive parents who arrive without an appointment or on a day other than when their appointment is scheduled. Ukrainian law does not allow adoption intermediaries. No private interpreters or facilitators are allowed to interpret during the meetings between the prospective adoptive parents and the SDAPRC. The private interpreters can be used at later stages of the adoption process.

Role of the Court: After the parents have identified and accepted a child for adoption, the file for the case is presented to a judge in the region the child lives. The power to approve or deny an adoption lies solely with the judge who bases his or her decision on a review of various case-specific documents during the court hearing. Adoptive parents must attend the hearing. If one parent cannot be present (e.g., major surgery, disability), a judge may permit the parent to provide the power of attorney to the attending parent.

The judge's decision is announced and issued the day of the hearing. However, it will not take effect for 10 days. During the 10 days the adoption can be appealed. If an appeal application is submitted, an additional 20-day period is granted for the appellant to file his/her complete appeal. This additional time can be shortened or waived if the court finds that delaying the final court decision would be contrary to the child's best interests. Once the final decision takes effect, the adoptive parents have full parental rights and legal responsibility for the child.

Role of Adoption Agencies: As stated above, Ukrainian law does not allow adoption intermediaries.

Adoption Application: Prospective adoptive parents register with the SDAPRC.

Time Frame: Three to 12 months can pass between the prospective adoptive parents' submission of their application dossier and the SDAPRC appointment date. In addition, there is usually a three-to-four week wait between the initial filing of the adoption petition in the local court and issuance of the final adoption.

Adoption Fees: There are no Ukrainian fees except those for court filing, notarial, translator, and similar services. Adoptive parents of Ukrainian children have reported paying between $2000 and $20,000 USD to the adoption agencies for services. This payment has included lodging, transportation, authentication of Ukrainian documents, fees for expedited services, and interpretation/translation services. Some adoptive parents have reported additional and unexpected fees after arriving in Ukraine. You are advised to inform the U.S. Embassy or the Department of State of any unexpected or seemingly inappropriate fees.

Documents Required: The following is a list of the eight documents required for an intercountry adoption in Ukraine:

- Certificate of completed home study, issued by a competent authority in the prospective adoptive parents' country. If completed by a non-Governmental entity, a copy of the license authorizing this entity to conduct home studies must be included.
- Form I-171H, Notice of Approval of Advance Processing, entrance and permanent residence permit for the adopted child.
- Proof of Income, including bank statements, W-2 forms or tax returns, and a statement from the parents' employers indicating salary.
- Medical Information–A specific medical form must be completed.
- Copy of marriage certificate, if applicable.
- Copies of the passports or other identification papers of prospective adoptive parents. If one prospective adoptive parent is not an American citizen, a copy of the Permanent Resident Card must be included.
- "No criminal record" statement from a competent authority, attesting to his/her/their having no criminal record at the State level.
- Registration Commitment–The prospective adoptive parents must commit, in writing, to register their child with the Ukrainian Embassy or Consulate in the United States within one month of the completion of the adoption. The parents also agree to complete the post-adoption progress reports.

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home.

Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* sec-

tion on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Ukraine requires adoptive parents to supply information about the adopted child's living conditions and educational progress to the Ukrainian consular office annually during the first three years following the adoption. Under Ukrainian law, an adopted child remains a citizen until he/she turns 18 years old. At that time, he/she can decide whether or not to remain a Ukrainian citizen.

Contact Information
U.S. Embassy in Ukraine
6 Pymonenko Street
Kyiv, Ukraine
Tel: 380-44-490-4422
Fax: 380-44-490-4040
Email: kyivadoptions@state.gov
Internet: http://kyiv.usembassy.gov

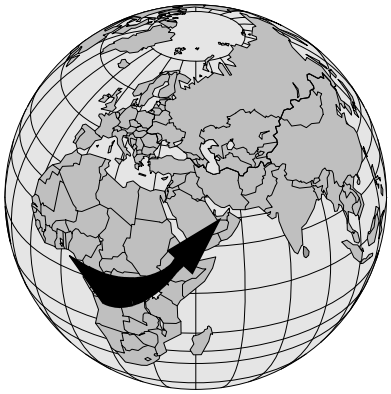
Ukraine's Adoption Authority
State Department for Adoptions and Protection of Rights of the Child (SDAPRC)
14 Desyatynna Street
Kyiv, Ukraine 01025
Tel: (380)(44) 278-4045
Fax: (380)(44) 278-4045

Embassy of Ukraine
3350 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
Tel: 202 333 0606
Fax: 202 333 0817
Email:
Internet: www.ukremb.com

Ukraine also has consulates general in Chicago (www.ukrchicago.com), New York (www.ukrconsul.org) and San Francisco (www.UkraineSF.com).

Office of Children's Issues
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Compiled from the June 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
United Arab Emirates

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 82,880 sq. km. (30,000 sq. mi.); about the size of Maine.
Cities: (2002 est.) Capital—Abu Dhabi (pop. 1,000,000); Dubai (pop. 860,000).
Terrain: Largely desert with some agricultural areas.
Climate: Hot, humid, low annual rainfall.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—U.A.E., Emirati.
Population: (2007 est.) 4.4 million.
Population growth rate: (2007 est.) 4.0%.
Ethnic groups: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Egyptian, Jordanian, Iranian, Filipino, other Arab; (15-20% of residents are U.A.E. citizens).
Religions: Muslim (96%), Hindu, Christian.
Languages: Arabic (official), English, Hindi, Urdu, Persian.
Education: Years compulsory—ages 6-12. Literacy (U.A.E. citizens)—about 80%.
Health: Life expectancy—about 76 yrs.
Work force: (2006) 2.968 million (93% foreign in 15-64 age group) Agriculture—2.3%; industry—61.9%; services—35.8%.

Government

Type: Federation of emirates.
Independence: December 2, 1971.
Constitution: December 2, 1971.
Government branches: Executive—7-member Supreme Council of Rulers, which elects president and vice president. Legislative—40-member Federal National Council (consultative only). Judicial—Islamic and secular courts.
Political subdivisions: Seven largely self-governing city-states.
Political parties: None.
Suffrage: State-nominated electors chose half of the Federal National Council seats in 2006.
Budget: (2006) $7 billion.

Economy

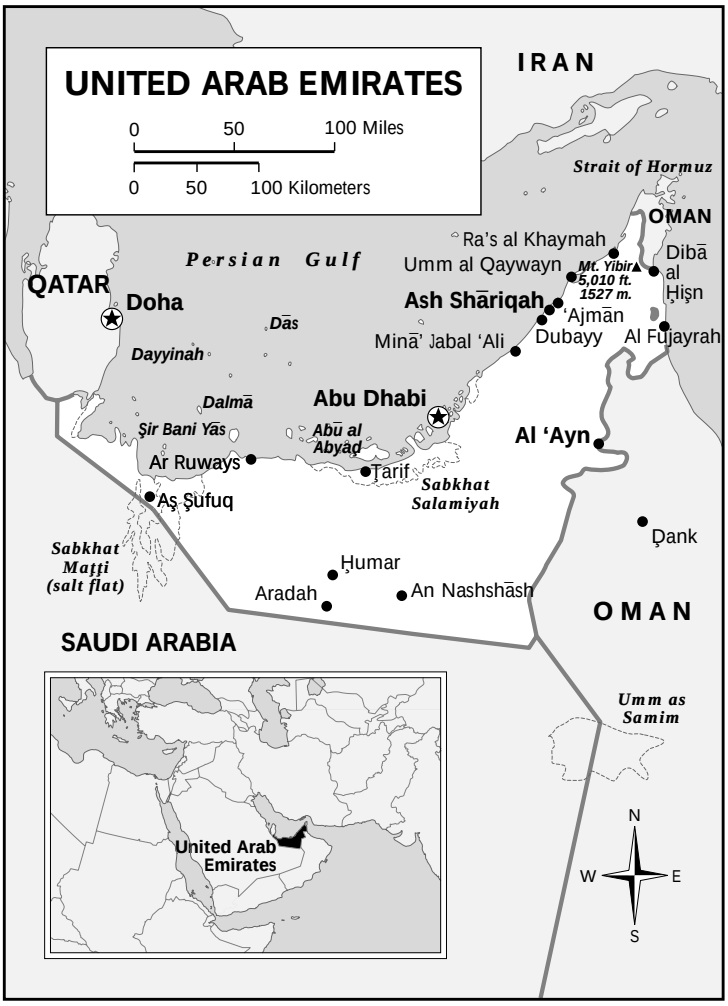
GDP: (2006 est.) $163 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2006 est.) 9.7%.
Per capita GDP: (2006 est.) $37,000.
Inflation rate: (2006 est.) 10-13%.
Natural resources: Oil and natural gas.
Agriculture: (2005 est., 2.0% of GDP) Products—vegetables, dates, dairy products, poultry, fish.
Petroleum (2005 est.) 36%.
Manufacturing: (2005 est.) 13%.
Services: (44% of 2003 GDP) Trade, government, real estate.
Trade: (2006 est.) Exports—$157 billion: petroleum, gas, and petroleum products. Major markets—Japan, South Korea, Thailand, India. Imports—$126.6 billion: machinery, chemicals, food. Major suppliers—Western Europe, Japan, U.S., China, India.
Foreign economic aid: (2004) In excess of $5.25 billion.

PEOPLE

Only 15-20% of the total population of 4.4 million is U.A.E. citizens. The rest include significant numbers of other Arabs—Palestinians, Egyptians, Jordanians, Yemenis, Omanis—as well as many Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Iranians, Afghans, Filipinos, and west Europeans.

The majority of U.A.E. citizens are Sunni Muslims with a very small Shia minority. Many foreigners also are Muslim, although Hindus and Christians make up a portion of the U.A.E.'s foreign population.

Educational standards among U.A.E. citizens population are rising rapidly. Citizens and temporary residents have taken advantage of facilities throughout the country. The UAE University in Al Ain had roughly 17,000 students in 2004. The Higher Colleges of Technology, a network of technical-vocational colleges, opened in 1989 with men's and women's campuses in each emirate. Zayed



University for women opened in 1998 with campuses in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Zayed University will establish separate male campuses for the 2007-2008 academic year. American University Sharjah had over 4,500 students enrolled in 2007. Many foreign universities, including ones from the U.S., U.K., and Australia, also have campuses in the U.A.E.

HISTORY

The U.A.E. was formed from the group of tribally organized Arabian Peninsula Sheikhdoms along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf and the northwestern coast of the Gulf of Oman. This area was converted to Islam in the Seventh century; for centuries it was embroiled in dynastic disputes. It became known as the Pirate Coast as raiders based there harassed foreign shipping, although both European and Arab navies patrolled the area from the 17th century into the 19th century. Early British expeditions to protect the India trade from raiders at Ras al-Khaimah led to campaigns against that headquarters and other harbors along the coast in 1819. The next year, a general peace treaty was signed to which all the principal sheikhs of the coast adhered. Raids continued intermittently until 1835, when the sheikhs agreed not to engage in hostilities at sea. In 1853, they signed a treaty with the United Kingdom, under which the sheikhs (the "Trucial Sheikhdoms") agreed to a "perpetual maritime truce." It was enforced by the United Kingdom, and disputes among sheikhs were referred to the British for settlement. Primarily in reaction to the ambitions of other European countries, the United Kingdom and the Trucial Sheikhdoms established closer bonds in an 1892 treaty, similar to treaties entered into by the U.K. with other Gulf principalities. The sheikhs agreed not to dispose of any territory except to the United Kingdom and not to enter into relationships with any foreign government other than the United Kingdom without its consent. In return, the British promised to protect the Trucial Coast from all aggression by sea and to help out in case of land attack.

In 1955, the United Kingdom sided with Abu Dhabi in the latter's dispute with Saudi Arabia over the Buraimi Oasis and other territory to the south. A 1974 agreement between Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia would have settled the Abu Dhabi-Saudi border dispute; however, the agreement has yet to be ratified by the U.A.E. Government. The border with Oman also remains officially unsettled, but the two governments agreed to delineate the border in May 1999. Since that time, the U.A.E. has constructed a border fence along the entire length with both Oman and Saudi Arabia. The new fence and checkpoints will likely be finished by 2008-2009.

In 1968, the U.K. announced its decision, reaffirmed in March 1971, to end the treaty relationships with the seven Trucial Sheikhdoms which had been, together with Bahrain and Qatar, under British protection. The nine attempted to form a union of Arab emirates, but by mid-1971 they were unable to agree on terms of union, even though the termination date of the British treaty relationship was the end of 1971. Bahrain became independent in August and Qatar in September 1971. When the British-Trucial Sheikhdoms treaty expired on December 1, 1971, they became fully independent. On December 2, 1971, six of them entered into a union called the United Arab Emirates. The seventh, Ras al-Khaimah, joined in early 1972.

The U.A.E. sent forces to help liberate Kuwait during the 1990-91 Gulf War. U.A.E. troops have also participated in peacekeeping missions to Somalia, Lebanon, Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, and Kuwait.

In 2004, the U.A.E.'s first and only president until that time, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, died. His eldest son Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan succeeded him as Ruler of Abu Dhabi. In accordance with the Constitution, the U.A.E.'s Supreme Council of Rulers elected Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan as U.A.E. Federal President. Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan succeeded Khalifa as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. In January 2006, Sheikh Makotum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, U.A.E. Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, passed away and was replaced by his brother, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MbR), Ruler of Dubai and U.A.E. Minister of Defense. On February 9, 2006, the U.A.E. announced a cabinet reshuffle. Several ministries were eliminated or renamed, while others were created.

GOVERNMENT

Administratively, the U.A.E. is a loose federation of seven emirates, each with its own ruler. The pace at which local government in each emirate evolves from traditional to modern is set primarily by the ruler. Under the provisional constitution of 1971, each emirate reserves considerable powers, including control over mineral rights (notably oil and gas) and revenues. In this milieu, federal powers have developed slowly. The constitution established the positions of President (Chief of State) and Vice President, each serving 5-year terms; a Council of Ministers, led by a Prime Minister (head of government); a supreme council of rulers; and a 40-member Federal National Council (FNC). The FNC is a consultative body with half its members appointed by the emirate rulers and half elected.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **KHALIFA bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan**
Vice Pres.: **MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID Al Maktum**
Prime Min.: **MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID Al Maktum**
Dep. Prime Min.: **SULTAN bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan**
Dep. Prime Min.: **HAMDAN bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan**
Min. of Cabinet Affairs: **Muhammad Abdallah al-GERGAWI**
Min. of Culture, Youth, & Social Development: **Abd al-Rahman Muhammad al-UWAIS**
Min. of Defense: **MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID Al Maktum**
Min. of Economy: **Sultan bin Saeed al-MANSURI**
Min. of Education: **Hanif Hassan ALI**
Min. of Energy: **Muhammad bin Dhaen al-HAMILI**
Min. of Environment & Water: **Rashid Ahmed bin FAHD**
Min. of Finance: **HAMDAN bin Rashid Al Maktum**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **ABDALLAH bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan**
Min. of Foreign Trade: **LUBNA Al Qasimi**
Min. of Health: **Humaid Muhammad Ubayd al-QATAMI**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **NUHAYYAN bin Mubarak Al Nuhayyan**
Min. of Interior: **SAIF bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan**
Min. of Justice: **Hadef bin Juaan al-DHAHERI**
Min. of Labor: **Saqr Ghobash Saeed GHOBASH**
Min. of Presidential Affairs: **MANSUR bin Zayid Al Nuhayyan**
Min. of Public Works: **HAMDAN bin Mubarak Al Nuhayyan**
Min. of Social Affairs: **Mariam Muhammad Khalfan al-RUMI**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Reem Ibrahim al-HASHEMI**
Min. of State Without Portfolio: **Maitha Salem al-SHAMSI**
Min. of State for Financial Affairs: **Obaid Humaid al-TAYER**
Min. of State for Foreign Affairs: **Anwar Muhammad GARGASH**
Governor, Central Bank: **Sultan bin Nasir al-SUWAYDI**
Ambassador to the US: **Yousef bin Mani Saeed al-OTAIBA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Ahmad Abd al-Rahman al-JARMAN**

The U.A.E. maintains an embassy in the United States at 3522 International Court, NW, Washington, DC, 20008 (tel. 202-243-2400). The U.A.E. Mission to the UN is located at 747 3rd Avenue, 36th Floor, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-371-0480).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The relative political and financial influence of each emirate is reflected in the allocation of positions in the federal government. The ruler of Abu Dhabi, whose emirate is the U.A.E.'s major oil producer, is president of the U.A.E. The ruler of Dubai, which is the U.A.E.'s commercial center, is vice president and prime minister.

Since achieving independence in 1971, the U.A.E. has worked to strengthen its federal institutions. Nonetheless, each emirate still retains substantial autonomy, and progress toward greater federal integration has slowed in recent years. A basic concept in the U.A.E. Government's development as a federal system is that a significant percentage of each emirate's revenues should be devoted to the U.A.E. central budget.

The U.A.E. has no political parties. The rulers hold power on the basis of their dynastic position and their legitimacy in a system of tribal consensus. Rapid modernization, enormous strides in education, and the influx of a large foreign population have changed the face of the society. In December 2006, the U.A.E. held its first-ever limited elections to select half the members of the FNC. Ballots were cast by electors selected by the emir of each emirate. One woman was elected to the FNC and seven additional women were appointed to be council members.

DEFENSE

The Trucial Oman Scouts, long the symbol of public order on the coast and commanded by British officers, were turned over to the U.A.E. as its

defense forces in 1971. The U.A.E. armed forces, consisting of 48,800 troops, are headquartered in Abu Dhabi and are primarily responsible for the defense of the seven emirates.

Although small in number, the U.A.E. armed forces are equipped with some of the most modern weapon systems, purchased from a variety of outside countries. The military has been reducing the number of foreign nationals in its ranks, and its officer corps is composed almost entirely of U.A.E. nationals. The U.A.E. air force has about 4,000 personnel. The Air Force has advanced U.S. F-16 BLOCK 60 multi-role fighter aircraft. Other equipment includes French Mirage 2000-9 fighters, British Hawk trainer aircraft, 36 transport aircraft and U.S. Apache and French Puma helicopters. The Air Defense Force is linked into a joint air defense system with the other six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations aimed at protecting the airspace of the allied states. The U.A.E. Navy is small—about 2,500 personnel—and maintains 12 well-equipped coastal patrol boats and 8 missile boats. Although primarily concerned with coastal defense, the Navy is constructing a six-unit class of blue water corvettes in conjunction with French shipbuilder CMN. The U.A.E.'s Land Forces are equipped with several hundred French LeClerc tanks and a similar number of Russian BMP-3 armored fighting vehicles. The U.A.E. Special Operations Command (SOC) is a small but effective force centered on the counter-terrorism mission within the country. SOC is well-financed, trained, and equipped and is capable of executing its mission with a level of expertise equal to, or above, the rest of the GCC.

The U.A.E. contributes to the continued security and stability of the Gulf and the Straits of Hormuz. It is a leading partner in the campaign against global terrorism, providing assistance in the military, diplomatic, and financial arenas since September 11, 2001.

ECONOMY

Prior to the first exports of oil in 1962, the U.A.E. economy was dominated by pearl production, fishing, agriculture, and herding. Since the rise of oil prices in 1973, however, petroleum has dominated the economy, accounting for most of its export earnings and providing significant opportunities for investment. The U.A.E. has huge proven oil reserves, estimated at 98.8 billion barrels in 2003, with gas reserves estimated at (212 trillion cubic feet); at present production rates, these supplies would last well over 150 years. In 2006, the U.A.E. produced about 2.8 million barrels of oil per day.

Major increases in imports occurred in manufactured goods, machinery, and transportation equipment, which together accounted for 70% of total imports. Another important foreign exchange earner, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority—which controls the investments of Abu Dhabi, the wealthiest emirate—manages an estimated $600 billion in overseas investments.

More than 6,000 companies from more than 120 countries operate at the Jebel Ali complex in Dubai, which includes a deep-water port and a free trade zone for manufacturing and distribution in which all goods for re-export or transshipment enjoy a 100% duty exemption. A major power plant with associated water desalination units, an aluminum smelter, and a steel fabrication unit are prominent facilities near the complex.

Except in the free trade zone, the U.A.E. requires at least 51% local citizen ownership in all businesses operating in the country as part of its attempt to place Emiratis into leadership positions.

As a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the U.A.E. participates in a wide range of GCC activities that focus on economic issues. These include regular consultations and development of common policies covering trade, investment, banking and finance, transportation, telecommunications, and other technical areas, including protection of intellectual property rights.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The U.A.E. is a member of the United Nations and the Arab League and has established diplomatic relations with more than 60 countries, including the U.S., Japan, Russia, the People's Republic of China, and most western European countries. It has played a moderate role in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, the United Nations, and the GCC.

Substantial development assistance has increased the U.A.E.'s stature among recipient states. Most of this foreign aid (in excess of $15 billion) has been to Arab and Muslim countries.

Following Iraq's 1990 invasion and attempted annexation of Kuwait, the U.A.E. has sought to rely on the GCC, the United States, and other Western allies for its security. The U.A.E. believes that the Arab League needs to be restructured to become a viable institution and would like to increase strength and interoperability of the GCC defense forces.

In 2007, the U.A.E. pledged and delivered $300 million to Lebanon, and was the first country to fulfill its pledge. The U.A.E. has provided significant monetary and material support to the Iraqi Government, including a pledge of $215 million in economic and reconstruction assistance, and has also provided substantial aid to Afghanistan and the Palestinian Authority. The U.A.E. is a member of the following international organizations: UN and several of its specialized agencies (ICAO, ILO, UPU, WHO, WIPO); World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Arab League, Organization of the Islamic Conference, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

U.S.-U.A.E. RELATIONS

The United States has enjoyed friendly relations with the U.A.E. since 1971. Private commercial ties, especially in petroleum, have developed into friendly government-to-government ties which include security assistance. The breadth, depth, and quality of U.S.-U.A.E. relations increased dramatically as a result of the U.S.-led coalition's campaign to end the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. In 2002, the U.S. and the U.A.E. launched a strategic partnership dialogue covering virtually every aspect of the relationship. The U.A.E. has been a key partner in the War on Terror. U.A.E. ports host more U.S. Navy ships than any port outside the U.S. The United States was the third country to establish formal diplomatic relations with the U.A.E. and has had an ambassador resident in the U.A.E. since 1974.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

ABU DHABI (E) P.O. Box 4009, APO/FPO Unit 6010, APO AE 09825, +971-2-414-2200, Fax + 971-2-414-2575, Workweek: Sunday-Thursday 0830–1700, Website: www.uae.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Carol Bourne
DHS/ICE:	Ransom Avilla
ECO:	Oliver John
FCS:	Christian Reed
FM:	Michael Duprez
HRO:	Lance Casady
MGT:	Laura Danylin
CG:	Paul Sutphin
CON:	Robert Dolce
DCM:	Martin Quinn
PAO:	Steve L. Pike
GSO:	Jeff Ogren
RSO:	James Aj Rowe
AFSA:	David Zwach
ATO:	David Williams
CLO:	Sandy Khan
DAO:	Col. Bret Rider
EEO:	Carol Bourne
FAA:	Roy Barnett
FAA/CASLO:	Roy Barnett
FMO:	Lance Casady
ICASS Chair:	Col. Bret Rider
IMO:	James Davidson
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck
ISO:	Manuel Dipre
ISSO:	James Davidson
LEGATT:	Gary S. Price
POL:	Alfred Magleby

DUBAI (CG), APO/FPO unit 6020, APO AE 09825, 971-4-311-6000, Fax 971-4-311-6166, Workweek: Sun-Thurs, 0830-1700, Website: http://dubai.usconsulate.gov.

CG OMS:	Jean Atkinson
DHS/ICE:	Chris Walker
FCS:	Dunn, Robert W
MGT:	Bras, Carlos M
POL/ECO:	Susan Unruh
CG:	Paul R. Sutphin
CON:	Cynthia Ebeid
PAO:	Vacant
GSO:	Bradley Page
RSO:	David Noonan
AFSA:	Christina Cheshier
ATO:	David J Williams
CLO:	Mary Hudon
DEA:	Richard Hudon
IPO:	Janet Stevenson
IRS:	Kathy J. Beck

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 26, 2008

Country Description: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of seven independent emirates, each with its own ruler. The federal government is a constitutional republic, headed by a president and council of ministers. Islamic ideals and beliefs provide the conservative foundation of the country's customs, laws and practices. The UAE is a modern, developed country, and tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A passport is required. For stays of 30 days or fewer, U.S. citizens holding valid passports may obtain visitor visas at the port of entry for no fee. For a longer stay, a traveler must obtain a visa before arrival in the UAE. In addition, an HIV/AIDS test is required for work or residence permits; testing must be performed after arrival. A U.S. HIV/AIDS test is not accepted. For further information, travelers can contact the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, 3522 International Court, NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone (202) 243-2400. Visit the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates web site at http://uae-embassy.org for the most current visa information.

The Government of the United Arab Emirates requires that all persons residing in the UAE, including U.S. citizens, have a national identification card. Americans who are working or living in the UAE, should visit the Emirates Identity Authority web site for more information on card registration procedures and requirements: http://www.emiratesid.ae/mainenglish.html.

Unlike other countries in the region that accept U.S. military ID cards as valid travel documents, the UAE requires U.S. military personnel to present a valid passport for entry/exit.

UAE authorities will confiscate any weapons, weapon parts, ammunition, body armor, handcuffs, and/or other military/police equipment transported to or through a civilian airport. Americans have been arrested and jailed for transporting such weapons and equipment without the express written authorization of the UAE government, even though airline and U.S. authorities allowed shipment on a U.S.-originating flight.

U.S. citizens and citizens of other countries that are not members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) who depart the UAE via land are required to pay a departure fee. This fee is 20 UAE dirhams and is payable only in the local currency.

Safety and Security: Americans in the United Arab Emirates should exercise a high level of security awareness. The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. Americans should maintain a low profile, vary routes and times for all required travel, and treat mail and packages from unfamiliar sources with caution. In addition, U.S. citizens are urged to avoid contact with any suspicious, unfamiliar objects, and to report the presence of

the objects to local authorities. U.S. Government personnel overseas have been advised to take the same precautions. In addition, U.S. Government facilities may temporarily close or suspend public services from time to time as necessary to review their security posture and ensure its adequacy.

Taking photographs of potentially-sensitive UAE military and civilian sites, or foreign diplomatic missions, including the U.S. Embassy, may result in arrest, detention and/or prosecution by local authorities. In addition, engaging in mapping activities, especially mapping which includes the use of GPS equipment, without coordination with UAE authorities, may have the same consequences.

On several occasions in the past three years, small groups of expatriate recreational boaters were detained by the Iranian Coast Guard for alleged violation of Iranian territorial waters while fishing near the island of Abu Musa, approximately 20 miles from Dubai. The UAE and Iran have had a long-standing dispute concerning jurisdiction of Abu Musa. Fishing or sailing in these waters may result in seizure of vessels and detention of passengers and crew in Iran. Obtaining consular assistance in Iran is difficult and can only be done through the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, which acts as a Protecting Power, providing limited U.S. consular services.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State Internet site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert and the Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime generally is not a problem for travelers in the UAE. However, the U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens to take normal precautions against theft, such as not leaving a wallet, purse, or credit card unattended. Although vehicle break-ins in the UAE are rare, U.S. citizens are encouraged to ensure that unattended vehicles are locked and that valuables are not left out in plain sight.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in the United Arab Emirates is 999.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Basic modern medical care and medicines are available in the principal cities of the UAE, but not necessarily in outlying areas. The United Arab Emirates has imposed HIV/AIDS travel restrictions on persons applying for a work or residence visa. An HIV/AIDS test is required for work or residence permits; testing must be performed after arrival. A U.S. HIV/AIDS test is not accepted. Please inquire directly with the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates at http://uae-embassy.org before you travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the United Arab Emirates is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The police emergency number and ambulance number is 999. Mobile phones are widely used throughout the UAE, so passers-by usually request emergency police and medical services quickly. Response time by emergency services is adequate. However, medical personnel emphasize transport of the injured to the hospital rather than treatment on site. Traffic accidents are a leading cause of death in the UAE because drivers often drive at high speeds. Unsafe driving practices are common, especially on inter-city highways. On highways, unmarked speed bumps and drifting sand create additional hazards.

Country-wide traffic laws impose stringent penalties for certain violations, particularly driving under the influence of alcohol. In the UAE, there is zero tolerance for driving after consumption of alcohol. Penalties may include hefty jail sentences and fines and, for Muslims (even those holding U.S. citizenship), lashings. Persons involved in an accident

in which another party is injured automatically go to jail, until the injured person is released from the hospital. Should a person die in a traffic accident, the driver of the other vehicle is liable for payment of compensation for the death (known as "dhiyya"), usually the equivalent of 55,000 U.S. dollars. Even relatively minor accidents may result in lengthy proceedings, during which both drivers may be prohibited from leaving the country.

In order to drive, UAE residents must obtain a UAE driver's license. Foreign driver's licenses are not recognized. However, a non-resident visitor to the UAE can drive if he/she obtains a valid international driver's license issued by the motor vehicle authority of the country whose passport the traveler holds. The UAE recognizes driver's licenses issued by other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states only if the bearer is driving a vehicle registered to the same GCC state. Under no circumstances should anyone drive without a valid license.

You may also visit the web site of the UAE's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.uaeinteract.org.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the United Arab Emirates' Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the United Arab Emirates' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The Government of the United Arab Emirates does not recognize dual nationality. Children of UAE fathers automatically acquire UAE citizenship at birth and must enter the UAE on UAE passports. UAE authorities have confiscated U.S. passports of UAE/U.S. dual nationals in the past. This act does not constitute loss of U.S. citizenship, but should be reported to the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi or the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai. In addition to being subject to all UAE laws, U.S. citizens who also hold UAE citizenship may also be subject to other laws that impose special obligations on citizens of the UAE. For additional information, please refer to our Dual Nationality flyer.

U.S. citizens have at times become involved in disputes of a commercial nature that have prompted local firms or courts to take possession of the U.S. citizen's passport. Travel bans may also be enforced against U.S. citizens involved in financial disputes with a local sponsor or firm. Such travel bans, which are rigidly enforced, effectively prevent the individual from leaving the UAE for any reason until the dispute is resolved. Although it is customary for a local sponsor to hold an employee's passport, it is illegal to do so under UAE law. Most contractual/labor disputes can be avoided by clearly establishing all terms and conditions of employment or sponsorship in the labor contract at the beginning of any employment. Should a dispute arise, the UAE Ministry of Labor has established a special department to review and arbitrate labor claims. A list of local attorneys capable of representing Americans in such matters is available from the Consular and Commercial sections of the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai.

Codes of behavior and dress in the UAE reflect the country's Islamic traditions and are more conservative than those of the United States. Visitors to the UAE should be respectful of this conservative heritage, especially in the Emirate of Sharjah where rules of decency and public conduct are strictly enforced. Female travelers should keep in mind the cultural differences among the many people who coexist in the UAE and should be cognizant that unwitting actions may invite unwanted attention to them. Isolated incidents of verbal and physical harassment of Western women have occurred. Victims of harassment are encouraged to report such incidents to the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi or the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai.

American citizens intending to reside and work in the UAE may have to present personal documents authenticated by the Department of State's Office of Authentications in Washington, D.C. before traveling to the UAE. This can be a complex process involving local, state and federal offices and requiring several weeks to complete. For procedural information, the Office of Authentications may be contacted by telephone from within the United States at 800-688-9889 or 202-647-5002, by fax at 202-663-3636, or by e-mail at aoprgsm-auth@state.gov. In order to meet UAE government requirements for school registrations and residency sponsorship for family members, Americans intending to bring their families to reside with them in the UAE will need to have their marriage certificate and children's birth certificates, or custody/adoption decrees, if appropriate, authenticated by the Department of State in Washington, DC. The U.S. Embassy and Consulate General cannot authenticate U.S. local- and state-issued personal, academic or professional documents; they will only be able to authenticate the final authentication document from the Department of State. The Embassy and Consulate General will also not authenticate the academic documents of institutions of higher education in the United States that are not accredited by the U.S. Department of Education, even if the documents have been authenticated by the Department of State. Additional information on authentication of documents can be found at http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth. In terms of employment, a recent change to UAE labor law requires local sponsors to have employees' diplomas, academic and/or occupational/professional certificates validated through a "Degree Verification" process established in the UAE. Prospective employees will be required to submit photocopies of such documents for verification to a firm under contract to the Ministry of Labor.

In addition, persons in the education and health professions reportedly have to meet two requirements for validation of their educational credentials at this time—the formal

"chain" authentication of academic/professional credentials in the U.S. and the "Degree Verification" process in the UAE. Different UAE Ministries have different requirements in this regard. Determining these requirements with one's prospective employer is strongly recommended before arrival in the UAE.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. As each Emirate has its own independent judicial system, legal procedures and penalties vary throughout the country. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Emirati laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the United Arab Emirates are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Legislation enacted in January 1996 imposes the death sentence for convicted drug traffickers. Since January 2006, possession of even trace amounts of illegal drugs has resulted in sentences of four years imprisonment for foreign citizens transiting the UAE. Some drugs normally taken under a doctor's supervision in the United States, and even some over-the-counter U.S. drugs and medications, are classified as narcotics in the UAE and are illegal to possess. A doctor's prescription should be carried along with any medication that is brought into the country. A person may be subject to arrest and prosecution if possession of prescribed medicines (especially those containing codeine and similar narcotic-like ingredients) comes to the attention of local authorities. The U.S. Embassy's web site includes an unofficial list of such medicines, obtained from the UAE Ministry of Health. This list can be found at http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov. Most medications available in the U.S. are also available by doctors' prescription through hospitals and pharmacies in the UAE.

In addition, the UAE's tough anti-narcotics program also includes poppy seeds, widely used in other cultures, including the U.S., for culinary purposes, on its list of controlled substances. The importation and possession of poppy seeds in any and all forms is strictly prohibited. Persons found to possess even very small quantities of controlled substances listed by the UAE are subject to prosecution by the authorities and may be given lengthy prison terms of up to 15 years. Travelers with questions regarding the items on the list of controlled substances should contact the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi or the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai. If suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, individuals may be required to submit to blood and/or urine tests and may be subject to prosecution.

Crimes of fraud, including passing bad checks and non-payment of bills (including hotel bills), are regarded seriously in the UAE and can result in imprisonment and/or fines. Bail generally is not available to non-residents of the UAE who are arrested for crimes involving fraud.

Drinking or possession of alcohol without a Ministry of Interior liquor permit is illegal and could result in arrest and/or fines and imprisonment. Alcohol is served at bars in most major hotels but is intended for guests of the hotel. Persons who are not guests of the hotel, and who consume alcohol in the restaurants and bars, technically are required to have their own personal liquor licenses. Liquor licenses are issued only to non-Muslim persons who possess UAE residency permits. Drinking and driving is considered a serious offense. Persons arrested on alcohol-related offenses are often jailed for many days as they await a court hearing. Penalties may include hefty jail sentences and fines and, for Muslims (even those holding U.S. citizenship), lashings. While individuals are free to worship as they choose, and facilities are available for that purpose, religious proselytizing is not permitted in the UAE. Persons violating this law, even unknowingly, may be imprisoned or deported.

If arrested, U.S. citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General for assistance. The U.S. Consul will provide information on the local judicial system and a list of local attorneys. In Dubai, the U.S. Consul can also arrange for U.S. citizen detainees to meet with an ombudsman from the Human Rights Department of the Dubai police headquarters, if the detainee believes he or she is not being treated fairly.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy and Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in the United Arab Emirates are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the United Arab Emirates. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi is located at Embassies District, Plot 38, Sector W59-02, Street No. 4, P.O. Box 4009. The telephone number is (971) (2) 414-2200, and the Consular Section fax number is (971) (2) 414-2241. The email address for American Citizens Services inquiries, including passport questions, is abudhabiacs@state.gov. The after-hours telephone number is (971) (2) 414-2500. The Embassy Internet web site is http://uae.usembassy.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Dubai is located on the 21st floor of the

Dubai World Trade Center, P.O. Box 9343. The telephone number is (971) (4) 311-6000 (for after-hours emergencies, contact the Embassy at (971)(2) 414-2200 for the Dubai Duty Officer, and the Consular Section fax number is (971) (4) 311-6213. The email address for American Citizens Services inquiries, including passport questions, is dubaiwarden@state.gov. The web site for the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai is http://dubai.usconsulate.gov.

The workweek for both the Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the Consulate General in Dubai is Sunday through Thursday.

Intercountry Adoption

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

The American Embassy in Abu Dhabi has been informed by the Sharia Court that Sharia law does not permit adoption in the United Arab Emirates. The Sharia Court may grant a guardianship, but such a guardianship is insufficient for the filing of an I-130 petition for U.S. immigration purposes, according to the U.S. Board of Immigration Appeals.

Specific questions regarding adoption issues may be addressed to:

U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi
11th St. (also known as Al-Sudan St.)
P.O. Box 4009
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Telephone: (971) (2) 436-691
Fax: (971) (2) 435-786
After-hours telephone:
(971) (2) 434-457
Internet:
http://www.usembabu.gov.ae

U.S. Consulate General in Dubai
21st floor of the
Dubai World Trade Center
P.O. Box 9343
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Telephone: (971) (4) 313-115
Fax: (971) (4) 316-935

Embassy of the
United Arab Emirates
1255 22nd Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20037
Phone: (202) 955-7999

For further information on intercountry adoption, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://adoption.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/Childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between the UAE and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to the UAE are subject to the jurisdiction of UAE courts, as well as to the country's laws and regulations. American citizens planning a trip to the UAE with dual national children should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: When child custody disputes arise between parents, custody decisions are based on Islamic (Sharia) law. Non-UAE nationals resident in the UAE, whether married to a UAE or non-UAE citizen, may file custody cases in the UAE. Non-residents of the UAE may also file custody cases in the UAE, but may need to authorize a UAE resident and/or a lawyer practicing in the UAE to act on their behalf for the duration of the case. Non-Muslims are also permitted to file cases in the UAE family courts, under Sharia law. In determining issues of custody, UAE courts may take into consideration the parents" religion, place of permanent residence, income, and the mother's subsequent marital status. Priority is generally given to the Muslim father, irrespective of his nationality, when the mother is a non-Muslim. As a basic starting point under Sharia law, a Muslim mother may be granted custody of girls under the age of nine and boys under the age of seven, at which time custody may be transferred to the father. If a child has attained an "age of discretion," that child may be allowed to choose the parent with whom he or she wishes to live. A UAE lawyer should be contacted to discuss the definition of "age of discretion."

If the court finds the mother "incompetent," custody of a child, regardless of age, can be given to the father, or to the child's grandmother on the father's side. A finding of incompetence is left fully to the discretion of the Sharia judge. Sharia courts consistently find parents incompetent if they engage in behavior that is con-

sidered to be inconsistent with the Islamic faith. Further, a mother may lose her rights of custody should she remarry. If both the mother and father are ruled incompetent, custody of the children may be given to the child's paternal grandparents. Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a UAE court may wish to retain an attorney in the UAE. The U.S. State Department, the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai maintain a list of attorneys practicing in the area.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in the UAE. UAE courts will not enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in the UAE to pay child support.

An American parent with a U.S. court order granting him or her custody can present that order to the court, and the court may take it into consideration, but it will not be binding in a custody proceeding in the UAE.

Visitation Rights: Non-custodial parents are guaranteed visitation rights, but may have to seek approval from the appropriate authorities. In some cases the custodial parent and family have been very open and accommodating in facilitating the right of the non-custodial parent to visit and maintain contact with the child, but in other cases the custodial parent and family have not been so accommodating.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under UAE law. Children of UAE fathers automatically acquire UAE citizenship at birth, regardless of where the child was born. In certain circumstances, UAE mothers can also transmit citizenship. UAE citizens must enter and exit the country on UAE passports.

Travel Restrictions: Exit visas are not required to leave the UAE. However, all persons exiting the country must exit on the passport that shows proof of the person's legal status in the UAE, meaning either their residence or entry visa. A parent can obtain a court order that places a travel ban on a child, and this ban will be enforced at all the airports in the country. If a parent attempts to leave with a child who has been placed under a travel ban, this could potentially lead to new legal issues concerning the custody of the child.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



UNITED KINGDOM

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 243,000 sq. km. (93,000 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Oregon.

Cities: Capital—London (metropolitan pop. about 7.2 million). Other cities—Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool, Bradford, Manchester, Edinburgh, Bristol, Belfast.

Terrain: 30% arable, 50% meadow and pasture, 12% waste or urban, 7% forested, 1% inland water.

Land use: 25% arable, 46% meadows and pastures, 10% forests and woodland, 19% other.

Climate: Generally mild and temperate; weather is subject to frequent changes but to few extremes of temperature.

People

Nationality: Noun—Briton(s). Adjective—British.

Population: (2008 est.) 60.9 million.

Annual population growth rate: (2007 est.) 0.276%.

Ethnic groups: British, Irish, West Indian, South Asian.

Religions: Church of England (Anglican), Roman Catholic, Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), Muslim.

Languages: English, Welsh, Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic.

Education: Years compulsory—12. Attendance—nearly 100%. Literacy—99%.

Health: Infant mortality rate: (2008 est.)—4.93/1,000. Life expectancy (2008 est.)—males 76.37 years; females 81.46 years; total 78.85 years.

Work force: (2008, 29.59 million) Services—80.4%; industry—18.2%; agriculture—1.4%.

Government

Type: Constitutional monarchy.

Constitution: Unwritten; partly statutes, partly common law and practice.

Government branches: Executive—monarch (head of state), prime minister (head of government), cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Parliament: House of Commons, House of Lords; Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly, and Northern Ireland Assembly. Judicial—magistrates' courts, county courts, high courts, appellate courts, House of Lords.

Political subdivisions: Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland (municipalities, counties, and parliamentary constituencies).

Political parties: Great Britain—Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrats; also, in Scotland—Scottish National Party. Wales—Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales). Northern Ireland—Ulster Unionist Party, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Fein, Alliance Party, and other smaller parties.

Suffrage: British subjects and citizens of other Commonwealth countries and the Irish Republic resident in the U.K., at 18.

Economy

GDP: (at current market prices, 2007 est.) $2.15 trillion.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.9%.

Per capita GDP: (2007 est.) $35,300.

Natural resources: Coal, oil, natural gas, tin, limestone, iron ore, salt, clay, chalk, gypsum, lead, silica.

Agriculture: (1.1% of GDP) Products—cereals, oilseed, potatoes, vegetables, cattle, sheep, poultry, fish.

Industry: Types—steel, heavy engineering and metal manufacturing, textiles, motor vehicles and aircraft, construction (5.2% of GDP), electronics, chemicals.

Trade: (2007 est.) Exports of goods and services—$415.6 billion: manufactured goods, fuels, chemicals; food, beverages, tobacco. Major markets—U.S., European Union. Imports of goods and services—$595.6 billion: manufactured goods, machinery, fuels, foodstuffs. Major suppliers—U.S., European Union, China.

PEOPLE

The United Kingdom's population in 2004 surpassed 60 million—the third-largest in the European Union. Its overall population density is one of the highest in the world. Almost one-third of the population lives in England's prosperous and fertile southeast and is predominantly urban and suburban—with about 7.2 million in the capital of London, which remains the largest city in Europe. The United Kingdom's high literacy rate (99%) is attributable to universal public education introduced for the primary level in 1870 and secondary level in 1900. Education is mandatory from ages 5 through 16. About one-fifth of British students go on to post-secondary education. The Church of England and the Church of Scotland are the official churches in their respective parts of the country, but most religions found in the world are represented in the United Kingdom.

A group of islands close to continental Europe, the British Isles have been subject to many invasions and migrations, especially from Scandinavia and the continent, including Roman occupation for several centuries. Contemporary Britons are descended mainly from the varied ethnic stocks that settled there before the 11th century. The pre-Celtic, Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norse influences were blended in Britain under the Normans, Scandinavian Vikings who had lived in Northern France. Although Celtic languages persist in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, the predominant language is English, which is primarily a blend of Anglo-Saxon and Norman French.

HISTORY

The Roman invasion of Britain in 55 BC and most of Britain's subsequent incorporation into the Roman Empire stimulated development and brought more active contacts with the rest of Europe. As Rome's strength declined, the country again was exposed to invasion—including the pivotal incursions of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes in the fifth and sixth centuries AD—up to the Norman conquest in 1066. Norman rule effectively ensured Britain's safety from further intrusions; certain institutions, which remain characteristic of Britain, could develop. Among these are a political, administrative, cultural, and economic center in London; a separate but established church; a system of common law; distinctive and distinguished university education; and representative government.

Union

Both Wales and Scotland were independent kingdoms that resisted English rule. The English conquest of Wales succeeded in 1282 under Edward I, and the Statute of Rhuddlan established English rule 2 years later. To appease the Welsh, Edward's son (later Edward II), who had been born in Wales, was made Prince of Wales in 1301. The tradition of bestowing this title on the eldest son of the British Monarch continues today. An act of 1536 completed the political and administrative union of England and Wales.

While maintaining separate parliaments, England and Scotland were ruled under one crown beginning in 1603, when James VI of Scotland succeeded his cousin Elizabeth I as James I of England. In the ensuing 100 years, strong religious and political differences divided the kingdoms. Finally, in 1707, England and Scotland were unified as Great Britain, sharing a single Parliament at Westminster.

Ireland's invasion by the Anglo-Normans in 1170 led to centuries of strife. Successive English kings sought to conquer Ireland. In the early 17th century, large-scale settlement of the north from Scotland and England began. After its defeat, Ireland was subjected, with varying degrees of success, to control and regulation by Britain.

The legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland was completed on January 1, 1801, under the name of the United Kingdom. However, armed struggle for independence continued sporadically into the 20th century. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 established the Irish Free State, which subsequently left the Commonwealth and became a republic after World War II. Six northern, predominantly Protestant, Irish counties have remained part of the United Kingdom.

British Expansion and Empire

Begun initially to support William the Conqueror's (c. 1029-1087) holdings in France, Britain's policy of active involvement in continental European affairs endured for several hundred years. By the end of the 14th century, foreign trade, originally based on wool exports to Europe, had emerged as a cornerstone of national policy.

The foundations of sea power were gradually laid to protect English trade and open up new routes. Defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 firmly established England as a major sea power. Thereafter, its interests outside Europe grew steadily. Attracted by the spice trade, English mercantile interests spread first to the Far East. In search of an alternate route to the Spice Islands, John Cabot reached the North American continent in 1498. Sir Walter Raleigh organized the first, short-lived colony in Virginia in 1584, and permanent English settlement began in 1607 at Jamestown, Virginia. During the next two centuries, Britain extended its influence abroad and consolidated its political development at home.

Great Britain's industrial revolution greatly strengthened its ability to oppose Napoleonic France. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the United Kingdom was the foremost European power, and its navy ruled the seas. Peace in Europe allowed the British to focus their interests on more remote parts of the world, and, during this period, the British Empire reached its zenith. British colonial expansion reached its height largely during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901). Queen Victoria's reign witnessed the spread of British technology, commerce,



language, and government throughout the British Empire, which, at its greatest extent, encompassed roughly one-fifth to one-quarter of the world's area and population. British colonies contributed to the United Kingdom's extraordinary economic growth and strengthened its voice in world affairs. Even as the United Kingdom extended its imperial reach overseas, it continued to develop and broaden its democratic institutions at home.

20th Century

By the time of Queen Victoria's death in 1901, other nations, including the United States and Germany, had developed their own industries; the United Kingdom's comparative economic advantage had lessened, and the ambitions of its rivals had grown. The losses and destruction of World War I, the depression of the 1930s, and decades of relatively slow growth eroded the United Kingdom's preemi-

nent international position of the previous century. Britain's control over its empire loosened during the interwar period. Ireland, with the exception of six northern counties, gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1921. Nationalism became stronger in other parts of the empire, particularly in India and Egypt.

In 1926, the United Kingdom, completing a process begun a century earlier, granted Australia, Canada, and New Zealand complete autonomy within the empire. They became charter members of the British Commonwealth of Nations (now known as the Commonwealth), an informal but closely-knit association that succeeded the empire. Beginning with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, the remainder of the British Empire was almost completely dismantled. Today, most of Britain's former colonies belong to the Commonwealth, almost all of them as independent members. There are, however, 13 former British colonies—including Bermuda, Gibraltar, the Falkland Islands, and others—which have elected to continue their political links with London and are known as United Kingdom Overseas Territories.

Although often marked by economic and political nationalism, the Commonwealth offers the United Kingdom a voice in matters concerning many developing countries. In addition, the Commonwealth helps preserve many institutions deriving from British experience and models, such as parliamentary democracy, in those countries.

GOVERNMENT

The United Kingdom does not have a written constitution. The equivalent body of law is based on statute, common law, and "traditional rights." Changes may come about formally through new acts of Parliament, informally through the acceptance of new practices and usage, or by judicial precedents. Although Parliament has the theoretical power to make or repeal any law, in actual practice the weight of 700 years of tradition restrains arbitrary actions. Executive power rests nominally with the monarch but actually is exercised by a committee of ministers (cabinet) traditionally selected from among the members of the House of Commons and, to a lesser extent, the House of Lords. The prime minister is normally the leader of the largest party in the Commons, and the government is dependent on its support.

Parliament represents the entire country and can legislate for the whole or for any constituent part or combination of parts. The maximum parliamentary term is 5 years, but the prime minister may ask the monarch to dissolve Parliament and call a general election at any time. The focus of legislative power is the 646-member House of Commons, which has sole jurisdiction over finance. The House of Lords, although shorn of most of its powers, can still review, amend, or delay temporarily any bills except those relating to the budget. The House of Lords has more time than the House of Commons to pursue one of its more important functions—debating public issues. In 1999, the government removed the automatic right of hereditary peers to hold seats in the House of Lords. The current house consists of appointed life peers who hold their seats for life and 92 hereditary peers who will hold their seats only until final reforms have been agreed upon and implemented. The judiciary is independent of the legislative and executive branches but cannot review the constitutionality of legislation.

The separate identities of each of the United Kingdom's constituent parts are also reflected in their respective governmental structures. Up until the recent devolution of power to Scotland and Wales, a cabinet minister (the Secretary of State for Wales) handled Welsh affairs at the national level with the advice of a broadly representative council for Wales. Scotland maintains, as it did before union with England, different systems of law (Roman-French), education, local government, judiciary, and national church (the Church of Scotland instead of the Church of England). In addition, separate departments grouped under a Secretary of State for Scotland, who also is a cabinet member, handled most domestic matters. In late 1997, however, following approval of referenda by Scottish and Welsh voters (though only narrowly in Wales), the British Government introduced legislation to establish a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly. The first elections for the two bodies were held May 6, 1999. The Welsh Assembly opened on May 26, and the Scottish Parliament opened on July 1, 1999. The devolved legislatures have largely taken over most of the functions previously performed by the Scottish and Welsh offices.

Northern Ireland had its own Parliament and prime minister from 1921 to 1973, when the British Government imposed direct rule in order to deal with the deteriorating political and security situation. From 1973, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, based in London, was responsible for the region, including efforts to resolve the issues that lay behind the "the troubles."

By the mid-1990s, gestures toward peace encouraged by successive British governments and by President Clinton began to open the door for restored local government in Northern Ireland. An Irish Republican Army (IRA) cease-fire and nearly 2 years of multiparty negotiations, led by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, resulted in the Good Friday Agreement of April 10, 1998, which was subsequently approved by majorities in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Key elements of the agreement include devolved government, a commitment of the parties to work toward "total disarmament of all paramilitary organizations," police reform, and enhanced mechanisms to guarantee human rights and equal opportunity. The Good Friday Agreement also called for formal cooperation between the Northern Ireland institutions and the Government of the Republic of Ireland, and it established the British-Irish Council, which includes representatives of the British and Irish Governments as well as the devolved

Governments of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Devolved government was reestablished in Northern Ireland in December 1999.

The Good Friday Agreement provides for a 108-member elected Assembly, overseen by a 12-minister Executive Committee (cabinet) in which unionists and nationalists share leadership responsibility. Northern Ireland elects 18 representatives to the Westminster Parliament in London. However, the five Sinn Fein Members of Parliament (MPs), who won seats in the 2004 election, have refused to claim their seats.

Progress has been made on each of the key elements of the Good Friday Agreement. Most notably, a new police force has been instituted; the IRA has decommissioned its weapons, and the security situation in Northern Ireland has normalized. Since 2002, when the last devolved government was suspended, the British Government, with Irish and U.S. support, continued to push Northern Ireland's main parties towards a power-sharing agreement. In October 2006, intense negotiations led to the St. Andrews Agreement, which set up a Transitional Assembly, as the precursor for the return of devolved government. Parties were given until March 26, 2007 to work out arrangements for a power-sharing agreement. As part of these negotiations, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) insisted that Sinn Fein endorse policing structures, a key U.S. objective as well.

In a historic move, Sinn Fein's general membership finally agreed to support policing in late January 2007. New assembly elections were held on March 7, returning the unionist (Protestant) DUP and nationalist (Catholic) Sinn Fein again as the two largest parties. While party leaders Ian Paisley (DUP) and Gerry Adams (Sinn Fein) did not reach agreement on power-sharing in time for the March 26 deadline, they did hold a historic joint meeting that day. At the meeting, they agreed to begin a power-sharing government on May 8 with Paisley as First Minister and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein as Deputy First Minister. On May 8, 2007 Paisley and McGuinness took their oath of office in the presence of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, and a bipartisan U.S. presidential delegation headed by Special Envoy Paula Dobriansky, who was accompanied by Senator Ted Kennedy.

While most attributes of government have been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, responsibility for security and justice remains in the hands of the Parliament in Westminster. The St. Andrews Agreement envisioned devolution of policing and justice by May 2008. Other outstanding issues relate to continued paramilitary activities. While the IRA has completely decommissioned its weapons and is no longer considered a terrorist threat, a few loyalist (Protestant) paramilitary groups have thus far refused to stand down or decommission. While one large loyalist paramilitary group recently announced it has placed its weapons "out of use", it has not formally decommissioned them. There is also some concern about dissident republican groups who are believed responsible for a number of fire bombs in November 2006 around Northern Ireland.

The United States also is committed to Northern Ireland's economic development, and through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) almost $462 million was obligated to the International Fund for Ireland from 1986 to 2006. The fund provides grants and loans to businesses to improve the economy, redress inequalities of employment opportunity, and improve cross-border business and community ties.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Queen: **ELIZABETH II**
Prime Min., First Lord of the Treasury, & Minister for the Civil Service: **Gordon BROWN**
Chancellor of the Exchequer: **Alistair DARLING**
Sec. of State for Business, Enterprise, & Regulatory Reform: **John HUTTON**
Sec. of State for Children, Schools, & Families: **Ed BALLS**
Sec. of State for Communities & Local Govt.: **Hazel BLEARS**
Sec. of State for Culture, Media, & Sport: **Andy BURNHAM**
Sec. of State for Defense: **Desmond BROWNE**
Sec. of State for the Environment, Food, & Rural Affairs: **Hilary BENN**
Sec. of State for Equalities: **Harriet HARMAN**
Sec. of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs: **David MILIBAND**
Sec. of State for Health: **Alan JOHNSON**
Sec. of State for the Home Dept.: **Jacqui SMITH**
Sec. of State for Innovation, Universities, & Skills: **John DENHAM**
Sec. of State for Intl. Development: **Douglas ALEXANDER**
Sec. of State for Justice: **Jack STRAW**
Sec. of State for Northern Ireland: **Shaun WOODWARD**
Sec. of State for Scotland: **Desmond BROWNE**
Sec. of State for Transport: **Ruth KELLY**
Sec. of State for Wales: **Paul MURPHY**
Sec. of State for Work & Pensions: **James PURNELL**
Lord Chancellor: **Jack STRAW**
Leader of the House of Lords: **ASHTON, Baroness**
Pres. of Council, Leader of the House of Commons, & Chmn. of the:
Labor Party: **Harriet HARMAN**
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster & Cabinet Office Minister: **Ed MILIBAND**
Chief Sec. to the Treasury: **Yvette COOPER**
Chief Whip & Parliamentary Sec. to the Treasury: **Geoff HOON**
Governor, Bank of England: **Mervyn KING**
Ambassador to the US: **Nigel Elton SHEINWALD, Sir**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **John SAWERS, Sir**

The United Kingdom maintains an embassy in the United States at 3100 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel. 202-588-6500; fax 202-588-7870).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Tony Blair became the first Labour Prime Minister ever to win a third

consecutive term when he was re-elected on May 5, 2005. Labour has a 67-seat majority in the House of Commons. The Conservative (Tory) Party and Liberal-Democrats (LibDems) form the major opposition parties. Blair stepped down as Prime Minister in June 2007. Labour Party leader Gordon Brown succeeded him. The main British parties support a strong transatlantic link, but have become increasingly absorbed by European issues as Britain's economic and political ties to the continent grow in the post-Cold War world. Prime Minister Brown is expected to continue Blair's policy of having the United Kingdom play a leading role in Europe even as the United Kingdom maintains its strong bilateral relationship with the United States. Britain's relationship with Europe is a subject of considerable political discussion in the United Kingdom.

ECONOMY

The United Kingdom has the fifth-largest economy in the world, is the second-largest economy in the European Union, and is a major international trading power. A highly developed, diversified, market-based economy with extensive social welfare services provides most residents with a high standard of living. Unemployment and inflation levels are amongst the lowest within the European Union.

Since 1979, the British Government has privatized most state-owned companies, including British Steel, British Airways, British Telecom, British Coal, British Aerospace, and British Gas, although in some cases the government retains a "golden share" in these companies. The Labour government has continued the privatization policy of its Conservative predecessor, particularly by encouraging "public-private partnerships" (partial privatization) in such areas as the London Underground. The economy of the United Kingdom is now primarily based on private enterprise, accounting for approximately four-fifths of employment and output.

London ranks alongside New York as a leading international financial center. London's financial exports contribute greatly to the United Kingdom's balance of payments. Ratings agencies rank the United Kingdom's banking sector as one of the strongest in the world and its banks are amongst the most profitable in the G-8. It is a global leader in emissions trading and is home to the Alternative Investment Market (AIM). It is also a government priority to make London the leading center of Islamic finance.

The United Kingdom is the European Union's only significant energy exporter. It is also one of the world's largest energy consumers, and most analysts predict a shift in U.K. status from net exporter to net importer of energy by 2020, possibly sooner. Oil production in the U.K. is leveling off. While North Sea natural gas production continues to rise, gains may be offset by ever-increasing consumption. North Sea oil and gas exploration activities are shifting to smaller fields and to increments of larger, developed fields, presenting opportunities for smaller, independent energy operators to become active in North Sea production.

DEFENSE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

The United Kingdom is a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and is one of NATO's major European maritime, air, and land powers; it ranks third among NATO countries in total defense expenditure. The United Kingdom has been a member of the European Community (now European Union) since 1973. In the United Nations, the United Kingdom is a permanent member of the Security Council. The U.K. held the Presidency of the G-8 during 2005; it held the EU Presidency from July to December 2005.

The British Armed Forces are charged with protecting the United Kingdom and its overseas territories, promoting Britain's wider security interests, and supporting international peacekeeping efforts. The 37,000-member Royal Navy, which includes 4,000 Royal Marine commandos, is in charge of the United Kingdom's independent strategic nuclear arm, which consists of four Trident missile submarines. The British Army, consisting of approximately 97,900 personnel, the Royal Air Force, with 42,000 personnel, along with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, are active and regular participants in NATO and other coalition operations. Approximately 9% of the British Armed Forces is female, and 4% of British forces represent ethnic minorities.

The United Kingdom stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., and its military forces are part of the coalition force in Afghanistan. The U.K. force in Afghanistan numbered 7,700 at the end of 2007. U.K. forces are primarily based in the Helmand region, where they are on the front line in the war against continued Taliban operations. In addition, the U.K. has contributed more than £500 million to Afghan reconstruction—the second-largest donor after the U.S. The U.K. was the United States' main coalition partner in Operation Iraqi Freedom and continues to have more than 5,000 troops deployed in Iraq to help stabilize and rebuild the country. Under UN Security Council Resolution 1483, the U.K. also shared with the United States responsibility for civil administration in Iraq and was an active participant in the Coalition Provisional Authority before the handover of Iraqi sovereignty on June 28, 2004. Britain's participation in the Iraq war and its aftermath remains a domestically controversial issue.

U.S.-UNITED KINGDOM RELATIONS

The United Kingdom is one of the United States' closest allies, and British foreign policy emphasizes close coordination with the United States.

Bilateral cooperation reflects the common language, ideals, and democratic practices of the two nations. Relations were strengthened by the United Kingdom's alliance with the United States during both World Wars, and its role as a founding member of NATO, in the Korean conflict, in the Persian Gulf War, and in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The United Kingdom and the United States continually consult on foreign policy issues and global problems and share major foreign and security policy objectives.

The United Kingdom is the fifth-largest market for U.S. goods exports after Canada, Mexico, Japan, and China, and the sixth-largest supplier of U.S. imports after Canada, China, Mexico, Japan, and Germany. U.S. exports of goods and services to the United Kingdom in 2006 totaled $92 billion, while U.S. imports from the U.K. totaled $93 billion. The United States has had a trade deficit with the United Kingdom since 1998. The United Kingdom is a large source of foreign tourists in the United States. In 2007, an estimated 3.1 million U.S. residents visited the United Kingdom, while 4.5 million U.K. residents visited the United States.

The United States and the United Kingdom share the world's largest foreign direct investment partnership. U.S. investment in the United Kingdom reached $324 billion in 2005, while U.K. direct investment in the U.S. totaled $282 billion. This investment sustains more than 1 million American jobs.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LONDON (E) 24 Grosvenor Square, London, W1A 1AE United Kingdom, APO/FPO Unit 8400, FPO AE 09498-4040, [44] (20) 7499-9000, Fax +44-20-7629-9124 (ADMIN), INMARSAT Tel 881631438965 (Iridium), Workweek: 8:30 AM- 5:30 PM, M-F, Website: http://london.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Hart, Patricia
AMB OMS:	Col. Adams, Kelli
DHS/ICE:	Davis, Scott
ECO:	Tokola, Mark
FCS:	Lutter, Dorothy
FM:	Jerry D. Pifer
HRO:	Creevy, Carolyn
MGT:	Jaworski, Richard
AMB:	Tuttle, Robert H.
CG:	Caulfield, John
DCM:	Lebaron, Richard
PAO:	Walkley, Barrie
GSO:	Hoff, Michael
RSO:	Kidd, David
AFSA:	Patch, Seth
AGR:	Mcsherry, Roderick
CLO:	Sindle, Erin
DAO:	RADM Henderson, Ronald
DEA:	Travers, Bruce
EEO:	Ternus, Scott
EST:	Whittlesey, Jock
FAA:	Barks, Christopher
FMO:	Lawrence
IMO:	Bricker, Michael
IPO:	Wiemels, David
IRS:	Beck, Kathy J. (Res. In Paris)
ISO:	O'Malley, Charles
ISSO:	Ternus, Scott
LAB:	Mcnamara, John
LEGATT:	Bullock, Mark
POL:	Connelly, Maura

BELFAST (CG) Danesfort House, 223 Stranmillis Road, Belfast, NI BT95GR, APO/FPO AmConGen Belfast, Unit 8400 Box 0040, FPO AE 09498-0040, +44 (0) 28 9038 6100, Fax +44 (0) 28 9038 6150, Workweek: M-F, 8:30-17:00, Website: http://www.usembassy.org.uk/nireland/index.html.

MGT:	Robert Hommowun
POL/ECO:	Henry Bisharat
CG:	Susan M. Elliott
CON:	Rebecca Pasini

EDINBURGH (CG) 3 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BW, United Kingdom, APO/FPO PSC 801 Box E, FPO AE 09498, +44-131-556-8315, Fax +44-131-557-6023, Workweek: M-F 0830-1700, Website: http://london.usembassy.gov/scotland.

PO:	Lisa A. Vickers

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

October 9, 2008

Country Description: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is a highly developed constitutional monarchy comprised of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland. Gibraltar is a United Kingdom Overseas Territory bordering Spain and located at the southernmost tip of Europe at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. It is one of thirteen former British colonies that have elected to continue their political links with London. Tourist facilities are widely available.

Entry Requirements: A UK visa/entry clearance is not required for tourist or business visits to the United Kingdom of less than six months in duration. Visitors wishing to remain longer than one month in Gibraltar should regularize their stay with Gibraltar immigration authorities. Those planning to visit the United Kingdom for any purpose other than tourism or business, or who intend to stay longer than six months, should consult the website of the British Embassy in the United States at http://ukinusa.fco.gov.uk/en for information about current visa/entry clearance requirements. The United Kingdom has very specific definitions of tourism and business. Interns, students, prospective students, fiancés/partners, those coming to the United Kingdom to work unpaid or paid, those coming to the United Kingdom to marry, and all dependents in the preceding categories may require a visa/entry clearance prior to travel, irrespective of duration of stay. Prospective visitors should note that "unpaid work" is defined very broadly by the UK authorities to include such activities as volunteer work and performance of any kind. Those who are required to obtain a visa/entry clearance and fail to do so may be denied entry and returned to their port of origin. The U.S. Embassy cannot intervene in UK immigration matters.

In the past year, the British government has completely restructured its immigration system, tightening visa/entry clearance regulations and enforcement at its borders. All American travelers to the United Kingdom are urged to check the web site of the British Embassy in the United States

at http://ukinusa.fco.gov.uk/en or the web site of the UK Border Agency at http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/ to determine whether they must have a visa/entry clearance before traveling to the United Kingdom. Students should be especially alert to UK visa/entry clearance requirements. Under no circumstances should Americans seeking to study or work in the United Kingdom attempt to enter the country without the appropriate visa/entry clearance from a British Consulate in the United States. If you do so, you are likely to be detained by UK immigration officials at the port of entry and held in an immigration detention facility until you can be returned to the United States. Again, the U.S. Embassy cannot intervene in UK immigration matters.

In addition to the British Embassy web site at http://ukinusa.fco.gov.uk/en, those seeking current UK visa/entry clearance information may also contact UK consular offices in the United States via their premium rate telephone service at 1-900-656-5000 (cost $3/minute) or 1-212-796-5773 ($12 flat fee). There is also a no-fee website for visa information at www.visainfoservices.com.

Safety and Security: The United Kingdom is politically stable, with a modern infrastructure, but shares with the rest of the world an increased threat of terrorist incidents of international origin, as well as the potential, though significantly diminished in recent years, for isolated violence related to the political situation in Northern Ireland (a part of the United Kingdom).

Like the United States, the United Kingdom shares its national threat levels with the general public to keep everyone informed and explain the context for the various increased security measures that may be encountered. UK threat levels are determined by the UK Home Office and are posted on its web site at http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/security/current-threat-level.

Information from the UK Security Service, commonly known as MI5, about the reasons for the increased threat level and actions the public can take is available on the MI5 web site at http://www.mi5.gov.uk. American citizens are advised to check with the UK Department for Transport at http://www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/airtravel/airportsecurity regarding the latest security updates and carry-on luggage restrictions.

The British Home Secretary has urged UK citizens to be alert and vigilant by, for example, keeping an eye out for suspect packages or people acting suspiciously at subway (called the Tube or Underground) and train stations, as well as at airports, and reporting anything suspicious to the appropriate authorities. Americans are reminded to remain vigilant with regard to their personal security and to exercise caution. For more information about UK public safety initiatives, consult the UK Civil Contingencies Secretariat web site at http://www.ukresilience.gov.uk.

The political situation in Northern Ireland has improved dramatically. The potential remains, however, for sporadic incidents of street violence and/or sectarian confrontation. American citizens traveling to Northern Ireland should therefore remain alert to their surroundings and should be aware that if they choose to visit potential flashpoints or attend parades, sporadic violence remains a possibility. Tensions may be heightened during the summer marching season (April to August), particularly during the month of July (around the July 12th public holiday).

The phone number for police/fire/ambulance emergency services—the equivalent of 911 in the United States—is 999 in the United Kingdom and 112 in Gibraltar. This number should also be used for warnings about possible bombs or other immediate threats. The UK Anti-Terrorist Hotline, at 0800-789-321, is for tips and confidential information about possible terrorist activity.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Recent communications from U.S. Embassy London to the local American citizen community, called Warden Messages, can be found on the U.S. Embassy's American Citizens' Services web site at http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/index.html.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The Kingdom and Gibraltar benefit from generally low crime rates, which decreased slightly in 2007 in significant categories, including violent crime. The crime situation in the United Kingdom is similar to that in the United States: typical incidents include pick pocketing; muggings; "snatch and grab" thefts of mobile phones, watches and jewelry; and thefts of unattended bags, especially at airports and from cars parked at restaurants, hotels, and resorts. Pickpockets target tourists, especially at historic sites and restaurants, and on buses, trains, and the London subway (known as the Tube or Underground). Thieves often target unattended cars parked at tourist sites and roadside restaurants, looking for laptop computers and handheld electronic equipment, especially global positioning satellite equipment. Walking in isolated areas, including public parks, especially after dark, should be avoided, as these are advantageous venues for muggers and thieves. At night or when there is little foot traffic, travelers should be especially careful using the underground pedestrian tunnels. As a general rule, either walk the extra distance to use a surface crossing or wait until there are other adult pedestrians entering the tunnel.

In London, travelers should use only licensed Black Cabs or car services recommended by their hotel or tour operator. Unlicensed taxis or private cars posing as taxis may offer low fares, but are often uninsured and may have unlicensed drivers. In some instances, travelers have been robbed

and raped while using these cars. You can access 7,000 licensed Black Cabs using just one telephone number: 087-1871-8710. This taxi booking service combines all six of London's radio taxi circuits, allowing you to telephone 24 hours a day if you need a cab. Alternatively, to find a licensed minicab, text HOME to 60835 on your mobile phone to get the telephone number to two licensed minicab companies in the area. If you know in advance when you will be leaving for home, you can prebook your return journey. The Safe Travel at Night partnership among the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London, and the Mayor of London maintains a web site with additional information at http://www.cabwise.com.

Travelers should not leave drinks unattended in bars and nightclubs. There have been some instances of drinks being spiked with illegal substances, leading to incidents of robbery and rape.

Americans should take steps to ensure the safety of their U.S. passports. Visitors in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Gibraltar are not expected to produce identity documents for police authorities and thus may secure their passports in hotel safes or residences. Abundant ATMs that link to U.S. banking networks offer an optimal rate of exchange, and they preclude the need to carry a passport to cash travelers' checks. Travelers should be aware that U.S. banks might charge a higher processing fee for withdrawals made overseas. Common-sense personal security measures taken in the United States when using ATMs should also be followed in the United Kingdom. ATM fraud in the United Kingdom is becoming more sophisticated, incorporating technologies to surreptitiously record customer ATM card and PIN information. Travelers should avoid using ATMs that look in any way temporary in structure or location, or are located in isolated areas. Travelers should be aware that in busy public areas, thieves use distraction techniques, such as waiting until the PIN number has been entered and then pointing to money on the ground, or attempting to hand out a free newspaper. When the ATM user is distracted, a colleague will quickly withdraw cash and leave. If distracted in any way, travelers should press the cancel transaction button immediately and collect their card before speaking to the person who has distracted them. If the person's motives appear suspicious, travelers should not challenge them but remember the details and report the matter to police as soon as possible. In addition, travelers should not use the ATM if there is anything stuck to the machine or if it looks unusual in any way. If the machine does not return the card, report the incident to the issuing bank immediately.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate at the opening of the next business day. The U.S. Embassy or Consulate only issues replacement passports during regular business hours. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, report it to local police. The nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate will also be able to assist by helping you to find appropriate medical care, contacting family members or friends, and explaining how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Visit the Victim Support web site, maintained by an independent UK charity to help people cope with the effects of crime: http://www.victimsupport.org.uk.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: While medical services are widely available, free care under the National Health System is allowed only for UK residents and certain EU nationals. Tourists and short-term visitors will be charged for medical treatment in the United Kingdom. Charges may be significantly higher than those assessed in the United States. Hiking in higher elevations can be treacherous. Several people die each year while hiking, particularly in Scotland, often due to sudden changes in weather. Visitors, including experienced hikers, are encouraged to discuss intended routes with local residents familiar with the area, and to adhere closely to recommendations.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance companies prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. If your medical insurance policy does not provide overseas coverage, you may want to purchase a short-term policy for your trip. The Department of State provides an online list of travel insurance companies that can provide the additional insurance needed for the duration of one's trip abroad.

Remember also that most medical care facilities and medical care providers in the United Kingdom do not accept insurance subscription as a primary source of payment. Rather, the beneficiary is expected to pay for the service and then seek reimbursement from the insurance company. This may require an upfront payment in the $10,000 to $20,000 range.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: UK penalties for driving under the influence of even minimal amounts of alcohol or drugs are stiff and often result in prison sentences. In contrast to U.S. and continental European traffic, which moves on the right side of the road, UK traffic moves on the left. The maximum

speed limit on highways/motorways in the United Kingdom is 70 mph. Motorways generally have a hard shoulder (breakdown lane) on the far left, defined by a solid white line. It is illegal to stop or park on a hard shoulder unless it is an emergency. In such cases, you should activate your hazard lights, get out of your vehicle, and go onto an embankment for safety.

Emergency call boxes (orange telephone booths with SOS printed on them) may be found at half-mile intervals along the motorway. White and blue poles placed every 100 yards along the motorway point in the direction of the nearest call box. Emergency call boxes dial directly to a motorway center. It is best to use these phones rather than a personal cell phone, because motorway center personnel will immediately know the location of a call received from an emergency call box.

Roadside towing services may cost approximately £125 (as of 10/08, approximately $225). However, membership fees of automotive associations such as the RAC (Royal Automobile Club) or AA (Automobile Association) often include free roadside towing service.

Visitors uncomfortable with or intimidated by the prospect of driving on the left-hand side of the road may wish to avail themselves of the United Kingdom's extensive bus, rail, and air transport networks. Roads in the United Kingdom are generally excellent but are narrow and often congested in urban areas. If you plan to drive while in the United Kingdom, you may wish to obtain a copy of the Highway Code, available at http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/index.htm.

Travelers intending to rent cars in the United Kingdom should make sure that they are adequately insured. U.S. auto insurance is not always valid outside the United States, and travelers may wish to purchase supplemental insurance, which is generally available from most major rental agents. A congestion charge of £8 (as of 10/08, approximately $15) is imposed on all cars entering much of central London Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Information on the congestion charge can be found at http://www.tfl.gov.uk/roadusers/congestioncharging.

Public transport in the United Kingdom is excellent and extensive. However, poor track conditions may have contributed to train derailments, resulting in some fatalities. Repairs are under way and the overall safety record is excellent. Information on disruptions to London transportation services can be found at http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/livetravelnews/realtime/tube/default.html and information about the status of National Rail Services can be found at http://nrekb.nationalrail.co.uk/service_disruptions/today.html. Many U.S. pedestrians are injured, some fatally, every year in the United Kingdom because they forget that oncoming traffic approaches from the opposite direction than in the United States. Extra care should be taken when crossing streets; remember to remain alert and look both ways before stepping into the street. Driving in Gibraltar is on the right-hand side of the road, as in the United States and continental Europe. Persons traveling overland between Gibraltar and Spain may experience long delays in clearing Spanish border controls.

For specific information concerning United Kingdom driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, refer to the United Kingdom's Department of Environment and Transport web site at www.dft.gov.uk, the Driving Standards Agency web site at http://www.dsa.gov.uk or consult the U.S. Embassy in London's web site at http://london.usembassy.gov.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the United Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of the UK's air carrier operations. For further information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The legal drinking age in the United Kingdom is generally lower than that in the United States, and social drinking in pubs is often seen as a routine aspect of British life. Parents, organizers of school trips, and young travelers should be aware of the impact that this environment may have when combined with the sense of adventure that comes with being abroad.

The United Kingdom has strict gun-control laws, and importing firearms is extremely complicated. Travelers should consider leaving all firearms in the United States. Restrictions exist on the type and number of weapons that may be possessed by an individual. All handguns, such as pistols and revolvers, are prohibited, with very few exceptions. Licensing of firearms in the United Kingdom is controlled by the police.

Applicants for a license must be prepared to show "good reason" why they require each weapon. Applicants must also provide a copy of their U.S. gun license, a letter of good conduct from their local U.S. police station, and a letter detailing any previous training, hunting, or shooting experience. Background checks will also be carried out. Additional information on applying for a firearm certificate and/or shotgun certificate can be found on the Metropolitan Police Firearms Enquiry Teams web site at http://www.met.police.uk.

A number of Americans are lured to the United Kingdom each year in the belief that they have won a lottery or have inherited from the estate from a long-lost relative. Americans may also be contacted by persons they have "met" over the Internet who now need funds urgently to pay for hospital treatment, hotel bills, taxes, or airline security fees. Invariably, the person contacted is the victim of fraud.

Any unsolicited invitations to travel to the United Kingdom to collect winnings or an inheritance should be viewed with skepticism. Also, there are no licenses or fees required when transiting a UK airport, nor is emergency medical treatment withheld

pending payment of fees. Please see our information on International Financial Scams.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Persons violating British law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the UK are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Many pocket knives and other blades, and mace or pepper spray canisters, although legal in the United States, are illegal in the United Kingdom and will result in arrest and confiscation if detected. A UK Metropolitan Police guide to items that are prohibited as offensive weapons is available at http://www.met.police.uk/youngpeople/guns.htm.

A UK Customs Guide, detailing which items visitors are prohibited from bringing into the United Kingdom, is available at http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk. Air travelers to and from the United Kingdom should be aware that penalties against alcohol-related and other in-flight crimes ("air rage") are stiff and are being enforced with prison sentences. Please also see our information on customs regulations that pertain when returning to the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration And Embassy And Consulate Locations: Americans living or traveling in the United Kingdom are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the United Kingdom.

By registering, Americans make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency, and to relay updated information on travel and security within the United Kingdom. The Embassy and Consulates regularly send security and other information via email to Americans who have registered. As noted above, recent communications from U.S. Embassy London to the local American citizen community, called Warden Messages, can be found on the embassy's web site.

Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The Consular Section also disseminates a newsletter every month. Those wishing to subscribe to the monthly consular newsletter in London should send a request by email to SCSLondon@state.gov.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 24 Grosvenor Square, London W1A 1AE; telephone: in country 020-7499-9000; from the U.S. 011-44-20-7499-9000 (24 hours); Consular Section fax: in country 020-7495-5012; from the U.S. 011-44-20-7495-5012, and on the Internet at http://london.usembassy.gov. The U.S. Consulate General in Edinburgh, Scotland, is located at 3 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BW; Telephone: in country 0131-556-8315, from the U.S. 011-44-131-556-8315. After hours: in country 01224-857097, from the U.S. 011-44-1224-857097. Fax: in country 0131-557-6023; from the U.S. 011-44-131-557-6023.

Information on the Consulate General is included on the Embassy's web site at http://london.usembassy.gov/scotland. The U.S. Consulate General in Belfast, Northern Ireland, is located at Danesfort House, 228 Stranmillis Road, Belfast BT9 5GR; Telephone: in country 028-9038-6100; from the U.S. 011-44-28-9038-6100. Fax: in country 028-9068-1301; from the U.S. 011-44-28-9068-1301. Information on the Consulate General is included on the Embassy's web site at: http://london.usembassy.gov/nireland.

There is no U.S. consular representation in Gibraltar. Passport questions should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, located at Serrano 75, Madrid, Spain; telephone (34)(91) 587-2200, and fax (34)(91) 587-2303. The web site is http://madrid.usembassy.gov. All other inquiries should be directed to the U.S. Embassy in London.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding.

Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority: The Department for Education and Skills is responsible for children's social services, including adoption policy. While the following address is the Central Authority for the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, each adoption case will be handled by the relevant social services department in the area where the adoptive

child is located. Anyone who wishes to contact the Department of Education & Skills's Adoption Team should write to the following:

Area 47
Looked After Children Division
CAXTON HOUSE
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA
Or e-mail: info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Anyone over 21, whether married or single, can legally adopt a child. The United Kingdom does not have a statutory upper age limit. However, each local authority has the power to determine if a prospective adoptive parent is above its acceptable age limit on a case-by-case basis. Married couples must adopt jointly unless one partner cannot be found, is incapable of making an application, or if a separation is likely to be permanent. Unmarried couples may not adopt jointly although one partner in that couple may adopt as a single parent.

Residency Requirements: Residency requirements are set by the local Social Services Department on a case-by-case basis.

Time Frame: In view of the above, there is no standard time frame.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Within the UK all local councils have a statutory responsibility to provide an adoption service. In addition to the local council, there are a number of voluntary adoption agencies who also provide an adoption service.

Adoption Fees: There are no specific costs set by the British government.

Adoption Procedures: Please see the Department for Education and Skills website (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption) for detailed information on preparing of an intercountry adoption from third countries. The adoption of such children will be governed by the child's country of origin.

Required Documents: In general, adoptive parents must provide the following:

- A detailed home study completed by an approved adoption agency;
- Medical clearance;
- Full police background check.

For more information, please see http://www.dfes.gov.uk/adoption.

The British Embassy
3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Ph: (202) 588-7800
http://www.britainusa.com

The United Kingdom has Consulates-General in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Orlando, San Francisco and Seattle.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children,* as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions.*

Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
55/56 Upper Brook Street
London W1A 2LQ
Phone: 020-7499-9000
Fax: 020-7495-5012

The United States also has Consulates General in Belfast (Northern Ireland) and Edinburgh (Scotland). These are located at:

U.S. Consulate General, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Danesfort House
223 Stranmillis Road
Belfast BT9 5GR
Tel: [44] (0)28 9038 6100
Fax: [44] (0)28 9068 1301

Consulate General, Edinburgh, Scotland
3 Regent Terrace
Edinburgh
Scotland, EH7 5BW
Tel: [44] (0)131 556-8315
Fax: [44] (0)131 557-6023

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in the United Kingdom may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in the London. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction came into force between the United States and the United Kingdom on July 1, 1988. Therefore, Hague Convention provisions for return would apply to children abducted or retained after July 1, 1988.

Parents and legal guardians of children taken to the United Kingdom prior to July 1, 1988, may still submit applications for access to the child under the Hague Convention in some cases. The United Kingdom has three Central Authorities: England and Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland.

The Central Authority
for England and Wales
The Child Abduction Unit
Official Solicitors Department
81 Chancery Lane—Fourth floor
London WC2A 1DD England
Telephone: 011 [44] (171) 911-7047
Fax: 011 [44] (171) 911-7248

The Central Authority
for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Court Service
Windsor House
9-15 Belford Street
Belfast BT2 7LT Northern Ireland
Telephone: 011 [44] (232) 328-594

The Central Authority for Scotland
Office of the Secretary of State
for Scotland
Scottish Courts Administration
Hayweight House
23 Lauriston Street
Edinburgh EH3 9DQ Scotland
Telephone: 011 [44] (131) 229-9200
Fax: 011 [44] (131) 221-6894

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov.

You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.



UNITED STATES

January 2009

Official Name:

United States of America

Editor's Note: This entry is an abstract of key facts regarding the United States. This information was provided by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency which indicates data was developed from public sources. The U.S. Department of State is the source for Background Notes on most other nations in this Yearbook.

PROFILE

Britain's American colonies broke with the mother country in 1776 and were recognized as the new nation of the United States of America following the Treaty of Paris in 1783. During the 19th and 20th centuries, 37 new states were added to the original 13 as the nation expanded across the North American continent and acquired a number of overseas possessions. The two most traumatic experiences in the nation's history were the Civil War (1861-65) and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Buoyed by victories in World Wars I and II and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the US remains the world's most powerful nation state. The economy is marked by steady growth, low unemployment and inflation, and rapid advances in technology.

GEOGRAPHY

Location: North America, bordering both the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Pacific Ocean, between Canada and Mexico

Geographic coordinates: 38 00 N, 97 00 W

Area: *total:* 9,826,630 sq km; *land:* 9,161,923 sq km; *water:* 664,707 sq km; *Note:* includes only the 50 states and District of Columbia

Area—comparative: about half the size of Russia; about three-tenths the size of Africa; about half the size of South America (or slightly larger than Brazil); slightly larger than China; more than twice the size of the European Union

Land boundaries: *total:* 12,034 km; *border countries:* Canada 8,893 km (including 2,477 km with Alaska), Mexico 3,141 km; *Note:* US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba is leased by the US and is part of Cuba; the base boundary is 28 km

Coastline: 19,924 km

Maritime claims: *territorial sea:* 12 nm; *contiguous zone:* 24 nm; *exclusive economic zone:* 200 nm; *continental shelf:* not specified

Climate: mostly temperate, but tropical in Hawaii and Florida, arctic in Alaska, semiarid in the great plains west of the Mississippi River, and arid in the Great Basin of the southwest; low winter temperatures in the northwest are ameliorated occasionally in January and February by warm chinook winds from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains

Terrain: vast central plain, mountains in west, hills and low mountains in east; rugged mountains and broad river valleys in Alaska; rugged, volcanic topography in Hawaii

Elevation extremes: *lowest point:* Death Valley -86 m; *highest point:* Mount McKinley 6,198 m

Natural resources: coal, copper, lead, molybdenum, phosphates, uranium, bauxite, gold, iron, mercury, nickel, potash, silver, tungsten, zinc, petroleum, natural gas, timber. The US has the world's largest coal reserves with 491 billion short tons accounting for 27% of the world's total

Land use: *arable land:* 18.01%; *permanent crops:* 0.21%; *other:* 81.78% (2005); *Irrigated land:* 223,850 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources: 3,069 cu km (1985)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural): *Total:* 477 cu km/yr (13%/46%/41%); *Per capita:* 1,600 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards: tsunamis, volcanoes, and earthquake activity around Pacific Basin; hurricanes along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts; tornadoes in the midwest and southeast; mud slides in California; forest fires in the west; flooding; permafrost in northern Alaska, a major impediment to development

Environment—current issues: air pollution resulting in acid rain in both the US and Canada; the US is the largest single emitter of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels; water pollution from runoff of pesticides and fertilizers; limited natural fresh water resources in much of the western part of the country require careful management; desertification

Environment—international agreements: *party to:* Air Pollution, Air Pollution-Nitrogen Oxides, Antarctic-Environmental Protocol, Antarctic-Marine Living Resources, Antarctic Seals, Antarctic Treaty, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Marine Dumping, Marine Life Conservation, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands, Whaling. *signed, but not ratified:* Air Pollution-Persistent Organic Pollutants, Air Pollution-Volatile Organic Compounds, Biodiversity, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Hazardous Wastes

Geography—Note: world's third-largest country by size (after Russia and Canada) and by population (after China and India); Mt. McKinley is highest point in North America and Death Valley the lowest point on the continent

PEOPLE

Population: 303,824,640 (July 2008 est.)

Age structure: *0-14 years:* 20.1% (male 31,257,108/female 29,889,645); *15-64 years:* 67.1% (male 101,825,901/female 102,161,823); *65 years and over:* 12.7% (male 16,263,255/female 22,426,914) (2008 est.)

Median age: *total:* 36.7 years; *male:* 35.4 years; *female:* 38.1 years (2008 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.883% (2008 est.)

Birth rate: 14.18 births/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Death rate: 8.27 deaths/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Net migration rate: 2.92 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Sex ratio: *at birth:* 1.05 male(s)/female; *under 15 years:* 1.05 male(s)/female; *15-64 years:* 1 male(s)/female; *65 years and over:* 0.72 male(s)/female; *total population:* 0.97 male(s)/female (2008 est.)

Infant mortality rate: *total:* 6.3 deaths/1,000 live births; *male:* 6.95 deaths/1,000 live births; *female:* 5.62 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.)

Life expectancy at birth: total population: 78.14 years; *male:* 75.29 years; *female:* 81.13 years (2008 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.1 children born/woman (2008 est.)

HIV/AIDS—adult prevalence rate: 0.6% (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS—people living with HIV/AIDS: 950,000 (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS—deaths: 17,011 (2005 est.)

Nationality: noun: American(s); adjective: American

Ethnic groups: white 79.96%, black 12.85%, Asian 4.43%, Amerindian and Alaska native 0.97%, native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander 0.18%, two or more races 1.61% (July 2007 estimate). *note:* a separate listing for Hispanic is not included because the US Census Bureau considers Hispanic to mean a person of Latin American descent (including persons of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin) living in the US who may be of any race or ethnic group (white, black, Asian, etc.); about 15.1% of the total US population is Hispanic

Religions: Protestant 51.3%, Roman Catholic 23.9%, Mormon 1.7%, other Christian 1.6%, Jewish 1.7%, Buddhist 0.7%, Muslim 0.6%, other or unspecified 2.5%, unaffiliated 12.1%, none 4% (2007 est.)

Languages: English 82.1%, Spanish 10.7%, other Indo-European 3.8%, Asian and Pacific island 2.7%, other 0.7% (2000 census); *Note:* Hawaiian is an official language in the state of Hawaii

Literacy: definition: age 15 and over can read and write; total population: 99%; *male:* 99%; *female:* 99% (2003 est.)

School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education): *total:* 16 years; *male:* 15 years; *female:* 16 years (2006)

Education expenditures: 5.3% of GDP (2005)

GOVERNMENT

Country name: *conventional long form:* United States of America; *conventional short form:* United States; *abbreviation:* US or USA

Government type: Constitution-based federal republic; strong democratic tradition

Cities: *Capital name:* Washington, DC; *geographic coordinates:* 38 53 N, 77 02 W; *time difference:* UTC-5 (during Standard Time); *daylight saving time:* +1hr, begins second Sunday in March; ends first Sunday in November; *Note:* the US is divided into six time zones

Political subdivisions: 50 states and 1 district*; Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia*, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Dependent areas: American Samoa, Baker Island, Guam, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Midway Islands, Navassa Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palmyra Atoll, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Wake Island. *Note:* from 18 July 1947 until 1 October 1994, the US administered the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands; it entered into a political relationship with all four political units: the Northern Mariana Islands is a commonwealth in political union with the US (effective 3 November 1986); the Republic of the Marshall Islands signed a Compact of Free Association with the US (effective 21 October 1986); the Federated States of Micronesia signed a Compact of Free Association with the US (effective 3 November 1986); Palau concluded a Compact of Free Association with the US (effective 1 October 1994)

Independence: 4 July 1776 (from Great Britain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 4 July (1776)

Constitution: 17 September 1787, effective 4 March 1789



Legal system: federal court system based on English common law; each state has its own unique legal system, of which all but one (Louisiana, which is still influenced by the Napoleonic Code) is based on English common law; judicial review of legislative acts; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Executive branch: *chief of state:* President Barack H. OBAMA (since 20 January 2009); Vice President Joseph R. BIDEN (since 20 January 2009); note—the president is both the chief of state and head of government; head of government: President Barack H. OBAMA (since 20 January 2009); Vice President Joseph R. BIDEN (since 20 January 2009); *cabinet:* Cabinet appointed by the president with Senate approval; *elections:* president and vice president elected on the same ticket by a college of representatives who are elected directly from each state; president and vice president serve four-year terms (eligible for a second term); election last held 4 November 2008 (next to be held in November

2012); *election results:* Barack H. OBAMA elected president; percent of popular vote - Barack H. OBAMA 52.4%, John MCCAIN 46.3%, other 1.3%

Legislative branch: bicameral Congress consists of the Senate (100 seats, 2 members are elected from each state by popular vote to serve six-year terms; one-third are elected every two years) and the House of Representatives (435 seats; members are directly elected by popular vote to serve two-year terms); *election results:* Senate 110th Congress (2007–2009); seats by party—Democratic Party 49, Republican Party 49, independent 2; House of Representatives—percent of vote by party—NA; seats by party—Democratic Party 233, Republican Party 202

Judicial branch: Supreme Court (nine justices; nominated by the president and confirmed with the advice and consent of the Senate; appointed to serve for life); United States Courts of Appeal; United States District Courts; State and County Courts

Political parties and leaders: Democratic Party [Howard DEAN]; Green Party; Libertarian Party [William (Bill) REDPATH]; Republican Party [Robert M. (Mike) DUNCAN]

Political pressure groups and leaders: environmentalists; business groups; labor unions; churches; ethnic groups; political action committees or PAC; health groups; education groups; cuvuc griyos; youth groups; transportation groups; agricultural groups; veterans groups; women's groups; reform lobbies

International organization participation: ADB (nonregional members), AfDB, ANZUS, APEC, Arctic Council, ARF, ASEAN (dialogue partner), Australia Group, BIS, BSEC (observer), CBSS (observer), CE (observer), CERN (observer), CP, EAPC, EBRD, FAO, G-5, G-7, G-8, G-10, IADB, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICCt (signatory), ICRM, IDA, IEA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, MIGA, MINUSTAH, NAFTA, NATO, NEA, NSG, OAS, OECD, OPCW, OSCE, Paris Club, PCA, PIF (partner), SAARC (observer), SECI (observer), SPC, UN, UN Security Council, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNITAR, UNMEE, UNMIL, UNOMIG, UNRWA, UNTSO, UPU, WCL, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, ZC

Flag description: 13 equal horizontal stripes of red (top and bottom) alternating with white; there is a blue rectangle in the upper hoist-side corner bearing 50 small, white, five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars; the 50 stars represent the 50 states, the 13 stripes represent the 13 original colonies; known as Old Glory; the design and colors have been the basis for a number of other flags, including Chile, Liberia, Malaysia, and Puerto Rico

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: January 2009

President: **Obama,** Barack
Vice President: **Biden,** Joeseph

Presidential Cabinet

(in order of succession to the presidency)

Secretary of State: **Clinton,** Hillary R.
Secretary of the Treasury: **Geithner,** Timothy F.
Secretary of Defense: **Gates,** Robert M.
Attorney General: **Holder,** Eric H.
Secretary of the Interior: **Salazar,** Ken L.
Secretary of Agriculture: **Vilsack,** Tom J. (designate)
Secretary of Commerce:
Secretary of Labor: **Solis,** Hilda L.
Secretary of Health and Human Services:
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development: **Donovan,** Shaun
Secretary of Transportation: **LaHood,** Ray
Secretary of Energy: **Chu,** Steven
Secretary of Education: **Duncan,** Arne
Secretary of Veterans Affairs: **Shinseki,** Eric K., Ret. Gen.
Secretary of Homeland Security: **Napolitano,** Janet

Cabinet Rank Members

Chief of Staff: **Emanuel,** Rahm
Environmental Protection Agency: **Jackson,** Lisa
Office of National Drug Control Policy: **Jurith,** Edward (acting)
United States Trade Representative: **Kirk,** Ron (nominee)
Office of Management and Budget: **Orszag,** Peter

Other Members of the Executive Office of the President

Council of Economic Advisors: **Romer,** Christina
Council on Environmental Quality: **Sutley**, Nancy
Domestic Policy Council: **Barnes,** Melody
National Economic Council: **Summers,** Lawrence H.
National Security Council: **Obama,** Barack
National Security Advisor: **Jones,** James, Ret. Marine Gen.
Office of National AIDS Policy:
Office of Science and Technology Policy: **Wackler,** Ted (acting); **Holdren,** John (nominee)
President's Intelligence Advisory Board and Intelligence Oversight Board:
Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board:
White House Military Office: **Caldera,** Louis
White House Counsel: **Craig,** Gregory
Senior Advisor: **Axelrod,** David

Other Offices

Speaker of the House: **Pelosi,** Nancy
House Majority Leader: **Hoyer,** Steny
House Republican Leader: **Boehner,** John
President of the Senate: **Biden,** Joseph
Senate Majority Leader: **Reid,** Harry
Senate Minority Leader: **McConnell,** Mitch
Federal Reserve Board Chairman: **Bernanke,** Ben S.
Central Intelligence Agency Director: **Panetta,** Leon
Federal Bureau of Investigation Director: **Mueller,** Robert S., III
Chief Justice of the Supreme Court: **Roberts,** John G., Jr.

ECONOMY

Overview

The US has the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world, with a per capita GDP of $46,000. In this market-oriented economy, private individuals and business firms make most of the decisions, and the federal and state governments buy needed goods and services predominantly in the private marketplace.

US business firms enjoy greater flexibility than their counterparts in Western Europe and Japan in decisions to expand capital plant, to lay

off surplus workers, and to develop new products. At the same time, they face higher barriers to enter their rivals' home markets than foreign firms face entering US markets.

US firms are at or near the forefront in technological advances, especially in computers and in medical, aerospace, and military equipment; their advantage has narrowed since the end of World War II. The onrush of technology largely explains the gradual development of a "two-tier labor market" in which those at the bottom lack the education and the professional/technical skills of those at the top and, more and more, fail to get comparable pay raises, health insurance coverage, and other benefits. Since 1975, practically all the gains in household income have gone to the top 20% of households.

The response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 showed the remarkable resilience of the economy. The war in March-April 2003 between a US-led coalition and Iraq, and the subsequent occupation of Iraq, required major shifts in national resources to the military. The rise in GDP in 2004-07 was undergirded by substantial gains in labor productivity.

Hurricane Katrina caused extensive damage in the Gulf Coast region in August 2005, but had a small impact on overall GDP growth for the year. Soaring oil prices in 2005-2007 threatened inflation and unemployment, yet the economy continued to grow through year-end 2007. Imported oil accounts for about two-thirds of US consumption. Long-term problems include inadequate investment in economic infrastructure, rapidly rising medical and pension costs of an aging population, sizable trade and budget deficits, and stagnation of family income in the lower economic groups. The merchandise trade deficit reached a record $847 billion in 2007. Together, these problems caused a marked reduction in the value and status of the dollar worldwide in 2007.

GDP (purchasing power parity): $13.78 trillion (2007 est.)

GDP (official exchange rate): $13.84 trillion (2007 est.)

GDP—real growth rate: 2% (2007 est.)

GDP—per capita (PPP): $45,000 (2007 est.)

GDP—composition by sector: agriculture: 1.2%; industry: 19.8%; services: 79% (2007 est.)

Labor force: 153.1 million (includes unemployed) (2007 est.)

Labor force—by occupation: farming, forestry, and fishing 0.6%, manufacturing, extraction, transportation, and crafts 22.6%, managerial, professional, and technical 35.5%, sales and office 24.8%, other services 16.5%/ *Note:* figures exclude the unemployed (2007)

Unemployment rate: 4.6% (2007 est.)

Population below poverty line: 12% (2004 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share: lowest 10%: 2%; highest 10%: 30% (2007 est.)

Distribution of family income—Gini index: 45 (2007)

Investment (gross fixed): 15.5% of GDP (2007 est.)

Budget: revenues: $2.568 trillion; expenditures: $2.73 trillion (2007 est.)

Fiscal year: 1 October—30 September

Public debt: 60.8% of GDP (2007 est.)

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 2.9% (2007 est.)

Central bank discount rate: 4.83% (31 December 2007)

Commercial bank prime lending rate: 8.05% (31 December 2007)

Stock of money: $1.374 trillion (31 December 2007)

Stock of quasi money: $10.1 trillion (31 December 2007)

Stock of domestic credit: $14.15 trillion (31 December 2007)

Agriculture—products: wheat, corn, other grains, fruits, vegetables, cotton; beef, pork, poultry, dairy products; fish; forest products

Industries: leading industrial power in the world, highly diversified and technologically advanced; petroleum, steel, motor vehicles, aerospace, telecommunications, chemicals, electronics, food processing, consumer goods, lumber, mining

Industrial production growth rate: -1.7% (2007 est.)

Electricity—production: 4.167 trillion kWh (2007 est.)

Electricity—consumption: 3.892 trillion kWh (2007 est.)

Electricity—exports: 20.14 billion kWh (2007 est.)

Electricity—imports: 51.4 billion kWh (2007 est.)

Oil—production: 8.457 million bbl/day (2007 est.)

Oil—consumption: 20.68 million bbl/day (2007 est.)

Oil—exports: 1.165 million bbl/day (2005)

Oil—imports: 13.71 million bbl/day (2005)

Oil—proved reserves: 20.97 billion bbl (1 January 2008 est.)

Natural gas—production: 545.9 billion cu m (2007 est.)

Natural gas—consumption: 652.9 billion cu m (2007 est.)

Natural gas—exports: 23.28 billion cu m (2007 est.)

Natural gas—imports: 130.3 billion cu m (2007 est.)

Natural gas—proved reserves: 5.977 trillion cu m (1 January 2008 est.)

Current account balance: -$731.2 billion (2007 est.)

Exports: $1.148 trillion f.o.b. (2007 est.)

Exports—commodities: agricultural products (soybeans, fruit, corn) 9.2%, industrial supplies (organic chemicals) 26.8%, capital goods (transistors, aircraft, motor vehicle parts, computers, telecommunications equipment) 49.0%, consumer goods (automobiles, medicines) 15.0% (2003)

Exports—partners: Canada 21.4%, Mexico 11.7%, China 5.6%, Japan 5.4%, UK 4.3%, Germany 4.3% (2007)

Imports: $1.968 trillion f.o.b. (2007 est.)

Imports—commodities: agricultural products 4.9%, industrial supplies 32.9% (crude oil 8.2%), capital goods 30.4% (computers, telecommunications equipment, motor vehicle parts, office machines, electric power machinery), consumer goods 31.8% (automobiles, clothing, medicines, furniture, toys) (2003)

Imports—partners: China 16.9%, Canada 15.7%, Mexico 10.6%, Japan 7.4%, Germany 4.8% (2007)
Economic aid—donor: ODA, $23.53 billion (2006)
Reserves of foreign exchange and gold: $70.57 billion (31 December 2007 est.)
Debt—external: $12.25 trillion (30 June 2007)
Stock of direct foreign investment—at home: $2.093 trillion (2007 est.)
Stock of direct foreign investment—abroad: $2.791 trillion (2007 est.)
Market value of publicly traded shares: $17 trillion (2005)
Currency (code): US dollar (USD)
Currency code: USD
Exchange rates: British pounds per US dollar: 0.4993 (2007), 0.5418 (2006), 0.5493 (2005), 0.5462 (2004), 0.6125 (2003); Canadian dollars per US dollar: 1.0724 (2007), 1.1334 (2006), 1.2118 (2005), 1.3010 (2004), 1.4011 (2003); Japanese yen per US dollar: 117.99 (2007), 116.18 (2006) 110.22 (2005), 108.19 (2004), 115.93 (2003); euros per US dollar: 0.7345 (2007), 0.7964 (2006), 0.8041 (2005), 0.8054 (2004), 0.8860 (2003), Chinese yuan per US dollar: 7.61 (2007), 7.97 (2006), 8.1943 (2005), 8.2768 (2004), 8.2770 (2003)

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephones—main lines in use: 163.2 million (2007)
Telephones—mobile cellular: 255 million (2007)
Telephone system: general assessment: a large, technologically advanced, multipurpose communications system; domestic: a large system of fiber-optic cable, microwave radio relay, coaxial cable, and domestic satellites carries every form of telephone traffic; a rapidly growing cellular system carries mobile telephone traffic throughout the country; international: country code—1; multiple ocean cable systems provide international connectivity; satellite earth stations—61 Intelsat (45 Atlantic Ocean and 16 Pacific Ocean), 5 Intersputnik (Atlantic Ocean region), and 4 Inmarsat (Pacific and Atlantic Ocean regions) (2000)
Radio broadcast stations: AM 4,789, FM 8,961, shortwave 19 (2006)
Radios: 575 million (1997)
Television broadcast stations: 2,218 (2006)
Televisions: 219 million (1997)
Internet country code:.us
Internet hosts: 316 million (2008); note—the US Internet total host count includes the following top level domain host addresses: .us, .com, .edu, .gov, .mil, .net, and .org
Internet users: 228 million (2006)

TRANSPORTATION

Airports: 14,947 (2007)
Airports—with paved runways: *total:* 5,143; *over 3,047 m*: 191; *2,438 to 3,047 m*: 224; *1,524 to 2,437 m*: 1,452; *914 to 1,523 m*: 2,323; *under 914 m*: 953 (2007)
Airports—with unpaved runways: *total:* 9,804; *2,438 to 3,047 m*: 7; *1,524 to 2,437 m*: 153; *914 to 1,523 m*: 1,732; *under 914 m*: 7,912 (2007)
Heliports: 146 (2007)
Pipelines: petroleum products 244,620 km; natural gas 548,665 km (2006)
Railways: *total:* 226,612 km; *standard gauge*: 226,612 km 1.435-m gauge (2005)
Roadways: *total:* 6,465,799 km; *paved:* 4,209,835 km (includes 75,040 km of expressways); *unpaved*: 2,255,964 km (2007)
Waterways: 41,009 km (19,312 km used for commerce). *Note:* Saint Lawrence Seaway of 3,769 km, including the Saint Lawrence River of 3,058 km, shared with Canada (2007)
Merchant marine: *total:* 422 ships *by type:* barge carrier 6, bulk carrier 61, cargo 69, carrier 2, chemical tanker 22, container 81, passenger 19, passenger/cargo 59, petroleum tanker 53, refrigerated cargo 3, roll on/roll off 25, vehicle carrier 22; *foreign-owned:* 74 (Australia 1, Denmark 31, Germany 5, Japan 7, Malaysia 2, Netherlands 1, Norway 9, Singapore 12, Sweden 5, UK 1); *registered in other countries*: 732 (Antigua and Barbuda 8, Australia 2, Bahamas 106, Bermuda 23, Cambodia 6, Canada 10, Cayman Islands 42, Comoros 2, Cyprus 5, Ecuador 1, Greece 8, Hong Kong 29, Ireland 2, Isle of Man 4, Italy 17, South Korea 7, Liberia 98, Luxembourg 4, Malta 23, Marshall Islands 123, Netherlands 14, Netherlands Antilles 1, Norway 1, Norway 7, Panama 126, Portugal 1, Puerto Rico 3, Russia 1, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 18, Sierra Leone 1, Singapore 22, Trinidad and Tobago 1, Tuvalu 1, UK 12, Vanuatu 1, unknown 2) (2008)
Ports and terminals: Corpus Christi, Duluth, Hampton Roads, Houston, Long Beach, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Tampa, Texas City

MILITARY

Military branches: US Army, US Navy (includes Marine Corps), US Air Force, US Coast Guard; note—Coast Guard administered in peacetime by the Department of Homeland Security, but in wartime reports to the Department of the Navy (2008)
Military service age and obligation: 18 years of age (17 years of age with parental consent) for male and female voluntary service; maximum enlistment age 42 (Army), 27 (Air Force), 34 (Navy), 28 (Marines); service obligation 8 years, including 2-5 years active duty (Army), 2 years active (Navy), 4 years active (Air Force, Marines) (2008)
Manpower available for military service: *males age 16-49:* 72,715,332; *females age 16-49:* 71,638,785 (2008 est.)
Manpower fit for military service: *males age 16-49:* 59,413,258; *females age 16-49:* 59,187,183 (2008 est.)
Manpower reaching military service age annually: *males:* 2,186,440; *females:* 2,079,688 (2008 est.)
Military expenditures—percent of GDP: 4.06% (2005 est.)

TRANSNATIONAL ISSUES

Disputes—international: the U.S. has intensified domestic security

measures and is collaborating closely with its neighbors, Canada and Mexico, to monitor and control legal and illegal personnel, transport, and commodities across the international borders; abundant rainfall in recent years along much of the Mexico-US border region has ameliorated periodically strained water-sharing arrangements; 1990 Maritime Boundary Agreement in the Bering Sea still awaits Russian Duma ratification; managed maritime boundary disputes with Canada at Dixon Entrance, Beaufort Sea, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and around the disputed Machias Seal Island and North Rock.

The Bahamas and US have not been able to agree on a maritime boundary; US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay is leased from Cuba and only mutual agreement or US abandonment of the area can terminate the lease.

Haiti claims US-administered Navassa Island; US has made no territorial claim in Antarctica (but has reserved the right to do so) and does not recognize the claims of any other states. Marshall Islands claims Wake Island.

Tokelau included American Samoa's Swains Island among the islands listed in its 2006 draft constitution

Refugees and internally displaced persons: refugees (country of origin): the US admitted 62,643 refugees during FY04/05 including, 10,586 (Somalia), 8,549 (Laos), 6,666 (Russia), 6,479 (Cuba), 3,100 (Haiti), 2,136 (Iran) (2006)

Illicit drugs: world's largest consumer of cocaine (shipped from Colombia through Mexico and the Caribbean), Colombian heroin, and Mexican heroin and marijuana; major consumer of ecstasy and Mexican methamphetamine; minor consumer of high-quality Southeast Asian heroin; illicit producer of cannabis, marijuana, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, and methamphetamine; money-laundering center

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

USUN (NEW YORK) (M) 140 East 45th St., New York, NY 10017, 212-415-4000, Fax 212-415-4443, Workweek: M-F 8:30-5:30, Website: http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/index.php.

AMB OMS:	Amb. Alejandro D. Wolff
CM OMS:	Clarke R. Cooper
MGT:	Raymond A. Boneski
US REP OMS:	Amb. Mark Wallace
AMB:	Amb. Zalmay Khalilzad
CON:	Russell Graham
PAO:	Richard A. Grenell
GSO:	Thomas Gallo
RSO:	Tanya Larson
FMO:	John E. Singler
IMO:	Barbara Sullivan
IPO:	Fred Murriel
ISO:	Warren A. Forrest
ISSO:	Warren A. Forrest
LEGATT:	Carolyn Willson
MLO:	Col Mark C. Easton
POL:	Jeffrey Delaurentis



URUGUAY

Compiled from the July 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Oriental Republic of Uruguay

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 176,220 sq. km. (68,000 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than Oklahoma.

Cities: Capital—Montevideo (est. pop. 1.4 million).

Terrain: Plains and low hills; 84% agricultural.

Climate: Temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Uruguayan(s).

Population: (July 2008) 3.5 million.

Annual growth rate: 0.5%.

Ethnic groups: (est.) European descent 88%, African descent 4%, mestizo 8%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 66%, Protestant and other Christian 2%, Jewish 1%, non-professing or other 31%.

Languages: Spanish.

Education: Literacy (2004)—98%.

Health: (2005) Life expectancy—76.1 yrs. (79.5 yrs females; 72.9 yrs. males). Infant mortality rate—11.6/1,000.

Work force: (1.3 million, 2006) Manufacturing—16%; agriculture—7%; commerce, restaurants & hotels—23%; other services—43%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: 1825.

Constitution: First 1830, current 1967, most recently amended December 1996.

Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government). Legislative—General Assembly consisting of a 99-seat Chamber of Deputies and a 30-seat Senate. Judicial—Supreme Court of Justice.

Political subdivisions: 19 departments with limited autonomy.

Political parties: Colorado Party, Blanco (National) Party, Encuentro Progresista-Frente Amplio, Nuevo Espacio.

Suffrage: Universal at 18.

Economy

GDP: $23.1 billion (2007); $19.3 billion (2006); $16.8 billion (2005); $13.2 billion (2004).

Annual growth rate: +7.4% (2007); +7.0% (2006); +6.6% (2005); +12.3% (2004); +2.5% (2003); -11.0% (2002).

Per capita GDP: $6,950(2007); $5,828 (2006); $5,200 (2005); $4,100 (2004).

Natural resources: Arable land, pastures, hydroelectric power, granite, marble.

Agriculture: (9% of GDP) Products—beef, wool, rice, wheat, barley, corn.

Industry: (23% of GDP) Types—meat processing, wool, textiles, leather, leather apparel, beverages and tobacco, chemicals, cement, petroleum refining.

Services: About 60% of GDP.

Trade: Exports (f.o.b.)—$4.5 billion: meat, wool, hides, leather, wool products, fish, rice, furs. Major markets—United States, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Germany. Imports (c.i.f.)—$5.5 billion: machinery, chemicals, fuel, vehicles. Major suppliers—Brazil, Argentina, United States, China, Venezuela.

PEOPLE

Uruguayans share a Spanish linguistic and cultural background, even though about one-quarter of the population is of Italian origin. Most are nominally Roman Catholic although the majority of Uruguayans do not actively practice a religion. Church and state are officially separated.

Uruguay is distinguished by its high literacy rate, large urban middle class, and relatively even income distribution. The average Uruguayan standard of living compares favorably with that of most other Latin Americans. Metropolitan Montevideo, with about 1.4 million inhabitants, is the only large city. The rest of the urban population lives in about 20 towns.

During the past two decades, an estimated 500,000 Uruguayans have emigrated, principally to Argentina and Spain. Emigration to the United States also rose significantly. As a result of the low birth rate, high life expectancy, and relatively high rate of emigration of younger people, Uruguay's population is quite mature.

HISTORY

The only inhabitants of Uruguay before European colonization of the area were the Charrua Indians, a small tribe driven south by the Guarani Indians of Paraguay. The Spanish discovered the territory of present-day Uruguay in 1516, but the Indians' fierce resistance to conquest, combined with the absence of gold and silver, limited settlement in the region during the 16th and 17th centuries. The Spanish introduced cattle, which became a source of wealth in the region. Spanish colonization increased as Spain sought to limit Portugal's expansion of Brazil's frontiers.

Montevideo was founded by the Spanish in the early 18th century as a military stronghold; its natural harbor soon developed into a commercial center competing with Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires. Uruguay's early 19th century history was shaped by ongoing conflicts between the British, Spanish, Portuguese, and colonial forces for dominance in the Argentina-Brazil-Uruguay region. In 1811, Jose Gervasio Artigas, who became Uruguay's national hero, launched a successful revolt against Spain. In 1821, the Provincia Oriental del Rio de la Plata, present-day Uruguay, was annexed to Brazil by Portugal. The Provincia declared independence from Brazil in August 25, 1825 (after numerous revolts in 1821, 1823, and 1825) but decided to adhere to a regional federation with Argentina.

The regional federation defeated Brazil after a 3-year war. The 1828 Treaty of Montevideo, fostered by the United Kingdom, gave birth to Uruguay as an independent state. The nation's first constitution was adopted in 1830. The remainder of the 19th century, under a series of elected and appointed presidents, saw interventions by neighboring states, political and economic fluctuations, and large inflows of immigrants, mostly from Europe. Jose Batlle y Ordonez, president from 1903 to 1907 and again from 1911 to 1915, set the pattern for Uruguay's modern political development. He established widespread political, social, and economic reforms such as a welfare program, government participation in many facets of the economy, and a plural executive. Some of these reforms were continued by his successors.

By 1966, economic, political, and social difficulties led to constitutional amendments, and a new constitution was adopted in 1967. In 1973, amid increasing economic and political turmoil, the armed forces closed the Congress and established a civilian-military regime, characterized by repression and widespread human rights abuses. A new constitution drafted by the military was rejected in a November 1980 plebiscite. Following the plebiscite, the armed forces announced a plan for return to civilian rule. National elections were held in 1984. Colorado Party leader Julio Maria Sanguinetti won the presidency and served from 1985 to 1990. The first Sanguinetti administration implemented economic reforms and consolidated democracy following the country's years under military rule.

Sanguinetti's economic reforms, focusing on the attraction of foreign trade and capital, achieved some success and stabilized the economy. In order to promote national reconciliation and facilitate the return of democratic civilian rule, Sanguinetti secured public approval by plebiscite of a controversial general amnesty for military leaders accused of committing human rights violations under the military regime, and sped the release of former guerrillas.

The National Party's Luis Alberto Lacalle won the 1989 presidential election and served from 1990 to 1995. Lacalle executed major structural economic reforms and pursued further liberalization of the trade regime. Uruguay became a founding member of MERCOSUR in 1991 (the Southern Cone Common Market, which includes Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay). Despite economic growth during Lacalle's term, adjustment and privatization efforts provoked political opposition, and some reforms were overturned by referendum.

In the 1994 elections, former President Sanguinetti won a new term, which ran from 1995 until March 2000. As no single party had a majority in the General Assembly, the National Party joined with Sanguinetti's Colorado Party in a coalition government. The Sanguinetti government continued Uruguay's economic reforms and integration into MERCOSUR. Other important reforms were aimed at improving the electoral system, social security, education, and public safety. The economy grew steadily for most of Sanguinetti's term, until low commodity prices and economic difficulties in its main export markets caused a recession in 1999, which continued into 2003.

The 1999 national elections were held under a new electoral system established by constitutional amendment. Primaries in April decided single presidential candidates for each party, and national elections on October 31 determined representation in the legislature. As no presidential candidate received a majority in the October election, a runoff was held in November. In the runoff, Colorado Party candidate Jorge Batlle, aided by the support of the National Party, defeated Frente Amplio candidate Tabare Vazquez.

The legislative coalition of the Colorado and National parties that held during most of Batlle's administration ended in November 2002, when the Blancos withdrew their ministers from the cabinet. Throughout most of his administration, President Batlle had to handle Uruguay's largest economic crisis in recent history, which impacted on poverty and led to

increased emigration. Aside from successfully addressing the crisis, Batlle increased international trade, attracted foreign investment and tried to resolve issues related to Uruguayans who disappeared during the military government. The two traditional political parties, the National ("Blanco") and Colorado parties, which were founded in the early 19th century, in the past garnered about 90% of the vote but have seen their share decline over the past decades. At the same time the share of the Frente Amplio, a coalition of various left-of-center factions that became the largest political force in 1999, was on the rise. In October 2004 presidential elections, Tabare Vazquez ran against the Blanco candidate Jorge Larranaga, a former state governor and senator who got 34.3% of votes, and against the Colorado candidate, former Interior Minister Stirling who got 10.4%. President Vazquez won the elections in the first round, with 50.5% of ballots, and his party achieved parliamentary majority. The Frente Amplio has ruled Montevideo since 1990. During its first 3 years in power, the Vazquez administration made good on its campaign promise to re-examine the human rights abuses committed during the period of military dictatorship and uncovered important forensic evidence. Bilateral relations with Argentina were strained by an ongoing dispute over the construction in Uruguay of a large wood pulp mill on a shared river. Legislation, including a controversial tax reform bill, tended to pass easily as the Frente Amplio enjoyed majorities in both houses of congress.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Uruguay's 1967 constitution institutionalizes a strong presidency, subject to legislative and judicial checks. The president's term is 5 years. Thirteen cabinet ministers, appointed by the president, head executive departments. The constitution provides for a bicameral General Assembly responsible for enacting laws and regulating the administration of justice. The General Assembly consists of a 30-member Senate, presided over by the vice president of the republic, and a 99-member Chamber of Deputies. In the October 2004 general elections, the Frente Amplio won the presidency in the first round with 50.7% and a majority of the seats in each chamber.

The National (Blanco) Party won 34.1%, the Colorado Party 10.3%, and the Independent Party 1.8%. The highest court is the Supreme Court; below it are appellate and lower courts and justices of the peace. In addition, there are electoral and administrative ("contentious") courts, an accounts court, and a military judicial system.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Tabare VAZQUEZ**
Vice Pres.: **Rodolfo NIN NOVOA**
Min. of Agriculture, Livestock, & Fishing: **Ernesto AGAZZI**

Min. of Economy & Finance: **Alvaro GARCIA**
Min. of Education, Sports, & Youth: **Maria SIMON**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Gonzalo FERNANDEZ**
Min. of Health: **Maria Julia MUNOZ**
Min. of Housing: **Carlos COLACCE**
Min. of Industry, Energy, & Mines: **Daniel MARTINEZ**
Min. of Interior: **Daisy TOURNE**
Min. of Labor & Social Welfare: **Eduardo BONOMI**
Min. of National Defense: **Jose BAYARDI**
Min. of Tourism: **Hector LESCANO**
Min. of Transportation & Public Works: **Victor ROSSI**
Pres., Central Bank: **Walter CANCELA**
Ambassador to the US: **Carlos GIANELLI Derois**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

ECONOMY

Uruguay's economy remains dependent on agriculture. Agriculture and agri-industry account for 23% of GDP, and for over two-thirds of total exports. Leading economic sectors include meat processing, agribusiness, wood, wool, leather production and apparel, textiles, and chemicals. Though still small, the information software industry is growing rapidly.

In 2002, Uruguay went through the steepest economic and financial crisis in recent history, which developed mostly from external factors. Devaluation in Brazil in 1999 made Uruguayan goods less competitive, and an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 curtailed beef exports to North America. Starting in late 2001, an economic crisis in Argentina undermined Uruguay's economy, with exports to Argentina and tourist revenues falling dramatically. In mid-2002 Argentine withdrawals from Uruguayan banks started a bank run that was overcome only by massive borrowing from international financial institutions. This, in turn, led to serious debt sustainability problems. A successful debt swap helped restore confidence and significantly reduced country risk.

Uruguay's economy resumed growth in 2003—with a 2.5% rise in GDP—and surged in 2004 and 2005 with growth rates of 12.3% and 6.6%, respectively. Growth equaled 7.0% in 2006 and reached 7.4% in 2007.

Uruguay's spectacular recovery over the past couple of years has been based on increased exports, especially to North America. The U.S. became Uruguay's largest export market in 2004, thanks in large part to meat exports. Uruguay enjoys a positive investment climate, with a strong legal system and open financial markets. It grants equal treatment to national and foreign investors and, aside from very few sectors, there is neither de jure nor de facto discrimination toward investment by source or origin.

Uruguay has traditionally favored substantial state involvement in the economy, and privatization is still widely opposed. Recent governments have carried out cautious programs of economic liberalization similar to those in many other Latin American countries. They included lowering tariffs, controlling deficit spending, reducing inflation, and cutting the size of government.

Uruguay has largely diversified its trade in recent years and reduced its longstanding dependency on Argentina and Brazil. It is a founding member of MERCOSUR, the Southern Cone trading bloc also composed of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, which is in the process of integrating Venezuela. The MERCOSUR Secretariat is located in Montevideo.

The investment climate is generally positive. Investments are allowed without prior authorization, foreign and national investors are treated alike, and there is fully free remittance of capital and profits. About 90 American firms operate in Uruguay and, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the stock of U.S. direct investment amounts to $656 million.

Uruguay's economy is based on free enterprise and private ownership. In spite of some de-monopolization and privatization over the past 10 years, the state continues to play a major role in the economy, owning either fully or partially companies in insurance, water supply, electricity, telephone service, petroleum refining, airlines, postal service, railways, and banking.

NATIONAL SECURITY

The armed forces are constitutionally subordinate to the president through the minister of defense. By offering early retirement incentives, the government has trimmed the armed forces to about 14,500 for the army, 6,000 for the navy, and 3,000 for the air force. Uruguay ranks first in the world on a per capita basis for its contributions to the UN peacekeeping forces, with 2,613 soldiers and officers in 13 UN peacekeeping missions. As of June 2008, Uruguay had 1,177 military personnel deployed to Haiti in support of MINUSTAH; its other major peacekeeping troop deployment was in the Congo.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Uruguay traditionally has had strong political and cultural links with its neighbors and Europe. With globalization and regional economic problems, its links to North America have strengthened. Uruguay is a strong advocate of constitutional democracy, political pluralism, and individual liberties. Its international relations historically have been guided by the principles of non-intervention, multilateralism, respect for national sovereignty, and reliance on the rule of law to settle disputes. Uruguay's international relations also reflect its drive to seek export markets and foreign investment. It is a founding member of MERCOSUR, the Southern Cone Common Market also composed of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. As of December 2006, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru were associate members of MERCOSUR. As of July 2008, Venezuela was in the process of becoming MERCOSUR's fifth full member.

Uruguay is a member of the Rio Group, an association of Latin Amer-

ican states that deals with multilateral security issues (under the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance). Uruguay's location between Argentina and Brazil makes close relations with these two larger neighbors and MERCOSUR associate members Chile and Bolivia particularly important. Usually considered a neutral country and blessed with a professional diplomatic corps, Uruguay is often called on to preside over international bodies. Uruguay is a member of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), a trade association based in Montevideo that includes 10 South American countries plus Mexico and Cuba.

U.S.-URUGUAYAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Uruguayan relations traditionally have been based on a common outlook and emphasis on democratic ideals. In 2002, Uruguay and the U.S. created a Joint Commission on Trade and Investment (JCTI) to exchange ideas on a variety of economic topics. In March 2003, the JCTI identified six areas of concentration until the eventual signing of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA): customs issues, intellectual property protection, investment, labor, environment, and trade in goods. In late 2004, Uruguay and the U.S. signed an Open Skies Agreement, which was ratified in May 2006. In November 2005, they signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), which entered into force on November 1, 2006. A Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) was signed in January 2007. More than 80 U.S.-owned companies operate in Uruguay, and many more market U.S. goods and services. In April 2008, Secretary Rice met with Foreign Minister Fernandez to sign a science and technology agreement. Uruguay cooperates with the U.S. on law enforcement matters such as regional efforts to fight drug trafficking and terrorism. It has also been very active in human rights issues. From 1999 through early 2003 Uruguayan citizens were exempted from visas when entering the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. This exemption was withdrawn on April 16, 2003, based on the high overstay rates for Uruguayans and worldwide national security concerns.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

MONTEVIDEO (E) Lauro Muller 1776, APO/FPO APO AA 34035, (598) (2) 418-7777, Fax 598-2-418 8611, Workweek: 8:45 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Website: http://uruguay.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Susan A. McDermott
AMB OMS:	Catherine N. Ramirez
ECO:	Jack T. Doutrich
FM:	Matthew Jennings
HRO:	Christine E. Everhart
MGT:	Teresa F. Stewart
POL/ECO:	Alfred Schandlbauer
AMB:	Frank E. Baxter
CON:	Michael J. Mc Camman
DCM:	Robin H. Matthewman
PAO:	Robert A. Zimmerman
GSO:	Allen L. Powell
RSO:	William A. Maxwell, III
CLO:	Lori J. Doutrich/Veronica Y. Hall
DAO:	Col. Ltc Patrick D. Hall
FMO:	Naida H. Moore
ICASS Chair:	Robert A. Zimmerman
IMO:	Jose M. Ortiz
IPO:	Keith Carlhoun
ISSO:	Dominic S. Meyer

Other Contact Information

U.S. Department of Commerce
Trade Information Center
International Trade Administration
14th and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230
Tel: 800-USA-TRADE
Home page: http://www.export.gov

American Chamber of Commerce in Uruguay
Plaza Independencia 831,
Oficina 209
Edificio Plaza Mayor
11100 Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel: (5982) 908-9186
Fax: (5982) 908-9187
Home page:
http://www.ccuruguayusa.com
E-mail: info@ccuruguayusa.com

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 1, 2008

Country Description: Uruguay is a constitutional democracy with a large, educated middle class and a robust developing economy. The capital city is Montevideo. Tourist facilities are generally good with many 5-star accommodations at resort destinations such as Punta del Este and Colonia de Sacramento. The quality of tourist facilities varies according to price and area. Travelers are encouraged to seek travel agency assistance in making plans to visit Uruguay.

Entry Requirements: All United States citizens entering Uruguay for business or pleasure must have a valid passport. U.S. citizens traveling on a regular passport do not need a visa for a visit of less than three months. U.S. citizens traveling on diplomatic or official passports require a visa. Air travelers are required to pay an airport tax upon departure. This fee may be paid in U.S. dollars or in Uruguayan pesos. For further information on entry requirements, contact the Embassy of Uruguay at 1913 "Eye" Street NW, Washington, DC 20006, tel. (202) 331-4219; e-mail: conuruwashi@uruwashi.org. Travelers may also contact the Consulate of Uruguay in New York, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Puerto Rico. Visit the Embassy of Uruguay web site at http://www.uruwashi.org for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: Regular protests, some with an anti-American flavor, take place outside Congress, City Hall and the "University of the Republic." U.S. citizens visiting or residing in Uruguay are advised to take common-sense precautions and avoid any large gatherings or any other event where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest. If travelers encounter a protest they should walk the other way or enter a commercial establishment until the

protest passes. Taking pictures of protesters is not a good idea. Although there have been no past instances of violence directed at U.S. citizens from cross-border extremist groups, U.S. citizens traveling or residing in the more remote areas of Uruguay near the border with Argentina and Brazil are urged to exercise caution.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up to date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. eastern time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Petty street crime is prevalent in Montevideo. The criminals tend to be non-violent. However, criminals often resort to violence if the victims resist. Travelers should exercise reasonable caution to minimize their exposure to crime. Criminals prey on the unaware, particularly those carrying cameras, pocketbooks, laptops, or backpacks. Travelers are advised to lock most valuables in secure hotel safes and to download their wallets of excess credit cards and cash. If dining at an outdoor restaurant take extra care with pocketbooks or bags. There are no "off limits" areas of the city and parts of "Ciudad Vieja" are popular tourist attractions. However the only sections of Ciudad Vieja with continual police patrols are Plaza Independencia, the pedestrian street Sarandi, and the Mercado del Puerto. Mugging is common in other parts of Ciudad Vieja - particularly for travelers walking alone, or couples walking at night. A smart alternative is to call for a taxi for evening travel between restaurants, bars, and hotels.

Victims are usually foreign tourists, individuals openly carrying valuable items, and motorists in unlocked vehicles stopped at busy intersections, particularly on Montevideo 's riverfront road known as the Rambla. Drivers should keep all car doors locked, the driver's window open only one inch, and purses, bags, briefcases and other valuables out of sight on the floor or in the trunk. Parked cars, particularly in the Carrasco neighborhood, are also increasingly targeted for break-ins. During the summer months (December-March), beach resort areas such as Punta del Este attract tourists, and petty street crimes and residential burglaries—similar to those that occur in Montevideo —rise significantly. Visitors are advised to exercise common sense in the conduct of their activities around Montevideo and in Uruguayan resort areas. They should be very attentive to personal security and their surroundings in the aforementioned areas.

Those planning to live in Montevideo should note that burglaries and attempted burglaries seem to be on the rise in upscale neighborhoods. The perpetrators are mostly non-confrontational but determined teenagers. A combination of preventive measures including rigorous use of locks and alarms, strong grillwork on all windows, guard dogs, keeping a residence occupied as much as possible, and using a security service is highly recommended.

Montevideo continues to experience armed robberies of patrons at crowded restaurants in the Pocitos neighborhood. Most of these crimes have occurred very late at night. Restaurant patrons should exercise extreme caution for late night dining.

Uruguayan law enforcement authorities have increased the number of uniformed policemen on foot in areas where criminal activity is concentrated and the number of patrol cars in residential areas. The clearly marked patrol cars are equipped with cellular phones and the phone numbers are conspicuously painted on the vehicles.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Uruguay is also 911.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Facilities for medical care are considered adequate. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States.

The Uruguayan Ministry of Transportation is responsible for maintaining safe road conditions countrywide. The Uruguayan Ministry of Interior highway police (tel. 1954) are responsible for traffic safety on highways and other roads beyond city limits. In urban and suburban areas, transit police and municipal employees share road safety responsibilities.

Driving is on the right-hand side of the road. Wearing seat belts and using headlights on highways and other inter-city roads 24 hours a day are mandatory. Children under 12 must ride in the back seat. Motorcyclists must wear helmets. The use of cellular phones while driving is prohibited. Right turns on red lights and left turns at most intersections marked with a stoplight are not permitted. Drivers approaching an intersection from the right or already in traffic circles have the right of way. Flashing high beams indicate intent to pass or continue through unmarked intersections. Many drivers ignore speed limits and traffic signs. If you plan to drive, use extreme caution and drive defensively.

For driving under the influence, violators are fined and confiscated licenses may be retained for up to six months. In accidents causing injury or death, drivers are brought before a judge who decides if incarceration is warranted. Inter-city travel is via bus, taxi, car service (remise), car and motorcycle. Speed limits are posted on highways and some main roads. Most taxis have no seat belts in the back seat. Cycling outside the capital or small towns is hazardous due to a scarcity of bike paths, narrow road shoulders and unsafe driving practices.

Illumination, pavement markings and road surfaces are sometimes poor. Route 1, which runs between Montevideo and Colonia or Punta del Este, and Route 2, between Rosario and Fray Bentos, are particularly accident-ridden because of heavy tourist traffic. Road accidents rise during the austral summer beach season (December to March), Carnaval (mid-to-late February) and Easter Week.

Within Montevideo, the emergency number to contact the police, fire department, rescue squad, or ambulance service is 911. In the rest of the country, dial 02-911 to connect with the Montevideo central emergency authority, which will then contact the local emergency service. The Automobile Club of Uruguay responds to emergency calls for roadside assistance at 1707, "Car Up" at 0800-1501 and the Automobile Center of Uruguay at 2-408-6131/2091. SEMM (tel. 159) and UCM (tel. 147), Montevideo-based ambulance services manned by doctors, have agreements with emergency medical units in other cities. You may also telephone Uruguay 's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety in Miami at (305) 443-7431.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Uruguay's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Uruguay's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Uruguay's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Uruguay of items such as precious jewels, gold, firearms, pornography, subversive literature, inflammable articles, acids, prohibited drugs (medications), plants, seeds, and foodstuffs as well as some antiquities and business equipment.

It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Uruguay in Washington, D.C., or one of Uruguay 's consulates in the U.S. for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Note: Travelers entering Uruguay with precious jewels or gold worth more than $500.00 (U.S.) must declare them to customs officers at the port of entry or face possible detention or seizure of the goods and charges of contraband or evasion of customs controls. Visitors are expected to comply with local law and regulations by approaching a customs officer before routine inspection of all incoming baggage, conducted on standard security equipment.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Uruguay's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Uruguay are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

The Uruguayan Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing strictly enforces all regulations regarding hunting permits, as well as seasonal and numerical limits on game.

Visitors who contravene local law have been detained by the authorities and had valuable personal property (weapons) seized. Under Uruguayan law, seized weapons can only be returned after payment of a sum equivalent to the value of the property seized. Hunters are also subject to stiff fines for practicing the sport without all appropriate permits.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Uruguay are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Uruguay. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at Lauro Muller 1776; telephone (598) (2) 418-7777; fax (598) (2) 418-4110 or -8611. Internet: http://uruguay.usembassy.gov, email: MontevideoACS@state.gov. Consular Section hours for American Citizen Services are Monday to Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., except U.S. and Uruguayan holidays.

Intercountry Adoption

September 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: While intercountry adoptions are legal in Uruguay, Uruguayan law explicitly favors local adoptions over intercountry adoptions. Prospective adoptive parents must live in Uruguay with the child they plan to adopt for a minimum of six months. A judge may reduce this time requirement on a case-by-case basis if he/she believes it is in the best interests of the child.

Patterns of Immigration: The U.S. Embassy in Montevideo has not issued any orphan visas for Uruguayan children for at least the last five years.

Adoption Authority: The government adoption authority in Uruguay is the Departamento de Adopción y Legitimación Adoptiva (DLAYA or Department of Adoption and Legitimating of Adoptions). DLAYA is an agency within the responsibility of the Instituto del Niño y el Adolescente (INAU or Uruguayan Institute for Children and Adolescents).

DLAYA
Rio Branco 1394
Montevideo, Uruguay
Tel: (598 2) 908-3219,
E-mail inaudlaya@adinet.com.uy

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: With a simple adoption, birth parents do not relinquish all parental rights over the child. It is important to note that while this may fulfill the adoption requirement in Uruguay, it will not necessarily fulfill the U.S. immigration requirements. Any person more than 25 years old and at least fifteen years older than the child to be adopted, who has had the prospective child under his/her care for at least one year is eligible to adopt. Consent of the spouse is required if the adopting person is married.

Adoption Legitimating Process: The legitimating process is an irrevocable release of parental rights by the birth parents. The child will be registered as the adoptive parent's child and a new birth certificate is issued bearing the adoptive parents' names. Adoption eligibility requirements for this type of adoption are as follows. Spouses more than 25 years old and at least fifteen years older than the child to be adopted, who have been married for at least four years, and who have had the prospective child under their care for at least one year are eligible. In the case of intercountry adoptions, the guardianship period may be shortened to six months.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are required to reside in Uruguay for a minimum of six months.

Time Frame: The adoption process in Uruguay can take four to five years from start to finish.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: In Uruguay adoptions can be arranged through one of the following:

- Government of Uruguay: Departamento de Adopción y Legitimación Adoptiva (DLAYA);
- Movimiento Familiar Cristiano (Christian Family Movement). Contact Sra. Ana Maria Castillo, Presidente, Movimiento Familiar Cristiano, Colonia 1738, Montevideo, Uruguay Tel/fax: (598 2) 400-7703; or
- Independently through a private lawyer.

Although the U.S. Embassy does not have a list of adoption lawyers specifically, they do maintain a list of attorneys in the Consular District which may be found at: http://uruguay.usembassy.gov.

Adoption Fees: DLAYA provides legal counseling at no cost. Even though the whole adoption process is free, the Uruguayan authorities charge for required documents and services they provide, prior to the adoption, such as legalization of foreign documents, and/or marriage, birth, police certificates. There is no information regarding private attorney's fees.

Adoption Procedures: Adoptions through DLAYA and the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano follow a similar process with an initial interview with the prospective adoptive parents that is used to explain the adoption process, the documents required, the legal aspects and expectations.

After the prospective adoptive parents submit the required documentation, an evaluation process begins through group activities and personal

interviews with psychologists and social workers of DLAYA, including a home study. DLAYA staff members make the final decision concerning the applicants' eligibility to adopt a child. Once approved, the couple is added to the waiting list. The length of the evaluation process varies according to staff availability. The average waiting time to complete an adoption from start to finish is four years. Once a child is assigned to a couple, a one-year period of legal custody (guardianship) begins. During this period, INAU periodically monitors the family to ensure the welfare of the child. Biological parents can claim the child during this period. Any such claim must be made through DLAYA and a judge is assigned to protect the privacy of the foster family. The four years listed above refer to the entire waiting period starting from the time prospective adoptive parents are first registered and a child is selected. Then, another year during legal custody and/or co-residency, which can be reduced to 6 months.

Once the parental rights of the birth parents are terminated, the child has completed a one-year period of legal custody (guardianship) with the prospective adoptive parents, and INAU has submitted a recommendation for approval, a judge will finalize the adoption process by awarding all legal rights regarding the child to the adoptive parents.

Required Documents:

- Original birth certificate of each prospective adoptive parent
- Local Police Records (Certificado de Antecedentes) issued by the Ministry of the Interior, for each prospective adoptive parent
- An original marriage certificate for the prospective adoptive parents
- Income certificate of each prospective parent
- Health certificate of each prospective parent
- Identification card of each prospective parent
- Voting Registration Card (Credencial Civica) of each prospective parent (if applicable)
- Photocopy of marriage booklet (libreta de matrimonio), if applicable
- Current color photographs of each prospective parent

Embassy of Uruguay
1913 I (Eye) Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
Tel. (202) 331 1313
e-mail: conuruwashi@uruwashi.org

Uruguayan Consulates are established in Chicago, IL; Coral Gables, FL; New York, NY; Santa Monica, CA; and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy
Lauro Muller 1776,
Montevideo.
Tel. (598-2) 418 7777 Ext. 2365
Fax (598-2) 418 4110
E-mail: MontevideoACS@state.gov

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Uruguay may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Montevideo through e-mail MontevideoIV@state.gov or MontevideoACS@state,gov. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



UZBEKISTAN

Compiled from the December 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Uzbekistan

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 447,400 sq. km., slightly larger than California.

Cities: Capital—Tashkent (pop. 2.5 million); Samarkand (600,000); Bukhara (350,000).

Terrain: Flat-to-rolling sandy desert with dunes; broad, flat, intensely irrigated river valleys along Amu Darya, Syr Darya; shrinking Aral Sea; semiarid grasslands surrounded by mountainous Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in east.

Climate: Mid-latitude desert; long, hot summers, mild winters.

People

Nationality: Uzbek.

Population: (July 2008 est.) 27,345,026.

Ethnic groups: (1996 est.) Uzbek 80%, Russian 5.5%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%, Karakalpak 2.5%, Tatar 1.5%, other 2.5%.

Religions: Muslim 90% (mostly Sunni), Eastern Orthodox 5%, other 3%.

Languages: Uzbek 74.3%, Russian 14.2%, Tajik 4.4%, other 7.1%.

Education: Literacy—97% (total population).

Health: (2005 est.) Life expectancy—60.82 years men; 67.73 years women.

Work force: (11.9 million) Agricultural and forestry—44%, industry—20%; services—36%.

Government

Type: Republic.

Independence: September 1, 1991.

Constitution: December 8, 1992.

Government branches: Executive—president, prime minister, cabinet. Legislative—bicameral Supreme Assembly or Oliy Majlis consists of an Upper House or Senate (100 seats; 84 members are elected by regional governing councils to serve five-year terms and 16 are appointed by the president) and a Lower House or Legislative Chamber (120 seats; elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms). Judiciary—Supreme Court, constitutional court, economic court.

Administrative subdivisions: (viloyatlar) 12, plus autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan and city of Tashkent.

Political parties: Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party—established February 18, 1995 in Tashkent, number of seats in the Legislative Chamber of the parliament 9, Ismail Saifnazarov, first secretary; Democratic National Rebirth Party (Milly Tiklanish Democratic Partiya) or MTP—established on June 3, 1995 in Tashkent, and merged with the National Democratic Party “Fidokorlar” ("Selfless men") on June 20, 2008, number of seats in the Legislative Chamber of the parliament 28, Ahtam Tursunov, chairman; ; People’s Democratic Party or PDPU (Uzbekiston Halq Democratic Partiya, formerly Communist Party)—established November 1, 1991 in Tashkent, number of seats in the Legislative Chamber of the parliament 32, Latif Gulomov, first secretary; Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan—established December 3, 2003, number of seats in the Legislative Chamber of the parliament 41, Muhammadyusuf Mutalibjanovich Teshaboev, chairman. Other political or pressure groups and leaders: Birlik (Unity) Movement—Abdurakhim PULATOV, chairman; Erk (Freedom) Democratic Party—Mohammed SOLIH, chairman (banned Dec. 1992); party of Agrarians and Entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan—Marat ZAHIDOV, chairman; Ozod Dekkon (Free Farmers) Party—Nigara KHIDOYATOVA, general secretary; Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan—Abdumannob PULATOV, chairman; Independent Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan—Mikhail ARDZINOV, chairman; Ezgulik—Vasilya INOYATOVA, chairwoman.

Suffrage: Universal at age 18, unless imprisoned or certified as insane.

Defense: Manpower fit for military service—males age 16-49 fit for military service: 5,684,540 (2008 est.),

females age 16-49 fit for military service: 6,432,976 (2008 est.); 18 years of age for compulsory military service; 1-year conscript service obligation.

Economy

(Note: Government of Uzbekistan statistics are not consistently reliable. This report therefore relies heavily on unofficial estimates and states clearly when a figure is an estimate.)

GDP: 2007 real GDP growth, according to the IMF based on Government of Uzbekistan statistics, was 9.5%. Actual GDP growth was likely lower.

Inflation: International institutions estimate inflation reached 12.3% in 2007, though actual inflation was likely higher, between 24%-28%.

Per capita GDP: Estimated per capita GDP in 2007, on a purchasing power parity measure, was $2,400.

Natural resources: Natural gas, petroleum, gold, coal, uranium, silver, copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, molybdenum. Natural gas production in 2006 was 62.5 billion cubic meters (bcm). In 2006, the U.S. Government estimates 48.4 bcm of natural gas was consumed in Uzbekistan and 12.5 bcm was exported. Oil production in 2007 was 109,400 bbl/day.

Agriculture: Products—cotton, fourth-largest producer worldwide; vegetables, fruits, grain, livestock.

Industry: Types—textiles, food processing, machine building, metallurgy, natural gas, automobiles, chemical. The industrial production growth rate was estimated at 12.1% in 2007; electricity production was 49 billion kilowatt hours (2006 estimate).

Budget: (2007 estimates) Revenues—$6.9 (IMF 2008 staff report, Table 5, 1290 soums/dollar) billion; expenditures—$6.6 billion.

Trade: Total exports—(2007 est., $8.05 billion f.o.b.): largest contribution from cotton, gold, natural gas, mineral fertilizers, ferrous metals, textiles, food products, automobiles. Major export markets (2007 est.)—Russia 25.8%, Poland 10.4%, Turkey 9.2%, China 5.4%, Ukraine 4.7%, Bangladesh 4.4%. Total imports—(2007 est., $4.48 billion f.o.b.): machinery and equipment, chemicals, metals, foodstuffs. Primary import partners (2007 est.)—Russia 25.8%, China 14.3%, South Korea 13.7%, Germany 6.7%, Kazakhstan 6.6%, Ukraine 4.3%, Turkey 4.2%.

External debt: (December 31, 2007 est.) $3.927 billion.

PEOPLE

Uzbekistan is Central Asia's most populous country. Its 27.3 million people, concentrated in the south and east of the country, are nearly half the region's total population. Uzbekistan had been one of the poorest republics of the Soviet Union; much of its population was engaged in cotton farming in small rural communities. The population continues to be heavily rural and dependent on farming for its livelihood. Uzbek is the predominant ethnic group. Other ethnic groups include Russian 5.5%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%, Karakalpak 2.5%, and Tatar 1.5%. The nation is approximately 90% Sunni Muslim, 1% Shiite Muslim, and 5% Eastern Orthodox. Uzbek is the official state language; however, Russian is the de facto language for interethnic communication, including much day-to-day government and business use.

The educational system has achieved 97% literacy, and the mean amount of schooling for both men and women is 9 years. However, due to budget constraints and other transitional problems following the collapse of the Soviet Union, texts and other school supplies, teaching methods, curricula, and educational institutions are outdated, inappropriate, and poorly kept. Additionally, the proportion of school-aged persons enrolled has been dropping. Although the government is concerned about this, budgets remain tight. Similarly, in health care, life expectancy is long, but after the breakup of the Soviet Union, health care resources have declined, reducing health care quality, accessibility, and efficiency. Uzbekistan continues to enjoy a highly educated and skilled labor force.

HISTORY

Located in the heart of Central Asia between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya Rivers, Uzbekistan has a long and interesting heritage. The leading cities of the famous Silk Road—Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva—are located in Uzbekistan, and many well-known conquerors passed through the land. Alexander the Great stopped near Samarkand on his way to India in 327 B.C. and married Roxanna, daughter of a local chieftain. Conquered by Muslim Arabs in the eighth century A.D., the indigenous Samanid dynasty established an empire in the 9th century. Genghis Khan and his Mongols overran its territory in 1220. In the 1300s, Timur, known in the west as Tamerlane, built an empire with its capital at Samarkand. Uzbekistan's most noted tourist sites date from the Timurid dynasty. Later, separate Muslim city-states emerged with strong ties to Persia. In 1865, Russia occupied Tashkent and by the end of the 19th century, Russia had conquered all of Central Asia. In 1876, the Russians dissolved the Khanate of Kokand, while allowing the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara to remain as direct protectorates. Russia placed the rest of Central Asia under colonial administration, and invested in the development of Central Asia's infrastructure, promoting cotton growing and encouraging settlement by Russian colonists.

In 1924, following the establishment of Soviet power, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan was founded from the territories including the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva and portions of the Ferghana Valley that had constituted the Khanate of Kokand. During the Soviet era, Moscow used Uzbekistan for its tremendous cotton growing and natural resource potential. The extensive and inefficient irrigation used to support the former has been the main cause of shrinkage of the Aral Sea to less than a third of its original volume, making this one of the world's worst environmental disasters. Uzbekistan declared independence on September 1, 1991.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The constitution of Uzbekistan provides for separation of powers, freedom of speech, and representative government. In reality, the executive holds almost all power. The judiciary lacks independence, and the legislature—which meets only a few days each year—has little power to shape laws. The president selects and replaces provincial governors. Islam Karimov, former First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Uzbek SSR Communist Party, was elected to a five-year presidential term in December 1991 with 88% of the vote. In a December 1995 referendum, his term was extended to 2000. President Karimov was re-elected in January 2000 with 91.9% of the vote. In a January 2002 referendum, the term of the presidency was extended from five years to seven. President Karimov was re-elected in December 2007. None of these elections or referenda were deemed free or fair.

The 2002 referendum also included a plan to create a bicameral parliament. Parliamentary elections in December 2004 likewise were neither free nor fair, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) limited observation mission concluded that the elections fell significantly short of OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections.

Uzbekistan has battled a low-intensity insurgency since the late 1990s. Early this decade, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) launched a number of small, cross-border raids. The IMU in summer 2001 allied itself with the Taliban government in Afghanistan, where most of its troops were then based, and subsequently engaged U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

Terrorist bombings, blamed on the IMU and splinter groups, have occurred sporadically, including multiple, simultaneous attacks in Tashkent in 1998 that destroyed a portion of the Ministry of Interior headquarters and narrowly missed President Karimov. Death estimates in those attacks and in subsequent shootouts in Tashkent with alleged bombers range as high as 200. The official government death tally was sixteen. In March and April 2004, suicide bombers struck the U.S. and Israeli

Embassies in Tashkent and also detonated devices in the city of Bukhara. In May 2005, armed gunman in the city of Andijon attacked a police station, seized weapons and then stormed a prison, freeing members of a local Islamic organization accused by the government of extremism. In events whose details remain unclear, the attackers then gathered in Andijon's main square. Thousands of local residents also gathered in the square. Shooting erupted between government forces and the insurgents, and a large but undetermined number of individuals were killed. The Government of Uzbekistan, which put the death toll at 187, refused to heed European and U.S. calls for an independent international investigation. Unofficial death toll estimates range as high as 700 to 800. While an international investigation did not take place, the government claimed to have conducted internal investigations into the May 2005 events. It discussed investigation techniques and results with diplomats and other international representatives in 2006, 2007, and 2008.

Human Rights

Uzbekistan has no meaningful political opposition. Five compliant political parties hold all seats in the parliament, and independent political parties have been effectively suppressed since the early 1990s. Multiple independent and governmental media outlets (radio, TV, newspaper) exist. Self-censorship is the norm. Editors and journalists who have broached politically sensitive topics have routinely experienced repercussions, including loss of employment.

Since 1991, many prominent opponents of the government have fled, and others have been arrested. The government severely represses those it suspects of Islamic extremism, including those suspected of any affiliation to organizations such as the banned extremist Party of Islamic Liberation (Hizb ut-Tahrir). Thousands of suspected extremists have been incarcerated since 1992, and arrests continue. The exact number remaining in custody is unknown but may be several thousand. A large number of prisoners have died in custody, many from disease and other poor conditions and others from mistreatment and abuse. Political prisoners and suspected extremists are allegedly treated worse than ordinary prisoners.

The police force and the intelligence service have used torture as a routine investigation technique. In May 2003, following the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Government of Uzbekistan drafted an action plan to implement the Rapporteur's recommendations. The government began enacting a number of the plan's provisions but has since ceased cooperating with international organizations involved in prison reform. Prison conditions and the prevalence of torture today therefore are not clear but are widely believed to remain problematic.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Islom KARIMOV**
Chmn., Supreme Assembly (Oliy Majlis): **Dilorom TOSHMUHAMEDOVA**
Prime Min.: **Shavkat MIRZIYOYEV**
First Dep. Prime Min.: **Rustam AZIMOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Farida AKBAROVA**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Abdulla ARIPOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Rustam QOSIMOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ulugbek ROZIQULOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Ergash SHOISMATOV**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Nodirxon XANOV**
Min. of Agriculture & Water Resources: **Sayfiddin ISMOILOV**
Min. of Culture & Sports: **Rustam QURBONOV**
Min. of Defense: **Qobul BERDIYEV**
Min. of Economics: **Batir XODJAYEV**
Min. of Emergency Situations:
Min. of Finance: **Rustam AZIMOV**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Vladimir NOROV**
Min. of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments, & Trade: **Elyor GANIYEV**
Min. of Higher & Secondary Specialized Education: **Azimjon PARPIEV**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Bahodir MATLYUBOV**
Min. of Justice: **Ravshan MUXITDINOV**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Aktam XAITOV**
Min. of Public Education: **Gayrat SHOUMAROV**
Min. of Public Health: **Feruz NAZIROV**
Sec., National Security Council: **Murod ATAYEV**
Chmn., National Security Service: **Rustam INOYATOV, Col. Gen.**
Chmn., State Bank: **Fayzulla MULLAJANOV**
Ambassador to the US: **Abdulaziz KAMILOV**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Alisher VOHIDOV**

The Republic of Uzbekistan maintains an embassy at 1746 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036. Tel.: (202) 887-5300; fax (202) 293-6804. Its consulate and mission to the UN in New York are located at 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 326/327a, New York, NY 10017. Consulate tel.: (212) 754-7403; fax: (212) 486-7998.

ECONOMY

The economy is based primarily on agriculture and natural resource extraction. Uzbekistan is a major producer and exporter of cotton. It also is a major exporter of gold, uranium, strategic minerals, and gas. Since independence, the government has stated its commitment to a gradual transition to a free market economy but has been cautious in moving to a market-based economy.

It is difficult to accurately estimate economic growth in Uzbekistan due to unreliable government statistics, which often serve political rather than economic ends. Economic growth has been strong in the past few years, but wealth is strictly held by the elite. According to the World Bank, approximately 25% of Uzbeks live at or below the poverty line.

The government implements a strict import substitution policy to control foreign trade and prevent capital outflow. Substantial structural reform is needed, particularly in the area of improving the investment climate for foreign investors and liberalizing the agricultural sector. Although the government has committed itself in theory to the provisions of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Article VIII regarding currency con-

vertibility for current account operations, in practice firms can wait from three to eight months for currency conversion. Convertibility restrictions and other government measures to control economic activity, (e.g., import and export restrictions, and intermittent border closings) have constrained economic growth and led international lending organizations to suspend or scale back credits.

GDP and Employment

The International Monetary Fund estimates 2007 GDP growth figure as 9.5%. The IMF projects 2008 GDP growth of 8.0%. Unemployment and underemployment are very high, but reliable figures are difficult to obtain, as no recent credible surveying has been done. Unofficially, unemployment is estimated around 8% and underemployment around 25%. Underemployment in the agricultural sector is particularly high—which is important given the fact that 62% of the population is rural-based. Many observers believe that employment growth and real wage growth have been stagnant, given virtually no growth in output.

Labor

Literacy in Uzbekistan is almost universal, and workers are generally well-educated and well-trained. Worsening corruption in the country's education system in the past few years has begun to erode Uzbekistan's advantage in terms of its human capital, as grades and degrees are routinely purchased. Additionally, elementary and secondary students in the remote provinces have poor access to basic education. Most local technical and managerial training does not meet international business standards, but foreign companies engaged in production report that locally hired workers learn quickly and work effectively. Foreign firms generally find that younger workers, untainted by the Soviet system, work well at all levels. The government has significantly curbed a long-time program emphasizing foreign education, which in past years annually sent about 50 students to the United States, Europe, and Japan for university degrees, after which they have a commitment to work for the government for 5 years. Reportedly, about 60% of the students who studied abroad found employment with foreign companies upon their return, despite their 5-year commitment to work in the government. In addition, Uzbekistan subsidizes studies for students at Westminster University—the only Western-style institution in Uzbekistan. In 2003, Westminster admitted about 360 students, and the government funded about half of the students' education. Education at Westminster costs $4,900 per academic year.

With the closure or downsizing of many foreign firms, it is relatively easy to find qualified, well-trained employees, and salaries are very low by Western standards. The government has implemented salary caps in an attempt to prevent firms from circumventing restrictions on the withdrawal of cash from banks. Some firms had tried in the past to evade these limits on withdrawals by inflating salaries of employees, allowing firms to withdraw more money. These salary caps prevent many foreign firms from paying their workers as much as they would like. Labor market regulations in Uzbekistan are similar to those once used in the Soviet Union, with all rights guaranteed but some rights unobserved. Unemployment is a growing problem, and a significant number of people continue to look for jobs in Russia, Kazakhstan, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, though the overall number might have declined in the past year due to slowing economies in neighboring countries. Business analysts estimate that a high number of Uzbek citizens are working abroad. Estimates range from lows of 3 million to highs of 5 million Uzbek citizens of working age living outside Uzbekistan, most in neighboring countries or Russia. Uzbekistan signed a labor agreement with Russia in 2007 to facilitate the temporary migration of Uzbek workers and the taxation of their income, though reportedly only 1,000 Uzbeks participated in this program in 2008.

Prices and Monetary and Fiscal Policy

Macroeconomic performance has been strong over the last two years and resulted in a positive trade balance. Real GDP growth was high, and official reserves continued to rise. Inflation is expected to be between 30%-40% in 2008. In order to combat inflation, the government has exercised strict currency controls, causing periodic shortages of cash. Reacting to the weakening of the dollar to the Euro, the government recently switched to the Euro for its accounting and financial management. The hospitality sector is following suit.

Outstanding external debt in 2007 was estimated at $3.927 billion. Tax collection rates remained high, due to the use of the banking system by the government as a collection agency. The World Bank and the UN Development Program (UNDP) have provided technical assistance to reform the Central Bank and Ministry of Finance into institutions that conduct market-oriented fiscal and monetary policy. Bank reform is very slow and inhibits the ability of citizens or private companies to obtain credit and other banking services.

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Agriculture and the agro-industrial sector contribute about 30% to Uzbekistan's GDP. Cotton is Uzbekistan's dominant crop, accounting for roughly 14% of the country's GDP in 2007. Uzbekistan also produces significant amounts of silk, wheat, fruit, and vegetables. Nearly all agriculture involves heavy irrigation. Farmers and agricultural workers earn low wages, which the state seldom pays on a regular basis. In general, the government controls the agriculture sector, dictates what farms grow, and buys directly from the farmers to sell abroad.

Minerals and mining are integral to Uzbekistan's economy. Gold is Uzbekistan's second most important foreign exchange earner, unofficially estimated at around 20%. Uzbekistan is the world's seventh-largest pro-

ducer, mining about 80 tons of gold per year, and holds the fourth-largest reserves in the world. Uzbekistan receives a considerable amount of income from natural gas exports. It produces oil for domestic consumption and has significant reserves of copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, and uranium.

Trade and Investment

Uzbekistan's export/import policy is based on import substitution. The highly regulated trade regime has led to both import and export declines since 1996, although imports have declined more than exports, as the government squeezed imports to maintain hard currency reserves. Draconian tariffs and sporadic border closures and crossing "fees" decrease legal imports of both consumer products and capital equipment. Uzbekistan's traditional trade partners are from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), notably Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. Non-CIS partners have been increasing in importance in recent years, with the European Union, South Korea, Germany, Japan, and Turkey being the most active.

Uzbekistan is a member of the IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. It has observer status at the World Trade Organization (WTO) and has publicly stated its intention to accede to the WTO. It is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization and is a signatory to the Convention on Settlement of Investment Disputes between States and Nationals of Other States, the Paris Convention on Industrial Property, the Madrid Agreement on Trademarks Protection, and the Patent Cooperation Treaty. In 2008, Uzbekistan was again placed on the special "301" Watch List for lack of intellectual copyright protection.

Since Uzbekistan's independence, U.S. firms have invested roughly U.S. $500 million in Uzbekistan. 2006 and 2007 saw some foreign investors depart Uzbekistan because of declining investor confidence, harassment, and currency convertibility problems. However, in 2007 GM-DAT, a Korean subsidiary of GM entered Uzbekistan when it signed a joint-venture agreement with UzDaewoo to assemble Korean-manufactured cars for export and domestic sale, including Chevrolets. GM is looking to expand its operations in Uzbekistan. Boeing also has a longstanding relationship with the national airline of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan Airways.

DEFENSE

Uzbekistan possesses the largest and most competent military forces in the Central Asian region, having around 65,000 people in uniform. Its structure is inherited from the Soviet armed forces, although it is moving rapidly toward a fully restructured organization, which will eventually be built around light and Special Forces. The Uzbek Armed Forces' equipment is not modern, and training, while improving, is neither uniform nor adequate yet for its new mission of territorial security. The government has accepted the arms control obligations of the former Soviet Union, acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (as a non-nuclear state), and has supported an active program by the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to demilitarize and clean up former weapons of mass destruction-related facilities in western Uzbekistan (Nukus and Vozrozhdeniye Island), as well as to guard against the proliferation of radiological materials across its borders. The Government of Uzbekistan spends about 2% of GDP on the military (2005 est.).

Beginning in the late 1990s until 2004, the government received U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and other security assistance funds. Beginning in 2004, new FMF and IMET assistance to Uzbekistan was stopped, as the Secretary of State, implementing U.S. Government legislation, was unable to certify that the Government of Uzbekistan was making progress in meeting its commitments, including respect for human rights and economic reform, under the U.S.-Uzbekistan Strategic Framework Agreement. Uzbekistan approved U.S. Central Command's request for access to a vital military air base in southern Uzbekistan following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., but asked the U.S. to leave in July 2005. All U.S. forces had departed this facility by November 2005.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Uzbekistan is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the United Nations, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, NATO Partnership for Peace, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Economic Cooperation Organization—comprised of the five Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In 1999, Uzbekistan joined the GUAM alliance (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova), which was formed in 1997 (making it GUUAM), but formally withdrew in 2005. Uzbekistan hosts the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. Uzbekistan is a founding member of the Central Asian Union, formed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (and which Tajikistan joined in March 1998). In 2002, Uzbekistan joined the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), which also includes Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. In 2006, Uzbekistan joined the Eurasian Economic Community (EurASEC), comprising Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, but subsequently withdrew in 2008.

Uzbekistan participated in the CIS peacekeeping force in Tajikistan and in UN-organized groups to help resolve the Tajik and Afghan con-

flicts, both of which it viewed as posing threats to its own stability. Uzbekistan is a supporter of U.S. efforts against worldwide terrorism and joined the coalition combating terrorism in Afghanistan. It continues to support coalition anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan by granting access to Germany to an air base in southern Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan has actively participated in regional efforts to combat terrorism and the narcotics trade. It has maintained close ties to Russia, while also seeking to balance this with stronger ties to China and other powers. In November 2005, Uzbekistan signed a mutual defense treaty with Russia.

U.S.-UZBEK RELATIONS

The U.S. recognized the independence of Uzbekistan on December 25, 1991, and opened an Embassy in Tashkent in March 1992. U.S.-Uzbek relations developed slowly and reached a peak following the U.S. decision to invade Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks. Relations cooled significantly following the "color revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan in 2003-2005, and the Government of Uzbekistan sought to limit the influence of U.S. and other foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on civil society, political reform, and human rights inside the country. Relations deteriorated rapidly following U.S. and European demands for an independent, international investigation into the May 2005 Andijon violence.

Relations have improved since the second half of 2007 as both the United States and Uzbekistan sought re-engagement under the terms of the March 2002 Declaration of Strategic Partnership between the two countries. The declaration covers not only security and economic relations but political reform, economic reform, and human rights. Uzbekistan has Central Asia's largest population and is vital to U.S., regional, and international efforts to promote stability and security.

Bilateral Economic Relations

Trade and investment. Trade relations are regulated by a bilateral trade agreement, which entered into force January 14, 1994. It provides for extension of most-favored-nation trade status between the two countries. The U.S. additionally granted Uzbekistan exemption from many U.S. import tariffs under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP status) on August 17, 1994. A Bilateral Investment Treaty was signed December 16, 1994; it has been ratified by Uzbekistan and received advice and consent of the U.S. Senate in October 2000. However, the Bilateral Investment Treaty will be unlikely to enter into force until Uzbekistan embarks on economic reform. The government is taking some modest steps to reduce the bureaucratic restraints on the nascent private sector.

Assistance. The United States' humanitarian and technical assistance to Uzbekistan has decreased markedly since 2004, both as a result of government actions against U.S. implementing partners and U.S. Government restrictions on aid. Since its independence, the U.S. has provided technical support to Uzbekistan's efforts to restructure its economy and to improve its environment, education, and health care system, provided support to nascent NGOs, and provided equipment to improve water availability and quality in the Aral Sea region. Through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Embassy's Public Affairs Section, the U.S. Government continues to support educational and professional exchanges and other programs that offer Uzbeks the opportunity to study in the United States and to establish professional contacts with their American counterparts. The Departments of State and Defense provide technical assistance in the form of equipment and training to enhance Uzbekistan's control over its borders and its capabilities to interdict the illicit movement of narcotics, people, and goods, including potential weapons of mass destruction-related items. In FY 2003, the United States provided roughly $87.4 million in humanitarian aid, technical assistance, military-to-military funding, and microcredit support in Uzbekistan. U.S. assistance grew to approximately $101.8 million in FY 2004, but fell to $92.6 million in FY 2005. These programs were designed to promote market reform and to establish a foundation for an open, prosperous, democratic society. Starting in 2004, the Secretary of State has been unable to certify that Uzbekistan has met its obligations under the bilateral 2002 Strategic Framework Agreement. As a result, U.S. assistance declined to approximately $10 million in FY 2008.

USAID provides both technical and humanitarian assistance. Technical assistance to Uzbekistan promotes sound fiscal and management policies, a strengthened business enabling environment, enhanced competitiveness of the agribusiness sector, increased citizens' participation in civil society and economic decision making, improved sustainability of social benefits and services, reduced environmental risks to public health, and other multi-sector reform programs. The USAID/Central Asian Republics Uzbekistan health program focuses on four chief needs: primary health care reform, HIV/AIDS and infectious disease control, drug demand reduction, and reproductive and maternal and child health. Programs are designed to develop local capacity and promote mechanisms for citizens to engage with their local government. U.S. Government funds also support the work of non-governmental organizations to prevent trafficking in persons and care for victims.

Peace Corps staff arrived in Uzbekistan in August 1992, and a bilateral agreement to establish the Peace Corps in Uzbekistan was signed November 4, 1992. The first volunteers arrived in December 1992. Peace Corps Volunteers were active in English teaching, small business

development, public health, and women's issues. However, Uzbekistan failed to renew visas for Peace Corps volunteers in 2005, ending the Peace Corps presence in the country. Department of State-managed exchange programs, farmer-to-farmer exchanges, and the Department of Commerce's Special American Business Internship Training Program (SABIT) contribute to expansion of technical know-how and support bilateral relations. The U.S. also provides export finance/guarantees and political risk insurance for U.S. exporters and investors through the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Proceeds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Monetization Program are scheduled to finance more than 30 farmer assistance and rural development projects which were approved jointly by U.S. and Uzbek officials in 2005. Some of the selected projects are already underway.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

TASHKENT (E), APO/FPO 7110 Tashkent Place, Dulles, VA 20189-7110, 998-71-120-5450, Fax 998-71-120-6335, Workweek: M-F, 0900-1800, Website: www.usembassy.uz.

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AMB OMS:	Patti Hagopian
CDC:	Michael Schmoyer (Almaty)
FM:	Jeffrey Walker
HRO:	Suzanne Clarke
MGT:	Doug Ellrich
POL/ECO:	Robert McCutcheon
AMB:	Richard B. Norland
CON:	Rafael Perez
DCM:	Duane Butcher
PAO:	Carol Farajdo
GSO:	Josh Rubin
RSO:	Edward Phillips
AFSA:	Molly Stephenson
AGR:	Ralph Gifford (Ankara)
AID:	James Bonner
DAO:	Ltc. Jeffrey Hartman
DEA:	Paul Hackett–Dushanbe
EEO:	Suzanne Clark
FMO:	Suzanne Clarke
ICASS Chair:	Ltc. Jeffry Hartman
IMO:	Bradley Gabler
IRS:	Susan Stanley (Frankfurt)
ISO:	Tom Strickland
ISSO:	Bradley Gabler
LEGATT:	Howard Ledbetter (Astana)
State ICASS:	Carol Fajardo

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

June 30, 2008

Country Description: Uzbekistan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. While the country has undergone significant change since then, its progress towards democratic and economic reform has been halting and uneven. Corruption is endemic at all levels of society. Much of the country, particularly areas outside of Tashkent and the major tourist destinations of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, is remote and difficult to access. Tourist facilities in these areas are typically below Western standards, and many goods and services remain difficult to find on a regular basis.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. Although official invitation letters are not required for American citizens applying for tourist visas, they are required for those planning to visit an individual who resides in Uzbekistan. Tourist visas cannot be extended in Uzbekistan. Visas are issued by Uzbek embassies and consulates abroad. Visitors coming from countries where Uzbekistan does not have diplomatic or consular representation should obtain visas in a third country. Visas are not available upon arrival at Uzbek airports. The Embassy has received a number of reports from American citizens who have had problems obtaining Uzbek visas or who received Uzbek visas valid for a very limited period, usually for fewer than three months. Americans seeking visas are encouraged to apply for their visas well in advance of their travel.

It is important to note that Uzbek visas indicate not only the validity of the visa, but also the period of time a person is allowed to stay in Uzbekistan on a given trip. A visitor will have to leave the country before the number of days indicated as the duration of stay on the visa expires. Therefore, it is important to indicate your intended period of stay when applying for your Uzbek visa. American citizens who are affiliated with a non-governmental organization (NGO) that has been closed in Uzbekistan may be prevented from entering the country, even with a valid visa. All travelers, even those simply transiting Uzbekistan for fewer than 72 hours, must obtain an Uzbek visa before traveling to Uzbekistan.

The Uzbek Government maintains travel restrictions on large parts of the Surkhandarya province bordering Afghanistan, including the border city of Termez. The border crossing point at Hayraton between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, while open, is tightly controlled. Foreign citizens intending to travel to this province must obtain a special permission card from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs or Uzbek embassies and consulates abroad. Even with such permission, however, some American citizens transiting to Afghanistan via Termez have been briefly detained and/or fined for not registering in Uzbekistan.

Travel within Uzbekistan by rail or land sometimes requires brief exit into neighboring countries. Travelers should have multiple-entry Uzbek visas and a proper visa for the neighboring country in order to avoid delays in travel.

Registration after entry: All travelers present in Uzbekistan for more than three business days must register with the Office of Entry, Exit, and Citizenship, commonly known as "OVIR." Hotel guests are registered automatically, but all other travelers are responsible for registering themselves. Registration fees vary depending on length of stay. See http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov/consular for more information. Visitors without proper registration are subject to fines, imprisonment, and deportation. The fines range from $500 to $4,000. Uzbek law mandates that visitors carry a medical certificate attesting that they are not infected with HIV, but this requirement is

sporadically enforced. Further visa information is available from the Consular Section of the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1746 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20036; telephone: (202) 530-7291; fax: (202) 293-9633; web site: http://www.uzbekistan.org, or, from the Consulate General of Uzbekistan in New York City, 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 327A, New York, NY 10017; telephone: (212) 754-7403; fax: (212) 838-9812; web site: http://www.uzbekconsulny.org.

Safety and Security: A Travel Warning remains in effect for Uzbekistan, and other parts of Central Asia. The Department of State reminds U.S. citizens of the potential for terrorist attacks or localized civil disturbances in Uzbekistan. Although there have been no violent incidents there since May 2005, Americans visiting or living in Uzbekistan are urged to exercise caution. The U.S. Government continues to receive information that indicates terrorist groups may be planning attacks, possibly against U.S. interests, in Uzbekistan. Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, al-Qaida, the Islamic Jihad Union, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement are active in the region. Members of these groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and have attacked U.S. Government interests in the past, including the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, and may attempt to target U.S. Government or private American interests in Uzbekistan. In the past, these groups have conducted kidnappings, assassinations, and suicide bombings.

Increased security at official U.S. facilities over the past year may lead terrorists and their sympathizers to seek softer targets. These may include facilities where Americans and other foreigners congregate or visit, such as residential areas, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, hotels, outdoor recreation events, and resorts. The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent continues to employ heightened security precautions. U.S. citizens should report any unusual activity to local authorities and then inform the Embassy.

Uzbekistan experienced a wave of terrorist violence in 2004. In July 2004 there were three suicide bombings in Tashkent, including one outside the U.S. Embassy. The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) claimed responsibility for the attacks. The IJU also used suicide bombers in multiple attacks targeting police and Uzbek private and commercial facilities in Tashkent and Bukhara in late March and early April 2004. In May 2005, armed militants stormed a prison in Andijon, released its prisoners, and then took control of the regional administration and other government buildings in Andijon Province. Fighting broke out between government forces and the militants, and reports indicated that several hundred civilians died in the ensuing violence. While there were no reports of U.S. citizens being affected by the fighting, U.S. citizens and other foreigners in Uzbekistan frequently have experienced harassment from authorities and local residents in the wake of the events of 2005.

Depending upon security conditions, travelers can expect and anticipate restricted personal movement, including the closing of roads to traffic in addition to frequent document, vehicle, and personal identification checks. The Uzbek Government has intermittently restricted travel to certain parts of the country in response to security concerns.

Crime: Uzbekistan's rate of violent crime, including against foreigners, has increased slightly in recent years. In urban areas, travelers are urged to take the same precautions against crime that they would take in a large American city. If you are traveling at night, please travel in groups, maintain a low profile, and do not display large amounts of cash. Beware of pickpockets in public places, such as tourist destinations and local markets.

Although using private cars as taxicabs is a common practice in Uzbekistan, Americans, especially women, should not consider this a safe practice. Americans are encouraged to use clearly marked taxicabs, such as those at hotels. Also, Americans should avoid riding in taxis alone. In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting the crime to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalents to the "911" emergency lines in Uzbekistan are: 01 for fire; 02 for police; 03 for an ambulance; and 050 for the Ministry of Emergency Situations.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care in Uzbekistan is below Western standards, with severe shortages of basic medical supplies, including disposable needles, anesthetics, and antibiotics. A large percentage of medication sold in local pharmacies is known to be counterfeit. Elderly travelers and those with pre-existing health problems may be at particular risk due to inadequate medical facilities. Most resident Americans travel to North America or Western Europe for their medical needs.

Travelers are advised to drink only boiled water, peel all fruits and vegetables, and avoid undercooked meat. Due to inadequate sanitation conditions, travelers should avoid eating

unpasteurized dairy products and most food sold in the streets. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Uzbekistan is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Uzbekistan has a developed but inconsistently maintained traffic infrastructure. Although main roads in central Tashkent are relatively well maintained, many secondary roads inside and outside Tashkent, and particularly those in the Tien Shan and Fan Mountains, are in poor condition and may be passable only by four-wheel-drive vehicles. Driving at night can be quite dangerous because only the main roads in Tashkent and a few other major cities have streetlights; rural roads and highways generally are not lit. Visitors are strongly urged to avoid driving at night outside Tashkent. The gasoline supply can be sporadic; therefore, travelers should expect occasional difficulty finding gasoline, particularly outside of Tashkent.

Livestock, as well as farm equipment and carts drawn by animals that lack lights or reflectors, are found on both urban and rural roads at any hour. Local drivers are not familiar with safe driving techniques. Pedestrians in cities and rural areas cross streets unexpectedly and often without looking for oncoming traffic. Uzbekistan has a large road police force, which frequently stops drivers for minor infractions or simple document checks. There have been reports of harassment of foreign drivers by the road police, with reported minor police corruption in the form of solicitation of bribes. Visit the website of Uzbekistan's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.uzbektourism.uz

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Uzbekistan's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Uzbekistan's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Travelers to Uzbekistan are subject to frequent document inspections. Therefore, U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to carry a certified copy of their U.S. passport and their Uzbek visa with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship are readily available. In accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and certain bilateral agreements, local authorities must grant a United States Consular Officer access to any U.S. citizen who is arrested. U.S. citizens who are arrested or detained should ask to contact the U.S. Embassy immediately.

Uzbek customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary import to or export from Uzbekistan of items such as armaments and ammunition, space technology, encryption devices, X-ray and isotope equipment, nuclear materials, poisons, drugs, precious and semi-precious metals, nullified securities, pieces of art, and antiques of historical value. Contact the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Washington, D.C. or the Consulate of Uzbekistan in New York for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Most transactions are conducted on a cash-only, local currency (soum) basis. Many merchants will accept dollars for larger tourist handicraft purchases. Credit cards are accepted only at the main hotels and a few shops and restaurants; travelers' checks can be cashed into dollars at the National Bank of Uzbekistan. The commission fee is two percent. Importation of currency exceeding $10,000 (US) is subject to a one-percent duty. Foreigners must complete a customs declaration upon entering Uzbekistan. The amount of cash taken out of Uzbekistan should not exceed the amount indicated on the customs declaration. In order to export more cash than was imported, one must have special permission from the National Bank of Uzbekistan. Those who understate the amount of currency on their declaration form upon departure from Uzbekistan face fines and confiscation of their unreported money. Old U.S. dollar bills (prior to 1990) and/or those in poor condition (with tears, writing or stamps) are not acceptable forms of currency in Uzbekistan. Although payment in U.S. dollars is required for certain hotel charges, airline tickets, and visa fees, other dollar transactions, as well as black market currency exchanges, are prohibited.

Uzbekistan is an earthquake-prone country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual

under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Uzbek laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Uzbekistan are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Uzbekistan are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Uzbekistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at # 3, Moyqorghon Street, 5th Block, Yunusobod District, Tashkent -700093, Uzbekistan. The main Embassy telephone number, which can also be reached after hours, is (998 71) 120-5450, fax: (998 71) 120-6335; Consular fax: (998 71) 120-54-48; e-mail: ConsularTashkent@state.gov; web site: http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Uzbekistan is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Uzbekistan, you must be found eligible to adopt by the U.S. Government. The U.S. Government agency responsible for making this determination is the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adopting in Uzbekistan is very difficult, and the Embassy is aware of only one adoption agency that has been able to process two adoptions since 2003. Adoption is a sensitive issue in Uzbekistan, and some Uzbek officials are not in favor of foreign adoptions. Individuals wishing to adopt in Uzbekistan, therefore, may face unexpected opposition, even when a case has been fully processed and the adoption is ready to be formalized. In addition to these U.S. requirements for adoptive parents, Uzbekistan also has the following requirements for adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: There are no residency requirements for Uzbekistan.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 15 years older than the child.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents may be married or single.

Who Can Be Adopted? Uzbekistan has specific requirements that a child must meet in order to be eligible for adoption. In addition to these requirements, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States. Learn more about these U.S. requirements.

Relinquishment Requirements: Minimum legal requirements must be met prior to the issuance of an adoption decree by the respective Mayor. Such requirements include the need for the child to remain in an orphanage for at least one year. This applies only to children who have been place with social services by their own parents. If there is legal finding determining the parents as "missing," "deprived of parental rights," "legally incapable," or "deceased," then the one-year rule does not apply. To meet both U.S. and Uzbek legal requirements, there should have been a reasonable effort made to locate the birth parents by competent authorities.

Uzbek Adoption Authority: Ministry of Education and the local Mayor's office ("Hokimiat")

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Uzbekistan is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the U.S. state in which they operate.

To bring an adopted child from Uzbekistan to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the U.S. Government, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Uzbekistan will provide you with a referral to a child. The child must be eligible to be adopted according to Uzbekistan's requirements. The child must also meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. law.

Role of the Adoption Authority: Under Uzbek law, the Guardianship and Trusteeship Organ (GTO) of each local Mayor's (Hokimiat) office is responsible for settlement of orphans. Adoptive parents or their legal representatives must submit documents to a local Mayor through its GTO.

Adoption Application: Once the prospective adoptive parents have selected a child, they or their legal representatives should submit an application and supporting documents directly to the Guardianship and Trusteeship Organ (GTO) of the Mayor's office ("Hokimiat") of the region. The application should include the prospective parents' names, place of residence, marital information, and complete information (name, age, sex) of any children they already have. It should also include the name, age and sex of the Uzbek child they wish to adopt.

After reviewing the family's documentation, the GTO will pass the documents to the Mayor for approval. Based on the Mayor's approval, the local Vital Records office issues a new birth certificate. The new birth certificate includes the names of the adoptive parents and changes the child's last name to the adoptive parents' last name. First name and the date of birth of the child can be changed upon request. The date of birth may be changed, but not by more than one year. If a child is under ten years old, his/her place of birth can also be changed to another location within the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

With the Mayor's (Hokim's) permission and the vital record office, the Administration for Entry, Exit, and Citizenship issues a passport and exit permission to the child. As was stated earlier in this flyer, prospective parents are not required to have maintained residency in Uzbekistan for any particular length of time.

In order to process adoption cases in the most expeditious manner and to avoid unforeseen delays due to incomplete documentation, please submit adoption documents for review at least 5 business days prior to the date of the child's expected interview date.

Time Frame: Foreign adoption in Uzbekistan is a time consuming process. It can take from six months to two years. In some cases the U.S. Embassy may be required to conduct field investigations after adoption documents have been submitted. This could cause significant delays in processing. Adoptive parents should be prepared to make additional trips to Uzbekistan before the adoption is complete.

Adoption Fees: The Uzbek Government charges small official fees, usually about $10 USD per document, for the submission and processing of the adoption application and corresponding documents.

Documents Required: The following documents must be submitted by the prospective parents for adoption:

- Application to the GTO of the regional Hokimiat, with the information outlined in this flyer (names, place of residence, marital information, data on current children, and information about the prospective adoptive child);
- Copy of prospective adoptive parent(s) passport(s);
- Marriage certificates and/or divorce decrees, if applicable;
- Home study certificate, including the number of family members;
- Employment letter for the prospective adoptive parent(s), including salary information;
- Letter of recommendation (description of personality) from a parent's employer, local city hall or home study agency;
- Medical certificate from a doctor indicating that the prospective parents are healthy, do not have communicable diseases, and do not abuse drugs or alcohol;
- Letter from U.S. Embassy, based on the approved I-600A notification (Visas 37) which states that the U.S. Government is aware of the family, and that relevant authorities have approved the family for an adoption of an orphan.

All documents must be translated into Uzbek or Russian by an official translator and authenticated by the Uzbek Embassy in the United States. For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa.

For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Uzbek law has no post-adoption requirements for adoptive parents. Parents should confirm any post-adoption requirements with their legal representatives.

Contact Information
U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan
MoyqorghonStreet,5thBlock,
Yunusobod District
Tashkent-700093
Uzbekistan
Phone:(998)(71)120-5450
Fax:(998)(71)120-5448

http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov
General Consular E-mail:
ConsularTashkent@state.gov

Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan
1746 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202-887-5300
Fax: 202—293-6804
Email: info@uzbekistan.org

Office of Children's Issues
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).

International Parental Child Abduction

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov/childabduction.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Uzbekistan is a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction but the Convention is not yet in force between Uzbekistan and the United States.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is not recognized under Uzbek law.

Custody Disputes: Past Uzbek court practice has given priority for custodianship to the mother as long as certain restrictive conditions are met. The father can appeal for custody at any time.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Uzbekistan if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices.

Visitation Rights: In cases where one parent has custody of a child, the second parent may be granted visitation rights by court decision.

Travel Restrictions: Uzbekistan issues two types of exit permissions:

- Temporary exit permission valid for two years: Consent of both parents (or guardian) is needed only for a minor under the age of 16. If only one parent is alive, a death certificate must be supplied.
- Permission to leave the country indefinitely: ALL citizens (adults and children) must submit a notarized letter of consent from both parents or supply a death certificate of the parents.

Persons who wish to pursue a child claim in Uzbekistan court should retain an attorney in Uzbekistan. The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent maintains a list of lawyers acting in Uzbekistan.

For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Travel Warning

July 3, 2008

This Travel Warning is being issued to remind U.S. citizens that the potential for a terrorist attack or localized civil disturbance still exists, despite the fact that there have been no violent incidents in Uzbekistan since May 2005. The Department of State continues to urge Americans in Uzbekistan to exercise caution when traveling in the region. This supersedes the Travel Warning dated October 25, 2007.

The U.S. Government continues to receive information that indicates terrorist groups may be planning attacks, possibly against U.S. interests, in Uzbekistan. Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Al-Qaida, the Islamic Jihad Union, and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement are active in the region. Members of these groups have expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and have attacked U.S. Government interests in the past, including the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent, and may attempt to target U.S. Government or private American interests in Uzbekistan. In the past, these groups have conducted kidnappings, assassinations, and suicide bombings, though no instances have been documented in recent years.

High security at official U.S. facilities may lead terrorists and their sympathizers to seek softer targets. These may include facilities where Americans and other foreigners congregate or visit, such as residential areas, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, hotels, outdoor recreation events, and resorts. The U.S. Embassy in Tashkent continues to employ heightened security precautions. U.S. citizens should report any unusual activity to local authorities and then inform the Embassy.

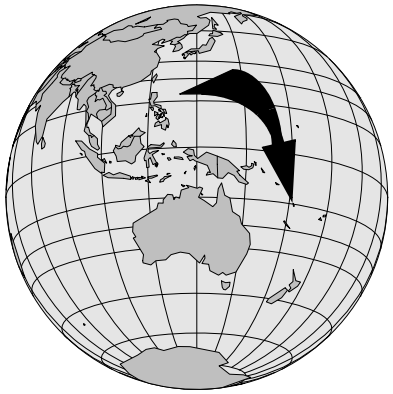
The Uzbek Government maintains travel restrictions on large parts of the Surkhandarya province bordering Afghanistan, including the border city of Termez. American citizens intending to travel to this region must obtain a special permission card from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or Uzbek embassies and consulates abroad. Even with permission, however, some American citizens transiting to Afghanistan via Termez have been briefly detained and/or fined for

not registering in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, American citizens affiliated with nongovernmental organizations that have been closed in Uzbekistan may be denied entry, even with a valid visa.

Uzbekistan experienced a wave of terrorist violence in 2004. In July 2004 there were three suicide bombings in Tashkent, including one outside the U.S. Embassy. The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) claimed responsibility for the attacks. The IJU also used suicide bombers in multiple attacks focused on police and Uzbek private and commercial facilities in Tashkent and Bukhara in late March and early April 2004. In May 2005, armed militants stormed a prison in Andijon, released its prisoners, and then took control of the regional administration and other government buildings in Andijon Province. Fighting broke out between government forces and the militants, and reports indicated that several hundred civilians died in the ensuing violence. While there were no reports of U.S. citizens affected by these events, U.S. citizens and other foreigners in Uzbekistan have experienced harassment from authorities since the 2005 violence.

Americans traveling to or remaining in Uzbekistan are strongly urged to register with the U.S. Embassy through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Uzbekistan. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent. The U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan is located at # 3, Moyqorghon Street, 5th Block, Yunusobod District, Tashkent-700093, Uzbekistan. The telephone number is 998-71-120-5450 and can be reached after hours as well. The Consular fax number is 998-71-120-5448. The website is http://uzbekistan.usembassy.gov.

As the Department continues to develop information on any potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through its consular information documents, including the Country Specific Information for Uzbekistan and the Worldwide Caution, available on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. In addition to information on the Internet, travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or, outside the U.S. and Canada, on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).



VANUATU

Compiled from the October 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Vanuatu

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 11,830 sq. km. (4,568 sq. miles) archipelago of 83 islands. Comparative area—about the size of Connecticut.

Cities: Capital—Port Vila (on the island of Efate), pop. 33,700. Other towns—Luganville (on the island of Espiritu Santo, also known as Santo).

Terrain: Mostly mountains of volcanic origin, narrow coastal plains.

Climate: Tropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—ni-Vanuatu.

Population: (2007 est.) 218,000.

Annual growth rate: (2007 est.) 2.0%.

Ethnic groups: 94% ni-Vanuatu; 4% European; 2% other Pacific Islanders, Asian.

Religions: Predominantly Christian (84%).

Languages: Bislama (Pidgin), English, French, over 100 tribal languages.

Education: Enrollment in primary is 100% with rapid fall-off to 20% in secondary and upper secondary. Adult literacy rate (2007)—74% of those age 15 and older.

Health: Infant mortality rate (2007)—53/1,000. Life expectancy (2007)—63 yrs.

Work force: (1999) 134,000. Agriculture—65%. Industry—5%. Service—30%.

Government

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Independence: July 30, 1980.

Constitution: July 30, 1980.

Government branches: Executive—president (head of state), prime minister (head of government). Legislative—unicameral (52-member parliament). Judicial—Supreme Court.

Political subdivisions: 6 administrative districts.

Political parties: Melanesian Progressive Party (MPP); Union of Moderate Parties (UMP); National United Party (NUP); Vanua'aku Party (VP); Vanuatu Republican Party (VRP); the Confederation of Greens (CG); John Frum group; People's Progressive Party (PPP); National Community Association (NCA).

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Independence: July 30.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $343.6 million.

Per capita income: (2005) $1,576.

Real growth rate: (2006) 4%.

Avg. inflation rate: (2006) 1.8%.

Natural resources: Forests, agricultural land, marine resources.

Agriculture: Products—copra, cocoa, coffee, cattle, timber.

Industry: Types—copra production, beef processing, sawmilling, tourism, financial services.

Trade: (2003) Exports—$135.27 million: coconut oil, copra, kava, beef. Major markets—EU 44.9%, Australia 12.1%, Japan 6.8%, New Caledonia 4.6%. Imports—$181.4 million: machines and transport equipment, food and live animals, basic manufactures, mineral fuels. Major suppliers—Australia 42.5%, New Zealand 13.0%, Fiji 8.6%, Singapore 6.2%.

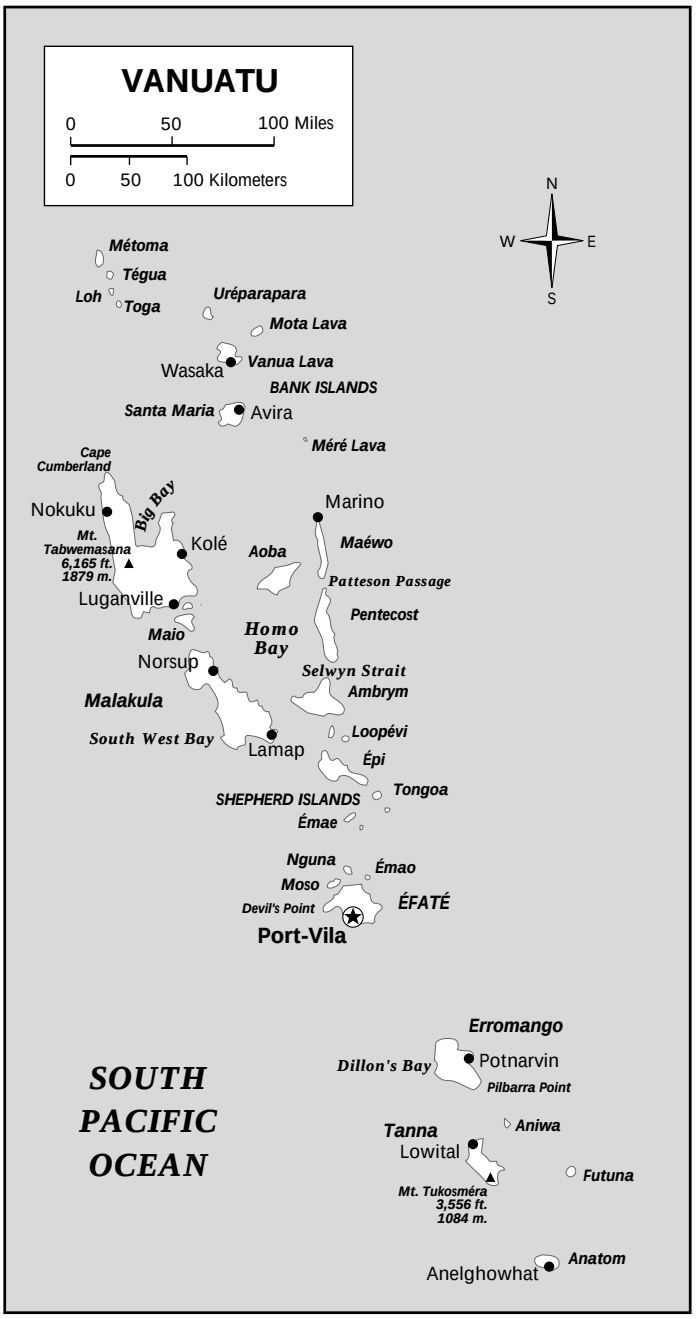
Exchange rate: (2005 avg.) 109.25 vatu=U.S.$1.

GEOGRAPHY

Vanuatu is a 'Y' shaped archipelago of 83 islands. It is located about 1,750 kilometers east of Australia. Fiji lies to the east, New Caledonia to the south, and the Solomon Islands to the northwest, all within the area of the South Pacific called Melanesia.

The two largest islands, Espiritu Santo (or Santo) and Malakula, account for nearly one-half of the total land area. They are volcanic, with sharp mountain peaks, plateaus, and lowlands. The larger islands of the remaining half also are

volcanic but are overlaid with limestone formations; the smaller ones are coral and limestone. Volcanic activity is common with an ever-present danger of a major eruption, the last of which occurred in 1945. Rainfall averages about 2,360 millimeters (94 in.) per year but can be as high as 4,000 millimeters (160 in.) in the northern islands.



PEOPLE

The population of Vanuatu is 94% indigenous Melanesian. About 33,700 live in the capital, Port Vila. Another 10,700 live in Luganville (or Santo Town) on Espiritu Santo. The remainder live in rural areas. Approximately 2,000 ni-Vanuatu live and work in New Caledonia. Although local pidgin, called Bislama, is the national language, English and French also are official languages. Indigenous Melanesians speak 105 local languages.

Christianity has had a profound influence on ni-Vanuatu society, and an estimated 90% of the population is affiliated with one of the Christian denominations. The largest denominations are Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Anglican. John Frum, a syncretic sect, also is important on Tanna Island.

HISTORY

The prehistory of Vanuatu is obscure; archaeological evidence supports the commonly held theory that peoples speaking Austronesian languages first came to the islands some 4,000 years ago. Pottery fragments have been found dating back to 1300-1100 B.C.

The first island in the Vanuatu group discovered by Europeans was Espiritu Santo, when in 1606 the Portuguese explorer, Pedro Fernandez De Quiros, spied what he thought was a southern continent. Europeans did not return until 1768, when Louis Antoine de Bougainville rediscovered the islands. In 1774, Captain Cook named the islands the New Hebrides, a name that lasted until independence.

In 1825, trader Peter Dillon's discovery of sandalwood on the island of Erromango began a rush that ended in 1830 after a clash between immigrant Polynesian workers and indigenous Melanesians. During the 1860s, planters in Australia, Fiji, New Caledonia, and the Samoa Islands, in need of laborers, encouraged a long-term indentured labor trade called "blackbirding." At the height of the labor trade, more than one-half the adult male population of several of the Islands worked abroad. Fragmentary evidence indicates that the current population of Vanuatu is greatly reduced compared to pre-contact times.

It was at this time that missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, arrived on the islands. Settlers also came, looking for land on which to establish cotton plantations. When international cotton prices collapsed, they switched to coffee, cocoa, bananas, and, most successfully, coconuts. Initially, British subjects from Australia made up the majority, but the establishment of the Caledonian Company of the New Hebrides in 1882 soon tipped the balance in favor of French subjects. By the turn of the century, the French outnumbered the British two to one.

The jumbling of French and British interests in the islands brought petitions for one or another of the two powers to annex the territory. In 1906, however, France and the United Kingdom agreed to administer the islands jointly. Called the British-French Condominium, it was a unique form of government, with separate governmental systems that came together only in a joint court. Melanesians were barred from acquiring the citizenship of either power.

Challenges to this form of government began in the early 1940s. The arrival of Americans during World War II, with their informal demeanor and relative wealth, was instrumental in the rise of nationalism in the islands. The belief in a mythical messianic figure named John Frum was the basis for an indigenous cargo cult (a movement attempting to obtain industrial goods through magic) promising Melanesian deliverance. Today, John Frum is both a religion and a political party with a member in Parliament.

The first political party was established in the early 1970s and originally was called the New Hebrides National Party. One of the founders was Father Walter Lini, who later became Prime Minister. Renamed the Vanua'aku Pati in 1974, the party pushed for independence; in 1980, the Republic of Vanuatu was created.

GOVERNMENT

The constitution created a republican political system headed by a president who has primarily ceremonial powers and is elected by a two-thirds majority in an electoral college consisting of members of Parliament and the presidents of Regional Councils. The president serves a 5-year term. The president may be removed by the Electoral College for gross misconduct or incapacity. The prime minister, who is the head of government, is elected by a majority vote of a three-fourths quorum of the Parliament. The prime minister in turn appoints the Council of Ministers, whose number may not exceed one-fourth of the number of parliamentary representatives. The prime minister and the Council of Ministers constitute the executive government.

Parliament is a 52-member unicameral house elected by all persons over 18 years old. Parliament normally sits for a 4-year term unless dissolved by majority vote of a three-fourths quorum or a directive from the president on the advice of the prime minister. The national Council of Chiefs, called the Malvatu Mauri and elected by district councils of chiefs, advises the government on all matters concerning ni-Vanuatu culture and language.

The Supreme Court consists of a chief justice and up to three other judges. Two or more members of this court may constitute a Court of Appeal. Magistrate courts handle most routine legal matters. The legal system is based on British law. The constitution also provides for the establishment of village or island courts presided over by chiefs to deal with questions of customary law.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

President: **Kalkot Matas KELEKELE**
Prime Minister: **Ham LINI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Sato KILMAN**
Min. of Agriculture, Forestry, & Fisheries: **Barak SOPE Ma'au Tamate**
Min. of the Comprehensive Reform Program: **Isabelle DONALD**
Min. of Education: **Joseph NATUMAN**
Min. of Finance & Economic Development: **Moana CARCASSES**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Sato KILMAN**
Min. of Health: **Morkin Iatika STEVENS**
Min. of Internal Affairs: **Georges Andre WELLS**
Min. of Lands, Geology, & Mines: **Willie Jimmy TAPANGARARUA**
Min. of Ni-Vanuatu Business Development: **Joshua KALSAKAU**
Min. of Public Utilities: **Edward NATAPEI**
Min. of Trade, Commerce, & Industries: **James BULE**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Arnold PRASAD**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

Vanuatu does not have an embassy in Washington. Its mission to the United Nations is located at 866 UN Plaza, 4th Floor, Room 41, First Avenue and 48th Street, New York, NY 10017. Vanuatu Maritime Services, which provides information on ship registration in Vanuatu, is located at 120 Broadway, Suite 1743, New York, NY 10271.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Government and society in Vanuatu tend to divide along linguistic—French and English—lines. Historically, English-speaking politicians such as Walter Lini and other leaders of the Vanua'aku Pati favored early independence, whereas French-speaking political leaders favored continuing association with the colonial administrators, particularly France.

On the eve of independence in 1980, Jimmy Stevens' Nagriamel movement, in alliance with private French interests and backed by American libertarians hoping to establish a tax-free haven, declared the island of Espiritu Santo independent of the new government. Following independence, Vanuatu requested assistance from Papua New Guinea, whose forces restored order on Santo. From then until 1991, the Vanua'aku Pati and its predominantly English-

speaking leadership controlled the Vanuatu Government, and Walter Lini became widely considered as the nation's founding father.

In December 1991, and following a split in the Vanua'aku Pati, Maxime Carlot Korman, leader of the Francophone Union of Moderate Parties (UMP), was elected Vanuatu's first Francophone prime minister. He formed a coalition government with Walter Lini's breakaway VP faction, now named the National United Party (NUP). From 1995-2004 government leadership changed frequently due to unstable coalitions within the Parliament and within the major parties.

The president dissolved Parliament in May 2004 to forestall a vote of no confidence and called a special election that resulted in losses for most major parties. UMP's leader, Serge Vohor, returned as Prime Minister at the head of an unwieldy coalition government. Following controversy over Vohor's attempt to extend diplomatic relations to Taiwan, he was ousted by a vote of no confidence in December 2004 and replaced by Ham Lini, brother of Walter Lini. The new coalition includes ten parties and features the former opposition leader, Sato Kilman, as Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister.

Elections were held on September 2, 2008, and a seven-party coalition elected Edward Natapei as Prime Minister with the former Prime Minister, Ham Lini, as Deputy Prime Minister.

ECONOMY

Vanuatu's economy is primarily agricultural; 80% of the population is engaged in agricultural activities that range from subsistence farming to smallholder farming of coconuts and other cash crops. Copra is by far the most important cash crop (making up more than 35% of the country's exports), followed by timber, beef, and cocoa. Kava root extract exports also have become important. In addition, the government has maintained Vanuatu's preindependence status as a tax haven and international off-shore financial center. About 2,000 registered institutions offer a wide range of offshore banking, investment, legal, accounting, and insurance and trust-company services. Vanuatu also maintains an international shipping register in New York City. In 2002, following increasing international concern over money laundering, Vanuatu increased oversight and reporting requirements for its off-shore sector.

Coconut oil, copra, kava and beef account for more than 75% of Vanuatu's total agricultural exports and agriculture accounts for approximately 20% of GDP. Tourism is a key driver of the economy and contributed 20% of GDP in 2006.

Vanuatu claims an exclusive economic zone of 735,893 square kilometers and possesses substantial marine resources. Currently, only a limited number of ni-Vanuatu are involved in fishing, while foreign fleets exploit this potential.

Vanuatu's economic growth of 3.4% in 2006 was broad-based and highly driven by the services sector especially tourism. Other sectors which contributed significantly were construction (15.7%), wholesale and retail sector (12.4%), and the real estate and business service sector (11.2%). The agricultural sector showed improved performance due to better domestic prices for copra. Other sectors including cocoa, beef, and kava continued to support the growth.

The Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) program is an agreement that allows unskilled Vanuatu laborers, such as fruit pickers and farm workers, to work in New Zealand. Starting from June 2007, RSE is anticipated to bring over 20 million vatu into Vanuatu's economy.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Vanuatu maintains relations with more than 65 countries, including Russia, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, and Vietnam. However, only Australia, France, New Zealand, and the People's Republic of China maintain embassies, high commissions, or missions in Port Vila.

The government's main concern has been to bolster the economy. In keeping with its need for financial assistance, Vanuatu has joined the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique.

The government encourages private enterprise, foreign investment, and producer cooperatives. Like other developing countries, Vanuatu is particularly interested in enterprises that add value to local primary products and that provide employment. In less lucrative sectors, the government sets up its own production companies or enters joint ventures with foreign investors.

Since 1980, Australia, the United Kingdom, France, and New Zealand have provided the bulk of Vanuatu's development aid. A number of other countries, including Japan, Canada, Germany, and various multilateral organizations, such as the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific, the UN Development Program, the Asian Development Bank, the European Economic Community, and the Commonwealth Development Corporation also provide developmental aid. The United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Japan also send volunteers. In March 2006 the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation signed a five-year $65.69 million Compact agreement with Vanuatu. Vanuatu retains strong economic and cultural ties to Australia, New Zealand, and France.

Membership in International Organizations

Vanuatu is a member of the United Nations and its specialized and related agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; Secretariat of the Pacific

Community (SPC); Pacific Islands Forum (PIF); Non-Aligned Movement; Commonwealth, Group of 77; and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

U.S.-VANUATU RELATIONS

The United States and Vanuatu established diplomatic relations in 1986. Between 1977 and 1987, Vanuatu received just under $3 million from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), including projects focusing on assisting the transition to indigenous plantation management. In June 1994, the regional USAID office located in Suva, Fiji, was closed due to U.S. Government budgetary cutbacks. The U.S. military retains training links and conducts ad hoc assistance projects in Vanuatu.

In March 2006 the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation signed a five-year $65.69 million Compact agreement with Vanuatu. The Millennium Challenge Program is expected to increase average income per capita by 15% within five years and directly impact the lives of more than 65,000 of the rural poor in Vanuatu.

Vanuatu identified costly and unreliable transportation infrastructure as a major impediment to economic growth. To overcome this constraint, the Compact consists of up to eleven infrastructure projects—including roads, wharfs, an airstrip and warehouses—that will help poor, rural agricultural producers and providers of tourist related goods and services reduce transportation costs and improve access to transportation services. The Compact also includes institutional strengthening efforts and policy reform initiatives in Vanuatu's Public Works Department, including: provision of plant and equipment for maintenance; introduction of service performance contracts; establishment of local community maintenance schemes; and introduction of user fees.

The United States also remains a major financial contributor to international and regional organizations that assist Vanuatu, including the World Bank, UNICEF, WHO, the UN Fund for Population Activities, and the Asian Development Bank.

In 1989, the United States concluded a Peace Corps agreement with Vanuatu. The Peace Corps has met with a warm welcome there and currently has over 80 volunteers in-country. The United States also provides security training assistance.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

PORT MORESBY (E) Douglas Street, P.O. Box 1492, NCD Port Moresby, 675-321-1455, Fax 675-320-0637, INMARSAT Tel 011-872-1534721, Workweek: 7:45am-4:30pm, Website: portmoresby.usembassy.gov.

AMB OMS:	Christopher Call
MGT:	Mike Bakalar
POL/ECO:	Andrea Appell (Tdy)
AMB:	Leslie Rowe
CON:	Ed Fajardo
DCM:	Thomas Weinz
COM:	Andrea Appell (Tdy)
GSO:	Chris Beenhouwer
RSO:	Bernard Nixon
AFSA:	Chris Beenhouwer
CLO:	Irene Weinz
IMO:	Bill Hamer
ISSO:	Bill Hamer

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 18, 2008

Country Description: Vanuatu consists of more than 80 islands in a Y-shaped archipelago, 1300 miles northeast of Sydney, Australia. It is an independent parliamentary democracy and a member of the British Commonwealth, with a primarily agricultural economy. Tourist facilities are limited outside the capital, Port Vila, which is located on the Island of Efate. The National Tourism Office of Vanuatu can be contacted at PO Box 209, Port Vila, Vanuatu, telephone (678) 22515, 22685, 22813, fax (678) 23889, e-mail: tourism@vanuatu.com.vu.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport, and onward/return ticket and proof of sufficient funds are required. Visas are not required for stays up to 30 days. For further information on entry requirements, particularly those planning to enter by a sailing vessel, please contact the Vanuatu Mission to the United Nations at 42 Broadway, Suite 1200-18, New York, NY 10004, tel. (212) 425-9600, fax (212) 425-9652, e-mail: vmsnyc@attglobal.net.

Travelers who plan to transit or visit Australia must enter with an Australian visa or, if eligible, through Electronic Travel Authority (ETA). The ETA replaces a visa and allows a stay of up to three months. It may be obtained for a small service fee at http://www.eta.immi.gov.au. Airlines and many travel agents in the United States are also able to issue ETA's. Travelers may obtain more information about the ETA and Australian entry requirements from the Australian Embassy at 1601 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036, tel. (202) 797-3000, or via the Australian Embassy's web site at http://www.austemb.org.

Safety and Security: Civil disorder is rare; however, U.S. citizens are advised to avoid public demonstrations and/or political rallies if they occur. For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site at http://travel.state.gov, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, as well as the Worldwide Caution, can be found Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except for U.S. federal holidays).

Crime: Although violent crime is extremely rare in Vanuatu, burglary reports have been on the rise. Tourists, therefore, should take reasonable precautions to avoid exposing themselves to undue risk. There are higher risks for women of being a victim of sexual assault or harassment in Vanuatu, so it is therefore advisable that women travelers not travel alone.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby for assistance. The Embassy staff can assist you to find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney, if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Vanuatu is 112.

Natural Disasters: Vanuatu is prone to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, sudden tidal movements, tropical storms, and cyclones. The Pacific cyclone season lasts from November through April. While local media and hotels will convey cyclone alerts issued by local authorities. Detailed weather information is published by Météo-France in New Caledonia at http://www.meteo.nc/, the Fiji Meteorological Service at http://www.meteo.nc/ and the Naval Pacific Meteorology and Oceanography Center at https://metocph.nmci.navy.mil/jtwc.php.

Volcanoes/Earthquakes: Vanuatu has many active volcanoes whose risk levels can change on a daily basis. Travelers to areas where there are volcanoes can contact the Department of Geology and Mines at 22423 to obtain information about the activity of a volcano. Detailed information about earthquakes is available from the National Earthquake Information Center of the United States Geological Survey at http://earthquake.usgs.gov/regional/neic. The country is situated in an active seismic zone and earthquakes are relatively common, sometimes followed by tsunamis. You should contact the Vanuatu Tourism Office prior to traveling to areas where volcanic activity may occur. If a natural disaster occurs, follow the advice of local authorities. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities are limited. The nearest reliable medical treatment is in Australia or New Zealand. There are two hyperbaric recompression chambers in Vanuatu; one in Luganville, on Espiritu Santo Island, and the other in Port Vila. Please note, however, that diving-related injuries may require medical evacuation to Australia or New Zealand. There is a paramedic service in Vanuatu called ProMedical, which is manned by Australian and New Zealand personnel. They also handle any medical evacuations. Malaria is prevalent in some areas. Serious injuries requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States or elsewhere can cost thousands of dollars). Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for their services.

Pharmacies in Vanuatu are found only in urban centers and at missionary clinics. They are small and may be inadequately stocked. Travelers should bring adequate supplies of their medications for their stay in Vanuatu.

Travelers who anticipate the possible need for medical treatment in Australia should obtain entry permission for Australia in advance. Entry permission for Australian can be granted by the Australian High Commission in Port Vila, but it may be easier to obtain a visa or ETA prior to leaving the United States.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Vanuatu. The Government of Vanuatu does not impose any entry restrictions for persons with the HIV/AIDS virus, as long as they include the information on the arrival form.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Vanuatu is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Vehicular traffic in Vanuatu moves on the right. Travel on highways outside of major towns can be hazardous. Drivers and passengers are advised to wear seatbelts. There is no country-wide road network; roads are generally in poor repair. Vanuatu is a chain of islands and atolls; most long-distance travel is by air or sea. Only the capital city of Port Vila (on Efate Island) and the town of Luganville (on Espiritu Santo Island) have consistently paved roads, which have a maximum speed limit of 50 kilome-

ters per hour. These paved roads can be quite narrow in spots; drivers should take care especially at night or along unfamiliar routes. The roads in all other areas are mostly unpaved or dirt tracks. Drivers on all roads should give way to traffic coming from the right, and to traffic coming from the left at a round-about. Travelers must take care when driving off main roads to avoid trespassing on communal land.

For specific information concerning Vanuatu driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the National Tourism Office of Vanuatu or the Vanuatu Mission to the United Nations at vmsnyc@attglobal.net.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Vanuatu, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Vanuatu's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with ICAO international aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Vanuatu and Australian customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Vanuatu of items such as firearms, certain prescription drugs, wooden artifacts, exotic animals, food, and sexually explicit material. Other products may be subject to quarantine. It is advisable to contact the Vanuatu Mission to the United Nations at 42 Broadway, Suite 1200 18, New York, NY 10004, tel. (212) 425-9600, fax (212) 425-9652, e-mail: vmsnyc@attglobal.net, and the Australian Embassy for specific information regarding customs requirements.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Vanuatu's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession of, use of, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Vanuatu are strict and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: The U.S. Embassy in Papua New Guinea provides primary assistance for U.S. citizens in Vanuatu. The Embassy is located on Douglas Street, adjacent to the Bank of Papua New Guinea, in Port Moresby. Use that address for courier service deliveries. The mailing address is PO Box 1492, Port Moresby, N.C.D. 121, Papua New Guinea; the telephone number is (675) 321-1455; after hours duty officer telephone number is (675) 683-7943; Fax (675) 321-1593. American citizens may submit consular inquiries via e-mail to ConsularPortMoresby@state.gov. Other inquires may be e-mailed to our Virtual Embassy Officer (VEO) at USVPPVanuatu@state.gov. For additional information, and to download forms, please refer to our virtual embassy at www.usvpp-vanuatu.org.

Americans living or traveling in Vanuatu are encouraged to register with the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby through the State Department's travel registration web site, https://travelregistration.state.gov, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Vanuatu. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the Embassy. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency.

Intercountry Adoption

September 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Patterns of Immigration: Recent U.S. immigrant visa statistics indicate that only one orphan from Vanuatu has received an adoption-based immigrant visa within the past five years.

Adoption Authority: Vanuatu courts oversee the adoption system. The court system may be reached by phone at (678) 22420.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents must be 18 years of age or older and can be either single or married. Although there are no income requirements, prospective adoptive parents must satisfy the Vanuatu courts that they are financially secure.

Residency Requirements: Although prospective adoptive parents do not need to be permanent residents of Vanuatu, they must remain in Vanuatu for the three-to-four-month period it takes for an adoption to be finalized.

Time Frame: Per above, the estimated time for an adoption to be processed is about 3 to 4 months.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Vanuatu. However, American prospective adoptive parents may still wish to enlist the services of an American adoption agency to assist them with the overall intercountry adoption process.

Adoption Fees: American prospective adoptive parents should expect to pay less than $100 in Vanuatu government fees related to processing an adoption. It may or may not be necessary for prospective parents to pay additional fees to lawyers, depending on the services rendered.

Adoption Procedures: Applications for adoption are obtained from and must be submitted when completed to the Courthouse in Port Vila (Vanuatu's capital).

Courthouse in Port Vila,
Private Mail Bag 9041,
Port Vila, Vanuatu,
Telephone—(678) 22420.

Required Documents: When submitted to the Vanuatu court, the adoption dossier must contain:

- A completed adoption application;
- Child's birth certificate;
- Bank statements for the prospective adoptive parents; and
- Prospective adopting parents' marriage license (or proof of single status).

Vanuatu Mission to the United Nations
42 Broadway,
Suite 1200-18,
New York, NY 10004,
Tel. (212) 425-9600,
Fax (212) 425-9652,
E-mail: vmsnyc@attglobal.net.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

U.S. Embassy, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
Douglas Street,
P.O. Box 1492,
Port Moresby, N.C.D. 121,
Papua New Guinea
Telephone—(675) 321-1455;
Fax—(675) 321-1593.
E-mail—
ConsularPortMoresby@state.gov.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Vanuatu or immigrant visas for adopted children from Vanuatu may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Papua New Guinea at the address, phone number and e-mail address listed above. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.



VENEZUELA

Compiled from the June 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 912,050 sq. km. (352,143 sq. mi.); slightly more than twice the size of California.

Cities: Capital—Caracas (metro. area pop. 3.6 million, 2004 est.). Other major cities—Maracaibo, Valencia, Barquisimeto, Maracay, Merida, Ciudad Bolivar.

Terrain: Andes Mountains and Maracaibo Lowlands in northwest; central plains; Guiana Highlands in southeast.

Climate: Varies from tropical to temperate, depending on elevation.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Venezuelan(s).

Population: (May 2008 est.) 27,874,747.

Annual population growth: 1.6%.

Religions: Roman Catholic 96%, Protestant 2%, other 2%

Languages: Spanish (official), numerous indigenous dialects.

Education: Years compulsory—9. Literacy—95%

Health: Infant mortality rate—22.02 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—73.38 yrs.

Ethnic groups: Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arab, German, African, Amerindian.

Government

Type: Federal Republic.

Independence: July 5, 1811.

Constitution: December 30, 1999.

Government branches: Executive—President (head of government and chief of state; 6-year term); Council of Ministers (cabinet, appointed by president). Legislative—unicameral Congress (5-year term). Judicial—32-member Supreme Court (elected by Congress; 12-year term). Electoral—National Electoral Council (elected by Congress; 7-year term). Citizen Power—Attorney General, Ombudsman, Comptroller General (elected by Congress; 7-year term).

Political subdivisions: 23 states, one federal district (Caracas), and one federal dependency (72 islands).

Political parties: United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Fifth Republic Movement or Movimiento V Republica (MVR), Democratic Action or Accion Democratica (AD), Christian Democrats or Comite Organizador Politico por Elecciones Independientes (COPEI), Homeland for All or Patria Para Todos (PPT), Movement to Socialism or Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), Radical Cause or La Causa R, First Justice or Primero Justicia, and the National Convergence or Convergencia.

Suffrage: Universal, age 18 and over.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $227 billion.

Annual growth rate: (2007) 8.3%.

GDP per capita: (2007) $8,140.

Government expenditures: 32% of GDP.

Natural resources: Petroleum, natural gas, coal, iron ore, gold, diamonds, bauxite, other minerals, hydroelectric power.

Petroleum industry: (28% of GDP) Oil refining, petrochemicals.

Manufacturing: (17% of GDP) Types—iron and steel products, paper products, aluminum, textiles, transport equipment, consumer products.

Agriculture: (4% of GDP) Products—corn, sorghum, rice, bananas, vegetables, coffee, beef, pork, milk, eggs, fish.

Trade: Exports (2007)—$69.2 billion: petroleum ($62.5 billion), aluminum, steel, chemical products, iron ore, cigarettes, plastics, fish, cement, and paper products. Major markets (2005)—U.S. 57.5%, the Netherlands 5.2%, Mexico, 4.5%, Colombia 4.5%. Imports (2007)—$45.5 billion: consumer goods, machinery and transport equipment, manufactured goods, construction materials. Major suppliers (2006)—U.S. 30.2%, Brazil 10.1%, Colombia 9.9%, Mexico 6.8%, China 6.7%.

Exchange rate: (May 2008) 2,145 bolivars=U.S. $1.

PEOPLE

An estimated 27.9 million people lived in Venezuela as of 2008. The population is young, growing, and urbanized. The population growth rate is 1.6% per year, and roughly 50% of Venezuelans are under the age of 25. According to the 2001 census, almost 90% of the population lives in urban areas. Metropolitan Caracas, the country's largest city, has an estimated 3.2 million inhabitants. Venezuela is proud of its tradition as a melting pot, and the majority of its citizens have a mixed racial heritage of Caucasian, African, and American Indian elements.

HISTORY AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

At the time of Spanish discovery, the indigenous in Venezuela were mainly agriculturists and hunters living in groups along the coast, the Andean mountain range, and the Orinoco River. The first permanent Spanish settlement in South America—Nuevo Toledo—was established in Venezuela in 1522. Venezuela was a relatively neglected colony in the 1500s and 1600s as the Spaniards focused on extracting gold and silver from other areas of the Americas.

Toward the end of the 18th century, the Venezuelans began to grow restive under colonial control. In 1821, after several unsuccessful uprisings, the country succeeded in achieving independence from Spain, under the leadership of its most famous son, Simon Bolivar. Venezuela, along with what are now Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador, was part of the Republic of Gran Colombia until 1830, when Venezuela separated and became a separate sovereign country.

Much of Venezuela's 19th-century history was characterized by periods of political instability, dictatorial rule, and revolutionary turbulence. The first half of the 20th century was marked by periods of authoritarianism—including dictatorships from 1908-35 and from 1950-58. In addition, the Venezuelan economy shifted after the first World War from a primarily agricultural orientation to an economy centered on petroleum production and export.

Since the overthrow of Gen. Marcos Perez Jimenez in 1958 and the military's withdrawal from direct involvement in national politics, Venezuela has enjoyed an unbroken tradition of civilian democratic rule. This earned Venezuela a reputation as one of the more stable democracies in Latin America. Until the 1998 elections, the Democratic Action (AD) and the Christian Democratic (COPEI) parties dominated the political environment at both the state and federal level.

The Caracazo and Popular Dissatisfaction

Venezuela's prevailing political calm came to an end in 1989, when Venezuela experienced riots in which more than 200 people were killed in Caracas. The so-called Caracazo was a response to an economic austerity program launched by then-President Carlos Andres Perez. Three years later, in February 1992, a group of army lieutenant colonels led by future President Hugo Chavez mounted an unsuccessful coup attempt, claiming that the events of 1989 showed that the political system no longer served the interests of the people. A second, equally unsuccessful coup attempt by other officers followed in November 1992. A year later, Congress impeached Perez on corruption charges.

Deep popular dissatisfaction with the traditional political parties, income disparities, and economic difficulties were some of the major frustrations expressed by Venezuelans following Perez's impeachment. In December 1998, Hugo Chavez Frias won the presidency on a campaign for broad reform, constitutional change, and a crackdown on corruption.

Constitutional Reforms

Current President Hugo Chavez was elected in 1998 on a platform that called for the creation of a National Constituent Assembly in order to write a new constitution for Venezuela. Chavez's argument that the existing political system had become isolated from the people won broad acceptance, particularly among Venezuela's poorest classes, who had seen a significant decline in their living standards over the previous decade and a half. The National Constituent Assembly (ANC), consisting of 131 elected individuals, convened in August 1999 to begin rewriting the Constitution. In free elections, voters gave all but six seats to persons associated with the Chavez movement. Venezuelans approved the ANC's draft in a national referendum on December 15, 1999. The political system described below is that defined by the 1999 Constitution.

The president is elected by a plurality vote with direct and universal suffrage. The term of office is 6 years, and a president may be re-elected to a single consecutive term. The president appoints the vice president. He decides the size and composition of the cabinet and makes appointments to it with the involvement of the National Assembly. Legislation can be initiated by the executive branch, the legislative branch (either a committee of the National Assembly or three members of the latter), the judicial branch, the citizen branch (ombudsman, public prosecutor, and controller general) or a public petition signed by no fewer than 0.1% of registered voters. The president can ask the National Assembly to reconsider portions of laws he finds objectionable, but a simple majority of the Assembly can override these objections.

The National Assembly is unicameral, consisting solely of the Chamber of Deputies. Deputies serve 5-year terms, and may be re-elected for a maximum of two additional terms. These legislative agents are elected by a combination of party list and single member constituencies. When the Congress is not in session, a delegated committee acts on matters



relating to the executive and in oversight functions. In December 2005 pro-government parties took all 167 seats in the National Assembly after opposition parties boycotted the election over concerns with electoral conditions.

The Constitution designates three additional branches of the federal government—the judicial, citizen, and electoral branches.

The judicial branch is headed by the Supreme Tribunal of Justice (TSJ), which may meet either in specialized chambers (of which there are six) or in plenary session. The justices are appointed by the National Assembly and serve 12-year terms. Under the 1999 Constitution, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice is composed of 20 justices. The 1999 Constitution was amended in 2004, and the total number of justices was expanded by 12 to a total of 32. In December 2004, the National Assembly selected new judges to fill the expansion. The judicial branch also consists of lower courts, including district courts, municipal courts, and courts of first instance.

The citizens branch consists of three components—the attorney general ("fiscal general"), the "defender of the people" or ombudsman, and the comptroller general. The holders of these offices, in addition to fulfilling their specific functions, also act collectively as the "Republican Moral Council" to challenge before the Supreme Tribunal of Justice actions they believe are illegal, particularly those which violate the Constitution. The holders of the "citizen power" offices are selected for terms of 7 years by the National Assembly.

The "Electoral Power," otherwise known as the National Electoral Council (Consejo Nacional Electoral or CNE), is responsible for organizing elections at all levels. Its five mem-

bers are also elected to 7-year terms by the National Assembly. In the event of a hung vote in the National Assembly, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice can be called on to appoint the members.

Political Turmoil

In July 2000, following a long and controversial process, voters re-elected President Hugo Chavez of the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR) in generally free and fair national and local elections. The MVR and pro-Chavez Movimiento a Socialismo (MAS) party won 92 seats in the 165-member legislature. Subsequent party splits reduced the pro-Chavez members to 84 seats. In April 2002, the country experienced a temporary alteration of constitutional order. When an estimated 400,000 to 600,000 persons participated in a march in downtown Caracas to demand President Chavez' resignation, gunfire broke out, resulting in as many as 18 deaths and more than 100 injuries on both sides. Military officers took President Chavez into custody, and business leader Pedro Carmona swore himself in as interim President. On April 14, military troops loyal to Chavez returned him to power. A national reconciliation process, with participation by the Organization of American States, the UN Development Program, and the Carter Center, was unsuccessful in stopping further conflict. Opposition leaders called a national work stoppage on December 2, 2002. Strikers protested the government and called for the resignation of President Chavez. The oil sector joined other sectors of the economy and effectively shut down all economic activity for a month. The OAS Permanent Council passed Resolution 833 on December 16, 2002, calling for a "constitutional, democratic, peaceful, and electoral solution" to the crisis in Venezuela. The strike formally ended in February 2003 as political opponents of Chavez sought a recall referendum to revoke the mandate of the president.

The Referendum Process

In September 2003, after an impasse in the National Assembly, the Supreme Court named a new board of directors for the National Electoral Council (CNE). After months of intense deliberations that included two conflictive signature drives overseen by the CNE, political riots over the government's disqualification of questionable signatures, and the intervention of international electoral observers, the CNE certified the opposition's results and set the date of the recall referendum for August 15, 2004. According to the CNE, President Chavez won 59% of the vote.

His opponents immediately contested that the results of the referendum were marked by electoral fraud. However, international electoral observation missions carried out by the Organization of American States and the Carter Center found no indication of systemic fraud.

From Referendum to Elections

In the wake of the referendum victory, Pro-Chávez candidates continued to sweep other electoral contests. Chávez supporters won 20 out of the total 22 state governor positions up for election in October 2004 (there are currently two opposition governors). Chavez supporters also won a majority of the seats in the August 2005 municipal council (parroquias) elections. Pro-Chávez parties won all 167 seats in the December 2005 National Assembly elections, after most opposition candidates withdrew one week before the elections over voter secrecy concerns.

The final reports of the EU and OAS observer missions to the 2005 legislative elections, which were marked by record-high abstention, noted high levels of distrust in electoral institutions. The reports made specific recommendations to increase transparency and help voters regain the confidence necessary for participation. Most of the recommendations were not implemented. As a signatory of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, Venezuela has an obligation to hold "periodic, free, and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage."

A New Term and New Administration

President Chavez was re-elected by an overwhelming majority (63%) in the December 3, 2006, presidential elections. He defeated Zulia Governor Manuel Rosales, whose Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT) party formed an alliance with several key opposition parties. Though international observers found no evidence of fraud on election day, they did note concerns over abuse of government resources used to support the Chavez campaign, voter intimidation tactics, and manipulation of the electoral registry.

In January 2007, President Chavez named a new Vice President (the former head of the CNE) and cabinet, drawing largely from deputies of the National Assembly. Chavez announced a renewed effort to implement his vision of "21st Century Socialism" in Venezuela. He asked the National Assembly to grant him special constitutional powers via an "enabling law" to rule by decree over a broad range of society and subsequently received those powers for a term of 18 months. He also took major steps to nationalize the telecommunications and electricity sectors, as well as to finalize a majority government share in many oil projects, all sectors with significant foreign investments.

On August 15, 2007, President Chávez proposed a package of reforms to his own 1999 Constitution, including measures that would have allowed indefinite presidential re-election, a reorganization of the geographic boundaries of government, and a redefinition of private property. On December 2, 2007, the proposed reforms were narrowly defeated in a public referendum after student groups, traditional opposition leaders, and former Chávez allies urged Venezuelans to reject the package. The vote was the first electoral loss for President Chávez since he assumed office and was viewed by

many as a rebuke of his efforts to consolidate greater power in the executive office. President Chavez has since signaled his intent to pass many of the changes defeated in the referendum by presidential decree.

Gubernatorial and mayoral elections are scheduled to be held in November 2008.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Hugo CHAVEZ Frias**
Executive Vice Pres.: **Ramon Alonzo CARRIZALEZ Rengifo**
Min. of Agriculture & Lands: **Elias JAUA Milano**
Min. of Basic Industry & Mining: **Rodolfo SANZ**
Min. of Culture: **Hector SOTO**
Min. of Defense: **Gustavo Reyes RANGEL Briceno, Gen.**
Min. of Education: **Hector NAVARRO**
Min. of Energy & Petroleum: **Rafael Dario RAMIREZ Carreno**
Min. of Environment & Natural Resources: **Yubiri del Carmen ORTEGA Lovera**
Min. of Finance: **Ali RODRIGUEZ Araque**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Nicolas MADURO Moros**
Min. of Health & Social Development: **Jesus MANTILLA Oliveros**
Min. of Higher Education: **Luis Augusto ACUNA Cedeno**
Min. of Housing & Habitat: **Francisco de Asis SESTO Novas**
Min. of Indigenous Peoples: **Nicia Marina MALDONADO**
Min. of Information & Communications: **Andres IZARRA**
Min. of Infrastructure: **Isidro RONDON Torres**
Min. of Interior & Justice: **Tarek El AISSAMI**
Min. of Labor & Social Security: **Roberto HERNANDEZ**
Min. of Light Industry & Commerce: **William CONTRERAS**
Min. of Nutrition: **Felix OSORIO Guzman**
Min. of Planning & Development: **Haiman EL-TROUDI**
Min. of Popular Economy: **Pedro MOREJON**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Nuris ORIHUELA**
Min. of the Secretariat of the Presidency: **Hector RODRIGUEZ**
Min. of Social Development & Popular Participation: **Erika FARIAS**
Min. of Sports: **Victoria MATA**
Min. of Telecommunications: **Socorro HERNANDEZ**
Min. of Tourism: **Olga Cecilia AZUAJE**
Min. of Women's Affairs: **Maria LEON**
Prosecutor Gen.: **Luisa ORTEGA Diaz**
Pres., Central Bank: **Gaston PARRA Luzardo**
Ambassador to the US:
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York:

The Venezuelan embassy in the United States is located at 1099 30th St. NW, Washington, DC 20007 (tel. (202) 342-2214). In addition to Washington, DC, Venezuela maintains consulates in Boston, Chicago, Houston, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, and Puerto Rico.

ECONOMY

Real GDP increased by 8.3% in 2007. The economy recovered strongly in 2004 (18.3%), 2005 (10.3%), and 2006 (10.3%) after two consecutive years of deep economic recession (in 2003, Venezuelan GDP contracted 7.8%, after contracting 8.9% in 2002). The economic recovery has been driven by a large increase in government expenditures, based on an oil windfall, which in turn generated higher consumption levels.

The Consumer Price Index increased 18.7% in 2007, following increases of 13.7% in 2006, 16.0% in 2005, and 21.7% in 2004. Early monthly statistics suggest that annual inflation could be as high as 30% in 2008.

All foreign exchange requests must be approved by the National Exchange Control Administration (CADIVI), and the Central Bank (BCV) completes all legal purchase and sale of foreign currency. In January 2008, the Venezuelan Government adopted the "bolívar fuerte" as its new currency, effectively redenominating the previous currency, the "bolívar," by removing three zeroes (1 bolivar fuerte=1,000 bolívars). The current exchange control regime rate for U.S. dollar exchange is Bs.F. 2.145=U.S. $1.00. Unofficial exchange rates are far higher.

Central Bank-held international reserves increased to over U.S. $36 billion at the end of 2006. The reserves would have been higher, but the BCV transferred $6 billion to the National Development Fund (FONDEN) during the last quarter 2005, as directed by the Central Bank Law (July 2005) and an additional $4.3 billion in 2006.

The Venezuelan Government dominates the economy. The state oil company, PDVSA, controls the petroleum sector. Government companies control the electricity sector and important parts of the telecommunications and media sectors. In the spring of 2008, the government announced the nationalization of cement and steel producers, as well as select companies in the milk and meat distribution sectors. These and previous nationalizations, as well as other threats to property rights and an uncertain macroeconomic environment characterized by high inflation and foreign exchange controls, have led to reduced space for the private sector and low levels of private investment.

There is considerable income inequality. The Gini coefficient was 0.42 during 2007. According to government statistics, the percentages of poor and extremely poor among Venezuelan population were 27.5% and 7.6%, respectively, for the first half of 2007.

Although economic growth has been impressive, as a result of the oil windfall, many in the Venezuelan business community remain very concerned about President Chavez' vision for "21st Century Socialism" and what it portends for the private sector.

Petroleum and Other Resources

Economic prospects remain highly dependent on oil prices and the export of petroleum. In 2005, the oil sector accounted for more than 25% of GDP, 90% of export earnings, and more than half of the central government's ordinary revenues. Venezuela remains the fourth-leading supplier of imported crude and refined petroleum products to the United States.

The Venezuelan Government has sought more income from the petroleum sector. The first example was a unilateral decision in late 2004 to increase the royalty rate on production from the Orinoco heavy crude "strategic associations" with international oil companies from 1% to 16.67%.

In the 1990s, the Government of Venezuela opened up much of the hydrocarbon sector to foreign investment, promoting multi-billion dollar investment in heavy oil production, reactivation of old fields, and investment in several petrochemical joint ventures. By the late 1990s almost 60 foreign companies representing 14 different countries participated in one or more aspects of Venezuela's oil sector. On November 13, 2001, under an enabling law authorized by the National Assembly, President Chavez enacted a new Hydrocarbons Law, which came into effect in January 2002. This law replaced the Hydrocarbons Law of 1943 and the Nationalization Law of 1975. Among other things, the new law provided that all oil production and distribution activities would be the domain of the Venezuelan state, with the exception of the joint ventures targeting extra-heavy crude oil production. Under the new law, private investors cannot own 50% or more of the capital stock in joint ventures involved in upstream activities. The new law also provided that private investors could own up to 100% of the capital stock in downstream ventures. A Gaseous Hydrocarbons law promulgated earlier by the Chávez government also allowed substantial participation by private investors with respect to gas production ventures.

During the December 2002-February 2003 general strike, petroleum production and refining by PDVSA, the state-owned oil company, almost ceased. Despite the strike, these activities eventually were substantially restarted. Out of a total workforce of 45,000, over 20,000 PDVSA management and workers were subsequently dismissed because the government asserted they had abandoned their jobs during the strike. Current levels of production remain a subject of debate, with considerable difference between the levels cited by the Venezuelan Government and those cited by private sector and international observers.

In early 2005, the government informed companies with operating service contracts for mature fields that they must migrate the contracts to joint ventures that conform to the 2001 Hydrocarbons Law. The government threatened to seize fields operating under the services contracts on December 31, 2005 if oil companies did not sign transition agreements to migrate their contracts. All but three companies ultimately signed joint venture agreements with the government. One company was bought out by its partner while the fields operated by two other companies were ultimately taken over by the government. One of these disputes was handled by negotiation while another company decided to take its case to international arbitration. In early 2007, President Chávez announced that the Venezuelan Government would take a majority government share in the remaining foreign investments in the oil sector, including the four heavy-oil "strategic associations." Several international oil companies agreed to migrate their interests to joint ventures with majority government ownership. Two U.S. companies decided to pull out of Venezuela—one is still in negotiations over compensation while the other has announced that it will seek international arbitration.

Trade, Manufacturing and Agriculture

Despite political tensions between the U.S. and Venezuela, the U.S. remains Venezuela's most important trading partner. In 2007, bilateral trade topped U.S. $50 billion. Venezuelan exports to the U.S. were U.S. $40 billion (accounting for at least 60% of total Venezuelan exports), and U.S. exports to Venezuela were $10 billion (or 22% of total Venezuelan imports). The U.S. is the single most important customer for Venezuelan oil. Venezuela shipped an average of approximately 1.4 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products per day to the U.S. in 2007, a figure which accounts for at least half of Venezuelan oil exports and 10% of U.S. oil imports.

The Government of Venezuela has taken a vocal role against the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). Its stated goal is to expand its Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) project and develop a South American bloc (see Foreign Relations).

Manufacturing contributed an estimated 17% of GDP in 2006. The manufacturing sector continued its recovery started in 2004, but remained hindered by a marked lack of private investment. Venezuela manufactures and exports steel, aluminum, textiles, apparel, beverages, and foodstuffs. It produces cement, tires, paper, fertilizer, and assembles cars both for domestic and export markets.

Agriculture accounts for approximately 4% of GDP, 10% of the labor force, and at least one-fourth of Venezuela's land area. Venezuela exports rice, cigarettes, fish, tropical fruits, coffee, cocoa, and manufactured products. The country is not self-sufficient in most areas of agriculture. Venezuela imports about two-thirds of its food needs. Through November 2006, U.S. firms exported $412 million worth of agricultural products, including wheat, corn, soybeans, soybean meal, cotton, animal fats, vegetable oils, and other items to make Venezuela one of the top two U.S. markets in South America. The United States supplies roughly one-quarter of Venezuela's food imports.

Labor and Infrastructure

Official unemployment statistics registered 10.2% unemployment in January 2008. Unofficial estimates are significantly higher. The public sector employs about 13% of the work force, while less than 1% work in the capital-intensive oil industry. About 18% of the labor force is unionized, and unions are particularly strong in the petroleum and public sectors. The

"informal" sector accounts for some 45% of the work force, or 5.5 million people.

Labor unions allege the government repeatedly violates International Labor Organization (ILO) agreements on freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively. Specifically, the Constitution and laws permit undue influence in the internal elections of unions. The government has told the ILO it will correct the problem; draft legislation remains pending in the National Assembly.

Venezuela has an extensive road system. With the exception of air service, transportation has failed to keep pace with the country's needs. Much of the infrastructure suffers from inadequate maintenance. Caracas has a modern subway but only one functioning rail line serves the rest of the country.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

President Chávez has promoted his "Bolivarian Revolution" as a model for other countries to follow. The policy calls for the establishment of a "multi-polar" world devoid of U.S. influence and for greater integration among developing countries. Venezuela is currently advocating regional integration through its PetroCaribe and PetroSur petroleum initiatives, the creation of a South American Community of Nations, and the establishment of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (a social integration project proposed by President Chavez as an alternative to the Free Trade Area of the Americas). In April 2006, President Chávez announced he was withdrawing Venezuela from the Andean Community trade bloc. In July 2006, Venezuela officially joined the Southern Common Market, MERCOSUR. Before it can become a full member of MERCOSUR, Venezuela must conform to the trade bloc's economic regulations. Congressional approval by Brazil and Paraguay is also still outstanding. The Venezuelan Government maintains very close relations with Cuba and advocates an end to Cuba's isolation. Since 2005, President Chávez has deepened relations with Iran, a state sponsor of terrorism, by signing multiple economic and social accords and publicly supporting Iran's controversial nuclear program. President Chávez has also reached out to North Korea, Belarus, and Syria. The Venezuelans have also embarked on a worldwide effort to increase their presence in embassies overseas in Africa and Asia.

President Chávez has also launched a major renovation of the Venezuelan Armed Forces by purchasing new advanced weaponry. In 2005-2006, Venezuela purchased 100,000 AK-103 rifles from Russia and signed an agreement to construct a rifle and ammunition complex. Venezuela has also purchased Russian Mi-24 HIND attack and Mi-26 transport helicopters, and has begun receiving 24 Russian Sukhoi Su-30 fighters. In 2007-2008 Venezuela signed agreements for Mi-28 Havok attack helicopters, IL-76 heavy lift aircraft, an integrated air defense missile systems from Belarus, four KILO class diesel submarines, and Chinese K-8 jet trainers.

Venezuela has longstanding border disputes with Colombia and Guyana, but seeks in general to resolve them peacefully. Bilateral commissions have been established by Venezuela and Colombia to address a range of pending issues, including resolution of the maritime boundary in the Gulf of Venezuela. Relations with Guyana are complicated by Venezuela's claim to roughly three-quarters of Guyana's territory. Since 1987, the two countries have held exchanges on the boundary under the "good offices" of the United Nations.

U.S.-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS

U.S.-Venezuelan relations have been tense in recent years. President Hugo Chávez has continuously defined himself in opposition to the United States, using incendiary rhetoric to insult President Bush and senior administration officials. For example, in his September 2006 speech to the UN General Assembly, President Chávez called President Bush "the Devil" and other offensive names. The United States continues to seek constructive engagement with the Venezuelan Government, focusing on areas of technical cooperation. Major U.S. interests in Venezuela include promotion of U.S. exports and protection of U.S. investment, preservation of Venezuela's constitutional democracy, closer counter-narcotics cooperation, more vigorous efforts on counterterrorism, and continued access to petroleum.

U.S.-Venezuelan commercial ties are deep. The United States is Venezuela's most important trading partner, representing about 22% of imports and approximately 60% of Venezuelan exports. In turn, Venezuela is the United States' third-largest export market in Latin America, purchasing U.S. machinery, transportation equipment, agricultural commodities, and auto parts. Venezuela's opening of its petroleum sector to foreign investment in 1996 created extensive trade and investment opportunities for U.S. companies. As a result, Venezuela is one of the top four suppliers of foreign oil to the United States. The Department of State is committed to promoting the interests of U.S. companies in overseas markets. For contact information and a list of government publications, please go to the end of this document.

Venezuela is a minor source country for opium poppy and coca but a major transit country for cocaine and heroin. Money laundering and judicial corruption are major concerns. In 2004 and early 2005, counternarcotics cooperation between the U.S. and Venezuela deteriorated significantly. In March 2005, the Venezuelan National Guard removed its highly experienced members from the U.S.-supported Prosecutor's Drug Task Force. In August 2005, the Government of Venezuela accused the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of espionage and terminated cooperation with the DEA pending negotiation of a new cooperation

agreement, which had gone unsigned as of October 2006. President Bush decertified Venezuela on counternarcotics cooperation in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

In June 2006, Venezuela was listed at Tier 3 status in the State Department's Report on Trafficking in Persons. Tier 3 status indicates a perceived lack of effort to combat human trafficking.

In May 2006, the Secretary of State certified that Venezuela was not fully cooperating with U.S. counter-terrorism efforts. As of October 1, 2006, the United States Government has prohibited arms sales and services to Venezuela.

Approximately 23,000 U.S. citizens living in Venezuela have registered with the U.S. embassy, an estimated three-quarters of them residing in the Caracas area. An estimated 12,000 U.S. tourists visit Venezuela annually. About 500 U.S. companies are represented in the country.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

May 5, 2008

Country Description: Venezuela is a medium income country whose economy is dominated by a substantial oil industry. The political climate in Venezuela is highly polarized and volatile. Violent crime is a continuing problem. Assaults, robberies, and kidnappings occur throughout the country. Scheduled air service and all-weather roads connect major cities and most regions of the country. Venezuela's tourism infrastructure varies in quality according to location and price.

Entry Requirements: A passport and a visa or tourist card are required. Tourist cards are issued on flights from the U.S. to Venezuela for persons staying less than ninety days. Persons traveling for reasons other than tourism, however, should consult the Venezuelan Embassy or nearest Venezuelan consulate regarding possible visa requirements for their specific purpose of travel. Venezuelan immigration authorities may require that U.S. passports have at least six months validity remaining from the date of arrival in Venezuela. Some U.S. citizens have been turned back to the United States if their passports will expire in less than six months. Passports should also be in good condition, as some U.S. citizens have been delayed or detained overnight for having otherwise valid passports in poor condition.

U.S. citizens residing in Venezuela should be careful to obtain legitimate Venezuelan documentation appropriate to their status. There have been numerous cases in the last several months of U.S. citizens who, having employed intermediaries, received what they believed to be valid Venezuelan resident visas and work permits. They were subsequently arrested and charged with possessing fraudulent Venezuelan documentation. ONIDEX, the Venezuelan government agency responsible for immigration documents, has informed the Embassy that the only valid resident visas are those for which the bearer has personally signed at ONIDEX headquarters in Caracas.

Venezuelan law requires Venezuelan citizens to enter and depart Venezuela using Venezuelan passports and Venezuelan immigration authorities are increasingly enforcing this requirement. In order to comply with U.S. and Venezuelan law, persons who hold dual American-Venezuelan nationality must plan to travel

between Venezuela and the United States with valid U.S. and Venezuelan passports.

Venezuela's child protection law mandates that minors (under 18) who are citizens or non-citizen residents of Venezuela and who are traveling alone, with only one parent, or with a third party, must present a copy of their birth certificate and written, notarized authorization from the absent parent(s) or legal guardian, specifically granting permission to travel alone, with one parent, or with a third party. This authorization must reflect the precise date and time of the travel, including flight and/or other pertinent information. Without this authorization, immigration authorities will prevent the child's departure from Venezuela. The Venezuelan Government no longer recognizes blanket or non-specific travel authorizations. When a parent is deceased, a notarized copy of the death certificate is required in lieu of the written authorization. If documents are prepared in the United States, the authorization and the birth certificate must be translated into Spanish, notarized, and authenticated by the Venezuela Embassy or a Venezuelan consulate in the United States. If documents are prepared in Venezuela, only notarization by a Venezuelan notary is required. A permission letter prepared outside Venezuela is valid for 90 days. A permission letter prepared in Venezuela is valid for 60 days.

Travelers entering Venezuela from certain countries are required to have a current yellow fever vaccination certificate. The Venezuelan government recommends that all travelers, regardless of their country of departure, be vaccinated for yellow fever before entering Venezuela. Mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever are also common in some areas and travelers should take precautions to prevent infection.

An exit tax and airport fee must be paid when departing Venezuela by airline. The exit tax is currently 46 Bolívares Fuertes, and the airport fee is currently 115 Bolívares Fuertes (a total of approximately 75 USD calculated at the official exchange rate). In many instances, especially with non-U.S. airlines, the exit tax and airport fee are not included in the airline ticket price and must be paid separately at the airport upon departure. Authorities usually require that payment be made in local currency. Both the departure tax and the airport fee are subject to change with little notice. Travelers should check with their airlines for the latest information.

For current information concerning entry, tax, and customs requirements for Venezuela, travelers may contact the Venezuelan Embassy at 1099 30th Street, NW, Washington DC 20007, tel: (202) 342-2214, or visit the Embassy of Venezuela web site at http://www.embavenez-us.org. Travelers may also contact the Venezuelan consulates in New York, Miami, Chicago, New Orleans, Boston, Houston, San Francisco, or San Juan. Additional information about vaccination requirements for travel to Venezuela, as well as to other international destinations, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via CDC's Internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx.

Safety and Security: Violent crime in Venezuela is pervasive, both in the capital, Caracas, and in the interior. The country has one of the highest per-capita murder rates in the world. Armed robberies take place in broad daylight throughout the city, including areas generally presumed safe and frequented by tourists. A common technique is to choke the victim into unconsciousness and then rob them of all they are carrying. Well-armed criminal gangs operate with impunity, often setting up fake police checkpoints. Kidnapping is a particularly serious problem, with more than 1,000 reported during the past year alone. Investigation of all crime is haphazard and ineffective. In the case of high-profile killings, the authorities quickly round up suspects, but rarely produce evidence linking these individuals to the crime. Only a very small percentage of criminals are tried and convicted. Travel to and from Maiquetía Airport, the international airport serving Caracas, can be dangerous and corruption at the airport itself is rampant. Travelers at the airport have been victims of personal property theft, as well as mugging and "express kidnapping" in which individuals are taken to make purchases or to withdraw as much money as possible from ATMs, often at gunpoint. The Embassy has received multiple, credible reports that individuals with what appear to be official uniforms or other credentials are involved in facilitating or perpetrating these crimes. For this reason, American citizen travelers should be wary of all strangers, even those in official uniform or carrying official identification. There are also known drug trafficking groups working from the airport. Travelers should not accept packages from anyone and should keep their luggage with them at all times.

Because of the frequency of robberies at gunpoint, travelers are encouraged to arrive during daylight hours. If not, travelers should use extra care both within and outside the airport. The Embassy strongly advises that all arriving passengers make advance plans for transportation from the airport to their place of lodging. If possible, travelers should arrange to be picked up at the airport by someone who is known to them. The Embassy has received frequent reports of armed robberies in taxicabs going to and from the airport at Maiquetía. There is no foolproof method of knowing whether a taxi driver at the airport is reliable. The fact that a taxi driver presents a credential or drives an automobile with official taxi license plates marked "libre" is no longer an indication of reliability. Incidents of taxi drivers in Caracas overcharging, robbing, and injuring passengers are common. Travelers should take care to use radio-dispatched taxis or those from reputable hotels. Travelers should call a 24-hour radio-dispatched taxi service from a public phone lobby or ask hotel, restaurant, or airline representatives to contact a licensed cab com-

pany for them. A list of transportation services used by members of the U.S. Embassy community is available on the U.S. Embassy web site at http://venezuela.usembassy.gov. The Embassy does not vouch for the professional ability or integrity of any specific provider. The list is not meant to be an endorsement by the Department of State or the Embassy. Likewise, the absence of any individual or company does not imply lack of competence.

While visiting Venezuela, Americans are encouraged to carry as little U.S. currency on them as possible and to avoid wearing expensive or flashy watches and jewelry. Due to the poor security situation, the Embassy does not recommend changing money at the international airport. Visitors should bring a major credit card, but should be aware of widespread pilfering of credit card data to make unauthorized transactions. Travelers' checks are not recommended as they are honored in only a few locations. It is possible to exchange U.S. currency at approved exchange offices near major hotel chains in Caracas (personal checks are not accepted) and at commercial banks with some restrictions. Due to currency regulations, hotels cannot provide currency exchange. There are ATM machines throughout Venezuela. Malfunctions are common, however, and travelers should be careful to use only those in well-lit public places. ATM data has also been hacked and used to make unauthorized withdrawals from user's accounts.

Popular tourist attractions, such as the Avila National Park, are increasingly associated with violent crime. Americans planning to participate in outdoor activities in potentially isolated areas are strongly urged to travel in groups of five or more and to provide family or friends with their itineraries prior to departure.

Cross-border violence, kidnapping, drug trafficking, smuggling, and cattle-rustling occur frequently in areas along the 1,000-mile long border between Venezuela and Colombia. Some kidnap victims have been released after ransom payments, while others have been murdered. In many cases, Colombian terrorists are believed to be the perpetrators. Colombia's National Liberation Army (ELN) has had a long history of kidnapping for ransom, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are active in the kidnapping trade. Common criminals are also increasingly involved in kidnappings, either dealing with victim's families directly or selling the victim to terrorist groups.

In-country travel by U.S. Embassy employees, both official and private, within a 50-mile area along the entire Venezuela/Colombia border, is prohibited. The State Department warns American citizens not to travel within a 50-mile area along the entire Venezuela/Colombia border. U.S. citizens who elect to visit areas along the border region with Colombia despite this warning, apart from the Colombian terrorist threat, could encounter Venezuelan military-controlled areas and may be subject to search and arrest.

The U.S. Embassy must approve in advance the official travel to Venezuela of all U.S. Government personnel. Private travel by U.S. military personnel to Venezuela requires advance approval by the U.S. Embassy. Please consult the Department of Defense Foreign Clearance Guide at https://www.fcg.pentagon.mil/ for further information. Non-military employees of the U.S. Government do not need Embassy approval for private travel.

Political marches and demonstrations are frequent in Caracas and often pass without incident. Nevertheless, travelers should be aware that violence, including exchanges of gunfire, has occurred at political demonstrations in the past. Demonstrations tend to occur at or near university campuses, business centers, and gathering places such as public squares and plazas. Marches generally occur on busy thoroughfares, significantly impacting traffic. Most major tourist destinations, including coastal beach resorts and Margarita Island, have not in the past been generally affected by protest actions. The city of Merida, however, a major tourist destination in the Andes, has been the scene of frequent student demonstrations, some of them violent, including the use of firearms.

Travelers should keep informed of local developments by following the local press, radio and television. Visitors should also consult their local hosts, including U.S. and Venezuelan business contacts, hotels, tour guides, and travel organizers. As circumstances warrant, the Embassy sends out messages to U.S. citizens who have registered on-line. These messages are also posted on the U.S. Citizens page of the Embassy's web site at http://venezuela.usembassy.gov. U.S. citizens traveling or residing in Venezuela are advised to take common-sense precautions and avoid large gatherings and demonstrations, no matter where they occur.

Harassment of U.S. citizens by pro-government groups, Venezuelan airport authorities, and some segments of the police occurs but is quite limited. Venezuela's most senior leaders, including President Chavez, regularly express anti-American sentiment. The Venezuelan government's rhetoric against the U.S. government, its American culture and institutions, has affected attitudes in what used to be one of the most pro-American countries in the hemisphere.

Venezuela is an earthquake-prone country and is occasionally subject to torrential rains, which can cause major disasters such as the one in Vargas State in 1999. Travelers who intend to rent or purchase long-term housing in Venezuela should choose structures designed for earthquake resistance.

Such individuals may wish to seek professional assistance from an architect or civil/structural engineer, as does the Embassy, when renting or purchasing a house or apartment in Venezuela. Americans already housed in such premises are also encouraged to seek a professional structural assessment of their housing.

For further information on seismic activity, you may wish to visit:

- The Multidisciplinary Center for Earthquake Engineering Research (MCEER) web site at http://mceer.buffalo.edu

- The Global Seismic Hazard Assessment Program web site at www.seismo.ethz.ch/GSHAP

- The Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project web site at www.oas.org/CDMP

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs' web site, where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Venezuela and its capital, Caracas, have one of the highest per capita murder rates in the world. Virtually all murders go unsolved. The poor neighborhoods that cover the hills around Caracas are extremely dangerous. These areas are seldom patrolled by police and should be avoided. Armed robberies are common in urban and tourist areas throughout Venezuela, even areas presumed safe and visited by tourists. Crimes committed against travelers are usually money-oriented crimes, such as theft and armed robbery. Incidents occur during daylight hours as well as at night. Many criminals are armed with guns or knives and will use force. Jewelry attracts the attention of thieves. Travelers are advised to leave jewelry items, especially expensive-looking wristwatches, at home. Gangs of thieves will often surround their victims and use a chokehold to disable them, even in crowded market areas where there is little or no police presence. Theft from hotel rooms and safe deposit boxes is a problem, and theft of unattended valuables on the beach and from rental cars parked near isolated areas or on city streets is a common occurrence. A guarded garage or locked trunk is not a guarantee against theft. Pickpockets concentrate in and around crowded bus and subway stations in downtown Caracas. Subway escalators are favored sites for "bump and rob" petty thefts by roving bands of young criminals. Many of these criminals are well dressed to allay suspicion and to blend in with crowds using the subways during rush hour. Travelers should not display money or valuables.

"Express kidnappings," in which victims are seized in an attempt to get quick cash in exchange for their release, are a problem. Kidnapping of U.S. citizens and other foreign nationals, from homes, hotels, unauthorized taxis and the airport terminal has occurred. U.S. citizens should be alert to their surroundings and take necessary precautions.

The Department has received reports of robberies during nighttime and early morning hours on the highways around and leading to Caracas. Reports have specifically involved cars being forced off the La Guaira highway leading from Caracas to the Maquetía International Airport, and the "Regional del Centro" highway leading from Caracas to Maracay/Valencia, at which point the victims are robbed. The Department recommends avoiding driving at night and in the early morning where possible. Drivers traveling on highways during nighttime and early morning hours should exercise caution.

Police responsiveness and effectiveness in Venezuela vary drastically but generally do not meet U.S. expectations. U.S. travelers have reported robberies and other crimes committed against them by individuals wearing uniforms and purporting to be police officers or National Guard members.

Incidents of piracy off the coast of Venezuela remain a concern. Some of these incidents have been especially violent, including the severe beating of a U.S. citizen in 2002, the fatal shooting of an Italian citizen in January 2004, and a machete attack on a U.S. citizen in 2005. U.S. citizen yachters should exercise a heightened level of caution in Venezuelan waters. Please consult the U.S. Coast Guard web site at http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-o/g-opr/g-opr.htm for additional information on sailing in Venezuela.

Rules governing the sale of fuel to foreign sailors in Venezuela vary by state. U.S. citizen yachters should inquire about specific state procedures prior to attempting to purchase fuel in any given location. Failure to comply with a state's particular requirements can result in arrest and criminal charges.

The Embassy is aware of several instances where women lured American men to Venezuela after establishing "relationships" with them over the Internet. Some of these men were robbed shortly after they arrived in Venezuela. Others were recruited to act as narcotics couriers or "drug mules." In three instances, the Americans were arrested at the airport with narcotics in their possession and served extended jail terms in Venezuela.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred.

Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to

understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical care at private hospitals and clinics in Caracas and other major cities is generally good. Public hospitals and clinics generally provide a lower level of care and basic supplies at public facilities may be in short supply or unavailable. Cash payment is usually required in advance of the provision of medical services at private facilities, although some facilities will accept credit cards. Patients who cannot provide advance payment may be referred to a public hospital for treatment. Private companies that require the patient to be a subscriber to the service or provide cash payment in advance generally provide the most effective ambulance services. Public ambulance service is unreliable. U.S. citizens should be aware that due to the currency restrictions in effect in Venezuela they might find it difficult to receive wire transfers from abroad, whether through a bank or Western Union. Such wire transfers cannot be used reliably as a source of emergency funds. U.S. citizens traveling to Venezuela may also find it difficult to obtain certain prescription drugs, particularly name brands, and should ensure that they have sufficient quantities of all medications for the duration of their stay.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Venezuela is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Driving regulations in Venezuela are similar to those in the United States, although many drivers do not obey them. Defensive driving is a necessity. Child car seats and seatbelts are not required and are seldom available in rental cars and taxis. Outside the major cities, night driving can be dangerous because of unmarked road damage or repairs in progress, unlighted vehicles, and livestock. Even in urban areas, road damage is often marked by a pile of rocks or sticks left by passersby near or in the pothole or crevice, without flares or other devices to highlight the danger. Traffic jams are common within Caracas during most of the day and are frequently exploited by criminals. Stops at National Guard and local police checkpoints are mandatory. Drivers should follow all National Guard instructions and be prepared to show vehicle and insurance papers and passports. Vehicles may be searched. Inexpensive bus service is available to most destinations throughout the country, but the high incidence of criminal activity on public transportation makes bus travel inadvisable. Peak holiday travel occurs during summer and winter school breaks and major civil and religious holidays, including Carnival, Easter, Christmas and New Year's holidays. Lengthy delays due to road congestion are common during these peak periods.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Venezuela's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Venezuela's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's Internet web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: In February 2007, the National Assembly granted President Chavez the authority to rule by decree in 11 general areas for 18 months. Laws issued by President Chavez under this authority become effective immediately after their publication in the government legislative gazette. As a result, laws directly impacting U.S. Citizens or their interests in Venezuela may come into force with little or no warning. U.S. Citizens are advised to carefully monitor changes in Venezuelan law. Venezuela is also slated to hold gubernatorial and mayoral elections nation-wide in late 2008. These electoral races are expected to generate extensive political campaigning from pro-government and opposition parties.

The government of Venezuela implemented rigid foreign exchange controls in 2003, including a fixed official rate of exchange. Foreign exchange transactions must take place through exchange houses or commercial banks at the official rate. As of October 2005 it is no longer possible to exchange money at hotels. Currency exchange for tourists can be arranged at "casas de cambio" (exchange houses). There are exchange houses located near most major hotels. It is also possible to exchange money at commercial banks; however, visitors should be aware that the exchange would not be immediate. Exchanges through commercial banks must first be approved by the Commission for Administration of Foreign Currencies (CADIVI). This requires a registration process, which delays the exchange. The exchange control mechanisms also require the exchange houses and commercial banks to obtain authorization from CADIVI to trade Bolívares Fuertes (the local currency) into U.S. dollars. Outside the major cities, a good supply of Venezuelan currency is necessary, as it may be difficult to find exchange houses. The Embassy cannot provide currency exchange ser-

vices. Travelers will likely encounter individuals in Venezuela who are willing to exchange Bolívares Fuertes for U.S. dollars at a rate significantly higher than the official rate of exchange. These "parallel market" currency exchanges are prohibited under the Venezuelan foreign exchange controls. Travelers engaging in such activity may be detained by the Venezuelan authorities. Additionally, in accordance with an October 2005 law, any person who exchanges more than 10,000 U.S. dollars in the course of a year through unofficial means is subject to a fine of double the amount exchanged. If the amount exceeds 20,000 U.S. dollars the penalty is two to six years imprisonment. Any person who transports more than 10,000 U.S. dollars into or out of Venezuela by any means must declare this amount to customs officials.

Credit cards are generally accepted at most upscale tourist establishments, but foreign exchange controls have made credit card acceptance less common than in the past. Visa, MasterCard, and American Express have representatives in Venezuela. Due to the prevalence of credit card fraud in Venezuela, travelers should exercise caution in using their credit cards and should check statements regularly to ensure that no unauthorized charges have been made. Most major cities have ATMs with 24-hour service where users may withdraw local currency, but many of these ATMs will not accept U.S.-issued debit cards.

Venezuelan customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from Venezuela of items such as plant and animal products, firearms, medications, archaeological or "cultural heritage" items, and pirated copies of copyrighted articles. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of Venezuela in Washington or one of Venezuela's consulates in the United States for specific information regarding customs requirements.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Venezuela's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Venezuela are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

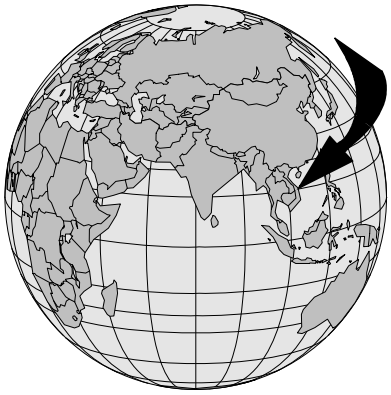
Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Venezuela are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Venezuela. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section is open for American Citizen Services from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Monday through Friday, excluding U.S. and Venezuelan holidays. The U.S. Embassy is located at Calle Suapure and Calle F, Colinas de Valle Arriba, Caracas. The telephone number during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) is (58) (212) 975-6411. In case of an after-hours emergency, callers should dial (58) (212) 907-8400. The Embassy's web site, http://venezuela.usembassy.gov, contains complete information about services provided and hours of operation.

A part-time consular agent in Maracaibo provides services for U.S. citizens in western Venezuela. The agent is available to the public every Monday from 8:15 am to 12:15 pm, at the Centro Venezolano Americano del Zulia (CEVAZ), Calle 63 No. 3E-60, Maracaibo; telephone (58)(0261) 797-8323 or 8324 or 8325.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2006

The adoption authority for Venezuela, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has advised the U.S. Embassy in Caracas that only citizens from countries that have ratified the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions are eligible to adopt in Venezuela. The United States has not finished the process of ratifying the Convention, thus U.S. citizens are not allowed to adopt.



VIETNAM

Compiled from the August 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 331,114 sq. km. (127,243 sq. mi.); equivalent in size to Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee combined.
Cities: (2008) Capital—Hanoi (6.232 million); on August 1, 2008 the capital city's administrative borders were officially expanded to include Ha Tay Province and parts of Hoa Binh and Ving Phuc. Other cities—Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon; 6.602 million), Haiphong (1.711 million), Danang (806,900), Can Tho (1.154 million).
Terrain: Varies from mountainous to coastal delta.
Climate: Tropical monsoon.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Vietnamese (sing. and pl.).
Population: (2007) 85.15 million.
Annual growth rate: (2007) 1.188%.
Ethnic groups: (2003) 54 groups including Vietnamese (Kinh) (85.73%), Tay (1.97%), Thai (1.79%), Muong (1.52%), Khmer (1.37%), Chinese (1.13%), Nung (1.13%), Hmong (1.11%).
Religions: (2007): Buddhism (14.38%), Catholic (6.9%), Cao Dai (2.8%), Protestantism (1.75%), Hoa Hao (1.5%), Islam (0.076%), Baha'i (0.007%), and other animist religions.
Languages: Vietnamese (official), English (increasingly favored as a second language), some French, Chinese, and other ethnic minority languages.
Education: (2006) Literacy—90%.
Health: (2007 estimate) Birth rate—16.63 births/1000 population. Infant mortality rate—17.4 /1000. Life expectancy—70.8 yrs. Death rate—6.56/1,000.

Government

Type: Communist Party-dominated constitutional republic.
Independence: September 2, 1945.
Constitution: April 15, 1992.
Government branches: Executive—president (head of state and chair of National Defense and Security Council) and prime minister (heads cabinet of ministries and commissions). Legislative—National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme People's Court; Prosecutorial Supreme People's Procuracy.
Political subdivisions: 59 provinces, 5 municipalities (Can Tho, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh).
Political parties: Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) with over 3 million members, formerly (1951-76) Vietnam Worker's Party, itself the successor of the Indochinese Communist Party founded in 1930.
Suffrage: Universal over 18.

Economy

GDP: (2007) $71.4 billion.
Real growth rate: (2007) 8.5%.
Per capita income: (2007) $832.
Inflation rate: (May 2008) 25%.
External debt: (2007) 27% of GDP, $19.3 billion.
Natural resources: Coal, crude oil, zinc, copper, silver, gold, manganese, iron.
Agriculture and forestry: (20.25% of GDP, 2007) Principal products—rice, maize, sweet potato, peanut, soya bean, cotton, coffee, cashews. Cultivated land—12.2 million hectares. Land use—21% arable; 28% forest and woodland; 51% other.
Industry and construction: (41.6% of GDP, 2007) Principal types—mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas, water supply, cement, phosphate, and steel.
Services: (38.13% of GDP, 2007) Principal types—wholesale and retail, repair of vehicles and personal goods, hotel and restaurant, transport storage, telecommunications, tourism.
Trade: (2007) Exports—$48.39 billion. Principal exports—crude oil, garments/textiles, footwear, fishery products, wood products, rice (second-largest exporter in world), sea

products, coffee, rubber, handicrafts. Major export partners—U.S., EU, Japan, China, Singapore, Australia, Taiwan, and Germany. Imports—$60.8 billion. Principal imports—machinery, oil and gas, garment materials, iron and steel, transport-related equipment. Major import partners—China, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Thailand. Exports to U.S. (2007)—$10.6 billion. Imports from U.S. (2007) $1.9 billion.

PEOPLE

Originating in what is now southern China and northern Vietnam, the Vietnamese people pushed southward over 2 millennia to occupy the entire eastern seacoast of the Indochinese Peninsula. Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups; ethnic Vietnamese or Kinh constitute approximately 85% of Vietnam's population. The next largest groups are ethnic Tay and Thai, which account for 1.97% and 1.79% of Vietnam's population and are concentrated in the country's northern uplands.

With a population of more than 900,000, Vietnam's ethnic Chinese community is one of the most significant and wealthiest in Vietnam. Long important in the Vietnamese economy, Vietnamese of Chinese ancestry have been active in rice trading, milling, real estate, and banking in the south and shop keeping, stevedoring, and mining in the north. Restrictions on economic activity following reunification of the north and south in 1975 and the subsequent but unrelated general deterioration in Vietnamese-Chinese relations caused increasing anxiety within the Chinese-Vietnamese community. As tensions between Vietnam and China reached their peak in 1978-79, some 450,000 ethnic Chinese left Vietnam by boat as refugees (many officially encouraged and assisted) or were expelled across the land border with China.

Other significant ethnic minority groups include central highland peoples (formerly termed Montagnards) such as the Gia Rai, Bana, Ede, Xo Dang, Gie Trieng, and the Khmer Krom (Cambodians), who are concentrated near the Cambodian border and at the mouth of the Mekong River.

Vietnamese is the official language of the country. It is a tonal language with influences from Thai, Khmer, and Chinese. Since the early 20th century, the Vietnamese have used a Romanized script introduced by the French. Previously, Chinese characters and an indigenous phonetic script were both used.

HISTORY

Vietnam's identity has been shaped by long-running conflicts, both internally and with foreign forces. In 111 BC, China's Han dynasty conquered northern Vietnam's Red River Delta and the ancestors of today's Vietnamese. Chinese dynasties ruled Vietnam for the next 1,000 years, inculcating it with Confucian ideas and political culture, but also leaving a tradition of resistance to foreign occupation. In 939 AD, Vietnam achieved independence under a native dynasty. After 1471, when Vietnam conquered the Champa Kingdom in what is now central Vietnam, the Vietnamese moved gradually southward, finally reaching the rich Mekong Delta, where they encountered previously settled communities of Cham and Cambodians. As Vietnam's Le dynasty declined, powerful northern and southern families, the Trinh and Nguyen, fought civil wars in the 17th and 18th centuries. A peasant revolt originating in the Tay Son region of central Vietnam defeated the Nguyen and Trinh and unified the country at the end of the 18th century, but was itself defeated by a surviving member of the Nguyen family, who founded the Nguyen dynasty as Emperor Gia Long in 1802.

French Rule and the Anti-Colonial Struggle

In 1858, the French began their conquest of Vietnam starting in the south. They annexed all of Vietnam in 1885, but allowed Vietnam's emperors to continue to reign, although not actually to rule. In the early 20th century, French-educated Vietnamese intellectuals organized nationalist and communist-nationalist anti-colonial movements.

Japan's occupation of Vietnam during World War II further stirred nationalism. Vietnamese communists under Ho Chi Minh organized a coalition of anti-colonial groups, the Viet Minh, though many anti-communists refused to join. After Japan stripped the French of much power in Indochina in March 1945, Ho Chi Minh announced the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on September 2, 1945.

North and South Partition

France's post-World War II unwillingness to leave Vietnam led to failed talks and an 8-year guerrilla war between the communist-led Viet Minh on one side and the French and their anti-communist nationalist allies on the other. Following a humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, France and other parties, including Britain, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, convened in Geneva, Switzerland for peace talks. On July 29, 1954, an Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam was signed between France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The United States observed, but did not sign, the agreement. French colonial rule in Vietnam ended.

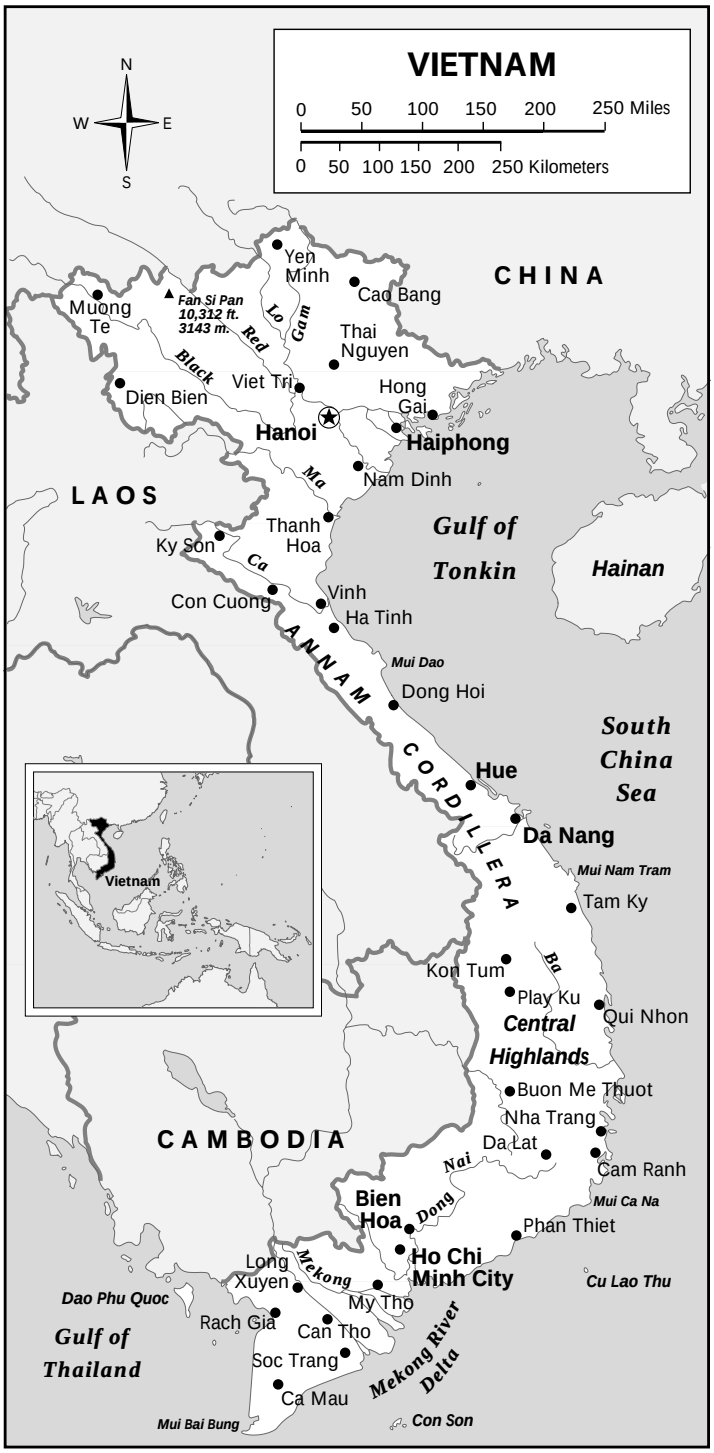
The 1954 Geneva agreement provided for a cease-fire between communist and anti-communist nationalist forces, the temporary division of Vietnam at approximately the 17th parallel, provisional northern (communist) and southern (non-communist) zone governments, and the evacuation of anti-communist Vietnamese from northern to southern Vietnam. The agreement also called for an election to be held by July 1956 to bring the two provisional zones under a unified government. However, the South Vietnamese Government refused to accept this provi-

sion. On October 26, 1955, South Vietnam declared itself the Republic of Vietnam.

After 1954, North Vietnamese communist leaders consolidated their power and instituted a harsh agrarian reform and socialization program. In the late 1950s, they reactivated the network of communist guerrillas that had remained behind in the south. These forces—commonly known as the Viet Cong—aided covertly by the north, started an armed campaign against officials and villagers who refused to support the communist reunification cause.

American Assistance to the South

In December 1961, at the request of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, President Kennedy sent U.S. military advisers to South Vietnam to help the government there deal with the Viet Cong campaign. In the wake of escalating political turmoil in the south after a 1963 generals' coup against President Diem, the United States increased its military support for South Vietnam. In March 1965, President Johnson sent the first U.S. combat forces to Vietnam. The American military role peaked in 1969 with an in-country force of 534,000. However, the Viet Cong's surprise Tet Offensive in January 1968 deeply hurt both the Viet Cong infrastructure and American and South Vietnamese morale. In January 1969, the United States, governments of South and North Vietnam, and the Viet Cong met for the first plenary session of peace talks in Paris, France. These talks, which began with much hope, moved slowly. They finally concluded with the signing of a peace agreement, the Paris Accords, on January 27, 1973. As a result, the south was divided into a patchwork of zones controlled by the South Vietnamese Government and the Viet Cong. The United States withdrew its forces, although U.S. military advisers remained.



Reunification

In early 1975, North Vietnamese regular military forces began a major offensive in the south, inflicting great damage to the south's forces. The communists took Saigon on April 30, 1975, and announced their intention of reunifying the country. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (north) absorbed the former Republic of Vietnam (south) to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on July 2, 1976.

After reunification, the government confiscated privately owned land and forced citizens into collectivized agricultural practices. Hundreds of thousands of former South Vietnamese Government and military officials, as well as intellectuals previously opposed to the communist cause, were sent to re-education camps to

study socialist doctrine. While Vietnamese leaders thought that reunification of the country and its socialist transformation would be condoned by the international community, this did not happen. Besides international concern over Vietnam's internal practices, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 and its growing tight alliance with the Soviet Union appeared to confirm suspicions that Vietnam wanted to establish hegemony in Indochina.

Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia also heightened tensions that already existed between Vietnam and China. Beijing, which had long backed the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, retaliated in early 1979 by initiating a border war with Vietnam.

Vietnam's tensions with its neighbors and its stagnant economy contributed to a massive exodus from Vietnam. Fearing persecution, many Chinese in particular fled Vietnam by boat to nearby countries. Later, hundreds of thousands of other Vietnamese nationals fled as well, seeking temporary refuge in camps throughout Southeast Asia.

The continuing grave condition of the economy and the alienation from the international community became focal points of party debate. In 1986, at the Sixth Party Congress, there was an important easing of communist agrarian and commercial policies.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

A new state constitution was approved in April 1992, reaffirming the central role of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in politics and society, and outlining government reorganization and increased economic freedom. Though Vietnam remains a one-party state, adherence to ideological orthodoxy has become less important than economic development as a national priority.

The most important powers within the Vietnamese Government—in addition to the Communist Party—are the executive agencies created by the 1992 constitution: the offices of the president and the prime minister. The Vietnamese President, presently Nguyen Minh Triet, functions as head of state but also serves as the nominal commander of the armed forces and chairman of the Council on National Defense and Security. The Prime Minister of Vietnam, presently Nguyen Tan Dung, heads a cabinet currently composed of five deputy prime ministers and the heads of 22 ministries and agencies, all confirmed by the National Assembly.

Notwithstanding the 1992 constitution's reaffirmation of the central role of the Communist Party, the National Assembly, according to the constitution, is the highest representative body of the people and the only organization with legislative powers. It has a broad mandate to oversee all government functions. Once seen as little more than a rubber stamp, the National Assembly has become more vocal and assertive in exercising its authority over lawmaking, particularly in recent years. However, the National Assembly is still subject to party direction. More than 80% of the deputies in the National Assembly are party members. The assembly meets twice yearly for 7-10 weeks each time; elections for members are held every 5 years, although its Standing Committee meets monthly and there are now over 100 "full-time" deputies who function on various committees. In 2007, the assembly introduced parliamentary "question time," in which cabinet ministers must answer often pointed questions from National Assembly members. There is a separate judicial branch, but it is still relatively weak. Overall, there are few lawyers and trial procedures are rudimentary.

The present 14-member Politburo, elected in April 2006 and headed by Communist Party General Secretary Nong Duc Manh, determines government policy, and its Secretariat oversees day-to-day policy implementation. In addition, the party's Central Military Commission, which is composed of select Politburo members and additional military leaders, determines military policy.

A Party Congress, which most recently was comprised of 1,176 delegates at the Tenth Party Congress in April 2006, meets every 5 years to set the direction of the party and the government. The 160-member Central Committee (with an additional 21 alternate members), was elected by the Party Congress and it usually meets at least twice a year.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Vietnamese officials are addressed by the last element in their names.

Pres.: **Nguyen Minh TRIET**
Vice Pres.: **Nguyen Thi DOAN**
Prime Min.: **Nguyen Tan DUNG**
Permanent Dep. Prime Min.: **Nguyen Sinh HUNG**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Hoang Trung HAI**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Nguyen Thien NHAN**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Pham Gia KHIEM**
Dep. Prime Min.: **Truong Vinh TRONG**
Min. of Agriculture & Rural Development: **Cao Duc PHAT**
Min. of Construction: **Nguyen Hong QUAN**
Min. of Culture, Sports, & Tourism: **Hoang Tuan ANH**
Min. of Education & Training: **Nguyen Thien NHAN**
Min. of Finance: **Vu Van NINH**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Pham Gia KHIEM**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Vu Huy HOANG**
Min. of Information & Communications: **Le Doan HOP**
Min. of Interior: **Tran Van TUAN**
Min. of Justice: **Ha Hung CUONG**
Min. of Labor, War Invalids, & Social Welfare: **Nguyen Thi Kim NGAN**
Min. of National Defense: **Phung Quang THANH, Sr. Lt. Gen.**
Min. of Natural Resources & Environment: **Pham Khoi NGUYEN**
Min. of Planning & Investment: **Vo Hong PHUC**
Min. of Public Health: **Nguyen Quoc TRIEU**
Min. of Public Security: **Le Hong ANH**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Hoang Van PHONG**
Min. of Transport: **Ho Nghia DUNG**

Chmn., Govt. Inspectorate: **Tran Van TRUYEN**
Chmn., Office of the Govt.: **Nguyen Xuan PHUC**
Chmn., State Ethnic Minorities Ctte.: **Giang Seo PHU**
Governor, State Bank: **Nguyen Van GIAU**
Ambassador to the US: **Le Cong PHUNG**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Le Luong MINH**

Vietnam maintains an embassy in the U.S. at 1233 20th Street, NW, #400, Washington DC 20036 (tel. 202-861-0737; fax 202-861-0917); Internet home page: www.vietnamembassy-usa.org. There is also a consulate general located in San Francisco at 1700 California Street, Suite 430, San Francisco, CA 94109 (tel. 415-922-1707; fax 415-922-1848; Website: www.vietnamconsulate-ca.org/home.asp.

ECONOMY

Economic stagnation marked the period after reunification from 1975 to 1985. In 1986, the Sixth Party Congress approved a broad economic reform package called "Doi Moi" (renovation) that introduced market reforms and dramatically improved Vietnam's business climate. Vietnam became one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, averaging around 8% annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth from 1990 to 1997 and 6.5% from 1998-2003. From 2004 to 2007, GDP grew over 8% annually. Foreign trade and foreign direct investment have improved significantly. Average annual foreign investment commitment has risen sharply since foreign investment was authorized in 1988, and in 2007 Vietnam licensed $17.86 billion in foreign direct investment. Actual investment in that year totaled $4.60 billion. From 1990 to 2005, agricultural production nearly doubled, transforming Vietnam from a net food importer to the world's second-largest exporter of rice. Exports in 2007 were a historic $48.39 billion, but Vietnam's need for capital goods, construction materials, refined fuel, and primary material for exports meant that it ran a trade deficit of $12.4 billion.

The shift away from a centrally planned economy to a more market-oriented economic model improved the quality of life for many Vietnamese. Per capita income rose from $220 in 1994 to $832 in 2007. Inflation in 2007 was 7.3% but was in the double digits and approaching 30% year-on-year by August 2008. The average Vietnamese savings rate is about 30%. Urban unemployment has been rising in recent years, and rural unemployment, estimated to be between 25% and 35% during non-harvest periods, is significant.

The Vietnamese Government still holds a tight rein over major sectors of the economy through large state-owned enterprises and the banking system. The government has plans to reform key sectors and partially privatize state-owned enterprises, but implementation has been gradual and the state sector still accounts for approximately 40% of GDP. Greater emphasis on private sector development is critical for job creation.

The 2001 entry-into-force of the Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) between the U.S. and Vietnam was a significant milestone for Vietnam's economy and for normalization of U.S.-Vietnam relations. Bilateral trade between the United States and Vietnam has expanded dramatically, rising from $2.91 billion in 2002 to $12.5 billion in 2007.

Implementation of the BTA, which includes provisions on trade in goods and services, enforcement of intellectual property rights, protection for investments, and transparency, fundamentally changed Vietnam's trade regime and helped it prepare to accede to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Following the conclusion of bilateral negotiations with interested WTO members and completion of multilateral negotiations in 2006, the WTO General Council approved the terms for Vietnam's membership on November 7, 2006. Vietnam formally acceded to the WTO as its 150th member on January 11, 2007.

Vietnam was granted unconditional normal trade relations (NTR) status by the United States through a Presidential Proclamation signed by President Bush on December 29, 2006. On January 11, 2007, the United States removed the application of quotas on textile and apparel imports from Vietnam consistent with the terms of our WTO bilateral market access agreement and treatment provided to other WTO members. To meet the obligations of WTO membership, Vietnam revised nearly all of its trade and investment laws and guiding regulations. As a result, foreign investors and those seeking to sell goods and services to the increasingly affluent Vietnamese population will benefit from the improved legislative framework and lower trade barriers. Local firms that have heretofore enjoyed a range of protections, meanwhile, will experience increased competition. In 2006, the Government of Vietnam reasserted its goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2010. That would entail raising the average per capita income to at least $1,000 from the 2007 average of $832. Economic analysts, including those at the World Bank, believe that this goal is attainable.

A U.S.-Vietnam Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), a bridge to future economic cooperation, was signed in June 2007 during President Triet's visit to the United States. The first TIFA Council occurred on December 17, 2007 in Washington. During Prime Minister Dung's June 2008 visit, the United States and Vietnam committed to undertake Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) negotiations.

Agriculture and Industry

Land reform, de-collectivization, and the opening of the agricultural sector to market forces converted Vietnam from a country facing chronic food shortages in the early 1980s to the second-largest rice exporter in the world. Besides rice, key exports are coffee, tea, rubber, and fisheries products. Agriculture's share of economic output has declined, falling as a share of GDP from 42% in 1989 to 20.25% in 2007, as production in other sectors of the economy has risen.

Paralleling its efforts to increase agricultural output, Vietnam's industrial production has grown. Industry and construction contributed 41.6% of GDP in 2007, up from 27.3% in 1985. Vietnam has successfully increased exports of manufactured goods, especially labor-intensive manufactures, such as textiles and apparel and footwear. Subsidies have been cut to some inefficient state enterprises. The government is also in the process of "equitizing" (e.g., transforming state enterprises into shareholding companies and distributing a portion of the shares to management, workers, and private foreign and domestic investors) a significant number of state enterprises. However, to date the government continues to maintain control of the largest and most important companies. Despite reforms, the state share of GDP has remained relatively constant since 2000, at 38-39%.

Trade and Balance of Payments

From the late 1970s until the 1990s, Vietnam was heavily dependent on the Soviet Union and its allies for trade and economic assistance. To compensate for drastic cuts in Soviet-bloc support after 1989, Vietnam liberalized trade, devalued its exchange rate to increase exports, and embarked on a policy of regional and international economic re-integration. Vietnam has demonstrated its commitment to trade liberalization in recent years, and integration with the world economy has become one of the cornerstones of its reform program. Vietnam has locked in its intention to create a more competitive and open economy by committing to several comprehensive international trade agreements, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA). Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization further integrated Vietnam into the global economy.

As a result of these reforms, exports expanded significantly, growing by as much as 20%-30% in some years. In 2007, exports accounted for 68% of GDP. Imports have also grown rapidly, and Vietnam has a significant trade deficit ($12.4 billion in 2007). Vietnam's total external debt, amounting to 27% of GDP in 2007, was estimated at around $19.3 billion.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

During the second Indochina war (1954-75), North Vietnam balanced relations with its two major allies, the Soviet Union and China. By 1975, tension began to grow as Beijing increasingly viewed Vietnam as a potential Soviet instrument to encircle China. Meanwhile, Beijing's increasing support for Cambodia's Khmer Rouge sparked Vietnamese suspicions of China's motives.

Vietnamese-Chinese relations deteriorated significantly after Hanoi instituted a ban in March 1978 on private trade, mostly affecting Sino-Vietnamese. Following Vietnam's December 1978 invasion of Cambodia, China launched a retaliatory incursion over Vietnam's northern border. Faced with severance of Chinese aid and strained international relations, Vietnam established even closer ties with the Soviet Union and its allies in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). Through the 1980s, Vietnam received nearly $3 billion a year in economic and military aid from the Soviet Union and conducted most of its trade with that country and with other Council for Mutual Economic Assistance countries. However, Soviet and East bloc economic aid ceased after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Vietnam did not begin to emerge from international isolation until it withdrew its troops from Cambodia in 1989. Within months of the 1991 Paris Agreements, Vietnam established diplomatic and economic relations with ASEAN as well as with most of the countries of Western Europe and Northeast Asia. China reestablished full diplomatic ties with Vietnam in 1991, and the two countries continue their joint efforts to demarcate their land and sea borders, expand trade and investment ties, and build political relations. In the past decade, Vietnam has recognized the increasing importance of growing global economic interdependence and has made concerted efforts to adjust its foreign relations to reflect the evolving international economic and political situation in Southeast Asia. The country has begun to integrate itself into the regional and global economy by joining international organizations. Vietnam has stepped up its efforts to attract foreign capital from the West and regularize relations with the world financial system.

In the 1990s, following the lifting of the American veto on multilateral loans to the country, Vietnam became a member of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. The country has expanded trade with its East Asian neighbors as well as with countries in Western Europe and North America. Of particular significance was Vietnam's acceptance into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July 1995. In recent years, Vietnam's influence in ASEAN has expanded significantly. In addition, Vietnam joined the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) in November 1998 and hosted the ASEAN summit in 2001 and APEC in 2006. In October 2007, Vietnam was elected for the first time to the United Nations Security Council, to serve a two-year term starting on January 1, 2008.

While Vietnam has not experienced war since its withdrawal from Cambodia, tensions have periodically flared between Vietnam and China, primarily over their overlapping maritime claims in the South China Sea. Vietnam and China each assert claims to the Spratly and Paracel Islands, archipelagos in the potentially oil-rich area of the South China Sea. Several other countries (Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan) claim all or part of the South China Sea. Over the years, conflicting claims have produced small-scale armed altercations in the area; in 1988, 70 Vietnamese sailors died in a confrontation with China in the Spratlies. China's asser-

tion of "indisputable sovereignty" over the Spratly Islands and the entire South China Sea has elicited concern from Vietnam and its Southeast Asia neighbors. Tensions escalated in the latter half of 2007, as China pressured foreign oil companies, notably BP, to abandon their oil and gas exploration contracts with Vietnam in the South China Sea. Vietnamese students staged several anti-China demonstrations in response, prompting a warning from the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman that Hanoi's failure to quell the demonstrations was harming relations. By contrast, Vietnam has made progress with China in delineating its northern land border and the Gulf of Tonkin, pursuant to a Land Border Agreement signed in December 1999, and an Agreement on Borders in the Gulf of Tonkin signed in December 2000.

U.S.-VIETNAM RELATIONS

After a 20-year hiatus of severed ties, President Clinton announced the formal normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam on July 11, 1995. Subsequent to President Clinton's normalization announcement, in August 1995, both nations upgraded their Liaison Offices opened during January 1995 to embassy status. As diplomatic ties between the nations grew, the United States opened a consulate general in Ho Chi Minh City, and Vietnam opened a consulate in San Francisco.

U.S. relations with Vietnam have become increasingly cooperative and broad-based in the years since political normalization. A series of bilateral summits have helped drive the improvement of ties, including President Bush's visit to Hanoi in November 2006, President Triet's visit to Washington in June 2007, and Prime Minister Dung's visit to Washington in June 2008. The two countries hold an annual dialogue on human rights, resumed in 2006 after a two-year hiatus. They signed a Bilateral Trade Agreement in July 2000, which went into force in December 2001. In 2003, the two countries signed a Counternarcotics Letter of Agreement (amended in 2006), a Civil Aviation Agreement, and a textile agreement. In January 2007, Congress approved Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) for Vietnam. In June 2008, the U.S. and Vietnam agreed to hold political-military talks and policy planning talks to consult on regional security and strategic issues. Bilateral diplomatic engagement expanded at ASEAN and APEC, and with Vietnam's January 2008 start of a two-year term on the UN Security Council.

Vietnam's suppression of political dissent continued to be the main issue of contention in relations with the U.S., drawing criticism from the administration and Congress. In spring 2007, Vietnam's government launched a crackdown on political dissidents, and in November the same year arrested a group of pro-democracy activists, including two Americans. By May 2008, all Americans had been released. In contrast, Vietnam continued to make significant progress on expanding religious freedom. In 2005, Vietnam passed comprehensive religious freedom legislation, outlawing forced renunciations and permitting the official recognition of new denominations. As a result, in November 2006, the Department of State lifted the designation of Vietnam as a "Country of Particular Concern," based on a determination that the country was no longer a serious violator of religious freedoms, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act. This decision was reaffirmed by the Department of State in November 2007. The government's harassment of certain religious leaders for their political activism, including leaders of the outlawed United Buddhist Church of Vietnam, was an ongoing source of U.S. concern.

As of December 14, 2007, the U.S. Government listed 1,763 Americans unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, including 1,353 in Vietnam. Since 1973, 883 Americans have been accounted for, including 627 in Vietnam. Additionally, the Department of Defense has confirmed that of the 196 individuals who were "last known alive" (LKA), the U.S. Government has determined the fate of all but 31. The United States considers achieving the fullest possible accounting of Americans missing and unaccounted for in Indochina to be one of its highest priorities with Vietnam.

Since entry into force of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement on December 10, 2001, increased trade between the U.S. and Vietnam, combined with large-scale U.S. investment in Vietnam, evidence the maturing U.S.-Vietnam economic relationship. In 2007, the United States exported $1.9 billion of goods to Vietnam and imported $10.6 billion of goods from Vietnam. Similarly, U.S. companies continue to invest directly in the Vietnamese economy. During 2006, the U.S. private sector committed $444 million to Vietnam in foreign direct investment. This number is expected to rise dramatically following Vietnam's accession into the WTO.

Another sign of the expanding bilateral relationship is the signing of a Bilateral Air Transport Agreement in December 2003. Several U.S. carriers already have third-party code sharing agreements with Vietnam Airlines. Direct flights between Ho Chi Minh City and San Francisco began in December 2004. Vietnam and the United States also signed a Bilateral Maritime Agreement in March 2007 that opened the maritime transport and services industry of Vietnam to U.S. firms.

Cooperation in other areas, such as defense engagement, nonproliferation, and law enforcement, is also expanding steadily. Prime Minister Dung announced during his June 2008 visit to the U.S. that Vietnam plans to take part in peacekeeper training under the U.S.-funded, multinational Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). In June 2008, Vietnam hosted a port call to Nha Trang by the hospital ship USNS Mercy, providing medical and dental treatment to over 11,000 Vietnamese patients. This followed Vietnam's hosting of visits by five U.S. Navy ves-

sels in 2007, including a port call to Danang by the humanitarian supply ship USS Peleliu, whose personnel carried out numerous medical and engineering projects.

Also in June 2008, Vietnamese observers took part for the second successive year in the multinational naval exercise Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT), organized by the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

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CLO:	Mei Chih (Julia) Owens
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COM:	William Marshak
GSO:	Kathleen Peoples
RSO:	Christopher Murray
AFSA:	Vacant
AGR:	John Wade (Res. In Hanoi)
CLO:	Vacant
EEO:	Peter Fricke
IPO:	Timothy A Hinman
ISSO:	Patrick J Kennedy
POL:	Katia Bennett

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

November 10, 2008

Country Description: Vietnam is a developing, mainly agrarian country in the process of moving from a centrally planned to a market economy. Political control rests in the Communist Party. Tourist facilities are not well established, but are improving in certain areas, especially in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and some beach and mountain resorts.

Entry Requirements: A valid passport and Vietnamese visa or visa exemption document are required. A visa or visa exemption document must be obtained from a Vietnamese Embassy or Consulate prior to traveling to Vietnam; entry visas are not available upon arrival. Americans arriving without an appropriate Vietnamese visa or exemption document will not be permitted to enter, and will be subject to immediate deportation. Vietnamese visas are usually valid for only one entry. Persons planning to leave Vietnam and re-enter from another country should be sure to obtain a visa allowing multiple entries.

Even while in possession of a valid visa, some travelers have been refused entry to Vietnam. U.S. citizens are cautioned that Vietnamese immigration regulations require foreigners entering Vietnam to undertake only the activity for which their visas were issued. A change in the purpose of your visit requires permission in advance from the appropriate Vietnamese authority. U.S. citizens whose stated purpose of travel was tourism, but who engaged in religious proselytizing have had religious materials confiscated and have been expelled from Vietnam. An American whose U.S. passport is lost or stolen in Vietnam must obtain both a replacement passport and a replacement Vietnamese visa. The U.S. Embassy and Consulate General can issue limited validity emergency replacement passports in as little as one day, but the Vietnamese government requires three working days, not to include the day of application, to issue a replacement visa. Neither the U.S. Embassy nor the Consulate General can expedite replacement Vietnamese visas.

Current information on visa and entry requirements may be obtained from the Vietnamese Embassy (http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/), 1233 20th Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036, tel: 202-861-0737, fax: 202-861-0917, the Vietnamese Consulate General, 1700 California Street - Suite 430, San Francisco, CA 94109, tel: (415) 922-1707, fax: 415-922-1848, or from the nearest Vietnamese embassy or consulate overseas.

Safety and Security: Official U.S. personnel and tourists are sometimes not authorized to travel to the Central Highland areas without prior consent from the Government of Vietnam. These travel limitations may hinder the ability of the U.S. Government to provide assistance to private U.S. citizens in those areas.

U.S. citizens have been detained after traveling in areas close to the Vietnamese borders with China, Cambodia and Laos. These areas are not always marked, and there are no warnings about prohibited travel.

Travelers should avoid such areas unless written permission is obtained in advance from local authorities.

Large gatherings, such as those forming at the scene of traffic accidents, can become violent, and should be avoided.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Cities in Vietnam have the crime problems typical of many other large cities throughout the world. Pick-pocketing and other petty crimes occur regularly. Although violent crimes such as armed robbery are still relatively rare in Vietnam, perpetrators have grown increasingly bold, and the U.S. Consulate General has received recent reports of knives and razors being used in attempted robberies in Ho Chi Minh City. Thieves congregate around hotels frequented by foreign tourists and business people, and assaults have been reported in outlying areas. The evolving nature of incidents warrants caution on the part of the U.S. traveler. Travelers are advised not to resist theft attempts, and to report them both to police and to the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi or the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City.

Motorcyclists are known to snatch bags, cameras and other valuables from pedestrians or passengers riding in "cyclos" (pedicabs) or riding on the back of rented motorcycles. Serious injuries have resulted when thieves snatched purses or bags that were strapped across their victims' bodies, resulting in the victim being dragged along the ground by the thief's motorcycle.

Passengers riding in cyclos (pedicabs) may be especially prone to thefts of personal possessions by snatch-and-grab thieves, because they ride in a semi-reclining position that readily exposes their belongings and does not allow good visibility or movement. As some cyclo drivers have reportedly kidnapped passengers and extorted money, it may be risky to hire cyclos not associated with reputable hotels or restaurants.

Travelers are strongly advised to keep passports and other important valuables in hotel safes or other secure locations. Travelers are advised to carry a photocopy of their passport with them when going out. The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the U.S. Embassy or the U.S. Consulate General. U.S. citizens must obtain a police report from the local police office in order to apply for a replacement passport and a Vietnamese exit visa.

Travelers should take precaution in choosing ground transportation upon arrival at the airports in Hanoi and HCMC. Some travelers have reported being robbed by drivers who had greeted them upon arrival with a placard showing the traveler's name. If one is expecting to be picked up, ensure that the driver truly knows who they are picking up and where they are taking them. It is best to stick with only airport taxis or vehicles provided by hotels. Several times in the past year in Hanoi, people have been extorted by taxi drivers who took them from the airport to flophouses masquerading as hotels. Travelers should be familiar with the hotel they have chosen.

There have been occasional reports of incidents in which an unknown substance was used to taint drinks, leaving the victim susceptible to further criminal acts. Travelers are advised to avoid leaving drinks or food unattended and to avoid going to unfamiliar venues alone. Travelers should also avoid purchasing liquor from street vendors, as the quality of the contents cannot be assured.

Recreational drugs available in Vietnam can be extremely potent, and more than one American has died of an accidental overdose of drugs. Penalties for possession of drugs of any kind are severe.

Some U.S. citizens have reported threats of death or physical injury related to personal business disputes. The U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Consulate General do not provide personal protection services. U.S. citizens who do not have confidence in the ability of the local police to protect them may wish to depart the country expeditiously.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. The embassy/consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. In Hanoi, the American Citizen Services (ACS) office is located at Rose Garden Tower, #170 Ngoc Khanh, Hanoi. Telephone number is (84-4) 3831-4590 Monday thru Friday and (84-4) 3850-5000 Main Embassy Fax; 3850-5010, after business hours and weekends. In Ho Chi Minh City, the ACS office is located in the U.S. Consulate General 4 Le Duan St., Dist. 1, Ho Chi Minh City, telephone (84-8) 3520-4200.

In Vietnam, the local equivalents to the "911" line are 113 for police, 114 for Fire, and 115 for Ambulance.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical facilities in Vietnam do not meet international standards and frequently lack medicines and supplies. Medical personnel in Vietnam, particularly outside Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, may speak little or no English. Doctors and hospitals expect immediate cash payment for health services. International health clinics in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City can provide acceptable care for minor illnesses and injuries, but more serious problems will often require medical evacuation to Bangkok or Singapore. Although many medications can be purchased at pharmacies without having a prescription, some common U.S. medications are not available in Vietnam. Travelers should bring adequate supplies of their medications for their duration of their stay in Vietnam. Travelers may obtain lists of local English-speaking physicians from the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi or the United States Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City. Travelers are reminded that neither office may recommend specific medical practitioners or hospitals. Emergency medical response services are generally unresponsive, unreliable, or completely unavailable.

Travelers should be cautious about drinking non-bottled water and about using ice cubes in drinks. Travelers may wish to drink only bottled or canned beverages, or beverages that have been boiled (such as hot tea and coffee).

Since December of 2007, Hanoi and provinces in northern Vietnam have seen an episodic resurgence of severe acute diarrhea known to be cholera. For more information on cholera, please visit CDC's web site at http://www.cdc.gov.

Travelers to Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries affected by avian influenza are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. Tuberculosis is a serious health concern in Vietnam. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB and other CDC resources at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) website. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Vietnam.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Vietnam is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Traffic in Vietnam is chaotic. Traffic accidents occur frequently and the most common victims are motorbike riders and pedestrians. At least 30 people die each day from transportation-related injuries and many more are injured, often with traumatic head injuries. Traffic accident injuries are the leading cause of death, severe injury, and emergency evacuation of foreigners in Vietnam. Traffic accidents, including those involving a pedestrian and a motorized vehicle, are the single greatest health and safety risk U.S. citizens will face in Vietnam.

Traffic moves on the right, although drivers frequently cross to the left to pass or turn, and motorcycles and bicycles often travel (illegally) against the flow of traffic. Horns are used constantly, often for no apparent reason. Streets in major cities are choked with motorcycles, cars, buses, trucks, bicycles, pedestrians and cyclos. Outside the cities, livestock compete with vehicles for road space. Sudden stops by motorcycles and bicycles make driving a particular hazard. Nationwide, drivers do not follow basic traffic principles, vehicles do not yield right of way, and there is little adherence to traffic laws or enforcement by traffic police. The number of traffic lights in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City is increasing, but red lights are often not obeyed. Most Vietnamese ride motorcycles; often an entire family rides on one motorcycle.

Road conditions are poor nationwide. Numerous tragic accidents have occurred due to poor road conditions that resulted in landslides, and American travelers have lost their lives in this way. Travelers should exercise extra caution in the countryside, as road conditions are particularly poor in rural areas.

Driving at night is especially dangerous and drivers should exercise extreme caution. Roads are poorly lit, and there are few road signs. Buses and trucks often travel at high speed with bright lights that are rarely dimmed. Some motor vehicles may not use lights at all, vehicles of all types often stop in the road without any illumination, and livestock are likely to be encountered.

Motorcyclists and bicyclists are strongly urged to wear helmets. Passengers in cars or taxis should use seatbelts when available, but should be aware that Vietnamese vehicles often are not equipped with working seatbelts. A law mandating the use of motorcycle helmets on all roads went into effect on December 15, 2007, and is strictly enforced Child car seats are

not available in Vietnam. Penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol or causing an accident resulting in injury or death can include fines, confiscation of driving permits or imprisonment. U.S. citizens involved in traffic accidents have been barred from leaving Vietnam before paying compensation (often determined arbitrarily) for property damage or injuries.

Emergency roadside help is theoretically available nationwide by dialing 113 for police, 114 for fire brigade and 115 for an ambulance. Efficiency of these services is well below U.S. standards, however, and locating a public telephone is often difficult or impossible. Trauma care is not widely available.

The urban speed limit ranges from 30 to 40 km/h. The rural speed limit ranges from 40 to 60 km/h. Both speed limits are routinely ignored. Pedestrians should be careful, as sidewalks are extremely congested and uneven, and drivers of bicycles, motorcycles and other vehicles routinely ignore traffic signals and traffic flows, and even drive on sidewalks. For safety, pedestrians should look carefully in both directions before crossing streets, even when using a marked crosswalk with a green "walk" light illuminated.

International driving permits and U.S. drivers' licenses are not valid in Vietnam. Foreigners renting vehicles risk prosecution and/or imprisonment for driving without a Vietnamese license endorsed for the appropriate vehicle. Americans who wish to drive in Vietnam should contact any office of the Provincial Public Transportation Service of the Vietnamese Department of Communications and Transport to obtain a Vietnamese driver's license. The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City cannot assist U.S. citizens in obtaining Vietnamese driver's permits or notarize U.S. drivers' licenses for use in Vietnam.

Most Vietnamese travel within Vietnam by long-distance bus or train. Both are slow, and safety conditions do not approach U.S. standards. Local buses and taxis are available in some areas, particularly in the larger cities. Safety standards vary widely depending on the individual company operating the service, but are generally much lower than what would be found in the U.S.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Vietnam, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the Government of Vietnam's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site athttp://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Hotels in Vietnam require that foreigners present their passports (and visas, if issued separately) upon check-in so that their stay can be registered with local police. Therefore, Americans should be sure to carry these documents with them when changing lodging. Every guest in a hotel room must be registered and foreigners are generally not allowed to share accommodations with Vietnamese nationals.

Currency: Foreign currency (including cash and travelers' checks) in excess of US$7,000, cash exceeding Vietnamese Dong (VND) 15,000,000, and gold exceeding 300 grams must be declared at customs upon arrival and departure.

There is no limitation on either the export or import of U.S. dollars or other foreign currency by U.S. citizens, provided that all currency in excess of US$7,000 (or its equivalent in other foreign currencies) or in excess of VND 15,000,000 in cash is declared upon arrival and departure, and supported by appropriate documentation. If excess cash is not declared, it can be confiscated at the port of entry/exit and the passenger may be arrested and/or fined.

Exports: Vietnamese law prohibits the export of antiques, but the laws on the subject are vague and unevenly enforced. Antique objects are subject to inspection and seizure by customs authorities with no compensation made to owners/travelers. The determination of what is an "antique" can be arbitrary. Purchasers of non-antique items of value should retain receipts and confirmation from shop owners and/or the Ministry of Culture and the Customs Department to prevent seizure upon departure.

Imports: Vietnamese government authorities have seized documents, audio and video tapes, compact discs, literature, and personal letters they deem to be pornographic or political in nature, or intended for religious or political proselytizing. Individuals arriving at airports with videotapes or materials considered to be pornographic have been detained and heavily fined (up to U.S. $2,000 for one videotape). It is illegal to import weapons, ammunition, explosives, military equipment and tools, narcotics, drugs, toxic chemicals, pornographic and subversive materials, firecrackers, children's toys that have "negative effects on personality development, social order and security," or cigarettes in excess of the stipulated allowance.

Speech: The Government of Vietnam maintains strict control over all forms of political speech, particularly dissent. Persons—both Vietnamese and visiting foreigners—engaging in public actions that the Government of Vietnam determines to be political in nature can be subject to arrest and detention. Even private conversations can lead to legal actions. American citizens have been detained and arrested for political activities (including criticizing the government or its domestic/foreign policies, or advocating alternatives to Communist Party rule), possession of political material, or non-sanctioned religious activities (including proselytizing). Sponsors of small, informal religious gatherings such as Bible-study groups in hotel rooms, have been detained, fined and expelled, although this has become much less common due to significant improvements in religious freedom.

Association with Groups: Persons whom the Government of Vietnam perceives to be associated with dissident political groups may be denied entry to Vietnam or prevented from departing Vietnam after a visit. In a number of cases, the plane tickets and personal property of such individuals have been confiscated and the individuals forced to spend extended periods in Vietnam at their own expense while undergoing extensive police interrogation. In addition, Vietnamese security personnel may place foreign visitors under surveillance. Hotel rooms, telephone conversations, fax transmissions, and e-mail communications may be monitored, and personal possessions in hotel rooms may be searched.

Local security officials have called in some U.S. citizens of Vietnamese origin for "discussions" not related to any suspected or alleged violation of law. These meetings normally do not result in any action against the traveler, but are nevertheless intimidating.

Photography: Taking photographs of anything that could be perceived as being of military or security interest may result in problems with authorities. Tourists should be cautious when traveling near military bases and avoid photographing in these areas.

Property: Foreigners are generally not allowed to purchase real property in Vietnam. Because Vietnamese laws governing real estate differ substantially from those in the United States, U.S. citizens may wish to consult with competent legal counsel before entering into any transaction. American citizens should exercise extreme caution if entering into any transaction through a third-party.

Disputes: The Vietnamese government has occasionally seized the passports and blocked the departure of foreigners involved in commercial disputes. The U.S. Embassy or Consulate General may issue a new passport to a U.S. citizen in such a situation, but the Vietnamese exit ban could remain in effect, preventing departure.

Notification and Access: A 1994 agreement between the United States and Vietnam provides for immediate notification of and reciprocal access within 96 hours to each other's detained citizens. Bearers of U.S. passports, who enter Vietnam with a Vietnamese visa, including those of Vietnamese origin, are regarded as U.S. citizens by the U.S. Government for purposes of notification and access. Therefore, U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry photocopies of passport data and photo pages with them at all times so that, if questioned by Vietnamese officials, proof of U.S. citizenship is readily available.

Despite the 1994 agreement, U.S. consular officers in Vietnam are rarely notified in a timely manner when a U.S. citizen is arrested or detained. There have also generally been very significant delays in U.S. consular officers obtaining access to incarcerated U.S. citizens. This has been particularly true when the U.S. citizen is being held during the investigatory stage that Vietnamese officials do not consider as covered by the bilateral agreement. The investigatory stage can last up to one year, and often proceeds without the formal filing of any charges. Americans should note that the problem of access has been particularly evident when the U.S. citizen is considered by the Vietnamese government to be a citizen of Vietnam, irrespective of proof of U.S. citizenship. According to the 1994 agreement, U.S. citizens, even dual citizens, have the right to consular access if they were admitted into Vietnam as a U.S. citizen with their U.S. passport, and should insist upon contact with the U.S. Embassy or the U.S. Consulate General.

Civil Procedures: Civil procedures in Vietnam, such as marriage, divorce, documenting the birth of a child, and issuance of death certificates, are highly bureaucratic, painstakingly slow, and often require chain authentication. Please contact the Vietnamese Embassy in Washington, DC or the Vietnamese Consulate General in San Francisco concerning documentary requirements for these services.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Vietnamese laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Vietnam are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Vietnam are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Vietnam. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi is located at 6 Ngoc Khanh, Ba Dinh District, Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, telephone: (84-4) 850-5000; after hours emergency telephone number: (84-4) 850-5000; fax: (84-4) 850-5010.

The U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City is located at 4 Le Duan, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, telephone: (84-8) 822-9433; fax: (84-8) 822-9434.

Intercountry Adoption
November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Vietnam is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention). On June 21, 2005, the United States and Vietnam signed a bilateral agreement on intercountry adoption. The current Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the United States and Vietnam expired on September 1, 2008. As a result, intercountry adoption is suspended until a new MOA is signed and implemented. If a child had been referred to a family by September 1, 2008 and approved by the Vietnam Department of Intercountry Adoptions, the adoption can proceed to completion. A referral has occurred once DIA sends a letter to the prospective adoptive parents informing them that both DIA and provincial authorities have agreed to a particular child's match.

Prospective adoptive parents who have a pending dossier with the Government of Vietnam should be aware that documents relating to adoptions in Vietnam, such as birth certificates, abandonment reports, relinquishment agreements, and investigative reports are generally issued by orphanage directors, local People's Committees, Provincial Departments, and the Department for Intercountry Adoptions (DIA). The facts asserted in these documents are not verified by the issuing officials. Attempts by U.S. officials to verify the accuracy of these documents frequently uncover evidence of fraudulent or inaccurate information. Therefore, documents issued by the authorities listed above, and any other documents containing information not verified by the issuing authority, may not be considered adequate evidence of the facts claimed. They may be used in conjunction with primary and contemporaneous secondary evidence, or must be independently verified by U.S. officials in Vietnam, before they can be considered valid for immigration purposes.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service and the Department of State have instituted procedures to verify that children identified for placement meet the requirements of Vietnamese and U.S. law, before the child has been adopted under Vietnamese law. Information about these procedures is available from USCIS. The Embassy strongly advises prospective adoptive parents not to travel to Vietnam until they have received notification from the Embassy that their case is ready for final processing and travel is appropriate. Parents should contact the Embassy immediately if anyone, including their adoption service provider, encourages them to travel to Vietnam prior to receiving this notification. The Embassy can work together with adoption service providers, Vietnam's Department of Intercountry Adoptions, and local authorities to resolve issues such as the scheduling of a Giving and Receiving Ceremony.

Contact Information

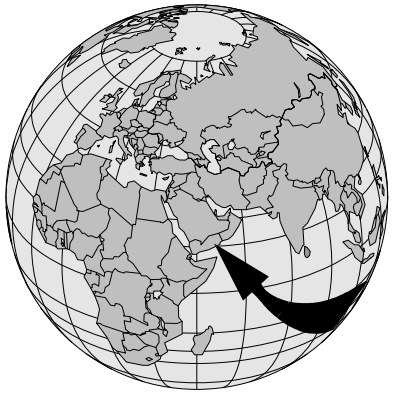
U.S. Embassy in Vietnam
Consular Section
6 Ngoc Khanh
Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel: (84) (4) 831-4590
Fax: (84) (4) 831-4578
Email: HanoiAdoptions@state.gov
Internet:
http://vietnam.usembassy.gov

Vietnamese Adoption Authority
Ministry of Justice's Department of Intercountry Adoptions (DIA)

Embassy of Vietnam
1233 20th Street, N.W.
Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 861-2293 or (202) 861-0694
Internet:
http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org

Office of Children's Issues
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.; SA-29
Washington, D.C. 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833)



YEMEN

Compiled from the December 2007 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Yemen

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 527,970 sq. km. (203,796 sq. mi.); about the size of California and Pennsylvania combined.

Cities: Capital—Sanaa. Other cities—Aden, Taiz, Hodeida, and al-Mukalla.

Terrain: Mountainous interior bordered by desert with a flat and sandy coastal plain.

Climate: Temperate in the mountainous regions in the western part of the country, extremely hot with minimal rainfall in the remainder of the country. Humid on the coast.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Yemeni(s).

Population: (July 2007 est.) 22,230,531.

Annual growth rate: 3%.

Ethnic groups: Predominantly Arab.

Religions: Islam, small numbers of Jews, Christians, and Hindus.

Languages: Arabic.

Education: Attendance (2004 est.)—80% for boys at the primary level and 50% for girls. Attendance was 55% for boys at the secondary level and 22% for girls. Literacy (2004 est.)—50% overall, including 70% of males, 30% of females.

Health: Infant mortality rate—76/1,000 live births. Life expectancy—62 years.

Work force: (by sector) Agriculture—53%; public services—17%; manufacturing—4%; construction—7%; percentage of total population—25%.

Government

Type: Republic; unification (of former south and north Yemen) May 22, 1990.

Constitution: Adopted May 21, 1990 and ratified May 1991.

Government branches: Executive—president, and prime minister with cabinet. Legislative—bicameral legislature with 111-seat Shura Council and 301-seat House of Representatives. Judicial—the constitution calls for an independent judiciary. The former northern and southern legal codes have been unified. The legal system includes separate commercial courts and a Supreme Court based in Sanaa.

Political subdivisions: 19 governorates subdivided into districts.

Political parties: General People's Congress (GPC), Yemeni Grouping for Reform (Islah), Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP).

Suffrage: Universal over 18.

National holidays: May 22 (Unity Day).

Economy

GDP: (2006 est.) $20.4 billion.

Per capital GDP: (2006 est.) $723.

Natural resources: Oil, natural gas, fish and seafood, rock salt, minor deposits of coal and copper.

Agriculture: (est. 12.5% of GDP) Products—qat (a shrub containing a natural amphetamine), coffee, cotton, fruits, vegetables, cereals, livestock and poultry. Arable land (est.)—3%.

Industry: (est. 42.8% of GDP) Types—petroleum refining, mining, wholesale and retail trade, transportation, manufacturing, and construction.

Services: (est. 43.7% of GDP).

Trade: Exports (2006)—$7.2 billion: crude petroleum, refined oil products, seafood, fruits, vegetables, hides, tobacco products. Major markets—China, Thailand, India, South Korea, United States, Switzerland. Imports (2006)—$5 billion: petroleum products, cereals, feed grains, foodstuffs, machinery, transportation equipment, iron, sugar, honey. Major suppliers—United Arab Emirates, China, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Kuwait.

Exchange rate: (2006) Market rate 199 rials per U.S. $1. The Yemeni rial (YR) floats freely based on an average of foreign currencies. Since the floating of the YR, the market usually reflects the official rate of exchange.

PEOPLE

Unlike other people of the Arabian Peninsula who have historically been nomads or semi-nomads, Yemenis are almost entirely sedentary and live in small villages and towns scattered throughout the highlands and coastal regions.

Yemenis are divided into two principal Islamic religious groups: the Shia Zaidi sect, found in the north and northwest, and the Shafa'i school of Sunni Muslims, found in the south and southeast. Yemenis are mainly of Semitic origin, although African strains are present among inhabitants of the coastal region. Arabic is the official language, although English is increasingly understood in major cities. In the Mahra area (the extreme east), several non-Arabic languages are spoken. When the former states of north and south Yemen were established, most resident minority groups departed.

HISTORY

Yemen was one of the oldest centers of civilization in the Near East. Between the 12th century BC and the 6th century AD, it was part of the Minaean, Sabaean, and Himyarite kingdoms, which controlled the lucrative spice trade, and later came under Ethiopian and Persian rule. In the 7th century, Islamic caliphs began to exert control over the area. After this caliphate broke up, the former north Yemen came under control of Imams of various dynasties usually of the Zaidi sect, who established a theocratic political structure that survived until modern times. (Imam is a religious term. The Shi'ites apply it to the prophet Muhammad's son-in-law Ali, his sons Hassan and Hussein, and subsequent lineal descendants, whom they consider to have been divinely ordained unclassified successors of the prophet.)

Egyptian Sunni caliphs occupied much of north Yemen throughout the 11th century. By the 16th century and again in the 19th century, north Yemen was part of the Ottoman Empire, and in some periods its Imams exerted control over south Yemen.

Former North Yemen

Ottoman control was largely confined to cities with the Imam's suzerainty over tribal areas formally recognized. Turkish forces withdrew in 1918, and Imam Yahya strengthened his control over north Yemen. Yemen became a member of the Arab league in 1945 and the United Nations in 1947.

Imam Yahya died during an unsuccessful coup attempt in 1948 and was succeeded by his son Ahmad, who ruled until his death in September 1962. Imam Ahmad's reign was marked by growing repression, renewed friction with the United Kingdom over the British presence in the south, and growing pressures to support the Arab nationalist objectives of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser.

Shortly after assuming power in 1962, Ahmad's son, Badr, was deposed by revolutionary forces, which took control of Sanaa and created the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). Egypt assisted the YAR with troops and supplies to combat forces loyal to the Imamate. Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported Badr's royalist forces to oppose the newly formed republic. Conflict continued periodically until 1967 when Egyptian troops were withdrawn. By 1968, following a final royalist siege of Sanaa, most of the opposing leaders reconciled; Saudi Arabia recognized the Republic in 1970.

Former South Yemen

British influence increased in the south and eastern portion of Yemen after the British captured the port of Aden in 1839. It was ruled as part of British India until 1937, when Aden was made a crown colony with the remaining land designated as east Aden and west Aden protectorates. By 1965, most of the tribal states within the protectorates and the Aden colony proper had joined to form the British-sponsored federation of south Arabia.

In 1965, two rival nationalist groups—the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) and the National Liberation Front (NLF)—turned to terrorism in their struggle to control the country. In 1967, in the face of uncontrollable violence, British troops began withdrawing, federation rule collapsed, and NLF elements took control after eliminating their FLOSY rivals. South Arabia, including Aden, was declared independent on November 30, 1967, and was renamed the People's Republic of South Yemen. In June 1969, a radical wing of the Marxist NLF gained power and changed the country's name on December 1, 1970, to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). In the PDRY, all political parties were amalgamated into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), which became the only legal party. The PDRY established close ties with the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and radical Palestinians.

Republic of Yemen

In 1972, the governments of the PDRY and the YAR declared that they approved a future union. However, little progress was made toward unification, and relations were often strained. In 1979, simmering tensions led to fighting, which was only resolved after Arab League mediation. The northern and southern heads of state reaffirmed the goal of unity during a summit meeting in Kuwait in March 1979. However, that same year the PDRY began sponsoring an insurgency against the YAR. In April 1980, PDRY President Abdul Fattah Ismail resigned and went into exile. His successor, Ali Nasir Muhammad, took a less interventionist stance toward both the YAR and neighboring Oman. On January 13, 1986, a violent struggle began in Aden between Ali Nasir Muhammad and the returned Abdul Fattah Ismail and their supporters. Fighting lasted for more than a month and resulted in thousands of casualties, Ali Nasir's ouster, and Ismail's death. Some 60,000 persons, including Ali Nasir and his supporters, fled to the YAR.



In May 1988, the YAR and PDRY governments came to an understanding that considerably reduced tensions including agreement to renew discussions concerning unification, to establish a joint oil exploration area along their undefined border, to demilitarize the border, and to allow Yemenis unrestricted border passage on the basis of only a national identification card.

In November 1989, the leaders of the YAR (Ali Abdullah Saleh) and the PDRY (Ali Salim Al-Bidh) agreed on a draft unity constitution originally drawn up in 1981. The Republic of Yemen (ROY) was declared on May 22, 1990. Ali Abdullah Saleh became President, and Ali Salim Al-Bidh became Vice President.

A 30-month transitional period for completing the unification of the two political and economic systems was set. A presidential council was jointly elected by the 26-member YAR advisory council and the 17-member PDRY presidium. The presidential council appointed a Prime Minister, who formed a Cabinet. There was also a 301-seat provisional unified Parliament, consisting of 159 members from the north, 111 members from the south, and 31 independent members appointed by the chairman of the council.

A unity constitution was agreed upon in May 1990 and ratified by the populace in May 1991. It affirmed Yemen's commitment to free elections, a multiparty political system, the right to own private property, equality under the law, and respect of basic human rights. Parliamentary elections were held on April 27, 1993. International groups assisted in the organization of

the elections and observed actual balloting. The resulting Parliament included 143 GPC, 69 YSP, 63 Islah (Yemeni Grouping for Reform, a party composed of various tribal and religious groups). The head of Islah, Paramount Hashid Sheik Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahmar, was elected speaker of Parliament, and continues in that capacity.

Islah was invited into the ruling coalition, and the presidential council was altered to include one Islah member. Conflicts within the coalition resulted in the self-imposed exile of Vice President Ali Salim Al-Bidh to Aden beginning in August 1993 and a deterioration in the general security situation as political rivals settled scores and tribal elements took advantage of the unsettled situation.

Haydar Abu Bakr Al-Attas (former southern Prime Minister) continued to serve as the ROY Prime Minister, but his government was ineffective due to political infighting. Continuous negotiations between northern and southern leaders resulted in the signing of the document of pledge and accord in Amman, Jordan on February 20, 1994. Despite this, clashes intensified until civil war broke out in early May 1994.

Almost all of the actual fighting in the 1994 civil war occurred in the southern part of the country despite air and missile attacks against cities and major installations in the north. Southerners sought support from neighboring states and received billions of dollars of equipment and financial assistance. The United States strongly supported Yemeni unity, but repeatedly called for a cease-fire and a return to the negotiating table. Various attempts, including by a UN special envoy, were unsuccessful in bringing about a cease-fire.

Southern leaders declared secession and the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Yemen (DRY) on May 21, 1994, but the DRY was not recognized by the international community. Ali Nasir Muhammad supporters greatly assisted military operations against the secessionists and Aden was captured on July 7, 1994. Other resistance quickly collapsed and thousands of southern leaders and military went into exile.

Early during the fighting, President Ali Abdullah Saleh announced a general amnesty, which applied to everyone except a list of 16 persons. Most southerners returned to Yemen after a short exile.

An armed opposition was announced from Saudi Arabia, but no significant incidents within Yemen materialized. The government prepared legal cases against four southern leaders—Ali Salim Al- Bidh, Haydar Abu Bakr Al-Attas, Abd Al-Rahman Ali Al-Jifri, and Salih Munassar Al-Siyali—for misappropriation of official funds. Abd Al-Rahman Ali Al-Rahman was allowed to return to Yemen in 2006. Others on the list of 16 were told informally they could return to take advantage of the amnesty, but most remained outside Yemen.

Although many of Ali Nasir Muhammad's followers were appointed to senior governmental positions (including Vice President, Chief of Staff, and Governor of Aden), Ali Nasir Muhammad himself remained abroad in Syria.

In the aftermath of the civil war, YSP leaders within Yemen reorganized the party and elected a new politburo in July 1994. However, the party remained disheartened and without its former influence.

In 1994, amendments to the unity constitution eliminated the presidential council. President Ali Abdullah Saleh was elected by Parliament on October 1, 1994 to a 5-year term. In April 1997, Yemen held its second multiparty parliamentary elections. The country held its first direct presidential elections in September 1999, electing President Ali Abdullah Saleh to a 5-year term in what were generally considered free and fair elections.

Constitutional amendments adopted in the summer of 2000 extended the presidential term by 2 years, creating a seven-year presidential term. The constitution provides that henceforth the President will be elected by popular vote from at least two candidates selected by the legislature.

The amendments also extended the parliamentary term of office to a 6-year term, with the next elections occurring in 2009. On February 20, 2001, a new constitutional amendment created a bicameral legislature consisting of a Shura Council (111 seats; members appointed by the president) and a House of Representatives (301 seats; members elected by popular vote). In April 2003, the third multiparty parliamentary elections were held with improvements in voter registration for both men and women and in a generally free and fair atmosphere. Two women were elected. In September 2006, citizens re-elected President Saleh to a second term in a generally open and competitive election, although there were multiple problems with the voting process and use of state resources on behalf of the ruling party.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Yemen is a republic with a bicameral legislature. Under the constitution, an elected president, an elected 301-seat House of Representatives, and an appointed 111-member Shura Council share power. The president is head of state, and the prime minister is head of government. The constitution provides that the president be elected by popular vote from at least two candidates endorsed by Parliament; the prime minister is appointed by the president. The presidential term of office is 7 years, and the parliamentary term of elected office is 6 years. Suffrage is universal over 18.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh was re-elected to a second term in 2006; the next presidential elections are scheduled for 2013. In the April 2003 parliamentary elections, the General People's Congress (GPC) maintained an absolute majority. International observers judged elections to be gen-

erally free and fair, and there was a marked decrease from previous years in election-related violence; however, there were some problems with underage voting, confiscation of ballot boxes, voter intimidation, and election-related violence. The next parliamentary elections are scheduled for 2009. In the September 2006 local council elections, the GPC won a majority of seats on local and provincial councils. International observers judged the elections to be generally open and competitive, with another marked decrease in election-related violence.

The constitution calls for an independent judiciary. The former northern and southern legal codes have been unified. The legal system includes separate commercial courts and a Supreme Court based in Sanaa.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Ali Abdallah SALIH**
Vice Pres.: **Abd al-Rab Mansur al-HADI, Maj. Gen.**
Prime Min.: **Ali Muhammad MUJAWWAR**
Dep. Prime Min.:
Dep. Prime Min.for Economic Affairs: **Abd al-Karim Ismail al-ARHABI**
Dep. Prime Min.for Local Authority Affairs: **Sadiq Amin ABU RAS**
Dep. Prime Min.for Security & Defense Affairs: **Rashad Muhammad al-ALIMI**
Min. of Agriculture & Irrigation: **Mansur Ahmad al-HAWSHABI**
Min. of Cabinet Affairs: **Salim al-AYDARUS**
Min. of Civil Service & Social Security: **Yahya al-SHUIBI**
Min. of Communications & Information Technology: **Kamal Husayn al-JABRI**
Min. of Construction, Housing, & Urban Planning: **Abdallah Husayn al-DAFA**
Min. of Culture: **Muhammad Abu Bakr al-MAFLAHI**
Min. of Defense: **Muhammad Nasir Ahmad ALI, Brig. Gen.**
Min. of Education: **Abd al-Salman Muhammad Hizam al-JAWFI**
Min. of Electricity: **Awadh Said al-SOCOTRI**
Min. of Expatriate Affairs: **Ahmad Musaed HUSAYN**
Min. of Finance: **Numan Salih al-SUHAYBI**
Min. of Fisheries: **Abyan Muhammad Salih SHAMLAN**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Abu Bakr Abdallah al-QIRBI**
Min. of Higher Education & Scientific Research: **Salih Ali BA SURA**
Min. of Human Rights: **Huda Abd al-Latif al-BAN**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Yahya Yahya al-MUTAWAKIL**
Min. of Information: **Hasan Ahmad al-LAWZI**
Min. of Interior: **Mutahir Rashad al-MASRI**
Min. of Justice: **Ghazi Shaif al-AGHBARI**
Min. of Legal Affairs: **Rashad Ahmad al-RASAS**
Min. of Local Admin.: **Abd al-Qadir Ali HILAL**
Min. of Oil & Minerals: **Amir Salim al-AYDARUS**
Min. of Planning & Intl. Cooperation: **Abd al-Karim Ismail al-ARHABI**
Min. of Public Health & Population: **Abd al-Karim RASI**
Min. of Public Works & Roads: **Umar Abdallah al-KURSHAMI**
Min. of Religious Endowment & Islamic Affairs: **Hamud Abd al-Hamid al-HITAR**
Min. of Social & Labor Affairs: **Amat al-Razaq Ali HAMAD**
Min. of Supply & Trade: **Abd al-Aziz al-KUMAYM**
Min. of Technical Education & Vocational Training: **Ibrahim Umar HAJRI**
Min. of Tourism: **Nabil Hasan al-FAQIH**
Min. of Transport: **Khalid Ibrahim al-WAZIR**
Min. of Water & Environment: **Abd al-Rahman Fadhl al-IRIYANI**
Min. of Youth & Sports: **Mahmud Muhammad UBAD**
Min. of State & Sec. Gen. of the Presidency: **Abdallah al-BASHIRI, Maj. Gen.**
Min. of State & Cabinet Member: **Qasim Ahmad al-AJAM**
Min. of State & Cabinet Member: **Muhammad Ali al-YASIR**
Min. of State & Dir. of Prime Min.'s Office: **Abdulrahman Muhammad TARMOUM**
Min. of State & Mayor of Sanaa: **Yahya Muhammad al-SHUAYBI**
Min. of State for Parliamentary & Shura Council Affairs: **Khalid Abd al-Wahhab al-SHARIF**
Governor, Central Bank: **Ahmad Abd al-Rahman al-SAMAWI**
Ambassador to the US: **Abd al-Wahab Abdallah al-HAJRI**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Abdallah Muhammad al-SAIDI**

The Republic of Yemen maintains an Embassy in the United States at 2319 Wyoming Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-965-4760).

ECONOMY

At unification, both the YAR and the PDRY were struggling, underdeveloped economies. In the north, disruptions of civil war (1962-70) and frequent periods of drought had dealt severe blows to a previously prosperous agricultural sector. Coffee production, formerly the north's main export and principal form of foreign exchange, declined as the cultivation of qat increased. Low domestic industrial output and a lack of raw materials made the YAR dependent on a wide variety of imports.

Remittances from Yemenis working abroad and foreign aid paid for perennial trade deficits. Substantial Yemeni communities exist in many countries of the world, including Yemen's immediate neighbors on the Arabian Peninsula, Indonesia, India, East Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Soviet Union and China provided large-scale assistance to the YAR. This aid included funding of substantial construction projects, scholarships, and considerable military assistance.

In the south, pre-independence economic activity was overwhelmingly concentrated in the port city of Aden. The seaborne transit trade, which the port relied upon, collapsed with the closure of the Suez Canal and Britain's withdrawal from Aden in 1967. Only extensive Soviet aid, remittances from south Yemenis working abroad, and revenues from the Aden refinery (built in the 1950s) kept the PDRY's centrally planned Marxist economy afloat. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and a cessation of Soviet aid, the south's economy basically collapsed.

Since unification, the government has worked to integrate two relatively disparate economic systems. However, severe shocks, including

the return in 1990 of approximately 850,000 Yemenis from the Gulf states, a subsequent major reduction of aid flows, and internal political disputes culminating in the 1994 civil war hampered economic growth.

Since the conclusion of the war, the government has entered into agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to institute an extremely successful structural adjustment program. Phase one of the IMF program included major financial and monetary reforms, including floating the currency, reducing the budget deficit, and cutting subsidies. Phase two will address structural issues such as civil service reform. The World Bank also is present in Yemen, with 19 active projects in 2005, including projects in the areas of public sector governance, water, and education. Since 1998, the government of Yemen has sought to implement World Bank economic and fiscal recommendations. In subsequent years, Yemen has lowered its debt burden through Paris Club agreements and restructuring U.S. foreign debt. In 2004, government reserves reached $4.7 billion.

Current U.S. commercial assistance is focused on aiding the business sector in supporting U.S.-Yemen bilateral trade relations, encouraging American business interests in country, and diversifying Yemen's economy toward non-petroleum dependent sectors.

Following a minor discovery in the south in 1982, an American company found an oil basin near Marib in 1984. A total of 170,000 barrels per day were produced there in 1995. A small oil refinery began operations near Marib in 1986. A Soviet discovery in the southern governorate of Shabwa proved only marginally successful even when taken over by a different group. A Western consortium began exporting oil from Masila in the Hadramaut in 1993, and production there reached 420,000 barrels per day in 1999. More than a dozen other companies have been unsuccessful in finding commercial quantities of oil. There are new finds in the Jannah (formerly known as the Joint Oil Exploration Area) and east Shabwah blocks. In November 2005, Hunt Oil's 20-year contract for the management of Block 18 fields ended. Despite agreement with the Government of Yemen on a 5-year extension, the Republic of Yemen Government abrogated the agreement via a parliamentary vote (not called for in the contract). The company formally requested arbitration proceedings at the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris in November. No decision has been rendered.

Yemen's oil exports in 1995 earned about $1 billion. By 2005, exports had grown to approximately $3.1 billion and comprised roughly 70% of government revenue. Oil production is expected to decline in 2007 due to dwindling reserves, but revenue will be stable as long as oil prices remain high.

Oil located near Marib contains associated natural gas. Proven reserves of 10-13 trillion cubic feet could sustain a liquefied natural gas (LNG) export project. A long-term prospect for the petroleum industry in Yemen is a proposed liquefied natural gas project (Yemen LNG), which plans to process and export Yemen's 17 trillion cubic feet of proven associated and natural gas reserves. In September 1995, the Yemeni Government signed an agreement that designated Total of France to be the lead company for an LNG project, and, in January 1997, agreed to include Hunt Oil, Exxon, and Yukong of South Korea as partners in the Yemeni Exploration and Production Company. The project envisions a $3.5 billion investment over 25 years, producing approximately 3.1 million tons of LNG annually. A Bechtel-Technip joint venture also conducted a preliminary engineering study for LNG production/development. In 2005, Yemen LNG signed two agreements for the sale of 4.5 metric tons per year, the majority of which will be exported to the United States and South Korea. Construction on the LNG export facility began in September 2005, and it is expected to begin exporting in 2009.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

The geography and ruling Imams of north Yemen kept the country isolated from foreign influence before 1962. The country's relations with Saudi Arabia were defined by the Taif Agreement of 1934, which delineated the northernmost part of the border between the two kingdoms and set the framework for commercial and other intercourse. The Taif Agreement has been renewed periodically in 20-year increments, and its validity was reaffirmed in 1995. Relations with the British colonial authorities in Aden and the south were usually tense.

The Soviet and Chinese Aid Missions established in 1958 and 1959 were the first important non-Muslim presence in north Yemen. Following the September 1962 revolution, the Yemen Arab Republic became closely allied with and heavily dependent upon Egypt. Saudi Arabia aided the royalists in their attempt to defeat the Republicans and did not recognize the Yemen Arab Republic until 1970. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia provided Yemen substantial budgetary and project support. At the same time, Saudi Arabia maintained direct contact with Yemeni tribes, which sometimes strained its official relations with the Yemeni Government. Hundreds of thousands of Yemenis found employment in Saudi Arabia during the late 1970s and 1980s.

In February 1989, north Yemen joined Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt informing the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), an organization created partly in response to the founding of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and intended to foster closer economic cooperation and integration among its members.

After unification, the Republic of Yemen was accepted as a member of the ACC in place of its YAR predecessor. In the wake of the Gulf crisis, the ACC has remained inactive. Yemen is not a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

British authorities left southern Yemen in November 1967 in the wake of an intense terrorist campaign. The people's democratic Republic of Yemen, the successor to British colonial rule, had diplomatic relations with many nations, but its major links were with the Soviet Union and other Marxist countries. Relations between it and the conservative Arab states of the Arabian Peninsula were strained. There were military clashes with Saudi Arabia in 1969 and 1973, and the PDRY provided active support for the Dhofar rebellion against the Sultanate of Oman. The PDRY was the only Arab state to vote against admitting new Arab states from the Gulf area to the United Nations and the Arab League. The PDRY provided sanctuary and material support to various international terrorist groups.

Yemen is a member of the United Nations, the Arab League, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Yemen participates in the nonaligned movement. The Republic of Yemen accepted responsibility for all treaties and debts of its predecessors, the YAR and the PDRY. Yemen has acceded to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. The Gulf crisis dramatically affected Yemen's foreign relations. As a member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 1990-1991, Yemen abstained on a number of UNSC resolutions concerning Iraq and Kuwait, and voted against the "use of force resolution." Western and Gulf Arab states reacted by curtailing or canceling aid programs and diplomatic contacts. At least 850,000 Yemenis returned from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.

Subsequent to the liberation of Kuwait, Yemen continued to maintain high-level contacts with Iraq. This hampered its efforts to rejoin the Arab mainstream and to mend fences with its immediate neighbors. In 1993, Yemen launched an unsuccessful diplomatic offensive to restore relations with its Gulf neighbors. Some of its aggrieved neighbors actively aided the south during the 1994 civil war. Since the end of that conflict, tangible progress has been made on the diplomatic front in restoring normal relations with Yemen's neighbors. The Omani-Yemeni border has been officially demarcated. In the summer of 2000, Yemen and Saudi Arabia signed an International Border Treaty settling a 50-year-old dispute over the location of the border between the two countries. Yemen also settled its dispute with Eritrea over the Hanish Islands in 1998.

U.S.–YEMEN RELATIONS

The United States established diplomatic relations with the Imamate in 1946. A resident legation, later elevated to embassy status, was opened in Taiz (the capital at the time) on March 16, 1959 and moved to Sanaa in 1966. The United States was one of the first countries to recognize the Yemen Arab Republic, doing so on December 19, 1962. A major U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) program constructed the Mocha-Taiz-Sanaa highway and the Kennedy memorial water project in Taiz, as well as many smaller projects. On June 6, 1967, the YAR, under Egyptian influence, broke diplomatic relations with the United States in the wake of the Arab-Israeli conflict of that year. Secretary of State William P. Rogers restored relations following a visit to Sanaa in July 1972, and a new USAID agreement was concluded in 1973.

On December 7, 1967, the United States recognized the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and elevated its Consulate General in Aden to embassy status. However, relations were strained. The PDRY was placed on the list of nations that support terrorism. On October 24, 1969, south Yemen formally broke diplomatic relations with the United States. The United States and the PDRY reestablished diplomatic relations on April 30, 1990, only 3 weeks before the announcement of unification. However, the embassy in Aden, which closed in 1969, was never reopened, and the PDRY as a political entity no longer exists.

During a 1979 border conflict between the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the United States cooperated with Saudi Arabia to greatly expand the security assistance program to the YAR by providing F-5 aircraft, tanks, vehicles and training. George H.W. Bush, while Vice President, visited in April 1986, and President Ali Abdullah Saleh visited the United States in January 1990. The United States had a $42 million USAID program in 1990. From 1973 to 1990, the United States provided the YAR with assistance in the agriculture, education, and health and water sectors. Many Yemenis were sent on U.S. Government scholarships to study in the region and in the United States. There was a Peace Corps program with about 50 volunteers. The U.S. Information Service operated an English-language institute in Sanaa.

In 1990, as a result of Yemen's actions in the Security Council following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States drastically reduced its presence in Yemen including canceling all military cooperation, non-humanitarian assistance, and the Peace Corps program. USAID levels dropped in FY 1991 to $2.9 million, but food assistance through the PL 480 and PL 416 (B) programs continued through 2006. In 2006, the U.S. Department of Agriculture provided 30,000 metric tons of soybean meal that were sold for approximately $7.5 million to finance programs in support of Yemen's agricultural sector.

The United States was actively involved in and strongly supportive of parliamentary elections in 1993 as well as the 2006 presidential and local council elections, and continues working to strengthen Yemen's democratic institutions. The USAID program, focused in the health field, had slowly increased to $8.5 million in FY 1995, but ended in FY 2000. It was reinvigorated in 2003 and a USAID office has re-opened in Sanaa. Yemen has also received significant funding from the Middle East Partnership Initiative. Funds went, in large part, to support literacy projects, election monitoring, training for civil society,

and the improvement of electoral procedures. Defense relations between Yemen and the United States are improving rapidly, with the resumption of International Military Education and Training assistance and the transfer of military equipment and spare parts.

In FY 2006 U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Yemen was $8.42 million, International Military Education and Training (IMET) was $924,000, and Non-Proliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) was $1.4 million. In FY 2006 Yemen also received $7.9 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF), $10 million in Food for Progress (Title 1) assistance, and $5 million in Section 1206 funding.

In November 2006, a World Bank-sponsored international donors conference held in London raised $4.7 billion for Yemen's development; the funds are to be disbursed between 2007 and 2010.

Currently, Yemen is an important partner in the global war on terrorism, providing assistance in the military, diplomatic, and financial arenas. President Ali Abdullah Saleh visited Washington, DC, in November 2001. Since that time, Yemen has stepped up its counter-terrorism cooperation efforts with the United States, achieving significant results and improving overall security in Yemen.

President Saleh returned to Washington in June 2004 when he was invited to attend the G-8 Sea Island Summit. The Summit was an excellent forum for Yemen to share its democratic reform experiences, and it has agreed to participate in future activities detailed in the Sea Island charter. In November 2005 and May 2007, President Saleh again visited high-level officials in Washington, including President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

SANAA (E) Sa'awan Street, (967) (1) 755-2000, Fax (967) (1) 303-182, Workweek: Sat–Wed 0800-1630, Website: http://yemen.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Janice Mcpherson
AMB OMS:	Joyce Cobb
ECO:	Andrew Mitchell
ECO/COM:	David Deurden
FM:	Nelson Rodrigeuz
MGT:	Paul Blankenship
POL/ECO:	Andrew Mitchell
AMB:	Stephen Seche
CON:	Terrence West
DCM:	Angie Bryan
PAO:	Ryan Gliha
GSO:	Doris Beck
RSO:	Nicholas Collura
AGR:	Frederick Giles (Riyadh)
AID:	Mike Sarhan
CLO:	Vacant
DAO:	Ltc. Robert Holzhauer
DEA:	(Res. Cairo)
FAA:	(Res. Brussels)
FMO:	Robert Haynie
ICASS Chair:	Ryan Gliha
IMO:	Linda Howard
IRS:	(Res. Berlin)
ISSO:	Linda Howard
MLO:	Frank Molinari
State ICASS:	Tbd

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

July 21, 2008

Country Description: The Republic of Yemen was established in 1990 following unification of the former Yemen Arab Republic (North) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South). Islamic and traditional ideals, beliefs, and practices provide the foundation of the country's customs and laws. Yemen is a developing country and modern tourist facilities are widely available only in major cities.

Entry Requirements: Passports and visas are required for travel to Yemen. Visas may be obtained at Yemeni Embassies abroad; all travelers to Yemen can also potentially obtain entry visas at ports of entry. Travelers to Yemen are no longer required to have an affiliation with and arrange their travel through a Yemeni-based individual or organization to enter Yemen. However, individuals may be asked for supporting evidence of their character, purpose of visit and length of stay. Upon arrival at ports of entry, travelers may be issued a visa valid for a maximum of three months.

Yemeni law requires that all foreigners traveling in Yemen obtain exit visas before leaving the country. In cases of travelers with valid tourist visas and without any special circumstances (like those listed below), this exit visa is obtained automatically at the port of exit as long as the traveler has not overstayed the terms of the visa.

In certain situations, however, foreigners are required to obtain exit visas from the Immigration and Passport Authority headquarters in Sanaa. These cases may include, but are not limited to, foreigners who have overstayed the validity date of their visa; U.S.-citizen children with Yemeni or Yemeni-American parents who are not exiting Yemen with them; foreigners who have lost the passport containing their entry visa; foreign residents whose residence visas are based on their employment or study in Yemen, marriage to a Yemeni citizen, or relationship to a Yemeni parent; or foreign residents who have pending legal action (including court-based "holds" on family members' travel). The loss of a passport can result in considerable delay to a traveler because Yemeni law requires that the traveler attempt to recover the passport by placing an advertisement in a newspaper and waiting a week for a response. All minor/underage U.S. citizens should be accompanied by their legal guardian(s) and/or provide a notarized letter in Arabic of parental consent when obtaining exit visas to depart Yemen. In all of these more complex cases, obtaining an exit visa requires the permission of the employing company, the sponsoring Yemeni family member, the sponsoring school or the court in which the legal action is pending. Without this permission, foreigners—including

U.S. Citizens—may not be allowed to leave Yemen. American women who also hold Yemeni nationality and/or are married to Yemeni or Yemeni-American men often must obtain permission from their husbands for exit visas. They also may not take their children out of Yemen without the permission of the father, regardless of who has custody (see Special Circumstances section below).

For more details, travelers can contact the Embassy of the Republic of Yemen, Suite 705, 2600 Virginia Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20037, telephone 202-965-4760; or the Yemeni (Mission to the U.N., 866 United Nations Plaza, Room 435, New York, NY 10017, telephone (212) 355-1730. Visit the Yemeni Embassy home page for more visa information at http://www.yemenembassy.org.

Safety and Security: The Department of State is concerned that al-Qa'ida and its affiliates are actively engaged in extremist-related activities in Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. The Department remains concerned about possible attacks by extremist individuals or groups against U.S. citizens, facilities, businesses and perceived interests.

On March 18, 2008, three mortar rounds landed in the vicinity of the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa. Yemeni students at a nearby school and Yemeni government security personnel posted outside the embassy were injured in the attack. On April 6, 2008, an expatriate residential compound in the Hadda neighborhood of southwestern Sanaa was attacked by mortar fire, and on April 30, 2008, suspected extremists fired two mortar rounds that exploded near the Yemen Customs Authority and the Italian Embassy. No injuries were reported in either incident. A group calling itself al-Qa'ida in Yemen may be responsible for all three attacks. Following the attacks against the Embassy and the residential compound, the Department of State ordered the departure of all American non-emergency embassy staff and family members on April 7, 2008.

On January 18, 2008, suspected al-Qa'ida operatives ambushed a tourist convoy in the eastern Hadramout Governorate, killing two Belgians. On July 2, 2007, suspected al-Qa'ida operatives carried out a vehicle-borne explosive device attack on tourists at the Belquis Temple in Marib, which resulted in the deaths of eight Spanish tourists and two Yemenis. The targeting of tourist sites by al-Qa'ida may represent an escalation in terror tactics in Yemen. On February 3, 2006, 23 convicts, including known affiliates of al-Qa'ida, escaped from a high-security prison in the capital city, Sanaa. Among the al-Qa'ida associates were individuals imprisoned for their roles in the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole and the 2002 attack on the French oil tanker Limburg. In the weeks following the escape, some prisoners voluntarily turned themselves in to authorities; to date, however, some escapees remain at large. Two of the escapees were killed in vehicle-based suicide attacks on oil facilities near Mukalla and Marib on September 15, 2006. Those attacks were followed by the arrest the next day in Sanaa of four suspected al-Qa'ida operatives, who had stockpiled explosives and weapons. On December 5, 2006, a lone gunman opened small arms fire outside of the Embassy compound during the early morning hours. The assailant, wounded by host-nation security personnel and subsequently arrested, was the sole casualty. It appears that, although the gunman was influenced by extremist ideology, he worked alone in planning and executing the attack.

Americans should avoid areas where demonstrations are taking place. A 2005 demonstration against an increase in the fuel price led to two days of widespread demonstrations and rioting throughout Sanaa and other cities. Those demonstrations resulted in a large amount of property damage, looting, and several roadblocks.

In late 2007 and throughout 2008, there has been an increase in anti-government demonstrations in southern Yemen, including the cities of Aden, Taizz, Ibb, and Mukalla, as well as surrounding regions. Some of these demonstrations have resulted in injuries and deaths. Americans should be aware of the potential for further demonstrations when traveling in these areas.

Throughout the country, U.S. citizens are urged to exercise particular caution at locations where large groups of expatriates have gathered. From time to time, the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa may temporarily close or suspend public services as necessary to review its security posture and ensure its adequacy.

In addition, U.S. citizens are urged to avoid contact with any suspicious, unfamiliar objects, and to report the presence of such objects to local authorities. Vehicles should not be left unattended and should be kept locked at all times. Americans in Yemen are urged to register and remain in contact with the American Embassy in Sanaa for updated security information (see section on Registration/Embassy location below).

Yemeni government security organizations have arrested and expelled foreign Muslims, including Americans, who have associated with local Muslim organizations considered to be extremist by security organs of the Yemeni government. Americans risk arrest if they engage in either political or other activities that violate the terms of their admission to Yemen.

Travel on roads between cities throughout Yemen can be dangerous. Armed carjacking, especially of four-wheel-drive vehicles, occurs in many parts of the country, including the capital. Yemeni security officials advise against casual travel to rural areas. The U.S. Embassy sometimes restricts the travel of its own personnel to rural areas, while the Government of Yemen also sometimes places restrictions on Americans traveling outside Sanaa. Please check with the Embassy for the latest restrictions.

Travel is particularly dangerous in the tribal areas north and east of Sanaa. Armed tribesmen in those areas have kidnapped a number of foreigners in attempts to resolve dis-

putes with the Yemeni government. Hostilities between tribesmen and government security forces in the Sadah governorate north of Sanaa have flared up on several occasions since 2005. Serious fighting occurred in the city of Benni Hashish from late May through early June 2008. Americans are urged to avoid this region during periods of conflict.

Travel by boat through the Red Sea or near the Socotra Islands in the Gulf of Aden presents the risk of pirate attacks. If travel to any of these areas is necessary, travelers may reduce the risk to personal security if such travel is undertaken by air or with an armed escort provided by a local tour company.

Other potential hazards to travelers include land mines and unexploded ordnance from the 1994 civil war. This is of particular concern in areas where fighting took place in the six southern provinces. However, most minefields have been identified and cordoned off.

Americans are most vulnerable to terrorist attacks when they are in transit to and from their residences or workplaces, or visiting locations where large groups of expatriates have gathered. All Americans are reminded to vary their routes and times, remain vigilant, report suspicious incidents to the Embassy, avoid areas where large groups of expatriates have gathered, lock car windows and doors, and carry a cell phone.

Based on previous abductions of foreigners in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait, the Embassy recommends that Americans with doubts about the identity of security or police personnel on the roads remain in their vehicles, roll up their windows, and contact the Embassy.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: The most serious problem affecting travelers to Yemen is carjacking. Travelers have rarely been victims of petty street crime.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends, and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Yemen is 199, but operators do not speak English.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Lack of modern medical facilities outside of Sanaa and Aden and a shortage of emergency ambulance services throughout the country may cause concern to some visitors. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. An adequate supply of prescription medications for the duration of the trip is important. While many prescription drugs are available in Yemen, a particular drug needed by a visitor may not be available.

The U.S. Embassy in Sanaa strongly advises all American citizens residing in or traveling to Yemen to ensure that they have received all recommended immunizations.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's internet site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Yemen.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Yemenis provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Based on previous abductions of foreigners in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait, the Embassy recommends that Americans with doubts about the identity of security or police personnel on the roads remain in their vehicles, roll up their windows, and contact the Embassy. For additional information addressing security concerns for Americans in Yemen, please see the Safety and Security section above.

Travel by road in Yemen should be considered risky. Within cities, minivans and small buses ply somewhat regular routes, picking up and dropping off passengers with little notice or regard for other vehicles. Taxis and public transportation are widely available but the vehicles may lack safety standards and equipment.

Embassy personnel are advised to avoid public buses for safety reasons. Despite the presence of traffic lights and traffic policemen, drivers are urged to exercise extreme caution, especially at intersections. While traffic laws exist, they are often not enforced, and/or not adhered to by motorists. Drivers sometimes drive on the left side of the road, although right-hand driving is specified by Yemeni law. No laws mandate the use of seat belts or car seats for children. The maximum speed for private cars is 100 kilometers per hour (62.5 miles per hour), but speed limits are rarely enforced. A large number of underage drivers are on the roads. Many vehicles are in poor repair and lack basic parts such as functional turn signals, headlights and taillights. Pedestrians, especially children, and animals on the roads constitute a hazard in both rural and urban areas. Beyond the main inter-city roads, which are usually paved and in fair condition, the rural roads in general require four-wheel-drive vehicles or vehicles with high clearance.

Yemeni security officials advise against casual travel to rural areas. The U.S. Embassy sometimes restricts the travel of its own personnel to rural areas, while the Government of Yemen also sometimes places restrictions on Americans traveling outside Sanaa. Please check with the Embassy for the latest restrictions.

Travelers should take precautions to avoid minefields left over from Yemen's civil wars. Traveling off well-used tracks without an experienced guide could be extremely hazardous, particularly in parts of the south and the central highlands.

Penalties for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and reckless driving which causes an accident resulting in injury, are a fine and/or prison sentence. If the accident results in death, the driver is subject to a maximum of three years in prison and/or a fine. Under traditional practice, victims' families negotiate a monetary compensation from the driver proportionate to the extent of the injuries—higher if it is a fatality.

and visit the web site of Yemen's national tourism office and national authority responsible for road safety at http//yementourism.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Yemen, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Yemen's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Photography of military installations, including airports, equipment, or troops is forbidden. In the past, such photography has led to the arrest of U.S. citizens. Military sites are not always obvious. If in doubt, it is wise to ask specific permission from Yemeni authorities.

Travelers should be aware that automated teller machines (ATMs) are being introduced in major cities but are still not widely available in Yemen. Credit cards are not widely accepted. The Government of Yemen may not recognize the U.S. citizenship of persons who are citizens of both Yemen and the United States. This may hinder the ability of U.S. consular officials to assist persons who do not enter Yemen on a U.S. passport. Dual nationals may also be subject to national obligations, such as taxes or military service. For further information, travelers can contact the nearest embassy or consulate of Yemen.

American citizens who travel to Yemen are subject to the jurisdiction of Yemeni courts, as well as to the country's laws, customs, and regulations. This holds true for all legal matters including child custody. Women in custody disputes in Yemen may not enjoy the same rights that they do in the U.S., as Yemeni law often does not work in favor of the mother. Parents planning to travel to Yemen with their children should bear this in mind. Parents should also note that American custody orders might not be enforced in Yemen. American women who also hold Yemeni nationality, and/or are married to Yemeni or Yemeni-American men, are advised that if they bring their children to Yemen they may not enjoy freedom of travel should they decide they want to leave Yemen. Such women often must obtain permission from their husbands for exit visas. They also may not take their children out of Yemen without the permission of the father, regardless of who has custody.

American students and workers in Yemen sometimes report that the sponsors of their residence permits seize their U.S. passports as a means of controlling their domestic and international travel.

While the sponsors say they seize the passports on behalf of local security services, there is no law or instruction from Yemeni passport or security offices requiring that passports be seized.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Yemeni laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession or use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Yemen are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines.

The use of the mild stimulant "qat" or "khat" is legal and common in Yemen, but it is considered an illegal substance in many other countries, including the United States. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child

abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Yemen are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Yemen. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Dhahr Himyar Zone, Sheraton Hotel District, PO Box 22347. The telephone number of the Consular Section is (967)(1) 755-2000, extension 2153 or 2266. The fax number is (967) (1) 303-175. The after-hours emergency number is (967) (1) 755-2000 (press 0 for extension) or (967) 733213509. The Embassy is open from Saturday through Wednesday.

Intercountry Adoption

May 2007

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: The basis for Yemeni family law is a strict interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, and, therefore, does not allow for adoption as that concept is understood in the United States. Accordingly, it is generally not possible for U.S. citizens to adopt a Yemeni orphan to obtain an immigrant visa that will allow that child to immigrate to the United States.

Patterns of Immigration: No Yemeni orphans have received U.S. immigrant visas within the past five fiscal years.

Yemeni Guardianship Authority: Guardianship in Yemen is granted by local courts. Persons considering applying for guardianship of a Yemeni child should direct their inquiries to the court in the region of Yemen where the child is residing.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: There are no adoption agencies in Yemen. However, prospective guardians who may wish to use the services of an agency in the context of a guardianship case are advised to fully research any agency or facilitator they are considering using.

Embassy of the Republic of Yemen
2319 Wyoming Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 965-4760
Fax: (202) 337-2017

Yemen also has a consulate in Detroit and an honorary consulate in San Francisco.

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Embassy of the United States of America
Saawan St
Sheraton District
Sanaa, Yemen
Telephone: +967 (1) 755-2000 (Immigrant Visa Unit)
Fax: +967 (1) 303-175

Additional Information: Specific questions about the guardianship process in Yemen may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Parental Child Abduction

February 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign legal counsel.

General Information: Yemen is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, nor are there any international or bilateral treaties in force between Yemen and the United States dealing with international parental child abduction. American citizens who travel to Yemen are subject to the jurisdiction of Yemeni courts, as well as to the country's laws and regulations. This holds true for all legal matters including child custody. Parents planning to travel with their children to Yemen should bear this in mind.

Custody Disputes: Cases involving divorce and the custody of minor children are adjudicated in local courts that apply principles of Islamic law. Islamic law will be applied regardless of the religious beliefs of the parents.

In Yemen, Islamic law gives priority for custodianship to the mother as

long as certain restrictive conditions are met. However, once the children reach adolescence (age 9 for boys and age 12 for girls), the father can take custody. If the mother refuses, the father can file in court for custody. A court can find a mother unfit to have custody before the children reach adolescence. In that case, a maternal grandmother living in Yemen or a paternal grandmother (if the maternal grandmother is not living in Yemen) will be given custody until the children reach the age at which the father may appeal for custody.

In actual practice, the conditions placed on the mother's primary right to custody often enable the father to maintain a great deal of influence over the rearing of the children, even though he may not have custody. For example, the mother must seek his approval to depart Yemen with the children. Frequently, the father is actually able to assume custody against the wishes of the mother when she is unable or unwilling to meet the conditions set by law for her to maintain her custodial rights.

A mother can lose her primary right to custody of a child in a number of ways. The court can determine that she is incapable of safeguarding the child or of bringing the child up in accordance with the appropriate religious standards. The mother can void her right to custody by re-marrying a party considered "unmarriageable," or by residing in a home with people who might be "strangers" to the child. The mother may not deny visitation rights to the father or the paternal grandfather and may not travel outside Yemen with the child without the father's approval and the approval of the court. In general, a Yemeni man divorcing his non-Yemeni wife may be awarded legal custody of their children if the court determines that any of the above conditions have not been met.

Under Sharia law, if a mother removes a child from the father, thus denying him access, the mother's custody rights can be severed. Removal of children from Yemen without the father's permission is a crime in Yemen. Immigration officials at the port of exit may request permission from the father before permitting the children to leave Yemen.

A Yemeni father can remove his children from Yemen without approval of the mother. While a mother can legally seek a travel ban to prevent the father from taking the children out of Yemen, this is not always possible in reality.

Persons who wish to pursue a child custody claim in a Yemeni court should retain an attorney in Yemen. The U.S. Embassy in Sanaa maintains a list of attorneys willing to represent American clients. For more information, please read the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and review current reports online at http://travel.state.gov.

Enforcement of Foreign Judgments: Custody orders and judgments of foreign courts are not enforceable in Yemen if they potentially contradict or violate local laws and practices. For example, an order from a U.S. court granting custody to an American mother may not be honored in Yemen if the mother intends to take the child to live outside Yemen. Courts in Yemen will not enforce U.S. court decrees ordering a parent in Yemen to pay child support.

Visitation Rights: The government of Yemen will assist non-custodial parents who wish to visit their children in Yemen. When the custodial parent refuses to permit visitation, the non-custodial parent will need to file a complaint in local court.

Dual Nationality: Dual nationality is recognized under Yemeni law. Children of Yemeni fathers automatically acquire Yemeni citizenship at birth, regardless of where the child was born. Yemeni women can only transmit citizenship in rare instances when there is official intervention from the Yemen government. Yemenis are not required to enter and leave the country on Yemeni passports.

Travel Restrictions: Parents can obtain an order from a local court preventing the other parent from taking a child out of Yemen, regardless of the child's nationality, when there is a custody dispute before the local court.

Criminal Remedies: For information on possible criminal remedies, please contact your local law enforcement authorities or the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Information is also available on the Internet at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org. For further information on international parental child abduction, contact the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State at 1-888-407-4747 or visit its web site on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. You may also direct inquiries to: Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC 20520-4811; Phone: (202) 736-9090; Fax: (202) 312-9743.

Travel Warning

November 10, 2008

This Travel Warning warns U.S. citizens of the high security threat level in Yemen due to terrorist activities and updates information on the security situation in Yemen. The Department of State has lifted the authorized departure status of non-emergency personnel and adult family members of the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a. The Department recommends that American citizens defer non-essential travel to Yemen. American citizens remaining in Yemen despite this warning should monitor the U.S. Embassy website at http://yemen.usembassy.gov and should make contingency emergency plans. This replaces the Travel Warning for Yemen issued September 17, 2008.

The security threat level remains high due to terrorist activities in Yemen. On September 17 at approximately 9:15 a.m. local time, armed terrorists attacked the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a Yemen. A number of explosions occurred in the vicinity of the Embassy's main gate. Several Yemeni security personnel and one Embassy security guard were killed, as were a

few individuals waiting to gain entry to the Embassy. U.S. embassy employees have been advised to exercise caution when choosing restaurants, hotels or visiting tourist areas in Sanaa in order to avoid large gatherings of foreigners and expatriates. In addition, unofficial travel outside of the capital is not authorized at this time.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Yemen despite this warning should exercise caution and take prudent security measures, including maintaining a high level of vigilance, avoiding crowds and demonstrations, keeping a low profile, varying times and routes for all travel, and ensuring travel documents are current. American citizens in Yemen are advised to exercise particular caution at locations frequented by foreigners countrywide, including restaurants and hotels frequented by expatriates. From time to time, the Embassy may restrict official Americans from restaurants, hotels, or shopping areas. The Department of State strongly encourages American citizens to consult the most recent Warden Messages (http://usembassy.state.gov/yemen/citizen_services.html) to get up-to-date information on security conditions. Americans who believe they are being followed or threatened while driving in urban centers should proceed as quickly as possible to the nearest police station or major intersection and request assistance from the officers in the blue-and-white police cars stationed there.

The Department remains concerned about possible attacks by extremist individuals or groups against U.S. citizens, facilities, businesses, and perceived interests. On January 17, 2008, suspected al-Qa'ida operatives ambushed a tourist convoy in the eastern Hadramout Governorate, killing two Belgians. On July 2, 2007, suspected al-Qa'ida operatives carried out a vehicle-borne explosive device attack on tourists at the Belquis Temple in Marib, which resulted in the deaths of eight Spanish tourists and two Yemenis. The targeting of tourist sites by al-Qa'ida may represent an escalation in terror tactics in Yemen. On February 3, 2006, 23 convicts, including known affiliates of al-Qa'ida, escaped from a high-security prison in the capital city, Sanaa, some of whom remain at large. Two of the escapees were later killed in vehicle-based suicide attacks on oil facilities near Mukalla and Marib on September 15, 2006. Those attacks were followed by the arrest the next day in Sanaa of four suspected al Qa'ida operatives, who had stockpiled explosives and weapons.

Since January 2007, the Government of Yemen has been battling al Houthi rebels in and around the northern governorate of Saada. While foreigners have not been targeted, hundreds of soldiers and civilians have been killed in the violence. U.S. citizens traveling in Yemen should be aware that local authorities occasionally place restrictions on the travel of foreigners to parts of the country experiencing unrest. In addition, the U.S. Embassy itself often restricts travel of official personnel to the tribal areas north and east of Sanaa, such as the governorates of Amran, Al Jawf, Hajja, Marib, Saada, and Shabwa. Travelers should be in contact with the Embassy for up-to-date information on such restrictions. U.S. citizens should register at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa and enroll in the warden system (emergency alert network) to obtain updated information on travel and security in Yemen. This can be done online prior to arrival in Yemen at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs.

The U.S. Embassy is located at Dhahr Himyar Zone, Sheraton Hotel District, P.O. Box 22347. The telephone number of the Consular Section is (967) (1) 755-2000, extension 2153 or 2266. The fax number is (967) (1) 303-175. The afterhours emergency number is (967) (1) 755-2000 (press zero for extension) or (967) 733213509. From time to time the Embassy may temporarily close or suspend public services for security reasons. Emergency assistance to U.S. citizens during non-business hours (or when public access is restricted) is available through Embassy duty personnel. Current information on travel and security in Yemen may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from outside the United States and Canada, 1-202-501-4444. U.S. citizens should consult the Country Specific Information for Yemen and the Worldwide Caution on the Department's Internet site at http://travel.state.gov. Up-to-date information on security conditions can also be addressed at http://usembassy.state.gov/yemen/citizen_services.html.



ZAMBIA

Compiled from the September 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Zambia

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 752,614 sq. km. (290,585 sq. mi.); slightly larger than Texas.
Cities: Capita—Lusaka (pop. approx. 1 million). Other cities: Kitwe, Ndola, Livingstone, Kabwe.
Terrain: Varies; mostly plateau savanna.
Climate: Generally dry and temperate.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Zambian(s).
Population: (2006) Approx. 11.9 million.
Annual growth rate: (2006) 1.6%.
Ethnic groups: More than 70 ethnic groups.
Religions: Christian, indigenous beliefs, Muslim, Hindu.
Languages: English (official), about 70 local languages and dialects, including Bemba, Lozi, Kaonde, Lunda, Luvale, Tonga, and Nyanja.
Education: No compulsory education; seven years free education. Literacy—women: 60.6%; men: 81.6%.
Health: Infant mortality rate—102/1,000. Life expectancy—37 years. HIV prevalence (15-49)—17%.
Work force: Agriculture—75%; mining and manufacturing—6%; services—19%.

Government

Type: Republic.
Independence: October 24, 1964.
Constitution: 1991 (as amended in 1996).
Government branches: Executive—president (chief of state and head of government), cabinet. Legislative—unicameral National Assembly. Judicial—Supreme Court, high court, magistrate courts, and local courts.
Political parties: Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD).
Suffrage: Universal adult.
Political subdivisions: Nine provinces subdivided into 72 districts.

Economy

GDP: (2006, current prices) $10.9 billion.
Annual growth rate: (2007, preliminary): 6.2%.
Per capita GDP: (2006, current prices) $921.
Natural resources: Copper, cobalt, zinc, lead, coal, emeralds, gold, silver, uranium, hydroelectric power, fertile land.
Agriculture: Products—corn, sorghum, rice, groundnuts, sunflower seeds, vegetables, horticultural products, tobacco, cotton, sugarcane, livestock, coffee, and soybeans.
Industry: Types—mining, transport, construction, foodstuffs, beverages, chemicals, and textiles.
Trade: (2006) Exports—$3.54 billion: copper, cobalt, lead, and zinc, cut vegetables, cotton. Major markets—South Africa, United Kingdom, Tanzania, Malawi, Japan. Imports—$2.7 billion: crude oil, refined petroleum products, manufactured goods, machinery, transport equipment, foodstuffs. Major suppliers—South Africa, China, Tanzania, Zimbabwe.
Major donors: Donors provided $1.1 billion in development assistance to Zambia in 2005/6. The World Bank is Zambia's largest multilateral donor. Other key multilateral donors include the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union, UN agencies, and the African Development Bank. Counting direct bilateral assistance and assistance through multilateral agencies, the U.S. is Zambia's largest country donor.

PEOPLE

Zambia's population comprises more than 70 Bantu-speaking ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups are small, and only two have enough people to constitute at least 10% of the population. Most Zambians are subsistence farmers. The predominant religion is a blend of traditional beliefs and Christianity; Christianity is the official national religion. Expatriates, a majority of whom are Brit-

ish (about 15,000) and South African, live mainly in Lusaka and in the Copperbelt in northern Zambia, where they are employed in mines and related activities. Zambia also has a small but economically important Asian population, most of whom are Indians. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is ravaging Zambia. Almost 17% of Zambians are infected by HIV. Over 800,000 Zambian children have lost one or both of their parents due to HIV/AIDS. Life expectancy at birth is 37 years.

HISTORY

The indigenous hunter-gatherer occupants of Zambia began to be displaced or absorbed by more advanced migrating tribes about 2,000 years ago. The major waves of Bantu-speaking immigrants began in the 15th century, with the greatest influx between the late 17th and early 19th centuries. They came primarily from the Luba and Lunda tribes of southern Democratic Republic of Congo and northern Angola but were joined in the 19th century by Ngoni peoples from the south. By the latter part of that century, the various peoples of Zambia were largely established in the areas they currently occupy.

Except for an occasional Portuguese explorer, the area lay untouched by Europeans for centuries. After the mid-19th century, it was penetrated by Western explorers, missionaries, and traders. David Livingstone, in 1855, was the first European to see the magnificent waterfalls on the Zambezi River. He named the falls after Queen Victoria, and the Zambian town near the falls is named after him.

In 1888, Cecil Rhodes, spearheading British commercial and political interests in Central Africa, obtained a mineral rights concession from local chiefs. In the same year, Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively) were proclaimed a British sphere of influence. Southern Rhodesia was annexed formally and granted self-government in 1923, and the administration of Northern Rhodesia was transferred to the British colonial office in 1924 as a protectorate. In 1953, both Rhodesias were joined with Nyasaland (now Malawi) to form the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Northern Rhodesia was the center of much of the turmoil and crisis that characterized the federation in its last years. At the core of the controversy were insistent African demands for greater participation in government and European fears of losing political control.

A two-stage election held in October and December 1962 resulted in an African majority in the legislative council and an uneasy coalition between the two African nationalist parties. The council passed resolutions calling for Northern Rhodesia's secession from the federation and demanding full internal self-government under a new constitution and a new national assembly based on a broader, more democratic franchise. On December 31, 1963, the federation was dissolved, and Northern Rhodesia became the Republic of Zambia on October 24, 1964.

At independence, despite its considerable mineral wealth, Zambia faced major challenges. Domestically, there were few trained and educated Zambians capable of running the government, and the economy was largely dependent on foreign expertise. Abroad, three of its neighbors—Southern Rhodesia and the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola—remained under white-dominated rule. Rhodesia's white-ruled government unilaterally declared independence in 1965. In addition, Zambia shared a border with South African-controlled South-West Africa (now Namibia). Zambia's sympathies lay with forces opposing colonial or white-dominated rule, particularly in Southern Rhodesia. During the next decade, it actively supported movements such as the Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA), the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), and the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).

Conflicts with Rhodesia resulted in the closing of Zambia's borders with that country and severe problems with international transport and power supply. However, the Kariba hydroelectric station on the Zambezi River provided sufficient capacity to satisfy the country's requirements for electricity. A railroad to the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam, built with Chinese assistance, reduced Zambian dependence on railroad lines south to South Africa and west through an increasingly troubled Angola. By the late 1970s, Mozambique and Angola had attained independence from Portugal. Zimbabwe achieved independence in accordance with the 1979 Lancaster House agreement, but Zambia's problems were not solved. Civil war in the former Portuguese colonies generated refugees and caused continuing transportation problems.

The Benguela Railroad, which extended west through Angola, was essentially closed to traffic from Zambia by the late 1970s. Zambia's strong support for the ANC, which had its external headquarters in Lusaka, created security problems as South Africa raided ANC targets in Zambia.

In the mid-1970s, the price of copper, Zambia's principal export, suffered a severe decline worldwide. Zambia turned to foreign and international lenders for relief, but as copper prices remained depressed, it became increasingly difficult to service its growing debt. In response to growing popular demand, and after lengthy, difficult negotiations between the Kaunda government and opposition groups, Zambia enacted a new constitution in 1991 and shortly thereafter became a multi-party democracy. Kaunda's successor, Frederick Chiluba, made efforts to liberalize the economy and privatize industry, but allegations of massive corruption characterized the latter part of his administration. By the mid-1990s, despite limited debt relief, Zambia's per capita foreign debt remained among the highest in the world.

Although poverty continues to be a significant problem in Zambia, its economy has stabilized, featuring



single-digit inflation, real GDP growth, decreasing interest rates, and increasing levels of trade. Much of its growth is due to foreign investment in Zambia's mining sector and higher copper prices on the world market. In 2005, Zambia qualified for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, consisting of approximately U.S. $6 billion in debt relief.

GOVERNMENT

Zambia became a republic immediately upon attaining independence in October 1964. The constitution promulgated on August 25, 1973, abrogated the original 1964 constitution. The new constitution and the national elections that followed in December 1973 were the final steps in achieving what was called a "one-party participatory democracy."

The 1973 constitution provided for a strong president and a unicameral National Assembly. National policy was formulated by the Central Committee of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), the sole legal party in Zambia. The cabinet executed the central committee's policy.

In accordance with the intention to formalize UNIP supremacy in the new system, the constitution stipulated that the sole candidate in elections for the office of president was the person selected to be the president of UNIP by the party's general conference. The second-ranking person in the Zambian hierarchy was UNIP's secretary general.

In December 1990, at the end of a tumultuous year that included riots in the capital and a coup attempt, President Kenneth Kaunda signed legislation ending UNIP's monopoly on power. In response to growing popular demand for multi-party democracy, and after lengthy, difficult negotiations between the Kaunda government and opposition groups, Zambia enacted a new constitution in

August 1991. The constitution enlarged the National Assembly from 136 members to a maximum of 158 members, established an electoral commission, and allowed for more than one presidential candidate who no longer had to be a member of UNIP. The constitution was amended again in 1996 to set new limits on the presidency (including a retroactive two-term limit, and a requirement that both parents of a candidate be Zambian-born). The National Assembly is comprised of 150 directly elected members, up to eight presidentially-appointed members, and a speaker. Zambia is divided into nine provinces, each administered by an appointed deputy minister who essentially performs the duties of a governor.

The Supreme Court is the highest court and the court of appeal; below it are the high court, magistrate's court, and local courts.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres. (Acting): **Rupiah BANDA**
Vice Pres.: **Rupiah BANDA**
Min. of Agriculture & Cooperatives: **Ben KAPITA**
Min. of Agriculture & Cooperatives: **Sarah SAYIFWANDA**
Min. of Commerce, Trade, & Industry: **Dora SILIYA**
Min. of Community Development & Social Services: **Catherine NAMUGALA**
Min. of Defense: **George MPOMBO**
Min. of Education: **Geoffrey LUNGWANGA**
Min. of Energy & Water Development: **Kenneth KONGA**
Min. of Environment, Natural Resources, & Tourism: **Michael KAINGU**
Min. of Finance & National Planning: **Ngandu Peter MAGANDE**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Kabinga PANDE**
Min. of Gender & Women's Development: **Patricia MULASIKWANDA**
Min. of Health: **Angela CIFIRE**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Ronnie SHIKAPWASHA, Lt. Gen.**
Min. of Information & Broadcasting: **Mike MULONGOTI**
Min. of Labor & Social Security:
Min. of Lands: **Gladys NYIRONGO**
Min. of Justice: **George KUNDA**
Min. of Local Govt. & Housing: **Sylvia MASEBO**
Min. of Mines & Mineral Resources: **Kalombo MWANSA**
Min. of Presidential Affairs: **Cecil HOLMES**
Min. of Science, Technology, & Vocational Training: **Brian CHITUWO**
Min. of Sports, Youth, & Child Development: **Gabriel NAMULAMBE**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Peter DAKA**
Min. of Works & Supply: **Kapembwa SIMBAO**
Permanent Sec., Office of the Pres.: **Gibson ZIMBA**
Attorney Gen.: **George KUNDA**
Solicitor Gen.: **Sunday NKONDE**
Governor, Central Bank: **Caleb FUNDANGA**
Ambassador to the US: **Inonge MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Lazarous KAPAMBWE**

Zambia maintains an embassy in the United States at 2419 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008 (tel: 202-265-9717/8/9).

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The major figure in Zambian politics from 1964 to 1991 was Kenneth Kaunda, who led the campaign for independence and successfully bridged the rivalries among the country's various regions and ethnic groups. Kaunda tried to base government on his philosophy of "humanism," which condemned human exploitation and stressed cooperation among people, but not at the expense of the individual.

Kaunda's political party—the United National Independence Party (UNIP)—was founded in 1959 and was in power under Kaunda's leadership from 1964 to 1991. Before 1972, Zambia had three significant political parties, but only UNIP had a nationwide following.

In December 1972, Zambian law established a one-party state, and all other political parties were banned; this was later enshrined in the 1973 constitution. Kaunda, the sole candidate, was elected President in the 1973 elections. Elections also were held for the National Assembly. Only UNIP members were permitted to run, but these seats were sharply contested. President Kaunda's mandate was renewed in December 1978, October 1983, and October 1988 in a "yes" or "no" vote on his candidacy.

Growing opposition to UNIP's monopoly on power led to the rise in 1990 of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). The MMD assembled an increasingly impressive group of important Zambians, including prominent UNIP defectors and labor leaders. Zambia's first multi-party elections for parliament and the presidency since the 1960s were held on October 31, 1991. MMD candidate Frederick Chiluba resoundingly carried the presidential election over Kenneth Kaunda with 81% of the vote. To add to the MMD landslide, in the parliamentary elections the MMD won 125 of the 150 elected seats and UNIP the remaining 25.

By the end of Chiluba's first term as President (1996), the MMD's commitment to political reform had faded in the face of re-election demands. A number of prominent supporters founded opposing parties. Relying on the MMD's overwhelming majority in parliament, President Chiluba in May 1996 pushed through constitutional amendments that eliminated former President Kaunda and other prominent opposition leaders from the 1996 presidential elections. In the presidential and parliamentary elections held in November 1996, Chiluba was re-elected, and the MMD won 131 of the 150 seats in the National Assembly. Kaunda's UNIP party boycotted the parliamentary polls to protest the exclusion of its leader from the presidential race, alleging in addition that the outcome of the election had been predetermined due to a faulty voter registration exercise. As President Chiluba began his second term in 1997, the opposition and civil society challenged the results of the election amid international efforts to encourage the MMD and the opposition to resolve their differences through dialogue.

Early in 2001, supporters of President Chiluba mounted a campaign to amend the constitution to enable Chiluba to seek a third term of office. Civil society, opposition parties, and many members of the ruling party exerted sufficient pressure on Chiluba to force him to back away from any attempt at a third term.

Presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections were held on December 27, 2001. Eleven parties contested the elections. The elections encountered numerous administrative problems. Opposition parties alleged that serious irregularities occurred. Nevertheless, MMD presidential candidate Levy Mwanawasa, having garnered a plurality of the vote (29%), was declared the victor by a narrow margin, and he was sworn into office on January 2, 2002. Opposition parties won a majority of parliamentary seats in the December 2001 election, but subsequent by-elections gave the ruling MMD a majority in parliament.

During his first months in office, President Mwanawasa encouraged the Zambian Anticorruption Commission to aggressively pursue its mandate. In July 2002, in a speech before the Zambian National Assembly, President Mwanawasa provided details on a number of corruption allegations targeting former President Chiluba, and called for parliament to consider lifting Chiluba's immunity from prosecution. Mwanawasa appointed a special Task Force to investigate and prosecute corrupt officials. Zambian courts are now hearing cases involving corruption charges against Chiluba and numerous officials from his regime.

On May 4, 2007, a British court found former President Frederick Chiluba and several others liable in a civil suit for misappropriating $41 million of public resources. The criminal case, which was frequently in recess due to Chiluba's poor health, is expected to continue through 2008. The government's Task Force on Corruption has also successfully prosecuted three other cases of abuse of office and high-level corruption.

During his first term in office, President Mwanawasa appointed an Electoral Reform Technical Committee (ERTC) and a Constitutional Reform Committee (CRC) to make recommendations for reforms. The ERTC submitted its final report to the President in August 2005. Voter registration began on October 31, 2005 and continued through December 31, 2005. The CRC presented its final report and a draft constitution in December 2005. In February 2006 the government agreed to allow the formation of a Constituent Assembly to consider and adopt the draft constitution, subject to certain conditions. In August 2007, the Zambian parliament passed a government-sponsored law creating a National Constitutional Conference (NCC) charged with drafting a new constitution. The NCC, which is comprised of over 500 members drawn from parliament, political parties, civil society, and government, began meeting in late December 2007. Some members of civil society have refused to participate in the NCC, saying that its membership is too heavily stacked in the government's favor and pushing instead for the promised Constituent Assembly.

The Government of Zambia introduced very limited legislative changes to electoral procedures in mid-2006, including an electoral code of conduct and limits on politically-motivated donations and handouts. On July 25, 2006, President Mwanawasa dissolved parliament and his cabinet and set September 28, 2006 as the date for presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections. Mwanawasa won the September 2006 election with 1,177,846 votes, while the Patriotic Front's Michael Sata came in second with 804,748 votes. The head of a three-party alliance, Hakainde Hichilema, placed third. In parliamentary elections, the ruling MMD party won a slim majority of seats. International observers commended the overall conduct of the elections, but noted some anomalies.

President Mwanawasa died August 19, 2008 in a Paris hospital from complications of a stroke suffered June 29 while he was attending the African Union (AU) Summit in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt. In accordance with the constitution, Vice President Rupiah Banda assumed presidential powers but must hold elections within 90 days of Mwanawasa's death.

ECONOMY

About two-thirds of Zambians live in poverty. Per capita annual incomes are well below their levels at independence and, at $921, place the country among the world's poorest nations. Social indicators continue to decline, particularly in measurements of life expectancy at birth (about 37 years) and maternal mortality (729 per 100,000 pregnancies). The country's rate of economic growth cannot support rapid population growth or the strain which HIV/AIDS related issues (i.e., rising medical costs, decline in worker productivity) place on government resources. Zambia is also one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most highly urbanized countries. Over one-third of the country's 12 million people are concentrated in a few urban zones strung along the major transportation corridors, while rural areas are underpopulated. Unemployment and underemployment are serious problems.

HIV/AIDS is the nation's greatest challenge, with 17% prevalence among the adult population. HIV/AIDS will continue to ravage Zambian economic, political, cultural, and social development for the foreseeable future.

Once a middle-income country, Zambia began to slide into poverty in the 1970s when copper prices declined on world markets. The socialist government made up for falling revenue by increasing borrowing. After democratic multi-party elections, the Chiluba government (1991-2001) came to power in November 1991 committed to an economic reform program. The government was successful in some areas, such as privatization of most of the parastatals, maintenance of positive real interest rates, the elimina-

tion of exchange controls, and endorsement of free market principles. Corruption grew dramatically under the Chiluba government. Zambia has yet to address effectively issues such as reducing the size of the public sector and improving Zambia's social sector delivery systems.

For 30 years, copper production declined steadily from a 1973 high of 700,000 metric tons to a 2000 low of 226,192 metric tons. The decline was the result of poor management of state-owned mines and lack of investment. With the privatization of the mines in April 2000, the downward trend in production and exports was reversed as a result of investments in plant rehabilitation, expansion, increased exploration, and high copper prices on the international market. Copper production rose to 515,000 metric tons in 2006, and a similar level was estimated for 2007.

Zambia experienced positive economic growth for the ninth consecutive year in 2007 with a GDP of U.S. $10.9 billion and a real growth rate of 6% (according to preliminary IMF estimates). The rate of inflation dropped from 30% in 2000 to a single digit inflation of 8.9% by December 2007 due to fiscal and monetary discipline and the growth of the domestic food supply.

In April 2005, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) provided Zambia significant debt service relief and debt forgiveness under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. Zambia was the 17th country to reach the HIPC completion point and has benefited from approximately U.S. $6 billion in debt relief. In July 2005, the G-8 agreed on a proposal to cancel 100% of outstanding debt of eligible HIPC countries to the IMF, African Development Fund, and IDA. Zambia is among the beneficiaries of this additional multilateral debt relief. Zambia also completed a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) arrangement with the IMF in 2007, and the government has not yet determined whether it will seek another PRGF program or pursue a different arrangement with the IMF, a Policy Support Instrument (PSI), which would not involve additional lending.

The Zambian Government is pursuing an economic diversification program to reduce the economy's reliance on the copper industry. This initiative seeks to exploit other components of Zambia's rich resource base by promoting agriculture, tourism, gemstone mining, and hydro power. The government is also seeking to create an environment that encourages entrepreneurship and private-sector led growth. The 2008 budget contained provisions for tax alleviation, as well as increased allotments for healthcare, education, and economic development.

DEFENSE

The Zambian Defense Force (ZDF) consists of the army, the air force, and Zambian National Service (ZNS). The ZNS, while operating under the Ministry of Defense, is responsible primarily for public works projects. The ZDF is designed primarily for internal defense. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has hit the ZDF especially hard.

The ZDF has contributed to African Union and United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, and in 2005 became a partner in the African Contingency Operations and Training Assistance (ACOTA) program. The first iteration of ACOTA peacekeeper training took place in 2007.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Zambia is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), which is headquartered in Lusaka.

President Kaunda was a persistent and visible advocate of change in Southern Africa, supporting liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), and South Africa. Many of these liberation organizations were based in Zambia during the 1970s and 1980s.

President Chiluba assumed a visible international role in the mid- and late 1990s. His government sponsored Angola peace talks that led to the 1994 Lusaka Protocols. Zambia provided troops to UN peacekeeping initiatives in Mozambique, Rwanda, Angola, and Sierra Leone. Zambia was the first African state to cooperate with the International Tribunal investigation of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

In 1998, Zambia took the lead in efforts to establish a cease-fire in the Democratic Republic of Congo. After the signing of a cease-fire agreement in Lusaka in July and August 1999, Zambia was active in supporting the Congolese peace effort, although activity diminished considerably after the Joint Military Commission tasked with implementing the cease-fire relocated to Kinshasa in September 2001.

During President Mwanawasa's administration, Zambia contributed troops to support UN peacekeeping operations in Sudan. In 2007, the Zambian Government publicly appealed to other African nations to contribute to a joint African Union-United Nations (UNAMID) peacekeeping force in Darfur. In August 2007, President Mwanawasa assumed the SADC Chairmanship and affirmed his commitment to launching a free trade agreement in 2008.

Zambia's history of stability and its commitment to regional peace has made it a haven for large numbers of refugees. Currently, Zambia hosts 113,600 refugees (down from a high of 203,000 in 2002), including roughly 56,100 Congolese, 40,700 Angolans, and 16,800 other nationalities (mainly Rwandans, Burundians, and Somalis). In recent years, Zambia has made serious efforts to repatriate many of these refugees, including an estimated 108,000 Angolan and 7,500 Congolese refugees.

U.S.-ZAMBIAN RELATIONS

The United States and Zambia enjoy warm relations. The United States works closely with the Zambian Government to defeat the HIV/AIDS pandemic that is ravaging Zambia, to promote economic growth and development, and to effect political reform needed to promote responsive and responsible government. The United States is also supporting the government's efforts to root out corruption. Zambia is a beneficiary of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). The U.S. Government provides a variety of technical assistance and other support that is managed by the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) Threshold Program, Centers for Disease Control, Department of Treasury, Department of Defense, and Peace Corps. The majority of U.S. assistance is provided through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), in support of the fight against HIV/AIDS.

In addition to supporting development projects, the United States has provided considerable emergency food aid during periods of drought and flooding through the World Food Program (WFP) and is a major contributor to refugee programs in Zambia through the UN High Commission for Refugees and other agencies.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

In 2007, U.S. assistance to Zambia exceeded $259 million. USAID's program in Zambia included over $116 million for HIV/AIDS programs utilizing PEPFAR funding and $11 million to fight corruption and increase trade under the MCA Threshold Program. In addition to programs funded through PEPFAR, the President's Malaria Initiative, and the Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Program, USAID's program in Zambia supported training and technical assistance to promote economic growth through trade and investment; create health and educational opportunities to improve lives; and reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS through multi-sectoral responses.

Peace Corps

A country agreement inviting the Peace Corps to work in Zambia was signed by the United States and Zambia on September 14, 1993. The first group of volunteers was sworn in on April 7, 1994. In 2007, the Peace Corps program in Zambia continued to increase understanding between Zambians and Americans.

More than 160 two-year Volunteers and as many as 10 extension and Crisis Corps Volunteers promote sustainable development through their activities in agricultural and natural resource management, health and sanitation, rural education, and humanitarian assistance. Volunteers are working in eight of Zambia's nine provinces building local capacity to manage family fish farms, to promote food security and positive resource management practices near forest reserves, to implement health reforms at the village level, to promote and support rural education, and to extend HIV/AIDS education and prevention efforts through full participation in PEPFAR. Volunteers live primarily in rural villages in remote parts of the country without running water, electricity, or other amenities.

New trainees undertake training in local language, culture, and the relevant technical specialty for 9-12 weeks at a center in the Chongwe district of Lusaka province.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

LUSAKA (E) Crn of Independence and United Nations Ave, 260-211-250-955, after hours follow instructions, Fax 260-211-252-225/Management Office–253-951, Executive Office–251 865, INMARSAT Tel Inbound–XXX-870-762637588 (use code req. fm USA or Outside USA), Workweek: Mon–Thu–07:30–17:30, Fri -08:00–12:00, Website: http://zambia.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Nelda Villines
AMB OMS:	Lorraine Mabazza
ECO:	Mikail Cleverley
FM:	Mark Nichols
MGT:	J. Denver Herren
POL/ECO:	Jill Derderian
SPSH:	Jeane Harris
AMB:	Carmen Martinez
CON:	Malia Heroux
DCM:	Michael Koplovsky
PAO:	Christopher Wurst
GSO:	Bill Hunt
RSO:	Dan Wutrich
AFSA:	Mikael Cleverly
AGR:	Kevin N. Smith (Nairobi)
AID:	Melissa Williams
CLO:	Kristin Ford
DAO:	Ltc. David Dougherty
EEO:	Michael Ac Jordan
FMO:	Martin Schwartz
ICASS Chair:	Melissa Williams
IMO:	Michael Ac Jordan
ISSO:	Travis Waites
LAB:	Randy Fleitman (Nairobi)
State ICASS:	Jill Derderian

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 8, 2008

Country Description: Zambia is a developing country in southern Africa. Tourist facilities outside of the capital, Lusaka, Livingstone (Victoria Falls), and well-known game parks are not fully developed.

Entry Requirements: A passport and visa are required. A visa may be obtained in advance at a Zambian Embassy or Consulate or at the port of entry. The visa fee for American passport holders is $135. Visas are valid for 3 years, multiple entries. Upon entry, immigration will stamp your passport with the permitted length of stay. This is normally 30 days and usually can be extended twice (a total time of 90 days) by visiting an immigration office. All Americans, except resident diplomats, must pay an airport departure tax. Often airlines include this tax in the cost of the ticket. At the airport, passengers need to verify this tax has

been paid. The traveler will receive a "no-fee" receipt to reflect payment. Travelers transiting through South Africa should ensure they have at least two blank (unstamped) visa pages in their passports. South African immigration authorities routinely turn away visitors who do not have enough blank visa pages. Zambian Immigration officials insist visitors carry the original or a certified copy of their passports and immigration permits at all times. Certified copies must be obtained from the immigration office that issued the permit. American citizens should closely follow immigration guidelines, including visa requirements. Visit the Embassy of Zambia web site at http://www.zambiaembassy.org or the Zambian Immigration site at http://www.zambiaimmigration. gov.zm for the most current visa information.

Safety and Security: U.S. citizens are advised to exercise caution when traveling in northern Luapula Province and in areas of Northern Province adjacent to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A cease-fire is currently in effect, but the DRC is not yet stable and uncontrolled militias operate in the eastern DRC. In the past, armed gunmen have attacked vehicles near the DRC-Zambian border. Land mines and unexploded ordnance along the western, southern, and eastern borders make off-road travel to those areas potentially hazardous. For these reasons, the U.S. Embassy discourages travelers from driving off-road or on remote tracks near the borders with DRC and Angola. American citizens who must drive in these areas are encouraged to drive in convoy and to carry satellite telephones.

U.S. citizens should avoid political rallies and street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Middle East and North Africa Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Travel in many sections of Lusaka, Livingstone and most other major cities as well as in the major game parks, is generally safe during daylight hours. Those using public transport or visiting high-pedestrian traffic areas are advised to be vigilant against petty crime.

Vehicle thefts, burglaries, and armed robbery occur throughout the country. Carjacking remains an ongoing problem, especially in Lusaka and other major cities. Carjackers generally employ a strategy of blocking the back of one's car when the car is waiting to pass through a security gate into a residence or other facility. It is recommended to drive with doors locked and windows closed at all times and remain vigilant when entering or exiting residences and facilities.

Foreign tourists have frequently been the target of small-scale financial scams involving "fees" to be paid to Zambian officials. The embassy cautions travelers to make sure they receive an official receipt from the Government of Zambia for any fines and duties paid. Often, travelers will be told that the official does not have a receipt book or that this type of fine is not receipted. Polite, but firm insistence on a Zambian Government receipt is recommended.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Zambia is: 999.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Government hospitals and clinics are often understaffed and lack supplies. Private medical clinics in major cities can provide reasonable care in many cases, but major medical emergencies usually require medical evacuation to South Africa, Europe, or the United States. Basic medical care outside of major cities is extremely limited. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Travelers should carry their prescription drugs and medications in original labeled containers, as well as the written prescription from their physician (See Criminal Penalties section).

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Zambia.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road condi-

tions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Zambia is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance. Traffic circulates on the left side of the road, and there are many British-style roundabouts rather than intersections with traffic lights. There is no left turn on red. Seat belts are mandatory, as are helmets for motorcyclists. A child seat is not mandatory by law, but is highly recommended for safeguarding children. The speed limit is 50 km/30 mph in Lusaka and 100 km/60 mph outside of city limits. However, speed limits are rarely respected, and most cars drive 80 km/50 mph in the city and 120 km/75 mph outside town. Most vehicles operate at even faster speeds on the road from Lusaka to Livingstone. Drivers under the influence of alcohol who are involved in accidents are tested at Lusaka's University Teaching Hospital (UTH).

Driving on Zambian roads can be hazardous. Most roads do not have shoulders or sidewalks, pedestrians and livestock use the roadways both day and night. While the main roads in Lusaka as well as the principal highways linking Lusaka with the major provincial capitals are generally maintained, many secondary roads are in poor repair. During the rainy season (end of October to mid-March), travelers who do not have a four-wheel drive vehicle will encounter problems driving on rural roads. Even in daylight, passing another vehicle can be particularly dangerous given the general condition of roads. Driving at night can be hazardous and is discouraged. When breakdowns occur, local drivers place a few branches behind the car to indicate trouble, but this is hardly visible at night. As a result, many drivers use their high beams at night to detect stopped vehicles and pedestrians.

Since 2000, Americans have been involved in a number of serious car accidents. There are no emergency services for injured or stranded drivers. Car accident victims are vulnerable to theft by those who pretend to be "helpful." It is advisable to have a cell phone when undertaking a trip outside of town, although many parts of the country do not have cell phone service.

City traffic is comprised mostly of cars and minibuses; motorcycles are rare. Minibuses serve as the primary means of inter-city travel in Zambia. They are often overcrowded and seldom punctual. Drivers often use pass using road shoulders or opposing traffic lanes. Often they will stop with little or no warning, in order to pick up or drop off passengers. Some luxury buses do ply the routes between Lusaka and Livingstone and the Copperbelt.

Visit the web site of the national tourist office at http://www.zambia tourism.com.

Aviation Safety Oversight: As there is no direct commercial air service between the United States and Zambia, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed Zambia's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: Perpetrators of fraud often target foreigners, including Americans. While such fraud schemes in the past have been largely associated with Nigeria, they are now prevalent throughout Africa, including Zambia. For additional information, please consult The Department of State's publication International Financial Scams. In addition, Americans are advised to exercise caution when approached with unsolicited offers to purchase gemstones or precious metals for export as the Embassy has received multiple recent complaints from Americans who have been victimized as a result of involvement in these deals.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times, so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. Zambian police do not provide the Embassy with timely notification of the arrest of American citizens. If you are detained, you should insist on your right to contact a U.S. consular officer.

Visa cards are accepted in major supermarkets, restaurants, stores, and hotels in Lusaka and Livingstone (Victoria Falls). Credit card fraud is increasing in Zambia and there have been several cases involving fraudulent charges, including some at major hotels catering primarily to foreign visitors. Many businesses use carbon-paper documents to process payment. These documents are not secure and can pose a threat to cardholders. The Embassy urges caution when using debit or credit cards at any point of purchase, especially if the transaction is not processed electronically. Normally, American travelers can withdraw money (in local currency) from ATMs in major cities in Zambia using their ATM cards or credit cards from the United States. However, from time to time, the banks lose their connections with the credit card exchanges, thus making withdrawals impossible. Zambian banks and bureaux de change will not accept dollar-denominated notes issued before 1990.

Travel to military areas and photographing military facilities, airports, bridges, and other facilities deemed to be of security relevance, are prohibited. Often these sites are not clearly marked and the first notification a tourist would receive is a police officer demanding their film and/or camera. Authorities may also challenge photography of areas other than tourist attractions. Service providers in Zambia, including the tourism sector, are not subject to the same standards of safety oversight that exist in the United States; visitors should evaluate risks carefully. Travelers are cautioned to observe local or park regulations and heed all instruction given by tour guides. Even in the most serene settings, wild animals can pose a threat to life and safety.

Large numbers of travelers visit tourist destinations, including South Luangwa National Park and Living-

stone (Victoria Falls), without incident. However, American citizens are advised to avoid rafting and other whitewater boating activities on the Zambezi River below Victoria Falls during the high-water season, February-June. During high water, the Batoka Gorge section of the river becomes unpredictable and several tourists have been involved in fatal accidents.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the U. S. for similar offenses. Persons violating Zambian laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Zambia are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

It is against both Zambian and U.S. law to buy, possess or transport animals or animal products, such as tortoise shell, rhino horn, elephant ivory, tusks of any animal or any items made out of these materials. In Zambia, penalties range from large fines to mandatory five-year prison sentences. The Zambian Wildlife Authority has screeners at international ports of entry/exit and WILL prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of the law. While many of these items are sold in open markets aimed at foreign tourists, it remains the responsibility of the customer to ensure that he/she is not purchasing a prohibited item.

Further instructions on the importation of items to the U.S. may be found on the following web-site at http://www.customs.gov.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Zambia are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Zambia. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at the corner of Independence and United Nations Avenues. The mailing address is PO Box 31617, Lusaka, Zambia. Telephone exchanges have recently changed within Zambia. When calling from the United States, please contact the American Embassy during regular work hours, Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and on Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. by dialing 011-260-21-125-0955. For after-hours emergencies involving American citizens, please dial 011-260-21-125-0955 extension 1. The fax number is 260-21-125-2225. The web site is http://zambia.usembassy.gov.

Intercountry Adoption

November 2008

The information in this section has been edited from a report available through the U.S. Department of State Office of Children's Issues. For more information detailed, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Zambia is not party to The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention).

There was a brief five-month suspension of foreign adoptions in Zambia from December 2007 until May 2008. No formal explanation was given for the suspension. The Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare has not announced its revised intercountry adoption procedures to date. Until the Ministry finalizes their procedures, it is premature for prospective adoptive parents to make arrangements to come to Zambia to continue with their adoption. The U.S. Embassy in Lusaka is in consultation with the Ministry and will post further updates on this website once they are available.

Who Can Adopt? To bring an adopted child to United States from Zambia, you must be found eligible to adopt by the U.S. Government. The U.S. Government agency responsible for making this determination is the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

For detailed information on these requirements for adoption, please review the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

In addition to these U.S. requirements for prospective adoptive parents, Zambia also has the following eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents.

Residency Requirements: Based on the Zambian Adoption Act, prospective adoptive parents must reside in Zambia for at least 12 months in order to adopt a Zambian child. The prospective adoptive parents may be required to foster the child for three months. At a minimum, U.S. citizens with an approved I-600A or I-600 indicating the completion of the home study must complete the three month fostering requirement.

Age Requirements: Prospective adoptive parent(s) must be at least 25 years of age. If the prospective parents are a couple, at least one parent must be 25 years of age and at least 21 years older than the child. If related to the child, the age requirement is 21 years old.

Marriage Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents may be married

or single; however, single men cannot adopt a female child unless the court finds special circumstances warranting the adoption.

Income Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be able to demonstrate adequate finances.

Who Can Be Adopted? In addition to any Zambian requirements for children to be eligible for intercountry adoption, a child must meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. law for you to bring him or her home back to the United States. Learn more about these U.S. requirements.

Zambia's Adoption Authority: Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, Department of Social Welfare

Prospective adoptive parents may contact Social Welfare officers and Juvenile Inspectors of the Provincial and District Social Welfare offices to apply for adoption (Information provided in the "Contact Information" tab).

The Process: The first step in adopting a child from Zambia is usually to select a licensed agency in the United States that can help with your adoption. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the U.S. state in which they operate.

U.S. adoption agencies must be registered with the Commissioner of Juvenile Welfare in order to provide adoption services in Zambia. Currently, there are no registered U.S. adoption agencies licensed to work in Zambia. Prospective adoptive families may also hire an attorney to assist them with Zambian legal requirements. The U.S. Embassy in Lusaka has a list of lawyers who will work with U.S. citizens available at http://www.usemb.org.zm/wwwhlawyers.htm. The Embassy cannot restrict applicants from using other attorneys or recommend the services of any specific attorney.

For US-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state Government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

To bring an adopted child from Zambia to the United States, you must apply to be found eligible to adopt (Form I-600A) by the U.S. Government, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Prospective adoptive families must apply to the Commissioner for Juvenile Welfare for permission to adopt. If foreign citizen prospective adoptive parents are resident in Zambia, Zambian social workers will interview them and conduct a home study. Parents await approval by the provincial adoption committee.

If you are eligible to adopt, and a child is available for intercountry adoption, the central adoption authority in Zambia will provide you with a referral to a child. The child must be eligible to be adopted according to Zambia's requirements. The child must also meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. law.

An adoption agency places the child with the prospective adoptive parents upon approval by provincial adoption committee. Parents must foster the child in Zambia for three months. After three months, parents file an adoption application with the court of the First Class (provincial court). The child is assigned a guardian ad litem (social worker) who will represent the child's interests before the court, investigate what is in the child's best interests, and report his/her findings to the court at the adoption hearing.

Role of the Adoption Authority: Intercountry adoptions are overseen by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, Department of Social Welfare.

Role of the Court: A summons will be served to the adoptive parents, the child, and any person caring for the child (if applicable). The hearing is confidential. Once the adoption order is issued it must be recorded with the Registrar General's office and the child's details are entered into the register as an adopted child. Prospective adoptive parents have the option to file an adoption petition in the High Court of Zambia, however, this is a much lengthier process. Adoptions filed in the High Court can take up to two years to complete.

Adoption Application: After three months of fostering the potential adoptee, the prospective adoptive parents file an adoption application with the court of the first class (provincial court). Once the adoption process is near completion, the child will receive a new birth certificate in his or her adoptive name. The adoptive parents receive an adoption decree, which is the final document and signifies the successful completion of the process. Equipped with the two documents, the child applies for a new Zambian passport in the adopted name.

Time Frame: There is a mandatory three-month continuous (foster) care requirement and a 12-month residency requirement prior to finalizing an adoption. The foster care period can run concurrently with the 12-month residency period. If the residency requirement is waived in lieu of the mandatory fostering, adoption processing may be completed within a few months.

Adoption Fees:

- Fostering fee–approximately $12 USD
- Adoption court fee –approximately $12 USD
- Zambian passport fee –approximately $24 USD
- Registration/certificate of adoption –approximately $26 USD
- Costs as may be determined by the court–approximately $26 USD
- Attorney's fees (fees vary widely)–approximately $10,000–35,000 USD
- Adoption Agency–FEES VARY WIDELY

Documents Required:

- Evidence of adequate finances (home study information will suffice)
- Copies of birth certificates, passports, and marriage certificates of prospective adoptive parents
- Approved I-600A (this can serve as evidence that the adoptive parents were vetted for suitability by U.S. authorities and can be used to avoid the residency requirement)

For updates on document requirements and information on how to authenticate documents, visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Bringing Your Child Home: Once your adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States, such as a birth certificate, a passport or travel document for your child from the country in which he or she was born, and a U.S. Immigration Visa. For detailed and updated information on how to obtain these documents, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Child Citizenship Act: For adoptions finalized abroad: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when he or she enters the United States as lawful permanent residents. For adoptions finalized in the United States: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 allows your new child to acquire American citizenship automatically when the court in the United States issues the final adoption decree. To learn more, review the *Intercountry Adoption* section on this publication and visit the USCIS Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

After Adoption: Zambia does not have any post-adoption requirements.

Contact Information

U.S. Embassy in Zambia
The American Embassy
Corner of the United Nations and Independence Road
P.O. Box 31617
Lusaka, ZAMBIA
Tel: (260)-1-250955
Fax: (260)-1-252225

Office of Children's Issues
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW; SA-29
Washington, DC 20520
Tel: 1-888-407-4747
E-mail: AskCI@state.gov
http://adoption.state.gov

Zambia's Adoption Authority: The Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services oversees adoptions. Prospective adoptive parents may contact Social Welfare officers and Juvenile Inspectors of the Provincial and District Social Welfare offices to apply for adoption. Visit the USCIS website at http://adoption.state.gov for a list of addresses.

Embassy of Zambia
2419 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 265-9717
Email: info@zambiainfo.org

For questions about immigration procedures, call the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) 1-800-375-5283 (TTY 1-800-767-1833).



ZIMBABWE

Compiled from the November 2008 Background Note and supplemented with additional information from the State Department and the editors of this volume. See the introduction to this set for explanatory notes.

Official Name:
Republic of Zimbabwe

PROFILE

Geography

Area: 390,580 sq. km. (150,760 sq. mi.), slightly larger than Montana.
Cities: Capital—Harare (pronounced Ha-RAR-e), pop. 1.5 million. Other towns—Bulawayo, Chitungwiza, Mutare, Gweru, Kwekwe, Masvingo, Marondera.
Terrain: Desert and savanna.
Climate: Mostly subtropical.

People

Nationality: Noun and adjective—Zimbabwean (sing.), Zimbabweans (pl.).
Population: (2008 est.) 8 to 9 million.
Annual growth rate: (2006 World Bank est.): 0.8%. (Note: the population growth rate is depressed by an HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate estimated to be 15.6% and a high level of net emigration.)
Ethnic groups: Shona 71%, Ndebele 16%, other African 11%, white 1%, mixed and Asian 1%.
Religions: Christianity 75%, offshoot Christian sects, animist, and Muslim.
Languages: English (official), Shona, Sindebele.
Education: Attendance—mandatory for primary level. Adult literacy—90.5% (2004 est.).
Health: Infant mortality rate—51.7/1,000 (2006 est.). Life expectancy—men 37 (2006), women 34 (2006).

Government

Type: Parliamentary.
Constitution: December 21, 1979.
Independence: April 18, 1980.
Government branches: Executive—President (chief of state and head of government), Cabinet. Legislative—bicameral (House of Assembly and Senate). Judicial—High Court, Court of Appeal, local and customary courts.
Administrative subdivisions: Town Councils and District Councils.
Political subdivisions: Town Councils and District Councils.
Political parties: Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF); Movement for Democratic Change (MDC); United People's Party (UPP).

Economy

GDP: (2007 IMF est.) U.S. $1.437 billion.
Real GDP growth rate: (2007 IMF est.): -6.1%.
Real per capita GDP: (Reliable estimates of current GDP and population size are unavailable.)
Avg. inflation rate: 1,694,000% year-on-year, May 2008, by official accounts; private sector estimates are roughly one and half times the official figure.
Natural resources: Deposits of more than 40 minerals including ferrochrome, gold, silver, platinum, copper, asbestos; 19 million hectares of forest (2000).
Agriculture: (15% of GDP) Types of crops and livestock—corn, cotton, tobacco, wheat, coffee, tea, sugarcane, peanuts, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs.
Industry: manufacturing, public administration, commerce, mining, transport and communication.
Trade: (2007) U.S. exports—U.S. $105.2 million. U.S. imports—U.S. $71.8 million. Partners (2000 est.)—South Africa 22%, U.K. 10%, Germany 9%, U.S. 8%. Total imports (2004)—U.S. $1.989 billion: most of these imports were construction and agricultural machinery, transportation equipment, data processing equipment and software, industrial machinery, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, and general manufactured products. Major suppliers—South Africa 34%, U.K. 10.8%, Germany 7.3%, U.S. 6%. (Although China is now said to be the second-largest trading partner, no statistics are available.)

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Primarily of the Bantu group of south and central Africa, the black Zimba-

bweans are divided into two major language groups, which are subdivided into several ethnic groups. The Mashona (Shona speakers), who constitute about 75% of the population, have lived in the area the longest and are the majority language group. The Matabele (Sindebele speakers), representing about 20% of the population and centered in the southwest around Bulawayo, arrived within the last 150 years. An offshoot of the South African Zulu group, they maintained control over the Mashona until the white occupation of Rhodesia in 1890.

More than half of white Zimbabweans, primarily of English origin, arrived in Zimbabwe after World War II. Afrikaners from South Africa and other European minorities, including Portuguese from Mozambique, also are present. Until the mid-1970s, there were about 1,000 white immigrants per year, but from 1976 to 1985 a steady emigration resulted in a loss of more than 150,000, leaving about 100,000 in 1992. Renewed white emigration in the late 1990s and early 2000s reduced the white population to less than 50,000. English, the official language, is spoken by the white population and understood, if not always used, by more than half of the black population.

Zimbabwe boasts one of Africa's highest literacy rates. Primary and secondary schools were segregated until 1979. In the first decade after independence in 1980, the educational system was systematically enlarged by the Zimbabwean Government, which was committed to providing free public education to all citizens on an equal basis. Though in the late 1970s only 50% of the black children (5-19 years old) were listed officially as attending rural schools, today most children attend primary school despite the fact that school fees are now charged for all schools at all levels. Primary through post-secondary enrollment has expanded from 1 million to about 2.9 million since independence. There is an impressive network of independent private schools and church-run mission schools that have significantly more resources and thus significantly higher school fees than government-run schools. Higher education is offered at seven state-run universities, the most prominent being the University of Zimbabwe in Harare and the National University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo, and three private church-run universities, Africa University (Methodist), Catholic University, and Solusi University (Seventh Day Adventist). There is also a large network of teacher-training, nursing, and polytechnic colleges.

Early History

Archaeologists have found Stone-Age implements and pebble tools in several areas of Zimbabwe, a suggestion of human habitation for many centuries, and the ruins of stone buildings provide evidence of early civilization. The most impressive of these sites is the "Great Zimbabwe" ruins, after which the country is named, located near Masvingo. Evidence suggests that these stone structures were built between the 9th and 13th centuries A.D. by indigenous Africans who had established trading contacts with commercial centers on Africa's southeastern coast.

In the 16th century, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to attempt colonization of south-central Africa, but the hinterland lay virtually untouched by Europeans until the arrival of explorers, missionaries, ivory hunters, and traders some 300 years later. Meanwhile, mass migrations of indigenous peoples took place. Successive waves of more highly developed Bantu peoples from equatorial regions supplanted the original inhabitants and are the ancestors of the region's Africans today.

British Settlement and Administration

In 1888, Cecil Rhodes obtained a concession for mineral rights from local chiefs. Later that year, the area that became Southern and Northern Rhodesia was proclaimed a British sphere of influence. The British South Africa Company was chartered in 1889, and the settlement of Salisbury (now Harare, the capital) was established in 1890. In 1895, the territory was formally named Rhodesia after Cecil Rhodes under the British South Africa Company's administration.

Following the abrogation of the company's charter in 1923, Southern Rhodesia's white settlements were given the choice of being incorporated into the Union of South Africa or becoming a separate entity within the British Empire. The settlers rejected incorporation, and Southern Rhodesia was formally annexed by the United Kingdom that year. Until 1980, Rhodesia was an internally self-governing colony with its own legislature, civil service, armed forces, and police. Although Rhodesia was never administered directly from London, the United Kingdom always retained the right to intervene in the affairs of the colony, particularly in matters affecting Africans.

After 1923, European immigrants concentrated on developing Rhodesia's rich mineral resources and agricultural potential. The settlers' demand for more land led in 1934 to the passage of the first of a series of land apportionment acts that reserved certain areas for Europeans.

In September 1953, Southern Rhodesia was joined in a multiracial Central African Federation with the British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in an effort to pool resources and markets. Although the federation flourished economically, the African population, who feared they would not be able to achieve self-government with the federal structure dominated by White Southern Rhodesians, opposed it. The federation was dissolved at the end of 1963 after much crisis and turmoil, and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland became the independent states of Zambia and Malawi in 1964.

Unilateral Declaration Of Independence (UDI)

The European electorate in Rhodesia, however, showed little willingness to accede to African demands for



increased political participation and progressively replaced more moderate party leaders. In April 1964, Prime Minister Winston Field, accused of not moving rapidly enough to obtain independence from the United Kingdom, was replaced by his deputy, Ian Smith. Prime Minster Smith led his Rhodesian Front Party to an overwhelming victory in the 1965 elections, winning all 50 of the first roll seats and demoralizing the more moderate European opposition.

Although prepared to grant independence to Rhodesia, the United Kingdom insisted that the authorities at Salisbury first demonstrate their intention to move toward eventual majority rule. Desiring to keep their dominant position, the white Rhodesians refused to give such assurances. On November 11, 1965, after lengthy and unsuccessful negotiations with the British Government, Prime Minister Smith issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from the United Kingdom.

Post-UDI Events

The British Government considered the UDI unconstitutional and illegal but made clear that it would not use force to oppose it. On November 12, 1965, the United Nations also determined the Rhodesian Government and UDI to be illegal and called on member states to refrain from assisting or recognizing the Smith regime. The British Government imposed sanctions on Rhodesia and requested other nations to do the same.

On December 16, 1966, the UN Security Council, for the first time in history, imposed mandatory economic sanctions on a state. Rhodesia's primary exports including ferrochrome and tobacco, were placed on the selective sanctions list, as were shipments of arms, aircraft, motor vehicles, petroleum, and petroleum products to Rhodesia. On May 29, 1968, the Security Council unanimously voted to broaden the sanctions by imposing an almost total embargo on all trade

with, investments in, or transfers of funds to Rhodesia and imposed restrictions on air transport to the territory.

In the early 1970s, informal attempts at settlement were renewed between the United Kingdom and the Rhodesian administration. Following the April 1974 coup in Portugal and the resulting shifts of power in Mozambique and Angola, pressure on the Smith regime to negotiate a peaceful settlement increased. In addition, sporadic antigovernment guerilla activity, which began in the late 1960s, increased dramatically after 1972, causing destruction, economic dislocation, casualties, and a slump in white morale. In 1974, the major African nationalists groups—the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), which split away from ZAPU in 1963—were united into the "Patriotic Front" and combined their military forces, at least nominally.

In 1976, because of a combination of embargo-related economic hardships, the pressure of guerilla activity, independence and majority rule in the neighboring former Portuguese territories, and a U.K.-U.S. diplomatic initiative, the Smith government agreed in principle to majority rule and to a meeting in Geneva with black nationalist leaders to negotiate a final settlement of the conflict. Blacks represented at the Geneva meeting included ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo, ZANU leader Robert Mugabe, UANC chairman bishop Abel Muzorewa, and former ZANU leader Rev. Nadabaningi Sithole. The meeting failed to find a basis for agreement because of Smith's inflexibility and the inability of the black leaders to form a common political front.

On September 1, 1977 a detailed Anglo-American plan was put forward with proposals for majority rule, neutrally administered with pre-independence elections, a democratic constitution and the formation of an integrated army. Reactions were mixed, but no party rejected them. In the interim, on March 3, 1978, the Smith administration signed the "internal settlement" agreement in Salisbury with Bishop Muzorewa, Rev. Sithole, and Chief Jeremiah Chirau. The agreement provided for qualified majority rule and elections with universal suffrage. Following elections in April 1979, in which his UANC party won a majority, Bishop Muzorewa assumed office on June 1, becoming "Zimbabwe-Rhodesia's" first black prime minister. However, the installation of the new black majority government did not end the guerilla conflict that had claimed more than 20,000 lives since 1972.

Shortly after British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's conservative government took power in May 1979, the British began a new round of consultations that culminated in an agreement among the Commonwealth countries as the basis for fresh negotiations among the parties and the British involving a new constitution, free elections and independence.

The British and the African parties began deliberations on a Rhodesian settlement at Lancaster House in London on September 10, 1979. On December 10, 1979, in preparation for the transition under British authority to officially recognized independence, the "Zimbabwe-Rhodesia" reverted de facto to colonial status. On December 12, British Governor Lord Christopher Soames arrived in Salisbury to reassert British authority over the colony. His arrival signaled the end of the Rhodesian rebellion and the "internal settlement," as well as the beginning of Zimbabwe's transition to independence. The United Kingdom lifted all remaining sanctions against Zimbabwe that day. The United States lifted sanctions effective December 16.

On December 21, after 3 months of hard bargaining, the parties signed an agreement at Lancaster House calling for a cease-fire, new elections, a transition period under British rule, and a new constitution implementing majority rule while protecting minority rights. The agreement specified that upon the granting of independence, the country's name would be Zimbabwe. The same day, the UN Security Council endorsed the settlement agreement and formally voted unanimously to call on member nations to remove sanctions.

During the transition period, nine political parties campaigned for the February 27-29 pre-independence elections. The elections were supervised by the British Government and monitored by hundreds of observers, most of whom concluded that, under the prevailing circumstances, the elections were free and fair and reflected the will of the people. Robert Mugabe's ZANU (PF) party won an absolute majority and was asked to form Zimbabwe's first government.

In a series of public statements during the transition period, Prime Minister Mugabe indicated that he was committed to a process of national reconciliation and reconstruction as well as moderate socioeconomic change. His priorities were to integrate the various armed forces, reestablish social services and education in rural areas, and resettle the estimated one million refugees and displaced persons. Mugabe also announced that his government would begin investigating ways of reversing past discriminatory policies in land distribution, education, employment, and wages.

Mugabe stated that Zimbabwe would follow a nonaligned foreign policy and would pursue a pragmatic relationship with South Africa. He noted that while Zimbabwe opposed apartheid and would support democratic change in South Africa, it would not provide bases for anti-South African guerillas.

The British Government formally granted independence to Zimbabwe on April 18, 1980. Most nations recognized Zimbabwe following independence. The United States was the first nation to open an embassy in Salisbury (Harare) on that day. Parliament convened for the first time on May 13, 1980. Zimbabwe became a member of the United Nations on August 25, 1980.

In seeking national reconciliation, Prime Minister Mugabe's first cabinet comprised members of ZANU-PF, PF-ZAPU, and independent white members of parliament (MPs) and senators. The government embarked on an ambitious reconstruction and development program and instituted increases in minimum wages. Land redistribution proceeded under four experimental models on land that the government had purchased at market rates from willing sellers.

Zimbabwe Since Independence

Prime Minister Mugabe's policy of reconciliation was generally successful during the country's first two years of independence, as the former political and military opponents began to work together. Although additional blacks were hired to fill new places in the civil service, there was no retribution for those whites who had worked for the Smith regime. Smith and many of his associates held seats in the parliament where they participated freely in debates. Likewise, Joshua Nkomo, Mugabe's rival as leader of the nationalist forces, was included in the first cabinet along with several other members of PF-ZAPU.

Splits soon developed, however. In 1981,several MPs from Smith's party left to sit as "independents," signifying that they did not automatically accept his anti-government posture. More importantly, government security officials discovered large caches of arms and ammunition on properties owned by ZAPU, and Nkomo and his followers were accused of plotting to overthrow Mugabe's government. Nkomo and his closest aides were expelled from the cabinet.

As a result of what they perceived as persecution of Nkomo (known as "Father Zimbabwe") and of his party, PF-ZAPU supporters, some of them deserters from the army, began a loosely organized and ill-defined campaign of dissidence against the government. Centering primarily in Matabeleland, home of the Ndebeles who were PF-ZAPU's main followers, this dissidence continued through 1987 and involved attacks on government personnel and installations, armed banditry aimed at disrupting security and economic life in the rural areas, and harassment of ZANU-PF members. Occasionally, some demanded that Nkomo and his colleagues be reinstated in the cabinet. More frequently, however, dissidents called for the return of farms and other properties seized from PF-ZAPU.

Because of the unsettled security situation immediately after independence and the continuing anti-government dissidence, the government kept in force a "state of emergency," which was first declared before UDI. This gave government authorities widespread powers under the "Law and Order Maintenance Act," including the right to detain persons without charge.

In 1983-84, the government declared a curfew in areas of Matabeleland and sent in the army in an attempt to suppress dissidents. Credible reports surfaced of widespread violence and disregard for human rights by the security forces during these operations, and the level of political tension rose in the country as a result. The pacification campaign, known as the "Gukuruhundi," or strong wind, resulted in as many as 20,000 civilian deaths. Nkomo and his lieutenants repeatedly denied any connection with the dissidents and called for an all-party conference to discuss the political problems facing the country. In the 1985 elections, ZANU-PF increased its majority, holding 67 of the 100 seats. ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU agreed to unite in December 1987, and the parties formally merged in December 1989.

In October 1987, in accordance with the Lancaster House Accords, the constitution was amended to end the separate roll for white voters and to replace the whites whose reserved seats had been abolished; among the new members were 15 whites in the Senate and House of Assembly. Elections in March 1990 resulted in another overwhelming victory for Mugabe and his party, which won 117 of the 120 election seats. However, voter turnout was only 54%, and the campaign was not free and fair although the actual balloting was. Not satisfied with a de facto one-party state, Mugabe called on the ZANU-PF Central Committee to support the creation of a de jure one-party state in September 1990 and lost. The state of emergency was lifted in July 1990.

After the remaining restrictions of the Lancaster House agreement expired on April 18, 1990, the government embarked on a campaign of amending the existing constitution. Both the judiciary and human rights advocates fiercely criticized some of the first amendments, which were enacted in April 1991, because they restored corporal and capital punishment and denied recourse to the courts in cases of compulsory purchase of land by the government.

During the 1990s students, trade unionists and workers often demonstrated to express their discontent with the government. Students protested in October 1990 against proposals for an increase in government control of universities and again in May 1991 and May 1992, when they clashed with police. Trade unionists and workers were also vocal critics of the government during this time. In June 1992, police prevented trade unionists from holding anti-government demonstrations. In 1994, there was widespread industrial unrest. In August and September 1996, thousands of civil servants demanding salary increases organized a national strike and in October and November of the same year, nurses and junior doctors went on strike over salary issues. On November 14, 1997, about 50,000 war veterans demanded and received compensation equivalent to about U.S. $1,300 per person for their war service. This immense and unbudgeted expenditure created a huge fiscal deficit. The Zimbabwe dollar lost more than half its value on that day, and the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange collapsed. This event marked the beginning of Zimbabwe's ongoing macro-economic crisis.

In part through its control of the media, the huge parastatal sector of

the economy, and the security forces, the government managed to keep organized political opposition to a minimum through most of the 1990s. Beginning in 1999, however, Zimbabwe experienced a period of considerable political and economic upheaval. Opposition to President Mugabe and the ZANU-PF government had grown, in part due to worsening economic and human rights conditions. The opposition was led by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which was established in September 1999.

The MDC's first opportunity to test opposition to the Mugabe government came in February 2000, when a referendum was held on a draft constitution proposed by the government. Among its elements, the new constitution would have permitted President Mugabe to seek two additional terms in office, granted government officials immunity from prosecution, and authorized government seizure of white-owned land. The referendum was handily defeated. Shortly thereafter, the government, through a loosely organized group of war veterans, sanctioned an aggressive land redistribution program often characterized by forced expulsion of white farmers and violence against both farmers and farm employees.

Parliamentary elections held in June 2000 were marred by localized violence, and claims of electoral irregularities and government intimidation of opposition supporters. Nonetheless, the MDC succeeded in capturing 57 of 120 seats in the National Assembly.

The March 2002 presidential election was preceded by months of intensive violence and intimidation against MDC supporters, and more than 50 people, mostly opposition supporters, were killed. President Mugabe was declared the winner over challenger Morgan Tsvangirai by a 56% to 42% margin. Most international observers condemned the election as seriously flawed—the pre-election environment was neither free nor fair, and the election itself was marred by significant fraud and rigging—but regional opinions were mixed. Soon after the election, the MDC filed a petition challenging Mugabe's victory, citing flaws in electoral laws, electoral irregularities and pre-election violence. As of the end of 2004, the case had not yet been decided.

As a result of the 2002 election, the United States, the EU, and other European countries imposed travel restrictions against senior Zimbabwean officials and embargoed the sale of arms to Zimbabwe. The U.S. and the EU also froze the financial assets of selected ruling party officials. The Commonwealth suspended Zimbabwe from council meetings for one year after its election observer team found the election neither free nor fair. At the mid-term suspension review in March 2003, the three-country committee charged with deciding Zimbabwe's fate decided to continue the suspension until the next Commonwealth meeting in December 2003. At this meeting, despite vigorous campaigning by South Africa, Zimbabwe was not invited to attend the meeting and the Commonwealth decided to continue with the suspension. Immediately after this, Mugabe withdrew Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth.

Following the 2002 presidential election, the political climate remained tense and intensely polarized. Violence escalated in the run up to rural council elections in September 2002 and various parliamentary by-elections that year. Parliamentary by-elections in Kuwadzana, Highfield, Zengeza, and Lupane in 2003 were marred by widespread intimidation and beatings. The government also passed legislation that curtailed free speech, free press, and rights of assembly. In March 2003, MDC leaders Morgan Tsvangirai, Welshman Ncube, and Renson Gasela went on trial for treason. Charges against Ncube and Gasela were subsequently dropped and in October 2004 Tsvangirai was found not guilty. In August 2005, the government dropped a second charge of treason against Tsvangirai.

The government subscribed to the electoral principles of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 2004 but failed to implement key elements of the principles in advance of the 2005 parliamentary elections. The campaign period and election day were largely non-violent, but the elections were not free and fair. The election process was marred by repressive legislation that limits freedom of speech and assembly; millions of expatriate Zimbabweans were not permitted to vote; the government used food distributions to influence an increasingly hungry population; an astonishingly high 10% (as high as 30% in some areas) of would-be voters were turned away; and discrepancies in officially announced results and the government's refusal to release key voting data led to questions about the possibility of fraud.

In May 2005, the government began Operation Murambatsvina (also known as Operation Restore Order), ostensibly to rid urban areas of illegal structures, illegal business enterprises, and criminal activities. A UN Special Envoy sent to Zimbabwe to assess the scope and impact of operation estimated that some 700,000 people nationwide lost their homes, their source of livelihood, or both. Families and traders, especially at the beginning of the operation, were often given no notice before police destroyed their homes and businesses. Others were able to salvage some possessions and building materials but often had nowhere to go, despite the government's statement that people should be returning to their rural homes. Thousands of families were left unprotected in the open in the middle of Zimbabwe's winter. The government interfered with non-governmental organization (NGO) efforts to provide emergency assistance to the displaced in many instances. Some families were removed to transit camps, where they had no shelter or cooking facilities and minimal food, supplies, and sanitary facilities. The operation continued into July 2005, when the government began a program to provide housing for the newly displaced. As of September 2007, housing construction fell far short of demand, and there were reports that beneficiaries were mostly civil servants and

ruling party loyalists, not those displaced. The government campaign of forced evictions continued in 2006, 2007, and 2008 albeit on a lesser scale.

In April 2007, South African President Thabo Mbeki, at the behest of SADC and the international community, was designated to serve as mediator between Robert Mugabe's government and the MDC. The mediation aimed to define a mutually agreed upon election date and procedures to rewrite the constitution. While the mediations were ongoing, Mugabe announced that "harmonized" elections would be held on March 29, 2008, despite Morgan Tsvangirai's protests that the mediation was still underway and that there was not enough time to campaign. As in 2005, the pre-election period was not free and fair. The environment was characterized by violence and a media environment that heavily favored Mugabe. Although Tsvangirai was allowed to campaign, Zimbabwean police did not grant permission to MDC to hold all of its rallies, and some MDC activists were intimidated and beaten in the weeks before the election. Foreign journalists were not granted permission to cover the story from Zimbabwe. Election day was largely peaceful, with international observers from the African Union, SADC, and the Pan African Parliament present; observers from Western nations, including the United States, were not invited.

The "harmonized" elections for the presidency, House of Assembly, Senate, and local government demonstrated a significant shift in the political environment. MDC secured a majority in the parliament, giving the MDC control of the legislative branch. In the presidential race, MDC's Tsvangirai secured 47.9%, while Mugabe came in second with 43.2%. Simba Makoni, who left Mugabe's ZANU-PF party in February 2008 to run as an independent, received 8.3%. The results in the presidential race were not released until May 2, 2008. This lengthy delay called into question the credibility and independence of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). Initially the MDC challenged the results, asserting that Tsvangirai had secured the majority of votes needed to win the presidency. Because no candidate secured the 50%-plus-one needed, a runoff was set for June 27, 2008.

As of early June 2008, over 50 Zimbabweans had been killed, at least 2,000 injured, and over 30,000 displaced as a result of widespread post-election violence, including state-sponsored violence. Due to these and other events, and out of concern for the lives of his MDC supporters, Tsvangirai announced in late June that he would not contest the runoff election. Voters went to the polls on June 27, and Mugabe was inaugurated for a new term as president on June 29.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Since independence, Zimbabwe has enunciated and follows a policy of "active nonalignment." In practice, this has meant that Zimbabwe usually adhered to positions established by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union; or, until it withdrew in 2003, the Commonwealth. Zimbabwe took a particular interest in the search for independence for Namibia (South-West Africa) from South Africa. In addition, as chairman of the front-line states in southern Africa, Zimbabwe spoke out vigorously against the policies of apartheid in South African and frequently called for the imposition of economic sanctions against Pretoria. In November 1982, Zimbabwe was chosen by the OAU to hold one of the non-permanent seats in the UN Security Council for the following two years, which brought it onto the center stage of world events and gave it much-needed experience in international affairs. In 1986, Zimbabwe was the site of the NAM summit meeting; Prime Minister Mugabe became chairman of that organization, giving both Mugabe and Zimbabwe added international visibility and responsibility.

Zimbabwe maintains embassies in the Angola, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, China, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, United Kingdom, the United States, Serbia, Zambia, Indonesia, Brazil, and Libya. Fifty-three countries are represented in Harare, as are several international organizations including UN institutions, the European Union, and the World Bank. Zimbabwe is a member of many international organizations, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF); African Development Bank; The World Trade Organization; Southern African Development Community (SADC); Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA); African Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP, in association with the EU); Group of 77 (G-77); Group of 15 (G-15); NAM; African Union (AU); Customs Cooperation Council (CCC); and the World Federation of Trade Unions. Shortly after the March 2002 presidential election, the Commonwealth suspended Zimbabwe from leadership councils for one year after the Commonwealth's election observer team found the conduct of the election seriously flawed. After this suspension was upheld in December 2003, Mugabe withdrew Zimbabwe from the Commonwealth. The IMF closed its Zimbabwe office in October 2004.

Historically, Zimbabwe's closest links have been with the U.K.; however, in the past eight years, this relationship has been very strained. The government has demonized Britain in the press, blaming the country for Zimbabwe's problems, and claiming that Britain reneged on promises made at Lancaster House to provide money for land reform. As with the U.S., thousands of Zimbabweans studied in the U.K., and private links remain close; however, official relations are strained.

Other West European countries have ties with Zimbabwe. The Scandina-

vian countries share certain philosophical affinities and have provided much assistance, as have France, Canada, and the Federal Republic of Germany. Portugal and Greece maintain links partly because of the sizable Portuguese and Greek communities in the country. Similar historical ties have led to the establishment of relations with India and Pakistan, and to a lesser extent, with Bangladesh. The government's "Look East" policy has led to closer diplomatic relations with East Asian countries such as Malaysia and China.

Zimbabwe maintains diplomatic relations with virtually every African country, although some ties are closer than others. African nations with embassies in Harare are Algeria, Angola, Botswana, D.R.C., Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia.

Zimbabwe developed and maintains close ties with a number of revolutionary states and organizations. Among these are the People's Republic of China, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran, Libya, and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

GOVERNMENT

According to Zimbabwe's constitution, the president is head of state and head of government, and is elected by popular majority vote. Parliament is bicameral and sits for up to a 5-year term. On October 1, 2007 Constitutional Amendment 18, which provides for significant changes in the country's electoral dispensation, went into effect. The amendment set out the framework to harmonize presidential and parliamentary elections, to reduce the presidential term of office from 6 years to 5, to increase the number of seats in the House of Assembly and in the Senate, to empower parliament to serve as an electoral college should the office of president become vacant for any reason, and to empower the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) to delimit parliamentary and local constituencies. The 210-member House of Assembly is entirely elected by voters in 210 constituencies. Sixty of the 93 Senators are directly elected by voters. Other Senators include 10 provincial governors and 5 others that are appointed by the president, 16 chiefs that are elected by other chiefs, plus the president and deputy president of the Council of Chiefs.

The Zimbabwean constitution institutionalizes majority rule and protection of minority rights. The elected government controls senior appointments in the public service, including the military and police, and the independent Public Service Commission is charged with making appointments at lower levels on an equitable basis.

The judiciary is headed by the chief justice of the Supreme Court who, like the other justices, is appointed by the president on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission. The constitution has a bill of rights containing extensive protection of human rights. The bill of rights could not be amended for the first 10 years of independence except by unanimous vote of the parliament.

Zimbabwe is divided into ten provinces, each administered by a provincial governor appointed by the president. The provincial administrator and representatives of several service ministries assist the provincial governor.

Principal Government Officials

Last Updated: 11/12/08

Pres.: **Robert MUGABE**
Vice Pres.: **Joseph MSIKA**
Vice Pres.: **Joyce MUJURU**
Min. of Agriculture: **Rugare GUMBO**
Min. of Defense: **Sidney SEKERAMAYI**
Min. of Economic Development: **Sylvester NGUNI**
Min. of Education, Sport, & Culture: **Anneas CHIGWEDERE**
Min. of Energy & Power Development: **Michael NYAMBUYA**
Min. of Finance: **Samuel MUMBENGEGWI**
Min. of Foreign Affairs: **Simbarashe MUMBENGEGWI**
Min. of Health: **David PARIRENYATWA**
Min. of Higher & Tertiary Education: **Stanislaus MUDENGE**
Min. of Home Affairs: **Kembo MOHADI**
Min. of Indigenization & Empowerment: **Josiah TUNGAMIRAI**
Min. of Industry & Trade: **Obert MPOFU**
Min. of Information & Publicity: **Sikhanyiso NDLOVU**
Min. of Legal & Parliamentary Affairs: **Patrick CHINAMASA**
Min. of Local Govt.: **Ignatius CHOMBO**
Min. of Mines: **Amos MIDZI**
Min. of National Security: **Didymus MUTASA**
Min. of Policy Implementation: **Webster SHAMU**
Min. of Public Services: **Nicholas GOCHE**
Min. of Rural Housing & Social Amenities: **Emmerson MNANGAGWA**
Min. of Science & Technology: **Olivia MUCHENA**
Min. of Small- & Medium-Scale Enterprises: **Sithembiso NYONI**
Min. of State Affairs Responsible for Land & Resettlement Programs: **Paul MANGWANA**
Min. of State Enterprises, Antimonopolies, & Anticorruption: **Samuel UNDENGE**
Min. of Tourism: **Francis NHEMA**
Min. of Transport & Communications: **Chris MUSHOWE**
Min. of Water Resources & Infrastructural Development: **Munacho MUTEZO**
Min. of Women's Affairs, Gender, & Community Development: **Oppah MUCHINGURI**
Min. of Youth Development & Employment: **Ambrose MUTIHIRI**
Min. Without Portfolio: **Elliot MANYIKA**
Governor, Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe: **Gideon GONO**
Ambassador to the US: **Simbi Veke MUBAKO**
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York: **Boniface Guwa CHIDYAUSIKU**

Zimbabwe maintains an embassy in the United States at 1608 New Hampshire Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009 (tel. 202-332-7100). A Zimbabwean mission to the United Nations is located at 19 East 47th St., New York, NY.

ECONOMY

Properly managed, Zimbabwe's wide range of resources should enable it to

support sustained economic growth. The country has an important percentage of the world's known reserves of metallurgical-grade chromite. Other commercial mineral deposits include coal, platinum, asbestos, copper, nickel, gold, and iron ore. However, for the country to benefit from these mineral deposits, it must attract foreign direct investment.

In the early 1970s, the economy experienced a modest boom. Real per capita earnings for blacks and whites reached record highs, although the disparity in incomes between blacks and whites remained, with blacks earning only about one-tenth as much as whites. After 1975, however, Rhodesia's economy was undermined by the cumulative effects of sanctions, declining earnings from commodity exports, worsening guerilla conflict, and increasing white emigration. When Mozambique severed economic ties, the Smith regime was forced to depend on South Africa for access to the outside world. Real gross domestic product (GDP) declined between 1974 and 1979. An increasing proportion of the national budget (an estimated 30%-40% per year) was allocated to defense, and a large budget deficit raised the public debt burden substantially.

Following the Lancaster House settlement in December 1979, Zimbabwe enjoyed a brisk economic recovery. Zimbabwe inherited one of the strongest and most complete industrial infrastructures in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as rich mineral resources and a strong agricultural base. Real growth for 1980-81 exceeded 20%. However, depressed foreign demand for the country's mineral exports and the onset of a drought cut sharply into the growth rate in 1982, 1983, and 1984. In 1985, the economy rebounded strongly due to a 30% jump in agricultural production. However it slumped in 1986 to a zero growth rate and registered a 3% contraction in GDP in 1987 due primarily to drought and a foreign exchange crisis. Growth in 1988-90 averaged about 4.5%.

Since the mid-1990s, this infrastructure has been deteriorating rapidly, but remains better than that of most African countries. Poor management of the economy and political turmoil have led to considerable economic hardships. The Government of Zimbabwe's chaotic land reform program, recurrent interference with the judiciary, and maintenance of unrealistic price controls and exchange rates have led to a sharp drop in investor confidence. Since 1999, the national economy has contracted by as much as 40%; inflation vaulted over 1,000,000% (year on year) in May 2008; and there have been persistent shortages of foreign exchange, fuel, and food. Direct foreign investment has all but evaporated. In a desperate attempt to control inflation, the government forced firms and supermarkets to reduce prices by half in July 2007, which resulted in severe shortages of basic and other commodities.

Agriculture is no longer the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy. Large-scale commercial farming has been effectively destroyed over the course of the last eight years under the government's controversial land reform efforts starting in 2000. Corn is the largest food crop and tobacco had traditionally been the largest export crop, followed by cotton. Tobacco production in 2006, however, slumped to its lowest level—about 50 million kg—since independence, off from a peak in 2000 of 237 million kg, before recovering to 73 million kg in 2007. Gold production, another former key foreign currency source, was less than one-third of its 1999 level in 2007. Poor government management has exacerbated meager corn harvests in years of drought or floods, resulting in significant food shortfalls every year since 2001.

Paved roads link the major urban and industrial centers, but the condition of urban roads and the unpaved rural road network has deteriorated significantly since 1995 for lack of maintenance. Rail lines connect with an extensive central African railroad network, although railway track condition has also worsened in recent years, along with locomotive availability and utilization. The electric power supply has become erratic and blackouts are common due to unreliable or nonexistent coal supplies to the country's large thermal plants and power plant breakdowns. Telephone service is problematic, and new lines are difficult of obtain. Municipal water supply is also erratic.

The largest industries are metal products, food processing, chemicals, textiles, clothing, furniture and plastic goods. Most manufacturers have sharply scaled back operations due to the poor operating climate and foreign exchange shortages. Zimbabwe is not eligible for preferred trade status under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Zimbabwean producers still export lumber products, certain textiles, chrome alloys, and automobile windscreens to the U.S.

Zimbabwe is endowed with rich mineral resources. Exports of gold, asbestos, chrome, coal, platinum, nickel, and copper could lead to an economic recovery one day. No commercial deposits of petroleum have been discovered, although the country is richly endowed with coal-bed methane gas that has yet to be exploited.

With international attractions such as Victoria Falls, the Great Zimbabwe stone ruins, Lake Kariba, and extensive wildlife, tourism historically has been a significant segment of the economy and contributor of foreign exchange. The sector has contracted sharply since 1999, however, due to the country's declining international image.

Energy Resources

With considerable hydroelectric power potential and plentiful coal deposits for thermal power station, Zimbabwe is less dependent on oil as an energy source than most other comparably industrialized countries, but it still imports 40% of its electric power needs from surrounding countries—primarily Mozambique. Only about 15% of Zimbabwe's total energy consumption is accounted for by oil, all of which is imported. Zimbabwe imports about 1.2 billion liters of oil per year. Zimbabwe also has substantial coal reserves that are utilized for

power generation, and coal-bed methane deposits recently discovered in Matabeleland province are greater than any known natural gas field in Southern or Eastern Africa. In recent years, poor economic management and low foreign currency reserves have led to serious fuel shortages.

DEFENSE

At independence, then-Prime Minister Mugabe declared integrating Zimbabwe's then three armed forces as one of his government's top priorities. A unified army was created by combining the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the Zimbabwe Peoples' Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), and the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF). In July 1994, the combined Zimbabwe Defense Forces (ZDF) Headquarters was created. Currently the armed forces of Zimbabwe are completely integrated and are composed of an army (ZNA) and an air force (AFZ).

The Zimbabwe Defense Forces (ZDF) is under the command of the president, who is the commander-in-chief of the Defense Forces. He is assisted by the Minister of Defense, who is responsible for the administrative and logistical support of the Defense Forces, and the commander of the Defense Forces, who maintains operational control of the Defense Forces. Subordinate to the commander of the Defense Forces are the commander of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and the commander of the Air Force of Zimbabwe (AFZ).

The ZNA is authorized 40,000 members but endstrength estimates as of June 2008 indicated the ZNA had about 30,000 members serving. The ZNA's operational forces are based in Harare, Bulawayo, Masvingo, and Mutare. Operational forces include five infantry brigades, artillery brigade, mechanized brigade, field artillery regiment, engineer regiment, air defense regiment, commando regiment, and one airborne battalion. Today, the ZNA is beset by shortages of supplies, including food. It is mostly under-trained and its equipment is aged, not particularly reliable, and largely immobile. The AFZ is authorized 5,000 members, but only 4,000 were on active duty as of June 2008. It is estimated that half of Zimbabwe's aircraft are mission capable.

The Zimbabwe Republic Police numbers 25,000. The force is organized by province, and is comprised of uniformed national police, the Criminal Investigation Department, and traffic police. It also includes specialized support units including the (paramilitary) Police Support Unit and riot police and a Police Internal Security and Intelligence unit. The police commissioner-general exercises overall command of the force.

The U.S. Congress terminated support for military cooperation programs in 2001. Presently, the U.S. has no military-to-military cooperation with Zimbabwe other than through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) program.

U.S.-ZIMBABWEAN RELATIONS

After the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in November 1965, the United States recalled its Consul General from Salisbury, closed the U.S. Information Service (USIS) library, and withdrew its Agency for International Development (USAID) and trade promotion officials. After 1965, the small remaining American consular staff continued to operate under authority of exequaturs issued by Queen Elizabeth II. Following declaration of a republic, the United States closed its Consulate General on March 17, 1970.

In 1971, despite Administration opposition, the U.S. Congress passed legislation permitting the United States to import strategic materials, such as chrome, from Rhodesia. The legislation, which took effect January 1, 1972, was of little real economic benefit to the Rhodesian economy, and the United States continued to support the balance of the sanctions program. After the legislation was repealed in March 1977, the United States once again enforced all sanctions.

The United States supported the United Nations and the United Kingdom consistently in their efforts to influence Rhodesian authorities to accept the principles of majority rule. Beginning in 1976, the United States began to take a more active role in the search for a settlement in cooperation with the British. The Anglo-American proposals of late 1977, aimed at bringing a negotiated end to the dispute, lent the weight of the United States to the search for a peaceful settlement and were a counterpart to the Soviet-Cuban use of military power to increase their influence in southern Africa. The United States supported British efforts to bring about and implement the settlement signed at Lancaster House on December 21, 1979 and extended official diplomatic recognition to the new government immediately after independence. A resident Embassy was established in Harare on Zimbabwe's Independence Day, April 18, 1980. The first U.S. Ambassador arrived and presented his credentials in June 1980. Until the arrival in 1983 of a resident Ambassador in Washington, Zimbabwe's relations with the U.S. were handled by its Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) in New York.

At the Zimbabwe conference on reconstruction and development (ZIMCORD) in March 1981, the United States pledged $225 million over a 3-year period toward the government's goals of postwar reconstruction, distribution and development of land, and the development of skilled manpower. By the end of FY 1986, the United States had contributed $380 million, the majority in grants, with some loans and loan guarantees. However, in July 1986, the U.S. Government decided to discontinue future bilateral aid to Zimbabwe as a result of a continuing pattern of uncivil and undiplomatic statements and actions by the Government of Zimbabwe in the United Nations and elsewhere. Aid programs previously agreed upon were not

affected by the decision, nor were regional development programs that might benefit Zimbabwe. Full programming was restored in 1988.

USAID assistance to Zimbabwe since 2002 has focused on family planning, HIV/AIDS prevention, democracy and governance programs, emergency food aid, and assistance to internally displaced persons. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began a direct assistance program in August 2000. CDC's program consists of prevention of HIV transmission; improved care of persons with HIV/AIDS; surveillance, monitoring, and evaluation of the epidemic; and health sector infrastructure support.

Since 2000, the United States has taken a leading role in condemning the Zimbabwean Government's increasing assault on human rights and the rule of law, and has joined much of the world community in calling for the Government of Zimbabwe to embrace a peaceful democratic evolution. In 2002 and 2003, the United States imposed targeted measures on the Government of Zimbabwe, including financial and visa sanctions against selected individuals, a ban on transfers of defense items and services, and a suspension of non-humanitarian government-to-government assistance. Despite strained political relations, the United States continues as a leading provider of humanitarian assistance to the people of Zimbabwe, providing about $400 million in humanitarian assistance from 2002-2007, most of which was food aid.

President Mugabe visited Washington informally in September 1980, and on official working visits in September 1983, July 1991, and in 1995, meeting with Presidents Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton respectively. He has also led the Zimbabwean delegation to the UN on several occasions, including the UN General Assembly in 2008. Vice President George H.W. Bush visited Harare in November 1982 on a trip to several African countries.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 8/12/08

HARARE (E) 172 Herbert Chitepo Ave., Harare, Zimbabwe, APO/FPO No APO/FPO, 263-4-250593/4/5, Fax 263-4-796488, INMARSAT Tel 00-873-683-142-869, Workweek: Mo-Th:7:30:-5:00; Fri:7:30-12:30, Website: http://harare.usembassy.gov.

DCM OMS:	Ruth Whiteford
AMB OMS:	Lori Enders
CA:	Joseph Ellis
CDC:	Ruth Walkup
ECO:	Amanda Porter
FM:	Steve Gavazza
MGT:	Don Curtis
PAO/ADV:	Mark Weinberg
POL/ECO:	Frances Chisholm
AMB:	James McGee
CON:	James Jimenez
DCM:	Kathy Dhanani
PAO:	Paul Engelstad
GSO:	Jay Lykins
RSO:	Raymond Yates
AFSA:	George Westfall
AID:	Karen Freeman
CLO:	Susie Ellis
DAO:	Ryan McMullen
EEO:	Amy Diaz
FMO:	Kevin Bohne
ICASS Chair:	David Emmert
IMO:	Tim I. McCann
ISO:	George Westfall
ISSO:	James Sallay
POL:	Glenn Warren
State ICASS:	Glenn Warren

TRAVEL

Consular Information Sheet

December 18, 2008

Country Description: Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa. The Department of State issued a Travel Warning for Zimbabwe on December 13, 2008, warning U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Zimbabwe due to deteriorating safety and security conditions. Although tourist facilities are available in Victoria Falls, Great Zimbabwe, major cities, and selected game parks, all Americans should carefully evaluate the decision to travel to Zimbabwe at this time.

Entry Requirements: A passport, visa, return ticket, and adequate funds are required. U.S. citizens traveling to Zimbabwe for tourism, business, or transit can obtain a visa at the airports and border ports-of-entry, or in advance by contacting the Embassy of Zimbabwe at 1608 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20009; telephone (202) 332-7100. American citizens considering travel to Zimbabwe to visit tourist destinations, including eco-tourist sites or hunting safaris, or for business purposes, are advised that the Government of Zimbabwe has declared that American visitors with proper documentation will be allowed entry without difficulty. However, the Government of Zimbabwe has also signaled an intention to refuse entry to Americans who are believed to have a bias against the Zimbabwean government. In some instances, Zimbabwean immigration officials have used materials found in searches of travelers and their luggage as an explanation to refuse entry. Visit the Embassy of Zimbabwe web site at http://www.zimbabwe-embassy.us/ for the most current visa information.

Americans entering Zimbabwe for tourism can expect to be granted a 30-day duration of stay. Extensions are possible, but normally require a personal visit to the Zimbabwe Immigration Office's public window, located in the center of Harare.

Americans intending to reside or work in Zimbabwe must obtain prior approval by the Zimbabwean Chief Immigration Officer. Such applications typically take a minimum of six weeks and should be made through the Embassy of Zimbabwe in Washington, DC. Since January 2007, several American citizens applying for or renewing residency or work permits have had their applications denied without explanation and been forced to depart the country.

Upon arrival in Zimbabwe, travelers should keep all travel documents readily available, as well as a list of residences or hotels where they will stay while in Zimbabwe. Travelers to Zimbabwe must carry some form of identification at all times. Although

the Government of Zimbabwe has rescinded their previous suspension of all aid and development work in Zimbabwe, Americans traveling to Zimbabwe to work in those fields should insure they have proper permission and documentation from the Zimbabwean government before entering the country.

U.S. citizens who intend to work in Zimbabwe as journalists must apply for accreditation with the Zimbabwean Embassy at least one month in advance of planned travel. The Government of Zimbabwe uses an extremely expansive definition of journalism and any formal interviews, filming or photography may be considered "presenting oneself as an accredited journalist," a crime punishable by arrest or detention. If you are in doubt about whether or not your purpose of travel constitutes journalism, please seek clarification from the Zimbabwean Embassy in Washington BEFORE you travel. It is no longer possible to seek accreditation after arrival in Zimbabwe. Journalists attempting to enter Zimbabwe without proper advance accreditation may be denied admission, detained for questioning, arrested or deported. Journalists seeking to file stories from Zimbabwe must comply with the requirements of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which requires that journalists seek accreditation by paying a $100 (U.S.) application fee and, if accredited, a $500 (U.S.) accreditation fee.

U.S. citizen students and faculty at educational and other institutions who wish to do research in Zimbabwe should contact a host educational or research institution for affiliation prior to applying for a visa. Despite fulfilling all such requirements and receiving appropriate permission, legitimate researchers have been detained in the past by the police because the subject of their research was believed to be sensitive.

While there is no set legal limit on the amount of foreign currency that a person can carry into Zimbabwe, it is illegal to take more than $1,000 U.S. dollars out of the country, whether departing by road or air. Travelers seeking to depart with greater amounts of currency risk having the money confiscated and/or being prevented from leaving pending a court appearance.

Safety and Security: The political, social, economic, and security situations in Zimbabwe are volatile and could deteriorate quickly without warning. During the presidential elections in 2008, the Zimbabwe government authorized its security forces to suppress all dissent by whatever means it deemed necessary. In the past year, political leaders at the highest levels of the Zimbabwean government have condoned the security forces' use of violence against opponents of the government. The government has defended its right to treat individuals roughly, including those in custody, and has warned of more such actions.

The political situation in Zimbabwe remains fluid and subject to change at a moment's notice. American citizens should carefully evaluate the need to travel to Zimbabwe at this time. In late 2008, the political, humanitarian, and economic crisis in Zimbabwe resulted in civil demonstrations that were violently dispersed by security forces, as well as riots by military personnel, and a general deterioration of government services and infrastructure, including the collapse of the country's public health system. Americans traveling to Zimbabwe should avoid crowds. Zimbabwean authorities may forcefully disband demonstrations by labor unions and other civil groups. American citizens should avoid all public demonstrations and protests.

Communications infrastructure in Zimbabwe is very unreliable. Telephone and cell phone outages are common.

Following the March 29, 2008 presidential elections, there was widespread political violence, particularly in rural areas and high-density suburbs. Zimbabwean security forces, including some military and police, as well as so-called war veterans, created a climate of intimidation and fear across the country. There were numerous and widespread attacks on opposition supporters, renewed farm invasions, and arrests and beatings of election officials accused of vote tampering. These attacks resulted in numerous deaths and hundreds of injuries. The government's security forces also directed violence at common citizens, indiscriminately beating individuals on the street and in private establishments.

Resident and visiting Americans have been arrested, detained, and threatened with expulsion for activities that would not be considered crimes in the U.S., including the expression of opinions regarding the current political regime in Zimbabwe. On May 13, 2008 and on June 5, 2008, American and other diplomats were detained by government security forces for several hours outside Harare. On the second occasion, one Zimbabwean U.S. Embassy employee was physically assaulted and the entire group was threatened with violence. Americans should carefully evaluate the need to travel around Zimbabwe by road, and make alternate plans when possible. If traveling by road, Americans should make sure they have working communication devices, and, evidence of their citizenship such as a photocopy of the face page of their passport. Americans should also notify a trusted friend or family member of their itinerary and expected departure and arrival times.

The streets around State House, the official residence of the President, and the Botanical Gardens are particularly sensitive and a number of pedestrians and motorists, including Americans, have been assaulted by local security forces when walking or driving in that area. President Mugabe and other senior government officials travel around Harare accompanied by large and aggressive motorcades that have been known to run motorists off the road, and by security personnel who occasionally beat and harass drivers who fail to pull out of the way quickly enough. American citizens are advised to be aware of police vehicles flashing lights and sirens and move quickly off the road if overtaken by a motorcade.

American visitors have been detained in the past under suspicion of operating as journalists without accreditation for photographing cultural sites and areas that may not immediately appear to be sensitive. Tourists may also be subject to harassment or arrest for photographing police, roadblocks, occupied commercial farms, and government buildings or military installations, official residences or embassies, including the president's palace. Prior written permission must be obtained from the appropriate government office before taking such photographs. It is not always immediately apparent what the police deem sensitive and American citizens have been detained for hours for photographing such seemingly innocuous subjects as fruit carts and religious buildings such as churches, mosques and synagogues. American citizens are encouraged to be very aware of their surroundings before taking any pictures outside game parks and known tourist areas.

The government frequently uses road blocks to enforce order, particularly in urban centers. Road blocks can be particularly dangerous, and extreme caution should be used when approaching them. When instructed by police or other security officials to stop at a roadblock, comply with these instructions. If possible, carry a mobile phone or other means of communication. In November 2002, Zimbabwean police outside of Mutare killed an American citizen at a roadblock.

Other ongoing security conditions that could affect the safety of tourists in Zimbabwe include rising crime (see below) and the occupation of commercial farms by members of the National War Veterans' Association and others. The so-called war veterans have seized American-owned property, and residents and tourists alike should avoid areas where war veterans are active.

Visitors should be prepared for food shortages, including shortages of bread, milk, meat and other basic goods. Zimbabwe is currently experiencing a significant nationwide fuel shortage, as well. Travelers should carefully assess their fuel situation, keep their tanks full, and consider carrying extra fuel in sealed containers specifically designed for such purpose before making any long-distance journeys.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's web site, where the current Worldwide Caution Travel Alert, Travel Warnings and other Travel Alerts can be found. Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada, or for callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444.

Crime: Crime is a serious problem in Zimbabwe, and is driven by the country's deteriorating economy.

Street crime in Zimbabwe is a serious problem. Americans and other foreigners are perceived to be wealthy and are frequently targeted by criminals who operate in the vicinity of hotels, restaurants, and shopping areas of the major cities and tourist areas such as Victoria Falls. Although the majority of crimes in Zimbabwe are non-violent, perpetrators are generally armed with weapons, which can include firearms. The downtown sector of Harare and its high density residential suburbs are particularly high-crime areas. A number of American visitors have been assaulted or robbed while walking in the town of Victoria Falls, especially after dark.

Travelers should secure their luggage at airports, railway and bus stations, and when making calls from public telephones. Purse-snatchers will often work in teams of two, with one person acting as a diversion. A typical mugging involves a group of young males who surround and overwhelm their victim in a public area. Avoid displaying or carrying unnecessary valuables, such as expensive jewelry, and do not carry large sums of money. Cell phones are of particular interest to local thieves. Always secure items such as passports, money, jewelry, and credit cards in hotel safety deposit boxes or safes when not being used. The use of credit cards is not recommended unless the exchange rate can be determined before their use.

Travelers should avoid driving at night outside the low-density suburban areas. Drivers should be alert for "smash and grabs," where thieves break the windows of cars stopped at intersections and take items from inside the car. Car doors should always be locked and the windows rolled up. Handbags, wallets, and other items should be placed out of sight under car seats or in the trunk of the car. While stopped in traffic, drivers should always be aware and look around to identify potential trouble. Drivers should always leave sufficient maneuver room between their vehicle and the one in front so they can drive away from danger. Travelers who suspect that their vehicle is being followed should drive to the nearest police station or other protected public area for assistance. Reducing idle times at traffic lights by slowing in advance to anticipate the changing of the light is an effective deterrent. Drivers should also be cautious of people using ploys to lure them out of their cars. In one ploy, an assailant will slash a tire and then offer to help with the flat, particularly on the road to Harare International Airport. Beware of drivers in vehicles without license plates who stop to render aid or who cause minor accidents. Always drive to a well-lit and populated area before making repairs or exchanging information.

Travelers are encouraged to make two photocopies of the biographic/identification page of their passport. They should leave one copy at home with friends or relatives and carry the second copy with them for identification purposes.

Information for Victims of Crime: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Zimbabwe for the police is 995/999; for fire fighters 994/999 and for ambulance: 993/999.

Medical Facilities and Health Information: Medical public medical infrastructure has effectively crumbled and medical facilities are extremely limited. There have been several instances where American citizens facing life-threatening illnesses or injuries have been turned away from hospitals because there were not sufficient beds or medical supplies available. Most serious illnesses or accidents require medical evacuation to South Africa. All travelers are strongly urged to obtain medical evacuation insurance coverage prior to arriving in Zimbabwe. Doctors, hospitals and air ambulance medical evacuation services often expect immediate cash payment for health services. Travelers are urged to carry an ample supply of prescription and other medications, as they will not likely be available in Zimbabwe. Provincial hospitals in rural areas, if still operating, have rudimentary staffing, equipment, and supplies, and are not equipped to provide medical care in case of a serious accident. The fuel shortage further diminishes emergency response capabilities. Emergency patients often must arrange their own transportation to medical facilities.

In late 2008, the deterioration of the health system impaired the government's ability to respond to a dangerous cholera outbreak which has killed nearly 1,000 people. Cholera is a potentially fatal bacterial infection of the intestine that causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. The disease is spread through untreated sewage and contaminated drinking water. The latest outbreak in Zimbabwe has exposed a shortage of potable water throughout the country and overwhelmed medical resources. Travelers to Zimbabwe should drink boiled or bottled water, use boiled or bottled water in food preparation, and regularly wash their hands with a sanitizer. American citizens may refer to the CDC's web site at http://www.cdc.gov.

Malaria is also prevalent throughout Zimbabwe, except in Harare, due to the capital's high altitude. The CDC strongly recommends that malaria prophylaxis and preventive measures be taken when traveling outside of Harare.

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Zimbabwe.

Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in Zimbabwe. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

Medical Insurance: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation.

Traffic Safety and Road Conditions: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Zimbabwe is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Zimbabweans drive on the left side of the road and many people drive over the speed limit. The main roads throughout Zimbabwe are generally in fair but deteriorating condition. Most lack passing lanes, shoulders, breakdown lanes, lighting, reflectors, and similar safety features.

Service stations frequently lack fuel or repair parts. Inter-city commuter bus travel, except by "luxury coaches," is dangerous due to overcrowding, inadequate maintenance, and unsafe drivers. Public bus drivers are often fatigued, fail to adhere to local speed limits, and often fail to obey traffic rules or regulations. Travelers are advised to avoid driving at night due to pedestrians (in dark clothing) and animals walking in the poorly lit roads. Motor vehicles often have no headlights or taillights and are difficult to see at night. Passing lanes are not always clearly marked, and road visibility at times can be restricted. In urban areas, lane markers are often faded, with both streetlights and traffic lights inoperative. Potholes are numerous on most roads.

It is illegal to operate a cellular telephone while driving in Zimbabwe. Drivers are required to wear seat belts or helmets if driving motorcycles. Car seats are not legally required for small children. Travelers should pack several pairs of latex gloves in the event of a road accident involving serious injuries or bleeding, as Zimbabwe has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection in southern Africa.

A nationwide fuel shortage makes internal travel difficult and unreliable, and severely restricts the response capability of police and other emergency services.

The Ministry of Transport is the government authority responsible for road safety in Zimbabwe. There is no national established network of road-

side emergency service. However, the Automobile Association of Zimbabwe, similar to the American Automobile Association, is willing to provide roadside emergency service to non-members for a fee. Travelers interested in contacting the service during their stay in Zimbabwe may contact AA Zimbabwe at 263-4-752-779. AA Zimbabwe's 24-hour emergency roadside helpline is 263-4-707-959.

Aviation Safety Oversight: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of Zimbabwe's Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of Zimbabwe's air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov.

Special Circumstances: The U.S. Embassy does not receive notification of the arrest of American citizens by the Zimbabwean police. Further, the Government of Zimbabwe does not always grant immediate or repeated visits to detained or incarcerated Americans by Embassy consular officers. In April 2007, two Americans were detained by Zimbabwean police in Harare. They were not charged with any crime, they were not asked if they would like legal representation, and they were not arraigned before a magistrate. The police failed to give consular notification, failed to grant consular visitation, and refused to provide Embassy staff any information about their whereabouts, despite repeated inquiries. In this case, the police officer in charge made comments which suggested that their refusal to provide information or consular access was at least partially motivated by political considerations and the strained state of U.S.-Zimbabwe relations. In August 2007, two more Americans arrested under similar circumstances were detained for two days and deported. Zimbabwean officials failed to notify U.S. consular officials of the arrests; after U.S. officials became aware of the detentions they were refused visitation.

U.S. citizens are encouraged to carry a copy of their U.S. passports with them at all times so that, if questioned by local officials, proof of identity and U.S. citizenship is readily available. If arrested, American citizens should ask to contact the American Embassy.

Under Executive Order 13288 of March 7, 2003, the United States placed sanctions on the property and economic assets of certain Zimbabwean government officials deemed most responsible for undermining Zimbabwe's democratic institutions. Under U.S. law, it is illegal for American citizens or residents to engage in any transaction or dealing with the targeted individuals or other entities designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under this sanctions program. It is not otherwise illegal for American citizens to transact business with Zimbabwean firms. U.S. citizens intending to engage in business or financial transactions in Zimbabwe are advised to consult the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control website at http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac for up-to-date information on these sanctions.

It is illegal to exchange foreign currency for local currency with anyone other than an authorized currency dealer affiliated with the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe. Authorized currency dealers include the major banks, such as Standard Chartered and Barclays. Street vendors and private individuals may also offer this service, but they should be avoided. Travelers observed by the police engaging in illegal money transactions will be immediately arrested and jailed pending a hearing before a magistrate court.

Travelers to Zimbabwe should carefully consider the method of payment used for lodging and other expenses. Due to hyper-inflation, prices may fluctuate dramatically. Internationally convertible currency such as U.S. dollars or British pounds may be required for certain travel-related expenses such as hotel bills and airfare. Even in instances where use of foreign exchange is required or permitted, traveler's checks may not be accepted. Similarly, many banks and foreign exchange windows refuse to accept traveler's checks for conversion to local currency, and virtually none will cash them for foreign exchange. There have been recent instances in which Zimbabwean authorities seized foreign currency from tourists/visitors who were unable to present documentation that they declared these funds when entering the country. Using a credit card could significantly increase the cost of purchases, as credit card companies calculate the U.S. dollar equivalent using the official government rate, which may be significantly lower than that used by local shopkeepers and vendors. Visitors are encouraged to assess the currency situation in Zimbabwe at the actual time of travel.

Zimbabwe offers opportunities for observation of wildlife in its natural habitat and many tour operators still offer structured, safe excursions into parks and other wildlife viewing areas for close observation of flora and fauna. However, standards and training have declined markedly and it is a good idea to ascertain whether operators are trained and licensed. Even animals marketed as "tame" should be respected as wild and extremely dangerous. Two foreign visitors were killed by an elephant on a "safari walk" in Hwange National Park in March 2007. A foreign tourist died in August 2005 after an attack during a "lion walk" at The Lion and Cheetah Park, a game preserve near Harare. In February 2007 another foreign visitor was seriously injured during a "lion walk" with young lions at the same park. In 2004, an American tourist was killed by a crocodile while in a canoe at Mana Pools on the Zambezi River. U.S. citizens participating in nature excursions in Zimbabwe should be aware that even organized and licensed tour operators may encourage or allow tourists to participate in activities, such as walking or canoe safaris, which could pose great risks to personal safety. Travelers should keep a safe distance from animals at all times, remaining in vehicles or other protected enclosures when venturing into game parks. There have been a few instances in which tourists have

faced last-minute cancellations or have had to leave a game park earlier than planned as a result of labor unrest and/or ownership disputes. Visitors to Nyanga should avoid Pungwe Falls, Mterazi Falls, and the Honde Falls, as there have been numerous incidents of armed robbery, theft, assaults, and attempted rapes reported at these sites. Land mines along the Mozambique border, situated beyond the main tourist areas, make travel to that border area potentially hazardous.

Tourists who wish to hunt in Zimbabwe must be accompanied by a licensed operator, who is required to be registered and licensed by the Zimbabwe Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Travelers to Zimbabwe should ask for the operator's license number when booking a hunt and should check the authenticity of the license by contacting the Zimbabwe Association of Tour and Safari Operators (ZATSO) at pangeti@zct.co.zw or bown@zct.co.zw.

U.S. citizens who are temporarily carrying firearms and ammunition into Zimbabwe for purposes of hunting, and who cannot qualify for an exemption under the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), may need an approved temporary export license (DSP73) from Department of State's Office of Defense Trade Controls. U.S. citizens should also contact the Embassy of Zimbabwe in Washington, D.C. to find out what permits are required by the government of Zimbabwe for importing weapons into the country. Travelers are advised to make sure that all of the necessary documentation is in order before departing the United States. The weapons also must be cleared through U.S. Customs when leaving the United States and upon reentry at the conclusion of one's trip.

Criminal Penalties: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Zimbabwe's laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Zimbabwe are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States.

Children's Issues: For information on intercountry adoption of children and international parental child abduction, see the Office of Children's Issues website at http://travel.state.gov.

Registration and Embassy Locations: Americans living or traveling in Zimbabwe are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within Zimbabwe. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 172 Herbert Chitepo Avenue, Harare, telephone (263-4) 250-593/4, after-hours telephone (263-4) 250-595; fax (263-4) 250-343. American citizen service hours are from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm Monday through Thursday and from 8:00 am to 11:30 am on Fridays, except U.S. and Zimbabwean holidays. The mailing address is PO Box 3340, Harare. The e-mail address is ConsularHarare@state.gov.

Travel Warning

December 12, 2008

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Zimbabwe due to deteriorating safety and security conditions, and urges them to carefully consider their need to travel there. The political instability and economic crisis in Zimbabwe have resulted in small-scale civil demonstrations and riots by military personnel, and a general deterioration of government services and infrastructure, including the near collapse of the country's public health system. The Department of State therefore urges U.S. citizens visiting Zimbabwe to closely monitor the situation, keep travel documents up to date, and have contingency plans ready for their own personal health, safety and security.

Americans travelling to Zimbabwe should avoid crowds. Zimbabwean authorities may forcefully disband demonstrations by labor unions and other civil groups. American citizens should avoid all public demonstrations and protests.

The public health system in Zimbabwe no longer provides even basic services due to a lack of staff, electricity, clean water, and medical supplies. Americans who fall ill while in Zimbabwe may find it difficult to find treatment. In late 2008, the deterioration of the health system impaired the government's ability to respond to a dangerous cholera outbreak which has killed hundreds of people. Cholera is a potentially fatal bacterial infection of the intestine that causes severe diarrhea and dehydration. The disease is spread through untreated sewage and contaminated drinking water. The latest outbreak in Zimbabwe has exposed a shortage of potable water throughout the country and overwhelmed medical resources. Travelers to Zimbabwe should drink boiled or bottled water, use boiled or bottled water in food preparation, and regularly wash their hands with a sanitizer.

For additional information on cholera, American citizens may refer to the CDC's website at http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/dfbmd/disease_listing/cholera_gi.html. American citizens experiencing symptoms associated with cholera, such as severe diarrhea, should seek immediate medical attention. However, Harare's three public hospitals have virtually shut down. Private clinics, while operational, often lack staff, electricity, water, and medical supplies. As a result, there is no guarantee that

travelers who become ill will be able to obtain adequate emergency medical treatment in Zimbabwe.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Internet web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts can be found.

Up-to date information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or, for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444.

These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Americans are also encouraged to read the Country Specific Information for Zimbabwe, available at http://travel.state.gov.

U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/ so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security. Americans without internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

U.S. citizens may contact the American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Harare for further information. The Embassy is located on 172 Herbert Chitepo Avenue, Harare. Telephone 263-4-250-593/4/5, e-mail consularharare@state.gov. The Embassy's Internet home page address is http://harare.usembassy.gov.

Department of State travel information and publications are available at Internet address: http://travel.state.gov. U.S. travelers may hear recorded information by calling the Department of State in Washington, D.C. at 202-647-5225 from their touch-tone telephone, or receive information by automated telefax by dialing 202-647-3000 from their fax machine.

Intercountry Adoption

June 2006

The information in this section has been edited from a report of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Overseas Citizens Services.

For more information, please read the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Disclaimer: The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and current understanding. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

Please Note: Intercountry adoption is rare in Zimbabwe. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare has a stated preference to place Zimbabwean children with parents of the same race. Inter-racial adoptions require the approval of the Minister of Social Welfare.

The Government of Zimbabwe occasionally has discouraged adoption of Zimbabwean children by foreigners and may make additional demands on the prospective adoptive parents before the adoption can be finalized.

These demands include but are not limited to counseling of children, additional referrals and home study visits. Interested U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to contact U.S. consular officials in Harare before formalizing an adoption agreement to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed that will make it possible for the Embassy to issue a U.S. immigrant visa for the child.

Patterns of Immigration: Please review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Adoption Authority:
Ministry of Labour and
Social Welfare
Harare Central District
Social Welfare Office
PO Box CY 562
Causeway
Harare, Zimbabwe
011-263-4-703-711

If the Ministry approves a request to adopt, the case is submitted to the Juvenile Courts to review the adoption application. If approved, the Court will issue an Adoption Order and release the child for immigration.

Eligibility Requirements for Adoptive Parents: Prospective adoptive parents who meet the residency requirements must be married and over the age of 25.

Single women 25 or older who are at least 21 years older than the prospective adoptive child may be approved by the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare. Single men may only adopt family members and must be approved by the Minister. All prospective adoptive parents must have a clean criminal record.

Residency Requirements: Prospective adoptive parents must be either citizens or legal residents of Zimbabwe. This requirement may be waived by the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare.

Time Frame: Adoptions in Zimbabwe take approximately three months once the Application to Adopt has been approved and the child has been identified. It is important to note the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has a stated preference to place Zimbabwean children with parents of the same race. Wait times for Caucasian and mixed-race children can be significantly longer than for indigenous children. Interracial adoptions require the approval of the Minister.

Adoption Agencies and Attorneys: Adoptions in Zimbabwe can only be facilitated through the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. A court order without the recommendation of the Ministry is not considered

a legal adoption and will not be considered valid for U.S. immigration purposes. All prospective adoptive parents should begin the adoption process with the Ministry or their district Social Welfare Office and in coordination with consular officers at the U.S. Embassy in Harare.

Currently, there are no licensed attorneys and/or facilitators authorized to handle adoption cases or issues in Zimbabwe. However, Zimbabwean law recently changed and in the coming months social work will be privatized to allow the Social Workers Agency Council to license private social workers to facilitate adoptions.

Adoption Fees: There are no fees from the Government of Zimbabwe and no court fees.

Adoptive parents have to obtain birth certificates for adopted children from the Registrar Generals Office of Births & Deaths in Harare or Bulawayo, for a nominal fee.

Adoption Procedures: There are two tracks to adoption in Zimbabwe:

- If the prospective adoptive parents have not yet identified a child, they may first file a general application to adopt in the district where they live; once the application is approved, the Ministry will work with them to identify an appropriate child. The Ministry may recommend a particular child for adoption.
- If the prospective adoptive parents have identified the child/children they wish to adopt, they must visit the Social Welfare Office in their district to open a case file by filing an application to adopt the child. Note: Not every child in a Zimbabwean orphanage is eligible for adoption and there is no central registry for identifying eligible children.

Once the Application to Adopt has been approved, the Ministry of Social Welfare will refer the case to the Juvenile Court for consideration and, if approved, the court will issue an Adoption Order and release the child for immigration. If the prospective adoptive parents are not domiciled in Zimbabwe, they must request a waiver of the residency requirement from the Ministry of Social Welfare before their application can be approved.

The U.S. Embassy is aware only of isolated cases where the residency requirement has been waived. "Nominated" or "directed" adoption, in which a birth parent(s) give up a child directly to prospective adoptive parents, is legal in Zimbabwe; however, such adoptions may not meet the requirements of U.S. immigration law. American citizens interested in a directed adoption should contact the U.S. Embassy in Harare before initiating legal action.

Required Documents: Identity documents (such as a passport), birth and marriage certificates, police clearances from both the U.S. and Zimbabwe, supporting documents attesting to one's eligibility, and three or four references from individuals not related to the potential adoptive parents. There are additional documentary requirements for the prospective adoptive child. A current list of these documents can be obtained by contacting the Zimbabwean Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

Embassy in the United States
1608 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington D.C. 20009
Telephone (202) 3327100, (301) 2639826

U.S. Immigration Requirements: Prospective adopting parents are strongly encouraged to consult USCIS publication M-249, *The Immigration of Adopted and Prospective Adoptive Children*, as well as the Department of State publication, *Intercountry Adoptions*. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for more details and review current reports online at http://adoption.state.gov.

Additional Information: Specific questions about adoption in Zimbabwe may be addressed to the U.S. Embassy in Harare, Zimbabwe (ConsularHarare@state.gov). General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

International Treaty Organizations

APEC

Last updated: November 2008

Official Name:

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

Editor's note: The information in this article has been compiled and edited from *Fact Sheets, Press Releases, and Background Notes* available from the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the U.S. Department of State.

OVERVIEW

The Beginning

The APEC forum was established in 1989 to promote economic cooperation and integration in the Pacific region. The United States was a driving force in APEC's creation, as a means of anchoring the United States more firmly in the region in the post-Cold War era. APEC has grown to 21 members, including four other economies in the western hemisphere (Canada, Chile, Mexico and Peru). The first APEC Leaders' Meeting occurred in 1993 when the United States invited member economies' leaders to Blake Island, Washington. In 1995, APEC established a business advisory body, called the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), which consists of three business executives from each member economy.

The Bogor Goals

At Blake Island, Leaders called for continued reduction of trade and investment barriers, envisioning an "Asia-Pacific community" that promotes prosperity through cooperation. In 1994, Leaders at Bogor, Indonesia, set the goals of reaching free trade and investment by 2010 for developed economies, and 2020 for developing economies.

Strengthening Multilateral and Regional Trade

APEC's early successes included helping to build consensus for conclusion of the Uruguay Round in 1994 and its role in pioneering the 1996 Information Technology Agreement. In Shanghai (2001), APEC's strong push for a new trade Round and support for a robust program of trade capacity-building assistance was critical to the successful launch of the Doha Development Agenda a few weeks later.

APEC has taken a number of steps to liberalize regional trade. For example, in 1999 it launched the APEC Open Skies Agreement, the first multilateral air services liberalization agreement in the world. In 2001, Leaders endorsed the U.S.-proposed "Shanghai Accord" that emphasizes implementation of APEC's commitments to open markets, structural reform, and capacity building. As part of the Accord, Leaders committed to develop and implement APEC transparency standards, reduce trade transaction costs in the Asia-Pacific region by 5 percent over 5 years, and pursue trade liberalization policies relating to information technology goods and services.

Counterterrorism

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, leaders in Shanghai pledged counterterrorism cooperation. In Los Cabos this year, Leaders will build on the Shanghai Statement through commitments designed to protect key Pacific Rim infrastructure—trade, finance and information systems—from terrorist exploitation and attack.

APEC GROUPS

APEC senior officials oversee the 10 following working groups, covering broad areas of economic, educational, and environmental cooperation. In addition, APEC has a Committee on Trade and Investment with customs and standards and conformance subcommittees, and an Economic Committee.

Trade and Investment Data

Develops consistent and reliable data in merchandise trade, trade in services, and investment.

Trade Promotion

Develops proposals to exchange trade and industrial information and to promote economic and trade missions among economies of the region. Orga-

Participating Economies

Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Republic of the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, USA, Vietnam.

nizes international seminars and meetings to promote trade, an Asia-Pacific trade fair, and a training course on trade promotion.

Industrial Science and Technology

Promotes economic growth by expanding technology flows and focusing on science and technology issues that network potential partners together in the Asia-Pacific region.

Human Resource Development

Seeks ways to exchange information among Asia-Pacific economies in such areas as business administration, industrial training and innovation, project management, and development planning. In this working group, the United States hosted an APEC education ministerial in Washington, DC, in August 1992 and sponsors the APEC Partnership for Education Program, which promotes university partnerships among U.S. and Asian/South Pacific universities, outreach and cooperative education activities, and private sector training.

Energy Cooperation

Develops cooperative projects, such as a regional database on energy supply and demand, and exchanges views on, among other things, coal utilization, technology transfer, and resource exploration and development.

Marine Resource Conservation

Exchanges information on policy and technical aspects of marine pollution and advancement of integrated coastal zone planning. Exchanges information on and develops recommendations for dealing with red tide/ toxic algae pollution problems.

Telecommunications

Compiles annual survey on APEC telecommunications development activities, including a description of each member country's telecommunications environment. Explores ways to establish and develop regional networks, initially by encouraging electronic data interchange. Exchanges information on policy and regulatory developments in each member's telecommunications sector. Disseminates a manual on how to approach training in a telecommunications organization, followed by a pilot project reviewing needs and recommending solutions in a selected organization.

Transportation

Studies and recommends ways to improve infrastructure, facilitate movement of passengers and freight, collect and exchange data, and enhance transportation safety and security. This U.S.-led working group is one of three added in March 1991. The United States proposed it because of the importance of improved transportation links to continued economic growth in the region. In June 1995, the United States hosted an APEC transportation ministerial.

Tourism

Studies one of the region's most important industries, focusing on tourism data exchange, barriers to expansion, training programs, and current projects in APEC member economies.

Fisheries

Surveys the pattern of APEC fisheries cooperation to develop fisheries resources. Reports on the role of APEC in coordinating and complementing the work of existing organizations and promoting cooperative relations among APEC participants.

THE UNITED STATES AND APEC

APEC plays a crucial role in pushing for global trade liberalization through the World Trade Organization, and repeatedly blazed a path for the rest of the world to follow. APEC's signature Bogor Goals of complete liberalization for industrialized economies by 2010 and developing economies by 2020 provide a consistent push in the right direction.

APEC was the first regional forum to respond to the September 11 attacks, and it contributes to the fight against terrorism via a range of secure trade and counterterrorism initiatives. An APEC initiative led by the U.S. and Australia set up a regionwide alert system to stop use of stolen passports. APEC was also the first regional forum to react to SARS, and the first regional body to do work to prevent, prepare for, and respond to a potential influenza pandemic.

APEC and the Asia Pacific

Since 1989, when the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum began, the Asia-Pacific region has been the most economically dynamic part of the world, with real GDP across all APEC economies rising by an impressive 66% from 1989 to 2005. APEC's 21 member economies now account for 60% of the global economy. The United States exported $575 billion—or nearly two- thirds (64%) of total U.S. goods exports—to APEC economies in 2005.

APEC member economies sustain their growth through an ever-deepening commitment to open and secure trade and investment, as well as economic reform. By progressively reducing tariffs and eliminating trade barriers, APEC member economies have become more efficient and have led the world in poverty reduction and social development. The annual gathering of APEC Leaders, initiated under U.S. leadership in 1993, is the most important multilateral gathering in the Asia-Pacific

region. APEC brings high level attention to issues of regional and global consequence, and provides a regular forum for the 21 APEC Leaders to meet and address issues of common concern. APEC has grown to include over 100 formal and informal dialogues and meetings, tackling issues that are critical to the future prosperity, security and development of the Asia-Pacific region.

U.S. Policy toward APEC

APEC is the only regional institution that brings together the leaders of all the region's major economies annually. The United States views APEC as the premier organization in the Asia-Pacific, enabling our government and people to contribute to the prosperity, security and healthy development of the region. Through APEC, the United States aims to create opportunities for sustainable growth by pushing consistently for accelerated trade and investment liberalization, while promoting hands on trade facilitation projects and capacity building. The United States works within APEC to prevent threats to sustainable growth by cooperating to ensure secure travel, transport and trade throughout the region.

Why APEC Matters to Americans — October 16, 2001

Released by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State

In 1989 when former President George Bush was President of the United States the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum was established to promote economic integration around the Pacific Rim and to sustain economic growth. APEC currently has 21 members: Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; Republic of the Philippines; Russia; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; USA; Vietnam.

The United States, recognizing the value of top-level meetings to advance the work of creating a Pacific community, invited member economies' leaders to Blake Island, Washington, to meet informally to discuss major issues in the APEC region. This gathering of economic leaders has become the single most important institution in the Asia Pacific region. It brings top level attention to APEC's vision of free trade and investment as well as providing a forum for Leaders to meet on a regular basis both as a group and bilaterally to discuss current issues and resolve disputes.

The economic health of the APEC region is vitally important to America's continued prosperity. Economic growth across the APEC region waned this year, largely in response to the slowing U.S. economy and the weakening global demand for many of the Asian members' exports (particularly electronics). Many members have lowered their 2001 growth projections in light of poor performance during the first half of the year, although most will still post positive results. APEC is home to our biggest customers in the world, with a total of $500 billion in exports in 2000. APEC remained a powerful trading group accounting for about half of the world exports and imports. We in turn have played a critical role in Asian recovery, providing a market that bought nearly $700 billion worth of goods and services from other APEC economies last year.

APEC has played an important role in promoting trade and investment liberalization in the region. As a result of these efforts, APEC markets are considerably more open today than they were ten years ago, creating new opportunities for American business and creating new employment for American workers.

The challenge posed by the higher profile APEC launched at Blake Island was also widely seen as galvanizing a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round Table negotiation by demonstrating an alternative path to liberalizing trade talks if global talks were to fail.

APEC has also played a complementary role to the International Monetary Fund and other international financial institutions in fostering a rapid Asian economic recovery. APEC encourages its members to pursue appropriate macroeconomic policies that stimulate domestic demand, and microeconomic polices to promote financial and corporate restructuring and attract investment. APEC is promoting increased transparency, openness and predictability based on the rule of law. APEC seeks to eliminate impediments to trade and investment by encouraging member economies to reduce barriers, adopt transparent, market-oriented policies and address such issues as unequal labor productivity, restricted mobility of business persons and outdated telecommunications regulatory practices.

APEC can serve a crucial role in advancing long-term projects and initiatives that will assist its members to reform their economies and implement the policy changes that will sustain the economic recovery. It also can help foster development of the physical and human capital necessary to sustain growth in the 21st century.

APEC also promotes discussion among Leaders and undertakes programs to assure that the social infrastructure exists to allow APEC economies to take advantage of trade and investment opportunities and that economic growth translates into real social progress. For example, APEC works to advance environmental and labor standards, improve basic education, fight disease, promote the growth and development of small business, and integrate women into economic life.

APEC works directly with the private sector to produce results with broad benefits. Public-private collaboration on customs projects is becoming a model for the benefits that the public sector can derive from partnership with business constituents. Other public-private partnerships this year in APEC focuses on developing e-commerce and region-wide information technology training programs.

A revived Asia-Pacific region means more exports from and investments by U.S. companies, more jobs for Americans and more U.S. economic growth. APEC's motto could be “prosper thy neighbor.” The United States is committed to ensuring APEC plays that constructive role.

The United States is a regional leader in countering the dangers of pandemic disease, as well as defending the integrity of financial systems. The United States strives to help its APEC partners build societies for sustainable growth by cooperating to foster good governance, wipe out corruption, and improve corporate culture and practice.

Human resources development and education are the common paths to social development, and U.S. assistance initiatives aim to produce lasting outcomes.

16th APEC Leaders' Meeting

November 23, 2008

At the 16th Annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders Meeting in Lima, Peru, President George W. Bush and fellow APEC leaders reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing economic growth, prosperity, security, and the quality of life for all citizens in the Asia-Pacific community.

The leaders discussed the current global financial turmoil and its impact on the Asia-Pacific region. The leaders pledged to take coordinated action to restore stability to financial markets and economic growth. They endorsed the principles and the specific actions to implement those principles identified in the declaration issued at the Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy.

The leaders also took concerted action to promote their shared goal of free and open trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific. The leaders endorsed a work program to strengthen regional economic integration and accelerate progress towards a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. The leaders agreed on 15 sets of model measures for free trade agreement (FTA) issue-specific chapters to promote high-quality FTAs.

The leaders resolved to agree this year on a framework that leads to an ambitious conclusion to the WTO Doha Development Agenda and to refrain from raising barriers. The leaders challenged their counterparts within and outside of APEC to build on progress achieved to deliver a strong market-opening outcome that creates new trade flows in agriculture, industrial goods, and services. The leaders pledged to reach agreement this year on modalities that leads to an ambitious and balanced conclusion to the Doha Round. The leaders agreed to refrain from raising barriers to investment or to trade in goods or services, imposing export restrictions, and implementing measures to stimulate exports that violate international trade rules.

The leaders also took important steps to resolve practical problems confronting commerce by:

- Launching an action plan to improve investment climates and increase investment flows.
- Endorsing steps to reduce trade transaction costs by 5 percent by 2010.
- Agreeing on the APEC Digital Prosperity Checklist to promote information and communication technologies as a drivers for economic growth.
- Reaffirming their commitment to strengthen protection and enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights and streamline patent procedures.

The leaders welcomed continued efforts by APEC to ensure the safety of the region's food supply.

They endorsed the launch of the Partnership Training Institute Network (PTIN) to strengthen food safety training and called for additional steps to enhance food and product safety in 2009.

The leaders committed to work together to address high food prices. Leaders pledged regional cooperation, across a range of issues, to address the underlying factors behind high food prices, including efforts on trade, agricultural productivity, and promotion of research and development. They affirmed that concluding the Doha negotiations will be key to addressing high food prices.

The leaders reaffirmed their support for APEC efforts to address the interlinked challenges of energy security and climate change. Leaders endorsed the Major Economies Leaders' Declaration on Energy Security and Climate Change and reaffirmed their commitment to reaching an equitable and effective post-2012 international climate change arrangement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. They expressed appreciation for financial support from Australia, Japan, and the United States for the Clean Technology Fund.

Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to meet the energy needs of regional economies through the operation of well functioning markets that promote trade in energy goods and services, as well as foster an improved investment climate for the development of energy resources.

President Bush continued to champion key transnational security issues in APEC. Leaders commended APEC efforts to enhance regional emergency preparedness for natural disasters, including development of a strategic plan for increasing cooperation. Leaders directed APEC economies to increase technical cooperation and capacity building to improve food security, fostering increased agricultural productivity and improved markets, regulatory institutions, and distribution systems.

APEC has made progress in working with private industry to protect the food supply from terrorism, and is taking steps to help economies clamp down on terrorist financing. Leaders also urged APEC members to strengthen cooperation to combat corruption and increase transparency.



ASEAN

Last Updated: November 2008

Official Name:
Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Editor's note: The information in this article has been compiled and edited from ASEAN *Background Notes, Press Releases,* and *Fact Sheets* made available 2001–2008 from the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs of the U.S. Department of State.

PROFILE

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was formed in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand to promote political and economic cooperation and regional stability. U.S. relations with ASEAN have been excellent since its inception.

The ASEAN chairmanship rotates annually on an alphabetical basis. The current chair is Vietnam.

The ASEAN Declaration in 1976, considered ASEAN's foundation document, formalized the principles of peace and cooperation to which ASEAN is dedicated.

Brunei joined in 1984, shortly after its independence from the United Kingdom, and Vietnam joined ASEAN as its seventh member in 1995. Laos and Burma were admitted into full membership in July 1997 as ASEAN celebrated its 30th anniversary. Cambodia became ASEAN's tenth member in 1999.

The Association commands far greater influence on Asia-Pacific trade, political, and security issues than its members could achieve individually. ASEAN's success has been based largely on its use of consultation, consensus, and cooperation.

ASEAN took the first steps toward an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1993, when it agreed to eliminate most tariffs on manufactured goods between members over the following decade.

Every year following the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July, ASEAN holds its Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC), where it meets with its ten Dialogue Partners. These are Australia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, and the United States. The Secretary participated in the July 2000 meeting in Bangkok.

In 1994, ASEAN took the lead in establishing the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which now has 26 members and meets each year at the ministerial level just before the PMC. The ARF is the only region-wide governmental security forum. Its goal is to promote regional stability and peace, and it is now looking at the overlap between confidence building measures, where it has been active, and preventive diplomacy.

GEOGRAPHY

Located in Southeast Asia on the Malay Peninsula and the islands to the south and east in the South China Sea, the ten ASEAN states adjoin some of the most important sea lanes in the world. The ASEAN states lie astride the Equator and extend from roughly 1,600 kilometers (1,000 mi.) north to 800 kilometers (500 mi.) south.

HISTORY

ASEAN was founded officially on August 8, 1967, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration by the foreign ministers of the original five members. The organization was created to strengthen regional cohesion and self-reliance through economic, social, and cultural cooperation. It developed slowly during its first decade, partly because of diverse economic interests, varied historical experience, and the initially fragile political ties among the five original states.

Brunei Darussalam, formerly a British protectorate, joined ASEAN as its sixth member state in January 1984, shortly after attainment of full independence.

To curb external interference, in 1971 the ASEAN nations set as their goal the establishment of a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality (ZOPFAN) for Southeast Asia, and this was included in the Bali Declaration signed by the ASEAN heads of

government in 1976. This concept remains a long-term objective. The fall of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975 led to a new phase of ASEAN relations.

In 1976, the first ASEAN summit conference was convened in Bali, Indonesia, and collaboration among ASEAN states took a major step forward with the signing of the Declaration of ASEAN Concord. Aimed at promoting cooperative activities in industry, trade, and other fields, this declaration remains the major "constitutional base" for ASEAN cooperation. It also authorized the formation of the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta.

Growing Cooperation

The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, starting in December 1978, played a key role in furthering ASEAN collaboration. During the 1980s, the ASEAN nations successfully managed passage of yearly UN General Assembly resolutions calling for an end to Vietnamese occupation and were instrumental in the 1991 peace settlement in Cambodia. These accomplishments and the political cooperation thus fostered have been ASEAN's major political achievements.

Diverse economic interests and levels of development have limited the extent of economic cooperation between member nations. However, the collapse of international commodity prices in the mid-1980s and the subsequent downturn in the economies of several ASEAN nations spurred regional leaders to initiate serious economic reforms and trade liberalization plans. The December 1987 ASEAN summit gave new impetus to reducing internal trade barriers and establishing joint industrial projects; it also fostered closer coordination on economic issues by ASEAN governments, particularly in international forums. The 1989 creation of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, an informal economic grouping of the U.S., Canada, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN, which expanded in 1991 to include the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) has provided an additional important venue in which ASEAN representatives can meet and discuss issues of broader regional importance. ASEAN economic ministers in 1991 agreed to move toward an ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). The decision to create AFTA was taken by ASEAN heads of government at the fourth ASEAN summit in January 1992.

INSTITUTIONS

Since its inception, ASEAN gradually has developed a number of formal, regular consultative meetings and committees, but it has only a very limited permanent structure. Decisions are made by consensus and often are achieved through informal, ad hoc consultations. However, there are several formal bodies that consult and make decisions on various common issues.

Foreign Ministers' Meetings

The periodic meetings of the six foreign ministers constitute the principal decision-making body for ASEAN. In addition to their regular annual sessions in June or July, the foreign ministers gather on other occasions as needed. The venue of the ministerial meetings rotates annually among the six countries.

The foreign ministers' meetings have assumed a prominent role partially as a result of events in Indochina. Recognizing the importance of a unified front on the Cambodia question, ASEAN has used the foreign ministers' consultations to reaffirm their common stand. Periodic meetings of senior officials plan for and supplement the work of the foreign ministers. In addition, an ASEAN Standing Committee, composed of ambassadors resident in the venue of the ministerial meeting and chaired by the foreign minister of the host country, meets as needed.

ASEAN

Members:
Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam.

Regional Forum (ARF) Members:
The ten members of ASEAN plus Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Timor Leste (East Timor), and the United States.

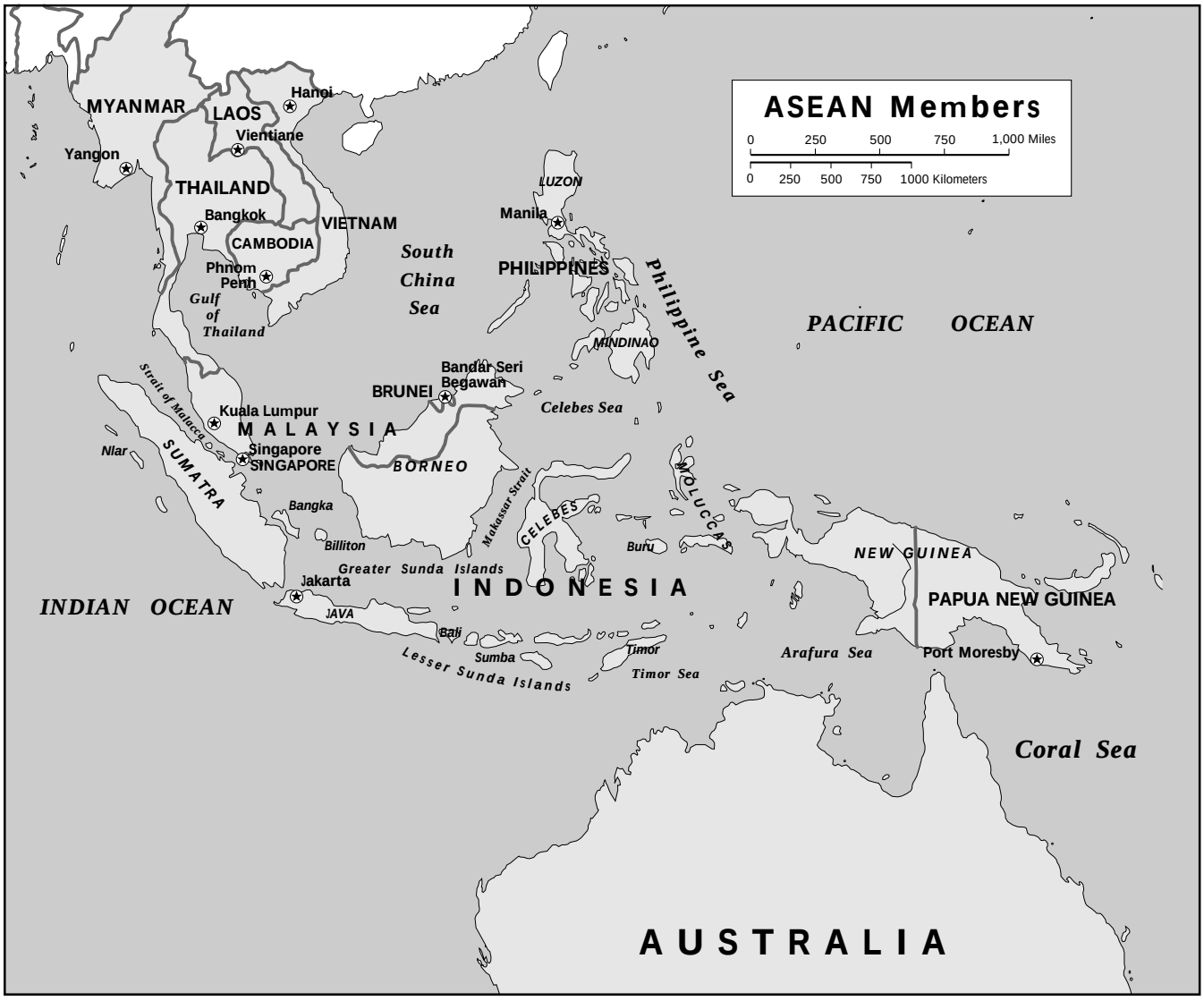
Economic Ministers' Meetings

The economic ministers usually meet twice a year to discuss common approaches to economic questions and to review cooperative programs. Decisions on economic questions are then referred to the foreign ministers or heads of government for final approval. Various sectoral committees, subcommittees, and working groups have been established to deal with specific economic and social issues. Regular ministerial consultations also are held in such sectors as labor, social welfare, education, energy, and information.

The ASEAN Secretariat

The ASEAN Secretariat is located in Jakarta in a headquarters building provided by the Indonesian Government. The ASEAN states have not favored development of a strong central coordinating authority. The Secretariat is limited in size and is tasked mainly with serving the various ministerial meetings and committees. It has been suggested that the Secretariat might serve as a regional research, information, and statistical center, but this and other roles have not yet been authorized.

Complementing the ASEAN Secretariat, each government maintains its own National Secretariat in its Foreign Ministry; these vary in size and function. The six National Secretariats are responsible to their own governments.



ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC)

ASEAN began establishing "Dialogue Partner" relationships in 1977 with countries that have major interests in the region. There are now ten Dialogue Partners. Each July, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meet with the Dialogue Partners at the Post-Ministerial Conference (PMC), immediately following the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, thus the name "PMC."

In recent years, ASEAN has been struggling to redefine the PMC and find a useful place for it between the ARF with its security portfolio and APEC with its economic agenda. The last several PMCs focused increasingly on international economic and political issues and on transnational issues, such as crime, narcotics, trafficking in persons, environment, and health. This year, however, transnational issues were omitted from the PMC agenda.

The U.S. feels that the PMC has an important role in ASEAN's relations with the rest of the Asia-Pacific region. We believe it could most usefully serve as a forum for discussing transnational issues and political issues outside the region, subjects not covered by either ARF or APEC. Transnational issues are threats common to all PMC participants. ASEAN identified them as priority concerns for the ASEAN region in its own 1998 Hanoi Plan of Action (HPA). We hope the PMC will return to a discussion of transnational issues next year.

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) draws together 26 countries involved in the security of the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF, which first met in 1994, provides a forum in which members can discuss regional political and security issues and develop cooperative measures to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security and the avoidance of conflict.

ARF meetings are held at the Foreign Minister level, annually in late July, in conjunction with the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC). Chairmanship of the ARF is in line with the annual rotation of the Chairmanship of ASEAN. The principal formal ARF document is the ARF Chairman's Statement issued after every ARF ministerial meeting. The Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and the Inter-Sessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures (ISG/CBMs) support the work of Ministers.

The ARF is characterized by minimal institutionalization and consensus decision-making. Participants have agreed on a three-stage evolution of confidence-building, preventive diplomacy and, in the longer term, approaches to conflict resolution.

The ARF's work program includes encouragement and development of confidence-building measures, such as promoting participation in international arms control and non-proliferation regimes and the production of Annual Security Outlooks by participating states.

Since 2000, the ARF has begun to develop its preventive diplomacy function, focusing on concepts and principles of preventive diplomacy as a framework for ARF activities. Specific tools are foreseen in efforts to enhance the role of the ARF Chair develop an experts/eminent persons register.

ARF currently has 26 participants: Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste (East Timor), United States, Vietnam.

The U.S. strongly supports the ARF and has sponsored or co-sponsored several confidence-building measures and ARF workshops, notably on preventive diplomacy. Development of multilateral approaches to regional concerns will enhance regional peace, security, and stability and promote improved relations between and among states of the Asia-Pacific region and their partners from outside the region.

ECONOMY

The ASEAN region is one of the world's economic success stories in agriculture, industry, and trade. The economies range from resource-rich but still largely agricultural Indonesia, to the highly industrialized city-state of Singapore. The ASEAN nations are mainly committed to market- and export-oriented economic growth strategies. Their dynamic economies averaged annual GDP growth of about 7% during the 1970s but experienced stagnation or recession in the mid-1980s due to slackening world trade and deteriorating commodity and oil prices. Since the late 1980s, growth rates have increased steadily and in 1990 ranged from 2.1% for the Philippines to 12% for Thailand; the combined ASEAN economies grew 7.6% in 1990.

Except for Singapore and Brunei, the ASEAN economies are still largely agricultural, producing commodities such as rubber, palm oil, rice, copra, and coffee for export, though manufacturing sectors in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia are of increasing importance in each economy. Singapore has a highly diversified commercial and industrial economy, with growing emphasis on the service sector. Commercialized cultivation and processing of primary agricultural products are important industries in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines.

ASEAN accounts for 72% of world exports of rubber and is the world's largest source of tropical timber. Mineral resources include 26% of the world's tin exports and significant amounts of copper, coal, nickel, and tungsten. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei are important energy exporters, producing most of East Asia's petroleum and natural gas.

THE UNITED STATES AND ASEAN

July 31, 2007

The year 2007 marked the 30th anniversary of the U.S. relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Since the first ASEAN-U.S. Dialogue meeting in Manila in 1977, the United States and ASEAN have forged a close and constructive partnership that addresses issues of importance to all.

Economic Ties

The United States economic ties with ASEAN are robust. Two-way trade was $168 billion last year and, collectively, ASEAN is America's fourth largest trading partner. To date, U.S. companies have invested nearly $90 billion in ASEAN countries. In August 2006, U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab and her ASEAN counterparts signed the U.S.-ASEAN Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement. The Arrangement established a regular and formal dialogue on trade and investment matters and a joint work plan.

Enhanced Partnership

U.S.-ASEAN relations were elevated to a new level when President Bush and ASEAN leaders announced the Enhanced Partnership Joint Vision Statement in November 2005.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and ASEAN Foreign Ministers signed the Enhanced Partnership Plan of Action in July 2006. The Plan guides cooperation as ASEAN advances toward its goal of political, economic and social integration. The United States and ASEAN cooperate closely on critical transnational challenges such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, infectious diseases, and protecting the environment.

Some highlights of the Enhanced Partnership include:

- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is supporting capacity building on HIV/

AIDS treatment, care and support, and other public health issues.

- The Fulbright Commission has launched an ASEAN Visiting Scholars Program, open to foreign affairs officials, scholars and researchers.
- The USAID Regional Development Mission supports ASEAN's Environmentally Sustainable Cities Initiative, including 12 pilot projects in 5 countries.

Plan of Action

In 2006, President Bush and ASEAN leaders identified eight priority areas within the Plan of Action:

- Economic cooperation
- Health
- Scholarships
- Information and communications technology
- Transport
- Energy
- Disaster management
- Environmental management

The U.S. Department of State, USAID, the U.S. Trade Representative, the U.S. Department of Commerce and other partners outside the U.S. Government have developed numerous cooperation programs in these priority areas. Under the Plan of Action, these programs include well over 100 activities in the political and security, economic, educational and cultural fields.

Security Cooperation

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) serves as the primary multilateral institution for regional security engagement for the U.S. in Asia. ARF provides a useful forum for discussion on security matters of importance to the Asia-Pacific region and progress on some of these issues. Through this 27-member forum, the United States has partnered with other ARF member countries to strengthen the institution, particularly in the areas of non-traditional security. Nonproliferation, disaster relief, maritime security, and civil-military coordination through multilateral exercises are some of the transnational security areas that should be reinforced as core issues for cooperation. The U.S. has funded capacity-building workshops in maritime security and nonproliferation; and has worked with the Philippines, as well as Australia and Indonesia, on a proposed 2009 ARF Disaster Relief Exercise.

United States Cooperation with Southeast Asia

September 7, 2007

On September 7, 2007, President Bush met with leaders from seven Southeast Asian economies participating in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Meetings. These countries are also members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

President Bush announced, and the leaders of the ASEAN nations welcomed, the creation of the position of united states ambassador to ASEAN. This ambassador will work with ASEAN nations to deepen the already strong and robust U.S.-ASEAN relationship.

President Bush and the Southeast Asian leaders hailed the growing cooperation under the U.S.-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership, announced under the leadership of President Bush and ASEAN leaders in 2005. They also discussed other regional issues, including U.S.-ASEAN trade cooperation, the disconcerting human rights situation in Burma, regional security, and counterterrorism cooperation.

President Bush and the ASEAN leaders noted the wide range of work accomplished on eight priority areas for cooperation under the Enhanced Partnership Since 2005. All this work is in addition to the substantial bilateral cooperation between the United States and individual ASEAN countries:

Economics: The United States and ASEAN have developed an extensive program of cooperation to support ASEAN's economic integration. On intellectual property rights, for example, more than 800 ASEAN officials have attended workshops, training, and other activities organized by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Health: The United States has supported an expert on pandemic preparedness and avian influenza at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. We have also provided support and technical assistance to help ASEAN tackle HIV/AIDS and other public health problems.

Scholarships: The Fulbright Commission has launched an ASEAN Visiting Scholars Program open to foreign affairs officials, scholars, and researchers working on issues central to the U.S.-ASEAN relationship.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT): The United States is supporting an assessment of ASEAN's integration of the region's ICT sectors and has provided increased ICT capability to the ASEAN Secretariat.

Transport: The United States has provided an assessment of the logistics sector in ASEAN, including its transport and communications infrastructure. This work contributed to ASEAN's plans to integrate freight, transport, and other logistics services to move goods more cheaply and efficiently.

Disaster Management: The U.S. has been a major provider of assistance in response to natural disasters in Southeast Asia. We will continue to provide support and training for disaster response and management in the coming year.

Environment: The U.S. supports environmental programs and improved wildlife conservation in Southeast Asia. The U.S.-supported ASEAN-Wildlife Enforcement Net-

work (ASEAN-WEN) has already broken several wildlife trafficking rings and was showcased by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Energy: The U.S. and ASEAN have organized workshops on clean energy, energy efficiency, and clean coal.

President Bush and the leaders of ASEAN nations also discussed the important progress made in trade and investment relations under the U.S.-ASEAN Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) signed in 2006.

Ongoing consultations under the TIFA are aimed at supporting deeper intra-ASEAN economic integration and U.S.-ASEAN trade ties in the specific areas of the ASEAN Single Window for customs clearance, pharmaceutical regulatory harmonization, and sanitary and phytosanitary policy.

The President and ASEAN Leaders discussed the importance and benefits to Southeast Asian countries of success in the Doha Round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. The United States and Singapore have a highly successful Free Trade Agreement (FTA), signed in 2003. The United States and Thailand launched FTA negotiations in 2004, and the United States and Malaysia commenced FTA talks in 2006.

Assisting in Disaster Preparedness

July 21, 2008

The United States provides approximately $16.8 million in annual disaster preparedness and mitigation assistance in the East Asia and Pacific region. This funds efforts to lessen the impact of disasters and to improve the response capabilities of governments and assisting agencies. In addition, when major disasters occur, U.S. agencies, led by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), respond with generous assistance.

Bilateral Assistance: USAID, which provides the bulk of U.S. disaster assistance, focuses strongly on Southeast Asia. Programs aim to help mitigate floods, droughts, tsunamis, and other natural disasters. These efforts build up local and national government response capabilities, provide forecasting capabilities, and minimize the public health risks of disasters.

Past U.S. Disaster Assistance in the Region

- 2004 Tsunami
- Cyclone Nargis in Burma
- Typhoon Frank in the Philippines
- Sichuan, China Earthquake

U.S. Annual Financial Assistance in the Region (estimated)

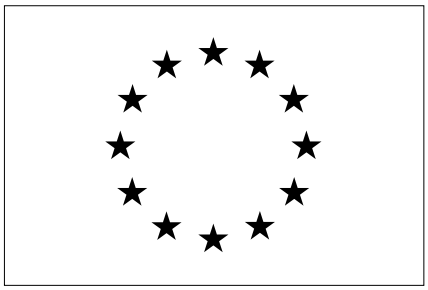
- Bilateral- $8 million
- Regional- $500,000
- Through U.S. PACOM and ARF—$3.35 million
- Tsunami Warning Systems—$4.975 million

Regional Efforts: U.S. assistance helps Southeast Asian nations implement ASEAN's goals for disaster management and emergency response. U.S. assistance includes support for the establishment of an ASEAN Emergency Response Assistance Team for Cyclone Nargis relief, assistance for an ASEAN-wide Incident Command System for ASEAN response to domestic crises, and work on developing more effective needs assessments for disasters.

APEC's Task Force on Emergency Preparedness (TFEP) programs have strengthened community resilience to natural disasters and pandemics, improved disaster communication and damage assessment, and exchanged strategies on large-scale disaster recovery. The U.S., through TFEP, aims to mitigate business disruption, promote the economic benefits of disaster risk reduction investments, and highlight the importance of public-private partnerships.

U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF): Joint efforts strengthen the ability of regional governments to coordinate in the event of large disasters requiring major, multilateral, civil-military responses. ARF efforts grow out of and sometimes expand the work of PACOM's Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) Program and Center of Excellence for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs (COE-DMHA). These centers develop coordination between regional militaries and with the humanitarian community. Programs include multinational exercises, development of common operating procedures, and raised awareness of international standards. ARF plans to host a Disaster Relief Exercise in the Philippines in mid-2009.

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC): The U.S. will continue to support the International Tsunami Information Center and the Pacific Tsunami Warning System. The U.S. provides interim tsunami forecast services for the Indian Ocean and other regions while working with the IOC to deliver tsunami warning expertise and capabilities to the Member States.



EUROPEAN UNION

Last Updated: January 2009

Official Name:
European Union (EU)

Editor's note: The information in this article was compiled from *Fact Sheets* and releases available through the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the U.S. Department of State 2007 and 2008.

PROFILE

The European Union (EU) is one of the United States' strongest strategic partners, with the importance of the relationship reflected in our close cooperation on regional crises and conflicts, our extensive collaboration on a wide range of global challenges, from counter-terrorism to nonproliferation, and our deep trade and investment relations.

Geography

Area: 4,326,243 sq km
Cities: Capital—Brussels, Belgium (European Commission, EU Council); Strasbourg, France (most European Parliament plenary sessions); Luxembourg City, Luxembourg (European Court of Justice).
Terrain: mainly flat along the Baltic and Atlantic coasts; mountainous in the central and southern areas.
Climate: cold temperate; potentially subarctic to temperate in the north; mild, wet winters, and hot, dry summers in the south.

People

Nationality: EU (Every person holding the nationality of a Member State is a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union complements and does not replace national citizenship. This provision currently applies to Austrian, Belgian, British, Bulgarian, Cypriot, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxembourg, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, and Swedish citizens).
Population: 490,426,060
Religion: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox Christian, Muslim, Jewish.
Languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Gaelic (Irish—from 2007), Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish (note—only official languages of the European Union are listed).
Health: total: 10 births/1,000 population; 10 deaths/1000 population (2007 est).
Life Span: male: 75.6 years; female: 82 years (2007 est.).
Unemployment: 8.5% (2006 est.).

Government

Type: supranational/mixed intergovernmental.
Founded: November 1, 1993 (Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty) establishing the EU entered into force). (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands signed the Treaty of Rome on March 25, 1957—see History.)
Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK; note—Canary Islands (Spain), Azores and Madeira (Portugal), and French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Reunion (France), which are legally part of EU Member States, are sometimes listed separately as territories forming part of the EU.
Government branches: Executive—European Commission; legislative—EU Council, European Parliament; judicial—Court of Justice of the European Communities, Court of First Instance.
Political parties: (in European Parliament) European People's Party-European Democrats (EPP-ED); Socialist Group (Party of European Socialists -PES); Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE); Independence/Democracy Group (IND/DEM); Group of Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA); Confederal Group of the European United Left-Nordic Green Left (EUL/NGL); Union for Europe of the Nations Group (UEN).

Suffrage: determined by national legislation in the individual Member States.

Economy

GDP: (2006) $13.08 trillion.
Annual Growth Rate: (2007) 2.9%.
Per Capita Income: (2004) $29,900 (2006 est).
Inflation Rate: 1.9% (2007 est.).
Natural Resources: iron ore, arable land, natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper, lead, zinc, hydropower, uranium, potash, fish.
Agriculture: Products—wheat, barley, oilseeds, sugar beets, wine, grapes, dairy products, cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, fish.
Industry: Type—ferrous and nonferrous metal production and processing, metal products, petroleum, coal, cement, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, rail transportation equipment, passenger and commercial vehicles, construction equipment, industrial equipment, shipbuilding, electrical power equipment, machine tools and automated manufacturing systems, electronics and telecommunications equipment, fishing, food and beverage processing, furniture, paper, textiles, tourism, media, financial services.
Trade: (2003) Exports—machinery, motor vehicles, aircraft, plastics, pharmaceuticals and other chemicals, fuels, iron and steel, nonferrous metals, wood pulp and paper products, textiles, meat, dairy products, fish, alcoholic beverages. Major markets—U.S., China, Japan, Switzerland. Imports—machinery, vehicles, aircraft, plastics, crude oil, chemicals, textiles, metals, foodstuffs, clothing. Major suppliers—U.S., China, Japan and Switzerland.

HISTORY

Following World War II, traditional European rivals sought to solidify peace by bringing their nations together under a common institutional structure. Influenced by his compatriot Jean Monnet, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman officially tabled a plan on May 9, 1950 to pool French and German coal and steel production under an organization that would be open to other European countries. German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer supported this proposal, and six founding countries—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands—took an early step toward European integration by establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) the following year.

After failing to establish a European Defense Community in the 1950s, the six countries then decided to set up a common market. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, they created the European Economic Community (EEC), with an objective of liberating the movement of goods, capital, workers and services. (The European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) was also established at this time.) The Treaty of Rome established the basic institutions and decision-making mechanisms still in place in today's European Union. As of July 1, 1968, the EEC abolished customs duties between Member States on manufactured goods. New policies, including a common agricultural policy (CAP) and a common trade policy, were in place by the end of the 1960s.

The success of the European integration project during a period of steady economic growth in the 1960s set the stage for a first enlargement—the accession of the UK, Ireland and Denmark—in 1973. Further "deepening" of European integration followed: the Community acquired executive authority in social, regional, and environment policies. The benefits of economic convergence became more evident in the context of the 1970s energy crisis and financial turmoil, which led to the launch of the European Monetary System in 1979. In the same year, the first direct elections to the European Parliament (EP) took place. Previously, delegates from national parliaments had represented their country's legislative bodies at the EP in Strasbourg, France.

The Community further expanded southward with the accession of Greece (1981, the second enlargement), followed by Spain and Portugal (1986, the third enlargement). These accessions led the EEC to adopt "structural programs" in order to reduce economic and social disparities among its regions.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Community began to assert itself on the international scene with the conclusion of agreements with southern Mediterranean countries. Starting in 1963, the EEC signed four successive Lome Conventions, which guaranteed trading advantages and development aid for Member States' former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP).

World recession and internal disputes over Member States' financial burdens gave way, from 1985 onward, to renewed efforts for economic integration, enshrined in the 1985 "Single European Act" (SEA) and marked by the 1992 "Single Market Project." The SEA set January 1, 1993 as the date by which an internal single market was to be established and, by extending the practice of majority voting rather than unanimity in the EU Council, gave Community institutions the means of adopting the 300 Community-wide Directives required to abolish the remaining barriers and obstacles to intra-Community trade. In 1995, the Community entered into the "Barcelona" partnership with twelve southern Mediterranean countries. The partnership, reinforced by agreements on social, cultural, and human cooperation, was intended to lead to a free-trade area.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall and German unification prompted Member States to negotiate the 1992 Treaty on European Union (the "Maastricht Treaty"). In addition to establishing the European Union, the Maastricht Treaty set an ambitious program of further integration: establishment of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) by 1999 (part of the "First or 'Community' Pillar"), setting up of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) ("Second Pillar"); and cooperation on Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) ("Third Pillar"). Shortly thereafter, in 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden joined the EU—the fourth enlargement.

Signed in 1997 and entering into force on May 1, 1999, the Amsterdam Treaty partially streamlined the EU institutional structure. Its most significant effects were: (1) to transfer aspects of Justice and Home Affairs policy to the Community Pillar, enabling the Commission to propose decisions to be taken by the EU Council by qualified majority voting instead of by consensus, and (2) to establish a High Representative for the CFSP (who also serves as Secretary-General of the Council Secretariat). Ten countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus began accession procedures in 1997, followed by Malta. The prospect of eastward enlargement raised significant resource concerns and prompted the adoption in March 1999 of the "Agenda 2000" package, which covered amendments to the CAP and EU structural policies, as well as a budgetary framework through 2006.

In May 1998, EU heads of government officially designated eleven Member States eligible to adopt a single currency. Greece initially did not qualify, and Sweden, the UK and Denmark "opted out." On January 1, 1999, the euro became the official currency of the EU, and the European Central Bank (ECB) put euro notes and coins into circulation on January 1, 2002. Today, thirteen countries use the euro: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain.

Streamlining the size and procedures of EU institutions to make the expanded EU more efficient was also an aim of the 2003 Treaty of Nice. A year later, in May 2004, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined the EU, bringing total membership to 25. In 2007, Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, which currently stands at 27 members. Formal Candidate countries currently include Turkey and Croatia, as well as the Republic of Macedonia.

In October 2004, Member States signed an EU Constitutional Treaty in Rome, intending that it take effect on November 1, 2006. French and Dutch voters rejected the treaty through referenda in 2005, thereby suspending the ratification process. A new effort, undertaken in June 2007, calls for the creation of an Intergovernmental Conference to form a political agreement, known as the Reform Treaty. In contrast to the Constitutional Treaty, the Reform Treaty would amend existing treaties rather than replace them. The IGC approved the new reform treaty, called the Lisbon Treaty, in October 2007. The Lisbon Treaty must be ratified by all 27 national Parliaments. So far, only Ireland has indicated that it is constitutionally bound to hold a referendum. The Lisbon Treaty would ideally streamline the decision making process of the EU and abolish the rotating Presidency of the Council, replacing it with a more permanent President of the Council. The Lisbon Treaty would also combine the role of the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, currently Javier Solana, and the EU Commissioner for External Relations, currently Benita Ferrero-Walder, into a single position, in an effort to combine the face and the purse strings of European foreign policy.

MAJOR INSTITUTIONS

The European Commission

The role and responsibilities of the European Commission place it at the center of the EU's decision-making process. Acting as the EU's policy and executive engine, the Commission is composed of 25 Commissioners, one from each Member State and is supported by a substantial staff located primarily in Brussels, Belgium. In matters relating to economic integration ("First or 'Community' Pillar"), only the Commission has the right to propose legislation for approval by the EU Council and European Parliament. As "guardian of the Treaties," the Commission ensures that EU laws are applied and upheld throughout the EU, prosecuting Member States and other institutions for failing to follow treaty precepts or otherwise apply Community law. The Commission has full authority to enforce Community competition policy, and its policing of implementation of Community legislation preserves the integrity of the EU single market. The Commission likewise manages and develops the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), implements the budget, and represents the European Community in its areas of competence, notably including international trade negotiations.

The Commission President is appointed by agreement of the EU heads of government and is subject to approval by the European Parliament. Commissioners serve for a renewable five-year term. New Commissioners are identified by Member State governments in consultation with the President-designate of the Commission and are normally put in place at the beginning of the term of the Commission President. The entire Commission must be confirmed as a collective whole by the European Parliament before its formal appointment by common accord of EU governments.

The European Council

The Council of Ministers of the European Union (the "EU Council") is the body in which representatives of the individual Member State governments, usually ministers, legislate for the EU, set its political objectives, coordinate national policies and resolve differences among their governments and with other EU bodies. Legally speaking, there is only one Council, but it meets in nine different formations, depending on the matters on its agenda. Foreign ministers usually meet at least once a month in the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC), which deals with major foreign policy issues and plays a coordinating role. Ministers for the Economy and Finance (ECOFIN) and ministers responsible for agriculture also hold monthly meetings.

Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) hold regular meetings to coordinate policies within their competence.

The Council holds formal sessions in its Brussels headquarters, except in April, June and October, when all sessions take place in Luxembourg. Most formations of the Council also meet informally (tasking no legally binding decisions) in the country holding the EU Presidency, usually once in the course of the Presidency's six-month term. The most prominent of these informal meetings is the so-called "Gymnich" meeting of foreign ministers, named for a town in Germany where the first such meeting took place.

The Council takes most decisions under the Community Pillar by qualified majority voting (QMV) but endeavors to reach the broadest possible consensus before approving legislation. Unanimity is required for a number of specific areas related to economic integration (e.g. taxation), constitutional matters such as amendments to the treaties, the launching of a new common policy, the accession of a new Member State, and matters falling within the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, European Security and Defense Policy, and aspects of law enforcement and judicial cooperation. The number of votes cast by each Member State when the EU Council votes by qualified majority voting was determined by the Nice Treaty and roughly correlates to the size of its population.

The European Parliament

Members of the European Parliament are directly elected by EU citizens for five-year terms; elections follow national election procedures. Members do not sit in national delegations; rather, they sit in groups according to political affiliation (including Socialists, Christian-Democrats/Conservatives, Liberals, Greens, etc.).

Parliament's powers have gradually grown with the entry into force of the Single European Act (1986), the Maastricht Treaty (1993) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999). Parliament shares decision-making power on an equal footing with the Council in many areas under the Community Pillar to which the "co-decision procedure" applies. The European Parliament is one of the two branches with budgetary authority—the Council is the other. The signature of the EP president brings the overall EU budget into effect.

The European Parliament also plays a role in the process of selecting the President and other members of the Commission. The European Council's nomination of the President is subject to approval by the Parliament. The EP holds U.S.-style public hearings of Commission nominees before taking a formal vote to approve the nomination of the Commission as a body. Parliament has the power to censure the Commission, but the Treaties do not allow for the dismissal of individual Commissioners by Parliament.

The European Court of Justice

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ensures uniform interpretation and application of both the Treaties establishing the European Communities and the secondary legislation and other law adopted under their authority. To enable it to carry out that task, the Court has wide jurisdiction to hear various types of cases. For example, the Court has the authority to hear and issue binding judgments in lawsuits that seek to annul a law adopted by the EU, to compel an EU institution to act, or to require that a Member State comply with EU law. The ECJ may issue clarifications of EU law (in response to a request for a preliminary ruling from any Member State court) and hears appeals on legal questions arising out of cases at the Court of First Instance. The ECJ currently has 25 justices and eight advocates-general, who are appointed by common accord of the governments of the Member States and who hold office for six-year renewable terms.

U.S.-EU RELATIONS

The United States and the EU are important partners who maintain a robust agenda of cooperation in areas such as the Middle East, Balkans, Ukraine, Central Asia, and Africa.

In pursuit of Middle East peace, the United States and the EU cooperate, with the United Nations and Russia, in the "Quartet." The EU has made significant contributions to the goal of promoting good governance, democracy, and strong civil societies throughout the Middle East. The United States and the EU also work together in promoting reform throughout the Middle East.

The United States and EU share a commitment to a free and democratic Iraq. The United States and EU supported preparations for Iraq's January 2005 elections and are cooperating to support Iraq's continuing political transition. The United States and EU co-hosted an International Conference on Iraq in June, 2005 in Brussels that marked the creation of a new international partnership to support the Iraqi Transitional Government.

In the Western Balkans, the United States and the EU are working together to strengthen democracy, ensure stability, and promote the region's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, and are urging all parties to meet their obligations to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The United States and EU also cooperate closely in the process intended to culminate in resolving Kosovo's future status.

The United States and the EU share a commitment to promoting democracy throughout Eurasia. The United States and the EU cooperated closely during the presidential election campaign in Ukraine, and especially following the flawed November 2004 second-round vote. In Afghanistan, the EU is a close partner with the United States in supporting democratic development and reconstruction. A combination of NATO security

forces and EU civilian rule of law assistance are contributing to the stabilization of a democratic Afghanistan. Most notably, in 2003 the EU pledged $1.3 billion to Afghanistan over a five-year period to support reconstruction and development.

The United States and the EU cooperate on many African issues, including supporting efforts by the African Union to restore peace in the Darfur region of Sudan. The United States welcomed the EU's peacekeeping mission in Africa's Great Lakes region and supported its joining the Tripartite Commission as an observer. The United States consults regularly with the EU on assistance programs, including efforts to combat HIV/AIDS throughout Africa.

ECONOMY

The institutions of the European Union were originally created to oversee the operation of the several economic communities that later became the Single European Market. Even as the EU's political integration has continued, the area of greatest integration has always been in the economic sphere: goods, capital, and labor move freely between Member States (with some exceptions), businesses in all Member States are increasingly subject to common basic rules, and thirteen of the 27 Member States use a common currency, the euro. The twelve euro-area countries share a common monetary policy administered by the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, Germany. The EU strives to eliminate internal barriers to the free flow of goods, services, labor, and capital, and to promote the overall convergence of living standards. Internationally, the EU aims to strengthen Europe's trade position and capitalize on the political and economic leverage that a large, unified market brings.

Growth

The EU is the world's largest economic area (the U.S. is second) with a 2006 GDP of $13.08 trillion; however, growth in many of the EU's Member States in the recent past has been slow. Between 2001 and 2003, the overall growth rate dropped from 1.8 percent to 1.0 percent. The EU economy staged a modest, short-lived recovery in 2004, and increased to 3.2% in 2006. Within the euro area, growth varies as much as 4.5 percentage points between the fastest and slowest-growing economies. In 2005, many of the EU's largest economies, including Germany, France and Italy, will grow by less than two percent. Outside the euro area, growth is forecast to remain strong, particularly in the Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in May 2004.

In spring 2000, the EU committed to a ten-year strategic goal of transforming the EU into a more competitive, knowledge-based economy capable of sustaining higher levels of growth. Focusing on labor market reform, macroeconomic and fiscal policy, and promotion of e-commerce and entrepreneurship, the EU's "Lisbon Agenda" was an attempt to stimulate growth while remaining committed to the EU social model. Some suggest that it has so far failed to achieve its goals in large part because national governments (which retain authority over employment policy, immigration, large public sector workforces, entitlement programs and pensions) have not completed the necessary reforms. With euro area unemployment at 8.6 percent, generous social programs continue to strain national economies. The European Commission relaunched the Lisbon Agenda in March 2005, promising three percent growth and six million new jobs by 2010. The revamped strategy focuses on developing political consensus within Member States to make the changes necessary to complete elimination of barriers in the internal market, reduce the regulatory burden on business, improve labor market flexibility, provide incentives to work and increase investment in human capital.

Fiscal and Monetary Policy

Introduced in 1999, the euro is currently the official currency of thirteen of the 27 EU Member States. United Kingdom, Denmark and Sweden chose to retain their national currencies, and newer EU members have yet to adopt the euro. Prior to the euro's launch in 1999, national currency exchange rates of countries intending to join the euro were fixed within an Exchange Rate Mechanism. Following the January 2002 introduction of euro notes and coins into general circulation, national currencies were removed from circulation. Each of the euro area countries agreed to abide by a shared fiscal policy rule book known as the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). This agreement generally obliges national governments to limit government budget deficits to 3 percent of GDP and established a target debt-to-GDP ratio of below sixty percent. Although enforcement actions have been forgiving—France and Germany, for example, avoided sanctions despite missing SGP targets—countries violating the SGP are technically subject to sanctions by the European Commission. As of March 2005, national governments have been granted budget leeway to achieve structural reforms and to combat prolonged stagnation, negative growth or other factors, such as the cost of German reunification or state pensions. The revised standards still require deficits to remain close to the targets; they may only temporarily exceed the three percent limit. The ten Member States that joined the EU in May 2004 may adopt the euro after complying with the SGP targets and meeting other applicable criteria.

The euro area's monetary policy is set by the European Central Bank (ECB), which must devise a monetary policy to accommodate a wide range of domestic policies and economic conditions within euro area Member States. The Treaties require that the ECB's primary objective be to maintain price stability (i.e., to keep inflation low). Euro-area national governments have sometimes criticized the ECB for guarding against inflation at the expense of interest rate flexibility that could enable struggling economies to gain traction. The ECB's consistent overnight interest rate of two percent has been cred-

ited with creating favorable conditions for growth in Spain and Ireland, but has been blamed for hindering growth in France, Germany, Italy, and Portugal.

Trade

The EU is the world's largest exporter of goods and services. In 2006, excluding internal EU trade, the EU exported $1.33 billion worth of goods to non-EU countries, compared to $987 billion in 2003. The EU's exports grew rapidly between 1996 and 2000 but have grown more slowly since. Except for 2002, the EU as a whole has posted a trade deficit every year since 1999; it was $62 billion in 2004. The EU is a major exporter of chemicals, transport equipment, and industrial machinery. The EU has large trade deficits in raw materials and energy, and a small deficit in food and drink.

The U.S. is the EU's main trading partner by a wide margin. In 2006, the U.S. consisted of 13.8% of all imports to the EU. U.S. goods and services exports to the EU reached $283 billion in 2004, while U.S. goods and services imports from the EU totaled $388 billion. Asian economies such as Japan and China, however, account for an increasingly important share of EU trade.

The EU's two-way merchandise trade with China grew to $223 million in 2004, while merchandise trade with Japan was $149 million. Internal trade between euro area and non-euro area countries was down one percent in the first quarter of 2005, but the EU's external trade was up four percent, particularly with Russia and Norway.

Member States have given almost exclusive authority to the EU to negotiate trade treaties that bind the Member States. The European Community (EC) is a full member of the World Trade Organization and plays an active role in the Doha Development Round to foster international trade in services and agricultural products. Bilaterally, the EC maintains framework agreements to facilitate trade flows with thirty-five countries worldwide, mostly elsewhere in Europe, in North Africa, and in the Middle East.

Foreign Direct Investment

The EU is both a major destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) and a major source of FDI. U.S. foreign direct investment in the EU totaled $83.3 billion in 2004; EU FDI into the U.S. totaled $46.6 billion. Following strong year-upon-year growth in the late 1990s, however, inward and outward flows of FDI have contracted since 2001. The EU is a net recipient of FDI from Japan, receiving $81 billion in 2003. Conversely, the EU is a net investor in Canada ($86 billion in outward investment in 2003), and China ($29 billion in outward investment in 2003). Growth of intra-EU FDI has increased rapidly in recent years and has increased much faster than FDI in non-EU countries.

The pattern of foreign investment by European firms reflects deep commercial ties with the United States. U.S. and EU businesses invest heavily and operate profitably on both sides of the Atlantic. U.S. affiliates in Europe accounted for 56 percent of the aggregate output of U.S. affiliates worldwide.

European firms were the largest foreign investors in 44 U.S. states and the second largest foreign investor in the remaining six. Sales by U.S. affiliates in Europe totaled $1.5 trillion in 2002, more than double those of U.S. affiliates in the Asia/Pacific region. European affiliate sales in the U.S. were $1.2 trillion in 2002, more than three times the value of U.S. imports from Europe.

Intra-firm trade involving foreign affiliates is particularly important to the transatlantic trade and investment relationship. Approximately 58 percent of U.S. imports from the EU in 2004 involved trade between related parties, as did 30 percent of U.S. exports to Europe in 2003.

This high level of intra-firm trade has contributed to the persistence of the U.S. trade deficit with Europe even as the dollar has lost value against the euro since 2002.

Budget

The EU's budget is essentially made up of Member State contributions. Equivalent to roughly one percent of the Member States' combined gross national income (GNI), it will be approximately 129.2 billion in 2008. The UK receives a rebate on its contribution. In June 2005, the EU failed to agree on a budget plan for 2007 through 2013, due in part to a disagreement between the UK and France over the persistence of the UK budget rebate and the funding of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Costs attributable to the CAP constitute the EU's largest annual budget item, benefiting farmers across the EU, especially in France. Payments to net-recipient Member States, designed to reduce economic and social disparities among EU countries and regions, are another budget item which has become more contentious with the accession of ten new states poorer than the EU average.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials

Last Updated: 1/14/2008

AMB: Kristen Silverberg
DCM: Christopher Murray

2008 U.S.-EU SUMMIT

June 10, 2008

On June 10, 2008, President George W. Bush reaffirmed his support for a strong Europe capable of being a strong partner with the United States in the advance of freedom and prosperity around the world. President Bush met with the leadership of the European Union (EU), Slovenian Prime Minister and European Council President Janez Jansa and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, at Brdo Castle in Slovenia to advance our efforts to jointly confront global challenges.

Holding the U.S.-EU Summit in Slovenia, a country once behind the Iron Curtain and now a member of NATO and the EU, is a compelling example of the success of our common vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

Advancing Transatlantic Partnership And Global Prosperity

The U.S.-European commercial relationship is the engine of the world economy. In their discussions, President Bush and European Union leaders discussed how to remove barriers to increase trade and investment to grow our economies and help lift people out of poverty.

The president and EU leaders noted their strong commitment to achieving a prompt, ambitious, and balanced outcome in the WTO Doha Development Agenda that creates new market access and economic opportunities that promote development and alleviate poverty. The United States and EU called on all WTO members to make meaningful contributions that are necessary to advance the negotiations, achieve a breakthrough on modalities in the next few weeks, and conclude an agreement as soon as possible.

At the Summit, the president gained support for his strategy for addressing the increase in global food prices:

- Provide assistance to target countries vulnerable to food price increases;
- Assist countries capable of rapidly increasing staple food production; and
- Advance trade liberalization and increase use of advanced agricultural technologies to increase the supply of food.

The United States and the EU agreed to join and work together in efforts to save more lives, by working to train health workers, especially in Africa, and to treat those suffering from seven major neglected tropical diseases.

The leaders reiterated their commitment to continue to work in the Major Economies Meetings process to support negotiations toward a climate change agreement by the end of 2009 under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The president underscored the need for all major economies to develop national climate change plans and goals and to have them reflected in binding international commitments.

Summit leaders advanced significant measures to enhance European energy security by launching an initiative for the U.S. and EU to work together with Ukraine to promote transparency and efficiency in its energy sector and by endorsing the development of the Nabucco and Turkey-Greece-Italy pipeline projects to diversify sources of natural gas to Europe. Building on the extensive work of the United States and the EU on African development, the Summit pledged U.S.-EU commitment to help realize Africa's development potential; combat infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria; foster human rights, democracy, and good governance; and cultivate investment, entrepreneurship, and economic growth. President Bush's recent trip to Africa advanced this work, as have the recently adopted EU-Africa Strategy and Action Plan and G8 efforts

The leaders renewed their commitment to deepening transatlantic economic integration through the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC). The TEC is making progress on addressing a range of regulatory issues that stand in the way of closer integration between Europe and the United States. The president underscored that the TEC must be a forum that delivers results and that to fulfill the TEC's promise, each side must follow through on the commitments it makes in the forum.

Global Security, Peace, Human Rights and Democracy

The strategic partnership between the United States and the EU is firmly anchored in common values and a determination to ensure global security, promote peace, protect human rights, and advance democracy.

The president and his counterparts affirmed the dual track strategy with regard to Iran; agreed to fully and effectively implement UN Security Council Resolutions 1737, 1747, 1803 and other pertinent resolutions; affirmed that we are ready to supplement these sanctions with additional measures; and underscored continuing concern about Iran's regional policies, especially its continued support for terrorist organizations.

The United States and Europe:

- Welcomed the election of Michel Sleiman as president of Lebanon and discussed ways to support Lebanon's legitimate government and its institutions, including through improved enforcement of existing UN Security Council Resolutions, which call for, among other things, the disarmament of illegal militias;
- Looked forward to the full implementation of the Doha agreement and a full resumption of the functioning of all democratic institutions of the state of Lebanon;
- Called on concerned parties, including Syria, to comply with UN Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1701, 1757, and other relevant resolutions, including full cooperation with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon; and
- Rejected the use of violence as a means to achieve political ends.

The leaders discussed how to advance peace in the Middle East and strengthen the Palestinian security sector and their own economic development initiatives. They agreed to pursue complementary efforts to support the Parties' efforts to reach a political agreement by the end of 2008 especially those in the region, to follow through on and increase their pledges and deliver assistance to the Palestinian Authority. The leaders

agreed that Serbia should have the opportunity to become a full partner in the European family of nations. The United States and Europe also agreed to support the stability and security of Kosovo and its regional integration and to assist Kosovo in its economic and institutional development.

The U.S. and the EU agreed to work with Iraq to hasten its ability to join the WTO. The EU is giving substantial assistance to Iraq and is negotiating an EU-Iraq Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the U.S. welcomes the EU's desire to expand its diplomatic presence in Iraq.

The United States and Europe are enhancing strategic cooperation to assist Afghanistan, including expanding the size and scope of justice and police reform assistance and counter-narcotics efforts.

The leaders discussed the aspirations of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova and committed to help these countries achieve their reform goals as soon as possible. They expressed support for President Saakashvili's peace initiatives on Abkhazia and encouraged direct talks between the Georgian Government and the Abkhaz, while reaffirming a commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The leaders welcomed China's recent decision to hold talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives and encouraged both parties to move forward with a substantive, constructive and results-oriented dialogue at an early date. The leaders also urged China to take substantive steps to address its poor human rights record.

The United States and Europe committed to work together to accelerate the deployment of the UN/African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur.

The leaders called on the government of Zimbabwe immediately to cease the state-sponsored violence and intimidation against its people and ensure a free and fair presidential runoff election on June 27.

The U.S. and the EU agreed to work together to further support democratic values and institutions in Latin America and called on the Cuban government to unconditionally release all political prisoners. The leaders agreed to expand cooperation to combat terrorism finance, including preventing misuses of charities and bulk cash smuggling to finance terrorism, and to increase information sharing.

The U.S. and the EU called for geographical expansion of the G8 Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (WMD).

Transatlantic Economic Council Report to the EU-U.S. Summit 2008

Review of progress under the framework for advancing transatlantic economic integration between the European Union and the United States of America

Believing that transatlantic economic integration will maximize economic benefits for their citizens through competition and stronger growth, while maintaining high standards of safety and protection, at their last summit meeting in April 2007, the leaders of the European Union (EU) and the United States of America (United States) committed their governments to increasing the efficiency and transparency of transatlantic economic cooperation and to accelerating the reduction and elimination of barriers to international trade and investment with the ultimate objective of achieving a barrier free transatlantic market.

The leaders of the European Union and the United States of America agreed on a Framework for Advancing Transatlantic Economic Integration (the Framework) and established the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) to oversee the efforts outlined in the Framework, with the goal of accelerating progress and guiding work between EU-U.S. Summits.

The TEC was requested to report annually to the EU-U.S. Summit leaders on the TEC's achievements (part 1) and on areas where more progress is needed (part 2).

TEC Achievements

The outcomes of two TEC meetings so far show the firm commitment of both sides to reach their common objective of greater economic integration. The meetings have shown clear signs of steady progress towards a more convergent transatlantic regulatory environment in a number of priority areas.

The regular and close contacts between the European Commission and the U.S. government in the context of the TEC have allowed both sides to deepen their political dialogue and offered a platform to informally discuss strategic issues of common interest. Representing the most important bilateral economic relationship in the world, built on shared values, including a belief in open economies, unfettered competition, the rule of law and well-regulated markets with a high level of safety and protection, the TEC is mindful that the European Union and the United States lead by example as to how to overcome economic barriers both in their bilateral relationship and in the world economy.

Since the 2007 Summit meeting, the TEC has:

- Adopted working arrangements on its composition, working methods, and relations with stakeholders, legislators and regulators;
- Convened a Group of Advisers comprised of the heads of existing transatlantic dialogues to provide input and guidance to the TEC on priorities for transatlantic economic integration; the Co-chairs of the TEC have consulted this Group of Advisers before each meeting of the TEC and informed them of the TEC's accomplishments afterwards;
- Appointed senior officials and heads of regulatory agencies as members of the EU-U.S. High-Level Regulatory Cooperation Forum; the Forum has met twice

over the past year, serving as a platform for exchanging best regulatory practices within and between sectors and for seeking early upstream consultation and more compatible regulatory approaches to upcoming regulatory matters and decisions;

- Assembled in Washington on 9 November 2007 and on 13 May 2008 in Brussels, reflecting the high-level political commitment to transatlantic economic cooperation on both sides of the Atlantic and demonstrating the intention of the European Commission and U.S. government to move rapidly towards achieving their common objectives in the areas mentioned in the following sections.

Fostering Cooperation and Reducing Regulatory Burdens

The TEC is committed to:

- Removing barriers to transatlantic commerce;
- Rationalizing, reforming, and, where appropriate, reducing regulations to empower the private sector;
- Achieving more effective, systematic and transparent regulatory cooperation to reduce costs associated with regulation to consumers and producers and to enhance consumer confidence and safety;
- Removing unnecessary differences between our regulations to foster economic integration;
- Reinforcing the existing transatlantic dialogue structures in regulatory cooperation both by intensifying sector-by-sector EU-U.S. regulatory cooperation and the dialogue between the European Commission services and the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on methodological issues.

Over the past year, the European Commission and the U.S. government have taken the following steps to reduce barriers to transatlantic economic integration.

The EU-U.S. High-Level Regulatory Cooperation Forum convened on 8 November 2007 and on 25 April 2008 and discussed closer cooperation in matters of product safety, early warning systems concerning forthcoming regulation that may be of common interest, regulatory issues presented by new technologies, impact and risk assessments methodologies, and the role of public consultations in the regulatory process.

The EU-U.S. High-Level Regulatory Cooperation Forum submitted its report "Towards enhanced cooperation between the European Union and the United States of America on the safety of (imported) products" to the TEC, including concrete recommendations on how to overcome current constraints on effective information sharing.

The exchange of non-confidential (and, in some sectors, confidential) information regarding product recalls and other market removals for safety reasons is well established. The importance of discussing the exchange of confidential (pre- or post-recall) information in additional sectors has been acknowledged, paying due attention to the need for confidentiality arrangements.

The EU-U.S. High-Level Regulatory Cooperation Forum also submitted the final joint OMB/Secretariat General report "Review of the Application of EU and U.S. Regulatory Impact Assessment Guidelines on the Analysis of Impacts on International Trade and Investment" to the TEC. The report seeks to advance the goal of ensuring that impact assessments and analyses of future regulations take due account of the impact of such regulations on international trade and investment.

Since the TEC's November 2007 meeting, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has met with domestic and foreign stakeholders—including several meetings with European Commission counterparts—to better understand and discuss systems and issues related to conformity assessment (CA) of electrical products, including suppliers declaration of conformity (SDoC). On the basis of these meetings, OSHA has decided to publish a new request for information (RFI) concerning the use of SDoC for certain electrical and electronic equipment used in the workplace. Further, as an additional step to facilitate trade in electrical products with respect to conformity assessment procedures for the safety of such products, in April 2008 OSHA proposed to increase the number of locations where product certification functions can be performed by Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratories.

At the TEC meeting in November 2007, the subject of the treatment of poultry meat with pathogen reduction substances was discussed. The European Commission has undertaken to act on this issue before the next EU-U.S. Summit, after receiving scientific advice. In this sense, the Commission consulted the European Food Safety Authority on the possible effects of the treatment on antimicrobial resistance and the Scientific Committee on Health and Environment and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks on the environmental risk and on the risk of emergence of microbial resistance associated with the use of these substances. The Commission has reviewed these scientific opinions and, in the light of those opinions, which provide no scientific basis for the continuation of the import ban, it will in the coming weeks come forward with a proposal for allowing the use of pathogen reduction treatments for poultry meat in the EU Member States and in imported poultry products. In line with its previous commitment, the Commission will actively solicit Member State and European Parliament support and will make best endeavors to achieve the final adoption of the relevant EU legislation before the next TEC meeting, planned for autumn 2008.

The European Commission and the U.S. government will seek to intensify their cooperation on agriculture, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, and food safety, and the TEC will review the state of progress at its

next meeting. The U.S. Federal Communications Commission plans to initiate a rulemaking to consider allowing suppliers declarations of conformity for products that currently require certification and have a good record of compliance with relevant requirements. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Commission have agreed to meet regularly to further their cooperation in the peer review of invalidated alternative methods to animal testing used to determine the safety of cosmetic ingredients (including some products regulated in the United States as drugs and in the European Union as cosmetics). The next expert meeting will be held in July 2008.

A first set of specific projects on medicinal products have been agreed following the administrative simplification workshop held in Brussels in November 2007. These results will provide important benefits for industry, patients, and regulatory authorities. The collaboration on inspections will result in more effective use of resources and a higher safety level of products from third countries. Work will continue to identify other areas for intensified collaboration. In addition, U.S. and EU authorities have recently announced a series of successes in their work on biomarker development and validation for various medicinal product development purposes. Finally, FDA and the European Medicines Agency (EMEA) have agreed recently on an implementation work plan for veterinary medicinal products regulation and have agreed on a process for offering parallel scientific advice to veterinary medicinal products manufacturers that wish to receive such advice simultaneously from the FDA and EMEA.

The European Union and the United States have achieved good progress in their co-operation on auto safety with the recent adoption—in March 2008—of two Global Technical Regulations (GTRs) on glazing and head restraints at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE). Furthermore, they are committed to work towards the adoption of GTRs on electronic stability control and pedestrian protection this year. In order to reduce unnecessary costs for transatlantic trade, the European Commission has proposed legislation that would allow the continued import of products into the EU with dual labelling of measurement units.

The European Commission and the United States government have continued their bilateral cooperation on chemicals regulation. In addition they have cooperated in multilateral fora. In relation to the EU's Registration, Evaluation, and Authorization of Chemicals (REACH) regulation and its implementation, they agreed to continue their discussion of issues including the placing of products on the candidate list, the "Only Representative" provision, and openness and transparency in REACH Implementation Projects. The Commission acknowledges that REACH presents an unprecedented challenge both for European and third country producers and will therefore, within its competence, undertake the necessary steps to ensure transparent implementation, legal certainty and non-discriminatory trade.

EU-U.S. cooperation on developing biofuels is advanced and on-going, following a common work plan agreed in February 2008. A White Paper on Internationally Compatible Biofuel Standards has been developed with the cooperation of European, American and Brazilian standards bodies. It carefully delineates those aspects of technical standards for biofuels that are already more or less compatible, those aspects that would be too difficult to make compatible, and those aspects that can be brought into closer alignment through continued effort. Additionally, U.S., EU and Brazilian measurement experts are working to develop common standards for calibrating and validating the accuracy of measurement results. This work complements ongoing standards efforts in the private sector and will enable purchasers globally to verify test results for biofuels they purchase.

The EU and the United States signed a comprehensive air transport agreement at the EU-U.S. summit in April 2007. That agreement was provisionally applied as of 30 March 2008 and is already delivering major benefits to our consumers, airlines, communities, and economies. As envisioned in the agreement, a second stage of negotiations, aimed at further liberalization, will begin on 15/16 May 2008.

Lighthouse Priority Projects

The European Commission and U.S. government have pursued work on the priority issues for transatlantic economic integration identified at the April 2007 Summit (the so-called "Lighthouse projects"), and the TEC has achieved progress on a number of them.

Intellectual Property Rights: The EU-U.S. cooperation on IP enforcement has been a success story. In the past year, the activities have focused in particular on joint enforcement efforts at the WTO and in third countries, in particular in China and Russia; joint organization of seminars in Russia (digital piracy), in Latin America and in ASEAN countries; and development of IP networks of EU and U.S. diplomats in third countries, starting with Russia and China. Closer customs co-operation, including joint border enforcement actions, has been an area of particular attention this year, namely the first joint customs cooperation project (Operation INFRASTRUCTURE) was a success. In addition, the United States and the European Union are working together and with other trading partners to negotiate a strong Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, which they will seek to conclude by the end of 2008.

Further, the United States Patent and Trademark Office and the European Commission have agreed to a roadmap to advance global patent harmonization. During the remainder of 2008, they will elaborate on the roadmap to identify implementation options and engage in consultations with stakeholders.

Secure trade: The European Commission and the United States Government recalled their commitment to

the multi-layered, risk based approach in supply chain security and to fully implementing the U.S.-EU Joint Customs Cooperation Committee Roadmap Towards Mutual Recognition of Trade Partnership Programs, adopted on 6 March 2008. The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the European Commission will work to implement the Roadmap and achieve mutual recognition of the U.S. and EU supply chain security programs—that is, the U.S. Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) and the EU Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program—in 2009, including by exchanging best practices and cooperating on supply chain security measures.

The United States and EU have also put in place the agreed exchange of customs officials specializing in risk management, starting by stationing in April 2008 EU customs officials at the U.S. National Targeting Center—Cargo.

The European Commission and the U.S. government will include in their discussions on secure trade the issue of the eventual implementation of the U.S. legislation on 100% scanning of containers. The European Commission recalled its concern about this issue and took note that certain U.S. legislators have flagged their willingness to look into this issue.

Financial Markets: In the 2007 "Framework for Advancing Transatlantic Economic Integration," the U.S. government and the European Commission confirmed their common objective "to promote and seek to ensure conditions for the U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (U.S. GAAP) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) to be recognized in both jurisdictions without the need for reconciliation by 2009 or possibly sooner." The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in November 2007, took the decision to abolish the requirement for reconciliation to U.S. GAAP for foreign companies using IFRS as issued by the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB), and solicited comment on the possibility of allowing domestic companies to file using IFRS. The European Commission will propose a decision on the equivalence of U.S. GAAP in the course of 2008. To this end, a European Commission working paper on convergence between IFRS and third country national GAAPs has been prepared. This working paper reflects the advice by the Committee of the European Securities Regulators (CESR), which takes a positive stance towards accepting U.S. GAAP as being equivalent to IFRS. The EU and the United States will also continue to monitor the situation in the coming months in the framework of the informal Financial Market Regulatory Dialogue (FMRD).

A joint statement by European Commissioner McCreevy and SEC Chairman Cox on the common willingness of the United States and EU to work together on mutual recognition in securities was released on 1 February 2008. Subsequently, SEC and the European Commission staffs have intensified their work on defining a process for carrying out a comparability assessment of EU and U.S. securities regimes which they hope to finalize by mid 2008. Thereafter, comparability assessments can begin. Mutual recognition in securities regulation would have the potential to facilitate access of EU and U.S. investors to a broader and deeper transatlantic market, increase the availability of information about foreign investment opportunities, promote greater diversification of securities portfolios, significantly reduce transatlantic trading and transaction costs, and increase oversight coordination among regulators. The TEC also encourages the implementation of other approaches to facilitate cross-border financial services, such as providing relief from local licensing requirements for securities firms engaging in cross-border business with certain sophisticated investors. The TEC discussed issues related to enhancing the openness and competitiveness of global insurance and reinsurance markets while maintaining high levels of consumer protection through the promotion of more comparable, efficient, cost-effective and modern prudential regulatory standards and practices. Currently, U.S. and European regulators and supervisors are engaged in significant efforts to modernize insurance and reinsurance regulation and supervision. The TEC urged both sides to make significant strides by the end of 2008 to identify the steps that need to be taken to create a true level playing field for EU and U.S. insurance companies operating in each other's jurisdiction, including reform of the collateral rules applied to EU reinsurers currently operating in the United States and proposals regarding the treatment of third country insurers and reinsurers in the European Commission's Solvency II Framework Directive Proposal. These discussions should continue to take place in the context of the FMRD, led by the European Commission and the U.S. Treasury, as well as between the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC), the Committee of European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Supervisors (CEIOPS) and the European Commission in the EU-U.S. Insurance Dialogue.

Innovation and Technology: Under the auspices of the EC-U.S. Task-Force on Biotechnology Research, a working group on bio-based products was established and several EC-U.S. scientific workshops paved the way to the identification of three joint research priorities related to innovative and eco-efficient bio-based products: plant cell walls in relation to bio-refining; plant oils as industrial feedstock; and biopolymers. The research projects selected in 2008 to address these priorities under the EC Research Framework Programme have a strong involvement of U.S. partners.

The November 2007 TEC meeting resulted in a commitment for the United States and EU to work together to improve international enforcement in the fight against fraud and illegal spam and spyware in light of the enactment of the Undertaking Spam, Spyware and Fraud Enforcement With Enforcers Beyond Borders Act of 2006 (the "U.S. SAFE WEB Act") and the adoption of

Regulation (EC) No. 2006/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council. U.S. and EU officials have since begun developing a mutual assistance agreement on the enforcement of consumer protection laws.

The U.S. and EU have agreed to undertake the development of a joint pilot project involving the use of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to track radioactive isotopes and to explore a second joint pilot project on postal bag tracking. The U.S. and EU will hold a joint symposium on the societal benefits of RFID, together with a workshop on RFID and privacy, in September 2008.

In December 2007, the U.S. and EU conducted an exchange of innovation experts on the mechanisms by which energy and sustainability are driving innovation within the European Union.

Investment: At its November 2007 meeting, the TEC launched an Investment Dialogue aimed at reducing barriers to transatlantic investment and promoting open investment regimes globally. Through the Investment Dialogue, the United States and the European Commission have prepared a joint "open investment statement" for submission to the U.S.-EU Summit, in which they affirm their shared commitment to preserve and promote open investment policies at home and globally. The two sides are working to address the challenges of rising protectionism around the globe and have held productive discussions regarding sovereign wealth investment, U.S. and EU investment regimes, and third country investment regimes and barriers. The United States and EU will continue their work as outlined in the Investment Dialogue work plan.

The way ahead

The TEC's working arrangements have proved to be a successful innovation which has given new political impetus to EU-U.S. economic cooperation with the objective of overcoming disagreements. A number of goals identified in the 2007 Framework have been achieved in the first year of its work. However, much remains to be done. The first year has confirmed that regulatory cooperation and economic integration entail arduous technical work to be successful and require the continued attention of and commitment by the political leadership to press for progress. This is a long-term project.

The TEC underlines that, as its central objective is to remove unnecessary constraints on and provide a common regulatory environment for transatlantic economic activity, the priorities for its work should be stakeholder-driven. The TEC emphasizes its appreciation of the counsel it has received from its Group of Advisors and of the Group's efforts to reach out to the wider stakeholder communities and to convey in a broad and balanced fashion the views of citizens, consumers and producers on both sides of the Atlantic.

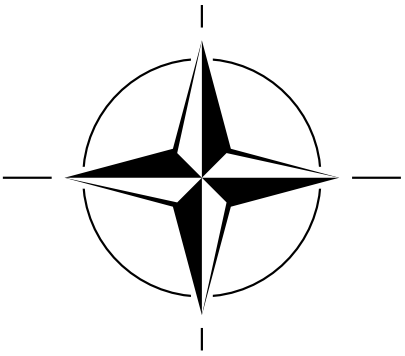
The TEC emphasizes the importance of upstream regulatory cooperation to minimize unnecessarily divergent regulatory approaches. The High-Level Regulatory Cooperation Forum has proved its value as a unique platform to bring together top officials involved in sectoral and horizontal regulatory dialogues to exchange views and identify best practices, to build trust and confidence among regulators, and to foster effective working relationships. The TEC has welcomed the reports and presentations of the Forum co-chairs, which allowed the TEC to gain greater insights into the technical complexities of regulatory convergence.

The TEC underscores that transatlantic economic integration and the reduction of regulatory burdens can be constrained by existing legislation or new legislative initiatives. The TEC's efforts would benefit from more active engagement between the legislatures on both sides of the Atlantic. The TEC underlines the importance of a structured, institutionalized dialogue between the European Parliament and U.S. Congress, so that legislators are more vigilant of the potential impacts on transatlantic trade and investment stemming from their legislative work and avoid initiatives that might undermine transatlantic economic integration efforts.

The 2007 Framework recognized the multi-year nature of our work program. In order to bring the initiatives launched in 2007 to fruition, the TEC resolves to continue our work on all elements of the Framework, giving particular attention to intellectual property rights, secure trade and financial markets, and to take stock of progress in a third meeting before the end of this year.

The United States and the European Union share the largest economic relationship in the world. They also share core values, including a belief in the importance of open economies, transparency and the rule of law. These bonds are strong. They inform the U.S. and EU approach to each project they pursue. It is because of the breadth and depth of what unites the United States and the European Union that they expect the TEC to continue playing a vital role in the U.S.-EU relationship.

The European Commission and the United States government affirm their strong commitment to ensure the continuity of the TEC process as the key joint governance mechanism for the transatlantic economy into the uture.



NATO

Last Updated: December 2008

Official Name:

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Editor's Note: The information in this article was compiled and edited from *Fact Sheets* and releases available 2006–2008 through the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and updated by the editors.

BACKGROUND

NATO, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is an international alliance of 26 countries of Europe and North America created to ensure the peace and security of the North Atlantic region. Signed April 4, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty is NATO's founding document that details the principles upon which NATO was established.

NATO was founded to fulfill its goal of safeguarding the freedom and security of its members by way of political and military means. NATO's members consult together to address security issues of concern and work jointly to take whatever action is necessary to defend against threats. One principle that guides NATO is the policy that an attack against one member is considered an attack against all members. On September 12, 2001, this principle of collective defense was acted on after the terrorist attacks against the United States, when NATO invoked Article 5 of the NATO treaty, declaring the attacks to be an attack against all of the NATO member countries. All NATO decisions are made by the member countries on the basis of consensus. The North Atlantic Council, or NAC, is the main decision-making body in NATO, made up of permanent representatives from each member country which meets regularly in discussion. The NAC also consults with Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers, and Defense Ministers and establishes committees to provide advice on military policy and strategy to NATO's political leaders.

Key Events in NATO History

April 4, 1949: The North Atlantic Treaty, NATO's founding document, was signed.

March 24, 1999: NATO began a 78-day air campaign against the military forces of Yugoslavia's Slobodan Milosevic. Following the campaign, the Kosovo Force (KFOR), a NATO-led international peace-enforcement force, entered Kosovo to maintain security in Kosovo.

Sept. 12, 2001: NATO declared the terrorist attacks on the United States to be an attack against all NATO member countries within the terms of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

May 28, 2002: The NATO-Russia Council was established at the NATO-Russia Summit, strengthening the commitment between NATO and Russia.

May 21, 2003: The NATO alliance agreed to support Poland in its leadership of a sector in the stabilization force in Iraq.

August 2003: NATO took over command and coordination of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). This is the first mission outside the Euro-Atlantic area in NATO's history.

August 2004: NATO established a Training Implementation Mission in Iraq.

Member Countries

Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

U.S.-NATO RELATIONS

On September 12, 2001, NATO took the historic action of invoking—for the first time—Article 5 of the NATO treaty. This Article embodies the principle of collective defense—that an attack on one member is an attack on all. The Alliance backed up this action by sending five AWACs aircraft and a detachment of 200 personnel to the United States in October 2001. These aircraft logged 3,000

hours patrolling American skies and protecting North American airspace. In addition, NATO ships patrolled the Eastern Mediterranean to keep terrorists from infiltrating into Europe. All NATO Allies have participated in either Operation Enduring Freedom, the military campaign against al Qaeda and the former Taliban regime, or in the current International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

U.S. security today requires us to look closely at NATO, which is already the strongest security Alliance in history, and find ways to make it even stronger. To confront and eliminate such global threats as terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we must ally with countries that share our values and act effectively with us. Since the end of the Cold War, Europe's newest democracies have proven themselves as able partners, whether securing stability in the Balkans or fighting terrorism in Afghanistan.

The enlargement of NATO will cement these benefits for the United States and its Allies, making the whole of NATO much stronger than the sum of the capabilities of individual members. NATO enlargement will help to enhance the political and economic stability for all countries in the Euro-Atlantic area. By helping Europe's newer democracies as they strengthen good governance, rule of law, and human rights, NATO will also facilitate a better long-term environment for American trade and investment.

NATO STRUCTURE

North Atlantic Council

The NAC is the principal forum for consultation and cooperation between NATO member governments on all issues affecting their common security. Its decisions are based on consensus, with each member having an equal right to express its views. The NATO Secretary General is chair. The NAC meets at least twice a year in ministerial session. It also meets weekly at the level of Permanent Representatives, who hold ambassadorial rank.

North Atlantic Council/ Defense Ministers (NAC/D)

The NAC/D deals with overall issues of defense and meets twice yearly when member countries are represented by their Defense Ministers.

Defense Planning Committee (DPC)

The DPC deals with defense planning and other issues related to NATO's integrated military structure. It is composed of all countries except France (which withdrew from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966). Like the NAC, it meets regularly at ambassadorial level and twice yearly with Defense Ministers, normally in conjunction with the NAC/D.

Nuclear Planning Group

This group has authority for nuclear matters. All countries except France participate. Iceland participates as an observer.

Military Committee

The highest military authority in the alliance; is composed of the chiefs of staff of each country. Iceland, which has no military forces, is represented by a civilian member. The Military Committee advises the NAC and the DPC on military measures necessary for the common defense and provides guidance to the NATO commanders.

Regional Commands

The strategic area covered by the North Atlantic Treaty is divided into two regional commands: Allied Command Europe and Allied Command Atlantic, with a regional planning group for North America. With the exception of France and Iceland, all countries assign forces to the integrated military command structure. The NATO Defense area covers the territories of member nations in North America, in the Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer, and in Europe, including Turkey. However, events occurring outside the area which affect the preservation of peace and security in the treaty area also may be considered by the NAC.

NORTH ATLANTIC COOPERATION COUNCIL

The precursor to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) was established in November 1991 to conduct NATO's outreach program to the former Warsaw Pact states.

The North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies and the newly free and independent states of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics, and the former Soviet Union in a program of political security dialogue, partnership, and cooperation. Subjects discussed in regular meetings between allies and partner states include defense planning and budgeting, democratic concepts of civil-military relations, defense conversion, and scientific and environmental topics. Members also discussed current political issues of common concern. In this way, the NACC complemented the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), NATO, the European Union, and the Council of Europe in building a Euro-Atlantic community of stable, democratic, and market-oriented societies from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

As the advent of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union and the crumbling of communist control in Eastern Europe changed the nature of the European security challenge, NATO turned from a posture of confrontation with the East to one of dialogue and cooperation. The June 1990 Turnberry North Atlantic Council ministerial and July 1990 London NATO summit extended the hand of friendship to NATO's former

adversaries and called for the alliance to institute a liaison program with the Warsaw Pact states. The June 1991 Copenhagen North Atlantic Council ministerial developed this theme in its statement on "Partnership with the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe."

In their October 3, 1991, joint statement, Secretary of State Baker and German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher proposed the institutionalization of the NATO liaison program in a North Atlantic Cooperation Council. The following month, the Rome NATO summit formally established the NACC as a forum in which allies could offer their experience and expertise to partner countries on security and related issues.

In its first year, NACC developed a solid basis of cooperation and dialogue. The first NACC ministerial, held on December 20, 1991, in Brussels, brought together representatives of the 16 NATO allies, the Baltic states, the U.S.S.R., Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. Participants pledged to uphold CSCE principles, support arms control efforts, and work together in building a Europe whole and free.

The second NACC ministerial held on March 10, 1992, in Brussels, admitted all the states of the former Soviet Union except Georgia (which joined the following month). Ministers adopted the first NACC work plan, which spelled out a program of intensified consultations and cooperative activities focused on security and related issues, including political, military, economic, scientific, and environmental subjects. Specific topics for cooperation included defense planning, conceptual approaches to arms control, democratic concepts of civilian-military relations, civil-military coordination of air- traffic management, defense conversion, and enhanced participation in NATO's "Third Dimension" scientific and environmental programs. Ministers also pledged to cooperate in disseminating information about NATO in the partner countries and gave their support to the NACC's ad hoc High Level Group charged with facilitating entry-into-force of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.

Georgia and Albania joined in June 1992 and the Czech-Slovak split in January 1993 created two new members. Finland, Slovenia, and Sweden attended ministerial meetings as observers.

A major step forward in NACC cooperation came at the December 1992 ministerial in Brussels. Ministers adopted a work plan for 1993 that included for the first time a provision for joint planning and training for peace-keeping Subsequently, the NACC established an Ad Hoc Group on Cooperation in Peace-keeping to coordinate activities in this area The NACC welcomed the participation in Ad Hoc Group deliberations of three non-NACC states with extensive peace-keeping experience—Finland, Sweden, and Austria A representative from the OSCE also attends.

Building on the momentum of cooperation created by the NACC, NATO established in January 1994 a program within the framework of NACC called the Partnership for Peace (PFP). PFP activities complement other activities undertaken in the framework of the NACC and are designed to intensify political and military cooperation between the Alliance and members of the Partnership. The PFP is open to states participating in NACC and other OSCE states able and willing to contribute to the Partnership.

At their meeting in Brussels in December 1994, ministers reviewed progress on implementing PFP and held extensive consultations on regional issues. At the Noordwijk NAC in May 1995, the Secretary of State presented U.S. initiatives to "intensify the relationship between NATO and its partners," including on ensuring democratic and civilian control of the military, widening the Partnership's focus, and working more closely together on exercise planning.

The 1996 work plan, adopted by ministers at the December 6, 1995, NACC Ministerial in Brussels, continues and expanded NACC/PFP work on peace-keeping and other topics.

The NACC established itself as an important element in post-Cold War Europe's security architecture. The NACC was succeeded by the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997. The EAPC is a multilateral forum created to improve relations between NATO and non-NATO countries in Europe and those parts of Asia on the European periphery. The 49 member states meet to cooperate and consult on a range of political and security issues. The EAPC works alongside the Partnership for Peace. In addition to the 26 members of NATO, there are 23 partner countries that participate in discussions. They are: Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and Switzerland in Europe; 12 former Soviet republics-Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan; and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia in the Balkans.

NATO ADAPTATION/ ENLARGEMENT

Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined NATO on March 29, 2004 in Washington, DC. Secretary of State Colin Powell accepted ratification documents known as instruments of accession from the prime ministers of the seven nations, making their countries formally eligible to join the 55-year-old alliance. The United States is the depositary nation for the North Atlantic Treaty, which means that new members must submit their accession documents to a U.S. official.

Significance

The event marked an important step forward toward President Bush's goal

of a Europe "whole, free, and at peace." With the addition of the seven nations, nearly 40% of NATO's membership is comprised of former communist countries.

Invitation to Membership

In November 2002, at the Prague Summit, NATO leaders invited the seven nations to join the Alliance. The nations then were required to demonstrate that they could take on the new responsibilities and commitments of NATO membership. In May 2003, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution ratifying the NATO invitation and by February 2004, all 19 NATO allies had ratified similar resolutions.

Qualifying for Membership

The seven countries committed themselves to the shared values of freedom and democracy that are the foundation of the Alliance. The seven countries pursued rigorous political, economic and defense reforms. They already have contributed to NATO operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan.

The U.S. and its NATO Allies decided at the Prague Summit that the invitees were ready to join based on their individual accomplishments under NATO's Membership Action Plan (MAP) and their contributions to the Global War on Terrorism. The MAP was created in April 1999 to help candidate countries to prepare themselves for membership in the Alliance. Under MAP, aspirants adopt an Annual National Program (ANP) that sets objectives and specific benchmarks for reform that will strengthen their country's candidacy. The ANP reforms encompass a broad range of issues, including anti-corruption measures, protections for classified information, and establishment of coherent National Military Strategies. Aspirants receive practical and technical support from NATO, which regularly assesses their progress.

The total cost for the last enlargement is estimated at $1.5 billion over ten years; of this, the U.S. share is $400 million. The present round of enlargement is expected to carry similar costs, with greater benefits, as the previous round in 1999. That round of enlargement reduced the U.S. share of NATO's budget and the costs of its Balkan operations.

Through their strong and unwavering support for the anti-terrorism coalition and assistance in bringing stability to Bosnia and Kosovo, current aspirants have already shown that they can make positive contributions to NATO operations. They have clearly demonstrated their willingness and ability to participate in the work of the Alliance. The three newest allies have sent troops to the Balkans, Afghanistan, and other peacekeeping operations. They have also made excellent progress in building their capabilities and thus their contribution to common defense. NATO is committed to an open door policy: any European democracy that is willing and able to contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area can become a member of the Alliance. Enlargement is not a new phenomenon but an ongoing process, as illustrated by previous successful rounds of enlargement: Turkey and Greece in 1952, Germany in 1955, Spain in 1982, and the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in 1999. Those countries not selected will continue to participate in MAP and work towards future membership.

Adding to NATO's Security Capabilities

- Bulgaria: engineers and minesweepers;
- Romania: unmanned aerial vehicles and mountain troops;
- Slovakia: nuclear, biological and chemical defense units;
- Slovenia: mountain warfare troops;
- Estonia: military divers and mine countermeasures;
- Latvia: explosive ordnance disposal;
- Lithuania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Slovakia, and Slovenia will provide special operations forces.

At the NATO Summit in 2008, leaders considered the invitations for three Balkan nations-Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia-to join the Atlantic Alliance. The United States has taken a clear position that NATO should welcome these countries into the Membership Action Plan, and NATO membership must remain open to all of Europe's democracies that seek it. NATO must make clear that it welcomes the aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine for membership in NATO and offers them a clear path forward toward that goal.

NATO PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

A U.S. initiative, Partnership for Peace (PFP) was launched by the January 1994 NATO summit to establish strong links between NATO, its new democratic partners in the former Soviet bloc, and some of Europe's traditionally neutral countries to enhance European security.

It provides a framework for enhanced political and military cooperation for joint multilateral activities, such as humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, and crisis management and enables Partners to improve their interoperability with NATO. It enables PFP members to consult with NATO when faced with a direct threat to its security but does not extend NATO security guarantees. Participation in PFP does not guarantee entry into NATO, but it is the best preparation for states interested in becoming NATO members.

PFP's utility has been demonstrated by the success of the NATO peacekeeping operations in Bosnia (IFOR and SFOR), in which 13 PFP Partners have worked side by side with NATO Allies. There are 33 member countries: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, MOntenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Once a country has joined the PFP, it submits a Presentation Document to NATO explaining what resources it will contribute to PFP activities and the steps that it will take to meet PFP political goals, such as democratic control of the military. A unique Individual Partnership Program (IPP), is then agreed to with the alliance. IPPs set forth shared objectives, (for instance, establishing democratic control over military forces; developing transparency in defense planning and budgetary processes; developing interoperability with NATO forces) and list activities planned to meet those objectives.

Partners can assign personnel on a full-time basis to NATO Headquarters in Brussels and to the Partnership Coordination Cell (PCC) at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium. Legislation which would enable Partners to accredit ambassadors to NATO is pending in Brussels. Partners may participate in an optional Defense Planning and Review Process (PARP) designed to evaluate and enhance a partner nation's interoperability with NATO. Participating states work with NATO to develop interoperability objectives, which can be used to help refine IPPs.

CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE (CFE) TREATY

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (or CFE Treaty), signed in Paris on November 19, 1990, by the 22 members of NATO and the former Warsaw Pact, is a landmark arms control agreement that established parity in major conventional forces/armaments between East and West from the Atlantic to the Urals. It provides an unprecedented basis for lasting European security and stability. The original CFE Treaty (which is of unlimited duration) entered into force in 1992. Following the demise of the Warsaw Pact and the enlargement of NATO in the 1990s, the then 30 CFE States Parties signed the Adaptation Agreement at the Istanbul OSCE Summit on 19 November 1999, to amend the CFE Treaty to take account of the evolving European geo-strategic environment.

The CFE Treaty covers the entire land territory of the States Parties in Europe from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains (ATTU). It thus excludes much of the territory of Russia and all the territory of the U.S. and Canada—all signatories of the original and Adapted Treaty. The conventional forces of all three countries that are stationed in Europe are subject to CFE limits. The 30 CFE States Parties are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States. However, on JUly 14, 2007, Russia notified the other CFE signatories of its intended suspension of the treaty.

The original CFE Treaty set equal limits for East and West in the ATTU on key conventional armaments essential for conducting surprise attacks or initiating large-scale offensive operations. Those armaments/equipment include: battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, and artillery pieces, as well as combat aircraft (except for naval air) and attack helicopters. In addition to limitations on the number of armaments in each category, the Treaty also provides for central zonal limits to prevent destabilizing force concentrations in Europe and for regional ("flank") limits, which were modified by the Flank Agreement of May 1996. Whereas the original CFE Treaty established an East-West group structure for limiting NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional armaments, the Adapted Treaty provides for a system of national and territorial ceilings (the former limits the number of armaments each state may possess, while the latter limits the total number of Treaty-limited equipment present within a State Party's borders); an accession mechanism for new States Parties; enhanced verification and transparency regimes; and honoring current Treaty commitments pending entry into force of the Adapted Treaty. The Adapted Treaty will facilitate NATO enlargement and reinforce the territorial sovereignty of individual States Parties. The principal accomplishment of the CFE Treaty has been the large-scale reduction or destruction of conventional military equipment in the ATTU during the first 5 years the Treaty was in effect. By the end of the Treaty's reduction period in 1995, when equipment limits took effect, the 30 States Parties completed and verified by inspection the destruction or conversion of over 52,000 battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery pieces, combat aircraft and attack helicopters. In addition, they have conducted/accepted over 4000 intrusive on-site inspections of military units/installations, and of specified areas.

ADRIATIC CHARTER

Secretary of State Colin Powell, together with his colleagues, Foreign Ministers Meta, Picula and Mitreva, signed the Adriatic Charter in Tirana, Albania, May 2, 2003. The Adriatic Charter, an initiative in the spirit of the 1998 U.S.-Baltic Charter, was proposed jointly by the Presidents of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to President Bush at the NATO Prague Summit in November 2002. President Bush welcomed the Adriatic initiative as a strong contribution toward his vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

The Charter builds on the achievements of the NATO Prague Summit by reinforcing continued U.S. support for the Alliance's "Open Door," underscoring the goal of Albania's,

Croatia's, and Macedonia's eventual full integration into NATO and other Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The Charter:

- Underlines Albania's, Croatia's, and Macedonia's dedication to strengthening their individual and cooperative efforts to intensify domestic reforms that enhance the security, prosperity and stability of the region.

- Highlights the tremendous accomplishments of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia on the path of Euro-Atlantic integration, outlines areas of continuing focus, and reiterates the intention of the United States to continue assisting the countries in implementing necessary reforms. Notes also that each aspirant country will be judged individually on its progress toward meeting standards for membership in Euro-Atlantic bodies.

- Reaffirms the parties' shared political commitment to strengthen democratic institutions, civil society, rule of law, market economies, and NATO-compatible militaries; to fight corruption and crime; and to protect human rights and civil liberties for all individuals in Albania, Croatia, Macedonia and the other countries of southeast Europe.

- Promotes the stability and Euro-Atlantic integration of all the countries of southeast Europe by bolstering political, defense, and economic cooperation among the partners and between them and their neighbors.

At the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April 2008, NATO Allies agreed that all three countries met NATO membership criteria. Albania and Croatia received invitations to begin the accession process to join NATO. Macedonia will be extended an invitation as soon as a mutually acceptable resolution to its name issue is found. The Adriatic Charter Partners decided in September 2008 to invite Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro to join the Charter. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, in an exchange of notes, have since affirmed and adhered to the principles outlined in the Adriatic Charter. On December 4, all six Partners signed an addendum to the Charter to officially welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

SPECIAL ISSUES

As of November 2008, the following were listed as special issues by the US Mission to NATO. More information on these and other topics concerning U.S. policy and cooperation with NATO may be found at http://nato.usmission.gov.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is NATO's highest political and operational priority. With its expansion into eastern Afghanistan in October 2006, NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is now responsible for providing security assistance throughout Afghanistan. ISAF's primary role is to support the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) in providing and maintaining a secure environment in order to facilitate reconstruction and development.

ISAF currently has more than 37,000 soldiers from 39 nations, working closely with Afghan National Security Forces. Of the approximately 20,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, approximately 16,000 are under ISAF command, mainly in Regional Command East, making the U.S. the largest single contributor to ISAF.

ISAF's 25 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are assisting Afghan provincial and local authorities in reconstruction, governance, and security efforts. There are 5 PRTs in the North (Kunduz, Meymana, Pol-e Khomri, Mazar-e-Sharif and Feyzabad); 4 in the West (Herat, Farah, Qala-e-Naw and Chaghcharan); 4 in the South (Kandahar, Lashkar Gah, Tarin Kowt and Qalat) and 12 in the East (Bagram, Bamyan, Sharan, Ghazni, Gardez, Asadabad, Jalalabad, Panjshir, Mitharlam, Kowst Nurestan, and Wardak). The U.S. currently leads 12 PRTs under ISAF: 10 in the East, 1 in the West and a joint PRT with Romania in the South.

Securing and reconstructing Afghanistan is a long-term endeavor that will require sustained investment. NATO is working in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, and closely with the UN, EU, and other international organizations for Afghanistan's long-term development and stability.

Kosovo

More than 7 years after Operation Allied Force ended the Milosevic regime's policy of ethnic cleansing, NATO remains firmly engaged in Kosovo. The NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) is the Alliance's largest military mission in the Balkans and second largest overall behind Afghanistan, with over 16,000 troops from more than 25 countries participating. In addition to providing security in Kosovo, KFOR supports the UN in policing and other civilian functions that are focused on rebuilding a civil society. NATO will continue to conduct prudent military planning in order to ensure KFOR's ability to respond to any future contingency as well as seek to optimize the Alliance's footprint in Kosovo as needed. In February 2008, UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari presented a Comprehensive Proposal for a Kosovo Status Settlement that, if approved as part of a new U.N. Security Council Resolution, calls on NATO to remain as the international military presence that would work closely with major international partners, including the European Union. The proposal also calls on NATO to take on the additional mission to supervise the establishment of a small, lightly armed security force and appropriate civilian oversight. NATO will continue to participate as part of the Contact Group Plus and will remain committed to maintaining peace and stability in post-status Kosovo.

Western Balkans

NATO remains committed to promoting a peaceful and stable environment in the Balkans and maintains three regional headquarters in Bosnia and Herzegovina (NATO HQ Sarajevo); Macedonia (NATO HQ Skopje); and Albania (NATO HQ Tirana) that are charged with assisting the defense reform efforts of those respective countries. NATO also has a military liaison office in Belgrade, Serbia that is designed to foster closer cooperation between NATO and the Serbian Ministry of Defense. In 2006, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace following the Riga Summit. NATO remains committed to providing financial assistance to the Balkans through the NATO SouthEast Europe Trust Fund Initiative which assists the transition of redundant military personnel to civilian life.

Darfur

NATO is supporting to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), by providing strategic airlift, and training in command and control and operational planning.

Early in 2005, the African Union (AU) began significantly expanding its peacekeeping mission in Darfur in an attempt to halt the continuing violence in the region. On April 26, 2005, the African Union asked NATO to consider the possibility of providing logistical support to its operation in Darfur.

Less than one month later, NATO's North Atlantic Council agreed on initial military options for possible NATO support to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), leading to the provision of strategic airlift; training in command and control and operational planning; assistance for the AU with "lessons learned" from AMIS, and improvement of the AU mission's ability to use information in Darfur.

The first airlift flights began on July 1, 2005. By June 2007, NATO had airlifted more than 24,000 African Union peacekeepers into Darfur, as well as over 500 civilian police, significantly boosting the force on the ground,. NATO has also trained several hundred AU officers in strategic-level planning and operational procedures, and provided support to a UN-led map exercise.

The May 5, 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement raised hopes for a transition to peace in this conflict-ravaged region of Sudan. Following consultations between NATO and the AU, AU Commission Chairperson Alpha Oumar Konare on June 2, 2006 sent a letter to Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer requesting additional assistance for AMIS including: certification of the troops that are earmarked for the mission; and supporting the AU in setting up a Joint Operations Center for AMIS.

NATO is considering possible support to proposed AU/UN "hybrid" mission in Darfur, which is planned to include more than 20,000 troops.

Somalia

On 7 June 2007, NATO agreed, in principle, to respond positively to the 22 May 2007 request of the African Union Commission, to provide strategic airlift for AU states who are willing to deploy in Somalia under the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The assistance will be similar to the airlift NATO provided to the AU for its peacekeeping mission in Darfur.

Iraq

At the 2004 Istanbul Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed to assist Iraq with the training of its security forces. In response to a request by the Iraqi Government, NATO has established a Training Mission in Iraq and is running a training centre for senior security and defense officials on the outskirts of Baghdad.

The aim of the Training Mission and the Joint Staff College at Ar-Rustamiyah is to help Iraq build the capability of its Government to address the security needs of the Iraqi people. NATO is training and mentoring middle and senior level personnel from the Iraqi security forces in Iraq and outside of Iraq, at NATO schools and training centers. The Alliance also plays a role in coordinating offers of equipment and training from individual NATO and partner countries.

To date, approximately 2,500 mid- and senior-level officers have been trained under the auspices of NATO's Training Mission in Iraq and in NATO facilities in Europe. In addition to the training center, NATO members have contributed to equipping the Iraqi army. With the donation in November 2005 of seventy-seven tanks and four tank-recovery vehicles, the total of NATO donations to the Iraqi Armed Forces in 2005 was 100 million euros.

Russia

The establishment of the NATO-Russia Council at the Rome Summit on 28 May 2002 opened a new chapter in NATO-Russia relations. The Council brings together the 26 NATO Allies and Russia as equal partners in areas of common interest to identify and pursue opportunities for joint action in 9 priority areas. These are: combating terrorism, crisis management, non-proliferation, arms control, theater missile defense, search and rescue at sea, mil-mil cooperation and defense reform, civil emergency planning, and new threats and challenges.

Chaired by NATO's Secretary General, meetings of the NATO-Russia Council are held at least monthly at the level of ambassadors and military representatives; twice yearly at the level of foreign and defense ministers and chiefs of staff; and occasionally at summit level. There are currently some 21 subgroups meeting regularly at working level.

NRC accomplishments to date include implementation of an Action Plan on terrorism; two civil emergency planning exercises in Russia; work on developing a joint theater missile defense capability; ongoing development of capabilities to share military and civilian air pictures; reciprocal nuclear security exercises in Russia, the UK, and (shortly) U.S.;

enhanced capabilities on mutual search and rescue at sea; regular political dialogue as well as exchanges of views on defense and security issues; and robust military-to-military cooperation, including three field training exercises to be held in 2006 and Russian naval participation in NATO's maritime interdiction effort Operation Active Endeavor.

The U.S. seeks to deepen this relationship by increasing the interoperability of our military forces and civilian personnel in order to more effectively face the common tasks ahead. We hope that Russia joins us in seeking to make the NRC a success and ensuring that NRC cooperation results in tangible progress in areas where our interests coincide.

Ukraine

The world's skies were made a little safer when the controlled destruction of 1000 Ukrainian man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS) was completed on September 20, 2006 in northeast Ukraine, outside the city of Shostka. These weapons, deemed by Ukraine to be excess to its defense needs, were but the first installment in a 12-year weapons and munitions destruction project being undertaken by Ukraine and NATO in a NATO-Partnership for Peace Trust Fund initiative—the largest such multilateral destruction project of its kind.

The United States is the lead sponsor of the first three-year phase of this project to which it already has contributed over $3.64 million. 12 other countries and the European Union have pledged over 5.6 million (approximately $7.2 million). Ukraine is providing most of the operational funding and in-kind support. A total of approximately $27 million will be required from donors to complete the project. Additional contributions, including those from non-NATO members, will be welcomed.

In addition to the MANPADS that were destroyed, 15,000 tons of stockpiled excess and unstable munitions, including ammunition for automatic weapons, artillery shells, and mortar rounds, and 400,000 small arms and light weapons, are scheduled to be destroyed during the first phase. By the end of the twelve-year project, a total of 1.5 million small arms and light weapons, and 133,000 tons of munitions will have been safely destroyed.

The impetus for this extraordinary project is twofold. First, Ukraine has suffered several major explosions of unstable ordnance in some of its munitions depots. Controlled destruction of the remaining dangerous ordnance will reduce the public safety threat and health risk to Ukrainians who live near such depots. Second, the destruction of weapons and munitions that are no longer needed by Ukraine to defend itself will ensure that they are never obtained by illicit arms traffickers, criminals, or terrorists.



OAS

Last Updated: November 2008

Official Name:

Organization of American States

Editor's Note: The information for this article is reprinted from *the OAS Fact Sheet 2005* available through the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. Additional information available in 2008 has been added by the editor where applicable.

PROFILE

Established: April 14, 1890, as the International Union of American Republics. Became the Pan American Union in 1910, then the Organization of American States in 1948 with the adoption of the OAS Charter in Bogotá, Colombia.

Purposes: To strengthen peace and security in the hemisphere; promote representative democracy; ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes among members; provide for common action in the event of aggression; and promote economic, social, and cultural development.

Members: 35-Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Cuba is a member, although its present government has been excluded from participation since 1962 for incompatibility with the principles of the inter-American system.

Permanent observers: 60-Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Latvia, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and Yemen.

Languages: (official) English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Principal organs: General Assembly, Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers, Permanent Council, Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the General Secretariat.

Specialized organizations: Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN), Inter-American Indian Institute (IAII), Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Other entities: Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), Justice Studies Center, Inter-American Juridical Committee (IAJC), Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE), Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), Inter-American Defense College (IADC), Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF).

HISTORY

The Organization of American States, the oldest regional international organization in the world, traces its origins to the Congress of Panama, convoked by Simon Bolivar in 1826 and attended by representatives from Central and South America. That congress drafted the Treaty of Perpetual Union, League and Confederation, signed by the delegates but ratified only by Gran Colombia (today's Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela).

Hemispheric countries continued the discussion of an inter-American system during the rest of the 19th century. The first concrete step was taken in 1889, when the First International Conference of American States convened in Washington, DC. On April 14, 1890, delegates created the International Union of American Republics "for the prompt collection and distribution of commercial information." They also established the Commercial Bureau of the American Republics in Washington as the Union's secretariat, with the participation of 18 Western Hemisphere nations, including the United States. In 1910, the Commercial Bureau became the Pan American Union, and American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie donated $5 million to construct a permanent headquarters in Washington, DC, which is today the historic OAS building on 17th Street & Constitution Avenue, N.W.

The experience of World War II convinced hemispheric governments that unilateral action could not ensure the territorial integrity of the American nations in the event of extra-continental aggression. To meet the challenges of global conflict in the postwar world and to contain conflicts within the hemisphere, they adopted a system of collective security, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty) signed in 1947 in Rio de Janeiro.

The OAS Charter was adopted at the Ninth International Conference of American States in Bogotá, Colombia in 1948. It reaffirmed the fundamental rights and duties of states, proclaimed the goals of the new organization, and established its organs and agencies. That conference also approved the American Treaty on Pacific Settlement (Pact of Bogotá) and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. The OAS Charter proclaims the organization to be a regional agency within the UN system.

The basic objectives of the OAS, as laid out in its Charter, are to strengthen peace and security; promote the effective exercise of representative democracy; ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes among members; provide for common action in the event of aggression; seek solutions to political, juridical, and economic problems that may arise; promote, by cooperative action, economic, social, educational, scientific, and cultural development; and limit conventional weapons so as to devote greater resources to economic and social development.

Concern over slow economic development led the United States and 19 other OAS members to establish the Inter-American Development Bank in 1959. This reflected concern that the World Bank, which included Latin American countries in its list of eligible borrowers, was preoccupied with infrastructure and not sufficiently attuned to the need for "social" lending as well as industrial and agricultural aid. In 1960, the OAS adopted the Act of Bogotá, which called for a hemisphere-wide commitment to economic and social development. This set the stage for OAS support for the Alliance for Progress.

The 1948 OAS Charter has been amended four times: by the 1967 Protocol of Buenos Aires, which went into effect in February 1970; by the 1985 Protocol of Cartagena, which took effect in November 1988; by the 1993 Protocol of Managua, which took effect in March 1996; and by the 1992 Protocol of Washington, which took effect in September 1997.

The Buenos Aires Protocol created the annual General Assembly and gave equal status to the Permanent Council; the Economic and Social Council; and the Council for Education, Science, and Culture. The Cartagena Amendments strengthened the role of the Secretary General; provided procedures to facilitate peaceful settlement of disputes; removed obstacles, involving border disputes, to the entry of Belize and Guyana; and called for strengthening economic and social development by taking measures to increase trade, enhance international financial cooperation, diversify exports, and promote export opportunities.

The Managua Protocol created the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) to replace the Economic and Social Council and the Council for Education, Science, and Culture. The key objectives of CIDI are to serve as a forum for technical policy-level discussions on matters related to development, to be a catalyst and promoter of development activities in response to mandates from the Summits of the Americas, and to strengthen a hemispheric partnership among OAS countries to promote cooperation for development and to help eliminate extreme poverty in the hemisphere.

Ratification of the Washington Protocol made the OAS the first regional political organization to permit suspension of a member whose democratically constituted government is overthrown by force. This protocol also amended the OAS Charter to include the eradication of extreme poverty as one of the organization's essential purposes.

The OAS helps preserve democracy by mobilizing the hemisphere in the face of threats to democratic rule. It acted under the mandate of General Assembly Resolution 1080 (1991) to support democracy in Haiti, Peru, Guatemala, and Paraguay. It also provides development and other assistance designed to strengthen democratic institutions, observe elections, promote human rights, increase trade, fight drugs, and protect the environment.

On September 11, 2001, the OAS adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter, designed to strengthen and preserve representative democracy in the hemisphere. The Democratic Charter prescribes steps to be taken in the event of an unconstitutional interruption of the democratic order or the unconstitutional alteration of the constitutional regime that seriously impairs the democratic order of a member state.

The OAS was the first international organization to condemn the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. In 2001-02, as a hemispheric response against terrorism, OAS

members successfully negotiated the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism (CICTE), which was opened for signature at the June 2002 OAS General Assembly. It entered into force on July 9, 2003, and provides for increased law enforcement cooperation against terrorism.

In recent years, OAS member states have successfully negotiated major international agreements to curb hemispheric arms trafficking, provide for transparency in conventional weapons acquisition, combat corruption, fight narcotics and money laundering, and define fair telecommunications standards. OAS contributions in the fields of international law, juridical cooperation, and facilitation of regional trade have been substantial and have provided the basis for effective observance of a host of regional treaties concluded since 1889. Information on treaties, conventions, and other inter-American legal instruments is available from the Secretariat of Legal Affairs at the OAS website at http://www.oas.org.

The OAS is implementing important portions of the Action Plans from the Summits of the Americas held in Miami (1994); Santiago, Chile (1998); Quebec City, Canada (2001); and Mar del Plata, Argentina (2005), as well as a Special Summit in Monterrey, Mexico (2004). The Santiago Summit assigned the OAS Secretariat responsibility for maintaining records and serving as the institutional memory of the summit process. The Mar del Plata summit focused on the theme of "Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance." The OAS Secretariat's website is http://www.summit-americas.org.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

The United States is committed to strengthening and working with the OAS, the premier multilateral forum for dealing with political issues in the Western Hemisphere. This reflects the U.S. Government's determination to promote a program of "relevant multilateralism" that engages multilateral diplomacy to resolve regional problems that threaten the democratic and economic security of the peoples of the Americas, and to reinforce our bilateral and multilateral relationships with our hemispheric neighbors and between our shared hemispheric agenda and the rest of the world.

The promotion of peace, democracy, and good governance are core OAS concerns. The OAS adopted the flagship Inter-American Democratic Charter on September 11, 2001, in the shadow of the terrorist attacks against the United States.

Article 1 states: "The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it."

The Democratic Charter defines the essential elements of representative democracy in very specific terms, including: respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; holding free and fair elections; a pluralistic system of political parties and organizations; separation of powers; independence of the branches of government; freedom of expression and of the press; and constitutional subordination of all state institutions to the legally constituted civilian authority.

In the event that one of the OAS members should fail to uphold the essential elements of democratic life, the Democratic Charter allows a member state or the Secretary General to request an immediate convocation of the Permanent Council to consider the facts, deploy diplomatic efforts, or use other political mediation. If there is a clear interruption of democratic order, or if an undemocratic alteration is not remedied, the document calls for a General Assembly that may, among other things, suspend the offending government from the inter-American system, which requires a two-thirds vote of the member states.

At the 2005 OAS General Assembly-hosted by the United States for the first time since 1974 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida under the theme "Delivering the Benefits of Democracy"-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated: "The Democratic Charter must become the core of a principled, effective multilateralism for the Americas. Together, we must insist that leaders who are elected democratically have a responsibility to govern democratically."

The Declaration of Florida-and Resolutions 2154 and 2251, adopted at the 2005 and 2006 General Assemblies, respectively-mark an important multilateral commitment to advance the hemisphere's democratic agenda. Building on previous achievements of the inter-American community to address threats to democracy - Resolution 1080, the Washington Protocol and the Quebec Summit - the declaration and the accompanying resolutions empower and give the Secretary General a new mandate to develop initiatives to strengthen implementation of the Democratic Charter to proactively address threats to democracy.

In recent years, the OAS has invoked Resolution 1080, the Washington Protocol, and the Inter-American Democratic Charter on multiple occasions to support representative democracy in situations where republican government was threatened, including Haiti (1991), Peru (1992), Guatemala (1993), Paraguay (1996), and Venezuela (2002). With each new crisis, the OAS has strengthened its resolve to find peaceful, constitutional solutions to key political crises in the hemisphere.

The OAS has become the leading Election Observation organization in the hemisphere since its first 1990 mission to Nicaragua. The Organization has successfully observed presidential, legislative, regional and special elections throughout the hemisphere. Representing a multilateral organization, OAS observers are often able to establish closer relationships with and gain greater access to political and electoral institutions than other observer groups.

The OAS, in addition, has the institutional capacity to organize larger electoral missions and keep observers on the ground longer than other organizations.

In 2006, the newly formed OAS Secretariat for Political Affairs (SPA), led by former Argentine Foreign Minister Dante Caputo, wholly committed to a tripartite program of democracy promotion, good governance, and crisis prevention in the hemisphere. The SPA consists of a tripartite division into a Department for the Promotion of Democracy, Department for the Promotion of Governance, and a Department for Crisis Prevention and Special Missions.

The Secretariat for Political Affairs coordinates the OAS electoral missions, develops projects to consolidate democratic governance through cooperative work with legislatures and governments, political parties, grassroots civic development and civil society organizations. The SPA also provides advice and assistance in the modernization of electoral laws, civil and electoral registries, and civil administration. Finally, the SPA develops and manages crisis-prevention, peace-building, crisis resolution, and post-conflict recovery programs to hemispheric countries, including boundary dispute negotiation and a program for humanitarian demining in Central America and the Andean region.

Another means of strengthening democracy is the Justice Studies Center of the Americas, established by the November 1999 Special General Assembly. This center fulfills an important goal of the 1998 Santiago Summit and is the result of close consultations among Ministers of Justice, Attorneys General, and others interested in this initiative. The Center is located in Chile, and its primary task is to promote reform in the justice sector throughout the hemisphere, focusing in the first stage on criminal justice issues.

FIGHTING TERRORISM

OAS Foreign Ministers were meeting in Lima, Peru, on September 11, 2001, to adopt and sign the new Inter-American Democratic Charter. Their response to the terrorist attacks was an immediate condemnation and a focus on a united hemispheric response. They met again in Washington, DC. On September 21, 2001, to approve a resolution calling on member states to take effective measures to combat terrorism. At Brazil's initiative, the 22 signatories of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, known as the Rio Treaty, met and declared that an attack against one member is an attack against all and committed themselves to providing mutual assistance in the war against terrorism. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell told the assembled ministers: "We, the united democracies of the Western Hemisphere, join the world in the global campaign against terrorism. We have pledged to deny terrorists and their networks the ability to operate within our territories. We have resolved to hold to account all those responsible for aiding, financing, and otherwise supporting and harboring terrorists."

The Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE), reinvigorated in the wake of the September 11 attacks, met in Washington, DC on January 28-29, 2002, where Attorney General John Ashcroft headed the U.S. delegation. Delegates approved a work plan for CICTE to coordinate steps to prevent and combat terrorism in the hemisphere.

OAS members began negotiation of the text of the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism in November 2001, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, and a text was agreed upon in March 2002. The Convention commits state parties to endeavor to become party to ten international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism (listed in the Convention), consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1373. The Convention also commits state parties to take certain measures to prevent, combat, and eradicate the financing of terrorism and to deny safe haven to suspected terrorists.

The Treaty further requires that the terrorist acts covered under the specified international conventions and protocols be criminalized as predicate crimes to money laundering. The Convention provides for enhanced cooperation in a number of areas, including exchanges of information, border control measures, and law enforcement actions.

Opened for signature in June 2002, the OAS convention entered into force internationally on July 10, 2003, 30 days after the sixth signatory deposited its instrument of ratification. The Convention entered into force internationally on July 10, 2003, after six countries became party. On October 7, 2005, the U.S. Senate gave its advice and consent to the President's ratification of the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism. On November 2, 2005, President Bush signed the instrument of ratification.

The United States deposited the instrument of ratification at the Organization of American States headquarters in Washington, D.C. in a ceremony on November 15, 2005, and became party to the Convention 30 days thereafter in accordance with the Convention's terms.

The Convention is a powerful indication of this region's resolve to fight terrorism in all its forms, enhancing hemispheric security by improving regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism, denying safe haven to terrorists, and by facilitating the exchange of information, technical assistance, and training in a wide number of complex areas, including the prevention and eradication of terrorist financing, the improvement of border and customs controls, and the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of terrorist acts.

FOSTERING HEMISPHERIC SECURITY AND PROTECTING THE DEMOCRATIC STATE

In 1991, the 21st OAS General Assembly began examining security issues ranging from proliferation and arms transfers to "cooperation for hemispheric security." In 1995 the 25th General Assembly instructed the Permanent Council to establish the Committee on Hemispheric Security, which created the region's first permanent forum for the consideration of arms control, defense, nonproliferation, and security issues. The Committee on Hemispheric Security is composed of 34 member states and has a chairman and 3 vice-chairs that are elected for a 12-month period.

Since 1991, the OAS has built an impressive record of achievement in the development of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). These security accomplishments include: the March 1994 Buenos Aires governmental experts' meeting on CSBMs (the first regional dialogue on CSBMs); the November 10, 1995, "Declaration of Santiago on Confidence and Security Building Measures;" the February 1998 "Declaration of San Salvador;" the "2003 Miami Declaration on Confidence and Security Building Measures," a regional roster of CSBMs Experts; the world's first Register of Antipersonnel Landmines (APL); and two path breaking conventions: the 1999 Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisition, which entered into force in November 2002, and the 1998 Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

In 2002-03, OAS member states undertook a comprehensive review of the hemispheric security architecture, culminating in a Special Conference on Security that took place in Mexico in October 2003. The Declaration on Security in the Americas provides a practical guide for resolving interstate border tensions, lowering pressure for arms spending, promoting democratic norms, and fostering a climate of confidence, trust, transparency, and cooperation in our Hemisphere. In addition, the OAS has been active in preventive diplomacy. The OAS, with technical support from PAIGH, has provided cartographers, facilitators, conciliators, offered its good offices, and brokered agreements to resolve disputes between Belize and Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and El Salvador and Honduras.

The OAS has been involved in many conflict resolution and national reconciliation activities, such as disarmament and demobilization in Colombia.

HUMAN RIGHTS: THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION

Located in Washington, DC, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) is distinguished from other multilateral organizations' human rights entities by its political autonomy. Its seven commission members are elected in their own right, not as representatives of governments. IACHR autonomy is further enhanced by its prerogative to initiate human rights investigations without the approval of the Secretary General or the Permanent Council. In response to a Santiago Summit initiative, in 1998 the IACHR established a Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, with a mandate to support and promote freedom of the press.

Human rights in the inter-American system are based on the 1948 American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights. The United States signed the American Convention on Human Rights in 1977, but has not yet ratified it.

The IACHR and Inter-American Court of Human Rights-located in San Jose, Costa Rica-give the OAS an active and, at times, forceful role in promoting and protecting human rights. Through private persuasion and published reports on human rights infringements, the IACHR has been instrumental in improving OAS members' human rights practices and has helped to resolve conflicts. The IACHR's annual report has chapters on human rights problems in general, details regarding individual cases, and country status reports. The IACHR also publishes special reports, which have been effective in challenging abuses in specific countries. From 1990-94, special on-site reports on Haiti kept the international spotlight focused on the dire human rights situation there and were praised by local and international organizations. The IACHR played a key role in the 1989 release of almost 2,000 political prisoners held by the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

FIGHTING CORRUPTION

The 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas plan of action charged the OAS with finding a hemispheric approach to fight corruption. The Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, negotiated under OAS auspices during 1995-96, is the world's first comprehensive multilateral anticorruption agreement. The Convention entered into force on March 6, 1997, when Paraguay and Bolivia became the first countries to deposit their instruments of ratification. A total of 29 countries, including the United States, have now ratified or acceded to the Convention. The Convention provides for institutional development and enforcement of anticorruption measures by fostering mutual legal assistance, technical cooperation, extradition, and seizure of assets. The OAS Permanent Council's Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs has a Probity and Ethics Working Group that focuses on promoting effective implementa-

tion of the Convention. The OAS Department of International Legal Affairs (ILA) carries out activities, including workshops funded by the U.S., to assist member states in developing the preventive measures provided for in the Convention and in implementing anti-corruption activities specified in the Country Report recommendations published by the Committee of Experts to the Follow-up Mechanism of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption (MESISIC). The first Country Reports were published on Argentina, Colombia, Nicaragua and Paraguay. In September 2006, the U.S. provided a grant to the OAS, in the amount of $1,042,750, to establish an Inter-American Anti-Corruption Fund to support OAS member states in fulfilling their commitments under the Convention. Twenty-seven OAS Member States, including the U.S., are parties to the Follow-up Mechanism.

COMBATING DRUG ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING

The OAS narcotics program was launched at the Inter-American Specialized Conference on Traffic in Narcotic Drugs in April 1986—the first Western Hemisphere meeting to deal with all aspects of the drug problem. In accordance with the program of action adopted at that meeting, the OAS General Assembly in November 1986 created the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), which meets twice a year to direct the program and assess the drug situation in the hemisphere. Originally composed of 11 member governments, the commission has been expanded to 34 because of growing interest in the program and concern about the drug problem. The first projects were implemented in 1988. The program has identified five priority lines of action: development of domestic and international law, establishment of an inter-American drug information system, demand reduction, alternative development, and strengthening national drug commissions. CICAD's website is http://www.cicad.oas.org. In 1996, the OAS produced a counter-narcotics strategy that will guide collective actions in the 21st century, and in 1999, it established a multilateral evaluation mechanism (MEM), as mandated by the Santiago Summit of the Americas. Under the MEM, experts evaluate individual country submissions documenting efforts to combat drug abuse and trafficking; the first full round of evaluations was published in January 2003. The OAS also has produced internationally acclaimed model legislation on precursor chemicals and money laundering control.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND FREE TRADE

The Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) was created in 1996 when the Protocol of Managua charter amendments entered into force. CIDI replaced the Inter-American Economic and Social Council (CIES) and the Inter-American Council for Education, Science, and Culture (CIECC). CIDI is responsible for coordinating OAS development and technical cooperation activities in a partnership intended to attract financial support from donor countries, international development institutions, and other sources. CIDI's Permanent Executive Committee (CEPCIDI), the Inter-American Committee on Education, the Inter-American Committee on Culture, the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS), the Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology (COMCYT), the Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP), and other committees and ministerial-level meetings and their subgroups provide guidance and evaluation to the OAS secretariat on relevant policies, projects, and other activities. They also bring together technical and policymaking officials from the hemisphere to agree on joint priorities and initiatives. CIDI ministerials have been tasked by the Summit of the Americas with follow-up the implementation of initiatives in their specific fields.

On November 15, 1999, a Special General Assembly adopted the Statute of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD). Created as the result of a U.S. initiative, the IACD will maximize use of existing resources, improve the management and delivery of technical cooperation, and better position the OAS to attract additional external resources to finance technical cooperation. The IACD's management board, composed of nine elected member states, provides operational guidance, while policy guidance comes from CIDI in both its annual and sectoral ministerial level meetings, from CIDI's executive committee and subsidiary bodies. IACD's statutes entered into force on January 1, 2000. Members elected in 2006 to serve on the Management Board are the United States, Argentina, Bahamas, Colombia, El Salvador, Grenada, Mexico Nicaragua and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Secretary General appointed Ambassador Alfonso Quiñonez to the position of Executive Secretary for Integral Development and Director General of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development and the CIDI ratified his appointment on May 22, 2006.

CIDI's Special Multilateral Fund, known by its Spanish acronym FEMCIDI, is composed of the voluntary contributions of the member states. While a member state is free to decide the level of its commitment, once a pledge is made to this fund, the country is legally obligated to pay the amount pledged, and a country is not allowed to request projects unless it has pledged by the deadline established.

The projects presented must receive a favorable evaluation (conducted by outside experts) in order to be considered for funding. Projects chosen to be

funded are those that receive the highest evaluation scores within their individual sectoral accounts. Horizontal cooperation funds (provided by Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and the U.S.) provide further assistance to lesser developed and smaller economies.

The OAS Scholarships and Training Program awards an average of 360 graduate fellowships each year. There also is a small undergraduate scholarship program, available only to students from Caribbean and Central American nations. A third program finances travel to training courses offered by member states. Although these scholarships have to date been financed by the OAS Regular Fund (assessed quota payments by member states), a Capital Fund for Scholarships and Training has been established to attract outside funding.

For 25 years, the OAS has helped member states incorporate environmental considerations into development projects. International development institutions have recognized the organization's in-house expertise and leadership role, and a number of these institutions have undertaken cooperative initiatives with the OAS or contracted the organization to serve as an executing agency for their environmental projects. The biggest boost for the OAS' environmental efforts came at the 1996 Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The Santa Cruz Declaration and Plan of Action gave the OAS a strong mandate to coordinate follow-up to those decisions. At the policy level, this takes place through the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS), a meeting of government officials within the framework of CIDI. At the technical level, this occurs in the Inter-Agency Task Force, a group of representatives of technical cooperation agencies such as the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, UN programs, and U.S. and Canadian aid and environmental agencies. The OAS Secretariat's Unit for Sustainable Development and the Environment has a website at http://www.oas.org/usde; the Unit for Science and Technology has one at http://www.redhucyt.oas.org/ocyt.

The 1999 OAS General Assembly created a committee on civil society participation to develop mechanisms to accredit representatives from civil society and non-governmental organizations in OAS activities. The committee completed a set of guidelines, which the Permanent Council approved in December 1999. The OAS has a long history of cooperation with civil society organizations, which has been enhanced by the Summit of the Americas consultative process. Non-governmental organizations have made significant contributions to the work of the IACHR, the Sustainable Development and Environment Unit, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy, and CIDI. The new OAS civil society guidelines are designed to complement, but not modify the rules governing CIDI, its inter-American committees, and other inter-American specialized conferences and organizations. The guidelines establish an accreditation process similar to that used within the UN system.

The OAS trade unit, in cooperation with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), provides technical support to the negotiating groups created by the Miami Summit process to deal with issues involved in the creation of a Free Trade Area in the Americas (FTAA). The trade unit also has sponsored training courses on trade issues for officials from Latin American and Caribbean countries, held at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. The OAS' highly regarded trade information service, known as SICE, provides trade data and information on trade agreements, investment treaties and national regulations, as well as business directories and other sources of contacts, in a data bank at http://www.sice.oas.org. SICE also manages the FTAA website at http://www.ftaa-alca.org, in addition to the FTAA's Secure Document Distribution Service.

The Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), which has active private sector participation, provides an impartial forum for resolving issues of keen commercial interest, such as coordination of standards and radio frequency spectrum use. In response to a Santiago Summit mandate, CITEL is developing best practices guidelines for universal service and interconnection and working to reduce standards-based trade barriers. One particularly important CITEL accomplishment was the endorsement in October 1999 of the Inter-American Mutual Recognition Agreement for the Assessment of Conformity of Telecommunications Equipment, also a Santiago Summit initiative. CITEL is a semiautonomous entity that reports to the OAS General Assembly through the Permanent Council. CITEL's website is http://www.citel.oas.org.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Member states participated in the first OAS Trafficking in Persons Experts meeting in Margarita Island, Venezuela, March 14-17, 2006. The meeting yielded a number of positive recommendations and conclusions that were considered by the OAS Meeting of Ministers of Justice (REMJA VI) in April 2006 in Santo Domingo. OAS member states agreed to the importance of establishing anti-trafficking procedures and programs focusing on prevention initiatives, victim protection, prosecution of traffickers, and mechanisms for exchange of information and experiences. In an effort to ensure that discussions continue in an integrated and crosscutting approach, member states have agreed to encourage additional discussion in the Committee on Hemispheric Security. Anti-trafficking in persons programs, such as capacity building and awareness training are managed through the Department for the Prevention of Threats against Public Security's OAS coordinator. The official website is http://www.oas.org/atip.

ORGANIZATION

The General Secretariat is the permanent and central organ of the OAS, executing programs and policies decided upon by the General Assembly and the two councils. Directed by the Secretary General, it occupies a key position within the inter-American system and serves the entire organization and all member states. The Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General are elected by the General Assembly for 5-year terms. They can be reelected once and cannot be succeeded by a person of the same nationality.

Senior secretariat officials appointed by the Secretary General include the assistant secretaries for legal affairs and management, the director general of the development agency (IACD), the executive secretaries of the commission of women (CIM) and the drug abuse control commission (CICAD), the directors of various units, including trade and promotion of democracy, and the executive director of the human rights commission. Secretariat personnel conduct the activities of all the OAS units and serve as the staff for the commissions, councils, and other bodies.

The staff of the General Secretariat is composed of personnel chosen mainly from the member states, with consideration given to geographic representation. Staff members are considered international civil servants. The OAS Secretariat also maintains a small office in many member states.

The General Assembly is the supreme organ of the OAS. It holds a regular session each year, either in one of the member states or at headquarters in Washington, DC. In special circumstances, and with the approval of two-thirds of the member states, the Permanent Council can convoke a special session of the General Assembly. Delegations are usually headed by foreign ministers. In addition to deliberating on current issues, the General Assembly approves the program-budget; sets the bases for fixing member-state quota assessments; establishes measures for coordinating the activities of the organs, agencies, and entities of the OAS; and determines the general standards that govern the operation of the General Secretariat. General Assembly decisions usually take the form of resolutions, which must be approved by a majority of all members (two-thirds for agenda, budget, and certain other questions).

A consultation meeting of foreign ministers can be called by any member state, either "to consider problems of an urgent nature and of common interest to the American States" (as stated in the OAS Charter) or to serve as an organ of consultation in cases of armed attack or other threats to international peace and security (per the Rio Treaty). In either case, the request must be directed to the Permanent Council of the OAS, which decides by absolute majority vote if the meeting is to be called. In cases between member states, the affected parties are excluded from voting. Should an armed attack take place within the territory of an American state or within the Western Hemisphere security zone defined by the Rio Treaty, a meeting of consultation is held without delay. Until the ministers of foreign affairs can assemble, the Permanent Council is empowered to act as a provisional organ of consultation and make decisions.

The Permanent Council, composed of ambassadors representing each member state, usually meets every two weeks throughout the year in Washington, DC. The council, its standing committees, and special working groups conduct the day-to-day business of the OAS, which involves implementing mandates from the General Assemblies, designing and assessing activities to promote democracy and strengthen human rights, considering requests from members, debating and approving resolutions on current issues, and dealing with reports from subsidiary organs.

In an emergency, a special session of the council can be called immediately by its chairman or at the request of any member. The chair rotates every three months, in alphabetical order. Unlike the UN Security Council, no member can exercise a veto in the Permanent Council. OAS members place great importance on obtaining consensus before decisions are made. The Permanent Council also serves provisionally as the organ of consultation (for meetings of foreign ministers) and every year acts as the preparatory committee for the General Assembly.

The Inter-American Council for Integral Development meets annually at the ministerial level; its subsidiary entities meet more frequently. CIDI also convokes ministerial-level sectoral meetings in areas such as labor, education, social development, sustainable development and culture to consider specialized issues in the priority areas of the Strategic Plan.

SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER ENTITIES

Much important inter-American business is conducted by separate entities, some of which are independent, some fully or partially funded by the OAS, and others consisting simply of periodic hemispheric meetings which receive support from the OAS Secretariat. Subjects covered include agriculture, labor, copyrights, private international law, highways, ports and harbors, railways, telecommunications, health and sanitation, statistics, travel, child welfare, women's issues, Indian affairs, and tourism. The conferences are attended by high-level officials and technical experts to further inter-American cooperation in these fields.

The Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN), founded in 1927 and headquartered in Montevideo, Uruguay, is concerned with the problems of minors and families, including trafficking, child labor, commercial sexual exploitation, international abduction of minors by one of their parents, and war-affected children. It serves as a center for social action and programs in the fields of health,

education, social legislation, legislation on adoptions, social service, and statistics. IIN has contributed extensively to international jurisprudence in the field of family law; the most recent example of this work is model legislation on intercountry adoption. IIN's website is http://www.iin.oas.org.

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), established in 1928, was the first international organization focusing on women's issues. It works to extend the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of women in the hemisphere. Now concerned with women's integration into development and decision-making processes, domestic violence, trafficking in persons, and women's human rights, CIM research and seminars have focused on women and politics, women and employment, violence against women and most recently HIV/AIDS. The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem do Para) was drafted under the auspices of the CIM. It was opened for signature at the OAS General Assembly in 1994 and has been signed by 32 OAS members. In April 2000, the CIM ministerial approved the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality. CIM's website is http://www.oas.org/cim.

The Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) is an entity of the Organization of American States of the OAS. Its statutes were recently adopted during the a special session of the OAS General Assembly. Under the statutes, the Board's central role is to provide the OAS and its member states with technical, educational and consultancy services on matters related to military and defense issues in the hemisphere in order to contribute to the fulfillment of the OAS Charter.

The IADB has as one of its principal organizations the Inter-American Defense College, established in 1962. The College is the preeminent hemispheric institution dedicated to developing and providing opportunities to military officers and civilian officials from OAS member states for advanced academic courses related to military and defense issues, the inter-American system and related disciplines. Over the past decade 20% of the student enrollment has been civilians. Instruction is based on distinguished speakers from throughout the hemisphere who are experts on matters of defense in the Americas.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the first of the regional development banks, was established in 1959 to provide lending attuned to the development needs of Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition to nations of the hemisphere, 15 European nations plus Japan and Israel are now members, but only Latin American and Caribbean members are eligible borrowers. The IDB's ordinary capital window provides development funds at market-related terms, while its Fund for Special Operations offers financing at concessional terms for projects in countries classified as economically less developed. The bank's website is http://www.iadb.org.

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA), founded in 1942 and headquartered in San Jose, Costa Rica, assists member states in promoting agricultural health and food safety, strengthening national agricultural institutional systems, and building trade capacity in agricultural commodities.

IICA supports efforts to increase agricultural productivity, employment opportunities in rural sectors, and rural participation in development activities. IICA also has an excellent record in preventing the spread of threatening animal and plant diseases and in helping members develop sustainable methods of food production. Policy direction comes from ministers of agriculture in each member country, who form the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (IABA). IICA's website is http://www.iica.int.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), created in 1902, has served as the Western Hemisphere arm of the UN World Health Organization (WHO) since 1948. It coordinates hemispheric efforts to combat disease and promote physical and mental health. It has contributed significantly to eradicating communicable diseases and promoting improved sanitation and health conditions. PAHO's website is http://www.paho.org.

The Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), headquartered in Mexico City, encourages the coordination, standardization, and publication of regional geographic, historical, cartographic, and geophysical studies. Member countries receive information and technical assistance for the sustainable development of their natural resources. PAIGH also assists member countries in identifying risks posed by natural disasters and has provided technical expertise to assist in mapping disputed borders between member countries.

Established in 1928, PAIGH preserves and documents historical data through research and publication. It also facilitates cooperative relationships between U.S. agencies and other countries in such vital areas as aviation safety and natural disaster mitigation. The organization is in the initial phase of developing a "global map of the Americas" which will assist in the decision making process within the countries of the hemisphere. PAIGH's website is http://www.ipgh.org.

The Inter-American Indian Institute (IAII), created by the Patzcuaro Convention in 1940 and headquartered in Mexico City, initiates, coordinates, and directs research to promote better understanding of the health, education, and economic and social problems of Indian populations. It provides a forum for government representatives to discuss approaches to address the many challenges facing indigenous communities in the Americas. The U.S. withdrew from the IAII in December 2000.

The Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) is a quasi-public international organization that, although created by the OAS in 1962, receives more than half its financial support from U.S. corporations and other private sources. Intended to serve as a social service partner for corporations operating in Latin American and the Caribbean, PADF has channeled more than $100 million into development projects that mobilize private sector support in recipient countries. It also coordinates disaster relief. The PADF qualifies for charitable donations under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). PADF's website is http://www.padf.org.

THE U.S. AND THE OAS

The U.S. Mission to the Organization of American States (OAS) is headed by U.S. Permanent Representative Hector E. Morales. The OAS is the premier multilateral forum in the Western Hemisphere. Its 35 members are countries from North, South, and Central America, the Caribbean, and Canada. The charter of the OAS states that its basic objectives are to:

- strengthen peace and security;
- promote the effective exercise of representative democracy;
- ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes among members;
- provide for common action in the event of aggression;
- seek solutions to political, juridical, and economic problems that may arise;
- promote, by cooperative action, economic, social, educational, scientific, and cultural development; and
- limit conventional weapons so as to devote greater resources to economic and social development.

As a member of the OAS, the United States is committed to strengthening and working with the organization. This reflects the U.S. Government's determination to make optimal use of multilateral diplomacy to resolve regional problems and to engage its neighbors on topics of hemispheric concern.

OAS and U.S. Officials

Secretary General: Jose Miguel Insulza (Chile), assumed charge May 26, 2005.

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U.S. ACCOMPLISHMENTS AT THE SPECIAL SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

November 1, 2005

At the Fourth Summit of the Americas, President Bush joined the other 33 democratically elected leaders of the Western Hemisphere in addressing common 21st Century challenges. In particular, the leaders focused on:

- Creating decent job opportunities, especially for the region's poor;
- Creating conditions to achieve sustained economic growth through greater trade and development;
- Fighting poverty; and
- Strengthening democratic governance and institutions.

The President encouraged his fellow leaders to make the strategic leap from commitment to achievement, and emphasized that words must lead to tangible results. President Bush and the United States will continue to lead and work for greater prosperity, security, and opportunity for the people of this hemisphere. At the Summit the President specifically raised the following programs for the hemisphere.

Infrastructure Facility Of The Americas: President Bush made available funds to launch a new institution to assess infrastructure project proposals from private and public sponsors. The Facility will promote high-return, job-creating projects by providing assessments and advice on: (1) engineering feasibility; (2) economic feasibility; (3) financial structure; and (4) public concession tendering, legal matters, and implementation.

United States and Uruguay Sign Bilateral Investment Treaty: The agreement demonstrates U.S. commitment to create new economic opportunities together with those countries in the hemisphere that are willing to help themselves by implementing sound economic policies. The United States is Uruguay's largest trading partner, and the stock of U.S. foreign direct investment in Uruguay was $533 million in 2004.

Central American and Caribbean Fund: The U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) will invite proposals from qualified private sector fund managers to organize a Central America and Caribbean Fund that could reach $135 million. The Fund will invest predominately in companies operating in the following countries: Barbados, Belize, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

Opportunity Zones: President Bush urged Heads of State to join him in developing Opportunity Zones in five to be identified countries. These programs through public and private cooperatives, encourage new business ownership opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged citizens.

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Reform: The President called for the shareholders of the IDB to implement measures that will better employ the bank's assets, encourage accountability and performance, and address the debt sustainability of the poorest countries in the region, including through grants and debt relief.

Private Sector Disaster Relief: The President announced that three distinguished private sector leaders—Steven S Reinemund, Robert W. Lane and Maria Elena Lagomasino—have agreed to launch a nationwide effort to encourage private donations for relief and reconstruction in response to the three recent hurricanes that struck Central America.

Protecting Children: President Bush announced strong American support for a significantly expanded effort over the next four years in Latin America and the Caribbean to remove children from exploitative work and provide them with educational opportunities. In support of the above goals, the United States Department of Labor has committed $16 million to continue and expand our fight against the worst forms of child labor in the Americas.

Commerce, Industry And Economy Ministerial On Competitiveness: President Bush recommended that the OAS convene the first ever joint Commerce, Industry and Economy Ministerial to bring high-level officials together to focus on competitiveness. This unprecedented meeting will identify concrete actions that governments may take alone, or in concert, to enhance the region's ability to compete more successfully in the global marketplace.

OSCE

Last updated: March 2008

Official Name:
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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PROFILE

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is a multilateral forum involving all European states and several Central Asian countries, as well as the United States and Canada.

The original Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was formalized in Helsinki, Finland, on August 1, 1975, when 35 leaders from Europe and North America signed the Final Act or Helsinki Accords. This document is a politically binding agreement composed of three major parts ("baskets") addressing military, economic, and human rights issues. The Helsinki Final Act initiated a diplomatic process—the "Helsinki Process"—with periodic review conferences to assess its implementation and elaborate/extend its provisions. Summits were held in: Helsinki (1975), Paris (1990), Helsinki (1992), Budapest (1994), Lisbon (1996), and Istanbul (1999). At the Budapest Summit, CSCE was renamed OSCE, effective January 1, 1995, and most of its bodies were renamed and given new or additional responsibilities.

The OSCE has adopted several important measures. The Vienna Document of 1994 (VD-94) builds upon the Vienna Document of 1992 and enhances several confidence- and security-building measures. The 1995 Global Exchange of Military Information (GEMI) requires members to exchange detailed information on conventional armaments/equipment and military personnel. In addition, a Defense Planning measure requires members to improve transparency regarding the size, structure, training, and equipment of armed forces. Finally, the program for Military Contacts and Cooperation involves exchanges and liaison arrangements.

The OSCE is based in Vienna. Delegations of OSCE participants meet almost daily in the framework of the Permanent Council to discuss and decide on a wide range of political and security issues. The Chairman-in-Office (C-I-O) of the OSCE, the Foreign Minister of an OSCE state, has overall responsibility for executive action. The C-I-O is assisted by the Troika, which is made up of the preceding, current, and succeeding Chairmen.

The OSCE also has a Secretary General that supports the C-I-O in all aspects of his activities and serves as the Chief Administrative Officer. The Secretariat provides operational support to the Organization. OSCE also has the Conflict Prevention Center to support implementation of CSBMs, and a Forum for Security Cooperation to conduct negotiations on European security and arms control and disarmament, review implementation of CSBMs, and organize the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting.

OSCE Member States

There are 56 member states: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, and Uzbekistan.

There are also 11 partners for cooperation: Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Mongolia, Morocco, Thailand, Tunisia, and South Korea.

FORUM FOR SECURITY COOPERATION

The Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), created in 1992 at the Helsinki Summit of the former Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), is an integral part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its principal forum for discussing/negotiating arms control and security issues. The FSC opened in Vienna on September 22, 1992, and has been meeting on a continuous basis, under rotating chairmanships in Vienna, Austria ever since. From September 2003 to January 2004, the United States will assume the FSC chairmanship. The FSC is responsible for conducting negotiations on arms control, disarmament and confidence/security-building measures (CSBMs).

In December 2001, the FSC was tasked to: address those aspects of new security challenges falling within its mandate, and update its activities accordingly; be closely connected with the overall OSCE work on current security issues; facilitate implementation of existing politico-military commitments; and serve as a venue to negotiate new measures in order to enhance security by fostering stability, transparency and predictability.

At the December 2002 OSCE Ministerial, the Foreign Ministers of its then 55 member states (including the United States) declared that arms control and CSBMs remain indispensable to the U.S. comprehensive approach to security and tasked the FSC to contribute to common responses to emerging security challenges. They added that OSCE has a unique role in promoting democracy, peace and stability throughout the Euro-Atlantic region by building confidence through dialogue, transparency and addressing the root causes of threats to stability.

FSC Activities: 1992-2002

- Monitoring/improving the implementation of Vienna Document 1999 of the Negotiations on Confidence-and Security-Building Measures, a political document containing major CSBMs agreed to by OSCE member states.
- Conducting an Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting to review the status and enhance full implementation of all agreed CSBMs by the OSCE participating states.
- Reviewing the implementation of other OSCE commitments, including: Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security; OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons; Principles Governing Non-Proliferation; and Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers.
- Remaining informed of the status of implementation of regional agreements, such as those in accordance with Annex 1-B of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Articles II, IV and V).
- Strengthening efforts by FSC member states to prevent and combat terrorism as mandated by the Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism.

Additional FSC Activities for 2003

- Implementing a Charter on Combating Terrorism.
- Developing a strategy to address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st century.
- Implementing an Annual Security Review Conference.

OPEN SKIES TREATY

The Treaty on Open Skies establishes a regime of unarmed aerial observation flights over the entire territory of its participants. The Treaty is designed to enhance mutual understanding and confidence by giving all participants, regardless of size, a direct role in gathering information about military forces and activities of concern to them. Open Skies is the most wide-ranging international effort to date to promote openness and transparency of military forces and activities.

The original concept of mutual aerial observation was proposed by President Eisenhower in 1955; the Treaty itself was an initiative of President George H.W. Bush in 1989. The Treaty was negotiated by the then-members of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and was signed in Helsinki, Finland, on March 24, 1992. The United States ratified it in 1993. The Treaty entered into force on January 1, 2002.

Membership

The 35 States party to the Open Skies Treaty are: Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States. The Treaty depositaries are Canada and Hungary.

The Open Skies regime covers the national territories—land, islands, and internal and territorial waters - of all the States Parties, and thus includes the territory of most member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Treaty is of unlimited duration and open to accession by other states as follows:

- States of the former Soviet Union that have not already become States Parties to the Treaty may accede to it at any time;
- Other members of the OSCE may apply for accession to the Treaty at any time;

- Any other interested state may apply for accession to the Treaty six months after it enters into force (i.e., from July 1, 2002 onward).

All applications for accession (i.e., categories 2 and 3 above) are subject to a consensus decision by the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC), the Vienna-based organization charged with facilitating implementation of the Treaty, to which all States Parties belong.

Basic Elements

Territory. The Treaty specifies that all territory of the States Parties is open to observation on a reciprocal basis. Observed States Parties may restrict observation flights only for reasons of flight safety and not for reasons of national security.

Aircraft. Observation aircraft may be provided by either the observing state party or (the "taxi option") by the observed state party, at the latter's choice. All Open Skies aircraft and sensors must pass specific certification and pre-flight inspection procedures to ensure that they meet Treaty standards and that only Treaty-permitted sensors are installed. The official U.S. Open Skies aircraft is the OC-135B (a military version of the Boeing 707).

Sensors. Open Skies aircraft may have video, optical panoramic and framing cameras for daylight photography, infrared line scanners for a day/night capability, and synthetic aperture radar for a day/night all weather capability. Photographic image quality will permit recognition of major military equipment (e.g., permit a State Party to distinguish between a tank and a truck), thus allowing significant transparency of military forces and activities. Sensor categories may be added and capabilities improved by agreement among States Parties. All equipment used in Open Skies must be commercially available to all participants in the regime.

Quotas. Each State Party has agreed to an annual quota of observation flights it is willing to receive - its passive quota of observation flights. Each State Party may conduct as many observation flights—its active quota—as its passive quota. During the first three years after EIF, each State will be obliged to accept no more than seventy-five percent of its passive quota. Since the overall annual passive quota for the United States is 42, this means that it will be obligated to accept no more than 31 observation flights a year during this three-year period.

Data Sharing/Availability. Collected imagery from Open Skies missions will be available to any State Party willing to pay the costs of reproduction. The Treaty provides that at the request of any State Party, the observing state will provide it a copy of the data collected during a mission over the observed state. As a result, the data available to each State Party is much greater than that which it can collect itself under the Treaty quota system.

Implementation

Provisional application of portions of the Treaty took place from signature in 1992 until entry into force in 2002. During that period, participants conducted joint trial flights for the purpose of training flight crews and testing equipment and sensors. Now that the Treaty has entered into force, formal observation flights began in August 2002—in accordance with the agreed distribution of active and passive quotas. Since the signature of the Open Skies Treaty in 1992, the security environment in Europe has changed significantly.

Nevertheless, the Open Skies Treaty remains an important element of the European security structure, along with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), and the Vienna Document 1999 Agreement on Confidence-and Security-Building Measures (CSBMS) under the auspices of the OSCE.

OSCE AND U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVES

March 1, 2007

Overview

U.S. participation in the OSCE advances America's interest in promoting democracy, strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and furthering arms control, economic prosperity and sustainable environmental policies. The pillars of the March 2006 U.S. National Security Strategy—promoting freedom, justice, human dignity, and effective democracies—are also the OSCE's prime objectives. The OSCE also has a role to play in helping to win the global war against terrorism through a number of initiatives in the areas of arms control, border and travel document security, and advancing freedom, security, and prosperity. Promoting these and other interests collectively through the OSCE allows the United States to share costs and political responsibility with other states and, at the same time, to coordinate actions to avoid duplication and maximize success.

Promoting democracy and respect for human rights is fundamental to achieving sustainable security in Europe and Eurasia. The OSCE's core democracy and human rights mission is crucial to that effort. All OSCE participating states have accepted the same commitments to respect fundamental freedoms and human rights, and all are being held to the same standards on implementation of those commitments. The United States is committed to expanding activities in the security and economic/environmental dimensions and preserving OSCE democracy and human rights promotion activities, including the important election observation work done by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

The U.S. contribution (and related costs) to the OSCE's field missions and OSCE extra-budgetary contributions in the region were funded in FY

2006 through the Support for Eastern European Democracy (SEED) and FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) accounts. The U.S. contribution to the OSCE was approximately $36 million in FY 2006, including funds from Diplomatic and Consular Programs (D&CP), FSA, and SEED accounts. The estimated FY 2007 contribution is $42.5 million.

Promoting Democracy

Drawing on a time-tested standardized methodology, OSCE election observation missions enjoy worldwide respect for their objectivity and credibility. The electoral workload has been challenging, even for an organization with as much experience as the OSCE. In 2006, the OSCE conducted ten election observation and assessment missions, most notably in Ukraine, Serbia, Tajikistan, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus. In those countries and elsewhere, ODIHR assisted with expertise to improve presidential and parliamentary elections and/or to provide robust election observation missions that documented the degree to which elections met OSCE commitments and international standards. In Ukraine, for example, the OSCE undertook several programs in cooperation with the Government of Ukraine to improve the reliability of voter lists and improve electoral laws. These and other changes greatly contributed to the 2006 parliamentary elections' transparency, which were widely considered to be the freest and fairest in Ukrainian history.

The United States invited ODIHR to observe the November 2006 mid-term congressional elections. The group of ODIHR experts subsequently produced a report on U.S. election methodologies, including improvements since the 2004 presidential election and areas for further improvement. The United States has welcomed ODIHR's election assistance and continues to engage in productive dialogue with its representatives.

ODIHR's election observation methodology, based on sound, standardized criteria applied in an objective and fair manner, represents the gold standard in this field. It served as the model and inspiration for the UN's 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and its accompanying Code of Conduct. Despite that success, there continue to be calls by some states, most notably Russia, to review election-related commitments and revise ODIHR's methodology in an effort to undermine ODIHR's autonomy or effectiveness. The United States considers ODIHR's methodology and practice to be sound and objective, needing at most minor fine-tuning to build on its accumulated experience. The real issue is not methodology but the lack of political will among some participating states to implement existing commitments and to allow the voice of the electorate to be heard. We will continue to lead by example and call on states to act on ODIHR's post-election recommendations and to allow ODIHR to continue its important electoral work undeterred.

Fight Against Intolerance

The OSCE tackles the challenges of intolerance and discrimination through programs and projects in the fields of legislative reform, law enforcement training, capacity building for tolerance-focused NGOs, education on the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, and all forms of anti-ethnic, racial or religious prejudice projects to counter media manifestations of hate, while still protecting freedom of expression. The United States has provided significant political and financial support to the activities of the OSCE's ODIHR in these areas and elsewhere.

Thanks to intense efforts by the U.S. Government, in close collaboration with NGO partners, the OSCE in 2005 appointed three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office on tolerance issues. Throughout 2006, these Representatives—on Anti-Semitism, on Intolerance Against Muslims, and on Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, Including Against Christians and Members of Other Religions—traveled to OSCE states to raise awareness of OSCE commitments and to spread support for projects to assist states in implementing these commitments. The United States strongly supported their reappointment by the Spanish chairmanship in early 2007. The representatives work closely with ODIHR in a cooperative environment, but are free to travel and undertake new projects independent of ODIHR. They also take part in NGO roundtables and OSCE expert meetings throughout the year. The United States supports the Spanish goal of reviewing the role of the three representatives with a view to enhancing their effectiveness.

The OSCE's Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance, held in Cordoba in June 2005, kept the spotlight on anti-Semitism as well as other tolerance issues—racism, xenophobia, and anti-Muslim and anti-Christian discrimination. The United States is working closely with Romania, the new Spanish Chairmanship and other States to develop a high-level conference on Combating Discrimination, Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, Following Up On the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance, that will take place in Bucharest in June 2007.

The tolerance decisions approved at the 2005 Ljubljana and 2006 Brussels ministerial meetings called for strengthened implementation of OSCE tolerance commitments in participating states and provided enhanced commitments in the fields of legislation, law enforcement, education, and the media, underscoring the need for governments to speak out against all acts and manifestations of hate. We continue to encourage the OSCE to step up ODIHR education programs to counter intolerance against Muslims and to increase its tolerance work and its training on media freedom in, and with the full cooperation of, the Mediterranean partner states.

Individual projects on law enforcement training and Holocaust education have been introduced in several states in Western Europe and Eurasia. Three expert-level seminars in

2006—on hate crimes data collection, tolerance education, and intercultural dialogue—have provided platforms for the launch of new ODIHR projects. ODIHR's ongoing work to build NGO capacity to combat intolerance allows the OSCE, its participating states, and civil society to work in concert, thus multiplying the effects of our individual efforts to promote mutual understanding and respect for diversity, and in this way to contribute to democracy and stability throughout the OSCE region.

Anti-Trafficking Efforts

Trafficking in persons is a transnational problem, requiring engagement with multiple foreign governments and NGOs.

this makes it ideal for OSCE attention. The Maastricht Action Plan of 2003 on combating trafficking in human beings has provisions for specialized police training, legislative advice, and other assistance, which are being provided by ODIHR and the field missions. The OSCE's Special Representative for Trafficking and the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit are supporting these efforts, in particular by providing the framework and coordination within the OSCE to expand states' combined efforts. The OSCE has taken the lead in the international community in establishing a strong code of conduct for its mission personnel to ensure that they do not encourage trafficking. This issue was addressed on a broader scale with the adoption at the 2005 Ljubljana ministerial of steps to prevent international mission members and peacekeeping troops from contributing to trafficking in persons. The OSCE has also crafted an economic component to its anti-trafficking plan directed toward at-risk individuals in source countries and businesses that might be misused by traffickers, such as hotels and tour operators exploiting the sex trade. The aim is to reduce demand in destination countries by raising awareness about the plight of victims trafficked for purposes of labor and commercial sexual exploitation.

Border Management and Security

At the 2005 OSCE ministerial conference, OSCE states adopted a "Border Security Management Concept," by which they committed to promoting previously agreed OSCE standards for open and secure borders in a free, democratic, and more integrated OSCE area. Now, the OSCE is working to find new ways to facilitate capacity building for border services and reinforce cross-border co-operation in the OSCE region.

The OSCE trained 800 Georgia border guards in a training assistance mission that ended in June 2006 and was replaced by a program (2006-2007) to train trainers in the reconstituted Georgia Border Guards in the Ministry of Interior. The United States will continue to work with the OSCE throughout 2007 to find ways to help targeted states, such as Tajikistan.

Combating the Threat of Illicit Drugs

In October 2006, the OSCE conducted, together with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), an expert workshop to address the threat of illicit drugs. The United States used the forum to highlight the need for increased attention to the issue and to promote increased international cooperation through existing tools. The U.S. Government works through our embassies to ensure that U.S.-funded OSCE projects are coordinated with our bilateral programs.

OSCE Field Missions

In 2006, the OSCE, through its field missions and institutions, carried out, with the concurrence of the host governments, an ambitious range of activities that support political stability and democratic and economic development.

Ukraine: The Yushchenko Administration, which took office after the dramatic events of the Orange Revolution in 2004, has been more willing than its predecessors to expand the scope of OSCE activities in Ukraine. The OSCE's project coordinator in Ukraine (PCU) continues to develop and implement projects in all three of OSCE's dimensions. The PCU was actively involved in promoting transparency, civil society, and the rule of law for the parliamentary and local elections held on March 26, 2006. To help strengthen the electoral process, the PCU worked with the Ukrainian Central Election Commission to develop a new, computerized, voter registry and to help implement the new election law. To increase public awareness of the elections and improve coordination of the OSCE's election-related activities with local authorities, the PCU set up regional centers throughout Ukraine.

The PCU and the regional centers continue to build on their efforts to provide ethics training for journalists on covering elections, information to Ukrainian citizens on their legal rights as voters, the judicial system relating to the election process, and to assist local authorities in updating voter lists. The PCU continues to implement projects to support the transition of former Ukrainian military personnel to civilian life through seminars on entitlements and retraining opportunities, assist the Ukraine judicial system and legislature to resolve contradictions between civil and commercial codes, increase public awareness of trafficking in persons, and promote economic capacity-building. Finally, at the end of 2006, the PCU began implementation of a project to destroy dangerous stockpiles of old ammunition at Novobogdanovka.

Georgia: The OSCE Mission helps Georgia to continue its development into a liberal, market-based democracy. The Mission's election reform efforts continue, with training for the election commission and NGOs as well as with support for strengthening local self-government. The Mission assists with the integration of persons belonging to national minorities. The Mission supports the monitoring of official anti-corruption initiatives, the development of small- and medium-size enterprises by offering entrepreneurial training, and

water management in the Black Sea and Caspian basins. The Mission supports the professional capacity of regional outlets and is assisting in the establishment of a public broadcasting service. The Mission offers human rights training at state institutions, monitors and handles human rights cases, and assists authorities and civil society in fighting trafficking and torture. The Mission has major programs to help reform the justice and penal systems. The United States supports a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. Resolution of the Georgia-South Ossetia conflict remains a major OSCE priority, and the Mission participates in the work of existing conflict resolution mechanisms, such as the Joint Control Commission and meetings in Vienna. The Mission's winter 2006 Needs Assessment Study for South Ossetia led to a donors' conference that raised pledges for short- and long-term projects, now being implemented, that bring ethnic Georgians and Ossetians together and benefit all residents of the conflict zone. The Mission supports weapon destruction and recycling throughout Georgia. The Border Guards Training Program of 2006-2007 will have trained a cadre of trainers by the time it ends in June 2007. Reform of policing in Georgia will continue, with a special focus on coordinated international efforts.

Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the Istanbul Commitments: On May 30, 2005, Georgia and Russia agreed on a Joint Statement addressing key remaining issues relating to the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit commitments on Russian forces in Georgia. Since then, withdrawals have continued from two Russian bases. Issues remain regarding the withdrawal from a third Russian base at Gudauta. The joint statement also identified other steps that Georgia and Russia have agreed to take in order to complete the Istanbul commitments.

Moldova and Transnistria: The OSCE and its Mission in Moldova are working to find long-term solutions to the situation in the breakaway region of Transnistria. The United States strongly supports the work of the OSCE in Moldova, which assists in our own strategy—as well as that of the EU—for finding a peaceful resolution that respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Moldova. The United States has urged all sides to work transparently with the OSCE to make concrete progress toward a political settlement, and has urged Russia to fulfill the commitments it made during the OSCE's 1999 Istanbul Summit to complete withdrawal of its forces from Moldova.

In late 2005, the two sides and three mediators of the conflict negotiations (Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE) agreed to invite the United States and the EU to join the talks as observers. While this was a positive step, there was little progress during the next several rounds of negotiations due in large part to Transnistrian intransigence, such as on proposals to reduce tensions through sharing military data and permitting the inspection of Transnistrian military-industrial enterprises. In March 2006, the Transnistrian side suspended its participation in the talks over the decision by the Ukrainian government to implement its bilateral customs agreement with Moldova and to invite the EU to assist in monitoring the Ukraine-Moldova border. There was no progress during 2006 on fulfillment of Russia's 1999 Istanbul commitment on military withdrawal from Moldova. The United States and NATO allies have made clear that they regard fulfillment of Istanbul commitments on both Georgia and Moldova as essential for NATO allies to move forward with ratification of the adapted CFE Treaty.

Belarus: The Government of Belarus' unabated repression of fundamental freedoms and human rights remains a significant concern of the United States and many other OSCE participating states. The United States welcomed the Belarusian invitation to the OSCE to observe the March 19 presidential elections, but was deeply concerned by increasing attacks by the Belarusian government against the political opposition, independent newspapers, and civil society in the run-up to the elections. The OSCE has played a crucial role in the international community's efforts to address Belarusian authorities' harassment and detention of the opposition and independent media before and after the Belarusian election. The OSCE office in Minsk has offered to help Belarusian authorities meet OSCE commitments and to help NGO groups work for the benefit of the country.

it has also been able to meet with political prisoners in jail and report on developments in the country. However, the government continues to stymie the office's work. It insists on a cumbersome government approval process for all office projects and has criticized the office's reporting activities. The United States coordinated closely with the EU and other concerned partners to bring public pressure to bear on the Belarusian government to live up to its OSCE commitments.

The Balkans: The majority of the OSCE's resources continue to be invested in missions in the Balkans, a legacy of the OSCE's major role before and after the Balkan wars. In general, missions in the Balkans, many of which originated as part of immediate post-conflict international stabilization efforts, are much larger than the field presences in the former Soviet Union. Overall, the OSCE's work in the Balkans is a success story.

Problems that still require assistance in the form of resources and attention of the international community include trafficking of drugs, weapons and human beings, and organized crime.

OSCE success stories in the Balkans include:

- **Kosovo:** the development of functioning institutions at central government and municipal levels, and the creation of a model police school.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** substantial progress toward the formation of a unified and professional military.

- **Macedonia:** inter-ethnic cooperation and integration in the wake of 2001 violence; elections and human rights monitoring.

- **Serbia:** legislative, judicial and police reform; reconciliation and stabilization in South Serbia.

- **Croatia:** development of democratic institutions; training of police; enhancement of media freedom.

- **Albania:** judicial and election reform; police assistance.

- **Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia:** capacity building for domestic war crimes trials.

- **Region-wide:** government transparency and accountability; capacity building and awareness-raising to combat trafficking in human beings; promotion of NGOs and civil society; progress on return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Eighty percent of all OSCE field mission personnel are working in the seven Balkan missions (the other eleven missions, in the former Soviet Union, make up the remaining twenty percent). At the urging of the United States, the OSCE has made some progress in reducing the size and budgets of its Balkans' missions, but additional reductions are needed.

Kosovo: During 2006, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) expanded its field presence by establishing municipal monitoring teams of human rights and democratization officers in each of Kosovo's 30 municipalities. Roughly half of OMiK's staff of 1,000 is now deployed throughout Kosovo while the other half continues to work out of its main headquarters in Pristina. The expansion of the field presence has improved OMiK's ability to monitor and report on developments in the municipalities and to serve as the international community's eyes and ears in the field once a status settlement is reached. The Mission has continued to perform its traditional institution- and democracy-building functions. It also played an important role in monitoring human rights, building local governing capacity, and contributing to the development of a professional police and judiciary.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: As the overall international presence continues to draw down, the work of the OSCE Mission remains essential for assisting BiH's democratic transition. The Mission played a key role in helping the government develop its military reform laws, which have created a single, national armed forces under civilian control. Passage of this legislation constituted a major step in fulfilling the requirements for future NATO membership. In addition, the Mission has focused on education reform in a country where many schools are still ethnically divided; trial monitoring (particularly of war crimes and human trafficking trials) to ensure fairness in the judicial system; public administration reform to improve governance at the local level; and overall political reform following the October 2006 national elections. The Mission monitors legal cases that have been transferred to Bosnia by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) pursuant to Rule 11 bis of the ICTY's Rules of Procedure and Evidence.

The Mission is also working to help government authorities implement the reform pledges outlined in their "Jobs and Justice Agenda." The agenda focuses on promoting reform in five strategic areas: the economy, law enforcement, defense, education and public administration. The OSCE Mission's role is becoming increasingly important as the role of the High Representative is reduced.

Macedonia: Among the primary tasks of the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje are monitoring and assisting with the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement. Many of the Mission's activities focus on preventing ethnic tensions through the implementation of confidence-building measures and the training of a multi-ethnic police force. It has expanded its focus to training police in community-based law enforcement, enhancing rule of law, and improving local self-government and the media. The Mission designs, or identifies and supports grassroots projects that promote inter-ethnic cooperation and confidence, including projects in primary and secondary education. Other activities support border training and judicial and electoral reform. The Mission's monitoring function will play an important role during 2007, when a decision over the future status of neighboring Kosovo is expected. The Mission maintains two field offices outside of Skopje in areas of past tensions. The Mission has largely succeeded in its most resource-intensive project, increasing minority representation in the police force, and is gradually drawing down. From 2005 to the beginning of 2007, the Mission reduced its total staff from 338 to 259. the Mission currently has a staff of 72 international personnel, less than a third than it had in September 2001.

Serbia: The Mission continues to focus on reform activities that are designed to prepare Serbia for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Mission activities emphasize strengthening the rule of law, including the judiciary, especially to combat organized crime; security sector reform, including law enforcement; and strengthening democratic institutions, including parliament. The Mission also pays special attention to South Serbia, national minority/tolerance issues, and reconciliation/regional cooperation issues. The Mission enjoys solid support at all levels of government in Serbia.

Montenegro: Following Montenegro's independence, an OSCE mission was established there in June 2006. The Mission is supporting democratization processes, and judicial and police reform. It conducts police training, assists legislators in drafting national laws, and is helping to create a national mechanism for monitoring prisons to help prevent torture.

Albania: A primary focus of the OSCE Presence in Albania in 2006 was electoral assistance, particularly in the lead up to the February 2007 local elections.

Together with ODIHR, the Presence worked with government and electoral authorities to help further enhance the electoral process in line with prior OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.

Throughout 2006, the Presence also provided technical assistance to Albanian authorities on property restitution, police training, parliamentary capacity building, legislative and judicial reform, good government, anti-corruption measures, and combating trafficking in human beings. The four field offices of the Presence are crucial in allowing the OSCE to carry out programs efficiently outside of the capital, and have also assisted other international organizations and governments with local contacts and support for complementary projects.

Croatia: The OSCE Mission is approaching a wind-down phase and has focused its work on a limited number of key issues, in particular refugee and IDP return and housing restitution. The Mission is supporting the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) by monitoring domestic war crimes trials, including cases that have been transferred to Croatia by the ICTY pursuant to Rule 11 bis of the ICTY's Rules of Procedure and Evidence. It also is working on promoting rights of persons belonging to minorities, on police training, and on electoral reform. The Mission is planning on a December 2007 closure of the OSCE presences in Croatia, with administrative wrap-up work to conclude by the middle of 2008.

Armenia and Azerbaijan: The OSCE's focus in these two countries in 2006 remained on advancing democratization and respect for human rights, and resolving the unresolved conflicts. In Armenia, the OSCE field presence carried out programs to combat corruption and trafficking in human beings, to reform the penal system, and to ensure the safe disposal of surplus toxic rocket fuel (mélange) left over from the Soviet era. The OSCE Office in Baku used its monitoring of trials of Azeri opposition members to develop recommendations for judicial reform in Azerbaijan. The office monitored and reported on the parliamentary elections and continues to track Azerbaijan's efforts to address shortcomings that became apparent. The Office is active in promoting media freedom and protection of journalists.in October 2006 it organized a visit by the OSCE's Special Representative on Freedom of the Media for a series of high-level meetings.

Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Meetings of the "Minsk Group" co-chairs (United States, Russia, and France) with the OSCE and with the Foreign Ministers and presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan continued throughout 2006. In February 2006, the presidents met with each other and with the co-chairs in France. They met again under the co-chairs' auspices in Bucharest in June and Minsk in November. Although a hoped-for breakthrough did not materialize by the end of 2006, the sides were close to agreement on basic principles for a settlement agreement. The co-chairs will continue to meet with the two sides in 2007 and hope for visible progress after the May elections in Armenia.

Central Asia: U.S. goals in Central Asia are to support the development of democratic, market-oriented, and fully sovereign states contributing to regional stability, security, and human rights. The United States seeks to revitalize ancient ties between Central and South Asia, and to create new links in energy, trade, transport, and communications. At the same time, we continue to support further integration of these nations into the Euro-Atlantic community. The OSCE plays an important role in advancing these goals. The OSCE conducts key human dimension activities, especially through its field missions, including its anti-torture program, and work to strengthen the freedom of media and rule of law and to assist independent journalists. Equally critical is addressing the abuse of law, stemming restrictive NGO legislation, and halting crackdowns on civil society.

A promising growth area for OSCE programming in Central Asia in support of U.S. goals are those activities focused on transnational issues, such as terrorism, trafficking (human beings, drugs and arms), border security, and police training. Several Central Asian states have shown willingness to cooperate with the OSCE on these issues, including implementation of the Bucharest Plan of Action for Combating Terrorism and the activities of the OSCE's police unit. The United States is exploring possible ways to increase cooperation in these areas. Several Central Asian governments have expressed an interest in increased activities in the Economic and Environmental Dimension. The OSCE is doing excellent work through its Environment and Security program to address environmental hot spots that could be destabilizing. The Central Asians have shown enthusiasm for this program, which centers on promoting technical and scientific cooperation between states.

Kazakhstan: Participating states are pressing the Kazakhstanis to bring their country in line with OSCE standards given Kazakhstan's bid to chair the OSCE in 2009. The OSCE Center in Almaty has sought to assist Kazakhstan to uphold OSCE core principles through programs promoting free and fair elections, legal education for lawyers, police training, and civil society development. The OSCE's efforts may be complicated by the Government of Kazakhstan's insistence in late 2006 to limit the OSCE Center's mandate to six months rather than the previous length of one year—a bureaucratic move that will necessitate future twice-yearly discussion and negotiation of the Center's mandate. Kazakhstan's human rights and democracy records remained poor in 2006. Beginning in November 2006, local government officials executed surprise demolitions of Hare Krishna homes, despite negative publicity and

diplomatic pressure to cease. Against the OSCE Media Freedom Representative's recommendation, President Nazarbayev signed into law restrictive amendments to Kazakhstan's media law. Libel laws in Kazakhstan still restrict freedom of expression, as journalists continued to be convicted in 2006 for allegedly insulting the dignity and honor of the president.

Kyrgyzstan: Throughout 2006, Kyrgyzstan stalled on constitutional reform. Protests in November finally forced the adoption of a new constitution that gave some hope to those wanting to see less power concentrated in the president and more checks and balances. However, many of these hopes were dashed when a second revised constitution that restored many presidential powers was drafted in December and enacted in January. The Government of Kyrgyzstan failed to rescind restrictive libel laws or to transform state TV and radio into independent entities as promised by President Bakiyev. Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan maintains one of the most vibrant civil societies and media in Central Asia.

The OSCE's work in Kyrgyzstan has also contributed to progress. The OSCE's police assistance work in particular is a noteworthy success story. The police have handled recent public demonstrations well due partly to the anti-riot training they have received. The public's attitude towards the police has improved since the OSCE began its program, and the OSCE has delivered a variety of police equipment, which has received extensive positive press coverage. This assistance is designed to aid transparency and fight corruption within the police force by providing the tools needed to train those who are in a position to uphold the rule of law and maintain a reputable, honest, and respected police force.

Tajikistan: Tajikistan hosts the largest of the OSCE Central Asian field presences. Its activities include demining and civic education for youth. Tajikistan has been an active and enthusiastic supporter of OSCE counter-terrorism and border initiatives, including strengthening travel document security. The OSCE Center in Dushanbe's Small Arms/Light Weapons (SALW) and conventional ammunition programs, under the guidance of the OSCE SALW and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition Documents, is a major success story, with at least seven countries, including the United States, making financial and in-kind contributions to infrastructure and capacity-building, as well as destruction of surpluses.

The OSCE has worked with the Tajiks on election reform and other basic OSCE commitments.

Tajikistan's revised election law promulgated in 2004 was an improvement over previous legislation, but significant shortcomings remain.

Presidential elections were held on November 6, 2006 in Tajikistan. ODIHR assessed that democratic practices were not fully tested in this election because of the lack of genuine competition. The election process also revealed substantial shortcomings, according to the Election Observation Mission's preliminary report, including the lack of a credible challenger, election legislation requiring significant improvement to meet OSCE commitments, and media which is still largely under government control. However, some aspects of the election merited positive comment, including a calm and peaceful election period, an election process that was administered efficiently, and free media time afforded to candidates. NGOs are still perceived as a threat and the Government of Tajikistan continues to enforce bureaucratic roadblocks to NGOs seeking to register. In the case of media, some local independent media stations have not received broadcast licenses, and other independent media outlets have been prevented from broadcasting.

Uzbekistan: Uzbekistan continued to take numerous steps backward on political reform during 2006. According to a little-known 2002 parliamentary resolution, Uzbekistan's next presidential election is to take place in December 2007. To date, Uzbek authorities have not indicated a desire to receive assistance in preparation for the election. During 2006, the government continued to pressure international NGOs and to repress civil society and opposition activities. In 2006, the Government of Uzbekistan forced 16, U.S.-based NGOs to close. In addition, throughout much of 2006, the OSCE Center in Tashkent was prevented from conducting any projects, and the Government of Uzbekistan successfully lobbied to change the Center to a project coordinator's office, seeking a much narrower focus for the OSCE's work in Uzbekistan. Nonetheless, the project coordinator's office was allowed to engage in a few projects by year's end, and still serves as an important resource and venue for human rights and democracy supporters.

Turkmenistan: The OSCE is the only international organization in which Turkmenistan is a full member and which is present on the ground in Ashgabat, offering the government and people opportunities for concrete cooperation to build a democratic future and reminding the government of its human rights obligations. In 2006, the OSCE maintained pressure on Turkmenistan to improve human rights, particularly regarding access to prisoners, freedom of association and religion, public access to the internet, and loosening restrictions on NGOs. The United States will continue to work with other OSCE members to improve the situation in Turkmenistan. The change in leadership due to President Niyazov's death in December 2006 may present opportunities for additional engagement with Turkmenistan in 2007, particularly on border security issues, combating drug trafficking and electoral reform.

Issues Affecting OSCE's Activities and Effectiveness

Russia, as well as a number of participating states (mostly from the CIS) that host OSCE field missions, continue to be strongly critical of the OSCE's field operations and the work of ODIHR. They assert that there are

"double standards" on human rights, ODIHR "interference" in domestic issues, excessive concentration of OSCE activities in the former Soviet republics, and lack of balance in OSCE activities that emphasize the human dimension over the economic and security dimensions. They have singled out for special mention the OSCE's election-related activities, specifically election observation procedures, asserting that a lack of standardized election criteria has led to politicized election assessments.

The United States strongly disagrees with these criticisms. Supported by the vast majority of participating states, we have continuously stressed that there are no OSCE double standards on human rights. All OSCE states signed on to the same commitments to respect fundamental freedoms and human rights and hold free and fair elections. There are also no OSCE double standards on election assessments: OSCE observer missions have standard assessment criteria, listed in a publicly accessible election observation handbook, and standard advance training. The OSCE's human dimension work is not concentrated exclusively to "east of Vienna:" while the core mandate of the OSCE's field missions is to help countries meet OSCE standards, efforts to combat trafficking in persons are directed toward the entire OSCE region, and several events in 2006 were concentrated in western European capitals on anti-Semitism and racism. CIS criticism of ODIHR "interference" in domestic affairs is also unwarranted: participating States agreed in Moscow in 1991 that human dimension commitments are "matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating states and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the state concerned." While the United States is always open to suggestions on ways to make the OSCE more effective, adaptations or changes must not come at the expense of its democracy and rights promotion activities. At the same time, we oppose revision of the OSCE's democratic principles and election monitoring standards.

OSCE Scales of Contribution and Budget

Following U.S. consultations with its major OSCE partners, the OSCE's 56 states agreed to a 2007 budget of $220 million (zero nominal growth from the adopted 2006 budget), a budget that is sufficient for the OSCE to carry out its core activities to promote democracy and human rights. The OSCE Scales of Contribution for 2008-2010 will need to be renegotiated over the course of 2007. Given very tight U.S. budget constraints, we will seek to reduce the level of our contribution to the organization. This effort will meet stiff resistance from most other major players, who believe the United States is capable of paying much more, rather than less, of the organization's costs.

Brussels Ministerial

The December 4-5, 2006 OSCE ministerial in Brussels allowed the United States to achieve a number of significant goals, including protecting ODIHR and the operation of the OSCE generally, while putting an end to the time-consuming reform process that had dominated discussions over the past year. The ministerial endorsed a number of draft decisions of importance to the United States on issues such as tolerance (including references to the three tolerance representatives and a conference on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance), a U.S.-initiated decision on the sexual exploitation of children, and trafficking in persons. Other decisions adopted included those on counter-terrorism, criminal justice, and economic issues, including energy security. The United States capitalized on opportunities at the ministerial to demonstrate support for the Istanbul commitments and proposed positive ideas for movement on the unresolved conflicts in Moldova, Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh. In the political-military arena, three decisions were taken on managing and destroying stockpiles of excess small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition, as well as on support for full implementation of UNSCR 1540 relating to better controls on weapons of mass destruction and related components. The reform process launched by the Ljubljana Roadmap Decision in 2005 concluded in Brussels, with agreement on several decisions on the internal functioning of the organization, the Secretariat, and the intergovernmental process. These included formal agreement on rules of procedure (which codified existing practice); elimination of the moribund senior council; creation of three sub-committees of the Permanent Council on an experimental basis; and agreement to launch negotiations on a convention on legal status and privileges and immunities for the OSCE. The ministerial deferred a decision on the question of the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2009 to no later than the Madrid ministerial at the end of 2007. The decision adopted in Brussels welcomed the interest by Kazakhstan in chairing the organization in 2009, but also pointed out that the highest functional responsibilities of the OSCE are a reflection of willingness and capacity to exercise leadership on the implementation of OSCE commitments, norms, and values. The decision took note that Kazakhstan has committed to a program of political action and reforms, and also committed to exercise leadership in upholding OSCE standards.

IMPLEMENTING THE U.S. AGENDA IN 2007 AND BEYOND

In 2007, U.S. priorities for the OSCE included:

- Increase the OSCE's effectiveness in transformational diplomacy to help all OSCE participating States reach their objectives to become fully democratic and prosperous nations at peace and helping to improve collective security.

- Continue to promote final settlement talks and resolution of regional conflicts in Moldova, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Georgia.

In Georgia, continue to support the OSCE Mission's implementation of projects identified by the needs assessment survey for South Ossetia, continue to develop broader international support for resolution of the conflict. In Moldova, engage the parties to the Transnistria conflict in the U.S. role of observer in the negotiating process, while working with the mediators to press the Transnistrian authorities to return to the negotiations. In the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the United States will work with its fellow Minsk Group co-chairs (France and Russia) to resolve differences between the Armenian and Azerbaijani sides in pursuit of a settlement agreement.

- Enhance OSCE activities in Central Asia and the Caucasus, including efforts at regional cooperation on border control, combating terrorism, and implementation of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs). Press for fundamental democratic reforms and protection of human rights, including freedom of assembly, the media, and religion.

- Seek ways to utilize OSCE expertise in developing and implementing programs aimed at combating terrorism, particularly through the strengthening of border security management.

- Increase the OSCE's outreach to partner countries, particularly Afghanistan, as well as the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation. In Afghanistan, seek ways the OSCE could become more actively engaged in the reconstruction and stabilization effort, such as designing a program to strengthen border management and security, and encouraging participation by Afghanistan in OSCE programs aimed at promoting religious and ethnic tolerance and democratic institution-building.

- Consider areas where the OSCE could lend particular expertise on current problems, such as on providing a forum for dialogue on countering radical Islam, and addressing the pressing issue of energy security within the OSCE's Economic and Environmental framework.

- Participate actively in negotiations on a convention to give the OSCE international legal status, while ensuring that such negotiations do not reopen the acquis of OSCE commitments.

Promoting the Human Dimension

- Work to keep the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) an effective forum for raising human rights cases, supporting human rights defenders, defending U.S. positions and practices on issues such as human rights and capital punishment, and integrating follow up on issues raised at the HDIM into the OSCE Ministerial agenda.

- Ensure that NGOs remain able to participate fully in the HDIM and the OSCE's other human dimension events.

- Prepare OMiK for its role in Kosovo after a settlement is reached on Kosovo's final status. Once a status settlement is reached, we expect the OSCE Mission in Kosovo to operate as the international community's eyes and ears in the field, proactively monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the terms of the agreement.

- Intensify efforts to strengthen implementation of existing OSCE election standards, and ensure that the OSCE continues to be able to provide election-related assistance and effective monitoring and recommendations, including: support OSCE election observation missions: Russia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and others will hold elections in 2007; continue to defend the OSCE's frank and public assessments of whether elections meet OSCE standards; support ODIHR follow through on recommendations from election observation missions; continue to work with Russia and other CIS countries to increase their participation in election observation missions. Such participation carries the potential for strengthening support for improved election procedures in these countries.

- Intensify efforts to promote rule of law, not "rule by law."

- Combat the growing trend of using restrictive NGO legislation to repress civil society.

- Develop more effective ways to help human rights defenders.

- Promote implementation of the OSCE's Action Plan to Combat Trafficking and engagement by the Anti-Trafficking Assistance Unit.

- Continue efforts in the Balkans to build democratic institutions; promote human rights, including inter-ethnic tolerance and protection of national minorities; fight organized crime and corruption, and bring persons indicted for war crimes to justice.

- Work closely with EU members and other OSCE participating states to maintain emphasis on a Belarusian democracy after the presidential elections and to press the Belarusian Government on accountability.

- Ensure a successful conference on Combating Discrimination, Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, follow-up to the Cordoba conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance in Bucharest in June.

Focusing the Political—Military Dimension

- Continue to strengthen the OSCE's work in the political-military dimension.

- Continue to engage Russia actively on security issues, including discussing new initiatives on counter-terrorism and on practical ideas for strengthening the political-military dimension.

- Encourage continued progress on implementation of Istanbul commitments relating to the Russian military presence in Georgia, and continue to press for resumption of Russian military withdrawal from Moldova. The U.S. remains committed to moving ahead with ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty as soon as Russia fulfills its 1999 commitments on troop withdrawal, as well as to helping Russia to complete the withdrawals that it has set for itself.

- Increase counter-terrorism work by using the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), the newly created Security Working Group and the Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC) to encourage participating states to meet existing commitments and to identify additional measures that the OSCE can take to fight terrorism.

- Counter proliferation of weapons, by promoting implementation of political-military agreements, including on Man Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), small arms and light weapons (SALW), and stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

- continue to coordinate the development of best practice guides for stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

- Support full implementation by the participating states of UNSCR 1540, which bars non-state actors from obtaining weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and activities by the OSCE to work in cooperation with the UN 1540 Committee in New York.

- Promote full compliance with all political-military commitments, including Vienna Document 1999 and the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, to maintain security and stability in the OSCE region.

- Work closely with the Russian Federation on a May 31-June 1 conference, organized by the OSCE's Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU), which will focus on ways public-private partnerships (PPP) can help governments combat terrorism.

Strengthening the Economic and Environmental Dimension

- Press the Economic and Environmental Subcommittee to focus more on a concrete program of activities.

- Energize the Economic Dimension by developing additional areas in which the OSCE can provide added value, particularly in the field of energy security.

U.S. POLICY AND OSCE

U.S. participation in the OSCE advances America's national interest in promoting democracy, strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, arms control, economic prosperity, and sustainable environmental policies. The OSCE also has a role to play in helping to win the global war against terrorism. Taking action together with other countries through the OSCE is effective because it allows the United States to share costs and political responsibility, as well as to coordinate and avoid duplication, with like-minded nations. The OSCE's common principles give the U.S. and other OSCE participating states shared values and commitments on which to act. From mediating regional conflicts to addressing human rights violations, the OSCE can bring the weight of 56 nations acting together to bear on problems that the U.S. cannot solve alone. All participating states in the OSCE have made public commitments to democracy and human rights, market economics, and political-military security policies that promote greater regional stability. In the post-Communist era, the OSCE has made a significant contribution toward achieving America's goal of a Europe whole, free and at peace. To achieve fully a democratic, prosperous and secure Euro-Atlantic area from Vancouver to Vladivostok, there is still clearly more to do. The OSCE can build on its experience to help reach that goal, with U.S. support and guidance.

The U.S. Mission to the OSCE

The United States Mission to the OSCE is the office of about 30 staff members who represent U.S. interests in OSCE activities and choices, including the Permanent Council, the principal policy-making body, the Open Skies Consultative Commission, and the Forum for Security Cooperation. The Mission also works to monitor implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.

Mission staff members are drawn from several other U.S. government agencies, such as Department of State, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 2004, the U. S. Mission played a leading role in the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) as that group established its largest election observation mission in Ukraine.

The Mission also served in to support elections in Afghanistan, Georgia, and ten other elections in OSCE participating States.

U.S. Goals and Objectives

In 2008, the U. S. Mission to the OSCE listed the specific U.S. goals and objectives within the OSCE as follows:

- Preserving the effectiveness of the OSCE in its missions and scope

- Engaging all OSCE participating states

- Resolving the "Frozen Conflicts," through supporting the OSCE Missions in Georgia and Moldova
- Combating terrorism, through efforts that include expanding OSCE efforts to destroy surplus conventional munitions and small arms and light weapons and through support of the initiatives taken at the 2004 Annual Security Review Conference
- Combating intolerance and discrimination, with a special commitment to combatting anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim sentiment, racism, and xenophobia
- Combating trafficking in persons, by promoting legislative reform, law enforcement cooperation, the development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other programs of prevention and support for victims
- Enhancing security across the OSCE region:, through a commitment to upholding various arms control initiatives.

The Inauguration of the Annual Security Review Conference

The OSCE held its first Annual Security Review Conference in June 2003 in Vienna. The aim of the annual conference, which was a U.S. initiative, is to assess progress in combating terrorism and to review OSCE activities in the security field. Ambassador Cofer Black, the State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, addressed the conference and suggested that the OSCE take action to improve travel document security, one of the biggest problems in the war on terror. This led to the initiative approved at Maastricht to improve handling and issuance procedures for travel documents described above.

OSCE & FOREIGN RELATIONS

OSCE Field Operations

The OSCE has about 3,600 staff members in several missions and field activities around the world. The mandate of each mission is specific to the needs of the country in which it is established. In general, the missions are expected to facilitate political processes toward conflict resolution and to keep the OSCE community informed of progress and new developments.

In early 2008, the OSCE had missions or other field activity posts as follows:

South Eastern Europe

- Presence in Albania
- Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Office in Zagreb
- Mission to Montenegro
- Mission to Serbia
- Mission in Kosovo
- Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje

Eastern Europe

- Office in Minsk
- Mission to Moldova
- Project Coordinator in Ukraine

Caucasus

- Office in Baku
- Mission to Georgia
- Office in Yerevan
- Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the Minsk Conference

Central Asia

- Center in Ashgabad
- Center in Astana
- Center in Bishkek
- Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan
- Center in Dushanbe

UNITED NATIONS

Last Updated: January 2009

Official Name:
United Nations

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PROFILE

Beginnings, Purpose, and Structure

In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt, flanked by the leaders of 26 Allied countries, first coined the term "United Nations" to describe the continued fight against the Axis Powers. Following World War II, the allies adopted the term to define a worldwide body of nations. On June 26, 1945, fifty nations signed the United Nations Charter in San Francisco, California. The United States Senate ratified the UN Charter on July 28, 1945. The United Nations came into effect on October 24, 1945. October 24 is now celebrated around the globe as UN Day.

The United Nations' aims are set out in the preamble to the UN Charter: to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to achieve international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems and in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in attaining these common ends.

The principal organs of the United Nations include the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat. (The Trusteeship Council, an original principal organ, suspended operations in 1994 when it fulfilled its function by overseeing the independence of the UN's last remaining trust territory.)

In addition to its principal organs, the United Nations system is made up of a complex mix of commissions and funds created by the General Assembly, such as UNICEF (UN Children's Fund) and the World Food Program; specialized agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the International Monetary Fund; and other UN entities, such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the peacekeeping missions established by the Security Council.

The headquarters of the United Nations is located in New York City. The General Assembly building and the Secretariat were built in 1949 and 1950 on land donated by the Rockefeller family. The property is now considered international territory. Under special agreement with the United States, certain diplomatic privileges and immunities have been granted, but generally the laws of New York City, New York State, and the United States apply.

The regular biennial budget of the UN in 2004-05, as revised, was $3.608 billion. For the calendar year 2003, the United States' assessed contribution to the UN regular budget was $362 million. In addition, the United States' assessed contribution to UN specialized agencies amounted to well over $400 million.

The United States also contributed $1.1 billion in assessments to the peacekeeping budget in calendar year 2004; $72 million for the support of the international war crimes tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia; and, nearly $5 million for preparatory work relating to the UN Capital Master Plan. Moreover, each year the United States provides a significant amount in voluntary contributions to the UN and UN-affiliated organizations and activities (largely for humanitarian and development programs). In sum, U.S. contributions (both cash and in kind) to the UN system in 2003 were well over $3 billion.

The United Nations currently has 192 member states. The official languages of the United Nations are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. More information about the UN is available on its web site at www.un.org.

HISTORY

The idea for the United Nations was elaborated in declarations signed at the wartime Allied conferences in Moscow and Tehran in 1943. President Franklin Roosevelt suggested the name "United Nations." From August to October 1944, representatives of the U.S. U.K., France, U.S.S.R., and China met to elaborate the plans at the Dumbarton Oaks Estate in Washington, D.C. Those and later talks produced proposals outlining the purposes of the organization, its membership and organs, as well as arrangements to maintain international peace and security and international economic and social cooperation. These proposals were discussed and debated by governments and private citizens worldwide.

On April 25, 1945, the United Nations Conference on International Organizations began in San Francisco. The 50 nations represented at the conference signed the Charter of the United Nations two months later on June 26. Poland, which was not represented at the conference, but for which a place among the original signatories had been reserved, added its name later, bringing the total of original signatories to 51.

The UN came into existence on October 24, 1945, after the Charter had been ratified by the five permanent members of the Security Council-China, France, U.S.S.R., U.K., and U.S.-and by a majority of the other 46 signatories. The U.S. Senate, by a vote of 89 to 2, gave its consent to the ratification of the UN Charter on July 28, 1945. In December 1945, the Senate and the House of Representatives, by unanimous votes, requested that the UN make its headquarters in the U.S. The offer was accepted and the UN headquarters building was constructed in New York City in 1949 and 1950 beside the East River on donated land, which is considered international territory. Under special agreement with the U.S., certain diplomatic privileges and immunities have been granted, but generally the laws of New York City, New York State, and the U.S. apply. UN membership is open to all "peace-loving states" that accept the obligations of the UN Charter and, in the judgment of the organization, are able and willing to fulfill these obligations. The General Assembly determines admission upon recommendation of the Security Council.

Preamble to Charter of the United Nations

We the Peoples of the United Nations Determined

- To Save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- To Reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women of nations large and small, and
- To Establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- To promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

And for these ends

- To Practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and
- To Unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and
- To Ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and
- To Employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

Have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims. Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Maintaining the Peace

The UN's role in international collective security is defined by the UN Charter, which gives the Security Council the power to:

- Investigate any situation threatening international peace;
- Recommend procedures for peaceful resolution of a dispute;
- Call upon other member nations to completely or partially interrupt economic relations as well as sea, air, postal, and radio communications, or to sever diplomatic relations; and
- Enforce its decisions militarily, if necessary.

The United Nations has helped prevent many outbreaks of international violence from growing into wider conflicts. It has opened the way to negotiated settlements through its service as a center of debate and negotiation, as well as through UN-sponsored fact-finding missions, mediators, and truce observers. UN peacekeeping forces, comprised of troops and equipment supplied by member nations, have usually been able to limit or prevent conflict. Some conflicts, however, have proven to be beyond the capacity of the UN to influence. Key to the success of UN peacekeeping efforts is the willingness of the parties to a conflict to come to terms peacefully through a viable political process.

UN peacekeeping initiatives have ranged from small, diplomatic or political delegations to large mobili-

zations, the most extensive of which was the 500,000-strong 1950-53 defense of South Korea against an attack by North Korea. In the first few years following the end of the Cold War the number of peacekeeping operations increased dramatically. The proliferation of operations reflected the view that, in the post-Cold War era, the UN could play an important role in defusing regional conflicts. Some of the peacekeeping operations of the early 1990s also saw an expansion of the traditional peacekeeping mandate to include such responsibilities as supervising elections, monitoring human rights, training police, and overseeing civil administration. From 1995 to mid-1999 there was a sharp decline in the number of UN peacekeepers in the field, from a high of around 70,000 to 12,000. The assumption by NATO of major peacekeeping responsibilities in the former Yugoslavia (and the resultant termination of UNPROFOR's mandate) accounted for much of the decrease. Other factors included the closeout of UN operations in Mozambique in January 1995, Somalia in March 1995, El Salvador in April 1995, and Rwanda in March 1996. With the U.S. and the UN taking a much harder look at proposed peacekeeping operations, the only major new UN mission set up in this period outside the former Yugoslavia was the UNAVEM III operation in Angola.

Beginning in June 1999, new missions in Kosovo and East Timor and expanded missions in Sierra Leone and the Congo dramatically increased both the costs and personnel levels of UN peacekeeping operations. They also added a new level of complexity to peacekeeping efforts, with a greater emphasis on civilian administration in East Timor and Kosovo. From July 1999 to June 2001, overall UN peacekeeping personnel levels increased by 31,000, with even more personnel authorized but not deployed.

As of July 31, 2002, there were 691 U.S. personnel (659 civilian police, and 32 military observers) in worldwide UN peace operations, accounting for 1.5% of total UN peacekeepers. As Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States never gives up command authority over U.S. troops. When large numbers of U.S. troops are involved and when the risk of combat is high, operational control of U.S. forces will remain in American hands, or in the hands of a trusted military ally such as a NATO member. But the President must

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Afghanistan (1946); Albania (1955); Algeria (1962); Andorra (1993); Angola (1976); Antigua and Barbuda (1981); Argentina; Armenia (1992); Australia; Austria (1955); Azerbaijan (1992); Bahamas, The (1973); Bahrain (1971); Bangladesh (1974); Barbados (1966); Belarus; Belgium; Belize (1981); Benin (1960); Bhutan (1971); Bolivia; Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992); Botswana (1966); Brazil; Brunei (1984); Bulgaria (1955); Burkina Faso (1960); Burma (1948); Burundi (1962); Cambodia (1955); Cameroon (1960); Canada; Cape Verde (1975); Central African Republic (1960); Chad (1960); Chile; China[2]; Colombia; Comoros (1975); Congo, Democratic Republic of the (1960); Congo, Republic of the (1960); Costa Rica; Côte d'Ivoire (1960); Croatia (1992); Cuba; Cyprus (1960); Czech Republic (1993); Denmark; Djibouti (1977); Dominica (1978); Dominican Republic; East Timor (2002); Ecuador; Egypt; El Salvador; Equatorial Guinea (1968); Eritrea (1993); Estonia (1991); Ethiopia; Fiji (1970); Finland (1955); France; Gabon (1960); Gambia, The (1965); Georgia (1992); Germany (1973); Ghana (1957); Greece; Grenada (1974); Guatemala; Guinea (1958); Guinea-Bissau (1974); Guyana (1966); Haiti; Honduras; Hungary (1955); Iceland (1946); India; Indonesia (1950); Iran; Iraq; Ireland (1955); Israel (1949); Italy (1955); Jamaica (1962); Japan (1956); Jordan (1955); Kazakhstan (1992); Kenya (1963); Kiribati (1999); Korea, North (1991); Korea, South (1991); Kuwait (1963); Kyrgyzstan (1992); Laos (1955); Latvia (1991); Lebanon; Lesotho (1966); Liberia; Libya (1955); Liechtenstein (1990); Lithuania (1991); Luxembourg; Macedonia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of (1993); Madagascar (1960); Malawi (1964); Malaysia (1957); Maldives (1965); Mali (1960); Malta (1964); Marshall Islands (1991); Mauritania (1961); Mauritius (1968); Mexico; Micronesia, Federated States of (1991); Moldova (1992); Monaco (1993); Mongolia (1961); Montenegro (2006); Morocco (1956); Mozambique (1975); Namibia (1990); Nauru (1999); Nepal (1955); Netherlands; New Zealand; Nicaragua; Niger (1960); Nigeria (1960); Norway; Oman (1971); Pakistan (1947); Palau (1994); Panama; Papua New Guinea (1975); Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Poland; Portugal (1955); Qatar (1971); Romania (1955); Russia[3]; Rwanda (1962); Saint Kitts and Nevis (1983); Saint Lucia (1979); Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (1980); Samoa (1976); San Marino (1992); Sao Tome and Principe (1975); Saudi Arabia; Senegal (1960); Serbia (2000); Seychelles (1976); Sierra Leone (1961); Singapore (1965); Slovakia (1993); Slovenia (1992); Solomon Islands (1978); Somalia (1960); South Africa; Spain (1955); Sri Lanka (1955); Sudan (1956); Suriname (1975); Swaziland (1968); Sweden (1946); Switzerland (2002); Syria; Tajikistan (1992); Tanzania (1961); Thailand (1946); Togo (1960); Trinidad and Tobago (1962); Tonga (1999); Tunisia (1956); Turkey; Turkmenistan (1992); Tuvalu (2000); Uganda (1962); Ukraine (formerly Ukrainian SSR); United Arab Emirates (1971); United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay; Uzbekistan (1992); Vanuatu (1981); Venezuela; Vietnam (1977); Yemen (1947); Zambia (1964); Zimbabwe (1980)

[1]Year in parentheses indicates date of admission; countries with no date were original members in 1945.
[2]By Resolution 2758 (XXVI) of Oct. 25, 1971, the General Assembly decided "to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to recognize the representative of its Government as the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations."
[3]In December 1991, Russia assumed the permanent Security Council seat previously held by the U.S.S.R.

retain the flexibility, which has served the U.S. well throughout its history, to allow temporary foreign operational control of U.S. troops when it serves U.S. interests, just as it has often served U.S. interests to have foreign forces under U.S. operational control.

Arms Control and Disarmament

The 1945 UN Charter envisaged a system of regulation that would ensure "the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources." The advent of nuclear weapons came only weeks after the signing of the Charter and provided immediate impetus to concepts of arms limitation and disarmament. In fact, the first resolution of the first meeting of the General Assembly (January 24, 1946) was entitled "The Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy" and called upon the commission to make specific proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction."

The UN has established several forums to address multilateral disarmament issues. The principal ones are the First Committee of the UN General Assembly and the UN Disarmament Commission. Items on the agenda include consideration of the possible merits of a nuclear test ban, outer-space arms control, efforts to ban chemical weapons, nuclear and conventional disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, reduction of military budgets, and measures to strengthen international security.

The Conference on Disarmament is the sole forum established by the international community for the negotiation of multilateral arms control and disarmament agreements. It has 66 members representing all areas of the world, including the five major nuclear-weapon states (China, France, the Russian Federation, the U.K., and the U.S.). While the conference is not formally a UN organization, it is linked to the UN through a personal representative of the Secretary-General; this representative serves as the secretary general of the conference. Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly often request the conference to consider specific disarmament matters. In turn, the conference annually reports on its activities to the General Assembly.

Human Rights

The pursuit of human rights was one of the central reasons for creating the United Nations. World War II atrocities and genocide led to a ready consensus that the new organization must work to prevent any similar tragedies in the future. An early objective was creating a legal framework for considering and acting on complaints about human rights violations. The UN Charter obliges all member nations to promote "universal respect for, and observance of, human rights" and to take "joint and separate action" to that end. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, though not legally binding, was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948 as a common standard of achievement for all. The General Assembly regularly takes up human rights issues. The UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), under ECOSOC, is the primary UN body charged with promoting human rights, primarily through investigations and offers of technical assistance. As discussed, the High Commissioner for Human Rights is the official principally responsible for all UN human rights activities (see, under "The UN Family," the section on "Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights").

The U.S. considers the United Nations to be a first line of defense of the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also a means by which those principles can be applied more broadly around the world. A case in point is support by the United Nations for countries in transition to democracy. Technical assistance in providing free and fair elections, improving judicial structures, drafting constitutions, training human rights officials, and transforming armed movements into political parties have contributed significantly to democratization worldwide. The United Nations is also a forum in which to support the right of women to participate fully in the political, economic, and social life of their countries.

International Conferences

The member countries of the UN and its specialized agencies—the "shareholders" of the system—give guidance and make decisions on substantive and administrative issues in regular meetings held throughout each year. Governing bodies made up of member states include not only the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the Security Council, but also counterpart bodies dealing with the governance of all other UN system agencies.

For example, the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board oversee the work of WHO. Each year, the U.S. Department of State accredits U.S. delegations to more than 600 meetings of governing bodies.

When an issue is considered particularly important, the General Assembly may convene an international conference to focus global attention and build a consensus for consolidated action. High-level U.S. delegations use these opportunities to promote U.S. policy viewpoints and develop international agreements on future activities. Recent examples include:

- The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 1992, led to the creation of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development to advance the conclusions reached in Agenda 21, the final text of agreements negotiated by governments at UNCED;

- The World Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, Egypt, September 1994, approved a program of action to address the critical challenges and interrela-

tionships between population and sustainable development over the next 20 years;

- The World Summit on Trade Efficiency, Columbus, Ohio, October 1994, cosponsored by UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the city of Columbus, and private-sector business, focused on the use of modern information technology to expand international trade;

- The World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, March 1995, underscored national responsibility for sustainable development and secured high-level commitment to plans that invest in basic education, health care, and economic opportunity for all, including women and girls;

- The Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995, sought to accelerate implementation of the historic agreements reached at the Third World Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 1985;

- The Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, Turkey, June 1996, considered the challenges of human settlement development and management in the 21st century; and

- The UN Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, March 2002, broke new ground in development discussions with the U.S. calling for a "new compact for development" defined by greater accountability for rich and poor nations alike.

PRINCIPAL ORGANS

Security Council—New York

The Security Council has five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.—informally known as the P-5), each with the right to veto, and 10 non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. Five non-permanent members are elected from Africa and Asia combined. One non-permanent member comes from Eastern Europe, two from Latin America, and two from Western Europe and other areas. The 2004 non-permanent members are: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Pakistan, the Philippines, Romania, and Spain. The president (or chair) of the Council rotates monthly in English alphabetical order of the members.

Under the UN Charter, the Security Council has "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security," and all UN members "agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council in accordance with the present Charter." Other organs of the UN make recommendations to member governments. The Security Council, however, has the power under the Charter to make decisions that member states must carry out. Unlike other representative bodies, the Security Council is always in session. A representative of each Council member must always be available so that the Council can meet at any time.

Decisions in the 15-member Security Council on all substantive matters require the affirmative votes of nine members, including the support of all five permanent members. A negative vote by a permanent member (also known as a veto) prevents adoption of a proposal that has received the required number of affirmative votes. Abstention is not regarded as a veto.

Under Chapter VI of the Charter, "Pacific Settlement of Disputes," the Security Council "may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute." The Council may "recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment" if it determines that the situation might endanger international peace and security. These recommendations are not binding on UN members.

Under Chapter VII, the Council has broader power to decide what measures are to be taken in situations involving "threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, or acts of aggression." In such situations, the Council is not limited to recommendations but may take action, including the use of armed force "to maintain or restore international peace and security." Decisions taken under Chapter VII, both with regard to military action and to economic sanctions, are binding on all UN member states.

Starting with the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in 1948, the Security Council has dispatched peacekeeping missions to the world's conflicts. These missions have helped prevent or limit many outbreaks of international violence from growing into wider conflicts.

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Security Council, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, adopted Resolution 1373, which obliges all member states to take action against international terrorism. The resolution also established the Counter Terrorism Committee within the Council to monitor progress in the war against terrorism and implementation of the resolution. The international community has adopted 13 UN counterterrorism conventions, 12 of which have entered into force. These conventions create a legal framework that the United States believes will combat international terrorism. The United States has signed and ratified the 12 resolutions that have entered into force. The 13th will open for signature on September 14, 2005.

General Assembly—New York

All UN member states are members of the General Assembly. The Assembly has six main committees: Disarmament and International Security; Economic and Financial; Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural; Special Political and Decolonization; Administrative and Budgetary; and Legal. Other committees address UN procedures, membership, and specific

issues, including peacekeeping, outer space, and UN Charter reform. The General Assembly meets in regular session once a year under a president elected from among the representatives. The regular session usually begins in mid-September and ends in mid-December. Special sessions can be convened at the request of the Security Council, a majority of UN members, or, if the majority concurs, a single member. A special session was held in October 1995 at the head of government level to commemorate the UN's 50th anniversary.

Voting in the General Assembly on important questions is by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. Voting questions may include recommendations on peace and security; election of members to organs; admission, suspension, and expulsion of members; and budgetary matters. Other questions are decided by majority vote. Each member state has one vote. Apart from the approval of budgetary matters, including the adoption of a scale of assessment, General Assembly resolutions are not binding on the members. The Assembly may make recommendations on any matter within the scope of the UN, except on matters of peace and security under Security Council consideration. Since the late 1980s, virtually all budgetary decisions at the UN have been taken by consensus.

As the only UN organ in which all members are represented, the Assembly serves as a forum for members to launch initiatives on international questions of peace, economic progress, and human rights. It can initiate studies; make recommendations; develop and codify international law; promote human rights; and advance international economic, social, cultural, and educational programs.

The Assembly may take action on maintaining international peace if the Security Council is unable to exercise its primary responsibility, usually due to disagreement among the permanent members. The "Uniting for Peace" resolutions, adopted in 1950, empower the Assembly to convene in emergency special sessions to recommend collective measures—including the use of armed force—in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression. Two-thirds of the members must approve any such recommendation. Emergency special sessions under this procedure have been held on ten occasions, most recently in 1997.

Developing countries constitute a majority among the UN's 192 members. Because of their numbers, developing countries are often able to determine the agenda of the Assembly, the character of its debates, and the nature of its decisions. For many developing countries, the UN General Assembly is the source of much of their diplomatic influence and the principal forum for their foreign relations initiatives. When an issue is considered particularly important, the General Assembly may convene an international conference to focus global attention and build a consensus for consolidated action. High-level U.S. delegations use these opportunities to promote U.S. policy viewpoints and develop international agreements on future activities.

The General Assembly has also been active in the fight against terrorism. On September 12, 2001, it adopted a resolution condemning the terrorist attacks against the United States. In its 56th and 57th Sessions, the General Assembly also passed resolutions calling on all states to prevent terrorism and to strengthen international cooperation in fighting terrorism. On April 13, 2005, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Economic and Social Council—New York

The General Assembly elects the 54 members of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Eighteen are elected each year for three-year terms. The U.S. has always been a member.

Under the UN Charter, ECOSOC is responsible for identifying solutions to international economic, social, and health problems, as well as facilitating international cultural and education cooperation and encouraging respect for human rights. ECOSOC meets for one annual four-week session and for shorter ad hoc, procedural, or special meetings. Voting is by simple majority.

ECOSOC coordinates the work of fourteen specialized UN agencies, ten functional commissions, and five regional commissions. Through much of its history, ECOSOC had served primarily as a discussion vehicle. ECOSOC had little authority to force action, which a number of member states felt marginalized the agency's utility. However, beginning in 1992, the U.S. and other nations began an effort to make ECOSOC more relevant by strengthening its policy responsibilities in economic, social, and related fields, particularly in the area of development.

The resulting reform made ECOSOC the oversight and policy-setting body for UN operational development activities and established smaller executive boards for the UN Development Program (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). The creation of an oversight body and smaller executive boards provides those agencies with operating guidance and promotes more effective management. The reform also gave ECOSOC a strong hand in ensuring that UN agencies coordinated their work on issues of common interest, such as narcotics control, human rights, the alleviation of poverty, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

One positive impact of this reform was the manner in which the UN development system began to respond more coherently and efficiently to humanitarian crises around the world. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's recent reform initiatives have attached considerable importance to further strengthening coordination among relief agencies.

Another positive reform outcome was the ECOSOC decision in 1994 to authorize the creation of the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). This Program acts

as the main advocate for worldwide action against HIV/AIDS and has brought together into one consolidated global program the AIDS-related resources and expertise of UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, the UN International Drug Control Program, the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, and the World Bank. UNAIDS has been instrumental in the expanded global response to HIV/AIDS, eliminating duplication among agencies and enhancing the ability of member states to respond effectively to the AIDS pandemic. UNAIDS began operating in January 1996.

International Court of Justice—The Hague, Netherlands

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ of the UN. Established in 1946, its main functions are to decide cases submitted to it by states and to give advisory opinions on legal questions submitted to it by the General Assembly or Security Council, or by such specialized agencies authorized to do so by the General Assembly in accordance with the UN Charter.

The Court is composed of 15 judges elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council from a list of persons nominated by the national groups in the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Judges serve for nine years and may be re-elected. No two may be nationals of the same country. One-third of the Court is elected every three years. A U.S. citizen has always been a member of the Court. Questions before the Court are decided by a majority of judges present. Only states may be parties in cases before the International Court of Justice. This requirement does not preclude private interests from being the subject of proceedings if one state brings a case against another. Jurisdiction of the Court is based on the consent of each UN member state to comply with an ICJ decision in a case to which it is a party. Any judgments reached are binding. If a party fails to perform its obligations under an ICJ decision, the other party may seek recourse in the Security Council. State parties to the Court's statute may declare their recognition of the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court for a wide range of international disputes. The U.S. accepted the Court's compulsory jurisdiction in 1946, but withdrew its acceptance following the Court's decision in a 1986 case involving activities in Nicaragua. Examples of cases include:

- a complaint by the U.S. in 1980 that Iran was detaining American diplomats in Tehran in violation of international law;
- a complaint filed by Iran in 1992 alleging that the United States violated a treaty obligation by attacking three Iranian oil platforms. The U.S. filed a counterclaim with respect to Iranian attacks on U.S. shipping interests in the Persian Gulf;
- a dispute over the course of the maritime boundary dividing the U.S. and Canada in the Gulf of Maine area, filed in 1981, judgment in 1984; and
- a complaint filed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DROC) in 1999 against Rwanda alleging violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed on DROC territory.

Secretariat—New York

The Secretariat is composed of international civil servants who carry out the daily tasks of the United Nations. It provides studies, information, and facilities needed by UN bodies for their meetings. It also carries out tasks as directed by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, and other UN bodies. The Charter provides that the staff be chosen by application of the "highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity," with due regard for the importance of recruiting on a wide geographical basis.

The Charter provides that the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any authority other than the UN. Each UN member is obligated to respect the international character of the Secretariat and not seek to influence its staff.

Under the UN Charter, the chief administrative officer of the UN and the head of the Secretariat is the Secretary-General of the United Nations, appointed to a five-year term by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council. Kofi Annan, the first Secretary-General from sub-Saharan Africa, began his first term on January 1, 1997. He was reappointed to a second term beginning January 1, 2002.

The Secretary-General's duties include helping resolve international disputes, administering peacekeeping operations, organizing international conferences, gathering information on the implementation of Security Council decisions, and consulting with member governments regarding various initiatives. The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that, in his or her opinion, may threaten international peace and security. In 1997, the General Assembly established a position of Deputy Secretary-General. Since 1998, Louise Frechette of Canada has held this position. Other senior UN officials, such as the Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs and Peacekeeping, also advise the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General also appoints Special Representatives and Envoys to mediate conflict in the world's trouble spots.

THE UN FAMILY

In addition to the principal UN organs, the UN family includes over 60 programs or specialized agencies, often headquartered in one of the UN offices around the world. Some agencies existed prior to UN creation and are related to it by agreement. Others were established by the General Assembly. Each provides expertise in a specific area. Some of those programs and agencies (with the location of their headquarters) are described

below. A diagram of the entire UN system can be found at www.un.org/aboutun/chart. A map showing principal UN offices around the world can be found at http://www.un.org/aroundworld/map.

Funds and Programs

UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). New York City. UNICEF provides long-term humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries. UNICEF relies on contributions from governments and private donors. Its programs emphasize developing community-level services to promote the health and well being of children. UNICEF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965.

UN Development Program (UNDP). New York City. UNDP is the largest multilateral source of grant technical assistance in the world. Voluntarily funded, it provides expert advice, training, and limited equipment to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the poorest countries. It focuses on six areas of assistance: democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, energy and the environment, information technology, and HIV/AIDS.

UN Environment Program (UNEP). Nairobi, Kenya. UNEP coordinates UN environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies. UNEP has developed guidelines and treaties on issues such as the international transport of potentially harmful chemicals, transboundary air pollution, and the contamination of international waterways.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Geneva, Switzerland. UNHCR protects and supports refugees at the request of a government or the UN and assists in their return or resettlement. UNHCR was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1954 and 1982.

World Food Program (WFP). Rome, Italy. The WFP distributes food commodities to long-term refugees and displaced persons, and provides emergency food assistance during natural and man-made disasters. In 2004, the WFP fed 113 million people in 80 countries, including most of the world's refugees and internally displaced people.

Specialized Agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Rome, Italy. FAO programs seek to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living; to improve agricultural productivity, to promote rural development; and, by these means, to provide access of all people at all times to the food they need for an active and healthy life.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Montreal, Canada. ICAO develops the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth.

The ICAO Council adopts standards and makes recommendations concerning air navigation, the prevention of unlawful interference, and the facilitation of border-crossing procedures for international civil aviation.

International Labor Organization (ILO). Geneva, Switzerland. The ILO seeks to strengthen worker rights, improve working and living conditions, create employment, and provide information and training opportunities. ILO programs include the occupational safety and health hazard alert system and the labor standards and human rights programs.

International Maritime Organization (IMO). London, England. The IMO's main objective is to facilitate cooperation among governments on technical matters affecting international shipping to achieve the highest possible degree of maritime safety and navigational efficiency. It also attempts to improve the marine environment through the prevention of pollution caused by ships and other craft and deals with legal matters connected with international shipping.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Geneva, Switzerland. The ITU brings together governments to coordinate the establishment and operation of global communication networks and services, including telegraph, telephone, radio communications, Internet, and the information society. It fosters cooperation and partnership among its members and offers technical assistance in this area.

UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Paris, France. UNESCO's purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting cooperation among nations through education, science, culture, and communication to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms without distinction of race, sex, language, or religion.

Universal Postal Union (UPU). Bern, Switzerland. The UPU attempts to secure the organization and improvement of the postal services, to promote international collaboration, and provide technical assistance in this area. The member countries constitute a single postal territory.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Geneva, Switzerland. The purpose of WIPO is to promote international cooperation in the field of intellectual property rights. It works in the areas of both industrial and literary-artistic property.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Geneva, Switzerland. WMO coordinates global scientific activity to allow increasingly prompt and accurate weather prediction and other services for public, private, and commercial use.

World Health Organization (WHO). Geneva, Switzerland. WHO acts as a coordinating authority on pressing global public health issues.

WHO's objective, as set out in its Constitution, is the attainment of all peoples of the highest possible level of health.

Other Related Bodies

World Bank. Washington, DC. The World Bank is one of the world's main sources of development assistance. It focuses on the poorest people in the poorest countries.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Vienna, Austria. The role of IAEA is to promote the contribution of atomic energy for peace, health, and prosperity throughout the world and to enhance the safety and security of radioactive materials and nuclear facilities worldwide. It has the responsibility of creating and implementing the safeguard provisions of various nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear free zone treaties.

International Monetary Fund (IMF). Washington, DC. The purposes of the IMF are to promote international monetary cooperation through consultation and collaboration, to promote exchange stability and orderly exchange arrangements, and to assist in the establishment of a multilateral system of payments and the elimination of foreign exchange restrictions.

REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations is currently engaged in one of the most important debates in its history: how to reform itself, strengthen itself as an institution, and ensure that it addresses effectively the threats and challenges of the 21st century. The United States is leading the effort to strengthen and reform the UN.

Budget, Management, and Administrative Reform: The U.S. seeks to ensure the highest standards of integrity and promote efficiency within the UN system, so that member states receive the greatest benefit from resources invested in the institution. Meaningful institutional reform must include measures to improve internal oversight and accountability, to identify cost savings, and to allocate resources to high priority programs and offices.

Peace Building Commission: The U.S. strongly supports the Secretary-General's idea of a Peace Building Commission that would allow the UN to be more effective in galvanizing the work of the international community to help countries after the fighting has stopped. Such a Commission would play an important role in helping countries in post-conflict situations. It could provide reconstruction and humanitarian support and set the stage for long-term development.

Human Rights Council: The U.S. supports the Secretary-General's initiative to replace the Commission on Human Rights with a smaller, action-oriented Human Rights Council, whose membership should not include states with a record of abuse. The problems with the current Commission, where human-rights abusers sit in judgment of democratic countries, are well known. The Council's mandate would be to address the most egregious human rights abuses, provide technical assistance, and promote human rights as a global priority.

Democracy Initiatives and the UN Democracy Fund: President Bush in his September 2004 UN General Assembly speech put this proposal on the table, as democracy promotion is one of our core aims. The goal is to create a mechanism for supporting new and emerging democracies, providing assistance that would help develop civil society and democratic institutions.

Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism: The U.S. strongly supports the adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism (CCIT), a subject of longstanding debate. This would be an important symbolic achievement in the UN's global effort to counter terrorism.

Development: The United States plays a leading, active, and positive role in development. The U.S. has a commitment to building healthy institutions and strong economies, through trade, foreign investment, and aid. As agreed in the Monterrey Consensus, the focus should be on supporting good governance and sound economic policies.

UN SECRETARIES GENERAL

Trygve Lie (Norway)—Feb. 1, 1946-April 10, 1953

Dag Hammarskjold (Sweden)—April 10, 1953-Sept. 8, 1961

U Thant (Burma)—Nov. 3, 1961-Dec. 31, 1971 (initially appointed acting Secretary General; formally appointed Nov. 30, 1962)

Kurt Waldheim (Austria)—Jan. 1, 1972-Dec. 31, 1981

Javier Perez de Cuellar (Peru)—Jan. 1, 1982-Dec. 31, 1991

Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Egypt)—Jan. 1, 1992-Dec. 31, 1996

Kofi Annan (Ghana)—Jan. 1, 1997-Dec 31, 2006

Ban Ki-moon (South Korea)—Jan. 1, 2007-present

U.S. REPRESENTATION

The U.S. Permanent Mission to the UN in New York is headed by the U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. Ambassador John R. Bolton has served in that position since August 1, 2005.

The mission acts as the channel of communication for the U.S. Government with the UN organs, agencies, and commissions at the UN headquarters and with the other permanent missions accredited to the UN and the non-member observer missions. The U.S. mission has a professional staff made up largely of career Foreign Service officers, including

specialists in political, economic, social, financial, legal, and military issues. The United States also maintains missions to international organizations in Geneva, Rome, Vienna, Nairobi, Montreal, and Paris. These missions report to the Department of State and receive guidance on questions of policy from the President, through the Secretary of State.

The Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs coordinates relations with the UN and its family of agencies. The U.S. Mission to the United Nations is located at 140 East 45th Street, New York, NY 10017 (tel. 212-415-4000). More information about the U.S. Mission to the UN is available on the mission's web site at www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov.

U.S. Representatives to the United Nations

Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.—March 1946-June 1946

Herschel V. Johnson (acting)—June 1946-January 1947

Warren R. Austin—Jan. 1947-Jan. 1953

Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.—Jan. 1953-Sept. 1960

James J. Wadsworth—Sept. 1960-Jan. 1961

Adlai E. Stevenson—Jan. 1961-July 1965

Arthur J. Goldberg—July 1965-June 1968

George W. Ball—June 1968-Sept. 1968

James Russell Wiggins—Oct. 1968-Jan. 1969

Charles W. Yost—Jan. 1969-Feb. 1971

George W. Bush—Feb. 1971-Jan. 1973

John P. Scali—Feb. 1973-June 1975

Daniel P. Moynihan—June 1975-Feb. 1976

William W. Scranton—March 1976-Jan. 1977

Andrew Young—Jan. 1977-April 1979

Donald McHenry—April 1979-Jan. 1981

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick—Feb. 1981-April 1985

Vernon Walters—May 1985-Jan. 1989

Thomas R. Pickering—March 1989-May 1992

Edward J. Perkins—May 1992-Jan. 1993

Madeleine K. Albright—Feb. 1993-Jan. 1997

Bill Richardson—Feb. 1997-Sept 1998

A. Peter Burleigh (acting)—Sept 1998-Aug 1999

Richard Holbrooke—Aug. 1999-Jan. 2001.

James B. Cunningham (acting)—Feb. 2001-Sept. 2001

John Negroponte—Sept. 2001-June 2004.

John C. Danforth—June 2004–Jan. 2005

Anne W. Patterson (acting) Jan.–Aug. 2005

John R. Bolton—August 2005–Dec. 2006

Zalmay Khalilzad—March 2007–Jan. 2009

Susan Rice—Jan. 2009–present

U.S. POLICY IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

September 21, 2006

The United States looks to work with the United Nations, particularly with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), to address the varied challenges facing the international community.

Ending the Genocide in Sudan

As a result of the conflict in Darfur, which the United States has called a genocide, thousands of people have been killed, nearly 2 million internally displaced, and over 200,000 made refugees in Chad. With the African Union and other international partners, the United States led the way in achieving the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), signed on May 5, 2006, between the largest rebel group and the Sudanese government. The UN Security Council issued a Presidential Statement on May 9, supporting the implementation of the DPA, and two UN Security Council Resolutions, 1679 and 1706. The latter resolution called for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to Darfur. The United States is working intensively with other Security Council members to ensure that the transition of the African Union forces to a UN-led operation will take place as soon as possible.

Nonproliferation and Iran

Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons represents a threat to the entire international community. In defiance of repeated calls from the United Nations Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Iranian regime is continuing its nuclear program. The United States, with its international partners, will continue to make every effort to achieve a successful diplomatic outcome, but there must be consequences, such as Security Council sanctions, for Iran's continued defiance.

A Lasting Peace in Lebanon

The United States worked with the other members of the Security Council to establish conditions for a lasting peace in Lebanon. The enhancement of the UN peacekeeping operation in Lebanon will help the democratic Lebanese government to regain control over its territory. It also will help to provide the conditions for the full implementation of Resolution 1559, which calls for the end of foreign interference in Lebanese internal affairs and for the disbanding and disarming of militias in Lebanon.

Nonproliferation and North Korea

In response to North Korea's launch of several ballistic missiles on July 5, 2006, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1695. The United States participated in and fully supported the Japanese-led efforts in making this

resolution possible. In concert with its regional partners, the United States has urged the North Koreans to return without delay to the six-party talks for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. This would allow North Korea to gain economic assistance and security, and to integrate itself into the region.

U.S. Financial Contributions to the UN System

September 20, 2007

In 2006, the United States contributed:

- 41.5%, or $1.12 billion, of the budget of the World Food Program (WFP), which provides over 4 million tons of food to 87.8 million people in 78 countries each year;
- 24%, or $346 million, of the budget of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to protect and safeguard the rights and well-being of 20.8 million refugees, returnees, stateless persons, and internally displaced persons in 116 countries; and
- 9.4%, or $260 million, of the budget of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to feed, educate, and protect children in 157 countries, including providing over 3 billion doses of vaccines to children.

U.S. Leadership and Engagement in the United Nations

The United States co-founded and continues to be the leading financial supporter of the United Nations. The U.S. believes that the UN has an essential role to play in fostering international peace and security, fighting poverty through development, providing humanitarian assistance, eradicating disease, advancing freedom, and promoting human rights and democracy. The United States is committed to ensuring good stewardship of United Nations resources so that these universal goals are met effectively and efficiently. The United States has been the largest contributor to the United Nations every year since its creation in 1945. In fiscal year 2006, the U.S. contributed over $5.3 billion to the United Nations system to support UN agencies and peacekeeping operations. The U.S. contribution to UN peacekeeping alone totaled nearly $870 million in fiscal year 2006.

As the UN's largest contributor, the U.S. will continue to call for the accountable use of these funds. In particular, the U.S. has proposed using the General Assembly's biennial budget process to reward programs that achieve desired results, while terminating low priority, poorly performing, or unnecessary programs.

In addition, the U.S. has called for a maximum of accountability and transparency in the management of all UN programs and funds. Stronger internal oversight and improved reporting require adequate resources and greater independence for the key Office of Internal Oversight Services. A fair and open procurement system is also necessary to ensure accountability and transparency.

U.S. Commitment to the UN's Founding Ideals

September 20, 2007

UN Reforms Secured Through U.S. Diplomatic Engagement Since 2005

- Creation of an independent Ethics Office;
- Additional resources for the Office of Internal Oversight Services;
- Expanded financial disclosure program;
- Strengthened "whistleblower" protections;
- Use of International Public Sector Accounting Standards;
- Support for establishment of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee;
- Support for mechanism to adjudicate staff grievances.

The United Nations was created 60 years ago to advance freedom, democracy, peace, security, human rights, and prosperity for all people.

The United States is not alone in its commitment both to these ideals and to ongoing reform of UN operations. In 2005, more than 170 heads of state and governments expressed a global consensus that wide-ranging UN reform is imperative.

U.S. Priorities for UN Reform Include:

- Strengthening the UN's internal oversight body to better identify, obtain, and deploy the resources to accomplish its mandate;
- Institutionalizing a system-wide approach to enforcing ethical conduct;
- Enhancing transparency and accountability through procurement reform;
- Increasing the UN's effectiveness and efficiency through results-based management.

Ethics

UN employees around the world must abide by the highest standards of ethical conduct. With the number of peacekeeping operations at an all-time high and growing, it is all the more essential for the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations to consistently and comprehensively enforce its zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers of the vulnerable citizens they are entrusted with protecting. The establishment of an independent Ethics Office and enhanced "whistleblower" protections for UN staff who report wrongdoing were positive steps.

Now, the Secretary-General should ensure the office's jurisdiction over all UN funds and programs, and guarantee full protection for whistleblowers. The Secretary-General has led the way in publicly disclosing his finances, and all senior UN officials should follow his example. UN staff should not only benefit the people they serve by their work, but also should set a standard for ethical public service.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Member States and United Nations officials should ensure careful stewardship of the UN's limited resources. Effective, results-based management will maximize resources available to improve the lives of the world's neediest people, who have the most to gain from reform. The General Assembly's biennial budget process is a powerful reform tool and should be used to reward programs that achieve desired results, while terminating low priority, poorly performing, or unnecessary programs. This approach requires measurable standards for success and regular performance assessments.

The UN Secretariat must ensure that the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the creation of the new Department of Field Support strengthen UN capacity to backstop a growing number of peacekeepers.

Accountability and Transparency

Accountability and transparency are at the heart of any well-run, effective organization. The UN must enhance accountability and transparency through a stronger, more independent Office of Internal Oversight Services with adequate and flexible funding; improved reporting practices; and a fair, open, and cost-effective procurement system.

Standards for Leadership

To accomplish its mission, the United Nations requires leaders, staff, and Member States whose conduct reflects the ideals of the UN Charter. Nations that violate these ideals or are under UN sanctions should not be elected to limited membership bodies, such as the UN Security Council or the Human Rights Council, or to leadership positions in any UN body.

A Mission of Liberation Around the World

September 25, 2007

President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly and called on every UN member to join a mission of liberation from tyranny, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and poverty. Achieving the promise of the UN's commitment to "freedom, justice, and peace" laid out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights requires both confronting long-term threats and answering the immediate needs of today. The UN must work to free people from tyranny and violence, hunger and disease, illiteracy and ignorance, and poverty and despair.

Liberation From Tyranny And Violence

Terrorists and extremists who kill the innocent are a threat to civilized people everywhere. All civilized nations must work together to stop them by sharing intelligence about their networks, choking off their finances, and capturing or killing their operatives. In the long run, the best way to defeat the extremists is to defeat their dark ideology with a more hopeful vision of liberty. Citizens in Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iraq have made the choice for democracy, and every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand with them. The extremists are doing everything in their power to bring down these young democracies, and the people of Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iraq have asked for our help.

The United States salutes the many nations that have recently taken strides toward liberty—including Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Morocco. Every civilized nation has a responsibility to stand up for people suffering under dictatorship. In Belarus, Cuba, North Korea, Zimbabwe, Syria, and Iran, brutal regimes deny their people the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration. Americans are also outraged by the situation in Burma, where a military junta has imposed a 19-year reign of fear. President Bush announced a series of steps to help bring peaceful change to Burma. The President urges the United Nations and all nations to use their diplomatic and economic leverage to help the Burmese people reclaim their freedom. The United States will:

- Tighten economic sanctions on the leaders of the regime and their financial backers.
- Impose an expanded visa ban on those responsible for the most egregious violations of human rights, as well as their family members.
- Facilitate the efforts of humanitarian groups working to alleviate suffering in Burma.

The United Nations must insist on free speech, free assembly, and, ultimately, free and competitive elections in Cuba as the nation transitions from the long dictatorship of Fidel Castro.

The United Nations must insist on freedom for the people of Zimbabwe. President Robert Mugabe's government has cracked down violently on peaceful calls for reform, and forced millions to flee their homeland. The United Nations must live up to its promise to promptly deploy peacekeeping forces to Darfur. The U.S. has provided more than $2 billion in humanitarian and peacekeeping aid to Darfur since 2005, and has responded to the repression in Sudan and genocide in the Darfur region with tough sanctions against those responsible for the violence. The President looks forward to attending a Security Council meeting on Peace and Security in Africa, chaired by French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Liberation From Hunger And Disease

Today, more than half of the world's food assistance comes from America.

The President has also proposed using a portion of U.S. emergency food assistance to purchase the crops of local and regional farmers. This would help build up local agriculture and break the cycle of famine in the developing world, and the President urges the United States Congress to support this approach. The President calls on UN member states to work together to turn the tide against HIV/AIDS and to eliminate malaria.

In 2003, the United States launched a $15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief—the largest national commitment to combat a single disease in history. This effort has helped bring life-saving treatments to more than a million people in sub-Saharan Africa. The President has announced a plan to double this initial commitment with an additional $30 billion over five years.

The President's Malaria Initiative is spending $1.2 billion over five years to combat malaria in 15 African countries. This funding is providing bed nets, indoor spraying, and anti-malaria medicine with the goal of reducing mortality by 50 percent in the most vulnerable groups.

The Global Fund is working with governments and the private sector to fight HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria around the world. The United States is the fund's largest donor at about 30 percent.

Liberation From Illiteracy And Ignorance

The United States is joining with nations around the world to help them provide a better education for their people. In partnership with other nations, America has: helped train more than 600,000 teachers and administrators; distributed tens of millions of textbooks; and helped nations raise standards in their schools. Last May, the President committed to provide an additional $525 million over the next five years to make our international education programs even more robust.

On September 24, First Lady Laura Bush announced that the basic education initiative will focus on: Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Liberia, Mali, and Yemen.

Liberation From Poverty And Despair

In the long run, the best way to lift people out of poverty is through trade and investment. Open markets ignite growth, encourage investment, increase transparency, strengthen the rule of law, and help countries help themselves.

The United States has both the will and the flexibility to help conclude a successful Doha Round, and the President urges other leaders to direct their negotiators to demonstrate the same spirit. The Doha round of trade talks is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to open up markets, create new trade flows, and help millions escape poverty, and the President is optimistic that we can reach a good agreement.

The United States will continue to pursue market-opening agreements that increase trade and investment. We recently signed free trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, Panama, and South Korea. These agreements embody the values of open markets, transparent and fair regulation, respect for private property, and resolving disputes under international law rules. They are now moving towards a Congressional vote, and the President urges Congress to approve them as soon as possible.

Through the Millennium Challenge Account, the United States is delivering economic assistance to developing nations in innovative ways. The Millennium Challenge Account increases aid to nations that govern justly, fight corruption, invest in the education and health of their people, and promote economic freedom.

We have signed Millennium Challenge Compacts with 14 nations, most recently with Morocco. Together, these are worth nearly $4.6 billion, and we have just approved two more compacts with Mongolia and Tanzania.

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Last Updated: July 2008

Official Name:
World Trade Organization

Editor's note: The information in this article was compiled and edited from *Background Notes* and *Fact Sheets* available through the U.S. Department of State. Additional information has been added from releases and reports available from the U.S. Department of State as of July 2008.

BACKGROUND

The World Trade Organization (WTO), established on January 1, 1995, is a multilateral institution charged with administering rules for trade among member countries. Currently, there are 153 official member countries. The United States and other countries participating in the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (1986–1994) called for the formation of the WTO to embody the new trade disciplines adopted during those negotiations.

The WTO functions as the principal international body concerned with multilateral negotiations on the reduction of trade barriers and other measures that distort competition. The WTO also serves as a platform for countries to raise their concerns regarding the trade policies of their trading partners. The basic aim of the WTO is to liberalize world trade and place it on a secure basis, thereby contributing to economic growth and development.

The Uruguay Round

Progress toward multilateral trade liberalization takes place through rounds of negotiations. Eight rounds have been completed since 1948. The eighth round, the Uruguay Round, began in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in September 1986 and concluded at Marrakech, Morocco, in April 1994.

On December 15, 1993, 123 countries, accounting for more than 90% of world trade, concluded a historic agreement to reform international trade. The Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, conducted under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), extended the GATT's rules to new areas of trade and updated its organization to conform to a more dynamic global trading system.

The WTO effectively replaced the GATT on January 1, 1995.

The Doha Round

At the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, held in November 2001, the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) was launched. The WTO reiterated its goals of promoting economic development and alleviating poverty through international trade. It recognized the particular vulnerability of the least-developed countries in the world, and pledged commitment to address the marginalization of those poor countries in international trade and to improve their participation in the multilateral trading system. Twenty-one subjects were listed in the Doha Declaration, among them decisions clarifying the objectives of developing country member governments. These included issues relating to agriculture, subsidies, textiles and clothing, technical barriers to trade, trade-related investment measures, and rules of origin. Other subjects covered included services, intellectual property rights, transparency, trade and the environment, electronic commerce, and technical cooperation. The Declaration set the date of January 1, 2005, for adopting all but two of the negotiations. The original deadline of January 1, 2005 was missed. It was extended to the end of 2006, but that deadline was also missed. Efforts then focused on achieving a breakthrough in 2007 and 2008.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF FOCUS

Tariffs

Previously existing as well as newly established tariffs will be "bound." Once bound, a tariff cannot be increased without compensation to other countries. In addition, all countries were required to begin reducing tariffs in 1995, with specific schedules established for each member. For developed countries, tariffs will be reduced a minimum of 15% per product line and an overall average of 36%

over a six-year implementation period. Developing countries are permitted smaller reduction commitments and longer implementation periods (10 years to cut tariffs by 24%). Important gains include 50–100% cuts in tariffs on electronic items (such as semiconductors and computer parts) and harmonization of tariffs in the chemical sector at low rates.

Services

The agreement on trade in services establishes new rules in more than 150 service sectors and subsectors (such as advertising, law, accounting, information and computer services, environmental services, engineering, and tourism), thus enabling U.S. firms operating overseas to be treated as fairly as local firms.

Intellectual Property

The agreement on trade-related intellectual property rights establishes improved safeguards to protect intellectual property rights. Computer programs and databases are protected under copyright. Patents for virtually all types of inventions, including those in pharmaceuticals and chemicals, are protected for up to 20 years.

Agriculture

The agreement on agriculture requires that all members reduce aggregate support to their domestic agricultural sectors by 20% from a 1986–88 base period. (The U.S. already has reduced domestic support so that further reductions will not be necessary.)

Agricultural products, which represent 10% of total U.S. merchandise exports, were the second-largest contributor to the overall U.S. trade balance in 1992. Since the U.S. is the world's major exporter of agricultural products, with a share of world trade averaging about 15% in recent years, increased market access and reduced subsidies for agriculture will create important opportunities for U.S. producers and exporters. An agricultural export subsidy agreement specifies reductions in spending on export subsidies (36% over six years for developed countries, 24% over 20 years for developing countries) and outlaws the extension of subsidies to new products not subsidized during a 1986–90 base period.

An agreement on sanitary and phytosanitary measures establishes a scientific standard for measures restricting plant and animal product imports on the basis of health or safety concerns, thereby eliminating import restrictions based on arbitrary or unsubstantiated health concerns.

Environment

Although environmental issues were not included in the original Uruguay Round, the U.S. initiated discussion of the environment in the late stages of the negotiations. The new Committee on Trade and Environment in the WTO will review the relationship of economic and environmental objectives in trade negotiations.

STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES

Under the Uruguay Round Agreement, the World Trade Organization replaced the GATT, with responsibility for enforcing the revised international trade rules, providing procedures for negotiating additional reductions of trade barriers, and settling disputes arising in areas covered by the new trade agreements.

Trade and Environment

The WTO agreement recognizes the importance of environmental concerns. This addresses a key interest among U.S. environmental and conservation groups, which have often expressed concern that international trade agreements have failed to take environmental issues into account.

A WTO committee on trade and environment aims to ensure the responsiveness of the multilateral trading system to environmental objectives.

Decision-making

The U.S. has successfully retained the practice of general decision-making by consensus followed under the GATT since 1947. Consensus is achieved "if no member, present at the meeting where the decision is taken, formally objects to the proposed decision." This continues to enable the U.S. to prevent a decision that it perceives to be contrary to its interest.

Amendments

The agreement permits amendments but ensures that an amendment of the substantive rights and obligations not be binding on the U.S. without acceptance of the amendment. In contrast, amendments to pure procedural provisions of the Uruguay Round agreements will be binding on all members in order to avoid the destabilizing effect that would result if different members were subject to different procedural rules.

Waivers

The agreement allows members to grant waivers of substantive provisions in the various Uruguay Round agreements, but only in exceptional circumstances. In the case of an obligation subject to phased-in implementation, such as those in the agreement on trade-related intellectual property issues (TRIPs), which has not yet been fulfilled by the requesting member, members may grant a waiver only by consensus. Also, the waiver provision substantially increases the threshold for obtaining waivers, from two-thirds of members present to three-quarters of all members. Any waivers granted are subject to specific conditions, including a date on which the waiver will terminate.

Interpretations

Under the WTO, the reports of dispute settlement panels do not constitute "authoritative" interpreta-

tions of the relevant agreements. Only the members themselves—acting through the Ministerial Conference or General Council—can adopt such an interpretation. The agreement also states that interpretations not be used in a manner that undermine amendment provisions.

Non-application

The agreement does not permit sector non-application. Thus, for example, India is precluded from not applying the TRIPs agreement to the U.S. With respect to WTO members that accede to the WTO but are not "original members" (generally, are not GATT contracting parties), a member can invoke "global" non-application. Thus, with respect to acceding members, the U.S. can choose not to apply the GATT and the Uruguay Round agreements to that country as a whole.

Definitive Application

In joining the WTO agreement, members agree to the definitive application of the obligations of the Uruguay Round multilateral trade agreements. (Accession to the multilateral trade agreements, such as the agreement on government procurement, is limited to those members who affirmatively accept these agreements.) Annex 1 to the WTO agreement eliminates the protocol of provisional application and corresponding provisions in protocols of accession to the GATT that had the effect of allowing certain existing legislation of contracting parties that are inconsistent with the GATT. However, Annex 1 includes a clause that protects from GATT challenge U.S. maritime laws relating to sabotage ("Jones Act").

U.S.-WTO COOPERATION

Benefits to the U.S. Economy

Exports of goods and services have been steadily rising as a share of the U.S. economy's total output. An increase in U.S. export opportunities helps stimulate greater capital investment; technological innovation; higher productivity; job growth; and rising living standards. Export growth is important not only for U.S. export producers but also for U.S. industries which provide the intermediate and capital goods used by producers of exports as well as the U.S. firms and workers supporting the export process. A large and growing share of the U.S. work force depends on U.S. exports for employment. The substantial reductions in trade barriers negotiated in the Uruguay Round will result in lower prices for imported intermediate and final products and a greater variety of goods for American consumers.

Competition in the U.S. market from increased imports stimulates U.S. industries to improve their productivity, quality, and technology; this can benefit both the firms and U.S. consumers who buy their goods at reduced prices.

U.S. Trade Policy

U.S. trade policy aims to raise standards of living in the U.S. and around the world. Trade accounts for one-quarter of the U.S. gross domestic product; for many nations, the figure is much higher. In a changing and more interdependent world, the key to prosperity and improved living standards is engagement rather than withdrawal and protectionism. The Administration is committed to harnessing the forces of change for the benefit of all Americans and the people of all nations through reducing trade barriers and promoting sustainable development.

When the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) began after World War II, it dealt only with tariffs. Later, the U.S. began to address non-tariff barriers to global trade. Opening new markets is critical to fostering global growth and creating jobs both in the United States—richer countries are able to buy more goods and services from the U.S.—and abroad. But sustainable development also is important to such growth, and it has both environmental and social dimensions. As President Clinton cautioned in January 1994:

"While we continue to tear down anti-competitive practices and other barriers to trade, we simply have to ensure that our economic policies also protect the environment and the well-being of workers."

More nations are recognizing that economic growth must occur at a rate that the environment can sustain. The U.S. strongly favored the establishment of the World Trade Organization's Committee on Trade and Environment to discuss the environmental aspects of sustainable development. Another dimension of sustainable development is that a rise in productivity should occur in tandem with the growth of middle classes, the rise in standards of living, and the improvement of internationally recognized labor standards. Such labor standards include freedom of association, freedom to organize and bargain collectively, freedom from forced or compulsory labor, a minimum age for the employment of children, and conditions of work.

The U.S. supports improved environmental and labor standards; at the same time, it will resist efforts to use them as protectionist tools.

U.S. Objectives

The principal trade negotiating objectives of the United States regarding the improvement of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and multilateral trade negotiation agreements were:

- To enhance the status of the GATT;
- To improve the operation and extend the coverage of the GATT and such agreements and arrangements to products, sectors, and conditions of trade not adequately covered; and
- To expand country participation in particular agreements or arrangements, where appropriate.

The agreement establishing the WTO facilitates the implementation of trade agreements in the diverse areas of trade in goods, trade in services, and the protection of trade-related intellectual property rights. The WTO encompasses the former GATT structure and extends it to new disciplines that have not been adequately covered in the past. By bringing together disciplines on government practices affecting trade in goods and services and the protection of intellectual property rights under one institutional umbrella, the WTO agreement also facilitates the "cross-retaliation" mechanism of the integrated dispute settlement understanding. In addition, the WTO resolves the "free rider" problem in the world trading system. WTO benefits only extend to its members who have agreed to adhere to all of the Uruguay Round agreements and who submit schedules of market access commitments for industrial goods, agricultural goods, and services. This eliminates the shortcomings of the former GATT system in which, for example, only a handful of countries voluntarily adhered to disciplines on subsidies under the 1979 Tokyo Round agreement. The WTO agreement establishes a number of institutional rules (described below) that are applied to all Uruguay Round agreements. It establishes an international organization with a stature commensurate with that of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The organization is similar to that of the existing GATT Secretariat.

U.S. DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

July 24, 2006

The United States has been the leader in seeking to promote development through the Doha Round of trade negotiations. A key to development through trade is agriculture. The World Bank has estimated that 63% of goods trade gains for developing countries comes from agriculture and 93% of that benefit derives from greater market access.

The United States has lower agricultural tariffs than the EU or advanced developing economies. The US average bound tariff is 12%; the EU average bound tariff is 23%. The global average bound tariff is 62% and India's average bound tariff is 114%.

The United States offered a far bolder package of agricultural tariff cuts than anyone else. The U.S. October proposal would require the developed countries to cut average agricultural tariffs by over 60%. Developing countries should offer a two-thirds reduction of this amount.

By contrast, the EU—trying to protect its market—would offer a far more limited tariff cut of 39–48% for developed countries and less than two-thirds of that for advanced developing countries. The EU and developing countries also propose substantial loopholes that could exempt many agricultural commodities from the tariff-cutting formulas altogether. For example, India's proposal would seek to shield up to 98% of its agricultural imports from tariff reduction, while the EU's would result in little if any new market access for key commodities. The United States has fewer trade-distorting agricultural supports than the EU. Total 2005 US trade-distorting agricultural domestic support is $12.5 billion with an allowed level of $19.1 billion. Total 2005 EU trade-distorting agricultural domestic support is $33 billion (est.) with an allowed level of $88 billion. The United States would make real cuts in allowed support in existing farm programs. The U.S. has proposed to cut its most trade-distorting subsidies by 60%. The EU proposal would not require any changes in its current farm programs.

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The Sixth Ministerial Conference was held in Hong Kong from 13-18 December 2005. The main objective of the conference was to settle a number of issues that will shape the final agreement of the Doha agenda. At the conclusion of the 2005 ministerial meeting, the then 149 members of the WTO agreed to an end date for all agricultural export subsidies, came to an agreement on cotton, created solid duty-free, quota-free access for the 32 least-developed members of the WTO, and came to an agreement on trade in services.

The United States, the European Union, and Japan lead the world in agricultural subsidies for their farmers. Brazil, joined by certain third parties, brought a complaint to the WTO over U.S. cotton subsidies, and in 2004, a WTO dispute resolution panel issued a mixed verdict on the complaint. The panel agreed with the United States that income support provided to U.S. cotton farmers and others that is decoupled from production and prices did not depress or suppress world cotton prices ("Decoupled" support means farmers are paid according to the number of acres they planted and the cotton they produced in the past, regardless of how they cultivate those fields in the present. Thus, farmers do not receive extra support for excess cotton produced.) However, the panel agreed with Brazil that some U.S. farm payments cause adverse effects to Brazil, and that export credit guarantees for some agricultural commodities are prohibited. In total, the WTO panel decided $3.2 billion in annual cotton subsidies and $1.6 billion in export credits paid by the U.S. in cotton and other commodities were illegal under WTO rules. This was a significant victory for Brazil and the third parties to the dispute.

Foreign Travel

Planning Your Trip: Know Before You Go!

Editor's note: The information below was compiled and edited from reports available through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs as of January 2009. References are made to documents the reader can obtain from various other agencies or by visiting the State Department's web site at www.state.gov.

HOW TO HAVE A SAFE TRIP

Register Your Travel: Why It's Important

The State Department strongly encourages American citizens planning travel abroad to register their travel with the Department of State. Travel registration makes it possible to contact a traveler if necessary, whether because of a family emergency in the United States or because of a crisis in the place the traveler is visiting. Registration is a free service provided by the State Department, and is easily accomplished online at http://travelregistration.state.gov.

Note that, in accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State may not release information about those registered without their express written authorization.

If your family needs to reach you because of an emergency, they can pass a message to you through the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, which can be contacted from within the United States at 1-888-407-4747 (toll free), and from overseas at 202-501-4444. The Office of Overseas Citizens Services will contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country in which you are traveling in order to pass the message to you.

The State Department also advises leaving a detailed itinerary and copies of your passport biographical-data page with a friend or relative in the United States.

How to Register (It's Easy)

You can either register online at https://travelregistration.state.gov.

or

If you would like to contact an embassy or consulate you can go to http://usembassy.state.gov for access to U.S. Embassy and Consulate web pages.

INFORMATION RESOURCES

Travelers should familiarize themselves with their destinations, both to get the most enjoyment out of the visit and to avoid known dangers. Travelers should also be aware of restrictions on items that may be taken overseas and even on items that may be brought into the U.S. upon return.

The Consular Information Program

The Consular Information Program consists of three main components that provide information to the American public about travel to specific countries: Country Specific Information, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts. The U.S. Department of State issues fact sheets called Country Specific Information on over 200 countries. The sheets contain information on entry requirements, crime and security conditions, areas of instability, road safety and other details relevant to travel.

The Department of State also issues Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts. Travel warnings are issued when the State Department recommends deferral of travel by Americans to a country because of civil unrest, dangerous conditions, terrorist activity and, in some cases, because the U.S. has no diplomatic relations with the country and may have great difficulty in assisting Americans in distress. Travel Alerts are issued as a means to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term or transnational conditions that could pose significant risks to American travelers.

Country Specific Information, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts are updated regularly and are accessible through the State Department's travel information website at http://www.travel.state.gov. For specific questions regarding an emergency involving an American citizen overseas, contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at (202) 647-5225.

There are three ways to access Country Specific Information, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts.

On the Internet: http:// travel.state.gov

By Fax: on a fax machine, dial 202-647-3000 and follow the voice prompts.

By Telephone: dial (888) 407-4747 from within the U.S., or, from overseas, (202) 501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Background Notes

Background Notes are factual publications that contain information on countries with which the United States has diplomatic relations. They include facts on each country's land, people, history, government, political conditions, economy, and relations with other countries and the United States. Background notes can be accessed via the Internet at http://www.travel.state.gov. This information can also be found in the country sections of this book.

Other Resources

For more information that can help you plan a wonderful (and trouble-free) trip, go to http://www.travel.state.gov.

CUSTOMS AND IMPORT RESTRICTIONS

Customs Restrictions of Foreign Destinations—What You Cannot Take to Other Countries

Many countries have restrictions on what may be brought into the country, including food, pets, and medications. Even over-the-counter medications may be prohibited in some countries. Check with the embassies of your destination countries as to prohibited items.

A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

U.S. Customs Restrictions—What You Cannot Bring Back With You

Some items may not be brought into the U.S., or may only be brought in under certain restrictions. For information on U.S. customs regulations and procedures, review reports at http://www.cbp.gov. General customs information is also available in the *Foreign Travel* section of this book.

There are special rules for products made from endangered wildlife. Many wildlife and wildlife products are prohibited either by U.S. or foreign laws from import into the United States, and you risk confiscation and a possible fine if you attempt to bring them into the U.S. when you return. Watch out for the following prohibited items:

- All products made from sea turtles
- All ivory, both Asian and African elephant, and rhinoceros
- Furs from spotted cats
- Furs from marine mammals
- Feathers and feather products from wild birds
- Most crocodile and caiman leather
- Most coral, whether in chunks or in jewelry

You may import an object made of ivory if it is an antique. To be an antique the ivory must be at least 100 years old, and you will need documentation that authenticates the age of the ivory. You may import other antiques containing wildlife parts under the same conditions: they must be accompanied by documentation proving they are at least 100 years old. Certain other requirements for antiques may also apply.

For more information, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Law Enforcement, P.O. Box 3247, Arlington, VA 22203-3247, or call 800-358-2104, or visit http://www.fws.gov.

Taking a Pet Overseas

If you decide to take your pet with you when you go abroad, you should check with the embassies of the destination countries as to specific requirements that must be met before a pet may be brought into the country. Many countries have strict health, quarantine, agriculture, wildlife, and customs requirements and prohibitions. A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

Note: In a crisis in which chartered or military aircraft or ships are used to evacuate Americans from a danger area, pets will not normally be permitted on the carrier. The pet owner will need to make other arrangements in order to remove the pet from the area. (Service animals, such as guide dogs, are not considered pets and will be accommodated if possible.)

Places to Receive Mail

If you will be abroad for an extended period, you may want to arrange for the delivery of your mail. Some banks and international credit card companies handle mail for customers at their overseas branches. In addition, post offices in many countries will hold mail for travelers under their General Delivery (Poste Restante) services. U.S. Embassies and Consulates do not handle private mail. Check with the embassy of your destination country to see if that will be possible there. A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of

State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

HEALTH

What You Need to Know in Advance of Travel

All travelers should familiarize themselves with conditions at their destination that could affect their health (high altitude or pollution, types of medical facilities, required immunizations, availability of required pharmaceuticals, etc.). While some of this information may be found in the documents listed above, the key resource for health information is the Travelers' Health page of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at http://www.cdc.gov/travel. The CDC website also provides general guidance on health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect-bite protection. The CDC also maintains an international travelers' hotline at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or, by fax, at 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299).

Vaccination, Infectious Diseases, Pandemic Influenza, Foot & Mouth Disease, Chemical/Biological/Nuclear Incidents

General guidance on vaccinations and other health precautions may be found on the Travelers' Health page of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel. Some general information from the CDC is available in the *Foreign Travel* section of this book.

Fact Sheets on foot and mouth disease, responding to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents and other health issues may be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel.

For information about pandemic influenza, see http://www.pandemicflu.gov or the website above. Information about infectious diseases abroad may also be found on the website of the World Health Organization at http://www.who.int/en, and further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

Insurance, Medicare & Medicaid, Medical Evacuation

Obtaining medical treatment and hospital care abroad can be expensive, and medical evacuation to the U.S. can cost more than $50,000. Note that U.S. medical insurance is generally not accepted outside the United States, nor do the Social Security Medicare and Medicaid programs provide coverage for hospital or medical costs outside the United States.

If your insurance policy does not cover you abroad, it is a good idea to consider purchasing a short-term policy that does. There are health insurance policies designed specifically to cover travel. Many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas including emergency services such as medical evacuations. The names of some of the companies offering short-term health and emergency assistance policies are listed on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at http://travel.state.gov/travel.

Bringing Medications or Filling Prescriptions Abroad

A traveler going abroad with a preexisting medical problem should carry a letter from the attending physician, describing the medical condition and any prescription medications, including the generic names of prescribed drugs. Any medications being carried overseas should be left in their original containers and be clearly labeled. Travelers should check with the foreign embassy of the country they are visiting to make sure any required medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics. A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

If you wear eyeglasses, take an extra pair with you. Pack medicines and extra eyeglasses in your hand luggage so they will be available in case your checked luggage is lost. To be extra secure, pack a backup supply of medicines and an additional pair of eyeglasses in your checked luggage.

If you have allergies, reactions to certain medications, foods, or insect bites, or other unique medical problems, consider wearing a "medical alert" bracelet. You may also wish to carry a letter from your physician explaining required treatment should you become ill.

Information on filling a prescription abroad and other health issues may be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel.

Doctors and Hospitals

If an American citizen becomes seriously ill or injured abroad, a U. S. consular officer can assist in locating medical services and informing family or friends. If necessary, a consular officer can also assist in the transfer of funds from the United States. (Note, however, that payment of hospital and all expenses is the responsibility of the traveler.) For more information, go to http://travel.state.gov/travel.

SPECIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Student Travelers

Many college students travel during school breaks. While most students will have a safe and enjoyable adventure,

for some the trip will become a nightmare with a serious impact on the rest of their lives. Students planning travel may want to review http://www.travel.state.gov/travel.

Senior Travelers

Local conditions: Be aware of any effects the local topography or climate may have on you: If you are sensitive to altitude or to humidity, or to other attributes of your destination, consult with your physician.

Don't over-program: The additional physical activity undertaken during travel can be quite strenuous, and sudden changes in diet and climate can have serious health consequences for the unprepared traveler.

Pack wisely: Don't pack so much that you will end up lugging around heavy suitcases. Dress conservatively—a wardrobe that is flashy may attract the attention of thieves or con artists, while clothing that is very casual may result in being barred from some tourist sites overseas. Include a change of clothing in your carry-on luggage.

Traveling With Disabilities

Individual countries have their own standards of accessibility for disabled travelers. Some countries have nondiscrimination laws that help to protect travelers with disabilities, while other countries do not. Preparation before you go can help ensure that your planned destination will be accessible, safe and enjoyable. Travelers with disabilities should review the Department of Transportation pamphlets *New Horizons for the Air Traveler with a Disability* and *Plane Talk: Facts for Passengers with Disabilities*. Both of these publications are available at the Department of Transportation's website http://www.dot.gov. In addition, travelers with disabilities should discuss the trip with a physician.

Research in advance: Learn about planned stops and ask questions about services available. Consider the level of health care available, as well as local transportation needs to and from the airport, luggage assistance, and whether other help will be needed to leave the airport terminal. When making reservations, inform the travel agent or carrier of your disability and the equipment you use, and, if necessary, request a wheelchair be brought to the gate upon arrival and any other assistance needed while flying and at the airport. In all cases, ask that your needs and requests be documented as part of the reservation, and take down the name of the agent. That way, if there is a problem, you may be able to quickly show that you are entitled to the service you requested.

Seek medical advice: Talk to your physician about the activities you have planned and your general physical condition, any immunizations that might be needed, and medications, whether prescription or over the counter, that you might need for your trip.

Carry a letter from your attending physician, describing your medical condition and any prescription medications, including the generic names of prescribed drugs.

Your medications: If you take prescription medication, make sure you have enough to last the duration of the trip, including extra medicine in case you are delayed. Pack your medication in your carry-on bag, since checked baggage is occasionally lost. Always carry your prescriptions in their labeled containers, not in a pill pack.

Documentation of immunizations: Take with you proper documentation of immunizations.

Health and Evacuation Insurance: Make sure you have adequate health insurance coverage while abroad, including coverage of medical evacuation (not covered by most domestic policies). Note that U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

Service dogs: Some countries have restrictions on service dogs. If you intend to travel with a service dog, be sure to check on possible restrictions with the embassy or consulate of each country you will visit. This and other country information may be found on each country's Country Specific Information in the country articles in this book. If service dogs are permitted, learn about quarantine or vaccination requirements. Find out what documents are needed, including international health certificates and rabies inoculation certificates, and if the documents need to be translated. Talk with your vet about tips for traveling with a dog, and how travel will affect the animal. You may also want to ensure that hotels will accommodate your service dog, and that there will be an adequate area for the dog to relieve itself.

Maintenance on equipment: Have a maintenance check done on any equipment you will take with you, to ensure that everything is in working order before you leave. You may want to research the availability of wheelchair and medical equipment providers in the areas you plan to visit.

Carry written plans: Carry with you your written itinerary and directions of where you wish to go. These can be shown to people who might be able to help you if you are lost. Another useful tool is a point-and-conversation guide.

REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS AND OTHER IMPORTANT DOCUMENTATION

Passport Requirements & How to Apply for a Passport

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the

bearer. Only the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Embassies and Consulates have the authority to grant, issue or verify U.S. passports. For travel overseas and to facilitate reentry into the U.S., a valid U.S. passport is the best documentation available. A valid passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Some countries may allow you to enter with only a birth certificate, or with a birth certificate and a driver's license. Note, however, that rules established under the U.S. Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, require that all persons, including U.S. citizens, traveling by air, must present a valid passport to reenter the United States. (Until September 30, 2007, U.S. citizens who have applied for but not yet received passports can enter and depart the United States by air to Western Hemisphere countries with a government-issued photo identification and official proof of application for a passport.

The proof may be obtained at http://travel.state.gov. This accommodation does not affect entry requirements of other countries, and U.S. citizens who are traveling to a country that requires a visitor to have a passport must still obtain one.

If you are traveling by land or sea, make certain that you can return to the United States with the proof of citizenship that you take with you. U.S. regulations require that you document both your U.S. citizenship and your identity when you reenter the United States.

Some countries require that a traveler's U.S. passport be valid at least six months or longer beyond the dates of the trip. In addition, with the number of international child custody cases on the rise, several countries have instituted passport requirements to help prevent child abductions. (Mexican law, for example, requires a child traveling alone, or with only one parent, or in someone else's custody, to carry written, notarized consent from the absent parent or parents if the child is not in possession of a U.S. passport.) Contact the embassy of the foreign destination for more information. A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

How to Apply for a U.S. Passport

Apply for your passport several months before your planned trip, and, if you will need visas from foreign embassies, allow even more time. Even if you don't have specific travel plans, but have family living abroad or are waiting to find a bargain trip, it is a good idea to apply as early as possible.

Information about applying for a U.S. passport may be found at http://www.travel.state.gov/passport.

Adoption Abroad

If you plan to adopt a child overseas, be aware that, in order to bring the child to the U.S. to live, the child must be issued a U.S. immigrant visa in the country of adoption. In addition to other requirements that must be met before a visa may be issued, U.S. law must be satisfied as to the legality of the adoption process that took place. Please see the *Intercountry Adoption* section of this book for further information. Persons interested in adopting abroad should also consult the State Department website at www.state.gov. The U.S. Government considers foreign adoptions to be a private, legal matter within the judicial sovereignty of the nation in which the child is residing. U.S. authorities have no right to intervene on behalf of American citizens in the courts of the country where the adoption takes place, and prospective parents must comply with the laws of that country.

Entry Requirements of Foreign Countries

To view information about entry requirements maintained on the website of the country you plan to visit, go to its embassy's or consulate's website, which may be found at http://www.state.gov. You should also review the Country Specific Information for the country you plan to visit.

If a visa is required by the country you will visit, obtain it from the appropriate foreign consular representative before proceeding abroad. Allow sufficient time for processing your visa application, especially if you are applying by mail. Most foreign consular representatives in the U.S. are located in principal cities, and, in many instances, a traveler may be required to obtain the visa from the consular office in the area of his/her residence. As soon as you receive your visa, check it to make sure no mistakes were made. Processing and visa fees vary, and fees may not be refundable.

Schengen Agreement

24 European countries are party to the Schengen agreement. This agreement eliminates all internal border controls between them. To enter one Schengen country is to gain up to 90 days of continuous travel between the member states. American citizens traveling for business or tourism are not required to have a visa for this initial entry into the Schengen area, but must have a passport valid three months beyond the proposed stay. (For a two week business trip, the passport must be valid for four months, for a two month holiday the passport must be valid for five months, for example.)

Please note, that while business and tourism visits of less than 90 days to the Schengen countries are visa-free, if you are traveling to Europe for any other reason-employment, study, internship, etc., your host country may require a visa for that purpose, to be obtained before you leave the U.S. Please check with the Embassy or Consulate of the country(ies) you are going for their specific requirements.

Although European Union regulations require that non-EU visitors obtain a stamp in their passports upon initial entry to a Schengen country, many borders are not staffed with officers carrying out this function. If an American citizen wishes to ensure that his or her entry is properly documented, it may be necessary to request a stamp at an official point of entry. Under local law, travelers without a stamp in their passports may be questioned and asked to document the length of their stay in Schengen countries at the time of departure or at any other point during their visit, and could face possible fines or other repercussions if unable to do so.

The member parties of the Schengen agreement are: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

Work Authorization, Residence Permits

If you plan to work or reside at your destination, check with that country's Embassy or Consulate in the U.S. to learn about any special documentation requirements (such as work authorization or a residence visa). A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

Additional Fees

All international flights are subject to U.S. immigration and customs fees, paid in advance when the ticket is purchased. In addition, many countries have departure fees that are collected at the time of ticket purchase or upon exiting the foreign country. Expenses usually are greater than expected, and travelers should plan to have at least enough cash handy at the end of the trip to pay any unexpected departure fee. Credit cards may be difficult to use in the country you are visiting, or at the airport at which you need to pay a fee.

Dual Nationality

The concept of dual nationality means that a person is a citizen of two countries at the same time. Each country has its own citizenship laws based on its own policy.Persons may have dual nationality by automatic operation of different laws rather than by choice. For example, a child born in a foreign country to U.S. citizen parents may be both a U.S. citizen and a citizen of the country of birth.

A U.S. citizen may acquire foreign citizenship by marriage, or a person naturalized as a U.S. citizen may not lose the citizenship of the country of birth. U.S. law does not mention dual nationality or require a person to choose one citizenship or another. Also, a person who is automatically granted another citizenship does not risk losing U.S. citizenship. However, a person who acquires a foreign citizenship by applying for it may lose U.S. citizenship. In order to lose U.S. citizenship, the law requires that the person must apply for the foreign citizenship voluntarily, by free choice, and with the intention to give up U.S. citizenship.

Intent can be shown by the person's statements or conduct. The U.S. Government recognizes that dual nationality exists but does not encourage it as a matter of policy because of the problems it may cause. Claims of other countries on dual national U.S. citizens may conflict with U.S. law, and dual nationality may limit U.S. Government efforts to assist citizens abroad. The country where a dual national is located generally has a stronger claim to that person's allegiance.

However, dual nationals owe allegiance to both the United States and the foreign country. They are required to obey the laws of both countries. Either country has the right to enforce its laws, particularly if the person later travels there. Most U.S. citizens, including dual nationals, must use a U.S. passport to enter and leave the United States. Dual nationals may also be required by the foreign country to use its passport to enter and leave that country. Use of the foreign passport does not endanger U.S. citizenship. Most countries permit a person to renounce or otherwise lose citizenship.

Information on losing foreign citizenship can be obtained from the foreign country's embassy and consulates in the United States. Americans can renounce U.S. citizenship in the proper form at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Don't bring anything you would hate to lose. Leave at home:

- Valuable or expensive-looking jewelry
- Irreplaceable family objects
- All unnecessary credit cards
- Social Security card, library card, and similar items that may be in your wallet.
- Do bring medical necessities (see the health sections above regarding medications and insurance).

Leave Copies of Documents and Itinerary with Relatives in the U.S.

Leave a copy of the itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency.

Make two photocopies of the passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license and the credit cards you plan to take. Leave one copy of each with family or friends

at home, and pack the other copies separately from the originals. Leave a copy of the serial numbers of your travelers' checks with a friend or relative at home. Carry your copy with you in a separate place and, as you cash the checks, cross them off the list.

Plan for the Unexpected
Take with you items that you will need if your trip is unexpectedly extended. These items may include extra money or medications.

EMERGENCIES: CONSULAR ASSISTANCE AND CRISES ABROAD

Assistance from American Consuls

U.S. consular officers are located in over 260 Foreign Service posts abroad. In addition, consular agents in approximately 46 foreign cities without U.S. embassies or consulates provide a more limited but still important series of emergency and other consular services.

Providing assistance to Americans during a crisis abroad, such as political upheaval or a natural disaster, is one of the most critical tasks consular officer perform. During a crisis, consular officers look for missing Americans and help Americans return to the U.S., among many other duties to assist Americans.

The State Department strongly encourages American citizens planning travel abroad to register their travel with the Department of State so that we may find you during a crisis. Travel registration is free, it's confidential, and it's easily accomplished online at https://travelregistration.state.gov.

Consuls also advise and help Americans who are in serious legal, medical or financial trouble, including health emergencies, arrests, deaths, missing persons, and destitution. For information about emergency assistance to Americans in trouble abroad, note the following websites:

Finding a hospital or doctor abroad:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1195.html

Victims of crime: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1748.html

Financial emergencies or destitution:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1198.html

Obtaining funds from the U.S. (OCS trust):
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1224.html

Missing persons: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1195.html

Arrests: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1199.html

Deaths: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1205.html#death

Passport replacement: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1197.html

Consular officers also perform non-emergency services, including providing information on absentee voting, selective service registration, and acquisition and loss of U.S. citizenship. They can arrange for the transfer of Social Security and other U.S. government benefits to beneficiaries residing abroad, provide U.S. tax forms, and notarize documents. They can also provide information on how to obtain foreign public documents.

Note, however, that because of the limited number of consular officers and the growing number of U.S. tourists and residents abroad, consuls cannot provide tourism or commercial services. For example, consuls cannot perform the work of travel agencies, lawyers, information bureaus, banks, or the police, nor can they obtain work, residence or driving permits, act as interpreters, search for missing luggage, or settle commercial disputes for U.S. citizens. For information about routine consular services performed by consuls abroad, see http://travel.state.gov.

Consular duty personnel are available for emergency assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at U.S. embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas and in Washington, D.C. To contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in the U.S. call 1-888-407-4747 (during business hours) or 202-647-5225 (after hours). Contact information for U.S. embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas may be found at http://www.state.gov/countries.

When the family of an American traveler needs to reach him or her because of an emergency at home or because family members are worried about the traveler's welfare, they should call 1-888-407-4747. The State Department will relay the message to the consular officers in the country in which the traveler is thought to be, and the consular officers will try to locate the traveler, pass on urgent messages, and, consistent with the Privacy Act, report back to the inquiring family.

Victims of Crime

Consular officers are committed to assisting American citizens who become victims of crime while abroad. Familiar with local government agencies and resources in the country where they work, consular officers can help American crime victims to:

- replace a stolen passport;

- contact family, friends, or employers;
- obtain appropriate medical care;
- address other emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime;
- provide information about the local criminal justice process and about the case itself;
- obtain information about local resources to assist victims, including foreign crime victim compensation programs;
- obtain information about U.S. crime victim assistance and compensation programs; and
- obtain a list of local attorneys who speak English.

Passport Fraud

Passport fraud is attempted by U.S. citizens and non-citizens for a variety of criminal purposes—money laundering, narcotics trafficking, illegal entry into the U.S., terrorism, etc. In processing lost/stolen passport cases, the Department of State must take special precautions that may delay the issuance of a new, full validity passport. If you suspect a U.S. passport is being used fraudulently, do not hesitate to contact the nearest American embassy or consulate or in the U.S., the nearest Passport Agency.

Scams

Financial scams originating from overseas are a real and growing problem. Individual American citizens have lost considerable sums of money on these scams, ranging from a few hundred dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars. While confidence schemes have long existed, the advent of the internet has greatly increased their prevalence, and the Department of State receives daily inquiries from victims. Scams may involve internet dating, inheritance, work permits, overpayment, and money-laundering.

For information about these scams and what you can do to protect yourself (or what to do if you are the victim of a scam), visit the Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov.

International Child Custody Disputes

There are legal limits to the assistance that U.S. authorities can provide to parents involved in a child custody dispute. When an American child is abducted overseas by a parent, the U.S. Government's role is to help the remaining parent by locating the child, monitoring the child's welfare, and providing information about child custody laws and procedures in the country where the child has been taken. Consular officers overseas can issue a U.S. passport to a child involved in a custody dispute, if the child appears in person at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, and if there is no court order from the foreign court of that country barring the child's departure from the country. Parents who are involved in a custody dispute overseas should find out whether the foreign country to which the child has been taken is party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Under the Hague Convention, a child who has been wrongfully removed from a parent may be returned to his or her place of habitual residence.

For further information on international child abduction and the Hague Convention, see the *International Parental Child Abduction* section of this book and visit the Department of State website at http://www.travel.state.gov/childabduction or contact the Office of Children's Issues at 202-647-7000.

If you are overseas and would like information on this subject, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for guidance.

Arrests Abroad

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws, and American officials are limited as to how they can assist you. They cannot, for instance, represent you in legal proceedings or pay your legal fees or other expenses. They can, however, perform a variety of vital services, which include providing a list of attorneys, assisting in contacting your family in the U.S. if you wish it, helping you obtain money from family in the U.S., and monitoring your health and welfare and the conditions under which you are being held.

If you are arrested, immediately ask to speak to a consular officer at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Under international agreements, the U.S. Government has a right to provide consular assistance to you upon your request. If your request to speak to your consul is turned down, keep asking—politely, but persistently. For information on how consuls assist American arrestees, see http://travel.state.gov.

Special Warning About Drug Offenses Abroad

Every year, several hundred Americans are arrested abroad on drug charges. Persons caught with illegal drugs in a foreign country are subject to the drug laws of that country, not those of the U.S.; as always, ignorance of the law is no excuse. In many countries, the burden of proof is on the accused to show that he or she is innocent of the charges. Some Americans take advantage of an offer of an all-expenses-paid vacation abroad in exchange for carrying a small package in the luggage. When, to their surprise, they are caught, the fact that they did not know that there were drugs in that package will not reduce the charges against them. Every aspect of a drug arrest abroad can be different from U.S. practice. For instance:

- few countries provide a jury trial
- many countries do not permit pre-trial release on bail

- pre-trial detention, often in solitary confinement, can last several months
- prisons may lack even minimal comforts, such as beds, toilets, and washbasins
- diets are often inadequate and require supplements from relatives and friends
- officials may not speak English
- physical abuse, confiscation of property, degrading treatment and extortion are possible
- persons convicted may face sentences ranging from fines and jail time, to years of hard labor, and even the death penalty
- penalties for drug possession and for drug trafficking are often the same abroad, so possession of one ounce of marijuana could result in years in a foreign jail

As with any arrest of a U.S. citizen abroad, consular officers perform a variety of services. For more information about arrests abroad, see http://travel.state.gov.

Terrorism

Terrorist acts occur unpredictably, making it impossible to protect yourself absolutely. The first and best protection is to avoid travel to areas where there has been a persistent record of terrorist attacks or kidnappings. Most terrorist attacks are the result of careful planning. Just as a car thief will first be attracted to an unlocked car with the key in the ignition, terrorists are looking for the most accessible targets.

The chances that a tourist, traveling with an unpublished program or itinerary, would be the victim of terrorism are slight. In addition, many terrorist groups, seeking publicity for political causes within their own country or region, may not be looking for American targets. Nevertheless, the following pointers may help you avoid becoming a target of opportunity. These precautions may provide some degree of protection, and can serve as practical and psychological deterrents to would-be terrorists.

- Schedule direct flights if possible, and avoid stops in high-risk airports or areas.
- Be cautious about what you discuss with strangers or what others may overhear.
- Try to minimize the time spent in the public area of an airport, which is a less protected area. Move quickly from the check-in counter to the secured areas. Upon arrival, leave the airport as soon as possible.
- As much as possible, avoid luggage tags, dress and behavior that may draw attention to yourself.
- Keep an eye out for abandoned packages or briefcases, or other suspicious items. Report them to airport authorities and leave the area promptly.
- Avoid obvious terrorist targets, such as places where Westerners are known to congregate.
- Watch for people following you or “loiterers” observing your comings and goings.
- Report any suspicious activity to local police, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
- Keep a mental note of safe havens, such as police stations, hotels, and hospitals. Formulate a plan of action for what you will do if a bomb explodes or there is gunfire nearby.
- Select your own taxicabs at random. Don’t take a vehicle that is not clearly identified as a taxi. Compare the face of the driver with the one on his or her posted license.
- If possible, travel with others.
- Be sure of the identity of visitors before opening the door of your hotel room. Don’t meet strangers at your hotel room, or at unknown or remote locations.
- Refuse unexpected packages.
- Check for loose wires or other suspicious activity around your car.
- Be sure your vehicle is in good operating condition.
- Drive with car windows closed in crowded streets. Bombs can be thrown through open windows.
- If you are ever in a situation where somebody starts shooting, drop to the floor or get down as low as possible. Don’t move until you are sure the danger has passed. Do not attempt to help rescuers and do not pick up a weapon. If possible, shield yourself behind a solid object. If you must move, crawl on your stomach.

Hijacking/Hostage Situations

While every hostage situation is different, there are some general considerations to keep in mind. U.S. Government policy is firm: we do not make concessions to terrorists. When Americans are abducted overseas, we look to the host government to exercise its responsibility under international law to protect all persons within its territories and to bring about the safe release of hostages.

We work closely with these governments from the outset of a hostage-taking incident to ensure that our citizens and other victims are released as quickly and safely as possible.

- At the outset of a terrorist incident, the terrorists typically are tense, high-strung and may behave irrationally. It is extremely important that you remain calm and alert, and control your own behavior.

- Avoid resistance and sudden or threatening movements. Do not struggle or try to escape unless you are certain of being successful. Don't try to be a hero, endangering yourself and others.

- Consciously put yourself in a mode of passive cooperation. Talk normally. Do not complain, avoid belligerency, and comply with all orders and instructions.

- If questioned, keep your answers short. Don't volunteer information or make unnecessary overtures.

- Make a concerted effort to relax. Prepare yourself mentally, physically and emotionally for the possibility of a long ordeal.

- Try to remain inconspicuous, avoid direct eye contact and the appearance of observing your captors' actions.

- Avoid alcoholic beverages. Eat what they give you, even if it does not look or taste appetizing, but keep consumption of food and drink at a moderate level. A loss of appetite and weight is normal.

- If you are involved in a lengthier, drawn-out situation, try to establish a rapport with your captors, avoiding political discussions or other confrontational subjects.

- Establish a daily program of mental and physical activity.

- Think positively and avoid a sense of despair. You are a valuable commodity to your captors, and it is important to them to keep you alive and well.

How to Access Funds in the U.S.

U.S. consuls can assist Americans abroad who are temporarily destitute due to unforeseen circumstances. Americans who find themselves in these circumstances should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate (see http://usembassy.state.gov for contact information) or the State Department's Office of Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747 (during business hours) or 202-647-5225 (after hours). Consular officers can help destitute Americans contact family, bank, or employer to arrange for transfer of funds. In some cases, these funds can be wired through the Department of State.

How to Get Your Passport Replaced

If your U.S. passport is lost or stolen while you are overseas, report it immediately to the local police and to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. A consul can issue a replacement passport, often within 24 hours. Links to contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates may be found at http://usembassy.state.gov. If your U.S. passport is lost or stolen in the U.S., report it to the Department of State by following instructions found at http://www.travel.state.gov.

RESIDING ABROAD

Whether you are planning to move abroad or are already residing outside of the U.S., you should review the information that appears above about safe travel and consular services available to you, since most of it applies equally to U.S. citizens residing abroad. The following is information about services you are more likely to need if you are residing abroad.

Marriage Abroad

U.S. consular officers abroad cannot perform marriages. Depending on the law of the foreign country, local civil or religious officials generally perform marriages. Procedures vary from country to country, and some require lengthy preparation. Many countries have requirements that the parties have been resident in that country for a specified period of time before a marriage may be performed there. There may be requirements for blood tests, etc. There may be requirements for parental consent. There are also, in many countries, a requirement that documents certifying the end of a previous relationship (such as a death or divorce certificate) be submitted, translated into the local language and authenticated. Some countries require an affidavit by the parties as proof of legal capacity to enter into a marriage contract. (This affidavit can be executed at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.) The process can be time-consuming and expensive, and, therefore, persons planning to marry in a foreign country should find out the requirements of that particular country before beginning travel. Contact the embassy or tourist information bureau of the country where you plan to marry to learn the specific requirements.

A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country. If you are already abroad, consult with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

Once your marriage has taken place abroad, U.S. consular officers can authenticate your foreign marriage document. Note that this authentication simply signifies that your foreign marriage documents are real; it does not necessarily mean that your marriage will be recognized by your home state in the U.S. If you are married abroad and need confirmation that your marriage will be recognized in the United States, consult the Attorney General of your state of residence in the United States.

Birth Abroad of a U.S. Citizen

Most children born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents acquire U.S. citizenship at birth. As soon as possible after the birth, the U.S. citizen parent should contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If the consul determines that the child has acquired U.S. citizenship, a consular officer prepares a Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America (Form FS-240). This document is recognized in the United States as proof of acquisition of U.S. citizenship, and it is acceptable evidence of citizenship for obtaining a passport, entering school, and most other purposes. Failure to document a child promptly as a U.S. citizen may cause hardship for the parents or child later on when attempting to obtain a passport or register for school. For further information, visit the Department of State website at http://www.travel.state.gov.

Divorce Abroad

The validity of divorces obtained overseas will vary according to the requirements of an individual's state of residence. Consult the authorities of your state of residence in the United States for these requirements. For further information about recognition of a divorce obtained abroad, go to the Department of State website at http://www.travel.state.gov.

Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad

One of the most important tasks of U.S. consular officers abroad is to provide assistance to the families of U.S. citizens who die abroad. Each year, over 6,000 Americans die abroad. Most of them are Americans who live overseas, but, each year, a few thousand Americans die while on short visits abroad.

One of the most important tasks of U.S. consular officers abroad is to provide assistance to the families of U.S. citizens who die abroad.

When an American citizen dies abroad, consular officers:

- confirm the death, identity and U.S. citizenship of the deceased
- make notification to the next-of-kin if they do not already know about the death, providing information about disposition of the remains and the effects of the deceased, and provides guidance on forwarding funds to cover costs
- serve as provisional conservator of the estate, absent a legal representative in country
- prepare documents for disposition of the remains in accordance with instructions from the next-of-kin or legal representative, and oversee the performance of disposition of the remains and of the effects of the deceased
- send signed copies of the Consular Report of Death of an American Citizen Abroad to the next-of-kin or legal representative, for use in settling estate matters in the U.S.

Federal Benefits Services Abroad

Prior to your move abroad you should contact the federal agency (Social Security Administration, Veterans Affairs, Railroad Retirement Board, or Office of Personnel Management) from which you receive a monthly check to report your change of address. This will help you avoid a lost or delayed check. Even if your payments are being sent to a bank, you must provide the federal agency with your new address. You should also contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate nearest your place of residence upon your arrival and advise them of your current address. Each time you move while living abroad, you should notify the U.S. Embassy or Consulate at least 60 days prior to your move. This will enable the federal agency to update its records so your checks are sent to your new address.

In many countries, you are able to have your monthly checks deposited directly into your account at either a financial institution in the country where you live or a U.S. financial institution. To determine if direct deposit is available in the country where you plan to reside, or to sign up for direct deposit, contact the federal agency from which you receive payment.

If your check does not arrive or you have other questions about your federal benefits, contact a consular officer at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If the consular officer cannot answer your inquiry, he or she will contact the regional federal benefits officer for your area and make inquiries on your behalf.

Driver's License

It is illegal to drive without a valid license and insurance in many countries. You should check with the Embassy of the country where you plan to reside, to find out more about driver's license requirements. A listing of foreign embassies and consulates in the U.S. is available on the Department of State's website at http://www.state.gov. Foreign embassy and consulate contact information can also be found on the Country Specific Information for each country.

Many countries do not recognize a U.S. driver's license. Some, however, will accept an international driver's permit. It is nevertheless a good idea to qualify for a local driver's license as soon as possible, since international driver's permits are not always valid for the length of a stay abroad, and often are only valid if presented in conjunction with a valid U.S. or local license. To renew a U.S. driver's license, contact the Department of Motor Vehicles in your home state.

Absentee Voting in U.S. Elections

Americans who reside abroad are usually eligible to vote by absentee ballot in all federal elections and may also be eligible to vote in many state and local U.S. elections. Eligibility depends upon the laws and regulations of your state of residence in the United States. To vote absentee, you must meet state voter registration requirements and apply to the state of your last domicile for a ballot as early as permitted. If possible, register for absentee voting before you move abroad. Check with your local voting authority for requirements and procedures. After you have registered for an absentee ballot, and if your state ballot does not arrive in sufficient time, you may be eligible to use a Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB). You should contact the Voting Assistance Officer at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for additional information, or visit the Department of State website at http://www.travel.state.gov.

Selective Service Registration

Section I-202 of the Presidential Proclamation of July 2, 1980, reinstituting registration under the Military Selective Service Act, states: "Citizens of the United States who are to be registered and who are not in the United States on any of the days set aside for their registration, shall present themselves at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for registration before a diplomatic or consular officer of the United States or before a registrar duly appointed by a diplomatic or consular officer of the United States. Check with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate if you need to comply." For more information on living abroad, visit the Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov.

PASSPORT AGENCIES

NOTE: The easiest way to get your passport is to apply at one of over 9,000 public places that accept passport applications.

If you need your passport urgently, generally in less than 2 weeks, you may contact one of our Passport Agencies listed below. All agencies take applications only by appointment. Please call in advance.

THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR AN APPOINTMENT AT A PASSPORT AGENCY. CUSTOMERS SHOULD NOT PAY ANYONE OR ANY BUSINESS MAKING SUCH A CHARGE.

Boston Passport Agency
Thomas P. O'Neill Federal Building
10 Causeway Street,
Suite 247
Boston, MA 02222-1094
Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Boston Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Chicago Passport Agency
Kluczynski Federal Building
230 S. Dearborn Street,
18th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-1564
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Chicago Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Colorado Passport Agency
Cherry Creek III
3151 South Vaughn Way, Suite 600
Aurora, CO 80014
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Colorado Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Connecticut Passport Agency
50 Washington Street
Norwalk, CT 06854
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1 (877) 487-2778

NOTE: Connecticut Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Honolulu Passport Agency
Prince Kuhio Federal Building
300 Ala Moana Blvd.
Suite 1-330
Honolulu, HI 96850
Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1 (877) 487-2778

NOTE: Honolulu Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Houston Passport Agency
Mickey Leland Federal Building
1919 Smith Street
Suite 1400
Houston, TX 77002-8049
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Houston Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Los Angeles Passport Agency
Federal Building
11000 Wilshire Blvd.
Suite 1000
Los Angeles, CA 90024-3615
Hours: 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Los Angeles Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Miami Passport Agency
Claude Pepper Federal Office Building
51 SW First Avenue
3rd Floor
Miami, FL 33130-1680
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., local time, M-F,
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Miami Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

New Orleans Passport Agency
One Canal Place (corner of Canal and North Peters Streets)
365 Canal Street, Suite 1300
New Orleans, LA 70130-6508
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 12 p.m., local time, M,W, F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: New Orleans Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

New York Passport Agency
376 Hudson Street
New York, NY 10014
Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: New York Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Philadelphia Passport Agency
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Room 103
Philadelphia, PA 19106-2970
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Philadelphia Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

San Francisco Passport Agency
95 Hawthorne Street
5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: San Francisco Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Seattle Passport Agency
Henry Jackson Federal Building
915 Second Avenue
Suite 992
Seattle, WA 98174-1091
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1-877-487-2778

NOTE: Seattle Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Washington Passport Agency
1111 19th Street, N.W.
First Floor, Sidewalk Level
Washington, D.C. 20036
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays
Automated Appointment Number: 1 (877) 487-2778

NOTE: Washington Passport Agency serves customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. An appointment is required.

Special Issuance Agency
1111 19th Street, N.W. Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20036

To serve you better, we have 2 Passport Processing Centers designed to help us meet our increasing demand for passports. Please note that these Centers are NOT open to the public.

Charleston Passport Center
1269 Holland Street
Charleston, SC 29405
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., local time, M-F, excluding Federal holidays

National Passport Center
31 Rochester Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801-2900
Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays

Foreign Embassies and Consulates in the United States

Editor's note: The information below was compiled and edited from reports and directories available through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs as of December 2008.

FOREIGN EMBASSIES IN THE UNITED STATES

Information on visa and passport requirements, customs and duties, and general information for travelers can often be obtained by contacting the embassy or consulate for the country to which you plan to travel. This listing of chanceries and offices is compiled from information available through the U.S. Department of State website. Additional offices and up-to-date listings may be found at the Department of State website (www.state.gov). All offices listed here are located in Washington, D.C., unless otherwise noted.

The Foreign Consular Offices in the United States list is available to the public for a fee through the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Telephone Number {202} 512-1800) and on the Department of State Internet web site under: http://www.state.gov.

AFGHANISTAN
Embassy of Afghanistan
Chancery: 2341 Wyoming Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-483-6410) (Fax 202-483-6488)

Consular Section
2233 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 216 20007
(Office 202-298-9125) (Fax 202-298-9127)

ALBANIA
Embassy of the Republic of Albania
Chancery: 2100 S Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-223-4942) (Fax 202-628-7342)

ALGERIA
Embassy of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Chancery: 2118 Kalorama Road, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-265-2800) (Fax 202-667-2174)

Consular Office
2137 Wyoming Avenue, NW 20008

ANDORRA
Embassy of Andorra
Chancery: 2 United Nations Plaza, Floor 27
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-750-8064) (Fax 212-750-6630)

ANGOLA
Embassy of the Republic of Angola
Chancery: 2100-2108 16th Street, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-785-1156) (Fax 202-785-1258)

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
Embassy of Antigua and Barbuda
Chancery: 3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW 20016
(Embassy 202-362-5122) (Fax 202-362-5225)

ARGENTINA
Embassy of the Argentine Republic
Chancery: 1600 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-238-6400) (Fax 202-332-3171)

ARMENIA
Embassy of the Republic of Armenia
Chancery: 2225 R Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-319-1976) (Fax 202-319-2982)

AUSTRALIA
Embassy of Australia
Chancery: 1601 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-797-3000) (Fax 202-797-3168)

AUSTRIA
Embassy of Austria
Chancery: 3524 International Court, NW 20008-3035
(Embassy 202-895-6700) (Fax 202-895-6750)

Consular Section
3524 International Court, NW 20008
(Office 202-895-6767)

AZERBAIJAN
Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan
Chancery: 2741 34TH Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-337-3500) (Fax 202-337-5911)

BAHAMAS
Embassy of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas
Chancery: 2220 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-319-2660) (Fax 202-319-2668)

BAHRAIN
Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain
Chancery: 3502 International Drive, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-342-0741) (Fax 202-362-2192)

BANGLADESH
Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Chancery: 3510 International Drive, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-244-0183) (Fax 202-244-5366)

BELARUS
Embassy of the Republic of Belarus
Chancery: 1619 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-986-1604) (Fax 202-986-1805)

BARBADOS
Embassy of Barbados
Chancery: 2144 Wyoming Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-939-9200) (Fax 202-332-7467)

BELGIUM
Embassy of Belgium
Chancery: 3330 Garfield Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-333-6900) (Fax 202-333-3079)

BELIZE
Embassy of Belize
Chancery: 2535 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-9636) (Fax 202-332-6888)

BENIN
Embassy of the Republic of Benin
Chancery: 2124 Kalorama Road, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-232-6656) (Fax 202-265-1996)

BOLIVIA
Embassy of the Republic of Bolivia
Chancery: 3014 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-483-4410) (Fax 202-328-3712)

Chancery Annex
4420 Connecticut Avenue, Suite 250 20037
(Office 202-232-4828)

Consulate of Bolivia
1819 H Street, NW, Suite 240 20006
(Office 202-232-4827) (Fax 202-232-8017)

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Chancery: 2109 E Street, NW 20037
(Embassy 202-337-1500) (Fax 202-337-1502)

BOTSWANA
Embassy of the Republic of Botswana
Chancery: 1531-1533 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-244-4990) (Fax 202-244-4164)

BRAZIL
Brazilian Embassy
Chancery: 3006 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-238-2700) (Fax 202-238-2827)

BRUNEI
Embassy of the State of Brunei Jerusalem
Chancery: 3520 International Court, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-237-1838) (Fax 202-885-0560)

Consular Office
1621 22nd Street, NW 20008
(Office 202-387-7969)

BULGARIA
Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria
Chancery: 1621 22nd Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-387-0174) (Fax 202-234-7973)

BURKINA FASO
Embassy of Burkina Faso
Chancery: 2340 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-5577) (Fax 202-667-1882)

BURMA
Embassy of the Union of Burma
Chancery: 2300 S Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-3344) (Fax 202-332-4351)

BURUNDI
Embassy of the Republic of Burundi
Chancery: 2233 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 212 20007
(Embassy 202-342-2574) (Fax 202-342-2578)

CAMBODIA
Royal Embassy of Cambodia
Chancery: 4530 16th Street, NW 20011
(Embassy 202-726-7742) (Fax 202-726-8381)

CAMEROON
Embassy of the Republic of Cameroon
Chancery: 2349 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-265-8790) (Fax 202-387-3826)

CANADA
Embassy of Canada
Chancery: 501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW 20001
(Embassy 202-682-1740) (Fax 202-682-7726)

CAPE VERDE
Embassy of the Republic of Cape Verde
Chancery: 3415 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-965-6820) (Fax 202-965-1207)

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Embassy of Central African Republic
Chancery: 1618 22ND Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-483-7800) (Fax 202-332-9893)

CHAD
Embassy of the Republic of Chad
Chancery: 2002 R Street, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-462-4009) (Fax 202-265-1937)

CHILE
Embassy of the Republic of Chile
Chancery: 1732 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-785-1746) (Fax 202-887-5579)

CHINA
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
Chancery: 2300 Connecticut Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-328-2500) (Fax 202-328-2582)

Consular Affairs
2300 Connecticut Avenue, NW 20008
(Office 202-328-2518)

Visa Section Office
2201 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Floor 1ST 20008
(Office 202-338-6688)

COLOMBIA
Embassy of Colombia
Chancery: 2118 Leroy Place, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-387-8338) (Fax 202-232-8643)

Consular Office
1901 L Street, NW, Suite 700 20008
(Office 202-887-9000)

COMOROS
Embassy of the Union of Comoros
Chancery: 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 418
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-972-8010) (Fax 212-983-4712)

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo
Chancery: 1726 M Street, NW, Suite 601 20036
(Embassy 202-234-7690) (Fax 202-234-2609)

CONGO, REPUBLIC OF
Embassy of the Republic of the Congo
Chancery: 4891 Colorado Avenue, NW 20011
(Embassy 202-726-5500) (Fax 202-726-1860)

COSTA RICA
Embassy of Costa Rica
Chancery: 2114 S Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-234-2945) (Fax 202-265-4795)

Consular Office
2112 S Street, NW 20008
(Office 202-328-6628)

COTE D'IVOIRE
Embassy of the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire
Chancery: 2424 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-797-0300) (Fax 202-462-9444)

Chancery Annex
2412 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008

CROATIA
Embassy of the Republic of Croatia
Chancery: 2343 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-588-5899) (Fax 202-588-8936)

CYPRUS
Embassy of the Republic of Cyprus
Chancery: 2211 R Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-462-5772) (Fax 202-483-6710)

CZECH REPUBLIC
Embassy of the Czech Republic
Chancery: 3900 Spring of Freedom Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-274-9100) (Fax 202-966-8540)

Visa Office
3900 Spring of Freedom Street, NW 20008
(Office 202-274-9123)

DENMARK
Royal Danish Embassy
Chancery: 3200 Whitehaven Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-234-4300) (Fax 202-328-1470)

DJIBOUTI
Embassy of the Republic of Djibouti
Chancery: 1156 15TH Street, NW, Suite 515 20005
(Embassy 202-331 -0270) (Fax 202-331 -0302)

ECUADOR
Embassy of Ecuador
Chancery: 2535 15TH Street, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-234-7200) (Fax 202-667-3482)

DOMINICA
Embassy of the Commonwealth of Dominica
Chancery: 3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW 20016
(Embassy 202-364-6781) (Fax 202-364-6791)

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Embassy of the Dominican Republic
Chancery: 1715 22ND Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-6280) (Fax 202-265-8057)

Consular Affairs Office
2535 15TH Street, NW 20009
(Office 202-234-7166)

EGYPT
Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt
Chancery: 3521 International Court, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-895-5400) (Fax 202-244-4319)

EL SALVADOR
Embassy of El Salvador
Chancery: 1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 100 20036
(Embassy 202-265-9671) (Fax 202-232-3763)

Consulate General
2332 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Floor 1ST 20007
(Office 202-331 -4032) (Fax 202-331-4036)

EQUATORIAL GUINEA
Embassy of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea
Chancery: 2020 16th Street, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-518-5700) (Fax 202-518-5252)

ERITREA
Embassy of the State of Eritrea
Chancery: 1708 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-319-1991) (Fax 202-319-1304)

ESTONIA
Embassy of Estonia
Chancery: 2131 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-588-0101) (Fax 202-588-0108)

ETHIOPIA
Embassy of Ethiopia
Chancery: 3506 International Drive, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-364-1200) (Fax 202-686-9551)

Consular Section
3506 International Drive, NW 20008
(Office 202-274-4555) (Fax 202-686-9621)

EUROPEAN UNION
Delegation of the European Commission
Chancery: 2300 M Street, NW, Floor 1ST-6TH 20037
(Embassy 202-862-9500) (Fax 202-429-1766)

FIJI
Embassy of the Republic of Fiji Islands
Chancery: 2000 M Street, NW, Suite 710 20036
(Embassy 202-466-8320) (Fax 202-466-8325)

FINLAND
Embassy of Finland
Chancery: 3301 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-298-5800) (Fax 202-298-6030)

FRANCE
Embassy of France
Chancery: 4101 Reservoir Road, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-944-6000) (Fax 202-944-6166)

GABON
Embassy of the Gabonese Republic
Chancery: 2034 20TH Street, NW, Suite 200 20009
(Embassy 202-797-1000) (Fax 202-332-0668)

GAMBIA
Embassy of the Gambia
Chancery: 1156 15TH Street, NW, Suite 905 20005
(Embassy 202-785-1379) (Fax 202-785-1430)

GEORGIA
Embassy of the Republic of Georgia
Chancery: 2209 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-387-2390) (Fax 202-387-0864)

GERMANY, FED. REP. OF
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
Chancery: 4645 Reservoir Road, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-298-4000) (Fax 202-298-4249)

GHANA
Embassy of Ghana
Chancery: 3512 International Drive, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-686-4520) (Fax 202-686-4527)

GREECE
Embassy of Greece
Chancery: 2217 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-939-1300) (Fax 202-939-1324)

GRENADA
Embassy of Grenada
Chancery: 1701 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-265-2561) (Fax 202-265-2468)

GUINEA
Embassy of the Republic of Guinea
Chancery: 2112 Leroy Place, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-986-4300) (Fax 202-986-3800)

GUATEMALA
Embassy of Guatemala
Chancery: 2220 R Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-745-4952) (Fax 202-745-1908)

Consular Section Office
2220 R Street, NW 20008

GUINEA-BISSAU
Embassy of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau
Chancery: P.O. Box 33813 20033
(Embassy 301-947-3958)

GUYANA
Embassy of Guyana
Chancery: 2490 Tracy Place, NW 20008

HAITI
Embassy of the Republic of HAITI
Chancery: 2311 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-4090) (Fax 202-745-7215)

Consular Affairs Office
2311 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Office 202-332-4090)

HOLY SEE
Apostolic Nunciature
Chancery: 3339 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-333-7121) (Fax 202-337-4036)

HONDURAS
Embassy of Honduras
Chancery: 3007 Tilden Street, NW, Suite 4-M 20008
(Embassy 202-966-2604) (Fax 202-966-9751)

Consular Section
1528 K Street, NW, Suite 200 20005
(Office 202-737-2972) (Fax 202-737-2907)

HUNGARY
Embassy of the Republic of Hungary
Chancery: 3910 Shoemaker Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-362-6730) (Fax 202-966-8135)

ICELAND
Embassy of Iceland
Chancery: 1156 15TH Street, NW, Suite 1200 20005
(Embassy 202-265-6653) (Fax 202-265-6656)

INDIA
Embassy of India
Chancery: 2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-939-7000) (Fax 202-483-3972)

Passport and Visa Section
2536 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Office 202-939-9806)

INDONESIA
Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia
Chancery: 2020 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-775-5200) (Fax 202-775-5365)

IRAQ
Embassy of the Republic of Iraq
Chancery: 3421 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-742-1600) (Fax 202-462-5066)

IRELAND
Embassy of Ireland
Chancery: 2234 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-462-3939) (Fax 202-232-5993)

ISRAEL
Embassy of Israel
Chancery: 3514 International Drive, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-364-5500) (Fax 202-364-5607)

ITALY
Embassy of Italy
Chancery: 3000 Whitehaven Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-612-4400) (Fax 202-518-2151)

JAMAICA
Embassy of Jamaica
Chancery: 1520 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-452-0660) (Fax 202-452-0081)

JAPAN
Embassy of Japan
Chancery: 2520 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-238-6700) (Fax 202-328-2187)

Chancery Annex
1155 31ST Street, NW 20036
(Office 202-238-6900) (Fax 202-822-6524)

JORDAN
Embassy of Hashemite Kingdom Of Jordan
Chancery: 3504 International Drive, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-966-2664) (Fax 202-966-3110)

KAZAKHSTAN
Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Chancery: 1401 16th Street, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-232-5488) (Fax 202-232-5845)

Consular Section
1401 16th Street, NW 20036
(Office 202-232-5488) (Fax 202-232-3541)

KENYA
Embassy of the Republic of Kenya
Chancery: 2249 R Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-387-6101) (Fax 202-462-3829)

KOREA
Embassy of the Republic of Korea
Chancery: 2450 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-939-5600) (Fax 202-387-0250)

Consular Office
2320 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Office 202-939-5657) (Fax 202-342-1597)

KUWAIT
Embassy of the State Of Kuwait
Chancery: 2940 Tilden Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-966-0702) (Fax 202-966-0517)

KYRGYZSTAN
Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic
Chancery: 2360 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-338-5141) (Fax 202-338-5139)

Consular Section
1511 K Street, NW 20005
(Office 202-628-0433)

LAOS
Embassy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
Chancery: 2222 S Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-6416) (Fax 202-332-4923)

LATVIA
Embassy of Latvia
Chancery: 2306 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-328-2840) (Fax 202-328-2860)

LEBANON
Embassy of Lebanon
Chancery: 2560 28TH Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-939-6300) (Fax 202-939-6324)

LESOTHO
Embassy of the Kingdom Of Lesotho
Chancery: 2511 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-797-5533) (Fax 202-234-6815)

LIBERIA
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia
Chancery: 5201 16th Street, NW 20011
(Embassy 202-723-0437) (Fax 202-723-0436)

LIBYA
Embassy of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Chancery: 2600 Virginia Avenue, NW, Suite 705 20037
(Embassy 202-944-9601) (Fax 202-944-9606)

LITHUANIA
Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania
Chancery: 4590 MacArthur Boulevard, NW,
Suite 200 20007
(Embassy 202-234-5860) (Fax 202-328-0466)

Consular Office
2600 Virginia Avenue, NW, Suite 711 20037

LIECHTENSTEIN
Embassy of the Principality Of Liechtenstein
Chancery: 888 17TH Street, NW,
Suite 1250 20006 (
Embassy 202-331 -0590) (FAX 202-331 -3221)

LUXEMBOURG
Embassy of the Grand Duchy Of Luxembourg
Chancery: 2200 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-265-4171) (Fax 202-328-8270)

MACEDONIA
Embassy of the Republic of Macedonia
Chancery: 2129 Wyoming Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-667-0501) (Fax 202-667-2131)

MADAGASCAR
Embassy of the Republic of Madagascar
Chancery: 2374 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-265-5525) (Fax 202-265-3034)

MALAWI
Embassy of Malawi
Chancery: 1029 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 100 20008
(Embassy 202-721 -0270) (Fax 202-721 -0288)

MALAYSIA
Embassy of Malaysia
Chancery: 3516 International Court, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-572-9700) (Fax 202-572-9882)

Consular Section
3516 International Court, NW 20008
(Office 202-572-9755)

MALDIVES
Embassy of the Republic of Maldives
Chancery: 800 2nd Avenue, Suite 400E
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-599-6195) (Fax 212-661 -6405)

MALI
Embassy of the Republic of Mali
Chancery: 2130 R Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-2249) (Fax 202-332-6603)

MALTA
Embassy of Malta
Chancery: 2017 Connecticut Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-462-3611) (Fax 202-387-5470)

MARSHALL ISLANDS
Embassy of the Republic of the Marshall Islands
Chancery: 2433 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Floor 1 20008
(Embassy 202-234-5414) (Fax 202-232-3236)

MAURITANIA
Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania
Chancery: 2129 Leroy Place, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-232-5700) (Fax 202-319-2623)

MAURITIUS
Embassy of Republic of Mauritius
Chancery: 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 441
20008 (Embassy 202-244-1491) (Fax 202-966-0983)

MEXICO
Embassy of Mexico
Chancery: 1911 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW 20006
(Embassy 202-728-1600) (Fax 202-728-1698)

Consular Office
2829 16th Street, NW 20009
(Office 202-736-1000)

Tourism Board
2829 16th Street, NW 20009
(Office 202-728-1600) (Fax 202-728-1698)

MICRONESIA
Embassy of the Federated States Of Micronesia
Chancery: 1725 N Street, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-223-4383) (Fax 202-223-4391)

MOLDOVA
Embassy of the Republic of Moldova
Chancery: 2101 S Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-667-1130) (Fax 202-667-1204)

MONACO
Embassy of Monaco
Chancery: 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 520
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-832-0721)

MONGOLIA
Embassy of Mongolia
Chancery: 2833 M Street, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-333-7117) (Fax 202-298-9227)

MOROCCO
Embassy of the Kingdom Of Morocco
Chancery: 1601 21ST Street, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-462-7980) (Fax 202-462-7643)

MONTENEGRO
Embassy of the Republic of Montenegro
Chancery: 1610 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-234-6108) (Fax 202-234-6109)

Chancery Annex
1821 Jefferson Place, NW
(Office 202-462-7979)

MOZAMBIQUE
Embassy of the Republic of Mozambique
Chancery: 1525 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-293-7146) (Fax 202-835-0245)

NAURU
Embassy of the Republic of Nauru
Chancery: 800 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-937-0074) (Fax 212-937-0079)

NEPAL
Embassy of Nepal
Chancery: 2131
Leroy Place, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-667-4550) (Fax 202-667-5534)

NAMIBIA
Embassy of the Republic of Namibia
Chancery: 1605 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-986-0540) (Fax 202-986-0443)

NETHERLANDS
Royal Netherlands Embassy
Chancery: 4200 Linnean Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-244-5300) (Fax 202-362-3430)

NEW ZEALAND
Embassy of New Zealand
Chancery: 37 Observatory Circle, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-328-4800) (Fax 202-667-5227)

NICARAGUA
Embassy of the Republic of Nicaragua
Chancery: 1627 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-939-6570) (Fax 202-939-6545)

NIGER
Embassy of the Republic of Niger
Chancery: 2204 R Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-483-4224) (Fax 202-483-3169)

NIGERIA
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Chancery: 3519 International Court, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-986-8400) (Fax 202-362-6541)

Chancery Annex
2201 M Street, NW 20037
(Fax 202-362-6541)

NORWAY
Royal Norwegian Embassy
Chancery: 2720 34TH Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-333-6000) (Fax 202-337-0870)

OMAN
Embassy of the Sultanate Of Oman
Chancery: 2535 Belmont Road, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-387-1980) (Fax 202-745-4933)

PAKISTAN
Embassy of Pakistan
Chancery: 3517 International Court, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-243-6500) (Fax 202-686-1544)

PALAU
Embassy of the Republic of Palau
Chancery: 1700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
Suite 400 20006
(Embassy 202-452-6814) (Fax 202-452-6281)

PARAGUAY
Embassy of Paraguay
Chancery: 2400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-483-6960) (Fax 202-234-4508)

PANAMA
Embassy of the Republic of Panama
Chancery: 2862 McGill Terrace, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-483-1407) (Fax 202-483-8416)

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Embassy of Papua New Guinea
Chancery: 1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Suite 805 20036
(Embassy 202-745-3680) (Fax 202-745-3679)

Visa and Consular Affairs
2400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Office 202-483-6960)

PERU
Embassy of Peru
Chancery: 1700 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-833-9860) (Fax 202-659-8124)

Consulate General Office
1625 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 605 20036
(Office 202-462-1081)

PHILIPPINES
Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines
Chancery: 1600 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-467-9300) (Fax 202-328-7614)

Consular Office
1600 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Office 202-467-9300)

POLAND
Embassy of the Republic of Poland
Chancery: 2640 16th Street, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-234-3800) (Fax 202-328-6271)

PORTUGAL
Embassy of Portugal
Chancery: 2012 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-328-8610) (Fax 202-462-3726)

Consular Section
2012 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Office 202-332-3007) (Fax 202-387-2768)

QATAR
Embassy of the State Of Qatar
Chancery: 2555 M Street, NW 20037
(Embassy 202-274-1600) (Fax 202-237-0061)

ROMANIA
Embassy of Romania
Chancery: 1607 23rd Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-4846) (Fax 202-232-4748)

Consular Affairs
1607 23RD Street, NW 20008
(Office 202-232-4747) (Fax 202-232-4748)

RUSSIA
Embassy of the Russian Federation
Chancery: 2650 Wisconsin Avenue, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-298-5700) (Fax 202-298-5735)

Consular Division
2641 Tunlaw Road, NW 20007
(Office 202-939-8907) (Fax 202-939-8917)

RWANDA
Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda
Chancery: 1714 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-232-2882) (Fax 202-232-4544)

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
Embassy of St. Kitts and Nevis
Chancery: 3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW 20016
(Embassy 202-686-2636) (Fax 202-686-5740)

ST. LUCIA
Embassy of Saint Lucia
Chancery: 3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW 20016
(Embassy 202-364-6792) (Fax 202-364-6723)

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
Embassy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Chancery: 3216 New Mexico Avenue, NW 20016
(Embassy 202-364-6730) (Fax 202-364-6736)

SAMOA
Embassy of the Independent State Of Samoa
Chancery: 800 2nd Avenue, Floor 4TH
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-599-6196) (Fax 212-599-0797)

SAN MARINO
Embassy of Republic of San Marino
Chancery: 2650 Virginia Avenue, NW 20037

SAO TOME & PRINCIPE
Embassy of Sao Tome And Principe
Chancery: 1211 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 300 20036
(Embassy 202-775-2075) (Fax 202-775-2077)

SAUDI ARABIA
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
Chancery: 601 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20037
(Embassy 202-342-3800) (Fax 202-944-3113)

Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission
2600 Virginia Avenue, NW, Suite 800 20037
(Office 202-337-9450)

SENEGAL
Embassy of the Republic of Senegal
Chancery: 2112 Wyoming Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-234-0540) (Fax 202-332-6315)

SERBIA
Embassy of the Republic of Serbia
Chancery: 2134 Kalorama Road, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-332-0333) (Fax 202-332-3933)

SEYCHELLES
Embassy of the Republic of Seychelles
Chancery: 800 2nd Avenue, Suite 400C
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-972-1785) (Fax 212-972-1786)

SIERRA LEONE
Embassy of Sierra Leone
Chancery: 1701 19TH Street, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-939-9261) (Fax 202-483-1793)

SINGAPORE
Embassy of the Republic of Singapore
Chancery: 3501 International Place, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-537-3100) (Fax 202-537-0876)

SLOVENIA
Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia
Chancery: 2410 California Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-386-6610) (Fax 202-386-6633)

SLOVAK REPUBLIC
Embassy of the Slovak Republic
Chancery: 3523 International Court, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-237-1054) (Fax 202-237-6438)

SOLOMON ISLANDS
Embassy of the solomon islands
Chancery: 800 2nd Avenue, Suite 400L
New York, NY 10017
(Embassy 212-599-6192) (Fax 212-661 -8925)

SOUTH AFRICA
Embassy of the Republic of South Africa
Chancery: 3051 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-232-4400) (Fax 202-265-1607)

Consular Office
4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW 20008
(Office 202-232-4400) (Fax 202-244-9417)

SPAIN
Embassy of Spain
Chancery: 2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW 20037
(Embassy 202-452-0100) (Fax 202-833-5670)

Cultural Office
2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW 20037
(Office 202-728-2334) (Fax 202-728-2312)

SRI LANKA
Embassy of the Democratic Socialist
Republic of Sri Lanka
Chancery: 2148 Wyoming Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-483-4025) (Fax 202-232-7181)

SUDAN
Embassy of the Republic of the Sudan
Chancery: 2210 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-338-8565) (Fax 202-667-2406)

SURINAME
Embassy of the Republic of Suriname
Chancery: 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW,
Suite 460 20008
(Embassy 202-244-7488) (Fax 202-244-5878)

SWAZILAND
Embassy of the Kingdom Of Swaziland
Chancery: 1712 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-234-5002) (Fax 202-234-8254)

SWEDEN
Embassy of Sweden
Chancery: 2900 K Street, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-467-2600) (Fax 202-467-2699)

SWITZERLAND
Embassy of Switzerland
Chancery: 2900 Cathedral Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-745-7900) (Fax 202-387-2564)

SYRIA
Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic
Chancery: 2215 Wyoming Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-232-6313) (Fax 202-234-9548)

TAJIKISTAN
Embassy Republic of Tajikistan
Chancery: 1005 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20037
(Embassy 202-223-6090) (Fax 202-223-6091)

TANZANIA
Embassy of the United Republic of Tanzania
Chancery: 2139 R Street, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-939-6125) (Fax 202-797-7408)

THAILAND
Embassy of Thailand
Chancery: 1024 Wisconsin Avenue, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-944-3600) (Fax 202-944-3611)

Cultural Office
2300 Kalorama Road, NW 20008
(Office 202-944-3600) (Fax 202-944-3611)

TIMOR LESTE
Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
Chancery: 4201 Connecticut Avenue, NW,
Suite 504 20008
(Embassy 202-966-3202) (Fax 202-966-3205)

TOGO
Embassy of the Republic of Togo
Chancery: 2208 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-234-4212) (Fax 202-232-3190)

TONGA
Embassy of the Kingdom Of Tonga
Chancery: 250 E. 51ST Street
New York, NY 10022
(Embassy 917-369-1025) (Fax 917-369-1024)

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Chancery: 1708 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-467-6490) (Fax 202-785-3130)

TUNISIA
Embassy of Tunisia
Chancery: 1515 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20005
(Embassy 202-862-1850) (Fax 202-862-1858)

TURKEY
Embassy of the Republic of Turkey
Chancery: 2525 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-612-6700) (Fax 202-612-6744)

Tourism
2525 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Office 202-612-6800)

UGANDA
Embassy of the Republic of Uganda
Chancery: 5911 16th Street, NW 20011
(Embassy 202-726-0416) (Fax 202-726-1727)

UKRAINE
Embassy of Ukraine
Chancery: 3350 M Street, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-349-2920) (Fax 202-333-0817)

TURKMENISTAN
Embassy of Turkmenistan
Chancery: 2207 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-588-1500) (Fax 202-588-0697)

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates
Chancery: 3522 International Court, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-243-2400) (Fax 202-243-2432)

Cultural Office
1010 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 700 20007
(Office 202-672-1050) (Fax 202-672-1082)

UNITED KINGDOM
British Embassy
Chancery: 3100 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-588-6500) (Fax 202-588-7870)

Northern Ireland Bureau
601 13TH Street, NW, Suite 570 South 20005
(Office 202-367-0464) (Fax 202-367-0468)

UZBEKISTAN
Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan
Chancery: 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20036
(Embassy 202-293-6803) (Fax 202-293-6804)

URUGUAY
Embassy of Uruguay
Chancery: 1913 I Street, NW 20006
(Embassy 202-331 -1313) (Fax 202-331 -8142)

VENEZUELA
Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
Chancery: 1099 30TH Street, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-342-2214) (Fax 202-342-6820)

V**IETNAM**
Embassy of Vietnam
Chancery: 1233 20TH Street, NW, Suite 400 20036
(Embassy 202-861-0737) (Fax 202-861-0917)

YEMEN
Embassy of the Republic of Yemen
Chancery: 2319 Wyoming Avenue 20008
(Embassy 202-965-4760) (Fax 202-337-2017)

ZAMBIA
Embassy of the Republic of Zambia
Chancery: 2419 Massachusetts Avenue, NW 20008
(Embassy 202-265-9717) (Fax 202-332-0826)

ZIMBABWE
Embassy of Republic of Zimbabwe
Chancery: 1608 New Hampshire Avenue, NW 20009
(Embassy 202-332-7100) (Fax 202-483-9326)

INTEREST SECTIONS

CUBA
Embassy of Switzerland, Cuban Interests Section
Chancery: 2630 16th Street, NW 20009 (202-797-8518)

IRAN
Embassy of Pakistan, Iranian Interests Section
Chancery: 2209 Wisconsin Avenue, NW 20007
(Embassy 202-965-4990) (Fax 202-965-1073)

WEB SITES AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES OF FOREIGN EMBASSIES

Angola: www.angola.org

Argentina: http://www.embajadaargentina-usa.org

Australia: http://www.austemb.org

Austria: http:///www.austria.org

Azerbaijan: azerbaijan@azembassy.com

Bangladesh: www.bangladoot.org

Bahrain: www.bahrainembassy.org

Belarus: usa@belarusembassy.org

Belgium: Washington@diplobel.org

Benin: www.beninembassyus.org

Brazil: www.brasilemb.org

Bulgaria: www.bulgaria-embassy.org; office@bulgaria-embassy.org

Cambodia: http//www.embassy.org/Cambodia; cambodia@embassy.org

Canada: www.ambassadeducanada.org

Cape Verde: www.capeverdeusaembassy.org

Colombia: http://www.colombiaemb.org

Costa Rica: consulate@costarica-embassy.org

Croatia: webmaster@croatiaemb.org

Cyprus: cypembwash@earthlink.net

Czech Republic: washington@embassy.mzv.cz

Denmark: wasamb@um.dk

Dominica: embdomdc@aol.com

Dominican Republic: http://www.domrep.org

Ecuador: mecuawaa@pop.erols.com

Egypt: Embassy@egyptembdc.org

Equatorial Guinea: info@equatorialguinea.org

Estonia: info@estemb.org

European Union: delegation-washington@cec.eu.int

Fiji: fijiemb@earthlink.net

Finland: info@finland.org

France: http://www.info-france-usa.org

Gabon: www.Omarbongo.com

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Guinea: EmbaGuinea@aol.com

Guyana: guyanaembassy@hotmail.com

Haiti: embassy@haiti.org

Honduras: embhondu@aol.com

Hungary: huembwas@attmail.com

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India: indembwash@indiagov.org

Iran: Requests@daftar.org

Ireland: embirlus@aol.com

Israel: www.israelemb.org

Italy: http://www.italyemb.nw.dc.us: 80/Italy/

Jamaica: emjam@sysnet.net

Japan: http://www.embjapan.org/jicc.html

Jordan: hkjembassydc@aol.com

Kazakhstan: kazakh.embusa@verizon.net

Korea: http://korea.emb.washington.dc.us

Laos: http://www.laoembassy.com

Latvia: embassy.usa@mfa.gov.lv

Lebanon: info@lebanonembassyus.org

Lesotho: lesothowashington@compuserve.com

Liberia: Liberia-Embassy@msn.com.

Liechtenstein: www.liechtenstein.li

Lithuania: http://www.ltembassyus.org

Macedonia: rmacedonia@aol.com

Madagascar: malagasy@embassy.org

Malawi: malawidc@aol.com

Mali: infos@mali.embassy.us

Malta: http://www.magnet.mt

Mauritius: mauritius.embassy@verizon.net

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Norway: emb.washington@mfa.no

Papua New Guinea: Kundu Wash@AOL.com

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Philippines: USWashpe@aol.com

Qatar: info@qatarembassy.org

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Rwanda: embrwawash@aol.com

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Serbia: info@yuembusa.org

Seychelles: seychelles@un.int

Singapore: http://www.gov.sg/mfa/washington

Slovak: info@slovakembassy-us.org

South Africa: info@saembassy.org

Spain: embespus@mail.mae.es

Sri lanka: slembassy@slembassyusa.org

Suriname: embsur@erols.com

Syria: eosdc@yahoo.com

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Switzerland: http://www.swissemb.org

Tajikistan: tajik.embassy@verizon.net

Tanzania: tanz-us@clark.net

Thailand: http://www.thaiembdc.org/

Timor Leste: embtlusa@comcast.net

Turkey: http://www.turkey.org; embassy@turkey@org

Turkmenistan: www.dc.infi.net/~embassy

Uganda: ambuganda@aol.com

Ukraine: letters@ukremb.com

Uruguay: uruwashi@uruwashi.org

Venezuela: despacho@embavenez-us.org

Vietnam: vietnamembassy@msn.com

FOREIGN CONSULATES IN THE UNITED STATES

This abbreviated lsiting of consulates general (CG) and honorary (H) consulates general was compiled from information available from the U.S. Department of State. The complete Foreign Consular Offices in the United States list is available to the public for a fee through the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Telephone Number {202} 512-1800) and on the Department of State Internet web site under: http://www.state.gov.

AFGHANISTAN
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11040 SANTA MONICA BL, SUITE 300, 90025
(310) 473-6583, Fax (310) 473-6775

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 360 LEXINGTON AV, FLOOR 11, 10017
(212) 972-2277, Fax (212) 972-9046

ALBANIA
Florida
FT. LAUDERDALE (HCG) 4077 N.E. 5TH TE, FORT LAUDERDALE 33334
(954) 537-3571

Georgia
AVONDALE ESTATES (HCG)
310 SOMERLANE PL, 30002
(404) 299-6803

Michigan
WEST BLOOMFIELD (HCG)
3300 LONE PINE RD, 48323
(248) 851-7310

North Carolina
PINEHURST (HCG) 130 SANDHURST PL, SOUTHERN PINES 28387
(910) 690-8471, Fax (910) 295-4741

Ohio
CLEVELAND (HCG) 1200 W. 58TH ST, 44102
(216) 631-1755

ANGOLA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 866 UNITED NATIONS PL, SUITE 552, 10017
(212) 861-5656

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 3040 POST OAK BL, SUITE 780, 77056
(713) 212-3840, Fax (713) 212-3841

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 25 S. E. 2ND AV, SUITE 300, 33131
New York

NEW YORK (CG) 3 DAG HAMMARSKJOLD PZ, FLOOR 6TH#1, 10017
(718) 882-7948

ARGENTINA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 5055 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 210, 90036
(213) 739-5959

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 800 BRICKELLAV, PENTHOUSE 1, 33131
(305) 373-7794

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 245 PEACHTREE CENTER AV,
SUITE 2101, 30303
(404) 880-0805

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 205 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 4208/4209, 60601
(301) 819-2620, Fax (312) 819-2626

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 12 W. 56TH ST, 10019
(212) 603-0400

ARMENIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 50 N. LA CIENEGA BL,
SUITE 210, BEVERLY HILLS 90211
(310) 657-6102

AUSTRALIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 2049 CENTURY PARK UN, E,
FLOOR 19TH, 90067; (310) 229-4800

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 3353 PEACHTREE RD, NE,
SUITE 1140, 30326
(404) 760-3400, Fax (404) 760-3401

Hawaii
HONOLULU (CG) 1000 BISHOP ST,
SUITE PHOUSE, 96813
(808) 524-5050

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 123 N. WACKER DR,
SUITE 1330, 60606
(312) 419-1480, Fax (312) 419-1499

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 150 E. 42ND ST,
FLOOR 34TH, 10017
(212) 421-6910

AUSTRIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11859 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 501, 90025
(310) 444-9310, Fax (310) 477-9897

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 400 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 707, 60611
(312) 222-1515, Fax (312) 222-4113

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 31 E. 69TH ST, 10021
(212) 737-6400, Fax (212) 772-8926

AZERBAIJAN
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1410, 90025
(310) 444-9101, Fax (310) 477-4860

BAHAMAS
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 25 S.E. 2ND AV, SUITE 818, 33131
(305) 373-6295, Fax (305) 373-6312

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 231 E. 46TH ST, 10017
(212) 421-6420, Fax (212) 759-2135

BAHRAIN
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 44TH ST, E, FLOOR 25TH, 10017
(212) 223-6200, Fax (212) 319-0687

BANGLADESH
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 4201 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 605, 90010
(323) 932-0100, Fax (323) 932-9703

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 211 E. 43RD ST, SUITE 502, 10017
(212) 599-6767, Fax (212) 682-9211

BARBADOS
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 150 ALHAMBRA CI, SUITE 1000, 33134
(305) 442-1994

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 800 2ND AV, FLOOR 2ND, 10017
(212) 867-8435

BELARUS
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 708 3RD AV,
SUITE 2101, 10017
(212) 682-5392, Fax (212) 682-5491

BELGIUM
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 6100 WILSHIRE BL, W,
FLOOR 12TH, 90048
(213) 857-1244

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 230 PEACHTREE ST, NE,
SUITE 2710, 30303
(404) 659-2150, Fax (404) 659-8474

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 1065 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS, FLOOR 22ND, 10018
(212) 586-5110, Fax (212) 582-9657

BELIZE
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 4801 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 250, 90010
(323) 469-7343

BENIN
California
LOS ANGELES (HC) 9111 S. LA CIENEGA BL, SUITE 204, INGLEWOOD 90301
(310) 641-3688

BHUTAN
NEW YORK (CG) 2 UN PZ, FLOOR 27TH, 10017
(212) 826-1919

BOLIVIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3701 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 1065, 90010
(213) 388-0475, Fax (213) 384-6272

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST, SUITE 575, 94102
(415) 495-5173, Fax (415) 399-8958

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1101 BRICKELL AV, SUITE 1103, 33131
(305) 670-0710, Fax (305) 358-6305

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 211 E. 43RD ST, SUITE 702, 10017
(212) 687-0530, Fax (212) 687-0532

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 737 N. MICHIGAN AV, SUITE 820, 60611
(312) 951-1245, Fax (312) 951-1043

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 866 UN PLAZA, SUITE 580, 10017
(212) 751-9018, Fax (212) 751-9135

BOTSWANA
Georgia
ATLANTA (HCG) 5580 QUEENSBOROUGH DR, NE, 30338
(770) 394-3303

BRAZIL
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 8484 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 730, 711, 74, BEVERLY HILLS 90211
(323) 651-2664, Fax (323) 651-1274

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 300 MONTGOMERY ST, SUITE 900, 94104
(415) 981-8170, Fax (415) 981-4931

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 80 S.W. 8TH ST, FLOOR 26TH, 33133
(305) 285-6200, Fax (305) 285-6229

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 401 N. MICHIGAN AV, SUITE 1850, 60611
(312) 464-0244, Fax (312) 464-0299

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 20 PARK PZ, SUITE 1420, 02116
(617) 542-4000, Fax (617) 542-4318

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 1185 AVENUE OF AMERICAS UN, FLOOR 21ST, 10036
(917) 777-7777, Fax (212) 827-0225

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1233 WEST LOOP, S, SUITE 1150, 77027
(713) 961-3063, Fax (713) 961-3070

BULGARIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 440, 90025

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 737 N. MICHIGAN AV, SUITE 2105, 60611
(312) 867-1901, Fax (312) 867-1906

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 121 E. 62ND ST, 10021
(212) 935-4646

BURKINA FASO
California
LOS ANGELES (HCG) 214 23RD ST, SANTA MONICA, 90402
(310) 393-2531, Fax (310) 393-0181

BURMA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 10 E. 77TH ST, 10021
(212) 535-1310, Fax (212) 737-2421

BURUNDI
California
LOS ANGELES (HC) 8318 WILSHIRE BL, Beverly Hills 90211
(310) 274-2793

CAMBODIA
Washington
SEATTLE (HC) 1818 WESTLAKE AV, N,
SUITE 315, 98109
(206) 217-0830

CAMEROON
California
SAN FRANCISCO (HC) 147 TERRA VISTA, 94115
(415) 921-5372

Texas
HOUSTON (HC) 1319 GAMMA, CROSBY 77532
(713) 499-3502

CANADA
Arizona
PHOENIX (CG) 2415 E. CAMELBACK RD,
SUITE 700, 85016
(602) 508-3573

California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 550 S. HOPE ST, SUITE 900, 90071
(213) 346-2700

SAN DIEGO (CG) 402 W. BROADWAY UN,
FLOOR 4, 92101
(619) 615-4286

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 580 CALIFORNIA ST,
FLOOR 14TH, 94104
(415) 834-3180

Colorado
DENVER (CG) 1625 BROADWAY ST,
SUITE 2600, 80202
(303) 626-0640

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 200 S. BISCAYNE BL, SUITE 1600, 33131
(305) 579-1600

TAMPA (HC) 101 E. KENNEDY BL,
SUITE 2000, 33602
(813) 229-2111

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 1175 PEACHTREE ST,
SUITE 1700, 30361
(404) 532-2000

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 180 N. STETSON AV,
SUITE 2400, 60601
(312) 616-1860

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 3 COPLEY PL, SUITE 400, 02116
(617) 262-3760

Michigan
DETROIT (CG) 600 RENAISSANCE CTR,
SUITE 1100,R650, 48243-1798
(313) 567-2340

Minnesota
MINNEAPOLIS (CG) 701 4TH AV, S, FLOOR 9TH, 55415
(612) 333-4641

New York
BUFFALO (CG) 3000 HSBC CENTER,
FLOOR 30TH&31ST, 14203-2884
(716) 858-9500

NEW YORK (CG) 1251 AVE. OF THE AMERICAS, 10020
(212) 596-1600

Texas
DALLAS (CG) 750 N. SAINT PAUL ST,
SUITE 1700, 75201
(214) 922-9806

Washington
SEATTLE (CG) 1501 4TH AV,
SUITE 600, 98101
(206) 443-1777

CAPE VERDE
Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 607 BOYLSTON ST, 02116; (617) 353-0014

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
California
LOS ANGELES (HCG) 901 N. CAMDEN DR, BEVERLY HILLS 90210
(310) 278-1095

CHILE
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 6100 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1240&1260, 90048
(323) 933-3697, Fax (323) 933-3842

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST,
SUITE 1058, 94102
(415) 982-7662, Fax (415) 982-2384

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 800 BRICKELL AV,
SUITE 1230, 33131
(305) 371-3219, Fax (305) 379-6613

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 875 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 3352, 60611
(312) 654-8780, Fax (312) 654-8948

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 866 UNITED NATIONS PZ,
SUITE 601, 10017
(212) 355-0612, Fax (212) 688-5879

Pennsylvania
PHILADELPHIA (CG) 446 6TH & CHESTNUT ST,
SUITE 1030, 19106
(215) 829-9520, Fax (215) 829-0594

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1360 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 1130, 77056
(713) 963-9066, Fax (713) 961-3910

CHINA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 443 SHATTO PL, 90020
(213) 380-3105, Fax (213) 380-1961

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 1450 LAGUNA ST, 94115
(415) 674-2905, Fax (415) 292-6523

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 100 W. ERIE ST, 60610
(312) 803-0095, Fax (312) 803-0105

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 520 12TH AV, 10036
(212) 279-4275

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 3417 MONTROSE BL,
SUITE 700, 77006
(713) 524-0780

COLOMBIA
California
BEVERLY HILLS (CG) 8383 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 420, 90211
(323) 653-9863

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 595 MARKET ST,
SUITE 2130, 94105
(415) 795-7195

District of Columbia
Washington (CG) 1101 17TH ST, NW,
SUITE 1007, 20036
(202) 332-7476, Fax (202) 332-7180

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 280 ARAGON AV, 33134
(305) 448-5558

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 5901 B PEACHTREE-DUNWOODY RD,
SUITE 405, 30328
(770) 668-0451, Fax (770) 668-0763

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 500 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 2040, 60611
(312) 923-1196, Fax (312) 923-1197

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 2 CANAL ST, SUITE 2302, 70130
(504) 525-5580

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 535 BOYLSTON ST, FLOOR 3RD, 02116
(617) 303-4656, Fax (617) 536-9372

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 10 E. 46TH ST, 10017; (212) 949-9898

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 5851 SAN FELIPE UN,
SUITE 300, 77057
(713) 527-8919

CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
New York
NEW YORK (HCG) 529 5TH AV, 10017

CONGO, REPUBLIC OF
Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (HC) 201 ST. CHARLES AV,
SUITE 2500, 70170
(504) 568-9376

COOK ISLANDS
California
LOS ANGELES (HC) 6033 W. CENTURY BL,
SUITE 690, 90045
(310) 216-2872

Hawaii
HONOLULU (HC) 144 KE ALA OLA RD, 96817
(808) 847-6377

COSTA RICA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 1605 W. OLYMPIC BL,
SUITE 400, 90015
(213) 380-7915, Fax (213) 380-5639

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST, ROOM 645,
94102; (415) 392-8488

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1101 BRICKELL AV, SUITE 401 N, 33131
(305) 871-7485, Fax (305) 871-0860

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 1870 THE EXCHANGE UN,
SUITE 100, 30339
(770) 951-7025, Fax (770) 951-7073

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 203 N. WABASH AV, SUITE 702, 60601
(312) 263-2772, Fax (312) 263-5807

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 2 CANAL ST,
SUITE 2334, 70130
(504) 581-6800, Fax (504) 581-6850

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 225 W. 34TH ST,
SUITE 1202, 10122
(212) 509-3066, Fax (212) 509-3068

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 3000 WILCREST DR,
SUITE 112, 77042
(713) 266-0484, Fax (713) 266-1527

COTE D'IVOIRE
California
SAN FRANCISCO (HCG) X PIER 23 UN, 94111
(415) 310-0812, Fax (415) 928-0512

Texas
HOUSTON (HCG) 412 HAWTHORNE UN, 77006
(713) 529-4928

CROATIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1250, 90025
(310) 477-1009

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 737 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1030, 60611
(312) 482-9902

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 369 LEXINGTON AV,
FLOOR 11TH, 10017
(323) 931-5036

CYPRUS
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 13 E. 40TH ST, 10016
(212) 686-6016

CZECH REPUBLIC
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 10990 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1100, 90024
(310) 473-0889, Fax (310) 473-9813

NEW YORK (CG) 1109-1111 MADISON AV,
FLOOR 1 ST, 10028; (212) 717-5643, Fax (212) 717-5064

DENMARK
Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 211 EAST ONTARIO ST,
SUITE 1800, 60611-3242
(312) 787-8780, Fax (312) 787-8744

DOMINICA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 800 2ND AV,
SUITE 400H, 10017
(212) 599-8478, Fax(212) 661-0979

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
California
SUN VALLEY (CG) 9001 LAUREL CANYON BL,
SUITE 204, 91352; (818) 504-6605

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1038 BRICKELL AV, 33131
(305) 358-3221

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 25 E. Washington ST,
SUITE 1400, 60602
(312) 469-8350, Fax (312) 469-8386

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 2 CANAL ST, SUITE 2100, 70130
(504) 522-1843, Fax (504) 522-1007

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 20 PARK PZ,
SUITE 601, 02116
(617) 482-8121, Fax (617) 482-8133

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 1501 BROADWAY,
SUITE 410, 10036
(212) 768-2480, Fax (212) 768-2677

ECUADOR
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 8484 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 540, 520, BEVERLY HILLS 90211
(323) 658-6020

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 235 MONTGOMERY ST,
SUITE 944, 94104
(415) 957-5921, Fax (415) 957-5923

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1101 BRICKELL AV,
SUITE M-102, 33131
(305) 539-8214, Fax (305) 539-8313

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 30 S. MICHIGAN AV, SUITE 204, 60603
(312) 338-1003, Fax (312) 338-1004

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 2 CANAL ST, SUITE 2338, 70130
(504) 523-3229

New Jersey
NEWARK (CG) 400 MARKET ST, FLOOR 4TH, 07105
(973) 344-6900, Fax (973) 344-0008

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 800 2ND AV,
SUITE 600, 10017
(212) 808-0170

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 4200 WESTHEIMER, SUITE 218, 77027
(713) 622-1787

EGYPT
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 3001 PACIFIC AV, 94115
(415) 346-9700

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 500 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1900, 60611
(312) 828-9162

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 1110 2ND AV, SUITE 201, 10022
(212) 759-7120

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1990 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 2180, 77056
(713) 961-4915

EL SALVADOR
Arizona
NOGALES (CG) 840 N. GRAND AV,
SUITE 3, 85621
(520) 287-9405

California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3450 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 250, 90010
(213) 383-8580

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST,
SUITE 508, 94102
(415) 781-7924

SANTA ANA (CG) 203 N. GOLDEN CIRCLE DR,
SUITE 103, 92705

District of Columbia
Washington (CG) 1724 20TH ST, NW, 20009
(202) 331-4032, Fax (202) 331-4036

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 2600 DOUGLAS RD,
SUITE 104, CORAL GABLES 33134
(305) 774-0840, Fax (305) 774-0850

Georgia
DULUTH (CG) 3505 DULUTH PARK LA,
SUITE 320, 30096
(770) 623-8891

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 104 S. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 816, 60603
(312) 332-1393, Fax (312) 332-4446

Nevada
LAS VEGAS (CG) 765 NELLIS AV,
SUITE C-5, 89110
(702) 437-5339

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 46 PARK AV, 10016
(212) 889-3608

NEW YORK (CG) 1090 SUFFOLK AV,
BRENTWOOD 11717
(631) 273-1355

Texas
DALLAS (CG) 1555 W. MOCKINGBIRD LA,
SUITE 216, 75235

HOUSTON (CG) 1702 HILLENDAHL BL, 77055
(713) 270-6239

Virginia
WOODBRIDGE (CG) 14572 POTOMAC MILLS RD,
SUITE 12, 22192
(703) 490-4300

ERITREA
California
OAKLAND (CG) 409 13TH ST,
FLOOR 14TH, 94612
(510) 986-1991

ESTONIA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 600 3RD AV,
FLOOR 26TH, 10016
(212) 883-0636, Fax (212) 883-0648

ETHIOPIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3460 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 308, 90010
(213) 365-6651

FIJI
California
EL SEGUNDO (HC) 2301 ROSECRANS AV,
SUITE 3185, 90245
(310) 531-8784, Fax (310) 531-8789

FINLAND
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 1801 CENTURY PARK EAST,
SUITE 2100, 90067
(310) 203-9903, Fax (310) 203-9186

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 866 UNITED NATIONS PZ,
SUITE 250, 10017
(212) 750-4400, Fax (212) 750-4418

FRANCE
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 10990 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 300, 90024
(310) 235-3200

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 540 BUSH ST, 94108
(415) 397-4330

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1395 BRICKELL AV,
SUITE 1050, 33131
(305) 403-4150, Fax (305) 403-4151

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 3475 PIEDMONT RD, NE,
SUITE 1840, 30305
(404) 495-1660, Fax (404) 495-1661

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 205 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 3700, 60601
(312) 787-5359

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 1340 POYDRAS ST,
SUITE 1710, 70112
(504) 523-5772

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 31 ST. JAMES AV,
SUITE 750, 02116
(617) 542-7374, Fax (617) 542-8054

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 934 5TH AV, 10021
(212) 606-3688

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 777 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 600, 77056
(713) 572-2799, Fax (713) 572-2911

GABON
New York
NEW YORK (C) 18 E. 41ST ST,
FLOOR 9TH, 10017
(212) 686-9720

GAMBIA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 144 E. 44TH ST,
FLOOR 5TH, 10017
(212) 867-3617, Fax (212) 867-3654

GERMANY, FED. REP. OF
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 6222 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 500, 90048
(323) 930-2703, Fax (323) 930-2805

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 1960 JACKSON ST, 94109
(415) 775-1061

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 100 N. BISCAYNE BL,
SUITE 2200, 33132
(305) 358-0290

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 285 PEACHTREE CENTER AV, NE,
SUITE 901, 30303; (404) 659-4760

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 676 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 3200, 60611
(312) 580-1199

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 3 COPLEY PL,
SUITE 500, 02116
(617) 536-4414

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 871 UNITED NATIONS PZ, 10017
(212) 610-9700, Fax (212) 610-9702

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1300 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 1850, 77056
(713) 627-7770

GHANA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 19 E. 47TH ST, 10017, (212) 832-1300

GREECE
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 12424 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 800, 710, 90025
(310) 826-5555, Fax (310) 826-8670

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 2441 GOUGH ST, 94123
(415) 775-2102, Fax (415) 776-6815

Florida
TAMPA (CG) 601 BAYSHORE BL,
SUITE 800, 33606

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 650 N. SAINT CLAIR ST, 60611
(312) 335-3915, Fax (312) 335-3958

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 86 BEACON ST, 02108
(617) 523-0100, Fax (617) 523-0511

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 69 E. 79TH ST, 10021
(212) 988-5500, Fax (212) 734-8492

GRENADA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 800 2ND AV, SUITE 400K, 10017
(212) 599-0301

GUATEMALA
Arizona
PHOENIX (CG) 4747 N. 7TH ST, SUITE 410, 85014
(602) 200-3660

California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 1625 W. OLYMPIC BL,
SUITE 1000, 90015
(213) 365-9251

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST,
SUITE 667, 94102
(415) 788-5651

Colorado
DENVER (CG) 820 16TH ST, SUITE 615, 80202

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1101 BRICKELL AV, SUITE 1003-S, 33131
(305) 679-9945

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 2750 BUFORD HW, NE, 30324
(404) 320-8804, Fax (404) 320-8806

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 203 N. WABASH AV,
SUITE 910, 60601
(312) 332-1587, Fax (312) 322-4256

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 57 PARK AV, 10016
(212) 686-3837

Rhode Island
PROVIDENCE (CG) 754 BRANCH AV,
SUITE 201, 02904; (401) 210-6345

GUINEA
Ohio
CLEVELAND (HC) 39 S. MAIN ST,
SUITE 404, AKRON 44308
(330) 252-1795, Fax (330) 252-1874

Pennsylvania
PHILADELPHIA (HC) 2 PENN CENTER,
SUITE 200, 19102
(215) 842-0860

GUYANA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 370 7TH AV, SUITE 402, 10001

HAITI
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 259 S.W. 13TH ST, 33130
(305) 377-3547

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 220 S. STATE ST, SUITE 2110, 60601
(312) 922-4004, Fax (312) 922-7122

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 545 BOYLSTON ST, ROOM 201, 02116
(617) 266-3660

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 271 MADISON AV,
FLOOR 17TH, 10016
(212) 697-9767

HONDURAS
Arizona
PHOENIX (CG) 4040 E. MC DOWELL RD,
SUITE 305, 85008
(602) 273-0173, Fax (602) 273-0547

California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3550 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 410, 90010
(213) 383-9244

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 7171 CORAL WA, SUITE 309, 33155
(305) 269-9399, Fax (305) 269-9445

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 600 HOUZE WA,
SUITE 3-A, ROSWELL 30076
(770) 234-9560

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 4439 W. FULLERTON AV, 60639
(773) 342-8281, Fax (773) 342-8293

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 2 CANAL ST,
SUITE 1641, 70130
(504) 522-3118

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 35 WEST 35TH ST, FLOOR 6, 10001

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 5433 WESTHEIMER RD,
SUITE 325, 77056
(713) 667-4693

HUNGARY
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 410, 90025
(310) 473-9344

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 600 N. STATE ST, 60610
(312) 943-3800

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 223 E. 52ND ST, 10022
(212) 752-0661, Fax (212) 755-5986

ICELAND
California
LOS ANGELES (HCG) 155 N. ANITA AV, 90049
(310) 440-3494, Fax (310) 440-9565

SAN FRANCISCO (HCG) 222 FRONT ST,
FLOOR 5TH, 94111
(415) 433-3103, Fax (415) 433-0449

Florida
TALLAHASSEE (HCG)
1486 ST. CHARLES PLACE UN, 32308
(850) 878-1144, Fax (850) 878-3862

Georgia
ATLANTA (HCG) 191 PEACHTREE ST, NE,
FLOOR 16, 30303
(404) 572-6670, Fax (404) 572-6999

Illinois
CHICAGO (HCG) 15750 S. HARLEM AV,
SUITE 28, ORLAND PARK 60611
(708) 429-1126, Fax (708) 429-9972

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 800 THIRD AV,
FLOOR 36TH, 10022
(212) 593-2700, Fax (212) 593-6269

Washington
SEATTLE (HCG) 5610 20TH AV, NW, 98107
(206) 783-4100, Fax (206) 784-8916

INDIA
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 540 ARGUELLO BL, 94118
(415) 668-0662

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 455 N. CITYFRONT PLAZA DR,
SUITE 850, 60611
(312) 595-0405, Fax (312) 595-0416

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 3 E. 64TH ST, 10021
(212) 879-7800

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1990 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 600, 77056
(713) 626-2148

INDONESIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3457 WILSHIRE BL, 90010
(213) 383-5126

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 1111 COLUMBUS AV, 94133
(415) 474-9571

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 211 W. WACKER DR, SUITE 800, 60606
(312) 595-1777, Fax (312) 595-9952

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 5 E. 68TH ST, 10021
(212) 879-0600

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 10900 RICHMOND AV, 77042

IRELAND
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 100 PINE ST,
FLOOR 33, 94111
(415) 392-4214, Fax (415) 392-0885

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 400 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 911, 60611
(312) 337-1868

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 535 BOYLSTON ST,
FLOOR 5TH, 02116
(617) 267-9330

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 345 PARK AV, FLOOR 17, 10154
(212) 319-2552

ISRAEL
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 6380 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1700, 90048
(213) 852-5500, Fax (213) 852-5555

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 456 MONTGOMERY ST,
FLOOR 21ST, 94104
(415) 398-8885, Fax (415) 398-8589

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 100 N. BISCAYNE BL,
SUITE 1800-1801, 33132
(305) 358-8111, Fax (305) 371-5034

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 1100 SPRING ST, NW,
SUITE 440, 30309
(404) 487-6500, Fax (404) 487-6555

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 111 E. WACKER DR,
SUITE 1308, 60601
(312) 565-3300, Fax (312) 565-3871

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 20 PARK PZ,
SUITE 1020, 02116
(617) 542-0041, Fax (617) 338-4995

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 800 2ND AV,
FLOOR 13, 14, 15, 10017
(212) 499-5477, Fax (212) 499-5465

Pennsylvania
PHILADELPHIA (CG) 230 S. 15TH ST,
FLOOR 7-8, 19102
(215) 546-5556, Fax (215) 545-3986

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 24 GREENWAY PZ,
SUITE 1500, 77046
(713) 627-3780, Fax (713) 627-0149

ITALY
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 12400 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 300&360, 90025
(310) 826-5998, Fax (310) 820-0727

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 2590 WEBSTER ST, 94115
(415) 931-4924

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 4000 PONCE DE LEON BL,
SUITE 590, 33146
(305) 374-6322, Fax (305) 374-7945

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 500 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1850, 60611
(312) 467-1550

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 600 ATLANTIC AV, FLOOR 17TH, 02210
(617) 722-9201, Fax (617) 722-9407

Michigan
DETROIT (C) 535 GRISWOLD UN,
SUITE 1840, 48226
(313) 963-8560

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 690 PARK AV, 10021
(212) 737-9100

Pennsylvania
PHILADELPHIA (CG) 150 S. INDEPENDENCE MALL
WEST UN, SUITE1026, 19106
(215) 592-1218

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1300 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 660, 77056
(713) 850-7520

JAMAICA
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 25 S.E. 2ND AV,
SUITE 842, 33131
(305) 374-8431

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 767 3RD AV, 10017
(212) 935-9000

JAPAN
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 350 S. GRAND AV,
SUITE 1700, 90071
(213) 617-6700, Fax (213) 617-6727

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 50 FREMONT ST,
SUITE 2300, 94105
(415) 777-3533

Colorado
DENVER (CG) 1225 17TH ST, SUITE 3000, 80202
(303) 534-1151, Fax (303) 534-3393

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 80 S.W. 8TH ST, SUITE 3200, 33130
(305) 530-9090

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 3500 LENOX RD,
SUITE 1600, 30326
(404) 240-4300, Fax (404) 240-4311

Hawaii
HONOLULU (CG) 1742 NUUANU AV, 96817
(808) 536-2226

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 737 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1100, 60611
(312) 280-0400

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 639 LOYOLA AV,
SUITE 2050, 70113
(504) 529-2101

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 600 ATLANTIC AV,
FLOOR 14TH, 02210
(617) 973-9772

Michigan
DETROIT (CG) 400 RENAISSANCE CENTER UN,
SUITE 1600, 48243
(313) 567-0120, Fax (313) 567-0274

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 299 PARK AV, FLOOR 18 & 19, 10171
(212) 371-8222

Oregon
PORTLAND (CG) 1300 S.W. 5TH AV, SUITE 2700, 97201
(503) 221-1811

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 909 FANNIN SQ, SUITE 3000, 77010
(713) 652-2977

Washington
SEATTLE (CG) 601 UNION ST,
SUITE 500, 98101
(206) 682-9107

JORDAN
Illinois
CHICAGO (HCG) 12559 S. HOLIDAY DR, A,
ALSIP 60803
(708) 272-6665, Fax (708) 385-5894

KAZAKHSTAN
New York
NEW YORK (C) 866 UNITED NATIONS PL,
SUITE 586A, 10017
(212) 888-3024

KENYA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 4801 WILSHIRE BL,
FLOOR MEZ, 90010

KIRIBATI
Hawaii
HONOLULU (HC) 95 NAKOLO PL, ROOM 265, 96734
(808) 521-7703

KOREA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3243-45 WILSHIRE BL, 90010
(213) 385-9300, Fax (213) 384-5139

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 3500 CLAY ST, 94118
(415) 921-2251, Fax (415) 921-5946

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 229 PEACHTREE ST, NE,
SUITE 500, 30303
(404) 522-1611, Fax (404) 521-3169

Hawaii
HONOLULU (CG) 2756 PALI HWY. UN, 96817
(808) 595-6109, Fax (808) 595-3046

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 455 N. CITYFRONT PLAZA DR,
SUITE 2700, 60611
(312) 822-9485, Fax (312) 822-9849

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 1 GATEWAY CN,
FLOOR 2ND, NEWTON 02458
(617) 641-2830, Fax (617) 641-2831

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 335 E. 45TH ST,
FLOOR 4, 5, 6, 10017; (646) 674-6001

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1990 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 1250, 77056
(713) 961-0186, Fax (713) 961-3340

Washington
SEATTLE (CG) 2033 6TH AV,
SUITE 1125, 98121
(206) 441-1011, Fax (206) 441-7912

KUWAIT
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 1801 AVENUE OF THE STARS UN,
SUITE 1010, 90067
(310) 402-1692

KYRGYZSTAN
New York
NEW YORK (C) 866 UNITED NATIONS PZ,
SUITE 514, 10017
(212) 319-2836

Texas
HOUSTON (HCG) 15600 BARKERS LANDING RD,
APT 1, 77079
(281) 920-1841, Fax (281) 920-1823

Utah
OREM (HCG) 800 W. UNIVERSITY PW,
SUITE AD-217, 84058
(801) 787-1708

LATVIA
California
COSTA MESA (HC) 2729 BRISTOL ST, 92626
(714) 979-1700

LOS ANGELES (HC) 3013 PALOS VERDES DR, W,
PALOS VERDES ESTATES 90274
(310) 377-1784, Fax (310) 377-5235

LEBANON
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 660 S. FIGUEROA ST,
SUITE 1050, 90017
(213) 243-0999, Fax (213) 612-5070

Michigan
DETROIT (CG) 3031 W. GRAND BL, SUITE 560, 48202
(313) 758-0753

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 9 E. 76TH ST, 10021
(212) 744-7905

LIBERIA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 820 2ND AV, 10017
(212) 687-1025

LIECHTENSTEIN
California
LOS ANGELES (HC) 400 S. ROSSMORE AV, 90020

Georgia
MACON (HC) 1338 OLD FORSYTH RD, 31210
(478) 471-7788

LITHUANIA
Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 211 E. ONTARIO ST,
SUITE 1500, 60611
(312) 397-0382, Fax (312) 397-0885

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 420 5TH AV,
FLOOR 3RD, 10018
(212) 354-7849, Fax (212) 354-7911

LUXEMBOURG
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 1 SANSOME ST,
SUITE 830, 94104
(415) 788-0816

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 17 BEEKMAN PL, 10022
(212) 888-6664, Fax (212) 888-6116

MACEDONIA
Michigan
SOUTHFIELD (CG) 2000 TOWN CN,
SUITE 1130, 48075
(248) 354-5537

MADAGASCAR
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 801 2ND AV, ROOM 404, 10017
(212) 986-9491

MALAYSIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 550 S. HOPE ST,
SUITE 400, 90071
(213) 892-1238, Fax (213) 892-9031

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 313 E. 43RD ST, 10017
(212) 682-0232, Fax (212) 983-1987

MALI
Florida
FT. LAUDERDALE (HC) 1710 CYPRESS CREEK RD, W,
33309; (954) 771-1795, Fax (954) 771-3281

Georgia
ATLANTA (HC) 1815 N. DECATUR RD, 30307

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (HC) 4232 WILLIAMS BL,
SUITE 101, KENNER 70065; (504) 465-0765

MALTA
New York
NEW YORK (C) 249 E. 35TH ST, 10016
(212) 725-2345

MARSHALL ISLANDS
Hawaii
HONOLULU (CG) 1888 LUSITANA ST,
SUITE 301, 96813

MAURITIUS
Arizona
SUN CITY (HC) 9744 W. BELL RD, 85351-1343
(623) 876-2718

California
LOS ANGELES (HC) 2029 CENTURY PARK, E,
FLOOR 6TH, 90067
(310) 557-2009, Fax (310) 551-0283

SAN FRANCISCO (HC) 2844 GREENWICH ST, 94123
(415) 693-9345

MEXICO
Arizona
PHOENIX (CG) 1990 W. CAMELBACK RD,
SUITE 110, 85015
(602) 249-2735

California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 2401 W. 6TH ST, 90057

SACRAMENTO (CG) 1010 8TH ST, 95814
(916) 329-3526, Fax (916) 441-3147

SAN DIEGO (CG) 1549 INDIA ST, 92101
(619) 231-8414, Fax (619) 231-4802

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 532 FOLSOM ST, 94105
SAN JOSE (CG) 540 N. 1ST ST, 95112
(408) 294-3414

Colorado
DENVER (CG) 5350 LEETSDALE DR, SUITE 100, 80246
(303) 331-1110

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 5975 S. W. 72ND ST, SUITE 301, 33143
(786) 268-4900, Fax (786) 268-4895

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 2600 APPLE VALLEY RD, 30319
(404) 266-2233, Fax (404) 266-2302

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 204 S. ASHLAND AV, 60607
(312) 833-6331

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 20 PARK PZ, SUITE 506,500, 02116
(617) 426-4942

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 27-29 E. 39TH ST, 10016
(212) 689-0456

Texas
AUSTIN (CG) 800 BRAZOS ST,
SUITE 330, 78701
(512) 478-2803

DALLAS (CG) 8855 N. STEMMONS FREEWAY, 75247
(214) 522-9740

EL PASO (CG) 910 E. SAN ANTONIO AV, 79901
(915) 533-3644

HOUSTON (CG) 4507 SAN JACINTO ST, 77004
(713) 271-6800, Fax (713) 271-3201

LAREDO (CG) 1612 FARRAGUT ST, 78040
(512) 723-6369

SAN ANTONIO (CG) 127 NAVARRO ST, 78205
(512) 227-9145

MICRONESIA
Hawaii
HONOLULU (CG) 3049 UALENA ST, SUITE 910, 96819
(808) 836-4775, Fax (808) 836-6869

MOLDOVA
New York
NEW YORK (HC) 405 PARK AV, 10022
(212) 888-6680

North Carolina
HICKORY (HC) 1117 2ND ST, 28601
(828) 312-8980, Fax (828) 396-5579

Pennsylvania
PHILADELPHIA (HC) 245 N. 15TH ST, 19102-1192
(215) 762-4401

Virginia
NORFOLK (HC) 6350 CENTER DR,
SUITE 112, 23502
(757) 466-8899, Fax (757) 466-9481

MONACO
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 565 5TH AV, FLOOR 23RD, 10017
(212) 286-0500, Fax (212) 286-1574

MONGOLIA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 6 E. 77TH ST, 10021

MONTENEGRO
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 801 SECOND AV,
SUITE 7TH, 10017
Fax (212) 661-5466

MOROCCO
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 10 E. 40TH ST, FLOOR 23RD, 10016
(212) 758-2625

NAMIBIA
Florida
ORLANDO (HCG) 200 S. ORANGE AV,
SUITE 2600, 32801
(407) 244-1112

NAURU
Hawaii
HONOLULU (HC) 841 BISHOP ST, SUITE 506, 96813
(808) 523-7821

NEPAL
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 820 2ND AV, SUITE 17B, 10017
(212) 370-4188

NETHERLANDS
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1150, 90025
(310) 268-1598, Fax (310) 312-0989

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 701 BRICKELL AV,
FLOOR 5TH, 33131
(786) 866-0480, Fax (786) 866-0498

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 303 E. WACKER DR,
SUITE 2600, 60601
(312) 856-0110, Fax (312) 856-9218

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 1 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA UN,
FLOOR 11TH, 10020; (212) 246-1429

NEW ZEALAND
California
SANTA MONICA (CG) 2425 OLYMPIC BL,
SUITE 600E, 90404
(310) 566-6555, Fax (310) 566-6556

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 222 E. 41 ST, SUITE 2510, 10017
(212) 832-4038, Fax (212) 832-7602

NICARAGUA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3550 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 200, 90010
(213) 252-1170

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST,
SUITE 514-520, 94102
(415) 765-6821

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 8532 S.W. 8TH ST,
SUITE 270, 33144
(305) 220-6900

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 820 SECOND AV,
SUITE 802, 10017
(212) 344-4491

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 8989 WESTHEIMER RD,
SUITE 103, 77063
(713) 789-2762, Fax (713) 789-3164

NIGERIA
Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 8060 ROSWELL RD, 30350
(770) 394-6261

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 828 SECOND AV, 10017
(212) 808-0301

NORWAY
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 20 CALIFORNIA ST,
FLOOR 6TH, 94111
(415) 986-0766

Minnesota
MINNEAPOLIS (CG) 901 MARQUETTE AV,
SUITE 2750, 55402
(612) 332-3338, Fax (612) 332-1386

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 825 THIRD AV,
FLOOR 38TH, 10022
(212) 421-7333

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 2777 ALLEN PKWY,
SUITE 1185, 77019
(713) 521-2900

OMAN
California
LOS ANGELES (HC) 10590 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1704, 90024
(310) 446-0249

PAKISTAN
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 10850 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1245&1250, 90024
(310) 441-5114

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 12 E. 65TH ST, 10021
(212) 879-5800

PALAU
California
LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE (HCG) 4368 HAYMAN AV,
91011; (818) 952-3832

Hawaii
HONOLULU (HCG) 1154 FORT ST,
SUITE 300, 96813
(808) 524-5414

PANAMA
California
SAN DIEGO (CG) 402 W. BROADWAY WA,
SUITE 670, 92101
(619) 235-4441, Fax (619) 235-4442

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST,
SUITE 551-553, 94102
(415) 391-4268, Fax (415) 391-4269

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 5757 BLUE LAGOON DR,
SUITE 320, 33126
(305) 447-3700, Fax (305) 447-4142

TAMPA (CG) 2211 3RD AV, 33605
(813) 283-0063, Fax (813) 283-0064

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 225 PEACHTREE ST, NE,
SUITE 503, 30303
(404) 522-4114, Fax (404) 522-4120

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 2 CANAL ST, 70130
(504) 525-3458, Fax (504) 424-8960

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 1212 AVE. OF THE AMERICAS,
FLOOR 6TH, 10036
(212) 840-2450, Fax (212) 840-2469

Pennsylvania
PHILADELPHIA (CG) 124 CHESTNUT ST, 19106
(215) 574-2994, Fax (215) 625-4876

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 24 GREENWAY PLAZA,
SUITE 1307, 77046
(713) 622-4451, Fax (713) 622-4468

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
California
LOS ANGELES (HCG) 1308 BANYAN DR,
FALL BROOK 92028
(760) 731-0436, Fax (760) 731-0472

Texas
HOUSTON (HCG) 4900 WOODWAY DR,
SUITE 1200, 77056
(713) 966-2500

PARAGUAY
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 6033 W. CENTURY BL,
SUITE 985, 90045
(310) 417-9500, Fax (310) 417-9520

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 25 S.E. 2ND AV,
SUITE 705, 33131
(305) 374-9090

Kansas
KANSAS CITY (CG) 630 *Minnesota* AV, 66101
(913) 281-5252

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 211 E. 43RD ST,
SUITE 2101, 10017

PERU
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3450 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 800, 90010
(213) 252-5910, Fax (213) 252-8130

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 870 MARKET ST,
SUITE 1067, 94102
(415) 362-7136

Colorado
DENVER (CG) 1001 S. MONACO PW,
SUITE 210, 80224

Connecticut
HARTFORD (CG) 250D MAIN ST,
SUITE D, 06106

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 444 BRICKELL AV, SUITE M-135, 33131
(305) 374-8935

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 4360 CHAMBLEE DUNWOODY RD,
SUITE 580, 30341
(770) 900-2131

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 180 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1830, 60601
(312) 853-6173

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 20 PARK PZ,
SUITE 511, 02116

New Jersey
PATERSON (CG) 100 HAMILTON PZ,
SUITE 1220, 07505
(201) 278-3324

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 241 E. 49TH ST, 10017
(212) 481-7419, Fax (646) 735-3866

Texas
DALLAS (CG) 1500 MARILLA UN, ROOM D, 75201

HOUSTON (CG) 5177 RICHMOND AV,
SUITE 695, 77056
(713) 355-9571, Fax (713) 355-9377

PHILIPPINES
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3600 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 500, 90010
(213) 639-0980, Fax (213) 639-0990

Hawaii
HONOLULU (CG) 2433 PALI HW, 96817
(808) 595-6316

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 30 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 2100, 60602
(312) 332-6458

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 556 5TH AV, 10036; (212) 764-1330

POLAND
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 12400 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 555, 90025
(310) 442-8500, Fax (310) 442-8515

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 820 N. ORLEANS ST, SUITE 335, 60610
(312) 337-8166

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 233 MADISON AV, 10016
(212) 889-8360

PORTUGAL
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 3298 Washington ST, 94115
(415) 346-3400

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) ONE EXETER PL,
FLOOR 7TH, 02116
(617) 536-8740

New Jersey
NEWARK (CG) ONE RIVERFRONT PZ, 07102
(973) 643-4200

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 590 5TH AV,
FLOOR 3RD, 10036
(212) 221-3165, Fax (212) 221-3462

QATAR
Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1990 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 810, 77056
(713) 355-8221, Fax (713) 355-8184

ROMANIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 560, 90025; (310) 444-0043

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 737 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1170, 60611

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 200 E. 38TH ST,
FLOOR 3RD, 10016

RUSSIA
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 2790 GREEN ST, 94123
(415) 928-6878, Fax (415) 929-0306

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 9-11 E. 91ST ST, 10128
(212) 348-0926, Fax (212) 831-9162

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1333 W. LOOP SOUTH UN,
SUITE 1300, 77027
(713) 337-3300, Fax (713) 337-3305

Washington
SEATTLE (CG) 2001 6TH AV, SUITE 2323, 98121;
(206) 728-1910, Fax (206) 728-1871

RWANDA
Illinois
GENEVA (HCG) 2100 ENTERPRISE AV, 60134
(630) 406-6408

Massachusetts
BOSTON (HCG) 151 TREMONT ST, SUITE 21K, 02111
(617) 948-9449

SAMOA
California
TORRANCE (HC) 833 W. TORRANCE BL, 90502
(310) 329-4748

SAN MARINO
District of Columbia
Washington (HCG) 3059 Q ST, NW, 20007
(202) 337-1647

New York
NEW YORK (HCG) 186 LEHRER AV,
SUITE 0, ELMONT 11003
(516) 437-4699, Fax (516) 775-5897

SAO TOME & PRINCIPE
Georgia
ATLANTA (HC) 245 PERIMETER CENTER PW,
SUITE 610, 30346
(678) 259-8146, Fax (770) 454-0032

Illinois
CHICAGO (HC) 645 W. PARK AV,
SUITE B, LIBERTYVILLE 60048
(847) 362-5615, Fax (847) 362-1637

SAUDI ARABIA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 2045 SAWTELLE BL, 90025
(310) 479-6000, Fax (310) 479-2752

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 866 2ND AV, FLOOR 5, 10017
(212) 752-2740

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 5718 WESTHEIMER UN,
SUITE 1500, 77057
(713) 785-5577

SENEGAL
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 271 W. 125TH ST,
SUITE 412/415, 10027

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 9701 RICHMOND AV,
SUITE 212, 77042

SERBIA
Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 201 E. OHIO ST,
SUITE 200, 60611
(312) 670-6707, Fax (312) 670-6787

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 62 W. 45TH ST,
FLOOR 7TH, 10036
(212) 596-4352, Fax (212) 596-4363

SEYCHELLES
Washington
SEATTLE (HCG) 3620 S.W. 309TH ST, FEDERAL WAY 98063
(253) 874-4579

SINGAPORE
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 595 MARKET ST, SUITE 2450, 94105
(415) 543-4775, Fax (415) 543-4788

SLOVAK REPUBLIC
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 10940 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 2030, 90024
(310) 209-1253, Fax (310) 209-1261

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 801 2ND AV, FLOOR 12, 10017
(212) 286-8434

SLOVENIA
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 600 3RD AV, FLOOR 21ST, 10016
(212) 370-3006, Fax (212) 370-3581

Ohio
CLEVELAND (CG) 55 PUBLIC SQ, SUITE 945, 44113
(216) 589-9220, Fax (216) 589-9210

SOUTH AFRICA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 6300 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 600, 90048
(323) 651-5902, Fax (323) 651-5969

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 200 S. MICHIGAN AV, FLOOR 6TH, 60604
(312) 939-7929

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 333 E. 38TH ST, FLOOR 9TH, 10016
(212) 213-4880

SPAIN
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 5055 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 860, 90036
(323) 938-0158

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 2655 LE JEUNE RD, SUITE 203, CORAL GABLES 33134
(305) 446-5511

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 180 N. MICHIGAN AV, SUITE 1500, 60601
(312) 782-4588

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) 2 CANAL ST, 70130
(504) 525-4951

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 31 ST. JAMES AV, SUITE 905, 02116
(617) 536-2506

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 150 E. 58TH ST, FLOOR 30 AND 31, 10155
(212) 355-4080

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1800 BERING DR, SUITE 660, 77057
(713) 783-6200

SRI LANKA
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 3250 WILSHIRE BL, SUITE 1405, 90010
(213) 387-0213, Fax (213) 387-0216

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 1762 WESTWOOD BL, 90024
(310) 694-5208, Fax (310) 694-8239

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 414 E. 75TH ST, 10021

Texas
DALLAS (HC) 6336 GREENVILLE AV, 75206

ST. LUCIA
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1101 BRICKELL AV, SUITE 1602, 33131

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 800 2ND AV, SUITE 910, 10017
(212) 697-9360

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 801 2ND AV, FLOOR 21ST, 10017
(212) 687-4490

SURINAME
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 6303 BLUE LAGOON DR, SUITE 325, 33126
(305) 265-4655, Fax (305) 265-4599

SWEDEN
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 10940 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 700, 90024
(310) 445-4008, Fax (310) 473-2229

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 885 2ND AV,
FLOOR 45TH, 10017
(212) 583-2550, Fax (212) 755-2732

SWITZERLAND
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1400, 90025
(310) 575-1145, Fax (310) 575-1982

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 456 MONTGOMERY ST,
SUITE 1500, 94104
(415) 788-2272, Fax (415) 788-1402

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 1349 W. PEACHTREE ST, NW,
SUITE 1000, 30309
(404) 870-2000, Fax (404) 870-2011

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 737 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 2301, 60611
(312) 915-0061, Fax (312) 915-0388

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 633 3RD AV, FLOOR 30TH, 10017
(212) 599-5700, Fax (212) 599-4266

SYRIA
California
LOS ANGELES (HCG) 660 NEWPORT CENTER DR,
SUITE 740, NEWPORT BEACH 92660
(949) 640-9888, Fax (949) 640-9292

Michigan
DETROIT (HCG) 900 WILSHIRE,
SUITE 202, TROY 48084
(248) 519-2496, Fax (248) 519-2399

Texas
HOUSTON (HCG) 5433 WESTHEIMER RD,
SUITE 1020, 77056
(713) 622-8860, Fax (713) 965-9632

TAIWAN
New York
NEW YORK (C) 1 E. 42ND ST, 10021

TANZANIA
Florida
BOCA RATON (HC) 1045 E. ATLANTIC AV,
SUITE 206, DELRAYBEACH 33483
(561) 279-4010, Fax (561) 279-4015

Georgia
ATLANTA (HC) 2245 GODBY RD,
SUITE 202, 30349
(404) 766-8000, Fax (404) 767-5264

Illinois
SAINT LOUIS (HC) 937 WHIPPOORWILL WA,
EDWARDSVILLE 62025
(618) 692-6715, Fax (618) 650-3509

THAILAND
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 611 N. LARCHMONT BL, 90004
(323) 962-9574, Fax (323) 962-2128

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 700 N. RUSH ST, 60611
(312) 664-3129, Fax (312) 664-3230

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 351 E. 52ND ST,
FLOOR 1-3, 10022
(212) 754-1770, Fax (212) 754-1907

TOGO
Florida
MIAMI (HC) 4000 PONCE DE LEON BL,
SUITE 700, CORAL GABLES 33146
(305) 371-4286, Fax (305) 371-4288

TONGA
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 360 POST ST, 94108
(415) 781-0365

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1000 BRICKELL AV,
SUITE 800, 33131
(305) 374-2199

New York
NEW YORK(CG) 475 5TH AV,
FLOOR 4TH, 10017
(212) 682-7272

TUNISIA
California
SAN FRANCISCO (HCG) 3401 SACRAMENTO ST, 94118
(415) 922-9222

New York
NEW YORK (HCG) 781 FIFTH AV,
SUITE 1205, 10022
(212) 355-2800

TURKEY
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 6300 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 2010, 90048
(323) 655-8832, Fax (323) 655-8681

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 360 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1405, 60601
(312) 263-0644

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 821 UNITED NATIONS PZ, 10017
(212) 949-0160

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1990 POST OAK BL,
SUITE 1300, 77056
(713) 622-5849

UGANDA
California
LOS ANGELES (HC) 3400 CAHUENGA BL, 90068

Florida
JUPITER (HC) 6710 INLAND CT, 33458
(561) 676-4808

Washington
GIG HARBOR (HC) 3226 ROSEDALE ST,
SUITE 100, 98335
(206) 571-9798

UKRAINE
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 530 BUSH ST,
SUITE 402, 94108
(415) 999-8612

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 10 E. HURON ST, 60611
(312) 642-4388

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 240 E. 49TH ST, 10017
(212) 371-5690

UNITED KINGDOM
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 11766 WILSHIRE BL,
SUITE 1200, 90025
(310) 477-3322

SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 1 SANSOME ST,
SUITE 850, 94104
(415) 617-1300

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1001 BRICKELL BAY DR,
SUITE 2800, 33131
(305) 374-1522, Fax (305) 374-8196

Georgia
ATLANTA (CG) 133 PEACHTREE ST, NE,
SUITE 3400, 30303-1818
(404) 954-7700, Fax (404) 954-7702

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 400 N. MICHIGAN AV,
FLOOR 13TH, 60611
(312) 346-1810

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 1 MEMORIAL DR,
SUITE 1500, CAMBRIDGE 02142
(617) 245-4500, Fax (617) 621-0220

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 845 3RD AV,
FLOOR 9 & 10TH, 10022
(212) 745-0200

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 1000 LOUISIANA ST,
SUITE 1900, 77002
(713) 659-6270

URUGUAY
California
LOS ANGELES (CG) 429 SANTA MONICA BL,
SUITE 400, SANTA MONICA 90401
(310) 394-5777

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1077 PONCE DE LEON BL,
SUITE B, CORAL GABLES 33134
(305) 443-9764, Fax (305) 443-7802

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 875 N. MICHIGAN AV,
SUITE 1422, 60611
(312) 642-3430, Fax (312) 642-3470

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 420 MADISON AV,
FLOOR 6TH, 10017
(212) 753-8581, Fax (212) 753-1603

UZBEKISTAN
New York
NEW YORK (CG) 801 SECOND AV,
FLOOR 20TH, 10017
(212) 754-6178, Fax (212) 486-7998

VENEZUELA
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 311 CALIFORNIA ST,
SUITE 620, 94104
(415) 955-1982

Florida
MIAMI (CG) 1101 BRICKELL AV, SUITE 300, 33131
(305) 577-4301

Illinois
CHICAGO (CG) 20 N. WACKER DR,
SUITE 1925, 60606
(312) 236-9658

Louisiana
NEW ORLEANS (CG) WORLD TRADE CENTER,
SUITE 2300, 70130
(504) 522-3284

Massachusetts
BOSTON (CG) 545 BOYLSTON ST,
FLOOR 3RD, 02116
(617) 266-9355

New York
NEW YORK (CG) 7 E. 51ST ST, 10022
(212) 826-1660

Texas
HOUSTON (CG) 2925 BRIARPARK DR,
SUITE 900, 77042
(713) 961-5141

VIETNAM
California
SAN FRANCISCO (CG) 1700 CALIFORNIA ST,
SUITE 370, 430, 94109
(415) 922-1707, Fax (415) 922-1848

YEMEN
Michigan
DETROIT (HCG) 10415 DIX AV, DEARBORN 48120
(313) 842-7032

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Know Before You Go—Regulations for U.S. Residents

Editor's note: The information below was posted on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection web site (www.customs.gov) as of January 2009 and has been condensed by the editors for publication in book format. Readers should consult www.customs.gov for additional information, updates, or revisions.

U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is responsible for keeping America's borders safe and secure. On March 1, 2003, CBP combined the inspectional workforces and broad border authorities of the U.S. Customs Service with three other agencies: Immigration and Naturalization Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the Border Patrol.

At CBP, our job is to keep terrorists, their weapons, and other illegal material or individuals from entering the United States, while also facilitating the flow of legitimate trade and travel. For obvious reasons, this mission is vitally important. We are dedicated to carrying it out to the best of our abilities.

Your Inspection

To keep our borders secure, we must inspect everyone who arrives at a U.S. port of entry. We pledge to treat you courteously and professionally. We do not assume that you have done anything wrong—because very few travelers actually violate the law.

As part of your inspection, you may be asked questions on:

- The nature of your citizenship,
- Your trip, and
- About anything you are bringing back to the United States that you did not have with you when you left.

We may also need to examine your baggage or your car, which we have the legal authority to do. If we are checking your baggage, you will need to place it on the exam station and open it. (After the exam is completed, you will be asked to repack and close the baggage.) If at any point you are unhappy with the way you are being treated, ask to speak to a CBP supervisor. Please note that the information contained within this brochure may change routinely. Visit the travel section of the CBP web site at www.cbp.gov for the most up-to-date traveler information.

PREPARING TO RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

When you return, you will need to declare everything you brought back that you did not take with you when you left the United States. If you are traveling by air or sea, you may be asked to fill out a CBP declaration form. This form is almost always provided by the airline or cruise ship. You will probably find it easier and faster to fill out your declaration form and clear

CBP if you do the following:

- Keep your sales slips.
- Try to pack the things you'll need to declare separately.
- Read the signs in the arrival area.

DOCUMENTS YOU WILL NEED TO ENTER THE UNITED STATES

All persons including citizens of the United States traveling by air between the U.S., Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda are required to present a passport, Merchant Mariner Document (presented by U.S. citizen merchant mariners traveling on official business) or NEXUS Card (NEXUS enrollment is limited to citizens of the United States and Canada, and lawful permanent residents of the United States and Canada). Children will be required to present their own passport.

U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs), refugees, and asylees will continue to be able to use their Alien Registration Card (Form I-551), issued by DHS, or other evidence of permanent resident status or refugee or asylee status to apply for entry into the United States. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) will not affect travel between the United States and its territories. U.S. citizens traveling directly between the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, America Samoa, Swains Island and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands will continue to be able to use established forms of identification to board flights and for entry.

It is anticipated that starting January 31, 2008, verbal declarations of identity and citizenship alone will no longer be accepted. On this date, U.S. and Canadian citizens entering the U. S. at land and sea ports of entry from within the Western Hemisphere will need to present (1) government-issued proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate, along with (2) government issued photo ID, such as a driver's license.

While a passport or other comparable document is not currently required for entry by land or sea, U.S. and Canadian citizens are highly encouraged to carry proof of identity and citizenship. Travelers 16 years and older should also carry government-issued photo ID.

Full WHTI implementation is currently planned for the summer of 2008. Ample advance notice will be provided to enable the public to obtain acceptable documents for land/sea entries to the United States.

Visitors/Non-immigrants must provide:

- Generally, a valid unexpired passport and visa. (However, certain people may require specific supporting documentation such as an employment petition, student authorization, or approval notice.)
- Citizens of countries authorized to participate in the Visa Waiver Program are required to present an unexpired machine-readable passport. For additional information refer to the State Department at http://www.travel.state.gov.
- Mexicans may provide a valid DSP-150 (BCC) in lieu of a valid passport and visa.
- Canadians flying to, or through the United states are required to have a valid passport or a NEXUS card, when used at a NEXUS kiosk at designated airports.
- Nationals of countries authorized to participate in the Visa Waiver Program are required to present an unexpired passport.

Advance Parole

Caution: Due to recent changes to U.S. immigration law, travel outside of the United States may have severe consequences for aliens who are in the process of adjusting their status or applying for an immigrant visa (refugees and asylees).

Upon return, these aliens may be found inadmissible, their applications may be denied, or both. It is important that the alien obtain the proper documentation before leaving the United States. Aliens who have pending applications for certain immigration benefits need Advance Parole to re-enter the U.S. after traveling abroad.

Aliens applying for advance parole on the basis of a pending application for adjustment of status must be approved for Advance Parole prior to leaving the United States in order to avoid the termination of their pending application for adjustment.

Note: This does not apply to aliens who have applied to adjust to permanent resident status and who maintain H-1B (Specialty Worker) or L-1 (Intracompany Transferee) status, or their dependents, who have applied to adjust to permanent resident status and who have valid H-1B or L status and valid visas, V nonimmigrants who have a valid V nonimmigrant visa, are in valid V nonimmigrant status and have or obtain a valid V nonimmigrant visa before applying for readmission to the U.S. and K-3/4 nonimmigrants who have applied to adjust to permanent resident status and who have a valid K-3/4 nonimmigrant visa, are in valid K-3/4 nonimmigrant status and have or obtain a valid K-3/4 nonimmigrant visa before applying for readmission to the U.S. An I-131 application for Advance Parole is filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) following the instructions found on their web site.

Aliens in the United States should, prior to departure, obtain Advance Parole in order to re-enter the United States after travel abroad if they have:

- Filed an application for adjustment of status but have not received a decision from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; Hold refugee or asylee status and intend to depart temporarily to apply for a U.S. immigrant visa in Canada; and/or
- An emergent personal or bona fide reason to travel temporarily abroad.

Applicants who are the beneficiary of a private bill and applicants who are under deportation proceedings must file with the: Department of Homeland Security, 425 I Street, NW ATTN: Parole and Humanitarian Assistance Branch, Washington, DC 20536.

Aliens in the United States are not eligible for Advance Parole if they are:

- In the United States illegally; or
- An exchange alien subject to the foreign residence requirement.

Please note that Advance Parole does not guarantee admission into the United States. Aliens with Advance Parole are still subject to the U.S. Customs and Border.

Protection inspection process at the port of entry. For more information, please visit the State Department web site at www.travel.state.gov or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security web site at www.dhs.gov. To apply for a passport, U.S. citizens can visit www.travel.state.gov or call the U.S. Passport Office at 1-877-4USA-PPT or TDD/TYY: 1-888-874-7793. Foreign residents should contact their respective governments to obtain passports.

Visa Waiver Program—Visitors

To participate in the Visa Waiver program (VWP) you must be a citizen of a participating VWP country. The 27 countries participating in the VWP are:

Andorra
Australia
Austria
Belgium
Brunei
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Liechtenstein
Luxembourg
Monaco
The Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Portugal
San Marino
Singapore
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

British citizens only with the unrestricted right of abode in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Each applicant (including infants) must be in possession of a passport from a VWP country valid for six months beyond the period of your intended stay, or essentially nine months (90 day + 6 months). Passports issued before October 26, 2005, must be machine-readable. Passports issued on or after October 26, 2005, and before October 26, 2006, must contain a digital photo.

Passports issued on or after October 26, 2006, must be an "E-passport," which must contain an integrated chip that stores biographical data, a digitized photo, and other biographical information. Applicants must be entering only as a visitor for business (WB) or pleasure (WT).

Applicants cannot be admitted for more than 90 days. Applicants must present a signed and completed Form I-94W. Applicants arriving by air or sea must arrive on a carrier that is signatory to the VWP. Applicants arriving by air or sea must possess a ticket, valid for at least one year, to any foreign place/port other than Canada or Mexico or an adjacent island unless you permanently reside there. Applicants arriving at land borders are required to prove economic solvency and a foreign residence to which they intend to return. Applicants who were previously removed from the U.S. as "deportable aliens" and those who have previously violated the terms of their admission (i.e. overstaying their visit), even if not formally apprehended or removed, must apply for a visa. Applicants must not fall under any inadmissibility provision, or appear in any "lookout" database.

Special requirements for VWP travelers from Austria, Italy, France and Germany:

Austria: The Austrian visa "foil" was an acceptable alternative means of compliance with the digital photo requirement for VWP applicants. The foil was used for newly issued passports as well as for passports that had been renewed. In both cases, the foil was valid for a maximum of 12 months. The machine-readable zone shows the period of validity, which in no case was later than December 31, 2006.

Italy: If your regular Italian passport was issued or renewed on or after October 26, 2005, and includes a digital photo, you are compliant with VWP requirements.

France: If you are traveling with a French passport issued on or after October 26, 2005 that does not have an electronic chip, you will need to apply for a U.S. visa. Your passport will have a gold symbol on the front cover if it has an electronic chip.

Germany: As of May 1, 2006, German temporary or emergency passports will no longer be valid for admission into the United States. German citizens who otherwise meet VWP requirements and present regular, official, or diplomatic passports that comply with VWP requirements may continue to travel to the United States under the VWP. For more information on documentation requirements for VWP participating countries, contact your consulate or embassy or their web site at www.state.gov for further instructions.

Students and Exchange Visitors

Before leaving your country:

- Confirm that your passport and nonimmigrant visa are still valid for entry into the United States. The passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
- Check to see that your visa accurately reflects your correct visa classification.
- If the visa states the name of the institution you will attend or identifies the exchange program in which you are participating, verify that this information is accurate as well.
- When you receive your visa, the consular officer will seal your immigration documents in an envelope and attach it to your passport. Do not open this envelope! The CBP officer at the U.S. port of entry will open it. If

your review indicates any discrepancies or potential problems, visit the U.S. embassy or consulate to obtain a new visa.

When you travel, you should carry some specific documents with you, including:

- Passport (including attached envelope of immigration documents) with nonimmigrant visa.
- SEVIS Form I-20AB, I-20MN, DS-2019.
- Visa exempt nationals presenting a SEVIS Form I-20AB, I-20MN or DS-2019 issued on or after September 1, 2004, who are entering the United States for the first time should have a Form I-797, Receipt Notice or Internet Receipt verifying SEVIS fee payment.
- Evidence of financial resources.

You should also carry:

- Evidence of Student/Exchange Visitor status (recent tuition receipts, transcripts).
- Name and contact information for Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO) at your intended school or program.

WHAT YOU MUST DECLARE

- Items you purchased and are carrying with you upon return to the United States.
- Items you received as gifts, such as wedding or birthday presents.
- Items you inherited.
- Items you bought in duty-free shops, on the ship, or on the plane.
- Repairs or alterations to any items you took abroad and then brought back, even if the repairs/alterations were performed free of charge.
- Items you brought home for someone else.
- Items you intend to sell or use in your business.

Also, if you acquired items in the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, or in a Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act country and asked the merchant to send them to you, you must still declare them when you go through CBP. This differs from the usual procedure for mailed items, which is discussed in the section on Sending Items Back to the United States.

You must state on the CBP declaration, in U.S. currency, what you actually paid for each item. The price 14 must include all taxes. If you don't know for sure, estimate. If you did not buy the item yourself—for example, if it is a gift—estimate its fair retail value in the country where you received it.

Remember: Even if you used the item you bought on your trip, it's still dutiable. You must declare the item at the price you paid or, if it was a gift, at its fair market value.

Tip: Register Items Before You Leave The United States

If your laptop computer was made in Japan—for instance—you might have to pay duty on it each time you brought it back into the United States, unless you could prove that you owned it before you left on your trip. Documents that fully describe the item—such as sales receipts, insurance policies, or jeweler's appraisals— are acceptable forms of proof.

To make things easier, you can register certain items with CBP before you depart—including watches, cameras, laptop computers, firearms, and CD players—as long as they have serial numbers or other unique, permanent markings. Take the items to the nearest CBP office and request a Certificate of Registration (CBP Form 4457). It shows that you had the items with you before leaving the United States and all items listed on it will be allowed duty-free entry. CBP officers must see the item you are registering in order to certify the certificate of registration. You can also register items with CBP at the international airport from which you're departing. Keep the certificate for future trips.

DUTY-FREE EXEMPTION

The duty-free exemption, also called the personal exemption, is the total value of merchandise you may bring back to the United States without having to pay duty. You may bring back more than your exemption, but you will have to pay duty on it. In most cases, the personal exemption is $800, but there are some exceptions to this rule, which are explained below.

Exemptions

Depending on the countries you have visited, your personal exemption will be $200, $800, or $1,600. There are limits on the amount of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products you may include in your duty-free personal exemption. The differences are explained in the following section. The duty-free exemptions ($200, $800, or $1,600) apply if:

- The items are for your personal or household use or intended to be given as gifts.

- They are in your possession, that is, they accompany you when you return to the United States. Items to be sent later may not be included in your $800 duty-free exemption. (Exceptions apply for goods sent from Guam or the U.S. Virgin Islands.)

- They are declared to CBP. If you do not declare something that should have been declared, you risk forfeiting it. If in doubt, declare it.

- You are returning from an overseas stay of at least 48 hours. For example, if you leave the United States at 1:30 p.m. on June 1, you would complete the 48-hour period at 1:30 p.m. on June 3. This time limit does not apply if you are returning from Mexico or from the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- You have not used all of your exemption allowance, or used any part of it, in the past 30 days—for example, if you go to England and bring back $150 worth of items—you must wait another 30 days before you are allowed another $800 exemption.

- The items are not prohibited or restricted as discussed in the section on Prohibited and Restricted Items. Note the embargo prohibitions on products of Cuba.

Joint Declaration

Family members who live in the same home and return together to the United States may combine their personal exemptions. This is called a joint declaration. For example, if Mr. and Mrs. Smith travel overseas and Mrs. Smith brings home a $1,000 piece of glassware, and Mr. Smith buys $600 worth of clothing, they can combine their individual $800 exemptions on a joint declaration and not have to pay duty.

Children and infants are allowed the same exemption as adults, except for alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.

Types Of Exemptions

$200 Exemption

If you cannot claim other exemptions because:

- You have been out of the country more than once in a 30-day period, or

- You have not been out of the country for at least 48 hours,

...you may still bring back $200 worth of items free of duty and tax. As discussed earlier, these items must be for your personal or household use. If you bring back more than $200 worth of dutiable items, or if any item is subject to duty or tax, the entire amount will be dutiable. For instance, you were out of the country for 36 hours and came back with a $300 piece of pottery. You could not deduct $200 from its value and pay duty on $100. The pottery would be dutiable for the full value of $300. You may include with the $200 exemption your choice of the following: 50 cigarettes and 10 cigars and 150 milliliters (5 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages or 150 milliliters (5 fl. oz.) of perfume containing alcohol. Note that unlike other exemptions, family members may not combine their individual $200 exemptions. Thus, if Mr. and Mrs. Smith spend a night in Canada, each may bring back up to $200 worth of goods, but they would not be allowed a collective family exemption of $400.

Also, duty on items you mail home to yourself will be waived if the value is $200 or less.

$800 Exemption

If you are arriving from anywhere other than a U.S. insular possession (U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam) you may bring back $800 worth of items duty free, as long as you bring them with you. This is called accompanied baggage. For Caribbean Basin or Andean countries, your exemption is also $800. These countries include:

Antigua and Barbuda
Aruba
Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Bolivia
British Virgin Islands
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Grenada
Guatemala
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
Jamaica
Montserrat
Netherlands Antilles
Nicaragua
Panama
Peru
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Trinidad and Tobago

You may include two liters of alcoholic beverages with this $800 exemption, as long as one of the liters was produced in one of the countries listed above, Depending on what items you're bringing back from your trip, you could come home with more than $800 worth of gifts or purchases and still not be charged duty. For instance, say you received a $700 bracelet as a gift, and you bought a $40 hat and a $60 color print. Because these items total $800, you would not

be charged duty, since you have not exceeded your duty-free exemption. If you had also bought a $500 painting on that trip, you could bring all $1300 worth of merchandise home without having to pay duty, because fine art is duty-free.

$1,600 Exemption

If you return directly or indirectly from a U.S. insular possession (U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or Guam), you are allowed a $1,600 duty-free exemption. If you travel to a U.S. insular possession and to one or more of the Caribbean Basin or Andean countries listed above, let's say on a Caribbean cruise, you may bring back $1,600 worth of items without paying duty, but only $800 worth of these items may come from the Caribbean Basin or Andean country(ies). Any amount beyond $800 will be dutiable unless you acquired it in one of the insular possessions.

For example, if you were to travel to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Jamaica, you would be allowed to bring back $1,600 worth of merchandise duty free, as long as only $800 worth was acquired in Jamaica. Also, you may include 1,000 cigarettes as part of the $1600 exemption, but at least 800 of them must have been acquired in an insular possession.

Only 200 cigarettes may have been acquired elsewhere. For example, if you were touring the South Pacific and you stopped in Tahiti, American Samoa, and other ports of call, you could bring back five cartons of cigarettes, but four of them would have to have been bought in American Samoa.

Similarly, you may include five liters of alcoholic beverages in your duty-free exemption, but one of them must be a product of an insular possession. Four may be products of other countries.

For Frequent Travelers

If you cross the U.S. border into a foreign country and reenter the United States more than once in a short time, you may not want to use your personal exemption until you have returned to the United States for the last time. This is due to the "once every 30 days rule"—you can only apply your personal exemption once every 30 days.

As an example, you go to Canada, buy a liter of liquor, reenter the United States, then go back to Canada and buy $900 worth of merchandise and more liquor. You would probably want to save your $800 exemption for those final purchases and not use it for that first liter of liquor. In this case, on your first swing-back, simply tell the CBP officer that you want to pay duty on the liquor, even though you could bring it in duty free.

Duty-Free or Reduced Rates

Items from Certain Countries

The United States gives duty preferences—that is, free or reduced rates—to certain developing countries under a trade program called the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Some products that would otherwise be dutiable are not when they come from a GSP country.

- Many products of Caribbean and Andean countries are exempt from duty under the Caribbean Basin Initiative, Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, Andean Trade Preference Act and the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act.
- Many products of certain sub-Saharan African countries are exempt from duty under the African Growth and Opportunity Act.
- Most products of Israel, Jordan, Chile and Singapore may also enter the United States 20 either free of duty or at a reduced rate under the U.S. free trade agreements with those countries.

Check www.cbp.gov for details on these programs.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect in 1994. If you are returning from Canada or Mexico, your goods are eligible for free or reduced duty rates if they were grown, manufactured, or produced in Canada or Mexico, as defined by the Act. Access the CBP web site for further details.

Household Effects

Household effects are duty free. These include such items as furniture, carpets, paintings, tableware, stereos, linens, and similar household furnishings; tools of the trade, professional books, implements, and instruments. You may import household effects you acquired abroad duty-free if:

- You used them for at least one year while you were abroad.
- They are not intended for anyone else or for sale.

Clothing, jewelry, photography equipment, portable radios, and vehicles are considered personal effects and cannot be brought in duty-free as household effects. However, duty is usually waived on personal effects over one year of age. All vehicles are dutiable.

Increased Duty Rates

Items from Certain Countries

Under what is known as its "301" authority, the United States may impose a much higher than normal duty rate on products from certain countries. Currently, the United States has imposed a 100 percent rate of duty on certain products of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, The Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the Ukraine.

If you should bring more of any of these products back with you than fall within your exemption or flat rate of duty, you will pay as much in duty as you paid for the product or products. While most of the products listed are not the type of goods that travelers would purchase in sufficient quantities to exceed their exemption, diamonds from the Ukraine are subject to the 100 percent duty and might easily exceed the exemption amount.

For information on countries that may become subject to a higher than normal duty rate, check the Department of Commerce web site at www.commerce.gov.

DETERMINING DUTY

The CBP officer will place the items that have the highest rate of duty under your exemption. Then, after subtracting your exemptions and the value of any duty-free items, a flat rate of duty will be charged on the next $1,000 worth of merchandise. Any dollar amount beyond this $1,000 will be dutiable at whatever duty rates apply. The flat rate of duty may only be used for items for your own use or for gifts. As with your exemption, you may use the flat rate provision only once every 30 days. Special flat rates of duty apply to items made and acquired in Canada or Mexico. The flat rate of duty applies to only to those purchases that accompany you on your return to the United States.

The flat duty rate will be charged on items that are dutiable but that cannot be included in your personal exemption, even if you have not exceeded the exemption. The best example of this is liquor. If you return from Europe with $200 worth of items, including two liters of liquor, one liter will be duty-free under your exemption; the other will be dutiable at 3 percent, plus any Internal Revenue Service tax.

Family members who live in the same household and return to the United States together can combine their items to take advantage of a combined flat duty rate, no matter which family member owns a given item. The combined value of merchandise subject to a flat duty rate for a family of four traveling together would be $4,000.

Tobacco Products

Travelers may import previously exported tobacco products only in quantities not exceeding the amounts specified in exemptions for which the traveler qualifies. Any quantities of previously exported tobacco products not permitted by an exemption will be seized and destroyed. These items are typically purchased in duty-free stores, on carriers operating internationally, or in foreign stores. These items are usually marked “Tax Exempt. For Use Outside the United States,” or “U.S. Tax Exempt For Use Outside the United States.” For example, a returning resident is eligible for the $800 exemption, which includes not more than 200 cigarettes and 100 cigars.

If the resident declares 400 previously exported cigarettes, the resident would be permitted 200 cigarettes tax-free under the exemption and the remaining 200 previously exported cigarettes would be confiscated. If the resident declares 400 cigarettes, of which 200 are previously exported and 200 not previously exported, the resident would be permitted to import the 200 previously exported cigarettes tax free under the exemption and the resident would be charged duty and tax on the remaining 200 foreign-made cigarettes.

The tobacco exemption is available to each adult. Except for information and informational materials, no traveler (whether traveling legally under an Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) license or traveling illegally without an OFAC license) may import Cuban made goods, including Cuban cigars.

Alcoholic Beverages

One liter (33.8 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages may be included in your exemption if:

- You are 21 years old.
- It is for your own use or as a gift.
- It does not violate the laws of the state in which you arrive.

Federal regulations allow you to bring back more than one liter of alcoholic beverage for personal use, but, as with extra tobacco, you will have to pay duty and Internal Revenue Service tax.

While Federal regulations do not specify a limit on the amount of alcohol you may bring back for personal use, unusual quantities are liable to raise suspicions that you are importing the alcohol for other purposes, such as for resale. CBP officers are authorized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to make on-the-spot determinations that an importation is for commercial purposes, and may require you to obtain a permit to import the alcohol before releasing it to you. If you intend to bring back 24 a substantial quantity of alcohol for your personal use, you should contact the port through which you will be re-entering the country, and make prior arrangements for entering the alcohol into the United States.

Also, you should be aware that state laws might limit the amount of alcohol you can bring in without a license. If you arrive in a state that has limitations on the amount of alcohol you may bring in without a license, that state law will be enforced by CBP, even though it may be more restrictive than federal regulations. We recommend that you check with the state government before you go abroad about their limitations on quantities allowed for personal importation and additional state taxes that might apply. In brief, for both alcohol and tobacco, the quantities discussed in this booklet as being eligible for duty-free treatment may

be included in your $800 or $1,600 exemption, just as any other purchase would be. But unlike other kinds of merchandise, amounts beyond those discussed here as being duty-free are taxed, even if you have not exceeded, or even met, your personal exemption. For example, if your exemption is $800 and you bring back three liters of wine and nothing else, two of those liters will be dutiable. Federal law prohibits shipping alcoholic beverages by mail within the United States.

PAYING DUTY

If you owe duty, you must pay it when you arrive in the United States. You can pay it in any of the following ways:

- U.S. currency. Foreign currency is not acceptable.
- Personal check in the exact amount, drawn on a U.S. bank, made payable to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. You must present identification, such as a passport or driver's license. CBP does not accept checks bearing second-party endorsements.
- Government check, money order, or traveler's check if the amount does not exceed the duty owed by more than $50.
- In some locations, you may pay duty with credit cards, either either MasterCard, VISA, American Express, and Discover.

Sending Items Back To The United States

Unaccompanied baggage is anything you do not bring back with you. These may be items that were with you when you left the United States or items that you acquired (received by any means) while outside the United States. In general, unaccompanied baggage falls into three categories: U.S. mail, express shipments, and freight.

U.S. Mail Shipments

Shipping through the U.S. mail, including parcel post, is a cost-efficient way to send items to the United States. The Postal Service sends all foreign mail shipments to CBP for examination. CBP officers then return packages that do not require duty to the Postal Service, which sends them to a local post office for delivery. The local post office delivers them without charging any additional postage, handling costs, or other fees. Packages that contain fruits, vegetables, meat or other items of agricultural interest are inspected to ensure that items meet the requirements of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine. The CBP agriculture specialist encloses a Mail Interception Notice, PPQ Form 287, to document any agriculture items that are removed from the package. The package is then returned to the U.S. Postal Service for delivery. If the package does require payment of duty, CBP attaches a form called a mail entry, CBP Form 3419Alt, which indicates how much duty is owed and charges a 26 $5 processing fee as well. When the post office delivers the package, it will also charge a small handling fee. Commercial goods—goods intended for resale—may have special entry requirements. Such goods may require a formal entry in order to be admitted into the United States. Formal entries are more complicated and require more paperwork than informal entries.

Generally, informal entries are personal packages or commercial items worth less than $2,000. CBP employees may not prepare formal entries for you; only you or a licensed customs broker may prepare one.

If you believe you have been charged an incorrect amount of duty on a package mailed from abroad, you may file a protest with CBP. You can do this in one of two ways. You can accept the package, pay the duty, and write a letter explaining why you think the amount was incorrect. You should include with your letter the yellow copy of the mail entry (CBP Form 3419Alt). Send the letter and the form to the CBP office that issued the mail entry, located on the lower left-hand corner of the form.

The other way to protest duty is to refuse delivery of the package. Then within five days, send your protest letter to the post office where the package is being held. The post office will forward your letter to CBP and will hold your package until the protest is resolved.

For additional information on international mailing, please see the brochure International Mail Imports, or visit the CBP web site at www.cbp.gov.

Express Shipments

Packages may be sent to the United States by private sector courier or delivery service from anywhere in the world. The express company usually takes care of clearing your merchandise through customs and charges a fee for its service. Some travelers have found this fee to be higher than they expected.

Freight Shipments

Cargo, whether duty is owed on it or not, must clear customs at the first port of arrival in the United States. If you choose, you may have your freight sent, while it is still in CBP custody, to another port for clearance. This is called forwarding freight in bond. You, or someone you appoint to act for you, are responsible for arranging to clear your merchandise through CBP or for having it forwarded to another port. Frequently, a freight forwarder in a foreign country will take care of these arrangements, including hiring a customs broker in the United States to clear the merchandise through CBP. Whenever a third party handles the clearing and forwarding of your merchandise, that party charges a fee for its services. This fee is not a CBP charge.

- There are several ways a traveler can find a broker: Phone book - in the Yellow Pages under "Customs Brokers,"
- Internet - search for "Customs Brokers," or
- CBP web site—click the "ports" button, click the state of interest and click on a city within the state. Under each city is a listing of brokers. Click "view list" for a listing of brokers in that area.

The phone book listings as well as the Internet listings are limited to brokers that submit the information. It is not all-inclusive. The listing of brokers on the CBP web site is updated on a regular basis. Listed brokers have a current permit in that port. This list is the only broker information provided by CBP. When a foreign seller entrusts a shipment to a broker or agent in the United States, that seller usually pays only enough freight to have the shipment delivered to the first port of arrival in the United States. This means that you, the buyer, will have to pay additional 28 inland transportation, or freight forwarding charges, plus broker fees, insurance, and possibly other charges. If it is not possible for you to secure release of your goods yourself, another person may act on your behalf to clear them through CBP. You may do this as long as your merchandise consists of a single, noncommercial shipment (not intended for resale) that does not require a formal entry—in other words, if the merchandise is worth less than $2,000 and you must give the person a letter that authorizes that person to act as your unpaid agent.

Once you have done this, that person may fill out the CBP declaration and complete the entry process for you. Your letter authorizing the person to act in your behalf should be addressed to the "Officer in Charge of CBP" at the port of entry, and the person should bring the letter with them when they go to clear your package.

CBP will not notify you when your shipment arrives, as this is the responsibility of your carrier. If your goods are not cleared within 15 days of arrival you could incur expensive storage fees.

GIFTS

Gifts you bring back

Gifts you bring back for your personal use must be declared, but you may include them in your personal exemption. This includes gifts people gave you while you were out of the country, such as wedding or birthday presents, and gifts you have brought back for others. Gifts intended for business, promotional, or other commercial purposes may not be included in your duty-free exemption. Also note that by federal law, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, and perfume containing alcohol and worth more than $5 retail may not be included in the gift exemption.

Gifts you mail

Gifts worth up to $100 may be sent, free of duty and tax, to friends and relatives in the United States, as long as the same person does not receive more than $100 worth of gifts in a single day. If the gifts are mailed or shipped from an insular possession, this amount is increased to $200.

Unless returning to the United States from an insular possession, you don't have to declare gifts you sent while you were on your trip, since they won't be accompanying you.

Gifts for more than one person

Gifts for more than one person may be shipped in the same package, called a consolidated gift package, if they are individually wrapped and labeled with each recipient's name. Here's how to wrap and label a consolidated gift package. Be sure to mark the outermost wrapper with the:

- Words "UNSOLICITED GIFT" and the words "CONSOLIDATED GIFT PACKAGE;"
- Total value of the consolidated package;
- Recipients' names; and
- Nature and value of the gifts inside. For example, tennis shoes, $50; shirt, $45; toy car, $15.

For instance: To John Jones—one belt, $20; one box of candy, $5; one tie, $20. To Mary Smith—one skirt, $45; one belt, $15; one pair slacks, $30.

If any item is worth more than the $100 gift allowance, the entire package will be dutiable.

Can I send a gift to myself?

You, as a traveler, cannot send a gift package to yourself, and people traveling together cannot send gifts 30 to each other. But there would be no reason to do that anyway, because the personal exemption for packages mailed from abroad is $200, which is twice as much as the gift exemption.

Personal belongings

Your personal belongings can be sent back to the United States duty-free if they are of U.S. origin and if they have not been altered or repaired while abroad. Personal belongings like worn clothing can be mailed home and will receive duty-free entry if you write the words "American Goods Returned" on the outside of the package. If a package is subject to duty If a package is subject to duty, the United States Postal Service will collect it from the addressee along with any postage and handling charges. The sender cannot prepay duty; the recipient must pay duty when a package is received in the United States.

Sending Purchases From Insular Possessions And Caribbean Basin And Andean Countries

Unaccompanied purchases are goods you bought on a trip that are being mailed or shipped to you in the United States. In other words, you are not carrying the goods with you when you return. If your unaccompanied purchases are from an insular possession or a Caribbean Basin country and are being sent directly from those locations to the United States, you may enter them as follows:

- Up to $1,600 in goods will be duty-free under your personal exemption if the merchandise is from an insular possession.
- Up to $800 in goods will be duty-free if it is from a Caribbean Basin and Andean country.
- An additional $1,000 in goods will be dutiable at a flat rate if they are from an insular possession, or from a Caribbean Basin country.

If you are sending more than $2,600 from an insular possession or more than $1,600 from a Caribbean Basin country, the duty rates in the Harmonized Tariff Schedules of the United States will apply. The Harmonized Tariff Schedule describes different rates of duty for different commodities. For example, linen tablecloths will not have the same duty rates as handicrafts or plastic toy trucks. To take advantage of the duty-free exemption for unaccompanied tourist purchases from an insular possession or a Caribbean country:

Step 1. At place and time of purchase, ask your merchant to hold your item until you send him or her a copy of CBP Form 255 (Declaration of Unaccompanied Articles), which must be affixed to the package when it is sent.

Step 2. On your declaration form (CBP Form 6059B), list everything you acquired on your trip, except the things you already sent home as gifts. You must also complete a separate Declaration of Unaccompanied Articles form (CBP Form 255) for each package or container that will be sent to you after you arrive in the United States. This form may be available where you make your purchase. If not, ask a CBP officer for one when you clear the customs area.

Step 3. When you return to the United States, the CBP officer will: (a) collect duty and tax on the dutiable goods you have brought with you; (b) check to see that your list of unaccompanied articles, which you indicated on the CBP Form 255, agrees with your sales receipts; (c) validate the CBP Form 255 as to whether your purchases are duty-free under your personal exemption ($1,600 or $800) or whether they are subject to a flat rate of duty.

Step 4. Two copies of this three part CBP Form 255 will be returned to you. Send the yellow copy of the CBP Form 255 to the foreign shopkeeper or vendor holding your purchase, and keep the other copy for your records.

Step 5. When the merchant gets your CBP Form 255, he or she will put it in an envelope and attach the envelope securely to the outside wrapping of the package or container. The merchant must also mark each package "Unaccompanied Purchase." Please remember that each package or container must have its own CBP Form 255 attached. This is the most important step to follow in order to gain the benefits allowed under this procedure.

Step 6. If your package has been mailed, the U.S.

Postal Service will deliver it after it clears customs. If you owe duty, the Postal Service will collect the duty along with a postal handling fee. If a freight service transports your package, they will notify you of its arrival so you can go to the CBP office holding the shipment and complete the entry procedure. If you owe duty or tax, you can pay it at that time. You could also hire a customs broker to do this for you. However, be aware that brokers are not CBP employees, and they charge fees for their services.

If freight or express packages from your trip are delivered before you return and you have not made arrangements to pick them up, CBP will authorize their placement in storage after 15 days. This storage will be at your risk and expense. If they are not claimed within six months, the items will be sold at auction. Packages sent by mail and not claimed within 30 days will be returned to the sender unless the amount of duty is being protested.

Duty-Free Shops

The term "duty-free" shops confuses many travelers. Travelers often think that what they buy in duty-free shops will not be dutiable when they return home and clear customs. But this is not true. Articles sold in a duty-free shop are free of duty and taxes only for the country in which that shop is located. So if your purchases exceed your personal exemption, items you bought in a duty-free shop, whether in the United States or abroad, will be subject to duty. Articles purchased in American duty-free shops are also subject to U.S. duty if you bring them into the United States. Therefore, if you buy liquor in a duty-free shop in New York before entering Canada and then bring it back into the United States, it may be subject to duty and Internal Revenue Service tax.

PROHIBITED AND RESTRICTED ITEMS

CBP has been entrusted with enforcing hundreds of laws for other government agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These agencies need to know what people bring into the United States, but they are not always at ports of entry, guarding our borders. CBP officers are always at ports of entry—their primary mission is to safeguard America's borders.

The products we need to prevent from entering the United States are those that would injure community health, public safety, American workers, children, or domestic plant and animal life, or those that would defeat our national political interests. Sometimes the products that cause injury, or have the potential to do so, may seem fairly innocent. But, as you will see from the material that follows, appearances can be deceiving.

Before you leave for your trip abroad, you might want to talk to CBP about the items you plan to bring back to be sure they're not prohibited or restricted. Prohibited means the item is forbidden by law to 34 enter the United States. Examples of prohibited items are dangerous toys, cars that don't protect their occupants in a crash, or illegal substances like absinthe and Rohypnol.

Restricted means that special licenses or permits are required from a federal agency before the item is allowed to enter the United States. Examples of restricted items include firearms, certain fruits, vegetables, and some animals.

Absinthe (Alcohol)

The importation of Absinthe and any other liquors or liqueurs that contain Artemisia absinthium is prohibited.

Automobiles

Automobiles imported into the United States must meet the fuel-emission requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the safety, bumper, and theft-prevention standards of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

Trying to import a car that doesn't meet all the requirements can be a frustrating experience for the following reasons. Almost all cars, vans, sport utility vehicles, and so on that are bought in foreign countries must be modified to meet American standards except most late model vehicles from Canada.

Passenger vehicles that are imported on the condition that they be modified must be exported or destroyed if they are not modified acceptably. Also under these circumstances, the vehicle could require a bond upon entry until the conditions for admission have been met. And even if the car does meet all federal standards, it might be subject to additional EPA requirements, depending on what countries it was driven in. You are strongly encouraged to contact EPA and DOT before importing a car. Information on importing vehicles can be obtained from visiting the Environmental Protection Agency web site at http://www.epa.gov/otaq/imports/factmtop.htm.

You may also find importation information from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance at http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov. Copies of the brochure Importing or Exporting a Car can be obtained by writing to:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
P.O. Box 7407
Washington, DC 20044
or visiting the CBP web site at www.cbp.gov

The EPA Automotive Imports Fact Manual can be obtained by writing to the:

Environmental Protection Agency,
Washington, DC 20460;
or by visiting www.epa.gov

Cars being brought into the United States temporarily, by nonresidents, (for less than one year) are exempt from these restrictions. It is illegal to bring a vehicle into the United States and sell it if it was not formally entered on a CBP Form 7501.

Biologicals

You may need a U.S. Department of Agriculture permit to import biological specimens including bacterial cultures, culture medium, excretions, fungi, arthropods, mollusks, tissues of livestock, birds, plants, viruses, vectors for research, biological or pharmaceutical use. For some permits you may have to contact the Centers for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov.

Ceramic Tableware

Although ceramic tableware is not prohibited or restricted, you should know that such tableware made in foreign countries may contain dangerous levels of lead in the glaze, which can seep into foods and beverages. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends that if you buy ceramic tableware abroad—especially in Mexico, China, Hong Kong, or 36 India—you have it tested for lead release when you return, or use it for decorative purposes only.

Cultural Artifacts and Cultural Property (Art/Artifacts)

Most countries have laws that protect their cultural property: art/artifacts/antiquities; archaeological and ethnological material are also terms that are used. Such laws include export controls and/or national ownership of cultural property. Even if purchased from a business in the country of origin or in another country, legal ownership of such artifacts may be in question if brought into the United States. Therefore, although they do not necessarily confer owner ship, you must have documents such as export permits and receipts when importing such items into the United States.

While foreign laws may not be enforceable in the United States, they can cause certain U.S. laws to be invoked. For example, under the U.S. National Stolen Property Act, one cannot have legal title to art/artifacts/ antiquities that were stolen—no matter how many times such items may have changed hands. Articles of stolen cultural property

from museums or from religious or secular public monuments originating in any of the countries party to the 1970 UNESCO Convention specifically may not be imported into the United States.

U.S. law may also restrict the importation of specific categories of art/artifacts/antiquities. For example, U.S. laws restrict the importation of:

- Any pre-Colombian monumental and architectural sculpture and murals from Central and South American countries;
- Native American artifacts from Canada; Mayan pre Colombian archaeological objects from Guatemala; pre Colombian archaeological objects from El Salvador and Peru; archaeological objects like terracotta statues) from Mali; Colonial period objects such as paintings and ritual objects from Peru;
- Byzantine period ritual and ecclesiastic objects such as icons from Cyprus; and
- Khmer stone archaeological sculpture from Cambodia.

Importation of items such as those listed above is permitted only when an export permit issued by the country of origin, where such items were first found accompanies them. Purveyors of such items have been known to offer phony export certificates.

As additional U.S. import restrictions may be imposed in response to requests from other countries, it is wise for prospective purchasers to visit the State Department cultural property web site. This web site also has images representative of the categories of cultural property for which there are specific U.S. import restrictions. Merchandise determined to be Iraqi cultural property or other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific and religious importance illegally removed from the Iraq National Museum, the National Library and other locations in Iraq, since August 6, 1990, are also prohibited from importation.

Dog and Cat Fur

It is illegal in the United States to import, export, distribute, transport, manufacture, or sell products containing dog or cat fur in the United States. As of November 9, 2000, the Dog and Cat Protection Act of 2000 calls for the seizure and forfeiture of each item containing dog or cat fur.

The Act provides that any person who violates any provision may be assessed a civil penalty of not more than $10,000 for each separate knowing and intentional violation, $5,000 for each separate gross negligent violation, or $3,000 for each separate negligent violation.

Drug Paraphernalia

It is illegal to bring drug paraphernalia into the United States unless they have been prescribed for authentic medical conditions such as diabetes. CBP will seize any illegal drug paraphernalia. Law prohibits the importation, exportation, manufacture, sale, or transportation of drug paraphernalia. If you are convicted of any of these offenses, you will be subject to fines and imprisonment.

Firearms

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) regulates and restricts firearms and ammunition; and approves all import transactions involving weapons and ammunition. If you want to import or export weapons or ammunition, you must do so through a licensed importer, dealer, or manufacturer. Also, if the National Firearms Act prohibits certain weapons ammunition, or similar devices from coming into the country, you will not be able to import them unless the ATF provides you with written authorization to do so. You do not need an ATF permit if you can demonstrate that you are returning with the same firearms or ammunition that you took out of the United States. To prevent problems when returning, you should register your firearms and related equipment by taking them to any CBP office before you leave the United States. The CBP officer will register them on the same CBP Form-4457 used to register cameras or computers. For further information about importing weapons, contact:

Chief, Firearms and Explosives Import Branch
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Washington, DC 20226
Visit www.atf.gov/firearms

Many countries will not allow you to enter with a firearm even if you are only traveling through the country on the way to your final destination. If you plan to take your firearms or ammunition to another country, you should contact officials at that country's embassy to learn about its regulations.

Fish and Wildlife

Certain fish and wildlife, and products made from them are subject to import and export restrictions, prohibitions, permits or certificates, and quarantine requirements. We recommend that you contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or look on their web site at http://www.fws.gov before you depart if you plan to import or export any of the following:

- Wild birds, land or marine mammals, reptiles, fish, shellfish, mollusks, or invertebrates.
- Any part or product of the above, such as skins, tusks, bone, feathers, or eggs.
- Products or articles manufactured from wildlife or fish.

Endangered species of wildlife, and products made from them, generally may not be imported or exported. You will need a permit from the FWS to import virtually all types of ivory, unless it is from a warthog. The FWS has many restrictions and prohibitions on various kinds of ivory—Asian elephant, African elephant, whale, rhinoceros, seal, pre-Endangered Species Act, post-CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), and many others—that they urge you to contact them before you even think of acquiring ivory in a foreign country. You may contact the Management Authority at 1.800.358.2104. Pressing Option 3 will provide you with general information, and Option 4 will connect you to the permits section. You may import an object made of ivory if it is an antique. To be an antique the ivory must be at least 40 100 years old. You will need documentation that authenticates the age of the ivory. You may import other antiques containing wildlife parts with the same condition, but they must be accompanied by documentation proving they are at least 100 years old. Certain other requirements for antiques may apply. If you plan to buy such things as tortoiseshell jewelry, or articles made from whalebone, ivory, skins, or fur, contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
Division of Law Enforcement,
P.O. Box 3247, Arlington, VA 22203-3247, or call
800.358.2104 or visit www.fws.gov

Hunters can get information on the limitations for importing and exporting migratory game birds from this office as well or from the FWS web site at http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/intrnltr/mbta/mbtintro.html.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated specific ports of entry to handle fish and wildlife entries. If you plan to import anything discussed in this section, please contact CBP. CBP will tell you about designated ports and send you the brochure Pets and Wildlife, which describes the regulations CBP enforces for all agencies that oversee the importation of animals. Some states have fish and wildlife laws and regulations that are stricter than federal laws and regulations.

If you are returning to such a state, be aware that the stricter state laws and regulations have priority. Similarly, the federal government does not allow you to import wild animals into the United States that were taken, killed, sold, possessed, or exported from another country if any of these acts violated foreign laws.

Food Products (Prepared)

You may bring bakery items and certain cheeses into the United States. The APHIS web site features a Travelers Tips section and Game and Hunting Trophies section that offers extensive information about bringing food and other products into the country. Many prepared foods are admissible. However, almost anything containing meat products, such as bouillon, soup mixes, etc., is not admissible. As a general rule, condiments, vinegars, oils, packaged spices, honey, coffee and tea are admissible. Because rice can often harbor insects, it is best to avoid bringing it into the United States. Some imported foods are also subject to requirements of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Prior Notice for Food Importation

The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (Bioterrorism Act or BTA), Public Law 107-188, established the requirement that food items, imported (or offered for import) for commercial use, including hand-carried quantities, be properly reported to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prior to arrival of those items in the United States. The FDA prior notification timeframes (by transport mode) are two hours by land, four hours by rail or air, eight hours by vessel and prior to the "time of mailing" for international mail.

Food that was made by an individual in his/her personal residence, or food purchased by an individual from a vendor that is sent by that individual as a personal gift (for non-business reasons) to someone in the United States is not subject to BTA requirements. However, food that is sent to an individual in the United States by a business is subject to special requirements of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. For instance, if you go to a food shop in England and buy a gift basket, then take it to the post office or a courier service to send to a friend, the shipment is not subject to BTA requirements. But if you go to that same shop and ask them to send the gift basket for you, the shipment is subject to BTA requirements, and the vendor will have to file Prior Notice. Many travelers are finding that vendors will not ship food directly to U.S. residents because the reporting requirements can be time-consuming to complete.

In general, failure to provide complete, timely and accurate prior notice for BTA regulated items, can result in refusal of admission of the merchandise, movement of the goods to an FDA registered facility (at importer expense) and/or civil monetary penalty liabilities for any party that was involved in the import transaction. For full details regarding the latest FDA BTA requirements, including those food items exempt from these requirements, access the FDA web site at www.fda.gov/oc/bioterrorism/bioact.html.

Fruits and Vegetables

Bringing fruits and vegetables can be complicated. For instance, consider the apple you bought in the foreign airport just before boarding and then did not eat? Whether or not CBP will allow the apple into the United States depends on where you got it and where you are going after you arrive in the United States. The same would be true for those magnificent Mediterranean tomatoes. Fresh fruits and vegetables can carry plant pests or diseases into the United States. One good example of problems imported fruits and vegetables can cause is the Mediterranean fruit fly outbreak during the 1980s. The outbreak cost the state of California and the Federal Government approximately

$100 million to get rid of this pest. The cause of the outbreak was one traveler who brought home one contaminated piece of fruit. It is best not to bring fresh fruits or vegetables into the United States. However, if you plan to, contact either CBP or check the Permits section on the USDA-APHIS web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits/plantproducts/index.html for a general approved list on items that need a permit.

NOTE: The civil penalty for failing to declare agricultural items at U.S. ports of entry will cost first time offenders $300. The penalty for the second violation goes up to $500. The key to avoiding the penalty is to declare all agricultural items and present them to Customs and Border Protection for inspection so that an agriculture specialist can determine if it is admissible or not.

Game and Hunting Trophies

Information on bringing back your game or a hunting trophy can be found at http://www.fws.gov. Currently, 14 ports of entry are designated to handle game and trophies; other ports must get approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to clear your entry. Depending on the species you bring back, you might need a permit from the country where the animal was harvested.

Regardless of the species, you are required to fill out a Fish and Wildlife Form 3-177, Declaration for Importation or Exportation. That form can be found at http://www.fws.gov/le/pdffiles/3-17-2.pdf Trophies may also be subject to inspection by CBP for sanitary purposes. General guidelines for importing trophies can be found on APHIS web site under the APHIS Import Authorization System (IAS) at http:// www.aphis.usda.gov; or by writing to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
APHIS, VS, NCIE Products Program
4700 River Road, Unit 40
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231
By calling 301.734.3277

Also, federal regulations do not allow the importation of any species into a state with fish or wildlife laws that are more restrictive than federal laws. If foreign laws were violated in the taking, sale, possession, or export to the United States of wild animals, those animals will not be allowed entry into the United States.

Warning: There are many regulations, enforced by various agencies, governing the importation of animals and animal parts. Failure to comply with them could result in time-consuming delays in clearing your trophy through CBP. You should always call for guidance before you depart.

Gold

Gold coins, medals, and bullion, formerly prohibited, may be brought into the United States. However, under regulations administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control, such items originating in or brought from Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Serbia, and Sudan are prohibited entry. Copies of gold coins are prohibited if not properly marked by country of issuance.

Meats, Livestock, and Poultry

The regulations governing meat and meat products are very strict. You may not import fresh, dried, or canned meats or meat products from most foreign countries into the United States. Also, you may not import food products that have been prepared with meat.

The regulations on importing meat and meat products change frequently because they are based on disease outbreaks in different areas of the world. APHIS, which regulates meats and meat products as well as fruits and vegetables, invites you to contact them for more information on importing meats. A list of countries and/or regions with specific livestock or poultry diseases can be found at http://www.aphis.usda.gov.

Medication

Rule of thumb: When you go abroad, take the medicines you will need, no more, no less. Narcotics and certain other drugs with a high potential for abuse— Rohypnol, GHB, and Fen-Phen, to name a few—may not be brought into the United States, and there are severe penalties for trying to do so. If you need medicines that contain potentially addictive drugs or narcotics (e.g., some cough medicines, tranquilizers, sleeping pills, antidepressants, or stimulants), do the following:

- Declare all drugs, medicinals, and similar products to the appropriate CBP official.
- Carry such substances in their original containers.
- Carry only the quantity of such substances that a person with that condition (e.g., chronic pain) would normally carry for his/her personal use.
- Carry a prescription or written statement from your physician that the substances are being used under a doctor's supervision and that they are necessary for your physical well being while traveling.

U.S. residents entering the United States at international land borders, who are carrying a validly obtained controlled substance (other than narcotics such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, or LSD), are subject to certain additional requirements. If a U.S. resident wants to bring in a controlled substance (other than narcotics such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin, or LSD) but does not have a prescription for the substance issued by a U.S.-licensed practitioner (e.g., physician, dentist, etc.) who is registered with, and authorized by, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to prescribe the medication, the individual may not import more than 50 dosage units of the medication into

the United States. If the U.S. resident has a prescription for the controlled substance issued by a DEA registrant, more than 50 dosage units may be imported by that person, provided all other legal requirements are met. Please note that only medications that can be legally prescribed in the United States may be imported for personal use. Be aware that possession of certain substances may also violate state laws. As a general rule, the FDA does not allow the importation of prescription drugs that were purchased outside the United States.

Warning: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prohibits the importation, by mail or in person, of fraudulent prescription and nonprescription drugs and medical devices. These include unorthodox "cures" for such medical conditions as cancer, AIDS, arthritis, or multiple sclerosis. Although such drugs or devices may be legal elsewhere, if the FDA has not 46 approved them for use in the United States, they may not legally enter the country and will be confiscated, even if they were obtained under a foreign physician's prescription.

Additional information about traveling with and importing medication can be found at http://www.fda.gov/ora/import/traveler_alert.htm.

Merchandise from Embargoed Countries

Generally, you may not bring in any goods from the following countries: Cuba, Iran*, Iraq*, North Korea*, Burma (Myanmar), Angola, Liberia and Sudan. Travelers are not allowed to bring diamonds from Sierra Leone into the United States that are not accompanied by a Certificate of Origin from the government of Sierra Leone or other documentation that satisfies CBP that these diamonds were exported with the approval of the government of Sierra Leone. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of Treasury enforces these bans.

- The embargo on Iranian goods has been revised to allow the importation of food stuffs intended for human consumption, carpets and other textile floor coverings. Please check with your local port for further details.

- Only certain Iraqi cultural property or other items of archaeological, historical/cultural, rare scientific and religious importance illegally removed from the Iraq National Museum, the National Library and other locations in Iraq is prohibited.

- The importation of merchandise from North Korea requires a letter of approval issued by the OFAC. You may, however, bring in information and informational materials—books, magazines, films, posters, photographs, microfilms, tapes, CDs, records, works of art, etc. Blank tapes and blank CDs are not informational materials.

If you want to import merchandise from any of these countries, you will first need a specific license from the Office of Foreign Assets Control. Such licenses are rarely granted. There are strictly enforced restrictions on travel to these countries. Therefore, before making plans to visit any of the countries on this list, you should visit the OFAC web site at www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs.

Pets

If you plan to take your pet abroad or import one on your return, please get a copy of the CBP brochure Pets and Wildlife. You should also check with state, county, and local authorities to learn if their restrictions and prohibitions on pets are stricter than federal requirements. Importing animals is closely regulated for public health reasons and also for the well being of the animals. There are restrictions and prohibitions on bringing many species into the United States. Cats must be free of evidence of diseases communicable to humans when they are examined at the port of entry. If the cat does not seem to be in good health, the owner may have to pay for an additional examination by a licensed veterinarian. As a rule, both cats and dogs must be free of fleas and ticks, and have a health certificate that was issued by the country of residence.

Dogs must also be free of evidence of diseases that could be communicable to humans. Puppies must be confined at a place of the owner's choosing, which can be a private residence, until they are three months old and then they must be vaccinated against rabies. The puppy will then have to stay in confinement for another 30 days following the vaccination. Dogs older than three months that have never been vaccinated for rabies must get a rabies vaccination at least 30 days before they come to the United States 48 and must be accompanied by a valid rabies vaccination certificate if coming from a country that is not rabies free.

This certificate should identify the dog, show the date of vaccination, the date it expires (there are one-year and three-year vaccinations), and be signed by a licensed veterinarian. If the certificate does not have an expiration date, CBP will accept it as long as the dog was vaccinated 12 months or less before coming to the United States. Dogs coming from rabies free countries do not have to be vaccinated. Birds may be imported as pets as long as you comply with APHIS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife requirements.

ADVISORY: Until further notice, there is a temporary ban on the importation of pet birds from Afghanistan, Albania, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Cambodia, Cameroon, Denmark (Funen County ONLY), Djibouti, France (VS defined restricted zone ONLY), Germany (Kreis of Muldental, Kreis of Torgue-Oschatz, and Kreis of Döbeln ONLY), Hungary (Bacs-Kiskun and Csongrad counties ONLY), India, Indonesia, Israel, Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), Japan, Jordan, Laos, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Peoples' Republic of China, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Sudan, Sweden (Kalmar county ONLY), Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine,

United Kingdom (counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, England), and Vietnam.

All non-U.S. origin pet birds imported into the United States (except from Canada) are required to be quarantined for 30 days in a USDA animal import quarantine facility at the owner's expense. A reservation at the facility must be made in advance by contacting the USDA port veterinarian at one of the special ports-of-entry listed below. A cost estimate for the quarantine will be provided at that time.

Once the reservation is made and payment is received in full for all quarantine services, the animal import quarantine facility will issue a USDA import permit (VS Form17-129). This permit must accompany the bird while in transit. The USDA defines pet birds as those that are imported for personal pleasure of their individual owners and are not intended for resale.

Document and Quarantine Requirements

- USDA import permit (VS Form17-129)
- Current Health Certificate issued by a full-time salaried veterinarian of the agency responsible for animal health of the national government in the exporting country of origin
- 30-day Quarantine in an USDA Animal Import Center
- Fish and Wildlife Services Certification (if necessary)

USDA Quarantine Centers and Ports of Entry

All non-U.S. origin pet birds must enter the country and undergo quarantine at one of the following import quarantine facilities.

These are the only ports of entry available for importing non- U.S. origin pet birds.

New York, New York
230-59 Rockaway Blvd.
Suite 101
Jamaica, NY 11413
Telephone (718) 553-1727
Fax (718) 553-7543

Miami Animal Import Center
USDA-APHIS-VS
6300 NW 36 Street
Miami, FL 33122
Telephone (305) 526-2926
Fax (305) 526-2929

Los Angeles, California
Los Angeles International Airport
11850 South La Cienega Blvd.
Hawthorne, CA 90250
Telephone (310) 725-1970
50 Fax (310) 725-9119

For additional information visit the APHIS web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/subjects/animal_health/index.shtml.

Other common pets such as rabbits, ferrets, hamsters, gerbils, and guinea pigs may be imported if they are in good health. The importation of reptiles and invertebrates is restricted; please contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for additional guidance. Most species of snails are not admissible. Contact APHIS for additional information.

Plants and seeds

Some plants, cuttings, seeds that are capable of propagation, unprocessed plant products, and certain endangered species are allowed into the United States but require import permits; some are prohibited entirely. Threatened or endangered species that are permitted must have export permits from the country of origin. Every single plant or plant product including handicraft items made with straw, must be declared to the CBP officer and must be presented for CBP inspection, no matter how free of pests it appears to be. For information on importing plants or plant products visit the APHIS web site at http://www.aphis.usda.gov.

Soil

Soil is considered the loose surface material of the earth in which plants, trees, and scrubs grow. In most cases, the soil consists of disintegrated rock with an admixture of organic material and soluble salts. Soil is prohibited entry unless accompanied by an import permit. Soil must be declared and the permit must be verified.

Textiles and Clothing

In general, there is no limit to how much fabric and clothing you can bring back as long as it is for your personal use or as gifts. If you have exceeded your personal exemption, you may have to pay duty on the items. Unaccompanied personal shipments (packages that are mailed or shipped), however, may be subject to limitations on amount.

On January 1, 2005, quotas for all countries that are part of the World Trade Organization (WTO) were eliminated. There are still some countries, like Vietnam, that are not part of the WTO that have quotas in place for commercial shipments. These countries may require an additional document called a “visa” accompany the shipment. China could have limits on particular garments called “safeguards.” It is recommended that you contact a CBP import specialist in your area or at the port where you plan to import to determine what countries are subject to quotas and what products from China are subject to safeguards.

There may be additional documentation required for textiles from other countries such as the African countries that require a visa to be placed on a commercial invoice in

order to get duty-free treatment. There may also be a certificate of eligibility document requirement to get duty-free treatment under many of the free trade agreements that are negotiated between the United States and the foreign government. These are not admissibility documents, but allow you to import your garments duty-free, provided certain conditions are met.

Trademarked and Copyrighted Articles

CBP enforces laws relating to the protection of trademarks and copyrights. Articles that infringe a federally registered trademark or copyright or copyright protected by the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works are subject to detention and/or seizure. Infringing articles may consist of articles that use a protected right without the authorization of the trademark or copyright owner or articles that copy or simulate a protected right. Articles bearing marks that are counterfeit or inappropriately using a federally registered trademark are subject to seizure and forfeiture. The importation of 52 articles intended for sale or public distribution bearing counterfeit marks may subject an individual to a civil fine if the registered trademark has also been recorded with CBP. Articles bearing marks that are confusingly similar to a CBP recorded registered trademark, and restricted gray market articles (goods bearing genuine marks not intended for U.S. importation for which CBP granted gray market protection) are subject to detention and seizure.

However, travelers arriving in the United States may be permitted an exemption and allowed to import one article of each type, which must accompany the person, bearing a counterfeit, confusingly similar or restricted gray market trademark, provided that the article is for personal use and is not for sale. This exemption may be granted not more than once every 30 days. The arriving passenger may retain one article of each type accompanying the person. For example, an arriving person who has three purses, whether each bears a different infringing trademark, or whether all three bear the same infringing trademark, is permitted only one purse. If the article imported under the personal exemption provision is sold within one year after the date of importation, the article or its value is subject to forfeiture. In regard to copyright infringement, articles that are determined by CBP to be clearly piratical of a protected copyright, i.e., unauthorized articles that are substantially similar to a material protected by a copyright, are subject to seizure. A personal use exemption for articles, similar to that described above also applies to copyrighted articles for the personal, noncommercial use of the importer and are not for sale or distribution.

You may bring back genuine trademarked and copyrighted articles (subject to duties). Products subject to copyright protection most commonly imported include software on CD-ROMs, sound recordings, toys, stuffed animals, clothing with cartoon characters, videotapes, DVDs, music CDs, and books. Products subject to trademark protection most commonly imported include handbags and accessories, and clothing.

Money And Other Monetary Instruments

You may bring into or take out of the country, including by mail, as much money as you wish. However, if it is more than $10,000, you will need to report it to CBP. Ask the CBP officer for the Currency Reporting Form (FinCen 105). The penalties for non-compliance can be severe. "Money" means monetary instruments and includes U.S. or foreign coins currently in circulation, currency, travelers' checks in any form, money orders, and negotiable instruments or investment securities in bearer form.

Photographic Film

CBP will not examine film you bought abroad and are bringing back unless the CBP officer has reason to believe it contains prohibited material, such as child pornography. You will not be charged duty on film bought in the United States and exposed abroad, whether it is developed or not. But film you bought and developed abroad counts as a dutiable item.

CBP's Pledge To Travelers

- We pledge to cordially greet and welcome you to the United States.
- We pledge to treat you with courtesy, dignity, and respect.
- We pledge to explain the CBP process to you.
- We pledge to have a supervisor listen to your comments.
- We pledge to accept and respond to your comments in written, verbal, or electronic form.
- We pledge to provide reasonable assistance due to delay or disability.

If you have a concern or need help understanding CBP regulations and procedures, ask to speak with the supervisor on duty.

If you have any questions about CBP procedures, requirements, or policies regarding travelers, or if you have any complaints about treatment you received from CBP officers or about your CBP processing, please write to:

Customer Service Center
Office of Public Affairs, Room 3.4-A
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229
Or call 1.877.CBP.5511 (1.877.227.5511)

Allegations of criminal or serious misconduct may be reported to the Joint Intake Center by telephone at 1.877.2INTAKE (1.877.246.8253), by email to Joint.Intake@dhs.gov, by fax to 202.344.3390, or by mail to:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
P.O. Box 14475
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20044

DHS TRAVELER REDRESS INQUIRY PROGRAM

The Department of Homeland Security's Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) provides a single point of contact for individuals who have inquiries or seek resolution regarding difficulties they experienced during their travel screening at airports or train stations or crossing U.S. borders, including:

- Denied or delayed airline boarding;
- Denied or delayed entry into and exit from the United States at a port of entry; or
- Continuously referred to secondary screening.

You will be asked to describe your concerns and experience, provide contact information and be assigned a case number to help you monitor the progress of your inquiry.

After filing online, you will be asked to provide supporting documentation within 30 days. DHS TRIP will process your request after the supporting paperwork is received. You may check the status of your request at any time through the DHS TRIP web site at www.dhs.gov/trip.

OTHER TRAVEL-RELATED INFORMATION

Planning for healthy travel: International travelers can take a number of simple steps to avoid potential health problems before and during travel. Contact your physician, local health department, or private or public agencies that advise international travelers at least 4 to 6 weeks before departure to schedule an appointment to receive current health information on the countries you plan to visit, obtain vaccinations and prophylactic medications as indicated, and address any special needs.

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be found at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm.

Animals are also susceptible to contracting diseases that were brought back to the United States by unknowing international travelers: diseases such as Exotic Newcastle Disease and Avian Influenza that can decimate local poultry populations; Swine Flu, Hoof and Mouth disease and other animal diseases. Passports are issued by the U.S. Department of State Passport Agency.

Please contact the Passport Agency nearest you for more information. Postal clerks also accept passport applications. Additional information can be found at www.travel.state.gov.

Baggage allowance: Ask the airline or steamship line on which you are traveling for more information. 56 Contact the Transportation Security Administration at www.tsa.gov for a list of prohibited and permitted items.

Currency of other nations: Your local bank can be of assistance. Foreign countries: For information about the country you will visit or about what articles may be imported or brought into that country, contact that country's embassy, consular office, or tourist information office.

Helpful Web Sites

U.S. Department of Homeland Security—www.dhs.gov

DHS TRIP—www.dhs.gov/trip

U.S. Customs and Border Protection—www.cbp.gov

Transportation Security Administration—www.tsa.gov

U.S. Customs and Immigration Services I-551, Permanent Resident Card ("Green Card")—www.uscis.gov/graphics/services/residency/index.htm

U.S. State Department Passports—travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

Visas—travel.state.gov/visa/visa_17 50.html

Visa Waiver Program—www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html

United States Department of Agriculture/APHIS

Birds—www.aphis.usda.gov/subjects/animal_health/index.shtml

Plants and seeds—www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/permits/plantproducts.index.html

Importation of hunting trophies—www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/downloads/import_rum_trophy.pdf

List of countries and/or regions with specific livestock or poultry diseases—www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/animal_disease_status.shtml

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Permits—www.fws.gov/permits

Lists of animals needing import permits—www.fws.gov/permits/SpeciesLists/SpeciesLists.shtml

Importing game birds—www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/intrnltr/mbta/mbtintro.html

Hunting trophies—www.fws.gov/le/HuntFish/HuntFishInfo.htm

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives—www.atf.gov/firearms/index.htm

Department of Commerce—www.commerce.gov

Environmental Protection Agency—www.epa.gov

Importing a vehicle—http://www.epa.gov/otaq/imports/factmtop.htm.

U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance—www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/import/FAQ%20Site/pages/page2.html

Food and Drug Administration

- Food items exempt from bioterrorism requirements—www.fda.gov/oc/bioterrorism/bioact.html
- Medications—http://www.fda.gov/ora/import/traveler_alert.htm

OFAC Country Sanctions—http://www.treas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/programs

Centers for Disease Control and Protection, Traveler Health—http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Know Before You Go—Security Measures

Editor's note: The information below was posted on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection web site (www.customs.gov) as of January 2009 and has been condensed by the editors for publication in book format. Readers should consult www.customs.gov for additional information, updates, or revisions.

ADVANCE PASSENGER INFORMATION SYSTEM (APIS)

Overview

A new predeparture Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) requirement allows the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to review passenger information prior to boarding for commercial flights arriving into or departing from the United States and for commercial vessels destined for or departing the United States.

Purpose

The advance transmission of this information, coupled with Passenger Name Record (PNR) data, will provide DHS the ability to identify potential threats and coordinate with carriers and foreign law enforcement to prevent the boarding of a person of interest.

APIS

The Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) is a widely used electronic data interchange system that allows carriers to transmit traveler data to CBP. APIS data includes passenger information that would be found on the face of a passport, such as full name, gender, and country of passport issuance. The current APIS requirements were established in April, 2005, with the publication of the APIS Final Rule. The APIS program is recognized by commercial carriers and the international community as the standard for passenger processing and enhanced security in the commercial air and vessel environment. During Fiscal Year 2006, CBP processed a record 87 million passengers arriving from abroad by air.

Transmission

Air carriers may transmit predeparture APIS information either:

- Using the APIS Batch Transmission, in interactive or non-interactive form, that requires air carriers to transmit the complete manifest for all passengers 30 minutes prior to departure.
- Using the APIS Quick Query mode that allows air carriers to transmit in real time as each passenger checks in for the flight prior to boarding.

Under both options, the carrier will not permit the boarding of a passenger unless the passenger has been cleared by CBP. For vessels departing from foreign ports bound for the U.S., current requirements to transmit passenger and crew arrival manifest data between 24 to 96 hours prior to arrival will remain unchanged, but requires vessel carriers to transmit APIS data 60 minutes prior to departure from the United States.

History

Prior to 9/11, the U.S. Customs Service, now part of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) received advance passenger information from air carriers on a voluntary basis. APIS requirements were first implemented under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) of 2001 and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Reform Act of 2002. As a result of 9/11 Commission recommendations, Congress mandated that DHS establish a requirement to receive advance information on international passengers traveling by air and sea, prior to their departure in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA).

What's New

CBP already requires the transmission of APIS data for commercial carriers arriving in or departing from the United States. The announcement of a predeparture requirement simply changes the time within which the APIS data must be transmitted. There is also a new benchmark definition, for the air environment. In addition, the definition of departure is being clarified. It no longer means "push-back" from the gate and now is "securing of the aircraft doors."

Privacy

Extensive discussions have been conducted between CBP and air and vessel carriers to identify best practices, ensure both carrier and CBP systems are communicating properly, and to ensure the highest level of privacy protection.

CBP AUTHORITY

A U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer's border search authority is derived through 19 U.S.C. 1467 and 19 C.F.R. 162.6, which states that, "All persons, baggage and merchandise arriving in the Customs territory of the United States from places outside thereof are liable to inspection by a CBP officer." Unless exempt by diplomatic status, all travelers entering the United States, including U.S. citizens, are required to participate in CBP processing. It is not the intent of CBP to subject travelers to unwarranted scrutiny. The CBP inspection procedures are designed to facilitate the entry of U.S. citizens and aliens who can readily establish their admissibility. CBP officers must determine the nationality of each applicant for admission and, if determined to be an alien, whether or not the applicant meets the requirements of the Immigration and Nationality Act for admission to the United States. CBP officers may, unfortunately, inconvenience law-abiding citizens in order to detect those involved in illicit activities. They are especially aware of how inconvenient and stressful the inspection process may be to those selected for inspection. In such cases they rely heavily on the patience, understanding, and cooperation of the traveler.

Speaking with travelers and closely examining their documentation are some of the ways CBP officers look for mala fide or improperly documented travelers. CBP relies upon the judgment of individual CBP officers to use their discretion as to the extent of examination necessary. However, CBP officers are expected to conduct their duties in a professional manner and to treat each traveler with dignity and respect.

CBP Officers use diverse factors to refer individuals for targeted examinations and there are instances when our best judgements prove to be unfounded. Although CBP does use information from various systems and specific techniques for selecting passengers for targeted examinations, a component of our risk management practices is the use of a completely random referral for a percentage of travelers.

Many travelers wonder if CBP is alerted when an inbound passenger has a warrant for their arrest issued. Yes, CBP is alerted. In the air passenger environment, air carriers transmit passenger information to CBP through the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS). CBP officers also rely on the Interagency Border Inspection System (IBIS) to determine which individuals to target for secondary examination upon arrival in the United States.

CBP, along with law enforcement and regulatory personnel from 20 other Federal agencies or bureaus, use IBIS. Some of these agencies are the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Interpol, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives, the Internal Revenue Service, the Coast Guard, the Federal Aviation Administration, Secret Service, and the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. Information from IBIS is also shared with the Department of State for use by Consular Officers at U.S. Embassies and Consulates.

IBIS assists the majority of the traveling public with expeditious clearance at ports of entry while allowing the border enforcement agencies to focus their limited resources on potential non-compliant travelers. IBIS provides the law enforcement community with access to computer-based enforcement files of common interest. It also provides access to the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and allows its users to interface with all 50 states via the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications Systems.

IBIS resides on the Treasury Enforcement Communications System at the CBP Data Center. Field level access is provided by an IBIS network with more than 24,000 computer terminals. These terminals are located at air, land, and sea ports of entry.

IBIS keeps track of information on suspected individuals, businesses, vehicles, aircraft, and vessels. IBIS terminals can also be used to access NCIC records on wanted persons, stolen vehicles, vessels or firearms, license information, criminal histories, and previous Federal inspections. The information is used to assist law enforcement and regulatory personnel.

CBP has the authority to collect passenger name record information on all travelers entering or leaving the United States. This information is strictly used for preventing and combating terrorism and serious criminal offenses with the principal purpose of facilitating the CBP mission to protect our Nation's borders through threat analysis to identify and interdict persons who have already committed or may potentially commit a terrorist act in the future. Should CBP determine that an error exists within our system of records, corrective measures will be taken.

THE CBP TRAVELER INSPECTION

Introduction

When a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer stops a traveler for a closer inspection, it does not necessarily mean that the traveler is suspected of any wrongdoing. In addition to enforcing homeland security related laws, CBP enforces hundreds of laws for other federal agencies. Only a very small percentage of passengers smuggle drugs and other prohibited items into the United States of America. CBP is faced with the challenge of finding these few people among the millions of honest travelers entering the country. Through its enforcement examinations, CBP has seized tons of illegal items at airports, seaports, and land borders. This contraband would otherwise have ended up in local communities or affected America's agriculture.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Mission Statement

We are the guardians of our Nation's borders. We are America's front line. We safeguard the American homeland at and beyond our borders. We protect the American public against terrorists and the instruments of terror. We steadfastly enforce the laws of the United States while fostering our Nation's economic security through lawful international trade and travel. We serve the American public with vigilance, integrity and professionalism.

Title 19, Section 1582 of the U.S. Code authorizes U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers and agriculture specialists to search, inspect and/or examine all persons, luggage and merchandise coming from a carrier arriving in the United States from a foreign destination.

Inbound Examinations

There are two types of inspections that you may be selected for; one when you enter the country and the other is when you leave. The purpose of the inspection upon entry to the United States is to verify the information on the CBP declaration, which has been completed by you, the arriving international traveler, and to address any possible issues arising from it.

CBP is also responsible for apprehending individuals attempting to enter the United States illegally, stemming the flow of illegal drugs and other contraband; protecting our agricultural and economic interests from harmful pests and diseases; protecting American businesses from theft of their intellectual property; and regulating and facilitating international trade, collecting import duties, and enforcing U.S. trade laws.

CBP officers are also looking for a possible terrorist, terrorist weapons, or narcotics when they choose passengers for examination. This may result in having to undergo a personal search. However, there are many other reasons for a traveler to be referred for a secondary examination.

For example, CBP officers may determine if:

- You owe customs duty or other taxes;
- You have merchandise that you did not declare on your declaration;
- You have commercial merchandise;
- You have merchandise that may be considered prohibited or restricted.

Outbound Examinations

The purpose of an inspection before leaving the United States is to inform passengers of their legal responsibility to file a Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) Form 105 when traveling with currency, or other monetary instruments in excess of $10,000 out of the United States.

CBP officers may choose passengers for an inspection for a variety of reasons and this may result in having to undergo a personal search. If selected for a personal search, your cooperation and understanding will be greatly appreciated.

Why aren't all passengers inspected?

Although CBP officers have the authority under federal statutes to inspect everyone and everything entering or leaving the United States, there are two reasons why they do not. Most passengers are law-abiding travelers. CBP officers use random inspections to concentrate on finding those few passengers who are not obeying the law.

Personal Search—What to expect during CBP examination

If you are selected for a personal search, there are a few things you need to know. You may not be searched on any discriminatory basis (e.g. race, gender, religion, ethnic background). A search based on consideration of citizenship or travel itinerary that includes a narcotics source or transit country is not discriminatory.

You should be treated in a courteous, professional, and dignified manner. You will receive an explanation of the examination process as it occurs. Unless probable cause has been developed, you can request that CBP notify someone of your delay if you are detained more than two hours after the personal search has begun.

What can I do if I think the examination was not conducted in a professional manner?

If you feel that the examination was not conducted in a professional manner, ask to speak with a CBP supervisor immediately. A CBP supervisor is always available at the facility or by telephone. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that CBP officers treat all persons with dignity and that they behave in a professional manner. The CBP processing facility you are in may also employ a CBP Passenger Service Representative (PSR). The PSR is a supervisor specifically trained to handle any concerns or questions you may have. If you have any additional comments or questions, U.S. Customs and Border Protection wants to hear from you. You may write or call directly to CBP Headquarters at:

Customer Service Center
Office of Public Affairs
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20229
1-877-CBP-5511
You will receive a written response in a timely manner.

If you provide your daytime phone number, CBP will contact you directly by telephone. You may also get information and provide feedback through the CBP Web site at www.cbp.gov.

Random Exams

One of CBP missions is to ensure that travelers entering the United States comply with U.S. laws. In support of this mission, CBP conducts random compliance examinations (COMPEX). Essentially, COMPEX examinations involve random selection of vehicles and/or air passengers that ordinarily would not be selected for an intensive examination. By combining the results of these examinations with the results of targeted examinations, CBP is able to estimate the total number of violations being committed by the international traveling public.

When CBP compares the results of the two types of examinations, we are better able to devise enforcement techniques that prevent the entry of contraband without creating undue delay of law abiding travelers. Often trends tell us what message we need to send to ensure informed compliance by travelers who were unaware of our requirements.

It is possible that, upon your entry into the United States from a foreign country, you may be selected for a COMPEX examination and experience a slight delay in your Customs processing. CBP believes that this compliance examination is a critical component of our ability to ensure that our processing procedures are effective. We apologize for any delay or inconvenience you may experience and appreciate your cooperation.

CDC Health Information for International Travelers
Geographic Distribution of Potential Health Hazards

Editor's note: The following information is not a complete medical guide for travelers. Consult with your doctor for specific information related to your needs and your medical history; recommendations may differ for pregnant women, young children, and persons who have chronic medical conditions. Be sure to read the information about all the regions you are planning to visit. The information presented in this section was condensed from the CDC's *Health Information for International Travelers 2008*, commonly referred to as the Yellow Book. For complete travel health information view CDC's website on the Internet at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel or call CDC's toll free voice information system at 1-877-394-8747.

NORTH AFRICA

Countries: Algeria, Canary Islands, Egypt, Libya, Madeira Islands, Morocco, Tunisia, Western Sahara

Access to clean water and sanitary disposal of waste are limited in many areas, so infections related to fecal contamination of food and water remain common and widespread. Vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, and diphtheria persist in the region. More common infections in returned travelers are gastrointestinal: diarrhea (acute and chronic) and occasionally typhoid fever, amebiasis, and brucellosis. Chronic and latent infections in immigrants (and long-term residents) from this region include tuberculosis, schistosomiasis, fascioliasis, hepatitis B and C, intestinal parasites, and echinococcosis.

Vector-borne infections: Many have focal distributions or seasonal patterns. Risk to the usual traveler is low. Vector-borne infections in parts of the region include dengue fever, lymphatic filariasis (especially in the Nile Delta), leishmaniasis (cutaneous and visceral), malaria (risk limited to a few areas), relapsing fever, Rift Valley fever, sand fly fever, Sindbis virus infection, West Nile fever (especially in Egypt), Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, spotted fever due to Rickettsia conorii, and murine typhus.

Food- and water-borne infections: These infections, which are common in travelers to this region, include dysentery and diarrhea caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Risk for hepatitis A is high throughout the region. Hepatitis E and cholera have caused focal outbreaks, and indigenous wild polio was still present in Egypt in 2005. Other risks include typhoid fever, brucellosis, amebiasis, and fascioliasis (rare in visitors to the area). Intestinal helminths are common in some local populations but rare in short-term travelers.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The annual incidence of tuberculosis is estimated to be 50-100/100,000 or lower in most countries in the region. Q fever is widespread in livestock-raising areas.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: HIV prevalence (in adults 15-49 years) is estimated to be 0.1%-,0.5% or lower. Chancroid is a common cause of genital ulcers. Prevalence of chronic hepatitis B carriage is estimated to be 2%-7% in the region; hepatitis C prevalence exceeds 15% in Egypt.

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is endemic in the region. Sporadic cases of human plague are reported, and an outbreak occurred in Algeria in 2003. Sporadic cases and outbreaks of anthrax occur in the region. Avian influenza (H5N1) was found in poultry in 2006; human cases and deaths were reported in Egypt in 2006.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Schistosomiasis is present, especially in the Nile Delta and Valley; it is found focally in other countries. Other risks include leptospirosis.

Other hazards: Scorpion stings, snake bites, and a high rate of motor-vehicle accidents and violent injuries occur. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

CENTRAL, EAST, AND WEST AFRICA

Central Africa: Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sudan, Zambia

East Africa: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Réunion, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda

West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, São Tomé and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

Vector-borne infections are common and widespread and pose a major risk to local residents and travelers. Access to clean water and sanitary disposal of waste are limited in many areas, so infections related to fecal contamination of food and water remain common and widespread. Vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella,

poliomyelitis, and diphtheria persist in the region. The most common cause of systemic febrile illness in travelers to this region is malaria caused by Plasmodium falciparum. Subacute or chronic infections in immigrants (and long-term residents) from the area include tuberculosis, hepatitis B, HIV, lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, loiasis, schistosomiasis, echinococcosis, leprosy, and intestinal parasites.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria transmission is intense in many parts of the region, including urban areas, where falciparum malaria, much of it resistant to chloroquine, predominates. Sporadic cases and outbreaks of yellow fever have occurred in at least 18 of the countries (especially in West Africa) since 2000; outbreaks were reported in 2005 from Guinea, the Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone. All countries in the region are considered to be in the endemic zone, and unvaccinated travelers are at risk for infection. Official reports of yellow fever reflect only a small percentage of all infections. African trypanosomiasis has increased in Africa (it is epidemic in Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Sudan; and highly endemic in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mozambique, Uganda, and Tanzania; low levels are found in most of the other countries), and an increase in travelers has been noted since 2000. Most had exposures in Tanzania and Kenya, reflecting common tourist routes. Trypanosoma brucei gambiense is found in focal areas of west-ern and central Africa; T. b. rhodesiense, which causes more acute illness, is found in east Africa. Vector-borne viral infections include dengue fever, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, Rift Valley fever, West Nile fever, chikungunya fever, and O'nyong nyong fever. Lymphatic filariasis is present in many areas; onchocerciasis is widely distributed around river systems, especially in West and Central Africa and as far east as Ethiopia. Another filarial infection, loiasis, is widely distributed in the tropical rain forest, especially in Central and West Africa. Filarial infections are rare in short-term travelers.

The rickettsial infections murine typhus, louse-borne typhus, and African tick bite fever (due to Rickettsia africae) occur in the region. African tick-bite fever has been increasingly recognized in travelers to rural areas. Murine typhus is more common in coastal areas. Tungiasis (penetration of the skin by sand fleas) is widespread in tropical Africa, especially West Africa, including Madagascar.

In 2005-2006, massive outbreaks of chikungunya occurred on island countries in the southwest Indian Ocean (Réunion, Mayotte, Mauritius, and Seychelles). Infections were also imported by returning travelers to Europe (160 imported cases in France alone) and the United States.

Tick-borne relapsing fever is widespread in eastern and central Africa and sporadic elsewhere. Epidemics of louse-borne relapsing fever have occurred in the past but pose little risk to usual travelers. Visceral leishmaniasis is endemic in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan (and has caused large epidemics); it is found in the savanna parts of the region. Cutaneous leishmaniasis is also found in the savanna and in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Myiasis transmitted by the tumbu fly can affect travelers.

Food- and water-borne infections: Dysentery and diarrhea are common in local populations; diarrhea in travelers may be caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites (especially Giardia, Cryptosporidium and Entamoeba histolytica). Cholera is sporadic and epidemic. A wave of outbreaks began in West Africa in 2005. Large outbreaks have been re-ported from southern Sudan and Angola in 2006. Risk of hepatitis A is wide-spread; sporadic cases and outbreaks of hepatitis E occur. Polio persists in Nigeria (799 confirmed cases in 2005) and was endemic in Niger in 2005; sporadic cases also occurred in Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, and Somalia in 2005-2006. Other risks to travelers include typhoid (a large outbreak occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2004-2005) and paratyphoid fever, amebiasis, and brucellosis. Dracunculiasis cases were re-ported from nine African countries in 2005, with the highest number of cases in Sudan, Ghana, and Mali, but it is rare in travelers. Intestinal parasites are common in residents in many parts of region but are rare in short-term travelers.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The estimated annual incidence rates of tuberculosis (per 100,000) are >100 in all countries and >300 in much of region. Frequent epidemics of serogroup A meningococcal disease occur during the dry sea-son (December through June) in a band of countries from Senegal to Ethiopia. Severe outbreaks have occurred in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and the Sudan. Serogroup W135 emerged in Burkina Faso in 2002, causing a large epidemic (13,000 cases). It was the predominant pathogen in 2006 in Kenya, Sudan (W. Darfur camps), and Uganda (Gulu district). Nosocomial and in-trafamilial spread of Ebola occurs in outbreaks (Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Gabon). Nosocomial spread of Marburg fever virus (an outbreak occurred in Angola in 2005) and Lassa fever virus has also occurred.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The estimated prevalence of HIV in adults (15-49 years) ranges from 1% to 15% in most countries. In most of the region, prevalence of chronic infection with hepatitis B virus exceeds 8%. HTLV-1 is endemic in parts of Central and West Africa. Common causes of genital ulcer disease include chancroid, syphilis, and herpes simplex.

Zoonotic infections: Dogs are the most important source of rabies, which is found throughout the region. A wild rodent is the reservoir host for Lassa fever virus, which is endemic in West Africa; cases have also been documented in the Central African Republic. Echinococcosis is widespread in animal breeding areas. Sporadic cases and outbreaks of anthrax occur in the region (it is hyperendemic in Zambia, Ethiopia, Niger, and Chad and in several countries along the western coast). Monkeypox is found in West and Central Africa, primarily in remote villages in rain forest areas. Plague is enzootic, and sporadic cases and

outbreaks occur in humans. (Outbreaks have occurred since 2000 in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, and Tanzania.) Ituri District (Oriental Province) in the Democratic Republic of Congo reports about 1,000 cases per year and was the site of an outbreak in 2006. Q fever (airborne spread) is found, especially in West Africa, where livestock breeding is common. Avian influenza (H5N1) was found in poultry in 2006 in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and Côte d'Ivoire. One human case occurred in Djibouti in 2006.

Soil and water-associated infections: Schistosomiasis due to Schistosoma mansoni and S. haematobium is widespread; S. intercalatum has a more limited distribution (West Africa). Mycobacterium ulcerans (the cause of Buruli ulcer) is most concentrated in West Africa and is increasing in prevalence. Rare cases have occurred in travelers. Leptospirosis (both sporadic cases and outbreaks) occurs in tropical areas. Other risks include mycetoma and histoplasmosis.

Other hazards: Motor vehicle accidents and other injuries, including violent injury with assault rifles and other weapons, and sexual assaults occur. Snake bites and aflatoxin contamination of grains are common, especially in rural areas. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe

Vector-borne infections are common in parts of the region. Access to clean water and sanitary disposal of waste are highly variable but are poor in some areas (especially some rural areas). Vaccine coverage is high in some populations, but vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, mumps, rubella, and diphtheria, persist in parts of the region. Polio reappeared in 2006 in Namibia. More common infections in travelers include gastrointestinal infections, African tick-bite fever, and malaria. Infections in immigrants (and long-term residents from the region) include tuberculosis, HIV, schistosomiasis, and intestinal parasites.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is present in parts of all countries in the region except Lesotho, although the risk is focal or seasonal in many areas. African tick-bite fever (Rickettsia africae) continues to be common in travelers to the region, especially South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. Other vector-borne infections include tick-borne relapsing fever, Rift Valley fever, dengue (focal outbreaks but larger areas infested with Aedes aegypti), tick-borne relapsing fever, murine typhus, West Nile fever, and Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever. African trypanosomiasis has been reported from Botswana and Namibia in the past. Tungiasis is reported from South Africa.

Food- and water-borne infections: Risk for hepatitis A is high in parts of the region and outbreaks of hepatitis E have been reported. Risk for dysentery and diarrhea is highly variable within the region. Diarrhea in travelers may be caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Other risks for travelers include typhoid and paratyphoid fever and amebiasis. Cholera is sporadic and epidemic (outbreaks in 2004 in South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe). Intestinal helminths, although common in some local populations, are rare in short-term travelers.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The estimated incidence rate of tuberculosis is >300 per 100,000 population in the region.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: HIV prevalence in antenatal clinics exceeds 25% in many countries in the region; 15%-34% of adults aged 15-49 years are infected. Prevalence of chronic carriage of hepatitis B virus exceeds 8%.

Zoonotic infections: The mongoose is a source of rabies, in addition to domestic dogs and other animals. Plague is enzootic, and sporadic cases and outbreaks have occurred in Botswana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe since 1990. Anthrax is hyperendemic in Zimbabwe, with recent outbreaks in animals and also human cases. Sporadic cases of anthrax have been reported elsewhere in the region.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Focal active areas of schistosomiasis persist (caused by Schistosoma mansoni, S. haematobium, and S. mattheei). Cutaneous larva migrans can occur after exposures on beaches. Leptospirosis has caused outbreaks. Histoplasmosis has caused an outbreak in South Africa.

Other hazards: Motor vehicle accidents and violent injury, as well as snake bites occur. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

NORTH AMERICA

Countries: Canada, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, United States

Good sanitation and clean water are available in major urban areas and most rural areas. Many vector-borne infections are found in focal areas and can pose a risk to travelers, especially adventure travelers to rural areas. In temperate areas these infections occur during the summer months. Levels of immunization are high in most areas. Poliomyelitis has been eradicated.

Vector-borne infections: Lyme disease is endemic in northeastern, north central (upper Midwest), and Pacific coastal areas of North America. West Nile fever was first documented in the United States (New York) in 1999 and has since spread throughout continental U.S. and southern Canada. Other vector-borne infections include Rocky

Mountain spotted fever, murine typhus, rickettsialpox, St. Louis encephalitis, La Crosse encephalitis, Eastern equine encephalitis, Colorado tick fever, and relapsing fever. Ehrlichiosis (granulocytic and monocytic) has been reported primarily from the central and eastern thirds of the United States. Sporadic local transmission of dengue has occurred since 1995 in Florida and Texas, and the vector mosquito Aedes aegypti inhabits the southeastern United States. An outbreak of dengue in Hawaii in 2001-2002 was transmitted by Ae. albopictus.

Food- and water-borne infections: Outbreaks of diarrhea caused by enterohemorrhagic Escherichia coli O157:H7 have occurred in many areas and have increased in the past decade. Campylobacter and Salmonella are the most common causes of acute bacterial diarrhea. Giardiasis and cryptosporidiosis occur sporadically and in outbreaks. Outbreaks of diarrhea due to norovirus are increasingly being reported in the United States and Canada.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: Outbreaks and cases of pertussis have been increasing for more than a decade. The incidence of tuberculosis is low (about 5/100,000 population). Numbers of measles cases have declined in the United States and Canada, and most of these cases are imported or linked to imported cases.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The HIV prevalence in adults aged 15-49 years is estimated to be 0.5% -<1.0% in US, and is 0.1%-<0.5% in Canada.

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is enzootic in bats, raccoons, foxes, and other wild animals. Human cases are rare. Cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome have been widely distributed in North America, with the greatest concentration in the western and southwestern United States. Tularemia is found in wide areas of the United States, including Alaska, and Canada, with the greatest number of cases in the central states (Missouri and neighboring states). Outbreaks have occurred on Martha's Vineyard (Massachusetts). Q fever cases occur sporadically, especially in persons having contact with livestock in the western part of the region; a number of outbreaks have been documented in the Maritime provinces, eastern Canada. Plague is enzootic in the western United States, and rare human cases occur, almost 90% from New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona and California, often associated with prairie dogs. Many outbreaks of anthrax in animals were reported in agricultural regions of the US and Canada in 2006; infection in humans is rare.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Coccidioidomycosis is endemic in the southwestern United States and can occur in visitors to the area. Its incidence has increased in Arizona and California in recent years. Histoplasmosis is highly endemic, especially in the Mississippi, Ohio, and St. Lawrence River valleys. Sporadic cases and large outbreaks occur. Hawaii has the highest incidence rate of leptospirosis in the United States, although sporadic cases and outbreaks have occurred elsewhere, primarily in warmer regions or in summer months. Leptospirosis is often associated with water recreational activities. Nonhuman schistosomes that cause cercarial dermatitis are widely distributed in freshwater and seawater along the Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts, and inland lakes.

Other hazards: Violent injury and death related to guns; rates are higher in the United States than in most industrialized countries. Nineteen species of venomous snakes inhabit North America; the highest bite rates are found in southern states and southwestern desert states. Tick paralysis is most often reported from western Canada and the northwestern United States.

MEXICO AND CENTRAL AMERICA

Countries: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama

Vector-borne infections have focal distributions, and some are seasonal. Access to clean water and sanitary disposal of waste remain limited in many areas, so infections related to fecal contamination of food and water remain common. Levels of vaccine coverage are generally good and improving.

More common infections in travelers to the area include gastrointestinal infections, dengue fever, and myiasis. The risk of malaria is low in most countries; more than half of the cases of malaria in travelers to this region are caused by P. vivax. Chronic or latent infections with late sequelae in immigrants (and long-term residents) include cysticercosis, tuberculosis, Chagas' disease, leishmaniasis, and strongyloidiasis.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is present in focal areas of all these countries; it remains sensitive to chloroquine in all areas except for parts of Panama. Risk for travelers is low in most areas. Dengue epidemics have affected most of these countries in the past 5 years. Other vector-borne infections include rickettsial infections (spotted fever and murine typhus) and relapsing fever (tick borne). Foci of active transmission of leishmaniasis (predominantly cutaneous) are present in all countries. West Nile virus has been found in Mexico and may spread in Central America. Localized foci of transmission of Chagas disease exist in rural areas. Risk to the usual traveler is low. Onchocerciasis is endemic in focal areas of Mexico (Oaxaca, Chiapas) and Guatemala; eradication efforts are in progress. Myiasis (primarily botfly) is endemic in Central America.

Food- and water-borne infections: Diarrhea in travelers is common and may be caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Diarrhea caused by enterotoxigenic E. coli predominates, but other bacteria and protozoa (including Giardia, Cryptosporidia, and Entamoeba histolytica) can also

cause diarrhea. Risk of hepatitis A is high in many areas; epidemics of hepatitis E have occurred in Mexico. Other infections include brucellosis, typhoid fever, and amebic liver abscess. Nicaragua and Guatemala reported cholera in 2002-2003; however, risk for travelers is low. Gnathostomiasis has increased in Mexico, with many cases being reported from the Acapulco area; infection has been reported in travelers. Intestinal helminth infections are common in some local populations but are rare in visitors to the area. Central nervous system cysticercosis is a common cause of seizures in local residents.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The estimated annual incidence rate of tuberculosis per 100,000 population is 25-50 in most of the area, but 50-100 in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The estimated prevalence of HIV in adults is 0.1% - <1%. Incidence of cervical cancer (due to human papillomavirus) is as high as 33/100,000 women.

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is found throughout the region. Anthrax is enzootic throughout the region and can infect humans; this disease is most common in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome have been reported from Panama.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Outbreaks of leptospirosis have occurred in travelers to the area (including whitewater rafters in Costa Rica and U.S. troops training in Panama); hemorrhagic pulmonary leptospirosis has occurred in Nicaragua. Sporadic cases and outbreaks of coccidioidomycosis and histoplasmosis have occurred in travelers to area. Risky activities include disturbing soil and entering caves and abandoned mines. Paracoccidioidomycosis is endemic in parts of Mexico and Central America. Hookworm infections are common in some local populations but rare in travelers. Cutaneous larva migrans occurs in visitors, especially those visiting beaches.

Other hazards: Scorpion and snake bites and motor vehicle accidents occur. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

THE CARIBBEAN

Countries: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadaloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Martin, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, British Virgin Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands

Access to clean water and levels of sanitation are highly variable in the region. More common infections in travelers include gastrointestinal infections; dengue fever is reported during periods of epidemic activity.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is endemic in Haiti and is found in focal areas in the Dominican Republic. In 2006, malaria (falciparum) was confirmed in travelers to Great Exuma, Bahamas, and Kingston, Jamaica, areas where malaria transmission typically does not occur. Dengue epidemics have occurred on many of the islands. Most islands are infested with Aedes aegypti, so these places are at risk for introduction of dengue. Lymphatic filariasis has a high prevalence in parts of Haiti; it is endemic in 9 of 13 municipalities in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Spotted fever due to Rickettsia africae has been acquired in Guadeloupe. Transmission of cutaneous leishmaniasis occurs in the Dominican Republic.

Food- and waterborne infections: Risk of diarrheal illness varies greatly by island. Risk of diarrhea and hepatitis A is high, especially on the island of Hispaniola, where an outbreak of typhoid fever occurred in 2003. An outbreak of eosinophilic meningitis caused by Angiostrongylus cantonensis occurred in travelers to Jamaica. Intestinal helminths are common in local populations on some islands but are rare in short-term travelers.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The annual incidence of tuberculosis is estimated to exceed 300 per 100,000 population in Haiti and is 50-100 per 100,000 population in the Dominican Republic. The rates are substantially lower on other islands.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of HIV infection is estimated to be 4.5% in Haiti (1.8%-7% in pregnant women) and greater than 2% in the Dominican Republic. The prevalence of chronic infection with hepatitis B is moderate (2%-7%) in Haiti and Dominican Republic, but <2% on most of the islands. Seroprevalence of HTLV-I/II is reported to be as high as 5%-14% on some islands.

Zoonotic infections: Anthrax is hyperendemic in Haiti but has not been reported on most of the other islands.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Cutaneous larva migrans is a risk for travelers with exposures on beaches. Endemic foci of histoplasmosis are found on many islands, and outbreaks have occurred in travelers. Leptospirosis is common in many areas and poses a risk to travelers engaged in recreational freshwater activities. Foci of schistosomiasis have been active in the past in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and other islands, but pose little risk to travelers.

Other hazards: Outbreaks of ciguatera poisoning, which results from eating toxin-containing reef fish have occurred on many islands. Injury from motor vehicle accidents (including from motorized scooters) is a risk for travelers. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in hospitals on many islands.

TROPICAL SOUTH AMERICA

Countries: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Galápagos Islands, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela

More common infections in travelers include dengue, gastrointestinal infections, and malaria. Chronic or latent infections in immigrants (and long-term residents) include tuberculosis, schistosomiasis, leishmaniasis, Chagas' disease, cysticercosis, and intestinal helminth infections, including strongyloidiasis.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is widely distributed, but the risk to travelers is low in most areas. Vivax malaria predominates in many areas. Dengue outbreaks have increased in the past decade, and infections occur in travelers. Yellow fever causes sporadic cases and outbreaks. Cases have been reported since 2000 from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela. Aedes aegypti infests all these countries, including urban areas, placing them at risk for introduction of yellow fever (and dengue). Fatal yellow fever has occurred in unvaccinated travelers. Other vector-borne infections include rickettsial infections (murine typhus and spotted fever due to Rickettsia rickettsii and R. felis), relapsing fever (the tick-borne form is widely distributed; the louse-borne form occurs primarily in the highlands of Bolivia and Peru), and Venezuelan encephalitis. Oropouche fever is a common arboviral infection, especially in the Amazon basin. Leishmaniasis has increased in recent years; foci of transmission of cutaneous leishmaniasis are found throughout the region; visceral leishmaniasis is found primarily in Brazil. American trypanosomiasis (Chagas' disease) has been widespread in poor, rural areas, but transmission has been interrupted or slowed in many areas (e.g., Brazil) through eradication programs. Onchocerciasis is endemic in focal areas of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela; eradication efforts are in progress. Bartonellosis is found in the mountain valleys of Peru (largest endemic focus), Ecuador, and southwestern Colombia (at altitudes of 600-2800 meters). Lymphatic filariasis is endemic in Guyana and in focal areas of Brazil and in parts of northeastern South America. Myiasis occasionally occurs in travelers.

Food- and waterborne infections: Gastrointestinal infections in travelers are caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Hepatitis A risk is widespread. Cholera was widespread in South America in the 1990s; only Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador reported infections in 2005. Typhoid fever, brucellosis, and amebic liver abscesses are occasionally seen in travelers. Fascioliasis is highly endemic in some areas, especially in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela, but risk is low for the usual traveler. Paragonimiasis is endemic in Ecuador and Peru and occurs sporadically in other countries; infections are rare in the usual traveler.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The annual incidence rate of tuberculosis per 100,000 is estimated to be 100-300 in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Guyana and 50-100 or less in the rest of the region. Multidrug resistance has been a problem, especially in Peru and Ecuador, where the rate of multidrug resistance is 3%-6% among new cases. Leprosy is highly endemic in some focal areas (e.g., high prevalence in the Amazon and parts of the Andes). Prevalence in Brazil was 46 per 100,000 population in 2004.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: Prevalence of HIV in adults is estimated to be 0.1% -<1% in most of the region, but the prevalence is higher in Guyana and Suriname (1%-<5%). The prevalence of chronic infection with hepatitis B exceeds 8% in Peru, northern Brazil, and southern Colombia and Venezuela and is 2%-7% in the rest of the region. Hepatitis D has caused epidemics of fulminant hepatitis in the Amazon Basin. HTLV-I is found especially in areas adjacent to the Caribbean, including Colombia, Venezuela, Surinam, Guyana, and Brazil.

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is found throughout the region; vampire bats transmit infection in some areas and have been responsible for outbreaks of human rabies in Peru, Venezuela, and Brazil. Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome caused by hantaviruses with rodent reservoirs has been documented in Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay; these viruses may be more widely distributed. Other rodent-associated viruses include Machupo virus, which causes sporadic infections in rural northeastern Bolivia, and Guanarito virus in Venezuela. Plague has been reported from Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru since 1990 (most cases are from Peru). Echinococcosis is endemic in cattle-grazing areas of Ecuador and other countries; the risk to travelers is low.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Endemic foci of schistosomiasis (Schistosoma mansoni) are found in Brazil, Venezuela, and Suriname. Buruli ulcer (Mycobacterium ulcerans) is endemic in French Guyana; a few cases have been reported from other countries (e.g., Peru and Suriname). Risk of leptospirosis is widespread in tropical areas; outbreaks have followed flooding. Histoplasmosis has been reported from all countries in the region, and paracoccidioidomycosis is endemic throughout the area, with the highest transmission in Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil. Coccidioidomycosis is more focal in distribution with endemic areas in Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, and Venezuela.

Other hazards: Venomous snake bites, injury from motor vehicle accidents, and high altitude-related illness in the Andes occur. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

TEMPERATE SOUTH AMERICA

Countries: Argentina, Chile, Easter Island, Falkland Islands, South Georgia, South Sandwich Islands, Uruguay, Bolivia

The overall risk for infections is low for most travelers to the area. Gastrointestinal infections are a risk, especially in rural areas. Chronic and latent infections in immigrants (and long-term residents) include cysticercosis, Chagas' (from remote acquisition), echinococcosis, soil-associated fungal infections, and intestinal helminth infections.

Vector-borne infections: Limited areas of malaria risk are found in Argentina. Dengue outbreaks have occurred in Argentina since 1997, and Aedes aegypti infests the country as far south as Buenos Aires. An outbreak occurred on Easter Island (Chile) in 2002. Other vector-borne infections include bartonellosis (limited to the slopes of the Andes in Chile), tick-borne relapsing fever (reported from northern Argentina and Chile), murine typhus, and spotted fever due to Rickettsia rickettsii (reported from Argentina). Leishmaniasis (both cutaneous and mucocutaneous) is endemic in northern Argentina and may be present in Uruguay. Programs to eradicate American trypanosomiasis (Chagas' disease) have reduced or interrupted active transmission in many areas.

Food- and water-borne infections: Risk of hepatitis A is moderate to high in parts of the region. Diarrhea in travelers is caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Typhoid fever outbreaks have occurred in Chile in the past, and sporadic infections occur in the region. Typhoid fever, amebic abscesses, and brucellosis can be acquired by travelers. Fascioliasis occurs sporadically, but travelers are at low risk.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The annual incidence of tuberculosis is estimated to be 25-50 per 100,000 population in most of region, but lower in Chile. Influenza outbreaks peak in May-August.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The estimated prevalence of HIV infection in adults is low (0.1%-<1%). Foci of high endemicity of HTLV-I are found in Argentina and Chile.

Zoonotic infections: Q fever (airborne spread) is common in areas where livestock are raised; frequent outbreaks have been noted in Uruguay. Rabies is present in the region. Anthrax is enzootic in Argentina. Sporadic cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (Andes virus; rodent reservoir host) have been reported from Argentina and Chile. Argentine hemorrhagic fever caused by Junin virus (rodent reservoir) is found in an agricultural area of Argentina. Risk to travelers is low.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Histoplasmosis is endemic in Uruguay and parts of Venezuela. Coccidioidomycosis is found in focal areas of Argentina and Chile; paracoccidioidomycosis is highly endemic in Uruguay and in parts of Argentina and sporadic elsewhere. Sporotrichosis is highly endemic in Uruguay and sporadic elsewhere. Hookworm infections are endemic in warm, wet areas but are rare in travelers. Leptospirosis is a risk in warmer months.

Other hazards: Screening of blood prior to transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

EAST ASIA

Countries: China, Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Macau SAR1, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan

Risk of infection is highly variable in the region. Access to clean water and good sanitary facilities are limited in many rural areas, especially in China and Mongolia. Respiratory infections (etiology often undefined) are common in travelers to the region. Chronic and latent infections in immigrants (and long-term residents) include tuberculosis, complications from chronic hepatitis B (and also hepatitis C) infection, schistosomiasis, liver flukes, paragonimiasis (lung flukes), and strongyloidiasis.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is found in focal areas of China and North and South Korea. Japanese encephalitis (JE) is found in wide areas of China and Japan and focally in Korea. Transmission of malaria and JE is seasonal in many areas. Reported infections in travelers are rare. Other vector-borne infections include dengue, which has caused outbreaks in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; spotted fever caused by Rickettsia sibirica (China, Mongolia); murine typhus; Oriental spotted fever caused by R. japonica (Japan); rickettsialpox (Korea); scrub typhus (especially in China, Korea, and Japan); tick-borne encephalitis (in forested regions northeastern China and in South Korea); visceral and cutaneous leishmaniasis (in rural China); lymphatic filariasis (in focal coastal areas of China and South Korea); and Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (in western China).

Food- and water-borne infections: Risk of diarrhea is highly variable within the region. Diarrhea in travelers may be caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Risk of hepatitis A is high in some areas (excluding Japan), especially in rural areas of China and Mongolia. Outbreaks of hepatitis E have been reported in China. Cases of cholera were reported from China in 2004; most of the cases reported from Japan in 2004 were imported (55 of 66). Sporadic cases of anisakiasis are reported from Korea and Japan. Brucellosis is found, especially in sheep-raising regions of China and Mongolia (annual incidence >500 per 100,000 population in Mongolia). Paragonimiasis is endemic in China (an estimated 20 million are infected) and still occurs in Korea. Liver flukes (causing clonorchiasis and fascioliasis) are endemic in the region (in 2004 the infected population in China was estimated to be 15 million), but risk to usual traveler is low.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The estimated annual incidence of tuberculosis per 100,000 population is 100-300 in China, Mongolia, and North Korea; 25-50 in Japan; and 50-100 in South Korea. High rates of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis are found in parts of China (3%-6% overall in new cases and as high as 10% in some areas). Outbreaks of SARS occurred in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in 2003. Measles remains endemic in the region, and infection has occurred in adopted children from China and in travelers to the region. In tropical areas, influenza may occur during all months of the year.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of HIV in adults is low (0.1%-<0.5%) in most of the region, but a much higher prevalence is found in focal areas in southern China. Hepatitis B is highly endemic among adults in the region, excluding Japan. Prevalence of chronic infection exceeds 8% in many areas. Prevalence of hepatitis C is 10% or higher in Mongolia; 2.0%-2.9% in mainland China and Taiwan, and slightly lower in the rest of the region. A high prevalence of HTLV-I is found focally in the southern islands of Japan.

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is widespread in China (not Hong Kong) and Mongolia. In 2005, a reported 2545 people died from rabies in China; outbreaks in 2006 have led to mass killings of dogs. Rates of rabies vaccine coverage in pet dogs have been low. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) continues to cause outbreaks in domestic and wild bird populations and has caused human cases and deaths in Hong Kong and China. Highly pathogenic H5N1 was also found in bird populations in Japan and South Korea in 2003-2004. Cases of human plague are reported most years from China and Mongolia. Hantaviruses causing hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome are a major health threat in China and the Republic of Korea, primarily affecting residents of rural areas in late fall and early winter. Risk to the usual traveler is low. Anthrax is enzootic in China and Mongolia, and sporadic infection is reported in the rest of the region. Tularemia occurs in China and Japan and is found especially in northern parts of region. Echinococcosis is endemic in rural areas of China and Mongolia.

In 2005 a large outbreak of human Streptococcus infection caused 215 cases (66 laboratory confirmed) in Sichuan, China. Infection occurred in farmers ex-posed to backyard pigs during slaughter.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Schistosomiasis (Schistosoma japonicum) is present in focal areas in China, especially in the Yangtze River basin. An estimated 60 million people live in at-risk areas. Leptospirosis is a risk, especially in tropical areas of China and South Korea. Cutaneous larva migrans is common in warm coastal areas. Cases of histoplasmosis have been reported.

Other hazards: Injury from motor vehicle accidents and venomous snake bites occur. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals in the region.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Countries: Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste (East Timor), Vietnam

More common infections in travelers to the area include dengue fever, respiratory infections, and diarrheal infections. Chronic and latent infections in immigrants (and long-term residents) include tuberculosis, late complications of hepatitis B infection, intestinal helminth infections (including strongyloidiasis), and other helminth infections, such as paragonimiasis, opisthorchiasis, and clonorchiasis.

Vector-borne infections: Dengue fever is hyperendemic in the region, and epidemics are common; cases occur in travelers to the region. Malaria is found in focal areas (primarily rural) in all these countries (except Brunei and Singapore), especially in rural areas. Japanese encephalitis is widely distributed in the region and is hyperendemic in some areas; risk is seasonal in some countries. Scrub typhus is a common cause of fever in the region. Other vector-borne infections include murine typhus, chikungunya virus, and relapsing fever. Foci of transmission of lymphatic filariasis are found throughout the area, with the exception of some of the Indonesian islands.

Food- and water-borne infections: Risk of hepatitis A is widespread in the region. Risk of diarrhea caused by bacteria, viruses, and parasites is high in parts of the area. An outbreak of polio (more than 300 virus-confirmed cases) occurred in Indonesia in 2005 after importation of the virus from Nigeria. Campylobacter infections are especially common in Thailand and are often resistant to fluoroquinolones. Amebic liver abscesses, typhoid fever, and brucellosis occur. Isolates of Salmonella causing typhoid fever may be resistant to multiple drugs, including the fluoroquinolones. Cholera epidemics have been common in the past; cases were reported from Cambodia, Malaysia, and the Philippines in 2004. Outbreaks of hepatitis E have been reported from the region (Indonesia and Burma). Cysticercosis is especially common in Indonesia. Gnathostomiasis is endemic in region and especially common in Thailand. Intestinal helminth infections are common in some rural areas; risk to the usual traveler is low. Opisthorchiasis, clonorchiasis, fasciolopsiasis, and paragonimiasis are endemic in parts of the region (especially Laos and Burma).

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The annual incidence rate of tuberculosis per 100,000 population is estimated to be more than 300 in Cambodia and 100-300 in the rest of the region. Measles transmission persists in the region, although vaccination coverage is improving in some countries. SARS outbreaks occurred in the region (especially in Singapore and Vietnam) in 2003. Influenza infections can occur throughout the year in tropical areas.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of HIV in adults is 1%-<5% in Thailand, Burma (Myanmar), and Cambodia and <1% in the rest of the region. Higher prevalences may be found in specific populations. The prevalence of hepatitis B chronic carriage exceeds 8% in many parts of region. The prevalence of chronic hepatitis C is 1%-2.4%. Chancroid is a common cause of genital ulcer disease.

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is common in the region, and travelers are at risk for exposure to rabid animals, especially dogs. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) has been found in poultry populations in most countries of the region. Human cases and deaths have been reported in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Cambodia. In 2006, the virus continued to spread in poultry populations in Indonesia. Anthrax is hyperendemic in Burma; sporadic cases occur in much of the rest of the region. An outbreak of Nipah virus, with a probable reservoir in fruit bats and documented transmission to humans from pigs, occurred in Malaysia (1998-1999) and in Singapore (after contact with pigs imported from Malaysia). Cases of human plague have been reported since 1990 from Indonesia, Laos, Burma, and Vietnam.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Schistosomiasis caused by S. japonicum is found in the Philippines and Indonesia (Sulawesi [Celebes]); caused by S. mekongi in Cambodia and Laos; and caused by S. malayensis in peninsular Malaysia. Leptospirosis is common in tropical areas and has been reported in travelers to the area. Melioidosis is a common cause of community-acquired sepsis, especially in rural areas of Thailand; it is also common in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Cases have in-creased in 2004 in Singapore. Infection in travelers is rare. Penicilliosis marneffei is found in Southeast Asia and is a common opportunistic infection in HIV-infected patients, especially in Thailand. Rare cases have been reported in travelers to the region. Cutaneous larva migrans is common on warm coastal areas.

Other hazards: Snake bites and motor vehicle accidents occur. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

SOUTH ASIA

Countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, British Indian Ocean Territory, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

More common infections in travelers are gastrointestinal infections (including acute bacterial diarrhea and amebic disease), typhoid fever, and malaria. Chronic and latent infections in immigrants (or long-term residents) include tuberculosis, cysticercosis, visceral leishmaniasis, lymphatic filariasis, echinococcosis, and intestinal helminths. Primary varicella may be seen in adults, as childhood infection is less common in tropical areas.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is widespread in areas at altitudes lower than 2000 meters and is found in the Terai and Hill districts of Nepal at altitudes lower than 1200 meters. Dengue fever has caused epidemics in all these countries except Nepal. Japanese encephalitis transmission occurs widely in lowland areas of the region (except for Afghanistan). Severe outbreaks occurred in India in 2005. Transmission is seasonal. Focal areas of transmission of visceral leishmaniasis are present in rural India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Major epidemics of visceral leishmaniasis have occurred in eastern India (especially Assam and Bihar states). Cutaneous leishmaniasis is present in Afghanistan, (where it has infected US troops); India; and Pakistan. Lymphatic filariasis is endemic in large areas of India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Other vector-borne infections include scrub typhus, murine typhus, epidemic typhus (in remote, cooler areas), relapsing fever, sandfly fever, spotted fever due to R. conorii (especially in India), Kyasanur Forest disease (tick-borne; Karnataka State, India, and Pakistan), and Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (in Pakistan and Afghanistan). In 2005-2006, an outbreak of chikungunya affected thousands of persons in India.

Food- and water-borne infections: Hepatitis A is widespread, and risk to travelers is high. Large outbreaks of hepatitis E have occurred in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Typhoid and paratyphoid fever (increasingly resistant to multiple antimicrobial agents) occur sporadically and in outbreaks and can affect travelers to the region. Amebic infections are common and can cause liver abscesses. Indigenous wild polio was present in 2005-2006 in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan; cases from Bangladesh and Nepal were confirmed in 2005-2006. Cyclospora infections have been reported, especially from Nepal. Cholera outbreaks have occurred frequently in the region, especially in Bangladesh and India. Cysticercosis is found, especially in India. Paragonimiasis is endemic in India (Manipur province). Gnathostomiasis has caused sporadic cases and outbreaks.

Airborne and person-to-person: The annual incidence rates of tuberculosis per 100,000 population are estimated to be higher than 300 in Afghanistan and 100-300 in most of the rest of the region. Measles occurs in the region and can be a source of infection for unvaccinated travelers.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of HIV in adults is less than 1% in most of the region but is rising rapidly in some populations in India (seroprevalence higher than 5% in some antenatal clinics). The prevalence of chronic infection with hepatitis B is 2%-7% in most of the region.

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is common in the region and poses a risk to travelers. Q fever is widespread. Anthrax is endemic in much of the region, and cases occur sporadically. Plague is endemic in India, and outbreaks have occurred. Echinococcosis is highly endemic in focal rural areas. An outbreak of Nipah virus (encephalitis) occurred in Bangladesh in early 2004, and person-to-person spread

may have occurred. Macaques throughout the region are infected with B virus (Herpes). Highly pathogenic avian influenza (H5N1) has been found in poultry populations in India and Pakistan.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Leptospirosis is common, especially in tropical areas.

Other hazards: There may be a risk for snake bites, injury from motor vehicle accidents, and injury related to ongoing conflicts. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

MIDDLE EAST

Countries: Bahrain, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Common infections in travelers are gastrointestinal infections. Chronic and latent infections in immigrants (and long-term residents) include tuberculosis, echinococcosis, cutaneous leishmaniasis, and brucellosis.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is present in focal areas of Iran, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen. Epidemic dengue activity occurred in Saudi Arabia and Yemen in 2002. Cutaneous leishmaniasis is widespread and common, especially in countries bordering the Mediterranean.

Transmission of visceral leishmaniasis occurs focally in Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Other vector-borne infections include murine typhus, spotted fever due to R. conorii, tick-borne encephalitis (in Turkey), Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (in Iran, Iraq, and the Arabian peninsula) (an outbreak occurred in Turkey in 2006), tick-borne relapsing fever, sandfly fever, and West Nile fever. Lymphatic filariasis and onchocerciasis are endemic in focal areas of Yemen.

Food- and water-borne infections: Risk of hepatitis A is high in many parts of the area; typhoid fever occurs sporadically and in outbreaks. Outbreaks of hepatitis E have been reported in Iran and Jordan. An outbreak of polio (478 virus-confirmed cases) occurred in Yemen in 2005 following importation of poliovirus from Nigeria. Cholera was reported from Iran and Iraq in 2004. Brucellosis is widespread and common in parts of the region.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: Pilgrims to the Hajj (Saudi Arabia) have acquired meningococcal infections caused by serotypes A and W-135, as well as influenza infections. The annual incidence of tuberculosis per 100,000 population is estimated to be 100-300 in Iraq, 50-100 in Yemen and 25-50 in most of the rest of the region. Measles continues to be reported from the region.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of hepatitis B chronic infection is >8% in Saudi Arabia and 2%-7% in much of the rest of the region. The prevalence of HIV is estimated to be lower than 0.5% throughout the region.

Zoonotic infections: Anthrax is enzootic in Turkey, and sporadic cases occur in most of the region except for Oman. Rabies is widespread in the region. Endemic foci of plague have been identified in the region in the past. Q fever is common in most countries in the region. Echinococcosis is endemic in many rural areas. Outbreaks of oropharyngeal tularemia have been reported from Turkey. Brucellosis is common in Syria (annual incidence of >500 per 100,000 population) and has an incidence of 50-500 cases per 100,000 population in most of the rest of the region.

Highly pathogenic H5N1 influenza virus has been found in poultry in Turkey, Iraq, and Israel. Human cases and deaths were confirmed in Iraq and Turkey in 2006.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Schistosomiasis has been found in focal areas in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria.

Other hazards: Motor vehicle accidents, intentional injuries, and injuries related to ongoing conflicts occur. Snake and scorpion bites are an additional hazard. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

WESTERN EUROPE

Countries: Andorra, Austria, Azores, Belgium, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Greenland, Holy See, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

The area is characterized by a low risk for most infectious diseases.

Vector-borne infections: The only malaria cases are "airport" malaria and imported cases. Lyme disease is found in broad areas of Europe in temperate forested areas. Tick-borne encephalitis is found in Austria, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, and Denmark (only on island of Bornholm); a few cases have also been reported from Italy, Norway, and France. Leishmaniasis (cutaneous and visceral) is found, especially in countries bordering the Mediterranean, with the highest numbers of cases from Spain, where it is an important opportunistic infection in HIV-infected persons.

Relapsing fever (tick-borne) is found in focal areas in Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain; sporadic cases may occur elsewhere in region. Murine typhus is more common in warmer areas, especially Mediterranean port cities. Sandfly fever occurs in warmer months in southern Europe, especially in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece.

Small numbers of cases of babesiosis have been reported from the region. A number of countries have reported imported cases of chikungunya fever in 2005-2006.

Food- and water-borne infections: Risk of hepatitis A is low (except for Greenland). Outbreaks of salmonellosis, campylobacteriosis, and other food- and water-borne infections occur, but the risk of diarrhea in travelers is low. Brucellosis is found, especially in southern countries on the Mediterranean. Variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob cases have been reported primarily from the United Kingdom, although a few cases have been reported from other countries. Large outbreaks of trichinosis have occurred; outbreaks in France have been linked to horse meat.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: Measles transmission has been slowed by vaccination programs. The annual incidence rate of tuberculosis per 100,000 population is estimated to be 10-50 for most of the region and less than 10 in Norway and Sweden.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of HIV in adults is estimated to be 0.3% in this region.

Zoonotic infections: Large outbreaks of tularemia have occurred in rural areas in several of these countries, including Sweden, Finland, and Spain. Hantaviruses causing hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome are widespread; Puumala virus, the cause of mild nephropathia epidemica, is found in Scandinavian and western European countries. Rabies is present in many countries in western Europe; human cases are rare. Echinococcosis due to Echinococcus granulosus is found, especially in Spain and the Mediterranean countries; areas with alveolar echinococcosis (caused by E. multilocularis) have expanded in recent years, with the largest number of cases found in focal areas of France, Germany, and Switzerland. Q fever (airborne spread) is a common cause of febrile illness (both sporadic cases and outbreaks), especially in rural areas of Spain, southern France, and other Mediterranean countries. Highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N1 has been documented in wild birds or other avian species in many of the countries (at least 10 by August 2006). No human cases have been documented in this region as of fall 2006.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Legionnaires' disease is sporadic; some outbreaks have involved tourists at resort hotels.

EASTERN EUROPE AND NORTHERN ASIA

Countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

Access to clean water and adequate levels of sanitation are limited in many parts of the region. Vaccine-preventable diseases remain a problem where levels of immunization are low. The public health infrastructure has deteriorated in areas of conflict; political instability has threatened health in some areas. Common infections in travelers include gastrointestinal infections, respiratory infections, and occasionally vector-borne infections. Chronic and latent infections immigrants (and long-term residents) include tuberculosis (including multidrug-resistant TB) and late sequelae of hepatitis B.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria transmission occurs seasonally in focal rural areas of countries in the southernmost part of the region (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). Tick-borne encephalitis is wide-spread, occurring in warmer months in the southern part of the nontropical forested regions of Europe and Asia. Most intense transmission has been reported in Russia, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. Other vector-borne infections include murine typhus, scrub typhus, spotted fever due to Rickettsia sibirica (North Asian spotted fever), rickettsialpox, relapsing fever (more southern parts of region), Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (in many countries of the region but primarily in persons working with animals or in hospitals), leishmaniasis (cutaneous and visceral, especially in the southern areas of the former Soviet Union), Lyme disease (throughout the former Soviet Union), sandfly fever (in the southern parts of region), West Nile (a large outbreak occurred in Romania in late 1990s), and Japanese encephalitis (transmission occurs in a limited area of far eastern Russia).

Food- and water-borne infections: A high risk of hepatitis A is present in many parts of the region. Sporadic cases of typhoid fever are reported, and outbreaks occur. Outbreaks of hepatitis E have been reported from the southern areas of Russia. Brucellosis is a risk in many areas (annual incidence 50-500 cases per 100,000 population in many parts of the region). Outbreaks of botulism are usually linked to home canned foods. Sporadic cases of fascioliasis occur. A population of 12.5 million is estimated to be at risk for opisthorchiasis in the region (especially Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Siberia, and Ukraine).

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The annual incidence rate of tuberculosis per 100,000 population is estimated to be as high as 100-300 in parts of the region. High rates of drug-resistant TB are found in Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, parts of Russia, and Uzbekistan, where rates of drug resistance in newly diagnosed TB patients are as high as 14%. Cases of diphtheria have declined (after the massive outbreak of the 1990s) with improved rates of immunization. Transmission of measles is declining.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of HIV in adults is estimated to be 1%-<5% in many parts of the region. It has increased rapidly in parts of the Russian Federation; seroprevalence in prison populations is 2-4%. The prevalence of hepatitis B is inter-

mediate (2%-7%) or high (more than 8%) in most of the region. The prevalence of hepatitis C is 1%-2.4% in much of the area (2.5%-9.9% in Romania).

Zoonotic infections: Rabies is widespread in the region and is increasing in some countries. Tularemia is widespread and occurs in focal outbreaks. Wild rodent plague is broadly distributed in southern areas of the former Soviet Union; human cases are rare. Sporadic cases and occasional outbreaks of anthrax are reported. Q fever is found, especially in cattle-raising areas. Hantaviruses causing hemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome are found in many countries in the region; infection is sporadic and epidemic. Echinococcosis occurs sporadically in the area. Highly pathogenic avian influenza virus H5N1 has been documented in wild birds or other avian species in many of the countries (at least 10 by fall 2006). Human cases and deaths were reported from Azerbaijan in 2006.

Soil- and water-associated infections: No endemic transmission of cholera was reported in 2004.

Other hazards: Motor vehicle accidents and injuries related to ongoing conflicts and alcohol abuse occur. Nosocomial transmission of infections is a problem in many areas because of inadequate infection control procedures. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in many hospitals.

AUSTRALIA AND THE SOUTH AND WESTERN PACIFIC

Countries: American Samoa, Australia, Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tahiti, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wake Island, Wallis and Futuna

Risk of infection is highly variable within the region. The risk of food and water-borne infections is low in most of Australia and New Zealand; immunization coverage is also generally high in those countries. Vector-borne infections and gastrointestinal infections are common in travelers to other islands.

Vector-borne infections: Malaria is transmitted on Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and the Solomon Islands. Dengue has caused recurring epidemics on many of the islands and in northern Australia. Japanese encephalitis (JE) is found in Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait and far northern Australia. JE infections have occurred in the western Pacific islands (e.g., Guam). Lymphatic filariasis is widely distributed on many of the Pacific islands, including American Samoa, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna. Other vector-borne infections include scrub typhus (in northern Australia and Papua New Guinea and on some of the western and southern islands), murine typhus, spotted fever due to Rickettsia australis (Queensland tick typhus), and Murray Valley encephalitis (recurring epidemics are re-ported, especially in southeastern Australia; rare cases occur in Papua New Guinea). Ross River fever (epidemic polyarthritis) causes sporadic cases and outbreaks in Australia and on a number of the Pacific islands.

Food- and water-borne infections: Risk of hepatitis A is high on many of the Pacific islands. Gastrointestinal infections due to bacteria, viruses, and parasites (including Entamoeba histolytica) have been common on some of the islands, including Papua New Guinea. Typhoid fever is uncommon in Australia; outbreaks have occurred on some of the islands. Cases of eosinophilic meningitis due to Angiostrongylus cantonensis have been reported from many of the islands. Occasional cases of cholera occur in Australia.

Airborne and person-to-person transmission: The annual incidence of tuberculosis per 100,000 population is estimated to be 100-300 for the Pacific islands, and 0-25 for the rest of the region. The influenza transmission season in Australia typically occurs April through September. Periodic outbreaks of measles have occurred on islands with inadequate immunization coverage.

Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections: The prevalence of HIV in adults is 0.1%-<0.5% in most of the region; it is higher (1%-<5%) in Papua New Guinea and some of the Pacific islands. The prevalence of chronic infection with hepatitis B is 8% on many of the Pacific islands. The prevalence of hepatitis C is 1%-2.4% in most of the area.

Zoonotic infections: Sporadic cases and outbreaks of Q fever occur in Australia (rarely in New Zealand). Most of the islands are reported to be rabies free, although bat rabies exists in some of these areas. Fatal cases of Hendra virus (closely related to Nipah virus) infection occurred in Australia in 1994. Fruit bats, widely distributed in Australia and the South Pacific, may be the natural host.

Soil- and water-associated infections: Buruli ulcer (caused by Mycobacterium ulcerans) increased in incidence in Australia in the 1990s, with the development of new foci on Phillip Island and in a district southwest of Melbourne. Most cases are in Victoria and Queensland. Cases of melioidosis have been reported from Papua New Guinea, Guam, and Australia; risk may exist on other islands. Leptospirosis is common on some of the islands. Sporadic cases of histoplasmosis have been documented. Hookworm infections and strongyloidiasis are common on some of the Pacific Islands.

Other hazards: High attack rates of ciguatera poisoning from eating large reef-dwelling fish have been reported on some of the islands. Venomous snakes and spiders are a risk in many areas. Screening of blood before transfusion is inadequate in hospitals on many of the islands.

CDC Health Information for International Travelers
General Health Recommendations

Editor's note: The information presented in this section was condensed from the CDC's *Health Information for International Travelers 2008*, commonly referred to as the Yellow Book. For complete travel health information view CDC's website on the Internet at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel or call CDC's toll free voice information system at 1-877-394-8747.

TRAVELERS' HEALTH KIT

The purpose of a Travel Kit is twofold: to allow the traveler to take care of minor health problems as they occur and to treat exacerbations of pre-existing medical conditions. Persons with pre-existing conditions, such as diabetes or allergies to envenomations or medications, should consider wearing an alert bracelet and making sure this information is on a card in their wallet and with their other travel documents. A variety of health kits are available commercially and may even be purchased over the Internet; however, similar kits can be assembled at home. The specific contents of the health kit are based on destination, duration of travel, type of travel, and the traveler's pre-existing medical conditions. Basic items that should be included are listed below.

Medications

- Personal prescription medications in their original containers (copies of all prescriptions should be carried, including the generic names for medications, and a note from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationery for controlled substances and injectable medications)
- Antimalarial medications, if applicable
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medication (e.g., bismuth subsalicylate, loperamide)
- Antibiotic for self-treatment of moderate to severe diarrhea
- Antihistamine
- Decongestant, alone or in combination with antihistamine
- Anti-motion sickness medication
- Acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, or other medication for pain or fever
- Mild laxative
- Cough suppressant/expectorant
- Throat lozenges
- Antacid
- Antifungal and antibacterial ointments or creams
- 1% hydrocortisone cream
- Epinephrine auto-injector (e.g., EpiPen), especially if history of severe allergic reaction. Also available in smaller-dose package for children

Other Important Items

- Insect repellent containing DEET (up to 50%)
- Sunscreen (preferably SPF 15 or greater)
- Aloe gel for sunburns
- Digital thermometer
- Oral rehydration solution packets
- Basic first-aid items (adhesive bandages, gauze, ace wrap, antiseptic, tweezers, scissors, cotton-tipped applicators)
- Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol
- Moleskin for blisters
- Lubricating eye drops
- First aid quick reference card

Other items that may be useful in certain circumstances

- Mild sedative (e.g., zolpidem) or other sleep aid
- Anti-anxiety medication
- High-altitude preventive medication
- Water purification tablets

- Commercial suture/syringe kits (to be used by local health-care provider. These items will also require a letter from the prescribing physician on letterhead stationery.)

- Latex condoms

- Address and phone numbers of area hospitals or clinics

Commercial medical kits are available for a wide range of circumstances, from basic first aid to advanced emergency life support. Many outdoor sporting goods stores sell their own basic first aid kits. For more adventurous travelers, a number of companies produce advanced medical kits and will even customize kits based on specific travel needs. In addition, specialty kits are available for managing diabetes, dealing with dental emergencies, and handling aquatic environments. If travelers choose to purchase a health kit rather than assemble their own, they should be certain to review the contents of the kit carefully to ensure that it has everything needed; additional items may be necessary.

A final reminder: a health kit is useful only if it is available. It should be carried with the traveler at all times, e.g., in carry-on baggage when allowable, and on excursions. All medications, especially prescription medications, should be stored in carry-on baggage, in their original containers with clear labels. With heightened airline security, sharp objects and some liquids and gels will have to remain in checked luggage.

PROTECTION AGAINST MOSQUITOES, TICKS, FLEAS AND OTHER INSECTS AND ARTHROPODS

Although vaccines or chemoprophylactic drugs are available against important vector-borne diseases such as yellow fever and malaria, travelers still should be advised to use repellents and other general protective measures against biting arthropods. The effectiveness of malaria chemoprophylaxis is variable, depending on patterns of drug resistance and compliance with medication, and no similar preventive measures exist for other mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue or chikungunya. For many vector-borne diseases, no specific preventives are available.

The number of insect repellents available has been increasing, with several active ingredients now registered by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, for travel to areas where the intensity of disease-transmitting vectors is high, it may be wise to use a product containing DEET or picaridin rather than an herbal product. DEET is the most studied repellent and travelers (military and civilian) have had the most experience with it.

General Preventive Measures

Tick-, mite-, and mosquito-borne parasitic and viral infections characteristically are diseases of “place” that are linked to known geographic or ecologic regions, and the amount of disease transmission in these areas often varies seasonally. Risk of infection increases when visiting areas of the world where these diseases occur and when epidemics are in progress. International travelers should consult CDC's Travelers' Health web page for alerts and information on regional disease transmission patterns that may change periodically (http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Travelers to areas with identified risks should take the precautions described below to reduce the likelihood of acquiring a vector-borne disease. When possible, known foci of epidemic disease transmission should be avoided.

Travelers should be advised that exposure to arthropod bites can be minimized by modifying patterns of activity or behavior. Some vector mosquitoes are most active in twilight periods (i.e., dawn and dusk) or in the evening after dark. Avoidance of outdoor activity during these periods can reduce risk of exposure. Wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats minimizes areas of exposed skin. Shirts should be tucked in. Repellents applied to clothing, shoes, tents, mosquito nets, and other gear will enhance protection.

When exposure to ticks, chigger mites, or biting insects is a possibility, travelers should be advised to tuck their pants into their socks and to wear boots, not sandals. Permethrin-based repellents applied as directed to clothing or camping equipment will enhance protection. Travelers should be advised to inspect themselves and their clothing for ticks, both during outdoor activity and at the end of the day. Ticks are detected more easily on light-colored or white clothing. Prompt removal of attached ticks can prevent some infections.

When accommodations are not adequately screened or air conditioned, bed nets are essential to provide protection and to reduce discomfort due to biting insects. Bed nets are most effective when treated with a repellent such as permethrin. Pre-treated, long-lasting bed nets can be purchased prior to traveling, or nets can be sprayed after purchase. The permethrin repellent will be effective for several months if the bed net is not washed. Bed nets should be tucked under mat-tresses. Aerosol insecticides can help to clear rooms of mosquitoes.

Repellents

Travelers should be advised that permethrin-containing repellents (e.g., Permanone) are recommended for use on clothing, shoes, bed nets, and camping gear, and are registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for this use. Permethrin is highly effective both as an insecticide and as a repellent for ticks, mosquitoes, and other arthropods. Clothing treated according to label instructions should provide protection for up to 2 weeks and through several machine washings before re-treatment is required. Clothing pre-treated with permethrin is

commercially available and should be used and washed according to the manufacturer's instructions. There appears to be little potential for toxicity from permethrin-treated clothing. Permethrin-treated clothing should be supplemented with topically applied repellents to protect exposed skin.

The EPA has registered several active ingredients for use in personal repellents applied to skin. EPA registration of repellent active ingredients indicates the materials have been reviewed and approved for efficacy and human safety if applied according to the instructions on the label. These active ingredients are DEET (N,N-diethylmetatoluamide), Picaridin (KBR 3023), IR 3535, p-menthane 3,8-diole (PMD or oil of lemon eucalyptus) and oil of citronella. Two additional compounds are also registered as repellents by EPA (MGK-326, MGK-264); however, they are generally formulated with other active ingredients to enhance repellent activity and are not found alone in repellent products.

All the EPA-registered active ingredients have some repellent activity. Published data indicate that repellent efficacy and duration of protection vary considerably among products and among mosquito species and are markedly affected by ambient temperature, amount of perspiration, exposure to water, abrasive removal, and other factors. In general, higher concentrations of active ingredient in a repellent formulation provide longer durations of protection, regardless of the active ingredient. Lower concentrations are not as long lasting, offering short-term protection only and necessitating more frequent reapplication.

DEET is the most common repellent active ingredient, and its efficacy and toxicity have been the subject of numerous scientific studies. Most authorities recommend repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethylmetatoluamide) as the most reliable and long-lasting active ingredient. DEET repels mosquitoes, ticks, and other arthropods when applied to the skin or clothing. In general, the more DEET a repellent contains, the longer it can protect against mosquito bites. Low concentrations provide shorter-duration protection than higher concentrations; however, there appears to be no added benefit of concentrations of more than 50% DEET. A microencapsulated, sustained-release formulation can have a longer period of activity than liquid formulations at the same concentrations.

DEET has been so widely used that a great deal of testing has been done. Over the long history of DEET use, very few confirmed incidents of toxic reactions to DEET have occurred when the product is used properly. No definitive studies have been published about what concentration of DEET is safe for children. However, reports of serious illness in children after the use of DEET are extremely rare; DEET was used inappropriately in most of these cases. DEET formulations as high as 50% are recommended for both adults and children >2 months of age. The recommendations for DEET use in pregnant women do not differ from those for nonpregnant adults.

Repellents that do not contain DEET have not been tested as thoroughly as DEET-based products, although available data indicate that many offer a duration of protection from biting mosquitoes similar to that provided by similar concentrations of DEET. Used according to label instructions and reapplied as necessary, EPA-registered non-DEET repellents can provide acceptable protection from biting insects and are not expected to pose health risks to people, including children and other sensitive populations. Similar to DEET, summaries from EPA indicate that Picaridin is slightly toxic by eye, dermal and oral routes. PMD (p-menthane-3,8-diol) shows no adverse effects except for eye irritation. IR3535 has been used as an insect repellent in Europe for 20 years with no substantial adverse effects. Toxicity tests show that the IR3535 is not harmful when ingested, inhaled, or used on skin, although it may cause eye irritation if it enters a person's eyes. Oil of citronella shows little or no toxicity, but may cause skin irritation.

Repellents applied according to label instructions may be used with sunscreen with no reduction in repellent activity. Products that combine sunscreen and repellent are not recommended, as sunscreen may need to be re-applied with greater frequency and in greater amounts than are needed to provide protection from biting insects.

Travelers should be advised to check the container to ensure that the product bears an EPA-approved label and registration number. The entire label should be read and the directions followed carefully. For example, if a tick repellent is needed, the product label should list this use. If ticks are not listed, the product may not be formulated for that use. Repellents should be stored away from children's reach.

Travelers should be advised to use the following precautions when using repellents:

- Use enough repellent to cover exposed skin or clothing. Do not apply repellent to skin that is under clothing. Heavy application is not necessary to achieve protection.
- Do not apply repellent to cuts, wounds, or irritated skin.
- After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Do not spray aerosol or pump products in enclosed areas; do not inhale the aerosol.
- Do not apply aerosol or pump products directly to the face. Spray hands and then rub them carefully over the face, avoiding eyes and mouth.
- When using repellent on a child, an adult should apply it to his or her own hands and then rub them on the child. Avoid the child's eyes and mouth and apply sparingly around the ears.

- Do not apply repellent to children's hands. (Children tend to put their hands in their mouths.)

- Do not allow children younger than 10 years old to apply insect repellent to themselves; an adult should do it for them. Keep repellents out of reach of children.

Protect infants younger than 2 months of age from biting mosquitoes by using an infant carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.

Bed nets and repellents should be purchased before traveling and can be found in hardware, camping, sporting goods, and military surplus stores.

When purchasing repellents overseas, look for the EPA-registered active ingredients on the product labels. Permethrin or a similar insecticide, deltamethrin, may be purchased to treat bed nets and clothes.

INJURIES

According to the World Health Organization, injuries are among the leading causes of death and disability in the world, and they are the leading cause of preventable deaths in travelers. An estimated 5 million people died from injuries in 2000, and more than 90% of these injury deaths occurred in lower and middle-income countries. Worldwide, among persons ages 5-44, injuries account for 6 of the 15 leading causes of death.

In 2005, just over 63.5 million Americans traveled outside the United States. The vast majority of these trips occurred without any serious health problems, but fatal and serious injuries occur to Americans every year while traveling internationally. Compared with injuries, infectious diseases, for example, only account for a small proportion (2%) of deaths of overseas travelers.

The U.S. State Department collects data for U.S. citizens who die in a foreign country from non-natural causes for the most recent 3-year period and makes these data available on the State Department website. These deaths are categorized by location where the death occurred, date of death, and cause of death. These deaths should be considered a conservative estimate of the true number of U.S. citizens who die in foreign countries, as some deaths may not be reported to the State Department. The data may not include some deaths of U.S. military or U.S. government officials. Road traffic crashes headed the list of causes (34%), followed by homicide (17%), and drowning (13%). (By comparison to U.S. injury fatalities in 2003, road traffic crashes accounted for 27%, homicide 11%, and drowning 2% of all injury deaths.

Depending on travel destination, duration, and planned activities, other common injury and safety concerns include natural hazards and disasters, civil unrest, terrorism, hate crimes against Americans, falls, burns, poisoning, drug-related overdose, and suicide. If a traveler is seriously injured, emergency care may not be available or acceptable by U.S. standards. Trauma centers capable of providing optimal trauma care are uncommon outside urban areas.

Males are more likely than females to die from injury causes while traveling internationally. Males account for 65% to 75% of all injury deaths to US citizens. Acquaintance rape and sexual assault are among the important risks to women travelers. Travelers should be aware of the increased risk of certain injuries while traveling abroad, particularly in low-income countries, and be prepared to take preventive steps to avoid them.

Road Traffic Injuries

Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of injury-related deaths worldwide. An estimated 3,000 people are killed each day in road traffic crashes involving cars, buses, motorcycles, bicycles, trucks or pedestrians. Each year, another 20 to 50 million people are seriously injured. In 2000, more than 1 million traffic-related deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries, and that number is likely to double by 2020.

According to U.S. State Department data, road traffic crashes are also the leading cause of injury death in U.S. citizens while traveling internationally. An estimated 768 Americans were killed in road traffic crashes from 2003 to 2005. Approximately 13% of these road traffic deaths involved motorcycles, and 7% were pedestrians. A study from Bermuda reported that tourists sustain a much higher rate of motorbike injuries than the local population, with the highest rate in persons age 50-59. Loss of vehicular control, unfamiliar equipment, and inexperience with motorized two-wheelers contributed to crashes and injuries, even for travel at speeds less than 30 mph. Road traffic crashes are also a leading cause of nonfatal injury among U.S. citizens requiring emergency transport back to the United States.

Road traffic crashes are common in foreign tourists for a number of reasons: lack of familiarity with the roads, driving on the opposite side of the road than in one's home country, lack of universal safety standards in vehicles, travel fatigue, poor road surfaces without shoulders, unprotected curves and cliffs, and poor visibility due to lack of adequate lighting, both on the road and on the vehicle. In many low-income areas of the world, unsafe roads and vehicles and an inadequate transportation infrastructure contribute to the traffic injury problem. A safety concern in low-income countries is the mixing of motor vehicles with vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorbike users. In low-income countries, cars, buses, and large trucks commonly all share the same road with pedestrians, motorbikes, bicycles, rickshaws, and even animals. This mixing of road users all in the same travel lane increases the risk for crashes and injuries.

Prevention of Road Traffic Injuries

Health advisors should counsel the traveler to:

- Use safety belts and child safety seats whenever possible. Safety belts reduce the risk of death in a crash by 45 to 60%, child safety seats by 54% and infant seats by 70%. When traveling, rent newer vehicles with safety belts and airbags, and bring your own child safety seats and booster seats from home.
- Rent larger vehicles if possible, for greater protection in a crash.
- Ride only in marked taxis with functional safety belts, ride in the rear seat and consider offering the driver a bonus for driving in a manner you determine "safe."
- Be alert when crossing streets, looking right, left, and then right again and pay close attention to the correct side of the road when driving in countries that drive on the left.
- Wear helmets when riding motorcycles, motorbikes, and bicycles. If helmets are not available at the destination, consider bringing one. Bike riders should bring their own helmets from home. Recognize that unless you ride motorcycles regularly, you will be a novice rider competing in traffic with much more experienced drivers and riders who are familiar with the terrain and the driving culture.
- Avoid excessive alcohol. Alcohol is a risk factor for injuries, especially for pedestrians, drivers, and passengers riding with drinking drivers. Travelers may have a more carefree attitude while away from home that predisposes them to driving under the influence of alcohol. Research in the United States has shown an alcohol-impaired driver has a 17 times greater risk of being involved in a fatal crash.
- Avoid riding in overcrowded, overweight, or top-heavy buses or minivans.
- Check with the Association for International Road Travel for useful safety information for international travelers, including road safety checklists and country-specific driving risks. (www.asirt.org)
- Check with the US State Department which has safety information useful to international travelers, including road safety and security, international driving permits, and insurance. (www.travel.state.gov)
- Check the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention which contains a section on interventions directed to the road, the vehicle and the driver that may help travelers select appropriate prevention strategies.
- Consider hiring a driver familiar with the city and expert in maneuvering through local traffic.

Other Unintentional Injuries

During 2003-2005, drowning, airplane crashes, natural disasters, and other unintentional injuries accounted for over a third of all injury deaths to Americans in foreign countries. Drowning was the leading cause of injury death to Americans visiting countries where water recreation was a major activity, such as Fiji, Dutch Antilles, Aruba, and Costa Rica. Risks for drowning and prevention measures are covered in the Swimming and Recreational Water Safety section. Studies have found that young men are particularly at risk of head and spinal cord injuries from diving into shallow water, with alcohol being a factor in some cases.

Fires can be a substantial risk in low-income countries, where building codes are not present or enforced, emergency access via 9-1-1 equivalent does not exist, and where fire departments are only involved in fire suppression (not fire prevention or victim rescue).

Travel by local commercial air carriers in many countries carries greater risk than appreciated. During 2003-2005, an estimated 83 Americans were killed in airplane crashes in foreign countries. Travel on unscheduled flights, in small aircraft, at night, in inclement weather, and with pilots who have limited flying hours carries the highest risk.

Prevention of Other Unintentional Injuries

- Injuries account for a substantial proportion of evacuations of tourists from low-income countries. Travelers should consider purchasing special health and evacuation insurance if their destinations include countries where there may not be access to good medical care.
- Because trauma care is poor in many countries, victims of injuries can die before reaching a hospital, and there may be no coordinated ambulance services. In remote areas, medical assistance, drugs, and medicines may be unavailable, and travel to the nearest medical facility can take a long time.
- Adventure travel activities, such as mountain climbing, whitewater rafting, and kayaking in low-income countries, are popular with Americans. Because quality emergency trauma care is lacking in many countries, travelers should consider this when planning the difficulty of their adventures.
- Travelers should avoid using local unscheduled small aircraft. Larger aircraft (greater than 30 seats), have usually undergone more strict and regular safety inspections and may provide more protection in the event of a crash. For country-specific airline crash events see www.airsafe.com.
- To prevent fire-related injuries, travelers should select accommodations on the 6th floor or below (fire ladders

generally cannot reach above the 6th floor). If possible, hotels should be chosen that have smoke alarms and sprinkler systems. Improperly vented heating devices may cause poisoning from carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless, odorless gas and by-product of all fossil fuel combustions. Travelers should identify two escape routes from buildings and remember to escape a fire by crawling low under smoke, and covering the mouth with a wet cloth.

Violence-Related Injuries

Violence is a leading worldwide public health problem and a growing concern of travelers. In 2000, about 1.6 million persons lost their lives to violence and only 20% were casualties of armed conflicts. Rates of violent deaths in low- to middle-income countries are more than 3 times those in higher-income countries, although there are great variations within countries, depending on regional demographic differences.

Homicide was the second leading cause of injury death among American travelers in foreign countries, accounting for almost 400 deaths during 2003-2005. For some low-income countries, such as Honduras, Colombia, Guatemala, and Haiti, homicide was the leading cause of injury death for Americans, accounting for 43% to 65% of all injury deaths.

Terrorism-related deaths among U.S. citizens in foreign countries, while alarming, are still relatively rare events and accounted for only 2% of all injury deaths. The vast majority of terrorism deaths among Americans occurred in countries of the Middle East. According to data for 2003-2005 from the State Department, 82% of the injury deaths among Americans in Saudi Arabia and 55% of injury deaths in Israel/West Bank/Gaza were from terrorism.

Suicide is the fourth leading cause of injury death to U.S. citizens traveling abroad. Factors contributing to homicide and suicide may be different while traveling than at home. Unfamiliarity with a destination, not being vigilant to one's surroundings, and alcohol involvement may increase risk of assault and homicide. For longer-term travelers (e.g., missionaries and volunteers), social isolation and substance abuse, particularly in the face of poverty and rigid gender roles, may increase the risk of depression and suicide.

Prevention of Violence-Related Injuries

U.S. travelers are viewed by many criminals as wealthy, naïve targets, who are inexperienced and unfamiliar with the culture and inept at seeking assistance once victimized. Traveling in high poverty areas, those with civil unrest, or in unfamiliar environments at night, increase the likelihood that a U.S. traveler will be the victim of planned or random violence. Drug or alcohol use will also increase the risk.

To avoid violence travelers should limit travel at night, travel with a companion, and vary routine travel habits. They should wear locally available accessories that would associate you with the country-savvy expatriate community, and avoid expensive or provocative clothing or accessories. Avoiding accommodations on the ground floor of hotels and immediately next to the stairs as well as locking all doors and windows are helpful as well. Criminals are less likely to victimize upper-level floors. Travelers can carry a portable door intruder alarm, a smoke alarm, and a rubber door stop that can be used as a supplemental door lock. If confronted, travelers should not resist attackers, but rather give up their car and all valuables.

Other Injury Prevention Tips

The U.S. State Department maintains a website that features a section on International Travel both for tourists and business travelers, which covers current country-specific travel warnings, emergencies, physical security, safety tips, crisis awareness and preparedness, consular information, and special services. When traveling to countries with developing economies or through regions with the potential for geopolitical instability, travelers should check with the State Department or the country's US Embassy for Country-Specific Travel Warnings. These advisories are updated regularly. The State Department issues Consular Information Sheets for every country of the world that include information such as crime, areas of instability, and location of the nearest embassy or consulate in the subject country. Public announcements are used to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term conditions that pose significant risks or disruptions to Americans overseas.

Summary

Injuries and violence are as much a public health problem to travelers overseas as are infectious and chronic diseases, and they are in many ways more deadly. Effective prevention strategies are available, particularly for travelers who find themselves in new environments and who may be more likely to be unaware of risks or complacent in exotic surroundings. Despite greater understanding and increased research efforts in this field, data on the magnitude and severity of injuries are still incomplete or unreliable in many countries. Travel health advisors and other health-care providers should alert the public to the known risks and especially about simple and effective preventive measures to implement during international travel.

SEEKING HEALTH CARE ABROAD

Preparation

In addition to ensuring that all necessary travel documents are complete before departure, travelers should learn what medical services their health insurance will cover overseas, as well as any policy exclusions. While

some major health insurance carriers in the United States may provide coverage for emergencies that occur while traveling, most do not cover medical expenses due to exacerbations of pre-existing medical conditions while abroad. It is also important to know the insurance company's policy for "out-of-network" services, pre-authorization requirements, and need for a second opinion before obtaining treatment. Travelers should carry claim forms and a copy of their insurance policy card, if their insurance policy does provide coverage abroad. The Social Security Medicare program does not provide coverage for medical costs outside the United States, except under very limited circumstances; some Medigap plans available to people enrolled in the original Medicare plan provide limited coverage for emergency care abroad. Furthermore, very few health insurance companies cover the cost of medical evacuation, which can vary widely, ranging from a few thousand dollars to over $100,000, depending on the circumstances. Travelers who will be outside the United States for an extended period of time, who have underlying illnesses, or who are participating in activities involving greater risk for injury are encouraged to consider purchasing a supplemental health insurance policy that provides guaranteed medical payments, assistance via a 24-hour physician-backed support center, and emergency medical transport, including repatriation. A list of travel insurance and medical evacuation companies is available at the U.S. Department of State website at www.travel.state.gov. A brief list of additional assistance companies is also included below; this list is not all-inclusive.

International SOS: http://www.internationalsos.com. International SOS offers comprehensive 24-hour physician-backed medical and security assistance, for which members pay a fee. Membership provides access to on-line services, including medical and safety travel advisories, pre-travel itinerary-based recommendations, and computerized medical records. Insurance policies include medical evacuation and repatriation coverage, access to international clinics that provide primary care, diagnostic, and emergency services, and voluntary patient support programs to assist with medication compliance while abroad.

MEDEX: http://www.medexassist.com. MEDEX travel assistance services include 24-hour access to coordinators who can help locate appropriate medical care providers, coordinate direct payment of covered medical expenses, and assist in other medical, legal or travel situations. Insurance policies include medical evacuation and repatriation services, emergency dental coverage, and assistance with replacement of medications. For an additional fee, subscribers also have access to itinerary-based destination reports, which cover practical topics from local transportation and cultural norms to medical and security alerts.

International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers: http://www.iamat.org. IAMAT is a nonprofit organization established to provide medical information to travelers and to make competent medical care available to them worldwide. IAMAT maintains an international network of physicians, hospitals, and clinics who have agreed to treat IAMAT members in need of medical care while abroad. Membership is free, although a donation to support IAMAT efforts is appreciated. Members receive a directory of participating physicians and medical centers and have access to a variety of travel-related informational brochures.

Travelers with underlying medical conditions also should consider choosing a medical assistance company that allows them to store their medical history before departure, so it can be accessed worldwide if needed. Alternatively, they may carry a letter from their physician listing underlying medical conditions and current medications (including their generic names). Travel insurance companies differ in their policies with regard to coverage for exacerbations of underlying medical conditions. Travelers are encouraged to research this carefully and understand the fine print.

Illness Abroad

If an American citizen becomes seriously ill or is injured abroad, a U.S. consular officer can assist in locating appropriate medical services and notifying friends, family, or employer. Additional resources include the clinic where the traveler received pre-travel health advice and immunizations, embassies and consulates of other countries, hotel doctors, credit-card companies, and multinational corporations, which may offer health-care services for their employees. For informational purposes, Travel Health Online (https://www.tripprep.com) provides a list of travel medicine providers from around the world. Wherever they are posted, lists of providers are obtained from a variety of sources, and the quality of services and the expertise of the providers are not guaranteed. The Inter-national Society of Travel Medicine and the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene also have directories of travel clinics available at their websites (www.istm.org and www.astmh.org, respectively). Although many of these clinics may only provide pre-travel services, some are located outside the United States and can see ill travelers.

The quality of health care from overseas medical centers can be variable, particularly in developing countries. Some foreign hospitals may have out-of-date facilities, while others have highly sophisticated diagnostic and therapeutic equipment similar to that found in the United States. Joint Commission International (JCI) is a division of Joint Commission Resources (JCR), a subsidiary of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), which accredits hospitals in the U.S. JCI helps to improve the quality of patient care in more than 60 countries. Since 1998, 93 health-care facilities have been accredited by JCI in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas. In 2005, WHO designated JCAHO and JCI as the world's first WHO collaborating center dedicated solely to patient safety (5). A list of accredited international health-care facilities is available at the JCI website: http://www.jcrinc.com.

Physicians, hospitals, and most entities in other countries usually require payment in cash or credit card for services rendered rather than bill an insurance company. Travelers with health insurance coverage should carry their insurance card and claim forms, and they should obtain copies of all bills and receipts. If one needs financial assistance, the U.S. consular office can assist with transferring funds from the United States. In extreme circumstances, they may even be able to approve small government loans until private funds are available (7). Travelers must be aware, however, that they are responsible for paying all medical expenses they incur while abroad, including evacuation expenses.

In many developing countries, virtually any drug, including antibiotics and anti-malarial medications, can be purchased without prescription. Travelers should be advised, however, not to buy these medications unless they are familiar with the products. The quality of these drugs may not meet U.S. standards, and they may even be counterfeit or potentially hazardous because of contaminants. In addition, travelers requiring an injection overseas should consider bringing their own injection equipment. At the very least, they should ask if the injection equipment is disposable and insist, if possible, that a new needle and syringe be used.

Blood Transfusions

A blood transfusion can be a life-saving intervention when the blood supply has been appropriately screened and managed. For travelers, transfusion should be required only in rare and unexpected situations of massive hemorrhage, such as severe trauma, gynecologic and obstetric emergency, or gastrointestinal bleeding. Not all developing countries have accurate, reliable, and systematic screening of all blood donations for infectious agents such as malaria, HIV, and hepatitis viruses, which can result in transfusion-related transmission of these infections. According to WHO, more than 70 countries reported to the Global Database on Blood Safety that, during a 12-month period in 2000-2001, they did not test all donated blood for all the major infectious agents transmissible by transfusion, i.e., HIV, hepatitis B and C viruses, and Treponema pallidum (the etiologic agent of syphilis); 66 countries did not have nationally coordinated blood transfusion services or were unable to provide complete national data; and 39 countries reported that, because of interruptions to supplies of test kits, blood was released for clinical use without testing for transfusion-transmissible infections. Additionally, transfusion reactions can occur if the blood products are not adequately characterized for compatibility with the recipient before transfusion. Because of these inherent risks, transfusion should be prescribed only for conditions for which there is no other treatment. People who travel frequently to, or who spend a prolonged period of time in, developing countries, and those whose activities put them at higher risk for serious injury should consider being immunized against hepatitis B virus. When blood transfusion cannot be avoided, travelers should make every effort to ensure that the blood has been screened for transmissible diseases, including HIV. In many cases, resuscitation can be achieved by use of colloid or crystalloid plasma expanders instead of blood. Once stabilized, travelers should consider urgent evacuation for additional management

In the past, travelers planning international itineraries have requested to have their own blood or blood from their home country available to them in case of urgent need. There are no medical indications for travelers to take blood with them from their home countries. The international shipment of blood for transfusion is practical only when handled by agreement between two responsible organizations, such as national blood transfusion services. This mechanism is not useful for the emergency needs of individual travelers and should not be attempted by private travelers or organizations not operating recognized blood programs. The limited storage period of blood and the need for special equipment negate the feasibility of independent blood banking for individual travelers or small groups. Travelers should, however, carry a medical card or other document, showing their blood group and information about any current medical problems or treatment.

Health-Seeking Travel

Traveling abroad for the purpose of improving one's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being is increasing in popularity. Such "health tourism" includes, but is not limited to, traveling for alternative therapies, such as balneotherapy (treatment by baths) and thalassotherapy (treatment based on the use of sea water), religious pilgrimages, and modern medical treatments, including elective surgery.

Therapies that are considered "natural" are not without hazards. Mineral and "holy" waters may not be potable by U.S. standards and have been sources of infectious diseases. Moreover, pilgrims are subject to the same destination-associated risks as other travelers (e.g., heat and altitude-associated illnesses), but many may be traveling in ill-health. Outbreaks of meningitis due to Neisseria meningitidis have occurred in Hajj pilgrims, leading to the requirement that all pilgrims participating in the Hajj be immunized before their departure. With the shift in the timing of the Hajj to winter months, pilgrims may also be at increased risk for respiratory tract infections, such as influenza and a de no virus.

Medical tourism, traveling to another country for medical, dental, or surgical care, is a rapidly growing industry. Traditionally, people who could afford to do so traveled from lower-income counties to more developed countries in order to seek care not available in their home country. In recent years, however, people from higher-income countries have started traveling to lower income countries in seek of lower medical costs and shorter waiting times, Companies offering vacation packages bundled with medical consultations and financing options provide direct-to-consumer advertising over the internet. Enter "medical tourism" into any internet search engine and one will find a variety of tourism packages from travel agencies and

health-care facilities worldwide. Recognizing the potential revenue to be gained through medical tourism, countries such as India, Thailand, Costa Rica, Turkey, and others have promotional campaigns to attract tourists seeking traditional and alternative therapies. Such medical packages often claim to provide high-quality care, but as mentioned above, the quality of health care in developing countries is highly variable, and only a handful of international health-care facilities are accredited by the Joint Commission International.

For the most part, medical insurance companies do not pay for medical procedures performed abroad, although some health insurance providers in the U.S, recognizing the cost benefits, allow policy holders to seek care in Mexico. Another problem with medical tourism is that there is little follow-up care. The patient usually is in the hospital for only a few days and then returns home. Complications are then the responsibility of the health-care system in the traveler's home country. For example, CDC received a number of reports of nontuberculous mycobacterial infections after elective cosmetic surgery abroad. In addition to these postoperative complications, procedures that result in significant blood loss and require transfusion subject the traveler to greater risk for blood-related complications, including compatibility errors and infection with hepatitis viruses or HIV. Finally, countries that offer medical tourism may have weaker malpractice laws than those in the U.S, giving the patient little recourse to local courts or medical boards if something goes wrong.

"Transplant Tourism," a special type of medical tourism, has been increasing as the number of available organs, especially kidneys, is decreasing relative to the increasing demand. A number of international transplantation rings have been discovered, in which people from developing countries are paid for donating organs. This practice is considered legal in only a few countries. Recently the World Health Assembly met to discuss the challenges of transplantation and to address international transplantation guidelines. It encouraged countries to protect those most vulnerable to such exploitation, but there is still no international consensus on incentives for organ donation. In June 2006, the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) and the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) Board of Directors unanimously approved a statement opposing transplant tourism.

Regardless of the reason, people seeking health care abroad should understand that medical systems outside the United States may operate differently from those in the United States and are not subject to the same rules and regulations. Those who are considering seeking health care outside the United States should consult with their local physician before traveling.

THE POST-TRAVEL PERIOD

Many illnesses resulting from a particular exposure during travel may manifest clinically during travel, while others become clinically apparent after travelers have returned home (1-4). Some diseases present immediately after the traveler returns, while others may become evident weeks, months, or even years later. Therefore, obtaining a travel history is crucial when evaluating any ill patient and it is particularly important to obtain an exact itinerary and details of pre-travel preparation, whether chemoprophylaxis was taken, and what exposures the traveler encountered during the trip.

Risk for Travelers

The likelihood of a travel-related illness developing relates to the person's specific travel destination, duration of travel, level of accommodation, underlying medical condition, immunization history, adherence to indicated chemoprophylactic regimens, and especially his or her history of exposure to potential infectious agents during travel. Eliciting a detailed history of the specific locales visited, the timing of travel relative to the onset of symptoms, and specific risk behaviors is essential in determining potential exposure to infectious pathogens and the likely incubation period. Particular groups of travelers are considered at higher risk of developing illness after returning to their place of residence. Adventure travelers and persons visiting friends and relatives overseas are at greater risk for becoming ill, in part because of increased exposure to pathogens. Travelers visiting friends and relatives are often also less likely to seek pretravel advice, obtain vaccinations or take antimalarial prophylaxis.

Clinical Presentation

Most travelers infected abroad become ill within 12 weeks after returning to the United States. However, some diseases, such as malaria, may not cause symptoms for as long as 6-12 months or more after exposure. If travelers become ill after they return home, even many months after travel, they should be advised to tell their physician where they have traveled. In particular, fever in a traveler returned from a malarious area should be considered a medical emergency. The possibility of malaria as a cause of the fever should be evaluated urgently by appropriate laboratory tests and qualified personnel, and testing should be repeated if the initial result is negative. In this regard, primary care physicians, general medicine practitioners, pediatricians, emergency medicine physicians and every health-care worker dealing with a febrile returned traveler from a malaria- endemic area should take the steps to ensure the patient has serial blood smears evaluated and consider hospitalization if there is any need for observation.

In evaluating patients seeking medical care, it is essential to obtain a detailed history of exposures such as insect bites, swimming in freshwater, animal bites, eating raw

meat, seafood, or unpasteurized dairy products, and sexual contacts. Answers to these questions may provide important clues for diagnosis of a particular illness or syndrome in returned travelers. In addition, when suspecting an infectious disease, calculating an approximate incubation period is a useful step in ruling out possible etiologies. For example, fever beginning 3 weeks or longer after return greatly reduces the probability of dengue, rickettsial infections, and viral hemorrhagic fevers in the differential diagnosis. This important step helps focus the differential diagnosis on probable causative agents and eliminates unlikely considerations. As indicated by exposure history, time course of illness, and associated signs and symptoms, initial investigations for febrile travelers may include prompt evaluation of peripheral blood for Plasmodium species; a complete blood cell count with differential; liver enzymes; urinalysis; culture of blood, stool, and urine; and chest radiography. More specific diagnostic assays may be useful initially for diseases such as leptospirosis (serology) and acute HIV infection (RNA viral load). However, sometimes acute- and convalescent-phase serologies are required to confirm a particular diagnosis such as many rickettsial infections.

Since most primary-care physicians have little expertise in tropical diseases, a newly returned, ill international traveler should be evaluated by an infectious disease or tropical medicine practitioner. For assistance in finding a provider who practices clinical tropical medicine, one may access the American Society of Tropical Medicine website for a listing by state at http://www.astmh.org or the International Society of Travel Medicine at http://www.istm.org.

It may be prudent for asymptomatic international travelers who have been abroad for many months or longer, particularly in developing countries, to be screened for certain diseases. The decision to screen for particular pathogens will depend on the travel and exposure history. For example, travelers who have engaged in casual unprotected sex or have received an injection, a body piercing, or a tattoo may be screened for HIV, hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted diseases, and, if not immune, hepatitis B. Sometimes, testing for hepatitis C RNA viral load or HIV RNA viral load is recommended for travelers with high-risk factors presenting with a febrile illness. In addition, performing a tuberculin skin test to identify conversion in those travelers who were previously tuberculin negative is recommended, particularly after a prolonged stay in a developing country. Travelers who have been exposed to freshwater in areas endemic for schistosomiasis should be screened for this infection by serology and stool and/or urine tests. Eosinophilia in a returned traveler suggests the possibility of a helminth infection, of which the most important is strongyloidiasis. If left untreated, this infection may last for the lifetime of the host, and in an immuno-compromised person it has the potential to disseminate.

CDC Health Information for International Travelers

Safe Food and Water

The following is general information concerning prevention of recognition and prevention of food borne illnesses. For more complete travel health information, view the CDC website at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/foodwater.htm

RISKS FROM FOOD AND WATER (DRINKING AND RECREATIONAL)

Contaminated food and water (drinking and recreational) are common sources for the introduction of pathogens into the body. Among the more common infections that travelers can acquire from contaminated food and drink are Escherichia coli infections, shigellosis or bacillary dysentery, giardiasis, cryptosporidiosis, noroviruses, and hepatitis A. Other less common infectious disease risks for travelers include typhoid fever and other salmonelloses, cholera, rotavirus infections, and a variety of protozoan and helminthic parasites (other than those that cause giardiasis and cryptosporidiosis). Many infectious diseases transmitted through food consumption and drinking water can also be acquired directly through the fecal-oral route. Accidental consumption of recreational water from lakes, rivers, oceans, and inadequately treated swimming pools can spread these same diarrheal diseases as well as ear, eye, skin, respiratory, and neurologic infections.

Food

To avoid illness, travelers should be advised to select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, the traveler should be advised to avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese, and to eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot or fruit that has been washed in clean water and then peeled by the traveler personally. Undercooked and raw meat, fish, and shellfish can carry various intestinal pathogens. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature can provide a fertile medium for bacterial growth or be recontaminated by food-handling techniques so should be thoroughly reheated before serving. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness. Travelers should be advised that these recommendations also include eating eggs that have been thoroughly cooked, alone or in sauces, and washing their own hands or using hand gel with more than 60% alcohol prior to eating, after using the bathroom or changing diapers and after direct contact with preschool children, animals or any feces.

The easiest way to guarantee a safe food source for an infant younger than 6 months of age is to have the infant breastfeed. If the infant has already been weaned from the breast, formula prepared from commercial powder and boiled water is the safest and most practical food.

Cholera cases have occurred in people who ate crab brought back from Latin America by travelers. Travelers should be advised not to bring perishable seafood with them when they return to the United States from high-risk areas. Moreover, travelers may assume incorrectly that food and water aboard commercial aircraft are safe. Food and water may be obtained in the country of departure, where items may be contaminated.

Water

Swimming

A variety of infections (e.g., skin, ear, eye, respiratory, neurologic, and diarrheal infections) have been linked to wading or swimming in the ocean, freshwater lakes and rivers, and swimming pools, particularly if the swimmer's head is sub-merged. Water may be contaminated by other swimmers and from sewage, animal waste, and wastewater runoff. Diarrhea and other serious waterborne infections can be spread when disease-causing organisms from human or animal feces are introduced into the water. Accidentally swallowing small amounts of fecally contaminated water can cause illness. Travelers should be warned to try to avoid swallowing water while engaging in aquatic activities. All travelers who have diarrhea should refrain from swimming to avoid contaminating recreational water.

Travelers who swim at freshwater or marine beaches should be advised to avoid swimming or wading 1) at beaches that may be contaminated with human sewage or animal feces (e.g., cattle, sheep, dogs); 2) near storm drains; 3) following heavy rainfall; 4) in freshwater streams, canals, and lakes in schistosomiasis-endemic areas of the Caribbean, South America, Africa, and Asia; 5) in bodies of water that may be contaminated with urine from animals infected with Leptospira; and 6) with open cuts or abrasions that might serve as entry points for pathogens.

Treatment of Water with Tincture of Iodine

Tincture of Iodine	Drops* to be added per quart or liter	
	Clear Water	Cold or Cloudy Water†
2%	5	10

Note: tincture of iodine can come from a medicine chest or first-aid kit

*1 drop = 0.05 milliliter. Water must stand for a minimum of 30 minutes before it is safe to use.

Very turbid or very cold water can require prolonged contact time; if possible, such water should be allowed to stand several hours prior to use. To ensure that *Cryptosporidium* is killed, water must stand for 15 hours before drinking.

In certain areas where fatal primary amebic meningoencephalitis has occurred after swimming in warm freshwater lakes or rivers, thermally polluted areas around industrial complexes, and hot springs, travelers should avoid submerging the head and should wear nose plugs when entering untreated water to prevent water containing the pathogen from getting up the nose and causing infection.

Generally, for infectious disease prevention, pools that contain chlorinated water can be considered safe places to swim if the disinfectant levels and pH are properly maintained. However, some organisms are moderately (e.g., Giardia, hepatitis A, norovirus) to highly (i.e., Cryptosporidium) resistant to chlorine levels commonly found in chlorinated swimming pools, so travelers also should avoid swallowing chlorinated swimming pool water. Poorly maintained swimming pools or spas may not only spread disease from fellow swimmers but may allow amplification of environmental contaminants, such as Pseudomonas or Legionella, to levels that may cause disease. Travelers may choose to take test kits or strips to check pool chlorine and pH levels when traveling.

Drinking

Water that has been adequately chlorinated according to the minimum recommended water treatment standards used in the United States will afford substantial protection against viral and bacterial waterborne diseases. However, chlorine treatment alone, as used in the routine disinfection of water, may not kill some enteric viruses and the parasitic organisms that cause giardiasis, amebiasis, and cryptosporidiosis. In areas where chlorinated tap water is not available or where hygiene and sanitation are poor, travelers should be advised that only the following may be safe to drink: beverages, such as tea and coffee, made with boiled water, canned or unopened bottled beverages, including water, carbonated mineral water, soft drinks, beer, and wine.Where water might be contaminated, travelers should be advised that ice should also be considered contaminated and should not be used in beverages. If ice has been in contact with containers used for drinking, travelers should be advised to clean the containers thoroughly, preferably with soap and hot water, after the ice has been discarded. It is safer to drink a beverage directly from the can or bottle than from a questionable container. However, water on the outside of beverage cans or bottles may also be contaminated. Therefore, travelers should be advised to dry wet cans or bottles before they are opened and to wipe clean surfaces with which the mouth will have direct contact. Where water may be contaminated, travelers should be advised to avoid brushing their teeth with tap water and that locally prepared fruit juice may also contain tap water.

Treatment of Drinking Water

Travelers should be advised of the following methods for treating water to make it safe for drinking and other purposes.

Boiling

Boiling is by far the most reliable method to make water of uncertain purity safe for drinking. Water should be brought to a vigorous rolling boil for 1 minute and allowed to cool to room temperature; ice should not be added. This procedure will kill all common waterborne pathogens. Adding a pinch of salt to each quart or pouring the water several times from one clean container to another will improve the taste.

Chemical Disinfection

Chlorine, in various forms, can also be used for chemical disinfection. However, its germicidal activity varies greatly with the pH, temperature, and organic content of the water to be purified; therefore, it can produce less consistent levels of disinfection depending on the water quality (e.g., turbid water). In addition, some forms of chlorine disinfectant may not be stable through long-term storage or at high temperatures.

Chemical disinfection with iodine, which is not as sensitive as chlorine to pH shifts, is an alternative method of water treatment when it is not feasible to boil water. However, using iodine cannot be relied on to kill Cryptosporidium. Cloudy water should be strained through a clean cloth into a container to remove any sediment or floating matter, and then the water should be treated with iodine. Two well-tested methods for disinfection with iodine are the use of tincture of iodine and tetraglycine hydroperiodide tablets

(e.g., Globaline, Potable-Aqua, or Coghlan's). These tablets are available from pharmacies and sporting goods stores. The manufacturer's instructions should be followed. If water is cloudy, the number of tablets used should be doubled; if water is extremely cold (<41°F), an attempt should be made to warm the water, and the recommended contact time should be increased to achieve reliable disinfection. Iodine treatment of water is intended for short-term use only to avoid over exposure to iodine. When the only water available is iodine treated, it should be used for only a few weeks.

Water Filters

Portable filters currently on the market will provide various degrees of protection against microbes but are generally meant to be used in conjunction with disinfection for greatest protection from pathogens. Reverse-osmosis filters provide protection against viruses, bacteria, and protozoa, but they are expensive and larger than most filters used by backpackers, and the small pores on this type of filter are rapidly plugged by muddy or cloudy water. In addition, the membranes in some filters can be damaged by chlorine in water. Microstrainer filters with pore sizes in the 0.1- to 0.3-µm range can remove bacteria and protozoa from drinking water, but they do not remove viruses. To kill viruses, travelers using microstrainer filters should be advised to disinfect the water with iodine or chlorine after filtration, as described previously. Some filtration kits come with an additional filter effective against viruses. Protozoa can be highly (Cryptosporidium) to moderately (Giardia) resistant to halogen treatment, particularly in cold or turbid water. As a result, filtration or boiling should be considered as a safer alternative to chemical disinfection. A travelers' guide to buying water filters for preventing cryptosporidiosis and giardiasis can be found http://wwwn.cdc.gov. Increased protection can be obtained by using a filter that removes Giardia and Cryptosporidium that is combined with an iodine-impregnated resin which is more effective against bacteria and some viruses.

Filters that are designed to remove Cryptosporidium and Giardia carry one of the four messages below—verbatim—on the package label.

- Reverse osmosis
- Absolute pore size of 1 micron
- Tested and certified by NSF International (formerly the National Sanitation Foundation) Standard 53 or NSF Standard 58 for cyst removal
- Tested and certified by NSF Standard 53 or NSF Standard 58 for cyst reduction

Filters may not be designed to remove Cryptosporidium and Giardia if they are labeled only with these words:

- Nominal pore size of 1 micron
- One-micron filter
- Effective against Giardia
- Effective against parasites
- Carbon filter
- Water purifier
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-approved (Caution: EPA does not approve or test filters.)
- EPA-registered (Caution: EPA does not register filters for Cryptosporidium removal)
- Activated carbon
- Removes chlorine
- Ultraviolet light
- Pentiodide resins
- Water softener

Filters collect organisms from water. Anyone changing cartridges should wash hands afterwards. Filters may not remove Cryptosporidium as well as boiling does, because even good brands of filters may sometimes have manufacturing flaws that allow small numbers of organisms to pass through the filter. In addition, poor filter maintenance or failure to replace filter cartridges as recommended by the manufacturer can cause a filter to fail.

Proper selection, operation, care, and maintenance of water filters are essential to producing safe water. The manufacturers' instructions should be followed. NSF International, an independent testing company, tests and certifies water filters for their ability to remove protozoa, but not for their ability to remove bacteria or viruses.

Few published scientific reports have evaluated the efficacy of specific brands or models of filters against bacteria and viruses in water (10). Until such information becomes available, CDC cannot identify which specific brands or models of filters are most likely to remove bacteria and viruses. To find out if a particular filter is certified to remove Cryptosporidium, contact NSF International by calling 1-877-867-3435; by fax to 313-769-0109; or by writing to 789 North Dixboro Road, P.O. Box 130140, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48113-0140; or online at http://www.NSF.org/certified/DWTU.

As a last resort, if no source of safe drinking water is available or can be obtained, tap water that is uncomfortably hot to touch might be safer than cold tap water; however, proper disinfection and filtering, or boiling is still advised.

CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE (VARIANT) AND BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY (PRION DISEASES)

Description

Since 1996, strong evidence has accumulated for a causal relationship between ongoing outbreaks, primarily in Europe, of a disease in cattle called bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or "mad cow disease") and a disease in humans called variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD). Both disorders, which are caused by an unconventional transmissible agent, are invariably fatal brain diseases with incubation periods typically measured in years. Transmission of the BSE agent to humans, leading to vCJD, is believed to occur via ingestion of cattle products contaminated with the BSE agent; the specific foods associated with this transmission are unknown. However, a recently published case-control study involving 132 vCJD cases in the United Kingdom (UK) showed evidence of an increased risk for vCJD associated with the frequency of consuming beef products likely to contain mechanically recovered meat and head meat (such as burgers, meat pies, and sausages). Bioassays and molecular tests have enabled identification of what World Health Organization consultants have classified as "high-infectivity" and "lower infectivity" tissues of cattle with BSE. The high-infectivity tissues include the brain, spinal cord, retina, optic nerve, and dorsal root and trigeminal ganglia, suggesting that these tissues can pose a relatively high risk of transmission. The lower infectivity tissues include peripheral nerves (e.g., sciatic and facial nerves), tonsils, nictitating membrane (third eye lid), distal ileum, bone marrow, and possibly thigh muscle. The latter tissue from one cow with BSE transmitted disease to highly BSE-sensitive transgenic mice at a rate indicative of trace levels of infectivity.

Occurrence

Human

From 1995 through mid August 2006, a total of 195 human cases of vCJD were reported worldwide, 162 in the UK, 20 in France, 4 in Ireland, 2 in the United States (US), and 1 each in Canada, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Saudi Arabia and Spain. Seven of the non-UK case-patients were most likely exposed to the BSE agent in the UK because of their having resided there during a key exposure period of the UK population to the BSE agent. These latter case-patients were those from Canada, Japan, the US, 1 of the 20 from France, and 2 of the 4 from Ireland. The median age at death from vCJD in the UK has been 28 years and almost all cases have been in persons under age 55 years. The reasons for this age distribution are not well understood but it suggests that older adults are much less susceptible to vCJD through the oral route of exposure than are children and young adults. By year of onset, the incidence of vCJD in the UK appears to have peaked in 1999 and to have been declining thereafter. In contrast, the number of reported cases in France has been increasing since the beginning of 2005. However, the future pattern of these ongoing epidemics remains uncertain. In 2004, a prevalence study of asymptomatic vCJD infections in the UK identified three positive appendices out of a sample of 12,674 surgically removed tonsils and appendices that were satisfactory for analysis. Genetic studies completed on two of the appendices regarded as positive for vCJD revealed that both had a different polymorphism at codon 129 of the prion protein gene than any of the patients with clinical vCJD tested to date, indicating that more people are genetically susceptible to vCJD infection, although not necessarily to the disease, than had been previously determined.

Transfusion of blood contaminated with the vCJD agent is believed to be responsible for at least three vCJD infections reported in the UK, including two blood recipients with clinical vCJD and one infected recipient who died without signs of neurologic disease. These three recipients indicate that the blood of asymptomatic, infected donors can contain infectivity 18 months to 3.5 years before the onset of vCJD disease. The possibility of transfusion transmission of vCJD had prompted the US Food and Drug Administration to publish guidance in 1999 and 2002 outlining a geography-based donor deferral policy to reduce the risk of such transmission in the United States. This guidance document included an appendix that listed European countries with BSE or a possible increased risk of BSE for use in determining blood donor deferrals.

Bovine

From 1986 through July 2006, >97% of BSE cases worldwide were reported from the UK, where the disease was first described. From 2003 through 2005, however, for the first time, Portugal rather than the UK reported the highest total country incidence of indigenous cases of BSE per million bovines aged over 24 months, reflecting the relatively more rapid decline of BSE cases in the UK. As of July 2006, the number of European countries that had ever reported an indigenous BSE case increased to 21. During 2001 through July 2006, four countries outside Europe (Canada, Israel, Japan, and the United States) reported their first indigenous BSE cases, and, except for Israel, other BSE cases in these countries followed.

The reported BSE incidence rates, by country and year, are available on the Internet website of the World Organization for Animal Health, and new information is being generated regularly. As of July 2006, of the countries with at least six reported BSE cases, only four reported that the incidence of BSE had risen in recent years (Canada, Czech Republic, Japan, and Poland).

The identification in 2003 of a BSE case in Canada and the subsequent identification later that year of a BSE case in the United States that had been imported from Canada led to the concern that indigenous transmission of BSE may be occurring in North America. During 2004 through

August 2006, the evidence for such transmission in North America was strengthened by the confirmation of nine additional indigenous North American BSE cases (seven in Canada and two in the United States). In 2004, both countries had implemented new safeguards to reduce the risk for human exposure to BSE. In 2006, Canada also banned cattle tissues capable of transmitting BSE from all animal feeds, pet foods, and fertilizers to enhance its BSE-related feed controls; at least four of the seven Canadian BSE cases reported in 2004 through August 2006 had been born after the 1997 US and Canadian feed bans.

Risk for Travelers

The current risk of acquiring vCJD from eating beef (muscle meat) and beef products produced from cattle in countries with at least a possibly increased risk of BSE cannot be determined precisely. If public health measures are being well implemented, the current risk of acquiring vCJD from eating beef and beef products from these countries appears to be extremely small, although probably not zero. A rough estimate of this risk for the UK in the recent past, for example, was about 1 case per 10 billion servings. Among many uncertainties affecting such risk determinations are 1) the incubation period between exposure to the infective agent and onset of illness, 2) the appropriate interpretation and public health significance of the prevalence estimates of asymptomatic human vCJD infections, 3) the sensitivities of each country's surveillance for BSE and vCJD, 4) the compliance with and effectiveness of public health measures instituted in each country to prevent BSE contamination of human food, and 5) details about cattle products from one country distributed and consumed elsewhere. As of August 2006, despite the apparent exceedingly low risk of contracting vCJD through consumption of food in Europe, the US blood donor deferral criteria focuses on the time (cumulatively 5 years or more) that a person lived in continental Europe from 1980 through the present. In addition, these deferral criteria apply to persons who lived in the UK from 1980 through 1996.

Clinical Presentation

Patients with vCJD are typically much younger than those with sporadic disease. They may present with sensory disturbances and psychiatric problems. Paresthesias, dysarthria, gait disturbances, depression and anxiety are common findings, especially as disease progresses. Tissue diagnosis is required.

Prevention

Public health control measures, such as surveillance, culling sick animals, or banning specified risk materials, have been instituted in many countries, particularly in those with indigenous cases of confirmed BSE, in order to prevent potentially BSE-infected tissues from entering the human food supply. The most stringent of these control measures, including a program that excluded all animals >30 months of age from the human food and animal feed supplies [the Over Thirty Month (OTM) rule], was applied in the UK and appeared to be highly effective. With the decrease in British BSE cases, the OTM rule was replaced in 2005 with a BSE testing regime, and in 2006, the ban on exports of British beef to other members of the European Union was lifted. In June 2000, the European Union Commission on Food Safety and Animal Welfare had strengthened the European Union's BSE control measures by requiring all member states to remove specified risk materials from animal feed and human food chains as of October 1, 2000; such bans had already been instituted in most member states. To reduce any risk of acquiring vCJD from food, concerned travelers to Europe or other areas with indigenous cases of BSE may consider either avoiding beef and beef products altogether or selecting beef or beef products, such as solid pieces of muscle meat (rather than brains or beef products like burgers and sausages), that might have a reduced opportunity for contamination with tissues that may harbor the BSE agent. These measures, however, should be taken with the knowledge of the very low risk of disease transmission, particularly to older persons, as discussed above. Milk and milk products from cows are not believed to pose any risk for transmitting the BSE agent.

Treatment

As of August 2006, treatment of prion diseases remains supportive; no specific therapy has been shown to stop the progression of these diseases.

TRAVELERS' DIARRHEA

Who gets travelers' diarrhea?

Travelers' diarrhea (TD) is the most common illness affecting travelers. Each year between 20%-50% of international travelers, an estimated 10 million persons, develop diarrhea. The onset of TD usually occurs within the first week of travel but may occur at any time while traveling, and even after returning home. The most important determinant of risk is the traveler's destination. High-risk destinations are the developing countries of Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Persons at particular high-risk include young adults, immunosuppressed persons, persons with inflammatory-bowel disease or diabetes, and persons taking H-2 blockers or antacids. Attack rates are similar for men and women. The primary source of infection is ingestion of fecally contaminated food or water.

What are common symptoms of travelers' diarrhea?

Most TD cases begin abruptly. The illness usually results in increased frequency, volume, and weight of stool. Altered stool consistency also is common. Typically, a traveler experiences four to five loose or watery bowel movements each day. Other commonly associated symptoms are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, bloating,

fever, urgency, and malaise. Most cases are benign and resolve in 1-2 days without treatment. TD is rarely life-threatening. The natural history of TD is that 90% of cases resolve within 1 week, and 98% resolve within 1 month.

What causes travelers' diarrhea?

Infectious agents are the primary cause of TD. Bacterial enteropathogens cause approximately 80% of TD cases. The most common causative agent isolated in countries surveyed has been enterotoxigenic Escherichia coli (ETEC). ETEC produce watery diarrhea with associated cramps and low-grade or no fever. Besides ETEC and other bacterial pathogens, a variety of viral and parasitic enteric pathogens also are potential causative agents.

What preventive measures are effective for travelers' diarrhea?

Travelers can minimize their risk for TD by practicing the following effective preventive measures:

- Avoid eating foods or drinking beverages purchased from street vendors or other establishments where unhygienic conditions are present
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat and seafood
- Avoid eating raw fruits (e.g., oranges, bananas, avocados) and vegetables unless the traveler peels them.

If handled properly well-cooked and packaged foods usually are safe. Tap water, ice, unpasteurized milk, and dairy products are associated with increased risk for TD. Safe beverages include bottled carbonated beverages, hot tea or coffee, beer, wine, and water boiled or appropriately treated with iodine or chlorine.

Is prophylaxis of travelers' diarrhea recommended?

CDC does not recommend antimicrobial drugs to prevent TD. Studies show a decrease in the incidence of TD with use of bismuth subsalicylate and with use of antimicrobial chemoprophylaxis. Several studies show that bismuth subsalicylate taken as either 2 tablets 4 times daily or 2 fluid ounces 4 times daily reduces the incidence of travelers' diarrhea. The mechanism of action appears to be both antibacterial and antisecretory. Use of bismuth subsalicylate should be avoided by persons who are allergic to aspirin, during pregnancy, and by persons taking certain other medications (e.g., anticoagulants, probenecid, or methotrexate). In addition, persons should be informed about potential side effects, in particular about temporary blackening of the tongue and stool, and rarely ringing in the ears. Because of potential adverse side effects, prophylactic bismuth subsalicylate should not be used for more than 3 weeks.

Some antibiotics administered in a once-a-day dose are 90% effective at preventing travelers' diarrhea; however, antibiotics are not recommended as prophylaxis. Routine antimicrobial prophylaxis increases the traveler's risk for adverse reactions and for infections with resistant organisms. Because antimicrobials can increase a traveler 's susceptibility to resistant bacterial pathogens and provide no protection against either viral or parasitic pathogens, they can give travelers a false sense of security. As a result, strict adherence to preventive measures is encouraged, and bismuth subsalicylate should be used as an adjunct if prophylaxis is needed.

What treatment measures are effective for travelers' diarrhea?

TD usually is a self-limited disorder and often resolves without specific treatment; however, oral rehydration is often beneficial to replace lost fluids and electrolytes. Clear liquids are routinely recommended for adults. Travelers who develop three or more loose stools in an 8-hour period—-especially if associated with nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, fever, or blood in stools—-may benefit from antimicrobial therapy. Antibiotics usually are given for 3-5 days. Currently, fluoroquinolones are the drugs of choice. Commonly prescribed regimens are 500 mg of ciprofloxacin twice a day or 400 mg of norfloxacin twice a day for 3-5 days.

Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole and doxycycline are no longer recommended because of the high level of resistance to these agents. Bismuth subsalicylate also may be used as treatment: 1 fluid ounce or 2 262 mg tablets every 30 minutes for up to eight doses in a 24-hour period, which can be repeated on a second day. If diarrhea persists despite therapy, travelers should be evaluated by a doctor and treated for possible parasitic infection.

When should antimotility agents not be used to treat travelers' diarrhea?

Antimotility agents (loperamide, diphenoxylate, and paregoric) primarily reduce diarrhea by slowing transit time in the gut, and, thus, allows more time for absorption. Some persons believe diarrhea is the body's defense mechanism to minimize contact time between gut pathogens and intestinal mucosa. In several studies, antimotility agents have been useful in treating travelers' diarrhea by decreasing the duration of diarrhea. However, these agents should never be used by persons with fever or bloody diarrhea, because they can increase the severity of disease by delaying clearance of causative organisms. Because antimotility agents are now available over the counter, their injudicious use is of concern. Adverse complications (toxic megacolon, sepsis, and disseminated intravascular coagulation) have been reported as a result of using these medications to treat diarrhea.

What is CDC doing to prevent travelers' diarrhea?

CDC, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and several Ministries of Health, is working to improve food and water safety around the world. CDC also investi-

gates risk factors associated with acquisition of TD, to assist in identifying more effective preventive measures. CDC continues to monitor antimicrobial resistance in other countries and in the United States. In addition, CDC, in collaboration with international agencies, is working to improve sanitary conditions in foreign accommodations (e.g., tourist resorts) and frequently consults with travel medicine specialists and local and state health departments. CDC is responsible for evaluating sanitation on cruise ships docking in US ports.

How can I learn more about travelers' diarrhea?

Potential travelers should consult with a doctor or a travel medicine specialist before departing on a trip abroad. Information about TD is available from your local or state health departments or the World Health Organization (WHO).

Other information that may be of interest to travelers can be found at the CDC Travelers' Health homepage at www.cdc.gov/travel.

CDC Health Information for International Travelers
Special Needs Travelers

Editor's note: The information presented in this section was condensed from the CDC's *Health Information for International Travelers 2008*, commonly referred to as the Yellow Book. For complete travel health information view CDC's website on the Internet at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel or call CDC's toll free voice information system at 1-877-394-8747.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

The medical preparation of a traveler with a stable, ongoing disability does not differ from that of any other traveler. The keys to safe, accessible travel are that each anticipated international itinerary must be assessed on an individual basis, in consultation with specialized travel agencies or tour operators; that travel health providers be consulted for additional recommendations; and that print and Internet resources be utilized as well.

Air Travel

By law, U.S. air carriers must comply with highly detailed regulations which affect people with disabilities. These do not cover foreign carriers serving the United States. However, all U.S. and non-U.S. carriers are required to file annual reports of disability-related complaints with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The DOT maintains a toll-free hotline (1-800-778-4838, available 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern Standard Time) to provide real-time assistance in facilitating compliance with DOT rules and to suggest customer-service solutions to the airlines. Carriers may not refuse transportation on the basis of disability. Airlines may not require advance notice that a person with a disability is traveling; however, they may require up to 48 hours advance notice for certain accommodations that require preparation time.

International Air Transport Association (IATA) member airlines voluntarily adhere to codes of practice that are very similar to U.S. legislation based on guidance from the International Civil Aviation Organization. However, smaller airlines overseas may not be IATA members. Airlines are obliged to accept a declaration by a passenger that he/she is self-reliant. Medical certificates can be required only in specific situations (for example, if a person intends to travel with a possible communicable disease, will require a stretcher or oxygen, or if unusual behavior is anticipated that may affect the operation of the flight).

When a disabled person requests assistance, the airline is obliged to provide access to the aircraft door (preferably by a level entry bridge), an aisle wheelchair, and a seat with removable armrests. Aircraft with fewer than 30 seats are generally exempt. Airline personnel are not required to transfer passengers from wheelchair to wheelchair, wheelchair to aircraft seat, or wheelchair to lavatory seat. Disabled passengers who cannot transfer themselves should travel with a companion or attendant, but carriers may not without reason require a person with a disability to travel with an attendant.

Only wide-body aircraft with two aisles are required to have fully accessible lavatories, although any aircraft with more than 60 seats must have an on-board wheelchair, and personnel must assist with movement of the wheelchair from the seat to the area outside the lavatory. Wet-acid batteries in electric wheelchairs may require special separate stowage. Airline personnel are not obliged to assist with feeding, visiting the lavatory, or dispensing medication to travelers.

Internationally standardized codes for classifying disabled passengers and their needs are available in all computerized reservations systems. Disabled passengers should use travel agents experienced in the use of the disability coding; it is critical that appropriate codes and inter-airline messages are sequentially entered for all flights. The delivering carrier is always responsible for a disabled passenger until a subsequent carrier physically accepts responsibility for that passenger.

Service Animals

Service animals are not exempt from compliance with quarantine regulations and so may not be allowed to travel to all international destinations. They are also subject to US Animal Import Regulations on return.

Cruise Ships

U.S. companies or entities conducting programs or tours on cruise ships have obligations regarding access for travelers with disabilities, even if the ship itself is of foreign registry. However, all travelers with disabilities should check with individual cruise lines regarding availability of requested or needed items prior to booking. Cruises are available that cater to travelers with special needs, such as dialysis patients.

Useful Links

MossRehab ResourceNet. http://www.mossresourcenet.org/travel.htm

New Horizons Information for the Air Traveler with a Disability. Full text at http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/publications/horizons.htm

American Council of the Blind. http://www.acb.org/resources/travel.html. Lists cruises, books, useful telephone numbers, and links to products for purchase.

Access-Able. http://www.access-able.com. Resource for mature and travelers with special needs.

Non-discrimination on the Basis of Disability in Air Travel. 14 CFR Part 382 (Federal Rules) http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/rules/rules.htm

Security Checkpoints for Travelers with Disabilities. http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds

Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality. http://www.sath.org

THE IMMUNOCOMPROMISED TRAVELER

Risk Assessment in the Immunocompromised Traveler

The main risk for the immunocompromised traveler is a complication or exacerbation of the underlying disease. In addition, endemic infectious diseases that may be acquired at the destination(s) may cause disease of increased severity in the traveler. Each proposed preventive intervention must be examined from two perspectives: 1) safety in the context of the underlying illness and the medication(s) being taken; and 2) the possibility of decreased effectiveness of the intervention. The medical provider should ensure that the traveler under-stands the risks involved of the proposed itinerary, based on his/her medical needs and the traveler's individual tolerance for the risks of the proposed interventions and of the travel itself.

Specific Immunocompromising Conditions

The degree to which a person is immunocompromised should be determined by a health-care provider. For practical purposes, immunocompromised travelers can be categorized into one of four groups, each with a general approach.

Severe Immunocompromise (Non-HIV)

Persons considered as having severe immunosuppression include those who have active leukemia or lymphoma, generalized malignancy, aplastic anemia, graft versus host disease or congenital immunodeficiency, or persons who have received current or recent radiation therapy, solid organ transplant, or bone marrow transplant within 2 years of transplantation; or persons whose transplants are of longer duration but who are still taking immunosuppressive drugs. For solid organ transplants, much higher risk of infection occurs within the first year of transplant, so high-risk travel might be postponed until after that time.

Medications that cause severe immunosuppression include high-dose corticosteroids, alkylating agents (e.g., cyclophosphamide), antimetabolites (e.g., azathioprine, 6-mercaptopurine), transplant-related immunosuppressive drugs (e.g., cyclosporine, tacrolimus, sirolimus, and mycophenolate mofetil), mitoxantrone (used in multiple sclerosis), and most cancer chemotherapeutic agents (excluding tamoxifen). Methotrexate, including low-dose weekly regimens, is classified as severely immunosuppressive, as evidenced by increased rates of opportunistic infections and blunting of responses to killed vaccines.

The immunosuppressive effects of steroid treatment vary, but the majority of clinicians consider a dose equivalent to either >2 mg/kg of body weight or 20 mg/day of prednisone or equivalent for persons who weigh >10 kg when administered for 2 weeks as sufficiently immunosuppressive to raise concern about the safety of vaccination with live-virus vaccines. Corticosteroids used in greater than physiologic doses also can reduce the immune response to vaccines. Vaccination providers should wait at least 1 month after discontinuation of high dose systemically absorbed corticosteroid therapy administered for more than 2 weeks before administering a live-virus vaccine. Tumor necrosis factor (TNF)-blocking agents such as etanercept, adalimumab, and infliximab are known to activate latent mycobacterial infection as well as to increase overall susceptibility to other serious infections. Although the benefits of live viral and bacterial vaccines in persons receiving TNF-blocking agents need to be carefully weighed against potential risk, most practicing clinicians would be reluctant to use such vaccines in this situation. The safety of using live vaccines is unknown for persons taking TNF-alpha blocking agents or interleukin-1 receptor antagonist (IL-1ra).

Severe Immunocompromise Due To Symptomatic HIV/AIDS

Knowledge of a current CD4 lymphocyte count is necessary before consultation with the HIV-infected traveler. HIV-infected persons with CD4 counts lower than 200, history of an AIDS-defining illness, or clinical manifestations of symptomatic HIV are considered to have severe immunosuppression. In newly diagnosed, treatment-naïve patients with CD4 counts lower than 200, travel should be

delayed pending reconstitution of CD4 counts with antiretroviral therapy. This delay will minimize risk of infection and avoid immune-reconstitution illness during the travel.

Asymptomatic HIV Infection

Asymptomatic HIV-infected persons with CD4 counts from 200 to 500 are considered to have limited immune deficits. CD4 counts increased by antiretroviral drugs, rather than nadir counts, should be used in categorizing HIV-infected persons. The exact time at which reconstituted lymphocytes are fully functional is not well defined. To achieve maximal vaccine response with minimal risk, if possible, many clinicians advise a delay of 3 months post-reconstitution before immunizations are administered.

Chronic Diseases with Limited Immune Deficits

These chronic diseases include asplenia, chronic renal disease, chronic hepatic disease (cirrhosis and alcoholism), diabetes, and nutritional deficiencies. Patients taking ribavirin and interferon for hepatitis C infection are at risk for neutropenia, although no clinically apparent increase in opportunistic infections has been described. No information on possible decreased vaccine efficacy or increased adverse events with live viral antigens is available for this group.

Persons Considered To Have No Immunologic Compromise

For the purpose of pre-travel preparation, travelers with the following conditions are not considered to be immunocompromised and should be prepared as any other traveler, although the nature of the previous or underlying disease needs to be kept in mind:

- Corticosteroid therapy under the following circumstances: short or long term daily or alternate day therapy with 20 mg or less of prednisone or equivalent; long-term, alternate day treatment with short-acting preparations; maintenance physiologic doses (replacement therapy); steroid inhalers; topical steroids (skin, ears, or eyes); intra-articular, bursal, or tendon injection of steroids; or if longer than 1 month has passed since high-dose steroids (greater than 20 mg per day of prednisone or equivalent for longer than 2 weeks) have been used. Some experts will wait 2 weeks prior to the administration of measles vaccine following short-term (less than 2 weeks) of therapy with daily or alternate day dosing of greater than 20 mg of prednisone or equivalent.

- HIV patients with >500 CD4 lymphocytes.

- Longer than 3 months since chemotherapy for leukemia/lymphoma or cancer, and the malignancy is in remission. Although some clinicians suggest waiting only 1 month since a last dose of immunosuppressive medications (including TNF-blockers) that are not being used for the chemotherapy of cancer, data are inconclusive. This recommendation may primarily refer to corticosteroids, but it remains unknown exactly how long is safest.

- Bone marrow transplant, if longer than 2 years post-transplant, not on immunosuppressive drugs and without graft versus host disease.

- Definitive data do not exist with respect to autoimmune diseases in the absence of any overlay of immunosuppressive drugs (e.g., systemic lupus erythematosus, inflammatory bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis, or multiple sclerosis). The ACIP's advice for the normal use of all live-virus as well as killed vaccines in multiple sclerosis (MS) patients who are not undergoing a current exacerbation of disease is reinforced by the National MS Society (www.nationalmssociety.org/Sourcebook-vaccinations.asp), a source well respected by MS patients and their physicians. In the past, many practicing neurologists have strongly advised their MS patients against the use of live-virus vaccines at any time. If possible, MS patients should not receive any vaccine for 6 weeks after the onset of a disease exacerbation. Immunomodulatory agents commonly used in MS patients, such as interferons and glatiramer acetate, are not thought to affect vaccine response or safety, but definitive data are lacking.

Vaccine Administration

Travelers with symptomatic HIV or severe non-HIV immunocompromise 1) cannot be given live-virus or live bacterial vaccines; 2) may require additional vaccines when compared with the healthy traveler; and 3) may receive decreased protection from some or all vaccines administered. Use of vaccines for different categories of immunocompromised adults is shown in Table 9-1 (10,11). Overall considerations for travel-related vaccines, such as destination and risk behavior, are the same as for other travelers, although the consequences of not administering an indicated vaccine may be more severe. A high risk for acquiring infections should prompt discussion of trip deferral or consideration of an alternate itinerary.

Vaccine Considerations for Certain Hosts

Transient increases in HIV viral load, which return quickly to baseline, have been observed after administration of several different vaccines to HIV-infected persons. The clinical significance of these increases is not known, but they do not preclude the use of any vaccine. Patients receiving any vaccines while receiving immunosuppressive therapy or in the 2 weeks before starting therapy because of imminent travel are not considered to have received valid vaccine doses. At least 3 months after therapy is discontinued, these patients should be revaccinated with all vaccines that are still indicated at that time.

Vaccine doses received by HIV-infected individuals while CD4 counts are less than 200 should be ignored, and the individual should be revaccinated at least 3 months after immune reconstitution with antiretroviral therapy.

Complete revaccination with standard childhood vaccines should begin 12 months after bone marrow transplantation (BMT). However, MMR vaccine should be administered at 24 months after BMT if the recipient is presumed to be immunocompetent. Influenza vaccine should be administered at 6 months after BMT and annually thereafter. Persons with chronic lymphocytic leukemia have poor humoral immunity even early in the disease course and rarely respond to vaccines.

Household contacts of severely immunocompromised patients may be given live-virus vaccines such as yellow fever, MMR, or varicella vaccine but should not be given live intranasal influenza vaccine.

Considerations for Certain Vaccines

Yellow Fever Vaccine

Severely immunosuppressed travelers should be strongly discouraged from travel to destinations that present true risk of yellow fever. If travel to a yellow fever-endemic zone by such individuals is unavoidable and the vaccine is not given, travelers should be instructed carefully in methods to avoid mosquito bites and should be provided a vaccination waiver letter. If international travel requirements and not true exposure risk are the only reasons to vaccinate an asymptomatic HIV-infected person or a person with a limited immune deficit, the physician should provide a waiver letter on letterhead stationery. Travelers should be warned that vaccination waiver documents may not be accepted by some countries and that if the waiver is rejected, the option of deportation might be preferable to yellow fever vaccination at the destination. Patients with limited immune deficits or asymptomatic HIV should be offered the choice of vaccination and monitored closely for possible adverse effects. As vaccine response may be suboptimal, such vaccines are candidates for serologic testing 1 month post-vaccination. (For information about serologic testing, contact a state health department or the CDC Division of Vector-Borne Diseases [970] 221-6400.) Diligent insect precautions are similarly recommended in this situation. Despite the theoretical risk for neuroinvasion and encephalitis due to vaccine, there are no reports of clinical or epidemiologic studies to evaluate the risk of yellow fever vaccination among severely immunocompromised recipients.

Hib Vaccine

This vaccine is recommended or should be considered for many categories of compromised host. Normally only one dose is recommended for persons older than 5 years of age. This dose may be insufficient to induce immunity in immunosuppressed persons, but the data are insufficient to recommend more than one dose.

Meningococcal Vaccines

Either one of the two vaccines should be considered for individuals who have a variety of compromising conditions, such as asplenia or complement deficiencies. The traveler's primary health-care provider should participate in the decision making in such situations.

Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine

This vaccine is recommended for many categories of compromised host, followed by a single booster. Data are insufficient on the use of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine to recommend its use in compromised older children and adults.

Influenza Vaccine

Influenza is a year-round infection in the tropics, and in the Southern Hemisphere the influenza season is April through September. Immunocompromised patients should be protected according to influenza risk at the destination; they should not be given live intranasal influenza vaccine.

Prevention and Self-Treatment of Infections

Travelers with symptomatic HIV or severe non-HIV immunocompromise are at risk for increased severity of some diseases.

Enteric Infections

The risk for foodborne and waterborne infections among immunosuppressed persons is amplified during travel to developing countries. Many enteric infections, such as those caused by Salmonella, Campylobacter, and Cryptosporidium, can be very severe or become chronic in immunocompromised persons.

Foods and beverages, specifically raw fruits and vegetables, raw or undercooked seafood or meat, tap water, ice made with tap water, unpasteurized milk and dairy products, and items purchased from street vendors, may be contaminated. Immunocompromised travelers need to be extraordinarily diligent in adhering to the food and water precautions recommended for all travelers. Waterborne infections might result from swallowing water during recreational activities. To reduce the risk for cryptosporidiosis and giardiasis, patients should avoid swallowing water during swimming and should not swim in water that might be contaminated (e.g., with sewage or animal waste). Attention to hand hygiene, including frequent and thorough hand washing, is the best prevention against gastroenteritis and is especially important on cruise ships. Hands should also be washed after any contact with animals, particularly young ones, or their living areas. Since diarrhea is a frequent complication of highly active antiretroviral therapy for HIV, such patients should receive counseling regarding the symptoms of enteric infections. Travelers' diarrhea is a frequent problem of immunosuppressed travelers, as it is in the general traveling population; however antibiotic prophylaxis is not routinely recommended.

Malaria

Meticulous malaria prevention should always be advised, as for immunocompetent travelers. Risk of malaria acquisition and severity of malaria are increased in HIV-infected individuals. Malaria infection increases HIV viral load and thus may exacerbate disease progression. Both atovaquone and mefloquine have theoretical potential for competition with protease inhibitors for metabolic enzymes (e.g., cytochrome P450) in the liver, but published evidence for clinically significant interaction is lacking. For malaria treatment, the use of quinidine (and by implication quinine) in patients taking nelfinavir or ritonavir is contraindicated because of potential cumulative cardiotoxicity. However, if a patient has severe and complicated malaria, there may be no choice. In these circumstances, as in others, quinidine should be used only with close monitoring. In addition, very careful monitoring should accompany quinidine therapy in those taking amprenivir, delaviridine, or the lopinavir/ritonavir combination. Ritonavir and ritonavir-containing combination drugs that do not require refrigeration are now available. Several protease inhibitors have been shown in laboratory testing to inhibit the growth of malaria parasites. Asplenic individuals may be at greater risk of acquisition and complications of malaria.

Reducing Risk for Other Diseases

Travelers should be informed about other region-specific risks and instructed in ways to reduce those risks. Sexual activity increases during travel. Safer sex should be reinforced. HIV-infected individuals may still acquire Hepatitis B or C, or, rarely, a superinfection with a nonclade B HIV strain. Geographically focal infections that pose an increased risk of severe outcome for immunocompromised persons include visceral leishmaniasis (a protozoan infection transmitted by the sandfly) and several inhalationally acquired fungal infections (e.g., Penicillium marneffei infection in Southeast Asia and coccidioidomycosis in the Americas).

Many developing areas have high rates of tuberculosis, and obtaining a baseline tuberculin skin test should be considered. Patients with advanced HIV and transplant recipients are frequently taking either primary or secondary prophylaxis for one or more opportunistic infections (e.g., pneumocystis, mycobacteria, and toxoplasma). Complete adherence to all indicated regimens should be confirmed before travel.

General Preparation: Practical Considerations

- Identify specific sources of medical care at the destination before departure and seek medical attention promptly when ill.

- Avoid changes in the medication regimen shortly before travel to ensure that no side effects or complications of a new regimen occur while traveling.

- Verify medical insurance coverage, purchase additional travel insurance if necessary and possible, and understand that many policies will not cover preexisting conditions such as HIV.

- Carry an oversupply of medications, along with copies of prescriptions. Medications should be divided between carry-on and checked baggage, as either one can be lost or stolen. Long-stay travelers should ensure the availability of adequate medication at the destination or a reliable source for its importation.

- HIV-positive travelers should be informed that many countries restrict entry of travelers with HIV infection. Antiretroviral drugs found in baggage at customs may lead to exclusion. Many countries require HIV antibody testing for students, workers, and others applying for long-term entry permits. Travelers should ascertain whether tests conducted in their home countries before travel will be accepted.

- Seek medical assistance early in case of any febrile illness while in a developing country. Asplenic or functionally asplenic patients are predisposed to rapidly overwhelming sepsis with encapsulated bacteria. If competent medical help is not readily available, febrile asplenic patients should carry a broad-spectrum antibiotic such as levofloxacin to initiate self-therapy immediately. Widespread bacterial resistance now precludes most clinicians from recommending oral penicillins.

PREGNANCY AND TRAVEL

Factors Affecting the Decision to Travel Before and During Pregnancy

Reproductive-aged women who may be planning both pregnancy and international travel should consider preconceptional immunization, when practical, to prevent disease in the offspring. Since as many as 50% of pregnancies are unplanned, reproductive-aged women should consider maintaining current immunizations during routine checkups in case an unplanned pregnancy coincides with a need to travel. Preconceptional immunizations are preferred to vaccination during pregnancy, because they decrease risk to the unborn child. A woman should defer pregnancy for at least 28 days after receiving live vaccines (e.g., MMR, yellow fever), because of theoretical risk of transmission to the fetus. However, no harm to the fetus has been reported from the unintentional administration of these vaccines during pregnancy, and pregnancy termination is not recommended after an inadvertent exposure. Vaccination of susceptible women during the postpartum period, especially for rubella and varicella, is another opportunity for prevention, and these vaccines should be encouraged and administered (even for breastfeeding mothers) before discharge from the hospital.

According to the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the safest time for a pregnant woman to travel is during the second trimester (18-24 weeks), when she usually feels best and is in least danger of spontaneous abortion or premature labor. A woman in the third trimester should be advised to stay within 300 miles of home because of concerns about access to medical care in case of problems such as hypertension, phlebitis, or premature labor. Pregnant women should be advised to consult with their health-care providers before making any travel decisions. Collaboration between travel health experts and obstetricians is helpful in weighing benefits and risks based on destination and recommended preventive and treatment measures. Table 9-2 lists relative contraindications to international travel during pregnancy (2,3). In general, pregnant women with serious underlying illnesses should be advised not to travel to developing countries.

Preparation for Travel During Pregnancy

Once a pregnant woman has decided to travel, a number of issues need to be considered before her departure.

- An intrauterine pregnancy should be confirmed by a clinician and ectopic pregnancy excluded before beginning any travel.
- Health insurance should provide coverage while abroad and during pregnancy. In addition, a supplemental travel insurance policy and a prepaid medical evacuation insurance policy should be obtained, although most may not cover pregnancy-related problems.
- Check medical facilities at the destination. For a woman in the last trimester, medical facilities should be able to manage complications of pregnancy, toxemia, and cesarean sections.
- Determine beforehand whether prenatal care will be required abroad and, if so, who will provide it. The pregnant traveler should also make sure prenatal visits requiring specific timing are not missed.
- Determine, before traveling, whether blood is screened for HIV and hepatitis B at the destination. The pregnant traveler should also be advised to know her blood type, and Rh-negative pregnant women should receive the anti-D immune globulin (a plasma-derived product) prophylactically at about 28 weeks' gestation. The immune globulin dose should be repeated after delivery if the infant is Rh positive.

General Recommendations for Travel

A pregnant woman should be advised to travel with at least one companion; she should also be advised that, during her pregnancy, her level of comfort may be adversely affected by traveling. Typical problems of pregnant travelers are the same as those experienced by any pregnant woman: fatigue, heartburn, indigestion, constipation, vaginal discharge, leg cramps, increased frequency of urination, and hemorrhoids (3). During travel, pregnant women can take preventive measures including avoidance of gas-producing food or drinks before scheduled flights (entrapped gases can expand at higher altitudes) and periodic movement of the legs (to decrease venous stasis) (3). Pregnant women should always use seatbelts while seated, as air turbulence is not predictable and may cause significant trauma.

Signs and symptoms that indicate the need for immediate medical attention are vaginal bleeding, passing tissue or clots, abdominal pain or cramps, contractions, ruptured membranes, excessive leg swelling or pain, headaches, or visual problems.

Greatest Risks for Pregnant Travelers

Motor vehicle accidents are a major cause of morbidity and mortality for pregnant women. When available, safety belts should be fastened at the pelvic area. Lap and shoulder restraints are best; in most accidents, the fetus recovers quickly from the safety belt pressure. However, even after seemingly mild blunt trauma, a physician should be consulted.

Hepatitis E, which is not vaccine preventable, can be especially dangerous for pregnant women, for whom the case-fatality rate is 17%-33%. Therefore, pregnant women should be advised that the best preventive measures are to avoid potentially contaminated water and food, as with other enteric infections.

Scuba diving should be avoided in pregnancy because of the risk of decompression syndrome in the fetus.

Specific Recommendations for Pregnancy

Air Travel During Pregnancy

Commercial air travel poses no special risks to a healthy pregnant woman or her fetus. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) states that women with healthy, single pregnancies can fly safely up to 36 weeks' gestation. The lowered cabin pressures (kept at the equivalent of 1,524-2,438 meters [5,000-8,000 feet]) affect fetal oxygenation minimally because of the favorable fetal hemoglobin-oxygen dynamics. If required for some medical indications, supplemental oxygen should be arranged in advance. Severe anemia, sickle-cell disease or trait, or history of thrombophlebitis are relative contraindications to flying. Pregnant women with placental abnormalities or risks for premature labor should avoid air travel. Each airline has policies regarding pregnancy and flying; it is always safest to check with the airline when booking reservations, because some will require medical forms to be completed. Domestic travel is usually permitted until the pregnant traveler is in week 36 of gestation, and international travel may be permitted until weeks 32-

35, depending on the airline. A pregnant woman should be advised always to carry documentation stating the expected day of delivery.

Airport security radiation exposure is minimal for pregnant women and has not been linked to an increase in adverse outcomes for unborn children to date. However, because of early reports of a possible association of radiation exposure during pregnancy and subsequent increased risk of childhood leukemia and cancer, a pregnant passenger may request a hand or wand search rather than being exposed to the radiation of the airport security machines.

An aisle seat at the bulkhead will provide the most space and comfort, but a seat over the wing in the midplane region will give the smoothest ride. A pregnant woman should be advised to walk every half hour during a smooth flight and flex and extend her ankles frequently to prevent phlebitis. The safety belt should always be fastened at the pelvic level. Dehydration can lead to decreased placental blood flow and hemoconcentration, increasing risk of thrombosis. Thus, pregnant women should drink plenty of fluids during flights. For pregnant flight attendants and pilots, working air travel is restricted by most airlines by 20 weeks gestation.

Travel to High Altitudes During Pregnancy

Acclimatization responses at altitude act to preserve fetal oxygen supply, but all pregnant women should avoid altitudes higher than 3,658 meters (12,000 feet). In addition, altitudes higher than 2,500 meters (8,200 feet) should be avoided in late or high-risk pregnancy. Pregnant women who must travel to high altitude should postpone exercise until acclimatized.

Food- and Waterborne Illness During Pregnancy

It is especially important for pregnant women to adhere strictly to food and water precautions in developing countries because the consequences may be more severe than diarrhea and may have serious sequelae (e.g., toxoplasmosis, listeriosis).

Suspect drinking water should be boiled to avoid long-term use of iodine-containing purification systems. Iodine tablets can probably be used for travel up to several weeks, but congenital goiters have been reported in association with administration of iodine-containing drugs during pregnancy. Oral rehydration is the mainstay of therapy for travelers' diarrhea. Bismuth subsalicylate compounds are contraindicated because of the theoretical risks of fetal bleeding from salicylates and teratogenicity from the bismuth.

The combination of kaolin and pectin may be used, and loperamide should be used only when necessary. The antibiotic treatment of travelers' diarrhea during pregnancy can be complicated. Azithromycin or an oral third-generation cephalosporin may be the best options for treatment if an antibiotic is needed.

Malaria During Pregnancy

Malaria in pregnancy carries significant morbidity and mortality for both the mother and the fetus. Pregnant women should be advised to avoid travel to malaria-endemic areas if possible. Women who do choose to go to malarious areas can reduce their risk of acquiring malaria by following several preventive approaches. Because no preventive method is 100% effective, they should seek care promptly if symptoms of malaria develop. Pregnant women traveling to malarious areas should 1) remain indoors between dusk and dawn, if mosquitoes are active outdoors during this time; 2) if outdoors at night, wear light-colored clothing, long sleeves, long pants, and shoes and socks; 3) stay in well-constructed housing with air-conditioning and/or screens; 4) use permethrin-impregnated bed nets; and 5) use insect repellents containing DEET as recommended for adults, sparingly, but as needed. Pyrethrum-containing house sprays may also be used indoors if insects are a problem. If possible, remaining in cities or areas of cities that are at low (or lower) risk for malaria can help reduce the chances of infection. Pregnant travelers should be under the care of providers knowledgeable in the care of pregnant women in tropical areas.

For pregnant women who travel to areas with chloroquine-sensitive Plasmodium falciparum malaria, chloroquine has been used for malaria chemoprophylaxis for decades with no documented increase in birth defects. For pregnant women who travel to areas with chloroquine-resistant P. falciparum, mefloquine should be recommended for chemoprophylaxis during the second and third trimesters. For women in their first trimester, most evidence suggests that mefloquine prophylaxis causes no significant increase in spontaneous abortions or congenital malformations if taken during this period.

Because there is no evidence that chloroquine and mefloquine are associated with congenital defects when used for prophylaxis, CDC does not recommend that women planning pregnancy need to wait a specific period of time after their use before becoming pregnant. However, if women or their health-care providers wish to decrease the amount of antimalarial drug in the body before conception, After two, four, and six half-lives, approximately 25%, 6%, and 2% of the drug remain in the body.

Doxycycline and primaquine are contraindicated for malaria prophylaxis during pregnancy, because both may cause adverse effects on the fetus. Malaria must be treated as a medical emergency in any pregnant traveler. A woman who has traveled to an area that has chloroquine-resistant strains of P. falciparum should be treated as if she as illness caused by chloroquine-resistant organisms. Because of the serious nature of malaria, quinine or intravenous quinidine should be initiated, and the case should be managed in consultation with an infectious disease or tropical medicine specialist. The management of malaria in a pregnant woman should include frequent blood glucose determinations and careful fluid monitoring: these requirements may necessitate intensive care supervision.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Risk to a developing fetus from vaccination of the mother during pregnancy is primarily theoretical. No evidence exists of risk from vaccinating pregnant women with inactivated virus or bacterial vaccines or toxoids. The benefits of vaccinating pregnant women usually outweigh potential risks when the likelihood of disease exposure is high, when infection would pose a risk to the mother or fetus, and when the vaccine is unlikely to cause harm.

The following information is intended for women who may require immunizations during pregnancy. Pregnant travelers may visit areas of the world where diseases eliminated by routine vaccination in the United States are still endemic and therefore may require immunizations before travel.

Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG)

BCG vaccine, used outside the United States for the prevention of tuberculosis, can theoretically cause disseminated disease and thus affect the fetus. Although no harmful effects to the fetus have been associated with BCG vaccine, its use is not recommended for U.S. travelers. Skin testing for tuberculosis exposure before and after travel is preferable when the risk is high.

Diphtheria-Tetanus (+/- Pertussis)

The combination diphtheria-tetanus primary series immunization should be given if the pregnant traveler has not been immunized or is only partially immunized. Previously vaccinated pregnant women who have not received a Td vaccination within the previous 10 years should receive a booster dose. However, if they have not received one dose of Tdap as an adult, this preparation should be used instead of Td. Although no evidence suggests teratogenicity with tetanus or diphtheria toxoids or with the use of Tdap, the preference would be for either of their administration to occur during the second or third trimester.

Hepatitis A

HAV is usually no more severe during pregnancy than at other times and does not affect the outcome of pregnancy. There have been reports, however, of acute fulminant disease in pregnant women during the third trimester, when there is also an increased risk of premature labor and fetal death. These events have occurred in women from developing countries and might have been related to underlying malnutrition.

HAV is rarely transmitted to the fetus, but transmission can occur during viremia or from fecal contamination at delivery.

Hepatitis B

The hepatitis B vaccine may be administered during pregnancy and is recommended for pregnant women at risk for hepatitis B virus infection.

Immune Globulin Preparations

No known fetal risk exists from passive immunization of pregnant women with immune globulin preparations. Administration of IG can be used pre-exposure as protection against hepatitis A or for postexposure management for other viral diseases if warranted.

Influenza

Because of the increased risk for influenza-related complications, women who will be pregnant during the influenza season of their travel destination should be vaccinated with inactivated vaccine, when vaccine is available. Vaccine can be administered in any trimester and is especially recommended for those with chronic diseases and an increased risk of influenza-related complications. Data from influenza immunization with inactivated vaccine of more than 2,000 pregnant women have not demonstrated an association with adverse fetal effects. Live attenuated influenza vaccines (LAIV), such as certain nasal preparations, are contraindicated during pregnancy.

Japanese Encephalitis

No information is available on the safety of Japanese encephalitis vaccine during pregnancy. It should not be routinely administered during pregnancy. Pregnant women who must travel to an area where the risk of JE is high should be vaccinated when the theoretical risks are outweighed by the risk of infection to the mother and developing fetus.

Measles, Mumps, and Rubella

The measles vaccine, as well as the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines in combination, are live-virus vaccines and are contraindicated in pregnancy (9,10). However, the Vaccine in Pregnancy Registry recently documented that no evidence of congenital rubella syndrome occurred in the offspring of more than 200 women who received rubella vaccine 3 months before to 3 months after conception. Rubella-susceptible women who are pregnant should be counseled about the potential risk for congenital rubella syndrome and the importance of being vaccinated after they are no longer pregnant. Because of the increased incidence of measles in children in developing countries and because of measles' communicability and potential for causing serious consequences in adults, susceptible women should delay traveling until after delivery, when immunization can be given safely. If an unprotected (without a history of physician-diagnosed measles or without at least two doses of measles vaccine) pregnant woman has a documented exposure to measles, IG should be given within 6 days to prevent illness.

Meningococcal Meningitis

The polyvalent meningococcal meningitis vaccine (MPSV4) can be administered during pregnancy if the woman is entering an area where the disease is epidemic. Studies of vaccination during pregnancy have not documented adverse effects among either pregnant women or neonates and have shown the vaccine to be efficacious. Based on data from studies involving the use of the

polysaccharide meningococcal vaccines administered during pregnancy, altering meningococcal vaccination recommendations during pregnancy is unnecessary. The conjugate (MCV4) meningococcal vaccine is safe and immunogenic among nonpregnant persons ages 11-55, but no data are available on the safety of MCV4 during pregnancy. Women of childbearing age who become aware that they were pregnant when they received MCV4 vaccination should contact their health-care provider or the vaccine manufacturer.

Pneumococcal (PPV23)

The safety of pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine during the first trimester of pregnancy has not been evaluated, although no adverse fetal consequences have been reported after inadvertent vaccination during pregnancy. Women with chronic diseases (such as asplenia or metabolic, renal, cardiac, or pulmonary diseases), smokers, and immunosuppressed women should consider vaccination.

Poliomyelitis

There is no convincing evidence of adverse effects of inactivated poliovirus vaccine in pregnant women or developing fetuses. However, if not previously immunized, a pregnant woman traveling to an area where polio still occurs should be advised to have at least two doses of vaccine one month apart before departure, in accordance with the recommended schedules for adults. The pregnant traveler who is not protected against poliomyelitis has increased risks to both herself and her unborn fetus.

Paralytic disease can occur with greater frequency when infection develops during pregnancy. Anoxic fetal damage has also been reported, with up to 50% mortality in neonatal infection.

Rabies

Because of the potential consequences of inadequately treated rabies exposure and because there is no indication that fetal abnormalities have been associated with cell culture rabies vaccines, pregnancy is not considered a contraindication to rabies postexposure prophylaxis. If the risk of exposure to rabies is substantial, preexposure prophylaxis may also be indicated during pregnancy.

Typhoid

No data are available on the use of either typhoid vaccine in pregnancy. The Vi capsular polysaccharide vaccine (ViCPS) injectable preparation is the vaccine of choice during pregnancy because it is inactivated and requires only one injection. The oral Ty21a typhoid vaccine is not absolutely contraindicated during pregnancy, but it is live attenuated and thus has theoretical risk.

Varicella

Women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should not receive the varicella vaccine. Nonimmune pregnant women should consider postponing travel until after delivery when the vaccine can be given safely. Varicella zoster immune globulin (VZIG) should be strongly considered within 96 hours of exposure for susceptible, pregnant women who have been exposed. However, VZIG may not be readily available.

Yellow Fever

The safety of yellow fever vaccination during pregnancy has not been established, and the vaccine should be administered to a pregnant woman only if travel to an endemic area is unavoidable and if an increased risk for exposure exists. In these instances, the vaccine should be administered, and infants born to these women should be monitored closely for evidence of congenital infection and other possible adverse effects resulting from yellow fever vaccination. Further, serologic testing to document an immune response to the vaccine can be considered, because the seroconversion rate for pregnant women may be lower than in other healthy adults.

If traveling to or transiting regions within a country where the disease is not a current threat but where policy requires a yellow fever vaccination certificate, pregnant travelers should be advised to carry a physician's waiver, along with documentation (of the waiver) on the immunization record.

The Travel Health Kit During Pregnancy

Additions and substitutions to the usual travel health kit need to be made during pregnancy. Talcum powder, a thermometer, oral rehydration salt packets, prenatal vitamins, an antifungal agent for vaginal yeast, acetaminophen, and a sunscreen with a high SPF should be carried. Women in the third trimester may be advised to carry a blood-pressure cuff and urine dipsticks so they can check for proteinuria and glucosuria, both of which would require prompt medical attention. Antimalarial and antidiarrheal self-treatment medications should be evaluated individually, depending on the traveler's itinerary and her health history. Most medications should be avoided, if possible.

BREASTFEEDING AND TRAVEL

Deciding About Travel and Breastfeeding

Travel need not be a reason to stop breastfeeding. A mother traveling with a nursing infant may find breastfeeding makes travel easier than it would be if traveling with a formula-fed infant. A mother traveling without her nursing infant or child may take steps to preserve breastfeeding and maintain her milk supply while separated. The major factors for a mother traveling without her nursing infant or child to consider are the amount of time she has to prepare for her trip, her flexibility of time while traveling, her options for storing expressed milk while traveling, the duration of her travel, and her destination. Mothers planning travel away from a nursing infant may

access information from her pediatrician or from an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC). Mothers may find an IBCLC in their area at http://gotwww.net/ilca/ or http://www.iblce.org/old.

A mother who travels without her nursing infant or child may find her milk supply somewhat diminished upon her return. This does not need to be a reason to stop breastfeeding. A mother who returns to her nursing infant or child can continue breastfeeding and supplement as needed until her milk supply returns to its prior level. Often, after returning from travel, a nursing infant or child will help bring her milk supply to its prior level. Occasionally, however, nursing infants or children who are separated from their mother for an extended time have difficulty transitioning back to breastfeeding.

Preparation for Travel While Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding mothers may wish to find local breastfeeding support before beginning travel and keep pertinent contact information handy throughout the trip. La Leche League International has breastfeeding experts in many countries (http://www.lalecheleague.org).

A mother traveling with a nursing infant younger than 6 months old need not plan to supplement breastfeeding because of travel. Breastfed infants do not require water supplementation, even in extreme heat environments. While traveling, the best way to both maintain a mother's milk supply and ensure ideal nutrition and hydration for the child is frequent, unrestricted nursing opportunities. Breastfeeding also protects the infant from water that is possibly contaminated.

A breastfeeding mother traveling without her nursing infant or child may wish to produce and store a supply of milk to be fed to the infant or child during her absence by another caregiver. Building a supply to be fed in her absence takes time and patience and is most successful when begun gradually, many weeks in advance of her departure. It is also important to consider that infants who have never consumed milk from a bottle or cup need opportunities to practice this skill with another caregiver prior to the mother's departure.

Maintaining Lactation During Travel

A breastfeeding mother traveling without her nursing infant or child who does not build a supply of milk to be fed in her absence can still maintain her milk supply while she is traveling. These efforts will help maintain her breastfeeding relationship for when she and her infant or child can be together again.

Milk expression approximately every 3-4 hours for infants less than 6 months old, less frequently for older infants and children, helps a mother maintain her milk supply and provides milk that she may choose to bring home for her infant or child. A mother who will be separated from her infant or child for a long period of time while traveling might have a difficult time maintaining lactation. In general, separation of a week or less does not pose a major problem for a mother wishing to maintain breastfeeding while separated from her infant or child. This time is more flexible as the child becomes older and complementary foods play a larger role in the child's diet.

Depending on her destination, a mother may need to plan for milk expression without a reliable electrical power source. Expressing milk without an electrical power source is less reliable for maintaining milk supply over a long period of time than expressing milk with a hospital-grade electric breast pump. Intermittent milk expression can be successful with battery and manual breast pumps, as well as manual (hand) expression. Manual (hand) expression is the most hygienic way to collect milk. Mothers planning on travel to locations without reliable electrical power should learn and practice manual expression techniques well before travel is to begin.

The destination for travel can impact decisions for milk storage. Expressed milk should be stored in clean, tightly sealed containers. Any container that may be cleaned well with hot, soapy water and that seals tightly and reliably may be used. Once milk is cooled, a cold chain needs to be maintained until the milk is consumed. Refrigerated milk can subsequently be frozen; however, once frozen milk is fully thawed, it should be used within 1 hour.

Handling expressed breast milk does not require special medical precautions. Breast milk may be stored in any refrigerator or other location where other foods would be safe and may be stored with other foods. Breast milk requires no special labeling, it is not considered a biohazard, and the universal precautions for prevention of transmission of human immunodeficiency virus, hepatitis B virus, and other blood borne pathogens (known widely as "Universal Precautions") do not apply to it.

Immunizations for Breastfeeding Mothers During Travel

Most nursing mothers may be immunized routinely, based on recommendations for the specific travel itinerary. Neither inactivated nor live vaccines administered to a lactating woman affect the safety of breast-feeding for mothers or infants. Breast-feeding does not adversely affect immunization and is not a contraindication for any vaccine. However, there is a theoretical risk to the infant with the use of yellow fever vaccine in breastfeeding mothers. Vaccination of nursing mothers should be avoided because of the theoretical risk for the transmission of 17D virus to the breastfed infant. When travel of nursing mothers to high-risk yellow fever-endemic areas cannot be avoided or postponed, such persons can be vaccinated. Breastfed infants should be vaccinated according to routine recommended schedules.

Medications for Breastfeeding Mothers During Travel

Breastfeeding mothers should take the usual adult dose of the antimalarial drug appropriate for the itinerary. Nursing mothers with infants weighing less than 5 kg (approximately 11 pounds) should not take atovaquone/proguanil (Malarone) for prophylaxis. Data are limited on the use of doxycycline during breastfeeding; however, most experts consider its short-term use compatible with breastfeeding. Primaquine is contraindicated during lactation unless both the mother and breastfed infant have normal G6PD levels. It is critical to note that breastfed infants require their own antimalarial medication if traveling to an endemic area. Mother's milk does not provide malaria protection, even when the mother is taking an adequate medication and dose for herself.

Traveling with a Breastfed Infant

A mother traveling with a nursing infant or child may wish to consider a sling or other soft infant carrier for use while traveling. This helps maintain breast-feeding by increasing opportunities for unrestricted nursing and increasing skin-to-skin contact with the child, while also protecting the child from environmental hazards and easing the burden of carrying a child. Infants are particularly susceptible to painful pressure due to eustachian tube collapse as a result of pressure changes during air travel. Breastfeeding during ascent and descent often relieves this discomfort.

X rays used in airport screenings have no effect on breastfeeding, breast milk, or the process of lactation. Expressed breast milk does not need to be declared at US Customs when returning to the United States. However, recommendations regarding the carrying of liquids on board aircraft are subject to change and should be checked prior to travel. Breast pumps are usually considered personal items during air travel and may be carried on and stowed underneath the passenger seat, similar to a laptop computer, purse, or diaper bag. It is always prudent to check current airline security guidelines.

A nursing mother with travelers' diarrhea should increase her own fluid intake and frequency of breastfeeding; she should not stop breastfeeding because of travelers' diarrhea. Breastfed infants are protected from travelers' diarrhea both because breastfeeding protects them from consuming contaminated items and because a nursing mother does not pass on travelers' diarrhea to her infant via breastfeeding. The use of oral rehydration salts (ORS) is fully compatible with breastfeeding.

In addition to the usual contents of the travel health kit, breastfeeding mothers may wish to include an antifungal cream, which can be used to treat periareolar yeast infections.

VACCINE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN

For all children, decisions regarding vaccinations should be made in cooperation with a health-care provider who will review the traveler's medical history and itinerary. Each traveler should be up to date with their routine childhood vaccinations because many of the diseases prevented by these vaccines are rare or non-existent in the United States but are still common in other parts of the world. Proof of yellow fever vaccination is required for entry into certain countries. Recommendations for other vaccines and immunobiologics depend on the traveler's medical history and itinerary and do not alter the schedule for recommended childhood immunizations. More information on specific recommendations can be found on the CDC website at wwwn.cdc.gov/travel.

Modifying the Immunization Schedule for Inadequately Immunized Infants and Younger Children Before International Travel

Several factors influence recommendations for the age at which a vaccine is administered, including age-specific risks of the disease and its complications, the ability of people of a given age to develop an adequate immune response to the vaccine, and potential interference with the immune response by passively transferred maternal antibody. Vaccines are recommended for the youngest age group at risk for developing the disease whose members are known to develop an adequate antibody response to vaccination.

The routine immunization recommendations and schedules for infants and children in the United States do not provide specific guidelines for those traveling internationally before the age when specific vaccines and toxoids are routinely recommended. When deciding when to travel with a young infant or child, parents should be advised that the earliest opportunity to receive routinely recommended immunizations in the United States (except for the dose of hepatitis B vaccine at birth) is at 6 weeks of age. Because additional vaccinations may be recommended for international travel, parents should also be aware of the youngest age at which these vaccinations can be administered. The following section provides guidance for active and passive immunization of such infants and children.

Routine Infant and Childhood Vaccinations

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is a cause of acute and chronic hepatitis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma. There are more than 200 million chronically infected persons worldwide; the risk of chronic infection is highest when

infection occurs in infancy or childhood and declines with age. Infants and children who have not previously been vaccinated and who are traveling to areas with intermediate and high HBV endemicity are at risk if they are directly exposed to blood (or body fluids containing blood) from the local population. Circumstances in which HBV transmission could occur in children include receipt of blood transfusions not screened for HBV surface antigen (HBsAg), exposure to unsterilized medical or dental equipment, or continuous close contact with local residents who have open skin lesions (impetigo, scabies, or scratched insect bites).

Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all infants in the United States, with the first dose administered soon after birth and before hospital discharge (3). Infants and children who will travel should receive the three doses of HBV vaccine before traveling. The interval between doses one and two should be at least 4 weeks. Between doses two and three, the interval should be a minimum of 8 weeks; the interval between doses one and three should be at least 16 weeks. The third dose should not be given before the infant is at least 24 weeks of age. Adolescents not previously vaccinated with hepatitis B vaccine should be vaccinated at 11-12 years of age. For adolescents, the usual schedule is two doses separated by at least 4 weeks, followed by a third dose 4-6 months after the second dose.

Diphtheria and Tetanus Toxoid and Pertussis Vaccine

Diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis each occur worldwide and are endemic in countries with low immunization levels. Infants and children leaving the United States should be immunized before traveling. Optimum protection against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis is achieved with at least three but preferably four doses of diphtheria and tetanus toxoids and acellular pertussis vaccine (DTaP). The usual primary series includes four doses given at 2, 4, 6, and 15-18 months of age. A fifth (booster) dose is recommended when the child is 4-6 years of age. The fifth dose is not necessary if the fourth dose in the primary series was given after the child's fourth birthday. For infants and children younger than 7 years of age, if an accelerated schedule is required to complete the series before travel, the schedule may be started as soon as the infant is 6 weeks of age, with the second and third doses given 4 weeks after each preceding dose. The fourth dose should not be given before the infant is 12 months of age and should be separated from the third dose by at least 6 months. The fifth (booster) dose should not be given before the child is 4 years of age. Two doses of DTaP received at intervals at least 4 weeks apart can provide some protection; however, a single dose offers little protective benefit. Parents should be informed that infants and children who have not received at least three doses of DTaP might not be fully protected against pertussis.

Haemophilus influenzae Type b Conjugate Vaccine

Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) is an endemic disease worldwide that can cause fatal meningitis, epiglottitis, and other invasive diseases. Infants and children should have optimal protection before traveling. Routine Hib vaccination beginning at 2 months of age is recommended for all U.S. children. The first dose may be given when an infant is as young as 6 weeks of age. Vaccination before age 6 weeks may induce immune tolerance to subsequent vaccines and should never be done. A primary series consists of two or three doses (depending on the type of vaccine used) with a minimum interval of 4 weeks between doses. A booster dose is recommended when the infant is at least 12 months of age, at least 8 weeks after the previous dose.

If Hib vaccination is started when the infant or child is 7 months of age or older, fewer doses are required. If different brands of vaccine are administered, a total of three doses of Hib conjugate vaccine completes the primary series. After completion of the primary infant vaccination series, any of the licensed Hib conjugate vaccines may be used for the booster dose when the infant is 12-15 months of age.

If previously unvaccinated, infants younger than 15 months of age should receive at least two vaccine doses before travel. An interval as short as 4 weeks between these two doses is acceptable. Unvaccinated infants and children 15-59 months of age should receive a single dose of Hib vaccine. Children older than 59 months of age, adolescents, and adults do not need to be vaccinated unless a specific condition exists such as functional or anatomic asplenia, immunodeficiency, immunosuppression, or HIV infection.

Polio Vaccine

While polio has been eliminated in the US, poliovirus continues to circulate in parts of Africa and Asia, including South Asia. In the US, all infants and children should receive four doses of inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) at 2, 4, 6-18 months, and 4-6 years of age. If accelerated protection is needed, the minimum interval between doses is 4 weeks. The minimum age for the fourth dose is 18 weeks. Infants and children who had initiated the poliovirus vaccination series with one or more doses of oral poliovirus vaccine (OPV) should receive IPV to complete the series. Proof of vaccination is required to enter Saudi Arabia for the Hajj.

Rotavirus Vaccine

Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe gastroenteritis in infants and young children worldwide. In developing countries rotavirus gastroenteritis is responsible for approximately 500,000 deaths per year among children younger than 5 years. Routine rotavirus vaccination beginning at about 2 months of age is recommended for all U.S. children. The first dose of the series must be administered between 6 and 12 weeks of age. The vaccination series should not be initiated for children 13 weeks of age or older because of a lack of safety data when the series is begun after 12 weeks of age. Two additional doses are recommended at 4 and 6 months of age. A minimum interval of 4 weeks between doses can be used if an accelerated sched-

ule is needed. All three doses of the series should be administered no later than 32 weeks of age (about 712 months). Rotavirus vaccine should not be administered to infants older than 32 weeks of age even if the 3-dose series has not been completed.

Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccine

Measles is an endemic disease in areas where measles immunization levels are low, and outbreaks occur even in developed countries. International travelers are at increased risk for measles exposure. Infants and children should be as well protected as possible against measles and should complete the immunization series before traveling. While the risk for serious disease in infants from either mumps or rubella is low, these diseases do circulate in many parts of the world and vaccination is recommended.

In addition to the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR), monovalent measles, monovalent mumps, monovalent rubella, and combinations of the components are available from the manufacturer. A combined measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella vaccine (MMRV) was also licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2005 for children age 12 months-12 years. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that MMR be administered when any of the individual components is indicated as part of the routine immunization schedule (MMRV can be used if varicella vaccine is also indicated). Two doses of MMR are routinely recommended for all children, usually at age 12 months and again at age 4-6 years. The second dose can be given as soon as 28 days after the first dose. If MMRV is used, note that two varicella-containing vaccines should be separated by at least 3 months.

Before travel outside the U.S., children 12 months of age and older should receive two doses of MMR separated by at least 28 days. Children age 6-11 months, if they must travel outside the U.S., should receive monovalent measles vaccine before departure if it is available, or MMR if monovalent measles vaccine is not available. However, MMR given before age 12 months should not be counted as part of the series. Children who receive MMR before age 12 months will need two more doses of MMR, the first of which should be administered at 12 months of age.

Varicella Vaccine

Varicella (chickenpox) is an endemic disease throughout the world. Two doses of varicella vaccine are recommended for all susceptible children 12 months of age and older. The first dose is recommended at age 12-15 months. The second dose is routinely recommended at age 4-6 years but can be given earlier, provided that at least 3 months have passed since the first dose.

Efforts should be made to ensure varicella immunity before age 13 years, because varicella disease can be more severe among older children and adults. Children 13 years of age and older should receive two doses of varicella vaccine 4-8 weeks apart. Vaccination is not necessary for children with health care provider-diagnosed chickenpox. When a prior history of chickenpox is uncertain, the vaccine should be given.

Meningococcal Vaccine

Meningococcal disease (including meningococcal meningitis) is caused by the bacterium Neisseria meningitidis and has high morbidity and mortality rates. Epidemics occur in sub-Saharan Africa during the dry season (December through June) and CDC recommends travelers be vaccinated before traveling to this region. Meningococcal vaccination is a requirement to enter Saudi Arabia when traveling to Mecca during the annual Hajj.

Two vaccines are available in the U.S. that protect against four serotypes of N. meningitidis (A, C, Y, and W-135): the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4) and the meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4). MCV4 is approved for use in persons 11-55 years of age and is recommended by the ACIP for routine vaccination of adolescents at 11-12 years of age. MCV4 is also recommended for persons 11 years of age and older who travel to or reside in areas where N. meningitidis is hyperendemic or epidemic. MPSV4 can be used when MCV4 is not available and is recommended for children age 2-10 years going to these high-risk areas. The serogroup A polysaccharide in MPSV4 induces an antibody response in some children as young as 3 months. Thus, vaccinating infants traveling to high-risk areas can provide some degree of protection. For children vaccinated at younger than 4 years of age, revaccination in 2-3 years should be considered if they remain at high risk for infection. For children vaccinated at 4 years of age and older, revaccination should be considered in 5 years if they remain at high risk.

Pneumococcal Vaccine

Streptococcus pneumoniae causes substantial morbidity and mortality throughout the world each year. The vaccine is available in two forms: the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV7) and the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPV23).

All infants should be vaccinated with PCV7. Infant vaccination provides the earliest protection, and infants younger than 23 months of age have the highest incidence of pneumococcal disease. The primary series for PCV7 includes three doses given at 2, 4, and 6 months of age with a fourth (booster) dose at 12-15 months of age. Children 24 months of age and older who are at high risk for pneumococcal disease (e.g., those with sickle cell disease, asplenia, HIV, chronic illness, or immunocompromising conditions) should receive a dose of PPV23 at least 2 months following their last dose of PCV7. If the child is 10 years of age or younger, one revaccination with PPV23 should be considered 3-5 years after the first dose of PPV 23.

Unvaccinated children 7-11 months of age should receive two doses of PCV7 at least 4 weeks apart and a booster dose at age 12-15 months. Unvaccinated children 12-23

months of age should receive two doses at least 8 weeks apart. Vaccination with a single dose of PCV7 should be considered for previously unvaccinated healthy children 24-59 months of age. Previously unvaccinated children 24-59 months of age at high risk for pneumococcal disease (as previously described) should receive two doses separated by at least 8 weeks. Children 24-59 months of age who are at increased risk for pneumococcal disease and who were previously vaccinated with PPV23 should receive two doses of PCV7 separated by at least 8 weeks. The PCV7 vaccine is not routinely recommended for children older than 59 months (5 years) of age.

Influenza Vaccine

Influenza vaccine can reduce the risk of influenza infection in transmission sea-son (typically November-February in the Northern Hemisphere, April-September in the Southern Hemisphere, and throughout the year in the tropics). The vaccine is prepared in two forms: an intramuscular trivalent inactivated vaccine (TIV) and a live, attenuated, intranasal vaccine (LAIV).

All children 6-59 months of age should receive TIV annually, as should all children at risk for complicated influenza infection due to chronic medical conditions, including but not limited to asthma, cardiac disease, sickle cell disease, HIV, and diabetes. In addition, all persons who have close contact with healthy children younger than 59 months of age (particularly infants younger than 6 months of age) or with persons at increased risk of influenza complications should be vaccinated annually. For healthy children 5 years of age and older, LAIV is an acceptable alternative to TIV. (LAIV can be given to healthy persons 5-49 years of age.)

Children receiving TIV should be administered an age-appropriate dose (0.25 mL for those 6-35 months of age and 0.5 mL for those 36 months of age and older). Children 8 years of age and younger who are receiving influenza vaccine for the first time should receive two doses (separated by at least 4 weeks for TIV and 6-10 weeks for LAIV). Children 9 years of age and older should receive one injection of the 0.5-mL dose.

Hepatitis A Vaccine or Immune Globulin for Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is endemic in most parts of the world, and infants and children traveling to these areas are at increased risk for acquiring HAV infection. Although HAV is often not severe in infants and children younger than 5 years of age, those infected efficiently transmit infection to older children and adults, who are at higher risk of severe disease.

Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for all children at age 1 year (i.e., 12-23 months). Vaccination should be ensured for all susceptible children traveling to areas where there is an intermediate or high risk of HAV infection. The HAV vaccine series consists of two doses at least 6 months apart. The first dose should be administered 4 weeks before travel to allow time for an adequate immune response to develop. The second dose is necessary for long-term protection.

The vaccine is not approved for children younger than 1 year of age. Children less than 1 year of age who are traveling to high-risk areas should receive immune globulin (IG). For optimal protection, IG may also be given to children older than 1 year who will be traveling less than 4 weeks after receipt of the first dose of hepatitis A vaccine. The vaccine and IG can be administered at the same time at different anatomic sites.

IG does not interfere with the response to yellow fever vaccine but can interfere with the response to other live injected vaccines (e.g., measles, mumps, rubella (MMR), and varicella vaccines). Administration of MMR should be delayed for at least 3 months and varicella for more than 5 months after administration of IG. Moreover, IG should not be administered for 2 weeks after measles-, mumps-, and rubella-containing vaccines and for 3 weeks after vaccination with varicella vaccine. If IG is given during this time, the child should be revaccinated with the live vaccine at least 3 months after administration of IG. When travel plans do not allow adequate time for administration of live vaccines and IG before travel, the severity of the diseases and epidemiology of the diseases at destination points will help determine the most appropriate course of preparation.

Other Vaccines

Yellow Fever Vaccine

Yellow fever, a disease transmitted by mosquitoes, is endemic in certain areas of Africa and South America. Proof of yellow fever vaccination is required for entry into some countries.

Infants are at high risk for developing encephalitis from yellow fever vaccine, a live virus vaccine. Vaccination of infants should be considered on an individual basis. Although the incidence of these adverse events has not been clearly defined, 14 of 18 reported cases of post-vaccination encephalitis were in infants younger than 4 months old. One fatal case confirmed by viral isolation was in a 3-year-old child.

Travelers with infants younger than 9 months of age should be strongly advised against traveling to areas within the yellow fever-endemic zone. The ACIP recommends that yellow fever vaccine never be given to infants younger than 6 months of age. Infants 6-8 months of age should be vaccinated only if they must travel to areas of ongoing epidemic yellow fever and a high level of protection against mosquito bites is not possible. Infants and children older than 9 months of age can be vaccinated if they travel to countries within the yellow fever-endemic zone.

Physicians considering vaccinating infants younger than 9 months of age should contact the Division of Vector-Borne

Infectious Diseases (970-221-6400) or the Division of Global Migration and Quarantine (404-498-1600) at CDC for advice.

Typhoid Vaccine

Typhoid fever is an acute, life-threatening febrile illness caused by the bacterium Salmonella enterica Typhi. Vaccination is recommended for travelers to areas where there is a recognized risk of exposure to S ser. Typhi.

Two typhoid vaccines are available: a Vi capsular polysaccharide vaccine (ViCPS) administered intramuscularly and an oral, live, attenuated vaccine (Ty21a). Both vaccines induce a protective response in 50%-80% of recipients. The ViCPS vaccine can be administered to children who are at least 2 years of age, with a booster dose 2 years later if continued protection is needed. The Ty21a vaccine, which consists of a series of four capsules ingested every other day, can be administered to children 6 years of age and older. All the capsules should be taken at least 1 week before potential exposure. A booster series for Ty21a should be taken every 5 years if indicated.

Because neither vaccine is fully protective, preventing contamination of food and beverages remains extremely important.

Japanese Encephalitis Vaccine

Japanese encephalitis (JE) is transmitted by primarily night-biting mosquitoes in rural areas of Asia and the Pacific Rim. In temperate climates, their numbers are greatest from June through September; they are inactive during the winter. Most reported cases occur in children. Although most infections are asymptomatic, when encephalitis occurs, the mortality rate can be as high as 30%; neurologic sequelae occur in 50% of survivors and are more common in the very young. The risk to short-term travelers and those who confine their travel to urban centers is very low. Expatriates and travelers living for prolonged periods in rural areas where JE is endemic or epidemic are at greatest risk. The decision to vaccinate a child should take into consideration the itinerary, expected activities, and level of JE activity in the country.

JE vaccine is administered as a series of three injections on days 0, 7, and 30. A booster dose is administered at least 24 months later. Children 1-2 years of age receive 0.5 mL of vaccine per dose; those 3 years of age and older receive 1.0 mL of vaccine per dose. No data are available on vaccine efficacy for infants younger than 1 year of age.

JE vaccine is associated with local reactions in approximately 20% of vaccines and mild systemic reactions (e.g., fever, headache, myalgias, and rash) in approximately 10%. Serious allergic reactions, including generalized urticaria and angioedema of the extremities, face, and oropharynx have been reported in up to 0.6% of vaccines, with accompanying respiratory distress or hypotension in a small number of these cases. Importantly, these hypersensitivity reactions can be delayed for 1 to 2 weeks after receipt of the vaccine. Children receiving the vaccine series should be observed for 30 minutes after immunization. Moreover, the series should be completed at least 10 days before departure, and during that time, vaccine recipients should be remain in areas with access to medical care.

Rabies Vaccine

Rabies is an acute, fatal encephalomyelitis usually transmitted by the bite of an infected mammal. Rabies occurs throughout the world and is endemic in most countries. As with other vaccines, the decision to vaccinate will depend on the itinerary and expected activities during international travel. The decision should also be guided by the availability of appropriate antirabies biologics at the destination. Children should always be instructed to report all bites and to avoid contact with animals other than their own pets.

Two rabies vaccines are licensed for use in the United States. Each may be administered to infants and children. All the rabies vaccines, when used in a preexposure regimen, are given as a series of injections on days 0, 7, and 21 or 28. Even if a child has completed the preexposure vaccine series, any mammal bite warrants immediate medical evaluation to determine the need for postexposure immunization.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS

International adoptions bring a host of special considerations, as these adopted children come from diverse cultural backgrounds, living conditions, and medical histories. Adoptive families should be aware of the unique medical, nutritional, environmental and psychological issues they may face. Government and private websites provide information on travel advisories (http://www.cdc.gov/travel), legislation, country-specific adoption requirements and procedures, and many other resources. This summary is not meant to be comprehensive, since resources are constantly changing; it will serve merely as a starting point for information on intercountry adoptions.

Adoptive Parents

Adoptive parents who travel overseas to pick up their child should visit a health-care provider or travel medicine specialist to ensure that their routine vaccinations are up to date and to obtain pre-travel advice tailored to their own medical history and the country they will visit. During travel, they need to take precautions regarding proper rest, food, water, and insect exposure to protect their own health, so that they can care for the child. Adoptive parents should be aware that unexpected complications in the adoption process may prolong their stay, and they should plan accordingly, especially if malaria prophylaxis or other important medication is needed. Recently, an outbreak of measles was identified among children being adopted from China and their family members. In 2002 and 2004, adoptions from the affected orphanages were temporarily sus-

pended while Chinese authorities implemented measures to control and prevent further transmission of measles among adopted children (2-4). Prospective parents who are traveling internationally to adopt children, as well as their household contacts, should ensure that they have a history of natural disease or have been vaccinated against measles according to guidelines of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). All persons born after 1957 should receive two doses of measles-containing vaccine.

Overseas Medical Examinations for the Child

All immigrants, including infants and children adopted overseas by U.S. citizens, and all refugees coming to the United States must have a medical examination overseas by a physician designated by the Department of State. The medical examination focuses primarily on detecting certain serious contagious diseases that may be the basis for visa ineligibility. Prospective adoptive parents should be advised not to rely on this medical examination to detect all possible disabilities and illnesses. If an infant or a child is found to have an illness or disability that may make the child ineligible for a visa, a visa may still be issued after the illness has been adequately treated or after a waiver of the visa eligibility has been approved by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. If the physician notes that the infant or child has a serious disease or disability, the prospective parent(s) will be notified and asked if they wish to proceed with the infant's or child's immigration.

The medical examination consists of a brief physical examination and a medical history. A chest radiograph examination for tuberculosis and blood tests for syphilis and HIV are required for immigrants 15 years of age and older. Applicants younger than 15 years of age are tested only if there is reason to suspect any of these diseases.

A new subsection of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act requires that any person seeking an immigrant visa for permanent residency must show proof of having received the vaccines recommended by ACIP before immigration. While this new subsection now applies to all immigrant infants and children entering the United States, internationally adopted children younger than 11 years of age have been exempted from the overseas immunization requirements. Adoptive parents are required to sign a waiver indicating their intention to comply with the immunization requirements within 30 days after the infant's or child's arrival in the United States.

Additional information about the medical examination and the vaccination exemption form for internationally adopted children is available on the Department of State website at http://www.adoption.state.gov.

Follow-up Medical Examinations after Arrival in the United States

The varied geographic origins of internationally adopted infants and children, their unknown backgrounds before adoption (including parental history and living circumstances), and the inadequacy of health care in many developing countries make appropriate medical evaluation of internationally adopted children a complex and important task. This evaluation should be performed within 2 weeks of the child's arrival in the United States. The content of the medical evaluation should be guided by the unique circumstances and needs of the child, taking into account the child's region and country of birth, past living conditions, and travel and medical history. In addition to the screening for infectious disease described below, a full medical and developmental assessment should be done, with attention to possible malnutrition, conditions undetected by limited prior care, and ectoparasites such as scabies and lice, in addition to other indicated tests, such as lead or G6PD.

Screening For Infectious Diseases

Infectious diseases, among the most common medical diagnoses, have been found in up to 60% of internationally adopted children, depending on their country of origin; many of these infections can be asymptomatic (6-10). Screening for these diseases is important for the health of the adopted infant or child as well as that of their adoptive family. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all internationally adopted children be screened with the following: hepatitis B serology, HIV serology, syphilis serology, Mantoux intradermal skin test for tuberculosis, stool examination for ova and parasites, and complete blood count including a peripheral eosinophil count and red blood cell indices. Regardless of eosinophil count, all international adoptees should have three separate stool samples, collected on 3 separate days, analyzed for ova and parasites. HIV antibodies in a child younger than 18 months of age may reflect maternal infection without transmission to the infant, and infection in the infant should be confirmed with an assay for HIV DNA by polymerase chain reaction. Two negative tests obtained 1 month apart are required for the child to be considered uninfected.

Tuberculin skin tests measuring less than 5 mm are negative; reactions larger than 5 mm are interpreted based on risk factors for diseases. For internationally adopted children born in regions of the world with high TB prevalence, a reaction of 10 mm or more of induration is always positive; a reaction from 5 to 9 mm is positive if the child is immunocompromised, has been exposed to tuberculosis, or has signs or symptoms of TB disease. If the TST is positive, a chest radiograph should be performed to evaluate for active TB disease. If evidence of TB disease is found, efforts to isolate an organism for sensitivity testing are very important because of the high proportions of drug resistance in many other countries, including countries in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Asia. Some experts also recommend that health-care providers

consider repeating the TST (if negative) 2-3 months after arrival when nutritional status has been improved, particularly if the child had evidence of under- or malnutrition at the initial screening. Receipt of BCG vaccine is not a contraindication for TST. Because BCG does not prevent infection with TB and because of the high risk for exposure in most countries where BCG is given, the AAP recommends that children with a positive TST be given 9 months of isoniazid therapy.

Up to 35% of internationally adopted children have ova or parasites identified on stool examinations (6-10). For Giardia intestinalis and Cryptosporium parvum infection, stool examination for antigen by enzyme immunoassay may be more sensitive than microscopic exam. Giardiasis is particularly prevalent in internationally adopted children from Eastern Europe. Strongyloides stercoralis serologic testing, available at CDC on request through the state public health laboratory, should be considered for children who have a high eosinophil count. If enteric symptoms develop in the future, tests should be repeated, even if it has been several years after arrival in the United States.

Other screening tests may be recommended based on country of origin, risk factors, symptoms, or clinical findings. For example, children from schistosomiasis-endemic areas should have serologic tests for schistosomiasis performed at CDC, which may be requested through the state public health laboratory (http://www.dpd.cdc.gov/dpdx/HTML/DiagnosticProcedures.htm). Screening for hepatitis C should be considered for all infants and children adopted from Asia, Eastern Europe, or Africa. Hepatitis C testing for children adopted from other areas should be considered if the records indicate potential risk factors, such as receipt of blood products or maternal drug use. Testing for hepatitis D, which is available at CDC, should be considered for children from the Mediterranean area, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America who have chronic infection with hepatitis B virus.

Laboratory reports from the country of origin should not necessarily be considered reliable.

Vaccination

Internationally adopted infants and children frequently are underimmunized and should receive necessary immunizations according to the ACIP-recommended schedules in the United States. In a retrospective review of records of 504 children, the majority (65%) had no written records of overseas vaccination. Among the 178 children with documented overseas vaccination, 167 (94%) had valid records and some vaccine doses that were acceptable and up to date under the U.S. schedule.

In assessing the immunization status of an internationally adopted child, only written documentation should be accepted as proof of receipt of immunization. In general, written records are deemed valid if the vaccine type, date of administration, number of doses, intervals between doses, and age of the patient at the time of administration are comparable with the current U.S. schedule. Although some vaccines with inadequate potency have been produced in other countries, most vaccines used worldwide are produced with adequate quality control standards and are reliable. However, immunization records for some internationally adopted children, particularly those from orphanages, may not reflect protection because of inaccurate or unreliable records, lack of vaccine potency, poor nutritional status, or other problems. For any child, if there is any question as to whether the immunizations were administered or were immunogenic, the best course is to repeat them. Vaccination is generally safe and avoids the need to obtain and interpret serologic tests.

In an older infant or child who is thought to have been vaccinated appropriately, judicious use of serologic testing can be helpful in determining which immunizations may be needed and can decrease the number of injections required. Children who do not have serologic evidence of previous hepatitis B infection should receive the full vaccine series. Many adopted children acquire hepatitis A virus infection early in life and are immune thereafter. Thus, in the United States it may be cost effective to screen these children for previous immunity before initiating the vaccination series. Verification of protection from MMR vaccine requires testing for antibodies to each virus. Serology is of limited availability or difficult to interpret for Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and poliovirus. Vaccination for these, as well as varicella and pneumococcal disease, which are not administered in most countries, should be administered to internationally adopted children based on age and medical history.

Data indicate increased risk of local adverse reactions after the fourth and fifth doses of DTP or DTaP. In some circumstances, judicious use of serologic testing of antibody levels to assess immunity may be helpful in decreasing the possibility of vaccine side effects. For children whose records indicate that they have received more than 3 doses, options include initial serologic testing or administration of a single booster dose of DTaP, followed by serologic testing after 1 month. If a severe local reaction occurs after revaccination, serologic testing for specific IgG antibody to tetanus and diphtheria toxins can be measured before additional doses are administered. No established serologic correlates exist for protection against pertussis, but protective concentrations of antibody to both diphtheria and tetanus toxin can serve to validate the vaccination record.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Testing Requirements for Entry into Foreign Countries

December 2006

Several countries require that foreigners be tested for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) prior to entry. It is usually required as part of a medical exam for long-term visitors, i.e. students and workers. The following list of country requirements is based on information available as of December 2006 and is subject to change. Updated information may be available in the Consular Information Sheets for each country. Before traveling abroad, check with the embassy of the country to be visited to learn about entry requirements and specifically whether AIDS testing is a requirement. If the list indicates U.S. test results are acceptable and the word "Yes" appears with an asterisk beside it (Yes*) in a particular country, prospective travelers should inquire at the embassy of that country for details (e.g. which laboratories in the United States may perform tests and where to have results certified and authenticated) before departing the United States.

Country	Test Required For	U.S. Test Accepted?
Algeria	Residency permit	No
Angola	All foreigners applying for work visas and resident permits.	Yes
Australia	All applicants (15 years of age or older) for permanent residence. Permanent applicants under 15 years of age must be tested if being adopted or has history of blood transfusions. Temporary applicants need to declare any illness/condition at time of interview. Any temporary applicant who is likely to come in contact with blood must be tested.	Yes*
Bahrain	All foreign citizens (workers, family, etc.) applying for residence permits must submit locally performed medical exams, including HIV tests. Anyone who tested positive is immediately deported.	No
Belarus	All persons staying longer than 3 months	Yes
Belize	Residency permit	No
Benin	Residency permit	No
British Virgin Isles	Residency permit	Yes
Brunei	Work permits	No
Bulgaria	All intending immigrants and foreigners staying longer than 1 month for the purpose of study or work.	Yes*
Canada	Routine HIV testing is required for all applicants who are 15 years of age and over and are seeking entry to Canada for a period longer than 6 months (I.e. students, workers, visitors, those applying for immigration and refugee status, etc.), and resided in a designated country for 6 consecutive months within a 12 month period immediately preceding entry into Canada.	Yes*
Central African Republic	Anyone seeking residence, work or student permits must submit to a medical exam (which includes an HIV test)	Yes
China, People's Republic of	Foreigners planning to stay for more than 6 months (not required for entry or residency in Hong Kong or Macau). Those who are HIV positive are not allowed into China for any purpose.	Yes*

Country	Test Required For	U.S. Test Accepted?
Colombia	Entry is prohibited for HIV positive individuals. HIV positive individuals should request a waiver from a Colombian Embassy.	No
Comoros	Foreigners planning to work	Yes
Cuba	Foreign students on scholarships	Yes*
Cyprus	All foreigners working or studying	No
Dominica	No HIV testing requirement for standard entry; students, intending immigrants and anyone seeking employment.	Yes
Dominican Republic	Foreigners planning to reside, study, or work	No
Egypt	All foreigners applying for work, study, or training permit and staying longer than 30 days in requires testing. Dependents are no longer exempt; testing is also a requirement for spouses and children aged 15 or older.	Yes*
Eritrea	May be required upon entry	N/A
Fiji	Persons staying longer than 6 months	Yes
Greece	Only persons arriving to work as legal prostitutes	Yes*
Hungary	Anyone staying over 1 year and all intending immigrants. Some employers may require workers to be tested.	No
India	All students over 18. Anyone between the ages of 18 and 70 with a visa valid for 1 year or more. Anyone extending length of stay to a year or more (excluding accredited journalists and those working in foreign missions).	Yes*
Iraq	Residency/exit permit	N/A
Israel	Legal foreign workers; Ministry of Interior reserves the right to deny entry to aliens claiming to be HIV positive.	N/A
Jordan	Anyone staying longer than 6 months	No
Kazakhstan	All visitors staying more then 1 month must present a certificate of an HIV test within 10 days of their arrival	Yes*
Korea, Republic of	Persons entering on an E-6 visa to be engaged in performance or entertainment activities at tourist hotels and entertainment places	No
Kuwait	Foreigners intending to work or reside (Anyone found to be HIV positive will be deported.)	Yes*
Lebanon	Persons intending to work and maids.	No
Lithuania	Residency permits (Migration Dept. reserves right to exclude foreigners who present a public health threat.)	Yes
Malaysia	Foreign workers (unskilled and semiskilled) undergo a full medical check up (includes HIV) within 1 month of arrival and on yearly basis.	No

Country	Test Required For	U.S. Test Accepted?
Marshall Islands, Republic of the	Applicants for residence. US Citizens are exempt from obtaining work permits, but may still require medical clearance (including HIV test) by the Immigration Division upon entry.	No
Mauritius	Foreigners planning to reside or work; testing performed upon arrival.	N/A
Moldova	Anyone staying more than 3 months	Yes*
Montserrat	University students and applicants for work and residency	No
Niger	Foreigners seeking to marry national of Niger	No
Oman	Residency permit	No
Palau	Anyone staying longer than 6 months	No
Paraguay	Applicants seeking temporary or permanent residency status.	No
Qatar	Applicants seeking residency and anyone staying longer than 30 days, including dependents.	No
Russia	Applicants applying for visas valid more than 3 months	Yes*
St. Vincent	No HIV testing required for visitors; HIV testing required for applicants seeking temporary and permanent residency visas	Yes
St. Kitts and Nevis	Residency permit	Yes
Samoa	Anyone applying for work, study or staying more than 12 months to submit a medical report, which may include an HIV test.	Yes*
Saudi Arabia	Residency/work permits	Yes*
Seychelles	Foreigners planning to work must undergo a medical exam, which includes an HIV test, upon arrival	No
Singapore	Employment passes, work permits and permanent resident status (except spouses and children of Singapore citizens)	No
Slovakia	Residency status (as part of a medical exam).	No
South Africa	All mine workers (irrespective of their positions)	Yes*
Syria	All foreigners (ages 15 to 60 years) staying more than 15 days	No*
Taiwan	Anyone staying over 90 days (Foreigners applying for residency/work permit must be tested, at a public hospital in Taiwan within three months of application.)	No
Tajikistan	Anyone staying more than 90 days	Yes*
Tonga	Anyone staying longer than 6 months	No
Turkey	Any foreigner immigrating or applying for permanent residence	No
Turkmenistan	All foreigners staying longer than 3 months	No
Ukraine	All foreigners staying longer than 3 months	30 days before arrival

Country	Test Required For	U.S. Test Accepted?
United Arab Emirates	Anyone applying for residence. Tests are done upon submission of visa applications.	No
United Kingdom	Anyone who does not appear to be in good health may be required to undergo a medical exam (including an HIV test) prior to being granted or denied entry	No
Uzbekistan	Anyone staying more than 15 days (long-term visitors must renew HIV certificate after the first 3 months in Uzbekistan and annually thereafter) Foreigners applying for permission to work are required to submit the certificate as proof that they are not HIV infected.	Yes*
Yemen	Applicants seeking permanent residence, students over age 16, all foreigners staying longer than one month and foreign spouses.	No

*A test performed in the U.S. may be accepted under certain conditions. Check with the embassy or representative office in Washington, D.C. for detailed requirements.

Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad

Editor's note: The information below was posted on the State Department's web site (www.state.gov) as of January 2009 by the Bureau of Consular Affairs and has been condensed by the editors for publication in book format. Readers should consult www.state.gov for additional information, updates, or revisions.

If an American citizen becomes seriously ill or injured abroad, a U. S. consular officer can assist in locating appropriate medical services and informing family or friends. If necessary, a consular officer can also assist in the transfer of funds from the United States. However, payment of hospital and other expenses is the responsibility of the traveler.

Before going abroad, learn what medical services your health insurance will cover overseas. If your health insurance policy provides coverage outside the United States, REMEMBER to carry both your insurance policy identity card as proof of such insurance and a claim form. Although many health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for your medical evacuation back to the United States. Medical evacuation can easily cost $10,000 and up, depending on your location and medical condition.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY MEDICARE PROGRAM DOES NOT PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR HOSPITAL OR MEDICAL COSTS OUTSIDE THE U.S.A.

Senior citizens may wish to contact the American Association of Retired Persons for information about foreign medical care coverage with Medicare supplement plans.

To facilitate identification in case of an accident, complete the information page on the inside of your passport providing the name, address and telephone number of someone to be contacted in an emergency.

A traveler going abroad with any preexisting medical problems should carry a letter from the attending physician, describing the medical condition and any prescription medications, including the generic name of prescribed drugs. Any medications being carried overseas should be left in their original containers and be clearly labeled. Travelers should check with the foreign embassy of the country they are visiting to make sure any required medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a travelers' health web page at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. The WHO also provides travel health information at http://www.who.int/ith.

U.S. embassies and consulates abroad maintain lists of hospitals and physicians. You can visit U.S. Embassy and Consulate web sites around the world at http://usembassy.state.gov.

Some countries require foreign visitors to have inoculations or medical tests before entering. Before traveling, check the latest entry requirements with the foreign embassy of the country to be visited.

Doctors/Hospitals Abroad

U.S. Embassies and Consulates maintain lists of physicians and medical facilities for distribution to American citizens needing medical care. The inclusion of a specific physician or medical facility does not constitute a recommendation and the Department of State assumes no responsibility or liability for the professional ability or reputation of, or the quality of services provided by, the medical professionals, medical facilities, or air ambulance services whose names appear on such lists. Names are listed alphabetically, and the order in which they appear has no other significance. Professional credentials and areas of expertise are provided directly by the medical professional, medical facility, or air ambulance service. Contact information for U.S. embassies and consulates in foreign countries is available in the Country Background Notes of this publication. Updates and more information are also available through the U.S. Department of State website at www.state.gov.

Medical Insurance

The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. If necessary, Americans should consider secondary medical coverage for the trip.

Why should I be concerned about medical coverage abroad?

- The Social Security Medicare Program does not provide coverage for hospital or medical costs outside the United States of America.
- Many health insurance plans do not provide coverage overseas. Those that provide "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad may not pay for your medi-

cal evacuation back to the United States which can easily cost $10,000.00 and up depending on your location and medical condition.

- Many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service.
- Uninsured patients may be refused service.
- Countries with socialized medicine may not provide full services to non-residents.
- Payment of hospital and other expenses abroad is the responsibility of the traveler.
- Some countries require tourists to carry accident or travel insurance.

What questions should I ask my health insurance company?

- Does this insurance policy cover emergency expenses abroad such as returning me to the United States for treatment if I am seriously ill?
- Does this insurance cover high-risk activities such as parasailing, mountain climbing, scuba diving, and off-roading?
- Does this policy cover pre-existing conditions?
- Does the insurance company require pre-authorizations or second opinions before emergency treatment can begin?
- Does the insurance company guarantee medical payments abroad?
- Will the insurance company pay foreign hospitals and foreign doctors directly?
- Does the insurance company have a 24-hour physician-backed support center?

Senior citizens may wish to contact the American Association of Retired Persons for information about foreign medical care coverage with Medicare supplement plans.

Can the U.S. government assist me if I become disabled overseas?

If an American becomes ill or is seriously injured abroad, a U.S. consular officer can assist in locating appropriate medical services and informing family or friends. If necessary a consular officer can also assist in the transfer of funds from the United States. Payment of hospital and other expenses is the responsibility of the traveler.

Where do I find a list of physicians in the country I plan to visit?

For detailed information on physicians abroad, the authoritative reference is The Official ABMS Directory of Board Certified Medical Specialists, published for the American Board of Medical Specialists and its certifying member boards. U.S. embassies and consulates abroad maintain lists of hospitals and physicians, many of which are posted on the embassy or consulate web site.

What's the difference between Travel Insurance and Travel Medical Insurance?

Travel Insurance insures your financial investment up to the amount of your policy limits. Travel Medical Insurance insures you should you become ill and need medical attention while living or traveling abroad.

What insurance information should I carry with me abroad?

Carry both your insurance policy identity card as proof of your insurance and a claim form.

AIR AMBULANCE/MED-EVAC

Several private organizations will provide medical information and insurance for overseas travelers. Most charge a fee for this service. The following is provided FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY and in no way constitutes an endorsement, expressed or implied, by the Department of State.

U.S.-based Companies

ABLE JET
Fort Pierce, FL
800-225-3538

ACADIAN AMBULANCE & AIR MED SERVICE, INC.
Lafayette, LA
800-259-3333

ADVANCED AIR AMBULANCE
Miami, FL
800-633-3590 / 305-232-7700

AIGAssist
American International Group, Inc.
Houston, Texas
800-626-2427; 01-713-267-2525

AIR AMBULANCE AMERICA
Austin, TX
800-222-3564 / 512-479-8000

AIR AMBULANCE NETWORK
Tarpon Springs, FL
800-327-1966

AIR AMBULANCE PROFESSIONALS
Fort Lauderdale, FL
800-752-4195 / 954-491-0555

AIREVAC
Phoenix, AZ
800-421-6111

AIRMD AIR AMBULANCE SERVICES
Clearwater, FL
800-282-6878 / 1-727-530-7972

AIR MEDIC - AIR AMBULANCE OF AMERICA
Washington, PA
800-245-9987

AIRescue INTERNATIONAL
Van Nuys, CA
800-922-4911 / 818-994-0911

AIR RESPONSE
Orlando, FL
800-631-6565 / 303-858-9967

AIR STAR INTERNATIONAL
Thermal, CA
877-570-0911 / 800-991-2869
e-mail: AirStar1@aol.com

AMERICAN CARE, INC.
San Diego, CA
800-941-2582 / 619-486-8844

AMERICAN JET AIR MEDICAL
Houston, TX
888-I-FLY-AJI / 713-641-9700

AXA ASSISTANCE
122 S. Michigan Ave Suite 1100
Chicago, IL 606031
(800) 874-4372
http://www.axa-assistance-usa.com

CRITICAL AIR MEDICINE
San Diego, CA
800-247-8326 / 619-571-0482

CRITICAL CARE MEDFLIGHT
Lawrenceville, GA
800-426-6557

GLOBAL CARE / MEDPASS
Alpharetta, GA
800-860-1111

INFLIGHT MEDICAL SERVICES INTERNATIONAL INC.
Naples, FL
800-432-4177 / 941-594-0800

INTERNATIONAL SOS ASSISTANCE
Philadelphia, PA
800-523-8930 / 215-244-1500
Also provides travel insurance services.

LIFE FLIGHT NEW ORLEANS
New Orleans, LA
800-942-0455 / 504-243-9800
e-mail: Info@NewOrleansJets.com

LIFE GUARD INTERNATIONAL, INC.
Las Vegas, NV
1-888-FLY'N-ICU (1-888-359-6428)
e-mail: lgii@flyingicu.com

MEDAIRE
Tempe, AZ
480-333-3700
e-mail: info@medaire.com

MED ESCORT INTERNATIONAL INC.
Allentown, PA
800-255-7182 / 610-791-3111

MEDEX ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
Baltimore, MD
888-MEDEX-00 / 800-537-2029
Also provides travel insurance services.

MEDJET ASSISTANCE
Birmingham, AL
800-963-3538

MEDJET INTERNATIONAL, INC.
Birmingham, AL
800-356-2161 / 205-592-4460

MEDWAY AIR AMBULANCE
Lawrenceville, GA
800-233-0655

MERCY MEDICAL AIRLIFT
Manassas, VA
800-296-1217
(Service area: Caribbean and part of Canada only. If necessary, will meet commercial incoming patients at JFK, Miami and other airports.)

NATIONAL AIR AMBULANCE
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
800-327-3710 / 305-525-5538

SMARTRAVEL
Alexandria, VA
800-730-3170 / 703-379-8645
Provides a range of travel medicine services.

TRAVEL ASSIST NETWORK CORPORATION
South Bend, IN
866-500-0333/+1 574-272-5400
email: info@travelassistnetwork.com

TRAVEL CARE INTERNATIONAL, INC.
Eagle River, WI
800-524-7633 / 715-479-8881

TRAVELERS EMERGENCY NETWORK
Tierra Verde, FL
800-ASK-4-TEN
e-mail: ten@intrex.net

Foreign-based Companies

AEA INTERNATIONAL
Singapore
U.S. Phone: 800-468-5232
Service worldwide, also provides travel insurance services

AUSTRIAN AIR AMBULANCE
Vienna, Austria
43-1-40-144

EURO-FLITE LTD.
Helsinki International Airport
Vantaa, Finland
358-9-870-2544

EUROPASSISTANCE
Johannesburg, South Africa
27-11-315-3999

GERMAN AIR RESCUE (DRF)
Filderstadt, Germany
49-0711-7007-0
e-mail: alarmzentrale@drf.de

LUXEMBOURG AIR RESCUE
Luxembourg
352-420-440-1
e-mail: office@air-rescue.lu

MEDIC'AIR
Paris, France
331-41-72-14-14

TYROL AIR AMBULANCE
Innsbruck, Austria
43-512-22422

TRAVEL INSURANCE COMPANIES

U.S.-based Companies

ACCESS AMERICA, INC.
Richmond, VA
866-807-3982

ASA, INC.
International Health Insurance
Phoenix, AZ
888-ASA-8288

CLEMENTS INTERNATIONAL
Washington, DC
800-872-0067 / 202-872-0060
http://www.clements.com
e-mail: info@clements.com

CSA TRAVEL PROTECTION
San Diego, CA
888-873-5484
http://www.csatravelprotection.com

GATEWAY INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE PLANS
Marsh Consumer
Washington, DC
202-367-5097 / 800-282-4495
email: gateway@marshpm.com

HEALTH CARE GLOBAL
(also known as MEDHELP or WALLACH & COMPANY or HEALTHCARE ABROAD)
Middleburg, VA
800-237-6615 / 540-687-3166

HIGHWAY TO HEALTH
Fairfax, VA
703-322-1515
(Also provides destination-based travel health information for cities worldwide.)

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GROUP (IMG)
Indianapolis, IN
800-628-4664 / 317-655-4500

MULTI NATIONAL UNDERWRITERS, INC.
Indianapolis, IN
800-605-2282
e-mail: insurance@mnui.com

M. H. ROSS TRAVEL INSURANCE SERVICES
Northridge, CA
800-423-3632

PETERSEN INTERNATIONAL UNDERWRITERS, INC.
Valencia, CA
800-345-8816
e-mail: piu@piu.org

QUOTEWRIGHT.COM
America's Travel Insurance Store
East Hartford, CT.800-821-4940
http://www.quotewright.com
e-mail: service@quotewright.com

SEVEN CORNERS INC
Carmel, IN
800-335-0611/317-575-2652

TRAVEL ASSIST NETWORK CORPORATION
South Bend, IN
866-500-0333/+1 574-272-5400
email: info@travelassistnetwork.com

TRAVELEX
Omaha, NE
800-228-9792

TRAVEL GUARD
Stevens Point, WI
800-826-1300/715-345-0505

TRAVEL INSURED INTERNATIONAL
E. Hartford, CT
800-243-3174

TRAVEL INSURANCE SERVICES
InterMedical Division
Walnut Creek, CA
800-937-1387/925-932-1387

TRIPGUARD PLUS
Northridge, CA
800-423-3632

UNICARD TRAVEL ASSOCIATION
Overland Park, KS
800-501-0352

UNIVERSAL SERVICE AND ASSISTANCE
Alexandria, VA
800-770-9111 / 703-370-7800

USA ASSIST
Los Angeles, CA
805-499-0363

WORLDWIDE ASSISTANCE
Washington, DC
800-777-8710 ext. 417

Foreign-based Companies

INTEGRA GLOBAL
Hallein, Austria
43-6245-71303
e-mail: info@integraglobal.com

EXECUTIVE MEDICAL SERVICES

AMERICAN MEDICAL CENTERS
Moscow, Russia
Offices in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kyiv, Prague, Warsaw, Istanbul
(7-095) 933-77-00 (Moscow)

HEALTH QUEST TRAVEL INC.
Wexford, PA
888-899-3633
e-mail: HQT@HealthQuestTravel.com

WORLD CLINIC
Burlington, MA
800-636-9186

MEDICAL ESCORT

AIR MEDICAL ESCORT SERVICES
1135 Kildare Farm Road
Suit 200
Cary, North Carolina 275111
1-877-400-0463 / 919-342-4598

Government Advice:
A Safe Trip Abroad

Editor's note: The information below was posted on the U.S. Department of State web site (www.travel.state.gov) as of January 2009 and has been condensed by the editors for publication in book format. Readers should consult www.travel.state.gov for additional information, updates, or revisions.

FOREWORD

When you travel abroad, the odds are in your favor that you will have a safe and incident-free trip. Travelers are, however, sometimes victimized by crime and violence, or experience unexpected difficulties. No one is better able to tell you this than the U.S. consular officers who work in more than 250 U.S. embassies and consulates around the globe. Every day of the year, U.S. embassies and consulates receive calls from American citizens in distress.

Happily, most problems can be solved over the telephone or by a visit to the Consular Section of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. There are other occasions, however, when U.S. consular officers are called upon to help U.S. citizens who are in foreign hospitals or prisons, or to assist the families of U.S. citizens who have passed away overseas. We have prepared the following travel tips to help you avoid serious difficulties during your overseas travel. We wish you a safe and wonderful journey!

BEFORE YOU GO

What to Take

- Safety begins when you pack. To help avoid becoming a target, do not dress so as to mark yourself as an affluent tourist. Expensive-looking jewelry, for instance, can draw the wrong attention.
- Always try to travel light. You can move more quickly and will be more likely to have a free hand. You will also be less tired and less likely to set your luggage down, leaving it unattended.
- Carry the minimum number of valuables, and plan places to conceal them. Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe. When you have to carry them on your person, you may wish to put them in various places rather than all in one wallet or pouch. Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets that are easy targets for thieves. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.
- If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair. Bring them and any medicines you need in your carry-on luggage.
- To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of carrying a certain drug into a country, consult the embassy or consulate of that country before you travel.
- Bring travelers checks and one or two major credit cards instead of cash.
- Pack an extra set of passport photos along with a photocopy of your passport's information page to make replacement of your passport easier in the event it is lost or stolen.
- Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity or nationality. If possible, lock your luggage.
- Consider getting a telephone calling card. It is a convenient way of keeping in touch. If you have one, verify that you can use it from your overseas location(s). Access numbers to U.S. operators are published in many international newspapers. Find out your access number before you go.

What to Leave Behind

Don't bring anything you would hate to lose. Leave at home:

- valuable or expensive-looking jewelry
- irreplaceable family objects
- all unnecessary credit cards
- your Social Security card, library card, and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet

Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency. Make two photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license and the credit cards that you plan to bring with you. Leave one photocopy of this data with family or friends at home; pack the other in a place separate from where you carry the originals. Leave a copy of the serial numbers of your travelers' checks with a friend or relative at home. Carry your copy with you in a separate place and, as you cash the checks, cross them off the list.

What to Learn About Before You Go

Security

The Department of State's Country Specific Information are available for every country of the world. They describe entry requirements, currency regulations, unusual health conditions, the crime and security situation, political disturbances, areas of instability, and special information about driving and road conditions. They also provide addresses and emergency telephone numbers for U.S. embassies and consulates. In general, Country Specific Information do not give advice. Instead, they describe conditions so travelers can make informed decisions about their trips. For some countries, however, the Department of State issues a Travel Warning in addition to a Country Specific Information. The Travel Warning may recommend that Americans defer travel to that country because of a dangerous situation there.

Travel Alerts are a means to disseminate information about relatively short-term conditions posing significant risk to the security of American travelers. They are issued when there is a perceived threat, even if it does not involve Americans as a particular target group. In the past, Travel Alerts have been issued to deal with coups, pre-election disturbances, violence by terrorists and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events. You can access Country Specific Information, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts 24-hours a day in several ways.

Internet: The most convenient source of information about travel and consular services is the Consular Affairs home page. The web site address is http://travel.state.gov.

Telephone: Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747 can answer general inquiries on safety and security overseas. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, can obtain information and assistance from OCS during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.

In Person: Country Specific Information, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts are available at any of the regional passport agencies and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

Local Laws and Customs

When you leave the United States, you are subject to the laws of the country you are visiting. Therefore, before you go, learn as much as you can about the local laws and customs of the places you plan to visit. Good resources are your library, your travel agent, and the embassies, consulates or tourist bureaus of the countries you will visit. In addition, keep track of what is being reported in the media about recent developments in those countries.

Things To Arrange Before You Go

Your Itinerary: As much as possible, plan to stay in larger hotels that have more elaborate security. Safety experts recommend booking a room from the second to seventh floors above ground level—high enough to deter easy entry from outside, but low enough for fire equipment to reach. When there is a choice of airport or airline, ask your travel agent about comparative safety records.

Legal Documents: Have your affairs in order at home. If you leave a current will, insurance documents, and power of attorney with your family or a friend, you can feel secure about traveling and will be prepared for any emergency that may arise while you are away. If you have minor children, consider making guardianship arrangements for them.

Register your travel: It is a good idea to register your travel with the State Department so that you may be contacted if need be, whether because of a family emergency in the U.S., or because of a crisis in the area in which you are traveling. Travel registration is a free service provided by the State Department, and is easily accomplished online at https://travelregistration.state.gov. (In accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State may not release information on your welfare or whereabouts to inquirers without your express written authorization.)

Credit: Make a note of the credit limit on each credit card that you bring, and avoid charging over that limit while traveling. Americans have been arrested for innocently exceeding their credit limit. Ask your credit card company how to report the loss of your card from abroad. 1-800 numbers do not work from abroad, but your company should have a number that you can call while you are overseas.

Insurance: Find out if your personal property insurance covers you for loss or theft abroad. Also, check on whether your health insurance covers you abroad. Medicare and Medicaid do not provide payment for medical care outside the United States. Even if your health insurance will reimburse you for medical care that you pay for abroad, health insurance usually does not pay for medical evacuation from a remote area or from a country where medical facilities are inadequate. Consider purchasing a policy designed for travelers, and covering short-term health and emergency assistance, as well as medical evacuation in the event of an accident or serious illness.

PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE WHILE TRAVELING

Safety on the Street

Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home. Be especially cautious in (or avoid) areas where you may be more easily victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, tourist sites, market places, festivals and crime-ridden neighborhoods.

Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets. Try not to travel alone at night.

Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.

Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.

Avoid scam artists by being wary of strangers who approach you and offer t be your guide or sell you something at bargain prices.

Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice who will:

- jostle you,
- ask you for directions or the time,
- point to something spilled on your clothing,
- or distract you by creating a disturbance.

Beware of groups of vagrant children who create a distraction while picking your pocket.

Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.

Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. Try to ask for directions only from individuals in authority.

Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.

Learn a few phrases in the local language or have them handy in written form so that you can signal your need for police or medical help.

Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

If you are confronted, don't fight back—give up your valuables.

Safety in Your Hotel

Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby.

Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out. Use the hotel safe.

If you are out late at night, let someone know when you expect to return.

If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.

Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire, and be sure you know where the nearest fire exits and alternate exits are located. (Count the doors between your room and the nearest exit; this could be a lifesaver if you have to crawl through a smoke-filled corridor.)

Safety on Public Transportation

If a country has a pattern of tourists being targeted by criminals on public transport, that information is mentioned in the Country Specific Information in the section about crime.

Taxis. Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings. Beware of unmarked cabs.

Trains. Well-organized, systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourists routes is a problem. It is more common at night and especially on overnight trains.

If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person is very close to you from behind, move away. This can happen in the corridor of the train or on the platform or station.

Do not accept food or drink from strangers. Criminals have been known to drug food or drink offered to passengers. Criminals may also spray sleeping gas in train compartments. Where possible, lock your compartment. If it cannot be locked securely, take turns sleeping in shifts with your traveling companions. If that is not possible, stay awake. If you must sleep unprotected, tie down your luggage and secure your valuables to the extent possible.

Do not be afraid to alert authorities if you feel threatened in any way. Extra police are often assigned to ride trains on routes where crime is a serious problem.

Buses. The same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses on popular tourist routes. For example, tourists have been drugged and robbed while sleeping on buses or in bus stations. In some countries, whole busloads of passengers have been held up and robbed by gangs of bandits.

Safety When You Drive

When you rent a car, choose a type that is commonly available locally. Where possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed. Make certain it is in good repair. If available, choose a car with universal door locks and power windows, features that give the driver better control of access. An air conditioner, when available, is also a safety feature, allowing you to drive with windows closed. Thieves can and do snatch purses through open windows of moving cars.

- Keep car doors locked at all times. Wear seat belts.
- As much as possible, avoid driving at night.
- Don't leave valuables in the car. If you must carry things with you, keep them out of sight locked in the trunk, and then take them with you when you leave the car.
- Don't park your car on the street overnight. If the hotel or municipality does not have a parking garage or other secure area, select a well-lit area.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Don't get out of the car if there are suspicious looking individuals nearby. Drive away.

Patterns of Crime Against Motorists: In many places frequented by tourists, including areas of southern Europe, victimization of motorists has been refined to an art. Where it is a problem, U.S. embassies are aware of it and consular officers try to work with local authorities to warn the public about the dangers. In some locations, these efforts at public awareness have paid off, reducing the frequency of incidents. You may also wish to ask your rental car agency for advice on avoiding robbery while visiting tourist destinations.

Carjackers and thieves operate at gas stations, parking lots, in city traffic and along the highway. Be suspicious of anyone who hails you or tries to get your attention when you are in or near your car.

Criminals use ingenious ploys. They may pose as good Samaritans, offering help for tires that they claim are flat or that they have made flat. Or they may flag down a motorist, ask for assistance, and then steal the rescuer's luggage or car. Usually they work in groups, one person carrying on the pretense while the others rob you.

Other criminals get your attention with abuse, either trying to drive you off the road, or causing an "accident" by rear-ending you. In some urban areas, thieves don't waste time on ploys, they simply smash car windows at traffic lights, grab your valuables or your car and get away. In cities around the world, "defensive driving" has come to mean more than avoiding auto accidents; it means keeping an eye out for potentially criminal pedestrians, cyclists and scooter riders.

How to Handle Money Safely

To avoid carrying large amounts of cash, change your travelers' checks only as you need currency. Countersign travelers' checks only in front of the person who will cash them.

Do not flash large amounts of money when paying a bill. Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction.

Deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money, buy airline tickets or purchase souvenirs. Do not change money on the black market.

If your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the local police. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and as an explanation of your plight.

After reporting missing items to the police, report the loss or theft of:

- travelers' checks to the nearest agent of the issuing company
- credit cards to the issuing company
- airline tickets to the airline or travel agent
- passport to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate

How to Avoid Legal Difficulties

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and are under its jurisdiction. You can be arrested overseas for actions that may be either legal or considered minor infractions in the United States. Familiarize yourself with legal expectations in the countries you will visit. Country Specific Information include information on unusual patterns of arrests in particular countries, as appropriate.

Some of the offenses for which U.S. citizens have been arrested abroad are listed below.

Drug Violations: More than 1/3 of U.S. citizens incarcerated abroad are held on drug charges. Some countries do not distinguish between possession and trafficking, and many have mandatory sentences - even for possession of a small amount of marijuana or cocaine. A number of Americans have been arrested for possessing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and amphetamines, that they purchased legally elsewhere. Other U.S. citizens have been arrested for purchasing prescription drugs abroad in quantities that local authorities suspected were for commercial use. If in doubt about foreign drug laws, ask local authorities or the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Possession of Firearms: The places where U.S. citizens most often experience difficulties for illegal possession of firearms are nearby - Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean. Sentences for possession of firearms in Mexico can be up to 30 years. In general, firearms, even those legally regis-

tered in the U.S., cannot be brought into a country unless a permit is obtained in advance from the embassy or a consulate of that country and the firearm is registered with foreign authorities on arrival. (Note: There are also strict rules about bringing firearms or ammunition into the U.S; check with U.S. Customs at http://www.cbp.gov before your trip.

Photography: In many countries you can be detained for photographing security-related institutions, such things as police and military installations, government buildings, border areas and transportation facilities. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs.

Purchasing Antiques: Americans have been arrested for purchasing souvenirs that were, or looked like, antiques and which local customs authorities believed were national treasures. This is especially true in Turkey, Egypt and Mexico. Familiarize yourself with any local regulations of antiques. In countries with strict control of antiques, document your purchases as reproductions if that is the case, or if they are authentic, secure the necessary export permit (often from the national museum). It is a good idea to inquire about exporting these items before you purchase them.

TERRORISM

Terrorist acts occur unpredictably, making it impossible to protect yourself absolutely. The first and best protection is to avoid travel to areas where there has been a persistent record of terrorist attacks or kidnappings.

Most terrorist attacks are the result of careful planning. Just as a car thief will first be attracted to an unlocked car with the key in the ignition, terrorists are looking for the most accessible targets.

The chances that a tourist, traveling with an unpublished program or itinerary, would be the victim of terrorism are slight. In addition, many terrorist groups, seeking publicity for political causes within their own country or region, may not be looking for American targets.

Nevertheless, the following pointers may help you avoid becoming a target of opportunity. They should be considered as adjuncts to the tips listed in the previous sections on how to protect yourself against the far greater likelihood of being a victim of crime.

These precautions may provide some degree of protection, and can serve as practical and psychological deterrents to would-be terrorists.

- Schedule direct flights if possible and avoid stops in high-risk airports or areas.
- Be cautious about what you discuss with strangers or what others may overhear.
- Try to minimize the time spent in the public area of an airport, which is a less protected area. Move quickly from the check-in counter to the secured areas. Upon arrival, leave the airport as soon as possible.
- As much as possible, avoid luggage tags, dress and behavior that may identify you as an American.
- Keep an eye out for abandoned packages or briefcases, or other suspicious items. Report them to airport authorities and leave the area promptly.
- Avoid obvious terrorist targets such as places where Americans and Westerners are known to congregate.

Travel to High-Risk Areas

If you must travel in an area where there has been a history of terrorist attacks or kidnappings, make it a habit to:

- Discuss with your family what they would do in the event of an emergency. Make sure your affairs are in order before leaving home.
- As noted earlier, it's a good idea to register your travel with the Department of State. This may be accomplished online at https://travelregistration.state.gov. Registration will make it easier to contact you in case of an emergency.
- Remember to leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers or copies of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.
- Remain friendly but be cautious about discussing personal matters or your itinerary.
- Leave no personal or business papers in your hotel room.
- Watch for people following you or "loiterers" observing your comings and goings.
- Keep a mental note of safe havens, such as police stations, hotels, and hospitals. Formulate a plan of action for what you will do if a bomb explodes or there is gunfire nearby.
- Let someone else know what your travel plans are. Keep them informed if you change your plans.
- Report any suspicious activity to local police, and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
- Select your own taxicabs at random. Don't take a vehicle that is not clearly identified as a taxi. Compare the face of the driver with the one on his or her posted license.
- If possible, travel with others.

- Be sure of the identity of visitors before opening the door of your hotel room. Don't meet strangers at your hotel room, or at unknown or remote locations.
- Refuse unexpected packages.
- Check for loose wires or other suspicious activity around your car.
- Be sure your vehicle is in good operating condition.
- Drive with car windows closed in crowded streets. Bombs can be thrown through open windows.
- If you are ever in a situation where somebody starts shooting, drop to the floor or get down as low as possible. Don't move until you are sure the danger has passed. Do not attempt to help rescuers and do not pick up a weapon. If possible, shield yourself behind a solid object. If you must move, crawl on your stomach.

HIJACKING/HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

While every hostage situation is different, there are some general considerations to keep in mind.

The U.S. Government's policy is firm: we do not make concessions to terrorists. When Americans are abducted overseas, we look to the host government to exercise its responsibility under international law to protect all persons within its territories and to bring about the safe release of hostages. We work closely with these governments from the outset of a hostage-taking incident to ensure that our citizens and other victims are released as quickly and safely as possible.

- At the outset of a terrorist incident, the terrorists typically are tense, high-strung and may behave irrationally. It is extremely important that you remain calm and alert and manage your own behavior.
- Avoid resistance and sudden or threatening movements. Do not struggle or try to escape unless you are certain of being successful. Don't try to be a hero, endangering yourself and others.
- Consciously put yourself in a mode of passive cooperation. Talk normally. Do not complain, avoid belligerency, and comply with all orders and instructions.
- If questioned, keep your answers short. Don't volunteer information or make unnecessary overtures.
- Make a concerted effort to relax. Prepare yourself mentally, physically and emotionally for the possibility of a long ordeal.
- Try to remain inconspicuous, avoid direct eye contact and the appearance of observing your captors' actions.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages. Eat what they give you, even if it does not look or taste appetizing, but keep consumption of food and drink at a moderate level. A loss of appetite and weight is normal.
- If you are involved in a lengthier, drawn-out situation, try to establish a rapport with your captors, avoiding political discussions or other confrontational subjects.
- Establish a daily program of mental and physical activity.
- Think positively. Avoid a sense of despair. Rely on your inner resources. Remember that you are a valuable commodity to your captors. It is important to them to keep you alive and well.

ASSISTANCE ABROAD

The Consular Section can provide updated information on the security situation in a country.

If you are ill or injured, contact the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate for a list of local physicians and medical facilities. If you request, consular officers will help you contact family or friends. If necessary, a consul can assist in the transfer of funds from family or friends in the United States. Payment of hospital and other medical expenses is your responsibility.

Should you find yourself in legal difficulty, contact a consular officer immediately. Consular officers cannot serve as attorneys, give legal advice, or get you out of jail. If you are arrested, consular officials will visit you, advise you of your rights under local laws, provide a list of local attorneys who speak English and who may have had experience in representing U.S. citizens, and ensure that you are held under humane conditions and are treated fairly under local law. A consular officer will contact your family or friends if you desire. When necessary, consuls can transfer money from home for you and will try to get relief for you, including food and clothing in countries where this is a problem. If you are detained, remember that under international treaties and customary international law, you have the right to talk to the U.S. consul. If you are denied this right, be politely persistent. Try to have someone get in touch for you.

Resources for U.S. Citizen Crime Victims

When a U.S. citizen becomes the victim of a crime overseas he or she may suffer physical, emotional, or financial injuries. The emotional impact of the crime may be intensified if the victim is in unfamiliar surroundings, far away from sources of comfort and support, and not fluent in the local language or knowledgeable about local laws and customs. Consuls and consular agents can provide assistance to U.S. citizen crime victims.

If you become the victim of a crime overseas, contact the nearest U.S. embassy, consulate, or consular agency for assistance. Also contact local police to report the incident and obtain immediate help with safety concerns.

While consular officials cannot investigate a crime, provide legal advice, represent you in court, serve as official interpreters or translators, or pay legal, medical, or other fees for U.S. citizens, they can assist crime victims in many other ways. Consular personnel overseas are familiar with local government agencies and resources in the countries in which they are located, and they can help you:

- replace a stolen passport
- contact family, friends, or employers
- obtain appropriate medical care
- address emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime
- obtain general information about the local criminal justice process and information about your case
- obtain information about local resources to assist victims, including foreign crime victim compensation programs
- obtain information about crime victim assistance and compensation programs in the U.S.
- obtain a list of local attorneys who speak English

Victim Assistance: If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, you may benefit from specialized resources for crime victims available in the United States. Throughout the United States, thousands of local crime victim assistance programs offer help to victims of violent crime and most will help residents of their community who have been the victim of a crime in another country. These include rape crisis counseling programs, shelter and counseling programs for battered women, support groups and bereavement counseling for family members of homicide victims, diagnostic and treatment programs for child abuse victims, assistance for victims of drunk driving crashes, and others.

Victim Compensation: All states operate crime victim compensation programs and nearly half of them offer benefits to their residents who are victims of violent crime overseas. These state compensation programs provide financial assistance to eligible victims for reimbursement of expenses such as medical treatment, counseling, funeral costs, lost income or loss of support, and others. Generally victim compensation programs require the victim to report the crime to law enforcement and they usually request a copy of the police report.

Contact Information for Victim Compensation and Assistance Programs: Information about each state's crime victim compensation program and how to apply for compensation is available on the Internet at the web site of the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards, http://www.nacvcb.org. The toll-free 24 hours a day/7 days a week hotline for sexual assault crisis counseling and referrals in the United States is 1-800-656-HOPE. It is operated by a non-profit organization, RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), which also has information on the Internet at http://www.rainn.org.

Information about local sexual assault victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state's sexual assault coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions are listed on the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office, http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw. The toll-free 24 hours a day /7 days a week National Domestic Violence Hotline, which provides crisis counseling and referrals in the U.S. is 1-800-799-SAFE.

Information about local domestic violence victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state's domestic violence coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions is listed at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office, http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw. The toll-free 24 hours a day/7 days a week crisis counseling and referral line for families and friends of those who have died by violence is 1-888-818-POMC. It is operated by a non-profit organization, POMC, Inc. (The National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children), which also has information on the Internet at http://www.pomc.org.

Information about national and local resources for victims and family members of victims of drunk driving crashes is available at the web site of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, http://www.madd.org. Contact information for non-emergency victim assistance services in communities throughout the U.S. is available at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, http://ovc.ncjrs.org/findvictimservices.

Information for crime victims on the impact of crime, safety planning, legal rights and civil legal remedies, and options for assistance and referrals to local programs is also available from the National Crime Victim Center (NCVC). Call toll free (8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST) 1-800-FYI-CALL or call TTY for hearing impaired (8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST) 1-800-211-7996. Information is also available on the Internet at http://www.ncvc.org. Information and referral to victim assistance programs is available from the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). Call toll-free 24 hours a day / 7 days a week 1-800-TRY-NOVA. Information is also available on the Internet at http://www.try-nova.org. Information about victim assistance programs in approximately 20 countries is available at the web site of Victim Assistance Online, http://www.vaonline.org. Also, consult the State Department brochure entitled Help for American Victims of Crime Overseas.

Government Advice:

International Parental Child Abduction

Editor's note: The information below was compiled from reports posted by the U.S. Department of State at www.travel.state.gov/family as of January 2009. Some material has been edited for publication in book format. Readers should consult www.travel.state.gov/family for additional information, updates, and revisions.

OUTGOING CASES

Responding to an International Parental Child Abduction

The Office of Children's is prepared to assist you as you pursue recovery of your abducted child. You will be assigned a specific case officer who can assist you with opening a case with your local law enforcement, searching for your child, understanding the legal process, and in other ways.

As a starting point for this bewildering experience, please learn about these five steps to responding to an international parental child abduction, and be in touch with our office. We will help you each step of the way.

Opening an International Parental Child Abduction Case

Begin by opening an international parental child abduction case. This should be done in two places:

The Office of Children's Issues: Contact our office. We have case officers who stand ready to assist. We have expertise about specific countries and regions of the world, the laws and possible solutions in each country. After you call, we will open an international parental child abduction case for you, and your case will remain open until you request it to be closed or your child is returned to the United States.

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
Office of Children's Issues
Toll Free Phone from the U.S./Canada: 1-888-407-4747
Outside the US/Canada: 1-202-501-4444
Fax 202-736-9132

The National Crime Information Center (NCIC): Contact your local police, file a missing person's report, and request that your child's name be entered into to the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer database. This is a mechanism provided to you by the Federal National Child Search Act of 1990,

Make this report and enter your child in NCIC even if you think you know where your child is located in another country. If your local law enforcement is unaware of the legal requirements for immediate entry into NCIC, please let our office know. We will contact the law enforcement agency and provide them with information that may assist you. Note: It is not always a good idea to file criminal charges against the abducting parent at this time.

Searching for Your Child

If you are not sure about where your child was taken, locating your child is the top priority. Frequently the abducting parent goes to great length to keep this location hidden, such as changing the name of the child.

You are not alone, however, in this search. There are resources available to help you find your child. Some of these resources are listed below. Our office will work with you to access these resources to try to locate your child as quickly as possible.

If you know an address where your child might be located, and your child is an American Citizen, our office can request that the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate in that country conduct a welfare and whereabouts visit to the child.

To request a welfare and whereabouts visit, fax a request to us at 202-736-9132. The request must contain the following information:

- Your child's or children's full name (and any aliases, other names by which they may also be known);
- Your child's date and place of birth;
- The full name (and any aliases) of the abducting parent; and
- Any information that may assist the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in locating the abductor, such as the names, addresses, telephone numbers of friends, relatives, place of employment, or business connections.
- The consular officer is required to request permission of the taking parent to conduct the welfare and whereabouts visit. If the consular officer obtains the other

parent's permission to visit the child, the officer will conduct the visit and report back to you about your child. In some instances, consular officers are also able to provide you with letters or photos from your child.

International Police

If the law enforcement issues a warrant for the taking parent, the International Police Organization (INTERPOL) can conduct a search for your child in the country where you believe your child has been taken. Request that your local police contact INTERPOL.

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

NCMEC can help you circulate your child's photograph to the media in the country to which you believe your child was taken. NCMEC can also assist you in creating a missing person's poster of your child. A poster may assist foreign authorities in attempting to locate your child

Further Steps to Take in Your Search

Relatives and Friends of the Other Parent—One of the best ways to find your child in another country is through establishing friendly contact with relatives and friends of the other parent, either in the United States or abroad. You may have more influence with such persons than you suspect, and their interest in your child's welfare may lead them to cooperate with you.

School Records—You can contact the principal of the school your child was attending to obtain information that might help you. The abducting parent may have requested that the school transfer your child's records.

United States Postal Service Mail Cover—By contacting the United States Postal Inspection Services, you may be able to obtain a "mail cover" for mailing address that you know of in the United States to which the abducting parent might write. A mail carrier is when the Postal Service scans the outside (or "cover") of mail that is sent to an address for up to 120 days. This may help you discover the new address abroad of the abducting parent.

Credit Card, Telephone, and Email Records—It may be possible for your local police to obtain, by subpoena or search warrant, to obtain credit card records, telephone records of the taking parent friends and relatives, cell phone records, and or e-mail records. Each of these items could be helpful in determining their whereabouts of the taking parent. Check with state and local authorities to see if this can be done for you.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Learning About Applicable Laws and Solutions

If you are a parent whose child has been taken from the United States to another country in violation of your parental rights, the Office of Children's Issues is here to help you. We offer many services that you might find valuable during this difficult time. As Central Authority for the Hague Abduction Convention, we can help you file an application for return of your child through this civil treaty. If your child is in a country that is not a treaty partner, we can help you understand other possible solutions. First, please read the information on this page and learn about possible solutions to an international parental child abduction. After reviewing these options, we invite you to contact us. We are experts on international parental child abduction. Our case officers understand what works in different countries and are available to respond to your questions and offer a variety of resources. In addition, we recommend consulting with an attorney. Finding an attorney is usually an important part of resolving an international parental child abduction case.

Settling out of Court

Quick Facts

- Mediation is often the quickest and most effective way of resolving an international parental child abduction case.
- Legal procedures can be long and expensive.
- You may have greater success in achieving the return of your child by negotiating with the abducting parent.
- A decrease in tension can increase your chances of being able to visit the child and participate in some way in the child's upbringing.

Possible Benefits of Mediation:

- Avoid the costs of proceedings in either country.
- Avoid the stress of contentious litigation in either country.
- Avoid repeated moves for the children and the further damage that would cause to emotional well-being and family relationships.
- Avoid a substantial delay in resolving the future of the family.
- Obligate and empower parents to resolve rather than aggravate the issues.

For names of Professional Mediation Organizations with international experience, contact The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST; or International Social Services at 443-451-1200.

Friends or relatives of the abductor may be able to help you reach a compromise with the abductor. Some parents find success in asking them for assistance.

USING THE HAGUE ABDUCTION CONVENTION

For left-behind seeking the return of their children, one of the biggest sources of frustration is that courts in many other countries do not take into account the prior decisions made by courts in the United States. A custody order in the United States can be meaningless abroad. When confronting this challenge, keep in mind the following three things:

- Each country is a sovereign nation. Sovereign nations cannot interfere with each other's legal systems, judiciaries, or law enforcement;
- Generally every country only has jurisdiction within its own territory and over people present within its borders; and
- Although court orders from other countries may be recognized in the United States under the Uniform Child Custody and Jurisdiction Enforcement Act (UCCJEA), this is rarely true in reverse—U.S. court orders are not generally recognized in other countries.

In part because of these difficulties, twenty-three nations agreed to draft a treaty about international parental child abduction at the Hague Conference on Private International Law in 1976. The treaty was to be a way for nations to work together to solve abduction cases. Between 1976 and 1980, the United States was a major force in preparing and negotiating the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Hague Abduction Convention). And on July 1, 1988, the Convention came into force for the United States.

The Hague Abduction Convention is the primary civil law mechanism for parents seeking the return of the children from other treaty partner countries. Countries that are party to the Convention have agreed that a child who was living in one Convention country, and who has been removed to or retained in another Convention country in violation of the left-behind parent's custodial rights, shall be promptly returned. Once the child has been returned, the custody dispute can then be resolved, if necessary, in the courts of that jurisdiction. The Convention does not address who should have custody of the child; it addresses where the custody case should be heard.

To date, the United States partners with 68 other countries under the Hague Abduction Convention (view the list of Hague Abduction countries). Each country that is party to the Convention has designated a Central Authority, a specific government office, to carry out specialized Convention duties. Central Authorities communicate with each other and they assist parents in filing applications for return of or for access to their children under the Convention. The Central Authority for the United States is the Department of State's Office of Children's Issues.

How to Use the Hague Abduction Convention

Fill out an Application: In order to use the Hague Abduction Convention as a possible solution, you will need to file an application. Your application will specify whether you seek the return of your child or access to your child. This application contains information such as the habitual residence of the child, the date of the wrongful removal, and your custody agreement, among other items.

The application can be downloaded from our website in both English and in Spanish. Our case officers are available to answer your questions about filling out the application; however we have detailed instructions and a checklist available to assist you with this process.

You do not need to have a custody decree to file an application under the Convention. However, to apply for the return of your child, you must:

- Have had and been actually exercising a "right of custody" at the time of the abduction ("right of custody" may be joint legal or sole legal custody); and
- Have not given permission for the child to be removed or, in the case of wrongful retention, to be retained beyond a specified, agreed-upon period of time.

Submit the Application: Once you have completed the application, we recommend that you submit it to our office (although you may submit your application directly to the Central Authority or foreign court of the country where the child is believed to be held). We will review your application to ensure that it is complete and that your request complies with the requirements of the Convention before forwarding it to the foreign Central Authority.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: An application should be submitted as soon as possible after an abduction or wrongful retention has taken place. Time is of the essence. If more than one year passes before you file a petition, you could be barred from pursuing your case. Do not wait until you get a custody order.

Attend Hague Proceedings: Once your application for return or access has been submitted to the foreign Central Authority, that foreign Central Authority is responsible for processing it. Operations and procedures implementing the Convention differ in each country party to the treaty.

For this reason, our case officers—who are experienced with the various countries' proceedings—are available to help you understand the process for the country to which you submit your application.

Sometimes just filing the application is sufficient to persuade the taking parent to return the child. The reputation of the Convention is such that, when an abducting or retaining parent learns that a Hague application has been or will be filed, he or she may return the child voluntarily and no further civil action will be taken under the Convention. The majority of Hague cases, however, require the left behind parent to retain an attorney in the country where the child is located and petition the court for return. If the abducting parent does not voluntarily agree to return your child, you may want to attend a legal proceeding in the foreign court about your application for return. Our case officers are prohibited from acting as an agent or attorney in legal proceedings arising under the Convention, however we will provide information on an ongoing bases. Please see our flyer on Retaining a Foreign Attorney for guidance on obtaining legal counsel to prepare for legal proceedings in a foreign country.

Conditions to Filing a Hague Application—What You Must Prove to Succeed

The Convention does not apply to every international parental child abduction case. Several parameters must be met in order to file an application for return under the treaty.

For your case to have merit, you must show:

- That your child was habitually resident (child's home for a significant amount of time) in one Convention country, and was wrongfully removed to or retained in another Convention country (taken or retained in violation of your custody rights);

- That the wrongful removal or retention must have occurred between two Convention countries that have a treaty relationship on or after the date the treaty came into force between the two countries (the dates are different for every country); and

- The child or children are under the age of 16 at the time of filing the petition.

Exceptions to a Country's Obligation to Return a Child

Depending on the facts of the your case, there could be a treaty obligation for a Convention country to return an abducted child or grant access to the child, unless one of the following exceptions apply:

- There is a grave risk that the child would be exposed to physical or psychological harm or otherwise placed in an intolerable situation in his or her country of habitual residence;

- The child objects to being returned and has reached an age and degree of maturity at which the court can take account of the child's views (the treaty does not establish at what age children reach this level of maturity—that age and the degree of weight given to children's views varies from country to country); or

- The return would violate the fundamental principles of human rights and freedoms of the country where the child is being held.

Criminal Charges and the Hague Abduction Convention

The Convention is a civil legal mechanism for return and does not provide for criminal sanctions. As such, criminal charges may have an unintended negative effect on the operation of the Convention. With the Convention, the emphasis is on the swift return of a child to his or her place of habitual residence where the custody dispute should be resolved. Courts in some countries, including the United States, have denied return of children solely because the taking parent would be arrested if they accompanied the child home. Many of these courts, both in the United States and abroad, have held that the arrest of the parent would expose the child to psychological harm under Article 13(b) of the Convention. This varies by country and the type of criminal charge, but if you are considering pressing criminal charges, we recommend first contacting our office to discuss potential benefits and consequences.

Children Abducted to the United States

The Hague Abduction Convention applies to children abducted to and from countries party to the Convention. If a child is abducted to the United States from one of our Hague treaty partners, the parent who is left behind may apply for return under the Convention. Even if the child was born in the United States, if the child is now found to be "habitually resident" in another country the child may be ordered to return to the country of habitual residence under the Convention, provided the case meets the requirements of the Hague and the child's country of habitual residence is a signatory.

On April 1, 2008, the Office of Children's Issues assumed the handling of all "incoming" Hague child abduction cases—that is, abductions of children to the United States from countries that are partners under the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. As the federally designated Central Authority for the Convention, we are pleased that all Central Authority work is now handled within our office. If your child has been wrongfully taken to the United States, or wrongfully kept in the United States, please view our information about incoming Hague cases.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: The Hague Abduction Convention focuses on issues of residency, not citizenship. The Convention does not confer any immigration benefit. Anyone seeking to enter the United States who is not a United

States citizen must fulfill the appropriate entry requirements, even if that person was ordered by a court to return to the United States. This applies to children and parents involved in any child abduction case, including a Hague Abduction Convention case. When a taking parent in a Hague Abduction Convention case is ineligible to enter the United States under United States immigration laws, the parent may be paroled for a limited time into the United States through the use of a Significant Public Benefit Parole in order to participate in custody or other related proceedings in a United States court.

HAGUE CONVENTION APPLICATION

General Instructions:

To invoke the Hague Convention, submit TWO completed applications for EACH child. The application form may be photocopied. Type or print all information in black or blue ink. Furnish as much of the information called for as possible, using an additional sheet of paper if you need more space. If you have further questions about the form, you may wish to refer to the text of the Convention You may also call the Office of Children's Issues (CA/OCS/CI) at 202-736-7000. Translation of the supporting documents into the official language of the receiving country may be necessary. Translations can speed up the overall process. Foreign attorneys and judges tend to respond more favorably with such documents. Ask CA/OCS/CI for more information about supporting documents.

You may fax your Hague application to CA/OCS/CI fax number (202) 736-9133.

Send originals and supporting documents by mail, express mail, or courier service to:

Department of State, Office of Children's Issues
SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520
Note: Be sure to sign and date the application

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-HAGUE CONVENTION PARENTS

Your situation is difficult, but there are things that you can do. This list assumes that you know, or strongly suspect, that your child has been abducted abroad to a country that is *not* a party to the Hague Convention on International Child Abduction. If the country *is* a party to the Hague Convention, read this booklet to determine if your situation meets the requirements of the Convention. If you have a Hague case, please submit the Application for Assistance Under The Hague Convention on International Child Abduction. If you do not have a Hague case, then please complete this checklist/report in detail and forward a **copy** to the Office of Children's Issues when you report the abduction of your child. It is critically important that you also continue to update our office on the status of any developments in your case. You should send us **updated** copies of this checklist when developments occur.

Please fill out a separate checklist for each child.

Name of child (last, first, middle):

Child is currently located (name of country):

Dates of child's birth (month/day/year):

Place of birth:

Is the child a United States citizen? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Child's United States passport number:

Your name (last, first, middle):

Your Nationality:

Address:

Home Phone Number:

Work Phone Number:

Cell Phone Number:

Pager Number:

Home Fax Number:

Work Fax Number:

E-mail Addresse(s):

Your relationship to child:

Abductor's Name (last, first, middle):

Last known United States address:

Telephone numbers (United States and foreign):

Fax number (United States and foreign):

Abductor's relationship to child:

Legal relationship between parents:

- Married
- Divorced
- Never Married
- Separated with custody order
- Separated with no custody order
- Paternity established
- Paternity not established

Emergency Action - What to do Right Away

Has your child been taken abroad?

If yes, please contact the Office of Children's Issues at 202 736-7000.

If no, please contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST.

If known, please give exact location of child.

Country:
Address:
Telephone, fax numbers and e-mail

What is the license plate number of a vehicle the abductor may use to transport the child?

Have local law enforcement authorities entered that number into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) computer? ❑ YES ❑ NO

What are the probable airlines and flight numbers the abductor may use to depart the United States?

Have you filed a missing person report with your local police department? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Date police report filed:

Name of police officer:

Address, e-mail, phone and fax numbers of police officer:

Have you reported the abduction to the F.B.I.?
❑ YES ❑ NO

Date of report to F.B.I.:

Name of F.B.I. agent:

Address, e-mail, phone and fax numbers of agent:

Have you obtained a decree of sole custody or one that prohibits your child from traveling without your permission? In most states, you may be able to obtain such a decree even after a child is abducted.

Dates of all custody orders:

Names of courts in which orders were issued:

Address, e-mail, phone and fax numbers for court (if known)

Has your child ever been issued a United States passport?
❑ YES ❑ NO

Has your child's name been entered in the United States Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program?
❑ YES ❑ NO

Date United States passport lookout entered:

Passport case number:

Does the taking parent have ties to another country?
❑ YES ❑ NO

May your child have a claim to citizenship of another country? ❑ YES ❑ NO

If yes, have you informed the embassy and consulates of the foreign country of your custody decree and asked them not to issue a foreign passport to your child?
❑ YES ❑ NO

Country contacted:

Date foreign embassy contacted:

Name of official contacted:

Has your child ever been issued a passport for another country? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Might the taking parent transit any other country en route to the country to which he or she has ties?
❑ YES ❑ NO

If yes, have you informed the embassy and consulates of that country of your custody decree and asked them not to issue a visa to your child?
❑ YES ❑ NO

Country contacted:

Date foreign embassy contacted:

Name of official contacted:

Do you have a valid passport in case you need to travel overseas? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Your passport number:

Is this a United States passport? ❑ YES ❑ NO

If not United States, what country?

Date passport issued:

Date passport expires:

Place passport issued:

(Make a copy of your passport information page, in case you need to submit it.)

The Search

Have you tried to establish contact with relatives or friends of the abducting parent? If so, please list their names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers and the dates contacted (Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.)

Have you contacted the principal of your child's school and asked to be informed of requests for transfer of your child's school records? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Have you contacted the registrar of official records to see if they can block the issuance of a duplicate birth certificate for your child? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Have you asked local law enforcement authorities to ask the United States Postal Inspection Service to put a "mail cover" on addresses in the United States to which the abductor might write? ❑ YES ❑ NO

Date of "mail cover":

Name, address, telephone and fax numbers of investigator doing cover:

Have you asked local law enforcement authorities to help you obtain information from telephone and credit card companies on the whereabouts of the abductor? ❑ YES ❑ NO

If yes, please give the date this was done, the contact information for the person who did it, and the results of the search:

Have you contacted the Office of Victims Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice (See References.)? ❑ YES ❑ NO

If yes, please provide CA/OCS/CI with details of whom you contacted, and the assistance they were or were not able to provide

Have you contacted the NCMEC to have search posters created (See References.)? ❑ YES ❑ NO

After Your Child Has Been Located Abroad

Have you retained the services of a foreign attorney?

Date attorney retained:

Name of attorney:

Address, e-mail, telephone and fax numbers for attorney:

Date of court hearing abroad:

Have you sent certified authorized copies of the custody decree, court orders, state and federal warrants, as well as copies of state custody and parental child abduction laws and the Federal Parental Kidnapping Prevention Act to the foreign attorney?

Date sent:

Please list the specific documents sent:

CHECKLIST AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE HAGUE APPLICATION

Section I: First Child Subject of Application

This section is for information concerning the child for whom you are invoking the Hague Convention.

Child's Name—The child's full name: last name, first, middle
Date of Birth—Month/Day/Year
Place of Birth—City/State/Country
Address—Child's address in the country of habitual residence at the time of the abduction or removal.
United States Social Security Number—A nine-digit number: 000-00-0000 (if known)
Passport/Identity Card—Issuing country and passport or I.D. number (if known)
Address and Telephone Number of Child's Current Location (if known)—Please provide any address information or details that may help locate the child.
Citizenship—Include all citizenship held by the child (e.g. U.S., Canadian).
Height—Feet and inches
Weight—Pounds
Sex—Male or Female
Color of Hair—Child's hair color
Color of Eyes—Child's eye color (Include color photo, if available.)
Name of Child's Father if not Listed in Section II or III—The father's full name (if it is not listed later in section II or III)
Name of Child's Mother if not Listed in Section II or III—The mother's full name (if it is not listed later in section II or III)

Section II: Applicant (Person Seeking Return of/ Access to Child/ren)

This section is for information concerning the person or institution applying for access to or the return of the child to the United States.

Name—Full name of applicant: last name, first, middle
Date of Birth—Month/Day/Year
Place of Birth—City/State/Country
Relationship to Child/ren- Relationship of the applicant requesting access/return to the child (e.g. mother, father)
Citizenship—List all citizenship held by the requester (e.g. United States, Canadian)
United States Social Security Number—A nine-digit number: 000-00-0000.
Passport/Identity Card—Issuing country and passport or I.D. number.
Current Address, Telephone Number, and Email Address—Include mailing address, home telephone, work telephone, fax number, and email address.

Occupation—Occupation of the requester (if a person).

Name, Address and Telephone Number of Legal Adviser, if any—Include zip code as well as telephone and fax numbers. Some of this information may be the same as that already given.

Section III: Person Alleged to Have Wrongfully Removed or Retained the Child/ren

This section is for information concerning the person alleged to have abducted or retained the child/ren. The information about the abducting parent is needed to assist in locating the child. Please provide all requested information and any additional facts that may help authorities locate the child.

Name—Full name of parent alleged to have abducted or wrongfully retained the child.

Date of Birth—Month/Day/Year

Place of Birth—City/State/Country

Relationship to Child/ren- Relationship of the alleged abductor/retainer to the child (e.g. mother, father)

Citizenship—List all citizenship held by the alleged abductor/retainer (e.g. United States, Canadian)

United States Social Security Number—A nine-digit number: 000-00-0000 (if known).

Passport/Identity Card—Issuing country and passport or I.D. number (if known).

Occupation, Name and Address of Employer—Provide any employment information that may be helpful in locating the alleged abductor/retainer, such as usual type of work, potential employers or employment agencies.

Known Aliases—Any other names the alleged abductor/retainer may use.

Address and Telephone Number of Current Location—Of the alleged abductor/retainer in the country where the child was taken.

Height—Feet and inches

Weight—Pounds

Color of Hair—Alleged abductor/retainer's hair color.

Color of Eyes—Alleged abductor/retainer's eye color. (Include color photo, if available.)

Section IV: Additional Child/ren Subject of Application

This section is for information concerning any additional child/ren for whom you are invoking the Hague Convention. Provide the following information for EACH child.

Child's Name—The child's full name: last name, first, middle

Date of Birth—Month/Day/Year

Place of Birth—City/State/Country

Address—Child's address in the country of habitual residence at the time of the abduction or removal.

United States Social Security Number—A nine-digit number: 000-00-0000 (if known)

Passport/Identity Card—Issuing country and passport or I.D. number (if known)

Address and Telephone Number of Child's Current Location (if known)—Please provide any address information or details that may help locate the child.

Citizenship—Include all citizenship held by the child (e.g. U.S., Canadian).

Height—Feet and inches

Weight—Pounds

Sex—Male or Female

Color of Hair—Child's hair color

Color of Eyes—Child's eye color (Include color photo, if available.)

Name of Child's Father if not Listed in Section II or III—The father's full name (if it is not listed later in section II or III)

Name of Child's Mother if not Listed in Section II or III—The mother's full name (if it is not listed later in section II or III)

Section V: Time, Place, Date, and Circumstances of the Wrongful Removal or Retention

This section is for the applicant to describe the circumstances under which the child/ren were wrongfully removed or retained.

Provide the date, to the best of your knowledge, that the child left the United States or when the wrongful retention began. Include the place from which the child was taken. Describe the legal relationship existing between you and the abducting parent when the child was removed. Describe the circumstances under which the child was removed/retained. What were the circumstances leading up to the removal or retention? How did you learn of the removal/retention? Did the other parent take the child during a scheduled visitation? Did the other parent take the child for what you believed would be a short visit and then inform you that they were staying? Did they purchase round-trip air tickets to show that they intended to return? Had you and your family moved to the other country, and then you decided to return to the United States? Take this opportunity to tell your story. Try to anticipate what claims the other parent may make and provide your explanation.

Do not limit yourself to the space provided on the form. Additional pages may be attached to fully narrate the circumstances. However, please be concise.

Section VI: Factual and Legal Justification for the Request

This section is for the applicant to describe the legal basis for invoking the Hague Convention.

Habitual Residence—Provide details that establish the child's place of habitual residence.

Basis of Applicant's Custody Rights—Provide information and documentation establishing that you had, and were exercising, a right of custody at the time of the child's removal. Generally, a right of custody is created by a custody order when parents are divorced, or by operation of

state law when parents are still married or were never married when the child was taken. As stated, the Convention defines "rights of custody" as including "rights relating to the care of the child and, in particular, the right to determine the child's place of residence." Thus, you may have a "right of custody" as defined by the Convention even if you do not have court-ordered joint or sole custody of the child.

IMPORTANT: If there is no applicable court order, please provide a copy of the state statute, case law, or an affidavit of law prepared by an attorney that establishes your right of custody at the time of the child's removal. This provision of the law may sometimes be found in the estate and wills section of the state code. Remember, you are not attempting to show that you would have an equal right to obtain custody in a subsequent custody proceeding, but that you had and were exercising a right of custody when the child was taken.

SEND IN YOUR HAGUE APPLICATION IMMEDIATELY.

Do NOT wait to get an order of custody. Orders issued after removal/retention are irrelevant in a Hague hearing.

Are civil proceedings currently in progress?—Indicate any civil action (in the United States or abroad) that may be pending (e.g. custody, divorce). List court and hearing dates.

Section VII: Proposed Arrangements for Return Travel of Child

This section is for the applicant to describe how the return travel of the child/ren will be arranged.

Provide means by which you propose the child will return to the United States if this is ordered. For example, would you travel to pick up the child, or would someone go in your place? Is the child old enough to travel by him or herself? Is there someone in the foreign country who could return with the child? Would the child travel by car, train, airplane? Be specific. Include:

- Name of person to whom child will be returned.
- Date of Birth of person to whom child will be returned.
- Place of Birth of person to whom child will be returned.
- Address of person to whom child will be returned.
- Telephone Number of person to whom child will be returned.

Section VIII: Other Persons with Additional Information Relating to the Whereabouts of the Children

This section is for the applicant to provide information concerning anyone else who may be able to provide information helpful in locating the child/ren. These persons would preferably be in the country of the child/ren's current location.

Provide names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of anyone who could potentially give the Central Authority in the country of the child/ren's current location information on the child's whereabouts.

Section IX: Other Relevant Information

This section is for the applicant to provide any other information that may be pertinent to the Hague application.

State here whether you are applying for return or access under the Convention. You should include here any additional information that you believe may be pertinent to the Hague application.

Sign and date the application in BLUE ink.

USING A FOREIGN COUNTRY'S CIVIL JUSTICE SYSTEM

If your child has been abducted to a country that is not a party to the Hague Abduction Convention, or if the Convention does not apply in your case, you can attempt using the civil justice system in the country to which your child was taken to try to achieve the return of your child. This usually will involve the family court system of that country.

Challenges to Using the Civil Justice System in Foreign Countries

There are many challenges that parents face in trying to using the Civil Justice system in countries that are not a party to the Hague Abduction Convention. For example, the person who has abducted the child may have a "home court" advantage if the proceedings take place in that parent's country of origin; and if the foreign country has a gender-based cultural bias.

Additionally, courts in other countries often do not consider the prior court decisions made in the United States. A custody order in the United States can therefore be meaningless abroad. When confronting this challenge, keep in mind the following three things:

- Each country is a sovereign nation. Sovereign nations cannot interfere with each other's legal systems, judiciaries, or law enforcement;

- Generally, every country only has jurisdiction within its own territory and over people present within its borders; and

- Although court orders from other countries may be recognized in the United States under the Uniform Child Custody and Jurisdiction Enforcement Act (UCCJEA), this is rarely true in reverse—U.S. court orders are not generally recognized in other countries.

Proceeding with the Civil Justice System in Foreign Countries: Even though your custody order from the United States has no legal authority in another country, it still might help you. Sometimes that custody order can be persuasive in a foreign court. The foreign court may consider it as evidence. In rare cases, the foreign court may decide to even recognize and enforce the custody order on the basis of comity (voluntary respect of one country for the laws and judicial decisions of another country). Ultimately, the foreign court will decide a child custody case on the basis of its own domestic laws—it is at the discretion of that court whether or not to give any weight to a U.S. court order.

If you decide to use the Civil Justice system in a country that is not party to the Hague Abduction Convention, you will likely need to retain an attorney in the country to which your child was taken. Please read our flyer about retaining a foreign attorney for more information about hiring an attorney abroad. Additionally, the case officer in our office may be able to provide you with some helpful hints about that country. Keep in mind that they are not able to provide legal advice to you, but they can serve as a helpful resource to you as you proceed with the emotional and difficult task ahead.

Tips to Keep in Mind

Do not ignore a document issued by a foreign court. Bring it to the attention of your case officer in our office without delay. Remember that different countries may have requirements that differ from those used by U.S. courts, such as citizenship, to proceed with a divorce or custody action. Some countries consider custody as part of a divorce petition, so agreeing to a divorce abroad you may inadvertently acquiesce to foreign court jurisdiction for custody case as well.

Pressing Criminal Charges

International parental child abduction is crime in every State and the District of Columbia. In some cases an abducting parent may be charged with a crime. International parental child abduction may also a Federal crime under the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act (IPKCA).

Your Decision to Use Criminal Charges

Your decision whether or not to press criminal charges against the abducting parent is a difficult and important one. Depending on the circumstances, criminal charges can be a powerful tool to achieve your child's safe return; however, they can also have the opposite affect and jeopardize the return of your child. When deciding whether to pursue criminal charges, keep in mind the potential reaction of the abducting parent. This may help you predict whether criminal charges would be an effective option.

Pros and Cons of Pressing Criminal Charges

PROS

- The criminal process may help you locate your child. In some places, law enforcement will only conduct a search for a child if there are criminal charges pending.

- If the abductor is not a United States citizen, a warrant may encourage the abducting parent to return the child voluntarily, especially if he or she has business or other reasons to travel to the United States.

- Abductions post a risk of harm to children, and perpetrators should be brought to justice.

- Prosecutions may protect children from repeat abductions.

- Criminal convictions result in a criminal record—this may be significant to judges making custody and visitation decisions and impact the ability of the taking parent to travel to the United States.

- Public awareness of successful prosecution of an abductor may help deter others from abducting their children.

CONS

- An outstanding criminal warrant may deter a voluntary or negotiated return.

- Criminal charges may adversely affect return proceedings under the Hague Abduction Convention—some foreign judges have refused to order a child's return under the Convention if the parent's return would likely result in his or her arrest.

- The abducting parent may react by increasing his/her efforts to remain undetected, going deeper into hiding. This is especially true in countries in which the abducting parent has family and/or deep ties in the community.

- It can be emotionally damaging on the child if the abducting parent is prosecuted and perhaps incarcerated.

- The criminal justice system takes into account several interests, some of which may be in conflict with your wishes. These interests include those of the child, each

parent, the civil justice system in seeking a workable custody agreement, and the criminal justice system in seeking justice.

Begin by Contacting Law Enforcement

We recommend keeping a log of all correspondence with law enforcement. Note in the log the person that you spoke to, the date and time of the conversation, and the information provided by the law enforcement official. If you decide to try to obtain a warrant against the abducting parent, initiate the process by reporting the abduction to law enforcement. They should respond with immediate action, including entering your child into the NCIC Missing Person File as an "Involuntary Missing" or "Endangered." The initial response from law enforcement can determine whether or not a child is quickly and safely recovered.

Your Local Police: Most international abductions are first reported to your local police. If they decide the case merits the issuance of an arrest warrant for the abducting parent, your local police (in coordination with the local prosecutor) may seek issuance of an Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution (UFAP) warrant under the Federal Fugitive Felon Act.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): You may also report your case directly to the FBI. The FBI may decide to treat the abduction as a felony under the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act. You can obtain the phone number of your local FBI office by looking in your phone book, or by viewing the FBI's website www.fbi.gov.

The Criminal Justice Process

Coordinated Effort: To successfully resolve an international parental child abduction case using criminal charges, a coordinated effort by Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies is needed. U.S. law enforcement will also enlist the cooperation of law enforcement authorities in the foreign country to carry on the investigation.

Types of Warrants: There are two types of warrants that you could be issued against the abducting parent: a State warrant and a Federal warrant. State warrants usually require you to have had court-ordered custody at the time of the abduction. Federal law enforcement officers, on the other hand, do not always require you to have to court-ordered custody to issue a warrant.

Foreign Policies, Customs, and Laws: Sometimes efforts to investigate the case can be hindered by the foreign country's policies and customs, as they relate to religion, gender, nationality, and other factors. What's more, the foreign country may not have laws against parental child abduction.

HELPFUL HINT: Law enforcement authorities in the U.S. and some countries abroad may be unfamiliar with international parental child abduction. If this is the case, please call our office. We may be able to help.

Prosecution of an Abductor in a Foreign Country

A final possibility in the area of criminal justice is prosecution of the abductor by the authorities of the foreign country where he or she is found. In many countries (but generally not the United States), nationals of the country can be prosecuted for acts committed abroad if the same conduct would constitute a criminal offense under local law. United States law enforcement authorities can request such prosecution by forwarding to the foreign country the evidence that would have been used in a United States prosecution. United States witnesses may, of course, have to appear and testify in the foreign proceeding. Like the courses of action discussed above, this approach also risks being counterproductive and will not necessarily result in the return of the child.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

Parental child abduction is a tragedy that has long-term consequences for both the child and the left-behind parent. When a child is abducted across international borders, the difficulties are compounded for everyone involved.

Difficulties for Left-Behind Parents

For left-behind parents, the trauma begins when they return home to find that the other parent has left and taken the children, or when they allow the children to travel abroad to visit the other parent, only to find that they do not return. Left-behind parents encounter substantial psychological, emotional, and financial problems. They may be paralyzed by helplessness and the sense that they have no idea where to start in the process of recovering their child. When the child has been abducted across international borders, the left-behind parent may face unfamiliar legal, cultural, and linguistic barriers. Left-behind parents experience a wide range of emotions including betrayal, the loss of their child and/or their marriage, anger against the other parent, anxiety, sleeplessness, and severe depression.

Finding Support

Although international parental child abduction has far-reaching consequences, its significance is not widely understood. Left-behind parents may have difficulty finding the support that they need and getting legal assistance.

Peer Support Groups—We recommend considering contacting a peer support organization. Organizations such as Take Root or Team Hope can link left-behind parents together. Other left-behind parents can provide invaluable support during this painful period.

Take Root—1-800-Root-Org

Team Hope—1-866-305-HOPE

Victim Assistance—The Office of Children's Issues works closely with victim assistance specialists in Overseas Citizens Services. They can help you locate a variety of resources to support you during this time. Ask your case officer in our office to put you in touch with one of these specialists.

Reuniting With Your Child

Reuniting with your child can be a powerful and emotional event, especially if the reunification takes place after a prolonged period of time. You and your child will no doubt be experiencing a wide range of emotions around this important occasion. Your case officer can provide you advice about reunification, and can help coordinate U.S. and foreign government authorities' involvement.

Reunification Resources

Reunification Funds—The financial costs of reunification to left-behind parents can be substantial. The Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has established a fund called The Federal Crime Victim Assistance Fund. When no other resources are available, this fund has at times been used to assist left-behind parents with travel costs associated with reunification. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children administers the OVC funds for left-behind parents. To learn about whether you might qualify for such assistance, contact your case officer.

Reunification Counselors– Many left-behind parents find it helpful to use the services of a reunification counselor to help guide them through the process. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children maintains a list of reunification counselors. If you think you might benefit from their assistance, ask NCMEC to put you in touch with one of these experts.

DESPERATE MEASURES (RE-ABDUCTION)

We strongly discourage taking desperate and possibly illegal measures to return your child to the United States. Attempts to re-abduct your child back into the United States may:

- Endanger your child and others;
- Prejudice any future judicial efforts you might wish to make in that country to stabilize the situation; and
- Result in your arrest and imprisonment in that country.If you are arrested, the foreign court will not necessarily give weight to the fact that you might have custody of your child in the United States, nor will the United States Embassy be able to secure your release.

If you do succeed in leaving the foreign country with your child, you and anyone who assisted you may be the target of arrest warrants and extradition requests in the U.S. or any other country where you are found.

Finally, there is no guarantee that the chain of abductions would end with the one committed by you. A parent who has re-abducted a child may have to go to extraordinary lengths to conceal his or her whereabouts, living in permanent fear that the child may be re-abducted again.

IMPORTANT NOTE: United States Consular officers cannot take possession of a child abducted by a parent or aid parents attempting to act in violation of the laws of a foreign country. Consular officers must act in accordance with the laws of the country to which they are assigned.

Emotional Consequences for Your Child: If you are contemplating such desperate measures, we advise you to consider the emotional trauma inflicted on a child who is a victim of abduction and re-abduction. We discourage re-abduction not only because it is illegal, but also because of possible psychological harm to the child.

REMAINING IN CONTACT WITH OUR OFFICE

It is an unfortunate reality that in some cases a child may not be returned to the United States for months, or even years. Nonetheless, the Office of Children's Issues can continue to assist you as you work to bring about your child's return. As long as your child has not returned, your case will remain open with our office. Please remain in touch with us during this difficult process. Helpful Hint: Please be sure to inform our office if your address or contact information changes. This will allow us to remain in contact with you.

What the State Department Can Do:

- Request American consular officers stationed around the world to attempt to visit and report on your child's health and welfare;
- Monitor the status of your Hague application by remaining in contact with the foreign Central Authority;
- Work with local and federal law enforcement to assist you in tracking your case in the criminal justice system in the United States;
- Work with your attorney in the United States to consider the strategy best calculated to bring your child back home;
- Alert foreign authorities to any evidence of child abuse or neglect;

- Assist you in securing legal representation in the country to which your child has been taken;
- Try to coordinate efforts with the government of the country to which your child has been taken to seek a legal solution to this difficult situation; and
- Use meetings with foreign dignitaries (or leaders) as an opportunity to raise difficult cases of abducted children and advocate for a swift resolution.

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
Office of Children's Issues
Toll Free Phone from within the U.S.: 1-888-407-4747
From Outside the U.S./Canada: 1-202-501-4444
Fax: 202-736-9132

ABDUCTIONS TO THE UNITED STATES

On April 1, 2008, the Office of Children's Issues assumed the handling of all "incoming" Hague child abduction cases—that is, abductions of children to the United States from countries that are partners under the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. If you are a parent whose child has been taken to the United States from a Hague Convention country in violation of your parental rights, the Office of Children's Issues is here to help you. We offer many services that you might find valuable during this difficult time.

Services for Incoming Abduction Cases

The services that the Office of Children's Issues provides for incoming abduction cases include:

- Accepting applications for return or access from Foreign Central Authorities;
- Assisting left-behind parents in locating their children within the United States;
- Attempting to achieve voluntary returns or access where possible;
- Assisting left-behind parents with securing attorneys, including attorneys willing to work on a pro bono or reduced-fee basis for qualified parents; and
- Assisting with return of children to their habitual residence abroad.

The Office of Children's Issues stands ready to assist abducted children and their parents in resolving these difficult and painful cases. For more information, please contact our office at AbductionUSCA@state.gov.

CHILD ABDUCTION PREVENTION

The Importance of a Custody Decree

Under the laws of the United States and many foreign countries, if there is no decree of custody prior to an abduction, both parents may be considered to have equal legal custody of their child. Even if both parents have custody of a child, removing a child from the United States against another parent's wishes can still be considered a crime in every state. In some cases an abducting parent may be charged with a Federal crime under the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act (IPKCA).Nevertheless, a custody decree can be helpful to prevent an international parental child abduction, or to recover your child if he/she is abducted.

Ask your attorney if you should obtain a decree of sole custody or a decree that prohibits the travel of your child without your permission or that of the court. If you have or would prefer to have a joint custody decree, you may want to make certain that it prohibits your child from traveling abroad without your permission or that of the court.

How to Draft or Modify a Custody Decree

A well-written custody decree is an important line of defense against international parental child abduction. In your custody decree, it may be advisable to include a statement that prohibits your child from traveling abroad without your permission or that of the court. If your child is at risk of being taken to a country that partners with the United States under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (Hague Abduction Convention), your custody decree should include the terms of the Hague Abduction Convention that apply if there is an abduction or wrongful retention (see country list).

The American Bar Association also suggests requesting the court, if the other parent is not a U.S. citizen or has significant ties to a foreign country, to require that parent to post a bond. This may be useful both as a deterrent to abduction and, if forfeited because of an abduction, as a source of revenue for you in your efforts to locate and recover your child.

REMINDER: Obtain several certified copies of your custody decree from the court that issued it. Give a copy to your child's school and advise school personnel to whom your child may be released.

U.S. Passports—Two Parent Signature Law

U.S. law requires the signature of both parents, or the child's legal guardians, prior to issuance of a U.S. passport to children under the age of 16. To obtain a U.S. passport for a child under the age of 16, both parents (or the child's

legal guardians) must execute the child's passport application and provide documentary evidence demonstrating that they are the parents or guardians. If this cannot be done, the person executing the passport application must provide documentary evidence that he or she has sole custody of the child, has the consent of the other parent to the issuance of the passport, or is acting in place of the parents and has the consent of both parents (or of a parent/legal guardian with sole custody over the child to the issuance of the passport).

EXCEPTIONS: The law does provide two exceptions to this requirement: (1) for exigent circumstances, such as those involving the health or welfare of the child, or (2) when the Secretary of State determines that issuance of a passport is warranted by special family circumstances.

Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program

You may also ask that your child's name be entered into the State Department's Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program (CPIAP). Entering your child into the Children's Passport Issuance Alert Program will enable the Department to notify you or your attorney if an application for a U.S. passport for the child is received anywhere in the United States or at any U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. If you have a court order that either grants you sole custody, joint legal custody, or prohibits your child from traveling without your permission or the permission of the court, the Department may refuse to issue a new or renewal U.S. passport for your child.

The Department may not, however, revoke a passport that has already been issued to the child. There is also no way to track the use of a passport once it has been issued, since there are no exit controls for people leaving the U.S. If your child already has a passport, you should take steps to ensure that it is kept from a potential abductor by asking the court or attorneys to hold it.

Foreign Passports—the Problem of Dual Nationality

Many United States citizen children who fall victim to international parental abduction possess, or may have a claim to dual nationality. While the Department of State will make every effort to avoid issuing a United States passport without the consent of both parents, the Department cannot prevent embassies and consulates of other countries in the United States from issuing their passports to children who are also their nationals. You can, however, ask a foreign embassy or consulate not to issue a passport to your child. Send the embassy or consulate a written request, along with certified complete copies of any court orders you have which address custody or the overseas travel of your child. In your letter, inform them that you are sending a copy of this request to the United States Department of State. If your child is only a United States citizen, you can request that no visa for that country be issued in his or her United States passport. Just keep in mind that no international law requires compliance with such requests, although some countries may comply voluntarily.

REMINDER: The United States government does not have exit controls at the border. There is no way to stop someone with valid travel documents from leaving the United States. The U.S. government does not check the names or the documents of travelers leaving the United States. Many foreign countries do not require a passport for entry. A birth certificate is sufficient to enter some foreign countries. If your child has a valid passport from any country, he or she may be able to travel outside the United States without your consent.

ISLAMIC FAMILY LAW & INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION

Disclaimer: The information in this circular relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is provided for general information only. Questions involving interpretation of specific foreign laws should be addressed to foreign counsel.

Marriage

In Islam, the act of marriage occurs with the conclusion of the marriage contract. The marriage contract itself is completed by an offer and acceptance, both of which must be made on the same occasion by two qualified parties.

If a marriage has been contracted by competent persons in the presence of two witnesses sand has been adequately publicized, it is complete and binding. It requires no religious or other rites and ceremonies because in Islamic law formalities have no value insofar as contracts are concerned. Such marriages are conducted only if both parties are willing.

Mixed Marriages

With few exceptions, a Christian or Jew who marries a Muslim and resides in an Islamic country will be subject to provisions of Islamic family law in that country. In these circumstances, any children born to the wife will be considered Muslim. They will usually also be considered citizens of the father's country.

The husband's permission is always needed for the children to leave an Islamic country despite the fact that the children will also have, for example, American citizenship. Foreign immigration authorities can be expected to enforce these regulations. The ability of U.S. consular officers to aid an American woman who wishes to leave the country with her children is very limited.

The wife may be divorced by her husband at any time with little difficulty and without a court hearing. At a certain point in age, the children will come under the custody of the father or his family. In Islamic countries, the wife will need the permission of her husband to leave the country.

Restrictions

For Americans, the most troubling of restrictions due to a marriage under Islamic Law have been:

- The inability of wives to leave an Islamic country without permission of their husbands;
- The wives' inability to take their children from these countries without such permission; and
- The fact that fathers have ultimate custody of children.

Children's Rights

There are three types of guardianship which are fixed for a child from the time of its birth:

- Guardianship of upbringing, which is overseen by women during the age of dependence: The age at which this period of dependence terminates varies: anywhere from 7 years for a son and 9 for a daughter to 9 and 11, respectively. In the case of divorced parents, it is permissible for a daughter to remain with her mother if the parents agree. Such an agreement cannot be made for a son.
- The child's spiritual guardianship: The spiritual guardian may be the father or a full-blooded male relative of the father.
- Guardianship over the child's property, which usually is carried out by the father.

Government Advice:
Intercountry Adoption

Editor's note: The information below was compiled from reports posted by the U.S. Department of State at www.adoption.state.gov as of January 2009. Some material has been condensed and edited for publication in book format. Readers should consult www.travel.state.gov/family for additional information, updates, and revisions.

THE OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S ISSUES

The Office of Children's Issues (CI), part of the Bureau of Consular Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, plays an active role in the intercountry adoption process. In our work, we are dedicated to assisting parents as they seek to provide a home to orphans abroad. We serve as the U.S. Central Authority for the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. Also known as the Hague Adoption Convention, this is an international treaty among over 75 nations around the world, including the United States. The Office of Children's Issues is responsible for the day-to-day oversight and implementation of the Convention in the United States.

We have 21 full-time employees that work in intercountry adoption. Some of our primary functions include:

- Producing and maintaining country specific information about intercountry adoption;
- Issuing Adoption Notices and Adoption Alerts to inform prospective adoptive parents about developments in a country;
- Providing information about the adoption process to prospective adoptive parents, adoption service providers, and members of Congress;
- Working with U.S. embassies and consulates on diplomatic efforts with host governments about adoption laws and procedures; and
- Monitoring complaints against Hague accredited adoption service providers, and overseeing the work of designated accrediting entities.

Please contact us if you have questions about intercountry adoption. We are here to help. Our office is open Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm (Eastern Standard Time). For emergencies, consular personnel in the United States and abroad are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Office of Children's Issues
U.S. Department of State
SA-29
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520
EMAIL: AskCI@state.gov (General Questions)
AdoptionUSCA@state.gov (Hague Adoption Convention Questions)
PHONE: 1-888-407-4747 (From the U.S. or Canada)
1-202-501-4444 (Outside the U.S. or Canada)
FAX: 1-202-736-9080

Your Privacy

Worried about confidentiality? In accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State may not release or share your information without your express written authorization.

Stay in touch when you head overseas...

If traveling abroad during the adoption process, we encourage you to register your trip with the Department of State. Travel registration makes it possible to contact you if necessary. Whether there's a family emergency in the United States, or a crisis in the country you're visiting, registration assists the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in reaching you. Registration is free and can be done online at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

What is Intercountry Adoption?

Intercountry adoption is the process by which you adopt a child from a different country of citizenship than your own through permanent legal means and bring that child to your home country to live with you permanently. Adoption is the legal transfer of parental rights from birth parent(s) to another parent(s). Over the last decade, U.S. families have adopted on average approximately 20,000 children from foreign nations each year.

Adoption means the judicial or administrative act that establishes a permanent legal parent-child relationship between a minor and an adult who is not already the minor's legal parent and terminates the legal parent-child relationship between the adoptive child and any former parent(s).

Generally speaking, to qualify as an adoption for immigration purposes, the adopted child has the same rights and privileges as a child by birth (such as inheritance rights, etc.). "Simple," "conditional," or "limited" adoptions, such as those conducted under Islamic Family Law in some countries, are more accurately described as guardianship and are not considered adoptions for U.S. immigration purposes.

The Hague Convention

On April 1, 2008, the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) went into force for the United States. It establishes important standards and safeguards to protect intercountry adoptions. These protections apply to you if you choose to adopt from a country that is also party to the Convention. Your adoption will be known as a Convention adoption. It will be important early on to determine if you wish to pursue a Convention adoption.

providing proper care to a child. They ask for relevant information about you and, if you are married, your spouse. They request supporting documentation, such as proof of citizenship and proof of marital status (if applicable). If there are any additional adult members residing in your household other than you and your spouse, you will also be required to submit a supplemental form about those individuals.

ELIGIBILITY TO ADOPT

A first step is to file an application with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Your application will consist of a USCIS form, a home study, an application fee, and other supporting documents. The form you use depends on the foreign country from which you would like to adopt. To know which form to file, you will need to know if your adoption is subject to the Hague Adoption Convention (view list). For a Convention country, file Form I-800A. (A Convention country is a party to the Hague Adoption Convention.) For a country not party to the Hague Adoption Convention, use Form I-600A.

Copies of these forms may be downloaded from the U.S. Department of State Intercountry Adoption website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Forms I-800A and I-600A allow prospective adoptive parents to demonstrate that they are eligible to adopt and capable of providing proper care to a child. They ask for relevant information about you and, if you are married, your spouse. They request supporting documentation, such as proof of citizenship and proof of marital status (if applicable). If there are any additional adult members residing in your household other than you and your spouse, you will also be required to submit a supplemental form about those individuals.

For Hague Convention Adoptions: If you wish to adopt a child from a Hague Adoption Convention country, you must begin the adoption process by filing Form I-800A. Do not accept any adoption placement before USCIS has approved Form I-800A. During this time, you must also refrain from any contact with parents, legal custodians, or other individual or entity responsible for the care of the child who may be eligible for adoption.

For Non-Hague Convention Adoptions: If you wish to adopt a child from a country not party to the Hague Adoption Convention, you may choose to file the Form I-600A before identifying a child for adoption. You may also file the Form I-600 with USCIS in cases where the child is known and you are traveling to the country where the child is located. Either way, the child must remain in the foreign country where he or she is located until processing is complete.

Filing Fee: USCIS charges a filing fee of $670 USD. An additional fingerprint fee of $80 USD must be paid for each person residing in your household who is 18 years of age or older. The latest fee information and instructions on where to file is posted on the USCIS website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Validity Period: USCIS evaluates your suitability and eligibility to be adoptive parents. If the application is approved, USCIS will send you written notification. For Form I-800A, the period of approval is 15 months from the date that USCIS was notified of your fingerprint record check results. You are entitled to request one extension of this approval with no additional fee and second extension of the approval with a fee. Form I-600A approval lasts 18 months. For more information on extending the validity of an I-600A, visit the USCIS website at http://adoption.state.gov.

Fingerprinting: USCIS requires prospective adoptive parents to be fingerprinted for the purpose of conducting FBI criminal background checks. To better ensure both the quality and integrity of the process, you must be fingerprinted at an authorized site. Authorized fingerprint sites include USCIS offices, Application Support Centers, and U.S. embassies and consular offices and military installations abroad. In general, USCIS schedules people to be fingerprinted at an authorized fingerprint site after an application. USCIS charges $80 USD per person at the time of filing for this fingerprinting service. (Note that fingerprint validity for I-600A is only 15 months.)

Prospective Adoptive Parent(s) Eligibility Criteria: Like all Americans considering adoption, persons with disabilities and persons in certain protected categories (for example, age, sex, race, color, national origin, or religion) must also comply with three sets of laws in order to adopt: U.S. federal law, the laws of the child's country of origin, and the laws of your home U.S. state. U.S. federal law does not prohibit Americans with disabilities or those in certain federally defined protected categories from being an adoptive parent. However, some countries or origin, for

example, do forbid individuals with certain disabilities from adopting. Likewise, some countries of origin may restrict single parent adoptions. U.S. state law on the eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parent(s) also varies. When deciding to pursue intercountry adoption, do your research.

More Information: For more information about filing an I-800A or an I-600A, or an I-600, call the USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283, or visit their website at www.uscis.gov.

WORKING WITH AN AGENCY

Selecting an Agency

Because intercountry adoptions are complex, most adoptive families work with an agency or adoption service provider. Choosing a qualified adoption service provider is a very important part of the adoption process. It is important to do your homework before selecting an agency. You may wish to talk to other families who have adopted internationally. What agency did they choose? Was the agency always helpful and upfront?

In addition, contact your state's licensing organization to find out what providers are licensed in your area (adoption service providers generally must be licensed by the state in which they operate). Ask if there are any unresolved complaints against an agency. You can also contact your local Better Business Bureau regarding a particular adoption service provider.

If you intend to adopt from a country party to the Hague Adoption Convention (view list), you will need to select an adoption service provider that has been accredited or approved (accredited agencies/agencies denied accreditation) by one of the two Accrediting Entities–the Council on Accreditation and the State of Colorado Department of Human Services–designated by the Department of State. In addition, other countries have their own accreditation process for adoption service providers.

Meet with several agencies. Sit down with each of them and find out what services they offer. They should be willing to disclose specific information about their operations and procedures in writing. We recommend that you review as much information as possible before you sign a contract with any agency. For example, an adoption service provider should disclose to you in writing such things as:

- A sample written adoption services contract;
- A proposal of all expected total fees and estimated expenses;
- Its adoption service policies and procedures, including general eligibility criteria;
- A list of any people and organizations not directly employed by the agency that would help with your adoption, and the costs of their services; and
- The number of adoption placements per year, and the number of these placements that remain intact.

In addition, before you commit to one agency, consider requesting the following:

- A list of families who have adopted through the agency who have agreed to act as references for the agency. These families can be a wonderful resource;
- Proof that the agency's state license is current and valid. You can research license validity through The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse;
- A copy of the agency's refund policy. In case there are changes in your circumstances, or changes in country policies, this is vital information to have;
- Copies of all contracts that will be signed between your family and the agency; and
- A list of all the agency's fees and a fee schedule, including: The home study fee, Adoption expenses in the United States, Foreign country program expenses. Childcare expenses incurred prior to adoption. Translation and document expenses, Contributions to child welfare service programs in the child's country of origin, Fees for post-placement and post-adoption reports, Third-party fees, Estimated travel and accommodation expenses.

Once you choose an adoption service provider, you will be expected to sign an adoption services contract with that agency. Only accredited or approved adoption service providers (organizations or individuals) will be eligible to provide adoption services in adoptions with Convention countries.

Adoption Services

If you adopt from a Convention country, your adoption service provider will generally be responsible for providing you with six adoption services:

- Identifying a child for adoption and arranging an adoption;
- Securing the necessary consent to termination of parental rights and to adoption;
- Performing a home study and reporting on prospective adoptive parents or a background study and report on a child;
- Making non-judicial determinations of a child's best interests and of the appropriateness of an adoptive placement;

- Monitoring a case after a child has been placed with prospective adoptive parents until final adoption; and

- Assuming custody of a child and providing childcare or any other social service, when necessary, because of a disruption pending alternative placement.

If you adopt from a non-Convention country, the services provided by your agency vary from case to case. You may work closely with an agency each step of the way, or you may do much of the work yourselves. Regardless, you and your agency should agree and specify in writing what services it will provide, and how much you will be charged for those services.

Independent Adoptions

Some families seek to save adoption services costs by completing an "independent adoption." However, we strongly recommend that you work with a reputable adoption service provider in a non-Convention adoption case and that you retain an accredited adoption service provider in a Convention adoption case. There are many critical social work tasks and other functions that must be completed in a professional manner for an intercountry adoption to go smoothly. In addition, some U.S. states and some countries prohibit independent adoptions.

In Convention adoption cases, avoid unaccredited adoption service providers who claim that they can 'assist' or 'help' your family as you complete an "independent adoption." Under the Intercountry Adoption Act, it is a criminal offense for an adoption service provider to provide any of the six adoption services in a Convention adoption case without being accredited, approved, supervised, or considered exempt. This prohibition applies even if the unaccredited adoption service provider alleges that it just sought to assist a family completing an "independent adoption" by providing only some adoption services. The Department encourages prospective adoptive parent(s) to report to the Department any adoption service providers who are offering adoption services between the United States and another Convention country without being accredited.

Agents & Facilitators

Licensing of agents and facilitators overseas is done according to the law of the foreign country. Not all foreign governments require that agents and facilitators be licensed or have the resources to investigate complaints or prosecute illegal activities. As a result, it can be difficult to hold facilitators accountable for fraud, malfeasance, or other bad practices in general.

If you are adopting from a Convention country, local agents and facilitators must operate under the supervision of an accredited or approved adoption service provider (generally know as the "primary provider"). Adopting parents should question their accredited adoption service provider about the qualifications and experience of any facilitators that it might use in a Convention country and the degree to which the agency assumes responsibility for the actions of its agents or facilitators.

Complaints

If you are adopting from a Convention country and you encounter a problem with your accredited adoption service provider, the Department of State has established a process for filing a complaint against that agency. First submit the complaint in writing directly to your accredited adoption service provider. If it is not resolved through the organization's complaint process, you may file the complaint with our internet based Hague Complaint Registry, which may be accessed through the website at Http;// adoption.state.gov.

Complaints submitted to the Hague Complaint Registry will be available to the relevant accrediting entity and to the Office of Children's Issues.

If you are adopting from a non-Convention country, you may also submit a complaint to our office at the email address AskCI@state.gov. In addition, we recommend contacting the state licensing agency of the state in which your adoption service provider is licensed. Contact information for state licensing agencies is available from Child Welfare Information Gateway.

Help Prevent Adoption Fraud

Take care to avoid possible adoption scams. Use only reputable agencies, attorneys, and facilitators. If the answers to your questions appear to be contradictory, vague, or unrealistic, be wary. The consular section in the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country of planned adoption can provide accurate information concerning local legal practices. If you have problems with agencies or intermediaries in the United States, you should report these concerns immediately to our office and to the appropriate state authorities.

Some states have moved to revoke licenses or prosecute the individuals connected with fraudulent activities including these two common abuses: 1) knowingly offering a supposedly healthy child for adoption who is later found to be seriously ill, and 2) obtaining prepayment for adoption of a nonexistent or ineligible child. In some countries, it is advisable to have the child examined by a physician of your choice before accepting the referral. This examination along with its report, supporting documents, tests and videos, can be reviewed by a U.S.-based physician trained to evaluate such information. Such an exam is separate from the routine medical examination required after completion of the adoption for visa purposes.

WHO CAN BE ADOPTED?

Adoption laws vary between countries. A child must qualify for adoption under the laws of his or her country of origin in order to be adopted. Each country has different requirements for children to be eligible for adoption.

Additionally, to adopt a child overseas and bring that child back to the United States, the child must be found eligible to be adopted under U.S. law. Because adoption laws vary from country to country, it is possible to adopt a child abroad who does not qualify to immigrate to the United States. Being eligible for both adoption and immigration allows the child to move with you to the United States.

The federal agency responsible for determining whether a child is eligible to immigrate to the United States in accordance with the Immigration and Nationalities Act (INA) is U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). U.S. law sets different eligibility requirements for of adopted children living in Convention countries (view country list) and those living in non-Convention countries. Children in Convention countries must meet the INA definition of a Convention adoptee; children in countries non-Convention countries must meet the INA definition of an orphan.

Convention Adoptees (Convention countries)

Children being adopted from a Convention country must qualify as a Convention adoptee in order to immigrate to the United States. USCIS determines whether a particular child meets the definition of a Convention adoptee.

Form I-800, and the required supporting documents, are required for USCIS to determine that a child is eligible for classification as a Convention adoptee. In order to file From I-800 with USCIS, you must have an approved, valid Form I-800A (Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country). See our eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents for more information about filing Form I-800A.

There are five primary elements to the Convention adoptee classification. In addition to other applicable requirements, all of the following must be true for a child to be eligible for the Convention adoptee classification:

- The child is under the age of 16 at the time the I-800 is filed on his or her behalf (taking into account special rules on filing dates for children aged 15-16), is unmarried, and lives in a Convention country;

- The child will be adopted by a married U.S. citizen and spouse jointly, or by an unmarried U.S. citizen at least 25 years of age, habitually resident in the United States, whom USCIS has found suitable and eligible to adopt (Form I-800A approval) with the intent of creating a legal parent-child relationship. Note that at this stage the child must not have been adopted yet.

- (In some very limited circumstances, families that adopted a child before obtaining I-800A approval may be able to correct that problem if certain USCIS requirements are met.);

- The child's birth parents (or parent if the child has a sole or surviving parent), or other legal custodian, individuals, or entities whose consent is necessary for adoption, freely gave their written irrevocable consent to the termination of their legal relationship with the child and to the child's emigration and adoption;

- If the child has two living birth parents who were the last legal custodian who signed the irrevocable consent to adoption, they are determined to be incapable of providing proper care for the child; and

- The child has been adopted or will be adopted in the United States or in the Convention country in accordance with the rules and procedures elaborated in the Hague Adoption Convention and the IAA, including that proper accredited adoption service providers were used where required, and there is no indication of improper inducement, fraud, misrepresentation, or prohibited contact associated with the case.

Orphan Status (Non-Convention Countries)

Children being adopted from non-Convention countries must meet the definition of an orphan as defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) before they can be considered for U.S. permanent residence/citizenship USCIS determines whether a particular child meets the definition of an orphan.

Form I-600, along with its supporting documents, are required for USCIS to determine that a child is eligible for classification as an orphan. In order to file Form I-600 with USCIS, you should submit Form I-600A (Application for Advance Processing or Orphan Petition) first. You may submit both forms at the same time, or you may already have an approved, valid Form I-600A when you file Form I-600. See our eligibility requirements for prospective adoptive parents for more information about filing Form I-600A.

According to the INA, a child must meet the following two conditions in order to be considered an orphan:

- The child must have no parents; or

- The child has a sole or surviving parent who is unable to care for the child and has, in writing, irrevocably released the child for emigration and adoption.

In some countries it is possible to adopt a child who is not an "orphan" as defined by U.S. immigration law. Whether a child qualifies as an orphan for the U.S. is determined by reference to the U.S. laws and regulation, and not by foreign law that may identify a child as orphaned. In general,

a child would be considered to have no parents if both are determined to have died, disappeared, deserted, abandoned or have been lost or separated from the child. Abandonment requires that the birth l parents give up all parental rights, obligations and claims to the child, as well as all control over and possession of the child (without transferring these rights to any specific person).

Under U.S. law, children may not be abandoned, relinquished, or released to a specific prospective adoptive parent for adoption.

There are three primary elements to the orphan classification. In addition to other applicable requirements, all of the following must be true for a child to be eligible for the orphan classification.

- The child must be under the age of 16 at the time an I-600 Petition is filed with the USCIS or a consular officer on his or her behalf (a child adopted at age 16 or 17 will also qualify, provided he or she is a birth sibling of a child adopted, or who will be adopted, under the age of 16 by the same adopting parents).

- The adopting parents must have completed a full and final adoption of the child or must have legal custody of the child for purposes of emigration and adoption in the U.S.

- The child has been or will be adopted by a married U.S. citizen and spouse jointly, or by an unmarried U.S. citizen at least 25 years of age, with the intent of forming a bona fide parent/child relationship.

If an I-600A has already been approved, the adopting parent may file an I-600 for one child without any additional fee. However, if parents are adopting two or more biologically unrelated children, there will be a $670.00 fee for the second child (this fee is waived for siblings).

The following documentation must be presented in order for an I-600 petition to be approved:

- Form I-600, Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative;

- The child's birth certificate;

- A final decree of adoption, if the orphan has been adopted abroad, or proof of legal custody for purposes of emigration and adoption;

- Proof of "orphan" status per definition above (ex. evidence of abandonment, written relinquishment, death certificates, etc. depending on the circumstances);

- Proof that the pre-adoption requirements, if any, of the state of the orphan's proposed residence have been met, if the orphan is to be adopted in the United States;

- Proof that adopting parents have seen the child prior to or during adoption proceedings.

IMPORTANT: Parents are urged to seek advice about the possibility that an adopted child might not be considered an orphan and therefore would not be able to accompany his or her adopting parents to the United States. Immigration attorneys, reputable adoption agencies involved in intercountry adoption, USCIS and Department of State officials all have information that will assist you in addressing this serious concern.

Children In Conflict Areas or Natural Disasters

The Department of State receives inquiries from American citizens concerned about the plight of the children in war zones and in countries afflicted by natural disasters such as hurricanes and tsunamis. Our office shares this concern for children in conflict areas and we understand that some Americans want to respond by offering to open their homes and adopting these children in need.

It can be extremely difficult in such circumstances to determine whether children who appear to be orphans truly are eligible for adoption. Children may be temporarily separated from their parents or other family members during a conflict or natural disaster and their parents may be looking for them. It is not uncommon in a hostile situation for parents to send their children out of the area, or for families to become separated during an evacuation. Even when it can be demonstrated that children are indeed orphaned or abandoned, they are often taken in by other relatives.

During times of crisis, it can also be exceptionally difficult to fulfill the legal requirements for adoption of both the U.S. and the child's country of origin. This is especially true when civil authority breaks down. It can also be very difficult to gather documents necessary to fulfill the legal requirements of the immigration law of the United States. There are still ways in which U.S. citizens can help the children in areas of conflict or natural disaster. For example, individuals who wish to assist can make a financial contribution to an established NGO working in that country.

HAGUE CONVENTION OVERVIEW

The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) is an international agreement to safeguard intercountry adoptions. Concluded on May 29, 1993 in The Hague, the Netherlands, the Convention establishes international standards of practices for intercountry adoptions. The United States signed the Convention in 1994, and the Convention entered into force for the United States in April 2008.

The Hague Adoption Convention applies to all adoptions between the United States and the other counties that have joined it (Convention countries). Adopting a child from a Convention country is similar in many ways to adopting a child from a country not party to the Convention. However, there are some key differences. In particular, those seeking to adopt receive greater protections if they adopt from a Convention country. (See our chart comparing the Convention process and the non-Convention process.)

Convention Facts

It requires that countries who are party to the Convention establish a Central Authority to be the authoritative source of information and point of contact in that country. The Department of State is the U.S. Central Authority for the Convention.

It aims to prevent the abduction, sale of, or traffic in children, and it works to ensure that intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of children.

It recognizes intercountry adoption as a means of offering the advantage of a permanent home to a child when a suitable family has not been found in the child's country of origin. It enables intercountry adoption to take place when:

- The child has been deemed eligible for adoption by the child's country of birth; and
- Proper effort has been given to the child's adoption in its country of origin.

It provides a formal international and intergovernmental recognition of intercountry adoption, working to ensure that adoptions under the Convention will generally be recognized and given effect in other party countries.

Keys to the Convention Process

Accredited Adoption Agencies: Only adoption service providers that have been accredited on a Federal level may offer certain key adoption services for Convention adoptions. When adopting a child from a Convention country, prospective adoptive parents know that their agency has been evaluated by one of the Department of State's designated Accrediting Entities. These Accredited Entities evaluate agencies using uniform standards that work to ensure professional and ethical practices.

Transparency: When adopting from a Convention country, accredited adoption agencies must itemize and disclose in writing the fees and estimated expenses associated with the adoption ahead of time. The adoption service provider is only permitted to charge for unforeseen expenses under very specific circumstances. There is also an official mechanism for lodging a complaint against an accredited agency to the Department of State.

Adoption Certificates: Every child adopted from a Convention country receives a Hague Adoption Certificate or a Hague Custody Declaration. The certificate is issued by a U.S. consular officer after determining that the adoption (or grant of custody) has met the requirements of the Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act. In Convention adoptions a U.S. consular officer also determines whether the child appears to meet the criteria for visa eligibility before the adoption is finalized (or custody is granted) in the country of origin. This will allow the parents to know ahead of time whether the child appears to be eligible to enter the United States.

Updated Forms & Visa Categories: Forms I-800A and I-800 replace Forms I-600A and I-600 for Convention adoption cases. Through Form I-800A, which must be filed prior to Form I-800, prospective adoptive parent(s) gain eligibility to adopt. Prospective adoptive parent(s) will identify the country from they will adopt on this form. From I-800 later determines the eligibility of a particular child to be adopted into a U.S. family. Children adopted from a Convention country must meet the definition of a "Convention adoptee." New visa categories, IH-3 and IH-4, will be used in Convention adoption cases.

HAGUE ADOPTION PROCESS

The process for adopting a child from a Convention country differs in some key ways from adopting from a non-Convention country. To date, about 75 countries have joined the Hague Adoption Convention. If you are adopting a child from one of these 75 countries, the following process applies to you.

Overview

The Convention adoption process generally involves six primary steps:

- Choosing an Accredited Adoption Service Provider
- Applying to be Found Eligible to Adopt
- Being Referred for a Child
- Applying for the Child to be Found Eligible to Immigrate to the United States
- Adopting the Child
- Obtaining an Immigrant Visa for the Child

Keys to the Hague Process

The Hague Adoption Convention process provides additional protections to prospective adoptive parents, children, and birth parents. The primary principles of the Hague Adoption Convention include: (ensuring that each adoption is in the best interests of the child, and (prevent-

ing the abduction, the sale of, or traffic of children related to intercountry adoption. The United States strongly supports these principles. Our process for adoptions from Convention countries is aimed at meeting these principles and is governed by the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 and its implementing regulations.

Adoption service providers must be accredited, temporarily accredited, or approved on a national level in order to provide adoption services in Convention countries. When adopting from a Convention country, prospective adoptive parents will know that their agency or attorney has been evaluated based on comprehensive standards contained in federal regulations.

These standards are designed to ensure that adoption agencies and persons operate using sound professional and ethical adoption practices.

Convention procedures "front-load" the immigrant visa petition and visa application processes. The goal of this is to protect children and families by identifying potential problems that could pose a legal bar to the child from entering the United States before the child is adopted by his or her American prospective adoptive parents. This helps ensure that every child who is adopted overseas (or brought to the United States for the purpose of adoption) by U.S. citizen adoptive parents will be able to enter and reside permanently in the United States.

Convention Process Steps

Choose an Accredited Adoption Service Provider: The first step in adopting a child from Convention countries is to select an adoption service provider in the United States that has been accredited. Only accredited agencies (or temporarily accredited agencies, or approved persons) can provide adoption services between the United States and other Convention countries.

In order to be accredited or approved, ASPs must be in substantial compliance with the standards established by the federal accreditation regulations (22 CFR Part 96). The Department of State has designated two accrediting entities to perform accrediting functions–the Council on Accreditation (COA) and the Colorado Department of Human Services. The Office of Children's Issues monitors the accrediting entities to ensure that each performs its functions in compliance with the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA) and the accreditation regulations.

As outlined in the IAA, accredited adoption service providers are responsible for providing prospective adoptive parents with six adoption services:

- Identifying a child for adoption and arranging an adoption;
- Securing the necessary consent to termination of parental rights to adoption;
- Performing a home study and reporting on prospective adoptive parents or a background study and report on a child;
- Making a non-judicial determination of a child's best interests and of the appropriateness of an adoptive placement;
- Monitoring a case after a child has been placed with prospective adoptive parents until final adoption; and
- Assuming custody of a child and providing childcare or any other social service, when necessary, because of a disruption pending alternate placement.

The accredited agency responsible for ensuring that all six adoption services are provided is called the primary provider. Primary providers can be organizations (an agency) that are accredited or individuals who are approved (an attorney). They may use other agencies or individuals to provide one of the adoption services, but that adoption service provider must generally operate under the supervision of the primary provider. These adoption service providers are called supervised providers. Supervised providers may be agents, facilitators, attorneys, or other organizations working in the United States or in a Convention country.

Your primary provider will develop and implement a service plan for providing you with all six adoption services.

Apply to be Found Eligible to Adopt: After you choose an accredited or approved adoption service provider, it will help you apply to be found eligible to adopt by the U.S. government. In order to adopt a child from another country and bring that child to live in the United States, you must be found eligible to adopt under U.S. law by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). You will not be allowed to bring an adopted child (or a child for which you have gained legal custody) into the United States until USCIS determines that you are able to provide a suitable and stable home for that child.

To apply, your agency will help you complete the proper form (called I-800A, Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country) and file it with USCIS. Along with this form, you will submit a home study to USCIS that includes in depth information about your health, finances, home, background, and more.

Be Referred for a Child: If USCIS finds you eligible to adopt, your ASP will send your I-800A approval notice form, along with your home study, to the foreign country's central adoption authority. This notifies the other Convention country that you have been found eligible to adopt by the U.S. government, and that you would like to be matched with a child. The central adoption authority will review your application to determine whether you are also eligible to adopt under that country's law.

If the country determines that you are eligible to adopt under its law and a child is eligible for intercountry adoption, the adoption authority will send you or your agency an official report on a child (called an Article 16 Report). This Article 16 report will include information about the child's psychological, social, and medical history.

The report, which is required under Article 16 of the Convention, specifies the child's name and date of birth, the reasons for making the adoption placement, and it establishes that the competent authority has, as required under Article 4 of the Convention:

- Established that the child is eligible for adoption;
- Determined, after having given due consideration to the possibility of placing the child for adoption within the Convention country, that intercountry adoption is in the child's best interests;
- Ensured that the legal custodian, after having been counseled as required concerning the effect of the child's adoption on the legal custodian's relationship to the child and on the child's legal relationship to his or her family of origin, has freely consented in writing to the child's adoption, in the required legal form;
- Ensured that if any individual or entity other than the legal custodian must consent to the child's adoption, this individual or entity, after having been counseled as required concerning the effect of the child's adoption, has freely consented in writing, in the required legal form, to the child's adoption;
- Ensured that the child, after having been counseled as appropriate concerning the effects of the adoption, has freely consented in writing, in the required legal form, to the adoption, if the child is of an age that, under the law of the country of the child's habitual residence, makes the child's consent necessary, and that consideration was given to the child's wishes and opinions; and
- Ensured that no payment or inducement of any kind has been given to obtain the consents necessary for the adoption to be completed.

Formats of this report will vary, however your adoption service provider will provide you with an English-language translation of the report. Additionally, it will be accompanied by:

- A copy of the child's birth certificate, or secondary evidence of the child's age;
- A copy of the irrevocable consent(s) signed by the legal custodian(s) and any other individual or entity who must consent to the child's adoption unless, as permitted under Article 16 of the Hague Adoption Convention, the law of the country of the child's habitual residence provides that their identities may not be disclosed, so long as the Central Authority of the country of the child's habitual residence certifies in its report that the required documents exist and that they establish the child's age and availability for adoption;
- A statement, signed under penalty of perjury by the primary provider (or an authorized representative if the primary provider is an agency or other juridical person), certifying that the report is a true, correct, and complete copy of the report obtained from the Central Authority of the Convention country; and
- A summary of the information concerning the child's medical and social history.

This summary, or a separate document, must include:

- A statement concerning whether there is reason to believe that the child has any medical condition that makes the child ineligible to immigrate to the United States;
- If both of the child's birth parents were the child's legal custodians and signed the irrevocable consent, the factual basis for determining that they are incapable of providing proper care for the child;
- Information about the circumstances of the other birth parent's death, if applicable, supported by a copy of the death certificate;
- If a sole birth parent was the legal custodian, the circumstances leading to the determination that the other parent abandoned or deserted the child, or disappeared from the child's life; and
- If the legal custodian was the child's prior adoptive parent(s) or any individual or entity other than the child's birth parent(s), the circumstances leading to the custodian's acquisition of custody of the child and the legal basis of that custody.

You will have at least two weeks to review it and consider the medical and social needs of the child, as well as your ability to meet those needs.

Apply for the Child to be Found Eligible to Immigrate to the United States: After you accept a proposed referral, you will apply to the U.S. Government (the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)) for provisional approval to adopt that particular child (form I-800). USCIS will make a provisional determination, based on the information available to them, about whether the child is eligible under U.S. law to be adopted and enter the United States.

A child being adopted by a U.S. citizen from a Convention country must qualify as a Convention adoptee in order to immigrate to the United States. USCIS determines whether a particular child meets the definition of a Convention adoptee.

If the child appears to meet all the requirements for a Convention adoptee, USCIS will provisionally approve your application. They will notify you, your adoption service provider, and the U.S. embassy or consulate in the Convention country of this provisional approval.

After this, your adoption service provider or you will submit a visa application to a Consular Officer at the U.S. embassy or consulate. The Consular Officer will review the child's information, along with the Form I-800 that USCIS had provisionally approved, and evaluate the child for possible visa ineligibilities. If practicable to complete the medical examination of the child, then the required medical exam would be completed for consideration as part of this provisional approval stage. If the Consular Office determines that the child appears eligible to immigrate to the United States, he/she will notify the Convention country's central adoption authority by issuing an Article 5 letter.

For Convention country adoptions, prospective adoptive parent(s) may not/not proceed with the adoption or obtain custody for the purpose of adoption until the Department issues the Hague Adoption Convention Article 5 letter.

REMEMBER: Most of the analysis of the child's eligibility for the Convention adoptee classification will take place at the provisional adjudication stage. However, the Consular Officer will make a final decision about the immigrant visa later in the adoption process.

Adopt the Child: Before you adopt (or gain legal custody of the child for the purpose of emigration and adoption) a child in a Convention country, you must have completed the above four steps. Only after completing these steps, can you proceed to finalize the adoption or grant of custody for the purposes of adoption.

The process for adopting or gaining legal custody of a child varies from country to country. To learn about the specific requirements of the Convention country from which you are adopting, refer to the Country Information section of our website.

Obtain an Immigrant Visa for the Child: After your Convention adoption is complete (or you have obtained legal custody of the child for the purpose of emigration and adoption), there are a few more steps to take before you can head home with your child. Specifically, you need to apply for several documents for your child before he or she can travel to the United States.

Birth Certificate (if applicable): You will first need to apply for a new birth certificate for your child, so that you can later apply for a passport from the country of your child's citizenship. Your name may be added to the new birth certificate. Refer to our Country Information section to learn how to obtain a new birth certificate for a child in his/her birth country of birth.

The Child's Passport: Your child is not yet a U.S. citizen, so he/she will need a Passport from the country of citizenship. Refer to our Country Information section to learn how to obtain a Passport for a child in his/her country of citizenship.

U.S. Immigrant Visa: After you obtain the new birth certificate and passport for your child, you also need to apply for a U.S. visa from the United States Embassy for your child. By this time you should have been in contact with the U.S. embassy or consulate where the visa will be issued and you should have an appointment to apply for the visa. After the adoption (or custody for purpose of adoption) is granted, visit the U.S. embassy or consulate for final review and approval of the child's I-800 petition and the visa application submitted earlier, and to obtain an immigrant visa for the child. The immigrant visa allows your child to travel home with you. As part of this process, the Consular Officer must have the Panel Physician's medical report on the child if it was not provided during the provisional approval stage.

Transition Cases

Under U.S. law, an adoption case involving a Convention country already in process on April 1, 2008, did not change into a Convention case on that date. For the United States, these transition cases will continue to be processed in accordance with the U.S. immigration regulations for orphan adoptions which were in effect at the time the case was filed. However, each country determines what is considered a Convention case under its law. In some cases this will not coincide with U.S. law.

If the Application for Advance Processing of an Orphan Petition (I-600A) or Petition to Classify an Orphan as an Immediate Relative (I-600) was filed before April 1, 2008, then the Convention and the IAA will not apply to that case. USCIS considers a case properly filed when USCIS receives an application or petition along with any required filing fee. The filing date is stamped on the application or petition to show the time and date of actual receipt.

NON-HAGUE ADOPTION PROCESS

The process for adopting a child from a non-Convention country differs in some key ways from adopting from a Convention country. To date, about 75 countries have joined the Hague Adoption Convention. If you are adopting a child from one of the countries non-Convention country, the following general process applies to you.

Overview

The process from non-Hague countries generally involves six primary steps:

- Choosing a Licensed Adoption Service Provider
- Applying to be Found Eligible to Adopt

- Being Referred for a Child
- Adopting the Child
- Applying for the Child to be Found Eligible for Immigration to the United States
- Obtaining an Immigrant Visa for the Child

Non-Convention Process Steps

Choose an Adoption Service Provider: The first step in adopting a child from a non-Convention country is usually to select an agency or attorney in the United States that can help with your adoption. At a minimum you will need the services of someone licensed or authorized to perform a home study for your state of residence. Choosing a qualified adoption service provider is a very important part of the adoption process. Adoption service providers must be licensed by the U.S. state in which they operate.

Apply to be Found Eligible to Adopt: To adopt a child from another country and bring that child to live in the United States, you must be found eligible to adopt under U.S. law. The Federal agency that makes this determination is U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). You will not be allowed to bring an adopted child (or a child for which you have gained legal custody for purpose of emigration and adoption) into the United States until USCIS determines that you are able to provide a suitable and stable home for that child.

To apply, you may choose to complete an immigration form (called I-600A, Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition) and file it with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Along with this form, you will submit a home study to USCIS that includes in depth information about your health, finances, home, background, and more. Form I-600A should be filed if you have not yet identified a child or intend to go abroad to locate a child for adoption.

If used, the I-600A Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition should be filed with the USCIS office having jurisdiction over the adopting parents' place of residence. The following documents must be submitted with the I-600A:

- Completed and signed I-600A (Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition);
- Proof of the prospective petitioner's United States citizenship;
- Proof of the marriage of the prospective petitioner and spouse, if applicable;
- Proof of termination of any prior marriages of the prospective petitioner and spouse or unmarried prospective petitioner, if applicable;
- A "home study" completed by the appropriate State organization with a favorable recommendation (USCIS regulations include very specific instructions on the issues to be addressed in the home study, authorized providers of home studies, and the recommendations regarding suitability); and
- Filing fee of $670.00.

In addition, you, your spouse (if married), and each additional adult member of your household must be fingerprinted as part of the I-600A application. For adopting parents in the United States, USCIS will provide information once the I-600A is filed on being fingerprinted at local USCIS offices. For adopting parents residing overseas, adopting parents should contact the U.S. embassy or consulate with jurisdiction over their place of residence to schedule fingerprinting prior to submitting the I-600A.

At the time of filing the I-600A, the petitioner should request that USCIS notify the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country where they plan to process the case as soon as the I-600A is approved.

Be Referred with a Child: If you are eligible to adopt, you can be matched with a specific child, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the child's country of residence regarding intercountry adoption. The child must meet the requirements of his or her country for determining if a child is eligible for intercountry adoption. The child must also meet the definition of an orphan under U.S. immigration law.

Adopt the Child (or Gain Legal Custody for Purpose of Emigration and Adoption): Although adoption procedures vary from country to country, most countries require that prior to any court action, a child placed for adoption be legally recognized as an orphan or, in the case where a parent is living, be legally and irrevocably released for adoption in a manner provided for under local law. In addition, the adoption laws in most countries require the full adoption of the child in the foreign court after the child has been declared an orphan or released by the living parent to an appropriate foreign authority. Some countries do allow simple adoption, which means that the adopting parent(s) can be granted guardianship of the child by the foreign court. This may permit the child to leave the foreign country to be adopted in the United States. A few countries do allow adoptive parents to adopt through a third party without actually traveling to that country.

IMPORTANT: A foreign country's determination that the child is an orphan does not guarantee that the child will be considered an orphan under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), and eligible to come to the United States to live. Foreign country may use different legal rules to determine if a child is an orphan. Questions that involve interpretation of specific foreign laws may be addressed to competent authorities in the COO or to a foreign attorney operating in the country where the adoption will take place.

Some countries will require your personal appearance before their court. Sometimes, countries require a period of residence by you or your spouse (if applicable). In these cases, you may find it necessary to spend an extended period in the foreign country awaiting the completion of the foreign adoption documents. Additionally, several countries require a post-adoption follow-up conducted by the adoption agency or the foreign country's consul in the United States.

Apply for the Child to be Found Eligible for Immigration to the United States: After you finalize the adoption (or gain legal custody for the …) in a non-Convention country, the USCIS) must determine whether the child is eligible to immigrate to the United States.

Adopting parents file the I-600 petition to determine if a specific child meets the US "orphan" classification in the INA. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the I-600 may be filed with the USCIS office having jurisdiction over the parents' place of residence, or with a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or Consular Officer overseas.

Adopting parents currently residing overseas should file the I-600 with the overseas DHS or consular officer at the U.S. embassy or consulate with jurisdiction over their residence.

Adopting parents residing in the U.S. may file the I-600 with the USCIS office with jurisdiction over their place of residence, or may contact the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country in question for information on filing the I-600 overseas. Parents will be permitted to file the I-600s with DHS officers at U.S. embassies or consulates where Department of Homeland Security immigration officials are assigned. At Embassies and Consulates without DHS immigration officials, parents may generally file the I-600 only if notice of I-600A has previously been sent to the Embassy or Consulate, if the U.S. citizen petitioner is physically present before the Consular Officer, and if the petitioner does not already have an I-600 petition pending somewhere else for the same child. Parents are strongly encouraged to verify I-600 filing procedures at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas prior to travel to the country in question.

Parents may wish to consult with adoption agencies, U.S. embassies or consulates overseas, and/or other adopting parents to determine whether they wish to file the I-600 overseas or in the United States. Processing times for I-600 petitions vary depending on where they are filed. Intent to travel to the child's country may also affect U.S. resident parents' decision on where to file the I-600.

Note that parents who have adopted abroad without first demonstrating suitability to adopt by filing an I-600A must file the I-600 petition (and accompanying suitability documents identified in Step 1 with the appropriate DHS/CIS office, not with a consular officer. Consular Officers can only accept I-600 petitions at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad when they have been notified that an I-600A for a family has already been approved. I-600 petitions should only be filed for children who fit the criteria, if any, identified in the parents' I-600A approval (e.g. if adoptive parents have been approved to adopt one child, they should not file I-600s for two children).

The following documentation must be presented in order for an I-600 petition to be approved:

- Form I-600, Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative;
- Child's birth certificate;
- A final decree of adoption, if the orphan has been adopted abroad, or proof of legal custody for purposes of emigration and adoption;
- Proof of "orphan" status per definition above (ex. evidence of abandonment, written relinquishment, death certificates, etc. depending on the circumstances);
- Proof that the pre-adoption requirements, if any, of the state of the orphan's proposed residence have been met, if the orphan is to be adopted in the United States; and
- Proof that adopting parents have seen the child prior to or during adoption proceedings.

If an I-600A has already been approved, the adopting parent may file an I-600 for one child without any additional fee. However, if parents are adopting two or more biologically unrelated children, there will be a $670.00 fee for the second child (this fee is waived for siblings).

Parents should note that documentary requirements for filing the I-600 petition are somewhat different, depending on whether the petition is filed with USCIS or the Consular Officer. USCIS officers may generally initially accept an I-600 with only the child's birth certificate, and, if not previously provided with the I-600A, proof of marriage of the petitioner (if applicable). USCIS also permits a petitioner to submit copies of some documents in lieu of originals. Form I-600 petitions filed with Consular Officers, however, must have all required documentation at the time of filing, and such documentation must be submitted as originals.

As part of the decision to approve an I-600 and immigrant visa, the DHS Officer or Consular Officer will carefully review information about the orphan and his or her personal situation. This review is documented by the DHS Officer or Consular Officer on an I-604 Orphan Investigation form. To protect adopting parents, the child, and biological parents, any indication or allegation of fraud, child buying or other inappropriate practices will be investigated as part of the I-604 review (or at any time that such concerns arise prior to visa issuance).

While the I-604 review for most cases will consist of an analysis of available documents, some cases will require additional interviews, documentation or a field investigation, all of which may result in delayed processing on the case.

Obtain an Immigrant Visa for the Child: Once USCIS or the consulate has approved the eligibility of the child for adoption, apply for an immigrant visa at the U.S. Embassy. This immigrant visa allows your child to travel home with you. As part of this process, the Consular Officer must review the Panel Physician's medical report on the child. Be aware that the adoption of a foreign-born orphan does not automatically guarantee the child's ability to immigrate to the United States. An orphan cannot legally immigrate to the United States without USCIS processing.

Age Limits—There are age limits on eligibility for adoptions and immigration, regardless of whether or not your state laws permit the adoption of older children (or adults). U.S. law allows the adoption and immigration of children who are under 16 years of age, with two exceptions:

- Biological siblings of a child adopted by the same parents may be adopted if under 18 years of age; and
- Orphans over the age of 16 may be adopted as long as the I-600 petition was filed on their behalf before their 16th birthday (or before their 18th birthday in the case of an orphan who is the sibling of a child adopted or coming to be adopted by the same parents).

If all the documentation for the orphan is in order and there are no legal bars to visa issuance, the orphan will be provided with an immigrant visa consisting of a packet of supporting documentation and either a cover sheet or visa placed in the child's passport. Both should be hand-carried with the child (not packed in luggage) when they travel to the U.S. and should be presented to the immigration inspectors at the port of entry. Do not open the envelope of supporting documents. The immigrant visa is valid for 180 days from the date of issuance, which means that adopting children have 180 days to use the immigrant visa to travel to the United States.

Orphans are issued IR-3 or IR-4 visas:

- IR-3 visas are for orphans who had a full and final adoption overseas by both adopting parents, when both parents physically saw the child prior to or during local adoption proceedings and where the state where they reside does not require re-adoption in the U.S.
- IR-4 visas are for orphans whose prospective adopting parents' have legal custody for purposes of emigration and adoption and who have satisfied any applicable state pre-adoption requirements or for orphans who had a full and final adoption overseas, but whose parents did not see the child prior to or during the local adoption proceedings.

VISAS

Children adopted from other countries must first obtain a U.S. visa before they can travel or move to the United States. Visas are granted at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the foreign country where a child has been living. Since a child being adopted abroad by a U.S. citizen parent(s) will usually be brought to live in the United States, that child will need an immigrant visa.

Child's Eligibility

Children being adopted abroad must be found eligible for adoption under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) in order to immigrate. Because adoption laws vary from country to country, it is sometimes possible to adopt a child abroad who does not qualify for immigration under U.S. law; such children cannot immigrate to the United States.

Under the INA, a child who is adopted abroad while under 16 and who has been in the legal custody, and has resided with, his or her adoptive parent(s) for at least two years may immigrate to the United States just like the biological child of a U.S. citizen: he or she may be the beneficiary of a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) I-130 petition (Petition for Alien Relative) and receive an immigrant visa in the IR-2 category. Most adoptive parents, however, are unable to spend two years abroad living with the child.

Most children are adopted under the immigration law (INA) provision which provides for adoption of orphans who have been or will be adopted by U.S. citizens, meeting the requirements. For most adoptive parents cases, children being adopted obtain an immigrant visa in one of two ways: one process applies to children in Hague Adoption Convention countries, and a separate process applies to children in countries that are not party to the Hague Adoption Convention.

Overview of Adoption Steps

To initiate the adoption process, adoptive parents must submit initial paperwork with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Once USCIS has approved the adoption, the case will be assigned to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas where the adoption will take place.

All children adopted abroad require an immigrant visa interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate coming to reside permanently in the United States. The Embassy or Consulate schedules the final visa interview once all required documents have been provided. The Department of State is committed to processing immigrant visas for adopted children expeditiously. Keep in mind, however, that the time required to issue your child's visa will depend on the specific requirements and circumstances in his or her country of residence.

Getting Help

The immigrant visa process is complicated, but you are not on your own. Your adoption agency or an immigration attorney can help. The Department of State also has an office for public inquiries on obtaining immigrant visas for adopted children.

To ask a question about immigrant visas, contact the Visa Office's Public Inquiries Division at 202-663-1225. Remember that information about a specific visa applicant can only be provided to third parties in certain circumstances.

Before making an inquiry, carefully review the visa section on travel.state.gov and the website of the relevant U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad. For questions about other adoption matters, please contact the Office of Children's Issues.

Visa Process

The process to obtain a visa includes both application forms and a formal interview with a consular officer. The time it takes to process your visa can vary significantly depending on the type of visa and the circumstances in the country or region where you've applied. Obtaining a visa can take several weeks and often longer.

The basic steps for obtaining a visa for the United States are:

- Visit www.UnitedStatesVisas.gov to read information regarding current visa policies and procedures. You may also contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate;
- Make an appointment to visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Visa application procedures may vary, depending on local needs. Be sure to ask what fees are required and how they can be paid. Fees are non-refundable;
- Gather all the necessary documentation;
- Submit your application, passport, and supporting documents to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate;
- Complete any additional review requests. Additional interviews may be required, or official registration and fingerprints may be requested; and
- Complete an arrival/departure form. Upon arrival in the United States, a U.S. official will verify all of your paperwork.

In addition, to process your intercountry adoption, a visa interview is required before a visa will be issued and before you can bring your adopted child to the United States. The consular section schedules the final visa interview once all the required documents have been provided and your file is complete. An adoption by a court decree, or comparable order by a competent authority, in another country does not automatically qualify a child for an immigrant visa for entry into the United States. Furthermore, a visa allows travel to the United States as far as a port of entry, however, a visa does not necessarily guarantee entry into the United States. Upon arrival to the port of entry, one must request permission of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs and Immigration Service immigration officer to enter the U.S.

Types of Visas

Hague Adoptions use IH-3 and IH-4 visas. An IH-3 visa is for a child who was adopted in a Hague Convention country and who automatically acquires U.S. citizenship upon entry to the U.S. An IH-4 visa is for a child coming from a Hague Convention country who will be adopted in the U.S. IH-4 children do not automatically acquire U.S. citizenship, but are lawful permanent residents until the adoption is full and final.

A child from a Convention country must meet the definition of a Convention adoptee child set forth in Sec 101(b)(1)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended by the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, rather than the "orphan" definition in Sec 101(b)(1)(F). Thus, a child habitually resident in a Convention country, who is adopted by a U.S. citizen habitual resident in the U.S. will no longer be eligible for classification as an orphan child and will be required to meet the new definition of a Convention adoptee.

There are 4 primary elements to the Convention adoptee classification. In addition to other applicable requirements, all of the following must be true for a child from a Convention country in order to be eligible for the Convention adoptee classification:

- The child is under the age of 16 at the time the I-800 is filed on his or her behalf (taking into account special rules on filing dates for children aged 15-16), is unmarried, and lives in a Convention country;
- The child will be adopted by a married U.S. citizen and spouse jointly, or by an unmarried U.S. citizen at least 25 years of age, habitually resident in the United States, who USCIS has found suitable and eligible to adopt (Form I-800A approval) with the intent of creating a legal parent-child relationship;
- The child's birth parent(s), or other legal custodian, individuals, or entities whose consent is necessary for adoption, freely gave their written, irrevocable consent for the termination of their legal relationship with the child and to the child's emigration and adoption; and
- The child has been adopted or will be adopted in the United States or in the Convention country according to the rules and procedures of the Hague Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act.

USCIS introduced two new forms to apply for adoptions from Hague Convention countries:

- Form I-800A, Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country. This form is used to adjudicate the eligibility and suitability of the applicant(s) to adopt a child who habitually resides in a Hague Adoption Convention country.

- Form I-800, Petition to Classify Convention Adoptee as an Immediate Relative. This form is used to determine the child's eligibility for classification as a Convention adoptee. The petition is filed by the U.S. Citizen prospective adoptive parent to finalize the immigration process of a child who habitually resides in a Convention country. The petitioner must have an approved, valid Form I-800A, Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country, in order to file the Form I-80.

Interested parties must first submit Form I-800A to USCIS in order to establish their eligibility and suitability as prospective adoptive parents under the Convention. If USCIS approves Form I-800A, then the prospective parents must submit Form I-800 to USCIS in order to determine the child's eligibility as a Convention adoptee BEFORE adopting or obtaining legal custody of the child.

The Convention adoptee visa process differs from standard non-immigrant visa or orphan processing primarily in that the prospective adoptive parent(s) must work with an accredited or approved Adoption Service Provider, and in that a Convention adoptee's eligibility for the visa classification and visa must be reviewed before the adoption or grant of legal custody takes place. Final approval of the petition and visa application only takes place after the adoption or grant of legal custody is complete and a Hague Convention Certificate indicating the adoption's or grant of legal custody's compliance with the Convention and IAA has been issued.

The following is a summary of the Convention Adoption Visa process.

After the adoption petition has been provisionally approved by USCIS, the prospective adoptive parents (in person only if practicable), or an approved service provider (ASP), then file a Form DS-230 Immigrant Visa Application (or, in certain cases, a Form DS-156 NIV application; check with your service provider) on behalf of the child. The consular officer will review the application and determine whether the child appears to meet the criteria for visa eligibility based on the information available. If the consular officer determines that the child appears to be eligible to receive a visa, he or she will note this in the visa application. This is the first of two ineligibility reviews for the child.

Provisional approval of the petition, along with the favorable review of the child's eligibility will result in the issuance of the Article 5 Letter to the Convention country's Central Authority. The Article 5 Letter states that the prospective adoptive parents have been counseled (including child specific counseling) and found suitable for the adoption, and that the child will be authorized to enter and reside in the United States. Prospective adoptive parents then adopt the child or obtain legal custody of the child for purposes of emigration and adoption.

In the case of an adoption, the Central Authority of the Convention country will issue an Article 23 Certificate certifying that the adoption has occurred in accordance with the Convention. IN the case of a grant of legal custody, the consular officer will determine whether, in a particular country, a document—comparable to the Article 23 Certificate—exists with respect to custody cases. The consular officer will officially request this document, which will certify Convention compliance. If such a document does not exist, proof that the grant of legal custody occurred will in these cases be sufficient to constitute appropriate notification.

After verifying compliance with the Convention and IAA, consular officers provide either (1) a Hague Adoption Certificate to the adoptive parent(s), certifying that the requirements of the Convention and the IAA have been met with respect to the adoption, or (2) a Hague Custody Certificate to the prospective adoptive parent(s), certifying that the requirements of the Convention and the IAA have been met with respect to the grant of legal custody.

USCIS has delegated authority to consular officers to grant final approval of Form I-800. If for some reason the Form I-800 is not CLEARLY approvable, the consular officer will forward the Form I-800 and accompanying evidence to the appropriate USCIS office for adjudication.

The consular officer (or USCIS if required as stated above) adjudicates the visa application. If there are no ineligibilities found upon this second review, the consular officer then issues the visa. Your child will be issued an IH-3 or IH-4 visa.

CHILD'S HEALTH

Children adopted from abroad come from diverse cultural backgrounds and living conditions. For this reason, adoptive families should be aware of the unique medical, nutritional, environmental, and psychological issues such children may face.

All immigrants, including adopted children, undergo a physical examination by a doctor who has been approved by the Department of State. The U.S. Embassy or Consulate can provide a list of such physicians, called "panel physicians," within the foreign country.

The medical examination focuses primarily on detecting certain serious infectious or contagious diseases, or medical disabilities that may be a basis for visa ineligibility. It

consists of a brief physical exam and a medical history. A chest X-ray for tuberculosis and blood tests for syphilis and HIV are required for immigrants 15 years of age and older. Applicants younger than 15 are tested only if there is reason to suspect any of these diseases.

If a child is found to have any of these illnesses or disabilities (generally referred to as "ineligibilities"), he or she may still receive a visa after the illness has been successfully treated, or after USCIS approves a waiver of the ineligibility, if available. If the panel physician or the consular officer learns that the child has a serious disease or disability, the parents will be notified and asked whether they wish to proceed with the child's immigration.

Prospective adoptive parents should not rely on this medical examination to detect all possible medical conditions and may wish to arrange an additional private medical examination if they have concerns about the child's health. The scope of the medical examination is, by law, limited; its purpose is to enable the U.S. Government to identify persons with serious infectious or contagious diseases. It is not designed to evaluate the child's overall health, provide medical care for the child, or give adequate information on the child's short-term and long-term medical needs.

See the Department of State's Office of Visa Services web pages for more information and frequently asked questions on the medical exam. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also offers adoptive parents valuable information on follow-up medical examinations, screening for infectious diseases, and vaccinations.

CHILD CITIZENSHIP ACT

It's important that you ensure that your adopted child becomes a U.S. Citizen. The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 was designed to make citizenship acquisition easier and to eliminate extra steps and costs. Under the Child Citizenship Act, children adopted abroad automatically acquire U.S. citizenship if:

- At least one parent of the child is a U.S. citizen;
- The child is under the age of 18;
- The child lives in the legal and physical custody of the American citizen parent;
- The child is admitted into the United States as an immigrant for lawful permanent residence; and
- The adoption is final.

Because of the Child Citizenship Act, many parents are no longer need to apply separately for a child's naturalization.

If your adoption does not meet these requirements, you must take additional steps to secure your child's U.S. citizenship. Children who enter the United States on IH-4 or IR-4 visas automatically acquire U.S. citizenship (assuming they are under the age of 18) as of the date of their full and final adoption in the United States. To obtain a Certificate of Citizenship once the adoption is complete, beneficiaries file Form N-600 with USCIS.

If you postpone documenting or obtaining your child's citizenship, later he or she may have difficulty getting college scholarships, working legally, voting, and enjoying other rights and privileges. In some cases, the child might even be subject to possible deportation. Act now to safeguard your child's rights and future.

Children who were 18 years of age or older on February 27, 2001 did NOT acquire American citizenship from the Child Citizenship Act of 2000. Because of this, in recent years, many adoptees have found that although they have been legally adopted and have been U.S. residents for most of their life, they do not hold U.S. citizenship. Many discovered this as young adults when applying for their first jobs, registering to vote, applying for a U.S. Passport, or unfortunately, when getting into trouble with the law and facing deportation to a country they no longer call home.

The reasons vary. Yet, the fact remains that many adoptees are considered to be foreign-born, non-citizens and don't even know it. If you are a foreign-born, non-citizen adopted person, and would like to apply for U.S. citizenship, you must first retrieve your adoption documents from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to begin the process. This can be done for free through the Freedom of Information Act. Please refer to the USCIS Freedom of Information Act Request Guide. To find out more information about how to obtain U.S. citizenship, please visit: http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship.

ISLAMIC SHARIA LAW

Adoption of children from countries in which Islamic Sharia law is observed

The Department of State has received many inquiries from American citizens who wish to adopt orphans from countries in which Sharia Law is observed. There is a vast variance in the implications and observance of Sharia law from country to country. Generally, however, Islamic family law does not allow for adoption as that concept is understood in the United States. Accordingly, it may not be possible for American citizens to adopt an orphan overseas and to obtain an immigrant visa that will allow that orphan to live in the United States. However, some countries in which Sharia law is observed do allow custody of children to be transferred through guardianship. Prospective parent/guardians frequently have inquired as to whether immigrant visas might be obtained for an orphan through Sharia recognized guardianship.

The Immigration and Nationality Act does allow for the issuance of immigrant visas for orphans to be adopted in the United States. Prospective adoptive parents must first obtain guardianship or custody of the orphan for emigration and adoption in the United States, in accordance with the laws of the sending country.

To show this standard has been met, the prospective adoptive parents must provide documentation to establish that the child has been irrevocably released for emigration and adoption. This may take the form of a written release from the Sharia court or a competent authority, either included on the guardianship decree itself or as a separate document, or a provision of law from the sending country indicating that the guardianship decree implies permission for the child to emigrate and be adopted in another country.

Again, the issuance of the immigrant visa in these cases depends on a showing that the underlying Sharia law or the Islamic courts in the country in question actually allows for the child to be adopted overseas. To this point, in many cases, when the I-600 petition and the guardianship decree are submitted by the prospective adoptive parents, the consular officer reviewing the case might have to contact the Islamic court that issued the decree or work with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service of the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that the guardianship decree meets all U.S. immigration law requirements. Because of this, the I-600 processing time period for these cases may be longer than in other orphan visa cases.

It is also important to note that at the time the prospective adoptive parents submit the I-600 application and guardianship decree they will also have to show the consular officer that they have met all the pre-adoption requirements of the state in which they will be adopting the orphan once they return to the U.S. (through documentary evidence, etc.).

For further information on this issue, please refer to the specific flyer for the Sharia law country in question or contact the Department of State's Office of Children's Issues at (202) 736-9099.

GENERAL ADOPTION INFORMATION

The information provided below is designed to provide a sampling of the many organizations involved in adoption. The agencies listed are not placement agencies. The Department of State does not endorse or recommend any particular organization.

National Adoption Organizations and Parent Support Groups

Child Welfare Information Gateway
Children's Bureau/ACYF
1250 Maryland Avenue, SW
Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20024
Internet Address: http://www.childwelfare.gov
Direct questions and comments: info@childwelfare.gov
Library requests: library@childwelfare.gov
Personal assistance and inquiries: 800.394.3366 or 703.385.7565
Fax: 703.385.3206

Formerly the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information and the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse, Child Welfare Information Gateway provides access to information and resources to help protect children and strengthen families. A service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Child Welfare Information Gateway is a service of the Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Adoptive Families Magazine
P.O. Box 5159
Brentwood, TN 37024
Tel: 212-877-1839
1-800-372-3300
Internet address:
http://www.adoptivefamiliesmagazine.com

Committee for Single Adoptive Parents, Inc.
P.O. Box 15084
Chevy Chase, MD 20825
Tel: 202-966-6367

FACE (Families Adopting Children Everywhere)
Face Inc.
P.O. Box 28058
Baltimore, MD 21239
Tel: 410-488-2656 (Help-line)
Internet address: http://www.face2000.org

International Concerns Committee for Children
911 Cypress Drive
Boulder, CO 80303
Tel: 303-494-8333
Internet address: http://www.iccadopt.org

Joint Council on International Children's Services
1320 19th St., NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-429-0400
Internet address: http://www.jcics.org

North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC)
970 Raymond Avenue, Suite 106
St. Paul, MN 55114

Tel: 651-644-3036
Fax: 651-644-9848
Internet address: http://www.nacac.org

National Council for Adoption
225 N. Washington Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-299-6633
Internet address: http://www.adoptioncouncil.org

Magazines

Adoptive Families (formerly OURS magazine); 1-800-372-3300; Complimentary copy available by calling the above number.

ODS News; Open Door Society of Massachusetts; 1-800-93A-DOPT.

Single Parents With Adopted Kids; 4108 Washington Rd. #101; Kenosha, WI 53144.

Books

General Information

Adamec, Christine and Pierce, William L. *The Encyclopedia of Adoption*. Facts on File, Inc.: June 1991.

Adamec, Christine. *There Are Babies To Adopt*. Windsor Publishing Corporation: 1991.

Alexander-Roberts, Colleen. *The Essential Adoption Handbook*. Taylor Publishing Co.: 1993.

Erichsen, Heino and Nelson-Erichsen, Jean. *How To Adopt Internationally: A Guide for Agency-Directed & Independent Adoption*. Los Ninos International Adoption & Information Center: 1993.

Gilman, Lois. *The Adoption Resource Book: All the Things You Need to Know & Ought to Know about Creating an Adoptive Family*. Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.: 1987.

Independent Adoption Manual. Advocate Press: June 1993.

Knoll, Jean and Murphy, Mary-Kate. *International Adoption: Sensitive Advice for Prospective Parents*. Chicago Review Press: 1994.

Hicks, Randall B. *ADOPTING IN AMERICA: How to Adopt Within One Year* (revised 1996-97 edition). WordSlinger Press: 1995.

Hicks, Randall B. *Adoption Stories for Young Children*. WordSlinger Press: 1995.

Wirth, Eileen and Worden, Joan. *How to Adopt a Child from Another Country*. Abingdon Press: 1993.

Adoption of Older Children

Jewett, Claudia. *Adopting the Older Child*. Harvard Common Press: 1978.

Kadushin, Alfred. *Adopting Older Children*. Columbia University Press: 1970.

Mansfield, Gianforte and Waldmann. *Don't Touch My Heart—Healing the Pain of an Unattached Child*. Pinon Press: 1994.

Children's Literature

Bloom, Suzanne. *A Family for Jamie: An Adoption Story*. Crown Books for Young Readers: 1991.

Krementz, Jill. *How It Feels to Be Adopted*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.: 1988.

Cultural and Racial Differences

Erichsen, Heino R. and Nelson, Erichsen, Jean. *Butterflies in the Wind: Spanish-Indian Children with White Parents*. Los Ninos International Adoption & Information Center: 1992.

Single Parent Adoption

Marindin, Hope, ed. *Handbook for Single Adoptive Parents*. Committee for Single Adoptive Parents: 1992.

Parenting and Adjustment

Bartels-Rabb, Lisa and Van Gulden, Holly. *Real Parents, Real Children: Parenting The Adopted Child*. Crossroad Publishing Co.: 1993.

Brodzinsky, David; Schechter, Marshall; and Henig, Robin. *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*. Doubleday & Company, Inc.: 1993.

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Government Advice:
The Office of Overseas Citizens Services

January 2009

Editor's note: The information below is a reprint of material posted by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs as of January 2009

OVERSEAS CITIZENS SERVICES

Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) in the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs is responsible for the welfare and whereabouts of U.S. citizens traveling and residing abroad. OCS has three offices: American Citizens Services and Crisis Management, the Office of Children's Issues and the Office of Policy Review and Interagency Liaison.

American Citizens Services And Crisis Management (ACS)

American Citizens Services and Crisis Management corresponds organizationally to American Citizens Services offices set up at U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world. ACS has five geographical divisions with case officers who assist in all matters involving protective services for Americans abroad, including arrests, death cases, financial or medical emergencies, and welfare and whereabouts inquiries. The office also issues Travel Warnings, Public Announcements and Consular Information Sheets and provides guidance on nationality and citizenship determination, document issuance, judicial and notarial services, estates and property claims, third-country representation, and disaster assistance.

Arrests

Over 2,500 Americans are arrested abroad annually. More than 30% of these arrests are drug related. Over 70% of drug related arrests involve marijuana or cocaine.

The rights an American enjoys in this country do not travel abroad. Each country is sovereign and its laws apply to everyone who enters regardless of nationality. The U.S. government cannot get Americans released from foreign jails. However, a U.S. consul will insist on prompt access to an arrested American, provide a list of attorneys, and provide information on the host country's legal system, offer to contact the arrested Americans family or friends, visit on a regular basis, protest mistreatment, monitor jail conditions, provide dietary supplements, if needed, and keep the State Department informed.

ACS is the point of contact in the U.S. for family members and others who are concerned about a U.S. citizen arrested abroad.

Deaths

Approximately 6,000 Americans die outside of the U.S. each year. The majority of these are long-term residents of a foreign country. ACS assists with the return of remains for approximately 2,000 Americans annually.

When an American dies abroad, a consular officer notifies the next of kin about options and costs for disposition of remains. Costs for preparing and returning a body to the U.S. are high and are the responsibility of the family. Often local laws and procedures make returning a body to the U.S. for burial a lengthy process.

Financial Assistance

If destitute, Americans can turn to a U.S. consular officer abroad for help. ACS will help by contacting the destitute person's family, friends, or business associates to raise private funds. It will help transmit these funds to destitute Americans.

ACS transfers approximately 3 million dollars a year in private emergency funds. It can approve small government loans to destitute Americans abroad until private funds arrive.

ACS also approves repatriation loans to pay for destitute Americans' direct return to the U.S. Each year over $500,000 are loaned to destitute Americans.

Medical Assistance

ACS works with U.S. consuls abroad to assist Americans who become physically or mentally ill while traveling. ACS locates family members, guardians, and friends in the U.S., assists in transmitting private funds, and, when necessary, assists in arranging the return of ill or injured Americans to the U.S. by commercial carrier.

Welfare and Whereabouts of U.S. Citizens

ACS receives approximately 12,000 inquiries a year concerning the welfare or whereabouts of an American abroad. Many inquiries are from worried relatives who have not heard from the traveler. Others are attempts to notify the traveler about a family crisis at home.

Most welfare/whereabouts inquiries are successfully resolved. However, occasionally, a person is truly missing. It is the responsibility of local authorities to investigate and U.S. consuls abroad will work to ensure their continued interest in cases involving Americans. Unfortunately, as in the U.S., sometimes missing persons are never found.

Consular Information Program
ACS issues fact sheets on every country in the world called Consular Information Sheets (CIS). The CIS contains information on entry requirements, crime and security conditions, areas of instability and other details relevant to travel in a particular country.

The Office also issues Travel Warnings. Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department recommends deferral of travel by Americans to a country because of civil unrest, dangerous conditions, terrorist activity and/or because the U.S. has no diplomatic relations with the country and cannot assist an American in distress.

Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings may be heard anytime, by dialing the Office of Overseas Citizens Services travelers' hotline at (202) 647-5225 from a touch-tone phone. They are also available via Consular Affairs' automated fax system at (202) 647-3000, or at any of the 13 regional passport agencies, at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, and through the airline computer reservation systems, or, by sending a self-addressed, stamped business size envelope to the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Room 4811, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818.

If you have a personal computer and Internet access, you obtain them and other consular handouts and publications through the Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov.

Disaster Assistance
ACS coordinates the Bureau's activities and efforts relating to international crises or emergency situations involving the welfare and safety of large numbers of Americans residing or traveling in a crisis area. Such crises can include plane crashes, hijackings, natural disasters, civil disorders, and political unrest.

OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S ISSUES

Our Mission

As part of the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs, the Office of Children's Issues actively engages in two issues that cross international borders: intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction. In this work, we are fully committed to protecting the welfare and interests of children and their parents.

We serve as the U.S. Central Authority for two multilateral treaties:

- The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption; and
- The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction
- Our Issues

Intercountry Adoption

The United States welcomes more children through adoption than any other nation—over 100,000 during the last five years alone. We assist parents as they seek to provide a home to orphans abroad through intercountry adoption by offering country specific information about the adoption process and by advocating for greater protections for adoptive parents and children abroad.

International Abduction

Parental child abduction is a tragedy that has long-term consequences for both the child and the left-behind parent. When a child is abducted across international borders, the difficulties are compounded for everyone involved. We assist parents as they pursue recovery of their abducted children, and we offer tools to prevent future abductions.

Government Advice:

Sending Money to Overseas Citizens Services

January 2009

Editor's Note: The information below was posted as of January 2009 by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs.

SENDING MONEY TO U.S. CITIZENS OVERSEAS

When a U.S. citizen encounters an emergency financial situation abroad, The Department of State's Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) can establish a Trust account in the citizen's name in order to forward funds overseas. There is a $30 Trust processing fee. Upon receipt of funds, OCS will transfer the money to the appropriate U.S. Embassy or Consulate for disbursement to the recipient. The recipient must contact the Embassy or Consulate directly, except in extremely limited circumstances, to arrange receipt. If the recipient's name and overseas location (city, country) are not provided with the money, it will delay the transfer. The Embassy or Consulate normally disburses funds in the foreign country's currency and not in U.S. dollars. Trust funds transfers are a one-time service, except in specific, pre-approved circumstances. Funds sent during non-business hours may not be processed until the next business day. Questions can be directed to OCS at 1-888-407-4747.

There are three methods of transmitting funds to OCS for transfer overseas:

WESTERN UNION: is the fastest method of sending funds to OCS. Funds sent via Western Union are generally processed and available for disbursement overseas within 24 hours during the business week. Western Union's Quick Collect© service may be used by calling 1-800-634-4322 or by logging onto www.westernunion.com. In most cases, funds sent via Western Union arrive at OCS within 30 minutes.

You will need one of the following major credit cards to send money over the phone: MasterCard, Visa or Discover; on the Internet: MasterCard and Visa only. You will be asked for a "code city," which is: "OVERSEASEMERGENCY, DC." You will be asked for a "Pay To" name which is "Department of State." You will be asked for an account number: please use your phone number. Tell the operator to put the name and location of the citizen you are sending money to in the reference field, or key that in if you are using the website.

Some States place restrictions on the use of QuickCollect by phone or the Internet. States with restrictions by phone are CT, MA, ME, MN & NY. States with restrictions by Internet are CA, CT, MA, ME, MN & NY.

You may go in person, with cash, to any Western Union agent location. This is the least expensive Western Union method of sending money. To find the closest location, call 1-800-325-6000. You will need to complete a blue payment form which will ask for the same information requested above. The State Department's $30 processing fee must be included in the total amount sent by Western Union. Failure to include the fee will result in the money being deducted from the amount intended for the U.S. citizen recipient.

BANKWIRE: can take up to 7 days to process a transaction. Tell your bank that you want to transfer the desired amount plus the $30 processing fee to Bank of America, Department of State Branch, 2201 C St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20520 at 202-624-4750, via ABA Number: 114000653; Account Number: 7476363838; Account Name: PUPID State Department. Include the recipient's full name, their overseas location, and your name, address, and telephone number. Bank of America forwards the funds to OCS. Failure to include the fee will result in the money being deducted from the amount intended for the U.S. citizen.

U.S. MAIL OR COURIER SERVICE: send a cashier's check or money order ONLY (personal checks and cash cannot be accepted) for the desired amount, plus the $30 processing fee, made payable to Department of State, to: Overseas Citizens Services, Department of State, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20520. Include the recipient's full name, their overseas location, and your name, address, and telephone number. Failure to include the fee will result in the money being deducted from the amount intended for the U.S. citizen. Delivery of overnight/courier mail to OCS may take 3 to 4 days. Regular mail can take 3 to 4 weeks to reach OCS due to on-going irradiation procedures. We strongly discourage this method for emergency use.

Government Advice:

Crisis Abroad: Emergency Assistance to American Citizens

Editor's note: The information below is a reprint of material posted by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs as of January 2009. It is the direct advice of the U.S. government to American travelers.

CRISIS ABROAD INVOLVING AMERICAN CITIZENS

When a crisis occurs abroad, such as a natural disaster, transportation accident, civil or political unrest or a terrorist incident, the Department of State and the U.S. Embassy abroad utilize a variety of means to communicate with the American public.

- If you are in a foreign country involved in a crisis:
- Monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs home page (www.state.gov) and the home page for the U.S. Embassy in the foreign country for up-to-date information about the crisis.
- If a crisis occurs in a country you are visiting, contact your family in the United States to reassure them of your whereabouts and safety.
- Contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate if you need help.
- Be sure to register with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate on-line, by phone, email, fax or in person. Registration helps consular staff contact you if necessary and allows you to receive situation updates.
- Monitor Voice of America and BBC broadcasts for announcements.

Families in the United States whose U.S. citizen relatives abroad may be directly affected by the crisis can contact the Department of State through our Office of American Citizens Services and Crisis Management at (202) 647-5225.

AMERICAN CITIZENS MISSING ABROAD

As concerned relatives call in, Consular officers use the information provided by the family or friends of a missing person to locate the individual. We check with local authorities in the foreign country to see if there is any report of a U.S. citizen hospitalized, arrested, or is otherwise unable to communicate with those looking for them. Depending on the circumstances, consular officers may personally search hotels, airports, hospitals, or even prisons.

CRISIS PREPAREDNESS

Crisis preparedness means planning and preparing for the many types of disasters and other crises that can occur while abroad. We cannot overemphasize the importance of being prepared. When a crisis or disaster strikes, you will only have the time to use the tools at your disposal. Planning and preparedness are essential.

Among the highest priorities of the Department of State and our missions abroad is the safety and security of local resident Americans overseas. In the past year, the Department has intervened to assist in the evacuation of Americans from half a dozen countries throughout the world as a result of serious political or economic unrest, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks.

Hundreds of expatriate Americans each year are forced by personal emergencies (e.g. death or illness in the family) to return to the U.S. on short notice. Evacuations, especially under crisis conditions, are inevitably very disruptive and distressing for those involved.

The State Department routinely provides standard advice to its employees on prudent steps to take to ensure they would be prepared in the event of such an evacuation.

This and other advice on crisis preparedness is available on the Department's Web site at http://travel.state.gov, and we are summarizing the principal points below. The Department commends these elementary steps to you for your careful consideration.

- Assemble all vital documents such as passports, birth and marriage records, vaccination, insurance and bank records in one readily accessible location.
- Check to be sure your passport and any necessary visas are valid and that you are registered at the Embassy/Consulate with your current address and phone number. If you need to obtain a new passport or

to update your registration, please do so at the Embassy as soon as possible (fill in the times and days).

- Visa processing can take several weeks. Immediate family members should keep their U.S. visas current and apply for visas with as much time in advance of planned travel as possible.

- Make or update as necessary a complete inventory of your household effects, in duplicate.

- Maintain an adequate supply of food, water, and necessary medications in your home. Make sure your car is in good working order. Keep the gas tank full and check oil, coolant, tires, and battery.

We do not want American citizens to become unduly alarmed. These are precautionary measures only. Given the potential for acts of violence, terrorism, or anti-American demonstrations, we believe it is important for all citizens to maintain readiness for all possibilities in case of an emergency. We will promptly inform you of any significant developments and advise you accordingly.

The Department of State encourages all American citizens residing abroad to register their presence and obtain up-to-date information on security conditions at the nearest American Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website. Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency and enable you to receive up-to-date information on security conditions. Create an account and you'll be able to return to the registration web site at any time to update your permanent residence and contact information. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare or whereabouts may not be released to inquirers without your expressed written authorizations. Registration through the web site is not considered proof of citizenship. You may want to keep numbers or copies of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in case of emergency.

EVACUATION

Sometimes commercial transportation entering and leaving a country is disrupted during a political upheaval or natural disaster. If this happens, and if it appears unsafe for Americans to remain, the embassy and consulates will work with the task force in Washington to charter special airflights and ground transportation to help Americans to depart. The U.S. Government cannot order Americans to leave a foreign country. It can only advise and try to assist those who wish to leave. By law, an American receiving evacuation assistance is required to sign a promissory note agreeing to reimburse the government for some of the evacuation costs. More information can be found on the form itself, available at: http://foia.state.gov.

DEATH

When an American dies abroad, the Bureau of Consular Affairs must locate and inform the next-of-kin. Sometimes discovering the next-of-kin is difficult. If the American's name is known, the Bureau's Office of Passport Services will search for his or her passport application.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs provides guidance to grieving family members on how to make arrangements for local burial or return of the remains to the U.S. The disposition of remains is affected by local laws, customs, and facilities, which are often vastly different from those in the U.S. The Bureau of Consular Affairs relays the family's instructions and necessary private funds to cover the costs involved to the embassy or consulate. The Department of State has no funds to assist in the return of remains or ashes of American citizens who die abroad. Upon completion of all formalities, the consular officer abroad prepares an official Foreign Service Report of Death, based upon the local death certificate, and sends it to the next-of-kin or legal representative for use in U.S. courts to settle estate matters.

A U.S. consular officer overseas has statutory responsibility for the personal estate of an American who dies abroad if the deceased has no legal representative in the country where the death occurred. The consular officer takes possession of personal effects, such as:

- convertible assets

- apparel

- jewelry

- personal documents and papers.

The officer prepares an inventory and then carries out instructions from members of the deceased's family concerning the effects. In Washington, the Bureau of Consular Affairs gives next-of-kin guidance on procedures to follow in preparing Letters Testamentary, Letters of Administration, and Affidavits of Next-of-Kin as acceptable evidence of legal claim of an estate.

INJURY

In the case of an injured American, the embassy or consulate abroad notifies the Office of Citizen Services, which notifies family members in the U.S. The Bureau of Consular Affairs can assist in sending private funds to the injured American; frequently it collects information on the individual's prior medical history and forwards it to the embassy or consulate. When necessary, the State Department assists in arranging the return of the injured American to the U.S. commercially, with appropriate medical escort, via commercial air ambulance or, occasionally, by U.S. Air Force medical evacuation aircraft. The use of Air

Force facilities for a medical evacuation is authorized only under certain stringent conditions, and when commercial evacuation is not possible. The full expense must be borne by the injured American or his family.

ARREST/DETENTION OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN ABROAD

One of the most important tasks of the Department of State and of U.S. embassies and consulates abroad is to provide assistance to U.S. citizens incarcerated abroad. The State Department is committed to ensuring fair and humane treatment for American citizens imprisoned overseas. We stand ready to assist incarcerated citizens and their families within the limits of our authority in accordance with international law.

We can and do monitor conditions in foreign prisons and can protest allegations of abuse against U.S. citizen prisoners when requested to do so. We work with prison officials to ensure treatment consistent with internationally recognized standards of human rights and to ensure that Americans are afforded due process under local laws.

While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. As our Country Specific Information explains, penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the law, even unknowingly, may be expelled, fined, arrested, or imprisoned.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs are strict and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and fines. If arrested abroad, a citizen must go through the foreign legal process for being charged or indicted, prosecuted, possibly convicted and sentenced, and for any appeals process. Within this framework, U.S. consular officers provide a wide variety of services to U.S. citizens arrested abroad and their families.

HELP FOR AMERICAN VICTIMS OF CRIME OVERSEAS

The Bureau of Consular Affairs, Overseas Citizens Services is committed to assisting American citizens who become victims of crime while traveling, working, or residing abroad. Government officials, known as consuls or consular officers, at embassies and consulates in nearly 250 cities throughout the world are responsible for assisting U.S. citizens who may be traveling, working, or residing abroad. In addition, in approximately 50 cities where a significant number of Americans reside or visit and there is no U.S. embassy or consulate, consular agents provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Consuls, consular agents, and local employees work with their counterparts in the Bureau of Consular Affairs Overseas Citizens Services Office in Washington, D.C. to provide emergency and non-emergency services to Americans abroad.

How to Contact Us

Consular duty personnel are available for emergency assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas and in Washington, D.C. To contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in the U.S. call 1-888-407-4747 (during business hours) or 202-647-5225 (after hours). Contact information for U.S. embassies, consulates, and consular agencies overseas is on this Internet site.

If you are the victim of a crime overseas, contact the nearest U.S. embassy, consulate, or consular agency for assistance. Contact local police to report the incident and obtain immediate help with safety concerns. Request a copy of the police report.

Consular Assistance

Consular personnel can provide assistance to crime victims. When a U.S. citizen becomes the victim of a crime overseas, he or she may suffer physical, emotional, or financial injuries. Additionally, the emotional impact of the crime may be intensified because the victim is in unfamiliar surroundings. The victim may not be near sources of comfort and support, fluent in the local language, or knowledgeable about local laws and customs.

Consuls, consular agents, and local employees at overseas posts are familiar with local government agencies and resources in the country where they work. They can help American crime victims with issues such as:

- Replacing a stolen passport;
- Contacting family, friends, or employers;
- Obtaining appropriate medical care;
- Addressing emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime;
- Obtaining general information about the local criminal justice process and information about your case;
- Obtaining information about local resources to assist victims, including foreign crime victim compensation programs;
- Obtaining information about crime victim assistance and compensation programs in the U.S.; and
- Obtaining a list of local attorneys who speak English.

Consular officials cannot, however, investigate crimes, provide legal advice or represent you in court, serve as official interpreters or translators, or pay legal, medical, or other fees for you.

Individual Reactions to Crime Victimization

How individuals react to being the victim of a crime will vary from person to person. Reactions are affected by individual factors such as how the victim handles stress, the nature and duration of the crime, the physical safety of the victim, and the number and type of support systems available. Reactions to a crime may be immediate or delayed. The physical, emotional, or cognitive (involving thinking ability) symptoms a victim may experience could include nausea, headaches, fatigue, hyperventilation, or sleeping problems. Some victims report feelings of anxiety or fear, hyper-vigilance, guilt, anger, or isolation. Some experience difficulty making decisions, short-term memory problems, difficulty concentrating, or recurring memories of the crime. It is important to realize that these are normal feelings, behaviors and reactions to an abnormal event. One of the first things to pay attention to is your need to feel safer. Addressing safety concerns and receiving emotional support can help. For most victims the reactions described above diminish with time. If these reactions persist and are disrupting your life or getting worse after three or four weeks, you should consider seeking professional assistance.

Resources and Information for Crime Victims

Victim Assistance: If you are the victim of a crime while overseas you may benefit from specialized resources for crime victims available in the U.S. Throughout the United States thousands of local crime victim assistance programs offer help to victims of violent crime and most will help residents of their community who have been the victim of a crime in another country. These include rape crisis counseling programs, shelter and counseling programs for battered women, support groups and bereavement counseling for family members of homicide victims, diagnostic and treatment programs for child abuse victims, assistance for victims of drunk driving crashes, and others. Information about locating crime victim assistance programs is below.

Victim Compensation: All states operate crime victim compensation programs and nearly half of them offer benefits to their residents who are victims of violent crime overseas. (See contact information for state compensation programs below.) These state compensation programs provide financial assistance to eligible victims for reimbursement of expenses such as medical treatment, counseling, funeral costs, lost income or loss of support, and others. Generally victim compensation programs require the victim to report the crime to law enforcement and they usually request a copy of the police report. Information about each state's crime victim compensation program and how to apply for compensation is available on the Internet at the web site of the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards, http://www.nacvcb.org. The toll-free 24 hours a day /7 days a week hotline for sexual assault crisis counseling and referrals in the United States is 1-800-656-HOPE. It is operated by a non-profit organization, RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), which also has information on the Internet at http://www.rainn.org.

Information about local sexual assault victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state's sexual assault coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions are listed at the website of the U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/help.htm. The toll-free 24 hours a day /7 days a week National Domestic Violence Hotline, which provides crisis counseling and referrals in the U.S., is 1-800-799-SAFE. Information about local domestic violence victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state's domestic violence coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions is listed at the website of the U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/help.htm.

The toll-free 24 hours a day /7 days a week crisis counseling and referral line for families and friends of those who have died by violence is 1-888-818-POMC. It is operated by a non-profit organization, POMC, Inc., (The National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children) which also has information on the Internet at http://www.pomc.org. Information about national and local resources for victims and family members of victims of drunk driving crashes is available at the web site of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, http://www.madd.org. Contact information for non-emergency victim assistance services in communities throughout the U.S. is available at the web site of the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, http://ovc.ncjrs.org/findvictimservices.

Information for crime victims on the impact of crime, safety planning, legal rights and civil legal remedies, and options for assistance and referrals to local programs is also available from the National Crime Victim Center. Call toll free (8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST) 1-800-FYI-CALL or call TTY for hearing impaired (8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST) 1-800-211-7996. Information is also available on the Internet at http://www.ncvc.org. Information and referral to victim assistance programs is available from the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). Call toll-free 24 hours a day /7 days a week 1-800-TRY-NOVA. Information is also available on the Internet at www.try-nova.org. Information about victim assistance programs in approximately 20 countries is available at the web site of Victim Assistance On-line, http://www.vaonline.org.

Government Advice:
How and Where to Seek the State Department's Assistance When Doing Business Abroad

Editor's note: The information below was posted on the U.S. Department of State's website for the Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs as of January 2009 and has been condensed by the editors for publication in book format. Readers should consult www.state.gov for additional information, updates, and revisions.

DOING BUSINESS ABROAD

Q. How is the Department of State working on my behalf to level the playing field on which to compete for foreign investment and trade?

A. The Office of Commercial and Business Affairs (CBA) is the primary point of contact for business concerns within the State Department. CBA services include:

- Problem-solving assistance to U.S. companies
- Dialogue with the U.S. private sector to ensure that business concerns are factored into foreign policy
- Programs and practices to improve the Department's support for business
- Through U.S. embassies, CBA helps ensure that American farmers, business people, and workers succeed in the growing global marketplace. Each embassy and/or consulate has officers who are responsible for assisting U.S. businesses abroad.
- Commercial Officers advise U.S. businesses on local trade and tariff laws, government procurement procedures, and business practices; identify potential importers, agents, distributors, and joint venture partners; provide information on local government tenders; and assist with trade and investment disputes. Note: Commercial Officers are listed in the publication Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts

Also contact Country Desk Officers at the Department of State and the U.S. Commercial Service for country-specific information.

Q. Where is the first stop for companies seeking information about federal export assistance programs?

A. For assistance with exporting U.S. products contact the Trade Information Center (TIC), of the Department of Commerce. The Trade Information Center (TIC) is a comprehensive resource for information on all U.S. Federal Government export assistance programs.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency can also help U.S. companies pursue overseas business opportunities. Also check the publication a Basic Guide to Exporting.

For personalized service call 1-800-USA-TRAD(E) (1-800-872-8723). Hearing-impaired callers can use a toll-free telecommunication device: 1-800-TDD-TRADE (1-800-833-8723)

Q. What organizations and government services are available to help me export?

A. Below is a listing of general and specialized export service links.

- The Trade Compliance Center (TCC) of the International Trade Administration and the U.S. Commercial Service

For more specialized assistance, please review the following agencies:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—Administers programs that support exports of agricultural products, including initiatives to combat unfair competition.
- Country Directories of International Contacts (CDIC)—Provides the names and contact information for importers, agents, trade associations, and government agencies on a country-by-country basis. Available on the NTDB.
- Customized Market Analysis (CMA)—Provides a research service to firms with specific information on marketing and conducting foreign business in order to determine marketability, key competitors, possible partners, etc.
- International Trade Administration (ITA)—Commerce Department office that specializes in the facilitation of trade by product or industrial sector.
- Market Access Compliance (MAC)—MAC officers help U.S. businesses to overcome barriers to trade and investment.

- My Export.com is an exporter referral service that connects exporters to the global marketplace
- Small Business Administration (SBA)—Provides a full range of export assistance services to small businesses just entering the international export market.
- U.S. Trade Development Agency (TDA)—Helps U.S. businesses obtain grants on a transaction-specific basis for foreign development projects.
- U.S. Business Advisor—Links all federal organizations assisting or regulating information and services the government provides for business.
- Ex-Im Bank—Supports U.S. exports by offering U.S. exporters loans, guarantees, and insurance products to compete in the global marketplace
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)—sells investment services to assist U.S. companies investing in some 140 emerging economies around the world.
- U.S. Export Assistant Centers (USEACs)—Provides U.S. companies information on markets abroad, international contacts, and advocacy services.
- Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR)—Provides information for U.S. exporters confronted with problems surrounding international trade agreements.

Q. What U.S. agency can provide me with trade leads?

A. U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) receives technology requests and distributes trade leads to registered U.S. companies. The Global Technology Network (GTN) is a program aimed at matching the technological needs of companies in developing countries with solutions from small- and medium-size U.S. companies.

Q. My overseas supplier (or customer) tells me I need to provide them with documentation from the U.S. Government. What paperwork is required?

A. Fifteen agencies are involved in the issuance of certificates, export control licenses, and other documentation for purchasing from and selling to overseas partners.

The Department of Commerce, Bureau of Export Administration (BXA) provides assistance on export licensing requirements and required documentation for export transactions

Depending on your product, BXA may refer you to another agency, which may include:

- Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) serves as the U.S. Government focal point for implementing arms control inspection and verification.
- Defense Trade Controls (DTC). The DTC handles: Licensing application for matters of defense trade compliance; defense trade exports and re-transfer; and enforcement and reporting,
- Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Department of Treasury administers and enforces economic and trade sanctions against targeted foreign countries and foreign terrorists.
- Office of Arms Controls and Nonproliferation, Export Control Division of the Department of Energy licenses nuclear technology and technical data for nuclear power and special nuclear material.
- Office of Fuels Programs of the Department of Energy licenses natural gas and electric power.
- Chief Office of Management Authority of the Department of the Interior controls the export of endangered fish and wildlife species.
- International Drug Unit of the Drug Enforcement Administration oversees the export of controlled substances.
- International Chemical Control Unit of the Drug Enforcement Administration controls the import and export of listed chemicals used in the production of control substances.
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Office of Compliance: licenses medical devices; Import/Export: licenses drugs.
- Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Solid Waste, International and Special Projects Branch regulates toxic waste exports.

Q. What forms does the Office of Defense Trade Controls (DTC) provide? Do I need a form?

A. Contact the Office of Defense Trade Controls (DTC) if the item in question involves a dual-use-product (defense-related materials or equipment, e.g., computers, munitions, and certain raw materials). From the DTC web site you can:

- Order State Department Forms
- Submit Export License Applications
- Download State Department Forms
- If your material or services does not require DTC review, then the next office to contact is the Bureau of Export Administration (BXA) which provides:
- Export assistance on licensing requirements
- Required documentation for export transactions

- Assistance in selecting the appropriate license

Q. Where can I find a listing of U.S. companies doing business abroad?

A. Contact the Chamber of Commerce which represents more than 3 million businesses and organizations.

Q. How can the embassy or consulate in the foreign country assist me in conducting business?

A. Establishing contact with the embassy or consulate before conducting business will provide you with current information on economic, trade, business trends and practices. If you are currently outside of the United States and need to contact the U.S. Embassy, click U.S. Missions Online If you are in the United States, contact the Department of State Country Offices

Q. How do I authenticate documents to be used overseas?

A. The State Department's Office of Authentication provides certification of all documents used by citizens and foreign nationals overseas.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How do I apply for a passport?

A. The Office of Consular Affairs handles all passport inquiries. You can also reach them by phone: 1-877-4USA-PPT or TDD/TTY 1-888-874-7793.

Q. How do I authenticate a personal/business document?

A. The Office of Verification and Authentication does this. You can also reach them by phone: 202-647-5002 or TDD/TDY 202-663-3468, 1-800-333-4636, email: aoprgsm-auth@state.gov, or fax: 202-663-3636.

Q. How do I start a business?

A. Contact the Small Business Administration or phone your local SB**A.** The Department of Commerce's Minority Business Development Agency has a nationwide network of business enterprise centers that provide management and technical assistance for U.S. minority-owned businesses, including assistance in creating business and marketing plans as well as identifying appropriate financing.

Q. Can you tell me if Company XYZ is legitimate?

A. If the company is located in the United States, contact the office of the Secretary of State (within the state-level government) in whichever state the company is headquartered.

The Office of Authentication updates the list of Secretaries by State of the United States. If the company is located outside the United States, contact the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, part of the Department of Commerce, to get information on their International Company Profile service.

Q. How do I incorporate my business?

A. This is determined by the state in which you reside or plan to incorporate your business. Contact the office of the Secretary of State (this is a state government-level official, not affiliated with the U.S. Department of State). The Office of Authentication updates the list of Secretaries by State of the United States.

Q. How do I do business with the State Department?

A. Contact the Office of the Procurement Executive or by phone: 703-516-1684.

Q. How do I learn about business contracts in Iraq?

A. Links to Iraq contract information can be found on CBA's website.

Q. How do I get visas for business associates who plan to travel to another country?

A. Foreign Entry requirements for Americans traveling to another country may be accessed through the website or you may contact the embassy or consulate of the country you plan to visit. All visa inquiries must be handled through the embassy or consulates of the country you plan to visit.

Q. How can I help my customer/client who is having problems getting a visa to the U.S.?

A. Comprehensive information on visa process and policy is available on the web at www.state.gov, or www.unitedstatesvisas.gov. You should also check the website of the consulate in which the applicant is applying—there is a link to U.S. Embassies and Consulates from each of the above sites. The best advice is for people to apply early.

Q. How can a U.S. business request commercial assistance-for-fee from a U.S. Embassy or the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service?

A. Gold Key Services, International Partner Searches, International Company Profiles and Customized Market Research reports are provided at all US&FCS offices as well as many U.S. embassies. Visit the Platinum Key Service program for more information.

Q. Where can I find current country commercial guides for doing business abroad?

A. Country Commercial Guides (CCGs) are prepared annually to provide a comprehensive look at commercial environments, using economic, political, and market analysis.

Q. How can I verify whether I can do business with companies in certain countries?

A. Information about sanctioned countries, entities, and individuals can be found through the Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

Q. Where can I find other information and help with exporting?

A. The Department of Commerce, Trade Information Center (TIC) provides resources for export/import. Contact TIC by web at http://www.trade.gov/td/tic/ or by phone at 1-800-USA-TRADE.

Q. How do I apply for an export license?

A. The first point of inquiry in export licensing is the government office responsible for coordinating the process. Consult the following web pages for detailed information on areas of competence:

- The State Department's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls for military-related items
- The Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security for export control items
- The Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control for most terrorist states and other special programs.

General Questions

Q. Is my export income exempt from federal income taxes?

A. A portion of the export income that is channeled through corporations that qualify as FSCs (Foreign Sales Corporations) under rules of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 921-927) can be exempt from federal income taxes. For more information, contact: The Office of the Associate Chief Counsel (International), Internal Revenue Service, Phone: (622) 622-3830, Fax: (202) 622-4408. Or the Office of Tax Policy, Phone: (202) 622-1755, Fax: (202) 622-8784.

Q. What assistance can the U.S. Government be in advocating on my behalf for a tender?

A. U.S. Government advocacy decisions are made with the best information available. Advocacy assistance can vary, but usually it involves companies that deal with foreign governments or government-owned corporations. Fill out an Advocacy Questionnaire or contact the Advocacy Center.

Q. Where can I go to find facts on foreign trade figures and statistics?

For General information on a country's yearly economic, political and investment climate, check the Country Commercial Guides; Economic Policy and Trade Practices. For specific information check Trade Statistics available at the International Trade Administration Additional information are available at:

- The National Trade Data Bank (NTDB) contains international trade-related data
- The Bureau of Census provides foreign trade statistics
- Bureau of Economic Analysis provides U.S. useful foreign trade data.

Q. Is there an updated directory of people, organizations and web sites that promotes global business principles and best practices?

A. The publication Resources for Promoting Global Business Principles and Practices: a Directory of People, Organizations, and Web Sites is available through the Environmental Protection Agency.

Facilitating Overseas Investment

Q. What Government offices/agencies can assist me in conducting business in a specific region?

A. There are numerous federal agencies available to assist you in your region of interest. Below is a regional list of offices:

- Central and Eastern Europe Business Information Center (CEEBIC)
- Untied Aid Initiative—Central source for information on how to access Japan's foreign aid program.

For additional information check the Commercial Service, Department of Commerce

Q. What private sector business organizations can help in my region?

A. Check the following organizations:

- APEC
- Association of American Chambers of Commerce in Latin America (AACCLA)
- Corporate Council on Africa (CCA)
- European and American Business Council (EABC)
- United States Asian Economic Program (USAEP)
- United States-Bangladesh Business Council (USBBC)
- United States-India Business Council (USIBC)

Q. What government agencies assist in Export Financing and Export Credit Insurance?

A. The U.S. Government encourages all U.S. exporters to use a "confirmed letter of credit" in business transactions to guard against non-payment by the recipient. The U.S. Ex-Im Bank can assist with:

- Export financial assistance and direct loans and loan guarantee programs
- Obtaining export insurance that covers risks on export receivables
- Working Capital Guarantee Program

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has numerous programs assisting small businesses to obtain guaranteed loans, capital and investment assistance.

Q. What agency can assist me with investment financing?

A. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)—Independent government agency that assists U.S. companies investing in emerging markets to help increase U.S. exports and promote economic growth.

Import and Export Bank—It was created to aid in financing and to facilitate U.S. exports. Today, this agency provides guarantees of working capital loans for U.S. exporters, guarantees the repayment of loans or makes loans to foreign purchasers of U.S. goods and services, and provides credit insurance against non-payment by foreign buyers for political or commercial risk

Q. Are there federal grants available for feasibility studies and technical assistance?

A. U.S. Trade Development Agency's (TDA) primary mission is to assist U.S. businesses in obtaining grants to conduct feasibility studies and/or technical assistance for major projects in developing and middle-income countries.

Trade Restrictions

Q. Currently, what countries have sanctions placed on them by the U.S. Government?

A. The Office of Foreign Asset Controls of the Department of Treasury provides information about sanctions regulations and maintains a list of individual entities with which U.S. parties cannot do business.

Q. What federal agencies are involved in export controls and over what products?

A. The Bureau of Export Administration (BXA) of the Department of Commerce provides links to federal agencies with export control responsibilities.

Q. What if I need additional information on which Federal agency has export controls/licensing authority over my product?

A. Go to the Bureau of Export Administration's General Information facts web page.

Q. What is a Commodity Jurisdiction request?

A. Go the Commodity Jurisdiction request.

Q. What are dual-use exports and who is the licensing agent?

A. Dual-use exports are those materials or equipment which are defense-related, involving sensitive (e.g., military or nuclear) or non-sensitive applications, such as computers, weapons, licensing of defense services and defense (munitions) articles.

Although the Bureau of Export Administration (BXA) the primary licensing agent for dual-use exports, the Defense Trade Controls (TDC) in the Department of State has authority over defense articles and services.

Assisting Foreign Companies Doing Business in the United States

Q. How do I register or incorporate a business in the United States?

A. The incorporation of foreign business entities is regulated at the state level (as opposed to the federal or national level) in the United States. The application process will vary from state-to-state. Check the list of State Business Development Offices.

Q. How do I get Information on importing products into the United States?

A. The U.S. Customs Service provides an overview of the foreign commercial importing process and requirements. For more information go to Commercial Importing Procedures and Requirements.

The Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center provides information and web links to importation procedures.

Q. Is there an agency that can assist me in inquiring about the economic opportunities and interests in various states?

State and Local Government on the Net is a resource guide to government-sponsored Internet sites that allows you to search by state.

CBA OFFICE CONTACTS

Commercial Coordinators
Commercial and Business Affairs (EB/CBA)
2201 C Street, NW, Room 2318
Washington, DC 20520
Phone: (202) 647-1625
Fax: (202) 647-3953
e-mail: BusinessOutreachweb@state.gov

Regional Commercial Coordinators
Bureau of African Affairs (AF)
2201 C Street, NW, Room 5242A
Washington, DC 20520
Phone: (202) 647-3502
Fax: (202) 736-4583

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP)
2201 C Street, NW, Room 5317
Washington, DC 20520

Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (EUR)
2201 C Street, NW, Room 5424
Washington, DC 20520

Bureau of Near East Affairs (NEA)
2201 C Street, NW, Room 5256
Washington, DC 20520
Phone: (202) 647-1378
Fax: (202) 647-7837

Bureau of South Asia (SA)
2201 C Street, NW, Room 5246
Washington, DC 20520
Phone: (202) 736-4254
Fax: (202) 736-4259

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA)
2201 C Street, NW, Room 3248
Washington, DC 20520
Phone: (202) 647-1232
Fax: (202) 647-6408

EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTED FORMS FOR ADDRESSING MAIL

It is most important that correspondence to a Foreign Service post be addressed to a section or position rather than to an officer by name. This will eliminate delays resulting from the forwarding of official mail to officers who have transferred. Normally, correspondence concerning commercial matters should be addressed simply "Commercial Section" followed by the name and correct mailing address of the post. (See below for examples of correct mailing addresses.)

Posts with APO/FPO Numbers:

*APO/FPO Address**

Name
Organization
PSC or Unit number, Box number
APO AE 09080 **or** APO AA 34038 **or**
APO AP 96337

*International Address***

Name of Person/Section
American Embassy
P.O. Box 26431***
Manama, Bahrain

Posts without APO/FPO Numbers:

*Diplomatic Pouch Address**

Name of Person/Section
Name of Post
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20521–four digit add-on
(*see* 9-digit ZIP Code explanation and listing)

*International Address***

Name of Person/Section
American Embassy
Jubilaeumstrasse 93***
3005 Bern, Switzerland

* Use domestic postage.
** Use international postage.
*** Use street address only when P.O. box is not supplied.

NOTE: Do not combine any of the above forms (e.g., international plus APO/FPO addresses). This will only result in confusion and possible delays in delivery. Mail sent to the Department for delivery through its pouch system for posts with APO/FPO addresses cannot be accepted and will be returned to the sender.

STATE ZIP CODES

In conjunction with the U.S. Postal Service's system of 9-digit ZIP Codes, the Department of State has assigned a unique 4-digit number to each Foreign Service post. All mail sent through the Department's pouch system (for posts without APO/FPO addresses) should add the 4-digit number to the current ZIP Code 20521. For example, the ZIP Code for Abidjan would be 20521–2010; for Abu Dhabi, 20521–6010. Refer to the following list for each Foreign Service post's unique number.

Abidjan 2010
Abu Dhabi 6010
Accra 2020
Adana 5020
Addis Ababa 2030
Algiers 6030
Almaty 7030
Amman 6050
Amsterdam 5780
Ankara 7000

Antananarivo 2040
Ashgabat 7070
Asmara 7170
Asuncion 3020
Athens 7100
Auckland 4370
Baghdad 6060
Baku 7050
Bamako 2050
Bandar Seri Begawan 4020
Bangkok 7200
Bangui 2060
Banjul 2070
Barcelona 5400
Beijing 7300
Beirut 6070
Belfast 5360
Belgrade 5070
Belize 3050
Berlin 5090
Bern 5110
Bishkek 7040
Bissau 2080
Bogota 3030
Bombay 6240
Bonn 7400
Brasilia 7500
Bratislava 5840
Brazzaville 2090
Bridgetown 3120
Brussels (USNATO - M) 5230
Brussels (E) 7600
Bucharest 5260
Budapest 5270
Buenos Aires 3130
Bujumbura 2100
Bukavu 2240
Cairo 7700
Calcutta 6250
Calgary 5490
Canberra 7800
Cape Town 2480
Caracas 3140
Casablanca 6280
Chengdu 4080
Chiang Mai 4040
Chisinau 7080
Ciudad Juarez 3270
Cluj-Napoca 1315
Colombo 6100
Conakry 2110
Copenhagen 5280
Cotonou 2120
Curacao 3160
Dakar 2130
Damascus 6110
Dar Es Salaam 2140
Dhahran 6310
Dhaka 6120
Djibouti 2150
Doha 6130
Dubai 6020
Dublin 5290
Durban 2490
Dushanbe 7090
Dusseldorf 5160
Edinburgh 5370
Florence 5670
Frankfurt 7900
Freetown 2160
Fukuoka 4310
Gaborone 2170
Geneva (M) 5120
Georgetown 3170
Grenada 3180
Guadalajara 3280
Guangzhou 4090
Guatemala City 3190
Guayaquil 3430
(The) Hague 5770
Halifax 5500
Hamburg 5180
Hamilton 5300
Hanoi 4550
Harare 2180
Havana 3200
Helsinki 5310
Hermosillo 3290
Ho Chi Minh City 7160
Hong Kong 8000
Islamabad 8100
Istanbul 5030
Jakarta 8200
Jeddah 6320
Jerusalem 6350
Johannesburg 2500
Kampala 2190
Karachi 6150
Kathmandu 6190
Khabarovsk 5870
Khartoum 2200
Kiev 5850
Kigali 2210
Kingston 3210
Kinshasa 2220
Kolonia 4120
Krakow 5140
Kuala Lumpur 4210
Kuwait 6200
Lagos 8300
La Paz 3220
Lahore 6160
Leipzig 5860
Libreville 2270
Lilongwe 2280
Lima 3230
Lisbon 5320
Ljubljana 7140
Lome 2300
London 8400

Luanda 2550
Lusaka 2310
Luxembourg 5380
Madras 6260
Madrid 8500
Majuro 4380
Malabo 2320
Managua 3240
Manama 6210
Manila 8600
Maputo 2330
Marseille 5600
Maseru 2340
Matamoros 3300
Mbabane 2350
Melbourne 4140
Merida 3320
Mexico City 8700
Milan 5690
Minsk 7010
Monrovia 8800
Monterrey 3330
Montevideo 3360
Montreal 5510
Moscow 5430
Munich 5190
Muscat 6220
Naha 4320
Nairobi 8900
Naples 5700
Nassau 3370
N'Djamena 2410
New Delhi 9000
Niamey 2420
Nice 5610
Nicosia 5450
Nouakchott 2430
Nuevo Laredo 3340
Oporto 5330
Osaka-Kobe 4330
Oslo 5460
Ottawa 5480
Ouagadougou 2440
Panama City 9100
Paramaribo 3390
Paris 9200
Perth 4160
Peshawar 6170
Phnom Penh 4540
Ponta Delgada 5340
Port-au-Prince 3400
Port Louis 2450
Port Moresby 4240
Port-of-Spain 3410
Poznan 5050
Prague 5630
Praia 2460
Pretoria 9300
Pusan 4270
Quebec 5520
Quito 3420
Rabat 9400
Rangoon 4250
Recife 3080
Reykjavik 5640
Riga 4520
Rio de Janeiro 3090
Riyadh 6300
Rome 9500
St. George's 3180
St. Petersburg 5440
San Jose 3440
San Salvador 3450
Sanaa 6330
Santiago 3460
Santo Domingo 3470
Sao Paulo 3110
Sapporo 4340
Sarajevo 7130
Seoul 9600
Shanghai 4100
Shenyang 4110
Singapore 4280
Skopje 7120
Sofia 5740
Stockholm 5750
Strasbourg 5620
Surabaya 4200
Suva 4290
Sydney 4150
Taipei, AIT 4170
Tallinn 4530
Tashkent 7110
Tbilisi 7060
Tegucigalpa 3480
Tel Aviv 9700
Thessaloniki 5060
Tijuana 3350
Tirana 9510
Tokyo 9800
Toronto 5530
Trieste 5720
Tunis 6360
Ulaanbaatar 4410
Valletta 5800
Vancouver 5540
Vatican City 5660
Vienna 9900
Vientiane 4350
Vilnius 4510
Vladivostok 5880
Warsaw 5010
Wellington 4360
Windhoek 2540
Yaounde 2520
Yekaterinburg 5890
Yerevan 7020
Zagreb 5080

TELEPHONING A FOREIGN SERVICE POST

Below is the procedure for telephoning a Foreign Service Post. American Embassy Canberra is used as an example.

Calling from a U.S. Government Agency:

Dial 9 + international access code + country code + city code + local number

E.g. 9 + 011 + [61] + (6) + 2705000

Others:

Dial international access code + country code + city code + local number Eg. 011 + [61] + (6) + 2705000

NOTE: Some international calls will require operator assistance because the country is not an international dial country. The telephone listing of these countries will not be preceded by a country code and city code (always shown in brackets and parentheses).

Calls to certain points outside the continental U.S. can be dialed in the same manner as long distance. Simply dial the area code or country code and the local number. For these locations, no city code will appear with the telephone number.

IVG USAGE DIAL PREFIX CODES

The International Voice Gateway (IVG) switch is located in Beltsville, Maryland and provided interconnectivity from 99 overseas locations to all Department of State and government agencies located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Through the use of calling cards, it also enables users to access the FTS networks, GETS, WITS, as well as commercial numbers for international direct dialing at substantially reduced rates.

Abidjan 783
Abu Dhabi 845
Accra 366
Algiers 928
Almaty 927
Amman 978
Ankara 295
Antananarivo 590
Ashgabat 962
Asmara 596
Asuncion 642
Athens 869
Baku 841
Bamako 467
Bandar Seri Begawan 468
Bangkok 675
Banjul 591
Barcelona 581
Beijing 987
Beirut 850
Belgrade 754
Belize City ..... 755 & 937
Berlin 292
Bern 873
Bishek 964
Bissau 760
Bogota 879
Brandy Station, VA 490
Brasilia 921
Bratislava 560
Bridgetown 986
Brussels 694
Bucharest 877
Budapest 990
Buenos Aires 878
Cairo 870
Canberra 679
Capetown 470
Caracas 643
Casablanca 748
Chennai 790
Chiang Mai 367
Chisinau 548
Ciudad Juarez 892
Colombo 761
Conakry 257
Copenhagen 989
Cotonou 595
Croughton 573
Dakar 785
Damascus 737
Dar Es Salaam 745
Dhaka 583
Dili 684
Djibouti 597
Doha 474
DTSPO 671
Dublin 693
Dushanbe 752
Frankfurt 568
Ft. Lauderdale 51200
Freetown 798
FS Charleston 35301
Gaborone 846
Geneva 493
Georgetown 747
Guadalajara 893
Guangzhou 285
Guatemala City 799
Guayaquil 756
Hanoi 786
Harare 778
Havana 333
Helsinki 953

Hermosillo 948
Ho Chi Minh City 381
Hong Kong 727
Islamabad 787
Istanbul 965
Jakarta 386
Jeddah 789
Jerusalem 779
Johannesburg 582
Kabul 599
Kampala 838
Karachi 922
Kathmandu 585
Khartoum 937
Kiev 788
Kigali 988
Kingston 929
Kinshasa 934
Kuala Lumpur 984
Kuwait 495
Lagos 261
La Paz 547
Libreville 587
Lilongwe 835
Lima 549
Lisbon 884
Ljubljana 762
Lome 888
London 492
Luanda 676
Lusaka 852
Luxembourg 677
Madrid 559
Managua 746
Manama 273
Manila 678
Manputo 887
Mbabane 732
Mexico City 578
Milan 481
Minsk 577
Monrovia 766
Monterrey 960
Montevideo 223
Moscow 435
Mumbai 791
Munich 923
Muscat 741
Nairobi 871
Nassau 823
Ndjamena 924
New Delhi 840
Niamey 594
Nicosia 735
Nogales 287
Nouakchott 589
Oslo 954
Ottawa 834
Panama City 833
Paramaribo 540
Paris 498
Peshawar 588
Phnom Penh 739
Port Louis 593
Port of Spain 363
Port au Prince 271
Prague 422
Pretoria 685
Pristina 584
Quito 644
Rabat 775
Rangoon 260
Reykjavik 682
Riga 868
Rio de Janeiro 966
Riyadh 792
Rome 674
San Jose 220
San Salvador 830
Sanaa 469
Santiago 843
Santa Domingo 848
Sao Paulo 967
Sarajevo 837
Seoul 725
Shanghai 959
Singapore 726
Skopje 839
Sofia 368
St. Petersburg 375
Stockholm 993
Suva 891
Taipei 844
Tallinn 969
Tashkent 793
Tbilisi 997
Tegucigalpa 539
Tel Aviv 751
The Hague 361
Tijuana 361
Tirana 970
Tokyo 688
Tunis 941
Ulaanbaatar 898
USNATO 641
Valletta 753
Vienna 872
Vientiane 586
Vilnius 973
Warsaw 628
Wellington 847
Windhoek 622
Yaounde 932
Yekaterinburg 757
Yerevan 996
Zagreb 444

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE DISTRICT OFFICES

ALABAMA
950 22ND Street North, Room 707
Birmingham, AL 35203
205-731-1331

ALASKA
431 West 7th Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-271-6237

ARIZONA
2901 N. Central
Phoenix, AZ 85205
602-640-2513

ARKANSAS
425 West Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201
501-324-5794

CALIFORNIA
2100 Chester Ave.
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661-637-0136

550 E. Shaw Ave.
Fresno, CA 93710
559-227-6582

84-245 Indio Springs Dr
Indio, CA 92203
760-342-4455

444 S. Flower St.
Los Angeles, CA 90071
213-894-4231

11150 W. Olympic Blvd
Los Angeles, CA 90064
310-235-7104

411 Pacific St, Ste 316A
Monterey, CA 93940
831-641-9850

3300 Irvine Ave, Ste 305
Newport Beach, CA 92660
949-660-1688

1301 Clay St.
Oakland, CA 94612
510-273-7350

250 Montgomery St, 14th floor
San Francisco, CA 94104
415-705-2300

55 South Market St.
San Jose, California 95113
408-535-2757

4040 Civic Center Dr
San Rafael, CA 94903
415-492-4546

COLORADO
1625 Broadway
Denver, CO 80202
303-844-6001

CONNECTICUTT
213 Court St.
Middletown, CT 06457
860-638-6950

WASHINGTON DC
14th & Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20230
202-482-3917

DELAWARE
Served by the Philadelphia EAC.

FLORIDA
14010 Roosevelt Blvd.
Clearwater, FL 33762
Phone: 727-893-3738

200 E Las Olas Blvd.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301
954-356-6640

United States Export Assistance Center
5835 Blue Lagoon Drive
Miami, FL 33126
305-526-7425

20 E. Robinson St.
Orlando, FL 32801
407-648-6235

325 John Knox Rd
Tallahassee, FL 32303
850-942-9635

GEORGIA
Century One Building
75 Fifth St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30308
Phone: 404-897-6090

11 E. Liberty St
Savannah, GA 31401
Phone: 912-652-4204

HAWAII
521 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 214
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 808-522-8040

IDAHO
700 West State St., 2nd Floor
Boise, ID 83720
208-364-7791

ILLINOIS
200 W. Adams St., Ste. 2450
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 312-353-8040

28055 Ashley Circle, Suite 212
Libertyville, IL 60048
847-327-9082

922 N. Glenwood Ave.
Jobst Hall, Room 141
Peoria, IL 61606
309-671-7815

515 N. Court St.
Rockford, IL 61110
815-987-8123

INDIANA
11405 N. Pennsylvania St.
Ste 106
Carmel, IN 46032
317-582-2300

IOWA
700 Locust St, Ste 100
Des Moines, IA 50309
515-288-8614

KANSAS
209 East William, Ste 300
Wichita, KS 67214
316-263-4067

KENTUCKY
1600 World Trade Center
333 West Vine Street
Lexington, KY 40507
859-225-7001

601 W. Broadway, Room 634B
Louisville, KY 40202
502-582-5066

LOUISIANA
2 Canal St.
New Orleans, LA 70130
504-589-6546

One University Place
Shreveport, LA 71115
318-676-3064

MAINE
511 Congress St
Portland, ME 04101
207-541-7400

MARYLAND
401 E. Pratt St., Ste 2432
Baltimore, MD 21202
410-962-4539

MASSACHUSETTS
55 New Sudbury St
Boston, MA 02210
617-565-4301

MICHIGAN
211 West Fort St, Ste 2220
Detroit, MI 48226
313-226-3650

401 W. Fulton St.
Suite 309C
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
616-458-3564

Oakland Pointe Office Building
250 Elizabeth Lake Rd., Suite 1300 West
Pontiac, MI 48341
248-975-9600

MINNESOTA
Minneapolis U.S. Export Assistance Center
100 North 6th Street, Ste. 210-C
Minneapolis, MN 55403
612-348-1638

MISSISSIPPI
175 East Capitol St., Ste 255
Jackson, MS 39201
601-965-4130

MISSOURI
2509 Commerce Tower
911 Main Street
Kansas City, MO 64105
Tel: 816-421-1876

8182 Maryland Ave, Ste 303
St. Louis, MO 63105
314-425-3302

MONTANA
P.O. Box 7487
Missoula, MT 59807
406-542-6656

NEBRASKA
11133-35 "O" St
Omaha, NE 68137
402-597-0193

NEVADA
400 South Fourth Street, Suite 250
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101
Tel: 702-388-6694

1 E. First St., 16th Floor
Reno, NV 89501
775-784-5203

NEW HAMPSHIRE
17 New Hampshire Ave
Portsmouth, NH 03801
603-334-6074

NEW JERSEY
3131 Princeton Pike
Bldg. 4, Ste 105
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
609-989-2100

744 Broad St., Ste 1505
Newark, NJ 07102
973-645-4682

NEW MEXICO
1100 St. Francis Dr.
Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-827-0350

NEW YORK
111 West Huron
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-551-4191

33 Whitehall St.
New York, NY 10004
212-809-2675

400 Andrews St., Ste 710
Rochester, NY 14604
585-263-6480

707 Westchester Ave, Ste 209
White Plains, NY 10601
914-682-6712

NORTH CAROLINA
521 E. Morehead St., Ste 435
Charlotte, NC 28202
704-333-4886

342 North Elm St., 2nd Floor
Greensboro, NC 27401
336-333-5345

10900 World Trade Blvd., Ste. 110
Raleigh, NC 27617
Phone: 919-281-2750

NORTH DAKOTA
Served by the Minneapolis EAC.

OHIO
One Cascade Plaza
17th Floor
Akron, OH 44308
330-237-1264

36 E. Seventh St
Cincinnati, OH 45202
513-684-2944

600 Superior Ave., Ste 700
Cleveland, OH 44114
216-522-4750

280 North High St, Ste 1400
Columbus, OH 43215
614-365-9510

300 Madison Ave, #270
Toledo, OH 43604
419-241-0683

OKLAHOMA
301 NW 63rd
Oklahoma City, OK 73116
405-608-5302

700 N. Greenwood Ave, Ste 1400
Tulsa, OK 74106
918-581-7650

OREGON
1401 Williamette St
Eugene, OR 97401
541-242-2384

121 SW Salmon St., Ste 242
Portland, OR 97204
503-326-3001

PENNSYLVANIA
228 Walnut St., #850
P.O. Box 11698
Harrisburg, PA 17108
717-221-4510

The Curtis Center
601 Walnut St., Ste 580 West
Independence Square West
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215-597-6101

425 Sixth Ave., Ste. 2950
Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone: 412-644-2800

PUERTO RICO
Centro Internacional de Mercadeo
Suite 702
90 Road 165
Guaynabo, Puerto Rico 00968-8058
Tel: 787-775-1992

RHODE ISLAND
One West Exchange St.
Providence, RI 02903
401-528-5104

SOUTH CAROLINA
1201 Main St., Ste 1720
Columbia, SC 29201
803-765-5345

1362 McMillan Ave.
North Charleston, SC 29405
843-746-3404

216 South Pleasantburg Dr.
Buck Mickel Ctr., Greenville Technical College
Greenville, SC 29606-5616
864-250-8420

SOUTH DAKOTA
Augustana College
2001 S. Summit Ave.
Madsen Center, Room 122
Sioux Falls, SD 57197
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COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM: 2007

Editor's note: The report below was edited from information released in April 2008 by the Office of the Coordinator of Counterterrorism of the U.S. State Department. This report is reproduced here to aid in increasing awareness of terrorism as a growing concern for citizens of all nations and to provide summary information on U.S. government programs to combat terrorism.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

Trends in 2007

Al-Qa'ida and Associated Trends: Al-Qa'ida (AQ) and associated networks remained the greatest terrorist threat to the United States and its partners in 2007. It has reconstituted some of its pre-9/11 operational capabilities through the exploitation of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), replacement of captured or killed operational lieutenants, and the restoration of some central control by its top leadership, in particular Ayman al-Zawahiri. Although Usama bin Ladin remained the group's ideological figurehead, Zawahiri has emerged as AQ's strategic and operational planner.

AQ and its affiliates seek to exploit local grievances for their own local and global purposes. They pursue their own goals, often at large personal cost to the local population. These networks are adaptive, quickly evolving new methods in response to countermeasures. AQ utilizes terrorism, as well as subversion, propaganda, and open warfare; it seeks weapons of mass destruction in order to inflict the maximum possible damage on anyone who stands in its way, including other Muslims and/or elders, women, and children.

Despite the efforts of both Afghan and Pakistani security forces, instability, coupled with the Islamabad brokered cease-fire agreement in effect for the first half of 2007 along the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier, appeared to have provided AQ leadership greater mobility and ability to conduct training and operational planning, particularly that targeting Western Europe and the United States. Numerous senior AQ operatives have been captured or killed, but AQ leaders continued to plot attacks and to cultivate stronger operational connections that radiated outward from Pakistan to affiliates throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe.

2007 was marked by the affiliation of regional insurgent groups with AQ, notably the growing threat in North Africa posed by the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat's (GSPC) September 2006 merger with AQ, which resulted in GSPC renaming itself al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM is still primarily focused on the Algerian government, but its target set is broader than it was prior to the merger. For example, AQIM claimed responsibility for the near-simultaneous December 11 bombings of the Algerian Constitutional Council and the United Nations headquarters in Algeria; building upon previous attacks on foreign vehicles and AQIM statements, the attack on the UN underlined that AQIM now considers foreign interests to be attractive targets. In April, AQIM launched suicide attacks for the first time and vowed to use them as a primary tactic against their enemies. In 2007, AQIM carried out eight suicide attacks that resulted in large numbers of government and civilian casualties. The suicide bombers used by AQIM are typically recruited from easily exploitable groups, such as teenagers in the July 11 and September 8 attacks, or the elderly and terminally ill, as in the December 11 UN attack. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group's (LIFG) November 2007 merger with AQ, on the other hand, has yielded few successful attacks to date, reflecting the depleted capabilities of LIFG within Libya.

At the same time, the alliance of convenience and mutual exploitation between al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and many Sunni populations there has deteriorated. The Baghdad Security Plan, initiated in February, along with assistance from primarily Sunni tribal and local groups has succeeded in reducing violence to late 2005 levels, has disrupted and diminished AQI infrastructure, and has driven some surviving AQI fighters from Baghdad and Al Anbar into the northern Iraqi provinces of Ninawa, Diyala, and Salah ad Din. While AQI remained a threat, new initiatives to cooperate with tribal and local leaders in Iraq have led to Sunni tribes' and local citizens' rejection of AQI and its extremist ideology. The continued growth and improved capabilities of the Iraqi forces have increased their effectiveness in rooting out terrorist cells. Iraqis in Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala Provinces, and elsewhere have turned against the terrorist group and were cooperating with the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces to defeat AQI.

The late 2006 Ethiopian invasion of Somalia and subsequent deployment of AU forces there have kept AQ East Africa leadership, and elements of the Council of Islamic Courts that harbored them, on the run. Intense militancy against the Ethiopian and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces continued, reinforcing the early 2007 call to action by AQ through Ayman al-Zawahiri. In an Internet video released in January 2007, al-Zawahiri

urged all mujahedin, specifically those in the Maghreb, to extend support to Somali Muslims in a holy war against the occupying Ethiopian forces.

Throughout 2007, AQ increased propaganda efforts seeking to inspire support in Muslim populations, undermine Western confidence, and enhance the perception of a powerful worldwide movement. Terrorists consider information operations a principal part of their effort. Use of the Internet for propaganda, recruiting, fundraising and, increasingly, training, has made the Internet a "virtual safe haven." International intervention in Iraq continued to be exploited by AQ as a rallying cry for radicalization and terrorist activity, as were other conflicts such as Afghanistan and Sudan. The international community has yet to muster a coordinated and effectively resourced program to counter extremist propaganda.

2007 witnessed the continuation of the transition from expeditionary to guerilla terrorism highlighted in *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006*. Through intermediaries, web-based propaganda, exploitation of local grievances, and subversion of immigrant and expatriate populations, terrorists inspired local cells to carry out attacks which they then exploit for propaganda purposes. We have seen a substantial increase in the number of self-identified groups with links (communications, training, and financial) to AQ leadership in Pakistan. These "guerilla" terrorist groups harbor ambitions of a spectacular attack, including acquisition and use of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Taliban and Other Insurgent Groups and Criminal Gangs: Afghanistan remained threatened by Taliban and other insurgent groups and criminal gangs, some of whom were linked to AQ and terrorist sponsors outside the country. Taliban insurgents murdered local leaders and attacked Pakistani government outposts in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan's long term three-pronged (security, economic and political) FATA Strategy was designed to eliminate Taliban and AQ safe havens along the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier.

The Government of Afghanistan continued to strengthen its national institutions and polls indicated the majority of Afghans believed they were better off than they were under the Taliban. The international community's assistance to the Afghan government to build counterinsurgency capabilities, ensure legitimate and effective governance, and counter the surge in narcotics cultivation is essential to the effort to defeat the Taliban and other insurgent groups and criminal gangs.

State Sponsors of Terrorism: State sponsorship of terrorism continued to undermine efforts to eliminate terrorism. Iran remained the most significant state sponsor of terrorism. A critically important element of Iranian national security strategy is its ability to conduct terrorist operations abroad. Iranian leaders believe this capability helps safeguard the regime by deterring United States or Israeli attacks, distracting and weakening the United States, enhancing Iran's regional influence through intimidation, and helping to drive the United States from the Middle East. Hizballah, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, is key to Iran's terrorism strategy. Iran also continued to threaten its neighbors and destabilize Iraq by providing weapons, training, and funding to select Iraqi Shia militants. These proxy groups perpetrate violence and cause American casualties in Iraq. Hizballah, supported by Iran and Syria, continued to undermine the elected Government of Lebanon and remained a serious security threat. Foreign terrorists continued to transit Syria en route to and from Iraq; a report to Congress stated that nearly 90 percent of all foreign fighters entering Iraq are transiting from Syria. In addition, the Government of Iran has recently begun an effort to expand commercial and diplomatic ties throughout the Western Hemisphere. Iran has, in the past, used diplomatic missions to support the activities of Hizballah operatives.

Other Terrorist Groups: The ongoing political stalemate in Lebanon has contributed to enabling suspected foreign extremist militants to set up operational cells within the Palestinian refugee camps, such as Fatah al Islam (FAI) in Nahr el-Barid. While the Lebanese Armed Forces defeated FAI militants after a three-month battle (May 20—September 2), some of its members remained at large while other Palestinian militant groups continued to capitalize on the lack of government control within the camps. Some of these groups, such as the al-Qa'ida-associated Asbat al-Ansar and Jund al-Sham, were able to find a safe haven within the camps, most notably in the Ain el-Hilwah camp.

Terrorist activity emanating from the Palestinian territories also remained a key destabilizing factor and a cause for concern.

In Colombia, the FARC exemplified another trend: growing links between terrorist and other criminal activity. The FARC, which continued to hold hundreds of hostages, including three American citizens captive for more than four years, raised more than an estimated $60 million per year from narcotics trafficking. Terrorist activities and support for terrorist infrastructure are funded by contributions from individuals, false charities and front organizations, but also increasingly through other illicit activities such as trafficking in persons, smuggling, and narcotrafficking. We also have seen increasing evidence of trafficking in persons network facilitators being employed to facilitate terrorist movement, particularly into Iraq.

Defeating an Agile Terrorist Enemy

Responding to terrorist groups that have many of the characteristics of a global insurgency—propaganda campaigns, grass roots support, and political and territorial ambitions, though ill-defined, requires a comprehensive response. Successful methods include a focus on protecting and securing the population; and politically and physically marginalizing the insurgents, winning the support and cooperation of at-risk populations by targeted political and development measures, and conducting precise intelli-

gence-led special operations to eliminate critical enemy elements with minimal collateral damage. There were significant achievements in this area this year against terrorist leadership targets, notably the capture or killing of key terrorist leaders in Pakistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, and the Philippines. These efforts buy us time to carry out the most important elements of a comprehensive counterterrorist strategy: disrupting terrorist operations, including their communications, propaganda and subversion efforts; planning and fundraising; and eliminating the conditions that terrorists exploit. We must seek to build trusted networks of governments, multilateral institutions, business organizations, and private citizens and organizations that work collaboratively to defeat the threat from violent extremism.

Working with allies and partners across the world, we have created a less permissive operating environment for terrorists, keeping leaders on the move or in hiding, and degrading their ability to plan and mount attacks. Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Jordan, the Philippines, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other partners played major roles in this success. Dozens of countries have passed new counterterrorism legislation or strengthened pre-existing laws that provide their law enforcement and judicial authorities with new tools to bring terrorists to justice. The United States has expanded the number of foreign partners for the sharing of terrorist screening information, which is a concrete tool for disrupting and tracking travel of known and suspected terrorists. Saudi Arabia has implemented an effective model rehabilitation program for returning jihadis to turn them against violent extremism and to reintegrate them as peaceful citizens.

Through the Regional Strategic Initiative, the State Department and other United States agencies are working with Ambassadors overseas in key terrorist theaters of operation to assess the threat and devise collaborative strategies, action plans, and policy recommendations. We have made progress in organizing regional responses to terrorists who operate in ungoverned spaces or across national borders. This initiative has produced better intragovernmental coordination among United States government agencies, greater cooperation with and between regional partners, and improved strategic planning and prioritization, allowing us to use all tools of statecraft to establish long-term measures to marginalize terrorists. 2007 witnessed improvement in capacity and cooperation on such key issues as de-radicalization, border controls, document security, interdiction of cash couriers, and biometrics and other travel data sharing.

Radicalization of immigrant populations, youth and alienated minorities in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa continued. But it became increasingly clear that radicalization to violent extremism does not occur by accident, or because such populations are innately prone to extremism. Rather, we saw increasing evidence of terrorists and extremists manipulating the grievances of alienated youth or immigrant populations, and then cynically exploiting those grievances to subvert legitimate authority and create unrest. We also note a "self-radicalization" process of youths reaching out to extremists in order to become involved in the broader AQ fight.

Such efforts to manipulate grievances represent a "conveyor belt" through which terrorists seek to convert alienated or aggrieved populations, by stages, to increasingly radicalized and extremist viewpoints, turning them into sympathizers, supporters, and ultimately, in some cases, members of terrorist networks. In some regions, this includes efforts by AQ and other terrorists to exploit insurgency and communal conflict as radicalization and recruitment tools, especially using the Internet to convey their message.

Counter-radicalization is a key policy priority for the United States, particularly in Europe, given the potential of Europe-based violent extremism to threaten the United States and its key interests directly. The leaders of AQ and its affiliates are extremely interested in recruiting terrorists from and deploying terrorists to Europe, people familiar with Western cultures who can travel freely. Countering such efforts demands that we treat immigrant and youth populations not as a source of threat to be defended against, but as a target of enemy subversion to be protected and supported. It requires community leaders to take responsibility for the actions of members within their communities and to act to counteract extremist propaganda and subversion, and also requires bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation.

Because the enemy is a non-state actor that thrives among disaffected populations, private sector efforts are as important as government activity. We have yet to fully harness the power of the private sector, which offers enormous potential, such as economic might and fast and flexible responses to market and security conditions. We need to find better ways to deploy this strength against terrorists. The private sector, of course, has a vested interest in partnering against violent extremists to secure its existing and future investments/economic opportunities. In addition, grassroots and community groups can play an important role in supporting immigrant and youth populations as described above, strengthening their resistance to extremist approaches. Citizen diplomacy, cultural activity, person-to-person contact, economic cooperation and development, and the application of media and academic resources are key components of our response to the threat.

The key success factor in confronting violent extremism is the commitment by governments to work with each other, with the international community, with private sector organizations, and with their citizens and immigrant populations. Local communities are also a vital part of countering radicalization strategies.

Where governments cooperate, build trusted networks, seek active, informed support from their people, provide responsive, effective, and legitimate governance, and

engage closely with the international community, the threat from terrorism has been significantly reduced. Where governments have lacked commitment in working with their neighbors and engaging the support of their citizens, terrorism and the instability and conflict that terrorists exploit, have remained key sources of threat.

This chapter sets the scene for the detailed analysis that follows. Significant achievements in border security, information sharing, transportation security, financial controls, and the killing or capture of numerous terrorist leaders have reduced the threat. But the threat remains, and state sponsorship, improved terrorist propaganda capabilities, the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction by some terrorist groups as well as by state sponsors of terrorism, and terrorist exploitation of grievances represent ongoing challenges.

AFRICA

Overview

Al-Qa'ida (AQ) operatives in East Africa and al-Shabaab militants in Somalia continued to pose the most serious threat to American and allied interests in the region. The late 2006 defeat of the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) as a governing force in Mogadishu by Ethiopian and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces, and the ensuing insurgency that engulfed Mogadishu and parts of south central Somalia for the remainder of the year continued to make Somalia a permissive operating environment and a potential safe haven for both Somali and foreign terrorists already in the region. Somalia remains a concern, as its unsecured borders and continued political instability provide opportunities for terrorist transit and/or organization. AQ is likely to keep making common cause with cells of Somali extremists in an attempt to disrupt international peacemaking efforts in Somalia.

There were few significant international terrorist incidents in Africa, but civil conflict, ethnic violence, and activity amongst domestic terrorist groups continued in a number of countries. The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) officially merged with AQ in September 2006 and subsequently, in early 2007, changed its name to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This event signaled the importance of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the threats posed in the region. The huge swath of largely open territory in the Sahel provides AQIM with an important base for smuggling, logistics, recruiting, and training fighters. AQIM focused its major attacks on Algeria, but continued to operate in the Sahel region, crossing difficult-to-patrol borders between Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Algeria, and Chad to recruit extremists within the region for training and terrorist operations in the Trans-Sahara and, possibly, for operations outside the region.

Hizballah continued to engage in fundraising activities in Africa, particularly in West Africa, but did not engage in any terrorist attacks within the region.

Many African governments improved their cooperation and strengthened their counterterrorism efforts. Both the African Union (AU) and African regional organizations continued initiatives to improve counterterrorism cooperation and information sharing.

Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP)

The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is a multi-faceted, multi-year strategy to combat violent extremism and defeat terrorist organizations by strengthening individual-country and regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security and intelligence organizations, promoting democratic governance, and discrediting terrorist ideology. The overall goals are to enhance the indigenous capacities of governments in the pan-Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Chad, and Niger, as well as Nigeria and Senegal) to confront the challenge posed by terrorist organizations in the trans-Sahara, and to facilitate cooperation between those countries and our Maghreb partners (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia).

TSCTP was developed as a follow-on to the Pan-Sahel Initiative, which focused solely on the Sahel. Ongoing concern that extremists continued to seek to create safe havens and support networks in the Maghreb and Sahel, as well as recognition that AQ and others were seeking to impose radical ideologies on traditionally moderate Muslim populations in the region highlighted the urgency of creating an integrated approach to addressing current threats and preventing conditions that could foster persistent threats in the future.

TSCTP's main elements include:

- Continued specialized Antiterrorism Assistance Training (ATA), Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP), and Counterterrorism Finance (CTF) activities in the trans-Sahara region and possible regional expansion of those programs;

- Public diplomacy programs that expand outreach efforts in the trans-Sahara region and seek to develop regional programming embracing this vast and diverse region. Emphasis is on preserving the traditional tolerance and moderation displayed in most African Muslim communities and countering the development of extremism, particularly in youth and rural populations;

- Democratic governance programs that strive, in particular, to provide adequate levels of USG support for democratic and economic development in the Sahel, strengthening those states to withstand internal threats; and,

- Military programs intended to expand military-to-military cooperation, to ensure adequate resources are available to train, advise, and assist regional forces, and to establish institutions promoting better regional cooperation, communication, and intelligence sharing.

The African Union

The African Union (AU) has several counterterrorism legal instruments including a Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (1999), a 2002 Protocol to the Convention and a 2004 Plan of Action. The Addis Ababa-based AU Commission provided guidance to its 53 member states and coordinated limited technical assistance to cover member states' counterterrorism capability gaps.

The Algiers-based African Center for Study and Research in Terrorism (ACSRT) was approved and inaugurated in October 2004 to serve as a think tank, an information collection and dissemination center, and a regional training center. The AU is working with member states to eliminate redundancies between the ACSRT and the Committee on Intelligence and Security Services in Africa (CISSA), which was first established at the AU Summit in Abuja, Nigeria, in January 2005. The Department of State and the National Defense University's Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) have collaborated with the AU to run counterterrorism workshops.

In 2005, with Danish funding, the AU hired a consultant to draft a counterterrorism Model Law to serve as a template to assist member states in drafting language to implement counterterrorism commitments. In December 2006, an AU-sponsored group of experts drafted counterterrorism language, which was in the process of being legislated. The group of experts decided to retain options for both broad and specific laws and determined that new legislation was needed to combat money laundering and other financial crimes.

Some AU member states maintained that Africa's colonial legacy made it difficult to accept a definition of terrorism that excluded an exception for "freedom fighters." Nonetheless, the AU is on record strongly condemning acts of terrorism.

Although the AU Commission had the strong political will to act as an effective counterterrorism partner, AU staffing remained below requisite levels; consequently, capacity remained relatively weak. The AU created a counterterrorism unit at its Addis Ababa headquarters to coordinate and promote member state counterterrorism efforts more effectively. The AU welcomed technical and financial assistance from international partners/donors to bolster both AU headquarters and ACSRT activities approved by member states.

Angola

Angola's borders remained porous and vulnerable to movements of small arms, diamonds, and other sources of terrorist financing. Angola's high rate of dollar cash flow makes its financial system an attractive site for money laundering. The Government of Angola's capacity to detect financial crimes is limited, although it did make several high-profile arrests of dollar counterfeiters in 2007. Angola has not signed the UN International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. The government's limited law enforcement resources were directed towards border control and stemming the flow of illegal immigrants into the country, which increased exponentially since the 2002 peace treaty ending Angola's protracted civil war. Lack of infrastructure, corruption, and insufficient capacity continued to hinder Angola's border control and law enforcement capabilities.

Botswana

The Botswana government was cooperative in international counterterrorism efforts. The Botswana government established the National Counter Terrorism Committee to address terrorism issues and weapons of mass destruction. In December, President Festus Mogae signed a law creating a new intelligence agency responsible for domestic and foreign intelligence gathering. The Botswana Defense Force designated a squadron as its counterterrorist unit and sent several officers to IMET-sponsored counterterrorism training.

Terrorists may use Botswana as a transit point due to its porous borders as evidenced by a 2006 report of organized smuggling of immigrants from Bangladesh and Pakistan, and the number of illegal Zimbabwean immigrants living in Botswana. Individuals suspected of providing financial support to terrorist groups may have business interests in Botswana companies.

The Bank of Botswana lists suspected terrorist assets and keeps all banking institutions in the country informed by circulating an updated list of suspicious accounts. Although there is no Financial Intelligence Unit, the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crimes had a unit that investigated suspicious transactions.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso continued to lack the resources necessary to protect its borders and to monitor movement of terrorists. There was no formal method for tracking movement into and out of the country at border checkpoints, or at either of the country's two commercial airports. Burkina Faso was not a safe haven for any terrorist groups, but had the potential of becoming a safe haven owing to its close proximity to several countries where terrorist groups operate and because its borders are porous, especially in the sparsely populated north.

Despite its lack of resources, Burkina Faso was serious about fighting terrorism, cooperated with the United States where possible, and participated in training, seminars, and exercises, such as the regional Flintlock Exercises held in Mali this past year. The government

participated in regional efforts at combating terrorism with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU), and other international organizations, such as INTERPOL (it participated in an Interpol General Assembly meeting that was held in November). In 2007, Burkina Faso submitted a request to the USG to train their existing, approximately 150-person antiterrorism unit under the President's Security Force.

Burundi

Burundi's counterterrorism efforts were hindered by domestic ethnic tension, the unsteadiness of a transitional period after a decade plus of civil war, a lack of mature governmental institutions, considerable corruption, and porous borders that enabled various rebel groups in Tanzania and Eastern Congo to freely enter Burundi. Due to Burundi's small size and overtly Christian identity, it is likely that any radical Muslim influence would be quickly noted and reported to both Burundian government institutions and the international diplomatic community. The Burundi National Police's financial crimes unit was severely crippled by both a lack of resources and trained investigators, resulting in little or no oversight of Burundi's financial community by law enforcement officials, which could be exploited by terrorists for financing terrorism. Transnational criminals, for example, laundered illegal drug money through Burundian front companies.

Comoros

International terrorism concerns in Comoros focused on Comorian national Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (a.k.a. Harun Fazul), who is suspected of involvement in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. His whereabouts were unknown, but he was believed to have maintained contacts in the Comoros. The Comorian government's security forces had limited resources and training in counterterrorism and maritime security, so the country remained vulnerable to terrorist transit. Comorian police and security forces participated in USG antiterrorism assistance programs and cooperated with the Rewards for Justice Program.

President Sambi, a devout Muslim democratically elected in May 2006, reconfirmed Comoros' rejection of terrorism and, with Comoros' religious leaders, publicly rejected Islamist extremism. In September, military and port officials participated in a USG-hosted Maritime Security Conference in Mombasa, Kenya. President Sambi has sought close partnership with the United States to develop Comoros and to create opportunities for the country's youth. In April, Foreign Minister Jaffar hosted a joint committee to improve bilateral relations, which included counterterrorism cooperation.

The Government of the Union of the Comoros did not provide safe haven to terrorist organizations on the islands of Grande Comore and Moheli. Colonel Mohamed Bacar, former island president of Anjouan and current illegitimate leader, runs his island for personal profit outside the authority of the Union. Among Bacar's illicit activities were licensing for shell banks. The extent of his dealings and contacts with criminal or terrorist networks in the Indian Ocean Region was unknown.

Cote d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire has been in the throes of a political-military crisis since 2002, leaving the country politically and, until recently, geographically divided. Despite this instability, violence associated with the country's crisis has not been linked with any international terrorist organizations, and there was little evidence to indicate a threat of terrorist attacks. While some Lebanese private communities living in Cote d'Ivoire were known to be active in donating personal income to Hizballah, it is unlikely that the Government of Cote d'Ivoire supported or subsidized it, although it was likely that it was aware of this.

Djibouti

Djibouti hosted the only military base in Sub-Saharan Africa for United States and Coalition Forces and was one of the most forward-leaning Arab League members supporting ongoing efforts against terrorism. President Ismail Omar Guelleh and many top leaders in Djibouti repeatedly expressed their country's full and unqualified support for the War on Terror.

United States security personnel continued to work closely with Djiboutian counterparts to monitor intelligence and follow up on prospective terrorism-related leads. Although the government's capabilities were limited, Djiboutian counterparts were very proactive, and were highly receptive and responsive to United States requests for cooperation. The Djiboutian National Security Services took extraordinary measures with its limited resources to ensure the safety and security of American citizens, the U.S. embassy, and the U.S. military base at Camp Lemonier.

Eritrea

The Government of Eritrea was not an active partner on counterterrorism programs. The government linked broader cooperation in USG counterterrorism programs to the unresolved border dispute with Ethiopia, publicly stating that cooperation will occur only after the final demarcation of the border. During the March kidnapping of British diplomats in Ethiopia by an ethnic Afari rebel group, the Eritrean government played a role in securing their release.

Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, designated under both UN Security Council Resolution 1267 and Executive Order 13224, was publicly reported as being in Asmara as recently as November.

Ethiopia

The Government of Ethiopia, after conducting a counter offensive in late 2006 in response to threats against its security and in support of the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, battled insurgents and extremists that were formerly affiliated with the Council of Islamic Courts, including the AQ-affiliated al-Shabaab militia. Ethiopian forces provided critical support in the stand up of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) peacekeeping force which was also targeted by extremist elements. In addition, Ethiopian forces countered Somali-based extremists who attempted to conduct attacks inside Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's location within the Horn of Africa made it vulnerable to money laundering activities perpetrated by transnational criminal organizations, terrorists and narcotics traffickers. As the economy continued to grow and become more liberalized, federal police investigation sources reported expectations that bank fraud, electronic/computer crimes, and laundering activities would continue to rise. On November 6, the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) and the United States Department of the Treasury signed the terms of reference and work plan for a technical assistance package to strengthen Ethiopia's anti-money laundering and counterterrorist financing regimes. The assistance will aid the NBE in establishing a financial intelligence unit and provide training to Ethiopia's government-owned and private banks.

Ethiopia's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), with broad authority for intelligence, border security, and criminal investigation; was responsible for overall counterterrorism management. Federal and local police counterterrorism capabilities were primarily focused on being able to respond to terrorist incidents. Draft counterterrorism legislation was submitted to Parliament in late 2006, but there was no legislative action in 2007.

Ethiopia was an active participant in AU counterterrorism efforts, served as a focal point for the AU's Center for Study and Research on Terrorism, and participated in meetings of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa.

Kenya

Following the late 2006 Ethiopian action to remove the radical Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) in Somalia, Kenyan Ministry of Defense efforts largely prevented the flight of violent extremists across the Somalia-Kenya border. The Kenyan military drastically increased its numbers on the Somalia border, and worked closely with police elements in the region to block CIC forces and associated individuals from infiltrating Kenyan territory. Kenyan security forces apprehended several suspected extremist leaders during these operations. However, human rights organizations criticized the Kenyan government for closing the border and claimed that large numbers of refugees fleeing the fighting were forcibly returned to Somalia. At the same time, the Kenyan government suspended all flights to and from Somalia except for humanitarian aid flights and flights to the Transitional Federal Government's (TFG) seat in Baidoa. The Kenyan government ended the suspension in August, but continued to require all flights from Somalia to first stop at Wajir Airport for immigration, customs, and security processing before proceeding to their final destinations in Kenya.

The Government of Kenya did not knowingly provide safe haven for terrorists or terrorist organizations. However, Kenya's borders remained porous and vulnerable to movement of potential terrorists as well as small arms and other contraband. Supporters of AQ and other extremist groups were active in the East Africa region. As a result of the continuing conflict in Somalia, many members of these organizations have sought to relocate elsewhere in the region and some were believed to have traveled to Kenya.

Kenya continued to lack the counterterrorism legislation necessary to comply with the UN conventions it has signed. In addition, it was difficult to detain terror suspects and prosecute them effectively under existing laws. The issue of counterterrorism legislation remained highly controversial in Kenya with elements of the press, the human rights community, and Muslim leadership criticizing proposed legislation as anti-Muslim and giving the government too much power to potentially abuse human rights. The Kenyan government wrote a revised draft of the defeated 2003 "Suppression of Terrorism Bill" in 2006, but the new bill was sharply criticized and subsequently did not pass. Progress also stalled on legislation for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. The "Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Bill" was submitted in March but the Parliament did not debate it.

Political and bureaucratic resistance remained to the formation of an interagency Kenyan Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Senior Kenyan officials sharply criticized the U.S. Public Announcement regarding the possibility of a terrorist threat to the Cross-Country World Championships in Mombasa in March, seeing this as an unfriendly act and a threat to the country's vital tourism industry.

Liberia

Despite limited resources, inadequately trained personnel, and a weak judicial system—products of 14 years of civil war—the Government of Liberia demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the United States and the international community to combat terrorism. Through rule of law and security sector reform assistance programs, the United States supported a number of initiatives that addressed Liberia's vulnerabilities, which included porous borders, rampant identification document fraud, lax immigration controls, wide-scale corruption, and underpaid law enforcement, security, and customs personnel.

There have never been any acts of transnational terrorism in Liberia. Of concern, however, were reports that hundreds of Middle Eastern businessmen purchased legitimately issued but fraudulently obtained Liberian

diplomatic passports from Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials. These documents would permit free movement between the Middle East and West Africa. The government took steps to stop this Charles Taylor-era practice by requiring that diplomatic passports be issued only by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Monrovia. New restrictions on who qualified for Liberian diplomatic or official passports were being implemented by the new head of the Foreign Ministry's passport office.

Since 2003, there has been resurgence in the number of visits to Liberia by foreign Islamic proselytizing groups, overwhelmingly Sunni organizations from Pakistan, Egypt, and South Africa. However, Liberian security services reported that none of these groups publicly espoused militant or anti-American messages. Liberia's indigenous, war-weary, and predominantly Sunni Muslim community, which represented at least 20 percent of the country's population, has demonstrated no interest in militant strains of Islam to date. That said, outstanding land disputes negatively affecting large numbers of Muslim land owners in Nimba and other counties could fan ethnic and religious tensions with the predominantly Christian central government. As in other West African states, reports surfaced that Lebanese businessmen in Liberia provided financial support and engaged in fundraising activities for Hizballah. There were no other terrorist groups known to be operating within Liberia.

Madagascar

International terrorism was a concern in Madagascar because of the island nation's inadequately monitored 3,000 mile coastline. Limited equipment, personnel, and training for border control increased the risks of penetration. Following the International Maritime Conference in 2006, hosted by the Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Embassy, Madagascar military and port officials participated in a similar event in Mombassa in September. Malagasy police, military, intelligence, and security forces have not had much training in counterterrorism and maritime surveillance. Despite limited resources, government officials were willing to cooperate with the United States; international maritime conferences and the Rewards for Justice Program were two examples of cooperative ventures. At the main port in Tamatave, which handled 80 percent of maritime traffic and more than 90 percent of container traffic, access control and overall security improved substantially. The U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Liaison removed Tamatave Port from its Port Security Advisory for Madagascar, with an acknowledgement that the Port met minimum standards under the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code.

Mali

Inadequate resources continued to hamper the Malian government's ability to control its long and porous borders, thus limiting the effectiveness of military patrols and border control measures. Mali is currently more threatened by tribal insurgencies than by terrorist threats, but cooperated with United States counterterrorism efforts, and remained one of the largest recipients in the sub-region of military training and assistance through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and other United States assistance programs. Northern Mali served as a potential safe haven for terrorists, traffickers, and smugglers due to the region's remoteness, harsh desert climate, and size. AQIM maintained a regular, small-scale presence, moving essentially without hindrance in the northern part of Malian territory, although it did not maintain any permanent facilities and was constantly on the move. There were no confrontations between the Malian military and the AQIM this year.

Mauritania

The December 2007 murder of four French tourists and the attack on a military checkpoint were both low-level attacks, but highlighted the fact that AQIM was active in the country despite the newly elected government's significantly increased level of cooperation with the United States on counterterrorism. The Mauritanian Government actively pursued the perpetrators of the December attacks. The government embarked on an ambitious political agenda to build national unity.

In June, 24 of 25 individuals accused of ties to AQIM were acquitted, and the remaining defendant sentenced in absentia to two years in prison. On July 31, the court acquitted 14 of 19 persons accused of complicity in the 2005 AQIM attack on a Mauritanian military base, for lack of evidence. The remaining five defendants received sentences from two to five years. In late October, the government arrested five other individuals for suspected ties to AQIM. Three of the five were released with the remaining two currently awaiting trial on terrorism and explosives charges.

The Government of Mauritania continued working to prevent terrorist organizations, notably AQIM, from using its territory. These efforts remained constrained, however, by limited resources and training, and by the inherent challenges of controlling the sparsely-populated and porous regions bordering Algeria and Mali. The government continued to identify and respond to AQIM cells operating in country. Western Missions warned their citizens of AQIM efforts to target westerners in Mauritania, particularly those involved in the petroleum industry.

The new government established a new counterterrorism force which, despite USG assistance, was not fully functional at year's end. The Mauritanian Army Camel Corps, responsible for patrolling the eastern border regions of the country, participated in USG antiterrorism training and the Mauritanian military participated in USG-sponsored regional counterterrorism exercises.

Nigeria

The apprehensions and trials of extremists by the Nigerian government seemed to indicate not just recognition of

potential threats to itself and its citizens, but a responsiveness and willingness to act to protect American interests, including facilities and personnel. These arrests also suggested some degree of cooperation and facilitation among extremist groups in the Sahel, which were made possible by porous borders with minimal controls, and the logistical difficulties inherent in patrolling the Sahara desert. Since 2005, the Nigerian Taliban (which has no connection to the Taliban of Afghanistan) has been suspected of having connections to AQIM in Mali and AQ affiliates. To date, no conclusive links have been definitively proven, although bin Ladin went on record in 2003 saying that Nigeria was fertile ground for action.

In December 2006, Mohammed Yusuf, a Maiduguri-based imam and alleged "Nigerian Taliban" leader was charged with five counts of illegally receiving foreign currency. His trial was still ongoing at the end of 2007.

Also in December 2006, Mohammed Ashafa of Kano was charged with receiving funds in 2004 from two AQ operatives based in Lahore, Pakistan to "identify and carry out terrorist attacks" on American residences in Nigeria. Deported from Pakistan for alleged ties to AQ, and said to have undergone terrorist training in Mauritania, Ashafa was charged in a Nigerian court with recruiting 21 fighters who were sent to Camp Agwan in Niger for terrorist training with AQIM. Ashafa also stood accused of being a courier for AQ from 2003 to 2004, who passed coded messages from Pakistan to Nigerian Taliban members on how to carry out terrorist activities against American interests in Nigeria. In addition, Nigerian authorities alleged that Ashafa's home was used as an AQ safe house, and that he rendered logistical and intelligence support to AQ operatives.

On January 16, 2007, Mohammed Bello Ilyas Damagun, a Nigerian cleric described by prosecutors as a primary sponsor of the Nigerian Taliban, was arraigned on three counts of terrorism. Damagun was accused of receiving the sum of 300,000 USD from Sudanese extremists or an AQ affiliate in Sudan "with the intent that said money shall be used in the execution of acts of terrorism." He also allegedly sent three young men to train with AQIM in Mauritania. The final count in Damagun's indictment was for aiding terrorist activities in Nigeria. This trial was ongoing with the defendant out on bail. These trials were still in progress due to a combination of procedural appeals, lengthy adjournments, and the additional time necessary to translate the proceedings from English to Hausa and back.

There was an attack in April that was likely perpetrated by the Nigerian Taliban, however this was not proven. On April 17, a police station in Panshekera, a small village outside Kano city, was attacked by militants subsequently described by the media as the "Nigerian Taliban," though the exact identities of the militants and their ideological affiliations (if any) remain unknown. While reports are conflicting, it was widely believed that the attackers were targeting the state and its uniformed security.

On July 27, the Government of Nigeria introduced e-passports containing a data chip, which will allow for easier passport authentication and fraudulent documentation detection. Besides enhanced security, the system will provide the country's first electronic database of biometric information.

The U.S. Embassy issued a warden message to American citizens on September 7, advising that American and other Western interests in Lagos and Abuja, both official and commercial, were at risk for terrorist attack. In an October 31 press report about the arrest of two men in Kano, "a senior officer" of the Nigerian State Security Service said that the men detained were the individuals whose activities had prompted the U.S. warden message.

On November 12, Nigerian law enforcement announced the arrests in Kano, Kaduna, and Yobe states of at least 10 suspected terrorists with alleged ties to AQIM, which included the two men from the October 31 report. On November 22, five of these individuals were charged with conspiracy and planning to commit a terrorist act. Two were also charged with attempted murder. The defendants were denied bail and the case was adjourned. The others were allegedly in custody, undergoing interrogation. Local news reports described a collaborative effort between Nigerian and American intelligence services.

The Sultan of Sokoto, the supreme Muslim authority in the country, has stated "There is no AQ cell of Taliban in Nigeria." The Sultan received information from a long-standing network of traditional local and regional leaders (emirs), and maintained that it would be extremely difficult for terrorist groups to operate without detection by this network. Nonetheless, poverty and unemployment, especially acute in the Muslim-majority north, helped create a climate potentially conducive to the radicalization of marginalized individuals.

In September 2005, a draft antiterrorism bill was approved by the Nigerian cabinet and sent to the National Assembly. The bill provided for sentences of up to 35 years for those convicted of a terrorist offense. Membership in a banned organization carried lighter jail sentences that could be replaced by a fine of up to 50,000 naira (400 USD). The bill was withdrawn, however, the day of its second reading in the Senate due to opposition from northern Senators who argued that the motivation for such a bill was anti-Muslim sentiment.

Rwanda

The Government of Rwanda combated terrorist financing and reinforced border control measures to identify potential terrorists and to prevent entry of armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Rwanda had an intergovernmental counterterrorism committee and a counterterrorism reaction team in the police intelligence unit. Rwandan police and marines conducted anti-narcotrafficking patrols on Lake Kivu. Central Bank and Ministry of Finance officials provided outstanding cooper-

ation on terrorist financing issues. While the Government of Rwanda had not yet fully developed its laws and regulations in accordance with international conventions and protocols concerning terrorism, it had the authority under local law to identify, freeze, and seize terrorist-related financial assets. Rwanda participated in regional initiatives on international counterterrorism cooperation, including the East African Standby Brigade. In November, Rwanda hosted a meeting of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa, which brought intelligence and security officials together to address security challenges faced by members of the African Union through information sharing and strategic intelligence coordination. Also in November, Rwanda hosted a six-week training course for East African police commanders in cooperation with the United Kingdom.

Besides reinforcing border security, the Government of Rwanda developed terrorism response strategies. The Rwandan national tourist office hired a consultant to develop a communications policy to alert embassies should their citizens be harmed in Rwanda's national parks, and to increase disaster preparedness. The national Civil Aviation Authority worked to develop a crisis plan to address terrorist attacks and/or other disasters, and installed more cameras at Kigali International Airport to increase surveillance capability.

Senegal

The Government of Senegal cooperated with the United States to identify terrorist groups operating in Senegalese territory. More work remained to be done, however, to develop first responder services, to facilitate the quick sharing of information between agencies, and to control porous borders where police and security services are undermanned and ill-equipped to prevent illicit crossborder trafficking. The Government of Senegal affirmed its commitment to United States government-assisted efforts to augment its border security.

Senegal continued to enhance its ability to combat terrorism, prosecute terror suspects, and respond to emergencies. Despite advances, however, Senegal lacked specific counterterrorism legislation, and current laws made it difficult to prosecute terror suspects. As participants in the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership, more than 318 Senegalese government officials participated in ATA programs. Senegalese military officials attended a counterterrorism seminar in Rabat and attended the Chiefs of Defense and Directors of Military Intelligence conferences. The Defense International Institute of Legal Studies, the Department of Justice, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) gave separate seminars on the legal aspects of fighting terrorism.

Senegal did not provide safe haven for terrorists or terrorist organizations. However, five Mauritanians, two of whom claimed to be members of al-Qa'ida, were allegedly involved in the December 24 murder of four French tourists in Mauritania; the five traveled through Senegal before being captured in a hotel in Guinea-Bissau by Bissau-Guinean police, aided by French authorities. The Mauritanians were able to cross four Senegalese borders without being stopped by Senegalese authorities. This event demonstrated Senegal's porous borders and its lack of capacity to identify and combat terrorist threats and the need for further training.

Somalia

Somalia's fragile central government, protracted state of violent instability, long unguarded coastline, porous borders, and proximity to the Arabian Peninsula made the country an attractive location for international terrorists seeking a transit or launching point for conducting operations in Somalia or elsewhere. Despite the late 2006 defeat of the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) in Mogadishu by Ethiopian and Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces, the ensuing low-level conflict that engulfed Mogadishu and parts of south central Somalia for the remainder of the year continued to make Somalia a permissive operating environment and safe haven for both Somali and foreign terrorists. The extremist al-Shabaab (The Youth), the militant "shock troops" of the CIC whose radicalism and violent means led to the CIC's undoing, initially dispersed and fled south along the Kenyan border. Al-Shabaab, some of whom are affiliated with AQ, consists of radicalized young men, between 20 and 30 years of age. A few of its senior leaders are believed to have trained and fought with AQ in Afghanistan. Al-Shabaab extremists participated in attacks against Ethiopian and TFG security forces. Al-Shabaab and other extremists were also behind suicide bombings, the use of landmines, remote controlled roadside bombs, and targeted assassinations against Ethiopian and TFG security forces, other government officials, journalists, and civil society leaders. The African Union Peace Support Mission (AMISOM), which deployed in March to secure the air and sea ports and presidential compound, lost six soldiers to extremist attacks during the year.

Among the foreign AQ operatives believed to have enjoyed protection by the former CIC and al-Shabaab leadership were individuals wanted for the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania and a 2002 hotel bombing in Kenya, including Fazul Abdallah Mohammed (aka Harun Fazul), and Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan. At the end of the year, Ethiopian and TFG forces remained nominally in control of Mogadishu and southern and central Somalia, though institutions of government remained weak and ineffective. Regional efforts to bring about national reconciliation and establish peace and stability in Somalia are ongoing. The capability of the TFG and other Somali local and regional authorities to carry out counterterrorism activities was limited.

South Africa

South Africa supported efforts to counter international terrorism and shared financial, law enforcement, and limited intelligence information with the United States. The South

African government adopted broad counterterrorism legislation under the title "Protection of Constitutional Democracy against Terrorist and Related Activities Bill" in 2004.

It was unclear to what extent foreign terrorist groups were present in South Africa. Some analysts held the view that AQ or other extremist groups had a presence within South Africa's generally moderate Muslim community. In January, the Department of the Treasury designated South African nationals Farhad and Junaid Dockrat as AQ financiers and facilitators, subjecting them to United States sanctions.

Border security challenges and document fraud negatively affected the government's efforts to pursue counterterrorism initiatives. South African documents often included good security measures, but because of corruption within the immigration services, thousands of South African identity cards, passports, and work/residence permits were fraudulently issued.

Sudan

See *State Sponsors of Terrorism*.

Tanzania

Tanzania took significant steps to establish a National Counterterrorism Center to build its capacity to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks, and worked closely with the United States to disrupt terrorist networks. Tanzania law enforcement cooperated with the United States to exchange evidence and testimony on cases related to the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Dar Es Salaam.

Tanzania continued its participation in several multi-year programs to strengthen its law enforcement and military capacity, improve aviation and border security, and combat money laundering and terrorist financing. The Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Tanzania showed ongoing willingness to combat terrorist financing. In December 2006, the Tanzanian Parliament passed the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Bill, ending a legislative process that began in 2002 with support from the United States. The AML Bill created a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and bolstered Tanzania's ability to combat financial crime, including counterterrorist financing.

With the Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Program, the United States supported Tanzania as it equipped and staffed the FIU. Tanzanian law enforcement and security forces attempted to identify and monitor terrorist activities and deny use of Tanzanian territory as a safe haven for terrorists. The government was aware that terrorists could use its territory for transit purposes and did not provide any kind of material assistance to terrorists or terrorist groups.

Uganda

Porous borders in a region rife with insecurity have left Uganda vulnerable to terrorist activity. In response, the Government of Uganda stepped up efforts to track, capture, and hold suspected terror suspects. Uganda also worked with the United States to push forward on peace and security initiatives in the Great Lakes Region. While the Ugandan government was a strong advocate for cross-border solutions to persistent problems, resource limitations and corruption hampered more effective measures. In March, the Ugandan military's counterterrorism units engaged some 100 Allied Defense Force (ADF) rebels, killing 60-80 and capturing 10-20. The Ugandan government engaged the Democratic Republic of Congo on the ADF through various regional mechanisms.

Zambia

Zambia demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the United States and the international community to combat terrorism. In June, Zambia endorsed the U.S. Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. In July, the government submitted an Antiterrorism Bill to Parliament. The Bill criminalized acts of terrorism, including terrorist training and incitement; and granted the government significant authority to investigate, prevent, and prosecute acts of terrorism. Inadequate resources and training impeded Zambia's law enforcement agencies' counterterrorism capabilities. Zambia's borders are long and porous, and its ports of entry are vulnerable transit points for human trafficking and international crime.

Zambia made no progress in ratifying the counterterrorism conventions listed in UNSC 1373. In November, Zambia participated in an African regional workshop on implementing UNSC 1540. Despite offers of assistance from the United States, the Zambian government does not have an internationally-compliant anti-money laundering or counterterrorist financing regime. The Cabinet is reviewing a national anti-money laundering policy and draft anti-money laundering and asset forfeiture bills.

Zimbabwe

Despite the Government of Zimbabwe's self-imposed isolation on most diplomatic issues, local intelligence and criminal investigative agencies were responsive to our counterterrorism needs. Government agencies routinely provided assistance by conducting investigative inquiries, traces, and border checks of individuals thought to be threats to USG facilities or personnel.

During the year, the government attempted to strengthen its ability to prevent and suppress terrorism and money laundering activities. On August 3, Parliament passed the Suppression of Foreign and International Terrorism Bill, which provided a maximum punishment of life in prison for engaging in or recruiting for foreign or international terrorist activities. It also contained penalties for harboring, concealing, or failing to report foreign or international terrorists. An enactment date for the Bill had not been set

by the end of 2007. The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe installed a new IT system that provided enhanced capability to detect, analyze, and disseminate information on suspicious financial transactions. Working with law enforcement and other government agencies, the Reserve Bank maintained export/import desks at ports of entry and conducted audits of mining entities to detect and prevent illegal mineral smuggling and money laundering activities. An increase in suspicious transaction reports and prosecutions of financial crime cases was attributed to these efforts.

The Government of Zimbabwe entered into talks with several other countries in the region to sign MOUs, similar to the MOU signed with South Africa last year, to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

Overview

The Jemaah Islamiya regional terrorist network (JI) remained a serious threat to Western and regional interests, particularly in Indonesia and the Southern Philippines, although its capabilities were degraded in large part as a result of regional counterterrorism successes in 2005-2007. The Government of Indonesia continued to create a legal and law enforcement environment conducive to fighting terrorism, and the Indonesian National Police scored major successes in breaking up terrorist cells linked to Jemaah Islamiya (JI) and other violent Islamic extremist organizations. In January, DNA analysis conducted by the FBI confirmed the death of Abu Sayyaf Group's (ASG) nominal leader, Khaddafy Janjalani, at the hands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Philippine forces also killed ASG spokesperson Abu Solaiman, while Indonesian police broke up JI cells in Sulawesi and Central Java. These actions represented major blows to JI and the ASG, but did not eliminate the overall threat to United States interests in the region. JI bombers Dulmatin and Patek remained on the run, probably on Jolo Island. Other terrorists remained at large, such as key JI operative Noordin Mohammad Top, in Indonesia.

Geography made effective border control problematic for archipelagic states like Indonesia and the Philippines. Monitoring remote locations among the thousands of islands in the Sulawesi Sea and Sulu Archipelago that span the boundaries between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines was extremely difficult, which made this triborder area accessible for such terrorist activities as movement of personnel, equipment, and funds. This made building regional capacity a priority goal, in addition to bilateral cooperation and national capacity-building. Institutes like the United States-Thailand International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok, the Australian-Indonesian Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC), and the Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) in Malaysia, sought to expand their activities to provide effective counterterrorism training to law enforcement officers throughout the region. Multilateral fora, including the UN Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee (UNCTC), the G8's Roma-Lyon Group and Counterterrorism Action Group (CTAG), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which adopted a new ASEAN Convention on Counterterrorism pending ratification, and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), also promoted regional counterterrorism cooperation.

Australia maintained its position as a regional leader in the fight against terrorism and worked to strengthen the Asia-Pacific region's counterterrorism capacity through a range of bilateral and regional initiatives, in fora such as APEC, the ASEAN ARF, and the Pacific Island Forum (PIF).

China increased its efforts to build its domestic counterterrorism capabilities to improve security for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In 2007, Beijing expressed concern that terrorists operated on Chinese territory and asserted that some members of the Uighur minority in Xinjiang Province posed a threat to China's domestic stability.

Japan strengthened its own security by contributing to counterterrorism capacity-building among Asian countries. Japan used Official Development Assistance (ODA) grants to expand counterterrorism capacity in Southeast Asia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Economic Cooperation Bureau increased funding for the annual Cooperation on Counterterrorism and Security Enhancement grant aid program. This FY-2007 65 million USD program included projects aimed at bolstering piracy prevention, increasing maritime and port security, and preventing weapons proliferation.

Traditionally focused on potential terrorism from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea), the South Korean government broadened its attention to acts of terror beyond the Korean Peninsula, and continued its active participation in regional training and capacity-building programs.

Counterterrorism cooperation with the Government of Thailand remained strong. Thai and USG officials were concerned that transnational terror groups could establish links with southern Thailand-based separatist groups. However, there were no indications that transnational terrorist groups were directly involved in the violence in the south, and there was no evidence of direct operational links between southern Thai separatist groups and regional terror networks.

Australia

Australia maintained its position as a regional leader in the fight against terrorism. In June, Australia hosted the Trilateral Counterterrorism Consultations in Sydney and

pushed for concrete measures to broaden the relationship between the Trilateral partners (Australia, Japan, and the United States) and regional stakeholders. Australia hosted a subregional ministerial conference on counterterrorism and the Asia-Pacific seminar on combating nuclear terrorism, and proposed that the partners develop and implement a special policy and operational "Combating Bioterrorism" workshop for Southeast Asian nations. The proposed workshop would strengthen local capacity to combat bioterrorism and improve the overall counterterrorism infrastructure in Southeast Asia by ensuring early detection of and effective response to bioterrorism.

The Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) continued to reap benefits for Australia and its regional partners. At the Counterterrorism Trilateral in Sydney, the partners proposed that JCLEC be expanded and serve as a platform for more diverse training. There were over 100 courses of training in place at JCLEC. Australia also continued its commitment to the designation of terrorist organizations; it has designated a total of 19 terrorist organizations under its domestic criminal code.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) received further funding to expand its investigative and specialist training, currently delivered to regional law enforcement partners through facilities like JCLEC. Funding was targeted toward:

- conducting offshore exercises and training with regional partners,
- increasing the number of counterterrorism advisers working in AFP's international liaison officer network,
- introducing to high priority locations a custom-built Case Management and Information System developed for use in overseas jurisdictions, and
- enhancing specialist forensic and technical training for law enforcement agencies in the region.

In 2007, 350 officers of the AFP's International Deployment Group (IDG) were deployed overseas, many in counterterrorism technical assistance and operational/liaison roles. The AFP Operational Response Group was designed to respond on short notice to emerging law and order issues and to conduct stabilization operations to head off lawless situations that terrorists could exploit. Australia continued to provide legal drafting assistance to regional states, including the South Pacific islands, seeking to adopt international conventions and protocols against terrorism, and to bring domestic laws into conformity with these conventions.

The Australian Transaction Reports Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC), which monitors financial transactions, serves as the national AML/CTF regulator with supervisory, monitoring, and enforcement functions over a diverse range of industry sectors. A new set of regulatory reforms, introduced in draft legislation made public in August, included new regulations regarding real estate, precious gems and stones; and specified legal, accounting, and trust services. Australia continued to seek and fund additional staff and technical capabilities, and established identity security strike teams to investigate and prosecute people and syndicates involved in manufacturing false identities.

In May, Australia (with New Zealand, Indonesia, and the Philippines) cosponsored the Third Asia-Pacific Interfaith Dialogue, held in New Zealand. The Dialogue, involving religious and community leaders from 15 South East Asia and Pacific countries, aims to foster mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance, and to isolate religious extremism.

Australia is a partner with both the United States in exchanging information on known and suspected terrorists using the Terrorist Screening Center as the operational hub for encounter management; and with the United States in APEC's Regional Movement Alert System (RMAS). Both programs enhance our joint ability to disrupt travel by known and suspected terrorists.

In Afghanistan, Australia continued its support of a Dutch-led provincial reconstruction team. By year's end, there were 960 and 970 Australian troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively.

Burma

Bilateral relations between Burma and the United States remained strained. The government defined almost all anti-regime activities as "acts of terrorism" and made little distinction between peaceful political dissent and violent attacks by insurgents or criminals. The Burmese government was quick to characterize dissident groups as aligned with terrorist organizations and used this as justification to scrutinize and disrupt their activities. In the past several years, bombs have exploded in Rangoon and other parts of Burma. In most incidents, the Government of Burma claimed the incidents were a subversive act, "committed by a group of insurgent destructive elements who wanted to disturb and destroy stability of the state." Authorities did not make public any evidence of a genuine investigation or identify the specific perpetrator(s). Requests by the U.S. Embassy to view either the scenes or remaining fragments of the explosive devices were consistently denied.

Cambodia

Cambodia's political leadership demonstrated a strong commitment to take aggressive legal action against terrorists. However, Cambodia's ability to investigate potential terrorist activities was limited by a lack of training and resources. The government passed a counterterrorism law and a law to combat terrorist financing, and comprehensive domestic legislation has been promulgated and implemented. To date, the Cambodian government has fully cooperated with United States counterterrorism efforts on many levels, despite its limited resources.

Conditions in Cambodia, such as porous borders, endemic corruption, massive poverty, high unemployment, a poor education system, and disaffected elements within the Cham Muslim population, which makes up approximately five percent of the population, could make the country vulnerable to terrorists and terrorist influence. Although the Cham were not generally politically active, the Cambodian government feared that Cham areas might provide safe haven to terrorists. For example, Hambali, the Indonesian national and key member of Jemaah Islamiya accused of involvement in the 2002 Bali nightclub bombings, took refuge in a Muslim school in Kandal Province in 2002-2003.

One violent group among the many peaceful and law-abiding Kampuchea Khmer Krom groups attempted to blow up the Vietnam-Cambodia Friendship memorial using three improvised explosive devices in July, providing evidence that terrorist groups were capable of conducting domestic attacks in Cambodia. Although no one was injured, the Cambodian government thoroughly investigated this case, and eventually arrested and jailed the responsible individuals.

Cambodia's National Counterterrorism Committee (NCTC), a policy level decision making body established by the government in 2005 and chaired by the prime minister, continued to develop its resources. In December, several NCTC officials traveled to the United States for USG consultations.

In July, Cambodia's Senate approved a Counterterrorism Law after it was passed by Cambodia's National Assembly on June 26. On July 20, following the Senate's approval, the King enacted the law, which addressed aircraft safety, maritime navigation safety, the protection of nuclear materials, the financing and provision of material support to terrorism, and other important issues affecting national security and safety. It also implemented measures to enhance international cooperation regarding terrorism offenses.

In June, the Cambodian government enacted the Law on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism. The government was also working on decrees and sub-decrees to bring these counterterrorism laws fully into effect. In addition, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) circulated nationwide the UN Security Council lists of individuals and entities involved in global terrorism. The NBC officially instructed all financial and banking institutions operating in Cambodia to scrutinize and freeze assets of these persons and entities.

The Australian and Cambodian governments jointly sponsored a Maritime Security seminar in November to train Cambodian military, police, and other officials. At this seminar, Prime Minister Hun Sen stated that Cambodia's maritime security is a priority in fighting against drug trafficking, human trafficking, terrorism, crossborder crimes, and piracy. He added that cooperation with international partners to combat terrorism and crossborder criminals had improved. As part of ongoing cooperation on counterterrorism capacity-building, training was conducted with elements of the U.S. military in conjunction with the USS Essex ship visit to Cambodia.

In June, the Royal Government of Cambodia designated three government focal points to work on the multilateral Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, co-chaired by the United States and the Russian Federation. The government strictly controlled the use of weapons, explosive devices, chemical substances, and radioactive materials.

With U.S. assistance, the Government of Cambodia installed computerized border control systems at Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports, and at the land border crossing of Poipet and Koh Kong. There are 20 land border checkpoints. During a November International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code) assessment visit by the U.S. Coast Guard, various Port security officials expressed a need for additional USG-funded training, tactical equipment, and technical materials in order to continue improving security standards. The Cambodian government also cooperated fully with U.S. requests to monitor terrorists and terrorist entities listed as supporters of terrorist financing.

The Cambodian government cooperated with a number of other governments on counterterrorism issues. The FBI conducted a "Major Case Management" course in Cambodia which reviewed Cambodia's new Criminal Procedures Law, instructed best practices in evaluating evidence, and increased the government's investigative capacity. Counterterrorism training was also provided by Singapore, Australia, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The Germans, as G8 President, convened a local CTAG (the G8's Counterterrorism Action Group) meeting December 13, to exchange views on the nature of the terrorist threat in Cambodia and the region; to share information about assistance programs in Cambodia building capacity and countering terrorist threats; to discuss the question of whether the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) "menu of services" included any activities of interest to donors; to hear a readout of the Australian-sponsored maritime security seminar; and to exchange information on the National Counterterrorism Committee.

China

In the lead up to the 2008 Olympics, China continued to boost counterterrorism cooperation with the United States and other nations. China participated in the UN Security Council's Fifth Special Meeting of the Counterterrorism Committee held in Nairobi, Kenya, and attended a United Nations, Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Antiterrorism conference held in Tunis, Tunisia. China, a founding member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), has made counterterrorism one of the group's main objectives. In August, troops from the six SCO member states conducted an "antiterrorist operation" joint military exercise in Russia. In December, Chinese and Indian

troops conducted joint antiterrorism training in Kunming, China. China selected Yangshan Deepwater Port in Shanghai as the pilot port for the Megaports Initiative, designed to detect and interdict illicit nuclear and radiological materials that could be smuggled in United States-bound cargo.

In February, at the second meeting of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism in Ankara, China offered to host a workshop on radiation emergency response. Fifteen countries attended this workshop, which was hosted by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing in December. China continued its participation in the Container Security Initiative with United States Customs and Border Protection inspectors stationed at the ports of Shanghai and Shenzhen.

China's new Anti-Money Laundering Law took effect January 1. The law expanded the criminalization of money laundering-related offenses and broadened the scope of existing anti-money laundering regulations to hold a greater range of financial institutions accountable for recording customer information and reporting suspicious transactions. It also firmly established the People's Bank of China (PBOC) as the lead agency for all anti-money laundering activities in China. The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) Anti-Money Laundering Division and Anti-Terrorism Bureau are responsible for criminal investigations.

China's cash-based economy and robust crossborder trade contributed to a high volume of difficult-to-track cash transactions. While mechanisms were in place for tracking financial transactions in the formal banking sector, the large size of the informal economy, prevalence of counterfeit identity documents, and vast numbers of underground banks presented major obstacles to law enforcement authorities. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) statistics, money laundering in China may account for as much as $24 billion dollars per year.

Terrorist financing is a criminal offense in China, and the government had the authority to identify, freeze, and seize terrorist financial assets, but laws defining terrorist financing were not yet consistent with international standards, according to reporting by the Financial Action Task Force. China's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), housed by PBOC, worked closely with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN) in the United States to develop its capabilities. In addition to its domestic collection and analysis activities, the FIU exchanged information with foreign FIUs on a case-by-case basis, but coordination in this area could be enhanced through membership in the Egmont Group, an umbrella body that coordinates the activities of over 100 FIUs worldwide. China applied for membership in the Egmont Group, but domestic political concerns about Taiwan's participation in the organization have reportedly hampered membership discussions.

China expanded its role in international efforts to combat terrorist finance and money laundering by becoming a full member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in June. Since 2004, China has also been a member of the Eurasian Group (EAG), a FATF-style regional grouping that includes China, Russia, and several Central Asian countries.

Human rights organizations have accused China of using counterterrorism as a pretext to suppress Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group composed of the majority of the population of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of western China. In January, Chinese authorities raided an alleged terrorist camp affiliated with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in the XUAR, killing 18 and arresting 17.

According to police reports, Chinese police seized hand grenades, unassembled explosives, detonators, and the equivalent of $38,705 dollars in cash. Six of the 17 arrested were sentenced in November: three were sentenced to death, two received suspended death sentences, and another was given life imprisonment. In August 2006, upon Chinese request, Uzbekistan extradited a Canadian citizen of Uighur ethnicity to China where he was convicted for alleged involvement in East Turkistan terrorist activities. In November 2006, China gave Canada assurances that he would not be executed for his alleged crimes, and in September 2007, China denied the appeal of his life imprisonment sentence; at year's end he remained in prison.

Formally established in 2002, the FBI Legal Attaché Office in Beijing bolstered United States-China cooperation on counterterrorism investigations. China provided substantive intelligence in some counterterrorism cases, but more work remained to be done in terms of the depth and overall responsiveness to United States requests.

In 2006, Chinese Air Marshals completed their first mission to the United States, and in July 2007, United States Air Marshals made inaugural trips to Shanghai and Guangzhou. The CAAC sent the Commander of the Air Marshals to attend an International In-Flight Security Officer Conference held in Miami in September. In October, the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) made the first high-level TSA visit to Beijing to discuss future formal collaboration on security matters in both the aviation and mass transit sectors.

Although not publicly attributing any particular incident to terrorism, Chinese authorities asserted that terrorists, primarily based in Xinjiang, continued to operate clandestinely on Chinese territory. The Chinese government increased the number of deployed security personnel in response to perceived terrorist activities in Xinjiang.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong's position as a major transit point for cargo, finances, and people and its open trade and financial regime made it a potential site for money laundering and terrorist financing activities. The high level of cooperation and the successful implementation of the Container Secu-

rity Initiative (CSI) by Hong Kong Customs officials received continued praise from visiting USG delegations, which described it as a model for CSI implementation. In cooperation with Hong Kong Customs and one of Hong Kong's port terminal operators, the United States began implementation of a the Strategic Freight Initiative (SFI) pilot project to screen 100 percent of U.S.-bound containers using non-invasive inspection techniques to scan for nuclear and radiological materials.

Hong Kong law enforcement agencies provided full support and cooperation to their overseas counterparts in tracing financial transactions suspected of being linked to terrorist activities.

Hong Kong actively participated in various anti-money laundering and counterterrorist financing initiatives, including the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Asia/Pacific Group (APG) on Money Laundering. Hong Kong's Joint Financial Intelligence Unit (JFIU), operated by Hong Kong Police and the Customs and Excises Department, is a member of the Egmont Group. Hong Kong completed a mutual evaluation by the FATF and APG in November; the results of this review will be announced in mid-2008.

Macau

The Macau Special Administrative Region is a member of the Asia Pacific Group (APG) and completed a mutual evaluation of its Anti-Money Laundering Regime in 2007. APG examiners reviewed Macau government regulations, suspicious transaction reporting; bank record-keeping and reporting requirements; and also interviewed frontline staff, senior management, and money laundering compliance officers. The APG report, published in September, made a series of recommendations including making the FIO a permanent body, establishing disclosure or declaration systems for crossborder transport of currency, and tighter due-diligence requirements for casinos.

The Government of Macau continued to exchange information with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and counterparts in mainland China. Additionally, Macau continued to cooperate internationally in counterterrorism efforts, through INTERPOL and other security-focused organizations within the Asia Pacific Region. Macau was considering information sharing mechanisms that would allow it to join the Egmont Group.

Indonesia

Indonesia experienced its second consecutive year of no major terrorist incidents. Radical groups in Indonesia had their ability to carry out attacks further diminished as a result of the Indonesian government's counterterrorism efforts. The Indonesian National Police (INP) scored major successes in breaking up terrorist cells linked to Jemaah Islamiya (JI) and other violent Islamic extremist organizations. While JI cells in Java and Central Sulawesi were weakened, JI and its radical associates remained a security threat to both Western and domestic targets. The Attorney General's Office made some strides toward conducting more efficient and effective counterterrorism prosecutions despite weaknesses in Indonesia's counterterrorism law. The Government of Indonesia continued to create a legal and law enforcement environment conducive to fighting terrorism within its borders, and numerous terrorists were convicted of crimes. One measure of the successful efforts to curb terrorism was the return of tourists to the country. In 2007, the number of tourists to Indonesia increased 14 percent; Bali, where tourists have been the target of terrorist attacks, experienced a 32 percent increase in tourism.

In January, the INP conducted two raids against a radical stronghold in Poso, Central Sulawesi. The second raid used 500 security force personnel against a large group of terrorists and their supporters, who were armed with small arms and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The raids ended with 18 dead, 18 injured, and 28 captured. Subsequent operations netted five more suspects. While the Poso operation was criticized as "heavy-handed" by some members of the local community, it calmed the previously tense situation in Central Sulawesi. There were no reprisal attacks following the raids. In March, information gained from the Poso suspects helped the INP initiate a series of raids in Central and East Java which resulted in the arrest of several members of the so-called "military wing" of JI and several cell leaders and the seizure of a large cache of explosives in East Java. In June, INP's Special Detachment 88 (SD-88) in Central Java, arrested several key JI terrorist operatives, including alleged JI Emir Ustad Syahroni (aka Zarkasih) and senior JI operative Abu Dujana (aka Ainul Bahri). As the JI Emir, Afghanistan-veteran Zarkasih, a former JI leader, is thought to be senior to Dujana in the JI hierarchy. Dujana, also an Afghanistan-veteran, was part of JI's central command and was involved in several JI attacks in recent years.

The arrests in January, March, and June removed several key JI leaders. To create sympathy for these radical groups and to discredit the INP (especially SD-88), lawsuits were brought against the INP by Abu Dujana's wife and by JI cofounder and spiritual leader, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. The two lawsuits did not create the expected groundswell of public attention and were eventually thrown out of court.

The newly formed USG-funded Attorney General's Task Force on Terrorism and Transnational Crime took the leading role in handling prosecutions of terrorists. The Task Force won convictions against: Hasanuddin, a JI leader in Poso; four men who participated in the 2005 schoolgirl beheadings; and three others who were involved in the 2005 Tentena market bombings. The Attorney General also won convictions against 17 Poso Christians who had murdered two Muslims in revenge killings in September 2006. The Task Force is currently prosecuting a dozen members of JI's military unit who were arrested in the March and June raids, including Dujana and Zarkasih.

Other Indonesian legal institutions took a hard line against terrorists. In September, the Supreme Court rejected the final appeals of three men on death row for carrying out the 2002 Bali bombings. The Court also upheld the life sentence imposed on JI trainer/recruiter Subur Sugiyarto. In October, the Ministry of Law and Human Rights announced that convicted terrorists would no longer be given automatic sentence remissions at major holidays. The new policy came too late to prevent the early release of some 20 convicted terrorists in 2007, but most of these were minor figures.

The Indonesian government made genuine efforts to develop an effective anti-money laundering system for investigations and prosecutions. Indonesian police froze terrorist financial assets uncovered during investigations. However, the government's implementation of the UNSCR 1267 sanctions was hampered by poor interagency coordination and by continued lack of human and technical capacity within both the government and financial institutions. It remains to be seen whether or not the Government of Indonesia has the political will to do what is necessary to implement UNSCR 1267.

USAID is promoting capacity-building through its Financial Crimes Prevention Project, a multi-year program to provide technical advisors and support to Indonesia's effort to develop an effective and credible regime against money laundering and terrorism finance. Other donors are also providing assistance to the Financial Crimes Transaction and Analysis Center (PPATK). The unit receives Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) and Cash Transaction Reports. PPATK has dramatically increased the number of STRs from 10 per month in 2002 to 483 per month in 2007 and these reports have led to 32 successful prosecutions to date. While only one of these had a terrorist component, strengthened financial oversight will assist the Indonesian government in tracking potential terrorist financial transactions.

The Indonesian National Police (INP) continued a program to "de-radicalize" convicted terrorists. The program identified individuals who may be open to more moderate teachings and INP officials work with them while they are in prison. The program focuses on providing spiritual support to the men and modest financial support to their families. By providing this support, the police attempt to gain the trust of the men and receive valuable information about terrorist networks. The program aims to reduce terrorist recruitment inside prisons.

While Indonesia's counterterrorism efforts have been impressive, more could be done in some areas. Despite the successes in Sulawesi and Central Java, JI networks and "sleeper" cells may remain intact and have the capacity to go operational with little warning. Moreover, Malaysian JI operative and recruiter Noordin Mohammed Top, who is suspected of involvement in every anti-Western terrorist attack in Indonesia since 2002, remains at large.

Japan

Domestically, Japan bolstered its defenses against terrorism by improving crisis management and first responder capabilities and took steps to strengthen border security. In 2007, 98 percent of local governments adopted plans to better protect the public from terrorist attacks. Japan held local drills simulating terrorist attacks to boost response capabilities. In January, Japan made it mandatory for both ship and air carriers to provide manifest information prior to the arrival of the conveyance.

In November, immigration officials began to collect and electronically store finger prints and facial imagery from foreigners under the revised Immigration and Refugee Control Act. The Ministry of Justice Immigration Bureau continued testing that began in 2004 on a biometric fingerprint and facial recognition system at Narita and Kansai airports with the aim of identifying people trying to enter Japan on fake passports.

Japan used Official Development Assistance (ODA) grants to expand counterterrorism capacity in Southeast Asia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Economic Cooperation Bureau increased funding for the annual Cooperation on Counterterrorism and Security Enhancement grant aid program. This FY-2007 65 million USD program included projects aimed at bolstering piracy prevention, increasing maritime and port security, and preventing weapons proliferation.

Japan made valuable contributions to building counterterrorism capacity among Asian countries. In May, Japan hosted a two-day Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) conference aimed at battling terrorism in Asia, Europe, and beyond. Participants shared threat assessments and discussed ways to increase counterterrorism capacity-building. Japan provided assistance to the G8 Counterterrorism Action Group (CTAG) and maintained momentum on improving port security via the G8 adopted Secure and Facilitated International Travel Initiative (SAFTI). Japanese experts participated in G8 bioterrorism workshops on forensic epidemiology and decontamination. In March, Japan hosted a seminar in which several Southeast Asian countries, as well as the United States and Australia, participated to promote accession and ratification of international counterterrorism treaties. In September, Japan hosted the ASEAN-Japan Counterterrorism Dialogue. In October, Japan became a partner nation in the U.S. Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Japan increased efforts to combat terrorist financing. On April 1, 2007, the Japanese government promulgated a new anti-money laundering law, the Law for Prevention of Transfer of Criminal Proceeds, which expanded the scope of businesses and professions under the previous law's jurisdiction, and moved the financial intelligence unit from the Financial Regulatory Agency to the National Police Agency (NPA) in accordance with FATF recommendations. Furthermore, the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law's January revision now requires Japanese financial institutions to confirm the identity of customers sending

100,000 yen ($900) or more overseas. The Financial Services Agency announced a similar change for domestic remittances; in an amendment to the Customer Identification by Financial Institutions rule, financial institutions are now required to identify the originators of wire transfers over 100,000 yen.

In June, Japan implemented revised infectious disease legislation aimed at tightening control of harmful pathogens that could be used for terrorism. In July, the Japanese government held a seminar on the prevention and crisis management of bioterrorism to strengthen mechanisms to combat CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) terrorism in the Asia Pacific. Participants included ASEAN countries, China, Korea, and the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT). In August, Japan ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Japan continued to reach beyond the region in its fight against terrorism; its trilateral counterterrorism cooperation with the United States and Australia remained strong. In June, Japan participated in a counterterrorism trilateral meeting in Australia to better synchronize regional activities.

Japan Air Self-Defense Forces, based in Kuwait, continued to provide airlift operations in support of Iraq. In July, the Cabinet approved a one-year extension of the deployment. During January thru October, the Maritime Self-Defense Forces provided approximately 5.7 million gallons of fuel to U.S. and allied naval vessels engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom (but ended refueling operations in the Indian Ocean in November).

Bilaterally, Japan was a responsive counterterrorism partner. In January, Japan and the United States initiated a pilot Immigration Advisory Program (IAP) at Narita Airport to identify high risk travelers before they board flights destined for the United States. The IAP pilot has been extended until July 2008; negotiations were underway to convert the pilot IAP into a long-term program.

Japan and the United States continued to improve the preparedness and interoperability of U.S. and Japanese armed forces and civilian entities to respond to and sustain operations during a CBRN attack. The bilateral CBRN Defense Working Group (CDWG), established under the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC), held plenary meetings, conducted seminars on decontamination and medical response and engaged in table top exercises in the United States and Japan. Representatives from the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs, the Japanese Self Defense Forces, Cabinet Secretariat, the NPA, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, and the Nuclear Safety Commission, and other government agencies, participated in the CDWG.

The NPA and the Public Security Intelligence Agency (PSIA) continued to monitor the activities of Aum Shinrikyo, renamed Aleph. In May, Fumihiro Joyu, a former spokesman and Aum leader, along with approximately 200 Aleph members, split and formed a new organization called Hikari No Wa (Ring of Light). PSIA and NPA continued to monitor both groups and inspected their facilities in 2007. The Tokyo High Court, in June, upheld the death sentence for Seiichi Endo for his involvement in the Matsumoto and Tokyo sarin attacks. In July, the Tokyo Court upheld the death sentence for former senior Aum member Tomomasa Nakagawa for his role in 11 crimes, including the 1995 Tokyo subway sarin gas attack. In August, the Supreme Court upheld the death sentence for Masato Yokoyama for his involvement in the 1995 attack; he is not eligible for future appeals. The Supreme Court, in October, upheld the death sentence for Aum Shinrikyo member Satoru Hashimoto, who carried out the 1994 sarin gas attack in Matsumoto. In November, the Supreme Court upheld the death sentence for Satoru Hashimoto, for his involvement in the 1994 attack.

In April, police arrested suspected former Japan Red Army member Yu Kikumura upon reentry to Japan following deportation from the United States; Kikumura was deported after his release from U.S. prison for serving time for transporting homemade bombs. In May, the Tokyo High Court upheld the life in prison sentence for Haruo Wako, for his role in both the 1974 seizure of the French Embassy in The Hague and the 1975 seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. The Tokyo District Court sentenced Jun Nishikawa to life in prison for his role in the 1974 seizure of the French Embassy in The Hague and the 1977 hijacking of a Japan Airlines plane.

Korea, North

See *State Sponsors of Terrorism*.

Korea, South

The Republic of Korea (ROK) demonstrated excellent law enforcement and intelligence capabilities, and provided terrorism-related training to law enforcement officials from various developing countries. Traditionally focused on potential terrorism from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea), the South Korean government broadened its attention to acts of terror beyond the Korean Peninsula. South Korean citizens were victims of terrorism in Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Somalia. Seoul supported U.S. goals in Afghanistan and maintained the third-largest foreign troop contingent in Iraq through most of 2007. Additionally, Seoul leads a Coalition Provincial Reconstruction Team in Irbil Province. The South Korean government remained a valued international partner in the fight against terror financing and money laundering.

In recognition of its regional efforts to combat terrorism, the Republic of Korea held the position of Chair Economy of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Counterterrorism Task Force (CTTF) in 2007. The South Korean Ambassador for International Counterterrorism Cooperation presided over three CTTF meetings. The ASEAN

Regional Forum's (ARF) 4th Seminar of Cyber Terrorism was held in October in Busan, Korea. The seminar, cohosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) and the National Cyber Security Center, welcomed 90 officials and experts from 24 ARF participating countries. The South Korean government also held bilateral consultations with Mexico, Germany, and France.

South Korean immigration and law enforcement agencies had an excellent record of tracking suspicious individuals entering their territory and reacting quickly to thwart potential terrorist acts. The government is on schedule to begin issuing e-passports that will further protect the identity of lawful travelers and prevent terrorists from using counterfeit passports. In November, the National Assembly passed Anti-Terrorist Financing legislation to further curb money laundering by terrorist organizations in and through the country.

Seoul continued its active participation in regional training and capacity-building programs. The South Korean government hosted representatives from Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries for training in crime prevention, criminal justice, counterterrorism, forensic science, prevention of money laundering, narcotics law enforcement, and antipiracy and terrorism management.

Laos

Since 2002, the Government of Laos has consistently denounced international terrorism and expressed a willingness to cooperate with the international community on counterterrorism, but has taken little proactive action to combat terrorism. In addition to a lack of resources, Lao officials at many levels believed that Laos, a small and neutral country, would not be targeted or exploited by international terrorists.

Laos did not have a separate counterterrorism law, but recent amendments to the criminal code sought to strengthen counterterrorism sanctions. Laos' border security was weak. Border officials could not effectively control access to the country even at its most sophisticated border checkpoints. Illegal border crossing along the Mekong River into the surrounding countries of Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia could be accomplished easily and without detection. Border delineation remained poor in more remote sections of the country, especially along the land borders with Vietnam and China; it is likely that unmonitored border crossings by locals occurred on a daily basis. Since 9/11, Lao authorities have strengthened airport security, and airport security forces participated in U.S. supported security seminars in an effort to raise their standards, but security procedures at land immigration points remained lax compared with most other countries in the region. In addition, official Lao identity documents, including passports and ID cards, were easy to obtain.

When requested, the Bank of Laos has vetted government and commercial bank holdings for possible terrorist assets, as identified by U.S.-provided lists of terrorist organizations and individuals, and issued freeze orders for assets of organizations and individuals named on these lists. However, the Bank has yet to require the freezing of assets of individuals and entities included on the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee consolidated list. In accordance with its obligations under UNSCR 1373, the Bank of Lao issued freeze orders for assets of organizations and individuals named in lists provided by the United States. Lao authorities issued orders limiting the amount of cash that could be withdrawn from local banks or carried into or out of the country and strengthened reporting requirements of state and privately owned commercial banks. Banking regulation remained extremely weak, however, and the banking system was vulnerable to money laundering and other illegal transactions. Cooperation between USG officials and the Bank of Laos remained cordial and cooperative.

Malaysia

New provisions to Malaysia's Penal Code and Criminal Procedures Code came into effect in March. They included clearer definitions of terrorism and related crimes and penalties including the death penalty or life in prison for terrorist-related crimes. The police forces in Malaysia continued to conduct all counterterrorist investigations and operations.

Malaysian police fall under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Security, headed by Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. To date, no suspected terrorists were brought to trial under either the new or previous legal provisions. At year's end, 29 terrorist suspects linked to Jemaah Islamiya and 17 linked to Darul Islam Sabah were held in detention under the country's Internal Security Act (ISA), where they undergo a program of rehabilitation. Two-year ISA sentences can be renewed if the Malaysian government determines that a detainee remains a threat to national security. On average, the Malaysian government has held suspected terrorists and suspected terrorist supporters in ISA detention for two to six years.

Amendments to the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act, the Subordinate Courts Act, and the Courts of Judicature Act also came into effect in March. These provisions provide for the forfeiture of terrorist-related assets, allow for the prosecution of those who materially support terrorists, and expanded surveillance of suspects. The Financial Action Task Force/Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (FATF/APG) conducted a Mutual Evaluation of Malaysia in February. While otherwise in compliance, FATF found ineffective enforcement of Malaysian laws on the import and export of cash. The Malaysian government responded by setting up an interagency task force to issue recommendations to bring Malaysia into compliance with international standards.

The Malaysian government engaged with its neighbors on issues related to counterterrorism and transnational crime. It continued to operate the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Counterterrorism (SEARCCT), which conducts training for Malaysian officials and to a lesser

extent for officials from countries in the region. Malaysian mediators continued to work in the southern Philippines to help end the conflict between the Philippines government and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). With the "Eyes in the Sky" program, Malaysian military forces worked with Singapore and Indonesia to provide enhanced security to the Strait of Malacca, the world's busiest shipping lane.

Malaysia's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) signed memoranda of understanding on the sharing of financial intelligence with the FIUs of the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the Republic of Chile. Malaysia's FIU provided training and evaluation assistance throughout the region. In late June, Malaysia's accession to the UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism came into force.

Mongolia

There were no known terrorist groups operating in Mongolia and no known bases of support. Nonetheless, Mongolian government officials cited more than 6,000 kilometers of porous borders, easy entry for foreign travelers, and poverty as conditions that terrorists could exploit, and moved to increase awareness of terrorism and to consider new laws. In August, Mongolia's Border Force, State Specialized Inspection Agency, Customs Authority and other agencies worked with a visiting "Second Line of Defense" team from the U.S. Department of Energy to improve systems for detecting the movement of nuclear and radiological materials that could be used as weapons of mass destruction. The Mongolian police, the Ministry of Justice, and the General Intelligence Agency's counterterrorism branch also cooperated with the United States. As a result of resource and technical limitations, counterterrorism law enforcement capacities remained modest. Mongolia deployed an eighth rotation of 100 Mongolian soldiers to Iraq in October in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as a seventh rotation of 21 Mongolian soldiers to Afghanistan to train the Afghan National Army.

New Zealand

In November, New Zealand passed a further amendment to the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002. The main amendments created a generic offense for committing a terrorist act; streamlined the process for designating terrorists (UN terrorist list entities are now automatically designated as terrorists under New Zealand law) and created two new offenses involving nuclear material. To date, New Zealand has designated more than 480 UN listed terrorist entities. The FIU processed over 4,090 Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs) and referred 615 of these to various law enforcement agencies and units for investigations1. Over the same twelve month period, the FIU received five Suspicious Property Reports pursuant to the Suppression of Terrorism Act 2002, none of which were found to have connections to terrorist entities or associated individuals.

New Zealand's counterterrorism efforts were reinforced by its engagement in interfaith and inter-cultural initiatives aimed at countering radicalization and terrorist recruitment. With Australia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, New Zealand co-sponsored the Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue. The Dialogue involved religious and community leaders from 15 countries from South East Asia and the Pacific, and aimed to foster tolerance, reinforce moderate religious views, and isolate religious extremism. In May, New Zealand hosted the third Dialogue at Waitangi, New Zealand. New Zealand also supports the UN-led Alliance of Civilizations (AOC) initiative, which has developed a framework for practical action to bridge differences and improve relations between faiths, societies and cultures, particularly between Islam and the West. New Zealand convened a Symposium in May to focus regional attention on the AOC Report's recommendations in the four "fields of action": education, youth, media, and migration.

New Zealand is a partner with both the United States in exchanging information on known and suspected terrorists using the Terrorist Screening Center as the operational hub for encounter management, and with the United States in APEC's Regional Movement Alert System (RMAS). Both of these programs enhance our joint ability to disrupt travel by known and suspected terrorists.

On October 15, New Zealand police arrested 17 people and seized a number of weapons, including semiautomatic weapons and petrol bombs, during a series of raids throughout the country and referred evidence against 12 of the 17 people for additional possible prosecution under the Terrorism Suppression Act (TSA), the first time the Act has been evoked since it became law in 2002. Solicitor-General Dr. David declined TSA prosecution; 16 still faced charges.

Also in mid-October, amendments to the TSA legislation were before Parliament. The Terrorism Suppression Amendment Bill corrected inconsistencies in the TSA with New Zealand's obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council resolutions on terrorism. It contained proposals on the designation of UN-listed terrorist entities, the High Court extension of designations for those entities, the freezing of terrorists' assets, the terrorist financing offenses, the offenses of committing a terrorist act and participating in a terrorist group. The Bill also introduced new offenses involving nuclear material.

New Zealand closed the security risk immigration case against an asylum seeker, Ahmed Zaoui, after five years of blocking his claim for refugee status on the grounds that he represented a threat to national security (he has convictions in Belgium and France for links to terror groups). On September 13, the Security Intelligence Service (SIS) determined that Zaoui was no longer a security risk and removed the security risk certificate it placed upon him.

New Zealand remained active in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, working with coalition partners

in undertaking Maritime Security Operations. New Zealand commands the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan's Bamiyan Province, as part of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

New Zealand continued to provide assistance to Pacific Islands Forum member countries to help them submit reports pursuant to UN Security Council Resolutions 1267, 1373, and 1540. Assistance was provided to five Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to date, and of these, four have submitted completed reports to the UN. New Zealand convened and chaired the annual Pacific Islands Forum Working Group on Counterterrorism (WGCT) which provided an opportunity for Pacific Island countries to receive up-to-date information on the international counterterrorism regime and to coordinate technical assistance projects to assist their compliance with UN Security Council reporting obligations. The last WGCT meeting was held in Nadi in June, preceding the annual Forum Regional Security Committee meeting.

New Zealand promoted counterterrorism capacity-building and a range of regional security initiatives through the Asia Security Fund. The Fund supported projects implemented by a range of partners, including regional counterterrorism centers such as the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation in Indonesia and the South East Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism in Malaysia.

Philippines

The Philippines continued to face numerous threats from terrorism. Operating within the country were the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), Communist Party of the Philippines/ New Peoples Army (CPP/NPA), and Jemaah Islamiya (JI), all of whom are designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) by the United States. In addition, the Alex Boncayao Brigade (ABB) and the Pentagon Gang are on the U.S. Terrorist Exclusion List.

Philippines military and law enforcement conducted intensive civil-military and internal security operations to eliminate terrorist safe havens in the Sulu Archipelago and central Mindanao. This year they captured and arrested 38 ASG members and killed 127. The ASG's release in October of an Internet video soliciting funds is an indication of the group's financial constraints. Courts sentenced 14 members of the ASG to life imprisonment for their role in the May 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping of 20 persons, including three Americans. President Arroyo signed landmark antiterrorism legislation to improve the Philippine government's ability to investigate and prosecute terrorism crimes.

The Government of the Philippines includes the following among its numerous successes against terrorists this year:

- On January 13, Philippine law enforcement authorities arrested Kule Mamagong in North Cotabato for his involvement in three bombings that left six dead and 36 injured.
- On March 11, Philippine military officials captured ASG member Abu Usman for his role in a January 2001 kidnapping in Lantawan, Basilan.
- On March 16, Philippine security forces on Basilan captured ASG member Merang Abate for his involvement in several kidnappings.
- In late March, the Philippine police arrested Pentagon Gang members, Alimona Cali and Beru Mendoza, for their role in a 1997 kidnapping of five civilians.
- On May 9, the Philippine police arrested Taya Kulat for his involvement in a bombing in Tacurong City.
- On May 11, Philippine security forces raided an ASG safe house on Simunul Island, Tawi Tawi, and arrested four children of fugitive JI bomber, Dulmatin, and deported them to Indonesia.
- In September, Philippine security officials arrested eight ASG members on Palawan Island and in Zamboanga.
- On November 12, Philippine security officials arrested Demaatol Guialal in Sultan Kudarat for his involvement in two bombings that left six dead and over 20 injured.
- On December 6, 14 ASG members were sentenced to life imprisonment for the May 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping of 20 people, including three Americans.
- On December 10, Philippine authorities arrested ASG member Abdel Kamala in Zamboanga City for his role in the 2001 Dos Palmas kidnapping and June 2001 attack on Lamitan, Basilan.
- On January 6, the Philippine military killed five ASG terrorists and one suspected JI operative near the southern island of Tawi-Tawi.
- On January 7, the Philippine military killed ASG bomb expert, Binang Sali, in a firefight on Jolo.
- On January 16, Philippine military forces killed ASG spokesman Jainal Sali a.k.a. Abu Solaiman during an armed encounter on Jolo.
- On August 18, the Philippine military killed ASG members, Furuji and Umair Indama, who were involved in the 2001 beheading of U.S. citizen Guillermo Sobero, an October 2002 bombing that killed a U.S. serviceman, and the July 10 beheadings of 10 Philippine Marines on Basilan.
- In the aftermath of a November 13 bombing at Congress that left five dead and nine injured, Philippine law enforcement authorities killed ASG member, Abu Jandal, during a raid of a safe house in Manila.

- On December 15, Philippine security forces killed ASG member Mubin Sakandal in Tawi-Tawi.

USG and Philippine authorities also effectively used rewards programs to target terrorist groups. The U.S. Department of State paid $5 million in June through its Rewards for Justice Program to informants who provided information that led to the killings of ASG leaders Khadaffy Janjalani and Jainal Sali a.k.a Abu Solaiman. The U.S. Department of Defense, meanwhile, rewarded informants whose information led to the capture of: Khair Malvan Mundos (April), Mohammad Yusuf Karim, April), Redendo Dellosa (April), Mariano Lomarda April), Abubakar Delos Reyes (April), Binang Andang Sali (April), Jundam Jamalul (April), Ismin Sahiron June), Alnaser Parad, June), and Itting and Omar Sailani (November). In total, the United States paid out $10,302,500 for information leading to the arrest or killing of 13 ASG members.

The passage of the Human Security Act (HSA) was a major step forward in the modernization of Philippine law enforcement tools for use against terrorists. It permits wiretapping of members of judicially designated terrorist organizations and financial investigations of individuals connected to terrorist organizations. Tight restrictions in the law, however, have prevented it from being used in actual cases.

Limited financial resources, inadequate salaries, corruption, low morale, limited cooperation between police and prosecutors, and other problems in law enforcement have hampered bringing terrorists to justice. In December, U.S prosecutors and FBI agents provided training to 34 representatives of the Philippine Anti-Terrorism Council. The training was directed at assisting the Philippines in HSA implementation, and focused on ways to use electronic surveillance authority and procedures to obtain judicial designation of organizations as terrorist under the HSA.

The Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC), operating under the Philippine Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2001 (AMLA), as amended in 2003, investigated and prosecuted money laundering and took the lead in implementing the asset freeze measures called for by the UN Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee. The AMLA was used as the legislative basis for financial actions against AQ and the Taliban. Under the law, however, the AMLC could not take direct action against suspected terrorists or those supporting terrorism; instead it had to apply for a court order to inquire into bank accounts and direct the freezing of assets and transactions.

The American Embassy received excellent cooperation from Philippine law enforcement officials in obtaining access to terrorist detainees and witnesses for FBI interviews, and access to criminal, immigration, financial, and biographic records via the mechanisms established in the U.S.-Philippine Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. The Philippine Security Engagement Board was the primary mechanism for planning and coordination of nontraditional security issues, including counterterrorism and maritime security. This watershed agreement served as the foundation for the "Kapit Bisig" (Arm-In-Arm) counterterrorism framework that focused on civil affairs, capability upgrades, and support for AFP operations. The United States helped the Philippines establish interagency intelligence fusion centers to support maritime interdictions against transnational criminal/terrorist organizations and a "Coast Watch" system in Mindanao. The Maritime Drug Enforcement Center is located at the Philippines Drug Enforcement Agency Headquarters in Quezon City. Three satellite centers, called Maritime Information Coordination Centers, are located at the headquarters of the Philippine Naval Forces-Western Mindanao in Zamboanga del Sur (southwestern Mindanao), the Coast Guard Station in General Santos City (southcentral Mindanao), and at Poro Point, San Fernando, La Union (northwestern Luzon). The United States also provided equipment valued at $120,000 to establish a bomb data center on Mindanao.

The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs began issuing digitized, machine-readable passports in June. While the Philippines cooperated with USG requests for prosecuting persons who had tampered with or altered travel documents, the prosecutions carried low-level penalties. In addition, law enforcement officials were reluctant to investigate or charge vendors or users of false documents when the Philippine government was not the issuing authority.

Singapore

Singapore continued its bilateral and multilateral intelligence and law enforcement cooperation to investigate terrorist groups with a focus on Jemaah Islamiya (JI). In June, Singapore announced that it had detained, under the Internal Security Act (ISA), a "self-radicalized" (i.e., through the Internet) Muslim attorney who had traveled abroad in an effort to join an extremist group and fight alongside the Taliban. Also in June, Singapore announced the detention of four suspected JI members who had fled Singapore in 2001 following the arrest of other JI members by the Internal Security Department (ISD).

As of November, Singapore held in detention 32 people with links to terrorist groups. Detainees included members of JI who had plotted to carry out attacks in Singapore in the past and members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Under detention orders, the detainees were required to undergo a program of religious counseling with a group of volunteer religious counselors. Singapore enlisted the support of religious teachers and scholars to study JI's ideology, to develop teachings to counter the group's spread within Singapore's Muslim community, and to provide counseling to detainees.

Singapore adopted revised regulations and guidelines for banks, other financial institutions, and non-financial businesses and professions that for the first time prescribed measures in accordance with Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations for countering the financing of terrorism (CFT.) The government moved to implement regulations to require inbound and outbound travelers to

report cash and cash-equivalent instruments of greater than $20,700 (S$30,000). In October, Parliament approved the Terrorism (Suppression of Bombings) Act, which gives effect to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. In March, Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security signed a Science and Technology Agreement to provide a framework to expand cooperation and carry out collaborative projects to enhance border security. After endorsing the Secure Freight Initiative (SFI) in December 2006, Singapore agreed in 2007 to participate in the Phase I deployment of SFI to improve the scanning of maritime container cargo, which will leverage Singapore's participation in the Container Security Initiative (CSI) and the Megaports Initiative.

Singaporean officials took strong measures to enhance maritime security in nearby waters, especially the Strait of Malacca, which included countering terrorist threats, piracy, and other criminal attacks. The three littoral states (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore) continued their surface naval and air patrols in and over the Strait of Malacca. In March, Singapore broke ground on construction of the Changi Command and Control Centre, which will enhance Singapore's maritime security capabilities by colocating the interagency Singapore Maritime Security Centre, the Information Fusion Centre, and the Multinational Operations and Exercises Centre.

In September, Singapore hosted the third and final International Maritime Organization (IMO)-sponsored meeting on "The Straits of Malacca and Singapore: Enhancing Safety, Security and Environmental Protection." Delegates from the three littoral states and 35 other countries and 16 international observer organizations and NGOs attended the conference. The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre (ISC) continued its operations, connecting 14 governments in Asia to enhance piracy-related information sharing. The Republic of Singapore Navy and Police Coast Guard worked closely on measures to secure the Singapore Strait and port from a maritime terrorist attack.

Singapore actively participated in counterterrorism efforts through various international fora, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and continued to take part in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), including the "Pacific Shield 07" exercise hosted by Japan. The Singaporean authorities regularly conducted emergency exercise drills to prepare for a potential terrorist attack in the country, bringing together relevant government agencies and civil society organizations.

Taiwan

Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations and, therefore, is not subject to UNSC Resolutions and cannot join UN conventions and protocols related to terrorist financing. Nonetheless, Taiwan sought to implement, to the maximum extent possible, all UN resolutions relating to combating terrorism and terrorist finance issues. Taiwan continued to provide rapid and thorough responses on terrorism financing issues to the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT). In 2006, Taiwan's Executive Yuan submitted an "Antiterrorist Action Law" to the Legislative Yuan. This bill would empower the Financial Supervisory Commission to seize assets of entities involved in terrorist activities, and employ a package of trade, travel, and financial sanctions against North Korea in response to UNSCR 1718. These items were under review at year's end.

The cabinet-level Counterterrorism Office (CTO) conducted several large-scale training exercises. In December, the CTO conducted its most recent exercise in Kaohsiung in preparation for the 2009 World Games. While the primary focus of this exercise was counterterrorism, it also included crisis management, disaster preparedness, and island-wide civilian military mobilization. Taiwan is currently engaged in seeking ways to harden and protect its critical infrastructure, in order to maintain continuity of operations and government in the event of an attack or a disaster.

Thailand

Counterterrorism cooperation with the Government of Thailand remained strong despite the September 2006 coup and preoccupation of the interim government with domestic political issues. Thai security forces continued to cooperate with the United States and other countries to deny safe haven for terrorists within their territory. No major incidents of international terrorism occurred in Thailand this year, though insurgency-related violence in Thailand's southern provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala, and Songkhla continued unabated, with acts of violence occurring daily.

The December 31, 2006 bomb attacks in Bangkok, which killed three Thai and injured dozens, including six foreign tourists, remained unsolved. Thai officials contended the bombing was related to domestic political issues. The locations targeted in the attacks were not specifically identified with foreign interests or tourists. On October 1, 2007, a bomb exploded outside Army headquarters in Bangkok. Two bomb disposal personnel were wounded. No suspects have been apprehended and Thai officials contended that this attack, like the December 31 bombings, was related to domestic issues.

Thailand's biggest domestic security challenge remained the ongoing separatist movement in the far southern provinces of Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani, and Songkhla. This region, bordering Malaysia, has experienced episodic, separatist-related violence for decades among the predominantly ethnic Malay-Muslim population. Since January 2004, violence increased dramatically and continued on a near daily basis. Suspected separatist militants carried out assassinations, beheadings, and coordinated bombings using improvised explosive devices.

A particularly brutal series of attacks commenced on March 14 in Yala province when suspected insurgents ambushed a civilian passenger van and executed the eight Buddhist passengers on board. Subsequently, on March 15, a mosque and a tea shop frequented by Muslims were attacked with grenades by unknown assailants. Thai press reports and security forces attribute nearly all the attacks in the south to militant separatists, but human rights watchers believe attacks are committed by both Buddhist and Muslim groups.

Interim Prime Minister Surayud's efforts at conciliation have had only a limited impact, and attacks continued to occur regularly. In June, Thai security forces adopted a more aggressive approach to dealing with the militants. Security forces began large scale operations to arrest and detain anyone suspected of having links to the insurgency. In late October, General Anupong Paochinda, the newly appointed commander-in-chief of the Royal Thai Army, reorganized security forces operating in the South to ensure better coordination of security operations.

Legal mechanisms to counter the insurgency lagged behind security efforts. Government prosecutors struggled to develop cases that could stand up in court and relied chiefly on confessions in order to bring prosecutions. Police forensics and ballistics work often failed to produce evidence that led to arrests following separatist attacks. Because of the difficulties in bringing cases to court, security forces engaging in operations to arrest militants relied instead on their powers under martial law and the 2005 Emergency Decree to detain suspects without trial.

Prosecutors have had some success in bringing cases to court, however. On July 2, after an investigation into bombing incidents, security forces arrested seven suspected bomb makers at an Islamic boarding school. This case remained in the court system; the prosecution is based on the confession of the suspects. In November, police were able to arrest six suspects after a series of bombings in Yala province, based on forensic investigations.

Thai authorities believe the Barisan Revolusi Nasional Coordinate (BRN-C) is behind most of the violence in the south. The operational arm of this group is the Ruanda Kumpulan Kecil (RKK). Other militant groups active in southern Thailand include the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), and the Pattani Islamic Mujahideen Movement (GMIP). Because of the transnational nature of the ethnic Malay-Muslim community in southern Thailand, all the separatist groups active in the South may have connections throughout maritime Southeast Asia. Some of these groups may share elements of ideology and general rejection of Western influence held by international Islamic terrorists, but by all indications they remained primarily focused on seeking autonomy for the far southern provinces and historical grievances against the Thai state.

Thailand's southern border with Malaysia remained an issue of concern because of the difficulty both Thailand and Malaysia have had in controlling it. In the past, former Prime Minister Thaksin alleged militants were traveling across the border to training camps in Kalantan, and interim Prime Minister Surayud claimed militants in southern Thailand funded their activities through business operations in Malaysia—an allegation that Malaysia strenuously denied.

Relations between Thailand and Malaysia improved after a series of meetings between Surayud and Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi in January and February, in which the two leaders agreed to a series of measures to tighten security along the border. These measures included resolving issues of recognizing dual nationality, sharing information, and initiating joint patrols between Thai and Malaysian security forces.

Thai security forces cooperated with the United States and with other countries to deny safe haven to terrorists within their territory. In the past, Thailand has served as a transit point for regional terrorists, as evidenced by the 2003 capture in central Thailand of Nurjaman Riduan bin Isomuddin (a.k.a. Hambali), JI's operations chief and the architect behind the 2002 Bali bombings. Thai and USG officials were concerned that transnational terror groups could establish links with southern Thailand-based separatist groups. However, there were no indications that transnational terrorist groups were directly involved in the violence in the south, and there was no evidence of direct operational links between southern Thai separatist groups and regional terror networks.

There was no evidence that foreign governments provided financial, military, or diplomatic support for militant separatist operations in the South of Thailand. However, PULO reportedly operated openly in Syria, and a number of self-declared separatist leaders received asylum in Europe or were believed to be hiding in Malaysia.

Thai police and security officials participated in USG training programs, and the U.S. and Thai militaries conducted a number of joint exercises that supported counterterrorism. Thailand is a co-sponsor of the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok. It continued to run training modules for Thai security officials and police that included post-blast and crime scene investigation courses.

Under the auspices of the Container Security Initiative (CSI) and the Megaports Initiative, Thailand participated in a range of port security programs, including programs to ensure that Thailand has proper controls on the export of munitions, dual use goods, and related technologies.

The Thai Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) acted as the center for interdicting terrorist finance. On October 28, The Ministry of Finance issued new regulations governing cross border cash carrying, bringing the Thai government into line with the Financial Action Task Force Special Rec-

ommendation on Terrorist Financing. UN 1267 resolutions were quickly implemented by Thai banks under instructions from AMLO. Thailand engaged with the G8 Counterterrorism Action Group on increasing penalties for document fraud, an ongoing problem in Thailand.

Thailand participated actively in international counterterrorism efforts through Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and other fora, and in January became a signatory to the ASEAN Convention on Counterterrorism. Thailand has not endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).

EUROPE AND EURASIA

Overview

European countries continued to improve their capabilities to counter the terrorist threat, foiled several significant terrorist plots, and continued to prosecute and jail terrorist suspects. European governments were increasingly concerned about radicalization among their populations and sought greater understanding of the process of "radicalization" and how to prevent it. Several governments increased outreach to Muslim communities living within their countries and made attempts to gain support from within those communities to counter the appeal of extremist ideology.

European nations continued to work in close partnership with the United States against a terrorist threat characterized by both external and, increasingly, internal components. The contributions of European countries in sharing intelligence, arresting members of terrorist cells, and interdicting terrorist financing and logistics were vital elements in the War on Terror.

At the June 2004 U.S.-EU Summit, the sides agreed on a Declaration on Combating Terrorism that renewed the transatlantic commitment to develop measures to maximize capacities to detect, investigate, and prosecute terrorists; prevent terrorist attacks; prevent access by terrorists to financial and other economic resources; enhance information sharing and cooperation among law enforcement agencies; and to improve the effectiveness of border information systems. These commitments were reaffirmed at the 2007 Summit, and work continued on implementation.

European nations were active participants in a variety of multilateral organizations that contribute to counterterrorist efforts, including the G8, NATO, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). During its G8 Presidency, Germany placed a particular emphasis on supporting UN counterterrorism activities and topics such as terrorist use of the Internet, protecting critical energy infrastructure, and countering radicalization and recruitment to terrorism. The United States worked with its international partners through multilateral organizations to establish and implement best practices, build the counterterrorism capabilities of "weak but willing" states, and help counter terrorism globally. OSCE members committed themselves to becoming parties to the 13 international terrorism conventions and protocols, to work together to modernize travel documents and shipping container security, to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist organizations, and to implement UNSC Resolution 1540 to counter WMD (related materials and the means of delivery) proliferation.

Terrorist activity and the presence of terrorist support networks in Europe remained a source of concern. Efforts to combat the threat in Europe were sometimes slowed by legal protections that made it difficult to take firm judicial action against suspected terrorists, asylum laws that afforded loopholes, the absence of adequate legislation, or standards of evidence that limited the use of classified information in holding terrorist suspects. Terrorists also sought to take advantage of the ease of travel among Schengen countries. At times, some European states have not been able to prosecute successfully or hold some of the suspected terrorists brought before their courts—a product, in part, of insufficient measures to use intelligence information in judicial proceedings. The EU as a whole remained reluctant to take steps to block the assets of charities associated with HAMAS and Hizballah.

Cooperation with and among European law enforcement agencies remained vital for counterterrorism successes. France and Spain continued to cooperate effectively against Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA). Germany led Europe in maintaining action against the militant Kurdish separatist group Kongra Gel/Kurdistan Workers' Party (KGK/PKK), which raised funds, often through illicit activity, to fund violence in Turkey, but coordination problems across borders in Europe blunted some successful arrests. Portuguese authorities worked with security services of several other European countries to arrest and extradite to Italy a person suspected of associating with and recruiting for an international terrorist organization. Eight other suspects were also arrested during similar operations across Europe. The Swiss Parliament ratified the U.S.-Swiss Operative Working Agreement, which entered into force in December.

No major terrorist attacks took place in Europe in 2007, but several plots were disrupted that could have resulted in a serious loss of life. In June, terrorists attempted attacks in London and, a day later, terrorists drove a burning car into Glasgow airport. A total of seven individuals, including the two suspected perpetrators in Glasgow, were arrested in connection with the attacks. In Germany, a major terrorist plot was disrupted in September with the arrests of two ethnic Germans and a Turkish citizen resident in Germany. The plotters, who German officials said were connected to the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), had acquired large amounts of hydrogen peroxide for possible

use in multiple car bomb attacks. Also in September, Danish police in Copenhagen arrested eight alleged militant Islamists with al-Qa'ida (AQ) links on suspicion that they were preparing explosives for use in a terrorist attack. Earlier in the year, Revolutionary Struggle claimed responsibility for a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) attack against the U.S. Embassy in Athens; no one was hurt. Judicial proceedings in countries across Europe resulted in the convictions of terrorist suspects. In Belgium, hearings began in the case of Bilal Soughir and five other men suspected of having recruited and trained terrorists for suicide attacks in Iraq. In Bosnia, three persons were convicted on terrorism charges in that country's first state-level terrorism trial, and in February, a Danish court convicted four men charged with planning a terrorist attack—the country's first trial under 2002 counterterrorism legislation. Members of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) were convicted in France for providing material support to a terrorist organization in connection with the 2003 terrorist bombings in Casablanca. In May, the Athens Court of Appeals in Greece issued consolidated sentences in the November 17 (N17) appeals trial. Of the 219 counts remaining, convictions were sustained on 218. The six members of the operational core of N17 received a total of 44 life sentences.

In October, Spain's National Court returned guilty verdicts on 21 of 29 individuals suspected of involvement in the 2003 Madrid train bombings that killed 191 people and wounded hundreds of others, and handed down sentences ranging from three years to almost 43,000 years in prison (although the maximum time they can serve under Spanish law is 40 years).

Albania

Albania pledged to increase its contribution of troops to both Afghanistan and Iraq, maintained frozen bank accounts related to money laundering and terrorism financing, and aggressively worked with the United States and other countries to combat terrorism. Albania made progress in identifying vulnerabilities at land and sea borders, but the government and police forces continued to face substantial challenges to enforce fully border security and combat organized crime and corruption.

In December, Hamzeh Abu Rayyan, the administrator for UNSCR 1267 Committee-designated terrorist financier Yassin Al-Kadi, was charged with hiding funds used to finance terror. This marked the first criminal terror finance-related case charged in Albania. A civil suit filed by al-Kadi to release his assets from seizure was originally dismissed for technical reasons but was refiled in July.

Although no new groups' assets were frozen this year under Albania's Terrorism Financing Freeze (TFF) law enacted in 2004, as of October, the Ministry of Finance claimed that it maintained asset freezes against six individuals and fourteen foundations and companies on the UNSCR 1267 list. Despite this progress, the effectiveness of the government's counterterrorist financing effort was undermined by a lack of data-processing infrastructure and an inadequate capability to track and manage cases properly.

Armenia

Armenia's counterterrorism contribution included its continued commitment to overflight and landing rights of U.S. military aircraft, additional security support to U.S. facilities in Armenia during times of terrorist alert, and the renewed deployment of peacekeeping forces in Iraq. In addition, Armenia joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and expressed interest in joining the Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

In September, a delegation of inspectors from the UN Counterterrorism Committee Executive Directorate visited Armenia to ascertain its progress in complying with UNSCR 1372, and found that 12 of the 13 legal counterterrorism instruments had already been implemented or were soon to be implemented. And in July, the Armenian government succeeded in adapting the EU export control list of "dual-use" commodities to its own national control list.

The Financial Monitoring Center (FMC), a U.S.-supported financial intelligence unit within the Central Bank of Armenia (CBA), continued to make investigative strides against money-laundering. During the first nine months of the year, the FMC received twenty-four suspicious transaction reports (STRs), compared to twenty-three STRs during the same period in 2006, and six STRs in 2005. Under its current mandate, the CBA can freeze temporarily financial assets while referring the STRs to the competent authorities for further investigation. However, it must rely on private financial institutions to self-monitor and lacked an integrated IT system to store information on financial entities or individuals of concern. At the end of the year, no cases involving terrorist financing were uncovered or prosecuted. The FMC received Egmont Group membership this year.

Armenia improved border security by maintaining an automated Border Management Information System (BMIS) that documented and stored the names of travelers at nearly all official points of entry, and contained criminal and terrorist watchlists as updated by the Republic of Armenia Police (RAP) and National Security Service (NSS). While Armenia has no bilateral agreement with the United States governing the sharing of information on travelers, the NSS and RAP shared information with the U.S. Embassy when they discovered fraudulent U.S. visas or other documents of interest to the United States.

Armenia's warming relations with neighboring Iran continued, with Armenia hosting official visits by Iranian President Ahmadinejad (October) and Iranian Defense Minister Najjar (November). In addition to fostering closer diplomatic ties, these visits served to solidify previous bilateral commitments to develop joint energy and transportation projects. This closer cooperation has made Arme-

nia more reluctant to criticize publicly objectionable Iranian conduct or join other UN member states in advocating for sanctions on the Iranian regime.

Although Armenia continued to strengthen its counterterrorism capabilities and enhanced its counterterrorism cooperation with the United States and other international security organizations, its geographic location, porous borders, and loose visa regime still provided ample opportunities for traffickers of illicit materials, persons, and finances. Furthermore, endemic governmental corruption, a significant organized crime presence, and a large shadow economy made the country potentially vulnerable to money laundering and terrorist financing schemes.

Austria

Austria experienced two concrete, Internet-based terror threats from second generation Muslim immigrants who were subsequently arrested. A national "integration platform" launched in the autumn sought to mobilize both the Austrian government and society to promote social and economic integration, prevent the isolation of ethnic and religious groups, and stop radicalization.

Austria made modest contributions to stability in Afghanistan and Iraq, with its contribution of three liaison officers at the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul, after having completed two larger in-and-out missions in Afghanistan since 2002.

However, Austria failed to coordinate fully law enforcement activities with other states against the militant Kurdish separatist group, Kongra Gel/Kurdistan Workers' Party (KGK/PKK), an EU- and U.S.-designated terrorist group. For example, in mid-year, Austria initially detained and quickly released KGK/PKK operative Riza Altun and allowed him to board a plane for northern Iraq, despite the fact that he had fake documents and faced charges in France and an extradition request from Turkey. In November, Austria failed to detain Remzi Kartal, a KGK/PKK leader known to be traveling to Austria who was wanted by INTERPOL.

Austria's legal framework to combat terrorism includes legislation making the planning of intended terrorist acts a criminal offense, but the 2005 terrorism law is untested. Austria also has policies in place to combat terrorism financing and money laundering.

Azerbaijan

Over the past five years, the Government of Azerbaijan has aggressively apprehended and prosecuted members of suspected terrorist groups. It has closed organizations that were suspected of supporting terrorist groups and arrested at least 39 persons from three separate terrorist-associated groups, on terrorism-related charges.

Azerbaijan has granted blanket overflight clearance, engaged in information sharing and law-enforcement cooperation, and has approved numerous landings and refueling operations at its civilian airport in support of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. Since August 2003, Azerbaijan has supported peacekeeping operations in Iraq with an infantry company of approximately 150 soldiers stationed at the Haditha Dam. A platoon of Azerbaijani soldiers has worked with the Turkish peacekeeping contingent in Afghanistan since November 2002.

While Azerbaijan has taken steps to combat terrorist financing and identify possible terrorist-related funding by distributing lists of suspected terrorist groups and individuals to local banks, comprehensive legislation to counter terrorist financing has not yet passed parliament. In December 2006, an inter-ministerial experts group responsible for drafting anti-money laundering and counterterrorist finance legislation through the President's office provided its most recent draft to the U.S. Department of Justice and the Council of Europe; the Department of Justice provided comments on the law and discussed it with Azerbaijani government officials. The government has not yet presented the draft law to parliament, nor has it taken steps to create a Financial Intelligence Unit. In anticipation of future adoption of this law, the USG has trained prosecutors, investigators, and judges on implementing anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing law enforcement techniques.

In February, Azerbaijani authorities arrested a group of 15 Azerbaijani citizens in Baku who called themselves the Northern Mahdi Army. The group was charged with having ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). In October, the group went before a closed trial on charges of cooperation with a foreign intelligence service, high treason, possession of illegal weapons and robbery. According to the Azerbaijani Ministry of National Security (MNS), the group was organized to establish a state ruled by Sharia (Islamic) law. According to published reports, the MNS said that one of the group members had met an IRGC officer in Qom, Iran, and was offered money to fight against the United States, Israel, and other Western countries. According to published reports, the group received training in Iran and Azerbaijan.

During security sweeps in late October and early November, a group of twelve Azerbaijanis, reportedly led by an ethnic Arab named Abu Jafar, were arrested in Sumgayit, Azerbaijan on terrorism-related charges. A large quantity of arms and ammunition, a map of Sumgayit, and other equipment were confiscated from members of the group. Criminal cases are pending.

Separately, in November, 11 Azerbaijani citizens were arrested over a number of days in connection with a late October threat against the U.S. Embassy in Baku, which resulted in the embassy working at limited staffing for two days. The group consisted of Azerbaijani citizens led by a renegade radicalized Azerbaijani army officer, Kamran Asadov, who left his unit without permission, taking four assault rifles, a machine gun, 20 grenades, and a large amount of cartridges on October 24. The fugitives from the

group robbed a Lukoil gas station in Baku on October 30. According to press reports, members of the groups told the MNS that they planned to attack the U.S. Embassy. All the weapons and known members of the group have been seized and criminal charges are pending.

Belgium

Belgium continued to strengthen its response to the threat of terrorism, fashioning new institutions in its security services, improving internal coordination among antiterrorism offices, promulgating new laws to deal with terrorism and money laundering more aggressively, and strengthening agencies that confront terrorist financing.

In 2006, under Belgium's 2003 antiterrorism law, members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), a far left militant Turkish group, were convicted for membership in a terror organization and for providing material support to a terrorist group. The Belgian Court of Appeals upheld the DHKP/C convictions and imposed stiffer sentences in November 2006. In April 2007, Belgium's Supreme Court cited technical grounds in quashing the Court of Appeals ruling; at year's end the case was being retried in the Antwerp Appellate Court.

On October 15, hearings began in the case of Bilal Soughir and five other men suspected of recruiting and training terrorists for suicide attacks in Iraq, including Muriel Degauque, a Belgian national who, in 2005, blew herself up in a failed bomb attack in Iraq. Federal authorities planned ongoing reviews of court rulings to gauge what acts and groups could be prosecuted successfully under the 2003 legislation and what types of sentences could be imposed.

Recently-enacted legislation that loosened restrictions on police surveillance of alleged extremists and clarified procedures for authorizing searches, wiretaps, and use of informants also facilitated action against suspected terrorists. Belgian authorities continued to strengthen their internal capabilities to combat terrorism and made its Coordinating Body for Threat Analysis (OCAM/CODA) more fully operational. OCAM aims to facilitate the exchange of information among all governmental counterterrorism bodies and make a common threat analysis on the basis of such information exchanges. The new agency operated under the joint authority of the Justice and Interior Ministers and included representatives from the external and internal services, the Federal Police, Customs, and the Ministries of Transport, Finance, and Foreign Affairs.

Belgium also granted authorities the ability to create a national list of terrorist entities, separate from UN and EU lists, to be coordinated by OCAM, and to include financiers and suspected financiers of terrorism. This information will allow Belgian authorities to develop and apply a national capacity to freeze assets (in addition to UN- and EU-mandated asset freezes that Belgium already implements). In addition, Belgian cooperation on security programs such as the Container Security Initiative (CSI), Megaports, and export controls has been generally excellent.

Belgian emergency action plans have been reviewed and updated to prepare for and respond to potential attacks, including bioterrorism. On a local level, authorities have instituted drills of rapid alert systems, and reviewed critical infrastructure support and civil protection and medical assistance procedures. Federal and local authorities have participated in a EUCOM WMD Consequence Management exercise, furthering U.S.-Belgian cooperation in this area. Police and private sector working groups have been formed to target terrorists, the financing of terrorism, and terrorist use of the Internet.

Belgium made a significant military contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, where it maintains a ground presence of about 400 troops, mainly at Kabul airport, with some personnel at the Provisional Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Konduz. Belgium contributed approximately $33 million euros toward Afghan reconstruction and promised to boost its support for reconstruction and development, totaling approximately 45 million euros, to be disbursed over the next four years. Assistance to Iraq included expanded participation in the Jordan International Police Training Center in Amman (which subsequently closed in September), training for Iraqi diplomats and magistrates in Belgium, and training for Iraqi servicemen in Abu Dhabi, in cooperation with Germany.

Belgian authorities remained concerned about potential terror activities involving groups from Algeria and North Africa, and have investigated groups such as the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), the DHKP/C, a far right group with links to neo-Nazi groups, and a cell suspected of training members for attacks in Iraq. The KGK/PKK is a known presence, with television production studios in Brussels. The KGK/PKK continued to exploit Belgium to raise illicit financing for violence in Turkey and its camps in northern Iraq.

Belgium continued to take action in response to EU and UN Security Council actions to freeze suspected terrorist assets and to study steps to improve its ability to combat and control terrorist financing. Based upon a mutual evaluation review by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in June 2005, Belgium was working to implement FATF's recommendations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Despite increased ethnic polarization and disputes among Bosnian political leaders that hindered the functioning of state government for most of the year, Bosnia and Herzegovina's law enforcement organizations cooperated with the United States on international counterterrorism issues. Bosnia remained a weak, decentralized state and ethnically-based political confrontations continued to undermine national government. As a result of weak inter-

agency communication, competing security structures, and political interference in law enforcement, Bosnia is vulnerable to exploitation as a potential staging ground for terrorist operations in Europe. The dysfunctional Bosnian state government and efforts by Republika Srpska officials to undermine state-level institutions contributed to a slowdown, and in some cases, setbacks in efforts to improve operational capabilities to combat terrorism and terrorism finance.

The State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) is the Bosnia agency with primary responsibility for counterterrorism operations. The position of SIPA Director was unfilled for most of the year and the agency's readiness and capabilities suffered as a result. In addition, the head of the Ministry of Security, parent organization to SIPA, politicized the Ministry's terrorism threat analysis and counterterrorism operations. Although Bosnian capabilities and potential for independent action were degraded over the year, Bosnian authorities were generally effective and responsive to U.S. counterterrorism cooperation requests.

The Citizenship Review Commission (CRC), formed to review the status of foreign mujahedin fighters and others who obtained Bosnian citizenship during and after the 1992-95 war, completed its review of approximately 1200 cases. The CRC withdrew citizenship from 612 individuals it deemed to have obtained Bosnian citizenship unlawfully. Among those denaturalized were three individuals listed under UNSCR 1267 Committee for links with the Taliban, Usama bin Ladin (UBL), and/or al-Qa'ida (AQ). UNSCR 1267-listed Abu Hamza al-Masri (Imad Al-Hussein) was stripped of his citizenship by the CRC in January.

The Bosnian government subsequently denied an appeal by Abu Hamza and an application for permanent residence. An asylum application also was denied by the Ministry of Security, and an ongoing appeal of the asylum rejection constitutes the final recourse for Abu Hamza.

On January 10, the Bosnian State Court handed down a fifteen and a half year prison sentence for Mirsad Bektasevic, a lead defendant in the country's first state-level terrorism trial. Two co-defendants received thirteen and a half, and eight year sentences, respectively. The three defendants were arrested in October 2005, on terrorism charges, and two others were charged with illegal possession of explosives. Lead defendants Mirsad Bektasevic (a Swedish citizen) and Abdulkadir Cesur were linked to terrorist networks elsewhere in Europe. In June 2007, a State Court appellate panel upheld the convictions but substantially reduced the sentences. The Bosnian organization Aktivna Islamska Omladina (Active Islamic Youth, or AIO) spread extremist and anti-American rhetoric through its weekly print and online publication SAFF Magazine. AIO was founded in Zenica in 1995 by individuals with ties to the so-called "El Mujahid Brigade," a wartime unit comprised mainly of foreign extremists. AIO conducts youth outreach in Bosnia and maintains a presence in Western Europe.

Bosnia and Herzegovina continued its deployments in support of MNF-I. In September, the sixth rotation of the Armed Forces' 36-member Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit deployed to Iraq. The Armed Forces also undertook specialized training that would allow for further deployments to either Iraq or to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria's Financial Intelligence Agency (FIA) remained vigilant against terrorist financing and cooperated with the United States on identifying and investigating terrorist assets. The FIA regularly distributed lists of individuals and organizations linked to terrorism to all banks in Bulgaria, the Ministry of Interior, Customs, and the Border Police. The FIA was active in efforts against all mandated UNSCR-designated terrorists and terrorist organizations, and cooperated on USG-designated individuals and organizations. The FIA advised the banking sector to use the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) website as a reliable information resource for individuals and organizations associated with terrorism. The FIA provided feedback, including information on the response level of Bulgaria's banks, to the U.S. Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN).

In 2006, the Bulgarian Parliament passed amendments that further strengthened the FIA's investigative powers, enabling it to obtain bank information without a court order or a Suspicious Transaction Report (STR). In late 2007, as part of legislation creating the new State Agency for National Security (DANS), the FIA was transferred from the Finance Ministry to DANS. The legislation lacked clarity on the independent and investigatory powers of the FIA, potentially complicating its Egmont compliance and undermining its ability to execute its mission and uphold its international commitments. Aware of the issue, Bulgarian officials were considering additional legislative and regulatory measures at year's end.

In December, the Bulgarian parliament adopted the State Agency for National Security Act, under which DANS will consist of four chief directorates: Internal Security, Counterintelligence, Technical Operations, and Economic and Financial Security. It will split off the current National Security Service from the Interior Ministry, Military Counterintelligence from the Defense Ministry, and the Financial Intelligence Agency from the Finance Ministry. These services will be incorporated into DANS. The new agency will exercise control over the stay of foreigners in Bulgaria, which was previously handled by the National Security Service.

Bulgaria signed and ratified the Council of Europe's new Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism in 2006, which entered into force on June 1, 2007. Bulgaria's religious leaders, including leaders of the nation's Muslim community, spoke out strongly against terrorism.

The Bulgarian government continued its high level of cooperation with the United States in preventing acts of terrorism against U.S. citizens in Bulgaria and elsewhere. This included sharing information on potential terrorist threats and a heightened level of protection for USG facilities. Bulgaria's Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry, Nuclear Regulatory Agency, Ports Authorities, and Civil Protection Agency participated in a multinational field exercise and command post exercise led by the Department of Defense's Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and the FBI on handling a terrorist attack scenario involving WMD.

Bulgaria has contributed approximately 150 troops to Operation Iraqi Freedom and 400 troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

Croatia

The Croatian government increased its contribution to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan from 150 to 200 soldiers who served in military police, medical support, force security, and liaison and training roles. In addition, Croatia maintained a small civilian and police team deployment to the German-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Feyzabad. Croatia's long land and sea borders presented a monitoring and enforcement challenge and guided continued efforts to improve its border integrity and its export control regime.

Cyprus

Cyprus took a clear stand against international terrorism and supported United States counterterrorism efforts. The Government of Cyprus continued to allow blanket overflight and landing rights to U.S. military aircraft supporting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cyprus was responsive to international efforts to block and freeze terrorist assets, implemented the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) recommendations, and conformed to EU counterterrorism directives.

Cyprus's legal framework for investigating and prosecuting terrorist-related activity remained relatively weak. The United States and the Republic of Cyprus cooperated closely on terrorist finance and money laundering issues. The Cypriot Anti-Money Laundering Authority (MOKAS) implemented new UNSCR 1267 Committee decisions immediately and informally tracked names listed under U.S. Executive Orders.

In the area administered by Turkish Cypriots, issues of status and recognition inevitably restricted the ability of authorities to cooperate on counterterrorism. Turkish Cypriots cannot sign treaties, UN conventions, or other international agreements, for example. Moreover, the Turkish Cypriot-administered area lacked the legal and institutional framework necessary to combat money laundering and terrorist financing effectively. Within these limitations, Turkish Cypriots cooperated in pursuing specific counterterrorism objectives. They shuttered the First Merchant Bank after receiving evidence of illicit financial activity there and conducted a successful criminal investigation into the bank's activities, bringing together law enforcement, financial crimes investigators, and "central bankers" to revoke First Merchant's operating license and seize its assets. Kurdish-origin communities exist on both sides of the island. The KGK/PKK has a presence in Cyprus, although its activities generally were limited to fundraising and transit en route to third countries; authorities believed there was little risk the group would conduct operations there. Cyprus maintained that it was fulfilling all responsibilities with respect to the EU designation of the KGK/PKK as a terrorist organization.

A large volume of container traffic moves through ports in the government-controlled area, making Cyprus an attractive and convenient venue for terrorist organizations seeking transshipment points for weapons and other items of concern. While Cypriot agencies responsible for nonproliferation assess only a small risk of illicit materials moving through transit cargo, the United States continued to push for increased maritime cooperation. The American Embassy organized and executed training programs to assist Cyprus to create a stronger export control regime and to pursue more proactive nonproliferation enforcement.

While the Turkish Cypriot community took some steps to prevent terrorist financing within its banking institutions, authorities lacked the legal and institutional framework to meet minimum international standards with regard to combating money laundering and terrorist finance. The "TRNC Central Bank" regularly asked financial institutions to search for assets linked to individuals or entities whom the United States and/or the UNSCR 1267 Committee has designated as terrorists. However, the north lacked modern audit control technology, relying instead on antiquated paper-based systems. Consequently, the Turkish Cypriot community's financial sector is vulnerable to abuse by criminals and terrorists. Authorities in the north are aware of the problem and "parliament" recently passed anti-money laundering legislation. Authorities are now looking to the international community for assistance with training and organizing a Financial Crimes Unit that would significantly improve their ability to combat illicit financial activity.

Czech Republic

Whether protecting the Prague headquarters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and other facilities, providing critical military assistance in Iraq and Afghanistan, or cooperating in criminal investigations, the Czech Republic remained a steadfast U.S. ally in the War on Terror.

The Czech Republic contributed significant numbers of troops to Coalition efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the Czech government is establishing a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar Province, and has decided to nearly double the size of its military force there, to over 400 soldiers. In Iraq, it maintained approximately

100 personnel, but will withdraw all but 20 by June 2008. Pursuant to a U.S. request, Czech authorities extradited Oussama Kassir to the United States on September 25. Kassir, a Lebanese-born Swedish national, was alleged to have conspired to provide material support to terrorists through the planned operation of a terrorist training camp in Oregon. Kassir had requested political asylum, which the Czech government denied.

Denmark

Denmark completed implementation of two counterterrorism legislation packages that were passed by Parliament in 2006. These new measures criminalized the recruitment of persons to terrorism and the training of others to assist in committing terrorist acts, including financing terrorism. These new counterterrorism measures enhanced the Danish government's ability to investigate and prevent terrorism and other serious crimes. In March, Parliament passed additional legislation that prohibited private persons from purchasing fertilizer with ammonium nitrate levels of more than 28 percent, which could be used for improvised explosive devices. Denmark worked closely with the United States on UN and other multilateral counterterrorism efforts, including the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and in international nonproliferation groups, such as PSI and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. We note however, that Roj-TV, a KGK/PKK affiliated media outlet, continued to operate in Denmark. During the year, German law enforcement authorities arrested a number of individuals suspected of involvement in terrorism. Prominent new actions and arrests included:

- On September 4, Danish police arrested eight alleged militant Islamists in Copenhagen with al-Qa'ida (AQ) links on suspicion that they were preparing explosives for use in a terror attack. Police raided 11 homes in the greater Copenhagen area during the sweep. Six of the men were released from custody, while two await trial and face possible life in prison, if convicted.

- On November 11, Danish police arrested a foreign-born resident in Copenhagen on charges of urging terror groups abroad to kidnap Danish nationals. The 22-year-old suspect had links to two men arrested on terrorism charges in Copenhagen on September 4 (see above). Danish officials stated that the man arrested in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen had apparently hoped that by kidnapping Danish citizens abroad, pressure could be exerted on Danish authorities to release the two suspects. The man remained in police custody awaiting trial.

Key judicial proceedings involving Islamic terrorism related crimes included:

- In January, the State Prosecutor's office dropped charges against a group of Danish imams who traveled to the Middle East in 2005, due to lack of evidence that they broke any laws in their alleged efforts to convince Muslims to protest against the publication of the Mohammed cartoons. The decision to drop the charges cleared the group of any responsibility for attacks on Danish embassies in Syria and Lebanon at the start of 2006.

- In February, a Danish court convicted four men charged with planning a terrorist attack, which marked the country's first trial under 2002 counterterrorism legislation. The men, all Muslims born in Denmark, were arrested in 2005 in the Copenhagen suburb of Glostrup, on charges of attempting to conduct terrorist acts in cooperation with two men arrested in Bosnia. On February 15th, 2007, however, a panel of judges overturned the verdict for three of the suspects due to insufficient evidence. The guilty verdict for the fourth suspect, 17-year-old Abdul Basit Abu-Lifa, was upheld. Abu-Lifa was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, which was upheld by a Danish Supreme Court decision in October. In July, the public prosecutor in Copenhagen decided to proceed with a re-trial for one of the three suspects whose conviction had been overruled by the judges.

- On March 28, Copenhagen City Court acquitted two leading members of the Danish branch of the Al-Aqsa Foundation of charges of supporting terrorism. The men were indicted in 2003 for funneling money collected in Denmark, ostensibly for humanitarian purposes, to terrorist-related groups abroad. Danish authorities seized approximately $89,406 in funds from the organization. The court ruled that the evidence against the group's president and treasurer was insufficient to establish a connection between the funds collected by Al-Aqsa in Denmark and HAMAS.

- On April 11, Copenhagen City Court convicted Said Mansour of inciting terrorism and sentenced him to three years and six months in prison. Mansour, a Danish citizen originally from Morocco, was arrested in September 2005 by Danish police for making and distributing DVDs and videos throughout Europe that showed beheadings and killings and called for a violent jihad against the Western world. The case marked the first conviction under 2002 counterterrorism legislation prohibiting the promotion of terrorism on Danish soil. Mansour previously served a 90-day sentence from December 2004 on weapons possession charges.

- On November 23, the Danish High Court convicted three men under national counterterrorism legislation for planning terrorist acts. Two foreign-born residents received 11-year prison sentences, while a Danish convert to Islam received a four-year sentence. A fourth defendant was acquitted after the presiding judge refused to consider a lesser charge. The men were among nine individuals arrested in September 2006, in Vollsmose, a suburb of Denmark's third-largest city, Odense, on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack. Prosecutors charged four of the nine with plotting acts of terrorism after finding laboratory equipment, chemicals, and explosives in their possession.

- On December 20, a Copenhagen municipal court acquitted seven people accused of supporting terrorism by transferring a portion of the proceeds of the sale of T-shirts to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), both of which are EU- and U.S.-listed terrorist groups. Two of the three presiding judges in the case ruled that, while there was evidence to show that the FARC and the PFLP had carried out criminal actions, it was not possible to determine whether they were terrorist groups. The dissenting judge stated that the FARC did constitute a terrorist organization. The accused included five employees of "Fighters+Lovers," the clothing company that made the T-shirts, a man who owned the server that hosted its website, and a hot dog vendor who posted an advertisement for the shirts. Danish police shut down the company in February 2006, a month after it began selling T-shirts with PFLP and FARC logos, and confiscated all intended donations to the two groups. Prosecutors appealed the ruling in late December.

- Danish authorities concluded their terror-finance case against Patrick MacManus, the spokesman of the Danish NGO, "Oprør" (Revolt), and await a ruling by the Danish High Court. MacManus was indicted in October 2005 for violating Danish counterterrorism legislation by transferring approximately $17,000 to the FARC and the PFLP. In 2005, MacManus informed local media that the group's actions were a means to challenge Denmark's counterterrorism laws.

Denmark withdrew nearly all of its 450 troops from southern Iraq at the end of 2007. The Danish government increased its contribution to Afghanistan, raising its forces to more than 750 as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Most of these are engaged in challenging Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan.

Estonia

As a member of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, Estonia contributed 120 soldiers to the UK-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Helmand Province. The Estonian contribution consisted of an infantry company, an explosive ordnance disposal team, the national support element, a cross-service team, a human intelligence team, a close protection team, and staff officers to various headquarters in Kabul and Kandahar. Estonia also sent 37 soldiers to participate in combat operations in Iraq.

On December 21, Estonia joined the EU Schengen Area for land and sea border controls, making it one of the easternmost border checkpoints of the EU. This means that EU and non-EU citizens alike who cross Estonia's borders will be entering common European space, and will not face further border controls when traveling to any other Schengen country. In December 2007, Estonia signed an arrangement for the exchange of terrorist screening information pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive #6.

Finland

Finland continued its support of the War on Terror, as evidenced by the approximately 100 Finnish troops deployed in Afghanistan in support of ongoing NATO/ISAF operations. Government officials and the general population focused on economic, social, and development aid projects aimed at addressing the conditions that terrorists exploit. Finland maintained its annual contribution of approximately $15 million in development assistance to Afghanistan, and announced new law enforcement, humanitarian, and counternarcotics assistance initiatives. Finnish and American officials shared counterterrorism information effectively, including a wide range of information on threat assessments, terrorist networks, and government responses to both. Following its EU Presidency in the second half of 2006, when it made counterterrorism and combating terrorist financing top priorities, the Finnish government continued to participate actively in ongoing EU efforts to remove institutional barriers to counterterrorism cooperation.

Finland pressed for EU cooperation with the U.S and the international community on counterterrorism issues. The Government of Finland maintained legislative and regulatory mechanisms to keep close watch over potential terrorist cells or financial support operations and to interdict their activities within the country. Finland effectively implemented new regulations requiring ships to submit security-related information prior to entry into port. In cases when another government presented a legal request for action or when an individual or organization was suspected of having committed an offense within Finland's borders, Finland implemented regulations that allowed it to freeze assets without prior UN or EU action.

Finland engaged in significant efforts to mitigate the social and economic factors that might lead members of the country's extremely small (less than 2 percent) population of foreign-born residents to adopt extremist ideologies. It carried out programs to help Muslim and other immigrants find jobs and integrate into Finnish society, and it encouraged religious and ethnic tolerance through a variety of legislation, government-funded social programs, and ombudsmen's offices.

France

France dismantled terror networks on its territory and successfully convicted or extradited a number of high profile terrorists and their supporters. French authorities detained people with connections to a number of different terrorist groups, including Islamic terrorists, Corsican nationalists, Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) members, 17 members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and 16 Kurds with links to the Kongra-Gel/Kurdistan Worker's Party (KGK/PKK). The French government undertook several counterterrorism operations during the year against Islamic terrorism targets in coordination with other countries including the UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, and Portugal. France's efforts to avoid homegrown radicalization and extremism increased in 2007,

and included administrative and judicial action against people who incite violence or hatred, and social and economic initiatives to prevent the susceptibility of at-risk populations. Increasing Islamic radicalization in the prison system continued to worry French officials.

Several public announcements by al-Qa'ida (AQ) reiterated that France and French interests remain key targets of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). In December, French police arrested a group of eight people in Paris suspected of providing material support to AQIM. In September, AQIM injured two Frenchmen in an attack in Algeria, and in December, it killed four French tourists in Mauritania. In February, AQ members were also suspected of killing four French nationals in Saudi Arabia.

In February, counterterrorism police detained 16 Kurds suspected of links to the KGK/PKK; all were charged with various crimes including extortion, money laundering, and terrorism financing; and were suspected of providing financial support to the KGK/PKK to fund terrorist attacks in Turkey. Riza Altun, who has been wanted in Turkey for many years on terrorism charges, was among those arrested. After being released on bail, he fled France for Austria and was allowed to depart Austria for northern Iraq. Altun is still wanted in France and is being prosecuted in absentia.

In April, authorities arrested 17 people suspected of extorting funds from the Tamil community in France, and illegally transferring the money to Sri Lanka for use by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Unofficial reports noted that the LTTE raises as much as six million euros per year in France.

The French government increased its efforts to obtain the release of French-Colombian hostage Ingrid Betancourt (detained since 2002), and other hostages held by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Both President Sarkozy and Foreign Minister Kouchner engaged Colombian President Uribe and Venezuelan President Chavez to work towards Betancourt's release. In November, Colombian authorities seized FARC materials that provided proof of life of Betancourt for the first time since 2003.

France's most recent counterterrorism legislation was adopted January 23, 2006. Preliminary detention for terrorism suspects in France is six days. The state may thereafter place suspects in pre-trial detention for up to four years when the evidence is compelling or when the suspect presents an imminent threat. In conjunction with local government, the national government increased video surveillance in major cities. French law also allowed for freezing of assets, video and telephone surveillance, monitoring of public transport records, and broad powers of official access to connection data held by Internet cafes and to various personal data records. The sentence for a convicted terrorist is up to 30 years for leading or organizing an attack, and from ten to twenty years for assisting a terrorist organization or operation. French nationality may be revoked, leading to eventual expulsion from French territory if the terrorist became a citizen through naturalization within the preceding 15 years.

France continued its active engagement with the UN Security Council (UNSC) Counterterrorism Committee (CTC), the G8's Counterterrorism Action Group (CTAG), the UNSCR 1267 Sanctions Committee (for the Taliban and AQ), and the European Council's Antiterrorism Strategy action plan. France is an original member of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and continued to participate actively. France remained a member and contributor to both the Proliferation and Container Security Initiatives.

In March, French Justice Minister Pascal Clement inaugurated an international justice network on terrorism. The network brought together justice officials from nine different countries2 whose legal systems have centralized terrorism-related cases. The concept was to create a dialogue among nations' experts about how to use the judicial system to counter terrorism.

On the military front, France contributed three additional Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) to Afghanistan and transferred six Mirage fighter jets to Kandahar. France continued its participation in Coalition Task Force (CTF) 150, a multinational naval force that patrolled the Red Sea and Gulf of Yemen to interdict the movement of suspected terrorists between Afghanistan, the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. It has twice commanded the Task Force. France maintained its overall contributions to both the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and Operational Iraqi Freedom (OIF), with approximately 1,200 and 750 troops, respectively.

Following the assassinations of two Spanish police in southern France in December, French and Spanish officials announced the creation of permanent joint police units to combat Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA). The assassinations marked the first killings by ETA in France since 1976. A number of arrests of Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) suspects were made throughout the year, several of whom were extradited to Spain. Police also arrested 13 people with ties to ETA in September in connection with the June 2006 attack against the Hotel Ostape in the French Basque region.

France continued to develop competencies and capabilities of TRACFIN, the Ministry of Finance's terrorism financing coordination and investigation unit. Within the European Union, France played an active role in the Clearinghouse, the EU process for designation of terrorist organizations. France did not designate HAMAS-affiliated charities, such as the French based Comite de Bienfaisance et Secours aux Palestiniens (Committee for the Well-Being and Assistance to Palestinians), arguing that this institution had no proven links to terrorism. France also opposed EU designation of Lebanese Hizballah as a terrorist organization, although it supported Hizballah's eventual disarmament,

maintaining that disarmament would result in Hizballah's gradual integration into Lebanese politics. Attacks on the French island of Corsica decreased in 2007, totaling 180. The government had a widespread police presence in the region and arrested dozens of people throughout the year in connection with various attacks. No deaths were reported and only a handful of minor injuries resulted from the attacks. The December conviction of Corsican extremist Yvan Colonna (convicted of the 1998 assassination of the highest ranking national government representative in Corsica), however fueled a rise in attacks at the end of 2007.

Key judicial proceedings involving Islamic terrorism related crimes included:

- The French government continued its policy of expelling non-French citizens engaged in terrorist activities or speech that promoted hate or incited violence. Among those ordered expelled from France were as many as 18 foreign imams who preached values determined to incite hate or violence.

- In April, France expelled Rachid Benmessahel to Algeria, and permanently banned him from entering France. Benmessahel was a French citizen who was sentenced in March 2005 on terrorism-related charges. His nationality was revoked in accordance with French law.

- In May police arrested Kamel Bouchentouf, a French citizen collaborating via the Internet with AQIM. Bouchentouf confessed to planning attacks against multiple targets including the American Embassy in Luxembourg.

- On December 19, five of six French former Guantanamo detainees expelled to France in 2004 and 2005 were convicted on terrorism related charges and sentenced to several years in prison. The judge ordered the majority of their sentences suspended, however, reducing jail time to time already served based on their incarceration in France upon return from Guantanamo. One detainee, Achhab Kanouni, was acquitted of all charges.

- On June 19, Djamel Beghal, convicted in 2003 for planning a terrorist attack against the U.S. Embassy in Paris, was ordered by an Expulsion Commission to be expelled from France upon the completion of his prison term. Beghal was sentenced to ten years prison in 2003, but is eligible for "parole" as early as mid-2008. Beghal had his French nationality revoked by French courts in 2005. He is an Algerian national and, under the current order, would be sent back to Algeria once released.

- On June 20, eight members of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) were convicted in France for providing material support to a terrorist organization in connection with the May 16, 2003 terrorist bombings in Casablanca. Mustapha Baouchi, sentenced to ten years, was considered the leader of the French cell and the key link to the group.

- In March, French citizen Willie Brigitte was sentenced to nine years in prison for planning a 2003 terrorist attack against a nuclear plant in Australia and for ties to Islamic radicals. Brigitte was held in pre-trial detention in Paris since his expulsion from Australia in 2003.

Georgia

The Georgian government improved border security operations and worked to eliminate corruption at border checkpoints, focusing its efforts on stopping the smuggling of contraband, including money, illegal drugs, and all types of weapons (chemical, nuclear and biological) that could support terrorism. There were significant improvements in infrastructure at the major border crossing checkpoints: new facilities were opened at Sadakhlo, an important land border crossing between Georgia and Armenia, which greatly enhanced controls at that port of entry. The Georgian Coast Guard installed a new coastal radar station at Chakvi, improving that facility's ability to guard Georgia's coastline. The U.S.-funded Georgia Border Security and Law Enforcement program facilitated an expansion of Georgia's Passport Identification Registration System to a total of 15 land border, railroad, and airport ports of entry. The land border between Russia and Georgia proper remained closed throughout the year. Border crossings into Russia from the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia operated, but were not under the control of the Government of Georgia. This situation allowed for the unrestricted and unidentified flow of people, goods, and other items from Russia into these regions.

Georgia contributed over 2,000 troops to counterterrorism efforts in Iraq and became a contributing nation to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

In January, the Georgian government sentenced a Russian citizen from North Ossetia to eight years in prison for a 2006 attempt to sell 100 grams of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium to Georgian undercover agents. In June, radiation sensors at the Red Bridge border crossing detected a load of contaminated metal originating in Azerbaijan, indicating those sensors were operational.

In the Pankisi Gorge in northeastern Georgia, the U.S.-funded Georgia Train and Equip Program (2002-2004) assisted Georgia in regaining control of the area by raising the combat effectiveness of the Georgian armed forces. According to the latest official reports, there were 1300 Chechen refugees in the Pankisi Gorge, down from 7000 in 1999. Anatoly Zabrodin, head of the Border Protection Department of the Russian Federal Security Service, noted publicly that there were no attempts by militants to infiltrate Russia from Georgia in 2007.

Germany

Germany participated in counterterrorism military operations overseas, provided leadership in multilateral settings, and fought terrorism within its borders. Although no terrorist attacks took place in Germany, a major terrorist plot was disrupted on September 4. The three individuals arrested in the plot included two ethnic Germans and a Turkish citizen resident in Germany. The group had acquired large amounts of hydrogen peroxide for possible use in multiple car bomb attacks. German officials said that the suspects were connected to the designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG). Concerned about the threat from radicalization, the government reached out to at-risk communities, in particular youth, through programs designed to foster integration, including German language classes, after school sports, etc. The government also made efforts to work with Muslim organizations to encourage and motivate opinion leaders within the Muslim community to counter extremist messages. The Ministry of Interior continued the Islam Conference that it began in 2006. The conference is made up of several working groups that meet on a regular basis, one of which discussed issues related to radicalization.

Germany was the third largest troop contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, with more than 3,000 troops deployed. Germany led the ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Kunduz and Feyzabad, provided a forward support base in Mazar-e-Sharif, and commanded ISAF's northern region, which encompassed nine provinces and five PRTs. Germany was the top European contributor to the EU police training mission in Afghanistan, EUPOL; and made available 100 Special Forces to operate in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The German Navy participated in OEF off the Horn of Africa and Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea. Germany's contribution to these naval operations included fast patrol boats that sought to prevent the movement of terrorists and weapons of mass destruction.

Germany was especially active in multilateral fora to promote counterterrorism cooperation; Germany held the EU Presidency during the first half of the year and the G8 Presidency for all of 2007. In January, German Federal Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble pushed for EU-wide adoption of the main provisions of the Pruem Treaty, an agreement signed in 2005 by seven European states that provides for greater cross-border law enforcement and judicial cooperation. Germany also used its EU Presidency to establish the "Check the Web" initiative that allows EU member states to submit and retrieve information from a central Europol-managed facility on Internet sites used by terrorist and extremist groups for radicalization, recruitment, and training purposes. As EU President, Germany took the initiative to hold EU troika meetings with Pakistan and Indonesia to expand EU counterterrorism cooperation with these two nations.

During its G8 Presidency, Germany placed a particular emphasis on supporting UN counterterrorism activities and topics such as terrorist use of the Internet, protecting critical energy infrastructure, and countering radicalization and recruitment to terrorism. These priorities were reflected in the G8 Heiligendamm Summit Statement on Counterterrorism and the Report on the G8 Support to the UN Counterterrorism Efforts. Germany's chairmanship of the G8 Roma-Lyon Anti-Crime and Counterterrorism Subgroup saw a record number of project proposals being addressed and new initiatives being agreed upon to tackle issues such as bulk cash smuggling used to finance terrorism.

In September, Germany's Foreign Office co-organized an international seminar in Berlin with key negotiating parties to discuss outstanding issues related to the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and ways that the negotiations might be advanced. The Germans remained steadfast advocates of the UNSCR 1267 sanctions regime and played an active role in suggesting the development of mechanisms to ensure due process in the regime. The United States works actively and cooperatively with the Germans on UN Security Council 1267 Committee listing and de-listing issues.

The German government implemented legislation and established new facilities to strengthen its ability to fight terrorism. On January 11, an extension of the 2002 Terrorism Prevention Law came into effect which extended for another five years the counterterrorism provisions contained in the 2002 law. The legislation also better defined the role of intelligence services in counterterrorism activities and broadened and simplified the ability of German security agencies to obtain travel, financial, and telephone data. In January, a Joint Internet Center was established in Berlin to monitor Islamic terrorist and extremist websites that are used for radicalization, recruitment, and training purposes. The center was staffed by representatives from domestic and foreign intelligence offices, law enforcement agencies, and the office of the public prosecutor. On March 30, a unified terrorism database was established and came into operation which combines information on members and supporters of terrorist and violence-prone groups from nearly 40 federal and state law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

During the year, German law enforcement authorities arrested a number of individuals suspected of involvement in terrorism. Prominent new actions and arrests included:

- The September 4 arrests of three individuals suspected of planning large-scale terrorist attacks. The suspects are alleged to have attended terrorism training camps in Pakistan.

- The August 14 arrest of German-Turkish citizen Tolga Duerbin who was deported from Pakistan to Germany by Pakistani security forces following his arrest there. Duerbin is alleged to have attended a terrorist training camp in Pakistan. After nearly four months incarceration, Duerbin was released on December 10 following a plea agreement.

German courts began trials or reached verdicts in some notable counterterrorism cases:

- In December, the trial of Youssef Mohammad El-Hajdib began at the Dusseldorf Higher Regional Court. Lebanese national El-Hajdib is charged with attempted murder and attempting to cause an explosion by placing bombs hidden in suitcases on commuter trains in Cologne in July 2006.

- On December 5, the Dusseldorf Higher Regional Court convicted Syrian national Ibrahim Mohamed Khalil and two Palestinian defendants (brothers Yasser Abu Shaweesh and Ismail Abu Shaweesh) of membership in and/or support of AQ, insurance fraud, and attempted procurement of enriched uranium for a "dirty bomb." The defendants received prison sentences of seven, six, and three and one half years, respectively.

- In September, the trial of Ibrahim Rashid started at the Celle Higher Regional Court. This was Germany's first trial in which the defendant's actions were carried out solely on the Internet. Rashid was charged with 28 counts of having promoted membership in, and support of, al-Qa'ida.

- The Bavarian Supreme Court sentenced two individuals to prison for supporting a foreign terrorist organization (Ansar al-Islam) and violating Germany's foreign trade law (for transferring money to Ansar al-Islam members in Iraq). Dieman Abdulkadir Izzat was sentenced on June 25 to three years and three months in prison and Farhad Kanabi Ahmad was sentenced on July 9 to five years and six months in prison. Izzat was also found guilty of fraud for having illegally obtained payments from the Nuremberg welfare office.

- In July, the trial of suspected AQ supporter Redouane El-Habhab began. El-Habhab, a dual German-Moroccan national, is accused of supporting al-Qa'ida, violating the German Foreign Trade Law, and assisting in the founding of a terrorist organization abroad.

- On January 8, the Hamburg Regional Court convicted Mounir el-Motassadeq of membership in a terrorist organization and of 246 counts of accessory to murder in connection with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. The court sentenced Motassadeq to a 15-year prison sentence, which is the maximum sentence that can be imposed under the German Penal Code for this crime. Motassadeq's lawyers appealed the sentence, but on May 11, the German Federal High Court in Karlsruhe rejected the appeal.

- The trial of three Iraqi alleged members of Ansar al-Islam, Ata Abdoulaziz Rashid, Rafik Mohamad Yousef, and Mazen al-Hussein, continued. German prosecutors have charged the three, who have been in detention since December 2004, with a plot to assassinate former Iraqi Prime Minister Allawi during his visit to Berlin. Prosecutors also charged them with financial crimes and membership in, financing, and recruiting for a foreign terrorist organization. The trial started in 2006.

German–U.S. bilateral counterterrorism cooperation is strong. Germany participated in several USG programs to combat terrorism, including the Customs and Border Protection's Container Security Initiative in the ports of Hamburg and Bremerhaven. The Transportation Security Administration's presence in Frankfurt, together with U.S. and German air marshals, formed key parts of bilateral efforts to provide air transport security for the seven German airports with flights to the United States.

Greece

With improved counterterrorism infrastructure in place following the 2004 summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece continued to fight international and domestic terrorism. There was concern that Greece, because of its long coast line and proximity to the Middle East, could be used as a transit route for terrorists traveling to Europe and the United States. Greek authorities cooperated with U.S. officials to address the problem. Cooperative efforts included information sharing, training of Greek security and customs officials, training of judicial personnel, and improving border and cargo-container security through such programs as the Container Security Initiative (CSI). Greece was also an active participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). A bilateral PSI ship boarding agreement was under consideration at year's end. Greece sustained its participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan by providing engineers and ISAF Headquarters personnel totaling about 130 troops. Greek forces were limited to operating in the Kabul region. Greece has also offered to provide an embedded Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team to train the Afghan Army.

From the mid-1970s until earlier this decade, the domestic Marxist terrorist group November 17 (N17) targeted Greek officials, as well as officials from NATO countries residing in Greece. During that period, five employees of the U.S. Embassy were murdered by N17, which was responsible for 23 killings altogether. Many of the N17 terrorists were apprehended by Greek authorities in 2002 and tried for their crimes. In 2003, Greek courts handed down multiple life sentences to key N17 members. A group appeals trial for the N17 convicts and two previously acquitted individuals opened in December 2005. The appeals trial essentially represented a new trial for the convicts, since the Greek judicial system allows new facts and evidence to be introduced in the appeals phase. The appeals trial lasted far longer than the original trial, in part due to the defense team's tactics and the court's decisions allowing defendants great leeway to make statements and interrupt witnesses.

On May 14, the Athens Court of Appeals issued consolidated sentences in the N17 appeals trial. There were 226 counts of major felonies (murder, attempted murder,

attacks with explosives) in the original trial, resulting in convictions on 224 counts. The appeal proceedings involved de novo review of 225 counts (the public prosecutor appealed one acquittal on behalf of the United States). During the appeal proceedings, six counts became time-barred under Greek law. Of the 219 counts remaining, convictions were sustained on 218. The six members of the operational core of N17 received a total of 44 life sentences. Seven members received various prison terms. Six of those originally charged were either acquitted or prosecutions were time-barred under Greek law.

During the original N17 trial, a new domestic terrorism group calling itself Revolutionary Struggle (RS) emerged. RS is a radical leftist group, which aligned itself with the ideology of N17 and may have incorporated some previous members of N17. RS was believed responsible for nine violent terrorist attacks since 2003, including the 2004 murder of a Greek guard outside the British Defense Attaché's residence. In 2006, RS claimed responsibility for triggering a remote-controlled explosive device placed along the vehicle route of the Greek Minister of Culture (formerly the Greek Minister of Public Order). The Minister was not injured in the attack. RS claimed responsibility for the rocket propelled grenade attack against the U.S. Embassy on January 12, 2007. The attack took place before normal working hours and no Embassy personnel were injured. The Hellenic National Police and the Embassy continued to work together on the investigation. No arrests were made.

Throughout the year, self-styled "anarchists" attacked banks, police stations, and other "imperialist-capitalist targets" with tools such as firebombs and Molotov cocktails. Since these attacks usually occurred at night, few persons were seriously injured and there were no deaths. Several U.S. businesses were targeted. Police officials pursued a more proactive approach to deterring these violent attacks and arrested perpetrators. No damage to the Embassy or injuries to personnel were noted in the last several years.

Hungary

Hungary made a long-term commitment to continue its leadership of a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan and proceeded with plans to increase its deployments there to more than 200. The Hungarian government continued to implement fully domestic legislation to ensure compliance with EU norms regarding financial transactions and money laundering. Cooperation on border security issues remained excellent in both the bilateral and regional context. Hungary assumed responsibility for its part of the EU's Schengen border in December. Its preparations for this responsibility, including the merger of the Border Guards into the National Police, should further enhance its ability to monitor the border for individuals and items of concern.

Iceland

The Government of Iceland worked to strengthen domestic border security and counterterrorism capabilities and increased links with neighboring states and in international bodies. The government signed bilateral security agreements in April with Norway and Denmark pledging to increase regional counterterrorism cooperation. The Icelandic Coast Guard (ICG) continued its capacity-building efforts with contracts for the purchase of new air and sea assets and was a founding member of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum in October.

In August and September, Iceland hosted two NATO exercises, each involving a counterterrorism component: NORTHERN VIKING 2007 featured separate air defense and ground-based counterterrorism elements; NORTHERN CHALLENGE 2007 was an ICG-hosted event focusing on Explosive Ordnance Disposal and counterterrorism scenarios.

The United States and Iceland held the first post-Naval Air Station Keflovik (NASKEF) round of high level security dialogue talks in June. Iceland-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation increased through the establishment of a formal linkage between the ICG and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) First District in Boston. In April, Iceland hosted a USCG International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) Program assessment visit.

The Icelandic government supported multilateral counterterrorism efforts. In May, Iceland joined the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Support for the NATO mission in Afghanistan remained strong. While Iceland withdrew its Mobile Liaison and Observation Team from a NATO Provincial Reconstruction Team in May, it continued its deployment at Kabul International Airport and supported NATO/ISAF operations through funding for airlift and other means.

In July, the FATF released an assessment of Iceland's anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regime.

Ireland

Strong counterterrorism measures implemented in previous years were sustained and relations between USG and Irish law enforcement officials continued to be positive. The Irish government permitted the transit of U.S. military personnel and materiel though Irish airspace and airports for deployment to theaters in Iraq, the broader Middle East, and elsewhere. Ireland has continued a modest troop commitment to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

In July, the European Commission criticized Ireland for failing to implement properly the European Arrest Warrant, which enables EU states to ask other member states to arrest and surrender criminal suspects and is a useful instrument for fighting terrorism. The European Commission alleged that Ireland often takes more than the specified 90 days to execute the warrants.

Italy

Italy aggressively investigated and prosecuted terrorism suspects, dismantled terrorist-related cells within its borders and maintained high-level professional cooperation with its international partners. In December 2007, Italy and the United States signed an Aide Memoire for the exchange of terrorist screening information. Italy's law enforcement and judicial authorities continued counterterrorism efforts with several noteworthy cases during the reporting period. In June, authorities issued arrest warrants in Milan for nine Tunisian nationals, including Ben Khemais Essid Sami, for recruiting militants for training in Afghanistan and providing logistical and financial support for a Milan-based Salafist terror cell from 1997 to 2001. In July, police arrested three Moroccan nationals in Perugia on terrorism charges, the culmination of a two-year investigation. The individuals, who included the Imam of the local mosque, were in possession of terrorist training items and chemicals used in explosives making.

In October, police arrested Iraqi national Saber Fadhil Hussein on charges of leading a cell that sought to procure ultra light aircraft and anti-tank rockets from Italian and other sources for use in attacks against coalition forces in Iraq. Also in October, a Milan court resentenced Mohammed Daki, a Moroccan immigrant accused in 2003 of recruiting suicide bombers for Iraq, to four years imprisonment in absentia. Maher Bouyahia and Ali Ben Saffi Toumi, both Tunisian, were sentenced in the same ruling to six years imprisonment, overturning a January 2005 decision by a Milan judge that acquitted Daki and the others on the grounds that they were "guerilla fighters" and not terrorists.

In October, a Spanish court acquitted Rabei Osman Sayed Ahmed, an Egyptian national currently serving an eight-year prison term in Milan, of involvement in the Madrid train bombings. This verdict did not affect his sentence in Italy, where he was found guilty in 2006 of subversive association with international terrorism for having recruited suicide bombers in Italy for Iraq. In November, as part of an international sweep involving British, French, and Portuguese authorities, police arrested 11 suspects (primarily Tunisians and Algerians) across Northern Italy and charged them with having been members of a Milan-based cell that recruited and sent suicide bombers to Iraq and Afghanistan. In December, a Milan court convicted Egyptian-born Imam Abu Imad and ten others of promoting jihad and recruiting potential suicide bombers. The members of the group received sentences ranging from two to ten years.

Domestic anarchist-inspired and extreme-left terrorist groups presented a continued (albeit small-scale) threat despite Italian authorities' continued efforts to dismantle their organizations. In February, in a string of simultaneous raids across northern Italy, police arrested 15 people suspected of membership in the operational wing of the Red Brigades. Police found arms caches during searches and determined that the cells were planning attacks on leading political figures, including former Prime Minister Berlusconi. Italian authorities have stated publicly that many radical Islamist groups in Italy were inspired by or connected to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other terrorist groups, and used Italy as a logistical and financial base. KGK/PKK affiliated organizations maintained a presence in Italy and were thought to have links with affiliated charitable organizations that maintained Italian branches. Italy worked closely with the United States on money laundering matters and information sharing.

Italy aggressively identified and blocked financial resources destined for suspected terrorist individuals and groups. Italy was one of the most active countries in the world with regard to the number of individuals and organizations submitted for designation to the UNSCR 1267 Sanctions Committee against al-Qa'ida (AQ) and the Taliban (73 individuals and 15 organizations). Since 2001, Italian authorities have frozen Euro 500,000 (ca. 720,000 USD) in assets belonging to individuals or entities in Italy suspected of financing terror activities. Italy worked closely with the United States on money laundering matters and information sharing. As an active member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Egmont Group, Italy cooperated actively with other foreign governments.

As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Italy played an active role in the UNSC Counterterrorism Committee and in UNSCR 1267 Committee deliberations and was a strong proponent of multilateral cooperation in countering terrorism. Italy was also a leading financial contributor to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Counterterrorism Prevention Branch.

Italy was an important partner in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and the Container Security Initiative (CSI), and was an initial partner nation of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. On December 4, The United States and Italy concluded initial negotiations on an HSPD-6 data sharing agreement and signed an Aide Memoire on data sharing.

Italy was a vital participant in NATO's Active Endeavour naval mission against terrorism in the Mediterranean, and contributed to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, where it held Regional Command-West and rotating command of the Kabul Region, and in Iraq, where it played a lead role in the NATO Training Mission. Italy contributed training personnel to various regional counterterrorism training centers such as the South East Asia Regional Centre on Counterterrorism (SEARCCT) in Malaysia, the Joint Centre on Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) in Indonesia, and the African Union's Anti-Terrorism Centre in Algeria.

Kosovo

The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) continued to monitor suspected terrorist activity with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). Officials

believed that a few of the more than 400 NGOs operating in Kosovo were involved in suspicious activities, and sought to prevent extremists from using NGOs to gain a foothold in Kosovo. Consequently, municipalities authorized NGO use of public facilities for religious gatherings only if the relevant religious community consented.

The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) and UNMIK Police Counterterrorism Units (CTUs) were primarily responsible for Kosovo's counterterrorism efforts, but were small and lacked resources. They received information and analysis support from the UNMIK Central Intelligence Unit (CIU) and the UNMIK Police Intelligence Liaison Unit (ILU), but also relied on the KPS CTU's intelligence, surveillance, and investigations units. The KPS established its CTU in October 2006 and incorporated it into UNMIK Police's CTU in January 2007. Consequently, it focused on building up its unit, training and equipping its officers, and collecting information on potential terrorist threats. UNMIK Police CTU monitored, mentored, and advised their KPS CTU counterparts, and exercised executive authority over them.

Porous boundary lines that were easily crossed by individuals trafficking in people, weapons, and narcotics hampered Kosovo's counterterrorism efforts. The Kosovo border police service lacked basic equipment, and only had a mandate to patrol the green border (areas that lack official, manned border, or administrative boundary line gates) from two to three kilometers beyond the actual border and boundary lines. NATO-KFOR roving teams patrolled the green border right up to the actual border and administrative boundary lines, but numerous passable roads and trails that lead to Kosovo lack border or boundary gates. Moreover, poorly paid border and customs officials were susceptible to corruption.

Witness intimidation was also an obstacle to combating terrorism in Kosovo. UNMIK's Department of Justice reported that it created a Witness Protection Task Force to address this issue. The Task Force reportedly worked on constructing a new safe house in Kosovo, encouraged the use of video conferencing equipment now in place in Kosovo's district courts, and increased efforts to secure relocation agreements with other jurisdictions.

According to the UNMIK Department of Justice (DOJ), there were three terrorism-related convictions, and seven terrorism cases underway with local judges and prosecutors. International prosecutors and the Kosovo Special Prosecutor's Office (KSPO) also initiated four terrorism-related investigations and filed two indictments, which were pending confirmation at year's end. One of the indictments was related to Albanian National Army (AKSH) activity, and one of the investigations involved the Front for Albanian National Unification (FBKSH), the AKSH's political wing.

The AKSH, which UNMIK designated as a terrorist organization in 2003, continued to intimidate Kosovo citizens. In June, its Tirana-based spokesman, Gafurr Adili, told Kosovo media that AKSH members in several Kosovo towns had distributed leaflets threatening violence if the Serbian paramilitary group Tsar Lazar Guard ventured into Kosovo for the annual June 28th commemoration of the 1389 Battle of Kosovo. Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) war veteran leader Abdyl Mushkolaj also made similar threats, adding to concerns over the commemoration. As a result, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) issued an executive decision prohibiting the Tsar Lazar Guard or any paramilitary group from carrying out activities in Kosovo. The commemoration passed without incident.

In an October interview on Radio Television Kosovo (RTK), heavily armed, masked individuals in black uniforms bearing the AKSH insignia appeared from an undisclosed location described as an AKSH training facility near the administrative boundary line with Serbia. One of them told viewers the "boys of former wars" wanted to show they were ready to counter the threat of Serbian paramilitaries. Adili later claimed that the people RTK featured were AKSH and that they were "filling a void" created by KFOR's alleged abandonment of several villages near Serbia proper in the municipalities of Podujevo and Kamenica. AKSH had long claimed to operate only in areas outside of KFOR or Kosovo Protection Corps control, and was reportedly also active in southern Serbia and western Macedonia.

Latvia

Latvia's Financial Intelligence Unit continued to maintain a terrorist financing database that it shared with local banks. Since the May 2005 U.S. Treasury designation of two Latvian banks as institutions of "primary money laundering concern" under Section 311 of the Patriot Act, Latvian government and regulatory agencies have worked very closely with the United States to enhance their legislative and regulatory framework. There have been no further sanctions on Latvian banks. In 2006, Treasury lifted the proposed sanction against one bank. In the case of the second bank, the issue is specific to the bank and its ownership structure, and does not reflect Latvian regulatory efforts.

On May 15-16, the counterterrorism exercise "Seajack" was conducted within the NATO international search and rescue exercise "Bold Mercy". Seajack was organized by the Coast Guard Service of the Latvian Naval Force together with the Counterterrorism Center of the Security Police. On October 25, a national exercise was conducted at the International Airport Riga, organized by the Security Police and International Airport Riga in cooperation with the Counterterrorism Unit OMEGA and other Latvian governmental agencies.

Latvia contributed 98 soldiers to support the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. In October, the team's mandate was renewed for one year and is now scheduled to expire the same day that the UNSCR mission mandate expires (October 23, 2008). In Iraq,

Latvia had two officers under Polish command. In December, the Latvian Parliament renewed the authority for Iraq deployment until December 31, 2008.

Lithuania

President Adamkus introduced a Lithuanian-Belarusian intergovernmental agreement to combat organized crime and trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, terrorism, and other crimes (Decree No. 616), which came into force in February. In May, Lithuania ratified the International Convention on the Fight Against Nuclear Terrorism. The Lithuanian military was an active participant in multinational operations against terrorist and insurgent elements. At year's end, Lithuania had approximately 50 troops in Iraq, including an infantry platoon serving in Multinational Division Center (MND-C) near Al Kut and trainers in the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I). In Afghanistan, Lithuania led a provincial reconstruction team in remote Ghor Province. This element consisted of approximately 150 Lithuanian troops and civilians responsible for maintaining a stable environment throughout the province to enable reconstruction efforts. An additional 50 Lithuanian Special Forces troops operated under NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Southern Afghanistan.

Macedonia

Macedonia passed legislation on nuclear security and terrorism, chemical weapons, and entered into bilateral law enforcement, security, and extradition agreements. Macedonia supported troop rotations to Afghanistan and Iraq. The government trained several hundred police and military personnel in counterterrorism techniques, technologies, and methods. The commitment of Macedonia in Iraq was increased by an additional platoon.

Macedonia provided adequate security on potential terrorist weapons with annual inventories and worked to improve security on its weapons facilities. With USG assistance, the Macedonian government destroyed 156 shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles (SA-7's), an important counterterrorism achievement. The Macedonian Ministry of Defense provided support to the Ministry of Interior for actions against domestic and regional terrorist groups.

The Government of Macedonia continued its close coordination with the United States on counterterrorism matters, which included intelligence sharing on potential terrorist groups operating in or transiting the country. The government also cooperated with its regional and European Union partners, and worked closely with INTERPOL and other international law enforcement agencies. Macedonia's efforts were hampered by the porous nature of the Kosovo border.

Malta

The Government of Malta continued to freeze assets of organizations on the consolidated list promulgated by the UNSCR 1267 Committee. Since its accession to the EU in 2004, Malta has actively participated in the EU Clearing House and cooperates with other Member States and third states to prevent and suppress terrorist acts, including the preparation and financing of any acts of terrorism, denying safe havens to terrorists, and exchanging information in order to prevent the commission of terrorist acts.

Some of the most significant Maltese contributions to international counterterrorism efforts were in support of U.S. military operations, including approval of requests for overflight and emergency landing for all military aircraft including those with hazardous material, use of the Malta Shipyards for repairs of U.S. Navy ships, and full security support for visiting U.S. Navy ships. Malta also demonstrated a commitment to interdiction operations and compliance with international requests.

While the Government of Malta was responsive to requests for action in support of the War on Terror, a lack of financial resources, dedicated training, and specialist staff sometimes hampered their efforts. Malta made significant progress in the area of customs inspection and border security procedures, however. Improvements included establishment of both the authority for Maltese Customs to inspect goods transiting the container port (Malta Freeport) and the necessary procedures to prevent the transshipment of WMD material through the Freeport. Maltese police and intelligence service officials have provided timely assistance to the Embassy's requests for investigation of potential suspects or groups within or transiting Malta as well as other terrorism related intelligence.

The United States affirmed its commitment to developing Malta's counterterrorism efforts by committing a 2005 earmark of $2,976,000 in the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) budget toward the purchase of a helicopter to enhance Malta's ability to control its borders and deter terrorists. Final acquisition will require the Government of Malta to more than match the U.S. contribution.

The Maltese criminal code included specific provisions on terrorism. The law addressed "acts of terror" and "terrorism" and enumerated actions that constitute the offense. Malta criminalized terrorist financing. Recently, Malta's Prevention of Money Laundering Act was expanded to include provisions on the "funding of terrorism." In addition, the Act broadened the money laundering mission of Malta's Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and gave it the authority to focus on terrorism funding. In February 2006, the Prevention of Money Laundering Regulations was extended to include "financing of terrorism," which criminalized terrorist financing and imposed additional obligations, namely customer due diligence, record keeping, reporting, and training procedures.

With Malta's entry into the EU in 2004, and its geographic location between northern Africa and the European mainland, Malta could become increasingly attractive to terrorist organizations seeking entry into Europe. The

Government of Malta has become increasingly concerned about migrant discontent and the possibility of radicalization within the detention centers. Maltese government officials received training last summer from the EU on recognizing the signs of radicalization, and from the FBI on the radicalization process, indicators, and infiltration.

Moldova

Moldovan support for counterterrorism included deploying servicemen to Iraq for humanitarian demining operations. In June, Moldova deployed its fifth contingent to Iraq. Returning in December, the contingent consisted of eleven personnel. To date, 87 Moldovan servicemen have served in Iraq. The Moldovan Ministry of Defense (MOD) also deployed two liaison officers to CENTCOM headquarters. One officer is Moldova's Senior Representative to CENTCOM while the other officer is attached to CENTCOM's Coalition Planning Group.

In October, in an effort to establish communication and response protocols and to evaluate the capabilities of the Moldovan national SWAT team, Embassy Chisinau and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) conducted a day-long, joint counterterrorism training exercise at the Quality Schools International (QSI) campus in Chisinau. This exercise simulated a terrorist attack against the school and a corresponding hostage situation. Approximately 25 U.S. Embassy children attend QSI and participated in this drill. The MIA performed well and new emergency assistance protocols were established between the Embassy and the Government of Moldova.

Moldova continued to work on implementation of obligations under UNSCR 1373 (and E.O. 13224, the Terrorism Finance Executive Order) and provisions related to terrorist financing. The Moldovan government continued to manage a counterterrorism strategy based on its 2003-2008 National Action Plan on Combating Terrorism.

The separatist-controlled Transnistria region of Moldova remained a potential area of concern. Moldovan law enforcement worked hard to track the whereabouts and activities of individuals moving in and out of Transnistria, an area where Moldovan police and security services do not have the authority to operate. Many of these individuals were foreign students who remained in Moldova illegally, as the government lacked the resources to deport them when their visas expired. Corruption was endemic, and it was easy to obtain false travel documents. The U.S. Embassy does not maintain liaison relationships or contacts with Transnistrian law enforcement and/or security service personnel. To date, the United States has not obtained any information about known terrorist organizations or terrorists operating from or within this region.

The following counterterrorism laws and "governmental decisions" were enacted:

- November 14: Information and Security Service of the Government of Moldova, Decree no. 75 constituting the publication/identification of known or wanted international terrorists and terrorist organizations (designation of foreign terrorist subjects and organizations);
- September 3: Government Decision no. 990 constituting the approval of the Cooperative Agreement between the Governments of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova in combating terrorism, organized crime, and other severe crimes;
- July 26: Law (190-XVI) on Preventing and Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing;
- June 5: Government Decision no. 632 constituting the approval of the National Strategy and Action Plan for preventing and combating money laundering and terrorism financing; and
- April 6: Government Decision no. 372 constituting the approval of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Center for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption and the Government of Georgia's Financial Monitoring Service in combating money laundering and terrorism financing.

Law enforcement and intelligence officials had the authority to intercept wire, oral, and electronic communications, with the investigator required to obtain prosecutorial concurrence and authorization from a judge. A specific section in the Prosecutor General's Office would handle any terrorism-related case. The primary investigative body in counterterrorism cases is the Information and Security Service (SIS), Moldova's intelligence service. In 2006, SIS was given the governmental lead to establish and manage a special Counterterrorism Center. Substantial assistance from the American Embassy's law enforcement assistance programs aid Moldovan efforts to impede the ability of terrorists and other citizens without proper immigration documents to cross national borders. The programs also facilitated automation at ports of entry to ensure greater security of passports and travel documents.

The Netherlands

The Dutch responded to the global terrorist threat with leadership and energy in the areas of border and transportation security, terrorist financing, bilateral counterterrorism cooperation, and Coalition efforts in Afghanistan. The Netherlands deployed over 1700 troops to Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The Dutch led a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Uruzgan province, headed the rotational command in Kandahar of NATO's efforts in southern Afghanistan for six months (ending in May), and provided in extremis support for Iraq. The Netherlands deployed as many as 14 trainers and security guards in support of the NATO Training Mission in Iraq, and pledged approximately 40 million USD for Iraqi reconstruction.

In an April quarterly terrorism threat analysis, the Dutch National Counterterrorism Coordinator (NCTb) lowered

the threat level from "substantial," where it had been since the government began producing the quarterly assessments in 2005, to "limited." The second lowest of the four levels, "limited" means that the identified threat from individuals or networks is relatively slight, but cannot be ruled out entirely. In the October threat assessment, the NCTb cited events in Denmark and Germany, and concern about continuing internationalization of the violent jihad in Afghanistan as the rationale for maintaining the level at "limited." It also noted a significant drop in the number of reports about possible Islamic radicalization among the Dutch population, citing growing resistance among the Muslim population to terrorist actions.

Nevertheless, the assessment warned about growing support for Salafism. According to an October report by the AIVD intelligence service, the Netherlands had approximately 20,000 to 30,000 Muslims who are susceptible to extremist ideology. As concern over possible radicalization mounted, the government launched efforts meant to foster integration and to combat the appeal of violent extremists, including teaching imams the Dutch language and culture. In 2007, the Dutch government devoted millions of euros and reorganized some offices in order to take on these issues in a more concerted way.

In November, the Justice Ministry launched a new phase in the "Netherlands against Terrorism" campaign that began in 2006, with a particular focus on the prevention of radicalization. In November, the Interior Ministry's National Advisory Center for Vital Infrastructure Protection (NAVI) was opened. The government's terror alert system, initiated in June 2005, now includes 14 economic sectors: the financial sector, seaports, airports, drinking water, railway, natural gas, oil, electricity, nuclear, chemical, municipal and regional transport, hotels, public events, and tunnels and flood defense systems. This early-warning system was designed to trigger a clear and rapid response to terrorist threats by both the public and private sectors. It linked sector-specific measures to be taken in response to the latest threat information from the National Counterterrorism Coordinator. In June, the Port Security Act came into force, expanding the definition of a "port" to include all works and facilities in the port area, including both seagoing and inland commercial maritime transportation-related facilities. In October, a biannual national disaster exercise, known as "Voyager," was held in and around the port of Rotterdam.

There were three major terrorism-related cases this year. In the Hofstad group appeal case, the public prosecutor's office sought 18-year prison sentences for both Jason Walters (a dual U.S. - Dutch national) and Ismael Aknikh, who were sentenced to 15 and 13 years imprisonment, respectively, for attempted murder and weapons violations in the trial court's March 2006 verdict. The prosecution argued that the two had acted with terrorist intent when they threw a hand grenade at police officers in The Hague in November 2004. The prosecution further argued that all Hofstad Group members acted with terrorist intent in sowing hatred and threatening politicians. The trial court ruled, in March 2006, that the Hofstad Group was a criminal organization "with terrorist intent," and found nine of the 14 defendants guilty of membership in a criminal and terrorist organization, but that there was insufficient evidence to convict the individual defendants of acting with "terrorist intent" in committing the criminal offences with which they were charged.

After two previous acquittals, the Amsterdam appeals court sentenced Samir Azzouz to four years imprisonment for having prepared terrorist attacks on government buildings in 2004. Azzouz was currently serving an eight-year sentence in the separate "Piranha" terrorism case.

In October, the Rotterdam district court acquitted five of the six suspects arrested in November 2006 on suspicion of terrorist recruitment, participating in a terrorist organization, and obtaining false travel documents. The court ruled that there was insufficient evidence that the defendants had "ideologically prepared" each other or other persons to fight in Afghanistan or Iraq to convict them on terrorist recruitment charges. One female defendant in the case was sentenced to one month imprisonment for distributing subversive documents.

Dutch officials remained committed to active cooperation with the United States in designating known terrorist organizations, and interdicting and freezing their assets, and supported the continued exchange of information on financial transactions. The Dutch government worked with the United States to emphasize the importance of balancing security, the effectiveness of the financial system, and data protection concerns in the debate over SWIFT, an international messaging service for cross-border money transfers that provided information to track terrorist financing.

In October, the Cabinet approved a bill to make participation and cooperation in a terrorist training camp a serious punishable offence, even if the training takes place outside the Netherlands; the offense would carry a maximum prison sentence of eight years. The bill, currently before the Council of State for review prior to submission to Parliament, would implement Article 7 of the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism. In March, the lower house of Parliament approved the Bill on Administrative National Security Measures, which would allow the Interior Minister to issue restraining orders to prohibit a terrorist suspect's physical proximity to specific locations or persons. At year's end the bill was awaiting action by the upper house of Parliament.

The port of Rotterdam completed the installation of 31 radiological portal monitors at container facilities. The radiological monitoring program was initiated in 2004 as a pilot project under the U.S. Department of Energy's Megaport/Second Line of Defense Initiative. In October, a new mobile container scanner became operational in the port of Rotterdam. The scanner has a processing capacity of 20 containers per hour, or 175,000 per year. During bilateral law enforcement consultations in October, the United

States and the Netherlands agreed to continue operational cooperation on counterterrorism, including the exchange of information on terrorism-related investigations. In October, three Dutch government officials observed the U.S. Top Officials (TOPOFF 4) national crisis management exercises.

In January, Wasem al Delaema, an Iraqi-born Dutch citizen was extradited to the United States for trial on charges of conspiring to attack U.S. troops in Iraq in 2003. Al Dalaema was the first Dutch citizen extradited on charges of terrorism, and the first person to be indicted in the United States for terrorist activities in Iraq.

Norway

Norwegian authorities considered the threat of terrorist attacks in Norway low and the widespread belief among the general public was that no one would attack Norway. However, the continued presence of Mullah Krekar in Norway and preparations for the upcoming trial of Arfan Bhatti highlighted gaps in Norway's existing legal system that the government was moving to address.

Alleged Ansar al-Islam leader Mullah Krekar, an Iraqi Kurd listed in December 2006 under UNSCR 1267, lost his final appeal of the government's expulsion order in Norway's Supreme Court this fall. Despite this ruling, Krekar will remain in Norway for the foreseeable future as the government still is unable to receive sufficient human rights assurances from Iraq to proceed with deportation. This situation brought to light the limited tools the police have to detain individuals deemed a danger to society. The government introduced legislation that would allow stricter controls over movements of suspected terrorists, including possible house arrest. Budget shortfalls limited the ability of the police to monitor dangerous individuals' activities, but to the extent possible, the police have put a high priority on counterterrorism activities.

Arfan Bhatti, a Pakistani Norwegian, remained the only individual in custody after the September 2006 arrest of four individuals suspected of shooting at an Oslo synagogue and planning attacks on the U.S. and Israeli embassies. In the summer, the government presented a revised version of the 2002 terror law designed to improve the law and bring it in line with international obligations. Questions were raised, however, whether the new law will be too restrictive in its definition of a terrorist act and of what constitutes aiding and abetting or financing terrorism.

Norway has contributed more than 500 troops to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts in Afghanistan.

Poland

Poland supported international counterterrorist efforts with vigorous participation in foreign missions. About 1,000 Polish troops served the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. In Iraq, Poland commanded the MND-CS, headquartered in Ad Diwaniyah, provided approximately 900 troops engaged in active patrolling, and trained and advised Iraq's 8th Army Division.

Through participation in initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, Poland was actively engaged in many international fora combating terrorist threats. Poland's December integration into the Schengen zone also served as another strong argument for close collaboration with European neighbors on counterterrorism.

The bilateral Counterterrorism Working Group (CTWG), formed in 2005 to further U.S.-Polish collaboration on counterterrorism by synchronizing counterterrorism policy and training counterterrorism specialists, held its most recent meeting in March. We agreed to collaborate on identifying ideal candidates for training under the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP). Under the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP), Embassy Warsaw provided Poland with $430,000 for special operations officer training, regional seminars, and terrorism focused programs.

The Government of Poland continued to recognize that terrorist threats can emanate from two sources: traditional migrant groups entering Poland from the east, such as Chechen refugees who may become radicalized, but also from western neighbors who have previously experienced threats or attacks stemming from radical Islamic groups. Groups with ties to organized crime also constituted a significant concern as a result of their experience with money laundering and access to fake documentation and weapons.

Portugal

Portugal supported international efforts to combat terrorist networks and actively pursued indications of extremist group activity in Portugal. Portuguese government agencies took steps to minimize exploitation of its financial sector by implementing European Community directives against money-laundering and illicit transfer of funds.

On November 6, Portugal's Judicial Police (PJ) arrested Algerian Samir Boussaha on charges of associating with, and recruiting for, an international terrorist organization. Eight other suspects were also arrested during similar operations across Europe. The Judicial Police coordinated its efforts closely with Italian officials and extradited Boussaha to Italy within one week of his arrest.

In another international case, Portuguese and Spanish law enforcement officers seized a car with 130 kilograms of explosives on June 22, which had been rented by members of the Basque terrorist group, ETA. The car was reportedly rented in Lisbon, and driven to Spain for a couple of days. On the way back into Portugal with the explosives, the driver saw a police outpost near the Spanish town of Ayamonte and abandoned the vehicle, fleeing with assistance

on the highway towards Seville. Portugal's border with Spain runs over 1,200 kilometers, and Portugal was studied as a possible staging location for ETA since 2003, according to press accounts.

In September, Portuguese officials announced plans to establish a Secretary General for Internal Security, to facilitate communication between the Judicial Police (FBI-equivalent), Public Security Police (national uniformed police), and a National Republican Guard (paramilitary police force).

Portugal supported International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts in Afghanistan with more than 150 troops.

Romania

Romania provided a full range of public and diplomatic support to counterterrorism efforts. Approximately 500 Romanian troops are serving in Iraq and 500 in Afghanistan as part of coalition and NATO Alliance efforts. In April, the Supreme Council for National Defense confirmed Romania's commitment of troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2008. Romania has made its airspace, ground infrastructure, and naval facilities available to U.S. and NATO forces. The Romanian government has established internal mechanisms to combat terrorism, including the development of a "National Anti-Terrorism Strategy" and guidelines to prevent the use of Romanian financial institutions, including its banking system, for the purpose of financing terrorist-related activities. Bucharest is the headquarters for the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SECI), a regional center that provided law enforcement training and intelligence sharing on transborder criminal activities, including terrorist-related activities, for the 12 member countries in South Eastern and Central Europe.

- In March, the Romanian Parliament ratified the Accord (originally signed in Bucharest in 2006) between the Indonesian and Romanian governments in the field of prevention and combating transnational organized criminality, terrorism, and other crimes.

- In April, the Government of Romania formally subscribed to the Statement of Principles for the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

- In August, the Chief of the Romanian Military Prosecutors, Dan Voinea, finalized the penal file regarding the 1981 terrorist attack against the Radio Free Europe Romanian service in Munich. Many Romanian journalists working at Romania Libera station were injured from the bombing, and sought civil damages in the penal file. The principal defendant in this case, the infamous Carlos "The Jackal," remained imprisoned in France.

- In October, terrorist suspects Tariq Mousa al Ghazi and Luis Felipe Moreno were handed over to the Drug Enforcement Administration by Romanian authorities. They were arrested in Bucharest in June, after attempting to sell weapons to U.S. undercover informers, and were extradited following the issuance of an international arrest warrant.

- Also in October, the Romanian Parliament's Chamber of Deputies adopted a draft law regarding cooperation in combating terrorism and organized crime, which ratified the Accord between the Romanian Government and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers, signed in Bucharest in June. The Chamber forwarded the document to the Senate for approval.

Russia

The Russian government continued to view counterterrorism as a top priority, and considered cooperation with the United States a pillar of bilateral relations. The scope of the Russian government's authority continued to grow, resulting in a greater number of terrorist acts being foiled and the continued weakening of formerly powerful terrorist groups. The majority of terrorist attacks continued to occur in the North Caucasus, where the pacification of much of Chechnya has correlated with an increase in terrorism in Dagestan and Ingushetia. Russia did not offer safe haven to terrorists, but there was evidence of a foreign terrorist presence in the North Caucasus with international financial and ideological ties. As in 2006, there were no high-profile terrorist incidents in Russia involving a large number of civilian casualties. According to Minister of Interior Rashid Nurgaliyev, there were 38 terrorist attacks in Russia in the first nine months of the year, compared to 561 terrorist acts committed in 2003.

Major terrorist acts included the following incidents:

- On August 13, a Moscow-St. Petersburg train was derailed in the Novgorod region, injuring sixty. Three members of the St. Petersburg League of Anarchists were arrested.

- On October 31, a suicide bomber blew up a bus in the Samara region, killing eight and wounding fifty, although Russian officials had not determined by the end of the year if the incident was terrorism or organized crime-related. They were investigating a Caucasus trail, Russian ultranationalists, and Chechen-based organized crime.

- On November 22, five people were killed and thirteen injured in a bomb explosion on a passenger bus in Stavropol; on December 9 another bus was blown up in the same region, killing two and injuring thirteen. Law enforcement agencies suspected the same terrorist group carried out both incidents.

- In May, the Federal Security Service (FSB) announced that it thwarted a terrorist attack planned for the Russia-EU summit in Samara.

- Other security incidents, such as a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) that exploded near the Krasnopresnenskaya Metro, and a VBIED that was located and disarmed just prior to the May 9 Victory Day celebrations, both in the Moscow area, may have been terrorist acts.

In Chechnya, from 2005-2007, mass attacks on civilians diminished in favor of increased targeted attacks on policemen, local interior ministry officials, and departments responsible for fighting the insurgency, although an increasing number of attacks failed or were prevented by Russian and Chechen special services. In January, more than 500 militants surrendered to authorities as part of an amnesty following the 2006 death of Shamil Basayev, the militant Islamist leader of the Chechen separatist movement. The incidence of violent acts increased in Dagestan and Ingushetia, but it was often difficult to characterize whether they were the result of terrorism, political violence, or criminal activities. In September, Rappani Khalilov (the "Emir" for Dagestan), whom the Russians had described as a terrorist, was killed by Russian forces. The FSB stated that special attention will be paid to the prevention of terrorist attacks in the North Caucasus.

The 1998 federal law "On Fighting Terrorism" and the 2006 federal law "On Countering Terrorism" remained the main counterterrorism legal authorities. The National Antiterrorism Committee, organized in 2006, was the main government body coordinating the Russian government's response to the terrorist threat.

The United States and Russian Counterterrorism Coordinators met in November to advance cooperation within the context of the United States-Russia Counterterrorism Working Group. Cooperation continued on a broad range of counterterrorism issues, including efforts to destroy, safeguard, and prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Russian law enforcement agencies also cooperated closely with U.S. agencies. Past participation led to the release of a hostage victim and the conviction of a U.S.-based subject attempting to purchase shoulder-to-air missiles.

Regulating and investigating terrorist websites was a major concern with numerous requests to the United States for assistance from both the FSB and the Cybercrime Directorate.

At the St. Petersburg G8 Summit in July 2006, the United States and Russia jointly announced the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and invited other nations to join. The Initiative demonstrated Russia's effort to take a leadership role in establishing a partnership among nations to accelerate efforts to combat nuclear terrorism. It includes 66 partner nations committed to combating nuclear terrorism in a variety of ways, including safeguarding radioactive and nuclear materials, preventing nuclear smuggling, and sharing information. The third meeting of the Initiative took place in Kazakhstan in June. Russia increased its commitment to fighting terrorism in Afghanistan. Through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Russia committed financial and technical resources and also supported the OSCE's initiative to develop projects aimed at strengthening security along Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.

In September, Russia hosted the Sixth International Meeting of the Heads of special services, security agencies, and law-enforcement organizations, which FBI, CIA, DOE, and NCTC attended. Russia participated in the OSCE Public-Private Partnership Counterterrorism Conference, which focused on partnerships between state authorities, civil society, and the business community in combating terrorism. Russia has also expanded counterterrorism activities into newer regional groups. The scenario for the August 9-17 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) "Peace Mission 2007" exercise in Chelyabinsk involved combating a terrorist takeover of a village. Under the scenario, approximately 6,500 troops from all six SCO countries, but primarily Russia and China, worked together to defeat terrorists and free hostages. The SCO also signed an agreement with the CSTO on the joint fight against terrorism.

Russia is a member of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (FATF). It is also a leading member, chair, and primary funding source of the FATF-style body known as The Eurasian Group on Money Laundering (EAG). EAG members include Russia, China, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Russia, through EAG, provided technical assistance and funding towards establishing legislative and regulatory frameworks.

Serbia

Serbia cooperated with the United States on a wide range of terrorism issues, including border security, information sharing, terrorist financing, and export controls.

In December, the Government of Serbia agreed to join the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Serbia, however, has not yet ratified the bilateral Weapons of Mass Destruction Agreement, which it signed in 2006. Failure of the Serbian Parliament to ratify the agreement prohibited the duty free import and donation of equipment that could be used to counter terrorism.

Serbia's law enforcement and security agencies, particularly the Customs Administration, Criminal Police, Security Information Agency, and Border Police, continued bilateral counterterrorism cooperation. Serbia had two police organizations that operated as counterterrorism tactical response units, the Special Antiterrorist Unit (SAJ) and the Counterterrorist Unit (PTJ). The Serbian government also began developing a third Counterterrorist force, an investigative unit within the Ministry of Interior's Criminal Investigation Directorate. The U.S. International Criminal Investigative Assistance Training Program's Organized Crime Advisor, in conjunction with Serbia's new Counterterrorist force, conducted an antiterrorism work-

shop in Serbia in November. The workshop covered trends in international terrorism, the formation of a Joint Terrorist Task Force, investigative techniques, vulnerability assessments, crime scene management, case studies, and practical exercise problems. In March, police raided a mountain cave near the town of Novi Pazar in the Sandzak region of Serbia. Large quantities of plastic explosives, ammunition, face masks, military uniforms, bombs, and other supplies were found at the site, which authorities believed was a training camp for Muslim fighters. Police found terrorist propaganda materials, military survival manuals, and maps. In April, during a search of another suspected terrorist hideout, Serbian police killed Ismail Prentic, the suspected leader of the local terror group. In total, police took 15 suspects into custody in connection with this operation.

Slovakia

In March, Slovakia hosted a Counterterrorism Fellowship Program seminar that was a follow-on to a 2005 seminar. Participants from law enforcement, judicial, military, and foreign affairs agencies in ten Central and East European countries participated.

Although Slovakia withdrew its last two officers from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the Minister of Defense and Prime Minister said publicly that this was part of a larger plan to focus efforts on three larger missions, including the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. In December, the Slovak Parliament approved a plan to send 56 additional soldiers to Afghanistan, nearly doubling Slovakia's contribution to the NATO mission, albeit with caveats on their deployment. Domestically, Slovakia's Ministry of Defense took the lead in developing a cross-agency Counterterrorism Training Facility in Lest, which is also used by both the Ministries of Interior and Finance.

Slovakia officially acceded to Europe's border-free Schengen zone on December 21. Although not directly involved in Slovakia's preparation for Schengen, the United States provided assistance to Slovakia's efforts to secure its borders against terrorist threats. In December, Slovak police arrested three men near the border with Ukraine, who were attempting to sell 400 grams of what was later evaluated as not being highly enriched uranium. Slovak police announced that they had worked cooperatively with Hungarian counterparts for a number of months in advance of the arrests, and had both the sellers and potential buyers under surveillance.

A suspected terrorist, Mustapha Labsi, has been held in Slovak custody since May. In November, the Bratislava Regional Court approved a Slovak Government request to extradite him to Algeria where he was convicted in absentia to life in prison, but the verdict was on hold pending an appeal to the Supreme Court. Slovakia's Justice Minister said that he personally will take the final decision on extradition in light of stated concerns that Labsi could be subject to torture in Algeria.

Slovenia

Slovenia participated in three Internal Control Program training sessions, which concluded the Export Control and Border Security Program in Slovenia. It also hosted a regional Proliferation Security Initiative exercise, and continued to provide instructors as part of the NATO training mission in Iraq. Slovenia also contributed 65 troops to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts in Afghanistan.

Spain

The Government of Spain and its citizens were concerned that their country has been and remained a principal target of Islamic extremism and acts of international terrorism. Al-Qa'ida (AQ) leaders Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri routinely called for the recapture of the former Muslim-controlled region in Spain they still call "al-Andalus." Almost four years have passed since the March 11, 2004, Madrid train bombings without another successful Islamic extremist terrorist attack on Spanish soil, but the Spanish government remained on a heightened state of alert. Spain cooperated closely with the United States to investigate and prosecute acts of terrorism and to prevent future attacks, and worked hard to disrupt terrorist acts that possibly were directed against U.S. interests. Spain was the first EU country to sign an arrangement for the exchange of screening information on known and suspected terrorists.

Spain remained an important transit point and logistical base for terrorist organizations operating in Western Europe. Its geographic location, large population of immigrants from North Africa, and the ease of travel to other countries in Europe, made Spain a strategic crossroads for international terrorist groups and an important staging point for North African extremists heading to Iraq to join the insurgency. The Spanish government feared that experienced terrorists may soon make their way back to Spain in a reverse terrorist pipeline. Spanish media reported in July that the Iraqi terrorist group Ansar al-Islam had established a recruiting cell in Catalonia to route would-be suicide bombers from Spain to Iraq.

Spain aggressively targeted terrorist recruiters and facilitators and arrested 47 suspected terrorists in 2007, according to the Ministry of Interior. The National Court Chief Prosecutor reported that as of November, Spain held a total of 139 terrorist suspects, either under a prison sentence or awaiting trial. Many of these individuals were believed to be supporters of terrorist groups such as AQ, al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM).

For much of the year, Spain was focused on the trial of 29 individuals suspected of involvement in the Madrid train bombings that killed 191 people and wounded hundreds of others. On October 31, Spain's National Court returned guilty verdicts on 21 individuals and handed down sentences ranging from three years to almost 43,000 years in prison. Under Spanish law, the maximum jail term an

individual can serve for terrorist crimes is 40 years. Only three of the individuals were convicted of complicity in the Madrid attacks; the rest were convicted for belonging to a terrorist organization, cooperating with a terrorist organization, trafficking in explosives, and/or document forgery. The Spanish government, including its law enforcement and intelligence services, government ministries, and national prosecutors and judges came together to carry out an in-depth and comprehensive investigation, prosecution, and trial on an issue of supreme national security and political importance. The Spanish government was able to energize and bring together its interagency community in a focused and highly-effective manner. The entire process was carried out in an open, transparent, and public way, despite the emotional circumstances of the attacks and the heightened political tensions and controversies surrounding its aftermath.

Since the 1960s, Spain has battled the Basque terrorist group Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA). The Spanish government began 2007 sifting through the rubble of a parking garage at Madrid's Barajas Airport that was destroyed by an ETA bomb on December 30, 2006, killing two individuals and effectively ending a "permanent ceasefire" the group had declared the previous March. ETA officially ended the ceasefire on June 6, 2007, and threatened to reopen its activities "on all fronts in defense of the Basque homeland." Good police work allowed Spanish security forces to thwart a number of potentially large attacks, but ETA was able to carry out a series of smaller strikes. On October 9, an off-duty police officer was the victim of an ETA attack when a bomb attached to his vehicle exploded at mid-day in a residential section of Bilbao. The officer survived with severe burns, and two bystanders were injured in the attack. This act was noteworthy because ETA had previously taken pains to avoid innocent victims when directing attacks against governmental targets. On December 1, alleged ETA gunmen shot and killed two Spanish Civil Guard officers in southwest France, the first such assassinations since December 2002. Spain has collaborated successfully with the Governments of France and Portugal to further squeeze ETA from all sides and limit its room to maneuver. As of early December, security services had arrested 122 alleged ETA members (76 in Spain, 40 in France, six in other countries).

In February, the Spanish National Court sentenced five individuals to 13 years in jail for belonging to a terrorist organization believed to have been planning a 2006 attack against a military base in southern Spain. These individuals are known in Spain as "The Detergent Command," due to their possession of large quantities of detergents that police believed were to serve as ingredients for explosive devices.

Spain participated in the Megaports and Container Security Initiatives, and worked hard to deny terrorists access to Spanish financial institutions. Spain maintained a robust law enforcement and intelligence posture against terrorist finance. In July, Spanish police arrested two Syrian nationals on money laundering and terrorism finance charges. Spain and the United States co-chaired the OECD's Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing. Spain was a member of the G8's Counterterrorism Action Group and provided technical assistance to other countries to help build their institutions to counter terrorist finance. Spain and France collaborated on a project to establish a Financial Intelligence Unit in Morocco.

Spain contributed more than 700 troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

Sweden

The Government of Sweden placed a high priority on increasing international cooperation against terrorism. Swedish authorities considered the threat of terrorist attacks inside Sweden to be low, but they monitored a number of known terrorists and terrorist organizations within their borders, including al-Qa'ida (AQ), Ansar al-Islam/Sunna, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Hizb Al-Tahrir, Hizballah, Islamic Jihad, and the Kongra-Gel/Kurdistan Worker's Party (KGK/PKK). They provided logistical and financial support to their respective organizations abroad.

In August, the Swedish artist Lars Vilks published a picture of the prophet Muhammed depicted as a dog in the local Swedish newspaper Nerikes Allehanda, as part of an article on freedom of speech. Several Muslim organizations condemned the picture. Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) offered a bounty to encourage the assassination of Mr. Vilks and his editor for having published the drawings. Following this incident, a group claiming to be supporters of AQ published a video on an Islamic website attacking Sweden and Swedish companies.

In January, the government participated in the NATO-led operation Active Endeavour focusing on maritime antiterrorism measures such as boarding procedures and smuggled weapons searches. Building upon a 2006 initiative to better prepare the military to assist law enforcement in responding to terrorist incidents in 2007, the police began training military pilots and marine commanders on providing such assistance.

The Government of Sweden did not provide safe haven to terrorists or terrorist organizations. Terrorist organizations, however, exploited Sweden's considerable legal protections of personal freedoms and civil liberties to maintain a presence in the country. Sweden's political asylum policy attracted individuals from areas of conflict. Although these numbers have not been verified, authorities on the subject have estimated there are approximately 1,500 members and supporters and 100 persons with ties to terrorist organizations in Sweden. According to Swedish terrorism experts, members of terrorist groups, such as Ansar al-Islam, Ansar al-Sunna, and Hizballah, earned money in Sweden to finance terrorist activities in other countries. The Swedish government shut down the al-Aqsa Foundation in Malmo when it was suspected of facilitating

such activity for Hizballah. Swedish law does not provide the government independent national authority to freeze or seize assets, unless in connection with an ongoing criminal investigation. However, once the EU takes action, the government can and does freeze assets of entities and persons listed on the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee list. This procedure is managed through the Sanctions Act (1995). Sweden can also take action against entities designated by the EU clearinghouse process, although Sweden has not yet proposed individuals or entities for inclusion on such lists.

Sweden implemented UN Security Council Resolutions 1267 and 1373 sanctions against AQ and the Taliban. Without a designation by the UN or EU however, Swedish authorities only have the right to seize assets once a criminal investigation has been initiated. Efforts to create a national authority and address existing shortcomings are underway.

Sweden played an active role in UN and EU deliberations to develop legal instruments for the listing and de-listing of terrorist organizations and an appeals process after the freezing of financial assets.

Sweden's ties to terrorism cases included:

- In January, three Swedes, accused of participating in Somali Islamist militia activity targeting Ethiopian troops, were apprehended in Kenya and taken to a prison in Addis Ababa. They were later released and returned to Sweden.

- In April, authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina sentenced 19 year-old, Bosnian-born Swedish citizen Mirsad Bektasevic to 15 years in prison on charges, inter alia, of conspiracy to commit terrorist acts against western targets.

- In September, the 41-year old Lebanese-born Swedish citizen Oussama Kassir, arrested in the Czech Republic in 2005 pursuant to a U.S. arrest warrant and INTERPOL Red Notice, was extradited to the United States. He was accused of conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists in connection with the planned establishment of an Islamist terrorist training camp in Bly, Oregon.

- Ahmed Essafri, a Moroccan-born Swedish citizen, was arrested in Morocco in December 2006 for allegedly having ties to the Moroccan Combatant Group and for participating in a recruitment network for foreign jihadis in Iraq. In September 2007, he was tried in Morocco on terrorism related charges.

- In 2005, the Swedish Court of Appeal found Ali Berzengi and Ferman Abdullah, Iraqi citizens with Swedish residency permits, guilty of financially supporting Ansar al-Sunna terrorist actions in Irbil, Iraq. They remained in custody awaiting a government decision on deportation.

Through the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (EFSP), Sweden contributed to capacity-building projects in Morocco, Algeria, and Indonesia. Sweden participated in EUROPOL and EUROJUST, European law enforcement institutions that coordinated member states' counterterrorism cooperation and activities. Additionally, it participated in the Nordic Council of Ministers Regional Forum for Nordic Governmental Cooperation.

Sweden drafted a development cooperation policy that identified ways that assistance could contribute to strengthening the recipient state's ability to prevent terrorism. Sweden contributed $575,000 to the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, $160,000 to the UN Counterterrorism Implementation Taskforce, and $150,000 to two intergovernmental organizations concentrating on counterterrorism capacity-building programs in Africa. Sweden also contributed $150,000 to legal counterterrorism education efforts at the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement Cooperation and initiated a dialogue with Pakistan on the possibility of providing greater training to Pakistani officials on terrorism financing methods.

Sweden has contributed 350 troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

Switzerland

The United States worked closely with the Government of Switzerland, the Swiss Bankers' Association, the financial community, and cantonal law enforcement authorities. Senior U.S. Treasury officials met frequently with Swiss officials throughout the year. Swiss security services continued to monitor activities of terrorist groups with a presence in Switzerland and coordinated with appropriate USG officials, although the scope of the coordination was limited. Swiss law severely restricts the level of information-sharing possible on banking issues.

The Swiss Parliament ratified the United States-Swiss Operative Working Agreement, which entered into force on December 1 and should facilitate more bilateral law enforcement and intelligence cooperation. The Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs also agreed to co-sponsor a second Bioterrorism Workshop (Black Ice II), with the State Department.

The Swiss have grown more conscious of the presence of terrorist groups on Swiss soil. Authorities tightened measures to curb terrorist use of telecommunications and banking services. The Swiss Federal Police (FEDPOL) once again described Switzerland as a "Jihadi field of operations." The Federal Council, Switzerland's Cabinet, extended its ban on al-Qa'ida (AQ) and kept frozen approximately $28 million in AQ and Taliban assets in 82 separate accounts. This total amount of frozen assets is among the highest of any nation. During the past year, Swiss banks reported eight terrorist-related money laundering transactions, down from 20 reports a year ago.

On June 15 the Federal Council modified Switzerland's money laundering legislation to bring it into compliance with the recommendations of the FATF. All financial institutions, not just banks, now are required to report suspicious transactions. Also on June 15, the Federal Council decided to transfer the Special Tasks Service (STS) of the Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy, and Communications (DETEC) to the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP). The STS serves as an intermediary between the criminal prosecution authorities and telecommunication service providers when it comes to the monitoring of correspondence by post and telecommunications. The surveillance measures must first be authorized by a judge. Telecom companies usually submit the required data to the STS, which forwards them to the criminal prosecution authorities for analysis. The STS does not undertake any surveillance nor does it have access to the monitoring results.

Swiss companies are slowly increasing the pressure on the Swiss government to allow them to participate in the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT) initiative, but Swiss legal barriers preventing Swiss firms from being active participants remained in place. Article 271, paragraph 1 of the Swiss Penal Code forbids foreign government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, from validating or contacting Swiss companies that export. Strict Swiss privacy laws also make initiatives such as C-TPAT difficult to implement.

Due in part to increased antiterrorism activities in neighboring EU countries, several terrorist organizations, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Kongra-Gel/Kurdistan Worker's Party (KGK/PKK), and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), have a presence in Switzerland. Existing Swiss law and practice prevent the government from listing these entities as terrorist organizations.

Switzerland has already ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure, and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime, and is a party to the UN International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.

The new "Pass 06" Swiss passport features electronically-stored data. The passport was introduced in September 2006 and provides greater reliability in identifying a person and is more tamper-resistant.

The Swiss government, recognizing the potential for terrorists to grow links in Switzerland, organized a meeting on November 26 between representatives of more than thirty Swiss-based Muslim organizations and the Federal Office of Police (FEDPOL) to address global issues related to internal security. Participants presented their views on internal security and stressed that it was important for them and condemned all forms of violence.

The Federal Council also took legislative steps to improve the nation's national security posture. On June 15, the Federal Council revised legislation enabling authorities to monitor terrorist suspects, spies and those involved with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction via telephone tapping, mail screening, video cameras, and bugs. The new measures must be approved by the Federal Administrative Court, the Justice Ministry, and the Defense Ministry.

In September, Justice Ministers from Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland created a working group to fight terrorism. The ministers also discussed the German-Austrian Pruem agreement on transborder exchange of DNA information, fingerprints, and data storage. Switzerland's Federal Office of Police is evaluating the conditions under which Switzerland could participate. The Swiss Justice Minister reemphasized that Switzerland was no haven for terrorists, and that Swiss bank secrecy provided no room for criminal money.

On July 12, 2006, then Swiss Justice Minister Christoph Blocher and then U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales signed a formal revision of the 2002 "Operative Working Agreement (OWA)". The new OWA was approved by parliament in June and entered into force on December 1, 2007. It will permit the exchange of law enforcement officials to create joint teams of investigators, though with restrictions on the use of information gathered by investigators. The new OWA extended the scope of the original, which was set up to regulate judicial cooperation in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States It provided the legal basis for joint investigations on terrorism and terrorism financing. These would only be set up once criminal proceedings had been launched in both countries and handed to a prosecutor. Unlike the initial OWA, cooperation was no longer limited to investigations related to AQ and the September 11 attacks, but extended to all terrorist groups linked to AQ. There has not yet been a formal investigation initiated under the scope of the OWA.

Turkey

Domestic and transnational terrorist groups have targeted Turkish nationals and foreigners, including, on occasion, USG personnel, in Turkey, for more than 40 years. Terrorist groups that operated in Turkey included Kurdish separatist, Marxist-Leninist, radical Islamist, and pro-Chechen groups. Terrorism in Turkey is defined in the Anti-Terror Law #3713 (TMK, 1991). "Terrorist" activities are composed primarily of crimes outlined in the Penal Code committed within the context of terrorist group activities, which target the structure of the state, changing or destroying the principles of the state, and aiming to create panic and terror in society. Thus, Turkish law defines terrorism as attacks against Turkish citizens and the Turkish state, and hampers Turkey's ability to interdict those who would target non-combatants globally. Most prominent among terrorist groups in Turkey is the Kongra-Gel/Kurdistan Worker's Party (KGK/PKK). Composed primarily of Kurds with a separatist agenda, the KGK/PKK operated from bases in northern Iraq and directed its forces to target mainly Turkish security forces. In 2005 and 2006,

KGK/PKK violence claimed hundreds of Turkish lives. This persisted in 2007, when the KGK/PKK continued its terrorist tactics. The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), a group designated under E.O. 13224, is affiliated with the KGK/PKK and has claimed responsibility for a series of deadly attacks on Turkish and foreign citizens in Turkish cities in recent years. KGK/PKK and TAK-linked individuals were discovered in late May in Istanbul, Adana, Konya, and Mardin with explosive materials designed to carry out suicide attacks. On May 25, the KGK/PKK claimed responsibility for the bombing of a cargo train in Bingol Province.

In the midst of weeks of violence, during which KGK/PKK attacks claimed scores of killed or wounded Turkish soldiers and citizens, the Turkish parliament on October 17 overwhelmingly passed a motion authorizing cross-border military operations against KGK/PKK targets in northern Iraq. Turkish forces carried out extensive operations along the Turkey-Iraq border in the latter part of the year. On November 5th, President Bush committed to provide Turkey "real-time, actionable intelligence" to counter the KGK/PKK in northern Iraq.

Other prominent terrorist groups in Turkey included the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), a militant Marxist-Leninist group with anti-U.S. and anti-NATO views that seeks the violent overthrow of the Turkish state; and Turkish Hizballah (not affiliated with Lebanese Hizballah), an organization of Sunni Kurds with a violent history. The Great Eastern Islamic Raiders Front (IBDA-C) is a decentralized Islamic revivalist group that was particularly active in the 1990s; it claimed ties with AQ.

A criminal trial for the 74 defendants allegedly involved in the four November 2003 Istanbul bombings concluded on February 16, with 48 of the 74 receiving jail sentences. Seven of those, including Syrian financier and operative Luay Sakka, were sentenced to life in prison; 26 were acquitted. The lead defendants admitted to contacts with AQ and warned of further attacks. Most of the other defendants denied responsibility for, or knowledge of, the bombings.

In January, the courts jailed seven Ansar al-Islam members for their role in the foiled 2004 assassination plot against President Bush, who was attending the Istanbul NATO summit. In June, the 13-year trial of Turkish Hizballah suspects for the murders of 24 people from 1992 to 1994 concluded with the acquittal of one and conviction and sentence of life imprisonment for ten. A local leader of the legal, Democratic Society Party (DTP) was jailed in April for aiding and abetting the KGK/PKK.

The Turkish National Police (TNP) and the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) conducted an aggressive counterterrorist campaign and detained numerous suspected terrorists in a number of raids, at least temporarily disrupting these groups before terrorist acts could be carried out, although prosecutions did not always follow the arrests. For example:

- In January, a multi-city crackdown netted 47 suspected terrorists associated with AQ;
- In March, 48 suspected Islamic terrorists were arrested in Konya;
- In June, a concentrated effort in Bursa resulted in 23 arrests;
- In November, in response to a German request, authorities arrested a German citizen in Konya allegedly involved in a disrupted terrorist plot.

Turkey has consistently supported Coalition efforts in Afghanistan. After commanding International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) II in 2002 and ISAF VII in 2005, Turkey led the joint rotational command of the ISAF in Afghanistan for the Capital Regional Command from April to December. Turkey was fielding a civilian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Wardak Province and pledged $100 million in humanitarian assistance for the reconstruction and operation of schools and hospitals.

Turkey has provided significant logistical support to Coalition operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, authorizing the use of Incirlik Air Base as an air-refueling hub for OEF and OIF and as a cargo hub to transport non-lethal cargo to U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Almost 60 percent of air cargo for U.S. troops in Iraq transits Incirlik. Establishment of this hub allows six C-17 aircraft to transport the amount of goods it took nine to ten aircraft to move from Germany, and saves the United States almost $160 million per year. Between one third and two thirds of the fuel destined for the Iraqi people and more than 25 percent of fuel for Coalition Forces transits from Turkey into Iraq via the Habur Gate border crossing. Turkey was active in reconstruction efforts, including providing electricity to Iraq. Turkey contributed headquarters personnel to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I), helped train Iraqi diplomats and political parties, and completed military leadership training in Turkey for 90 Iraqi officers as a further contribution to the NATO NTM-I.

In October 2006, a new law went into place giving MASAK, Turkey's Financial Crimes Investigation Board, sole responsibility for financial investigation of money laundering and financing of terrorism (ML/FT). In its February peer review report, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) evaluated Turkish standards to combat ML/FT. Among its major findings were that although the new legislation has been in place only a short time, the number of convictions for money laundering was relatively low; confiscation measures have not yet produced substantial results; and the number of suspicious transaction reports was also relatively low. Pursuant to its obligations under UNSCR 1267 and subsequent resolutions, Turkish officials continued to circulate UN and U.S.-designated names of terrorists to all law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and to financial institutions. Only UN-listed names, however, were subjected to asset freezes enforced through a Council of Ministers decree. This legal mechanism for

enforcing sanctions under UNSCR 1267 was challenged in Turkish courts by UN-designated terrorist financier Yasin al-Kadi. A lower-court reversed the ruling, but the appeals court upheld the Council's authority to freeze. In the meantime, al-Kadi's assets remained frozen.

Ukraine

Ukraine did not suffer from domestic terrorism incidents, although law enforcement authorities sometimes labeled ordinary criminal activity as terrorist acts. The Ukrainian government instituted legislative and regulatory changes to improve its ability to investigate and prosecute acts of terrorism. On May 24, the Ukrainian Parliament amended the Criminal and Criminal Proceedings Codes of Ukraine to conform to commitments resulting from Ukraine's ratification of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The new law implemented criminal sanctions for actions in support of nuclear terrorism. On January 31, the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers approved an action plan for countering terrorism financing. The Ukrainian State Financial Monitoring Agency continued to pass information to the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) to investigate whether organizations possibly engaged in terrorism financing activity were active in Ukraine, but the SBU found no evidence of such activity in Ukraine. From June 25-26, the SBU and the NATO Special Committee hosted a joint seminar on "organized crime and financing terrorism" in Odessa that brought together experts from 13 nations and NATO International Staff. Ukraine has made contributions to efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

United Kingdom

On June 29, three days after Prime Minister Gordon Brown took office, terrorists attempted attacks in London and, a day later, terrorists drove a vehicle into Glasgow airport, which caught fire. The terrorist plots were disrupted by the British police, the British public, and, in the London attempt, the failure of the explosive material to detonate. The first attempts took place in London, where the terrorists had left two cars filled with explosive materials outside popular nightclubs. A paramedic became suspicious of the contents of one of the vehicles, (the other had already been towed for parking illegally), which led to discovery of the plot. Neither vehicle detonated. The following day, two terror suspects, believed to have fled from London, attempted to drive a vehicle into an entrance of Glasgow airport. The vehicle caught fire and did limited damage to the building. One of the suspects did not survive the fire and a passer-by, who worked at the airport, apprehended the other suspect as he exited the burning vehicle.

A total of seven individuals were arrested in connection with the June attempted attacks. Among them were an Iraqi and other nationals from the Middle East, several of whom worked in the UK in health professions. These attempted attacks followed the pattern of a spike in attempted terror activity in the summer, beginning in 2005 with the July 7 and July 21 London subway and bus attacks (in which 52 civilians died) and the foiled transatlantic airline plot disrupted in August 2006, though there were no AQ core-inspired plots in 2007. Of the seven individuals arrested in connection with the June attempted attacks, one died, three were released without being charged, and three are awaiting trial.

Seventeen individuals were arrested and charged with various aspects of the airline plot disrupted in August 2006. This plot involved preparations for the detonation of explosives on aircraft traveling between the UK and the United States. One individual has been convicted, charges against one individual were dropped, and 15 are awaiting trial.

As to the attacks of July 7, 2005, four individuals have been arrested and are awaiting trial (four suicide bombers died). Regarding the failed attacks of July 21, 2005, on July 9 four of the would-be suicide bombers were found guilty of conspiracy to commit murder and received life sentences. One defendant was acquitted. An additional 16 suspects were arrested for aiding and abetting; two have been convicted and fourteen await trial.

In November, the head of the domestic Security Service told the press that the number of individuals residing in the UK whose support for terrorism posed a direct threat to national security and public safety was at least 2,000. This figure represented an increase of 400 individuals from 2006, an increase attributable to both the government's greater coverage of terrorist networks and the steady flow of recruits to the extremist cause. Deeply concerned about growing extremism, HMG sought through the "Prevent" portion of its Counterterrorism Strategy to prevent the radicalization of vulnerable populations by exerting influence on both extremists and their audiences, addressing structural problems that cause radicalization, and disrupting extremists' ability to gain access that means of communications such as websites, blogsites, and other forms of new media. HMG also made efforts to stimulate self-regulation from the mosques and imams.

The domestic Security Service official noted that over the course of the last five years, attack planning had derived from AQ leadership in Pakistan, often using young British citizens to mount the attacks. In 2007, the government's assessment of the threat against the UK never fell below "severe," which is defined as "an attack is highly likely." The threat level was raised briefly in June and early July, around the time of the London/Glasgow incidents, to "critical," defined as "an attack is expected imminently."

After the attempted attacks of June, which were carried out by resident foreigners working in the UK health field, the British government pledged to review how it vets foreign-born personnel working in the National Health Service (the main, state-run health care employer in the UK). In December, the British government announced it had allocated $14 million to secure and dispose of used radiological and other materials from British hospitals (that could be used as ingredients for a radiological weapon or

"dirty bomb"). The British government reorganized its governmental structures to better address terrorism. Changes included creation of an office of security and counterterrorism to coordinate all intra-governmental counterterrorism efforts, and the establishment of a research, intelligence, and communication unit (RICU) to lead British efforts to develop coherent messaging for domestic and international audiences on terrorist issues. The number of people working on counterterrorism was increased in both the Home Office and the domestic Security Service. The government increased its efforts to engage local communities through the establishment of a new ministerial position. In addition, the government announced its intention to meld the immigration and border control agencies into a single agency, a move meant to increase the government's ability to track movements of individuals entering and exiting the country. In November, the government said it would improve physical security for key infrastructure, including major train and air transportation hubs. The government announced it will increase education campaigns to teach private sector businesses how to improve their security.

Individuals were prosecuted under UK terror legislation on charges of "incitement to terrorism." On November 8, a Muslim woman, known as the "Lyrical Terrorist," was convicted under the Terrorism Act in the UK. The woman, arrested in October 2006, had a "library" of material useful to terrorists in her apartment. She was found guilty of possessing records likely to be used for terrorism, but not guilty of the more serious charge of possessing an article for a terrorist purpose. On December 6, she was given a nine-month suspended sentence, ordered to do 100 hours of unpaid work within the community, and will remain under supervision for 18 months. The government's prosecution on the grounds of "incitement to terrorism" were contested by some Muslim community organizations as amounting to "conviction for thought."

The UK provided assistance to U.S. extradition requests for three individuals charged with attacks of terrorism in the United States or against U.S. citizens. Khalid Al Fawwaz, Adel Mohammed Aboul Almagid Abdul Bary, and Ibrahim Hussein Abdelhidi Eidarous are wanted for alleged involvement in the bombing of American Embassies in East Africa. Two of the three await decisions by the Home Secretary as to whether to extradite them to the United States. They remained in custody. The Home Secretary declined to extradite one individual on humanitarian, medical-related grounds. Also in UK custody, where the Home Secretary is considering his extradition to the United States, is Mustafa Kamel Mustafa, aka Abu Hamza, who was found extraditable in November. The Home Secretary subsequently concurred with this decision. Abu Hamza has been found guilty in the UK of offenses relating to incitement to commit terrorist acts, has been sentenced to seven years, and is wanted in the United States on a variety of charges including conspiring to take hostages in Yemen in 1998. In May, the UK extradited Syed Hashmi to the United States; Hashmi is wanted for conspiring to provide and providing material support to terrorist activities in Afghanistan. The United States and the UK worked closely within the UN and the FATF to deny terrorists, and their supporters, access to the international financial system. The UK had strong legal provisions in place for freezing assets related to terrorist financing, including the Terrorism Act 2000, the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001, the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Order 2006, and to further restrict the flow of funds to anyone HM Treasury designates as involved in terrorism, the AQ and Taliban (United Nations Measures) Order 2006. The Brown government is currently proposing language in an upcoming Counterterrorism bill to authorize forfeiture of assets by anyone involved in any aspect of support for terrorism. Current law only allows forfeiture for those convicted of terrorist financing.

The UK has an arrangement with the United States for the exchange of screening information on known and suspected terrorists, pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive #6.

The UK has consistently supported the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and is currently the second largest troop contributor. The UK increased its contributions to more than 7,500 troops. The UK has also contributed approximately 4,000 troops to efforts in Iraq.

Northern Ireland

In October of 2006, representatives of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) announced their support for the Ireland/UK-brokered "St. Andrews Agreement," which was implemented in the spring. The St. Andrews Agreement restored power to the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) and envisioned a power-sharing arrangement between the unionists and republicans.

Elections for the Assembly were held in March. On May 8th, the Democratic Unionist Party's Ian Paisley assumed office as First Minister, and Martin McGuiness of Sinn Fein became the Deputy First Minister. Two key decisions underpinned the restoration of the NIA. First, at a party conference in January, Sinn Fein agreed to endorse policing. Next, the DUP contested the election in March, signaling that it would agree to share power with Sinn Fein. The Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC), a four-person body established by the Irish and British governments in 2004, regularly releases reports on paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The most recent publication, the Sixteenth IMC report released in September, praised the British government's "amazing progress" on its dismantling of Northern Ireland's military structure.

British commitments were on schedule: all security watchtowers have been dismantled, and all soldiers assigned to counterterrorism duties were removed from Northern Ireland. Special counterterrorism legislation was gradually

being rescinded. The IMC Commissioners expressed concern over the still-armed loyalist Ulster Defense Association's (UDA) lack of progress towards a strictly political existence and debated how long the UDA should be given to make the transition from paramilitary activity. The IMC Commissioners also stated that the IRA "has abandoned terrorism and violence and does not pose any form of threat relevant to security normalization." They also found that loyalist paramilitaries did not present a "terrorist type threat to the security forces," and were not likely to be a threat in the future. Republican dissidents did not have the resources to mount a major sustained violent effort. Nevertheless, dissident Republicans admitted responsibility for shooting two police officers in November, and were still considered a threat by security services.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Overview

Iraq remained at the center of the War on Terror battling al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and affiliated terrorist organizations, insurgent groups fighting against Coalition Forces (CF), militias and death squads engaged in sectarian as well as intra-communal violence, and criminal organizations. The Iraqi government, in coordination with the Coalition, made significant progress in combating AQI and affiliated terrorist organizations. There was a notable reduction in the number of security incidents throughout much of Iraq, including a decrease in civilian casualties, enemy attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IED) attacks in the last quarter of the year. Terrorist organizations and insurgent groups continued their attacks on Coalition and Iraqi security forces using IEDs, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), and suicide bombers. The Iraqi government continued to emphasize national reconciliation and made progress in passing key pieces of reconciliation-related legislation. There were practical steps taken that helped to advance reconciliation at the provincial and local level. The United States continued its focused efforts to mitigate the threat posed by foreign fighters in Iraq. State sponsors of terrorism, Iran and Syria, continued to play destabilizing roles in the region.

While the number and lethality of individual terrorist attacks in Israel declined in comparison to 2006, Israel nevertheless continued to suffer from terrorist threats emanating from the West Bank and Gaza, and was particularly vulnerable to rocket and mortar attacks launched against Israeli targets from inside Gaza. While there was an overall decrease in the number of successfully perpetrated terrorist attacks in comparison to previous years, Israeli security officials maintained that the decrease was not for lack of terrorists' efforts, but because the security services were able to keep terrorist planners and operators off balance and foil acts before they were carried out. Throughout the year, Israel's security services publicly reported several foiled attempts. In Lebanon, a campaign of domestic political violence continued. Most notable were the June 13, September 19, and December 12 car bombing assassinations of MP Walid Eido, MP Antoine Ghanem, and General Francois Hajj, respectively. Both MPs were part of the pro-government March 14 coalition. Several political allies of the two MPs charged that the Syrian government was responsible for the assassinations, which Syria strongly denied. These acts, the latest in a series of assassinations and attempted assassinations over the last three years, seemed designed to intimidate the pro-government forces and eliminate, through the process of killing MPs, their numerical majority in parliament.

There were several high profile attacks in Algiers, including the April 11 bombing of the Prime Minister's office and the December 11 near simultaneous bombing of the Constitutional Council and the UN headquarters in Algeria. These attacks underlined the substantial shifts in strategy made by al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) towards mass-casualty attacks employing suicide tactics and targeting Western interests. AQIM claimed responsibility for both attacks and touted them as major successes. In the latter case, AQIM inaccurately equated breaching the security in the heretofore highly protected Hydra neighborhood of Algiers with breaching the Green Zone in Baghdad.

Saudi Arabia suffered two high-profile terrorist incidents: the shooting of four French citizens and the violent murder of a high-ranking Saudi colonel. Saudi security forces managed to capture or kill most of the assailants involved in the two incidents and successive government roundups resulted in hundreds of arrests that likely disrupted terrorist cells planning to carry out attacks in the Kingdom.

A series of suicide bombing attacks shattered the relative lull in terrorist violence that had prevailed in Morocco since the 2003 Casablanca bombings. The attacks underscored that Morocco's greatest terrorist threat stems from numerous small "grassroots" Salafi Jihadist groups. The main external terrorism threat to Morocco was AQIM and its demonstrated willingness to train inexperienced Moroccan extremists. Morocco adopted a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that emphasized vigilant security measures, counter-radicalization policies, and strong international cooperation. In the wake of the December AQIM double bombing in Algiers, King Mohamed VI summed up Moroccan cognizance of the AQIM threat in a condolence message, stating that "Algeria's security is linked to the security of the region." On July 2 in Yemen, Abdu Mohamad Sad Ahmad Reheqa drove a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) into a group of western tourists in Marib, killing himself and ten others. Three days later, U.S.-trained Yemeni security forces killed the suspected leader of the SVBIED bombing Ahmed Basyouni Dwedar, an Egyptian wanted in Egypt. On August 8 and 13, Yemeni security forces raided two houses, arresting 17 and killing four AQ-affiliated suspects while suffering one casualty.

Most governments in the region cooperated with the United States in counterterrorist activities and undertook efforts to strengthen their capabilities to fight the War on Terror. These efforts included participation in USG-sponsored antiterrorism assistance (ATA) programs and taking steps to bolster banking and legal regimes to combat terrorist financing. Many countries continued to provide some form of assistance to Coalition efforts to bring peace and stability to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Algeria

The security situation in Algeria was marked by several high profile terrorist attacks throughout the country, an evolution of terror tactics and ongoing low-level terrorist activities in the countryside. Beginning in April, several high profile attacks were staged throughout Algeria, including the December 11 near simultaneous bombing of the Constitutional Council and the UN headquarters in Algiers. This attack against a Western hard target underlined the substantial shift in strategy by al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), who claimed responsibility for the attack and touted it as a major success.

Previously, AQIM's predecessor, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), had preferred to target Algerian government interests and had been more averse to suicide attacks and civilian casualties. Although Algerian government interests remained the primary focus of AQIM, this attack confirmed that foreigners were included as targets.

Two events helped fuel terrorism concerns in Algeria: the September 2006 merger of elements of the GSPC with AQ to form AQIM, and the conclusion of the amnesty period for Algeria's Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation in August 2006. National Reconciliation remained an open wound for much of the Algerian population, which is divided over amnesty and re-integration on the one hand and a more aggressive, unforgiving approach to terrorism on the other. Although the Charter has officially expired, its terms may still be applied on a case by case basis at the exclusive discretion of the Presidency.

Following the AQ September 11, 2006, announcement of affiliation, AQIM began to make more threats against what it termed "crusading" westerners, particularly American and French citizens, although Russians have been targeted as well. Even before its affiliation with AQ, the GSPC was an organization whose regional ties were expanding. AQIM support cells have been discovered and dismantled in Spain, Italy, Morocco, Mauritania, and Mali, and it maintained training camps in northern Mali.

The year was punctuated with over half a dozen high profile terrorist attacks that included:

- On February 13, AQIM claimed responsibility for car bombings in the provinces of Tizi Ouzou and Boumerdes that claimed six lives and injured many.
- On April 11, AQIM conducted its trademark attack against multiple targets in the city of Algiers. The terrorists targeted government offices and a police station with suicide car bombs.
- On September 6, the first suicide vest attack targeted Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Batna, 200 miles east of Algiers.
- On September 8, a suicide bomber attacked the coast guard barracks in Dellys.
- In December, a roadside bomb attack again targeted a Russian company bus west of Algiers.
- The December 11 double suicide bombing of the Algerian Constitutional Council building and UN Headquarters in Algiers.

The most alarming trend was the evolution of tactics to include the use of suicide bombers to conduct attacks in Algeria. We have witnessed a shift in Algeria to tactics that have been successfully employed by insurgents and terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan. The use of suicide car bombs, suicide vests, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by Algerian terrorists indicated a greater level of cooperation and training by AQIM. Of greater concern was the degree that AQIM consistently changed its profile throughout the year. For example, the August 8 suicide bomber was a 15-year-old boy, the youngest suicide bomber in the history of Algeria. Meanwhile the suicide bomber who struck UN Headquarters on December 11 was a 64-year-old man, in the advanced stages of cancer, potentially the oldest. The proliferation of tactics used in Iraq has had a profound effect on the level of organization and sophistication employed by the terrorists in Algeria. The main sources of funding for AQIM remained kidnapping for ransom, muggings, and the narcotics trade in Southern Algeria/Northern Mali. Individual cells in Europe also provided support through small scale funding.

Algerian security services expressed a concern about AQIM using propaganda based on the call to fight in Iraq as a hook to recruit young people, many of whom never made it to Iraq but were redirected towards joining local groups. In previous years, the AQIM propaganda videos originating in Algeria were of amateur quality and poorly produced. This has changed dramatically. It was evident that AQIM has placed a greater emphasis on improving the quality of the videos, and that these videos and communiqués were orchestrated to attract Algerian youth to the AQIM "cause." Several videos posted on the Internet, such as the series "Shadows of the Sword" and "Apostate Hell," showed operations conducted against Algerian military and security targets that included preparations for the attacks and pre-briefings with the commanders that led the attacks. The ability to conduct an attack and claim responsibility via communiqué within hours demonstrated the importance AQIM placed in transmitting their message in an attempt to win the media war.

It was estimated that the Algerian security services killed and arrested upwards of 1100 terrorists, compared to the estimated combined killed and arrested figure of about 650 for 2006. Notable successes were the surrender of GSPC founder Hassan Hattab in late September and the September 6 killing of AQIM central zone emir Zohair Harek. On September 10, Harek's deputy Fateh Bouderbala was arrested, effectively removing the top leadership of the central zone. The counterterrorism successes of the Algerian services, combined with the public's continued rejection of terrorists, have possibly influenced AQIM's shift in tactics to the use of suicide bombers. AQIM was believed to have resorted to suicide attacks as a result of its operational weakness, and to demonstrate its AQ link by adopting the organization's trademark modus operandi. Suicide attacks were cheap and attracted media attention. The head of the Algerian External Intelligence Service confirmed that AQIM's membership was becoming more international. However, the service also noted that the recruitment of foreigners had been limited thus far as a result of the joint efforts of neighboring states.

AQIM, thanks in part to high unemployment among Algerian youth, was partially successful in replenishing its numbers after the arrests, surrenders, and deaths of over 1,000 terrorists. Those remaining appeared to be more hard-line and resistant to the government's amnesty offer. Despite the upsurge of AQIM activity toward the end of the year, overall, the government had greatly improved security from the situation of the late 1990s. That said, the Algerian military and security forces were often perceived as slow to adapt to AQIM's changing tactics and have shown a resistance to accepting that they now face a better organized international threat in the form of AQIM. The Algerian security services and military remained capable of handling a prolonged effort against internal terrorist threats and were a reliable counterterrorism partner.

Bahrain

The Government of Bahrain actively monitored terrorist suspects, but domestic legal constraints at times hampered its ability to detain and prosecute suspects. Using the new 2006 counterterrorism law1, security forces monitored the travels and activities of a Bahraini citizen and arrested him on August 8. His arrest and the subsequent investigation led to the arrest of a number of other men. Prosecutors charged each with membership in a terrorist organization, undergoing terrorist training, facilitating the travel of others abroad to receive terrorist training, and financing terrorism. Their trial began on October 23 and had not concluded at year's end.

Bahrain continued to host the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA FATF) secretariat. The MENA FATF concluded Bahrain's mutual evaluation in November 2006 and published it in early 2007.

Egypt

There were no successful terrorist attacks in Egypt, due mainly to the vigilance and effectiveness of Egypt's security services. The Egyptian government's active opposition to terrorism, and effective intelligence and security services, made Egypt an unattractive locale for terror groups. Nonetheless, Egypt's northern Sinai region remained a haven for smuggling weapons, explosives, funds, and people between Egypt, Gaza, and Israel. Criminal networks that smuggle weapons and other contraband through the Sinai into Israel and Gaza may be associated with or used by terrorist groups in the region. The apparent radicalization of some Sinai Bedouin may be linked in part to these smuggling networks and to the Bedouin's long-standing complaints of discriminatory and heavy-handed treatment by the central government.

In the past four years, Egypt has tightened its terror finance regulations in keeping with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. Egypt passed anti-money laundering legislation in 2002, established a financial intelligence unit in 2003, and ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. The Government of Egypt kept open, regular lines of communication with U.S. officials concerning terrorist finance information. Egypt maintained its strengthened airport security measures and security for the Suez Canal, and continued to institute more stringent port security measures.

The Egyptian judicial system does not allow plea bargaining, and terrorists have historically been prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Terrorism defendants may be tried in military tribunals or emergency courts.

Many of the Egyptian president's far-reaching powers in the realm of counterterrorism come from a decades-old Emergency Law, which was renewed by Parliament for two years in 2006. President Mubarak has pledged to lift the Emergency Law by June 2008 and has called for new anti-terrorism legislation to replace the Emergency Law, noting that Egypt should follow the example of other countries that have recently passed comprehensive laws to combat terrorism. Such legislation was being drafted by a governmental interagency committee at year's end.

The United States hosted the third session of the United States-Egypt Counterterrorism Joint Working Group.

The imprisoned former leader of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Sayid Imam al-Sharif, issued a detailed "revision" of his previous ideology of violent jihad. His revised approach to jihad did not amount to a rejection of the concept, but an attempt to establish "rules of engagement" for conducting jihad, while also offering non-violent alternatives. He also denounced AQ's agenda and verbally attacked AQ's leaders Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Iran

See *State Sponsors of Terrorism*.

Iraq

The Iraqi government, with support from Coalition Forces, made significant progress in combating al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) and affiliated terrorist organizations. There was a significant reduction in the number of security incidents throughout much of Iraq, including a decrease in civilian casualties, enemy attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IED) attacks in the last five months of the year.

Terrorist organizations and insurgent groups continued their attacks on Coalition and Iraqi security forces using IEDs, including vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), and suicide bombers. The Iraqi government continued to emphasize national reconciliation and passed key pieces of reconciliation-related legislation. However, there was greater success taking practical steps that helped to advance reconciliation at the provincial and local level.

Coalition and Iraqi forces made their gains against AQI and like-minded extremists with much help from the grass-root engagement of Sunni and Shia tribal leaders and Concerned Local Citizens (CLC)/Sons of Iraq (SOI) groups. The Iraqi government took greater steps on both the bilateral and multilateral fronts to try to harness regional and international support against the common threat from AQI and like-minded extremists.

An improved security environment has resulted from the combined factors of Coalition troop surge and sustained presence, the declared ceasefire by Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi militia in August, improved Iraqi Security Forces proficiency, and increasing popular support for the actions of Iraqi Forces against AQI and other extremist groups. CLC and SOI groups provided Coalition and Iraqi forces with valuable information that helped disrupt terrorist operations and expose large weapons caches. Tribal awakening movements, similar to the Anbar Awakening that emerged in western Iraq in 2006, gained momentum as both Sunni and Shia sheikhs formed alliances with the coalition against AQI and extremist groups. Ethno-sectarian related violence declined but remained a concern as Shia extremists and criminal organizations became an increasing threat to stability.

Iraqi and Coalition Forces forced AQI cells from their strongholds in western Iraq and the Baghdad area. With their bases of operations disrupted and with members detained or killed, AQI and like-minded extremist elements were forced into the eastern and northern parts of Iraq to look for more advantageous and secure operating areas. AQI has shifted its tactics from primarily Shia targets to focusing its attacks against Iraqi security forces, CLC groups, and tribal awakening movement members. Despite the improved security environment, AQI still possessed the means to launch high-profile attacks against Iraqi civilians and infrastructure.

Iraqi government officials continued to strongly condemn terrorists. On September 28, Iraq and Turkey concluded a counterterrorism agreement between its interior ministers to increase cooperation in countering the militant Kurdish separatist group, Kongra Gel/Kurdistan Workers' Party (KGK/PKK). Following an October 7 attack by the KGK/PKK that killed 13 Turkish soldiers in Southern Turkey, Prime Minister Maliki publicly stated that the KGK/PKK was a terrorist organization and would not be tolerated in Iraq. Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials in northern Iraq also took concrete actions against the KGK/PKK presence there by closing off re-supply routes via additional checkpoints, increasing airport screening for KGK/PKK members, and directing the closure of KGK/PKK-affiliated offices.

The government's national reconciliation programs made incremental progress. The Iraqi Council of Representatives passed a unified pension law important to reconciliation efforts, and local working level reconciliation initiatives also successfully brought Sunni and Shia groups together to promote a message of unity. In October, Anbar and Karbala provincial government officials and tribal sheikhs met three times in two weeks to foster improved Sunni-Shia reconciliation.

Terrorism committed by illegal armed groups receiving weapons and training from Iran continued to endanger the security and stability of Iraq. Foreign terrorists from Saudi Arabia, North Africa, and other Middle Eastern countries continued to flow into Iraq, predominantly through Syria.

The Iraqi government increased its bilateral and multilateral efforts to garner regional and international support against the common threat from AQI and like-minded extremists. The Expanded Neighbors Process has emerged as a forum in which Iraq and its neighbors can address the political and security challenges facing Iraq. The first Expanded Neighbors of Iraq Ministerial was convened in Sharm el Sheikh on May 4. At the ministerial, participants unanimously endorsed the creation of three working groups, including one on border security, which held its first meeting in Damascus later in the year. At the second Expanded Neighbors of Iraq Ministerial, hosted by Turkey on November 3, participants, including high-level representatives from all of Iraq's neighbors, issued a final communiqué that condemned all acts of terrorism in all its forms in Iraq. In August, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki met with Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and other top Syrian government officials to discuss improving bilateral cooperation on both the counterterrorism and border security fronts. Other senior Iraqi government officials also visited Syria in an effort to foster bilateral counterterrorism and border security cooperation. Iraq remained a committed partner in counterterrorism efforts. The Iraqi security forces continued to build tactical and operational momentum and assumed responsibility for security in nine of Iraq's 18 provinces. Continued Coalition and other international support will be critical for the Iraqi government to continue building its capacity to fight terrorist organizations. Iraq's intelligence services continued to improve in both competency and confidence but will also require ongoing support before they will be able to adequately identify and respond to internal and external terrorist threats. The

international community's support for investment and reconstruction are critically needed to ensure the success of the Government of Iraq's plans to reduce violence, improve services, and increase economic opportunities.

Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza

Israeli civilians were killed in six separate terrorist attacks during the year, the lowest number since the first Intifada broke out. While the lethality of individual terrorist attacks declined in comparison to 2006, Israel nevertheless continued to suffer from terrorist threats emanating from the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli security sources continued to express concern that AQ and other external Sunni extremists might infiltrate the West Bank and Gaza, especially after Palestinian gunmen claiming affiliation with AQ blew up a vacant resort in Gaza in January. Claims of actual AQ presence in the West Bank and Gaza have not been substantiated.

Israel responded to the terrorist threat as it has in recent years, with targeted operations directed at terrorist leaders and weapons experts, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) incursions into the West Bank and Gaza to conduct roundup operations, and other efforts designed to increase pressure on Palestinian terrorist organizations and their supporters. The Israeli security services also imposed strict and widespread closures and curfews in Palestinian areas, and continued constructing an extensive security barrier in the West Bank and Jerusalem that Israeli officials believe has played an important role in making terrorist attacks more difficult to undertake.

Perceiving the need to restore deterrence vis-à-vis Lebanese Hizballah and its backers in Syria and Iran, the IDF conducted extensive military exercises in northern Israel and the Golan Heights. Diplomatically, Israel continued to make the case at the UN, in its bilateral relations, and through public diplomacy that it faced threats from Hizballah, which was re-arming with Syrian and Iranian help, and from Palestinian terrorist groups receiving financial support from Iran. Israel contended that Egypt did not do enough to stop the smuggling of arms and explosives from the Sinai into Gaza through tunnels under the Gaza-Sinai border. In October, the Army Corps of Engineers conducted a study of the situation, and Egypt agreed to utilize $23 million of its Foreign Military Funding budget this year to purchase anti-tunneling equipment. Egypt has also agreed to discuss coordination and constructive ways to address this problem with the United States, Israel, and the Palestinian Authority. While rocket fire against Israeli civilian targets from Gaza by HAMAS and other terrorist organizations continued during the year, HAMAS did not otherwise take responsibility for terrorist attacks pursuant to a unilateral conditional cease-fire it announced in 2005. HAMAS likely aided other terrorist organizations in Gaza, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB), and the Popular Resistance Committees (PRC), particularly after HAMAS seized power and expelled the legitimate Palestinian Authority government from Gaza in June.

Terrorist attacks that resulted in injuries and the Israeli responses included:

- On January 29, in the resort city of Eilat, a suicide bomber blew himself up in a bakery. Three Palestinian groups, PIJ, AAMB, and an unknown group calling itself "The Army of the Faithful," claimed responsibility for the attack.

- On February 25, the body of an Israeli settler was found in the Gush Etzion settlement bloc in the West Bank. The Israeli National Police said that he had been stabbed to death in a terrorist attack. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. Two young Palestinian men were subsequently arrested in a joint IDF-Israel Security Agency (ISA or Shin Bet) operation, and reportedly admitted to carrying out the attack based on religious grounds.

- On May 21 and 28, two Israeli civilians were killed when Qassam rockets launched from Gaza landed near them in the border community of Sderot.

- On November 19, an Israeli civilian was killed in a shooting incident near the West Bank settlement of Kedumim. The AAMB took responsibility for the attack. Two suspects were arrested the following day in a joint IDF-ISA operation. Palestinian security forces arrested a third suspect, who reportedly served previously in the Palestinian National Security Forces.

These incidents reflected an overall decrease in the number of successfully perpetrated terrorist attacks in comparison to previous years. Israeli security officials maintained that the decrease was not for lack of terrorists' efforts, but because the security services were able to keep terrorist planners and operators off balance. Throughout the year, Israel's security services publicly reported several foiled attempts.

Three nearly successful attempts, in particular, could have had disastrous consequences if they had been carried through to completion. The first attempt occurred on February 20 and involved a PIJ militant who carried an explosive backpack onto an Israeli bus in Tel Aviv. After failing to detonate the backpack, the man fled the scene. The man, his PIJ accomplices, and the backpack were subsequently found by the Israeli security services. The PIJ commander who ordered the failed attempt was killed by IDF forces the following day in the West Bank. The second involved a truck bomb in Tel Aviv in March. For unknown reasons, the driver did not detonate the truck. The operation was discovered by the Shin Bet and suspected operators were subsequently detained. Press reports cite Shin Bet sources as alleging that HAMAS was behind the foiled attack. HAMAS never responded to the allegations. The third attack involved an explosive belt discovered in an apartment in Tel Aviv on September 22. According to Israeli security sources, the belt was intended to be used in an attack on the Yom Kippur holiday, to be carried out by a suicide bomber who had been arrested three days earlier

in a joint IDF-ISA operation in the West Bank. A joint HAMAS-Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) cell in the West Bank reportedly planned the attack.

On the law enforcement front, in March, a Tel Aviv court sentenced three Israelis to 13 years in jail for assisting a Palestinian who killed five Israeli civilians and wounded 30 in the July 2005 suicide bombing of a shopping mall in Netanya. Another Israeli was sentenced to seven years imprisonment in May for transporting a Palestinian suicide bomber to a Tel Aviv cafe, where the bomber carried out his attack in 2002, killing an Israeli civilian and wounding 28 others.

Despite the fact that Palestinian terrorists were relatively unsuccessful in carrying out suicide bombings and other attacks within Israel, they were nevertheless able to harass Israel throughout the year with mortar attacks against the Israeli-manned crossings between Gaza and Israel, and with Qassam rocket launches from Gaza towards Israeli communities abutting Gaza, the majority of which were targeted at the town of Sderot in the southern Negev desert. The Israeli Foreign Ministry claimed that from mid-June through mid-December, 428 Qassam rockets and 590 mortar shells were fired from Gaza towards Israeli civilians and soldiers. On October 7, militants fired a 122 mm Grad missile into Israel. It struck the town of Netivot, 15 kilometers inside Israel. PIJ, HAMAS, the AAMB, and the PRC claimed responsibility for the rocket and mortar attacks. On the eve of the November 27 Annapolis Conference, attended by the United States, Israel, the Palestinians, and representatives of other Middle Eastern countries, the PRC announced that it would begin "Operation Autumn Storm" and launch hundreds of rockets towards Sderot and western Negev communities during and after the conference. This threat was not carried out.

The Israeli security services assessed that the use of rockets and mortars reflected recognition by the groups launching them that their best chances for success were through asymmetrical warfare. The reliance on rockets also reflected technological advancements that allowed the groups to manufacture the rockets cheaply, stockpile them, and launch them greater distances. Prior to HAMAS' takeover of Gaza in June, Israeli security experts also assessed that rocket attacks were being carried out in order to draw Israel into Gaza, and force PA President Abbas' Fatah party to cooperate with HAMAS. Mortars were used mainly against Israeli targets within or on the very edge of the Gaza, to include crossings, which had the effect of closing the crossings to the detriment of Gaza's residents.

During the first half of the year, Israel undertook small-scale military operations against suspected launch teams and sites in Gaza. After HAMAS' June seizure of control in Gaza, the IDF sought to prevent launches by carrying out aerial attacks against vehicles it had identified as carrying rockets en route to launch sites in Gaza. The Israeli government also authorized targeted operations against terrorist leaders and operatives and the expansion of a buffer zone within Gaza wherein the IDF could carry out counter-terrorist operations. Throughout the year, the IDF struck at areas used for launch sites in northern Gaza to deter launches. Israeli Air Force (IAF) helicopters also deliberately struck HAMAS military headquarters and other HAMAS installations in response to Qassam rocket attacks that HAMAS claimed it carried out.

Press reports also highlighted numerous attempts by Palestinians to kidnap Israeli citizens or high-value targets of interest, including foreign diplomats and journalists. In January, a French diplomat and his two bodyguards were kidnapped by AAMB gunmen in the West Bank. On March 12, BBC reporter Alan Johnston was abducted in Gaza by gunmen belonging to a Palestinian group calling itself "The Army of Islam" and was held for 114 days until his release on July 4. While in captivity, an AQ-affiliated Palestinian organization calling itself "The Palestinian Jihad and Tawheed Brigades" claimed that it executed Johnston, and blamed the Palestinian Authority and the British government for his death. Two videos were also released that showed Johnston dressed in an explosive vest, and threatened his death unless Palestinian prisoners in the UK and Jordan were released. HAMAS brokered his release in an apparent bid to demonstrate its control over Gaza.

Deterring the Threat from Hizballah and Syria

Israel's security establishment remained concerned about the terrorist threat posed to Israel in the north by Hizballah and its Iranian and Syrian backers. Israeli security officials said that Hizballah continued to provide support to select Palestinian groups to augment their capacity to conduct attacks against Israel.

Israeli politicians and security officials pointed to Hizballah's efforts to rebuild and re-arm after the previous summer's war as evidence that Hizballah remained a threat to Israel. Throughout the rest of the year, Israeli officials claimed publicly that Hizballah had completely replenished its ranks, possessed even more short and medium-range rockets than it had before the 2006 war, had moved arms back into southern Lebanon, and was providing training to HAMAS operatives from Gaza.

During the summer, Israeli officials and media outlets also filled Israel's airwaves with dire predictions of a summer war between Israel and Syria that was likely to be started by a kidnapping or terrorist operation in the vicinity of the Golan Heights. With a view to deterring such a provocation, the IDF carried out large-scale, comprehensive military exercises for several weeks in the Golan Heights, in clear view of UN Disengagement Observer Force observers, the Syrian military, and Hizballah.

While some observers feared that the exercises themselves might lead to a misunderstanding and a subsequent conflict, Israel's northern border remained comparatively quiet.

Increasing Pressure on HAMAS and Raising the Tunnel Problem

Israel continued to face the problem of terrorists in Gaza receiving funds and supplies through cross-border smuggling either through the Egypt-Gaza border, or under the border via tunnels, or by sea. In June, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert publicly stated that the smuggling problem had become so serious that the international community should consider deploying a multinational force between Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula. HAMAS said it would treat such a force as an occupying power. Israeli security sources claimed in August that arms smuggling into Gaza had reached a peak since HAMAS' June takeover of Gaza. Specifically, officials said that since June, 40 tons of explosives, as well as large quantities of ammunition and over 150 RPG launchers had been smuggled into Gaza from Egypt. Israeli security sources also alleged that HAMAS had smuggled hundreds of terrorists from Gaza to Iran for advanced training across the Gaza-Sinai border and through tunnels underneath. They claimed that HAMAS was amassing an arsenal of sophisticated anti-tank missiles and long-range rockets of the type used by Hizballah in the Summer 2006 Israel-Hizballah conflict.

Israel responded to the ongoing tunnel problem by taking unilateral military action to root out and destroy the tunnels, and by increasing diplomatic pressure on Egypt to enhance security on its side of the Egypt-Gaza and Egypt-Israel border. Throughout the year, small IDF units, backed by helicopters and armored combat vehicles, entered southern Gaza on missions to search for terrorist suspects and tunnels. By the end of the year, more than 40 tunnels had been discovered and destroyed.

At the same time, the Israeli government increased pressure on the Egyptian government to encourage it to address the problem of smuggling through tunnels and the Rafah crossing. On December 26, Israeli Defense Minister Barak met with Egyptian President Mubarak and his aides about the arms smuggling problem and the flow of Palestinians between Gaza and Sinai.

West Bank and Gaza

The Palestinian Authority's (PA) counterterrorism efforts improved in 2007, with a new PA Cabinet under PM Salam Fayyad undertaking serious efforts to fight incitement and terror in the second half of the year. Nevertheless, additional efforts will be required to dismantle terrorist groups and infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza. In the first half of the year, PA counterterrorism efforts and USG assistance to support these efforts were greatly complicated by HAMAS' control of the PA government and by the creation of rival security forces in Gaza. In June, HAMAS militants captured PA offices and security bases in a violent takeover of Gaza. Subsequently, President Mahmud Abbas dismissed HAMAS Prime Minister Ismayil Haniyah and his cabinet. A new cabinet, appointed and led by PM Salam Fayyad and USG security assistance to PA security forces in the West Bank created new opportunities for PA action against terrorism.

The primary PA security forces (PASF) are the National Security Forces (NSF), police, Preventive Security Organization (PSO), Presidential Guard (PG), General Intelligence (GI, or Mukhabarat), and civil defense. While the GI, PG, and NSF are subordinate to the President, under Palestinian law all are under the jurisdiction of the Interior Minister. In Gaza, HAMAS has established separate police, coastal patrol, border guard, and "Executive Force" organizations under the former HAMAS Prime Minister's control. HAMAS military-wing members were often integrated into their ranks. Militias such as the HAMAS and PIJ military wings, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and clan-based armed groups (especially in Gaza) also exercised significant control and carried out vigilante justice in areas where PASF were not present or were ineffective at delivering basic law enforcement.

There were no terrorist attacks against American citizens in the West Bank or Gaza during the reporting period. The PA made no progress in apprehending, prosecuting, or bringing to justice the perpetrators of the October 2003 attack on a U.S. Embassy convoy in Gaza that killed three USG contractors and critically injured a fourth.

While cooperation between the PA and Government of Israel security services improved in the second half of the year, local counterterrorism coordination remained weak. The PA protected and returned several Israelis, including IDF soldiers, who had entered Palestinian cities, including Jenin and Bethlehem.

In the West Bank, the PASF were hindered by a lack of resources and trained personnel, and an unclear chain of command and guidance. PASF officials frequently raised concerns about operational difficulties imposed by the Israeli government on PASF movement. Efforts to arrest and prosecute terrorists were also impeded by a disorganized legal system, a weak security apparatus, and inadequate prison infrastructure.

President Abbas and PM Fayyad put their weight behind a security program that included disarming fugitive militants and eventually dismantling armed groups. PM Fayyad has condemned violence against Israelis in harsh terms and has taken rapid action against those involved in attacks. Since becoming Prime Minister, Fayyad has condemned every attack against Israelis as contrary to Palestinian interests and commitments and has ordered immediate action, including planned prosecutions against the perpetrators.

The Fayyad-led PA government instituted stricter controls on media outlets and religious figures to reduce incitement. The Fayyad government's political platform was the first to omit language concerning "the right of resistance," and he and the PA government have actively criticized violence and terror as contrary to Palestinian interests.

The Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA) continued building a Financial Follow-Up Unit (FFU) and developing capacity to track and deter financial transactions used to

fund terrorist activity. The new PA Cabinet, formed in July, improved efforts to counter terrorist financing, and the Finance Ministry worked effectively with the Justice Ministry, Attorney General, and (as appropriate), with the Interior and Waqf Ministries to shut down illegal NGOs and charities. The PMA drafted an Anti-Money Laundering Law that was enacted as law by Presidential decree in November.

Jordan

In its public statements, new legislation, security measures, and court cases, the Government of Jordan continued to place a high priority on its fight against extremism and terrorism. Those efforts coincided with an apparent shift in public opinion against extremism as reflected in poll results. The 2007 Pew Research Center Global Attitudes survey indicated a marked turn against support for terrorism among Jordanians.

Only a fifth of respondents expressed any confidence in Usama bin Ladin (down from 56 percent four years ago), and fewer than a quarter viewed suicide bombing as justified (down from 43 percent in 2002, and from 57 percent in 2005). A common view among commentators was that antipathy toward extremism increased since terrorists killed 60 Jordanians in attacks on three hotels in Amman in 2005. According to the Pew data, while worries about terrorism fell in many countries since 2002, in Jordan concerns were up nearly threefold, from 15 percent to 42 percent.

King Abdullah used international fora, national addresses, and media interviews to denounce extremists and promote a tolerant, moderate brand of Islam. Speaking before the opening session of the new parliament in December, for example, the King promised to combat extremist Islam and "stand up to anybody who tries to abduct our religion or to monopolize fatwas for political reasons, for the purpose of using religion as a tool to subdue others for the sake of special or suspicious agenda."

Parliament passed new anti-money laundering legislation that began to address a key law enforcement deficiency in what is otherwise a strong counterterrorism environment. The new law, which went into effect in July, created an Anti-Money Laundering Unit (AMLU) that is the central receiving point for all suspicious transaction reports related to money laundering. Although the law did not specify terrorism and terrorism financing as a predicate offense for money laundering, the AMLU believes it will be able to resolve these ambiguities through the issuance of regulations and Central Bank of Jordan instructions to obligated entities. This approach has not yet been tested in the courts.

Jordan's security forces remained vigilant against terror threats. For example, the General Intelligence Directorate in February arrested members of al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) who were attempting to infiltrate from Syria. Another member was killed in an armed confrontation in Irbid in January. Additionally, Jordan's State Security Court (SSC), a special tribunal for terrorism and other cases that had both civilian and military judges and attorneys, maintained a heavy caseload. Examples of SSC actions included:

- In November, it ratified a prior ruling against two men who were convicted of plotting to launch an attack on Israel via the Jordanian border.
- In September, 16 people were convicted and given prison terms ranging from 20 months to five years for recruiting people to fight Americans in Iraq and carry out suicide attacks. Five of them, including Fatah al-Islam leader Shaker al-Absi, were tried in absentia.
- In August, five men were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 20 months to five years after being convicted of plotting acts that undermine Jordan's relations with another country and subjecting the country to hostile acts.
- In July, two men were given prison sentences for plotting to kill Americans in Jordan "to avenge U.S. policies toward Muslims."
- In April, sentences were handed to six men who plotted AQ-linked terrorist attacks at Queen Alia International Airport and hotels in Aqaba and the Dead Sea.

The SSC continued to review the cases in the trial of the defendants accused of plotting to assassinate President Bush during his November 2006 visit to Jordan. The three Zarqa residents, Nidal Momani, Sattam Zawahra, and Tharwat Daraz, stand accused of conspiracy to carry out terrorist attacks with flammable substances in Jordan, and of possession of illegal weapons and explosive substances for illicit purposes.

Additionally, in January, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence imposed on would-be suicide bomber Sajida Rishawi, who, in 2006 was convicted of plotting terrorist attacks against three hotels in Amman; she was the first woman to receive the death penalty in a terror-related trial in Jordan.

Kuwait

In 2007, the Government of Kuwait did not enact stronger antiterrorism and money laundering legislation, and it continued to have difficulty prosecuting terrorists and terrorism financiers and facilitators. The risk of a terrorist attack in Kuwait remained high because of U.S. forces in the country, regional tensions, and the Kuwaiti government's reluctance to confront domestic extremists. Kuwait lacked legal provisions to deal with conspiracies to commit terrorist acts, a problem complicated by domestic politics. In the past, the Kuwaiti government took action against non-Kuwaiti residents involved in terror facilitation but was reluctant to take action against key local Sunni extremists unless there was a perception of clear and

direct danger to Kuwaiti or U.S. interests. The Kuwaiti government was reluctant to support the designation of its nationals as terrorists or terrorism supporters under UNSCR 1267.

In April, the Kuwaiti government froze all financial accounts of terrorism financier Mubarak Al-Bathali and forbade him to open any further accounts in Kuwait. In July, Kuwaiti authorities arrested Jabir Al-Jalahmah for his role in facilitating the travel of jihadists to Iraq, but a Kuwaiti court later released him on bail. The Kuwaiti government had not prepared a case against Al-Jalahmah. Mohsen al-Fadhli, a U.S.-designated Kuwaiti terrorist, was believed to be in Jordan and remained at large. The Court of Cassation, Kuwait's highest court, ruled in March 2005 that it did not have jurisdiction over al-Fadhli's alleged financing of the terrorist attack on the USS Cole in October 2000.

The Kuwaiti government continued the prosecutions of the 36 members of the "Peninsula Lions" terrorist cell involved in January 2005 confrontations with police. In May, the Court of First Instance overturned the convictions of three defendants. In June, the Court of Cassation commuted the death sentences of four defendants to life sentences (equal to 25 years of imprisonment under Kuwaiti law). The Court of Cassation is reviewing the verdicts of the remaining 32 defendants in the Peninsula Lions case.

In 2002, twelve armed Kuwaitis attacked two U.S. service members outside a military base near Failaka Island. The Appeals Court acquitted five of the twelve defendants. In February 2007, the Court of Cassation reduced the fines of two of these defendants from 700,000 USD to 7,000 USD. Separately, in 2005, the Criminal Court convicted 18 Kuwaitis in absentia to three years in prison for recruiting jihadists to fight in Iraq. In October, the Appeals Court attempted to review the cases of seven of these individuals, but was unsuccessful since they remained at large.

In April and May, Kuwaiti courts upheld the not guilty verdicts of seven former Guantanamo detainees on terror-related charges. The Kuwaiti government had been appealing decisions previously rendered by lower Kuwaiti courts.

Nevertheless, Kuwait was an effective and reliable partner in providing security for U.S. military installations and convoys in Kuwait. In 2006, Kuwaiti police arrested three bidoons (stateless residents) for planning to attack U.S. military personnel. The Criminal Court convicted the bidoons in January 2007, and sentenced them each to ten years in prison, to be followed by deportation. The Court of Appeals was scheduled to review their case on December 31. Kuwait's reluctance to address the social and economic conditions of its bidoon residents has resulted in this segment of the population becoming vulnerable to radical ideologies and terrorist recruiters.

In response to AQ threats to attack oil facilities in the Gulf, Kuwait took some steps to improve security at its petroleum installations and export terminals. In March, a multi-agency U.S. Critical Energy Infrastructure Protection team visited and provided the Kuwaiti government with a number of recommendations to improve its energy infrastructure security. Kuwait responded by taking initial steps to enhance physical security at several locations.

The Kuwaiti government's legal regime for combating money laundering and terrorist financing lacked sufficient enforcement mechanisms, thus hindering its effectiveness. The Kuwaiti government implemented no cash reporting requirements for individuals leaving the country, and this was a significant vulnerability. While money laundering was a criminal offense, terrorist financing was not specifically prohibited. Kuwait had established an Anti-Money Laundering/Combating Terrorist Financing Committee (AML/CTF), with representation from a wide range of government ministries and domestic financial institutions. Kuwait was also an active member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA FATF). Although Kuwait had a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), it did not exercise independent authority in accordance with current international standards.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MOSAL) took some steps to strengthen its domestic monitoring regime of Kuwait-based Islamic charities, but was less effective in monitoring the activities of these charities outside Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government needs to accelerate its efforts to pass counterterrorism legislation, strengthen charity oversight, empower its FIU, monitor cash couriers, and fully conform to international standards and conventions on terrorist financing.

In 2005, Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf (religious endowments) and Islamic Affairs launched an initiative to spread moderation and to combat extremism within the Muslim community. The Ministry's World Moderation Center (WMC), tasked with implementing this program, offers a 45-day moderation course, which over 700 imams have completed thus far. The Center also began offering this course to high school Islamic studies teachers.

The moderation campaign has had some difficulty reaching the broader public, prompting the government to launch an awareness campaign on its behalf. The World Moderation Center sponsored international moderation conferences in London and Washington, D.C., and established a moderation center in Manchester, England.

Lebanon

Political violence continued throughout 2007. Most notable were the June 13, September 19, and December 12 car bombing assassinations of MP Walid Eido, MP Antoine Ghanem, and General Francois al-Hajj, respectively. The two MPs were part of the pro-government March 14 coalition, and several political allies of the two MPs charged that the Syrian government was responsible for the assassinations, which Syria strongly denied. These acts, the latest in a series of assassinations and attempted

assassinations over the last three years, seemed designed to intimidate the pro-government forces and eliminate, through the process of killing MPs, their numerical majority in parliament.

On May 20, a conflict involving the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and militant Islamic fundamentalist group Fatah al-Islam (FAI) erupted in Nahr el-Barid, a Palestinian refugee camp in the north. After a three-month battle, the Lebanese Army took control of the camp on September 2. The death toll was 168 LAF soldiers and an estimated 42 civilians. While the LAF were able to defeat FAI militants and secure the Nahr el-Barid camp, the Government of Lebanon still lacked control of the other eleven refugee camps in the country. The assassinations of the MPs and the battle against FAI were followed by a December 12 car bombing that killed LAF Brigadier General Francois al-Hajj in the Christian town of Baabda, east of Beirut. General al-Hajj had been in charge of operations when Lebanon's army fought Islamic militants from Fatah al-Islam in Nahr el-Barid refugee camp. No one publicly claimed responsibility for the bombing, though potential suspects include FAI and its sympathizers.

On June 24, six soldiers in the Spanish contingent of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) were killed, and another two injured, when two improvised explosive devices (IEDs) exploded near their vehicle in southern Lebanon. While no organization claimed credit for the attack, it was widely viewed as an effort by those who oppose UNIFIL's efforts to prevent attacks against Israel launched from southern Lebanon.

During the last three years, there have been at least 12 assassinations and assassination attempts that resulted in more than 49 deaths, including that of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Other attacks targeted Lebanese journalists and politicians critical of Syrian interference in Lebanon. All of these attacks remained unsolved. The UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIIC) continued its investigation of the Hariri assassination and its assistance to Lebanon in the Lebanese investigation of the other assassinations.

By confronting and defeating FAI in the Nahr el-Barid camp, the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and the LAF took a strong incremental step in combating and preventing terrorist activities. The battle against FAI marked the first time in 40 years that the LAF fought a major conflict as a single entity, and it was the first time the army entered a Palestinian refugee camp to eliminate an Islamic militant terrorist group and reestablish order and security. Also, the LAF continued to strengthen its border presence and increased patrols in the south, with assistance from UNIFIL. Even with the conflict in north Lebanon, the LAF was able to maintain its deployment commitments in the south.

While the Lebanese government has made progress, there were still concerns about its ability to combat terrorism. The Lebanese government continued to recognize Hizballah, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, as a legitimate "resistance group" and political party. Hizballah retains its strong influence among Lebanon's Shia community, which comprises about one-third of Lebanon's population. Hizballah maintained offices in Beirut and elsewhere in Lebanon.

The ongoing political stalemate over both the election of a president and the failure of Parliament to meet has contributed to enabling militant foreign Islamic extremists affiliated with or sympathetic to al-Qa'ida (AQ) to infiltrate Lebanon, and to set up operational cells. Palestinian militant groups continued to capitalize on the lack of government control within the camps. Some of these groups, such as AQ-affiliated Asbat al-Ansar and Jund al-Sham, have been able to find safe haven within the camps to support their actions, most notably in the Ain el-Hilwah camp.

Although Syria withdrew its military forces from Lebanon in April 2005, it still maintains a covert intelligence presence. The Lebanese government has accused Syria of continuing to support and facilitate arms smuggling to Hizballah and Palestinian terrorist groups. Even with the continued LAF troop deployments, the Government of Lebanon still did not exercise full control over areas in the Hizballah-dominated south, the southern suburbs of Beirut, parts of the Bekaa Valley, and inside eleven Palestinian-controlled refugee camps. This lack of control provided opportunities for terrorist groups to operate relatively freely in some of these locations.

At the end of the year, the Lebanese government had not fully implemented provisions of UNSCR 1559, which called for respect for the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon, the end of foreign interference in Lebanon, and the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. While the Lebanese government was committed to fulfilling the provisions of UNSCR 1559, it maintained that implementation of Hizballah's disarmament should be accomplished through "national dialogue" rather than force.

Lebanese authorities maintained that the amnesty for Lebanese individuals involved in acts of violence during the civil war prevented the government from prosecuting terrorist cases of concern to the United States. These cases included individuals involved in the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847, during which a U.S. Navy diver was murdered, and the abduction, torture, and murder of U.S. hostages in Lebanon from 1984 to 1991. U.S. courts issued indictments against Lebanese Hizballah operatives responsible for a number of those crimes. Mohammad Ali Hamadi, who spent 18 years in a German prison for his role in the TWA hijacking, was released in December 2005 and was believed to be in Lebanon. The United States continued its efforts to bring him to trial before a U.S. court and formally requested his extradition.

With regard to terrorism finance, Lebanese officials played an active leadership role in the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA/FATF). The

Central Bank of Lebanon's Special Investigation Commission (SIC), an independent legal entity with judicial status that is empowered to investigate suspicious financial transactions, investigated 209 cases involving allegations of money laundering and terrorist financing activities. On two occasions, the SIC was unable to designate or freeze the assets of two groups affiliated with Hizballah, because the groups were affiliated with a political party participating in the Lebanese government, and thus, a decision to freeze their assets would have been a political, rather than a legal decision.

Libya

Since the United States rescinded Libya's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism in June 2006, Libya has continued to cooperate closely with the United States and the international community on counterterrorism efforts. Since renouncing terrorism in 2003, Libya has endeavored to show its commitment to the War on Terror.

On November 3, Egyptian cleric and AQ leader Ayman al-Zawahiri announced a merger between AQ and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). In an audiotape, al-Zawahiri urged AQ fighters to topple the government of Libya, describing Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi as an "enemy of Islam" and criticizing Qadhafi's 2003 decision to renounce WMD and terrorism. According to press accounts, LIFG maintained a limited presence in eastern Libya and has facilitated the transfer of foreign fighters to join insurgents fighting U.S.-led forces in Iraq.

A number of U.S. court cases seeking compensation from Libya for its past support for terrorism remained unresolved. Libyan officials are engaging with the courts and, at USG urging, are continuing settlement talks with the claimants, including the families of the victims of the 1988 bombing of Pam Am flight 103 in Lockerbie, Scotland, and the 1986 bombing of the La Belle nightclub in Berlin.

Morocco

A series of suicide bombing attacks shattered the relative lull in terrorist violence that had prevailed in Morocco since the 2003 Casablanca bombings. The attacks underscored that Morocco's greatest terrorist threat stems from numerous small "grassroots" Salafi Jihadist groups.

The main external terrorism threat to Morocco was al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its demonstrated willingness to train inexperienced Moroccan extremists. Morocco adopted a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that emphasized vigilant security measures, counter-radicalization policies, and strong international cooperation. This year's violence was centered in the city of Casablanca, Morocco's commercial capital, but the last attack occurred in the city of Meknes.

- On March 11, an individual blew himself up in an Internet café.
- On April 10, three suicide bombers, cornered by police as a result of an investigation of the March bombing, blew themselves up to avoid capture, with a fourth being killed by the police.
- On April 14, two suicide bombers blew themselves up near the U.S. Consulate and the private American Language Center, respectively. Other than the attackers themselves, one person was wounded.
- In August, a fourth suicide bombing incident took place in Meknes when an individual unsuccessfully attacked a tourist bus with a crude improvised explosive device (IED), blowing his arm off but injuring no one else seriously.

Characteristics of the attacks supported previous analysis that Morocco's greatest terrorist threat stems from the existence of numerous small "grassroots" terrorist groups in Morocco willing to commit violent acts against the state, foreigners, and innocent civilians. However, these separate followings in Morocco remained small, separate, and disorganized groups without territorial safe haven. These attacks, which appeared to have been, at best, poorly coordinated events, contrasted sharply with the 2006 terrorist incidents, which had more elaborate plots, albeit thwarted by Moroccan authorities.

Morocco has several external terrorist threats, including AQIM, al-Qa'ida (AQ), and extremist veterans returning from Iraq. The main threat from AQIM remained the knowledge transfer of AQIM operational capabilities to Morocco's committed, but relatively inexperienced, Salafi adherents. There were credible reports of Moroccans going to northern Mali and Algeria and returning to Morocco after training with AQIM. In the wake of the December AQIM double bombing in Algiers, King Mohamed VI summed up Moroccan cognizance of the AQIM threat in a condolence message, stating that "Algeria's security is linked to the security of the region."

AQ's information operations may have inspired the 2003 and 2007 bombings in Casablanca. AQ number two Ayman al-Zawahiri publicly threatened Moroccan and Western interests, and in December 2006 and November 2007, implicitly called for attacks on the two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, which, for many Moroccans, represent humiliating colonial legacies. In so doing, AQ demonstrated its ability to mix local grievances into its propaganda to increase its effectiveness.

Morocco's comprehensive counterterrorism strategy not only emphasized identifying and neutralizing existing terrorist threats through traditional law enforcement and security measures, but also engaged in preventative measures to discourage terrorist recruitment through political reform and policy measures. King Mohamed VI led this effort by unambiguously condemning terrorism and those who espouse or conduct terrorism; he recently called terrorism something "alien to Islam and contrary to religion and law."

In September, Morocco held free and fair elections of its lower house of parliament. Turnout for the election was lower than many expected (approximately 37 percent of registered voters) and the parliament's institutional capacity remained limited. The parliament, however, has been a productive forum for moderate Islamists to air their views, in part offering a counterweight to extremist rhetoric.

The Moroccan government continued to implement internal reforms aimed at ameliorating socio-economic factors that terrorists exploit for recruitment and ideological purposes. The National Initiative for Human Development, launched by King Mohamed VI in 2005, is a $1.2 billion program designed to generate employment, combat poverty, and improve infrastructure, with a special focus on rural areas. Morocco's Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MOIA) continued the reforms launched in 2004 to counter extremist ideology and promote religious moderation and tolerance. MOIA supervised revisions to the country's religious curriculum, broke with precedent by appointing 50 women as spiritual guides at mosques across the country, and installed a closed circuit television network that broadcast moderate religious sermons to 2,000 mosques per day.

Rabat continued to target aggressively and dismantle terrorist cells by enhancing policing techniques, coordinating and focusing the security services, and expanding and bolstering regional counterterrorism partnerships.

The Government of Morocco aggressively continued to pursue terrorism-related cases. Police investigations into the March 11 suicide bombings led police subsequently to capture Saad Houssaini, an individual linked to the 2003 Casablanca bombings who confessed to helping make the explosives for the March attacks.Police were also able to disrupt an attack in Casablanca a month later. The police tracked down the four men involved in the April 10 bombing as a result of an investigation of the March bombing and a tip they had received from an undisclosed source, according to press reports. The Government of Morocco also disrupted numerous cells dedicated to sending Jihadi fighters to Iraq, including one based in the northern Moroccan city of Tetouan. The Tetouan cell appeared to be both a nascent domestic terror cell and a feeding point into the Iraq foreign fighter pipeline.

The Government of Morocco emphasized adherence to human rights standards and increased law enforcement transparency as part of its counterterrorism program. The government provided non-governmental organizations with unprecedented access to prisons where individuals convicted of terrorism-related crimes were being held. Counterterrorism investigations and arrests appeared to be better targeted and legal proceedings more transparent throughout the year. The government also demonstrated unprecedented frankness in presenting candid assessments of the terrorism threat and its response to the public. Government appeals for public support with counterterrorism investigations, in this regard, also appeared successful. Subsequent to the March suicide bombing attacks, police were able to locate and raid a makeshift bomb making facility in Casablanca linked to the bombers after receiving tip-offs from local residents.

In May, Morocco implemented a comprehensive anti-money laundering bill that provided the legal basis for the monitoring, investigation, and prosecution of illegal financial activities. The law also called for the establishment of a centralized Financial Intelligence Unit. Both U.S. and EU assistance provided Moroccan police, customs, central bank, and government financial officials with training to recognize money laundering methodologies. Morocco had an effective system for disseminating U.S. and UN Security Council Resolution terrorist freeze lists to its financial sector and legal authorities. Morocco provided timely reports requested by the UNSC Sanctions Committee and, as a result, was able to freeze some terrorist-related accounts.

Transparent Moroccan court proceedings against detained terrorism suspects ended with prosecutorial successes. In March, Moroccan courts convicted eight individuals for plotting to conduct terrorist attacks in France, Italy, and Morocco. One of the defendants, believed to have ties to AQIM, received the maximum penalty of 15 years. The case of over 50 individuals linked to the Ansar al-Mahdi cell continued to move forward despite several delays. The judicial proceedings for six individuals allegedly linked to the 2007 Casablanca bombings began in May.

Another key to Morocco's counterterrorism success has been its emphasis on international counterterrorism cooperation. The United States and Morocco have built a valuable relationship based on cooperation and an ongoing exchange of information. Moroccan authorities continued to disrupt plots to attack Moroccan, U.S., and other Western-affiliated targets, and aggressively investigated numerous individuals associated with international terrorist groups. Morocco forged solid cooperative relationships with European partners such as Spain and France, and continued to work to increase existing counterterrorism relationships with its North African neighbors.

Oman

Oman remained proactive in its implementation of counterterrorism strategies and its cooperation with neighboring countries to prevent terrorists from moving freely throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The Omani government promoted religious moderation and tolerance in an effort to prevent the spread of extremist ideology. A new comprehensive antiterrorism law was promulgated in January, which established the National Committee for Combating Terrorism and strengthened the country's legal proscriptions against all forms of terrorist acts, including the furnishing of assistance to terrorists.

Oman is not a major financial center and did not have a significant money laundering problem. Nevertheless, it has adopted controls designed to prevent the use of its

financial system to fund terrorist or other illicit activities. Following the launch of the "Oman Program for Anti-Money Laundering" (OPFAM) in 2006, the government sponsored two workshops to enhance the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of money laundering. The Omani government continued to encourage information exchanges among relevant actors, standardize indicators to report suspicious transactions, and develop common guidelines to address the threat of money laundering.

Oman's long coastline and relatively porous borders offered significant security challenges as they remained vulnerable to illegal transit by migrant workers, smugglers, terrorists, and individuals involved in the traffic and sale of illegal drugs. The government was concerned by the steady flow of illegal immigrants throughout the year attempting to enter Oman, often in transit to other destinations in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly the United Arab Emirates. The majority of the illegal immigrants apprehended were from Pakistan and Afghanistan. An increasing amount of Somalis illegally attempted to cross the border into Oman from Yemen. No known terrorists were found during immigration enforcement operations.

The Omani government has been aggressive in seeking training and equipment through the U.S. military to support its efforts to control its land and maritime borders. United States military assistance, including the sale of night vision equipment and the provision of training on maritime interdiction operations, was used to bolster coastal patrol efforts, modernize Oman's coastal surveillance system, and made Oman's remote inland borders with Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE less porous and easier to observe.

Qatar

Qatari security services maintained tight control over immigration and effective monitoring of possible extremist events. While counterterrorism cooperation remained positive, the United States continued to strive for increased cooperation with the Qatari government on information sharing and political engagement.

There has not been a terrorist attack in Qatar since the March 19, 2005, suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) attack at an amateur theater playhouse that killed a British citizen. Cooperation with U.S. law enforcement authorities continued to improve during and after the course of the investigation of this case. Press reports indicated that up to 19 people of various nationalities, including one Qatari, were apprehended during the ensuing investigation. There were no reports of criminal prosecution in the case; however, many of the third country nationals who were apprehended were deported subsequent to the investigation.

The Qatar Authority for Charitable Activities is responsible for overseeing all domestic and international charitable activities, including approving international fund transfers by charities and monitoring overseas charitable, development, and humanitarian projects. The Authority reports annually to Qatari government ministries on their status.

Cooperation with U.S. authorities on counterterrorism finance continued to develop. Qatar's Financial Information Unit resides in the Qatar Central Bank. Local banks worked with the Central Bank and the FIU on counterterrorism finance and anti-money laundering issues, and bank officials attended U.S.-sponsored conferences.

As of December 2007, Qatar was the only country in the Gulf with an Attorney General (AG) independent of the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Justice, and equivalent to a ministerial level position. The AG independently controlled and oversaw public prosecutions and appointed attorneys within the Public Prosecutors Office. The AG's office was created in 2002 and maintains a National Security Office responsible for prosecutions under the 2004 Combating Terrorism Law. Prior to the creation of a separate AG office, the majority of public prosecutors were senior police officers, not trained lawyers.

Qatar was the only Gulf country with a public prosecutor exchange program with the U.S. Department of Justice. In November, six Qatari attorneys from the Public Prosecutors' office attended a two-week exchange; one week was spent studying financial crimes at the Public Prosecutors Training Academy Federal Advocacy Center at the University of South Carolina School of Law, and the second week was devoted to shadowing U.S. federal attorneys in Boston and New Hampshire.

As of mid-December, Qatar and the United States were discussing a non-binding memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding judicial assistance and cooperation between the two nations. The MoU would allow both nations to strengthen judicial cooperation and to exchange evidence and information for use in prosecutions.

The USG has provided law enforcement and counterterrorism training under various programs, including the State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program. The exchanges and training have had a positive effect in maintaining a good relationship with Qatari law enforcement agencies and increasing their ability to deter, disrupt, and defeat terrorist activity in Qatar. Operationally, however, this capability has yet to be fully tried, tested, or proven.

Saudi Arabia

The Government of Saudi Arabia continued to confront terrorism and extremist ideologies, though with varying degrees of success. The country suffered two high-profile terrorist incidents: the shooting of four French citizens and the violent murder of a high-ranking Saudi colonel. Saudi security forces managed to capture or kill most of the assailants involved in the two incidents and successive government roundups resulted in hundreds of arrests that

likely disrupted terrorist cells planning to carry out attacks in the Kingdom. The Saudi government continued its efforts to disrupt terror-related financial flows. Cooperation with the United States resulted in the arrests of 16 Saudi-based terrorism financiers and the successful implementation of new Saudi Customs cash courier regulations. The United States continued to urge Saudi Arabia to establish a Charities Commission to oversee all private charitable activities.

In February, a group of armed men attacked nine French nationals traveling near the city of Medina. Four of the victims were killed, including one teenager. By June, security forces had captured or killed all individuals suspected of being involved in the attack. In mid-April, a police colonel serving in Al-Qasim was found decapitated at his family rest house in Al-Qusaiah. The murder was widely believed to have been carried out by terrorists. Security forces later detained 30 people in connection to the murder. This was not the first time that terrorists attacked and killed a member of the security forces. In June 2005, terrorists murdered a lieutenant colonel in Mecca just outside his home.

The Saudi security forces continued efforts to make Saudi Arabia inhospitable for terrorists and their supporters. The security forces arrested 380 individuals suspected of involvement in terrorism during operations conducted throughout 2007. The announcements were widely reported in the press and may have bolstered a perception among the public that terrorism remained a threat but that the government continued to combat terrorism within the Kingdom actively. According to the Ministry of the Interior, these attacks neutralized several terror cells and prevented several planned attacks, including an imminent attack on an unnamed Saudi oil installation. Some of those arrested had allegedly received flight training abroad, while others planned to mount attacks against Saudi oil facilities or to murder public officials. Some of those arrested were planning to travel to Iraq or Afghanistan as foreign fighters.

To address the enduring concern over foreign fighters returning to Saudi Arabia from Iraq or Afghanistan, the Saudi government continued plans to construct a border security system. During the first half of the year, Saudi border guards seized large amounts of weapons and explosives from smugglers transiting the Saudi-Iraqi border and the Saudi-Yemeni border. They also apprehended a large number of individuals attempting to enter the Kingdom illegally and, through their investigations, located caches of weapons and explosives at undisclosed locations in the desert. Saudi Arabia increased its efforts to disrupt terror-related financing in the Kingdom. In the past year, the Saudi government arrested more than thirty individuals suspected of financing terrorism. However, in the case of ten individuals arrested in February, some activists protested against the arrests and testified to the legitimate reform efforts of some of these individuals.

Despite these steps, the United States continued to urge the Government of Saudi Arabia to pursue and prosecute terrorist financiers more vigorously. The Saudi Government took action against suspected terrorism financiers by freezing their accounts and confiscating their assets. Saudi Arabia continued to comply with obligations under the UNSCR 1267 Sanctions regime, which included freezing assets of and enforcing a travel ban on three Saudi nationals designated in October.

New cash courier regulations in Saudi Arabia were put in place to curb illegitimate cross-border cash flows. Travelers transiting all 17 Saudi ports of entry were now required to declare cash, jewels, and precious metals with a value in excess of 16,000 USD. In the weeks preceding Ramadan, the Ministry of Interior reiterated Saudi law prohibiting the placement of donation collection boxes in department stores, shopping centers, pharmacies, mosques, and hospitals. The Saudi government had still not established its National Committee for Relief and Charity Work Abroad (Charities Commission). As a stopgap, the Saudi government decreed that no local charities could send funds abroad until the Charities Commission was established.

Over the past year, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bin Muhammad Al-Asheikh, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, made statements undermining financial support for terrorism. During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the Grand Mufti delivered a sermon in which he cautioned young Saudis against traveling abroad under the pretext of jihad—a vague reference to joining the insurgency in Iraq. In the same speech, he urged Saudi citizens not to finance terrorism and be mindful of how their charitable contributions are distributed. In late November, the Grand Mufti declared that “deviant groups” guilty of corrupting society should be subject to severe punishment in accordance with Islamic law. Several Saudi Islamic scholars and officials including Dr. Saleh bin-Humaid, the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, voiced support for the Grand Mufti’s words. While not a member of the Saudi government, the Grand Mufti is the most senior religious scholar in Saudi Arabia and his moral authority plays an influential role in shaping public opinion in the Kingdom.

On a more basic level, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs launched an extensive media campaign to educate young Saudis on the “correct” teachings of Islam in order to prevent them from becoming drawn to extremist doctrines. The campaign included messages incorporated into Friday sermons at mosques, distribution of literature and tapes, and publication of articles on the Internet. As a part of the campaign, the government published a book in October entitled, “Guarding Against Terrorism.” The government also recently began to issue identification cards to imams and religious leaders to curb instances of unauthorized persons delivering Friday sermons.

The Kingdom took several steps toward prosecuting its growing prison population of terror suspects. Senior Saudi officials, including the Minister of Interior, Minister of Jus-

tice, and Supreme Judicial Council Chairman all publicly supported aggressive legal action against terrorists but it remained unclear exactly how many detainees have faced formal charges in Saudi courts and how many were awaiting trial at year's end. During an address to the Shura Council on July 1, the Interior Minister stated that of some 9,000 suspected militants detained since 2003, 3,106 were still in detention.

The Saudi government also moved to reform its judicial system, including establishing a new state security court to try terrorism cases and expanding rehabilitation programs for terror-related prisoners. On October 1, King Abdullah issued a royal decree approving the restructuring of the judiciary to improve governance and efficiency of the Saudi court system. In addition, Saudi officials have announced the establishment of specialized state security courts to try terrorism cases. The Grand Mufti's October fatwa against supporting jihad abroad also added gravitas to pending legal actions against terror financiers and facilitators. The Grand Mufti and Supreme Judicial Council Chairman have urged the courts to follow a strict interpretation of Islamic law, including sentencing unrepentant terrorists to death. However, they continued to offer incentives for good behavior and said that terrorists who surrender themselves to the authorities and repent will be given special consideration in accordance with Islamic law.

Saudi officials acknowledged that the long-term solution must include an effective rehabilitation program to undermine detainees' adherence to extremist ideology. Accordingly, the government continued its extensive prisoner rehabilitation program aimed at addressing the social context within which individuals are recruited by terrorist groups. Officials involved with the rehabilitation program told the press that since the establishment of detainee counseling programs in 2004, the Interior Ministry had held more than 5,000 sessions to counsel more than 3,200 detainees and successfully rehabilitated and released more than 1,000 prisoners. Likewise, Saudi prisoners repatriated to Saudi Arabia from Guantanamo Bay underwent a similar rehabilitation program before reintegration into Saudi society.

Syria

See *State Sponsors of Terrorism*.

Tunisia

Tunisian law enforcement organizations carefully monitored the activities of Tunisian extremists, both in Tunisia and abroad, which challenged the ability of terrorists to organize internally. In December 2006 and January 2007, government forces disrupted a terrorist cell that allegedly targeted domestic and foreign (including U.S. and UK) interests in Tunisia. Six of those involved allegedly entered Tunisia from Algeria, where they received training and support. Tunisian security forces killed 12 members of the group, reportedly called Assad Ibn Fourat's Army, and captured 15 others. In December 2007, 30 individuals allegedly associated with the cell were convicted by the Tunis Court of First Instance of various terrorism-related charges. Lawyers have appealed the sentences, which ranged from death to five years imprisonment.

The Tunisian government actively prevented the formation of terrorist groups inside Tunisia, including prohibiting the formation of religious-based political parties and groups that it believed would pose a terrorist threat. Hundreds of other suspected terrorists were reportedly detained, charged, and/or convicted under Tunisia's 2003 Terrorism Law and other relevant legislation.

Tunisian extremists were also involved in terrorist activities abroad, including in Algeria, Italy, Iraq, and Lebanon. Domestically, the government worked to improve security procedures at borders and airports. In April, 12 Tunisians were convicted of planning to travel to Algeria to join al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). A number of Tunisians suspected of involvement in terrorist incidents abroad were also repatriated and subsequently charged with or convicted of terrorist activities.

In November, Tunisia hosted an international conference on terrorism organized by the Islamic International Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ISESCO). The concluding statement of the conference, which was attended by over 100 international officials and opened by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and Tunisian President Ben Ali, stressed the role of education and economic development in defeating terrorism. During the year, Tunisia also hosted several meetings of Ministry of Interior officials from Arab League members, including ministers and chiefs of counterterrorism units, to review regional counterterrorism efforts and cooperation.

United Arab Emirates

The Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) repeatedly condemned terrorist acts in Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the region. In order to prevent extremist preaching in UAE mosques, the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments provided prescribed guidelines for all Friday sermons, and required all 1,500 mosques that delivered sermons to record them each Friday to ensure that imams adhered to the guidelines.

The Container Security Initiative (CSI), which became operational at the ports of Port Rashid and Jebel Ali in the Emirate of Dubai in 2005, had five U.S. Customs officers co-located with the Dubai Customs Intelligence Unit at Port Rashid. On average, CSI reviewed approximately 250 bills of landing each week, resulting in 15-20 non-intrusive inspections of U.S.-bound containers; examinations were conducted jointly with Dubai Customs officers. In addition, Dubai Customs made requests that most, if not all containers that originated in Iran be designated for inspection.

Although generally cooperative in counterterrorism, cooperation on law enforcement matters was hampered by the lack of a mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) between

the United Arab Emirates and the United States. The UAE has a cyber-crime law criminalizing the use of the Internet for terrorist groups to "promote their ideologies and finance their activities." The UAE has established a National Security Council charged with formulating and implementing a national strategic plan.

The UAE continued its efforts to combat terror financing, but challenges remain. The United States-UAE Joint Terrorist Finance Coordinating Committee met three times during the year, directly resulting in affirmative changes to the UAE's anti-money laundering laws. The UAE Central Bank provided training programs to financial institutions on money laundering and terrorist financing. However, the Central Bank remained resistant to implementing operations targeting passengers suspected of Bulk Cash Smuggling arriving from terrorist source countries. The Central Bank initiated memoranda of understanding with regional financial intelligence units, and performed anti-money laundering training both locally and regionally. The Central Bank investigated financial transactions and froze accounts in response to internal investigations. Nine prosecutions for money laundering were in process at year's end. In December, the Department of Justice provided training for prosecutors on Bulk Cash Smuggling in Dubai.

Yemen

Yemen's 2007 counterterrorism record was mixed. The Republic of Yemen took action against al-Qa'ida (AQ) and local extremists, arresting and killing several individuals suspected of having AQ ties, and prosecuted the perpetrators of previous terrorist acts. However, significant setbacks included the June 22 announcement that Abu Basir Nasir al-Wahishi was the new head of al-Qa'ida in Yemen (AQY), and the July 2 terrorist attack in Marib that killed ten people. Despite United States pressure, Yemen continued to implement a surrender program with lenient requirements for terrorists it could not apprehend, which often led to their relatively lax incarceration. Yemen also released all returned Guantanamo detainees after short periods of assessment and rehabilitation, into a government monitoring program that lacked strict monitoring measures. U.S.S. Cole bomber Jamal al-Badawi's continued incarceration remained uncertain at the end of 2007.

On July 2, Abdu Mohamad Sad Ahmad Reheqa drove a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (SVBIED) into a group of western tourists in Marib, killing him and several others. AQY claimed responsibility. Three days later, U.S.-trained Yemeni security forces killed the suspected leader of the SVBIED bombing, Ahmed Basyouni Dwedar, an Egyptian wanted in Egypt for his ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. On August 8 and 13, Yemeni security forces raided two houses, arresting 17 and killing four AQ-affiliated suspects while suffering one casualty.

On June 22, AQ affiliate and February 2006 prison escapee Abu Basir Nasir al-Wahishi announced he was the new head of AQY, replacing Abdul Ali al-Harithi, who was killed in 2002. On August 23, the Yemeni Ministry of Interior instituted a gun ban in major cities throughout Yemen based on a 1992 gun control law. Security forces continued to report increasing numbers of weapons seized.

Despite Yemen's history of terrorist activity and repeated offers of assistance from the USG, Yemen lacked a comprehensive counterterrorism law. Current law as applied to counterterrorism was weak. In October, the government established a working group on drafting a comprehensive counterterrorism law. The Yemeni justice system was also ineffective. The courts did not set dates for the trials of suspects involved in the two September 2006 AQY-orchestrated attacks on oil facilities in eastern Yemen. In August 2006, the Sanaa Appellate Court returned to a lower court the case of two individuals accused of plotting in 2004 to assassinate the U.S. Ambassador, claiming the judge did not follow correct sentencing procedures. Consequently, the March 2006 convictions to five years in prison for Hizam al-Mass and Khalid al-Halilah were under appeal at year's end.

Yemeni security forces continued to arrest and try suspected members of AQ and other terrorist groups throughout the year. On November 12, a Yemeni court sentenced December 2006 U.S. Embassy shooter Saleh Alawi al-Ammari to five years in prison. On November 6, the government sentenced 23 suspected AQ affiliated individuals to between two and 15 years in prison.

Although the government lacked laws to criminalize or prevent foreign fighters going to Iraq, it applied available lesser laws to thwart foreign fighter activity. At year's end twenty-one individuals awaited the appeal of their July 2006 Special Penal Court conviction on fraudulent document charges relating to traveling to Iraq to attack U.S. forces. On August 22, a Yemeni court sentenced 19 individuals charged with conspiring to travel to Iraq to attack U.S. and Yemeni interests to 40 months in prison for falsifying documents, possession of arms and aiding AQ suspects.

On August 8, the courts sentenced two Yemenis to one year in prison for their part in the February 2006 escape from a maximum security prison of 23 suspected AQ supporters. Much of this sentence will be time served. The escapees included individuals convicted of participating in the 2000 U.S.S. Cole and 2002 M/V Limburg attacks. On January 15, the Yemeni security forces killed prison escapee Yasir Hamayqani in southern Yemen. In total, ten escapees returned to Yemeni custody and security forces killed six. The government could not account for seven of the escapees at year's end. In May 2006, a security court convicted Mohammed Hamdi al-Ahdal, allegedly AQ's number two in Yemen, to 37 months in prison for financing terrorist groups associated with AQ.

The government had a surrender program for wanted terrorists that it believed it could not apprehend. The program provided lenient requirements for completion of convictions to those who surrendered. Most notably on

October 15, mastermind of the U.S.S. Cole bombing and February 2006 prison escapee Jamal al-Badawi surrendered to Yemeni authorities. He was released to house arrest on October 17, under the terms of this program. Following substantial USG pressure, he was back in jail by October 29. The Yemeni constitution precludes extradition of Yemeni citizens.

Yemen used its Islamic Dialogue Committee, headed by a leading judge who was also the Minister of Religious Guidance and Endowments, to continue its dialogue with detainees arrested for connections to terrorist groups. The government released detainees it considered rehabilitated after they pledged to uphold the Yemeni constitution and laws, the rights of non-Muslims, and the inviolability of foreign interests. The government also released all 12 returned Guantanamo detainees, lacking sufficient evidence for convictions after short periods of assessment and rehabilitation. The government monitoring program of released detainees was loose. The government considers this program to have a very high success rate, but this has not been independently corroborated.

The Government of Yemen's capacity for stemming terrorism financing remained limited. On November 6, the government presented a terrorism financing bill to parliament for approval, where it remained at year's end. On August 6, the UN agreed to a study at the behest of the Yemeni government to rescind the 2004 UN 1267 sanctions against Abdulmajeed al-Zindani, who was associated with promoting and supporting AQ. Yemen continued to take no action to bar his travel or freeze his assets in compliance with its UN obligations. Throughout the year, President Saleh continued to voice public support for al-Zindani and his Al-Iman University.

SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

Overview

Terrorism remained a serious problem in the region, directly and indirectly threatening American interests and lives. Increasingly, South and Central Asian terrorists expanded their operations and networks across the region and beyond. To varying degrees, U.S. cooperation with regional partners on counterterrorism issues continued to increase, but much is left to be accomplished.

Despite progress in Afghanistan, the Taliban-led insurgency remained strong and resilient in the South and East. Although the insurgency absorbed heavy combat and leadership losses, its ability to recruit foot soldiers from its core base of rural Pashtuns remained undiminished.

Pakistan continued to suffer from rising militancy and extremism. The United States remained concerned that the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan were being used as a safe haven for AQ terrorists, Afghan insurgents, and other extremists. Terrorists staged numerous attacks in India and continued to foment terrorist ideology. India continued to rank among the world's most terror-afflicted countries. Terrorists, separatists, and extremists took more than 2,300 lives this year. Although clearly committed to combating violent extremism, the Indian government's counterterrorism efforts were hampered by its outdated and overburdened law enforcement and legal systems. Neighboring Bangladesh continued to arrest extremists, but porous borders and internal political strife threatened the progress made against violent extremists. Although the Caretaker Government made a concerted effort to crack down on corruption and address the root causes of violent extremism within its borders, mistrust between Bangladesh and India stymied potential counterterrorism cooperation between the two countries.

In Sri Lanka, both the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government engaged in numerous violations of the 2002 Cease-fire Agreement that left more than 5,000 people dead since hostilities started again in 2006. The LTTE reverted to targeting civilians in bus bombings and claymore mine attacks, while the government used anti-LTTE paramilitaries to terrorize citizens suspected of having ties to the Tigers. Both the LTTE and armed groups allied to the government engaged in wide-spread human rights abuses including extra-judicial killings, abductions, and extortion.

The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) briefly entered into a coalition with the government in the spring, withdrew from the coalition in September, and rejoined the government in December. The Maoists continued to engage in violence, extortion, and abductions, and tensions remained high throughout the year. Various separatist groups fought with the government as well as with each other as crime, abductions, and general lawlessness were evident throughout Nepal.

A sustained commitment to counterterrorism by Central Asian states resulted in relatively few terrorist attacks. With U.S. support, Central Asian states have undertaken to improve the capabilities of their border forces and build new border posts to impede terrorist movements and interdict drug smuggling, some of which financed terrorism in the region. The sheer length of the border and local corruption remained obstacles in Central Asia's efforts to control its borders, however. More widely, popular grievances over governance and poor economic growth enhanced the conditions that terrorists and other extremists could exploit to recruit and operate in some parts of the region, such as the Ferghana valley.

Central Asia's most significant terrorist organizations include the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and a splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG). However, radical extremist groups such as Hizbut-Tahrir (HT) foment an anti-Semitic, anti-Western ideology that may indirectly generate support for terrorism. HT, an extremist political movement advocating the establishment of a borderless, theocratic Islamic state throughout the entire

Muslim world, has followers in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and elsewhere. The United States has no evidence that HT has committed any acts of international terrorism, but the group's radical anti-American and anti-Semitic ideology is sympathetic to acts of violence against the United States and its allies. HT has publicly called on Muslims to travel to Iraq and Afghanistan to fight Coalition Forces.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan struggled to build a stable, democratic, and tolerant government in the face of vicious attacks by the Taliban and related groups on Coalition Forces, civilians, international NGOs, and other soft targets, most notably through suicide bombings. Supported by the international community, the Afghan government has made suppression of terrorism and establishment of effective law-enforcement mechanisms a high priority. The Afghan government reached out to neighboring Pakistan through a Joint Peace Jirga to find ways to root out economic and social factors contributing to terrorism. Reconciliation of low- and mid-level insurgents remained a high priority, and the Program for Strengthening Peace and Reconciliation (PTS) has brought in over 5,000 Taliban and other insurgents who have wearied from the violence and lack of opportunity offered by extremism. The Government of Afghanistan was exploring additional efforts to strengthen and expand PTS reconciliation efforts.

The Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) program, the follow-on to the earlier Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program, has disbanded 161 illegal armed groups and collected almost 36,000 weapons in 62 districts since its inception in March 2005. In April 2007, in an effort to achieve greater local government support, DIAG began offering development assistance to qualifying districts. DIAG operations expanded, intensifying efforts to build political will at the provincial and local levels to target the more threatening illegal armed groups.

In 2006, the Combined Joint Task Force (then CJTF-76), which had led the Coalition Forces' campaigns against terrorism, turned this responsibility over to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ISAF used a combination of effective counterinsurgency means and methods, including synchronized use of combat (air and ground forces) and non-combat means (building civil governance and aiding reconstruction and development) to fight terrorism, extremism, and attempts to undermine the constitutionally constituted government. The careful targeting of insurgent leaders and insurgent centers, and proactive operations against them, were aimed at eliminating terrorists and facilitating the flow of reconstruction and development. The increasingly professional and effective Afghan National Army (ANA), and to a lesser extent, the Afghan National Police (ANP), more often took the lead in counterterrorism operations and cooperated closely with the United States. In December, the ANA combined with UK and U.S. forces to retake the Taliban-held town of Musa Qala in southern Helmand Province. New integrated civilian-military counterinsurgency approaches in the east, particularly Nangarhar, have begun to yield successes. Despite progress, the Taliban-led insurgency remained a capable, determined, and resilient threat to stability and to the expansion of government authority, particularly in the Pashtun south and east. The insurgency continued to suffer heavy combat losses, including senior leaders, but its ability to obtain AQ support and recruit soldiers from its core base of rural Pashtuns remained undiminished. Taliban information operations were increasingly aggressive and sophisticated.

Streams of Taliban financing from across the border in Pakistan, along with funds gained from narcotics trafficking and kidnapping, have allowed the insurgency to strengthen its military and technical capabilities. At a Joint Peace Jirga held in August, Pakistani President Musharraf acknowledged that support to the Afghanistan insurgency was being provided from within Pakistani territory.

The Taliban continued to target police, police recruits, government ministers, parliamentarians, civil servants, and civilians, including urban crowds, in numerous violent incidents. Having increased the use of improvised explosive devices, suicide bombings became both more numerous and more costly in terms of innocent lives lost. According to media reports of UN- compiled figures, terrorists launched approximately 140 suicide bombing attacks this year, inflicting large numbers of civilian casualties.

Terrorists, often supported by criminal gangs, have also increasingly turned to kidnapping foreigners, most notably the July abduction of South Korean missionary aid workers. This kidnapping was an attempt to extort ransom as well as to make a political point; the Taliban killed two hostages before releasing the remaining 21 after talks with the Afghan and South Korean governments.

Insurgents also targeted international NGOs, UN workers, and recipients of NGO assistance. They attacked teachers, pupils (especially girls), and schools. They also threatened and often brutally killed those who worked for religious tolerance, including ex-insurgents, tribal leaders, and moderate imams, mullahs, and religious scholars. The Taliban coupled threats and attacks against NGOs with continued targeting of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, de-mining teams, and construction crews on road and other infrastructure projects.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh continued to arrest dozens of alleged members of Jamaatul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB), the banned Islamic extremist group responsible for a wave of bombings and suicide attacks in late 2005, and recovered bomb-making materials and weapons from their hideouts. The arrests, combined with the execution in March of six senior JMB leaders, appeared to have depleted the membership of the organization. Although there was speculation that

JMB remnants might try to reorganize to launch a new wave of attacks, no such terror campaign unfolded. On May 1, three small bombs went off at railroad stations in the major cities of Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet. Authorities found a message signed by "Zadid al-Qa'ida" at each of the sites threatening non-governmental agencies if they did not leave Bangladesh within ten days. The deadline passed without incident and it remained unclear who was responsible for the attacks.

Neighboring India continued to allege that the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and other anti-India insurgency groups operated from Bangladesh with the knowledge of senior Bangladeshi government officials. India also blamed the terrorist group Harakat ul-Jihadi-Islami-Bangladesh (HUJI-B) for bomb attacks in the city of Hyderabad in May and August. Bangladesh strongly denied these allegations. The absence of counterterrorism cooperation between India and Bangladesh fueled mutual allegations that each country facilitated terrorism inside the borders of the other.

Bangladesh's caretaker government pledged to pass a series of amendments that would strengthen Bangladesh's Anti-Money Laundering Act and a draft Anti-Terrorism Act, but failed to do so by the end of the year. The legislation would help Bangladesh enter Egmont, the international body of Financial Intelligence Units that plays a critical role in fighting terror financing.

The caretaker government took a strong stance against corruption and arrested many leading politicians and businessmen on graft charges. The United States launched a $20 million, five-year anti-corruption program in Bangladesh to further transparency and good governance efforts, necessary foundations for counterterrorism activity.

U.S. and Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies cooperated well on several cases related to domestic and international terrorism. The United States continued to fund Antiterrorism Assistance programs for Bangladeshi security forces. Bangladesh also continued cooperation with the United States to strengthen control of its borders and land, sea, and air ports of entry.

India

India continued to rank among the world's most terror-afflicted countries. The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, attacks by extreme leftist Naxalites and Maoists in eastern and central India, assaults by ethno-linguistic nationalists in the northeastern states, and terrorist strikes nationwide by Islamic extremists took more than 2,300 lives this year. The Indian government's counterterrorism efforts remained hampered by outdated and overburdened law enforcement and legal systems. The Indian court system was slow, laborious, and prone to corruption; terrorism trials can take years to complete. Many of India's local police forces were poorly staffed, lacked training, and were ill-equipped to combat terrorism effectively.

The Indian government accused Islamic extremists for the following terrorist attacks:

- The February 19 attack on the Friendship Train service between New Delhi and Lahore, Pakistan that killed dozens;
- The May 18 bomb blast at the Mecca Masjid (Mosque) in Hyderabad that killed eleven;
- The August 25 nearly simultaneous explosions on at an amusement park and a market in Hyderabad that killed dozens;
- The October 11 blast at a Sufi mosque in Ajmer, Rajasthan, that killed three;
- The October 14 explosion in a cinema in Ludhiana, Punjab, that killed seven; and
- The November 23 three simultaneous explosions on in judicial complexes in Lucknow, Varanasi, and Faizabad (all in Uttar Pradesh) that killed 13.

These attacks, which killed and injured both Muslims and Hindus, were probably conducted by extremists hoping to incite anger between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Indian officials claim that the perpetrators of these attacks have links to groups based in Pakistan and Bangladesh, particularly Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, and Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami, among others.

These groups also have links to terrorist activity in Jammu and Kashmir. The number of civilians killed were approximately half of that in the previous year. In May, the Indian government acknowledged that the level of infiltration across the Line of Control had fallen, but noted that insurgents had in some case shifted routes to enter India through Bangladesh and Nepal. Attacks in Kashmir continued. For example, on October 11, two civilians and five soldiers were killed by an improvised explosive device (IED), and on July 29, six people were killed when a bomb exploded on a tourist bus.

The Government of India is very concerned with the threat from leftist extremist (Maoist or agrarian Naxalite) groups to India's internal stability and democratic culture. Leftist extremist groups were very active in wide areas of impoverished rural eastern and central India, and also operated in parts of southern India. Hundreds of people were killed in conflicts between the government and various leftist extremist groups, such as the Naxalites and the Communist Party of India; Maoists (CPI-Maoists) and the government; and between the groups themselves. There were at least 971 Naxalite attacks in the first seven months of the year, approximately equal to that of the entire previous year. Leftist extremists were highly active across a wide swath of India, including the states of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal. They were also active in some areas of Orissa, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. Extremists have targeted

elected officials: On March 4, CPI-Maoists shot a Member of Parliament from Jharkhand and five others during a soccer game, and on August 25, leftist extremists killed the son of a former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh during a cultural performance in the city of Hyderabad. Ethnic-linguistic separatist groups were responsible for numerous attacks in Northeastern India, particularly in the states of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya.

Several proscribed terrorist groups operated in the northeast, including the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the People's Liberation Army. At least 850 died in conflicts between dozens of insurgent groups and security forces, and in conflicts between the groups.

Lack of security, remoteness, and inhospitable terrain combined to prevent the government from providing security and other basic services in many of the areas in which the leftist extremists and the northeastern separatist groups operated. Both types of groups increased the level of sophistication of attacks this year by using satellite phones and sophisticated IEDs. In some districts, they took control of a large proportion of the territory, making it impossible for government service providers to enter the area. Infighting, particularly among groups in the northeast, may have slowed the increase in the attacks, but poverty and isolation combined to make the rural, mountainous, and forested areas of India vulnerable to both the Maoists and those who claimed to be fighting for liberation in the northeast.

The United States-India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group (CTJWG) has met nine times since its creation in 2000, most recently on November 28. India participated in CTJWGs with 15 other countries, and in multilateral CTJWGs with the EU and with the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, an organization that promotes economic cooperation among Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal. In October, the Indian government held the second round of consultations with Pakistan under the bilateral counterterrorism joint mechanism, and hosted a ministerial level meeting of the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation on Counterterrorism.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan continued to aggressively combat terrorism and extremism locally and strengthened its cooperation and timeliness in sharing information with the United States. There was little movement, however, on counterterrorism legislation, and the long-delayed draft law on money laundering remained stalled in Parliament. In June, Kazakhstan hosted over 50 partners for the third meeting of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

In April, authorities began Kazakhstan's first ever trial concerning the financing of terrorism. According to press reports, the trial involved two leaders of the banned East Turkistan Islamic Party and an unnamed organization in Central Asia. In April, authorities arrested approximately 20 people in Shymkent and other cities, accusing the individuals of organizing terrorist acts against Special Services' employees. In July, a trial began in the case of ten members of a radical Islamic Wahabi group suspected of organizing terrorist acts in and around Astana and Almaty. Also in July, an Almaty court sentenced ten individuals from the terrorist group Jamaat Muhadjir, who were detained in 2006, on allegations of planning a series of terrorist attacks. Nine of the individuals were sentenced to prison terms ranging from three to twenty-five years. According to press reports, there is one Kazakhstani national being detained in the Guantanamo Bay detention facility.

The Islamic extremist group Hizbut Tahrir (HT) remained the only group designated and outlawed as an "extremist" organization under the Law on Extremism. There were several instances of arrests of individuals associated with HT, as well as the confiscation of printed materials and electronic media. In August, a closed trial began against 30 members of HT arrested in December 2006 on accusations of activities in support of a banned extremist organization, the stirring of national and religious enmity, and establishing an organized criminal group. The list of fourteen banned terrorist organizations was unchanged from 2006.

Kazakhstan, with China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which established a Regional Antiterrorism Center in Tashkent. Kazakhstan is also a member of the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasia Group, a regional anti-money laundering organization modeled on the Financial Action Task Force, with the objective of integrating Kazakhstan, Belarus, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia, and Uzbekistan into the global system of anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism.

Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz Republic took political, legislative, and law enforcement steps to disrupt and deter terrorism. Since 2001, Kyrgyzstan has hosted the Operation Enduring Freedom Coalition airbase at Manas International Airport near Bishkek. In October 2006, Kyrgyzstan adopted an antiterrorism law that provided for establishment of an antiterrorism center to coordinate the activities of state agencies and facilitate international cooperation. In November 2006, President Bakiyev signed a comprehensive law on "Counteracting Terrorist Financing and Legalization (Money Laundering) of Proceeds from Crime." The law obligates financial institutions to report any suspicious activity and bank transactions that exceed the threshold of $25,000. The law also established a Financial Intelligence Service, an administrative body charged with collecting and analyzing information related to financial transactions, developing systems to prevent and detect suspicious transactions, and submitting cases to the prosecutor's office for further action.

Kyrgyzstan's military and internal forces worked to improve their counterterrorism capabilities and to expand cooperation with regional partners. Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Cooperative Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which established lists of banned terrorist groups in an effort to streamline cooperation. With U.S. assistance, the Kyrgyz National Guard opened a counterterrorism training facility. Also in December, the Ministry of Defense opened a U.S.-funded facility to house a non-commissioned officers academy.

Nepal

While Nepal experienced no significant acts of international terrorism, several incidents of domestic terrorism and politically-motivated violence occurred in urban areas and in the Terai. In 2007, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), a designated organization on the Terrorism Exclusion List (TEL), became part of the interim government. Despite ending their ten-year insurgency by signing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006, and entering into the interim government in April 2007, the Maoists, the only U.S.-designated terrorist organization in Nepal, continued to engage in violence, extortion, and abductions. The Maoists withdrew their ministers from the interim government between September and December, but left their members in place in the interim Parliament. The government failed to hold the Maoists accountable for violating the peace process, and law enforcement efforts against terrorist activity were minimal. The Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA) ostensibly settled into UN-monitored cantonments but at times attempted to circumvent the disarmament and combatant verification process. The Maoist-affiliated Young Communist League, which included former PLA members, grew increasingly prominent during the year, carrying on the Maoist militia's tactics of abuse, abduction, assassination, intimidation, and extortion in cities and villages.

Ethnic tensions increased in the southern Terai plains. From mid-January to early March, as Madhesis (Terai inhabitants culturally and linguistically close to India) protested against the failure of the interim constitution and the interim government to address their concerns, an occasionally-violent popular uprising, the Madhesi Andolan, left many dead. Over a dozen extremist groups in pursuit of independence or autonomy and some criminal elements followed the Maoist lead of "negotiation" via armed struggle. Competing factions of Madhesis clashed with each other, with the Maoists, with hill-origin Nepalis, and with police, instigating numerous strikes, demonstrations, and Indo-Nepal border road closures. The most violent of these groups were factions of the Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (People's Terai Liberation Front), which had broken with the Maoist-affiliated Madhesi Mukti Morcha (Madhesi Liberation Front) insurgency in 2004 in order to bring about the secession of the Terai from the rest of Nepal. The Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha factions became increasingly more violent through 2007, despite splitting into five factions by the end of the year. The Maoists exacerbated bloodshed in the Terai in a scramble to regain influence it had lost in the region. On March 21, confrontation between Maoists and Madhesis at a rally in Gaur resulted in the massacre of over 25 people, most of them Maoists. The Government of Nepal largely ignored the conflict in the Terai.

Anti-money laundering legislation remained stalled in Parliament, although the government responded favorably to U.S. requests to be prepared to freeze the assets of individuals and entities involved in the financing of terrorism when or if such assets were discovered. The United States provided substantial antiterrorism assistance and training to Nepal's security forces, including courses on crisis management, post-blast investigations, and terrorist crime scene investigations.

Pakistan

International terror organizations, including al-Qa'ida (AQ) and its supporters, operated and carried out attacks in Pakistan. Violence stemming from Sunni-Shia sectarian strife and militant sub-nationalists also claimed civilian lives. Attacks occurred with greatest frequency in the regions bordering Afghanistan: Balochistan, the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and the adjacent Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), but militant attacks continued to grow and target urban centers including Karachi, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi.

The trend and sophistication of suicide bombings grew in Pakistan this year. The December 27 assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in a suicide bombing after a political rally in Rawalpindi, was the most prominent suicide attack. Between 2002 and 2006, the Department recorded approximately 22 suicide attacks in the country, whereas in 2007 there were over 45 such attacks. These suicide attacks often resulted in large numbers of casualties, and several occurred in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. A number of these attacks targeted well-protected government targets and made use of coordinated and complex operations, such as the November 24 and September 4 suicide attacks in Rawalpindi. On October 18, the most deadly suicide attack in Pakistan's history took place against Bhutto's homecoming procession in Karachi, killing over 130, and injuring hundreds more. In separate suicide attacks in Peshawar and Charsadda, extremists targeted Federal Minister for Political Affairs Amir Muqam in November, and former Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao in December and April; neither were killed, although there were civilian casualties.

Extremists led by Baitullah Mehsud and other AQ-related extremists re-exerted their hold in areas of South Waziristan and captured over 200 government soldiers, who were later released after a local peace deal collapsed. Earlier this year, extremists took over the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad for a number of months until they were ousted in July during a military operation. Extremists have also gained footholds in the settled areas bordering the FATA, including Swat, Tank, and DI Khan. The

Taliban broke a peace agreement between the government and local leaders associated with the Taliban, which contributed to the increase in attacks. Maulana Hasan Jan, a prominent Islamic teacher who preached against the practice of suicide bombings, was assassinated in September. Taliban-linked extremists have closed barber shops and CD and music stores that were alleged to be anti-Islamic, through a series of bombings and threats in the NWFP. A number of girls' schools have closed due to similar threats. Pakistani security forces continued to fight militant leader Maulana Fazlullah in Swat, a settled area in NWFP, after his group tried to implement Sharia law there and displaced court and law enforcement authorities. As of early December, Pakistan's military was conducting enhanced operations against Fazlullah, although Islamabad will likely continue to face challenges to its ability to enforce its writ of law there.

The government's crackdown on banned organizations, hate material, and incitement by religious leaders continued unevenly. Madrassa registration, foreign student enrollment in madrassas, and financial disclosure requirements remained a source of friction between government and religious leaders.

AQ's continued public calls for the overthrow of President Musharraf remained a threat to Pakistan, despite government efforts to eliminate AQ elements. Pakistan continued to pursue AQ and its allies through nationwide police action and military operations in the FATA and elsewhere. Despite having approximately 80,000 to 100,000 troops in the FATA, including Army and Frontier Corps (FC) units, the Government of Pakistan's authority in the area continued to be challenged. While military operations caused disruptions in militant activities, there were no reports of the government capturing or killing any senior AQ leaders. Over 1,000 Pakistani military personnel have been killed since 2001 while carrying out counterterrorist operations.

Pakistani security services cooperated with the United States and other nations to fight terrorism within Pakistan and abroad. Hundreds of suspected AQ operatives have been killed or captured by Pakistani authorities since September 2001. Close cooperation between Pakistani, British, and American law enforcement agencies exposed the August 2006 London-Heathrow bomb plot, leading to the arrest in Pakistan of Rashid Rauf and other alleged conspirators connected to the case. On December 15, 2007, Rashid Rauf escaped from police custody in Rawalpindi and remained at large. Two of the police officers guarding him were arrested and questioned.

Pakistan's leaders took steps to prevent support to the Kashmiri militancy, and the number of violent attacks in Kashmir was down by approximately 50 percent from 2006, according to public statements made by the Indian Defense Minister. Meetings in September 2006 led to the March establishment of the Anti-Terrorism Mechanism to coordinate Pakistan-India exchange of information on terrorist threats.

Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT) and other Kashmir-focused groups continued regional attack planning. In 2007, Kashmir-focused groups continued to support attacks in Afghanistan, and operatives trained by the groups continued to feature in AQ transnational attack planning.

Armed conflict between the government and militant Baloch nationalists continued. Pakistani press reported that the government killed the leader of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Nawabzada Balach Marri, in November, although the details remained unclear. The BLA and its sympathizers responded with violent protests and terrorist attacks against the government leaving more than 12 dead. (Pakistan declared the BLA a terrorist organization in April 2006.)

Sectarian violence claimed hundreds of lives this year and increased since 2006, according to data from the Institute for Conflict Management. In November, more than 100 people were killed in Sunni-Shia fighting in Parachinar. In April, approximately 80 people were killed in Kurram (in the FATA), when sectarian fighting broke out after a religious procession was attacked.

In 2006, President Musharraf and governmental agencies developed the FATA Sustainable Development Program (SDP) to accelerate economic and social development and strengthen political administration and security in the region. The government created a FATA Development Authority and filled all of its executive positions in November 2006. Pakistan allocated 120 million USD in its FY-2007 budget for FATA development programming, with the bulk going to education and infrastructure projects. While capacity remained a serious challenge, the government continued to build schools, enhance security, and provide training and education.

Although Pakistan continued to work with the UNSCR 1267 Committee to freeze the assets of individuals and groups identified as terrorist entities linked to AQ and the Taliban, several UN-sanctioned entities continued to operate in Pakistan. In September, the long-awaited anti-money-laundering (AML) ordinance was adopted by presidential decree. Unfortunately, parts of the ordinance did not meet international norms and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations, particularly in the areas of designated offense categories and the statutory definition of money laundering. The AML ordinance formally established a Financial Management Unit (FMU) to independently monitor suspicious transactions.

The State Bank of Pakistan required all informal money changers (or hawaladars) to register as authorized foreign exchange dealers and meet minimum capital requirements, although enforcement was uneven. The regulation had limited success in consolidating the national foreign exchange regime, subjecting it to more stringent regulation and accounting standards. Despite government efforts, unlicensed hawalas still operated illegally in parts of the country (particularly Peshawar and Karachi). The

informal and secretive nature of the unlicensed hawalas made it difficult for regulators to effectively combat their operations. Most illicit funds were transacted through these unlicensed operators.

Pakistan arrested or detained several high-profile terrorist suspects, but faced significant challenges in prosecuting such cases. The government freed 28 militants in November, three of whom were convicted on terrorism charges, in exchange for the release of 213 Pakistani soldiers held by militant commander Baitullah Mehsud. In August, the government released Muhammad Naem Noor Khan without formally charging him, even though the government claimed at the time of his arrest in July 2004 that he was a top AQ operative.

The United States and Pakistan engaged in a broad range of counterterrorism cooperative efforts including border security and criminal investigations, as well as several long-term training projects. Pakistan is the third largest recipient of U.S. military and economic assistance.

Sri Lanka

Approximately 5,000 people were killed and many thousands more displaced as the conflict escalated between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. The Sri Lankan government took effective control of the Eastern Province in midyear, but the LTTE continued to control much of the north and carried out attacks throughout the country. The Sri Lankan Army remained deployed across the country in all areas it controlled to fight the insurgency. The Special Task Force (STF) police were deployed both in the east and in strategic locations in the west. Although a Cease-fire Agreement was nominally in effect, the level of violence rose to that associated with the period prior to the signing of the agreement in 2002.

The LTTE and government forces engaged in retaliatory attacks throughout the year. On November 28, an LTTE suicide bomber attempted to assassinate Minister for Social Services and Welfare Douglas Devananda. (This was at least the 11th attempt on the Tamil leader's life.) On the same day, a parcel bomb killed at least 19 in a shopping area in southern Colombo. The likely perpetrator was the LTTE, although there is some public speculation that this may have been a criminal, rather than LTTE, attack. Other major LTTE attacks included attacks on the Anuradhapura Air Base (October); the first-ever LTTE attacks by air of Katunayake Airport and a gas storage facility in Colombo (March), the Palaly Air Force Base in Jaffna (April), and parcel bombings of two intercity buses in southern Sri Lanka (January). Many of these attacks appeared to have been reprisals for offensive actions taken, or at least alleged to have been carried out, by the Government of Sri Lanka, such as attacks on busses and villages and the air raid on November 2 that killed LTTE political chief S.P. Tamilchelvan.

A breakaway group from the LTTE, the Karuna Faction, was also responsible for extrajudicial killings and attacks against the LTTE and its alleged civilian supporters in eastern Sri Lanka. Its former leader, Karuna Amman, was arrested in London on charges of immigration fraud in November. A rival leader, Pillayan, has since consolidated control of the Karuna faction and displaced cadres loyal to Karuna.

The government took control of Sri Lanka's eastern province by July, but was unable to move forward on elections, devolution of power, and economic development programs because of instability and the fragility of the national governing coalition. The LTTE maintained control of much of the north and retained the capacity to mount attacks throughout the country. In late November and December, government forces increased activity against targets in the north.

The LTTE continued to finance itself with contributions from the Tamil Diaspora in North America, Europe, and Australia, by imposing local "taxes" on businesses operating in the areas of Sri Lanka under its control, and reportedly by extortion operations in government-controlled areas. The LTTE also used Tamil charitable organizations as fronts for its fundraising. In November, the USG designated under Executive Order 13224 and froze the U.S.-held assets of the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization, a charity associated with the LTTE. The LTTE previously used such funds for weapons purchases on the international black market and also captured arms from Sri Lankan security forces. The Sri Lankan Navy sunk three LTTE supply ships in September and another in October.

Human rights groups and other observers have accused all parties to the conflict with carrying out abductions and extrajudicial killings. The LTTE and the Karuna faction were charged with forced conscription and child recruitment. In general, the LTTE did not intentionally target U.S. citizens or assets, limiting attacks to Sri Lankan security forces, political figures, civilians, and businesses. However, attacks occurred within the vicinity of the U.S. embassy and personnel; the U.S. Ambassador was traveling in a helicopter that came under mortar fire in February. The LTTE subsequently apologized for the incident.

Sri Lankan cooperation with the FBI resulted in arrests of persons charged with material support to terrorist groups. The U.S. provided training for relevant Sri Lankan government agencies and the banking sector. The Government of Sri Lanka cooperated with the United States to implement both the Container Security Initiative and the Megaports program at the port of Colombo.

Tajikistan

As the poorest of the former Soviet countries, the Tajik government's main impediment to counterterrorism remained its lack of resources. The government, particularly the Border Guards, lacked appropriate technical equipment, personnel, and training to effectively interdict

illegal border crossings and to detect and analyze hazardous substances. As a result, Tajikistan could serve as a transit country for extremists and terrorists traveling to and from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The United States and other donors assisted the government of Tajikistan to secure its 1400 kilometer porous border with Afghanistan.

Assistance included a $5 million U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) radio program to improve Border Guard communications capability. DOD held four Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) sessions with Tajikistani security forces to improve their capacity to conduct counterterrorism operations. The U.S. Embassy administered training which included chemical weapons response and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) detection training. These programs will help Tajikistan stop potential terrorists who may attempt to cross the Tajikistani border, and will enable Tajikistan to better control its borders.

Tajikistan endorsed the joint U.S.-Russia co-chaired Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. In November, it hosted a regional conference to discuss with its neighbors more effective cooperation to counter WMD proliferation. The Tajikistani government also participated in regional security alliances, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Since September 11, 2001, the Government of Tajikistan has allowed its airspace to be used for counterterrorist actions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Tajikistan prohibited extremist-oriented activities and closely monitored groups it listed as terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizbut-Tahrir (HT). The Government of Tajikistan believed that HT, in particular, was active in the northern part of the country. Analysts believed that supporters of terrorist groups such as al-Qa'ida and the IMU were active in the region this year.

The Government of Tajikistan did not provide safe haven for terrorists or terrorist organizations. However, the country's poor economic climate and repressive government policies to restrict Islamic religious practice provided conditions that religious extremists could exploit. Events occurred in Tajikistan that may have been terrorism-related. A small bomb exploded outside the Supreme Court on June 17, causing no injuries or serious damage, and another bomb detonated at a conference hall on November 14, killing one person. These incidents remained under investigation at year's end.

Under the guise of fighting extremism, the Government of Tajikistan has taken increased measures against opposition parties in the country, particularly the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), the only legal Muslim opposition party in Central Asia.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan's longtime president, Saparmyrat Niyazov, died in late December 2006, and it remained too early in the presidency of Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to assess any change in the government's counterterrorism policy. The Government of Turkmenistan, while generally supportive of counterterrorism initiatives, increasingly was viewing counterterrorism through a domestic security lens and was receptive to international counterterrorism initiatives as they related to the country's effort to prevent terrorist activity on its own soil. The government cooperated with a variety of international organizations and partner countries in conducting counterterrorism training events for government personnel, including, for example, canine bomb detection training and professional seminars on terrorism and security studies.

While the government continued to strictly control access into and passage through Turkmenistan at official border crossings and along main roads, clandestine passage was still possible due to long and porous borders that stretch across mountain and desert terrain, as well as the small size and uneven quality of Turkmenistan's border guard and customs services. Turkmenistan's law enforcement and security agencies exert stringent security control over all aspects of society making it unlikely that Turkmenistan could easily be used as a terrorist refuge. The Government of Turkmenistan strictly controlled religious expression, and radical or extremist forms of Islam were not tolerated.

The government maintained a military-style counterterrorism unit with hostage rescue and explosives threat management capability, as well as a Department for the Prevention of Terrorism and Organized Crime in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Government of Turkmenistan continued to support humanitarian assistance related to the War on Terror and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. The government entered the names of individuals and organizations on terrorist financing lists into its banking system.

Uzbekistan

The Government of Uzbekistan did not provide safe haven for terrorists or terrorist organizations and continued to work aggressively to combat terrorist groups and other suspected Islamic radicals. Nevertheless, widespread poverty and the government's repressive security policies created conditions that religious extremists could exploit. In the past, Uzbekistan's porous borders, particularly in the Ferghana Valley, allowed for people and illicit goods to move in and out of the country with relative freedom. The government responded to these threats with impressive tightening of border controls, especially in the Ferghana Valley and increased its cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. It did not, however, systematically address the conditions terrorists might exploit to gain popular support and recruits for their cause.

Supporters of terrorist groups such as the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the IMU-affiliated East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), and other al-Qa'ida (AQ)-affiliated groups were

active in the region, and terrorist groups in the region continued to target both the Government of Uzbekistan and western interests. Members of these groups expressed anti-U.S. sentiments and some have attacked U.S. interests in the past, including a 2004 suicide bombing at the U.S. Embassy in Tashkent conducted by the IJG. USG personnel and facilities continued to operate at a heightened state of alert.

In contrast with 2005, when the Government of Uzbekistan ended virtually all counterterrorism cooperation with the United States, there were a few modest steps in resuming cooperation. In November, the government of Uzbekistan extended for another year a protocol giving over-flight rights to commercial aircraft contracted by the Department of Defense, and permitted several over-flights of such aircraft in 2007.

Tashkent hosts the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS), which said it had both facilitated combined counterterrorism exercises among SCO member states and begun work on developing a coordinated terrorist database. Uzbekistan is also a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which said it held counterterrorism exercises and made progress in coordinating counterterrorism efforts.

Nonetheless, the Government of Uzbekistan did not participate fully in the SCO or CSTO exercises. The government increased its participation in counterterrorism-themed UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) programs, and took part in two out of three regional terrorism prevention activities organized by UNODC.

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Overview

Regionally based Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) in Colombia, and remnants of radical leftist Andean groups were the primary perpetrators of terrorist acts in the Western Hemisphere. With the exception of the United States and Canada, where some prosecutions of suspected terrorists were underway, there were no known operational cells of Islamic terrorists in the hemisphere, although pockets of ideological sympathizers in South America and the Caribbean lent financial and moral support to terrorist groups in the Middle East.

In May 2007, Venezuela was re-certified as "not cooperating fully" with U.S. antiterrorism efforts under Section 40A of the Arms Export and Control Act, as amended. Rampant corruption with the Venezuelan government and military, ideological ties with the FARC, and lax counternarcotics policies have fueled a permissive operating environment for drug traffickers and an increase in drug trafficking to Europe, Africa, and the United States. Cuba remained a state sponsor of terrorism. On November 9, 2006, an Argentine judge issued arrest warrants for eight current and former Iranian government officials and one member of Hizballah for their alleged role in the July 18, 1994 terrorist bombing of the Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) that killed 85 and injured over 150 people. On March 13, 2007, INTERPOL's Executive Committee unanimously decided to issue international "wanted" notices ("Red Notices") for five of the Iranians (including the former Minister of Intelligence and Security, Ali Fallahijan, and the commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Qods force) and the one Lebanese national (Imad Mugniyah, recently deceased). The Government of Iran appealed that decision. On November 7, INTERPOL's General Assembly voted (78 for, 14 against, 26 abstentions) to uphold the Executive Committee's March 13 decision and the "Red Notices" were issued.

The threat of a transnational terrorist attack remained low for most countries in the hemisphere. Overall, governments took modest steps to improve their counterterrorism capabilities and tighten border security, but corruption, weak government institutions, ineffective or lack of interagency cooperation, weak or non-existent legislation, and reluctance to allocate sufficient resources limited progress. Some countries, like Argentina, Panama, Paraguay, Mexico, and El Salvador, made serious prevention and preparedness efforts. Others lacked urgency and resolve to address deficiencies in their counterterrorism posture. Caribbean and Central American nations, recognizing their vulnerability to attack or transit by terrorists, took steps to improve their border controls and to secure key infrastructure, especially air and maritime ports. The CARICOM nations have an on-going relationship with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for the review of passengers traveling in the region which enables the United States to screen passengers against the terrorist screening database and review them for other suspected travel patterns. Most countries began to look seriously at possible connections between transnational criminal organizations and terrorist organizations. Colombia maintained and strengthened its "democratic security" strategy, directly confronting the convergence of threats from terrorism, newly emerging criminal groups, narcotics trafficking organizations, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The Colombian government was increasingly successful in attacking mid-level FARC commanders engaged in narcotics trafficking and terrorist activities. The September 3 and October 25 deaths of commanders Tomas Medina Caracas "El Negro Acacio," and Gustavo Rueda Diaz, "Martin Caballero," respectively, represented serious blows.

In May, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation uncovered a plot by two Guyanese, one Trinidadian, and one U.S. citizen to destroy a fuel pipeline at New York's JFK airport. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago cooperated in the effort to locate and detain those involved in the plot. Of the four suspects, three were arrested in Trinidad, where they remained in custody awaiting a judicial decision on their extradition to the United States The fourth

suspect remained in detention in the United States. The United States enjoyed solid cooperation on terror-related matters from most hemispheric partners, especially at the operational level, and maintained excellent intelligence, law enforcement, and legal assistance relations with most countries. The hemisphere boasts the OAS Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, which is the only permanent regional multilateral organization focused exclusively on counterterrorism.

Mexico and Canada were key partners in the War on Terror and U.S. homeland security. Cooperation with them was broad and deep, involving all levels of government and virtually all agencies, in several initiatives. Recognizing the threat from terrorist transit, the Mexican government worked with the United States to enhance aviation, border, maritime, and transportation security, to secure critical infrastructure, and to combat terrorism financing. United States- Canadian counterterrorism cooperation took place in a number of established forums, including the terrorism subgroup of the Cross Border Crime Forum, the Shared Border Accord Coordinating Committee, and the Bilateral Consultative Group (BCG). The BCG brings together USG and Canadian counterterrorism officials from over a dozen agencies, on an annual basis, to coordinate policy on bioterrorism, information sharing, and joint counterterrorism training. Both Canada and Mexico have arrangements with the United States for the exchange of terrorist screening information, pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) No. 6.

The United States remained fully committed to supporting the Government of Colombia in its efforts to defeat Colombian-based Foreign Terrorist Organizations. President Alvaro Uribe continued vigorous law enforcement, intelligence, military, and economic measures against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and remaining elements of the former United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) who have not demobilized or who have gravitated to newly-formed criminal groups. The Colombian government also increased its efforts with neighboring countries to thwart terrorist expansion, investigate terrorist activities inside and outside Colombia, seize assets, secure hostage release, and bring terrorists to justice. Colombia provided antiterrorism training to nations in the region.

Colombia's neighbors had varied reactions to the threat from Colombian based terrorists. While none condemned the terrorists or designated the groups for domestic purposes, they responded for the most part, positively to Colombian requests to arrest specific fugitives. Brazil and Peru improved cross-border cooperation with Colombia, which was often instituted at the local rather than national level. Ecuador demonstrated a willingness to militarily confront encroaching foreign narcoterrorists, while security forces in Brazil and Peru generally sought to avoid military confrontations with them. Forces in Peru pursued reemerging domestic terrorist groups aggressively. It remained unclear to what extent the Government of Venezuela provided support to Colombian terrorists. However, weapons and ammunition, some from official Venezuelan stocks and facilities, have turned up in the hands of Colombian terrorist organizations. Neither the Venezuelan nor Colombian governments systematically policed the 1400-mile Venezuelan-Colombian border to prevent the movement of groups of armed men or to interdict arms flows to narcoterrorists.

Tri-Border Area

(Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay)

The Governments of the Tri-Border Area (TBA), Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, have long been concerned with arms and drugs smuggling, document fraud, money laundering, and the manufacture and movement of contraband goods through this region. In the early 1990s, they established a mechanism to address these illicit activities. In 2002, at their invitation, the United States joined them in what became the "3+1 Group on Tri-Border Area Security" to improve the capabilities of the three to address cross-border crime and thwart money laundering and potential terrorist financing activities. The United States remained concerned that Hizballah and HAMAS sympathizers were raising funds in the TBA by participating in illicit activities and soliciting donations from sympathizers within the sizable Muslim communities in the region. There was no corroborated information, however, that these or other Islamic extremist groups had an operational presence in the TBA.

Argentina

Argentina cooperated well with the United States at the operational level, and addressed many of the legal and institutional weaknesses that previously hindered its counterterrorism efforts. In 2006 and 2007, the National Coordination Unit in the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights became fully functional, managing the government's anti-money laundering and counterterrorism finance efforts and representing Argentina to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the Financial Action Task Force of South America (GAFISUD). The Attorney General's special investigative unit set up to handle money laundering and terrorism finance cases began operations this year. The Central Bank's specialized anti-money laundering and counterterrorism finance examination program was awaiting final authorization and was not operational at year's end. The Argentine government and Central Bank remained committed to freezing assets of terrorist groups identified by the United Nations if they were detected in Argentine financial institutions.

A noteworthy event was the Argentine Congress' passage in June of legislation penalizing the financing of terrorism ("Illegal Terrorist Associations and Terrorism Financing"), which brought Argentina into greater compliance with FATF standards. The law, which entered into effect in mid-July, amended the Penal Code (Law No. 25.246 "Cover-Up and Laundering of Assets Act") to criminalize acts of terror, terrorism financing, and money laundering for the purpose of financing terrorism. The new law provided a

legal foundation for the financial intelligence unit (FIU), Central Bank, and other regulatory and law enforcement bodies to investigate and prosecute such crimes. Argentina joined Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay as the only countries in South America to have laws against financing terrorism. On September 11, the Argentine President signed into force the National Anti-Money Laundering and Counterterrorism Finance Agenda. The Agenda will serve as a road map to implement the existing money laundering and terrorism finance laws and regulations. The Agenda's 20 objectives focus on closing legal/regulatory loopholes and improving interagency cooperation. The next challenge is for Argentine law enforcement and regulatory institutions, including the Central Bank and FIU, to implement the National Agenda and aggressively enforce the newly strengthened and expanded legal, regulatory, and administrative measures available to them to combat financial crimes.

On November 9, 2006, an Argentine judge issued arrest warrants for eight current and former Iranian government officials and one member of Hizballah, that were indicted in the July 18, 1994 terrorist bombing of the Argentine-Jewish Mutual Association (AMIA) that killed 85 and injured over 150 people. On March 13, 2007, the INTERPOL Executive Committee decided unanimously to issue international "wanted" notices ("Red Notices") for five of the Iranians (including the former Minister of Intelligence and Security, Ali Fallahijan, and the commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the Qods force) and the one Lebanese national (Imad Mugniyah, recently deceased). The Government of Iran appealed the Executive Committee's decision and requested that the INTERPOL General Assembly decide the matter. On November 7, the INTERPOL General Assembly voted (78 for, 14 against, 26 abstentions) to uphold the Executive Committee's March 13 decision and the Red Notices were issued.

Belize

The Government of Belize cooperated with the United States by sharing information and providing assistance to the extent that its limited resources allowed. The U.S. Embassy enjoyed a close and cooperative relationship with counterparts in the police force, particularly the Special Branch, immigration, customs, and prison officials. The Government of Belize cooperated with U.S. law enforcement agencies to capture AQ associate Earnest James Umaama and return him to Washington State. The Belize Defense Force (880 total personnel) established a Counterterrorism Platoon to perform operations within Belize and its territorial waters.

Bolivia

With political instability, a weak and fluctuating legal framework, increasing coca cultivation, and the opening of diplomatic relations with Iran, Bolivia showed new potential as a possible site for terrorist activity. Supporters and actors from the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), the Paraguayan Free Fatherland Party (PPL), and the Shining Path were thought to be present in Bolivia.

In December, following 16 months of deliberations within a Constituent Assembly, President Morales' Movement to Socialism (MAS) party approved a new draft constitution with little input from the political opposition. The government's actions divided the country with five out of nine departmental governors calling the new constitution illegal and illegitimate. Opposition departments (states) may hold autonomy votes in May and June. Bolivia's uncertain political and economic climate, and an increase in coca production, could lead to increased trafficking of illicit goods and money across Bolivia's borders.

In September, the Bolivian government announced the opening of diplomatic and commercial relations with Iran. The September 27 agreement pledged $1.1 billion in Iranian assistance to Bolivia over five years. In addition, Bolivia received continued medical and intelligence support from Cuba, with which it has had a close relationship since 2006. The Bolivian government's ineffective anti-money laundering regime failed to comply with international norms. In July, the Egmont Group suspended Bolivia's membership when it did not criminalize the financing of terrorism.

In October, the Peruvian government requested the extradition of Walter Chavez, a close advisor to the Bolivian government. In 1990, Chavez was arrested in Peru for alleged illegal activities and involvement with the MRTA, and was released on bail and disappeared before turning up in Bolivia in 1992. The Bolivian government vowed to defend and protect Chavez, arguing that he was a political refugee protected by international agreements.

Brazil

Elements of the Brazilian government continued counterterrorism cooperation, which included investigating potential terrorism financing, document forgery networks, and other illicit activity. Operationally, elements of the Brazilian government responsible for combating terrorism, such as the Federal Police, Customs, and the Brazilian Intelligence Agency, diligently worked with their U.S. counterparts to pursue investigative leads provided by U.S. intelligence, law enforcement, and financial agencies regarding terrorist suspects. Brazil was increasingly capable of monitoring domestic financial operations and effectively utilized its financial intelligence unit, the Financial Activities Oversight Council (COAF), to identify possible funding sources for terrorist groups. COAF carried out name checks for persons and entities on the UNSCR 1267 Committee's Consolidated List, but has not found any assets, accounts, or property in the names of persons or entities on the lists. COAF partnered with Customs to create a database called the Electronic Declaration of Cash Carriage (EDPV), which will assist in monitoring individuals who transfer funds abroad. Although the system is a prototype and is still being tested, Brazilian law enforce-

ment officials were encouraged by initial results. The government recognized the connection between cash couriers and terrorism, and took the necessary steps to receive guidance from the Financial Action of South American (GAFISUD) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). At year's end, there was a bill before the Minister of Justice for approval that would increase training and the budget to counter illicit cash/drug smuggling regimes in Brazil.

Two key counterterrorism-related legislative initiatives continued to languish. Neither the antiterrorism nor the anti-money laundering bills, which have been pending since 2005, were introduced in Congress. If passed, the bills would criminalize terrorism and associated activities, and facilitate greater law enforcement access to financial and banking records during investigations, criminalize illicit enrichment, allow administrative freezing of assets, and facilitate prosecutions of money laundering cases by amending the legal definition of money laundering and making it an autonomous offense.

Brazil and the United States agreed to expand the Container Security Initiative (CSI) in Santos. The USG provided a variety of training courses in Brazil in combating money laundering, airport interdiction, container security, and maritime security. Brazilian authorities received seminars and courses on security and worked closely with U.S. law enforcement agencies to prepare for the 2007 Pan American Games.

The Government of Brazil continued to invest in border and law enforcement infrastructure with a view to gradually controlling the flow of goods, both legal and illegal, through the Tri-Border Area (TBA), the proceeds of which could be diverted to support terror groups. Tougher controls at the Brazilian Customs inspection station at the Friendship Bridge in the TBA enabled the government to crack down on contraband crossing the bridge, though law enforcement officials expected that traffickers would respond to the tougher controls by trying to move their goods clandestinely across the border elsewhere via boat. In 2007, a Joint Intelligence Center was built in the TBA in an effort to combat transborder criminal organizations with its neighbors.

Canada

The United States and Canada collaborated extensively on a broad array of counterterrorism initiatives that spanned virtually all agencies and every level of government. Canada continued stabilization and reconstruction operations in the Kandahar province of Afghanistan and led G8 efforts to improve border security to cut the flow of insurgents and terrorists into Afghanistan from Pakistan. The Canadian government submitted additional counterterrorism legislation and revised security certificate legislation to Parliament to strengthen the country's legal tools to combat terrorism. Through its Counterterrorism Capacity-building Program, Canada continued to implement a major effort to assist in training and technical assistance to partner nations in terrorism financing, legislation, and border management. This year marked the tenth anniversary of the exchange of terrorist screening information between the United States and Canada.

In June 2006, Canadian law enforcement officials charged 18 individuals, all Canadian citizens or residents, with planning terror attacks in Canada. Among them, fourteen adults continued to face charges, three youths have had charges against them stayed or dropped, and a fourth youth was released on bail. Four of the fourteen adults charged were released on bail, subject to conditions. Only six of the fourteen faced the most serious charges of planning to storm Parliament Hill and take politicians hostage, and to bomb targets such as a Canadian Forces base and government offices in Toronto and Ottawa. The rest of the group faced lesser charges, including participation in alleged terrorist training and charges related to terrorist financing. This case, and that of Momin Khawaja, who was accused of conspiring with a British AQ cell in a thwarted plot to bomb targets in London in 2004, will be the first cases tried under Canada's 2001 Anti-Terrorism Act.

In October 2007, the Government of Canada introduced two important pieces of legislation, both of which were under debate in Parliament. One bill proposed to amend provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to allow for continued application of "security certificates," which have been in use for several decades as a way to detain, pending deportation, foreign nationals deemed to be a security threat. In February, the Canadian Supreme Court ruled that the government's use of secret evidence in certificate proceedings and procedures for detention review were unconstitutional and gave the government until February 23, 2008 to amend the Act. The proposed legislation would provide for cleared "special advocates" to challenge the evidence on behalf of the accused and for an initial judicial review of detainees in the first 48 hours of arrest and at six-month intervals. Six individuals are still subject to security certificates; five of whom were released from detention on conditions and one who is in custody. The bill remained in the House of Commons upon its adjournment on December 13.

The second key bill is part of a mandatory review of the Anti-Terrorism Act. Two provisions of the Act—investigative hearings that would permit police to apply for an order requiring a witness to appear before a judge and answer questions; and preventive arrest, whereby peace officers may bring an individual before a judge in the early stages of terrorist activity to disrupt a potential terrorist attack—were subject to sunset clauses and lapsed in February. The Canadian government was committed to reinstating these provisions as part of its overall counterterrorism strategy and introduced the measures after an earlier motion to extend them was defeated in the House of Commons in February. In October, the government reintroduced the legislation first in the Senate, where it remained as of its adjournment in December.

In an effort to improve emergency management in the event of a disaster (such as a major terrorist attack), the Canadian parliament passed a bill in June that clarified responsibilities and lines of authority during an emergency. The bill also included a special provision "that the Minister may develop joint emergency management plans with the relevant USG authorities and, in accordance with those plans, coordinate Canada's response to emergencies in the United States and provide assistance in response to those emergencies."

United States-Canadian counterterrorism cooperation took place in a number of established forums, including the terrorism sub-group of the Cross Border Crime Forum, the Shared Border Accord Coordinating Committee, and the Bilateral Consultative Group (BCG). The BCG brings together U.S. and Canadian counterterrorism officials from over a dozen agencies, on an annual basis, to coordinate policy on bioterrorism, to share information, and for joint counterterrorism training. The United States and Canada continued to work on mechanisms to accommodate Canadian concerns about information sharing in the wake of a 2002 case in which a Canadian-Syrian citizen and terror suspect was removed from New York to Syria, where he claimed to have been tortured and subsequently received formal compensation from the Government of Canada.

In Afghanistan, Canada stood firm in fighting the insurgency in Kandahar province, where it provided a 2500-person battle group to ISAF Regional Command South and a Provincial Reconstruction Team for stabilization and development efforts. Canada also was leading a major initiative to improve cross border coordination between Afghan and Pakistani authorities, police, and military, and to enhance the capacities of the units that work to secure the border from insurgent and terrorist crossings. In October, Canada led two border assessment missions and held a Joint Border Management Workshop with Afghan and Pakistani experts in Dubai. To date, Canada has suffered 73 soldiers and one diplomat killed in Afghanistan, the highest proportion of casualties to troops deployed for any NATO member.

Canada also helped key countries address terrorism and terrorism financing with its Counterterrorism Capacity-building Program, a $15 million a year program to provide training, advice, and technical assistance to counterpart agencies. Through this program, Canada provided assistance to several countries in the Caribbean to draft new counterterrorism legislation, intelligence training for border officials on the Afghan-Pakistani border, and financial intelligence training to officials in India. Through its Cross Cultural Roundtable and Muslim Outreach program, Canada has been actively seeking to engage its citizens in a dialogue on a broad range of national security issues, including terrorism. The Muslim Communities Working Group in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is also engaged in efforts abroad to enhance Canada's relationships with the countries of the Muslim world, focusing on the promotion of democratic governance, pluralism, and human rights. In November, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade led an effort to compare approaches and lessons learned among international partners on outreach to Muslim communities.

The Government of Canada extended its Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Research and Technology Initiative (CRTI), which aimed to bring people and knowledge from the Canadian and U.S. scientific, technology, intelligence, responder, and policy communities together in an integrated fashion to pursue new technologies and approaches to counterterrorism. Canada also worked with the United States under the 1995 Canada/U.S. Counterterrorism Research and Development Agreement to manage a robust joint program on counterterrorism research and development.

In late 2006, the Canadian government passed legislation that amended the Proceeds of Crime and Terrorist Financing Act to make Canada's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing regime consistent with new Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards. It allowed Canada to enter into Memorandums of Understanding with international and third country law enforcement organizations to strengthen information sharing and to create penalties to improve compliance with the act. The bill also created a registration regime for money service businesses, expanding the number of reporting actions required to implement compliance, to include dealers in precious metals and stones and the real estate industry, and created an administrative and monetary penalties regime that could better enforce compliance.

Chile

Chilean law enforcement actively cooperated in international terrorism investigations and with the United States to monitor and combat terrorist financing. Law Enforcement officials monitored possible links between extremists in Chile's Iquique Free Trade Zone and those in the Tri-Border Area, as trade links between these two areas are increasing. Chile's National Intelligence Agency remained mostly an analytical body, relying on law enforcement and investigative agencies for the vast majority of collection and operations.

Chile endorsed both the Proliferation Security Initiative (March) and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (May). In June, representatives from Chile's Foreign Relations Ministry and the two national police forces (the uniformed Carabiñeros and the Investigative Police) attended the FBI-sponsored Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism Law Enforcement Conference in Miami. Chile was an active member of APEC's Counterterrorism Task Force.

Chileans requested FBI support on two domestic terrorism cases. Coordinadora Arauco Melleca (CAM), is a violent Mapuche Indian group in southern Chile that has burnt fields and attacked police while fighting for land it claims belongs to it. CAM appeared to have begun organizing

itself more like a guerilla group; attacks late in the year demonstrated increased planning and a more professional use of weapons and tactics. Walter Wendelin, a representative of the Spain-based Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) political branch, traveled to Chile to meet with CAM members. Chilean police were monitoring for possible contacts between Mapuche groups and armed political movements in Latin America.

Grupo de Operaciones Policiales Especiales (GOPE), a 300-person unit of the Carabiñeros police force, served as the nation's primary counterterrorist reaction force. The force was well-trained and participates annually in Exercise Fuerzas Comando, a U.S. Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH)-sponsored special operations seminar designed to refine the tactics, techniques, and procedures used by Special Operations counterterrorism forces. A GOPE commander attended a conference in Paraguay this year on "Combating Radical Ideology," sponsored by the Counterterrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP).

Colombia

The Government of Colombia, facing domestic terrorist threats, continued vigorous law enforcement, intelligence, military, and economic measures against three designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations within Colombia: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and remaining elements of the former United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). Colombia increased its counterterrorism efforts in the region to counter terrorist groups' operations, investigate terrorist activities inside and outside Colombia, seize assets, and bring terrorists to justice.

Colombia continued to expand its role as regional leader in counterterrorism, and provided some training to numerous countries. Leveraging experience gained from U.S. training, Colombia reached out to countries across the region to create AMERIPOL (a regional police cooperation institution similar to INTERPOL), which will allow more efficient coordination on counterterrorism and law enforcement issues in the region. The Colombian government continued to seek enhanced regional counterterrorism cooperation to target terrorist safe havens in vulnerable border areas, and provided counterterrorism training to officials from partner countries across the region. Colombia and Mexico significantly increased joint training and operations against narco-terrorist organizations operating in both countries.

The United States-Colombia extradition relationship remained the most successful such effort in the world. The Colombian government cooperated fully with U.S. efforts to recover U.S. citizen kidnapping victims, including three kidnapped by the FARC in February 2003—Thomas Howes, Keith Stansell, and Marc Gonsalves—and remained open to third-party proposals for a hostage-prisoner exchange.

In November, President Alvaro Uribe agreed to a request of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Colombian Senator Piedad Cordoba, to act as intermediaries for a possible "humanitarian exchange" of FARC-held hostages for FARC prisoners in Colombian jails. The Colombian government-sanctioned effort ended in November after Chavez and Cordoba repeatedly failed to adhere to Colombia's guidelines. Nevertheless, Chavez continued his efforts to gain the release of hostages including a failed effort at year's end involving the promised release of three Colombian hostages (Clara Rojas, her son Emmanuel, and Consuelo Gonzales de Perdomo) to an international delegation that included former-Argentine President Nestor Kirchner. The Government of Colombia revealed that the FARC had turned over Emmanuel to a sympathizer, who had in turn placed the child in Colombian social services. Confusion over Emmanuel's whereabouts coupled with FARC allegations that the Colombian military was operating in the area led the FARC to temporarily call off the release. The FARC, under intense public pressure, eventually turned over Rojas and Gonzales to President Chavez.

In December, the Colombian government intercepted three FARC operatives with video tapes showing twelve hostages, including Howes, Stansell, and Gonsalves, and former Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, who holds dual Colombian-French citizenship. French President Nicolas Sarkozy remained active in renewed efforts for the hostages' release, calling on leaders across the region to take up the cause.

In December, President Uribe announced a proposal to establish an "encounter zone" to negotiate an exchange that would be mediated by the Catholic Church. Though previous mediation attempts by the Church were unsuccessful, and the Colombian government had attempted a similar proposal in 2005, international pressure to free the hostages further increased. At year's end, the FARC has not responded President Uribe's offer.

The Uribe Administration maintained its focus on defeating and demobilizing Colombia's terrorist groups through its "democratic security" policy, which combined military, intelligence, police operations, efforts to demobilize combatants, and the provision of public services in rural areas. Colombian security forces captured or killed a number of mid-level FARC leaders, debriefed terrorist group deserters for detailed information on their terrorist cells, and reduced the amount of territory where terrorists could freely operate. The September 3 and October 25 deaths of commanders Tomas Medina Caracas "El Negro Acacio," and Gustavo Rueda Diaz, "Martin Caballero," respectively, represented serious blows to the FARC. Medina was a key figure in overseeing the FARC's drug trafficking and weapons procurement activities. Rueda led FARC fronts in the Caribbean coast, and was responsible for the 2003 kidnapping of current Foreign Minister Fernando Araujo, who escaped FARC custody during a military assault on his captors and was recovered in January 2007.

Colombia continued its close cooperation with the United States to block terrorists' assets. Financial institutions closed drug trafficking and terrorism-related accounts on Colombian government orders. Aerial and manual eradication of illicit drugs in Colombia, key to targeting terrorist group finances, covered about 220,000 hectares of illegal drug crops, thus depriving terrorist groups of potentially huge profits. At the same time, the Treasury Department through the Office of Foreign Assets Control pursued and blocked the assets of narcotics traffickers and terrorists it had placed on its Specially Designated Nationals List.

Colombia implemented a new law that defined and criminalized direct and indirect financing of terrorism for both national and international terrorist groups, in accordance with recommendations of both the Financial Action Task Force of South America (GAFISUD) and the Egmont Group. The new law authorized Colombia's Financial Intelligence Unit (UIAF) to freeze terrorists' assets immediately after their designation. Banks were held responsible for their client base and must immediately inform UIAF of any accounts held by newly designated terrorists. Banks also had to screen new clients against current lists of designated terrorists before they would be allowed to provide prospective clients with services. (Previously, banks were not legally required to comply with these regulations, although many had done so on a voluntary basis.)

The threat of extradition to the United States remained a strong weapon against drug traffickers and terrorists. Colombia extradited 164 defendants to the United States for prosecution, the vast majority Colombian nationals, surpassing its previous record. At the end of the year, the Uribe administration had extradited 581 individuals to the United States. Ex-FARC senior member Anayibe Rojas Valderrama, "Sonia," was sentenced in July to more than 16 years in prison for drug trafficking. AUC members Davinson Gomez Ocampo and Hector Rodriguez Acevedo were convicted of drug trafficking and providing material support to a terrorist organization, respectively. The Uribe administration suspended six extraditions of alleged-AUC members, who continued cooperating with the paramilitary peace process under the Colombian Justice and Peace Law. The United States continued to seek their extraditions.

Despite the ongoing military campaign against it, the FARC continued tactical-level terrorist, kidnapping for profit and narcotrafficking activities, and launched several bombings against military and civilian targets in urban areas. It also targeted numerous rural outposts, infrastructure targets, and political adversaries in dozens of attacks. Examples of the FARC's 2007 terrorist activity included the following:

- In January, six people, including a child, were killed in a bomb attack in Buenaventura.
- In March, a bomb attack killed six people and injured over ten in Buenaventura.
- In March, a car bomb attack attempted but failed to assassinate Neiva Mayor Cielo Gonzalez.
- In April, a bomb detonated in front of the Cali police headquarters, killed one person, injured more than thirty, and destroyed the building.
- In June, eleven department legislators from Valle del Cauca held hostage since 2003 were murdered while in FARC custody.
- In October, a grenade attack at a campaign headquarters in Puerto Asís killed two people and injured six others.
- In December, the FARC again attempted but failed to assassinate Neiva Mayor Cielo Gonzalez in a rocket attack.

The Colombian government continued to seek the extradition of three Irish Republican Army (IRA) members, who were first acquitted and then sentenced after the prosecution appealed, to 17 years in prison for training the FARC on bomb tactics. The three fled Colombia while on bail and resurfaced in Ireland in August 2005. Colombia's extradition request remained under review before the Irish courts and the three fugitives remained at large.

The Government of Colombia and the ELN continued peace talks, but no agreements were reached. The ELN remained in the field, but with ever-limited resources, a dwindling membership, and reduced offensive capability. The ELN and FARC clashed over territory in northeastern Colombia, which further weakened the ELN.

Demobilized AUC members continued to be processed and investigated under the Justice and Peace Law, which offered judicial benefits and reduced prison sentences for qualifying demobilizing terrorists. The law requires all participants to confess fully their crimes as members of a terrorist group and to return all illicit profits. More than 32,000 rank-in-file AUC members who did not commit serious crimes have demobilized, and many were receiving benefits through the government's reintegration program, including psychosocial attention, education, healthcare, and career development opportunities. Over 80,000 victims have registered under the JPL, and the Colombian government was working on measures to provide reparations. Some AUC renegades continued to engage in criminal activities after demobilization, mostly in drug trafficking, but the AUC as a formal organization remained inactive.

Cuba

See *State Sponsors of Terrorism*.

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Armed Forces have a counterterrorism unit, but were unable to conduct complex special opera-

tions-type missions to counter terror. Despite good intentions, the Dominican government displayed a persistent inability to control its air, land, and sea borders. While many seaports and airports were considered permeable, three facilities, Caucedo, Haina, and La Romana, were certified by the International Maritime Organization as being compliant with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code. In September, a new border control unit, the Cuerpo Especializado Fronterizo (CESFRONT), was deployed along the border with Haiti. Despite start-up problems, there was increased optimism that the unit will become increasingly productive in controlling the border with time, experience, and proper funding.

The United States has provided assistance in both training and equipment. A particularly large donation was four interceptor "go fast" boats from U.S. SOUTHCOM under the "Enduring Friendship" program. These boats will be used to intercept vessels carrying arms, narcotics, and individuals who were attempting to transit the territorial waters of the Dominican Republic. Another significant donation was the provision of biometric equipment to the Dominican government.

Ecuador

Ecuador's greatest counterterrorism and security challenge remained the presence of Colombian narcoterrorists on its Northern Border. In order to evade Colombian military operations, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) regularly used Ecuadorian territory for rest, recuperation, resupply, and training, thereby involving significant numbers of Ecuadorians in direct or indirect ways. The Government of Ecuador faced challenges in patrolling a porous 400-mile border, and the lack of adequate licit employment opportunities for Ecuadorians in the region have made the area vulnerable to narcoterrorist influence. Ecuadorian officials along the border believed the FARC's economic impact allowed it to buy silence and compliance.

Ecuador's response to this threat historically has been uneven, but it has improved of late. The government shifted troops to the border region, continued efforts to improve military-to-military information sharing with Colombia, and launched a domestic Northern Border development agenda in concert with international donors to spur economic development in the area. The Correa Administration, while maintaining the country's traditional neutrality with respect to the Colombian conflict, has firmly opposed armed encroachments of any kind across its borders. It has publicly expressed its desire to eliminate FARC presence within Ecuadorian territory. Despite some notable successes in this effort, insufficient resources and the challenging border region terrain have made it difficult to thwart cross-border incursions.

Despite constraints on their resources and limited capabilities, Ecuador's security forces conducted effective operations against FARC training and logistical resupply camps along the Northern Border. The Ecuadorian military significantly increased the number of operations along Ecuador's Northern border, especially at the end of the year. The Ecuadorian military destroyed FARC training, rest, and resupply camps; and confiscated weapons, communications equipment, explosives, explosives manufacturing equipment, and other support equipment. These operations also netted valuable information on FARC activities and infrastructure in and outside of Ecuador. Ecuadorian forces discovered and destroyed three cocaine producing laboratories and eradicated coca plants in at least two locations.

Ecuadorian police suspected several small and relatively minor Ecuadorian groups of domestic subversion and involvement in terrorism. A handful of other radical groups, including a radical self-proclaimed vestigial faction of the Alfaro Vive Carajo organization, were reputed to have ties with and support from Colombian narcoterrorists. As recently as June, Ecuadorian security forces conducted operations against this faction of the Alfaro Vive Carajo organization in an attempt to minimize their capacity to conduct subversive, disruptive, or terrorist activities.

The Ecuadorian legislature passed a landmark anti-money laundering law in 2005, criminalizing the laundering of illicit funds from any source, penalizing the undeclared entry of more than 10,000 USD in cash, and establishing a Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) under the Superintendent of Banks. There was one major case in process as of December 2007.

Ecuador's judicial institutions remained weak, susceptible to corruption, and heavily backlogged with pending cases. While the military and police have made numerous arrests, the judicial system had a poor record of achieving convictions. The Government of Ecuador established a Ministry of Justice on November 15 to reform the penal code and improve the prison system.

El Salvador

El Salvador, the only Western Hemisphere country with troops serving alongside U.S. forces in Iraq, continued its support for the Coalition by dispatching a ninth contingent of troops to Iraq and approving a tenth rotation that will arrive in Iraq in early 2008. El Salvador also hosted a U.S. Department of Defense "Forward Operating Location" (FOL) at Comalapa International Airport, and a USG-funded International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA).

The Government of El Salvador cooperated closely with the United States on counterterrorism efforts and took active steps to protect U.S. interests and citizens. The CA-4 agreement, recently implemented among El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, allowed for the inspection-free movement of citizens among these countries, and reduced overall inspection at land crossings. The agreement has raised concerns, however, that its implementation could possibly facilitate easier international movement of terrorists.

The National Civilian Police was well regarded by U.S. and international observers alike, and coordinated its work with the Immigration Service, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Office of State Intelligence.

In July, the Government of El Salvador used the 2006 terrorism statute2 to file charges against several individuals who had taken part in a violent demonstration protesting the visit of Salvadoran President Tony Saca to the town of Suchitoto. This in turn led to numerous Salvadoran and U.S.-based non-governmental organizations alleging that the government was using the statute to suppress political opposition, and was guilty of backsliding on human rights. Given the violent nature of the demonstrations, in which several protestors blocked roads, set fire to debris, threw stones at the Presidential motorcade, and allegedly fired shots at a police helicopter, the government's decision to prosecute the protestors under the statute served to further blur the distinction between full-blown acts of terrorism and violent political protest subject to ordinary criminal sanction.

Guatemala

Guatemala continued to strengthen its anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regime since its 2004 removal from the Financial Action Task Force list of Non-Cooperative Countries. With U.S. assistance, Guatemala formed an interagency money laundering task force with representation from the Financial Intelligence Unit, the Guatemalan tax authority, and the Public Ministry (prosecutor's office). There was no credible evidence of terrorist financing in Guatemala.

In May/June, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Defense, Guatemala inaugurated its first military counterterrorist unit. The Guatemalan Counterterrorist unit, primarily tasked with counterterrorism operations, also had counternarcotics operations and border enforcement capabilities.

Severe resource constraints, corruption, and an ineffective criminal justice system hampered efforts against transnational crime threats such as drug trafficking and alien smuggling, especially in remote areas of the country. Guatemala's northern and western borders with Mexico lacked effective coverage by police or military personnel, and controls of its southern and eastern borders with El Salvador have been relaxed as part of the Central American integration process. Nevertheless, Guatemalan civil aviation and port authorities provided strong cooperation to U.S. requests for assistance in investigating potential terrorism leads. The Guatemalan government was working to enhance overall maritime, aviation security, and counterterrorism capabilities to remain in compliance with rising international standards.

Honduras

Honduran cooperation with the United States on counterterrorism finance issues remained strong. The Honduran Banking and Insurance Commission, through instruction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promptly sent freeze orders to the entire regulated financial sector every time the United States amended Executive Order lists. Financial entities, particularly the commercial banks, promptly undertook the requested searches for accounts by terrorist entities. No terrorist-related funds have been found to date in the Honduran financial system. The Honduran Congress was considering a change to the criminal code that would criminalize terrorist financing. While terrorism is a crime, terrorist financing is not listed as a separate crime.

There was a trend in Honduras towards closer regional intelligence cooperation with neighboring countries; this cooperation was aimed principally at organized crime, but it could potentially protect the country from terrorist threats. In September, the Honduran government announced the adoption of a National Security Strategy, which included counterterrorism as an objective, and stressed regional and international cooperation.

The United States assisted the Honduran Armed Forces (HOAF) with its counterterrorism efforts by providing training and equipment. With U.S. assistance, the Honduran Armed Forces created a Joint Task Force.

There was no indication of illegal immigration networks being used by terrorist groups. Over the past five years, however, smuggling rings were detected moving people from East Africa, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia to or through Honduras. There was an increase in the number of boats arriving on the north coast with people from all over the world seeking to enter the United States illegally via Guatemala and Mexico. Nationals of countries without Honduran visa requirements were involved in schemes to transit Honduras, often with the United States and Europe as their final destination. The Honduran government's ability to combat transnational crime was limited by sparsely populated and isolated jungle regions, limited resources, corruption, and poor control of the north coast and eastern border.

Mexico

Since entering office in December 2006, President Calderón's Administration has demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to improve national security, which included taking a leadership role to improve the region's response to the threat posed by transnational crime. Moreover, the Mexican government has resolved to strengthen law enforcement and counterterrorism cooperation with the United States. The already strong relationships existing between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies improved further. Mexico worked with the United States to secure critical infrastructure, combat terrorism financing, and enhance aviation, border, maritime, and transportation security.

Although the July and September attacks on oil and gas pipelines by a guerrilla group called the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) raised the specter of domestic terror-

ism, Mexico primarily represented a terrorist transit threat and our bilateral efforts focused squarely on minimizing that threat. The Mexican government made steady progress on counterterrorism and alien smuggling in 2007. It restructured and strengthened the institutions directly responsible for fighting organized crime, and developed tools under the framework of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) to address national security threats more effectively.

Information sharing on counterterrorism issues in the first year of the Calderón Administration was strong. We will continue working with Mexico to improve existing information sharing initiatives. In particular, we will continue to support digitalization of the government's information-gathering procedures to build a database of usable biometric information and to strengthen our ability to analyze accurately the information provided by Mexico. In 2007, Mexico signed an arrangement pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) No. 6, with the United States, for the exchange of terrorist screening information.

The continued exploitation of smuggling channels traversing the U.S.-Mexico border and the lack of enforcement along Mexico's border with Guatemala remained strategic concerns. The Government of Mexico acknowledged and responded thoughtfully to U.S. concerns regarding terrorist transit and the smuggling of aliens who may raise terrorism concerns. Mexico passed a federal law against human trafficking, which will aid in pursuing criminal proceedings against traffickers and smugglers. In a recent case, Mexican authorities provided substantial support to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in arresting a third country national wanted in the United States for alien smuggling.

One setback in United States-Mexico counterterrorism cooperation was a change in detention procedures. In 2005 and 2006, Mexico's Immigration Service (INM) maintained a policy of housing all detained aliens who may raise terrorism concerns in their detention facility near Mexico City. In March 2007, however, the INM began releasing such detainees from their point of arrest, thus hindering information sharing and the USG's ability to track the movement of these aliens.

Nevertheless, cooperation between Mexico and the United States was strong overall, especially in investigating individuals suspected of cooperation with alien smugglers. A particularly effective mechanism was the Operation Against Smugglers Initiative on Safety and Security (OASISS), which allowed Mexican and U.S. law enforcement officials to share real-time information regarding ongoing alien smuggling investigations on a regular basis. OASISS, which is operational in the United States in all four states along the southwest border, and in most of Mexico's northern Border States, enhanced the ability of both governments to prosecute alien smugglers and human traffickers who otherwise might elude justice. The program provided a model for bilateral information sharing in a variety of law enforcement and security areas. An essential next step will be to expand OASISS to all of Mexico's northern border states. At the same time, the United States will need to continue to support Mexican efforts to identify smuggling organizations operating along Mexico's southern border that may raise terrorist concerns.

The U.S.-Mexico Border Security and Public Safety Working Group, formed in March 2006, became another important tool for bilateral cooperation; it established protocols between both governments to respond cooperatively at a local level to critical incidents and emergencies along the border. The success of the pilot sites led to the expansion and formalization of the program. These protocols are now in place along the entire U.S.-Mexico border. The United States was able to develop further its border security relationship with the Mexican government under President Calderón, through training programs, which focused on using non-intrusive inspection equipment, detecting weapons of mass destruction, and identifying fraudulent documents.

Mexico coordinated with the United States on the information sharing of air passenger data and the use of its Integrated System for Migratory Operations (SIOM). In addition, the United States and Mexican governments agreed to share, on a case by case basis, biometric data for comparison to the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS).

In mid-2006, Mexico and the United States began negotiations on programs designed to deter terrorists from using Mexico's seaports to ship illicit materials, detect nuclear or radioactive materials if shipped via sea cargo, and to interdict harmful material before it could be used against the United States or one of our allies. The cooperative effort will include installation of specialized equipment to screen cargo containers for nuclear or other radioactive materials. If anything were detected, the equipment would alert Mexican port officials of the need to further examine the cargo and take appropriate action.

In the area of money laundering, the United States developed strong working relationships with the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Attorney General's Office (PGR), and its companion unit in the Mexican Treasury (Hacienda), to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, and narcotics trafficking.

On June 28, President Calderón signed legislation into law outlawing terrorist financing and associated money laundering. The new law established international terrorism and terror financing as serious criminal offenses, as called for in UN resolution 1373, and provided for up to 40-year prison sentences.

The measure also incorporated several non-finance related provisions, including jail sentences for individuals who cover up the identities of terrorists and for those who recruit people to commit terrorist acts. The law was a significant step forward in suppressing those who plan, facil-

itate, finance, or commit terrorist acts, although it lacked some important provisions, such as assets forfeiture measures.

The Mexican Navy and Army continued to expand counterterrorism capabilities. The Mexican Navy improved control over ports of entry by deploying a newly constituted infantry force. The Navy was also looking to expand its still incomplete control over Mexico's vast maritime zone by better integrating radar, patrol craft, sea going vessels, air platforms, and land based platforms. If undertaken, such enhancements to Mexico's maritime air surveillance will allow the Navy to protect more effectively key national strategic facilities, including those related to oil production in the Bay of Campeche.

It remained difficult to assess the Mexican Army's counterterrorism capabilities due to the institution's closed nature. There have been improvements in U.S.-Mexico military-to-military cooperation in the past year, but the United States and Mexican armed forces had limited counterterrorism interoperability.

Nicaragua

In January, Daniel Ortega was inaugurated as the elected President of Nicaragua. Ortega reestablished formal diplomatic ties with Iran, which now has a resident, accredited Ambassador in the capital, and aggressively sought to expand relations with Cuba and Venezuela. In November, the government relaxed visa requirements for all travelers from Iran, permitting visa-free entry. As a member of the Central American Four (CA4), with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, Nicaragua shared common immigration and customs policies with its CA4 partners. The Nicaraguan government's recent decision to grant visa-free entry for Iranians created consternation among the other CA4 members.

Nicaragua is the only Central American nation without a Financial Intelligence Unit. A counterterrorism bill, first proposed in 2004, remained moribund in the National Assembly. The new Penal Code, however, included language that specifically penalized terrorism financing and used an international definition of money laundering. The judicial system remained a vulnerability that could be exploited by international terrorist groups, because it was highly politicized, corrupt, and prone to manipulation by political elites and organized crime.

President Ortega has made several public statements supporting Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, including his September address to the UN General Assembly in New York. Ortega's statements questioned the authority of the UN, NATO, and other international actors to prevent any nation (namely Iran) from its "right" to develop nuclear weapons.

Panama

The Panama Canal remained Panama's most important economic asset. An act of terrorism that would close off the Canal would severely affect the economies of Panama, the United States, and other countries that rely heavily on the Canal for commerce. The Panamanian government continued to review the structure of its Public Forces and conducted exercises to ensure its ability to protect the Canal and residents of Panama against a possible terrorist act.

Panama's highly developed commercial transport sector and shared border with Colombia made it a transshipment point for arms, drugs, and smuggling of illegal aliens. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continued to be active in Panama's Darien Province and although they committed no significant terrorist acts, Panama's Public Forces (PPF) closely monitored its activities. Panama created a dedicated border patrol force for both the Colombian and Costa Rican borders, and took the first steps toward creating a stand-alone border protection force with its own command and headquarters under direction of the Panamanian National Police (PNP).

Panama provided enhanced force protection for U.S. military vessels, including submarines, during "high value transits" of the Canal; U.S. officials praised Panama's level of support and security. The Ministry of Government and Justice used classroom training, tabletop exercises, and field visits to improve coordination among the PPF agencies. Panama was the sponsor and host of the annual PANAMAX exercise, a multinational civil and military forces training exercise tailored to the defense of the Panama Canal. The exercise replicated real world threats to the Canal in order to develop appropriate responses and guarantee safe passage through the waterway. Seventeen nations, including the United States, participated. On the margins of PANAMAX, Panama, for the first time, hosted a tabletop exercise specifically designed to examine its ability to address asymmetric threats.

Panama worked closely with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to sign a Container Security Initiative agreement and to launch its activities, beginning with two operational scanners at two ports. Panamanian Public Force Counterterrorism units continued to benefit from the second year of SOUTHCOM-funded training provided by Navy Special Warfare South personnel. In February, Panama hosted the General Assembly of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE) multilateral conference. Subsequently, Panama headed this committee, whose work focused primarily on infrastructure security.

Panama is an international offshore banking center. While the government has taken extensive measures to combat money laundering in the banking system, the Colon Free Trade Zone served as a vehicle for illicit finance. Panama's Foreign Ministry, Council for Public Security and National Defense, Financial Analysis Unit, and the Superintendent of Banks were fully cooperative in reviewing terrorism finance lists.

Paraguay

Paraguay was very cooperative in counterterrorism and law enforcement efforts, but its judicial system was hampered by a lack of strong anti-money laundering and counterterrorism legislation. On December 20, Paraguay's Congress passed improved anti-money laundering legislation as part of a major overhaul of the penal code; this statute will improve Paraguay's ability to effectively obstruct and prosecute money laundering and terrorist financing, particularly in Ciudad del Este. Counterterrorism legislation, introduced but not passed, will be critical to keep Paraguay current with its international obligations. The Congress Legal Reform Commission was also working on a criminal procedural code reform bill that would facilitate prosecution of money laundering and terrorism and modernize Paraguay's criminal justice system.

Paraguay did not exercise effective immigration or customs controls at its borders. Efforts to address illicit activity occurring in the Tri-Border Area were uneven due to a lack of resources and, more principally, corruption within customs, the police, and the judicial sector. Despite expanded cooperation with other government entities and significant USG assistance over the past several years, Paraguay's Secretariat for the Prevention of Money Laundering (SEPRELAD) did not demonstrate the ability to monitor and detect money laundering in the first half of the year. However, with a change in leadership in August, SEPRELAD made significant progress. In November it secured approval of important insurance and credit union regulations, and paid a portion of its past dues to the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFISUD), preserving its membership in that organization. Paraguay still lacked terrorist finance legislation, however, and without it, the Egmont Group, which facilitates information exchange among Financial Intelligence Units, will likely suspend Paraguay.

Despite pending constitutional appeals, the tax evasion case against Kassem Hijazi, a suspected Hizballah money launderer connected to 113 businesses, is at the trial stage. In a judicially suspect move, Hijazi's case was separated from related charges against forty-three defendants. The court excluded key evidence and summarily absolved all forty-three defendants in August. An appellate court reduced the 2006 sentence of suspected terrorist fundraiser Hatim Ahmad Barakat from six to three years.

The United States assisted Paraguay with training for judges, prosecutors, and police in bulk cash smuggling, document fraud, terrorist financing; and investigating, preventing, and prosecuting individuals involved in money laundering. Under the Millennium Challenge Account Threshold Program3, the U.S. assisted Paraguay with training for judges, prosecutors, and police in investigation techniques that are critical to money laundering and terrorist finance cases. In December, Paraguay was invited to submit a proposal for a second phase Threshold program.

Peru

Peru's topmost counterterrorism concern remained preventing the reemergence of Sendero Luminoso (SL or Shining Path), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization that devastated the country in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2007, SL remnants engaged in narcotrafficking and killed 11 police officers, 20 civilians, and one member of the military. SL in the Upper Huallaga River Valley (UHV) suffered significant setbacks with the arrests of several of their key members. Meanwhile, the SL organization in the Apurimac and Ene River Valley (VRAE) retained its control over the area.

Although the Peruvian government nearly eliminated SL in the 1990s, the organization, now entwined with narcotics trafficking, reemerged and remained a threat. Estimated to include up to several hundred armed combatants, SL conducted 80 terrorist acts in remote coca-growing areas this year. The reemergent SL is shorter on revolutionary zeal than it was in the past, but reports suggested it was attempting to rebuild support in the university system, where it exercised considerable influence in the 1980s. Meanwhile, involvement in drug production and trafficking provided SL with substantial funding to conduct operations, improve relations with local communities in remote areas, and to recruit new members. While the government made significant progress against SL in the UHV, insufficient government presence and ineffective security capabilities in the more remote VRAE allowed the SL to operate practically unhindered.

For example, on June 14, a SL ambush near Tocache in the UHV resulted in the deaths of a local anti-drug prosecutor and the three police officers protecting him. Two other police officers were seriously injured in the attack. On December 24, an estimated 20 heavily armed persons attacked a PNP patrol, killing two officers and wounding one near the town of Huanta in the Ayacucho region. Over 70 anti-personnel mines caused one death and 22 injuries, mostly to eradication workers in illegal coca plantations in the San Martin region. Authorities suspected SL remnants in the UHV were responsible.

The "Huallaga Police Front" counterterrorism campaign in the UHV, initiated by then-President Toledo in 2006, was largely inactive. Implementation of the Garcia government's "Plan VRAE," which called for 2,000 troops and 19 counterterrorism bases operated under a central command, was slow because of the lack of an operational security plan. Plans for new health, education, and infrastructure investment in isolated communities where the state lacks presence were implemented spottily, if at all. The government's efforts to strengthen prosecutorial capacity and to improve interagency cooperation, especially in intelligence, were marginally successful. Police units specializing in counterterrorism and counternarcotics conducted some joint operations with the Peruvian Army in the Upper Huallaga Valley. There was no movement on President Garcia's 2006 proposal calling for the death penalty for those convicted of acts of terrorism.

President Garcia repeatedly reauthorized a 60-day state of emergency in parts of Peru's five departments where SL operated, which suspended some civil liberties and gave the armed forces additional authority to maintain public order.

In August, two Huallaga Front (PNP/Peruvian Army) operations captured 28 SL suspects, including two believed to be bodyguards of UHV SL Committee head "Artemio". Also apprehended were a number of suspected participants in the June ambush near Tocache that killed a prosecutor and three police.

During a November 27 PNP operation, Epifanio Espiritu Acosta, known as "Comrade JL," third in the UHV organization and leader of its forces on the western side of the Huallaga River, was killed. Eight suspects were captured including the organization's ideological chief, "Comrade Julian," as well as the head of personal security for the group's leader. UHV-SL leader "Comrade Artemio," is a top priority target of continuing PNP security operations.

Media and other sources continued to report that former SL members released from prison were rejoining leftist civic groups and political movements, and perhaps recruiting new members into the organization. SL founder and leader Abimael Guzman and key accomplices remained in prison facing charges stemming from crimes committed during the 1980s and 1990s.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) continued to use remote areas along the Colombian/Peruvian border for rest and to make arms purchases. There were reports that the FARC was funding coca cultivation and cocaine production among the Peruvian population in border areas.

Suriname

Suriname's lead agency for counterterrorism was the Central Intelligence and Security Agency (CIVD). The Ministry of Justice and Police (MOJP) had a police Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) and a 70-person "Arrest Team" (A-Team). At the end of the year, the Council of Ministers approved a new counterterrorism law that defined terrorism as a crime, and provided a framework for more effectively combating terrorism and the financing of terrorism. This legislation should bring Surinamese law in line with various international treaties dealing with terrorism and could help pave the way for Surinamese membership in the Egmont Group. The draft law will be presented to the State Council and the President for their approval, after which it will be presented to the National Assembly. A criminal procedure law is expected to be approved by the Council of Ministers, which will provide the implementing legislation for the new counterterrorism law, as well as special investigative tools to assist law enforcement authorities in detecting and investigating terrorist activities.

Suriname began issuing Caribbean Community (CARICOM)-compliant machine-readable passports in 2004, yet there were still numerous valid old passports in circulation, which could easily be tampered with in order to assume a false identity to travel across borders. An unknown number of blank old-style passports remained unaccounted for. The United States provided watch lists of known terrorists to Surinamese police, but if any terrorists were present, the likelihood of apprehending them would be low because of the lack of border and immigration control by police and other Surinamese government officials, and because Suriname has no system for registering and monitoring visitors. According to police sources, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has conducted arms-for-drugs operations with criminal organizations in Suriname. In December, the Minister of Justice and Police told the media that his Ministry had received information that international criminal organizations were planning attacks in Suriname. According to the Minister, there were arrests over a two-week period late in the year, and investigations had pointed to involvement of the FARC and unspecified African crime organizations. As of late December, no further information was available on those allegations and no attacks had occurred.

Trinidad and Tobago

In May, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) uncovered a plot by two Guyanese, one Trinidadian, and one U.S. citizen to destroy a fuel pipeline at New York's JFK airport. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago supported the FBI effort to locate and detain those involved in the plot. Of the four suspects, three were arrested in Trinidad, where they remained in custody awaiting a judicial decision on their extradition to the United States.

Imam Yasin Abu Bakr of Jamaat al Muslimeen (JAM) became the first person to be prosecuted under the 2005 Anti-Terrorism Act after delivering a seditious sermon in late 2005. Abu Bakr has a loyal following that was consumed with issues related to Trinidad and Tobago. His rhetoric has yet to become an international threat. His current trial continued to be delayed based on claims that Bakr would not receive a fair trial because of the publicity that still surrounded the JAM's 1990 attempted coup.

In February, Trinidad and Tobago implemented the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) in preparation for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. Under the system, regional and international aircraft and vessels must submit Advance Passenger Information prior to arrival in and upon departure from any of the ten Member States. The system utilized a number of watch lists, including INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database, to check every passenger arriving in the region or traveling throughout the region by air or by sea.

Recognizing Trinidad and Tobago's role as the United States' largest supplier of liquefied natural gas and as guarantor of energy security in the Caribbean region, the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of

Homeland Security provided the government with technical assistance to conduct a vulnerability assessment of critical infrastructure in its energy sector under the umbrella of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (OAS/CICTE). In October and December, following preparatory meetings between officials of these agencies and participants in Trinidad and Tobago's public/private Energy Sector Security Initiative, a team of USG experts carried out an assessment and prepared a report for the government with recommendations on how best to improve and prioritize critical infrastructure protection efforts.

Uruguay

The level of cooperation and intelligence sharing on counterterrorism related issues greatly improved in 2007, especially at the working level where officers in law enforcement and security services recognized the importance of conducting proactive investigations, sharing intelligence with the United States, and working cooperatively with its regional partners. The Government of Uruguay generally cooperated with the United States and international institutions on counterterrorism efforts, but has not devoted great resources to the effort. Uruguayan banking and law enforcement agencies professed to search for financial assets, individuals, and groups with links to terrorism, but discovered neither terrorist assets in Uruguayan financial institutions nor terrorist operatives in Uruguay.

While Uruguay supported the fight against international terrorism in principle, it has been hesitant for many years to permit joint military training on its soil. Part of the reluctance to engage in robust security cooperation can be explained by the painful experiences endured during a thirteen-year period of military dictatorship when security forces ruthlessly conducted a campaign against violent insurgents. Instead, the Government of Uruguay focused its participation on efforts to promote global security through collective action within multinational organizations such as the UN and OAS.

Uruguay provided the greatest number of UN peacekeepers, in per capita terms, of any UN member state. Although these efforts are not specifically focused on counterterrorism, Uruguay believed that using its diplomatic and military resources to fight global instability served to address the conditions that terrorists exploit, such as political, economic, and social instability.

Uruguay is a member of the MERCOSUR Permanent Working Group on Terrorism, together with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Bolivia. The group facilitated cooperation and information sharing among countries combating terrorism. The focus was expanding from the Tri-border region of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil, to include the Uruguayan-Brazilian border, although with limited tangible results. Uruguay was also active in a range of international counterterrorism efforts, particularly in the Rio Group and the OAS.

Venezuela

In May 2007, Venezuela was re-certified as "not cooperating fully" with U.S. antiterrorism efforts under Section 40A of the Arms Export and Control Act, as amended (the "Act"). Pursuant to this certification, defense articles and services may not be sold or licensed for export to Venezuela from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2008. This certification will lapse unless it is renewed by the Secretary of State by May 15, 2008.

President Hugo Chavez persisted in his public criticism of U.S. counterterrorism efforts and deepened Venezuelan relationships with state sponsors of terrorism Iran and Cuba. Chavez's ideological sympathy for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), along with high levels of corruption among Venezuelan officials, limited Venezuelan cooperation with Colombia in combating terrorism. FARC and ELN units regularly crossed into Venezuelan territory to rest and regroup.

It remained unclear to what extent the Venezuelan government provided support to Colombian terrorist organizations. However, limited amounts of weapons and ammunition, some from official Venezuelan stocks and facilities, have turned up in the hands of Colombian terrorist organizations. The Venezuelan government did not systematically police the 1,400-mile Venezuelan-Colombian border to prevent the movement of groups of armed terrorists or to interdict arms or the flow of narcotics.

In another case, the trial began on February 22 for two self-proclaimed Islamic extremists that were arrested in October 2006 for placing a pair of pipe bombs outside the American Embassy in Caracas. At year's end, the Venezuelan government continued to prosecute both persons, and they remained in police custody.

In March, Iran and Venezuela began weekly Iran Airlines flights connecting Tehran and Damascus with Caracas. Passengers on these flights were not subject to immigration and customs controls at Simon Bolivar International Airport. On June 1, one of the JFK Airport bombing subjects, Abdul Kadir, was arrested at the airport in Port of Spain, Trinidad, on board a flight destined for Caracas, Venezuela. He had an onward ticket to Tehran. Venezuelan citizenship, identity, and travel documents remained easy to obtain, making Venezuela a potentially attractive way station for terrorists. International authorities remained suspicious of the integrity of Venezuelan documents and their issuance process.

STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM

Overview

State sponsors of terrorism provide critical support to non-state terrorist groups. Without state sponsors, terrorist

groups would have greater difficulty obtaining the funds, weapons, materials, and secure areas they require to plan and conduct operations. More worrisome is that some of these countries also have the capability to manufacture weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that could get into the hands of terrorists. The United States will continue to insist that these countries end the support they give to terrorist groups.

Sudan continued to take significant steps to cooperate in the War on Terror. Cuba, Iran, and Syria, however, have not renounced terrorism or made efforts to act against Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Iran and Syria routinely provided safe haven, substantial resources, and guidance to terrorist organizations.

State Sponsor: Implications

Designating countries that repeatedly provide support for acts of international terrorism as state sponsors of terrorism imposes four main sets of U.S. Government sanctions:

- A ban on arms-related exports and sales.
- Controls over exports of dual-use items, requiring 30-day Congressional notification for goods or services that could significantly enhance the terrorist-list country's military capability or ability to support terrorism.
- Prohibitions on economic assistance.
- Imposition of miscellaneous financial and other restrictions, including: Requiring the United States to oppose loans by the World Bank and other international financial institutions; Exception from the jurisdictional immunity in U.S. courts of state sponsor countries, and all former state sponsor countries (with the exception of Iraq), with respect to claims for money damages for personal injury or death caused by certain acts of terrorism, torture, or extrajudicial killing, or the provision of material support or resources for such acts; Denying companies and individuals tax credits for income earned in terrorist-list countries; Denial of duty-free treatment of goods exported to the United States; Authority to prohibit any U.S. citizen from engaging in a financial transaction with a terrorist-list government without a Treasury Department license; and Prohibition of Defense Department contracts above $100,000 with companies in which a state sponsor government owns or controls a significant interest.

Cuba

The Government of Cuba remained opposed to U.S. counterterrorism policy, and actively and publicly condemned many associated U.S. policies and actions. To U.S. knowledge, the Cuban government did not attempt to track, block, or seize terrorist assets, although the authority to do so is contained in Cuba's Law 93 Against Acts of Terrorism, as well as Instruction 19 of the Superintendent of the Cuban Central Bank. No new counterterrorism laws were enacted, nor were any executive orders or regulations issued in this regard. The Government of Cuba provided safe haven to members of ETA, the FARC, and the ELN. It maintained close relationships with other state sponsors of terrorism such as Iran and Syria.

The Cuban government continued to permit more than 70 U.S. fugitives to live legally in Cuba and refused almost all U.S. requests for their return. These U.S. fugitives include convicted murderers (two of them killed police officers) as well as numerous hijackers, most of whom entered Cuba in the 1970s. The government returned one American citizen fugitive when that person sailed his boat into Cuban waters and it was determined that he was wanted on fraud charges in the state of Utah. The Cuban government stated in 2006 that it would no longer provide safe haven to new U.S. fugitives entering Cuba.

The Cuban government did not extradite suspected terrorists during the year.

Iran

Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism. Elements of its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) were directly involved in the planning and support of terrorist acts throughout the region and continued to support a variety of groups in their use of terrorism to advance their common regional goals. Iran provides aid to Palestinian terrorist groups, Lebanese Hizballah, Iraq-based militants, and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.

Iran remains a threat to regional stability and U.S. interests in the Middle East because of its continued support for violent groups, such as HAMAS and Hizballah, and its efforts to undercut the democratic process in Lebanon, where it seeks to build Iran's and Hizballah's influence to the detriment of other Lebanese communities.

Iran is a principal supporter of groups that are implacably opposed to the Middle East Peace Process, and continues to maintain a high-profile role in encouraging anti-Israel terrorist activity—rhetorically, operationally, and financially. Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad praised Palestinian terrorist operations, and Iran provided Lebanese Hizballah and Palestinian terrorist groups, notably HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, with extensive funding, training, and weapons.

Despite its pledge to support the stabilization of Iraq, Iranian authorities continued to provide lethal support, including weapons, training, funding, and guidance, to some Iraqi militant groups that target Coalition and Iraqi security forces and Iraqi civilians. In this way, Iranian government forces have been responsible for attacks on Coalition forces. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)-Qods Force, continued to provide Iraqi militants with Iranian-produced advanced rockets, sniper rifles, automatic weapons, mortars that have killed thousands of

Coalition and Iraqi Forces, and explosively formed projectiles (EFPs) that have a higher lethality rate than other types of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and are specially designed to defeat armored vehicles used by Coalition Forces. The Qods Force, in concert with Lebanese Hizballah, provided training outside Iraq for Iraqi militants in the construction and use of sophisticated IED technology and other advanced weaponry. These individuals then passed on this training to additional militants inside Iraq, a "train-the-trainer" program. In addition, the Qods Force and Hizballah have also provided training inside Iraq. In fact, Coalition Forces captured a Lebanese Hizballah operative in Iraq in 2007.

Iran's IRGC-Qods Force continued to provide weapons and financial aid to the Taliban to support anti-U.S. and anti-Coalition activity in Afghanistan. Since 2006, Iran has arranged a number of shipments of small arms and associated ammunition, rocket propelled grenades, mortar rounds, 107mm rockets, and plastic explosives, possibly including man-portable air defense systems (MANPADs), to the Taliban.

Iran remained unwilling to bring to justice senior al-Qa'ida (AQ) members it has detained, and has refused to publicly identify those senior members in its custody. Iran has repeatedly resisted numerous calls to transfer custody of its AQ detainees to their countries of origin or third countries for interrogation or trial. Iran also continued to fail to control the activities of some AQ members who fled to Iran following the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

North Korea

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was not known to have sponsored any terrorist acts since the bombing of a Korean Airlines flight in 1987. The DPRK continued to harbor four Japanese Red Army members who participated in a jet hijacking in 1970. The Japanese government continued to seek a full accounting of the fate of the 12 Japanese nationals believed to have been abducted by DPRK state entities; five such abductees have been repatriated to Japan since 2002. As part of the Six-Party Talks process, the United States reaffirmed its intent to fulfill its commitments regarding the removal of the designation of the DPRK as a state sponsor of terrorism in parallel with the DPRK's actions on denuclearization and in accordance with criteria set forth in U.S. law.

Sudan

During the past year, the Sudanese government continued to cooperate in the War on Terror, pursuing terrorist operations directly involving threats to U.S. interests and personnel in Sudan. While the U.S.-Sudanese counterterrorism relationship remained solid, hard-line Sudanese officials continued to express resentment and distrust over actions by the USG and questioned the benefits of continued cooperation. Their assessment reflected disappointment that Sudan's counterterrorism cooperation has not warranted rescission of its designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. AQ-inspired terrorist elements, elements of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), HAMAS, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), remained in Sudan. In light of the ongoing hybrid United Nations-African Union deployment to Darfur, various terrorist threats against these forces emerged, and AQ leadership has called for jihad against UN forces in Darfur. Further, Sudanese authorities uncovered and largely dismantled a large-scale terrorist organization targeting western interests in Khartoum in summer and fall of the year. The terrorist threat level remained high in Khartoum and Darfur, and potentially other parts of Sudan.

With the exception of HAMAS, the Sudanese government does not appear to openly support the presence of terrorist groups in Sudan. The Sudanese government has taken steps to limit the activities of these organizations. As an example, Sudanese officials have welcomed HAMAS members as representatives of the Palestinian Authority (PA), but have limited their activities to fundraising. The Sudanese government has also worked hard to disrupt foreign fighters from using Sudan as a logistics base and transit point for extremists going to Iraq.

The LRA, led by Joseph Kony, continued to operate from its base in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and threatened the tri-border area (DRC, Sudan, and Uganda). The Government of Southern Sudan worked to mediate peace between the LRA and neighboring countries and has vowed to eliminate the presence of the LRA as an organization in Southern Sudan. The Sudanese People's Liberation Army made some progress in containing LRA activity. Negotiations between the LRA and the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF) continued, with occasional interruptions in Juba under the mediation of the Government of Southern Sudan.

Syria

Since Syria's 1979 designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, it has continued to provide political support to Palestinian terrorist groups. Syria has also continued to provide political and material support to Hizballah since that group's creation. HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), among others, all have offices in Damascus and operate within Syria's borders. The Syrian government insisted that the Damascus-based groups are confined to political and informational activities, but Palestinian groups with leaders in Syria have claimed responsibility for anti-Israeli terrorist attacks.

As in 2006, President Bashar al-Asad expressed public support for Palestinian terrorist groups. HAMAS Politburo head Khalid Mishal and his deputies continued to reside in Syria, and the Syrian government provided security escorts for their motorcades. Additionally, Mishal led Friday prayers at various mosques throughout Syria and gave several public speeches expressing gratitude for Syria's

support. The regime in Damascus continued to undermine Lebanon's sovereignty and security through its proxies. Although Syrian officials publicly condemned some acts of international terrorism, including bombing attacks that killed Lebanese government officials, it made a distinction between what it considered to be legitimate armed resistance by Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The Syrian government has not been implicated directly in an act of terrorism since 1986, although an ongoing UN investigation into the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri continued to examine Syrian involvement. The Syrian regime, Hizballah, and pro-Syrian opposition elements in Lebanon have attempted to stymie international efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the Hariri assassination, as well as efforts to disarm militia groups that constitute a challenge to Lebanese security and sovereignty.

Separately, four Syrian members of Fatah al-Islam were arrested in connection with the February 13 Ain Alaq bus bombings in Lebanon. In March, Syrian Interior Minister, Major General Bassam Abdul Majeed, spoke publicly on the matter and rejected suggestions that the Syrian regime was involved in the attack. Syrian-linked groups were involved in several attacks outside of the country in 2007, including a rocket-propelled grenade attack in Lebanon. Lebanese authorities also blame Syria for complicity in a September improvised explosive device (IED) attack that killed a member of the Lebanese parliament.

Syria continued to strengthen its ties with Iran, another state sponsor of terrorism. Iranian President Ahmadinejad, accompanied by the Iranian Defense Minister and the Iranian Army Chief of Staff, met with Syrian President al-Asad and other senior Syrian officials in July. During this visit, Ahmadinejad also met with Palestinian terrorist groups, including two separate meetings with the leaders of HAMAS and PIJ and a collective meeting with leaders of PFLP, PFLP-GC, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and Fatah al-Intifada. Additionally, local media reported that Hizballah leader Nasrallah met with Ahmadinejad at the Iranian Embassy in Damascus. Syria and Iran worked successfully to rearm Hizballah after the July-August 2006 conflict between Hizballah and Israel.

Although the Syrian government suspended intelligence cooperation with the United States and several foreign governments in 2004, Damascus has taken some action against AQ-linked groups and individuals in 2007. Additionally, the Syrian government worked to increase security cooperation with Iraq. In July, Syria hosted a meeting of technical border security experts representing Iraq's neighbors, the United States, and other countries. Syria also participated in two ministerial-level Iraq Neighbors' Conferences in May and November, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and Istanbul, respectively. In August, Syria hosted Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki and signed several security-related agreements. According to U.S. and Iraqi officials, 2007 witnessed a marked reduction in the flow of foreign terrorists transiting through Syria into Iraq. Despite acknowledged reductions in foreign fighter flows, the scope of the problem remained large. According to the December "Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq" report to Congress, nearly 90 percent of all foreign terrorists known to be in Iraq had used Syria as an entry point. The Syrian government could do more to stop known terror networks and foreign fighter facilitators from operating within its borders. Separately, the Syrian government has cracked down on pro-Kongra-Gel/Kurdistan Worker's Party (KGK/PKK) sympathizers in northeastern Syria, and President al-Asad expressed his public support of Turkish military action against KGK/PKK militants operating in southern Turkey and northern Iraq.

The Syrian government refused to implement mandatory visa requirements for citizens of Arab countries. Syria remained a source of concern regarding terrorist financing. The Commercial Bank of Syria remained subject to U.S. sanctions. Industry experts reported that 70 percent of all business transactions were conducted in cash and only eight percent of all Syrians used formal banking services.

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF WMD TERRORISM

Introduction

The nexus of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorism poses one of the gravest potential risks to the national security of the United States and its global partners. A successful major WMD terrorist attack could result in mass casualty events and produce far-reaching economic and political consequences that would affect all members of the international community. This section outlines:

- The key elements of the United States' National Strategy for Combating WMD Terrorism;
- The various types of materials terrorists may use in a WMD attack;
- The potential that resources of a state could be directed or diverted to facilitate WMD terrorism;
- The emerging WMD terrorism threat presented by non-state facilitators; and
- Transformational U.S. partnerships to combat this growing global risk.

The United States places the highest priority on working with a broad range of national governments, international organizations, local governments, and private sector organizations, to develop effective partnerships to confront the global challenge of WMD terrorism.

Diplomatic and Strategic Priorities for Combating WMD Terrorism

U.S. diplomatic priorities for combating WMD terrorism build on the comprehensive approach set forth in the U.S. National Strategy for Combating WMD Terrorism.

Specifically, our strategic approach hinges on the six objectives outlined in the National Strategy. We work across all objectives simultaneously to maximize our ability to eliminate the threat.

- Determine terrorists' intentions, capabilities, and plans to develop or acquire WMD. We need to understand and assess the credibility of threat reporting and provide technical assessments of terrorists' WMD capabilities.

- Deny terrorists access to the materials, expertise, and other enabling capabilities required to develop WMD, with a particular focus on weapons-usable fissile materials, dangerous pathogens, and poisonous chemicals; as well as methods of transport, sources of funds, and other capabilities that facilitate the execution of a WMD attack. In addition to building upon existing initiatives to secure materials, we are developing innovative approaches that blend classic counterproliferation, nonproliferation, and counterterrorism efforts.

- Deter terrorists from employing WMD. A new deterrence calculus combines the need to deter terrorists, facilitators, and supporters from contemplating a WMD attack and, failing that, would need to dissuade them from actually conducting an attack. Traditional threats may not work because terrorists generally show a wanton disregard for the lives of innocents and, in some cases, for their own lives. We require a range of deterrence strategies that are tailored to the various WMD threats and the individual actors who facilitate or enable those threats. We will employ diplomatic strategies that seek to address extremism and defuse volatile conditions to discourage consideration of WMD as an appropriate tool to address perceived injustices.

- Detect and disrupt terrorists' attempted movement of WMD-related materials, weapons, and personnel. We will seek to expand our global capability for detecting illicit materials, weapons, and personnel transiting abroad. We will use our global partnerships, international agreements, and ongoing border security and interdiction efforts. We also will continue to work with countries to enact and enforce strict penalties for WMD trafficking and other suspect WMD-related activities.

- Prevent and respond to a WMD-related terrorist attack. Once the possibility of a WMD attack has been detected, we will seek to contain, interdict, and eliminate the threat. We will continue to develop requisite capabilities to eliminate the possibility of a WMD operation and to prevent a possible follow-on attack. We will prepare ourselves for possible WMD incidents by developing capabilities to manage the range of consequences that may result from such an attack.

- Define the nature and source of a terrorist-employed WMD device. Should a WMD terrorist attack occur, the rapid identification of the source and perpetrator of an attack would facilitate our response efforts and may be critical in disrupting follow-on attacks. We will maintain and improve our capability to determine responsibility for the intended or actual use of WMD via accurate attribution, using the rapid fusion of technical forensic data with intelligence and law enforcement information.

As we move forward in the implementation of our diplomatic strategic priorities for combating WMD terrorism, we will take special care to work closely with the full range of foreign partners to prioritize and to tailor our capacity-building approaches to the regional and local conditions we face across the world.

The Material Threats

There are four generally accepted categories of weapons of mass destruction that terrorists may seek to acquire and use in a WMD terrorist attack: nuclear, radiological, biological, and chemical.

Nuclear

Some terrorist organizations, such as al-Qa'ida (AQ), have openly stated their desire to acquire and use nuclear weapons. The diffusion of scientific and technical information regarding the assembly of nuclear weapons, some of which is now available on the Internet, has increased the risk that a terrorist organization in possession of sufficient fissile material could develop its own crude nuclear weapon. The complete production of a nuclear weapon strongly depends on the terrorist group's access to fissile material and scientific expertise. Terrorists may, however, seek to link up with a variety of facilitators to develop their own nuclear capability. These facilitators include black market proliferators or transnational criminal networks that may seek to profit from the sale of nuclear material, a weaponized device, or technical knowledge gathered from nuclear experts involved in a national nuclear program.

Radiological

Some terrorists seek to acquire radioactive materials for use in a radiological dispersal device (RDD) or "dirty bomb." Most radioactive materials lack sufficient strength to present a significant public health risk once dispersed, and the materials posing the greatest hazard would require terrorists to have the expertise to handle them without getting radiation sickness and possibly dying or being detected. Public panic and economic disruption caused by setting off a radiological dispersal device, however, could be substantial, even if a weak radioactive source is used. Radioactive materials are used widely in industrial, medical, and research applications and include devices used for power supply in remote locations, cancer

therapy, food and blood irradiation, and radiography. Their widespread use in nearly every country makes radioactive materials much more accessible than fissile material.

Biological

Bioterrorism, another deadly threat, is the deliberate dispersal of pathogens through food, air, water, or living organisms to cause disease and, potentially more devastating, trigger alarm in a population. If properly produced and released, biological agents can kill on a massive scale and, if terrorists use a pathogen that can be transmitted from person to person, the disease can quickly spread across oceans and continents through air travel before authorities realize their nations have been attacked.

Developing a bioterrorism capability presents some scientific and operational challenges. However, the required scientific capabilities are not beyond the expertise of motivated biologists with basic university-level training. And, unlike other types of WMD, the materials required to produce a weapon are widely available—some are even found in nature. Even a badly-designed weapon resulting in limited health impact can cause significant uncertainty. Even though a small-scale bioterrorism attack, such as the 2001 anthrax attacks in the United States, can produce a relatively small number of cases of the disease, the costs of decontamination, medical treatment for the "worried well," decreased commercial activity, social distress, and lost productivity can be considerable. The terrorists can often meet their objective of creating disruption and fear without large numbers of casualties.

Among present-day terrorist organizations, AQ is believed to have made the greatest effort to acquire and develop a bioterrorism program. U.S. forces discovered a partially built biological weapons laboratory near Kandahar after expelling the Taliban from Afghanistan. Although it was not conclusive that AQ succeeded in obtaining a biological weapon, the discovery demonstrated a concerted effort to acquire a biological weapons capability.

Chemical

Chemical weapons represent another highly dangerous potential tool in the hands of terrorists. Effectively dispersed and in sufficient dosages, chemical agents could cause mass casualties as demonstrated by the use of chemical weapons during World War I. Today's terrorist threat ranges from the potential acquisition and use of militarized chemical weapons and delivery systems, to the production and use of improvised chemical agents and dissemination systems like the 1995 attack conducted by Aum Shinrikyo in the Tokyo subway system. Perpetrators of that attack employed an improvised nerve agent (sarin) with plastic bottles taped together, and the pointed end of an umbrella to puncture the containers, which caused mixing and dissemination of the materials. More recently, terrorists have concentrated on acquiring and employing chemical materials with dual uses, such as pesticides, poisons, and industrial chemicals, in their operations.

The growth and sophistication of the worldwide chemical industry, including the development of complex synthetic and dual-use materials, may make the task of preventing and protecting against this threat more difficult.

Preventing chemical terrorism is particularly challenging as terrorists can, with relative ease, use commercial industrial toxins, pesticides, and other commonly available chemical agents and materials as low-cost alternatives to militarized weapons and delivery systems, though likely with more limited effects.

Dual-Use Materials, Equipment, Research, and Technologies of Concern

Reducing the risk of terrorist acquisition of, access to, and use of dual-use materials, equipment, research, and technologies also remains a critical challenge. Terrorists have shown an interest in developing improvised devices leveraging such capabilities, and the diffusion of information on the Internet regarding dual-use research has compounded this challenge. Recent attacks in Iraq involving improvised devices containing chlorine, a dual-use chemical used in water treatment facilities, offer a notable example. Effective partnerships with private sector organizations, industry, academia, and the scientific research community, as well as with local governments, will play an important role in mitigating the risk of dual-use capabilities falling into the wrong hands.

State Sponsorship of Terrorism: A Key Concern

A state that directs WMD resources to terrorists, or one from which enabling resources are clandestinely diverted, may pose a potentially grave WMD terrorism threat. Although terrorist organizations will continue to seek a WMD capability independent of state programs, the sophisticated WMD knowledge and resources of a state could enable a terrorist capability. State sponsors of terrorism and all nations that fail to live up to their international counterterrorism and nonproliferation obligations deserve greater scrutiny as potential facilitators of WMD terrorism.

Non-State Facilitators: An Emerging Threat

State sponsors of terrorism represent just one facet of the overall risk of WMD terrorism. Non-state facilitators have emerged as a growing WMD proliferation threat in recent years, and could eventually provide terrorists with conduits to materials and expertise that are particularly hard to acquire. In 2003, the United States and its international partners succeeded in interdicting a shipment of WMD-related material destined for Libya's then-active nuclear weapons program. As facts emerged regarding this shipment and its origin, the United States gained insight into an emerging WMD terrorism risk. Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan had developed a transnational nuclear proliferation network reaching from Southeast Asia to

Europe, and was making available sensitive technology and WMD-related materials to nations willing to pay. The dismantling of the A.Q. Khan network revealed an uncomfortable truth about globalization. The very trends driving globalization, improved communications and transportation links, can enable development of extended proliferation networks that may facilitate terrorist acquisition of WMD. Globalization requires that partner nations work together closely to prevent, detect, and disrupt linkages that may develop between terrorists and facilitators such as A.Q. Khan.

Transformational Partnerships to Combat WMD Terrorism

Since September 11, 2001, the international community has made significant strides in responding to the threat of WMD terrorism. States are working together bilaterally and multilaterally to address these threats and protect their populations. The United States has taken concrete measures to build a layered defense against the WMD terrorism threat. In 2003, the United States announced the first National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction. Through a variety of multinational initiatives such as the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, the Proliferation Security Initiative, and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, the United States has taken a leadership role in reducing the threat of WMD in the hands of non-state actors and terrorists.

The Proliferation Security Initiative. Announced by President Bush in 2003, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) deserves special mention as a particularly well received and effective international initiative. The PSI is a global effort that aims to stop the trafficking of WMD, WMD delivery systems, and related materials to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern worldwide. States that wish to join the PSI are asked to endorse its Statement of Interdiction Principles, which identifies specific measures participants intend to undertake for the interdiction of WMD and related materials. As of December 31, 2007, 86 states have endorsed the statement. PSI participants also conduct exercises to improve their operational capabilities to conduct interdictions and meet periodically to share information and develop new operational concepts. The PSI has led to a number of important interdictions over the last five years and is an important tool in the overall U.S. strategy to combat WMD terrorism.

The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. President Bush and Russian Federation President Putin announced the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism on July 15, 2006, to expand and accelerate the development of partnership capacity against one of the most serious threats to international security. The Global Initiative offers a comprehensive approach to strengthening all defensive layers necessary to prevent, protect against, and respond comprehensively to the nuclear terrorist threat.

By agreeing to the Global Initiative's Statement of Principles, partner nations commit themselves to:

- Develop, if necessary, and improve accounting, control, and physical protection systems for nuclear and other radioactive materials and substances;
- Enhance security of civilian nuclear facilities;
- Improve the ability to detect nuclear and other radioactive materials and substances in order to prevent illicit trafficking in such materials and substances, to include cooperation in the research and development of national detection capabilities that would be interoperable;
- Improve capabilities of participants to search for, confiscate, and establish safe control over unlawfully held nuclear or other radioactive materials and substances or devices using them;
- Prevent the provision of safe haven and financial or economic resources to terrorists seeking to acquire or use nuclear and other radioactive materials and substances;
- Ensure respective national legal and regulatory frameworks, which are sufficient to provide for the implementation of appropriate criminal and, if applicable, civil liability for terrorists and those who facilitate acts of nuclear terrorism;
- Improve capabilities of participants for response, mitigation, and investigation in cases of terrorist attacks involving the use of nuclear and other radioactive materials and substances, including the development of technical means to identify nuclear and other radioactive materials and substances that are, or may be, involved in the incident; and
- Promote information sharing pertaining to the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism and their facilitation, taking appropriate measures consistent with their national laws and international obligations to protect the confidentiality of any information which they exchange in confidence.

In the beginning of 2007, the partnership consisted of 13 nations; by December 31, the partnership had grown to 66 partner nations representing all regions of the world. The IAEA and the EU also participated as observers. Partner nations created a Plan of Work, committing themselves to host or co-sponsor events in furtherance of the goals in the Statement of Principles. In 2007, seven countries conducted nine Plan of Work activities implementing all eight of the Principles. The Global Initiative also engaged the private sector and local governments, both of which have an important role to play in preventing, protecting against, and responding to acts of nuclear terrorism.

The Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI). The goal of GTRI, announced by the United States on May 26, 2004, in Vienna, Austria, is to identify, secure, remove, or facilitate the disposition, as quickly and expeditiously as possible, of vulnerable nuclear and radioactive materials and equipment around the world that pose a potential threat to the international community. International partners are key participants in this initiative, and GTRI has undertaken cooperative activities in over 90 countries. In particular, GTRI seeks to facilitate globally the reduction or elimination of the use of highly enriched uranium in civilian nuclear applications and to remove or protect other vulnerable nuclear and radiological materials at civilian sites worldwide. Specific activities include the conversion of reactors used for research, testing, and medical-isotope production from the use of highly enriched uranium (HEU) fuel to low enriched (LEU); repatriation of fresh and spent HEU fuel to its country of origin (the United States or Russian Federation); enhancing the physical protection at sites utilizing such materials; and removal of unwanted radiological sources and other nuclear materials not otherwise covered by the fuel-return programs.

Additional U.S. Efforts Supporting a Global Layered Defense. The United States has also worked with partner nations through the UN and the IAEA to reduce the threat of WMD in the hands of terrorists. The UN Security Council has passed two important resolutions related to the prevention of terrorism and the proliferation of WMD. In 2001, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1373, which requires all UN member states to refrain from providing any support, active or passive, to terrorists, and to work together to limit terrorist movement and safe haven. In 2004, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1540, which requires all UN member states to refrain from providing support to non-state actors that attempt to develop or acquire WMD and their means of delivery. The United States remains committed to full implementation of both UN Security Council Resolutions 1373 and 1540.

The Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (Nuclear Terrorism Convention) entered into force on July 7, 2007. The USG submitted the Nuclear Terrorism Convention to the Senate for advice and consent to ratification in 2007, along with three other multilateral counterterrorism instruments: the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the Protocol of 2005 to the Convention on the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, and the Protocol of 2005 to the Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf. Collectively, these treaties will enhance international cooperation with regard to the prevention of WMD terrorism and proliferation of WMD, as well as the investigation and prosecution of such acts.

Conclusion. The potential threat of terrorists acquiring and using WMD poses one of the greatest security challenges facing the United States and our international partners today. During the past year, the USG has built on a range of activities and launched new efforts to prevent, protect against, and respond to the threat or use of WMD. Together with partner nations and international organizations, the United States will continue to take the initiative to reduce the global risk of WMD terrorism.

TERRORIST SAFE HAVENS

Terrorist safe havens are defined in this report as ungoverned, under-governed, or ill-governed areas of a country and non-physical areas where terrorists that constitute a threat to U.S. national security interests are able to organize, plan, raise funds, communicate, recruit, train, and operate in relative security because of inadequate governance capacity, political will, or both. Physical safe havens provide security for terrorist leaders, allowing them to plan acts of terrorism around the world. Global communications and financial systems, especially those created by electronic infrastructure such as the Internet, global media, and unregulated economic activity, further allow terrorists to carry out activities, particularly the dissemination of propaganda and misinformation, without the need for a physical safe haven. These "virtual" havens are highly mobile, difficult to track, and difficult to control, and are not based in any particular state. This part of the report, however, will not address virtual safe havens, focusing instead on physical safe havens.

Africa

Somalia. A small number of al-Qa'ida (AQ) operatives remain in East Africa, particularly Somalia, where they pose a serious threat to U.S. and allied interests in the region. Although these elements have been severely disrupted as a result of Ethiopian and Somali Transitional Federal Government military actions, AQ continues to operate in Somalia and elsewhere in East Africa. Somalia remains a concern given the country's long, unguarded coastline, porous borders, continued political instability, and proximity to the Arabian Peninsula, all of which provide opportunities for terrorist transit and/or safe haven. AQ remains likely to make common cause with Somali extremists.

The Trans-Sahara. Remote areas of the Sahel and Maghreb regions in Africa serve as terrorist safe havens because of little government control in sparsely populated regions. The threat to U.S. interests from Islamic extremists increased in 2007 as a result of AQ merging with two Islamic extremist organizations that operate in the region: al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), based in Algeria; and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), although LIFG's November 2007 merger with AQ has yielded few successful attacks to date, reflecting the depleted capabilities of LIFG within Libya.

AQIM has used the Sahel to train Islamic militants in small arms, use of explosives, and guerilla tactics for the

last several years. Training appears to take place on the move or in makeshift facilities in remote areas outside government control. While LIFG members have trained in AQIM-run and other camps, the goal of their preparations has been to join anti-Coalition fighting in Iraq. AQIM taps into already existing smuggling networks in the region to obtain weapons, explosives, and supplies to support its operations.

East Asia and Pacific

The Sulu/Sulawesi Seas Littoral. Southeast Asia includes a safe haven area composed of the Sulawesi Sea and Sulu Archipelago, which sit astride the maritime boundary between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. The geography of the thousands of islands in the region made the area difficult for authorities to monitor. Worker migration, tourism, trade, and other non-terrorist activities, both licit and illicit, that occur in this maritime region pose another challenge to identifying and countering the terrorist threat. Although Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines have improved their efforts to control their shared maritime boundaries, this expanse remains difficult to control. Surveillance is partial at best, and traditional smuggling and piracy groups provided an effective cover for terrorist activities, such as movement of personnel, equipment, and funds. The Sulu/Sulawesi Seas Littoral represents a safe haven for the AQ-linked Jemaah Islamiya (JI) organization and the Philippine Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

The Southern Philippines. The southern Philippines, specifically the Sulu archipelago and Mindanao, serve as terrorist safe havens. The government's control in this area is weak due to rugged terrain, weak rule of law, poverty, and local Muslim minority resentment of central governmental policies. In addition to Jemaah Islamiya (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the area hosts several terrorist and insurgent groups including the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army and the Rajah Solaiman Movement. JI and the ASG pose a threat to U.S. interests, including the U.S. military forces supporting the Philippine Armed Forces that are conducting counterinsurgency operations in Jolo Island. JI maintains a presence in the southern Philippines where it conducts attack planning, but its capabilities in the region have decreased since 2006. It conducts training in some areas of Mindinao controlled by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), though MILF's peace talks with the government may reduce ties (and therefore support capabilities) between the groups. Indonesia. Jemaah Islamiya (JI) poses the principal threat to U.S. and other Western interests in Indonesia. In 2007, the Indonesian government improved its counterterrorist capabilities and scored several successes against the group, such as the June arrest of the former acting JI emir Muhammad Naim (aka Zarkasih) and the former JI military commander Abu Dujana. JI's leadership operates largely in west and central Java where the group recruits, funds, trains, and plans operations, which in the past have included attacks on Western targets.

The Middle East and North Africa

Iraq. Iraq is not currently a terrorist safe haven, but terrorists, including Sunni groups like al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), Ansar al-Islam (AI), and Ansar al-Sunna (AS), as well as Shia extremists and other groups, view Iraq as a potential safe haven and are attempting to make it a reality. The Iraqi government, in coordination with the Coalition, made significant progress in combating AQI and affiliated terrorist organizations in 2007.

The substantial degradation of AQI stems from a number of factors. The alliance of convenience and mutual exploitation between AQI and many Sunni populations has deteriorated. The Baghdad Security Plan, initiated in February, along with assistance from primarily Sunni tribal and local groups, has succeeded in reducing violence to late 2005 levels, has disrupted and diminished AQI infrastructure, and has driven some surviving AQI fighters from Baghdad and Anbar into the northern Iraqi provinces of Ninawa, Diyala, and Salah ad Din. While AQI remained a threat, new initiatives to cooperate with tribal and local leaders in Iraq have led to Sunni tribes' and local citizens' rejection of AQI and its extremist ideology. The continued growth, professionalism, and improved capabilities of the Iraqi forces have increased their effectiveness in rooting out terrorist cells. Iraqis in Baghdad, Anbar and Diyala Provinces, and elsewhere have turned against AQI and were cooperating with the Iraqi government and Coalition Forces to defeat it. The Coalition troop surge and its sustained presence and tactics, and the reduction in violence following the declared ceasefire by Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi militia in August, also increased popular support for the actions of Coalition and Iraqi Forces against AQI and other terrorist groups.

AQI, although substantially degraded in 2007, retains some infrastructure that allows the group to use these areas for staging operations.

Northern Iraq. The Kongra Gel/Kurdistan Worker's Party (KGK/PKK) maintained an active presence in northern Iraq, from which it coordinated attacks in the predominantly ethnic Kurdish areas of southeastern Turkey and provided logistical support to forces that launched attacks into Turkey, primarily against Turkish security forces, local Turkish officials, and villagers who opposed the organization. On October 17, the Turkish Parliament overwhelmingly passed a motion authorizing cross-border military operations against KGK/PKK encampments in northern Iraq. Turkish forces carried out extensive operations along the Turkey-Iraq border in the latter part of the year. The United States continued to work with Turkey and Iraq to counter the common threat from the KGK/PKK.

Lebanon. Hizballah remained the most prominent and powerful terrorist group in Lebanon, with a strong influence among Lebanon's large Shia community. The Lebanese government continued to recognize Hizballah, a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, as a legitimate "resistance group" and political party. Hizballah retains its

strong influence among Lebanon's Shia community, which comprises at least one third of Lebanon's population. Hizballah maintained offices in Beirut and elsewhere in the country, and was represented by elected deputies in parliament.

An increasing number of AQ-associated Sunni extremists are also operating within the country. AQ likely views Lebanon as an opportunity to expand its jihad into the Levant, especially after the 2006 conflict between Israel and Hizballah. The organization uses the refugee camps as staging grounds for recruitment, training, planning, and facilitating transit of foreign fighters to and from Iraq. On May 20, a conflict involving the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and militant Islamic fundamentalist group Fatah al-Islam (FAI) erupted in Nahr el-Barid, a Palestinian refugee camp in the north. After a three-month battle, the Lebanese Army took control of the camp on September 2. The death toll was 168 LAF soldiers and an estimated 42 civilians. While the LAF were able to defeat FAI militants and secure the Nahr el-Barid camp, local Palestinian authorities still retained control of the other eleven refugee camps in the country.

Yemen. Yemen experienced several setbacks to its counterterrorism efforts with the June 22 announcement that Abu Basir Nasir al-Wahishi was the new head of al-Qa'ida in Yemen (AQY), the July 2 terrorist attack which killed ten people, and the uncertainty of U.S.S. Cole bomber Jamal al-Badawi's continued incarceration.

At the end of 2007, the Government of Yemen could not account for seven of the 23 AQ members that escaped from a prison in Sanaa in February 2006. AQY carried out several attacks against tourism targets, most notably the January and July 2007 attacks against foreign visitors to the Queen of Sheba Temple in Ma'rib and the country's oil infrastructure. Yemen continued to increase its maritime security capabilities, but land border security along the extensive frontier with Saudi Arabia remained a problem, despite increased Yemeni-Saudi cooperation on bilateral security issues.

Southwest Asia

Afghan-Pakistan Border. Despite the efforts of both Afghan and Pakistani security forces, instability along the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier appeared to have provided al-Qa'ida (AQ) leadership greater mobility and ability to conduct training and operational planning, particularly that targeting Western Europe and the United States. Numerous senior AQ operatives have been captured or killed, but AQ leaders continue to plot attacks and to cultivate stronger operational connections that radiate outward from Pakistan to affiliates throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe.

Pakistan. Portions of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan have become a safe haven for AQ terrorists, Afghan insurgents, and other extremists. AQ uses the FATA to launch attacks in Afghanistan, plan operations worldwide, train, recruit, and provide propaganda. Other extremists, including Taliban and Kashmir-focused organizations such as Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin or Hizb-e-Islami Khalis, use the area for safe haven and share short term goals of eliminating Coalition presence in Afghanistan. They exploit the local sympathetic populations to recruit, train, and conduct cross-border raids and bombings in Afghanistan. Islamist Deobandi groups and many local tribesmen in the FATA continue to resist the government's efforts to improve governance and administrative control at the expense of longstanding local autonomy.

Extremists led by Taliban commander Baitullah Mehsud and other AQ-related extremists re-exerted their hold in areas of South Waziristan and captured over 200 government soldiers, who were later released after a local peace deal collapsed. Extremists have also gained footholds in the settled areas bordering the FATA, including Swat, Tank, and DI Khan. Pakistani security forces continue to fight militant leader Maulana Fazlullah in Swat, a settled area in NWFP. As of December, Pakistan's military was conducting increased operations in Swat. The Government of Pakistan maintains approximately 120,000 troops, including Army and Frontier Corps (FC) units, along the Afghanistan border. The United States plans to help modernize and increase the capacity of the FC so they can become a more effective force.

In order to increase the central government's writ in the FATA, the Government of Pakistan is implementing a comprehensive approach with three prongs: political, security, and development. For the political prong, the government seeks to bolster effective governance by empowering local officials. For the security prong, Pakistan's objective is to increase the capacity and efficacy of local security forces. For the development prong, the Government of Pakistan has designed a comprehensive sustainable development plan for the region. The plan concentrates on four sectors—basic human services, natural resources, communication/ infrastructure, and economic development—and, if fully implemented, would cost $2 billion. The plan was developed with the extensive grassroots participation of all stakeholders to provide essential economic and livelihood opportunities while upgrading and expanding social services to a population at risk for recruitment by terrorist organizations.

Afghanistan. The Afghan government, in concert with ISAF/NATO forces and the international community, continued efforts to bring and build security on the Afghan side of the border. The border areas remained contested, however, with ongoing insurgent and terrorist attacks, including AQ activity. Attacks by the Taliban and other insurgent groups and criminal networks, along with those of extremist movements such as Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) and the Haqqani network, continued throughout Afghanistan. Criminal networks and narcotics cultivation remained particularly prevalent in the south and east of the country, constituting a source of funding for the insurgency in Afghanistan. In 2007, AQ expanded its Afghani-

stan-based leadership cadre and its support to militants inside the country, providing funding, training, and personnel to facilitate terrorist and insurgent operations. Anti-Coalition organizations such as HIG continued to operate in coordination with AQ, Taliban, and other insurgent groups, primarily in the east.

Western Hemisphere

Colombia Border Region. The regions adjacent to Colombia's borders with Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, and Brazil include rough terrain and dense forest cover. These conditions, coupled with low population densities and weak government presence, create areas of safe haven for insurgent and terrorist groups, particularly the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Panama have often adopted a tacit policy mix of containment and non-confrontation with Colombian narcoterrorist groups, although some confrontations do occur. Much depends on local decisions and cross-border relations. The FARC used areas in neighboring countries near Colombia's border to rest and regroup, procure supplies, and stage and train for terrorist attacks. These areas appeared to be more prevalent in Venezuela and Ecuador, less so in Brazil and Peru. In addition, the FARC and another designated terrorist organization, the National Liberation Army (ELN), regard Venezuelan territory near the border as a safe haven and often used the area for cross-border incursions.

Venezuela. Rampant corruption within the Venezuelan government and military, ideological ties with the FARC, and lax counternarcotics policies have fueled a permissive operating environment for drug traffickers and an increase in drug trafficking to Europe, Africa, and the United States. The United States is closely monitoring this situation.

The Tri-Border Area (TBA) (Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay). Although no corroborated information shows that Hizballah, HAMAS, or other Islamic extremist groups used the TBA for military-type training or planning of terrorist operations, the United States remains concerned that these groups use the TBA as a safe haven to raise funds. Suspected supporters of Islamic terrorist groups, including Hizballah, take advantage of loosely regulated territory and the proximity of Ciudad del Este, Paraguay and Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil to participate in a wide range of illicit activities and to solicit donations from within the sizable Muslim communities in the region and elsewhere in Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. The governments of the TBA have long been concerned with arms and drugs smuggling, document fraud, money laundering, and the manufacture and movement of contraband goods through this region. In the early years of this decade, the governments of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay invited the United States to participate in the Three Plus One Group on TBA Security to address these illicit activities.

Strategies, Tactics, Tools for Disrupting or Eliminating Safe Havens

Corruption, poverty, a lack of civic institutions and social services, politically repressive governments, and inadequate or unjust law enforcement and legal systems are conditions terrorists exploit for recruitment, operational planning, or physical safe haven. Efforts to build partner capacity and encourage states to cooperate more effectively at the local and regional level are key to denying terrorists safe haven. U.S. Ambassadors, as the President's personal representatives abroad, are in charge of U.S. relations with host nations, with a unique responsibility to bring all elements of national power to bear against the terrorist enemy. They lead interagency country teams that develop strategies to help host nations understand the threat and to strengthen their political will and capacity to counter it.

Defeating the terrorist enemy requires a comprehensive effort executed locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Working with partner nations, we must eliminate terrorist leadership, but incarcerating or killing terrorists will not achieve an end to terrorism. We must simultaneously eliminate terrorist safe havens, tailoring regional strategies to disaggregate terrorist networks and break terrorist financial, travel, communications, and intelligence links. Finally, and most challenging, we must address the underlying conditions that terrorists exploit at the national and local levels to induce alienated or aggrieved populations to become sympathizers, supporters, and ultimately members of terrorist networks. We can marginalize violent extremists by addressing people's needs and grievances, by giving people a stake in their own political future, and by providing alternatives to what terrorists offer.

Economic development offers at-risk populations a better choice. Terrorists exploit despair and hopelessness to win recruits. Systems characterized by an absence of political choice, economic opportunities, and personal freedom can become unwitting incubators of extremism. Economically disadvantaged people are vulnerable to recruitment by extremists and by criminal "quick-fix" livelihoods, such as the poppy production that finances terrorism in Afghanistan.

Combating corruption and fostering good governance in host governments is indispensable to our efforts to strengthen host government law enforcement and oversight of terrorist financing, and the effectiveness of our other training programs, such as those that help border guards interdict dangerous goods and people.

Terrorists exploit weakness, most notably sectarian violence, to create greater instability and to piggyback onto the conflict for propaganda purposes. Fostering reconciliation and strengthening community mechanisms is vital to eliminating terrorism. This is a long-term challenge. Over time, our global and regional cooperative efforts will reduce terrorists' capacity to harm us and our partners, while local security and development assistance will build

our partners' capacity. We must continue to enlist the support and cooperation of a growing network of partners. If we are to be successful, we must all work together toward our common goal in a strategic and coordinated manner.

Regional Strategic Initiative

Building on this understanding, we have worked to develop the Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), an effort to develop flexible regional networks. The State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (S/CT) is working with ambassadors and interagency representatives in key terrorist theaters of operation to collectively assess the threat, pool resources, and devise collaborative strategies, action plans, and policy recommendations.

The RSI is a key tool in promoting cooperation between our partners in the War on Terror—for example, with Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines as they confront terrorist transit across the Sulawesi Sea; or among Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco, Niger, Chad, and Mali, to counter al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), as it recruits and hides in the desert that sits astride national borders. Terrorists are highly adaptable; defeating them requires both centralized coordination and field authority. Resources and responses must be applied in a rapid, flexible, and focused manner. The RSI helps achieve this coordinated approach.

RSI strategy groups are in place for South East Asia, Iraq and its neighbors, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Western Mediterranean, East Africa, the Trans-Sahara, South Asia, and Latin America. These groups are chaired by Ambassadors, with interagency representatives participating. RSI programs focus on developing a common understanding of the strategic situation in a region. Using this shared perspective, networked country teams then identify opportunities for collaboration and pool resources not only to eliminate terrorism safe havens, but also to address the conditions that terrorists exploit for recruitment.

Terrorists operate without regard to national boundaries. To effectively counter terrorists, we are working to strengthen our regional and transnational partnerships and increasingly operate in a regional context. Denying safe haven plays a major role in undermining terrorists' capacity to operate effectively and forms a key element of U.S. counterterrorism strategy.

Countering Terrorism on the Economic Front

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States has acted to block funding of terrorists and their supporters, and to promote international cooperation against them. On September 23, 2001, the President signed E.O. 13224, giving the United States a powerful tool to impede terrorist funding. This Executive Order (EO) provides a means to disrupt the financial support network for terrorists and terrorist organizations by authorizing the USG to designate and block assets of foreign individuals and entities that commit, or pose a significant risk of committing, acts of terrorism. In addition, because of the pervasiveness and expansiveness of the financial base of foreign terrorists, the order authorizes the USG to block the assets of individuals and entities that provide support, offer assistance to, or otherwise associate with designated terrorists and terrorist organizations. The order also covers their subsidiaries, front organizations, agents, and associates.

The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Treasury, also has the authority to designate groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) pursuant to Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended. These designations play a critical role in U.S. counterterrorism efforts and are an effective means of curtailing support for terrorist activities and pressuring groups to get out of the terrorism business. As a consequence of such a designation, it is unlawful for U.S. citizens or any persons subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to provide material support or resources to a designated FTO. U.S. financial institutions are also required to freeze the funds of designated FTOs.

EO and FTO designations support U.S. efforts to curb the financing of terrorism and encourage other nations to do the same. They internationally stigmatize and isolate designated terrorist entities and individuals. They also deter donations or contributions to, and economic transactions with, named entities and individuals. In addition, they heighten public awareness and knowledge of terrorist organizations, and signal U.S. concerns about named entities and individuals to other governments.

In 2007, the United States designated a number of individuals and entities:

- On January 26, the United States designated two South African individuals, Farhad Ahmed Dockrat and Junaid Ismail Dockrat, and a related entity for financing and facilitating al-Qa'ida, pursuant to Executive Order 13224. Farhad Dockrat both finances and facilitates al-Qa'ida. In one example, Dockrat in 2001 provided over 400,000 South African Rand (approximately $62,900) to the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan to be forwarded to al-Akhtar Trust, an Afghanistan-based fundraiser for al-Qa'ida. Al-Akhtar Trust was previously designated by the United States under E.O. 13224 for its support to al-Qa'ida. Al-Akhtar Trust is also on the United Nations Security Council 1267 Committee's list of sanctioned individuals and entities designated for providing support to al Qa'ida, Usama bin Ladin and the Taliban. Junaid Dockrat is an al-Qa'ida financier, recruiter, and facilitator. Junaid Dockrat in 2004 worked via phone and email with al-Qa'ida operations chief Hamza Rabi'a (now deceased) to coordinate the travel of South Africans to Pakistan in order for them to train with al Qa'ida. He is also responsible for raising $120,000 that Rabi'a received in the spring of 2004.

- On February 20, the United States designated Jihad al-Bina under Executive Order 13224 for its support to Hizballah. Jihad al-Bina is a Lebanon-based construction company formed and operated by Hizballah. Jihad al-Bina receives direct funding from Iran, is run by Hizballah members, and is overseen by Hizballah's Shura Council, at the head of which sits Hizballah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah.

- On June 15, the United States designated `Ali Sulayman Mas'ud `Abd al-Sayyid, Sa'id Yusif Ali Abu Azizah, and Nur al-Din al-Dibiski under Executive Order 13224. `Abd al-Sayyid is one of al-Qa'ida's early members and is reportedly a member of the al-Qa'ida military committee. 'Abd al-Sayyid was assigned by al-Qa'ida's leadership to deliver messages to al-Qa'ida members in Libya that contained instructions for terrorist plots in Libya. `Abd al-Sayyid was also tasked by LIFG to enter Libya secretly, and was involved in arming an al-Qa'ida group in Libya. Sa'id Yusif Ali Abu Azizah is a member of and recruiter for al-Qa'ida, and was responsible for al-Qa'ida's publications and mass media operations. Azizah was identified as a member of al-Qa'ida in Canada in 2003, and became the leader of the LIFG in Canada in 2004. Nur al-Din al-Dibiski traveled to Afghanistan in the early 1990s, where he joined al-Qa'ida and received military training in al-Qa'ida's camps. Dibiski is believed to be a senior member of the LIFG and a member of that terrorist group's military committee.

- On July 24, the United States designated the Iran-based Martyrs Foundation, including its U.S. branch, the Goodwill Charitable Organization (GCO), and the finance firm al-Qard al-Hassan (AQAH) under Executive Order 13224 for their support to Hizballah. Two individuals, Qasem Aliq and Ahmad al-Shami, were also designated for the role they play in Hizballah's support network. The Martyrs Foundation is an Iranian parastatal organization that channels financial support from Iran to several terrorist organizations in the Levant, including Hizballah, HAMAS, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). The designation included: The Goodwill Charitable Organization (GCO), a fundraising office in Dearborn, Michigan, established by the Martyrs Foundation. GCO is a Hizballah front organization that reports directly to the leadership of the Martyrs Foundation in Lebanon. The finance firm al-Qard al-Hassan (AQAH), which has been used by Hizballah as a cover to manage its financial activity. After the summer 2006 conflict, Hizballah transferred a portion of its financial activity to AQAH, giving Hizballah access to the international banking system. Qasem Aliq, a Hizballah official who was previously the director for the Martyrs Foundation branch in Lebanon, and is responsible for overseeing Martyrs Foundation's operation. He worked closely with senior Hizballah officials. Ahmad al-Shami, who has worked for the Martyrs Foundation in Lebanon and has been in frequent contact with GCO. Money raised by GCO was sent to al-Shami in Lebanon to be distributed to the Martyrs Foundation. Hizballah leadership placed al-Shami in his position at the Martyrs Foundation in Lebanon.

- On August 7, the United States designated the al-Salah Society and its director Ahmad al-Kurd under Executive Order 13224 for their support to HAMAS. Al-Salah is one of the largest and best-funded HAMAS charitable organizations in the Palestinian territories. The al-Salah Society supported HAMAS-affiliated combatants during the first Intifada and recruited and indoctrinated youth to support HAMAS' activities. It also financed commercial stores, kindergartens, and the purchase of land for HAMAS. The al-Salah Society was included on a list of suspected HAMAS and Palestinian Islamic Jihad-affiliated NGOs whose accounts were frozen by the Palestinian Authority as of late August 2003. After freezing the bank accounts, PA officials confirmed that the al-Salah Society was a front for HAMAS. Ahmad al-Kurd, Director of the al-Salah Society, is a recognized high-ranking HAMAS leader in Gaza.

- On August 13, the United States designated Fatah al-Islam under Executive Order 13224. Fatah al-Islam, an offshoot of the Syria-backed secular Palestinian terrorist group Fatah al-Intifada, was led by Shakir al-Absi, a well-known Palestinian-Jordanian militant who was sentenced to death in absentia in Jordan for his involvement in the 2002 murder of U.S. diplomat Laurence Foley. Fatah al-Islam initiated the hostilities in the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp near Tripoli, Lebanon with an unprovoked attack on Lebanese security forces in May, and used civilian refugees as human shields during the fighting. Over 130 Lebanese Armed Forces soldiers and civilians lost their lives in the conflict at Nahr al-Barid.

- On October 10, the United States designated Abdul Rahim al-Talhi, Muhammad `Abdallah Salih Sughayr, and Fahd Muhammad `Abd al-`Aziz al-Khashiban under Executive Order 13224 for providing support to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), an al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorist group responsible for multiple bombings, kidnappings, and other terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia. These three men have served as significant sources of financial and other support to individuals and entities in Southeast Asia previously named as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) and listed pursuant to UNSCR 1267.

- On October 25, the United States designated the IRGC-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) under Executive Order 13224 for its support to terrorist organizations. The Qods Force is a branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC; aka Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps), that provides material support to the Taliban, Lebanese Hizballah, HAMAS, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC). The Qods Force is the Iranian regime's primary instrument for providing lethal support to the Taliban. The Qods Force pro-

vides weapons and financial support to the Taliban to support anti-U.S. and anti-Coalition activity in Afghanistan. Since at least 2006, Iran has arranged some shipments of small arms and associated ammunition, rocket propelled grenades, mortar rounds, 107mm rockets, plastic explosives, and possibly man-portable defense systems to the Taliban. The Qods Force has a long history of supporting Hizballah, providing it with guidance, funding, weapons, intelligence, and logistical support. The Qods Force operates training camps for Hizballah in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and has reportedly trained more than 3,000 Hizballah fighters at IRGC training facilities in Iran. The Qods Force provides roughly $100 to $200 million in funding a year to Hizballah and has assisted Hizballah in rearming in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Through Qods Force material support to the Taliban, Iran is seeking to inflict casualties on U.S. and NATO forces. In addition, the Qods Force provides lethal support in the form of weapons, training, funding, and guidance to select groups of Iraqi Shia militants who target and kill Coalition and Iraqi forces and innocent Iraqi civilians.

- On October 25, the United States designated Bank Saderat, its branches, and subsidiaries under Executive Order 13224 for their support to terrorist organizations. Bank Saderat, which has approximately 3200 branch offices, has been used by the Government of Iran to channel funds to terrorist organizations, including Hizballah and EU-designated terrorist groups HAMAS, PFLP-GC, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Hizballah has used Bank Saderat to send money to other terrorist organizations, including millions of dollars to support the activities of HAMAS. As of early 2005, HAMAS had substantial assets deposited in Bank Saderat, and in 2007, Bank Saderat has transferred several million dollars to HAMAS.

- On November 15, the United States designated the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) under Executive Order 13224 for its support to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The TRO is a charitable organization that acts as a front to facilitate fundraising and procurement for the LTTE through a network of individual representatives. In the United States, TRO has raised funds on behalf of LTTE and facilitated LTTE procurement operations in the United States. Operations included the purchase of munitions, equipment, communication devices, and other technology for the LTTE. TRO's efforts worldwide have reportedly allowed the LTTE to use humanitarian aid that it collected from the international community after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to launch new campaigns to strengthen LTTE military capacity.

- On December 4, the United States designated Abdelmalek Droukel, of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), under Executive Order 13224. Droukel reportedly supervised the April 2007 AQIM bombings of the Algerian Prime Minister's office and police facilities in Algiers. In a May 2007 video announcement, Droukel publicly called on regional AQIM commanders to seek recruits and select targets for suicide bombings.

- On December 6, the United States designated Fawzi Mutlaq al-Rawi, the leader of the Iraqi wing of the Syrian Baath Party, under Executive Order 13224, for providing financial and material support to al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI). In November 2005, al-Rawi facilitated the provision of $300,000 to members of AQI, and provided AQI with vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, rifles, and suicide bombers at the request of a senior AQI leader. As of March 2005, al-Rawi was present at regular meetings to plan funding for Muhammad Yunis Ahmad's network in Iraq. Muhammad Yunis Ahmad has provided guidance, financial support, and coordination for insurgent attacks throughout Iraq. Al-Rawi also ran a charity organization which was a front for funding the network.

UN Security Council Resolution 1267

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999) and successor resolutions require member states to impose financial and other sanctions on listed groups and individuals associated with Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban, or al-Qa'ida. The 1267 Sanctions Committee, also established by the Security Council, maintains a list of individuals and entities associated with al-Qa'ida, the Taliban, and/or Usama bin Ladin who are subject to the international sanctions, assets freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo that member states are obligated to implement. On July 29, 2005, the UN Security Council requested, through the adoption of Resolution 1617, that the UN Secretary General take the necessary steps to increase cooperation between the UN and INTERPOL in order to provide the Committee (established pursuant to Resolution 1267) with better tools to fulfill its mandate more effectively.

In 2007, the United States and the UN Security Council 1267 Committee designated the following individuals and entities:

- On June 8, the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee added Ali Sulayman Mas'ud `Abd al-Sayyid, Sa'id Yusif Ali Abu Azizah, and Nur al-Din al-Dibiski to its list of individuals and entities associated with Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban, or al-Qa'ida. `Abd al-Sayyid is one of al-Qa'ida's early members and is reportedly a member of the al-Qa'ida military committee. 'Abd al-Sayyid was assigned by al-Qa'ida's leadership to deliver messages to al-Qa'ida members in Libya that contained instructions for terrorist plots in Libya. `Abd al-Sayyid was also tasked by LIFG to enter Libya secretly, and was involved in arming an al-Qa'ida group in Libya. Sa'id Yusif Ali Abu Azizah is a member of and recruiter for al-Qa'ida, and was responsible for al-Qa'ida's publications and mass media operations. Azizah was identified as a member of al-Qa'ida in Canada in 2003, and became the leader of the LIFG in Canada in 2004. Nur al-Din al-Dibiski traveled to Afghanistan in the early 1990s, where he joined al-Qa'ida and received military

training in al-Qa'ida's camps. Dibiski is believed to be a senior member of the LIFG and a member of that terrorist group's military committee.

- On August 27, the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee added Abdelmalek Droukdel, the leader or emir of al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), to its list of individuals and entities associated with Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban, or al-Qa'ida. Droukel reportedly supervised the April 2007 AQIM bombings of the Algerian Prime Minister's office and police facilities in Algiers. In a May 2007 video announcement, Droukel publicly called on regional AQIM commanders to seek recruits and select targets for suicide bombings.

- On September 13, the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee added Sirajuddin Jallaloudine Haqqani to its list of individuals or entities associate with Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban, or al-Qa'ida. Haqqani is a Taliban Deputy Commander who since 2004 has been a major operational commander in the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan.

- On October 9, the UN 1267 Sanctions Committee added three individuals based in Saudi Arabia to its list of individuals and entities associated with Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban, or al-Qa'ida. Abdul Rahim al-Talhi, Muhammad `Abdallah Salih Sughayr, and Fahd Muhammad `Abd al-`Aziz al-Khashiban were listed for providing support to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), an al-Qa'ida-affiliated terrorist group responsible for multiple bombings, kidnappings and other terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia. These three men have served as significant sources of financial and other support to individuals and entities in Southeast Asia previously named as SDGTs and listed pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1267 and successor resolutions.

De-Listing of Individuals and/or Entities under UNSCR 1267

Pursuant to the UN 1267 Committee guidelines, any individual(s), groups, undertakings, and/or entities on the Consolidated List may submit a petition for de-listing. The petitioner must provide justification for the de-listing request, offer relevant information, and request support for the de-listing. The Committee, in determining whether to remove names from the Consolidated List, may consider, among other things: whether the individual or entity was placed on the Consolidated List due to a mistake of identity, or whether the individual or entity no longer meets the criteria set out in relevant resolutions. In evaluating whether an individual or entity no longer meets the criteria, the Committee may consider, among other things, whether the individual is deceased, or whether it has been affirmatively shown that the individual or entity has severed all association, as defined in paragraph 2 of Resolution 1617 (2005), with al-Qa'ida, Usama bin Ladin, the Taliban, and their supporters, including all individuals and entities on the Consolidated List.

In 2007, the United States and the UN 1267 Committee de-listed the following individuals and entities:

- On August 1, Momtaz Bank was de-listed as an entity from the 1267 Consolidated List.

- On September 17, Lokman Amin Mohammed (Hama Karim) was de-listed from the 1267 Consolidated List.

- On November 14, Ahmed Irdis Nasreddin was de-listed as an individual (and 12 entities associated with him were delisted as entities) from the consolidated list (al-Qa'ida section) of the UN 1267 Committee.

Bringing Terrorists to Justice: Rewards for Justice

Rewards for Justice (RFJ) is a valuable asset in the War on Terror. Through the RFJ program, the Secretary of State offers and pays rewards for information that prevents or successfully resolves an act of international terrorism against United States persons or property. Reward offers of up to $25 million have been authorized for information leading to the capture of Usama bin Ladin and other key terrorist leaders. Since its inception in 1984, RFJ has paid more than $77 million to over 50 people who provided credible information. In 2007, the United States gave out rewards totaling $15 million for the successful resolution of terrorist cases in the Philippines and the United States. This was the second highest payout year in the history of the RFJ program.

In June, U.S. Ambassador Kristie A. Kinney presided over a public reward ceremony jointly sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Manila and the Government of the Philippines. The reward payment of $10 million to multiple sources was the largest Rewards for Justice payment in the Philippines since the program was launched in the country in 2002. The sources provided information that contributed to successful military operations against Khadaffy Janjalani and Abu Solaiman, leaders of the Abu Sayyaf Group, who were responsible for the kidnappings and deaths of American and Filipino citizens. Janjalani was killed during a battle with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in October 2006, while Abu Solaiman was killed in similar circumstances by the AFP in January 2007.

In October, RFJ gave $5 million to an individual who was instrumental in bringing Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called "20th hijacker" of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, to justice.

In 2007, new initiatives included adding six terrorists to the RFJ Most Wanted List and one new incident-based reward offer. In January, RFJ added three new terrorists with reward offers of up to $5 million to its list: Mohammad Ali Hamadei, a member of Lebanese Hizballah, who participated in the 1985 hijacking of TWA 847 and the murder of U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem; Ramadan Shallah, the Secretary-General and founding member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad; and Mohammed Qari Zafar, a terrorist operative wanted for questioning in connection

with the March 2006 attack against the Consulate in Karachi, which led to the death of U.S. Foreign Service Officer David Foy. In March, Zulkifli bin Hir (a.k.a. Marwan), a leader in Jemaah Islamiya (JI) in the Philippines, was added to the RFJ list with a reward offer of up to $5 million. In April, the Secretary of State approved a reward offer of up to $1 million for information regarding the January 2007 terrorist attack against the U.S. Embassy in Athens. Finally, in July, RFJ added JI leaders Noordin Top and Zulkarnaen to the list.

All of these reward offerings are listed in greater detail on the www.rewardsforjustice.net website, which was redesigned in July 2007.

Multilateral Efforts to Combat Terrorism

International cooperation remains essential to initiatives in fields ranging from intelligence and law enforcement coordination, to targeted financial sanctions, to norms and standards of financial regulation, because most funds used to support terrorism are located outside the jurisdiction of the United States.

Throughout the year, the United States worked closely with multilateral partners in numerous counterterrorist financing efforts, including the Counterterrorism Committee of the United Nations, the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the G8's Counterterrorism Assistance Group (CTAG), and international financial institutions. In addition, the United States continued its regular dialogue on terrorism finance with the European Union. Since its launch in September 2004, the dialogue has served as the framework for ongoing exchanges to promote information sharing and cooperation on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and on technical assistance issues.

European nations are active participants in a variety of multilateral organizations that contributed to counterterrorist efforts, including the G8, NATO, the FATF, MONEYVAL, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The United States and its partners worked through these organizations to establish and implement best practices, build the counterterrorism capabilities of "weak but willing" states, and to institutionalize the War on Terror globally. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund have pledged to provide countries with training to increase their capacity to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

The United Nations (UN). The Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) was established by Security Council Resolution 1373 after September 11, 2001, with the goal of enhancing the ability of UN member states to combat terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate (CTED), established by Resolution 1535 in 2004, became fully operational in December 2005. CTED's mandate is to enhance the Committee's ability to monitor the implementation of Resolution 1373 and to advance capacity-building work by facilitating technical assistance to member states and promoting closer cooperation and coordination with international, regional, and subregional organizations. It also conducts visits to member states to assess the implementation of Resolution 1373. CTED visited seven states in 2007 (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bangladesh, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Nigeria, and Vietnam).

In 2007, UN Security Council Resolution 1787 (December 10), extended the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (the Executive Directorate) until March 31, 2008. The resolution requested that the Executive Director of the Executive Directorate recommend appropriate changes and recommendations to the organization of CTED.

The Counterterrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) brought together 24 UN entities across the UN system, which work under mandates from the General Assembly, the Security Council, and various specialized agencies, funds, and programs to implement the historic Global Counterterrorism Strategy agreed to by all 192 member countries in September 2006. In 2007, the Task Force developed a program of work and established working groups to carry forward a first set of initiatives to implement the Strategy.

UN Specialized Agencies are also involved in the work of fighting terrorism. For example, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) adopted passport security standards, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC's) Terrorism Prevention Branch continued to provide assistance to countries in the legal and related aspects of counterterrorism.

This included an emphasis on building the legal framework necessary to become party to and implement the international counterterrorism conventions and protocols. The Terrorism Prevention Branch also focused on strengthening the capacity of the national criminal justice systems to apply the provisions of these instruments in compliance with the principles of rule of law, providing substantive input on counterterrorism issues to intergovernmental bodies.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) continued to implement its Nuclear Security Plan (2006-2009) for combating the threat of terrorism involving nuclear and other radioactive material. IAEA promoted States' ratification and implementation of international instruments relating to nuclear security, including the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, the latter of which entered into force in July. The IAEA Nuclear Security Series is a framework of guidance documents designed to help states establish a coherent nuclear security infrastructure.

In 2007:

- The IAEA published Engineering Safety Aspects of the Protection of Nuclear Power Plants against Sabotage (NSS-4) and Identification of Sealed Radioactive Sources and Devices (NSS-5). It also brought other documents close to publication.
- The IAEA continued to prioritize nuclear security training and support the development of mechanisms for nuclear security education.
- More than 950 participants from 87 countries took part in IAEA nuclear security training in a total of 69 events.
- In April, the IAEA inaugurated a Nuclear Security Support Centre (NSSC) in Islamabad, Pakistan.
- The IAEA also procured equipment for the establishment of an NSSC in Ghana, and conducted initial discussions with Brazilian and Malaysian authorities on establishing NSSCs in those States.
- In May, the IAEA transmitted a set of Practical Arrangements for enhancing cooperation between NAUSS and the Agency to Saudi Arabia's Naif Arab University for Security Services.

The IAEA continued to assist States in the removal and repatriation of vulnerable radioactive sources. In 2007:

- The IAEA facilitated the repatriation of 127 such sources from Brazil to the United States.
- In Nigeria, IAEA coordinated the recovery, conditioning, and repatriation two high-activity, disused sources, and also assisted Nigeria in the removal to secure storage of one very large disused source, one disused teletherapy source, and one disused brachytherapy machine.
- To aid in the recovery, handling, and conditioning of spent high activity radioactive sources (SHARS), the IAEA developed a mobile hot cell enabling SHARS to be conditioned and readied for long-term storage.
- In March, the pilot operation of the SHARS mobile hot cell was successfully carried out.
- In November, the IAEA convened the International Conference on Illicit Nuclear Trafficking: Collective Experience and the Way Forward, hosted by the UK. The Conference reviewed global experience in combating illicit trafficking and suggested a range of actions through which international efforts in this area, including those under the Agency's auspices, could be strengthened.
- Also during the year, participation in the IAEA Illicit Trafficking Database (ITDB) program expanded to 99 States. As of December 31, ITDB Participating States had reported or otherwise confirmed in total 1,340 incidents to the ITDB.

The IAEA continued, upon request, to assist States in developing and implementing measures to prevent incidents of nuclear terrorism at major public events. Drawing on ITDB reporting, the Agency provided information support and advice in the areas of detection, interdiction, and response. In addition, training courses, workshops, and exercises were conducted and detection equipment purchased and supplied. In 2007, the Agency conducted, in support of Brazilian authorities, a successful project to ensure the nuclear security of the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, and began the implementation of a project for nuclear security at the 2008 Olympic Games, to be held in Beijing, China.

ITDB also continued to expand its membership, which now includes nearly 100 countries. The ITDB is a voluntary program whereby states confirm incidents of illicit trafficking or other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and radioactive material. The ITDB collects authoritative information on illicit trafficking events and helps participating states better understand illicit trafficking events and trends. Additionally, the ITDB is an authoritative database for tracking nuclear and radioactive materials that have fallen outside of legitimate control and that could be used in potential actions of terrorism.

Group of Eight (G8) Counterterrorism Actions. The Group of Eight (G8), composed of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, continued to develop and promote effective counterterrorism standards and best practices throughout 2007. Germany hosted the 2007 annual G8 Summit in Heiligendamm where leaders committed to take action on a range of counterterrorism issues, including countering cash smuggling used to finance terrorism and violent extremism by identifying key transshipment and courier routes; maximizing effective information exchange; enhancing law enforcement investigations; facilitating enforcement of cash declaration and disclosure standards; and offering training and capacity-building to partners. G8 Leaders welcomed the completion of 28 projects to improve transportation security and the completed efforts to protect critical energy infrastructure and sharing best practices of effective security responses. G8 Leaders committed to counter terrorism in the Afghanistan and Pakistan border regions and to work against terrorist radicalization and recruitment. In May, G8 Justice and Home Affairs Ministers met in Munich to increase judicial cooperation and joint efforts to combat international terrorism, including tackling terrorist misuse of the Internet, and sharing knowledge and experiences regarding the processes of some countries' residents becoming radical and violent, known as "homegrown" terrorism.

Counterterrorism Action Group (CTAG). At the June 2003 Evian Summit, G8 leaders adopted a plan to build political will and capacity to combat terrorism globally,

and established the Counterterrorism Action Group (CTAG) to implement this plan. CTAG supports the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee's efforts to monitor and promote implementation of UNSCR 1373 by developing an active forum for donors to coordinate counterterrorism cooperation with, and assistance to, third countries. It promotes counterterrorism by prioritizing needs and targeting and coordinating assistance to expand counterterrorism capacity in recipient countries; and encourages all countries to meet their obligations under UNSCR 1373 and, for states party to them, the 13 international counterterrorism conventions and protocols.

Under the leadership of the rotating G8 presidency, CTAG meets two times per year with the active participation of G8 member states, the European Commission, and other donor countries and organizations. Coordination meetings hosted by the local embassy of the G8 presidency were also held among CTAG members' diplomatic missions in recipient countries.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Under the Department of Treasury's leadership, the United States played a strong role in developing new initiatives within FATF to meet evolving anti-money laundering and counterterrorism finance threats. The United States became a co-chair, with Italy, of the newly created International Cooperation Review Group to examine AML/CTF systemic threats and participated in major FATF studies (e.g., Trade-Based Money Laundering) and FATF mutual evaluations.

European Union (EU). In September, the European Union appointed Council Secretariat Justice and Home Affairs Director Gilles de Kerchove as the new EU Counterterrorism Coordinator. Since then, he has participated in various meetings with U.S. counterterrorism officials. The United States and the EU's Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust) have improved cooperation and information exchange among investigators and prosecutors. A U.S. Intermittent Liaison Prosecutor, resident in Brussels, currently liaises with Eurojust. Progress was made towards ratification and entry into force of the U.S.-EU Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance Agreements. Expert level discussions have begun and the U.S. and EU are working to establish a roadmap toward mutual recognition of the EU Authorized Economic Operator provisions and the U.S. Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, which are based on a risk management approach to cargo security. In August, we began a Container Security Initiative pilot project for feeder ports. We began a Secure Freight Initiative pilot project in Southampton, UK, which should provide data that will be useful in determining how best to implement 100 percent scanning of maritime cargo containers.

The United States and the EU continued to:

- Improve procedures for information sharing and for proactively implementing FATF Special Recommendations, including enforcing cash declaration regulations for travelers and working with private sector financial institutions to improve implementation of asset freeze measures;
- Exchange information and best practices in expert-level discussions;
- Hold semi-annual senior-level meetings and practitioner workshops between the United States and EU on terrorism finance issues; and
- In 2007, the United States and the EU completed a public outreach statement on fairness and transparency in the implementation of sanctions regimes.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The United States worked with the OSCE through its Anti-Terrorism Unit to encourage cooperation and to address existing gaps in the capabilities and legal framework of the OSCE's 56 participating states. In June, the OSCE organized a high-level political conference, a joint initiative of the United States and the Russian Federation, on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The conference highlighted the fact that effective solutions to fighting terrorism required integrated approaches that harness the expertise of all sections of society by bringing them together in close public-private sector cooperation. Over 320 participants from 58 OSCE countries and Partners for Cooperation discussed ways to best draw upon the capacity of businesses and civil society to help governments fight terrorism.

The OSCE also continued its considerable efforts to provide technical capacity-building assistance to help participating states detect and prevent the use of fraudulent and counterfeit travel documents, to make it more difficult for terrorists and other criminals to forge or counterfeit them, and to encourage the reporting of lost and stolen travel documents to INTERPOL. Given the difficulties of mutual legal assistance cooperation in fighting terrorism, the OSCE, in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), held a follow-up experts workshop in February which highlighted issues of extradition and promoted the use of UNODC's mutual legal assistance software. The OSCE also held a sub-regional event in Turkey, which gave participants more in-depth mutual legal assistance instruction. In addition, the OSCE also held events on victims of terrorism, incitement, and terrorist use of the Internet. The OSCE Madrid Ministerial issued a statement supporting the UN's Global Counterterrorism Strategy, called upon OSCE participating states to join the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and tasked the OSCE's Forum for Security Cooperation to produce a Best Practices Guide as a tool to help OSCE members implement UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). First and foremost, NATO contributes to the War on Terror by leading International Security Assistance Force stability operations against radical insurgents in Afghanistan.

NATO also conducts Operation Active Endeavor (OAE), a naval mission that aims to combat terrorism by monitoring Mediterranean maritime traffic. The Alliance is also engaged in a far-reaching transformation of its forces and capabilities to better deter and defend against 21st Century threats, including terrorism, and is working closely with partner countries and organizations to ensure interoperability of forces, enhance security, and broaden cooperation. NATO adopted its Military Concept against Terrorism in 2002, fielded a Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defense battalion in 2004, and established a special Terrorist Threat Intelligence Unit. Efforts are underway to enhance Allied resilience against the potential disruption of critical infrastructure (energy, cyber) systems. Through NATO's Defense Against Terrorism (DAT) program, the Alliance is developing 11 cutting-edge technologies to protect troops and civilians against terrorist attacks.

NATO contributes to non-proliferation through the efforts of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Center, the Senior Political Committee, and the Senior Political-Military Group on Proliferation (which organizes the annual Seminar on Proliferation Issues, NATO's largest outreach event). NATO has opened a dialogue with the United Nation's 1540 Committee and is developing a framework for further cooperation. NATO's 26 Allies and 23 Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Partners have all submitted initial reports as called for by UN Security Council Resolution 1540. NATO also supported a Defense Against Biological Terrorism regional workshop in Bucharest in Fall 2007.

Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). The TSCTP is a multi-faceted, multi-year strategy aimed at defeating terrorist organizations by strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security forces, promoting democratic governance, discrediting terrorist ideology, and reinforcing bilateral military ties with the United States. The overall goals are to enhance the indigenous capacities of governments in the pan-Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Chad, and Niger, as well as Nigeria and Senegal) to confront the challenge posed by terrorist organizations in the region, and to facilitate cooperation between those countries and our Maghreb partners (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) in combating terrorism.

The African Union (AU). The AU has several counterterrorism legal instruments, including a Convention on Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (1999), a 2002 Protocol to the Convention, and a 2004 Plan of Action.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). In January 2007, the Heads of State of the ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprising Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, signed a new convention on counterterrorism cooperation. The new ASEAN treaty recognizes the importance of having a global legal framework to combat terrorism, as established by the universal conventions on terrorism, and further recognizes that terrorism offenses such as hijacking, hostage-taking, or bombing are not political offenses, and terrorists cannot hide behind political justifications to evade justice. Under the new Convention, ASEAN members agree to cooperate to prevent terrorist attacks, the financing of terrorism, and terrorist movement across national borders. They will also cooperate to enhance intelligence exchanges, promote public participation in counterterrorism efforts and strengthen preparedness for dealing with chemical, biological, and nuclear terrorism.

The United States actively participates in counterterrorism-related activities of the 26-member ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), including the annual meetings on counterterrorism and transnational crime. The United States has continued efforts to increase maritime security cooperation. In January 2007, ARF held a maritime security desktop exercise in Singapore. ARF continues to hold various capacity-building activities in counterterrorism and transnational crime.

Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The 21 member economies of APEC (Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam), are committed to creating a safe environment for the movement of goods, services, and people throughout the region.

The APEC Counterterrorism Task Force (CTTF) was established in 2003 to coordinate implementation of Leaders' and Ministers' statements on counterterrorism and non-proliferation.

The United States works within APEC to dismantle transnational terrorist groups and to eliminate the severe and growing danger posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In 2007, the United States continued its capacity-building work to counter biological and chemical terrorism.

The second expert-level food defense workshop was held in Vietnam and built upon the success of the first workshop held in Bangkok in 2006. The USG-led bioterrorism initiative resulted in the first ever, APEC Food Defense Principles on prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and effective communication. These principles will make an important contribution to international counterterrorism efforts to protect the food supply from deliberate contamination.

OAS Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE). On March 1, 2007, at the CICTE Ministerial in Panama City, CICTE released the Declaration of Panama on the Protection of Critical Infrastructure in the Hemisphere in the Face of Terrorism, which acknowledged that terrorism is a threat to critical infrastructure and committed OAS members to take all necessary actions, in accor-

dance with their domestic law and relevant international agreements, to prevent, mitigate, and deter potential terrorist threats to critical infrastructure, through the development and implementation of national measures and the strengthening of regional and international cooperation. In addition, CICTE delivered more than $5 million in counterterrorism capacity-building assistance in the region. During 2007, the Secretariat conducted 61 training courses and technical assistance missions, benefiting some 2,692 participants in the Hemisphere; this included training of nearly 500 port and airport security officials from 29 member states to help meet the requirements of the International Maritime Organization's International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code, and the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) new air security standards.

In addition, the Secretariat continued to solidify its position as a central point for facilitating international cooperation against terrorism. Following adoption of CICTE's aforementioned "Declaration of Panama on Protection of Critical Infrastructure in the Hemisphere" the Secretariat helped facilitate two instances of horizontal cooperation between the United States and OAS Member States: a vulnerability assessment of the energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago, and technical assistance on the first steps in identifying and protecting critical infrastructures in Paraguay. CICTE also provided security training to the Caribbean nations hosting the Cricket World Cup.

CICTE continued to advise its 34 member state governments on how to meet the requirements of UNSCR 1373, the 13 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, and the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism (IACAT), which complements and expands on international conventions and protocols. CICTE also organized its sixth annual regular session in Bogota, Colombia.

Tri-Border Area (Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay)

The governments of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay have long been concerned with arms and drugs smuggling, document fraud, money laundering, and the manufacture and movement of contraband goods through the region where their territories meet, known as the Tri-Border Area (TBA). In the 1990s, they established the "Tripartite Commission of the Triple Frontier" to address these illicit activities. In 2002, at their invitation, the United States joined what became the "3+1 Group on Tri-Border Area Security," a regional mechanism focusing on practical steps to help the TBA states address cross-border crime through enhanced law enforcement and intelligence sharing and strengthened financial and border controls. The United States remains concerned that Hizballah and HAMAS are raising funds in the TBA by participating in illicit activities and soliciting donations from extremists within the sizable Muslim communities in the region and elsewhere in the territories of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. However, there was no corroborated information that these or other Islamic extremist groups had an operational presence in the area.

Long-Term Goals and Programs

The **Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATA)** provides partner countries with the training, equipment, and technology needed to increase their capabilities to find and arrest terrorists, and builds the kind of cooperation and interactivity between law enforcement officers that has a lasting impact. In 2007, ATA sponsored 266 training activities and technical consultations and trained over 4500 participants from 64 countries. In its two-decade long existence, ATA has trained more than 5850 students from 151 countries, providing programs tailored to the needs of each partner nation and to local conditions. Training included: crisis management and response, cyber terrorism, dignitary protection, bomb detection, airport security, border control, response to incidents involving weapons of mass destruction, countering terrorist finance, interdiction of terrorist organizations, and kidnap intervention and hostage negotiation and rescue. All courses emphasized law enforcement under the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Examples of ATA training include the following:

- Palestinian Authority: A $5-million program to administer technical and leadership training, and operational support equipment, to build a professional VIP Protective Unit for the Palestinian Authority. With initial efforts focused on the Presidential Guards from the West Bank, 15 courses were offered in less than five months that trained 320 participants in VIP Protection, Surveillance Detection, and Vital Installation Security.

- Liberia: With a $5-million budget, the State Department initiated training and provided equipment for the Special Security Service (SSS), the protective security detail of Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Nine courses were offered and extensive support equipment was provided, building upon an existing DS/ATA program that has supported contracted mentors embedded in the SSS since early 2007. During this period, the local police called upon SSS personnel to assist with a hostage situation at the home of a former Liberian Minister. Three officers responded, safely extricated the hostages from the home, and shot the perpetrator as he fired on them while trying to escape.

- Colombia: For the past several years, ATA has conducted numerous classes of antiterrorism instruction at a cutting-edge training facility known as Sibate, which has helped Columbia's anti-kidnapping units (known by their Spanish acronym GAULA) to reduce kidnappings in Colombia by 83 percent since 2002. None of the ATA-trained GAULAs have lost a hostage during rescue operations. Furthermore, Colombia is taking over responsibility for running the programs itself; the transition is expected to be complete by 2009, with Colombia funding the entire tactical portion of training. In 2007, the Colombian police hosted the head of the Serious Crime Unit from the Montevideo, Uruguay Police Department to explore the possibility

of training his anti-kidnapping and counterterrorism units at that location. Training of the Brazilian Federal Police has already occurred.

- Afghanistan: ATA programs worked to organize, train, equip, and mentor the protective detail and supporting tactical elements of the now regionally renowned Presidential Protective Service (PPS) responsible for the safety of President Karzai. As a result of the high degree of professionalism that it has achieved, the PPS began escorting President Karzai on overseas state visits without American mentor support.

- The Caribbean: ATA training enabled officials from five Caribbean countries to develop strategies to manage security for the 2007 Cricket World Cup.

- Thailand: A Royal Thai Police (RTP) tactical team conducted a successful raid in which they recovered unharmed a kidnapped American citizen and arrested eight suspects. The RTP Lieutenant Colonel who led the operation, the lead investigator, and four members of the tactical entry team had completed ATA training in Crisis Response Team, Hostage Negotiation, Officer Survival/High-Threat Incident, and the Police Role in Crisis Management.

- Pakistan: The Federal Special Investigations Group's (SIG's) forensics laboratory used leads gleaned from a cell phone SIM card retrieved by Quetta Criminal Investigative Division personnel who had attended an ATA Post-Blast Investigation course. More than 33 messages were retrieved that outlined 14 bomb threats. Numerous suspects were identified, and two bombs were later seized. ATA had designed and funded the SIG's forensics laboratory and trained the staff.

- Persian Gulf: In order to facilitate participation in the ATA program by the energy-rich nations of the Persian Gulf that would not otherwise be eligible for foreign assistance, ATA initiated the strategic Partner Nation Pre-Payment Program. Under this program, the State Department first obtains the required legal "determination" from the Office of Foreign Assistance authorizing a foreign nation's participation in the program; then determines the antiterrorism training needs of the Partner Nation; and enters into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide training subsequent to receipt of their advance payment. Initial training deliveries are currently under negotiation with two Persian Gulf nations for the Preventing Attacks on Soft Targets course.

The **Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP)** assisted priority countries at risk of terrorist activity to enhance their border security capabilities. TIP provided participating countries with a computerized watch listing system to identify suspect travelers at air, land, or sea ports of entry. TIP further promotes expanded cooperation and close liaison with host governments in the areas of rule of law, anti-corruption, and law enforcement. Since 2001, the State Department has provided TIP assistance to more than 20 countries, assistance that was instrumental in impeding terrorist travel. High-priority countries participating in the program include Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Kenya. Hundreds of individuals traveling on stolen passports in Pakistan, as well as wanted criminals, narcotics smugglers, and human traffickers have been identified and intercepted worldwide. The TIP complements other counterterrorism-related U.S. efforts to enhance aviation, border, cyber, maritime, and transportation security.

Counterterrorist Finance Training (CTFT). The State Department chaired the interagency Terrorist Finance Working Group (TFWG), which meets biweekly to develop and coordinate USG CTF capacity-building efforts, and worked to expand its counterterrorism financing (CTF) capacity-building efforts in key partner nations. Under the auspices of the TFWG we have worked with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and our interagency partners to expand our bulk cash smuggling training programs, and thus provided regional or bilateral Bulk Cash Smuggling training to 45 countries.

In addition, the CTF capacity-building program includes training and technical assistance in the legal, financial regulatory, financial intelligence, financial investigation, and judicial/prosecutorial fields. In 2007, CTF programs included the posting of five Resident Legal Advisors, the development of a Regional Operational Cash Courier program, Prosecutorial and Designation Workshops, Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) Development, and terrorist financing analytical training for law enforcement authorities.

Increasing Economic Development. Poverty, unemployment, weak institutions, and corruption can turn nations of great potential into recruiting grounds for terrorists. Development is central to the President's National Security Strategy and long-term U.S. economic growth. Well-conceived, targeted aid is a potential leveraging instrument that can help countries implement sound economic policies and improve the conditions that terrorists might otherwise exploit.

The Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), established by Congress in 2004, represents a new model for achieving transformational development by providing assistance to those countries that rule justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom. The prospect of an MCA Compact provides a powerful incentive for the poorest countries to reform. U.S. private sector flows to the developing world, including trade and investment ($685.4 billion in 2004), dwarf our foreign aid ($23.5 billion). Unutilized capital in developing countries, owing to weak policies and poor property rights, is estimated to be as high as $9 trillion.

Debt relief for the poorest is another element of our development strategy. Our long-standing support for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, as well

as for the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI) introduced in 2006, promotes debt sustainability, reduces the likelihood of debt distress and enables the poorest countries to devote additional resources to reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. Our aggressive multilateral and bilateral trade agenda to open agricultural and non-agricultural markets and liberalize financial services, transportation, telecommunications, and government procurement all support development.

USAID's humanitarian aid programs and its activities in the areas of economic growth, agriculture, trade, health, democracy, and conflict prevention help reduce the risk of countries becoming breeding grounds for terrorism. In Afghanistan, USAID is helping to build a safe, stable society that meets the needs of its people and eliminates an environment in which terrorist groups have flourished. USAID has been on the front lines of support to tsunami-affected countries, garnering goodwill toward the United States among people in the hardest-hit areas.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Despite some setbacks to the freedom agenda, including attempts by authoritarian governments to limit basic rights for citizens, 2007 developments in the Middle East and North Africa region demonstrated that calls for greater political, economic, and educational opportunities; and women's empowerment are clear, indigenous, and growing.

In 2007, to support and amplify local demands for reform, MEPI provided tangible support to reformers in the region so democracy could spread, education could thrive, economies could grow, and women could be empowered. Working in 16 countries and the Palestinian territories, MEPI invested in programs ranging from campaign schools to civic education to an Arab businesswomen's network. Examples of MEPI's work with reformers include the following:

Political

- MEPI supported programs to increase participation in the 2007 Majlis Al Shura elections in Oman, and in Parliamentary elections in Jordan, Algeria, and Morocco. While there is still more progress that needs to be made to truly make these electoral processes free and fair, it is significant nonetheless that elections are becoming institutionalized and that electorates expect a level of transparency and competition;

- Through training, technical assistance, and networking, MEPI supported programs that addressed media reform and the backsliding situation of press freedoms in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and the Palestinian Territories; and

- Strengthened the role of civil society in the democratic process by supporting regional networks of grassroots activists that are advancing tangible reform initiatives in the areas of freedom of expression, women's political participation, and the legal environment for NGOs. Awarded direct grants to numerous Arab civil society organizations across the region to advance the Freedom Agenda. MEPI also supported dialogue between these civil society leaders and their respective governments within the framework of the G8's BMENA Initiative.

Economic

- Provided technical and other assistance in support of successfully completed free trade agreements with Bahrain and Oman; Trade and Investment agreements with Kuwait, Qatar, Tunisia, and Egypt; and, WTO accession support for Yemen, Algeria, and Lebanon;

- Expanded trade capacity of Arab countries with training and technical assistance; and assisted a number of Gulf and North African countries with revisions to their labor, intellectual property codes, customs codes, and agricultural import/export standards;

- Expanded efforts to strengthen indigenous labor and business organizations;

- Provided entrepreneurial training for more than 400 participants, almost half of them women, from 16 Middle Eastern and North African countries, with 50 alumni going on to start or expand businesses. At least 1,000 new jobs have been created following their participation in MEPI programs;

- Extended credit and services to small- and medium-sized businesses through peer consultation and training for regional banks and financial organizations;

- Established self-sustaining Junior Achievement chapters in 12 countries throughout the Middle East, with more than 10,000 students participating. Created public-private partnerships that assisted in the sustainability of Junior Achievement chapters; and

- Expanded commercial and legal reform efforts in the Gulf by working to update legal curricula at law schools in Qatar and Oman; update commercial codes to meet international standards in Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman; and provide continuing education programs for the judiciary.

Education

- Empowered more than 300 young, highly motivated Arab men and women with leadership, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial skills through intensive five-week training institutes; most have started their own civic projects in their countries;

- Supported a regional civic-education network that promotes youth civic awareness and involvement. Examples of resulting youth-led projects included starting after-school classes for underprivileged students and

improving health services at local hospitals. The program is being widely accepted and adopted; for example, education officials committed to adopting Project Citizen in all schools in Marrakesh, Morocco;

- Promoted critical thinking and independent reading with an initiative to provide over 8.2 million high-quality Arabic-language American children's books to more than 6,770 primary schools in more than 40,620 classrooms in four Middle Eastern countries; and

- Provided English language study to more than 4,500 underserved youth from 13 countries in the Middle East through a micro-scholarship program, bringing the total number of students reached with MEPI support to more than 12,000.

Women

- Strengthened the technology, business, and advocacy skills of women throughout the region, including the Gulf;

- Established the first U.S.-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research, which enabled women across the region to join together in private-public partnerships, civic engagement, and networking;

- Created business network hubs in nine countries, focusing on training, professional development, and information sharing on laws, business opportunities, skills, and the global economy; and

- Supported legal reform and family law initiatives in the region that improve gender equality and economic rights for women.

Support for Pakistan

The 9/11 Commission recommended the United States "make the difficult long-term commitment to the future of Pakistan" and "support Pakistan's government in its struggle against extremists with a comprehensive effort that extends from military aid to support for better education, so long as Pakistan's leaders remain willing to make difficult choices of their own."

Composition and Levels of Assistance, Including Security and Other Assistance

The United States commitment to a long-term relationship with Pakistan is highlighted by President Bush's pledge to Pakistani President Musharraf to seek from Congress $3 billion in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Pakistan during the five-year period from FY-2005 through FY-2009. Since 2002, U.S. assistance to Pakistan, including Coalition Support Funds (CSF), totals $9.92 billion. Approximately $1.24 billion in U.S. assistance, also including CSF, was provided to Pakistan from monies appropriated for FY-2007. The Administration requested $845 million in assistance for Pakistan for FY-2008 and is requesting $785 million for FY-2009, neither of which includes CSF. In addition to Economic Support Funds and Foreign Military Financing, the United States is also providing other forms of assistance to Pakistan, including funding for Child Survival and Health (CSH), Development Assistance (DA), International Military Education and Training (IMET), International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE), Antiterrorism Assistance (NADR-ATA), Export Control and Border Security (NADR¬EXBS), Small Arms and Light Weapons (NADR-SALW), Terrorism Interdiction Programs (NADR-TIP), Food for Peace (P.L. 480 Title I & II), Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance (ERMA), and International Disaster and Famine Assistance (IDFA). The chart below offers a comparison of selected types of assistance and does not include CSF.

The mix of U.S. assistance for Pakistan reflects the diverse ways the United States is cooperating with Pakistan in pursuit of critical USG policy goals. These include prosecuting the War on Terror; countering nuclear proliferation; building a stable and democratic Afghanistan; ensuring peace and stability in South Asia through the continuation of the India-Pakistan reconciliation process; supporting Pakistan's efforts to become a modern, prosperous, democratic state; and assisting it in reconstruction efforts from the October 8, 2005 earthquake.

U.S. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funding for Pakistan is designed to enhance Pakistan's capabilities in the War on Terror; help it to better control its borders; meet its legitimate defense needs; and make Pakistan more secure so that it can more readily take the steps necessary to build a durable peace with all its neighbors-thus fostering security and stability throughout the South Asia region. FMF is being used by Pakistan to purchase helicopters, aircraft, weapons systems, munitions, and other equipment, which, inter alia, have enabled Pakistan's armed forces to operate against foreign terrorists and militants in the rugged border areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The Pakistani military is continuing military operations along that border. Since 2001, over 1,000 Pakistani military personnel have been killed carrying out operations in support of the War on Terror. International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance for Pakistan complements FMF by exposing Pakistani officers to U.S. doctrine, systems, and American culture, promoting military-to-military cooperation, increased professionalism, and enhanced military interoperability between Pakistan and the United States. IMET also assists Pakistan in developing expertise and systems to more effectively manage its defense establishment; builds technical skills for better operation and maintenance of U.S.-origin equipment; and promotes military subordination to democratic civilian rule and respect for human rights. For FY-2008, the Administration's International Military Education and Training request is just under $2.0 million, with post seeking sizable increases in the future to bridge the gap created during sanction years when no Pakistani military officials attended training in the United States.

Measures to Ensure that Assistance Has the Greatest Long-Term Positive Impact on the Welfare of Pakistani People and Their Ability to Cooperate Against Terror

Economic Support Funds, Development Assistance, and Child Survival and Health assistance are being used to improve the lives of ordinary Pakistanis; lay the groundwork for the country's sustained economic growth; and strengthen social, political, and economic institutions, thus alleviating the conditions that breed extremism while demonstrating that the United States interest in Pakistan extends beyond the War on Terror to concern for the Pakistani people as a whole.

Approximately $60 million in FY-2008 Economic Support Funds and Development Assistance funds will be allocated to implement education reform programs in Pakistan and support the Government of Pakistan's initiative to improve the teaching and learning process in public schools. Pakistan's low literacy rate greatly hampers its ability to develop and expand its economic base. Literacy averages 54 percent nationwide, and in Pakistan's remote tribal areas can be as low as 0.5 percent for women. The dearth of good public schools results in thousands of youth attending madrassas, schools that teach mainly religious subjects, some of which promote a radical, violent ideology. To tackle these problems, USG-funded education programs in Pakistan are aimed at improving the quality of education in Pakistani primary and secondary schools, especially in Baluchistan, Sindh, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA); improving early childhood education; training teachers; increasing parental and community involvement in schools; ensuring teachers have adequate classroom materials; improving access to schools and promoting the development of a new generation of Pakistani leaders by providing scholarships for disadvantaged students to obtain a higher education. Adult and youth literacy education programs are targeting out-of-school youth and illiterate adult populations, with a focus on women and girls. In addition, student exchanges play a large part in our education efforts, with Pakistan's Fulbright program being the largest in the world.

Democratization is a key focus of USG assistance toward Pakistan. One of the fundamental tools for combating terrorism over the long-term is democracy. The programs include several mutually reinforcing components: legislative training to increase the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of Pakistan's provincial and national parliaments; political party strengthening focused on identifying and training young reformers - tomorrow's political leadership; support for increased women's political participation; independent media training for journalists; and civil society development designed to increase the capacity of indigenous nongovernmental organizations to serve as policy watchdogs and promote human rights. In preparation for the 2008 elections, several USAID-funded non-governmental organizations are conducting security assessments in sensitive areas to ensure the safety of observers, monitors, and polling stations.

Pakistan trails its South Asian neighbors in almost all key health areas: maternal and infant mortality; safe affordable family planning; and control of infectious diseases. FY-2008 Child Survival and Health funds will be used to increase availability of maternal and child health services, especially in rural areas; to ensure that families who want to space births can access high quality family planning services; to help maintain Pakistan's low human immunodeficiency virus prevalence rate by increasing awareness; to eradicate polio, to support continued progress in TB diagnosis and treatment; and to increase communities' access to clean drinking water and their practice of adequate hygiene behaviors.

The United States supports Pakistan's economic growth. New programs are being developed to create jobs and increase incomes. Current programs providing microfinance and small business lending in rural and peri-urban areas will continue to enable enterprise development and smooth income streams for the poor. Programs improving the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises are assisting the growth of Pakistani exports and generating frequent, positive coverage in the local press, helping to improve the image of USG assistance.

Earthquake Reconstruction efforts will enter their third year in FY-2008, and will continue to rebuild, furnish, and supply health and education sector infrastructure and human resource capacities; to re-establish the livelihoods of earthquake victims; to resettle displaced victims; and to train skilled and unskilled individuals in vocational training, agriculture, and livestock development, asset formation, enterprise development, micro-credit, and market restoration.

The FY-2008 budget request for Economic Support Funds, Child Survival and Health, and Development Assistance (DA) is $500 million, which is $10 million less than the FY-2007 actual budget. Part of the FY-2008 request is $60 million in ESF funds from the Global War on Terror Supplemental. This will help fund the government's Federally Administered Tribal Areas Sustainable Development Plan to improve governance and encourage economic development of the border area between Afghanistan and Pakistan. International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funds for Pakistan continue to strengthen border security and enable law enforcement access to remote areas along the Pak-Afghan border - thus enhancing the country's capability to interdict traffickers in narcotics, arms, persons, and contraband, as well as terrorists. International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funds are used to reform, strengthen, and improve cooperation among Pakistan's law enforcement agencies, all of which play an important role in the War on Terror. International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funds support a counternarcotics Air Wing based in Quetta, Baluchistan, operated by Pakistan's Interior Ministry. The Wing includes C-208 Caravan fixed-wing surveillance aircraft and UH-2 Huey II helicopters.

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funds are also used to procure vehicles and communications, surveil-

lance, and related equipment for border control and counter-narcotics activities; fund infrastructure projects to enhance roads in inaccessible parts of FATA; fund an Automated Fingerprint Identification System and National Criminal Database; and for training and equipment to expand law enforcement investigative skills and forensic capacities. In tackling poppy cultivation, International Narcotics and Law Enforcement funds support crop control, alternative livelihood, and demand reduction programs.

Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Export Control and Related Border Security assistance strengthens Pakistan's export control system and thus prevents weapons of mass destruction and related technology transfers that raise proliferation concerns. Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Export Control and Related Border Security funds are used for nonproliferation export control training addressing legal/regulatory reform, export licensing systems, customs enforcement, general inspection, weapons of mass destruction detection training for border control personnel, and procuring specialized radiation/chemical detection equipment. The Administration's $500,000 FY-2008 request in Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Export Control and Related Border Security assistance represents a slight decrease from the FY-2007 $600,000 request.

Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Antiterrorism Assistance funding for Pakistan enhances the capabilities of elite national police units responsible for counterterrorism investigations and tactical operations. Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Antiterrorism Assistance trained the Special Investigation Group and crisis response teams that were integral in making arrests after the December 2003 assassination attempts on President Musharraf and the May 2004 car bombs near the U.S Consulate in Karachi. The Administration's FY-2008 request of $8 million for Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Antiterrorism Assistance represents a decrease from the FY-2007 $8.59 million request.

Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Terrorism Interdiction Programs funding for Pakistan is being used to support the Personal Identification Secure Comparison Evaluation System automated border control system, including to sustain ongoing program operations and to expand coverage to additional Pakistani ports-of-entry. The Administration is requesting $900,000 in Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs/Terrorism Interdiction Programs funds for Pakistan for FY-2008, a slight decrease from the $1 million requested for FY-2007.

Measures to Alleviate Difficulties, Misunderstandings, and Complications in United States-Pakistani Relations

The United States and Pakistan engage in extensive consultations to ensure U.S. foreign assistance has the greatest long-term benefit for Pakistanis and also enhances the country's ability to cooperate in the War on Terror. This is exemplified by the annual consultations that result in mutually-agreed Shared Objectives for the Government of Pakistan's use of $200 million in Economic Support Funds in direct budget support. The United States participates in the annual Pakistan Development Forum, which brings together the Government of Pakistan and bilateral and multilateral donors to discuss Pakistan's development priorities and assistance needs. The United States holds regular consultations with major donors including Great Britain, the European Union, Japan, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank, to ensure that assistance to Pakistan is effectively coordinated for maximum impact.

The USAID Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Development Program supports the Government of Pakistan's FATA Sustainable Development Plan. The USAID program is focused on improving health, education, access to and availability of jobs, and capacity-building of FATA institutions. In education, USAID is improving access and quality of education for students by building and furnishing 65 primary, middle, and high schools; awarding scholarships to 37 women from this area to attend a one-year, pre-service teacher education program; and building or restoring water and sanitation facilities at 190 girls' primary schools and 90 villages. In health, USAID is improving the quality of drinking water, training health practitioners, providing polio vaccines, and immunizing children. To date, the United States has conducted 32 polio eradication campaigns in the FATA. USAID is promoting competitiveness initiatives to support both the marble and granite, and gems and jewelry sectors of the local economy, as well as provide jobs, training opportunities, and access to micro loans. Finally, the program is building the capacity of the FATA Secretariat and other Government of Pakistan institutions to improve their ability to deliver services to the people of the FATA and to ensure the sustainability of USAID's development efforts in the region.

USAID Global Export Promotion Programs

The Pakistan Initiative for Strategic Development and Competitiveness (PISDAC) project aims at increasing the competitiveness of Pakistani small- and medium-sized enterprises. Sectors currently covered under the project are gems, jewelry, dairy, horticulture, surgical supplies, furniture, and marble granite. The project has focused on several prominent Pakistani industries and formed six strategic working groups composed of business people from the industries that develop sector-specific strategies. FY-2007 funding for PISDAC was $2.0 million.

USAID supports the Government of Pakistan's education reform strategy by: (1) strengthening education policy and planning; (2) improving the skills and performance of teachers and administrators; (3) increasing youth and adult literacy; (4) expanding public-private partnerships; and (5) providing school improvement grants and involving parents and communities in public schools.

Collaboration with Saudi Arabia

Steps to Institutionalize and Make More Transparent Government-to-Government Relations

The United States-Saudi Strategic Dialogue, inaugurated in November 2005 by Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal, and reporting to President Bush and King Abdullah, remains the highest level institutionalized forum for coordinating U.S. and Saudi interests. The Strategic Dialogue consists of six working groups focusing on human development, economy, energy, consular affairs, military cooperation, and counterterrorism. These Strategic Dialogue working groups meet periodically to address issues such as making government more accountable and participatory, human rights, visas, child custody cases, and security cooperation. Ministerial-level meetings, dealing with bilateral issues of strategic importance, are held as part of the Strategic Dialogue.

Intelligence and Security Cooperation in the Fight against Islamic Terrorism

The United States and Saudi Arabia have an ongoing dialogue on a full range of counterterrorism issues, which include regular high-level discussions and close working-level collaboration. Saudi cooperation in this area is significant, and U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies have benefited and continue to benefit from Saudi information and intelligence on individuals and organizations. U.S. law enforcement agencies have provided counterterrorism training to Saudi security services in both Saudi Arabia and in the United States.

Since May 2003, the Saudi government has killed or captured al-Qa'ida's (AQ's) operational Saudi-based senior leadership, as well as most of the network's key operatives and many of the Kingdom's most wanted individuals. This effort has disrupted AQ's efforts to prosecute its terrorist campaign against the government. During 2007, Saudi security forces continued to target terrorists and their supporters, and the Saudi government announced the arrest of more than 400 terrorists and their supporters, including terrorist financiers and those advocating extremist ideology over the Internet. Saudi officials claimed these arrests disrupted major attacks that were planned against Saudi government and economic targets. During an address to the Shura Council on July 1, Interior Minister Prince Nayif bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, stated that more than 9,000 suspected terrorists and their supporters have been arrested since 2003 and more than 3,100 remained in custody.

Recognizing that financiers of terrorism are key actors that allow terrorist groups to operate, the Saudi government continued to target such individuals and announced the arrest of more than 30 terrorist financiers in 2007. The United States continued to urge Saudi Arabia to take action against additional key terrorist financiers and facilitators in the Kingdom. While the government has not yet made operational a National Committee to oversee overseas charitable contributions, the government has prohibited Saudi charities from sending funds abroad until the Committee is established. Saudi Arabia took action against suspected terrorist financiers by freezing their accounts and confiscating their assets. In October, the Saudi government froze assets and accounts belonging to three Saudis who were designated by the 1267 committee, and also imposed the required travel ban on these individuals.

Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz al-Sheikh, Saudi Arabia's preeminent religious figure, made strong statements warning Saudis to be cautious when making charitable contributions, and the government continued to closely monitor charitable giving by Saudis. The government also implemented new customs regulations that restrict the free flow of money, precious metals, and gems across its borders.

Saudi Contributions to Stability in the Middle East and Islamic World, Including the Middle East Peace Process, by Eliminating Support for Extremist Groups

Saudi Arabia has strengthened its border controls and security and, in particular, its border with Iraq to address travel by Saudis to Iraq to join terrorist groups fighting against Coalition Forces and the travel of non-Saudis through Saudi Arabia. The government announced a project to secure its border with Iraq as part of its larger border modernization program. The project will increase physical barriers and electronic surveillance of the northern border. In the interim, the Ministry of the Interior has deployed additional forces to the border area and has been successful in interdicting illicit movement of persons and equipment across the Saudi-Iraq border. The Saudi government announced the arrest of several hundred individuals who were planning to travel to Iraq or were actually en route, and increased its security cooperation with the Government of Iraq.

Senior Saudi leaders, including King Abdullah and Interior Minister Nayif, made strong statements against Saudis traveling to Iraq to join terrorist groups. On October 1, Grand Mufti Abdulaziz al-Sheikh issued a religious edict urging Saudi youth not to travel to Iraq to join terrorist organizations. This edict was repeated by other senior Saudi religious leaders as well.

The Saudi government continued its aggressive campaign to undercut the extremist ideologies that underpin support for terrorism and terrorist groups. Its publicity campaign includes using print media ads, billboards, text messages, and the Internet to oppose extremist thought. The government continues to monitor speeches and writings of religious leaders closely to ensure they do not advocate extremism and to conduct re-education training for religious leaders. Those who violate government decrees and regulations are fired or reassigned. In an effort to prevent unauthorized preaching, the Saudi government has recently taken steps to issue identification cards to imams authorized to speak in mosques. The government has stepped up its efforts to de-legitimize the extremist ideologies that glorify terrorism and undercut the so-called

Islamic underpinnings of these beliefs. Senior Saudi leaders have made strong statements criticizing the extremist ideology espoused by many terrorists as evil and "un-Islamic."

The government also operates a counter-radicalization/de-radicalization program designed to re-educate those arrested for supporting extremism or terrorism, including Saudis formerly held at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. The program is designed to reintegrate individuals into society and includes educational, social, and religious components to undermine extremist messages and foster a more tolerant attitude. The program builds on family and tribal relations to reinforce the message and speed the reintegration process. Those who complete the program and show evidence of having been rehabilitated are eligible for consideration for release from custody, though not before they have served any prison sentence for their previous crimes. Employment, coupled with tribal and family re-integration, including marriage, in some cases, are important components of the post-release program, as are monitoring and follow-up by both extended families and the Saudi government. More than 1,000 Saudis have completed the program and the Saudi government states that the recidivism rate is very low. The USG is following the progress of this program closely, both to understand the program and monitor rates of recidivism, and will not hesitate to raise any concerns with the Saudi government.

The USG continued to urge the Saudis to make progress on revising their textbooks to remove hateful and intolerant references and to reform its educational system. Senior Saudi officials have acknowledged the need to combat extremism by addressing comprehensive education reform. In November 2006, the King Abdul Aziz Center for National Dialogue held the Sixth National Dialogue Forum in Al-Jawf called "Education: Reality and Promises." The Dialogue produced a "road map" for educational reform that included revision of textbooks, curricula, and teaching methods to promote tolerance. The government continued its National Campaign to Counter Terrorism, which includes publications, lectures, and workshops intended to educate school-age girls and boys about the evils of terrorism. Additionally, the Ministry of Education recently issued a new regulation that allows only Ministry-approved summer camps to operate.

Political and Economic Reform in Saudi Arabia and Throughout the Islamic World

King Abdullah continued to pursue an incremental reform policy that aims to achieve a more tolerant society. Saudi Arabia is a conservative country and some societal elements are wary of this policy. The undercurrent against reform remains strong, albeit muted, and the government continued to move slowly in easing many social restrictions. The United States has encouraged the Government of Saudi Arabia to make legal, economic, political, and social reforms, with progress in such areas as local governance, economic reform, and religious and social freedoms.

The Saudi government has taken some steps to devolve power. In 2007, King Abdullah granted increased authority to the Majlis al-Shura, the Consultative Council, which can now offer some oversight on government actions and has the authority not only to review laws proposed by the Council of Ministers but to propose laws. King Abdullah also established a Succession Council that will guide the selection of future Crown Princes, a move to institutionalize the process more formally. The United States will continue to urge the Government of Saudi Arabia to promote political participation, increased transparency, and accountability in government.

Recognizing the need to better prepare Saudis for the challenges of the 21st century and to address some of the root causes of extremism, King Abdullah has directed a major overhaul of the Saudi education system. Saudi Arabia is now in the second year of a six-year $2.4 billion program to reform its educational system, which includes incorporating an updated and modernized curriculum, updated teacher training, and new textbooks. The government is expanding the number of colleges and universities and is examining possibilities for partial privatization of primary and secondary schools.

While Saudi Arabia continues to have a society strictly segregated by gender, women's rights and opportunities have increased. Saudi women are joining the workforce in larger numbers and there have been efforts to rein in the Mutawwa'in (religious police) and apply official sanctions for extremist acts. Recent government initiatives to allow women to stay alone at hotels and comments about granting women the right to drive have generated a strong backlash among religious conservatives, but demonstrate the King's commitment to moving forward slowly on women's rights. In October, the King announced a sweeping judicial reform including specialized criminal, commercial, labor, and family courts, which has the potential to modernize and improve the Saudi judicial system.

The United States sponsors a variety of initiatives focused on increasing freedom and opportunity for Saudi citizens. These include the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), support to the Middle East Democracy Assistance Dialogue, the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Civil Society Dialogue, and a variety of public diplomacy educational, exchange, and outreach programs of the State Department's Bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs and International Information Programs. With MEPI support, Junior Achievement International, a program to educate youth on the benefits of free enterprise, business, and economics will focus on opening a new chapter in Saudi Arabia this summer. MEPI is supporting the creation of a women's business hub in the Kingdom to expand economic opportunities for women. Higher oil prices bolstered the Saudi economy in 2007, resulting in a budget surplus of roughly $47.6 billion. In addition to reducing the national debt, Saudi Arabia is re-investing much of the surplus revenue in social development and large infrastructure projects and also has supported investments to diversify the economy away from petro-

leum and the petrochemical industry. The Kingdom announced plans to establish six Economic Cities to provide regional anchors to spur economic diversification and to move into greater value-added manufacturing. The King Abdullah Economic City in Rabigh will be the site for the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Saudi Arabia's flagship effort to establish a world-class university.

Ways to Promote Greater Tolerance and Respect for Cultural and Religious Diversity in Saudi Arabia and Throughout the Islamic World

In November 2007, the Secretary of State re-designated Saudi Arabia a "Country of Particular Concern" pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act. This is an important element of our bilateral dialogue with the Saudi government. The United States is working to promote religious and cultural tolerance in Saudi Arabia and to counter the spread of extremist ideology through high-level engagement and exchange programs aimed at reaching key population groups. In 2007, 25 Saudis traveled to the United States on International Visitor programs designed for religious leaders in an effort to expose Saudis to American ideas of religious tolerance and civil society.

On April 25, 2005, following the visit of then-Crown Prince Abdullah to Crawford, Texas, the United States and Saudi Arabia issued a joint declaration noting that "future relations must rest on a foundation of broad cooperation. We must work to expand dialogue, understanding, and interactions between our citizens." The declaration noted that such cooperation would include programs designed to:

- Increase the number of young Saudi students traveling and studying in the United States;
- Increase military exchange programs so that more Saudi officers visit the United States for military training and education; and
- Increase the number of Americans traveling to work and study in Saudi Arabia.

In 2005, Saudi Arabia initiated a scholarship program to increase the number of young Saudi men and women pursuing undergraduate and graduate studies in the United States. By 2007, more than 15,000 Saudis were studying in the United States on Saudi government scholarships.

Ways to Assist Saudi Arabia in Reversing the Impact of Financial, Moral, Intellectual, or Other Support to Extremist Groups in Saudi Arabia and Other Countries, and to Prevent this Support from Continuing in the Future

The United States and Saudi Arabia worked closely together to combat terrorism in Saudi Arabia and abroad. The United States continued to urge the Saudi government to more vigorously pursue and prosecute terrorist financiers, and offered training to the Government of Saudi Arabia to help increase its capacity to detect and disrupt terrorist financing efforts. While the Saudis have not yet made operational a High Commission for Charities to oversee all charities in Saudi Arabia, the government has imposed a ban on domestic charities sending money overseas except through this Commission. All international charitable work is carried out through the Saudi government agencies such as the Saudi Fund for Development or the Red Crescent Society.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have worked together to designate individuals and entities jointly to the UNSC 1267 Committee. More needs to be done in terms of reducing the flow of money and foreign fighters to Iraq. To combat terrorist financing, Saudi Arabia has instituted new anti-money laundering and counterterrorism finance laws and regulations including removing charity boxes from mosques, restricting the amount of cash that can be carried into or out of the Kingdom, and establishing a Financial Investigations Unit (FIU) in the Ministry of Interior to investigate money-laundering cases and to consolidate all counterterrorism financing operations, both analysis and investigations.

Struggle of Ideas in the Islamic World

Public diplomacy is essential to a successful foreign policy and to America's national security. The United States recognizes that the global and generational challenge of countering terrorism is, at its heart, a contest of ideas and values. America is more secure when people around the world share the same hopes and freedoms.

Goals for Winning the Struggle of Ideas

The State Department's public diplomacy work is guided by three strategic imperatives. First and foremost, it offers a positive vision of hope and opportunity rooted in the enduring U.S. commitment to freedom. It promotes the fundamental and universal rights of free speech and assembly, the freedom to worship, the rule of law, and rights for women and minorities. It strives to isolate and marginalize violent extremists and undermine their efforts to exploit religion to rationalize their acts of terror. Finally, it fosters a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people around the world.

Tools to Accomplish Such Goals

The United States advances these strategic objectives by vigorously engaging foreign publics to explain and advocate American policies. Reaching foreign audiences with core policy messages on democracy, tolerance, and the universal values of liberty, justice, and respect are at the center of U.S. efforts to counter extremist rhetoric and disinformation coming from hostile groups.

The United States is promoting increased exchanges, which exemplify the transformative power of American global engagement. The significance of people-to-people exchanges has never been more clear or compelling. The 9/11 Commission Report recognized the essential contribution exchanges make to national security. The National Intelligence Reform Act of 2004 reaffirmed the importance

of America's commitment to exchanges. The United States is expanding educational opportunities as the path to hope and opportunity. English language programs not only provide crucial skills but also open a window to information about the United States, its people, and its values. Americans must also better educate themselves about the world. The President's National Security Language Initiative will encourage more American students to study critical languages such as Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Persian, and Arabic.

Responding to and quickly debunking misinformation, conspiracy theories, and urban legends is crucial for success in the war of ideas. That is a key objective of the State Department's Digital Outreach Team, whose members post comments on well-trafficked Arabic, Persian, and Urdu language blogsites. Additionally, State maintains a public "Identifying Misinformation" website in both English and Arabic, which is devoted to countering false stories that appear in extremist and other web sources. The site focuses on disinformation likely to end up in the mainstream media. Embassies have used information from this site to counter disinformation in extremist print publications in Pakistan and other countries. One article, "A Trio of Disinformers," was the subject of a 1,100-word front-page article in an issue of the influential pan-Arab newspaper al-Sharq al-Awsat. "Identifying Misinformation" is featured on the America.gov website and is listed first of 17.6 million sites in a Google search for the term "misinformation." At least 49 websites have direct links to "Identifying Misinformation."

The Internet, radio, television, and video products remain powerful tools for bringing America's foreign policy message to worldwide audiences. The State Department produces a wide array of print and electronic materials describing for foreign audiences, in their own languages, the need to counter those who have committed or wish to commit terrorist acts, as well as achievements made in this area.

The State Department's premier web page to explain U.S. counterterrorism policy is "Confronting Terrorism," featured on the America.gov web site. The site is listed among the top 10 of more than 200 million sites in a Google search for the terms "terrorism U.S." At least 133 websites link directly to it. In addition to ýfeaturing articles, texts, and transcripts from key policymakers, this site provides valuable links to the Electronic Journals series, the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, the designated Foreign Terrorist Organization list, and the State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism.

Support for and understanding of the United States go hand-in-hand with strengthening and empowering the voices most credible to speak out in favor of tolerance and rule of law to counter the violent extremists' message of hate and terror. One of public diplomacy's greatest assets is the American people. Empowerment of individuals and groups, from all walks of life, is a key aspect of the Department's public diplomacy efforts.

As we actively prosecute the struggle of ideas, we need to recognize that this will require a long-term effort spanning years and generations. For that reason, we are placing increased emphasis on programs directed at younger audiences, including undergraduate and, in select cases, high school students.

The USG's assistance programs, administered through USAID, the Middle East Partnership Initiative, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and other U.S. entities, advance U.S. interests in this area directly through programs to increase access to education, improve health care, and empower people to build better lives. Civic engagement is an important component. Assistance programs to strengthen and professionalize independent media and civic society contribute to opening the "marketplace of ideas," as well as support development and reform across the board.

The United States appropriated $66 million in FY-2006 supplemental funds and almost $60 million in FY-2008 funds for civil society development, broadcasting, and exchange efforts related to Iran, allowing us to dramatically increase our ability to speak directly to the Iranian people. This funding supports efforts to clarify U.S. policy objectives to the Iranian people.

Benchmarks for Measuring Success and Linking Resources to Accomplishments

In 2004, State established the Public Diplomacy Evaluation Office (PDEO). Its mandate is to evaluate all major public diplomacy and exchange programs individually as well as provide an overall strategic framework for public diplomacy assessment.

Organizations as diverse as the Peace Corps, Department of Defense, the British Council, the World Bank, and nonprofits in Italy, Japan, and the Netherlands have all consulted with the PDEO on how to measure public diplomacy activities.

The measures used by the PDEO are based upon recognized social and behavioral science methodologies and include measuring changes in audience attitudes (knowledge, skills, perceptions, and understanding), behavior, and condition. Examples include:

- Improved or increased understanding of the United States, its policies and values;
- Initiated or implemented "positive" change within an individual's organization (positive referring to changes that support U.S. ideals and values);
- Institutional partnerships and linkages and on-going collaboration; and
- Changes in editorial content in major media.

Participation in International Institutions for the Promotion of Democracy and Economic Diversification

The United States is a leading participant in many international organizations, such as the United Nations and NATO. We also play a leading role in other initiatives, such as the Forum for the Future and the Community of Democracies, which stimulate cooperation with other nations to advance the agenda of freedom. For the first time since its creation in 2000 and in response to USG recommendations, the Community of Democracies created regional dialogues which brought together governmental and non-governmental organization representatives from each region to discuss the particular challenges and solutions unique to their area. We will continue to seek opportunities to build on the momentum coming out of the April ministerial, particularly in support of the Forum for the Future and the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) processes.

U.S. Assistance Sufficient to Convince Allies and People in the Islamic World that the United States is Committed to Winning this Struggle

USG assistance programs are intended to improve economic conditions and opportunities in developing countries around the world, thereby serving the United States national interest in a more prosperous and secure international community. Our assistance can have the additional impact of demonstrating our commitment to help poorer countries or countries in special need, as we saw after the tsunami of 2004 and the Pakistan earthquake of 2005. There is, however, no set amount of money or time that we could identify as being sufficient to win the struggle of ideas.

Outreach through Broadcast Media

This section is provided by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG).

Broadcasting Board of Governors Initiatives: Outreach to Foreign Muslim Audiences

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) promotes freedom and democracy and seeks to enhance understanding through the broadcast of accurate, objective news and information about America and the world to foreign audiences. Since September 11, this mission has become more critical in the Muslim world and BBG programming has expanded accordingly. The result of BBG efforts, detailed below, has been to boost audiences in Muslim majority countries from under 15 million five years ago to over 60 million weekly today.

Four of the five broadcast entities under the supervision of the Board—the Voice of America, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Asia—provide programming for Muslim audiences. From 24-hour broadcasting to large Muslim populations in the Middle East and South Asia, to programs heard by smaller Muslim audiences in Thailand, Russia, and Russian-speaking Central Asia, BBG programs are serving Muslim audiences and U.S. foreign policy goals. In the past five years, a number of new or expanded broadcasts reflect the continued urgency of the broadcast priorities associated with U.S. counterterrorism efforts. For example, the programs of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (Radio Sawa and Al Hurra television) are broadcast 24 hours a day in Arabic and reach audiences in 22 countries in the Middle East and Europe. In 2007, the agency charted a dramatic expansion of VOA's Persian News Network from the previous year, boosting production of original Persian language programming from two to six hours daily, with broadcasting into Iran 24 hours per day, up from only eight hours daily in 2006. "Radio Farda," a joint VOA and RFE/RL effort that also broadcasts 24/7, rounds out the Persian broadcast strategy by targeting a younger Iranian audience with a mix of music and information programs. Today, the BBG's Arabic and Persian broadcasts are available 24/7 and reach audiences in the broadcast media they prefer—radio, television, and the Internet.

To reflect the nation's critical foreign policy priorities since September 11, 2001, BBG resources have also shifted from areas of the world where the local media are increasingly free and strong to the Middle East and Central and South Asia. VOA has similarly reduced its broadcasts to Europe, increasing its focus on Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan, and other critical nations. Eighteen of RFE/RL's broadcast languages, almost two-thirds of the total, are directed to countries or regions where the majority populations are Muslim. RFE/RL now broadcasts to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; the majority Muslim populations of Kosovo; and Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and the North Caucasus in the Russian Federation.

The BBG's research indicates that these new programs resonate with audiences and are drawing listeners and viewers, even in environments where listening or seeking access to satellite broadcasts may be illegal. In Iraq, Al Hurra Television's audience has equaled that of Al Jazeera and competes increasingly well with Al Iraqia, Al Sharqiya, Al Arabiya, and MBC. Telephone surveys conducted in Iran indicate that the BBG's Persian language programming reaches 25 percent of Iranians on a weekly basis. Research indicates that these new programs have gained respect and trust since their relatively recent inception.

Programming in other key areas of the Muslim world continues to provide relevant news and information to populations who otherwise might not have access to unbiased reporting on key USG policy statements and reporting on local or international news. VOA's Urdu language service has expanded its broadcasts to Pakistan, and Pashto language broadcasts target the Waziristan region. Both VOA and RFE/RL provide blanket news and information coverage to Afghanistan in the Dari and Pashto languages. Listener rates are up to 69 percent weekly.

New technologies aid the transmission of programming to key audiences, and comprehensive Internet sites are vital to each language service. The Internet offers an exciting transmission opportunity to countries such as Iran, where the BBG's traditional broadcast technologies are jammed or blocked. Through the use of proxy sites and daily emails of news summaries, VOA Persian and Radio Farda bypass the Iranian government's censorship tools. Radio Farda has enhanced its website to improve the flow of information to viewers and to increase opportunities for interactivity.

Where Internet access is unfettered, BBG broadcasters are using the web to access audiences that increasingly use the Internet as their information lifeline. VOA's central English-language Internet site, VOANews.com, routinely carries news reports and special coverage of events relevant to Muslim viewers. For example, the site offered a special report entitled "Exploring Ramadan," which examined ways that Muslims around the world celebrate Islam's holiest month, as well as news reports and features from VOA correspondents around the world, audio and video reports focusing on Muslims in America, links to President Bush's Ramadan greeting, and special reports relevant to Muslims in Nigeria, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan.

The agency's broadcast strategy focuses on building program reach and impact within the Islamic world with thematic content, which includes facilitating citizen discourse, engaging the world in conversations about America, and helping audiences understand the principles of democratic societies. Technical aspects emphasize enhanced program delivery and employ modern communication techniques. The rigorous use of research about audience and broadcast environments, more frequent program review and oversight, and more compelling broadcast formats that will resonate in competitive but critical international markets remain crucial to this strategy. Underlying these techniques, the journalistic product and integrity remain the same. BBG broadcasters provide accurate, objective, and comprehensive news and information as mandated under the U.S. International Broadcasting Act. Through the combined skills of its broadcasters, the BBG is securing a public diplomacy strategy that mirrors U.S. national security priorities and focuses on nations that may suffer from, or contribute to, the growth of terrorism.

During the past year, the agency's extensive journalistic resources reported on issues such as the Annapolis Peace Conference and the upcoming U.S. elections to provide a program perspective that is often lacking in media outlets abroad. BBG correspondents in the United States and around the world contribute to coverage available in 60 languages. Live, simultaneous interpretation of Congressional hearings and of Presidential speeches, such as the State of the Union, allow Muslim audiences to hear both the President's message and the opposing party's response.

Arabic Broadcasting. To effectively communicate with the large, predominantly young audiences in the Middle East, the BBG launched Radio Sawa, a 24/7 network of stations specifically designed to reach the large segment of the Arabic-speaking population under the age of 35. Radio Sawa went on the air in March 2002, quickly attracting and sustaining a loyal audience throughout the Middle East as new transmission sites were added throughout the region. In 2007, Radio Sawa continued to broadcast accurate, authoritative, comprehensive, and timely news about the Middle East, the United States, and the world. In addition to 325 newscasts per week, Radio Sawa offers discussion and informational programs such as the popular "Sawa Chat" interactive feature and the "Free Zone," a weekly review and discussion of democracy and freedom as they relate specifically to the Middle East. Feature programs encouraged discussion of key social and political issues in a manner very different from indigenous Arab media.

Radio Sawa broadcasts on FM in Morocco (Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Meknes, Marrakesh, Agadir, and Fes), Jordan (Amman and Ajlun), the Palestinian Territories (Ramallah and Jenin), Kuwait (Kuwait City), Bahrain (Manama), Qatar (Doha), U.A.E. (Abu Dhabi and Dubai), Iraq (Baghdad, Nasiriya, Basra, Mosul, Kirkuk, Sulimaniya, Amara, Najaf, Samawa, and Erbil), Lebanon (Beirut, North Lebanon, South Lebanon, and Bekaa Valley), and Djibouti.

Radio Sawa expanded its FM coverage in 2007 by adding its first FM transmitter in Khartoum, and plans to further expand its FM coverage throughout Sudan. Radio Sawa broadcasts on medium wave to Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and throughout Sudan.

Building on the success of Radio Sawa, the BBG launched Al Hurra Television on February 14, 2004, covering 22 countries in the Middle East via the same satellites used by major indigenous Arabic channels. In the four years Al Hurra has been broadcasting 24/7, it has provided in-depth coverage of historic events, such as the elections in Morocco and the renewed efforts to begin the Middle East peace process. Al Hurra was a consistent leader analyzing and reporting on democratic trends in the Middle East. Through objective and accurate reporting, Al Hurra has been an example of a free press to the region and has become a trusted source of news for its estimated 20 million weekly viewers.

Al Hurra also gives its audience insights into life in America and the American system of government. During both the United States midterm elections in 2006 and the road to the 2008 presidential elections, Al Hurra has provided daily coverage of the candidates and the issues that impact United States elections. Broad election coverage provided an opportunity to showcase the political institutions of the United States.

Al Hurra carried extensive live news coverage of events and speeches by President Bush, Secretary of State Rice, and members of Congress. Additionally, Al Hurra has reporters that cover the White House, Congress, State

Department, and the Pentagon. Al Hurra's current affairs programs, such as Inside Washington, take viewers behind the scenes of the political process in Washington with guests such as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, and Representatives Howard Berman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Peter Hoekstra. The network also included a series of reports within its newscasts examining Islam in America.

Al Hurra produces programs to provide a forum for discussion on sensitive issues such as women's rights and human rights. Current affairs programs, such as Equality, are unique in the region's media. Hosted by Saudi journalist Nadine Al-Bdair, the program addresses women's rights and tackles subjects such as young girls being forced into marriage. There has been positive feedback on this program and others, praising the programs' courageousness, while others condemn Al Hurra for raising these topics.

In 2007, Al Hurra launched a new program bringing together four women to discuss social and political issues that are largely regarded as taboo in the region. Each of the hosts brings a different perspective when they address issues such as sexual harassment, women in prison, discrimination of women, the psychological impact on women who marry at an early age, and domestic violence against women. Al Hurra also broadcasts Eye on Democracy, which focuses on democratic efforts throughout the Middle East.

Throughout its four-year history, Al Hurra has provided a forum for discussion of important topics by a wide variety of experts including the all-important voices of moderation. Al Hurra's talk shows, roundtables, and documentaries have routinely tackled vital topics that are taboo on many other stations in the region, including the struggle for human rights, the position of women in Arab society, religious freedom, freedom of the press, and freedom of expression.

Radio Sawa and Al Hurra Television now reach a total audience of 35 million adults 15 and older, according to international research firms such as ACNielsen and Ipsos. The surveys show that despite high levels of anti-American sentiment throughout the region, both Al Hurra and Radio Sawa are regarded as credible sources of news and information by their audiences.

Iraq. Al Hurra Iraq, a special television stream containing more concentrated news and information to and about Iraq, began broadcasting in April 2004. Through satellite and terrestrial broadcasting in Iraq, Al Hurra has gained a foothold in one of the most competitive TV marketplaces in the world. Al Hurra's goal is to help its viewers make educated and informed decisions about political, social, and economic events affecting their lives. During the historic elections in Iraq, Al Hurra produced and broadcast the first televised electoral debate in Iraq's history, featuring six candidates representing the major political parties. This historic debate brought about a candid discussion among the candidates and provided a forum for viewers to compare the various candidates.

RFE/RL's **Radio Free Iraq (RFI)** continues to provide the Iraqi people with breaking news and in-depth coverage of developments in Iraq and the Middle East. Because RFI is a surrogate broadcaster, the Iraqi people see it as "their radio" but with the reliability and reputation of a top-notch western operation. RFI appeals to a wide spectrum of listeners in Iraq by covering the most significant political issues in the country, including daily coverage of the activities of the Iraqi Cabinet and Parliament. RFI's extensive network of freelance reporters, based in the Baghdad bureau, risk their lives to bring objective news to their compatriots. Two Radio Free Iraq correspondents, Khamail Khalaf and Nazar Abdulwahid Al-Radhi, were slain; a third, Jumana Al-Obaidi, was kidnapped and held for nearly two weeks before being released (her driver was shot and killed during the kidnapping). A September survey showed listening rates for RFI at a weekly level of 16.6 percent and revealed widespread appreciation of RFI's distinctly Iraqi sound.

This past year, Radio Free Iraq focused on subjects such as the campaign by Iraqi and coalition forces to make the city of Baghdad more secure, the mortar attack on the joint press conference by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in Baghdad, and the December 16 Turkish military raid on KGK/PKK targets in Northern Iraq. RFI also broadcast interviews with a host of high-profile figures, including U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwaffaq al-Rubay'i, and Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, Mahmoud al-Mashadani.

In June, RFE/RL analysts Daniel Kimmage and Kathleen Ridolfo released Iraqi Insurgent Media: The War of Images and Ideas, a 78-page report that provided an in-depth analysis of the media efforts of Sunni insurgents who are responsible for the majority of U.S. combat deaths in Iraq. On June 12, Kimmage testified before an open hearing of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on the findings of the report.

Arabic in Europe. Since August 2006, Al Hurra Europe has brought the best programs of Al Hurra and Al Hurra-Iraq to the Arabic-speaking population in Europe. Al Hurra Europe can be seen on the Hotbird satellite system that reaches all of Europe.

Kurdish. Broadcasting four hours of daily radio programming, VOA's Kurdish Service remains highly popular among Kurds in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. According to surveys conducted by InterMedia Research, VOA occupies a unique position among Iraqi Kurds. It is the only major international broadcaster offering programs in the Kurdish language. VOA Kurdish focuses on the Iraqi scene through a network of stringers, with special programs and call-in shows devoted to combating extremism inside the country and the surrounding region.

Special coverage highlighted the debate among Kurds on the role of Islam in the regional and national constitutions of Iraq. Some of the topics discussed in special program-

ming by VOA Kurdish during the last year included the observance of Muslim holidays in the United States, Muslim students in U.S. colleges, and the role of religion in U.S. politics.

Iran. As noted above, broadcasting to Iran remains a key BBG priority. In 2007, VOA's Persian Service, once part of VOA's West and South Asia Division, became a separate unit and changed its name to the "Persian News Network" (PNN) to reflect this priority.

PNN's seven-hour program block opens with Today in Washington, a brief look at the latest news developments in Washington, as well as the content of PNN's upcoming programs. Other original programming includes:

- *Today's Woman,* PNN's newest program made its debut on September 27. The one-hour program features influential women from around the world discussing such topics as social issues, medical themes, human rights, the law, sports, and business.

- *News and Views,* PNN's flagship news program, is now two hours in length, and features live interviews and news coverage of the latest headlines from Washington, DC, Iran, and across the globe.

- *Roundtable with You* is a talk show with expert guests who discuss current events, politics, popular culture, and global health. Viewers and listeners from Iran and around the world participate in the show via phone calls and e-mails.

- *Late Edition* begins with a close look at the day's top story. This program is targeted to a younger demographic and features segments on Iran's student movement, health, technology, sports, entertainment, and culture.

- *NewsTalk* is a new journalists' roundtable discussion program that features an examination of the day's top stories and an in-depth look at issues relating to Iran.

This year, Persian television featured an impressive array of prominent guests including former Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor James Jeffrey, U.S. Ambassador to the UN Zalmay Khalilizad, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, several U.S. senators and representatives, and Christine Levinson, wife of ex-FBI agent Robert Levinson, who has been missing in Iran since March 2007. Other programs included annual live coverage of the President's State of the Union address with simultaneous Farsi translation and post speech analysis, live coverage of the opening of the UN General Assembly in September, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech at the UN coupled with a special live hour of analysis and coverage, President Bush's June visit to the Islamic Center of Washington in commemoration of its 50th anniversary, live coverage from President Bush's May trip to Latin America, live coverage of an IAEA meeting in Vienna on Iran's nuclear program, and coverage of Commander of the Multinational Forces-Iraq, General David Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker during their September testimony to Congress. VOA's Persian News Network has also covered Senate and House hearings on Iran and Iraq.

VOA devotes significant effort to hard-hitting topics on the role of religion in society, including the Iranian regime's abuse of Islam to solidify its control of power, to justify the oppression of women, and to limit free speech, free association, and freedom of religion. These stories generated considerable email response and other feedback from Iran, and from Persian-speaking populations in Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Europe, and the United States.

Radio Farda, a joint service of RFE/RL and VOA, continued to broadcast to Iran 24 hours a day in 2007. As Radio Farda has matured, and as funding has supported the addition of larger blocks of news and information, it has done so in its tradition as a "surrogate" broadcaster, presenting news about the country to which it broadcasts. Current broadcasts include over eight hours of news and information programming daily. Popular Persian and western music draws in the younger audience. Radio Farda finds direct sources of information within Iran in spite of the challenging environment for journalism.

The people of Iran turned to Radio Farda and its website for round-the-clock breaking news on stories of global interest, such as the ongoing standoff over Iran's nuclear program, the seizure and release of several British sailors, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's trip to New York, the arrest of three Iranian-Americans visiting Iran and court proceedings against a fourth who worked as a Radio Farda reporter. Their stories included the arrest of a prominent union leader and several women's rights activists; riots sparked by the imposition of gasoline rationing in May 2007; and the mistreatment of Azeri, Kurdish, Ahvazi Arab, and other ethnic minority populations of Iran. To enhance its coverage, Radio Farda has doubled the length of its main evening newscast to one hour and launched a revamped, news-oriented website. Radio Farda reaches significant audiences in Iran, in spite of the government's consistent jamming. According to the last InterMedia survey conducted in November 2006, Radio Farda's weekly reach measured 10.3 percent—the highest weekly reach rate of any international radio broadcaster, and more than double that of the BBC's Persian service. Among a key target group, youth under 30, Farda's weekly reach was 14.8 percent. Utilizing new resources provided by the Congress, Radio Farda augmented its website to expand its content, providing more stories to read, more images to view, and more opportunities to comment on news and information. It now receives over five million page views each month, despite the Iranian government's efforts to block it. Radio Farda's website is highly interactive, with features such as "Most Popular and Most Emailed Stories" and "Farda Club" for moderated discussions and blogsites.

Afghanistan. After September 11, 2001, the BBG increased radio broadcasting to Afghanistan pursuant to the Radio Free Afghanistan Act, signed into law in March 2002. Together, RFE/RL and VOA provide a 24-hour daily radio stream in the Dari and Pashto languages that has a vast audience reach in Afghanistan.

VOA's Radio Ashna (Friend) continued to build on its reputation as a source of accurate and credible news for listeners in Afghanistan. The seamless daily 12-hour program includes daily call-in shows and in-country reporting from approximately 30 stringers. Program topics include reconstruction, security, continuing violence, disarmament, international counterterrorism efforts, drug trafficking, and human rights.

VOA continues to rank as one of the top three international broadcasters in Afghanistan. The most recent survey shows that VOA's one-hour daily TV Ashna program in Dari and Pashto has become widely popular. The viewership rate increased from 9 percent in 2006 to 20 percent in 2007.

VOA's TV Ashna has taken advantage of Washington's large Islamic community to produce a number of original reports for Afghanistan and other Services in the South Asian Division. For example, the program followed Rep. Keith Ellison, the first Muslim-American member of Congress, taking the oath of office using a Koran owned by Thomas Jefferson, and his activities during his first year in the House of Representatives. It also covered the opening of a new Islamic Center in Prince William County in Virginia, and obtained interviews with Governor Tim Kaine, Senators John Warner and Jim Webb, and Representative Tom Davis, who attended the center's ribbon cutting. Viewers were taken inside an Islamic Academy in Virginia to view how education and Muslim tradition coexist in the United States. Other coverage included an exclusive interview with President Karzai of Afghanistan.

RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan has a weekly reach of 64.3 percent in the country, according to preliminary data from an August InterMedia survey. Afghanistan is the only country in the RFE/RL broadcast region where a USG-funded broadcaster is the dominant media outlet.

Radio Free Afghanistan delivers breaking news, in-depth reporting, and analysis to the people of Afghanistan on the struggles their young democracy faces, including a resurgent Taliban. With its dual-language programming and its tone of moderation, Radio Free Afghanistan works to promote national unity and religious tolerance. In January, a would-be suicide bomber credited a Radio Free Afghanistan series on suicide bombings with changing his mind about carrying out his deadly mission.

Reports from Washington, Prague, and Kabul, exclusive interviews and roundtables, and ongoing coverage of the efforts by Coalition Forces to subdue the insurgency made up the program offerings. In 2007, Radio Free Afghanistan celebrated its fifth anniversary. Throughout the year it provided its listeners with coverage of important stories such as the Taliban's execution of journalist Adjmal Naqshbandi, the accidental killing of 25 civilians by NATO air strikes in June, the Taliban's seizure of 23 Korean hostages and the negotiated release of the 21 who survived, the death of former Afghan king Mohammad Zahir Shah, the lives of Afghan expatriates living in Saudi Arabia, the massive bomb attack that took place in Baghlan province on November 6, the assassination of Pakistani politician Benazir Bhutto, and the recapture by NATO and Afghan forces of the Taliban stronghold of Musa Qala in southern Afghanistan. In addition, Radio Free Afghanistan uses the hundreds of letters it receives from listeners to find stories that deserve attention and to spur the government to act on them.

Pakistan. The Pakistani government's "state of emergency" crackdown on private media on November 3, 2007 darkened two VOA television affiliates in the country, foremost among them the privately-owned cable news operation GEO TV, which had carried VOA's 30-minute news and information Urdu-language, Beyond the Headlines. In response, VOA immediately stepped up its radio news and information programming in Urdu by shifting its TV staff to expand live daily radio news programming from five to 12.5 hours. Domestic TV stations currently face restrictions on the use of foreign broadcast material. However, VOA is aggressively working to regain access to the Pakistani TV Market with affiliates GEO and Aaj.

In covering the crisis, and U.S. and world reaction, the Urdu Service engaged its network of stringers in Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta, Karachi, and Lahore, and interviewed government officials and Pakistani opposition figures, such as former Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto. The Service also provided timely, in-depth coverage of Benazir Bhutto's assassination, with stringers in Rawalpindi and Islamabad providing live coverage of events. One stringer in Islamabad was among a group of journalists who spoke with Benazir Bhutto just hours before her assassination, between her meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and her final campaign rally.

Since VOA introduced its youth-oriented, 12/7 radio station called Radio Aap ki Dunyaa (Your World) in 2004, the station has continued to attract a growing number of listeners with its contemporary format that includes news, information, roundtable discussions, call-in shows, interviews, features, and music. The programs target Pakistani listeners between the ages of 15 and 39, which account for some 60 million of Pakistan's 150 million residents, as well as millions more potential listeners in India, the Gulf, and the Diaspora. To increase Radio Aap ki Dunyaa's reach, VOA introduced a bilingual web page that offers live audio streaming of news and entertainment programming.

The Pakistan/Afghanistan Border Region. VOA's Deewa Radio broadcasts reports, interviews, and call-in shows on events and issues about political Islam in and outside of the United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to

Muslim audiences in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Scholars and leaders of religious parties in Pakistan participate in call-in shows to answer questions from listeners on their role in the local political scene.

Deewa Radio presented American views to people living in the target broadcast region. After the assassination of Pakistan's opposition leader Benazir Bhutto and the worsening political crisis, the Service obtained reactions from former U.S. ambassador to Pakistan Wendy Chamberlin, CSIS Director of South Asia Programs Teresita Schaffer, UNHR representative Hina Jilani, U.S.-based Pakistani analyst Michael Shank, and other prominent analysts.

Through interviews with religious and secular leaders, the station addressed critical issues such as terrorism, suicide attacks, religious extremism, the madrassa and its syllabus, the role of women in society, and the political future of the region. Noted personalities interviewed by Deewa included former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, Imran Khan (leader of Tehrik Insaf party), Asfandyar wali Khan (Pashtun nationalist), Mehmood Khan Achakzai (nationalist leader), Farooq Laghari (former Pakistan president), sitting and former federal ministers Aftab Sherpao, Iftikhar Gilani, Mohammad Ali Durrani, Amir Muqam Khan, Saif Ali Khan, and Saleem Saifullah; as well as a number of provincial ministers in NWFP and Balochistan province.

India. With a Muslim population numbering close to 150 million, India has the second largest Muslim population after Indonesia. VOA's Hindi Service reaches this audience, with discussions about events in Pakistan and Kashmir, the recent India-Pakistan peace initiatives, Iran's nuclear ambitions, developments in Afghanistan, and the Iraq war. Hindi also offered exclusive TV interviews with USG senior officials, dozens of U.S. senators and representatives, the late Benazir Bhutto, and Muslim-American leaders and scholars. Topics addressed included developments in the region and India's relations with Iran, Pakistan, and the United States.

Bangladesh. Bangladesh has one of the largest Muslim populations in the world. During the past year, VOA Bangla Radio and Television produced numerous features on Muslim youth, including a piece on Hasan Askari, a 20-year old Muslim student from Bangladesh who was honored by the Governor of New York for saving a Jewish youth from a beating during the holiday season in December. VOA Bangla also produced features on Islamic centers in the United States, Ramadan observances, and Eid festivals. Following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, Bangla Service interviewed diplomats, scholars, and political analysts in the United States and abroad.

Turkish. As part of the special coverage of the general election in Turkey, VOA's Turkish Service focused on the role of Islam in Turkish politics under the strictly secular Turkish constitution. Coverage included interviews with U.S. and Turkish officials, members of the U.S Congress, and other experts. VOA Turkish provided extensive coverage in radio and television programs and on the VOA Turkish website on the role of religion in U.S. society. This year, VOA Turkish also expanded its TV affiliation in Turkey by launching daily live reports for TGRT News TV network, broadcast via web cam. TGRT News, a 24-hour nationwide news network with a weekly audience share of over 30 percent of Turkey's estimated 25 million regular viewers, carries twice-weekly a live, 15-minute news and current affairs program and a weekly 30-minute news and magazine program produced by the VOA Turkish Service. At the request of TGRT, VOA has produced a number of live or pre-recorded special programs on developments in U.S.-Turkish relations and on the U.S. image in the world.

Indonesia. This year, the Indonesian Service produced nearly nine hours of original radio programming per day for over 200 affiliates throughout Indonesia. A new program called Executive Lounge is a daily 30-minute prime-time radio program for Indonesia's growing numbers of young professionals, and is aired on a new affiliate network, the Trijaya Radio Network. The new lifestyle program Pop Notes is a weekly 60-minute culture program for JakTV (Jakarta) and other regional TV stations. Warung VOA (Café VOA), a weekly 30-minute talk show, airs on JTV (East Java). The Service also developed four new regular short feature segments for Indonesian national TV stations. VOA Indonesian TV programming can now be seen regularly on five of the 11 national stations. In addition, the VOA Indonesian Service produced six special series and special events programs, including reports on the Virginia Tech shootings that claimed one Indonesian victim, reports on illegal arms exports, Indonesian immigrants in the United States, and U.S.-Indonesian military relations, as well as special serial programming for Indonesian Independence Day and Ramadan. The Service continued to develop its website, and sent out both a daily email with headline news and a weekly email-newsletter. VOA Headlines are also available for text message transmission to mobile phones.

Uzbekistan. VOA's daily 30-minute radio broadcasts are carried on short wave, medium wave from Tajikistan, and two FM frequencies in Osh and Jalalabad, Kyrgyzstan. The Service's Exploring America, is a weekly half-hour TV show placed on a satellite network targeting Uzbek-speakers in Afghanistan and all of Central Asia. Two local stations in the Uzbek-speaking areas of Kyrgyzstan carry it live. All broadcasts reach the Ferghana Valley. VOA Uzbek features interviews with various U.S. and international sources discussing critical issues, such as the War on Terror, religious extremism, and U.S.-Uzbek relations. Interviews with Members of Congress and key officials provide a unique perspective of U.S. policymaking. The Service also features reporting on Muslim life in the United States and serves as a window into religious tolerance and understanding in America.

RFE/RL's programming to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan continued despite various forms of harassment and even repression against its correspondents and editors. A former corre-

spondent for, and frequent contributor to, the Uzbek Service was murdered in Kyrgyzstan in October 2007. RFE/RL's Tashkent Bureau remained closed by Uzbek government order, but the Uzbek Service continued to provide news coverage and democracy promotion under harsh conditions reminiscent of the Soviet era. In Kyrgyzstan, RFE/RL was able to work with Kyrgyz National Television (KTR) to produce and air local television news.

Azerbaijan. VOA's Azerbaijani Service provides extensive coverage on Muslims in America. In addition, the Service produces special programs on the occasion of Muslim holidays, featuring messages of congratulation by the President of the United States, administration officials, and Congressional leaders. Since the beginning of 2007, the Azerbaijani broadcasts of VOA and RFE/RL reached radio audiences in and around Baku, the capital, via a local 24/7 dedicated FM frequency. VOA has added two daily five-minute newscasts to its ongoing, daily 30-minute radio program. This programming also reached the Azerbaijani speaking audience in Iran via short wave frequencies. The Service also produces a 15-minute TV news program, which is rebroadcast by Azerbaijan TV network six days per week. VOA Azerbaijani maintains two websites, one in Persian-Arabic script to reach the large Azeri-speaking minority in Iran (estimated at more than 15 million). This year, the Service started to send out daily VOA newsletters in Latin and Arabic-Persian scripts to a number of subscribers via the Internet.

Following changes in rebroadcast partnerships, the weekly listenership of RFE/RL's Azerbaijani Service declined to 4.9 percent from 7.7 percent in 2006. In 2007, however, the RFE/RL Service and VOA Azerbaijani secured re-broadcasting on a new FM frequency in Baku. Programming remains a mix of newscasts and democracy-related programming on political issues and civil society such as human rights, media rights, minorities, judicial rights, religion, and elections. Social issues of health care, pensions, public welfare, unemployment, and drugs increasingly became programming themes.

Nigeria. VOA reaches a large percentage of the almost 250 million Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa. One in every five Muslims in the world lives in Africa, and roughly one-third of Sub-Saharan Africa's population is Muslim. VOA's biggest audience is in Nigeria, with a weekly audience of more than 21 million adults tuning in to its Hausa or English-to-Africa broadcasts—up from 19 million in 2006. Among the primarily Muslim Hausa-speaking population of Nigeria, over 43 percent listen to VOA at least once a week.

In April, VOA's Central News, Hausa, and English-to-Africa provided on-the-ground coverage of the Nigerian presidential, gubernatorial, national and state assembly elections. VOA Hausa and English-to-Africa broadcasts included live hookups with VOA's three reporting centers in Nigeria, discussions with reporters and stringers on the scene, and interviews with leading political and election officials. VOA's Hausa reporter secured an exclusive interview with the winner of the controversial presidential election, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, of the ruling People's Democratic Party, and with opposition candidates. Prior to the elections, VOA Hausa organized two town hall meetings, featuring live panel discussions with politicians, government officials, and leaders of civil society in Kano and in Abuja. Using staff correspondents and 14 stringers throughout Nigeria, Hausa and English-to-Africa Services covered the aftermath of the elections, including violence and complaints of vote rigging.

Somalia and the Horn of Africa. VOA established its Somali Service on February 12, 2007, with an on-air promise to listeners that they would hear the voices of Somalis from all political persuasions and walks of life. What started as a 30-minute broadcast expanded to 60 minutes in July and to two hours in early December. One hour is also repeated for VOA's FM Horn Afrik affiliate in Mogadishu. Through its shortwave and medium wave transmissions and its network of 12 affiliate FM stations, the Somali Service reaches a large Muslim population in this critical region. VOA's Somali program is available through rebroadcast by some of the most widely listened-to FM stations in Somalia and the region, including HornAfrik, the network of stations run by Radio Daljir, the SBC in Puntland, and a VOA-leased FM station in Djibouti. HornAfrik's satellite service also broadcasts VOA Somali programs to the Diaspora throughout Europe. Somali websites worldwide provide links to the VOA Somali Service website.

The expanded VOA Somali broadcast has allowed for more interaction with listeners, more in-depth discussion segments, and more regular features on such topics as reconciliation, democratic ideals, development, health, youth, women's issues, American life, and Somali culture. After his recent appointment, Transitional Federal Government Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein gave his first broadcast interview to the VOA Somali Service. The Service has also conducted interviews with transitional government President Abdulahi Yusuf and opposition figures such as Islamic Courts leader Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. VOA's Amharic Service also covers news developments in Somalia as well as in Ethiopia and the sub-region. The service offers interviews with Horn of Africa newsmakers and U.S. policymakers and experts, as well as interviews with members of the Somali Diaspora, analysis, cultural features, and music.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. VOA broadcasts to Bosnia and Herzegovina include programming targeted to the 49 percent of the population that are Bosnian Muslims. VOA's Bosnian Service has a 15-minute daily live radio show; a half hour daily live television show (news and current affairs); and a variety of short programs aired by the best rated Bosnian television station, BHT1.

In October 2006, VOA Bosnian launched its interactive program segment in partnership with BHT1, Bosnia and Herzegovina's public broadcaster. The segment airs each Sunday during BHT1's primetime news program. Topics

range from official Washington policy on Bosnian issues to medicine and technology reports. The Sarajevo-based BHT1 network is internationally funded and is the only station that reaches audiences in both the Bosnian-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska. Programs are also aired by 15 television and 15 radio affiliate stations throughout Bosnia, and are available via satellite.

The Service has worked to promote reconciliation between the three ethnic groups in Bosnia. VOA's news and current affairs programs are tailored to address concerns of the Muslim population in Bosnia, and provide exclusive interviews with Bosnian political and religious leaders.

RFE/RL's South Slavic and Albanian Languages Service continued to fulfill a unique role in the Balkans with its regional programming. With bureaus in Sarajevo and Pristina, the Service reached Muslim listeners in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina with programs that stressed the bonds among the peoples of the former Yugoslavia. The Service broadcasts two popular thirty-minute television programs in Bosnia, TV Liberty and Open Parliament.

China. Radio Free Asia (RFA) provides service to Muslim audiences through its Uighur language service launched in December 1998. It is the only international radio service providing impartial news and information in the Uighur language to the potential audience of more than 16 million Uighur Muslims in Western China and Central Eurasia. The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) alone comprises roughly one-sixth of China's territory and is estimated to have more than 10 million Uighur speakers.

Consistent with RFA's mandate, the Uighur service acts as a substitute for indigenous media reporting on local events in the region. The service broadcasts two hours daily, seven days a week, often breaking stories that go unreported by China's state-run media or foreign news organizations. RFA provides a forum for a variety of opinions and voices from within the XUAR with its programs, that include breaking news, analysis, interviews, commentary, a hotline call-in show, a weekly news review, and feature stories.

The Uighur Service news and stories feature important interviews with various U.S. and international sources, including officials, scholars, scientists, artists, historians, educators, and human rights activists, as well as Chinese and Uighur dissidents from all over the world. Programs address pressing issues like China's relationship with Central Asian countries, democratic development in Central Asia, Uighur history, literature, the arts, human rights, religious freedom, labor issues, official corruption, the environment, Internet control in China, and AIDS and other health issues. Additionally, RFA brings U.S. policy, debate, and Congressional resolutions on China to its listeners via interviews with members of Congress and other policymakers.

RFA's Uighur service website, launched in September 2004, provides continuously updated news in all three writing systems used to convey the Uighur language, Arabic, Latin, and Cyrillic. RFA's site is the only non-Chinese Uighur news website and the only Unicode Uighur news website. The site streams the daily RFA broadcast in Uighur and offers ongoing coverage of events in the XUAR in text, image, and video. The archived audio files can be retrieved on a special page or downloaded via podcast. RSS feeds are also available, making it possible for people to automatically update their news readers or web pages with RFA news content.

RFA continues to be confronted with unrelenting jamming of broadcasts and blocking of its website. RFA confronts Chinese censorship by broadcasting on multiple shortwave frequencies and by regularly e-mailing instructions on accessing the banned www.rfa.org through proxy web servers. Despite Chinese censorship and the dangers involved, research indicates that Uighur listeners and web users consider RFA a lifeline in a controlled media environment—a station offering unique content worth taking risks to access.

Transmission. Since September 11, 2001, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) has modernized its transmission capabilities, continuing its move from a predominantly shortwave environment to one that uses AM, FM, satellite, and Internet capabilities to reach its audience. By bolstering transmission capabilities to the Muslim world, BBG has improved opportunities to deliver news and information clearly, reliably, and effectively. New transmission capabilities have been added, and assets reallocated from regions of lesser geopolitical importance and from technologies of declining effectiveness.

The BBG has worked to ensure that programming is delivered in the media that are most effective in reaching local populations. In the past year, transmission facilities in Ismaning, Germany and Delano, California were closed to shift available resources to more effective delivery media. Asiasat 3 replaced Asiasat 2 to deliver BBG TV and radio programs to large audiences throughout Asia on this more popular satellite service. An emergency back-up power system was installed at the IBB Djibouti transmitting facility to overcome erratic local electricity supply problems and to ensure more reliable delivery of BBG medium wave programs to audiences in Sudan and Somalia. A new high power leased medium wave transmitting service from the UAE significantly improved VOA radio transmissions to Pakistan. Higher capacity, more flexible, and cost-effective fiber optic circuits replaced satellite channels between the Far East and Washington. These circuits will facilitate video newsgathering in Asia. In the past year, new BBG FM transmitters came on the air in Ethiopia, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, and the West Bank/Gaza.

The BBG is currently supporting the construction of a number of additional FM transmitters in various locations and two high power medium wave radio transmitters that should come on the air in the coming year: one for Pashto programming in Afghanistan and one for Radio Farda programs to Iran. On the Internet, the recently launched VOA

Daily Download provides a short, lively video feature of current information targeted toward a youthful audience. The use of webchats, blogsites, and other attractive Internet applications have also been expanded as the Internet becomes an increasingly viable information medium in both open and closed societies.

Presenting the United States Point of View through Indigenous Broadcast Media

At the Department of State, the Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Broadcast Services uses television and video products as strategic tools for bringing America's foreign policy message to Middle East and worldwide audiences. A state-of-the-art digital broadcast television facility enables the Department to deliver messages instantly, using the same technology as commercial broadcast television networks. Public Affairs facilitates live and taped interviews with the Secretary of State and other State Department principals to all the major Arab networks such as Middle East Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Al Arabiya, Al Iraqiya, Abu Dhabi TV, Dubai Television, Arab Radio and Television Network (ART), Al Hurra, Kuwait TV, Egyptian TV (ETV), and the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC). This investment in people and technology was developed to give senior USG officials an opportunity to engage and inform the largest audiences possible about our foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives.

To enhance the capacity of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq, the Department of State operates a television studio inside the Embassy. This fully-functioning studio allows senior USG officials to conduct live interviews via satellite with national and international media on a range of topics related to the current situation and future of Iraq, as well as America's role in the broader Middle East.

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Press & Public Diplomacy Office, through its Arab and Regional Media Unit, has significantly expanded the Department's outreach to Arab and regional media outlets (i.e. print, broadcast, and web) through a strategy of proactive engagement. Since its creation, it has recorded an ever-increasing number of interviews with Arab and regional media outlets. In 2007, the Arab and Regional Media Unit, together with NEA posts, gave over 1,200 interviews to Arabic, Farsi, and Hebrew language media. Many of the broadcasts aired multiple times and were picked up by other regional media outlets and wire services. The Arab and Regional Media Unit has also inaugurated weekly web chats in an effort to utilize new media and reach Arab and regional audiences directly. The new Arabic language web chats allow Arab audiences to interact directly with USG policy makers on topics such as, "What is a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)," "Muslims and Political Participation in the United States," and "Solving the Western Sahara Dilemma."

This capacity was further enhanced by the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs' creation of Regional Media Hubs in London, Brussels, and Dubai. In these key media markets, spokesmen advocate U.S. policies and actively encourage and facilitate a growing number of USG officials to appear on important Arabic, European, and other international media. For example, between November 2006 and November 2007, the Dubai Hub Director participated in 242 on-air interviews, talk shows, and panel discussions (more than 230 of them in Arabic) with Arab broadcast media, including Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, MBC 1, LBC, Al Hurra, Sharqiyya, Nile TV, BBC Arabic, Radio Sawa, Sawt al Arab, and a number of smaller local and regional stations. The construction of a new broadcast studio at the Brussels Hub, combined with the existing studio used by the London Hub, enables Hub spokesmen and visiting USG officials to quickly reach media and audiences around the world. The London Hub also produces a weekday morning report on the pan-Arab media for readers throughout the USG, matched by the Brussels' Hub morning report on key European media.

A Rapid Response Unit (RRU) monitors and translates major world media in real-time, produces an early morning daily report on stories driving news around the world, and provides language to explain the U.S. position on these issues. It is distributed daily worldwide, to U.S. cabinet and sub-cabinet officials, U.S. ambassadors, public affairs officers, regional combatant commanders, and others across the USG.

Presenting the U.S. Point of View through Internet-based Media

The Department of State directly engages participants in online discussion forums on the Internet through the Digital Outreach Team. The Team participates in discussions of policy issues and related developments on websites in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Openly representing the State Department, but using the more informal language of the discussion forums, the Team seeks to ensure that the U.S. perspective is heard in cyberspace, providing a counterpoint to extremist ideological arguments and misinformation. Other public diplomacy efforts of the Department of State and other agencies targeted at countering extremist use of the Internet are coordinated through the interagency Counterterrorism Communication Center, chaired by the Bureau of International Information Programs.

The Department has expanded its web presence via the State.gov website and the America.gov website in English, Arabic, Russian, Persian, French, and Spanish. The introduction of multimedia interactive products such as ads, videos, podcasts, web chats, blogging, and other interactive elements widen audience participation. Country-specific websites run by our Embassies overseas provide a wide range of information and advocate U.S. policies to foreign audiences. In the absence of a U.S. embassy in Iran, the Bureau of International Information Programs manages a Persian-language website directing policy and general information into Iran. The website supports active engagement via web chats, webcasts, and listservs to connect U.S. policymakers and subject-matter experts with Iranian citizens. IIP's Arabic-language website provides information about U.S. policies, society, and values directly to audiences in the Middle East.

Presenting the U.S. Point of View through U.S. Missions in the Field

The Strategic Speakers Initiative (SSI) identifies, recruits, and programs prominent U.S. experts to engage foreign opinion leaders on key strategic themes such as democracy and rule of law, terrorism and security, energy, the environment, and trade and development.

A subset of this program is the Citizen Dialogue Program, in which Muslim-American citizens share their personal stories with ýfellow Muslim cohorts in strategically important countries, many of whom are not aware of the ýstrength and diversity of Muslim life in America. Such speakers can be deployed rapidly to focus IIP resources where the need is greatest to address the most crucial U.S. policy priorities. Strategic Speaker participants are often part of a bigger public diplomacy package that includes web chats, DVCs, and other outreach.

IIP's INFOCENTRAL website provides guidance and background information on U.S. policy priorities to U.S. embassies and military commands worldwide.

Major Themes of Biased or False Media Coverage of the United States in Foreign Countries and Actions Taken to Address this Type of Media Coverage

The Department of State is taking a leading role to counter misinformation and falsehoods about the United States and its policies or intentions. The Department of State's actions to address these false allegations include:

- The Department of State's America.gov webpage entitled "Identifying Misinformation," which appears in English and Arabic, provides truthful information and analysis to the public to debunk false allegations about the September 11 attacks, Iraq, and other issues.

- The Department has instructed Public Affairs Officers at our embassies around the world to use information on the website to counter false stories in the local media, or to contact the Department's Counter-Misinformation Officer, who can rapidly provide research and guidance.

Potential incentives for and costs associated with encouraging U.S. broadcasters to dub or subtitle into Arabic and other relevant languages their news and public affairs programs broadcast in the Muslim world in order to present those programs to a much broader Muslim audience than is currently reached

The single greatest incentive for U.S. broadcasters to dub or subtitle their news and public affairs programs would be evidence that there is adequate demand for the programming among the targeted foreign publics. The Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs is working with the Bureau of Public Affairs and other elements within the Department to explore avenues to demonstrate that a potentially profitable market exists for this programming. If data emerges that indicates that this translation makes sense from a business standpoint, we will present this data to broadcasters in an effort to encourage this activity.

Any recommendations the President may have for additional funding and legislation necessary to achieve the objectives of the strategy?

The President's budget request for FY-2009, the FY-2008 appropriation, and the FY-2007 and supplemental request include a number of initiatives that would aid the strategic objectives of U.S. international broadcasting. The FY-2007 supplemental contained $10 million for the Middle East Broadcasting Networks. As part of the Administration's strategy to counter violent extremism, Al Hurra television is launching a signature three-hour daily program to provide additional information about American policies, people, institutions, and perspectives to its audiences across 22 countries in the Middle East. This program capitalizes on Al Hurra's unique perspective in a growing market of over 200 channels, and would provide a format and information mix unavailable in the region today. Programming would focus on the news of the day, compelling social issues, investigative reporting, and a range of information not presented in the region's media.

The FY-2008 appropriation and FY-2009 request provides ongoing support for this new Al Hurra programming effort, increases Al Hurra's newscast capability to 24 hours a day (expanding from the current 16 hour capability), and allows Radio Sawa to grow as a news source in the region. The FY-2008 budget also continues VOA's Somalia program initiative, and maintains program strength in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The FY-2009 Administration budget request includes proposals to continue VOA Somali three-hour daily broadcasts and to launch a "RFE/RL Azerbaijani to Iran" program. Further, our pending legislative request to the Congress to permanently adopt the BBG's pilot program for personal services contracting (PSC) authority, up to a ceiling of 200 PSCs at any given time, would assure the agency the flexibility to meet staffing needs to respond quickly to broadcast requirements.

Visas for Participants in U.S. Government Programs

According to the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs, current visa processing guidelines are sufficient to meet any requirements for the issuance of appropriate visas to individuals from predominantly Muslim nations to participate in any new exchange program, as envisioned by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Protection Act of 2004.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs' policy is to expedite all student and exchange visitor applications, with the goal of giving every student and exchange visitor applicant the opportunity to meet their program start date in the United States. This policy is in place at every embassy and consulate worldwide. In countries with a significant waiting period for a visa appointment due to high demand, this policy reduces the wait time for students and exchange vis-

itors from weeks to mere days. In all cases requiring a separate security clearance, the average processing time is now about 25 days. Processing can take longer, however, and applicants should allow additional time. Security clearances can be expedited when circumstances so warrant. The most important factor in expediting visa applications is for the applicants, in conjunction with their program sponsors, to initiate their visa applications well in advance of their planned travel. Most problems in the visa process can be resolved given sufficient time. New exchange programs should be planned far enough in advance to allow the necessary time for visa processing. Candidates should be advised to obtain passports immediately, visit embassy websites for instructions on applying for U.S. visas, and ensure they follow instructions concerning required documents and procedures, as well as for information on how to complete an Electronic Visa Application Form (EVAF) and how to arrange an appointment.

Basic Education in Muslim Countries

The Department of State, USAID, and other U.S. agencies continued to support an increased focus on education in predominantly Muslim countries and those with significant Muslim populations. The United States' approach stresses mobilizing public and private resources as partners to improve access, quality, and the relevance of education, with a specific emphasis on developing civic-mindedness in young people. In many Muslim-majority countries, such as Afghanistan and Yemen, the challenge was to increase country capacity to provide universal access to primary education and literacy. Countries faced increasing enrollments and low education quality in the classroom while struggling with limited budgets. In the Middle East, USAID and the Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) promoted quality education through improved policy, teacher training, education, finance/governance, and community participation. These U.S. efforts complemented investments of partner countries and other donors. Between FY-2002 and FY-2007, MEPI funding for projects in basic education totaled approximately $90 million.

The U.S. Strategy to Meet Challenges in Education

To promote transformational diplomacy and development, the Department of State and USAID have articulated a common Foreign Assistance Framework. In the framework's "Investing in People" objective, education is a major element with basic education as an important sub-element. This strategy is applied to programs worldwide, including Muslim countries.

Basic Education: USAID has an agency-wide Basic Education Strategy that targets underserved populations and promotes free universal basic education. The goal is to help learners gain the general skills and knowledge needed to function effectively in life. Basic education programs focus on three areas, which also provide the strategic goals for the Middle East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) education programming in the Middle East and North Africa:

- **Increasing Access:** Targeting groups that have been marginalized in the education system such as minority, rural, out-of-school youth, girls, and young adults, and those who have been impacted by conflict or disaster, thus helping ensure equitable access to education.

- **Improving Quality:** Improving the quality of education is pivotal for ensuring attendance and learning outcomes of basic education. Increasing attention is placed on curriculum reform and measuring learning outcomes.

- **Improving Relevance:** Education programs develop human capacities and livelihood skills, and aim to link learning with skill development and employment opportunities, particularly in areas with high youth unemployment.

In designing and implementing basic education programs throughout the world, USAID works closely with host-country governments (national and local), non-governmental organizations, communities, and the private sector to maximize program impact and sustainability.

Working with the International Community. The United States continued to be an active member of several international bodies and activities to achieve universal basic education, including the International Working Group on Education, which originally proposed the "Education for All" (EFA) initiative begun in the late 1980s.

Coordination of the International Effort. USAID provides technical guidance to the EFA effort through the UNESCO-aligned International Institute for Educational Planning. The U.S. Director of Foreign Assistance represents the United States at the annual EFA high level group meeting. The USAID Office of Education participates in the annual EFA working group meeting. USAID has participated in all Fast Track Initiative (FTI) meetings since its inception in 2000.

In engaging the G8 and Muslim country governments for Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) initiatives, USAID collaborates closely with the State Department and key cooperating U.S. agencies, especially on literacy. At the June 2004 G8 Sea Island Summit, the G8 launched the BMENA Literacy Initiative aimed at halving illiteracy rates in the region by 2015. This initiative launched a series of Literacy Working Group and Education Ministerial Dialogues in the BMENA region. Education Ministers from the BMENA region and the G8 met in Jordan in May 2005 and in Egypt in May 2006, and confirmed their commitment to the process of cooperation under the umbrella of the Forum for the Future launched in Rabat in December 2004. Following the Egypt Ministerial, USAID took over as G8 co-chair of the BMENA Literacy Task Force with Egypt as regional co-chair. As part of the USG contribution to this international effort, USAID is supporting literacy assessments in the region and has developed the BMENA 'Literacy Hub' database of global best practices in promoting literacy.

Leveraging Other Donors. USAID coordinates closely with multilateral donors (e.g., the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB)) and other bilateral donors in each country, often extending the reach of USAID programs. In Indonesia, the Australian bilateral aid agency, AusAID, used USAID pilot education program as the basis for its new basic education project. Collaboration with AusAID, as well as other donors such as UNICEF, continued during implementation in the form of jointly-prepared training materials and activities in communities to avoid duplication as well as to combine approaches in working with local and national officials. This coordinated approach has extended donor program coverage in Indonesia in the education sector.

In Tajikistan, training modules on interactive learning and teaching methods and teacher trainers support the Government of Tajikistan's implementation of the EFA FTI, leveraging funds of approximately $1.6 million. The USAID basic education project also complements WB and ADB projects in the area of education finance, curriculum revision, teacher training, and strengthening capacity of teacher training institutes. In Kyrgyzstan, a USAID-supported independent testing organization won a WB tender to implement student assessments. USAID-developed teacher standards are used in revision of the teacher incentive system. The basic education project collaborates with the ADB project by providing training for textbook authors.

Leveraging Contributions from the Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations. The USG uses its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to leverage other resources for education by developing alliances or partnerships with the private sector and NGOs, including civil society organizations. USAID's Global Development Alliances (GDAs), also known as public-private partnerships, are tailored to country-specific needs and the private sector partners' interests. Below are several examples of ongoing and new country-specific partnerships in the region.

Western and Central Mindanao, and the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao in the Philippines. There are currently six GDA partnerships, with the goals of: increasing educational opportunities for children by ensuring access to quality education; improving the capacity of teachers; raising math, science, and English skills among elementary school beneficiaries; increasing employment opportunities and engaging young leaders; providing business and skills training for out-of-school youth; and providing opportunity for school drop-outs and out-of-school youths to rejoin formal schooling through an accreditation and equivalency mechanism. With approximately $12 million in USAID funding, an additional $42.7 million was leveraged (more than a one-to-three leverage) from private businesses, local NGOs, foundations, and national government agencies.

Indonesia. Public-private partnerships are being used to expand the reach of USAID activities and to respond in natural disaster situations. A partnership with BP is helping improve education quality in Papua, one of the most underserved and isolated areas of Indonesia. An alliance with ConocoPhillips is helping restore education services in communities affected by the May 2006 earthquake that struck Yogyakarta and Central Java.

Morocco and Jordan. USAID information technology partnerships with Cisco Systems, Inc., UNIFEM, and the Governments of Morocco and Jordan have introduced Cisco Certified Network Associate and job-readiness training to eleven Moroccan institutions (900 students, 49 percent women) and to over 600 students (all women) in Jordan. In both countries, there is a focus on job skills and placement for women. In Morocco, 900 students, more than 50 percent of whom are women, have benefited (or are still benefiting) from the Cisco Certificate programs and job-preparedness training. Fifty percent of the first group of students who completed the program found jobs within six months after graduation.

USAID's Office of Middle East Affairs recently finalized a new GDA that will engage and support emerging youth leaders in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, and West Bank/Gaza. Save the Children International, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, will create a youth development tool kit and link emerging young leaders to a network of youth development workers and institutions that assist young people to build leadership capacity and exercise positive, moderate leadership behaviors within a community development context.

In cooperation with the Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), Scholastic Inc. is providing 8.2 million Arabic-language classroom libraries to more than 40,620 classrooms in more than 6,770 primary schools in the Middle East and North Africa. Scholastic's substantive contribution allows MEPI to leverage its $12 million investment in this critical-thinking and independent reading skills development program. In another example, MEPI's partnership with the CISCO Learning Institute developed on-line English language curricular materials to complement the efforts of the private sector-based World Economic Forum (WEF)-sponsored Jordan Education Initiative.

USG Coordination to Reduce Duplication and Waste. The Department of State and USAID work closely together implementing their Foreign Assistance Framework, which includes education. Through this framework and a joint Operational Plan process, the Department of State and USAID coordinate to reduce duplication of effort and/or waste.

USAID collaborates actively with the Department of State's MEPI to promote education in Muslim countries within the Near East region, with a focus on civic education. The MEPI education pillar supports education systems that enable all people, especially girls, to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in today's economy, participate actively and effectively in the civic arena,

and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families. MEPI and USAID coordinate to minimize any potential duplication of efforts and investments. A modest number of MEPI-funded education programs, notably the support for the Arab Civitas network, are implemented in conjunction with USAID. MEPI is also providing funding for an Arabic version of the Global Learning Portal, a project under the auspices of the BMENA initiative. The Portal will provide new avenues of professional collaboration and benefit educators and idea leaders across the Arab world.

Training and Exchange Programs. Bridging both basic and higher education, USAID and the State Department coordinate in the area of providing training and exchanges for students from Muslim-majority countries to the United States. In addition to the educational value of these kinds of interventions, participants are exposed to American values, culture, and democratic institutions. Many of these programs directly benefit basic education. In Egypt, 100 scholarships will be awarded to enhance the Education Ministry's technical college instructor capacity through "Train-the-Trainer" teacher preparation programs. In Pakistan, secondary school educators will attend a five-week program in the United States, focusing on mathematics, science, and classroom technology.

Scholarship Programs. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has launched two new pilot scholarship programs, the basic-education based "MEPI Scholarship Program," and the higher-education based "Tomorrow's Leaders" program, using $9 million in FY-2006 funds. The MEPI Scholarship Program is providing disadvantaged youth with the opportunity to receive a democratic based education (grades 7–12) at American-sponsored schools abroad. The program was launched in Oman, Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan, for the September 2007 school year and was enthusiastically received by teachers, parents, students, and the communities. With an additional $2.7 million in FY-2007 funds, the program has grown to include more students at the initial pilot schools and has expanded to include the affiliate school in Lebanon. The "Tomorrow's Leaders" scholarship recipients will be selected from among the underserved around the Middle East and North Africa, and the scholarship will provide them with a four-year academic and internship/study-abroad opportunity with specialized curricula to develop their civic engagement, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills.

USAID's Training Future Leaders initiative highlights the importance of U.S.-trained scholars and their unique role in developing their nations upon returning home. A USAID analytical study on prior USG investments will inform future program design and provide a "best practices" framework for long-term training programs. Currently, field research is being done in Yemen, Egypt, Nepal, and Indonesia. This program complements ongoing efforts carried out by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and MEPI.

Funds Needed to Achieve Universal Basic Education. UNESCO estimates that $5.6 billion is needed per year to achieve EFA by 2015. Globally, UNESCO estimated that 103 million children were out of school in 2002/2003. For the countries in the Muslim world, this figure is estimated to be around 45 million. Estimating that it costs roughly $50 per year per child to complete basic education (six years of schooling), it would cost $2.2 billion per year in Muslim countries as a whole to achieve universal basic education.

Efforts to Encourage Development and Implementation of a National Education Plan. In countries with predominantly Muslim populations, the effectiveness of basic education systems is at the crux of their development and of their potential to moderate the negative influence of low growth, joblessness, lagging social services, and despair. The USG encourages countries to develop and implement national education plans by offering assistance to support education, reform developments, and program funding once reforms have moved into the implementation phase.

The United States has influenced national education plans and reform by way of pilot programs that model best practices in education. These positive experiences galvanize support for broader change and can impact the education system beyond the pilot programs' localities. Model programs also potentially have an impact outside of targeted interventions. In Indonesia, for example, USAID helped the provincial government of Aceh with its new long-term education strategy, developed after decades of conflict and the 2004 tsunami. This strategic plan was recently endorsed by the Government of Indonesia's Ministry of National Education.

Fulbright-Hays Programs. Under authority of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (Fulbright-Hays Act), the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs conducts a variety of programs designed to increase mutual understanding, promote international cooperation, and foster friendly and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries in the world. Among the programs relevant to this report are the following.

The **English Access Microscholarship Program (Access)** provides English classes for deserving high school students from non-elite sectors in countries with significant Muslim populations and other key student audiences. Students receive language instruction in a civic education context and become more competitive for future job and educational opportunities. Access also prepares them to be considered for other U.S. exchange programs.

Through its **Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES) and Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX),** the State Department brings high school students to live with American host families and attend American high schools for one academic year. Participants in the YES Program are from countries with significant

Muslim populations, while FLEX students are from Eurasia. Both the YES and FLEX students perform community service while in the United States, and have the opportunity to take part in a number of enhancement activities designed to heighten their awareness of civic responsibility and leadership.

Under **Youth Leadership Programs,** high school studentsand educators from all regions of the world come to the United States for two to four-week programs that focus on specific themes related to science, cultural heritage, leadership development, civic education, conflict management, and community activism.

The **Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program (TEA)** provides secondary school teachers from Eurasia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia with unique opportunities to enhance their teaching skills and increase their knowledge about the United States.

The participants attend a six-week professional teacher development program in the United States, which includes a three-week internship at a secondary school where participants actively engage with American teachers and students. Also, the TEA program provides follow-on grants to the international teachers to purchase essential materials for their schools, to offer follow-on training for other teachers, and to conduct other activities that will build on the exchange visits.

The State Department's **International Leaders in Education Program** is a semester-long program for secondary teachers that includes university coursework, intensive training in teaching methodologies, leadership development, and use of computers as tools for teaching. The program includes an eight-week internship at U.S. secondary schools to engage participants in the American classroom experience. The program currently serves Algeria, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen.

The State Department's **Global Connections and Exchange Program** seeks to promote mutual understanding and civic education in countries with significant Muslim populations by bringing together more than 1,000 schools from 16 countries for online collaborative projects that focus on professional development, media literacy, and civic education. Teachers also develop skills needed to participate in collaborative activities with U.S. schools, and teachers and students are offered opportunities to travel to their partner schools as a way to strengthen mutual understanding and solidify virtual relationships through face-to-face meetings.

Since 2005, MEPI has worked in partnership with Ministries of Education in Yemen and Algeria to help them refine and implement their National Education Plans. Efforts in Yemen focused on developing a workable strategy by which to incorporate information technology into Yemen's broader education goals.

Closing the Digital Divide and Expanding Vocational/Business Skills

To "close the digital divide" and expand vocational/business skills, USAID, the Department of State, and other agencies implement public-private partnerships, information technology in the classroom, school-to-work and workforce training programs, improved quality of basic and secondary education programs, scholarships, and exchanges. A few programs are highlighted below.

- The Education and Employment Alliance promotes private sector participation in Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines to enhance skills and improve education and employment opportunities among over one million underserved youth. In addition to local profit and non-profit partners, corporate partners include Chevron/Unocal, GE, Ink Media, Lucent, Microsoft, Nike, and Oracle.

- The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is partnering with the Education for Employment Foundation (EFE) and with businesses, universities, and private organizations to create four highly scalable and replicable youth education and employment programs that offer real employment to 80 percent of all graduates. The programs are as follows: in Egypt, both a "Mini MBA" accounting training and a textile management and workplace for success training program; in Morocco, sales force training; in Jordan, vocational scholarships and workplace for success training; and in Yemen, IT training. EFE will also create an affiliate foundation in Yemen that will partner with business, universities, and civil society leaders that are dedicated to youth education and employment to develop employer-driven education and training linked to jobs. This initiative also supports broader education goals articulated under BMENA.

- MEPI's Partnership Schools Program in Algeria launched a pilot e-Math initiative to develop and implement a web-based math curriculum for primary school students. In the first year of implementation, students in the pilot province of Ghardaia improved their success rates on end-of-year exams by an average of 20 percent. MEPI's E-Enabled Civics project in Jordan leverages the efforts underway through the Jordan Education Initiative and has developed new, on-line, interactive civics material to support the revised civics curriculum for grades 7-12.

- The USAID Internet Access Training Program (IATP), administered by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) since 1995, provides free Internet access and training in 11 countries throughout Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Eurasia. From major cities to small communities, IATP encourages information sharing, network building, and collaboration among USG exchange alumni and other targeted audiences. IATP staff train alumni and other targeted audiences in the effective use of the Internet and sponsor the development of local language websites. The centers also conduct training in basic civics, entrepreneurship, and English.

- USAID and the Intel Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding in December 2006 to broaden access and usage of information and communications technologies (ICT) in developing communities around the world. This alliance envisions collaboration and partnership in the following areas: enabling "last mile" Internet connectivity and locally relevant applications; supporting ICT usage and deployment by small and medium-sized enterprises to enhance economic development opportunities; and increasing the use of ICTs to support education and health. Intel's prior experience in the education sector includes software development and teacher training programs for K-12.

Countries Eligible for Assistance. USAID education programs in Muslim-majority countries and countries with large Muslim populations potentially overlap with and reinforce those which might be targeted by the USG's International Youth Opportunity Fund [Section 7114(b)]. Below is a list, though not exhaustive, of programs in the Asia Near East, Africa, Europe, and Eurasia regions. The Asia Near East region contains several Muslim-majority countries with significant education needs. Basic education program highlights include:

- **Afghanistan.** Students need to catch up to their appropriate grade level because many children and youth lost years of formal schooling. USAID created an accelerated learning program, compressing two years of study into a single year through innovative teaching techniques. This program has trained around 10,500 teachers and enrolled nearly 170,000 students. More than half the students are girls. In addition, USAID has printed and distributed nationwide 48.5 million textbooks for grades 1-12. Since 2002, USAID in conjunction with the Ministry of Education has built or refurbished 622 schools, mostly in remote areas.

- In **Bangladesh,** Sesame Street Bangladesh, known locally as Sisimpur, is USAID's most recognized activity in the country. The program began airing in April 2005 and is the first show of its kind in Bangladesh. The half-hour television programs provide access to literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills for almost half of the estimated nine million three to six-year-olds in Bangladesh. This prepares them for learning success and helps to combat traditionally low achievement and high drop out rates in the lower primary grades. USAID also supports the Early Learning for School Success Program (SUCCEED) operation of 1,800 preschools which prepare preschool-aged children for school by improving reading and math skills and expanding access to primary schools. A further aim of the program is to increase children's confidence and to reduce high dropout rates by enriching early learning opportunities prior to formal education. The program has established 1,800 preschools across the country (600 are based in schools and 1,200 are based in homes) and trained over 1,800 preschool teachers in new interactive methodologies.

- **USAID/Egypt** supports the Government of **Egypt** in sustaining improvements in learning outcomes in grades K-12. The program focuses on improving teaching and learning, increasing equitable access to education, and strengthening management and governance in seven governorates. Activities include in-service teacher training, school libraries, information technology, and some school construction in remote and densely populated areas. To date, USAID has also provided 5 million books to over 5,000 Egyptian primary schools. Over 39,000 students now have access to computer technology. USAID has built 70 new girls schools serving almost 40,000 students. USAID supported the development of the Egyptian Sesame Street, which helps over 85 percent of all children under age eight acquire early literacy and numeracy skills.

- The program in **Indonesia,** the world's largest Muslim country, works with over 100 districts (25 percent of the nation), providing training and technical assistance to school officials, communities, and local governments on education management and finance. This Presidential initiative also includes in-service teacher training, mentoring, and teacher resource centers to improve the quality of classroom instruction. Over 245,000 junior secondary students and out-of-school youth are learning employment-related life skills while working toward school completion or its equivalency. USAID supports an Indonesian version of Sesame Street, which went on the air in 2007. Through direct assistance and dissemination of best practices, education programs are expected to reach 9,000 public and private schools, 2.5 million students, 90,000 educators, and one million out-of-school youth by 2010.

- In July 2003, the Government of **Jordan** launched a five-year, $380 million program, developed with USAID assistance, Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) initiative. This initiative is one of the most ambitious education reform programs in the Arab region to date; its goal is to re-orient education policy, restructure education programs and practices, improve physical learning environments, and promote learning readiness through improved and more accessible early childhood education. USAID, in coordination with Jordan and eight other donor nations and multilateral organizations, will provide $80 million during this strategy period to support reform efforts through ERfKE. USAID's efforts under this initiative: assist the Government of Jordan's early child care initiative, creating 100 public kindergartens, field-test curriculum, and develop an accreditation system; develop school-to-work programs and an IT curriculum stream for high school students; connect 100 'Discovery' schools to broadband and test e-learning modules for all subject; expand youth and life skills programs to secondary schools in new underserved areas in Jordan; and, construct up to 28 new schools and rehabilitate another 100 schools to create the appropriate learning environment that supports the reform efforts and accommodates the recent influx of refugees from the region.

- In **Pakistan,** USAID supports the government's education reform strategy by: strengthening education policy and planning; improving the skills and performance of teachers and administrators; increasing youth and adult literacy; expanding public-private partnerships; and, providing school improvement grants and involving parents and communities in public schools. Over 9,000 parent-teacher associations received school improvement grants helping communities to build over 3,000 new classrooms, reconstruct over 1,000 more classrooms, build over 1,200 toilets, and repair another 1,000. In addition, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), USAID is constructing and furnishing 65 primary, middle, and high schools. USAID is building or restoring water and sanitation facilities at 190 girls' schools. Scholarships have been awarded to 57 women from this area to attend a one-year, pre-service teacher education program.

South Asia also contains countries with significant Muslim populations though not in the majority, such as India with the second largest Muslim population in the world.

- **USAID/India's** pilot program introduces the formal curriculum in eleven Islamic religious schools (madrassas), complementing the Indian government's efforts to modernize madrassa education. The program reaches over 2,500 out-of-school youth and working children, particularly adolescent girls. A state government has decided to scale-up this model with its own resources, benefiting over 90,000 children in 1,200 madrassas by September 2008.

- In the **Philippines** (Mindanao), education programs aim at improving education quality and access, and providing livelihood skills training for out-of-school youth. USAID and the U.S. Peace Corps jointly help improve instruction in English, science, and math by training over 21,000 elementary and secondary school teachers, as well as mobilizing over 300 Parent-Teacher Community Associations. Computer and Internet education was also introduced.

- The **sub-Saharan Africa region** includes a number of important Muslim and Muslim majority countries, in which support for basic education activities and improved learning opportunities for in-school and out-of-school youth figure prominently. While USAID has been working with predominately Muslim countries and communities in the education sector in Africa from the 1960s, since the events of 9/11, the Africa Bureau's Office of Sustainable Development (AFR/SD) has re-evaluated the role of education and taken a more strategic approach to address the concerns of a post-9/11 society. USAID partners with Muslim communities to ensure that children in these communities are receiving the best and broadest education possible and that USAID is working collaboratively to create an enabling socio-economic environment that will ultimately lead to greater global peace, security, and understanding.

In support of President Bush's $100 million **East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative (EACTI),** USAID initiated programs in East Africa in 2003 that provided basic education opportunities in marginalized Muslim communities. The targeted countries included Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ethiopia. Eritrea had been part of the original list, but was eliminated when USAID/Eritrea ended its operations. A summary of these programs include:

- **USAID/Ethiopia** implements various activities in Muslim-dominated areas particularly in Somali, Afar, and Oromia regions. The activities include support to pre-service and in-service teacher training to improve the quality of primary education; provision of capacity-building training for Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and community members to increase parent and community involvement in school management; building the capacity of education officers to improve the planning and management of the education system; and establishment and expansion of alternative basic education centers to provide non-formal primary education to children, especially girls, and adult literacy classes for illiterate Muslim men and women.

- **USAID/Kenya's** basic education program, Education for Marginalized Children in Kenya (EMACK), is concentrated in the North Eastern and Coast Provinces. Both Provinces have predominantly Muslim populations and the lowest education statistics in the country. This education portfolio began in 2004 with supplemental funding specifically targeted at Muslim communities. At the end of two years the project has had a tremendous impact on enrollment and retention. Over 100,000 children have been reached in the Coast Province. Approximately 250 Early Childhood Development Centers have been supported; over 2,000 teachers were trained in child-centered teaching methods. To date, the School Infrastructure Program has successfully built 107 classrooms, three dining halls, eight dormitories, and supplied 2,000 desks and 300 bunk-beds with mattresses.

- **USAID/Tanzania's** program focuses on strengthening primary school performance in general and secondary school performance in math and sciences over the next five years. USAID will focus basic education activities for under-served children (especially girls in Muslim and pastoral areas). The U.S. basic education initiative will provide training and materials to teachers and students, allowing thousands of Tanzanian students to receive textbooks written in Kiswahili and allowing girls to receive scholarships. U.S. resources will enable two programs to lay the groundwork over the next five years to: increase the number of girls receiving pre-school, primary, and secondary education; improve primary and secondary skills in math and science; and provide specialized training for teachers in math, science, English, and the needs of children with disabilities. USAID works with Muslim and pastoralist populations in geographic areas where there is little or no donor support.

- **USAID/Tanzania** will continue enhancing service delivery in Zanzibar, while adding two pilot districts (Lindi Urban and Mtwara Urban) on the southern Tanzanian mainland. Over 36,000 secondary, 64,000 primary, and 7,000 pre-primary school students will benefit from U.S. support targeting education delivery systems at local, district, and regional levels. In addition, an innovative radio instruction activity will focus on pre-primary and primary-level education. The radio instruction activity will establish 100 informal learning centers, and pilot radio instruction in 40 primary-school classrooms in Zanzibar. In addition, isolated communities in pastoralist areas will establish 70 Community Learning Centers providing equitable access to education for 14,000 children by FY-2008. Children will benefit from quality basic education in Kiswahili, English, math, social studies, science, and life skills.

- **USAID/Uganda** supports Madrassa Early Childhood Development (ECD), which targets poor communities and builds on existing informal early child education at selected community mosques. Through the Madrassa Resource Centre, communities are supported to establish and manage their own pre-schools by using intense community participation in pre-primary education. The education activities follow a unique structure that was exclusively designed for Madrassas in the Ugandan context. The project seeks to provide access to high quality, culturally relevant, and affordable early childhood education in order to increase the chances children from underprivileged communities will access and succeed in later formal education. To date, the project has achieved the following: 15 community schools have been mobilized and are participating in the program; 13 community schools are being supported post graduation to ensure the long-term sustainability of the pre-schools; 1,207 children are currently enrolled in the new schools and other schools supported by the ECD activity; 282 Schools Management Committee members received training on how to manage their schools; 120 ECD teachers have been trained in ECD methodologies; and 1,810 parents have been mobilized to send their children to the community schools.

In support of the **Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP):**

- **USAID/Mali's** basic education program focuses on supporting moderate madrassas and improving the quality of primary education for Mali's predominantly Muslim population. The program reinforces the Ministry of Education's management capacity; provides school-based and radio-based teacher training; develops interactive radio instruction for students; promotes adult literacy; and mobilizes communities to better manage and advocate for their local primary schools. In the three northern regions of the country, USAID provides scholarships for over 6,000 disadvantaged girls each year.

- **USAID/Senegal's** program aims at improving basic education in Koranic schools and currently benefits approximately 4,800 vulnerable children living and studying in these schools. The pilot activity, funded by TSCTP, was launched in late 2005. It supports improvements in the living, health, nutrition, and learning conditions of children in Koranic schools. It accomplishes this through the provision of: hot meals; basic learning materials such as pens, books, and notebooks; and first aid kits. The program also provides training to teachers on how to effectively teach languages, math, life skills, and health education. Vocational training is also offered in the areas of carpentry, sewing, masonry, and tannery. Over the past few months, the leaders of these schools have become increasingly receptive to incorporating secular education in their curriculum and in promoting better nutrition and hygiene among their students.

- USAID's efforts through the President's Africa Education Initiative (AEI) in **Niger, Chad, and Mauritania** complement the TSCTP's efforts to counter extremism and terrorism. In these countries, USAID has used the AEI's Ambassador Girls' Scholarship Program to improve access to quality education for girls and to engage parents and communities in the north of Mali and throughout Niger, Chad, and Mauritania.

While not part of EACTI or TSCTP, other countries have benefited from USAID's Africa Bureau's efforts to reach out to Muslim populations, including Somalia, Sudan, and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa and Nigeria in the West.

- **USAID/East Africa** has been supporting education programs in Somalia since 1994. The current education program uses radio to deliver high-quality, interactive instructional programs to marginalized children. The radio programs are currently being broadcast throughout Somalia, including in Mogadishu. The instructional radio program will target out-of-school youth and Koranic schools in Muslim communities.

- **USAID/Sudan** efforts are focused on the Three Areas and southern Sudan and engaging in national development. USAID continues to implement programs to enhance inter-religious peace-building through improving education access. Formal and non-formal programs focus on primary and girls' education, teacher training and institutional development, targeting out-of-school youth, women, girls, returnees, and other vulnerable groups. The USG is expediting the provision of primary education and adult literacy through radio-based instruction to provide a quality standard of learning both for students and teachers. Conflict resolution, recovery, and prevention are integrated to support the peace process.

- **USAID/Djibouti.** Since 2003, USAID has supported Djibouti's education reform program, to: increase access through school rehabilitation, renovating/build-

ing water and sanitation facilities, and the provision of textbooks, equipment and kits; improve quality through teacher training, development of teachers' and school principals' guides, provision of English Language teaching and teacher training for secondary and university levels, and construction and equipment of pedagogic resources centers, as well as improving supervision; and, improve community participation and increase girls' education through the provision of scholarships to 1,000 girls and non-formal education programs for out-of-school youth, especially girls. USAID collaborates with the U.S. Embassy and the Combined Joint Task Force/ Horn of Africa.

- **USAID/Nigeria** began support to the education sector in 1999. The first three-year program: focused on increasing teachers' instructional skills in English literacy and numeracy; used interactive radio instruction; increased community/PTA involvement in schools' management; increased child-focused classroom instructional methods; and increased local and state government skills in school-based data collection and use (this aspect evolved into the current Government of Nigeria's National model). Some 25 percent of participating schools were Islamic, the balance were public. The current program integrates health and education activities, focusing on increasing teachers' instructional skills in English literacy and numeracy. The use of interactive radio instruction increases community/PTA involvement in school management and addresses school health and nutrition issues.

In **Europe and Eurasia** the dissolution of the Soviet Union, followed by the creation of new independent countries in place of the former Soviet republics, and the drastic deterioration of the economic situation during the 1990s, forced many of the new governments to reduce drastically the country's share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allocated to the education sector. The economic downturn and the challenges of restructuring the economy and the education sector have been particularly severe in Tajikistan, which suffered from a five-year civil war (1992-97).

In 2003, to support the efforts of the Central Asian countries to reform the education sectors, USAID has implemented a regional education project in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. Although regional in implementation, the project takes into account the specific needs of each country and aims to utilize windows of opportunity as they arise.

The **Basic Education Strengthening Program (PEAKS)** focuses on five major aspects of the education system: in-service teacher training; classroom-level learning materials and textbook development; parent and community involvement in education decision making; management and technical capacity at all levels of the education system; and, rehabilitation of school infrastructure. The program is implemented in close collaboration with the respective Ministries of Education, Ministry of Finance, teacher training institutes, and other pedagogical and research institutions. USAID also facilitates donor-host country dialogue and collaborates with other donors to ensure complementary design and delivery of education activities.

Kyrgyzstan. Strengthening the ability of the education sector to deliver quality education relevant to the needs of market-based democracy will facilitate Kyrgyzstan's democratic transition and economic performance and competitiveness. USAID provides teacher training and resource development for 11 pilot schools, which in turn will serve as teacher training centers for 84 cluster schools. The Professional Development Schools (PDS) have been recognized by the Government of Kyrgyzstan as the alternate teacher training providers, a significant accomplishment in a country with a highly centralized educational system that does not readily look to alternate service providers. The Government of Kyrgyzstan pays a salary for a PDS coordinator. From the inception of the project, 90,268 students have benefited from this program and 12,062 teachers have received training. In addition, USAID funds the Kyrgyz National Scholarship Test, which helps to fight corruption by enabling high school graduates to receive merit-based scholarships for higher education.

Tajikistan. Keeping momentum towards democratic reform in Tajikistan is critical, and a strong education system is an important tool to support that goal. While the basic education project initially focused on primary grades that were considered in most urgent need of support, additional resources allowed the project to expand to cover grades 5-11 and to introduce the Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking Program. From the inception of the project, 53,105 students benefited from this program and 481 teachers received training.

In addition to the regionally implemented PEAKS project, USAID is also supporting a basic education project through the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). This project works in remote, mountainous areas where teachers seldom have access to professional development activities. As a result of teacher training improvements, teachers report increased attendance, return to school of students who stopped attending, and new motivation to study among the students. From its inception, the USAID-AKF project has benefited 5,000 students and trained 1,057 teachers.

Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan has taken the disturbing step of essentially eliminating upper secondary education by reducing the length of study to nine years instead of the standard ten years (under the Soviet system). In addition, the shift to the almost total reliance on the late President Niyazov's books (Rukhnama) as the primary curriculum, which emphasizes loyalty to the president and his spiritual teachings, has resulted in devastating deterioration of education quality and relevance and created a vast knowledge vacuum which will affect many generations to come. Young people under the age of 15 make up nearly 35 percent of the population in Turkmenistan - the second largest percentage of youth in the Europe and Eurasia region. As a result of the President Niyazov's education reforms,

upper secondary enrollments have fallen from 67 % to 27 % since 1991. This means that approximately one in four students aged 15 to 18 is enrolled in school.

Besides a small-scale UNICEF initiative in primary and secondary education, USAID has been the only other donor involved in education. Although the Government of Turkmenistan has not formally endorsed the program, it has allowed interested schools to work with the USAID-funded project. Assistance-to-date has focused on teacher training in interactive teaching and learning methods. Up to now, 57,335 students have benefited from the project and 533 teachers received training. The change of leadership following the death in 2006 of President Niyazov may create opportunities for broader engagement. President Berdimuhammedov announced that Turkmenistan will embark on reform to align the education system with international standards. If implemented, this may provide an opportunity for U.S. involvement in basic education reform.

Economic Reform

High unemployment and underemployment, often a result of slow economic growth, are among the most critical issues in predominantly Muslim countries. U.S. assistance programs attempt to address this issue with reforms to improve the investment climate. Such reforms could include business registration, dispute settlement, financial sector and agricultural reforms, combined with education, job training, and health programs.

The U.S. strategy of Total Economic Engagement pursues economic reform, rule of law, and global economic integration, including countries with predominantly Muslim populations. Total Economic Engagement includes:

- Regular bilateral discussions on these topics with host government officials, with both U.S. Embassy officials and officials from a wide range of U.S. agencies participating;
- Formal structured dialogues, high-level Economic Dialogues, and Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Councils;
- U.S. bilateral and multilateral assistance programs for economic reform, trade capacity-building, and rule of law managed chiefly through USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). Programs are often complemented with technical assistance provided by specialized U.S. agencies and offices;
- Coordinated multilateral policies and assistance strategies to advance reform goals by working with such international organizations as the (IMF, WB, World Trade Organization (WTO), and OECD (MENA-OECD Investment), and other multilateral donors; and
- Working with NGOs, such as Transparency International, and U.S. and foreign business associations, such as American Chambers of Commerce and Business Councils, to advance reform issues of mutual concern.

Integrating Predominantly Muslim Countries into the Global Trading System

There are a number of USG-funded programs to promote predominantly Muslim countries' integration into the global trading system and promotion of regional trade and rule of law.

WTO Awareness and Accession. FY-2007 USAID programs with components dealing with WTO awareness and accession are being implemented in Afghanistan ($9,000,000), Indonesia ($7,073,927), and Iraq ($2,222,830):

- **Afghanistan.** The Strengthening Private Sector through Capacity-building Project is designed to establish sound economic governance within the economic ministries and agencies of the Government of Afghanistan. Activities include customs operations and administration and other related reforms supporting progress toward WTO accession.
- **Indonesia.** The Trade Assistance Project focuses on legal support, economic research, public outreach, organizational development, information technology, and WTO awareness and agreements. The objective is to improve the Ministry of Trade's capacity to analyze and implement trade reforms that will lead to increased exports and a more attractive investment climate.
- **Iraq.** The Trade Policy and Market Access Support Project provides technical assistance to the Government of Iraq on legal, procedural, and practical matters pertaining to Iraq's bid to join the WTO. This includes technical assistance in completing key accession-relation documentation, in particular ACC4 (agriculture), ACC8 (sanitary and phytosanitary, technical barriers to trade), and ACC9 (intellectual property), and modifications and updates as WTO-related regulatory reforms progress.

USAID Global Export Promotion Programs. USAID global export promotion programs in FY-2007 include Afghanistan ($5,500,000), Bangladesh ($575,088), Indonesia ($3,131, 110), and Pakistan ($3,343,000):

- **Afghanistan.** The Small Medium Enterprise Development Project supports the development of the Afghan private sector by addressing non-governmental barriers to enterprise development. Key activities include strengthening business associations through support of trade fairs, trade missions, and participation of leading small and medium enterprises and associations.
- **Bangladesh.** The Shrimp Quality Support Project focuses on improving the quality and quantity of

shrimp exports by Bangladesh in socially and environmentally acceptable ways by transferring appropriate applied research to farmers.

- **Indonesia.** The Enterprise and Agribusiness Development Activity supports the competitiveness of labor-intensive manufacturing industries, including footwear, furniture, auto parts, garments, home accessories, and information and communications technology. Competitiveness is strengthened by strengthening industry value chains, developing new industry-based standards to improve product quality and access to markets, and improving business skills, such as export readiness.

- **Pakistan.** The Initiative for Strategic Development and Competitiveness provides technical assistance and training to increase the competitiveness of Pakistani small and medium-sized enterprises. The project works with a number of sectors, including gems, jewelry, dairy, marble, horticulture, and furniture to improve their capacity to market and export their products. The project has formed six strategic working groups to develop sector-specific strategies aimed at upgrading production and improving marketing and trade.

Customs Reforms. Customs reforms are supported by USAID FY-2007 programs in Egypt ($5,000,000), Afghanistan ($9,000,000, previously mentioned), and Indonesia ($7,073,927, previously mentioned).

USfrica Bureau Programs. Programs managed within the USAID Africa Bureau include Sub-Saharan integration into the global trading system, the driving forces of which are the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the President's Initiative - African Global Competitiveness Initiative (AGCI).

Program efforts are focused on helping countries build a sound enabling environment including policies, laws, and regulations governing business and trade; improving infrastructure to facilitate trade; strengthening financial services to small and medium-sized enterprises and other businesses; and developing the energy sector to meet the needs of growing African economies.

USAID Europe and Eurasia Bureau Programs.

Albania. The objective in Albania is to strengthen its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community and promote its contribution to ethnic integration in the region. USAID/Albania's programs worked with the government to improve the business climate for private sector growth and investment, and to improve private sector competitiveness to meet international export requirements.

The Albanian Center for International Trade, founded in 2003, assists the Government of Albania to improve the quality of its trade policies. The Enterprise Development and Export Market Services Project, scheduled to run through September 2008, promotes the competitiveness of small and medium Albanian enterprises in domestic and foreign markets, and accelerates the entry of Albanian exports into global markets.

Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's program emphasizes economic growth and reform, with a focus on developing the non-oil sectors of the economy.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The program in BiH supports progress towards full integration into the EU. USAID/BiH worked to integrate the energy sector into the regional European framework and supported the development and implementation of a coherent direct taxation system that is regionally competitive. USAID's competitiveness projects promote trade and investment in agribusiness, wood processing, and tourism by improving the competitiveness of the firms, industries, and training firms to meet EU standards.

Central Asia Region. The Trade Facilitation and Investment (TFI) Project has been operating in Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic since 2001 and in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan since 2002. The project seeks to improve the trade and investment environment for small and medium-sized enterprises through the reduction of investment constraints, trade facilitation, and accession to and active participation in the WTO (Kyrgyz Republic joined in 1998).

Building on USAID's TFI Project, the **U.S. Central Asia Trade Facilitation Initiative** works to foster greater regional trade through reduced transaction costs for businesses by harmonizing, strengthening, and streamlining customs functions.

The **Business Environment Improvement Project (BEI)** was launched for Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan in October 2006. This program supports the streamlining of legal and regulatory processes, and facilitates multi-party engagement to improve the business, trade, and legal environment. The Central Asia Infrastructure Integration Initiative, under the Regional Electricity Market Assistance Project (REMAP), helps to establish a transparent and competitive regional electricity market to increase regional electricity trade, stimulate economic growth, and provide market-based solutions for regional disputes related to hydro facilities and reservoirs.

Kazakhstan. The TFI Project operates five offices in Kazakhstan and was directly involved in the drafting of Kazakhstan's Customs Code, bringing the country into greater compliance with WTO principles and agreements. TFI is also financing the training of front-line customs officers in the identification and seizure of pirated goods to help Kazakhstan meet the standards of the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and achieve removal from the Special 301 Watch List, both of which will help Kazakhstan's accession process to the WTO. The Kazakhstan Small Business Development Project, funded in October 2006, aims to promote development of small business, resulting in an increase of sales domestically and regionally.

Kosovo. The objective in Kosovo is to strengthen its integration into the Euro-Atlantic community and promote its contribution to ethnic integration in the region. USAID's goal is to help Kosovo make the transition from international administration to self-governance in an effective and peaceful manner.

USAID provides training and expert counsel to ensure Kosovars quickly build capacity in the fiscal and economic policy sectors, private enterprise development, and energy management. One such program is the Cluster and Business Support Project, assisting businesses in the construction materials, livestock, and fruit and vegetables sectors by promoting productivity, trade and investment, identifying trade, marketing, and import-substitution opportunities; and providing training to meet EU standards.

Kyrgyz Republic. The TFI Project provides support to the WTO Department within the Kyrgyz Ministry of Economic Development and Industry & Trade (MEDIT), to increase its technical capacity in the legal and regulatory process. The Kyrgyz Agri-Enterprise Development Program works closely with the USAID Ferghana Valley Agribusiness Initiative, and provides development assistance to private agricultural-input suppliers that share the Ferghana Valley with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Tajikistan. The TFI Project works directly with the Tajik government to prepare it to meet its WTO commitments by revising and updating the Legislative Action Plan to bring trade-related legislation into conformity with the provisions of WTO Agreements.

Patent, copyright, trademark, and geographic indication legislation are revised to reach conformity with the provisions of the TRIPS Agreement. USAID's programs support small and medium enterprise development, customs reform, and the creation of agricultural value chains. Fiscal reform projects focus on reducing regional disparities by increasing the effectiveness of local tax administration and increasing the capacity of local governments to develop and execute budgets.

Turkmenistan. USAID works to foster trade advisory services and implement International Financial Reporting Standards in Turkmenistan.

Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe (SP). The SP has several relevant programs related to global trade that affect parts of the region with significant Muslim populations, including Albania, BiH, and Kosovo. The SP's Trade Working Group has encouraged the negotiation, ratification, and implementation of a network of bilateral free trade agreements among the members of the SP and supports negotiation of a single regional trade agreement aimed at harmonizing the bilateral trade agreements to encompass all SP members. The United States supports this process by providing technical assistance to lower non-tariff barriers within the region, consistent with WTO principles.

Under SP auspices, the OECD Investment Compact for Southeastern Europe aims to improve the region's investment conditions, by setting out commitments for policy reform and to encourage increasing local and foreign direct investment. Albania and BiH (among other Southeastern Europe nations) are signatories.

Possible Actions to Promote Intraregional Trade and Rule of Law in the Region

Supporting intraregional trade and rule of law is a key aspect of U.S. policy in the Middle East and around the world.

Intraregional Trade

- The President's vision of a Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) by 2013, linking countries in the region with each other and the United States, is the centerpiece of our effort to promote intraregional trade. Our strategy for attaining MEFTA includes: Negotiating Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with countries ready for that step. The United States has concluded FTAs with Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain, and Oman; Working with additional countries through the TIFA process to advance readiness for FTA negotiations; and Assisting reform-minded Middle East countries that are not yet in the WTO accession process.

- The MEPI, MCC, and USAID Missions in the Middle East, provide support for the MEFTA initiative through a variety of programs in trade capacity-building. MEPI and USAID missions in the Middle East are supporting the WTO accession efforts of Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon. USG assistance programs assist FTA partners Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain, and Oman with free trade implementation with the United States.

- USAID/Jordan's Business Development Center supports implementation of the FTA between the United States and Jordan, and assists small and medium-sized firms to modernize and improve their competitiveness so they can move into higher value sectors and take advantage of FTA export opportunities. FY-2007 funding is $840,220.

- USAID/Morocco's New Business Opportunities (NBO) Program helps export-oriented Moroccan firms to take advantage of new opportunities for entry and expansion into the United States created by the Morocco-U.S. Free Trade Agreement. NBO includes business development services that help exporting firms to identify new market opportunities, and then work to improve their marketing and promotion to turn these opportunities into exports to the United States. FY-2007 funding is $3,343,000.

The Rule of Law

- The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) will continue to support rule of law activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of regional governments to enact and implement commercial laws conducive to

promoting economic growth. By working with legislators, judges, lawyers, and business persons, improvements in the commercial legal and regulatory environment focused on international best practices should lead to increased investment and employment across the region.

- Egypt. USAID's Administration of Justice Support II project promotes the rule of law by reforming and modernizing the commercial court system and improving the access to quality legal services. FY-2007 funding is $3,700,000.

- Indonesia. USAID's Financial Crime Prevention Project (FCPP) is designed to strengthen Indonesia's ability to combat financial crimes. FCPP provides technical assistance to the FIU (PPATK), Supreme Audit Commission, Attorney General's Office, Corruption Eradication Commission, and Ministry of Finance-Inspector General Office. FCPP's work aids Indonesia's own efforts to build a more modern legal and institutional framework to detect and prosecute corruption and financial crimes. FY-2007 funding is $254,132.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The MCC provides assistance for transformational development in countries that perform well on 17 independent, transparent policy indicators in the areas of ruling justly, investing in people, and economic freedom. Besides the financial support provided by MCC programs, MCC selection criteria creates an incentive for candidate countries to adopt related legal, policy, regulatory, and institutional reforms related to the MCC selection criteria. Such reforms will contribute to countries' efforts to reduce poverty and increase economic growth.

Summary of MCC Activities in Predominantly Muslim Countries:

Compact-Eligible Countries. Based on their good performance on the 17 policy indicators mentioned above, Compact-Eligible countries are invited to apply for substantial grants from MCC for programs that they design and implement through a "Compact."

Mali. Mali signed a five-year, $460.8 million Compact with MCC in November 2006 which entered into force in September 2007. It aims to reduce rural poverty and help achieve national food security through a sustainable increase in the economic performance of the agricultural sector, and to spur economic growth and reduce poverty by increasing the competitiveness of light industry and increasing the value-added of exports and tourism. These objectives will be met through investments that increase farmers' productivity, enhance agricultural supply chains, reduce transport costs, and create a platform for industry. The Compact focuses on improved infrastructure at the Bamako Airport, a key gateway for trade, and along the Niger River for irrigated agriculture.

Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso submitted an initial Compact proposal to MCC in October 2006. It aims to promote economic growth in the rural sector by fostering land tenure security; investing in irrigation and watershed management infrastructure for agricultural purposes; constructing national roads, feeder roads, and market infrastructure; and improving existing agro-industrial supply chains. While MCC continues due diligence, it granted the government $9.43 million in pre-Compact assistance in December 2007 to cover preparatory work and fees.

Morocco. Morocco signed a five-year, $697.5 million Compact with MCC on August 31, 2007. The Compact focuses on relieving constraints to growth in the agriculture, fishing, artisan, and small enterprise finance sectors. Entry into force is pending.

Threshold Programs are designed to assist countries that have demonstrated significant commitment to improving their performance on MCC selection criteria, but do not yet pass more than half the indicators in each of the three selection categories of ruling justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom. A Threshold Program provides financial assistance to help improve a low score on at least one of MCC's policy indicators.

Albania. Reducing corruption is the primary focus of the $13.8 million Albanian program that began in April 2006. Albania is receiving assistance from MCC to fund three programs designed to reform tax administration, public procurement, and business administration. The program anticipates reducing the extensive red tape and below-board payments needed to start a business while increasing the national tax base.

Burkina Faso. The $12.9 million program, signed in July 2005, is a pilot program that seeks to improve performance on girls' primary education completion rates. Specific interventions include the construction of 132 "girl-friendly" schools, teacher training, providing take-home dry rations to girls who maintain a 90 percent school attendance rate, and providing literacy training for mothers. Burkina Faso is also eligible for Compact assistance.

Indonesia. The $55 million program with Indonesia, begun in November 2006, seeks to immunize at least 80 percent of children under the age of one for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis, and 90 percent of all children for measles. The Threshold Program also has a component aimed at curbing public corruption by reforming the judiciary and strengthening government institutions that fight corruption.

Jordan. The $25 million Jordanian program, signed in October 2006, aims to strengthen democratic institutions by supporting Jordan's efforts to broaden public participation in the political and electoral process, increasing government transparency and accountability, and enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of customs administration. The Threshold Program is a part of Jordan's reform efforts focused on improvements in public administration, civil liberties, infrastructure, and the economy.

Kyrgyz Republic. The Kyrgyz Republic $16 million Threshold Program was approved in August 2007 to help the Kyrgyz government fight corruption and improve the rule of law through judicial, criminal justice, and law enforcement reforms. As of December 2007, the implementing agreement (SOAG) was pending signature.

Yemen. In February, the Republic of Yemen was reinstated into the Threshold Program based on the Yemeni government's efforts to address the country's performance on the MCC selection criteria.

On September 12, the MCC Board approved a $20.6 million grant to Yemen to help it fight corruption and improve rule of law, political rights, and fiscal policy. However, signing of a Threshold agreement, originally scheduled for October 31, has been indefinitely deferred pending MCC review of Yemen's status.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). In 2007, MEPI provided tangible support to reformers in the region so democracy could spread, education could thrive, economies could grow, and women could be empowered. Working in 16 countries and the Palestinian territories, MEPI invested in programs ranging from trade technical assistance to commercial code reform to a network for Arab business women.

Examples of MEPI's work with reformers include the following:

- Provided technical and other assistance in support of successfully completed free trade agreements with Bahrain and Oman; Trade and Investment agreements with Kuwait, Qatar, Tunisia, and Egypt; and supported WTO accession for Yemen, Algeria, and Lebanon;
- Expanded trade capacity of Arab countries with training and technical assistance, including assisting a number of Gulf and North African countries with revising their labor codes, and updating intellectual property codes, customs codes, and agricultural import/export standards;
- Expanded efforts to strengthen indigenous labor and business organizations;
- Provided entrepreneurial training for more than 400 participants, almost half of them women, from 16 Middle Eastern and North African countries, with 50 alumni going on to start or expand businesses. These entrepreneurs created at least 1,000 new jobs following their participation in MEPI programs;
- Extended credit and services to small- and medium-sized businesses through peer consultation and training for regional banks and financial organizations;
- Established self-sustaining Junior Achievement chapters in 12 countries throughout the Middle East, with more than 10,000 students participating. Created public-private partnerships that assisted in the sustainability of Junior Achievement chapters; and
- Expanded commercial and legal reform efforts in the Gulf by working to update legal curricula at law schools in Qatar and Oman, update commercial codes to meet international standards in Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman, and provide continuing education programs for the judiciary.

FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) aliases cited are consistent with and drawn from the Specially Designated Nationals list maintained by the Department of Treasury. The full list can be found at the following website: http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/sdn/sdnlist.txt.

On October 15, 1999, pursuant to UNSCR 1267, the "al-Qa'ida and Taliban Sanctions Committee" was established. The 1267 sanctions regime has been modified and strengthened by subsequent resolutions so that the sanctions now cover individuals and entities associated with al-Qa'ida, Usama bin Ladin, and the Taliban. The targeted individuals and entities are placed on the Consolidated List. The full list can be found at the following website: http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/consolist.shtml.

Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)

a.k.a. Arab Revolutionary Brigades; Arab Revolutionary Council; Black September; Fatah Revolutionary Council; Revolutionary Organization of Socialist Muslims

Description: The Abu Nidal Organization (ANO), an international terrorist organization, was founded by Sabri al-Banna (a.k.a. Abu Nidal) after splitting from the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1974. The group's previous known structure consisted of various functional committees, including political, military, and financial. In August 2002, Abu Nidal died in Baghdad, probably at the hands of Iraqi security officials; the new leadership of the organization remains unclear.

Activities: The ANO has carried out terrorist attacks in 20 countries, killing or injuring almost 900 persons. The group has not staged a major attack against Western targets since the late 1980s. Major attacks included the Rome and Vienna airports in 1985, the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul, the hijacking of Pan Am Flight 73 in Karachi in 1986, and the City of Poros day-excursion ship attack in Greece in 1988. The ANO is suspected of assassinating PLO deputy chief Abu Iyad and PLO security Chief Abu Hul in Tunis in 1991. The ANO conducted no attacks in 2007.

Strength: Current strength is unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: The group is largely considered inactive, although former and possibly current ANO associates might be in Iraq and Lebanon.

External Aid: The ANO's current access to resources is unclear, but it is likely that the decline in state support has had a severe impact on its capabilities.

Abu Sayyaf Group

a.k.a. Al Harakat al Islamiyya

Description: The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) is an Islamic terrorist group operating in the southern Philippines. Some ASG leaders allegedly fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion and are students and proponents of radical Islamic teachings. The group split from the much larger Moro National Liberation Front in the early 1990s under the leadership of Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, who was killed in a clash with Philippine police in December 1998. His younger brother, Khadaffy Janjalani, replaced him as the nominal leader of the group. In September 2006, Janjalani was killed in a gun battle with the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Radullah Sahiron is assumed to be the new ASG leader.

Activities: The ASG engages in kidnappings for ransom, bombings, beheadings, assassinations, and extortion. The group's stated goal is to promote an independent Islamic state in western Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago, areas in the southern Philippines heavily populated by Muslims, but the ASG primarily has used terror for financial profit. Recent bombings may herald a return to a more radical, politicized agenda, at least among certain factions. In August 2006, the Armed Forces of the Philippines began "Operation Ultimatum," a sustained campaign that disrupted ASG forces in safe havens on Jolo Island in the Sulu archipelago, and resulted in the killing of ASG leader Khadaffy Janjalani in September 2006 and his deputy, Abu Solaiman in January 2007. In July 2007, the ASG, and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) engaged a force of Philippine marines on Basilan Island, killing fourteen, of which ten were beheaded.

The group's first large-scale action was a raid on the town of Ipil in Mindanao in April 1995. In April 2000, an ASG faction kidnapped 21 persons, including ten Western tourists, from a resort in Malaysia. In May 2001, the ASG kidnapped three U.S. citizens and 17 Filipinos from a tourist resort in Palawan, Philippines. Several of the hostages, including U.S. citizen Guillermo Sobero, were murdered. A Philippine military hostage rescue operation in June 2002 freed U.S. hostage Gracia Burnham, but her husband Martin Burnham and Filipina Deborah Yap were killed.

U.S. and Philippine authorities blamed the ASG for a bomb near a Philippine military base in Zamboanga in October 2002 that killed a U.S. serviceman. In February 2004, Khadaffy Janjalani's faction bombed SuperFerry 14 in Manila Bay, killing 132. In March 2004, Philippine authorities arrested an ASG cell whose bombing targets included the U.S. Embassy in Manila. The ASG also claimed responsibility for the 2005 Valentine's Day bombings in Manila, Davao City, and General Santos City, which killed eight and injured more than 150. In November 2007, a motorcycle bomb exploded outside the Philippines Congress, killing a congressman and three staff members. While there was no definitive claim of responsibility, three suspected ASG members were arrested during a subsequent raid on a safe house.

Strength: ASG is estimated to have 200 to 500 members.

Location/Area of Operation: The ASG was founded in Basilan Province and operates primarily in the provinces of the Sulu Archipelago, namely Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. The group also operates on the Zamboanga peninsula, and members occasionally travel to Manila. In mid-2003, the group started operating in Mindanao's city of Cotobato and on the provincial coast of Sultan Kudarat, Mindanao. The ASG was expelled from Mindanao proper by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in mid-2005. The group expanded its operational reach to Malaysia in 2000 with the abduction of foreigners from a tourist resort there.

External Aid: The ASG is funded through acts of ransom and extortion, and receives funding from both regional terrorist groups such as Jemaah Islamiya (JI), which is based mainly in Indonesia, and from Middle Eastern Islamic extremists. In October, the ASG appealed for funds and recruits on YouTube by featuring a video of the Janjalani brothers before they were killed.

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade

a.k.a. al-Aqsa Martyrs Battalion

Description: The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade consists of loose cells of Palestinian militants loyal to, but not under the direct control of the secular-nationalist Fatah movement. Al-Aqsa emerged at the outset of the 2000 Palestinian al-Aqsa intifada as a militant offshoot of the Fatah party to attack Israeli military targets and settlers with the aim of driving Israel from the West Bank and Gaza and establishing a Palestinian state. Al-Aqsa has no central leadership; the cells operate with autonomy, although they remained ideologically loyal to Palestinian Authority (PA) President and Fatah party head Yassir Arafat until his death in November 2004.

Activities: Al-Aqsa initially focused on small arms attacks against Israeli military personnel and settlers in the West Bank. In 2002, however, the group began to conduct suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. Al-Aqsa suspended most anti-Israel attacks as part of the broader unilateral Palestinian ceasefire agreement during 2004 but resumed them following HAMAS's victory in January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council elections. Al-Aqsa members continued the anti-Israeli and intra-Palestinian

violence that contributes to the overall chaotic security environment in the Palestinian territories. In 2007, the majority of al-Aqsa attacks were rocket and mortar attacks into southern Israel from HAMAS-ruled Gaza. Israel agreed to extend a conditional pardon to 178 West Bank al-Aqsa members, but did not expand the program to the rest of the organization. Al-Aqsa has not targeted U.S. interests as a policy, although its anti-Israeli attacks have killed some dual U.S.-Israeli citizens.

Strength: Current strength is unknown, but most likely numbers a few hundred.

Location/Area of Operation: Al-Aqsa operates mainly in the West Bank but has conducted attacks inside Israel and Gaza.

External Aid: Iran has exploited al-Aqsa's lack of resources and formal leadership by providing funds and other aid, mostly through Hizballah facilitators.

Ansar al-Islam

a.k.a. Ansar al-Sunna; Ansar Al-Sunnah Army; Devotees of Islam; Followers of Islam in Kurdistan; Helpers of Islam; Jaish Ansar Al-Sunnah; Jund Al-Islam; Kurdish Taliban; Kurdistan Supporters of Islam; Partisans of Islam; Soldiers of God; Soldiers of Islam; Supporters of Islam in Kurdistan

Description: Ansar al-Sunnah (AS) is a Salafi terrorist group whose goals include expelling the U.S.-led Coalition from Iraq and establishing an independent Iraqi state based on Sharia law. In 2003, AS announced its creation by posting a statement on the Internet calling all extremists in Iraq to unite under the new name. The bid to become an extremist umbrella organization failed, but the name AS remained in use until November, when it changed its name back to Ansar al-Islam (AI).

AI has ties to the al-Qa'ida (AQ) central leadership and to al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), although it has a competitive relationship with AQI, and did not join the AQI-dominated "Islamic State of Iraq." Some members of AI trained in AQ camps in Afghanistan, and the group provided safe haven to affiliated terrorists before Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

Since OIF, AI has become the second-most prominent group engaged in anti-Coalition attacks in Iraq behind AQI and has maintained a strong propaganda campaign. Despite AI's ties to AQ, the group does not seem to be interested in attacking targets outside Iraq.

Activities: AI continued to conduct attacks against a wide range of targets including Coalition Forces, the Iraqi government and security forces, and Kurdish and Shia figures. AI has claimed responsibility for many high profile attacks, including the execution-style killing of nearly two dozen Yazidi civilians in Mosul in reprisal for the stoning death of a Muslim convert in April, the car-bombing of a police convoy in Kirkuk in July, the suicide bombing of Kurdistan Democratic Party offices in Khursbat in October, and numerous kidnappings, executions, and assassinations.

Strength: Precise numbers are unknown. AI is one of the largest Sunni terrorist groups in Iraq.

Location/Area of Operation: Primarily central, western, and northern Iraq.

External Aid: AI receives assistance from unknown sources.

Armed Islamic Group (GIA)

a.k.a. Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Musallah, Groupement Islamique Arme

Description: The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) aims to overthrow the Algerian regime and replace it with a state governed by Sharia law. The GIA began its violent activity in 1992 after the military government suspended legislative elections in anticipation of an overwhelming victory by the Islamic Salvation Front, the largest Algerian Islamic opposition party.

Activities: The GIA engaged in attacks against civilians and government workers. The group began conducting a terrorist campaign of civilian massacres in 1992, sometimes wiping out entire villages and killing tens of thousands of Algerians, alienating itself from the Algerian populace. Since announcing its campaign against foreigners living in Algeria in 1992, the GIA killed more than 100 expatriate men and women, mostly Europeans, in the country. Many of the GIA's members joined other Islamist groups or have been killed or captured by the Algerian government.

The government's September 2005 reconciliation program led to an increase in the number of GIA terrorist suspects who surrendered to security forces. The GIA's most recent significant attacks occurred in August 2001.

After the arrest of the GIA's last known emir and subsequent counterterrorism operations, the Algerian government declared that the GIA network was almost entirely broken up. The last terror attack attributed to the GIA occurred in 2006.

Strength: Precise numbers are unknown, but the group continues to decline and probably numbers fewer than 40. The last known emir was Nourredine Boudiafi, who was arrested by Algerian authorities in November 2005.

Location/Area of Operation: Algeria, the Sahel, and Europe.

External Aid: GIA members in Europe provide funding, but most funding comes from the group members' criminal activity.

Asbat al-Ansar

Description: Asbat al-Ansar is a Lebanon-based Sunni extremist group composed primarily of Palestinians with links to the al-Qa'ida (AQ) organization and other Sunni extremist groups. The group follows an extremist interpretation of Islam that justifies violence against civilian targets to achieve political ends. Some of the group's goals include thwarting perceived anti-Islamic and pro-Western influences in the country.

Activities: Asbat al-Ansar maintains close ties with the AQ network, with its base of operations in the Ain al-Hilwah Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon. Lebanese authorities detained a cell of al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) extremists in June in the Bekaa Valley that had trained with Asbat al-Ansar and was possibly planning terrorist attacks throughout Lebanon against United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) or other Western targets. Asbat al-Ansar has recently been reluctant to involve itself in operations in Lebanon due in part to concerns over losing its safe haven in Ain al-Hilwah. Various extremist web forums criticized Asbat al-Ansar for its failure to support fellow Sunni extremist group Fatah al-Islam (FAI) during the Lebanese Armed Forces campaign in summer 2007 that forced FAI out of Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in northern Lebanon, and severely damaged the group.

Members of Asbat al-Ansar were believed responsible for a Katyusha rocket attack on the Galilee region of Israel in December 2005. Asbat al-Ansar operatives have been involved in fighting Coalition Forces in Iraq since at least 2005 and several members of the group have been killed in anti-Coalition operations. Al-Sa'di was working in cooperation with Abu Muhammad al-Masri, the head of al-Qa'ida at the 'Ayn al-Hilwah refugee camp, where fighting has occurred between Asbat al-Ansar and Fatah elements. In 2007, Asbat al-Ansar remained focused on supporting jihad in Iraq and planning attacks against UNIFIL, Lebanese security forces, and U.S. and Western interests. Asbat al-Ansar-associated elements were implicated in the June 17 Katyusha rocket attack against northern Israel.

Asbat al-Ansar first emerged in the early 1990s. In the mid-1990s the group assassinated Lebanese religious leaders and bombed nightclubs, theaters, and liquor stores. It was involved in clashes in northern Lebanon in December 1999, and carried out a rocket-propelled grenade attack on the Russian Embassy in Beirut in January 2000. Asbat al-Ansar's leader, Ahmad Abd al-Karim al-Sa'di, a.k.a. Abu Muhjin, remains at large despite being sentenced to death in absentia for the 1994 murder of a Muslim cleric. In September 2004, operatives with links to the group were allegedly involved in planning terrorist operations targeting the Italian Embassy, the Ukrainian Consulate General, and Lebanese government offices. In October 2004, Mahir al-Sa'di, a member of Asbat al-Ansar, was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment for plotting to assassinate then U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, David Satterfield, in 2000.

Strength: The group commands between 100 and 300 fighters in Lebanon. Its named leader is Ahmed Abd al-Karim al-Saadi.

Location/Area of Operation: The group's primary base of operations is the Ayn al-Hilwah Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon in southern Lebanon.

External Aid: It is likely the group receives money through international Sunni extremist networks.

Aum Shinrikyo

a.k.a. A.I.C. Comprehensive Research Institute; A.I.C. Sogo Kenkyusho; Aleph; Aum Supreme Truth

Description: Shoko Asahara established Aum Shinrikyo (Aum) in 1987, and the cult received legal status as a religious entity in 1989. Initially, Aum aimed to take over Japan and then the world, but over time it began to emphasize the imminence of the end of the world. Asahara predicted 1996, and 1999 to 2003, as likely dates and said that the United States would initiate Armageddon by starting World War III with Japan. The Japanese government revoked its recognition of Aum as a religious organization following Aum's deadly sarin gas attack in Tokyo in March 1995. In 1997, however, a government panel decided not to invoke the Operations Control Law to outlaw the group. A 1999 law authorized the Japanese government to maintain police surveillance over the group because of concerns Aum might launch future terrorist attacks. Under the leadership of Fumihiro Joyu, the chief of Aum's once thriving Moscow operation, Aum changed its name to Aleph in January 2000 and tried to distance itself from the violent and apocalyptic teachings of its founder. In late 2003, however, Joyu stepped down under pressure from members who wanted to return fully to the worship of Asahara. A growing divide between members supporting Joyu and Asahara emerged. In 2007, Joyu officially split and in May, established a splinter group called Hikari No Wa. Hikari No Wa is translated as 'Circle of Light' or 'Ring of Light.' Japanese authorities continued to monitor both Aum (now called Aleph) and Hikari No Wa.

Activities: In March 1995, Aum members simultaneously released the chemical nerve agent sarin on several Tokyo subway trains, killing 12 persons and causing up to 6,000 to seek medical treatment. Subsequent investigations by the Japanese government revealed the group was responsible for other mysterious chemical incidents in Japan in 1994, including a sarin gas attack on a residential neighborhood in Matsumoto that killed seven and hospitalized approximately 500. Japanese police arrested Asahara in May 1995, and in February 2004 authorities sentenced him to death for his role in the 1995 attacks. In September 2006, Asahara lost his final appeal against the death penalty.

Since 1997, the cult has recruited new members, engaged in commercial enterprises, and acquired property, although it scaled back these activities significantly in

2001 in response to a public outcry. In July 2001, Russian authorities arrested a group of Russian Aum followers who had planned to set off bombs near the Imperial Palace in Tokyo as part of an operation to free Asahara from jail and smuggle him to Russia.

Strength: Aum's current membership in Japan is estimated to be about 1,500 persons, according to a study by the Japanese government issued in December. At the time of the Tokyo subway attack, the group claimed to have as many as 40,000 members worldwide, including 9,000 in Japan and 30,000 members in Russia.

Location/Area of Operation: Aum's principal membership is located in Japan, while a residual branch of about 300 followers live in Russia.

External Aid: None.

Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)

a.k.a. Askatasuna; Batasuna; Ekin; Euskal Herritarrok; Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna; Herri Batasuna; Jarrai-Haika-Segi; K.A.S.; XAKI

Description: Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) was founded in 1959 with the aim of establishing an independent homeland based on Marxist principles encompassing the Spanish Basque provinces of Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa, and Alava, the autonomous region of Navarra, and the southwestern French territories of Labourd, Basse-Navarre, and Soule. Spain and the EU both have listed ETA as a terrorist organization; in 2002 the Spanish Parliament banned the political party Batasuna, ETA's political wing, charging its members with providing material support to the terrorist group. In 2004, Spain and France formed a joint counterterrorism and judicial unit to combat ETA and Islamic terrorist groups. During 2005 and 2006, police in both countries together arrested around 100 individuals associated with ETA, dismantled several of the group's cells, and dealt a significant blow to its operational capability. Spanish and French prisons are estimated to hold a total of more than 500 ETA members. In March 2006, days after claiming responsibility for a spate of roadside blasts in northern Spain that caused no injuries, ETA announced that it would implement a "permanent" cease-fire. However, on December 30, 2006, ETA exploded a massive car-bomb that destroyed much of the covered parking garage outside the new Terminal 4 of Madrid's Barajas International Airport. Two individuals killed in the blast became ETA's first fatalities in more than three years. The Spanish Government suspended talks with ETA, and government officials later said political negotiations with the group had ended.

Activities: Since the beginning of 2007, the group has been suspected of conducting numerous arson and incendiary attacks against government, financial, and civilian targets using various youth organizations as a proxy. ETA claimed several bombings: one in late July, on a road targeting the Tour de France that caused no damage; a car bombing in late August targeting a police station that wounded two police officers and damaged the building; a bombing in early September on a road that caused no damage; an attempted car-bombing on a Defense Ministry building in early September that failed due to a technical fault; and a bombing in late September at another police station that damaged the building but caused no injuries. ETA was also suspected of a car bombing in early October that wounded the bodyguard of a local government official, although the group has not yet claimed responsibility.

ETA formally renounced its "permanent" cease-fire in June, and in early September threatened a wave of attacks throughout Spain. Following indications in mid-2007 that the group may have expanded into Portugal its logistical operations, such as renting vehicles, Madrid and Lisbon agreed, in October, to intensify their cooperation against ETA by establishing a joint antiterrorism team based in Lisbon. In December, ETA murdered two Civil Guard officials in southern France, the first ETA killings in France since 1976. Several days later, the group threatened to open a new front in France against Spanish authorities. Also in December, Spanish and French authorities agreed to create a permanent joint police investigation team to fight ETA.

ETA primarily conducts bombings and assassinations; targets are typically Spanish government officials, security and military forces, politicians, and judicial figures, but the group also has targeted journalists and tourist areas. The group is responsible for killing more than 800 and injuring thousands more since it began its lethal attacks in the late 1960s.

Security service scrutiny and a public outcry after the Islamic extremist train bombings in Madrid in March 2004, have limited ETA's capability and willingness to inflict casualties. In February 2005, ETA detonated a car bomb in Madrid at a convention center where Spanish King Juan Carlos and then Mexican President Vicente Fox were scheduled to appear, wounding more than 20 people. ETA also detonated an explosive device at a stadium constructed as part of Madrid's bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games; there were no injuries in that attack. ETA's late 2006 attack at Madrid's airport is the group's first fatal attack since March 2003.

Strength: According to Spanish security forces quoted in the press in mid-2007, ETA has about 100 active members; this number was reduced in 2007 as a result of the number of arrested by Spanish and French authorities.

Location/Area of Operation: ETA operates primarily in the Basque autonomous regions of northern Spain and southwestern France, but also has attacked Spanish and French interests elsewhere.

External Aid: ETA finances its activities primarily through bribery and extortion of Basque businesses. It has received training at various times in the past in Libya, Lebanon, and Nicaragua. Some ETA members allegedly

fled to Cuba and Mexico, while others reside in South America. ETA members have operated and been arrested in other European countries, including France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the UK, Germany, and Portugal.

Communist Party of Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA)

a.k.a. Communist Party of the Philippines; CPP; New People's Army; NPA

Description: The military wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA), is a Maoist group formed in March 1969 with the aim of overthrowing the government through protracted guerrilla warfare. Jose Maria Sison, the chairman of the CPP's Central Committee and the NPA's founder, reportedly directs CPP and NPA activity from the Netherlands, where he lives in self-imposed exile. Luis Jalandoni, a fellow Central Committee member and director of the CPP's overt political wing, the National Democratic Front (NDF), also lives in the Netherlands and has become a Dutch citizen. Although primarily a rural-based guerrilla group, the NPA has an active urban infrastructure to support its terrorist activities and at times uses city-based assassination squads.

In September, Sison was briefly arrested in the Netherlands but was released on a judge's order a few days later. In November, the Armed Forces of the Philippines announced the capture of Elizabeth Principe, a suspected member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

Activities: The NPA primarily targets Philippine security forces, government officials, local infrastructure, and businesses that refuse to pay extortion, or "revolutionary taxes." The NPA charges politicians running for office in NPA-influenced areas for "campaign permits." The group opposes any U.S. military presence in the Philippines and has attacked U.S. military interests; it killed several U.S. service personnel before the U.S. base closures in 1992. The NPA claimed responsibility for the assassination of two congressmen, one from Quezon in May 2001 and one from Cagayan in June 2001, among other killings. Periodic peace talks with the Philippine government stalled after these incidents. In December 2005, the NPA publicly expressed its intent to target U.S. personnel if they were discovered in NPA operating areas.

Strength: Estimated at less than 9,000, a number significantly lower than its peak strength of approximately 25,000 in the 1980s.

Location/Area of Operations: Operates in rural Luzon, Visayas, and parts of northern and eastern Mindanao. There are cells in Manila and other metropolitan centers.

External Aid: Unknown.

Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA)

a.k.a. Continuity Army Council; Continuity IRA; Republican Sinn Fein

Description: The Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA) is a splinter group formed in 1994 as the clandestine armed wing of Republican Sinn Fein, which split from Sinn Fein in 1986. "Continuity" refers to the group's belief that it is carrying on the original Irish Republican Army's (IRA) goal of forcing the British out of Northern Ireland. CIRA cooperates with the larger Real IRA (RIRA).

Activities: CIRA has been active in Belfast and the border areas of Northern Ireland, where it has carried out bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings, extortion, and robberies. On occasion, it has provided advance warning to police of its attacks. Targets have included the British military, Northern Ireland security forces, and Loyalist paramilitary groups. CIRA did not join the Provisional IRA in its September 2005 decommissioning and remained capable of effective, if sporadic, terrorist attacks. In late 2006, CIRA members issued a list of up to 20 individuals they were targeting for paramilitary attacks, several of whom were wounded in subsequent shootings. In early 2006, the Independent Monitoring Commission reported that two splinter organizations, Óglaigh na hÉireann and Saoirse na hÉireann, were formed due to internal disputes within CIRA. In mid-October 2006, CIRA claimed the firebomb attacks of B&Q home-supply stores. CIRA activity has largely decreased from previous levels seen in 2005 and by 2007, the group had become increasingly active in criminal activity. In April, following the discovery of an improvised mortar adjacent to the railway line in Lurgan, three cira members were arrested and charged with conspiracy to murder, possession of explosives with intent to endanger life, and possession of articles for use in terrorism.

Strength: Membership is small, with possibly fewer than 50 hard-core activists. Police counterterrorist operations have reduced the group's strength.

Location/Area of Operation: Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. CIRA does not have an established presence in Great Britain.

External Aid: Suspected of receiving funds and arms from sympathizers in the United States. CIRA may have acquired arms and materiel from the Balkans in cooperation with the Real IRA.

Gama'a al-Islamiyya (IG)

a.k.a. Al-Gama'at; Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya; GI, Islamic Gama'at, IG; Islamic Group

Description: Gama'a al-Islamiyya (IG), Egypt's largest militant group, has been active since the late 1970s, but is now a loosely organized network. The external wing, composed of mainly exiled members in several countries, maintains its primary goal is to overthrow the Egyptian

government and replace it with an Islamic state. The IG announced a cease-fire in 1997 that led to a split into two factions: one, led by Mustafa Hamza, supported the cease-fire; the other, led by Rifa'i Taha Musa, called for a return to armed operations. The IG announced another ceasefire in March 1999, but its spiritual leader, Shaykh Umar Abd al-Rahman, sentenced to life in prison in January 1996 for his involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and incarcerated in the United States, rescinded his support for the cease-fire in June 2000. IG has not conducted an attack inside Egypt since the 1997 Luxor attack, which killed 58 tourists and four Egyptians, and wounded dozens more. In February 1998, a senior member signed Usama bin Ladin's fatwa calling for attacks against the United States.

In early 2001, Taha Musa published a book in which he attempted to justify terrorist attacks that cause mass casualties. Musa disappeared several months afterward, and we have no information about his whereabouts. In March 2002, members of the group's historic leadership in Egypt declared the use of violence misguided and renounced its future use, prompting denunciations by much of the leadership abroad. The Egyptian government continued to release IG members from prison; approximately 900 were released in 2003, and most of the 700 persons released in 2004 at the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan were IG members. In August 2006, Ayman al-Zawahiri announced that IG had merged with al-Qa'ida, but the group's Egypt-based leadership quickly denied this claim.

Activities: Before the 1997 cease-fire, IG conducted armed attacks against Egyptian security and other government officials, Coptic Christians, and Egyptian opponents of Islamic extremism. After the cease-fire, the faction led by Taha Musa launched attacks on tourists in Egypt, most notably the 1997 Luxor attack. IG claimed responsibility for the June 1995 assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. IG was dormant in 2007.

Strength: Unknown. At its peak IG probably commanded several thousand hardcore members and a like number of supporters. Security crackdowns following the 1997 attack in Luxor, the 1999 cease-fire, and post-September 11 security measures have probably resulted in a substantial decrease in the group's membership and extremist activities.

Location/Area of Operation: IG operates mainly in the Al-Minya, Asyut, Qina, and Sohaj Governorates of southern Egypt. It also appears to have support in Cairo, Alexandria, and other urban locations, particularly among unemployed graduates and students. The IG maintains an external presence in Afghanistan, Yemen, the United Kingdom, and other locations in Europe.

External Aid: Al-Qa'ida and Afghan militant groups support the organization. IG also may obtain some funding through various Islamic non-governmental organizations.

The Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS)

a.k.a. Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya; Izz al-Din al Qassam Battalions; Izz al-Din al Qassam Brigades; Students of Ayyash; Student of the Engineer; Yahya Ayyash Units ; Izz al-Din al-Qassim Brigades; Izz al-Din al-Qassim Forces; Izz al-Din al-Qassim Battalions; Izz al-Din al Qassam Forces

Description: HAMAS, which includes military and political wings, was formed at the onset of the first Palestinian uprising or Intifada in late 1987, as an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The armed element, called the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, conducts anti-Israeli attacks, including suicide bombings against civilian targets inside Israel. HAMAS also manages a broad, mostly Gaza-based network of "Dawa" or ministry activities that include charities, schools, clinics, youth camps, fund-raising, and political activities. A Shura council based in Damascus, Syria, sets overall policy. After winning Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006, HAMAS took control of significant Palestinian Authority (PA) ministries, including the Ministry of Interior. HAMAS subsequently formed an expanded, overt militia called the Executive Force, subordinate to the Ministry. This force and other HAMAS cadres took control of Gaza in a military-style coup in June 2007, forcing Fatah forces to either leave Gaza or go underground there.

Activities: Prior to 2005, HAMAS conducted numerous anti-Israeli attacks, including suicide bombings, rocket launches, improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, and shootings. HAMAS, however, has not directly targeted U.S. interests, although the group makes little or no effort to avoid soft targets frequented by foreigners. The group curtailed terrorist attacks in February 2005, after agreeing to a temporary period of calm brokered by the PA, and ceased most violence after winning control of the PA legislature and cabinet in January 2006. After HAMAS staged a June 2006 attack on IDF soldiers near Kerem Shalom that resulted in two deaths and the abduction of Corporal Gilad Shalit, Israel took steps that severely limited the operation of the Rafah crossing. HAMAS maintained and expanded its military capabilities in 2007. In June 2007, HAMAS took control of Gaza from the PA and Fatah in a military-style coup, leading to an international boycott and closure of Gaza borders. HAMAS has since dedicated the majority of its activity in Gaza to solidifying its control, hardening its defenses, tightening security, and conducting limited operations against Israeli military forces.

HAMAS fired rockets from Gaza into Israel in 2007 but focused more mortar on attacks targeting Israeli incursions. Additionally, other terrorist groups in Gaza fired rockets into Israel, most, presumably, with HAMAS support or acquiescence. HAMAS internal security efforts have centered on confronting threats to the group's hold on power, including arrest operations against Fatah. In June 2007, HAMAS took control of Gaza, leading to a drawn-out struggle between HAMAS and supporters of Fatah.

The majority of HAMAS activity in Gaza is directed at solidifying their control over Gaza and weakening Fatah through kidnappings, torture, and the use of the "Executive Force" as a de-facto security apparatus. The continued international boycott and perceived efforts to destroy HAMAS have increased anti-U.S. sentiment on the Palestinian street, a development that could lead cells affiliated with HAMAS to launch attacks, including suicide bombings, without the sanction of HAMAS' senior leadership.

Strength: HAMAS probably has several hundred operatives in its armed wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, along with its reported 9,000-man Executive Force and tens of thousands of supporters and sympathizers.

Location/Area of Operation: HAMAS has an operational presence in every major city in the Palestinian territories and currently focuses its anti-Israeli attacks on targets in the West Bank and within Israel. HAMAS could potentially activate operations in Lebanon or resume terrorist operations in Israel. The group retains a cadre of leaders and facilitators that conducts diplomatic, fundraising, and arms smuggling activities in Lebanon, Syria, and other states. HAMAS is also increasing its presence in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, probably with the goal of eclipsing Fatah's long-time dominance of the camps.

External Aid: HAMAS receives some funding, weapons, and training from Iran. In addition, fundraising takes place in the Gulf countries, but the group also receives donations from Palestinian expatriates around the world and private benefactors in Arab states. Some fundraising and propaganda activity takes place in Western Europe and North America.

Harakat ul-Mujahadin (HUM)

a.k.a. Al-Faran; Al-Hadid; Al-Hadith; Harakat ul-Ansar; Harakat ul-Mujahideen; HUA; Jamiat ul-Ansar

Description: Harakat ul-Mujahadin (HUM), an Islamic militant group based in Pakistan, is politically aligned with the radical political party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam's Fazlur Rehman faction (JUI-F), and operates primarily in Kashmir. Reportedly under pressure from the Government of Pakistan, HUM's long time leader Fazlur Rehman Khalil stepped down and was replaced by Dr. Badr Munir as the head of HUM in January 2005. Khalil has been linked to Usama bin Ladin, and his signature was found on Bin Ladin's fatwa in February 1998, calling for attacks on U.S. and Western interests. HUM operated terrorist training camps in eastern Afghanistan until Coalition air strikes destroyed them in autumn 2001. Khalil was detained by Pakistani authorities in mid-2004 and subsequently released in late December. In 2003, HUM began using the name Jamiat ul-Ansar (JUA). Pakistan banned JUA in November 2003.

Activities: HUM has conducted a number of operations against Indian troops and civilian targets in Kashmir. It is linked to the Kashmiri militant group al-Faran that kidnapped five Western tourists in Kashmir in July 1995; one was killed in August, and the other four reportedly were killed in December of the same year. HUM was responsible for the hijacking of an Indian airliner in December 1999 that resulted in the release of Masood Azhar, an important leader in the former Harakat ul-Ansar, who was imprisoned by India in 1994 and then founded Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) after his release. Ahmed Omar Sheik also was released in 1999, and was later convicted of the abduction and murder in 2002 of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl.

Strength: HUM has several hundred armed supporters located in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, India's southern Kashmir and Doda regions, and in the Kashmir valley. Supporters are mostly Pakistanis and Kashmiris, but also include Afghans and Arab veterans of the Afghan war. HUM uses light and heavy machine guns, assault rifles, mortars, explosives, and rockets. In 2000, HUM lost a significant share of its membership in defections to the JEM.

Location/Area of Operation: Based in Muzaffarabad, Rawalpindi, and several other towns in Pakistan, HUM conducts insurgent and terrorist operations primarily in Kashmir, but members have also been found operating in Afghanistan. HUM trains its militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

External Aid: HUM collects donations from wealthy and grassroots donors in Pakistan, Kashmir, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf and Islamic states. HUM's financial collection methods include soliciting donations in magazine ads and pamphlets. The sources and amount of HUM's military funding are unknown. Its overt fundraising in Pakistan has been constrained since the government clampdown on extremist groups and the freezing of terrorist assets.

Hizballah

a.k.a. Party of God; Islamic Jihad; Islamic Jihad Organization; Revolutionary Justice Organization; Organization of the Oppressed on Earth; Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine; Organization of Right Against Wrong; Ansar alla; Followers of the Prophet Muhammed

Description: Formed in 1982, in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, this Lebanese-based radical Shia group takes its ideological inspiration from the Iranian revolution and the teachings of the late Ayatollah Khomeini. The group generally follows the religious guidance of Khomeini's successor, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Hizballah is closely allied with Iran and often acts at its behest, though it also acts independently. Although Hizballah does not share the Syrian regime's secular orientation, the group has helped Syria advance its political objectives in the region. The Majlis al-Shura, or Consultative Council, is the group's highest governing body and has been led by Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah since 1992.

Hizballah remains the most technically capable terrorist group in the world. It has strong influence in Lebanon's Shia community, which comprises about one-third of Lebanon's population. The Lebanese government and the majority of the Arab world, still recognize Hizballah as a legitimate "resistance group" and political party. Hizballah claimed 14 elected officials in the 128-seat Lebanese National Assembly and was represented in the Cabinet for the first time, by the Minister of Water and Electricity Mohammed Fneish, until his resignation, along with other Shia ministers and Hizballah members of Parliament on November 11, 2006.

Hizballah has reduced its overt military presence in southern Lebanon in accordance with UNSCR 1701, although it likely maintains weapons caches in southern Lebanon. It justifies its continued armed status by claiming to act in defense of Lebanon against acts of Israeli aggression. Hizballah alleges that Israel has not withdrawn completely from Lebanese territory because, in its view, the Shebaa Farms and other areas belong to Lebanon. Hizballah provides support to several Palestinian terrorist organizations that reject peace between Israel and its neighbors. This support includes the covert provision of weapons, explosives, training, funding, and guidance, as well as overt political support.

Activities: Hizballah is known to have been involved in numerous anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli terrorist attacks and prior to September 11, 2001, was responsible for more American deaths than any other terrorist group. In July 2006, Hizballah attacked an Israeli Army patrol, kidnapping two soldiers and killing three, starting the conflict with Israel that lasted into August. Since at least 2004, Hizballah has provided training to select Iraqi Shia militants, including the construction and use of shaped charge improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that can penetrate heavily armored vehicles, which it developed in southern Lebanon in the late 1990s.

A senior Hizballah operative, Ali Mussa Daqduq, was captured in Iraq in 2007 while facilitating Hizballah training of Iraqi Shia militants. Hizballah's terrorist attacks have included the suicide truck bombings of the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, and the U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut in 1984, and the 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847, during which a U.S. Navy diver was murdered. Elements of the group were responsible for the kidnapping, detention, and murder of Americans and other Westerners in Lebanon in the 1980s.

Hizballah also was implicated in the attacks on the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in 1992 and the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) in Buenos Aires in 1994. In 2000, Hizballah operatives captured three Israeli soldiers in the Sheba'a Farms area and kidnapped an Israeli noncombatant.

Strength: Thousands of supporters, several thousand members, and a few hundred terrorist operatives.

Location/Area of Operation: Operates in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon. Has established support cells in Europe, Africa, South America, North America, and Asia.

External Aid: Receives training, weapons, and explosives, as well as political, diplomatic, and organizational aid from Iran, and diplomatic, political, and logistical support from Syria. Hizballah also receives funding from private donations, and profits from legal and illegal businesses.

Islamic Jihad Group (IJG)

a.k.a. Al-Djihad al-Islami; Dzhamaat Modzhakhedov; Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan; Jama'at al-Jihad; Jamiat al-Jihad al-Islami; Jamiyat; The Jamaat Mojahadin; The Kazakh Jama'at; The Libyan Society

Description: The Islamic Jihad Group (IJG) is an extremist organization that splintered from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). They oppose secular rule in Uzbekistan and seek to replace it with a government based on Islamic law. They adhere to an anti-Western global agenda.

Activities: In September, German authorities disrupted an IJG plot by detaining three IJG operatives involved in the operation. Two of the three had attended IJG run terrorist training camps in Pakistan and maintained communications with their Pakistani contacts after returning to Germany. The operatives had acquired large amounts of hydrogen peroxide and an explosives precursor that they stockpiled in a garage in southern Germany. The group had acquired large amounts of hydrogen peroxide for possible use in multiple car bomb attacks. The IJG subsequently claimed responsibility for the foiled attacks.

The IJG issued a statement in May 2005, fully supporting the armed attacks on Uzbek police and military personnel in Andijon, Uzbekistan, and called for the overthrow of the regime in Uzbekistan. The group first conducted attacks in March-April 2004 targeting police at several roadway checkpoints and a popular bazaar.

These attacks killed approximately 47 people, including 33 terrorists, some of whom were suicide bombers. The IJG's claim of responsibility, which was posted to multiple militant Islamic websites, denounced the leadership of Uzbekistan. These attacks marked the first use of suicide bombers in Central Asia.

In July 2004, the group carried out near-simultaneous suicide bombings in Tashkent of the U.S. and Israeli Embassies, and the Uzbekistani Prosecutor General's office. The IJG again claimed responsibility via an Islamic website and stated that martyrdom operations by the group would continue. The statement also indicated that the attacks were done in support of IJG's Palestinian, Iraqi, and Afghan brothers in the global insurgency. The date of the

July attack corresponded with the trial of individuals arrested for their alleged participation in the March-April attacks.

Strength: Unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: IJG members are scattered throughout Central Asia, South Asia, and Europe.

External Aid: Unknown.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

Description: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is a group of Islamic militants from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. The IMU's goal is to overthrow Uzbekistani President Islam Karimov and to establish an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. The IMU is affiliated with al-Qa'ida (AQ) and under the leadership of Tohir Yoldashev, has embraced Usama bin Ladin's anti-Western global terrorist ideology.

Activities: Since Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU has been predominantly occupied with attacks on U.S. and Coalition soldiers in Afghanistan.

The IMU also was active in terrorist operations in Central Asia. Government authorities in Tajikistan arrested several IMU members in 2005. In November 2004, the IMU was blamed for an explosion in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh that killed one police officer and one terrorist. In May 2003, Kyrgyz security forces disrupted an IMU cell that was seeking to bomb the U.S. Embassy and a nearby hotel in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

The IMU was also responsible for explosions in Bishkek in December 2002, and Osh in May 2003, that killed eight people. The IMU primarily targeted Uzbekistani interests before October 2001, and is believed to have been responsible for several explosions in Tashkent in February 1999. In August 1999, IMU militants took four Japanese geologists and eight Kyrgyz soldiers hostage, and in August 2000, they took four U.S. mountain climbers hostage.

Strength: Approximately 500 members.

Location/Area of Operation: IMU militants are located in South Asia, Central Asia, and Iran. Their area of operation includes Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

External Aid: The IMU receives support from a large Uzbek Diaspora, Islamic extremist groups, and patrons in the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia.

Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM)

a.k.a. Army of Mohammed; Jaish-i-Mohammed; Khudamul Islam; Khuddam-ul-Islam; Kuddam e Islami; Mohammed's Army; Tehrik ul-Furqaan

Description: Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) is an Islamic extremist group based in Pakistan that was founded in early 2000 by Masood Azhar, a former senior leader of Harakat ul-Ansar, upon his release from prison in India. The group's aim is to unite Kashmir with Pakistan, and it has openly declared war against the United States. It is politically aligned with the radical political party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam's Fazlur Rehman faction (JUI-F). Pakistan outlawed JEM in 2002. By 2003, JEM had splintered into Khuddam ul-Islam (KUI), headed by Azhar, and Jamaat ul-Furqan (JUF), led by Abdul Jabbar, who was released from Pakistani custody in August 2004. Pakistan banned KUI and JUF in November 2003.

Activities: JEM continued to operate openly in parts of Pakistan despite President Musharraf's 2002 ban on its activities. The group was well-funded, and was said to have tens of thousands of followers who supported attacks against Indian targets, the Pakistani government, and sectarian minorities. Since Masood Azhar's 2000 release from Indian custody in exchange for 155 hijacked Indian Airlines hostages, JEM has conducted many fatal terrorist attacks in the area. JEM continued to claim responsibility for several suicide car bombings in Kashmir, including an October 2001 suicide attack on the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly building in Srinagar that killed more than 30 people. The Indian government has publicly implicated the JEM, along with Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LT), for the December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament that killed nine and injured 18. Pakistani authorities suspect that JEM members may have been involved in the 2002 anti-Christian attacks in Islamabad, Murree, and Taxila that killed two Americans. In December 2003, Pakistan implicated elements of JEM in the two assassination attempts against President Musharraf. In July 2004, Pakistani authorities arrested a JEM member wanted in connection with the 2002 abduction and murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl. In 2006, JEM claimed responsibility for a number of attacks, including the killing of several Indian police officials in the Indian-administered Kashmir capital of Srinagar.

Strength: JEM has at least several hundred armed supporters, including a large cadre of former HUM members, located in Pakistan, in India's southern Kashmir and Doda regions, and in the Kashmir Valley. Supporters are mostly Pakistanis and Kashmiris, but also include Afghans and Arab veterans of the Afghan war. The group uses light and heavy machine guns, assault rifles, mortars, improvised explosive devices, and rocket-propelled grenades.

Location/Area of Operation: Pakistan and Kashmir. Prior to autumn 2001, JEM maintained training camps in Afghanistan.

External Aid: Most of JEM's cadre and material resources have been drawn from the Pakistani militant groups Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI-B) and the Harakat ul-Mujahadin (HUM). In anticipation of asset seizures by the Pakistani government, JEM withdrew funds from bank accounts and invested in legal businesses, such as commodity trading, real estate, and production of consumer goods. In addition, JEM collects funds through donation requests in magazines and pamphlets, and allegedly from AQ.

Jemaah Islamiya (JI)

Description: Southeast Asia-based Jemaah Islamiya (JI) is a terrorist group that seeks the establishment of an Islamic caliphate spanning Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, and the southern Philippines. More than 300 JI operatives, including operations chief Hambali, have been captured since 2002, although many are free after serving short sentences, including former JI emir Abu Bakar Bashir. Abu Bakar was released from prison in 2006 after serving a 25-month sentence for his involvement in the 2002 Bali bombings. Indonesia's Supreme Court later that year acquitted him of the charges. The death of top JI bomb maker Azahari bin Husin in November 2005, the arrests of several close associates of senior JI operative Noordin Mat Top in 2006, and the 2007 arrests of former acting JI emir Muhammad Naim (a.k.a. Zarkasih), JI military commander Abu Dujana, and several of their associates, coupled with additional efforts by the Government of Indonesia, likely disrupted JI's anti-Western attacks- that had occurred annually from 2002-2005.

Activities: The group's most recent high-profile attack occurred in Bali on October 1, 2005, which left 26 persons dead, including the three suicide bombers. Other major JI attacks include the September 2004 bombing outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, the August 2003 bombing of the J. W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, and the October 2002 Bali bombing. The 2002 Bali attack, which killed more than 200, was one of the deadliest terrorist attacks since 9/11. In December 2001, Singaporean authorities uncovered a JI plot to attack the U.S. and Israeli Embassies, and British and Australian diplomatic buildings in Singapore. In December 2000, JI coordinated bombings of numerous Christian churches in Indonesia and was involved in the bombings of several targets in Manila.

In February 2004, JI facilitated attacks in Manila, Davao, and General Santos City. In 2007, the group staged an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in Sultan Kudarat that killed two civilians and injured thirty others. JI associates in the Philippines provide operational support and training for indigenous Philippine Muslim violent extremists.

Strength: Exact numbers currently are unknown. Estimates of total JI members vary from the hundreds to one thousand.

Location/Area of Operation: JI is based in Indonesia and is believed to have cells in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

External Aid: Investigations indicate that JI is fully capable of its own fundraising, although it also receives financial, ideological, and logistical support from Middle Eastern contacts and non-governmental organizations.

Al-Jihad

a.k.a. Egyptian Islamic Jihad; Egyptian al-Jihad; New Jihad; Jihad Group

Description: In 2001, this Egyptian Islamic extremist group merged with al-Qa'ida (AQ). Usama bin Ladin's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was the former head of Al-Jihad (AJ). Active since the 1970s, AJ's primary goal has been the overthrow of the Egyptian government and the establishment of an Islamic state. The group's targets, historically, have been high-level Egyptian government officials as well as U.S. and Israeli interests in Egypt and abroad. Regular Egyptian crackdowns on extremists and Cairo's deradicalization measures aimed at imprisoned AJ members have greatly reduced AJ's capabilities in Egypt.

Activities: The original AJ was responsible for the 1981 assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. It claimed responsibility for the attempted assassinations in 1993 of Interior Minister Hassan al-Alfi and Prime Minister Atef Sedky. AJ has not conducted an attack inside Egypt since 1993 and has never successfully targeted foreign tourists there. The group was responsible for the Egyptian Embassy bombing in Islamabad in 1995, and a disrupted plot against the U.S. Embassy in Albania in 1998. AJ was dormant in 2007.

Strength: Believed to have several hundred hard-core members inside and outside Egypt.

Location/Area of Operation: Most AJ members today are outside Egypt in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, and Yemen. AJ activities have been centered outside Egypt for several years under the auspices of AQ.

External Aid: Since 1998, AJ has received most of its funding from AQ; these close ties culminated in the eventual merger of the groups in June 2001. Some funding may come from various Islamic non-governmental organizations, cover businesses, and criminal acts.

Kahane Chai (Kach)

a.k.a. American Friends of the United Yeshiva; American Friends of Yeshivat Rav Meir; Committee for the Safety of the Roads; Dikuy Bogdim; DOV; Forefront of the Idea; Friends of the Jewish Idea Yeshiva; Jewish Legion; Judea Police; Judean Congress; Kach; Kahane; Kahane Lives; Kahane Tzadak; Kahane.org; Kahanetzadak.com; Kfar Tapuah Fund; Koach; Meir's Youth; New Kach Movement;

Newkach.org; No'ar Meir; Repression of Traitors; State of Judea; Sword of David; The Committee Against Racism and Discrimination (CARD); The Hatikva Jewish Identity Center; The International Kahane Movement; The Jewish Idea Yeshiva; The Judean Legion; The Judean Voice; The Qomemiyut Movement; The Rabbi Meir David Kahane Memorial Fund; The Voice of Judea; The Way of the Torah; The Yeshiva of the Jewish Idea; Yeshivat Harav Meir

Description: Kahane Chai's (Kach) stated goal was to restore the biblical state of Israel. The group disbanded in 2005. Kach was founded by radical Israeli-American rabbi Meir Kahane. Its offshoot, Kahane Chai, (translation: "Kahane Lives") was founded by Meir Kahane's son Binyamin following his father's 1990 assassination in the United States. Both Kach and Kahane Chai were declared terrorist organizations in 1994 by the Israeli Cabinet under its 1948 Terrorism Law. This designation followed the groups' statements in support of Dr. Baruch Goldstein's attack in February 1994 on the Ibrahimi Mosque and their verbal attacks on the Israeli government. Palestinian gunmen killed Binyamin Kahane and his wife in a drive-by shooting in December 2000 in the West Bank. The group has attempted to gain seats in the Israeli Knesset over the past several decades, but has won only one seat, in 1984.

Activities: Kach has harassed and threatened Arabs, Palestinians, and Israeli government officials, and has vowed revenge for the death of Binyamin Kahane and his wife. Kach is suspected of involvement in a number of low-level attacks since the start of the al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000.

Strength: Unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: Israel and West Bank settlements, particularly Qiryat Arba' in Hebron.

External Aid: Receives support from sympathizers in the United States and Europe.

Kongra-Gel

a.k.a. Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); Freedom and Democracy Congress of Kurdistan (KADEK); Halu Mesru Savunma Kuvveti (HSK); Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress; Kurdistan People's Congress (KHK); Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan; People's Congress of Kurdistan; The People's Defense Force. (Note: Despite name changes, the group is still most commonly referred to as the PKK; for the purposes of this report we use the name Kongra-Gel/Kurdistan Workers Party or KGK/PKK.)

Description: The Kongra-Gel/Kurdistan Worker's Party was founded by Abdullah Ocalan in 1978 as a Marxist-Leninist separatist organization. The group, composed primarily of Turkish Kurds, launched a campaign of violence in 1984. The KGK/PKK aspired to establish an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey, but in recent years has spoken more often about autonomy within a Turkish state that guaranteed Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights. In the early 1990s, the KGK/PKK moved beyond rural-based insurgent activities to include urban terrorism. In the 1990s, southeastern Anatolia was the scene of significant violence; some estimates place casualties at approximately 30,000 persons. Following his capture in 1999, Ocalan announced a "peace initiative," ordering members to refrain from violence and requesting dialogue with Ankara on Kurdish issues. Ocalan's death-sentence was commuted to life-imprisonment; he remains the symbolic leader of the group. The group foreswore violence until June 2004, when the group's hard-line militant wing took control and renounced the self-imposed cease-fire of the previous five years. Striking over the border from bases within Iraq the KGK/PKK engaged in terrorist attacks in eastern and western Turkey.

Activities: Primary targets have been Turkish government security forces, local Turkish officials, and villagers who oppose the organization in Turkey. KGK/PKK's reputed military-wing, the People's Defense Force (HPG), has been responsible mainly for attacks against military and paramilitary targets in the southeastern area of Turkey. The group conducted attacks on Turkish diplomatic and commercial facilities in West European cities in 1993 and again in spring 1995. In an attempt to damage Turkey's tourist industry, the KGK/PKK bombed tourist sites and hotels and kidnapped foreign tourists in the early-to-mid-1990s. KGK/PKK-initiated attacks rose from just five in 2000 to more than 70 in 2007. Last year was the most violent year for Turkish security forces since the 1990s, with more than 140 deaths attributed to counterterrorism related operations in eastern Turkey.

Strength: Approximately 4,000 to 5,000; 3,000 to 3,500 are currently located in northern Iraq.

Location/Area of Operation: Operates primarily in Turkey, Iraq, Europe, and the Middle East.

External Aid: In the past, KGK/PKK has received safe haven and modest aid from Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Since 1999, Syria and Iran have cooperated in a limited fashion with Turkey against the KGK/PKK. The group maintains a large extortion, fundraising, and propaganda network in Europe.

Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LT)

a.k.a. Al Mansooreen; Al Mansoorian; Army of the Pure; Army of the Pure and Righteous; Army of the Righteous; Lashkar e-Toiba; Lashkar-i-Taiba; Paasban-e-Ahle-Hadis; Paasban-e-Kashmir; Paasban-i-Ahle-Hadith; Pasban-e-Ahle-Hadith; Pasban-e-Kashmir

Description: Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LT) is one of the largest and most proficient of the Kashmiri-focused militant groups. LT formed in the late 1980s or early 1990s as the

militant wing of the Islamic extremist organization Markaz Dawa ul-Irshad (MDI), a Pakistan-based Islamic fundamentalist mission organization and charity founded to oppose the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. LT, which is not connected to any political party, is led by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed. Elements of LT and Jaish-e-Muhammad combined with other groups to mount attacks as "The Save Kashmir Movement. LT, which is not connected to any political party, is led by Hafiz Muhammad Saeed. Elements of LT and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JEM) combined with other groups to mount attacks as "The Save Kashmir Movement." The Pakistani government banned the group and froze its assets in January 2002. LT and its leader, Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, continue to spread ideology advocating terrorism, as well as virulent rhetoric condemning the United States, India, Israel, and other perceived enemies.

Activities: LT has conducted a number of operations against Indian troops and civilian targets in Jammu and Kashmir since 1993, as well as several high profile attacks inside India itself. LT claimed responsibility for numerous attacks in 2001, including an attack in January on Srinagar airport that killed five Indians; an attack on a police station in Srinagar that killed at least eight officers and wounded several others; and an attack in April against Indian border security forces that left at least four dead. The Indian government publicly implicated LT, along with JEM, for the December 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament building, although concrete evidence is lacking. LT is also suspected of involvement in May 2002 attack on an Indian Army base in Kaluchak that left 36 dead. India blamed LT for an October 2005 attack in New Delhi and a December 2005 Bangalore attack. Senior al-Qa'ida (AQ) lieutenant Abu Zubaydah was captured at an LT safe house in Faisalabad in March 2002, which suggested that some members were facilitating the movement of AQ members in Pakistan. Indian governmental officials hold LT responsible for the July 11, 2006 train attack in Mumbai and several attacks since then in Hyderabad.

Strength: The actual size of the group is unknown but LT has several thousand members in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan, in the southern Jammu and Kashmir and Doda regions, and in the Kashmir Valley. Most LT members are Pakistanis from madrassas across Pakistan or Afghan and/or veterans of the Afghan wars, though the group is alleged to augment its strength through collaboration with terrorist groups comprised of non-Pakistanis. The group uses assault rifles, light and heavy machine guns, mortars, explosives, and rocket-propelled grenades.

Location/Area of Operation: Based in Muridke (near Lahore) and Muzaffarabad, Pakistan; maintains a number of facilities, including training camps, schools, and medical clinics.

External Aid: Collects donations from the Pakistani expatriate communities in the Middle East and the United Kingdom, Islamic NGOs, and Pakistani and other Kashmiri business people. LT coordinates its charitable activities through its front organization Jamaat ud-Daawa (JUD), which spearheaded humanitarian relief to the victims of the October 2005 earthquake in Kashmir. The precise amount of LT funding is unknown.

Lashkar i Jhangvi (LJ)

Description: Lashkar i Jhangvi (LJ) is the militant offshoot of the Sunni Deobandi sectarian group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan. LJ focuses primarily on anti-Shia attacks and was banned by Pakistani President Musharraf in August 2001 as part of an effort to rein in sectarian violence. Many of its members then sought refuge in Afghanistan with the Taliban, with whom they had existing ties. After the collapse of the Taliban, LJ members became active in aiding other terrorists with safe houses, false identities, and protection in Pakistani cities, including Karachi, Peshawar, and Rawalpindi.

Activities: LJ specializes in armed attacks and bombings and has admitted responsibility for numerous killings of Shia religious and community leaders in Pakistan. In January, the Interior Ministry ordered the arrest of three LJ militants suspected of being involved in a suicide bombing at a Shia religious procession in Peshawar that killed 15 people. In February, police arrested 20 LJ militants who were wanted for various terrorism attacks in the Punjab and Sindh provinces.

In June, Sindh authorities issued a statement attributing the April 2006 Mishtar Parking bombing in Karachi to a militant with ties to LJ. The government claimed that the group was involved in the April 2006 assassination attempt and the July 2006 assassination of Allama Turabi, an influential Shia leader. In October, Afghan security forces claimed to have arrested four Pakistani suicide bombers in Kandahar who asserted that they belonged to LJ.

In May 2006, Pakistani police arrested two LJ militants suspected of involvement in the March bombing outside the U.S. Consulate in Karachi that killed one U.S. official. Pakistani authorities have publicly linked LJ members to the 2002 abduction and murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl. Media reports linked LJ to attacks on Christian targets in Pakistan, including a March 2002 grenade assault on the Protestant International Church in Islamabad that killed two U.S. citizens, but no formal charges were filed. Pakistani authorities believe LJ was responsible for the July 2003 bombing of a Shia mosque in Quetta, Pakistan. Authorities also implicated LJ in several sectarian incidents in 2004, including the May and June bombings of two Shia mosques in Karachi that killed more than 40 people. In January 1999, the group attempted to assassinate former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shabaz Sharif, Chief Minister of Punjab Province.

Strength: Probably fewer than 100.

Location/Area of Operation: LJ is active primarily in Punjab and Karachi. Some members travel between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

External Aid: Unknown.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

a.k.a. Ellalan Force; Tamil Tigers

Description: Founded in 1976, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is a powerful Tamil secessionist group in Sri Lanka. The LTTE wants to establish an independent Tamil state in the island's north and east. Since the beginning of its insurgency against the Sri Lankan government in 1983, it has evolved its capability from terrorist and guerilla tactics to conventional warfare. Although the LTTE nominally committed to a 2002 cease-fire agreement with the Sri Lankan government, it continued terrorist attacks against government leaders and dissident Tamils.

Activities: LTTE has integrated a battlefield insurgent strategy with a terrorist program that targets key personnel in the countryside and senior Sri Lankan political and military leaders in Colombo and other urban centers. It has conducted a sustained campaign targeting rival Tamil groups and figures, and assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India in 1991, and President Ranasinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka in 1993. Although most notorious for its cadre of suicide bombers, the Black Tigers, the organization also features an amphibious force, the Sea Tigers; and a nascent air wing, the Air Tigers. Fighting between the LTTE and the Sri Lanka government escalated in 2006 and continued through 2007. Political assassinations and bombings were commonplace tactics prior to the cease-fire and have increased again since mid-2005. After a period of targeting Sri Lankan military and official personnel throughout 2007, the LTTE appears to have recently resumed its targeting of civilians.

Strength: Exact strength is unknown, but LTTE is estimated to have 8,000 to 10,000 armed combatants in Sri Lanka, with an elite cadre of 5,000 to 7,000. LTTE also has a significant overseas support structure for fundraising, weapons procurement, and propaganda activities.

Location/Area of Operations: LTTE controls portions of the northern areas of Sri Lanka, where it has set up a de facto administrative structure, but over the past year, the LTTE has lost control of its eastern bases to the Sri Lankan military. LTTE also has conducted operations throughout the island and has established an extensive network of checkpoints and informants to keep track of any outsiders who enter the group's area of control.

External Aid: The LTTE uses its international contacts and the large Tamil Diaspora in North America, Europe, and Asia to procure weapons, communications, funding, and other needed supplies. The group employs charities as fronts to collect and divert funds for their activities. In May 2007, Australian police arrested two individuals with ties to LTTE. The two were also accused of collecting money for tsunami relief and sending the funds to the LTTE in Sri Lanka instead. In November, the United States designated the Tamils Rehabilitation Organization (TRO)—a charitable organization with offices in seventeen countries worldwide —as an LTTE front organization that facilitates fundraising and procurement for the group.

Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)

Description: In the early 1990s, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) emerged from the group of Libyans who had fought Soviet forces in Afghanistan and the Qadhafi regime in Libya. The LIFG declared Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi un-Islamic and pledged to overthrow him. In the years following, some members maintained a strictly anti-Qadhafi focus and targeted Libyan government interests. Others, such as Abu al-Faraj al-Libi, who in 2005 was arrested in Pakistan, aligned with Usama bin Ladin and are believed to be part of the al-Qa'ida (AQ) leadership structure or active in the international terrorist network. On November 3, 2007, senior AQ leaders announced that LIFG had officially joined AQ.

Activities: Libyans associated with the LIFG are part of the broader international terrorist movement. The LIFG is one of the groups believed to have planned the Casablanca suicide bombings in May 2003. Spanish media in August 2005 linked Ziyad Hashem, an alleged member of the LIFG's media committee, as well as the imprisoned amir Abdallah al-Sadeq, with Tunisian Islamist Serhane Ben Abdelmajid Fakhet, the suspected ringleader in the 2004 Madrid attacks. The LIFG continued to target Libyan interests, and attempted to assassinate Qadhafi four times; the last attempt was in 1998. The LIFG engaged Libyan security forces in armed clashes during the 1990s. However, the LIFG has been largely operationally inactive in Libya since the late 1990s when members fled predominately to Europe and the Middle East because of tightened Libyan security measures. To date, the November 3 merger with AQ has not resulted in a significant increase in LIFG activities within Libya.

Strength: The LIFG probably has several hundred active members or supporters, mostly in the Middle East or Europe.

Location/Area of Operation: Since the late 1990s, many members have fled to various Asian, Arabian Gulf, African, and European countries, particularly the UK. It is likely that LIFG maintained a limited presence in eastern Libya.

External Aid: Unknown. The LIFG has used Islamic charitable organizations as cover for fundraising and transferring money and documents; it may have also financed operations with criminal activity.

Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM)

a.k.a. Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain

Description: : The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) has disintegrated, and it is likely that the few remaining former members no longer operate on behalf of any single group. Much of the leadership in Morocco and Europe have been killed, imprisoned, or are awaiting trial. There is no indication that new leaders have emerged or additional members have been recruited to fill the ranks of arrested cell members, although individual extremists still pose a threat.

The Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) was a clandestine transnational terrorist group centered in the Moroccan Diaspora communities of Western Europe. Its goals included establishing an Islamic state in Morocco and supporting al-Qa'ida's (AQ 's) war against the West by assisting in the assimilation of AQ operatives into Moroccan and European society.

The group emerged in the 1990s and was comprised of Moroccan recruits who trained in armed camps in Afghanistan, including some who fought in the Soviet Afghan war. GICM members interact with other North African extremists, particularly in Europe.

Activities: GICM members were among those responsible for the 2004 Madrid bombing, and Moroccans associated with the GICM are part of the broader international terrorist movement. GICM members were implicated in the recruitment network of individuals for Iraq, and at least one GICM member carried out a suicide attack against Coalition Forces in Iraq. GICM individuals are believed to have been involved in the 2003 Casablanca attacks.

Strength: Much of the GICM's leadership in Morocco and Europe have been killed, imprisoned, or are awaiting trial. Alleged leader Mohamed al-Guerbouzi was convicted in absentia by the Moroccan government for his role in the Casablanca attacks but remained free in exile in the UK.

Location/Area of Operation: Morocco, Western Europe, Afghanistan, and Canada.

External Aid: The GICM was involved in narcotics trafficking in North Africa and Europe to fund its operations. Moroccan security officials believe money from drug trafficking largely financed the 2003 Casablanca attacks. The Madrid attacks were financed mainly by the narcotics trafficking of Moroccan terrorist Jamal Ahmidan.

Mujahadin-e Khalq Organization (MEK)

a.k.a. MKO; Mujahadin-e Khalq (Iranian government name for group); Muslim Iranian Students' Society; National Council of Resistance (NCR); Organization of the People's Holy Warriors of Iran; The National Liberation Army of Iran (NLA); The People's Mujahadin Organization of Iran (PMOI); National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI); Sazeman-e Mujahadin-e Khalq-e Iran

Description: The Mujahadin-e Khalq Organization (MEK) advocates the violent overthrow of the Iranian regime and was responsible for the assassination of several U.S. military personnel and civilians in the 1970s. The MEK's armed wing is known as the National Liberation Army of Iran (NLA). In December 2006, the European Court of Justice ruled to overturn the designation of the MEK as a terrorist organization but was not supported by the Council of the European Union (EU).

The MEK emerged in the 1960s as one of the more violent political movements opposed to the Pahlavi dynasty and its close relationship with the United States. MEK ideology has gone through several iterations and blends elements of Marxism, Islam, and feminism. The group has planned and executed terrorist operations against the Iranian regime for nearly three decades from its European and Iraqi bases of operations. Additionally, it has expanded its fundraising base, further developed its paramilitary skills, and aggressively worked to expand its European ranks. In addition to its terrorist credentials, the MEK has also displayed cult-like characteristics.

Upon entry into the group, new members are indoctrinated in MEK ideology and revisionist Iranian history. Members are also required to undertake a vow of "eternal divorce" and participate in weekly "ideological cleansings." Additionally, children are reportedly separated from parents at a young age. MEK leader Maryam Rajavi has established a "cult of personality." She claims to emulate the Prophet Muhammad and is viewed by members as the "Iranian President in exile."

Activities: The group's worldwide campaign against the Iranian government uses propaganda and terrorism to achieve its objectives and has been supported by reprehensible regimes, including that of Saddam Hussein. During the 1970s, the MEK assassinated several U.S. military personnel and U.S. civilians working on defense projects in Tehran and supported the violent takeover in 1979 of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

In 1981, MEK leadership attempted to overthrow the newly installed Islamic regime; Iranian security forces subsequently initiated a crackdown on the group. The MEK instigated a bombing campaign, including an attack against the head office of the Islamic Republic Party and the Prime Minister's office, which killed some 70 high-ranking Iranian officials, including Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, President Mohammad-Ali Rajaei, and Prime Minister Mohammad-Javad Bahonar. These attacks resulted in a popular uprising against the MEK and an expanded Iranian government crackdown which forced MEK leaders to flee to France. For five years, the MEK continued to wage its terrorist campaign from its Paris headquarters. Expelled by France in 1986, MEK leaders turned to Saddam Hussein's regime for basing,

financial support, and training. Near the end of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, Baghdad armed the MEK with heavy military equipment and deployed thousands of MEK fighters in suicidal, mass wave attacks against Iranian forces.

The MEK's relationship with the former Iraqi regime continued through the 1990s. In 1991, the group reportedly assisted the Iraqi Republican Guard's bloody crackdown on Iraqi Shia and Kurds who rose up against Saddam Hussein's regime. In April 1992, the MEK conducted near-simultaneous attacks on Iranian embassies and installations in 13 countries, demonstrating the group's ability to mount large-scale operations overseas. In April 1999, the MEK targeted key Iranian military officers and assassinated the deputy chief of the Iranian Armed Forces General Staff, Brigadier General Ali Sayyaad Shirazi.

In April 2000, the MEK attempted to assassinate the commander of the Nasr Headquarters, Tehran's interagency board responsible for coordinating policies on Iraq. The pace of anti-Iranian operations increased during "Operation Great Bahman" in February 2000, when the group launched a dozen attacks against Iran. One attack included a mortar attack against a major Iranian leadership complex in Tehran that housed the offices of the Supreme Leader and the President. In 2000 and 2001, the MEK was involved in regular mortar attacks and hit-and-run raids against Iranian military and law enforcement personnel, as well as government buildings near the Iran-Iraq border. Also in 2001, the FBI arrested seven Iranians in the United States who funneled $400,000 to an MEK-affiliated organization in the UAE, which used the funds to purchase weapons. Following an initial Coalition bombardment of the MEK's facilities in Iraq at the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, MEK leadership negotiated a cease-fire with Coalition Forces and voluntarily surrendered their heavy-arms to Coalition control. Since 2003, roughly 3,400 MEK members have been encamped at Ashraf in Iraq, under the protection of Coalition Forces.

In 2003, French authorities arrested 160 MEK members at operational bases they believed the MEK was using to coordinate financing and planning for terrorist attacks. Upon the arrest of MEK leader Maryam Rajavi, MEK members took to Paris' streets and engaged in self-immolation. French authorities eventually released Rajavi. Although currently in hiding, Rajavi has made "motivational" appearances via video-satellite to MEK-sponsored conferences across the globe.

According to evidence which became available after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the MEK received millions of dollars in Oil-for-Food program subsidies from Saddam Hussein from 1999 through 2003. In addition to discovering 13 lists of recipients of such vouchers on which the MEK appeared, evidence linking the MEK to the former Iraqi regime includes lists, as well as video footage of Saddam Hussein handing over suitcases of money to known MEK leaders, and video of MEK operatives receiving training from the Iraqi military.

Strength: Estimates place MEK's worldwide membership at between 5,000 and 10,000 members, with large pockets in Paris and other major European capitals. In Iraq, roughly 3,400 MEK members are gathered under Coalition protection at Camp Ashraf, the MEK's main compound north of Baghdad, where they have been treated as "protected persons" consistent with provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This status does not affect the group's members outside of Camp Ashraf or the MEK's designation as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

As a condition of the 2003 cease-fire agreement, the MEK relinquished more than 2,000 tanks, armored personnel carriers, and heavy artillery. A significant number of MEK personnel have voluntarily left Ashraf, and an additional several hundred individuals have renounced ties to the MEK and been voluntarily repatriated to Iran.

Location/Area of Operation: The MEK maintains its main headquarters in Paris and has concentrations of members across Europe, in addition to the large concentration of MEK located at Camp Ashraf in Iraq. The MEK's global support structure remains in place, with associates and supporters scattered throughout Europe and North America. Operations target Iranian regime elements across the globe, including in Europe and Iran. MEK's political arm, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), has a global support network with active lobbying and propaganda efforts in major Western capitals. NCRI also has a well-developed media communications strategy.

External Aid: Before Operation Iraqi Freedom began in 2003, the MEK received all of its military assistance and most of its financial support from Saddam Hussein. The fall of Saddam's regime has led MEK increasingly to rely on front organizations to solicit contributions from expatriate Iranian communities.

National Liberation Army (ELN)

a.k.a. Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional

Description: The National Liberation Army (ELN) is a Colombian Marxist-Leninist terrorist group formed in 1964 by urban intellectuals inspired by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. It is primarily rural-based, although it possesses several urban units. Peace talks between the ELN and the Colombian government began in Cuba in December 2005 and continued as recently as August 2007. To date, Bogota and the ELN have yet to agree on a formal framework for peace negotiations.

Activities: The ELN engages in kidnappings, hijackings, bombings, drug trafficking, and extortion activities. It has minimal conventional military capabilities. The group conducts kidnappings for ransom, often targeting foreign employees of large corporations, especially in the petroleum industry. In August, ELN leadership discussed the possibility of ending kidnapping as a means of financing insurgent operations as a government-proposed precondition for formal peace talks. However, the organization has

yet to renounce kidnapping. ELN derives some revenue from taxation of the illegal narcotics industry, and its involvement may be increasing. It attacks energy infrastructure and has inflicted major damage on oil and natural gas pipelines and the electrical distribution network, but has lost much of its capacity to carry out these types of attacks in recent years.

Strength: Approximately 3,000 armed combatants and an unknown number of active supporters.

Location/Area of Operation: Mostly in rural and mountainous areas of northern, northeastern, and southwestern Colombia, and Venezuelan border regions.

External Aid: Cuba provides some medical care and political consultation.

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)

a.k.a. PLF-Abu Abbas; Palestine Liberation Front—Abu Abbas Faction

Description: In the late 1970s the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) splintered from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), and later split into pro-PLO, pro-Syrian, and pro-Libyan factions. The pro-PLO faction was led by Muhammad Zaydan (a.k.a. Abu Abbas) and was based in Baghdad prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Activities: Abbas's group was responsible for the 1985 attack on the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro and the murder of U.S. citizen Leon Klinghoffer. In 1993, the PLF officially renounced terrorism when it acknowledged the Oslo accords, although it was suspected of supporting terrorism against Israel by other Palestinian groups into the 1990s. In April 2004, Abu Abbas died of natural causes while in U.S. custody in Iraq. Current leadership and membership of the relatively small PLF appears to be based in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The PLF took part in the 2006 Palestinian parliamentarian elections but did not win a seat.

Strength: Estimates have placed membership between 50 and 500.

Location/Area of Operation: Based in Iraq from 1990 until 2003. The group currently is based in Lebanon and Syria.

External Aid: Unknown.

Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

a.k.a. Palestine Islamic Jihad-Shaqaqi Faction; PIJ-Shaqaqi Faction; PIJ-Shallah Faction; Islamic Jihad of Palestine; Islamic Jihad in Palestine; Abu Ghunaym Squad of the Hizballah Bayt Al-Maqdis; Al-Quds Squads; Al-Quds Brigades; Saraya Al-Quds; Al-Awdah Brigades

Description: Formed by militant Palestinians in Gaza during the 1970s, Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) is committed to both the creation of an Islamic state in all of historic Palestine, including present day Israel, and the destruction of Israel through attacks against Israeli military and civilian targets.

Activities: PIJ terrorists have conducted numerous attacks, including large-scale suicide bombings against Israeli civilian and military targets. In 2006, the group conducted two suicide bombings and launched numerous homemade rockets from Gaza into neighboring Israeli towns. PIJ continues to plan and direct attacks against Israelis both inside Israel and in the Palestinian territories.

Although U.S. citizens have died in PIJ mounted attacks, the group has not directly targeted U.S. interests. All but one of PIJ's attacks in 2007 consisted of rocket attacks aimed at southern Israeli cities.

Strength: Unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: Primarily Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. The group's senior leadership resides in Syria. Other leadership elements reside in Lebanon and official representatives are scattered throughout the Middle East.

External Aid: Receives financial assistance and training primarily from Iran. Syria provides the group with safe haven.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

a.k.a. Halhul Gang; Halhul Squad; Palestinian Popular Resistance Forces; PPRF; Red Eagle Gang; Red Eagle Group; Red Eagles

Description: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a Marxist-Leninist group founded by George Habash, broke away from the Arab Nationalist Movement in 1967. The PFLP does not view the Palestinian struggle as religious, seeing it instead as a broader revolution against Western imperialism. The group earned a reputation for spectacular international attacks in the 1960s and 1970s, including airline hijackings that killed at least 20 U.S. citizens. A leading faction within the PLO, the PFLP has long accepted the concept of a two-state solution but has opposed specific provisions of various peace initiatives.

Activities: The PFLP stepped up its operational activity during the al-Aqsa intifada. This was highlighted by at least two suicide bombings since 2003, multiple joint operations with other Palestinian terrorist groups, and the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi in 2001 to avenge Israel's killing of the PFLP Secretary General earlier that year. In March 2006, the PFLP's current Secretary General, Ahmed Sa'adat, who had been

imprisoned by the Palestinian Authority for his involvement in the Ze'evi assassination, was seized from the Jericho prison compound by Israeli forces and is now awaiting trial. The PFLP-GC is suspected in several rocket attacks against Israel in 2007.

Strength: Unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

External Aid: Receives safe haven and some logistical assistance from Syria.

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)

Description: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) split from the PFLP in 1968, claiming it wanted to focus more on resistance and less on politics. Originally, the group was violently opposed to the Arafat-led PLO. Ahmad Jibril, a former captain in the Syrian Army, whose son Jihad was killed by a car bomb in May 2002, has led the PFLP-GC since its founding. The PFLP-GC is closely tied to both Syria and Iran.

Activities: The PFLP-GC carried out dozens of attacks in Europe and the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. The organization was known for cross-border terrorist attacks into Israel using unusual means, such as hot-air balloons and motorized hang gliders. The group's primary focus now is on supporting Hizballah's attacks against Israel, training members of other Palestinian terrorist groups, and weapons smuggling. The PFLP-GC maintains an armed presence in several Palestinian refugee camps and its own military bases in Lebanon. The PFLP-GC has been implicated by Lebanese security officials in several rocket attacks against Israel in 2007.

Strength: Several hundred to several thousand.

Location/Area of Operation: Headquartered in Damascus with bases in southern Lebanon and a presence in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria.

External Aid: Receives logistical and military support from Syria and financial support from Iran.

Al Qa'ida

a.k.a. al Qaeda; International Front for Fighting Jews and Crusaders; Islamic Army; Islamic Army for the Liberation of Holy Sites; Islamic Salvation Foundation; The Base; The Group for the Preservation of the Holy Sites; The Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places; The World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders; Usama bin Ladin Network; Usama bin Ladin Organization; al-Jihad; the Jihad Group; Egyptian al-Jihad; Egyptian Islamic Jihad; New Jihad

Description: Al-Qa'ida (AQ) was established by Usama bin Ladin in 1988 with Arabs who fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. The group helped finance, recruit, transport, and train Sunni Islamic extremists for the Afghan resistance. AQ's near-term goal is uniting Muslims to fight the United States and its allies, overthrowing regimes it deems "non-Islamic," and expelling Westerners and non-Muslims from Muslim countries. Its ultimate goal is the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate throughout the world. AQ leaders issued a statement in February 1998 under the banner of "The World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders" saying it was the duty of all Muslims to kill U.S. citizens, civilian and military, and their allies everywhere. AQ merged with al-Jihad (Egyptian Islamic Jihad) in June 2001.

Activities: Even as AQ's top leaders continue to plot and direct terror attacks worldwide, terrorists affiliated with but not necessarily controlled by AQ have increasingly carried out high-profile attacks. AQ, its affiliates, and those inspired by the group were involved in anti-U.S. and anti-Coalition attacks in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, including suicide bombings and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. AQ has reconstituted some of its pre-9/11 operational capabilities through the reestablishment of a safe haven in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, replacement of captured or killed operational lieutenants, and the restoration of some central control by its top leadership, in particular Ayman al-Zawahiri. Although bin Ladin remains the group's ideological figurehead, Zawahiri has emerged as AQ's strategic and operational planner.

AQ is assessed to be the top terrorist threat to the United States and is developing stronger operational relationships with affiliates in the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. It is through these "franchises" that AQ has conducted its recent attacks. AQ remains committed to attacking the United States and focuses its planning on targets that would produce mass casualties, dramatic visual destruction, and economic dislocation. In a 1999 interview with the press, bin Ladin's response to a question about chemical and nuclear weapons was, "Acquiring weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty."

The Government of Pakistan accused AQ, along with the Taliban, of being responsible for the October suicide bombing attempt against former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto that killed at least 144 people in Karachi, Pakistan. On December 27, the Government of Pakistan stated that Baitullah Mahsud, a leading Pakistani Taliban commander with close ties to AQ, was responsible for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto.

In 2006, AQ and affiliated organizations continued major efforts to attack the West and its interests. For example, in mid-August, UK and U.S. authorities foiled a plot to blow up several aircraft. AQ may have been complicit in the plot but the group has made no public statement claiming its involvement. Additionally, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Penin-

sula claimed responsibility for the February 24, 2006 attack on the Abqaiq petroleum processing facility, the largest such facility in the world, in Saudi Arabia. The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) officially merged with al-Qa'ida in September 2006, subsequently changed its name to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and attacked a U.S. contractor bus in December 2006 in greater Algiers, marking its first attack against a U.S. entity. On December 11, 2007, AQIM conducted a near-simultaneous double suicide bombing that hit both the Algerian Court building and a UN office building. The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) also officially merged with AQ in November 2007, although no significant LIFG activities have occurred since the merger.

Bin Ladin's deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri claimed responsibility on behalf of AQ for multiple attacks on July 7, 2005 against the London public transportation system. The extent of senior leadership involvement in planning the July 2005 attacks was unclear. Some suspects in the attacks included homegrown United Kingdom-based extremists who were "inspired" by AQ.

In 2003 and 2004, Saudi-based AQ operatives and associated extremists launched more than a dozen attacks, killing at least 90 people, including 14 Americans in Saudi Arabia. AQ may have been connected to the suicide bombers and planners of the November 2003 attacks in Istanbul that targeted two synagogues, the British Consulate, and the HSBC Bank, and resulted in the deaths of more than 60 people. Pakistani President Musharraf blames AQ for two attempts on his life in December 2003.

In October 2002, AQ directed a suicide attack on the French tanker MV Limburg off the coast of Yemen that killed one and injured four. The group also carried out the November 2002 suicide bombing of a hotel in Mombasa, Kenya that killed 15. AQ probably provided financing for the October 2002 Bali bombings by Jemaah Islamiya that killed more than 200.

On September 11, 2001, 19 AQ members hijacked and crashed four U.S. commercial jets—two into the World Trade Center in New York City, one into the Pentagon near Washington, DC, and a fourth into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania—leaving nearly 3,000 individuals dead or missing. In October 2000, AQ conducted a suicide attack on the USS Cole in the port of Aden, Yemen, with an explosive-laden boat, killing 17 U.S. Navy sailors and injuring 39. AQ also carried out the August 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam killing at least 301 individuals and injuring more than 5,000 others. AQ and its supporters claim to have shot down U.S. helicopters and killed U.S. servicemen in Somalia in 1993, and to have conducted three bombings that targeted U.S. troops in Aden in December 1992.

Strength: AQ's organizational strength is difficult to determine in the aftermath of extensive counterterrorist efforts since 9/11, but several thousand members and associates comprise the AQ-associated movement. The arrests and deaths of mid-level and senior AQ operatives have disrupted some communication, financial, and facilitation nodes and disrupted some terrorist plots. Additionally, supporters and associates worldwide who are "inspired" by the group's ideology may be operating without direction from AQ central leadership; it is impossible to estimate their numbers. AQ also serves as a focal point of "inspiration" for a worldwide network that is comprised of many Sunni Islamic extremist groups, including some members of the Gama'at al-Islamiyya, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Islamic Jihad Group, Lashkar i Jhangvi, Harakat ul-Mujahadin, Ansar al-Sunnah, the Taliban, and Jemaah Islamiya.

Location/Area of Operation: AQ worldwide networks are augmented by ties to local Sunni extremists. The group was based in Afghanistan until Coalition Forces removed the Taliban from power in late 2001. While the largest concentration of senior AQ members now resides in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the network incorporates members of al-Qa'ida in Iraq and other associates throughout the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, and Central Asia who are working to carry out future attacks against U.S. and Western interests.

External Aid: Al-Qa'ida primarily depends on donations from like-minded supporters and individuals who believe that their money is supporting a humanitarian or other cause. Some funds are diverted from Islamic charitable organizations. In addition, parts of the organization raise funds through criminal activities; for example, al-Qa'ida in Iraq raises funds through hostage-taking for ransom, and members in Europe have engaged in credit card fraud. U.S. and international efforts to block al-Qa'ida funding have hampered the group's ability to raise money.

Al-Qa'ida in Iraq

a.k.a. al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in Iraq; al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia; al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida of Jihad in Iraq; Al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of The Two Rivers; Al-Qa'ida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers; Al-Tawhid; Jam'at al-Tawhid Wa'al-Jihad; Tanzeem Qa'idat al Jihad/Bilad al Raafidaini; Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn; The Monotheism and Jihad Group; The Organization Base of Jihad/Country of the Two Rivers; The Organization Base of Jihad/Mesopotamia; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base in Iraq; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base in the Land of the Two Rivers; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in Iraq; The Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in the Land of the Two Rivers; The Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers; al-Zarqawi Network

Description: In January 2006, in an attempt to unify Sunni extremists in Iraq, al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) created the Mujahidin Shura Council (MSC), an umbrella organi-

zation meant to encompass the various Sunni terrorist groups in Iraq. AQI claimed its attacks under the MSC until mid-October, when Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi's successor, Abu Ayyub al-Masri, took the first step toward al-Qa'ida's goal of establishing a caliphate in the region by declaring the "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI), under which AQI now claims its attacks. Although Iraqis compose 90 percent of the group's membership, it is probable that the majority of AQI's leadership is foreign-born. In an attempt to give AQI a more Iraqi persona, the Islamic State of Iraq umbrella organization was created and headed by "Abu Omar al-Baghdadi."

Abu Ayyub al-Masri, Zarqawi's successor, issued a statement pledging to continue what Zarqawi began, and AQI has continued its strategy of targeting Coalition Forces, Iraqi government groups, and Shia civilians to provoke sectarian violence and undermine perceptions that the Iraqi central government can defend them.

AQI has claimed joint attacks with both Ansar Al-Sunnah (AS) and the Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI); however, ideological differences have prevented these groups from merging. More recently, IAI and the 1920 Revolution Brigades cooperated with Coalition Forces in targeting AQI.

Activities: High-profile attacks in 2007 included the suicide car-bombing attack of a mosque in Al Habbaniyah in February, the multiple suicide bombing attack of Shia pilgrims in Al Hillah in March, several chlorine gas canister bombings from January through June, an orchestrated bridge bombing campaign throughout Iraq aimed at isolating Baghdad Shia population concentrations and disrupting ground transportation from January through October, the suicide truck bombing of a market in Tall 'Afar in March, the suicide truck bombings of a market and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) party offices in Amurli and Kirkuk in July, and the single deadliest attack of the Iraq war, the multiple suicide truck bombings of two Yazidi villages near Sinjar in August.

In August 2003, Zarqawi's group carried out major terrorist attacks in Iraq when it bombed the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad, which was followed 12 days later by a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack against the UN Headquarters in Baghdad that killed 23, including the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello. That same month the group conducted a VBIED attack against Shia worshippers outside the Imam Ali Mosque in al Najaf, killing 85, including the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The group kept up its attack pace throughout 2003, striking numerous Iraqi, Coalition, and relief agency targets such as the Red Cross. Zarqawi's group conducted VBI ED attacks against U.S. military personnel and Iraqi infrastructure throughout 2004, including suicide attacks inside the Green Zone perimeter in Baghdad. The group successfully penetrated the Green Zone in the October 2004 bombing of a popular café and market. It also claimed responsibility for the videotaped execution by beheading of Americans Nicholas Berg (May 11, 2004), Jack Armstrong (September 22, 2004), and Jack Hensley (September 21, 2004). AQI was likely involved in other hostage incidents as well. In 2005, AQI largely focused on conducting multiple high-profile, coordinated suicide attacks. AQI claimed numerous attacks primarily aimed against civilians, the Iraqi government, and security forces, such as the coordinated attacks against polling sites during the January elections and the coordinated VBIED attacks outside the Sheraton and Palestine hotels in Baghdad on October 24. The group also continued assassinations against Shia leaders and members of the Shia militia groups Jaysh al-Mahdi and Badr Corps.

AQI increased its external operations in 2005 by claiming credit for three attacks: suicide bomber attacks against hotels in Amman on November 9; a rocket attack against U.S. Navy ships in the port of Aqaba in August, which resulted in limited damage in Jordan and in Eilat, Israel; and the firing of several rockets into Israel from Lebanon in December. In August 2005, an AQI operative was arrested in Turkey while planning an operation targeting Israeli cruise ships. Prior to 2005, Zarqawi planned and conducted limited attacks in Jordan, including the assassination of USAID official Laurence Foley in 2002. In October 2006, AQI declared the ISI would become a platform from which AQI would launch terrorist attacks throughout the world. Following the announcement, AQI members marched through cities they considered to be part of their new state as a show of force. AQI attack claims, which the group released under the auspices of the Mujahidin Shura Council and now the ISI, increased in 2006 but decreased significantly in 2007.

AQI was implicated in the February 2006 Samarra' al-Askari Mosque bombing that precipitated the escalation in sectarian violence. AQI senior leaders in Iraq may have had advance knowledge of terrorist attacks in Iraq that incorporated chlorine into vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). However, the use of chlorine in suicide attacks probably represents an opportunistic evolution of conventional VBIED attacks.

Strength: Membership is estimated at 5,000 to 10,000, making it the largest Sunni extremist group in Iraq. AQI perpetrates the majority of suicide and mass casualty bombings in Iraq with foreign operatives constituting the majority of these bombers. The selection of civilian targets, particularly in Baghdad, generates widespread media coverage.

Location/Area of Operation: AQI's operations are predominately Iraq-based, but it has perpetrated attacks in Jordan. The group maintains an extensive logistical network throughout the Middle East, North Africa, Iran, South Asia, and Europe. In Iraq, AQI currently conducts the majority of its operations in Ninawa, Diyala, Salah ad Din, and Baghdad provinces and to a lesser extent Al Anbar.

External Aid: AQI probably receives funds from donors in the Middle East and Europe, local sympathizers in Iraq, from a variety of businesses and criminal activities, and other international extremists throughout the world. In many cases, AQI's donors are probably motivated to support terrorism rather than an attachment to any specific terrorist group.

Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

a.k.a. Tanzim al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Maghrib al-Islamiya; Le Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat; Salafist Group for Call and Combat; Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat

Description: The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) officially merged with al-Qa'ida (AQ) in September 2006 and subsequently changed its name to al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The GSPC formed in 1998 when its members left the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) over disagreements about leadership, tactics, and indiscriminant targeting of Algerian civilians. In contrast to the GIA, it has pledged to avoid attacks on civilians inside Algeria, but civilians have died in numerous GSCP/AQIM attacks. The GSPC retained GIA's mission of overthrowing the Algerian government and installing an Islamic regime. AQIM is the most effective and largest armed group inside Algeria. AQIM and AQ have used the merger extensively in their propaganda.

Activities: On April 11, 2007, AQIM for the first time employed suicide tactics. The attacks on that date, near-simultaneous bombings of multiple targets inside Algiers including the office of Algeria's prime minister, claimed more than 30 lives. Shortly thereafter, AQIM vowed to continue to use suicide tactics, and the organization carried out five further suicide attacks in Algeria during 2007. On December 11, AQIM carried out two near-simultaneous suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attacks that struck two UN offices and the headquarters of Algeria's Constitutional Council, killing 41 people, (including 17 UN employees), and wounding at least 170 others. AQIM had previously attacked vehicles belonging to foreign corporations several times during the year, beginning in December 2006 with an attack in Algiers on a bus belonging to a U.S.-Algeria joint venture and carrying several expatriate workers.

Outside Algeria, in December 2007, multiple AQIM-linked attacks in Mauritania were the first terrorist incidents since 2005, when the GSPC had claimed responsibility for an attack on a remote Mauritanian military outpost that killed 15; this appeared to indicate an AQIM shift towards a more regional terrorist campaign. Also during 2007, police in France, Italy, and Spain arrested several individuals from Algeria and other Maghreb countries suspected of providing support to AQIM. French officials announced that AQIM had issued an Internet call-to-action against France, declaring France "public enemy number one."

Strength: AQIM has several hundred fighters operating in Algeria and the Sahel. Abdelmalek Droukdel, a.k.a. Abu Mus'ab Abd al-Wadoud is the leader of the group.

Location/Area of Operation: Algeria and the Sahel, with affiliates and logistics/fundraisers in Western Europe.

External Aid: Algerian expatriates and AQIM members abroad, many residing in Western Europe, provide financial and logistical support. AQIM members also engage in criminal activity to finance their operations.

Real IRA (RIRA)

a.k.a. 32 County Sovereignty Committee; 32 County Sovereignty Movement; Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association; Real Irish Republican Army; Real Oglaigh Na Heireann

Description: Like the Continuity IRA, the Real IRA (RIRA) did not participate in the September 2005 weapons decommissioning. RIRA was formed in 1997 as the clandestine armed wing of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, a "political pressure group" dedicated to removing British forces from Northern Ireland and unifying Ireland. RIRA also seeks to disrupt the Northern Ireland peace process. The 32 County Sovereignty Movement opposed Sinn Fein's September 1997 adoption of the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence; it also opposed the amendment in December 1999 of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution that laid claim to Northern Ireland. Despite internal rifts and calls by some jailed members, including the group's founder Michael "Mickey" McKevitt, for a cease-fire and disbandment, RIRA pledged additional violence and continued to conduct attacks.

Activities: Many RIRA members are former Provisional Irish Republican Army members who left that organization after it renewed its cease-fire in 1997. These members brought a wealth of experience in terrorist tactics and bomb-making to RIRA. Targets have included civilians (most notoriously in the Omagh bombing in August 1998), British security forces, police in Northern Ireland, and local Protestant communities. RIRA's most recent fatal attack was in August 2002 at a London army base, killing a construction worker. The organization seeks to improve its intelligence-gathering ability, engineering capacity, and access to weaponry; it also trains members in the use of guns and explosives. RIRA continues to attract new members, and its senior members are committed to launching attacks on security forces.

Three suspected RIRA members that engaged in cigarette smuggling were arrested in Spain in 2006. From 2006 to November 2007, terrorist activity in the form of successful and attempted attacks by RIRA slightly decreased. Notably, between August and November 2006, throughout Northern Ireland, RIRA targeted B&Q home-supply stores and other retail businesses in successful and attempted firebombings, although a handful of these attacks were

also claimed by the Continuity Irish Republican Army (CIRA). In November 2007, RIRA claimed two armed attacks that wounded two Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) officers.

Strength: According to the Irish government, RIRA has approximately 100 active members. The organization may receive limited support from IRA hardliners and Republican sympathizers dissatisfied with the IRA's continuing cease-fire and with Sinn Fein's involvement in the peace process. Approximately 40 RIRA members are in Irish jails.

Location/Area of Operation: Northern Ireland, Great Britain, and the Irish Republic.

External Aid: RIRA is suspected of receiving funds from sympathizers in the United States and of attempting to buy weapons from U.S. gun dealers. RIRA also is reported to have purchased weapons from the Balkans.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

a.k.a. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

Description: The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is Latin America's oldest, largest, most capable, and best-equipped insurgency. It began in the early sixties as an outgrowth of the Liberal Party-based peasant self-defense leagues, but took on Marxist ideology, although it only nominally fights in support of Marxist goals today. The FARC is governed by a general secretariat led by co-founder Antonio Marin (a.k.a. Manuel Marulanda or "Tirofijo") and six others, including senior military commander Victor Suarez (a.k.a. Jorge Briceno or "Mono Jojoy"). The FARC is organized along military lines and includes some specialized urban fighting units. A Colombian military offensive targeting FARC fighters in southern Colombia has experienced some success, with a number of FARC mid-level leaders killed or captured. Colombian military operations in September and October resulted in the deaths of Thomas Median Caracas (a.k.a. "Negro Acacio") and Gustavo Rueda (a.k.a. "Martin Caberllero"), two senior FARC military commanders, respectively.

Activities: The FARC has carried out bombings, murder, mortar attacks, kidnapping, extortion, and hijacking, as well as guerrilla and conventional military action against Colombian political, military, and economic targets. In February 2003, when a U.S. plane crashed in a FARC-held area, the FARC murdered a U.S. citizen and a Colombian; it continues to hold hostage the three other U.S. citizens that were on the plane. In late 2007, the Colombian government granted Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez permission to negotiate with the FARC to secure the release of the three U.S. citizens and 42 other so-called "political" hostages, some held as long as a decade. Colombia ended Chavez' role after he repeatedly ignored Colombian positions, however, the FARC did release two hostages. Foreign citizens were often targets of abductions that the FARC carried out to obtain ransom and political leverage. The FARC has well-documented ties to the full range of narcotics trafficking activities, including taxation, cultivation, and distribution.

Strength: Approximately 9,000 to 12,000 combatants and several thousand more supporters.

Location/Area of Operation: Primarily in Colombia with some activities such as extortion, kidnapping, weapons sourcing, and logistics in neighboring countries.

External Aid: Cuba provided some medical care, safe haven, and political consultation. Venezuela supplied some lethal aid to the FARC, although this may be a result of individual corruption rather than official policy; available information is not conclusive. The FARC often used the Colombia/Venezuela and Colombia/Ecuador border areas for incursions into Colombia and also used Venezuelan and Ecuadorian territory for safe haven, although the degree of government acquiescence was not clear and may vary depending on cross-border relations.

Revolutionary Nuclei

a.k.a. Revolutionary Cells; ELA; Epanastatiki Pirines; Epanastatikos Laikos Agonas; June 78; Liberation Struggle; Organization of Revolutionary Internationalist Solidarity; Popular Revolutionary Struggle; Revolutionary People's Struggle; Revolutionary Popular Struggle

Description: Revolutionary Nuclei (RN) emerged from a broad range of anti-establishment and anti-U.S./NATO/EU leftist groups active in Greece between 1995 and 1998. The group is believed to be the successor to or offshoot of Greece's most prolific terrorist group, Revolutionary People's Struggle (ELA), which has not claimed an attack since January 1995. Indeed, RN appeared to fill the void left by ELA, particularly as lesser groups faded from the scene. RN's few communiqués show strong similarities in rhetoric, tone, and theme to ELA proclamations.

Activities: Since it began operations in January 1995, the group has claimed responsibility for some two dozen arson attacks and low-level bombings against a range of U.S., Greek, and other European targets in Greece. In its most infamous and lethal attack to date, the group claimed responsibility for a bomb it detonated at the Intercontinental Hotel in April 1999 that resulted in the death of a Greek woman and injury of a Greek man. RN's modus operandi includes warning calls of impending attacks, attacks targeting property instead of individuals, use of rudimentary timing devices, and strikes during the late evening to early morning hours. RN may have been responsible for two attacks in July 2003 against a U.S. insurance company and a local bank in Athens. RN's last confirmed attacks against U.S. interests in Greece came in November 2000, with two separate bombings against the

Athens offices of Citigroup and the studio of a Greek-American sculptor. Greek targets have included judicial and other government office buildings, private vehicles, and the offices of Greek firms involved in NATO-related defense contracts in Greece. Similarly, the group has attacked European interests in Athens.

Strength: Group membership is believed to be small, probably drawing from the Greek militant leftist or anarchist milieu.

Location/Area of Operation: Primary area of operation is the Athens metropolitan area.

External Aid: Unknown but believed to be self-sustaining.

Revolutionary Organization 17 November

a.k.a. Epanastatiki Organosi 17 Noemvri; 17 November

Description: Revolutionary Organization 17 November (17N) is a radical leftist group established in 1975 and named for the student uprising in Greece in November 1973 that protested the ruling military junta. 17N is an anti-Greek, anti-U.S., anti-Turkey, and anti-NATO group that seeks the ouster of U.S. bases from Greece, the removal of Turkish military forces from Cyprus, and the severing of Greece's ties to NATO and the European Union (EU).

Activities: Initial attacks were assassinations of senior U.S. officials and Greek public figures. Five U.S. Embassy employees have been murdered since 17N began its terrorist activities in 1975. The group began using bombings in the 1980s. In 1990, 17N expanded its targets to include Turkish diplomats, EU facilities, and foreign firms investing in Greece, and added improvised rocket attacks to its methods. The group supported itself largely through bank robberies. A failed 17N bombing attempt in June 2002 at the port of Piraeus in Athens, coupled with robust detective work, led to the arrest of 19 members, the first 17N operatives ever arrested, including a key leader of the organization. In December 2003, a Greek court convicted 15 members, five of whom were given multiple life terms. Four other alleged members were acquitted for lack of evidence. In December 2005, against the backdrop of a sympathetic press, a group appeals trial opened for the 15 convicted members and two of the previously acquitted members. The appeals trial essentially represents a new trial for the convicts because new evidence and facts can be introduced under Greek law. At the conclusion of the appeals trial in May 2007, 13 of the 17 members of 17N were found guilty of terrorism. Two members already released from prison for medical reasons in July 2006 and 2005 were cleared of their charges since the crimes they were suspected of committing were outside of the Greek twenty-year statute of limitations. Two others were also acquitted due to doubts surrounding the charges against them. The last suspected attack by 17N occurred in May 2004, at a courthouse in Larissa, Greece, wounding one civilian and causing minor damage to the facility. Although no group claimed responsibility for the attack, authorities believed 17N was responsible.

Strength: Unknown but presumed to be small.

Location/Area of Operation: Athens, Greece.

External Aid: Unknown.

Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)

a.k.a. Dev Sol; Dev Sol Armed Revolutionary Units; Dev Sol Silahli Devrimci Birlikleri; Dev Sol SDB; Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi-Cephesi; Devrimci Sol; Revolutionary Left

Description: The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) originally formed in 1978 as Devrimci Sol, or Dev Sol, a splinter faction of Dev Genc (Revolutionary Youth). It was renamed in 1994, after factional infighting. "Party" refers to the group's political activities, while "Front" is a reference to the group's militant operations.

The group espouses a Marxist-Leninist ideology and is vehemently anti-U.S., anti-NATO, and anti-Turkish establishment. Its goals are the establishment of a socialist state and the abolition of F-type prisons, which contain one to three-man prison cells. DHKP/C finances its activities chiefly through donations and extortion.

Activities: Since the late 1980s, the group has targeted primarily current and retired Turkish security and military officials. It began a new campaign against foreign interests in 1990, which included attacks against U.S. military and diplomatic personnel and facilities. To protest perceived U.S. imperialism during the Gulf War, Dev Sol assassinated two U.S. military contractors, wounded an Air Force officer, and bombed more than 20 U.S. and NATO military, commercial, and cultural facilities. In its first significant terrorist act as DHKP/C in 1996, the group assassinated a prominent Turkish businessman and two others; the perpetrators fled to Belgium, where legal cases continue. DHKP/C added suicide bombings to its repertoire in 2001, with successful attacks against Turkish police in January and September. Since the end of 2001, DHKP/C has typically used improvised explosive devices against official Turkish targets and soft U.S. targets of opportunity. Attacks against U.S. targets beginning in 2003 probably came in response to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Operations and arrests against the group have weakened its capabilities. In late June 2004, the group was suspected of a bus bombing at Istanbul University, which killed four civilians and 21 other people. In July 2005, in Ankara, police intercepted and killed a suicide bomber who attempted to attack the Ministry of Justice. In June 2006,

in Istanbul, the group fired upon and killed a police officer; four members of the group were arrested the next month for the attack.

In January 2007, authorities raided DHKP/C safe-houses in Duinbergen, Belgium, and in Istanbul, Turkey, resulting in the confiscation of weapons, bomb-making material, documents, and propaganda material, and in the arrest of several members of DHKP/C. In the spring of 2007, the Belgian Supreme Court overturned, on procedural grounds, the conviction of several DHKP/C operatives, including the DHKP/C spokesman in Belgium, Bahar Kimyougur, and key figure Musa Asoglu, who had been convicted of membership in a terrorist organization, arms possession, and using forged documents.

Strength: Probably several dozen terrorist operatives inside Turkey, with a large support network throughout Europe.

Location/Area of Operation: Turkey, primarily Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Adana.

External Aid: Widely believed to have training facilities or offices in Lebanon and Syria. DHKP/C raises funds in Europe.

Shining Path (SL)

a.k.a. Sendero Luminoso; Ejercito Guerrillero Popular (People's Guerrilla Army); EGP; Ejercito Popular de Liberacion (People's Liberation Army); EPL; Partido Comunista del Peru (Communist Party of Peru); PCP; Partido Comunista del Peru en el Sendero Luminoso de Jose Carlos Mariategui (Communist Party of Peru on the Shining Path of Jose Carlos Mariategui); Socorro Popular del Peru (People's Aid of Peru); SPP

Description: Former university professor Abimael Guzman formed the Shining Path (SL) in Peru in the late 1960s, and his teachings created the foundation of SL's militant Maoist doctrine. In the 1980s, SL became one of the most ruthless terrorist groups in the Western Hemisphere. The Peruvian government made dramatic gains against SL during the 1990s, but recent SL attacks against Peruvian counternarcotics police underscore that SL continues to be a threat. In response to SL's bloody attacks in late 2005, Peruvian authorities stepped up counterterrorism efforts against the group. SL's stated goal is to destroy existing Peruvian institutions and replace them with a communist peasant revolutionary regime. It also opposes any influence by foreign governments. More recently, SL members have attempted to influence the local populace through indoctrination versus violence.

Activities: In the past, SL has conducted indiscriminate bombing campaigns, ambushes, and selective assassinations. Remnants of SL now focus on drug-trafficking activities to obtain funds to carry out attacks.

Strength: Unknown but estimated to be between 200 and 300 armed militants.

Location/Area of Operation: Peru, with most activity in rural areas, specifically the Huallaga Valley, the Ene River, and the Apurimac Valley of central Peru.

External Aid: None.

United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)

a.k.a. Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia

Description: The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), commonly referred to as the paramilitaries, was an umbrella group formed in April 1997 to organize loosely affiliated illegal paramilitary groups that had emerged to retaliate against leftist guerillas fighting the Colombian government and the landed establishment. The AUC increasingly discarded its counterguerilla activities, electing instead to involve itself in the illegal drug trade. By 2007, as the result of a large demobilization process, most of the AUC's centralized military structure had been dismantled, and all of the top paramilitary chiefs had stepped down with the majority being held in a maximum security facility. More than 31,000 paramilitary members and support personnel demobilized bloc by bloc from 2003 to 2006. Colombia now faces criminal gangs formed by demobilized paramilitaries and other individuals, and one minor paramilitary group that refused to disarm. Unlike the AUC, the new criminal groups make little claim to fighting insurgents and are more clearly criminal enterprises focused primarily on drug trafficking, other lucrative illicit activities, and influencing local politics to facilitate their criminal ventures. These new criminal groups are not a reconstituted AUC, but they recruit heavily from the pool of former AUC members. A large part of their leadership appears to be former mid-level paramilitary commanders who did not participate in demobilization.

Activities: Paramilitary operations varied from assassinating suspected insurgent supporters to engaging insurgent combat units. As much as 70 percent of the paramilitary operational costs were financed with drug-related earnings, with the rest coming from "donations" from sponsors and government corruption. These groups generally avoided actions against U.S. personnel or interests. Traditional paramilitary operations are largely nonexistent as a result of the demobilization of all AUC groups, although some individuals are violating their demobilization commitments by continued participation in criminal activities.

Strength: The Colombian government has determined that the AUC no longer exists. The Colombian government and Organization of American States estimate that 22 new criminal groups have emerged in the wake of AUC demobilization.

According to Colombian government figures, approximately 10 to 15 percent of the 3,000 to 4,000 members of these groups are former members of paramilitary groups, including the AUC.

Location/Areas of Operation: Paramilitary forces were strongest in northwest Colombia in Antioquia, Cordoba, Sucre, Atlantico, Magdelena, Cesar, La Guajira, and Bolivar Departments, with affiliate groups in the coffee region, Valle del Cauca, and Meta Department.

External Aid: None.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND KEY TERMS

Country Reports on Terrorism 2007 is submitted in compliance with Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f (the "Act"), which requires the Department of State to provide Congress a full and complete annual report on terrorism for those countries and groups meeting the criteria of the Act. Statutory excerpts relating to the terms used in this report and a discussion of the interpretation and application of those terms in this report are included below.

Excerpts and Summary of Key Statutory Terms

Section 2656f(a) of Title 22 of the United States Code states as follows:

(a) … The Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, by April 30 of each year, a full and complete report providing –

(1) (A) detailed assessments with respect to each foreign country –

(i) in which acts of international terrorism occurred which were, in the opinion of the Secretary, of major significance;

(ii) about which the Congress was notified during the preceding five years pursuant to Section 2405(j) of the Export Administration Act of 1979; and

(iii) which the Secretary determines should be the subject of such report; and

(B) detailed assessments with respect to each foreign country whose territory is being used as a sanctuary for terrorist organizations;

(2) all relevant information about the activities during the preceding year of any terrorist group, and any umbrella group under which such terrorist group falls, known to be responsible for the kidnapping or death of an American citizen during the preceding five years, any terrorist group known to have obtained or developed, or to have attempted to obtain or develop, weapons of mass destruction, any terrorist group known to be financed by countries about which Congress was notified during the preceding year pursuant to section 2405(j) of the Export Administration Act of 1979, any group designated by the Secretary as a foreign terrorist organization under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1189), and any other known international terrorist group which the Secretary determines should be the subject of such report;

(3) with respect to each foreign country from which the United States Government has sought cooperation during the previous five years in the investigation or prosecution of an act of international terrorism against United States citizens or interests, information on-

(A) the extent to which the government of the foreign country is cooperating with the United States Government in apprehending, convicting, and punishing the individual or individuals responsible for the act; and

(B) the extent to which the government of the foreign country is cooperating in preventing further acts of terrorism against United States citizens in the foreign country; and

(4) with respect to each foreign country from which the United States Government has sought cooperation during the previous five years in the prevention of an act of international terrorism against such citizens or interests, the information described in paragraph (3)(B).

Section 2656f(d) of Title 22 of the United States Code defines certain key terms used in Section 2656f(a) as follows:

(1) the term "international terrorism" means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country;

(2) the term "terrorism" means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents; and

(3) the term "terrorist group" means any group practicing, or which has significant subgroups which practice, international terrorism.

The "7120 Report": Title 22 USC Section 2656f(b) requires the Department of State, to the extent feasible, to provide to Congress an update of the information contained in the report required to be transmitted to Congress under Section 7120(b) of the 9/11 Commission Implementation Act of 2004 (also known as the Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004 or "IRTPA"). The "7120 Report" forms a part of the annual Country Reports on Terrorism, and the terrorist sanctuary reporting required under Sections 22 USC 2656f(a)(1)(B) and (b)(2) is integrated with the information required under Section 7120(b)(1) of IRTPA.

Interpretation and Application of Key Terms: For purposes of this report, the terms "international terrorism," "terrorism," and "terrorist group" have the definitions assigned to them in 22 USC 2656f(d) (see above). The term "non-combatant," which is referred to but not defined in 22 USC. 2656f(d)(2), is interpreted to mean, in addition to civilians, military personnel (whether or not armed or on duty) who are not deployed in a war zone or a war-like setting.

It should be noted that 22 USC 2656f(d) is one of many U.S. statutes and international legal instruments that concern terrorism and acts of violence, many of which use definitions for terrorism and related terms that are different from those used in this report. The interpretation and application of defined and related terms concerning terrorism in this report is therefore specific to the statutory and other requirements of the report, and is not intended to express the views of the USG on how these terms should be interpreted or applied for any other purpose. Accordingly, there is not necessarily any correlation between the interpretation of terms such as "non-combatant" for purposes of this report and the meanings ascribed to similar terms pursuant to the law of war (which encapsulates the obligations of states and individuals with respect to their activities in situations of armed conflict).

Statistical Information: Pursuant to 22 USC § 2656f(b), this report must contain "to the extent practicable, complete statistical information on the number of individuals, including United States citizens and dual nationals, killed, injured, or kidnapped by each terrorist group during the preceding calendar year." This requirement is satisfied through the inclusion of a statistical annex to the report that sets out statistical information provided by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC). The statistical annex includes a discussion of the methodology employed by NCTC in compiling the relevant data.

This report does not contain statistical information specifically concerning combatants. The focus of the terrorism report, as is clear from the definition of terrorism, is on violence against noncombatant targets. Further, it would not be practicable to provide such statistics, as the government does not maintain - and would have great difficulty maintaining - statistics that distinguish between incidents against combatants by terrorist groups and by others, including insurgents, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Contextual Reporting: Adverse mention in this report of individual members of any political, social, ethnic, religious, or national population is not meant to imply that all members of that population are terrorists. Indeed, terrorists rarely represent anything other than a tiny fraction of such larger populations. It is terrorist groups, and their actions, that are the focus of this report. Furthermore, terrorist acts are part of a larger phenomenon of violence inspired by a cause, and at times the line between the two can become difficult to draw. This report includes some discretionary information in an effort to relate terrorist events to the larger context in which they occur, and to give a feel for the conflicts that spawn violence. Thus, this report will discuss terrorist acts as well as other violent incidents that are not necessarily "international terrorism" and therefore are not subject to the statutory reporting requirement.

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